Double the Numbers for College Success

A Call to Action for the District of Columbia

DC College Access Program

DC Education Compact

DC Public Schools

DC State Education Office

October 2006

Why This Report?

The purpose of this analysis is to create a knowledge base that allows the many committed DC stakeholders to prioritize and combine their efforts to help many more DCPS and public charter school students succeed in high school and college. Rather than wait for a multiyear, longitudinal study performed by academics, we have gathered the best available data on what happens to a specific group of 9th-grade students across their high school and postsecondary careers. This type of "cohort" analysis allows us to follow the path of individual students over time.

Although we recognize that many students take longer than five years to finish college, we have used the five-year time span for two reasons: it provides the greatest opportunity for national comparison, and most financial aid packages last this long. We hope that others will refine, modify and continue to improve this analysis. For our part, we are planning a companion analysis to better understand what happens to the majority of DC public school students who choose or end up at work or on some other pathway after high school.

Despite the limitations of our approach, we believe the data in this report illuminate many of the critical needs of District students and point the way toward many beneficial interventions. Our research already has helped us focus the efforts of our own organizations.

Although the current situation is not acceptable, there is a path forward. Important improvements have been made, and many plans in place today will create greater change tomorrow. Much more needs to be done. As educational leaders and others commit to additional initiatives, we hope that this report will serve as a platform to bring people together … and as a resource to guide the difficult choices and deep investments needed to help our children succeed.

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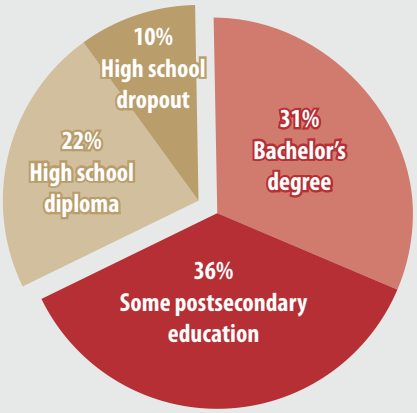
Double the Numbers for College Success

Postsecondary education, particularly college, is moving from being a hoped-for opportunity to a necessity. A high school diploma alone is no longer enough: Earning a family-supporting wage means having a postsecondary education. The average male college graduate earns 70 percent more than a high school graduate, while female college graduates earn nearly 80 percent more.[1] Eighty percent of the fastest-growing jobs in the new, knowledge-driven economy require some postsecondary education.[2]

Share of new jobs, 2000–10

Jobs that require at least some postsecondary education will make up more than two-thirds of new jobs.

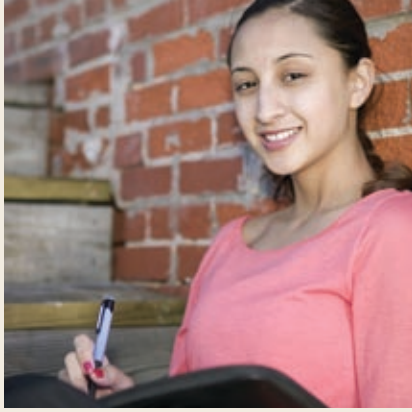


Source: Carnevale, Anthony P., and Donna M. Desrochers, *Standards for What? The Economic Roots of K–16 Reform*, Educational Testing Service, 2003.

Despite the growing importance of additional learning after high school, only one in four Americans who enter 9th grade successfully attains a college degree. This is a national challenge and should be a wake-up call for anyone interested in the civic and economic health of our nation. African American students face even longer odds in this country: Of 100 students sitting at their desks during their freshman year of high school, fewer than 11 ultimately graduate from college on time.

In the District of Columbia, the situation is even bleaker. Only 9 percent of incoming 9th graders complete college "on time" (see data, page 4). The remainder — the more than 90 percent who leave the high school system, never start college or fail to finish their degree — will face a future of diminished opportunities and low-wage jobs. Creating opportunities for all students to graduate from high school and attend college if they choose to is *the* central challenge for leaders, educators and residents of the District of Columbia.

College or Work? Students Should Have a Choice



The analysis and recommendations in this report focus particularly on the college option. Yet we know that other high-quality options will meet the needs of many students: skilled jobs, apprenticeships, military training and similar pathways that do not require a college degree. Even if the District triples the number of postsecondary graduates in the next decade, more than 70 percent of DC students still will not attain college degrees on time. Indeed, the DC Education Compact, DC Public Schools and others have made strengthening career and technical options an important priority to help prepare a diverse and qualified workforce. Within the next 12 months, the Double the Numbers coalition will be developing a companion research report on postsecondary workforce pathways.

