



QUESTION: What were the post-graduation employment outcomes of members of the AISD class of 2006?

RESPONSE: Student demographic information for the class of 2006, results from the AISD 2006 High School Exit Survey, postsecondary enrollment data for the class of 2006, and students' academic performance data pulled from district records were linked to employment outcome data provided by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to examine the postsecondary and workforce outcomes of the AISD class of 2006. Postsecondary outcome data for the class of 2006 were compiled from two sources: the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).

KEY FINDINGS

- Of the class of 2006 graduates who enrolled in an Institution of Higher Education (IHE) in the fall or spring semester after graduation, 76% of graduates who enrolled in a 2-year IHE were employed, while 43% of graduates who enrolled in a 4-year IHE were employed.
- Approximately 43% of AISD graduates who did not enroll in an IHE were identified in the TWC data file.
- Sixty-seven percent of AISD graduates from the class of 2006 who did not enroll in an IHE, but who were employed between July 1, 2006 and December 31, 2006, indicated on the 2006 AISD High School Exit Survey that they aspired to enroll in a postsecondary institution after graduation.
- Employed Hispanic graduates who aspired to attend an IHE after graduation, but who did not enroll during the academic year after graduation, were less likely than were members of other ethnic groups to report having completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or to have taken a college admissions test during their senior year.
- Graduates with lower cumulative grade point averages (GPAs) were more likely to enter the workforce directly than were students with higher GPAs.
- The most common sector of employment for class of 2006 graduates was in the retail trade industry.

DATA PREPARATION AND LIMITATIONS

Several modifications were made to the data provided by the TWC so that the employment outcome data file could be linked to the postsecondary enrollment records and High School Exit Survey responses of AISD graduates from the class of 2006. Because the post-graduation employment activities of the class of 2006 were of primary interest, the TWC employment data were limited to the 4th fiscal quarter of 2006 and the 1st fiscal quarter of 2007, yielding a data file containing unduplicated student observations and identifiers. However, several data components from the original TWC file were retained (e.g., median monthly wages across fiscal quarters, number of unique employers during this period, and employment sector for the most recent job position reported).

To restrict the analyses to only class of 2006 graduates and to obtain the AISD student identifiers required to link employment files to the postsecondary enrollment data, unduplicated employment records were linked to district graduation records for class of 2006 graduates. GPA data were merged to incorporate students' academic background information. Lastly, postsecondary enrollment records for the class of 2006 were added.

For conciseness and clarity, the six most frequent employment sectors were selected for presentation. Employment sector classifications were taken from the 2007 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) manual. The TWC data file included a two-digit NAICS code denoting the economic sector within which the industry operates.

One important limitation of the TWC data was the absence of a variable measuring the number of hours worked. Although the data did include total wages by fiscal quarter, it was indeterminate whether wage differentials were attributable to variations in hours worked or to differences in hourly earnings. Efforts to impute hourly wages using aggregate hourly earnings reported by the TWC produced unrealistic estimates of hourly wages, and consequently were abandoned. Thus, inferences from the subsequent analyses should be made with this important qualification in mind.

