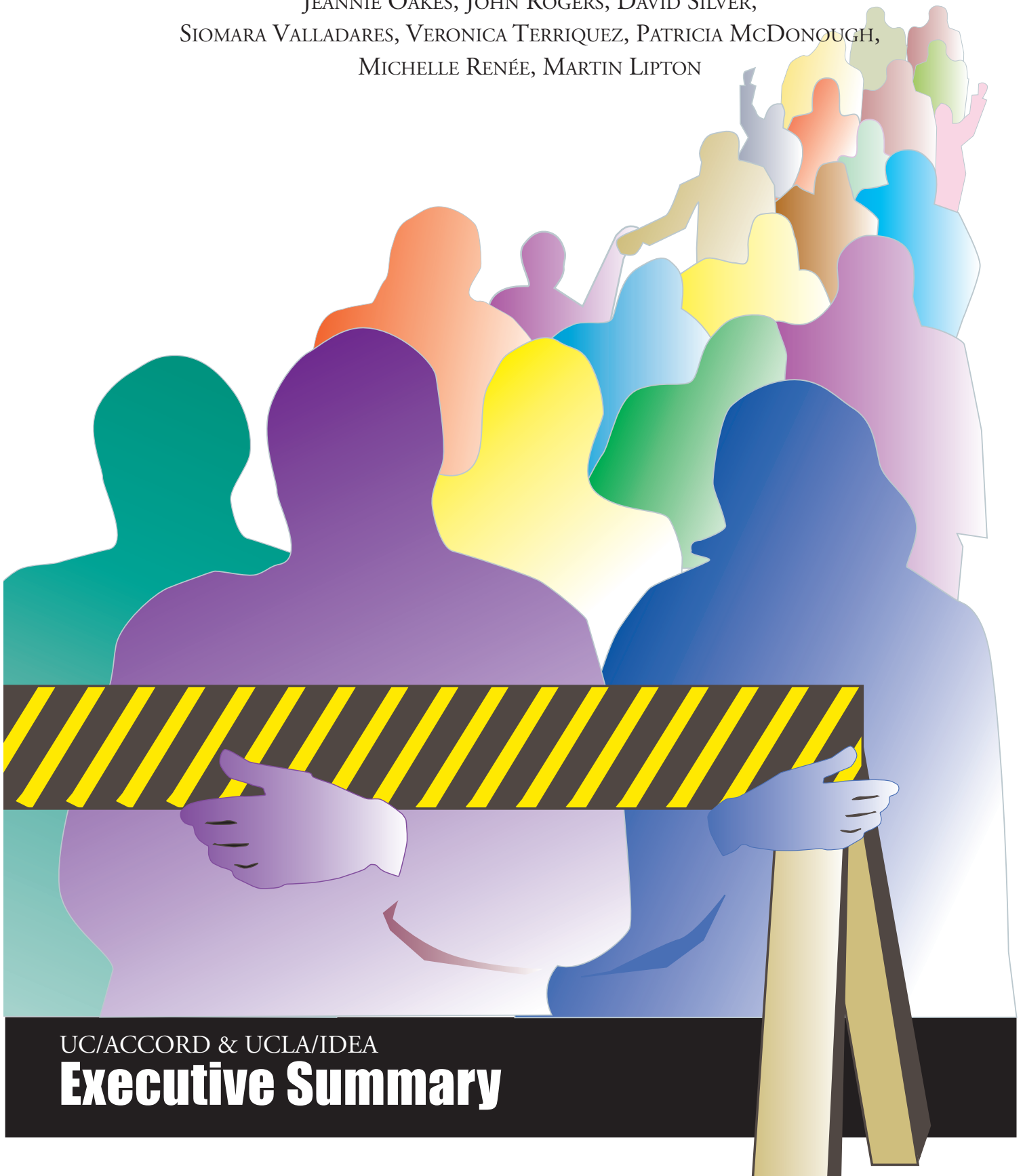


# Removing the Roadblocks:

## FAIR COLLEGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CALIFORNIA STUDENTS

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UC/ACCORD & UCLA/IDEA

# Executive Summary

# **Removing the Roadblocks: Fair College Opportunities for All California Students**

November 2006

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Michelle Renée, Martin Lipton**

**University of California/All Campus Consortium for Research Diversity (UC/ACCORD)  
&  
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# Removing the Roadblocks: Fair College Opportunities for All California Students

Jeannie Oakes, John Rogers, David Silver,  
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## UC/ACCORD & UCLA/IDEA

In November of 1996, California voters approved Proposition 209, which prohibited the state from discriminating against or granting preferential treatment to any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting. In the official ballot arguments, 209's authors argued, "It's time to bring us together under a single standard of equal treatment under the law." They advocated that the state make sure that "*all* California children are provided with the tools to compete in our society."

