

NATIONAL LATINO RESEARCH CENTER



PROGRESS REPORT: Ethnic Disparities in Higher Education in North County San Diego

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This progress report is a first attempt at compiling the available data about ethnic disparities in higher education in the North County region of San Diego County. This report draws on data from high schools, community colleges, and universities to describe the current state of this problem.

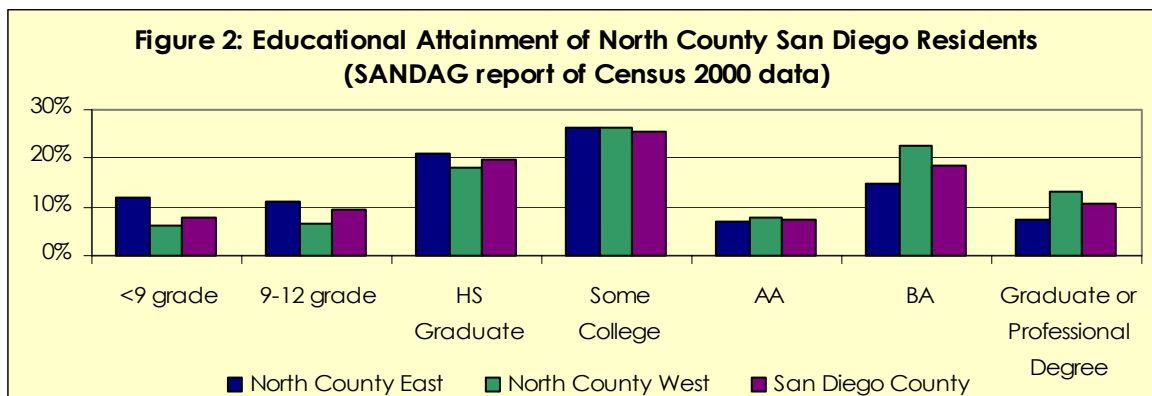
Overview of San Diego County and North County San Diego

San Diego County is the third largest county in California and sixth largest in the U.S. with a 2004 estimated population of over 3 million residents.¹ Roughly 27% (810,878) of the County's residents live in the northern part of the region (defined as North County East and North County West Major Statistical Areas, see Figure 1).²

Figure 1: San Diego Region - Major Statistical Areas



More than four out of five of San Diego County's residents over age 25 have completed high school, and 63% have completed at least some college. Among North County residents, the figures are very similar. However, there are some differences in educational attainment among residents of the North County East and North County West areas. Specifically, only 56% of North County East residents have attended college while 70% of North County West residents have. In addition, North County West residents are much more likely to have completed a college degree than are North County East residents, as illustrated in Figure 2.²



Higher Education in San Diego County

San Diego County is served by five community college districts, with a total of eight community colleges, as well as three public universities and numerous private colleges. Figure 3 shows the location of the County's five community college districts.

Figure 3: San Diego County Community College Districts



Table 1 lists all of the County's public colleges and universities, along with each institution's enrollment. This report focuses on the two North County community colleges (MiraCosta and Palomar Colleges) and one public university (California State University San Marcos or CSUSM).

As Table 1 shows, enrollment in North County's three institutions of higher education account for roughly 25% of the County's college enrollment. North County colleges enroll more Latinos than the County's colleges as a whole, with 24% of college students being Latino.

Table 1: Total and Latino Enrollment at San Diego County Colleges & Universities^{3,4,5,6,7}

	Total Headcount	Latino Headcount	% Latino
Community Colleges (Fall 2003 headcount data)			
Cuyamaca College ³	10823	1567	14.5%
Grossmont College ³	18115	2928	16.2%
MiraCosta College³	13351	3274	24.5%
Palomar College^{4,5}	29635	7347	24.8%
San Diego City College ³	15460	4333	28.0%
San Diego Mesa College ³	22778	3515	15.4%
San Diego Miramar College ³	9569	1178	12.3%
Southwestern College ³	20145	11416	56.7%
Total community college headcount	139876	35558	25.4%
Four-Year Universities (Fall 2004 headcount data)			
California State University San Marcos⁶	7365	1417	19.2%
San Diego State University ⁶	32936	6774	20.6%
University of California San Diego ^{7*}	23968	2344	9.8%
Total university headcount	64269	10535	16.4%
Total North County San Diego headcount	50351	12038	23.9%
Total San Diego County headcount	204145	46093	22.6%
North County colleges are highlighted in bold text.			
* Total and Latino headcounts calculated by adding undergraduate and graduate headcounts for each category.			

Higher Education Data for North County San Diego

This report will focus on higher education issues among North County San Diego's Latinos, with data drawn from numerous sources.

First, the report will highlight college preparation among Latinos in North County's public high schools. All California high schools are required to report annually on the college preparatory coursework completed by their students. The data tracked includes information about the courses required for admission to CSU or UC campuses (but not information on standardized test scores or other college admissions criteria). The California Department of Education maintains public databases of this course information by school, school district, and county.