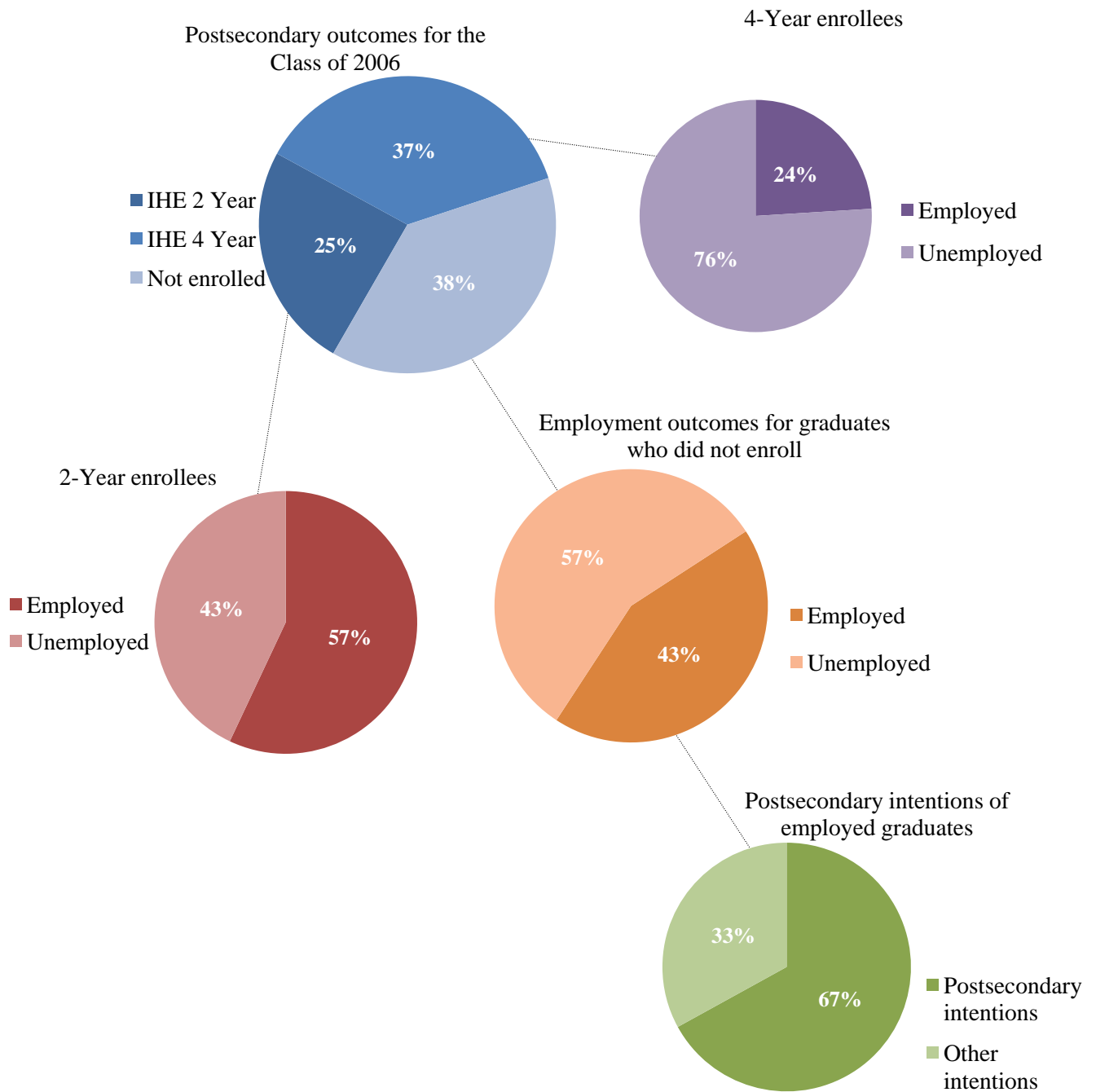
EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES OF AISD CLASS OF 2006 GRADUATES

Figure 1 presents a series of charts that depict the employment status of selected subpopulations within the AISD 2006 graduating class. Several patterns are discernable. First, graduates who enrolled in a 2-year IHE in the fall or spring semester after graduation were far more likely to be concurrently employed (57%) than were graduates who enrolled in a 4-year institution (24%). One interpretation of this finding is that students confronting financial constraints are more likely to enroll in a 2-year IHE than in a 4-year IHE to reduce the economic burden of postsecondary education. Similarly, graduates enrolled in a 2-year IHE may select fewer credit hours than do those in a 4-year IHE, allowing more time to work to offset the costs of postsecondary education. These hypotheses are explored in greater depth in the discussion about Table 1.

Of the graduates who did not enroll in an IHE (38%), 43% were employed between July and December of 2006. However, 67% of employed graduates who did not enroll in an IHE¹ aspired to attend a postsecondary institution, according to their High School Exit Survey response. The gap between pre-graduation aspirations and post-graduation outcomes merits deeper consideration; Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the characteristics of these students.

