



EDUCATION BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL SERIES

The Illinois Class of 2002 and Race/Ethnicity: A descriptive summary four years after high school

Kathleen Sullivan Brown, Christopher M. Mullin, and Bradford R. White

Executive Summary

The Illinois High School Class of 2002 is part of the third generational wave of American students following the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, which outlawed segregation in public education. The court wrote in 1954 that:

Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education in our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954) (USSC+)

This longitudinal study allows us to examine the long-term impacts of this monumental education and legal policy in the state of Illinois. An examination of data on how students of various races and ethnicities participate in public and private postsecondary education can provide insights into their subsequent success and challenges in pursuing the American Dream through educational advancement.

Key Findings

Participation

When we examine the enrollment of the 2002 cohort in postsecondary education from the standpoint of race/ethnicity, the proportions of those who enrolled follow similar patterns that have been seen in the past in Illinois and in the United States, with Asian-Americans and White/Caucasian students leading (89% and 82% respectively) in participation.

However, the longitudinal nature of this dataset allows us to show enrollment up to four years after high school graduation. Thus, the data show higher enrollment rates than usually reported for sub-groups, as well for those who enroll immediately following high school. Among those who identified themselves as Multiracial, for example, 3 out of 4 students attended some institution of higher learning within the first four years after high school. Nearly three out of four African-American high school graduates in this cohort enrolled in postsecondary education within four years of completing high school.

Approximately 20-30% of each demographic group starts out at the public community college the first year out of high school.

Completion

However, when we look at program completions in that same time span, the numbers tell a different story. Asian-Americans and White/Caucasian students again lead with the highest proportion of completers, but the percentages drop to 35.5% and 34%, respectively. The completion rate declines for those who identify themselves as “Other” to 21%; for Multiracial, 18%; for non-responders, 16%; for Mexican-American students, 14%; and for Black/African-American students, 12%.

The data show a compelling picture of postsecondary education in Illinois. White/Caucasian students, who represent 59% of the Class of 2002, clearly predominate in the ranks of those who completed a degree or certificate. Their sheer numbers dwarf the other seven groups. Asian-Americans, who represent 4.14% of the cohort, had the highest rate of completion (35.5%); but their proportion of the overall population was much smaller. All other groups had completion rates at approximately 20% or less.

The Public Agenda report (2008), which analyzed demographic projections for population growth in Illinois, explains why this situation is of great concern—it is the population groups at the bottom of completion scale that are expected to grow the fastest.

Only 16% of the Class of 2002 had completed a Bachelor’s degree by Summer 2006. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of all Bachelor degrees earned were completed by White/Caucasian students.

A Gained Perspective

The various ways by which members of the Class of 2002 interact with opportunities for postsecondary education frame this study. Presented are results for the cohort as a whole. We display data by fall, spring, and summer semesters to capture the annual rhythms of educational participation.

As we attempt to study educational pursuits beyond high school, it is important to note that the legal parameters guiding education from kindergarten to graduate school shift at that critical juncture that is education beyond high school. The compulsory, lock-step pattern of enrollment and promotion as seen in K-12 education no longer applies. Postsecondary education represents the various branches sprouting from a tree, not the rigid trunk that gets one there. It is our hope that the descriptive nature of this study, and others forthcoming in the *Education Beyond High School Series*, provide both the foundation for action

and new avenues for exploration into the enrollment and completion puzzle that is postsecondary education for the students from Illinois’ K-12 system.

Research Notes

In reading through this material, it is important to note who exactly is a member of the Class of 2002 cohort in order to understand the findings, implications, and limitations of this cohort.

Who is included in this cohort

- The 113,660 individuals who, as public high school students, took the Prairie State Achievement Exam in Spring 2001

Who is not included in this cohort

- Private high school graduates
- Out-of-state high school graduates that migrated to higher education institutions in Illinois
- Non-traditional, older students who entered or returned to postsecondary education
- Dual enrolled/dual credit students currently in high school
- It is important to note who is included in this study as the resulting recommendations may apply only to one segment of postsecondary education in Illinois. Further, by noting who is not included in this study, several items are important as they impact the findings presented herein:
 1. The fact that September 11th attacks of 2001 occurred during this cohorts’ senior year in high school would likely have an impact on those who chose to enlist in the various branches of the military as opposed to postsecondary education. We have attempted to identify individuals who entered the various branches of the military, but have yet to be successful.
 2. Private high school students and students from out-of-state would greatly enhance our dataset, but they were not included as data sharing agreements were not established with other states and private education entities.
 3. Non-traditional and dual enrollment/dual credit students were not included as they were/would be part of a different graduating cohort.

Considerations in interpreting the data

- While the findings presented in this series suggest that postsecondary enrollment and completion are associated with race/ethnicity, we note that these analyses do not take into account other measures which may help to explain these relationships.
- With regard to the attainment of certificates and degrees, remember that completion is at least partially dependent upon enrollment and that students from different sub-groups enroll at various institution types at quite different rates.
- Finally, it is important to note that in order to provide the level of detail required to illustrate our findings, the scales utilized in the charts of this report often vary. Since the graphs do not all have a consistent scale, figures that may appear similar at first glance might, in fact, represent substantially different enrollment or completion rates.

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Reports in this Series:

The Illinois Class of 2002—An Overview: A descriptive summary four years after high school (IERC 2009-1)

The Illinois Class of 2002 and College Readiness: A descriptive summary four years after high school (IERC 2009-2)

The Illinois Class of 2002 and Gender: A descriptive summary four years after high school (IERC 2009-3)

The Illinois Class of 2002 and Parent Income: A descriptive summary four years after high school (IERC 2009-4)

The Illinois Class of 2002 and Race/Ethnicity: A descriptive summary four years after high school (IERC 2009-5)

Previous IERC studies on the Illinois Class of 2002:

The demographics and academics of college readiness in Illinois (IERC 2005-3), by Yuqin Gong and Jennifer B. Presley

The demographics and academics of college going in Illinois (IERC 2006-2), by Yuqin Gong and Jennifer B. Presley

Following the Illinois high school class of 2002: Three years into college (IERC 2006-5), by Yuqin Gong, Jennifer B. Presley and Bradford R. White

