TACOMA POSTSECONDARY ACCESS LANDSCAPE SCAN
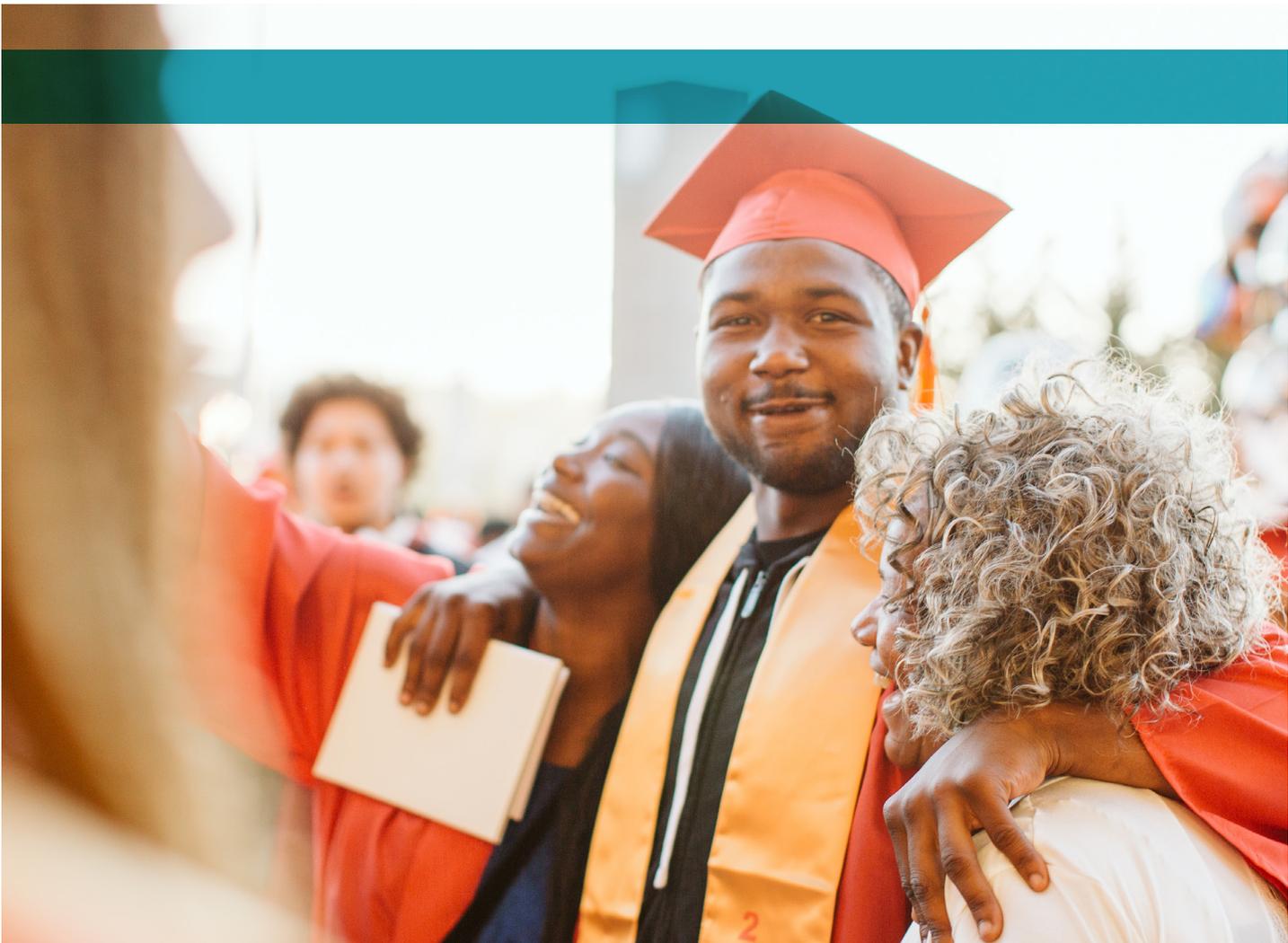
BERK

"Helping Communities and Organizations Create Their Best Futures"

Founded in 1988, we are an interdisciplinary strategy and analysis firm providing integrated, creative and analytically rigorous approaches to complex policy and planning decisions. Our team of strategic planners, policy and financial analysts, economists, cartographers, information designers and facilitators work together to bring new ideas, clarity, and robust frameworks to the development of analytically-based and action-oriented plans.

Postsecondary Access Scan

Foundation for Tacoma Students

Contents

Executive Summary

Our national promise of free public education ends at high school. The choice to pursue education beyond high school is a major cost-benefit calculation and involves many personal factors like parental educational attainment, student achievement, and one's supportive environment which in turn vary according to income, race, and first-generation status. The combined outcome is large and growing gaps in postsecondary entry and patterns of entry that have little to do with academic performance. Today, the lowest performing students with wealthy backgrounds go to college at the same rates as the highest performing students from low-income backgrounds.

Students, especially students of color, are not guaranteed the same return on investment in education. A 2019 report revealed that 20 years after entering repayment, the median white student borrower has paid back 94 percent of their student debt while the median black borrower still owes 95 percent of their student loans. High performing students with these backgrounds also tend to attend schools that don't match their abilities due to affordability. Continuing these patterns not only shortchanges individuals but shortchanges our communities and economies of their potential.

The Foundation for Tacoma Students (FFTS) received a two-year investment by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation toward strengthening community alignment to close equity gaps and increase the overall rate of Tacoma Public School (TPS) graduates on a postsecondary pathway. This landscape scan grounds the effort with interviews with postsecondary access partners, a survey of families and youth from the TPS classes of 2014 to 2019, and data analysis of relevant outcomes. We found:

Current State

- 49% of TPS students enroll in college (2- or 4-year) within one year of high school graduation (Graduate Tacoma, 2019).

- The majority of Tacoma Public School students are students of color (61% in middle school and 59% in high school) and the majority are low-income (62% receive free and reduced meals). Eleven percent of students are English Language Learners. Fewer than half of the survey respondents for this scan had at least one parent attend college.

- The **four-year direct college pathway** is the strongest for TPS students and for the low-income students, first generation students, and students of color who "demonstrate academic potential." Gaps are bigger for those who do not "demonstrate academic potential," experience learning disabilities, experience homelessness or high mobility (especially across school district lines), leave high school for a period of time (Opportunity Youth), and undocumented youth.

- **Financial aid and the affordability of postsecondary education** was raised as the biggest challenge for students, including housing, transportation, food, books, clothing, and supplies. Many prospective students do not believe they can afford opportunities, or are unable to assume that risk, despite their potential eligibility for support.

- **Current threats to the postsecondary access work included** Tacoma's housing crisis and underlying economic changes, the budget cuts in Tacoma Public Schools in 2019 that resulted in a lower allocation of school FTE to college and career counseling and no district-level lead for college and career success, and increasingly limited flexible student time to engage with their potential next steps and with partners.

- **Programming is strongest in TPS' comprehensive high schools, with some activity extending to middle schools.** Interviewees indicated that ideally, postsecondary access messages and programming should extend to kindergarten and beyond high school, potentially connecting with Tacoma Completes.

- **Program dosages** varies from one on one engagement to broad based workshops and field trips. Most programs fill their slots and it is common for students to access multiple programs. For example, the average survey respondent participated in two programs. However, depending on the specific programs and students' needs, this can be viewed as either complementary or duplicative.

Needs and Opportunities

- **Opportunities for strengthening community alignment included** formalizing informal relationships in MOUs or exploring a common application across programs.

- **Engaging in partnerships and related initiatives were a common theme.** The Tacoma College Support Network is a crucial venue for access partners to convene and share resources. Interviewees discussed broadening the table to smaller organizations, with consideration to their capacity to participate, and to more employers. There are also related initiatives housed at WorkForce Central, the Tacoma Housing Authority, and PSESD's Pierce County Strong (including other K-12 districts and local technical colleges) that can tie in.

- With great growth in the ability to **collect and analyze relevant data,** there are new opportunities to put that data to use on the field level. For example, Verified Acceptance at Next Institution data can be used to follow up on who did not matriculate despite acceptance and determine why. Another major upcoming data opportunity is TPS' community portal version of eSchoolsPlus which is expected to greatly improve partner access to relevant student data.

- Many interviews mentioned the **summer melt** as a needed focus area that was especially well-suited for a cross-system partnership because that time period is not 'owned' by any institutions.

- **Mentorship and building a culture** where anyone can be a mentor in a young person's life needs to pervade school buildings and the community.

- **Flexible funds** to "smooth" the differences when a student cannot access the program best suited to meet their need due to funding restrictions, support students' transportation needs, or make small tests of changes in practices, then provide feedback and evaluate.

- **Messaging needs** included destigmatizing non-college pathways, raising expectations in messaging around College Bound, improving capacity to communicate in real-time with students and parents, or holding student-led success conferences to create community spirit, serve as a rallying point, and showcase pathways to inspire students.

Background

The Foundation for Tacoma Students (FFTS) received a two-year investment of $2.5 million by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to deepen the capacity and capability of the Graduate Tacoma movement. Part of this investment is to be directed toward strengthening community alignment to close equity gaps and increase the overall rate of Tacoma Public School graduates embarking on a postsecondary pathway or earning a postsecondary degree or certificate.

To best identify opportunities for alignment and describe the baseline, FFTS contracted with BERK Consulting to scan the landscape of postsecondary access for Tacoma students. The scan includes interviews with postsecondary access partners, a survey of low-income families and youth from the classes of 2014 to 2019, and data analysis on milestones and outcomes on postsecondary pathways.

This access scan complements parallel work on persistence and completion at postsecondary institutions. The combined goal of these studies and the FFTS effort is attainment of a sustaining and fulfilling postsecondary experience and career for all of Tacoma's students.

The scan first overviews data relevant to postsecondary access and the results of our survey of TPS students and caregivers to establish the current state. The next section discusses literature to situate Tacoma in broader trends and identify what is known about possible interventions. The report ends with local perspectives from interviews on opportunities for greater alignment to close equity gaps.

Tacoma Public School Student Pathways and Outcomes

We examined the current state of Tacoma Public student outcomes in two ways. First, we worked with the Foundation for Tacoma Students to analyze and present data on key outputs and outcomes associated with postsecondary access. Second, we conducted an online survey of youth ages 18 to 23 and parents or caregivers of those youth.

POSTSECONDARY ACCESS DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents and analyzes available data on postsecondary access, which includes financial aid, academic preparation, and high expectations (a culture that fosters student belief in their ability to achieve success). Access to these opportunities are shown to help prepare students for their postsecondary pathway.

Graduate Tacoma has set an intentional focus on students of color, students impacted by poverty, and first-generation students because of historic opportunity gaps for these groups and the desire to eliminate racial and economic opportunity gaps in the Tacoma community. Gaps in academic preparation and opportunities emerge early and persist and grow as students progress through school (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). This section illustrates access and opportunity disaggregated by students of color, students experiencing poverty, and school where available.

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

Graduate Tacoma acts as the community's data clearinghouse and maintains partnerships within the community and across organizations to share data to "identify what's working and fix what's not."

Their data-to-action plan includes improving outcomes in the following postsecondary areas that expand access and opportunity:

- Academic Preparation
- High Expectations
- Financial Aid

Data Overview

The Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) publishes data on districts and schools through its [public data portal](#). Data published includes enrollment figures, student performance, other student measures, and non-student information. Some variables are disaggregated by population categories.

The Tacoma Public School District (TPS) [public data portal](#) publishes student academic goals, including academic assessment scores and competencies, grades, graduation rates, returning to school if dropped out, extracurricular activities, acceptance to next institutions, industry certification, and other student data.

Graduate Tacoma maintains its own [public data portal](#) (which receives data from multiple sources, including OSPI and TPS) which tracks indicators related to postsecondary access and opportunity, as well as student outcomes. Data available through this dashboard includes academic achievement, SAT exams for college entry, graduation rates, and college enrollment.

LEADING WITH RACE

The [Coalition of Communities of Color](#) has identified challenges in data practices for communities of smaller size. They've found that data can make marginalized communities "invisible" which prevents engagement. They also found communities of color can be made "hyper-visible" when data that is used to represent their community can be deficit-focused.

Other sources of data include:

- [Washington Student Achievement Council](#) (WSAC)
- [National Student Clearinghouse](#) (data via Graduate Tacoma partnership)
- [Washington's Education Research & Data Center](#) (ERDC)

Tacoma Public Schools Overview

Tacoma Public Schools has over 30,000 students enrolled as of the 2018-19 school year and is projecting growth of more than 600 students over a ten-year period. The district has 11 middle schools and 10 high schools, some of which are designated as [innovative schools](#) which pilot programs around unique curriculum (not all schools have data available).

49% of TPS students enroll in college (2- or 4-year) within one year of high school graduation (Graduate Tacoma, 2019).

Note: Student privacy and data reporting policies are governed by multiple institutions and laws. Typically, figures of fewer than 10 students are suppressed to protect students' privacy.

Exhibit 1. Tacoma Public Schools Enrollment by Grade, 2018-19

Grade	Enrollment
6th Grade	2,352
7th Grade	2,208
8th Grade	2,082
9th Grade	2,238
10th Grade	2,016
11th Grade	2,052
12th Grade	2,196
PK-12 Total	30,320

Sources: Tacoma Public Schools, 2019; BERK, 2019.

The majority of Tacoma students are students of color. Enrollment by race can be seen in Exhibit 2 for middle schools and Exhibit 3 for high schools.

- Of about 7,220 middle school students, 61% are students of color. Proportions of students of color vary across schools.
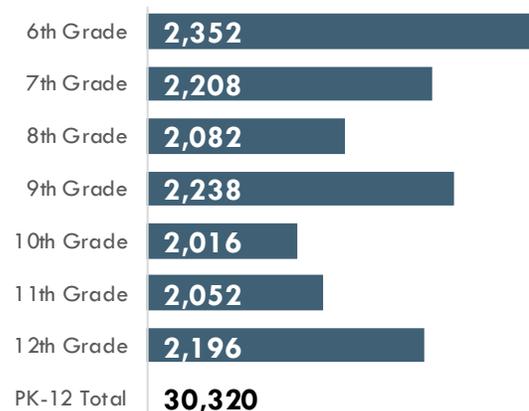
- Of about 7,970 high school students, 59% are students of color.

The majority of Tacoma students are low-income. Enrollment by income can be seen in Exhibit 4 for middle schools and

Exhibit 5 for high schools.

- District-wide, 62% receive free and reduced meals (a proxy for low-income students). Because household enrollment is necessary, it is possible this under counts the number of students who are low-income.

The majority of Tacoma adults 25 and older do not yet have a college degree (ACS, 2013-17). Students whose parents did not attend college are less likely to be academically prepared for postsecondary opportunities ([2018](#)).

- 25% of the adult population has some college but no degree, while 38% do not have any college education.

Eleven percent of Tacoma students are English language learners.

- Of those, 15% met the standard to transition out of services while 47% were progressing. Proficiency is determined by an annual test (RLPA21) and a student is making progress if they are on track to leave services within 6 years.