The bottom line: DC students should have a choice. Research by the American Diploma Project, ACT and others shows that high school graduates need basically the same skills, whether they go to college, a specialized training program or work. Those who want to attend college — and large majorities of high school students say they do — should be prepared to do so, should have the resources to do so and should be fully supported once they are on campus. Their high school education should not preclude them from pursuing better careers and better lives.

A good education is particularly essential in the DC area. In 2000, more than half the jobs in the District of Columbia were held by employees with a bachelor's degree or higher, almost twice the national average.[3] Moreover, the DC metro area ranks sixth in the nation in the New Economy Index, which looks at the concentration of managerial, professional and technical jobs, according to a report from the DC Workforce Investment Council.[4] These trends may help explain how the number of good jobs in the District *and* unemployment for DC residents can be rising simultaneously.

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

In response, over the past six months a group of DC education leaders has developed a plan to at least double the number of DC public high school students who graduate from high school ready for college and work and who complete college. Representatives from the DC College Access Program (DC-CAP), the DC Education Compact (DCEC), DC Public Schools (DCPS) and the DC State Education Office (SEO), with support from The Bridgespan Group and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, have:

- Reviewed and analyzed the data on student outcomes in the District of Columbia to identify leverage points for improvement,
- Outlined elements of a strategy for dramatically increasing the number of DC students who graduate from high school and college,
- Started to mobilize the key actors in the District behind a common plan of action, and
- Established a baseline against which future progress will be evaluated.

These efforts are merely a prelude to the broad-based and sustained actions that will be required to provide DC students with the opportunities and options they deserve. The good news is that the response has been overwhelmingly positive — from the mayor's office to Capitol Hill, there is a powerful consensus around the need for action.

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1. Webster, Bruce H., Jr., and Alemayehu Bishaw, U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Reports, ACS-02, Income, Earnings, and Poverty Data from the 2005 American Community Survey. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

2. "Employment Outlook: 2004–14: Occupational Employment Projections to 2014," *Monthly Labor Review* (November 2005), Bureau of Labor Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

3. "Reducing Poverty in the District: A Strategy for Growing the Middle Class from Within," Greater Washington Research Program, The Brookings Institution, September 2006.

4. *The District's State of the Workforce Report*, DC Workforce Investment Council, January 2003.

Falling off the Path to Success: A Sobering Reality

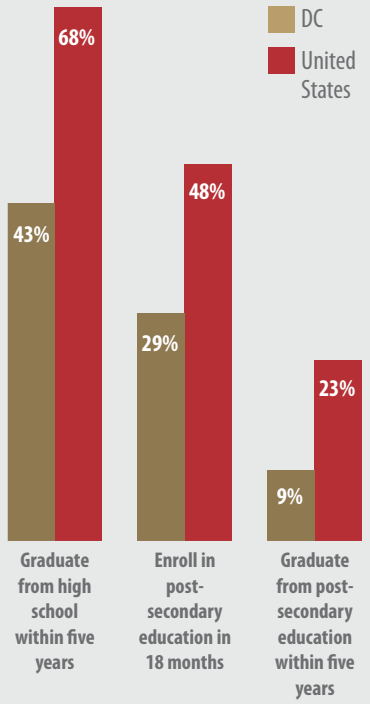
The bottom line is distressing. Based on a detailed analysis of our cohort, of every 100 students who enter 9th grade in DCPS and DC charter schools:

- **43** graduate from high school in the District within five years,
- **29** enroll in postsecondary educational programs within 18 months of graduating high school, and
- **9** attain a postsecondary degree within five years of enrolling in college.

Note: *DC high school graduation rates* include anyone who will graduate high school in five years, based on a likely increase in rates by allowing for an additional year. *DC postsecondary enrollment rates within 18 months* assumes an increase of 21 percent of postsecondary enrollees at two-year colleges and a 6 percent increase at four-year colleges from 12 months to 18 months after high school graduation. *DC graduates from postsecondary education within five years* is measured as of spring graduation. *U.S. high school graduation rates* use the Cumulative Promotion Index. *U.S. postsecondary enrollment rates* are inflated to 18-month rates using a DC inflator. Associate of arts (AA) degree attainment is estimated based on six-year rates; certificates excluded.

Sources: SEO Audited Enrollment Longitudinal Database; National Student Clearinghouse; UDC; Trinity; DC-CAP; "The Class of 2002 Final Longitudinal Report: A Three-Year Follow-up Study," NYC Department of Education; Urban Institute, "Who Graduates, Who Doesn't?"; National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), "The Condition of Education"; NCES, "Postsecondary Longitudinal Study"; NCES, "Enrollment in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall 2004."

Few DC students in our cohort succeed in high school or post-secondary education



These rates are considerably below the national average, even if one looks only at low-income or African American students. In some sections of the city, the situation is even more desperate: For instance, of those attending high school in Wards 7 and 8 from our cohort of students, only one in three finishes high school, and only one in 20 earns a college degree. Additionally, the oft-noted gap between males and females is clearly present in the District; a female starting 9th grade is *twice* as likely to attain a postsecondary degree on time as her male classmate.

