



December 2006
FS 06-04

California Postsecondary Education Commission

The Impact of Socioeconomic Factors on College-Going Rates

Introduction

A primary goal of California's higher education system is to provide capable students access to higher education regardless of the high school they attended, their ethnicity, their gender, or their socioeconomic status. Overall, college-going rates declined between 1985 and 2005. The percentage of public high school graduates going to community college decreased from 37.4% to 29.6%. Rates for the California State University increased slightly from 11.1% to 11.3% and decreased slightly at the University of California from 8.6% to 7.1% (see Display 1).

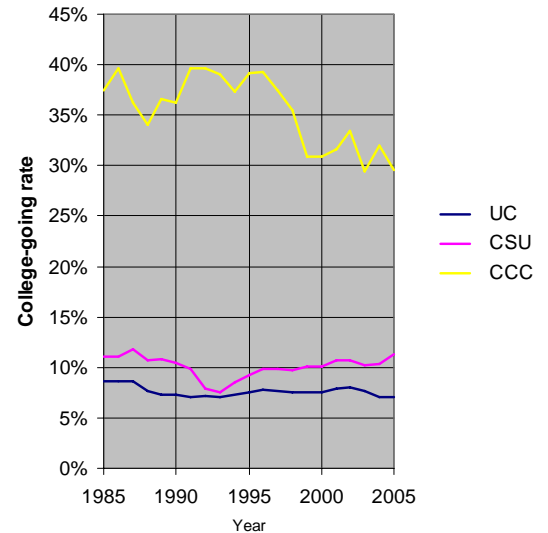
College-going rates show that there are still significant inequities among students from different backgrounds. The data shows students graduating from high schools in low-income neighborhoods are going to college at lower rates than students from high schools located in wealthier neighborhoods. When ethnic trends are examined, data show that underrepresented low-income students are impacted the most. Gender also plays a role in college-going rates. Females from high schools in high-income neighborhoods consistently outperform their male counterparts in college-going rates at UC and CSU, and males graduating from high schools in low-income areas tend to have the lowest college-going rates.

The data suggest that current policies and programs targeting students from high schools in low-income neighborhoods are not eliminating the gap in college-going rates. What remains to be determined are the necessary mechanisms needed to eliminate this gap. Further analysis is needed to determine effective and efficient policies that will improve college-going rates and equity for underrepresented students, especially those from low socioeconomic neighborhoods.

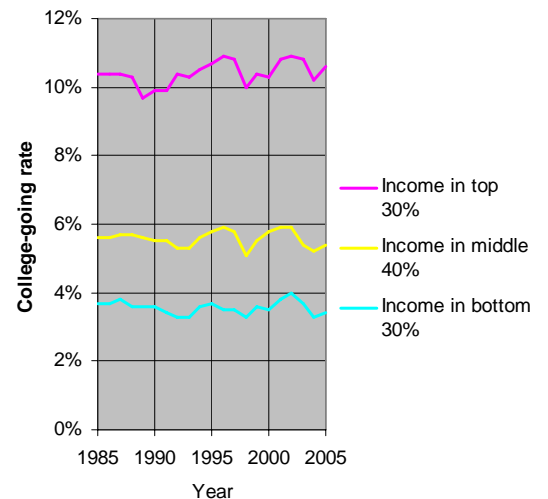
Segment Trends by Income Level

UC - College-going rates for students from schools in high-income neighborhoods have consistently been higher compared to other students, and this gap shows no sign of decreasing. In 2005, students who graduated from high-income high schools had college-going rates twice that of students from middle-income area high schools, and three times that of students from high schools in low-income neighborhoods (see Display 2).

