

Direct Admissions Report: Reactions and Commentary

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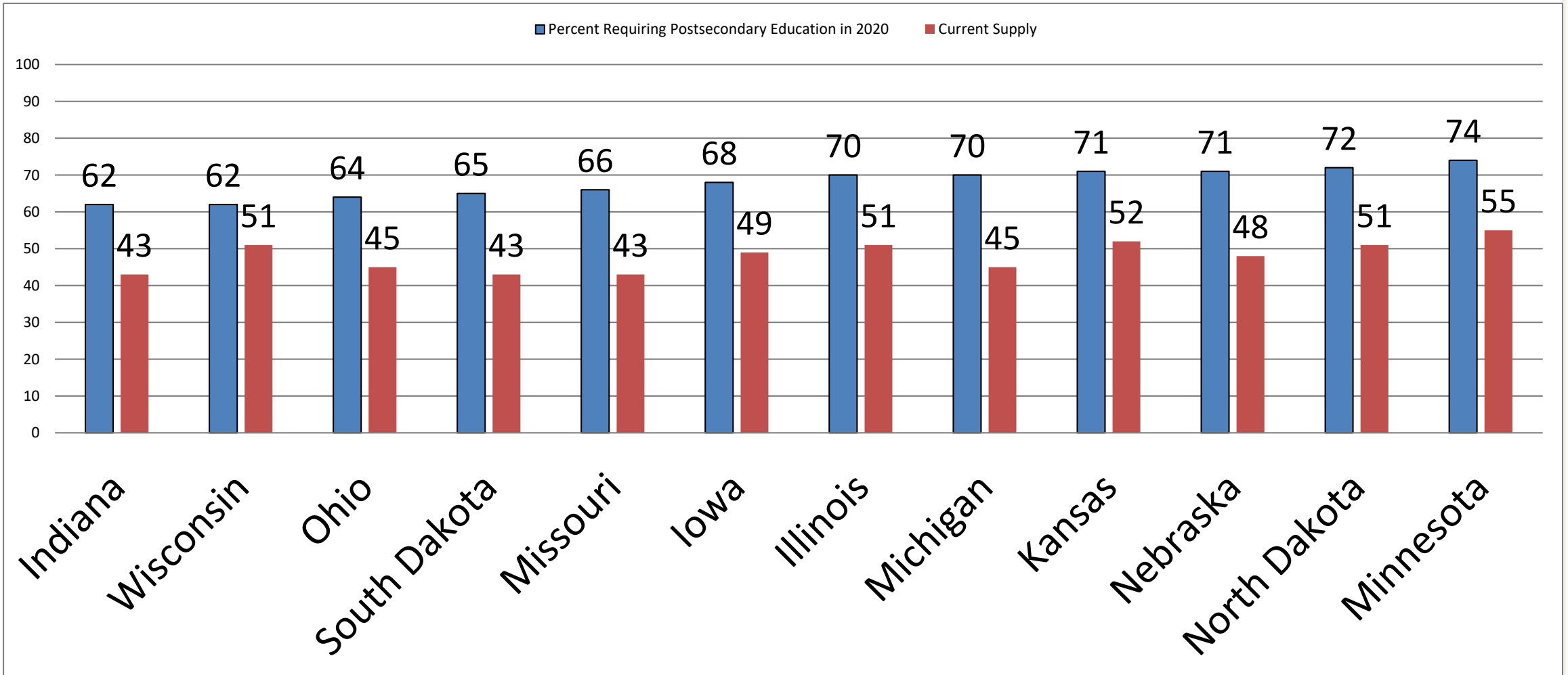
Midwestern Higher Education Compact

Outline of presentation

- I. Key College Participation Challenges in Midwestern States
- II. The potential role of Direct Admissions
- III. Enhancing direct admissions to meet Midwestern challenges
- IV. Questions for states moving forward

