COLORADO
Department of Higher Education

# Postsecondary Access and Success for Colorado's High School Graduates

## 2026 Full Report

**2026**

The Colorado Department of Higher Education
Report to the education committees of the House of Representatives
and the Senate of the Colorado General Assembly and the State Board of Education

Statute: §23-1-113 9

The Colorado Department of Higher Education (DHE), under its own authority and through the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE), oversees and coordinates policy for 31 public institutions of higher education (including community colleges, independent local district colleges and local area technical colleges) and authorizes and regulates private colleges, universities and occupational schools.

**Mission** – We support students, advocate and develop policies to maximize higher education opportunities for all.

**Vision** – All Coloradans will have an education beyond high school to pursue their dreams and improve our communities.

COLORADO
Department of Higher Education

Prepared and submitted by the Colorado Department of Higher Education
under the Executive Leadership of JB Holston
Pursuant to the statutory authority of CRS §23-1-113 9

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# Letter from our Executive Director

Postsecondary education is a cornerstone of Colorado's economic prosperity, civic strength, and quality of life. As workforce demands continue to shift and industries evolve, ensuring that students successfully transition from high school into postsecondary education and earn a high-value credential is essential to Colorado's long-term competitiveness and economic future. The Colorado Department of Higher Education is pleased to present the Postsecondary Access and Success for Colorado's High School Graduates report.

Pursuant to CRS §23-1-113 (9), this report provides a comprehensive view of how Colorado students move from high school into higher education, how they progress toward their educational goals, and how postsecondary attainment contributes to the state's talent development needs. The findings illustrate both areas of progress and opportunities for continued improvement. Colorado students pursue a variety of educational pathways, and their experiences highlight the importance of supporting learners at every stage—from college exploration and enrollment to persistence, completion, and entry into the workforce. The data also reinforces the value of collaboration among K-12 education, higher education institutions, employers, communities, and policymakers. By working together, Colorado can continue to expand opportunities, reduce barriers to success, and help more students earn credentials that align with their aspirations and the needs of Colorado's economy. This report informs decision-making and supports ongoing efforts to strengthen educational attainment. We hope the information presented here encourages thoughtful discussion and continued action to improve outcomes for students throughout the state.

To the institutions, educators, policymakers, and partners whose commitment to student success makes this work possible: thank you. To our students and learners: we encourage you to help us continue to make Colorado a place where all can thrive—at college and beyond!

JB Holston, Executive Director

# Executive Summary

Pursuant to CRS §23-1-113 (9), this report shares information on college going rates, needs for supports for students to be successful in gateway courses in English and math, first-year college grade point averages (GPA), and certificate and degree attainment for Colorado students. This executive summary highlights the key findings for postsecondary outcomes for the 2023 and 2024 high school graduating cohorts, including college enrollment, credential attainment, student demographic trends, socioeconomic factors, and college readiness indicators. Total college enrollment among Colorado's 2024 high school graduating cohort reached its highest level on record (34,217).

## High School Graduating Cohort

### 2024 and 2023 Cohort Postsecondary Enrollment and Credential Outcomes

- Total high school graduates: **63,593 (2024); 61,958 (2023)**
- Students enrolling in college: **34,217 (2024); 33,017 (2023)**
- College enrollment rate: **53.81% (2024); 53.29% (2023)**
- Students enrolling in college or receiving a credential: **35,237 (2024); 33,962 (2023)**

## Summary of Key Findings

### Positive Trends from 2023 to 2024

- Total high school graduates increased from **61,958 to 63,593 (2.6% increase)**.
- College enrollment increased from **33,017 to 34,217 students (3.6% increase)**.
- College enrollment rate improved from **53.29% to 53.81%**.
- College enrollment or credential attainment increased from **54.81% to 55.41%**.
- College GPA and credit accumulation improved for the 2024 cohort.
- More students achieved 15, 24, and 30 college credit milestones in the first year of college.
- Concurrent enrollment participation increased (**43.97% to 47.86%**).[1]

[1] Dashboard data includes further data on concurrent enrollment as well as college enrollment.

### Areas for Continued Focus

- College enrollment gaps remain between Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL) eligible students (39.47%) and non-FRL eligible students (62.95%) college going rates.
- Gender differences continue, with female students enrolling in college at higher rates (60.06%) than male students (47.61%).
- Postsecondary enrollment varies by race/ethnicity, ranging from 35% to over 60%.[2]

## Conclusion

The 2024 high school graduating cohort demonstrates continued improvement in postsecondary outcomes compared with 2023; and both continue an upward trend since the pandemic. Growth in college enrollment, concurrent enrollment participation, academic performance, and credit accumulation indicates positive momentum toward increasing college readiness and student success. However, rates across many categories have still not improved to pre-pandemic levels, and gaps persist across various demographic groups.