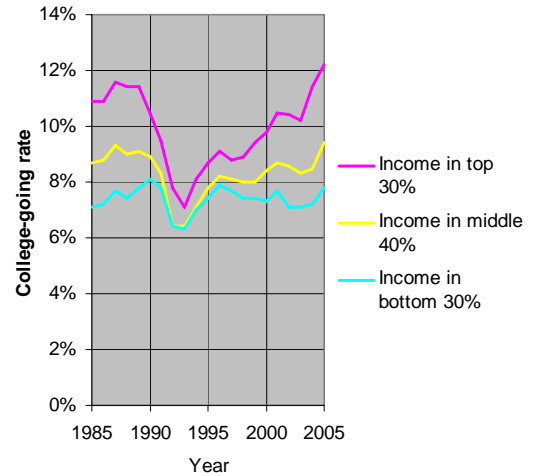
DISPLAY 1 College-Going Rates by Segment (regardless of income level)



DISPLAY 2 UC

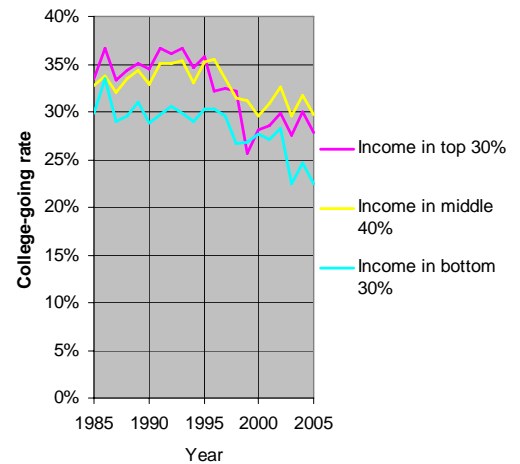


DISPLAY 3 CSU



CSU - Students attending CSU campuses show a similar income gap in college-going rates, with an increasing gap between students from high schools in high-income areas, and students from high schools in middle and low-income areas. The trend was reflected in rates for 2005 where students from schools in high-income areas had a college-going rate proportionally 50% higher than schools in middle-income areas, and almost double that of low-income areas (see Display 3).

DISPLAY 4 CCC



CCC - From 1985 to the mid-90's, community colleges reflected a pattern similar to the UC and CSU systems. Since the mid-90's, however, students from high schools that fell in the middle-income band began to have higher college-going rates than any of the other income groups (see Display 4). Students whose high school was in a high-income area had college-going rates that decreased by almost 20%, whereas students from high schools in middle-income areas saw a decrease of about 15%. Students going to community colleges from low-income area high schools saw the largest decline in college-going rates, with a proportional decrease of 25%.

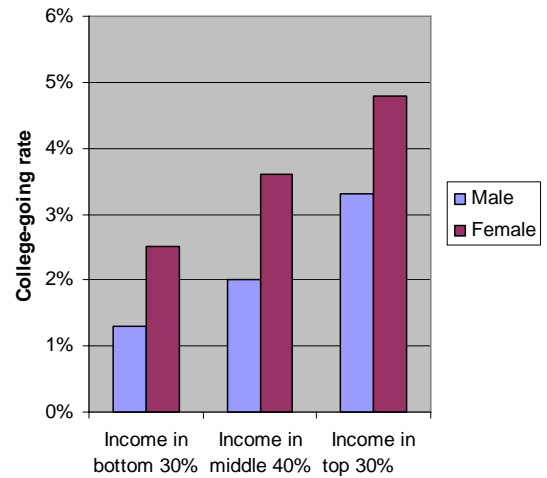
2005 College-Going Rates by Gender and Ethnicity

Gender

Regardless of the income level of the high school, females consistently have higher college-going rates at UC and CSU. Of interest is that females from high schools in high-income areas had the highest college-going rates at both systems in 2005, while males from high schools in low-income areas had the lowest rates.

