

College Reach-Out Program *1998-1999 Highlights*

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INTRODUCTION

The College Reach-Out Program (CROP) is a statewide program designed to further the Legislature's intent of increasing the number of students successfully completing a postsecondary education. The primary objective of the College Reach-Out Program is to strengthen the educational motivation and preparation of low-income and educationally disadvantaged students in grades 6-12 who "otherwise would be unlikely to seek admission to a community college, state university, or independent postsecondary institution without special support and recruitment efforts" (Section 240.61 (1) Florida Statutes). The program recruits students and provides them with academic enrichment activities as well as career and personal counseling.

In 1991, the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission was asked by the College Reach-Out Program Advisory Council to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the program. Through legislation approved during the 1994 legislative session, the Commission is now statutorily responsible for annually evaluating the effectiveness of the program. This is the Commission's ninth annual statewide CROP evaluation.

Report Methodology and Format

This evaluation is based on the 1998-99 CROP cohort comprised of 7,869 program participants and 10,000 public school students drawn from a random sample stratified on the basis of race and income. All comparisons are based on the stratified sample with the exception of the statewide college readiness data that includes all student test takers. In addition, comparative data on the 1994-95 CROP and random longitudinal cohorts are also included in this report.

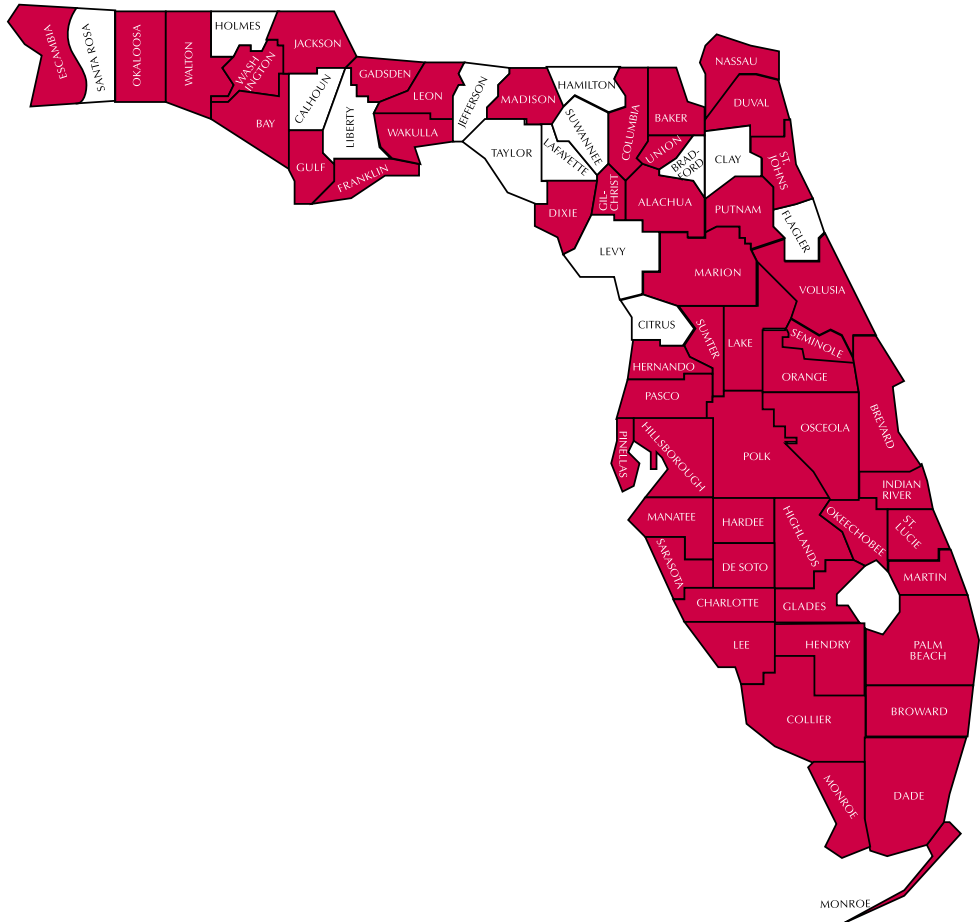
Data matches to extract information were performed against databases in the Division of Public Schools, Office of K-16 Articulation, Office of Assessment and Evaluation, the State University System, the Community College System, the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP), and the Bureau of Student Financial Assistance (BSFA). Narrative reports submitted by the projects provided a descriptive analysis of program activities and student participation. Regional and statewide meetings and project site visits provided supplemental information for this evaluation.



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT
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SUMMARY OF 1998-99 COHORT

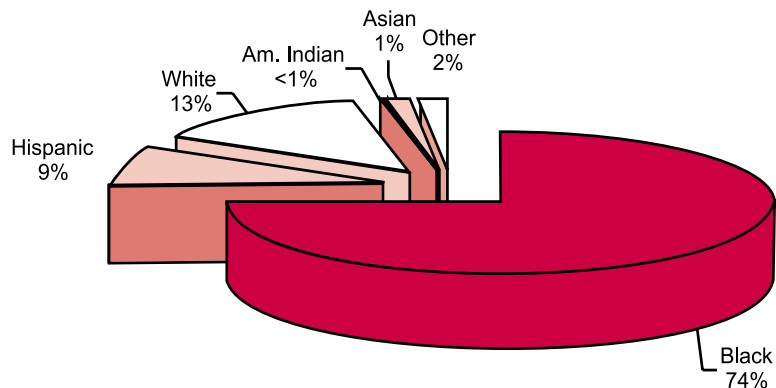
- A total of 7,869 participants were enrolled in one of 41 CROP projects located across 53 Florida counties in 1998-99. See below.



Students in 53 counties across the State were served by College Reach-Out in 1998-99.

- Blacks accounted for 74 percent of participants, whites were 13 percent, Hispanics were nine percent, Asians were one percent, American Indians were one percent, and other nationalities comprised two percent (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Racial/Ethnic Characteristics 1998-99 CROP Cohort

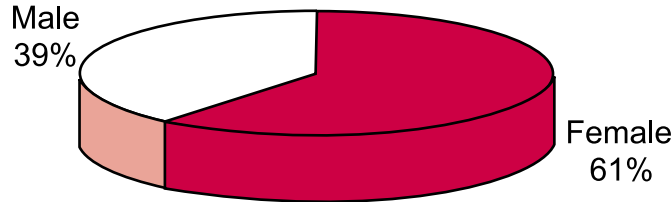


Source: College Reach-Out Program.

CROP serves a diverse student population.

- Females outnumbered males in CROP by a substantial majority. Sixty-one percent of all CROP participants were female (Figure 2). Two percent of CROP students were disabled.