¹ For simplicity and concision, henceforth students meeting these criteria are referred to as “employed aspirants.” These students are defined as having entered the workforce in the first fiscal quarter after graduation, without concurrently enrolling in a 2- or 4-year IHE in the fall or spring after high school graduation.

Figure 1. Employment Status by Postsecondary Enrollment Outcomes and Intentions, AISD Class of 2006



Sources: National Student Clearinghouse, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2006 AISD High School Exit Survey, and the Texas Workforce Commission; prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, June 2008

According to Berkner, Horn, and Clune (2000), students who enrolled in a 2-year IHE were more likely to enroll part time than were those who enrolled in a 4-year IHE. These researchers found that part time enrollment, particularly in a 2-year IHE, increased the time to degree attainment,

and consequently reduced the likelihood of postsecondary completion. The factors influencing the decision to enroll on a part-time basis, however, were unexplored.

The findings in Table 1, which are in line with those of Berkner, Horn, and Clune (2000), help to explain the tendency to enroll part time. As shown in Table 1, post-graduation monthly wages, irrespective of ethnicity and gender, were considerably higher for graduates enrolled in a 2-year IHE than for graduates enrolled in a 4-year IHE. Assuming the hourly wages of 2-year enrollees were not higher than the wages of 4-year enrollees, this suggests students enrolled in 2-year IHEs worked more hours than did their peers enrolled in 4-year postsecondary institutions.

In addition, Table 1 displays the most common area of employment for graduates from the class of 2006 (i.e., segmented by ethnicity, gender, and post-graduation IHE enrollment status) and shows how frequently they changed employers. Very little variation existed in the modal sector of employment. However, graduates who did not enroll in an IHE tended to change employers more frequently than did those who did not enroll. The median number of unique employers for these employed aspirants exceeded that of graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution; this was the case independent of ethnicity and gender, with the exception of African American graduates. Lastly, African American graduates recorded lower median monthly wages than did Hispanic or White graduates across all post-graduation outcomes. From the available data, it is unclear whether these lower wages were due to working fewer hours or earning lower hourly wages.

Table 1. Descriptive Employment Statistics, AISD Class of 2006

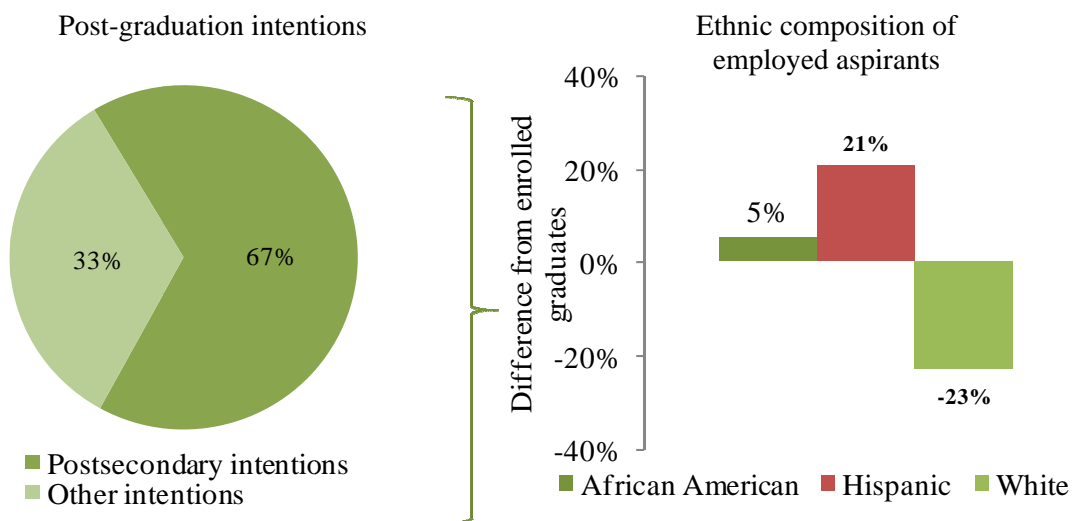
<i>Employed Graduates not Enrolled in an IHE</i>				
		Median Monthly Wages	Modal Sector of Employment	Median Number of Unique Employers
<i>Ethnicity</i>	African American	\$741	Retail Trade (n=37)	2
	Hispanic	\$1,041	Retail Trade (n=125)	2
	White	\$883	Retail Trade (n=58)	2
<i>Gender</i>	Female	\$889	Retail Trade (n=90)	2
	Male	\$1,034	Retail Trade (n=92)	2
<i>Employed Graduates Enrolled in a 2-Year IHE</i>				
<i>Ethnicity</i>	African American	\$660	Retail Trade (n=19)	2
	Hispanic	\$926	Retail Trade (n=95)	1
	White	\$817	Retail Trade (n=102)	1
<i>Gender</i>	Female	\$801	Retail Trade (n=105)	1
	Male	\$888	Retail Trade (n=99)	1
<i>Employed Graduates Enrolled in a 4-Year IHE</i>				
<i>Ethnicity</i>	African American	\$381	Retail Trade (n=26)	2
	Hispanic	\$540	Retail Trade (n=52)	1
	White	\$459	Retail Trade (n=62)	1
<i>Gender</i>	Female	\$428	Retail Trade (n=83)	1
	Male	\$532	Retail Trade (n=59)	1