Exhibit 2. Middle School Enrollment by Race, 2018-19
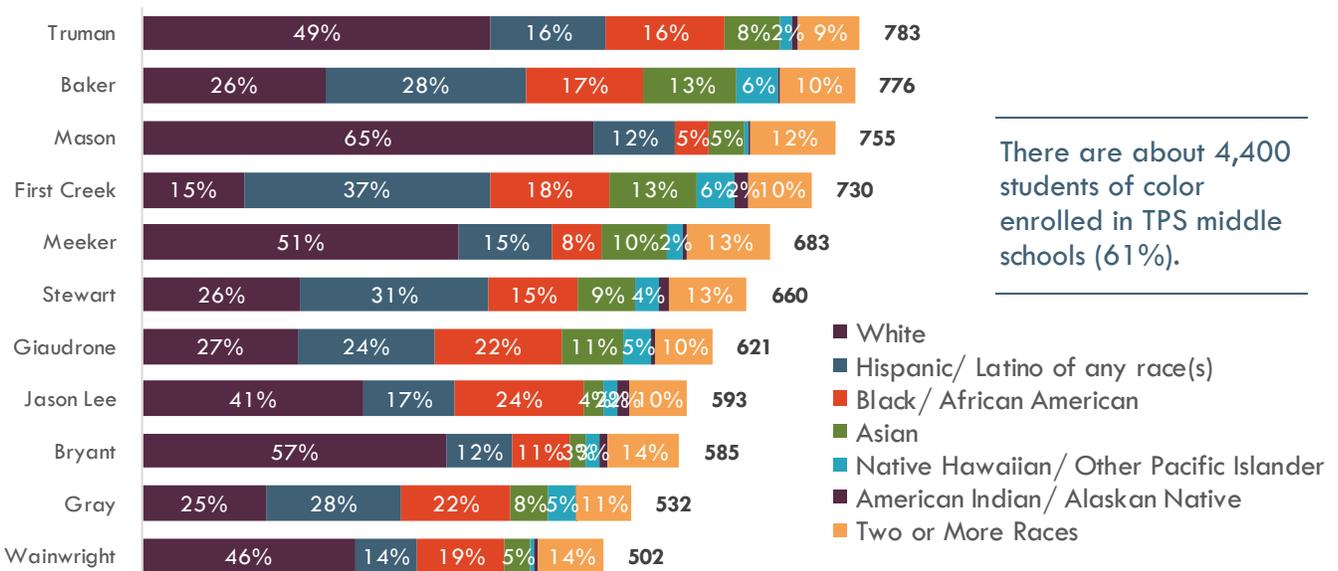
There are about 4,400 students of color enrolled in TPS middle schools (61%).

Legend:
- White
- Hispanic/ Latino of any race(s)
- Black/ African American
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander
- American Indian/ Alaskan Native
- Two or More Races

School	White	Hispanic	Black	Asian	NHPI	AIAN	Two+	Total
Truman	49%	16%	16%	8%	2%		9%	783
Baker	26%	28%	17%	13%	6%		10%	776
Mason	65%	12%	5%	5%			12%	755
First Creek	15%	37%	18%	13%	6%	2%	10%	730
Meeker	51%	15%	8%	10%	2%		13%	683
Stewart	26%	31%	15%	9%	4%		13%	660
Giaudrone	27%	24%	22%	11%	5%		10%	621
Jason Lee	41%	17%	24%	4%	2%	2%	10%	593
Bryant	57%	12%	11%	3%	3%		14%	585
Gray	25%	28%	22%	8%	5%		11%	532
Wainwright	46%	14%	19%	5%			14%	502

Sources: Tacoma Public Schools, 2019; BERK, 2019.
Note: Student privacy and data reporting policies are governed by multiple institutions and laws. Typically, figures of fewer than 10 students are suppressed to protect students' privacy. Data is labeled as reported by the source.

Exhibit 3. High School Enrollment by Race, 2018-19
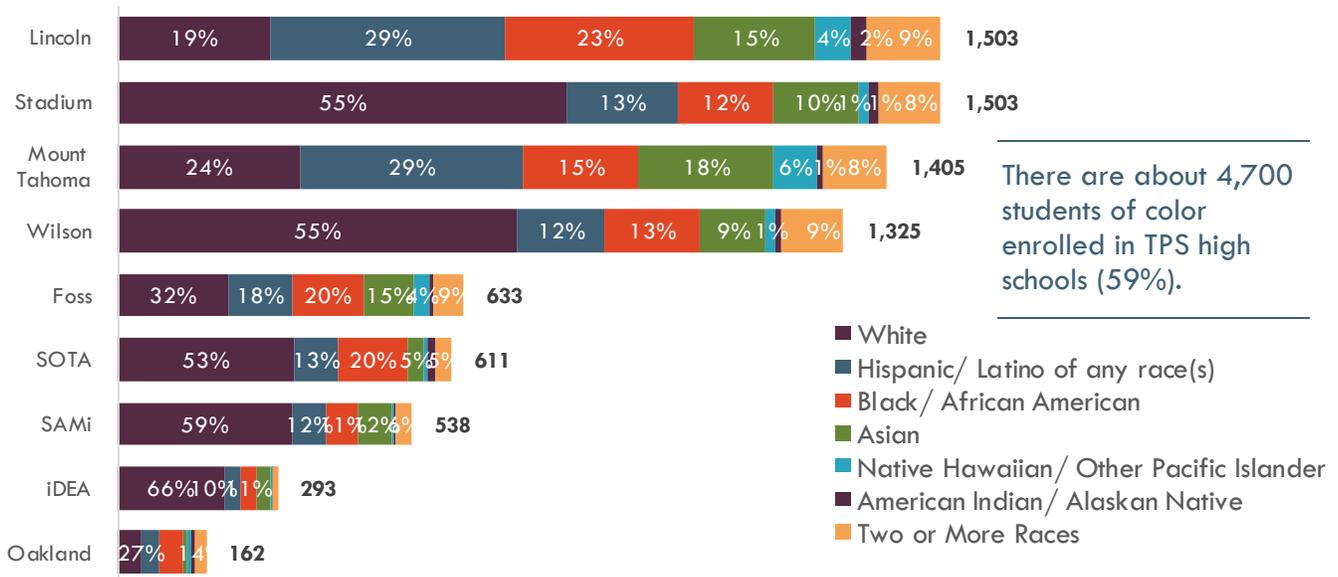
School	White	Hispanic/Latino	Black/African American	Asian	Native Hawaiian/PI	American Indian	Two or More	Total
Lincoln	19%	29%	23%	15%	4%	2%	9%	1,503
Stadium	55%	13%	12%	10%	1%	1%	8%	1,503
Mount Tahoma	24%	29%	15%	18%	6%	1%	8%	1,405
Wilson	55%	12%	13%	9%	1%		9%	1,325
Foss	32%	18%	20%	15%	4%		9%	633
SOTA	53%	13%	20%	5%	5%		5%	611
SAMi	59%	12%	11%	12%	2%		6%	538
iDEA	66%	10%	1%	1%				293
Oakland	27%	14						162

There are about 4,700 students of color enrolled in TPS high schools (59%).

Legend:
- White
- Hispanic/ Latino of any race(s)
- Black/ African American
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander
- American Indian/ Alaskan Native
- Two or More Races

Sources: Tacoma Public Schools, 2019; BERK, 2019.
Note: Student privacy and data reporting policies are governed by multiple institutions and laws. Typically, figures of fewer than 10 students are suppressed to protect students' privacy. Data is labeled as reported as reported by the source.
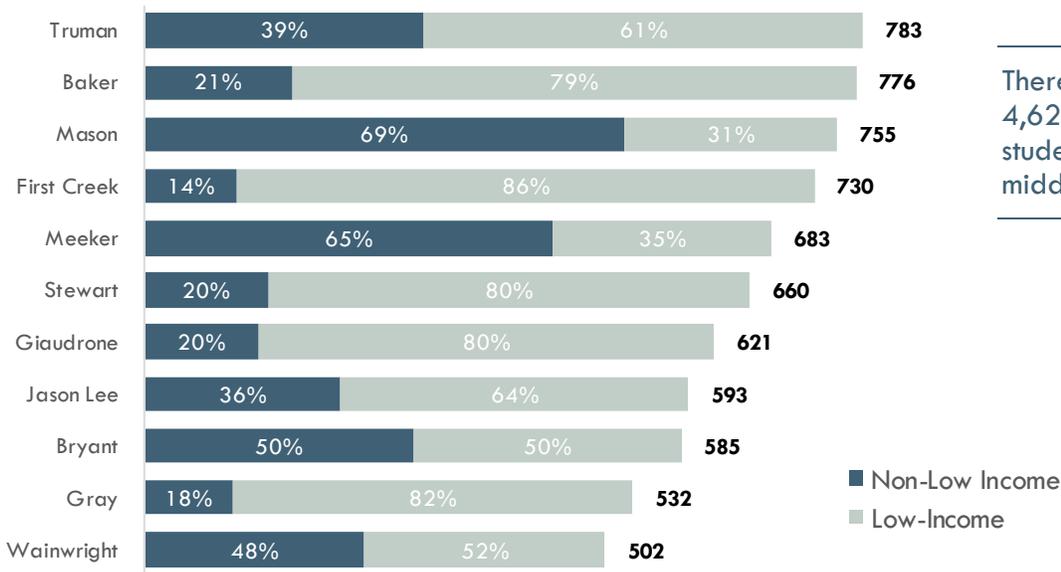
The majority of Tacoma students are low-income. Free and reduced meals (FARM) are used by OSPI as an indicator of poverty. FARM eligibility is set by federal rules and a household application is necessary for participation. Eligibility is based on household size and income using federal poverty guidelines.

TPS uses an online application called Meal App Now, a private company. Meal App Now runs compliance checks and only submits completed forms to the school district.

FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

- Student name, grade, date of birth, and ID number.
- Student status if fostered, homeless, or migrant child.
- School number.
- Student income.
- Names of all other household members and their incomes.
- All household members' public assistance, child support, or alimony received.
- All household members' pensions, retirement, and social security benefits.
- All other sources of household income.
- Last four digits of Social Security Number (SSN) of a household member (or check if no SSN).

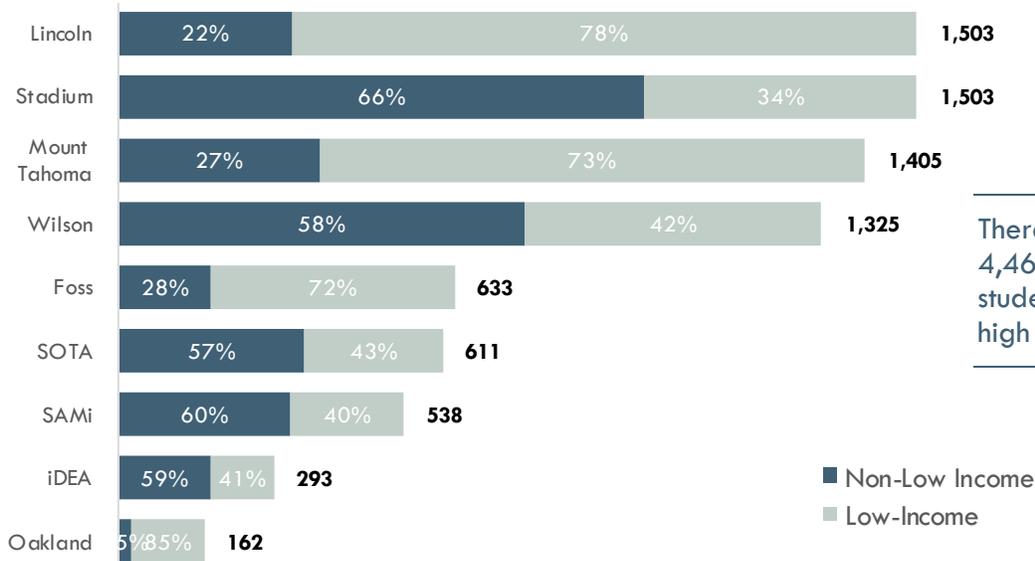**Exhibit 4. Middle School Enrollment by Free and Reduced Meals , 2018-19**

School	Non-Low Income	Low-Income	Total
Truman	39%	61%	783
Baker	21%	79%	776
Mason	69%	31%	755
First Creek	14%	86%	730
Meeker	65%	35%	683
Stewart	20%	80%	660
Giaudrone	20%	80%	621
Jason Lee	36%	64%	593
Bryant	50%	50%	585
Gray	18%	82%	532
Wainwright	48%	52%	502

There are at least 4,620 low-income students enrolled in TPS middle schools (64%).

■ Non-Low Income
■ Low-Income

Sources: Tacoma Public Schools, 2019; BERK, 2019.
Note: Student privacy and data reporting policies are governed by multiple institutions and laws. Typically, figures of fewer than 10 students are suppressed to protect students' privacy.

Exhibit 5. High School Enrollment by Free and Reduced Meals, 2018-19

School	Non-Low Income	Low-Income	Total
Lincoln	22%	78%	1,503
Stadium	66%	34%	1,503
Mount Tahoma	27%	73%	1,405
Wilson	58%	42%	1,325
Foss	28%	72%	633
SOTA	57%	43%	611
SAMi	60%	40%	538
iDEA	59%	41%	293
Oakland	5%	85%	162

There are at least 4,464 low-income students enrolled in TPS high schools (56%).

■ Non-Low Income
■ Low-Income

Sources: Tacoma Public Schools, 2019; BERK, 2019.
Note: Student privacy and data reporting policies are governed by multiple institutions and laws. Typically, figures of fewer than 10 students are suppressed to protect students' privacy.

