

RESEARCH REPORT DECEMBER 2023

The Four Years Fallacy

Four-Year vs. Six-Year Bachelor's Degree
Completion Rates



Jenny Nagaoka, Shelby Mahaffie, Alexandra Usher, & Amy Arneson

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Introduction

Students need access to clear and useful data on colleges when they are deciding where to apply and ultimately attend. College completion rates are commonly used by students, families, college counselors, and the public to evaluate the quality of bachelor’s-degree-granting institutions and make decisions about where to enroll. Research has shown that these rates are strongly related to an individual student’s likelihood of attaining a degree.¹ But while nationally about 90% of first-year college students expect to take four or fewer years to complete a degree,² many of the most-used online tools report graduation rates based on how many students complete a degree in six years, not four years (see Table 1).³

In this brief, we examine the extent to which colleges’

four-year completion rates differ from six-year completion rates to determine whether the focus on six-year rates may be limiting the ability of students, families, counselors, and higher education institutions to make well-informed decisions about college enrollment. We know from previous research that many students—particularly first-generation and low-income students—take pathways through college that are non-linear and many take longer than four years to complete.⁴ The consequences of taking longer than four years to complete a degree may lead students to take on unexpected financial obligations, including more student debt, and delay the start of their careers and earnings. Students may also undergo an emotional toll in spending more time on their degree than planned.

TABLE 1
Examples of college completion rates used on free, publicly available college data tools

Website Name	College Completion Rates Reported (disaggregation if available)
College Board BigFuture	6-year
College Insight	4-year, 6-year, and 8-year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes by Pell recipients
College Navigator	4-year, 6-year, and 8-year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 6-year by gender and race/ethnicity
College Results	6-year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By race/ethnicity and gender
College Rover	4-year and 6-year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4-year for gender and first-generation status • 6-year for race/ethnicity
College Scorecard	8-year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pell recipients

Note: Website information as of October 10, 2023.

1 Allensworth & Clark (2020); Roderick, Holsapple, Clark, & Kelley-Kemple (2018).
 2 Stolzenberg et al. (2020).
 3 Most tools and other resources use the numbers colleges provide annually to the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) for the Integrated

Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). IPEDS includes both four-year and six-year completion rates. The completion of all IPEDS surveys is mandatory for colleges that participate in or are applicants for participation in any federal student financial aid program (such as Pell grants).
 4 Nagaoka, Lee, Usher, & Seeskin (2021).

This brief presents four-year and six-year college completion trends for 2004–14 Chicago Public School (CPS) graduates. We then present patterns of bachelor’s degree completion across student characteristics and institutions for 2012–14 CPS graduates who made an immediate transition to a bachelor’s-degree-granting institution after graduating from high school.^{5,6}

By looking at these patterns of bachelor’s degree completion, we hope to better understand whether the information provided by four-year rates and six-year rates is useful for all students’ assessments of college options, regardless of their high schools and backgrounds.

Specifically, this brief asks and answers three questions:

1. How many immediate college enrollees⁷ completed a bachelor’s degree within four vs. six years?
2. For bachelor’s degree completers who took longer than four years, how many terms were they enrolled before completing their degree?
3. How different were four-year and six-year bachelor’s degree completion rates:
 - a. By college attended?
 - b. By high school attended?
 - c. By student characteristics?

5 We do not use eight-year completion rates because the six- and eight-year rates are similar. The eight-year and six-year completion rates for first-time, full-time students starting in 2011 were similar, 61% and 63%.

6 Unlike the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) definition used for IPEDS, we include both full-time and part-time students in our completion rates due to data limitations. Because our focus is on CPS, we limit our sample to all recent high school graduates, rather than any first-time college

student who enrolled in the fall term. We used National Student Clearinghouse data to identify students’ college enrollment and college completion. Nagaoka & Mahaffie (2020) highlights limitations of the NSC data, including the unreliability of the fulltime and part-time status variable.

7 Throughout this brief, we use the term “immediate college enrollees” to refer to CPS graduates who made an immediate transition in the summer or fall after high school completion to a bachelor’s-degree-granting institution.

