



# A Report on the Educational Opportunity Centers Program

2007–08, With Select Comparative Data, 2002–07

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## Background

The Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) program is one of the federal TRIO programs, a group of eight outreach programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education that are designed to support and assist students from disadvantaged backgrounds to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to attainment of a postbaccalaureate degree.

The EOC program provides counseling and information on college admissions to qualified adults who want to enter or continue a program of postsecondary education. An important objective of the program is to counsel participants on financial aid options and to assist in the application process. While the primary goal of the EOC program is to increase the number of adult participants who enroll in institutions of postsecondary education, EOC grantees may also serve postsecondary students and, under some circumstances, individuals younger than 19. EOC thus serves a wider age range of individuals than do most other TRIO programs.

In the past, the EOC program has funded projects through grant competitions held every four years; the program completed one grant cycle with the 2005–06 academic year and began a new cycle with the 2006–07 academic year. Although most grantees received four-year awards, the applicants whose peer review scores were in the top 10 percent received five-year awards, so there is some overlap between

grant cycles. (Under the *Higher Education Opportunity Act*, signed into law in 2008, in the future EOC and six other TRIO programs will award all grants for five-year periods and will therefore hold competitions every five years.) As appropriate, this report will examine program characteristics and outcomes at up to four points: the first year of the previous grant cycle (2002–03), the last year of the previous grant cycle (2005–06), the first year of the current cycle (2006–07), and the most recent year for which data is currently available (2007–08).

Every year, the grantee for each funded project is required to submit an Annual Performance Report (APR) that includes data about the participants served and the status of those participants at the end of the reporting period. Reporting periods correspond to academic years, and for most grantees run from September through the following August. For the EOC program, grantees report the total number of participants that fit into a number of different categories, rather than the status of each individual participant. The APR was redesigned for the new grant cycle (beginning in 2006–07) and reflects the standard objectives introduced in the FY 2006 competition; these objectives concern enrollment in continuing education, application for postsecondary admission and financial aid, and, most important, postsecondary enrollment. The APR also incorporates improved consistency checks designed to reduce data entry errors.

## Program Funding

Table 1 shows the major funding characteristics of the EOC program: number of grantees, number of participants that the project was funded to serve and actually served, and program funding, along with the mean funding per project, mean participants served per project, and mean spending per participant served. 2002–03 reflected a significant increase in the program’s grantees, from 82 in the 1998–2002 cycle to 139 in the 2002–06 cycle. Slightly fewer participants were actually

served in 2002–03 than the projects were funded to serve; as the 57 new projects gained experience in providing program services, in each subsequent year the number of participants served increased beyond the number funded to serve. In the 2006 competition, the program did not make any completely new awards; thus, in 2006–07, the number of participants served continued to exceed the number of participants the projects had been funded to serve.

**Table 1. EOC program funding characteristics, by reporting year: 2002–03, 2005–06, 2006–07, and 2007–08**

Program funding characteristics	Reporting year			
	2002–03	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08
Projects funded	139	139	135	125
Total program funding	\$48,011,331	\$48,971,567	\$47,726,296	\$47,006,891
Mean funding per project	\$345,405	\$352,313	\$353,528	\$376,055
Total participants funded to serve	217,836	217,565	205,815	195,795
Total participants served	214,684	219,974	209,179	202,039
Mean spending per participant served	\$224	\$223	\$228	\$233
Mean participants served per project	1,544	1,583	1,549	1,616

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Federal TRIO Programs, Educational Opportunity Centers performance reports, 2002–03, 2005–06, 2006–07, and 2007–08.

NOTE: Table reflects two four-year funding cycles in EOC: 2002–06 and 2006–10. Fourteen projects funded in the 2002–06 cycle did not receive grants in the 2006 competition because they did not apply, were ineligible, or applied and were not successful. Four of these 14 grants ended at the close of the 2005–06 reporting year; the remaining 10 ended at the close of the 2006–07 reporting year.