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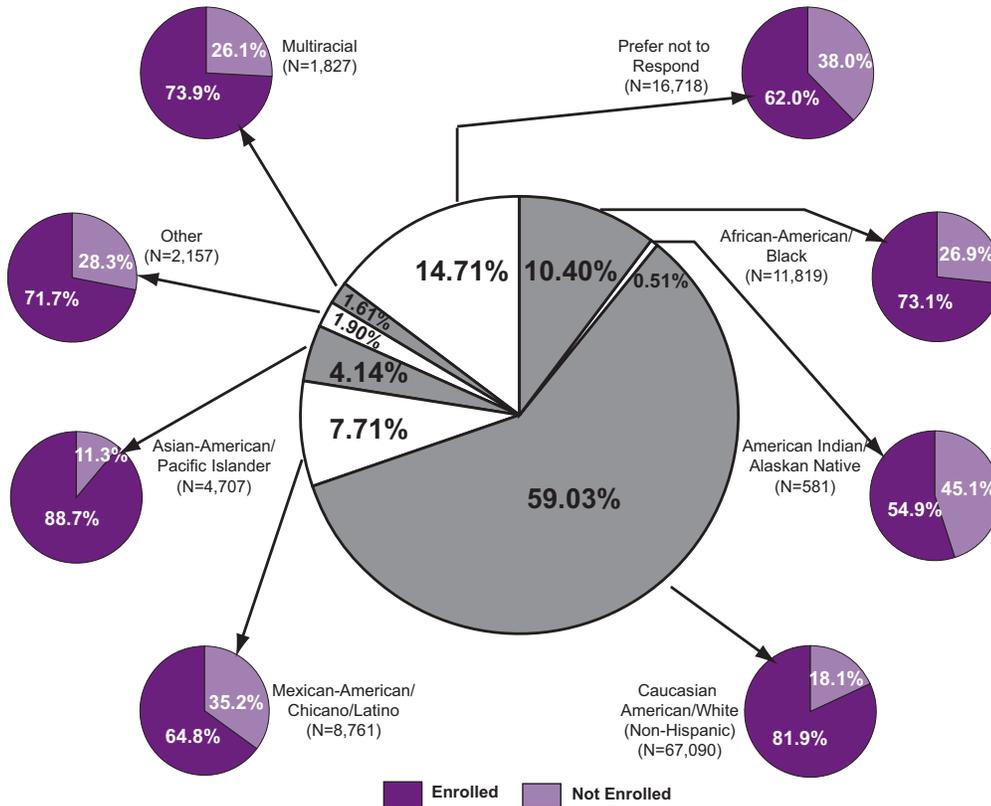
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Enrollment

Figure 1. Percent of the Class of 2002 that Ever Enrolled in Postsecondary Education: Fall 2002 to Summer 2006 ((N=113,660)

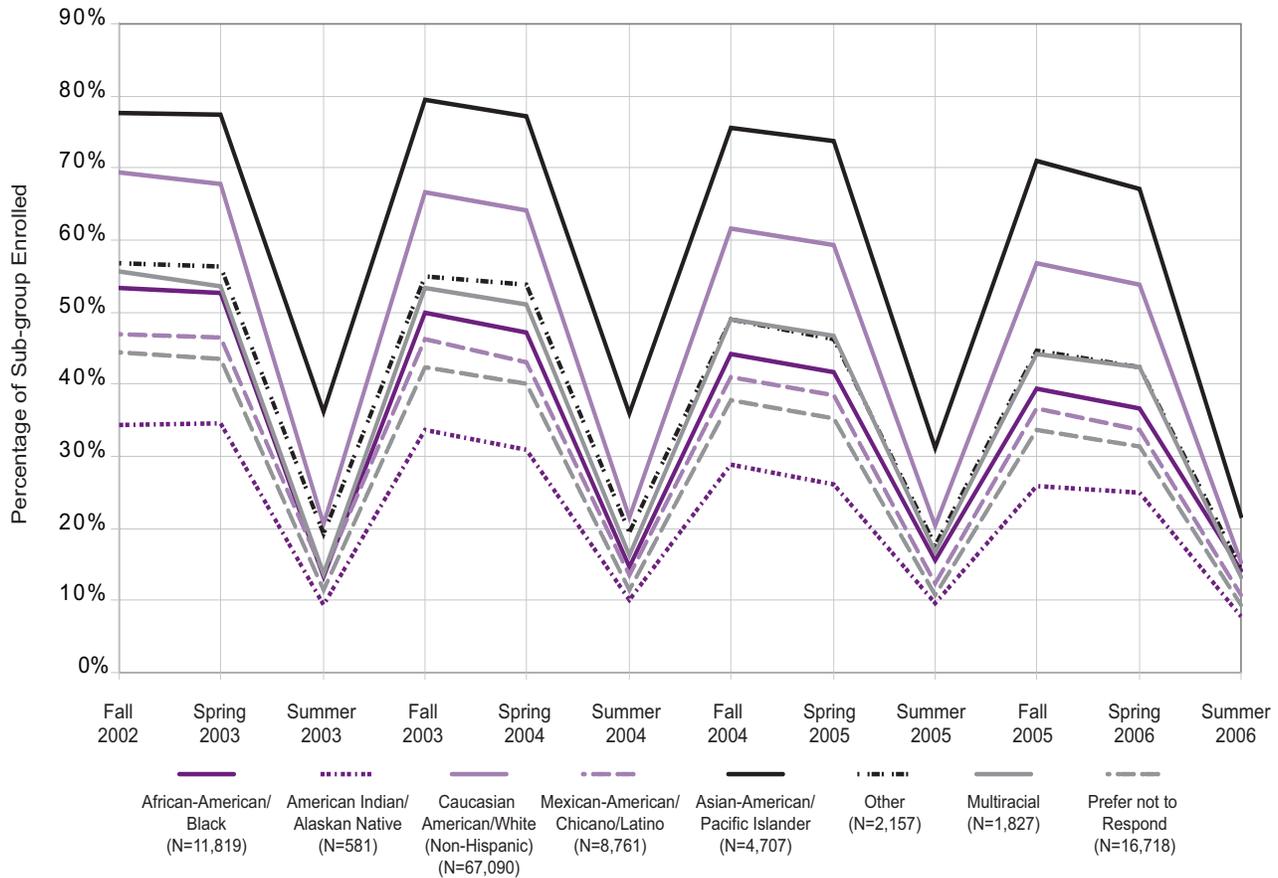


How many individuals of the Class of 2002 ever enrolled in postsecondary education in the four years after high school graduation?

The demographic profile of the Illinois High School Graduating Class of 2002 shows the following breakdown as to race/ethnicity. White/Caucasian students represent the largest proportion at 59.0%, and Black/African Americans are the next largest group at 10.4%. Mexican-American students made up 7.7% while Asian-Americans constituted 4.14%. The “Other” category was chosen by 1.9% and the Multiracial category was preferred by 1.6%. A very small group reported American Indian or Alaskan Native heritage (0.5%). [A fairly large group of students (14.7%) chose not to respond to this question.]

When we examine the enrollment of the 2002 cohort in postsecondary education from the standpoint of race/ethnicity, the proportions of those who enrolled follow similar patterns that have been seen in the past in Illinois and in the United States, with Asian-Americans and White/Caucasian students leading (89% and 82% respectively). However, the longitudinal nature of this dataset also shows high enrollment rates for all other groups as well. Among those who identified themselves as Multiracial, 3 out of 4 students attended some institution of higher learning. Nearly three out of four African-Americans high school graduates in this cohort enrolled in postsecondary education within four years of completing high school. Mexican-American students as well showed a high rate of participation at 65%. For these groups that have traditionally been underrepresented in postsecondary participation, this is encouraging news.

