

**The College Success Of Boston Public School
Graduates From The Classes Of 2000-2008:
Findings From A Post-Secondary Longitudinal
Tracking Study and the Early Outcomes of the
Success Boston College Completion Initiative**

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Prepared By:

Andrew Sum
Ishwar Khatiwada
Joseph McLaughlin

With

Sheila Palma
Jacqui Motroni
Center for Labor Market Studies
Northeastern University
Boston, MA

With

Neil Sullivan
Boston Private Industry Council

And

Nahir Torres
The Boston Foundation
Boston, Massachusetts

November 2010

Introduction

The growing importance of formal educational attainment to personal labor market, economic and social success and to the civic, economic, health, fiscal, and social well being of the nation has become more widely recognized over the past decade. Increased efforts have been made at the national, state, and local level to increase high school graduation, college attendance, and college graduation rates of young adults.¹ Here, in Boston, following the release of a report on the college enrollment and graduation experiences of city high school graduates in 2008, Mayor Thomas M. Menino established an initiative to substantially boost the college graduation rates of those young men and women leaving Boston public high schools with a diploma.² Mayor Menino challenged the Boston Public Schools, area institutions of higher education, and the nonprofit community to increase by 50% the college graduation rate for the BPS Class of 2009 and to double the rate for the Class of 2011.³ He charged BPS Superintendent Carol Johnson, UMass Boston Chancellor J. Keith Motley, and Boston Foundation President Paul S. Grogan to work with a task force of civic leaders to develop a strategy for meeting these goals.

In their recent book on the college performance of students in public four year colleges, Bowen et al., also make a strong case for establishing increased college graduation rather than college admissions as the key educational goal for the nation's higher education system. In the conclusion to their book, they argue:

“Today, with our global competitiveness in question and our educational attainment levels ominously stagnant, we realize that the real promise of opportunity depends on completing, not just pursuing a college degree.”⁴

¹ President Obama had set a national goal that would make the U.S. first in the world in the proportion of the nation's young adult population that were college graduates by 2020. The so-called American Graduation Initiative would help increase college graduates by five million. The specific desired thresholds for college graduates were not mentioned nor were targets set for specific demographic, socioeconomic, or geographic subgroups. See: President Barack Obama, Remarks by the President on the American Graduation Initiative, Warren, Michigan, 2009.

² See: Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University with the Boston Private Industry Council and Boston Public Schools, Getting to the Finish Line: College Enrollment and Graduation, Boston, 2008.

³ For a discussion and assessment of alternative college graduation rate definitions and measures, See: Andrew Sum, Ishwar Khatiwada, and Joseph McLaughlin, Defining and Measuring College Graduation Outcomes for Boston Public School Graduates: Their Implications for the Mayor's Task Force on College Success, Prepared for the Boston Private Industry Council, Boston, July 2010.

⁴ For a recent national study on college graduation rates in four year public colleges and the case for emphasizing graduation goals, See: William G. Bowen, Matthew M. Chingos, and Michael S. McPherson, Crossing the Finish Line, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2009.

The members of the Success Boston Task Force will have to address a series of issues on defining, measuring, and tracking college enrollment and graduation rates for future Boston Public School graduates. The process of defining college enrollment and graduation rates and measuring interim progress toward the Mayor's goals is dependent on knowledge of the actual trends in the college enrollment behavior, persistence rates, and graduation rates of all BPS graduates, as well as by gender and race-ethnic subgroups and by type of high school and college attended.

During the past few years, the Center for Labor Market Studies in cooperation with the Boston Private Industry Council and the Boston Public Schools has been undertaking a series of longitudinal analyses of the college experiences of BPS graduates from the Class of 2000 onward through the Class of 2008. These studies use data from the annual Boston PIC follow-up surveys of each year's high school graduates and the National Student Clearinghouse to track the college enrollment status of each high school graduate, the name and type of college attended, and the college persistence and graduation status of the college student at the end of each semester. Findings of a seven year longitudinal study of BPS graduates from the Class of 2000 (Getting to the Finish Line) were released in a report to the public in 2008.⁵

During the past year, the Center for Labor Market Studies of Northeastern University has prepared this new set of research reports on the college enrollment, persistence, and graduation experiences of BPS graduates. The research series begins with a description of data sources and methodologies used to track BPS graduates followed by a report on the measurement of college graduation rates of BPS graduates and the issues involved with setting and tracking the attainment of numerical targets for graduation rates. The second paper in this series provides an update on the college enrollment and graduation experiences of BPS graduates from the Class of 2000. The third paper introduces new findings and analyses of the college enrollment and graduation experiences of Class of 2003 BPS graduates through the end of the fall term of 2009, six and one-half years after their graduation from high school.⁶ A fourth paper in this series of

⁵ See: Center for Labor Market Studies, Getting to the Finish Line: A Seven Year Longitudinal Study of the Boston Public Schools, Class of 2000, Report Prepared for the Boston Private Industry Council and Boston Public Schools, November 2008.

⁶ See: (i) Andrew Sum, Ishwar Khatiwada, Joseph McLaughlin, with Sheila Palma, and Allison Beard, The College Enrollment and Graduation Experiences of Class of 2000 BPS Graduates Through 2009, Prepared for Boston Private Industry Council, Boston, 2010; (ii) Andrew Sum, Ishwar Khatiwada, Joseph McLaughlin, et al., College

research findings describes and assesses the college persistence rates of BPS graduates from the Classes of 2001 to 2008.

The titles of the four comprehensive research reports are:

1. *Defining and Measuring College Graduation Outcomes for Boston Public School Graduates: Their Implications for the Mayor's Task Force on College Success*
2. *The College Enrollment and Graduation Experiences of Class of 2000 BPS Graduates Through 2009*
3. *College Enrollment and College Graduation Experiences and Outcomes of Class of 2003 Boston Public School Graduates: Findings of a Longitudinal Study Through 2009*
4. *The College Persistence Rates of Boston Public School Graduates in Two and Four Year Colleges and Universities: BPS High School Graduating Classes of 2001 to 2008*

The findings in these four reports have important implications for the work of the Success Boston Task Force. Findings of these research reports will provide members of the Task Force with information on the actual college graduation outcomes for BPS graduates from the Classes of 2000 and 2003 at various points in time following their graduation from high school. The report on college persistence rates provides the Task Force with more recent findings on the college enrollment and retention behavior of graduates from Boston Public Schools. This new round of research will complement our earlier findings on college graduation outcomes for the Class of 2000 and provide early results on the progress being made toward the Mayor's ambitious college graduation rate goals for BPS graduates. A brief overview of the key findings from these reports and emerging results from the Success Boston Class of 2009 cohort follows.

