
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INFORMATION ITEM: 2006 Arizona High School Eligibility Study

ISSUE: The Board is asked to review the findings from the 2006 Arizona High School Eligibility Study. Determining the proportion of Arizona high school graduates who are eligible for admission to the public universities is essential to fully understanding access to a four-year education and attainment of a baccalaureate degree.

BACKGROUND

- In 1989, the Arizona Board of Regents coordinated a study of the eligibility for university admission of Arizona high school graduates. The primary purpose of this study was to help determine the universities' success at recruiting minority students.
- In 1999, an eligibility study of 1996 and 1998 Arizona high school graduates was undertaken to update the 1989 study and determine the impact of the changes in the ABOR admission requirements that were implemented in 1998.
- In 2003, a study of 2002 Arizona high school graduates was requested to understand the eligibility rates for Arizona high school graduates under current ABOR admission policy and to examine the possible impact of the admissions policy changes that were approved as part of the Changing Directions Initiative.
- In fall 2007, a study of 2006 Arizona high school graduates was requested as a follow-up to the 2002 study to further understand the eligibility rates for Arizona high school graduates under current ABOR admission standards. The University of Arizona agreed to conduct the study.

STUDY DESIGN

- The study was based on data entered directly from spring 2006 transcripts of Arizona public high school graduates.
- A stratified random sample of 99 high schools and 4,435 transcripts was drawn to ensure adequate representation of minority students and geographic regions.
- Transcripts were requested from each of the selected schools. Confidentiality was guaranteed and an incentive of \$5 per transcript was offered for their participation.
- A total of 3,252 transcripts (73.3% response rate) from 66 schools were received, ensuring an error rate of 4% or less for all estimated rates. Because only 92 transcripts were received from Charter Schools, conclusions could not be drawn about these schools.
- A comprehensive database, with course-level data from each transcript, was created for the study analysis.

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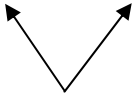
RESULTS

Effective for the fall 2006 entering class, admission of Arizona resident freshmen is divided between delegated and assured criteria. Admission to any of the universities is automatic for students who are in the top 25% of their graduating class and who have completed all 16 of the required competency courses. In addition, students who are in the top half of their class or have at least a 2.50 grade point average will be eligible under delegated admissions authority.

- Under current policy, an estimated 47.9% of 2006 high school graduates were eligible for university admission. All five ethnic groups showed progress between 2002 and 2006. American Indian students had the largest relative eligibility rate change, increasing from 20.9% in 2002 to 25.7% in 2006; a change of 23%. The smallest increase was among African American students, whose eligibility moved to 32.4% in 2006 from 30.9% in 2002 (a 5% increase);

Eligibility Rates
Percent of Arizona High School Graduates
Eligible for Admission to the Universities