[2] See Figure 3 for details on rates for each demographic category.

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# Introduction

Pathways are essential not only to individual success but also to meeting the state's economic needs. By 2031, 73% of Colorado jobs are projected to require a postsecondary credential or other postsecondary education.[3] However, only 64.3% of Coloradans 25-64 years old hold a postsecondary credential[4], indicating a supply-and-demand gap for some occupations.

In 2023, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) and the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) released a statewide plan aimed at improving economic mobility for Colorado learners and workers by better aligning postsecondary talent development with workforce and statewide needs. *Building Skills in an Evolving Economy*[5] outlines an ambitious vision to expand opportunities for learners who have not been effectively served by the state's postsecondary system and provide them with clear pathways to success. The plan emphasizes educational pathways that offer strong economic value by reducing costs for students, investing in evidence-based learner support programs, and strengthening collaboration between education providers and employers. The plan mobilizes three strategic pillars:

- Pillar #1: Identify and improve pathways with negative return on investment;
- Pillar #2: Focus on equitable access and participation that enables more learners to succeed;
- Pillar #3: Catalyze increased postsecondary/workforce collaboration, alignment, and co-creation of new pathways that offer a positive return on investment.

A key strategy for meeting Colorado's workforce needs is to ensure that Colorado's high school graduates are enrolling and succeeding in career-connected postsecondary education. Growing our talent is imperative, as projections show the number of people moving to Colorado is slowing.[6]

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[3] Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, as cited in Diagnosing Colorado's Skills and Attainment Gap (Common Sense Institute, 2024).

[4] Lumina Foundation. (2024). Credentials of value: Colorado. Stronger Nation. https://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/credentials-of-value/colorado.

[5] Colorado Department of Higher Education. (2023). Strategic plan. https://cdhe.colorado.gov/strategic-plan.

[6] Totten, G. (2026, March 10). Colorado demographic outlook 2026 [Presentation]. Colorado State Demography Office. https://cgfoa.org/images/meeting/031026/2026_03_10_totten___colorado_government_finance_officers_association.pdf

Further, according to the state demographer, Colorado's population growth will also be impacted by slowing birth rates.[7] As fewer people move to Colorado, it will be challenging for Colorado to meet workforce demand if the state does not focus on college-going and completion rates for resident Coloradans—with a specific focus on groups with low college-going rates including American Indian or Alaska Native, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latinx, and low-income students and students from rural areas.

Graduating from high school is an accomplishment, but to be competitive in the workforce, change careers, and achieve economic stability Coloradans could increase their opportunities by earning a postsecondary degree or credential. This report focuses on the 2024 class of students, which is the most recent class for which data is available for analysis.[8] In 2024, 63,593 students graduated from a public Colorado high school. A total of 53.81% of 2024 Colorado high school graduates enrolled in a college or university in the fall after graduation, a slight increase from the previous year, continuing an upward trend since 2021. Moreover, 55.41% either went to college or graduated with a postsecondary credential (a slight increase from the previous year). Conversely, a total of 28,356 students (44.59%) graduated from high school in 2024 without achieving a postsecondary-recognized credential or enrolling directly into postsecondary education. Though some may have taken a gap year, joined the military, or entered a skilled apprenticeship program, many did not pursue a postsecondary pathway. Regardless, ensuring alignment to Tier 1 and Tier 2 jobs[9] through postsecondary opportunities and outcomes is essential. With the launch of COData, Colorado aims to better understand how Colorado residents are prepared and pursue educational and professional experiences to meet the state's workforce needs.[10]

[7] Colorado Department of Local Affairs, State Demography Office. (2025). SDO publications resource page. https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/assets/html/publications.html.
[8] This lag for cohort data is standard for reporting.
[9] Colorado Workforce Development Council. (2025). *Colorado talent pipeline report 2025*. Figure 24. Colorado Department of Labor and Employment. https://cwdc.colorado.gov/resources/colorado-talent-pipeline-report .
[10] Colorado Data Connections, or COdata for short, is the statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) created in HB24-1364 and is designed to bring together data from residents' educational and professional experiences. These data will help us better understand how to prepare students to succeed and meet the state's workforce needs. See: https://codata.colorado.gov/ .

# Section I: Pathways to Enrolling in Higher Education

Postsecondary enrollment is an important milestone in the educational journey of Colorado's high school graduates. Understanding who enrolls in higher education, and whether enrollment patterns differ across student populations, can help policymakers, educators, and institutions identify opportunities to expand access and reduce barriers to postsecondary education.

This section examines college-going rates among Colorado high school graduates and highlights trends in enrollment across race and ethnicity groups. It also explores how college-going rates vary by income status, providing insight into differences in postsecondary participation among recent graduating classes. Together, these measures help illustrate the extent to which Colorado students are transitioning from high school to higher education and where disparities in access may persist.

