

# Research Briefs

## Diversity Trends

### Community Colleges

More than ever before, students in our classrooms come from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, speak other languages, and espouse quite different values. It is crucial that we understand the demographic shift in progress, and how it relates to the community. The success of higher education will depend on how well it responds to these changes, both in enhancing student access and in ensuring their success and matriculation, especially for those from the underrepresented groups.

Some general observations about the diversity trends over ten years appear below. Additional details are presented in the accompanying charts.

At **DVC**, White students represented 66% of the enrollment in 1994, while non-Whites were 32%, a gap of 34%. In 2003, the comparable numbers were 51% for Whites and 39% for non-Whites, a smaller gap of 12%.

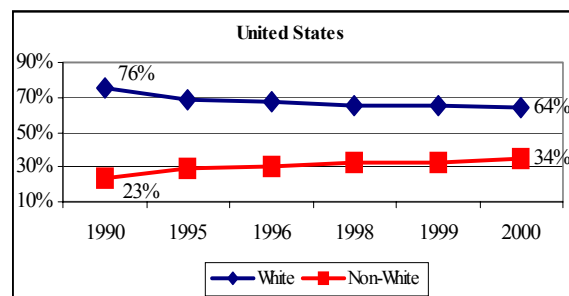
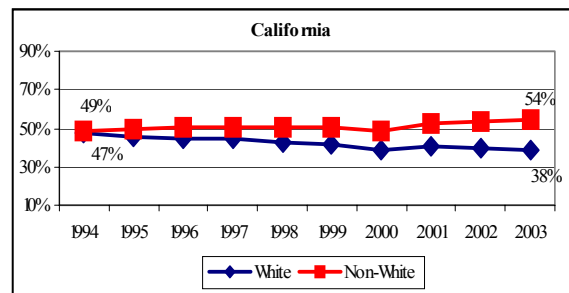
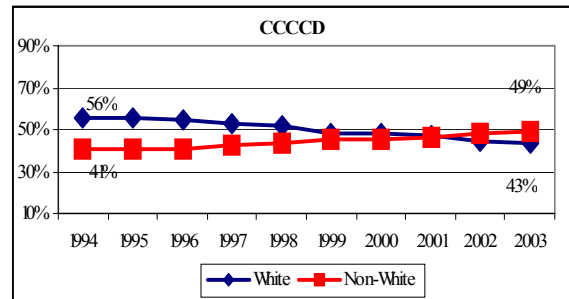
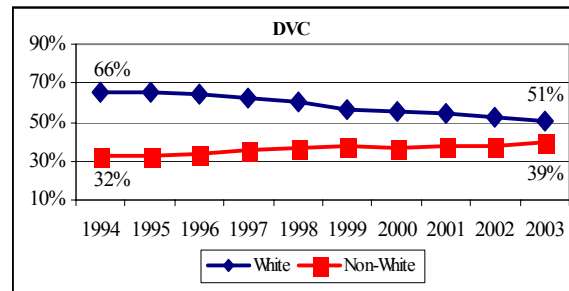
At **CCCCD**, White student enrollment exceeded that of non-White students by 15% in 1994, but non-Whites outnumbered their White counterparts by 6% in 2003.

In **California's** 109 community colleges, the number of non-White students exceeded that of the White students by 2% in 1994 and by as much as 16% in 2003.<sup>1</sup>

At the **nation's** community colleges, the enrollment gap between White and non-White students has been narrowing gradually, from 53% in 1990 to only 30% in 2000 (the last year of available statistics).<sup>2</sup>

In summary, there is a dramatic increase in the ethnic diversity of students at community colleges. This has been facilitated in part by the open admissions policies and the effective programs designed for attracting ethnic minorities such as EOPS, Puente, and Educational Talent Search.

Enrollment in Community Colleges by Ethnicity



Source: CCCCO MIS; US data from NCES Digest of Education Statistics, 2002

<sup>1</sup> Data for DVC, Contra Costa County, and California are available up to 2003, while national data are only available for 2000.

