

Postsecondary Educational Attainment of IB Diploma Programme Candidates from US High Schools

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Introduction

With the emergence of the knowledge economy, there is a growing demand worldwide for higher education in the workforce. With an increasing demand for postsecondary access and completion, policymakers and practitioners in the United States are focused on student preparedness for postsecondary education. In 2006 The Spelling Commission report (Department of Education 2006) stated that "the educational achievement levels of ... young people who do complete high school are simply not high enough to allow them to succeed in college" (Department of Labor 2006: 8). Recent attention to this issue has resulted in the formation of several US Department of Education sponsored programs such as Race to the Top in 2009 and College Pathways in 2010; both programs were designed to help better prepare more high school students for college and career (The White House 2009, 2010).

The International Baccalaureate's Diploma Programme (DP) is a rigorous academic curriculum that aims to prepare students in the last two years of high school to succeed at the postsecondary level and beyond. The DP is currently offered in more than 770 schools in the US and in 1,590 schools in the other 141 countries where schools are located (IBO 2013). Recent studies have looked into the role of DP preparation for postsecondary education in several countries around the world. Findings from the United Kingdom revealed that more DP students than A-level students are admitted at top 20 UK higher education institutions, and DP students are more likely to further their studies and to be employed in higher income occupations (HESA 2011). Results from a study conducted in Australia indicated that DP students enrolled at an Australian university had higher rates of progression and were more likely to complete their degree within five years than non-DP students in a comparison group (Edwards, Underwood 2012).

Specifically addressing the postsecondary pathways of DP students in the US, research shows that DP students are more likely to enroll and persist for two years in four-year colleges (including more selective universities), when compared with a matched comparison group (Coca et al 2012). The study also found that DP students attending college attributed their strong analytical skills to the work they completed in the DP. An earlier study found that DP graduates enrolled in the University of California System earned significantly higher first-year and at-graduation grade point averages (GPAs) and had higher graduation rates, when compared with non-DP students in a comparison group (Shah, Dean, Chen 2010). Finally, a study that tracked the postsecondary enrollment and completion rates of the DP students reported that out of the 2000 and 2001 DP cohorts, 85% enrolled in postsecondary institutions and 67% enrolled full-time at four-year schools (Caspary 2011). In addition, DP students often graduated at higher rates than the institutional averages at the represented institutions.

The findings highlighted above indicate the increasing interest in the DP as a college-preparatory curriculum, as well as the growing body of research investigating the postsecondary educational attainment of the DP graduates. This study aims to contribute to this area by reporting on postsecondary pathways of the DP students graduating from US high schools in 2005.

Purpose of the study

This study explored the patterns of college enrollment, destination, and completion of students who sought an IB Diploma and graduated from public and private high schools in the US in 2005.

The research questions addressed in this study are:

- 1. What are the rates of postsecondary enrollment among the students who pursued the Diploma Programme and graduated from public and private high schools in the US in 2005?
- 2. What are the top postsecondary destinations of these students?
- 3. What are the rates of postsecondary retention of these students?
- 4. What are the rates of postsecondary graduation of these students?

Terminology

To clarify the terminology used in this paper, the following concepts are explained:

Postsecondary enrollment (college-going) refers to enrollment or matriculation at any postsecondary institution, including both public and private, two-year (ie, community colleges, junior colleges) and four-year institutions (ie, colleges, universities). This paper focuses on reporting the postsecondary enrollment of the 2005 cohort, occurring immediately after high school graduation (ie, by 31 January 2006). However, overall enrollment that occurred any time between May 2005 and November 2011, the date of data request, are also reported.

A four-year institution is "a postsecondary education institution that can award a bachelor's degree or higher" (NCES n.d.).

A two-year institution is an "institution that does not confer bachelor's or higher degrees, but does provide 2-year programs that result in a certificate or an associate's degree, or 2-year programs that fulfill part of the requirements for a bachelor's degree at a 4-year institution" (NCES n.d.).

Full-time enrollment indicates student enrollment for 12 or more credit hours during a given semester, while part-time enrollment denotes enrollment for less than 12 credit hours per semester.

