

The Postsecondary Progress and Success of High School Graduates



COLORADO
Department of
Higher Education

This report was prepared by the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) pursuant to C.R.S. 23-1-113 and C.R.S. 23-1-113.3.

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Colorado's 2017 High School Graduates



COLLEGE GOING RATE FOR
THE CLASS OF 2017

56.3 percent

If you factor in the more than
1,600 credentials that graduates
received while in high school
then it becomes 57.4 percent.

57.4%

Equity gaps still exist
for African American
and Hispanic Students

46 PERCENT
of Hispanic students

and

54 PERCENT
of African American students

ENROLL IN COLLEGE

compared to

61 PERCENT
of white students



24 PERCENT

of students attend
out of state



73 PERCENT

attend 4-year institutions

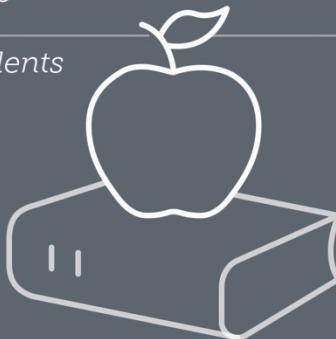


Only **43** PERCENT of students who qualify for
free and reduced lunch (FRL)
attend college

compared to 62 percent of students
who do not qualify (non-FRL).

FRL students are also
more likely to enroll in-state
(88 percent compared to 72 percent)

and attend community colleges
(41 percent compared to 33 percent).



Only

40 PERCENT
of Hispanic students

32 PERCENT
of African American students

ATTEND FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

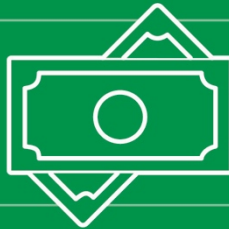
Compared to more than

75 PERCENT
for most other groups

Postsecondary Success of Colorado's Graduates

Thanks to increased state investment the
number of students receiving state aid has increased

30 PERCENT



*and the number of students receiving institutional aid
has increased 11 percent since 2013.*

EQUITY GAPS STILL PERSIST

Hispanic, African American and Hawaiian Pacific Islanders



are least likely to be on track to complete a degree
on time and only 35 percent of FRL students are
on track to complete a degree on time.



Almost half of students
from the class of 2017
who enrolled in college
have accumulated

30 CREDITS

**making them on-track
to complete their
degree on time.**

Completion rates continue to
improve with each new class.

BETWEEN 2009 AND 2016

Two-year completion
rates have gone up

61 PERCENT



BETWEEN 2009 AND 2014

Two-year certificate and degree
completion rates went up

29 PERCENT

Four year rates went up

28 PERCENT

HISPANIC STUDENTS



have the highest
2 YEAR
completion rates

and

one of the lowest
4 YEAR
completion rates

Introduction

Earning a postsecondary credential is increasingly important for individuals, the economy, and the future of Colorado. The Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce predicts that in the modern economy, two-thirds of entry-level jobs will require training beyond high school. Approximately 56 percent of good jobs, jobs paying a minimum of \$35,000 for workers between the ages of 25 and 44 and \$44,000 for those 45 to 64 years old, require a bachelor's degree. Another 24 percent of good jobs require some other postsecondary experience.¹

In response to these realities, the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) released *Colorado Rises: Advancing Education and Talent Development*, a statewide plan to help Colorado reach 66 percent educational attainment among adults by 2025. To get there, the master plan lays out four strategic goals: increase credential completion, erase equity gaps, improve student success, and invest in affordability and innovation.

Developing Colorado's own population by ensuring our high school graduates are enrolling and succeeding in postsecondary education is essential to reaching the state's goals. According to the Education Commission of the States, Colorado is one of only a few states that can reach its educational-attainment goals through increased outreach and engagement of traditional students. Assuming 100 percent high school graduation and postsecondary enrollment rates, Colorado can meet Lumina Foundation's Goal 2025 of 60 percent educational attainment by 2025.² Though it is unlikely that Colorado will be able to reach its attainment goal focusing solely on high school graduates, this population is certainly worth the investment. The CDHE has several initiatives aimed at supporting high school students as they make the transition to a variety of postsecondary education options; however, Colorado must do more to ensure high school graduates pursue some type of education after they graduate.

2018 Report Format

This report explores both data trends and policy context related to the experience of Colorado's recent high school graduates in postsecondary education through three sections:

1. Postsecondary enrollment trends
2. Leading indicators of postsecondary success
3. Progress toward a credential

Consistent with the commitments outlined in Colorado's goal to erase equity gaps, selected data are provided by gender, race/ethnicity, and income.

This report meets the reporting requirements outlined in C.R.S. 23-1-113 and C.R.S. 23-1-113.3 and has been submitted to the education committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Colorado General Assembly as well as the State Board of Education.

¹ Carnevale, A., Strohl, J., Ridley, N., and Gulish, A. (2018). [Three Educational Pathways to Good Jobs](#). Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

² Education Commission of the States. (2016). [Free Community College: An approach to increase adult student success in postsecondary education](#).

Part I. Postsecondary Enrollment

Colorado’s high school graduates are currently one of the largest contributors to Colorado’s higher education system and, as a result, are key to meeting the statewide goal of 66 percent educational attainment by 2025 among adults ages 25 to 34. The data in this report can be used by Colorado’s K-12 and higher education systems to better coordinate the seamless transition of all students from high school into college.

Overview

Of the 2017 high school class’s 57,471 graduates, 56.3 percent, or 32,391 students, enrolled in postsecondary education in Colorado or elsewhere during the fall immediately following graduation. This is slightly above the five-year average of 56.0 percent. Some students do delay college enrollment; on average, an additional 6 percent of students enroll one year after graduation and 3 percent enroll two years after graduation.³

In recent years, the CDHE and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) along with their institutional and district partners have achieved dramatic results in ensuring more students are receiving credentials while enrolled in high school. These credentials are often awarded through concurrent or dual-enrollment programs that allow high school students to enroll in postsecondary institutions and earn college and high school credit simultaneously. When students with concurrent or dual-enrollment credentials are factored in, the college-going or credential rate increases to 57.4 percent.⁴