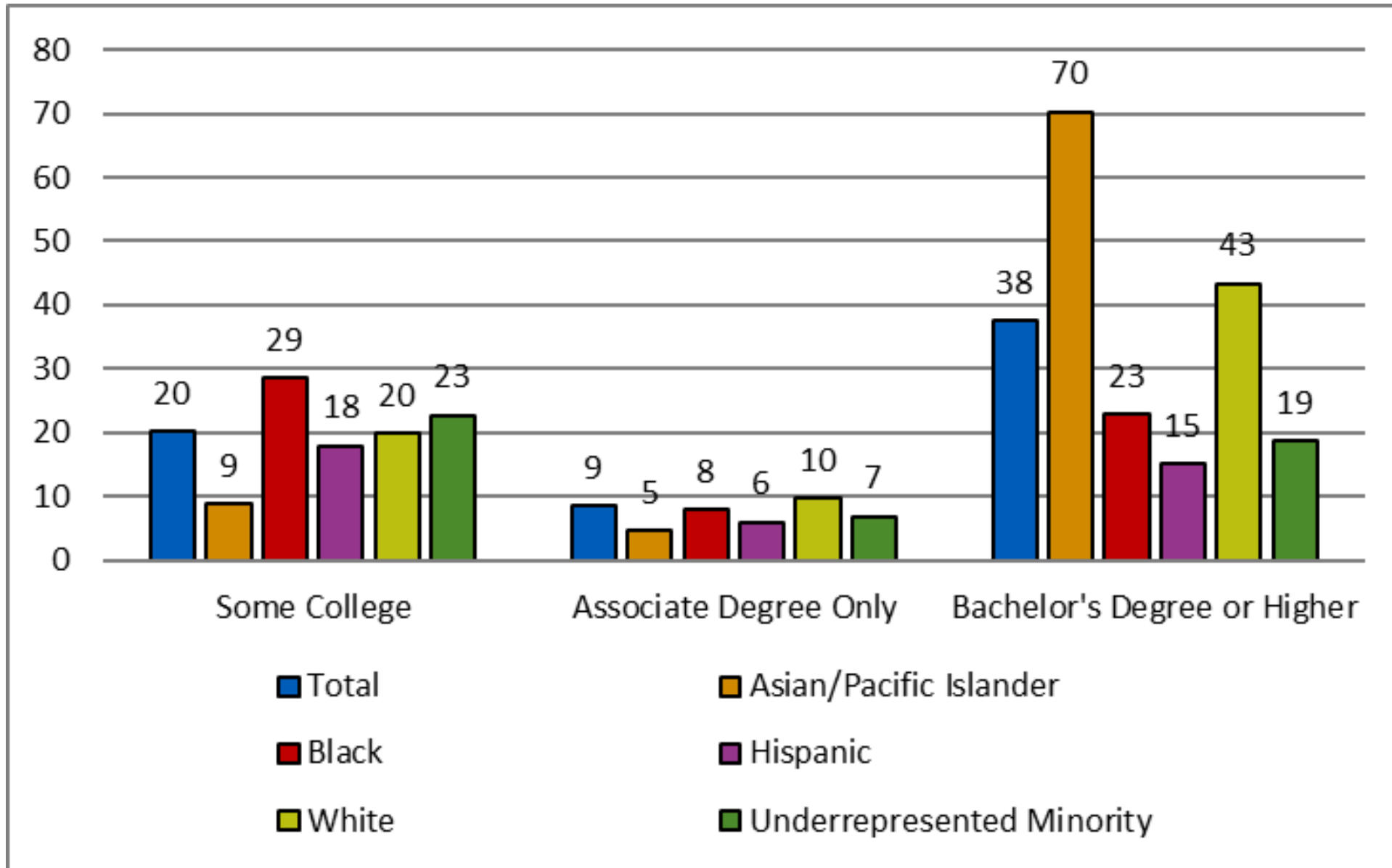
Key College Participation Challenges in Midwestern States