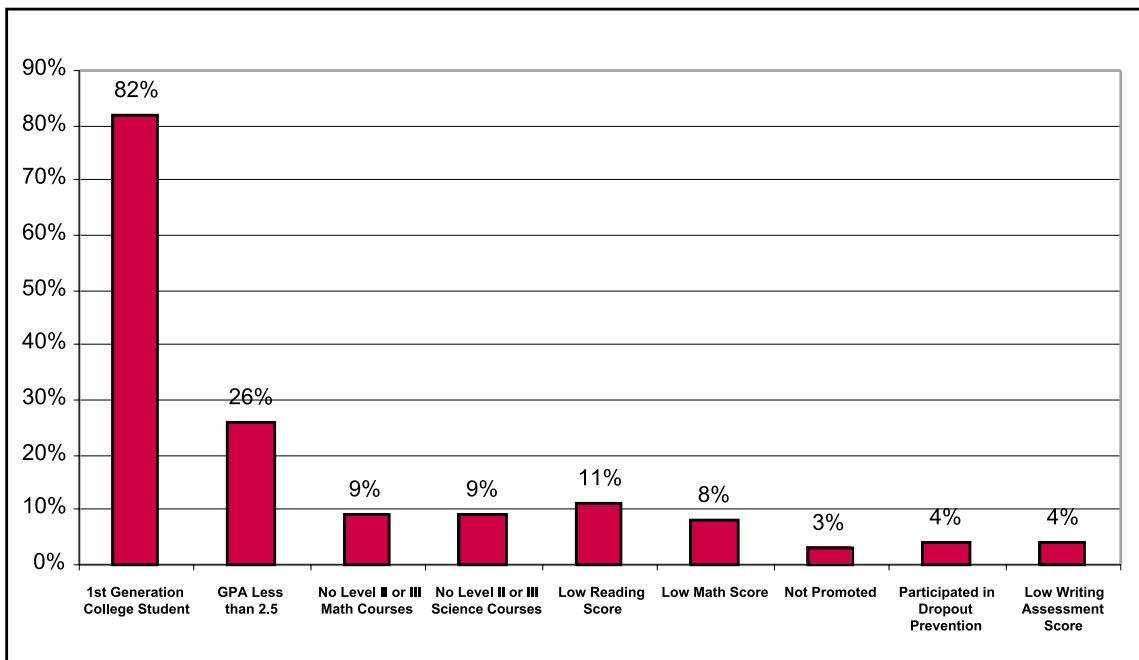
Figure 2
CROP Students by Gender, 1998-99
(N=7,869)



Source: College Reach-Out Program.

- Ninety-three percent of newly recruited CROP participants met both academic and economic criteria established by law and the Advisory Council as prerequisites for admission to the program. Eighty-two percent of new CROP participants were potential first generation college students and 85 percent had low family income as established by federal guidelines. Eighty-one percent of CROP students participated in the free or reduced lunch program (Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3
CROP Students Meeting Academic Criteria, 1998-99 Cohort



Source: College Reach-Out Program.

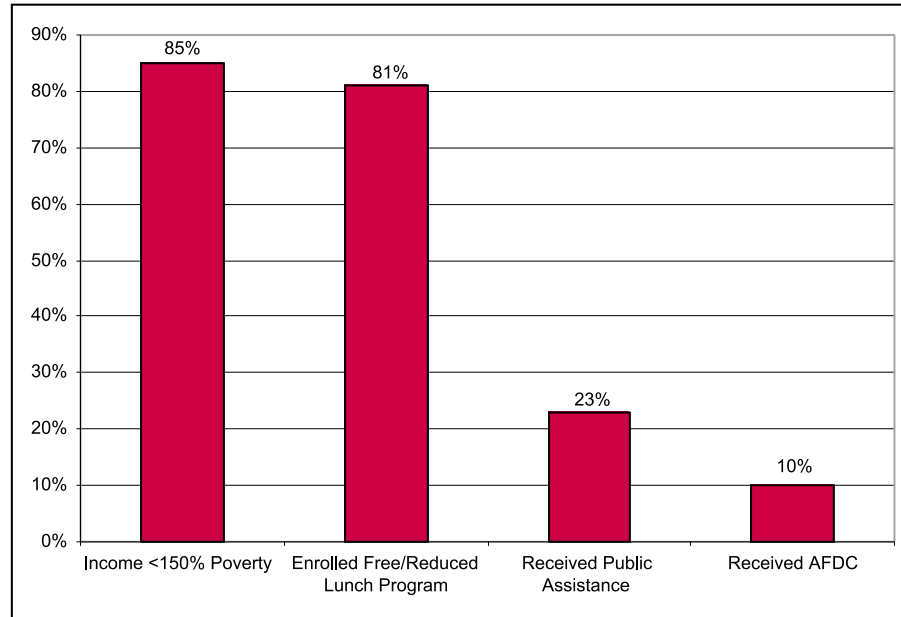
Female participants outnumbered males by a considerable majority.

Eighty-two percent of CROP students were potential 1st generation college students.

Eighty-five percent of CROP students were from families whose incomes were less than 150% of the poverty level.

Ninth graders were the largest percentage of program participants.

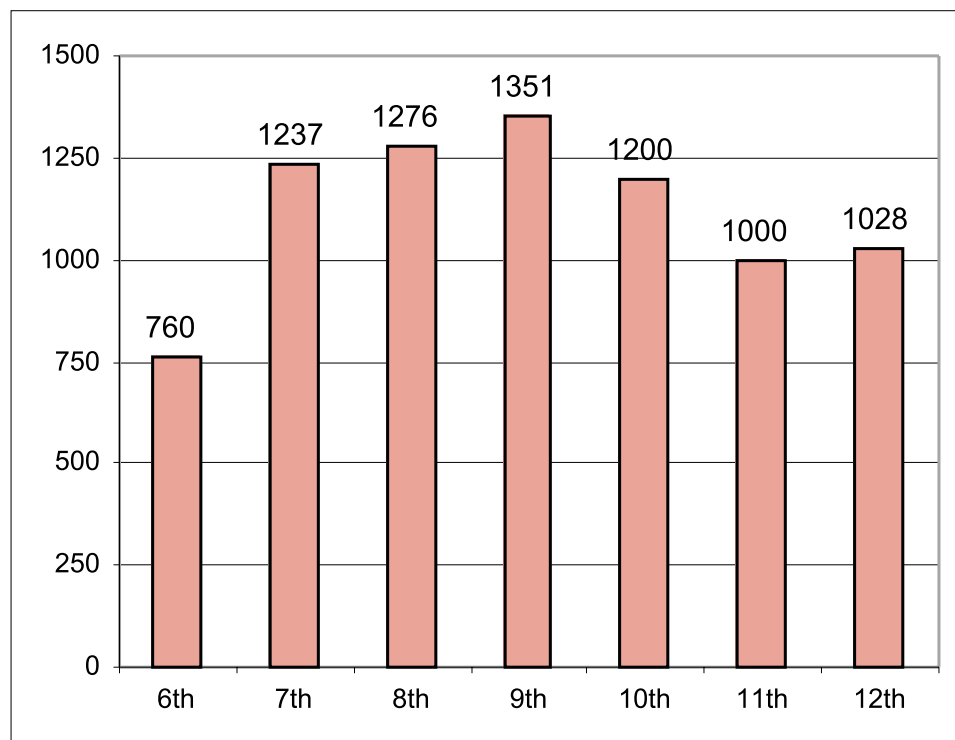
Figure 4
CROP Students Meeting Economic Criteria, 1998-99 Cohort



Source: College Reach-Out Program.

- For the first time, ninth graders accounted for the largest percentage (17 percent) of program participants (Figure 5). Historically, the highest program attrition rates were among new high school students. A concentrated effort among program directors has reversed this trend.

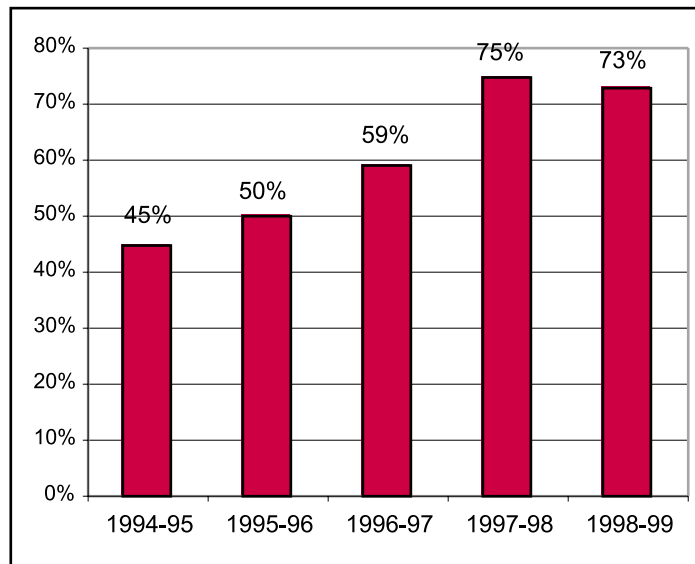
Figure 5
1998-99 CROP Grade Level Distribution



Source: College Reach-Out Program.

