

# Understanding Updates to Historical College Enrollment Rates of CPS Graduates

*November, 2025*

We have updated the 2017-23 college enrollment numbers for CPS graduates due to an error in the NSC data. The updated rates reported in this brief and on the tool are slightly higher than the college enrollment rates that were previously reported.

## *Background*

The most comprehensive national source of data on postsecondary college enrollments is the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). Unfortunately, [errors in decision rules in the NSC 2.0 data system](#) resulted in an undercount of enrollments in previous years, including To&Through's reporting of college enrollment among Chicago Public Schools (CPS) graduates. Specifically, the postsecondary enrollments of some graduates who had attempted dual credit and/or dual enrollment courses while still in high school were omitted from the college enrollment data, making it falsely appear that those students did not enroll in college after graduating from high school. This problem had a larger and larger impact on the college enrollment rate of CPS graduates over time, as an increasing number of CPS graduates are participating in dual enrollment and dual credit programming every year. College persistence and completion rates were also affected slightly, as students who had initially appeared to be non-enrollees were not included in the denominators of college persistence and completion rates. These problems most impacted the college enrollment rates of high schools with large and successful dual credit and dual enrollment programs.

This year, for the first time, we received an additional source of NSC data, pulled from the NSC 3.0 data system that addressed the error for dual enrollment/dual credit students, which covered the 2017-2024 cohorts of CPS high school graduates. Although this preliminary data source had other omissions and errors, we were able to use the two NSC data sources in concert for the 2017-2024 cohorts in order to create the fullest possible picture of college enrollment among those cohorts of CPS graduates. Updated data for the 2016 cohort and earlier are not available.

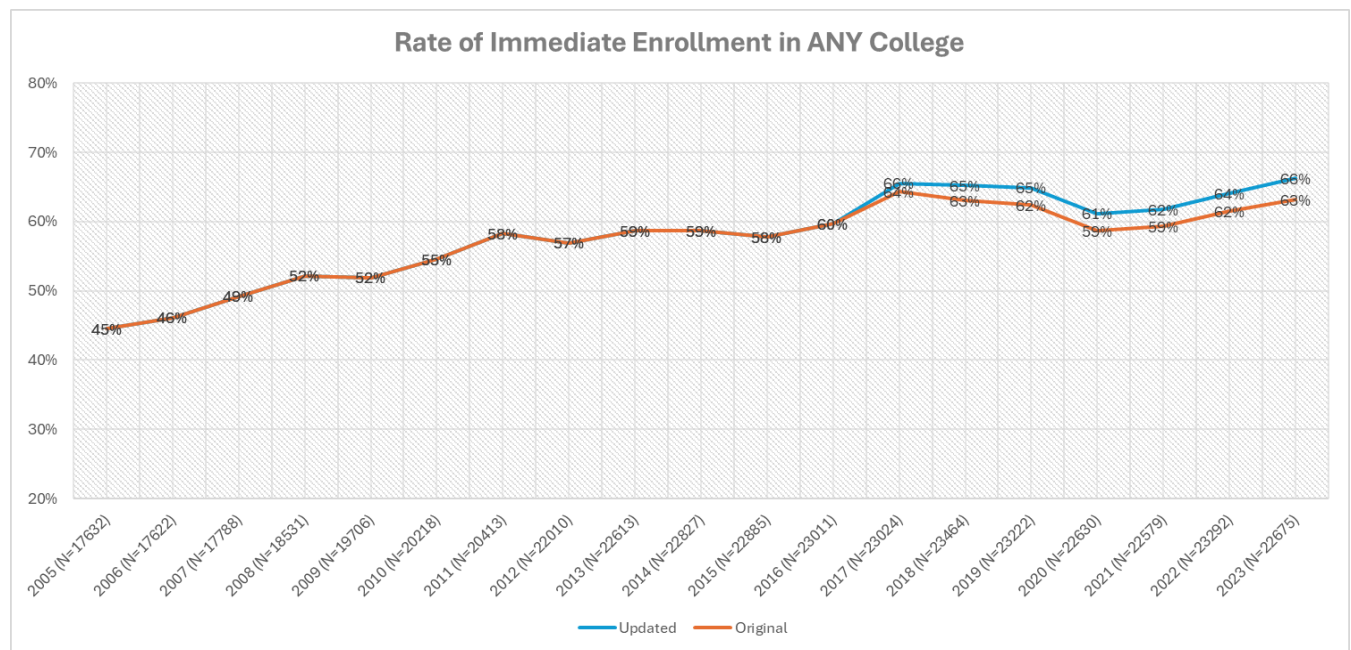
Specifically, we used students' college enrollment data from the 2.0 data source *unless* those students had received early college credit for taking dual credit or dual enrollment courses while they were CPS high school students, in which case we used only their enrollment data from the 3.0 data source. This methodology resulted in an increase in the college enrollment rate from 2017-2023 when compared to our previous reporting. In the future, we expect to receive complete NSC 3.0 data, which will make the patch described in this brief unnecessary going forward.