Figure 1 presents college-going rates for Colorado high school 2019 through 2024.[11] Colorado continues to experience an upward trend, but statewide rates remain below pre-pandemic rates. That said, more Colorado students enrolled in postsecondary education than ever as represented by the 2024 high school graduating cohort.

**Figure 1: College-Going Rates and High School Graduates in College or Receiving a Credential**

| 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 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2024 | 63,593 | 34,217 | 53.81% | 35,237 | 55.41% |
| 2023 | 61,958 | 33,017 | 53.29% | 33,962 | 54.81% |
| 2022 | 61,657 | 31,447 | 51.00% | 32,332 | 52.44% |
| 2021 | 61,714 | 30,781 | 49.88% | 31,622 | 51.24% |
| 2020 | 60,726 | 30,659 | 50.49% | 31,590 | 52.02% |
| 2019 | 60,191 | 33,911 | 56.34% | 34,664 | 57.59% |

Source: CDHE Student Unit Record Data System, 2026

[11] Historical data for additional years available in data dashboard.

Figure 2 presents college-going rates for Colorado high school graduates by race and ethnicity from 2019 through 2024. Across most race and ethnicity groups, college-going rates in 2024 remained below 2019 levels. The percent change since 2019 demonstrates the remaining gaps (compared to 2024 rates) for every group represented in the table. Among the 2024 graduating class, college-going rates ranged from 35.5% for Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students to 77.6% for Asian students. American Indian or Alaska Native students had a college-going rate of 41.1% in 2024, compared to 45.0% in 2019. Asian students had the highest college-going rate in each year shown, with a rate of 77.6% in 2024, compared to 78.8% in 2019. Black or African American students were the only group shown with a higher college-going rate in 2024 (53.7%) than in 2019 (51.9%), an increase of 3.4%. Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students experienced the largest decrease among the groups shown, declining from 44.4% in 2019 to 35.5% in 2024.[12] Hispanic students had a college-going rate of 41.1% in 2024, compared to 45.9% in 2019.

**Figure 2: College-Going Rates by Race/Ethnicity, 2019–2024**

| - | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | % Change from 2019 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 44.95% | 34.64% | 33.61% | 32.74% | 39.31% | 41.11% | -8.54% |
| Asian | 78.80% | 71.85% | 71.96% | 73.15% | 76.17% | 77.64% | -1.47% |
| Black or African American | 51.91% | 47.83% | 47.57% | 52.76% | 55.09% | 53.68% | 3.41% |
| Hawaiian or Pacific Islander | 44.37% | 42.45% | 37.30% | 35.61% | 32.74% | 35.54% | -19.90% |
| Hispanic of any race | 45.94% | 39.44% | 37.88% | 39.68% | 41.45% | 41.14% | -10.45% |
| Two or more races | 59.03% | 52.32% | 52.80% | 50.95% | 55.61% | 56.93% | -3.56% |
| White | 61.13% | 55.78% | 55.45% | 56.39% | 59.24% | 60.40% | -1.19% |

Source: CDHE Student Unit Record Data System, 2026

The next table is a specific look at the class of 2024 graduates, the most recent cohort of students on which this report focuses. As highlighted in the executive summary, gaps are present including disparities among female and male student college going rates, and higher college going rates for students without FRL status. As with the 2024 cohort, gaps persisted for the 2023 cohort. However, overall college going rates improved from 2023 to 2024, yet rates still are not at pre-pandemic levels in Colorado.

[12] It is important to note percentages can vary significantly from year to year due to smaller statewide population sizes.

