



# **Public Policy for the Promotion of Student Retention in Higher Education: An Overview from an International Point of View**

Michelle Asha Cooper  
President

National Ministry of Education of Colombia  
September 2009



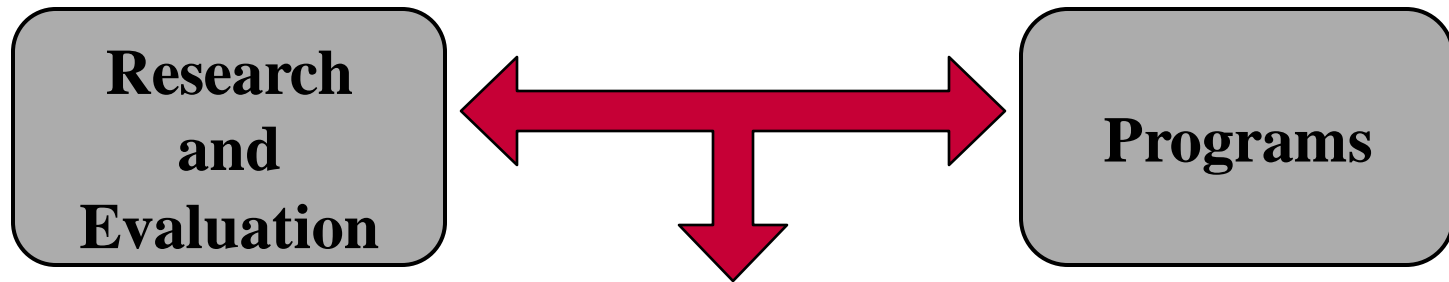
PRESENTED BY  
Institute for Higher Education Policy

# Agenda

- About IHEP
- Comparative International Data on College Dropout (Select OECD Countries)
- Case Example: Australia
  - Student Demographics / Equity Participation
  - Performance of Equity Groups
  - Reasons for Withdrawal After 1<sup>st</sup> Year
- Case Example: United States
  - Student Demographics / Performance Rates
  - Commonly Cited Reasons for Withdrawal
- Policies and Initiatives to Increase Student Retention and Completion

# What We Do

IHEP uses unique **research** and innovative **programs** to inform key decision makers who shape public policy and support economic and social development.



Through research and programs our work involves higher education policy at the U.S. **federal, state, and institutional** levels as well as **international** issues.