Figure 2. Enrollment Trends, by Semester: Fall 2002 to Summer 2006 (N=113,660)

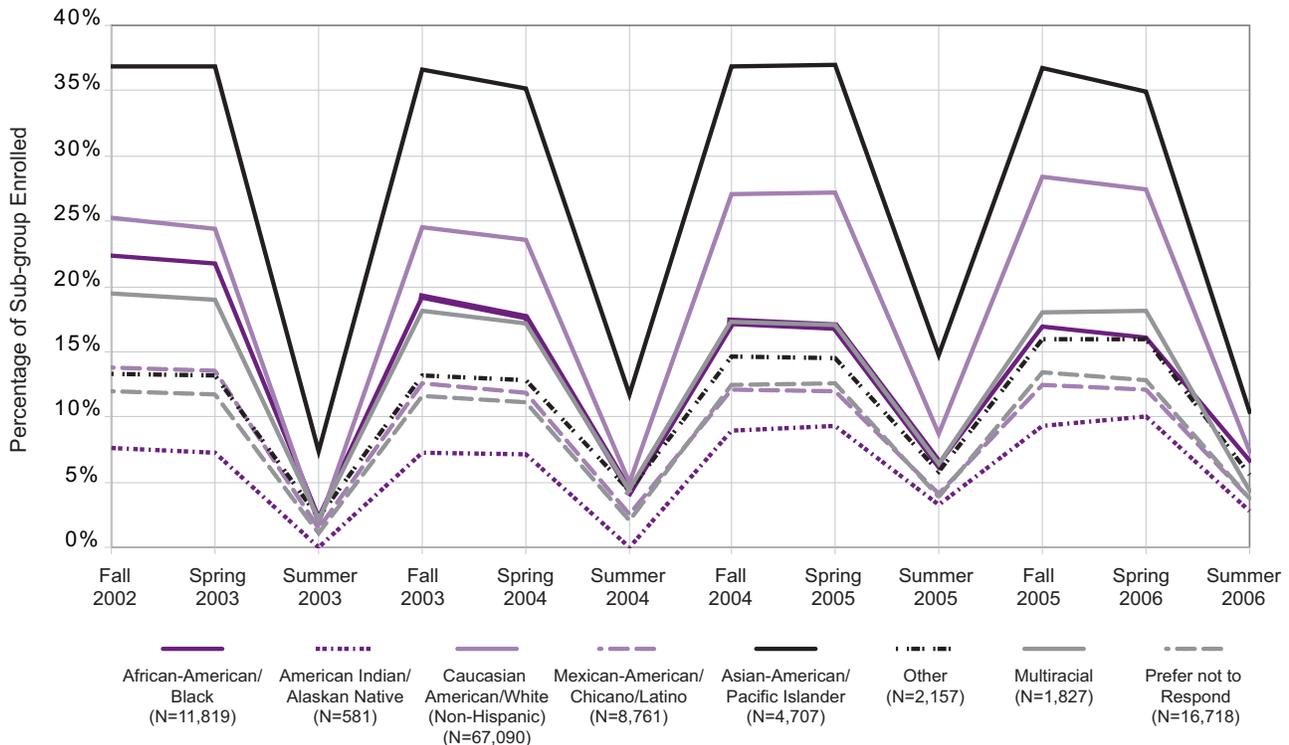


What was the enrollment trend of the Class of 2002 during the four years after high school graduation?

When looking at enrollment by fall and spring semesters, the pattern seems clear: Asian-Americans typically participate at the highest rates, with White/Caucasians next, followed by traditionally underrepresented groups at substantially lower rates. In summer, enrollments drop for every group. Also, the most substantial drop in terms of percentage is for Asian-American and Caucasians. This graph does not appear to show a large retention problem, with only slightly downward trends for all groups over the six year period.

The longitudinal database does not provide information on transfer behavior. The data do not provide differentiated information to allow us to understand if a change in enrollment for a semester or a concurrent enrollment was in effect, influencing the transfer of credits or a switch in institutional attendance. We know, however, from other research on college persistence which suggests that students remain enrolled and engaged when they feel a connection or sense of community on campus (NSSE, 2007).

Figure 3. Public Four-Year Institution Enrollment Trends, by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2002 to Summer 2006 (N=113,660)



How did enrollment trends differ between race/ethnicity groups in the four-year public institutions for the Class of 2002?

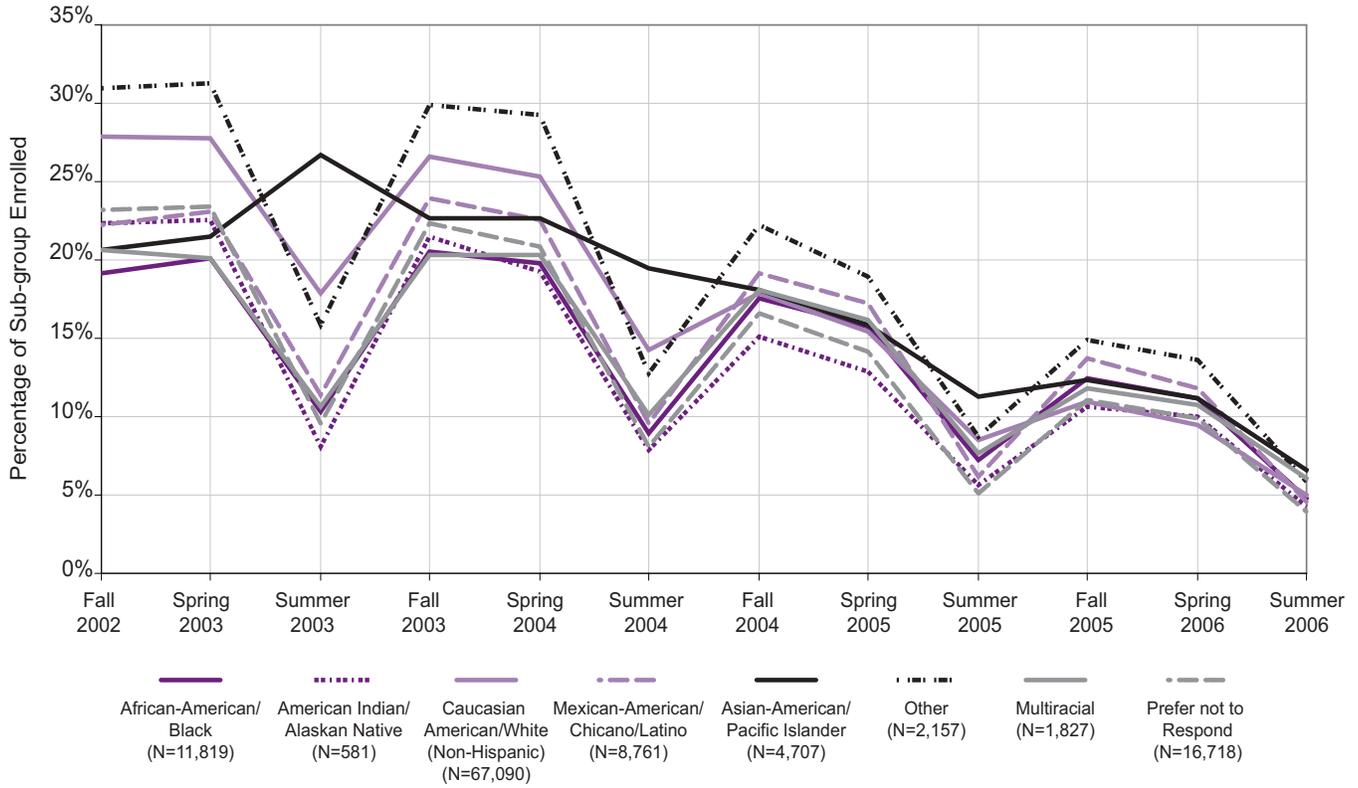
Asian-Americans led enrollment in four-year public institutions by a wide margin in every semester, including summer semesters. They also maintained a steady enrollment through every semester through Spring 2006.

White/Caucasian students were next highest in their proportion of enrollment in public four-year institutions, and their rate rose in the third and fourth years.

While the percent of various subpopulations appears to increase over the four years studied, this graph reflects a possible retention issue for African-American students who start at 22% in the first fall and spring out of high school and drop to approximately 16% by Fall 2005. The IERC's previous studies on college readiness and demographics support the conclusion that African-American and other underrepresented students are less ready for postsecondary education and more likely to be part of families with fewer resources to support continuous enrollment and college persistence (Presley and Gong, 2005).