Findings

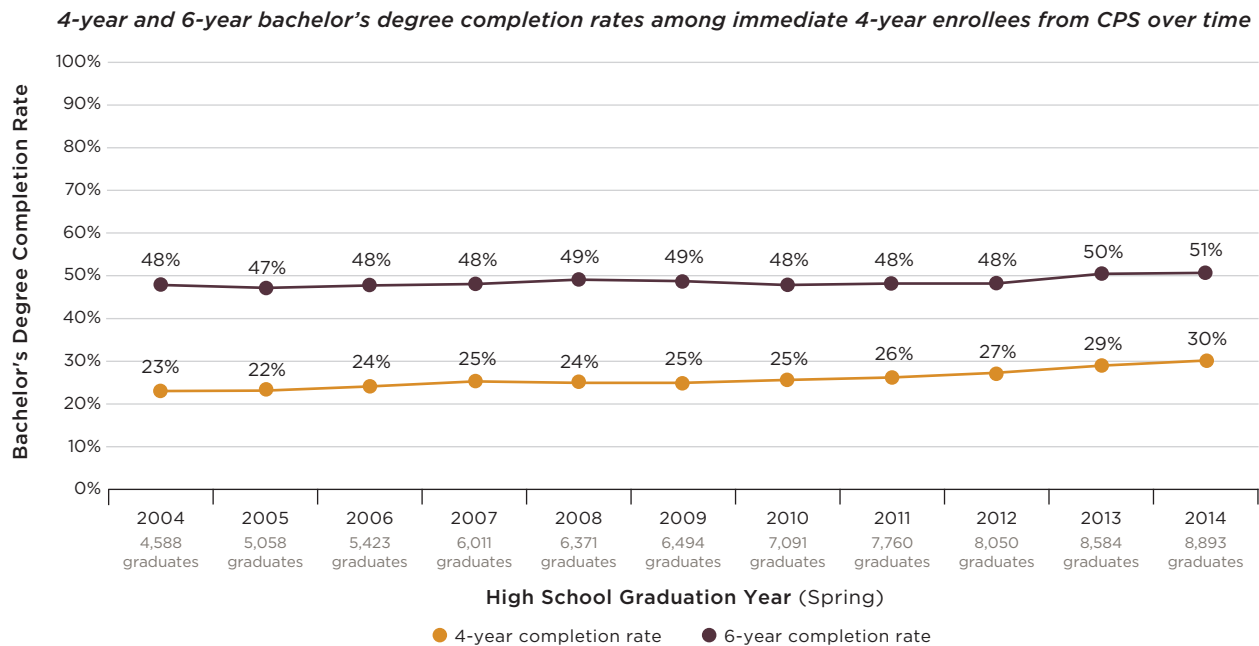
1. How many college enrollees completed a bachelor’s degree within four vs. six years?

The two college completion rates (the four-year rate and the six-year rate) paint different pictures of bachelor’s degree completion for CPS graduates. Among 2014 CPS graduates who immediately enrolled in a bachelor’s-degree-granting institution, fewer than one-third of students completed a bachelor’s degree within four years (30%); however, the proportion of students completing rose to over one-half when we extended the time period to six years (51%; see Figure 1). This difference also exists nationally: the national four-year completion rate for 2014 college enrollees was 47%, while the six-year rate was 64%.⁸

CPS graduates’ four-year bachelor’s degree completion rates have increased by 7 percentage points over the past 10 years, even as the number of college enrollees nearly doubled from 4,588 in 2004 to 8,893 in 2014. The six-year completion rate has shown a more modest 3 percentage point increase. Bachelor’s degree completers from the high school class of 2014 were more likely to have completed their degree in four or fewer years than bachelor’s degree completers from the class of 2004, but the difference between the four-year and six-year rates remained notable.

FIGURE 1

Four-year bachelor’s degree completion rates increased over the past 10 years, but remain much lower than six-year rates



Note: Year labels show the year in which a cohort of students graduated from high school and immediately enrolled in a bachelor’s-degree-granting institution by the following fall.

⁸ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

(IPEDS), Winter 2020–21, Graduation Rates component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 326.10.

2. For bachelor’s degree completers who took longer than 4 years, how many terms were they enrolled before completing?

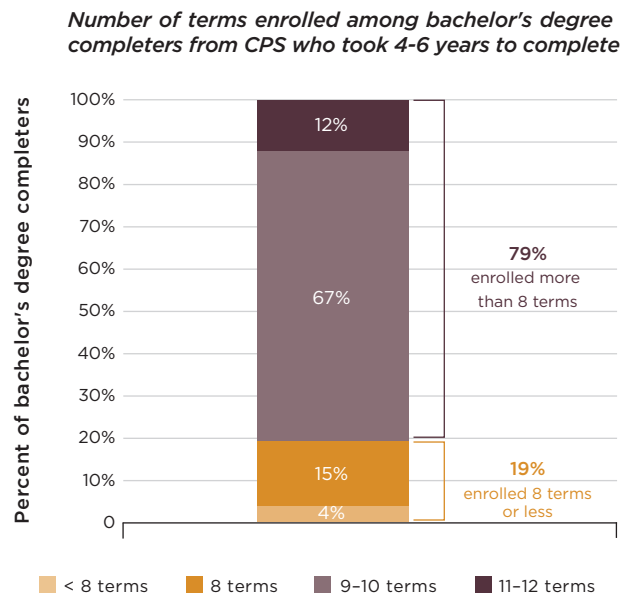
When students take more time to complete a bachelor’s degree, they face costs related to tuition, other school expenses, and delayed entry into the workforce. However, the nature of these costs differs depending on whether students are **A)** enrolled and paying for only eight terms, but spread across more than four years, or **B)** taking more than eight terms to complete. The underlying reasons for these two scenarios differ, and therefore require different strategies to address them. Students who completed within eight terms but did so in longer than four years may have encountered financial or personal challenges that led them to take a leave from college. On the other hand, students who took more than eight terms may have done so because they took non-credit bearing courses, changed colleges and were unable to transfer credits, or because they accumulated fewer credits per term than needed for on-time, four-year completion in their major.

When we look at the number of terms enrolled for 2012–14 CPS graduates who took longer than four years to complete a bachelor’s degree, about one-fifth of students were in the first group: 15% were enrolled for exactly eight terms, and an additional 4% completed in fewer than 8 terms. All of these students took at least one term off, but completed within the equivalent of four years of enrollment (see **Figure 2**). The majority of students took more than 8 terms to complete a bachelor’s degree—about 67% of students needed one or two extra

terms (completing in nine or 10 terms), and an additional 12% of students took considerably longer (11 or 12 terms). For a complete description of how terms were categorized, see the Appendix.