First-time enrollment signifies student enrollment "at any institution for the first time at the undergraduate level" (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, Whitmore, Miller 2007: B2).

Retention (one-year and two-year) refers to yearly progression and continued enrollment one year or two years following the first semester of matriculation, either at the same institution or a different institution (ie, including transfer students).

Graduation indicates successful completion of a prescribed program of studies or degree attainment at either the institution of first matriculation or a different institution (ie, transfer students). On-time graduation is generally considered to be graduation within four years of first time enrollment. The six-year graduation rate is also reported as it is common in the higher education community.

Diploma Programme candidates are students enrolled in authorized IB schools participating in the Diploma Programme with the intention of pursuing a diploma (regardless of whether they earn it or not).

Background

The IB offers four educational programmes for a worldwide community of schools, aiming to create a better, more peaceful world. While there is a common philosophy underpinning the programmes, each one has distinct characteristics designed to meet the developmental needs of students at particular stages. All four programmes have a strong international dimension and draw on content from educational cultures around the world. Additionally, all IB programmes encourage students to become responsible and active members of their community. Founded in 1968, the organization currently works with 3,483 schools in 144 countries to develop and offer four programs to approximately one million students aged 3 to 19 years (IBO 2013).

The Diploma Programme is an academically challenging and balanced educational programme designed to prepare students aged 16 to 19 for success at university and life beyond. In this programme, students complete six courses with a mix of standard level and higher level courses. They choose one subject from groups 1 to 5, which ensures breadth of experience in languages, social studies, the experimental sciences and mathematics. The sixth subject may be an arts subject chosen from group 6, or the student may choose another subject from groups 1 to 5. At least three and not more than four subjects are taken at higher level, the other remaining courses are taken at standard level. In addition, three core courses—the extended essay (EE), theory of knowledge (TOK), and creativity, action, service (CAS)—are required and central to the DP curriculum (IBO, 2013).

Data

Data for this study came from two sources that were merged: the IB student data system (IBIS) and the National Student Clearinghouse's (NSC) Student Tracker system. The IBIS is maintained by the IB and provides student demographic and assessment data of all DP students taking IB examinations. The samples used in this study included DP students from public and private US high schools registered for IB examinations in 2005, and who were Diploma Programme candidates, students enrolled in the DP with the intention of pursuing the IB diploma.

The NSC provides data on student postsecondary enrollment across multiple institutions, graduation and degree attainment. At the time of the request, there were over 3,300 US postsecondary institutions participating in the Student Tracker service, which made available postsecondary data on approximately 92% of all US college students (National Student Clearinghouse n.d.). The NSC also provides the Degree Verify service, a verification system that "confirms collegiate degrees and/or attendance for former students and graduates of any participating institution" (NSC n.d.). Data on student enrollment at institutions outside of the US are not available through the NSC.

In November 2011, IB Global Research requested data from NSC on 11,273 DP candidates who sat for IB examinations in 2005. The NSC returned detailed enrollment, graduation, and degree completion data for 9,654 students (86%). Data were not returned for 746 student records which were blocked by either institutions or students themselves. In addition, no NSC record was found for 873 students.

The samples used for analysis included DP students who enrolled in college in the US immediately after high school graduation (ie, by 31 January 2006). Students who enrolled later than 31 January

2006 were not included. The samples contained 59% female students and 41% male students. The majority of students, or 94%, graduated from public high schools with only 6% of students graduating from private schools. English was the first/preferred language (similar to native language) for 96% of students. There were 376 high schools across 42 US states and the District of Columbia represented in the samples.

Missing data

The first subset of missing data was related to the enrollment status of 746 students whose records were blocked in the NSC system. Given that students with blocked records were included in the aggregate data obtained from NSC, it can be assumed that this subsample (n=746) included students who enrolled in college. However, with no detailed data available for these students, they were not included in the final samples. Thus, enrollment rates are most likely underestimated. Another factor contributing to the underestimation was non-participation to Student Tracker of institutions that enrolled 8% of all US postsecondary students, which might have prevented us from capturing the enrollment of some of the college-going IB students.

