

Texas Higher Education Opportunity Project

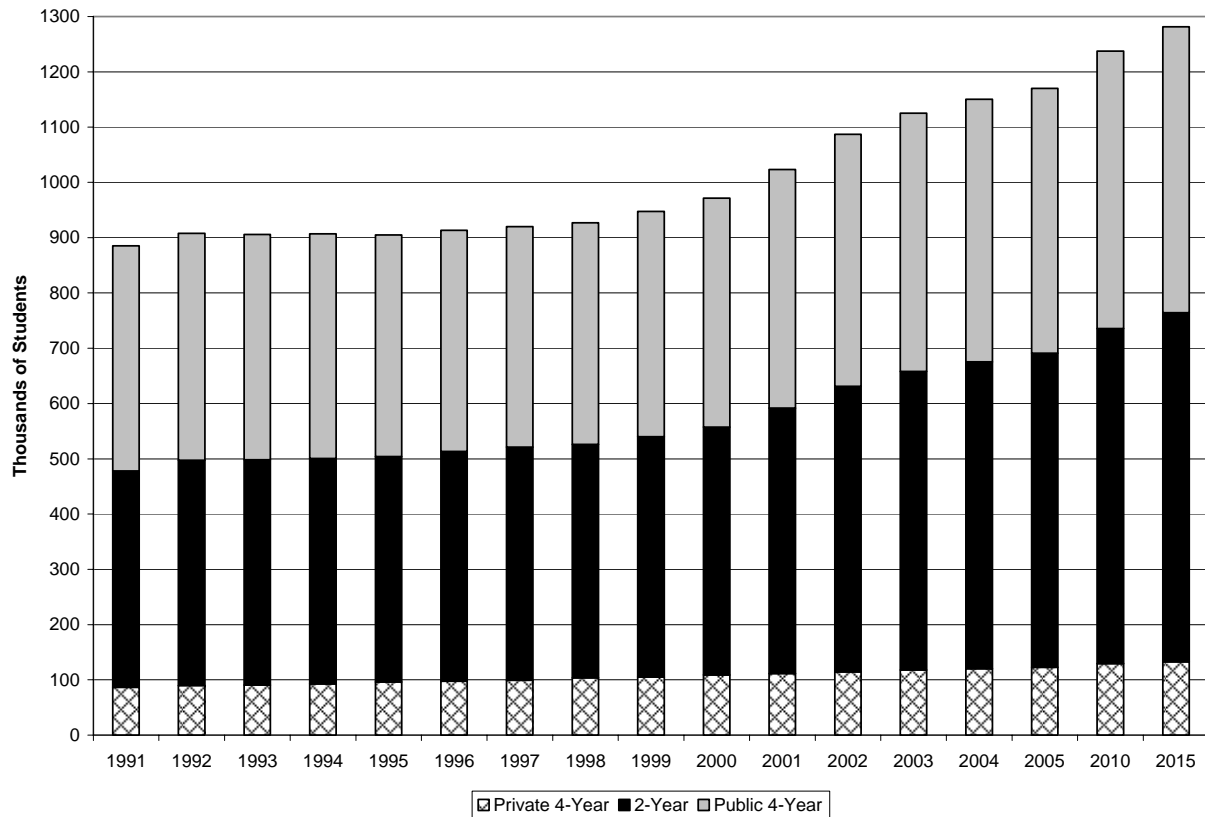
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Overview

The Texas Higher Education Opportunity Project (THEOP) is a multi-year study that investigates college planning and enrollment behavior under a policy that guarantees admission to any Texas public college or university to high school seniors who graduate in the top decile of their class. The study collected administrative data on applications, admissions and enrollment from 12 colleges and universities in the state that differ in the selectivity of their admissions, and conducted a two-cohort longitudinal survey of sophomores and seniors who were enrolled in Texas public schools as of spring, 2002. As of February 2005, the senior and sophomore wave 1 public-use datasets are available through the OPR data archive at <http://opr.princeton.edu/archive>. For more information about THEOP, please visit the project website at <http://theop.princeton.edu>

Texas Higher Education Enrollment Trends and Projections By Institution Type, 1991-2015



Although college enrollment has increased steadily since 1991, it did not keep pace with the potential demand. Between 1991 and 2004 enrollment in Texas post-secondary institutions rose only 30 percent. The share of total enrollment at Texas 2-year public community and technical colleges rose from 44 to 48 percent, while the enrollment share of public, 4-year institutions fell five percentage points, from 46 to 41 percent. The number of Texas public high school graduates rose 48 percent over the same period, producing a “college squeeze” which was intensified because of the slow growth in enrollment slots at 4-year institutions. The guarantee of automatic admission coupled with uneven expansion of public, private, two- and four-year institutions heightened competition for admission to the most selective institutions, but did not cause the “squeeze.”