FIGURE 2

Most students who completed a bachelor’s degree in more than four years were actively enrolled in college for more than eight total terms



Note: This figure only includes students who enrolled in a bachelor’s-degree-granting institution by the fall immediately following their graduation from high school in 2012–14, and did not complete a bachelor’s degree in four years, but did complete in six years (5,447 students). The terms included in a student’s total count includes fall and spring enrollments in both community colleges and bachelor’s-degree-granting institutions. Component rates, as labeled, do not sum to 100 due to rounding.

3. How different were four-year and six-year completion rates by college?

Figure 1 (on page 1) shows the differences between overall four-year and six-year completion rates for CPS graduates, but what do these differences look like at the college level? Do the two rates tell two different stories about what a student’s experience might look like if they were to enroll in one college vs. another?

Both the four-year and six-year college completion rates for 2012–14 CPS graduates varied widely by college, as we would expect given the wide variation in student characteristics, college selectivity, and institutional

resources. At most colleges, the four-year completion rates were much lower than six-year rates, mirroring the overall trend showing in **Figure 1** on p.1. Notably, *the difference* between the four-year and six-year completion rates also varied greatly by college.

Figure 3 shows the 41 colleges most commonly attended by CPS graduates; each dot represents a college’s four-year and six-year graduation rates.

For example, a student looking at an online tool considering College C and College D would see that

they both have six-year completion rates slightly above 80%. However, College C has a four-year completion rate of 44% and College D has a four-year completion rate of 71%—a difference of 27 percentage points that would not be reflected on most college search tools for students considering both colleges.

Two colleges can also have similar four-year completion rates, but very different six-year rates. For example, College A and College B have very similar four-year completion rates around 25%. But at College A, the six-year rate is very similar to the four-year rate (26% vs. 23%), while at College B, the six-year completion

rate is almost 40 percentage points higher than the four-year rate (65% vs. 26%). A student looking only at four-year completion rates would not see this important difference in prior students' ultimate outcomes.

The notable differences across these two pairs of colleges underscore the importance of looking at both the four-year and six-year completion rates for a given college. Table 1 on p.1, gives examples of websites that show both four-year and six-year institutional graduation rates for bachelor's-degree-granting institutions across the country.

FIGURE 3
CPS graduates' four-year and six-year completion rates varied significantly by college attended



Note: Each dot represents the four-year and six-year completion rates of the CPS graduates enrolled at one post-secondary institution. Only students who enrolled in a bachelor's-degree-granting institution by the fall immediately following their graduation from high school in 2012-14 are included. All colleges in which at least 100 combined CPS graduates enrolled from the 2012, 2013, and 2014 CPS graduating classes are included. Forty-one institutions met this criteria and are included, representing a total of 25,847 students. To focus on the patterns of four-year and six-year completion across institutions, rather than individual institutional rates, we do not name higher education institutions in this figure. Table 1 provides options for finding publicly available four-year and six-year institutional graduation rates.

How to read Figure 3: The position of each dot represents a college's four-year (on the horizontal axis) and six-year (on the vertical axis) completion rates for 2012-14 CPS graduates who enrolled immediately after high school graduation. A dot on the diagonal line shows the same four-year and six-year completion rates; a dot close to the diagonal line shows similar rates. A dot much higher than the diagonal line shows a six-year completion rate that is much higher than the four-year rate.

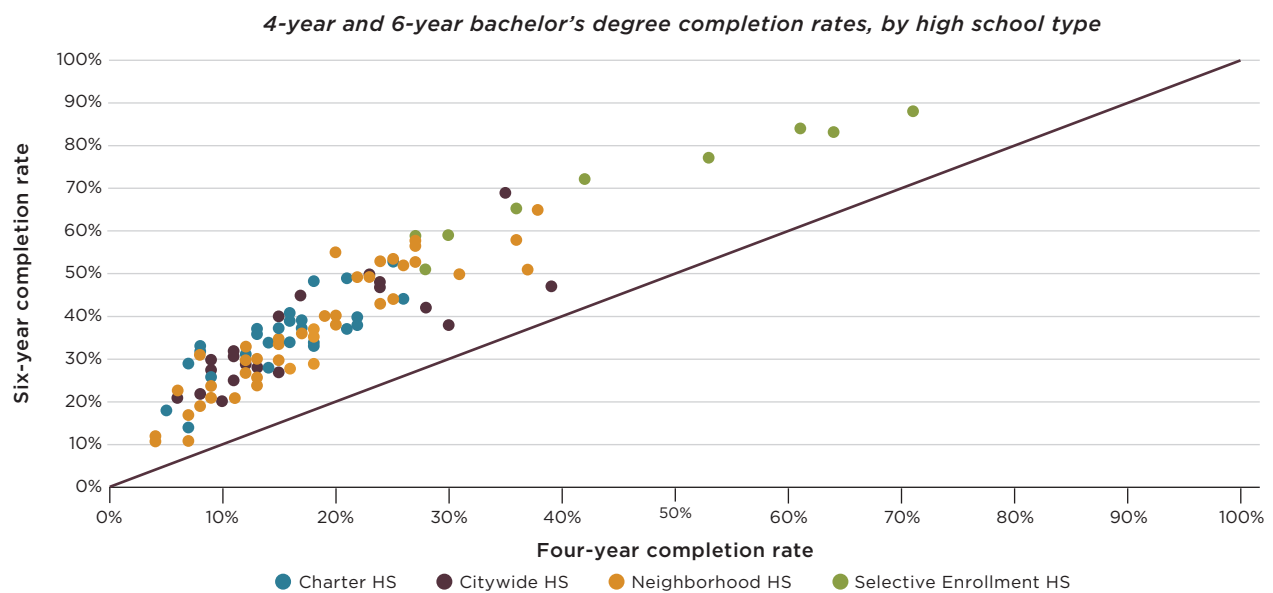
4. How different were four-year and six-year completion rates by high school attended?