College Bound Scholars

The College Bound Scholarship (CBS) is a Washington State financial aid opportunity for low-income students that covers tuition at 2-year, 4-year, and technical and trade schools.
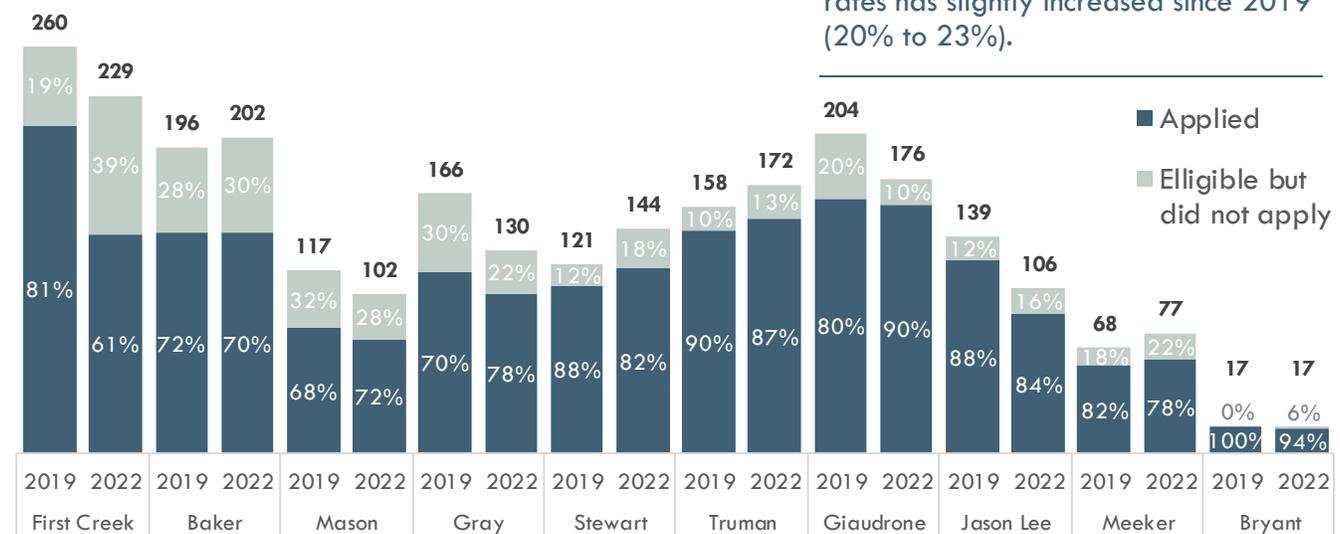
Students are eligible if they were enrolled at school and became eligible for free and reduced-price lunch anytime during the 7th or 8th grade. Application is determined by the number of students with complete applications attending that specific school at the end of their 8th grade year. Eligible but did not apply figures are the difference between eligible and applied.

Graduate Tacoma 2020 Goal: 100% of 8th graders signed up for the College Bound Scholarship

For the TPS class of 2022, 77% of eligible 8th graders signed up as a college bound scholar, a gap of 23% relative to the goal. As shown below, the gap varies by middle school.

- From TPS: To maximize the CBS sign-up rate, districts should use the WSAC online portal, middle school toolbox, and upload process. Find more information and resources for counselors on Ready Set Grad.

Exhibit 6. College Bound Scholarship Sign-Up Rates, 2019 and 2022 Cohorts

The TPS 2022 cohort college bound scholarship gap in eligible application rates has slightly increased since 2019 (20% to 23%).
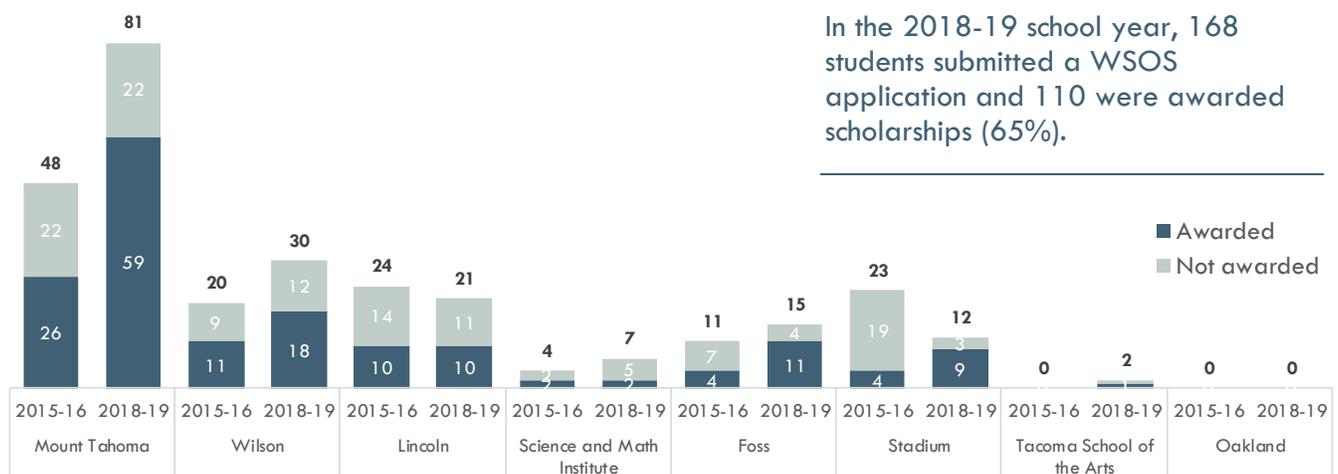

Sources: Washington Student Achievement Council, 2019; BERK, 2019.

Washington State Opportunity Scholarship Completion

The Washington State Opportunity Scholarship (WSOS) refers to two scholarship programs for Washington State residents from low- and middle-income backgrounds to earn degrees, certificates, or apprenticeships in high-demand trade, health care, or STEM fields. The scholarship funds are flexible and can be used to cover tuition, fees, and other costs of attendance such as housing, transportation, food, and more.

> **Graduate Tacoma 2020 Goal:** Double the number of TPS student WSOS scholarships applications from 130 to 260.

Exhibit 7. WSOS Submissions and Awards, 2015-16 and 2018-19

In the 2018-19 school year, 168 students submitted a WSOS application and 110 were awarded scholarships (65%).

	Mount Tahoma		Wilson		Lincoln		Science and Math Institute		Foss		Stadium		Tacoma School of the Arts		Oakland	
	2015-16	2018-19	2015-16	2018-19	2015-16	2018-19	2015-16	2018-19	2015-16	2018-19	2015-16	2018-19	2015-16	2018-19	2015-16	2018-19
Total	48	81	20	30	24	21	4	7	11	15	23	12	0	2	0	0
Not awarded	22	22	9	12	14	11	2	5	7	4	19	3				
Awarded	26	59	11	18	10	10	2	2	4	11	4	9				

Sources: WSOS data via Foundation for Tacoma Students; BERK, 2019.
Note: Data includes both the Baccalaureate and Career and Technical scholarship programs.

Financial Aid (FAFSA)

Financial aid is the total package available to students to reduce or eliminate the cost of education. Different types of aid are provided from different sources which include federal and state governments as well as institutional and private organizations. The two main sources of aid to students are through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA). Aid programs include grants, loans, or work study opportunities. The aid package given to a student is assigned by the college for each student based on student need and aid availability.
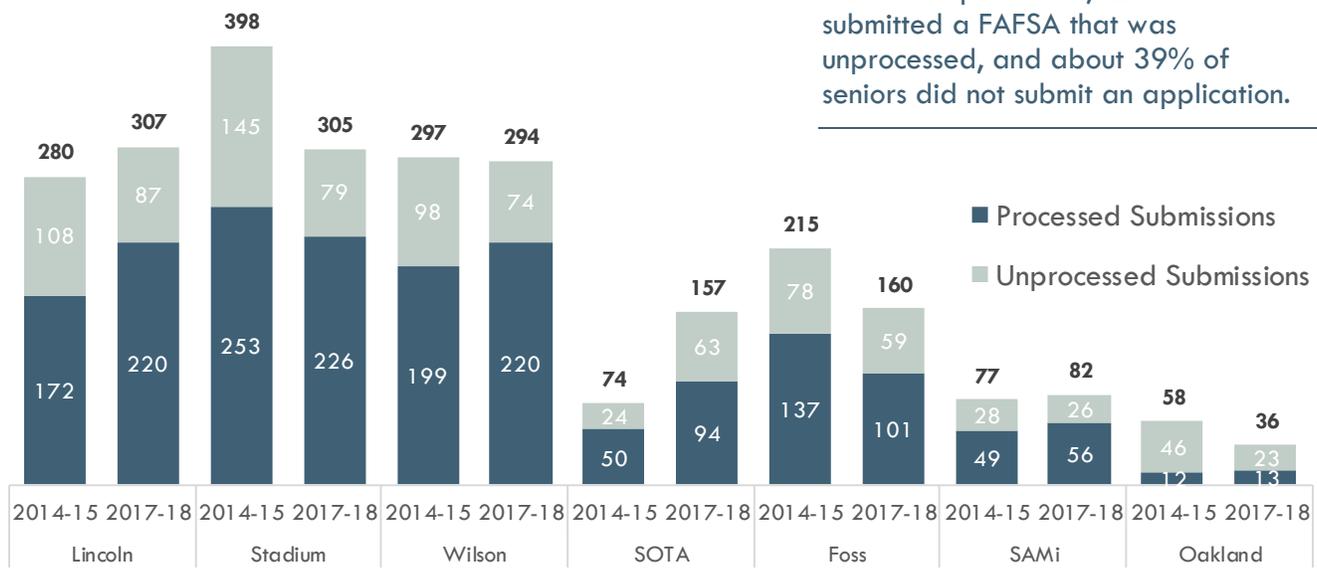
The institutional financial aid package offered to a student may include grants, scholarships, work study, and loans to meet financial needs. Anyone who plans to attend college should submit the FAFSA. It is used by the US government and many other state systems and organizations to determine a students' eligibility for student aid.

$5.5 Million in federal Pell grants, one type of financial aid available through the FAFSA, was left unused in Pierce County for the 2016-17 school year.

> **Graduate Tacoma 2020 Goal:** Currently there is no stated Graduate Tacoma goal for FAFSA or WAFSA completion.

Exhibit 8. FAFSA Submissions, 2014-15 and 2017-18

For the 2017-18 school year, about 42% of seniors had their FAFSA submission processed, about 19% submitted a FAFSA that was unprocessed, and about 39% of seniors did not submit an application.

Legend:
- ■ Processed Submissions
- ■ Unprocessed Submissions

Chart data:

School	Year	Total	Unprocessed	Processed
Lincoln	2014-15	280	108	172
Lincoln	2017-18	307	87	220
Stadium	2014-15	398	145	253
Stadium	2017-18	305	79	226
Wilson	2014-15	297	98	199
Wilson	2017-18	294	74	220
SOTA	2014-15	74	24	50
SOTA	2017-18	157	63	94
Foss	2014-15	215	78	137
Foss	2017-18	160	59	101
SAMi	2014-15	77	28	49
SAMi	2017-18	82	26	56
Oakland	2014-15	58	46	12
Oakland	2017-18	36	23	13

Sources: Graduate Tacoma, 2019; BERK, 2019.
Note: Unprocessed FAFSA submissions include those with errors and those that were unmatched.

College Entry Exams

College applications require entry exams to assess student academic aptitude. The most common exam is the College Board's SAT exam. TPS began offering free SAT exams and Preliminary-SAT (PSAT) exams to students in 2012. Some college entry exams may also be used as a graduation alternative requirement.

The tests offered have changed depending on the annual budget and student grade. The exam is given during an SAT/PSAT school day (other districts have had challenges with testing during weekends and not having enough exam proctors, which acts as a barriers to student access). The PSAT/NMSQT is a preparation exam as well as the qualifying exam for the National Merit Scholarship Program and other scholarships. The online Khan Academy also offers official SAT practice for free.

The SAT measures and scores exams based on multiple subject areas that then generate a composite score. Benchmarks are set depending on a student's grade, with the grade for seniors benchmarking to college and career readiness. For example, a student may meet the grade 11 math subject standard but not meet the college and career readiness benchmark for math. The college and career readiness benchmarks are intended to predict a 75% likelihood or higher of achieving a C or higher grade in a student's first semester college courses.

COLLEGE ENTRY EXAMS 2019-20 SCHEDULE

- Grade 8: PSAT
- Grade 9: none *eliminated by budget cuts*
- Grade 10: PSAT/NMSQT
- Grade 11: PSAT/NMSQT (fall)
- Grade 11: SAT w/ essay (spring)
- Grade 12: SAT w/ essay

College and Career Readiness Benchmark Scores	
Reading & Writing	480
Math	530

Composite scores are given for an evidence-based reading and writing section and math section, which can range from 200-800. The benchmark scores are shown above, and the score report tells the student additional information such as if they're on track for college.

TPS has improved the number of students taking the SAT to near universal participation. While data for participation is not available prior to the free exam administration by TPS, participation has increased from 80% in 2015 to 99% in 2018 and 2019.

Graduate Tacoma 2020 Goal: Increase the percentage of high school seniors who take the SAT. Increase the average score on the SAT.

