

OUTCOMES ONE YEAR LATER: AN UPDATE ON THE CLASS OF 2006

**A Research Report of the
Central Texas Student Futures Project**

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Chapter I. Introduction

The Central Texas Student Futures Project is a research partnership of the Ray Marshall Center, Skillpoint Alliance and several Central Texas independent school districts (ISDs).¹ The project follows the progress of Central Texas high school seniors as they make the critical transition from high school to postsecondary education and the labor market.

Student Futures Project Overview

The project relies on a combination of student surveys and linked administrative records to improve feedback and policy and program alignment for Central Texas ISDs, that prepare students for the demands of adulthood and for success in the workplace. The purpose is two-fold:

- To provide Central Texas school districts, postsecondary institutions and employers with comprehensive, longitudinal research on what local high school students are doing after high school, why they are making these decisions and how a variety of educational, personal and financial factors are related to their success in higher education and the workforce; and
- To foster best practices through workshops, seminars and applied research, assisting the region's ISDs, Education Service Center and postsecondary institutions to increase the number of regional youth who obtain postsecondary education and workforce credentials.

To determine both what students plan to do after high school and key influences on these outcomes, the Student Futures Project surveys students in the spring prior to graduation and links survey data to information from prior high school records and up to four years of postsecondary enrollment and employment records. Statistical analysis of the resulting data identifies those background factors and educational practices that are associated with positive education and labor force outcomes. Findings are shared annually with local educators and business leaders committed to improving education and supporting local initiatives.

¹ The Central Texas Student Futures Project was previously named the Central Texas High School Graduate Data Center.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide the analysis of the Student Futures Project:

1. Which students are participating in postsecondary education and why?
2. Which students are going to work and why?
3. Which students are both working and participating in postsecondary education?

This is the second of four annual outcomes reports on 2006 graduates from four Central Texas school districts. The first report on postsecondary outcomes for Central Texas students, *Education and Work After High School: A First Look at the Class of 2006*, was published in November 2007 (King et. al, 2007).

This report measures both initial outcomes for all 2006 graduates — as opposed to all seniors in the earlier reports — and persistence in postsecondary education and employment through December 2007. It also measures longitudinal earnings over the same period. By design, the research questions addressed for each graduating class become more sophisticated as additional years of postsecondary education and employment data become available and possible combinations of post-high school activities grow more complex.

Data Sources

Table 1 identifies the data sources used to construct the research dataset described in this report and briefly describes each source.

Table 1. Sources of Data Used to Construct Research Dataset

Type of Data	Data Source	Description
Historical High School Records	All participating ISDs	Demographic and program information for all 2006 graduates
Postsecondary Education Enrollment	National Student Clearinghouse	Directory information for students enrolled in postsecondary education from September 2006 – December 2007 at colleges throughout the U.S.
	University of Texas and University of North Texas	Directory information for students enrolled from September 2006 – December 2007 (UT and UNT are not included in NSC database)
Employment and Earnings	Texas Workforce Commission	Unemployment Insurance quarterly wage records for employment within Texas from the fourth quarter of 2006 through the fourth quarter of 2007

Research Methods and Data Limitations

The research questions were analyzed by computing the numbers and shares of those students in the research samples who enrolled in postsecondary education in Texas and other states, were employed in Texas, or were both enrolled and employed through the time period examined. Earnings represent the sum of individual earnings by quarter.

Researchers addressed the most important data limitations from the Class of 2006 *First Look* report for this year's analysis, e.g., using graduates rather than seniors. Remaining data issues include the absence of some Texas postsecondary institutions from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) database and an inability to measure out-of-state employment or employment not covered by the Texas Workforce Commission's Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records.²

Organization of the Report

This chapter provides the project overview, research questions and research methods. Chapter II presents initial outcomes for 2006 graduates in four districts after incorporating a large number of data set improvements. It also adds postsecondary education enrollment and employment data through December 2007 for those graduates. Chapter III summarizes the results from the research. The appendix contains a technical description of all research data sets.

² A complete list of non-participating Texas colleges and universities is provided in the technical Appendix. In Texas, more than 95 percent of wage and salary employment is covered by UI. Gaps in coverage exist for those who are self-employed, including independent contractors, as well as employees of religious organizations, railroads, small farms and the military.

