

Participation within the University Honors Program Impacts on Persistence, Retention, and Graduation for Diverse Student Groups

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Research Questions

Q1: Does participation in the University Honors Program (UHP) affect graduation rate outcomes?

Q2: Are there noticeable differences in graduation rates across demographic subgroups when comparing UHP and Non-UHP participants?

Q3: Are there enrollment gaps in UHP?

Introduction

The University Honors Program offers diverse, highly-engaged students multiple high impact practices that develop students' intellectual abilities, leadership capabilities, community engagement, and professional preparation. Additionally, through UHP, students can access priority registration, connect with faculty through our course offerings, enjoy additional advising, and complete a research or creative project. Thus, **participation in the UHP increases students' access to opportunities, expands their strengths, and ultimately, positively impacts time to graduation.**

Students interested in the University Honors Program must have at least a 3.5 cumulative GPA and apply to join. Students can apply their first, second or third year. They must complete 15 (Plan II) – 21 units (Plan I) under one of our three tracks (General, Business, Engineering) or the Los Angeles Studies Certificate. There is a mandatory thesis or creative project that is completed during the final two years in the program.

Given UHP's positive impact on students' success, we want to **ensure the program is accessible to our diverse CSULB students through equitable admission and that we are strong contributors to the public good and CSULB mission.**

Methods

Sample:

- Fall 2017 and Fall 2018 first-time, first year (FTFY) cohorts
- UHP participants defined as eligible students who began UHP at entry to University/during cohort term
- Non-UHP participants defined as eligible to join UHP based on High School GPA, but did not participate in UHP

Data Sources:

- Data from student transcripts and Institutional Research & Analytics were merged into an Access Database.
- Data collected included: gender, first generation status, race/ethnicity, start/end term at CSULB and Honors, and Honors Completion status.

Design and Procedure:

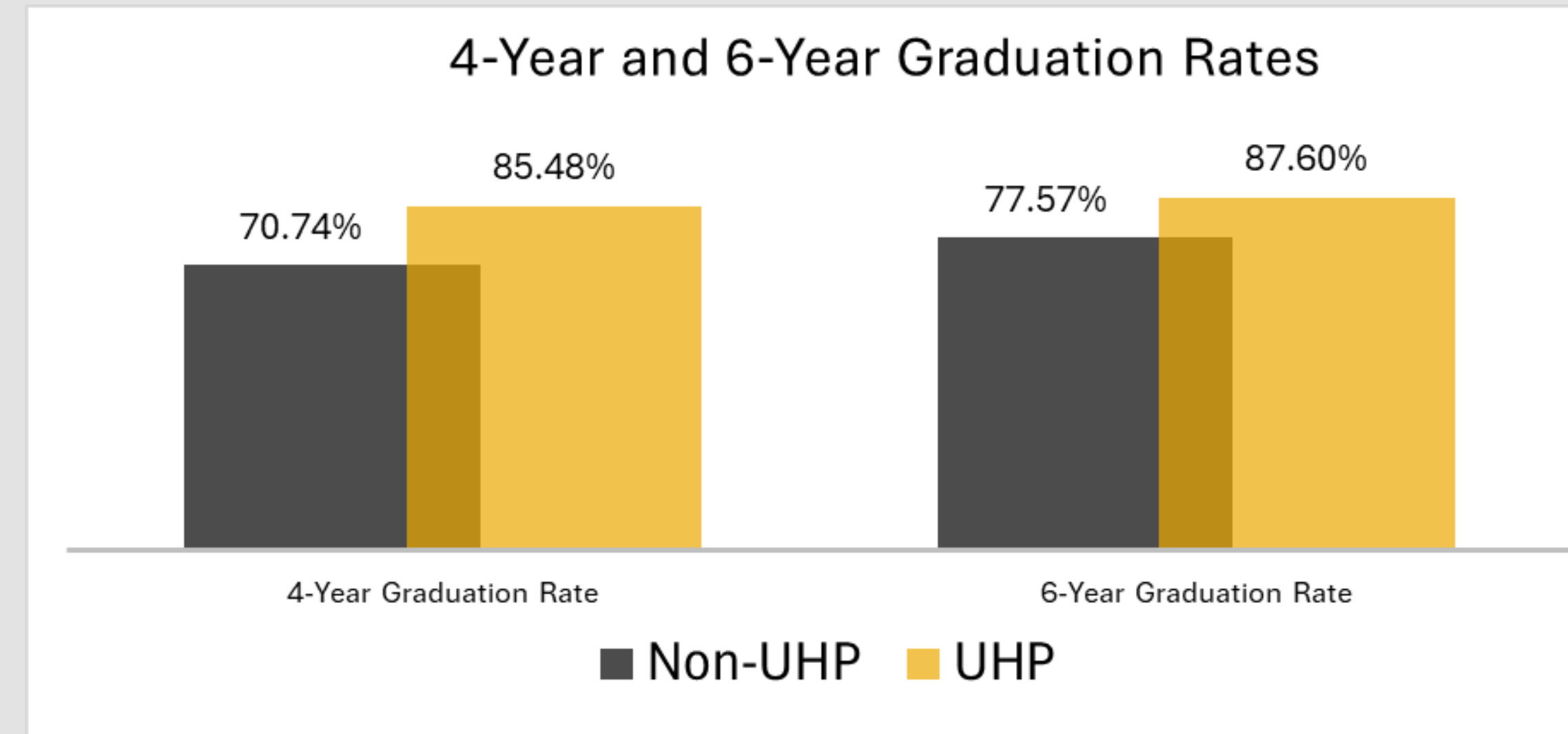
- A summative evaluation approach was employed to examine the effects of demographic characteristics on Graduation Rates and Equity Gaps.
- Data was analyzed using Chi-square tests to evaluate if the differences in graduation rates were statistically significant.

