



The Education Pipeline in Georgia

Introduction

A pipeline analogy is often used in discussions of educational attainment, especially with more recent views of education as a seamless system from pre-kindergarten through postsecondary education. Although students enter the pipeline at about the same age, they may flow through this pipeline at different rates. For example, a student might be retained and required to repeat a grade, or a high school graduate might choose to work for a couple of years before going to college. The education pipeline also “leaks,” for example, when students leave K-12 education without a high school diploma or choose not to pursue postsecondary education.

The education pipeline ends with the attainment of an advanced degree; however, completion of a bachelor’s degree is often viewed as the minimum because of the benefits to both the individual and society. That is, individuals with a bachelor’s degree typically have substantially higher incomes and rely less on public services, such as welfare, than those without a college education. In addition, individuals with a bachelor’s degree or higher tend to engage in behaviors, such as voting and volunteering, that are viewed as beneficial to society. Because of these benefits, policymakers may be interested in how students flow through the educational pipeline and where the leaks occur. This paper sheds light on the educational pipeline in Georgia and, in some cases, describes how Georgia compares to the rest of the U.S.

Kindergarten through Twelfth Grade in Georgia

Both the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) project that Georgia will experience considerable growth in enrollment in grades K-12 and high school graduates. Even though the *number* of students graduating from high school will increase, the *percentage* of students graduating is not likely to change much. Georgia continues to have one of the lowest high school graduation rates among the 50 states. Finally, the dropout rates for Georgia public school grades 9-12 decreased slightly between the 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 school years.

- In 2000, 1,523,671 youth between the ages of 5 and 17 (96.8 percent) were enrolled in school in Georgia.¹
- In the 1998-1999 school year, the total public school enrollment in Georgia for kindergarten through grade 12 was 1,370,555. That number increased to 1,496,012 in the 2002-2003 school year, an increase of 9.2 percent.²
- NCES projects that enrollment in grades K-12 in Georgia public schools will increase from 1,445,000 in Fall 2000 to 1,517,000 in Fall 2012, a 5 percent increase. In addition,

NCES projects a 19.9 percent increase in the number of public high school graduates between 1999-2000 (62,563) and 2011-2012 (74,990).³

- WICHE projects that the number of public high school graduates will grow to 94,748 in 2017-2018, a 38.6 percent increase over 2001-2002.⁴
- Georgia's public high school graduation rate has not changed much in recent years. In 2000-2001, 51.4 percent (62,499) of the 121,511 Fall 1997 ninth-graders completed high school with a diploma, a rank of 49th among the 50 states. The graduation rate decreased from 53.2 percent (of 107,625) in 1996-1997 to 50.4 percent (of 114,176) in 1998-1999, but increased slightly to 52.3 percent (of 119,617) in 1999-2000 before dropping to 51.4 percent (of 121,511) in 2000-2001.⁵
- In the 2001-2002 school year, 5.3 percent (23,067) of the 435,221 students in grades 9 through 12 dropped out of school. The dropout rate increased slightly to 5.5 percent (24,655 of 448,264 students) in the 2002-2003 school year.⁶
- In 2000, 13.5 percent (63,906) of 471,799 Georgia teenagers between the ages of 16 and 19 were not enrolled in school nor were they a high school graduate or a member of the Armed Forces. Only 46.2 percent (29,544) were employed. In the U.S., by comparison, 9.8 percent (1,562,184) of youth between the ages of 16 and 19 were not enrolled in school, high school graduates, or members of the Armed Forces. Of those, only 43.8 percent were employed.⁷
- Georgia ranked 31st among the 50 states in 2000 with 42.5 GEDs awarded per 1000 18-24 year olds with less than a high school diploma.⁸

College Enrollment

Georgia compares favorably with many states in terms of the percentage of high school graduates going directly to college. Low-income students, however, are much less likely than other students to enroll in college within one year of high school graduation.

In addition, the University System of Georgia has experienced substantial increases in enrollment and small, steady increases in one-year retention rates for first-time, full-time freshmen in recent years.