Chapter II. Education and Employment Outcomes for the Class of 2006

As described in Chapter I, several actions increased the amount of information available for the Class of 2006. The most significant change allowed seniors and graduates to be distinguished, thus changing some of the results presented in the *First Look* report. This chapter discusses postsecondary outcomes for all graduates and major subgroups of 2006 Central Texas graduates. It begins with a discussion of which graduates were enrolled at any time. It offers comparisons among graduates who were continuously enrolled and presents findings on graduates who persisted in enrolling beyond the first year after high school graduation. The chapter then examines similar outcomes for employment. Finally, trends in students' decisions to both enroll and be employed are examined, including an analysis of differences in median earnings for subgroups of graduates.

Characteristics of 2006 Graduates

Table 2 details the characteristics of the 2006 Central Texas graduates. Overall, 6,863 graduates from the four participating districts are included in the research sample; 51% are White, 30% are Hispanic, 12% are Black and the remaining graduates are Asian or are of unknown race/ethnicity. Equal shares of male and female graduates are represented, and one-fourth of the graduates live in a low-income family. Additionally, 10% of graduates were classified as Special Education.

Table 2. Characteristics of 2006 Central Texas Graduates

	2006 Graduates
N	6,863
Ethnicity	
Asian	6%
Black	12%
Hispanic	30%
White	51%
Unknown	1%
Gender	
Female	50%
Male	49%
Unknown	0%
Family Income Status	
Low-income	25%
Not low-income	74%
Unknown	1%
Special Education Status	
Special Education	10%
Not Special Education	90%
Unknown	0%
District	
Austin ISD	52%
Pflugerville ISD	14%
Manor ISD	2%
Round Rock ISD	31%

Source: Student Futures Project calculations

Note: Some calculations may not total 100% due to rounding.

Postsecondary Enrollment Outcomes

Using longitudinal data, a number of statistics can be reported. This section first details the shares of graduates ever enrolled and enrolled in each of the time periods examined, both for the entire sample and subgroups of interest.³ That information is then compared to the share of graduates who were continuously enrolled, defined as graduates enrolled during Fall 2006, Spring 2007 *and* Fall 2007. Finally, persistence, defined as

³ Summer enrollment was not examined. Only the Fall 2006, Spring 2007 and Fall 2007 semesters/quarters were considered.

enrollment in either the Fall 2006 and/or Spring 2007, followed by enrollment in the Fall 2007, is examined for all graduates.

Although 66% of 2006 graduates enrolled in some postsecondary education by Fall 2007, this does not mean that two-thirds of these graduates were enrolled during each of the academic terms following high school graduation. Fifty-seven percent of graduates enrolled directly after graduation in Fall 2006, and a slightly larger share of graduates (58%) attended during Spring 2007. Enrollment dipped slightly (55%) in Fall 2007. For comparison purposes, 66% of 2006 graduates nationwide enrolled in postsecondary education in Fall 2006 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). Larger shares of Asian and White graduates in Central Texas enrolled during any academic period compared to Black and Hispanic graduates. Female graduates, graduates not from a low-income family, and graduates not classified as Special Education enrolled at higher rates during each period compared to their counterparts.

While nearly equal shares of graduates ever enrolled in either a 2-year or a 4-year institution from Fall 2006 through Fall 2007 (36% and 38% respectively), a larger share of graduates enrolled at 4-year institutions during any one academic period (Figure 1). A larger share of graduates also enrolled at in-state institutions during every semester examined.