We have seen in previous research that CPS students who graduated from different high schools had different eventual college completion rates.⁹ Are there also differences between the four-year and six-year college completion rates for graduates across CPS high schools? Or is it the case that students from certain high schools tend to have similar four-year and six-year rates because most complete college within four years?

When we compared bachelor's degree completion rates for CPS students by high school attended, there was a difference between the four-year and six-year

completion rates for the graduating classes of most high schools (see Figure 4). This held true across all high school types, including selective enrollment high schools (SEHSs). Selective enrollment high schools did have higher overall completion rates, which is not surprising, given their students have to meet competitive high school admissions standards and SEHSs tend to enroll fewer low-income, first-generation college students. But even these graduates had six-year completion rates that were as much as 30 percentage points higher than four-year completion rates.

FIGURE 4
Across CPS high schools, graduates were much more likely to complete a bachelor's degree in six years vs. four years



Note: Each dot represents one CPS high school, and the position of each dot represents the four-year and six-year completion rates for CPS graduates from that high school who enrolled immediately in a bachelor's-degree-granting institution; 25,527 students are represented here. All 110 CPS high schools with at least 20 graduates per year for the cohorts 2012-14 are included. Only students who enrolled in a bachelor's-degree-granting institution by the fall immediately following their graduation from high school in 2012-14 are included in four-year and six-year completion rates.

How to read Figure 4: Each dot represents a CPS high school. The position of each dot represents the four-year (on the horizontal axis) and six-year (on the vertical axis) completion rates for 2012-14 CPS graduates from that school who enrolled immediately in a bachelor's-degree-granting institution after high school graduation. A dot on the diagonal line shows the same four-year and six-year completion rates; a dot close to the diagonal line shows similar rates. A dot much higher than the diagonal line shows a six-year completion rate that is much higher than the four-year rate.

⁹ See the [To&Through High School Tool](#) for specific rates, which varied from 0-88% for 2016 high school graduates.

And at more than one-half of CPS high schools, fewer than 20% of 2012–14 graduates who made an immediate transition to a bachelor’s-degree-granting institution completed in four years; for many, the rate was below 10%. At the same time, the six-year completion rates for students from these high schools varied widely—sometimes

more than double the four-year rates—meaning that while many students took longer than four years to complete a bachelor’s degree, they did complete a degree.

The district-wide trend of higher six-year than four-year rates shown in **Figure 1** on p.1, was mirrored across almost all high schools in CPS.

5. How different were four-year and six-year completion rates by student characteristics?

We examined the differences between four-year and six-year completion rates by student characteristics (high school GPA, ACT scores, and race/ethnicity and gender) for 2012–14 CPS graduates who immediately enrolled in college (see **Figure 5**). We disaggregated data by race/ethnicity and gender to understand which students faced more barriers to bachelor’s degree completion, how different groups of students were affected by differences in four-year and six-year rates, and where different strategies and supports may be needed. We report these numbers to contribute to critical examinations about whether high schools and colleges are making progress toward fostering equitable outcomes, and how high schools and colleges can further change practices and policies that contribute to inequitable outcomes.

Student academic characteristics (GPA and ACT scores¹⁰)

We find that student groups with different academic credentials also had differences between their four- and six-year completion rates, ranging from 15 to 25 percentage points. Even students with strong academic qualifications (GPAs between 3.5 and 4.0 and ACT scores over 24) had large differences between their four-year and six-year completion rates, around 22 percentage points.

Further, prior research has shown that college choice is consequential for students with the highest qualifications, because having high qualifications does not ensure students will complete college.¹¹ College enrollees with low/mid-GPA and test scores (a GPA between 2.5 and 2.9; an ACT score between 18 and 20) had a roughly 20 percentage points difference: their four-year completion rate was around 20% and a six-year rate around 40%. Students with low GPAs and low ACT scores were unlikely to complete college within four years; their four-year completion rate was around 10% or lower.

Student race/ethnicity¹² and gender¹³

The four-year completion rates for Black young men (13%), Black young women (20%), and Latino young men (23%) were lower than the rates for their peers. The six-year completion rates for these groups were around 20 percentage points higher. Around 40% of Asian and White young men, and more than 50% of Asian and White young women, completed within four years. The difference between the four-year and six-year completion rates for Asian and White students ranged between 22 and 31 percentage points. Thus, the *differences* between the four-year rates and six-year rates were generally similar across student groups.

