IHEP — INSTITUTE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY
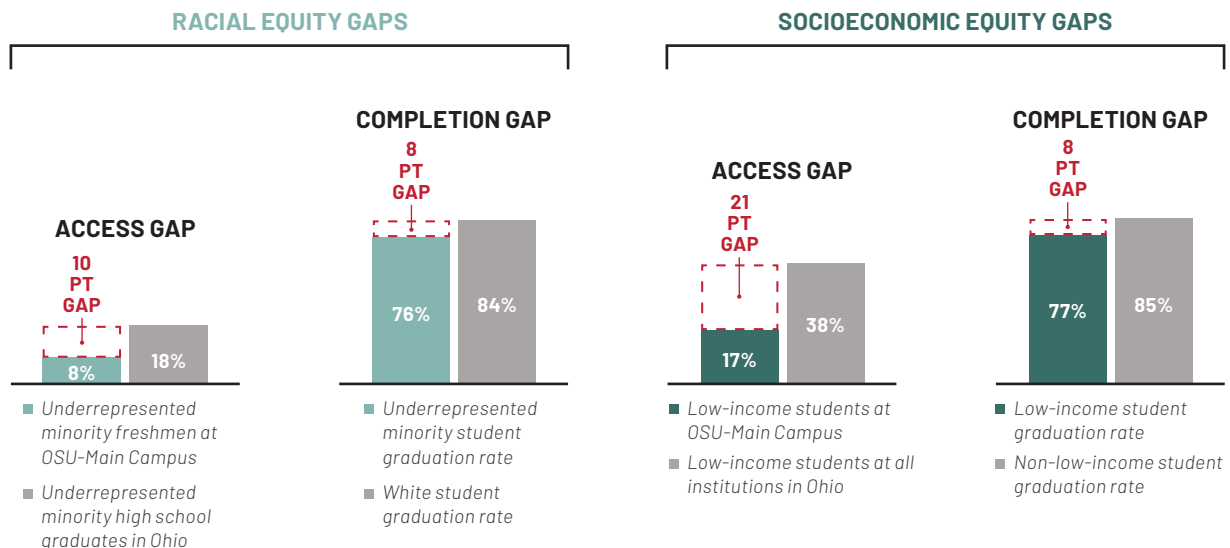
EQUITY FIRST FOR 25 YEARS

Equity Snapshot

The Ohio State University – Main Campus

Public flagship universities were established with a mission to provide an excellent education to their states' residents and are therefore well-positioned to enhance social and economic mobility within their states. Yet in many cases, too few low-income students and students of color have access to these elite colleges and the opportunities they provide. This analysis of racial and socioeconomic equity at The Ohio State University – Main Campus (OSU-Main Campus) finds large and growing gaps in college access, as well as gaps in college completion, by race and socioeconomic status (Figure 1). To serve as a catalyst for mobility and equity in Ohio, OSU-Main Campus must do a better job enrolling and graduating low-income students[1] and students of color.

EQUITY AT A GLANCE

Figure 1. Racial and Socioeconomic Equity Gaps in Access and Completion at OSU-Main Campus, 2016

RACIAL EQUITY GAPS

ACCESS GAP — 10 PT GAP — 8% / 18%
- Underrepresented minority freshmen at OSU-Main Campus
- Underrepresented minority high school graduates in Ohio

COMPLETION GAP — 8 PT GAP — 76% / 84%
- Underrepresented minority student graduation rate
- White student graduation rate

SOCIOECONOMIC EQUITY GAPS

ACCESS GAP — 21 PT GAP — 17% / 38%
- Low-income students at OSU-Main Campus
- Low-income students at all institutions in Ohio

COMPLETION GAP — 8 PT GAP — 77% / 85%
- Low-income student graduation rate
- Non-low-income student graduation rate

Source: Racial equity gaps: IHEP analysis of first-time, full- and part-time undergraduate fall enrollment, 2016 IPEDS data and public high school graduates 2015–16 Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) data retrieved from https://knocking.wiche.edu/data/; IHEP analysis of first-time, full-time undergraduate six-year graduation rate by race/ethnicity, 2016 IPEDS data. Socioeconomic equity gaps: IHEP analysis of first-time, full-time undergraduates receiving Pell Grants at OSU – Main Campus and at public, private not-for-profit, and for-profit two- and four-year Title IV participating institutions in Ohio, 2015–16 IPEDS data; IHEP analysis of first-time, full-time undergraduate six-year graduation rate by Pell receipt, 2016 IPEDS data.

