

Key Indicators on the Path to a Bachelor's Degree by Race and Ethnicity in Maryland

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Maryland, like many other states, has set ambitious goals for increasing the number of college graduates. In a state with an increasingly diverse student population at all levels of its educational system, reaching this goal requires understanding how well students of each racial/ethnic group are progressing along the path to college graduation. This report examines the percentages of each major racial/ethnic group at three different points on the path to the baccalaureate: the estimated college-age population of recent high school graduates, the current full-time undergraduate population at Maryland campuses, and current bachelor's degree recipients statewide.

The group that exhibits by far the largest differences in their representation between each of the three points along the path to a degree is the African-American population (Table 1). African Americans make up about 35% of recent high school graduates but only 27% of full-time undergraduates (Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2015) and 20% of bachelor's degree recipients. This contrasts with Asians and Whites who make up higher percentages of college graduates than their representation in the college-age population.¹ For example, Whites, who comprise 48% of the college-age population, receive 59% of bachelor's degrees.

Table 1: Representation of Racial/Ethnic Groups at Different Points on the Path to a College Degree, 2014.

	College-Age Population	College Full-Time Undergraduates	Bachelors Degree Recipients
	<u>2009-14</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2014</u>
Asian	6.1%	8.4%	8.9%
Black	35.4%	26.9%	20.2%
Hispanic	8.2%	7.8%	5.7%
White	48.1%	50.0%	59.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Sources: Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Higher Education Commission

¹ Throughout this paper data for the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) is excluded. Only about 15% of its total enrollments are full-time undergraduate students and less than half of them are from Maryland. Its programs are offered online to a large extent. Hence, its performance has little impact on the traditional college age population in Maryland, which is the reference population in this paper.

In 2014 Blacks received 5,571 (20%) of the baccalaureates awarded by Maryland public and private colleges and universities. In order to be represented at the same rate as they are in the college-age population (35%), Black students would have had to receive **6,200 additional degrees, a more than doubling of the number they currently receive**. To obtain degrees at the same rate as their representation in the full-time undergraduate population (27%) would require an increase of 2,600 degrees, or 47% more than are now awarded to Blacks. These differences in percentage composition obviously are very large when translated into the number of additional degrees required for parity. (See Table A-3 in appendix for calculation.)

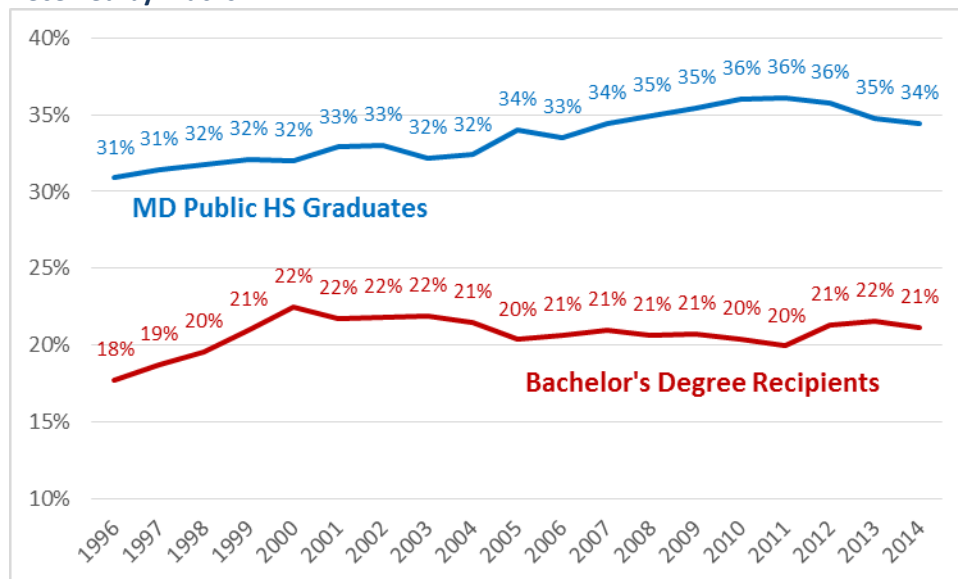
For Hispanics, the difference between their representation in the college age population and enrollment as full-time undergraduates is small. However, the difference between full-time undergraduate status and receipt of a degree is larger and is proportionately about the same as for African Americans. Because their numbers are increasing rapidly at all points, the baseline of college-age students that can be used to compare changes in college enrollments and graduates over time is not stable. The fact that the six-year college graduation rate in Maryland for Hispanic students is much higher than for African Americans (66% vs. 44%) suggests that the gap between undergraduate enrollment and degree recipients should eventually be smaller for Hispanics than for Blacks (Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2015). While significant growth in the Hispanic population is a relatively new phenomenon in Maryland, the growth among Blacks came much earlier and the percentage of Black high school graduates has been relatively stable for the past decade. It is, therefore, meaningful to examine the degree to which the gap between the relatively stable representation of Blacks in the high school graduate pool and their college degree representation has changed.