**Figure 3: Class of 2024 and 2023 College Going Rates & Trends by Gender, Race, and Socioeconomic Status**

| Class of 2024 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | High School Graduates | % Students Enrolled in College | % College Students Enrolled in-State | % College Students Enrolled Four-Year |
| Female | 31,643 | 60.06% | 69.68% | 75.64% |
| Male | 31,880 | 47.61% | 72.71% | 74.02% |
| Race/Ethnicity | | | | |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 377 | 41.11% | 80.65% | 65.16% |
| Asian | 2,182 | 77.64% | 76.39% | 83.88% |
| Black or African American | 2,673 | 53.68% | 79.72% | 76.79% |
| Hawaiian or Pacific Islander | 166 | 35.54% | 79.66% | 71.19% |
| Hispanic of any race | 21,683 | 41.14% | 85.06% | 62.35% |
| Two or more races | 2,886 | 56.93% | 67.99% | 77.48% |
| White | 33,626 | 60.40% | 63.93% | 79.45% |
| Socio-economic Status | | | | |
| No FRL | 38,831 | 62.95% | 65.00% | 79.99% |
| FRL | 24,762 | 39.47% | 86.07% | 62.25% |
| **Class of 2023** | | | | |
| Gender | High School Graduates | %Students Enrolled in College | % College Students Enrolled in-State | % College Students Enrolled Four-Year |
| Female | 30,888 | 59.39% | 69.37% | 76.38% |
| Male | 31,070 | 47.23% | 71.19% | 74.54% |
| Race/Ethnicity | | | | |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 379 | 39.31% | 75.17% | 72.48% |
| Asian | 2,220 | 76.17% | 78.47% | 84.86% |
| Black or African American | 2,625 | 55.09% | 76.14% | 75.73% |
| Hawaiian or Pacific Islander | 168 | 32.74% | 70.91% | 74.55% |
| Hispanic of any race | 20,979 | 41.45% | 85.57% | 62.85% |
| Two or more races | 2735 | 55.61% | 69.10% | 77.05% |
| White | 32,852 | 59.24% | 62.18% | 80.33% |
| Socio-economic Status | | | | |
| No FRL | 43,012 | 59.58% | 65.37% | 79.40% |
| FRL | 18,946 | 39.00% | 86.83% | 62.25% |

Source: CDHE Student Unit Record Data System, 2026

The next figure presents college-going rates for 2024 and 2023 high school graduates by race/ethnicity and free or reduced-price lunch (FRL) status. For each race and ethnicity group shown, college-going rates were higher among students not eligible for FRL than among students eligible for FRL. Among students not eligible for FRL, college-going rates ranged were lowest (44%, 36%) for Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students, and highest (80%, 79%) for Asian students. Among students eligible for FRL, college-going rates ranged from approximately 26% and 27% for Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students to 71% and 66% for Asian students. The statewide college-going rate for 2024 high school graduates was 53.81% and 53.29% for 2023 graduates. Except for Asian students, all students eligible for FRL had college-going rates below the statewide average, while students not eligible for FRL had college-going rates above the statewide average except for Hawaiian or Pacific Islander and Hispanic of any race.

**Figure 4: College-Going Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Income for 2024 and 2023 High School Graduates**

| **2024** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Race/Ethnicity | No FRL | FRL | Statewide |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 55.09% | 30.00% | - |
| Asian | 80.61% | 71.31% | - |
| Black or African American | 59.50% | 50.24% | - |
| Hawaiian or Pacific Islander | 44.58% | 26.51% | - |
| Hispanic of any race | 49.58% | 36.22% | - |
| Two or more races | 65.68% | 39.20% | - |
| White | 66.06% | 40.48% | - |
| **All Students** | **62.95%** | **39.47%** | **53.81%** |
| **2023** | | | |
| Race/Ethnicity | No FRL | FRL | Statewide |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 46.48% | 30.12% | - |
| Asian | 79.27% | 66.67% | - |
| Black or African American | 58.97% | 51.88% | - |
| Hawaiian or Pacific Islander | 36.27% | 27.27% | - |
| Hispanic of any race | 46.22% | 37.13% | - |
| Two or more races | 61.28% | 39.14% | - |
| White | 63.26% | 36.83% | - |
| **All Students** | **59.58%** | **39.00%** | **53.29%** |

Source: CDHE Student Unit Record Data System, 2026

# Section II: Pathways to Success in Higher Education

Successful postsecondary outcomes often depend on students having access to the academic preparation and support needed to meet college-level expectations. This section examines the extent to which Colorado high school graduates enrolled at in-state public institutions require developmental education and whether those students participate in traditional developmental coursework or corequisite development coursework (also known as Supplemental Academic Instruction or SAI) during their first year of college. For some students, developmental education and supplemental academic instruction serve as important resources that help strengthen foundational skills and support their transition into higher education. These measures provide insight into students' academic readiness, and the strategies institutions use to support student success during the transition from high school to postsecondary education.

Overall, the number and percentage of Colorado high school graduates enrolling at in-state public institutions who required developmental education has decreased over time and in recent years. A number of factors have contributed to this decrease, including developmental education policy reform[13], as well as an increase in Supplemental Academic Instruction opportunities which allows a student to enroll in a college level course in addition to an academic support course or assistance (as opposed to a standalone developmental education course). The percentage requiring developmental education decreased from 26.75% for the 2019 high school graduating class to 14.10% for the 2024 graduating class. Among the cohorts shown, the percentage requiring developmental education was highest for the 2020 graduating class (30.21%) and lowest for the 2024 graduating class (14.10%). For the 2024 graduating class, 20,910 students enrolled at an in-state public institution, and 2,948 identified as requiring developmental education. Overall, developmental education percentage has decreased over time, trending downward each year since 2020, apart from 2023.[14]

[13] Most recently updated in 2020. Colorado Commission on Higher Education. (2020, May 1). Section I, Part E: Developmental education (Revised). Colorado Department of Higher Education. https://highered.colorado.gov/sites/highered/files/SECTION%20I%20-%20Part%20E%20-%20Revised%2005-01-2020%20%281%29.pdf

[14] Note: Tables 5, 6, 7 do not include area technical colleges and private institutions because they do not submit developmental education data.

