

The Toolbox Revisited **and Beyond**

“Paths to degree completion” is
just the beginning . . .



Rules of engagement:

- You can interrupt at any time with **burning questions**
- We may skip through some slides quickly but you have them on the handout and can return to them.

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Why did we get this study?

- This is a follow-up to 1999's *Answers in the Tool Box*, which was based on the High School Class of 1982 followed through 1993.
- It was time to see what had changed since 1999.



Prior to 1999, we had lots of talk about

- **SATs predicting 1st year college grades**
- High school GPA predicting “retention” to the 2nd year
- Competencies and “skill standards”
- But nobody really talked about curriculum, let alone in relation to **completing a degree**



The first *Tool Box* changed all that

- We got Texas Scholars, which became State Scholars and it was all about curriculum
- North Carolina and Illinois systems cited it in changing admissions course requirements
- We got *Daniel v. California* on opportunity-to-learn

People were starting to take curriculum requirements seriously



But not seriously enough, as we will see

- **It's a funny thing, but you learn what you study**
- **HeLOO!**
- **And it doesn't stop in the high school graduation line**
- **DUH!**



What kind of document is *Revisited*?

- It's a data-essay.
- **Lots of statistical analysis.**
- Lots of tables to be used as references.
- **Lots of evidence:** transcripts don't lie.
- **Executive Summary** can be a stand-alone piece.



Who is it about?

- Students who were 12th graders in 1992 and who **subsequently attended a 4-year college at any time through December 2000**
- 98% of this group graduated from high school on time in 1992, with a standard diploma
- They represent 68% of all who were in the 8th grade in 1988; that is, 68 percent of 1988 eighth graders both graduated from high school on time and attended a 4-year college at some time.
- The current longitudinal study, following students who were 10th graders in 2002, will not be completed until 2012.



Who is this story **NOT** about?

- It is **not** about people who don't finish high school. That is a different issue.
- It is **not** about people who earn GEDs.
- It is **not** about students who never entered a postsecondary institution.
- It is **not** about students who entered but never set foot in a bachelor's degree-granting institution.



What is it about?

- Starting in high school, what contributes to earning a bachelor's degree by age 26?
- **Not about entering college (access).**
- **Not about making it to the 2nd year.**
- It's about what matters to students, families, and the nation—the **culmination of opportunity, choice, and effort.**



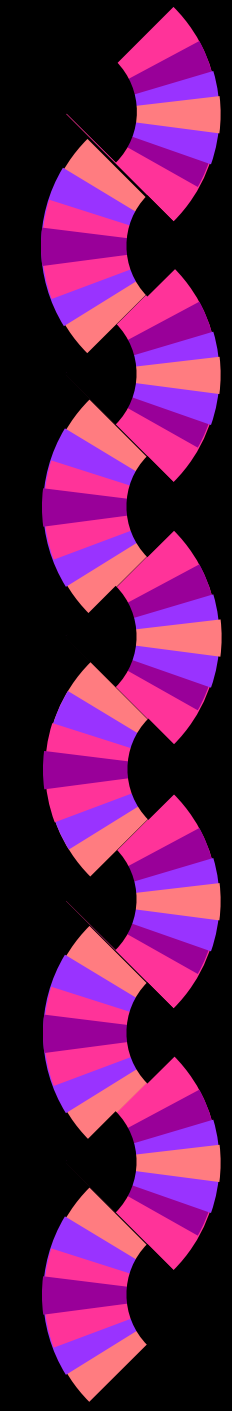
Let's get a basic story straight. Of all 8th graders in 1988 :

- **78 percent graduated from high school on time (1992) with a standard diploma.**
- **53 percent entered postsecondary education directly from high school.**
- **48 percent persisted from their 1st to the 2nd year of postsecondary study.**
- **35 percent earned either a bachelor's or associate degree by December 2000.**



Official v. Unofficial Statistics on This

	Unofficial	Official
Base	“Out of every 100 9 th graders”	8 th graders, 12 years from 1988
Type	Cross-Sectional	Longitudinal
HS Grad	67	78
Enter College	38	53
Get to Year 2	28	48
Assoc/Bach	18	35



The *Unofficial* statistics you just saw

- **Constitute one of the greatest frauds ever sold to policy-makers, editors, and publics eager for bad stories**
- **The “pipeline” leaks number series, once repeated by the White House and posted on URLS everywhere, has been nearly impossible to erase**
- **I don’t want to hear any of you repeating it!**