Results

Q1: Does participation in the University Honors Program affect graduation rate outcomes? Yes

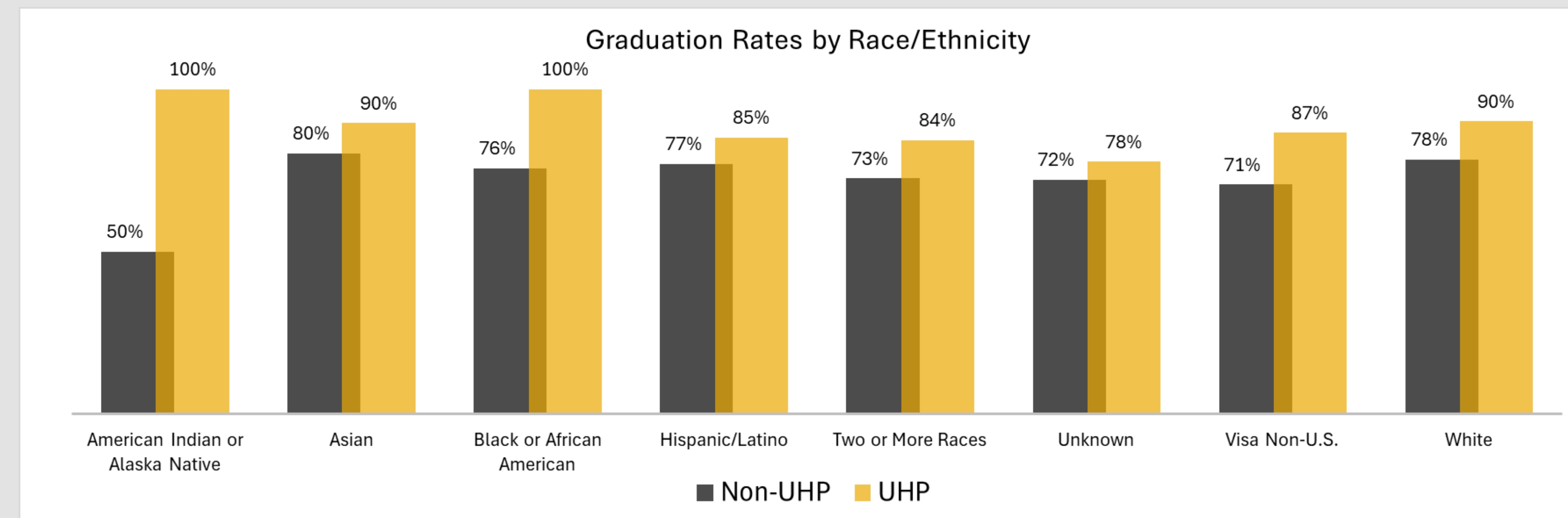
4-year and 6-year graduation rates, suggest participation in UHP increases the likelihood of graduation from the University (UHP showed a **15% positive difference in 4-year graduation rates and a 10% positive difference in 6-year graduation rates compared to Non-UHP participants**).