**Figure 5: High School Graduates at In-State Public Institutions Requiring Developmental Education**

| High School Graduation Year | High School Grads Enrolling In-State | Assessed as Needing Developmental Education | Enrolled in Developmental Education Course in Year 1 | Not Assessed but Took a Developmental Education Course in Year 1 | Total Requiring Developmental Education | % Requiring Developmental Education |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2024 | 20,910 | 2,377 | 689 | 571 | 2,948 | 14.10% |
| 2023 | 20,766 | 2,593 | 973 | 765 | 3,358 | 16.17% |
| 2022 | 20,019 | 2,459 | 1,031 | 722 | 3,181 | 15.89% |
| 2021 | 19,464 | 2,528 | 1,037 | 753 | 3,281 | 16.86% |
| 2020 | 20,252 | 5,544 | 1,397 | 575 | 6,119 | 30.21% |
| 2019 | 21,806 | 4,936 | 1,874 | 897 | 5,833 | 26.75% |

Source: CDHE Student Unit Record Data System, 2026

The percentage requiring developmental mathematics decreased from 22.92% for the 2019 high school graduating class to 13.33% for the 2024 graduating class. Among the cohorts shown, the percentage requiring developmental mathematics was highest for the 2020 graduating class (27.42%) and lowest for the 2024 graduating class (13.33%). For the 2024 graduating class, 20,910 students enrolled at an in-state public institution, and 2,787 identified as requiring developmental mathematics. The percentage requiring developmental mathematics was 14.89% for the 2023 graduating class and 13.33% for the 2024 graduating class.

**Figure 6: Students Assessed and Enrolled in Developmental Mathematics**

| High School Graduation Year | High School Grads Enrolling In-State | Assessed as Needing Developmental Math | Enrolled in Developmental Math Course in Year 1 | Not Assessed but Took a Developmental Math Course in Year 1 | Total Requiring Developmental Math | % Requiring Developmental Math |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2024 | 20,910 | 2,080 | 821 | 707 | 2,787 | 13.33% |
| 2023 | 20,766 | 2,357 | 907 | 735 | 3,092 | 14.89% |
| 2022 | 20,019 | 2,172 | 915 | 655 | 2,827 | 14.12% |
| 2021 | 19,464 | 2,250 | 862 | 644 | 2,894 | 14.87% |
| 2020 | 20,252 | 4,996 | 1,237 | 557 | 5,553 | 27.42% |
| 2019 | 21,806 | 4,104 | 1,662 | 895 | 4,999 | 22.92% |

Source: CDHE Student Unit Record Data System, 2026

For developmental English courses, Figure 7 shows the percentage requiring developmental English was 6.63% for the 2023 graduating class and 6.14% for the 2024 graduating class. For the 2024 graduating class, 20,910 students enrolled at an in-state public institution, and 1,283 identified as requiring developmental English. The percentage of students requiring developmental English decreased from 11.61% for the 2019 high school graduating class to 6.14% for the 2024 graduating class. Among the cohorts shown, the percentage requiring developmental English was highest for the 2020 graduating class (11.96%) and lowest for the 2021 graduating class (5.50%).

**Figure 7: Students Assessed and Enrolled in Developmental English**

| High School Graduation Year | High School Grads Enrolling In-State | Assessed as Needing Developmental English | Enrolled in Developmental English Course in Year 1 | Not Assessed but Took a Developmental English Course in Year 1 | Total Requiring Developmental English | % Requiring Developmental English |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2024 | 20,910 | 1,318 | 116 | 92 | 1,283 | 6.14% |
| 2023 | 20,766 | 1,412 | 85 | 73 | 1,377 | 6.63% |
| 2022 | 20,019 | 1,409 | 149 | 120 | 1,417 | 7.08% |
| 2021 | 19,464 | 908 | 248 | 199 | 1,070 | 5.50% |
| 2020 | 20,252 | 2,444 | 259 | 121 | 2,423 | 11.96% |
| 2019 | 21,806 | 2,658 | 374 | 186 | 2,531 | 11.61% |

Source: CDHE Student Unit Record Data System, 2026

In Figure 8, the 2024 graduating class had 2,377 students assessed as needing developmental education, and 361 enrolled in a developmental education course and/or SAI during their first year, representing 15.19% of students assessed as needing developmental education. For the 2023 graduating class, 2,593 students were assessed as needing developmental education, and 454 enrolled in a developmental education course and/or SAI, representing 17.51% of students assessed as needing developmental education. Over the period shown, the percentage of students assessed as needing developmental education who enrolled in a developmental education course and/or SAI during their first year decreased from 32.33% for the 2019 graduating class to 15.19% for the 2024 graduating class. The highest percentage shown was 32.33% for the 2019 graduating class.