Overview of Key Findings On College Enrollment, Persistence, and Graduation Outcomes From the Longitudinal Tracking Studies of Boston Public School Graduates, Classes of 2000-2008

Updates on the College Enrollment and Graduation Experiences of the Class of 2000 Nine Years Following High School Graduation

In the Getting to the Finish Line report on the BPS Class of 2000, the cumulative college enrollment rate for this class through seven years following high school graduation was found to be 64%. During the fall of 2009, college transcript records received from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) provided 9 and ½ years of post-high school tracking information for the Class of 2000. The college enrollment rate of the same group of graduates nine and ½ years after graduation increased to 68.9%. Thus, the aggregate college enrollment rate increased by nearly 5-percentage points over the past two and half years.⁷ Of the 2,966 BPS Class of 2000 graduates, 2,043 or 68.9% of the graduates attended a two-year or four-year college at some time between June 2000 and December 2009.⁸ The college enrollment rate for women from the Class of 2000 was 7 percentage points higher than that of men (72.1% versus 65.1%).

The increase in the college enrollment rate was accompanied by a higher graduation rate for the Class of 2000. In the Getting to the Finish Line report, the 7-year college degree attainment rate of BPS high school graduates was found to be 35.5%. With an additional 2 and ½ years of followup information, the college graduation rate of Class of 2000 BPS graduates increased to 41.5 percent. Since the initial publication of Getting to the Finish Line, more colleges have joined the NSC. In addition to more college degrees being earned by BPS graduates between the 7th and 9th year of tracking, part of the increase in the college graduation rate for the Class of 2000 reflects somewhat better coverage of colleges and universities in the Clearinghouse database.⁹

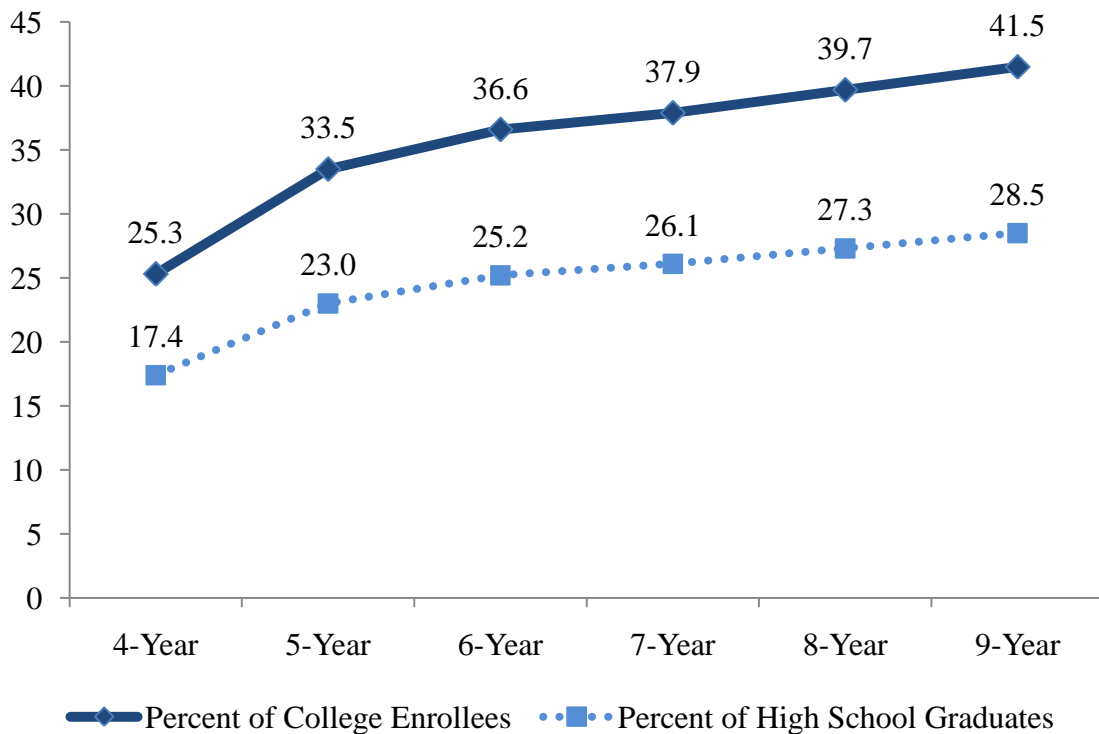
⁷ A part of this increase in cumulative enrollments was due to improved membership among colleges and universities in the National Student Clearinghouse that reported slightly higher enrollments in prior years.

⁸ These counts are largely based on data submitted by colleges/universities to the National Student Clearinghouse. As of the winter 2010, nearly every college and university attended by BPS graduates in Massachusetts were members of the National Student Clearinghouse. Two colleges- New England Institute of Art and Communications and the Boston Architectural Center- were non-members of the National Student Clearinghouse. The Boston Private Industry Council's annual follow-up survey of BPS high school graduates reveal that only 10 graduates from the Class of 2008 were enrolled in these two institutions.

⁹ The seven year college graduation rate of BPS Class of 2000 graduates when they were first tracked in the spring of 2007 was 35.5%. Based on updated data obtained from National Student Clearinghouse in the winter 2010,

The college graduation rate for a high school graduating class will vary depending on when one measures it. In Chart 1, college graduation rates for the Class of 2000 show the substantial variation that exists when the rate is measured for four year, five year, six year, and nine year periods. For the Class of 2000, the college graduation rate of all enrollees by 2004 was only 25.3%. The rate increased to 33.5% in the fifth year, to 36.6% in the sixth year, 37.9% in the seventh year, and reached nearly 42% in the ninth year. The college degree completion rates of BPS graduates from the Class of 2000 increased by 50% from the 4th to 7th year following high school graduation and continued to increase nine years after high school. Longer term tracking of BPS graduates beyond traditional 4, 5, and 6 year college graduation periods is clearly desirable to obtain an accurate portrayal of their eventual college enrollment and graduation outcomes.

Chart 1:
Four Year, Five Year, Six Year, Seven Year, Eight Year, and Nine Year
College Graduation Rates of Class of 2000 Boston Public High School Graduates



the 7-year college graduation rate was found to be 37.9%. This additional gain was due to improved membership in the National Student Clearinghouse and the inclusion of the entire 2007 year rather than the spring of 2007 in estimating the number of 7-year college graduates from the Class of 2000.

College Graduation Rates Are Higher for the Class of 2003

The ability to measure college graduation rates of different high school classes at different points in time allows for comparisons between the Class of 2000 and more recent graduating classes, providing key interim benchmarks for measuring progress toward graduation rate targets for the Classes of 2009 and 2011. The graduation Class of 2003 was the first class required to pass the state MCAS exams to obtain a regular high school diploma. BPS college enrollees from the Class of 2003 have fared better than their counterparts from the Class of 2000 in obtaining degrees. Findings in Table 1 provide estimates of the percent of college enrollees from the BPS graduating classes of 2000 and 2003 who had obtained a college degree four, five, and six years after graduating from high school. The college graduation rate of 2003 BPS graduates was nearly 29% after 4 years, increased sharply to 38% after 5 years, and to 41% after 6 years (Chart 2). Their six year college graduation rate was nearly 5 percentage points above that for the Class of 2000. If this graduation rate advantage prevails through their 9th year after high school, the 9-year graduation rate for Class of 2003 graduates would be over 46%.