56.3%

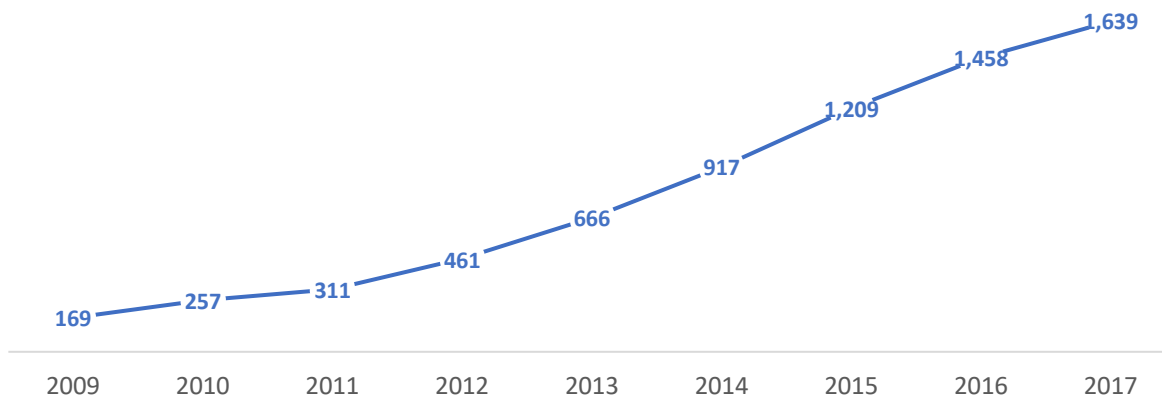
Of 2017 high school graduates enrolled in postsecondary education

The college-going or credential rate increases to

57.4%

when students with concurrent or dual-enrollment credentials are factored in.

Figure 1. High School Graduates Receiving a Credential While Enrolled in High School



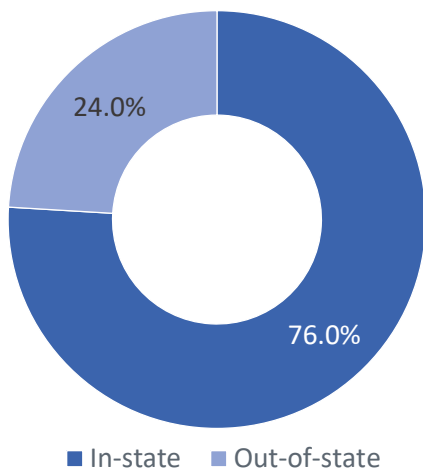
³ Data Table 1 in Appendix 1

⁴ Data Table 1 in Appendix 1

College Enrollment by Institution Type and Location

About 76 percent of the 2017 high school graduates who enrolled in college within six months attended an in-state college or university, while 24 percent attended out-of-state institutions. This number represents a slow but steady trend of more Colorado students enrolling out of state.⁵ As the number of high school students declines nationally⁶ it is likely that an increasing number of Colorado students will be drawn out of state since colleges will compete to maintain enrollment levels. Students who enroll out of state are most likely to enroll in institutions located in California or Arizona. Almost three-fourths of recent graduates, 73 percent, matriculate to four-year institutions.⁷

Figure 2. In-state and Out-of-state Enrollment 2017



Report Table 1. Out-of-state Enrollment State

STATE	# OF STUDENTS ENROLLED
California	817
Arizona	737
Wyoming	473
Nebraska	454
Texas	405
Kansas	392
Utah	365
Washington	275
Montana	271
New York	237

Colorado's immediate neighbor states are shaded orange.

73.2%

Attended a Four-Year Institution

Enrollment Rates by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Income

Ensuring Colorado's high school graduates succeed in postsecondary education is essential to reaching the *Colorado Rises* goals. Equity gaps persist in who enrolls in college and where they enroll. Women are more likely to enroll in college than are men. They are also more likely to attend college out of state and to attend four-year institutions.

⁵ Data Table 2 in Appendix 1

⁶ Bransberger, P. and Michelau, D. (2016) [Knocking at the College Door](#). Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education.

⁷ Data Table 4 in Appendix 1

When looking at race/ethnicity, there are wide disparities in who goes to college. Asian students are most likely to attend college, followed by white students and students who identify as being of two or more races. White and Hispanic students comprise the largest portion of Colorado’s high school graduates, 57 percent and 30 percent respectively. However, 61 percent of white students enroll in college compared to just 46 percent of Hispanic students. Moreover, 88 percent of Hispanic students who attend college stay in state, compared to just 71 percent of white students. More than 75 percent of the total number of Asian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, individuals who identify as two or more races, and white students enroll in four-year institutions, while only 60 percent of Hispanic students and 68 percent of African American students attend four-year institutions.

The largest inequities in whether students go to college are by socio-economic status. Only 43 percent of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch (FRL) attend college compared to 62 percent of students who do not qualify (non-FRL). FRL students are also more likely to enroll in-state (88 percent compared to 72 percent) and attend community colleges (41 percent compared to 33 percent).

These trends have important implications for Colorado’s higher education system and underscore the necessity of statewide and campus-level work designed to ensure the success of all students. In particular, all higher education institutions are seeing increases in populations that have traditionally lower persistence and graduation rates. Additionally, community colleges are more likely to serve lower-income students who may need access to additional resources—even when those institutions have the fewest funds to support students.

Report Table 2. College Enrollment Characteristics by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Income

	HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES	% STUDENTS ENROLLED IN COLLEGE	% COLLEGE STUDENTS ENROLLED IN-STATE	% COLLEGE STUDENTS ENROLLED FOUR-YEAR
Gender				
Female	28,783	61.9%	74.8%	74.2%
Male	28,688	50.8%	77.4%	71.9%
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian or Alaska Native	423	38.1%	65.8%	70.2%
Asian	1,922	75.2%	82.9%	80.9%
African American	2,697	54.8%	77.1%	68.2%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	169	43.2%	74.0%	75.3%
Hispanic	17,354	45.8%	88.0%	60.4%
Two or More Races	1,972	58.2%	73.4%	75.0%
White (not Hispanic)	32,934	61.1%	70.8%	77.9%
Socio-economic Status				
Non-FRL	40,113	62.0%	72.2%	77.4%
FRL	17,358	43.4%	88.5%	59.3%

Despite persistent equity gaps, there are some positive gains. Hispanic and African American students have seen small but steady increases in college-going rates over the last five years. FRL students have also seen growth. However, for Colorado to reach its attainment goals, we must dramatically increase college-going rates for all high school graduate populations.