- Within grade levels, and among projects, the mix of new and returning participants varied. Reflecting a continuing trend, 73 percent of all eligible students returned to a CROP project in 1998-99. The actual return rate is probably higher than reported because many students transferred into a different school system (and consequently a different CROP project) but were identified as new students for 1998-99. Changes to the reporting procedures will alleviate this problem for the next review cycle (Figure 6).

Figure 6
Percentage of Eligible Students Returning
to a College Reach-Out Program 1994-95 to 1998-99



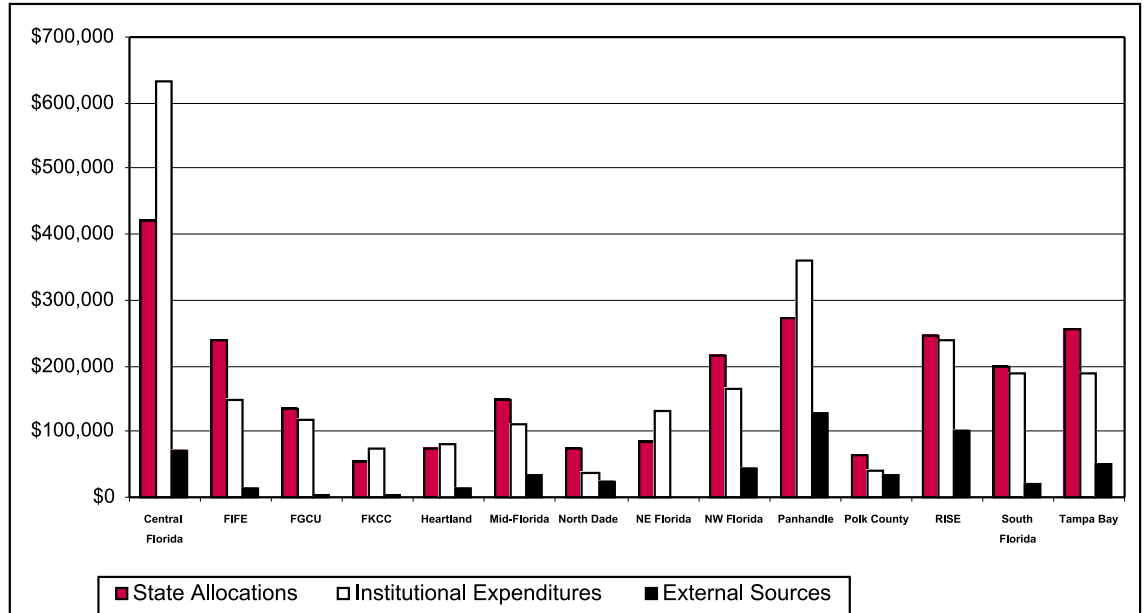
Source: College Reach-Out Program.

Seventy-three percent of eligible students returned to a CROP project in 1998-99.

Funding and Expenditures

- Ten state universities, 27 community colleges, and four independent institutions shared an appropriation of \$2.48 million. The Commission and the Office of K-16 Articulation received \$117,000 for administration, CROP Advisory Council expenses, and program evaluation and dissemination.
- All but two CROP programs were members of a consortium comprised of two or more projects in 1998-99. Central Florida, the largest of the State’s 14 consortia, included six projects and received the largest amount of state funding (Figure 7).
- All but four of the consortia reported combined institutional and external expenditures that met or exceeded the state appropriation.
- Based on the approximately \$5.6 million in total CROP expenditures, the average program cost per student was \$713 (from all sources) and \$316 (from the state CROP grants).
- Among the 41 institutions, a total of \$9,813 in unexpended state funds was returned to the State.

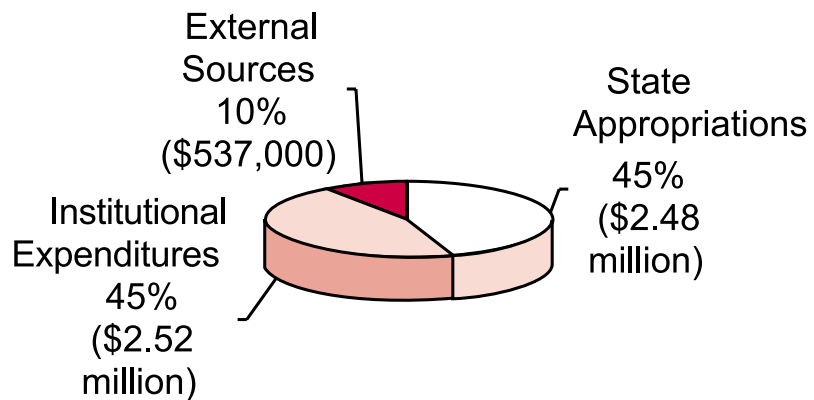
Figure 7
Expenditures for College Reach-Out Program, 1998-99



Source: College Reach-Out Program.

- Forty-five percent of the projects' expenditures came from the state appropriation. Institutional expenditures accounted for 45 percent of the dollars expended, while other external sources provided ten percent of funding for the CROP program (Figure 8).

Figure 8
Expenditures for College Reach-Out Program, 1998-99



Source: College Reach-Out Program.

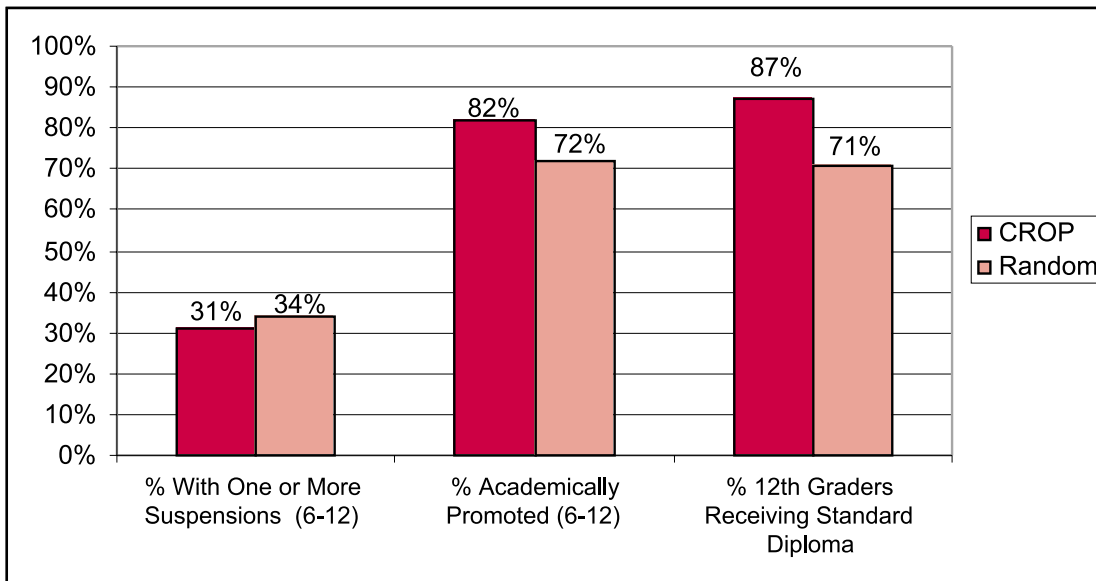
CROP
 expenditures
 exceeded
 \$5 million
 in 1998-99.

Comparative Analysis: College Reach-Out Program and Stratified Random Sample (grades 6-12 Outcome Measures)

To compare the performance of CROP participants with students in the public school population, a stratified random sample of 6th through 12th graders during academic year 1998-99 was selected from the Division of Public Schools' database. The stratified random sample is designed to reflect demographic characteristics similar to that of the characteristics of the pool of CROP participants.

