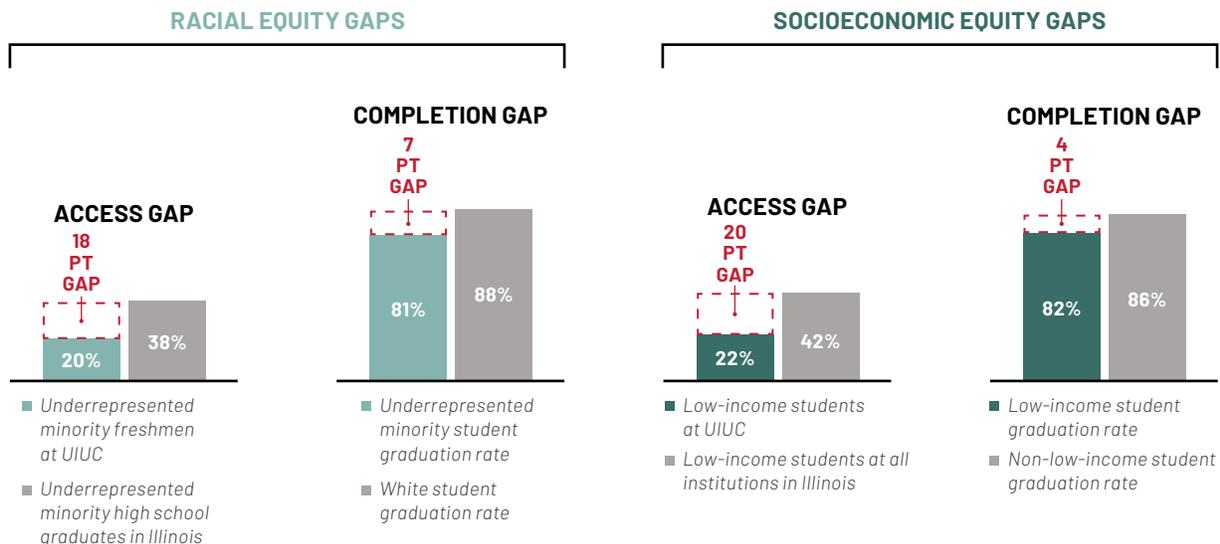# Equity Snapshot

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Public flagship universities were established to provide an excellent education to their states' residents and are therefore well-positioned to enhance social and economic mobility within their states. Yet in many cases, too few low-income students and students of color have access to these elite colleges and the opportunities they provide. This analysis of racial and socioeconomic equity at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) finds large and growing gaps in college access, as well as gaps in college completion, by race and socioeconomic status (Figure 1). To serve as a catalyst for mobility and equity in Illinois, UIUC must do a better job enrolling and graduating low-income students[1] and students of color.

EQUITY AT A GLANCE

Figure 1. Racial and Socioeconomic Equity Gaps in Access and Completion at UIUC, 2016

RACIAL EQUITY GAPS

ACCESS GAP
18 PT GAP
- 20%
- 38%

COMPLETION GAP
7 PT GAP
- 81%
- 88%

- Underrepresented minority freshmen at UIUC
- Underrepresented minority high school graduates in Illinois
- Underrepresented minority student graduation rate
- White student graduation rate

SOCIOECONOMIC EQUITY GAPS

ACCESS GAP
20 PT GAP
- 22%
- 42%

COMPLETION GAP
4 PT GAP
- 82%
- 86%

- Low-income students at UIUC
- Low-income students at all institutions in Illinois
- Low-income student graduation rate
- Non-low-income student graduation rate

Source: Racial equity gaps: IHEP analysis of first-time, full- and part-time undergraduate fall enrollment, 2016 IPEDS data and public high school graduates 2015–16 Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) data retrieved from https://knocking.wiche.edu/data/; IHEP analysis of first-time, full-time undergraduate six-year graduation rate by race/ethnicity, 2016 IPEDS data. Socioeconomic equity gaps: IHEP analysis of first-time, full-time undergraduates receiving Pell Grants at UIUC and at public, private not-for-profit, and for-profit two- and four-year Title IV participating institutions in Illinois, 2015–16 IPEDS data; IHEP analysis of first-time, full-time undergraduate six-year graduation rate by Pell receipt, 2016 IPEDS data.

WHO HAS ACCESS TO UIUC?

RACIAL EQUITY: More students of color attend UIUC today than 30 years ago, but Black and Hispanic students are nonetheless more underrepresented compared with the state population than they were 15 years ago. Between 1980 and 2016, the number of underrepresented minority students at UIUC more than tripled (Figure 2). See sidebar, "Who are Underrepresented Minority Students?"

