The Dallas ISD began in 2005-06 to use data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), based in Herndon, Virginia, to track graduates’ enrollment in postsecondary educational institutions. The NSC collects information from more than 2,800 institutions across the country, and has cooperative agreements with the majority of public and private four-year and two-year colleges and universities. As well, individual student information is generally accurate. Although schools allow students to opt out of sharing their enrollment records, very few students actually do so.

Methodology
Data were provided to the district by the NSC for all students reported by the district as graduates for the school years from 1999-2000 through 2007-2008. Enrollment reports from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) provided supplemental information from Texas institutions that do not report enrollment to the NSC.

A small number of postsecondary institutions do not provide information to the NSC. The institution of most concern to the Dallas ISD is the University of Texas at Austin. Another institution of concern is Texas Southern University, which provided information in the past but did not do so in 2009.

Current Postsecondary Enrollment
Data from the NSC show that 38% of students (2,440 of 6,370) who graduated in 2007-08 were enrolled in a postsecondary institution. Of these, 17% were enrolled in four-year colleges and 21% in two-year colleges. Figure 1 shows the percent of district graduates in the NSC database for the four years from 2004-05 through 2007-08 who were enrolled in two-year or four-year colleges or were not found by the NSC.

NSC data further show that about half of Dallas ISD 2007-08 graduates who were enrolled in college in spring 2009 attended Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD) colleges. The DCCCD colleges enrolling the largest numbers of 2007-08 graduates were El Centro College (312), Mountain View College (291), Eastfield College (265), and Brookhaven College (131).

The NSC reported that four-year colleges enrolling the largest numbers of 2007-08 graduates were the University of Texas at Arlington (113), the University of North Texas (93), and Texas Woman’s University (82). According to THECB, however, the University of Texas at Austin enrolled 126 Dallas ISD graduates in fall 2008, making UT-Austin the fifth largest institution in number of 2007-08 Dallas ISD graduates enrolled, after Brookhaven College and before UT-Arlington. Texas Southern University enrolled 41 2007-08 graduates not counted by NSC, and Trinity Valley Community College enrolled 5.

Adjusted estimates including Texas colleges not reporting to NSC show that the college attendance rate for 2007-08 graduates was at least 41% (2,612 of 6,370). The percent attending four-year colleges was 20% (1,255) and the percent attending two-year colleges was 21% (1,357). The data in Figure 1 were not revised to reflect these adjustments because THECB does not provide current enrollment information for all cohorts of graduates.

Further data from the NSC show that 2,123 2007-08 graduates (33%) attended Texas colleges and universities, while 317 (5%) attended out-of-state institutions. Adjusting for THECB data, the revised estimate is that 36% of graduates attended in-state colleges. Of those who attended any college, about 88% attended in-state schools.

Even with adjustment, these estimates undoubtedly still underreport college enrollment rates of Dallas ISD graduates. Three groups of students are still excluded:
- Students enrolled at NSC nonreporting out-of-state colleges
- Students enrolled at NSC nonreporting Texas colleges that enroll fewer than 5 Dallas ISD graduates (also not reported by THECB)
- Untrackable students

“Untrackable” students are students whose college enrollment or nonenrollment cannot be confirmed, in most cases because they have no Social Security number. A large number of untrackable students may be undocumented immigrants, but there are other
reasons that students may not provide Social Security numbers to educational institutions. Untrackable students made up 13% of the Dallas ISD 2007-08 graduating class (N=829).

**Postsecondary Graduation**

College graduation data for Dallas ISD graduates from 1999-2000 through 2003-04 are shown in Figure 2. Data are not shown for later years because 2003-04 graduates are the first cohort who would have had the opportunity for four years’ full-time college enrollment. (May and June 2009 college graduation data were not included in the spring NSC report.) As well, the caveats regarding enrollment undercounting apply similarly to reported graduation data.

The figure shows the percentage of students from each high school graduation cohort who (a) attended college at some time since high school graduation but have not received a degree, or (b) have been awarded a degree. About 13% of 2003-04 graduates who attended college at any time since high school graduation had received a degree prior to the spring semester of 2009. About 25% of 1999-2000 college-going graduates had received a degree by that time.

![Figure 2. Percent of college-going Dallas ISD graduates who received degrees prior to spring 2009.](image)

Of reporting colleges and universities, the University of North Texas granted the largest number of degrees (457, or 9.7% of all degrees granted to Dallas ISD graduates from the nine cohorts). The University of Texas at Dallas was second, granting 364 degrees (7.8%). In contrast, all DCCCD colleges combined granted only 142 degrees. For example, El Centro College, which currently has 1,047 Dallas ISD graduates enrolled, has reported only 15 degrees awarded to students from all cohorts combined. Eastfield college has 1,026 graduates enrolled, but has reported only 12 degrees awarded. It is likely that many students transfer credits from community colleges to four-year institutions without ever receiving an Associate degree, but others may fail to complete a two-year course of study at these colleges.

**Recommendations**

While some current reporting issues may be resolved by an agreement recently signed between the University of Texas at Austin and the NSC, the district should continue to work with THECB and other organizations to supplement NSC data.

The NSC does not provide data on graduates who do not enroll in college. The district should continue to investigate further sources of information regarding students who do not enroll in college after graduation.

Dallas ISD should form a partnership with the Dallas County Community College District to more closely examine outcomes of Dallas ISD graduates at these colleges. Research from other districts indicates that students attending nonselective colleges are more likely to fail to complete their college courses of study than students attending more selective institutions. Access to postsecondary data is needed to determine how many district graduates are transferring DCCCD credit to four-year schools, and how many are successful in completing Associate degrees.

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