WHO HAS ACCESS TO OSU-MAIN CAMPUS?

RACIAL EQUITY: More students of color attend OSU–Main Campus today than 30 years ago, but Black students are nonetheless more underrepresented compared with the state population than they were 15 years ago. Between 1980 and 2016, the number of underrepresented minority students at OSU–Main Campus increased slightly, despite a decrease in Black student enrollment (Figure 2). See sidebar, "Who are Underrepresented Minority Students?"

Yet during that time, OSU–Main Campus' enrollment of underrepresented minority students failed to keep pace with the growing racial/ethnic diversity in Ohio. Black students made up a growing share of Ohio's high school graduates over the last decade, but Black student representation at OSU–Main Campus fell.[2] In 2001, underrepresented minority enrollment at OSU–Main Campus out-paced racial diversity in the state. By 2016, however, racial gaps between the flagship's freshmen class and the state's high school graduates increased to 10 percentage points—largely due to Black student underrepresentation. While 14 percent of Ohio's high school graduates were Black in spring 2016, just 4 percent of OSU–Main Campus' incoming freshmen were Black that fall (Figure 3).
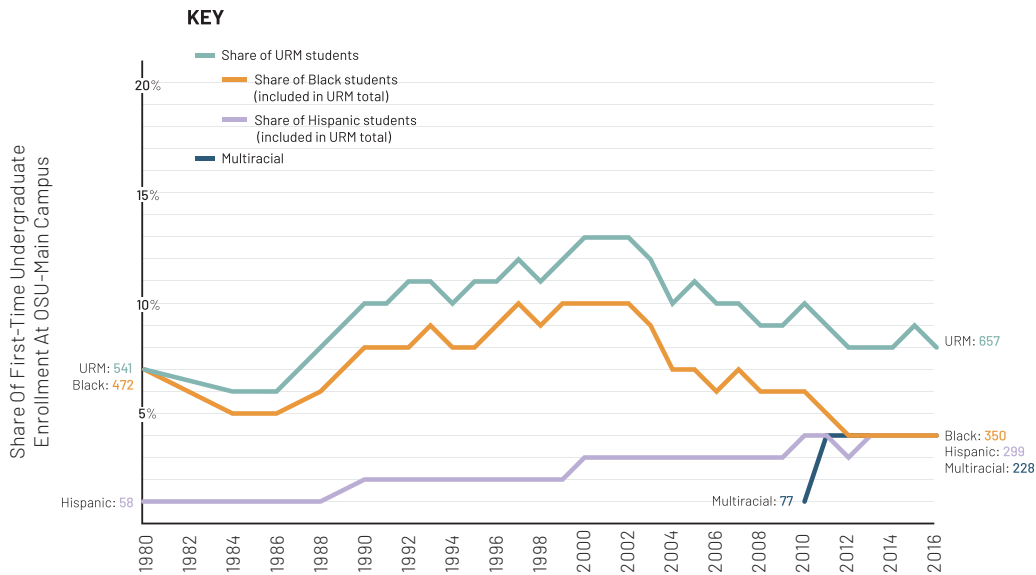

