



# Postsecondary Persistence

## Class of 2013

Austin Independent School District

### Purpose

The purpose of this report is to summarize postsecondary enrollment persistence for Austin Independent School District's (AISD) Class of 2013 graduates and the factors influencing their postsecondary persistence.

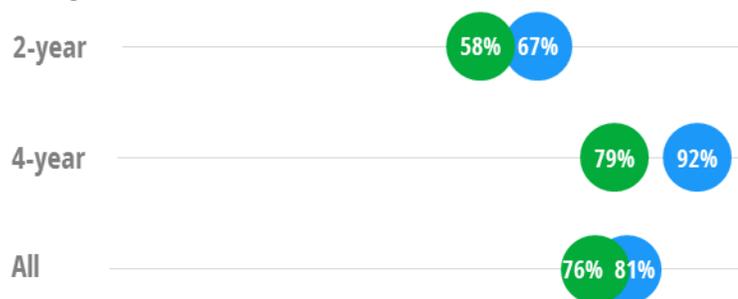
### Findings

#### What percentage of Class of 2013 college-going graduates persisted in their postsecondary enrollment?

Of the 63% of AISD's Class of 2013 graduates who enrolled in a postsecondary institution the year after high school graduation, 81% continued to be enrolled for a second year (Figure 1). The national postsecondary persistence rate for 2013 college goers was 70% (National Student Clearinghouse, 2015). Sixty-four percent of AISD Class of 2013 college goers returned to the same institution in which they enrolled the first year after high school graduation. Research indicates students who initially enrolled in 2-year institutions persisted at lower rates than did their peers who initially enrolled in 4-year institutions (Radford, Berkner, Wheelles, & Shepherd, 2010; Shapiro, Dundar, Ziskin, Yuan, & Harrell, 2013). This also was the case for AISD college goers (Figure 2).

Figure 1.

Postsecondary persistence rates for AISD's Class of 2013 graduates exceeded national averages for the Class of 2013.



Source. National Student Clearinghouse, August 2015; AISD enrollment and graduation data 2013

Figure 2.

A significantly greater percentage of AISD college goers who enrolled in 4-year institutions than of their peers who enrolled in 2-year institutions persisted in a college the following year.



Source. National Student Clearinghouse, August 2015; AISD enrollment and graduation data 2013

### What factors influenced college persistence?

Four student-level, pre-college variables were found to be significant and positive predictors of whether AISD graduates would persist in college. Graduates who had a grade point average (GPA) in the top 25% of their class, had a mother with a college degree, submitted a Free Application for Federal Aid (FAFSA), and passed Algebra 1 by the end of 8<sup>th</sup>-grade were more likely to persist in college for a second year than those who had not met these criteria. Students who were low-income and who graduated from a school with more than 40% of the students categorized as low-income were significantly less likely to persist in college than were students who were not categorized as low-income and who did not attend a school with more than 40% of the students categorized as low-income.

Additional factors found in the research literature to influence postsecondary persistence also were explored. However, they were not found to significantly influence postsecondary persistence for AISD graduates. These factors included student gender, student economic disadvantage status, dual credit and advanced placement (AP) course taking, higher-level math course taking (e.g. Algebra II and calculus), early college planning, and postsecondary institution type.

Figure 3.

**Five factors significantly predicted whether AISD graduates would persist in college for a second year.**

<b>Significant, positive predictors</b>	<b>+ Top quartile GPA</b>
	<b>+ Mother's education level = college degree or above</b>
	<b>+ Submitted the FAFSA</b>
	<b>+ Passed Algebra I by grade 8</b>
<b>Significant, negative predictor</b>	<b>- Low socio-economic status</b>

Source: National Student Clearinghouse, August 2015; AISD enrollment and graduation data 2013

\* $p < .05$

### Findings in the Research Literature

It is important for high school graduates, not to only enroll in a postsecondary institution, but also to persist and earn a credential. By the year 2020, 65% of all U.S. jobs will require a postsecondary degree, certification, and/or training beyond high school (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2014). Persistence in college leads to successful completion of a degree or certification and is an important indicator of future success for individuals (Choy, 2001; National Center for Education Statistics, 2015a). For young adults, who are between the ages of 25 and 35 and who work full time, the higher their educational attainment the more money they earned (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015b). Leaving college without a degree has “negative monetary, occupational, and other consequences” for students (Choy, 2001).

