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Student Migration Trends: Minnesota's Net Loss of College-Going High School Graduates

INTRODUCTION

For a number of years, the Minnesota Private College Research Foundation (MPCRF) has tracked *in-migration* — students graduating from high school in other states and enrolling in a Minnesota college or university and *out-migration* — Minnesota residents graduating high school in Minnesota and then enrolling in college in another state. Over six years, the data have consistently shown that more students are leaving Minnesota than come here for college — a net loss.

The purpose of this research brief is to highlight migratory patterns of Minnesota postsecondary participants. The brief details the past six years and discusses implications and policy questions generated from an annual net loss of college-bound students. As our society generally increases in its mobility, some students will decide to leave their home state to attend college. As a consequence, states need to pay close attention to the number leaving (and arriving). States that attract at least as many college enrollees from other states as they lose will be in a much better labor market position than states that ignore the phenomenon and tolerate out-migration of college-bound talent (Tornatzky, et. al., 2001).

DATA

Institutions included in the analysis are public, private not-for-profit and private for-profit four-year institutions. First-time, full-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students are counted in the analysis. International students and students of unknown origin are not included. Data presented in this brief are from fall 2003 to 2008. Unless otherwise noted, all data is from the National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS.

FINDINGS

As shown in table 1 and figure 1 on the next page, the net loss of college entrants has averaged 5,242 per year since 2003, resulting in a total net loss of college-going talent of 31,457 students. While the in- and out-migration has fluctuated from year to year, the net loss of students has been consistent.

This is one in a series of research-based briefs prepared by the Minnesota Private College Research Foundation for Minnesota Private College Council members and other interested parties.

If you have a question or suggestion for a topic for a future issue brief, please contact the Research Foundation.

continued on next page

The import and export origin and destination of students are similar from year to year, with most students leaving Minnesota going to states in the region. However, the export of Minnesota high school graduates also shows some departures to colleges on both coasts. The origin of students coming here is primarily regional with fewer coming from states outside of the Upper Midwest.

The net gain/loss is indicated in the map (Figure 2) on the next page. Looking at fall 2008 data only, Minnesota is clearly a net exporter to a majority of states. The greatest net loss occurs regionally to North Dakota and Iowa, while Wisconsin and South Dakota are also big importers of our students. Arizona is the only state out of our region that is a large net importer of Minnesota high school graduates. While this is only one year of data, previous research from the Research Foundation indicates this has been a consistent pattern.

ENROLLMENT OF MINNESOTANS IN OTHER STATES

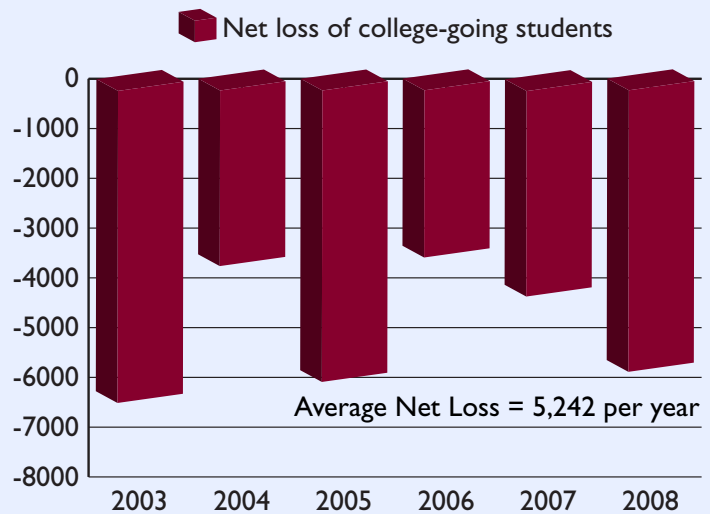
In fall 2008, 4,188 Minnesota students opted for a private not-for-profit institution in a state other than Minnesota while 8,119 chose an out of state public college. This compared to the 2,983 students from other states choosing to attend a private not-for-profit in Minnesota and 3,734 choosing a Minnesota public college.