In conclusion, this graph depicts a trend toward increased percentages of subpopulations enrolling at four-year institutions two years after high school. This suggests that transfer is occurring, a finding supported further in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Public Community College Enrollment Trends, by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2002 to Summer 2006 (N=113,660)



How did enrollment trends differ between race/ethnicity groups in the community colleges for the Class of 2002?

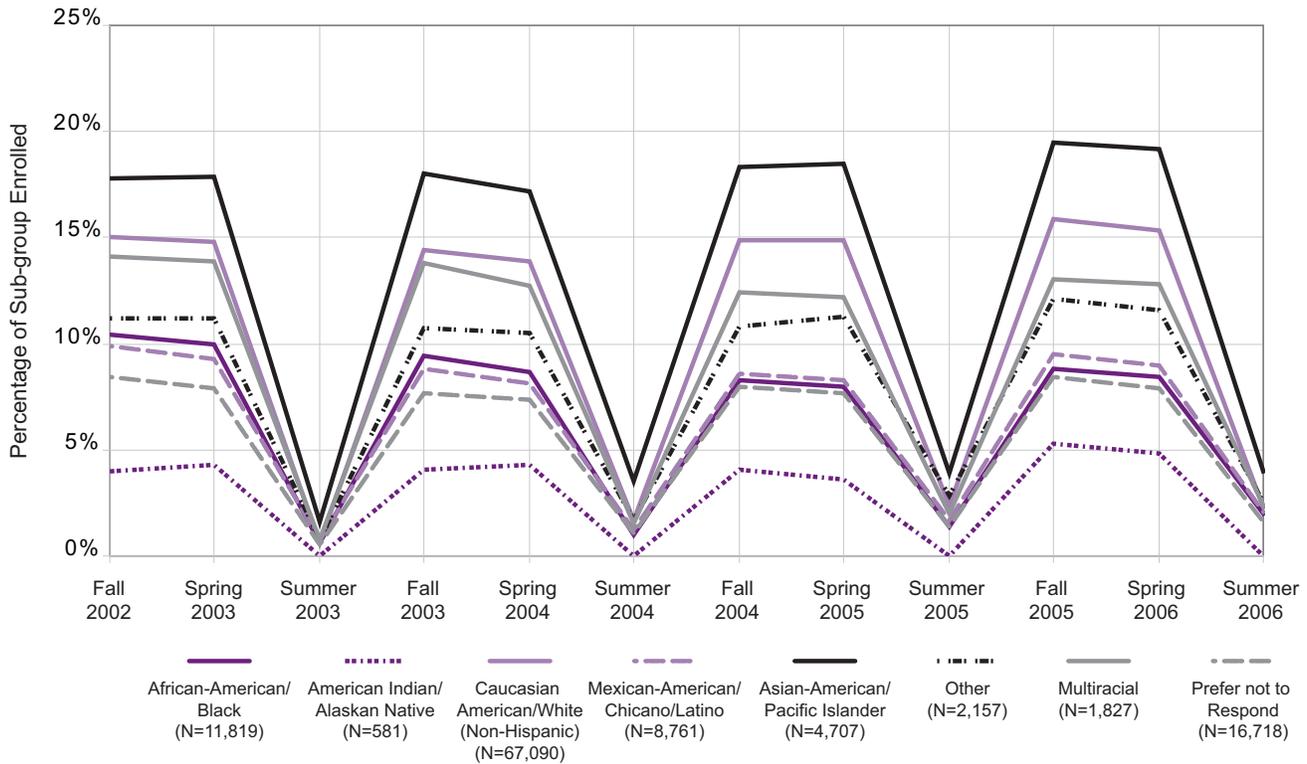
This graph shows that approximately 20-30% of each demographic group starts out at the public community college the first year out of high school. There is a significant drop for all groups except Asian-Americans during the first college summer. With the exception of the group who identified themselves as “Other,” the cohort tracks fairly closely by race/ethnicity in community college participation, until the third summer after starting college when the rate drops to between 5-10%.

What is interesting about the observations of public community colleges over the four-years after high school is the different participation rates by racial/ethnic sub-groups. While all sub-groups follow the same participation roughly from semester to semester in terms of their relationships to each other, the sub-groups appear to follow much different patterns—Asian-Americans/Pacific Islanders and Caucasians, for example. Both groups increased summer semester enrollment at community colleges.

In looking at the graph, it appears that the prevalence of Caucasian participation in public community colleges drops substantially after Summer 2004.

Across all summer sessions, Asian-American/Pacific Islanders appear to have the high percent of subgroup participation in postsecondary education at public community colleges.

Figure 5. Private Four-Year Institution Enrollment Trends, by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2002 to Summer 2006 (N=113,660)



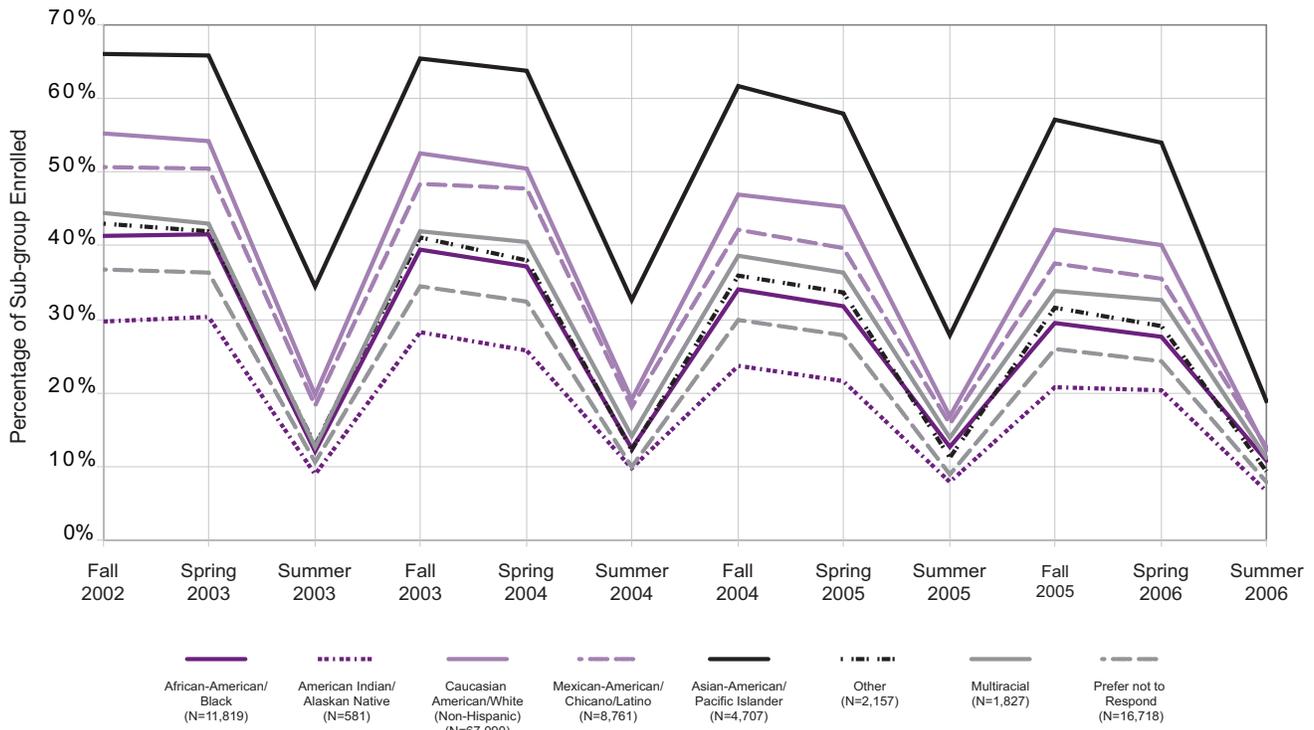
How did enrollment trends differ between race/ethnicity groups in the private four-year institutions for the Class of 2002?

