What the Data Say About TRIO (and what we can infer)

D. Merrill Ewert

A draft of this presentation was shared with the U.S. Department of Education, August, 2013.

Purpose of Trio:

to identify and provide services...targeted to serve and assist low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to post-baccalaureate programs.

[Office of Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education]

Federal TRIO Programs

1. Upward Bound
2. Upward Bound Math-Science
3. Veterans Upward Bound
4. Talent Search
5. Educational Opportunity Centers
6. Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate
7. Student Support Services
8. Training Program for Federal TRIO

The big questions:

- **Are TRIO programs effective?**

- **Are they worth the cost?**

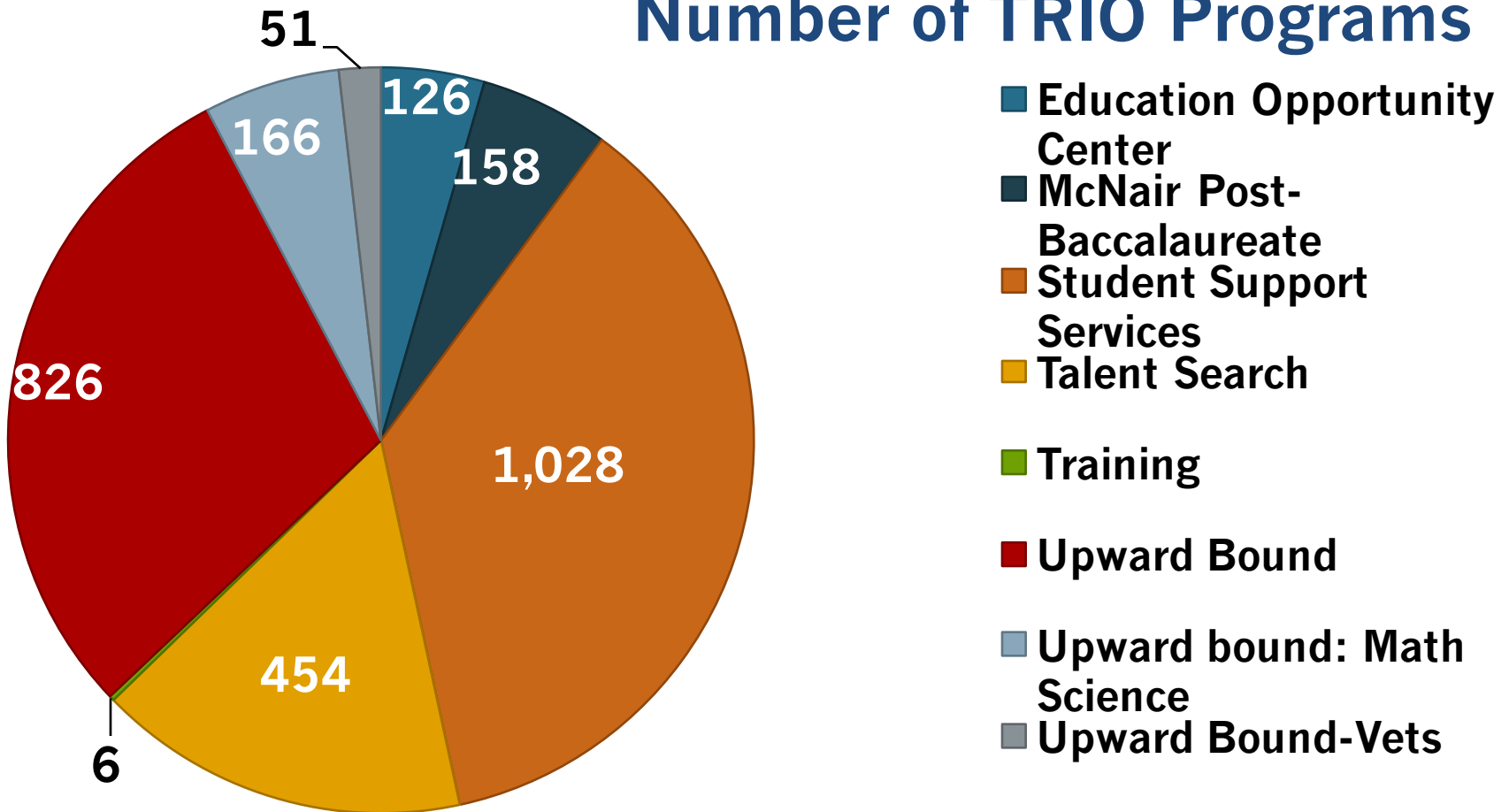- **Should the money be spent for something else?**

What we know about TRIO:

- **What we <u>do have</u>:**
  - o *Input* **data – How much we spend on programs**
  - o *Process* **data – What's happening inside them**
  - o *Outcome* **data – What comes out the other end**
- **What we <u>don't have</u>:**
  - o *Impact* **data – Direct evidence on the difference these programs make in students' lives.**

The argument of this report:

- **The activities funded through TRIO reflect the research findings on "best practice" relating to enrollment, retention and completion.**

- **TRIO programs exceed their goals in terms of enrollment, retention and completion.**

- **We do not have data that document direct impact on students' lives.**

TRIO Inputs

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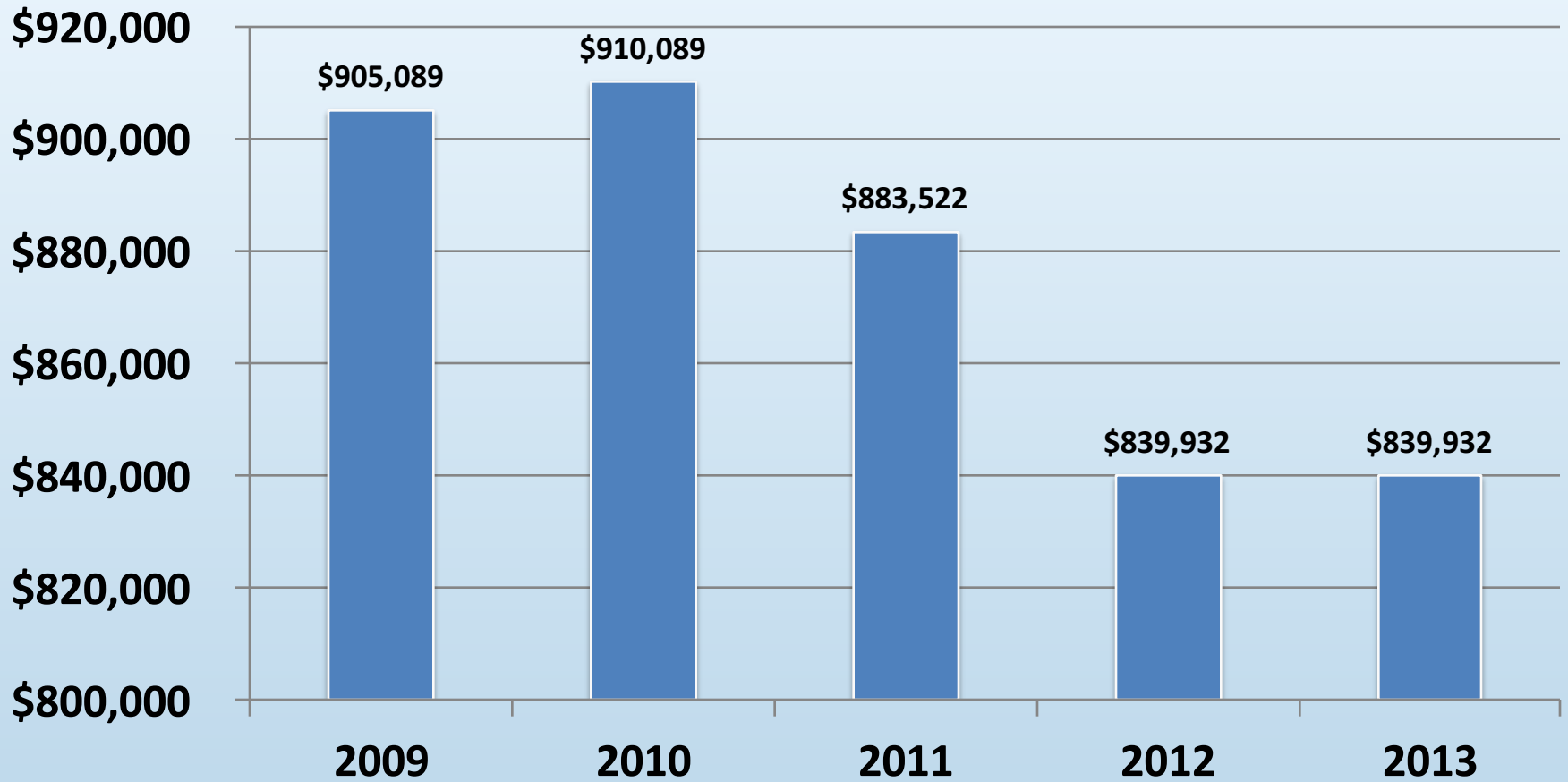# Number of TRIO Programs

