

## Introduction

The following report is the first in a series of reports to examine Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) students' enrollment and persistence in college. In future reports, program components and other data sources will be linked to this information for more thorough investigations into AVID students' preparation for college enrollment and success.

AVID's mission, *to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society*, necessitates that we follow AVID students into college and track their progress to truly determine whether they have been adequately prepared for the rigors of postsecondary education. Are AVID students enrolling in college at acceptable rates? Do they persist into the second year of college? We now have student-level data to help determine whether AVID students are enrolling in college and persisting once enrolled.

In 2013, AVID Center contracted with the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) to acquire postsecondary enrollment information for the 2010, 2011, and 2012 cohorts of AVID seniors. This information, when linked with other data collected by AVID Center, will help us as an organization make informed decisions across all levels of our efforts to impact students. This initial report provides a general overview of the 2010 and 2011 cohorts of AVID seniors, their enrollment in college, their rates of persistence into the second year, and a brief illustration of enrollment and persistence rates disaggregated along characteristics commonly associated with achievement and equity gaps.

## Setting the Context

The reality of education in the United States is that large portions of students who finish high school are not adequately prepared for college. The College Board, in its *2013 SAT<sup>®</sup> Report on College and Career Readiness*, revealed that even though 2013 had the largest percentage of minority students taking the SAT, more than half of all students who took the exam failed to meet its college and career readiness benchmark. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2012) showed that more than half of young adults in the United States between the ages of 25 and 29 years old had not attained an associate's degree or higher. When U.S. Census Bureau data is disaggregated by ethnicity, we see that smaller portions of Hispanics and African Americans in this age range, when compared to Whites, earned a degree. A gap in gender is also evident, with a greater portion of females than males earning a degree. There are also gaps in educational attainment based on socioeconomic status (Conley, 2007; Engle & Tinto, 2008).

Prior to presenting the findings, it should be noted that AVID's student population is quite unique and differs from the U.S. student population. Nationally, U.S. high school graduates in 2010 were comprised of small portions of Hispanic and African American students (16 percent and 13 percent, respectively). Also, only 39 percent of U.S. high school graduates in 2010 were from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The 2010 cohort of AVID graduates, on the other hand, was comprised of larger portions of students with these demographic characteristics: 52 percent were Hispanic, 17 percent were African American, and 67 percent were from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Similar

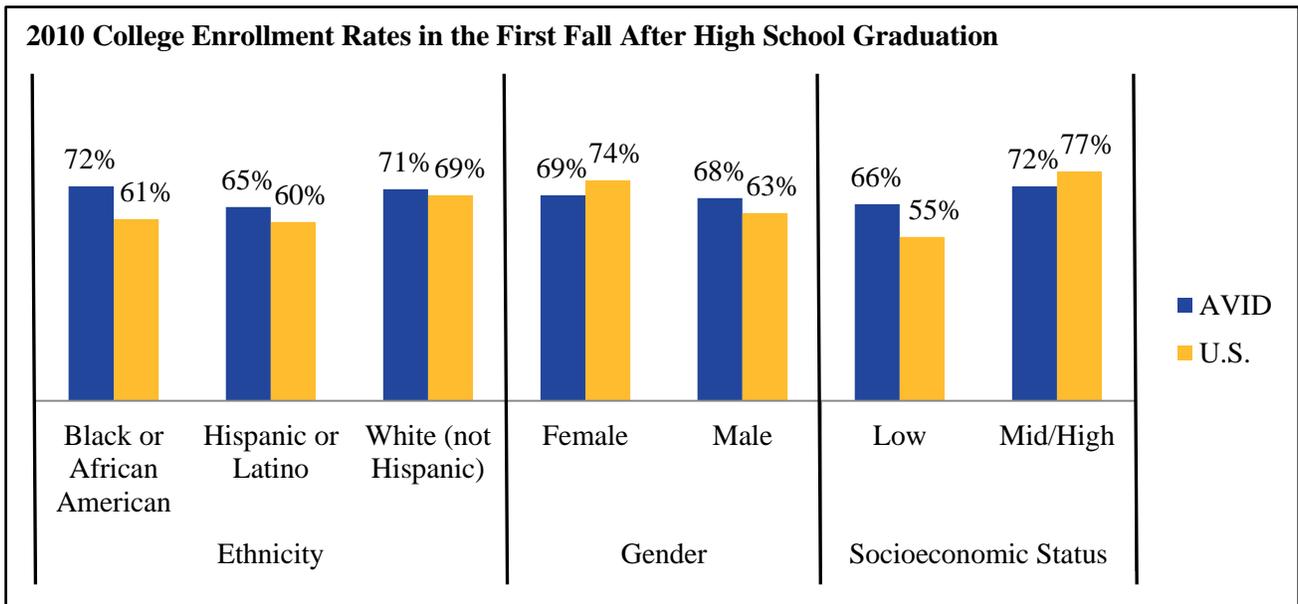
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differences in proportions of these characteristics existed for the 2011 cohort of AVID graduates and the population of all U.S. high school graduates in 2011.

