

# Advancing to Completion: Increasing degree attainment by improving graduation rates and closing gaps for African-American students

BY MARY NGUYEN, ERIN WARD BIBO, AND JENNIFER ENGLE

“With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope,” proclaimed Dr. Martin Luther King one fateful August day, nearly 50 years ago. Indeed, the obstacles black students face in their path to a college degree can sometimes appear insurmountable. Many black students aspiring to go to college are faced with the harsh reality of having been educated in schools that spend less, expect less, and teach less than the schools attended by their white counterparts. And with the rising cost of college, and escalating debt burdens, the media are bombarding students with confusing messages about the value of college, such as, “Maybe college isn’t for everyone.”

Without question, such arguments distract us from the urgent need to help more Americans earn college degrees *now*. By 2018, our nation is projected to need 22 million new college degrees; 63 percent of jobs also are projected to require a postsecondary degree by that time.<sup>1</sup> And the only way we can make progress toward that goal is to improve performance among our diverse student populations. While we have done better over the past 40 years in opening the doors to higher education to many more of our country’s underrepresented minority and low-income students, plain access isn’t enough. We need to do much more to ensure those students continue to succeed both in and after college. In particular, demographics demand a greater focus on ensuring the success of our African-American students: While nearly 40 percent of white 25- to 29-year-olds have attained at least a bachelor’s degree, attainment among young African Americans is only one-half that rate.<sup>2</sup> These disparities are unacceptable. If America is to restore its status as first-in-the-world in degree attainment, postsecondary institutions need to do more to ensure that all of their students — especially African-American students — graduate from college.

And it can be done. Current trends in college graduation rates are not inevitable: Many institutions have increased success and closed graduation-rate gaps for African-American students. These institutions are our stone of hope. Our nation will be well-served if more colleges and universities validate and replicate the equity-minded policies and practices of those institutions that are getting it done.

This study updates previous Education Trust briefs that looked at public, four-year colleges that successfully improved minority graduation rates and narrowed graduation-rate gaps.<sup>3</sup> This new report examines which four-year, nonprofit colleges — public *and* private — have made the most improvements for African-American students (*see Figure 1 for the population of schools included in this study*).<sup>4</sup> Because for-profit institutions are a distinct subset of colleges, we have explored trends in their outcomes in a separate report.<sup>5</sup> In a companion brief, we profile colleges that have made the most progress for another important group of underrepresented students: Hispanics. By highlighting this diverse set of institutions, we find that:

- Institutions can benchmark their progress toward producing more degrees in two ways: Some colleges can focus on making gains in graduation rates for their African-American students, while others can focus on closing gaps between black students and white students.
- The starting point doesn’t matter: Progress is possible for all types of institutions. Some can start by making substantial gains in graduation rates, while others can sustain previous progress made; still others can narrow gaps between African-

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American students and their white peers even if they've had large gaps in the past.

- An intentional and well-coordinated institutional effort to transform the quality and execution of the undergraduate experience will benefit all students, especially African-American students.

## TRENDS IN BLACK GRADUATION RATES

At first glance, the numbers look intimidating. Graduation rates for African-American students in our study have largely remained stagnant over time, with slight dips from 2004 to 2010: In 2004, 41.2 percent of black students graduated in six years, compared to 40.6 percent in 2010. This lack of progress contrasts with the (albeit slow) progress made by all students in our study: Figure 1 shows how the overall graduation rate increased by 2.8 percentage points, from 57.3 percent in 2004 to 60.1 percent in 2010.<sup>6</sup>

Though black graduation rates were flat as a whole, there were big differences beneath those averages: Figure 2 shows how black graduation rates actually increased at more than half the schools in the study, declined at 4 in 10 schools, and stayed the same at 1 in 10 schools.

These statistics, however, are more alarming from a student's perspective: Black students are, unfortunately, more

concentrated in the institutions that experienced declines in graduation rates. Figure 2 highlights this disparity between the fates of institutions — and of students — and shows how trends compare between sectors. The 51 percent of colleges that improved, for example, served only 41 percent of all black students in our study sample. Stated differently, nearly 3 out of 5 black students were concentrated in the schools that declined or remained stagnant over six years.

## THE TOP GAINERS IN BLACK GRADUATION RATES

Against this seemingly sluggish backdrop, many colleges have shown that the status quo is not inevitable. These colleges show it is possible to raise graduation rates substantially for African-American students without significantly reducing black student enrollment. This distinction is important because it's possible for some colleges to have improved their black graduation rates by becoming more exclusive and serving fewer African-American students. Since this is counterproductive to our collective degree attainment goals, we have eliminated from our "Top Gainer" analysis any college that served considerably fewer African-American students among the incoming freshmen it enrolled over the study period.<sup>7</sup> These top gainers saw, on average, nearly an 8-point boost in graduation rates

**Figure 1: Graduation Rates for African-American Students Remain Stagnant**

	# of Institutions	Median SAT Fall 2009	Average Undergrad FTE Fall 2009 Enrollment	% Black among Undergrad FTE Fall 2009	Black Six-Year Grad Rate 2004	Black Six-Year Grad Rate 2010	Change	Overall Six-Year Grad Rate 2004	Overall Six-Year Grad Rate 2010	Change
Overall	543	1065	8,943	23.5%	41.2%	40.6%	-0.6	57.3%	60.1%	2.8
Public	340	1040	11,840	20.6%	39.2%	38.7%	-0.5	54.7%	57.9%	3.2
Private (Nonprofit)	203	1111	4,092	28.5%	46.9%	46.2%	-0.7	67.3%	69.1%	1.8

Sources: IPEDS and College Results Online data set.

Notes: The full sample for this analysis includes four-year, nonprofit, degree-granting institutions — public and private — receiving Title IV funds, and with complete graduation-rate data in both study years (2004 and 2010). The sample is also limited to institutions with a cohort of at least 30 African-American students in both study years. See Note 4 for more detail.



