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ABSTRACT

The New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) aims to provide access to higher education for disadvantaged students in order to increase diversity in New Jersey's institutions of higher education. This report is issued in accordance with the EOF Board of Directors' responsibility to inform the Commission on Higher Education, the Governor, and the Legislature about the status and process of the Fund. Key findings and recommendations include: (1) EOF's public mission needs to be broadened to include student success; (2) every institution that received public funds should continue to participate in EOF; (3) EOF's primary focus should continue to be degree seeking students and those in certificate programs; (4) improving student success must be a major long-term goal; (5) greater emphasis must be placed on connecting education with work; (6) accountability must be a core component of the Board's future planning; (7) the Board will annually request funding levels to ensure funding services, maintain partnerships, and preserve affordability; (8) a priority for future funding requests should be targeted to specific initiatives aimed at improving student outcomes; (9) attention needs to be devoted to annual student award levels; and (10) early intervention is essential to student access and success. Appendices contain eight graphs and figures detailing enrollment trends and retention rates. (JL)

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# OPPORTUNITY FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM

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## New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund

Commission on Higher Education  
Fall 1997

20490336

# **OPPORTUNITY FOR A NEW MILLENIUM**

**Adopted by the  
New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund  
Board of Directors**

**October 1997**

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## Executive Summary

The New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) is one of the nation's most comprehensive and successful state-supported efforts to provide access to higher education for disadvantaged students. EOF is a collaborative effort between the EOF Board of Directors, which administers the program, and the state's colleges and universities, which recruit and directly serve the students. Board members, who are appointed by the Governor, set policy, approve all necessary regulations for the program's operation, develop the annual budget request for the statewide program, and support EOF programs at New Jersey public and independent colleges and universities. The EOF Board also oversees a small graduate grant program, as well as the C. Clyde Ferguson Law and the Martin Luther King Physician-Dentist Scholarships.

The program has been successful in providing access and opportunity for students from the state's most distressed municipalities. Moreover, EOF has proven to be a valuable seedbed for educational innovations that have found broad applicability in the larger higher education community. EOF has also been a leader in increasing diversity in New Jersey's institutions of higher education.

The state has experienced major demographic, economic, and social changes since the program's inception. Foremost has been a global economic restructuring that has contributed to a significant decline of the state's manufacturing base and the almost total shift of new employment from the state's urban cores to the suburbs and emerging fringe communities. New Jersey has joined the developing global marketplace fueled by an information technology revolution and the concomitant growth of service industries no longer tied to the urban areas of the state.

In this new environment higher education access and opportunity are even more critical than at the program's inception in 1968. The completion of a higher education is increasingly the dividing line between those individuals, families, and communities that are experiencing the benefits of the new economy and those who are being left behind. EOF assumes a more important public policy role as a bridge to the new economy for those who remain in communities that have not participated in the economic and social transformation of the past decade.

During the 1996/97 academic year, the Board, working in collaboration with key stakeholders, engaged in a planning process to explore how the program should best respond to the state's

changing economic, educational, and social conditions. The dialogue examined the critical issues facing the EOF program and how we can work with the higher education community in the development of a “shared vision” and an expanded mission for the EOF program--under the guiding principles of promoting access, enhancing quality, and maintaining accountability.

The following report is issued in accordance with the Board’s responsibility to inform the Commission on Higher Education, the Governor, and the Legislature about the status and progress of the Fund as well as the key issues and challenges facing EOF, how the Fund contributes to the well-being of the state, and the Board’s long-term vision and priorities.

### **Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations**

Over the past decade, the Fund has been challenged to provide access and successful outcomes for a population of students that is relatively poorer in comparison to the state’s general population, and increasingly isolated from the incredible economic opportunities and changes that have occurred in the rest of the state. Despite these challenges, the Fund continues to provide access and opportunity to students from the state’s most distressed communities and has achieved significant gains in short-term retention.

Key findings and recommendations include:

- The basic premise of the Educational Opportunity Fund’s mission remains sound. EOF’s public mission needs to be clearly articulated and broadened from its traditional emphasis on access to include student success.
- Every institution that receives public funds should continue to participate in EOF.
- EOF’s primary focus should continue to be degree seeking students and those in certificate programs. In addition, more emphasis should be given to improving county college to senior college transfer articulation.
- Improving student success must be a major long-term goal for EOF and participating institutions.

- Greater emphasis must be placed on connecting education with the world of work.
- Accountability must be a core component of the Board's planning for the future.
- The Board will annually request funding levels to ensure the integrity of program services, maintain the Fund's fiscal partnership with the institutions, and preserve college affordability.
- A priority for future funding requests and allocations should be targeted to specific initiatives aimed at improving EOF student transfer, graduation, and preparation for majors in which EOF students are underrepresented, as well as recognition of institutional commitment and success and student performance.
- Serious attention needs to be devoted to the annual student award levels. Affordability is eroding in light of rapidly increasing costs of attendance, which are outpacing student assistance funding.
- Early intervention, including greater articulation and collaboration with the K-12 community and pre-college programs, is an essential component to improving student access and success.
- As part of future funding contracts with the EOF Board, each participating institution will develop and reach agreement with the Board on the mission, broad long-term (3 -5 year) goals and desired outcomes for its EOF Program, including steps to improve student success and close the outcomes gap between EOF students and others.
- As part of the upcoming "sunset review" of the EOF regulations, the Board will charge a working group to thoroughly review the regulations with the intent of reducing/eliminating sections which serve merely to increase paperwork and/or are no longer relevant and to recommend new or revised language which addresses the demographic and economic changes occurring in the state and focuses on enabling strategies to improve student success and ensure public accountability.

## **Background on the Educational Opportunity Fund Planning Process**

The New Jersey Commission on Higher Education issued its plan for higher education, *“Looking to the New Millennium: New Jersey’s Plan for Higher Education”* in October 1996. The plan articulated a “vision and characteristics of excellence” to guide the future development of higher education in New Jersey. Central to accomplishing the Commission’s vision for higher education are programs which serve educationally and economically disadvantaged students. The New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) is the primary state program for providing access to higher education for economically and educationally disadvantaged students. Supporting over 13,000 students and funded at \$32 million in fiscal year 1997, the program is one of the most comprehensive and successful state-supported programs of its kind in higher education to provide educational opportunity for disadvantaged students.

The Commission’s report made the following recommendations which are consistent with many of the high priority issues the EOF Board has addressed over the last two years:

- The EOF Board of Directors should develop a clearly articulated mission statement for the statewide program that takes into account assumptions about the future and critical state needs.
- Each participating college and university, within its distinct mission, should embrace and enhance the EOF program as an integral part of the institution, providing sufficient institutional resources to complement state funds.
- The EOF Board, in consultation with the Commission, the Presidents’ Council, and representatives of the higher education community, should establish a five-year strategic plan for EOF. The plan should include minimum group expectations for the academic progress of EOF students at each college and university. An institution that falls below its benchmark should develop and implement a plan for improvement, building on successful programs at other institutions where possible.

- The Commission, in collaboration with the EOF Board, New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund Professional Association (NJEOPFA) and institutions involved in pre-college programs, should investigate and implement ways to develop stronger linkages between EOF and federal and state-funded pre-college efforts such as Upward Bound and College Bound.

In anticipation of the Commission's recommendations, the EOF Board of Directors held a series of meetings in the fall of 1996 with college and university presidents, EOF directors, and other campus officials. The purpose of the meetings was to explore the critical issues facing the EOF program and to work with the higher education community on the development of a shared vision and expanded mission for the EOF program under the guiding principles of promoting access, enhancing quality, and maintaining accountability.

To develop a framework for the discussion, the Executive Committee of the EOF Board assembled a small working group which consisted of five institutional presidents, Rutgers University administrators and members of the New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund Professional Association, the Executive Director of the Commission on Higher Education, EOF Central Office staff and participants from the Educational Testing Service (ETS). Aided by a nationally recognized facilitator and expert on opportunity programs, the group examined the Fund's mission and related critical issues. The working group met on September 30, 1996 at ETS, identified key issues for consideration, and suggested questions for the EOF Fall Symposium.

As a follow-up, a one-day symposium was held at Rutgers University - Busch Campus. Participants included EOF Board members, and EOF directors and their reporting supervisors. Grouped by institutional sectors and aided by external facilitators, the participants reviewed the recommendations of the working group and focused their discussions on the future mission, goals, and needs of the Fund.

## **The Educational Opportunity Fund--Past and Present**

The New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) was created by law to ensure access to higher education for those burdened by economic and educational disadvantages. EOF provides access to higher education for highly motivated students who exhibit the potential for success but for whom (because of backgrounds of extreme hardship) the likelihood of attending college is remote without the services and support of the program. To ensure such individuals the opportunity to *attend* college, EOF supplies supplemental financial aid to help defray the costs of attendance such as tuition (at Independent institutions), fees, books, and room and board. To ensure that students have a viable opportunity to succeed and *graduate*, EOF funds an array of campus-based adaptive and academic support services.