Second, enrollment status data (ie, full-time, part-time) for the first semester of enrollment were missing for 1,165 students. Missing data were due to lack of reporting by the respective institutions (NSC 2011).

Findings

1. Postsecondary enrollment

Overall, 92% of the DP candidates graduating from US high schools in 2005 enrolled in US postsecondary institutions between May 2005 and November 2011 (Table 1). Seventy-seven percent enrolled directly from high school (before 31 January 2006). However, it should be noted that due to missing data, enrollment results are likely underestimated. For comparison purposes, the national rate of postsecondary enrollment directly from high school was 69% in 2005 (Department of Labor 2006). Table 1 displays overall and immediate enrollment rates at all institutions.

Table 1. Overall and immediate enrollment rates

	All		Diploma result Diploma Diploma not received received			Gender Female Male				
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Total DP candidates, 2005	11,273	100%	8,443	100%	2,830	100%	6,585	100%	4,688	100%
Overall enrollment between May 2005 and November 2011*	10,320	92%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Immediate enrollment (i.e., by January 31, 2006)	8,679	77%	6,481	77%	2,198	78%	5,114	78%	3,565	76%

^{*}Includes frequencies of available data and blocked records

Table 2 displays enrollment rates by type of enrollment and type of postsecondary institution. Of all the students who enrolled immediately after high school graduation, 95% enrolled at four-year

institutions and only 5% enrolled at two-year institutions. At the national level, in 2005, 56% of students enrolled at four-year institutions and 44% enrolled at two-year or less-than-two-year institutions. Table 3 presents immediate enrollment rates comparatively with the 2005 national cohort.

Table 2. Enrollment rates by type of institution.

	All			Diplom	a result		Gender			
			All Diploma Diploma not received received		Female		Male			
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
All immediate enrollment (by 31 January 2006)	8,679	100%	6,481	100%	2,198	100%	5,114	100%	3,565	100%
2-year	392	5%	187	3%	205	9%	232	5%	160	4%
4-year	8,287	95%	6,294	97%	1,993	91%	4,882	95%	3,405	96%
First full-time enrollment*	7,106	82%	5,427	84%	1,679	76%	4,221	83%	2,885	81%
2-year	100	1%	30	0%	70	3%	58	1%	42	1%
4-year	7,006	81%	5,397	84%	1,609	73%	4,163	82%	2,843	80%
Public	4,568	53%	3,404	53%	1,164	53%	2,646	52%	1,922	54%
Private	2,438	28%	1,993	31%	445	20%	1,517	30%	921	26%

^{*}Enrollment status is missing for 775 students (8%) in the sample

Table 3. Immediate enrollment by type of institution compared with the national rate.

	20	05 DP	2005 National *		
	N	N	Percent		
Immediate enrollment	8,679	100%	15,089,720	100%	
4-year institutions 2-	8,287	95%	8,476,353	56%	
year institutions	392	5%	6,613,367	44%	

^{*}National enrollment numbers are extracted from Knapp, Kelly-Reid, Whitmore, Miller 2007: 4.

Of all the students who enrolled at four-year institutions, 85% did so full-time and 15% part-time, in the first semester. For comparison, the national rates were 80% full-time and 20% part-time (see Table 4).

Table 4. Four-year institutional enrollment compared with the national rate.

	20	05 DP	2005 National		
	N Perce		N	Percent	
4-year institutions- Immediate enrollment	8,287	100%	8,476,353	100%	
Full-time	7,006	85%	6,799,882	80%	
Part-time	1,281	15%	1,676,471	20%	

^{*}National enrollment numbers are extracted from Knapp, Kelly-Reid, Whitmore, Miller 2007: 4.

2. Postsecondary destinations

Overall, DP candidates enrolled at 487 four-year institutions in 49 US states (all except North Dakota) and the District of Columbia immediately after graduation. Results depict only institutional destinations corresponding to the first semester of enrollment and do not account for transfers to other institutions that

may have occurred in subsequent semesters. Also, results only report full-time or part-time enrollment before 31 January 2006. The states with the highest IB postsecondary enrollments were Florida (n=2,230; 26%), California (n=872; 10%) and Virginia (n=649; 8%). These results are not surprising given that they follow closely the distribution of IB schools and students by state (see Table 9 in the "Appendix").