Figure 3. Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity Over Time

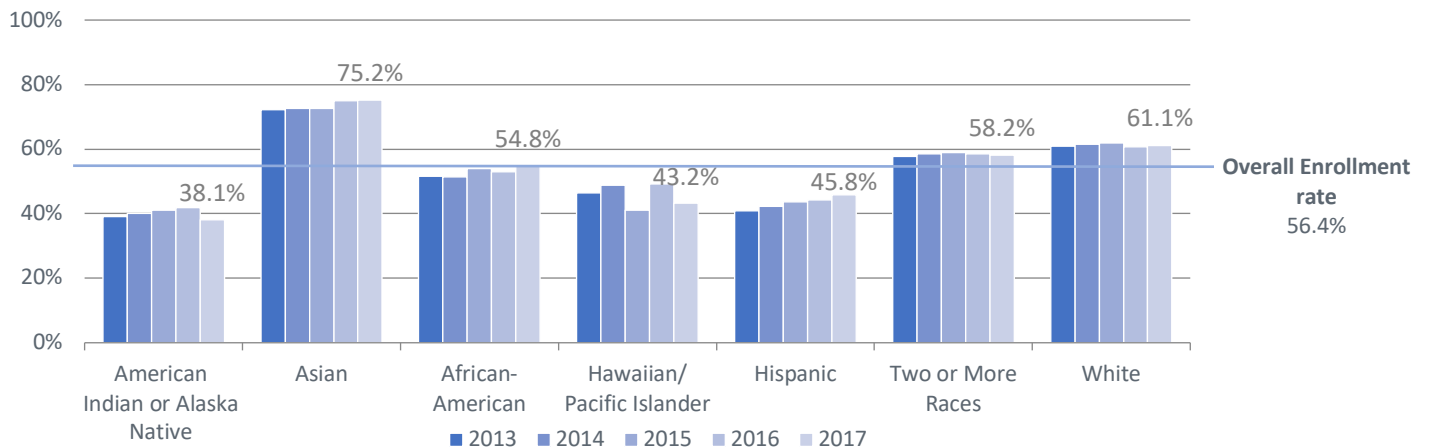
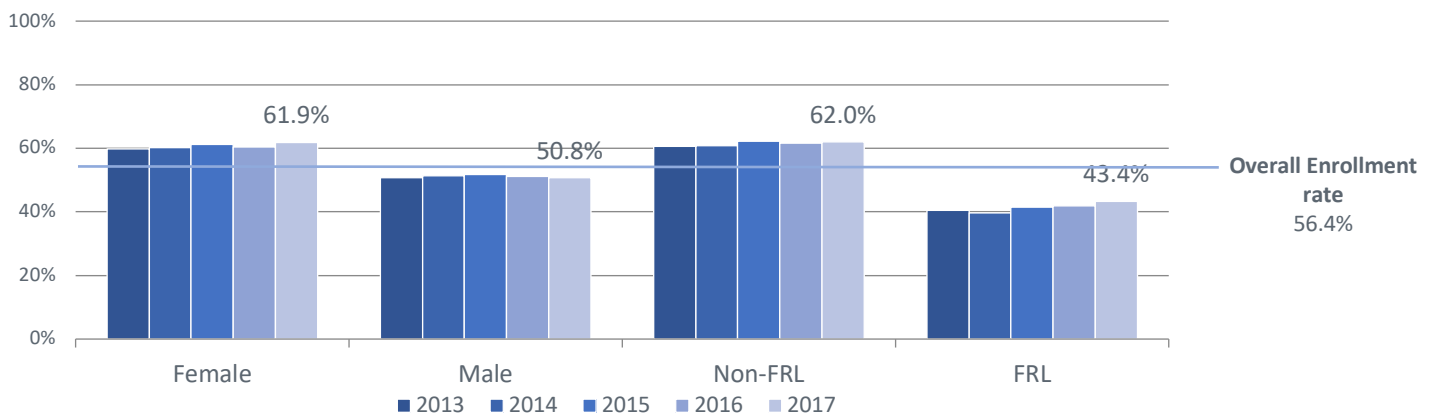


Figure 4. College Enrollment by Gender and Income Over Time



Ensuring More Colorado High School Students Attend College

Easing the Transition

The CCHE, CDHE, and institutions of higher education continue to work with the CDE and its stakeholders to ease the transition from high school into college and to ensure more students consider various postsecondary options.

- Colorado Opportunity Scholarship (COSI):** COSI was created in 2014 with the goal of increasing the attainment of postsecondary credentials and degrees for underserved students in Colorado. This program provides tuition support to students through matching scholarship funds while also providing pre-collegiate and collegiate support services to ensure more students have the support they need to attend college.


- Updated Admissions Policy:** The CCHE, under authority outlined in C.R.S. 23-1-113, has worked with institutions to evolve the Colorado admissions policy so that it aligns with high school graduation guidelines: www.coadmissionstool.org.
- College Application Month:** For more than a decade, College In Colorado has offered tools, resources, and direct outreach for counselors and educators as they assist students in the college-going process. These efforts culminate each fall during College Application Month, a six-week campaign that guides students through the application process.


- Colorado Free Application Day:** In 2018, every Colorado public college and university—and several in-state private institutions—waived application fees for in-state students for one day. This resulted in a 12 percent increase in applications statewide; half of the applications submitted during College Free Application Day were submitted by students of color and a third were submitted by first-generation students.
- Colorado GEAR UP:** Since 1999 Colorado GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), which is housed in CDHE, has provided pre-collegiate programs designed to increase the number of low-income students who enroll in postsecondary education. In 2018, Colorado was awarded a seven-year, \$35 million grant by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) that allows CDHE to serve 5,000 students in 15 Colorado high schools. This federal investment is essential to broadening college access and success in Colorado.


- Colorado Student Leaders Institute (COSLI):** COSLI was created by Senate Bill 15-290 and is a competitive academic four-week summer program for 100 high students. It reinforces the importance of civic engagement, academic richness, entrepreneurship, responsibility, accountability, ethics, and integrity in the rising generation of American leaders and exposes students to postsecondary education.

Creating New Opportunities

Every year thousands of Colorado high school students complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), making them eligible to receive grants and loans from the federal DOE as well as state and institutional aid. Increasing FAFSA completion rates can increase college enrollment: 90 percent of students who complete the application will enroll in college within one year.⁸ Currently, Colorado is ranked 47th in the nation for FAFSA completion, with an only 50 percent completion rate by high school seniors, according to the National College Access Network.⁹

Colorado's low FAFSA completion rate is a leading indicator for Colorado's college-going rate. The CDHE estimates that Colorado high school seniors left \$47 million in federal Pell Grant aid on the table in 2017 alone, since nearly 15,000 high school seniors who are eligible for Pell Grants did not take advantage of the funding.¹⁰ This negatively affects the students' economic and social mobility and hinders Colorado's ability to achieve its attainment goals.


The CDHE is committed to helping to use FAFSA as a vehicle to increase postsecondary access and success by helping to encourage school districts and civic leaders to reach out to more students and families. In addition to the direct support offered by the programs highlighted above, this year the department has challenged school district superintendents and the congressional delegation to compete for their "piece of the pie" by increasing FAFSA completion rates among the populations they serve.



HUNGRY
for financial aid?

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FAFSA.ED.GOV

 **COLORADO**
Department of
Higher Education

WITH SUPPORT FROM
POPSOCKETS

**GET YOUR PIECE
OF THE PIE!**

APPLY EARLY! MOST AID IS GIVEN ON FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED BASIS.