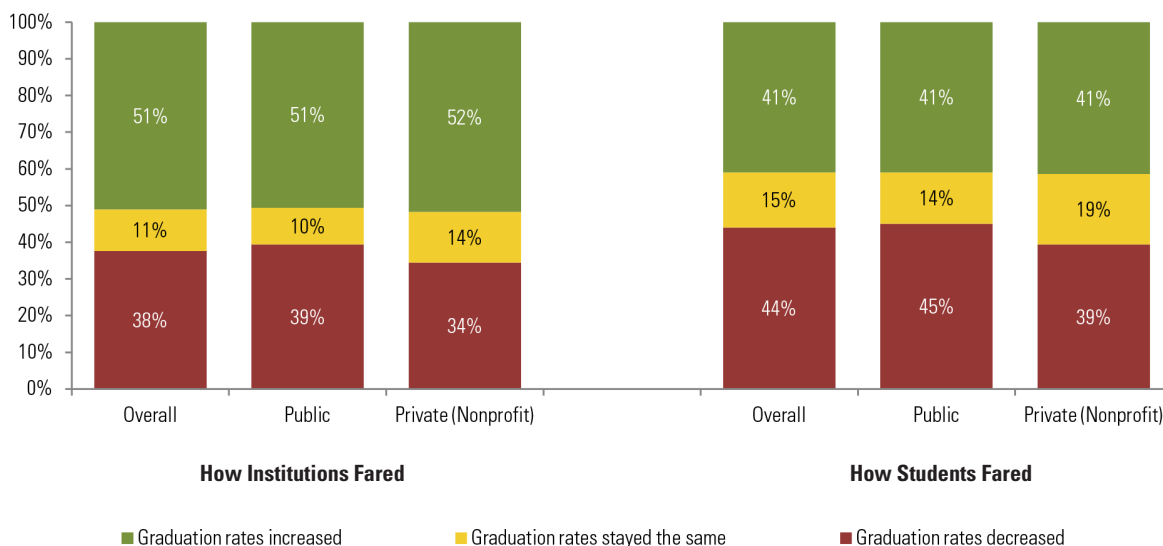
### About College Results Online

College Results Online ([www.collegeresults.org](http://www.collegeresults.org)) is an interactive tool designed to provide information about graduation rates for most four-year colleges and universities. CRO allows users to:

- Examine graduation rates and see how these rates have changed over time.
- Compare graduation rates of similar colleges serving similar students.
- Learn about colleges' track records in graduating diverse groups of students.

Some colleges do a much better job of graduating students than others. At many colleges, significant gaps exist in graduation rates between white students and students of color. But some colleges are proving that low graduation rates — especially for minority students — are not inevitable.

**Figure 2: The Majority of Institutions Improved Black Graduation Rates, but Black Students are Concentrated in Colleges that Did Not**



Sources: IPEDS and College Results Online data set.

Notes: The full sample for this analysis includes four-year, nonprofit, degree-granting institutions — public and private — receiving Title IV funds and with complete graduation-rate data in both study years (2004 and 2010). The sample is also limited to institutions with a cohort of at least 30 African-American students in both study years. Colleges at which 2010 graduation rates were within +/- 1 percentage point of their 2004 rates were coded as "Same." "Black students" refers to the number of black students in the 2004 freshmen cohort of first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students. See Note 4 for more detail.

for their African-American students, thereby setting a benchmark for other institutions. See Table 1 for the top 25 private, nonprofit gainers and top 25 public gainers.

### WHICH ARE THE TOP GAINERS?

Contrary to what some might expect, progress is possible for all types of institutions, regardless of their starting point. Take **Indiana-Purdue-Indianapolis**, for example. It is a public research university with an overall 2010 graduation rate that is over 25 points below the overall study average of 60.1 percent, at 34.2 percent. But over six years, IUPUI has managed to more than double its black student graduation rates from 12.6 percent in 2004 to 28.4 percent in 2010. On the opposite end, schools like **Northeastern University**, a private research university with graduation rates almost 20 points above the overall study average can also improve. With an overall graduation rate of 76.7 percent in 2010, this university, too, has raised its black student graduation rates from 49.4 percent in 2004 to 64.7 percent in 2010. Other top gainers are showing they can continue to sustain previous progress made, as highlighted in our 2010 briefs.<sup>8</sup> **The University of Louisville** and **Iowa State University**, for example, now have black graduation rates that exceed

**The Access to Success Initiative (A2S) is a project of the National Association of System Heads (NASH) and The Education Trust. A2S works with 22 public higher education systems that have pledged to cut in half the college-going and graduation gaps for low-income and minority students by 2015. Together, these institutions serve more than 3.5 million students.**

**Each participating A2S system sets its own improvement targets and agrees to a common set of metrics to evaluate progress. Findings in the just-released midterm report on A2S, "Replenishing Opportunity in America," include:**

- **Enrollment figures and degrees conferred have increased, with improvements largely driven by African-American, Latino, American-Indian, and low-income students.**
- **At two-year colleges, there are no access gaps for low-income and minority students, relative to their representation among high school graduates in their state.**
- **At four-year institutions, the access gap for low-income freshmen has been cut in half and has closed for low-income transfer students.<sup>9</sup>**

the black study average at 41.1 percent and 52.4 percent, respectively.

Some top gainers are concentrated in certain states and systems. On the West Coast, we see that 6 out of 23 institutions in the **California State University (CSU) system**, like **San Jose State University** and **Cal State Long Beach**, appear on our top 25 list for public institutions. As part of Ed Trust’s Access to Success Initiative (*see A2S, pg. 3*), the CSU system has already successfully met one of the initiative’s goals: to cut *access* gaps in half for underrepresented minority students by 2015. But the system has made great strides in raising graduation rates as well. The CSU’s Graduation Initiative has set a goal to substantially raise overall graduation rates while cutting in half the gap in completion for underrepresented minority students. Our analysis suggests this initiative is well on its way to success: In addition to the six institutions on our top 25 list, a total of 20 of 23 institutions in the system have also made gains for black students from 2004 to 2010.

### TRENDS IN GAP-CLOSING FOR BLACK STUDENTS

Colleges can also benchmark their progress toward increased degree attainment by tracking the gaps in their completion rates for black students and white students. Yet when we examine trends in gap-closing across the study institutions, after excluding any school — including all HBCUs — that did not serve significant populations of white students in both study years, we find that gaps have generally grown larger between white students and black students.<sup>10</sup> Although graduation rates improved modestly for black students at the schools that met these criteria, they also grew for white students, slightly widening the gap from 2004 to 2010 (*see Figure 3*). Today, there is a

nearly 19-point gap between African-American and white students across study institutions.

Why have these gaps grown? Simply put, the number of schools that have gotten worse or have made no progress outnumbers those making progress or having no gaps to begin with. Figure 4 shows how the distribution of progress on gap-closing compares between sectors.