This report summarizes postsecondary enrollment rates for AISD's Class of 2013 college goers in the two years immediately after high school graduation based on National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data. The NSC database consists of 98% of nationwide enrollment in both public and private postsecondary institutions. In accordance with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations, data from NSC were linked to the 2013 AISD graduate records on the following variables: student's first and last name, data of birth, and zip code.

The results of this report may be an underestimation of actual postsecondary enrollment. Discrepancies in a student's name or a change in zip code are common reasons an enrollment record may not be found. Also, the NSC data do not include all postsecondary enrollment institutions within or outside the United States. Students may opt out of sharing their enrollment data with external agencies, thus their records are not reported to the NSC. Even with these limitations, the NSC postsecondary enrollment database is the most comprehensive source available at this time.

A multi-level regression model was used to determine the predictors of postsecondary persistence for AISD Class of 2013 graduates. This type of analysis enabled analysts to examine predictors of postsecondary persistence while accounting for student- and school-level characteristics.

The results of this study should be interpreted with caution. The factors used to predict college persistence were limited by the data available from AISD student records and NSC postsecondary enrollment records. The variables were not all inclusive, and there may be additional influences not represented in the study.

Certain demographic characteristics and pre-college behaviors make a difference in postsecondary persistence and in obtaining a postsecondary degree or credential. Researchers found when student demographic factors were considered (e.g., race, socioeconomic status), parents' education level was strongly related to the likelihood of enrolling and persisting in college (Choy, 2001; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006). Particular academic characteristics (e.g., high GPAs, attendance, and test scores) and pre-college activities (e.g., submitting FAFSA and college applications) positively influenced postsecondary persistence (Nagaoka, Roderick, & Coco, 2009). Lee (2013) found completing Algebra I by 8<sup>th</sup> grade and Algebra II by 10<sup>th</sup> grade reduced the need for remedial coursework in college. Students who took remedial coursework at the college level were less likely to experience postsecondary success (Nagaoka et al, 2009).

Planning for college as early as 8<sup>th</sup> grade positively impacted the likelihood of successfully completing college (Swail, Cabrera, Lee, & Williams, 2005). Although the point in time (i.e., by elementary school versus after high school) at which students thought about college was not found to be a significant predictor of postsecondary persistence, Wiggins (2015) found AISD Class of 2013 and 2014 college-going graduates who thought about enrolling in college before high school enrolled at significantly higher rates than did their peers who thought about college during high school.

Some college-level factors also were found to be significant predictors of postsecondary persistence (i.e., college GPA, coursework, credit load, attending college full time, type of institution) (Nagaoka et al, , 2009). Although full- or part-time college attendance and the type of institution were not significant predictors of postsecondary persistence in AISD, the district's Class of 2013 college-going graduates who attended college full time, and those who attended 4-year institutions, had higher rates of college persistence than did their peers who attended college part time or attended 2-year institutions.

## **Implications and Next Steps**

Some postsecondary persistence predictors may be influenced by AISD policies and practices. Generally, GPA is a predictor of academic success because it is heavily influenced by rigorous course-taking and the resulting success in those courses. All students should be encouraged to take more rigorous courses (e.g., pre-AP and AP) as they proceed through middle and high school. The district must ensure students who take Algebra I in 8<sup>th</sup>-grade are appropriately assigned to the course and must include students who are underrepresented in higher education. All seniors must be supported to submit and complete the FAFSA. Although the district cannot influence the educational level of students' mothers or whether students is categorized as low income, these students should be identified and provided with thorough college preparation support as they progress through school.

Other factors, particular to elementary (e.g., literacy by grade 3) and middle school (e.g., passing state assessments) have been found to be significant predictors of postsecondary persistence in additional research studies. Such factors may be researched in the future to create a more comprehensive picture of predictors of postsecondary persistence for AISD.

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