Moreover, with a few notable exceptions, such as Trinity University, the 10 colleges most attended by DC students have low graduation rates compared to similar colleges and universities. Many colleges are not successfully addressing the academic and social challenges that many DC students bring to campus, given their level of K–12 preparation. As important, most of the Washington, DC, consortium colleges, with the exception of the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) and Trinity, enroll very few public school students from DC. The good news is that some of these colleges already are making efforts to improve.

What's Working? What's Not?

Some DCPS and DC charter high schools serve their students well. For instance, all 82 seniors at Benjamin Banneker Academic High School in the class of 2005 graduated and applied to college; 74 of them enrolled. The senior class received more than $4 million in scholarship offers.

At other schools, the picture is quite different. Only 45 of the 184 students who entered Anacostia High School in fall 2001 graduated from high school, and of those, only 32 enrolled in a postsecondary program within 18 months.

The problems are not confined to schools like Anacostia. At Wilson High School, for instance, 72 percent of entering 9th graders in our cohort earn a diploma, but only 79 percent of them enroll in college and 39 percent of those graduate within five years. Of every 100 9th graders at Wilson, only 22 receive their postsecondary degree on time. Too many DCPS and DC charter high schools have similar, disheartening outcomes.

About the Data

To develop an initial strategy for improving college attainment, we needed to answer one central question: Out of a group of 9th graders, how many eventually will graduate from college? Unfortunately, current data systems in DC do not allow for such a calculation, and therefore assembling the answer required the close collaboration of nearly every major educational institution in DC. The resulting analysis is not perfect but is sufficiently rigorous to set priorities and establish a baseline against which future progress can be measured.

This analysis takes a cohort of actual DCPS and public charter school students who were in 9th grade in the 2001–02 academic year. Using data from the annual enrollment audit of the SEO, we tracked actual, individual students through the public school system, including transfers between DCPS and public charter schools. We then used data from the National Student Clearinghouse (which verifies enrollment information for 91 percent of American college students) — as well as specific inquiries to UDC and Trinity, which do not participate in the Clearinghouse — to see which graduates enrolled in college within 18 months. To estimate how many students graduate from college within five years, we used a separate analysis of how well a previous cohort of DC students who entered college in 2001 performed at their schools, which we triangulated across three data sets (DCPS, DC-CAP and SEO/DC-TAG). For example, because 51 percent of previous DC enrollees at Trinity have earned their degrees, we projected that roughly half of the students from our group who enrolled in Trinity would eventually graduate from college.

Several notes are important to keep in mind when comparing our high school graduation numbers to others that have been reported. First, this is a snapshot that may contain one-time anomalies. Second, our data are based on students who were in 9th grade in fall 2001; thus, any subsequent improvements in high school or college performance that did not affect this group will not be reflected in this analysis. Third, our analysis is based on following a group of specific students whom we tracked by name, using independently generated raw data from the SEO. Most other calculations use self-reported information and do not track actual students. Fourth, we could not completely account for students who transferred from DCPS and public charters to private schools or schools outside the District. And lack of accurate historical data limited our analysis of charter school performance.

ENCOURAGING SIGNS

These gaps are not new and have not gone unnoticed. In fact, the District has a demonstrated capacity to address the college challenge. In the late 1990s, a study on DC college enrollment helped to galvanize the city's leaders and Congress, leading to the formation of the DC Tuition Assistance Grant program (DC-TAG) and the founding of the DC-CAP, as well as many other efforts aimed at improving college attendance.

The result has been nothing short of transformative. DC students now enroll in postsecondary programs at twice the rate they did previously, and an area of weakness has become a comparative strength.

Conditions are ripe for even more dramatic improvement. The DCPS Master Education Plan (MEP) promises to alter the face of K–12 education in the District, with dozens of far-reaching programs to strengthen academic offerings (including major improvements in career and technical education); improve the quality of teaching and leadership; and provide all students with the individualized support they need to succeed, whether they go straight to college or work.

Similarly, the leadership of UDC recently has embraced an ambitious turnaround plan to strengthen its academic and student support programs. And the District is fortunate to have capable leaders across the public, private and social sectors who are now united behind a vision for fundamentally altering the current situation.

A 10-Point Plan for Helping DC Students Succeed

Doubling the number of students who graduate from high school and college requires focused and strategic work at multiple levels. Each student needs support throughout the education process … whether it is passing 9th grade, graduating from high school, learning about college or other high-quality postsecondary options, navigating scholarships and aid programs, or getting help in a tough subject in college. This level of individualized attention will require the combined efforts of program, school, district and community leaders. Action, resources and systems must support the work, not get in the way.