Figure 4 also highlights a segment of schools that consistently post equitable success rates for their black and white students. Of these “no-gap” schools, 19 colleges (15 public and four private) are shown in Table 2. Institutions that stand out here include **Georgia State University**, a school we previously profiled as a 2010 top gainer and gap-closer.<sup>11</sup> Other notable mentions include **Stony Brook University**, a school that made the top of our “Smallest White-Black Graduation-Rate Gap” list from 2010 (and profiled in our companion brief for improving outcomes for Hispanic students), and **University at Albany, SUNY**, another school on our “Smallest White-Black Graduation-Rate Gap” list.<sup>12</sup>

How have these schools managed to maintain their success? The University at Albany, SUNY, credits a “concerted effort both inside and outside the classroom,” in which administrators have worked to bridge students’ academic life and residential life. They do so by actively engaging faculty in student affairs, setting explicit learning objectives for student activities and services, and convening regular meetings between academic and student affairs staff to identify students at risk of dropping out, explains Susan Phillips, the provost and vice president for Academic Affairs, and her colleagues Sue Faerman, vice provost for Undergraduate Education, and Robert Andrea, associate vice provost for Enrollment Management.

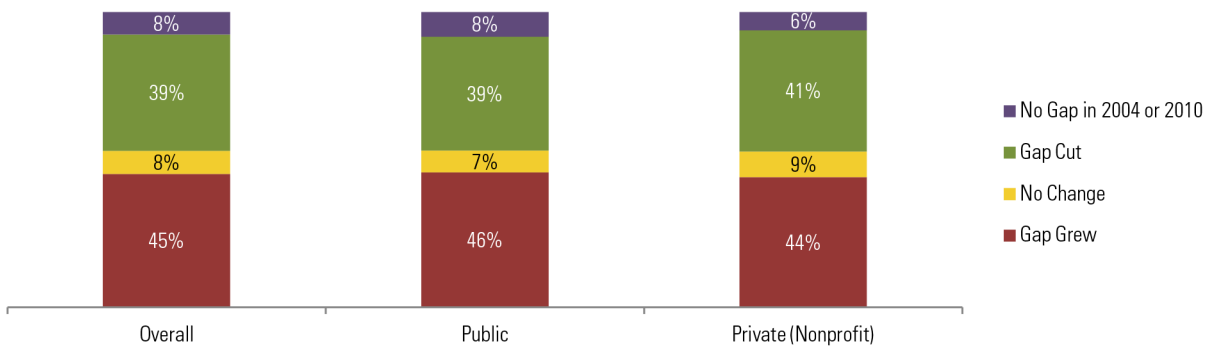
**Figure 3: Graduation-Rate Gaps between Black Students and White Students Have Widened**

	# of Institutions	Black Six-Year Grad Rate 2004	White Six-Year Grad Rate 2004	Black Six-Year Grad Rate 2010	White Six-Year Grad Rate 2010	White-Black Grad-Rate Gap 2004	White-Black Grad-Rate Gap 2010	Gap Change 2004-2010
Overall	459	43.1%	60.3%	45.0%	63.8%	17.2	18.8	1.6
Public	298	40.9%	57.7%	42.8%	61.5%	16.8	18.7	1.9
Private (Nonprofit)	161	52.3%	72.0%	54.2%	74.1%	19.7	19.9	0.2

Sources: IPEDS and College Results Online data set.

Notes: The sample for the gap-closing analysis is limited to the four-year, nonprofit, degree-granting institutions — public and private — receiving Title IV funds with complete graduation-rate data in both study years (2004 and 2010), and a cohort of at least 30 black and 30 white undergraduate students in both study years, which is a subset of the full study sample. HBCUs also are excluded. Since this differs from the full sample of schools featured in Figure 1, different graduation rates are displayed. See Note 10 for more detail.

**Figure 4: Graduation Gaps for African-American Students Remain Stagnant or Get Worse at Majority of Colleges**



Sources: IPEDS and College Results Online data set.

Notes: The sample for the gap-closing analysis is limited to the four-year, nonprofit, degree-granting institutions — public and private — receiving Title IV funds with complete graduation-rate data in both study years (2004 and 2010), and a cohort of at least 30 black and 30 white undergraduate students in both study years, which is a subset of the full study sample. HBCUs also are excluded. Colleges at which 2010 gaps were within +/- 1 percentage point of their 2004 gaps were coded as “No Change.” Colleges with “No Gap in 2004 or 2010” had either higher graduation rates for black students than white students or a difference between black and white graduation rates within 2 percentage points. See Note 10 for more detail.

## WHICH ARE THE TOP GAP-CLOSERS?

Gaps can close in a variety of ways, not all of them productive. Gaps can close, for instance, if the success rates of white students decline. They could close if schools become more exclusive over time and serve significantly fewer African-American students. As a result, our top gap-closer analysis refines our sample by only including colleges that did not grow more exclusive over time, while making gains in graduation rates for black students and keeping graduation rates for white students steady or improving.<sup>13</sup>

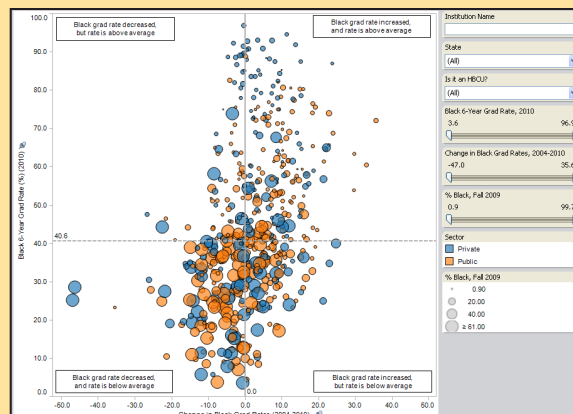
Gaps separating African-American students and white students have narrowed nearly 7 percentage points across all top gap-closer schools (see Table 3 for the top 25 private gap-closers and top 25 public gap-closers).

As we might expect, the majority of top gap-closers were also top gainers, such as **The University of North Carolina at Wilmington** and **Appalachian State University**, a top gainer and gap-closer in our 2010 reports. **NC State at Raleigh**, while not a top gainer in this report, is another UNC system campus to join the top gap-closer list and was a 2010 top gainer.

Progress is also possible for schools that once had large gaps. **The University of Iowa**, for example, was designated a “Big Gap” school in our 2010 brief but has since narrowed its gap from 23.7 in 2004 to 13.3 points in 2010.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, New Jersey’s **Seton Hall University** had a large 23-point gap in 2004 but has since narrowed it to 14.5 points in 2010. In addition to these schools, about one-third of all top gap-closer schools have successfully cut

## How Are We Doing?

**Our “Top Gainers and Top Gap-Closers” lists only provide the 25 four-year institutions (including private nonprofit and public) making the highest gains in African-American graduation rates and in closing the graduation-rate gap between black and white students. To see how other institutions in the study performed, in terms of black graduation rates and graduation-rate gaps from 2004 to 2010, visit the Ed Trust’s new interactive tool at [www.edtrust.org/gainersclosersafricanamerican](http://www.edtrust.org/gainersclosersafricanamerican).**





their gaps in half — a goal that coincides with our A2S initiative — and another one-third of top gap-closers have closed their gaps completely.

**Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)** in Richmond, Va., is one of those schools. A public, urban research university enrolling more than 20,000 undergraduates, VCU serves quite a diverse student population: Nearly 20 percent of its student body is African American, 5 percent is Hispanic, and 25 percent is eligible for Pell Grants. VCU has shown that it can close gaps for African-American students. In 2004, the graduation rate for African-Americans students was 34.5 percent, 7.4 points lower than the rate for white students. Fast forward six years, African-American students now graduate at a rate of 49.8 percent, which is approximately the same rate as their white peers. Graduation rates for Hispanic students, too, have improved significantly — by more than 22 points — and Hispanic students also graduate at the same rate as their white peers.

What accounts for this improvement at VCU? Joseph Marolla, vice provost for Instruction and Student Success, largely credits its University College model, which provides a cohort-based curricular experience and a centralized support system for first-year students. A product of VCU's strategic planning and accreditation processes, the University College program was borne out of recognition by VCU leadership that the function of higher education was changing, particularly for large public universities. "In order to be competitive worldwide, we had to concentrate on making students more successful, rather than just screening students like we've been doing for the last 50 years," Marolla says.

Launched in 2006, the University College model is built around a cohesive core curriculum with a limited set of course options and small class sizes. The courses are taught by a dedicated group of faculty members hired specifically to work together across disciplines to create content around such learning objectives and skills as critical thinking and writing fluency, eschewing the "cafeteria-style" core. The new core includes a full-year class that students take with the same instructor and the same group of students as a cohort. After implementing the new model, the proportion of students who dropped, failed, or withdrew decreased significantly in core courses, which translated to higher proportions of students in good standing at the end of the first year, and consequently higher retention rates.<sup>15</sup>

A "proactive" approach to academic advising is another key feature of the University College. "We track everything," Marolla says. First-year students are required to meet with professionally trained advisors at least twice a semester and faculty regularly report class attendance to advising staff. Advisors reach out to students at the first sign of trouble, like failing to go to class or register for the next term, and develop a plan for getting back on track. Making personal contact is especially important for underrepresented populations, Marolla adds. "If they miss two weeks of classes, they think they shouldn't even try. [We] help students understand that all is not lost yet."

A robust set of support programs is available to help students succeed at VCU, including an advising center, a learning center with supplemental instruction and tutoring services, and a writing center. There are also new student programs, such as orientation courses, that underscore what it takes to graduate on time to both students and their parents. "It's amazing how many don't understand that if they drop one course every semester, they're a full year behind," Marolla says. "We show students that if they drop a class, they must take a summer or intersession or online class if they want to graduate in four years." Additionally, VCU has a special program targeted at the 700 to 800 students who remain undeclared majors at the end of freshmen year, and are at particular risk of dropping out.

Clearly, the intensity and intentionality of the University College model required a significant investment and commitment at the highest levels of VCU to improving student success. By diligently tracking the data and continually assessing their progress, Marolla has been able to show that it was worth it. "The investment we made in University College came back to the university in terms of retention in less than three years," he says. VCU continues to add resources to the effort, which has been a catalyst for improvement on campus, and plans to extend the successful aspects of the student-centered model into the sophomore and junior years to further improve graduation rates.

"We do everything we can to make sure that students aren't being slowed down by us," Marolla says. "It takes a group of dedicated professionals, at every level, to make this possible for our students."

Similarly, the high success rates for both African-American and Hispanic students at the **University of Southern California (USC)** are "not by accident," says Katharine

Harrington, vice president for Admissions and Planning. Like VCU, USC, a private research university in Los Angeles, serves a relatively diverse population and has not had a majority race in its freshman class in years. USC, too, has managed to ensure virtually no gaps in graduation rates for Hispanic students and African-American students and their white peers. But it wasn't always this way. African-American students, in particular, have made tremendous progress since 2004. Their graduation rates have increased 15 points, and they have closed the gap with their white peers, graduating at a 87.5 percent rate in 2010.

How have the staff and faculty at USC accomplished this? Around 15 years ago, USC invested resources to create a position that reports to the provost responsible for focusing the institution on improving retention and graduation rates. The provost also made available over \$500,000 in funding for projects and programs that would improve retention. During this time period, USC created a university-wide core program — similar to the approach taken by VCU — to help students access the entire university and not be penalized for changing majors. This took considerable work from multiple faculty committees, which also created a number of new interdisciplinary minors, to open up the university to students. "A great strength of USC is that students are very often interested in exploring a broad array of intellectual and academic interests," Harrington says. "But separate general education requirements were limiting student mobility. We, as a university, had to remove these structural impediments for our students."

But opening up the university wasn't the only thing that occurred during this time. "The single most important thing was to literally start counting noses," Harrington says. "And with 16,000 students, that was not a trivial matter." Harrington describes how her office back in 1998 started running lists of all the continuing students who had not yet registered for the upcoming semester. Initially, she would personally hand deliver these lists to the deans of the academic colleges. If the deans couldn't fix the problems preventing students from registering, she said, the office of the provost was there to help. This process has been automated since 2007 when USC created an online advising database developed under the leadership of Gene Bickers, the vice provost for Undergraduate Programs. This technical advance, Bickers explains, has made it possible for advisors across different majors and minors to access the same record for every student, and to provide consis-

tent — not contradictory — advice to help students graduate. It has also facilitated the university's efforts to reach out to students who have not graduated in four years and to help them finish within five or six years.

Additionally, every student works with an advisor to create a four-year plan that is audited at the end of the third and fifth semesters. Students then receive an updated report from their advisor that projects their time to degree, providing a traffic light that helps students gauge their progress to graduation. "We don't mind being intrusive and suggesting to students what should be done, even if they did not seek out advising in the first place. We bring additional advising directly to students, to supplement the advising they receive in their particular major," Bickers explains. A mid-semester grade reporting system is also in place to alert advisors if students are having academic difficulties.

Citing the leadership of the former president, Steven Sample, and current President C.L. Max Nikias as well as that of Provost Beth Garrett and Vice Provost Gene Bickers, Harrington explains how USC successfully implemented efforts to improve graduation rates. "[They were] successful in creating a culture of shared accountability for student success that starts with the student, but then extends out to faculty, academic advisors, and even to the staff who review degree profiles in the registrar's office," she says. "It's not rocket science. It requires paying attention. We've worked hard at this."