This graph shows a relatively stable enrollment in fall and spring at private institutions and further, institutions with substantial dropoff during each summer. Attendance at private institutions among the cohort is led by Asian-Americans, followed by White/Caucasians and Multiracial students. Other groups cluster in the 10% range. Very few students from American Indian/Alaskan Native populations enrolled in private institutions generally.

Fall to spring semester enrollment changes over time suggest that, overall, private four-year institutions are retaining students. In the third and fourth years after high school, there appears to be transfer for all groups, possibly as transfers from community colleges and other public institutions.

What is interesting about this graph, and is evidenced in other graphs to come and in other reports, is the consistency of the gaps between groups. This consistency points to the importance of academic preparation in K-12.

Figure 6. In-State Enrollment Trends, by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2002 to Summer 2006 (N=113,660)

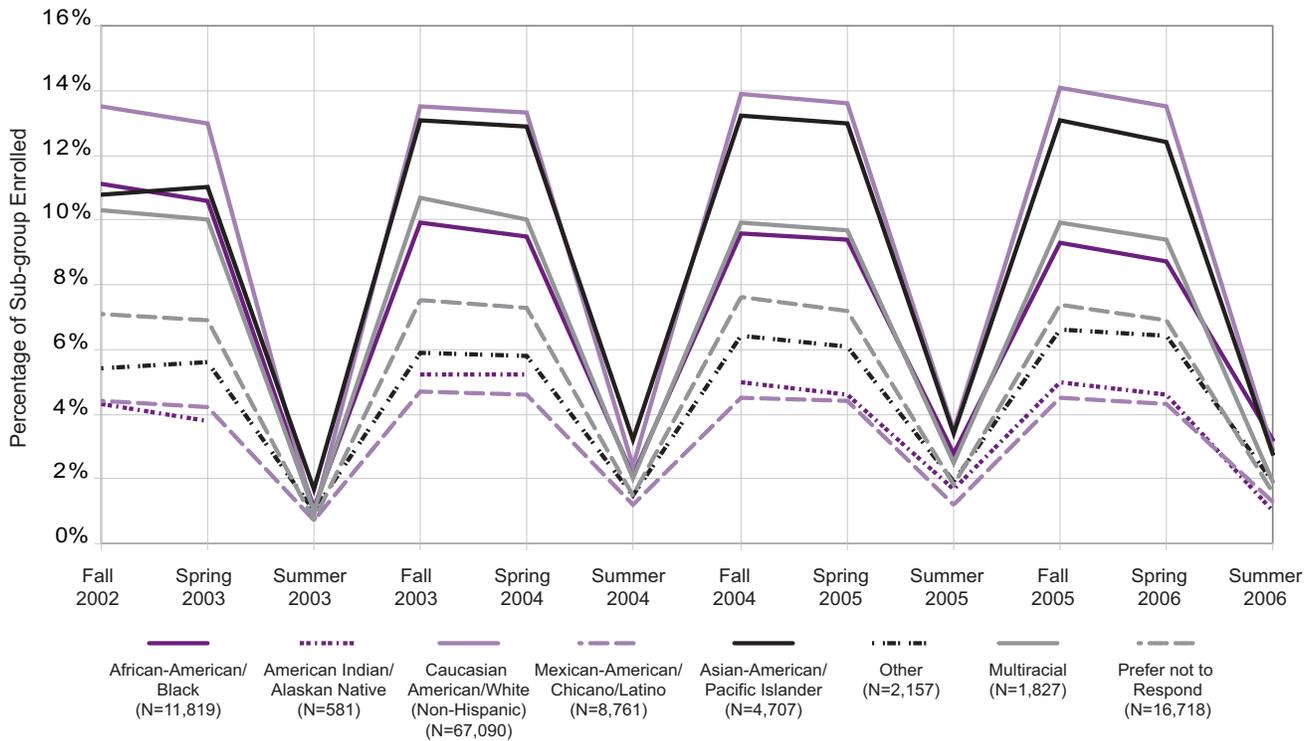


How did enrollment trends differ between racial and ethnic groups at in-state for the Class of 2002?

In-state enrollments were highest for Asian-Americans (65%) and White/Caucasians (55%) during the period of our study. This graph reflects possible access and retention issues in the low level for Mexican-American/Chicano/Latino students. Reasons for this low level of participation need to be identified and addressed, given the expected growth rate of this population within the state.

As mentioned earlier, IERC’s previous analysis of demographics and college readiness of the 2002 cohort suggest that Mexican-American/Chicano/Latino students and other underrepresented groups are less likely to be college-ready and more likely to be in families with lower incomes. The multiple causes could include inadequate academic preparation, financial challenges and other issues that might be addressed through federal, state, local or institutional policies.

Figure 7. Out-of-State Enrollment Trends, by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2002 to Summer 2006 (N=113,660)



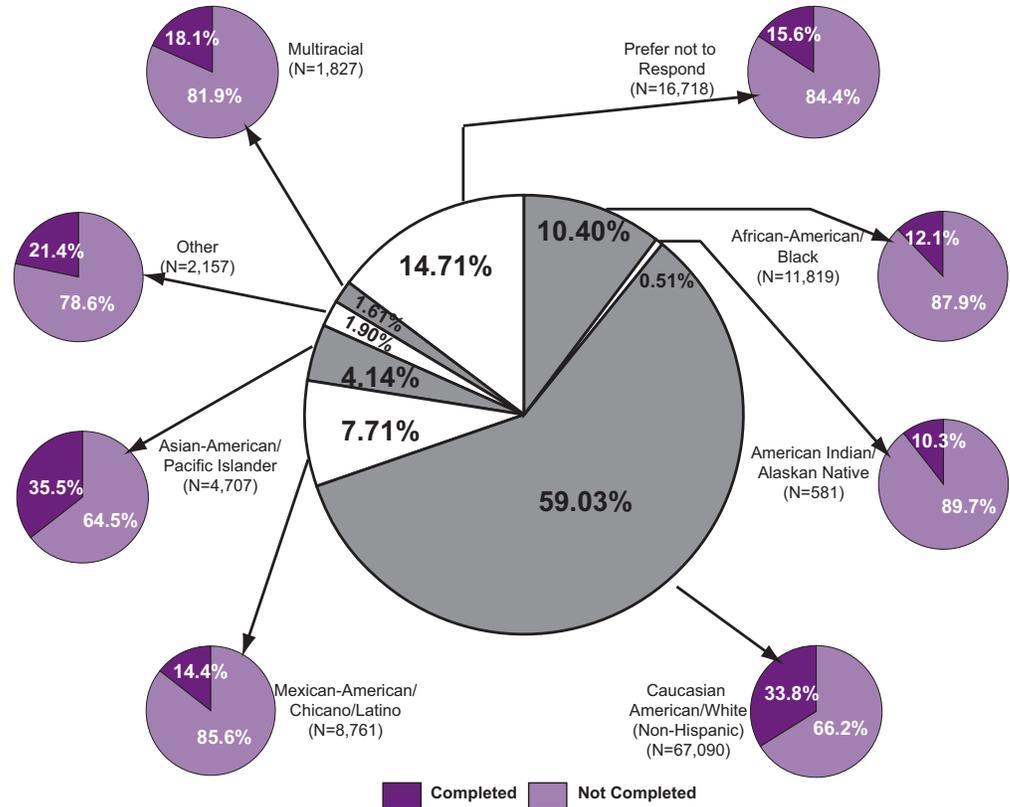
How did enrollment trends differ between race/ethnicity groups in the out-of-state institutions for the Class of 2002?

