



# College Enrollment Patterns Among Chicago Public Schools Graduates

As more jobs than ever require a college degree, young people also increasingly report that they want to go to college. Educators and advocates around the U.S. — including school districts, community and non-profit organizations, and the higher education sector — are focusing more and more on helping students plan for, enroll in, and succeed in college. The University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (UChicago Consortium) has previously reported on the rates at which Chicago Public Schools (CPS) high school graduates enroll in 4-year colleges immediately after high school. However, many students also enroll in 2-year colleges, enter college well after finishing high school, or transfer from one institution to another during their time in higher education.

In an effort to help practitioners and policymakers better understand the extent to which CPS graduates are making the transition to college, and who may benefit from additional support, the UChicago Consortium published a report in October 2017, *Patterns of Two-Year and Four-Year College Enrollment Among Chicago Public Schools Graduates*. This report made use of an expanded dataset to examine immediate, delayed, and overall enrollment in 2-year and 4-year colleges over a six-year period, as well as transfers between 2-year and 4-year colleges. The result is the UChicago Consortium's most comprehensive look at CPS graduates' college enrollment trends to date.

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**“More CPS graduates are enrolling in college immediately after high school...but focusing only on immediate college enrollment masks the complexity of college enrollment and transfer patterns.”**

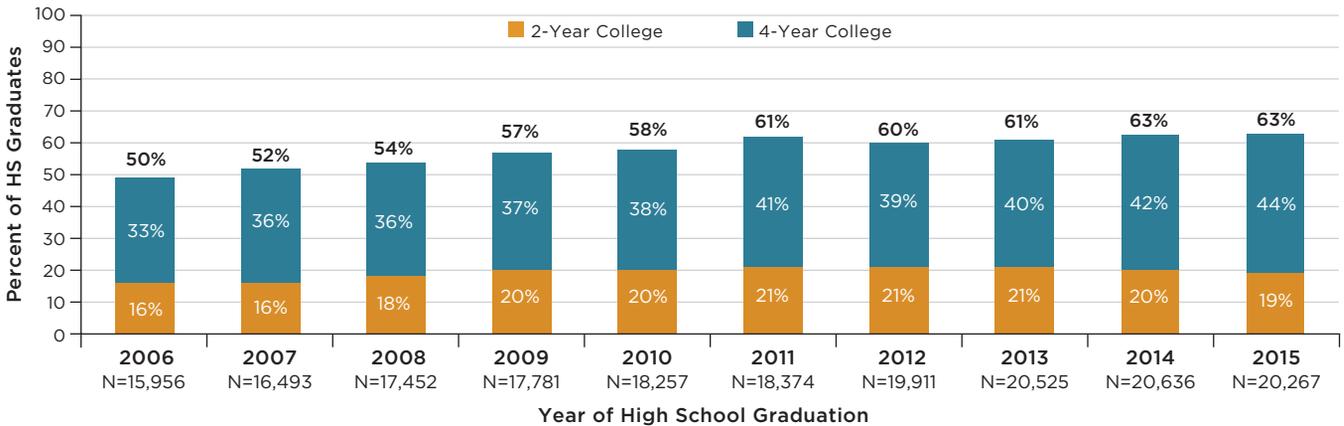
# Research Findings

## Immediate Enrollment

More CPS graduates are enrolling in college immediately after high school.

### SNAPSHOT FIGURE 1

CPS Graduates' Immediate College Enrollment Rates Increased Over the Last Decade



	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>Number of Total Immediate Enrollees</b>										
2-Year	2,577	2,669	3,173	3,523	3,621	3,771	4,074	4,347	4,203	3,742
4-Year	5,311	5,893	6,279	6,547	7,003	7,515	7,844	8,251	8,755	8,988
<b>Percent of Total Immediate Enrollees</b>										
2-Year	33%	31%	34%	35%	34%	33%	34%	35%	32%	29%
4-Year	67%	69%	66%	65%	66%	67%	66%	65%	68%	71%

**Note:** Ns listed above refer to the number of high school graduates for each year. Percentages in stacked bars may not add up to numbers listed above stacked bars due to rounding. Data and methods are described in Appendix A; see full report.