As the leaders of these institutions suggest, an intentional and well-coordinated effort to transform the quality and execution of the undergraduate experience can benefit not only African-American students and Hispanic students, but all students. And while serving quite different students from different circumstances and with different levels of preparation, both institutions were similarly motivated to help their students succeed, showing that progress can be made everywhere and for all groups of students. To close, Figure 5 highlights the various schools that have made substantial improvements in both black and Hispanic graduation rates, among them VCU.

The institutions listed in Figure 5 demonstrate that remaining stagnant amidst the status quo of low graduation rates for their African-American students is not a universally acceptable benchmark. These institutions prove the "college for some" mentality is an outdated excuse

that does nothing to preserve the democracy, stability, and upward mobility of our country. These institutions show it's possible to work toward ensuring the success of our increasingly diverse nation going forward. It is now incumbent on other colleges and universities to validate the lessons and replicate the efforts of successful institu-

tions. Doing so will help our increasingly diverse nation reclaim its status as the international leader in educational attainment. ■

**Figure 5: Top Gainer Institutions for Black Student and Hispanic Student Graduation Rates**

<b>Institution Name</b>	<b>Sector</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Carnegie Classification</b>
Northeastern University	Private	Boston, MA	Research
Texas Tech University	Public	Lubbock, TX	Research
Texas Wesleyan University	Private	Fort Worth, TX	Master's
Virginia Commonwealth University	Public	Richmond, VA	Research



**Table 1a: Top 25 Gainers in Black Student Graduation Rates among Private Institutions, 2004-2010**

	Undergrad FTE Fall 2009 Enrollment	% Black among Undergrad FTE Fall 2009 Enrollment	Overall Six-Year Grad Rate 2010	Black Six-Year Grad Rate 2004	Black Six-Year Grad Rate 2010	Change in Black Six-Year Grad Rates 2004-2010
1. Northwood University (TX)	794	33.3%	36.2%	15.3%	40.0%	24.7
2. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (NY)	5,610	3.4%	82.3%	63.3%	87.0%	23.7
3. Tiffin University (OH)	2,027	18.4%	38.8%	11.9%	34.8%	22.9
4. Andrews University (MI)	1,797	25.7%	51.4%	42.9%	65.0%	22.1
5. The University of the Arts (PA)	2,131	10.5%	64.8%	42.9%	64.7%	21.8
6. LaGrange College (GA)	806	19.9%	60.6%	35.5%	56.8%	21.3
7. Texas Wesleyan University (TX)	1,381	18.2%	35.8%	3.8%	25.0%	21.2
8. Philadelphia University (PA)	2,748	8.4%	61.1%	38.3%	55.6%	17.3
9. Eastern University (PA)	2,370	18.8%	67.1%	41.2%	57.9%	16.7
10. Seton Hall University (NJ)	4,852	13.6%	64.6%	38.5%	54.9%	16.4
11. Faulkner University (AL)	2,308	49.1%	37.3%	20.5%	36.4%	15.9
12. Northeastern University (MA)	17,052	4.8%	76.7%	49.4%	64.7%	15.3
13. Gallaudet University (DC)	1,027	11.0%	34.8%	12.1%	27.3%	15.2
14. George Washington University (DC)	9,946	7.0%	80.6%	63.4%	78.6%	15.2
15. University of Southern California (CA)	16,314	5.5%	88.9%	72.4%	87.5%	15.1
16. Lynchburg College (VA)	2,140	8.1%	56.7%	51.3%	66.0%	14.7
17. Marquette University (WI)	7,822	4.8%	81.0%	54.8%	68.9%	14.1
18. Loyola Marymount University (CA)	5,626	7.8%	79.7%	64.7%	77.7%	13.0
19. Long Island University-CW Post Campus (NY)	5,566	6.8%	44.1%	22.5%	35.4%	12.9
20. Marymount University (VA)	2,007	14.7%	56.8%	48.6%	61.5%	12.9
21. Stillman College (AL)	1,022	87.3%	23.8%	12.0%	24.0%	12.0
22. Metropolitan College of New York (NY)	646	63.6%	35.6%	32.7%	44.6%	11.9
23. American International College (MA)	1,651	27.5%	37.1%	20.9%	32.6%	11.7
24. Embry Riddle Aeronautical University-Daytona Beach (FL)	4,258	6.1%	54.3%	30.6%	41.9%	11.3
25. Vassar College (NY)	2,413	5.5%	93.3%	83.3%	94.6%	11.3

**Table 1b: Top 25 Gainers in Black Student Graduation Rates among Public Institutions, 2004-2010**

	Undergrad FTE Fall 2009 Enrollment	% Black among Undergrad FTE Fall 2009 Enrollment	Overall Six-Year Grad Rate 2010	Black Six-Year Grad Rate 2004	Black Six-Year Grad Rate 2010	Change in Black Six-Year Grad Rates 2004-2010
1. California University of Pennsylvania (PA)	6,735	6.8%	55.1%	27.5%	60.5%	33.0
2. California State Polytechnic University-Pomona (CA)	17,806	3.5%	56.6%	24.3%	53.9%	29.6
3. Towson University (MD)	15,903	12.2%	68.2%	51.2%	74.0%	22.8
4. Appalachian State University (NC)	14,368	3.1%	65.9%	42.5%	64.6%	22.1
5. University of North Carolina-Wilmington (NC)	10,855	4.6%	65.9%	40.0%	61.4%	21.4
6. San Jose State University (CA)	20,294	4.9%	48.0%	23.9%	43.5%	19.6
7. New Mexico State University-Main Campus (NM)	13,321	3.3%	44.7%	20.0%	39.1%	19.1
8. Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania (PA)	7,442	5.4%	60.6%	25.7%	44.1%	18.4
9. Texas Tech University (TX)	22,786	4.7%	62.6%	47.0%	65.4%	18.4
10. University of Louisville (KY)	13,146	12.5%	48.6%	24.4%	41.1%	16.7
11. San Francisco State University (CA)	21,853	5.5%	48.0%	25.9%	41.9%	16.0
12. SUNY College at Old Westbury (NY)	3,407	33.1%	39.4%	31.6%	47.6%	16.0
13. Iowa State University (IA)	21,770	2.5%	70.2%	36.5%	52.4%	15.9
14. Indiana University-Purdue University-Indianapolis (IN)	17,837	9.5%	34.2%	12.6%	28.4%	15.8
15. California State University-Northridge (CA)	24,449	8.5%	47.9%	22.4%	38.1%	15.7
16. Virginia Commonwealth University (VA)	20,285	19.3%	50.4%	34.5%	49.8%	15.3
17. University of Massachusetts-Boston (MA)	8,801	15.6%	41.1%	21.3%	36.4%	15.1
18. University of South Florida-Main Campus (FL)	25,316	12.5%	51.4%	41.9%	56.5%	14.6
19. California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo (CA)	17,849	0.9%	72.9%	45.2%	59.4%	14.2
20. University of Iowa (IA)	19,175	2.4%	69.6%	43.4%	57.0%	13.6
21. Rutgers University-New Brunswick (NJ)	28,090	8.0%	77.0%	61.6%	74.4%	12.8
22. California State University-Long Beach (CA)	25,595	4.9%	54.0%	38.1%	50.7%	12.6
23. Central Connecticut State University (CT)	8,569	7.9%	47.6%	28.6%	41.0%	12.4
24. University of California-Irvine (CA)	21,881	2.3%	82.6%	68.2%	80.6%	12.4
25. University of Rhode Island (RI)	12,261	5.0%	62.7%	38.7%	51.0%	12.3

Sources: IPEDS and College Results Online data set.

