

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.

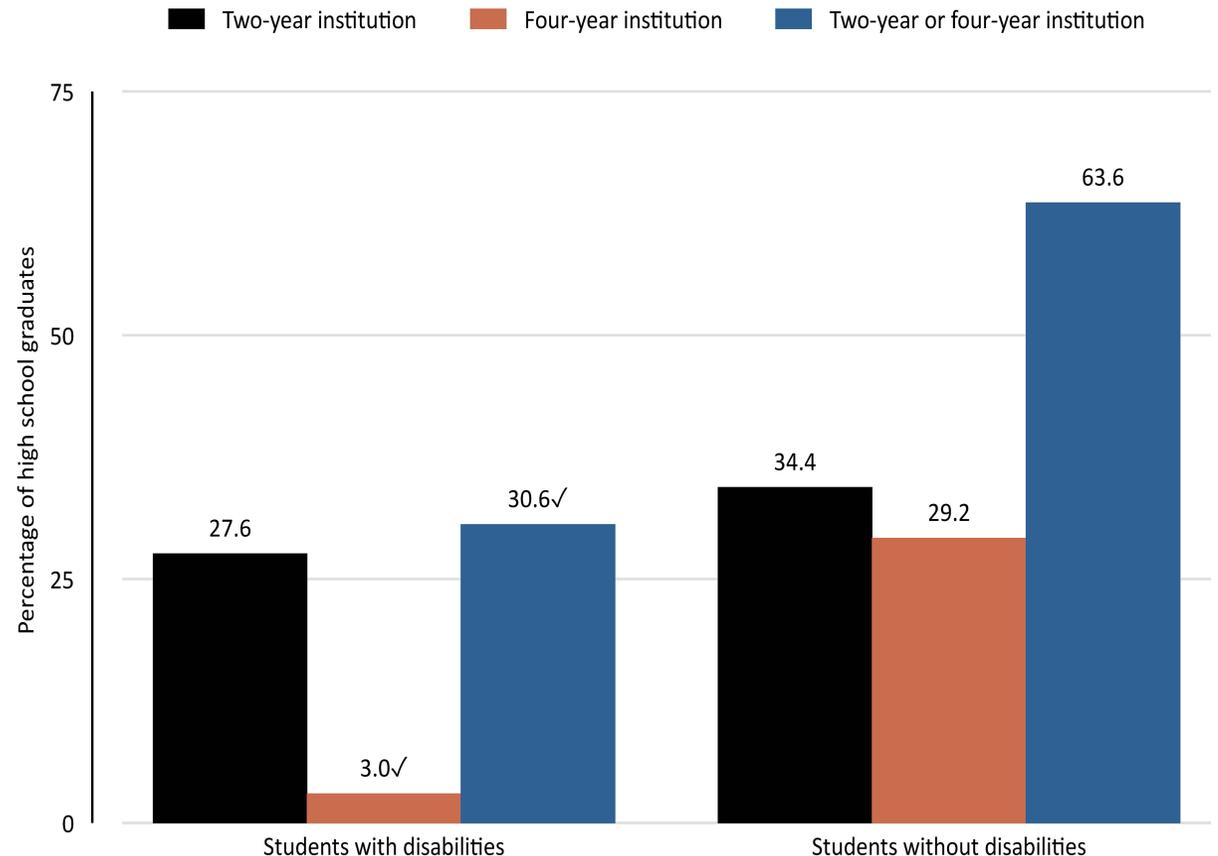
Methods

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

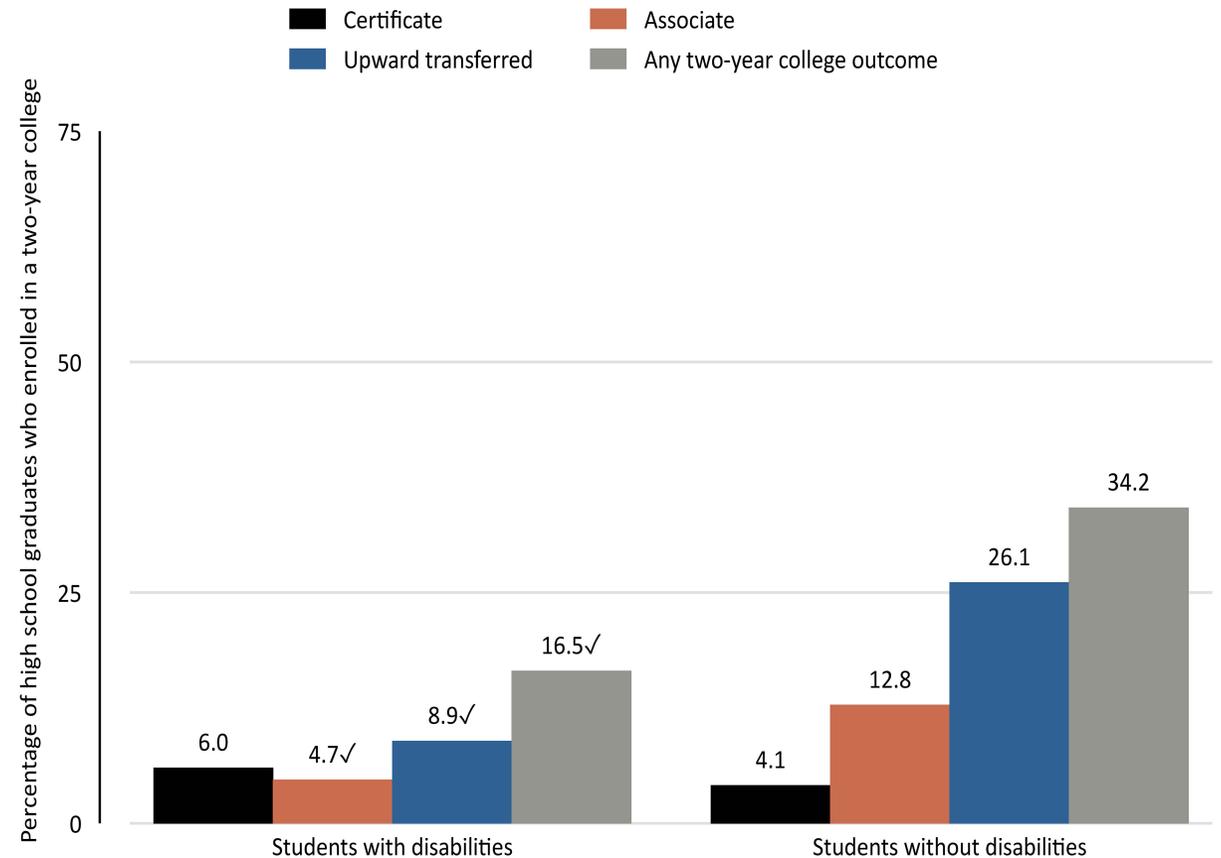
- College enrollment was substantially lower for high school graduates with a disability than for graduates without a disability.
- Among high school graduates with a disability, fewer than one of three enrolled in a Texas college within two years of graduation, and of those who did, 90 percent enrolled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