⁸ National College Access Network. [Why Invest In FAFSA.](#)

⁹ Rank through June 29 2018 of the 2018-19 FAFSA cycle. National College Access Network. [#FormYourFuture FAFSA Tracker.](#)

¹⁰ National College Access Network. [Why Invest In FAFSA.](#)

Part II. First-Year College Students

The previous section provided information about enrollment patterns and access to higher education for Colorado's high school graduates. This section explores the leading indicators that project postsecondary success for first-year students who attend public college in-state or a private institution that reports data.¹¹ Those indicators include access to financial aid, GPA, and credit accumulation.

Access to Financial Aid

Financial aid improves a student's likelihood of success in higher education.¹² Almost 35 percent of students from 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 increase in the number of high school graduates who had qualified for FRL status, suggesting that more low-income students are attending postsecondary institutions and receiving Pell Grants. The percentage of students who receive Pell Grants tends to fluctuate from year to year, and the five-year change has been minimal. However, 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.

Percentage Change in the Number of Students Receiving Aid Since 2013¹³

1%

Pell Grant
34.4% to 34.8%

30%

State Aid
28.5% to 37.2%

11%

Institutional Aid
37.2% to 41.3%

Approximately 20 percent of high school students who were not FRL eligible received a Pell Grant, 26 percent received state aid, and 40 percent received institutional aid.¹⁴ Student aid formulas take many factors into consideration, so even if students do not qualify for assistance in high school, they may still qualify for assistance in college.

¹¹ University of Denver, Regis University, and Colorado Christian University are the private institutions that submit data to the CDHE

¹² Campbell, C. Cochrane, D. and Love, I. (2017) [Aiding Success: The Role of Federal and State Financial Aid in Supporting California Community College Students](#). ACCT.

¹³ Data Table 7 in Appendix 1

¹⁴ Data Table 9 in Appendix 1

Leading Indicators

To understand future postsecondary success, it is important to know how students are performing in their first year of college. Evidence shows that the first-year GPA is a significant indicator of persistence¹⁵, and there is growing evidence to support first-year credit accumulation as an indicator of long-term academic success in college.¹⁶ Additionally, students who have identified a program of study and have taken coursework in that program of study in their first year are more likely to complete a degree.

2.81

Cumulative GPA

First year GPA has risen each year since these data have been available. The average GPA for students who graduated high school in 2017 and attended a Colorado institution was 2.81 on a scale of 4.0. This is up from 2.65 percent in 2009.

Credit accumulation has also increased overall, particularly for the number of students who complete 30 credits in their first year of college. For the class of 2017, the percent of students completing more than 40 credits is 48.6, a change of almost 6 percent since 2016. The average credit accumulation in the first year of college for the class of 2017 was 31.63 credits.¹⁷

First-Year College Credit Accumulation for 2017 High School Graduates

81%

More than 15 Credits

66%

More than 24 Credits

49%

More than 30 Credits

Leading Indicators by Race/Ethnicity and Income

When looking at leading indicators by demographic status, it is clear that equity gaps emerge early. After the first year of college, almost half as many African American students (as compared to white students) completed 30 credit hours. African American students also had lower GPAs than white students. Hispanic students had higher GPAs and credit accumulation (as compared to African American students), but there are still substantial gaps when compared to white students. There are also significant gaps between those who qualified for FRL in high school and those who did not. If Colorado is going to erase equity gaps in attainment, the state must address the needs of diverse students earlier in the education pipeline.

¹⁵ Stewart, S., Lum, D.H., and Kim, J. (2015). [Factors Influencing College Persistence for First-Time Students](#). Journal of Developmental Education.

¹⁶ Jenkins, D. and Baily, T. (2017) [Why Early Momentum Metrics Why They Matter for College Improvement](#). Community College Research Center.

¹⁷ Data Table 10 in Appendix 1. Averages do not include students who accumulated 0 credits, the first-year credit accumulation rates do.

Report Table 3. First-Year Leading Indicators by Race/Ethnicity and Income¹⁸

	AVERAGE GPA	% WITH 15 CREDITS OR MORE	% WITH 30 CREDITS OR MORE
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian or Alaska Native	2.60	76.3%	45.2%
African American	2.37	68.3%	27.1%
Hispanic	2.60	71.5%	37.6%
White (not Hispanic)	2.93	85.4%	54.5%
Socio-economic Status			
Non-FRL	2.90	84.7%	53.3%
FRL	2.55	68.6%	34.6%

Creating Successful Pathways to Graduation

Accelerating Momentum

In 2018, Colorado became one of just four states to join Complete College America’s (CCA) Momentum Pathways Scale Project. This initiative is focused on boosting college attainment rates by developing clear pathways and implementing evidence-based strategies that help students meet key, first-year benchmarks. In this effort, the CDHE and Colorado’s colleges and universities will work with CCA to create a three-year implementation timeline for strategies designed to lead to greater student momentum and success, such as increased early credit accumulation, gateway course completion, and completion of credits in a program of study. This effort will help grow Colorado’s momentum and improve early success so that more students are on the pathway to postsecondary achievement.

CCA’s interventions include a “15 to Finish” campaign that encourages significantly more students to enroll in at least 15 credits a semester or 30 credits in their first year to put them on track for graduation. CCA will work with institutions across Colorado to scale best-practice interventions including supplemental academic instruction and alternative math pathways to improve outcomes for students who come to school underprepared. Additionally, CCA will help institutions implement key components of a guided pathways system that allows students to pursue meta-majors, select their program, and enroll in degree-relevant coursework in their first year, while experiencing proactive advising to keep them on track. This planning increases credit completion and academic outcomes.

¹⁸ Data Table 11 in Appendix 1

Colorado's Talent, Innovation, and Equity Grant

In 2017 Colorado was awarded a \$500,000 Talent, Innovation, and Equity (TIE) Grant from the Lumina Foundation. The grant funds three high-impact projects designed to accelerate progress toward the statewide goals of reaching 66 percent educational attainment. Two of the grant's components will address and should significantly impact some of the gaps identified in the Leading Indicators by Race/Ethnicity and Income section above.

First, the TIE Grant will create and scale culturally responsive professional development for faculty and administration across the state. Because culturally responsive teaching and advising fosters a more inclusive, accessible environment for historically underrepresented students, we anticipate that statewide adoption will boost student outcomes and help to close equity gaps.

Second, this grant supports interventions specifically designed to address equity gaps at Pueblo Community College, Colorado State University-Pueblo and Community College of Aurora. The CDHE hopes to collect best practices from these projects and scale them statewide.

Concurrent Enrollment

Colorado utilizes the state's Concurrent Enrollment program as a strategy to cultivate seamless P-20 pathways and increase credential completion. Through Concurrent Enrollment, high school students have the opportunity to enroll in college-level courses and simultaneously earn high school and college credit, often at no cost to students. Research indicates that Concurrent Enrollment students are more likely to enroll and persist in college, have higher earned cumulative credit hours by the end of their first year, have higher first-year GPAs, and are less likely to need remedial education once in college.