**Figure 8: Students Assessed as Needing Developmental Education Who Enrolled in Developmental Education and/or Supplemental Academic Instruction**

| High School Graduation Year | Assessed as Needing Developmental Education | Assessed and Took a Developmental Course in Year 1 | Assessed and Took SAI in Year 1 | Assessed and Took at Developmental Course OR SAI in Year 1 | % Assessed and Took a Developmental Course or SAI in Year 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2024 | 2,377 | 159 | 202 | 361 | 15.19% |
| 2023 | 2,593 | 208 | 246 | 454 | 17.51% |
| 2022 | 2,459 | 309 | 320 | 629 | 25.58% |
| 2021 | 2,528 | 284 | 296 | 580 | 22.94% |
| 2020 | 5,544 | 822 | 439 | 1,261 | 22.75% |
| 2019 | 4,936 | 977 | 619 | 1,596 | 32.33% |

Source: CDHE Student Unit Record Data System, 2026

# Section III: Postsecondary Outcomes

Postsecondary success is reflected not only in students' enrollment in higher education but also in their academic performance and progress toward earning a credential. Early indicators of success can provide valuable information about students' experiences after enrollment and their likelihood of achieving longer-term educational goals. This section examines the first-year grade point averages of recent Colorado high school graduates enrolled in postsecondary education, as well as the attainment of certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees among college students. Outcomes are presented by demographic characteristics, including gender, race and ethnicity, and income status, to provide a deeper understanding of student achievement and credential completion across Colorado's postsecondary system.

As shown in Figure 9, for the 2024 graduating class, 21,589 Colorado high school graduates enrolled at an in-state institution, with an average first-year GPA of 2.98 and an average of 36.84 credits earned during the first year.[15] Among 2024 enrolled students, 85.59% earned 15 or more credits, 73.25% earned 24 or more credits, and 57.95% earned 30 or more credits in their first year. For the 2023 graduating class, the average first-year GPA was 2.91 and the average number of credits earned was 34.32, while 82.57% earned 15 or more credits, 68.79% earned 24 or more credits, and 52.60% earned 30 or more credits. Across the period shown, first-year GPA increased from 2.91 for the 2019 graduating class to 2.98 for the 2024 graduating class. The average number of credits earned increased from 32.50 in 2019 to 36.84 in 2024, and the percentage of students earning 15 or more, 24 or more, and 30 or more credits during their first year also increased over the same period. These figures include credits earned through Concurrent Enrollment, though the Department has not studied whether this is a reason for the upward trend. Though GPA and credits earned are student success measure, CDHE also intends to further analyze student success in gateway courses (pursuant to reporting parameters). In future versions of this same report, CDHE aims to enhance internal and external frameworks to deliver further student success analyses in gateway courses.

**Figure 9: First-Year Leading Indicators of Success Over Time**

| High School Graduation Year | Graduates Enrolled In-State | Average GPA | Average Credits | % with 15 credits or more | % with 24 credits or more | % with 30 credits or more |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2024 | 21,589 | 2.98 | 36.84 | 85.59% | 73.25% | 57.95% |
| 2023 | 21,409 | 2.91 | 34.32 | 82.57% | 68.79% | 52.60% |
| 2022 | 20,544 | 2.88 | 33.18 | 81.01% | 66.82% | 49.43% |
| 2021 | 19,715 | 2.86 | 31.91 | 80.97% | 65.83% | 47.93% |
| 2020 | 20,707 | 2.90 | 32.13 | 79.03% | 64.68% | 48.66% |
| 2019 | 22,258 | 2.91 | 32.50 | 81.79% | 67.12% | 50.08% |

Source: CDHE Student Unit Record Data System, 2026

[15] Cumulative credit hours are the total college-level credit hours completed by the student and counted toward a degree or certificate, computed at the end of the reported term. This includes advanced placement credits, transfer hours, and excludes remedial credit hours.

For the 2024 college enrollees in Figure 10, female students had a higher average first-year GPA (3.03) than male students (2.91). Female students also had a higher average number of credits earned during their first year (37.05 compared to 36.59). The percentage earning 15 or more, 24 or more, and 30 or more credits was similar for male and female students. Average credits

Among race and ethnicity groups, average first-year GPA ranged from 2.57 for Black or African American students to 3.11 for White students. Average credits earned ranged from 29.75 for American Indian or Alaska Native students to 42.52 for Asian students. The percentage earning 30 or more credits ranged from 38.10% for Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students to 67.1% for Asian students. White students (64.2%) and Asian students (67.06%) also had the highest percentages earning 30 or more credits during their first year.