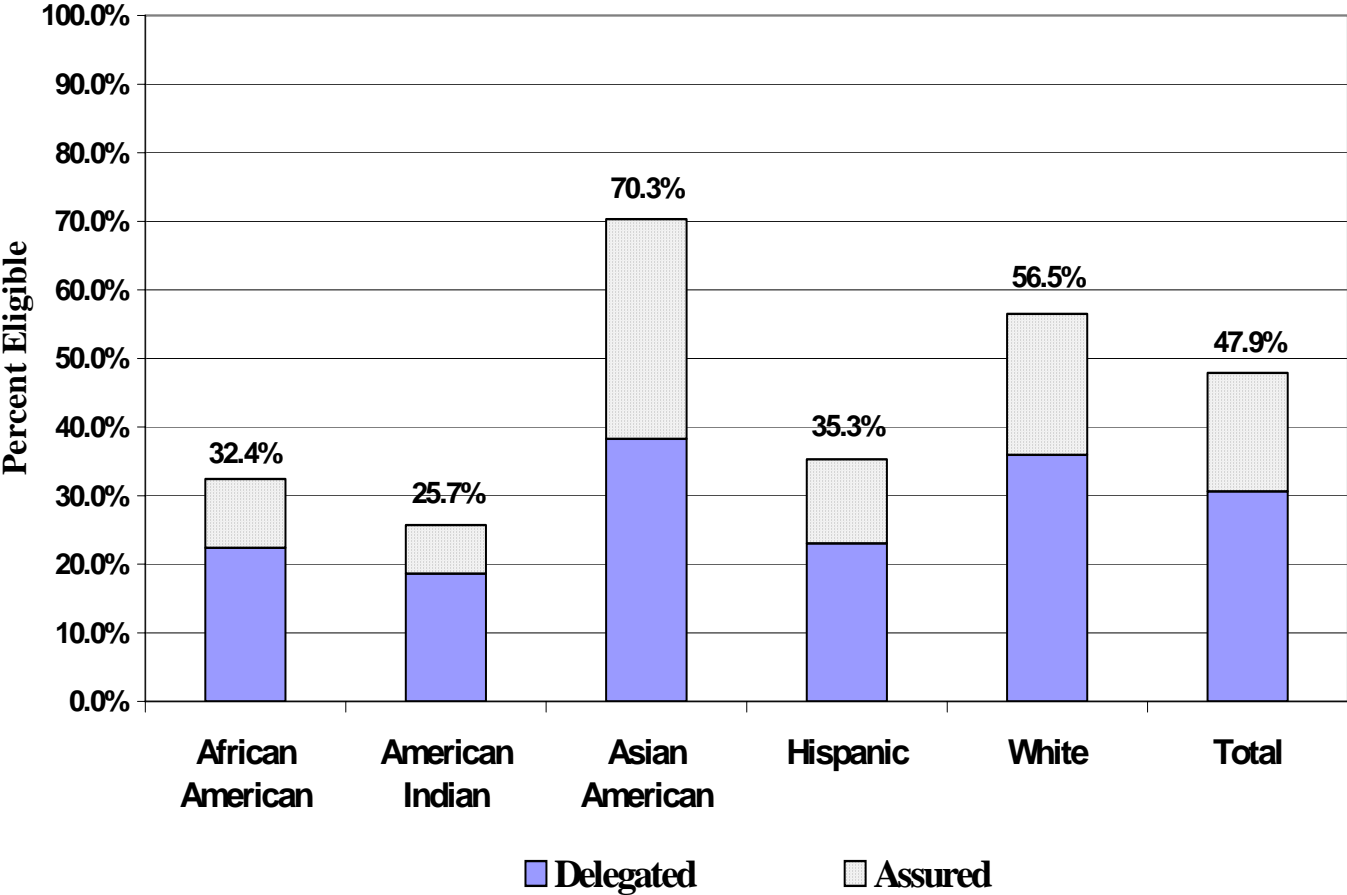
| | 2006 | 2002 | 1998 | 1996 | 1989 |
|------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| African American | 32.4% | 31.1% | 27.1% | 40.5% | 32.1% |
| American Indian | 25.7% | 20.9% | 21.4% | 40.4% | 22.1% |
| Asian American | 70.3% | 65.9% | 61.8% | 73.9% | 65.7% |
| Hispanic | 35.3% | 29.9% | 29.0% | 41.7% | 31.3% |
| White | 56.5% | 52.1% | 48.6% | 61.0% | 50.4% |
| TOTAL | 47.9% | 43.9% | 41.7% | 55.3% | 44.2% |



Effective for fall of 1998, the Board of Regents added 5 high school units for a new total of 16 curricular requirements. This increase in standards resulted in a dramatic reduction in the eligibility rate for the 1998 high school graduates.

- Assured admission requirements were met by 17.3% of 2006 high school graduates, up slightly from an estimated 16.8% of the 2002 high school graduates. Asian American graduates were most likely to have met the assured admission requirements; American Indian students were least likely to have met this requirement.