Sources: National Student Clearinghouse, The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2006 AISD High School Exit Survey, and the Texas Workforce Commission

CHARACTERISTICS OF “EMPLOYED ASPIRANTS”

Figure 2 represents the self-reported post-graduation intentions of members of AISD’s class of 2006 who entered the workforce during the fiscal quarter after graduation. To determine whether the demographic compositions of the employed aspirants and the graduates who enrolled in an IHE in the fall or spring after graduation were proportional, the demographic makeup of the former was reported as the percentage point difference between both groups. Negative values indicate underrepresentation, while positive values denote overrepresentation. As Figure 2 demonstrates, Hispanic students who aspired to attend an IHE were disproportionately represented among employed aspirants, compared with White and African American students.

Figure 2: Ethnic Composition of Employed IHE Aspirants, Class of 2006



Sources: National Student Clearinghouse, The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2006 AISD High School Exit Survey, and the Texas Workforce Commission

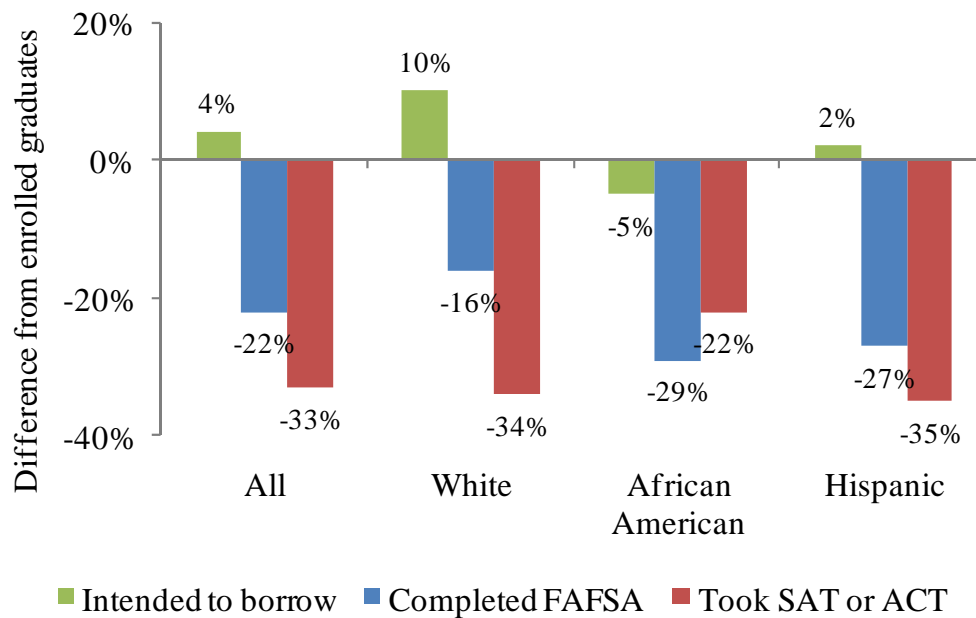
Note. The category “other” includes the following responses: “I have no specific plans yet,” “travel,” “be a full-time parent,” “go into the military,” “go to work full-time,” and “go to work part-time.”