Table 5 displays the 25 most frequent four-year postsecondary institutional destinations of the DP candidates. University of Florida had the highest enrollment of DP graduates, accounting for 13% of all DP college-goers. Florida State University (3%) and University of Virginia (2%) followed, although with much lower enrollments. Tables 10 and 11 in the "Appendix" show the 25 most frequent four-year postsecondary destinations of IB DP candidates, separately for students who earned the IB diploma and students who did not earn the IB diploma.

Table 5. Postsecondary four-year destinations (top 25).

Postsecondary 4-year institutions	Frequency	Percent
University of Florida	1,110	13.4
Florida State University	258	3.1
University of Virginia	189	2.3
University of Central Florida	153	1.8
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	151	1.8
University of Colorado at Boulder	138	1.7
University of South Florida	120	1.4
University of California at Los Angeles	102	1.2
New York University	94	1.1
University of Miami	93	1.1
College of William & Mary	83	1.0
University of Georgia	82	1.0
University of Michigan	82	1.0
The University of Texas at Austin	81	1.0
Georgia Institute of Technology	80	1.0
Florida International University	79	1.0
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech)	75	.9
California State University, Fullerton	70	.8
Colorado State University	69	.8
Florida Atlantic University	67	.8
University of California,Irvine	66	.8
Boston University	64	.8
University of California, San Diego	64	.8
Clemson University	62	.7
University of Southern California	62	.7

3. Retention rates at four-year institutions

The rate of first-year retention of DP students enrolled at four-year institutions was 98%, while the rate of two-year retention was 97% of initial enrollment (Table 6). By comparison, the first-year retention rate at all U.S. four-year institutions was 75% (NCHEMS 2013). At public four-year institutions, the DP students' first-year retention rate was 98%, while the national rate was 76% (NCHEMS 2013). At private four-year institutions, 99% of DP students enrolled full-time, compared with 72% at the national level (NCHEMS 2013).

Table 6. Retention rates at four-year postsecondary institutions.

	200	2005 DP		
	1-year Retention	2-year Retention	1-year Retention	
All 4-year institutions	98%	97%	75%	
Public 4-year institutions	98%	96%	76%	
Private 4-year institutions	99%	98%	72%	

^{*}National rates retrieved from NCHEMS, December 2012

4. Graduation rates at four-year institutions

4.1. Four-year graduation rates

Overall, 74% of the DP graduates who enrolled at four-year institutions graduated within four years (Table 7). These results account for student transfers across institutions. By comparison, at the national level, 38% of the students who enrolled full-time at four-year institutions in 2004¹ graduated within four years (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, Ginder 2012a). At public institutions, the 4-year graduation rate of the DP graduates was 70%, while at private institutions the rate was 81%. By comparison, in 2004, the national rate for public institutions was 31%, while for private institutions was 52%.

4.2. Six-year graduation rates

Overall at four-year institutions, the six-year graduation rate of the 2005 DP graduates was 87%, while the national rate of the 2005² cohort was 56% (Table 7). At public institutions, the six-year graduation rate of the DP graduates was 86%, compared with 54% the national rate. At private institutions, 89% of DP graduates completed their degree in six years, compared with 64% nationwide.

Table 7. Overall graduation rates at four-year postsecondary institutions.

	4-year (Graduation	6-year	Graduation
	2005 DP	2004 National*	2005 DP	2005 National*
All 4-year institutions	74%	38%	87%	56%
Public	70%	31%	86%	54%
Private	81%	52%	89%	64%

^{*}National graduation rates retrieved from NCHEMS, December 2012

4.3. Graduation rates by institution

Table 8 shows the four-year and six-year graduation rates of DP candidates compared with institutional rates, at institutions with the highest IB student enrollment. At each institution, the graduation rate of DP candidates is consistently higher than the institutional rate. The percent difference ranged from 5% (University of Virginia) to 35% (University of South Florida) for the 4-year graduation rate and from 4%

¹ National four-year rates for the 2005 cohort were not available at the time of the report writing. For comparison purposes, national rates reported by Knapp, Kelly-Reid, and Ginder (2012a) for the 2004 cohort are used.