Figure 1 compares the percentage of bachelor's degrees and high school diplomas received by African Americans since the mid-1990s. Until 2000, the slope of the line representing the percentage of bachelor's degrees received by Blacks was moving upward at a pace that suggested progress was being made in closing the gap between the percentages of high school diplomas and college degrees awarded to Blacks. The gap between the two measures dropped from 14 percentage points in 1996 to 11 percentage points in 2000. After that, the gap stabilized and then widened and has remained consistently large. Long-term trends suggest that the gap will persist. In 2014 the gap was 14 percentage points, the same as in 1996 and the size of the gap has averaged 14 percentage points for the 1996-2014 period. Hence, as the projected number of Black high school graduates begins a modest decline, there is no reason to predict that degrees received by Blacks will trend any differently.

The recent downturn in the number of Black freshmen entering college in Maryland, even as the number of Black high school graduates in the state has remained relatively stable (Figure 2), reinforces the argument that the gap between share of the college age population and degree representation will not narrow. Between 2009 and 2014, the number of Black college freshmen has declined by 22% while the number of high school graduates has changed very little. Hence, the size of the Black college-age population has remained stable but the number of individuals from this pool who enter college has decreased. This drop alone would make it difficult to anticipate any reduction in the size of the gap shown in Figure 1 for the next several years.²

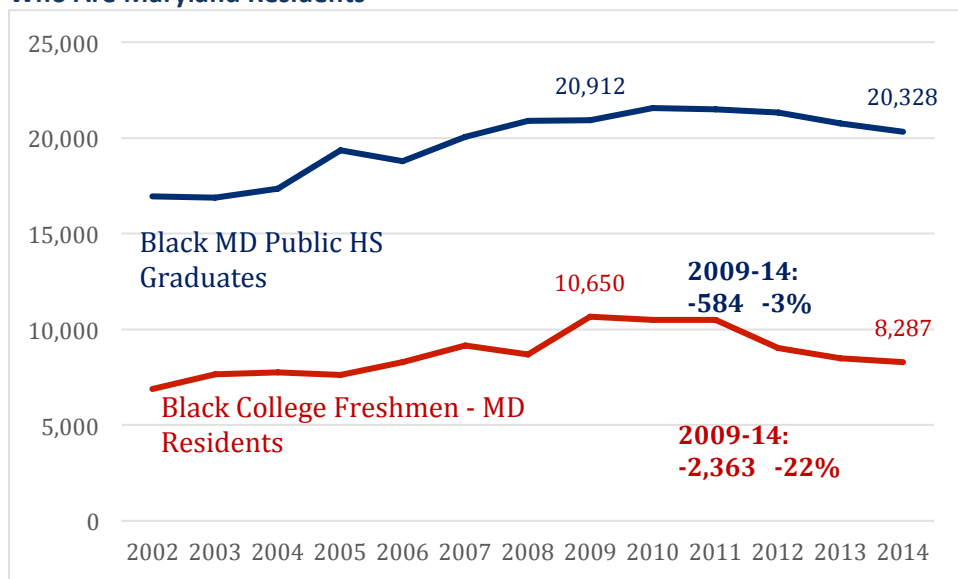
² See Popovich, J. (2015). *Why is the number of college freshmen declining in Maryland?* College Park, MD: Maryland Equity Project, <http://www.education.umd.edu/TLPL/centers/MEP/Research/College/> for an analysis of the decline in Black freshmen enrollment.

