Race, gender play role in college graduations

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of the widespread more than half of students who started college in the U.S. in Fall 2010 completed a degree. The completion rate of Hispanic students, however, was almost 10 percentage points higher at 55 percent. On the other hand, more than two-thirds of Asian and white students completed a degree within the same period (62 percent and 55 percent, respectively).

The study, titled "A National View of Student Retention Rates by Race and Ethnicity," was conducted by the Lumina Foundation, a private institution whose mission is to expand educational attainment beyond high school. This study was conducted among 2,823,678 students who entered college in the Fall of 2010.

When the study’s authors looked at all students – those who started at two-year community colleges as well as those who began at two-year community colleges but later transferred to four-year schools – Asian and white students had a much higher completion rate (44.5 percent and 42 percent, respectively) than Hispanic and black students (36.7 percent and 34 percent, respectively). Students who started at two-year colleges (with or without receiving an associate’s degree first) had a higher completion rate than two-year and four-year racial and ethnic groups. "While almost one-in-five community college students who began with the intention of earning a bachelor’s degree had completed this transfer pathway by the end of the six-year study period, 67 percent of Hispanic students and about one in 12 black students did," the study notes.

Another interesting finding from this study was that the completion gaps between racial groups tend to shrink as students grow older. Among traditional-age students (under 25 years), there was a 24-percentage point gap in the completion rates of black and white students (42.7 percent and 46.8 percent, respectively); and among 25- and 29-year-old students, the gap was only 12.7 percentage points (42.0 percent and 29.3 percent, respectively) between black and white students and in the 30- and 34-year-old group, the percentage points between Hispanic and white students (42.7 percent and 29.3 percent, respectively) was 13.4.

There are several conclusions we can draw from this study. First, it is that many high schools do not seem to be preparing many students well for college, especially those with a large proportion of minorities. The other is that colleges and universities are not taking great steps to help some students when it comes to monitoring. And finally, that colleges and universities need to take particular steps to help students complete their degrees. To that end, they need to focus on the needs of these students and who can also serve as these students’ role models.

Dr. Aldemaro Romero Jr.
Letters from Academia

Oak Brook, IL (AP) — McDonald’s says a promotion for $1 sodas and a new line of premium burgers helped boost sales in its flagship U.S. market. The company said Tuesday that domestic sales rose 3.9 percent at established locations during the four weeks ending Aug. 6. Overall, sales were up 2 percent.

CEO Steve Easterbrook has said the chain’s menu and stores to get customers visiting more often in a competitive, healthier envi-

ronment.

The research, however, found only 54.8 percent of the undergraduate students who entered college in the U.S. in Fall 2010 completed a degree within six years. The lowest six-year completion rate (45.9 percent), however, was for those who enrolled in community colleges.

Students who entered community colleges is to later transfer to four-year schools. Asian and white students had a much higher completion rate (44.5 percent and 42 percent, respectively) than Hispanic and black students (36.7 percent and 34 percent, respectively). Students who started at two-year colleges (with or without receiving an associate’s degree first) had a higher completion rate than two-year and four-year racial and ethnic groups. "While almost one-in-five community college students who began with the intention of earning a bachelor’s degree had completed this transfer pathway by the end of the six-year study period, 67 percent of Hispanic students and about one in 12 black students did," the study notes.

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