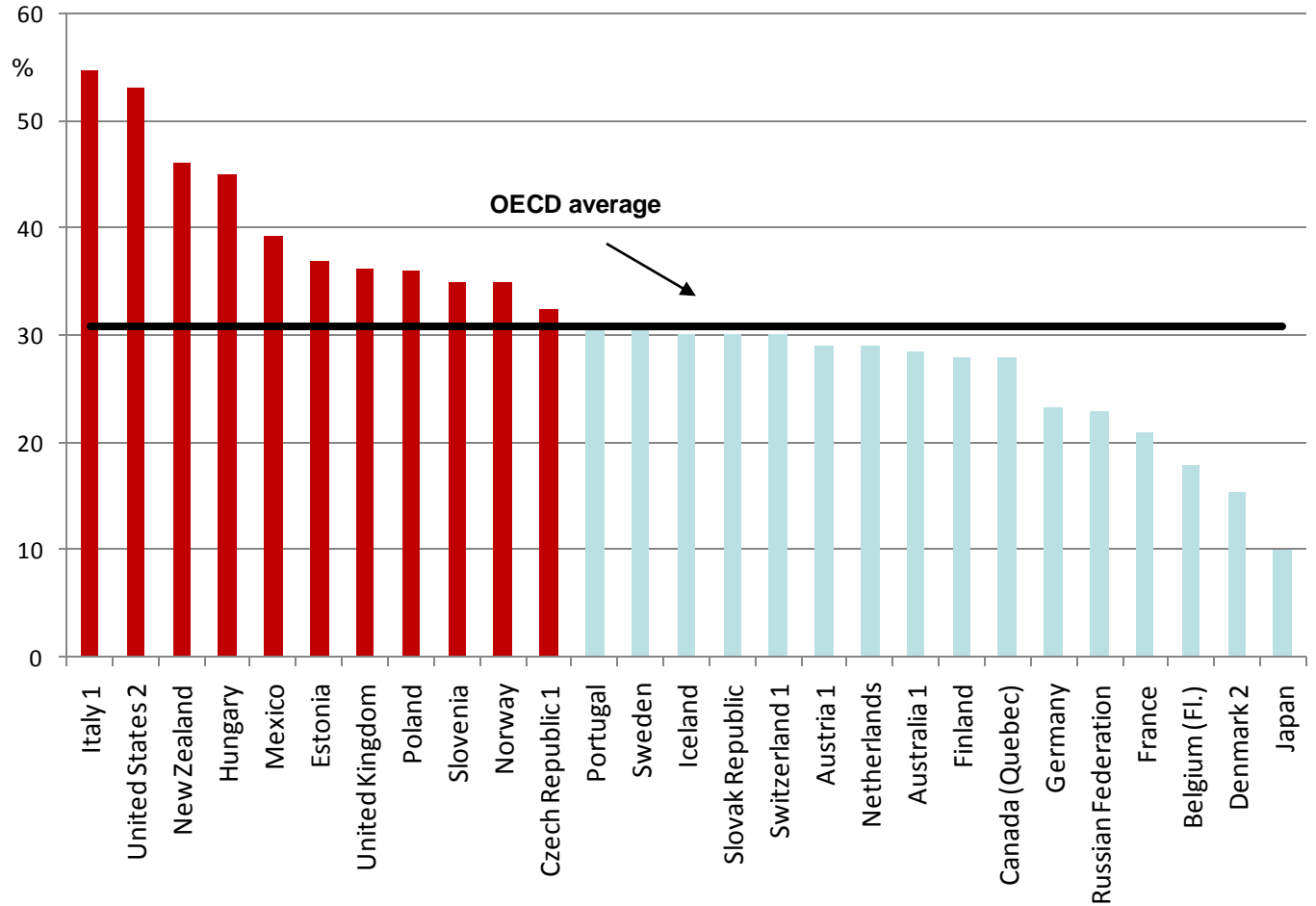


# Overview of Dropout Data (Select Countries)



PRESENTED BY  
Institute for Higher Education Policy

# International Comparisons of College Dropouts (Select Countries)



1. Only tertiary-type A programmes.

2. Only full-time students.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the proportion of students who enter into a tertiary programme



# Case Example: Australia



PRESENTED BY  
Institute for Higher Education Policy

# Case Example: Australia

## System Characteristics

- Australia's tertiary education system is divided into two sectors – the higher education sector and the vocational education and training sector.
- In 2005, there were a total of 957,176 students enrolled in Australian universities. They attended the following types of institutions.
  - 37 public institutions.
  - 2 private institutions.
  - 1 Australian branch of an overseas university.
  - 4 self-accrediting institutions
  - Over 150 non-self accreditation higher education providers.

# Case Example: Australia Students

Equity Group	% of all domestic students in 2005
Women in non-traditional area	19
Rural	17
Low-income status	15
Students with a disability	4
Students from a non-English speaking background	4
Isolated	1
Indigenous	1

- In 2005, the composition of students from the equity groups (identified by the Australian government) was under 20 percent for all groups, with students in several groups representing less than 5 percent of the student population.

Source: DEST, 2007

## Case Example: Australia Performance of Equity Groups in 2004

2004	Participation Rate (%)	Retention Rate (%)
Low SES (under 25)	-	79
Low SES (25 & over)	-	85
Non-English speaking background	4	83
Students with disabilities	4	78
Students from rural areas	17	78
Students from isolated areas	1	69

- Retention rates for the five equity groups show differences, ranging from 69 percent (isolated areas) to 85 percent (low SES).
- In contrast, the participation rates show variation and are considerably low average, when compared to their share of the population.

