



**Reports: Nationwide, large-scale studies find new evidence on how schools are closing outcome gaps**

*Tyton Partners publishes three reports highlighting how higher education institutions struggle to support students in the post-pandemic era and what is working to close equity gaps*

July 12, 2022 – BOSTON, MA - [Tyton Partners](#) today published three reports which highlight how the higher education system misses the mark for students, especially those from historically under-represented groups and those with financial needs. Especially for Black, Latino, and Indigenous students and students with financial needs, the college experience continues to be a challenging one. Thanks to the participation of 7,400 faculty and administrators at more than 1,500 different institutions, these three reports, [Driving Toward a Degree](#), [Hitting Their Stride](#), and [Time for Class](#), identify where in the student journey obstacles remain.

- **Nearly 1/3 of faculty report an increase in introductory course-level withdrawals or failures compared to last year.** When combined with the enrollment declines at the undergraduate level over the last 2 years and even greater declines for Black, Latino, and Indigenous students and students with financial needs, the US higher education system is on the cusp of erasing the modest educational attainment gains that have been achieved across the last decade.
- **Academic advisors and administrators report, for the third year in a row, that large student caseloads are the biggest barrier to improving student success.** Practices that have been proven to improve persistence—like mandatory advising sessions each year—cannot be implemented at scale due in part to unmanageable caseloads at many institutions.
- **Faculty and administrators report, for the third year in a row, that only about 1/3 of institutions have implemented developmental education reforms at scale.** While progress has been made in dismantling biased placement policies and in offering co-requisite math and English courses that are credit-bearing, some of the problematic vestiges of developmental education still remain.

While the macro picture is not good, there are pockets of progress illuminated in part by a novel technique that Tyton and its collaborators developed for measuring graduation rate gaps disaggregated by race and income-levels. *Driving Toward a Degree* studies the systems, practices, sentiments, and technology that enable student support, especially academic advising. *Hitting Their Stride* measures the adoption and current state of classroom implementation of key developmental education reforms. *Time for Class* examines the interplay of evidence-based teaching practice, digital learning products, and faculty attitudes in service of improving the student learning experience and introductory-level course outcomes. In each study, we have highlighted specific opportunities and challenges for closing equity gaps at the intersection of attitudes, practice, products, institutional infrastructure, and policy. For example:

- **Integrated, high-quality advising enabled by technology closes equity gaps.** According to *Driving Toward a Degree*, institutions that have narrowed graduation gaps over the last decade



for Black, Latino, and Indigenous students and students with financial needs are statistically unique in two ways: 1) at 2-year institutions advisor caseloads are smaller than peer institutions whose graduation gap widened and, 2) larger institutions are statistically more likely to have adopted caseload management technology and other integrative initiatives at scale than institutions who saw their outcome gaps widen over the same time period.

- **Measuring results disaggregated by race, socioeconomic status, and other factors promotes continuous improvement and scaling of practices that in turn closes equity gaps.** According to *Hitting Their Stride*, institutions that have narrowed graduation gaps over the last decade for Black, Latino, and Indigenous students and students with financial needs are those that have gone beyond adoption of new developmental education policies; institutions that have narrowed these graduation gaps are statistically more likely to have practiced regular measurement of their reform effort and are transparent about results and ongoing refinement with institutional stakeholders.
- **Blended modes of instruction enabled by courseware save faculty time and correlate with the adoption of evidence-based teaching practices that close equity gaps.** According to *Time for Class*, faculty who use courseware to blend online and face-to-face modalities of instruction save time and are statistically more likely to implement active learning, meta-cognition, and data-informed teaching.

The implications for the field from these findings are far-reaching. Institutions should be more motivated than ever to ensure students persist and graduate, and these studies offer specific actions to improve the student experience. Policy makers and researchers need to ensure that progress toward closing equity gaps is not eroded by creating the environment for scaled and sustainable implementation. Suppliers can identify opportunities to better support end users with target services and training.

This research was conducted in coordination with [Strong Start to Finish](#), the [Every Learner Everywhere](#) Network, and the [Advising Success Network](#), organizations focused on reducing race and income as predictors of postsecondary success. More than 7,400 respondents at over 1,500 higher education institutions addressed issues of perceived prioritization, definition of equity at their institution, and perception that their area of focus has played a role in systemic racism. The research was made possible by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The findings and conclusions contained within are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the foundation.

About Tyton Partners

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