THEOP Data

Administrative Data

The 12 public and private Texas post-secondary institutions represent a range of admissions selectivity including the public flagships (UT-Austin and Texas A&M), several public teaching campuses (UT-Arlington, UT-Pan Am, UT-San Antonio, Texas Tech, Southwest Texas State, and Texas A&M at Kingsville), and the most competitive private institutions (Rice, SMU, TCU, and Trinity). Most institutions provided data for an 8-10 year period that spans the two admissions regimes we will compare.

Survey Data

Two-Cohort Longitudinal Design				
	2002	2003	2004	2005
Senior Cohort	Wave 1 N=13,803	Wave 2 N=5,800		Wave 3 N=5,800
Sophomore Cohort	Wave 1 N=19,969		Wave 2 N=3,000 2,000 Stayers 1,000 Movers	

The statewide surveys of seniors and sophomores are based on a stratified random sample of 105 high schools. The baseline survey (wave 1) queried students about their course taking and grades, experiences with guidance counselors, knowledge and perceptions of college admissions process, college perceptions, future plans and demographic information, including race and ethnic origin, family background, and household structure. Seniors (but not sophomores) were asked a battery of questions about colleges applied to, their self-reported admission status, and plans to attend college. The follow-up senior cohort survey, completed during the fall of 2003, ascertained the primary post-secondary school activity chosen including college attended (type and selectivity), military enlistment, labor force participation, etc.

Sample Characteristics

Demographic Composition of the Baseline Samples and the 2002 Texas Public School Population (in percent)				
	THEOP Samples		2002 Texas Public Schools	
	Sophomores	Seniors	Sophomores	Seniors
% Female	52	52	49	50
% White	49	51	46	50
% Black	12	10	14	13
% Hispanic	34	33	37	33
% Asian	4	4	3	4
% Other	2	2	0	0
Sources: Sample: THEOP Wave 1 Senior and Sophomore Surveys Texas: TEA, <i>Enrollment in Texas Public Schools, 2001-02</i>				

Not only does Texas have the second largest Hispanic population in the nation, but high levels of immigration combined with high immigrant fertility portend continued Hispanic population growth for decades to come. Using statewide public high school data as a benchmark, the THEOP baseline survey sample is statistically representative of the state population of seniors and sophomores enrolled in public high schools as of spring, 2002. Approximately one-half of seniors are white and one-in-three are Hispanic. Reflecting the impact of immigration, roughly two out of five students surveyed report the use of a second language at home. Differences between the sophomore and senior cohorts reflect the relatively high drop out rates of Blacks, Hispanics, and the foreign-born. A sub-sample of the sophomore cohort is being re-interviewed, including 2,000 students who did not change schools and 1,000 who either changed schools or withdrew from school altogether. Comparisons of the baseline senior and follow-up sophomore cohorts will permit us to determine whether and how college choices changed, and also to evaluate the nature and extent of high school attrition.

Papers/Publications

Forthcoming

Tienda, Marta and Sunny Niu. forthcoming. "Capitalizing on Segregation, Pretending Neutrality: College Admissions and the Texas Top 10% Law." *American Law and Economics Review*.

Niu, Sunny; Marta Tienda; and Kalena Cortes. forthcoming. "College Selectivity and the Texas Top 10% Law: How Constrained are the Options?" *Economics of Education Review*.

Kleykamp, Meredith A. forthcoming. "Military Enlistment Decision Making Among Youth: The Influence of Educational Goals, Military Institutional Presence and Family Background." *Social Science Quarterly*.

Tienda, Marta and Sunny Niu. forthcoming. "Flagships, Feeders, and the Texas Top 10% Plan." *Journal of Higher Education*.

Working Papers

Tienda, Marta; Kalena Cortes; and Sunny Niu. 2003. "College Attendance and the Texas Top 10 Percent Law: Permanent Contagion or Transitory Promise?" Paper presented at the Conference on Expanding Opportunity in Higher Education, Sponsored by the Harvard Civil Rights Project, Sacramento, CA, October 23-25, 2003.

Frost, Michelle Bellessa. 2004. "High School Students' Educational Expectations and Race: How Does Racial Composition Matter?" Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation Chapter, OPR, Princeton University.

Opinion-Editorials

Tienda, Marta. 2004. "Focus on Higher Education upgrades in Texas; Get past debate over top 10% law, make plan better." *The Houston Chronicle*. Op-Ed Section, July 18.

Tienda, Marta and Sunny Niu. 2004. "Texas' 10-Percent Plan: the Truth Behind Numbers." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 50(20): B10.

Tienda, Marta. 2003. "Texas' Top 10 Percent Policy Hurts Minorities' Chances for College." *Detroit Free Press*, March 26.