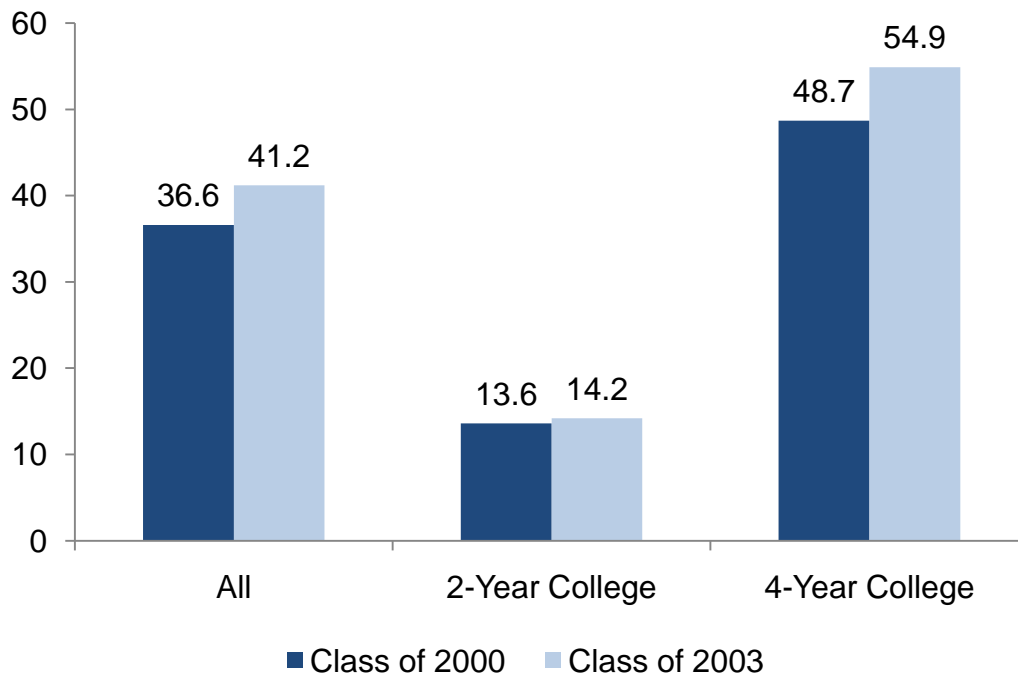
Table 1:
The College Graduation Rates of College Enrollees from the BPS Graduating Classes of 2000 and 2003 Four, Five, Six and Nine Years After Graduation from High School

	(A)	(B)	(C)
Year After Graduation	Class of 2000	Class of 2003	Class of 2003 – Class of 2000
Four	25.3	28.6	+3.3
Five	33.5	37.5	+4.0
Six	36.6	41.2	+4.6
Nine	41.5	--	--

The increases in college graduation rates of BPS Class of 2003 graduates, however, were not evenly shared across two and four year college attendees. Comparisons of the six year college graduation rates of college enrollees from the Classes of 2000 and 2003 show that most of the improvement was due to higher graduation rates of four year college attendees. Among those attending two year colleges, the graduation rate only rose from 13.6% for the Class of 2000 to 14.2% for BPS graduates from the Class of 2003. (Chart 2) In contrast, the six year graduation

rate of four year college enrollees increased from 48.7% to 54.9%, with strong gains among both four year public and private college attendees.

Chart 2:
Comparisons of the Six Year College Graduation Rates of College Enrollees from the BPS
Graduating Classes of 2000 and 2003 by Type of College First Attended



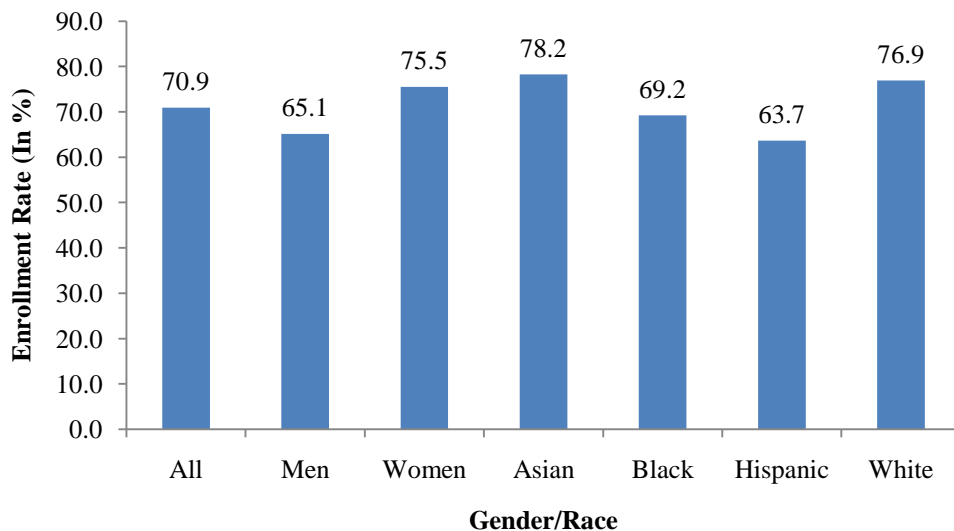
Disparities in college enrollment and graduation rates by gender, by race, and by race/gender groups remain disturbingly high for the Class of 2003.

Both the Getting to the Finish Line report and the new research report on the 9-year follow-up results for the Class of 2000 provide detailed descriptions and analysis of the college enrollment and graduation behavior of graduates by gender, race-ethnic group, type of high school attended, and type of college attended. A similar analysis was prepared for the Class of 2003 based on the National Student Clearinghouse data set. Of the 3,017 BPS Class of 2003 graduates, 2,140 or 70.1% of the graduates attended a two-year or four-year college at some time between June 2003 and December 2009. Similar to findings for the Class of 2000, female graduates had a higher college enrollment rate than their male peers (Chart 3). The college enrollment rate for women from the Class of 2003 was slightly more than 10 percentage points

higher than that of men (75.5% versus 65.1%). Among the four major race-ethnic groups, college enrollment rates varied even more widely, ranging from highs of 78.2% among Asians and 76.9% among White, non-Hispanics to lows of 69.2% among Blacks and 63.7% among Hispanics (Chart 3).¹⁰

The college enrollment rate of Class of 2003 BPS graduates increased both overall and for every race-ethnic group compared to the cohort from the graduating Class of 2000 six and ½ years after leaving high school. This increase in the college enrollment rate for Class of 2003 graduates may have been attributable to the MCAS graduation requirements that took effect for the first time with the Class of 2003 graduates. College enrollment rates from more recent post-MCAS classes remain higher than earlier in the decade although national college enrollment rates have also risen steadily over the past decade.