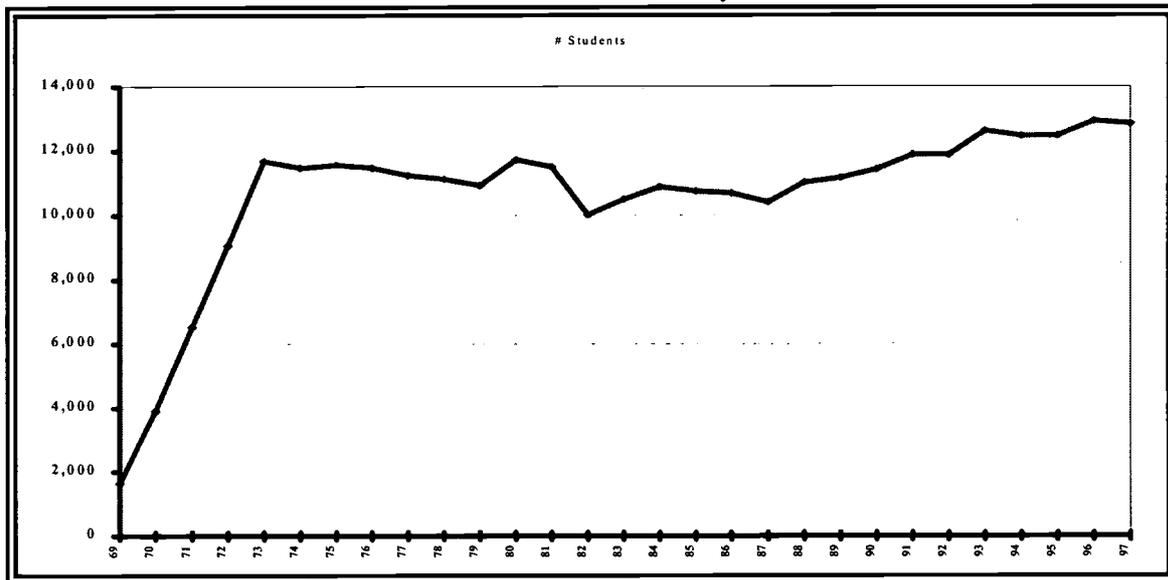
*EOF is not an entitlement program but rather a program that provides academic support linked to financial assistance.* Each participating institution selects only those students who, based upon the institutions' professional judgment, demonstrate commitment and motivation and have a reasonable chance of success with the services provided at that institution. EOF students are expected to meet high standards. The program provides the extra support that may be necessary to make up for prior educational disadvantages or to help students negotiate difficult life circumstances. However, EOF students are required to make satisfactory academic progress to continue to receive the program services and financial assistance, and EOF students must meet the same graduation standards that are required of all students.

The EOF program has been successful in meeting the challenge of providing access to higher education for New Jersey's economically and educationally disadvantaged citizens. Nevertheless, new challenges lie ahead driven by the state's changing economy and the diversification of its workforce. A look at EOF -- past, present, and future --is instructive in determining the vision and evolving mission of the Fund.

### Access and Diversity--The Impact of EOF

Despite concerns about potential declines in commitment to EOF and its student enrollment as a result of higher education restructuring, the opposite has occurred. Undergraduate EOF enrollments are at the highest levels in the program's history (refer to Figure 1) and EOF students comprised over 12% of the entering New Jersey first-time, full-time freshmen students statewide during fall 1996. During fall 1996, 12,500 students participated in the program at 41 New Jersey institutions of higher education.

Figure 1  
EOF Enrollment History



Source: NJ Commission on Higher Education/EOF Central Office

EOF has been an important avenue of access and diversity for New Jersey residents from disadvantaged and/or minority backgrounds. Initially, the program provided access to students (primarily minorities) who had been systemically excluded by practice and custom from New Jersey colleges and universities. The EOF program has had a significant impact on increasing the enrollment of minority students in New Jersey's higher education institutions. Prior to the program's inception, minority students comprised less than three-percent of the total full-time undergraduate enrollment within New Jersey's public and independent institutions, while minority enrollment in graduate and professional education was estimated to be less than one-percent.

Needless to say, the state's colleges and universities have made significant strides in increasing minority student enrollment. The program, however, continues to provide access to a significant proportion of Black, Latino, and Asian-American students from low-income households. While never limited to minority students (Whites comprise over 20% of the total program enrollment), today approximately one-quarter of all African-American and Latino students are enrolled at New Jersey colleges and universities through EOF (refer to Table 1). In addition, EOF continues to serve as the initial point of campus contact for many minority students, since there are several institutions where the EOF office provides support and enrichment services to non-EOF minority students also.

**Table 1**  
**Percent of Black and Hispanic Full-Time Undergraduates**  
**Enrolled through EOF by Institutional Sector, 1970, 1980, 1990 and 1996**

		<b>Fall 1970</b>	<b>Fall 1980</b>	<b>Fall 1990</b>	<b>Fall 1996</b>
<b>Blacks</b>	<b>State</b>	57%	44%	42%	32%
	<b>Public</b>	61%	44%	33%	27%
	<b>University</b>				
	<b>County</b>	60%	35%	27%	19%
	<b>Independents</b>	49%	35%	38%	28%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Hispanics</b>	<b>State</b>	21%	29%	37%	23%
	<b>Public</b>	50%	33%	30%	25%
	<b>University</b>				
	<b>County</b>	16%	27%	26%	14%
	<b>Independents</b>	12%	24%	34%	25%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>21%</b>

Source: NJ Commission on Higher Education/EOF Central Office

The program itself has experienced major student demographic shifts over the past decade, as increasing numbers and proportions of Hispanics other than Puerto Ricans and Asians have both migrated to New Jersey and enrolled in college through EOF. During the program's early years Black students comprised over 60% of the total EOF enrollment. That began to change during the late 1970's as more Puerto Rican students enrolled in college through the program and (most notably since the mid-1980's) as "Other Hispanics" have rapidly increased in number. Today, Black students continue to be the single largest group of program participants, but a much smaller proportion of the total EOF enrollment than a decade ago (refer to Table 2 and Appendix A).

**Table 2**  
**EOF Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, Fall 1986, 1996**

Race/Ethnicity	Fall 86		Fall 96		Change F96 V F86	
	Column %	Fall 86	Column %	Fall 96	#	%
<b>Black</b>	43.2%	4,497	39.8%	5,115	618	13.7%
<b>White</b>	22.9%	2,383	18.8%	2,416	33	1.4%
<b>Puerto Rican</b>	12.8%	1,331	9.0%	1,156	-175	-13.1%
<b>Other Hispanic</b>	11.6%	1,207	21.0%	2,692	1,485	123.0%
<b>Asian</b>	4.8%	495	8.1%	1,040	545	110.1%
<b>Other</b>	4.8%	501	3.3%	423	-78	-15.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>10,414</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>12,842</b>	<b>2,428</b>	

Source: NJ Commission on Higher Education/EOF Central Office

The number of “Other Hispanic” and Asian enrollments has doubled over the past decade, while Black and White enrollments have increased but at a much slower rate. Conversely, Puerto Ricans have experienced a decline in numbers. However, when viewed as a “group” the proportion of EOF students labeled “Hispanic” (Puerto Ricans and Other Hispanics) has grown tremendously over the life of the program from approximately four-percent in 1968, to over 30% of the total enrollment today.

### Access and Affordability

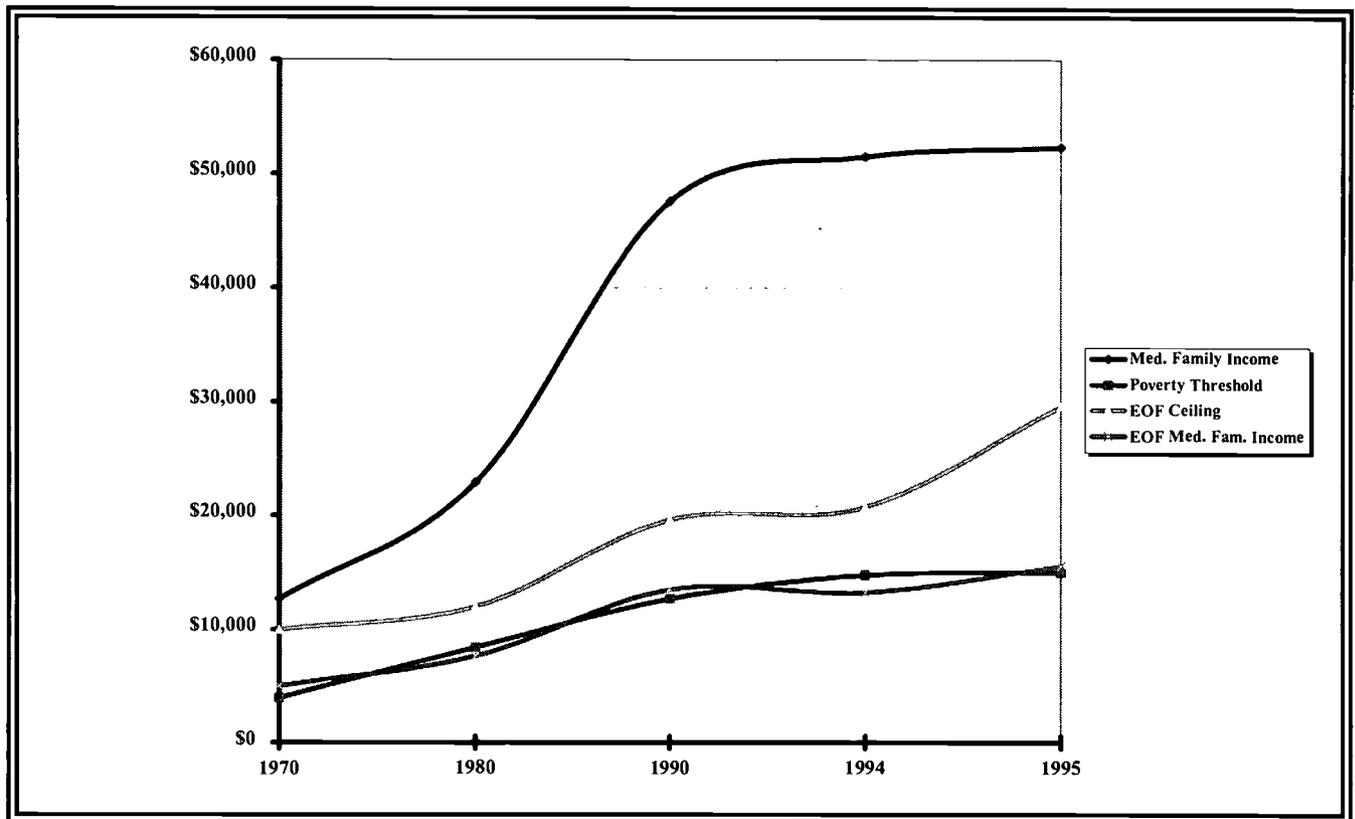
The program continues to provide access for the state’s neediest residents as an avenue to higher education for deserving students from the state’s most distressed communities and households. For example:

- Approximately 60% of the total EOF enrollment comes from the state’s most distressed municipalities (Labor Surplus Areas) and school districts (District Factor Group {DFG} A and B).
- 50% of the EOF enrollment comes from the 30 special needs school districts.