Legend:
- ■ Education Opportunity Center
- ■ McNair Post-Baccalaureate
- ■ Student Support Services
- ■ Talent Search
- ■ Training
- ■ Upward Bound
- ■ Upward bound: Math Science
- ■ Upward Bound-Vets

Pie chart values: 126, 158, 1,028, 454, 6, 826, 166, 51

(Source: Department of Education 2014 Budget Request for Higher Education)

(Source: US Department of Education

TRIO Participants: FY 2012

Award Type	Number of Participants	Participants/project (Ave.)	Federal cost per participant
Talent Search	313,641	691	$434
Upward Bound	62,320	76	$4,303
Veterans Upward Bound	6,831	134	$2,107
Upward Bound: Math-Science	10,265	62	$4,300
Ed Opportunity centers	189,131	1,501	$243
Student Support Services	202,750	197	$1,432
McNair	4,482	28	$8,316
Total	789,420		

(Source: Department of Education 2014 Budget Request for Higher Education)

TRIO Processes

Student Support Services Projects: Required Activities (by statute)

- **Academic Tutoring**
- **Advice and Assistance in course selection**
- **Information on Federal student financial aid**
- **Counseling on financial & economic literacy**
- **Activities helping students apply and get financial aid to attend 4-year institutions**
- **Activities for those in 2-year institutions applying (and seeking financial aid) to 4-year**

Student Support Services Projects: Permissible (by statute) Activities

- **Counseling: personal, career & academic matters**
- **Information, activities and instruction on careers**
- **Cultural events and academic programs not usually available to disadvantaged students**
- **Mentoring by faculty or upper class students**
- **Temporary housing during breaks**
- **Activities for under-represented students, limited English, disabled, homeless/disconnected**

What the research tells us about best practice relating to college completion....

Kuh: High Impact Educational Practices

1. **First-year seminars and experiences**

2. **Common intellectual experiences/core**

3. **Learning communities**

4. **Writing-intensive courses**

5. **Collaborative assignments and projects**

(Source: George Kuh, *High-Impact Educational Practices: What they are, Who has access to them, and Why they matter*. American Association of Colleges and Universities, Washington, DC, 2010.)

Kuh: High Impact Practices (Cont.)

6. Undergraduate research

7. Diversity/global learning

8. Service learning/community-based learning

9. Internships

10. Capstone courses and projects

Source: George Kuh, *High-Impact Educational Practices: What they are, Who has access to them, and Why they matter*. American Association of Colleges and Universities, Washington, DC, 2010.)

Framework for Increasing College Completion

1. **Transform developmental education**
   - **"Upward placement" (mainstreaming)**
   - **Compress courses; make them shorter**
   - **Accelerate movement into regular courses**
   - **Pairing classes with developmental courses**
   - **Modularize content into segments**

(Source: *Evidence Meets Practice*, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 2012)

Framework for Increasing College Completion (Continued)

2. **Bring advising to the student**
   - **Advisors initiate contact with students**
   - **Counseling beyond scheduling/academic**
   - **Incorporate student's life situation/goals**
   - **Integrate advising with coaching**
   - **Use technology for planning/monitoring**

(Source: *Evidence Meets Practice*, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 2012)

Framework for Increasing College Completion (Continued)

3. **Create structured pathways**

    - **Help students shape pathways based on goals and interests**

    - **Sequence of courses into academic plan; connect life goals with the planned major**

    - **Students and advisors monitor progress on a regular basis**

    (Source*: Evidence Meets Practice*, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 2012)

Framework for Increasing College Completion

4. **Engage and incentivize faculty**
   - **Faculty recognize role in student success**
   - **Student success – promotion/tenure**
   - **Engage students in faculty research**
   - **Assign best teachers are assigned to gatekeeper and developmental courses**
   - **Faculty/staff collaboration – student success**

(Source: *Evidence Meets Practice*, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 2012)

College Board: The College Completion Agenda

1. **Voluntary preschool education, universally available to children from low-income families**
2. **Improve middle and high school college counseling**
3. **Research-based dropout prevention programs**
4. **Align K-12 with international standards and college admission expectations**
5. **Improve teacher quality and emphasize recruitment and retention**

(Source: Katherine Hughes, *The College Completion Agenda: 2012 Progress Report.*   The College Board.)

College Board: The College Completion Agenda (Continued)

6. Clarify & Simplify college admissions process

7. Provide more need-based grant aid; simplify financial aid & make it more transparent

8. Restraining growth in college costs; make sure government carries out its appropriate role

9. Dramatically increase college completion rates

10. Provide postsecondary opportunities as an essential element of adult education programs

(Source: Katherine Hughes, *The College Completion Agenda: 2011 Progress Report.* The College Board.)

Tinto: Conditions for Student Success

1. **Students have high expectations for success**

2. **Support (academic, social and financial) for students to achieve these expectations**

3. **Assessment of student performance and frequent feedback**

4. **Students are actively engaged in educational activities and the learning they produce**

(Source: Vincent Tinto, Completing College: Rethinking Institutional Action. University of Chicago Press, 2012.)

