

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL  
EFFECTIVENESS & STUDENT SUCCESS

# SPOTLIGHT

CHARTING STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH DATA & RESEARCH

# ACHIEVEMENT GAPS: EQUITY, ACCESS, & SUCCESS



What is an  
ACHIEVEMENT  
GAP?



Who are  
UNDERREPRESENTED  
STUDENTS?



How can  
NOVA help  
EVERY  
STUDENT  
SUCCEED?

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**NOVA**  
Northern Virginia  
Community College

# A COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

## HELPING EVERY STUDENT SUCCEED

The term “achievement gap” refers to “any significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of students.”<sup>1</sup> Community colleges nationwide serve a diverse population, including many students from historically underrepresented groups. These students face a multitude of challenges that can directly impact access and success in college. As a result, community colleges continue to observe alarming achievement gaps among various student groups. Therefore, Achieving the Dream (ATD) has encouraged member colleges to put equity at the forefront of completion efforts.<sup>2</sup>

The first years of college are critical for student success. Indeed, students who gain momentum early are more likely to achieve their long-term goals, such as graduating with an associate degree or transferring to a four-year institution.<sup>3</sup> An evaluation of first term, first year, and second year success outcomes—collectively referred to as early momentum metrics—can help NOVA identify where achievement gaps occur during the critical first terms of college. In doing so, NOVA will be better positioned to create policies and initiatives that address equity from the very beginning of a student’s academic career, which can improve their opportunity for long-term success at NOVA and beyond.

## NATIONWIDE NUMBERS



**40%**

of associate degrees were earned by students of color.<sup>4</sup>

**32%**

of bachelor’s degrees were earned by students of color.<sup>4</sup>



**39%**

of all community college students graduated within six years.<sup>5</sup>



**36%**

of Hispanic community college students graduated within six years.<sup>5</sup>



**28%**

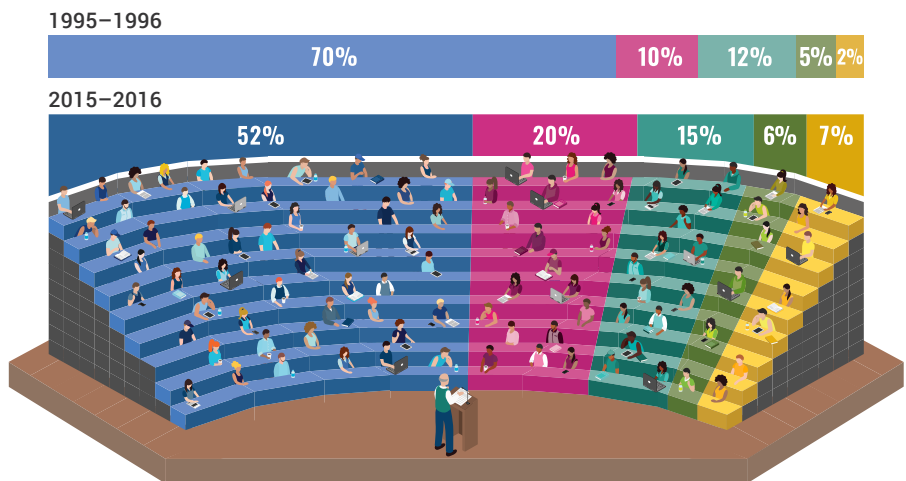
of black community college students graduated within six years.<sup>5</sup>

## STUDENT ACCESS VS. STUDENT SUCCESS

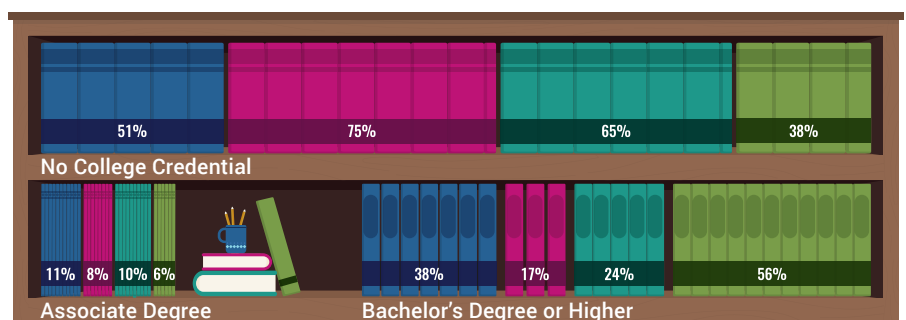
In recent years, students of color have become an increasingly larger proportion of all students enrolled in college. However, many minority students are still less likely than their peers to reach graduation. This means that colleges are doing a better job of improving student access, but there remains a need for a renewed focus on student success efforts.<sup>4</sup>