Another significant contribution of the EOF program has been its goal to make college accessible and affordable for low-income families--many of whom live at or below the poverty level. The Board adopted major increases in the income eligibility ceilings in 1994 in response to economic and demographic changes in the state since the program's inception. The Fund

continues to provide access to those truly in need of assistance. Figure 2 compares the median family income distribution of dependent and independent EOF students for the years 1970, 1980, 1990, and 1996 as matched against the general state population.

**Figure 2**  
**NJ Median Family Income vs. EOF Student Family Income & U.S. Poverty Threshold for Academic Years 1970, 1980, 1990, and 1995**



Source: NJ Commission on Higher Education/EOF Central Office  
NJ Department of Labor, State Data Center

The data indicate that EOF provides access to students from the state's neediest households. Indeed, the gap between the median EOF family income and the state median family income has widened significantly over the life of the program. At the program's inception in 1970, the EOF median family income was 40% of the state's median family income (refer to Table 3). By 1990, the median EOF family income had declined to only 29% of the state's median family income. Over this period, the students served by the program were relatively poorer than those students served in the 1970's. While the EOF Board has approved aggressive increases in the program's income eligibility criteria, the gap between the EOF median family income and the

state remains large. This is perhaps a reflection of the growing concentration of poverty in the state's most distressed communities, where most EOF students reside.

**Table 3**  
**Ratio, EOF Median Income as a Percentage of NJ Median Family Income<sup>1</sup>**

	<b>New Jersey Median Family Income</b>	<b>EOF Median Family Income</b>	<b>EOF Median as a % of the State Median Family Income.</b>
<b>1970</b>	\$11,400	\$5,000	45%
<b>1980</b>	\$23,583	\$7,670	32%
<b>1990</b>	\$47,257	\$13,507	29%
<b>1994</b>	\$51,526	\$13,252	26%
<b>1995</b>	\$52,323	\$15,595	30%

Source: NJ Commission on Higher Education/EOF Central Office  
NJ Department of Labor, State Data Center

### **Affordability - Losing Ground**

Essential for the success and retention of EOF students is adequate financial assistance to help meet the costs of college attendance. Because EOF students are among the neediest students enrolled at our institutions, student assistance is critical to their persistence in college. It is important to note that for the purposes of our discussion affordability centers on the full costs of attendance rather than a more limited view of tuition only. Cost of attendance more accurately reflects what students and their families face when trying to finance a college education. The data indicate that affordability for EOF students is a growing concern, when measured by the percent of college attendance costs covered by grant assistance. Since the EOF Board last visited this issue, the average costs of college attendance has significantly outpaced the amount of available grant assistance (refer to Tables 4a - 4d). For example, between the 1990/91 and 1996/97 academic years the following changes occurred:

- The average cost of college attendance increased by 24% at the senior publics and 26% at the county colleges and independents.
- In contrast, the amount of federal and state grant aid available to EOF students increased by less than 20% at the senior publics and the independents.
- Except for the county colleges, the cost of attendance significantly outpaced available grant assistance at an increasing rate.
- The amount that must be made up by students, families and institutions increased over 60% at senior publics, 34% at independents and 11% at county colleges.

- The portion of the costs of attendance not covered by grants increased to approximately one third of the median EOF family income at the senior publics, over half of the median EOF family income at the independents and 12% at the county colleges.

**Table 4a:**  
**Comparison, Cost of College Attendance versus Available Public Grant Assistance**

County Colleges	Changes			
	1990-91	1996-97	\$	%
Average Total Cost of College Attendance	\$5,570	\$7,016	\$1,446	26%
Maximum TAG Grant	1,150	1,560	410	36%
Maximum Pell Grant	1,800	2,470	670	37%
Maximum EOF Grant	650	800	150	23%
Total Grants	\$3,600	\$4,830	1,230	34%
% of Costs Covered by Grants	65%	69%		4%
Remaining Need to be covered by Loans, Institutional Grants, and Family Resources	\$1,970	\$2,186	\$216	11%
EOF Median Family Income (Pre-tax)	\$13,507	\$17,836	\$4,329	32%
Need as % of EOF Median Income	15%	12%		3%

SOURCES: NJ Commission on Higher Education/Educational Opportunity Fund  
NJ Office of Student Assistance

**Table 4b:**  
**Comparison, Cost of College Attendance versus Available Public Grant Assistance**

State Colleges	Changes			
	1990-91	1996-97	\$	%
Average Total Cost of College Attendance	\$8,410	\$11,243	\$2,824	34%
Maximum TAG Grant	1,900	2,440	540	28%
Maximum Pell Grant	2,300	2,470	170	7%
Maximum EOF Grant	1,000	1,100	100	10%
Total Grants	\$5,200	\$6,010	810	16%
% of Costs Covered by Grants	62%	53%		-9%
Remaining Need to be covered by Loans, Institutional Grants, and Family Resources	\$3,210	\$5,224	\$2,014	63%
EOF Median Family Income (Pre-tax)	\$13,507	\$17,836	\$4,329	32%
Need as % of EOF Median Income	24%	29%		5%

SOURCES: NJ Commission on Higher Education/Educational Opportunity Fund  
NJ Office of Student Assistance

**Table 4c:**  
**Comparison, Cost of College Attendance versus Available Public Grant Assistance**

	Rutgers		Changes	
	1990-91	1996-97	\$	%
<b>Average Total Cost of College Attendance</b>	\$9,790	\$13,100	\$3,310	34%
<b>Maximum TAG Grant</b>	2,900	3,768	868	30%
<b>Maximum Pell Grant</b>	2,300	2,470	170	7%
<b>Maximum EOF Grant</b>	1,000	1,100	100	10%
<b>Total Grants</b>	\$6,200	\$7,338	1,138	18%
<b>% of Costs Covered by Grants</b>	63%	56%		-7%
<b>Remaining Need to be covered by Loans, Institutional Grants, and Family Resources</b>	\$3,590	\$5,762	\$2,172	61%
<b>EOF Median Family Income (Pre-tax)</b>	\$13,507	\$17,836	\$4,329	32%
<b>Need as % of EOF Median Income</b>	27%	32%		5%

SOURCES: NJ Commission on Higher Education/Educational Opportunity Fund  
NJ Office of Student Assistance

**Table 4d:**  
**Comparison, Cost of College Attendance versus Available Public Grant Assistance**

	Independents		Changes	
	1990-91	1996-97	\$	%
<b>Average Total Cost of College Attendance</b>	\$15,670	\$19,781	\$4,111	26%
<b>Maximum TAG Grant</b>	4,200	5,570	1,370	33%
<b>Maximum Pell Grant</b>	2,300	2,470	170	7%
<b>Maximum EOF Grant</b>	1,950	2,100	150	8%
<b>Total Grants</b>	\$8,450	\$10,140	1,690	20%
<b>% of Costs Covered by Grants</b>	54%	51%		-3%
<b>Remaining Need to be covered by Loans, Institutional Grants, and Family Resources</b>	\$7,220	\$9,641	\$2,421	34%
<b>EOF Median Family Income (Pre-tax)</b>	\$13,507	\$17,836	\$4,329	32%
<b>Need as % of EOF Median Income</b>	53%	54%		1%

SOURCES: NJ Commission on Higher Education/Educational Opportunity Fund  
NJ Office of Student Assistance

There are a number of factors driving these trends including college attendance costs that continue to greatly outpace inflation, a change in federal policy over the past two decades that shifted the emphasis of federal student assistance from grants to loans, and the inability to secure regular increases to the EOF student grant. The primary focus of state student assistance policy is tuition, rather than the actual cost of attendance which includes room, board, fees, books, computer, etc. As a result, since TAG's inception in 1977, EOF Article III awards for students were increased only three times. The last increase, in FY 1996, was the first in almost a decade and brought maximum annual awards to \$750 for county college students, \$1,100 for senior public institutions, and \$2,100 for independent institutions.

**Table 5**  
**EOF Academic Year Student Grant Levels**

Published Guidelines	1970		1973		1978			1979		1986	1987	1996 - Current
	Minimum Grant	Standard	Maximum	Combined	Standard	Maximum	Combined	Standard	Grandfathered			
Minimum Grant	\$250		\$250		\$200	\$200		\$200		\$200	\$200	\$200
UNDERGRADUATE												
County College	\$750		\$750		\$350	\$750	\$750	\$350	\$750	\$450	\$650	\$750
Senior Publics	\$1,000	Residential	\$1,000		\$500	\$1,000	\$1,200	\$600	\$1,200	\$700	Fr/Soph Jr/Sr	\$1,100
	\$750	Commuter	\$750		\$350	\$750	\$950	\$350	\$950	\$450	Fr/Soph Jr/Sr	\$850
Independent	\$1,000		\$1,000		\$1,000	\$1,300	\$2,000	\$1,200	\$2,000	\$1,400	Fr/Soph Jr/Sr	\$2,100
GRADUATE												
State	\$1,000		\$2,500			\$1,500		\$1,500		\$1,500	\$2,000	\$2,100
Rutgers/NJIT	\$1,000		\$2,500		\$2,500	\$2,500		\$2,500		\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,650
UMDNJ	\$1,000		\$2,500			\$3,000		\$4,000		\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000
Independent	\$1,000		\$2,500			\$2,500		\$2,500		\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,650
Out-of-State	\$1,000		\$1,000			\$1,000		No longer funded				



### **Accountability and Outcomes**

Critical to continued public support for programs like the Educational Opportunity Fund are outcome measures. (i.e., factors related to student academic progress and graduation rates) which demonstrate responsible stewardship of public funds.