### Rates of Enrollment: 2015 vs 2006

- ↑ 11 Percentage-Point Increase in 4-year Enrollment Rates**
- ↑ 3 Percentage-Point Increase in 2-year Enrollment Rates**
- ↑ 14 Percentage-Point Increase in Overall College Enrollment**

As a result of these changes, 2-year enrollment now accounts for a smaller share of overall college enrollment than it did in the past.

### Number of Students Enrolled: 2015 vs 2006

- ↑ 3,677 More 4-Year Enrollees**
- ↑ 1,165 More 2-Year Enrollees**
- ↑ 4,832 More Total College Enrollees**

### Looking Beyond Immediate Enrollment

Focusing only on immediate college enrollment masks the complexity of college enrollment and transfer patterns. This report looks at three other enrollment patterns of CPS 2009 high school graduates to gain a clearer picture of college enrollment overall:

1. **Delayed Enrollment:** Where and when did CPS graduates start their college careers?
2. **Overall Enrollment Patterns Six Years Out:** How many CPS graduates from the classes of 2006-09 enrolled in 2-year and 4-year colleges (or both) within six years of graduating high school?
3. **Transfers Between 2-Year and 4-Year Colleges:** How many immediate enrollees transferred between level of institution within four years: from a 2-year to a 4-year college; or from a 4-year to a 2-year college?

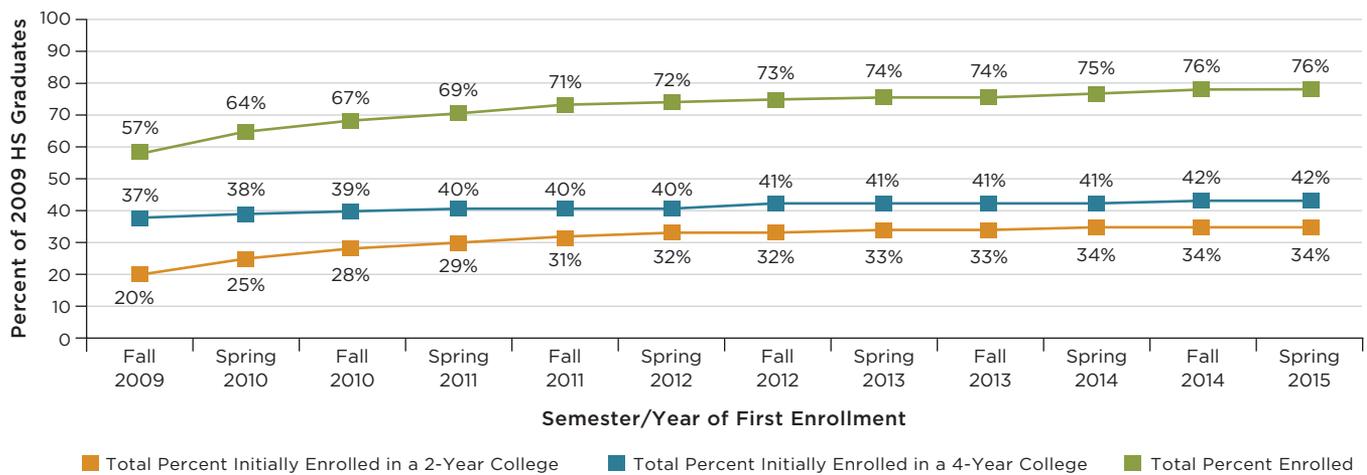
# Delayed Enrollment

Where and when did CPS graduates start their college careers?

- **19% of 2009 CPS graduates** delayed enrolling in college.
- Many **2-year enrollees** did not enroll in college immediately after high school:
  - **20% of graduates** immediately enrolled in a 2-year college.
  - **14% of graduates** delayed enrollment in a 2-year college.
  - **40% of graduates** who started at a 2-year college were delayed enrollees.
- Most **4-year enrollees** enrolled in college immediately after high school:
  - **37% of graduates** immediately enrolled in a 4-year college.
  - **5% of graduates** delayed enrollment in a 4-year college.
  - **12% of graduates** who started at a 4-year college were delayed enrollees.