High-Impact Practices for Community College Engagement

1. Academic goal setting and planning
2. Orientation
3. Accelerated/fast-track developmental ed
4. First-year experience
5. Student success course
6. Learning community
7. Experiential learning beyond the classroom

(Source: *A Matter of Degrees: High-Impact Practices for Community College Engagement*; Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2013)

High-Impact Practices for Community College Engagement (Continued)

8. Tutoring

9. Supplemental instruction

10. Assessment and placement

11. Registration before classes begin

12. Class Attendance

13. Alert and intervention

(Source: *A Matter of Degrees: High-Impact Practices for Community College Engagement*; Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2013)

Student Success: Recurring Themes the the Literature

1. Adequate preparation on part of incoming students

2. Simplified application/financial aid process

3. Expectation of success; appropriate orientation

4. Adequate advising/planning/monitoring

5. Clearly defined pathways through the college experience

Student Success: Recurring Themes in the Literature (Continued)

6. Tutoring, supplemental instruction and skill development

7. Provision of student support and counseling beyond academic issues

8. Opportunities for and encouragement of, student engagement

TRIO <u>Outcomes</u>

Measuring Student Support Services Program Success

1. **Postsecondary persistence**

1. **Degree completion rates for SSS participants who remain at the grantee institution**

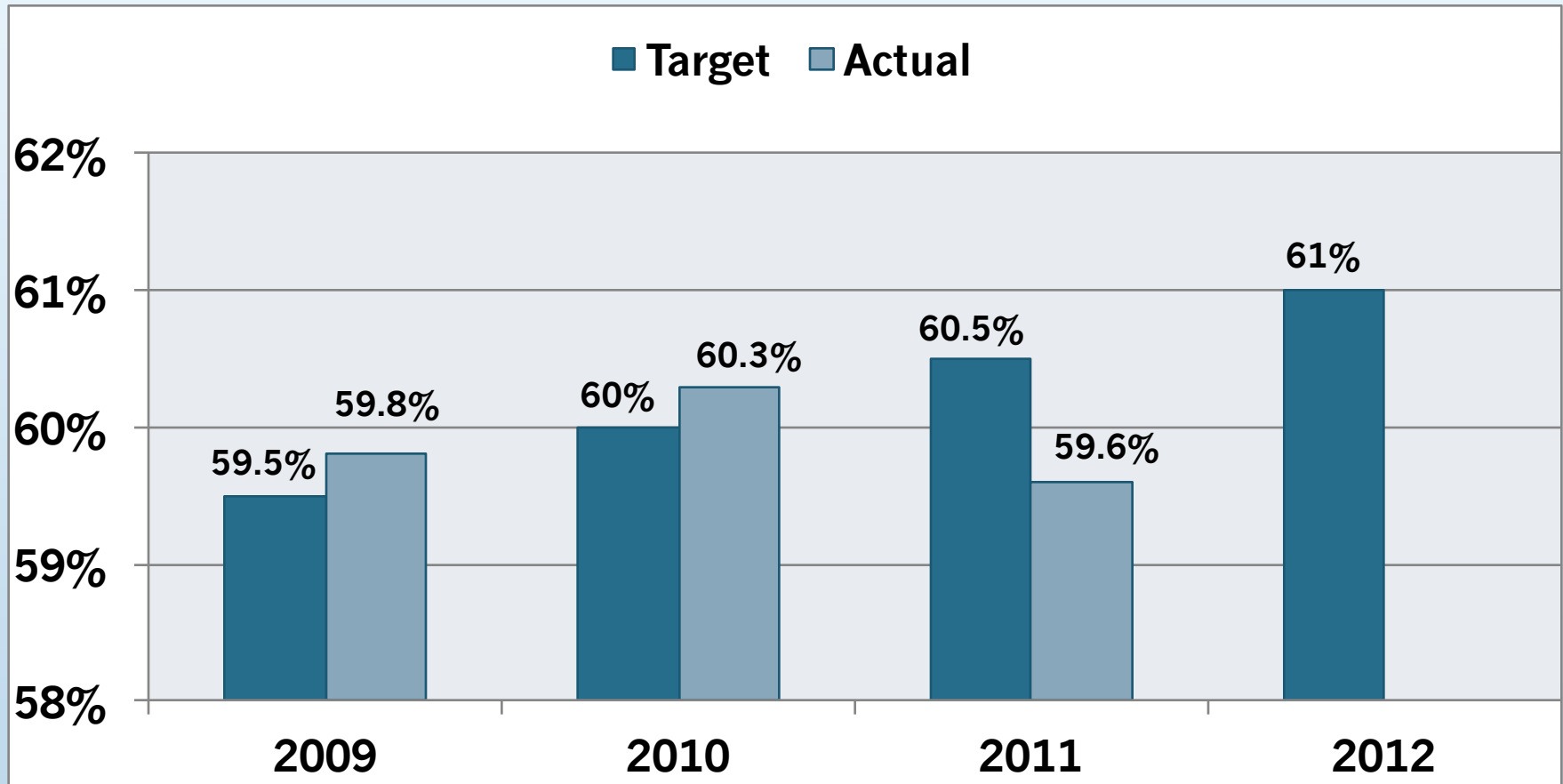# Upward Bound: Percentage of Students Enrolling in College