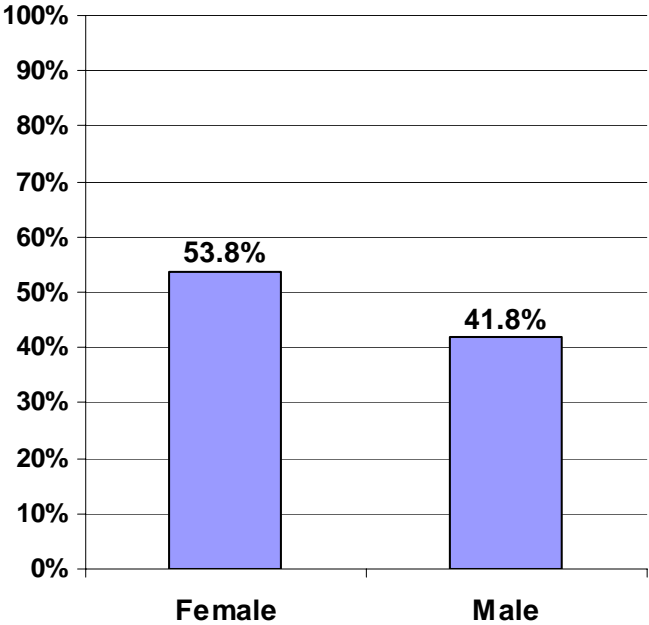
Percent of 2006 Arizona High School Graduates Eligible for Assured and Delegated Admission



Gender Differences

- Female eligibility rates were greater than rates for males by 12 percentage points (54% compared with 42%).

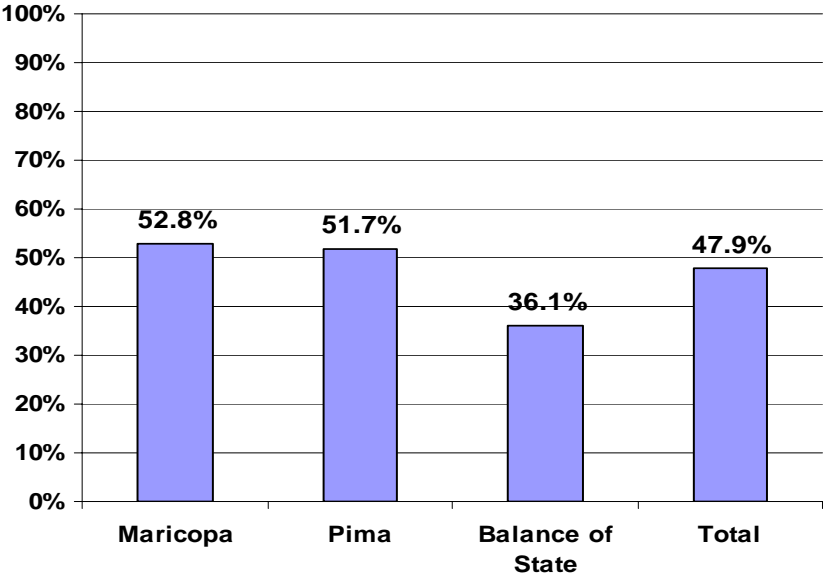
Eligibility by Gender



Regional Variation

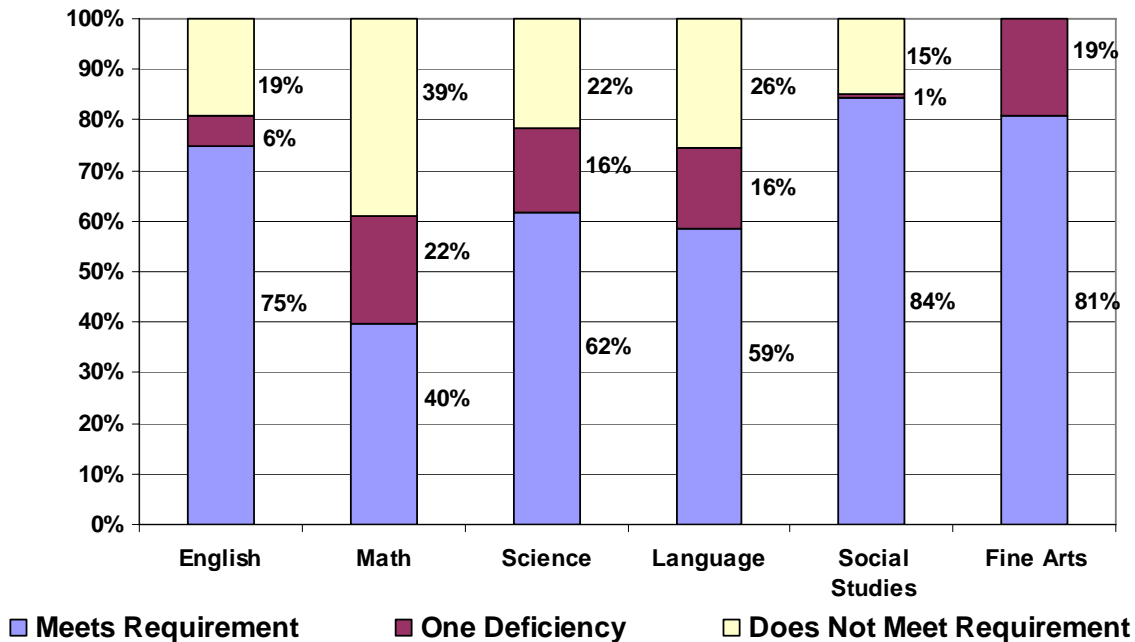
- Differences across regions of the state reflect lower eligibility rates in rural areas: the rate for Maricopa County graduates was 53%; Pima County, 52%; and the rest of Arizona, 36%.

