

Thrive Scholars - Research Roundup - 2023 - Edition 1

Welcome to the inaugural Thrive Scholars Research Roundup, which will be shared quarterly with you! We thought you might like to see what we are reading as we continually learn about the work that we are doing.

The Importance of Cross-Class Friendships for Economic Mobility

Raj Chetty, an expert in economic mobility, and colleagues published an [article](#) in Nature about how social capital can increase economic mobility. The key idea here is that having high-income friends is one of the biggest boosts a low-income young person can have in achieving economic mobility. Our Scholars are able to do this by attending top colleges, which we facilitate through our [model](#) of rigorous academic preparation, social-emotional support, and encouragement to engage with peers on campus and leaders in their chosen career industries. (Read even more about Chetty's research at the [NYT](#) and [Brookings](#).)

Strategies for Navigating Campus

[Anthony Jack](#), a Harvard researcher (and Amherst grad!) who focuses on supporting low-income and BIPOC students on elite campuses, published a new [article](#) on the differing campus navigation strategies of lower-income and upper-income undergraduates. As you might have guessed, lower-income students have a harder time integrating into elite campuses than their upper-income peers—but lower-income students who have had previous experience at elite high schools have an advantage over those that don't. We hope our program has this effect, too. Through summer academy and one-on-one coaching, our students gain experiences that help them succeed in college and experience the fullness of campus life. And additionally, we purposefully include a small number of low-income students who did attend elite prep schools in high school on scholarship, as these students can share their insight and navigation strategies within the cohort.

Occupational Segregation and Recommendations to Stop it

A recent Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality [report](#) examines how segregation by college majors perpetuates social inequities by occupation, clearly showing that fewer students of color and women end up in fields that have the greatest earning power and status. Authors introduce four key principles that institutions and organizations like us can do to interrupt this segregation—we primarily focus on this recommendation through our [career development programming](#) and [corporate partnership efforts](#): *ensure equitable and meaningful work-based opportunities relevant to students' field of study*. This can go a long way in mitigating inequality!

Changing Diversity on College Campuses

This [article](#) in the Chronicle of Higher Education discusses the decline in Black student enrollment on college campuses; [another](#) discusses the decline in men's college-going. These issues are what we are trying to address with our newest program—On Ramp—which is a pre-college program designed to provide top-performing multi-generational African American males with our signature Summer Academy and college planning and preparation experiences starting a year before our traditional program starts.

First-Generation College Students on the Job Market

Though this Wired [article](#) is from 2021, it summarizes research on first-generation college students (students who are the first in their families to go to college, which 85% of our Scholars identify as) and the job market hurdles they face—such as limited knowledge of the industry, coaching to navigate it, connections within it, as well as discrimination that they face from employers themselves. Our career development and corporate partner model addresses these barriers head on, supporting Scholars to have similar experiences and outcomes as their continuing-generation peers on their campuses.

Racial Inequality in Student Debt

The racial wealth gap is a big part of why we do what we do—and not surprisingly, student loan debt disproportionately affects BIPOC borrowers. Researchers Addo and Houle recently published a [book](#) on the [student loan crisis](#) among Black borrowers, and Education Trust also published articles specifically about how [student debt harms Black borrowers' mental health](#), particularly [Black women's mental health](#).

We aim to reduce this crisis every time we help a student identify a no or low-loan college they like or negotiate a financial aid package. And it works: 60% of our Scholars graduate with \$0 in debt, and overall, our Scholars graduate with an average of <\$7K in debt!

Engagement with Science

Pew Research has produced a couple of reports lately on [Black Americans'](#) and [Hispanic Americans'](#) views of, trust in, and engagement with science. Both articles identify a lack of representation of Black and Hispanic Americans in these fields, coupled with a sense among Black and Hispanic Americans that scientists (as a group) are unwelcoming to Black and Hispanic Americans. What can we do at Thrive? This quote stuck out to us, "A majority of Black Americans say more examples of Black high achievers in STEM would encourage more young Black people to pursue these fields." Representation can drive further engagement, and we know that from our work.

Recent Data and How Thrive Compares

The Center for Education Statistics released [new data](#) on graduation rates, student outcomes, financial aid, and admissions from the winter collection of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) in October. These findings show that about 65% of full-time, first-time students enrolled in four-year institutions in 2015 graduated within six years at the college where they started. We are happy to report that our graduation rate is much higher than this: 95% of our High School Class of 2015 Scholars persisted through our program and 97% have graduated.

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) released the [Class of 2021 Report](#) on first destination outcomes. These data include over 500K bachelor's degree graduates from NACE institutions and show that 55% of respondents from the College Class of 2021 were employed within six months of graduation, and an additional 22% were continuing their education post-college. Though we're still surveying our 2022 graduates about their employment status at six months post-graduation, this report provides one comparison number for us to benchmark against.