Yet UIUC's enrollment of underrepresented minority students has failed to keep pace with the growing racial/ethnic diversity in the state. Since 2001, racial gaps between Illinois' high school graduates and UIUC's freshmen class doubled to 18 percentage points. While 38 percent of high school graduates in Illinois were students of color in spring 2016, just 20 percent of UIUC's freshmen class were students of color that fall (Figure 3). This growth is largely due to widening access gaps for Hispanic students, which have tripled since 2001 as access gaps for Black students have remained at a troubling 9 percentage points since 2007 (Figure 3).[2]
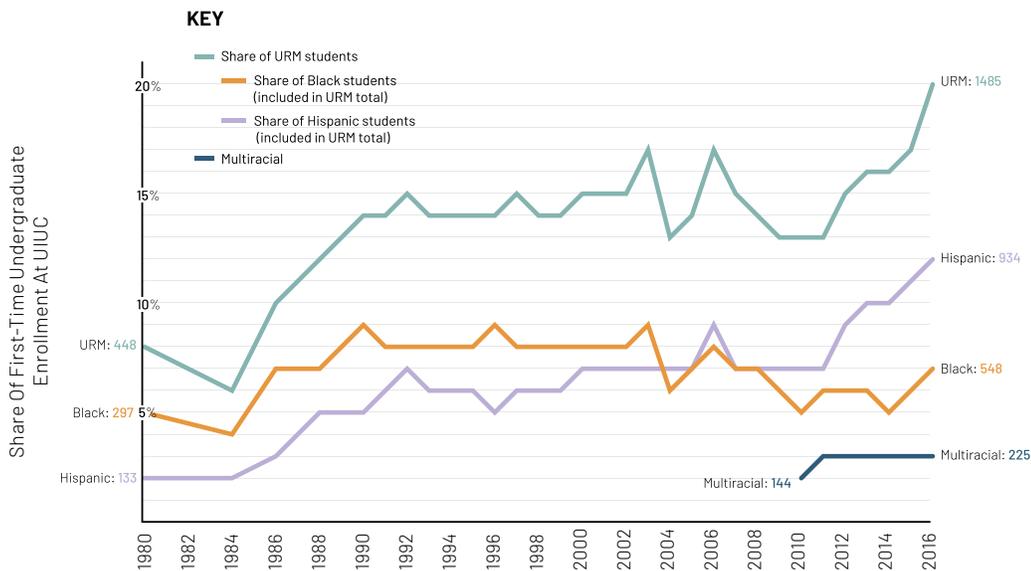

KEY

- Share of URM students
- Share of Black students (included in URM total)
- Share of Hispanic students (included in URM total)
- Multiracial

Share Of First-Time Undergraduate Enrollment At UIUC

URM: 1485
Hispanic: 934
Black: 548
Multiracial: 225
URM: 448
Black: 297
Hispanic: 133
Multiracial: 144

Figure 2.
Change in Racial/Ethnic Diversity at UIUC, 1980–2016

Source: IHEP analysis of first-time, full- and part-time undergraduate fall enrollment, 1980–2016 IPEDS data. Note: Cohorts of American Indian/Alaska Native students are too small and therefore not shown separately. However, American Indian/Alaska Native students are included in the underrepresented minority (URM) category.
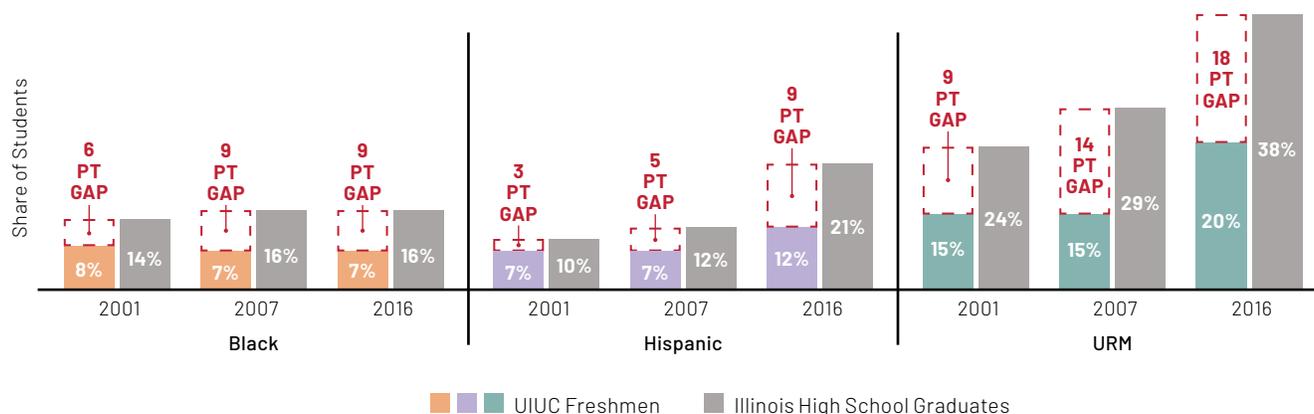
Who are Underrepresented Minority Students?