Figure 2.
Change in Racial/Ethnic Diversity at OSU–Main Campus, 1980–2016

Source: IHEP analysis of first-time, full- and part-time undergraduate fall enrollment, 1980–2016 IPEDS data. Note: Cohorts of American Indian/Alaska Native students are too small and therefore not shown separately. However, American Indian/Alaska Native students are included in the underrepresented minority (URM) category.
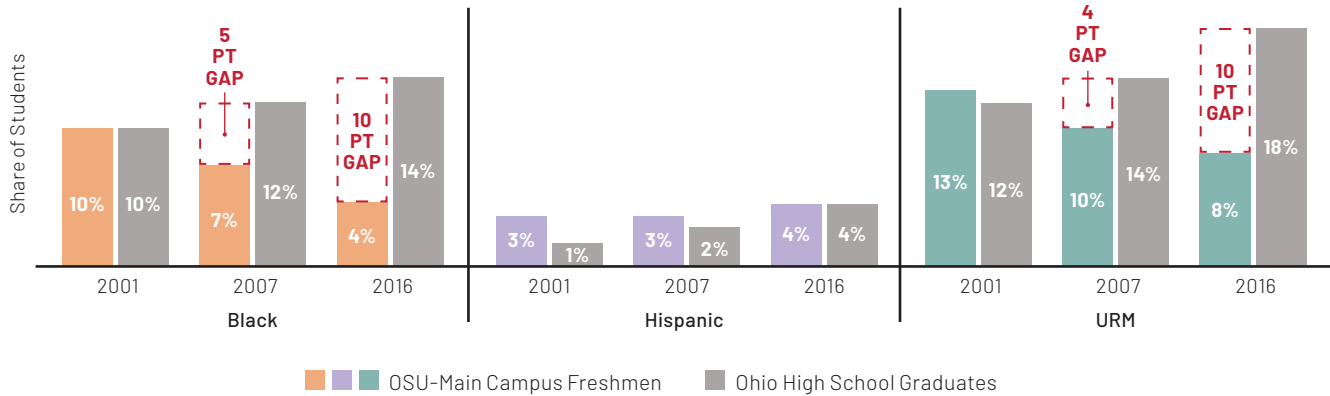
Who are Underrepresented Minority Students?

In this analysis, underrepresented minority (URM) students or students of color refers to Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native students. Other populations, such as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders, Southeast Asian Americans, and other underserved Asian students, also are underrepresented within higher education and deserve attention.[3] However, current data are insufficient to measure access and completion for these critical populations over time.

Also, due to small population sizes and to protect students' anonymity, this paper includes American Indian/Alaska Native students as part of the collective underrepresented minority group but does not discuss or depict them on their own. In 2016, American Indian/Alaska Native students comprised approximately 1 percent of undergraduates in the United States.[4] And just 40 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native students at public four-year colleges earned a degree within six years in 2014, compared with 61 percent of White students.[5]

We urge institutions to examine trends for all underrepresented groups to develop recruitment and intervention strategies targeted to their needs.

Figure 3. Change in Racial/Ethnic Gaps Between Ohio High School Graduates and OSU-Main Campus Undergraduates, 2001, 2007, and 2016

Share of Students

| | Black | | | Hispanic | | | URM | | |

5 PT GAP (2007, Black)
10 PT GAP (2016, Black)
4 PT GAP (2007, URM)
10 PT GAP (2016, URM)

Black: 2001 — 10% / 10%; 2007 — 7% / 12%; 2016 — 4% / 14%
Hispanic: 2001 — 3% / 1%; 2007 — 3% / 2%; 2016 — 4% / 4%
URM: 2001 — 13% / 12%; 2007 — 10% / 14%; 2016 — 8% / 18%