Target **Actual**

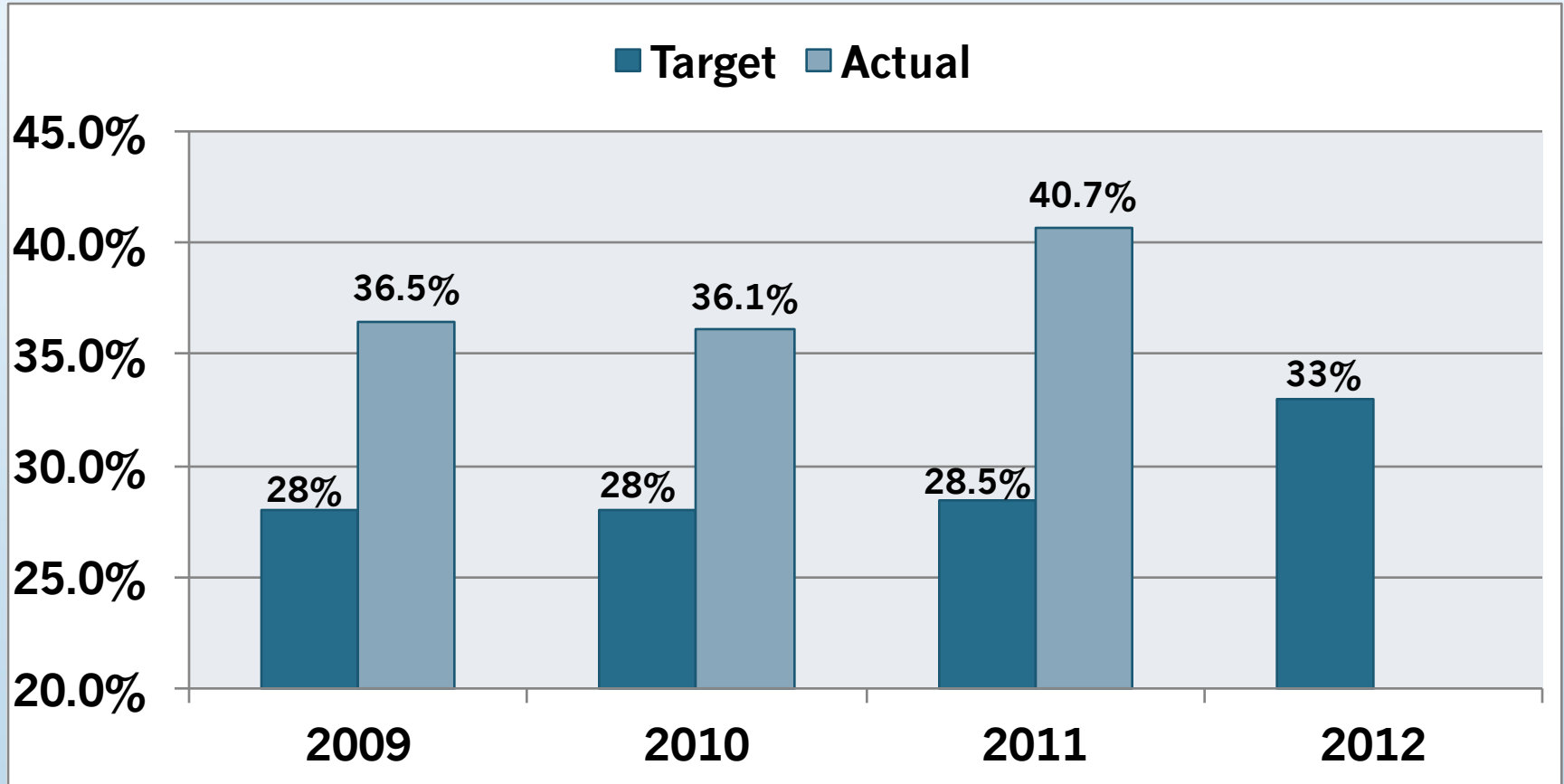|	2009	2010	2011	2012
Target	75%	75%	76%	76%
Actual	82.80%	83.80%		
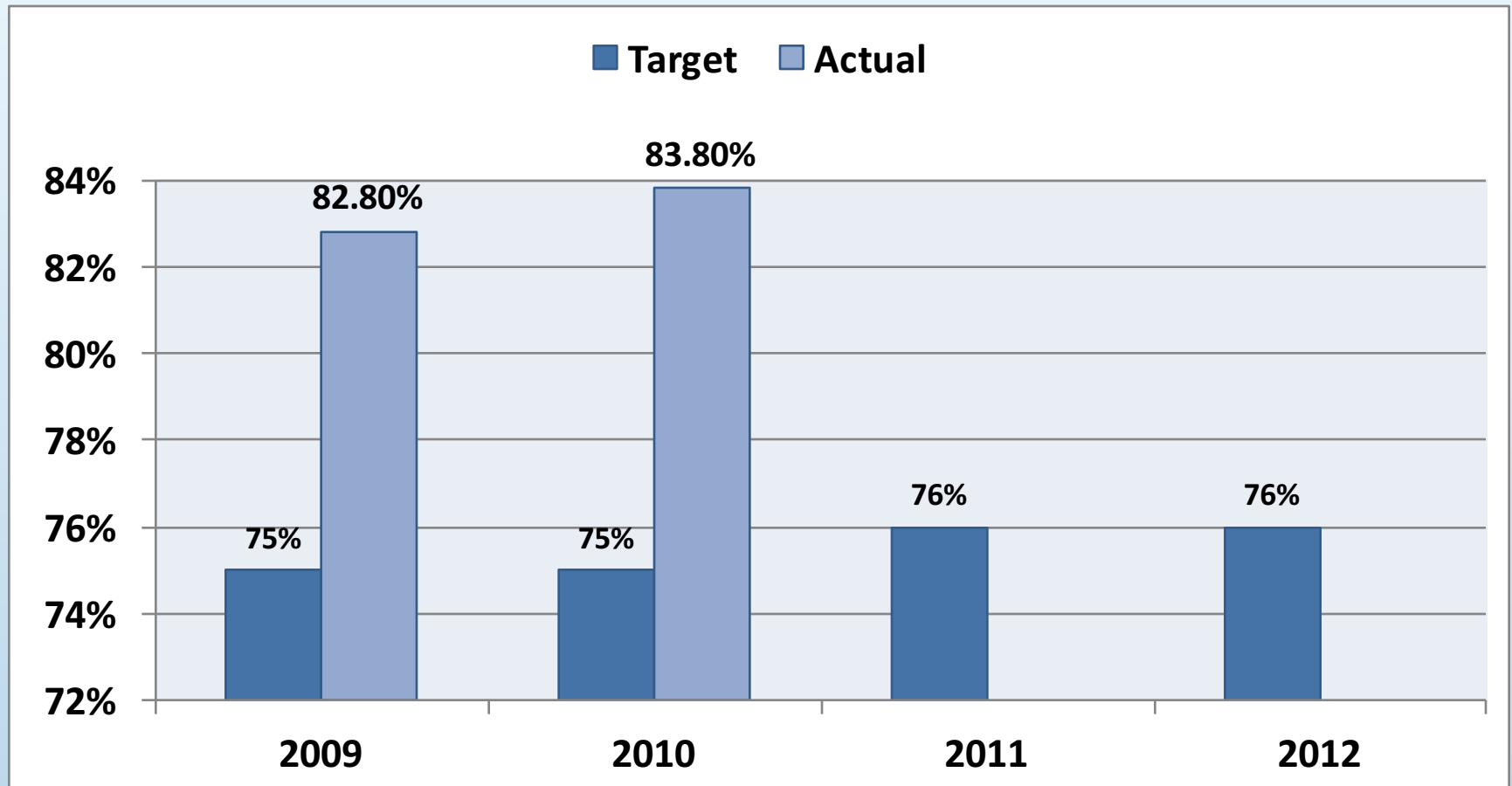
(Source: Department of Education 2014 Budget Request for Higher Education)

Educational Opportunities Centers: Percentage of Students Enrolling in College
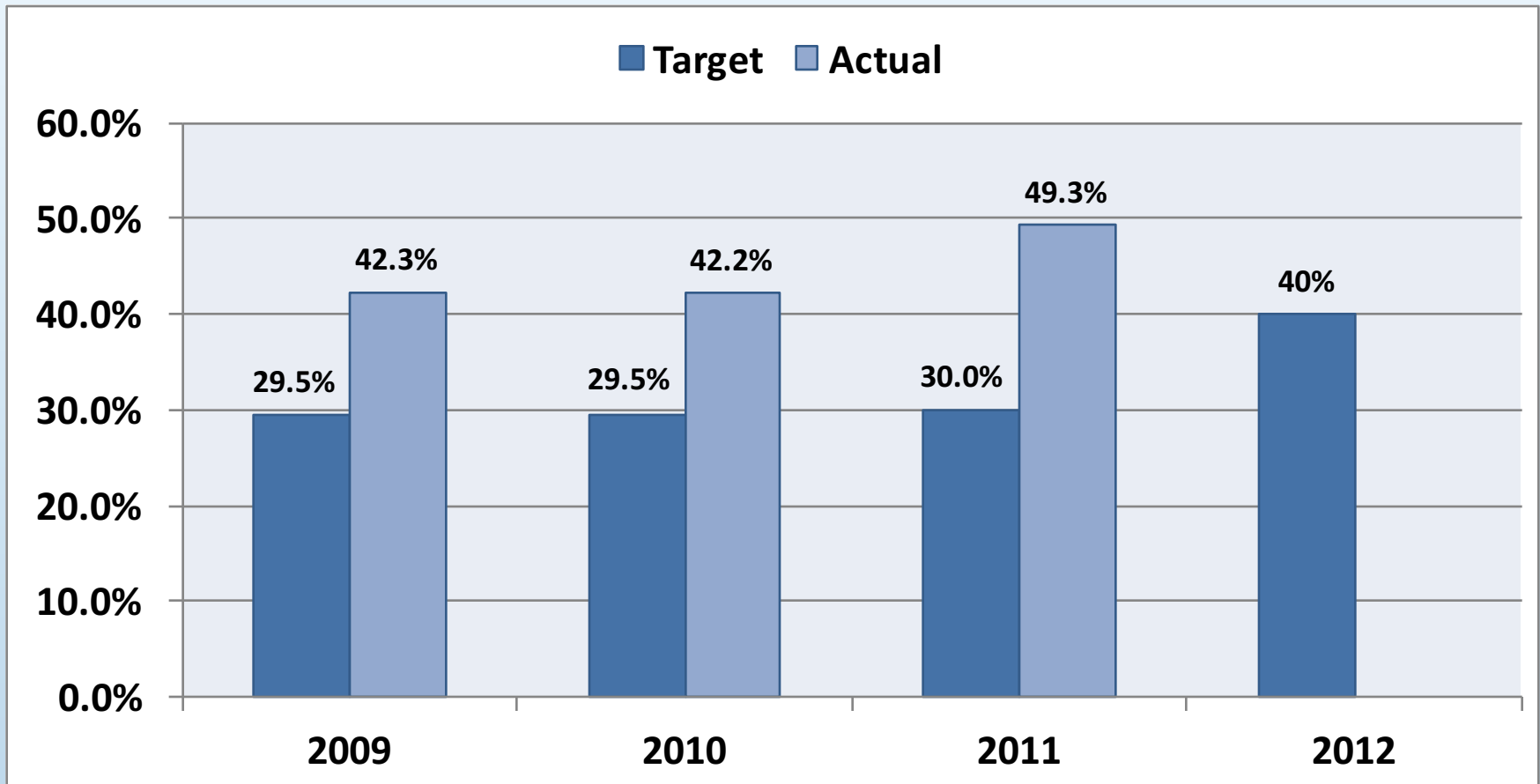
(Source: Department of Education 2014 Budget Request for Higher Education)

