

**Achieving the Dream (AtD) Initiative**

"Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count" is a multi-year initiative funded by the Lumina Foundation for Education that addresses the challenge of providing low income students and students of color with opportunities for academic success. There are five AtD student outcome indicators: (1) Successful completion of developmental courses and progression to college-level courses; (2) Enrollment and successful completion of college-level "gatekeeper" courses; (3) Passing grades (C or higher) in all courses; (4) Semester-to-semester persistence; and (5) Completion/graduation attaining certificates and degrees. All colleges of the Houston Community College System (HCCS) participate in this initiative to cultivate and promote a culture of evidence in tracking and documenting student success.

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**Introduction**

The focus of this brief is to assess demographics of students in the 2004, 2005, and 2006 cohorts and to note significant changes, if any, among these three cohorts. In some instances, comparisons are given between AtD and HCCS total population. Additionally, enrollment trends are provided for AtD cohorts and overall enrollment ranging over a five-year period (2002-2006). The last section of this issue discusses AtD financial aid recipients by ethnicity.

**Methodology**

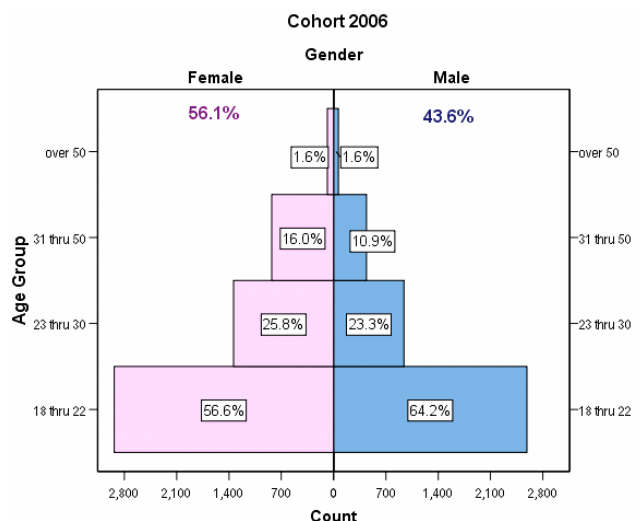
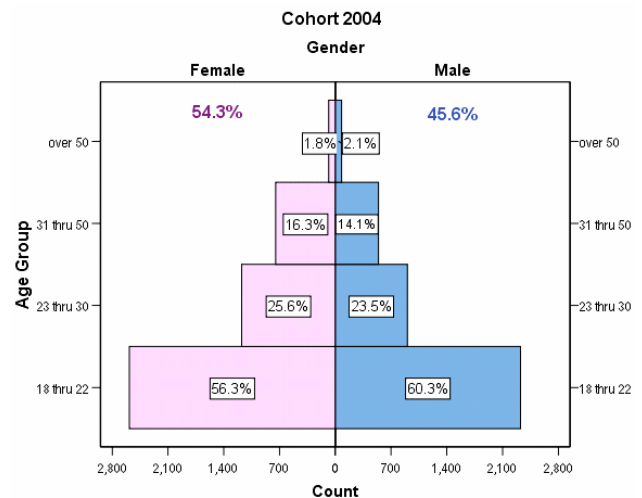
This initiative will track Fall semester student cohorts to examine where students are experiencing difficulties. Historical data for the Fall 2002 through Fall 2006 cohorts has been collected for analysis. Included in each cohort are students enrolling in HCCS in the Fall semesters, having entered that term or the prior summer semester. These cohorts include full-time, part-time, and transferred students entering for the first time as a degree or certificate-seeking semester credit student. These students may have previously attended HCCS as dual credit or adult literacy program students, non-credit or non-degree seeking students.

**Results**

On the average, the 2004, 2005, and 2006 Fall cohorts were comprised of 78% First Time in College (FTIC) students, of which 7% entered with a GED. The remaining 21.6% of the students were classified as transfer students, of which about 2.5% had already obtained an Associate or higher degree.