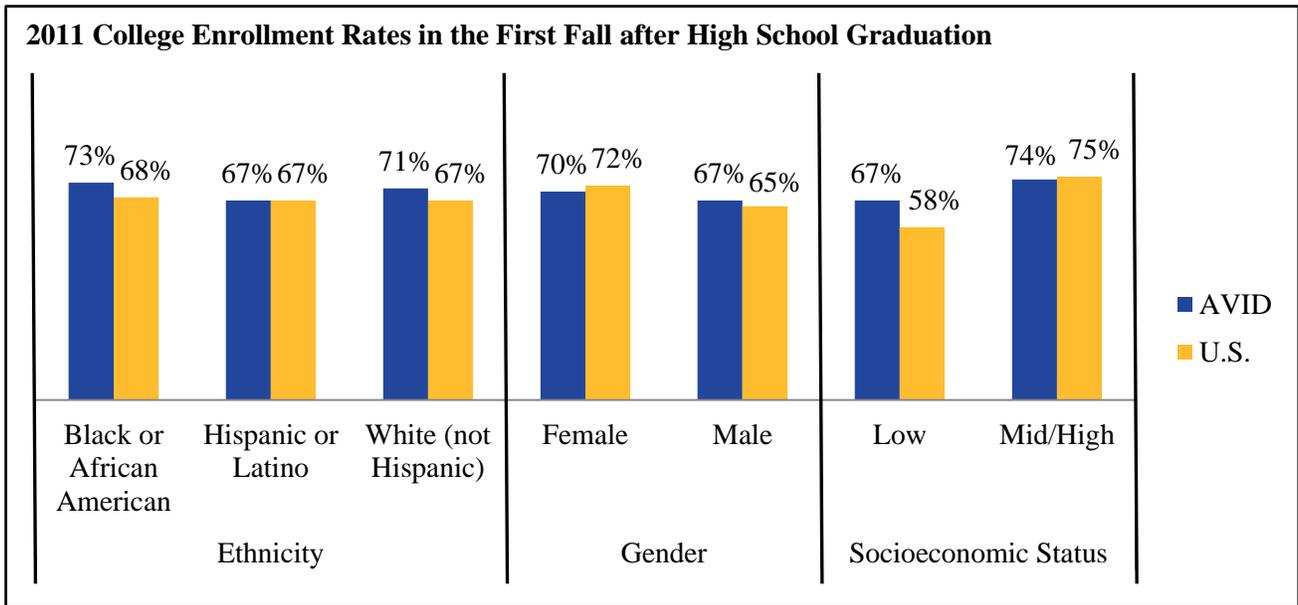
Consideration of Findings

**College Enrollment.** As a whole, 68 percent of the 2010 AVID graduates enrolled in college in the fall semester immediately after high school. While this figure is on par with the national rate of college enrollment for all U.S. high school graduates in 2010 (also 68 percent), as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau (2010) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, its remarkableness is evident given that the AVID population is largely comprised of students typically underrepresented in higher education. When enrollment data is disaggregated by student group, we see that many of AVID’s student groups (e.g., African Americans, Hispanics, males, and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds) actually enroll in college in higher proportions than their peers nationally. We highlight students with these characteristics—being male, African American, Hispanic, and of low socioeconomic background—because they are typically underrepresented in postsecondary education in the United States. Further, the underrepresented students who do enroll in college often struggle with persistence and degree completion, as evidenced by the prevalent gaps in educational attainment mentioned earlier.