Table 1: Minnesota Has Been a Net Exporter of College Enrollees Over Time

Fall Year	In-Migration	Out-Migration	Net Loss
2003	3,177	9,710	-6,533
2004	7,437	11,388	-3,951
2005	4,791	10,900	-6,109
2006	7,745	11,834	-4,089
2007	5,658	10,544	-4,886
2008	7,410	13,299	-5,889
TOTAL	36,218	67,675	-31,457

Fall 2008 Migration Snapshot by Sector			
	In-Migration	Out-Migration	Net Migration Change
Private Not-For-Profit	2,983	4,188	-1,205
Private For-Profit	693	992	-299
Public	3,734	8,119	-4,385
TOTAL	7,410	13,299	-5,889

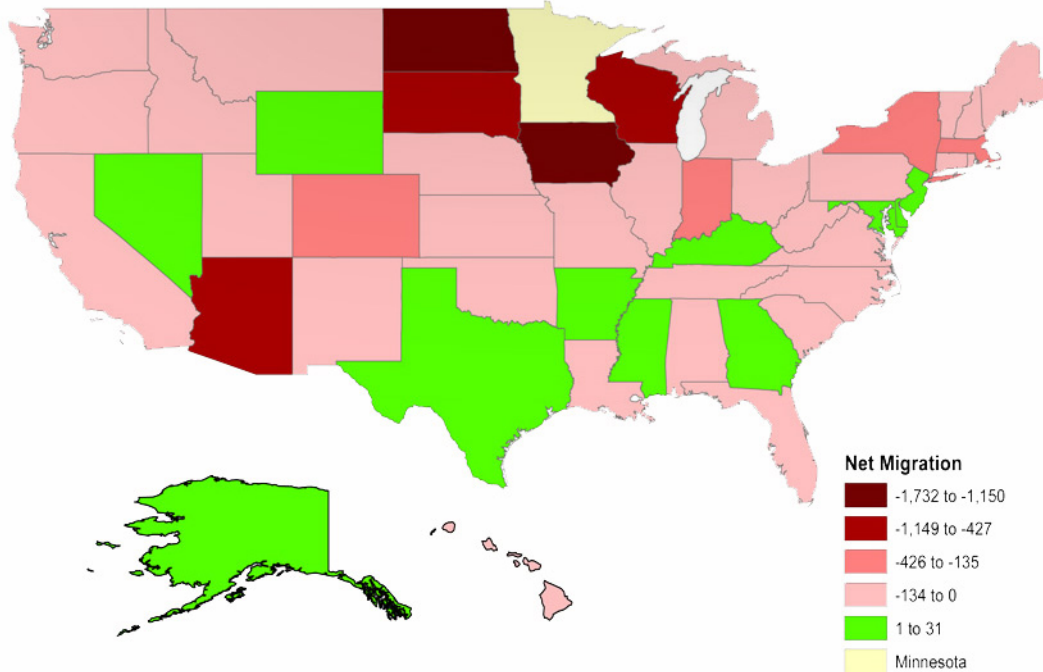
Figure 1: Each Year Minnesota Exports More Recent High School Graduates That Enroll in College Than It Imports



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Tables 2 and 3 show the top states and institutions Minnesota students chose for enrollment outside of Minnesota in fall 2008.

Figure 2: Net Gain/Loss of First-time College Students – Fall 2008



DISCUSSION

What does being a net exporter of college-bound students mean for Minnesota? It would be important to know if high school graduates who leave to attend an institution in another state eventually return and contribute to Minnesota’s economy. As shown, Minnesota is a net exporter, and if students who leave do not come back this would result in an overall loss of graduates poised to enter the workforce. Unfortunately, research regarding choices college graduates make in starting their career is limited.

Table 2: Top States Where Minnesota High School Graduates Enroll for College When They Don’t Enroll in Minnesota

Private not-for-profit		Public	
Top states	Enrollment (Fall 2008)	Top states	Enrollment (Fall 2008)
Iowa	784	Wisconsin	3,086
Illinois	492	North Dakota	2,299
Wisconsin	406	Iowa	665
South Dakota	234	South Dakota	573
Massachusetts	227	Colorado	195
New York	214	Michigan	175
California	210	Arizona	131
Indiana	145	Kansas	115
Nebraska	109	Montana	110
Washington	102	Indiana	90
Colorado	100	Nebraska	82
TOTAL	3,023	TOTAL	7,521
Percent of all out-of-state private not-for-profit enrollment	72%	Percent of all out-of-state public enrollment	93%

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Table 3: Top 25 Out-of-State Institutions Minnesota High School Graduates Choose for Enrollment