Exhibit 9. SAT Subjects Met by School, 2018-19
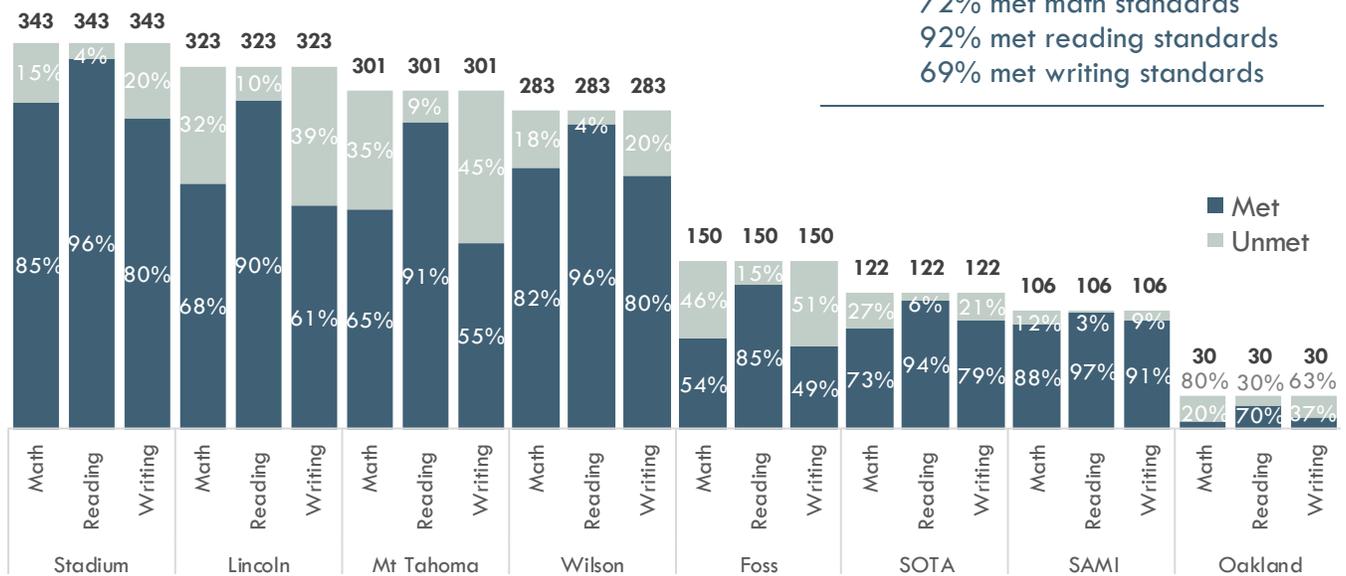
1,672 TPS students took the SAT
72% met math standards
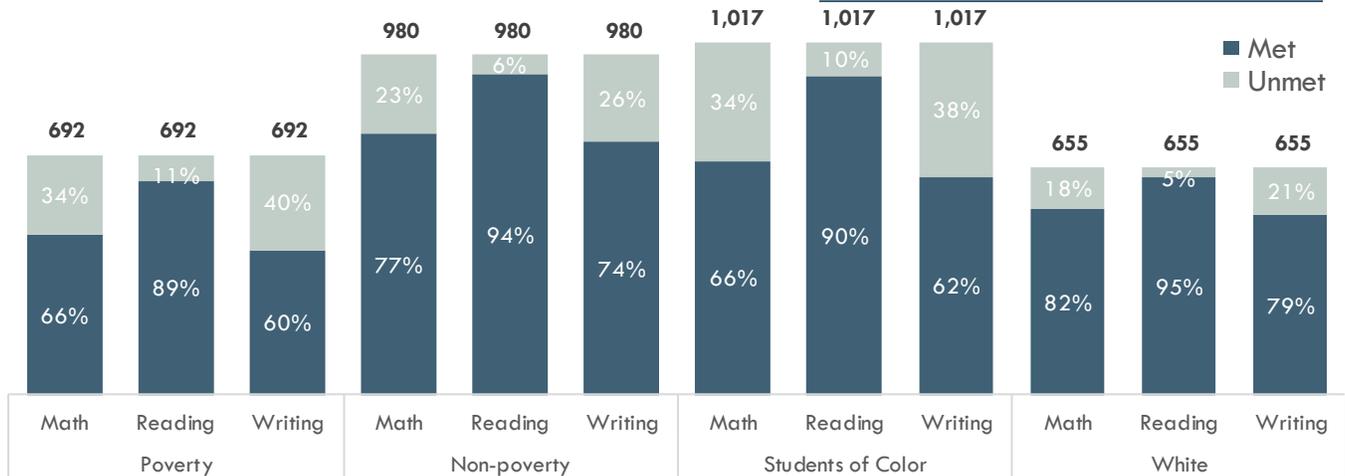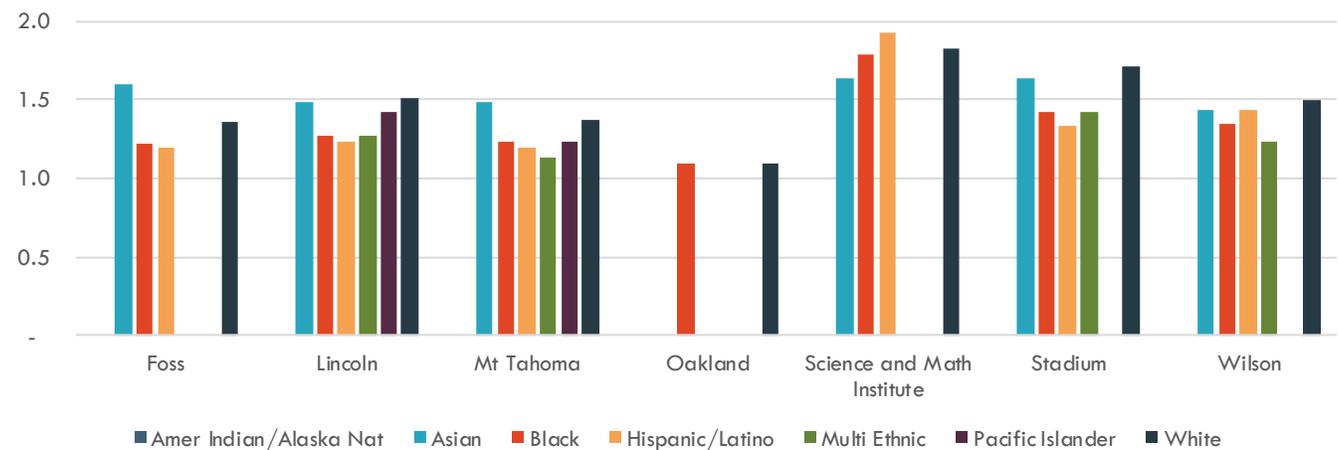92% met reading standards
69% met writing standards

Sources: Graduate Tacoma, 2019; BERK, 2019.
Note: Student privacy and data reporting policies are governed by multiple institutions and laws. Typically, figures of fewer than 10 students are suppressed to protect students' privacy. Data is labeled as reported as reported by the source.

Exhibit 10. SAT Standards Met by Student Category, 2018-19

1,672 TPS students took the SAT
72% met math standards
92% met reading standards
69% met writing standards

Legend: ■ Met ■ Unmet

	Poverty			Non-poverty			Students of Color			White		
	Math	Reading	Writing	Math	Reading	Writing	Math	Reading	Writing	Math	Reading	Writing
Total	692	692	692	980	980	980	1,017	1,017	1,017	655	655	655
Unmet	34%	11%	40%	23%	6%	26%	34%	10%	38%	18%	5%	21%
Met	66%	89%	60%	77%	94%	74%	66%	90%	62%	82%	95%	79%

Sources: Graduate Tacoma, 2019; BERK, 2019.
Note: Student privacy and data reporting policies are governed by multiple institutions and laws. Typically, figures of fewer than 10 students are suppressed to protect students' privacy. Data is labeled as reported as reported by the source.

SAT Times Taken

A study of over 10 million SAT takers found that taking the exam a second time improves scores on average of nearly 90 points. Retakers were more likely to enroll in a 4-year (compared to 2-year college) (Goodman, Gurantz, & Smith, 2019). White and Asian American students nationally are the most likely to take the test multiple times, a trend generally reflected among TPS' comprehensive high schools. Taking the exam independently costs nearly $50, with additional fees for ordering score reports. Tacoma Public Schools offers the SAT free to seniors and juniors and available during the school day.

Exhibit 11. SAT Average Times Taken by Race, 2018-19

Legend: ■ Amer Indian/Alaska Nat ■ Asian ■ Black ■ Hispanic/Latino ■ Multi Ethnic ■ Pacific Islander ■ White

Sources: Graduate Tacoma, 2019; BERK, 2019.
Note: Student privacy and data reporting policies are governed by multiple institutions and laws. Typically, figures of fewer than 10 students are suppressed to protect students' privacy. Data is labeled as reported as reported by the source.

Exhibit 12. SAT Times Taken by Other Student Categories, 2018-19
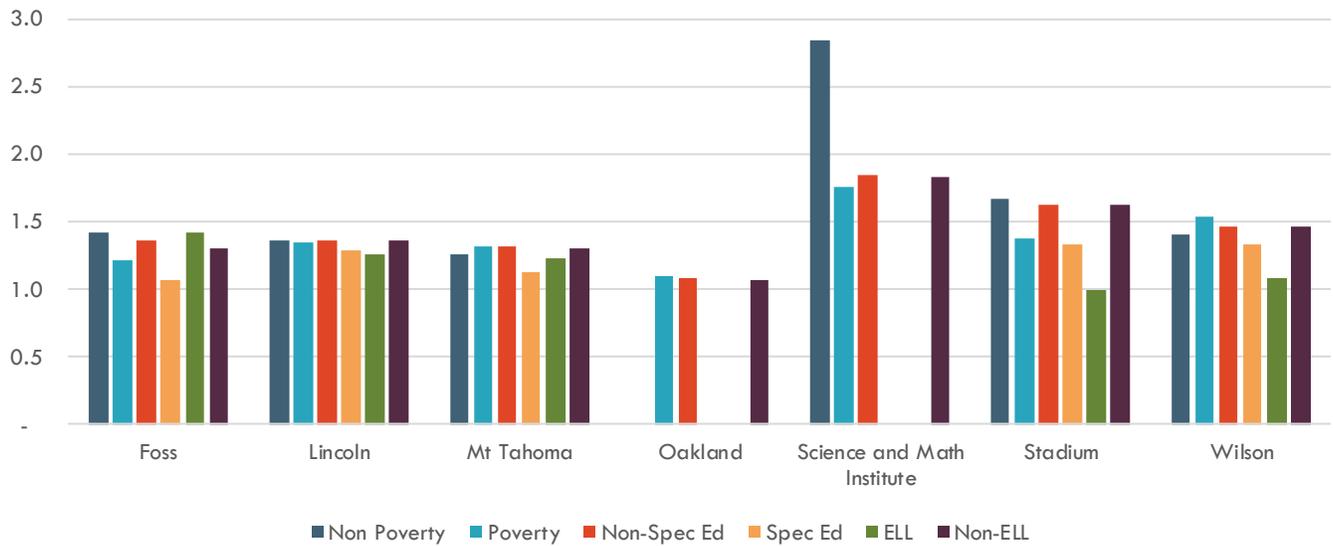
Sources: Graduate Tacoma, 2019; BERK, 2019.
Note: Student privacy and data reporting policies are governed by multiple institutions and laws. Typically, figures of fewer than 10 students are suppressed to protect students' privacy. Data is labeled as reported as reported by the source.

Courses of Rigor

This data tracks students participating in "rigor" coursework, currently defined as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, College in the High School, Running Start or Career and Technical Education (CTE) credits (FFTS only). Colleges and postsecondary programs often use this information in admissions decisions to understand a student's willingness to challenge themselves and their commitment to courses of study. They can also have a financial impact by helping students earn credits before enrolling in college.

White and Asian students, students at SAMI and SOTA and Foss are the most likely to take courses of rigor. Those who attend Wilson or Mt Tahoma and students who identify as multi-ethnic or Latinx are the least likely to do so.

Graduate Tacoma 2020 Goal: Increase the percentage of 11th and 12th graders taking at least one advanced class eligible for college credit.

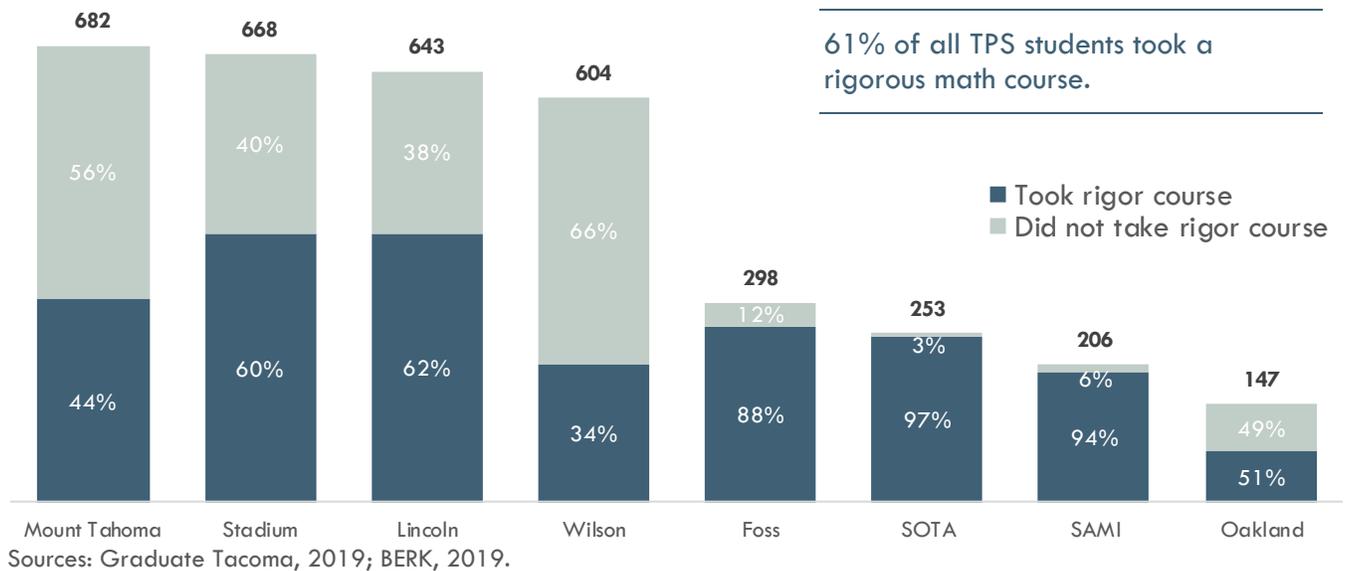**Exhibit 13. Students Taking Rigor Math Courses by School, 2018-19**

61% of all TPS students took a rigorous math course.

- ■ Took rigor course
- ■ Did not take rigor course

	Mount Tahoma	Stadium	Lincoln	Wilson	Foss	SOTA	SAMI	Oakland
Total	682	668	643	604	298	253	206	147
Did not take	56%	40%	38%	66%	12%	3%	6%	49%
Took rigor	44%	60%	62%	34%	88%	97%	94%	51%

Sources: Graduate Tacoma, 2019; BERK, 2019.

Exhibit 14. Students Taking Rigor Math Courses by Student Race

61% of all TPS students took a rigorous math course.

- ■ Took rigor math course
- ■ Did not take rigor math course

	White	Hispanic/Latino	Black	Asian	Multi Ethnic	Pacific Islander	Amer Indian/Alaska Nat
Total	1,422	676	608	464	255	123	48
Did not take	36%	45%	42%	28%	47%	52%	42%
Took rigor	64%	55%	58%	72%	53%	48%	58%

Sources: Graduate Tacoma, 2019; BERK, 2019.
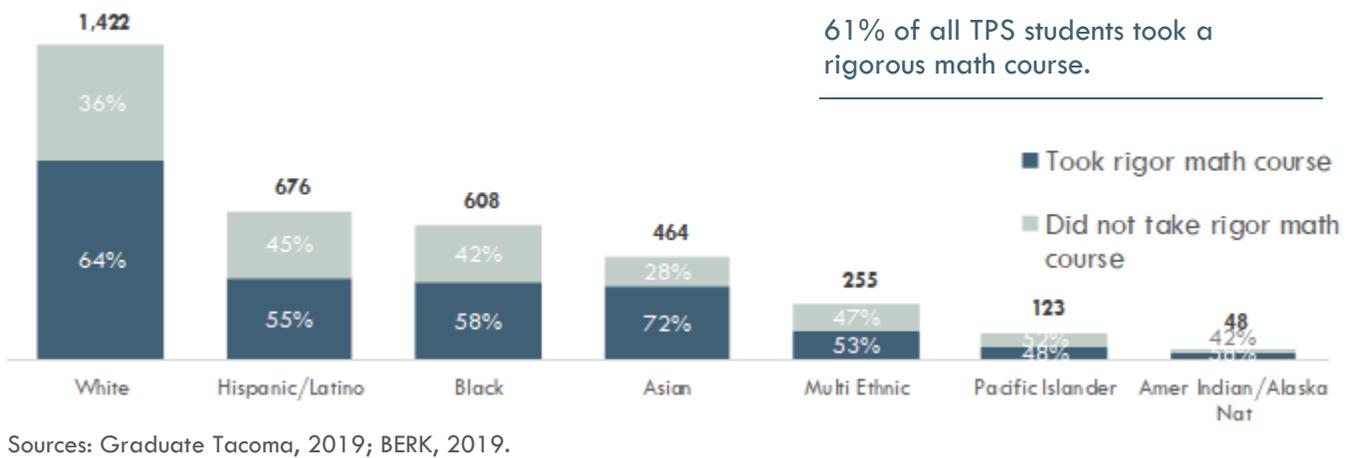
Exhibit 15. Students Taking Rigor Courses by Other Student Category

61% of all TPS students took a rigorous math course.