## SNAPSHOT FIGURE 2

19% of 2009 CPS Graduates Delayed Enrolling in College



**Note:** Percentages of 2-year and 4-year enrollees may not add up to total enrollees due to rounding. Data and methods are described in Appendix A; see full report.

## KEY TERMS

- **Immediate Enrollment:** Students graduated high school in June and enrolled in college in the fall.
- **Delayed Enrollment:** Students didn't enroll in college immediately, but did enroll in college at some point within six years of graduating high school.
- **Transfer:** At some point in their college career, students changed "level" of institution—from 2-year to 4-year, or from 4-year to 2-year colleges. Students who took time off in between switching levels of institutions are included in our transfer numbers. Students who transferred institution but did not change "level" of institution are not included in our transfer numbers.
- **Overall Enrollment:** Includes students' enrollment in college at any time within six years of high school graduation (includes immediate enrollees, delayed enrollees, and transfers between levels of institution).

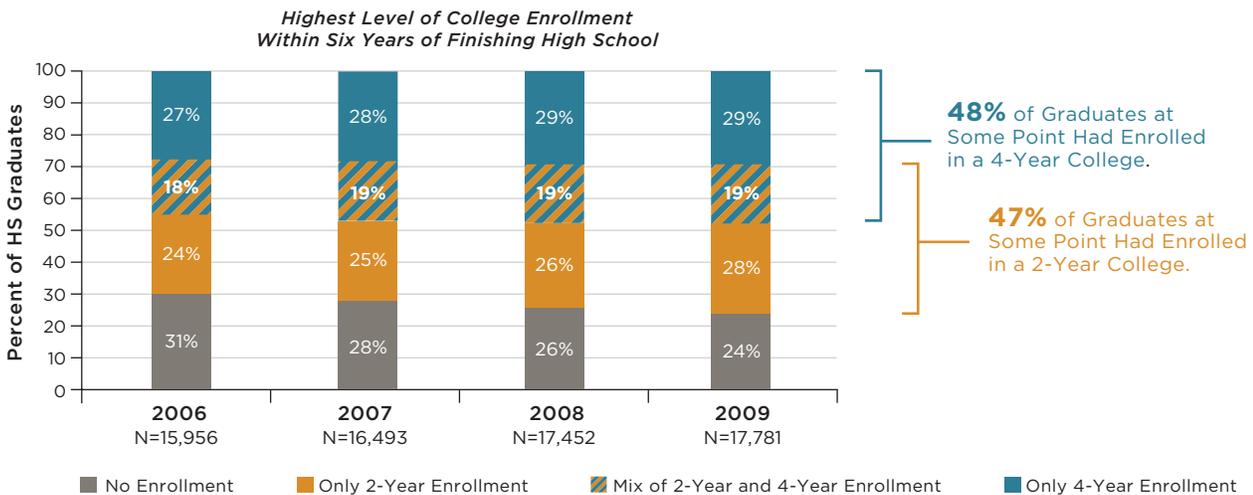
## Overall Enrollment Patterns Six Years Out

How many CPS graduates from the classes of 2006–09 enrolled in 2-year and 4-year colleges (or both) within six years of graduating high school?

- Most 2009 graduates (76%) enrolled in college at some point within six years of finishing high school.
- Roughly the same percentage of CPS graduates enrolled at some point in a 4-year college (48%) as enrolled at some point in a 2-year college (47%).
- 1 in 5 graduates enrolled in both a 2-year and a 4-year college during their college career.
- The increase in overall enrollment (69% to 76%) from 2006–09 was driven mostly by an increase in 2-year enrollment.

### SNAPSHOT FIGURE 3

Three in Four CPS Graduates Enrolled in College Within Six Years of Graduating High School



**Note:** Ns listed above refer to the number of high school graduates for each year. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Data and methods are described in Appendix A; see full report.

## Transfers Between 2-Year and 4-Year Colleges

How many immediate enrollees transferred between level of institution within four years: from a 2-year to a 4-year college; or from a 4-year to a 2-year college?