Asserting that a vote for Proposition 209 was a vote for fairness, proponents argued that "affirmative action" policies had stood in the way of correcting social inequalities, and, in fact, worsened them. They also argued that 209 would remove these barriers and foster equal opportunity and fairness.

Ten years later, the representation of Latino, African American, and American Indian students in the University of California (UC), and particularly at the UC's most selective campuses, has decreased, even as these groups make up a larger share of California high school graduates. Proposition 209 and ending affirmative action have produced neither the "results" nor the opportunities that were promised. California's Latino, African American, and American Indian students have not received the "the tools to compete."

This report extends UC ACCORD and UCLA IDEA's April 2006 *California Educational Opportunity Report: Roadblocks to College*. That earlier report found that many of the state's high schools provide insufficient college preparatory classes, too few qualified teachers to teach those classes, and too few counselors to guide students along the path to college. Here we look closely at the distribution of these scarce resources. We find that within California's under-resourced education system, resources are not distributed equally: White and Asian students receive considerable college-preparation advantages that African Americans, Latinos, and American Indian students do not.

This uneven distribution of college opportunities cannot be justified by racial differences in educational aspirations. The vast majority of California parents want schools that prepare their children for the state's four-year colleges, and most high school students expect to earn a four-year college degree after finishing high school. Neither can differences in students' "merit" justify the disparate opportunities. Access to challenging curriculum, to well-qualified teachers, and to guidance from counselors is not something students should have to "deserve." Our new analyses of state data, along with five years of UC ACCORD and UCLA IDEA studies, demonstrate that racial preferences in access to core educational resources pervade California's K-12 educational system.

This report addresses the complex competencies and formal requirements for entrance into the campuses of the California State University and the University of California. It reviews the record of low college participation and college eligibility among African American, Latino, and American Indian students, and it examines the K-12 school conditions that contribute to these inequalities. The report concludes with a comprehensive set of policy recommendations for removing roadblocks that unfairly impede the educational progress of Latino, African American, and American Indian students. These are not "pie in the sky" proposals. Rather they are strategies that have been tried in other states, as well as in California districts and schools; they are backed by research.

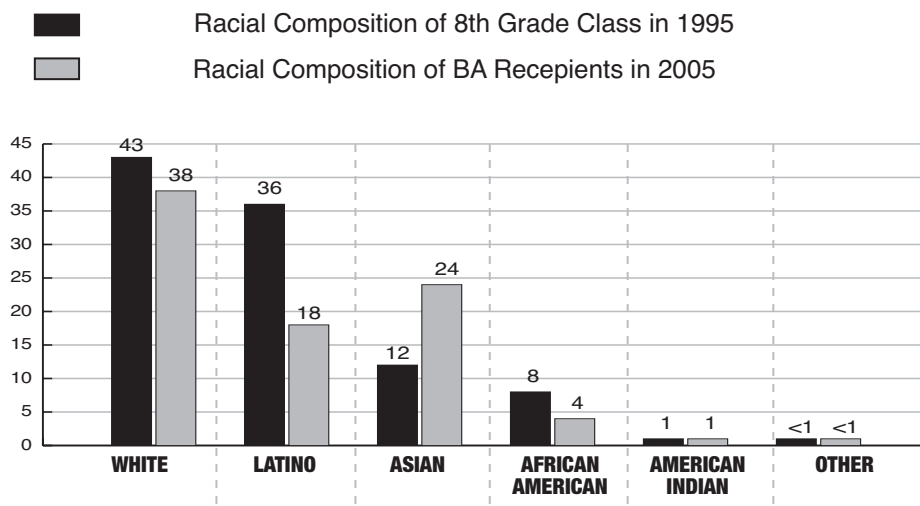
Throughout the report, we focus on the patterns of access to resources and opportunities in the K-12 system that favor White and Asian students. We also outline a set of new policies needed to remove the roadblocks to college that California’s African American, Latino, and American Indian students face.

## Racial Disparities in College Participation

California students, overall, lag behind most other states in the rates at which they enter and complete four-year colleges and universities. Beneath these overall low rates are significant racial disparities. California’s Asian American and white high school graduates enroll as freshmen in public four-year institutions at much higher rates than African American or Latino students, and California Bachelors degree’s are disproportionately earned across these groups.

State policy contributes to California’s overall low rate of four-year college enrollment. According to the state’s 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education in California, the state’s vast system of community colleges should provide the first two years of college to many of the state’s young people, who upon completion of their Associate’s degree would transfer to four-year colleges. However, California’s low rates of African American and Latino freshman enrollments in the state’s four-year universities combined with low rates of transfer from community colleges to four-year universities produce overall low and disparate rates of college completion.