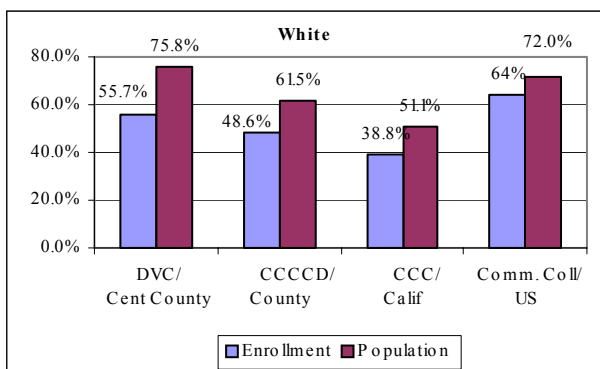
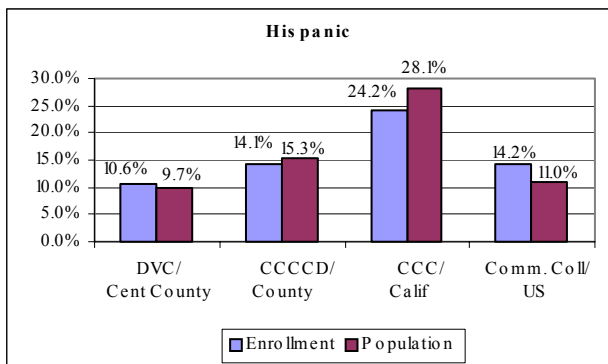
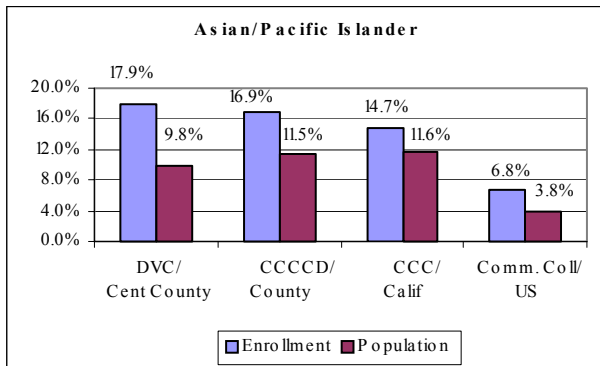
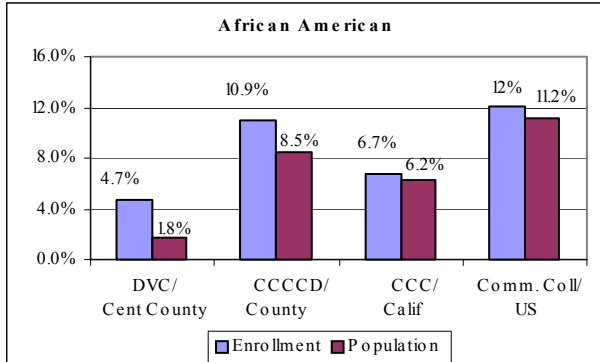
<sup>2</sup> Data for the national statistics include specific ethnicities. The unknown category is not available at this level.

# Diversity Trends

## General Population

To assess the success of providing access and equity, it is important to place these changes in the context of the general population of 18 years and older. The following observations are based on the charts presented below.

### Comm. Colleges vs. General Population, 2000



Based on 2000 data:

**African Americans** were overrepresented in the community colleges in comparison to the general population for all segments; the service area (central county), county, state, and the US. The greatest difference was in the service area, in which the proportion enrolled in community colleges was more than twice that of the general population.

**Asians/Pacific Islanders** were also overrepresented in the community colleges in comparison to the general population for all segments. The greatest difference was in the service area and the US, in which the proportion enrolled in community colleges was almost twice as high as that of the general population.

**Hispanics** were overrepresented in the service area and the US in terms of the proportion enrolled in community colleges as compared to the general population. However, a smaller proportion were enrolled in the county and the state compared to the general population.

**Whites** were the only group that were consistently underrepresented at the community colleges as compared to the general population. The greatest underrepresentation occurred in the service area.

Undoubtedly, public community colleges have succeeded in enhancing access for several ethnic minorities who are now well represented on campuses. Affordability, flexibility of course offerings, proximity to one's residence, and the nurturing environment have played a significant role in this success.

In contrast, the percentage of White students enrolled in community colleges falls far below their proportionate representation in the general population. Apparently, White students have opted mostly for enrollment at private and four-year institutions. This is supported by the statistics on student demographics at the four-year universities.<sup>3</sup> Such observation has far-reaching implications, as the following commentary from the Los Angeles Times indicates.

*"... no one should be misled by the 'browning of America,' as some have labeled the demographic shift in progress. It doesn't signal a change in the power structure. Education equals participation and success, said George Spindler [professor emeritus of anthropology at Stanford University]. It's a simple equation. And if whites continue to have the best, the longest... the most professional kinds of educational experience, they are going to stay in control. But... if you have a large mass of Blacks or Latinos who are educated, ... eventually this inequality is going to break down. But for most groups, it takes perhaps three generations to attain that competitive socioeconomic status."*<sup>4</sup>

Providing access is a key component in improving equity. However, enhancing students' academic success, retention, completion, and transfer for all groups present greater challenges for many years to come.

<sup>3</sup> NCES: Projection of Education Statistics, 2013

<sup>4</sup> Beyond the Melting Pot, Los Angeles Times in Writing About Diversity, by Irene L. Clark, Harcourt Brace College Publishers, New York, 1994, p. 172