¹⁰ We used ACT scores in this analysis because CPS did not switch to administering the SAT until 2017.

¹¹ Roderick et al. (2008).

¹² We urge readers to examine college completion rates disaggregated by race/ethnicity and gender within the context of structural oppression—particularly the history and present reality of systemic racism—while moving through the stages of questioning needed to affect change. We hope that readers will interrogate how disparities in attainment are due to issues of equity—particularly racial equity—within the district and higher education institutions, in addition to the broader context of systemic racism in which schools are situated. These

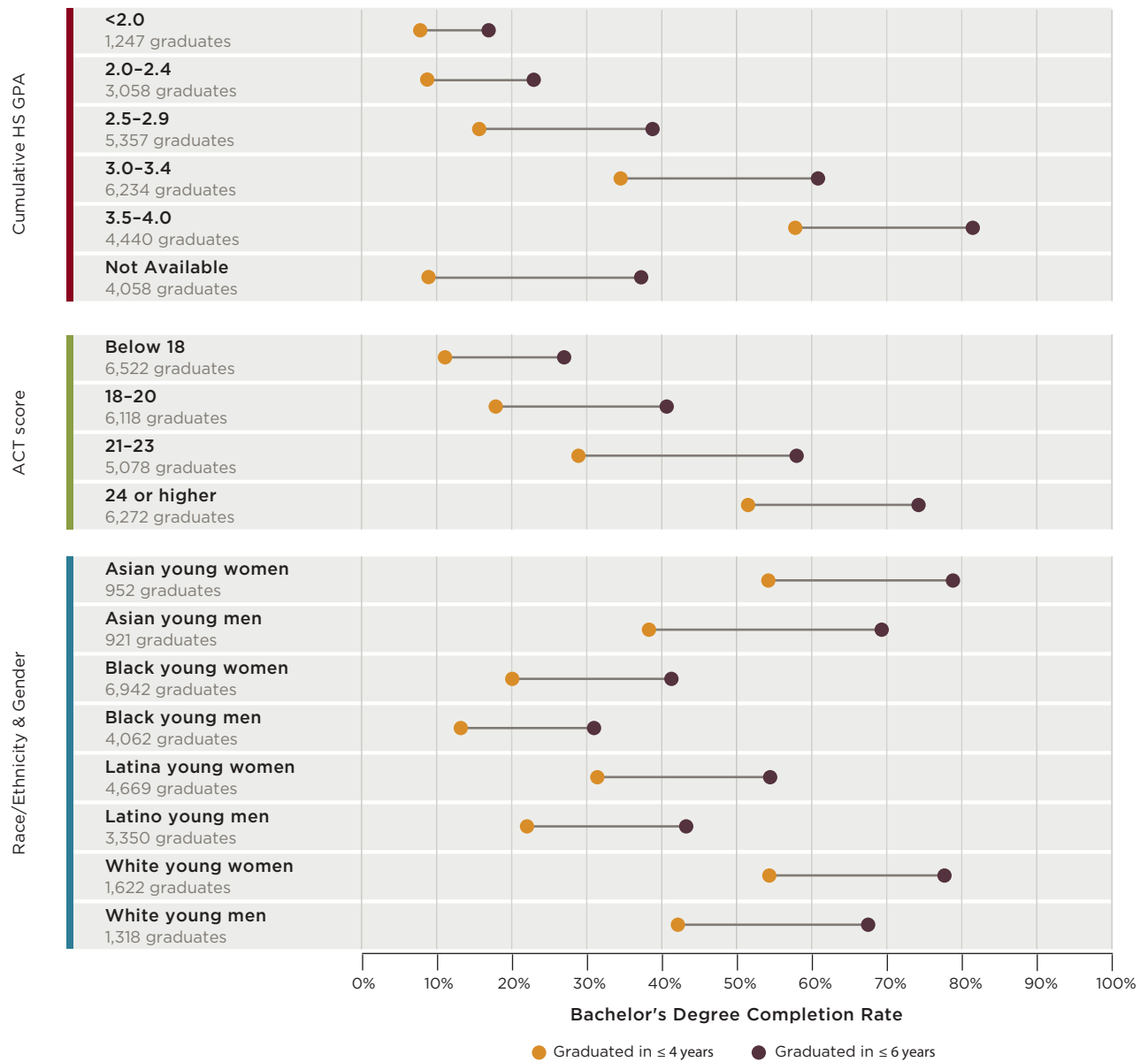
data represent individual students who face and overcome barriers to educational attainment every day. Students can bring a wealth of lived experience to bear on the inequitable policies and practices that prevent CPS students from reaching their full potential.

¹³ Historically, data has been collected in a way that groups students into one of two categories: male and female. Starting in school year 2020-2021, the categories in the CPS demographic questionnaire were: male, female, and non-binary. We hope in the future to be able to report data that more fully and accurately describes the identities of CPS students.