- Eighty-two percent of CROP students in grades 6-11 were academically promoted to the next grade in 1998-99 compared to 72 percent of the random cohort. Eighty-seven percent of CROP 12th graders received a standard diploma in 1998-99 compared to 71 percent of the random cohort. At the same time, CROP students were less likely to be suspended than the random cohort (Figure 9).

Figure 9
CROP Secondary Performance Measures, 1998-99

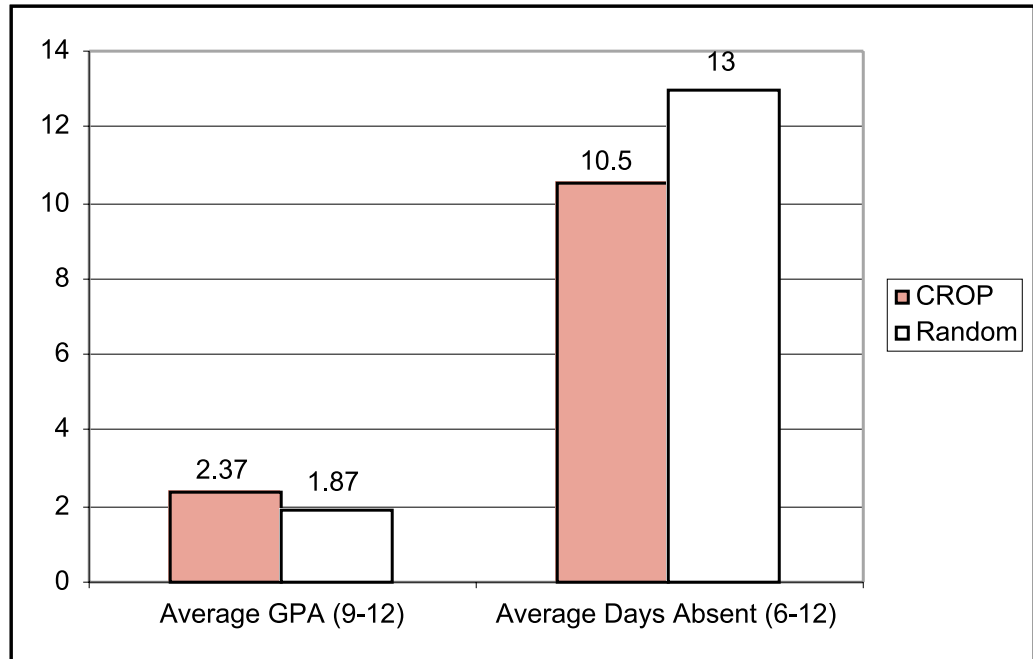


Source: Division of Public Schools.

- CROP students in grades 6-12 had a higher (2.37) Grade Point Average (GPA) than those in the random cohort (1.87) and were absent fewer days (10.5 vs. 13) than the stratified random cohort (Figure 10).

Eighty-seven percent of CROP 12th graders received a standard diploma in 1998-99.

Figure 10
Secondary Performance Measures, 1998-99



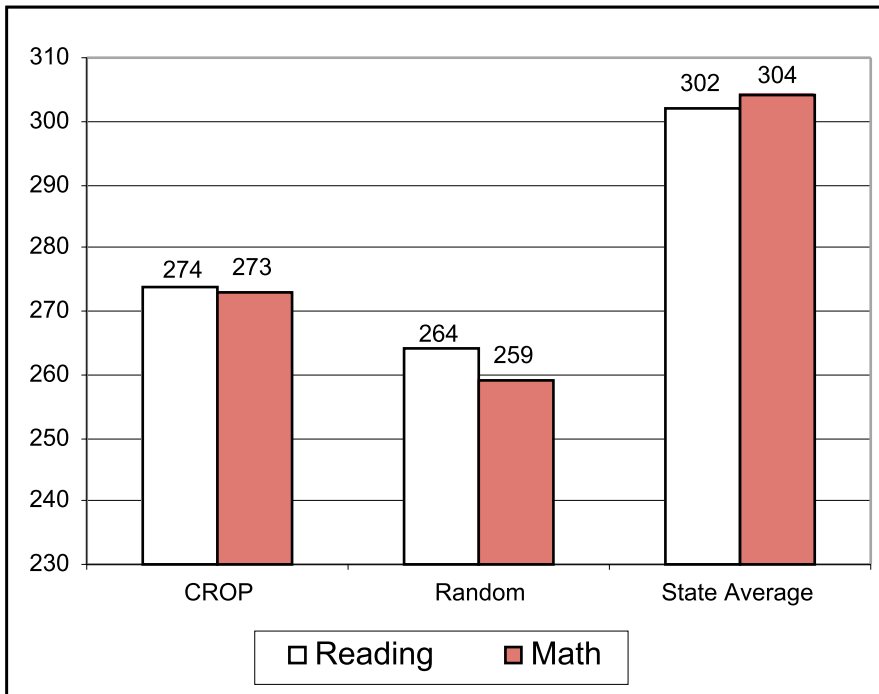
Source: Division of Public Schools.

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) measures student performance on selected benchmarks in reading, mathematics, and writing that are defined by the Sunshine State Standards. The Standards articulate challenging content that Florida students are expected to know and be able to do. Students' proficiency in reading and mathematics in grades 4, 5, 8, and 10 are measured with the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test and reported in terms of five achievement levels. Performance at level 1 indicates that the student has little success with the challenging content of the Sunshine State Standards. Performance at level 5 indicates that the student has success with the most challenging content of the Sunshine State Standards.

- CROP eighth graders who took the 1998-99 FCAT reading examination scored an average of 274. The average score among the stratified random cohort was 264, while the overall state average (all eighth graders) was 302. CROP eighth graders scored an average of 273 on the FCAT math examination compared to an average of 259 among the stratified random cohort and 304 among all state test takers (Figure 11).

**CROP
students
had a higher
GPA than
the random
cohort.**

Figure 11
8th Grade FCAT Reading and Math Scores – CROP, Random Cohort,
and State Averages, 1998-99



Source: Division of Public Schools.

- On the FCAT writing examination, CROP 8th graders scored an average of 3.2 compared to a 3.0 among the random cohort and a 3.3 among all state 8th graders (Figure 12).

Figure 12
8th Grade FCAT Writing Scores – CROP, Random Cohort
and State Averages, 1998-99



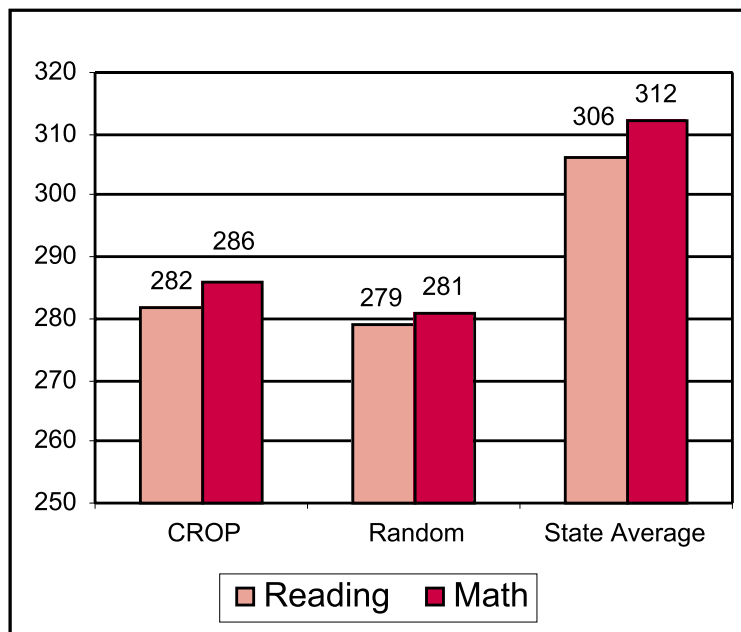
Source: Division of Public Schools.

