

RESEARCH BRIEF

PLANNING, INNOVATION, AND ACCOUNTABILITY
OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION – FEBRUARY 28, 2022



Postsecondary Enrollment, Persistence, and Degree Attainment

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ABSTRACT

This brief summarizes the results from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) postsecondary data reports. Each year, data regarding Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS) graduates are provided to the NSC that is then matched to university enrollment records at participating institutions across the nation. The reports provided by the NSC document the numbers and percentages of VBCPS graduates who enrolled in college immediately after high school, during the first year after high school, and during the first two years after high school. The reports also provided information on postsecondary persistence from freshman to sophomore year and degree attainment trends for VBCPS graduates. Over the last ten graduating cohorts, the highest percentage of students enrolling in a postsecondary institution was 61 percent for the Class of 2017 and the lowest was 52 percent for the Class of 2021. The percentage of VBCPS graduates enrolling in college immediately after graduation for the Class of 2021 was a 1-percentage point decrease from the prior year. According to the NSC, the current national data showed a 2.7 percent decline in enrollment immediately after high school compared to fall 2020 and a 13.1 percent decline since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e., fall 2019). These declines were greater than what was found in VBCPS. The VBCPS decline for the Class of 2021 represented a 1.9 percent decline compared to the prior year and a 5.5 percent decline since the start of the pandemic. The percentage of VBCPS graduates who enrolled in a postsecondary institution two years after graduation ranged from 62 percent for the Class of 2019 to 70 percent for the Class of 2012. Once enrolled in college, 82 to 86 percent of VBCPS graduates reenrolled for their sophomore year from the 2010 to 2019 graduating classes. Approximately 40 percent of 2015 VBCPS graduates obtained a postsecondary degree within six years.

INTRODUCTION

This brief is based on data reports provided by the NSC. The NSC collects data that represent approximately 97 percent of all students enrolled in a postsecondary institution from over 3,600 colleges and universities that participate in the educational reporting service.¹ This information enables schools and school divisions to track their graduates as they continue through the educational pipeline. The school division began subscribing to the NSC service in 2004 and has provided the NSC with graduation data from the Class of 2001 through the most current Class of 2021.

METHOD

Each fall, VBCPS provides the NSC with a list of all combined term graduates.² Based on the requirements of the NSC, this list contains graduates' first name, last name, date of birth, graduation date, diploma type, high school attended, and

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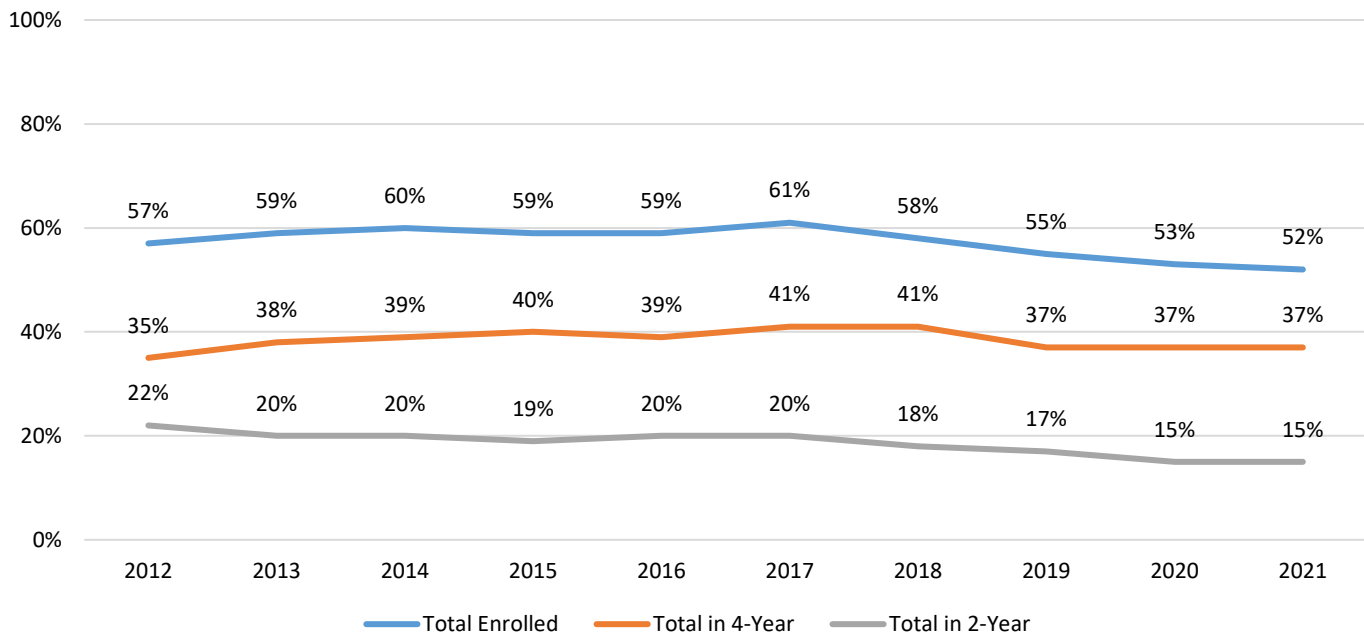
demographic information. Using this information, the NSC utilizes a proprietary algorithm to match these student records with data provided by each participating postsecondary institution. The results are provided in reports that illustrate college enrollment trends for VBCPS alumni. The following sections summarize the division-level trends for postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion. Additionally, data regarding school-level trends for all measures are included in the Appendix. Data shown in this brief for each graduating class are based on the most recent reports from the NSC.

POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT

Immediately After High School – All Students

The following figures illustrate the percentage of high school graduates who enrolled in a postsecondary institution during the fall semester immediately following high school graduation. In order to be included in this percentage, a student must have enrolled following graduation between August 15 and October 31. Figure 1 shows the overall division-level enrollment percentages for the graduating classes of 2012 through 2021. Additionally, the institution level (2-year or 4-year) in which these students enrolled is illustrated. At the division level, the percentage of students who enrolled in a postsecondary institution immediately after graduation ranged from a low of 52 percent for the Class of 2021 to 61 percent for the Class of 2017. For the Class of 2021, the percentage of students enrolled in a postsecondary institution immediately after high school was 1 percentage point lower than the prior year and continued a downward trend observed since the Class of 2017. With regard to institution level, a consistently higher percentage of graduates enrolled in four-year institutions immediately after graduation compared to two-year institutions. Enrollment in a four-year postsecondary institution has ranged from 35 percent for the Class of 2012 to a high of 41 percent for the classes of 2017 and 2018. For the Class of 2021, the percentage of students enrolling in a four-year institution immediately after graduation was maintained at 37 percent. Enrollment in a two-year postsecondary institution has ranged from 15 percent for the classes of 2020 and 2021 to 22 percent for the Class of 2012. Overall, enrollment in a two-year institution has been declining since 2012 and was maintained at 15 percent for the Class of 2021.

Figure 1: Division Postsecondary Enrollment by Year and Level - Immediately After High School



Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on College Enrollment Immediately After High School

To provide context for the division results for the Class of 2021 and potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office of Research and Evaluation reviewed information provided by the NSC for national trends. According to the NSC, the current national data show a 2.7 percent decline in enrollments immediately after high school compared to fall 2020 and a 13.1 percent decline since the start of the pandemic (i.e., fall 2019).³ For reference, the VBCPS decline for the Class of 2021 represented a 1.9 percent decline compared to the prior year and a 5.5 percent decline since the start of the pandemic. Overall, Class of 2021 freshmen enrollment decreased for most racial/ethnic groups compared to the prior year. Nationally, enrollment for White students declined by 7.9 percent and 6.5 percent for Black or African American students. In VBCPS, the declines were smaller for these groups with a 3.4 percent decline for White students and a 2.4 percent decline for Black or African American students.