The California Community Colleges provide annual census data to track enrollment trends, including trends among ethnic groups. In addition, data are available about the retention (students who enroll and complete a course) and success (students who enroll, complete, and pass a course) of students enrolled in community college courses.

The CSU campuses also track data about student enrollment and progress. This report will include information from California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) on ethnic disparities in several areas: enrollment (at various student levels), freshman proficiency in math and English, and retention of freshmen and transfers.

Public Higher Education in California^{8,9,10}

The California Master Plan for Higher Education, adopted in 1960, established an organizational hierarchy for the public higher education systems in California. These systems include the California Community Colleges, the California State University (CSU) system, and the University of California (UC) system.

The California Community Colleges are publicly supported and locally focused institutions of higher education that offer programs for transfer to four-year colleges, career education, remedial education, and continuing education. These 109 colleges offer certificate and associate's degree programs to their students. In addition, many community colleges offer adult basic education classes to meet high school graduation requirements. California Community Colleges are organized into community college districts, with each district containing one or more colleges. A primary function of the California Community Colleges is to provide access to all of the states' high school graduates, including those who may eventually transfer to four-year colleges.

The CSU system, with 23 campuses, is composed primarily of comprehensive universities offering Bachelor's and Master's degree programs as well as professional training for teachers, nurses, social workers, and engineers. In addition, CSU campuses offer a limited number of joint doctoral degree programs in collaboration with University of California campuses and private higher education institutions. The CSU system awards over half of the bachelor's degrees and more than a third of the master's degrees awarded in California.

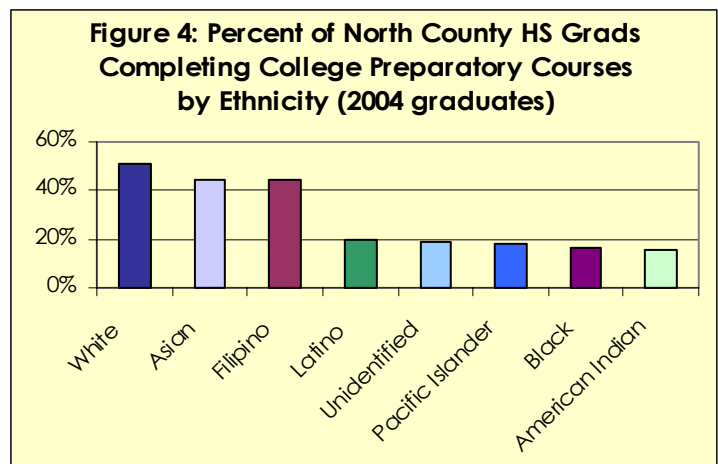
The UC system, with 10 campuses as of Fall 2005, is the State of California's doctoral-granting system. These universities focus on undergraduate and graduate teaching, world-class research, and public service. The UC campuses also have jurisdiction over granting all law, medical, veterinary, and dentistry degrees.

College Preparation among North County High School Students¹¹

Both UC and CSU have specific course requirements that high school students must complete to be eligible for admissions as first-time freshmen. Although these college preparatory courses are not the only admissions criteria used by UC and CSU campuses, they are one of the minimum requirements. Also, because all California high schools track and report annual data on student completion of these courses, these data provide a useful indicator of college preparation among high school students.

Overall, 37% of San Diego County's high school graduates and 39% of North County's high school graduates have completed all required courses for admissions to UC or CSU. However, countywide and in North County especially, substantial ethnic disparities exist in the completion of the college preparatory curriculum.

Among North County's high school graduates, White (51%), Asian (45%), and Filipino (44%) students complete the required college preparatory courses at high rates. In sharp contrast, less than one-fifth of high school graduates from other ethnic groups complete the required courses. Among Latinos, for example, only 19% of high school graduates have completed the UC/CSU required courses (Figure 4).



Minority completion rates of UC/CSU required coursework are substantially lower in North County than they are in San Diego County and the State of California as a whole. As Table 2 illustrates, completion rates are considerably lower for *all* non-White ethnic groups in North County when compared to San Diego County. In comparison to statewide completion rates, North County rates are again lower for all non-White ethnic groups, but the difference is not as large for some groups (e.g., Filipinos).

