

# EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FUND

REPORT | APRIL 2023



## Acknowledgments

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# Executive Summary

The Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) Progress Report is produced periodically by the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education to provide a comprehensive assessment of this State-funded program.

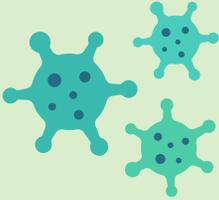
This iteration of the EOF Progress Report provides important comparisons of outcomes between program recipients and non-recipients at participating institutions for the 2017-2018 through 2021-2022 Academic Years. Information contained in this report provides a robust understanding of how EOF continues to serve first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students in overcoming systemic barriers to receiving a college education.



# Report Highlights at a Glance



1. The COVID-19 pandemic is arguably the most widespread and complex social and economic disruption society has faced since the Great Recession. While our understanding of its impact on higher education continues to evolve, the trend analyses contained in this report demonstrate that New Jersey EOF programs were not immune to the pandemic's effects.



Third-term retention rates for undergraduate EOF students remained relatively flat for all sectors except for community colleges through the fall 2019 cohort (the first pandemic cohort). Decreases in third-term retention rates for the fall 2020 and fall 2021 cohorts and fifth-term retention rates for the fall 2018 and fall 2019 cohorts correlate with the expiration of pandemic harm-reduction measures.

2. EOF plays an outsized role in Black student enrollment in New Jersey, with Black students consistently comprising over thirty percent (30%) of the total EOF population over the last five years.

Though encouraging, concerns have emerged since the 2019-2020 academic year, as the proportion of Black students enrolled in EOF programs has decreased by more than three percent (3%) over the past two years.



4. Concerns about enrollment and persistence notwithstanding, the overall success of EOF students is higher than expected, especially given that their pre-college academic indicators (SAT Scores and student's High School Rank) are lower than their non-EOF counterparts at EOF-participating institutions.

For each of the past five years about eighty percent (80%) of EOF students have met the satisfactory academic progress standards of their institution.



The proportion of EOF students with a GPA of 2.0 or higher consistently exceeds the proportion of non-EOF students meeting this threshold by over twenty percentage points.



3. Retention of EOF Students Trending Lower



After remaining nearly flat between the fall 2017 and 2019 cohorts, third-term retention rates declined for the fall 2020 cohort in all sectors except for community colleges.

Fifth-semester retention rates of the fall 2018 cohort were more than one percent (1%) lower for both Public Research and Independent institutions than the fifth-semester retention rates of the fall 2017 cohort.



5. The graduation rates of EOF students are higher than the overall graduation rates of students in EOF-participating institutions.

The EOF Equity Index (EI) compares the graduation rates of EOF students to the overall graduation rates of EOF-participating institutions in the senior public sector.

An EI greater than one-hundred percent (100%) indicates that the EOF program's graduation rate is higher than the overall graduation rate of senior public institutions.

The four-year EI for the fall 2017 cohort was 104.09%, while the five-year EI was 114.15%, indicating that both four- and five-year degree attainment at senior public institutions was higher among EOF students than the institutions as a whole.

# EOF Program Data and Demographic Statistics

## Program Overview

The EOF Program, administered by the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) in conjunction with the EOF Board of Directors, provides support services for undergraduate students with economic and educational disadvantages to help them fulfill the dream of attaining a postsecondary credential. Ensuring program students succeed in college is an investment that benefits the State of New Jersey by increasing the diversity, skills and education level of the State's workforce. This report highlights the outcomes achieved through this investment.

Specifically, this progress report provides an overview of program outcomes in the areas of student retention, graduation and course completion using the most recent data available. It also provides context on funding, in addition to student demographic and financial aid profiles.

**The New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) was created by legislation approved in 1968 to expand higher education opportunities to low income residents of the State.**

### EOF Eligibility Requirements

To be considered for the undergraduate EOF program a student must:

- Be a resident of the State of New Jersey
- Demonstrate an educationally and economically disadvantaged background
- Be accepted through admissions for EOF and be enrolled at a participating New Jersey college or university
- Have a family income that falls within the established income eligibility criteria, defined as being within two hundred percent (200%) of the Federal Poverty Guidelines
- Meet the academic criteria set by the participating higher education institution

### Current Funding and Participation

With a current (Fiscal Year 2023) appropriation of \$54,838,000, OSHE disbursed funds to 71 distinct EOF programs at 29 public institutions and 13 independent institutions (see Appendix C for complete program list). These are comprised of 56 distinct academic year programs and 15 programs that are either distinct summer, graduate, or combination summer and graduate programs. Of the 56 academic year programs, 19 are at two-year institutions and 37 are at four-year institutions. Each of the 37 academic programs at four-year institutions has the ability to support graduate students. The total number of students served for Fiscal Year 2022 was 13,015 (12,685 undergraduates and 330 graduates).

In addition to the State support received, institutions are required to provide a dollar-for-dollar match of their EOF undergraduate academic year program support allocation. These financial contributions supplement the allocation to foster program innovation and ensure that students have access to quality services and support.

## EOF Campus Program Services

For over 50 years, EOF has served as one of the nation's most comprehensive student support programs. Students enrolled in the EOF program receive an academic year student grant to help offset their total cost of education. Grants range from \$200 to \$3,050 annually, depending on the type of institution and students' financial need, and are renewable based upon continued eligibility. Beyond the financial aid support provided, participating students receive some form of advisement/counseling, tutoring, supplemental instruction, student leadership development, summer/pre-first-year bridge program experiences and academic guidance to their respective participants.

The EOF approach to accessing and providing higher education opportunity is supported by evidence-based research and national reports that stress the importance of aggressive outreach initiatives to help first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students pursue and make the transition to higher education.[1][2] It also supports the critical roles of intensive support services (including educational enrichment, student leadership development, holistic counseling services, developmental advisement, tutoring and supplemental instruction) to improve these students' chances of collegiate success. These elements form the core of EOF's campus outreach and service delivery model, but each program is tailored to adapt to the unique mission, culture, organizational structure, and characteristics of the service population at the local college or university.

## Academic Year Enrollment

Table 1 provides academic year 2021-2022 EOF undergraduate unduplicated student enrollments by institutional sectors for the 56 academic-year undergraduate programs. This unduplicated enrollment number includes students enrolled for both the fall 2021 and spring 2022 semesters, as well as students enrolled for just one of those semesters.

**Table 1**  
**EOF Funded, Non-Funded, and Total Undergraduate Enrollment by Sector, Academic Year 2021-2022**

Institutional Sector	Number of Programs	Funded Students	Non-Funded Students	Mixed-Funded Students	Total Number of Students	% of Total EOF Population
Independent Institutions	16	1895	37	15	1947	15.35%
Two-Year Public Institutions	19	3342	380	331	4053	31.95%
Public Research Universities	10	4480	236	80	4796	37.81%
State Colleges and Universities	11	1853	31	5	1889	14.89%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>11570</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>12685</b>	

Source: Educational Opportunity Fund Final Enrollment Report, New Jersey Financial Aid Management System

[1] Kezar, A., & Kitchen, J. A. (2020). *Supporting First-Generation, Low-Income, and Underrepresented Students' Transitions to College Through Comprehensive and Integrated Programs*. *The American Behavioral Scientist (Beverly Hills)*, 64(3), 223-229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764219869397>

[2] Dalton, D., Moore, C. A., & Whittaker, R. (2009). *First-Generation, Low-Income Students*. *The New England Journal of Higher Education*, 23(5), 26-27.

Table 2 provides academic year 2021-2022 unduplicated EOF graduate student enrollments.

Table 2

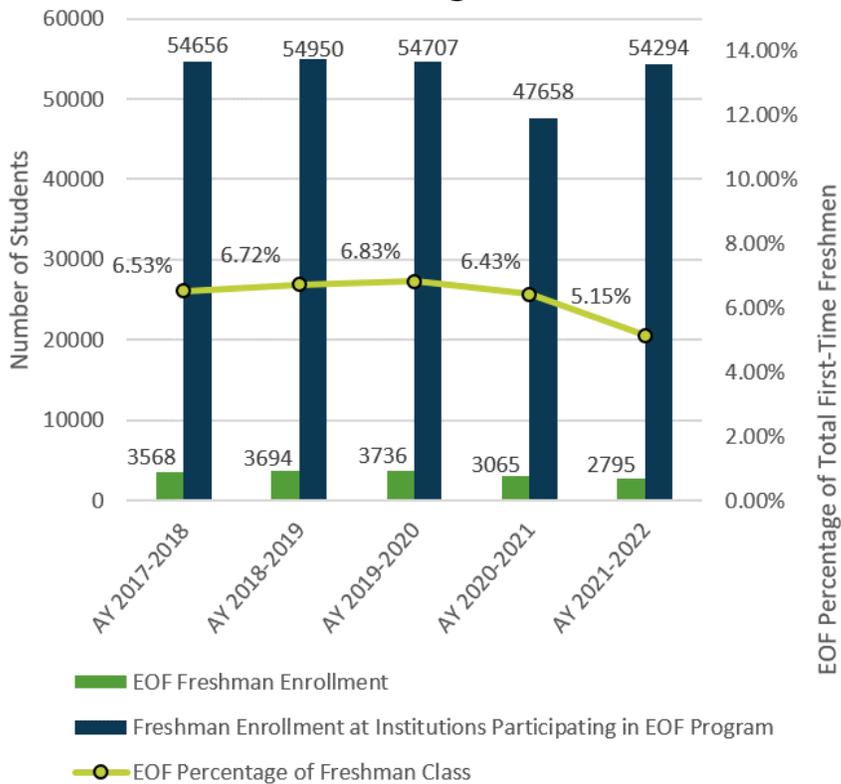
**EOF Graduate Enrollment by Sector, Academic Year 2021-2022**

Institutional Sector	Independent Institutions	Public Research Universities	State Colleges and Universities	Biomedical and Health Sciences Schools	Total
Number of Programs	13	5	5	4	27
Number of Students	73	128	44	85	330

Source: EOF Graduate Student Enrollment Data

Figure 1

**Five Year Trend of First-Time Freshman Enrollment and EOF First-Time Freshman Enrollment  
AY 2017-2018 through AY 2021-2022**



Source: Educational Opportunity Fund Final Enrollment Report, New Jersey Financial Aid Management System

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, overall first-time enrollment in EOF programs was trending upward, driven largely by increases in first-time EOF enrollment at New Jersey County Colleges through the 2020 academic year. Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, first-time enrollment in EOF programs has decreased substantially over the last two academic years, with nearly 1,000 fewer EOF Freshmen enrolling in AY 2022 compared to AY 2020. This trend is demonstrated in figure 1 along with the decline in first-time freshman EOF enrollment, which is expressed as a percentage of the overall first-time freshman enrollment at EOF-participating institutions.