Immediately After High School – by Student Groups

Gender and race/ethnicity data were provided to the NSC to be included in the enrollment reports. The NSC bases these percentages on the number of students within the student group who enrolled in college out of the total number of students in that student group who were in the graduating class. As can be seen in Figure 2, the percentage of female students enrolling in a postsecondary institution ranged from a low of 58 percent for the Class of 2021 to 68 percent for the Class of 2017, while the percentage of male students enrolling immediately after high school ranged from a low of 45 percent for the classes of 2020 and 2021 to 54 percent for the Class of 2017. Overall, a larger percentage of females than males enrolled in a postsecondary institution immediately after high school each year. At the division level for the Class of 2021, the percentage of female graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution immediately following graduation decreased by 3 percentage points to 58 percent and the percentage of male students who enrolled in a postsecondary institution immediately following graduation was maintained at 45 percent.

Figure 2: Postsecondary Enrollment by Gender - Immediately After High School

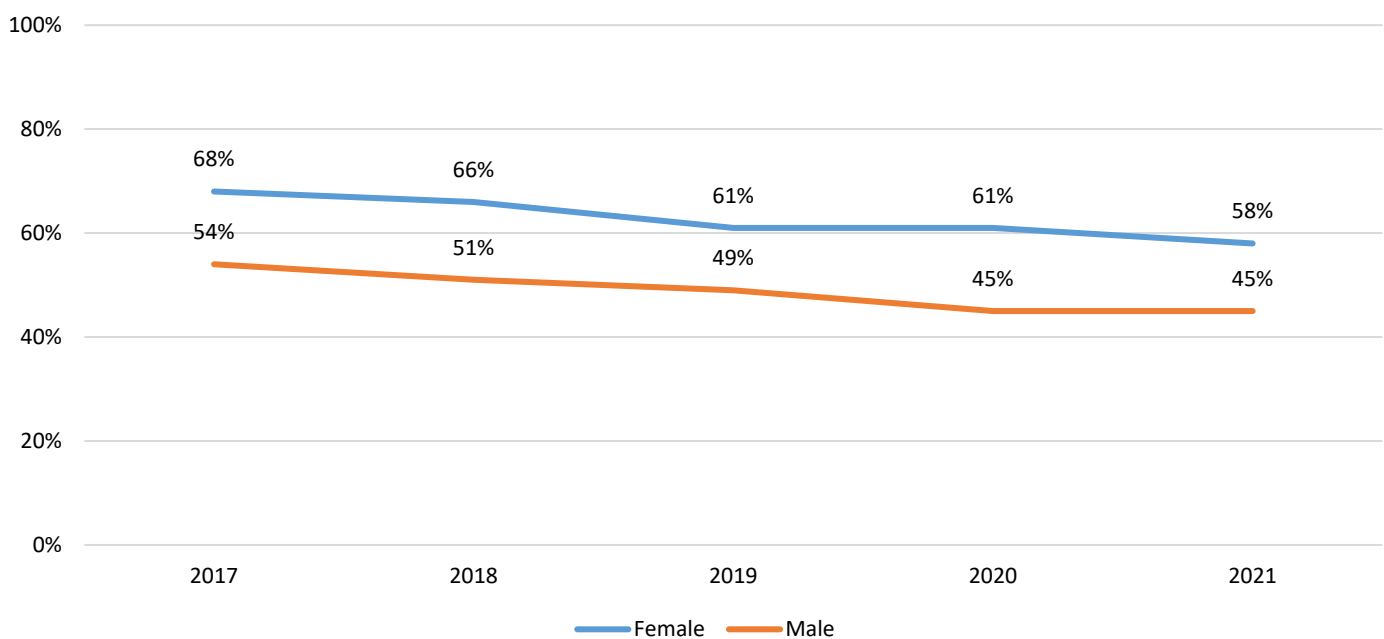
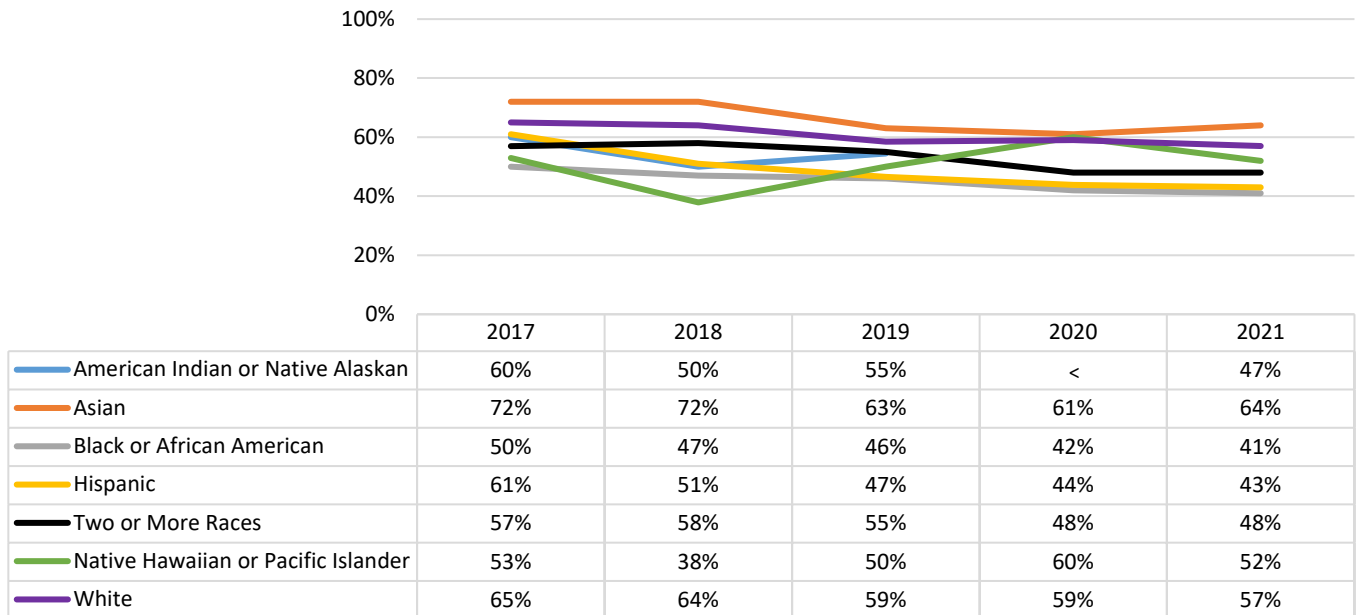


Figure 3 contains the division-level postsecondary enrollment percentages by race/ethnicity for the graduating classes of 2017 through 2021. Overall, the percentage of students enrolling in a postsecondary institution ranged from a low of 38 percent for Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander graduates from the Class of 2018 to 72 percent for Asian graduates from the classes of 2017 and 2018. With regard to the race/ethnicities of the students in the Class of 2021, the student group with the largest percentage of graduates who enrolled immediately following graduation was Asian (64%) followed by White students (57%). The student groups from the Class of 2021 with less than 50 percent of students enrolling in a postsecondary institution were students identifying as Two or More Races (48%), American Indian/Alaskan Native (47%), Hispanic (43%), and Black or African American (41%). Additionally, the percentage of graduates enrolling in a postsecondary institution immediately after high school decreased for all student groups compared to the prior year except for Asian students who had an increase of 3 percentage points and students who identify as two or more races who maintained their percentage (48%). The fluctuation in the enrollment percentages for the Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander student group was likely related to the group having a relatively small number of students (e.g., 29 students in the Class of 2021).

Figure 3: Division Postsecondary Enrollment by Ethnicity - Immediately After High School



Note: American Indian and Native Alaskan student group data were not reported for the Class of 2020 due to the group being less than 10.

Figure 4 contains the division-level postsecondary enrollment percentages for the economically disadvantaged and non-economically disadvantaged students who were graduates from the classes of 2017 through 2021. Over the last six graduating cohorts, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students enrolling in a postsecondary institution ranged from a low of 37 percent for the Class of 2021 to 46 percent for the Class of 2017, while the percentage of non-economically disadvantaged students enrolling immediately after high school ranged from a low of 58 percent for the Class of 2021 to 66 percent for the Class of 2017. At the division level for the Class of 2021, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students enrolled in a postsecondary institution immediately following graduation decreased 1 percentage point from the prior year to 37 percent and the percentage of non-economically disadvantaged students who enrolled in a postsecondary institution immediately following graduation decreased 3 percentage points to 58 percent.

