

# Archived Information

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## **Objective 3.1: Secondary school students get the information, skills, and support they need to prepare successfully for postsecondary education.**

### **National Need**

**National Concerns.** In the United States today, a postsecondary education has become more important than ever before. Postsecondary graduates can expect to earn at least \$600,000 more over their lifetime than high school graduates. This amount has doubled in the past 15 years, and this disparity is likely to continue to grow. While the number of students attending postsecondary institutions has increased over time, low-income and minority students remain at a significant disadvantage in terms of their access to postsecondary education. Research has shown that information about the benefits of postsecondary study, academic requirements, and the availability of financial aid are critical factors in motivating students and families to begin early preparation for and eventually attend a postsecondary institution.

**Our Role.** The Department of Education (ED) supports postsecondary preparatory programs such as Upward Bound, Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), and Talent Search. These programs are designed to provide low-income youth with academic support, information about postsecondary costs and financing, and other assistance. In addition, the Department disseminates information and provides other postsecondary preparatory support services to a broad range of students and families, beginning in the middle school years and continuing throughout high school.

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### **Our Performance**

**How We Measure.** The performance indicators for Objective 3.1 relate to expected outcomes of the Department's efforts to improve postsecondary study awareness including increasing postsecondary enrollment rates, creating greater awareness of the availability of financial aid and the academic requirements of postsecondary enrollment, and providing effective early intervention programs.

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### **Indicator 3.1.a. Postsecondary education enrollment rates will increase each year for all students while the enrollment gap between low- and high-income and minority and nonminority high school graduates will decrease each year.**

**Assessment of Progress.** No 1999 data are available; progress toward reducing the enrollment gap between low- and high-income students is likely, while progress toward increasing the overall enrollment rate is difficult to judge and no progress has been made in reducing the enrollment gap between minority and white students. Figure 3.1.a.1 shows that the enrollment rate of low-income students (3-year average) increased 10 percentage points between 1996 and 1998, resulting in a statistically significant reduction in the gap between low- and high-income students between 1997 and 1998. There was also a statistically significant increase in the overall enrollment rate from the 1994-1995 period to the 1997-1998 period. However, there has been no significant change in the enrollment rate since 1996 making it difficult to judge progress. Finally, there was no statistically significant difference in any of the two years presented between whites and blacks and whites and Hispanics (see figure 3.1.a.2) indicating no progress in reducing the enrollment gap by race. One factor affecting achievement of this goal is that while Federal financial aid is an important factor in promoting postsecondary access, outside factors such as academic preparation and the economic returns on education are probably even more crucial to students' decisions about whether to attend a postsecondary institution.

Figure 3.1.a.1

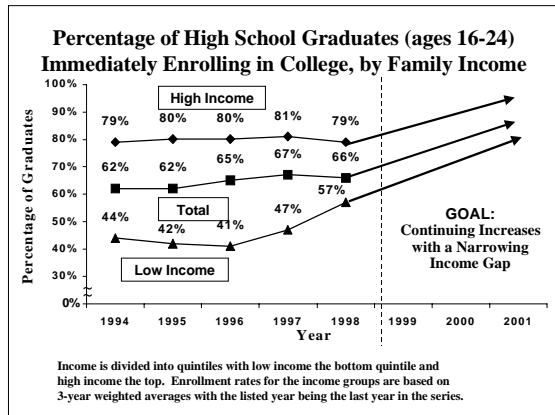
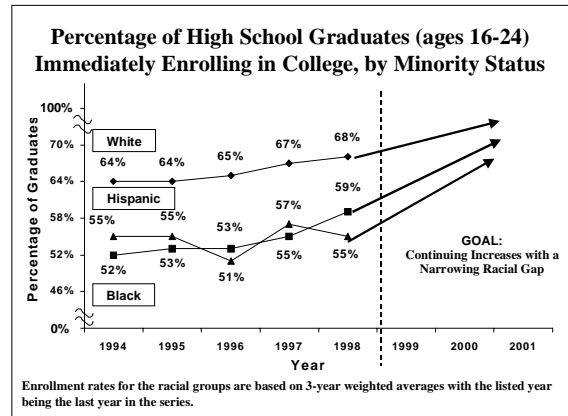