A Chi-square test revealed a statistically significant difference between the graduation rates of Non-UHP and UHP (with a Chi-square value of 788.23 and a very small p-value of less than 0.0001).



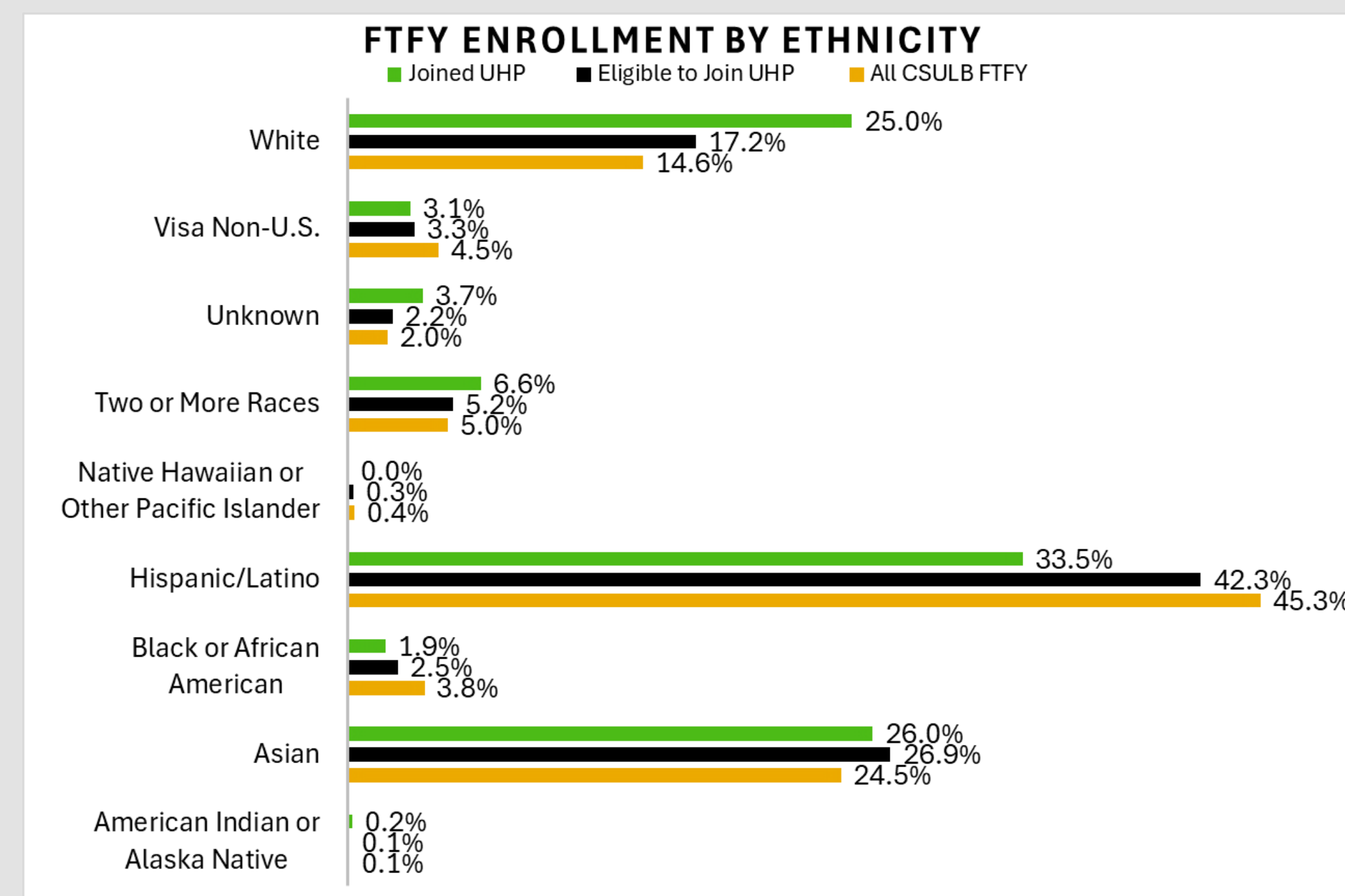
Q2: Is there noticeable differences in graduation rates across demographic subgroups when comparing UHP and Non-UHP participants? Yes