In this analysis, underrepresented minority (URM) students or students of color refers to Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native students. Other populations, such as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders, Southeast Asian Americans, and other underserved Asian students, also are underrepresented within higher education and deserve attention.[3] However, current data are insufficient to measure access and completion for these critical populations over time.

Also, due to small population sizes and to protect students' anonymity, this paper includes American Indian/Alaska Native students as part of the collective underrepresented minority group but does not discuss or depict them on their own. In 2016, American Indian/Alaska Native students comprised approximately 1 percent of undergraduates in the United States.[4] And just 40 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native students at public four-year colleges earned a degree within six years in 2014, compared with 61 percent of White students.[5]

We urge institutions to examine trends for all underrepresented groups to develop recruitment and intervention strategies targeted to their needs.

Figure 3. Change in Racial/Ethnic Gaps Between Illinois High School Graduates and UIUC Undergraduates, 2001, 2007, and 2016
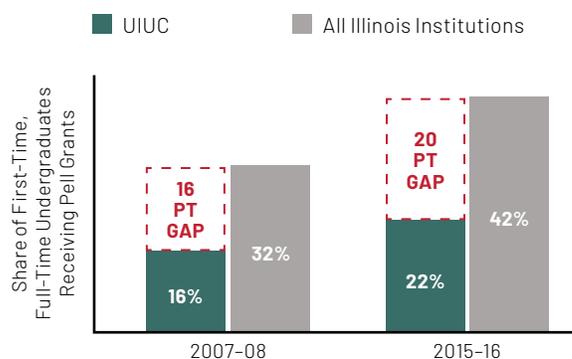

Share of Students

Black
- 2001: 6 PT GAP — 8%, 14%
- 2007: 9 PT GAP — 7%, 16%
- 2016: 9 PT GAP — 7%, 16%

Hispanic
- 2001: 3 PT GAP — 7%, 10%
- 2007: 5 PT GAP — 7%, 12%
- 2016: 9 PT GAP — 12%, 21%

URM
- 2001: 9 PT GAP — 15%, 24%
- 2007: 14 PT GAP — 15%, 29%
- 2016: 18 PT GAP — 20%, 38%

■ UIUC Freshmen   ■ Illinois High School Graduates

Source: IHEP analysis of first-time, full- and part-time undergraduate fall enrollment, 2001–16 IPEDS data and public high school graduates 2000–01 (earliest available data) through 2014–15 Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) data retrieved from https://knocking.wiche. edu/data/. 2000–01 through 2012–13 data on high school graduates are based on the Common Core of Data (CCD), and 2013–14 through 2015–16 high school graduate data are WICHE projections. Note: IPEDS cohorts of American Indian/Alaska Native students are too small and therefore not shown separately. However, American Indian/Alaska Native students are included in the underrepresented minority (URM) category.

SOCIOECONOMIC EQUITY: Low-income student enrollment at UIUC increased over the last decade but has not kept pace with growing enrollments of low-income college students in Illinois overall. UIUC enrolls low-income students at approximately half the rate of all Illinois colleges (22 percent compared with 42 percent, respectively; Figure 4).

NET PRICE: Price is one barrier to college access for low-income students. In 2015–16, the lowest income in-state students at UIUC—those with family incomes of $30,000 or less—paid about $7,600 in college expenses after accounting for grant aid. This means that students at UIUC must devote at least 25 percent of their income to college costs.[6]

Figure 4. Change in Socioeconomic Gaps between UIUC and All Illinois Colleges, 2007–08 and 2015–16

■ UIUC   ■ All Illinois Institutions

Share of First-Time, Full-Time Undergraduates Receiving Pell Grants

- 2007–08: 16 PT GAP — 16%, 32%
- 2015–16: 20 PT GAP — 22%, 42%

Source: IHEP analysis of first-time, full-time undergraduates receiving Pell Grants at UIUC and at all public, private not-for-profit, and for-profit two- and four-year Title IV participating institutions in Illinois, 2007–08 to 2015–16 IPEDS data.

WHO SUCCEEDS AT UIUC?