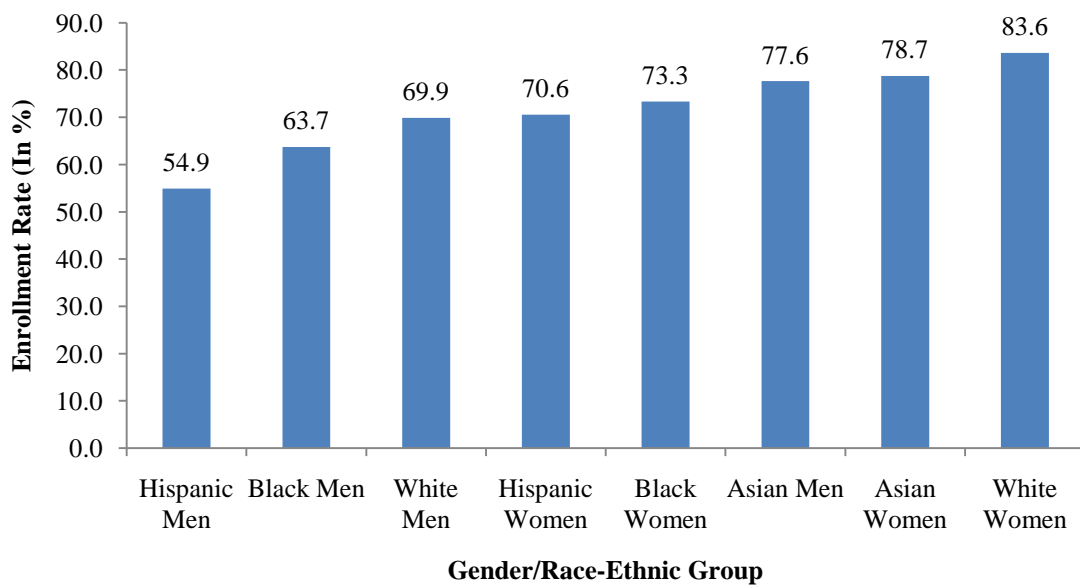
Chart 3:
College Enrollment Rates of Class of 2003 BPS Graduates Through the Fall of 2009 by Gender and Major Race-Ethnic Group (In %)



¹⁰ Race-ethnic background information for 44 graduates was missing for the Class of 2003. Prior to 2007, Bunker Hill Community College was not a member of the National Student Clearinghouse. When we obtained data from Bunker Hill Community College, we were able to match most of the students' background information with BPS data records; however, there were 279 students (mostly from Bunker Hill Community College) from the Classes of 2000 through 2008 that were perceived to be from BPS for whom we could not match the race-ethnic information from the master records of graduates obtained from BPS.

The college enrollment rates of members of eight race-ethnic/gender groups of graduates from the Class of 2003 varied quite widely (Chart 4). These differences add to large differences across these same eight groups in their high school graduation rates. At the bottom of the college enrollment rate distribution were Hispanic and Black men with college enrollment rates ranging from 55% to 64%. At the top of the distribution were White and Asian women with college enrollment rates of 84 and 79 percent, respectively. In each race-ethnic group, women attended college at a higher rate than men with double digit differences among Blacks, Hispanics, and Whites. The gap between the college enrollment rates of Asian women and Hispanic men was nearly 24-percentage points while the gap between White women and Hispanic men was nearly 30 percentage points.

Chart 4:
College Enrollment Rates of Class of 2003 BPS Graduates by Gender/Race-Ethnic Group (In %)



Getting more BPS high school graduates prepared for entry into college is an important educational objective, but an equally if not more important goal is having them successfully complete college. Among BPS graduates who enroll in college, there are tremendous disparities in graduation rates across gender, race-ethnic, and other schooling subgroups. Of the 2,140 graduates from the Class of 2003 who had enrolled in college at some time since leaving high school, 884 or 41.3% had obtained either a college degree or a certificate by the end of calendar year 2009. Not only were female BPS graduates more likely to enroll in college, but they also

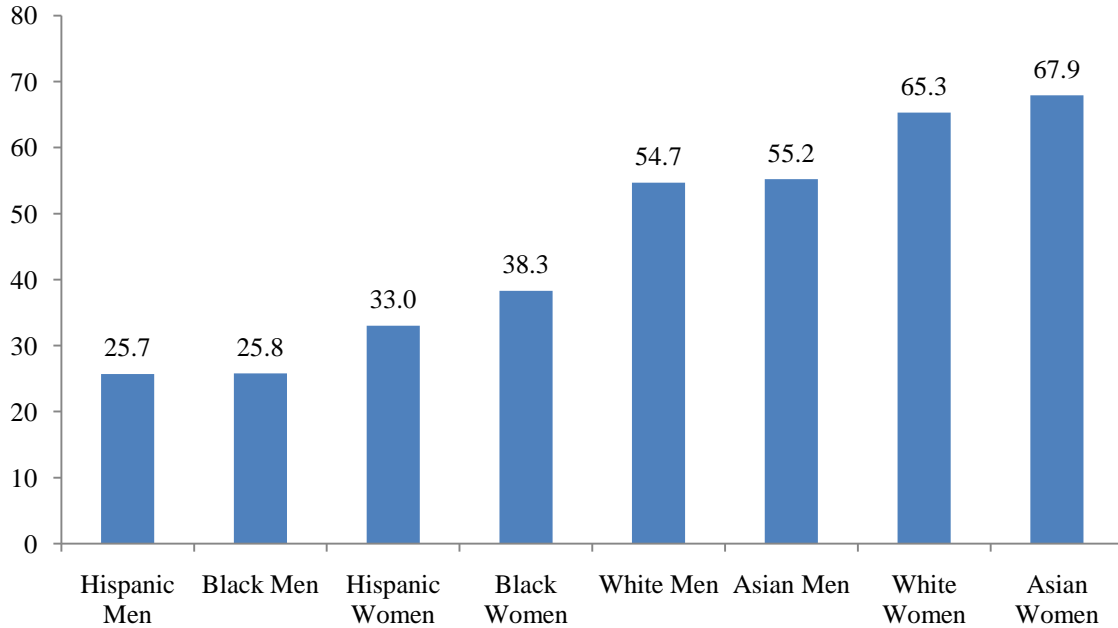
achieved a higher college graduation rate. Slightly over 45% of female college enrollees had obtained a college degree versus only 36% of males (Table 2). Even larger disparities in college degree attainment rates prevailed across the four major race-ethnic groups. They ranged from lows of 30 percent among Hispanic college enrollees and 33 percent among Black college enrollees to highs of nearly 61 percent and 62 percent among White non-Hispanics and Asians. Asian and White college enrollees were twice as likely to graduate from college as Hispanics and Blacks.