Since the Fund's inception, the EOF Board of Directors has maintained a system of accountability essential for its operation and success. In the early years, the program's accountability efforts were developed in response to external pressures which required frequent justification of all aspects of the program's operation and the need to monitor the progress and commitment of individual institutions. Since then EOF's accountability efforts have significantly shifted from primarily monitoring student access, campus climate, and program structure to an assessment of student outcomes.

Over the past decade the program has made great strides in maintaining access and improving overall short-term retention. The figures in Appendix B demonstrate by sector significant cohort retention improvements since the program's current longitudinal tracking system was initiated in 1986. It should also be noted that the gains in retention occurred while the primary target population became more diverse and relatively poorer in relation to the general state population, and during a period of heightened concern about declining conditions in the state's neediest public school districts. Yet the data show that improvements in retention occurred over time. Now the Board must focus on the Fund's unfinished agenda - improving graduation rates

While the state has made considerable progress toward realizing the promise of access, one of the major problems/challenges that must be addressed by higher education, both nationally and in New Jersey, is narrowing the disparities in graduation rates between disadvantaged and minority students and that of non-minority students. In New Jersey the gap between six-year cohort graduation rates for Black and Latino students and White and Asian students is 15 to 20 percentage points.

This issue was raised by the EOF Board in *"Eye on the Future"* (1991) and more recently by the Commission on Higher Education, *"Higher Education: Our Renewable Resource"* (1995) and *"Looking to the New Millennium: New Jersey's Plan for Higher Education"* (1996). Most

available retention literature is limited to short-term retention improvement, prefreshman summer programs, freshman year programs, and student success in individual courses. While there is some information about programs/frameworks to improve long-term retention and graduation, the majority of graduation research simply reports student characteristics and graduation rates rather than models that can improve graduation outcomes. A research priority for the Board is one which examines the key issues related to improving graduation and transfer rates and identifies the barriers that presently exist.

As a first step, the Governor included in the Commission on Higher Education's FY 1998 budget a \$1 million competitive incentive grant program to assist institutions in implementing strategies that have proven effective in improving graduation and transfer rates for minority or low-income students. Additionally, the EOF Board, in collaboration with the NJEOFPA, supports a pilot project to redesign programs at 13 public and independent institutions with the goal of improving retention and graduation of EOF students.

### **EOF Addresses Critical State Needs: Changing Landscape**

EOF is the only state-supported initiative that specifically targets and prepares individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to earn associate, baccalaureate, graduate, and professional degrees. Today access to postsecondary education is more important than ever before. Educational attainment has become a major determinant of success and social mobility in society. Nationally, the only groups demonstrating income growth and upward mobility are households where one or more of the adults has completed at least a baccalaureate degree. Higher education not only helps to promote the values of democratic citizenship necessary for social stability and quality of life, but also increasingly provides the essential foundation of skills and knowledge that prepare individuals to participate and compete in the workforce. In this vein, the access and support provided by EOF is vital to New Jersey. The Fund serves as higher education's major initiative for access and opportunity for individuals from backgrounds and circumstances that are least conducive for entry and participation in higher education, and the workforce or for full participation in society.

A number of studies suggest several economic, population, and social trends in the state that emphasize the need for the postsecondary opportunity and services provided by EOF:

### **Economy and Employment**

- New Jersey will continue its shift toward jobs in the service-producing sector of the economy (lead by health and business services and a highly skilled, capital intensive, high value-added manufacturing sector).
- A massive out-migration of jobs and populations from cities and inner suburbs to newly developing growth corridors or “edge cities” and rural areas characterizes the economic restructuring. Major job growth opportunities in this emerging economy are predicted to occur outside of the state’s cities – for every one opportunity located inside a city, seven job opportunities will be located outside.
- As part of this economic transformation, New Jersey experienced one of the highest rates of loss in the traditional manufacturing sector that historically provided employment opportunities for many non-college graduates and urban and minority residents.

### **Education and Income**

- Over the period 1994-2010, jobs requiring the most education and training will be the fastest growing and highest paying. Occupations that require a postsecondary education are projected to grow by twenty-three percent, almost double the twelve-percent growth projected for occupations that require less education and training. Although high paying jobs will be available without college training, most jobs that pay above average wages will require a college degree.

- There is a clear relationship between levels of education and income that extends across all race and ethnicity lines. Across all groups (race and gender) individuals who have pursued and completed baccalaureate degrees (and beyond) demonstrate higher annual and lifetime earnings, lower unemployment rates, lower likelihood of criminal involvement, and higher degrees of civic participation.

### **Demographic Imperatives**

- The ongoing shift from cities to emerging growth corridors or “edge cities” and rural areas results in the hyper segregation of minorities and the poor in New Jersey within 30 urban cities, accounting for approximately 60% of the state’s residents with incomes below the poverty line. Two out of every three African-American and Hispanic households live in only 25 municipalities which rank among the most distressed municipalities and school districts in the state. New Jersey’s segregation of minority and poor populations exceeds national averages.
- Disproportionate numbers of poor and minority students attend special needs public school districts that continue to be the subject of court challenges to provide equitable state support and a thorough and efficient education. The districts that enroll the largest number of Black and Hispanic students (Jersey City, Newark, and Paterson) are currently under state control for poor performance.
- By the year 2010, New Jersey’s non-White populations are estimated to more than double and grow to 44 percent of the total population. Between 1994 and 2005, non-Whites (Blacks and Hispanics) will experience the largest total population and labor force increases. During that period, New Jersey’s Black and Hispanic populations and participation in the labor force are projected to increase by over 50% compared to an approximate five-percent increase for Whites.
- Groups in the labor force with lower than average educational attainment in 1994, including Hispanics and Blacks, will continue to have difficulty obtaining a share of the high paying jobs consistent with their share of the labor force, unless their educational attainment rises.

### **The Importance of Higher Education**

- Education has become increasingly important not only to an individual's standard of living, but also to the circumstances into which the next generation will be born. College completion has become more unequally distributed across levels of family income than at any time in the past 25 years. There is a strong relationship between parental educational attainment, race/ethnicity, family income, and academic preparation and an individuals likelihood of college attendance.

When viewed as a whole, these demographic, economic, and social changes not only present New Jersey with daunting challenges but also offer numerous opportunities. EOF, working in partnership with higher education institutions, will need to play a central role in improving the educational achievement of minorities and urban residents.

### **Summary of Recommendations: Working Group and the Rutgers Symposium**

#### **Recommendations**

The initial deliberations of the working group assembled by the Executive Committee of the EOF Board and outcomes of a one-day symposium resulted in the following recommendations:

- The basic premise of the Educational Opportunity Fund's mission remains sound. EOF's public mission needs to be clearly articulated and broadened from its traditional emphasis on access to include student success. The premise of the Fund's mission is sufficiently flexible that as institutions, under restructuring, examine and pursue unique missions and program differentiation, each can play an important role in meeting the state's, the Fund's, and students' goals.

- EOF's primary focus should continue to be degree seeking students and those in certificate programs. In addition, more emphasis should be given to improving county college to senior college transfer articulation.
- Every institution that receives public funds should continue to participate in EOF.
- Improving student success must be a major long-term goal for EOF and participating institutions. In this vein participants at both sessions indicated that the relationship among the key stakeholders (which are the State of New Jersey, institutions, and the students) must be viewed as a working partnership.

Accountability must be a core component of the Board's planning for the future. The Board should work with institutions to develop an accountability system which recognizes the unique mission and goals of each participating institution and provides the essential measures to assure the public and key stakeholders about the value of public investment in EOF. Furthermore, an accountability system should include elements, especially in funding components, which recognize exceptional institutional commitment and success in educating and graduating EOF students.

## **A Vision and Mission for The Educational Opportunity Fund**

### **A Vision for the Future**

Through its Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF), New Jersey will be the national leader in providing access to higher education for its students from educationally and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. EOF will play a central role in increasing the diversity of students participating in postsecondary education and contribute to the preparation of citizens for entrance into the state's skilled workforce. EOF will develop partnerships with colleges and universities, K-12, pre-college, and community-based programs to strengthen the pipeline between each level of education in support of the transition to higher education. The Fund will support high-quality programs and educational experiences intended to assist students to persist to graduation and to prepare them with the knowledge, skills, abilities, and values which are necessary to compete in both a regional and global multicultural workplace, graduate study, and other personal and civic endeavors.

### **The Mission of EOF**

EOF contributes to the development of a college-educated public that reflects the diversity of New Jersey, by working in partnership with New Jersey colleges and universities and the K-12 educational system to provide access to higher education for students from families/communities disadvantaged by low income and the lack of access to the quality educational preparation necessary to attend college. The Fund will partner with established pre-college efforts and seek to initiate additional opportunities to identify and prepare students for college at the pre-collegiate level. At the postsecondary level, the access and opportunity provided by the Fund is not limited to simply meeting freshman (or transfer) student enrollment goals but to also focus on student success. In this vein, EOF provides support for educational initiatives, support services, and leadership development activities that assist students to improve their chances of success in specific majors and careers fields and prepares them for the changing world of work and to assume leadership in their communities and the state.

### **Goals related to the EOF Mission: Critical Elements for Institutional Plans**

EOF's statewide goals and expectations for participating institutions must be linked to the general mission of the Fund as well as to the different missions of participating institutions. Each institution, within the bounds of its unique mission (which determines its educational program, service area and student profile), will develop the services and program that will increase EOF students' opportunities for success.