**Figure 4 and 5:**  
**1995 8th Graders Compared to 2005 Bachelors Degree Recipients from California’s Public Post-Secondary Institutions**



\*Other includes students who identified as either “Other,” “Non-Resident,” or provided “No Response.”

Source: California Basic Education Data System, online data, [www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/)  
California Postsecondary Education Commission, online data, [www.cpec.ca.gov](http://www.cpec.ca.gov)

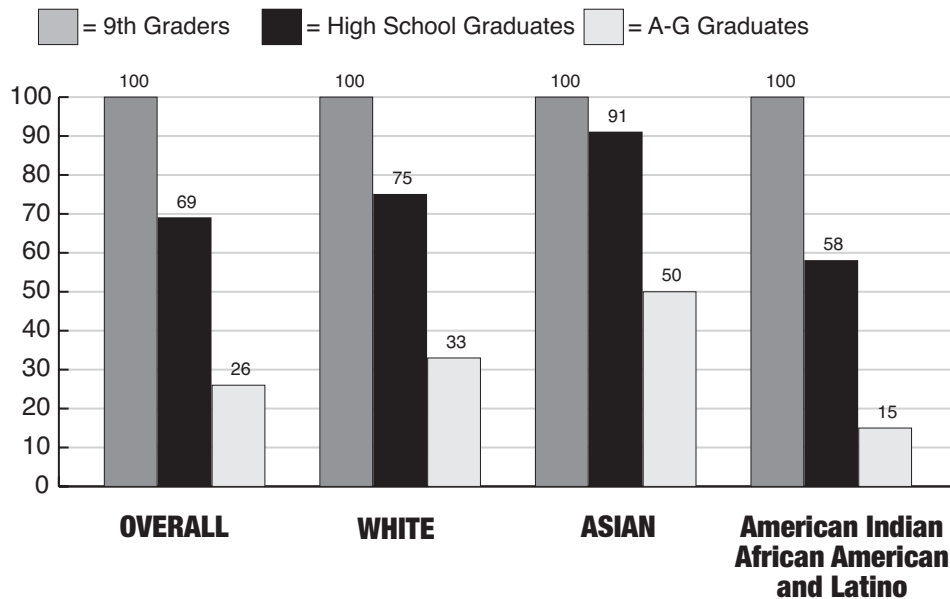
## Racial Disparities in College Eligibility

To be eligible to attend a four-year public college in California, students must graduate from high school having completed a college preparatory curriculum, having maintained a grade point average of at least a “C,” and having taken college entrance exams (i.e. the SAT and the ACT). The University of California and the California State University system require the same set of courses, although the UC system requires higher grades and test scores than the CSU system. Within both systems the more competitive campuses require higher grade point averages and test scores than the less competitive campuses.

Students from different racial and ethnic groups graduate from high school eligible for college at very different rates. Our “College Opportunity Ratio (COR) Indicator” shows these disparities. California’s statewide COR in 2004 was 100:69:26, meaning that for every 100 9<sup>th</sup> graders in 2000, there were 69 graduates and 26 college-ready graduates in 2004. Beneath this overall ratio are considerable racial disparities. For every 100 of California’s Latino, African American, and American Indian 9<sup>th</sup> graders in 2000, only 15 graduated in 2004 having passed the courses required for CSU and UC. This is half the rate of Whites (33 for every 100) and a third of the rate of Asians (50 for every 100). Whites and Asians also take the college entrance tests at much higher rates. In fact, African American, Latino, and American Indian students are dramatically underrepresented at every point along the road to meeting UC admission requirements.

Figure 9:

### College Opportunity Ratios for California Racial Groups 2000 9<sup>th</sup> Graders and 2004 High School Graduates



## Racial Roadblocks to College Preparation in High Schools

Factors outside of school may contribute to racial disparities in college eligibility and college participation. For example, low-income families often have fewer educational resources at their disposal and, unlike high-income families, may not be familiar with college requirements. However, racial inequalities in *schooling*—access to K-12 resources, opportunities, and supports—also contribute to unequal college eligibility and participation. These schooling roadblocks can be removed by the actions of policymakers and educators.

The college chances of every student—wealthy or poor, regardless of race or ethnicity—will be affected by whether he or she has access to essential college-going conditions, including access to curriculum, high-quality teaching, counseling, and opportunities for extra academic support. It is important to note that none of these conditions is within the control of the student or his or her family.

