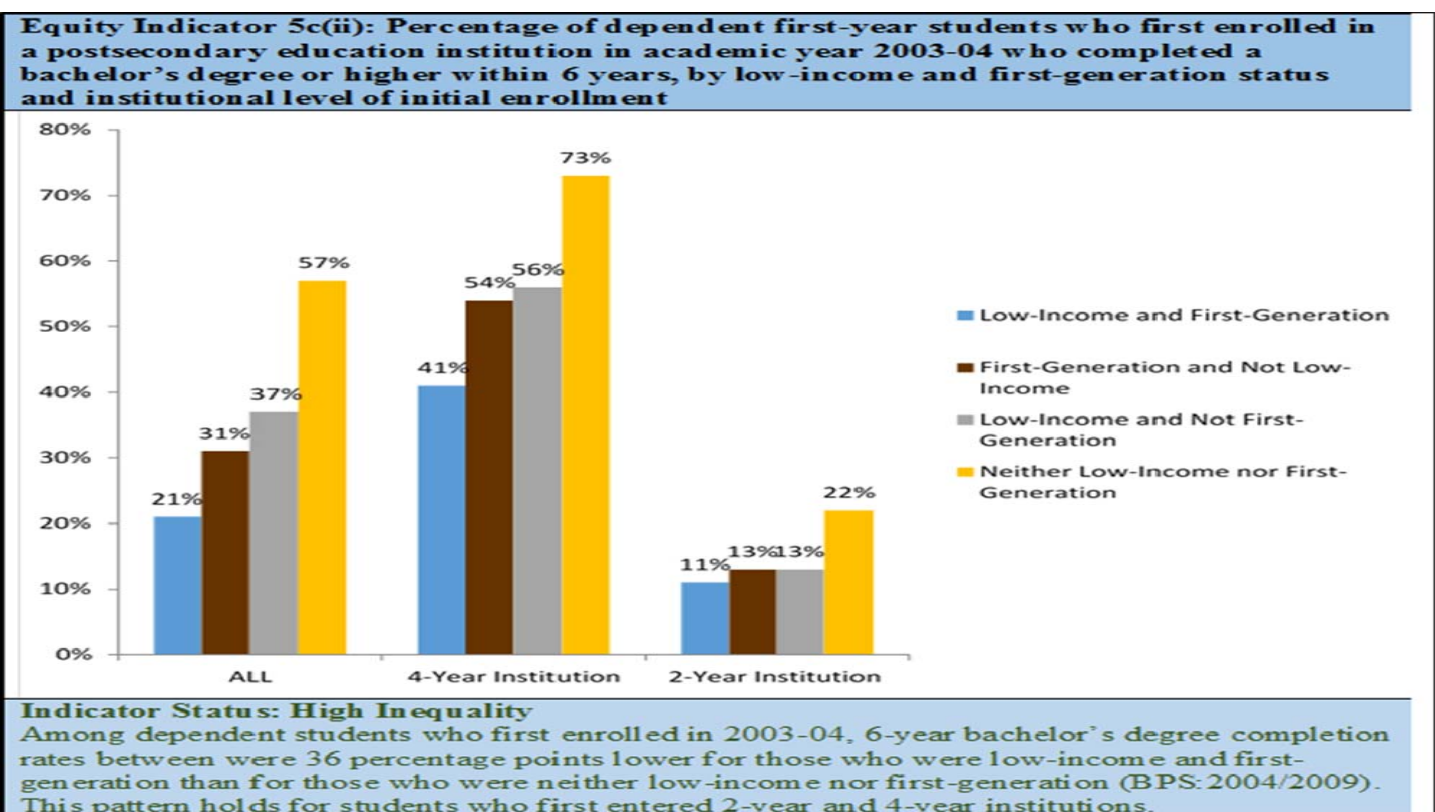
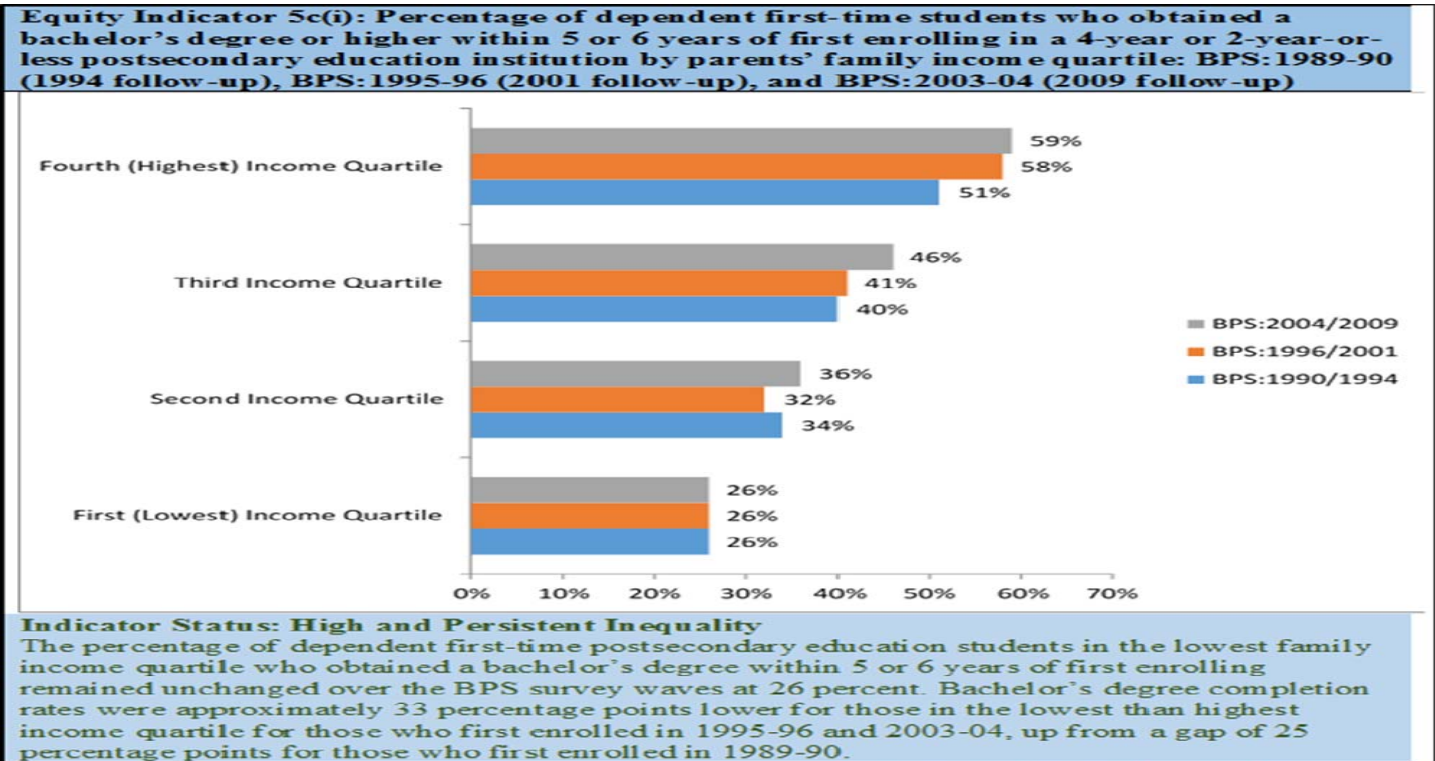