Within each of the four race-ethnic groups, females were more likely to graduate than males. Only little more than one-fourth of Hispanic and Black males who entered college earned a degree by fall 2009 versus 33% of Hispanic women and 38% of Black females (Chart 5). Although White (55%) and Asian men (55%) achieved college graduation rates much higher than those of Black and Hispanic graduates, they graduated at lower rates than White and Asian females. College graduation rates of White and Asian women from the Class of 2003 were 65 and 68 percent, respectively.

Table 2:
College Enrollments, College Graduations, and College Graduation Rates by Fall 2009 for High School Graduates from the BPS Class of 2003, All and by Gender and Race/Ethnic Group

	(A)	(B)	(C)
Gender/Race-Ethnic Group	College Enrollees	College Graduates	Graduation Rate (in %)
All	2,140	884	41.3
Gender			
Men	865	309	35.7
Women	1,275	575	45.1
Race-Ethnic Group			
Asian	284	177	62.3
Black	1,036	346	33.4
Hispanic	370	112	30.3
White, not Hispanic	406	246	60.6

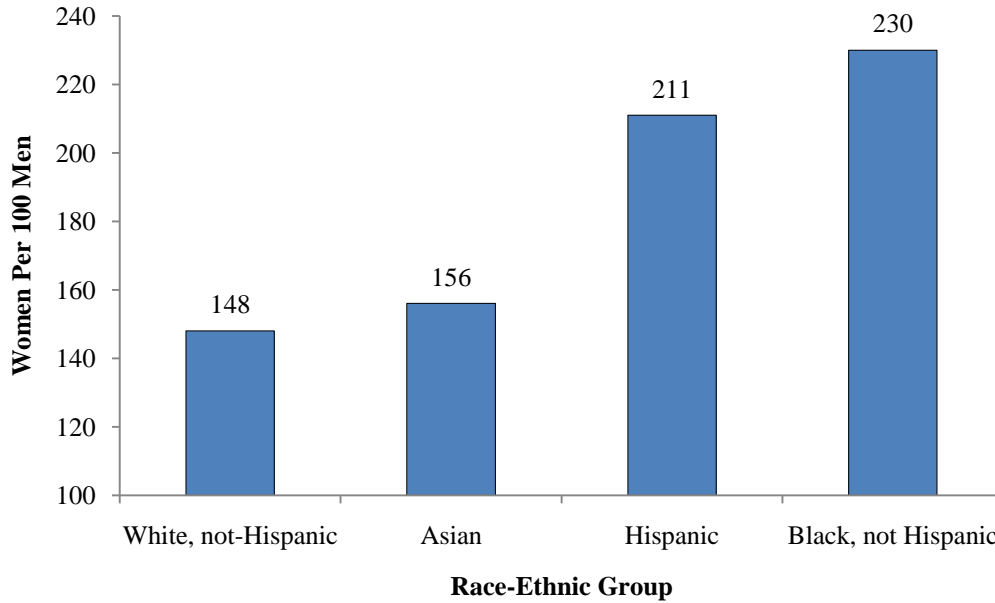
Chart 5:
6-Year College Graduation Rates of BPS Class of 2003 College Enrollees By Gender/ Race-
Ethnic Subgroup (in %)



As a consequence of their higher high school graduation rates, their higher college enrollment rates upon graduation from high school, and their higher incidence of college graduation, the number of female BPS students from the Class of 2003 who held college degrees by the end of 2009 was substantially higher than that of men both overall and in each race-ethnic group (Chart 6). Overall, there were 186 women who obtained a college degree for every 100 men. The ratio of women with college degrees (certificates) per 100 men ranged from 148 among White, non-Hispanics and 156 among Asians to highs of 211 among Hispanics and 230 among Blacks. Similarly large gender differences in college degree attainment have prevailed across these same race-ethnic groups in the state in recent years.¹¹

¹¹ See: Andrew Sum, Ishwar Khatiwada, and Joseph McLaughlin, “Gender Gaps: The Gap in College Degree Attainment Between New England Men and Women Are Rising,” Communities and Banking, Vol. 18, No. 2, Federal Reserve Bank, Boston 2007, pp. 3-6.

Chart 6:
Number of Female College Graduates Per 100 Male College
Graduates from the BPS Class of 2003 by Major Race-Ethnic Group
 (Findings as of the End of 2009)



College Degree Attainment Rates of Class of 2003 Graduates From the BPS Exam Schools and All Other BPS High Schools Differ Substantially

Earlier research on the college graduation experiences of BPS graduates from the Class of 2000 revealed very large differences seven years after graduation in college degree attainment rates between the graduates of the city’s three exam schools (Boston Latin, Latin Academy, and O’Bryant Technical High School) and all other high schools combined.¹² Similar outcomes prevailed among Class of 2003 college attendees. Findings on college graduation outcomes through the fall of 2009 revealed a college graduation rate of 69% for those exam school graduates who enrolled in college (of whom 90% did so) versus only 28% for all other graduates from the Class of 2003 (Table 3). Among those who enrolled in four year colleges, the college graduation rate among exam school graduates 6.5 years after graduation was 74% versus 43% for the non-exam schools. The college graduation rate was extremely low (11%) for those non-exam school graduates who went on to enroll in two year colleges. Achieving the college graduation goals established by Mayor Menino will require a substantial improvement in the

¹² See: Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, Getting to the Finish Line...

college enrollment and college persistence rates of the graduates of the city’s non-exam high schools over coming years.

Table 3:
College Graduation Rates Six and One Half Years Following Graduation of BPS Graduates from the Class of 2003 by Type of High School Attended and Type of Initial College (in %)

	(A)	(B)	(C)
Type of College	Exam School Graduates	All Other High Schools	Exam Minus All Other Schools
All	69.3	27.7	+41.6
Two Year College	33.7	10.8	+22.9
Four Year College	74.3	42.8	+31.5

Improving College Persistence Rates At Both 2-Year and 4-Year Colleges and Universities

As part of the longitudinal tracking project, a paper on the college persistence rates of BPS graduates from the Classes of 2001-2008 was prepared this summer by the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University. The college persistence rate provides an interim benchmark to know if more recent college enrollees from BPS graduating classes are on the path toward college graduation. There are two primary measures of college persistence used in this paper. The year one persistence rate is the share of college enrollees in the fall immediately following high school graduation that enrolled again in college in the following fall. The second measure of persistence tracked in this study is a two-year persistence rate. It measures the share of college enrollees who enrolled in the fall immediately following high school graduation and were enrolled in the fall semester two years later.

Findings on the one year and two year college persistence rates of BPS graduates from the classes of 2001, 2003, 2007, and 2008 are displayed in Table 4 and Charts 7 and 8. For all college students combined (two year and four year colleges), the one year persistence rates grew steadily over the 2001-2008 period from 78.1% in 2001 to 81.8% in 2008, a gain of nearly four percentage points over this 7 year time period (Table 4, Column A). All of the gain in one year persistence rates was attributable to the performance of those students attending two year colleges (Chart 7). Their one year persistence rate increased from 55% for BPS graduates from the class of 2001 to 67% for those graduates from the class of 2008, an increase of 12 percentage points while the one year persistence rate of those attending four year colleges and universities

held constant at about 87% over the entire period. The improvement in one year persistence rates of community college students is a very welcome development since the college graduation rates of class of 2000 and 2001 BPS graduates from those post-secondary educational institutions were quite low.