FIGURE 5

Bachelor's degree completion rates differed widely based on student characteristics

4-year and 6-year bachelor's degree completion rates among immediate 4-year enrollees from CPS, by student characteristics



Note: This figure includes students who graduated from CPS in 2012–14 and enrolled in a bachelor's-degree-granting institution by the fall immediately following their graduation from high school; 25,527 students are represented here. Some students are missing ACT scores and are therefore not present in the ACT disaggregation. Almost all students missing GPAs attended charter schools. Many CPS charter schools use different student information systems from the system used by non-charter schools. Because each system varies in the way that it stores information about courses, credits teachers, periods, grades, and other data, creating linkages across systems is difficult, and our data archive currently does not include records of charter school students' course performance. We are therefore unable to report charter students' GPAs. All immediate four-year enrollees are included in this figure, from both charter and non-charter schools—including those who enrolled at colleges not represented in Figure 3. We do not show numbers for Multiracial and Native American students because fewer than 100 students identified in each of those categories, making it difficult to reliably interpret rates.

Implications

The current reality is that many CPS graduates who enroll in bachelor's degree programs and colleges take more than four years to complete a degree. We knew the term “four-year college” is a fallacy for many students nationally; these findings show the term is a fallacy for students from Chicago, too. This is true across all groups of students—students with different demographic and academic characteristics, students graduating from different high schools, and students who enroll in different colleges.

These findings from Chicago suggest that:

1. Online college search tools should prominently display both four-year and six-year completion rates.

The proliferation of online tools that provide information on college characteristics has transformed how students, families, and counselors make decisions about college enrollment. However, the emphasis most online tools place on six-year college completion rates leaves out the key information provided by four-year completion rates, namely the likelihood of on-time bachelor's degree completion. It is also essential that online tools include rates disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, and Pell eligibility so that students can make informed decisions based on how colleges serve students like them, and that policymakers can evaluate colleges on how well they serve students with different backgrounds.

Counselors and advisors can make sure that

students are aware that taking longer than four years to complete college is a common experience. For example, almost 40% of the CPS class of 2014 who completed a bachelor's degree took longer than four years to do so. At the same time, counselors and advisors should also prepare students with information and strategies that will allow them to make a more informed choice of college and eventually graduate in a time frame that aligns with their goals, as well as guidance on how to return to college and complete. As more and more low-income, first-generation students enroll in college, it is particularly important that they have the information necessary to make consequential decisions about both where to enroll and how to reach college completion.

2. High schools need to prepare students academically and provide information and support to help more students complete college within four years

While four-year completion rates among CPS graduates have been steadily increasing over the past ten years, they remained low, at 30%, for the class of 2014. In many ways, this was a remarkable accomplishment as the number of four-year college enrollees nearly

doubled from 4,588 to 8,893. This historic shift means that the role of high schools has changed from needing to prepare and support a small number of students to go to college and be successful to ensuring that all students have the potential to

complete a bachelor's degree if they choose to pursue one. CPS has done much to enact changes at the district level and changes in high schools to improve access to college so that more students enroll. The next stage is deepening current efforts to improve

academic preparation and support around college choice and financing college so that the trend of more CPS graduates completing college with a bachelor's degree continues in the future.

3. Colleges need to examine and improve their policies, practices, and cultures to ensure that more students are completing degrees, and completing them on the expected timeline.

The differences between four-year and six-year completion rates also illuminate a critical way of assessing how well colleges are supporting their students, for both improvement efforts within colleges and for holding them accountable for the outcomes of their students. Different colleges serve very different students, so we acknowledge it is not realistic to expect similar completion rates across colleges, nor for all colleges to have similar differences between their four- and six-year rates. However, all colleges should strive to ensure that their students are completing their degrees, and doing so in as little time as possible, as the financial

and psychological consequences of struggling to complete college can last well into adulthood. Colleges need to interrogate their practices and policies to better understand why students are taking longer than expected, and what can be changed to ensure that more students graduate in the time frame they expect. Further, both four-year and six-year college completion should be key metrics for policymakers and higher-education institutions to evaluate their performance; adding a temporal dimension of completion to the data conversation can provide critical nuance to better develop policies and support structures for completion.

4. Colleges need to improve their support for Black young men as they interrogate their practices.

We have noted the importance of ensuring that students graduate, and particularly graduate on their expected timeline, but it is also essential to emphasize that the need for support and change in colleges is not the same for all students. As students of increasingly diverse backgrounds enroll, colleges need to reflect on which practices and policies that served students well in the past do not work for the changing population of students on their campuses. In particular, colleges are failing to effectively serve Black young men. Among CPS graduates who immediately enrolled in

a bachelor's-degree-granting institution, only 13% of Black young men graduated within four years and only 31% graduated within six years. The impact of more time in college, through increased student loan debt and reduced earning potential, has a particularly large long-term impact on students of color by reducing their opportunity to build generational wealth. It is imperative that colleges take a mirror to their policies, practices, and culture to understand why so many Black young men are not completing the degrees they started when they arrived on college campuses.

5. Some colleges are already implementing effective, evidence-based practices that other colleges can learn from.

Research on existing practices in higher education has provided evidence that highlights some ways to help more students graduate and address challenges around financing college, academic preparation, personal and family responsibilities, and the college context. Evidence-based approaches that colleges are currently using include:

- Providing a point person for students, particularly first-generation college students, who is responsible for identifying and connecting students to intensive, holistic wrap-around supports (Fulcher Dawson, Kearney, & Sullivan, 2020; Schneider & Clark, 2018).
- Implementing strong, proactive academic advising, such as intrusive advising programs that support student success in courses and ensure they take enough credits to graduate in four years (Thomas, 2020).
- Offering non-tuition financial support through emergency loans, covering transportation costs and college fees, free use of textbooks, and stipends (Fulcher Dawson et al., 2020; Schneider & Clark, 2018).
- Placing students in college-level courses, with co-requisite support if needed, rather than remedial courses (Partnership for College Completion, 2019; Schneider & Clark, 2018).

