



## REL Pacific Ask A REL Response

College and Career Readiness

December 2017

### Question:

**Is it common for students who go straight to the workforce after high school to later enroll in community college for further training and education? How do community colleges accommodate such students and what are their outcomes?**

### Response:

Following an established REL Pacific research protocol, we conducted a web-based search for resources related to delayed enrollment in college (see Methods section for search terms and resource selection criteria). We searched for information specific to the Pacific region, but did not find sources focused on the issue in our region.

Descriptions of the resources are quoted directly from the publication abstracts. We have not evaluated the quality of references and the resources provided in this response. We offer them only for your reference. Also, our search included the most commonly used research resources, but they are not comprehensive and other relevant references and resources may exist.

### Research References

Berker, A. & Horn, L. (2003). *Work First, Study Second: Adult Undergraduates Who Combine Employment and Postsecondary Enrollment*, NCES 2003–167. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office. Available from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED482529>.

From the ERIC abstract: Working adult undergraduates can be broken into two groups: employees who study (those who work full-time and pursue postsecondary education to obtain skills necessary to advance in their careers) and students who work (those who work part-time and attend school full-time). In 1999–2000 roughly two-thirds of working undergraduates aged 24 or older reported that work was their primary activity, and among these nearly 70% combined full-time work with part-time attendance. These working adults

make up a large percentage of the undergraduate population and nearly one-half received some sort of financial aid, including one-quarter who received aid from their employers. However, full-time work and part-time attendance combined with family responsibilities appeared to be barriers to completing a credential. Despite the fact that most employees who study thought it was important to earn a formal credential, 62% had not done so within 6 years. Moreover, among those who left, most did so in their first year. In contrast, their counterparts whose focus was on postsecondary enrollment students who work experienced more positive educational outcomes. These students, who were more likely to have fewer family responsibilities, were more likely to earn postsecondary credentials, especially bachelor's degrees. (Appendices include a glossary, technical notes and methodology, and supplementary tables.)

Bozick, R., & DeLuca, S. (2005). Better late than never? Delayed enrollment in the high school to college transition. *Social Forces*, 84(1), 531–554. Available from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ720304>.

*From the ERIC abstract:* In this paper, we examine the antecedents and consequences of timing in the transition from high school to college. Using the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88), we find that 16 percent of high school graduates postpone enrollment by seven months or more after completing high school. Delayers tend to have some common characteristics: they come from families with few socioeconomic resources, they have performed poorly on standardized tests, they have dropped out of school, and they have exited high school with a GED. We find that even after controlling for these academic and socioeconomic characteristics, students who delay postsecondary enrollment have lower odds of bachelor degree completion. Additionally, we find that delayers are more likely than on-time enrollees to attend less than four-year institutions and to transition to other roles such as spouses or parents before entering college. Controlling for institutional context and life course contingencies, however, does not completely explain the negative relationship between delayed enrollment and degree completion. The following is appended: Covariate Construction and Classification.

Clery, S. (2012, March–April). Delayed enrollment: Is it a risk? *Data Notes*, 7(2). Silver Spring, MD: Achieving the Dream. Available from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED533080>.

*From the ERIC abstract:* This issue of "Data Notes" examines characteristics and three-year outcome differences between students who enroll in Achieving the Dream colleges immediately after high school and those who delay their enrollments. Recent high school graduates were identified based on the student's reported high school graduation year and the year the student first enrolled in the Achieving the Dream college. Comparisons were conducted between students who enrolled during the fall immediately following high school graduation, those who delayed enrollment one to two years, three to four years, and five or more years after graduating. Student characteristics examined include: attendance status, developmental education needs, type of major, gender, race/ethnicity, and Pell grant receipt.

Horn, L., Cataldi, E.F., and Sikora, A. (2005). *Waiting to Attend College: Undergraduates Who Delay Their Postsecondary Enrollment* (NCES 2005–152). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office. Available from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED485639>.