This analysis provides an incomplete model of the types of realities graduates confront when planning for successful postsecondary transitions. From the information presented in Figure 2, whether prospective graduates are successfully navigating the pathways to a postsecondary education by fulfilling the requirements critical to entering a postsecondary institution remains unclear. For example, did the employed aspirants complete the FAFSA? Did they take a college entrance exam?

To overcome these limitations, Figure 3 displays the college preparation activities of the class of 2006. The percentage of employed aspirants by ethnicity is compared with that of enrolled graduates attempts to address these questions. The completion of preparation activities of the employed aspirants and enrolled graduates differed with respect to the various ethnic groups within each category. Overall, employed aspirants were less likely than their enrolled peers to meet the respective postsecondary enrollment criteria analyzed.

Employed aspirants were less successful than their enrolled peers in satisfying several of the basic steps need for enrollment in an IHE. For instance, Hispanic employed aspirants were 35 percentage points less likely than their enrolled peers to have taken the SAT or ACT. Although not shown in Figure 3, the percentage of Hispanic employed aspirants who took either college entrance examination was 38%, compared with 55% of African American and 43% of White employed aspirants. Furthermore, Hispanic employed aspirants were less likely to report in the High School Exit Survey that they had completed the FAFSA than were their White (29%) and African American (34%) peers.

Figure 3. College Preparation Activities of Employed IHE Aspirants and “Enrolled Graduates”, Class of 2006



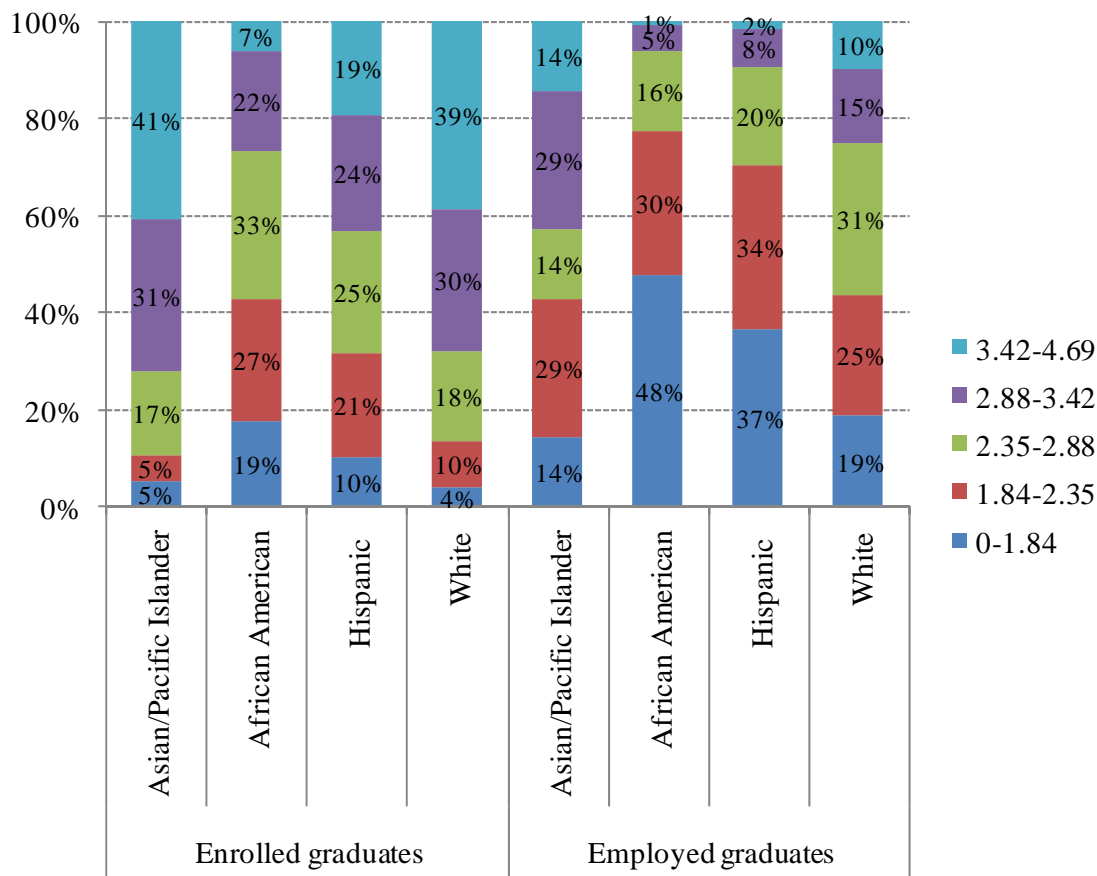
Sources: National Student Clearinghouse, The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2006 AISD High School Exit Survey, and the Texas Workforce Commission.