- About 52 of every 100 students who enter ninth grade are likely to graduate high school four years later. Of those 52 students, about 32 (60 percent) are likely to enroll in college within a year. In comparison, about 16 of every 100 low-income students are likely to enroll in college within one year of high school graduation.⁹
- In 2000, Georgia ranked 16th among the 50 states with 60.4 percent (41,921) of 69,382 high school graduates going directly to college.¹⁰

- The Fall 2003 headcount enrollment for the University System of Georgia was 247,020, an increase of 21.2 percent over Fall 1999.¹¹
- In 2001, Georgia two-year colleges had a retention rate of 55 percent (14th in the U.S.).¹²
- Georgia four-year institutions of higher education had a retention rate of 72.7 percent in 2001, resulting in a rank of 37 out of the 50 states.¹³
- The Fall 2002 cohort in the USG had an institution-specific retention rate of 74.4 percent for first-time, full-time freshmen, an increase of 3.8 percentage points over the Fall 1998 cohort.¹⁴

Migration of College Students

To determine which states are net receivers or losers of college students, the federal government tracks the residence and migration of two cohorts of students: all freshmen and freshmen who graduated from high school in the previous 12 months.¹⁵ Among all freshmen, Georgia receives more students than it loses; however, the difference is small.

- In Fall 2000, there were 65,793 freshmen enrolled in Georgia's colleges and universities. This places Georgia 10th among the states and the District of Columbia in enrolling freshmen.¹⁶
- Among Georgia-resident freshmen, there were 65,206 attending college anywhere in the U. S., placing Georgia ninth among the states and the District of Columbia in the number of freshmen enrolled in college.¹⁷
- Of Georgia residents enrolled in college, 56,398 (or 86.5 percent) attended colleges in Georgia.
- In Fall 2000, 9,395 freshmen migrated into Georgia to enroll in college, and 8,808 left Georgia to enroll in college. Therefore, Georgia experienced a modest net gain of college freshmen, with 587 more students coming into the state than leaving the state for college. Net migration numbers range from New Jersey, which exported 21,187 students, to Pennsylvania, which imported 12,781 students. In 18 states, the number of out-migrant college freshmen exceeds the number of in-migrant college freshmen.
- The ratio of freshmen from Georgia enrolled in college in Georgia to those enrolled anywhere in the U. S. is .86. This ratio ranges from a high of .92 in California to a low of .11 in the District of Columbia.

The picture differs for Georgia when looking only at those freshmen who graduated from high school in the past 12 months (i.e., recent high school graduates). Georgia saw a net loss of recent high school graduate freshmen enrolled in college in Fall 2000.

- In Fall 2000, there were 41,223 recent high school graduate freshmen enrolled in Georgia's colleges and universities. Georgia ranked 12th among the states and the District of Columbia in the number of recent high school graduate freshmen enrolled in the state. Sixty-three percent of all freshmen enrolled in Georgia's colleges were recent high school graduates.
- Among Georgia-resident recent high school graduate freshmen, there were 41,921 attending college anywhere in the U.S., placing Georgia 12th among the states and the District of Columbia in the number of freshmen enrolled in college.
- Of Georgia-resident recent high school graduate freshmen enrolled in college, 34,423 (or 82.1 percent) attended colleges in Georgia.
- In Fall 2000, 6,800 recent high school graduate freshmen migrated into Georgia to enroll in college, and 7,498 left Georgia to enroll in college. Therefore, Georgia experienced a net loss of recent high school graduate freshmen, with 698 more students leaving the state than coming into the state for college.
- The ratio of recent high school graduate freshmen from Georgia enrolled in colleges in Georgia to those enrolled anywhere in the U.S. is .82.

College Completion

For all Title IV degree-granting institutions in Georgia, the three-year graduation rate for associate degree students improved in recent years, but the six-year graduation rate for bachelor's degree students did not. Both rates continue to be below the national average.

The opposite is true for USG institutions. The three-year graduation rate for associate degree students fluctuated slightly, but experienced no net change between 1999 and 2003. The six-year graduation rate for bachelor's degree students increased.