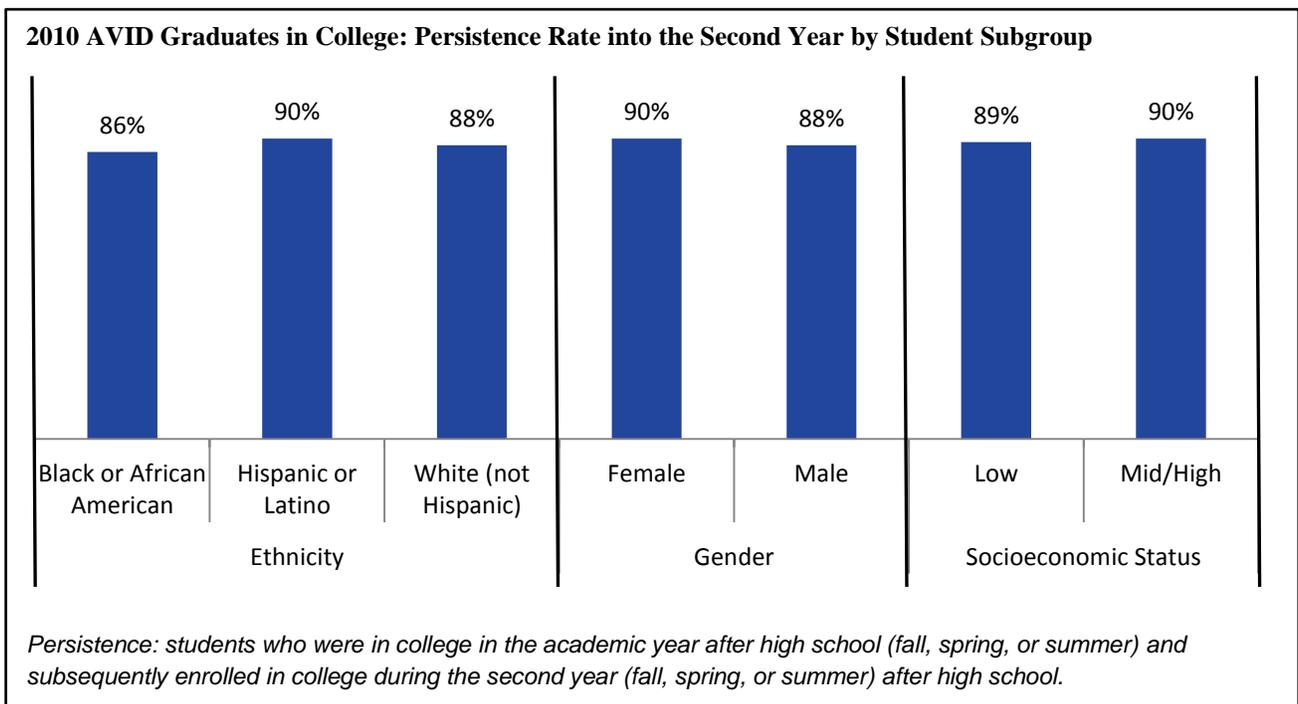


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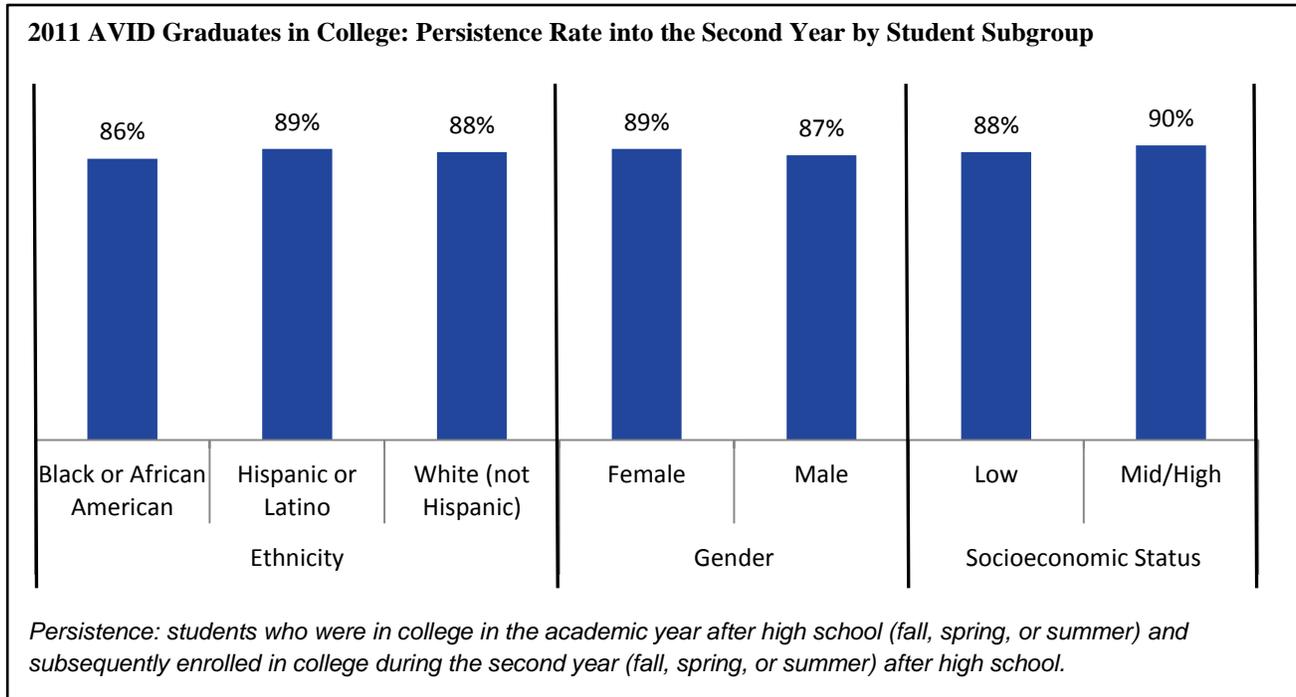


**College Persistence.** We anticipated seeing similar, albeit reduced, gaps among AVID students' persistence in college. When data were disaggregated by ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status, however, almost no discernable gaps were visible. In other words, AVID graduates, largely derived from historically underrepresented populations, are persisting into their second year of college at very similar rates across all student groups.



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For this report, our calculation of persistence starts with AVID graduates who were enrolled at any two- or four-year college/university for *at least* one term (fall, spring, or summer) during the academic year after high school. We then determined what percent of those students were still enrolled at any two- or four-year college/university, again for *at least* one term (fall, spring, or summer), during the second academic year after high school. This calculation does not restrict or necessitate that a student be enrolled at the same institution from one year to the next, as some students tend to change from two-year to four-year institutions or vice versa.

**Conclusion**

While the findings in this paper are predominantly descriptive in nature, they are provided in the context of national data and other research to illustrate and suggest that equity gaps, which are typically seen and expected in educational attainment, have not yet surfaced for AVID students currently enrolled in college. Signs of equitable persistence among diverse groups of college students, as illustrated in the above findings, are a hint of fruition of our efforts at closing achievement gaps by preparing *all* students for college readiness and success. Future discussions in this series of NSC briefs will focus on (1) the factors (e.g., academic, demographic, institutional, implementation) that predict whether AVID students will enroll in college, persist, and graduate; and (2) the students who choose to not enroll in college after high school.

### References

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