
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INFORMATION ITEM: 2009 Arizona High School Eligibility Study

ISSUE: The Board is asked to review the findings from the 2009 Arizona High School Eligibility Study. Determining the proportion of Arizona high school graduates who are eligible for admission to the public universities is essential to fully understanding access to a four-year education and attainment of a baccalaureate degree.

BACKGROUND:

- In 1989, the Arizona Board of Regents coordinated a study of the eligibility for university admission of Arizona high school graduates. The primary purpose of this study was to help determine the universities' success at recruiting minority students.
- In 1999, an eligibility study of 1996 and 1998 Arizona high school graduates was undertaken to update the 1989 study and determine the impact of the changes in the ABOR admission requirements that were implemented in 1998.
- In 2003, a study of 2002 Arizona high school graduates was requested to understand the eligibility rates for Arizona high school graduates under current ABOR admission policy and to examine the possible impact of the admissions policy changes that were approved as part of the Changing Directions Initiative.
- In fall 2007, a study of 2006 Arizona high school graduates was requested as a follow-up to the 2002 study to further understand the eligibility rates for Arizona high school graduates under current ABOR admission standards.
- In fall 2010, a study of 2009 Arizona high school graduates was requested to update the eligibility rates for Arizona high school graduates. The University of Arizona agreed to conduct the study.

STUDY DESIGN:

- The study was based on data entered directly from spring 2009 transcripts of Arizona public high school graduates.
- A stratified random sample of 140 high schools and 6,817 transcripts was drawn to ensure adequate representation of minority students and geographic regions.
- Transcripts were requested from each of the selected schools. Confidentiality was guaranteed and an incentive of \$5 per transcript was offered for their participation.
- A total of 3,562 transcripts (53.4% response rate) from 76 schools were received, ensuring an error rate of 4% or less for all estimated rates. Based on the very low response rates in previous studies, charter school and private school transcripts were not requested for this study.
- A comprehensive database of each transcript was created for the study analysis.

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RESULTS:

ABOR Arizona Resident Freshman Admission Requirements

The minimum ABOR requirement for freshman admission to any of the universities is: a) to be in the top half of the graduating class; or b) to earn at least a 2.50 GPA; and c) to complete the 16 required competency courses with no more than two deficiencies but not in each of science and math.

Overall Eligibility

Although overall eligibility dropped slightly between 2006 and 2009 from 47.9% to 46.7%, the change was well within the study's margin for error. This means we cannot conclude from the study sample results that eligibility dropped across all Arizona high schools. The same logic applies to the small decreases found for Asian American, Hispanic, and White students. Substantial increases, however, were seen for African American graduates (increasing from 32.4% to 36.8%) and, especially, Native American graduates (increasing from 25.7% to 33.7%), the two groups with the lowest eligibility in the 2006 study. These gains were primarily a result of having met more of the competency course requirements. A substantial gap remains between groups with lower eligibility (African American, American Indian, and Hispanic students) and the other two groups (Asian American and White students). It is important to note that ethnic differences may also reflect underlying socio-economic disparities, income differences, and school resource differences.

