

# REL Southwest Study: *College Enrollment and Completion Among High School Graduates With Disabilities*

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# Motivation for the study

**There is limited information about the experiences and outcomes of students with disabilities attending college.**

For example:

- Most Texas colleges have an office to support students with disabilities, but students must self-report their disability to receive services.
- Existing research on college enrollment and outcomes of students with disabilities draws primarily on surveys with voluntary responses and often with a small sample size.

# Purpose of the study

**Inform policies and research about how to serve postsecondary students with a disability in Texas and across the country**



# Research questions

1. What percentages of high school graduates with a disability *enrolled in a Texas two-year or four-year college within two years of graduation?*
2. What percentages of high school graduates with a disability who initially *enrolled in a Texas two-year college attained a credential or transferred to a four-year college within four years of enrollment?*
3. What percentages of high school graduates with a disability who initially *enrolled in a Texas two-year or four-year college attained a baccalaureate degree within seven years of enrollment?*

# Study approach

## Data

*Administrative records from:*

- Texas Education Agency (TEA).
- Texas Higher Education Board (THECB).

## Population

*Cohorts of students who graduated from a Texas public high school in one of four years:*

- 2006/07.
- 2007/08.
- 2008/09.
- 2009/10.

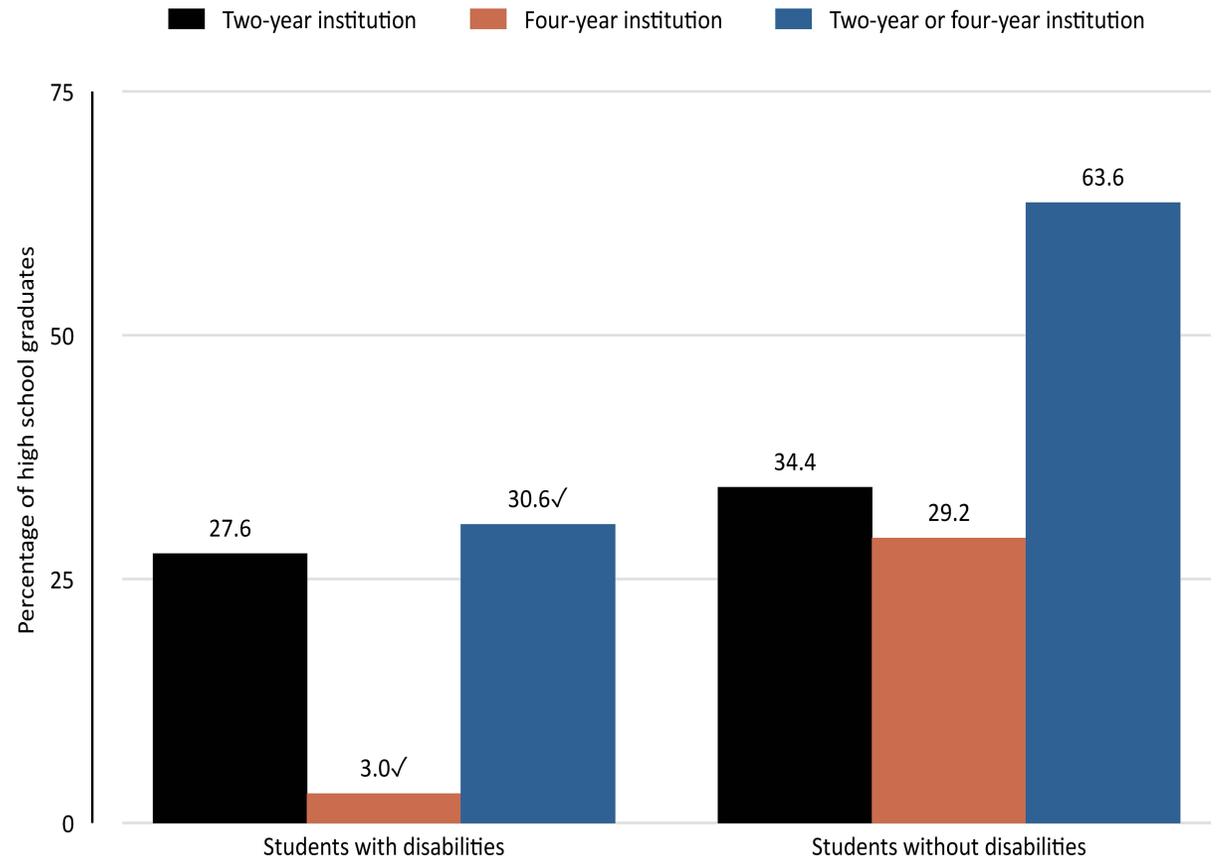
## Methods

*Tracked graduates from each cohort for up to eight years, and used descriptive statistics to characterize their college enrollment and completion patterns overall and by:*

- Disability status.
- Disability type.
- Student demographic characteristics.