Let's get a better story straighter. Of all 12th graders in 1992:

- **40 percent earned a bachelor's or associate degree by December 2000;**
- **4 percent earned a certificate;**
- **6 percent were still enrolled, but without a degree;**
- **31 percent had enrolled at sometime, but did not earn a degree and were no longer enrolled;**
- **18 percent never enrolled in postsecondary.**



And as for the Dow Jones Industrial Average of U.S. higher education :

- Among students who enrolled in a 4-year college at any time, **66** percent earned a bachelor's degree by December 2000.
- Among students who started in a 4-year college, **68** percent earned the bachelor's
- Among community college transfers, **60** percent earned the bachelor's.
- And the average time-to-degree was **4.58** elapsed calendar years; for community college transfers, it was **5.40** calendar years



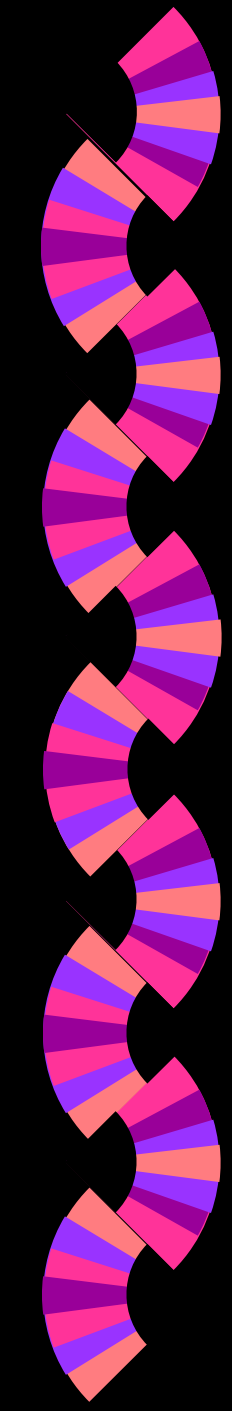
What are the basic postsec markers?

- Of those who earned the bachelor's degree, **15 percent** were community college transfers, and
- **another 20 percent** earned the degree from a different 4-year college than the one in which they started.
- And you know we don't count these people in the GRS—nor does *US News*.
- It starts at the top, too: **Barak Obama is not counted as a college graduate by the GRS.**



Some other postsec markers to keep in mind: **mobility dynamics can't be ignored.**

- 20 percent don't start in the **fall** term.
- **64 percent attended more than 1 school; 25 percent attended more than 2.**
- 13 percent of those based in 4-year colleges attended community college in summer terms; another 14 percent moved back and forth between CCs and 4-year.
- 62 percent earned summer term credits.



And what about that 1st-to-2nd year persistence rate?

- 88 percent (yes, you heard that correctly) of those who start between July 1 and June 30 of Year X **turn up somewhere and at some time between July 1 and June 30 of Year X+1.**
- For those starting in community colleges, the true 1st-to-2nd year retention rate was 82 percent (yes, you heard that correctly).
- But what matters more is the **quality of persistence** and one-third of the 88 percent comes forward with unsatisfactory progress (**slightly higher for community college beginners**).



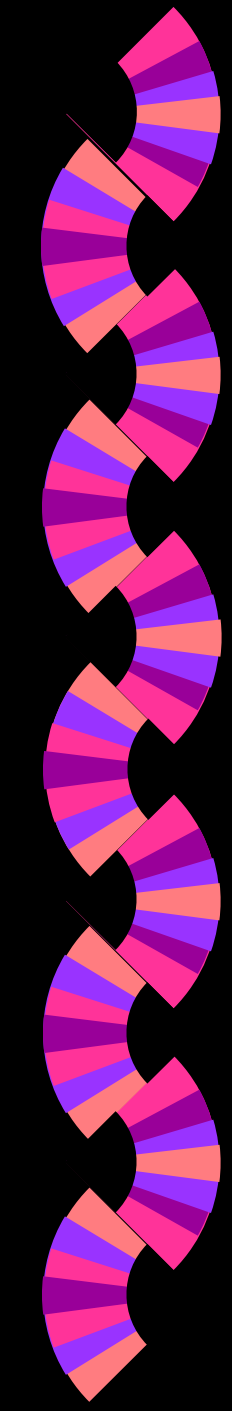
What are the core themes?