This 10-point plan does just that, helping students stay on the path to success through high school, into college and through college. It also requires our leaders to rise to the challenge, putting the political support, financial resources and systems in place to make student success happen.

STRONG SUPPORT
PUT RESOURCES AND SYSTEMS IN PLACE FOR CHANGE

1. Actively engage leaders and the public to commit resources, time and support in a visible and an active campaign focused on student success, starting with an assurance that all high school graduates are ready for college and work.
2. Put systems in place to monitor student progress, and use the data to target assistance and hold institutions more accountable for student success.
3. Create a strong coordinating mechanism to put appropriate policies in place and align school-based and citywide efforts, all with an unyielding focus on student success.

HIGH SCHOOL SUCCESS
INCREASE THE NUMBER OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES READY FOR COLLEGE AND OTHER POSTSECONDARY OPTIONS

4. Implement the far-reaching recommendations of the DCPS MEP, which include a college-ready curriculum, stronger career and technical offerings, alternative education and dropout prevention programs, and 9th grade academies. Support similar efforts in public charter high schools.

5. Aggressively work to prevent dropouts and help out-of-school youth get back on track.

6. Strengthen and support the expansion of proven systemic and school-level college access programs.

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT
HELP STUDENTS MAKE THE TRANSITION FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

7. Educate DC students and families about the prerequisites of college and the value of a degree. Overhaul the student support system so that counselors, teachers and principals focus on helping students and their families better understand and prepare for their postsecondary options. Ensure that students and families know that college is affordable and grants and loans are available.

8. Remove financial barriers to ensure that all qualified students can afford postsecondary education. Work with colleges to cut costs and provide greater aid for DC residents.

COLLEGE SUCCESS
HELP MORE STUDENTS SUCCEED IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

9. Ensure that the colleges with the highest DC enrollment are providing students with the academic and other supports they need to succeed.

10. Expand DC students' options by working closely with additional four-year colleges and strengthening the pathways from two-year community colleges to four-year degrees.

The 10 points are not meant to be a project or a program, but rather a joint commitment by multiple parties to focus intensively on this critical challenge, now and in the future.

This work must continue over many years to reach the goal of doubling the numbers so that at least 18 percent of the class of 2010 (students who entered the 9th grade in 2006) will finish high school and graduate from college within five years. For the class of 2013, the community should aim to triple the number of college graduates.

Strong Support:
Put Resources and Systems in Place for Change

The first priority is to be candid about where the city stands and to mobilize the District's political, education, business and community leaders to respond. The publication of this report and formation of a Double the Numbers coalition are important early steps.

To make informed decisions, the city needs a streamlined data system to track the performance of DC students all the way from preschool through college. Are we losing students in certain grades or for certain reasons? When? Why? Are some schools and colleges doing better than others? Do certain courses or interventions lead to success more than others? How are students performing over time — in school, in college or on the job?

Other states can answer questions such as these, but it is very difficult and time consuming to do so in the District. Information is controlled by different agencies and groups, from DCPS and SEO to DC-area colleges and the College Board.

Moreover, although these organizations and others are working hard to help high school students successfully transition to college, their efforts are often uncoordinated and occasionally duplicative. In some cases, "turf wars" get in the way of serving students, and there is no comprehensive record of the services and supports received by each student.

The time it takes to learn how many students graduate from high school and enroll in college

Miami, FL: **Less than one hour**
Houston, TX: **Less than one hour**
Washington, DC: **4 months**

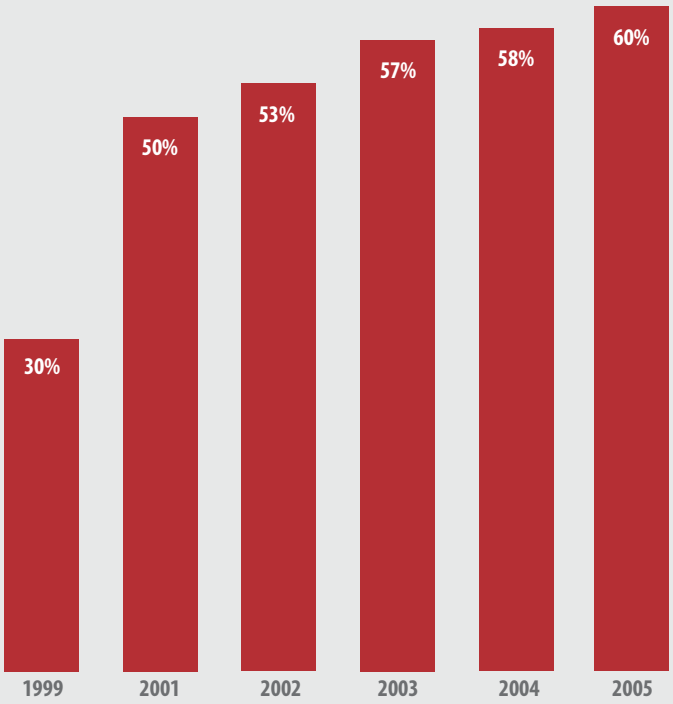
Going forward, leaders from all sectors must be involved in developing a multiyear action plan for sustaining change. Among other challenges, policies are needed that will allow our strategy to succeed, including:

- An umbrella coordinating organization whose primary activities will include shared goal-setting and regular communications;
- A shared P–16 data warehouse that will give educators and policymakers instant access to key information about the performance of students and institutions;
- Continued funding of the very successful DC-TAG, which provides up to $10,000 in annual financial aid to help DC youth afford tuition in public colleges and universities outside the District, and DC Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (LEAP), which helps students access federal aid; and
- Sufficient resources to implement the DCPS MEP, which is committed to preparing all students for college and work, and improvements to UDC.

Just as important, leaders must help students and parents recognize that college is not just for someone else — but is within reach for them.

Postsecondary enrollment of graduating DCPS seniors has risen sharply since DC-CAP and DC-TAG launched

Enrollment rate, 12 months after high school graduation (percentage of graduates)



Note: Excludes alternative school graduates; enrollment after 12 months in college.
Sources: DC-CAP internal data.

High School Success:
Increase the Number of High School Graduates Ready for College and Other Postsecondary Options

The greatest barrier on the pathway to college is high school, where we lose more than half the students. The tragedy is exacerbated by the many DC students who arrive at college unprepared academically or socially for college-level work. This lack of preparation limits their choices and undermines their chances of success. In fact, some colleges report that up to 75 percent of their DC students require significant remediation.

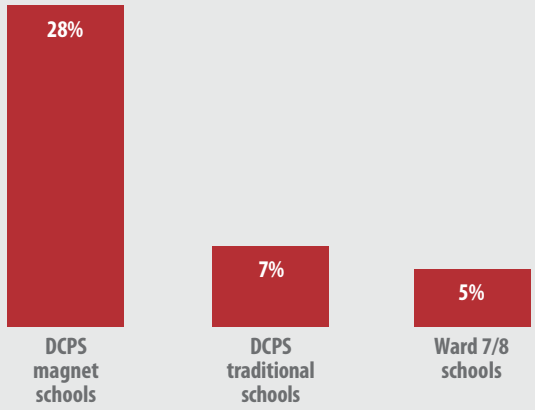
In response to these challenges, the DCPS MEP, released in February 2006, offers a comprehensive, multiyear strategy for improving the performance of DC students. Many of the school system's recommendations anticipate and reinforce the Double the Numbers agenda, including:

- Stronger academic standards in all core subjects, with aligned curricula and increased graduation requirements;
- 9th-grade academies;
- 8th-to-9th-grade summer transition programs;
- Student support teams and improved guidance counseling;
- Expanded Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and dual-enrollment programs;
- Stronger career and technical education offerings for all students, particularly those who will choose not to go straight from high school to college; and
- Stronger accountability, including better data systems.

One of the MEP's top priorities is implementing the national Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) program, which has been very successful in preventing students from dropping out, bringing dropouts back into the system and helping graduates start careers. Given that nearly

Level of attainment differs by type of high school attended and ward

Percentage of 9th graders from our cohort earning postsecondary degrees



Note: Ward 7/8 schools include Anacostia, Ballou, Woodson, Business & Finance SWSC at Woodson, IDEA, Friendship-Edison, SEED, and Thurgood Marshall; DCPS magnet schools include Banneker, Ellington, School Without Walls, Business & Finance SWSC at Woodson, and Pre-Engineering at Dunbar.
Source: SEO Audited Enrollment; National Student Clearinghouse (NSC); UDC Reported Enrollment; DC-CAP.

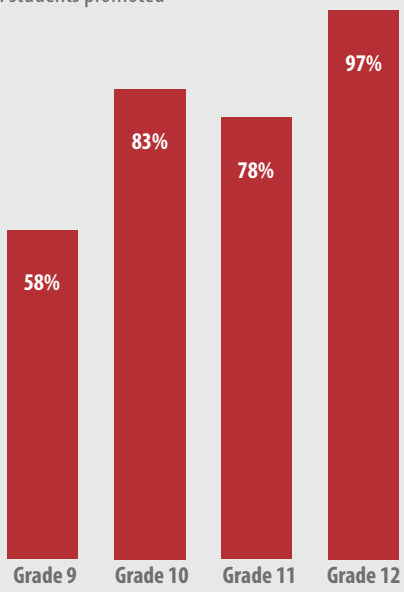
60 percent of DC 9th graders leave DC high schools before finishing, the successful rollout of JAG is essential. But even when the program is fully in place by SY2009–10, it will serve only about 960 students, less than one-third of those considered most at risk.