RACIAL EQUITY: UIUC has made impressive gains in graduation rates for all students, especially students of color. Yet the flagship must continue to improve completion rates for students of color to close persistent equity gaps. Over the last two decades, UIUC narrowed graduation-rate gaps between underrepresented minority and White students by 13 percentage points (Figure 5).

Despite these noteworthy improvements, graduation-rate gaps remain between students of color and their White peers. In 2016, UIUC graduated White students at a rate 7 percentage points higher than underrepresented minority students (Figure 5).

The flagship should therefore continue working to boost completion rates for students of color but do so without increasing admissions requirements that could exclude students poised to benefit from a UIUC education. Indeed, increasing selectivity likely contributed to UIUC's graduation-rate gains over the past several decades. The flagship became more selective, increasing the median SAT/ACT scores of incoming students by approximately 5 percent between 2002 and 2016.[7] This trend, however, is at odds with the need to enhance socioeconomic and racial diversity.[8]

OUT-OF-STATE ENROLLMENT: Many flagships have increased out-of-state enrollments, a practice that can negatively impact socioeconomic or racial diversity.[9] The share of first-time, full-time undergraduates at UIUC who are from outside of Illinois increased by 21 percentage points over the last 30 years (from 5 percent in 1986 to 26 percent in 2016).[10]
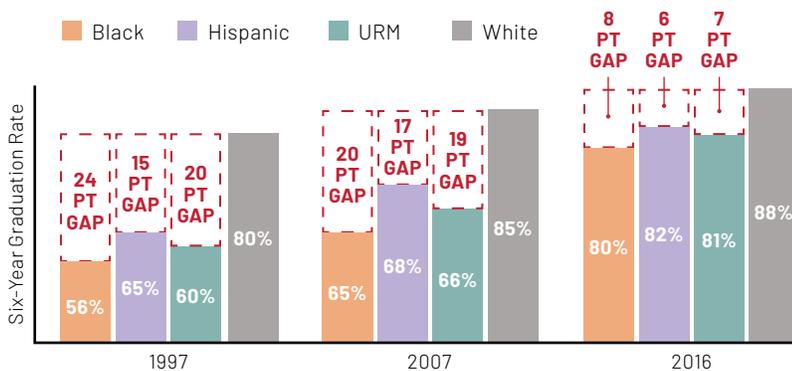

Figure 5. Graduation-Rate Gaps by Race/Ethnicity at UIUC, 1997, 2007, 2016

Source: IHEP analysis of first-time, full-time undergraduate six-year graduation rate by race/ethnicity, 1997–2016 IPEDS data. Note: Cohorts of American Indian/Alaska Native students are too small and therefore not shown separately. However, American Indian/Alaska Native students are included in the underrepresented minority (URM) category.

SOCIOECONOMIC EQUITY: Low-income students have a lower chance of graduating from UIUC than their higher-income peers. In 2016, UIUC graduated 82 percent of low-income students within six years compared with 86 percent of non-low-income students (Figure 6).
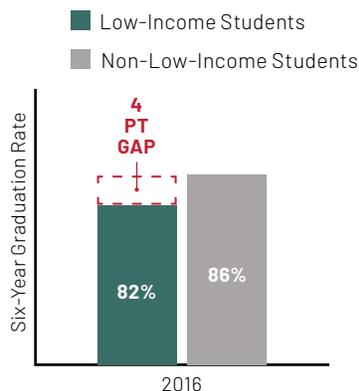

Figure 6. Graduation-Rate Gap by Socioeconomic Status at UIUC, 2016

Source: IHEP analysis of first-time, full-time undergraduate six-year graduation rate by Pell receipt, 2016 IPEDS data. Data on graduation rates for low-income students became available in 2016, allowing for analysis of socioeconomic gaps in student completion at individual institutions.

EQUITY-MINDED POLICIES AT UIUC

What institutions do matters.

Colleges and universities must commit to increasing racial and economic diversity and supporting students of color and low-income students through to completion. That commitment requires unwavering leadership, alongside a solid financial investment. That institutional commitment plays out in a number of ways, including through university policies, which shape the opportunities available to low-income students and students of color. Public flagship institutions should design admissions and financial aid policies that encourage historically underrepresented students to gain access and succeed at high levels. The checklist below includes examples of policies that can encourage, or impede, enrollment and success for low-income students and students of color. Interviews with Great Lakes flagship administrators provided context on the motivations behind enacting these policies and how they impact equity on campus.