² National six-year rates for the 2005 cohort reported by Knapp, Kelly-Reid and Ginder (2012b) were used for comparison purposes.

(University of Virginia and University of California, Los Angeles) to 29% (University of South Florida) for the 6-year graduation rate.

Table 8. Graduation rates by institution.

	IB students*		4-year grad	duation rate	6-year graduation rate	
Four-year institutions	Frequency	Percent	DP students	Institution**	DP students	Institution**
University of Florida	1,110	13.4%	76.4%	58.3%	91.9%	84.0%
Florida State University	258	3.1%	79.8%	49.3%	90.3%	74.0%
University of Virginia	189	2.3%	91.5%	86.7%	97.9%	93.8%
University of Central Florida	153	1.8%	66.7%	33.0%	86.9%	63.0%
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	151	1.8%	93.4%	75.2%	96.7%	89.0%
University of Colorado at Boulder	138	1.7%	73.9%	40.0%	92.8%	68.0%
University of South Florida	120	1.4%	60.0%	25.0%	81.7%	52.0%
University of California, Los Angeles	102	1.2%	83.3%	67.2%	94.1%	90.0%
New York University	94	1.1%	87.2%	80.0%	91.5%	86.0%
University of Miami	93	1.1%	79.6%	66.0%	87.1%	78.0%

^{*}Enrolled before 31 January 2006

Discussion and Conclusion

This study used data on students seeking an IB diploma and graduating in 2005 from public and private high schools in the US, who enrolled in US postsecondary institutions, to examine their postsecondary attainment. Results show that when compared with national rates, DP graduates enroll, persist and graduate on time at higher rates. For example, when considering immediate enrollment after high school graduation, DP students' rate surpassed the national rate by 8%. In addition, DP students tended to enroll at four-year institutions at a much higher rate than the national one (39% difference).

While confirming the findings reported in 2011 by Caspary on the enrollment rates of DP candidates graduating in 2000 and 2001, these results show positive developments. The 2005 cohort exhibited a 6% increase in the overall postsecondary enrollment compared with the 2000 and 2001 cohorts. Moreover, the increase in overall full-time enrollment was 10%. While the full-time enrollment increased by 10% at four-year institutions, it decreased slightly by 1% at two-year institutions. Therefore, compared with the 2000 and 2001 cohorts, DP candidates from 2005 sought full-time enrollment at four-year institutions more often.

Results show that University of Florida had the highest enrollment of DP graduates, accounting for 13% of all DP college-goers. Similarly, Caspary (2011) found that University of Florida matriculated the highest percentage of DP candidates of the 2000 and 2001 cohorts. These findings reflect indicate that this institution implemented strong recognition policies of DP coursework and it offers scholarships that explicitly target DP graduates (International Baccalaureate, n.d.). In addition, distribution by state in 2005 shows Florida as the state with the highest number of DP candidates (Table 9 in the "Appendix").

^{**}Rates retrieved from IPEDS Data Center

This study found that the DP candidates had four-year and six-year graduation rates notably higher than the national rates. DP candidates' graduation rate at public four-year institutions was 39% higher than the national rate, while at private four-year institutions, the rate was 29% higher than the national one.

At institutional level, results revealed consistently higher graduation rates for DP graduates than overall institutional rates. At the University of Florida, for example, the four-year graduation rate of DP candidates was 18% higher than the institutional rate, and the six-year graduation rate was 8% higher than the institutional rate. These findings are consistent with Caspary's results in 2011, which reported 18.5% difference in four-year graduation rate and 6% difference in the six-year graduation rate at the University of Florida in 2001.

Limitations

Although these findings are important, several limitations should be noted. First, the comparison with national rates does not take into account student demographic characteristics and previous academic achievement. Second, this sample includes only DP candidates, who are students enrolled in the DP with the intention of earning the IB diploma; therefore these findings are not applicable to students who take one or more individual DP courses, without pursuing the full diploma.