Demand for Postsecondary Education Exceeds the Supply



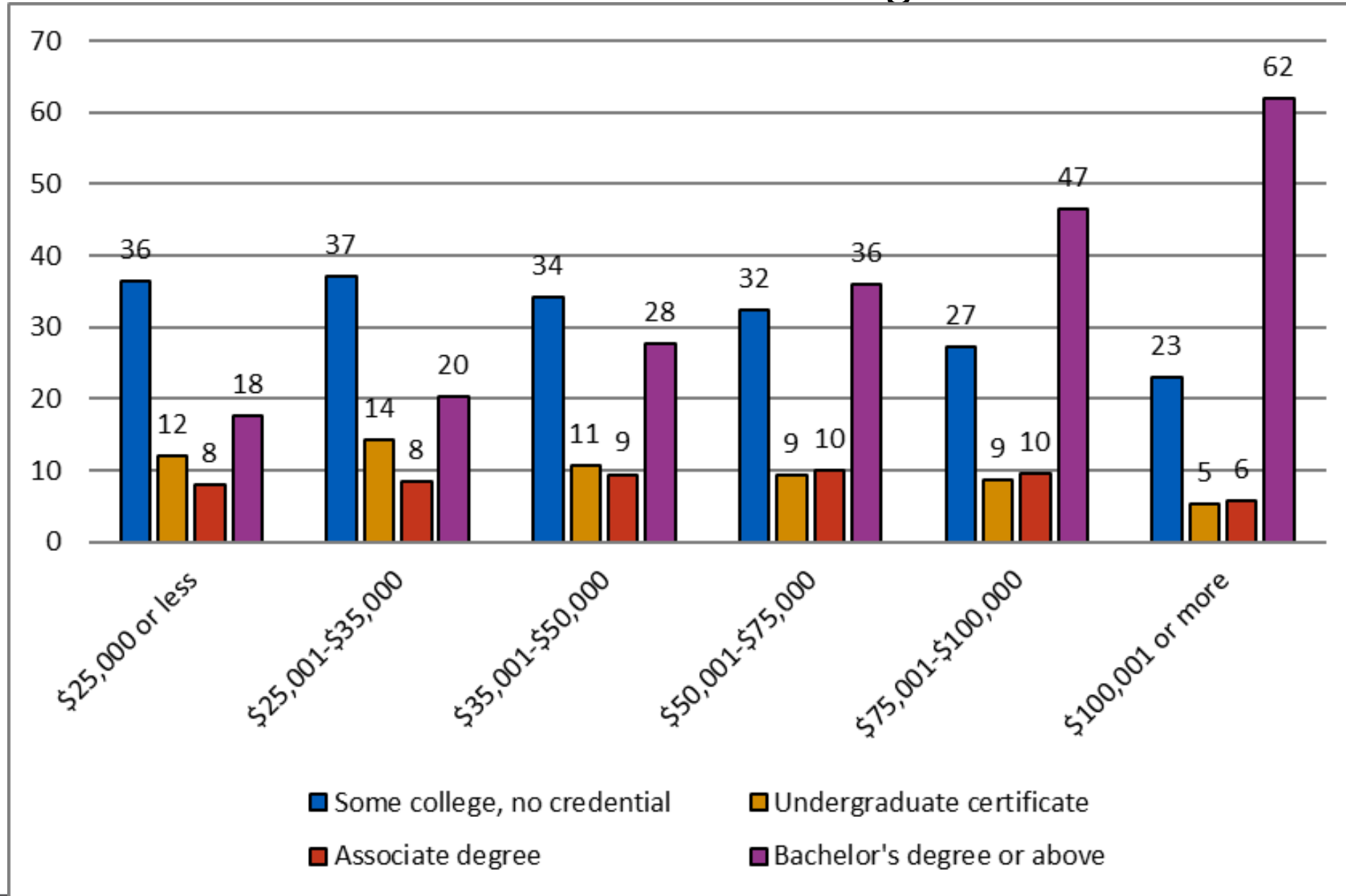
Source: MHEC. Higher Education in Focus. Georgetown CEW.