Figure 3.1.a.2

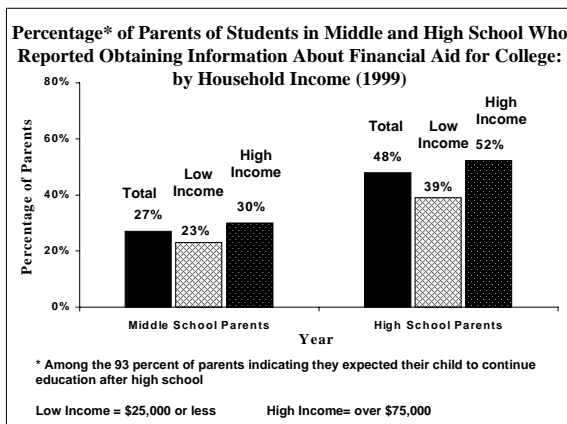


**Source:** October Current Population Surveys conducted by the Census Bureau. *Frequency:* Annual. *Next Update:* 1999. **Validation procedure:** Verified by ED data attestation process. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** Small subgroup sample sizes for low-income and minority students lead to large yearly fluctuations in enrollment rates.

**Indicator 3.1.b. The percentage of parents of students in middle and high school obtaining information concerning financial aid for postsecondary study will increase while the difference in rates between low- and high-income families will decrease.**

**Assessment of Progress.** Progress cannot be judged until trend data are available. Overall, 38 percent of parents of middle and high school students who indicated that they expected their child to continue education after high school reported either talking with someone or reading materials about sources of financial aid for their child's postsecondary education (not shown in figure). Figure 3.1.b.1 shows that parents of high school students were more likely to obtain financial aid information than were parents of middle-schoolers (48 percent versus 27 percent). Higher income parents were also more likely to obtain financial aid information than were lower income parents.

Figure 3.1.b.1

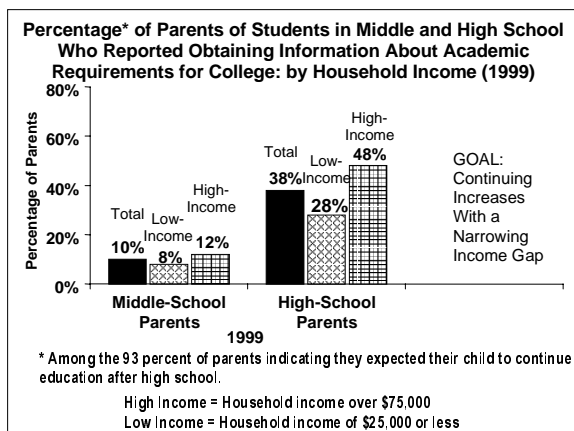


**Source:** National Household Education Survey. *Frequency:* Periodic. *Next Update:* 2001. **Validation procedure:** Data validated by National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) review and *NCES Statistical Standards*. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** None.

**Indicator 3.1.c. The percentage of parents of students in middle and high school obtaining information concerning the academic requirements for postsecondary study will increase while the difference in rates between low- and high-income families will decrease.**

**Assessment of Progress.** Progress cannot be judged until trend data are available. Overall, 26 percent of parents of middle and high school students who indicated that they expected their child to continue education after high school reported talking with a counselor or teacher about the academic requirements for postsecondary study or postsecondary vocational school (not shown in figure). Figure 3.1.c.1 shows that parents of high school students were more likely to obtain information about the academic requirements for postsecondary education than were parents of middle schoolers (38 percent vs 10 percent). Higher-income parents were also more likely to obtain information about academic requirements for postsecondary education than were lower-income parents.

Figure 3.1.c.1



**Source:** National Household Education Survey. *Frequency:* Periodic. *Next Update:* 2001. **Validation procedure:** Data validated by NCES review and *NCES Statistical Standards*. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** None.

**Indicator 3.1.d. Participants receiving support services through the Department’s early intervention programs will enroll in postsecondary programs at rates higher than comparable nonparticipants.**

**Assessment of Progress.** Target met for certain subgroups of students but not for the overall program. Figure 3.1.d.1 summarizes key results for the program. Educational outcomes were statistically significantly higher for Upward Bound participants who had lower educational expectations, were academically high-risk students, and were male, compared with those than they were for similar students in a random control group. Overall, however, students who participated in Upward Bound did not have a higher number of total high school credits earned, high school graduation rate, grade point average (GPA), or postsecondary enrollment rate than did comparable nonparticipants.