In conclusion, this study clearly shows that the DP candidates graduating from US high schools enroll at a higher rate at the postsecondary level, in general, and in particular at four-year institutions. In addition, almost all of the DP candidates enrolled at four-year institutions persist beyond the first and second year of study, and successfully complete their degree, graduating on-time (in four years) at much higher rates than the national and institutional averages. Future research taking into account student background and academic achievement could lead to further insight into DP graduates' postsecondary enrollment and completion rates relative to the institutional and national cohorts.

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Appendix

Table 9. Frequency of DP candidates, IB schools, and postsecondary enrollment by state.

State	Number of IB schools with DP candidates 2005	Number of DP graduates 2005	Number of DP candidates enrolled in college 2005 ³
FL	40	2,676	2,230
CA	51	830	872
VA	29	693	649
NY	23	468	515
GA	16	326	358
NC	19	326	357
CO	15	539	351
TX	21	366	289
IL	16	205	276
PA	7	81	267
MA	1	13	250
SC	18	216	194
MD	11	252	168
DC	2	36	148
WA	13	163	146
OR	12	205	136
MI	4	95	134
MO	7	94	133
MN	10	131	113
ΑZ	6	124	98
WI	5	63	88
TN	2	25	86
ОН	5	52	81
AL	4	90	74
СТ	2	16	74
UT	2	43	62
RI	1	9	47
KS	3	79	46
OK	2	36	44
IN	4	34	44
NJ	7	111	40
KY	4	49	36
LA	1	11	32
AR	2	34	29
WY	2	38	28
NV	3	43	25
MS	1	14	22
NE	1	13	13
DE	1	13	11

³ This number reflects student mobility across states and includes all DP candidates who were captured as enrolled at postsecondary institutions in each state, regardless of whether they graduated from high schools in that state or a different state.

State	Number of IB schools with DP candidates 2005	Number of DP graduates 2005	Number of DP candidates enrolled in college 2005⁴
HI	1	9	9
WV	1	11	7
NM	1	41	3
AK	1	6	2

Table 10. Most frequent postsecondary destinations of IB 2005 Diploma earners.

Postsecondary 4-year institutions	Frequency	Percent
University of Florida	920	14.6
Florida State University	185	2.9
University of Virginia	176	2.8
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	125	2.0
University of Colorado at Boulder	117	1.9
University of Central Florida	106	1.7
University of California, Los Angeles	93	1.5
New York University	84	1.3
University of Miami	84	1.3
University of South Florida	83	1.3
College of William & Mary	77	1.2
Georgia Institute of Technology	73	1.2
University of Michigan	72	1.1
The University of Texas at Austin	67	1.1
California State University, Fullerton	63	1.0
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech)	58	.9
Boston University	56	.9
University of Georgia	55	.9
University of Pennsylvania	55	.9
University of Southern California	55	.9
University of California, San Diego	53	.8
Emory University	52	.8
Florida Atlantic University	51	.8
University of California, Irvine	51	.8
Florida International University	47	.7
George Washington University	47	.7

⁴ This number reflects student mobility across states and includes all DP candidates who were captured as enrolled at postsecondary institutions in each state, regardless of whether they graduated from high schools in that state or a different state.

Table 11. Most frequent postsecondary destinations of the 2005 DP candidates who did not earn the Diploma.

Postsecondary 4-year institutions	Frequency	Percent
University of Florida	190	9.5
Florida State University	73	3.7
University of Central Florida	47	2.4
University of South Florida	37	1.9
Florida International University	32	1.6
University of Georgia	27	1.4
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	26	1.3
Colorado State University	25	1.3
Clemson University	23	1.2
Virginia Commonwealth University	23	1.2
University of Colorado at Boulder	21	1.1
University of North Florida	17	.9
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech)	17	.9
Florida Atlantic University	16	.8
North Carolina State University	16	.8
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	15	.8
University of California, Irvine	15	.8
University of Maryland, College Park	15	.8
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	14	.7
University of South Carolina	14	.7
The University of Texas at Austin	14	.7
Arizona State University	13	.7
Howard University	13	.7
Old Dominion University	13	.7
University of Illinois at Chicago	13	.7
University of Virginia	13	.7
University of Washington - Seattle	13	.7
University of West Florida	13	.7