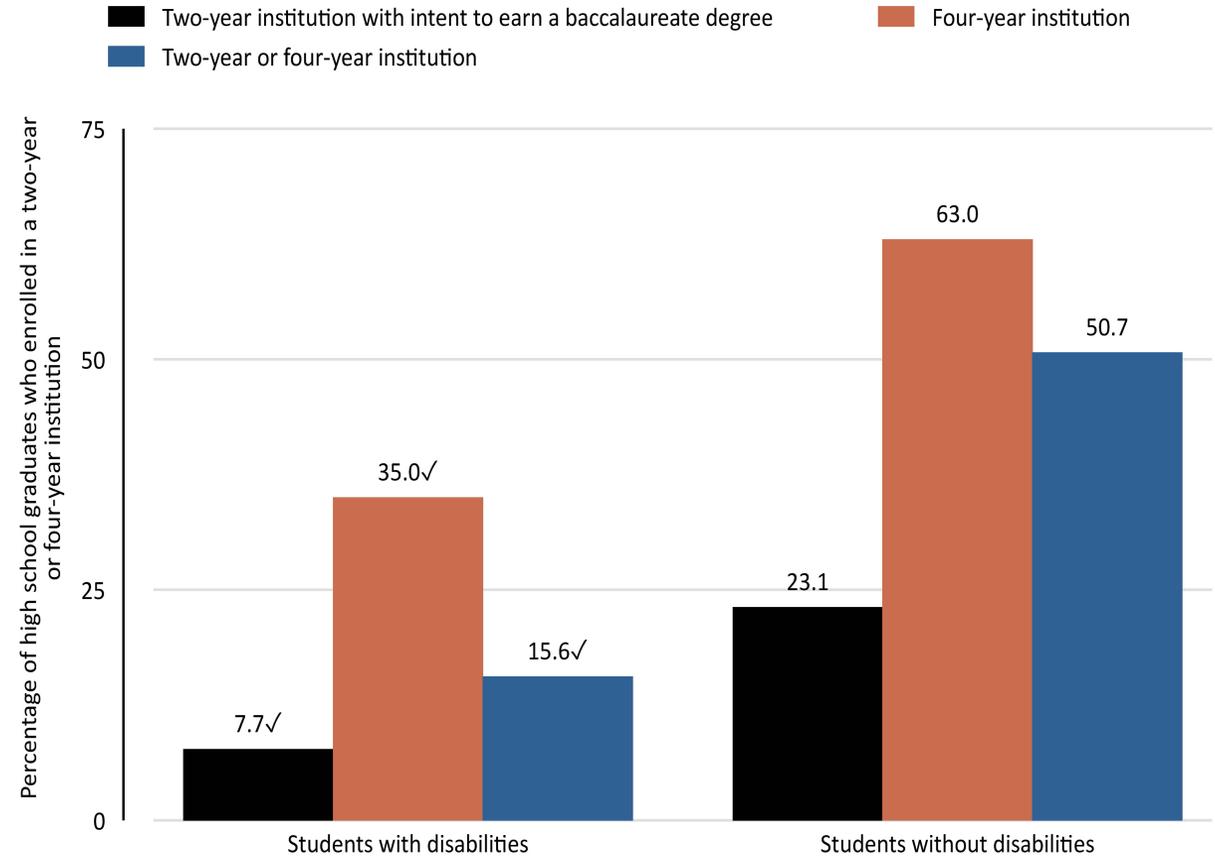
- **Attainment of a certificate** was similar for graduates with a disability and graduates without a disability.
- **Upward transfer** and attainment of an **associate degree** were substantially lower for graduates with a disability.
- The percentage of graduates who attained **any of the two-year-college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



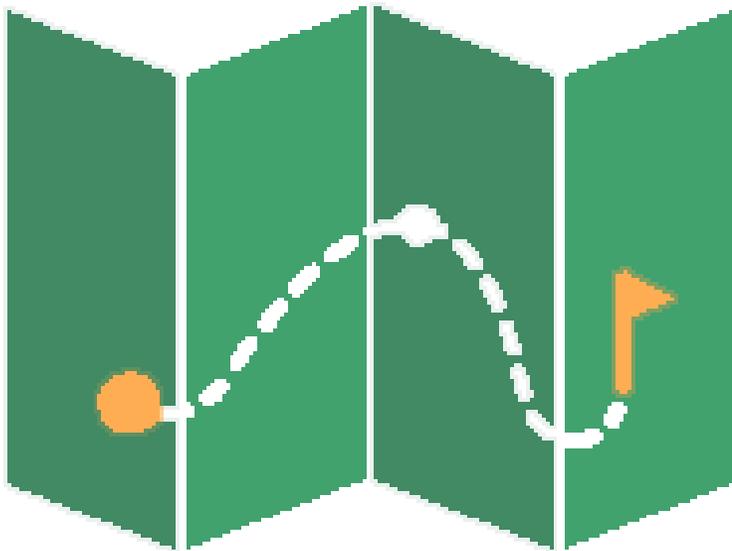
Findings: Four-year degree attainment among students enrolled at a four- or two-year college

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.



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Question-and-answer session