As we detailed in our earlier report, fewer than half (45%) of the state's comprehensive high schools provide all students a sufficiently rigorous academic curriculum. That is, they fail to offer enough college preparatory (A-G) classes to enable all students to take them. California's high school teaching force has neither the time nor the preparation to provide most students with the high quality teaching they need as they prepare for college. More than 25% of California high schools routinely assign improperly trained teachers to college preparatory courses overall, and 33% assign improperly trained teachers to college preparatory math classes. California ranks last among the states in the provision of counselors who can cultivate a college going culture on middle and high school campuses and connect students with the additional academic and social support they need for college preparation. Across the state, the average high school counselor load is 506 students—nearly double the national average. Almost a third (30%) of California schools suffer from all of these serious college preparation deficiencies.

However, these overall statistics mask quite dramatic racial disparities in students' access to curriculum, teachers, and guidance. Schools with a high concentration of Latino and African American students tend to have fewer of these essential college-preparation resources and opportunities than other schools. Additionally, Latino and African American students tend to have less access to essential college-preparation resources and opportunities in diverse schools than their White and Asian classmates. These roadblocks are not primarily a function of differences in students' effort or achievement; they also result from statewide shortages. When resources and opportunities are scarce, the educational system does not provide them equally to all students.

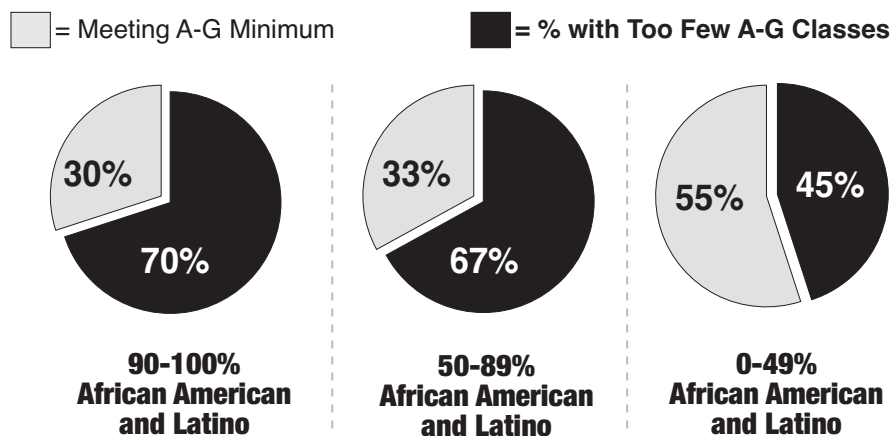
Fortunately, each of these concrete racial roadblocks can be addressed by research-based policy recommendations. Our recommendations focus on features of schools that can be created and shaped by policy.

## The Curriculum Roadblock: *Disparate Access to College Preparatory Courses*

Shortages of A-G college preparatory classes and advanced A-G classes are much more likely in schools where African American and Latino students are in the majority. For example, only 30% of schools enrolling 90-100% African American

Figure 14:

### Racial Disparities in Access to Schools with Enough College Preparatory Classes (2004-2005)

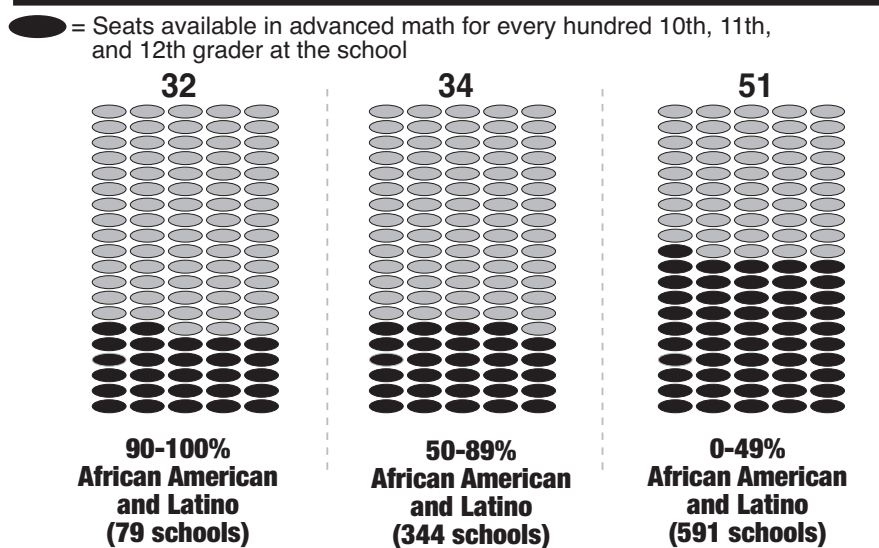


Source: California Basic Education Data System, online data, [www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/)

and Latino students and 33% of schools enrolling 50-89% from these groups have sufficient college preparatory offerings. In contrast, more than half (55%) of the schools where White and Asian students are the majority offer at least the minimum of 67% A-G classes.