CROP 8th graders scored higher on the FCAT examinations than those in the random cohort.

CROP
 10th graders
 scored higher
 on the FCAT
 examinations
 than those
 in the
 random
 cohort.

- CROP 10th graders outscored the stratified random sample on all three subtests while remaining one level behind the average statewide cohort score for two subtests and scoring slightly lower on the writing examination (Figures 13 and 14).

Figure 13
 10th Grade FCAT Reading and Math Scores – CROP, Random Cohort,
 and State Averages, 1998-99



Source: Division of Public Schools.

Figure 14
 10th Grade FCAT Writing Scores – CROP, Random Cohort,
 and State Averages, 1998-99



Source: Division of Public Schools.

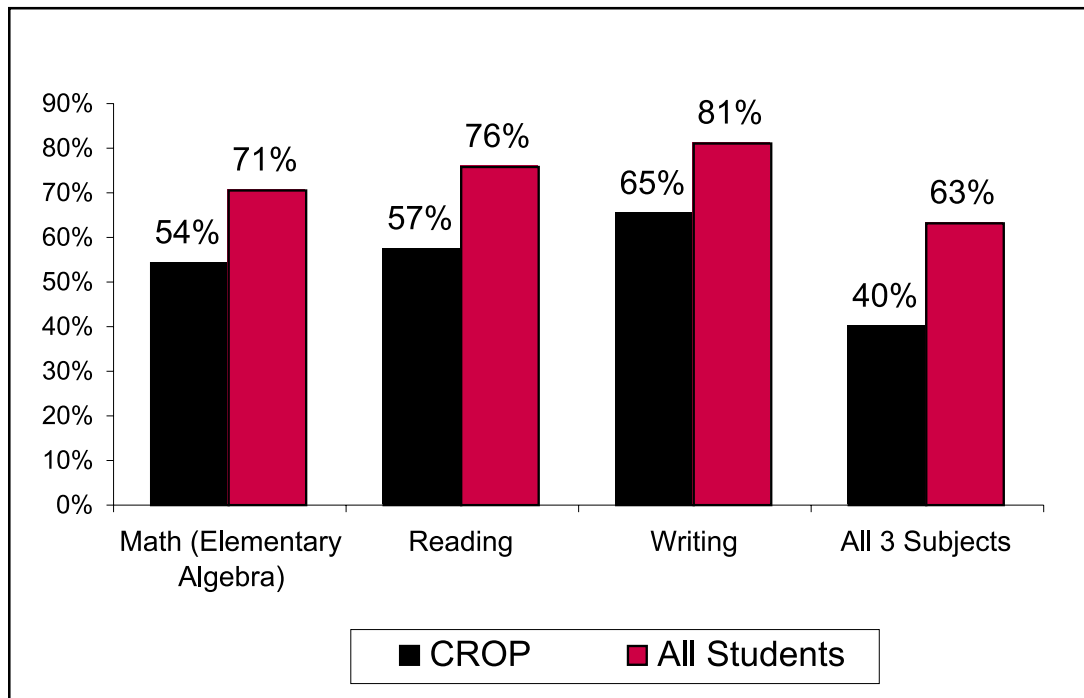
Comparative Analysis: College Reach-Out Program and Stratified Random Sample (Postsecondary Outcome Measures)

The intent of the College Reach-Out Program is to motivate and prepare academically and economically disadvantaged students to enter and complete postsecondary education; thus data were collected on indicators related to postsecondary education for 12th graders and recent graduates. Analyses of these variables include the following:

- *Readiness for college.* Baccalaureate degree-seeking freshmen in a public community college or university in Florida must demonstrate certain basic skills before beginning college-level courses. Students who achieve minimum scores on the Florida College Placement Test (CPT) are considered “ready” for college-level math, reading, and writing respectively. CROP students’ test results were compared to those of *all test takers* statewide. The data revealed that, as expected, CROP students, all of whom are low-income and academically disadvantaged, scored lower in all subject areas than students statewide (Tables 15 and 16).

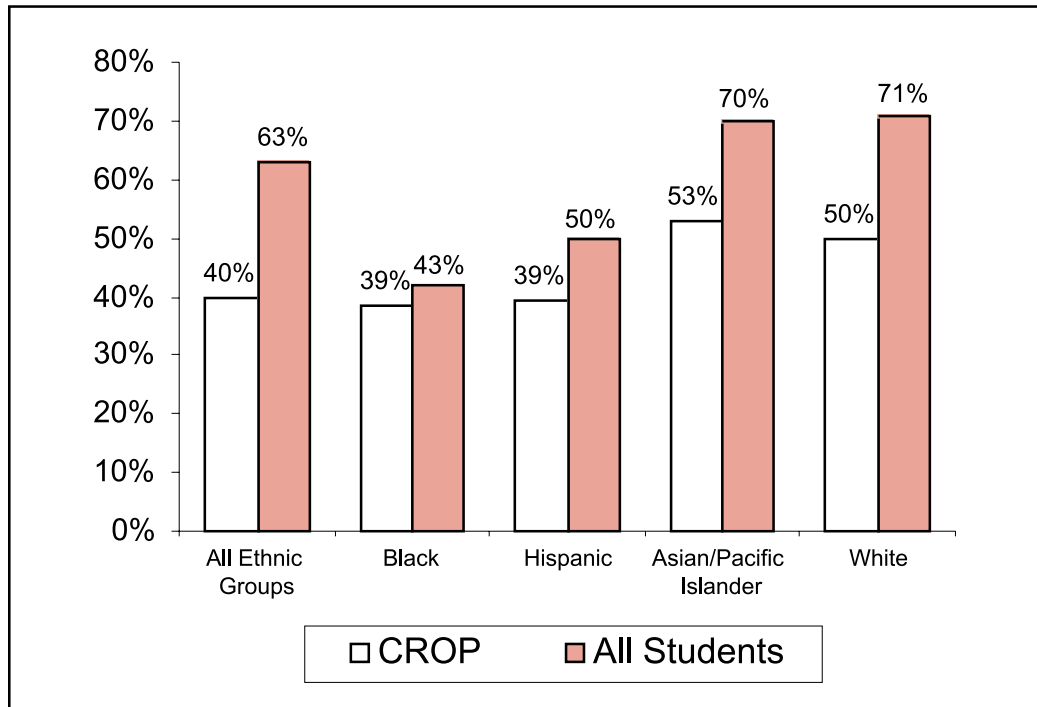
Forty percent of CROP degree-seeking freshmen were “ready” for college course work.

Table 15
College Readiness – Students Tested “Ready” Statewide
by Subject Area, 1999-2000



Source: Office of K-16 Articulation.

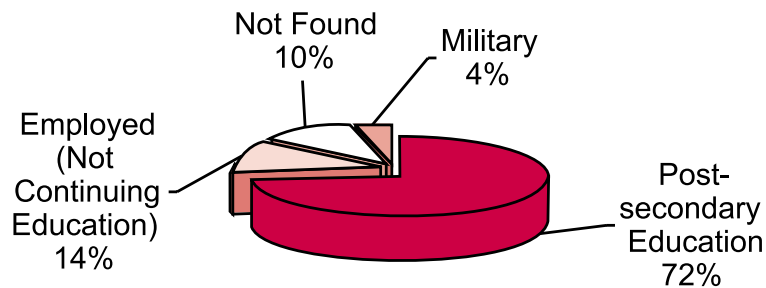
Table 16
College Readiness – Students Tested “Ready” in All
Subjects by Ethnicity, 1999-2000



Source: Office of K-16 Articulation.