Participation in UHP shows a positive difference in graduation for all Race/Ethnicities. **American Indian/Alaska Native subgroup had a 50% positive difference and Black/African American subgroup had a 24% positive difference in graduation from the University.** Ability to determine statistical significance was limited by small population sizes of several race/ethnicity subgroups.

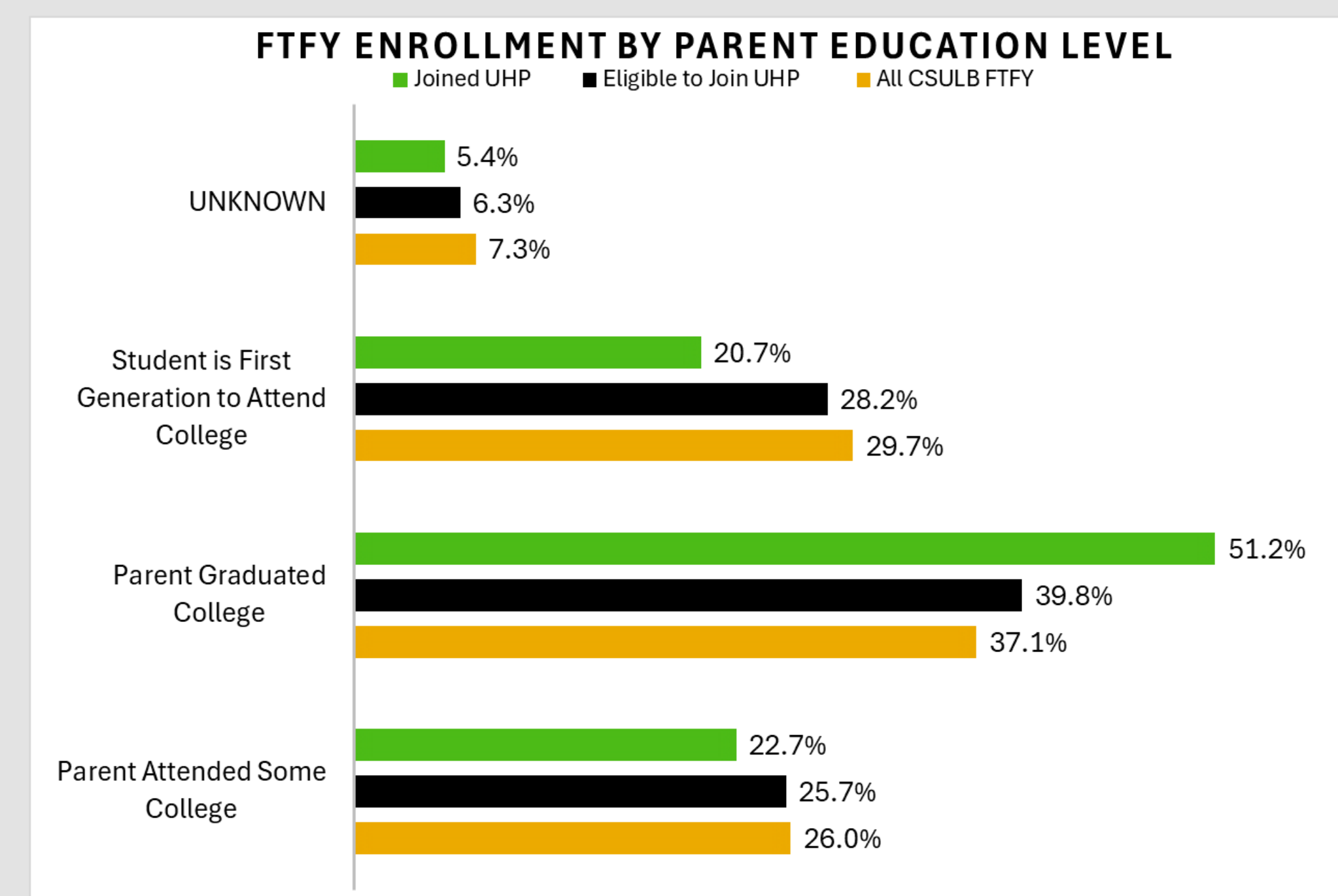


Q3: Are there enrollment gaps in UHP? Yes and No. Note: Populations in the following analysis are using a nested model to assess if eligibility restrictions impacted UHP in representation of the full campus student population.

In running a Chi-square test for homogeneity on enrollment by ethnicity there was no significance found in comparing both Eligible to join UHP and All CSULB FTFY to those that joined UHP (All FTFY vs. UHP: Chi-square statistic is 6.868 and the p-value is 0.551; Eligible to Join vs. UHP: Chi-square statistic is 11.139 and the p-value is 0.190). However, looking at percentage differences **UHP could improve in Hispanic/Latino enrollment with an 8.8% disparity.**



In running a Chi-square test for homogeneity on enrollment by parent education level there is a statistically significant difference between the All CSULB FTFY and UHP in terms of parent education levels (Chi-square statistic is 20.42 and the p-value is 0.0002). There was no significance found in the Eligible to Join UHP vs. UHP (Chi-square statistic is 6.94 and the p-value is 0.074). In looking at percentage differences, **UHP could improve in enrollment of First-Generation students with a disparity of 9%.**



Conclusion / Discussion

This analysis confirms that participation in the University Honors Program (UHP) positively impacts graduation outcomes, with UHP participants showing higher 4-year and 6-year graduation rates compared to non-UHP students. While small sample sizes limit statistical significance in some underrepresented populations, notable trends include:

- Higher graduation rates among American Indian/Alaska Native and Black/African American UHP participants.
- Underrepresentation of Latine students in UHP enrollment.
- A statistically significant gap for First-Generation students in UHP participation.

The findings from this study reinforce the critical role of the UHP in supporting university-wide graduation outcomes. The positive impact of UHP participation on graduation rates, particularly among underrepresented students, highlights the importance of sustaining and expanding the program's efforts. These findings underscore the need for continued efforts to expand UHP access and further investigate its role in closing graduation rate gaps among diverse student populations.

Implications for Action

These results will guide the development of targeted recruitment and programming initiatives aimed at further closing graduation rate gaps for UHP participants. Additionally, this research provides an opportunity to strengthen existing partnerships and foster new collaborations across the university. Future efforts may include strategic alliances with programs such as **Beach Promise, Outreach, EOP, and OURS** to enhance student support, engagement, and academic success.

By leveraging these insights, the UHP can refine its approach to student success, ensuring that participation in the program continues to serve as a key factor in improving retention and graduation outcomes across diverse student populations.

Next Steps / Future Directions

- Expand data collection efforts to establish longitudinal trends on participation and impact on graduation rates
- Strengthen partnerships with Outreach, Beach Promise and EOP to promote UHP
- Increase subgroup representation to reduce gaps and disparities in data analysis