Students attending these three types of schools—intensely segregated, majority African and Latino, and majority White and Asian—also have very different access to advanced A-G classes, particularly advanced math and science classes. For example, approximately 38% of the math classes at majority White and Asian schools are advanced, at the same time only about 25% of the math courses are advanced at schools enrolling a majority of African American and Latino students. These shortages mean that it is far more difficult for students at majority African American and Latino schools to complete the entire sequence of A-G math requirements during four years of high school.

**Figure 15:**  
**Access to Higher Level A–G Math Classes in Schools Differing in Racial Composition (Available Seats – 2004-2005)**



Source: California Basic Education Data System, online data, [www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/)

Compounding the inequalities among schools in their A-G offerings, there exists within-school disparities in students' access to the A-G classes. Regardless of the racial composition of schools, Asian and Whites are consistently over-represented in advanced college preparatory classes in math and science. Additional policy barriers make it especially difficult for English Learners to access the A-G curriculum.

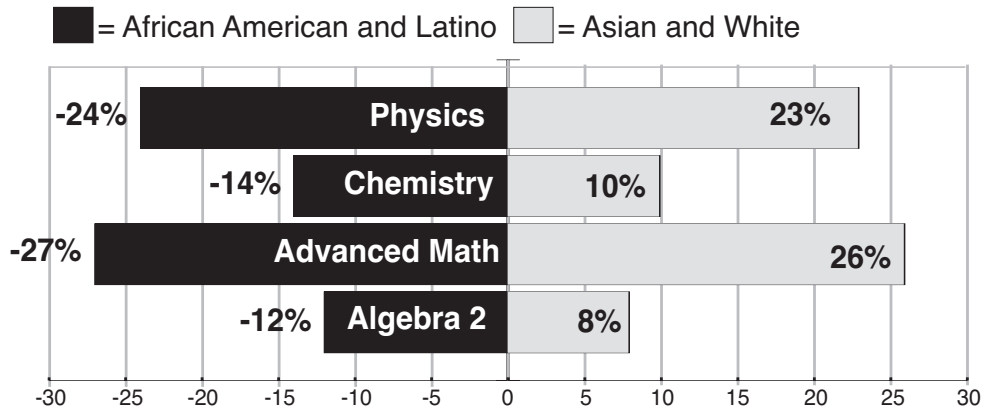
As a result of these within-school barriers, African American and Latino students are subjected to a double layer of inequality. First, they are less likely to have access to advanced courses if they attend schools where they are the majority because these schools are likely to offer fewer A-G courses. Second, if they attend majority White and Asian schools where more advanced courses are offered, their chances of being enrolled in these classes are low compared to their White and Asian counterparts.

Even when high schools enrolling large percentages of African American, Latino, and low-income students do have these courses, these schools are more likely to have dysfunctional science labs, insufficient supplies, and a lack of computer hardware and connectivity can hobble their academic programs.

African American and Latino students also report far more often than their White and Asian peers that they don't feel welcomed into and supported in advanced and honors classes at their schools. This difference in perception is not trivial, as students who report feeling welcome and supported in advanced coursework are more likely than others to go onto college.

Figure 17:

**Within School Racial Disparities in Enrollment in Advanced College Preparatory Classes (All California High Schools, 2005)**



**Average Representation of 10, 11, & 12 Graders in Advanced College Preparatory Classes, by Race**

Source: California Department of Education 2005-2006.

## 1. Removing the Curriculum Roadblock:

### *A College Preparatory (A-G) Curriculum for All Students*

Enrolling all students in the A-G course sequence would reduce one of the most significant barriers to college-going. By simplifying the high school curriculum and eliminating the distinction between A-G courses and “non A-G” courses in the academic subjects, families and students would be assured that students are taking the “right” courses for college preparation.

Some people may be concerned that enrolling all students in academically challenging courses will harm those with lower achievement or lead to greater levels of dropping out. The evidence is to the contrary. Students enrolled in challenging academic classes score higher on achievement tests than students in less challenging classes; they feel more challenged, have higher aspirations, do more homework, and go on to take more advanced courses later on in high school. It may seem obvious that students in the challenging classes are higher achieving. However, *all types* of students, whether or not they are among the school’s highest achievers, score better when they are in challenging classes. Therefore, California should adopt the following curriculum policies.