Part III: Degree-Seeking Status and Credential Attainment

This final section explores the degree levels that students who enroll in college pursue as well as their persistence and completion rates. These data provide insight into existing trends in degree production within Colorado's high school population and will help the state focus its efforts to improve outcomes for populations currently pursuing a degree.

Student Degree Level

Recent high school graduates are most likely to pursue a bachelor's degree, followed by an associate degree. Very few recent high school graduates pursue a certificate in their first year after high school (3.3 percent). Students who received a post-high school credential¹⁹ while in high school were more likely to pursue shorter degree paths (certificate or associate degree).

Report Table 4. Postsecondary Credential Enrollment for High School Graduates of 2017²⁰

	All Students	Students With No Credential in High School	Students Receiving a Credential in High School
Certificate ²¹	3.3%	3.2%	5.2%
Associate	26.7%	26.5%	33.4%
Bachelor's or Beyond	68.5%	68.9%	59.3%

Persistence Rates

First-year retention and persistence are important indicators of whether a student will earn a degree; most students who drop out do so in their first year. First-year persistence rates reflect the number of students who enroll in the second year of their education either at the institutions they enrolled in initially or at some other institution anywhere in the country. Report Table 5 includes persistence and completion rates for students who enroll in a postsecondary institution as well as students who complete a certificate or degree by the following fall.

¹⁹ These credentials, often awarded through concurrent enrollment, may include CTE certificates, academic certificates or Associate degrees.

²⁰ Data Table 12 in Appendix 1

²¹ Includes one- or two-year certificates offered at institutions that report data to the State Unit Record Data System (SURDS)

For the class of 2016²², more than 80 percent of students who graduated high school in spring 2016 and enrolled in an in-state college in fall 2016 enrolled for a second year of college in fall 2017 or received a credential.²³ Colorado's retention rates remain above the national average; however, as national rates are climbing, Colorado's retention rate has stayed constant.²⁴

The first-year persistence rate at four-year institutions was 86 percent for 2016 graduates. Comparatively, the persistence rate at two-year colleges was 63 percent. When the number of students who received a degree or credential is included, it impacts community colleges that award one-year certificates. In Colorado the persistence rate for two-year institutions is 66 percent.

Report Table 5. Persistence for High School Graduates of 2016

	Persistence	Persistence and Completion
Overall	79.5%	80.6%
Two-Year Institutions	63.1%	66.2%
Four-Year Institutions	86.2%	86.5%

Persistence Rates by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Income

Persistence rates also reflect equity gaps. Women have a persistence rate five percentage points higher than men. The first-year persistence and completion rate for white students is 83.6, 9.7 percentage points higher than for Hispanic students and 10.9 percentage points greater than for African American students. Also, 72 percent of FRL students persist to the second fall compared to 83 percent of non-FRL-eligible students. If Colorado is going to erase equity gaps in attainment, the state must ensure that low-income and minority students return to college after their first year of school.

Credential Completion

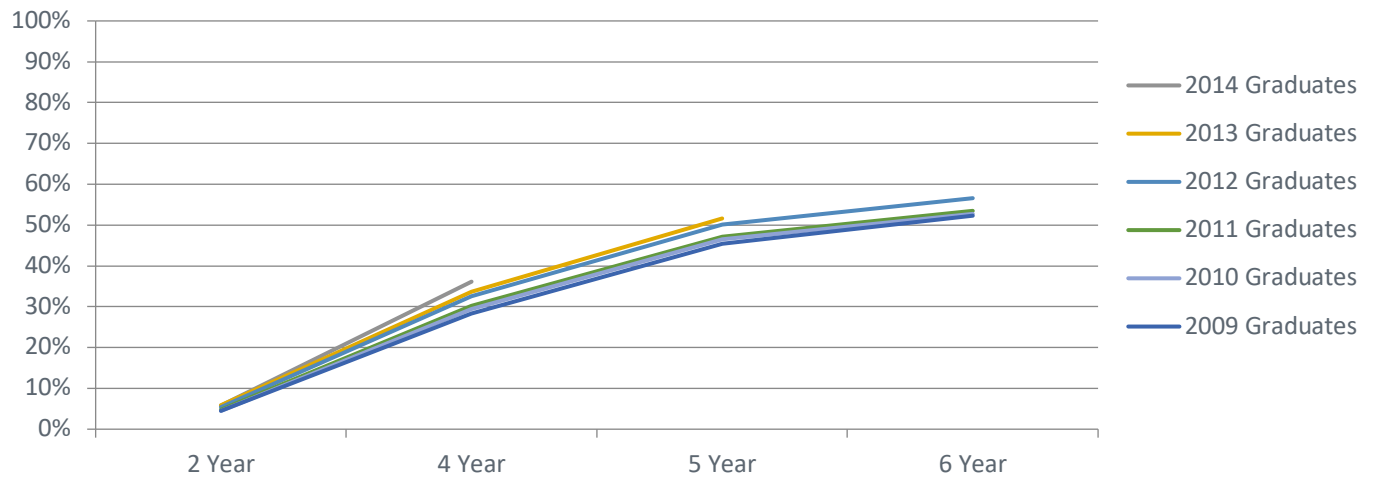
Based on the most recent data, for every 100 students who enrolled in college, seven will complete in two years, 36 will complete in four years and 57 will graduate in six years. Colorado has made significant progress on completion rates; since 2009 the two-year completion rate has increased 60 percent and the four-year completion rate has increased almost 28 percent. Figure 5 illustrates these trends. Not only have completion rates increased but the trajectory of completion rates since 2009 has improved each year. Unfortunately, rates are not increasing quickly enough; for Colorado to reach its goals, we need many more students to complete a degree or credential between now and 2025.

²² Data Table 13 in Appendix 1

²³ Retention rates are not yet available for students who were in their first year of college in the 2017-2018 academic year.

²⁴ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

Figure 5. Credential Completion Rates by High School Graduation Year



Credential Completion by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Income

As the leading indicators hinted, equity gaps exist in completion. The four-year completion rate is 9.3 percentage points higher for females than it is for males. Comparing racial/ethnic populations, white and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students complete within four years at twice the rate of African American students. Hispanic students have one of the highest two-year completion rates but one of the lowest four-year completion rates.

Report Table 6. Certificate, Associate or Bachelor's Completion by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Income for 2014 College Enrollees

	% EARNING A CREDENTIAL IN 2 YEARS	% EARNING A CREDENTIAL IN 4 YEARS
Gender		
Female	6.5%	40.6%
Male	5.0%	31.0%
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian or Alaska Native	3.6%	24.1%
Asian	1.8%	35.7%
African American	1.7%	20.9%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	7.5%	40.0%
Hispanic	6.9%	28.1%
Two or More Races	5.0%	34.2%
White (not Hispanic)	6.0%	40.2%
Socio-economic Status		
Non-FRL	5.5%	38.3%
FRL	7.1%	26.6%

Working with Institutions to Improve Credential Completion

Institutional goal setting and action to support Colorado Rises

The state plan, *Colorado Rises*, is at the heart of everything the CCHE and the CDHE do. Senate Bill 297 – Revising Higher Education Performance Requirements put in statute the requirement for the department to work with institutions of higher education to set goals and move forward strategies to increase degree completion and credential production. Each year, the CDHE connects directly with institutional leadership to affirm their contribution toward meeting master plan goals. The outcome of this process is documented on the master plan dashboard: <http://masterplan.highered.colorado.gov/dashboard>.

