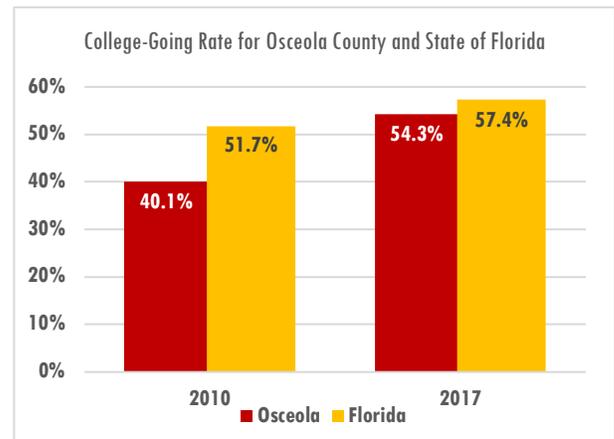


An Analysis of the Impact of “Got College?” and the Opening of the Poinciana Campus

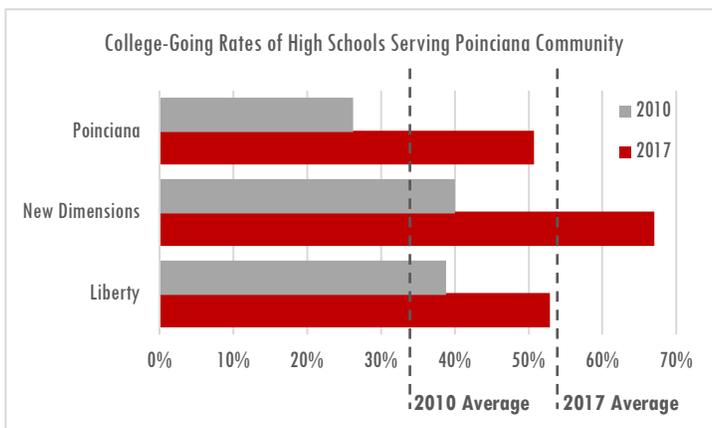
Background: In 2010, Osceola County ranked 61st out of the 67 counties in the state of Florida in terms of the percentage of high school graduates who enrolled in a public postsecondary institution in the state of Florida in the Fall after graduating from high school (college-going rate). Osceola County’s college-going rate was 40.1% in 2010; the state average was 51.7%.¹

Launch of “Got College?”: Valencia College, the School District of Osceola County, and the Education Foundation of Osceola County partnered to launch “Got College?,” a grass-roots campaign to increase Osceola County’s college-going rate. The “Got College?” effort sought to understand and remove the barriers that were preventing students in Osceola County from participating in postsecondary education, and set an ambitious goal that Osceola County’s college-going rate would exceed 50% by 2020. Specific strategies and tactics included creating “Valencia Ambassador” positions for Valencia students to visit K-12 classrooms to share why going to college is important and to describe the obstacles that they overcame; hosting bilingual community information sessions to share information about the cost of college as well as available financial aid and scholarship opportunities; hosting days of “mock college” for K-12 students; and partnering with the Celebration Foundation to ensure that every K-12 student in Osceola County had an opportunity to visit Valencia.

By 2016, four years ahead of the community’s ambitious goal, Osceola County’s college-going rate exceeded 50%; by 2017, it reached 54.3%, nearly closing the gap with the state average (57.4%).



Unique Challenges in Poinciana: For some students, however, one barrier was impossible to overcome through “Got College?” efforts: transportation. Students from the Poinciana area reported not having access to personal vehicles and relying on a bus trip to the Osceola Campus that required a 2.5-hour commute or more, each way. The college-going rate of the three high schools that serve the Poinciana community was 35% in 2010, the lowest in the county; with aspirations for a Valencia College Poinciana Campus in the future, the community set an audacious goal for the college-going rate of the high schools that serve the Poinciana community to exceed 53% by 2023.



With the opening of the Poinciana Campus in 2017, transportation was no longer a barrier for students living in the Poinciana community. The college-going rate for the Class of 2017 for students graduating from the three high schools serving Poinciana was 53.7%, exceeding the community’s goal.

Overall Impact: In 2017, 3,882 students graduated with a standard diploma from the School District of Osceola County; if Osceola County’s college-going rate had remained at its 2010 level of 40.1%, only 1,557 students would have enrolled in a public, postsecondary institution in the state of Florida. However, with a college-going rate of 54.3%, 2,108 students pursued postsecondary education, resulting in a one-year net impact of more than 550 additional students enrolling in college. Sustained efforts to increase the college-going rate will yield this type of impact year after year, significantly increasing the overall educational attainment level in Osceola County.

¹ Florida Department of Education High School Feedback Report (<http://data.fldoe.org/readiness/default.cfm>)