In comparison with HCCS' general student population, the AtD 2004-2006 cohorts are similar in gender and age characteristics. However, across the three AtD cohorts there is an increasing proportion of females and a changing male population. Interestingly, the percentage of males under age

23 are increasing, while those over 23 are decreasing. If the younger males in the Fall 2006 cohort persist into next year, a closer balance in gender could result.



## Enrollment Patterns

The AtD cohort enrollment pattern closely follows overall HCCS enrollment over the last five years, as shown in the adjacent charts. Just as we expect a record high of over 57,000 students for Fall 2006, the AtD cohort enrollment of 9,315 for that term is the largest since the beginning cohort in 2002.

Similarly, statistics show close proximity in growth patterns for proportion of dual credit students in the AtD cohorts and the overall enrollments. In Fall 2005, these students accounted for 5.4% of the AtD cohort compared to 5.9% of the overall. In Fall 2006, dual credit increased to 8.1% of the overall enrollment, so most likely the AtD cohort will show a similar increase. There is no significant difference in the Grade Point Average of dual credit students in the 2004-2006 cohorts, which have an average GPA of 2.68.

{ **“...one half of dual credit students return to HCCS within 6 years”** }

Prior analysis of dual credit return rates show that over one half of dual credit students will return to HCCS for college-level (SCH) courses within 6 years of graduating from high school.

The chart on the right shows the five-year enrollment trend by college of AtD students. Consistently, Southwest College has the largest percentage, averaging about 30%. Proportionally, Central, Southwest, Southeast, and Northeast are increasing, while Northwest and the Health Science Center are decreasing.

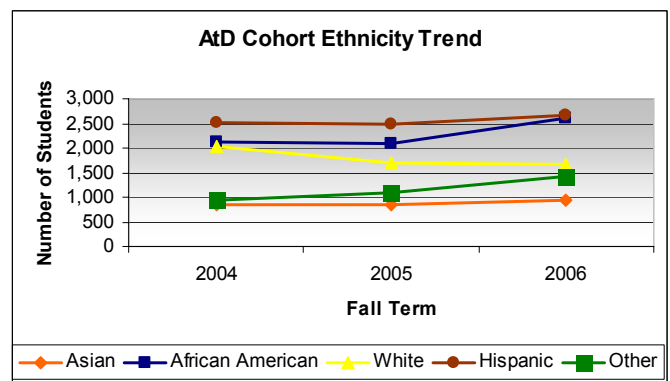
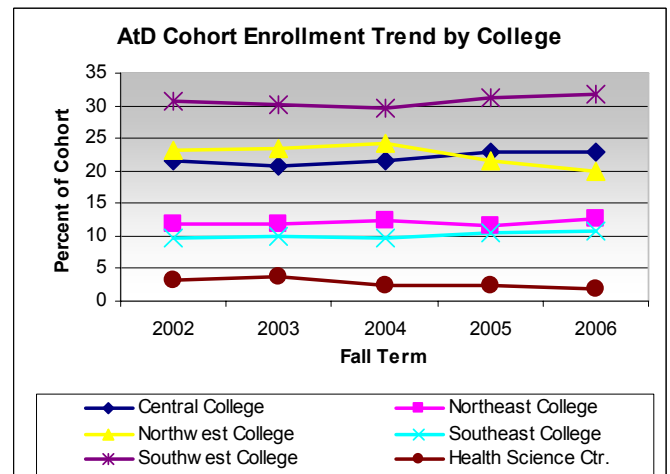
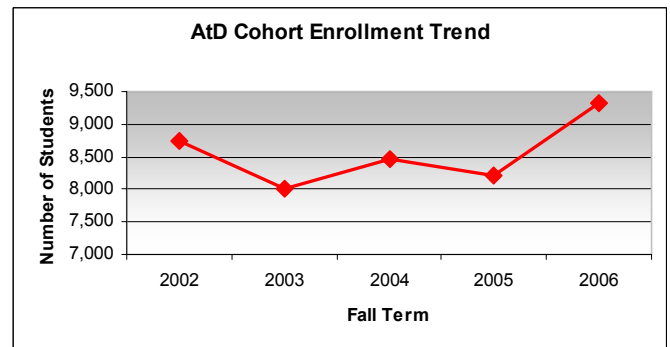
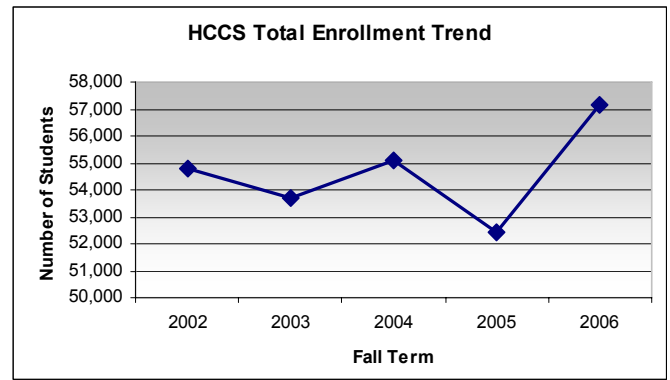
## Ethnic Diversity