Conclusion

This report outlines the transition between high school and postsecondary education for the class of 2017. Without strengthening connections to postsecondary education, Colorado could find itself not only falling short of its attainment goals but also unable to ensure its homegrown talent is prepared for the modern-day workforce.

An important intervention for students making the transition from high school to postsecondary education is enhanced advising. Students must interact with postsecondary education in a more intentional way by having resources that help them map their postsecondary journey toward their participation in the workforce. The CDHE has partnered with the CDE to implement programs and build tools to interact in innovative ways with students to ensure they have the best information available as they make decisions about their educational opportunities.

Failing to erase equity gaps also threatens Colorado's ability to meet its attainment goal, since by 2025 Hispanics and whites are projected to make up 31 percent and 32 percent of the population, respectively.²⁵ The CCHE and the CDHE have made erasing these equity gaps—including for our fast-growing Hispanic population—a top priority, and institutions have myriad student support programs in place to enroll and retain students from underserved backgrounds. Additionally, the CDHE has made outreach to and engagement with low-income students and students requiring additional support (such as child care or other public benefits programs) priorities that align to our master plan goals. The CDHE continues to work with institutions of higher education around increasing equity mindedness and enhancing those student support programs to reach more students statewide.

The results highlighted by this report show significant improvements in both leading indicators and completions with the percentage of students completing a degree within two, four and six years increasing with each graduating class. Still more must be done. Guided by the goals and objectives outlined in *Colorado Rises*, the CCHE and the CDHE will work together with higher education institutions and other public and private partners to move forward innovative approaches that help ensure that more Colorado high school graduates enroll in and succeed in postsecondary education.

²⁵ Bransberger, P. and Michelau, D. (2016). Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates. Retrieved February 15, 2018 at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57f269e19de4bb8a69b470ae/t/5a4bf94f24a694d32cfe41ab/1514928467746/Knocking2016FINA-LFORWEB-revised010218.pdf>

Data and Methodology

Data Source

To construct these data the CDHE receives data on high school graduates from the CDE. The data from CDE is then connected to CDHE's State Unit Record Data System (SURDS) to get postsecondary information from Colorado institutions of higher education. The introduction of the State Assigned Student ID (SASID) in 2009 enabled data to be shared between the two departments; therefore, this kind of data is not available prior to the 2009 high school graduating class. Finally, the CDHE submits a request to the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) for out-of-state enrollment information, as well as information on private institutions in Colorado not included in SURDS. NSC data is included and is reflected in college enrollment data in Part I and persistence data in Parts II and III. Though NSC provides data on out-of-state completions, those data are not included in any part of this report. As a result all completions data in this report only includes in-state completions at institutions reporting to SURDS.

Report Cohorts

[This report uses two separate cohorts:](#)

High School Graduate Cohort: This cohort consists of all students who graduated from high school in Colorado in a given year and is used primarily in Part I. CDE, SURDS and NSC are the source of these data.

College Enrollee Cohort: This cohort consists of students who graduated from high school in Colorado in a given year and are attending an in-state institution that reports data into the SURDS system. This includes all public Colorado colleges and universities, plus Colorado Christian University, Regis University, and the University of Denver. This cohort is used in Parts II and III. CDE and SURDS are the only source of this data with the exception of persistence, where NSC data is used to identify student who enrolled in a private institution or out of state institution following their first year.

Academic Years

The academic years referred to in the report coincide with the following fall entry into college of the high school graduates. For example, the 2016 high school graduates tracked in this report enrolled in college in fall 2016. This report, like all reports after 2012, focuses primarily on students who enroll in college in the fall immediately following high school graduation.²⁶

²⁶ The report published in 2012 for 2009 high school graduates used a different methodology by calculated college matriculation for all graduates who enrolled in college within 18 months of graduating.

Limitations to Race/Ethnicity Data and Terminology

Additionally, this report uses standard race/ethnicity categories defined by the National Center for Education Statistics. These categories do not always reflect new terminology for race/ethnicity. New racial/ethnicity categories were adopted in 2012 to comply with state and federal reporting standards. As a result, data and comparisons for Asian students, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students, and students of Two or More Races are not available prior to 2012.

Accessing Data

To make these data more accessible to the public, the CDHE created a searchable database and individualized district profiles. The project, known as District at a Glance, is housed on the CDHE's website at <https://highered.colorado.gov/Data/Districtataglance.html>

Contact Information

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Appendix I: Data Tables

Section 1: High School Graduates Cohort

This cohort consists of all students who graduated from high school in Colorado in a given year and is used primarily in Part I.

Data Table 1. Percent of Highschool Graduates Enrolled in College

Source: CDE, SURDS, NSC

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION YEAR	TOTAL HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES	TOTAL COLLEGE ENROLLMENT	% HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES ENROLLING IN COLLEGE	ENROLLING IN COLLEGE OR RECEIVING A CREDENTIAL	% HS GRADUATES IN COLLEGE OR RECEIVING A CREDENTIAL
2017	57,471	32,391	56.3%	32,982	57.4%
2016	56,238	31,384	55.8%	31,873	56.7%
2015	53,128	30,042	56.5%	30,481	57.4%
2014	53,772	30,085	55.9%	30,424	56.6%
2013	54,498	30,115	55.3%	30,348	55.7%
2012	52,012	29,625	57.0%	29,759	57.2%
2011	52,261	29,979	57.4%	30,050	57.5%
2010	51,702	29,937	57.9%	29,966	58.0%
2009	50,184	29,529	58.9%	29,548	58.9%

Data Table 2. In-state and Out-of-state Enrollment Over Time for Students Enrolling in College

Source: CDE, SURDS, NSC

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION YEAR	% HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES ENROLLING IN-STATE	% HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES ENROLLING OUT-OF-STATE
2017	76.0%	24.0%
2016	76.8%	23.2%
2015	76.2%	23.8%
2014	76.0%	24.0%
2013	77.6%	22.4%
2012	78.1%	21.9%
2011	78.7%	21.3%
2010	79.3%	20.7%
2009	80.5%	19.5%