Going forward, top priorities are to ensure the successful implementation of the MEP, including targeted funding to support outside partners such as America's Choice, the DC Teaching Fellows and Teach for America. Groups such as the Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, Communities in Schools, and Mentors, Inc. will play a critical role in implementing several dropout prevention and recovery strategies, including:

- **Mentoring and tutoring:** Encouraging programs that provide one-on-one relationships between youth and responsible adults.
- **Service learning:** Providing youth with meaningful community service activities that connect back to academic learning.
- **Out-of-school opportunities:** Filling the "gap time" when young people are not in school (after school, vacations, summers) with meaningful enrichment activities.
- **School and community collaboration:** Working with community groups to provide strong support during and after the school day.
- **Family engagement:** Employing programs that will enable parents to become more involved in their children's school lives.
- **Early childhood education:** Intervening at early stages of a child's life to ensure that he or she is prepared to start school.

9th grade is the most critical point for improving high school performance

Percentage of students promoted



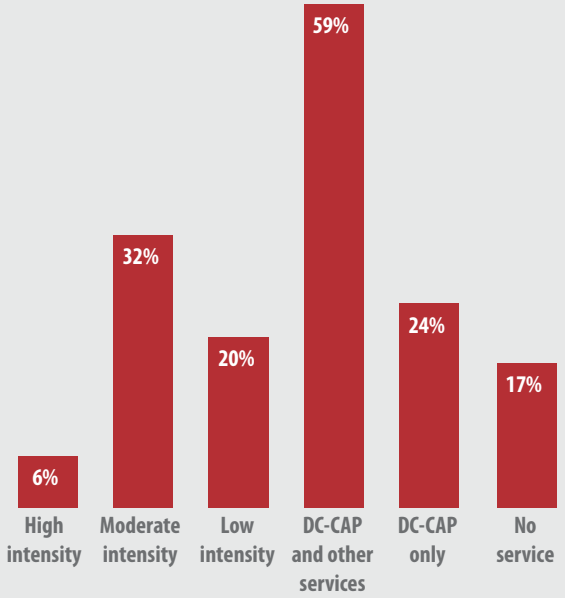
Note: Numbers are based on a cohort of about 4,433 students who entered 9th grade in 2001 in DCPS or a DC charter school; analysis includes only students who were enrolled in a DC school in the grade indicated; fall-out numbers exclude students who were not promoted and then dropped out; excludes students who skipped grades or who are in alternative schools; excludes special education students and entries with data errors.
Source: SEO Audited Enrollment.

College Enrollment:
Help Students Make the Transition from High School to Postsecondary Education

Too many students and their families do not have access to the kind of timely information that encourages them to take advantage of postsecondary education and advises them about the best options to meet their individual needs. Students whose parents never attended college are at a particular disadvantage.

Most students do not receive high-intensity college access services

Percentage of students receiving services



Note: Intensity based solely on hours of service per year. *Low intensity* offers fewer than 100 hours of service in senior year. *Moderate intensity* offers 100–200 hours of service. *High intensity* offers more than 200 hours of service. *Assumption:* All students who are enrolled in other college access programs also are registered with DC-CAP. *Regarding "no service":* School-based services at charter schools have not been fully researched.
Source: Interviews and data from DC college access providers.

Counselors play a crucial and unique role. They often are students' only source of information about postsecondary and career goals, while offering a bridge to academic and nonacademic support services. They have a vital role in explaining how college is necessary for students' dreams, and they can steer students to the courses that will prepare them for college. But for a variety of reasons — including understaffing, lack of accountability and inadequate training — DC counselors are not as effective as they need to be.

Revamping the DCPS guidance counseling system will require several steps, including:

- Explicit districtwide postsecondary goals to focus each principal's priorities;
- Increased counseling staff in schools and the central office, including more counselors and clerical support;
- Required professional development for counselors that is focused on helping students develop individualized graduation plans; and
- Expanded accountability, with counselors expected to meet established performance goals.

The MEP addresses many of these issues.

"The students think that if they borrow $30,000, someone will be waiting with a baseball bat to collect it on graduation day." — DC teacher

"I have a lot of students from DC. They are often first-generation learners and don't know the steps they should take to apply for financial aid." — Postsecondary official

"Many DC students have difficulty completing the required information on time, particularly their FAFSA forms and tax returns." — Postsecondary official

DC high school students also receive a variety of supports from numerous national and local programs. These range from the intensive, multiyear academic remediation offered by Upward Bound, to information and awareness programs such as the College Summit or Talent Search, to the mentoring focus of Hoop Dreams and the Urban Alliance. Going forward, the challenge is to identify the programs that are most successfully addressing our top priorities and expand them to serve more students.