The two year persistence rates of college students rose between 2001 and 2007 for all students and for those in 2 and 4 year colleges (see bottom half of Table 4 and Chart 8). The two year persistence rate for all college students increased from 65.8% in 2001 to nearly 76.4% for BPS graduates from the class of 2007. Marked improvements in two year retention rates took place for those attending community colleges/two year private colleges with a substantial gain occurring with the class of 2003, the first graduating class that had to pass the state MCAS exam in order to graduate with a regular diploma. The two year retention rate for 2 year college students rose from just under 38% for the class of 2001 to 48% for the class of 2007, a 10 percentage point increase.¹³ Four year college students also improved their two year persistence rates from 76.2% in 2001 to nearly 83.2% for BPS graduates from the Class of 2007.

Table 4:

One and Two Year College Persistence Rates for BPS Graduates from the Graduating Classes of 2001, 2003, 2007, and 2008, All and by Type of College Attended (in %)

One Year Persistence Rate			
Graduating Class	All Colleges	Two Year Colleges	Four Year Colleges
2001	78.1	55.4	86.5
2003	81.6	61.0	87.5
2007	81.1	61.3	87.0
2008	81.8	67.3	86.5
Change, 2001-2008	+3.7	+11.9	0
Two Year Persistence Rate			
Graduating Class	All Colleges	Two Year Colleges	Four Year Colleges
2001	65.8	37.6	76.2
2003	73.1	47.9	80.4
2007	76.4	53.5	83.2
Change, 2001-2007	+10.6	+15.9	+7.0

¹³ Some community college students will have obtained an Associate degree or certificate within this two year period. A future paper will be devoted to this topic of changing graduation rates for the classes of 2001 to 2004.

Chart 7:
Trends in One Year Persistence Rates of BPS Graduates Attending
Two Year Colleges, Classes of 2001, 2003, 2007, and 2008 (in %)

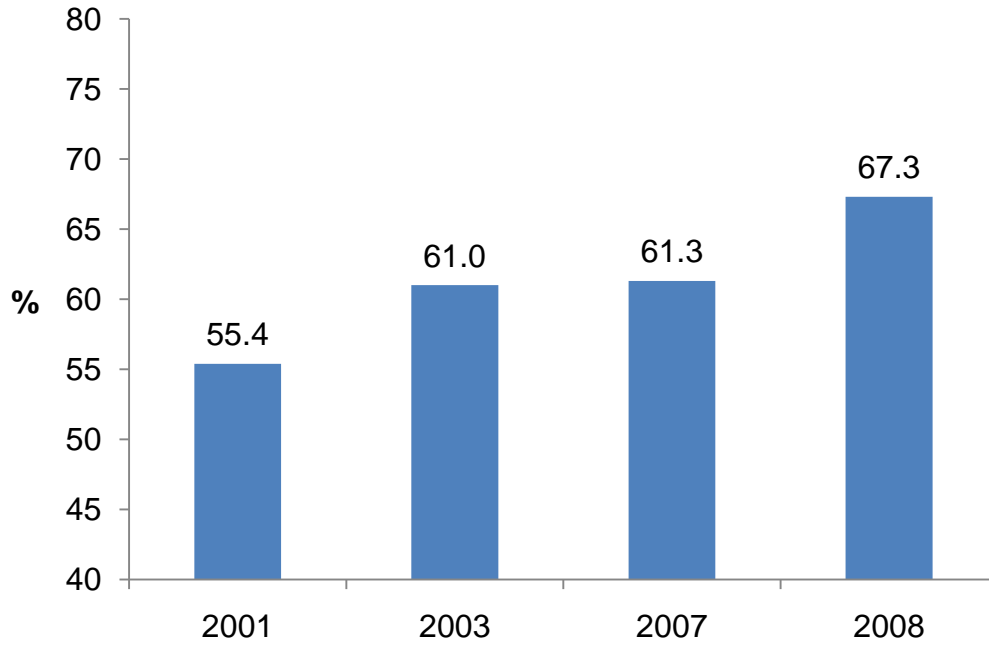
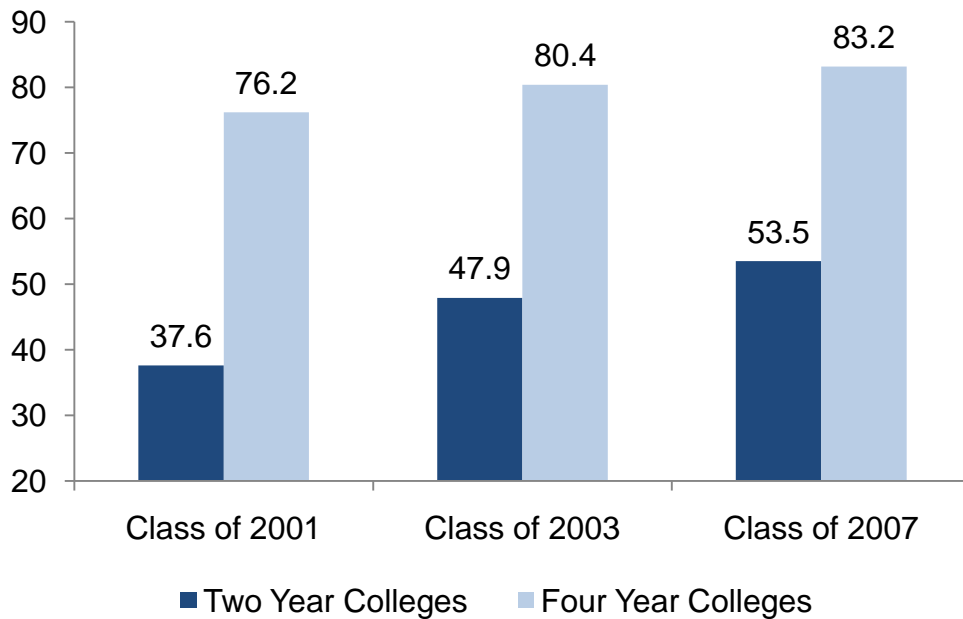


Chart 8:
Trends in Two Year Persistence Rates of BPS Graduates Attending Two and
Four Year Colleges, BPS Graduating Classes of 2001, 2003, and 2007 (in %)



Gains in college retention rates in recent years bode well for raising the ultimate college degree attainment rates of BPS graduates from the Classes of 2007-2008, and, by extension, their lifetime earnings as each completed year of post-secondary schooling has been found to help raise the annual earnings of young adults. Programs such as Success Boston and the Foundation Year program at Northeastern University can play an important supportive role in assisting BPS graduates to complete their first year of college and return for a second year of post-secondary learning, placing them on the path toward degree completion.