■ White
 ■ Hispanic/Latino
 ■ Black/African American
 ■ Asian
 ■ Other

### STUDENT ACCESS



### STUDENT SUCCESS



<sup>1</sup> (2013). *Achievement Gap*. The Glossary of Education Reform.

<sup>2</sup> Achieving the Dream Equity Statement.

<sup>3</sup> Jenkins, D. and Thomas, B. (2017). *Early Momentum Metrics: Why They Matter for College Improvement*. CCRC Research Brief Number 65. Community College Research Center.

<sup>4</sup> Espinosa, L.L., Turk, J.M., & Chessman, H.M. (2019). *Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report*. American Council on Education.

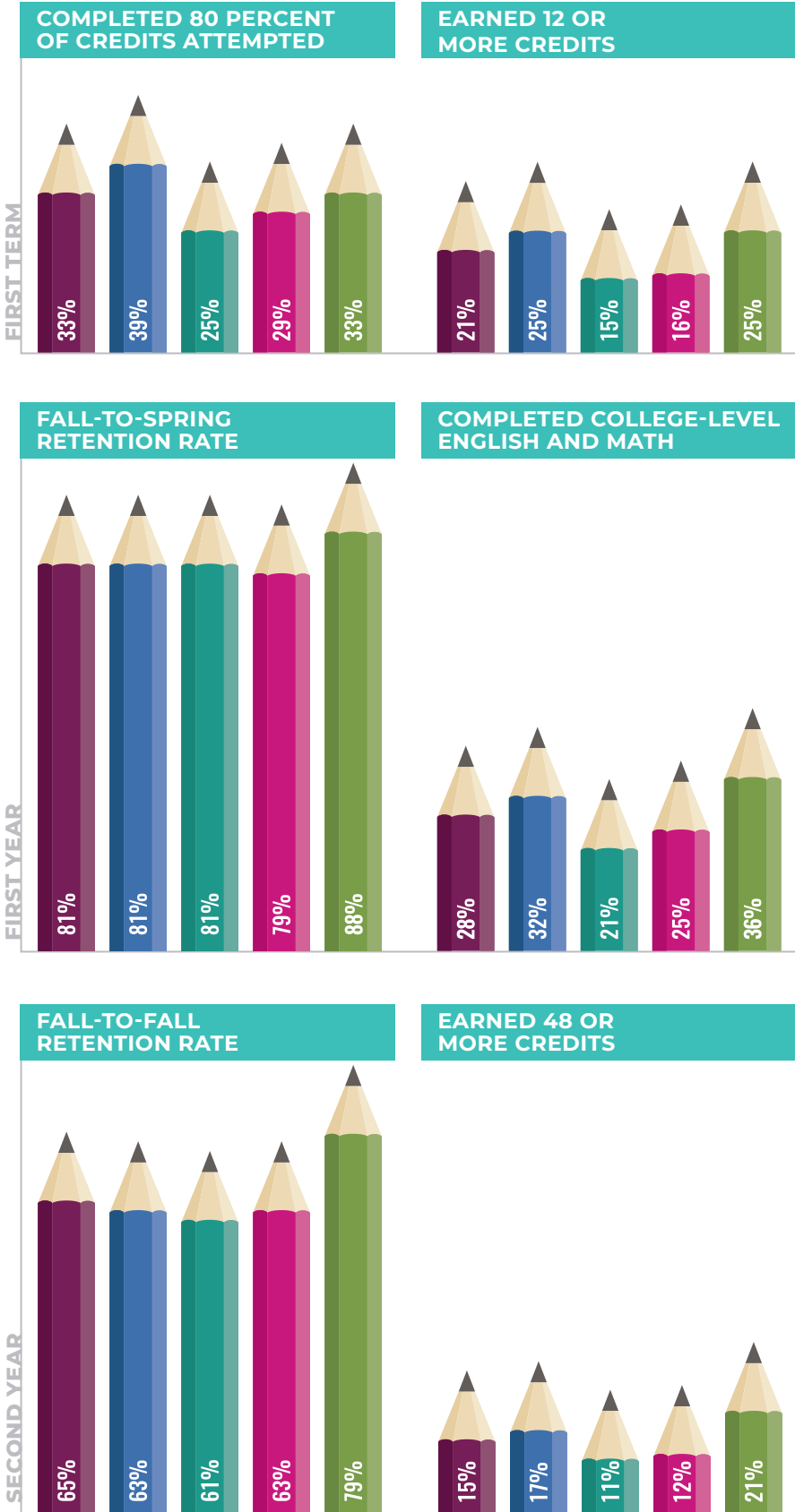
<sup>5</sup> Shapiro, D., Dunder, A., Huie, F., Wakhungu, P.K., Bhimdiwala, A. & Wilson, S.E. (2018). *Completing College: A National View of Student Completion Rates – Fall 2012 Cohort*. Signature Report No. 16. National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