■ OSU-Main Campus Freshmen   ■ Ohio High School Graduates

Source: IHEP analysis of first-time, full- and part-time undergraduate fall enrollment, 2001–16 IPEDS data and public high school grad- uates 2000–01(earliest available data) through 2014–15 Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) data retrieved from https://knocking.wiche.edu/data/. 2000–01 through 2012–13 data on high school graduates are based on the Common Core of Data (CCD), and 2013–14 through 2015–16 high school graduate data are WICHE projections. Note: IPEDS cohorts of American Indian/Alaska Native students are too small and therefore not shown separately. However, American Indian/Alaska Native students are included in the underrepresented minority (URM) category.
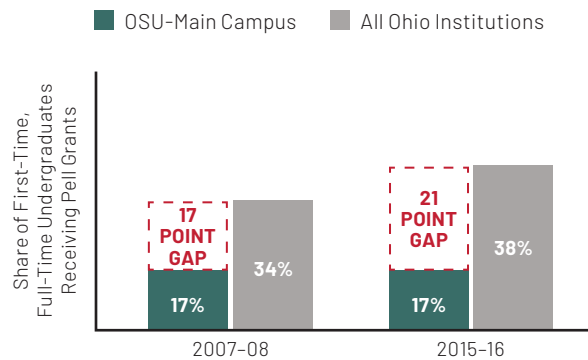
SOCIOECONOMIC EQUITY: Low-income student enrollment at OSU-Main Campus has not kept pace with growing enrollments of low-income college students in Ohio. OSU-Main Campus enrolls low-income students at less than half the rate of all Ohio colleges combined (17 percent compared with 38 percent; Figure 4).

In fact, many students at OSU-Main Campus come from high-income backgrounds. Of OSU-Main Campus students born in 1991, nearly half (46 percent) have parents in the top income quintile with an annual income of $111,000 or more. Only 5 percent come from the bottom income quintile with an annual income of $25,000 or less.[6]

NET PRICE: Price is one barrier to college access for low-income students. In 2015–16, the lowest income in-state students at OSU-Main Campus— those with family incomes of $30,000 or less—paid about $8,450 in college expenses after accounting for grant aid. This means that students with the fewest resources at OSU-Main Campus must devote more than a quarter (28 percent) of their income to college costs.[7]

Figure 4. Change in Socioeconomic Gaps between OSU-Main Campus and All Ohio Colleges, 2007–08 and 2015–16

■ OSU-Main Campus   ■ All Ohio Institutions

Share of First-Time, Full-Time Undergraduates Receiving Pell Grants

2007–08 — 17% / 34% — **17 POINT GAP**
2015–16 — 17% / 38% — **21 POINT GAP**

Source: IHEP analysis of first-time, full-time undergraduates receiving Pell Grants at OSU-Main Campus and at all public, private not-for-profit, and for-profit two- and four-year Title IV participating institutions in Ohio, 2007–08 to 2015–16 IPEDS data.

WHO SUCCEEDS AT OSU-MAIN CAMPUS?

RACIAL EQUITY: OSU-Main Campus has made substantial gains in graduation rates for all students, especially students of color. Yet the flagship must continue to improve completion rates for underrepresented minority students to close persistent equity gaps. Over the last two decades, OSU-Main Campus narrowed graduation-rate gaps between underrepresented minority students and White students by 10 percentage points. During that same time, graduation rates between Hispanic and White students narrowed by 17 percentage points (Figure 5).

Despite these noteworthy improvements, graduation-rate gaps remain—especially for Black students. In 2016, OSU-Main Campus graduated Black students at a rate 10 percentage points lower than White students (Figure 5).

The flagship must continue working to improve completion rates for students of color but do so without increasing admissions requirements that could exclude students poised to benefit from an OSU-Main Campus education. Indeed, increasing selectivity likely contributed to OSU-Main Campus' graduation-rate gains over the past several decades. The flagship became more selective, increasing the median SAT/ACT scores of incoming students by approximately 13 percent between 2002 and 2016.[8] This trend, however, is at odds with the need to enhance socioeconomic and racial diversity.[9]