- ■ Took rigor math course
- ■ Did not take rigor math course

	Non Poverty	Poverty	Non-Spec Ed	Spec Ed	Non-ELL	ELL
Total	1,966	1,630	3,142	454	3,339	257
Did not take	37%	42%	35%	72%	38%	54%
Took rigor	63%	58%	65%	28%	62%	46%

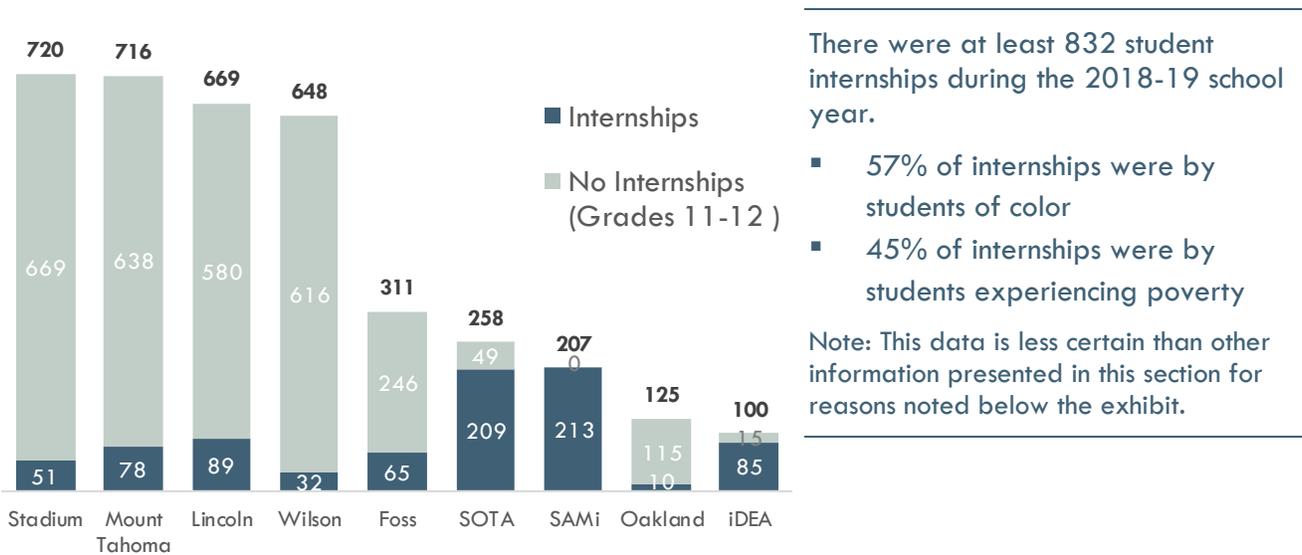Sources: Graduate Tacoma, 2019; BERK, 2019.
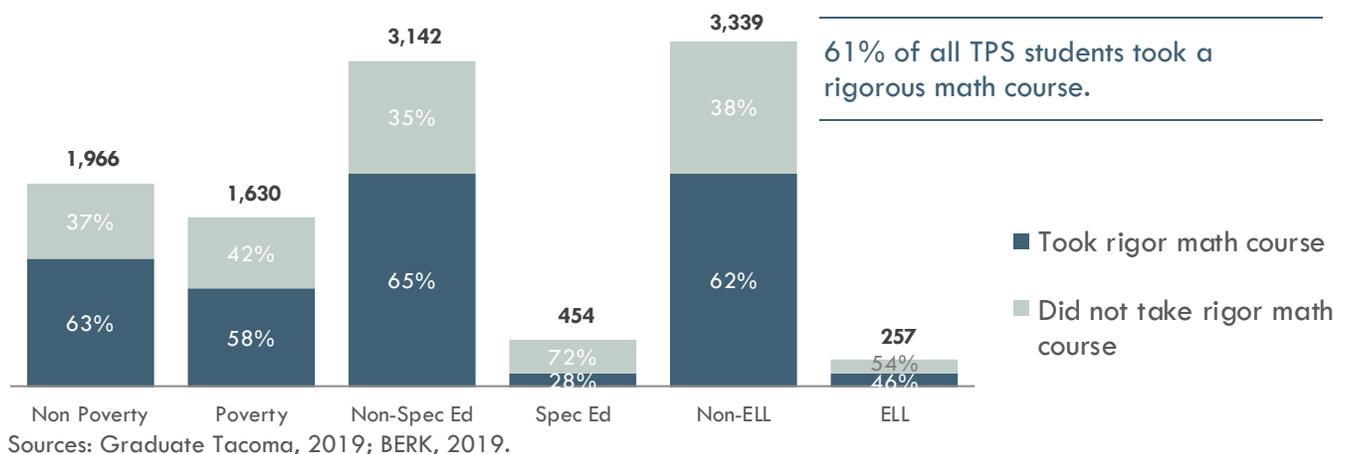
Career and Technical Education

Graduate Tacoma started tracking internship and apprenticeship completion in 2019 and the status of this data is still incomplete. An initial baseline was created with student transcript data and course titles (categorizing classes with internship or apprenticeship in the title, for example). Course offerings differ by school and can vary because of school-level unique graduation requirements. Some graduation requirements may have students take a specific class at the same time they complete their internship, for example.

The TPS Class of 2019 and beyond are asked to declare an emphasis on high school and beyond plans that include college attendance or a career directly after high school. Each emphasis requires students to take three credits of CTE courses that count towards the career concentration subject requirements ("Occ Ed" in the TPS course catalog). Student transcripts include data on whether the high school and beyond plan requirement was met. Career and technical education opportunities are provided by TPS, which connects students to internships and other CTE opportunities. Tacoma Public Schools also offers the Next Move Internship Program to juniors and seniors, but data on the number of applications and internship placements are not available for this report.

Graduate Tacoma 2020 Goal: Currently there is no direct Graduate Tacoma goal for career and technical education, however the STEAM learning network helps place students in community-based internships.

Exhibit 16. Estimated Internship Completion by School, 2018-19

There were at least 832 student internships during the 2018-19 school year.

- 57% of internships were by students of color
- 45% of internships were by students experiencing poverty

Note: This data is less certain than other information presented in this section for reasons noted below the exhibit.

Sources: Graduate Tacoma, 209; BERK, 2019.
Data notes: Graduate Tacoma presents this data incomplete due to a lack of any prior collection of this data and the currently incomplete process of counting internships. The "No Internships" figure is also an estimate based on the number of 2018-19 upperclassmen minus the number of internships. The Tacoma Public School's Next Move Internship Program is offered for juniors and seniors.

YOUTH AND PARENT/CAREGIVER SURVEY

Methods and Respondents

Survey questions were developed in partnership with FFTS and pre-tested with a group familiar with the Tacoma education system and close to the age ranges of youth respondents. Survey participants were recruited via college access program partners and via a communications mailing that went to Tacoma Housing Authority clients with youth in the household ages 18 to 23. They each determined the best way to distribute the survey given their respective contacts. Degrees of Change, the Tacoma Housing Authority, the Metropolitan Development Council, and College Success Foundation all recruited participants. There were 65 survey respondents, 33 from youth and 32 from parents/caregivers. These respondents represent over 8 different high schools. Mount Tahoma High School was the most common, with 27 respondents, followed by Lincoln High School with 10.

Exhibit 17. Respondents by Recruitment Method, (n=65)
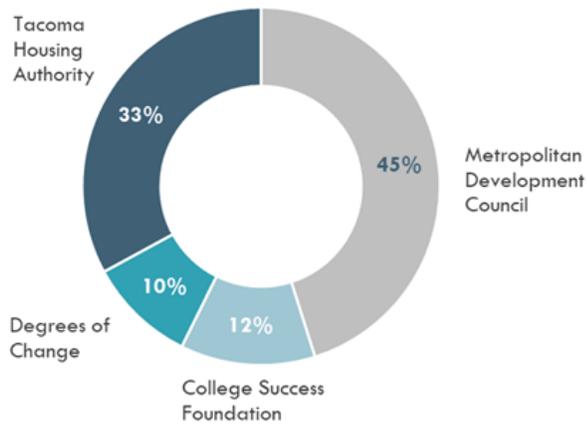
Exhibit 18. Respondents by High School, Youth and Parent/Caregiver (n=65)
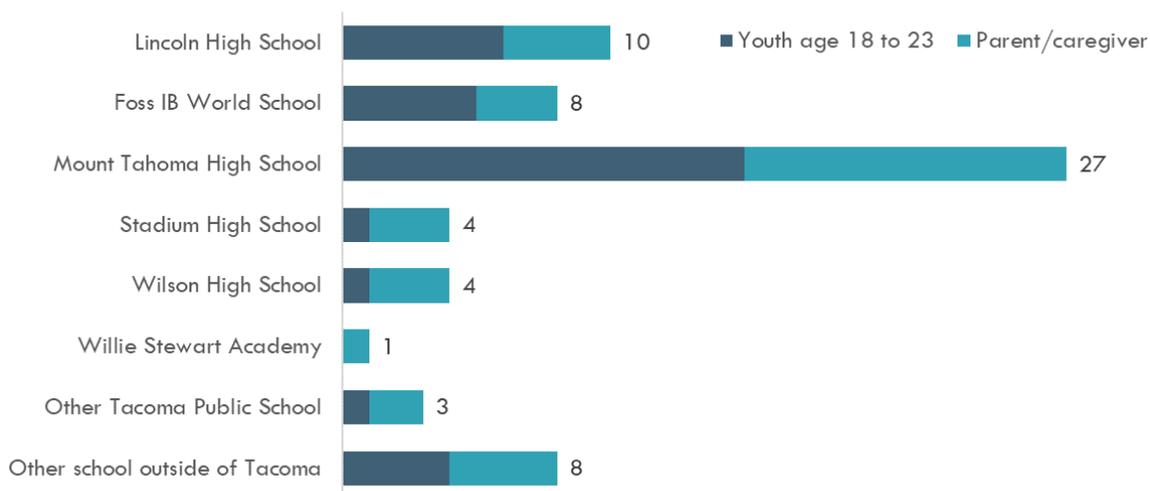
Exhibit 19. Respondents by Race, Youth and Parent/Caregiver (n=58)
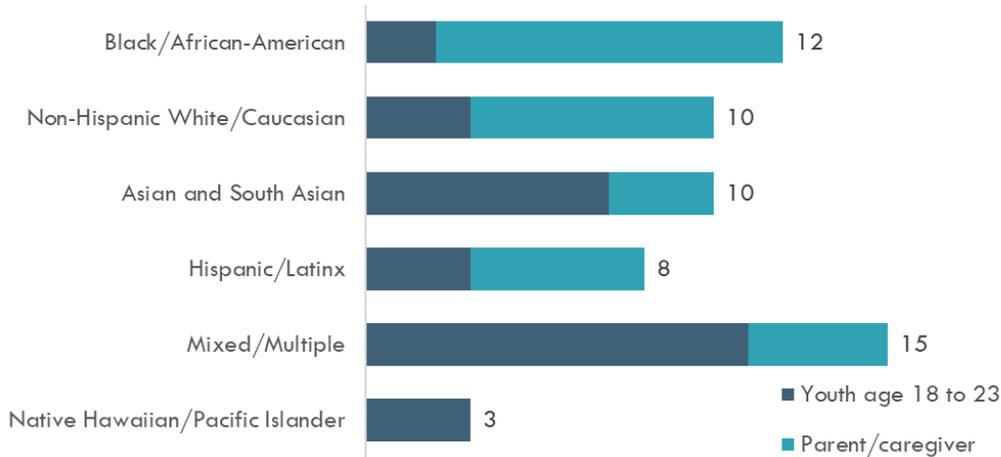
Source: BERK, 2019.
Note: The survey asked the respondent to identify the race of the youth (not the parent/caregiver).

Preparation and Encouragement for Postsecondary

Most respondents (60 of 65) participated in at least one of the listed college access programs, with an average of two per person. TRiO and the College Bound Scholarship are the two most popular programs for respondents. This is not surprising given the survey distribution venues. A full matrix of program participation demonstrates the co-occurrence of program participation in Exhibit 22.

Program participation varies among different race/ethnic groups, with highest participation among Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander respondents and lower among White and Black respondents. 90% of respondents visited a college campus before high school graduation and less than half (46%) had a parent who attended college.

Exhibit 20. Program Participation Count, (n=59)

	Total	% Total
Act Six	5	8%
Big Brothers/Big Sisters	1	2%
Boys and Girls Club	1	2%
College Bound Scholarship	26	40%
College Success Foundation / Higher Education Readiness Opportunity (HERO) or Achievers	22	34%
Summer Jobs 253	4	6%
Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) Program	4	6%
Next Move	4	6%
Palmer Scholars	6	9%
Peace Community Center	0	0%

Ready to Rise	4	6%
Running Start	6	9%
TRiO Educational Talent Search	32	49%
Upward Bound	11	17%
Other (please specify)	6	9%

Source: BERK, 2019.

Exhibit 21. Number of Programs per Student, by Race/Ethnicity (n=65)

	# Programs
OVERALL AVERAGE	2.0
Black	1.2
Asian and South Asian	2.4
Hispanic	2.3
Mixed/Multiple	2.4
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	3.7
White	1.0
No Response	1.9

Exhibit 22: Program Co-Occurrence Count, (n=59)

Student Participation by Program	Act Six	Big Brothers/ Big Sisters	Boys and Girls Club	College Bound	College Success Foundation*	Summer Jobs 253	MESA Program	Next Move	Palmer Scholars	Peace Community Center	Ready to Rise	Running Start	TRiO Educational Talent Search	Upward Bound
Act Six	5	1	0	2	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	4	1
Big Brothers/Big Sisters	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Boys and Girls Club	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
College Bound	2	0	0	26	12	1	3	2	4	0	0	2	13	4
College Success Foundation*	4	1	0	12	22	2	1	4	6	0	1	2	18	8
Summer Jobs 253	0	0	1	1	2	4	1	2	0	0	2	0	2	2
MESA** Program	0	0	0	3	1	1	4	1	0	0	0	1	2	1
Next Move	1	0	0	2	4	2	1	4	0	0	1	1	4	2
Palmer Scholars	0	0	0	4	6	0	0	0	6	0	0	1	5	3
Peace Community Center	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ready to Rise	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	1
Running Start	1	0	0	2	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	6	3	1
TRiO Educational Talent Search	4	0	0	13	18	2	2	4	5	0	1	3	32	8
Upward Bound	1	1	1	4	8	2	1	2	3	0	1	1	8	11

Source: BERK, 2019.