“EOF helped me find classmates with similar backgrounds who are still good friends to this day. The EOF office and program generally served as a home away from home as well as an academic and social support system in a new environment. I would not be where I am today without EOF.”



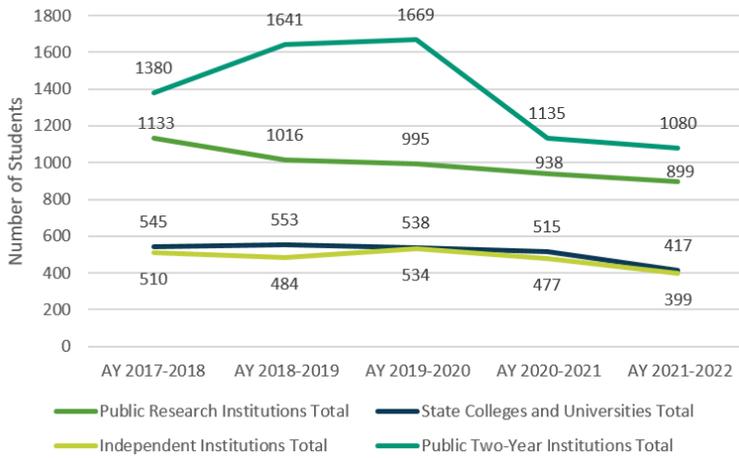
**Kayvon Paul**

Year of Graduation: 2019,  
School/EOF Program:  
Monmouth University, Degree:  
Bachelor's, Hometown: Long  
Branch, NJ, Current Position:  
Attorney at Hogan Lovells

Figure 2 provides the trends in enrollment of first-time EOF freshmen by institutional sector. Following the onset of the pandemic, first-time enrollment in EOF programs decreased across all sectors, with county colleges experiencing the steepest drop in first-time freshman enrollments between the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 Academic Years.

Figure 2

**Five Year Trend of EOF First-Time Freshman by Institutional Sector AY 2017-2018 through AY 2021-2022**

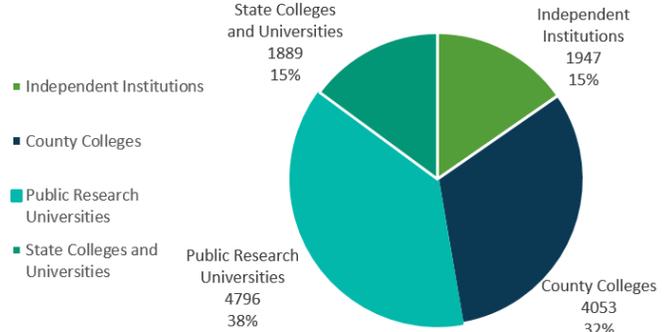


Source: Educational Opportunity Fund Final Enrollment Report, New Jersey Financial Aid Management System

Figure 3 shows that the five public research universities enroll nearly four out of every ten EOF students with another third enrolled at the 19 participating community colleges.

Figure 3

**EOF Enrollment by Institutional Sector AY 2021-2022**

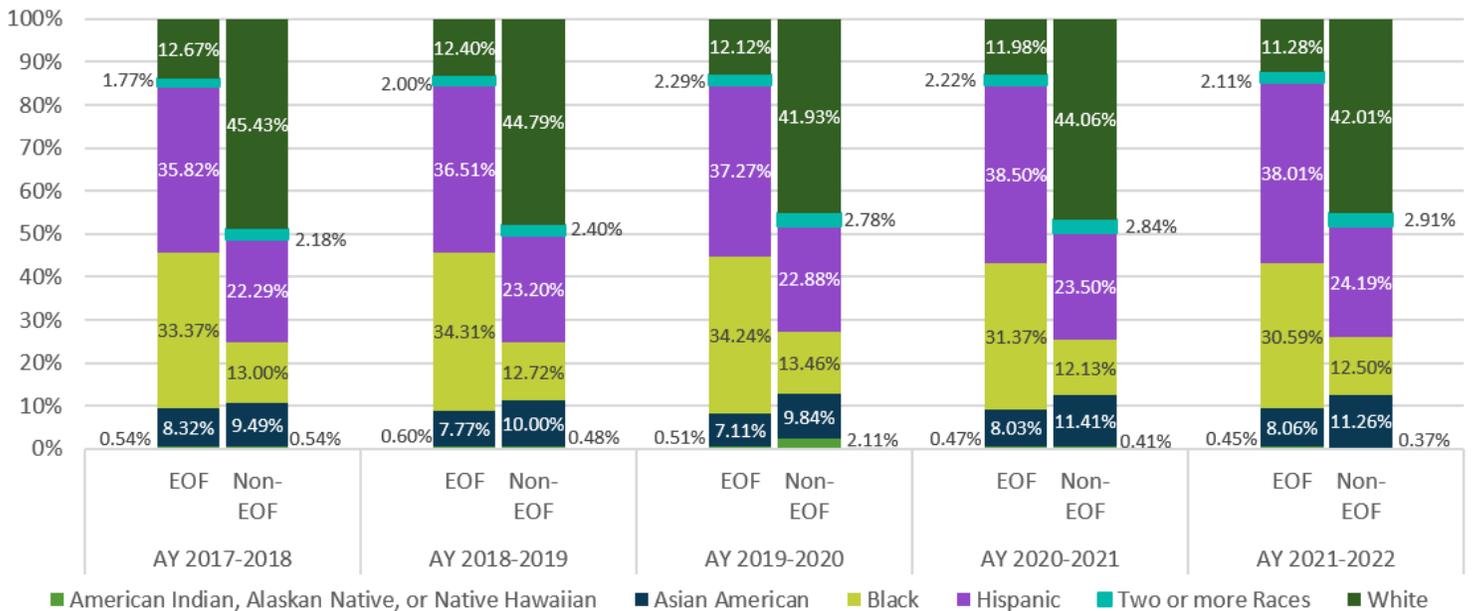


Source: Educational Opportunity Fund Final Enrollment Report, New Jersey Financial Aid Management System

Figure 4 displays the racial/ethnic distribution trends of EOF students compared to non-EOF students at EOF participating institutions. Black and Hispanic students have consistently comprised the largest proportion of EOF student enrollment combining for nearly seventy percent (70%) of the total share, followed by white students at about twelve percent (12%), and Asian students at about eight percent (8%). While these figures demonstrate the potential of the EOF program to increase equity in higher education attainment in New Jersey, special attention should be paid to the number and percentage of Black students enrolled in EOF programs, as both the number and proportion of EOF students who identify as Black have decreased since the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic.[3]

Figure 4

**Comparison Trend of EOF versus Non-EOF Undergraduate Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity AY 2017-2018 through AY 2021-2022**



Source: Educational Opportunity Fund Final Enrollment Report, New Jersey Financial Aid Management System; New Jersey Student Unit Record System

[3] Due to data limitations, institutions not participating in SURE are not included in the non-EOF analyses. As of AY 2021-2022, only two independent, public-mission EOF-participating institutions were not participating in SURE.

The enrollment trend of undergraduate EOF students by gender has held steady since the 2017-2018 academic year, with women accounting for approximately two-thirds of the undergraduate EOF population. In contrast, women comprise fifty-four percent (54%) of the overall undergraduate population in New Jersey and fifty-eight percent (58%) nationally (SOURCE: Fall 2021 IPEDS Fall Enrollment Survey).

## Wiktorija Piaszczyńska



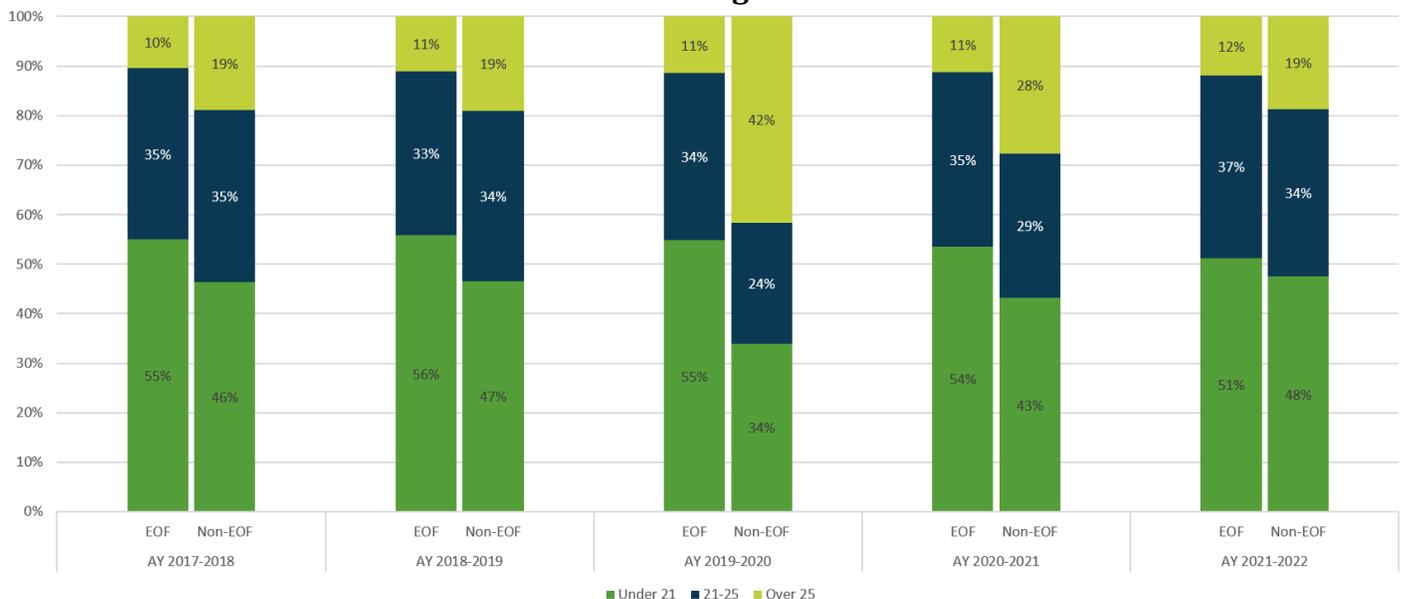
Year of Graduation: 2020, School/EOF Program: Essex County College, Degree: Associate's, Year of Graduation: 2022, School/EOF Program: Rutgers-Newark, Hometown: South Orange, NJ, Current Position: Graduate Student & Part-Time Tutor

"I started my academic journey at Essex County College where I also became a part of the EOF program. There is a lot I can say about the funding and resources provided but more important to me was the community. EOF truly provided me with an opportunity to belong and become a part of something more. I often felt homesick but I knew the EOF department was a safe space and I could always talk to my counselor as well as other staff. When I finished my associate's degree, I transferred to a 4-year institution and EOF played a big part in that as well...I became a part of the EOF program at Rutgers-Newark but when the opportunity to work for the EOF program at Essex was presented I didn't hesitate. While working as a tutor for EOF I saw how important community support is for each student's success. I benefited from it as well as earned my bachelor's degree in Environmental Health and Safety from Rutgers University Newark. I am currently attending the School of Public Health at Rutgers New Brunswick. I have a strong interest in data analysis which is why I chose to pursue a biostatistics concentration."

