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Mayor Announces Jump In CPS Students Going To College

Half Of 2007 CPS Grads Enrolled In College

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CHICAGO -- Half of all Chicago Public Schools graduates in the Class of 2007 enrolled in a college or university within the first year after high school graduation, Mayor Daley and CPS officials announced Tuesday.

The college enrollment rate of CPS grads has climbed 6.5 percentage points over the last four years -- outpacing the national rate in almost every category -- since the district created a department aimed at boosting the number of students who go on to colleges and universities, according to a release from the mayor's office.

The CPS Department of Postsecondary Education and Student Development also announced that even bigger jumps have been gauged in the number of students attending four-year universities and in the number of male students attending college, particularly among black and Latino grads.

Daley announced the findings at a news conference at John Hope College Prep High School Tuesday morning. Hope College Prep has seen an increase of 20.6 percentage points in its college enrollment rate since 2004, according to the release.

In 2007 alone, the overall number of CPS grads enrolling in post-secondary institutions rose by 2.1 percent over the previous year. Since 2004, when the post-secondary department began tracking the college enrollment rate of graduates, the overall number has steadily climbed by about 2 percentage points each year, the release said.

But CPS has seen bigger increases in enrollment since 2004 for all racial/ethnic groups, with the greatest increases among male students -- white males from 52.7 percent to 63.6 percent; black males from 36.7 percent to 44.9 percent; and Latino males from 29.8 percent to 37.4 percent, according to the release. While college enrollment for both gender groups rose, male enrollment increased at a higher rate than female enrollment -- slowly closing the gender gap from 9.2 percentage points in 2004 to 6.1 in 2007.

The data, gathered from the National Student Clearinghouse, also shows that the percentage of CPS students attending four-year institutions has steadily increased since 2004, from 60.2 percent to 68 percent in 2007. The percentage of students attending college full-time also rose: from 68.2 percent of enrolled students in 2006 to 71.3 percent in 2007.

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CPS also has seen a higher percentage of students enrolling in highly selective colleges, including Big Ten universities (29.8 percent), historically black colleges and universities (9.8 percent), Associated Colleges of the Midwest, a group of liberal arts colleges that includes Carleton, University of Chicago and Grinnell (25.7 percent), and Associated Colleges of Illinois, which includes Lake Forest College and Knox College (24.4 percent).

A small portion of CPS' overall gain in college enrollment over the last year -- 0.5 percent -- can be attributed to the inclusion of East-West University students, who had not been counted by the National Student Clearinghouse previously.

Since 2004, CPS' overall college enrollment has gone up 6.5 percentage points, versus the nation's 0.5 percentage point increase, the release said.

"It's important for us to understand that graduating high school is no longer the finish line it once was," Daley said. "Forty or fifty years ago, a high school diploma better guaranteed a good job and success in life.

"In today's global economy, however, while having a high school diploma is still essential, it is simply not enough for many professions.

"That's why we've worked so hard over the past several years to lift students' expectations, to help them see high school graduation not as an end, but as the first step toward a successful career in their chosen field," the mayor said.

CPS and the National Student Clearinghouse also track CPS grads as they progress through college; retention numbers will be available later this year.

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