This graph shows the same familiar saw-tooth pattern. This time White/Caucasians lead the cohort in out-of-state attendance, with Asian-American, Multiracial and then African-American students in the second, third and fourth positions. Mexican-American/Chicano/Latino students are least likely to attend out of state. However, attendance at out-of-state institutions overall is low, peaking at just under 20% of enrolled students.

College selection is a complex process that involves student readiness for the academic, as well as the social challenge of being away from home. Choosing to attend college out of state depends upon a number of factors that this study cannot address, including institutional recruitment efforts and unique academic program offerings.

Completions

Figure 8. Percent of the Class of 2002 that Ever Completed a Certificate or Degree Program, by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2002 to Summer 2006 (N=113,660)

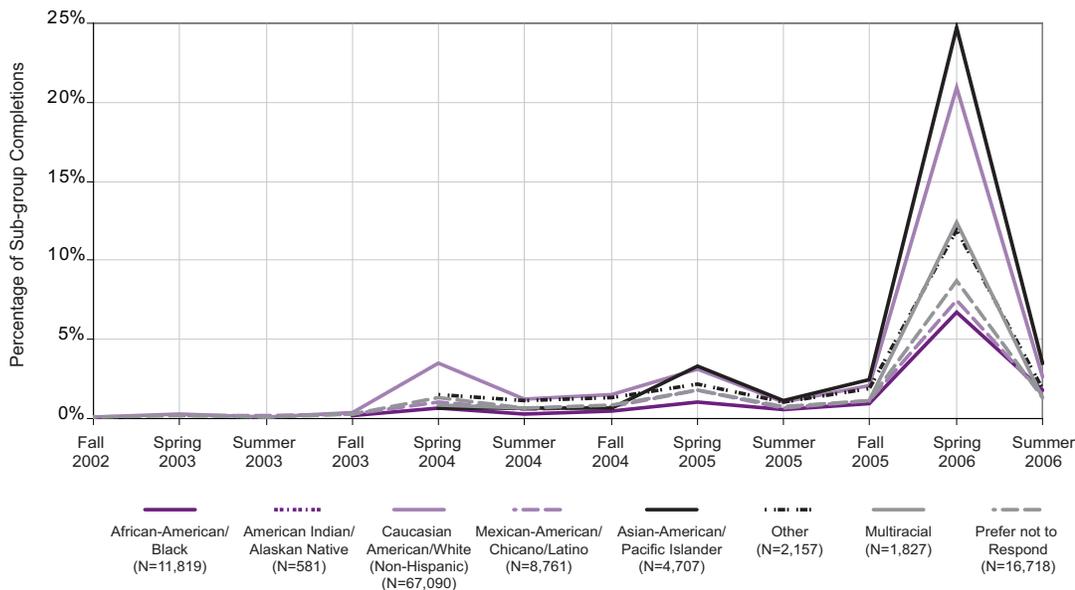


How many individuals of the Class of 2002 ever completed a certificate or degree program in the four years after high school graduation?

In Figure 1 we reported very high levels of participation among the cohort within the first four years following high school; however, when we look at program completions in that same time span, the numbers tell a different story. Asian-Americans and White/Caucasian students—groups which lead in enrollment—lead again, with 36% and 34%, respectively. The completion rate for those self-identified as “Other” declines to 21%; for Multiracial, 18%; for non-responders, 16%; for Mexican-American students, 14%; and for Black/African American students, 12%. Are these students taking longer to complete a degree? Or are they not completing the programs they started after high school?

Further studies will examine in more detail the fifth and sixth year completion trends while taking into account multivariate links, including of college readiness for each group.

Figure 9. Completions Trends, by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2002 to Summer 2006 (N=113,660)



What were the completion trends by race/ethnicity of the Class of 2002 during the four years after high school graduation?

This graphic (Figure 9) shows a compelling picture of current postsecondary education in Illinois. Asian-American and White/Caucasian students (who represent 63.1% of the Class of 2002) clearly predominate in the ranks of those who completed a degree or certificate. Asian-Americans had the highest rate of completers (35.5%) over the entire four-year period (Table 1, below); but their proportion of the overall population was much smaller, representing just 4.1% of the 2002 cohort.

The Public Agenda report (2008) which analyzed demographic projections college attainment levels, and economic development prospects in Illinois, suggests that these minority population groups are expected to grow the fastest in the coming years and will be needed to drive the state’s economy in the future. That is why these completion trends are of great concern.

Table 1. Comparison of Cohort Completers, by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2002 to Summer 2006 (N=113,660)

	Class of 2002: Fall 2002 - Summer 2006 (N=113,660)		Completers: Fall 2002 - Summer 2006 (N=30,508)		Non-Completers: Fall 2002 - Summer 2006 (N=83,152)	
	Sub-group Total	% of Sub-group	# Completers	% Completers	# Non-Completers	% Non-Completers
African-American/Black	11,819	10.4%	1,429	12.1%	10,390	87.9%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	581	0.1%	60	10.3%	521	89.7%
Caucasian American/White (Non-Hispanic)	67,090	59.0%	22,686	33.8%	44,404	66.2%
Mexican-American/Chicano/Latino	8,761	7.7%	1,264	14.4%	7,497	85.6%
Asian-American/Pacific Islander	4,707	4.1%	1,671	35.5%	3,036	64.5%
Other	2,157	1.9%	461	21.4%	1,696	78.6%
Multiracial	1,827	1.6%	331	18.1%	1,496	81.9%
Prefer not to respond	16,718	14.7%	2,606	15.6%	14,112	84.4%

* May not total 100% due to rounding.

Figure 10. Completions at Public Institutions, by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2002 to Summer 2006 (N=113,660)

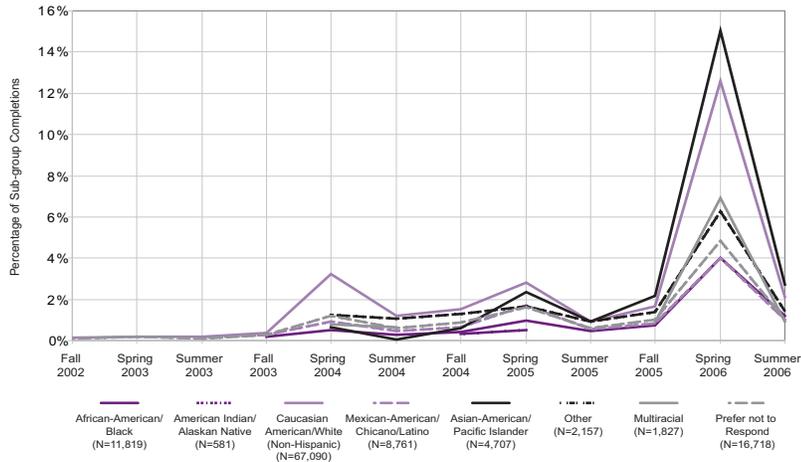


Figure 11. Completions at Private Institutions, by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2002 to Summer 2006 (N=113,660)

