

College Going

Starting the College Process on the Right Foot

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Choosing the Right College

Choosing which college to attend is one of many tough decisions students face on their path to attaining a college degree. If they have the right information, then young people are more likely to follow through to complete college. For example, recent reports found many students who are identified as low-income overestimate the cost of college by as much as 200%. That price tag often prevents them from applying to more selective schools where they would have a greater chance of completing their degree. Counselors can support students to make informed college decisions by helping find colleges that match and fit their preferences in terms of academics, college selectivity, cost, program offerings, location, and other needs.



This report looked at postsecondary enrollment and completion rates for San Diego's college going students with a special focus on areas that contribute to higher retention and completion rates in our most commonly attended colleges and universities.

Key Takeaways

- 1. Chances of earning a college degree are higher than ever.** College completion rates remained strong despite the pandemic. *About 4 in 10 students from the class of 2014 earned a bachelor's degree.*
- 2. College outcomes are important to consider before students enroll in college.** In San Diego, we have an equal share of students enrolled in two and four-year colleges, *but less than 20% of students attend colleges with a 70% graduation rate or higher.* College graduation rate is the best predictor of college success, and counselors play an important role in shaping and guiding students' college-going decisions toward colleges that ensure most students attain a degree. All college-going students need access to the most relevant information when making a decision about where to attend college, especially a college's graduation rate.
- 3. Matching is the best way to ensure college completion.** A poor college match results in more students dropping out of college or changing colleges. Most students who drop out never return and students who change colleges are at risk of not completing. Student need to know that (a) college students who enroll full-time have a much better chance of completing a degree, and (b) students enrolled in colleges with higher retention rates attain degrees at higher rates than others. *All schools and counselors must provide students access to tools and information that support college matching, including costs, retention, and graduation rates.*
- 4. The pandemic forced more students to delay or defer college enrollment in 2020.** Enrollment rates across San Diego County dropped by nearly 11% from 2019. *Counselors must pay close attention to those students most impacted by the pandemic in terms of college enrollment including American Indian students, students who are low-income, English learners, and others.*

¹Coker, C. & Glynn, J. (2017). Making college affordable: Providing low-income students with the knowledge and resources needed to pay for college. Jack Kent Cooke Foundation: Lansdowne, VA.

²Access the full 2020 postsecondary report at <https://www.sdcoe.net/lls/assessment/Pages/evaluation-reports.aspx>