For the 2024 college enrollees, students not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL) had an average first-year GPA of 3.10, compared to 2.72 for FRL-eligible students. Students not eligible for FRL earned an average of 39.35 credits during their first year, compared to 31.63 credits for FRL-eligible students. In addition, 64.47% of students not eligible for FRL earned 30 or more credits during their first year, compared to 44.74% of FRL-eligible students.

**Figure 10: First-Year Leading Indicators of Success by Gender, Race/Ethnicity and Income College Enrollees 2024 and 2023**

| 2024 Graduation Year | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Average GPA | Average Credits | % with 15 Credits or More | % with 24 Credits or More | % with 30 Credits or More |
| Male | 2.91 | 36.59 | 85.43% | 72.79% | 56.62% |
| Female | 3.03 | 37.05 | 85.72% | 73.64% | 59.08% |
| Race/Ethnicity | Average GPA | Average Credits | % with 15 Credits or More | % with 24 Credits or More | % with 30 Credits or More |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 2.65 | 29.75 | 70.91% | 60.91% | 42.73% |
| Asian | 3.08 | 42.52 | 90.00% | 79.66% | 67.06% |
| Black or African American | 2.57 | 31.40 | 75.52% | 58.37% | 42.05% |
| Hawaiian or Pacific Islander | 2.96 | 30.29 | 80.95% | 73.81% | 38.10% |
| Hispanic of any race | 2.76 | 32.54 | 78.80% | 62.76% | 47.36% |
| Two or more races | 2.98 | 38.02 | 89.06% | 76.29% | 58.87% |
| White | 3.11 | 38.97 | 89.50% | 79.36% | 64.20% |
| Socioeconomic Status | Average GPA | Average Credits | % with 15 Credits or More | % with 24 Credits or More | % with 30 Credits or More |
| No FRL | 3.10 | 39.35 | 89.67% | 79.36% | 64.47% |
| FRL | 2.72 | 31.63 | 77.31% | 60.87% | 44.74% |

| 2023 Graduation Year | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Average GPA | Average Credits | % with 15 Credits or More | % with 24 Credits or More | % with 30 Credits or More |
| Male | 2.84 | 33.61 | 82.39% | 68.64% | 51.13% |
| Female | 2.97 | 34.90 | 82.72% | 68.92% | 53.81% |
| Race/Ethnicity | Average GPA | Average Credits | % with 15 Credits or More | % with 24 Credits or More | % with 30 Credits or More |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 2.52 | 31.08 | 74.53% | 55.66% | 39.62% |
| Asian | 3.11 | 40.36 | 88.96% | 79.45% | 63.74% |
| Black or African American | 2.41 | 27.19 | 69.87% | 50.64% | 33.17% |
| Hawaiian or Pacific Islander | 2.73 | 32.13 | 75.76% | 63.64% | 42.42% |
| Hispanic of any race | 2.69 | 30.60 | 74.91% | 58.08% | 42.23% |
| Two or more races | 2.94 | 34.86 | 82.58% | 68.48% | 52.77% |
| White | 3.05 | 36.32 | 87.49% | 75.55% | 59.19% |
| Socioeconomic Status | Average GPA | Average Credits | % with 15 Credits or More | % with 24 Credits or More | % with 30 Credits or More |
| No FRL | 3.00 | 35.99 | 86.02% | 73.50% | 57.25% |
| FRL | 2.65 | 29.56 | 73.05% | 55.77% | 39.74% |

Source: CDHE Student Unit Record Data System, 2026

Below, Figure 11 presents credential attainment rates for Colorado high school graduates by gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status for students who attended schools in Colorado. Among the 2021 high school graduating class, 45.03% of female students earned a certificate, associate degree, or bachelor's degree within four years, compared to 38.52% of male students. Two-year credential attainment rates were 8.65% for female students and 6.98% for male students.

Among race and ethnicity groups in the 2021 graduating class[16], four-year credential attainment rates ranged from 20.25% for American Indian or Alaska Native students to 46.35% for Asian students. Four-year attainment rates were 25.79% for Black or African American students, 29.27% for Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students, 35.01% for Hispanic students, 43.27% for students identifying with two or more races, and 46.3% for White students. Two-year credential attainment rates ranged from 3.6% for Asian students to 9.9% for Hispanic students.