2005	UC		CSU		CCC	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Income in top 30%	9.6%	11.5%	10.7%	13.6%	29.9%	25.7%
Income in middle 40%	4.6%	6.1%	7.7%	10.9%	30.7%	28.8%
Income in bottom 30%	2.7%	4%	6.2%	9.2%	22.2%	22.5%

DISPLAY 5 African Americans at UC (2005)



African Americans

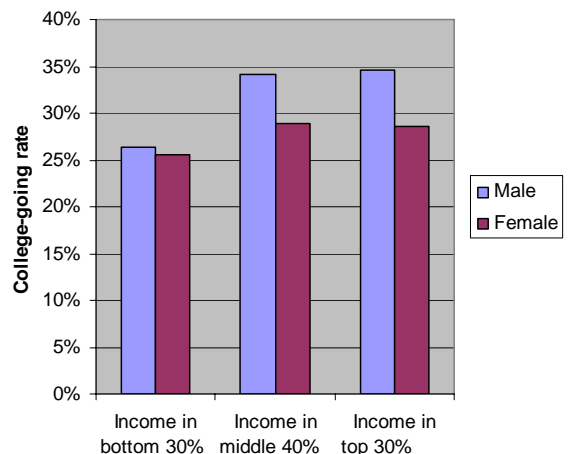
UC: College-going rates for African American students going to UC have decreased. This is even true for students graduating from high schools in high-income areas where college-going rates decreased by 25% between 1985 and 2005. Females from high schools in middle-income areas currently have a higher college-going rate than males from high schools in high-income areas.

DISPLAY 6 African Americans at CSU (2005)



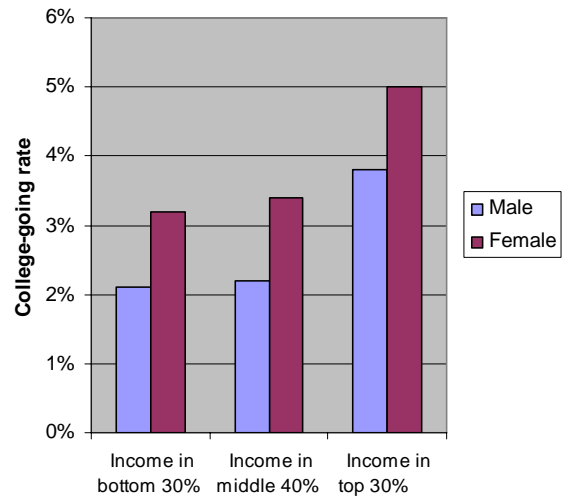
CSU: College-going rates for African American students going to CSU have increased. A significant increase was seen among students graduating from high schools in high-income areas; where college-going rates nearly doubled. Females graduating from high schools in all income areas had higher college-going rates to CSU than males from high schools in high-income areas.

DISPLAY 7 African Americans at CCC (2005)

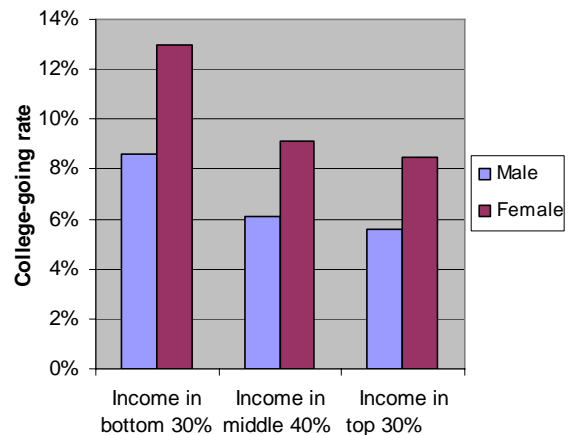


CCC: At community colleges, African Americans from high schools in high and middle-income areas had college-going rates of 31.3% and 31.5% respectively. When rates were broken down by gender, males from high schools in high- and middle-income areas showed the highest college-going rates. High school graduates from schools in low-income areas had the lowest college-going rates at 25.9%.

