

Guidelines for Examination of Disaggregated Student Outcomes Data

Our mission is justice, and justice means equity for our students. As we begin to consider inequity in student outcomes, it is important to acknowledge the context in which we do this work. We are an HSI and MSI. Most of the students we serve are Black and Brown. When we see a racial gap, it's not a number. It's our students. Our students are bright, capable, and motivated. They, like us, are living with the legacy of racism and white supremacy that defines the history of our nation, our state, and our city. Many of our students live in formerly redlined neighborhoods that public officials ignored for generations; that lack of investment has had lasting effects educationally and otherwise. The opportunity before us is to examine our curricula, our pedagogies, and our practices. Are we inadvertently supporting a legacy of inequity or are we actively working to correct it?

In 2021, the college adopted the [Seven Principles for a Culturally Responsive, Inclusive, and Anti-Racist Curriculum](#). That document acknowledges this legacy and calls on us to “tear down those beliefs and structures” and work to “achieve equity and inclusion in [the] learning experiences” of our students. The Seven Principles provide a framework for how we examine our curricula, pedagogies, and students’ experiences to inform efforts to counteract the institutional racism and structural inequities that effect John Jay College. The Seven Principles provide a framework for moving our curriculum towards practices proven to help students succeed. Examining gaps in student performance between race and ethnic groups is one indication of which courses, curricula are not effectively serving all John Jay students.

We have worked towards understanding student outcomes data for several months. In December 2023, Program Coordinators were introduced to the data disaggregated by race. In that meeting, coordinators looked at and discussed undergraduate outcomes at the institutional level. That group returned to this discussion in February 2024, looking at disaggregated completion rates for specific courses. The consideration of disaggregated data is an exciting development at the college. These examinations give us the ability to more fully realize our justice mission as a Hispanic and Minority Serving Institution.

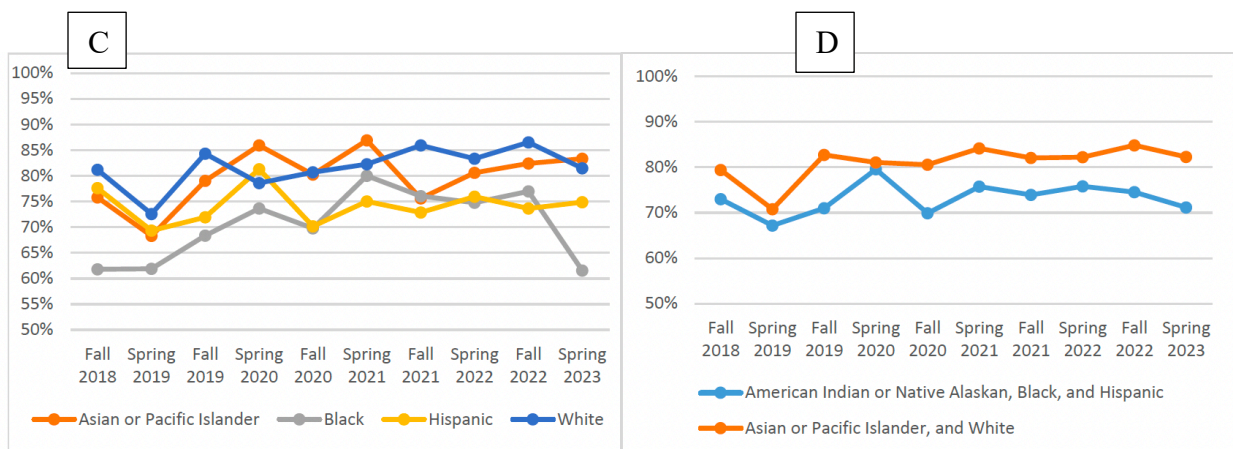
The college seeks to foster thoughtful conversations about and around these data. The goal of these conversations and the actions that flow from them should always be creating the conditions under which our students can succeed, regardless of their demographic characteristics. The existence of race gaps in student outcomes is evidence of inequity. Presenting departments and programs with these data is meant to spur the conversations about how to best address these gaps specifically and student success generally.

Understanding the Data

We are looking at outcomes by race and it is important that we are clear about how race is measured. We measure race the way that CUNY measures it. It is imperfect. We need, however, to be aware of and respond to the same data for which CUNY holds us accountable.

CUNY assigns a race category to every enrolled student. Information on race comes from a variety of sources, including applications and official high school records. CUNY takes all of this information, plus other demographic data, and imputes race for each student. Students are assigned to one of five categories: American Indian/Native Alaskan, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic, or White. CUNY does not include a category for other. CUNY does not account for the possibility of multiracial identification. Again, imperfect. Despite this, we should not let issues about measurement prevent us from having conversations about student outcomes. Even with an imperfect measure, consistently finding that students identified as Hispanic pass a given course at a lower rate than students assigned to other categories of race is evidence of a racial gap that we need to address.

The outcomes we are starting with is successful course completion. We define successful completion as earning a C- or better, essentially the opposite of DFWI. Below is an annotated example of the tables and figures you will receive. These data are outcomes for all sections of a course between fall 2018 and spring 2023.



Course Completion Gap	Fall 2018	Spring 2019	Fall 2019	Spring 2020	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Fall 2022	Spring 2023
	Asian or Pacific Islander	-4%	-2%	-4%	5%	0%	3%	-6%	-2%	-2%
Black	-18%	-9%	-14%	-7%	-11%	-4%	-6%	-7%	-8%	-21%
Hispanic	-2%	-1%	-11%	0%	-10%	-9%	-9%	-6%	-11%	-7%
White	2%	2%	2%	-2%	0%	-2%	4%	1%	2%	-1%
Overall Course Completion Rate	76%	68%	75%	80%	75%	79%	77%	78%	79%	75%
Overall Headcount	703	591	711	598	592	554	634	448	724	541
Asian or Pacific Islander	95	82	81	71	91	84	86	67	125	60
Black	123	118	120	91	96	95	146	99	139	91
Hispanic	299	277	317	294	228	248	258	183	277	203
White	186	113	191	140	176	124	142	96	178	81

A. This table provides the raw number of students who enrolled in the course. Overall headcount is the total number of students. That is followed by the number of students in

each category of race. For example, of the 591 students who took this course in spring 2019, 277 were Hispanic.