Notes: The full sample for this analysis includes four-year, nonprofit, degree-granting institutions — public and private — receiving Title IV funds and with complete graduation-rate data in both study years (2004 and 2010). The sample is also limited to institutions with a cohort of at least 30 African-American students in both study years. The sample for the analysis in Table 1 also excludes institutions that served significantly fewer black students, a relative decline of 20 percent or more, among incoming freshmen in the study years (incoming 1998 and 2004). See Note 4 for more detail.

**Table 2a: Private Colleges at Which Black Student Graduation Rates Equal or Exceed Rates of White Students, 2004 and 2010**

	Undergrad FTE Fall 2009 Enrollment	% Black among Undergrad FTE Fall 2009 Enrollment	Black Six-Year Grad Rate 2004	White Six-Year Grad Rate 2004	Black Six-Year Grad Rate 2010	White Six-Year Grad Rate 2010	White-Black Grad-Rate Gap 2004	White-Black Grad-Rate Gap 2010
1. Andrews University (MI)	1,797	25.7%	42.9%	34.6%	65.0%	48.0%	-8.3	-17.0
2. Pepperdine University (CA)	3,181	6.6%	81.8%	78.1%	80.6%	78.8%	-3.7	-1.8
3. Harvard University (MA)	8,242	7.6%	97.3%	96.9%	96.9%	97.1%	-0.4	0.2
4. University of Miami (FL)	9,757	7.7%	69.2%	69.5%	78.0%	79.4%	0.3	1.4

**Table 2b: Public Colleges at Which Black Student Graduation Rates Equal or Exceed Rates of White Students, 2004 and 2010**

	Undergrad FTE Fall 2009 Enrollment	% Black among Undergrad FTE Fall 2009 Enrollment	Black Six-Year Grad Rate 2004	White Six-Year Grad Rate 2004	Black Six-Year Grad Rate 2010	White Six-Year Grad Rate 2010	White-Black Grad-Rate Gap 2004	White-Black Grad-Rate Gap 2010
1. SUNY College at Old Westbury (NY)	3,407	33.1%	31.6%	18.2%	47.6%	28.2%	-13.4	-19.4
2. Stony Brook University (NY)	15,544	6.6%	62.5%	53.3%	71.3%	58.7%	-9.2	-12.6
3. University of California-Riverside (CA)	16,665	7.9%	69.3%	60.9%	72.2%	60.4%	-8.4	-11.8
4. Radford University (VA)	7,551	5.5%	64.8%	56.0%	63.7%	56.7%	-8.8	-7.0
5. Georgia State University (GA)	18,758	33.0%	47.6%	36.5%	50.9%	44.5%	-11.1	-6.4
6. Old Dominion University (VA)	15,268	24.0%	45.0%	46.7%	52.8%	48.4%	1.7	-4.4
7. Sam Houston State University (TX)	13,005	16.4%	44.0%	39.1%	52.9%	49.0%	-4.9	-3.9
8. SUNY at Albany (NY)	12,584	10.2%	64.7%	61.3%	71.0%	67.1%	-3.4	-3.9
9. Kennesaw State University (GA)	17,107	12.3%	33.3%	30.6%	43.5%	40.0%	-2.7	-3.5
10. University of California-Santa Cruz (CA)	14,961	2.7%	78.2%	69.9%	75.6%	75.1%	-8.3	-0.5
11. Coastal Carolina University (SC)	7,399	14.7%	42.4%	38.8%	43.6%	43.2%	-3.6	-0.4
12. East Carolina University (NC)	19,414	14.2%	52.7%	53.7%	56.4%	56.2%	1.0	-0.2
13. Winthrop University (SC)	4,681	26.9%	63.5%	53.6%	54.4%	54.3%	-9.9	-0.1
14. University of North Carolina at Greensboro (NC)	14,412	22.5%	51.5%	51.0%	52.3%	53.1%	-0.5	0.8
15. Florida State University (FL)	28,738	10.2%	67.8%	65.7%	72.7%	74.1%	-2.1	1.4

Sources: IPEDS and College Results Online data set.

Notes: These colleges are listed here because their black student graduation rate, in both 2004 and 2010, was either higher than their white student graduation rate, or the white-black graduation-rate gap was less than or equal to 2 percentage points. The sample for the gap-closing analysis is limited to the four-year, nonprofit, degree-granting institutions — public and private — receiving Title IV funds with complete graduation-rate data in both study years (2004 and 2010), and a cohort of at least 30 black and 30 white undergraduate students in both study years, which is a subset of the full study sample. HBCUs also are excluded. The sample for the analysis in Table 2 also excludes institutions that served significantly fewer black students, a relative decline of 20 percent or more, among incoming freshmen in the study years (incoming 1998 and 2004), as well as institutions at which graduation rates among white students declined by more than 1 percentage point from 2004 to 2010. Only institutions with black graduation rates exceeding the 2010 six-year public- and private-sector average rate in Figure 3 are listed here. See Note 10 for more detail.