Table 2: Percent of Graduates by Ethnicity Completing Required UC/CSU Coursework¹¹

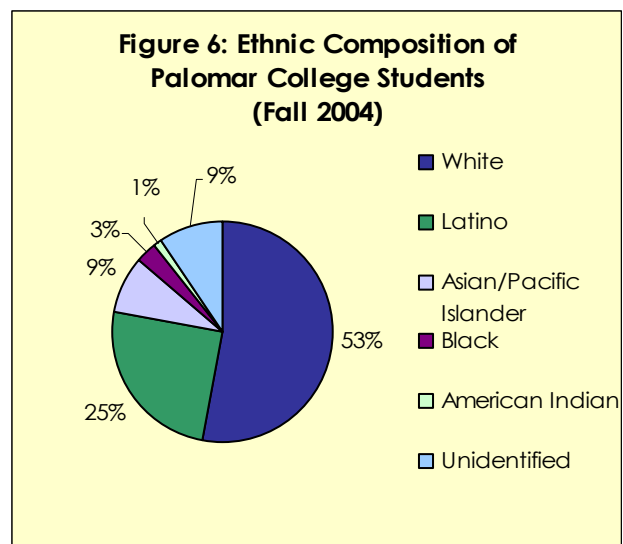
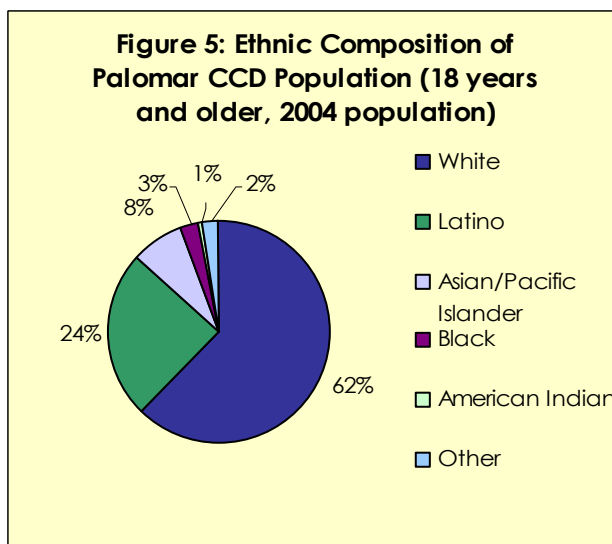
Ethnicity	Percent of Graduates Completing Required UC/CSU Coursework		
	North County	San Diego County	California
Asian	44.6	53.6	56.2
Filipino	44.2	51.3	44.8
White	51.3	45.7	39.5
Pacific Islander	17.8	28.0	27.2
Multiple/No Response	19.0	27.5	26.9
Black	16.4	25.6	25.1
Hispanic	19.4	22.9	21.7
American Indian	15.3	20.9	22.3
Total	38.5	37.4	33.7

Community Colleges

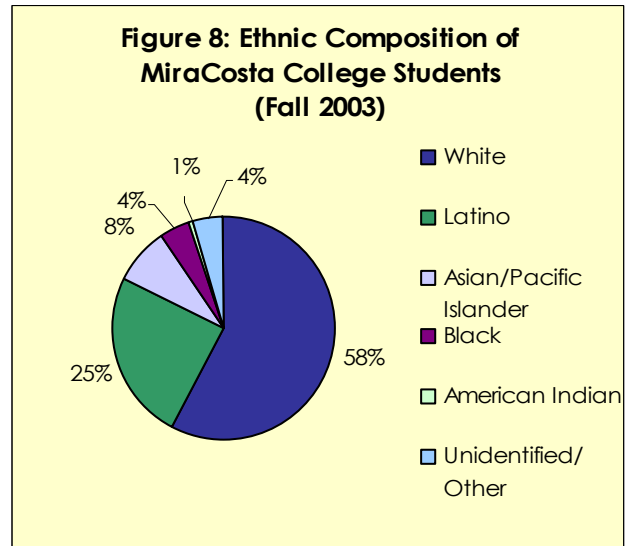
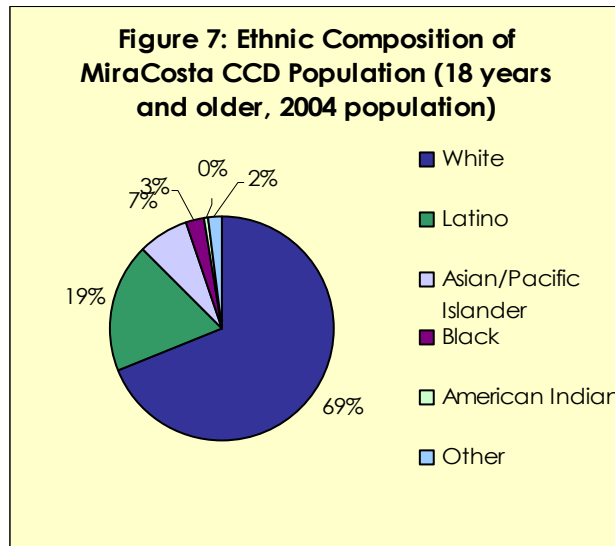
San Diego County is home to 8 community colleges in 5 community college districts (CCDs). North County is home to two of these colleges, MiraCosta and Palomar, each in its own district. Palomar College has a substantially larger student body than MiraCosta College, with 69% of the total North County community college enrollment.^{3,4,5}

Ethnic Composition of North County Community College Districts and Service Areas

Palomar CCD serves a sizeable area of northern San Diego County with a 2004 population of 521,682 (see Figure 3). Approximately 38% of the service area of Palomar College is comprised of ethnic minorities, including a Latino population of 24% (see Figure 5).¹² Enrollment by ethnic minorities at Palomar College exceeds the minority population in the service area (Figure 6).^{4,5} MiraCosta CCD serves a narrow stretch of coastal San Diego County from Camp Pendleton on the north to Solana Beach on the south with a 2004 population of 272,006 (see Figure 3).