- *Postsecondary outcomes.* Postsecondary follow-up data on employment and continuing education reveal that 72 percent of CROP high school graduates with a standard diploma were enrolled in higher education in 1998-99 (Figure 17). However, only 57 percent of CROP graduates with a standard diploma were actually enrolled in postsecondary coursework for *college credit*. The remaining students (15 percent) attended a community college but were not enrolled in coursework related to a postsecondary degree or certificate program.

Figure 17
1998-99 CROP High School
Graduates (N=895)



Source: Florida Education Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP), State University System (SUS), State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC).

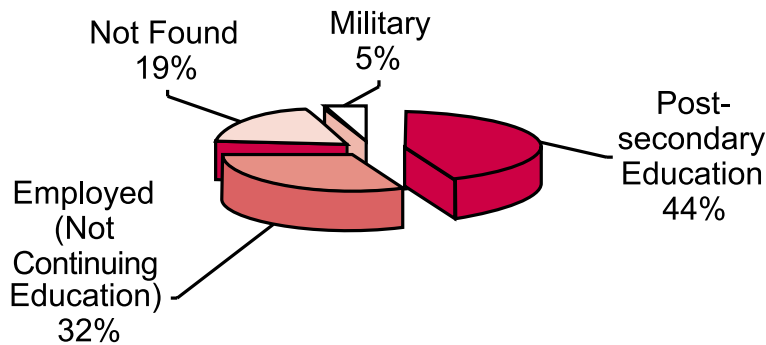
- Among the stratified random cohort, 44 percent of those with standard diplomas were enrolled in higher education in Florida in 1998-99 (Figure 18). However, only 33 percent of the random students were enrolled in postsecondary credit

Seventy-two percent of CROP high school graduates enrolled in higher education in 1999-2000.

coursework. The remaining students (11 percent) attended a community college but were not enrolled in coursework related to a postsecondary degree or certificate program.

- Fourteen percent of CROP graduates and 32 percent of the stratified random cohort were found employed and not continuing their education (Figures 17 and 18).

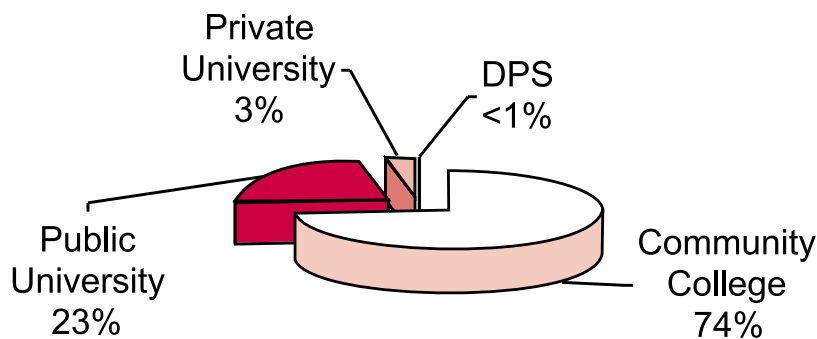
Figure 18
1998-99 Random High School
Graduates (N=553)



Source: FETPIP, SUS, SBCC.

- Twenty-three percent of CROP students enrolled in postsecondary education attended a state university, 74 percent attended a community college, and three percent attended a private institution while less than one percent were enrolled in postsecondary vocational coursework (Figure 19).

Figure 19
1998-99 CROP High School
Graduates in Postsecondary Education (N=643)



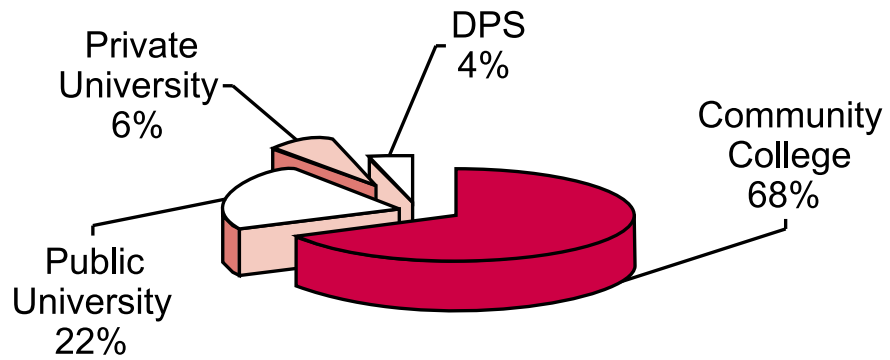
Source: FETPIP, SUS, SBCC.

- Twenty-two percent of the random cohort attended a public university in Florida, 68 percent attended a community college, six percent attended a private institution, and four percent were enrolled in postsecondary vocational coursework (Figure 20).

Fourteen percent of CROP graduates and 32 percent of the random cohort were found employed and not continuing their education in 1998-99.

Seventy-four percent of CROP graduates enrolled in postsecondary education attended a community college in 1998-99.

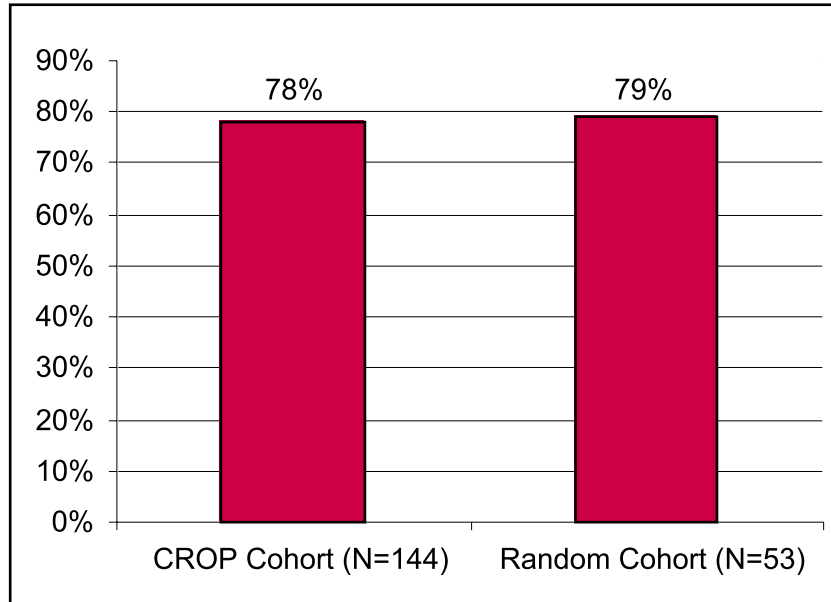
Figure 20
1998-99 Random High School
Graduates in Postsecondary Education (N=236)



Source: FETPIP, SUS, SBCC.

- Seventy-eight percent of CROP students and 79 percent of the random cohort enrolled in the SUS in 1998-99 had a GPA of 2.0 or higher at the end of their freshman year (Figure 21).

Figure 21
Students with GPA of 2.0 or Higher in
SUS, 1998-99 Cohorts*



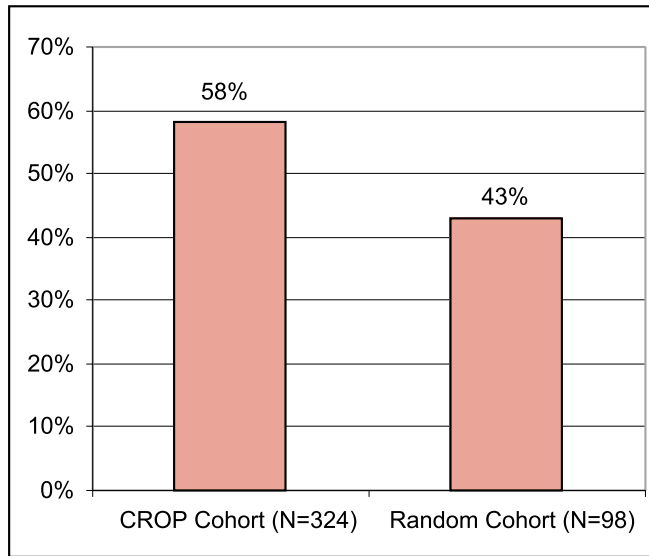
Source: State University System.