Lack of financial aid and other affordability issues represent major barriers to DC students. Other than at UDC, the average unmet financial need for DC students attending the 10 most popular colleges ranges from $2,000 to almost $10,000. If this were not daunting enough, DC students face additional affordability challenges. Too many are unfamiliar with the process, are unable to complete the complex applications, are afraid of assuming loan debt or are burdened with poor academic records that cause them to lose aid. Providing additional financial aid and overcoming these other barriers must be top priorities.

Finally, annual report cards that analyze, rate and publicize information about the performance of high schools and colleges could inform students about their choices, while helping the public hold these public institutions accountable for meeting specific enrollment and graduation goals.

A sampling of college access programs

College Bound	• More than 120 students served annually • Five community-based sites • Academic mentoring program, SAT prep • Scholarships offered throughout college
College Summit	• More than 1,100 students served annually • Peer leaders (100), summer workshop, essay writing, online tools • Tools for teachers to manage senior students applying to college
DC-CAP	• Nearly 11,000 students served annually, about 90 percent of DCPS students • Counselors in every DCPS high school who provide information • Last-dollar scholarships offered
Hoop Dreams	• Nearly 90 students served annually • Intensive mentoring and relationship-based program • Internships, college awareness, search process, assistance with applications, financial aid help, SAT-prep course • Not basketball related
Upward Bound	• More than 450 students served annually • Intensive program for grades 9–12 • Tutoring and college awareness during academic year and residential summer component

College Success: Help More Students Succeed in Postsecondary Education

More than half of DC students from our cohort clustered in just 10 colleges that have had varying levels of success — from disappointing to promising — graduating DC public school students. Meanwhile, beyond UDC, Trinity and Howard University, most of the DC consortium colleges enrolled very few students from our cohort. A top priority must be to improve the pathways from our public schools to our consortium colleges and to ensure that the colleges where our students cluster are prepared to help them succeed.

Most consortium colleges enrolled very few DC public school students from our cohort

CONSORTIUM COLLEGE	DC ENROLLEES
University of the District of Columbia	309
Trinity University	45
Howard University	18
George Mason University	8
George Washington University	7
University of Maryland – College Park	5
Catholic University of America	3
Marymount University	3
American University	2
Georgetown University	0

Note: Enrollment totals include only the SY2001–02 DC 9th graders enrolled in college by spring 2006. These figures do not include Gallaudet or Southeastern.
Sources: NCES College Opportunities Online (COOL); National Student Clearinghouse; UDC, Trinity.

Although the District has no control over these schools, except UDC, it should work closely with these institutions to encourage sharing their best practices. These include increased academic support (including more tutoring, small classes and better advising), strong institutional support, extra mentoring and other nonacademic services, and significant aid to reduce the financial burden on low-income students.

Moreover, as virtually every other state and metro area currently does, the District should encourage the expansion of two-year options for DC students. Among the most promising possibilities are new programs by Trinity University in Southeast DC and replicating Jack Kent Cooke's successful Community College Transfer Program in this area. Some also have suggested that UDC could strengthen its role as the District's two-year alternative.

UDC: The Challenge and the Opportunity

The University of the District of Columbia (UDC) plays an essential but difficult role in improving postsecondary attainment for DC students. It is the city's only public university, serving almost one-third of all students graduating from DC public schools — even before including delayed enrollments. It must respond to being seen as both the "state flagship" and the "local commuter college." As an open admissions college, it enrolls some of the District's highest-need students, who on average have lower GPAs and SAT scores and who work many hours a week. Over the years, these issues have been complicated by financial difficulties and questions about the need for the university's existence. Despite these challenges, UDC's board and leadership have committed to improving its performance, and they already have launched several critical initiatives including:

- A stronger advising program,
- Improved teaching,
- More small classes,
- A freshman-retention program and other efforts to help students adjust to college life,
- More free tutoring and counselors, and
- Better monitoring of student performance.

University officials say that their internal analysis shows that nearly 40 percent of freshman pursuing their bachelor's degrees eventually graduate. Improving UDC's success is inextricably linked to the success of thousands of DC students and this effort. This also will require commitment and collaboration across the city.

Meanwhile, the District should more proactively encourage increased DC student enrollment in colleges with a track record of success in serving low-income and minority students, including higher graduation rates than many of the colleges in which DC students now cluster. Local colleges such as Trinity and out-of-state institutions such as Elizabeth City State University (NC) and Fisk University (TN) are examples of such schools.