## Outcomes

The main goal of the EOC program is to increase the number of adult participants who enroll in postsecondary education. The most direct measurement of this goal is the percentage of certain program participants who successfully enroll in programs of postsecondary education. The groups of participants included in the denominator for calculating the enrollment rate changed to some extent between the two grant cycles. In APRs prior to the current grant cycle, participants included in the calculation comprised high school graduates, high school equivalency graduates, and high school seniors and were referred to as “college-ready.” Beginning with the new grant cycle in 2006–07, the term “college-ready” did not appear in the APR, although a similar subset of program participants was identified that aligned with the enrollment objective established for the 2006 grant competition. This subset of participants consists of those included in the previous cycle plus certain categories of participants listed in the APR: adults without a high school diploma or equivalent credentials who are enrolled in a continuing education program at the level of a high school senior; postsecondary dropouts;

potential postsecondary transfers; and participants not older than 18 years enrolled in an alternative education program at an academic level equivalent to a high school senior.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 1 shows rates of enrollment in postsecondary education by “college-ready” participants from the beginning of the previous grant cycle (2002–03) to the most recent year for which data are available (2007–08). While some variation occurred during the previous cycle (2002–06), its yearly rates were consistently higher than those of the two years in the new cycle (2006–07 and 2007–08). The recent lower rates may be due to the inclusion in the denominator of postsecondary dropouts and other persons who may have been away from secondary or postsecondary school longer than those included in the older definition.

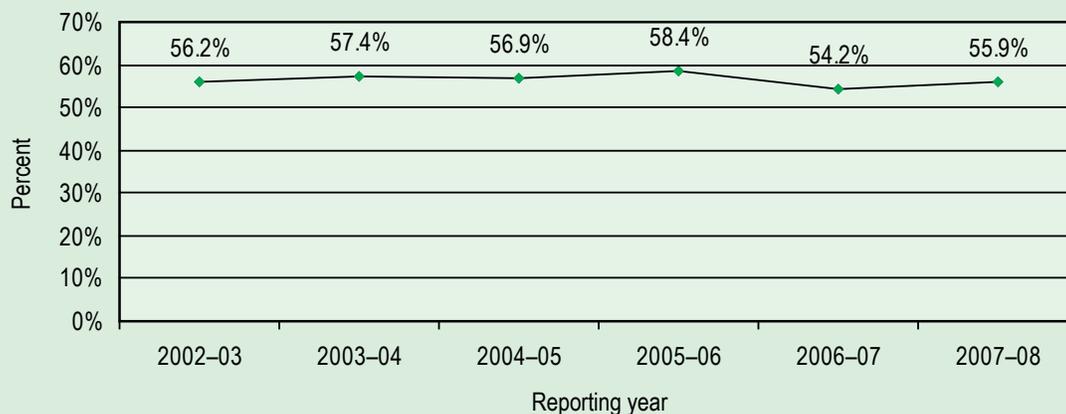
<sup>1</sup> For purposes of continuity, some TRIO publications continue to use the term “college-ready” in descriptions of the enrollment measure and similar calculations, though the phrase no longer appears in the APR for EOC.

Table 2 compares the percentages of certain program participants who applied for admission to an institution of postsecondary education and who applied for financial aid for attendance at an institution of postsecondary education in the first two years of the current cycle (2006–07 and 2007–08). Both rates increased between these years. The rates in Table 2 are not directly comparable to those calculated in the previous grant cycle (2002–06) due to data problems involving overreporting of participants' applications for admission and financial aid during the earlier cycle; figures for years prior to 2006–07 are therefore omitted. The APR revised for the 2006–07 reporting year resolved the data problems of earlier years.