Eligibility by Region



- Students continue to have the lowest level of preparation in mathematics, where only 40% of high school graduates met the requirement of four units; 22% took three units; and 39% did not meet the minimal requirement of three units of math (adds to 101% due to rounding). Only 20% of Native American graduates met the math requirement, whereas 68% of the Asian American students met this requirement. In contrast, 84% of all graduates met the requirement in social studies.

Total Competency Area Attainment

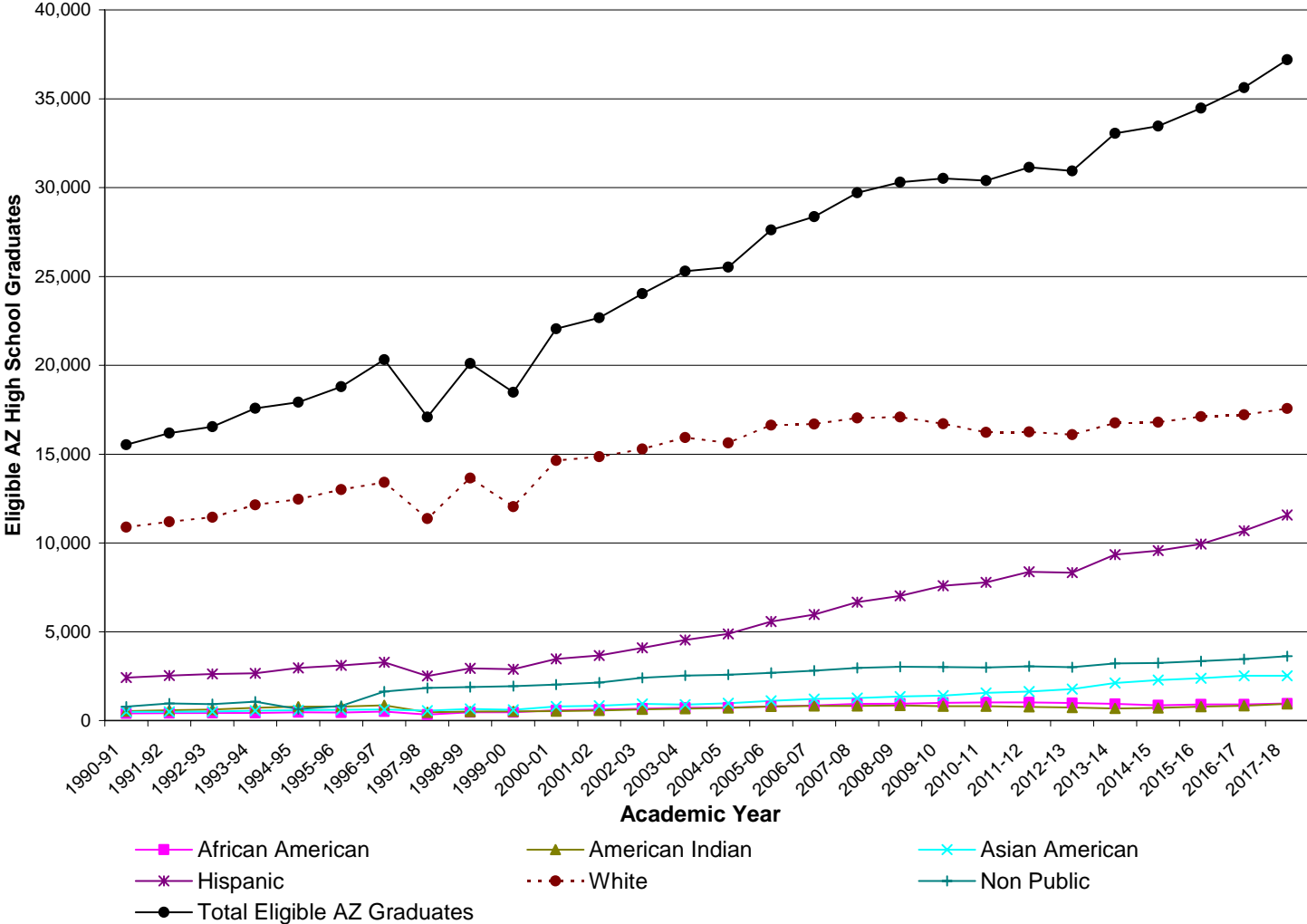


Completion Rates for ABOR Curricular Requirements 2006 Arizona High School Graduates

| | English | Math | Science | Lang | Soc Sci | Arts |
|------------------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|
| African American | 70% | 27% | 47% | 47% | 77% | 74% |
| American Indian | 66% | 20% | 49% | 37% | 73% | 64% |
| Asian American | 86% | 68% | 82% | 75% | 92% | 91% |
| Hispanic | 65% | 26% | 50% | 51% | 78% | 71% |
| White | 81% | 48% | 69% | 64% | 89% | 87% |
| Total | 75% | 40% | 62% | 59% | 84% | 81% |

- The increased eligibility rates are consistent with the assumptions made in previous projections of Arizona public university enrollment growth produced for the Board.

Arizona High School Graduates Eligible for Admission to the Arizona University System



DISCUSSION

Overall Eligibility

For all racial/ethnic groups, the eligibility rates increased between 2002 and 2006, an important indication of progress toward better academic preparation. A substantial gap, however, remains among the groups, with African American, American Indian, and Hispanic students having substantially lower eligibility rates than Asian American or White students. Since 2002, this gap has closed somewhat for Hispanic and Native American graduates, but widened for African Americans. It is important to note that ethnic differences also reflect underlying socio-economic disparities and income differences.

Gender

Female high school graduates continued to have significantly higher eligibility rates than males, a further reflection of the differences between male and female academic performance at all levels of education in Arizona and nationally. Clearly, this gap reflects a number of social issues beyond the scope of this study.

Urban/Rural

