

Graduation Rates at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

There are slightly fewer than 100 four-year historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the continental United States. They enroll about one out of every five black students attending a four-year institution and grant a similar proportion of all bachelor's degrees awarded to black students.ⁱ The aggregate six-year institutional graduation rate for HBCUs in 2006 was 37.9 percent, compared to 45 percent for non-HBCUs.ⁱⁱ It's important to note, however, that HBCUs enroll a disproportionately large share of first-generation and low-income students, who tend to be at a higher risk of dropping out.

In fact, there is far more variation in graduation rate performance within the community of historically black institutions than there is between HBCUs and non-HBCUs. A

few institutions with selective admissions policies, like Spelman College in Atlanta and Howard University in Washington, D.C., typically graduate two-thirds or more of their black students. Others that serve primarily at-risk students graduate less than 25 percent of black students within six years. The same variation occurs when HBCUs are compared to peer institutions, including non-HBCUs: A few have outstanding results, a few fare very poorly, and most are somewhere in between.

In addition to peer comparisons, the best way to judge improvement at HBCUs is to observe how black graduation rates change over time. The table below shows HBCUs that improved their black six-year graduation rate by more than five percentage points from 2002 to 2006.

Institution	State	Enrollment	Sector	Change 2002–2006	2006 Black Six-Year Graduation Rate	2005 Black Six-Year Graduation Rate	2004 Black Six-Year Graduation Rate	2003 Black Six-Year Graduation Rate	2002 Black Six-Year Graduation Rate	2001 Black Six-Year Graduation Rate
Albany State University	GA	3,927	Public	17%	43%	45%	40%	33%	26%	31%
Savannah State University	GA	3,241	Public	15%	33%	30%	30%	18%	18%	17%
Fort Valley State University	GA	2,176	Public	11%	37%	25%	31%	30%	26%	23%
Grambling State University	LA	5,065	Public	11%	39%	37%	38%	34%	28%	35%
Delaware State University	DE	3,690	Public	10%	39%	37%	36%	33%	29%	32%
Alabama State University	AL	5,565	Public	8%	29%	23%	23%	22%	21%	25%
Central State University	OH	1,766	Public	8%	27%	30%	25%	22%	19%	12%
Harris-Stowe State University	MO	1,868	Public	6%	21%	16%	25%	22%	15%	n/a
Voorhees College	SC	710	Private	37%	46%	37%	31%	54%	10%	n/a
Saint Augustines College	NC	1,247	Private	20%	32%	36%	35%	28%	12%	45%
Howard University	DC	10,771	Private	13%	69%	67%	59%	65%	56%	56%
Wiley College	TX	862	Private	9%	37%	22%	25%	33%	28%	n/a
Clark Atlanta University	GA	4,514	Private	9%	40%	n/a	34%	30%	31%	44%
Oakwood College	AL	1,771	Private	9%	48%	45%	51%	38%	38%	30%
Dillard University	LA	1,124	Private	9%	47%	41%	49%	42%	39%	n/a
Lane College	TN	1,370	Private	6%	34%	38%	28%	29%	28%	29%
Paine College	GA	913	Private	6%	30%	28%	30%	31%	24%	n/a
Benedict College	SC	2,531	Private	6%	30%	25%	24%	25%	24%	n/a

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

ⁱStephen Provasnik and Linda Shafer, *Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 1976 to 2001* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2004).

ⁱⁱAmong public and private nonprofit four-year institutions that submitted Graduation Rate Survey data for 2006.