Although Figure 1 presents the most direct measurement of the EOC program goal of increasing the number of adult participants who enroll in institutions of postsecondary education, and although Table 2 presents measurable steps toward this main goal, all three measures take into account only

“college-ready” participants, who represent around two-thirds of those served each year. In the current grant cycle, the APR includes data on a fourth objective established in the 2006 competition that tracks the progress toward this ultimate goal made by another subset of participants: those who had neither enrolled in a continuing education program, nor obtained a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate. Figure 2 displays the percentage of these participants who enrolled in a continuing education program during the reporting year. For this objective, a continuing education program is defined as any program that allows students to prepare themselves for postsecondary education via a diploma or equivalent—e.g., reenrollment in high school or enrollment in a GED program. If a student goes from high school dropout status (or equivalent) directly to postsecondary education without an intervening program, for purposes of the APR the postsecondary education program counts as continuing education.

**Figure 1. Postsecondary enrollment rate of EOC program participants, by reporting year: 2002–03, 2003–04, 2004–05, 2005–06, 2006–07, and 2007–08**



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Federal TRIO Programs, Educational Opportunity Centers performance reports, 2002–03, 2003–04, 2004–05, 2005–06, 2006–07, and 2007–08.

NOTE: Table reflects two four-year funding cycles in EOC: 2002–06 and 2006–10. The percentage of postsecondary enrollment was derived by dividing the number of participants enrolled in a program of postsecondary education by the number of high school graduates, high school equivalency graduates, and high school seniors; in 2006–07 and 2007–08, the denominator also included adults without high school diploma or equivalency credentials enrolled in a continuing education program at a level equivalent to a high school senior; postsecondary dropouts; potential postsecondary transfers; and participants not older than 18 years enrolled in an alternative education program at a level equivalent to a high school senior.

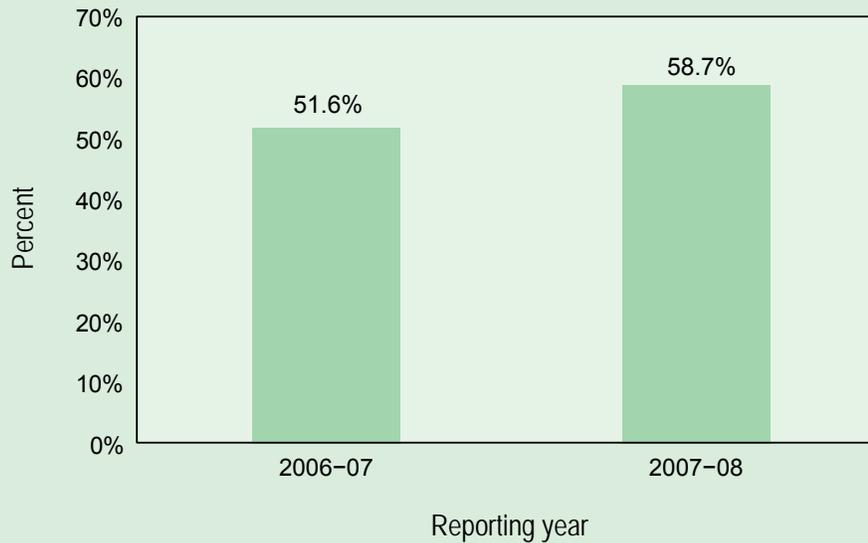
**Table 2. Postsecondary application rate and student financial aid application rate of EOC program participants, by reporting year: 2006–07 and 2007–08**

Application rate	2006–07	2007–08
Postsecondary application rate	68.0%	71.1%
Financial aid application rate	74.0%	76.6%

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Federal TRIO Programs, Educational Opportunity Centers performance reports, 2005–06, 2006–07 and 2007–08.

NOTE: Table reflects the current funding cycle in EOC: 2006–10. The percentages of the postsecondary application rate and student financial aid application rate were derived by dividing the number of participants who applied for postsecondary school admission or student financial aid by the number of high school graduates; high school equivalency graduates; high school seniors; adults without high school diploma or equivalency credentials enrolled in a continuing education program at a level equivalent to a high school senior; postsecondary dropouts; potential postsecondary transfers; and participants not older than 18 years enrolled in an alternative education program at a level equivalent to a high school senior.