Figure 5 compares the trend of EOF versus non-EOF undergraduate enrollment by age between academic year 2017-2018 and academic year 2021-2022. Over the past four years, an increasing proportion of EOF undergraduates were between the ages of 21 and 25, suggesting a slight upward trend in the age of EOF beneficiaries. During fall 2022, fifty-one percent (51%) of the EOF students were under age 21, compared to forty-eight percent (48%) of the non-EOF student population attending EOF-participating institutions. Twelve percent (12%) of EOF students were age 25 or higher compared to nineteen percent (19%) of the non-EOF student population attending EOF-participating institutions. When compared with the previous EOF Progress Report (2015), this demonstrates that the age demographics of EOF students are trending more in-line with the age demographics of the general student population attending EOF-participating institutions in New Jersey.

Figure 5

### Comparison Trend of EOF versus Non-EOF Undergraduate Enrollment by Age AY 2017-2018 through AY 2021-2022



Source: Educational Opportunity Fund Final Enrollment Report, New Jersey Financial Aid Management System; New Jersey Student Unit Record System

## Summer Enrollment

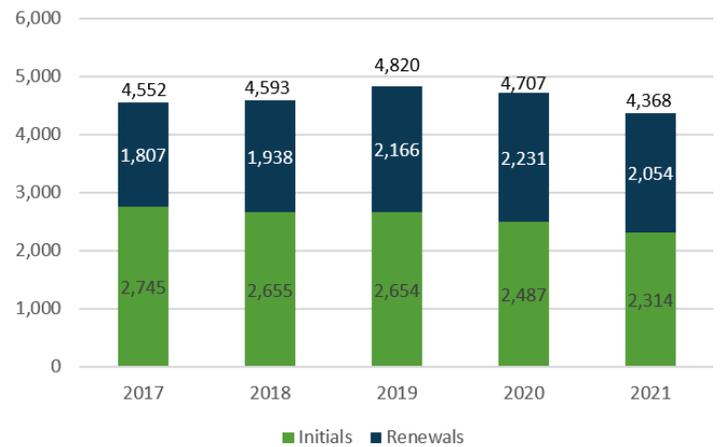
The number of incoming freshmen and renewal students enrolled in the summer program declined between 2019 and 2021. As demonstrated in Figure 6, there was a nine percent (9%) decline (452 students) in total EOF summer enrollment between summer 2019 and summer 2021, which counters a growth trend over the previous two summers. The downward trend in EOF Summer program enrollment during this period is likely explained by the COVID-19 pandemic, and preliminary data for summer 2022 indicate an increase in EOF Summer enrollment for the first time since 2019. The summer program decreases the amount of time it takes for students to graduate and helps reduce loan indebtedness.

## Winter Session Enrollment

Providing students with the ability to enroll in courses and receive support during the Winter Session plays an important role in EOF's ability to help students reduce time to degree completion and improve college affordability. Since 2017, 3,076 students have taken courses during the Winter Session.

Figure 6

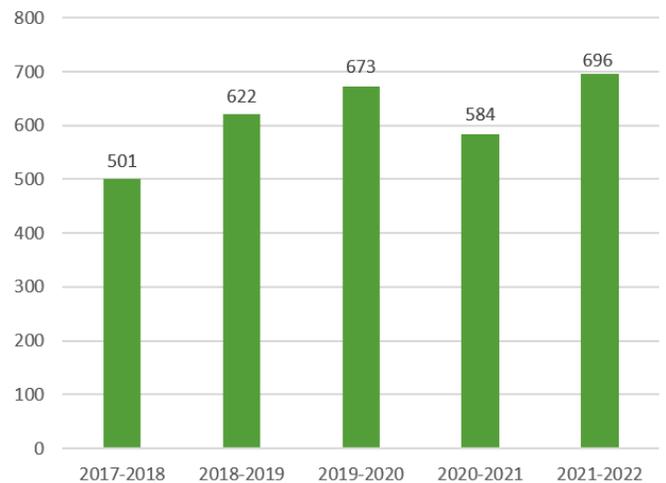
**EOF Summer Program Enrollment Trends  
Summer 2017 (Fiscal 2018) to  
Summer 2021 (Fiscal 2022)**



Source: Educational Opportunity Fund Summer Enrollment Data

Figure 7

**EOF Winter Program Enrollment Trends  
Winter 2017-2018 to Winter 2021-2022**



Source: Educational Opportunity Fund Winter Enrollment Data

**“EOF has allowed me to receive the extra support to stay on track for my academic studies as well as gain the skills and knowledge to transition successfully into a professional career as a Social Worker for the State of New Jersey.”**

Year of Graduation: 2022, School/EOF Program: Rutgers University - Camden, Degree: Bachelor's, Hometown: Atlantic City, NJ, Current Position: Social Worker at the New Jersey Commission of the Blind and Visually Impaired



**Angela Jones**

# Measuring EOF Success

EOF's student and programmatic success is measured by a combination of indicators including students' academic progress and standing, retention and graduation rates. During the 2021-22 academic year, EOF program participants completed an average of eighty-one percent (81%) of course credits attempted, and about eighty percent (80%) of the total EOF student population made satisfactory academic progress. Eighty-six percent (86%) earned a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.0 or better compared with only sixty-three percent (63%) of non-EOF undergraduate students enrolled at EOF-participating institutions. Fifty-four percent (54%) of the total EOF population earned GPAs of 3.0 (B) or better, compared with just forty-five percent (45%) of non-EOF undergraduate students enrolled in EOF-participating institutions. This suggests that while the average GPA is similar between EOF and non-EOF undergraduate students, the median GPA is higher for EOF undergraduate students than non-EOF students. In other words, a greater proportion of EOF students maintain a higher GPA than non-EOF participants.

## Predictors of Student Success

Historically, industry standards for predicting student success in college have relied upon several high school metrics including, but not limited to, student's high school rank[4], SAT scores[5][6], and family income[7][8]. EOF students have consistently lower SAT scores and generally end high school with an average class rank lower than their non-EOF peers. Despite this, the outcomes discussed later in this report provide evidence suggesting that the financial and academic supports provided through the EOF program facilitate an enhanced experience that allows EOF students to outperform their peers in a number of success measures.

“EOF is important to me because the program supported me in achieving my academic goals. I believe that I was given major insight into the world of college that I would have been ignorant to otherwise. EOF provided me with a support system that I could heavily rely on to assist me with any and all academic challenges while also leading me to several life changing opportunities.”



*Year of Graduation: 2022,  
School/EOF Program: Kean  
University, Degree: Bachelor's,  
Hometown: New Brunswick, NJ,  
Current Position: Retention  
Specialist for EOF at Middlesex  
College*

**Anijah Jackson**

[4] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3685191/>

[5] <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED563073.pdf>

[6] <https://satsuite.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/national-sat-validity-study-overview-admissions-enrollment-leaders.pdf>

[7] <https://www.ctpublic.org/education/2019-05-15/georgetown-study-wealth-not-ability-the-biggest-predictor-of-future-success>

[8] <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/05/23/feds-release-broader-data-socioeconomic-status-and-college-enrollment-and-completion>

Table 3 provides a comparison of average SAT scores for EOF first-year students with regularly admitted students at NJ senior public colleges and universities. One of the indices in the EOF regulations to identify educational disadvantage is that an applicant's standardized test scores fall below an institution's norms for regular admissions. Importantly, the SAT scores of EOF students are consistently lower than that of regularly admitted students. Across all senior public institutions, the average percent deficit between SAT scores of EOF students and regularly admitted students is between eleven and twenty-five percent (11%-25%).

**Table 3**

**Average SAT Scores for EOF and Non-EOF First-Year Students at NJ Senior Public Institutions**

Public Research Universities	Academic Year	Math Regular Admit	Math EOF	Evidenced-Based Reading and Writing Regular Admit	Evidenced-Based Reading and Writing EOF	Total Score Regular Admit	Total Score EOF	Percentage Deficit Between EOF and Regular Admit Scores								
									2019-2020	638	531	610	521	1248	1052	-15.70%
2020-2021	627	539	607	530	1234	1070	-13.33%									
2021-2022	648	547	627	538	1275	1085	-14.91%									
State Colleges and Universities	Academic Year	Math Regular Admit	Math EOF	Evidenced-Based Reading and Writing Regular Admit	Evidenced-Based Reading and Writing EOF	Total Score Regular Admit	Total Score EOF	Percentage Deficit Between EOF and Regular Admit Scores								
									2019-2020	565	421	563	425	1128	846	-25.04%
									2020-2021	562	496	563	497	1125	993	-11.76%
									2021-2022	595	507	593	511	1188	1017	-14.36%

Source: New Jersey Student Unit Record System

Table 4 demonstrates the average high school rank of EOF, special admit, and regular admit students in New Jersey's senior public institutions. While entering EOF students' SAT scores were on average nearly twelve percent (12%) lower than that of regular admits across New Jersey's four-year public institutions, high school rank of EOF students at public research institutions was nearly the same as that of regular admits in the sector. However, high school rank was much lower for EOF students at non-research State Colleges and Universities, averaging only seventy-nine percent (79%) that of regular admits in the sector. The disparity between average SAT scores and high school rank for EOF students compared to regularly admitted students at the State's public research universities could be an indicator demonstrating that EOF support services assist in the success of these students and warrants further investigation.