# Findings: College enrollment

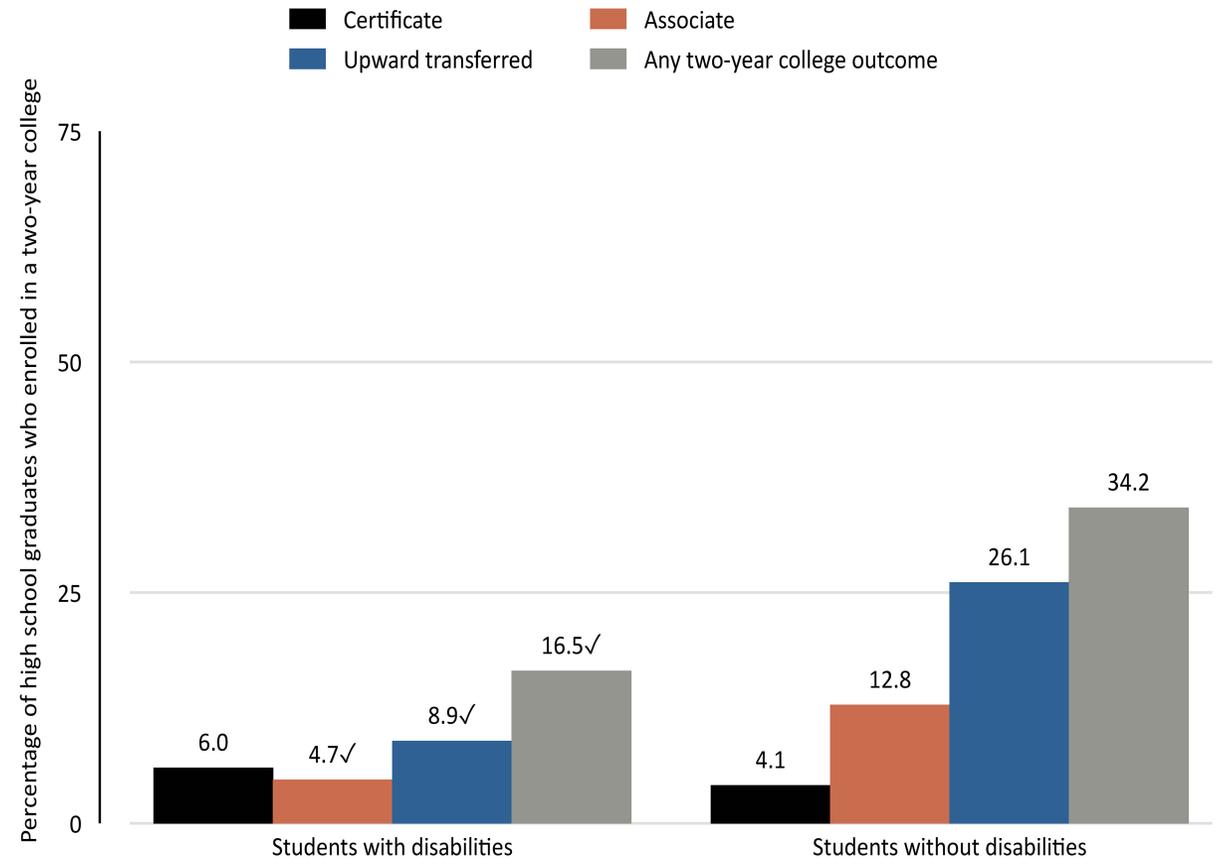
- College enrollment was substantially lower for high school graduates with a disability than for graduates without a disability.
- Among high school graduates with a disability, fewer than one of three enrolled in a Texas college within two years of graduation, and of those who did, 90 percent enrolled in a two-year college.



# Findings: Degree or credential attainment within four years of enrollment at a two-year college

*Most high school graduates with a disability enrolled in a Texas two-year college did not attain a credential or degree within four years.*