Figure 1: Percent of Maryland High School Diplomas and Bachelor's Degrees Received by Blacks



Sources: Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Higher Education Commission

Figure 2: Black Maryland High School Graduates and Black College Freshmen Who Are Maryland Residents



Sources: Maryland Higher Education Commission; Maryland State Department of Education

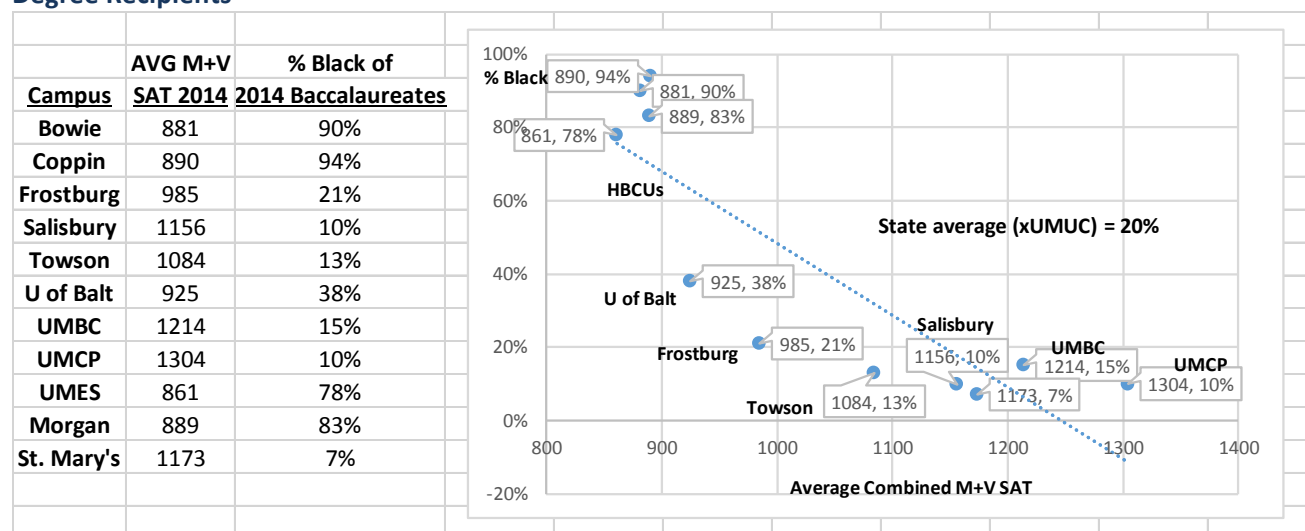
Discussion

The challenge for the state is to determine the potential of its public institutions to increase the number of degrees awarded to African Americans. Public institutions awarded 76% of all baccalaureates in 2014, but they accounted for 84% of awards to Black graduates (see Appendix Table 2-A). In addition,

traditionally White institutions (TWIs) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) awarded about the same number of bachelor's degrees to African Americans (2,405 by TWIs; 2248 for HBCUs) even though TWIs award about seven times as many total baccalaureates as HBCUs.

Many Black students who do not make it from high school through a four-year degree on a six-year schedule³ may be at risk to begin with for academic or financial reasons, or both. However, many students are unlikely to be admitted to many of Maryland's public institutions, particularly its TWIs, which range from moderately to highly selective, because they do not meet their admissions requirements. Table 2 shows the relationship between campus selectivity and the percentage of bachelor's degrees awarded to Blacks. As the average SAT score rises, the percentage of Black degree recipients goes down (Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2015). Note that the three largest campuses – UMCP, UMBC, and Towson – are well below the statewide average of 20% of degrees that are awarded to Blacks. Yet, it would take many more awards to Blacks by schools of this size to allow the state to produce significantly larger numbers of degrees unless other campuses with more liberal admissions policies grow significantly and/or the relationships between community colleges and four-year campuses becomes much more productive with respect to African Americans. This mismatch between the preparation of students, who are not currently successful in moving from high school to a degree on a reasonably traditional schedule, and the selectivity of most of Maryland's public campuses, places a limit on how much additional degree production is possible without new approaches to supporting access.