Income status also impacts time to degree completion. Among the 2021 graduating class, 32.53% of free or reduced-price lunch (FRL) eligible students earned a credential within four years, compared to 44.53% of students who were not FRL eligible. Two-year credential attainment rates were 9.02% for FRL-eligible students and 7.61% for students who were not FRL eligible. Compared to the 2020 graduating class, four-year credential attainment rates increased for female students, male students, Black or African American students, Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students, Hispanic students, students identifying with two or more races, White students, FRL-eligible students, and students who were not FRL eligible.

[16] Data reported includes class of 2021 given this is the most recent class for which postsecondary matriculation data is available.

**Figure 11: Certificate, Associate, and Bachelor's Degree Completion by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Income**

| | 2020 High School Graduates | 2020 High School Graduates | 2021 High School Graduates | 2021 High School Graduates |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | % Earning a Credential in 2 Years | % Earning a Credential in 4 Years | % Earning a Credential in 2 Years | % Earning a Credential in 4 Years |
| Female | 9.11% | 42.92% | 8.65% | 45.03% |
| Male | 6.85% | 36.13% | 6.98% | 38.52% |
| Race/Ethnicity | - | - | - | - |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 6.52% | 28.26% | 3.80% | 20.25% |
| Asian | 5.66% | 46.32% | 3.61% | 46.35% |
| Black or African American | 3.35% | 22.68% | 3.90% | 25.79% |
| Hawaiian or Pacific Islander | 4.65% | 27.91% | 7.32% | 29.27% |
| Hispanic of any race | 9.19% | 32.49% | 9.85% | 35.01% |
| Two or more races | 5.64% | 38.19% | 6.18% | 43.27% |
| White | 8.36% | 44.26% | 7.83% | 46.27% |
| Socioeconomic Status | - | - | - | - |
| FRL | 8.43% | 28.69% | 9.02% | 32.53% |
| No FRL | 7.99% | 43.20% | 7.61% | 44.53% |

Source: CDHE Student Unit Record Data System, 2026

# Conclusion

As outlined, the report examined postsecondary access and success outcomes for Colorado high school graduates, including college-going rates, the need for developmental education and Supplemental Academic Instruction, first-year academic performance, and credential attainment. Together, these measures provide a view of Colorado students' progression from high school enrollment through postsecondary completion and highlight Colorado's collective landscape for postsecondary education. Several trends emerged from the analysis.

- College-going rates in 2024 remained below 2019 levels for most race and ethnicity groups, although rates increased between 2023 and 2024 for some populations.
- The percentage of students requiring developmental education, developmental mathematics, and developmental English continued to decline among recent high school graduating classes due to policy reform and guided-self placement at community colleges.
- First-year academic performance measures, including average GPA, average credits earned, and the percentage of students reaching key credit accumulation milestones, were higher for the 2024 graduating class than for the 2023 graduating class.
- Credential attainment rates varied across gender, race and ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, with differences evident in both two-year and four-year attainment outcomes.

Continued monitoring of these trends over time provides insight into how Colorado high school graduates are accessing higher education, navigating their first year of college, and progressing toward a postsecondary credential.

# Overview of Data Included in Report

The data included in this report addresses reporting requirements pursuant to statute as well as CCHE policy. Specifically, the report addresses Colorado Revised Statute §23-1-113 9(a). See subsequent sections for information on additional data available via the Department's website in alignment with §23-1-113 9(b).

# Data and Methodology

**Data Source**

CDHE receives data on high school graduates from CDE. This data 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 type of data is not available before the 2009 high school graduating class. Finally, Colorado Department of Education (CDE) utilizes National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) for out-of-state enrollment information, as well as information on private institutions in Colorado not included in SURDS. CDHE works with CDE to use this data for this report. NSC data is included and is reflected in college enrollment data in Section I. 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 include in-state completions at institutions reporting to SURDS.

**Report Cohorts**

This report uses two separate High School cohorts. A High School Graduate Cohort consists of all students who graduated from high school in Colorado in a given year and is used primarily in Section I and II. CDE, SURDS and NSC are the source of these data. The College Enrollee 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 Section III. CDE and SURDS are the only source of this data with the exception of persistence, where NSC data is used to identify students 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 2024 high school graduates tracked in this report enrolled in college in fall of 2024. This report, like all reports after 2012, focuses primarily on students who enroll in college in the fall immediately following their high school graduation.

**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 or Pacific Islander students and students of two or more races are not available before 2012.

# Appendix

## Links to Data Tables

Data available in the appendix section of past version of this report is available publicly on the Department's webpage. To make this data more accessible to the public, CDHE created a searchable database and individualized district profiles. The project, known as District at a Glance, is housed on CDHE's website at: https://cdhe.colorado.gov/pathways-to-prosperity. This information is publicly available via data files disaggregated by high school and school district of graduation, to the extent practicable while adhering to data suppression rules, and by ethnicity, gender, financial aid status, and any other characteristic deemed relevant by the commission.