**Table 4**

**Average High School Rank (percentile) of EOF and Regular Admit First-Year Students at NJ Senior Public Institutions, AY 2017-2018 through AY 2021-2022**

Academic Year	EOF		Special		Regular	
	Public Research Universities	State Colleges and Universities	Public Research Universities	State Colleges and Universities	Public Research Universities	State Colleges and Universities
2017-2018	64.87	57.82	54.47	48.71	65	66.13
2018-2019	65.04	54.7	47.72	78.27	63.34	66.73
2019-2020	66.77	52.97	90.5	Not Reported	75.5	81.44
2020-2021	67.59	55.92	79.5	Not Reported	67.7	67
2021-2022	59.21	61.74	48.17	29.67	43.4	82.06

Source: New Jersey Student Unit Record System

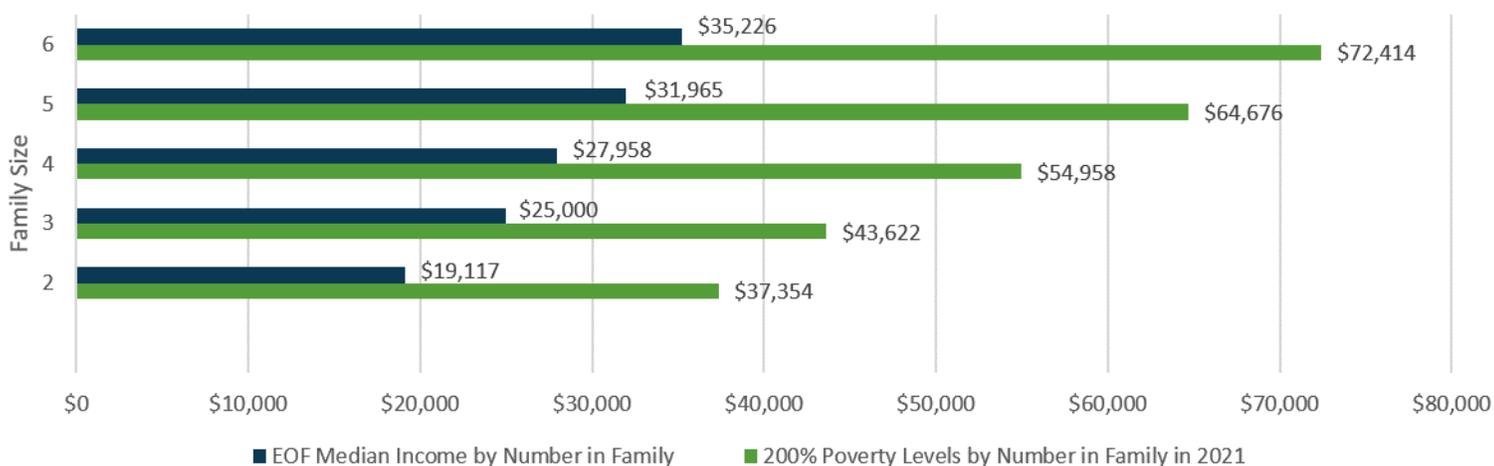
## EOF Student Family Finances

One criterion for initial EOF eligibility is that students have a family income and assets that fall within the income criteria, which is based on two-hundred percent (200%) of the federal poverty income guidelines. Once a student receives an EOF academic year grant, the student continues to retain their eligibility to receive funding if they continue to meet the financial eligibility criteria. Students who fail to continue to meet the financial eligibility criteria may continue to receive EOF program support services as a non-funded student, but they must meet all other State and institutional requirements to remain a program participant.

Figure 8 compares the median family income of initial EOF students who were funded during the 2021-2022 academic year to the income ceilings (by family size) set forth in the EOF regulations. As the data demonstrates, the program serves students from extremely low-income backgrounds, in as much as the EOF students' median family incomes are on average only sixty-four percent (64%) of the two-hundred percent (200%) poverty level set forth in the regulations.

Figure 8

### EOF Students' Median Family Income Compared to Eligibility Ceilings by Family Size AY 2021-2022



Source: Educational Opportunity Fund Final Enrollment Report, New Jersey Financial Aid Management System

**“Our EOF scholars are truly amazing. Their success both in and outside of the classroom continues to serve as a testimony to the power of EOF,” said EOF Executive Director Dr. Hasani Carter. “Their achievements can not only be attributed to their hard work and sacrifices, but are also tied to the dedication and support that they receive from the EOF program directors, campus staff and the continued investments made by both the State and our participating institutions.”**

## Undergraduate EOF Student Outcomes

EOF has developed a set of outcome indicators that are used to monitor program performance at the campus level and statewide. Student and programmatic success are measured by a combination of indicators:

- Academic Progress and Standing
  - Percentage of students making satisfactory academic progress by sector
  - Average GPA by sector
  
- Student Retention Rates
  - Third -semester cohort (freshman to sophomore year) retention rates (Figure 10) by sector
  - Fifth-semester cohort (sophomore to junior year) retention rates (Figure 11)
  
- Graduation Rates that correspond to the maximum number of semesters students are eligible to receive EOF:
  - County Colleges: 4-year cohort rate
  - Independents, Public Research Universities and State Colleges and Universities: 4-year and 5-year cohort rates

### Academic Progress and Standing

As noted in Table 5, about eighty percent (80%) of the total EOF student population made satisfactory academic progress each year since the 2017-2018 academic year. Though the percentage of EOF students making satisfactory academic progress had slight, steady decreases each year between the 2017-2018 and 2020-2021 academic years, the overall decline since 2017-2018 can largely be explained by the sharp drop between 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. This is particularly true for county colleges, which experienced a drop of nearly 3.25% in students making satisfactory academic progress between the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic years. These sharp declines are likely due to the expiration of COVID-era policies that were implemented early in the pandemic—such as the ability for students to take courses as pass/fail as opposed to the normal grading scale—however the data is insufficient for this conclusion to be made.

**Table 5**

**Percentage of EOF Students Making Satisfactory Academic Progress by Sector**

Academic Year	County Colleges	State Colleges and Universities	Public Research Universities	Independent Colleges	Total
2017-2018	66.66%	86.69%	87.47%	89.65%	81.09%
2018-2019	65.85%	92.36%	91.19%	91.45%	82.37%
2019-2020	64.75%	92.62%	89.75%	91.28%	80.62%
2020-2021	64.07%	92.13%	88.11%	90.98%	80.01%
2021-2022	60.83%	91.79%	87.55%	90.57%	78.27%

Source: Educational Opportunity Fund Final Enrollment Report, New Jersey Financial Aid Management System

As highlighted in Table 6, program participants maintained an average cumulative GPA between 2.89 and 3.08 since the 2017-2018 academic year, with the highest average maintained by EOF students attending public research universities followed by those attending state colleges and universities. Another outcome of note is that EOF students attending county colleges maintained a higher GPA than their non-EOF counterparts every year, the only sector where that occurred.

Table 6

**Comparison of EOF and Non-EOF Average GPA by Sector  
AY 2017-2018 through AY 2021-2022**

Academic Year	County Colleges		State Colleges and Universities		Public Research Universities		Independent Colleges		Total	
	EOF	Non-EOF	EOF	Non-EOF	EOF	Non-EOF	EOF	Non-EOF	EOF	Non-EOF
2017-2018	2.90	2.89	2.96	3.11	2.99	3.08	2.97	3.16	2.95	3.00
2018-2019	2.93	2.91	2.91	3.11	2.92	3.09	2.85	3.26	2.9	3.02
2019-2020	2.87	2.67	2.93	3.09	2.89	2.93	2.95	3.20	2.89	2.83
2020-2021	3.16	2.72	3.05	3.21	3.08	3.14	2.89	3.10	3.08	2.96
2021-2022	2.87	2.65	3.03	3.21	3.10	3.22	2.94	3.26	3.00	2.97

Source: New Jersey Student Unit Record System

Table 7 provides a comparison of the proportion of EOF and non-EOF students enrolled at EOF-participating institutions that meet certain GPA thresholds. Greater proportions of EOF students maintain high GPAs compared to their non-EOF peers, with the proportion of EOF students maintaining a 2.0 GPA or higher exceeding the proportion of non-EOF students meeting this threshold by over twenty percentage points over the last five years.

Table 7

**Comparison of Percentages of EOF and Non-EOF Students Meeting GPA Thresholds  
AY 2017-2018 through AY 2021-2022**

Academic Year	2.0 GPA or Higher		3.0 GPA or Higher	
	EOF	Non-EOF	EOF	Non-EOF
2017-2018	84%	62%	41%	37%
2018-2019	84%	61%	44%	37%
2019-2020	85%	60%	44%	36%
2020-2021	88%	63%	55%	43%
2021-2022	86%	63%	54%	45%