Figure 4: Postsecondary Enrollment by Economic Status - Immediately After High School

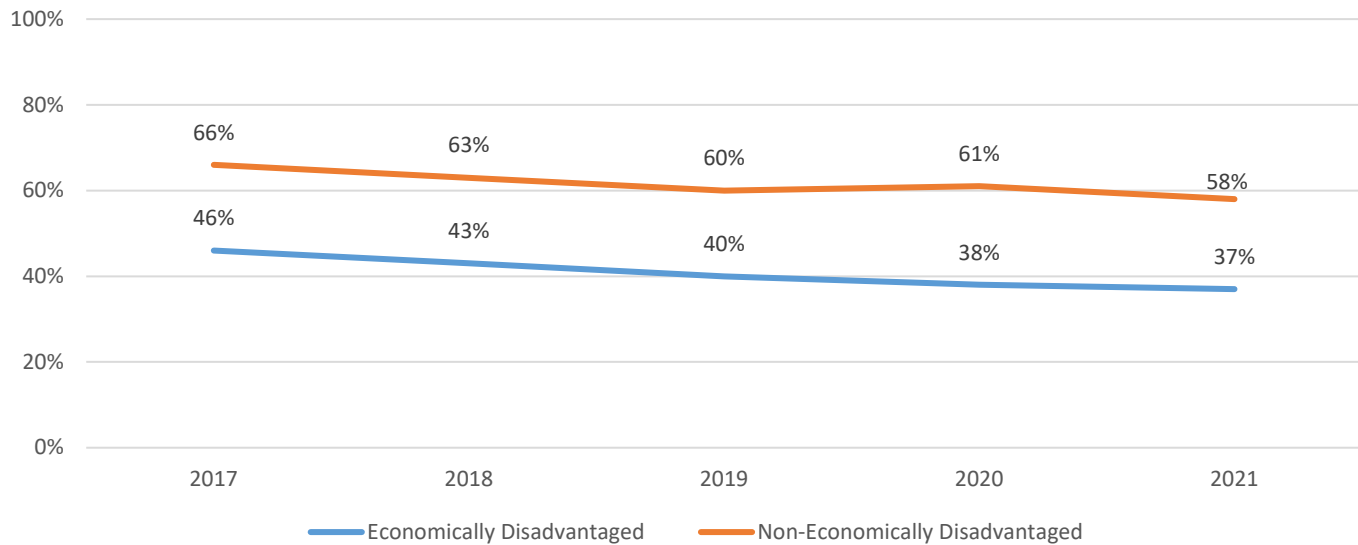
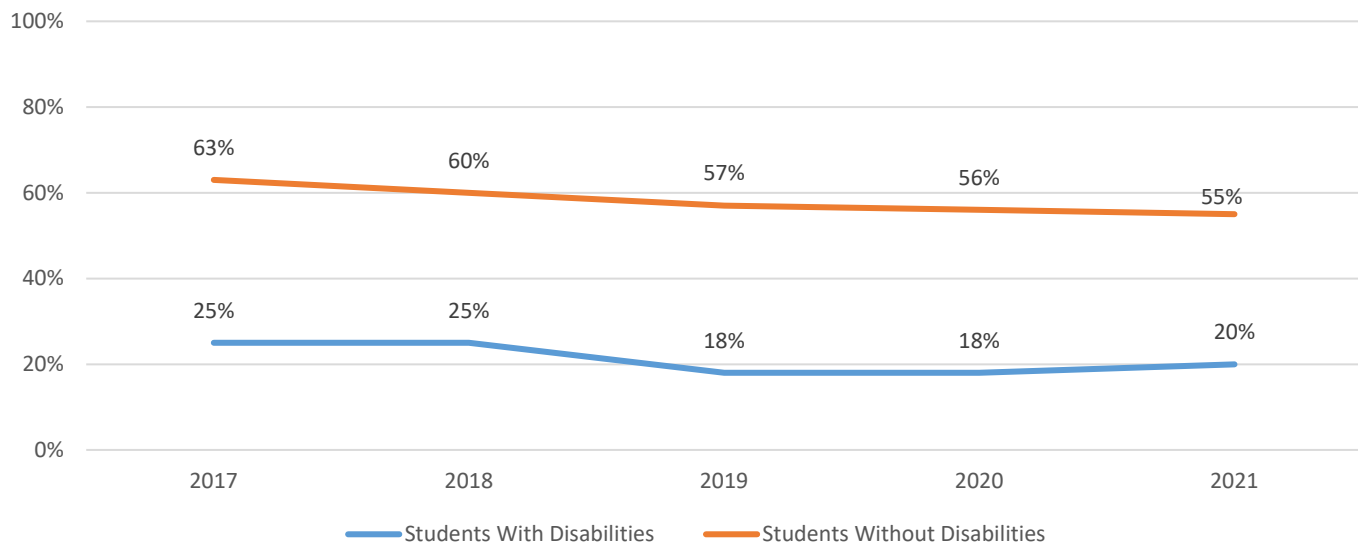


Figure 5 contains the division-level postsecondary enrollment percentages for students with disabilities and students without disabilities who were graduates from the classes of 2017 through 2021. Over the last six graduating cohorts, the percentage of students with disabilities enrolling in a postsecondary institution ranged from a low of 18 percent for the Classes of 2019 and 2020 to 25 percent for the classes of 2017 and 2018, while the percentage of students without disabilities enrolling immediately after high school ranged from a low of 55 percent for the Class of 2021 to 63 percent for the Class of 2017. At the division level for the Class of 2021, the percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in a postsecondary institution immediately following graduation increased 2 percentage points from the prior year to 20 percent and the percentage of students without disabilities who enrolled in a postsecondary institution immediately following graduation decreased 1 percentage point from the prior year to 55 percent.

Figure 5: Postsecondary Enrollment by Disability Status - Immediately After High School

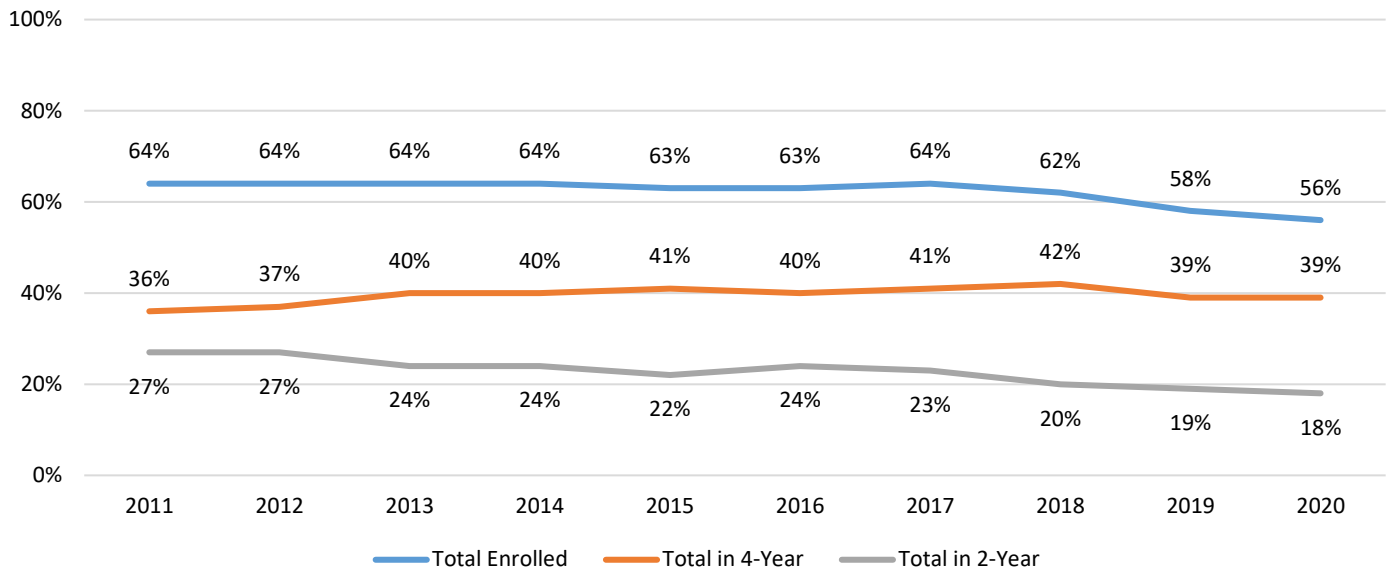


Any Time During the First Year After High School

In addition to reporting data for students who enroll in college during the fall semester immediately following graduation, the NSC also provides data on the number of high school graduates who enroll in a postsecondary institution at any time during the first academic year following graduation (August 15 to August 14). Figure 6 shows the overall