Data Table 3. Enrollment by Institution Type for Students Enrolling in College

Source: CDE, SURDS, NSC

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION YEAR	% HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES ENROLLING IN TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS	% HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES ENROLLING IN FOUR- YEAR INSTITUTIONS
2017	26.8%	73.2%
2016	26.8%	73.2%
2015	25.1%	74.9%
2014	25.7%	74.3%
2013	28.1%	71.9%
2012	28.1%	71.9%
2011	28.7%	71.3%
2010	29.0%	71.0%
2009	28.1%	71.9%

Data Table 4. College Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity Over Time

Source: CDE, SURDS, NSC

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION YEAR	AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	ASIAN	AFRICAN- AMERICAN	HAWAIIAN/ PACIFIC ISLANDER	HISPANIC	TWO OR MORE RACES	WHITE
2017	38.1%	75.2%	54.8%	43.2%	45.8%	58.2%	61.1%
2016	41.9%	75.0%	53.0%	49.3%	44.2%	58.5%	60.7%
2015	41.0%	72.7%	53.9%	41.1%	43.6%	58.9%	61.9%
2014	40.5%	72.7%	51.4%	48.9%	42.3%	58.9%	61.6%
2013	39.2%	72.2%	51.6%	46.5%	40.9%	57.7%	61.0%
2012	40.3%	71.1%	52.4%	57.7%	41.6%	61.8%	62.8%
2011	41.8%	NA	54.3%	NA	41.5%	NA	63.4%
2010	42.4%	NA	54.2%	NA	39.7%	NA	63.7%
2009	38.2%	NA	54.5%	NA	39.8%	NA	64.5%

Data Table 5. College Enrollment by Gender and Income Over Time

Source: CDE, SURDS, NSC

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION YEAR	FEMALE	MALE	NON-FRL	FRL
2017	61.9%	50.8%	62.0%	43.4%
2016	60.3%	51.2%	61.6%	42.0%
2015	61.2%	51.8%	62.2%	41.5%
2014	60.4%	51.4%	60.9%	39.8%
2013	59.9%	50.7%	60.7%	40.5%
2012	61.1%	52.8%	62.7%	41.4%
2011	61.0%	53.7%	62.5%	41.5%
2010	61.9%	53.8%	60.3%	45.9%
2009	62.0%	55.7%	66.0%	42.7%

Section 2: College Enrollee Cohort

This cohort consists of students who graduated from high school in Colorado in a given year and are attending an in-state institution that reports data into the SURDS system. This includes all public Colorado colleges and universities, plus Colorado Christian University, Regis University, and the University of Denver. This cohort is used in Parts II and III.

Data Table 6. College Students Receiving a Pell Grant by Institution Type

Source: CDE, SURDS

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION YEAR	2017 HS GRADUATES ENROLLED IN-STATE	% STUDENTS RECEIVING PELL	2-YEAR STUDENTS	% 2-YEAR STUDENTS RECEIVING PELL	4-YEAR STUDENTS	% 4 YEAR STUDENTS RECEIVING PELL
2017	21,859	34.8%	6,101	40.9%	15,758	32.4%
2016	21,905	33.1%	6,338	38.8%	15,567	30.9%
2015	20,333	32.5%	5,743	38.4%	14,590	30.1%
2014	19,377	33.8%	5,173	40.8%	14,204	31.3%
2013	20,865	34.4%	5,903	40.3%	14,962	32.1%
2012	20,903	35.1%	6,376	42.3%	14,527	31.9%
2011	22,463	36.8%	7,056	44.7%	15,407	33.1%
2010	22,972	34.6%	7,594	41.6%	15,378	31.2%
2009	23,182	28.6%	7,479	33.0%	15,703	26.5%

Data Table 7. Types of Aid Received by College Enrollees Over Time

Source: CDE, SURDS

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION YEAR	2017 HS GRADUATES ENROLLED IN-STATE	% FILED A FAFSA	% RECEIVED A PELL GRANT	% RECEIVED STATE AID	% RECEIVED INSTITUTIONAL AID
2017	21,859	84.3%	34.8%	37.2%	41.3%
2016	21,905	82.1%	33.1%	35.4%	39.8%
2015	20,333	81.9%	32.5%	34.8%	37.6%
2014	19,377	82.7%	33.9%	34.7%	36.7%
2013	20,865	82.0%	34.4%	28.5%	37.2%
2012	20,903	82.2%	35.1%	31.4%	35.1%
2011	22,463	81.4%	36.8%	32.3%	35.0%
2010	22,972	78.5%	34.6%	34.1%	32.9%
2009	23,182	74.1%	28.6%	31.7%	32.2%

Data Table 8. Types of Aid Received by Gender, Race/Ethnicity and Income for 2017 College Enrollees

Source: CDE, SURDS

	2017 HS GRADUATES ENROLLED IN-STATE	% FILED A FAFSA	% RECEIVED A PELL GRANT	% RECEIVED STATE AID	% RECEIVED INSTITUTIONAL AID
Gender					
Female	11,787	86.6%	37.6%	40.5%	45.0%
Male	10,072	81.6%	31.5%	33.4%	36.9%
Race/Ethnicity					
American Indian or Alaska Native	93	94.6%	41.9%	51.6%	35.5%
Asian	1,097	86.6%	39.7%	38.7%	51.4%
African American	966	93.1%	64.2%	60.9%	46.9%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	44	88.6%	38.6%	40.9%	45.5%
Hispanic	5,876	86.5%	52.1%	51.1%	39.7%
Two or More Races	754	84.9%	33.2%	34.2%	42.6%
White (not Hispanic)	13,029	82.3%	24.4%	29.1%	40.7%
Socio-economic Status					
Non-FRL	16,289	82.0%	20.9%	26.4%	40.3%
FRL	5,570	91.1%	75.2%	68.8%	44.1%

Data Table 9. First-Year Leading Indicators of Success Over Time

Source: CDE, SURDS

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION YEAR	2017 HS GRADUATES ENROLLED IN-STATE	AVERAGE GPA	AVERAGE CREDITS	% WITH 15 CREDITS OR MORE	% WITH 24 CREDITS OR MORE	% WITH 30 CREDITS OR MORE
2017	21,859	2.81	31.63	80.6%	66.3%	48.6%
2016	21,905	2.78	30.58	79.2%	63.4%	45.9%
2015	20,333	2.79	29.53	79.6%	63.7%	44.3%
2014	19,377	2.78	30.03	82.1%	66.0%	45.1%
2013	20,865	2.76	29.12	80.1%	63.4%	42.9%
2012	20,903	2.72	28.80	79.1%	63.6%	42.3%
2011	22,463	2.67	28.29	77.4%	61.3%	39.6%
2010	22,972	2.66	27.86	77.3%	59.6%	37.5%
2009	23,182	2.66	28.11	77.0%	60.6%	40.1%

Data Table 10. First-Year Leading Indicators of Success by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Income for 2017 College Enrollees