*Higher Education Readiness Opportunity (HERO) or Achievers
*Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement

Exhibit 23: Preparation and Education, Youth and Parent/Caregiver (n=65)
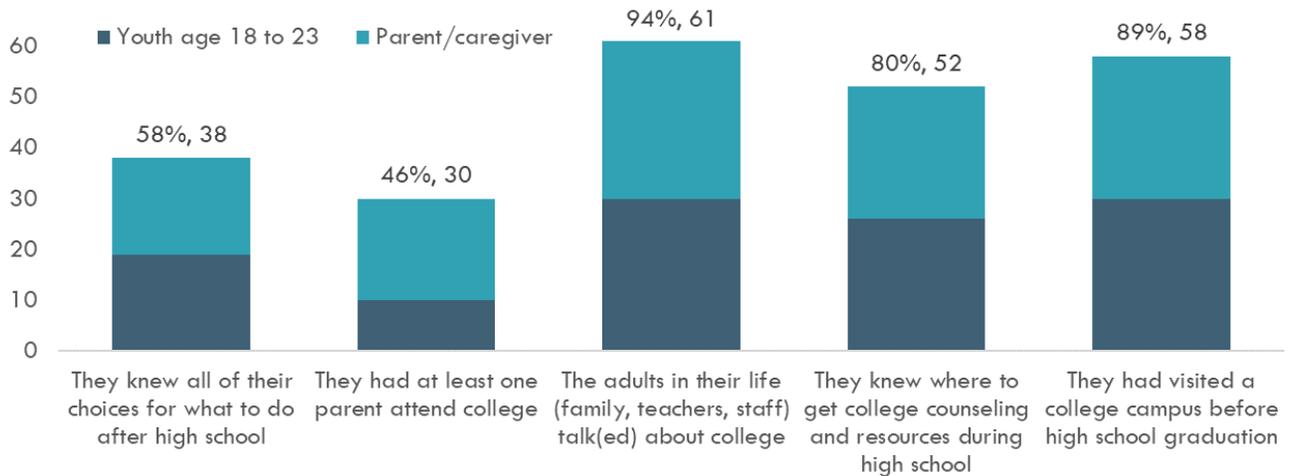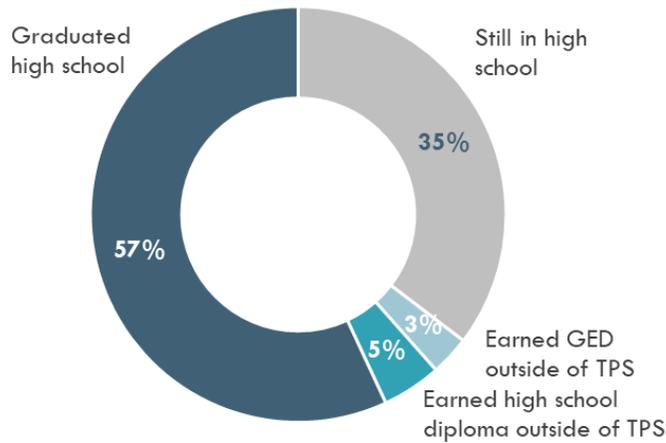

Source: BERK, 2019.

Education Status

Fewer than half of respondents had at least one parent attend college (46%), yet 94% had adults in their life talk about college. Not attending college does not preclude parents and caregivers from being supportive and participants in creating a college-going culture.

57% of respondents are high school graduates and 35% are still enrolled as high school students. Five respondents (8%) pursued a GED or diploma outside of TPS.

Overall, 66% of high school graduates are pursuing post-secondary education, 17% have graduated from a college or certificate program, and 12% (5 people) have chosen to not pursue education after high school. In comparison, the population level college enrollment for TPS was 49%: the rate of college going in the survey sample, largely drawn from postsecondary access program participants, is higher than the TPS general population. Given the sample size, it is difficult to identify common trait(s) among those who have selected to not pursue education after high school. However, they had a lower participation in college access programs overall, averaging less than one (0.83) per person, compared to 2.0 per person for the group.

Exhibit 24: High School Attainment, (n=65)

Graduated high school 57%
Still in high school 35%
Earned GED outside of TPS 3%
Earned high school diploma outside of TPS 5%

Source: BERK, 2019.

The remaining analysis considers only the students who have graduated high school or earned a GED or high school diploma. The majority of these students, roughly two-thirds, are currently enrolled in a postsecondary program. Another 17% have graduated postsecondary and 12% have not pursued continued education.

Exhibit 25: Current Education Status for High School Graduates, (n=41)

Has not pursued education after high school 12%
Graduated from a college or certificate program 17%
Currently enrolled in post-secondary program 66%
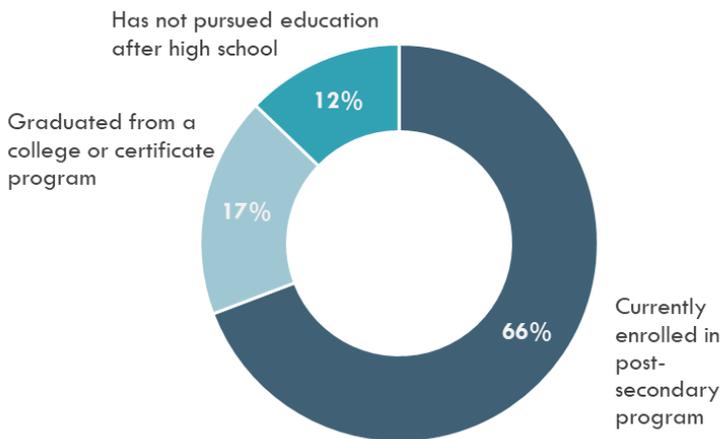
Source: BERK, 2019.

Employment Status

Of the high school graduates, 17 respondents (26%) are not currently working for income. 12 of these 17 are currently enrolled in education programs, two are graduates of 2- or 4-year colleges, and three are students who chose not to pursue education after high school.

Ten high school graduate respondents (15%) are working full-time. Four of these are college graduates, four are students who chose not to pursue post-secondary education, and two are currently enrolled students. One student is in the armed forces.

Exhibit 26: Employment Status for High School Graduates, (n=42)

Enlisted in the armed forces — 2%, 1
Working full-time — 15%, 10
Working part-time — 20%, 13
Working on a gig or short-term contract — 3%, 2
Professional apprenticeship — 0%, 0
Professional internship — 2%, 1
Caregiving full-time — 2%, 1
Not working for income — 26%, 17
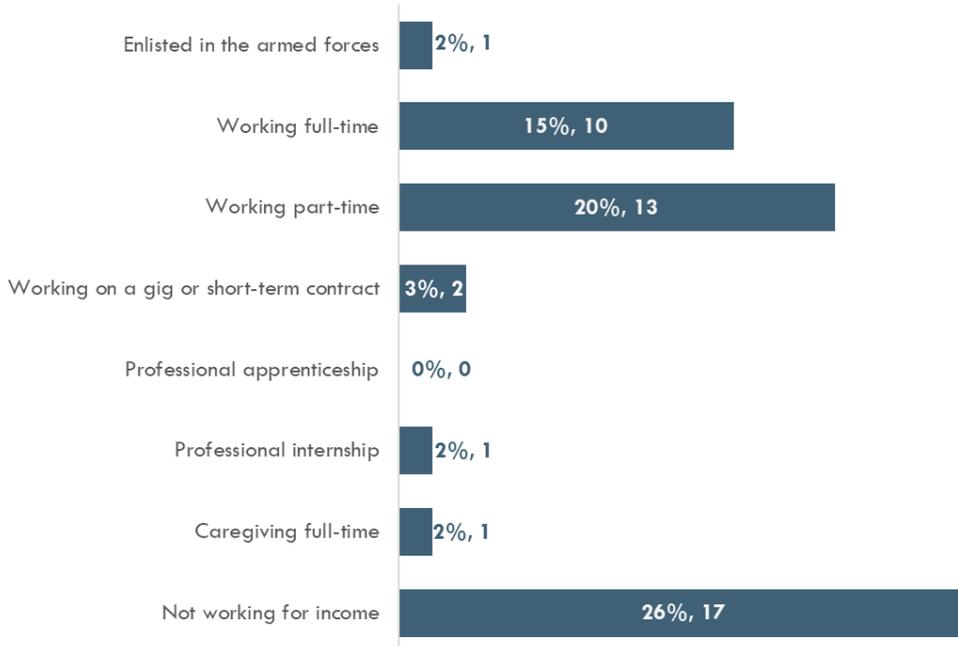
Source: BERK, 2019.

Exhibit 27: Employment Status for High School Graduates, Education status (n=42)

Legend:
■ Current Post-Secondary Students
■ College Graduates
■ No post-secondary education

Not working for income: 12 (Current Post-Secondary Students), 2 (College Graduates), 3 (No post-secondary education)
Working part-time: 11 (Current Post-Secondary Students), 1 (College Graduates)
Working full-time: 2 (Current Post-Secondary Students), 4 (College Graduates), 2 (No post-secondary education)

Source: BERK, 2019.

Motivations to Pursue or Not Pursue Postsecondary Education

For students who decided to pursue education after high school, top motivations listed were: clarity in career path, encouragement from a trusted adult, school feeling right, or they had a scholarship.

The least common reasons for pursuing postsecondary education were having money saved (2) and availability of housing (3).

For the six students who decided not to pursue postsecondary education, five provided reasons behind this decision:

1. Student is a care-giver to a child or family member.

2. Student felt that school was too expensive and did not receive sufficient scholarship funding.

3. Student listed a combination of factors: money, lack of access to transportation, and that they did not feel prepared for education after high school.

4. Student has a learning disability and felt a lack of academic support to feel fully prepared for continued education.

5. Student did not feel prepared and lacked clarity in their career path.

Exhibit 28: Motivations to Pursue Higher education, Inclusive and Exclusive of Current High School Students (n=54; n=42)

Including current high school students (n=54)   *Excluding current high school students (n=42)*
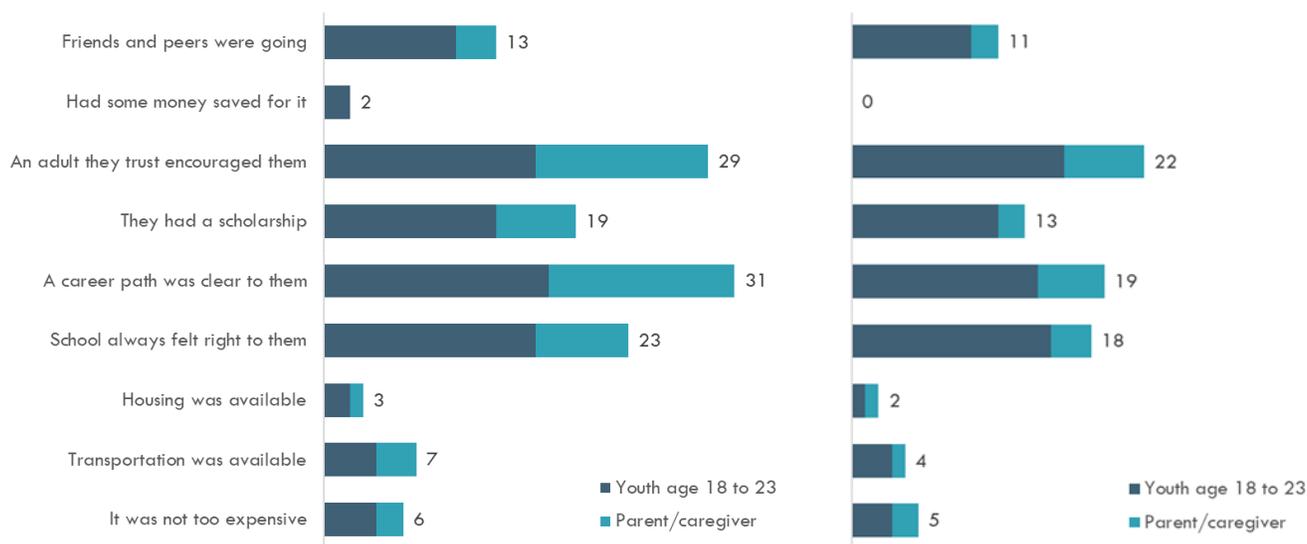
Source: BERK, 2019.
Note: Several current high school students responded to the question about motivations to pursue education beyond high school. Since these might represent seniors who have been accepted but not matriculates, they are included in the chart on the left but not the right.

Qualitative Insights

In the qualitative survey comments, respondents stressed the importance of programs and resources to help with college prep, starting early in high school. Explaining career options, helping with applications and paperwork, and funding campus visits were all noted as important and appreciated.

Many students felt well supported by family, school, and programs but others did not. In particular, respondents mentioned a lack of resources or connections to resources for students with learning disabilities. Several respondents also emphasized the need to provide a well-rounded picture of alternatives, including routes other than 4-year colleges. Some illustrative examples of these comments are:

> *"I wish I explored more outside career paths during high school to get an idea. Having more opportunities to explore choices is very beneficial."*

> *"The most helpful thing I personally received was help throughout the application process (essay construction, FAFSA, etc)"*

"I was supported by many staff members at Mount Tahoma. Whether that was my CSF advisor, my TRIO advisors, my Act Six cohort, and more."

"What are some vocational opportunities for students that teachers/advisors can provide? What ways can we get out students involved in the community if they decide to go the non-traditional pathway?"

"Try to target youth who don't necessarily want to go straight into a four year university. Help the kids who are super seniors or going into community college, those in running start who have questions."

"I had no idea how the application process worked or what a FAFSA was."

"I felt like the school district have failed kids [who have a learning disability]."

"Joining AVID helped me visit college campuses, as my parents could not afford the time or the money to take me themselves. Having strong, present teachers allowed me to feel confident in my abilities to go to college and achieve my dreams."

Postsecondary Access Concepts and Trends

While not intended to be a comprehensive review of the literature, this section highlights a selection of key concepts and trends in postsecondary access equity. They introduce at a high level what we know about what matters for low-income, first-generation, and student of color college access and enrollment.

KEY THEORIES ON THE COLLEGE CHOICE

The individual choice to attend college is typically framed in one of two ways. First, scholars and economists commonly describe it as cost-benefit calculation, also known as the human capital argument, often associated with Gary S. Becker (1994). In this framework, the decision to go to college weighs the investment in higher education against an expected long-term return to that investment. In this model, family wealth and income are major determinants of whether the equation will shake out in favor of going to college. Policies and interventions such as federal grants, loan programs, and scholarships are designed to tip these scales.

A second popular model drawing more on psychology than economics was proposed by Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Hossler and Maple. This model frames college choice as a three-stage process: predisposition, search, and choice. During predisposition, college-going expectations and preferences are being formed as early as birth, but commonly studied in middle school. During this phase, there is little interaction between postsecondary institutions and students, but as a matter of personal identity students are already sorting themselves into college-goers, undecideds, and non-college-goers. During the search stage, students seek information about their postsecondary choices both to make the decision whether to attend, and which institution to attend. They are also developing the set of institutions and non-college pathways they will seriously consider. Finally, the application and attendance choice is made. Several studies underscore three most important factors in predisposition and search: parental educational attainment, parental encouragement, and student achievement (National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, 2007). Interventions like college counseling, mentorship, talent search and outreach, and information campaigns are all designed to nudge this process in the direction of college-going.

LARGE AND GROWING GAPS IN ENTRY BY INCOME; SHIFTING TRENDS BY RACE

Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated structural relationships between college attendance and socioeconomic status and recent reviews demonstrate that gap is growing. (Corazzini, Dugan, & Grabowski, 1972; Bailey & Dynarski, 2011; Ellwood & Kane, 2000). For example, Ellwood and Kane (2000) observed this pattern empirically with data on college attendance among academically prepared students from different income brackets in the class of 1992. Controlling for test scores, high school class rank, and 8th grade school, youth from the top income quartile were 14 percentage points more likely to attend any postsecondary training (2-year, 4-year, or vocational) and 12 percentage points more likely to attend a 4-year college. Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Martha Bailey and Susan Dynarski demonstrated that for students born between 1961 and 1964, the gap in college going rates between the top income quartile and the bottom was 39 percentage points. For those born eighteen years later, that same gap was 51 percentage points.