<sup>6</sup> (2019). *NOVA Equity Scorecard*. NOVA Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success, Northern Virginia Community College.

# NOVA'S EQUITY SCORECARD

NOVA's Equity Scorecard provides data regarding how various subgroups, such as students of color, perform on early momentum metrics. A selection of these metrics shows emerging achievement gaps among some students at NOVA. Notably, Hispanic and African American students lag behind their peers when it comes to critical metrics of early success in college.<sup>6</sup>

■ All Students 
 ■ White 
 ■ Black/African American 
 ■ Hispanic/Latino 
 ■ Asian



# BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

NOVA serves many different historically underrepresented student populations. Each of the groups listed below face unique challenges to achieving their academic goals. Investing in programs and initiatives that address the barriers to success faced by these groups can improve equity, access, and success in college.<sup>2</sup>



FIRST GENERATION



LOW-INCOME STUDENTS



ADULT STUDENTS



MARGINALIZED ORIENTATIONS



ENGLISH LEARNERS



UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS



STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES



VETERANS



FOSTER CARE YOUTH



STUDENTS WITH CHILDREN



PART-TIME STUDENTS



FORMERLY AND CURRENTLY INCARCERATED

# LEARN MORE

## RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF

NOVA is deeply committed to the values of access, opportunity, student success, and excellence. In particular, the College aims to provide students with access to high-quality, post-secondary education in the Northern Virginia region, as well as to promote success by preparing students to graduate, transfer, and enter the workforce with improved educational and labor market skills.

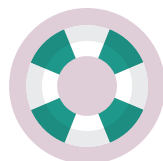
Student equity is at the forefront of programs and initiatives at NOVA. NOVA provides a variety of services to help every student succeed, many of which may be particularly helpful to students from historically underrepresented populations.



### FINANCIAL STABILITY PROGRAM

The **Financial Stability Program (FSP)** provides personalized wrap-around services to help students build strong financial foundations that can lead to family-sustaining careers. FSP helps students find income and work support when life gets complicated and connects them to financial services to prepare for the future.

Learn more about the Financial Stability Program and find available resources at: <https://blogs.nvcc.edu/wssn>



### EMERGENCY GRANTS

The **Student Emergency Grant** program provides one-time financial support to students experiencing an enrollment-threatening financial emergency, such as job loss, homelessness, medical or dental emergencies, theft, or loss of child care.

Find the application and more information about eligibility at: <https://blogs.nvcc.edu/wssn/student-emergency-grant>



### SINGLE STOP

**Single Stop**, an initiative within NOVA's Financial Stability Program, provides coordinated access to resources in the community that can help students find financial assistance in the form of childcare services, healthcare coverage, temporary cash assistance, financial counseling, food assistance, and more.

Learn more about Single Stop and find available resources at: <https://nvcc.singlestoptechnologies.com>



### FOOD PANTRIES

NOVA operates a **Food Pantry** on each campus. Pantries are operated by volunteers and are open during normal business hours (8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.). Students, faculty, and staff can volunteer their time or donate food to help stock NOVA's pantries.

Learn more and find locations at: <https://blogs.nvcc.edu/wssn/resources-services/food-pantries>

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