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Author

Lin, Barbara

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By Barbara Lin

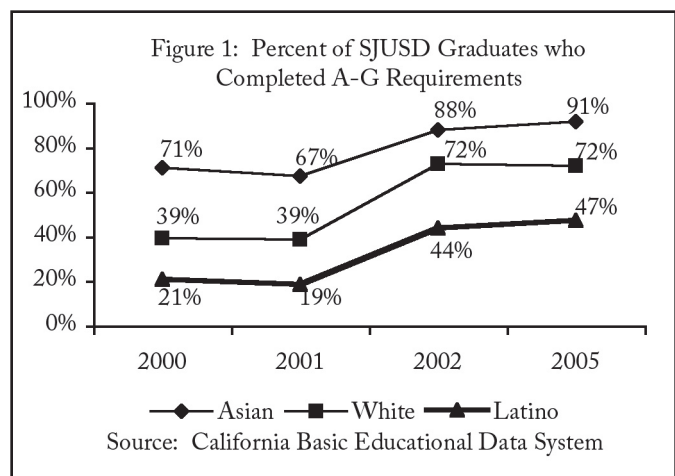
The deleterious effect of Proposition 209 on the status of underrepresented minorities in California’s system of public higher education pushed the issue of inequity of access to the opportunity to complete the A-G coursework series, the set of courses required for admission to both the University of California and California State University, into the mainstream dialogue. A good example of this is AB 1896, a bill proposed by Assemblymember Coto that would require A-G or Career Technical Education (CTE) as the default high school enrollment curriculum for all California public high school students. The bill did not propose changing the state’s graduation requirements; instead, it merely mandated that schools provide these two options. It also included an “opt out” option for students and their families. Still, this bill is stalled in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

Individual school districts such as San Jose Unified School District (SJUSD) and Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) have pursued more ambitious policies by aligning their high school graduation course requirements with those of the A-G coursework series. The LAUSD policy affects the ninth grade class of 2008 whereas SJUSD’s policy was put into effect for the graduating class of 2002. In general, the purpose of aligning graduation requirements with a college-bound curriculum is to increase the A-G completion rate among all SJUSD high school graduates, especially those of underrepre-

sented minority students and to promote a “college-going culture” in all high schools.

This research brief explores whether SJUSD has met these goals.¹ It does so by examining the district’s A-G completion rates and the proportion of twelfth-graders who take the SAT over time with the latter serving as a measure of a “college-going culture”. Particular attention is paid to Latino students as these students now constitute over 50 percent of the district’s enrollment.²

In 2002, 64 percent of SJUSD graduates completed the A-G coursework series in comparison to only 37 percent of the 2001 graduates, an undeniably dramatic increase. The policy change was also beneficial towards all racial-ethnic groups with increases ranging from 20 to 30 percent as of 2005 (see figure 1).

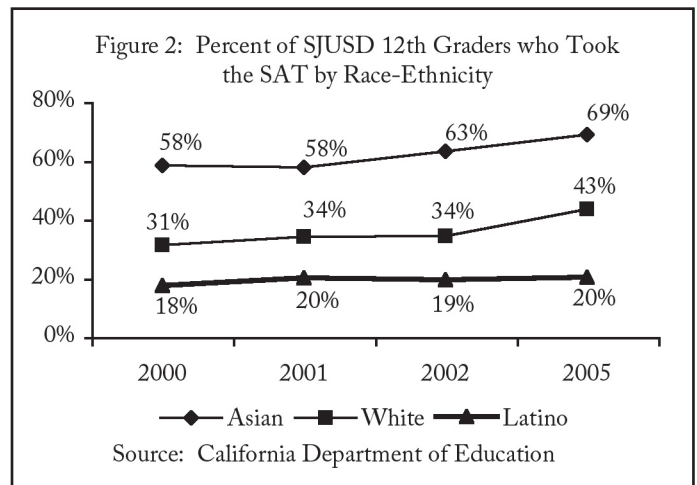


Barbara Lin is an undergraduate Research Assistant at CLPR. She began this research as a participant in UC Berkeley’s Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP) under the mentorship of Professor David Montejano and Graduate Student Researcher Oscar Medina.

The percent of Latino graduates who completed the A-G requirements in 2005 is particularly impressive at 47 percent compared with only 27 percent of Latinos statewide doing so. However, the gap in A-G completion rates between racial-ethnic groups has persisted, suggesting that the change in graduation requirements alone is not enough to address the racial-ethnic “achievement gap” that existed before 2002. An analysis of A-G completion rates at the districts’ comprehensive schools (therefore, excluding the continuation and alternative schools that are comprised mostly of Latino students) showed that the Latino A-G completion rates are higher at these schools yet still lower than those of Asians and white students (data not shown).

Given the dramatic increase in the proportion of graduates who have completed the A-G requirements the question now arises: by making one aspect of “college-going culture” mandatory, did the proportion of SJUSD students taking the SAT also increase as of 2005? The data in figure 2 shows that this is indeed the case for Asians and whites but this increase is modest. In contrast, the percent of Latino twelfth graders taking the SAT since 2001 has remained virtually unchanged. Finally, the proportion of twelfth graders taking the SAT remains lower than the proportion of graduates who have completed the A-G requirements.

In conclusion, this analysis has shown that although the percent of SJUSD graduates completing the A-G coursework series has increased dramatically in the years following the implementation of new graduation requirements, the racial-ethnic gap in this measure of college preparation has remained firmly in place with Latinos less likely to complete the A-G coursework series compared with Asian and White students. Moreover, other college-going factors such as taking the SATs did not increase at the same



pace as did the A-G completion rate. This disparity between Latino SAT takers and those completing their A-G requirements is particularly disconcerting and does not bode well for these students’ access to colleges and universities (such as UC) that require taking the SAT. The SJUSD must direct additional resources toward improving SAT taking among Latino students if it wants to promote a true college going culture.

The full paper can be found at the CLPR website (www.clpr.berkeley.edu) as part of the Working Paper Series.

¹ The new graduation requirements do not apply to special education students or students in alternative programs.

² Data for African-Americans and other groups are not included here due to their low representation at SJUSD.

Center for Latino Policy Research-ISSC

University of California, Berkeley
 2420 Bowditch Street #5670 * Berkeley, CA 94720-5670
 510-642-6903 (phone) * 510-643-8844 (fax)
 email: clpr@berkeley.edu * website: www.clpr.berkeley.edu



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