Exhibit 29: Fraction of Students Entering College, by Income Quartile and Birth Year
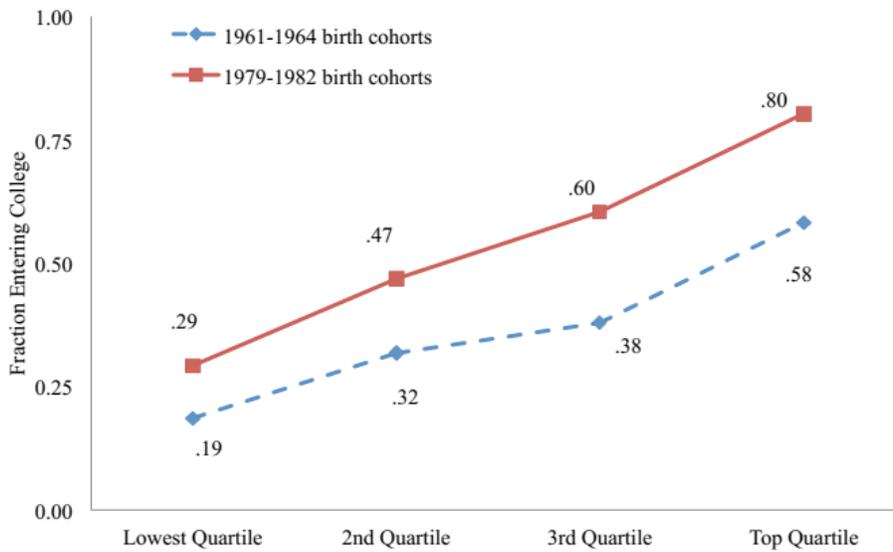
Source: (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011); Author's calculation based on data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1979 and 1997 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010a, 2010b).

Robert Hauser investigated trends in college entry by race and sex between 1972 and 1988. He demonstrated continuous gains in women's college that was consistent for white, black, and Latinx students (1993). The trend has continued through 2017, such that women of any race are significantly more likely to attend college than their male counterparts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Historical trends in black and African American students' chances of college entry have been marked by ups and downs. Hauser (1993) attributed gains in the 1970s to gains in educational attainment by the previous generation and the size of black families and declines in the 90s to the rising cost of entry. The uneven path continued to appear in data from 2000 to 2017. Black student enrollment gap (compared to whites) in 2017 is slightly larger than where it started in 2000, despite a significant period of gain between 2007 and 2010. The legacy of affirmative action and subsequent resistance to these policies has also shaped these uneven trends, and patterns of racial gap by institution types (public vs. private vs. HBCU) have emerged (Allen, McLewis, Jones, & Harris, 2018). More recent statistics of racial gaps illustrates that Asian students are by far the most likely to attend college immediately after high school graduation, and black and Latinx students lag their white counterpart in this measure.

Exhibit 30: US Immediate College Enrollment Rates, by Race, 2000-2017
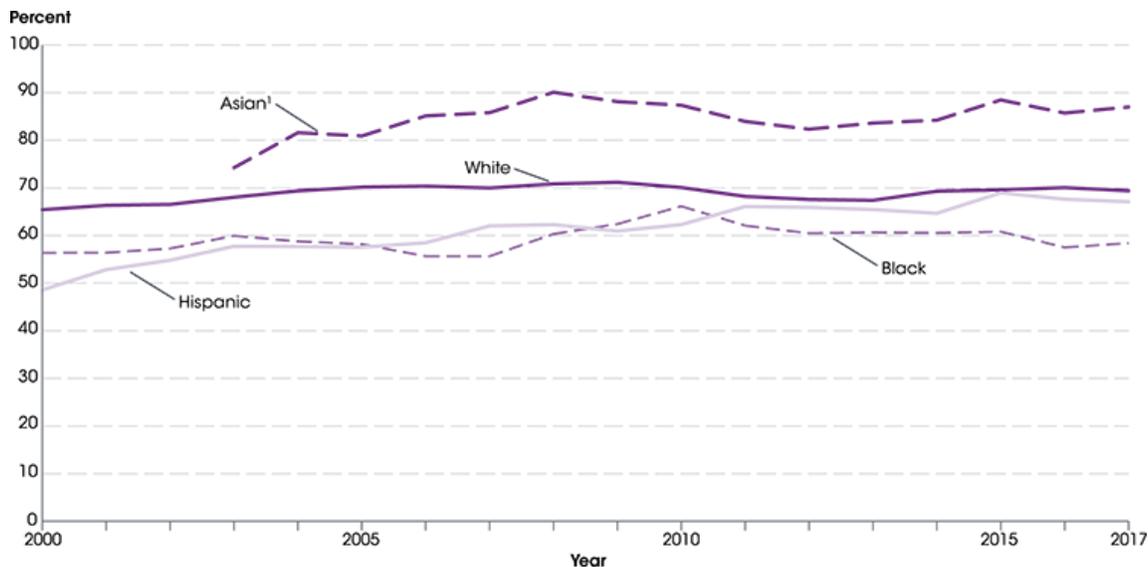
1 The separate collection of data on Asian high school completers did not begin until 2003.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), October Supplement, 2000 through 2017. See Digest of Education Statistics 2018, table 302.20. National Center for Education Statistics, 2019. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Note: Immediate college enrollment rate is defined as the annual percentage of high school completers who were enrolled in 2- or 4-year institutions by the October immediately following high school completion. High school completers are individuals ages 16 to 24 who graduated from high school or completed a GED or other high school equivalency credential prior to October of the calendar year. Due to some short-term data fluctuations associated with small sample sizes, percentages for racial/ethnic groups were calculated based on 3-year moving averages, with the following exceptions: the percentages for 2017 were calculated based on a 2-year moving average (an average of 2016 and 2017), and the 2003 percentage for Asian high school completers was based on a 2-year moving average (an average of 2003 and 2004). From 2003 onward, data for White, Black, and Asian high school completers exclude persons identifying themselves as of Two or more races. Race categories exclude persons of Latinx ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

CHOICES ABOUT POSTSECONDARY PURSUITS LOOK DIFFERENT FOR LOW-INCOME STUDENTS, STUDENTS OF COLOR, AND FIRST-GENERATION STATUS

Fewer low-income students enter college compared to middle- and high-income peers. The difference has been shown to be unrelated to academic performance. Low-income high school graduates who perform in the top quartile on standardized tests attend college at the same rate as high-income high school graduates in the bottom quartile on the same tests (Wyner, Bridgeland, Diiulio, 2007). In other words, the lowest performing students with wealthy backgrounds go to college at the same rates as the highest performing students from low-income backgrounds.

Money is a major driver of this pattern. Many studies have linked income to college enrollment and shown that students in lower income brackets are more sensitive to tuition differences (i.e., disproportionately likely to decide not to go to college when tuition goes up). A very recent survey of perceptions of the payoff to college underscore that for some students, the math just does not seem to work out (Kane, 2001; Fishman, Nguyen, Acosta, & Clark, 2019). Students do not believe that the return on investment will make postsecondary pursuits worthwhile in the long-run. And for non-white students, there is evidence backing their claim. A 2019 report revealed that 20 years after entering repayment, the median white

student borrower has paid back 94 percent of their student debt while the median black borrower still *owes* 95 percent of their student loans (Sullivan, Meschede, Shapiro, & Escobar, 2019). The fundamental return on investment equation looks different by race due to underlying wealth disparities by race and labor market discrimination.

However, the challenges that are not purely financial and can involve non-academic preparedness and information about choices (Bedsworth, Colby, and Doctor, 2006; Oseguera, 2012). Many of these students will be the first in their families to attend college constraining the resources they have to navigate college and career choices compared to peers. Low-income and first-gen students are also susceptible to a phenomenon known as "undermatch" or going to a college that is below their academic ability. One study found that almost half of low-income students applied to a set of institutions in which not one matches their abilities (The Executive Office of the President, 2014).

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES ON DEFINITION OF POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS

Broad national trends linked to underlying changes in the economy have prompted a rethinking of what success beyond high school can and should mean. Postsecondary pathways today more commonly co-occur with income-earning and family responsibilities, can happen throughout one's lifetime rather than direct from high school, do not include a residential experience, and can reflect a wider range of certifications and credentials. Pathways formerly considered "alternative" are expanding.

A 2019 survey conducted by New America found "whether it is an apprenticeship, technical degree, associate degree, or bachelor's degree, almost all Americans said that they felt comfortable recommending that their children or close family members enroll in these programs (90 percent or more for all programs except for associate degree programs, 84 percent)." (Fishman, Nguyen, Acosta, & Clark, 2019)

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT WHAT WORKS

We review key evaluation findings on several well-established postsecondary access programs active in Tacoma Public Schools.

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)

AVID is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 1980 that delivers a college preparatory curriculum for underrepresented students with academic potential. It focuses on literacy, math, and critical thinking skills for students whose parents do not have college experience, those from lower-income households, and those from underrepresented race and ethnicities. There are many evaluations of the AVID system of supports showing improved outcomes, including higher completion of courses of rigor, completion of college-going requirements, direct enrollment to 2- and 4-year colleges, and first year to second year college persistence rates (Tacoma Public Schools).

College Bound Scholarship

The College Bound Scholarship is a Washington State financial aid opportunity for low-income students that covers tuition (at comparable public college rates), some fees, and a small book allowance. It can be used at 2-year, 4-year, and technical and trade schools. Students apply in 8th grade by completing a form, signing the College Bound Pledge (pledge to graduate from high school with a 2.0 GPA or higher, to not be convicted of a felony, and to file the FAFSA or WASFA senior year to determine their income

eligibility) and demonstrating income-eligibility. In senior year, they submit their FAFSA or WASFA to confirm income eligibility and receive the scholarship. Foster youth are automatically enrolled via state systems.

College Bound enrollment is associated with a higher high school 4-year graduation rate (76% vs 63%) (WSAC). A 2013 program evaluation analyzed further outcomes related to graduation rates, college attendance, and College Bound sign-up rates (and a composite rate) disaggregated by school and student characteristics. Their findings are listed below.

- Participation in the Navigation 101 program was associated with increased odds of college enrollment for College Bound Scholarship (CBS) students.

- White CBS students were less likely to enroll in college than Black CBS students.

- Students who completed lower levels of math had lower odds of enrolling in college than students who completed higher levels.

- Students who did not participate in Running Start had lower odds of enrolling in college.

- Students with lower GPAs had lower odds of enrolling in college.

- Schools with higher enrollments and schools with higher percentages of students enrolled in college credit courses tended to have higher levels of college attendance, use of the CB scholarship, and overall results.

- The percentage of male students, the percentage of non-White students, and the student teacher ratio emerged as negative predictors of most of the outcomes.

- Schools with a higher percentage of male students tended to have lower college, CBS, and composite rates.

- Schools with higher student-teacher ratios were associated with lower college, CBS, and composite rates.

- The percentage of non-White students at a school was negatively related to the rate of college attendance and composite rates. It was not related to CBS sign-up rates. (Baker, et al., 2013)

TRIO

TRIO refers to a series of eight federally funded programs that have existed in various formats since 1965. Their primary purpose is to prepare persons from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter into and succeed in postsecondary education. Disadvantaged backgrounds include low-income, first-generation college students and students with disabilities. Upward Bound and Talent Search are the major TRIO Programs active in the Tacoma area concerned with postsecondary access:

- Talent Search is a broad-based program that provides academic, career, and financial counseling encouragement to graduate high school, and assistance with financial aid and postsecondary application processes throughout middle and high school years. Like Upward Bound, two-thirds of the students in each local TS program must be from low-income economic backgrounds and from families where parents do not have a bachelor's degree. The federal grant for this program operates on a five-year cycle.

- Upward Bound is an individual grant program that includes a summer program of college exposure and prep, and school year weekly check-ins. Two-thirds of participants need to be both low-income and "potential first-generation college students," with the remaining third of students meeting one of the requirements. There is a math and science focused version of this program (Upward Bound Math-Science).

Research demonstrates the positive effects of TRIO programs on students' college-related outcomes Maynard et al., 2014). Methodologically rigorous research studies conducted by Westat and Mathematica Policy Research show that:

- Talent Search increases applications for financial aid and postsecondary enrollment; and

- Upward Bound Math-Science has positive effects on enrollment in selective four-year institutions and completion of a bachelor's degree in a math or science discipline (The Pell Institute, 2009).

In a meta-analysis of research that used experimental or quasi-experimental research designs, Maynard et al. (2014) found that, on average, the studied TRIO and other college access programs increased college enrollment by 12 percentage points. Other research demonstrates the cost-effectiveness of Talent Search, especially relative to other dropout prevent programs, in promoting high school completion (Levin et al., 2012). (Perna, 2015)

Tacoma Postsecondary Access Community: Current State and Opportunities

This section discusses perspectives on the current state of alignment in the postsecondary access community and identified opportunities for improvement. The content is a synthesis of interviews conducted in September and October of 2019. The full list of interviewees appears in the Appendix.

PERSPECTIVES ON DEFINITION OF POSTSECONDARY OPPORTUNITY ALIGN, BUT OTHER CONSTRAINTS KEEP IT FROM PRACTICE

The community is highly aligned in terms of defining postsecondary opportunities at a personal level. Most interviewees phrased it as any opportunity beyond high school that supports a family wage or other sustainable economic outcomes. They tended to list opportunities including 4-year and 2-year colleges, technical and trade schools, apprenticeships and military careers as satisfying these criteria. Less commonly interviewees offered the example of a good job with upward mobility (possibly direct from high school) as part of the definition.

Many framed the idea of postsecondary opportunity around student choice. Whatever the pathway, if it opened up additional choices for a student, that would be considered a successful outcome. Relatedly, one interviewee described their role as primarily focused on ensuring students have the knowledge and capacity to make informed choices. What the students choose to do with that information and capacity is up to them (and may not include postsecondary education).

As a practical matter, program representatives are operating within constraints related to funder requirements, organizational structures, and program definitions. Further constraints related to what their partners are willing to resource can narrow their ability to serve certain students, promote certain pathways, or use certain strategies.

SOME PATHWAYS ARE STRONGER THAN OTHERS

Overall interviewees indicated that the four-year direct college pathway is the strongest. This pathway has had infrastructure built over time, and benefits from its normative status as the best option and from being the path taken by most of the adults in public school buildings.

Interviewees commented that pathways are also strongest for students who show academic potential. Sometimes this is embedded in the program mandate. Other times it is an artifact of the incentives for programs that are funded or are accountable for outcomes including high school graduation rates, a direct to college enrollment rate, or college persistence rates. A corresponding gap or relative lack of attention is paid to low-income students, first generation students, and students of color who do not "demonstrate academic potential." Also noted as gaps were potential pathways for learning disabled students, students with high mobility (especially across school district lines), those who leave high school for a period of time (Opportunity Youth), and undocumented youth. South and east Tacoma were noted as neighborhoods where the school district lines are porous with many students in and out of Franklin-Pierce or Bethel School Districts.