- Using early alert systems based on data mining and technology to identify and connect students to support services when they encounter challenges (Wood, Sáenz, & Campos, 2023; Schneider & Clark, 2018).
- Providing disaggregated data to faculty and staff to highlight patterns in students' experiences and outcomes and develop strategies and policies to address challenges (Wood et al., 2023).

Importantly, research has shown that programs or reforms that work in one college often do not work at another college, because of specifics of implementation, characteristics of the student body, or aspects of the college context. But beyond these specific practices, colleges with higher four-year graduation rates typically recognize the range of challenges many students face in completing college and therefore take a comprehensive and holistic approach to supporting students and changing college culture.¹⁴

¹⁴ Schneider & Clark (2018).

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Appendix

Assigning Student Enrollments to Terms

While most higher education institutions operate on the semester system, some use academic calendars that divide the year into terms or quarters. There are also instances where we see enrollments of exceptionally short or long lengths. To address these issues, we developed a series of decision rules, explained here, that governed how we categorized and standardized different types of enrollments in National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data and ultimately assigned them to terms.

We consider three terms per academic year: summer, fall, and spring. For example, summer 2015, fall 2015, and spring 2016 are all part of the 2015–16 academic year.

To deal with enrollment records of different lengths, we divided enrollments into two groups (enrollments of fewer than 28 days are dropped from the data):

- **For enrollments between 28 and 180 days:**
 - For enrollments we used the start/end date matrix “Term Decisions - non-Withdrawals” (see **Figure A.1**) to determine whether the enrollment was a fall, spring, or summer enrollment, based on its term start and term end date values.
 - For enrollments with a status of W (withdrawn) or A (leave of absence), we used the start/end date matrix “Term Decisions - Withdrawals” (see **Figure A.2**) to determine whether the enrollment was a fall, spring, or summer enrollment, based on its term start and term end date values.
- **All enrollments over 180 days were assigned to exactly two terms, according to the following process:**
 - We created an arbitrary end date set 90 days after the start date.
 - We used the start/end date matrix “Term Decisions - non-Withdrawals”, using the new end date that is three months after the start date.

- We duplicated the original record and assigned it to the term immediately after the original term.
- But we only duplicated once, even for records that spanned for time lengths that appeared to be more than two terms.

In the NSC data, some students had multiple enrollments per term. We included only one enrollment per student per term in our dataset. In cases in which a student matched to multiple enrollments in one term, we selected only one to include according to the following process:

- **We deprioritized missing status** under every enrollment with a non-W/A enrollment status.
- **We removed duplicates** by keeping only one record for each student/term/institution combination.
- **We prioritized whether or not the enrollment was in Illinois** (as those students were more likely to correspond to CPS graduates), then two-year or four-year status (prioritizing four-year enrollments), then enrollment status.
 - Prioritization order of enrollment statuses: F (full-time), Q (quarter-time), H (half-time), L (less than half-time), [blank], A (leave of absence), W (withdrawn), D (deceased).

TABLE A.1

Term Decisions: Non-Withdrawals

x.1 = day 1 of month through day 15

x.2 = day 16 of month through end of month

Term End Date:																								
Term Start Date:	Jan.1	Jan.2	Feb.1	Feb.2	Mar.1	Mar.2	Apr.1	Apr.2	May.1	May.2	Jun.1	Jun.2	Jul.1	Jul.2	Aug.1	Aug.2	Sep.1	Sep.2	Oct.1	Oct.2	Nov.1	Nov.2	Dec.1	Dec.2
Jan.1	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring											
Jan.2		Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring											
Feb.1			Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring									
Feb.2				Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring								
Mar.1					Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring							
Mar.2						Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring						
Apr.1							Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring					
Apr.2								Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	
May.1									Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	
May.2										Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	
Jun.1											Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	
Jun.2												Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall
Jul.1													Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall
Jul.2	Fall													Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	
Aug.1	Fall	Fall	Fall												Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	
Aug.2	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall												Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	
Sep.1	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall												Summer	Summer	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	
Sep.2	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall												Summer	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	
Oct.1	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall												Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	
Oct.2	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall												Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	
Nov.1	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring												Fall	Fall	Fall	
Nov.2	Fall	Fall	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring												Fall	Fall	
Dec.1	Fall	Fall	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring													Fall	
Dec.2	Fall	Fall	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring											Fall	