Roughly 31% of MiraCosta College's service area is comprised of ethnic minorities, including a Latino population of 19% (Figure 7).¹³ Enrollment by ethnic minorities at MiraCosta far exceeds the minority population of the service area, especially for Latinos (Figure 8).³

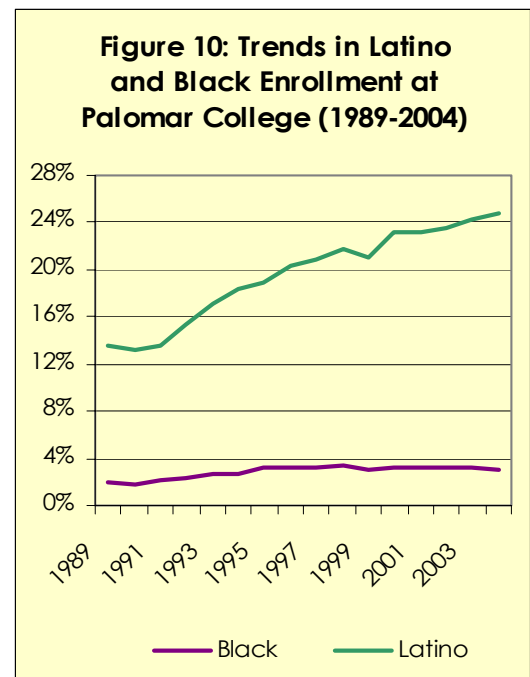
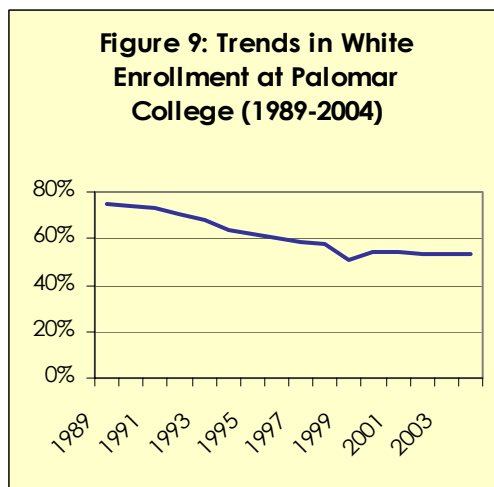


Trends in Minority Enrollments at North County Community Colleges

Because community colleges play a crucial role in providing minority access to higher education, it is important to note how minority enrollment at these colleges has changed.

Over the last 16 years (1989-2004), Palomar College has experienced substantial changes in the ethnic makeup of its student body. Most notably, enrollment of Latino and Black students has risen, while enrollment of White students has declined. Figures 9 and 10 show the percent of total enrollment comprised of each of these groups.^{4,5}

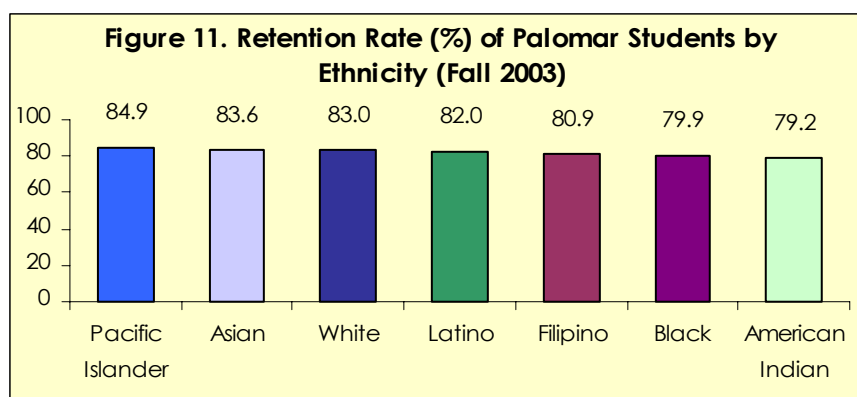
Fewer years of enrollment data are available from MiraCosta College, covering only six years from 1998-2003. At least over the course of this shorter time period, the ethnic composition of MiraCosta's student enrollment has remained stable.³