Cumulative Retention & Attainment: 1st inst. 2-year (2009)

	BA/BS	AA	Cert.	No Dg/ SE	No Dg/ Left
Low Income/first generation	5.5%	13%	11.8%	17.3%	52.4%
Low income/ not first gen	9.7%	12.2%	9.2%	22.7%	46.2%
First gen/not low income	9.9%	17%	9.4%	17.6%	46.2%
Not low income/not first gen	19.4%	14.4%	6.9%	21%	38.4%
TRIO eligible (2003-04 criteria)	39.7%	15.1%	10.2%	17.9%	48.5%
Student Support Services 2009	36.5%				
Student Support Services 2010	36.1%				
Student Support Services 2011	40.7%				

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics

Cumulative Retention & Attainment: 1st inst. 6-year (2009)

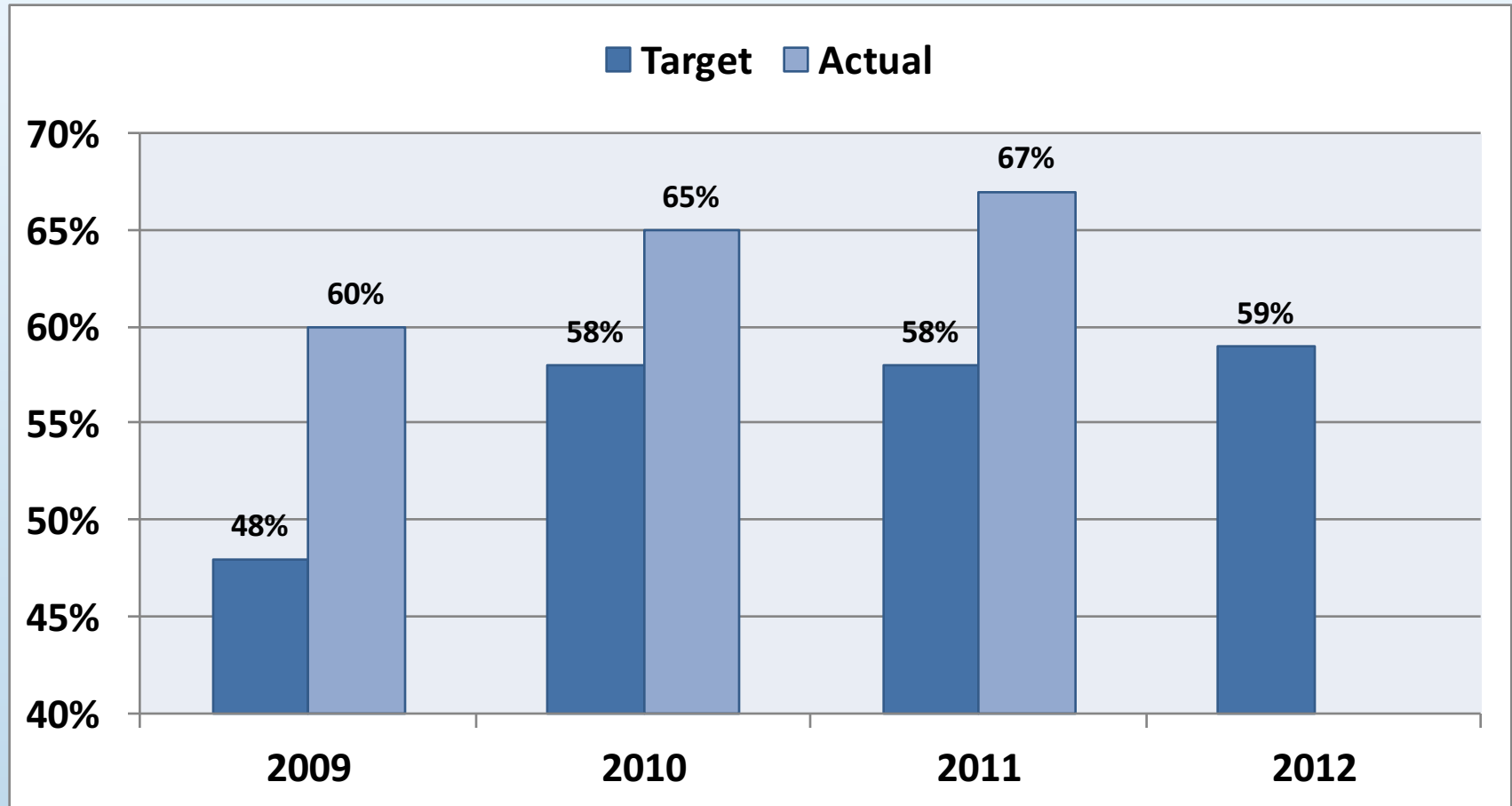|	BA/BS	AA	Cert.	No Dg SE	No Dg Trans	No Dg Left
Low Income/first generation	**27.5%**	**4.2%**	**2.1%**	**6.4%**	**27.5%**	**32.3%**
Low income/ not first gen	**41.4%**	**3.3%**	**0.0%**	**5.2%**	**26.5%**	**23.7%**
First gen/not low income	**44.9%**	**3.8%**	**0.7%**	**5.1%**	**26.6%**	**18.9%**
Not low income/not first gen	**62.2%**	**1.2%**	**0.2%**	**3.7%**	**23%**	**9.7%**
TRIO eligible (2003-04 criteria)	**39.7%**	**3.9%**	**1%**	**5.5%**	**26.8%**	**23.1%**
Student Support Services 2009	**42.3%**					
Student Support Services 2010	**42.2%**					
Student Support Services 2011	**49.3%**					