- **Academic momentum;**
- **Curriculum counts—both in high school and college;**
- **Student uses of time are now more important than place; and**
- **Students are front-and-center as decision-making adults.**



High school findings, I:

- Academic intensity of curriculum counts more than grades & test scores.
- But class rank and GPA counted more for the Class of '92 than for the Class of '82.
- The curriculum intensity index is a **package**: you can't separate one element out as more important than others.
- But if you had to do that, it would be a **combination** of highest level of math and number of Carnegie units in core lab science.



**At the highest level of academic intensity
(out of 31 levels), high school graduates
completed an average of :**

- **4.3 units of English;**
- **4.3 units of math (and 94% at precalculus or calculus);**
- **3.6 units of core laboratory science;**
- **3.8 units of foreign languages;**
- **3.8 units of history & social studies; and**
- **3 Advanced Placement courses**

95% earned a bachelor's degree. Surprise???



This measure is criterion-referenced, so:

- **Theoretically, everybody can get there.**
- **It's what academic momentum is all about.**
- **But if they aren't reading at or near grade level when they enter high school, the chances of "getting there" are low, indeed.**
- **And 37 percent of the on-time high school graduates in this group were reading below the level of simple inference in the 12th grade**



High school findings, II:

- We are doing better in math and science but not well enough.
- **We still have opportunity-to-learn issues: We can't close gaps if the high schools do not offer the curricula.**
- Counting Carnegie units is not as effective as documenting content standards. Renaming a course doesn't mean students learn more.



What does “doing better” mean?

- For the HS class of 1992, 33% got beyond Algebra 2 versus 20% a decade earlier.
- For the HS class of 1992, 66% completed more than 1 year of core laboratory science versus 40% a decade earlier.
- Among those who subsequently attended a four-year college at any time, 21% were assigned to remedial math versus 30% a decade earlier



And what does an “opportunity-to-learn” problem mean?

- 45% of Latino students **versus** 59% of white students attended a high school that offered calculus.
- 19% of low-SES students **versus** 34% of high-SES students attended a high school that offered statistics.
- . . . and so on . . .



So what does *Revisit* recommend for high school curriculum intensity?

- **Math beyond Algebra 2;**
- **Three years of core laboratory science;**
- **A minimum of 6 credits dual-enrollment in lower division disciplinary introductions (e.g. General Psych, Microeconomics, Geology); and**
- **When the high school doesn't teach it, bring in the on-line courseware.**



We are not merely counting Carnegie units here: Part I

- **A student can show 4 units of math and still not get beyond plane geometry.**
- **A student can record 3 units of science without a laboratory course.**
- **A student can show 4 units of English and still be reading below the level of simple inference.**

We can't change the marquee on the theater and leave the show inside unchanged.



We are not merely counting Carnegie Units here: Part II

- Rather, we should be providing discrete, concrete examples of postsecondary assignments, examinations, and laboratories to high school teachers, guidance counselors, students, and parents so that there is no disconnect between what students expect and are prepared to do and what turns out they are asked to do.
- This is an open display of content standards.



And these examples must be included:

- In all college and community college recruitment and promotional literature;
- In all application packages;
- On all college and community college Web sites;
- What *Revisited* says to IHEs: **your primary business is the distribution of knowledge**, and without these examples, students will not know what you are about.



Your references:

- The American Diploma Project, *Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma That Counts* (2004)
- Conley, *College Knowledge: What It Really Takes for Students to Succeed . . .* (2005)
- Venezia, Kirst, and Antonio, *Betraying the College Dream . . .* (2003)



What counts in postsec, I?

- Entering directly from high school;
- 20 additive credits by the end of the 1st calendar year—even part-time students can do this;
- College-level math as early as possible, no matter what your eventual major.
- If we ran this analysis in 2011 with both active duty military and recent veterans, we would have a separate set of answers.



What counts in postsec, II

- **Summer term credits—high octane persistence;**
- **Formal transfer, not “swirling” behavior;**
- **Continuous enrollment, even if part-time; and**
- **Trend in GPA—a rising boat means likelihood of completion.**



What hurts most in postsec?