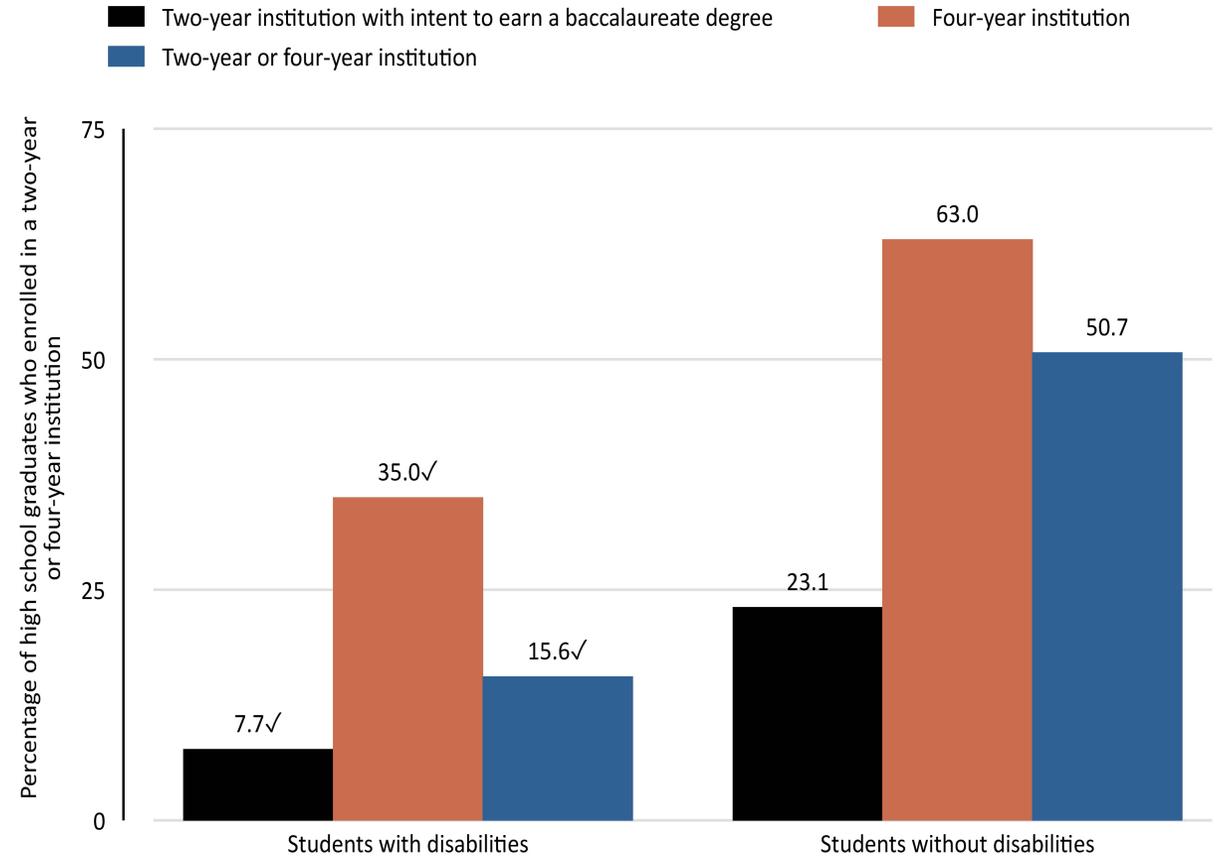
- **Attainment of a certificate** was similar for graduates with a disability and graduates without a disability.
- **Upward transfer** and attainment of an **associate degree** were substantially lower for graduates with a disability.
- The percentage of graduates who attained **any of the two-year-college outcomes** was substantially lower for those with a disability.



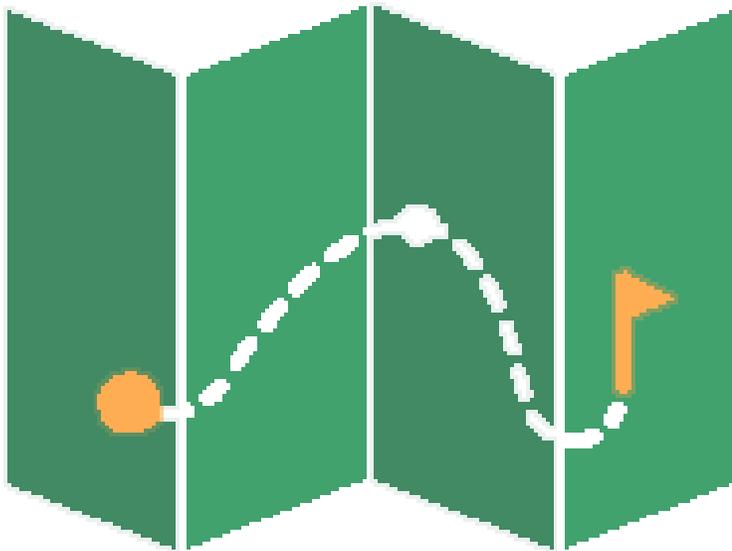
# Findings: Four-year degree attainment among students enrolled at a four- or two-year college

*Most high school graduates with a disability did not attain a baccalaureate degree within seven years.*

- Attainment of a baccalaureate degree was higher for the 3,176 graduates with a disability **who initially enrolled in a four-year college** than for the 7,787 graduates who initially enrolled **in a two-year college**.
- Attainment of a baccalaureate degree within seven years was substantially lower for high school graduates with a disability overall and for those who initially **enrolled in a two-year college or a four-year college**.



# Findings: College enrollment and degree attainment varied by demographics



- **Eligibility for the national school lunch program.** College enrollment and degree attainment were substantially lower for high school graduates with a disability who were eligible vs. ineligible for the program.
- **Race/ethnicity.** College enrollment and degree attainment were substantially lower for Black and Hispanic high school graduates with a disability vs. White graduates with a disability.
- **Disability type.** College enrollment and degree attainment were generally higher for high school graduates with auditory, speech, visual, orthopedic, and other health impairments.

# Study findings can inform efforts to increase college enrollment and completion

1. Targeted solutions for challenges faced by students with a disability in the higher education pipeline.
2. Strategies for preparing students with a disability for college, including identifying, selecting, and applying for postsecondary programs.
3. Additional research and guidance on ways to encourage students with a disability to seek supports and accommodations, as well as on the kinds of supports and accommodations that can help them succeed in college.



# Contact

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# Question-and-answer session