*From the ERIC abstract:* This report describes the characteristics and outcomes of students who delay enrollment in postsecondary education. It covers the ways in which the demographic, enrollment, and attendance patterns of students who delay postsecondary enrollment differ from their peers who enroll immediately after high school graduation. In addition, the report discusses how students who delay a shorter amount of time differ from those who delay longer. It is based on data from the 2000 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:2000), the 2000 follow-up of the National Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88/2000), and the 2001 follow-up of the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:96/01). Delayed entrants began their postsecondary education at a significant disadvantage compared to those who enrolled immediately after high school with regard to family income, parental education, academic preparation, time spent working while enrolled, and course of study. While only a quarter of those who delayed entry first enrolled in bachelor's degree programs, over half of those who enrolled immediately did so. Further, 40 percent of delayed entrants earned some kind of postsecondary credential compared with 58 percent of immediate entrants.

Hyslop, A. (2008). *Ensure portability and transferability of credits and skills attained. Techniques: Connecting Education and Careers*, 83(2), 41–43. Available from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ785393>.

*From the ERIC abstract:* The fourth recommendation in ACTE's postsecondary reform position statement is to ensure portability and transferability of credits and skills attained. All postsecondary learning has value that should be recognized. Students' progress toward completion of postsecondary credentials can be improved with clear, consistent policies that ensure full transfer and articulation of postsecondary learning. Successful strategies include common course-numbering systems, articulation agreements, and the transcription of credit for postsecondary career and technical education (CTE) certificate programs that are currently non-credit. Postsecondary education, including CTE, would benefit tremendously if states adopted systems to assess, measure, and document the educational progress of learners in ways that are clear and meaningful to students as well as to their employers. Transferability of credits and skills attained through postsecondary education calls for a re-examination of the ways that learning at the postsecondary level is measured and transcribed. Measuring competencies rather than seat time, or offering postsecondary credit for prior work experience, would enable documentation for what students can do and the skills they have attained. This article is part of a year-long series that closely examines the recommendations made in ACTE's postsecondary reform position statement and highlights best practices for implementing each of the recommendations.

Mullin, C. M., & Phillippe, K. (2013, January). *Community college contributions (policy brief 2013-01PB)*. Washington, DC: American Association of Community Colleges. Available from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED557992>.

*From the ERIC abstract:* America's community colleges are the brokers of opportunity for a stronger middle class and more prosperous nation. The value of community colleges has repeatedly been detailed in broad brushstrokes. While these broad-brush pictures of the community college contribution are important, the community college is an intricate institution offering pathways to credentials, degrees, and retraining opportunities for those with and without college credentials; they operate as engines of economic development. To date, the multifunctional nature of the community college mission has limited our ability to understand community colleges' role in sustaining the nation's general welfare. This brief provides a better opportunity to understand community colleges' role, and frames private and public economic returns of the community college movement in three ways: (1) Community college as a launching pad--community colleges serve as a starting point for students in terms of educational progression; (2) Community college as a (re)launching pad--community colleges serve as providers of knowledge and skills to members of the community when they need them, and in ways that they need them, often for those who have already been successful in college; and (3) Community college as a local commitment--community colleges serve local purposes, focusing on the needs and demands of the communities they serve. [Contains notes. The following are appended: (1) Student Labor Market Experiences for Certificate Completers, by Initial Institution Type; and (2) Student Labor Market Experiences for Associate Degree Completers, by Initial Institution Type.]

## **Methods**

### **Keywords and Search Strings**

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

- "community college" AND "workforce" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "community college" AND "workforce" AND "Pacific" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "community college" AND "leave work" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "pathways to college" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "work to school" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "work to college" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "work before college" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "gap" AND "college enrollment" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "older college applicants" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "work" AND "leave work" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "adult education" AND "Pacific" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "work experience" AND "college" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"

- "delayed enrollment" AND "college" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"

### **Databases and Resources**

ERIC, EBSCO Host, ProQuest Education Journals, Google/Google Scholar

### **Reference Search and Selection Criteria**

REL Pacific searched ERIC and other academic journal databases for studies that were published in English-language peer-reviewed research journals within the last 20 years. REL Pacific prioritized documents that are accessible online and publicly available, and prioritized references that provide practical information based on peer-reviewed research for the teachers and leaders who requested this Ask A REL.<sup>1</sup> Resources included in this document—including URLs, descriptions, and content—were last accessed in December 2017.

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<sup>1</sup> This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by educational stakeholders in the Pacific Region (American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Hawai'i, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL Pacific) at McREL International. This memorandum was prepared by REL Pacific under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-IES-17-C-0010, administered by McREL International. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.