division-level enrollment percentages for the graduating classes of 2011 through 2020, along with the institution level. At the division level, the percentage of students who enrolled in a postsecondary institution within the first year following graduation ranged from a low of 56 percent for the Class of 2020 to 64 percent for the classes of 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2017. For the Class of 2020, the percentage of students enrolled in a postsecondary institution anytime during the first year after graduation was 3 percentage points higher than the percentage enrolled in the fall immediately after high school graduation. When the data were analyzed for the classes of 2011 through 2020, the percentage of students enrolling in a postsecondary institution anytime during the first year was 3 to 7 percentage points higher compared to enrollment in a postsecondary institution in the fall immediately after high school.

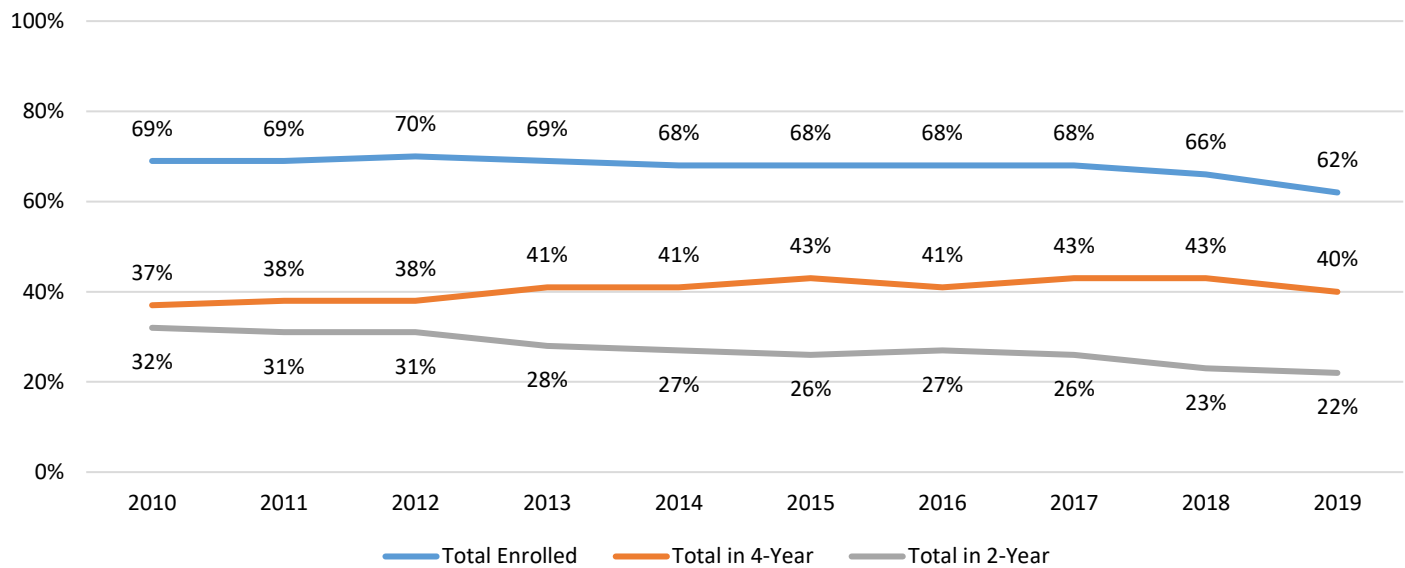
Figure 6: Division Postsecondary Enrollment by Year and Level - During the First Year After High School



Within Two Years After High School

The NSC reports also provided data on the number of graduates who enroll in a postsecondary institution within two years of graduation. Figure 7 displays the percentages for the classes of 2010 through 2019 along with the institution level in which these students enrolled. At the division level, the percentage of students who enrolled in a postsecondary institution within two years of graduation ranged from a low of 62 percent for the Class of 2019 to 70 percent for the Class of 2012. The percentage of students enrolling in a four-year institution decreased 3 percentage points compared to the prior year to 40 percent for the Class of 2019 and the percentage of students enrolling in a two-year institution has shown a decreasing trend since 2010.

Figure 7: Division Postsecondary Enrollment by Year and Level - Within Two Years After High School



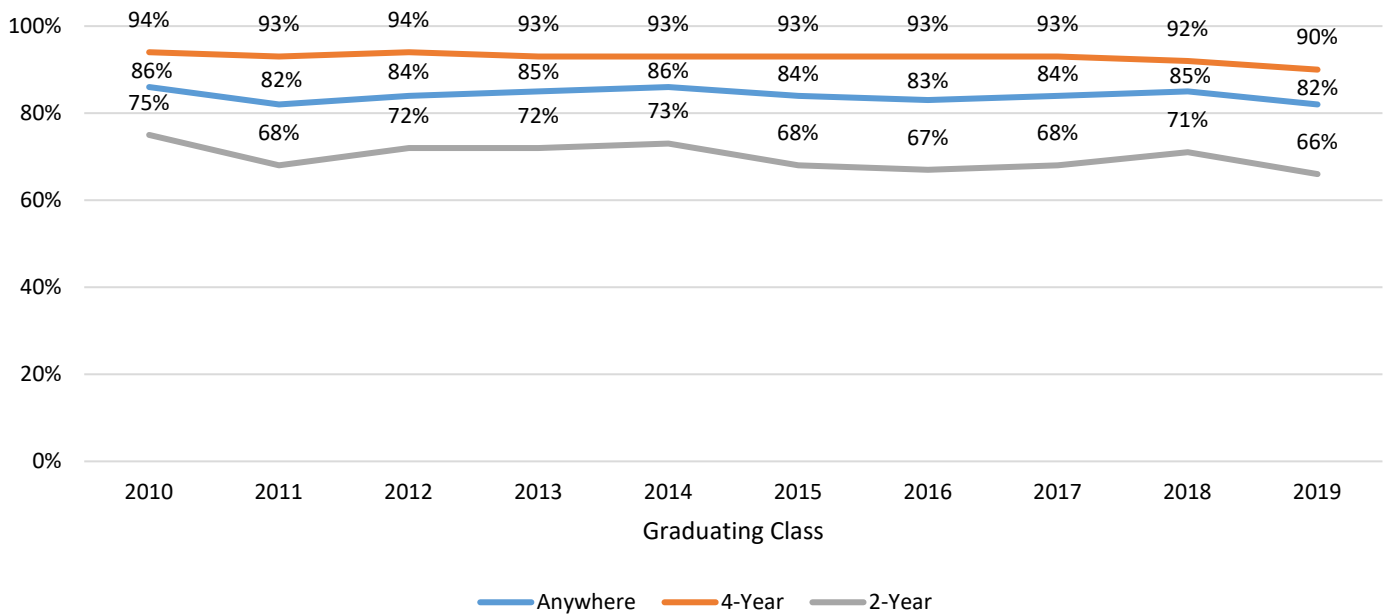
Compared to immediate enrollment during the fall after graduation (Figure 1), the overall percentage of the Class of 2019 graduates who enrolled in postsecondary education within two years increased by 7 percentage points. When data were analyzed for the classes of 2010 through 2019, the percentage of students enrolling in a postsecondary institution within two years of graduation was 7 to 13 percentage points higher compared to enrollment in a postsecondary institution in the fall immediately after high school.