- In 2002, the three-year graduation rate for associate degree students at all Title IV degree-granting institutions in Georgia was 30.1 percent (5,470 of 18,158), which was 23rd in the U.S. This was a substantial improvement over 1998 when the rate was 23.3 percent (2,548 of 10,939), a rank of 36th in the nation.¹⁸
- The institution-specific three-year graduation rate for USG first-time, full-time freshmen seeking associate's degrees was 13.6 percent (1,078 of 7,914) in 2003, about the same as it was in 1999 (13.7 percent or 1,109 of 8,123).¹⁹
- The six-year graduation rate for bachelor's degree students at all Title IV degree-granting institutions in Georgia decreased slightly between 1998 and 2002. The six-year graduation rate was 42.4 percent (10,892 of 25,695) in 1998, or 38th in the nation, and 41.9 percent (13,582 of 32,427) in 2002, or 44th among the 50 states.²⁰

- In contrast, the institution specific six-year graduation rate for USG first-time, full-time freshman seeking bachelor's degrees increased from 39.5 percent (7,467 of 18,929) in 1999 to 43.5 percent (8,972 of 20,615) in 2003.²¹
- In 2002, Georgia ranked 49th in the U.S. with respect to the number of associate degrees awarded per 100 high school graduates three years earlier with 11.5 per 100. Georgia also performed below the national average (36th) regarding the number of bachelor's degrees awarded per 100 high school graduates six years earlier with 45.4 out of 100.²²

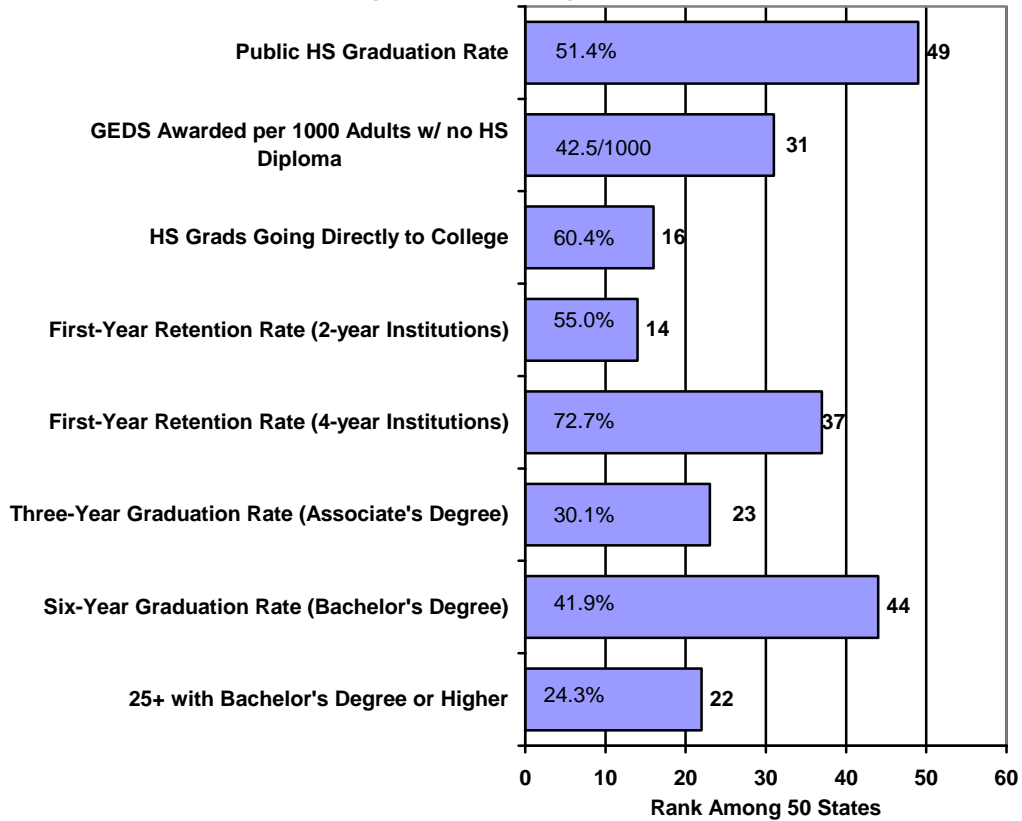
Educational Attainment

Although the college completion statistics suggest that Georgia has difficulty retaining students, the state ranks just under the national average in terms of the percent of the population 25 years and older with a bachelor's degree or higher. The most plausible explanation is that Georgia experiences a net in-migration of college graduates.