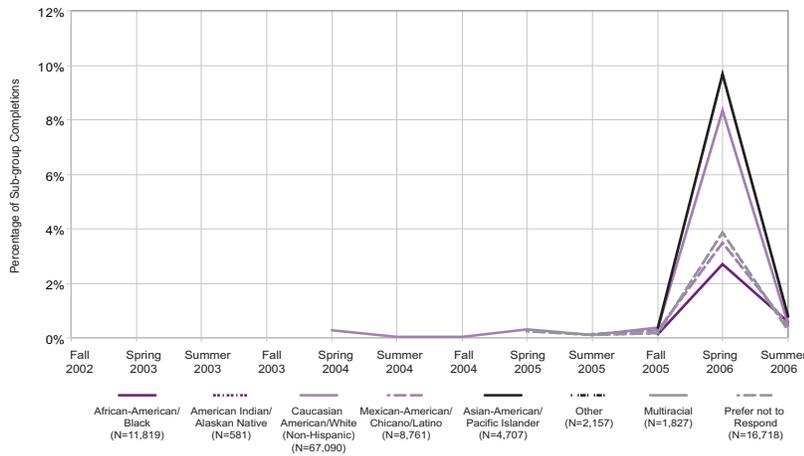


Figure 12. Completions at In-State Institutions, by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2002 to Summer 2006 (N=113,660)

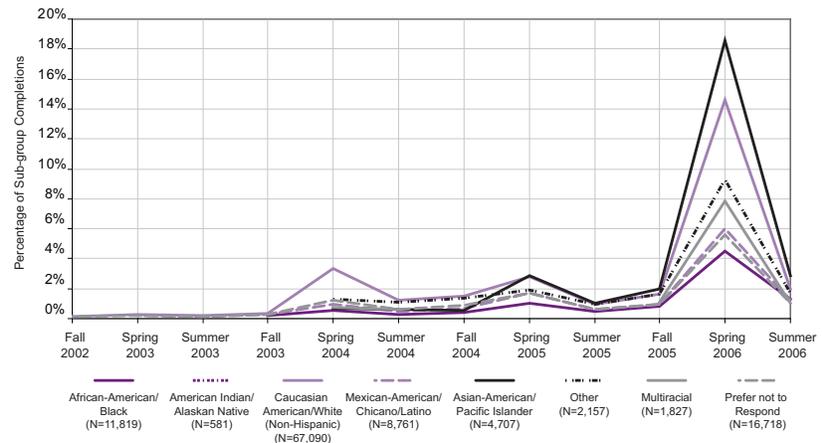
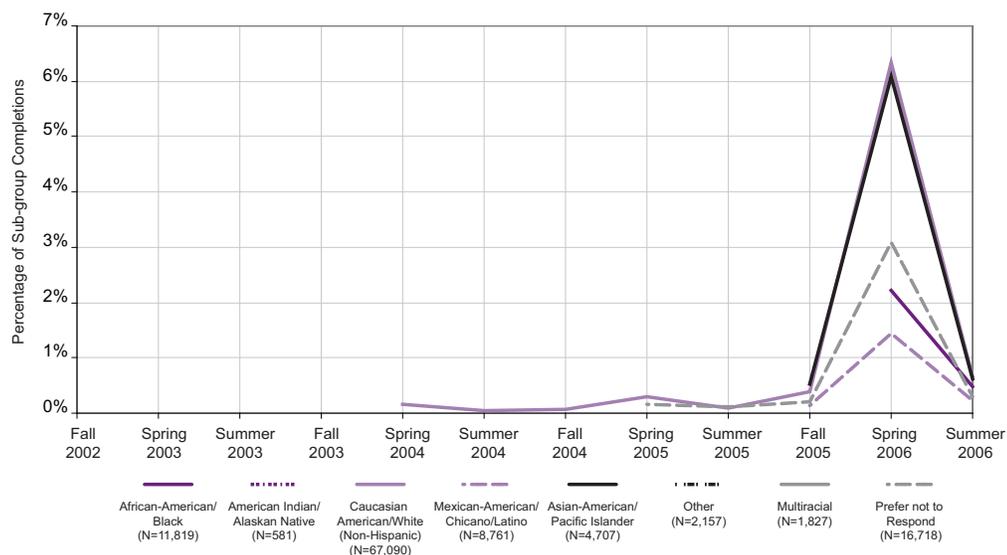


Figure 13. Completions at Out-of-State Institutions, by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2002 to Summer 2006 (N=113,660)



What were the completion trends by race/ethnicity of the Class of 2002 at different institution types?

Figures 10-13 reflect the story that has been unfolding throughout these data analyses. Asian-American and White/Caucasian students, who represented 63.1% of the base population of the 2002 cohort, have entered into postsecondary education in greater numbers, and have persisted and completed degrees at public, private, in-state and out-of-state institutions.

Three groups (American Indian, Other, and Multiracial) show no completions at private (Fig. 11) and out-of-state (Fig. 13), and negligible completions at other institution types (Fig. 10, 12). The Asian-American/Pacific Islander group takes a slight lead in completions at out-of-state institutions in Spring 2006.

Analysis of the fifth and sixth years of data will examine additional completions at the associates and baccalaureates level and beyond. It is possible that the completion rates of all students, including underrepresented groups, will continue to rise.

Figure 14. Completions at Four-Year Institutions, by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2002 to Summer 2006 (N=113,660)

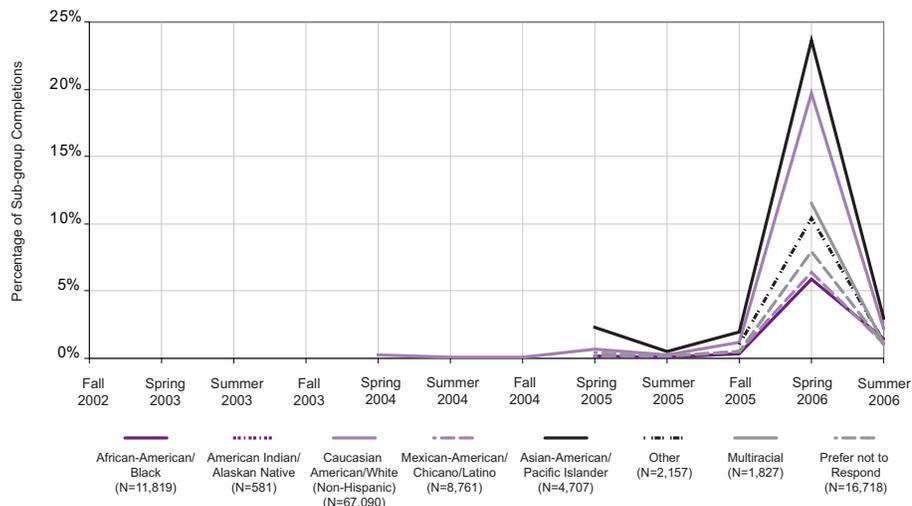
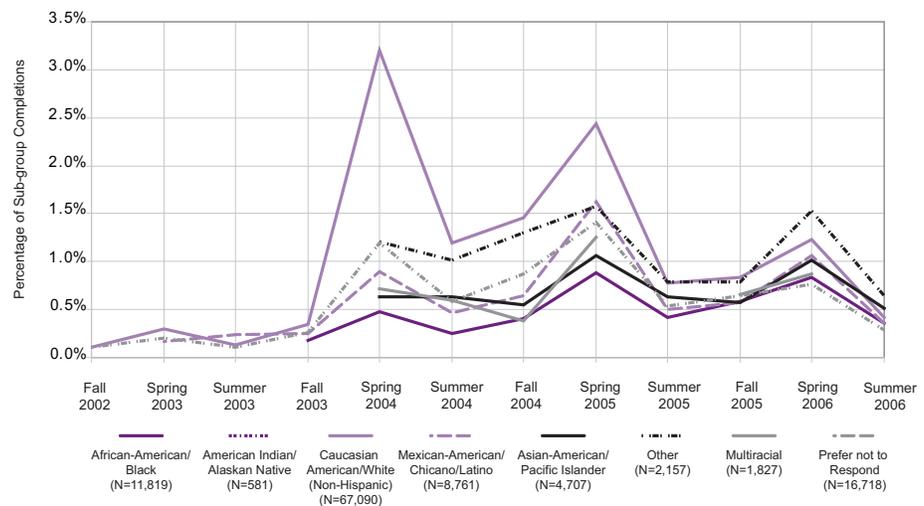