- 1.1 California high schools make the A-G college preparatory course sequence the “default” curriculum.
- 1.2 California high schools offer multiple pathways for students to complete college preparation, including pathways that align and/or integrate career and technical courses with A-G academic courses. Students who wish to pursue technical careers must simultaneously be able to complete the courses required for UC/CSU admission.
- 1.3 All California high school programs for immigrants and English Learners include and develop their language competencies and prior education as part of college preparation.
- 1.4 California high school students may enroll concurrently in appropriate community college courses, particularly those that provide advanced course work in the A-G subjects.
- 1.5 State high school assessments are aligned to college admissions and placement tests.



# The Teacher Roadblock:

## *Disparities in Access to Fully Qualified Teachers*

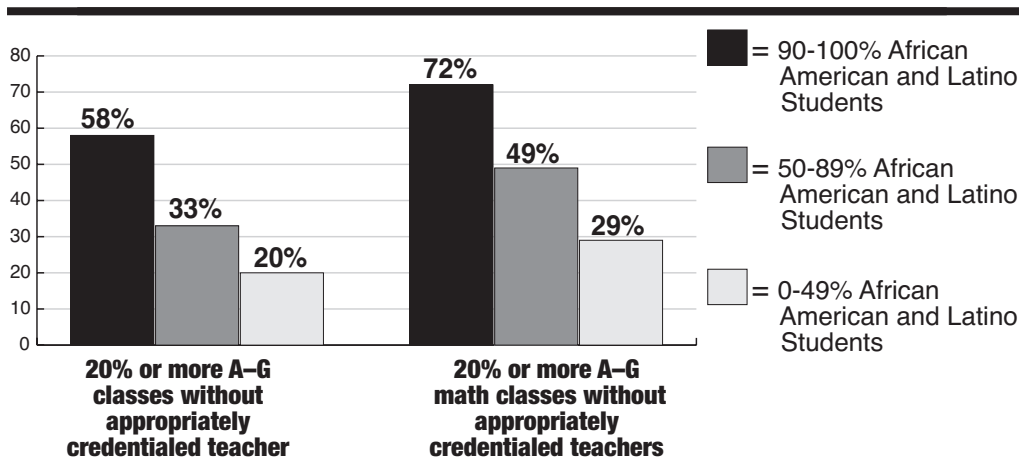
California's ratio of high school teachers to students is higher than the ratio in any other state: 21 to 1. 91% of California high schools have more students per teacher than the national average. Further, this teacher-student ratio does not reflect the actual class sizes that high school teachers must teach. Classes of 30 to 40 students are common in California high schools. Students have far less *access* to teachers in very large classes than they do in smaller ones.

Students attending high schools enrolling 90-100% African American and Latino students are more likely than students in majority white schools to have teachers who are not fully qualified. Having fully qualified teachers is critically important to students' opportunities to prepare for college. Well-qualified teachers provide a wide range of teaching strategies, including the ability to ask higher order questions and respond to students' needs and curriculum goals. Poorly qualified teachers spend more time on drill and practice, while those better prepared can engage students in higher level thinking about content.

Statewide, more than 25% of all California high schools have severe teacher shortages and mis-assignments in college preparatory courses. At these schools, teachers without the appropriate subject matter qualifications teach more than 20% of the college preparatory classes. Schools enrolling 90-100% African American and Latino students are almost 3 times as likely as majority white schools to have significant percentages of mis-assigned teachers teaching A-G courses.

More than 33% of California high schools routinely assign improperly trained teachers to college preparatory math courses. Schools enrolling 90-100% African American and Latino students are about 2 ½ times more likely than majority white schools to have more than 20% of their A-G mathematics classes taught by teachers lacking full math certification.

Figure 21:  
**Disparities in A-G Classes Taught by Teachers Certified in the Subject Matter of the Class (2004-2005)**



Source: California Basic Education Data System, online data, [www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/)

## 2. Removing the Teacher Roadblock:

### *Fully Prepared Teachers in College Preparatory (A-G) Courses*

Knowledgeable, experienced, and fully certified teachers provide instruction that engages students in intellectual work. In diverse communities, quality teaching makes highly valued knowledge accessible to students from diverse backgrounds. The following policies will help ensure that all California high school students have fully prepared teachers.

- 2.1 All teachers of college preparatory (A-G) courses are fully credentialed in the subject matter of the course.  
Educationally sound incentives are necessary to recruit and support highly trained teachers in schools with low A-G eligibility rates and low four-year college enrollment rates. These include:
  - ◆ Lower class sizes.
  - ◆ Financial “bonuses” to fully qualified teachers.
  - ◆ Teams of five or more fully qualified teachers hired together to collaborate on increasing college eligibility and college going.
  - ◆ Schools that provide safe and supportive working environments for teachers.
- 2.2 All teachers participate in ongoing professional development that prepares them with the content knowledge and pedagogical skills to teach rigorous college preparatory courses to diverse groups of students.
- 2.3 A specially educated core of “College Opportunity Teachers” provides assistance to the school as it increases the rates at which students graduate ready for four-year universities.

