

PRESS RELEASE

Thursday, June 5, 2014

Contact: [Alexa Garcia-Ditta](#), 512-823-2873

CPPP data tool updated to include county-level higher education data that show poor 8th graders are less likely to complete college

Data consistently show clear relationship between greater access to college-level classes in high school and greater enrollment in colleges among poor students

Higher education completion numbers show low-income 8th graders across Texas are far less likely than their higher income counterparts to finish college or complete a higher education credential. The Center for Public Policy Priorities, with funding support from TG, has added statewide and local higher education data to its [Texas Regional Opportunity Index \(TROI\) county data tool](#), and the numbers show that the state is making uneven progress on major indicators of success. While the rate of completion varies across counties, the data consistently show a clear relationship between greater access to rigorous college-level classes in high school and greater enrollment in four-year colleges among poorer students.

“College completion is an important milestone in moving up the economic ladder,” said Don Baylor, Jr., senior policy analyst at the Center for Public Policy Priorities. “Unfortunately, the new data show that Texas is falling short in providing opportunities for more students, especially those with fewer family resources, to succeed along the educational pipeline.”

The [TROI](#), first released in October 2013, uses more than 65 data indicators to evaluate local economic mobility and improve public policy. The TROI is designed to be an easy, one-stop resource for data gathered from government agencies and other reliable sources.

The Center has updated 43 indicators and added 7 new ones, including several postsecondary measures to track county performance on credential completion, adult educational attainment, and academic preparation.

Statewide, only 19 percent of all students who started 8th grade in the fall of 2001 had earned a higher education degree or credential 12 years later, a phenomenon known as the “leaky pipeline.” Across various counties, the percentage ranges from 7 to 41 percent completion.

Economically disadvantaged 8th graders are three times less likely to complete a college degree or credential than their counterparts who live in households with higher income, but that rate varies across counties. For example, only 5 percent of Travis County’s poor 8th graders complete a higher education credential, compared to Hidalgo County’s 15 percent completion rate.

Other data show that nearly two-thirds of Texas community college students who start college underprepared for the coursework do not persist or complete their degree after three years.

“The leaky pipeline and lack of academic preparedness of Texas college students reveal a significant challenge for the state,” said Leslie Helmcamp at the Center for Public Policy Priorities. “If we want to be a competitive and prosperous state with a skilled workforce, we must give every student, no matter their income, the tools to further their education.”

Addressing these challenges is possible, as evidenced by the successful work of Early College High Schools in the Rio Grande Valley, and other parts of the state, over the past decade. These programs promote college readiness by providing underserved high school students with opportunities to earn college credit and their high school diploma simultaneously.

Thanks to the support of TG, a non-profit corporation that promotes college access and success, CPPP has recently shared the TROI with Corpus Christi, San Antonio, and Rio Grande Valley communities and leaders through the *Road to College Completion: What It Takes to Survive and Thrive in Texas* roadshow. CPPP will visit at least two more regions in the state later this year.

“State and local stakeholders can use this opportunity to reflect on the data available in the TROI and design programs and policies that address the gaps in educational attainment.” said Jacob Fraire of TG. “The state’s economic progress depends on our ability to move more students through to completion of a college degree or credential. We value this partnership with CPPP to improve access to local data around key college access and success indicators.”

Visit TexasRegionalOpportunityIndex.org to use the tool.

#