

Tuesday, June 25, 2019 | Washington, DC

PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES

ACE: American Council on Education

TIAA Institute  
The Education Trust

THE STATUS OF RACE AND ETHNICITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report provides an overview of the educational journeys of today's students and the educators who serve them. For the full report and downloadable chapters, essays, figures, and data tables, see: www.equityinhighered.org.

Over the past two decades, the U.S. population has grown not only more educated but also more racially and ethnically diverse, thanks in large part to a growing Hispanic population that is seeking higher education at levels not before seen. Between 1995-96 and 2015-16, the total share of Hispanic students among all undergraduate students increased from about 10 percent to roughly 20 percent. This is the largest increase of any other racial or ethnic group.

At both the undergraduate and graduate levels, advances in Black student enrollment and attainment have been accompanied by some of the lowest persistence rates, highest undergraduate dropout rates, highest borrowing rates, and largest debt burdens of any group. Moreover, the gender gap in enrollment for Black students remained the widest of any group. In 2016, 62.2 percent of Black undergraduates and 70.2 percent of Black graduate students were women.

We still lack precise national data on many educational outcomes for American Indians or Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders; but what the available data do show is troubling.

Indigenous students were less likely than other racial and ethnic groups to attend a four-year institution, a very selective college, or pursue a bachelor's degree. At the graduate level, a higher share of indigenous students than all other graduate students completed degrees at for-profit institutions.

Great differences exist by race, ethnicity, and gender when it comes to where students go to college and what they study, signaling an uneven playing field in the labor market and a threat to the opportunity for intergenerational upward mobility. As a group, Hispanic undergraduates were among the most likely to pursue and complete an associate degree, but were the least likely to complete their associate degree in high paying health care fields.

How students pay for higher education varied considerably by race and ethnicity, especially in terms of who borrows and who leaves college with high levels of student loan debt. About one-third of African American bachelor's degree recipients accumulated \$40,000 or more in debt, compared with 18 percent overall and 13 percent of Hispanic graduates.

Racial and ethnic diversity among college faculty, staff, and administrators still doesn't reflect that of today's college students. In 2016, people of color held only 21 percent of full-time faculty positions. To put this into context, in 2015-16, about 45 percent of undergraduate students and 32 percent of graduate students were people of color.