#### **Recruitment**

The goal of the Fund is to identify promising students (those who demonstrate the commitment, motivation, and potential for success) who, with the special/supplementary educational, and financial support provided by the Fund and participating institutions, demonstrate the commitment and potential to successfully complete undergraduate study leading to an approved certificate; an associate degree; transfer from a county college to a senior college or university; a baccalaureate degree; and for graduate and professional

students, leading to an approved master's, doctoral or professional degree. EOF is not intended to serve as an adult basic education, language proficiency, literacy, or short-term job-training program.

The 10% freshman goal should remain to ensure that public institutions share in meeting statewide access needs and that higher educational opportunity continues to be an option for promising students from the state's neediest communities and school districts.

- **Improving Student Success**

Improving student success, as measured by a) community college to senior institution transfer rates, b) cohort retention, and c) graduation rates, is the major task facing the Fund. In New Jersey, we have achieved proportional (and in some cases more than proportional) freshman enrollment of minority and disadvantaged students when compared nationally. Yet New Jersey, like the rest of the nation, has not adequately or successfully addressed the issue of improving opportunity as measured by student graduation rates. Each participating institution should examine its strengths and weaknesses and connect program activities with its mission by developing a plan to close the graduation gap between EOF and other students. In addition, future funding requests and allocations should target as a priority specific initiatives aimed at improving EOF student transfer and graduation rates and preparation for majors in which disadvantaged students are underrepresented.

- **Developing Partnerships with Pre-College and the K-12 Community**

Earlier student identification and intervention with educational enrichment, leadership development, and career exposure will be necessary to ensure access and opportunity. This becomes even more critical as colleges and universities seek to increase entrance requirements and strengthen curricula to prepare students for an increasingly competitive workplace and global citizenship. Early intervention becomes an important strategy to help reduce a student's need for extensive remediation at the college level. In addition, it is clear that early identification and intervention are necessary to increase the enrollment

of minority males who are woefully underrepresented in higher education. To expand the pipeline of students who are able to take advantage of the educational opportunity provided by the Fund, EOF must establish closer working partnerships with established pre-collegiate efforts such as College Bound and the Federal Upward Bound and Talent Search Programs. In addition, the Fund must develop early identification and intervention initiatives for populations and communities that current efforts are unable to serve.

- **Connecting Education with the World of Work**

Career exploration, skills development, and internships/cooperative education to prepare EOF students for the world of work are other experiences critical in a student's education that the Fund should promote. By and large, EOF students come from communities and demographic groups that experience high levels of long-term underemployment and unemployment. This is particularly true of those from federal and state designated labor surplus areas. Many of these areas have not experienced the economic growth and positive transformation of the past decade. An important component of the EOF effort in the future will be to create local initiatives within campus programs to help develop workplace skills including redesigning counseling to place greater emphasis on specific job related skills such as leadership and communications, interpersonal relations, and teamwork. Also campus programs should focus on providing opportunities for work-based learning through planned use and allocation of campus employment to developing internship opportunities. EOF programs, in collaboration with other resources (i.e. partnerships with businesses and nonprofit organizations), must educate students about the changing economy and workplace and provide students with a regional/global perspective as a component of career education.

- **Initiating a Research Agenda**

Improving student success and program outcomes will require research and program experimentation beyond the current state of the art in student retention practices and current literature on the subject. In addition to assisting in policy development, the

Board will require information about changing demographic and economic issues, and emerging best practices to improve student learning for diverse student populations. The Fund should establish the capacity to help institutions initiate research on local issues that will help improve the quality of education and student success. It is essential for the Board as a policy making group to fully understand the barriers to student success.

- **Enhancing the Program's Image**

Campuses are microcosms of the larger society and, as a result, societal conflicts over issues of race, ethnicity, and class are also concerns for EOF and students who enroll through the program. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon campus EOF staff, students, and the parent institutions to cast programs in a favorable light and to operate in accordance with the highest levels of professionalism and responsiveness, maintaining high expectations and standards for students.

### **Realizing the Goals--A Plan for Action**

The purpose of this paper is not to provide a list of prescriptive approaches or program models but rather to identify critical areas that can be addressed by varying degrees depending upon the mission and culture of individual institutions. These areas include:

- Institutions must ensure that EOF students are provided the academic preparation to select from among the broad distribution of majors and programs offered and not be clustered into a few narrow areas of the curriculum.
- Senior institutions, especially research institutions and those developing or expanding graduate programs, should set expectations for EOF students to continue on to graduate or professional school.
- Initiatives should be developed to promote student transfer from county to senior institutions and to develop collaborative working relationships between institutions and programs to foster student transfers.

- The activities and services of campus EOF programs should be based on sound models and incorporate what the literature and research have demonstrated to be among the “best practices” for promoting student success.
- Each participating institution and local program should set goals to change the program’s image on campus and to create supportive campus environments for EOF students and the effective administration of services.
- Institutions that participate in the Fund should structure activities which identify and select promising students, provide quality educational enrichment, improve EOF student academic performance, promote student retention and progress toward graduation within the established period of program eligibility and the academic standards of the institution, and provide effective administrative support for the operation of the EOF program within the institution.

### **A Partnership Among the Board, Institutions, and Students**

The future success of the Fund depends upon the strength of the partnership between the State (represented by the Governor, Legislature, EOF Board of Directors, and Commission on Higher Education), the Presidents’ Council, institutions of higher education, and students. Each of these stakeholders plays important roles.

#### The Role of the State:

- Ensure adequate funding for the statewide program.
- Provide oversight for the program, strengthening the partnership role between the Commission and the EOF Board with campus programs.
- Collect and interpret program data and report to the public the Fund’s progress in meeting its goals.
- In consultation with the Commission, institutions, and the public, set and refine the broad policy objectives for the program.

- Support and encourage institutional initiatives designed to improve campus climate, program offerings, and capacity.
- Support statewide initiatives for staff development, student leadership, and program planning.
- Establish a forum with the community advisory boards.
- Serve as a clearinghouse to disseminate information about effective program (access, retention, and graduation) practices/models to campus staff.

The Role of the Institution:

- Nurture supportive teaching/learning environments for students enrolled through EOF and an administrative environment that promotes the advocacy and coordination of services proven effective for promoting “EOF-type” student success.
- Offer high quality EOF services/programs with attention given to the selection of leadership and staff with requisite professional credentials, expertise, and commitment.
- Engender a climate/ethos with high expectations for EOF student scholarship, achievement, and success. Too often the perception of EOF is that of a program which only responds to student deficits, remediation and/or survival, rather than an effort to develop long-term educational strategies and collaborations that focus on scholarship and graduation.
- Provide counseling and student leadership development activities that promote student accountability and responsibility for taking full advantage of the opportunity the Fund and its participating institutions offer and to develop the self-management skills and work-ethic necessary for academic, personal, and professional success.

Support programming and collaborative efforts with faculty/departments designed to prepare students with the skills, abilities, and expertise to successfully compete in the global, information-age workplace and to develop leadership skills, a sense of social responsibility, and willingness to improve the quality of life in their home communities.

The Role of the Student:

- Demonstrate the commitment and continuous effort necessary to be a successful learner and student.
- Accept and demonstrate responsibility for their educational progress and make the most of their collegiate experience.
- Meet academic progress requirements that lead to certificate or degree completion.

### **Process for Program Evaluation & Improvement**

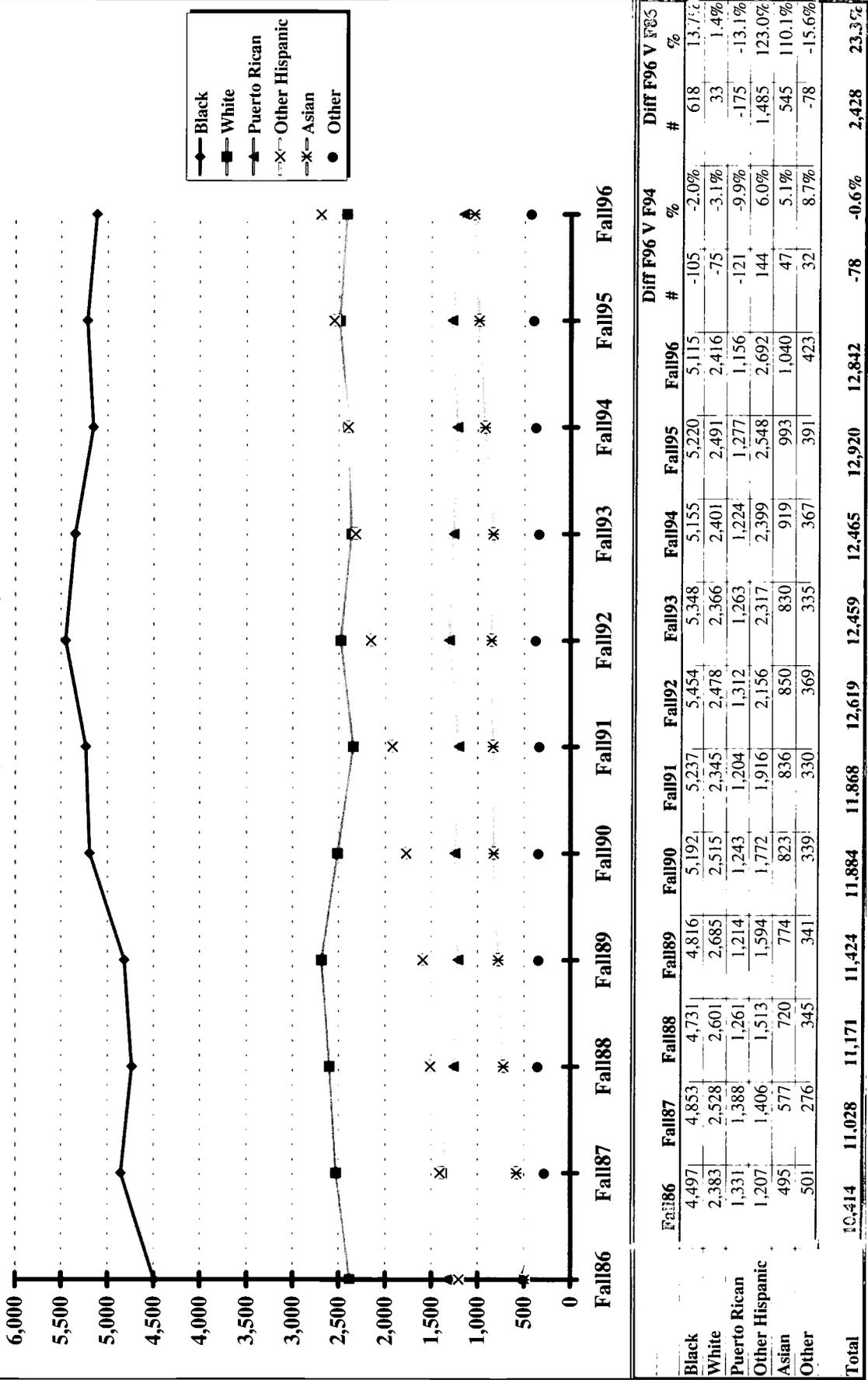
Both the working group and the symposium participants agreed that an accountability system was critical to the Fund. The current EOF accountability system was developed under the philosophy that there was a need for strong central oversight and direct institutional program monitoring and intervention. The future requires a system that assures the public and other critical stakeholders that EOF is a wise investment and that participating institutions are meeting access and student outcome goals. But the system should also be useful to the institutions, assisting them with local self-study and identifying program improvements without increasing staff resources devoted to paperwork or creating undue work-flow demands that detract from providing services to students. Both groups indicated that any future system should include the following elements:

- Each participating institution should develop and reach agreement with the EOF Board on the mission, broad long-term (3 -5 year) goals and desired outcomes for its EOF Program. Using agreed upon performance indicators that are collected statewide and local data (both quantitative and qualitative), each institution will report its progress toward meeting the agreed upon goals and objectives for its local program.
- Institutions should set measurable goals/benchmarks for attaining their stated program outcomes.

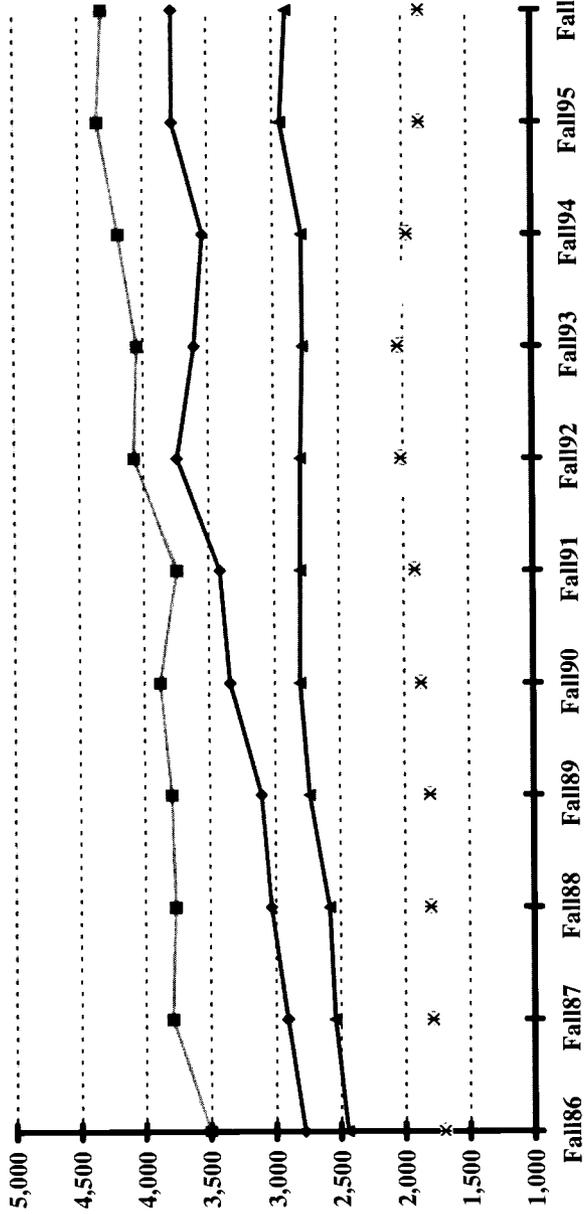
- The Fund will provide a set of performance indicators that report institutional and statewide outcomes for access, student progress, retention, and graduation.
- Institutions will maintain the EOF 10% first time, full-time freshman enrollment goal, measured against the actual fall enrollment from the previous academic year.
- The Fund will provide incentives and assistance for local program improvement, including technical assistance and/or collegial site visits. A collegial site visit should involve process-oriented visits by a small peer team, which will provide a fact-finding, technical assistance report at the conclusion of the visit, as opposed to auditing or monitoring for compliance.
- The Fund will incorporate incentives for rewarding outstanding institutional commitment/success as part of the annual funding process.
- The Fund will develop a standing group to review and make recommendations to the EOF Board about the appropriateness of the current program performance criteria and to make recommendations for a future system of performance indicators. This body should regularly review EOF outcome/accountability data and make recommendations.

## Appendices

Total EOF Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, Fall 1986 to Fall 1996



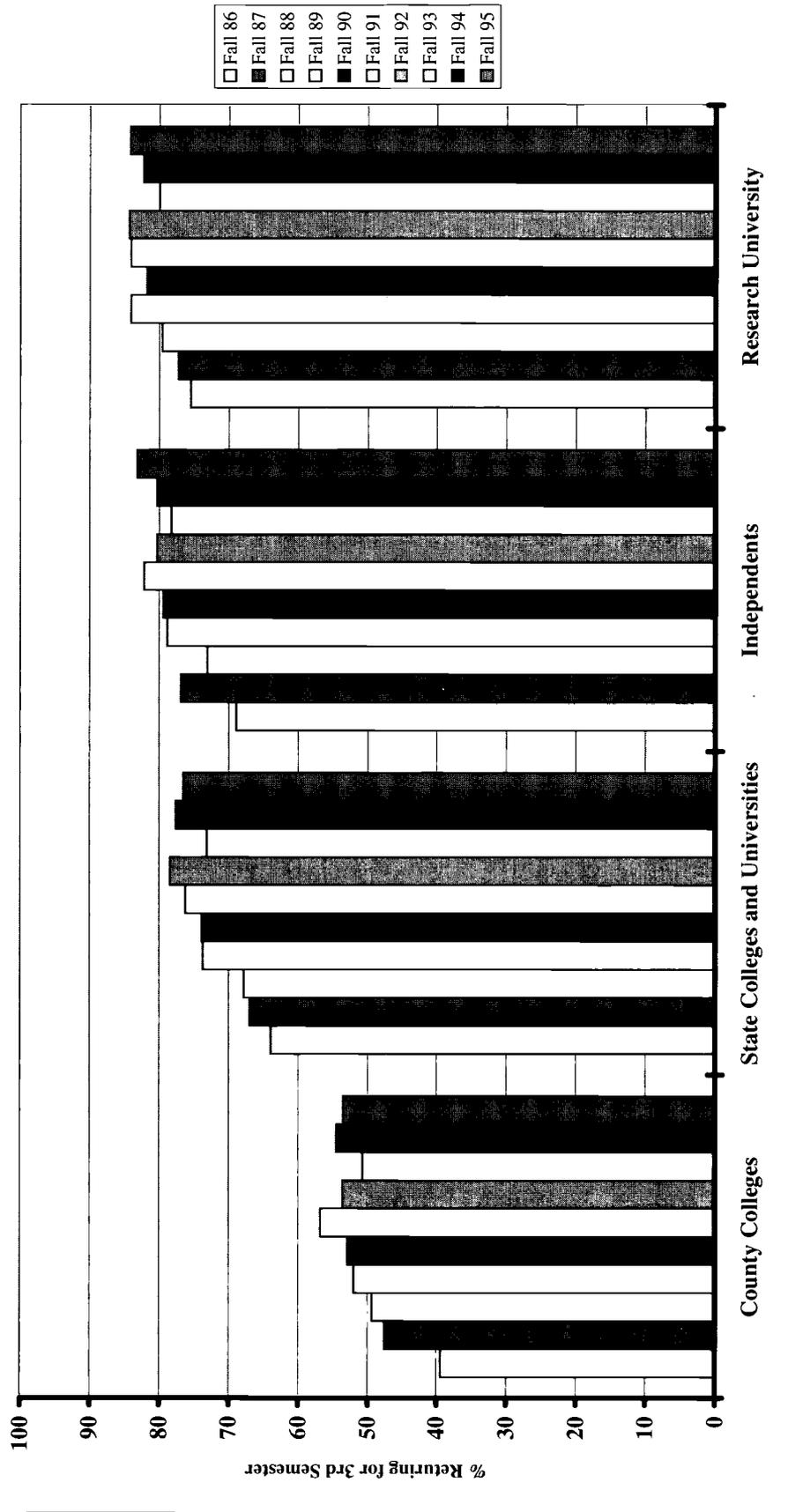
Total EOF Enrollment by Sector, Fall 1986 to Fall 1996