POSTSECONDARY PERSISTENCE

The NSC provides information on the postsecondary persistence by reporting on the percentage of students who remained enrolled in a postsecondary institution from the first year to the second year. It is important to note that the values in the figures represent the percentage of students who remained enrolled in any postsecondary institution and not necessarily retained at the same institution. Figure 8 shows the division’s total student percentages by institution level for the graduating classes of 2010 through 2019. Over the graduating classes, a range of 82 to 86 percent of the graduates who enrolled in a postsecondary institution returned for a second year. For the most recent Class of 2019, 82 percent of graduates who enrolled in a postsecondary institution returned for a second year.

For students who enrolled in a four-year institution, from 90 percent of the Class of 2019 to 94 percent of the classes of 2010 and 2012 returned for a second year. For the Class of 2019, the persistence rate of VBCPS students at four-year institutions decreased two percentage points to 90 percent from the prior year. The persistence rate for VBCPS students at two-year institutions ranged from 66 percent for the Class of 2019 to 75 percent for the Class of 2010 and demonstrated a decrease of 5 percentage points compared to the prior year. For the Class of 2019, the persistence rate for students attending a four-year institution was 24 percentage points higher compared to the students attending a two-year institution.

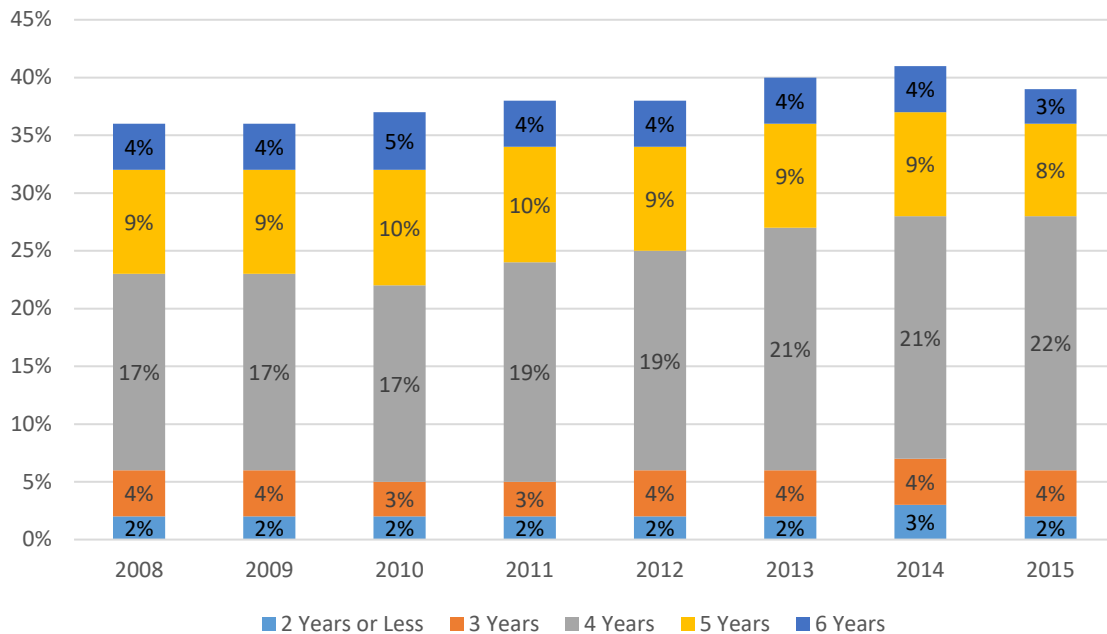
Figure 8: Division Postsecondary Persistence From Freshman to Sophomore by Year and Level



DEGREE ATTAINMENT

The percentage of students who completed a degree at a postsecondary institution is illustrated in Figure 9 for the graduating classes of 2008 through 2015. In order to be included, a student must have earned either an associate degree, bachelor's degree, or advanced degree within six years following enrollment. Overall, graduation rates within four years ranged from approximately 22 percent for the Class of 2010 to 28 percent of graduates for the classes of 2014 and 2015. Graduation rates within six years ranged from 36 to 40 percent depending on the class.

Figure 9: Division Postsecondary Time to Graduation



SUMMARY

The data provided by the NSC allow schools and school divisions to track the progress of their students and answer questions about postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and degree attainment. It also allows for the examination of enrollment choices that students make based on institutional level (i.e., 2-year and 4-year schools). Additionally, the data provide a picture of the postsecondary enrollment rates based on students' gender, ethnicity, economic status, and special education status.

Over the last ten graduating classes, from 52 to 61 percent of VBCPS graduates continued their education immediately following high school. These enrollment percentages continued to increase over the course of two years after high school from 62 to 70 percent. The largest percentage of VBCPS graduates who enrolled in a postsecondary institution chose to attend a four-year program. Based on the available demographic data for the Class of 2021, female students (58%) were more likely to continue their education compared to males (45%) at the division level. For the Class of 2021, Asian graduates (64%) were the most likely to enroll immediately after high school and Black or African American graduates (41%) were the least likely to enroll. At the division level, a larger percentage of non-economically disadvantaged graduates (58%) enrolled in a postsecondary institution compared to economically disadvantaged students (37%). Additionally, non-special education graduates (55%) were more likely than special education graduates (20%) to enroll in a postsecondary institution.

According to the NSC, the current national data showed a 2.7 percent decline in enrollments immediately after high school in fall 2021 compared to fall 2020 and a 13.1 percent decline since the start of the pandemic (i.e., fall 2019). These declines were greater than what was found in VBCPS. The VBCPS decline for the Class of 2021 represented a 1.9 percent decline compared to the prior year and a 5.5 percent decline since the start of the pandemic.

Of the VBCPS graduates who enrolled in a four-year postsecondary institution, from 90 to 94 percent persisted into their second year, whereas 66 to 75 percent enrolled in a two-year institution persisted into the second year. Approximately 28 percent of 2015 VBCPS graduates obtained a college degree within four years of enrolling in a postsecondary institution. This percentage was nearly 40 percent after six years for the Class of 2015.

APPENDIX: SCHOOL SPECIFIC DATA

Figure 1: Postsecondary Enrollment by School and Year - Immediately After High School

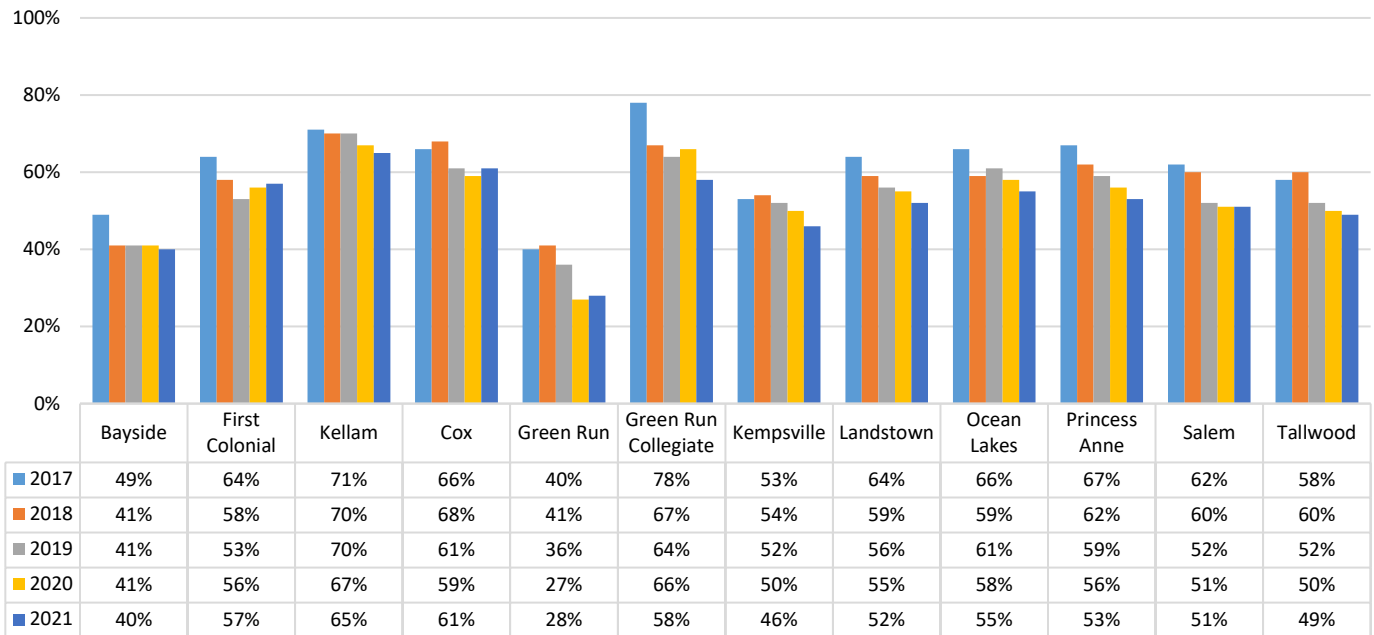


Figure 2: Postsecondary Enrollment by School and Gender - Immediately After High School