- With 24.3 percent (1,260,178 of 5,185,965) of the population 25 years and older with a bachelor's degree or higher, Georgia ranked 22nd among the 50 states in 2000.²³
- The percentage of Georgia's population 25 years and over with a bachelor's degree or higher increased from 6.2 percent in 1960 to 24.3 percent in 2000.²⁴

Figure 1 shows statistics for Georgia at various points in the education pipeline and Georgia's rankings compared to rest of the United States.

Figure 1
Georgia's Rank Among the 50 States



Conclusion

Georgia will likely experience an increase in the number of students that enter and flow through the education pipeline in the near future. Both NCES and WICHE project that Georgia will see considerable gains in public school enrollment in grades K-12 and high school graduates in the next 15 years. These increases will stretch the resources of educational institutions at all levels and require changes in policy and practice.

Despite the projected gains in public school enrollment and high school graduation, Georgia continues to experience troublesome “leaks” in its education pipeline. Georgia currently performs poorly in comparison with other states in several areas, most notably the public high school graduation rate, the first-year retention rate for four-year institutions, and the six-year graduation rate for bachelor’s degree students. Educational administrators and policymakers might focus on these areas as they consider ways to improve educational attainment of Georgians.

Notes

¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census – Summary File 3 (2000), Table PCT23.

² Georgia Department of Education. *1998-1999 Georgia Public Department of Education Report Card* and the *2002-2003 Annual Report Card on K-12 Public Schools*.

³ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data Surveys and State Public Elementary and Secondary Enrollment Model.

⁴ Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. (December 2003). *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates by State, Income, and Race/Ethnicity*. Boulder, CO: WICHE.

⁵ www.HigherEdInfo.org, which cites *Postsecondary Education OPPORTUNITY* and the NCES Common Core Data.

⁶ *2002-2003 Annual Report Card on K-12 Public School*.

⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census – Summary File 3 (2000), Table P38.

⁸ www.HigherEdInfo.org, which cites the GED Testing Service – *GED Statistical Report* and the U.S. Census Bureau – *Summary File 3* (2000).

⁹ Education Commission of the States. (October 2003). *Closing the College Participation Gap*, which cites *Postsecondary Education OPPORTUNITY*, 2002.

¹⁰ www.HigherEdInfo.org, which cites *Postsecondary Education OPPORTUNITY*.

¹¹ University System of Georgia, Student Information Reporting System.

¹² www.HigherEdInfo.org, which cites an unpublished ACT analysis of the ACT Institutional Data Questionnaire.

¹³ www.HigherEdInfo.org, which cites an unpublished ACT analysis of the ACT Institutional Data Questionnaire. The retention rate for Georgia is the average for all Georgia four-year institutions, not just University System of Georgia institutions.

¹⁴ University System of Georgia, Student Information Reporting System.

¹⁵ The data for this section are from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Systems (IPEDS), Fall Enrollment Survey, 2000; published in the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *Digest of Education Statistics, 2002*, NCES 2003-060, by Thomas D. Snyder and Charlene M. Hoffman. Washington, D.C.: 2003; tables 203—205.

¹⁶ Colleges and universities are defined as degree-granting institutions. Georgia follows California, Texas, New York, Pennsylvania, Florida, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, and North Carolina.

¹⁷ Georgia follows California, Texas, New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Florida, Ohio, and Michigan.

¹⁸ www.HigherEdInfo.org, which cites the National Center for Education Statistics IPEDS Completion Survey, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

¹⁹ University System of Georgia, Student Information Reporting System.

²⁰ www.HigherEdInfo.org, which cites the National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

²¹ University System of Georgia, Student Information Reporting System.

²² www.HigherEdInfo.org, which cites the National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS Completions Survey, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE).

²³ U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000.

²⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960 and 2000.

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