DC students cluster in a few colleges, several of which have low graduation rates

	Percentage of cohort enrollees	Five-year graduation rate		Admissions selectivity (percentage admitted)
		Overall	*DC students*	
University of the District of Columbia	29.8%	11%	9%	Open
North Carolina A&T State University	5.5%	36%	24%	> 75%
Trinity University	3.6%	44%	51%	> 75%
Virginia State University	3.0%	35%	44%	50–75%
University of Maryland – Eastern Shore	1.8%	38%	39%	> 75%
Temple University	1.7%	52%	64%	50–75%
Virginia Commonwealth University	1.6%	37%	52%	50–75%
Delaware State University	1.6%	32%	27%	50–75%
Howard University	1.4%	63%	12%	< 50%
Bowie State University	1.4%	30%	15%	> 50%

Note: A very small group of UDC programs do have competitive admission.
Source: The Education Trust, College Results OnLine.

Making It Work in the District

Achieving these and other goals will require the proactive collaboration of multiple public, private and community organizations and the city at large, including parents, families and students. The 10 strategies are part of a coherent, integrated vision, with each strategy helping to reinforce the others and providing a framework on which the city and its schools can build. Maintaining this coherence should be a top prority.

EARLY COMMITMENTS

Encouragingly, many major institutions already have made long-term commitments to the success of the Double the Numbers initiative.

DC-CAP will continue to provide student support services and last-dollar scholarships, raise additional dollars for public charter school participation and increased scholarship awards, and help guide students toward colleges with strong programs and graduation rates.

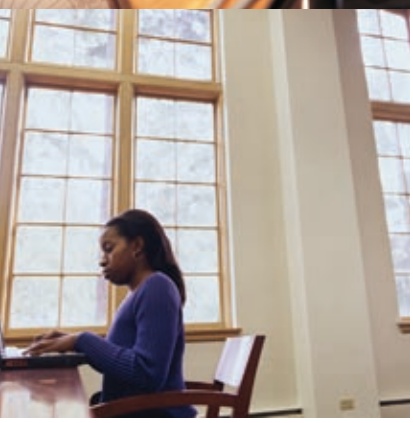
DC Education Compact will take the lead in reaching out to the community, communicating the Double the Numbers message, enlisting support, mobilizing policymakers behind this agenda, and coordinating community efforts to support high schools' efforts to prevent students from dropping out and provide social service supports to students.

DC Public Schools will fully implement its MEP, including offering stronger college-preparatory and career-preparatory programs to all students, revamping its college guidance program, implementing JAG and other dropout prevention programs, and strengthening principal accountability.

DC State Education Office, working closely with DCPS, will take the lead in developing the coordinated data tracking system, creating a policy agenda, producing annual report cards on college performance, leading a scholarship and aid awareness campaign, forming partnerships with successful colleges that are willing to enroll more DC students, and supporting reforms at UDC.

These commitments are not exclusive. That is, each of these four organizations will be working closely with each other on these action steps … and with many, many others in the community.

Our immediate priority is to bring many more organizations, leaders, families and students into the conversation … to help them understand the current reality and the implications for our students and city … and to continue developing solutions collectively. As such, this report and suggested 10-point plan are just the starting point. Please join us.



DC COLLEGE ACCESS PROGRAM (DC-CAP), is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to encouraging and enabling DC public high school students to enroll and graduate from college. In partnership with the DC Public High School System, DC-CAP provides direct counseling and financial assistance to more than 12,000 high school students. The overwhelming majority of students served by DC-CAP in its 20 College Information Resource Centers are from low-income, minority, single-parent households, and many are the first in their families to attend college. DC-CAP has awarded approximately $10 million in Last Dollar Award scholarships since its inception, and in fall 2006, it will be tracking and counseling nearly 5,300 college students.

DC EDUCATION COMPACT is a broad-based coalition whose mission is to institutionalize the civic engagement needed to ensure that every public school student in the District of Columbia obtains the education needed to succeed in college, the workplace and the community. Its strategic goal for FY2007 through FY2010 is to dramatically increase the number of graduates from DC Public Schools with academic, social and civic proficiency.

DC PUBLIC SCHOOLS enrolls approximately 58,000 students (prekindergarten through grade 12) in more than 160 schools. Its goals are to (1) provide high-quality teaching and learning in every classroom and every school; (2) ensure management and operations support high-quality teaching and learning in every classroom and every school; and (3) create a culture of transparency, open communication and collaboration to support high-quality teaching and learning in every classroom and every school.

DC STATE EDUCATION OFFICE (SEO) promotes learning for District residents of all ages. The SEO provides access to information through policy analysis, research and community outreach, as well as resources, such as postsecondary grants and other educational support services, that help residents make informed decisions about learning opportunities. The SEO's work is organized into four major functions: services, resources, policy and oversight. These functions span a P–16 continuum (prekindergarten through postsecondary education).

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