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JOHN W. GARDNER CENTER
for Youth and Their Communities

Supporting the Transition to Postsecondary Education

San Francisco's Bridge to Success (BtS) initiative has brought together the City and County of San Francisco, the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), the City College of San Francisco (CCSF), and key community organizations to promote the postsecondary success of underrepresented students. Data from the Youth Data Archive (YDA), an initiative of the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities that links individual-level data across youth-serving institutions, shows that in an average cohort of first-time ninth grade SFUSD students, approximately 65% graduate within four years and about 80% of these graduates attend a postsecondary institution the following year.¹ In order to increase the number of students that transition into a postsecondary institution, and to improve the transition for those who do, BtS is developing a "summer bridge" program for the summer of 2011. This program aims to orient recent SFUSD graduates to their new college experience through enrichment activities, academic skill building and an opportunity to connect to their new campus and fellow students.

This analysis presents information on the characteristics of students who graduated from SFUSD in the past and did not attend a postsecondary institution, or who attended a postsecondary institution only briefly before exiting. The findings have been used to help BtS partners plan for the summer bridge program and appropriately target students who could benefit most from the program's services.

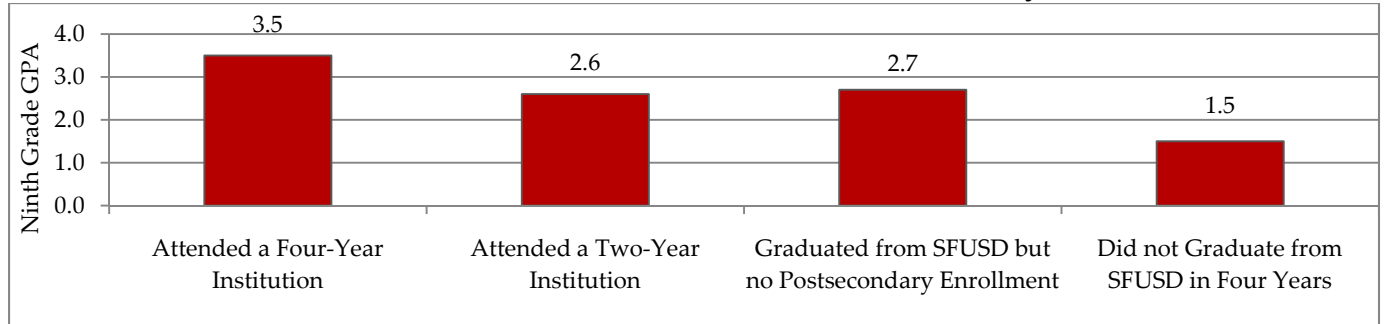
Characteristics of Students Who Do Not Attend a Postsecondary Institution

Following a cohort of 4,913 first-time ninth grade students in the 2003-04 school year, we found that 63% graduated within four years. Of those students who graduated, 46% went on to attend a four-year institution in the next year, 31% attended CCSF, and 4% attended another two-year institution. A total of 19% of SFUSD graduates did not attend a postsecondary institution in the year after graduation. Exhibit 1 shows that ninth grade GPA was highly predictive of students' postsecondary outcomes, with students who attended a four-year institution having the highest average GPA and students who did not graduate

¹ SFUSD provided student data in December 2009 and National Student Clearinghouse postsecondary data in February 2010. CCSF provided student data in December 2009. Analysis focusing on the trajectory of ninth grade students is available at http://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/current_initiatives/youth_archive.html.

having the lowest average GPA. Perhaps surprisingly, students who attended a two-year institution had similar average GPA in ninth grade as students who graduated but had no postsecondary enrollment. The remaining analysis compares the characteristics of these two groups to determine what factors were most strongly associated with postsecondary enrollment.