- **16% of 2009 immediate 2-year enrollees** transferred to a 4-year college.
- 564 of 3,523 immediate 2-year enrollees transferred to a 4-year college.
- **26% of 2009 immediate 4-year enrollees** transferred to a 2-year college.
- 1,702 of 6,547 immediate 4-year enrollees transferred to a 2-year college.

### SNAPSHOT FIGURE 4

One in Four CPS Graduates Who First Enrolled in a Four-Year College Transferred to a Two-Year College Within Four Years of Graduating High School



**Note:** Data and methods are described in Appendix A; see full report.

# Implications

**C**ollege enrollment is fluid — some students delay enrollment, some transfer, and some stop out and return to the same college or enroll in another. While we don't know the full picture of CPS graduates' college enrollment, these findings prompt questions: What drives students' enrollment choices? How can the K-12 and higher education sectors best support students? These supports are most likely to be successful if practitioners and policy makers dig into available data, ask questions, and gain insights that lead to adjustments in practice and updated policies that support CPS students and graduates.

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## Tracking Overall Enrollment Rates

College enrollment extends long beyond the fall after high school graduation

- 19% of CPS 2009 graduates delayed enrollment, of whom almost three-quarters enrolled in a 2-year college.
- This confirms that if we only pay attention to the students who make the immediate transition to college after high school graduation—as much research, policy, and practice has done to date—we are overlooking a large number of students who likely need a different set of supports.

A sizable number of CPS graduates enroll in multiple institutions during their college career

- 1 in 5 CPS 2009 graduates at some point had enrolled in a 2-year and a 4-year college.
- We don't yet know the full picture of CPS graduates' college enrollment. This report does not show the full extent of transfer patterns, such as students who started at a 2-year or 4-year college and transferred to another college at the same level, or students who may have stopped out of college and then re-enrolled in the same college or another college at the same level.

## Additional Supports Needed for the Transition to College

Learning about why students delay enrollment could potentially lead to solutions—in both K-12 and higher education; in both practice and policy—to help students enroll earlier and with more support

- The small portion of students who delayed entry into 4-year colleges and large portion of students who delayed entry into 2-year colleges suggest that 2-year institutions offer a more flexible post-secondary option.
- However, this flexibility often comes at a cost. Research has shown that students who delay college entry are less likely to attain a degree than those who enter college immediately after high school, even after controlling for measurable differences across the two groups.
- Asking similar questions about students who transfer and students who do not enroll (many of whom are well-qualified), and the role that colleges play in these patterns, could also help improve college access and success for CPS graduates.

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**“If we only pay attention to the students who make the immediate transition to college after high school graduation, we are overlooking a large number of students who likely need a different set of supports.”**

## ABOUT THE RESEARCH

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*Patterns of two-year and four-year college enrollment among Chicago Public Schools graduates.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Consortium on School Research.

## ABOUT THE UCHICAGO CONSORTIUM

The University of Chicago Consortium on School Research conducts research of high technical quality that can inform and assess policy and practice in the Chicago Public Schools. We seek to expand communication among researchers, policymakers, and practitioners as we support the search for solutions to the problems of school reform. The UChicago Consortium encourages the use of research in policy action and improvement of practice, but does not argue for particular policies or programs. Rather, we help to build capacity for school reform by identifying what matters for student success and school improvement, creating critical indicators to chart progress, and conducting theory-driven evaluation to identify how programs and policies are working. The UChicago Consortium is a unit of the Urban Education Institute.

## ABOUT THE TO&THROUGH PROJECT



The To&Through Project is a partnership between the University of Chicago's Urban Education Institute and the Network for College Success. The Project's mission is to use research, data, and professional learning to help more students get to and through high school and college:

- Research that illuminates what matters most for students' high school and college success
- Data that guides efforts to improve students' attainment of key milestones
- Professional Learning that helps translate research and data into improved practice

In collaboration with educators, policymakers, and communities, the To&Through Project aims to significantly increase the percentage of Chicago Public Schools freshmen who graduate from high school and go on to earn a college degree, and to share the learning from Chicago with education stakeholders across the country.

Views expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the UChicago Consortium or the University of Chicago.

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To read the full report, visit: <http://consortium.uchicago.edu/publication-tags/college-enrollment>