> OUT-OF-STATE ENROLLMENT: Many flagships have increased out-of-state enrollments, a practice that can hurt socioeconomic or racial diversity.[10] In 2016, one-third (33 percent) of first-time, full-time undergraduates at OSU-Main Campus were from outside of Ohio, an increase of 29 percentage points since 1986.[11]
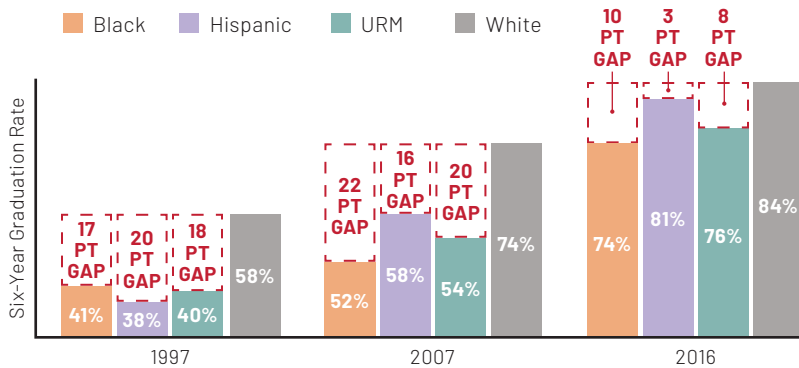
Figure 5. Graduation-Rate Gaps by Race/Ethnicity at OSU-Main Campus, 1997, 2007, 2016

Source: IHEP analysis of first-time, full-time undergraduate six-year graduation rate by race/ethnicity, 1997–2016 IPEDS data. Note: Cohorts of American Indian/Alaska Native students are too small and therefore not shown separately. However, American Indian/Alaska Native students are included in the underrepresented minority (URM) category.

SOCIOECONOMIC EQUITY: Low-income students have a lower chance of graduating from OSU-Main Campus than their higher-income peers. In 2016, OSU-Main Campus graduated 77 percent of low-income students within six years compared with 85 percent of non-low-income students (Figure 6).
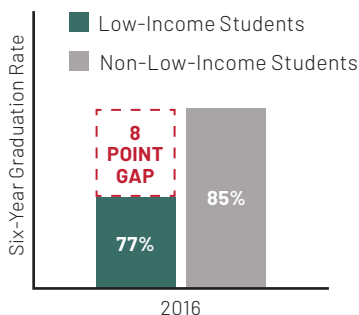
Figure 6. Graduation-Rate Gap by Socioeconomic Status at OSU-Main Campus, 2016

Source: IHEP analysis of first-time, full-time undergraduate six-year graduation rate by Pell receipt, 2016 IPEDS data. Data on graduation rates for low-income students became available in 2016, allowing for analysis of socioeconomic gaps in student success at individual institutions.

EQUITY-MINDED POLICIES AT OSU-MAIN CAMPUS

What institutions do matters.

Colleges and universities must commit to increasing racial and economic diversity and supporting students of color and low-income students through to completion. That commitment requires unwavering leadership, alongside a solid financial investment. Public flagship institutions should design admissions and financial aid policies that encourage historically underrepresented students to gain access and succeed at high levels. The checklist below includes examples of policies that can encourage, or impede, enrollment and success for low-income students and students of color. Interviews with Great Lakes flagship administrators provided context on the motivations behind enacting these policies and how they impact equity on campus.

While designing and implementing the policies below can open more opportunities for students of color and low-income students, this list is illustrative—not exhaustive. Furthermore, fully closing gaps in access and completion is about more than checking a handful of policy boxes. This analysis of OSU-Main Campus polices makes this clear. OSU-Main Campus has implemented a host of equity-minded policies, which is commendable. Yet the institution's enrollment and graduation of students of color and low-income students still lags behind where it could—and should—be.

Institutions need consistent leadership that sets equity goals as top institutional priorities. Doing so compels administrators, faculty, and staff to re-examine and question all policies and practices—large and small. Institution-wide policies matter, but so do the day-to-day decisions made and priorities set on a campus. As a public university founded on the principal of providing an excellent education to Ohioans, OSU-Main Campus has a responsibility to examine its policies and practices with the goal of opening doors of opportunity within the state.