Source: CDE, SURDS

	AVERAGE GPA	AVERAGE CREDITS	% WITH 15 CREDITS OR MORE	% WITH 24 CREDITS OR MORE	% WITH 30 CREDITS OR MORE
Gender					
Female	2.91	32.24	81.8%	67.7%	50.3%
Male	2.70	30.92	79.2%	64.6%	46.6%
Race/Ethnicity					
American Indian or Alaska Native	2.60	29.81	76.3%	64.5%	45.2%
Asian	2.90	35.64	84.5%	71.6%	57.4%
African American	2.37	24.26	68.3%	47.8%	27.1%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2.79	29.84	72.7%	56.8%	36.4%
Hispanic	2.60	27.75	71.5%	54.4%	37.6%
Two or More Races	2.78	30.75	79.7%	65.9%	46.8%
White (not Hispanic)	2.93	33.57	85.4%	72.6%	54.5%
Socio-economic Status					
Non-FRL	2.90	33.33	84.7%	71.5%	53.3%
FRL	2.55	26.46	68.6%	50.9%	34.6%

Section 3: College Enrollee Cohort

Data Table 11. College Enrollee Program Enrollment²⁷ Over Time

Source: CDE, SURDS

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION YEAR	CERTIFICATE	ASSOCIATE	BACHELOR'S OR ABOVE
2017	3.3%	26.7%	68.5%
2016	2.5%	29.0%	67.2%
2015	1.5%	28.7%	68.3%
2014	1.1%	27.6%	69.7%
2013	1.4%	28.5%	68.2%
2012	1.2%	30.0%	66.9%
2011	2.4%	28.3%	66.4%
2010	2.7%	28.5%	64.9%
2009	2.8%	26.5%	65.7%

Data Table 12. First-Year Persistence²⁸ and Completion Over Time

Source: CDE, SURDS, NSC

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION YEAR	PERSISTENCE			PERSISTENCE AND COMPLETION		
	OVERALL	TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS	FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS	OVERALL	TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS	FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS
2016	79.5%	63.1%	86.2%	80.6%	66.2%	86.5%
2015	80.1%	62.4%	87.1%	81.1%	65.5%	87.3%
2014	81.9%	64.6%	88.1%	82.7%	67.4%	88.3%
2013	80.0%	62.1%	87.0%	80.9%	65.2%	87.2%
2012	80.4%	64.2%	87.5%	81.1%	66.3%	87.6%
2011	78.7%	60.8%	86.9%	79.4%	62.9%	87.0%
2010	79.4%	62.3%	87.8%	80.0%	64.1%	87.9%
2009	80.3%	63.1%	88.5%	81.0%	64.9%	88.6%

²⁷ For alignment, a slightly different cohort was used for this data than was used for similar data in 2018 report as a result the numbers are not the same, but the trends remain similar.

²⁸ For alignment, a slightly different cohort was used for this data than was used for similar data in 2018 report as a result the numbers are not the same, but the trends remain similar. This change allowed us to incorporate completion.

Data Table 13. First-Year Persistence²⁹ and Completion by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Income for 2016 College Enrollees

Source: CDE, SURDS, NSC

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION YEAR	PERSISTENCE			PERSISTENCE AND COMPLETION		
	OVERALL	TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS	FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS	OVERALL	TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS	FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS
Gender						
Female	81.5%	65.9%	87.7%	82.5%	68.9%	88.0%
Male	77.2%	59.9%	84.5%	78.4%	63.1%	84.8%
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian or Alaska Native	66.1%	59.1%	70.6%	66.1%	59.1%	70.6%
Asian	89.0%	75.0%	92.6%	89.4%	75.9%	92.8%
African American	72.3%	59.6%	78.0%	72.7%	60.6%	78.2%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	63.0%	58.3%	64.7%	63.0%	58.3%	64.7%
Hispanic	72.6%	61.3%	80.4%	73.9%	64.4%	80.5%
Two or More Races	77.1%	57.8%	83.8%	77.5%	59.4%	83.8%
White (not Hispanic)	82.5%	64.2%	88.5%	83.6%	67.8%	88.8%
Socio-economic Status						
Non-FRL	82.3%	64.8%	88.3%	83.4%	68.1%	88.6%
FRL	70.8%	59.7%	78.2%	72.0%	62.4%	78.4%

Data Table 14. Credential (Certificate, Associate or Bachelor's) Completion Over Time

Source: CDE, SURDS

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION YEAR	% EARNING A CREDENTIAL IN 2 YEARS	% EARNING A CREDENTIAL IN 4 YEARS	% EARNING A CREDENTIAL IN 5 YEARS	% EARNING A CREDENTIAL IN 6 YEARS
2016	7.2%	NA	NA	NA
2015	6.8%	12.0%	NA	NA
2014	5.8%	36.1%	NA	NA
2013	5.9%	33.7%	51.6%	NA
2012	5.4%	32.6%	50.2%	56.6%
2011	4.8%	30.2%	47.2%	53.5%
2010	4.5%	29.4%	46.5%	52.7%
2009	4.5%	28.3%	45.4%	52.3%

²⁹ For alignment, a slightly different cohort was used for this data than was used for similar data in 2018 report as a result the numbers are not the same, but the trends remain similar. This change allowed us to incorporate completion.

Appendix II: Data File Specifications

An excel file with data for each of the cohorts in this report is available. It includes the following information at the High School, District and State Level and can be accessed on the CDHE's website at <https://higher.ed.colorado.gov/Data/Districtatag glance.html#Data>

High School Graduate Cohort

This cohort consists of all students who graduated from high school in Colorado in a given year and is used primarily in Part I. CDE, SURDS and NSC the source of this data.

- # HS Graduates
- #, % Enrolled in College,
- # Received a Credential in College,
- #, % Enrolled in College or Received a Credential,
- #, % Enrolled In-State,
- #, % Enrolled Out-of-State,
- #, % Enrolled 2-Year,
- #, % Enrolled 4-Year

College Enrollee Cohort:

This cohort consists of students who graduated from high school in Colorado in a given year and are attending an in-state institution that reports data into the SURDS system. This includes all public Colorado colleges and universities, plus Colorado Christian University, Regis University, and the University of Denver. This cohort is used in Parts II and III. CDE and SURDS are the only source of this data with the exception of persistence, where NSC data is used to identify student who enrolled in a private institution or out of state institution following their first year.

- # Enrolled in a College Reporting to SURDS
- #, % Receiving Pell Grant
- #, % Receiving State Aid
- #, % Receiving Institutional Aid
- #, % Enrolled in a Certificate, Associate Degree or Bachelor's Degree Program,
- #, % Persisted 2nd Year, 3rd Year, 4th Year
- #, % Persisted or Received a credential 2nd Year, 3rd Year, 4th Year
- #, % Completed a Credential (Certificate Associate Degree or Bachelor's Degree) in their 2nd Year, 4th Year, 5th Year, 6th Year