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics

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**Percentage of TRIO McNair Participants Enrolling and Persisting in Graduate School**
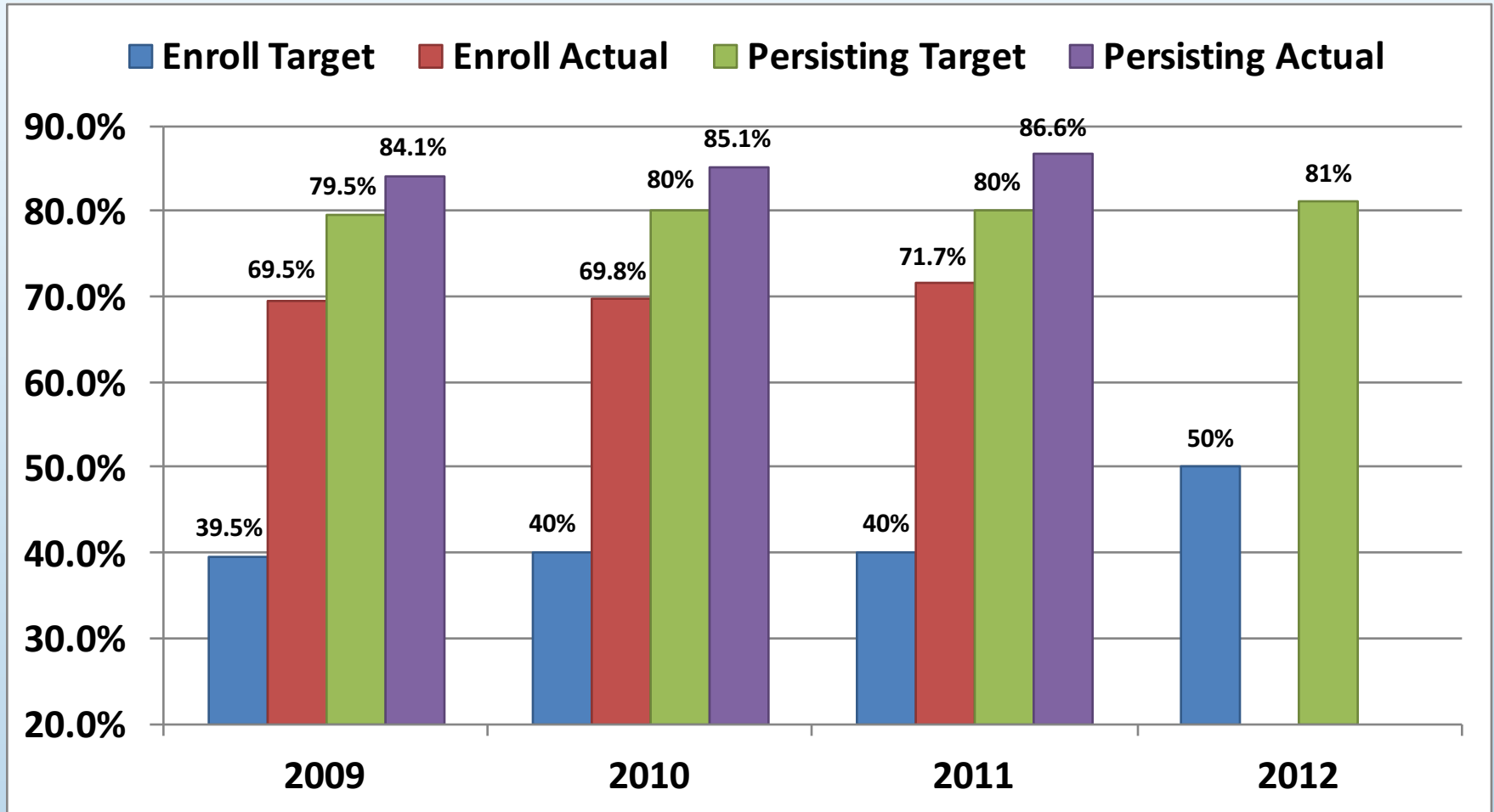
Legend: Enroll Target | Enroll Actual | Persisting Target | Persisting Actual

2009:
- Enroll Target: 39.5%
- Enroll Actual: 69.5%
- Persisting Target: 79.5%
- Persisting Actual: 84.1%

2010:
- Enroll Target: 40%
- Enroll Actual: 69.8%
- Persisting Target: 80%
- Persisting Actual: 85.1%

2011:
- Enroll Target: 40%
- Enroll Actual: 71.7%
- Persisting Target: 80%
- Persisting Actual: 86.6%

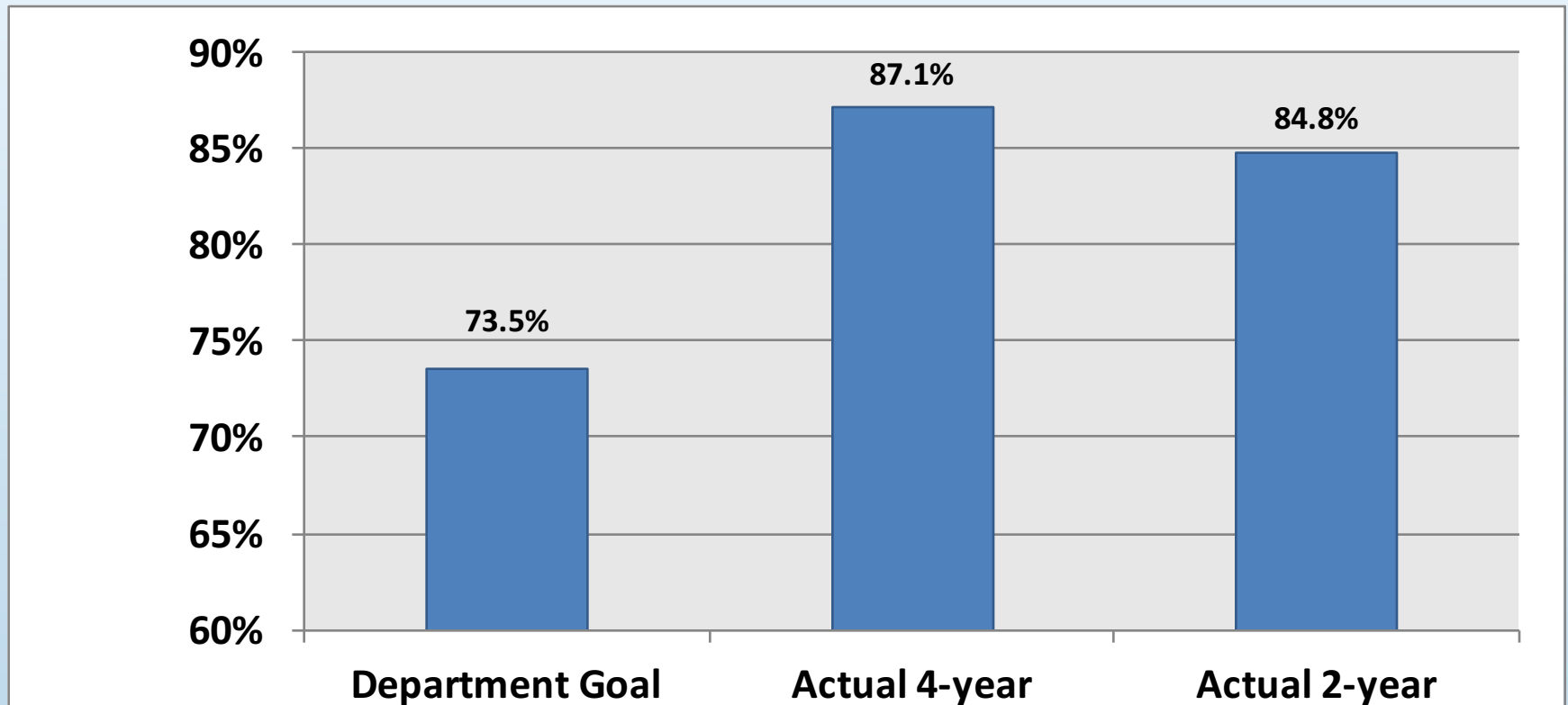2012:
- Enroll Target: 50%
- Persisting Target: 81%