Figure 1. Percent Enrolled by Type of Institution

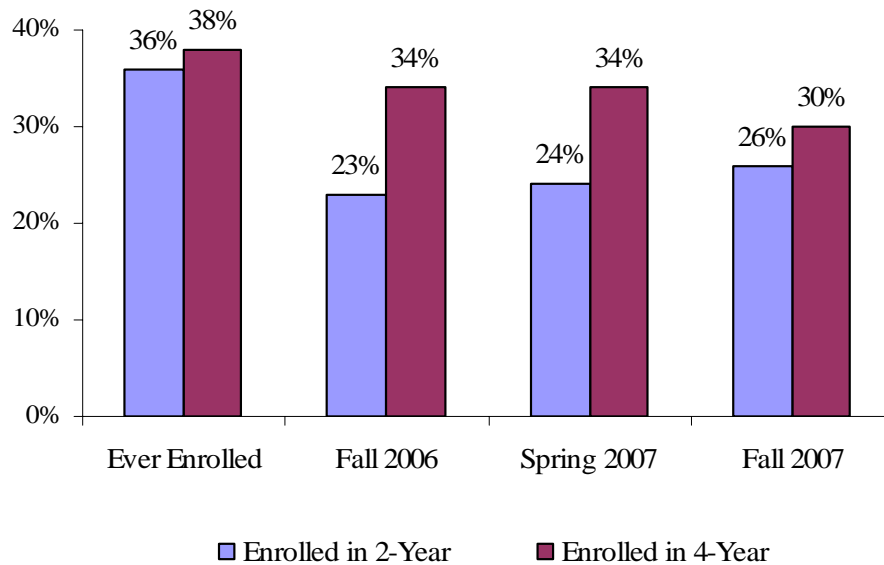


Table 3 further examines these enrollment trends by comparing shares of graduates who were ever enrolled at some point before December 2007 to those graduates who were continuously enrolled in Fall 2006, Spring 2007 and Fall 2007.⁴ Larger shares of Asian and White graduates were both ever enrolled and continuously enrolled than Black and Hispanic graduates. Larger shares of graduates from a non low-income family were also both ever enrolled and continuously enrolled compared to low-income graduates. Finally, larger shares of graduates not classified as Special Education were both ever enrolled and continuously enrolled compared to Special Education graduates.

Table 3. Ever Enrolled vs. Continuously Enrolled by Selected Demographics

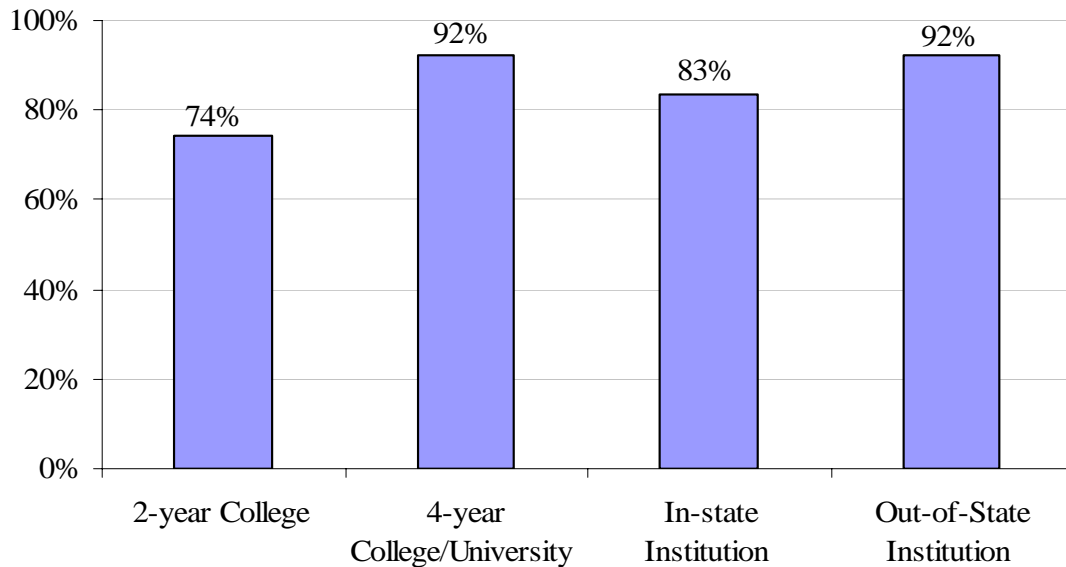
	Ever Enrolled	Continuously Enrolled
Overall (N = 6,863)	66%	49%
Ethnicity		
Asian	71%	53%
Black	62%	42%
Hispanic	52%	36%
White	74%	58%
Gender		
Female	68%	52%
Male	63%	46%
Family Income Status		
Low-income	48%	30%
Not low-income	72%	56%
Special Education Status		
Special Education	40%	22%
Not Special Education	69%	55%
Enrollment Status		
Enrolled 2-year	36%	15%
Enrolled 4-year	38%	26%
Enrollment Location		
Enrolled Out-of-state	7%	6%
Enrolled In State	59%	43%

Source: Student Futures Project calculations

⁴ To be counted as “continuously enrolled,” graduates had to have been enrolled during all three academic periods.