## *District-Level Impact*

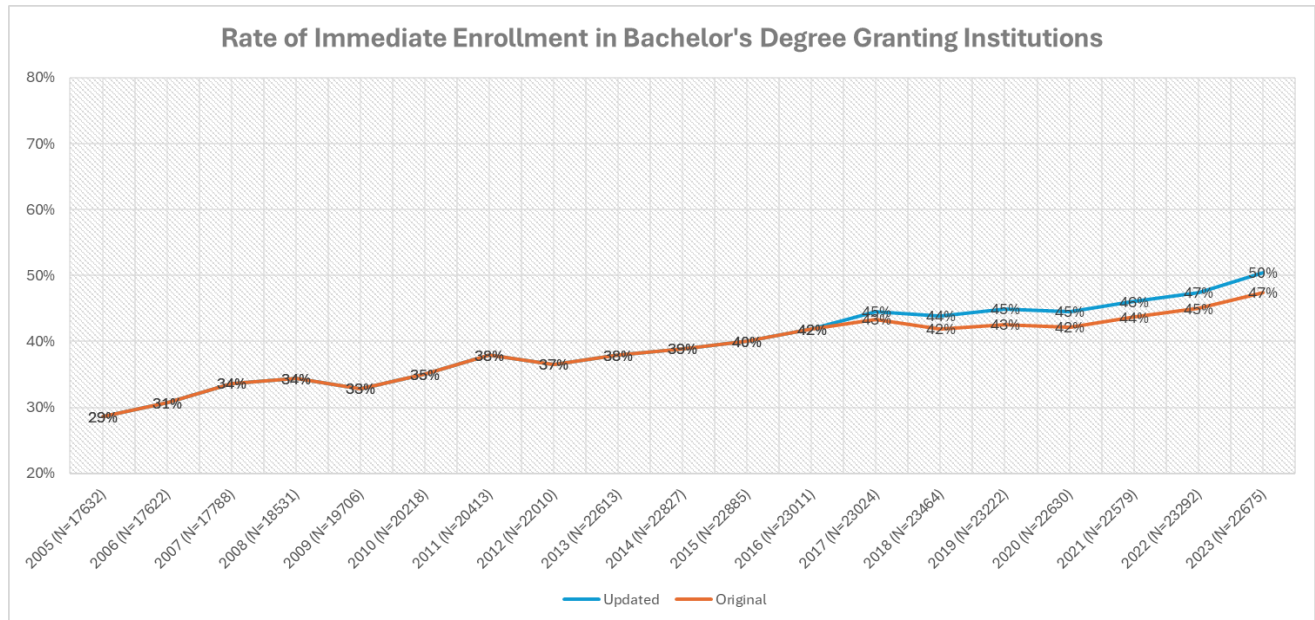
The updated district-level college enrollment rates for the 2017-2023 CPS graduating classes are between two and four percentage points higher than the rates originally reported by To&Through. This gap has been increasing over time (see Figure 1). The additional enrollments are primarily enrollments in Bachelor's Degree Granting institutions, as students who participated in dual credit programs in high school are disproportionately likely to enroll in Bachelor's degree granting institutions after high school graduation.

Note that while part of the increase in the updated college enrollment rate between 2016 and 2017 is explained by the fact that this update applies only to the 2017-2023 cohorts, there was a jump in the college enrollment rate from 2016 and 2017 even in the originally reported rate -- only around a third of the increase in the college enrollment rate from 2016 to 2017 is related to this change in data availability.

**Figure 1: Original and Updated Immediate College Enrollment Rates among CPS Graduates**



**Figure 2: Original and Updated Immediate Enrollment Rates in Bachelor's Degree Granting Institutions among CPS Graduates**



### *School-Level Impact*

To understand the impact of this update at the school level, we focused on the 2023 graduating cohort, as that was both the most recent cohort, and the one most affected by the data update (see Figure 1). Of all 174 CPS high schools (including Options, charter, and specialty high schools), 135 had no additional students with college enrollments among their 2023 graduating class and did not see any change in their 2023 college enrollment rate. Of the high schools whose rate was impacted, most saw an increase of less than one percentage point. A small number of high schools saw very significant increases in their enrollment rate of up to 11.7 percentage points.

**Table 1: Impact on College Enrollment Rate across High Schools**

Increase (in percentage points)	Number of High Schools
10+	1 high school (+11.7 pp)
5-10	2 high schools (+9.6pp; +7.7 pp)
2-5	8 high schools
1-2	9 high schools
<1	19 high schools
0	135 high schools