Table 2: SAT Scores of Maryland Public Four-Year Campuses and Their Percentages of Black Bachelor's Degree Recipients



Source: Maryland Higher Education Commission

Maryland public campuses are frequently cited for the high percentages of Blacks among their degree recipients. However, such recognition is usually based on comparisons to the U.S. population, which is 13% Black. The appropriate comparison, instead, is to Maryland's population, which overall is 30% Black with a college-age population that is 35% Black. By this measure, a very large degree attainment gap

³ A six-year graduation rate is the standard definition used for full-time entering freshmen by the federal government and the most commonly reported rate by colleges.

exists in Maryland, a gap that has not narrowed in twenty years. A doubling of the number of degrees awarded to African Americans is needed to close this gap. It is apparent that the strategies used to date have not had much of an impact.

The problem obviously merits renewed attention. At least three general aspects of the problem merit consideration and the development of new strategies by the state and its public institutions at all educational levels.

First, it is apparent that the transition from high school to college needs to be improved for African Americans. This already has been a long-term effort of schools systems throughout the state but it has shown little evidence of effectiveness to date, at least on the scale necessary to reduce the college degree attainment gap. As it becomes increasingly apparent that Maryland's degree attainment goals cannot be achieved without a substantial increase in the number of African Americans entering and being successful in higher education, there likely will be increased scrutiny of past and current efforts. Hopefully, this attention, accompanied by a greater sense of urgency than in the past, will lead to new evidence-based approaches to increasing the college-going rates of minority students of college age. It is clear that such approaches will have to entail early motivation efforts, adequate preparation beginning prior to high school, and the availability of financial aid for those in need.

At the college level, for students of traditional college age, success is likely to depend on expanding the role of campuses with liberal admissions standards. In Maryland, this group is made up primarily of community colleges and historically Black campuses. These institutions have a tradition of successfully dealing with the underprepared and a culture that makes remedial education and strong academic support programs integral parts of campus missions. Whether these campuses are the places where students obtain their degrees or are starting points from which students transfer, they are likely to be the most successful places for many African Americans as well as other minorities and low-income students entering higher education.

A third approach is to provide degree opportunities for those who already have bypassed college or who have dropped out as well as for those who will do so in the future. This will require programs for adult learners who typically are employed and who cannot afford the time required to complete a traditional degree program. The University of Maryland University College (UMUC) has a long-term record of successfully educating such students. It is noteworthy that it consistently leads Maryland campuses in bachelor's degrees awarded to African Americans, a group that drops out of traditional campuses at an above-average rate. It may be that the state should consider financial aid for students enrolled in such programs at UMUC or other campuses who need aid and who cannot obtain it from their employers.

Appendix

Table A-1 below shows graduates and completers of Maryland public schools for the 2009-2014 period. The average for all of these years is used in this report to approximate the population of traditional college age that holds a high school diploma (see shaded figures in lower right portion of table). While the total number of high school graduates was stable, averaging just over 59,000 for the period, there was strong growth among Hispanics (up by 2,086, or 54%) and a significant decline in White graduates (-3,642, or -12%). The six-year averages, which are used to approximate the composition of the population of traditional college age, are: White – 48.1%, Black – 35.4%, Hispanic – 8.2%, and Asian 6.1%. Due to the rapid growth in the Hispanic population this methodology may somewhat under-state the actual percentage of this group in the college-age population but because the percentage is still quite low any error also would be small. (Maryland State Department of Education, 2008-09 thru 2013-14).