Access to the new economy is highly unequal (Illinois)



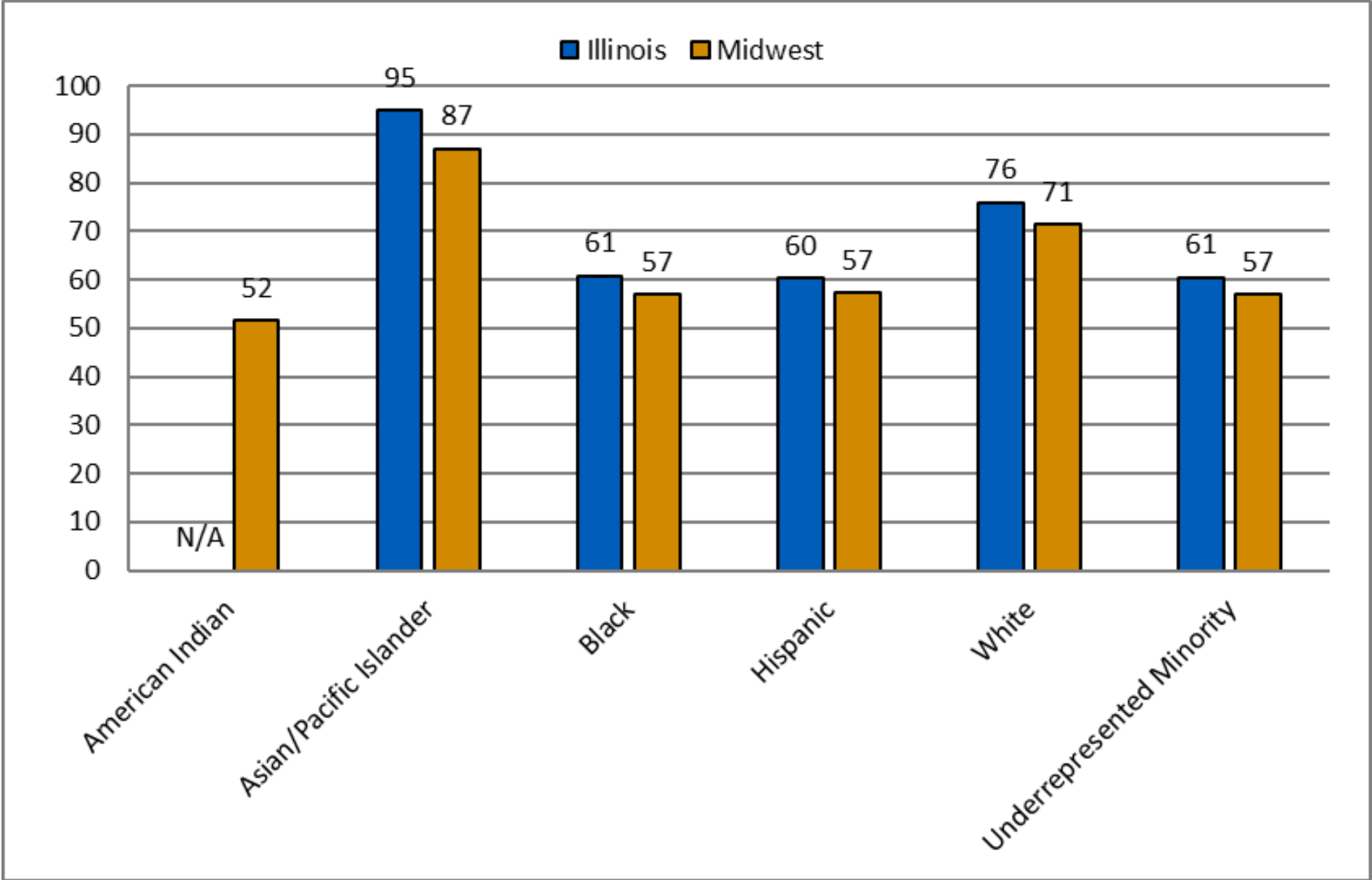
Source: MHEC.
Higher Education
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High School Sophomores in the United States who Attained a Postsecondary Credential Before Age 27



