AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

While African Americans are catching up to their white counterparts in terms of college enrollment, there has been less progress in closing the degree attainment gap. In 2019, 29% of the African American population aged 25 to 29 held a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to 45% of the white population in the same age range.

ENROLLMENT/DEGREE ATTAINMENT

- The college enrollment rate for African American students who enter immediately after completing high school (GED recipients included) was 62% in 2018, about the same as it was in 2000.
  - Between 2000 and 2010, African American undergraduate enrollment increased by 73% (from 1.5 million students to 2.7 million).
  - However, between 2010 and 2018, African American undergraduate enrollment decreased by 21% (from 2.7 million students to 2.1 million students).
- Of the 16.6 million undergraduate students enrolled in the Fall of 2018, African American students made up 1.1 million students (13%) of the undergraduate population but they were not equally represented at different institution types.
  - African American students made up 12% of the student population at 4-year public institutions, 13% of the student population at 4-year private nonprofit institutions, and 29% of the student population at 4-year private for-profit institutions.
  - Only 15% of African American students attended a highly selective institution, and only 8% of African American students attended an elite research institution.
- Bachelor’s degree attainment for African Americans aged 25 to 29 has increased more slowly than among white students.
  - 29% of African Americans aged 25 to 29 held a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2019, up 11 percentage points from 18% in 2000.
  - By comparison, degree attainment for white 25 to 29-year olds increased from 34% to 45% during the same time period.
- In 2019, approximately 40% of African American adults aged 25 to 29 had at least a two-year college degree, an increase from 26% in 2000. Among white adults, this level of degree attainment grew from 44% in 2000 to 56% in 2019.
- Female African American students were enrolled in higher percentages than male African American students.
  - In 2016, females made up 62% of the total African American undergraduate student enrollment.
GRANTS, LOANS & DEBT

- 72% of African American students received Pell Grants in 2015-16, compared with 34% of white students. The average award for African American students was $5,000.
- In the 2015-2016 academic year, 71% of African American students took out federal student loans, compared with 56% of white students.
- In the 2015-16 academic year, African American students took out larger federal loans on average ($11,140) than Hispanic ($10,500), Asian ($10,940), and American Indian/Alaska Native ($9,210) students. On average, white students ($12,100) and Pacific Islander students ($12,560) took out slightly higher loan amounts than African American students.

SOURCES


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