Table A-1: Maryland Public High School Graduates by Race and Ethnicity 2009-2014

	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u># Ch</u>	<u>% Ch</u>	<u>6 Year Total</u>
American Indian	188	191	197	189	246	200	12	6.4%	1,211
Asian	3,464	3,721	3,452	3,580	3,737	3,766	302	8.7%	21,720
Black	20,912	21,543	21,474	21,321	20,740	20,328	-584	-2.8%	126,318
Hispanic	3,885	4,134	4,735	5,089	5,541	5,971	2,086	53.7%	29,355
Hawian/Pac Isl			27	53	52	73			205
White	30,573	30,183	28,271	27,925	27,713	26,931	-3,642	-11.9%	171,596
Mixed			1,296	1,471	1,681	1,749			6,197
Total	59,022	59,772	59,452	59,628	59,710	59,018	-4	0.0%	356,602
							Six-Year		
Percent of Total	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>Average</u>		
American Indian	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%		
Asian	5.9%	6.2%	5.8%	6.0%	6.3%	6.4%	6.1%		
Black	35.4%	36.0%	36.1%	35.8%	34.7%	34.4%	35.4%		
Hispanic	6.6%	6.9%	8.0%	8.5%	9.3%	10.1%	8.2%		
Hawian/Pac Isl	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%		
White	51.8%	50.5%	47.6%	46.8%	46.4%	45.6%	48.1%		
Mixed	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	2.5%	2.8%	3.0%	1.7%		
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

Source: Maryland State Department of Education, 2008-09 to 2013-14

Table A-2 below shows bachelor's degrees awarded in Maryland in 2014 by campus. (Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2015).

Table A-2: Bachelor's Degrees Awarded by Maryland Campuses 2014

<i>Bachelor's Degrees 2014</i>						
Campus	Black	Asian	White	Hispanic	Total U.S. Citizens	Percent Black of Total U.S. Citizens
Public Four-Year Campuses						
Bowie	658	13	22	24	729	90.3%
Coppin	410	4	7	4	438	93.6%
Frostburg	215	11	716	32	1,012	21.2%
Salisbury	181	42	1,507	98	1,887	9.6%
Towson	585	166	3,158	192	4,349	13.5%
University of Baltimore	246	38	299	34	656	37.5%
U of M Baltimore	54	46	196	26	336	16.1%
U of M Baltimore County	347	469	1,257	127	2,347	14.8%
U of M college Park	746	1,115	4,235	586	7,202	10.4%
U of M Eastern Shore	418	9	66	15	538	77.7%
Morgan	762	64	30	23	918	83.0%
St. Mary's	31	13	323	32	424	7.3%
Total	4,653	1,990	11,816	1,193	20,836	22.3%
All Private Campuses	918	462	4,572	391	6,736	13.6%
All Maryland Campuses	5,571	2,452	16,388	1,584	27,572	20.2%
HBCUs	2,248				2,623	85.7%
TWIs	2,405				18,213	13.2%

Source: Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2015⁵

⁴ Degrees include those to U.S. Citizens because foreign students are not assigned to a racial category by federal data collection standards. Maryland's four HBCUs are Bowie, Coppin, UM Eastern Shore, and Morgan. All other public four-year campuses are considered TWIs.

⁵ Note that in order to arrive at a given percentage of Blacks among total degree recipients, the number of additional degrees awarded to Blacks also has to be added to the denominator of total degrees, as the total would increase by the number of Black degrees added.

Table A-3 shows the number of degrees that would have to be awarded to African Americans to achieve parity with their representation (1) in the college-age population and (2) full-time undergraduates at Maryland campuses. Note that the additional number of degrees awarded to Blacks also has to be added to “Total Bachelor Degrees” in this calculation in order to reflect the larger denominator (degree recipients of all races) that would result from the addition of more Black degree recipients.

Table A-3: Additional Degrees that would have to be awarded to Blacks to Achieve Parity with Comparison Group

	% Black	# of	Total	Additional	Additional
	Bachelor's	Degrees	Bachelor's	Degrees to	Total
	Degrees	to Blacks	Degrees	Blacks	Degrees
Current	20%	5,571	27,572		
Parity with College-Age Population	35%	11,771	33,772	6,200	6,200
Parity with Full-Time Undergraduates	27%	8,171	30,172	2,600	2,600

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About the Maryland Equity Project

The Maryland Equity Project seeks to improve education through research that supports an informed public policy debate on the quality and distribution of educational opportunities. It conducts, synthesizes, and distributes research on key educational issues in Maryland and facilitates collaboration between researchers and policymakers. The Maryland Equity Project is a program in the Department of Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership in the College of Education at The University of Maryland.

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