Finally, persistence was examined for all graduates. Looking at graduates who enrolled during the first year after graduation (Fall 2006 and/or Spring 2007), researchers examined the share of graduates that persisted in college through Fall 2007.⁵ Overall, 4,184 graduates enrolled in the year after graduation and 3,532 graduates persisted to the Fall 2007 semester, resulting in an overall persistence rate of 84%. National studies show that persistence from the freshman to sophomore year has decreased since 1983 (Seidman, 2005). In 2004, the national rate for freshman to sophomore persistence at a 4-year institution was approximately 74% and the 2-year persistence rate was approximately 55% (Seidman, 2005). The 2006 Central Texas graduates fared better for both types of institutions (Figure 2). Persistence rates were higher for 4-year and out-of-state institutions when compared to 2-year and in-state institutions, but all rates were higher than the national comparison rates.

Figure 2. Persistence by Type and Location of Institution



Previous research indicates that approximately 40% of all students attend more than one institution (Choy, 2002); the sample of persisters was examined for consistency. When

⁵ Persistence is different than continuously enrolled in that it takes into account that graduates may have not enrolled for the first time until Spring 2006. This measure is often used in literature to allow for a more informed measure of persistence beyond the first year after high school graduation.

looking at only this sample of persisters (n = 3,532), 79% enrolled at the same school they originally attended, and the remainder enrolled in a different school (Table 4). Further examination revealed that a majority of persisters stayed at the same school regardless of the type and/or location of the institution originally attended.

Table 4. Fall 2007 Enrollment by Type and Location of Institution

All Persisters (N = 3,532)	100%
Stayed at same institution	79%
Changed institutions	21%
All 2-year Persisters (N = 1,341)	100%
Stayed at same institution	82%
Changed to a different 2-year	6%
Changed to a 4-year	12%
All 4-year persisters (N = 2,191)	100%
Stayed at same institution	77%
Changed to a different 4-year	6%
Changed to a 2-year	16%
All in-state persisters (N = 3,094)	100%
Stayed at same institution	79%
Changed to a different in-state	21%
Changed to an out-of-state	0%
All out-of-state persisters (N = 438)	100%
Stayed at same institution	81%
Changed to a different out-of-state	19%
Changed to an in-state	0%

Source: Student Futures Project calculations

Note: Some calculations may not total 100% due to rounding.

Postsecondary Employment Outcomes

Employment outcomes were also examined for the Class of 2006 graduates using Texas quarterly UI wage data.⁶ First, the share of graduates *ever* employed over all of the time periods is examined, followed by the share of graduates continuously employed over all the time periods.⁷ Overall, 73% of all graduates were employed in Texas during at least one of the five quarters studied through December 2007. Demographic differences varied

⁶ Out-of-state employment was not measured in this analysis.

⁷ This section focuses solely on employment outcomes regardless of enrollment status. Any employed graduate may or may not have also been enrolled in a postsecondary institution.

somewhat from the patterns seen in enrollment outcomes (Table 5). Larger shares of Black and Hispanic graduates were continuously employed through December 2007 compared to Asian and White graduates. However, when examining the share of graduates that had *ever* been employed during this time period, a smaller share of Hispanic graduates (69%) than White graduates (75%) had ever been employed. Black graduates had the largest share ever employed (81%), whereas only half of Asian graduates were ever employed. Employment rates for all demographic groups increased in each quarter of the post-graduation period.