The ethnic composition of the AtD cohorts shows increasing percentages for 2 out of 5 groups for the 2004-2006 cohorts. Across the cohorts, the Other group—American Indian/Alaskan, Nonresident Alien, Unknown—increased the most, from 11.2% to 15.3%. Significant among these is the International Student population (9.1% of the 2006 cohort), which reflects the gradual growth of that group in HCCS' overall enrollment. African-American AtD students increased in Fall 2006 to 28%, a change of 3% over the prior two cohorts and over that of the total population.

**The proportion of Hispanics in the AtD cohorts exceeds that of the total population...**

Although the Hispanic proportion of the Fall 2006 cohort is down about 2% from the prior two years, the percentage of Hispanics across the cohorts continues to exceed that of HCCS' total population.

The proportion of Whites in the AtD cohorts has decreased about 5% over the last three years and runs about 2% below the HCCS total population. There was no change in the AtD Asian constituency of 10%, which is proportionally less than the total population.



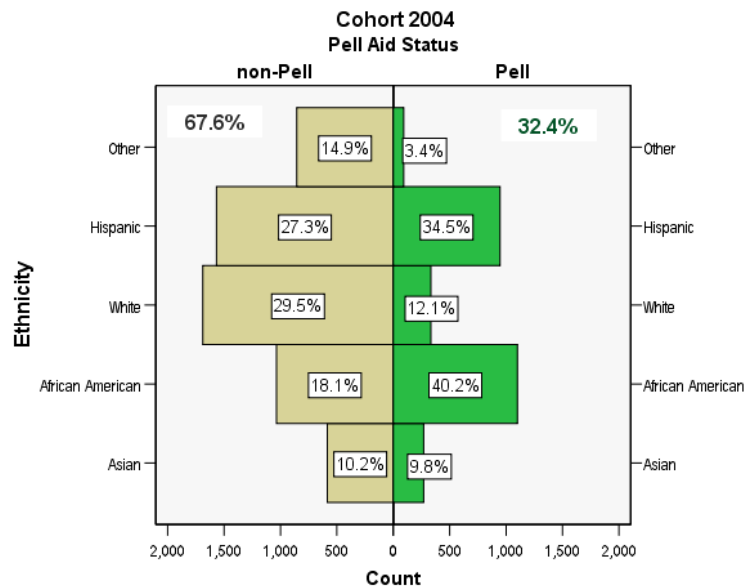
## Ethnicity and Financial Aid Recipients

Not only are a larger proportion of AtD students covered by financial aid than reflected in the entire HCCS population, but the numbers and percentages are growing. Preliminary mid-term figures for the Fall 2006 cohort are likely to increase before end of term as more student packages are approved, adding at least another 150 students, 100 covered by Pell and 50 by other financial aid.