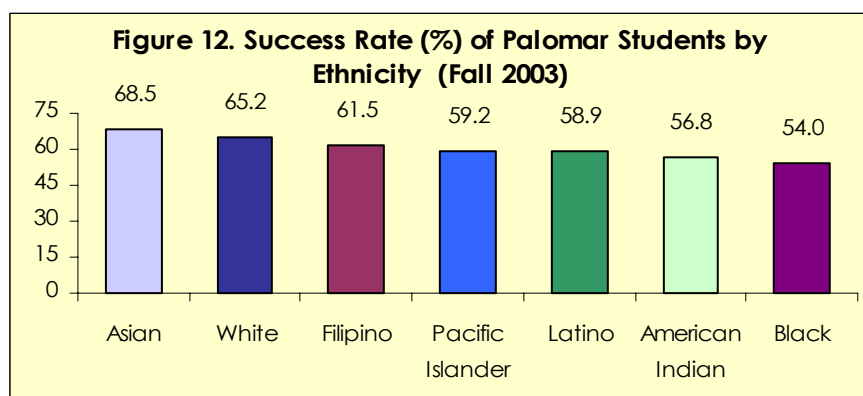
Minority Retention and Success in North County Community College Courses⁴

Community colleges assess and report the performance of their students in coursework as rates of *retention* and *success*. A retention rate refers to the percentage of students who enroll for a particular semester and complete that semester with a valid grade (regardless of whether the grade is passing or failing). A success rate refers to the percentage of students who enroll for a semester and complete the semester with a successful (i.e., passing) grade. When retention and success rates at North County community colleges are examined by ethnicity, performance disparities are evident.

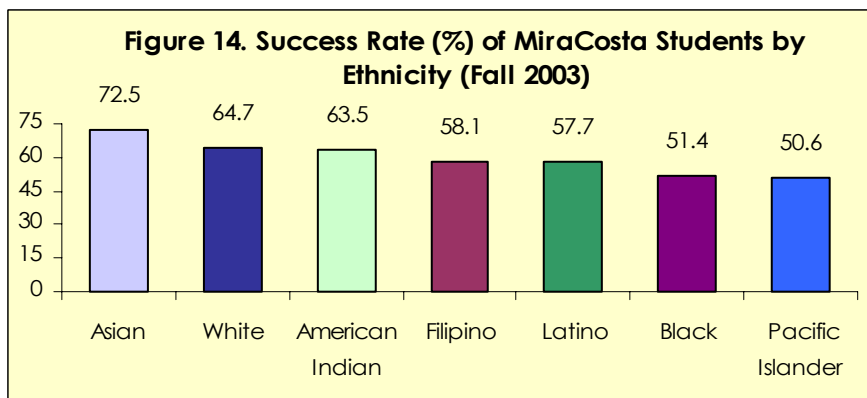
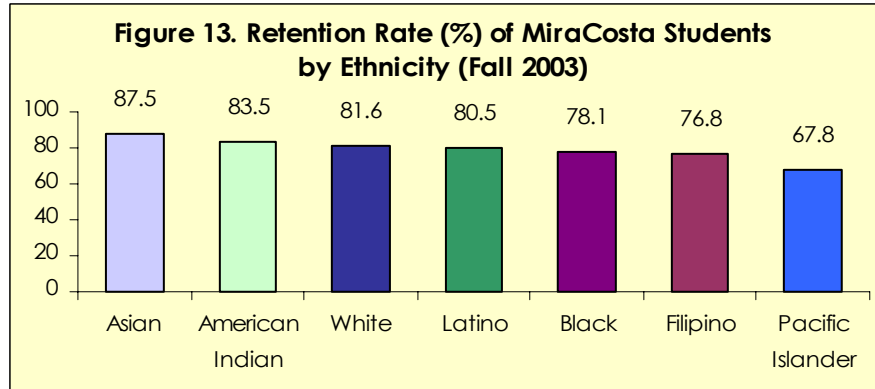
At Palomar College, retention of students in a course varies by ethnicity. Specifically, Pacific Islander (85%) and Asian (84%) students have the highest retention rates, while Black (80%) and American Indian (79%) students have the lowest rates (Figure 11).



Ethnic disparities in success rates are even more apparent. While Asian (68%) and White (65%) students have the highest success rates, American Indian (57%) and Black (54%) students have much lower success rates (Figure 12).



At MiraCosta College, ethnic gaps in retention are wider than at Palomar College, but the pattern is different. At MiraCosta College, Asian students have the highest retention rate (88%), similar to their rate at Palomar College. Pacific Islander students, who have the highest retention rate at Palomar College, have the lowest retention rate (68%) at MiraCosta College (Figure 13).



