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New Report Finds Persistent Gaps in Funding for Colleges Serving Underrepresented Students

Schools serving higher shares of students of color also have the lowest success rates

Oakland, CA – State budgets are consistently shortchanging underrepresented college students, according to a new report released today by The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS). While college plays a critical role in providing opportunities for economic mobility, alarming inequities in degree attainment by race persist. Those gaps are exacerbated by state funding patterns that consistently funnel the least money to schools that serve the highest proportions of Black, Latino, and other students of color.

_Dire Disparities: Patterns of Racially Inequitable Funding and Student Success in Public Postsecondary Education_ examines how changes in core education revenue (including state and local appropriations and tuition) between 2006 and 2016 — the years during and following the Great Recession — impacted disparities in resources across public colleges and universities and the underrepresented students of color who enroll in them.

The report finds that underrepresented students of color disproportionately attend community colleges, which have less money to spend and where graduation rates are lower than other public colleges and universities. Over half of underrepresented students at public colleges and universities are enrolled at community colleges, yet inequitable funding leaves these schools with inadequate resources to support student success.

While there has been an encouraging shift toward greater state support for community colleges following the Great Recession, investments have been insufficient to make progress in closing resource disparities between different types of colleges. Community colleges still receive nearly $2,900 less per student from states than doctoral universities, despite serving the highest shares of underrepresented students of color.

“Our public universities and community colleges should be some of our country’s most important institutions for equal opportunity, but they aren’t working that way,” said TICAS president James Kvaal. “Black, Latino, and other students of color are most likely to attend underfunded colleges where they are less likely to graduate.”

Funding patterns in five states (California, Illinois, New York, North Carolina, and Texas), which together educate half of all underrepresented students of color enrolled in public colleges, mirror the national trends. In each of these states, students of color disproportionately enroll in community colleges that have no more than half – and sometimes less than a quarter – of the per-student revenue available to doctoral universities.

“The status quo of funding for public colleges does not provide a workable path to achieving racial equity in degree attainment. Spending is directly connected to student success, and schools cannot
spend money they do not have,” said TICAS senior policy analyst Lindsay Ahlman. “The evidence shows that, even as many states are investing in public colleges, these disparities in resources by race continue year after year.”

In Dire Disparities, TICAS recommends Congress establish a partnership between the federal government and states, to use new federal investments in public higher education to supplement state investment. Such a partnership should focus states on working toward more equitable institutional support, as well on enhancing state data systems to support the development of evidence-based strategies close equity gaps.

Read the report here: http://bit.ly/2L0ozvx

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