WHO IS DOING WHAT

The college access landscape in Tacoma is continuously evolving. Federal grants come and go; most notably, TRIO is on a five-year cycle. Programs enter and exit the region, and existing programs evolve their capacity and eligibility requirements. The following table is a snapshot of available access programs based on interviews and web research. It is not comprehensive. Students also receive support with postsecondary access from many other sources including family, peers, faith communities, affinity groups, and expanded learning programs.

Exhibit 31. Table of Available Postsecondary Access Programs

PROGRAM/SUPPORT	SLOTS/CASELOADS	SCHOOLS
Educational Talent Search/TRIO by Tacoma Community College TCC	503	▪ Foss IB World School ▪ Stadium High School ▪ Jason Lee Middle School
Upward Bound by Metropolitan Development Council	46-47/advisor 165 total	▪ Foss IB World School ▪ Lincoln High School ▪ Mt. Tahoma High School ▪ Stadium High School ▪ Spanaway Lake High School (Bethel SD)
Educational Talent Search by Metropolitan Development Council	Up to180/site 592 total	▪ Lincoln High School ▪ Mt. Tahoma High School ▪ Baker, Gray, and First Creek Middle Schools ▪ Bethel High School (Bethel SD) ▪ Spanaway Lake High School (Bethel SD) ▪ Cedarcrest and Spanaway Middle Schools (Bethel SD)
Achievers by College Success Foundation (grades 11-12)	~100 per cohort	▪ Foss IB World School ▪ Lincoln High School ▪ Mt. Tahoma High School ▪ Stadium High School ▪ Wilson High School

PROGRAM/SUPPORT	SLOTS/CASELOADS	SCHOOLS
HERO by College Success Foundation (grades 9-10)	~70 per cohort	▪ Foss IB World School ▪ Mt. Tahoma High School ▪ Wilson High School
College and Career Readiness (grades 6-8)	Schoolwide programs	▪ Baker Middle School ▪ First Creek Middle School ▪ Giaudrone Middle School ▪ Gray Middle School ▪ Stewart Middle School ▪ Truman Middle School
Proyecto MoLE	100-115/year, plus drop-in students and student summit	▪ Mt. Tahoma High School
Ready to Rise by Degrees of Change	Tacoma Site: 80 high school seniors planning to enroll at TCC or UWT	
Treehouse for Kids	8 education specialists with caseloads of 20-25 students in foster system between multiple schools across the Tacoma, Clover Park, and Puyallup School Districts.	
Palmer Scholars	117 current college Scholars 32 current high school seniors 45+ new Scholars (high school juniors) 15 Pathways (re-engagement) youth	
Peace Community Center/Hilltop Scholars	112 elementary 128 middle school 77 high school	McCarver Elementary School Jason Lee Middle School
Seattle Education Access/Northwest Education Access	Expanding into Pierce County in early 2020. ~75/advocate	

Source: BERK, 2019.

Others noted the many community initiatives currently underway in Tacoma and the need to align with related work happening. For example, the WIOA Economic Security for All work and 98404 zipcode economic security work housed at WorkForce Central may tie into building non-4-year college postsecondary pathways.

One on one engagement and long-term relationship building/coaching is seen as most effective, but also most resource intensive and more difficult to scale. Other programs are lighter-touch. One challenge noted is getting students into the "best fit" program for their needs. Several respondents also noted that they can only truly serve those students who are seeking their support. There are many students who might benefit from supports but are not willing to engage. Engagement can be driven by existing relationships and networks. Relationship-driven introductions to program services are often times the most effective in getting individual students to engage. However, they are difficult to scale and can introduce bias into who gets services.

Overall program interviewees indicated that if given more resources, they would likely expand into other schools or go earlier in the students' experience. No programs indicated they needed to turn away students or employ a waitlist because they were full, though some do administer an application and

screening process (implying that there are students who apply and are not enrolled). The only program that indicated a sense of "unfilled slots" was AVID, which has resources on tap to deploy into additional schools, but requires the commitment of the school buildings to invite them in and give them schedule time.

CURRENT STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Many interviewees noted a need to engage very early, from kindergarten through high school. The majority of programming is currently in high school and some in middle school. The concept of starting in Kindergarten is linked to a crucial opportunity for identity formation and visioning, i.e., "what do you want to be when you grow up." Shorter term goals such as 3rd grade assessments can mean students losing sight of those dreams somewhere between kindergarten and high school. Several interviewees mentioned visioning workshops and carving out space for thinking long term and imagination for students well before the high school crunch happens.

> *The question is 'Can we get them to want it [the long-term dream] so bad that they will overcome any barriers? Or are we focusing them on short-term things?'*

On the other hand, many also mentioned weakness or the need to build the systems of supports further beyond high school graduation and into the postsecondary experience. Specifically connecting this work with the Tacoma Completes work was called out as essential.

Financial aid and the affordability of postsecondary education was raised as the biggest challenge for students. The full spectrum of costs for postsecondary education should be considered to include housing, transportation, food, books, clothing, and supplies. There is additional nuance in that many prospective students do not believe they can afford opportunities, or are unable to assume that risk, despite their potential eligibility for support.

Data was mentioned as both a strength and a weakness in many interviews. There has been great growth in the ability to collect and analyze relevant data. A current weakness is the capacity to put that data to use on the field level. One example was to use the Verified Acceptance at Next Institution data to follow up on who did not actually matriculate despite acceptance and determine why. Many interviews mentioned the summer melt as a needed focus area that was especially well-suited for a cross-system partnership because that time period is not 'owned' by any institutions.

The community highlighted a strong tradition and recognition of the need for mentorship and coaching. However, many mentioned that the mentor/coach identity is not broad enough. In other words, the most effective relationships need to be organic rather than a formal matchmaking. A culture where anyone can be a mentor in a young person's life—teacher, coach, someone from church—needs to pervade the school buildings and the community.

> *There are students who are awesome but scared to succeed. We need to support that with multiple faces. You'd be amazed how many students who say I heard you, but I didn't believe you. Getting to believing creates change.*

Many highlighted the existing infrastructure for postsecondary access, in the TCSN, High School and Beyond Planning, free SAT, and automatic enrollment in courses of rigor, and the need to continue building on that work.

THREATS TO AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR POSTSECONDARY ACCESS WORK

Interviewees are concerned about Tacoma's housing crisis and underlying economic changes which are shifting their landscape. Current growth patterns can lead to displacement and exacerbated inequality and may be shifting targeted students out of the Tacoma Public School boundaries. Further economic changes are changing what successful postsecondary pathways look like, with some formerly secure career prospects potentially replaced by automation or other suppliers.

Many interviewees highlighted major shifts happening in the school system that affect their work. The budget cuts in Tacoma Public Schools in 2019 resulted in a lower allocation of school FTE to college and career counseling, and no district-level lead for college and career success. This limits overall capacity to serve students directly and to sit community alignment tables or coordinate partnerships with community organizations and postsecondary institutions. From the community partner side, there is no longer a "go-to" person for help with school district data requests, calendar and curriculum alignment, or help getting access to students and families who may benefit from their services. An interviewee also mentioned that the district McKinney-Vento Liaison no longer works at the district. The full-time role of homeless student liaison has been absorbed by the foster care liaison.

Community program and postsecondary outreach connections must happen at the building level if at all. Partners noted that access to school buildings and students can vary greatly according to the school administration and relationships. The main requests are for space and time to meet with students. From the building side, their space and time feels extremely scarce, especially with the 24-credit framework for graduation requirements. Flexible student time to engage with their potential next steps and with partners is increasingly limited.

Aside from space and time, many community partners desire access to student data. A major upcoming opportunity is TPS launching in 2020 is a community portal version of eSchoolsPlus which is expected to greatly improve partner access to relevant student data.

Policy changes at the state and federal level regarding scholarships and aid (even when they are positive and needed changes) can create confusion and communication challenges. Eligibility or the process changes from year to year and all adults who are channels of information to students need to stay up to date. This was noted in particular for the expansion of income eligibility for the College Bound Scholarship.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY ALIGNMENT

Overall, program interviewees felt that the community is aligned and rowing in the same direction. The atmosphere is that things are trending up and people accomplished much in last 2-3 years. There is city and community thinking about pulling resources together and making a bigger impact.

TCSN is an important venue for that conversation. Interviewees pointed to many joint initiatives and collaborative programs, such as shared bus field trips and bilingual FAFSA/WASFA nights. Programs acknowledge that some students may participate in more than one program, also verified by our survey participants. For the most part, they felt it could be a strength as the programs have different models and students have varying needs that need to be met multiple places. A handful of voices were concerned that in some situations, and between some specific program pairs, the overlap is truly duplicative.

The really smart [students] get Ready to Rise, Palmer, and College Success Foundation support. There are those in the same demographic who are being underserved for whatever reason.

We do share students. I think it really works well to share students. What we offer can offset what they don't. Building a team around the student is really important.

One proposed alternative would be to formalize informal relationships in MOUs. This would force deeper thinking on how to align missions, where they may not align, processes for cross-referral, and which students are best-fit for which programs. MOUs, however, are a major effort of staff time. Others simply asked for better information to build awareness of the different programs and what each one actually does. This expands to understanding resources in mental health, housing resources, independent living, and scholarships and learning opportunities.

We hear the names, but we don't really know what that looks like. Being more knowledgeable about what it does, what it offers, what the criteria are.

Finally, one person mentioned exploring the possibility of a common application across programs. A common application would also ease the application burden for students. One interviewee was concerned that students are being recruited to apply for programs they are not likely to get into (due in part to outcome measures such as # of applications and race/ethnicity of applications).

A few voiced concerns about competition among programs to recruit students, particularly students likely to be successful in their program. This can lead to student choices about who gives the best incentives or who has the best field trip, rather than what program is the best fit. Another manifestation of the competitive environment is counting/claiming "full" outcomes for students who have been served by others. This can be driven by the need to hit participation and outcome targets for funders and lack of student-level data across programs. Others felt the community did a good job of cross-referring, putting the student need first, and not needing to hit individual numbers first.

Key partnerships

Strengthening partnership and relationships with TPS was mentioned. People come in with different initiatives and the school capacity is already strained to do basic education.

I already know I can't do my job the way I want to.

Listening deeply, putting dollars to compensate the people doing the work and additional resources, before suggestions and requests of people in school buildings. For example, professional development opportunities in TPS are more rare which might be an opportunity to build capacity and bring resources.

Partnerships with concurrent WorkForce Central grants and the Pierce County Co-Op (of which TPS is a member) were also mentioned as a potential opportunity for more alignment. Many emphasized career exploration programming, such as job shadows across the community, as crucial for success. Any venue that brings students in contact with employees and employers can be highly impactful and help them envision a postsecondary pathway.

The Tacoma Housing Authority specifically raised an opportunity in a new apartment complex available to rent 75 units to TPS, UWT, and TCC students. This would be a place-based opportunity to deliver postsecondary access services to students with housing challenges. A partnership could help identify 25

high school students appropriate for independent housing to bridge to their postsecondary pursuits. Also related to housing, one interviewee mentioned a REACH grant for housing unaccompanied senior students.

Proposed focus areas

Several pointed to a needed focus on decreasing summer melt, building on successes and lessons from the What's Next event, and expanding to include all students.

Some indicated interest in expanding the conversation and funding opportunities beyond the usual suspects to expanded learning programs and smaller organizations that connect with youth. These partnerships could be valuable for integrating career exploration activity, for example. Another impactful voice missing from the table is that of employers.

Mentorship is a major piece of postsecondary success for many interviewees. Mentorship opportunities can be structured in many ways. Resources and suggestions to strengthen mentorship included the Mentorship Matters, a delivery model for apprenticeship and trades programs which trains the business enterprise how to talk to young people, and trains young people in how to ask the right questions and be an active listener. Others suggested recruiting a community-wide pool of potential mentors or recruiting TPS alumni specifically.

Some community members were interested in using funding for professional development across the postsecondary access community. Others pointed to existing resources like PSESD, Pierce County, City of Tacoma, and SOWA for that content. Content related to mental health, stress and anxiety, and equity and inclusion were all mentioned. Another alternative mentioned in this vein would be to have community partners train each other in their areas of relative strengths (working with WAFSA eligible students for example).

AVID is underutilized at the district. It only goes up to 9th and 10th grades in select schools, while it could be up to 12th and could be at every school. According to interviewees the main barrier is Core 24 which has limited the time building administrators can allocate to AVID courses. A second barrier to getting AVID in schools is finding teachers at the school building to teach those courses.

One person mentioned the possibility of making filling out FAFSA and WAFSA a graduation requirement to increase completion rates—Washington is 45th in the nation in FAFSA completion. Other regional school districts have done so, including Federal Way. Introducing this requirement would require investment in administrative supports.

Interviewees were hopeful for flexible funds for a number of opportunities. One would be to "smooth" differences when a student cannot access the program best suited to meet their need due to funding restrictions. Funds could also support students' transportation needs, which tend to be small dollar amounts but a major restriction. Another would be opportunities to do small tests of changes in practices, then provide feedback and evaluate.

Messaging

Many interviewees highlighted areas of opportunity around community messaging. One was destigmatizing non-college pathways. Students in the comprehensive high schools have access to many adults with college backgrounds, resulting in a strong bias toward that pathway. Adults in schools, except for counselors, were identified as ill-equipped to support students interested in the trades, military, or other postsecondary options. Another was around destigmatizing and raising expectations around

College Bound Scholarships. The current message that "all you need is a 2.0 GPA" is true, but a student graduating with a 2.0 does not have many postsecondary choices.

Beyond the needed messages, several noted a need to strengthen communications capacity. The field is much slower than students and families in communicating digitally. Parents and students need to see key messages in their comfort zones and at the right time and place. The current marketing plans and tools and resources are seen as outdated.

Many mentioned events like Tacoma student success conferences such as and Signing Days, IGNITE Conference and WE Days. Student leaders and community groups could lead design of these conferences, which could create community spirit, serve as a rallying point, and showcase pathways to inspire students.

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Interviewees

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- Amy Van, Tacoma Housing Authority
- Angela Pierce, Northwest (Seattle) Education Access
- April Black, Tacoma Housing Authority
- Brandon Ervin, Tacoma Public Schools
- Christina Nakada-Alm, Tacoma Community College
- Deborah Walker, Tacoma Community College
- DJ Crisostomo, Degrees of Change
- Dolores Haugen, Tacoma Community College
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- Felice Davis, Metropolitan Development Council
- Jamila Jones, Tacoma Public Schools
- Jessica Simanton, PSESD
- Joe Contris, Metropolitan Development Council
- John Page, Tacoma Public Schools
- Justina Johnson, Tacoma Public Schools
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- Liesl Santkuyl, College Success Foundation
- Lori Parrish, Metropolitan Development Council
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