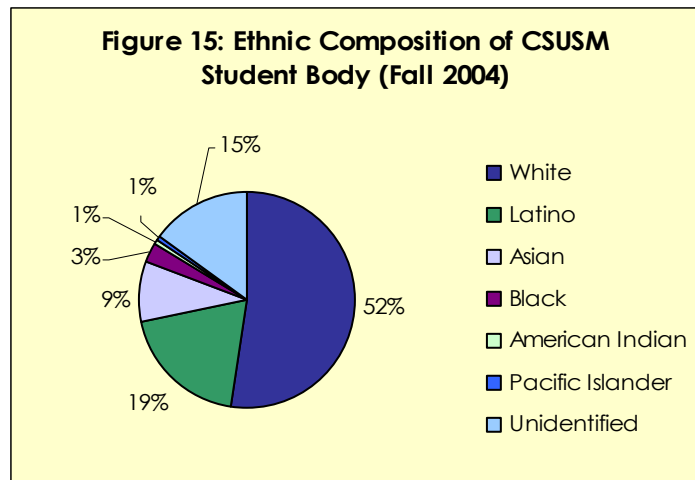
MiraCosta College also has ethnic disparities in student success rates (Figure 14). Similar to MiraCosta’s retention rates, Asian students have the highest success rate (73%) while Pacific Islander students have the lowest success rate (51%).

California State University

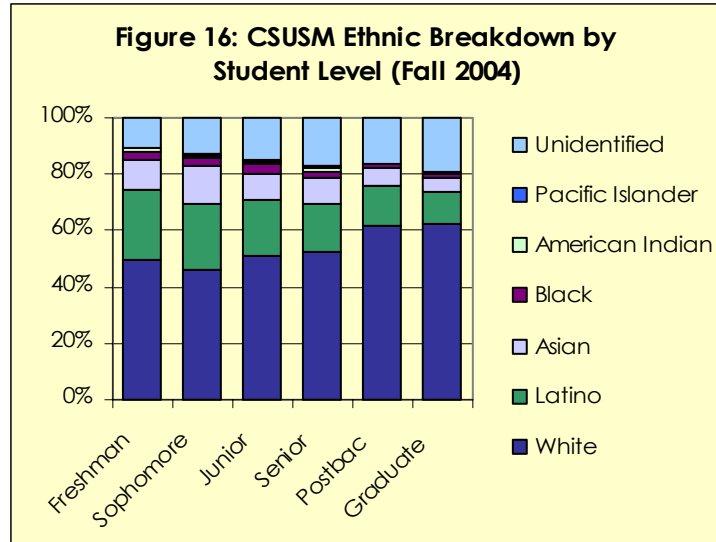
North County is home to one campus of the California State University. California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) is located in North County in the City of San Marcos. CSUSM is the primary four-year university serving North County as well as southwest Riverside County.

Enrollment of Ethnic Minority Students at San Diego County’s CSU Campuses¹⁵

As of Fall 2004, roughly half (52%) of the students (freshman through graduate level) at CSUSM identified themselves as White, while the remaining students were divided among ethnic minority groups (33%) and a substantial group of unidentified students (15%). The largest minority groups on campus were Latino (19%), Asian (9%), and Black (3%) students. Native American and Pacific Islander students each comprised 1% of the student population.

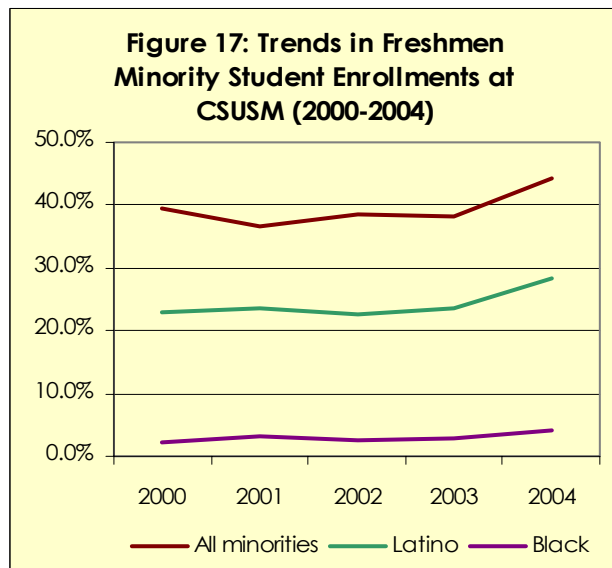


Enrollment data from CSUSM also show how the ethnic composition of the student body varies by student level. Specifically, ethnic minorities make up a larger proportion of the students enrolled at lower (freshman and sophomore) levels in comparison to upper (junior and senior) and postgraduate (postbaccalaureate and graduate) levels. White students comprise fewer than half of the freshman (49%) and sophomore (46%) classes and a small majority of the junior (51%) and senior (52%) classes. The trend is most striking at postgraduate levels, where 62% of students are White.