## Time and Support Roadblocks:

All students require academic support and assistance beyond what is provided during the traditional structure of A-G courses. Well-educated and affluent parents are more likely than others to purchase these supports for their children outside of school. Students in low-income families and from those without college experience depend on what schools provide.

## 3. Removing Time and Support Roadblocks:

### *A Robust Academic Support Infrastructure*

Schools must provide a strong academic support infrastructure to ensure meaningful access to college preparation for all students. They can adopt the following strategies, or others that fit their school context, to ensure that all students have the additional academic support they require.

- 3.1 Small learning communities ease 9<sup>th</sup> graders’ transition into high school.
- 3.2 Additional academic instruction and support built into the master schedule replaces “remediation” and repeating subjects.
- 3.3 Summer school is available to all students, including “bridge” classes that give students a “head start” in rigorous academic classes.
- 3.4 The senior year includes additional coursework for students to become proficient on college placement tests and/or to begin college-level courses.

## **The Counseling Roadblock: *Disparities in Information and Encouragement***

To sustain and fulfill college aspirations, students and their families need adequate information, and they need to receive it early enough for students to complete the necessary prerequisites for college. They need to be encouraged and supported in achieving their college aspirations. These supports need to begin early, because students who fall behind early typically have great difficulty compensating in later years.

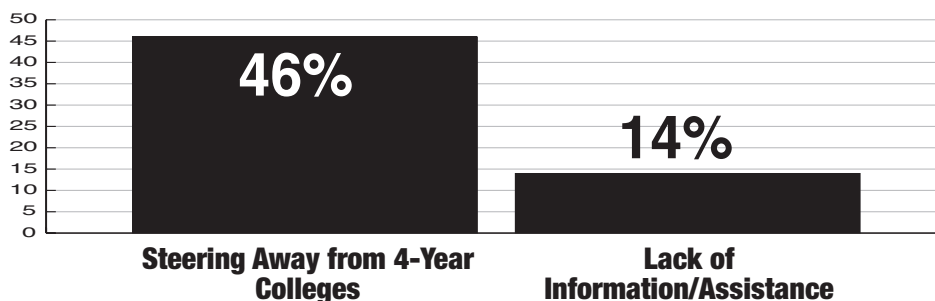
African American and Latino students are less likely than other students to receive college information and assistance. They also report far more often than whites and Asians that school adults actually steer them away from attending four-year colleges. Rather than being encouraged to attend four-year colleges, these students were more likely to be encouraged to go to a community college, to a trade or vocational school, or to get a job after high school.

African-Americans and Latinos, and low-income students' access to information is constrained by a lack of fully credentialed counselors and other trained professionals to advise them. California's average ratio of counselors to students is 1 to 506, compared to the national ratio of 284 students for every high school counselor. Although the vast majority of all California schools have student-to-counselor ratios that exceed the national average, students have the least access to counselors in intensely segregated and majority African American and Latino schools.

Here, too, many California families supplement the limited school-provided college-preparation information and guidance with out-of-school support, including tutoring, supplemental academic classes, college counseling, preparation for college entrance tests, and more. Well-educated parents are more likely than others to make up for deficits on the schools' part by purchasing this extra boost for their children outside of school.

**Figure 23:  
Disparities in College-Going School Culture, 2003**

**Increased odds that African Americans and Latinos report low levels of college-going school culture relative to Whites and Asians**



Source: UC ACCORD, *Survey of Recent High School Graduates*, (Los Angeles: UC ACCORD, 2003).

## 4. Removing the Counseling Roadblock:

### *Effective College Counseling*

Students' chances of enrolling in a four-year college are far greater when school adults actively support students and their families through the college choice and admissions process. The following can make such effective college counseling available to all students.

- 4.1 The student-counselor ratio does not exceed 200:1.
- 4.2 All counselors have formal training in college counseling.
- 4.3 Professional development in building a “college-going culture” is provided to all administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, and counseling staff.
- 4.4 “College Knowledge” curriculum tools enable educators to create a college-going culture.
- 4.5 Students and families are consistently given specific information about their individual progress toward college eligibility.
- 4.6 Advisory classes and other opportunities enable students to develop supportive relationships with teachers and administrators that are sustained throughout the high school years.
- 4.7 Local community based organizations engage as partners in providing workshops to families in the college preparation, admissions, and financial aid process.