Graduates’ post-graduation outcomes may be affected by their academic performance. In Figure 4, students were classified according to their cumulative GPA upon graduation and their post-graduation employment status. Unlike the results of the previous analysis, employed graduates who did not enroll in a postsecondary institution (“employed graduates”) were not restricted to those who aspired to enroll in an IHE after graduation. Moreover, enrolled graduates included both those who were enrolled and concurrently employed and those who were enrolled and not concurrently employed.

Irrespective of ethnicity, a greater proportion of graduates with higher GPAs was found enrolled in a postsecondary institution than entering the workforce directly, bypassing postsecondary education. For instance, 27% of African American enrolled graduates had a cumulative GPA greater than 2.88, compared with 6% of African American graduates not enrolled in an IHE. Moreover, evidence of systematic differences in cumulative GPA across ethnic groups were was

visible. Across all enrolled (69%) and non-enrolled (25%) graduates, the percentage of graduates with GPAs above 2.88 was generally higher for White than for other ethnic groups (Figure 4).

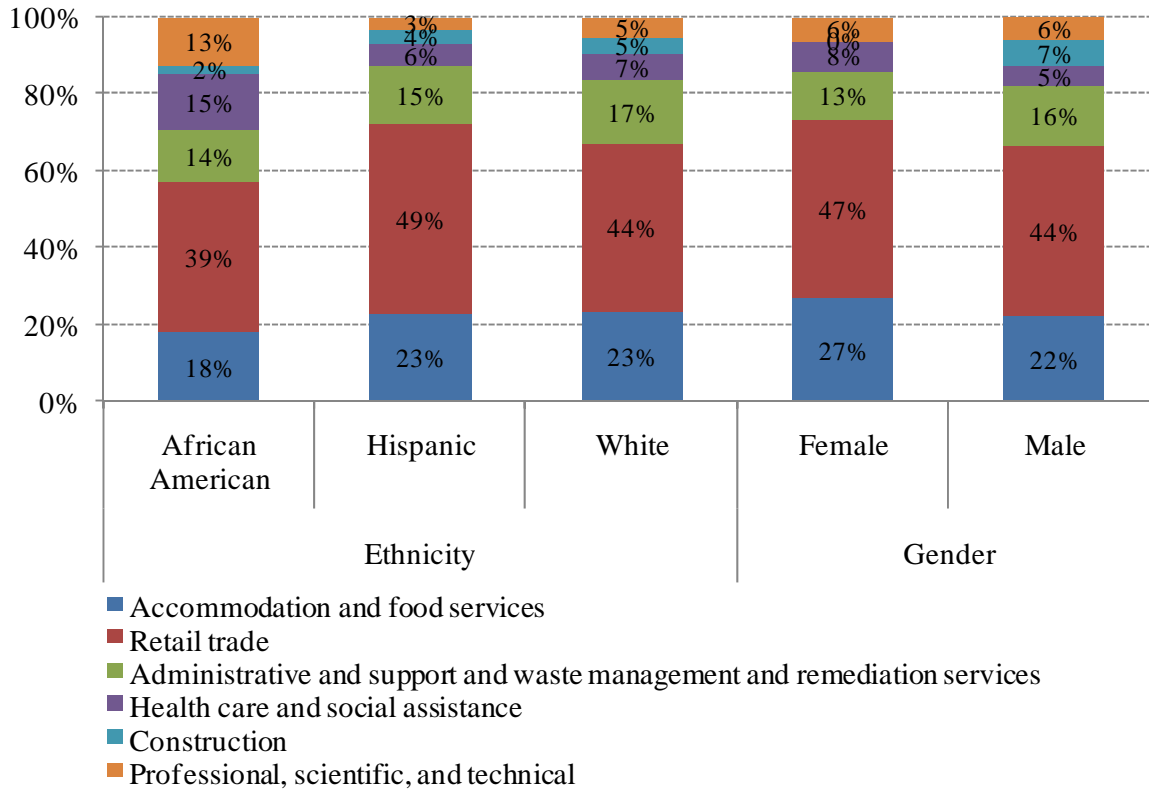
Figure 4. Cumulative GPA Distribution by Post-Graduation Outcome and Ethnicity, AISD Class of 2006



Sources: National Student Clearinghouse, The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2006 AISD High School Exit Survey, and the Texas Workforce Commission

The type of employment chosen by graduates may vary across ethnic groups. Figure 5 depicts the employment sector distribution of class of 2006 graduates who did not enroll in an IHE, segmented by ethnic and gender grouping. Little variation existed across ethnic groups, although African American graduates were more likely to be employed in the professional, scientific, and technical area of the economy (13%) and in the health care and social assistance area (15%) than were graduates from other ethnic groups. Across all ethnic groups, the retail trade sector was the most common area of post-graduation employment.

Figure 5. Ethnic and Gender Composition of Economic Sector Employment Outcomes, AISD Class of 2006