Comparisons of urban and non-urban areas within Arizona revealed a much lower eligibility rate outside of Pima and Maricopa counties. A number of explanations may underlie these differences, including larger numbers of high school graduates from populations that have lower eligibility, less intention to attend college, and less access to the courses needed to meet ABOR competencies.

Academic Deficiencies

The detailed data regarding competency area attainment may be useful in light of the proposed changes in Arizona high school requirements.

- For all ethnic groups and across the state, math was the area where students were most likely to fall short of even the minimal requirement (one deficiency) of three high school units. Nearly two in five students failed to meet this standard.
- Foreign language proved to be next most difficult to achieve: one in four students did not meet the minimal requirement of one unit; 42% did not meet the full requirement of two units.
- Results for laboratory science were similar to foreign language, whereas attainment in the areas of English, social studies and fine arts was strong.
- Consistent with the overall increase in the eligibility rate, the percentage of graduates meeting the ABOR competency requirements in math, science, foreign language, and fine arts each increased by 4-6 percentage points between 2002 and 2006.

These are substantive positive changes in the curricular areas of lowest attainment, an indication that the 1998 changes in ABOR admission requirements are having a positive effect. The changes being proposed in Arizona high school graduation requirements may provide a further boost in academic preparation of college-bound students, especially in curricular areas in which eligibility rates remain lower than would be desirable.

Future Students

The projected numbers of eligible high school graduates is an important element in the Arizona educational pipeline. Knowing eligibility rates and the characteristics of eligible high school students is essential to making solid projections of university system enrollment. The data shown in the above graph of projected eligible high school graduates are consistent with the data the Board has previously seen and discussed regarding the large projected increases in Arizona university system enrollment.

RECOMMENDATION/CONCLUSION

The Board is asked to approve the 2006 Arizona High School Eligibility Study, as presented in this Executive Summary.