

## COLLEGE-READY, COLLEGE-BOUND

“The Higher Education Readiness Opportunity (HERO) builds college awareness in ninth and tenth grade students at Foss, Wilson, and Mt. Tahoma High School. We personally and academically support students to overcome barriers to college readiness while exposing them to career and college opportunities.

We help ninth grade scholars understand the importance of grades once they’re in high school and the practical things they can do to keep up. Meanwhile, our tenth grade program includes test preparation and a more pronounced emphasis on college itself. We help students identify immediate and long-term steps they can take to prepare for their future.

HERO scholars complete three college exploration activities and three career exploration activities each year. Part of the magic is the direct mentorship that is provided. Students have told us that it makes a huge difference having a day-to-day mentor in school.

Students in our pipeline have a 77 percent rate of enrolling in college directly from high school. HERO scholars are able to say, “I’m part of something.” They see other students go on to college because of what they started in ninth and tenth grade. They’re part of a community of students from similar backgrounds aspiring to go to college. Our students are impacted by poverty and seldom have college in their families’ experience, so these important milestones wouldn’t otherwise be part of their high school years.”



(From Left) HERO Advisors Michael Liptrap, Levon Williams and Phanat Ny serve students at Mount Tahoma, Foss and Wilson High Schools. Not pictured is Liesl Santkuyl, Program Manager at the College Success Foundation which hosts the Higher Education Readiness Opportunity (HERO).

# COLLEGE AND TECHNICAL SCHOOLS COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

As Tacoma students continue to reach their highest potential in K-12, our work now turns to college enrollment, persistence, and completion with increased focus. In the last few years, Graduate Tacoma has transitioned to using data from both the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) and Education Research Data Center (ERDC), enabling us to do a deeper study of student-level outcomes while also examining larger statewide trends.

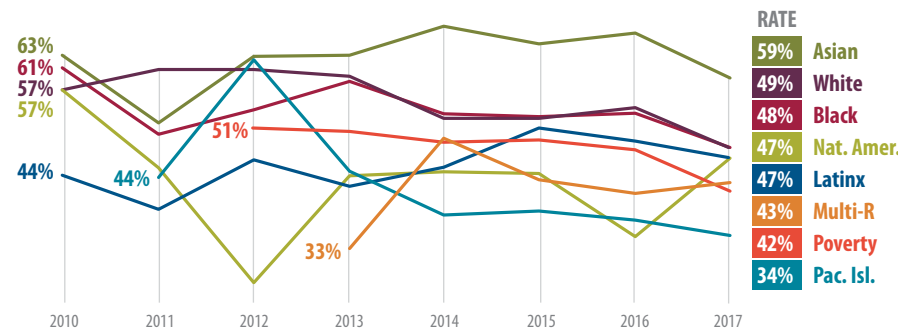
## Rising Costs, Falling Enrollment

According to NSC data, the rate of TPS students enrolled in college within one year of graduating high school has declined overall by 9 percent since 2010. Specifically, from 2016-17, we saw a 5 percent decline, driven almost entirely by a drop in low-income student enrollment from 48 to 42 percent. This has widened the poverty gap from 11 percent at baseline to 20 percent last year. ERDC calculates rates differently,\* but shows that in 2016 Tacoma fell 4 percent below the statewide average of 28 percent enrollment in two-year programs.

In 2017, state legislation ended a six-year freeze on college tuition, allowing institutions to begin raising the annual costs to earning a postsecondary degree or credential. The full impact of this decision still looms for college-going students and may be a contributor to falling low-income enrollment — which similarly declined following steep state tuition hikes during the Great Recession. This only emphasizes the importance of passing future legislation to fully fund the Washington College Promise Scholarship, a guaranteed source of financial aid for more than 93,000 eligible students statewide.

The growing financial burden of college and the large percentage of low-income Tacoma graduates make it increasingly difficult to improve the rate of enrollment. Our collective effort is essential to ensuring students have the tools to apply and pay for college. It is likewise essential to building up the future of Tacoma’s economy and workforce. Graduate Tacoma’s College Support Network has made particular headway in connecting students to in- and out-of-school college enrollment resources, [see pages 38-39](#). Their success in laying the groundwork makes Graduate Tacoma’s efforts in this area now ripe for cross-sector coordination and alignment.

## DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKOUT

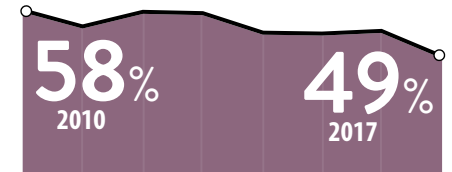


\*EERDC includes students in less than two-year programs and certificate programs and double counts students who enroll in both two- and four-year programs. This is true for both enrollment and completion data.

## DATA TRENDS

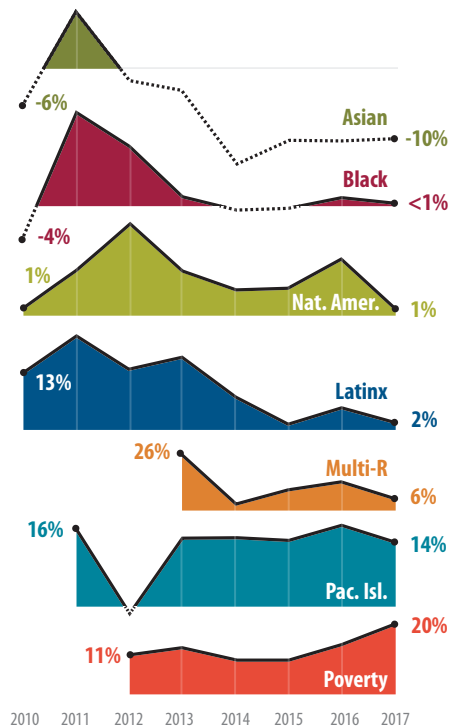
### BASELINE TO CURRENT

Two- or Four-Year Enrollment within One Year of H.S. Graduation



**AIMING HIGHER GOAL:** Increase the percentage of TPS graduates who enroll in two- or four-year colleges, apprenticeships, or technical certification courses within one year of graduation.

**MULTI-YEAR GAPS** Represents the increase or decrease in the achievement gap between students of color and White students and between students in poverty and those not in poverty, baseline to current.



Note: Gap measures don’t perfectly match demographics due to rounding to the nearest percent. Data Source: National Student Clearinghouse via TPS, with support from Degrees of Change.