## **Policies to Support Successful College Preparatory High Schools**

In addition to removing the roadblocks in California high schools, policy changes are required to prepare students for college preparation in high school, to provide alternative college preparation strategies for students who need them, and to hold schools accountable for college preparation. Because the racial disparities in higher education are also the result of higher education policy, changes are needed in California's postsecondary system as well. Finally, Californians must provide the additional funding that excellent and equitable K-12 and higher education require.

## 5. College Preparatory Culture and Conditions in Elementary and Middle Schools

- 5.1 Middle school courses provide rigorous, academic, college preparatory “pipeline” curricula.
- 5.2 Middle school courses are taught by teachers certified in the subject matter of their courses and who have the pedagogical skills that make rigorous academic content accessible to diverse groups of learners.
- 5.3 Middle school student-to-counselor ratios do not exceed 200: 1.
- 5.4 Tutoring and other intensive academic supports ready students for college-preparatory high school courses.

## 6. “Second-Chance” College Preparatory Opportunities Beyond Traditional High Schools

Not all students will be able to navigate the traditional high school successfully—especially in the short term—even with all of the recommendations made in this report. For that small portion, alternative programs should be available that offer a variety of non-traditional ways for students to prepare for college.

## 7. Accountability for College Preparation

The state’s primary mechanism for reporting to the public on school quality is the School Accountability Report Card or SARC. Yet few SARCs provide clear and accurate information on students’ progress toward college readiness. Furthermore, most SARCs do not present information on learning conditions in a format that allows parents to determine whether their children are receiving quality college-preparatory instruction. California high schools are neither rewarded nor punished for how many incoming 9th graders graduate ready to enter college-level coursework, and the state does not create incentives for high schools to provide a full array of college-promoting learning opportunities.

The State’s Accountability System Should be Modified to Include all of the Following:

- 7.1 Information about high school students’ college preparation and high school graduates’ college participation is regularly collected and analyzed.
- 7.2 Indicators that ‘grade’ the quality of college preparation and participation are reported on state and school report cards.
- 7.3 Parents and community members review the local college preparation report card at annual public forums and participate in holding local schools accountable.

## 8. Revised Higher Education Policies

New higher education policies are required to ensure that the state provides fair college-going opportunities to California’s students whose high school success demonstrates their ability to succeed in higher education.

- 8.1 Eligibility and admissions criteria eliminate the effect of racial preferences in K-12 education.
- 8.2 A revised California Master Plan for higher education permits far more high school graduates to enroll in four-year public universities.
- 8.3 Students who begin their post-secondary education in two-year institutions are provided the necessary resources to make a fluid and timely transition to a four-year institution.

## 9. Sufficient Funding to Support Fair College Opportunity

Many of these recommendations cannot be adequately implemented without more funding for K-12 education. California currently spends 85% of the national average for each student in K-12 when regional cost of living differences are taken into account. The 10 states that send the highest proportion of 12<sup>th</sup> graders to four-year colleges spend an average of \$2,350 more per student each year than California. In addition to extra funding for K-12 reforms, more funding is required to increase the number of seats in CSUs and UCs. These are all investments that will yield California significant economic and social returns.

## Conclusion

These recommendations are likely to spark controversy, and not only because they require new resources. Some critics are likely to assert that providing college preparation for all is not a reasonable policy goal. Some may argue that many jobs don't require a college education and that many students lack the motivation or talent for college. However, recent analyses linking college preparation to the future well-being of students and to society as a whole argue otherwise. Today, college preparation readies young people for flexible, adaptable, creative, and powerful adult roles in a knowledge-based society.

Compelling economic arguments exist for expanding college access. Providing all students access to college preparation readies them for the competitive labor market and ensures California's capacity to be vital and relevant in a global marketplace. Jobs that provide the income necessary to support a family increasingly require post-secondary education.

Although arguments that are heard most frequently are economic ones, post-secondary education helps students do more than gain personal financial security and add to the state's economic vitality. Providing all students access to college preparation can enable all California communities to participate robustly in shaping California's civic life. Through post-secondary education, students gain a greater sense of self, intellectual and interpersonal competency, more tolerant views about differences in others, and they also become members of a more informed public.

Prop 209 has failed to deliver on its promise to eliminate racial favoritism and preferences. In many respects, California is farther from offering equal opportunity for all students than it was ten years ago. Worsening inequities, combined with the prohibition of the use of race in university admissions, have steadily widened the gap between California's White and Asian students, on the one hand, and its African Americans, Latinos, and American Indians, on the other. Proposition 209 was not the answer for providing California students with an equal opportunity to realize the universal California dream of a college education but solutions do exist, and they are not beyond our means, our intelligence, or our imaginations.

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