Source: New Jersey Student Unit Record System

## Student Retention Rates

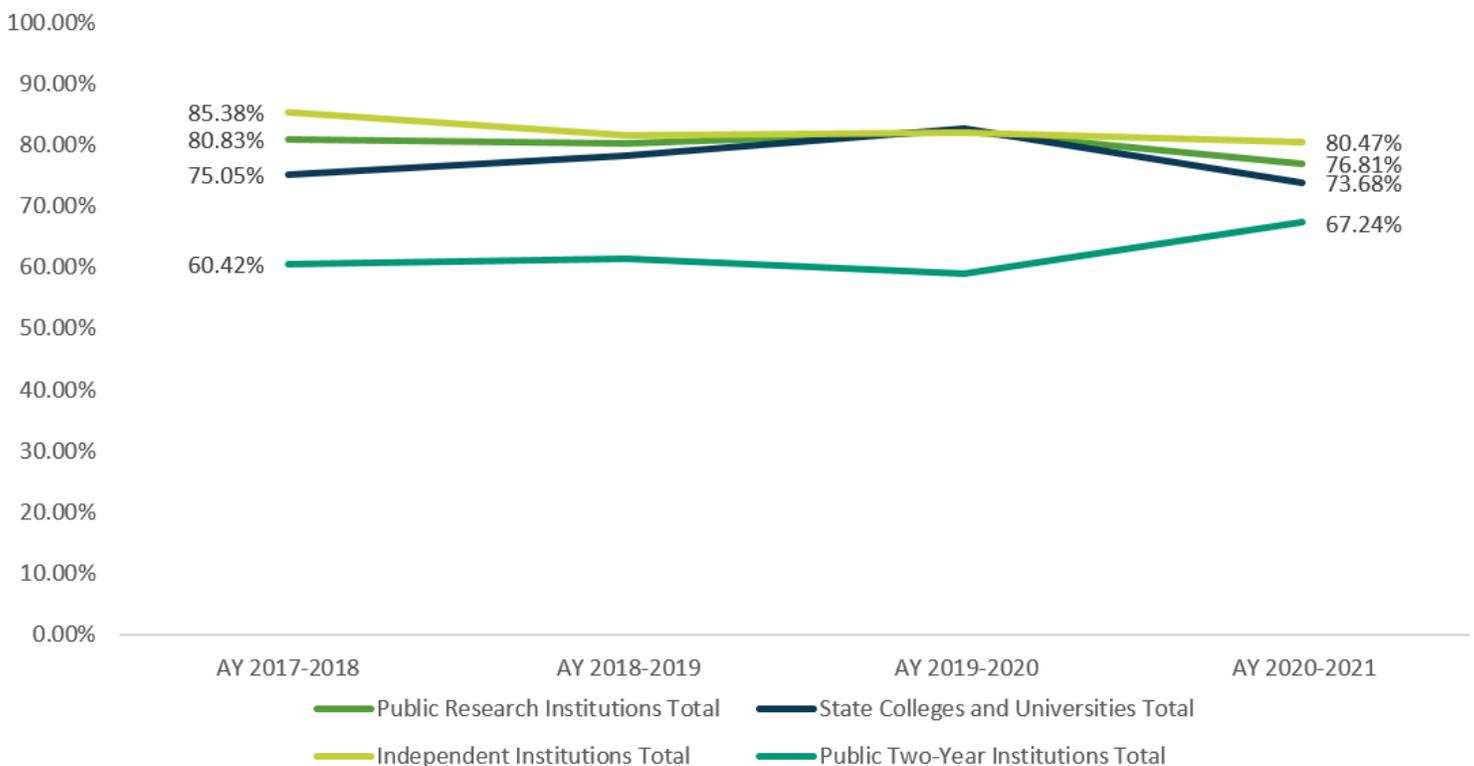
College student retention studies traditionally follow the progress of an entering fall cohort of students over a specified period of time; generally first year to second year (third semester) and persistence to graduation. This iteration of the EOF Progress Report includes the third-semester retention rates from the fall 2017 freshman cohort through the fall 2021 freshman cohort.

Figure 9 highlights the five-year trend of average third-semester cohort retention rates by institutional sector. As the data demonstrates, all sectors, except for community colleges, experienced slight declines in overall third-semester retention rates during this five-year period. State Colleges and Universities achieved improvements through the fall 2019 cohort, but experienced significant declines over the past two cohorts (fall 2020 and fall 2021) such that third-semester retention rates are over one percent (1%) lower as of the 2021-2022 academic year than in the 2017-2018 academic year.

The decreases in third-semester retention rates for EOF students across New Jersey's public and independent four-year institutions coincides with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The most precipitous decline was at private, independent institutions at almost five percent (5%). While the public two-year sector experienced declines in retention following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the third-semester retention rates of students in the State's community colleges rebounded for the fall 2021 cohort, with third-semester retention rates nearly seven percent (7%) higher than the fall 2017 cohort. This sector has witnessed a substantial downward trend in enrollment for the previous decade, but this recent uptick is encouraging and worth exploring further.

Figure 9

**EOF Third-Semester Retention Rates by Sector and Cohort**

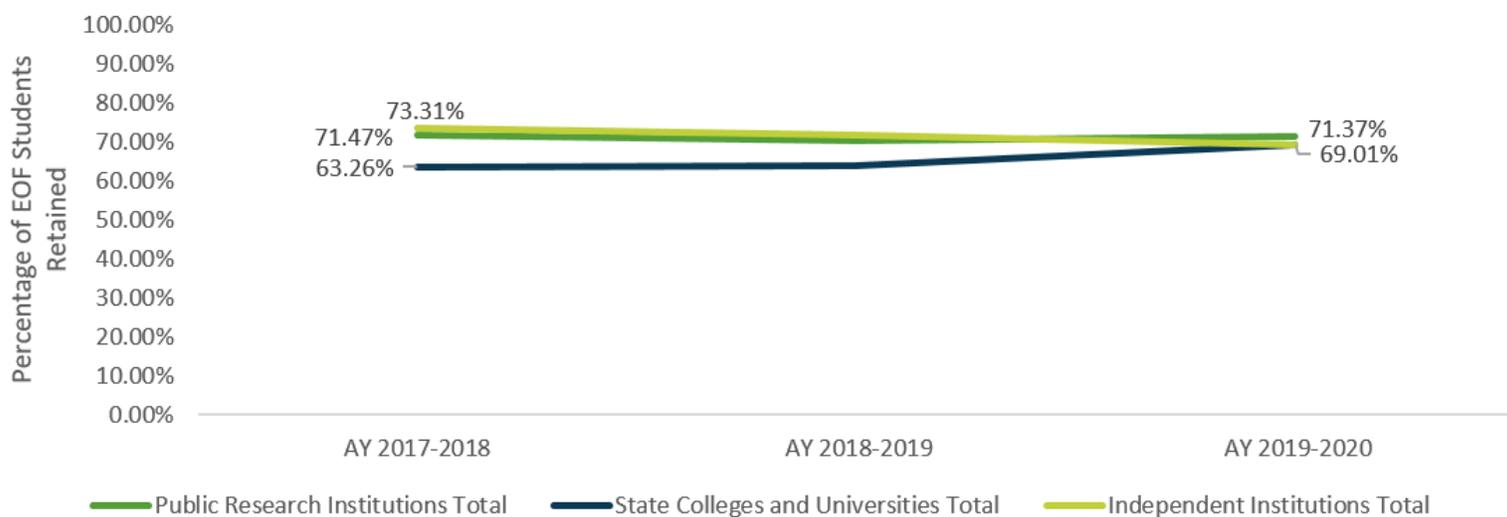


Source: New Jersey Student Unit Record System

Figure 10 highlights the five-year trend in the average fifth-semester cohort retention rates (retention from the second to third year of enrollment) by institutional sector.

Figure 10

### EOF Fifth-Semester Retention Rates by Sector and Cohort



Source: New Jersey Student Unit Record System

Historically, EOF students’ retention rates compare favorably with others, despite entering college with significant economic disadvantages. Figure 11 compares first- to second-year cohort retention rate trends for EOF to the overall institutional sector rates for first-time, full-time freshmen. The figure demonstrates that third-term retention rates for both EOF and non-EOF students remained mostly flat between the 2017, 2018, and 2019 cohorts. Decreases in the percentage of EOF students retained in the third semester at Public Research Universities, State Colleges and Universities, and Independent Public Mission institutions between the 2019 and 2020 cohorts suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on the EOF student population. Interestingly, while an eight-point increase was observed in third-term retention rates for EOF students at public two-year institutions (county colleges), a six-point decrease was observed in third-term retention rates for non-EOF students in the sector.

Year of Graduation: 2020,  
 School/EOF Program: Hudson  
 County Community College,  
 Degree: Associate’s,  
 Year of Graduation: 2022,  
 School/EOF Program: Saint  
 Peter’s University, Degree:  
 Bachelor’s, Hometown: Jersey  
 City, NJ, Current Position:  
 Graduate Student & EOF  
 Counselor at Saint Peter’s  
 University

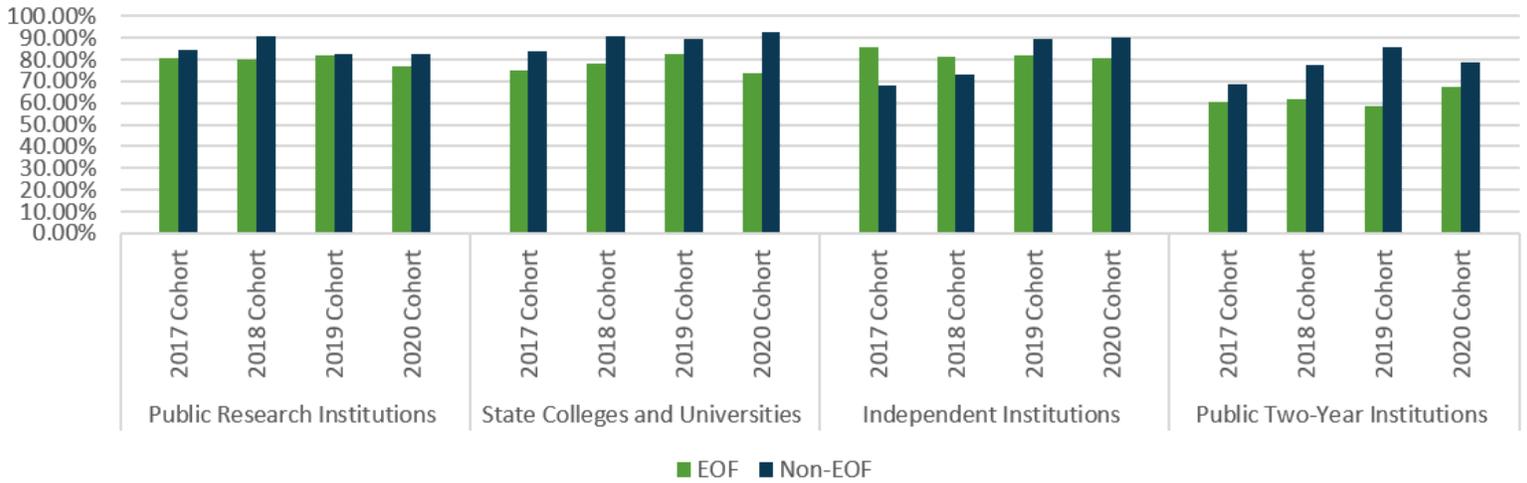


Avery Tan

“EOF is the true definition of 'Extension of Family.' Without the EOF Program I would have not been able to achieve so much success throughout my educational endeavors including my professional career aspirations.”