Private Not-For-Profit			Public		
Institution	Enrollment (Fall 2008)	State	Institution	Enrollment (Fall 2008)	State
Luther College	245	Iowa	North Dakota State University-Main	1,373	North Dakota
Augustana College	174	South Dakota	University of North Dakota	870	North Dakota
Drake University	159	Iowa	University of Wisconsin-Madison	809	Wisconsin
Marquette University	94	Wisconsin	University of Wisconsin-River Falls	648	Wisconsin
DePaul University	85	Illinois	University of Wisconsin-Stout	575	Wisconsin
Creighton University	73	Nebraska	Iowa State University	491	Iowa
Loyola University Chicago	70	Illinois	University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire	474	Wisconsin
Northwestern University	67	Illinois	South Dakota State University	410	South Dakota
Viterbo University	65	Wisconsin	University of Wisconsin-La Crosse	218	Wisconsin
Columbia College Chicago	61	Illinois	University of Iowa	145	Iowa
University of Notre Dame	57	Indiana	University of Wisconsin-Superior	117	Wisconsin
Wartburg College	55	Iowa	University of Colorado at Boulder	102	Colorado
Jamestown College	50	North Dakota	University of Kansas	95	Kansas
University of Denver	49	Colorado	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	90	Wisconsin
Dordt College	45	Iowa	Arizona State University	80	Arizona
Grinnell College	43	Iowa	Michigan Technological University	80	Michigan
Boston College	43	Massachusetts	University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point	73	Wisconsin
Brigham Young University	41	Utah	University of Nebraska-Lincoln	71	Nebraska
North Park University	40	Illinois	Montana State University	69	Montana
Northwestern College	38	Iowa	Northern State University	54	South Dakota
University of Sioux Falls	38	South Dakota	University of South Dakota	51	South Dakota
New York University	35	New York	Purdue University-Main Campus	49	Indiana
University of So. California	34	California	University of Arizona	45	Arizona
Lawrence University	34	Wisconsin	The University of Montana	40	Montana
University of Puget Sound	33	Washington	Northern Michigan University	38	Michigan
TOTAL	1,728		TOTAL	7,067	
Percent of all out-of-state private not-for-profit enrollment	41%		Percent of all out-of-state private not-for-profit enrollment	87%	

While research regarding Minnesota students is limited, research in Ohio suggests that students simply do not stay in the state, regardless of their origination. A solid majority (58 percent) planned to leave Ohio in the first few years after finishing college. Specifically, the survey research found that Ohio had failed to win over the non-Ohioans who had come for college, 79 percent of them noting they would leave the state upon graduation. Also, 51 percent of native Ohioans — who presumably have stronger roots in their communities — also said they’ll be leaving (Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2009).

In examining reasons for planning to leave the state where they are attending college, almost nine in 10 undergraduates surveyed said jobs and career opportunities will be very important criteria to them when they decide where to live. Also, the state better be entertaining; nearly six in 10 said that when they decide where to live, it will be very important for them to find a place that is “active, exciting and fun” (Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2009).

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A 2003 study examining choices of Maine residents who leave for college out-of-state indicated that about half returned to the state to begin or continue their career (Silvernail and Gollihur). A higher proportion of a subset, their “best and brightest” high school graduates, were found to be employed out-of-state. Similar to the findings in Ohio, the choice to stay out of state was largely based on economic outcomes perceived to be better in another area of the country compared to their home state.

Similarly, findings from Tornatzky, et. al. suggest that premier high school achievers in a southern group of states tended to leave their home state after high school graduation, and like Maine students, were less likely to return upon college graduation (Tornatzky, et. al., 2001). Contradicting the research in Ohio, which found students leave the state regardless of where they graduated high school or obtained a college degree, Tornatzky, et. al. found that students in general tended to stay where they earned college degrees. Thus, if a state loses high school graduates who go on to obtain a college degree in another state, it will result in fewer individuals contributing to the home state’s future economy. However, if a state is able to import students who complete their degree, these students are more likely to stay in that state. If the net import and export is zero sum, a state will be in a good position for sustaining labor force entry. The real dilemma lies with states that are net exporters of college bound students — like Minnesota.

More troubling is Tornatzky, et. al.’s (2001, p. 19) findings that migration patterns and employment choices are likely stable over time. “If a given state has a relatively high rate of out-migration of its graduates without a corresponding in-migration of talent, then over time the

Table 4: Minnesota Not-for-profit Institutions That Enroll More Than 100 Students From Other States

Minnesota is a net exporter of students regardless of sector, as shown in table 1. However, Minnesota not-for-profits do enroll a number of students from other states. In contrast to table 3, table 4 shows the top destinations for students coming from other states to attend a Minnesota not-for-profit institution.

