

COLLEGE READINESS IN CONTEXT: Barriers to Student Success

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Postsecondary attainment has increased in import, yet too many students who enter college do not graduate, especially those who are first-generation, low-income, and/or of color.¹ This concern has motivated an emphasis on college readiness in research and policy.² Broadly speaking, a college-ready student has (a) cognitive academic skills; (b) non-cognitive competencies, such as pro-academic mindsets and behaviors; and (c) college knowledge, or familiarity with postsecondary requirements and culture. Readiness discourse consequently tends to focus on the individual rather than the sociocultural context in which the student is embedded.³ This approach engenders two implicit assumptions: all students need the same competencies to succeed in higher education, and failure to earn a postsecondary credential is attributable to the individual (not-ready) student.

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also propagate the assumption that improving college readiness requires remediating deficits in students who are largely low-income, first generation, and of color.

Readiness scholarship focusing on students has tended to support policy interventions that target change at an individual level, leaving the broader structures largely intact.⁴ For instance, research on non-cognitive college-ready skills and college knowledge has driven recommendations for interventions designed to help underprepared students develop these competencies. While such programs may be beneficial for participants, small-scale interventions of this nature do not address the underlying structures that systematically create inequitable opportunities to learn. Such approaches may

This infographic situates the student’s college-ready skill development within his or her schooling context.⁵ It highlights some of the contextual factors that may diminish the potential of underserved youth to hone college-ready competencies. College readiness research and policy that foreground students’ social, cultural, and institutional contexts is advantageous to: (a) account for the structural conditions that affect individual opportunity, (b) reveal the unique needs and cultural assets of underrepresented students, and (c) provide a stronger foundation for institutional reform.

Citations listed here: <http://www.uscrossier.org/pullias/citations/>

COLLEGE READINESS IS DEFINED AS THE AMOUNT OF PREPARATION A STUDENT NEEDS TO ENROLL IN CREDIT-BEARING COURSES AND PERSIST TO GRADUATION.

A college-ready student has:

content knowledge and cognitive skills

pro-academic behaviors and mindsets

college knowledge

BLACKS AND LATINOS ARE **3X** MORE LIKELY THAN WHITES TO ATTEND SCHOOLS WITH HIGH CONCENTRATIONS OF FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS

1 OUT OF **20** WHITES & **10** OUT OF **20** BLACKS & LATINOS ATTEND HIGH-POVERTY K-12 SCHOOLS

BLACK STUDENTS ARE EXPELLED AT **3X** THE RATE OF WHITE STUDENTS



HOW CAN WE BROADEN CONCEPTIONS OF COLLEGE READINESS TO ACCOUNT FOR THE SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS OF UNDERSERVED YOUTH?