(Source: Department of Education 2014 Budget Request for Higher Education)

Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need: Median Time (in Years) to a Degree
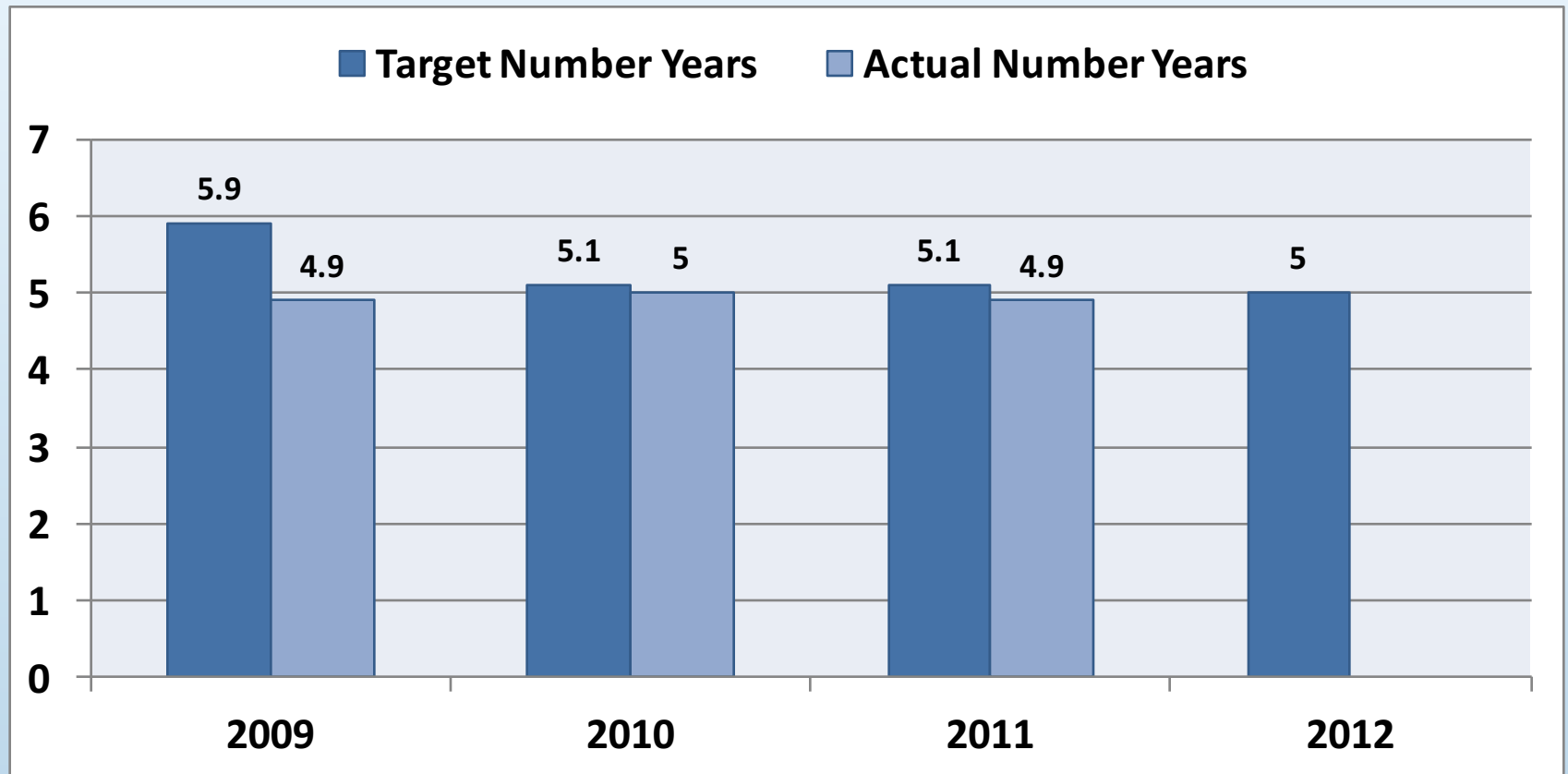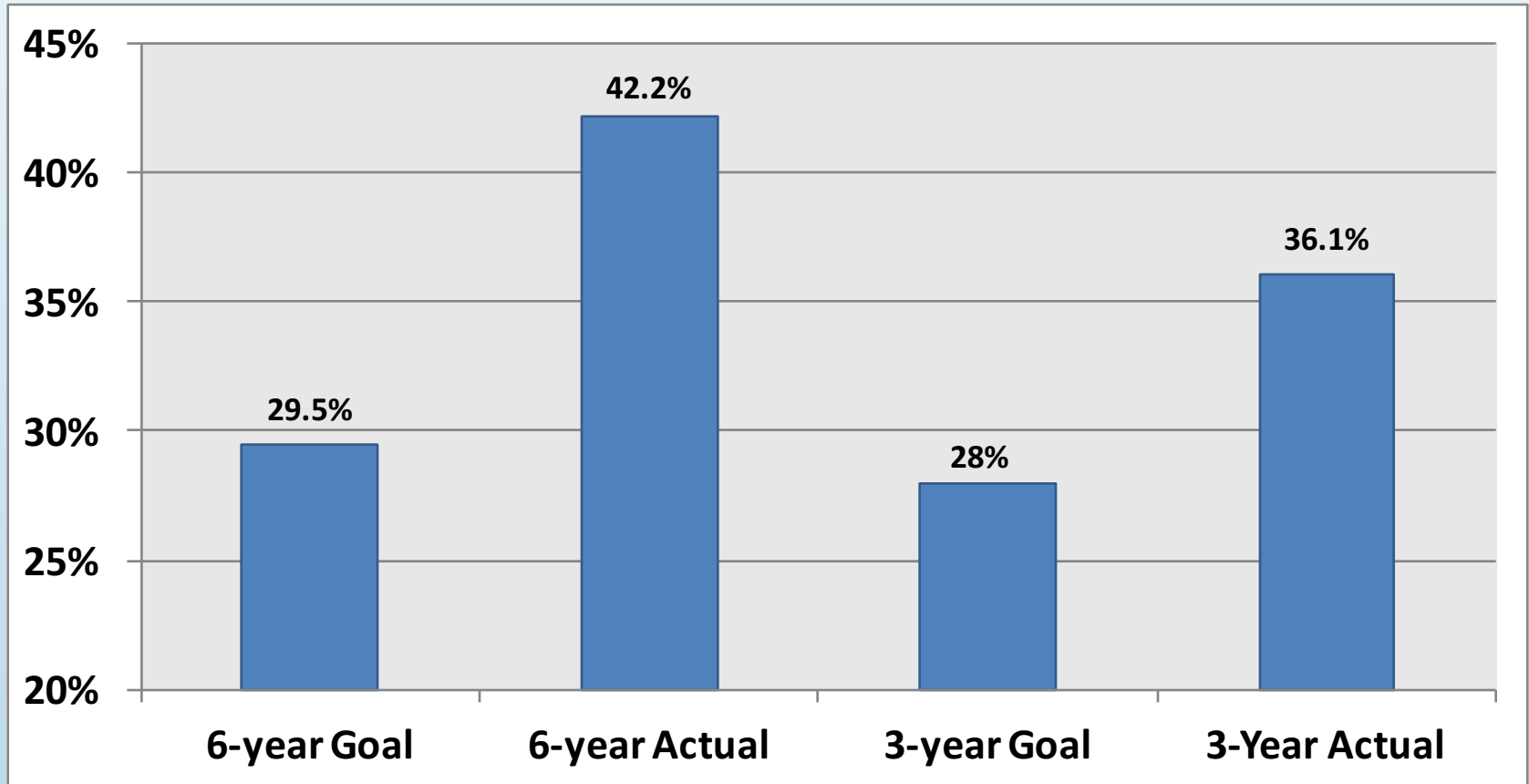
(Source: Department of Education 2014 Budget Request for Higher Education)