Figure 11

### Comparison of Third-Term Retention Rates of EOF and Non-EOF Students by Cohort and Sector Fall 2017 Cohort through Fall 2020 Cohort



Source: New Jersey Student Unit Record System

Year of Graduation: 2020,  
School/EOF Program: Passaic  
County Community College,  
Degree: Associate's, Year of  
Graduation: 2022, School/EOF  
Program: New Jersey Institute  
of Technology - EOP, Degree:  
Bachelor's, Hometown:  
Paterson, NJ, Current Position:  
Graduate Student - Ph.D. in  
Electrical Engineering at  
Purdue University



Jehan Shalabi

“As a first-generation, under-represented engineering student living in a low-income community, I am so grateful that EOF has blessed me with the guidance (counseling, financial assistance, etc.) to focus on my academics and pursue undergraduate and graduate degrees.”

### Graduation Rates

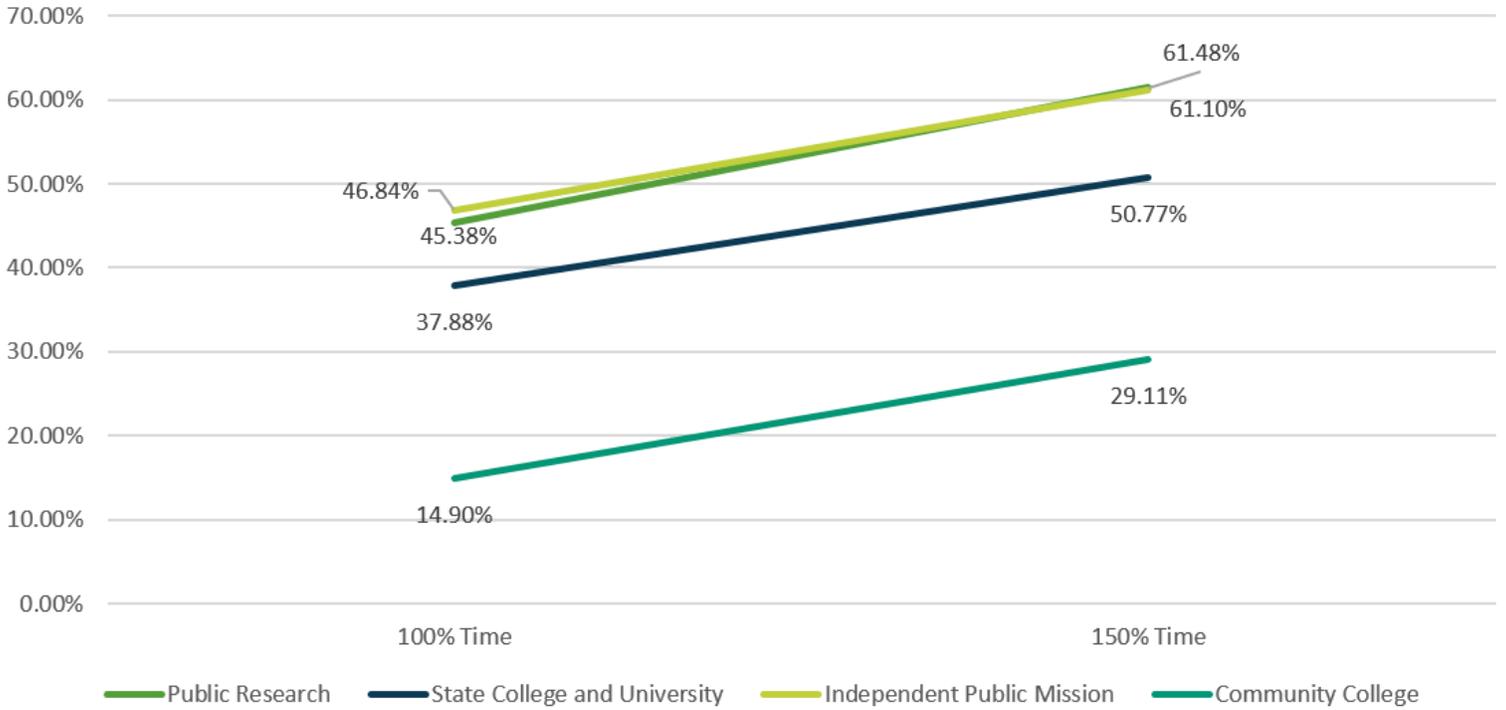
The ultimate goal of the EOF program is to assist participating students in improving their chances of graduation. The EOF regulations provide up to a maximum of twelve semesters of financial support. Similarly, most student persistence research and the federal financial aid regulations use a six-year graduation rate as a barometer of student and program success at four-year institutions and a three-year graduation rate at two-year institutions. This is referred to as the percentage of students who earn a degree within one-hundred-fifty percent (150%) time-to-degree. Due to changes in data systems that have taken place since the 2015 EOF Progress Report, EOF cohort data presently only spans five years, and therefore one-hundred-fifty percent (150%) time-to-degree for four-year institutions is lower than it will be when a sixth year of data becomes available.

Figure 12 summarizes the EOF credential attainment rates within one-hundred percent (100%) of the time-to-degree and within one-hundred-fifty percent (150%) of the time-to-degree for the public and independent sectors. As to be expected, the trend line is in the right direction for each sector.[10] Interestingly, the 4-year graduation rate for public research universities begins slightly below that of independent public mission institutions, but surpasses them slightly for the 5-year rate.

[10] Given that only five academic years have passed since the fall 2017 cohort began, the 150% time for Senior Public institutions only includes students who graduated within five years of matriculation.

Figure 12

### Fall 2017 EOF Cohort Graduation Rates by Sector All Credential Levels

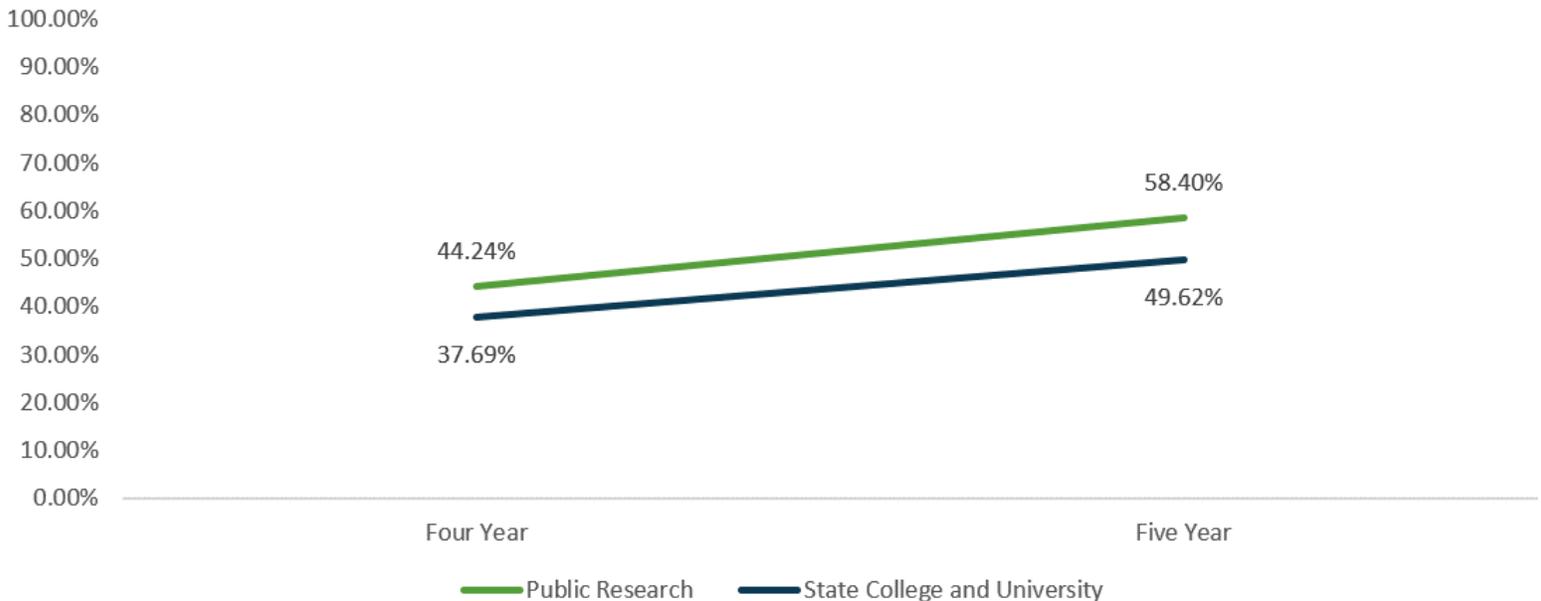


Source: New Jersey Student Unit Record System

Figure 13 highlights the bachelor's degree graduation rates of the Fall 2017 EOF cohort. As to be expected, at each degree level graduation rates improve as we move further away from the entering cohort. This effect tapers off after the one-hundred-fifty percent (150%) time-to-degree window, however it also reflects the life challenges that often interrupt EOF students' pursuit of their collegiate dreams.