Figure 3.1.d.1

### Upward Bound Evaluation Findings

Results are based on information collected 2 to 3 years after students applied to Upward Bound. About two-thirds of the students in the sample had completed high school, but only one-quarter were enrolled in college. Because many of the students had not attended college, the most credible results pertain to students' high school experiences:

- **The overall effects of Upward Bound on high school students are limited.** Participants who had slightly higher educational expectations, earned more credits in math and social studies, earned more credits from 4-year postsecondary institutions, were more likely to have received financial aid, and were more actively involved in college activities. However, participation did not affect total high school credits earned, high school graduation, GPA, or postsecondary school enrollment.
- **Upward Bound has a large impact on some groups of students.** Three groups of students who benefited substantially were students entering Upward Bound with lower educational expectations, academically high-risk students, and boys. The evaluation had positive results for these students across a wide range of topics, including educational expectations, high school academic credits, high school graduation, and college enrollment.
- **The duration of participation matters.** A longer exposure to Upward Bound was associated with a greater program impact.
- **The findings from the evaluation strongly suggest that two ways to improve the program's effectiveness are to enroll more at-risk students and to improve program retention.**

**Source:** Special Upward Bound evaluation commissioned by ED. *Frequency:* Periodic. *Next Update:* 2000. **Validation procedure:** Data validated by conducting the evaluation in accordance with strict methodological standards including the random assignment of students to treatment and control groups. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** Major program evaluations, while providing rigorous information comparing recipients and nonrecipients, are conducted very infrequently. We are currently assessing the feasibility of combining program performance reports with data on student aid recipients to assess the success of the TRIO programs in getting students to enroll in and complete postsecondary study. Data reported by grantees on their annual performance reports on the performance of the TRIO programs will be verified against the evaluation results.

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## How We Plan to Achieve Our Objective

### How ED's Activities Support the Achievement of This Objective.

- **Support services to help students prepare for postsecondary education.**
  - The GEAR UP Program provides low-income children with additional counseling, mentoring, academic support, outreach, and support services, as well as information on the benefits of postsecondary study, academic requirements, and financial aid opportunities through state programs and partnerships of postsecondary institutions, middle and high schools, businesses, and community organizations. Funding also supports strategies and activities for parental involvement, professional development, and staff training. In FY 2000, GEAR UP projects will provide services to more than 750,000 students. The FY 2001 budget provides a 62.5 percent increase in GEAR UP funding to \$325 million, enough to provide services to 1.4 million students in high-poverty schools.

- The \$725 million FY 2001 request for the TRIO Programs, an increase of \$80 million, would enhance support for the Upward Bound Program and maintain support for the Talent Search Program, which identifies disadvantaged students in middle and high school and provides them with academic and career counseling, postsecondary preparatory information, help with postsecondary admission and financial aid, and tutoring services. In addition, the Department will use the findings from its evaluations to help projects improve programs and to increase program effectiveness.
  - The Department will continue to work with the Ford Foundation to promote the GEAR UP Program, provide information to help GEAR UP grantees implement high-quality projects, and support continuous program improvement. These efforts include a series of regional conferences for prospective GEAR UP applicants to learn about the grant application process, to design high-quality projects, and to form college-school partnerships. In addition, conferences will be held for GEAR UP grantees to disseminate information on best practices, to exchange information and ideas with other grantees, and to assist the Department in monitoring early program implementation.
- **National campaign for middle school students.**
- The Department will continue its efforts to inform middle and high school students and their families, as well as the general public, about the steps needed to attend a postsecondary institution. Efforts will include updating and reprinting publications designed to inform students and their parents of the benefits of postsecondary study, academic requirements, and the availability of financial aid. For example, the parent publication *Getting Ready for College Early* was reprinted (almost one million copies have been requested), and a Spanish edition has been published and widely distributed. In addition, the availability of the Think College Early Web site provides an electronic mechanism for informing the public about postsecondary education.
  - Continue to partner on early postsecondary awareness initiatives of numerous public and private organizations, such as the National Middle School Association's Month of the Young Adolescent, the College Board's Connect ED 2000: Engaging a Nation Summit, the Boy Scouts of America's Learning for Life program, and Court TV's Choices and Consequences middle grades initiative. Also work with state programs, such as the Massachusetts Think College Early campaign, and higher education institutions that partner with middle schools on postsecondary awareness and preparation programs.

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## **How We Coordinate with Other Federal Agencies**

- **Public awareness campaigns.** We work with the National Science Foundation's National mathematics public engagement campaign and the Department's GEAR UP Program in designing and implementing postsecondary awareness information and activities, and working to ensure that the programs are well-coordinated and mutually reinforcing.
- **Dissemination of research.** We coordinate the TRIO clearinghouse with other ERIC clearinghouses to better disseminate research on the preparation of disadvantaged youth for postsecondary education.

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## **Challenges to Achieving Our Objectives**

Student preparedness for postsecondary study depends on many factors, including school experiences in K-12, family and outside influences, and individual motivation and expectations. Although family and other influences will continue to have a strong bearing on student success, the Department of Education (ED) will provide information and support to as many students and families as possible through publications, Web sites, and promotion of family involvement through the GEAR UP Program.