Sources: National Student Clearinghouse, The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2006 AISD High School Exit Survey, and the Texas Workforce Commission

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

- The finding that 67% of graduates who indicated on the High School Exit Survey that they intended to enroll in a postsecondary institution after graduation, yet entered the workforce directly after graduation instead, warrants greater attention. Although the analyses presented in this report did not disaggregate these findings by campus, variations may exist across school settings that help explain this tendency.
- Of the 67% of graduates who entered the workforce directly, rather than enrolling in an IHE as they aspired, many are not completing some of the fundamental steps required for transitioning into a postsecondary institution. Identifying college aspirants late in their junior year, or early in their senior year, may allow campus staff to guide students through the processes and steps necessary for meeting their post-graduation goals.
- The finding that 2-year enrollees earn higher wages than do 4-year enrollees may indicate that graduates who enroll in a 2-year institution potentially face greater financial barriers than do their peers who enroll in 2-year institutions. However, the greater workload may interfere with their intentions to transition from a 2-year institution to a 4-year institution. Future research, using the NSC data, should examine the transition patterns of 2-year enrollees to determine whether employment intensity mediates the probability of transition from a 2-year to a 4-year institution. For these students, a targeted information

campaign detailing the availability of federal financial aid may improve postsecondary transition success rates.

References

Berkner, L., Horn, L., & Clune, M. (2000). *Descriptive summary of 1995–96 beginning postsecondary students: Three years later* (NCES 2000–154). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

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OFFICE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Anne Ware, Ph.D.

DEPARTMENT OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

Holly Williams, Ph.D., Director

Karen Alderete-Looby, Ph.D.

AUTHORS

Marshall W. Garland



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