

EDUCATION

FINANCE

AND POLICY

EFP Takeaways

Racial and Ethnic Differences in College Application Behavior

Background

College access and enrollment vary considerably across racial and socioeconomic groups in the United States. Students' own college application decisions are an important, but often overlooked, component of college access. A new study by Sandra Black, Kalena Cortes, and Jane Lincove in vol. 15, issue 2 of *EFP* expands our current knowledge of college access by investigating application decisions.

The Study

The purpose of this study was to (1) assess how student demographics, high school quality, and student preparedness influence the college application decision, and (2) examine where students chose to apply to college. Specifically, the authors examined student-campus fit through estimation of academic match, campus demographics, and high school feeder pattern behaviors.

Utilizing data from the Texas Workforce Data Quality Initiative, funded by the US Department of Labor, the authors analyzed data on Texas public school students who graduated in 2008 and 2009.

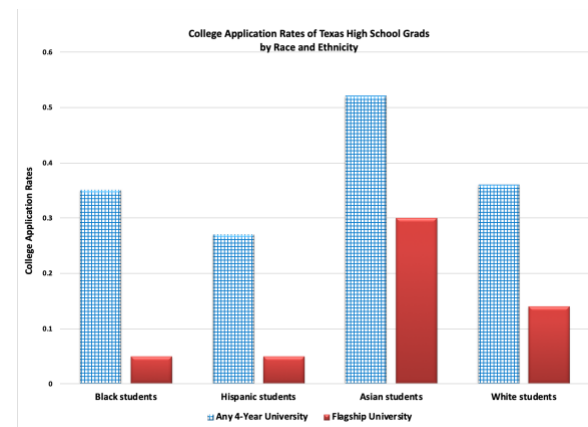
For more details:

- View the [full issue](#).
- See the [full article in Education Finance and Policy](#).
- [Sign up here to receive future EFP Takeaways](#).
- Summary of:
Black, S. E., Cortes, K. E., Lincove, J. A. (2020). Apply yourself: Racial and ethnic differences in college applications. *Education Finance and Policy*, 15(2), 209 - 240

Findings

Their analysis revealed three major findings:

- Hispanics have the lowest college enrollment rate. They also are less likely to apply to college than their peers. Hispanic student enrollment is low even among students who have higher than average college readiness.
- Black students are more likely to apply to college when compared to peers with the same level of college readiness and high school quality, and this is especially true for Black students with low college readiness.
- Black and Asian students prefer college campuses with more students from their own racial groups.
- Black and Hispanic students are more responsive to previous experiences of high school peers when making application choices.



Ultimately, inequality in both college access and quality is highly connected to the decision to apply to college. Factors influencing college applications include student demographics and past high school experiences. In order to diversity campuses, institutions need to enact intentional policies to attract and retain minority students.