**Table 3a: Top 25 Graduation-Rate Gap-Closers among Private Institutions, 2004-2010**

	Undergrad FTE Fall 2009 Enrollment	% Black among Undergrad FTE Fall 2009 Enrollment	Black Six-Year Grad Rate 2004	White Six-Year Grad Rate 2004	Black Six-Year Grad Rate 2010	White Six-Year Grad Rate 2010	White-Black Grad-Rate Gap 2004	White-Black Grad-Rate Gap 2010	Gap Change 2004-2010
1. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (NY)	5,610	3.4%	63.3%	82.1%	87.0%	82.4%	18.8	-4.6	-23.4
2. Tiffin University (OH)	2,027	18.4%	11.9%	37.7%	34.8%	40.7%	25.8	5.9	-19.9
3. The University of the Arts (PA)	2,131	10.5%	42.9%	60.4%	64.7%	64.8%	17.5	0.1	-17.4
4. George Washington University (DC)	9,946	7.0%	63.4%	80.6%	78.6%	81.6%	17.2	3.0	-14.2
5. Marquette University (WI)	7,822	4.8%	54.8%	79.3%	68.9%	82.3%	24.5	13.4	-11.1
6. Eastern University (PA)	2,370	18.8%	41.2%	62.6%	57.9%	68.9%	21.4	11.0	-10.4
7. Gallaudet University (DC)	1,027	11.0%	12.1%	25.6%	27.3%	31.3%	13.5	4.0	-9.5
8. LaGrange College (GA)	806	19.9%	35.5%	49.4%	56.8%	61.2%	13.9	4.4	-9.5
9. Saint Peter's College (NJ)	2,204	24.7%	28.4%	55.8%	39.1%	57.2%	27.4	18.1	-9.3
10. Seton Hall University (NJ)	4,852	13.6%	38.5%	61.7%	54.9%	69.4%	23.2	14.5	-8.7
11. Texas Wesleyan University (TX)	1,381	18.2%	3.8%	24.0%	25.0%	36.7%	20.2	11.7	-8.5
12. University of Southern California (CA)	16,314	5.5%	72.4%	82.2%	87.5%	89.0%	9.8	1.5	-8.3
13. Trinity College (CT)	2,205	6.2%	73.5%	89.0%	81.1%	88.4%	15.5	7.3	-8.2
14. Philadelphia University (PA)	2,748	8.4%	38.3%	52.9%	55.6%	62.2%	14.6	6.6	-8.0
15. Wittenberg University (OH)	1,834	4.4%	39.4%	67.5%	46.7%	67.0%	28.1	20.3	-7.8
16. Furman University (SC)	2,665	6.8%	79.4%	84.0%	87.5%	84.4%	4.6	-3.1	-7.7
17. Rice University (TX)	3,274	7.0%	81.6%	92.3%	88.2%	91.3%	10.7	3.1	-7.6
18. Loyola Marymount University (CA)	5,626	7.8%	64.7%	73.4%	77.7%	79.4%	8.7	1.7	-7.0
19. Marymount University (VA)	2,007	14.7%	48.6%	51.8%	61.5%	57.7%	3.2	-3.8	-7.0
20. Long Island University – CW Post Campus (NY)	5,566	6.8%	22.5%	41.9%	35.4%	47.9%	19.4	12.5	-6.9
21. Savannah College of Art and Design (GA)	7,524	3.2%	51.2%	63.6%	61.3%	66.9%	12.4	5.6	-6.8
22. Carnegie Mellon University (PA)	5,672	5.3%	72.0%	86.2%	79.2%	86.8%	14.2	7.6	-6.6
23. Duke University (NC)	6,559	9.7%	86.1%	94.5%	90.9%	94.4%	8.4	3.5	-4.9
24. Faulkner University (AL)	2,308	49.1%	20.5%	26.2%	36.4%	37.2%	5.7	0.8	-4.9
25. Vassar College (NY)	2,413	5.5%	83.3%	87.2%	94.6%	93.6%	3.9	-1.0	-4.9

**Table 3b: Top 25 Graduation-Rate Gap-Closers among Public Institutions, 2004-2010**

		Undergrad FTE Fall 2009 Enrollment	% Black among Undergrad FTE Fall 2009 Enrollment	Black Six-Year Grad Rate 2004	White Six-Year Grad Rate 2004	Black Six-Year Grad Rate 2010	White Six-Year Grad Rate 2010	White-Black Grad-Rate Gap 2004	White-Black Grad-Rate Gap 2010	Gap Change 2004-2010
1.	California University of Pennsylvania (PA)	6,735	6.8%	27.5%	47.2%	60.5%	59.2%	19.7	-1.3	-21.0
2.	University of North Carolina-Wilmington (NC)	10,855	4.6%	40.0%	62.7%	61.4%	66.6%	22.7	5.2	-17.5
3.	New Mexico State University- Main Campus (NM)	13,321	3.3%	20.0%	48.1%	39.1%	49.8%	28.1	10.7	-17.4
4.	Towson University (MD)	15,903	12.2%	51.2%	62.5%	74.0%	68.6%	11.3	-5.4	-16.7
5.	Appalachian State University (NC)	14,368	3.1%	42.5%	61.2%	64.6%	66.7%	18.7	2.1	-16.6
6.	California State Polytechnic University- Pomona (CA)	17,806	3.5%	24.3%	45.7%	53.9%	58.7%	21.4	4.8	-16.6
7.	Iowa State University (IA)	21,770	2.5%	36.5%	68.0%	52.4%	71.5%	31.5	19.1	-12.4
8.	California Polytechnic State University- San Luis Obispo (CA)	17,849	0.9%	45.2%	72.6%	59.4%	74.9%	27.4	15.5	-11.9
9.	Texas Tech University (TX)	22,786	4.7%	47.0%	56.4%	65.4%	63.0%	9.4	-2.4	-11.8
10.	University of California-Irvine (CA)	21,881	2.3%	68.2%	79.5%	80.6%	80.7%	11.3	0.1	-11.2
11.	University of South Florida-Main Campus (FL)	25,316	12.5%	41.9%	46.8%	56.5%	50.8%	4.9	-5.7	-10.6
12.	Miami University-Oxford (OH)	14,528	4.0%	61.2%	81.1%	71.4%	80.8%	19.9	9.4	-10.5
13.	University of Iowa (IA)	19,175	2.4%	43.4%	67.1%	57.0%	70.3%	23.7	13.3	-10.4
14.	University of West Georgia (GA)	8,625	26.4%	25.0%	31.4%	37.3%	33.7%	6.4	-3.6	-10.0
15.	Rutgers University-New Brunswick (NJ)	28,090	8.0%	61.6%	74.2%	74.4%	77.4%	12.6	3.0	-9.6
16.	San Francisco State University (CA)	21,853	5.5%	25.9%	39.7%	41.9%	46.3%	13.8	4.4	-9.4
17.	Central Connecticut State University (CT)	8,569	7.9%	28.6%	46.6%	41.0%	50.2%	18.0	9.2	-8.8
18.	Pennsylvania State University- Main Campus (PA)	37,867	3.6%	66.1%	86.3%	75.0%	86.6%	20.2	11.6	-8.6
19.	Virginia Commonwealth University (VA)	20,285	19.3%	34.5%	41.9%	49.8%	49.1%	7.4	-0.7	-8.1
20.	United States Naval Academy (MD)	4,552	5.1%	75.4%	87.9%	85.3%	89.9%	12.5	4.6	-7.9
21.	SUNY College at Plattsburgh (NY)	5,677	4.7%	50.0%	56.7%	60.0%	58.9%	6.7	-1.1	-7.8
22.	University of Rhode Island (RI)	12,261	5.0%	38.7%	59.2%	51.0%	63.8%	20.5	12.8	-7.7
23.	North Carolina State University at Raleigh (NC)	23,097	8.4%	49.9%	69.6%	61.6%	73.9%	19.7	12.3	-7.4
24.	University of Massachusetts-Boston (MA)	8,801	15.6%	21.3%	29.3%	36.4%	37.5%	8.0	1.1	-6.9
25.	California State University-Northridge (CA)	24,449	8.5%	22.4%	46.3%	38.1%	55.2%	23.9	17.1	-6.8

Sources: IPEDS and College Results Online data set.