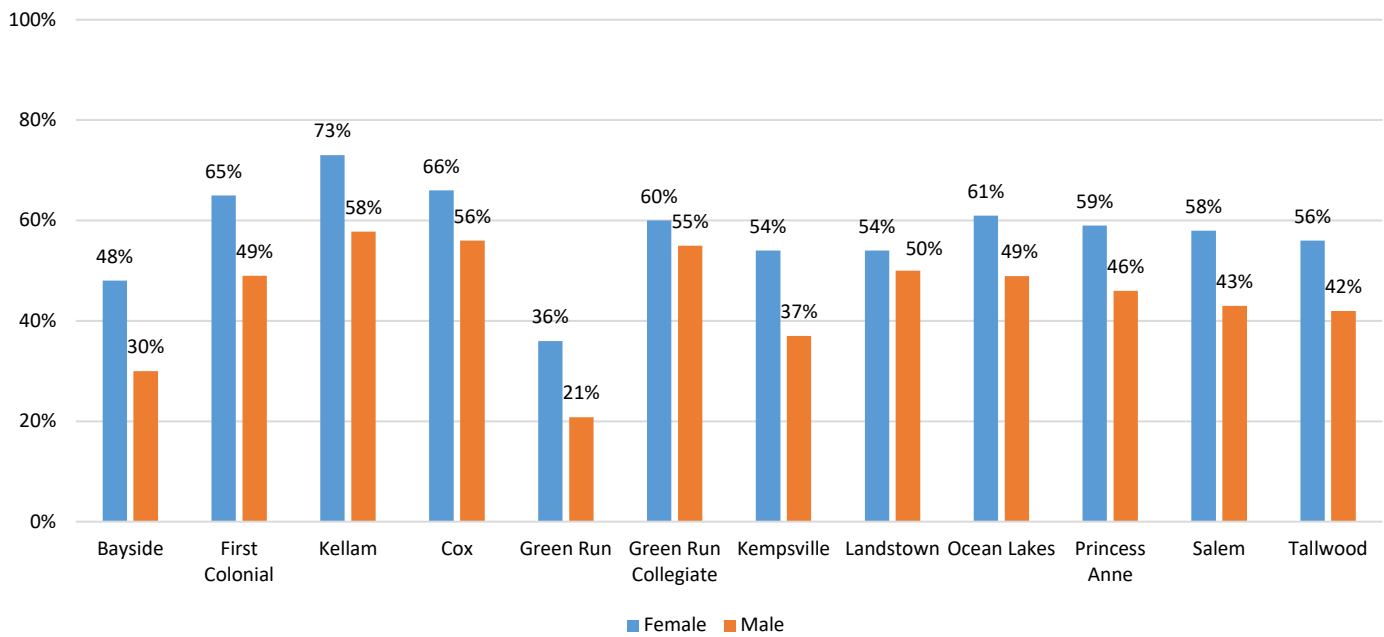


Figure 3: Postsecondary Enrollment by School and Select Ethnicities - Immediately After High School

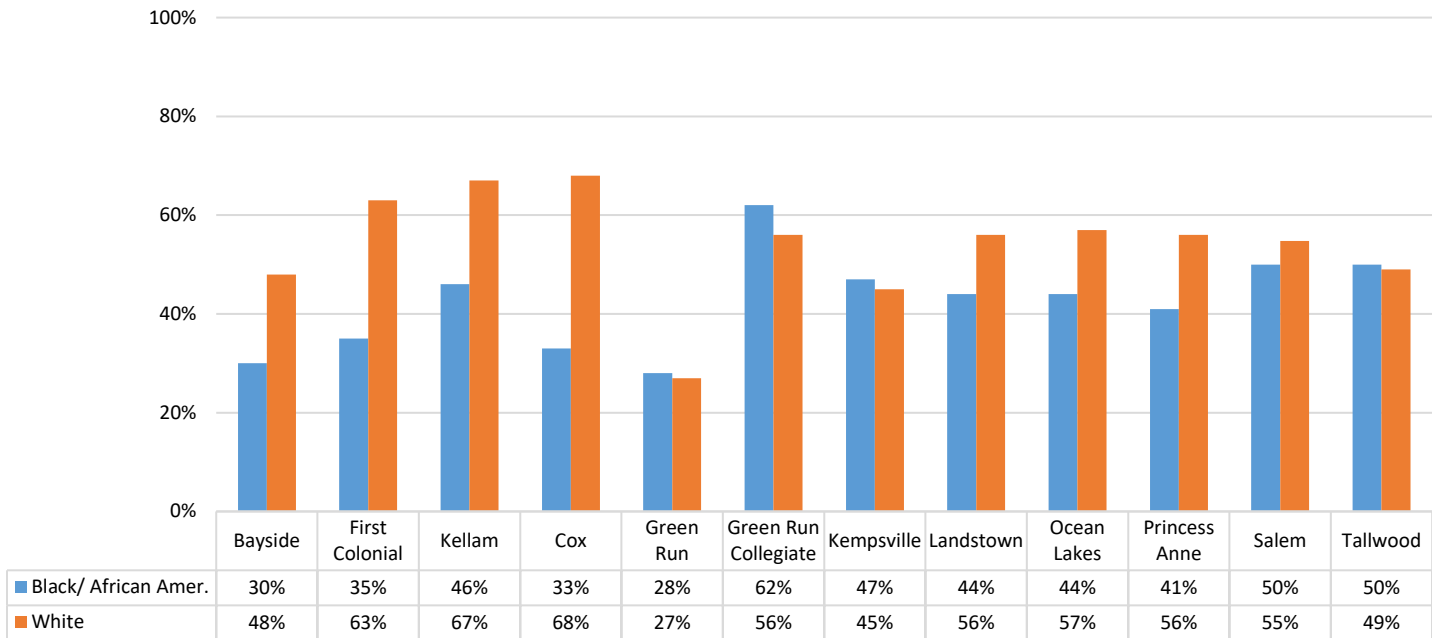


Figure 4: Postsecondary Enrollment by School and Economic Status - Immediately After High School