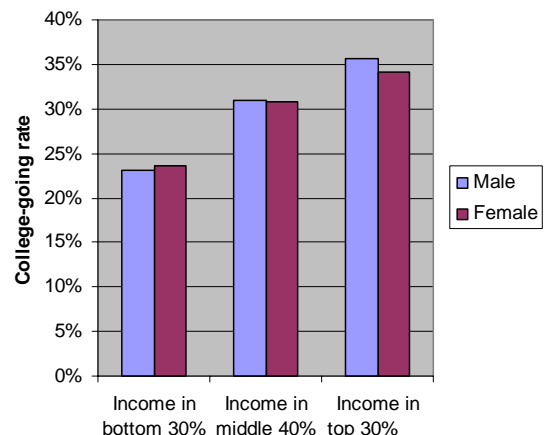
DISPLAY 8 Latinos at UC (2005)



DISPLAY 9 Latinos at CSU (2005)



DISPLAY 10 Latinos at CCC (2005)



Latinos

UC: Latinos going to UC from high schools in high-income areas have seen a decrease of almost 50% in college-going rates in the last two decades. Despite this decrease, students from high schools in high-income areas still have the highest college-going rate. Latinos from high schools in middle and low-income areas, on the other hand, have seen no change in their college-going rates, starting with 2.9% and 2.7% in 1985, respectively, and remaining at the exact same rates in 2005.

CSU: College-going rates for Latinos going to CSU increased, regardless of the average income in the high school neighborhood. Between 1985 and 2005, Latinos from high schools in high-income areas saw college-going rates more than double from 6.6% to 10.8%. Throughout the same time period, Latinos from high schools in middle-income areas saw rates increase by more than 40%, and students from high schools in low-income areas saw rates more than double.

CCC: Unlike other ethnic groups going to community college, Latino students graduating from high schools in high-income areas had the highest college-going rates, with a rate of 34.9% in 2005. Latinos from high schools in middle-income areas had a college-going rate of 30.9% and those from high schools in low-income areas had the lowest rate at 23.3%.

DISPLAY 11 Asians at UC (2005)



Asians

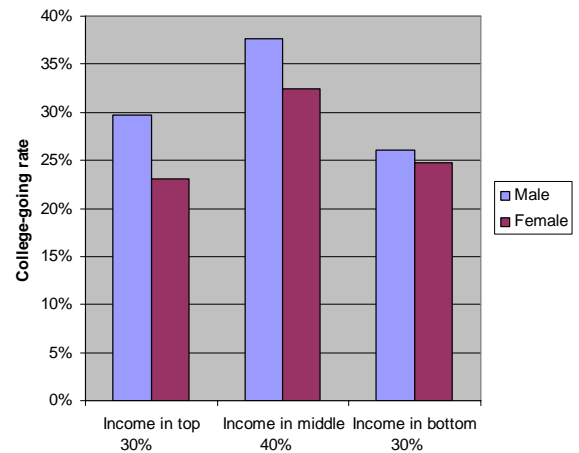
UC: Asian students graduating from high schools in high and middle-income areas increased their college-going rates by 25% and 23%, respectively, between 1985 and 2005. Students graduating from high schools in low-income areas saw a minimal increase of less than one percent. A significant gender gap was seen in high schools from all income areas, with Asian females consistently going to UC at higher rates than males.

DISPLAY 12 Asians at CSU (2005)



CSU: Asian students attending CSU showed little variation in college-going rates compared to other ethnic groups. Interestingly, among males, those who graduated from high schools in high-income areas had the highest college-going rate, whereas females who graduated from high schools in low-income areas had the highest college-going rates (see Display 6).