Figure 13

### Fall 2017 EOF Cohort Graduation Rates by Sector Bachelor's Degrees



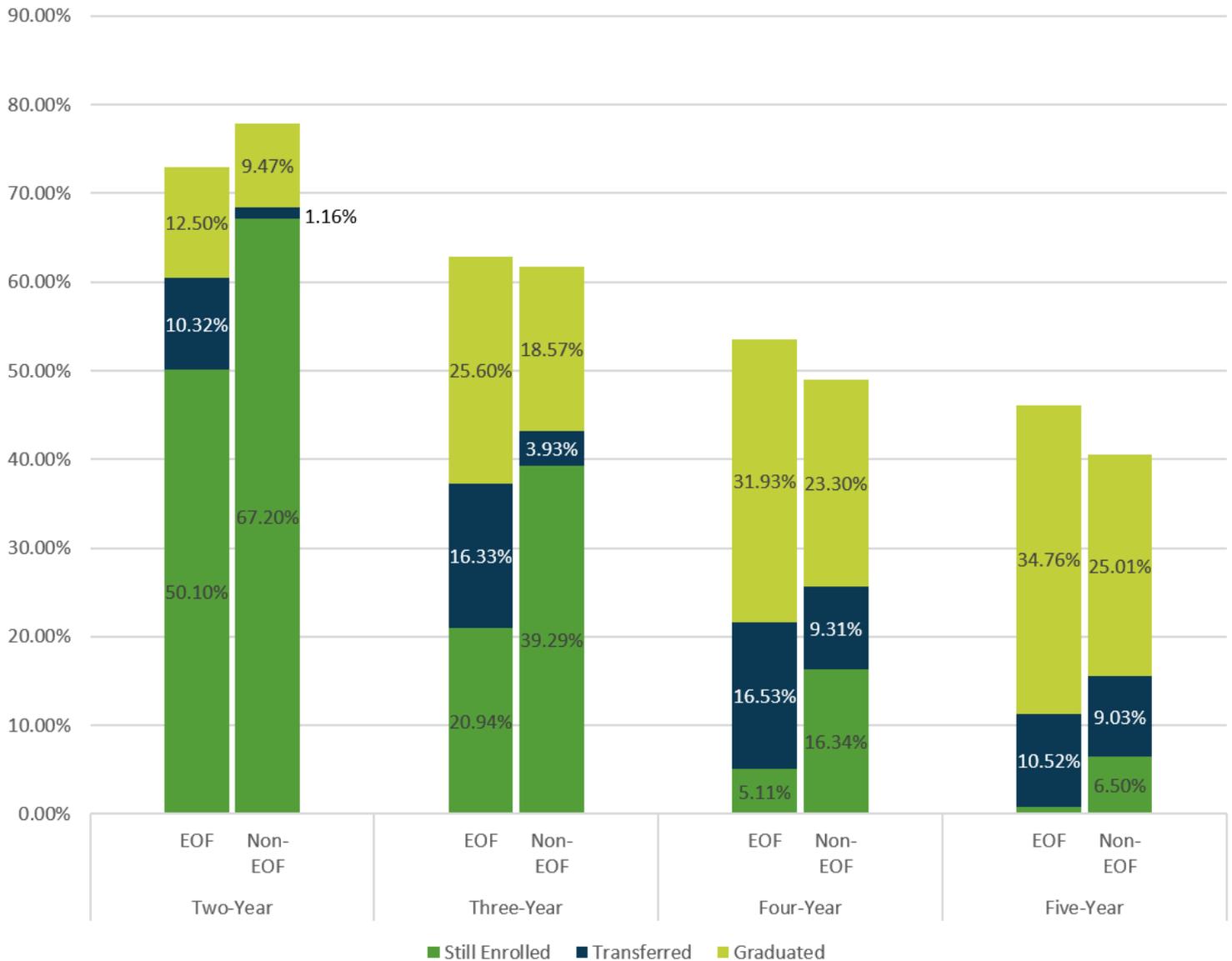
Source: New Jersey Student Unit Record System

## Community College Success Rates

Overall, retention and graduation rates are lower at community colleges than in other sectors due to a number of factors. Over time, EOF students enrolled in New Jersey community colleges outperform their non-EOF counterparts. Figure 14 shows a comparison between average outcome rates for EOF versus non-EOF students at the community colleges, including the percentage of the fall 2017 cohort that graduated in two, three, four, and five years; the proportion that transferred prior to graduation; and the proportion that remained enrolled at their original institution. Note that recent changes in national datasets encourage—and in some cases require—the following of cohorts through much longer periods of time when monitoring the success of low-income first-generation students.[11] In the case of New Jersey community colleges, following the 2017 cohort to five-years after initial enrollment demonstrates that the completion rates of EOF students are nearly ten percent (10%) higher than that of non-EOF students.

Figure 14

**Comparison Trend of EOF versus Non-EOF Community College Two-, Three-, Four-, and Five-Year Cohort Success Rates, Fall 2017 Cohort**



Source: New Jersey Student Unit Record System

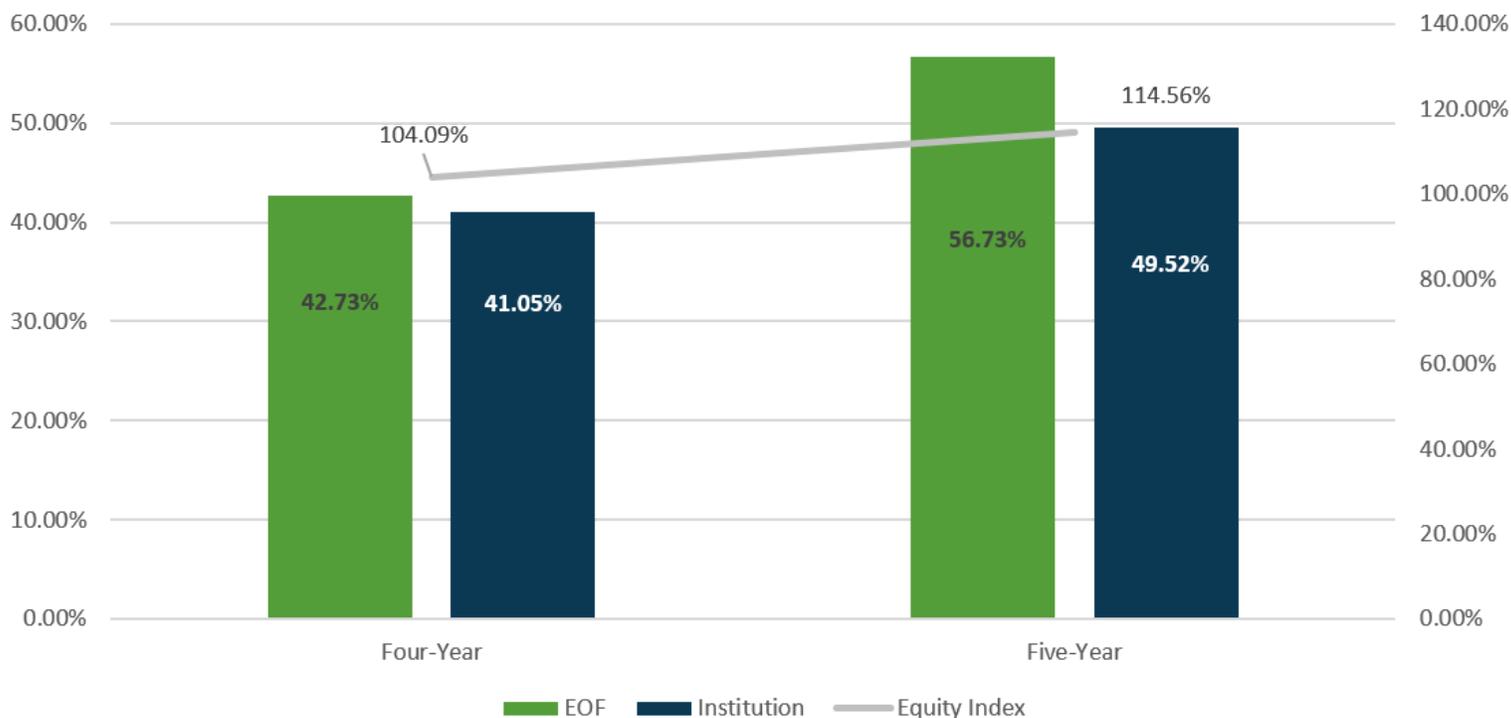
[11] [https://www.airweb.org/collaborate-learn/professional-development-training/ipeds-tutorials/200-graduation-rates-\(gr200\)](https://www.airweb.org/collaborate-learn/professional-development-training/ipeds-tutorials/200-graduation-rates-(gr200))

## Equity Index of Senior Public Institutions

The Equity Index (EI) is the ratio of the EOF graduation rate to the overall graduation rate ( $EI = \text{EOF cohort graduation rate} / \text{overall cohort graduation rate}$ ) across New Jersey's senior public (four-year) institutions. Figure 15 demonstrates a comparison of the four-year graduation rates (2021) of the 2017 EOF cohort versus the overall freshman cohort across senior public institutions participating in the EOF program. The figure also provides the same comparison for the five-year graduation rates (2022). An EI equaling one-hundred percent (100%) means that the EOF program's graduation rate is proportionally equal to the overall graduation rate of senior public institutions participating in the EOF program. An EI greater than one-hundred percent (100%) indicates that the EOF program's graduation rate is higher than the overall graduation rate of senior public institutions participating in the EOF program. An EI less than one-hundred percent (100%) would indicate that the EOF program's graduate rate is lower than the overall graduation rate of senior public institutions participating in the EOF program. Figure 16 tells us that, when looking at the graduation rates of only EOF students compared to the overall graduation rates of the institutions in which they enroll, EOF students graduate at higher rates than the overall student population at senior public institutions.

Figure 15

**Four- and Five-Year 2017 Cohort Equity Index  
Inclusive of both Main and HCP Programs**



Source: New Jersey Student Unit Record System

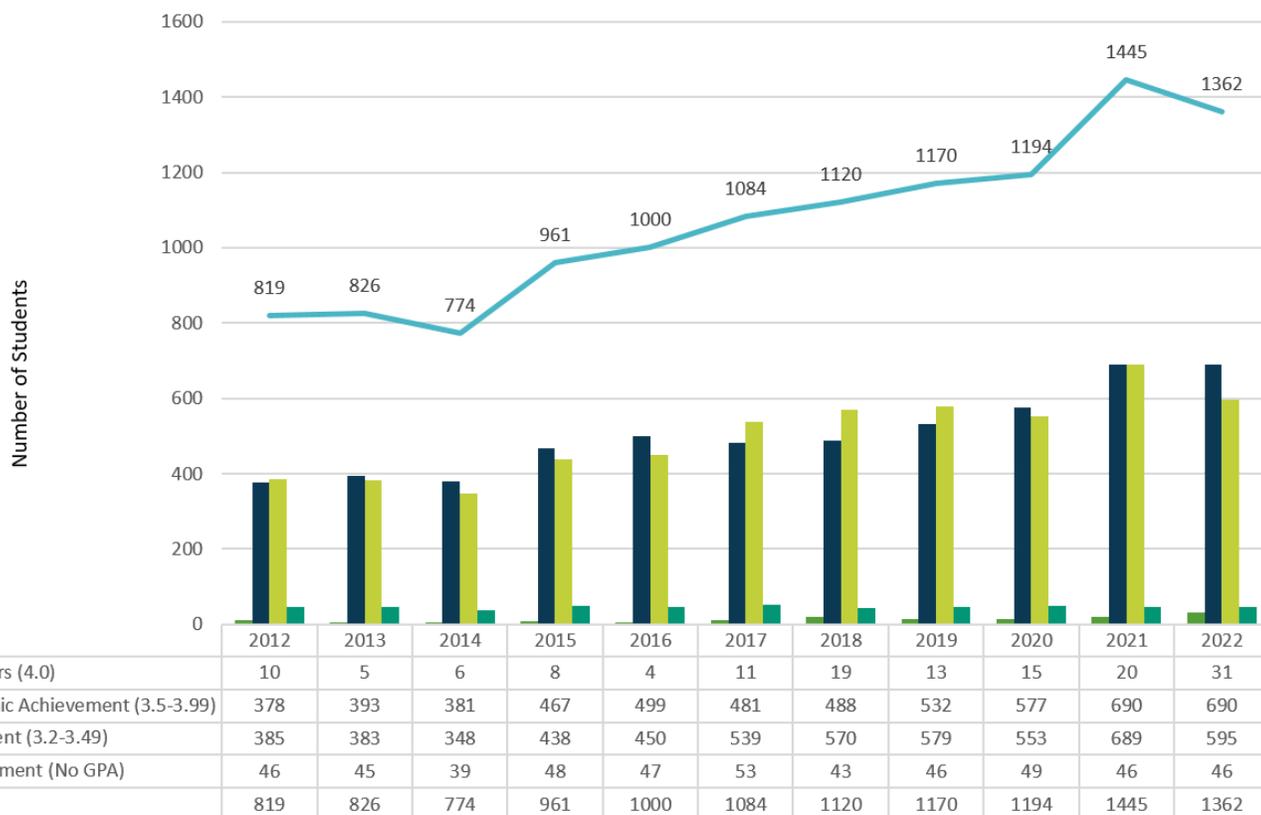
## Academic Achievement Awards

EOF graduates were recognized for outstanding academic achievement and leadership during the 2021-2022 academic year when 1,701 EOF students graduated with degrees and or certificates. Each year the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, the Governor's Office, and the EOF Board of Directors recognizes the students at an academic achievement awards ceremony.