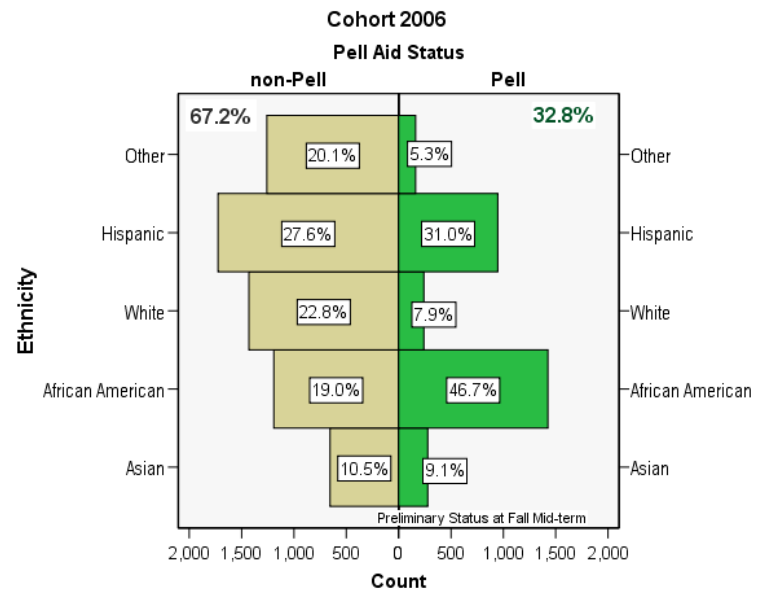
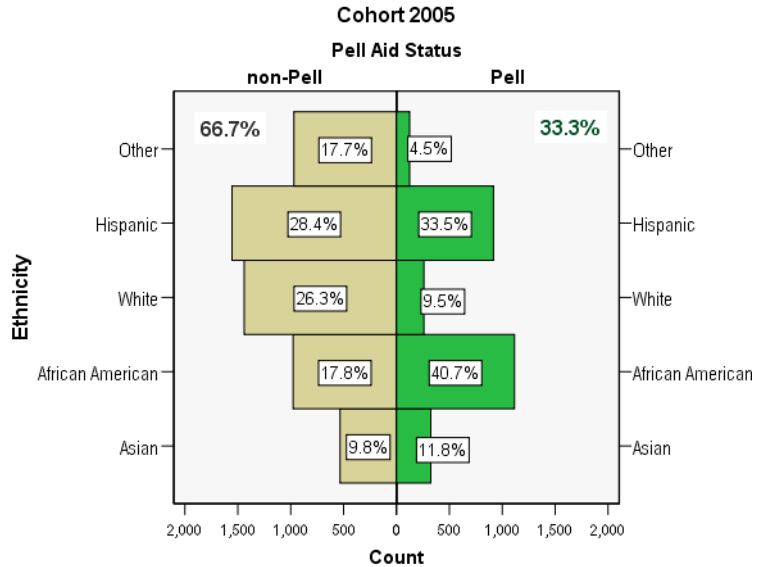
The population pyramids on this page compare Pell and non-Pell status for AtD students, as well as the ethnic population for each status. AtD uses Pell recipient status as a proxy for financial aid need. While an average of 38% of the AtD students are financial aid recipients, only 33% of those receive Pell.

By studying the pyramids for the three cohorts, one can see ethnic trends in Pell Aid status. For instance, the charts show that although African Americans and Hispanics make up about 55% of the AtD cohorts, the two groups constitute 73% to 77% of AtD students on Pell grants.

A comparison of the pyramid for Cohort 2005 with that of Cohort 2006 shows that, based on preliminary Pell figures, the African-American proportion of Pell recipients has already gained six percentage points since Fall 2005.



**AtD uses PELL recipient status as a proxy for financial need.**



## Summary

The Achieving the Dream Cohorts are steadily growing in concert with the overall enrollment at HCCS. As with the initial cohorts, the characteristics of the 2004-2006 AtD student groups are similar in many respects. However, some changes are noteworthy, especially in ethnic composition across the cohorts, age, and the increasing percentage and number of financial aid recipients.

## Next Steps

In the next Research Brief on cohort demographics, academic preparation of Achieving the Dream students and the impact of code changes will be the topic of discussion.