Table 5. Employment Outcomes for Class of 2006 through Fall 2007

	Ever Employed	Continuously Employed
Overall (N = 6,863)	73%	32%
Ethnicity		
Asian	51%	16%
Black	81%	36%
Hispanic	69%	37%
White	75%	30%
Gender		
Female	74%	33%
Male	71%	31%
Family Income Status		
Low-income	68%	35%
Not low-income	74%	31%
Special Education Status		
Special Education	73%	36%
Not Special Education	73%	32%

Source: Student Futures Project calculations

Employment and Enrollment Activities

Table 6 compares all of the combined enrollment and employment outcomes for 2006 Central Texas graduates. Few major changes were seen from the initial outcomes examined in Fall 2006. A larger share of 2006 graduates was both enrolled and employed in Fall 2007 than in Fall 2006 (27% vs. 23%), and fewer were enrolled and not employed from Fall 2006 to Fall 2007.

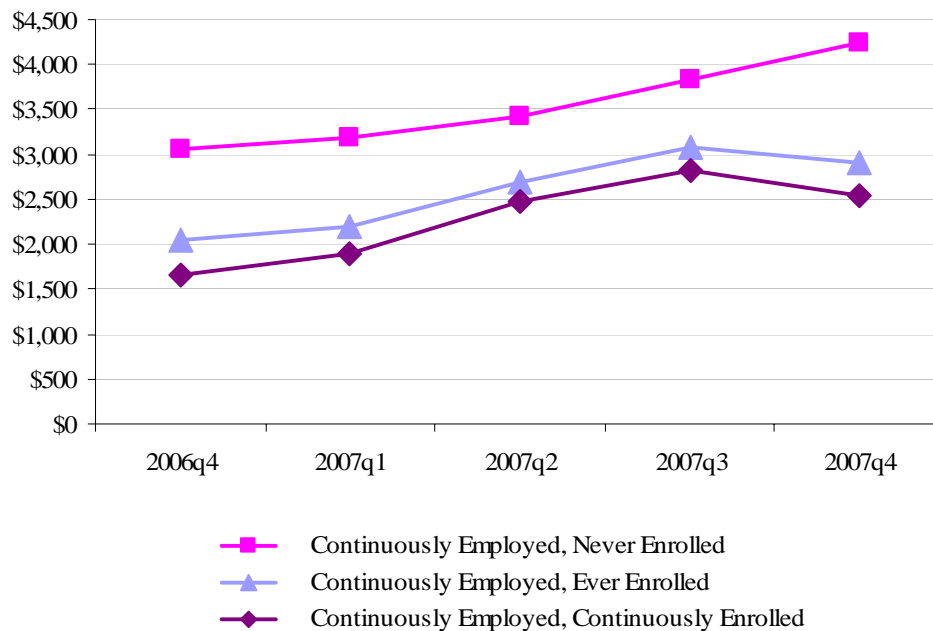
Table 6. Postsecondary Outcomes for 2006 Graduates

Overall (N = 6,863)	Fall 2006	Fall 2007
Enrolled & Employed	23%	27%
Enrolled, not Employed	24%	18%
Enrolled, Employment Unknown	10%	10%
Employed, not Enrolled	22%	25%
Not Employed, not Enrolled	13%	12%
Employment Unknown, not Enrolled	8%	7%

Source: Student Futures Project calculations

Figure 3 shows the earnings trends among different subgroups of graduates. Looking across each subgroup, graduates who were continuously employed and never enrolled had the highest median earnings across the entire time period studied. In the fourth quarter of 2007, earnings of those graduates were nearly double those who were continuously employed and also continuously enrolled. It should be noted, however, that the highest median earnings reported for any of these subgroups are less than \$17,000 annually, the equivalent of working full-time, full-year at a wage of just over \$8 per hour. For comparison purposes, an individual working full-time, for a full year at the federal minimum wage (\$5.85/hour) would have earned \$11,934 in 2007, in addition, the "hiring wage" for Austin was \$9.79/hour (Austin Living Wage Coalition, 2000).

Figure 3. Median Earnings over Time



Chapter III. Summary

This is the second of four reports to examine postsecondary education and employment outcomes for the Class of 2006 graduates in Central Texas. It examines initial outcomes for 2006 graduates in four districts after incorporating a series of data set improvements. It also adds postsecondary education enrollment and employment data through December 2007 for those graduates. This section summarizes the latest analysis of postsecondary education and employment outcomes for the 2006 graduates.