TABLE A.2

Term Decisions: Withdrawals

x.1 = day 1 of month through day 15

x.2 = day 16 of month through end of month

Term End Date:																								
Term Start Date:	Jan.1	Jan.2	Feb.1	Feb.2	Mar.1	Mar.2	Apr.1	Apr.2	May.1	May.2	Jun.1	Jun.2	Jul.1	Jul.2	Aug.1	Aug.2	Sep.1	Sep.2	Oct.1	Oct.2	Nov.1	Nov.2	Dec.1	Dec.2
Jan.1		Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring										
Jan.2			Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring										
Feb.1					Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring								Spring		
Feb.2						Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring										
Mar.1						Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring										
Mar.2							Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring					
Apr.1								Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring					
Apr.2									Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Summer	Summer			
May.1										Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer			
May.2											Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer			
Jun.1												Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Fall	Fall		
Jun.2													Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall
Jul.1														Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall
Jul.2															Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall
Aug.1	Fall															Summer	Summer	Summer	Summer	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall
Aug.2	Fall	Fall															Summer	Summer	Summer	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall
Sep.1	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall														Summer	Summer	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall
Sep.2	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall														Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall
Oct.1	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall															Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall
Oct.2	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall																Fall	Fall	Fall
Nov.1	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring														Fall	Fall
Nov.2	Fall	Fall	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring													Fall	Fall
Dec.1	Fall	Fall	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring														Fall
Dec.2	Fall	Fall	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring														Fall

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

JENNY NAGAOKA is the Deputy Director of the UChicago Consortium, where she has conducted research for nearly 20 years. Her research interests focus on policy and practice in urban education reform, particularly using data to connect research and practice and examining the school environments and instructional practices that promote college readiness and success. She has co-authored numerous journal articles and reports, including studies of college readiness, noncognitive factors, the transition from high school to post-secondary education, and authentic intellectual instruction. She is the lead researcher on the To&Through Project, a project that provides educators, policymakers, and families with research, data, and training on the milestones that matter most for college success. She is the lead author of *Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework*, which draws on research and practice evidence to build a coherent framework of the foundational factors for young adult success, and investigates their development from early childhood through young adulthood and how they can be supported through developmental experiences and relationships.

SHELBY MAHAFFIE is a Research Analyst at the UChicago Consortium. In this role, she conducts data analysis for the To&Through Project, which provides educators and families with data and research on improving students' college access and attainment. Prior to joining the UChicago Consortium, she worked as a research assistant at the

University of Chicago Urban Labs, where she contributed to research on youth employment and workforce development programs in Chicago.

ALEXANDRA USHER is an Associate Director of the To&Through Project and a Senior Research Analyst at the UChicago Consortium. Alexandra leads the research and data processes that inform the To&Through Project, which aims to increase the percentage of Chicago Public School students who graduate from high school and earn a college degree, and to share the learning from Chicago with education stakeholders across the country. Prior to this role, Alexandra led data strategy for the AUSL network of schools, and spent time at Chicago Public Schools and the Center on Education Policy. She is an Education Pioneers and Fulbright alumna.

AMY ARNESON is a Senior Research Associate at the UChicago Consortium, leading and supporting mixed-methods research projects with advanced quantitative analysis, visualization, and modeling. She focuses on conducting rigorous, meaningful, and timely research and, importantly, making the results accessible so that they can be used by educators to improve college and career outcomes for public school students. Amy has worked in the education field for 15 years, first as a high school math and statistics teacher. Her time in the classroom ignited and continues to fuel her passion for improving educational systems and student outcomes.



The To&Through Project In collaboration with educators, policymakers, and communities, the To&Through Project aims to significantly increase high school and postsecondary completion for under-resourced students of color in Chicago and around the country by providing education stakeholders with research-based data on students' educational experiences and facilitating dialogue on its implications for adult practice. At the To&Through Project, we:

- Conduct research and publish data on what matters for the attainment of Chicago Public Schools students (in collaboration with the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research).
- Design data tools and resources for education stakeholders that make data meaningful and actionable, including the publicly available To&Through Online Tool.
- Foster conversations about what matters most for students' high school and post-secondary success.
- Facilitate a network of middle grades educators committed to building more equitable and supportive educational environments that promote the success of middle grades students in high school and beyond.

The To&Through Project is located at the University of Chicago's Urban Education Institute in the Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice.

This report reflects the interpretation of the authors. Although the UChicago Consortium's Steering Committee provided technical advice, no formal endorsement by these individuals, organizations, the full Consortium, or the To&Through Project, should be assumed.

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SHAZIA MILLER

Mathematica

KAFI MORAGNE-PATTERSON

UChicago Inclusive Economy Lab

NATALIE NERIS

Education Consultant

TALI RAVIV

Center for Childhood Resilience at
Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's
Hospital of Chicago

ELLEN SCHUMER

COFI

REBECCA VONDERLACK-NAVARRO

Latino Policy Forum

ACASIA WILSON FEINBERG

Wilson Feinberg Consultants, LLC

JOHN ZEIGLER

DePaul University

UCHICAGO Consortium on School Research

1313 East 60th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637

T 773.702.3364

F 773.702.2010

@UChiConsortium
consortium.uchicago.edu

OUR MISSION With the goal of supporting stronger and more equitable educational outcomes for students, the UChicago Consortium conducts research of high technical quality that informs and assesses policy and practice in the Chicago Public Schools. We seek to expand communication among researchers, policymakers, practitioners, families, and communities as we support the search for solutions to the challenge of transforming schools. We encourage the use of research in policy action and practice but do not advocate for particular policies or programs. Rather, we help to build capacity for systemic school improvement by identifying what matters most for student success, creating critical indicators to chart progress, and conducting theory-driven evaluation to identify how programs and policies are working.



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