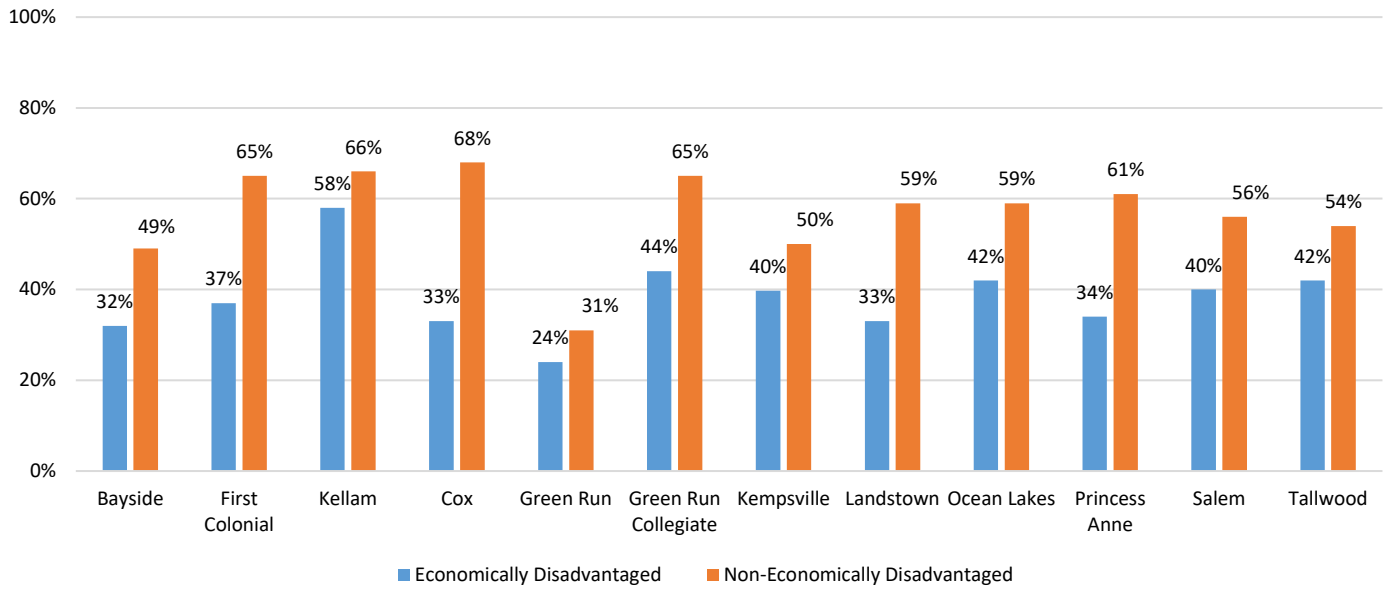
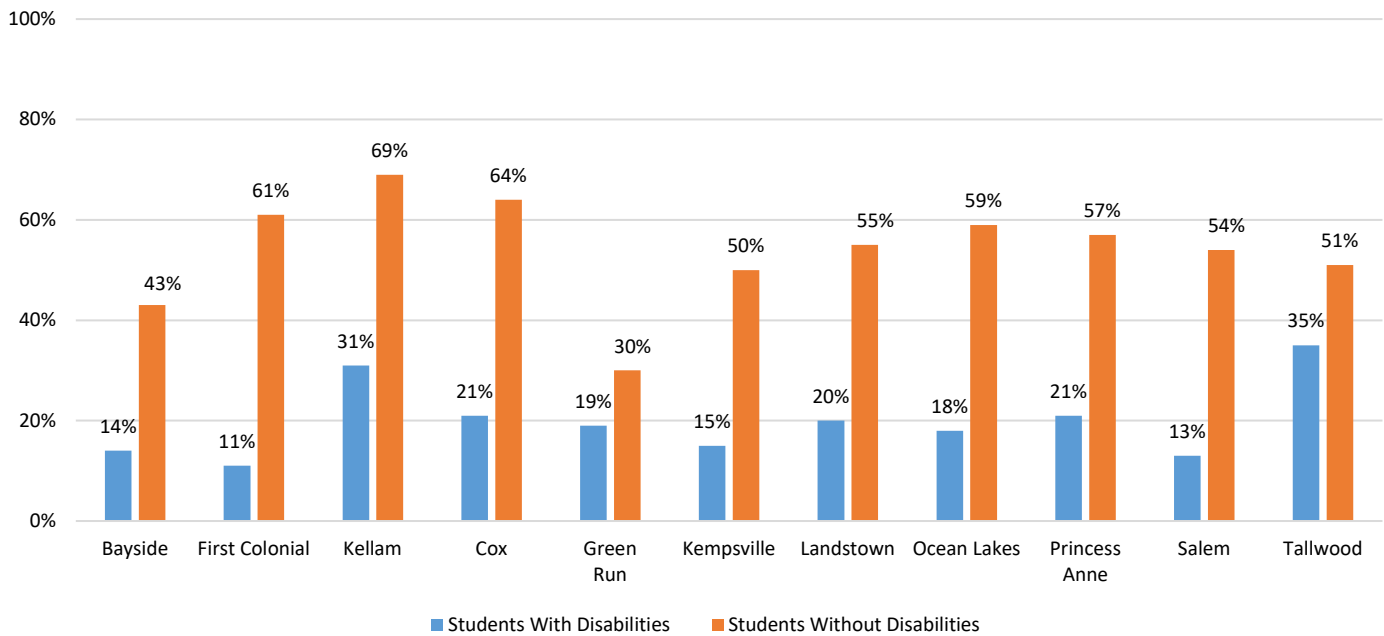


Figure 5: Postsecondary Enrollment by School and Special Education Status - Immediately After High School



Note: Green Run Collegiate is not represented in this chart due to having a special education population below 10 students for this measure

Figure 6: Postsecondary Enrollment by School and Year - During the First Year After High School

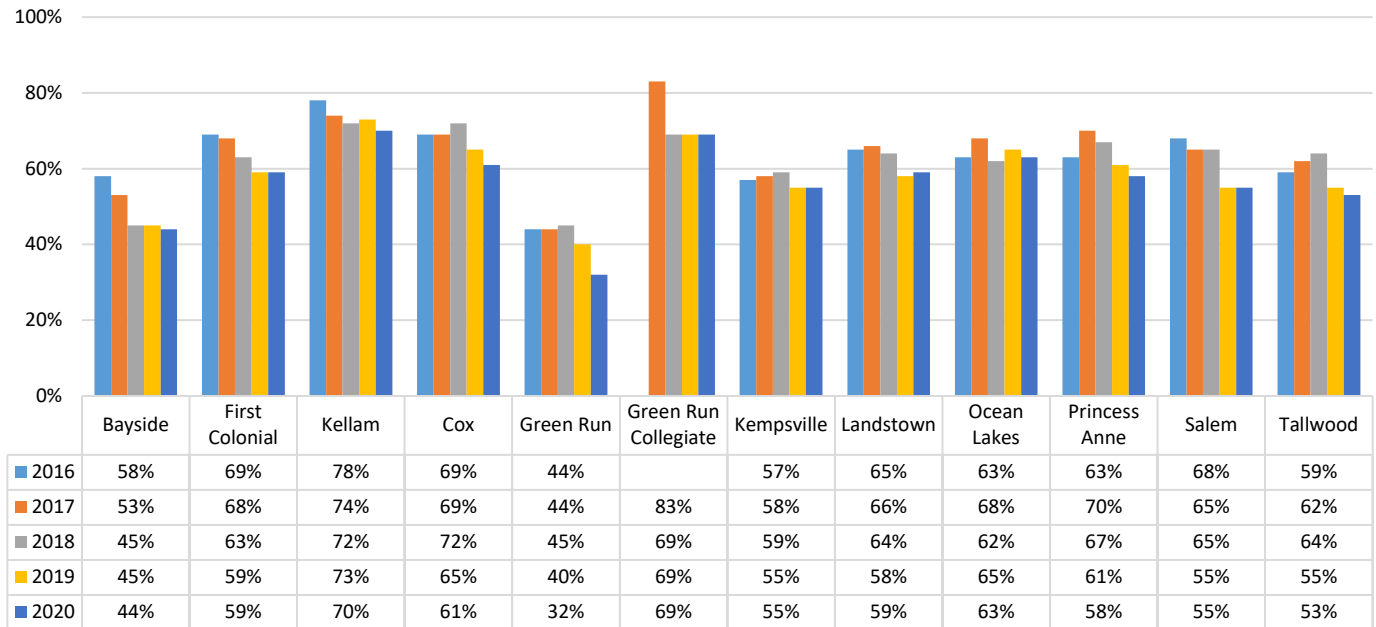


Figure 7: Postsecondary Enrollment by School and Year - Within Two Years After High School

