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**As Colorado aims to improve student outcomes, high school college-going rate remains consistent with persistent gaps among ethnic groups**

*More than 56 percent of students in the 2017 high school graduating class enrolled in a postsecondary institution*

DENVER – Feb. 22, 2019: Among Colorado’s high school class of 2017, 56.3 percent, or about 32,400 students, enrolled in a postsecondary institution directly after graduation, according to a [report](#) issued today by the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE). Factoring students who earned a credential through concurrent and dual enrollment programs, the college-going rate rises to 57.4 percent.

Of the college-going group, more than three-fourths chose to attend a Colorado college or university, while 24 percent opted for out-of-state institutions. About 11 percent more women (61.9 percent) enrolled than men (50.8 percent), continuing a nine-year trend.

Gaps also persist among white students and students of color. Asian and white high school graduates had the highest college-going rates in 2017—75.2 percent and 61.1 percent, respectively. Data also reveals a 15.3 percentage point gap in postsecondary enrollment among white and Hispanic students, who make up the fastest-growing ethnic group in the state, and a 6.3 percent gap among white and African American students.

“We must continue to create new pathways for students and ease their transition from high school to college,” said Dr. Angie Paccione, executive director of CDHE. “While it’s promising to see some of these initiatives pay off, we must mobilize our communities to expand higher education opportunities for all.”

**Outcomes for lower income Coloradans**

Similar to the racial gaps, enrollment discrepancies persist among students from lower income families. Students who received free or reduced lunch in high school enrolled in college at disproportionately lower rates than their counterparts (43 vs. 62 percent).

Almost 35 percent of the class of 2017 who attended college in Colorado received a federal Pell Grant, compared to 33 percent for the class of 2016. This increase outpaces the uptick in high school graduates who qualified for free and reduced lunch, suggesting that more low-income students are pursuing postsecondary education and receiving Pell Grants when they arrive on campus.

**Student success measures**

Research suggest students who complete more than 30 credits in their first year are more likely to graduate. For the class of 2017, 48.6 percent of students met this benchmark, an increase of nearly 6 percent since 2016. What’s more, two- and four-year credential completion rates are improving with each consecutive graduating class.

Despite these gains, gaps remain when looking at race and ethnicity. Colorado’s minority students lag behind their white and Asian peers in credit accumulation, GPAs, overall retention and four-year graduation rates.

### [Other key findings](#)

- Hispanic students have the highest two-year completion rate and one of the lowest four-year completion rate.
- The percentage of recent high school graduates receiving state or institutional aid—aid directly related to state General Fund investment in higher education—has increased since 2013.
- Recent high school graduates are most likely to pursue a bachelor’s degree, followed by an associate degree. Very few pursue a certificate (3.3 percent).
- Students who received a post-high school credential while in high school were more likely to pursue shorter degree paths (certificate or associate degree).
- Among 2016 graduates, 86 percent continued their program, known the *persistence rate*. The persistence rate at two-year colleges was 63 percent.

### **Efforts to improve outcomes**

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE), CDHE and institutions of higher education partner with outside organizations to boost postsecondary enrollment rates. As part of the first-ever Colorado Free Application Day, every Colorado public college and university—and several in-state private institutions—waived application fees for in-state students only. This resulted in a 12 percent increase in applications statewide; half the applications were submitted by students of color, and a third were submitted by first-generation students. Read more examples in the report.

### **About the report**

Now in its eighth iteration, the report provides both statewide information as well as district specific results aimed at strengthening efforts to improve student success and alignment between the K-12 and higher education systems. The [report](#) was submitted to the Education Committees of the Senate and House of Representatives and the State Board of Education, pursuant to 23-1-113 [9] C.R.S.

### **About the Colorado Department of Higher Education**

Working with the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, we advocate, develop policies and support students to maximize higher education opportunities for all. The Department believes every Coloradan should have an education beyond high school to pursue their dreams and improve our communities. Read the CDHE master plan [Colorado Rises](#).

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