While designing and implementing the policies below can open more opportunities for students of color and low-income students, this list is illustrative—not exhaustive. Furthermore, fully closing gaps in access and completion is about more than checking a handful of policy boxes, as this analysis of UIUC policies makes clear. UIUC has implemented a host of equity-minded policies, which is commendable. Yet the institution's enrollment and graduation of students of color and low-income students still lags behind where it could—and should—be.

Institutions need consistent leadership that sets equity goals as top institutional priorities. Doing so compels administrators, faculty, and staff to re-examine and question all policies and practices—large and small. Institution-wide policies matter, but so do the day-to-day decisions made and priorities set on a campus. As a public university founded on the principal of providing an excellent education to Illinoisans, UIUC has a responsibility to examine its policies and practices with the goal of opening doors of opportunity within the state.

NEED-BASED FINANCIAL AID

UIUC awards more than three-quarters of institutional grant aid based on need. Low-income students are sensitive to the price of college and financial aid offers. Need-based grant aid helps ease the financial burden of attending college, promote affordability, and narrow access inequities.[11] In the 2015–16 academic year, UIUC awarded 84 percent of institutional grants ($82.7 million) based on financial need.[12] UIUC offers the Illinois Promise to newly admitted in-state freshmen and transfer students who have an expected family contribution (EFC) of $0 and a family income at or below the federal poverty level. This grant covers the full cost of attendance (including tuition, fees, room and board, books, and supplies) through a combination of grants, scholarships, and an opportunity to earn income via campus employment.[13] In fall 2019, UIUC will implement an additional need-based aid program, the Illinois Commitment. This program will cover the cost of tuition and fees for in-state students whose family income is $61,000 or less and have assets less than $50,000.[14]

EARLY DECISION

UIUC does not accept early decision applications. Binding early decision polices increase the admissions chances of students who have the preparation and financial means to apply early to only one college and commit to enroll there if admitted, without comparing financial aid packages across multiple institutions. Affluent students are almost twice as likely as low-income students to apply to early decision deadlines, and thus benefit disproportionally from the advantages these policies offer.[15] UIUC does not offer early decision.[16]

DEMONSTRATED INTEREST

UIUC does not consider students' demonstrated interest in the admissions process. Institutions that favor applicants who show "demonstrated interest" in the school can disadvantage low-income students. While affluent students have the financial means to demonstrate their interest by visiting college campuses, low-income students are often unable to do so because of the high costs associated with these trips.[17] UIUC does not consider "level of applicant interest" in the admission process.[18]

LEGACY PREFERENCE

UIUC does not have a legacy admissions policy. Legacy admissions policies that give preference to students with familial ties to the institution can increase admissions chances of the children of alumni, a benefit exclusively available to students with college-educated parents.[19] These policies disadvantage low-income students and students of color, who are more likely than their White and non-low-income peers to be the first in their family to attend college.[20] UIUC does not consider "alumni/ae relation" in their application review process.[21]

INTERACTIONS WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

UIUC has not "Banned the Box," meaning applicants must disclose and provide an explanation of past criminal convictions and pending criminal charges.[22] Requiring applicants to check a box disclosing interactions with the criminal justice system, a practice that has not been shown to have any impact on campus safety, disadvantages applicants of color to a larger degree than White students.[23] UIUC asks about a prospective student's criminal justice involvement on its application, and considers that information after admissions decisions have been made, at which point the university might conduct further evaluation or follow-up. Notably, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)—of which UIUC is a member—recently called on its membership to remove questions about criminal history from applications for admissions.[24]

Endnotes

1. Low-income students are those who receive Pell Grants. Eighty-two percent of all Pell recipients have incomes below $40,000. U.S. Department of Education, 2015–16 Federal Pell Grant Program End-Of-Year Report, Table 71. Retrieved from: https://www2.ed.gov/finaid/prof/resources/data/2015-2016eoyresearchreports.zip

2. In 2010, UIUC began reporting race/ethnicity data for multiracial students in response to changing federal guidelines, but data on the demographics of high school students does not include a multiracial category. Even if all multiracial students in 2016 were counted as Black, however, UIUC would still be enrolling Black students at a rate lower than their representation in Illinois' high school graduating class (10 and 16 percent, respectively).

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12. IHEP analysis of 2000–16 College InSight data, The Institute for College Access & Success. Retrieved from: http://college-insight.org

13. University of Illinois Office of Student Financial Aid. (2018). Illinois Promise. Retrieved from: http://osfa.illinois.edu/types-of-aid/illinois-promise; University of Illinois, Illinois Promise. (2018). What's I-Promise? Retrieved from: https://ipromise.illinois.edu/whats-i-promise

14. IHEP interview with Daniel Mann, UIUC Associate Provost, Enrollment Management on September 5, 2018.

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