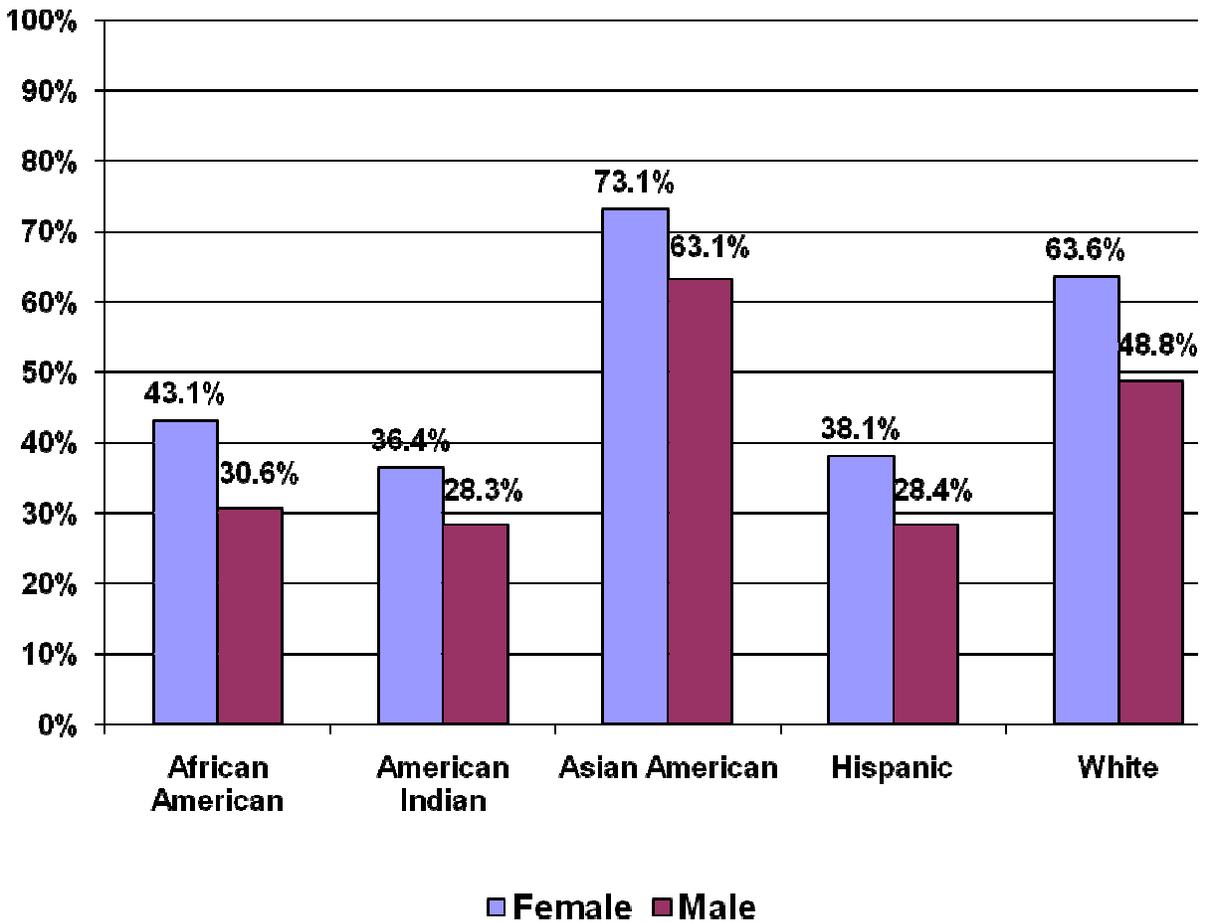
Eligibility Rates
Percent of Arizona High School Graduates
Eligible for Admission to the Universities

	2009	2006	2002	1998*	1996*	1989
African American	36.8%	32.4%	31.1%	27.1%	40.5%	32.1%
American Indian	33.7%	25.7%	20.9%	21.4%	40.4%	22.1%
Asian American	69.9%	70.3%	65.9%	61.8%	73.9%	65.7%
Hispanic	34.2%	35.3%	29.9%	29.0%	41.7%	31.3%
White	54.9%	56.5%	52.1%	48.6%	61.0%	50.4%
TOTAL	46.7%	47.9%	43.9%	41.7%	55.3%	44.2%

* Effective for fall of 1998, the Board of Regents added 5 high school units for a new total of 16 curricular requirements. This increase in standards resulted in a dramatic reduction in the eligibility rate for the 1998 high school graduates.