Trends in Minority Enrollments at CSUSM⁵

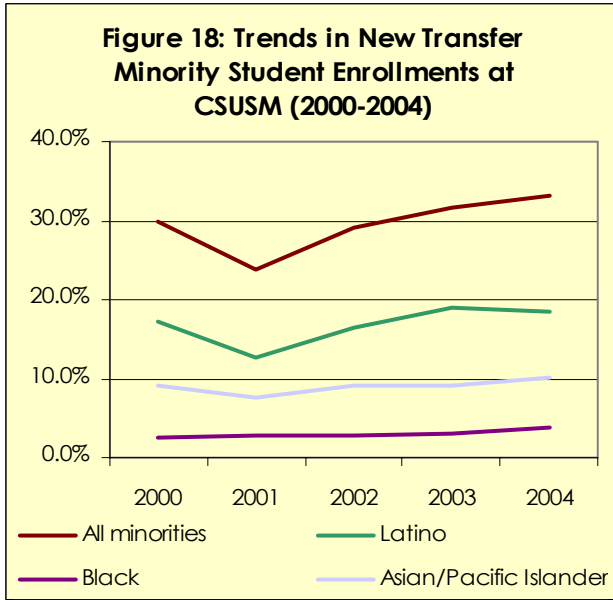
Ethnic minority enrollments at CSUSM have increased in recent years, as have enrollments for specific minority groups.



Among first-time freshmen, the proportion of ethnic minority students entering CSUSM as first-time freshmen has increased from 39.6% in Fall 2000 to 44.2% in Fall 2004 (see Figure 17). This increase reflects specific increases among Latino and Black students among CSUSM’s first-time freshmen. The percentage of first-time freshmen who were Latinos increased over these five years from 22.9% to 28.4% while the percentage of first-time freshmen who were Black students increased from 2.3% to 4.0%.

When considering new transfer student enrollments, a similar trend is apparent. The proportion of ethnic minority students entering CSUSM as new transfer students increased from 29.8% in Fall 2000 to 33.2% in Fall 2004. As

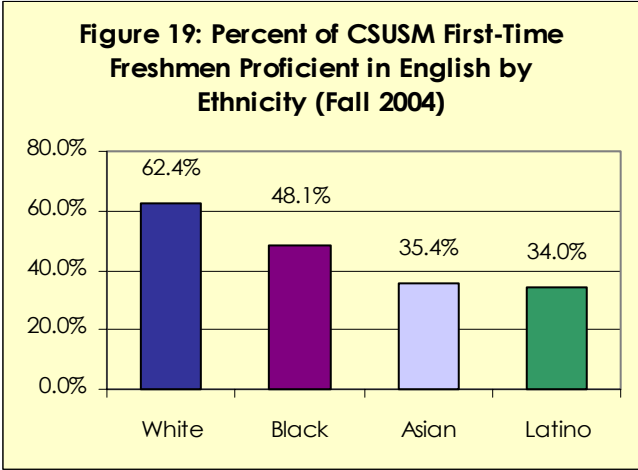
with first-time freshmen, this increase reflects a rise in Latino and Black enrollments, as well as an increase in Asian and Pacific Islander enrollments. The percentage of new transfer students who were Latino increased from 17.1% to 18.5%, the percentage of new transfers who were Black students increased from 2.6% to 3.7%, and the percentage of new transfers who were Asian or Pacific Islander increased from 9.0% to 10.1%.



Trends in minority enrollments are less clear-cut when all undergraduate students are considered; however, the overall trend has paralleled that of new freshmen and transfer students. The proportion of minority students to all undergraduate students has increased modestly from 32.1% in Fall 2000 to 34.7% in Fall 2004. As with new student enrollments, total undergraduate enrollments of Latino students has increased over this five-year period from 18.6% to 20.5% of all undergraduate students. Unlike the trend among new students, however, total undergraduate enrollments of Black students has remained steady around 3.0% over the five years.

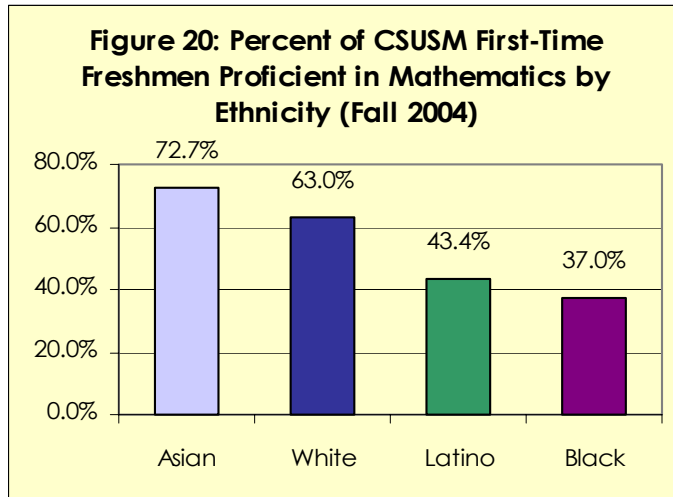
Freshmen Proficiency at CSUSM⁶

Freshmen proficiency in English and mathematics is assessed on all CSU campuses for incoming freshmen. Based on performance on standardized tests, proficiency in each subject is required before a student is allowed to enroll in college-level courses in that subject. Data on freshmen proficiency are reported by ethnicity, providing useful information about ethnic disparities in the readiness of incoming freshmen for college-level coursework. Note that some ethnic minority groups are represented by very low numbers of first-time freshmen at CSUSM; therefore, this analysis of disparities is limited to the largest ethnic groups on campus. In addition, the analysis excludes non-resident aliens and students who did not identify ethnicity.



