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## Almost half of city high school class of '07 in college

### Study also finds gender gap closing on enrollment

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12:05 AM CDT, May 13, 2008

The portion of Chicago public high school graduates who enrolled in college in 2007 climbed to a four-year high, with male students closing the enrollment gap with their female peers, school officials are expected to announce Tuesday.

Mayor Richard Daley and schools chief Arne Duncan plan to announce the findings Tuesday at Hope College Prep High School, 5515 S. Lowe Ave., which had its college enrollment rate rise by nearly 21 percentage points since 2004.

Chicago Public Schools officials worked with the Virginia-Based National Student Clearinghouse to determine where the district's graduates were enrolled from 2004 through 2007. The non-profit organization maintains a record of student enrollment figures.

Across the district, the college enrollment rate increased by 6.5 percentage points from 2004 through 2007, officials said. Last year, nearly half of the district's 17,669 graduates enrolled in college.

That portion increased from 2004, when about 43 percent of the district's 18,224 graduates enrolled in college. The district's post-secondary department began tracking the college enrollment rate of graduates in 2004.

"Our schools have worked so hard over the past several years to lift students' expectations to help them see high school graduation not as an ending, but as only the first step toward a successful career in their field," Daley said in a statement. "The conversations in all of our high schools across the city are changing from 'How do I get to graduation day?' to 'Where is the best place for me to continue my education?' "

While the percentage of females who enrolled in college was still more than the percentage of males, the difference dipped slightly last year.

Four years ago, the gender gap amounted to about 9 percentage points, as females outpaced males, compared to last year when the difference amounted to slightly more than 3 percentage points, with

about 46.5 percent of males enrolled.

School officials and Daley, who took over the district in 1995, credit the overall increase in college enrollment to a concerted effort to get students to believe that college is within their reach. The district has outpaced the country in boosting college enrollment, Duncan said.

"I was thrilled with the results. It's a big step in the right direction," said Duncan. "We're not satisfied, but it's a very encouraging trend."

Among the district's findings, the greatest gains over the last four years came from the relatively small population of white male students, who have seen their percentage jump by more than 10 points between 2004 and last year. In 2007, 63.6 percent of the white male students graduating from Chicago public schools enrolled in college, a total of 595, officials said.

The more significant number of African-American male students who enrolled in college increased by more than 8 percentage points over the last four years, with nearly 45 percent—1,670 students—signed up to attend college in 2007.

While the portion of Latino males who enrolled in college last year, slightly more than 37 percent, continued to lag behind African-American and white male peers, there was a 7.6 percentage point increase over the four-year period studied, officials said.

Along with the increased numbers of students enrolling in college in their first year after high school, officials also found that the number of students going on to a four-year institution also increased.

Also increasing was the number of students who attended college on a full-time basis, according to data gathered from the National Student Clearinghouse.

Officials said the percentage of students going to a 4-year school jumped by nearly 8 percent since 2004, to 68 percent in 2007. Officials have said that students at four-year schools are less likely to drop out than those at two-year institutions.

Julie Woestehoff, executive director of Parents United for Responsible Education, said that while she was happy with the increase in students enrolling in college, district officials should be more concerned about whether students are being prepared to succeed and graduate from college.

"Six percent doesn't seem like a lot over four years," she said. "You have to put it into a context about what is really happening in the schools."

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