**Figure 2. Percentage of EOC participants' enrollment in a continuing education program, by reporting year: 2006–07 and 2007–08**



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Federal TRIO Programs, Educational Opportunity Centers performance reports, 2006–07 and 2007–08.

NOTE: Table reflects the current funding cycle in EOC: 2006–10. The percentage of enrollment in a continuing education program was derived by dividing the number of participants enrolled in a continuing education program during the reporting period by the number of participants who had neither already enrolled in a continuing education program nor obtained a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate.

## Participants

The EOC program primarily seeks to increase the percentage of low-income, potentially first-generation adult college students who successfully enroll in postsecondary education (although grantees also serve a significant percentage of students who do not fit this profile). The TRIO programs define low-income students as those whose families' taxable income for the preceding year did not exceed 150 percent of the poverty level amount established by the Census Bureau based on family size, with adjustments for determining the poverty status of residents of Alaska and Hawaii. Potentially first-generation college status refers to an individual neither of whose natural or adoptive parents received a baccalaureate degree, or a student who, prior to the age of 18, regularly resided with and received support from only one natural or adoptive parent and whose supporting parent did not receive a baccalaureate degree. The program's regulations require that at least two-thirds of participants be both low-income individuals and potentially first-generation college students.

Table 3 shows the numbers and percentages of 2007–08 program participants who were considered low-income, potentially first-generation college students, low-income only, potentially first-generation college students only, and neither low-income nor potentially first-generation college students. These percentages have remained stable between years and grant cycles. The table also shows the numbers and

percentages of participants who were included in calculations for objectives involving postsecondary enrollment and application for postsecondary admission and financial aid. Finally, Table 3 displays the distribution of 2007–08 program participants by academic status. The categories used to describe participants' academic status changed in the revised APR first used in 2006–07, but the general distribution was similar to the academic status of program participants in the previous grant cycle and APRs.

Table 4 displays the gender and age distribution of program participants served in each of the past three years (2005–06, 2006–07, and 2007–08). The proportion of male participants served has increased relative to female participants in the most recent two years, but the distributions of participants by age range remained nearly the same in 2005–06 and 2006–07 before an increase in high school-aged participants (14–18) and participants of unknown age, and a decrease in both groups of older participants (19–28 and 28+) in 2007–08. The EOC program, which primarily serves participants ages 19 and older, also serves a significant percentage younger than 19. By comparison, in EOC's sister program, Talent Search, which helps disadvantaged secondary school students enter postsecondary education, only 2.5 percent of 2007–08 participants were 19 or older.

**Table 3. Number and percentage distribution of EOC program participants, by program eligibility characteristics, inclusion in calculations for postsecondary objectives, and academic status: Reporting year 2007–08**

	Number	Percentage
<b>Program eligibility characteristics</b>		
Low-income, first-generation	150,158	74.3%
Low-income only	18,365	9.1%
Potentially first-generation only	24,745	12.2%
Neither low-income nor potentially first-generation	8,771	4.3%
<b>Inclusion in calculations for postsecondary objective</b>		
Included in calculations for postsecondary objectives	129,368	64.0%
Not included in calculations for postsecondary objectives (includes unknown status)	72,671	36.0%
<b>Academic status</b>		
Adult without high school diploma or equivalency credentials and not enrolled in a continuing education program	22,969	11.4%
Adult without high school diploma or equivalency credentials enrolled in a continuing education program at an academic level equivalent to a high school senior*	5,448	2.7%
High school graduates or high school equivalency graduates not already enrolled in a postsecondary school*	72,632	35.9%
Postsecondary dropout*	28,722	14.2%
Postsecondary student	36,641	18.1%
Potential postsecondary transfer*	6,167	3.1%
High School non-senior (9th–11th grade)	2,862	1.4%
High School senior (12th grade only)*	15,377	7.6%
Secondary school dropout (not older than 18 years)	2,535	1.3%
Participant not older than 18 years enrolled in an alternative education program at an academic level equivalent to a high school senior*	1,022	0.5%
Other/Unknown	7,664	3.8%

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Federal TRIO Programs, Educational Opportunity Centers performance report, 2007–08.