2019 Search for Solutions-Shared Dialogues

Issue #3: How Can We Close the Gaps in Postsecondary Completion?

Background

At the recent hearing by the House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment, Members of Congress noted a shift in focus from access to completion. The following graphs sharply depict the differences in expected completion for students who enroll in college by income and first-generation status.



Policy Proposals Addressing Completion

With the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act underway, policymakers are considering several new options to address challenges to completion. Many of these policies are informed by the work already happening on college campuses as a result of state- and privately-funded initiatives as well as federal programs like TRIO Student Support Services.

Please discuss the following possible Policy Proposals (and feel free to add additional approaches) as well as the questions under each proposal.

- Do you view a version of such a proposal as a sound approach to the problem?
- What would be important variables to consider in crafting such a proposal?
- Do you think sufficient resources could be identified to implement such a proposal? Would those resources most likely be federal, state, or local?
- What obstacles do you see in implementing such a policy?
- What obstacles do you see to securing support for such a policy?
- Are there possible unintended consequences of implementing such a policy?

Provide Micro-grants to Students in Danger of Dropping Out or Unable to Return Because of Monies Owed to the Institution

Georgia State University piloted the concept of micro-grants and it has since been replicated on many campuses. Essentially, the institution identified students with relatively small outstanding balances that were preventing them from persisting and provided them with small grants to address those debts. Micro-grants can also be used to address other issues that present one-time obstacles to continuing in college (e.g., needed car repairs, pressures to respond to a family crisis, etc.)

15 to Finish

Research shows that if a student earns 15 credit hours during a semester (or 30 credits during two semesters—an intersession and the summer) he or she has a much stronger chance of completing the baccalaureate degree within four years. “15 to Finish” is a campaign promoted by Complete College America designed to spread the word among students and advisors and ultimately to encourage as many students as possible to complete 30 credit hours (or its equivalent) each year, particularly during the first year of college.

Expansion of Supportive Services, Particularly TRIO Student Support Services

Data from currently funded TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) programs suggest a significant impact on completion, particularly at two-year campuses. A 2015 report from the Department of Education found that three years after entering two-year institutions as freshmen, 41% of SSS participants transferred to four-year institutions, received an associate degree, and/or received a certificate as compared with just 21% of a national sample of low-income, first-generation college students or students with disabilities demonstrating academic need. The SSS completion rate increased to 50% percent by the end of the fourth year of college as compared with 28% of the national sample. Existing federal resources could be utilized to place a much larger emphasis on completion by investing more heavily in TRIO Student Support Services.