*Not all enrolled students had GPA data available in 1999-2000.

- Fifty-eight percent of CROP and 43 percent of random students enrolled in a Florida community college had a GPA of 2.0 or higher in 1998-99 (Figure 22).

Seventy-eight percent of CROP students enrolled in the SUS had a GPA of 2.0 or higher in 1998-99.

Figure 22
Students with a GPA of 2.0 or Higher in
Community Colleges, 1998-99 Cohorts*

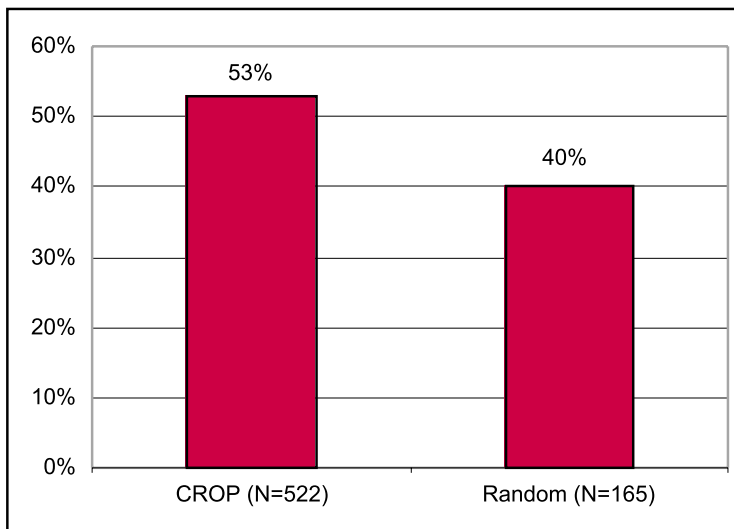


Source: SBCC.

*Not all enrolled students had GPA data available in 1999-2000.

- Financial Aid.** The Florida Student Assistance Grant (FSAG) is the State's largest need-based aid program. Eighty percent of CROP high school graduates who received a standard diploma in 1998-99 applied for the FSAG and other federal need-based aid programs. In 1999-2000, fifty-three percent of CROP high school graduates who were enrolled in college credit coursework at a community college or a public or private university in Florida received an FSAG award. Students who qualify for an FSAG award do not receive the award if they enroll part-time or if they fail to meet other institutional requirements for the award (Figure 23).

Figure 23
Students in Postsecondary Education College Credit Coursework
Who Received Need-Based Financial Aid, 1998-99 Cohorts*



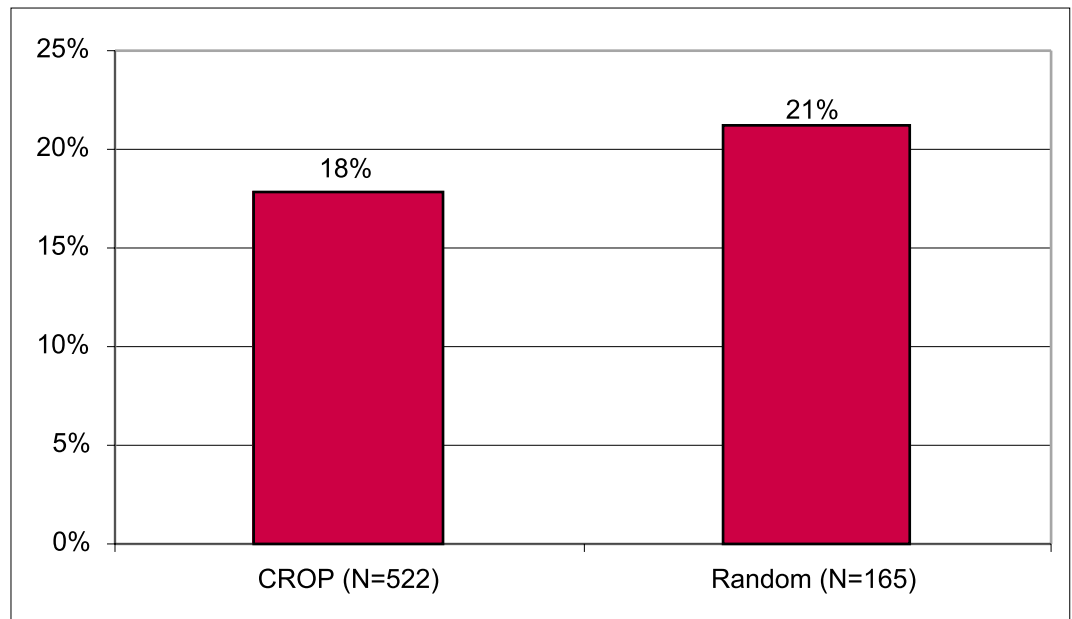
Source: Bureau of Student Financial Assistance (BSFA).

*In 1999-2000 year.

Fifty-three percent of CROP students enrolled in postsecondary education in Florida in 1998-99 received an FSAG award.

- Forty percent of the stratified random cohort who attended a public community college or university received an FSAG.
- While 47 percent of CROP high school graduates applied for a merit-based (Bright Futures) scholarship, only 18 percent of graduates who were enrolled in college-credit coursework at a community college, public or private university in Florida received that award in 1999-2000. Twenty-one percent of random students who applied received a Bright Futures Scholarship (Figure 24).

Figure 24
Students in Postsecondary Education Who
Received Merit-Based Financial Aid (Bright Futures), 1998-99 Cohorts



Source: Bureau of Student Financial Assistance (BSFA).

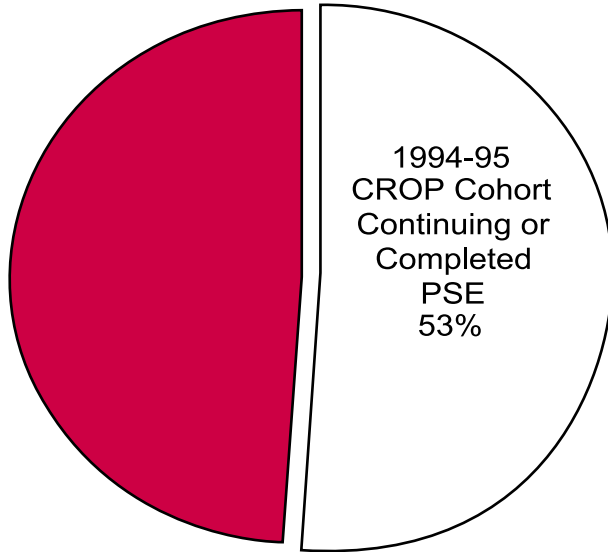
Postsecondary and Employment Follow-up Longitudinal Cohort

The following data is based on the postsecondary outcomes of the 1994-95 CROP longitudinal cohort. Because of data problems with the random longitudinal cohort, only limited comparison between the two cohorts is available.

- Of the 4,428 eligible participants in the 1994-95 longitudinal cohort (five graduating classes), 2,902 (71 percent) have enrolled in postsecondary education at some point during the last five years. Five percent (146) of the 1994-95 cohort have received associate degrees while 16 (one percent) have received baccalaureate degrees.
- Fifty-three percent of the 4,428 eligible participants in the 1994-95 cohort have either graduated from a postsecondary education institution or are still enrolled in postsecondary education (Figure 25).

Seventy-one percent of eligible participants enrolled in postsecondary education.

