

'SEGREGATION FOREVER'?



The Continued Underrepresentation of Latino Undergraduates at the Nation's 122 Most Selective Private Colleges and Universities



EDTRUST
#EndCollegeSegregation



The Education Trust

‘SEGREGATION FOREVER?’:

The Continued Underrepresentation of Latino Undergraduates at the Nation’s 122 Most Selective Private Colleges and Universities

BY: **SANDRA PEREZ**, RESEARCH ANALYST, & **GABRIEL MONTAGUE**, ED.M., FORMER HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH ANALYST

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2020, EdTrust released a report titled, “[Segregation Forever?](#),” which explored the continued underrepresentation of Black and Latino first-time, full-time undergraduates at the nation’s 101 most selective public four-year colleges and universities in 2000 and 2017.¹ The analysis revealed significant underrepresentation of Black and Latino students at public colleges and universities in states matching their demographics; nearly half of these institutions received failing grades in our analysis for disproportionately low enrollment of Latino students.

As a follow-up, we explored enrollment for these same student groups at the nation’s 122 most selective private four-year colleges and universities. We looked at the years 2000 and 2020 to see how Latino enrollment at these institutions matched the demographics of Latino residents in the states from which first-time students came. While the share of Latino student enrollment grew at almost all these institutions between 2000 and 2020, enrollment did not represent the demographics of the states from which students came. Population parity is not the ultimate goal; however, it is the most reliable benchmark for comparison based on available data at the time of our analysis. This report specifically analyzes Latino student enrollment, and a similar analysis for Black students can be found [here](#).

Access scores, ranging from 0-100, measure how well each institution’s Latino enrollment reflects the racial and ethnic demographics of the states from which first-time undergraduate students migrated. (See “How Colleges and Universities Were Graded” on page 14 for more details.) Letter grades were applied based on an institution’s access score. Scores of 90 or higher received A’s. Scores in the 80s, 70s and 60s received B’s, C’s, and D’s, respectively. And scores below 60 received F’s.

UNPACKING ACCESS AND ACCESSIBILITY

In this report, we analyze access through the lens of enrollment for Latino residents who are between the ages of 18 to 24. At EdTrust, we believe enrollment is just one component of higher education access, and that retention, completion, and student outcomes should be considered as well. But if students don't enroll in college, they have a 0% chance to complete college, so it's critically important to examine college access.

While all but two institutions in our sample have increased their Latino undergraduate student enrollment since 2000, our findings show that these increases were slight, and that overall, higher education institutions have made very little progress. The overwhelming majority of the nation's most selective private colleges and universities remain inaccessible for Latino first-time, full-time undergraduate students. From 2000 to 2020, the percentage of institutions receiving D's and F's in our analysis fell almost 10 percentage points. However, even with this improvement, 88% of schools in our sample had access scores below 70 (D grade). See [Latino Student Appendix](#) for a comprehensive list of the access grades, scores, and enrollment benchmark data for each institution.² The lingering underrepresentation of Latino students is especially concerning since the Supreme Court has further limited the use of race as a factor in higher education admissions. Already, we have seen the detrimental impacts of banning affirmative action in states like California, where thousands of academically competitive minority students were [discouraged from applying to top public research universities](#)³ because of [Proposition 209](#).⁴

The overwhelming majority of the nation's most selective private colleges and universities remain inaccessible for Latino first-time, full-time undergraduate students



Additionally, we know that boosting racial and ethnic diversity has a positive effect on campus racial climate and student success, so making these institutions more accessible for Black and Latino students would benefit [all students](#).⁵

OUR FINDINGS

- While the average Latino access score for all 122 selective private four-year institutions increased by 25 points since 2000, the average was only 55 in 2020 — a failing grade.
- Despite a small, positive rise in Latino enrollment, 78% of institutions in our sample failed to enroll a proportionate number of Latino students.
 - Only 9% of institutions received an A for access, with seven of them exceeding their benchmarks, scoring over 100. On average, these institutions scored 78 points higher than they did in 2000.
- Since 2000, Latino enrollment rose at all but two of the 122 most selective private four-year colleges and universities, with an average increase of about 7 percentage points.
- On average, all eight Ivy League institutions remained inaccessible for Latino students between 2000 and 2020, earning an average score of 52 in 2020 (below the overall average score of 55). This is 19 points above their average score of 33 in 2000.
- From 2000 to 2020, the average access score at non-HBCU MSIs improved from 43 to 69, and more than three-fifths of these institutions have passing scores.
- Kentucky, Florida, Michigan, Tennessee, and Maryland had the top five highest access scores in 2020. In 2000, the top five were Michigan, Florida, Indiana, Illinois, and Vermont.

On average, all eight Ivy League institutions remained inaccessible for Latino students between 2000 and 2020

The pattern of Latino student underrepresentation highlighted in this report is not by chance, but by choice. Many of these institutions have some of [largest endowments](#) of all degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the U.S., which suggests that limited fiscal resources are not to blame for the continued underrepresentation of Latino undergraduates among first-time, full-time enrollees.⁶ That said, financial resources alone will not be enough to move the needle in a higher education system that was built on racism, oppression, and white supremacy. Higher education leaders and policymakers must intentionally work to expand access and be held more accountable.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Here are four actions education leaders and policymakers can take to ensure that more Latino students have a chance to attend the nation's most selective private colleges and universities:

1. DEVELOP RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES THAT INCREASE ACCESS
2. IMPROVE CAMPUS RACIAL CLIMATES
3. LEVERAGE FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY
4. INCREASE ACCOUNTABILITY FROM ACCREDITORS AND ACCREDITATION ORGANIZATIONS

1. Nichols, A. H. (2020). "Segregation Forever?: The Continued Underrepresentation of Black and Latino Undergraduates at the Nation's 101 Most Selective Public Colleges and Universities." *The Education Trust*. <https://edtrust.org/resource/segregation-forever/>.
2. The Education Trust. "Segregation Forever Privates Graphics & Appendices." (2023). <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/the.education.trust/viz/SegregationForeverPrivatesGraphicsAppendices/FullDashboard>
3. "Affirmative Action, Mismatch, And Economic Mobility After California's Proposition 209." *Berkeley Center for Studies in Higher Education*, Aug. 2020, https://cshe.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/publications/rops.cshe.10.2020.bleemer.prop209.8.20.2020_2.pdf.
4. "Proposition 209 Prohibition Against Discrimination or Preferential Treatment by State and Other Public Entities." *Legislative Analyst's Office: The California Legislature's Nonpartisan Fiscal and Policy Advisor*, Nov. 1996, https://lao.ca.gov/ballot/1996/prop209_11_1996.html.
5. The Department of Education. *Advancing Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education*. (U.S. Department of Education, November 2016). <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/advancing-diversity-inclusion.pdf>
6. National Center for Education Statistics. (January 2022). Table 333.90. Endowment funds of the 120 degree-granting postsecondary institutions with the largest endowments, by rank order: Fiscal year 2020 [Data table]. In *Digest of Education Statistics*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_333.90.asp?current=yes.