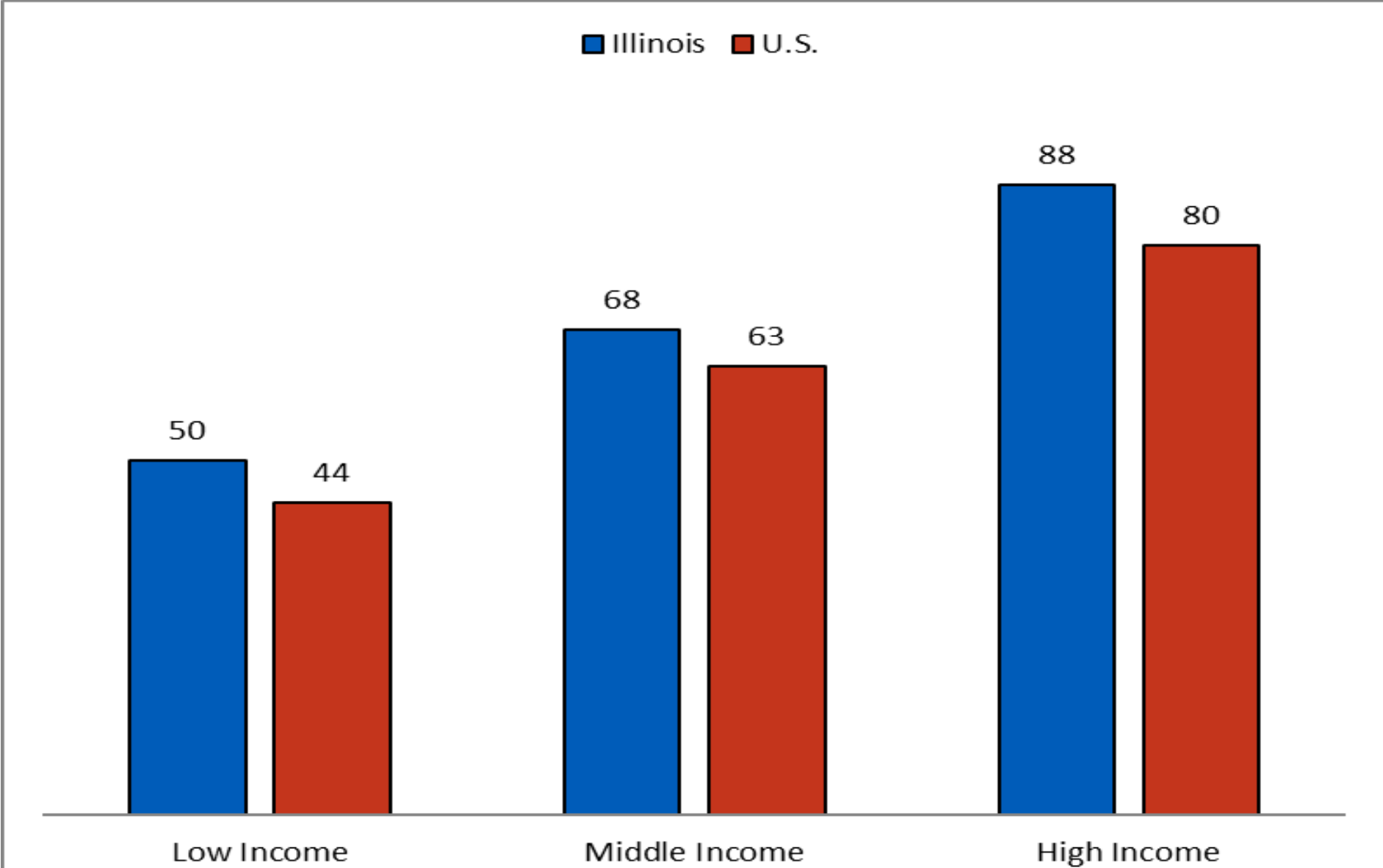
Source: MHEC.
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Percentage of Persons Aged 18-24 who are Currently Enrolled or Have Completed Some College by Race and Ethnicity



Source: MHEC.
Higher Education
in Focus.

Dependent 18 to 24 Year Old Residents Who Have Enrolled in or Have Completed Some College by Family Income



Source: MHEC.
Higher Education
in Focus.