***A City Responds:
College Persistence Rates for the Success Boston Cohort
from the Boston Public Schools Class of 2009***

In response to the 2008 report, Getting to the Finish Line, Mayor Thomas Menino called upon Superintendent Carol Johnson, UMass Boston Chancellor Keith Motley, Boston Foundation President Paul Grogan to co-chair a task force to develop a strategy to double the college graduation rate. Working with civic leaders including Dr. Gary Gottlieb, President and CEO of Partners HealthCare and Chair of the Boston Private Industry Council, they created Success Boston, a college completion initiative aimed at doubling the college graduation rate for Boston Public School graduates from the Class of 2011 and beyond. The initiative was based on a three-part strategy: getting ready, getting in, and getting through. The premise was that, in order to increase college graduation rates for BPS graduates, students need to improve their college readiness, both academic and nonacademic, and students needed support transitioning into college, particularly in the first two years, and students needed to be able to access on-campus supports to help them attain their postsecondary credential. In convening a task force, the Mayor indicated that the school district, the nonprofit community, and the institutions of higher education all were responsible for meeting the goal and working together to implement the necessary interventions.

While the initiative aims to strengthen the college access and success pipeline in Boston through the creation of a comprehensive and integrated support system, an immediate response was necessary to address the needs of the BPS graduates from the Class of 2009, the first class

targeted under the initiative, and to identify effective practices for promoting greater persistence among those BPS students who are college bound but not college ready. A transitional support model was developed and implemented for the BPS Class of 2009 based on existing college access and retention models with proven results, including the Posse Foundation and Bottom Line, and effective practices from the field. The program model targeted low-income, first generation or minority students, bound for area two and four-year public institutions and a limited number of private commuter campuses, and paired them with “transition coaches” from community organizations to provide them with one-on-one advising and group supports to facilitate successful navigation of the first two years of college. In many cases, the coaches or the organizations had a pre-existing relationship with the students. By targeting the most vulnerable and least prepared students bound for campuses where supports were limited or harder to access, the program model aimed to reverse the odds and accelerate progress towards the Mayor’s goal.

The following section describes the demographic makeup of the Success Boston cohort of 2009 and their first year persistence rates and compares them with the rates for the BPS Class of 2008 (see Table 5). In the absence of persistence data on the BPS Class of 2009, the BPS Class of 2008 offers the closest comparison group for examining the reenrollment results among participants in the 2009 cohort. While the full Class of 2009 cohort was comprised of 282 BPS graduates, for the sake of comparison with the Class of 2008 persistence rates, the results below reflect only the 250 students who enrolled in college in the fall semester immediately following high school graduation.

Table 5:
Demographic Characteristics and High Schools/ Colleges Attended By Success Boston Cohort Members from the BPS Class of 2009 Compared with College Enrolled High School Graduates from the BPS Class of 2008, All and by Gender, Race/Ethnic Group

	Success Boston Cohort Class of 2009 Fall Enrollees		BPS Class of 2008 Fall Enrollees	
All	250	100.0%	2412	100%
Gender				
Females	156	62.4%	1,397	57.9%
Males	94	37.6%	1,015	42.1%
Race-Ethnic Group				
Asians	21	8.0%	308	12.8%
Black	72	29.0%	1,012	42.0%
Hispanic	105	42.0%	632	26.2%
White, not Hispanic	10	4.0%	444	18.4%
Other	42	17.0%	16	0.6%
By High School Type				
Exam School	42	17.0%	700	29.0%
All Other Schools	208	83.0%	1,712	71.0%
By College Type				
Two Year College Attendees	105	42.0%	795	33.0%
Four Year College Attendees	145	58.0%	1,617	67.0%

Success Boston Cohort and BPS Class of 2008 Comparisons

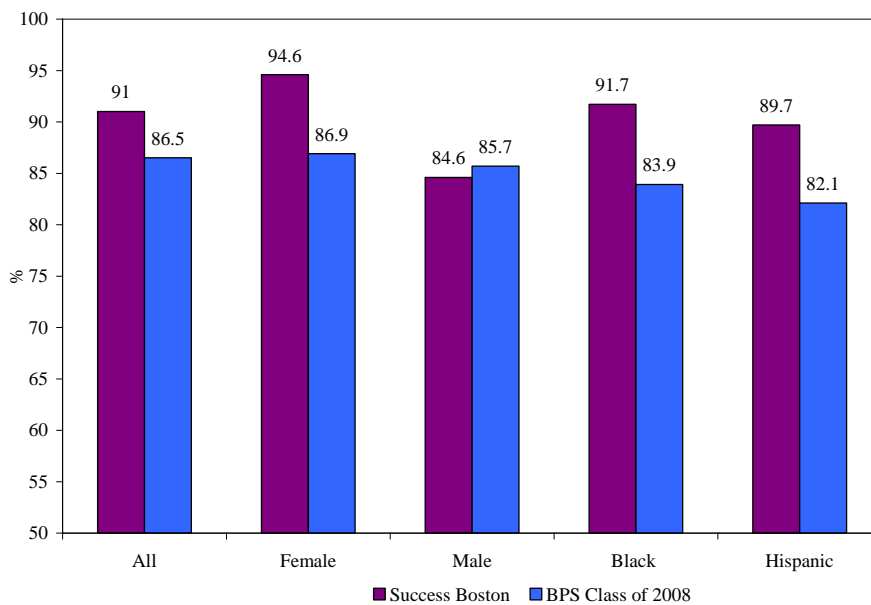
Compared to their Class of 2008 BPS peers who enrolled in college, the Success Boston cohort includes a slightly higher share of females than males. (The Success Boston cohort is 62.4% female and 37.6% male as compared to 57.9% and 42.1%, respectively, for college enrollees from the Class of 2008.) The Success Boston cohort has a disproportionately high number of Hispanic students (42% compared to 26%,) and a lower share of black students (29% versus 42%.) When combining the Asian, Black, Hispanic and multi-racial students, classified as “Other”, students of color represent a greater share of the Success Boston cohort, at 96% versus 81.6%, than their peers in the Class of 2008, (96% vs. 82%).

Consistent with the campus destinations targeted in the initiative, there is a greater proportion of cohort students attending two year colleges compared with their Class of 2008 peers, 42% compared to 33%. While it is likely that the makeup of students headed to two year colleges from the Success Boston cohort and the BPS Class of 2008 is similar in terms of academic readiness, it is notable that the cohort members attending four year colleges were limited to less selective public institutions and a limited number of private commuter campuses compared with their Class of 2008 peers who attended four year colleges ranging in selectivity, residential status and accessibility of supports.