Among the major ethnic groups at CSUSM, there are marked differences in English proficiency (for students entering in Fall 2004, Figure 19). Many more White students (62.4%) were proficient in English than students of any other ethnic group. An intermediate proportion of Black students (48.1%) were English proficient. Both Asian (35.4%) and Latino (34.0%) students lag far behind White students in the proportion of first-time freshmen with English proficiency.

There are also marked disparities in mathematics proficiency among CSUSM's first-time freshmen of the major ethnic groups; however, the pattern of disparities is very different. Asian students



(72.7%) are most likely to be math proficient, followed by White students (63.0%). Far fewer Latino (43.4%) and Black (37.0%) first-time freshmen are math proficient. Note that the proportion of White students proficient in mathematics is almost identical to the proportion of White students that are proficient in English. The divergent patterns of English and mathematics proficiency are due entirely to differences in proficiency among ethnic minority students (Figure 20).

Summary

Disparities in education in higher education in the North County region of San Diego County are evident in terms of access, retention, and graduation rates of students across geographic and ethnic differences. This progress report highlights the following findings:

- ❖ Residents in North County East and North County West regions of San Diego County attain education at different rates. North County West residents are more likely to have attended college and to have completed college degrees.
- ❖ Roughly 25% of the students enrolled in San Diego County colleges and universities attend Palomar, MiraCosta, and CSUSM.
- ❖ Latinos comprise 24% of college students enrolled at Palomar, MiraCosta, and CSUSM, a slightly higher rate than Latino enrollment at colleges and universities countywide.
- ❖ Enrollment and graduation trends at California community colleges and universities in San Diego County differ across ethnic groups. Overall, 37% of San Diego County's high school graduates and 39% of North County's high school graduates have completed all required courses for admission to UC or CSU.
- ❖ Minority completion rates of UC and CSU required coursework are substantially lower in North County compared to the rest of the county and state. Among Latinos, only 19% of high school graduates completed the UC/CSU courses compared to 51% of Whites, 45% of Asians, and 44% of Filipinos. Blacks (16%) and American Indians (15%) have the lowest completion rates.
- ❖ Enrollment by ethnic minorities at Palomar College and MiraCosta College exceeds the minority population in the service areas. Approximately 38% of the Palomar College service area is comprised of ethnic minorities, including a Latino population of 24%. 53% of Palomar's enrolled students are White, 25% Latino, 9% Asian, and 3% Black. MiraCosta's service area is comprised of roughly 31% ethnic minorities, including a Latino population of 19%. 58% of enrolled students at MiraCosta are White, 25% Latino, 8% Asian, and 4% Black.
- ❖ Enrollment of Latino and Black students has increased at Palomar and MiraCosta colleges while enrollment of Whites has declines during the last decade.
- ❖ Performance disparities in terms of retention and success rates at community colleges are evident. At Palomar College, Pacific Islander (85%) and Asian (84%) students have the highest retention rates, while Blacks (80%) and American Indians (79%) have the lowest rates of retention. Ethnic disparities in success rates are even more apparent at Palomar College. While Asian (68%) and White (65%) students have the highest success rates, American Indian (57%) and Black (54%) students have much lower success rates.
- ❖ At MiraCosta College, ethnic gaps in retention are wider than at Palomar, but the pattern is different. At MiraCosta College, Asian students have the highest retention rate (88%). Pacific Islander students, who have the highest retention rate at Palomar College, have the lowest retention rate at MiraCosta College. Similarly, Asian students have the highest success rate (73%) while Pacific Islander students have the lowest success rate (51%).

- ❖ Roughly half (52%) of the students at CSUSM identified themselves as White. Minority populations include Latino (19%), Asian (9%), Black (3%); American Indian and Pacific Islander students each comprised 1% of the student population.
- ❖ Among the major ethnic groups at CSUSM, there are marked differences in English proficiency. 62.4% of White students were proficient in English compared to 48.1% of Blacks. Both Asian (35.4%) and Latino (34.0%) students lag far behind White students.

Conclusions

Substantial ethnic disparities exist in North County San Diego. Ethnic minority students lag behind their White and Asian counterparts at all levels of education. Latino and Black students, in particular, experience disparities in educational opportunities (e.g. completion of college preparatory curriculums) and outcomes (e.g. graduation rates). If these disparities continue, the negative impact they have on students and society will increase as the school-age Latino population continues to grow.

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