Transitioning to College and Work
Part 2: A Study of Potential Enrollment Indicators

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This report examined three potential indicators of college enrollment school and district staff might use to identify and support students at risk of not attending college:

- Chicago: Designed to predict high school graduation*; based on earning six course credits — the minimum to advance to the next grade in HISD — and having at most one semester "F" in a core subject (English, math, science, or social studies)

- Houston Education Research Consortium (HERC): Designed to predict college enrollment (see Appendix A or information on its origins); based on having an attendance rate of 90% or higher, having a B-average (80% or higher), and earning at least 0.5 advanced course credits

- State: Designed to predict college enrollment by the Texas Education Agency; based on meeting the benchmark on the English/language arts and mathematics tests

First, the findings suggested the HERC indicator might be the best predictor of college enrollment. Second, ninth-grade was when students were most at risk of not meeting the HERC indicator and fell off-track from college enrollment.

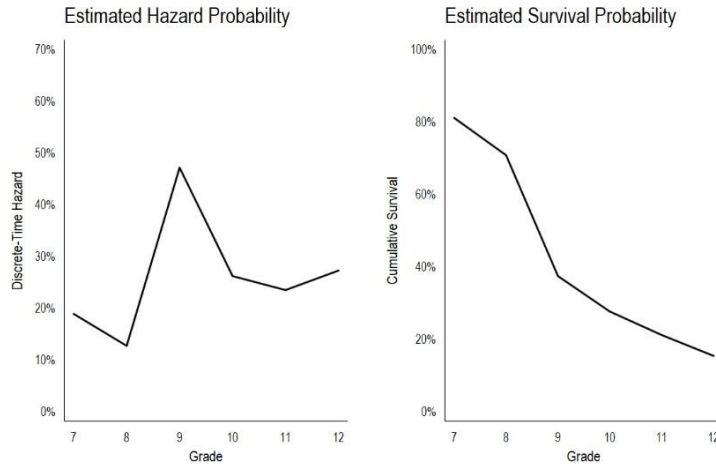*The full report is available at kinder.rice.edu/herc.*

Key Findings

• The Chicago indicator was less effective at predicting college enrollment than the HERC and state indicators.

• The HERC indicator was more effective than the Chicago indicator at predicting non-college enrollment, particularly in ninth and 11th grade.

• The three potential indicators underestimated the college enrollment rates of white, Asian, and non-economically disadvantaged students, but were more accurate for black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students.

* The Chicago indicator was tested to see whether a high school graduation indicator could also serve as a potential college enrollment indicator.

Figure 1. Falling Off-Track Based on HERC Indicator

Source: Figure 2 in full report.
Note: The hazard probability curve shows the percentage of students who did not meet the HERC indicator in each grade. The survival probability curve shows the percentage of students still on-track by the end of each grade. This is a cumulative graph: by the end of high school, 15% of students met the HERC indicator in *all* six grade levels, seventh through 12th.

• Students were most at risk of not meeting the Chicago and HERC indicators during the ninth grade.

• The state indicator did not show the same ninth-grade pattern likely because it was based on test scores, which might vary little over time or neglect to capture changes in student motivation and effort.

Recommendations

1: School and district practitioners should use the HERC indicator to identify and target potential non-enrollees for intervention.

2: Practitioners should be aware the potential indicators do not predict college enrollment equally well for different groups of students.

3: Practitioners should provide additional supports for ninth-grade students to help them stay on-track to college enrollment. The potential indicators may be part of these efforts if they can help teachers, counselors, and administrators identify students in need of special assistance.