TRIO Student Support Services: Persistence Rates for 2009-10

(Source: Department of Education Annual Performance Reports for 2009-10)

TRIO Student Support Services: Graduation Rates for 2009-10

(Source: Department of Education Annual Performance Reports for 2009-10)

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Percent of GEAR UP Students Enrolled in Pre-Algebra by end of 7th Grade who passed, and % of GEAR UP Students Enrolled in Algebra I by end of 9th Grade Who Passed the Course
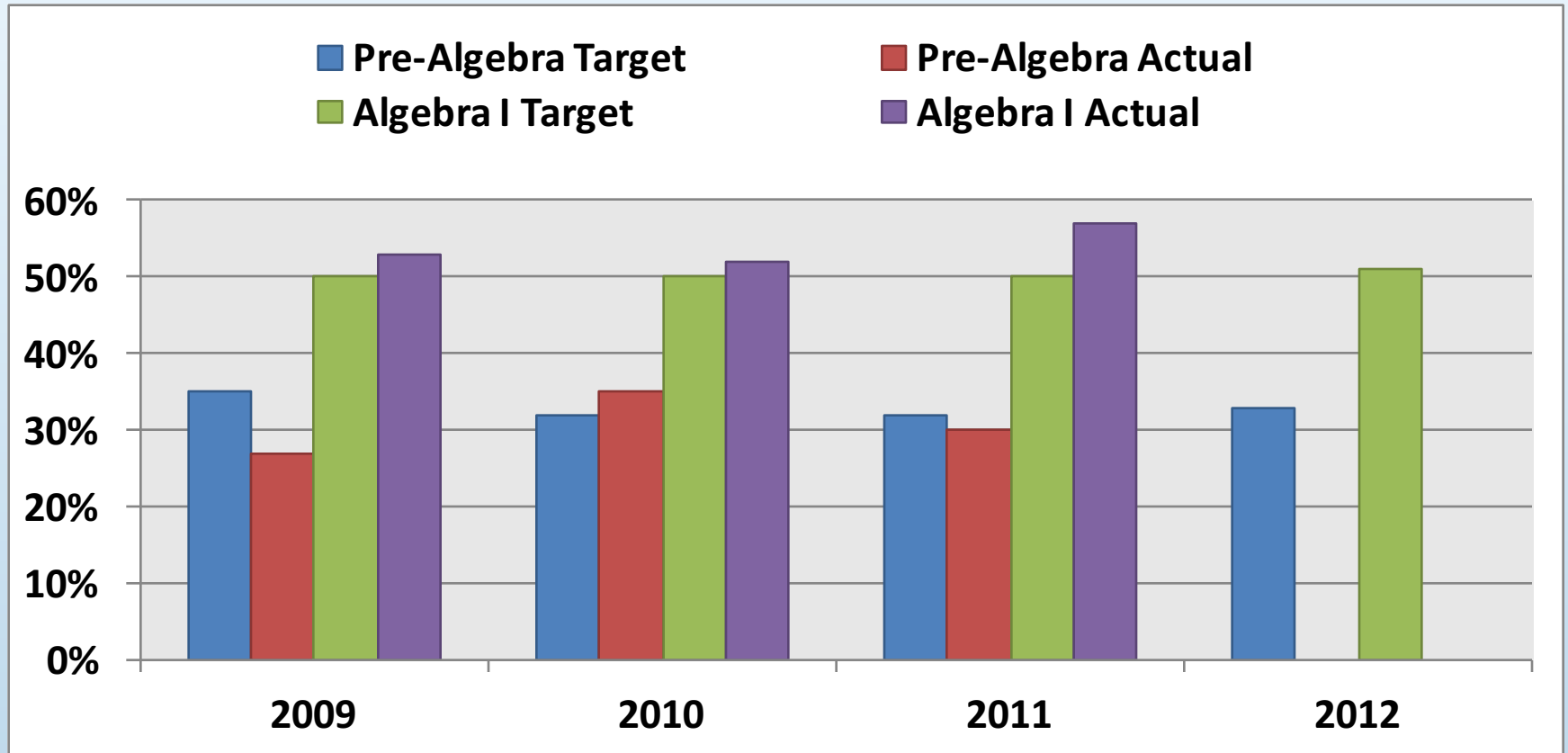
(Source: Department of Education 2014 Budget Request for Higher Education)

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TRIO Impacts

Problematic Studies About the Impact of TRIO Programs

1. **1992-2004 Upward Bound Evaluation**
   - **Upward Bound has "no detectable effect on postsecondary enrollment…."**

2. **Brookings-Princeton: Time for Change…**
   - **Programs for the "disadvantaged" are "at best only modestly successful."**

Cahalan: Problems with the National Evaluation of UPWARD BOUND

- **Sampling error**
  - o **Sample design flaws and unequal weighting issues (Unequal weighting issues)**

- **Non-sampling error**
  - o **Treatment-control group bias in favor of the control group (Control group received comparable services in other ways)**

(Source: Margaret Cahalan; "Do the Conclusions Change?" Council for Opportunity in Education)

Problems with the Brookings/Princeton Study

- **Uncritically accepts findings of a flawed, Upward Bound evaluation**

- **Extrapolates from the findings of this flawed study of <u>UB</u>, and then generalizes to <u>TRIO</u>**

- **Proposes structural reforms to address the alleged failures of programmatic process that are not grounded in an analysis of the data**

The Challenge

1. **Input** data – are only descriptive; tell us what we're investing in TRIO

2. **Process** data – tell us what happens inside the activities funded by TRIO

3. **Outcome** data – tell us how TRIO programs perform, relative to goals

4. **Impact** data – not available because we can't track individual students and are precluded by Congressional action from experimental designs to assess TRIO impact

Conclusions

1. **TRIO programs are generally meeting or exceeding their goals in terms of persistence and graduation.**

2. **The processes funded through TRIO generally reflect what research says about "best practices" in retention and completion**

3. **It's time to stop giving credence to flawed studies of TRIO (Upward Bound evaluation and the Brookings/Princeton study)**

Conclusions (Continued)

4. The "Framework for Increasing College Completion" in *Evidence Meets Practice* is an outstanding resource that needs to be shared much more broadly.