Notes: The sample for the gap-closing analysis is limited to the four-year, nonprofit, degree-granting institutions – public and private – receiving Title IV funds with complete graduation-rate data in both study years (2004 and 2010), and a cohort of at least 30 black and 30 white undergraduate students in both study years, which is a subset of the full study sample. HBCUs also are excluded. The sample for the analysis in Table 3 also excludes institutions that served significantly fewer black students, a relative decline of 20 percent or more, among incoming freshmen in the study years (incoming 1998 and 2004), as well as institutions at which graduation rates among white students declined by more than 1 percentage point from 2004 to 2010. Colleges with “No Gap in 2004 or 2010,” which in 2004 and 2010 had either higher graduation rates for black students than white students or a difference between black and white graduation rates within 2 percentage points, were also excluded from Table 3. See Note 10 for more detail.



## NOTES

1. A.P. Carnevale, N. Smith, and J. Strohl. "Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018" (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, 2010).
2. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "The Condition of Education 2010" (NCES 2010-028) (Washington, D.C., 2010). U.S. Census Bureau, "Educational Attainment in the United States."
3. J. Engle and C. Theokas. "Top Gainers: Some Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities Make Big Improvements in Minority Graduation Rates" (Washington, D.C.: The Education Trust, 2010). J. Engle and C. Theokas. "Top Gap Closers: Some Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities Have Made Good Progress in Closing Graduation Rate Gaps" (Washington, D.C.: The Education Trust, 2010).
4. The sample for this analysis includes four-year, nonprofit, degree-granting institutions — public and private — receiving Title IV funds and with complete graduation-rate data in both study years (2004 and 2010). The sample is also limited to institutions with a cohort of at least 30 African-American students in both study years, the minimum number of cases required by accepted statistical standards. The full sample size contains 543 institutions.
5. M. Lynch, J. Engle, and J. Cruz. "Subprime Opportunity: The Unfulfilled Promise of For-Profit Colleges and Universities" (Washington, D.C.: The Education Trust, 2010).
6. The Education Trust analysis takes a "weighted" graduation rate to see how many students actually graduate, rather than taking institutional averages that may bias against larger institutions that may have lower graduation rates. The Education Trust divided the sum of all students, and of black students, in the 2004 and 2010 completer cohort (for the 1998 and 2004 entering cohort) by the sum of all students, and of black students, in the 1998 and 2004 entering cohort.
7. To account for the fact that some colleges might have improved their graduation-rate performance by becoming more selective in their admissions, rather than improving academically, we chose to eliminate any college that grew more exclusive by serving significantly fewer African-American students among incoming freshmen, a relative decline of 20 percent or more, in the study years (incoming 1998 and 2004). We chose to refine our sample using this metric because SAT data were incomplete during our study period. The revised sample size fell from 543 to 452 institutions.
8. J. Engle and C. Theokas. "Top Gainers: Some Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities Make Big Improvements in Minority Graduation Rates." (Washington, D.C.: The Education Trust, 2010). J. Engle and C. Theokas. "Top Gap Closers: Some Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities Have Made Good Progress in Closing Graduation Rate Gaps" (Washington, D.C.: The Education Trust, 2010).
9. J. Engle, J. Yeado, R. Brusi, and J. Cruz. "Replenishing Opportunity in America: The 2012 Midterm Report of Public Higher Education Systems in the Access to Success Initiative" (Washington, D.C.: The Education Trust, 2012).
10. The gap-closer sample includes four-year, nonprofit, degree-granting institutions — public and private — receiving Title IV funds with complete graduation-rate data in both study years (2004 and 2010) and a cohort of at least 30 black and 30 white undergraduate students in both study years, the minimum number of cases required by accepted statistical standards. HBCUs are also excluded because of their history and mission to serve black students, thus a gap analysis would not be as pertinent for these institutions. The gap-closer sample contains 459 schools.
11. J. Engle and C. Theokas. "Top Gainers: Some Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities Make Big Improvements in Minority Graduation Rates" (Washington, D.C.: The Education Trust, 2010). J. Engle and C. Theokas. "Top Gap Closers: Some Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities Have Made Good Progress in Closing Graduation Rate Gaps" (Washington, D.C.: The Education Trust, 2010).
12. M. Lynch and J. Engle. "Big Gaps, Small Gaps: Some Colleges and Universities Do Better than Others in Graduating African-American Students" (Washington, D.C.: The Education Trust, 2010).
13. Top gap-closer institutions have a cohort of at least 30 black and 30 white undergraduate students in both study years, 2004 and 2010, the minimum number of cases required by accepted statistical standards. To account for the fact that some colleges might have improved their graduation-rate performance by becoming more selective in their admissions, rather than improving academically, we chose to eliminate any college that grew more exclusive by serving significantly fewer African-American students among incoming freshmen, a relative decline of 20 percent or more, in the study years (incoming 1998 and 2004). We also exclude any institution where graduation rates among white students declined by more than 1 percentage point from 2004 to 2010. The revised sample size fell from 459 institutions to 308 institutions.
14. M. Lynch and J. Engle. "Big Gaps, Small Gaps: Some Colleges and Universities Do Better Than Others in Graduating African-American Students" (Washington, D.C.: The Education Trust, 2010).
15. Virginia Commonwealth University. University College Annual Report to Provost Beverly Warren (Richmond, Va., 2010).





## The Education Trust

The Education Trust promotes high academic achievement for all students at all levels—pre-kindergarten through college. We work alongside parents, educators, and community and business leaders across the country in transforming schools and colleges into institutions that serve all students well. Lessons learned in these efforts, together with unflinching data analyses, shape our state and national policy agendas. Our goal is to close the gaps in opportunity and achievement that consign far too many young people—especially those who are black, Latino, American Indian, or from low-income families—to lives on the margins of the American mainstream.

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