Institution	Enrollment (Fall 2008)
St. Olaf College	389
Carleton College	347
Macalester College	332
University of St Thomas	251
Concordia College, Moorhead	236
Bethel University	161
Martin Luther College	147
Northwestern College	136
Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota	133
Gustavus Adolphus College	101
North Central University	101
TOTAL	2,334
Percent of all in-migration for MN not-for-profit enrollment	78%

Table 5: Minnesota Public Institutions Enrollment of Students From Other States

Institution	Enrollment (Fall 2008)
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities	1,536
Winona State University	678
Minnesota State University-Moorhead	417
Minnesota State University-Mankato	321
University of Minnesota-Duluth	278
Saint Cloud State University	221
Southwest Minnesota State University	95
University of Minnesota-Crookston	77
Bemidji State University	69
University of Minnesota-Morris	40
Metropolitan State University	2
Public TOTAL	3,734

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human resource assets available for participating in the knowledge economy are likely to become degraded.” This is the situation Minnesota appears to face as an annual net exporter of college-bound students.

POLICY QUESTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Highlighting the troubling path Minnesota is heading down, Tom Stinson, Minnesota’s State Economist and Tom Gillaspay, Minnesota’s State Demographer, have pointed out that the state is getting older (September, 2009). The first wave of the baby boom generation turned 62 in 2008. The number turning age 62 will continue to grow, peaking in 2022 at a level more than 60 percent above the 2007 level. In addition, labor force growth is about to slow sharply from an annual growth of 1.12 percent to 0.10 percent over the next 15 years. Future economic growth will depend greatly on increasing productivity and less on sheer labor force size. How will Minnesota fare in increasing productivity, as the workforce population ages and shrinks, high school and college graduates decrease, and qualified students leave Minnesota for college?

Several policy recommendations designed for other states and regions have been suggested in previously mentioned research. For most, the concern revolves around the attraction of and the retention of academic talent. For instance, it has been found that high school graduates tend to become employed in the state where they receive their college degree (Tornatzky, et. al., 2001). This means students who leave to attain their degree in another state come back at a low rate. In order to improve retention of college-bound and college grads, states have developed the strategies and recommendations summarized below.

- Intervene earlier in postsecondary educational and vocational choices. Attempt to keep talent in-state by aggressively encouraging and providing incentives such as specified tuition reduction programs, loan forgiveness, grant aid and/or offer more graduate school scholarships and fellowships (Tornatzky, et. al., 2001 and Silvernail, David L. and Gollihur, Greg, 2003, Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2009)
- Since college graduates tend to stay in the state where they attended regardless of home state, it may be more in the economic development interest of states to provide mechanisms reducing out-of-state tuition charges or exempt them if certain criteria are met post-college (Tornatzky, et. al., 2001).
- Talent will stay only if opportunities exist. Thus, the obligation to keep college graduates extends from the university to a state’s industry and other institutions charged with comprehensive economic planning for economic stability and growth. Traditionally, these entities have operated in a decentralized approach to improving economic outcomes. As part of a policy solution to work toward a common economic outcome, institutions may consider building upon existing collaborative efforts. For example, almost seven in 10 Ohio college students think their college is serious about helping them develop career options and connections in Ohio (Tornatzky, et. al., 2001 and Silvernail, David L. and Gollihur, Greg, 2003, Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2009). Institutions may consider forming stronger bonds with economic development efforts and industry and provide a stronger nexus to the labor market for their students.

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- Greater targeting and marketing strategies geared towards residents for a home state's higher education opportunities (Tornatzky, et. al., 2001).
- Develop a community college system with greater capacity, quality and efficient matriculation to four-year or career opportunities (Silvernail, David L. and Gollihur, Greg, 2003).
- Increase business and workplace connections for students. For instance, Ohio college students noted they would be very interested in local internships — a springboard for establishing roots in the local economy (Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2009).
- Decrease students' isolation from their communities. Half of the non-Ohioan students surveyed indicate they did not spend a lot of time off campus doing things like going to museums, concerts, and performances (Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2009).

CONCLUSION

Minnesota is a net exporter of college bound students annually. And while research of the labor force implications for Minnesota is not available, states that have examined the choices of college graduates indicate that students typically stay where they receive their degree. A large part of this decision is the economic opportunities available in the state.

Policy and business leaders would benefit from having a clearer picture than is now available of the final destination of college graduates who either leave Minnesota to receive a degree in another state, or come here to receive a college degree. As Minnesota's labor force shrinks and the need for college educated individuals increases — it would be important to know if Minnesota retains college graduates and if our high school graduates earning a degree in other states come home.

REFERENCES

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Thomas B. Fordham Institute. (2009). *Losing Ohio's Future: Why College Students Flee the Buckeye State and What Might Be Done About It*.