- B. This table is the “Course Completion Gap.” At the bottom is the percentage of students who successfully completed the course (received a C- or better). The course completion gap is the difference between the completion rate of students in a particular race and the overall completion rate.

For example, in spring 2019, 68% of all students passed with a C- or better. The gap for Black students was -9 points, meaning the completion rate for Black students was 9 points lower than the overall rate. While the completion rate for students in each race category is not presented, we know it is roughly 59% (68 minus 9). You can see the completion rate for each category of race in C.

- C. This is the figure that shows the completion rate over time for each category of race.
- D. This figure presents the completion rate gap between students in an “underrepresented minority” category and those who are identified as Asian/Pacific Islander or White. In the PMP, CUNY includes goals for gaps between groups they define as underrepresented minorities and other students. We include presentation of those gaps in these data.

General Guidance

1. Completion rates are a statistic. What matters is learning.

Like most statistics, completion rates or DFWI rates are an indicator. They are measures of an outcome. We give them a definition—the percentage of students earning a C- or better. The solutions are not in how to raise the rates, but in how to support students in their learning. Learning is a cumulative process. The skills and knowledge gained in one course should provide students the tools to succeed in the next course. By the same token, inequity in one course will produce inequity in other courses.

We produced data for a set of courses that include the highest enrolled General Education offerings and the courses identified by departments as key courses. Focusing efforts on these courses first provides an opportunity to make improvements on the core learning experiences in your programs and improve the ways the General Education curriculum prepares all students for upper-level coursework. Improving equity in these courses creates the foundation for improving equity across the curriculum.

2. Aim for thoughtful, productive conversations.

Again, the goal is to create a learning environment in which race, or other demographic characteristics, does not affect student success. This is not to say that race doesn't affect

learning. It does. Our charge is to make sure that students of all races are equally able to learn in our courses. Achieving this takes **everyone**. Everyone who teaches. Everyone who supports students in and out of the classroom. Everyone who schedules sections. Everyone who supports the faculty who teach the classes and the faculty and staff who support the students.

Race gaps can and should provoke a range of negative reactions. Let those fuel our motivation to create change. And let's all help everyone see their role in making change happen. We hope these conversations will focus on questions about the strategies faculty can use to create conditions for equitable learning experiences. Some guiding questions are included below.

3. Gaps, where they exist, can have several causes. Explore all of them.

A first step in understanding the causes of race gaps might be to identify the parts of the learning experience in our direct control. These include the curriculum, course readings, activities, lectures, and discussion prompts. The [Seven Principles](#) provide excellent suggestions in the central elements for moving our courses and curriculum towards cultural responsiveness, inclusivity, and anti-racism. Part of this lies in developing more equitable learning environments that productively address differences by demographics and educational histories. This can be done through adjustments to pedagogy and teaching strategies, classroom set-up, or subject matter and assignments.

You may also want to look at the relationship in outcomes between courses in your program. Some gaps are the result of learning differences in prerequisite courses. Questions about what is happening in a course and how learning in one course transfers to others can all be answered through assessment. Exploring race gaps in student outcomes should be built into our assessment plans and conducted with intention because assessing equity gaps in student learning means assessing student learning.

4. Like results of student learning assessment, these data should not be used to single out faculty.

The existence of a race gap does not mean that the faculty teaching those courses are racist. The existence of a race gap should not be mentioned in observations, evaluations, or other documents that become part of a faculty member's personnel file.

We are just beginning these explorations. As noted above, race gaps will result from several factors. We should not hold anyone accountable for a problem we have not studied. We are all responsible, however, for implementing possible solutions.

5. Context matters and these data reflect the complexity of our institution and our students' lives.

It can be very easy to take figures like these and turn them into sensational headlines. It is easy to look at a graph with a 10-point gap between “underrepresented minorities” and other students and conclude we are racist. By the same token, it is easy to look at a gap in the other direction, with White and Asian students underperforming compared to their Black and Hispanic peers, and conclude that wokeness has run amok. Both reactions are wrong and will do little more than drive people into their partisan-ideological camps. Whatever we find, let’s talk about it thoughtfully and with an eye towards the goal: creating the conditions under which students can succeed regardless of race or other demographics.

6. Ask questions.

Responding to these data will be neither quick nor simple. Part of the challenge, which we addressed in the introductory paragraph, is that we are working to undo the inequity our students faced in their education up to this point. As a statistic, a completion rate gap will not point its finger at the thing in a course that help improve the outcomes. A lot of this work will take trial and error. Trying different things in our courses, assessing their effects, and responding to those observations.

We provide these data to spur the conversations that will give all of us a better understanding of the state of our courses and the curriculum. To begin these conversations, we suggest that you and your colleagues investigate the following:

- **How do students demonstrate learning in this course?**
- **What knowledge or skills are most crucial for students to succeed in this course?**
- **What (if any) teaching strategies are used consistently in the course and what assignments are students asked to complete?**

We fully expect that your investigation of these questions will lead to more questions. Ask them. If there are different data you and your colleagues need to better understand what you are seeing, we will help you find it. If the answers lie in different ways of assessing the student experience, we are happy to help you think through how those assessments could be conducted.