



## FOR EMBARGOED RELEASE

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## UChicago Engages Local and National Education Leaders on Myths, Milestones, and Risks Associated with Students' Journeys To and Through College

**CHICAGO** — Today the University of Chicago Urban Education Institute and Network for College Success convenes [local and national civic, nonprofit, and school leaders](#) to discuss key levers and strategies for fostering student success in high school and college as part of the [To&Through Project](#)—a cross-sector effort to help students make it to and through high school and college. The discussions center on new research from the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, key lessons learned from Chicago's educational gains, and stories of progress and promise from educators and nonprofit leaders on the front lines of the city and nationwide effort to improve students' educational attainment.

Speakers at the [To&Through Project](#) include:

- Current and former Chicago Public Schools students;
- Dr. Janice K. Jackson, CEO of Chicago Public Schools;
- John King, President and CEO of the Education Trust and former U.S. Education Secretary; and
- Tony Bryk, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning.

### ***The Educational Attainment of Chicago Public Schools Students: 2017***

The UChicago Consortium and the To&Through Project's new research brief: *The Educational Attainment of Chicago Public Schools Students: 2017* finds:

- The percent of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) ninth-graders projected to earn a bachelor's degree within six years of high school graduation has **more than doubled** over the last decade, from **9 percent** in 2006 to **19 percent** in 2017;
- **75 percent** of CPS students graduated from high school in 2017, up from **57 percent** in 2006;
- **Two-thirds** of CPS graduates immediately enrolled in either a two- or four-year college in 2016, up from **50 percent** in 2006; and
- CPS's four-year college graduation rate has remained relatively steady, hovering near **50 percent** since 2003.

In addition, the study finds that attainment gaps by race and gender persist:



- Ten percent of Black young men and 13 percent of Latino young men who were ninth graders in 2017 are projected to earn a bachelor's degree within 10 years, compared to the district average of 19 percent.

*“The gaps in college degree attainment along race and gender lines persist in Chicago and across the country,”* said UChicago Urban Education Institute Interim Director, Tanika Island Childress. *“We have progress to celebrate, and significant room to grow to ensure all students achieve their higher education aspirations. I am thrilled we have the opportunity to engage the brightest minds in our city and country to discuss equity as it relates to the educational attainment of our young people.”*

### ***Hidden Risk: Changes in GPA across the Transition to High School***

The UChicago Consortium and the To&Through Project's new study, *Hidden Risk: Changes in GPA across the Transition to High School*, finds that failure in a *non-core* course (such as art and physical education) is equally as detrimental as failure in a core course (English, math, science, and social studies) to students' likelihood of graduating from high school; only **seven in 10** CPS freshmen with either one core or non-core course failure graduate from high school, compared to nine in 10 CPS freshman with zero course failures in ninth grade.

### ***Effect on Grade Point Averages (GPA)***

All CPS students are at risk of seeing significant declines in GPAs in core courses in the transition to high school, even students with strong eighth grade grades and test scores. **Fewer than half of students** who earned a 3.0 in eighth grade earned a 3.0 in ninth grade, and the core GPAs of high-achieving Black students fell **twice as much** as those of their White and Asian peers. Students at nearly all CPS high schools saw significant declines in PE/Health and arts grades between the eighth and ninth grades. Black and Latino male students also saw significant grade declines on average in the non-core subject areas. The arts grades of Black young men fell by more than three-quarters of a point between the eighth and ninth grades, and their PE/health grades fell a full point.

*“GPA is a powerful indicator of students' college access and college readiness, and a failure of even a non-core course like PE or art matters to students' GPA and ultimately high school graduation,”* said Jenny Nagaoka, Deputy Director of the UChicago Consortium on School Research. *“GPA declines during the transition to high school signal that students are at risk of not graduating and less able to enroll and succeed in college.”*

### ***Practice-Driven Data: Lessons from Chicago's Approach to Research, Data, and Practice in Education***

The UChicago Consortium, Network for College Success, and the To&Through Project's new paper, *Practice-Driven Data: Lessons from Chicago's Approach to Research, Data, and Practice in Education*, shares key lessons learned from Chicago's approach to using data to foster ongoing improvement in students' educational attainment. Over the past decade, CPS has seen:

- A **28 percentage-point** rise in the proportion of freshmen on-track to graduate, with the greatest increases among Black and Latino young men;



- An **18 percentage-point** rise in the district-wide high school graduation rate, alongside rising ACT scores and GPAs; and
- **Twice** as many high school freshmen projected to earn a bachelor's degree.

*“We want to share what we’ve learned about how, when, why, and under what conditions data can support real and sustainable improvement in students’ educational outcomes,”* said Eliza Moeller, Director of Research and Continuous Improvement at the University of Chicago Network for College Success.

The To&Through Project has also updated resources for educators—[toolkits](#), [issue briefs](#), [data insights](#), [school profiles](#), and “[mythbusters](#)”—to support school leaders and school partners in communicating and developing strategies around what decades of research has shown matters most for students’ high school and college success.

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To watch the livestream of the To&Through event today, click [here](#).

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**The To&Through Project** is a partnership between the **University of Chicago’s Urban Education Institute** and **Network for College Success** that integrates research, data, and professional learning to help more students get to and through high school and college. In collaboration with educators, policymakers, and communities, the To&Through Project aims to significantly increase the percentage of Chicago Public Schools freshmen who graduate from high school and go on to earn a college degree, and to share the learning from Chicago with education stakeholders across the country.

**The University of Chicago Urban Education Institute** bridges education research and practice to foster greater equity and excellence in urban schooling. Across four units, UEI conducts rigorous applied research, trains teachers and school leaders, operates a preK-12 public school, and provides research-based tools and resources to schools in 60 major cities across 33 states. Together, UEI’s units produce research- and practice-based knowledge on what matters most for school improvement and student success.

**The University of Chicago Consortium on School Research** at the Urban Education Institute has conducted more than two decades of research on Chicago Public Schools to discover what matters most for school improvement and student success, providing the insight and knowledge that ground The To&Through Project. Over the last 10 years, at least 13 cities have replicated the Consortium’s model for place-based research partnerships, including New York City, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., New Orleans, Houston, Kansas City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

**The Network for College Success** (NCS) at the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration designs and provides professional learning and support resources to help build schools leaders’ capacity to use research and data to improve student outcomes.

For more information, please visit: [toandthrough.uchicago.edu](http://toandthrough.uchicago.edu).