Gender Differences

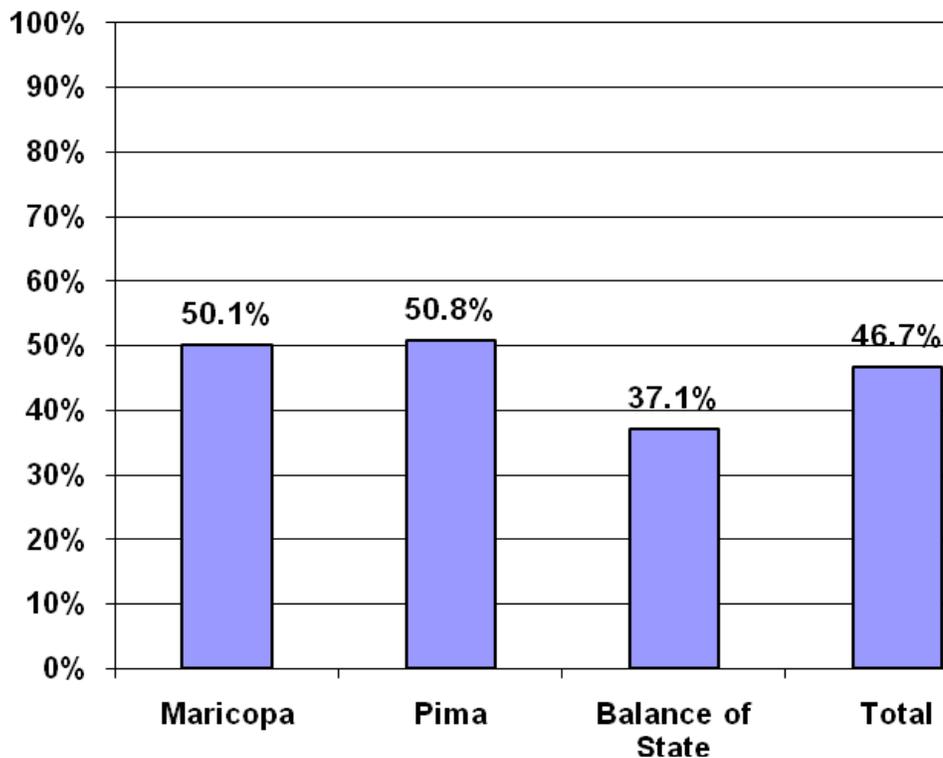
Female high school graduates continued to have significantly higher eligibility rates than males across all racial/ethnic groups and regions of the state, a further reflection of the differences in academic performance at all levels of education in Arizona and nationally. Clearly, this gap reflects a number of social issues beyond the scope of this study.



Regional Variation

Comparisons of urban and non-urban areas within Arizona revealed a much lower eligibility rate outside of Pima and Maricopa counties. A number of explanations may underlie these differences, including larger numbers of high school graduates from populations that have lower eligibility, less intention to attend college, and less access to the courses needed to meet ABOR competencies. Although overall eligibility dropped slightly between 2006 and 2009 for Pima and Maricopa counties, but increased slightly for the remainder of the state, these changes were well within the study's margin for error. This means we cannot conclude from the study sample results that eligibility changed across all Arizona high schools in these areas.