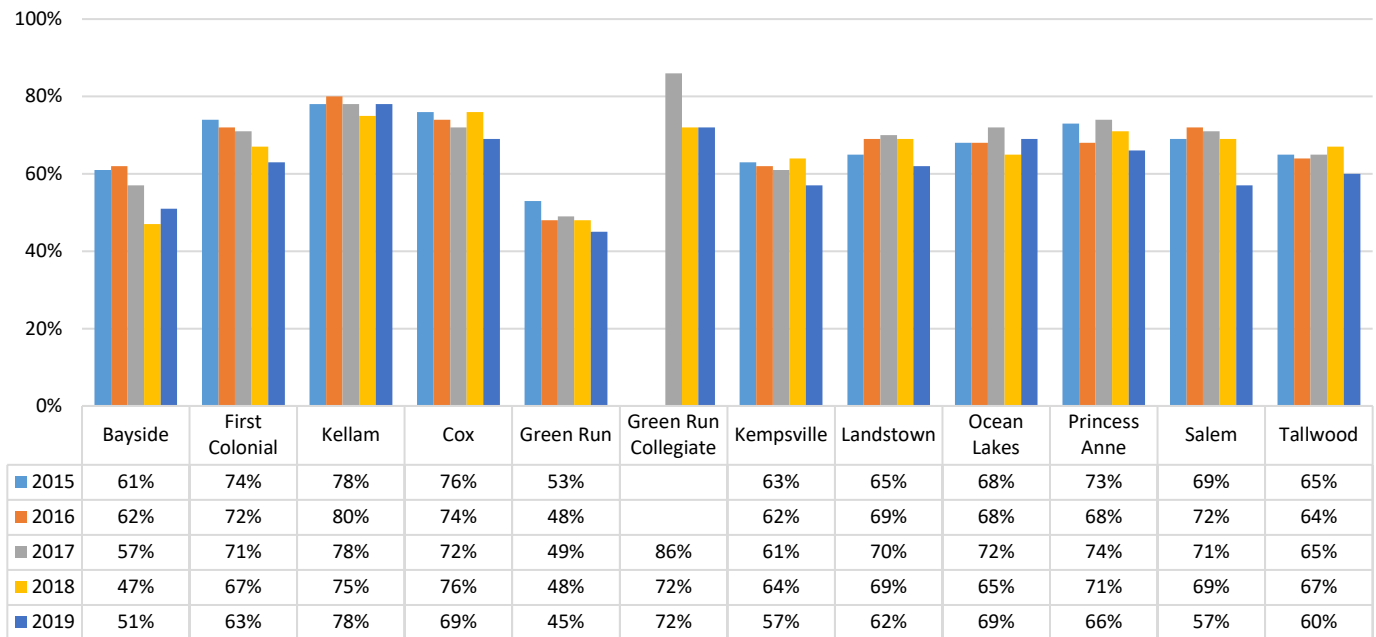


Figure 8: Postsecondary Persistence by School and Year

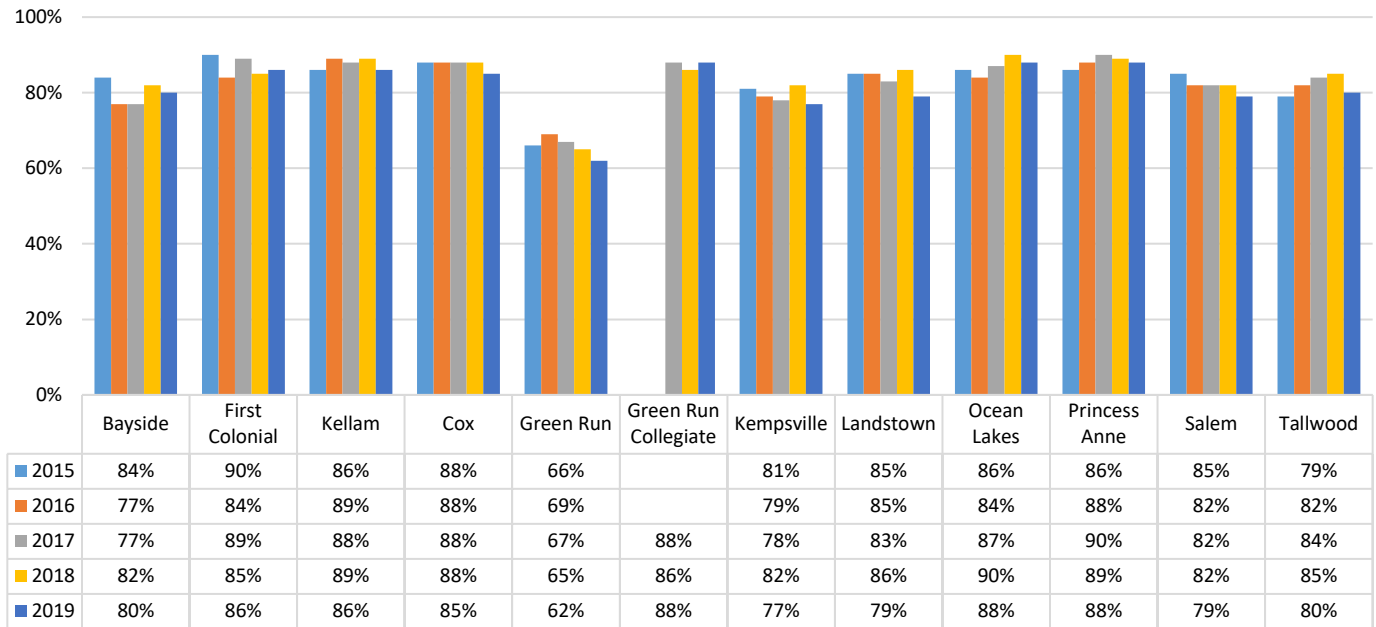
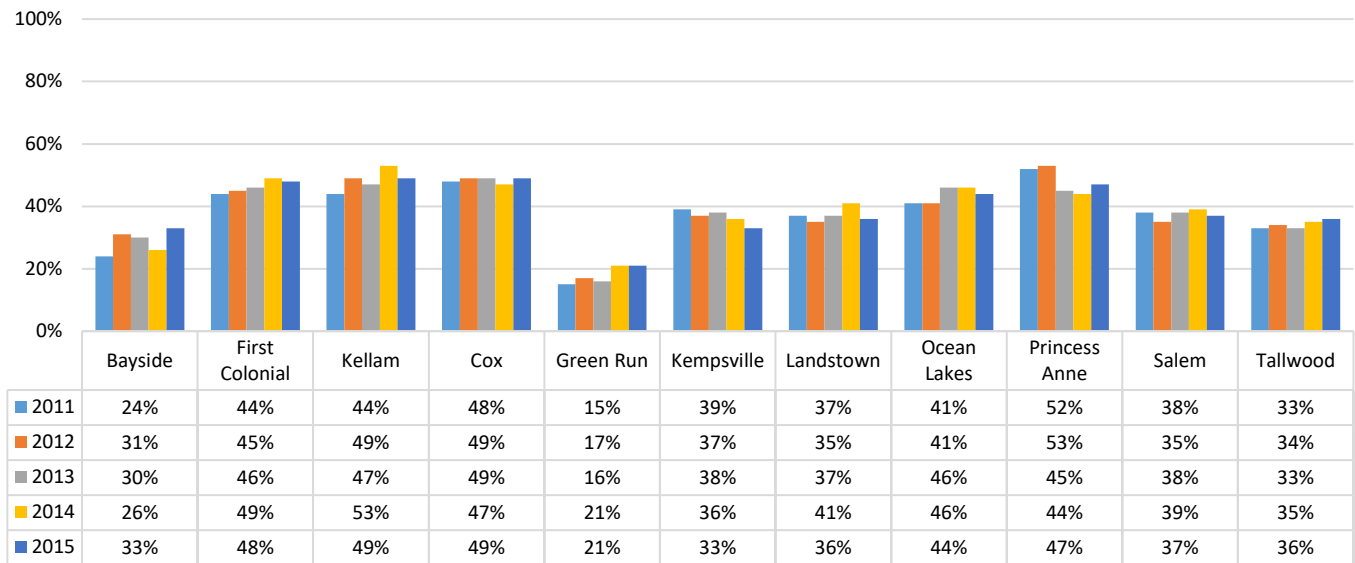


Figure 9: Degree Attainment Within Six Years by School



Note: Green Run Collegiate is not represented in this chart due to not having a graduating class in the reported years

ENDNOTES

¹ Source: <https://studentclearinghouse.info/onestop/wp-content/uploads/NSCFactSheet.pdf>.

² Data for students whose educational record indicates that they do not want their directory information released are not sent to the NSC.

³ Source: <https://nscresearchcenter.org/stay-informed/>