DISPLAY 13 Asians at CCC (2005)

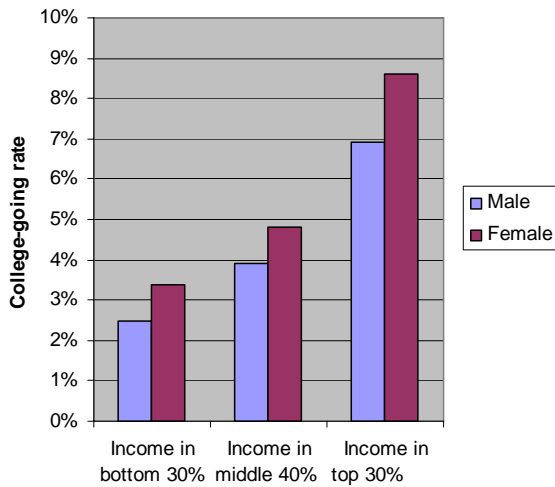


CCC: Among Asian students, those graduating from high schools in middle-income areas have the highest college-going rate to community colleges. Compared to UC and CSU trends, Asian males have significantly higher college-going rates at community colleges than females, suggesting that a growing proportion of Asian males may be choosing to attend community college instead of a UC or CSU campus.

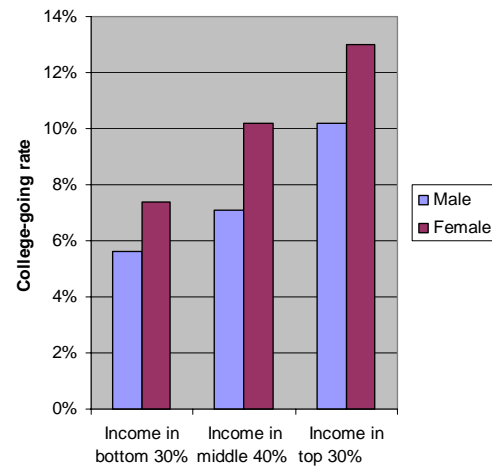
Whites

UC and CSU: White students from high schools in high-income areas have UC and CSU college-going rates of 7.7% and 11.6%, respectively, followed by White students from high schools in middle-income areas with rates of 4.4% and 8.7%. White students graduating from high schools in low-income areas had the lowest rates with 2.9% for the UC and 6.5% for the CSU systems. Females had significantly higher college-going rates both in the UC and CSU systems, than did males in this population group.

DISPLAY 14 Whites at UC (2005)

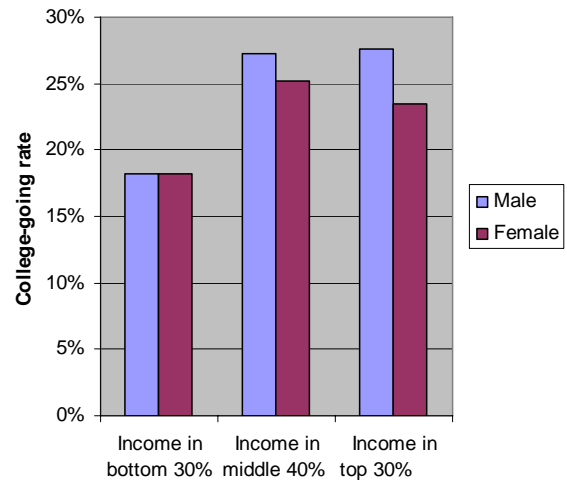


DISPLAY 15 Whites at CSU (2005)



CCC: The college-going rate of White students in community college showed a large decline between 1985 and 2005. Students from high schools in low-income areas were the most impacted, and had a decline of almost 45%. The rate for White students from high schools in middle-income areas declined by 23% and those from high schools in high-income areas declined by almost 25%.

DISPLAY 16 Whites at CCC (2005)



Methodology:

College-going rates are calculated by dividing the number of entering freshmen by the number of public high school graduates for each year.

High schools were classified into three categories based on the average income of the neighborhood surrounding the high school: income in bottom 30% (\$44,000 and below), income in middle 40% (\$44,000-\$65,000), and income in top 30% (\$65,000 and above). College-going rates were then calculated for the last 20 years and broken down by gender, ethnicity, income and segment.