Figure 15. Completions at Community Colleges, by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2002 to Summer 2006 (N=113,660)



What were the completion trends by race/ethnicity of the Class of 2002 at four-year institutions and community colleges?

Similar to the previous group of graphs (Figures 10-13), Figure 14 reflects another peak of Spring 2006 completions, primarily at the baccalaureate level, for the Asian-American and White/Caucasian students from this cohort. The data show no American Indian completions at four-year institutions or community colleges in this time period. Years 5 and 6 should show additional completions for that increasingly large group of students from all demographic groups who are taking longer than four years to complete their Bachelor’s degrees and for students who chose to enter postsecondary education in subsequent years.

Figure 15 shows three different peaks—at Spring 2004, Spring 2005, and Spring 2006—with each one declining in the number of community college completions by White/Caucasian students at those milestones. However, two additional observations can be made: the level of completions is quite low compared to other institutional types; and completions recorded for the other races or ethnic groups are minimal.

Table 2. Number of Completions by Type and Semester:, by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2002 to Summer 2006

Race/Ethnicity	Missing Information	Unknown Certificate/ Associate Type	Transfer Associate/ Certificate	Terminal Associate/ Certificate	Baccalaureate Degree	Master's Degree	Total
African-American/ Black	228	107	220	233	733	*	1,521
American indian/ Alaskan Native	11	*	17	*	23	0	51
Caucasian American/ White (Non-Hispanic)	3,103	1,427	4,272	2,416	13,651	38	24,907
Mexican American/ Chicano/Latino	182	131	256	183	619	*	1,371
Asian-American/ Pacific Islander	156	46	135	96	1,334	*	1,767
Other	70	30	100	51	254	*	505
Multiracial	42	21	50	24	210	0	347
I Prefer Not to Respond	508	325	383	341	1,341	*	2,898
Total	4,300	2,087	5,433	3,344	18,165	38	33,367

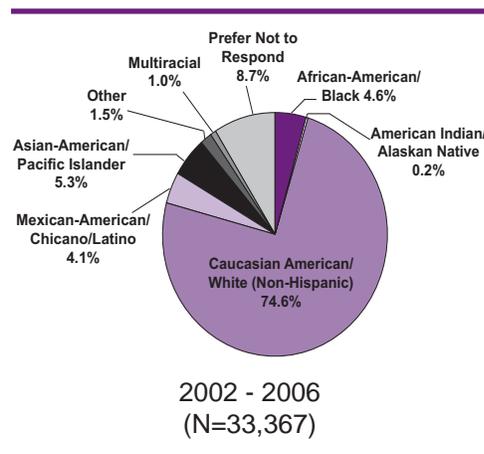
* indicates that more than zero but fewer than 10 completions were observed.

What were the trends in degree level completion for the Class of 2002?

The data presented in Table 2 show that, for the Illinois High School Class of 2002, the postsecondary education system in the state of Illinois is dominated by Asian-American and White/Caucasian students who enrolled and completed degrees and certificates faster at all levels during the four-year period of this study. While this reflects their combined presence in the population, it may also reflect greater levels of college-readiness and financial and other resources to attend and persist toward educational attainment (as cited in previous IERC reports). Still, among these two successful demographic groups, their rate of completion after four years is only 35.5% and 33.8% respectively of their sub-group peers who started this journey into postsecondary education.

Asian-American/Pacific Islanders show high levels of both enrollment and completion, although their proportion of the population is much smaller (4.4%). For other minority population groups that are expected to grow in population impact in the future, there are worrying signs of low persistence and completion despite an early surge in enrollment in the first four years following high school.

Figure 16. Percent of Degree/ Certificate Completions, by Race/ Ethnicity



Key Findings

Participation

- When we examine the enrollment of the 2002 cohort in postsecondary education from the standpoint of race/ethnicity, the proportions of those who enrolled follow similar patterns that have been seen in the past in Illinois and in the United States, with Asian-American and White/Caucasian students leading (89% and 82% respectively).
- However, the longitudinal nature of this dataset allows us to show enrollment up to four years after high school graduation. Thus, the data show higher enrollment rates than usually reported for sub-groups as well as for those who enroll immediately following high school. Among those who identified themselves as Multiracial, for example, 3 out of 4 students attended some institution of higher learning within the first four years after high school. Nearly three out of four African-Americans high school graduates in this cohort enrolled in postsecondary education within four years of completing high school.
- Approximately 20-30% of each demographic group starts out at the public community college the first year out of high school.

Completion

- However, when we look at program completions in that same time span, the numbers tell a different story. Asian-American and White/Caucasian students again lead with the highest proportion of completers, with 36% and 34%, respectively. The completion rate declines for those who identify themselves as “Other” to 21%; for Multiracial, 18%; for non-responders, 16%; for Mexican-American students, 14%; and for Black/African-American students, 12%.
- The data show a compelling picture of postsecondary education in Illinois. Asian-American and White/Caucasian students, who represent 63.1% of the Class of 2002, predominate in the ranks of those who completed a degree or certificate. Asian-Americans, who represent 4.14% of the cohort, had the highest rate of completion (35.5%) over the four-year period of the study; but their proportion of the overall population was much smaller. All other groups had completion rates at approximately 20% or less.
- Seventy-seven percent (77%) of all Bachelor degrees earned were completed by White/Caucasian students.
- The Public Agenda report (2008), which analyzed demographic projections for population growth, educational attainment, and economic development prospects in Illinois, explains why this graphic is of great concern. It is the currently underrepresented population groups that are expected to grow the fastest in the coming years.
- Only 16% of the entire Class of 2002 had completed a Bachelor’s degree by Summer 2006.

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About the Illinois Education Research Council



The Illinois Education Research Council was established in 2000 at Southern Illinois University to provide Illinois with education research to support P-20 education policy making and program development. The IERC undertakes independent research and policy analysis, often in collaboration with other researchers, that informs and strengthens Illinois' commitment to providing a seamless system of educational opportunities for its citizens. Through publications, presentations, participation on committees, and a research symposium, the IERC brings objective and reliable evidence to the work of state policy makers and practitioners.