# Case Example: Australia

## Common Reasons for Dropping Out

- A change of direction, mainly in regards to career
- Difficulty passing subjects
- Conflict between paid work and study
- Dissatisfaction with the teaching or other aspects of the course
- Financial difficulties
- Conflict between family and study
- Personal illness
- Social isolation or loneliness.



# Case Example: United States



PRESENTED BY  
Institute for Higher Education Policy

# Case Example: United States Students

- In 2004, 18 million students were enrolled in postsecondary education.
  - 61 percent enrolled in 4-year.
  - 38 percent enrolled in 2-year .
  - 13 million enrolled in public institutions.
  - 3 million enrolled in private institutions.
  - 1 million enrolled in for-profit institutions.

# Differences in Educational Outcomes Across Student Groups

Students Entering a 4-year institution in 1995-96, intending to achieve a bachelor's degree	Bachelor's Degree	Associate's Degree	Certificate	Still Enrolled in 4-year Institution	Still Enrolled in Less than 4-year Institution	Not Enrolled
<b>AGE</b>						
18 years or younger	44	10	5	11	5	26
19 years	20	16	11	11	7	36
20-23 years	7	10	20	9	9	45
24-29 years	4	7	32	3	8	46
30 or older	2	10	26	4	4	54
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>						
White	32	11	11	9	7	4
Black	17	6	17	8	6	45
Hispanic	19	11	15	10	6	39
Asian/Pacific Islander	40	10	8	9	7	26
American Indian/Alaska Native	35	3	9	8	3	42
<b>FAMILY INCOME IN 1994</b>						
Less than \$25,000	26	14	11	9	6	35
\$25,000-\$49,999	33	10	9	11	7	31
\$45,000-\$69,999	40	11	4	11	5	29
\$70,000 or greater	56	6	3	10	4	20

# Case Example: United States Commonly Cited Reasons for Withdrawal

- Financial difficulties
- Academic problems
- Homesickness and don't feel like they fit in
- Work and family obligations
- No guidance or mentors
- Needing to work more more



# **Policy Initiatives to Increase Retention and Completion**



PRESENTED BY  
Institute for Higher Education Policy

# Policy Initiatives of Select Countries

## (macro-level)

Category	Australia	Ireland	The Netherlands	United States
Macro-level Initiatives	Monitoring of retention, access, and participation rates against national targets for institutions and student subgroups	Monitoring of detailed student records through Student Record System	National monitoring of retention issues for ethnic minority groups	
		Exchange of best practices through Inter-University Retention Network	Exchange of best practices and national coordination through ECHO	
	Funding for specific equity-group-related projects at the institutional level	Funding for projects aimed at specific retention issues in IT/math/engineering		Funding for TRIO Student Support Services
	Scholarships for students from disadvantaged groups	Abolition of tuition fees	Importance of financial aid in supporting retention	Importance of financial aid, specifically Pell Grants for low- and moderate-income families
	Research on retention and attrition rates	Exit interview to understand why students leave HE	More curriculum flexibility; binding study advice after the first year of study	

# Policy Initiatives of Select Countries

## (micro-level)

Category	Australia	Ireland	The Netherlands	United States
<b>Micro-level initiatives</b>	Improved information for incoming students	Improved information for incoming students	Improved introduction for incoming students	Variety of efforts related to early information
	Specific university monitoring into causes of non-completion (surveys)	Specific university monitoring into causes of non-completion (surveys)		Specific university monitoring of mid-term and semester performance (early alerts)
		Peer mentoring	Peer mentoring	Peer/faculty mentoring
	Specific transition courses/skills training	Specific transition courses/skills training	Transition courses/skills training	First-year experience and orientation programs
	Lowering of entry requirements for disadvantaged students			Summer programs for at-risk students
	Financial support to disadvantaged students			Financial aid for low-income students
	Raising staff awareness and providing guidance on retention issues	Retention officers	Professionalizing and improving student support	Improving student support services and advising
			Accessible and engaging teachers	Raised awareness of faculty
			Creation of learning communities	Creation of learning communities and living/learning environments.



**For More Information:**

[www.ihep.org](http://www.ihep.org)



PRESENTED BY  
Institute for Higher Education Policy