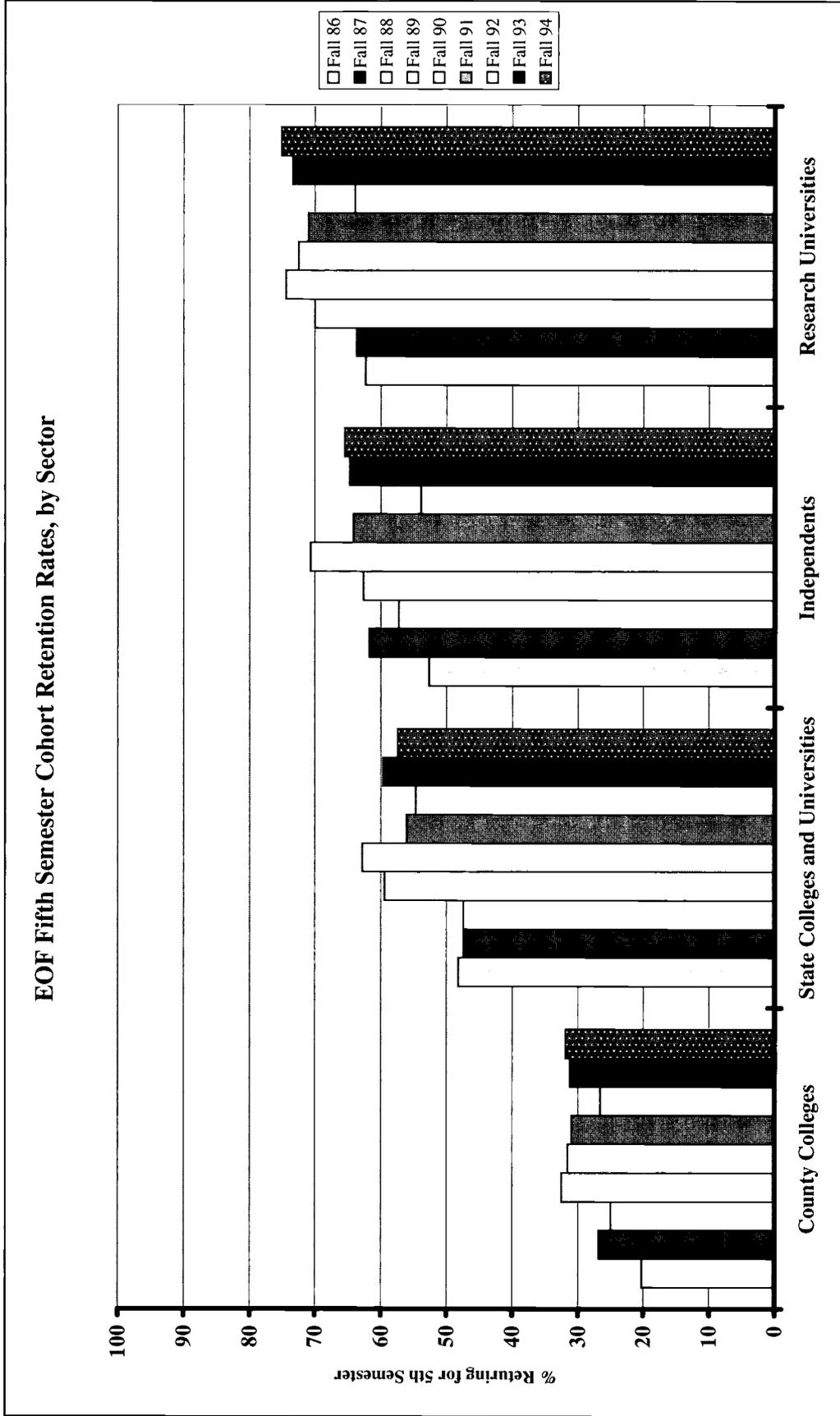


	Fall 1986	Fall 1987	Fall 1988	Fall 1989	Fall 1990	Fall 1991	Fall 1992	Fall 1993	Fall 1994	Fall 1995	Fall 1996	Diff F96 V F94	%	Diff F96 V F86	%
County	3,502	3,794	3,767	3,790	3,874	3,748	4,071	4,045	4,186	4,348	4,312	-36	-0.9%	810	23.1%
State	2,776	2,909	3,028	3,100	3,335	3,413	3,744	3,607	3,536	3,772	3,772	0	0.0%	996	35.9%
Independent	1,693	1,785	1,798	1,801	1,870	1,909	2,012	2,036	1,963	1,864	1,866	2	0.1%	173	10.2%
Rutgers/NJIT/UMDNJ	2,443	2,540	2,578	2,733	2,805	2,798	2,792	2,771	2,780	2,936	2,892	-44	-1.6%	449	18.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,414</b>	<b>11,028</b>	<b>11,171</b>	<b>11,424</b>	<b>11,884</b>	<b>11,868</b>	<b>12,619</b>	<b>12,459</b>	<b>12,465</b>	<b>12,920</b>	<b>12,842</b>	<b>-78</b>	<b>-0.6%</b>	<b>2,428</b>	<b>23.3%</b>