Exhibit 1. Ninth Grade GPA for Students with Different Postsecondary Enrollments

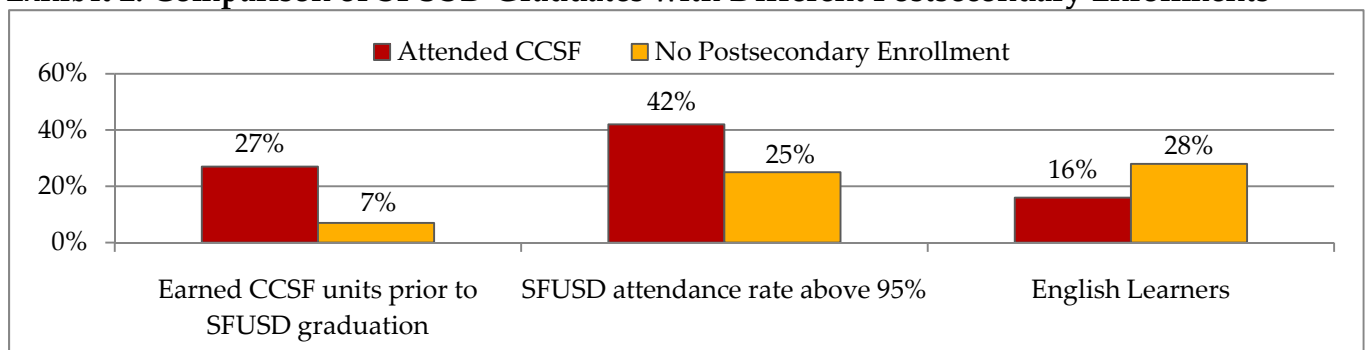


Note: This chart includes students who were enrolled as first-time ninth graders in the 2003-04 school year. Graduation and postsecondary status were measured in the beginning of the 2007-08 school year.

There are a variety of reasons why SFUSD students do not attend postsecondary institutions after high school graduation. Some students, especially those with stronger academic backgrounds, may enter the workforce or take a gap year prior to entering college, and may not need the services offered by a summer bridge program. We therefore concentrated the analysis on students who were most likely to need support making the transition to college, which we defined as those who graduated with a cumulative GPA of less than 3.0.²

Exhibit 2 shows that students who attended CCSF were more likely to have earned CCSF credits while in high school and had higher SFUSD attendance rates, compared to students with no postsecondary enrollment. Being classified as an English learner at the time of graduation was negatively associated with CCSF enrollment.

Exhibit 2. Comparison of SFUSD Graduates with Different Postsecondary Enrollments



Note: This chart includes students who were enrolled as first-time ninth graders in the 2003-04 school year and graduated in 2006-07. Attendance rate was averaged across all four years in high school. English learner status was measured in twelfth grade. Logistic regressions were used to determine which factors were most strongly associated with postsecondary attendance.

² This approach also removes potential biases in the analysis for students with high GPAs whose postsecondary enrollment information is not captured by the NSC, including those in foreign universities or smaller, private institutions.

Approximately 97% of students who initially attended a four-year institution or were enrolled full-time at CCSF remained enrolled in the subsequent year, compared to an 85% retention rate for part-time CCSF students. The few students who left CCSF had lower SFUSD attendance rates, were less likely to have earned CCSF units while in high school, and were more likely to have been classified as special education. Latino students were also more likely to leave CCSF after one year, compared to other ethnic groups.

Summary

This analysis served as a starting point for a discussion of identifying high school graduates for participation in a summer bridge program to help them transition more successfully into postsecondary education. Based on the findings from this research and the overarching goals of Bridge to Success, the summer bridge program will focus on traditionally underrepresented students, English learners, and students who had lower high school attendance rates or did not have any connection to CCSF prior to graduation.

In early 2011, BtS issued a Request For Proposal (RFP) for a summer bridge program aimed at preparing 250 “underrepresented first generation low income students to enroll, attend, persist, and complete a credential or degree at the City College of San Francisco.” The analysis summarized in this snapshot was included in the RFP to help program providers understand and identify the target population that they believed would be most effectively served by the proposed program. Beyond 12, a national nonprofit organization with a mission that aligns with the goals of the BtS summer bridge program was selected to implement the program for the summer of 2011. The program will run for six weeks and students will have the opportunity to:

- Take academic courses at CCSF;
- Participate in workshops on various college-success related topics;
- Receive personalized coaching from recent college graduates, who will continue to coach them throughout their first year; and
- Have the opportunity to develop a robust network of peers, faculty and staff who will help them build a foundation for academic, financial, social and personal success.

The YDA continues to work with BtS partners to generate questions and produce analyses that help San Francisco agencies make better informed data-driven decisions to improve the lives of youth.

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