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Summary

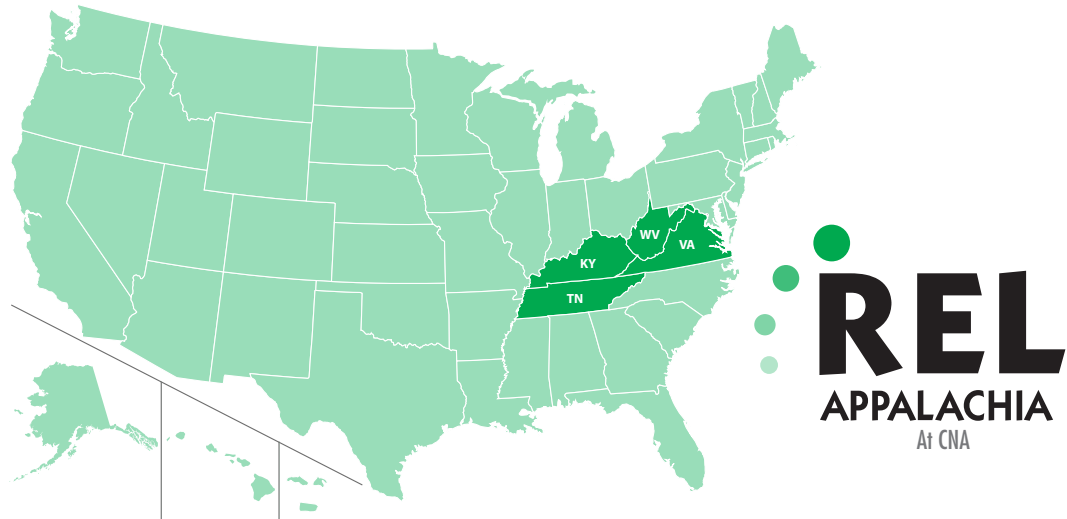
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Estimating college enrollment rates for Virginia public high school graduates

Using data from the National Student Clearinghouse and the Virginia Department of Education, this report examines college enrollment rates overall and by student academic and demographic characteristics for the Virginia public high school class of 2008.

College enrollment is an issue of national concern. And many states, including Virginia, use college enrollment data to understand what types of students are ready for college—to prepare them for enrollment and improve their outcomes when they get there. But historically, Virginia state and local officials have had to rely on limited information (such as the state and national average percentages of high school students who enroll in college immediately after graduation) to identify enrollment patterns. These averages can be informative, but they mask substantial demographic variation and say little about what types of students enroll.

This report uses the best available data on college enrollment from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) and on high school graduates from the Virginia Department of Education to disaggregate enrollment by academic characteristics (diploma type, career and technical education [CTE] completer

status, proficiency on state end-of-course assessments) and by demographic characteristics (race/ethnicity, sex, economically disadvantaged status, limited English proficiency status). It compares these data for enrollment in both two- and four-year colleges within one year of high school graduation. Cross-group differences identified in this report can serve as a benchmark for assessing rates of change over time as new data become available.

Four research questions guided this study:

- Within one year of public high school graduation (by the following June), what percentage of 2008 Virginia public high school graduates enrolled in college, and what was the split between enrollment in two- and four-year colleges?
- How do college enrollment rates vary by the academic characteristics of high school diploma type, CTE completer status, and proficiency level on end-of-course assessments in high school reading and algebra II?
- How do college enrollment rates vary by the demographic characteristics of race/ethnicity, sex, economically disadvantaged status, and limited English proficiency status?

- Do gaps in overall enrollment rates, disaggregated by demographic characteristics, narrow after controlling for the two most common diploma types in Virginia (Advanced Studies Diploma and Standard Diploma)?

The findings indicate that:

- Sixty-two percent of 2008 Virginia public high school graduates enrolled in degree-granting institutions within one year of graduation: 25 percent in two-year colleges and 37 percent in four-year colleges.
- Advanced Studies Diploma graduates had higher rates of total enrollment in two- or four-year colleges (85 percent) than did Standard Diploma graduates (46 percent).
- CTE completers and non-CTE completers had similar overall rates of enrollment, but a greater percentage of CTE completers enrolled in two-year colleges.
- Students who scored advanced proficient on end-of-course assessments in reading or algebra II had higher rates of enrollment in four-year colleges than did students who scored proficient.
- Economically disadvantaged students had lower overall rates of enrollment than did non-economically disadvantaged students.
- Limited English proficient students had lower overall rates of enrollment than did non-limited English proficient students.

- The enrollment gaps between Black and White, male and female, and economically disadvantaged and non-economically disadvantaged students narrowed for students with the same diploma type.

The findings are underestimates of actual enrollment rates. The undercount, possibly as high as 12 percentage points overall, was caused by:

- *Students enrolled in college as reported in the NSC database but not matched by the NSC algorithm to the Virginia Department of Education records on students who graduated from Virginia public high schools.* The NSC estimates the reliability of the match at approximately 90 percent overall. However, match rates may vary by demographic group.
- *Students enrolled in institutions not participating in the NSC.* The NSC database includes only 92 percent of students enrolled in U.S. colleges and 96 percent of students enrolled in Virginia colleges.
- *Students whose records were blocked.* Some colleges that report enrollment data to the NSC, and some students who attend participating schools, do not allow these data to be shared. This caused the study to lose 502 of the 86,194 Virginia graduates (0.6 percent) from an unknown number of colleges.

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