Rationale for Direct Admissions Experimentation

Reasons to experiment with Direct Admissions

- Low cost of implementation (e.g., all states in Midwest have SLDS)
- It is consistent with the simple-is-better principle in financial aid research
- It helps accommodate contemporary student expectations of just-in-time knowledge and one-click convenience
- It reduces uncertainty about college options, particularly among students with inadequate social capital

Reasons to experiment with Direct Admissions

- It is consistent with past research showing that targeted information improves enrollment rates of low-income and underrepresented minority students
 - “in an experiment with elements of a direct admission system (where students, parents, and principals received personalized mailings encouraging students to apply to a selective institution), high-achieving, low-income students applied to college at rates more than 2.5 times that of peers who did not receive the mailings (67 percent compared to 26 percent), and 27 percent enrolled in a selective institution compared to only 12 percent in the control group (Dynarski, Libassi, Michelmore, & Owen, 2018)”
- Possible effects of direct admissions in Illinois on application and enrollment variables (see Delaney et al., 2019)

Enhancing Direct Admissions to Meet Midwestern Challenges

Consider Direct Admissions Add-Ons

- common application, financial aid estimates, application fee waivers, match information (e.g., expected salary, graduation probability)
- Other possibilities?
 - universal college readiness test administration
 - connect with college student mentors
 - student ranking rather than absolute threshold criteria for admissions to manage limited seats at selective institutions
 - other measures of college readiness (e.g., civic engagement, entrepreneurship, innovation, badges/certificates)

Direct Admissions as One Component of a Larger System

- Academic preparation (e.g., dual enrollment, teacher preparation)
- On-going information about the college admissions process (e.g., FAFSA and enrollment deadlines)
- Affordability (e.g., Need-based financial aid, promise programs)
 - *MHEC Affordability and Finance Policy series*: assesses the relative effectiveness of various state-level policies and program in reducing the financial burden of postsecondary enrollment and degree completion.
- Access to educational quality (especially instructional excellence, highly effective programs, academic challenge, academic and social support)
 - E.g., *SHEEO Quality Assurance and Improvement Initiative*: overview of approaches utilized to assess and assure the quality of higher education institutions and higher education credentials at the state level.

Direct Admissions as One Component of a Larger System

- Other roles for technology: Employing virtual assistants to facilitate academic preparation and college-goal orientation (see MHEC. (2015). *Campus-based practices for promoting student success: Software solutions.*)
 - Academic planning: assists students in creating a college plan and monitoring progress (e.g., Degree Map at Austin Community College)
 - Task engagement software: provides automated cues, reminders, and positive reinforcement that help students to complete coursework and comply with deadlines (e.g., FAFSA submission)
 - Early warning systems: collect and utilize data to alert high school teachers, counselors, parents, and direct admissions program staff that a student is in need of assistance
 - Absenteeism, grades below “C”, low participation/effort

Questions for states going forward

Needs assessment

- To what extent do differences in application and enrollment rates across demographic groups reflect information and complexity barriers versus other types of barriers (e.g., preparation)?

Infrastructure

- Would the existing SLDS support Direct Admissions?
- What enhancements can be made to Direct Admissions (e.g., common application, financial aid estimates, universal test administration, application fee waivers)?
- Is there any advantage of creating a multi-state common application (e.g., American Medical College Application Service)?

Building a coalition

- How would institutions be grouped to facilitate buy-in?
- Are selective public and private institutions in your state willing to commit to increasing enrollment of qualified disadvantaged students that require significant financial aid and other support?

Program Evaluation

- How will we evaluate the impact of implementation? What data will we need?
 - E.g., only three institutions in Idaho report application data
- Are there any possible unintended consequences that should be assessed? E.g.,...
 - Increasing administrative burden of processing applications without increasing enrollment rates
 - Increasing enrollment rates without increasing completion rates (nudging students to apply with weak college aspirations)
 - Creating capacity or system-balance problems due to stronger demand at some institutions
 - Oversimplifying the college admissions process by not accounting for other important factors (e.g., potential to add value to the overall student body and, upon graduation, to society)

Conclusion