NOTE: Table reflects the current funding cycle in EOC: 2006–10. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

\*Participants in this category are included in the outcomes calculations for postsecondary enrollment (figure 1) and application for postsecondary admissions and financial aid (table 2).

**Table 4. Distribution of EOC program participants by gender, age, and reporting year: 2005–06, 2006–07, and 2007–08**

	Reporting year		
	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08
<b>Gender and age of participants</b>			
Male	35.8%	37.2%	38.9%
Female	64.2%	62.8%	61.1%
Age 11–13	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%
Age 14–18	15.6%	16.0%	17.1%
Age 19–28	40.3%	40.3%	38.9%
Age 28+	43.6%	43.3%	41.4%
Age Unknown	0.2%	0.2%	2.5%

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Federal TRIO Programs, Educational Opportunity Centers performance reports, 2005–06, 2006–07, and 2007–08.

NOTE: Table reflects two four-year funding cycles in EOC: 2002–06 and 2006–10. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Table 5 displays the race and ethnicity of the program participants served in each of the past three years; for 2007–08, the figures reflect new guidance on collecting and reporting this

data issued Department-wide in late 2007 and incorporated into the 2007–08 APR (<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/tseoc-aprinstr-07-08.pdf>, pp. 7–9).

**Table 5. Race and ethnicity of EOC program participants, by reporting year: 2005–06, 2006–07, and 2007–08**

Race and ethnicity	2005–06	2006–07	Race and ethnicity	2007–08
American Indian or Alaska Native	3.7%	3.6%	American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic/Latino	3.0%
Asian	1.4%	1.6%	Asian, non-Hispanic/Latino	1.8%
Black or African-American	34.9%	34.4%	Black or African-American, non-Hispanic/Latino	34.9%
Hispanic or Latino	16.7%	16.9%	Hispanic or Latino of any race	18.0%
White	39.5%	39.6%	White, non-Hispanic/Latino	38.2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.5%	0.6%	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic/Latino	0.6%
More than one race	2.1%	2.3%	Two or more races, non-Hispanic/Latino	2.4%
Unknown race	1.3%	1.1%	Race and ethnicity unknown	1.2%

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Federal TRIO Programs, Educational Opportunity Centers performance reports, 2005–06 and 2006–07.

NOTE: Table reflects two four-year funding cycles in EOC: 2002–06 and 2006–10. Categories are those used in the APRs for the years indicated; 2007–08 reflects new Department-wide guidance on collecting and reporting data on race and ethnicity issued Oct. 19, 2007. The slight increase between 2005–06 and 2007–08 in the proportion of Hispanic participants served and the concomitant decrease in the proportion of white and American Indian or Alaska Native participants served is partially due to 14 projects that did not receive grants in the FY 2006 grant competition; four of these projects served out their last year of funding in 2005–06 while the remaining ten completed their grants in 2006–07. Differences in distribution between 2006–07 and 2007–08 may also be due to the new guidance on collecting and reporting data on race and ethnicity reflected in the 2007–08 APR. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

## Target Schools

EOC projects may serve participants through arrangements with high schools referred to as target schools. Because the focus of the EOC program is on adult participants, most EOC projects do not serve any target schools, and EOC projects may serve target schools only if the eligible students cannot be appropriately served by a Talent Search project. In reporting

year 2007–08, 20 EOC projects served 212 target schools. Examination of the characteristics of the target schools served by both EOC and Talent Search grantees can be found in *A Report on the Talent Search Program: 2007–08, With Select Comparative Data, 2002–07*.



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**September 2009**

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