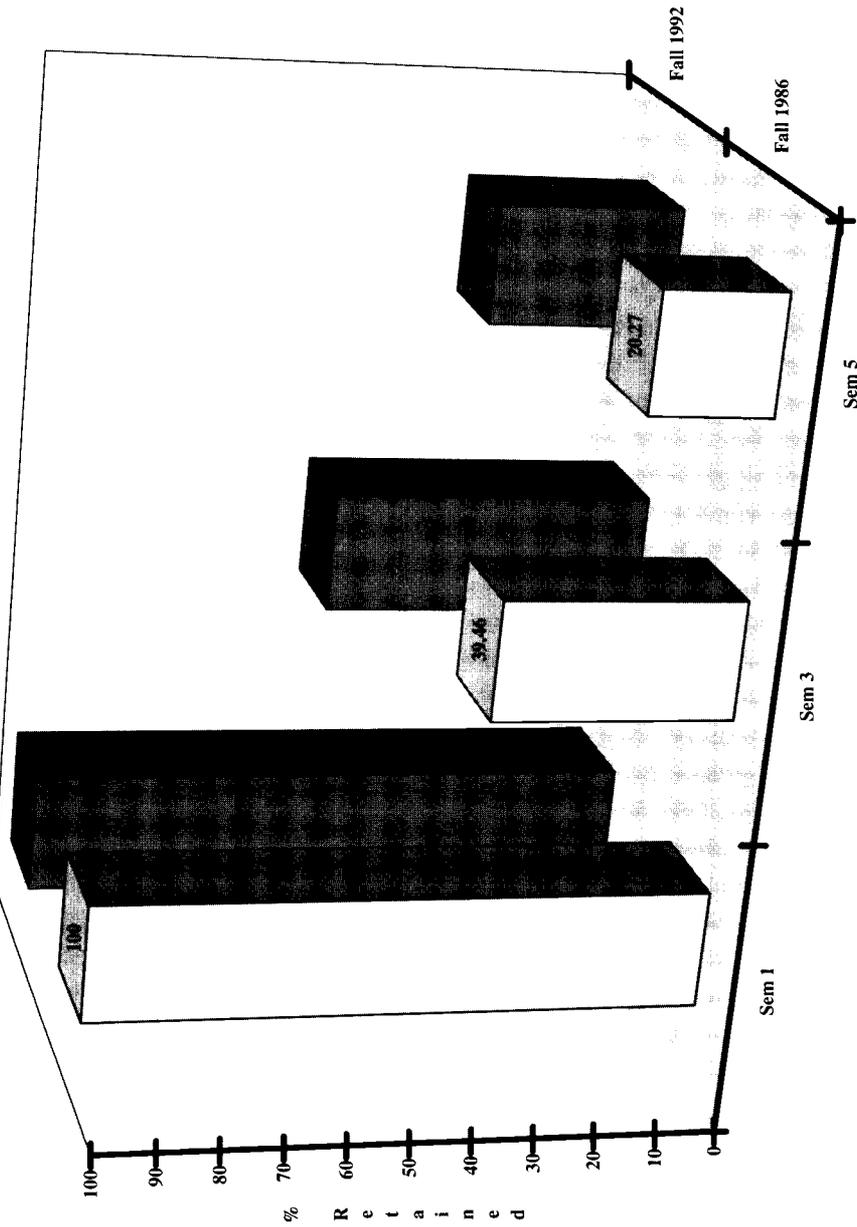
Appendix B fig 1

### EOF 3rd Semester Cohort Retention by Sector



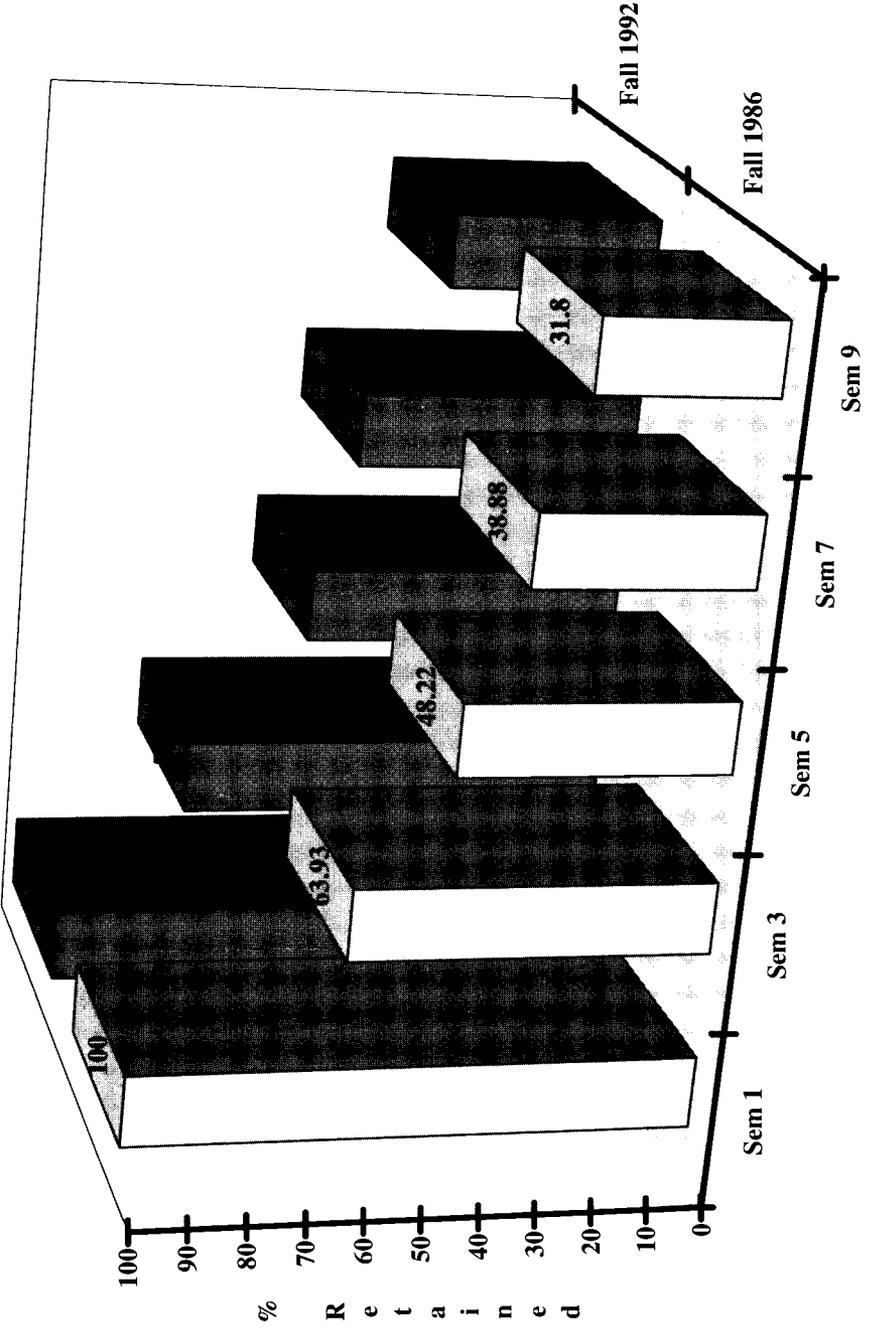


County Colleges - EOF Retention Comparison,  
Fall 1986 and Fall 1992 Freshman Cohorts

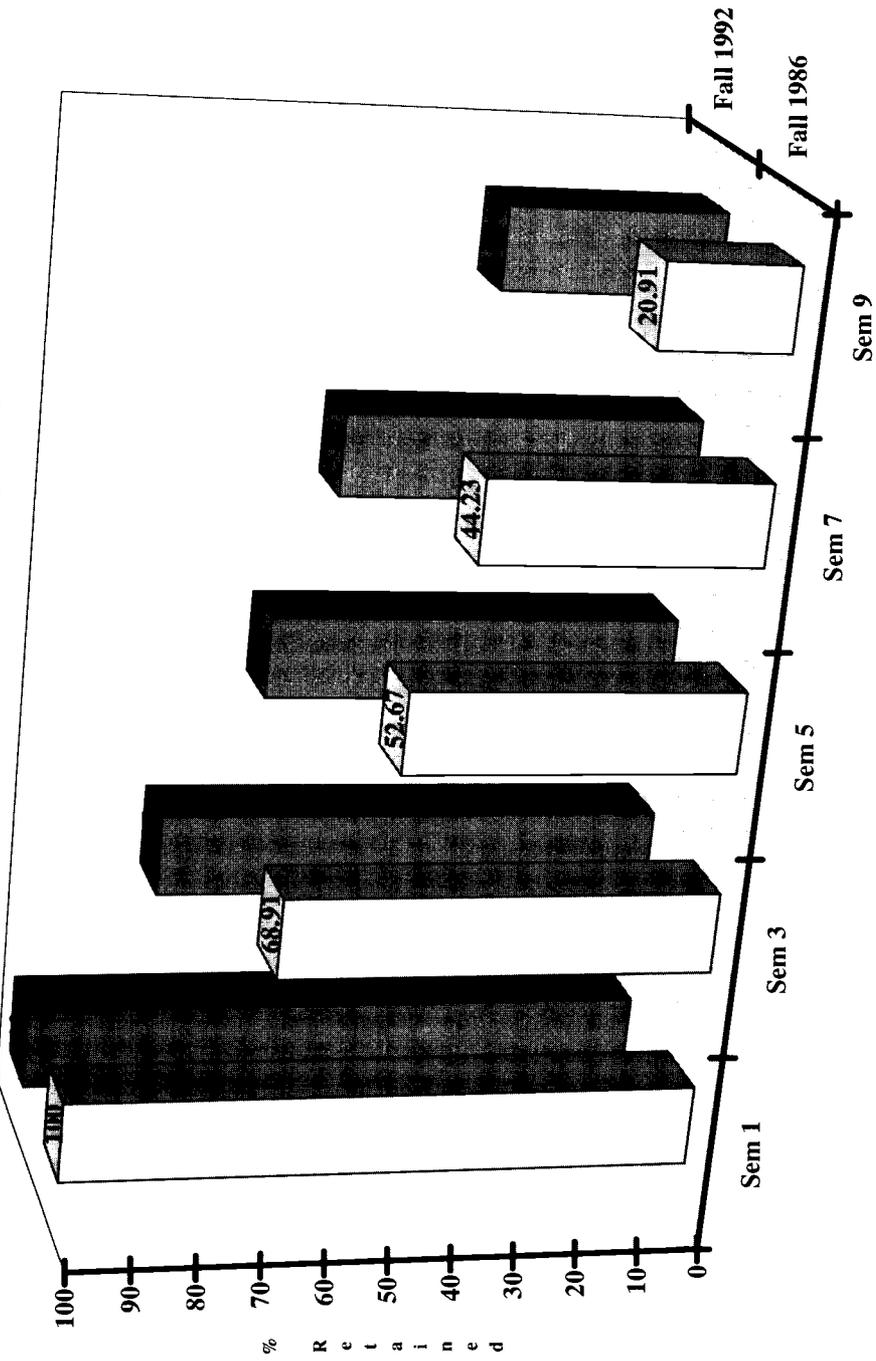


Appendix B fig4

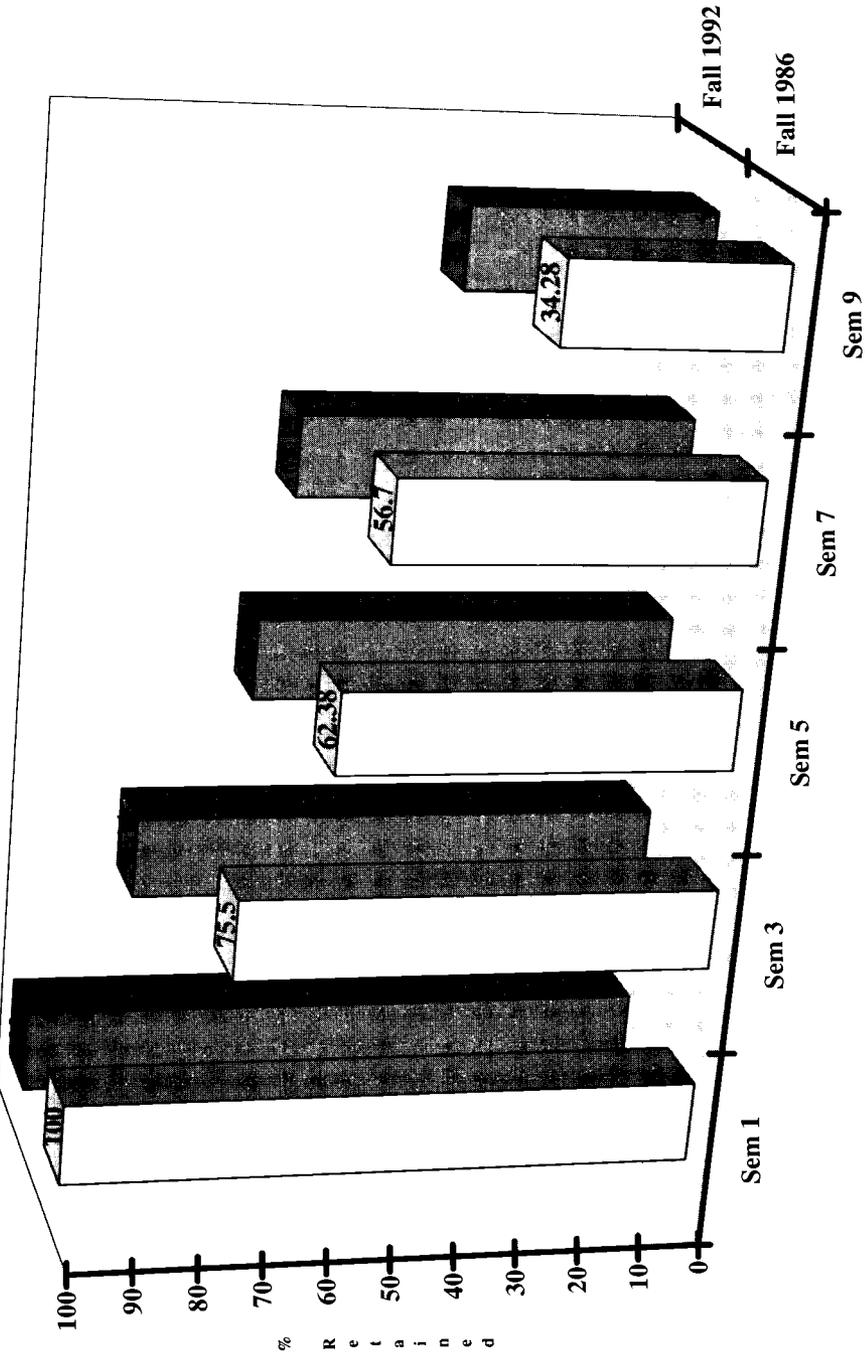
State Colleges and Universities - EOF Retention Comparison,  
Fall 1986 and Fall 1992 Freshman Cohorts



**Independent Colleges and Universities - EOF Retention Comparison,  
Fall 1986 and Fall 1992 Freshman Cohorts**



Public Research Universities - EOF Retention Comparison,  
Fall 1986 and Fall 1992 Freshman Cohorts



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