While the number of total awardees was slightly down in 2022 (when compared to 2021), the Class of 2022 produced a record number of EOF students who achieved a 4.0 GPA (31). In addition to those who were recognized for outstanding academic achievement, an additional 46 were recognized for outstanding leadership and exemplifying the spirit and intent of EOF at their campuses and home communities. Figure 16 provides the longitudinal trends of EOF Academic Achievement Awards from the 2011-2012 academic year through the 2021-2022 academic year.

Figure 16

### EOF Graduate Achievement Award Recipients



Source: Educational Opportunity Fund Academic Achievement Award Data



Photo Credit: Mike Peters, Montclair State University

# Appendix A

## EOF Funding

Funding for EOF includes a mix of the State appropriation for the program and contributions from participating institutions. The State appropriation comes in two major accounts: Opportunity Grants (also known as Article III), and Supplemental Grants (also known as Article IV).

### EOF Article III Opportunity Grants (Student Grants)

- Summer Program grants support summer high school to college bridge programs for incoming freshmen that cover the costs of tuition, fees, room, board, books and supplies.
- Summer Program funding also supports students from their sophomore through senior years, helping them remain in academic sequence and maintain satisfactory academic progress of time required to graduate.
- Undergraduate Academic Year student grants help cover educational costs not met by Pell and TAG (New Jersey's Tuition Aid Grants).
- Winter Session grants support continuing EOF students to help them remain in academic sequence and maintain satisfactory academic progress. In addition, participation in the Winter Session helps to reduce the time-to-degree attainment and helps to address college affordability.

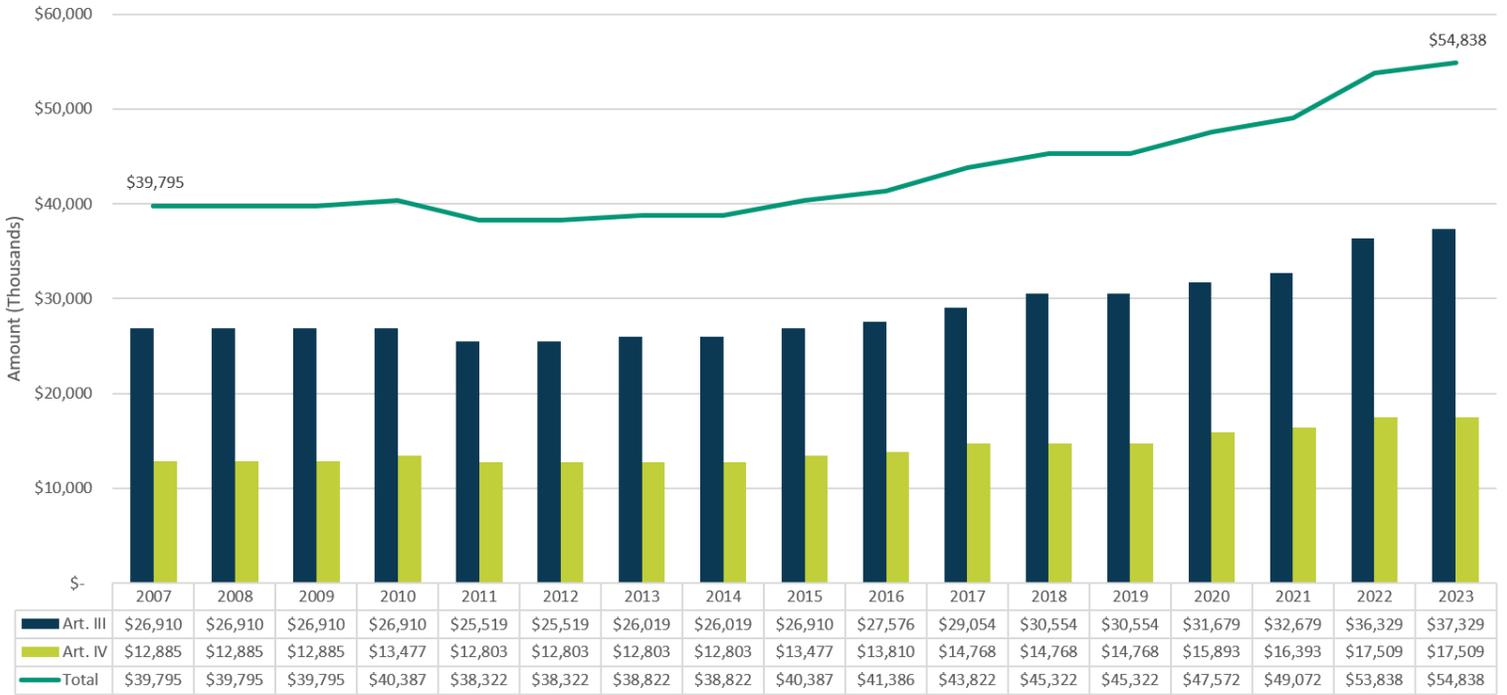
### EOF Article IV Supplemental Grants (Program Support)

- Grants to institutions used to support counseling/advising, tutoring, supplemental instruction, recruitment outreach into schools and communities, and student leadership development.
- Institutions must match State support on a dollar-for-dollar basis in the academic year programs (not required for winter session or summer programs).

State appropriations for EOF increased thirty-eight percent (38%) between FY2007 and FY 2023, reflecting the State's commitment to supporting these students (see Figure 17). The most significant increases began in FY2019 and increased twenty-one percent (21%) from that time to FY2023.

Figure 17

**EOF Appropriations History (2007 - 2023)  
Amounts in Thousands**



Source: Educational Opportunity Fund Appropriations Data

Though State funding has increased over the last several years, the proportion contributed by institutions continues to outpace the required institutional match (Table 8).

Table 8

**FY 2022 Article IV Allocations and Institutional Contribution (Match) by Sector**

Institutional Sector	Article IV Allocation	Institution Contribution	Total	EOF Contribution Percentage	Institution Contribution Percentage	Institution Contribution Over Match
Community Colleges	\$4,838,866	\$5,276,568	\$10,115,434	47.84%	52.16%	\$437,701.60
State Colleges and Universities	\$2,228,397	\$5,499,599	\$7,727,996	28.84%	71.16%	\$3,271,202.00
Public Research Universities	\$7,085,322	\$7,894,780	\$14,980,102	47.30%	52.70%	\$809,458.00
Independent Public Mission Institutions	\$3,351,938	\$5,972,650	\$9,324,588	35.95%	64.05%	\$2,620,712.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$17,504,523</b>	<b>\$24,643,597</b>	<b>\$42,148,120</b>	<b>41.53%</b>	<b>58.47%</b>	<b>\$7,139,074</b>

Source: Educational Opportunity Fund Appropriations Data

# Appendix B

## Institutions and Programs

### Community Colleges

Atlantic Cape Community College  
Bergen Community College  
Brookdale Community College  
Camden County College  
County College of Morris  
Essex County College  
Hudson County Community College  
Mercer County Community College  
Middlesex College  
Ocean County College  
Passaic County Community College  
Raritan Valley Community College  
Rowan College at Burlington County  
Rowan College of South Jersey  
- Cumberland  
- Gloucester  
Salem Community College  
Sussex County Community College  
Union County College  
Warren County Community College

### Independent Colleges and Universities

Bloomfield College  
Caldwell University  
Centenary University  
Drew University  
Fairleigh Dickinson University  
- Florham  
- Metropolitan  
Felician University  
Georgian Court University  
Monmouth University  
Rider University  
- Main  
- Westminster Choir Campus  
Saint Peter's University  
Seton Hall  
- Law  
- Main  
- Pre-Legal  
- Pre-Med/Pre-Dent Plus  
St. Elizabeth University  
Stevens Institute of Technology

### Public Research Universities

Kean University  
Montclair State University  
- Main  
- Health Careers Program  
New Jersey Institute of Technology  
Rowan University  
- Camden  
- Cooper Medical School  
Graduate (Only)  
PULSE Program  
- Glassboro  
- Graduate Bio-medical  
- School of Osteopathic Medicine (SOM)  
Graduate (Only)  
Pre-Matric  
Summer Prep  
Rutgers University  
- Camden  
- College of Nursing  
- Graduate Bio-medical  
- Graduate Education Prep  
- Graduate Studies (except Bio-medical)  
- Newark  
- New Jersey Medical School (NJMS)  
- Office for Diversity and Academic Success in the Sciences (ODASIS)  
- Office of EOF Administration  
- Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (RWJMS)  
- School of Arts and Sciences (New Brunswick)  
- School of Engineering  
- School of Environmental and Biological Sciences  
- School of Health Professions  
- School of Pharmacy  
- Summer Grads

### State Colleges and Universities

New Jersey City University  
Ramapo College of New Jersey  
Stockton University  
- Atlantic City  
- Galloway  
The College of New Jersey  
William Paterson University



NEW JERSEY OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF

# HIGHER EDUCATION

