



## CONNECTICUT SEES PROGRESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION DEGREE ATTAINMENT AMONG BLACK AND LATINO STUDENTS

**(June 15, 2018)** Today, [Ed Trust](#) released two reports highlighting National and State trends in degree attainment for African American and Latino adults in states that had set goals to increase the amount of adults with college credentials and degrees.

Ed Trust found that in Connecticut, progress is being made in the state's higher education institutions to improve degree attainment rates among all student populations. Since 2000, attainment-among African American and Latino students has increased at a rate higher than average for both subgroups. African American students have seen above average change with gains of over 10 percentage points, ranking Connecticut 4<sup>th</sup> in the country as far as progress. Latino student attainment rates have improved 6.7%, the 8<sup>th</sup> largest increase in the country.

While there is progress being made, the attainment rates for Black and Latino students are only just above average. And, more alarming, is the education attainment gaps between whites and students of color are greater in Connecticut than in almost all other states in the country. Connecticut ranks dead last in the attainment gap that exists between white students and African American students and fifth to the bottom for the degree attainment gap between Latino and white students.

"We still have a lot of work to do as far as closing degree attainment gaps in our state," said CSCU President Mark Ojakian. "Over 90% of our students are from Connecticut and almost 80% of them find employment after they graduate. However, there is an entire population being missed, which equates to missed opportunities for our state and its employers. If our goal is an educated citizenry and economic growth then higher education should be considered as much of a priority as K – 12 education among all stakeholders."

"Higher education is the great equalizer in this country and ensuring access through financial aid is critical to closing our state's attainment gap," says Jennifer Widness, the President of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges. "Independent colleges provide significant financial aid in Connecticut. More than 8 in 10 first-year students at CCIC member institutions

receive financial aid that they don't have to pay back. Our member institutions have increased institutional aid more than 110% in the past ten years. We award over half of the bachelor's degrees earned by minority students. The state needs to similarly prioritize and boost funding for the state's need-based financial aid program which has been reduced by \$30 million – nearly 50% -- in the past few years." A recent report from the Hechinger Group found only 20% of eligible students get a state need-based grant in CT putting our state in the top 5 with most unmet need.

Connecticut's attainment goal was set in its Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education adopted in 2015 which asserts that our economy in 2025 will require a workforce in which 70% of our working age population have some post-secondary training. The plan noted that the education attainment gaps between whites and minorities are greater in Connecticut than in almost all other states in the country and to meet its goal, progress must be made in closing these gaps.

Today's Ed Trust report reinforced what the Planning Commission for Higher Education resolved in adoption of the State Strategic Plan in 2015: *Connecticut must make it a priority to close the attainment gap specifically in higher education.* While much attention is provided to the state's persistent achievement gap at the K-12 level, less attention is given to the attainment gap that continues into higher education.

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