Comparisons of One Year College Persistence Rates between the Success Boston Class of 2009 Cohort and the BPS Class of 2008

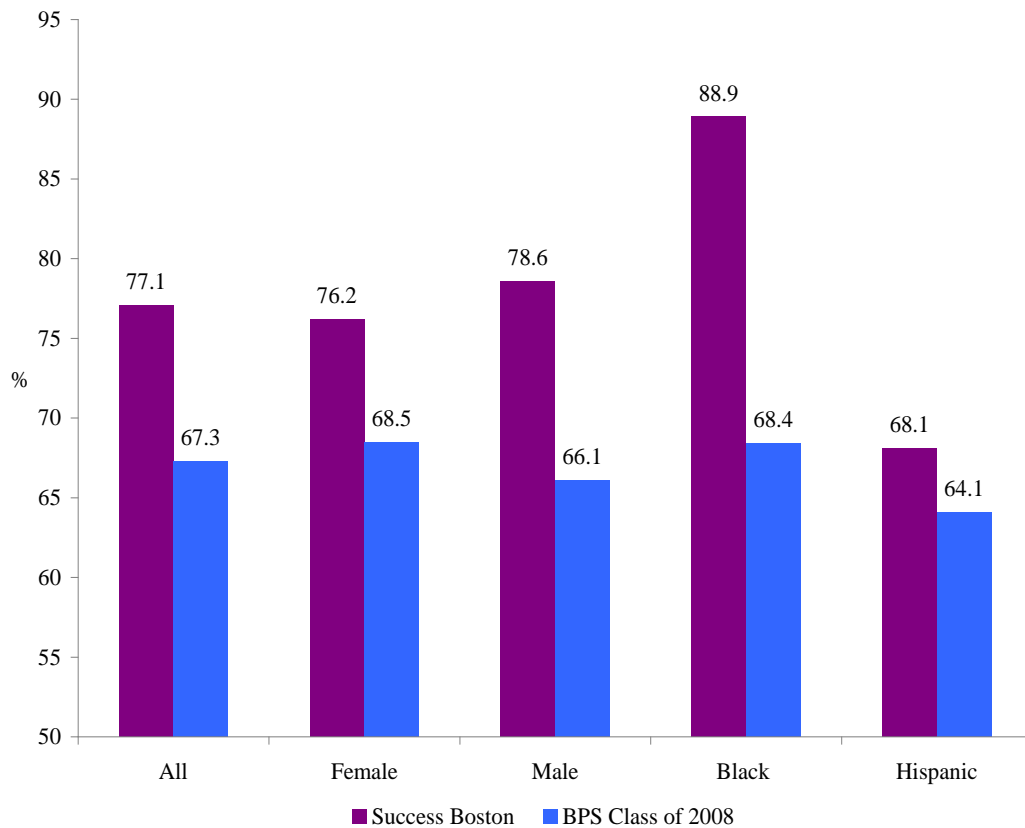
In comparing the one year persistence rates of the Success Boston Class of 2009 cohort and their BPS Class of 2008 peers overall, we find a difference of 3.5 percentage points in favor of the Success Boston cohort, with reenrollment rates of 85.2% and 81.8% respectively. While this difference appears modest, it is important to note that the Success Boston cohort is serving a more at risk group of youth. Among four year college attendees in the Success Boston cohort, there was a 91% reenrollment rate compared to an 86.5% reenrollment rate for the BPS Class of 2008 (see Chart 9.).

Chart 9:
One-Year College Persistence Rates of the 2009 Cohort of Success Boston Students Attending Four-Year Colleges Versus That of BPS Class of 2008 Four Year College Attendees



The most dramatic gains in one year persistence rates can be found among two year college attendees. While the BPS Class of 2008 students attending two year colleges achieved a 67.3% one year persistence rate, two year college attendees from the Success Boston Class of 2009 showed a 77.1% reenrollment rate, a difference of nearly 10 percentage points, a full 14.6% higher than their Class of 2008 peers (see Chart 10.)

Chart 10:
One-Year College Persistence Rates of the 2009 Cohort of Success Boston Students Attending Two-Year Colleges Versus That of BPS Class of 2008 Two Year College Attendees



The disaggregated results for the Success Boston cohort are also notable. Among two year attendees, both males and females show considerable gains in persistence, of 12.5 and 7.7 percentage points respectively, when compared with their Class of 2008 peers. This is particularly significant given the growing trend of lagging college completion outcomes for male

students, both locally and nationally, compared to their female peers. In other words, the initiative is showing early success in closing the gender gap for college completion rates.

Comparisons by gender and race/ethnicity groups reveal dramatic gains among black female and black male cohort attendees of two year colleges. They experienced gains of 17.6 and 23.2 percentage points, respectively, above their BPS Class of 2008 peers. Overall, black cohort members had a reenrollment rate of 88.9%, a full 20.5 percentage points, or 30%, higher than their Class of 2008 peers. Among Hispanic students in the cohort attending two year colleges, the gains in persistence over their BPS Class of 2008 peers were more modest overall, 68.8% compared to 63.7% among females and 66.7% compared to 64.5% among males. The greatest difference found among Hispanic students was among male four year college attendees, who showed a 90.9% reenrollment rate compared to a 71.8% rate among their Class of 2008 peers.

On the whole, the gains in persistence among the initial cohort of Success Boston cohort members, particularly those attending two year colleges, are very promising and suggest that the program intervention is contributing to greater persistence across the cohort. Initiative partners recognize that in order to meet the Mayor's ambitious goal of doubling the graduation rate partners will need to build on these initial successes by continuing to integrate and institutionalize the Success Boston program model across the city. As it was carefully analyzed data that first catalyzed this city-wide response, data will continue to serve as the driver for the initiative, ensuring ongoing fidelity and progress towards achieving the promise of Success Boston.

Final Remarks

The Success Boston college completion initiative was designed to help find strategies to achieve a set of very ambitious college graduation goals for Boston public high school students in the years ahead. We believe that the goal of increasing college graduation as opposed to college access is the right one both economically and morally for the city to pursue. Increased college graduations can help raise the employment and earnings of young adults in the city over their working life, strengthen family formation and marriage, reduce future poverty and other income inadequacy problems, increase home ownership, improve living conditions for future children, and increase the fiscal well being of the local, state, and national government.

This set of research papers has outlined, discussed, and analyzed several issues that need to be carefully considered by the members of the Success Boston Task Force as they move forward, including the choice of appropriate college graduation definitions and measures, the establishment of specific numerical targets to represent the attainment of these goals, and the need to identify specific sub-goals for different types of colleges/universities, for BPS graduates from different high schools, and for different gender/race-ethnic groups of BPS high school graduates. There will be major challenges to securing these ambitious college graduation goals, but the target is right. As the former President of Morehouse College, Benjamin Mays, once remarked: “It is not a disgrace not to reach the stars, but it is a disgrace to have no stars to reach for. Not failure, but low aim, is a sin.”¹⁴

¹⁴ See: Marian Wright Edelman, Families in Peril: An Agenda for Social Change, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1987.