NEED-BASED FINANCIAL AID

OSU-Main Campus does not award more than three-quarters of institutional grant aid based on need. Low-income students are sensitive to the price of college and financial aid offers. Need-based grant aid helps ease the financial burden of attending college, promote affordability, and narrow access inequities.[12] In the 2015–16 academic year, OSU-Main Campus awarded 59 percent of institutional grants ($102.3 million) based on financial need.[13] Among other financial aid programs, OSU-Main Campus offers the Buckeye Affordability Grant, which covers tuition and fees not covered by other gift aid for in-state students who qualify for the Pell Grant. The flagship also offers the President's Affordability Grant, which provides up to $2,250 in need-based financial aid to low- and middle-income Ohio students.[14]

EARLY DECISION

OSU-Main Campus does not accept early decision applications. Binding early decision polices increase the admissions chances of students who have the preparation and financial means to apply early to only one college and commit to enroll there if admitted, without comparing financial aid packages across multiple institutions. Affluent students are almost twice as likely as low-income students to apply to early decision deadlines, and thus benefit disproportionally from the advantages these policies offer.[15] OSU-Main Campus does not offer early decision.[16]

DEMONSTRATED INTEREST

OSU-Main Campus does not consider students' demonstrated interest in the admissions process. Institutions that favor applicants who show "demonstrated interest" in the school can disadvantage low-income students. While affluent students have the financial means to demonstrate their interest by visiting college campuses, low-income students are often unable to do so because of the high costs associated with these trips.[17] OSU-Main Campus does not consider "level of applicant interest" in the admission process.[18]

LEGACY PREFERENCE

OSU-Main Campus does not have a legacy admissions policy. Legacy admissions policies that give preference to students with familial ties to the institution can increase admissions chances of the children of alumni, a benefit exclusively available to students with college-educated parents.[19] These policies disadvantage low-income students and students of color, who are more likely than their White and non-low-income peers to be the first in their family to attend college.[20] OSU-Main campus does not consider "alumni/ae relation" in their application review process.[21]

INTERACTIONS WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

OSU-Main Campus has "Banned the Box," meaning applicants are not asked to disclose and provide an explanation of past criminal convictions and pending criminal charges.[22] Requiring applicants to check a box disclosing interactions with the criminal justice system, a practice that has not been shown to have any impact on campus safety, disadvantages applicants of color to a larger degree than White students.[23]

Endnotes

1. Low-income students are those who receive Pell Grants; 82 percent of all Pell recipients have incomes below $40,000. U.S. Department of Education, 2015–16 Federal Pell Grant Program End-Of-Year Report, Table 71. Retrieved from: https://www2.ed.gov/finaid/prof/resources/data/2015-2016eoyresearchreports.zip

2. In 2010, OSU-Main Campus began reporting race/ethnicity data for multiracial students in response to changing federal guidelines, but data on the demographics of high school students does not include a multiracial category. Even if all multiracial students in 2016 were counted as Black, however, OSU-Main Campus would still be enrolling Black students at only half the rate of their representation in Ohio's high school graduating class (7 percent and 14 percent, respectively).

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11. IHEP analysis of state of residence for first-time degree/certificate seeking undergraduate students, 1986–2016 IPEDS data.

12. Castleman, B.L., & Long, B.T. (2016), Looking beyond enrollment: The causal effect of need-based grants on college access, persistence, and graduation. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 34 (4), 1023-1073.

13. IHEP analysis of 2000–16 College InSight data, The Institute for College Access & Success. Retrieved from: http://college-insight.org

14. Ohio State University Student Financial Aid. (2018). Grants: Incoming freshmen. Retrieved from: https://sfa.osu.edu/incoming-freshmen/accept-aid/view-your-aid/accept-grants

15. Giancola, J., & Kahlenberg, R.D. (2016), True merit: Ensuring our brightest students have access to our best colleges and universities. Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. Retrieved from: https://outreach.jkcf.org/TrueMerit/?utm_source=all&utm_medium=all&utm_campaign=True_Merit

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