

Report reveals improvements and persistent inequities in college access and success in NYC

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[A new report from the Research Alliance for New York City Schools](#)

provides an in-depth look at high school students' pathways into and through college, revealing large improvements in college access, but also highlighting persistent differences in outcomes for historically underrepresented groups of students.

New York City has made dramatic progress reducing [high school](#) dropouts and boosting on-time graduation rates, which rose from 47 percent in 2005 to 70 percent in 2016. At the same time, educational priorities and expectations have changed, with an increased emphasis on graduating students who are college- and career-ready.

This new report, the second in the Research Alliance's New York City Goes to College series, explores how rising high [school](#) graduation rates are playing out as students move into and through college. The report follows multiple cohorts of New York City students, beginning with those who entered 9th grade in 2003 and ending with students who began 9th grade in 2008. Researchers followed each cohort for up to 10 years (through the 2014-15 school year).

Doing so allowed them to report six-year college completion rates for the early cohorts, an important metric since many students require more than four years to finish college. Researchers also included students who delayed their enrollment into college, as well as those who "stopped

out"—that is, left college and returned later.

"Patterns of college going have changed, with many more enrollment options available to students. That demands a wider lens for measuring outcomes," said Kristin Black, the report's co-author and a research fellow at the Research Alliance through the NYU Institute for Education Sciences-funded Predoctoral Interdisciplinary Research Training (IES-PIRT) program.

The researchers used a four-part framework - access, persistence, efficiency, and equity - to examine students' pathways from 9th grade to the end of college. Key findings include:

- **Access:** There have been broad improvements in college access, driven largely by rising on-time high school graduation rates. The proportion of New York City 9th graders who enroll in college has increased over time, from 55 percent of students who started high school in 2003 to 61 percent of those who started in 2008.
- **Persistence:** Higher rates of college access have been eroded somewhat by students leaving after one or two years of college. While the researchers measured a 6-percentage point increase in [college enrollment](#) from the 2003 to 2008 cohorts, a third of those gains were lost within the first two years of college for the 2008 cohort.
- **Efficiency:** Although four-year colleges remain the primary source of degrees, increasing proportions of students have enrolled in two-year colleges, with fewer students delaying their college enrollment. Enrollment in two-year colleges is growing faster among students from underrepresented groups—that is, those from the poorest neighborhoods, Black and Latino students, and young men.
- **Equity:** While all students have seen improved college access over time, gaps in enrollment and outcomes associated with

gender and neighborhood income have persisted, and there is some evidence that differences by race/ethnicity have worsened. For example, while the 25-percentage point gap in college enrollment between Asian and Latino students (the highest and lowest attaining groups) remained unchanged from the 2003 to 2008 cohort, the gap between the groups after two years of college actually widened from 27 to 29 percentage points.

"New York City has made extraordinary progress in its high school graduation rates—and these changes have in turn driven improved college access for students who, even 20 years ago, would never have had the opportunity to enroll," said James Kemple, executive director at the Research Alliance. "But addressing deeply rooted inequities—particularly those associated with income and race—is proving much more challenging. In future studies, we will be able to see whether the City's current slate of reforms is moving the needle on these inequities."

The New York City Goes to College series is possible as a result of the NYC Partnership for College Readiness and Success, a collaboration between the Research Alliance, the NYC Department of Education, and CUNY. The partnership is aimed at better understanding how to prepare and support students toward [college](#) success.

Provided by New York University

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