Eligibility by Region

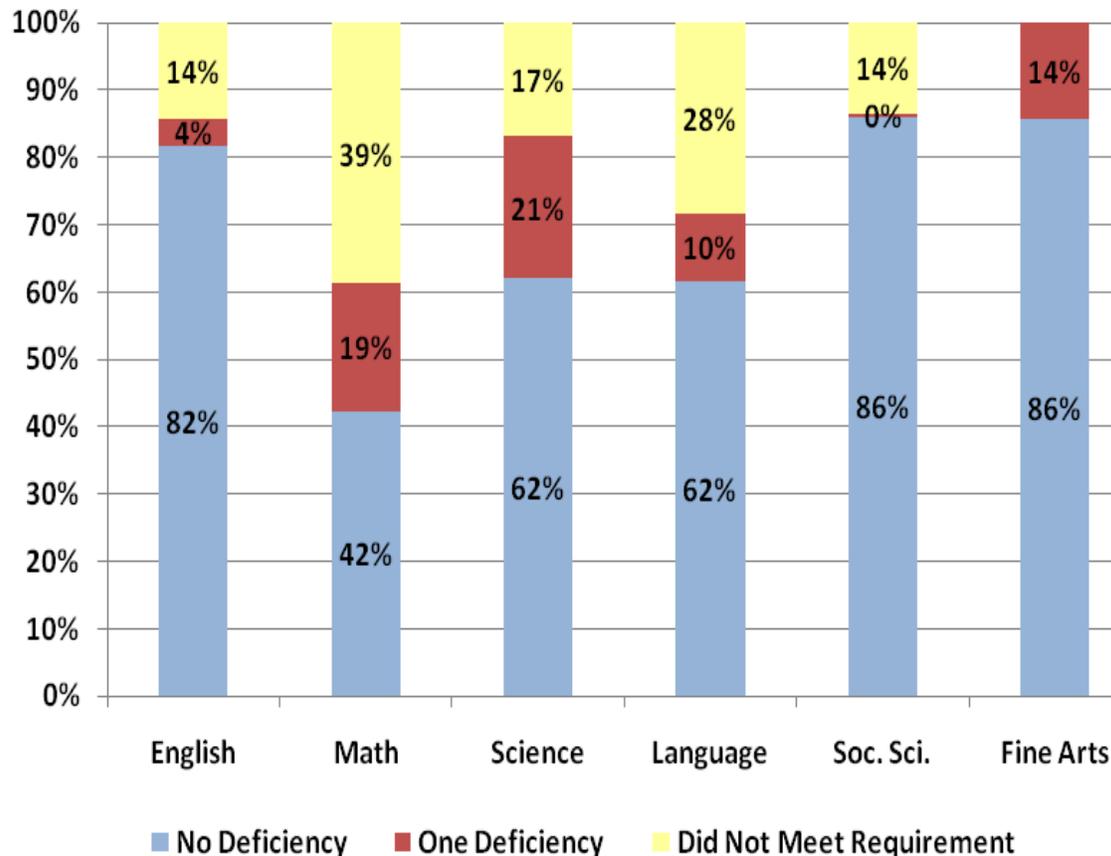


Academic Deficiencies

For all ethnic groups and across the state, math was the area where students were most likely to fall short of the minimal requirement (one deficiency) of three high school units. Nearly two in five students (39%) failed to meet this standard—and only 42% met the full requirement of four math units. A positive finding was that African American, Native American, and Hispanic students showed increases since 2006 in the percentages of students meeting the full requirement of four math units; in particular, the rate for Native Americans increased sharply from 20% to 32%. It was encouraging to find evidence of progress for groups with the lowest levels of math attainment in previous years.

Foreign language proved to be next most difficult standard to achieve: more than one in four students (28%) did not meet the minimal requirement of one unit. For laboratory science, 17% did not meet the minimal requirement and another 21% had one deficiency. Attainment in the areas of English, social studies and fine arts was strong. The only substantial change from 2006 was in English, where 14% did not meet the minimum requirements in 2009 compared with 19% in 2006.

Total Competency Area Attainment



**Completion Rates for ABOR Curricular Requirements
2009 Arizona High School Graduates**

	English	Math	Science	Lang	Soc Sci	Arts
African American	76%	32%	54%	57%	81%	81%
American Indian	73%	32%	54%	44%	81%	78%
Asian American	89%	72%	83%	76%	94%	88%
Hispanic	75%	31%	53%	54%	81%	83%
White	86%	49%	67%	68%	90%	88%
Total	82%	42%	62%	62%	86%	86%

Future University Students

The projected numbers of eligible high school graduates is an important element in the Arizona educational pipeline. Knowing eligibility rates and the characteristics of eligible high school students are essential to making solid projections of university system enrollment and degree production, which are critical elements of the ABOR 2020 Vision and Strategic Plan.

RECOMMENDATION/CONCLUSION

The Board is asked to approve the 2009 Arizona High School Eligibility Study, as presented in this Executive Summary.