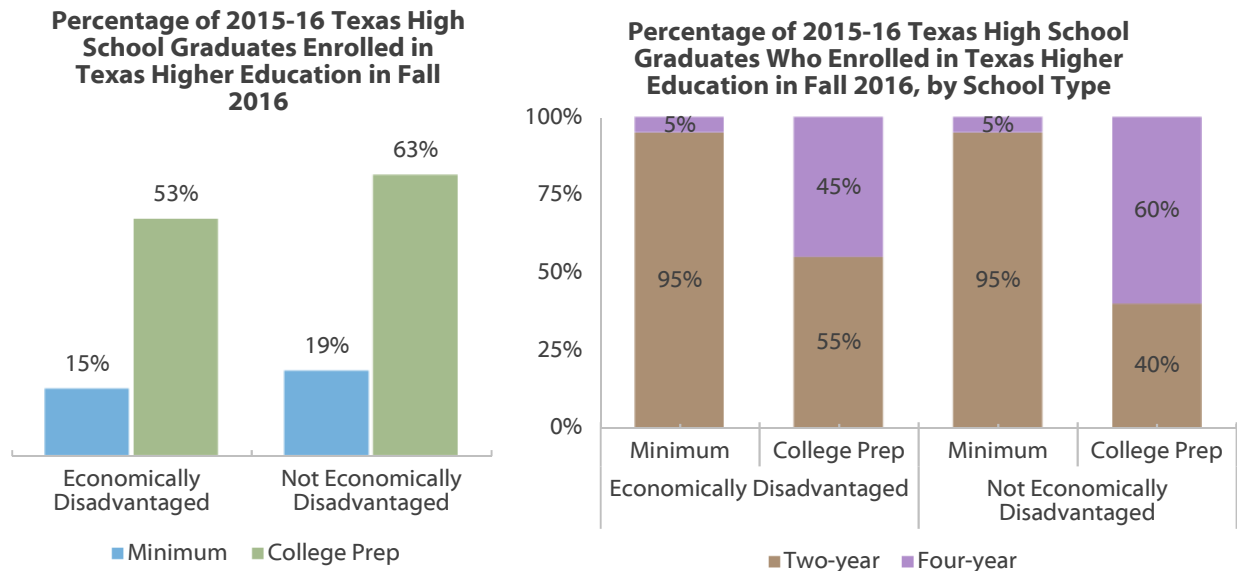


A High School Curriculum of Academic Intensity Boosts College Success for Disadvantaged Students



While family income has a positive association with college enrollment, access to a high school curriculum of high academic intensity and quality, such as the Recommended or Distinguished achievement programs in Texas, can also play a key role in students' success. A U.S. Department of Education study found that the intensity and quality of a student's high school curriculum has a bigger impact on bachelor's degree completion than either the student's high school test scores or the student's grade point average (GPA).

In 2015–16, high school graduates with College Prep* diplomas were more likely to enroll in college immediately following graduation, with 53 percent of economically disadvantaged** students with College Prep diplomas enrolling in college compared to 15 percent of those with minimum diplomas. For students who were not economically disadvantaged, 63 percent of those with College Prep diplomas enrolled in college compared to 19 percent of those with minimum diplomas. "Economically disadvantaged," college-prepared high school graduates are 15 percentage points less likely than college-prepared students considered "not economically disadvantaged" to enroll in a four-year college after graduation.

*A high school student who graduates under either the Recommended or Distinguished achievement program is considered to have a College Prep diploma for the purposes of this analysis, and a graduate of the Minimum achievement program is considered a Minimum program. The Recommended and Distinguished programs require more completed credits (26) in mathematics, science, social studies, language other than English, and fine arts than the minimum program. The Minimum program has fewer required completed credits (22). Students enrolled under the Foundation program, eight percent of 2015-16 Texas high school graduates, are excluded from this analysis as this new diploma program is intended to replace all existing diploma types, and thus encompasses minimum and college prep curriculums.

** The Texas Education Agency (TEA) collects data on whether a student is "economically disadvantaged" based on the student's eligibility for free or reduced lunch as a proxy for family income. The TEA does not have detailed information about family income.

Sources: High school curriculum and degree completion: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, *Answers in the Tool Box: Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor's Degree Attainment*, by Clifford Adelman (1999) (<http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/Toolbox/toolbox.html>); Side-by-Side Comparison: Texas Graduation Programs 2014-2015: (https://tcta.org/sites/tcta.org/files/current_hb5_grad_requirements_comparison_chart.pdf); All other: THECB, "2015-2016 Texas High School Graduates Enrolled in Higher Education Fall 2016, by Economic Category, Diploma Type, and Ethnicity" (unpublished tables).