- **No-penalty course withdrawals and no-credit course repeats. This is a death knell, and it's something within the power of institutions to control.**
- **Every W or NCR grade means someone was blocked from sitting in a course seat. Add those seats up, and access is blocked.**
- **For those who finish degrees, this is the No. 1 contribution to excessive time-to-degree.**



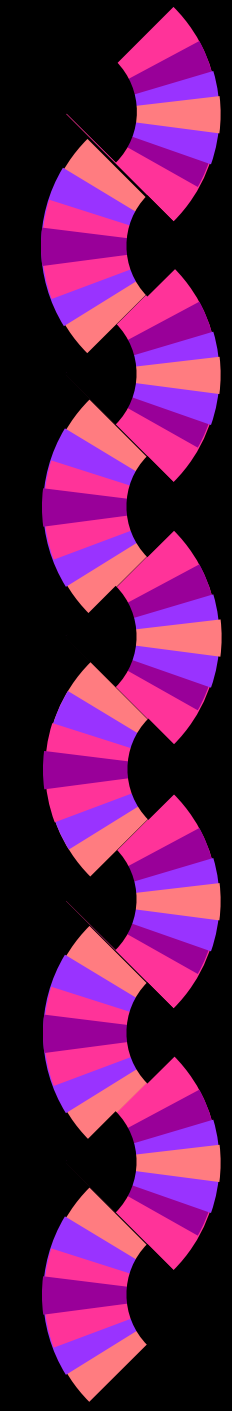
Do any demographics count?

- **Only socioeconomic status (set in quintiles), and even that is modest.**
- **Race/ethnicity drops out of the equations altogether when extended postsecondary performance is considered.**
- **The following didn't even qualify for the analysis: second language background, number of siblings, first generation status, urbanicity of high school community, etc.**



What about financial aid?

- **The data are very weak, the analyses inconclusive, and family income was not a convincing proxy.**
- **Of all modes of financing, only Work/Study was admitted to the statistical models, and it was not significant.**
- **We refer readers to the BPS longitudinal studies instead. And in 2012, we will have a transcript-based 6-year BPS for the first time, so financial aid data will be watched very carefully in logistic regressions.**



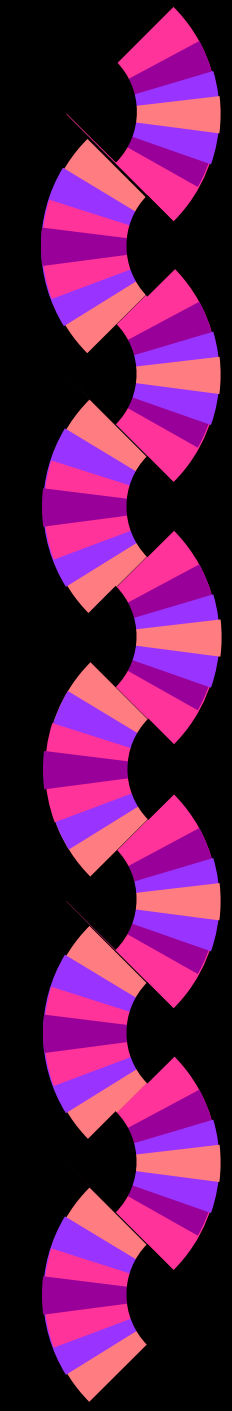
Closing degree-completion gaps

- **Improving high school curriculum participation does more than anything else, and for Latinos in particular.**
- **Summer term credits yield particular gap-closing benefits for African-Americans.**
- **Cutting excessive Ws and NCRs in half is a solid gap-closing move for everybody.**



Now let's go back to that question about degree completion

- **If we graduate 75% of entering high school students under conditions of compulsory education. . .**
- **And 66% of our traditional-age students who attend a 4-year college at any time now graduate in a non-compulsory situation,**
- **How high do you think the college graduation rate can go?**



And given the following conditions:

- **We're not passing out cheap degrees**
- **We give students 8 or 9 years from point of entry to finish**
- **Net costs stay roughly at the rate of the CPI**
- **The remediation rate stays at about 30% of those who attend a 4-year at any time**
- **Everybody enters with at least 3 credits from dual-enrollment, AP, or challenge exam**



Same question for traditional-age students who start in community colleges

- **The current rate for either transfer or completion of an associate's degree is 40%**
- **With remediation rate remaining stable at around 60%**
- **And we give them the same 8 or 9 years**



Realistic goals. . .by 2018

- **75 percent for 4-year attendees (from 66)**
- **50 percent (associate's degree or transfer) for community college beginners (from 40)**
- **Most of this will come from minority students who are not in the lowest SES quintile**
- **Is it doable? You bet!**