The 2006 graduates included in the research sample had many options regarding both postsecondary enrollment and employment following high school graduation. While a majority of graduates (66%) enrolled in a postsecondary institution at some time through Fall 2007, only half (49%) were continuously enrolled from Fall 2006 through Fall 2007. These enrollment patterns varied widely among different subgroups of the population, as did the types and locations of the institution the graduates chose to attend. Of those graduates that did enroll during the first year after high school graduation, 84% persisted and enrolled in Fall 2007. Graduates attending a 4-year college/university exhibited a persistence rate of 92%, whereas the 2-year persistence rate was 74%; both of these rates are higher than national averages. Over three fourths of all persisters chose to stay at the same institution at which they initially enrolled regardless of type and/or location.

Nearly three-fourths of graduates (73%) were employed in Texas in at least one of the five quarters from Fall 2006 through Fall 2007. Employment rates increased for all subgroups over the post-graduation period, but employment patterns differed from enrollment patterns for subgroups of graduates.

When examining enrollment/employment combinations, little changed from Fall 2006 to Fall 2007. Earnings, however, did change over time among subgroups of graduates. Those graduates continuously employed but never enrolled exhibited median earnings nearly twice those of graduates continuously employed and continuously enrolled in the last quarter of 2007. However for graduates who were continuously employed but never enrolled, quarterly earnings were still relatively low, equal to an annualized rate of less than \$17,000.

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Technical Appendix

This technical appendix provides additional information on the datasets used in this report and any associated limitations.

Description of Data Sources

Historical School Records. Researchers obtained historical school records on graduates from each district. In the state of Texas, districts are required to report specific student-, school- and district-level information to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). Graduates are classified by districts to TEA through PEIMS records in the spring following graduation.

Postsecondary Education and Employment Outcomes. Outcomes data for the class of 2006 were collected through December 2007. Future reports will extend the time period for which outcomes are measured for these graduates.

National Student Clearinghouse: National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data is based on college directory information from over 3,000 participating colleges nationwide and includes information on student dates of enrollment, location, name and type of institution and whether any degrees and/or honors were awarded. For Manor, Pflugerville and Round Rock ISDs, RMC researchers submitted student directory information to NSC to obtain relevant postsecondary enrollment records. Austin ISD currently works separately with the NSC to obtain this information for their students and provided this information to RMC researchers based on the current Data Sharing Agreement.

University of Texas at Austin and the University of North Texas: Not all postsecondary institutions in the state of Texas are included in the NSC data, the largest of which are The University of Texas at Austin (UT) and The University of North Texas (UNT). For all students not found in NSC data, researchers used directory information provided by the registrars at UT and UNT to locate additional graduates. Researchers also worked with staff from the Austin ISD Department of Program Evaluation using the same process to locate their graduates in the UT and UNT databases.

Texas Workforce Commission: For this report, RMC researchers used UI data through the 4th calendar quarter of 2007 to measure employment following high school graduation.

Dataset Limitations

Postsecondary Enrollment: As detailed earlier, not all postsecondary institutions are included in the NSC database. A complete list of Texas institutions not included in NSC is

presented below in Table A-1, along with the approximate number of students enrolled in each institution as reported by the NSC in April 2008.

Table A-1: Texas Postsecondary Education Institutions not Included in NSC Data

School Name	Approximate Enrollment Size
University of Texas at Austin	50,000
University of North Texas	30,000
South Texas College	17,000
Laredo Community College	9,000
Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi	8,000
Lee College	6,000
Angelina College	5,000
Texarkana College	4,000
Paris Junior College	4,000
Alvin Community College	4,000
University of Dallas	3,000
Texas Wesleyan University	3,000
Northeast Texas Community College	2,000
Lamar State College-Port Arthur	2,000
Galveston College	2,000
Remington College - Dallas Campus	2,000
Lamar State College-Orange	2,000
Lubbock Christian University-Undergraduate	2,000
Dallas Theological Seminary	2,000
Panola College	2,000
The Art Institute of Houston	2,000
College of Biblical Studies-Houston	1,500
The Art Institute of Dallas	1,500
Frank Phillips College	1,500
Western Technical Institute	1,500
Court Reporting Institute-Wheeler Institute of TX	1,500

Employment: Employment outcomes could only be determined for students who both possessed an SSN and provided that information to their school district. Additionally, employment records were not available for students employed outside the state of Texas.