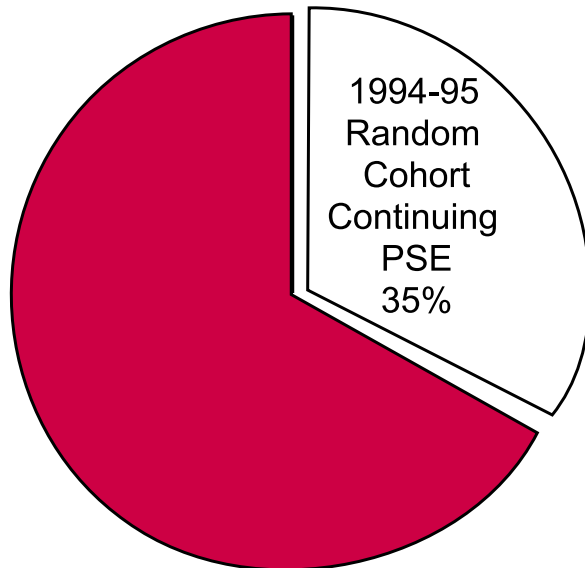
Figure 25
1994-95 CROP Longitudinal Cohort



Source: FETPIP.

- Thirty-five percent of the 5,261 eligible participants in the 1994-95 random cohort are still enrolled in postsecondary education (Figure 26).

Figure 26
1994-95 Random Longitudinal Cohort



Source: FETPIP.

Fifty-three percent of the 1994-95 longitudinal cohort are continuing in or have completed postsecondary education.

PROGRAM EVALUATION SUMMARY

Since 1990, CROP has served 30,830 individual students in grades 6-12. The continued success of the College Reach-Out Program is due to the dedication and hard work of the participants: directors, counselors, mentors, tutors, parents, community volunteers, and students, who year after year recommit themselves to the goal of increasing postsecondary education opportunities for disadvantaged youth. CROP has enjoyed the enthusiastic support of the Commissioner of Education, Governor, State Board of Education, and Legislature in part due to the results of data-based reports, such as this *1998-99 Highlights*, that prove conclusively that the program works. By comparing the academic outcomes of CROP and non-CROP participants, the Commission's reports have repeatedly shown that CROP students outperform their peers, particularly when non-CROP students are stratified by race and income. While hard data are an essential component of any evaluative report, they are not the sole arbiter of program effectiveness and merit. As part of their annual reports submitted to the Commission, CROP project directors include a detailed narrative description of their projects' activities. Both the narrative and the mandatory program activity chart provide another avenue for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each project. In addition, Commission staff, in conjunction with members of the CROP Advisory Council and staff from the Department of Education, meet twice a year with all CROP directors at statewide workshops and routinely conduct selected site visits. This year, the Northeast CROP consortium, the First Coast CROP consortium, the Polk Consortium, and the Tampa Bay CROP consortium were visited.

Following are findings related to the 1998-99 annual review of the College Reach-Out Program that are based on the narrative reports, program activity charts, workshops, and site visits.

CROP Staff Continuity and Quality

Attendance at CROP-sponsored academic enrichment activities is greatly increased and more consistent when turnover among project tutors and mentors is minimized. CROP directors report that students are more likely to maintain weekly contact with project mentors and tutors when they can establish long-term relationships with caring adult role models. Many projects use scholarships and stipends provided as a cash match by their institution to attract qualified, committed tutors and mentors. Others hire school teachers and counselors who provide academic and personal counseling at school and neighborhood based sites. Still other projects have partnered with the public and private schools to enhance the delivery of programs and services to CROP participants. The hands-on involvement of qualified, interested tutors, mentors, and counselors is the key to student development and achievement.

Continuous Contact

Many projects reported that attendance at CROP-sponsored activities was down in 1998-99. A review of the program activity charts reveals that this was particularly true for academic support activities among high school students. Participation in student development activities including mentoring, counseling, information workshops,

The hands-on involvement of qualified CROP staff is key to student development.

cultural and motivational activities, campus visits, and summer enrichment and residency programs remained strong among all participants. Scheduling appropriate times for tutoring and other academic enrichment activities is a challenge to project directors in districts where schools are not as supportive or refuse to provide student release time or classroom space for CROP-sponsored activities. In addition, high school students, many of whom work and participate in athletic and organizational activities, may fail to maintain the appropriate participation in CROP activities. Projects that develop partnerships with school and community-based organizations to deliver academic and student development services to CROP students (often in conjunction with other outreach programs such as TRIO and GEAR-UP) increase their chances of attracting and maintaining contact with older students who are attracted to the variety of services offered by those programs. Providing college scholarships to eligible CROP graduates and providing bridge or pre-collegiate summer programs for CROP high school graduates before the beginning of the freshman year in college are two very successful means of maintaining interest and close contact with CROP high school students. CROP directors must constantly reevaluate the success and relevancy of their activities in order to ensure consistent contact with program participants.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement in CROP projects continues to be a key factor in the success of the program and its individual participants. Despite continuous effort and the implementation of innovative strategies to increase parental involvement in CROP, most projects report that the lack of parental input and involvement is one of the most unsuccessful features of their program. Those projects that report widespread and committed parental involvement have implemented a multifaceted approach to securing parental support that includes appointing or hiring a parent liaison, including multilingual parent coordinators or volunteers on staff, including door prizes and guest speakers at parent meetings, holding parent retreats and providing transportation and child care when needed. Some projects have combined joint activities with students and parents such as picnics, family days, and other social and cultural programs. According to several program directors, parents show the greatest interest in CROP projects when their children are honored for specific achievements. Additionally, projects that require parents to sign a pledge to support the CROP program and their children's educational goals have reported an increase in parental involvement.

Family Instability and Relocating

CROP directors have increasingly noted the hardship of providing continuous contact with participants who frequently move from one school to another and from one district to another due to family instability and relocating. Not every school in each school district is served by a CROP project and not every county has a College Reach-Out Program. Consequently, those students who transfer from one school or district to another either during or after the school year, frequently lose contact with a CROP project. At the same time, transportation to and from CROP activities is sometimes unavailable for students who remain in the same school but move to a more distant

Parental involvement is crucial to program success.

location. Communication between consortia and between directors, parents, and students is essential for assisting and tracking students who transfer from one program area to another. Assistance is of equal importance in those areas where CROP is not offered but where other federal programs such as TRIO and GEAR-UP may provide similar continuity and services to former CROP participants.

Summer Programs and Field Trips

The summer residential and summer enrichment components of CROP continue to be major program activities that offer educational enrichment and personal growth to participants. They also provide employment opportunities for former CROP participants who serve as mentors, instructors, and counselors during the summer sessions. After several site review teams expressed concern that some summer programs contained activities that were not age-specific or that were not geared to the needs of participants, those programs were restructured and now include separate sessions; one for middle school students, one for high school students, and, increasingly, one for entering college freshmen who need remedial coursework. In addition to the summer residential component, various summer academic enrichment programs for students are offered in diverse settings within the community. Cultural activities and field trips that engage and broaden participants' experiences and awareness greatly enhance program success and continuity.

Tuition Scholarships/Financial Aid

More and more postsecondary institutions are offering tuition scholarships to CROP participants as part of their required cash match. While scholarships are a major incentive for CROP participants, not all students will be recipients. Consequently, it is imperative that all CROP programs contain extensive information on financial aid awards that are available through state and federal programs. Despite the availability of state-funded, need-based financial aid programs, not all college-bound CROP students apply for the Florida Student Assistance Grant (FSAG) or other available state and federal grants and loans. The new College Reach-Out Program Web site (<http://www.firn.edu/pepc/cropindx.html>) offers information on a variety of state and federal financial aid programs. CROP directors must intensify their efforts to educate parents and students on the importance of applying for all available state and federal financial aid, loan, and grant programs.

CONCLUSION

The Postsecondary Education Planning Commission's evaluation found commendable activities and successful practices in all projects. In summary, the College Reach-Out Program directly serves its participants while also assisting the State in achieving a higher level of postsecondary education rates among low-income, academically deficient students. The Commission strongly supports the continuation of CROP and urges the Legislature to adequately fund this crucial and effective component of Florida's seamless education system.