

# Enrollment Management Trends Report | 2012

A snapshot of the 2011 ACT-tested high school graduates





ACT is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides assessment, research, information, and program management services in the broad areas of education and workforce development. Each year, we serve millions of people in high schools, colleges, professional associations, businesses, and government agencies, nationally and internationally. Though designed to meet a wide array of needs, all ACT programs and services have one guiding purpose—helping people achieve education and workplace success.

A copy of this report can be found at

**[www.act.org/emtrends](http://www.act.org/emtrends)**

# Enrollment Management Trends Report

ACT created the *Enrollment Management Trends Report* to provide enrollment managers and other college administrators with information about students' patterns during the college choice process of the 2011 high school graduates who took the ACT® test.

More than 1.6 million students—roughly half of the graduating class of 2011—took the ACT during high school. Of these students, a little more than 70% enrolled in college the following fall. This report covers such topics as the students' migration patterns, the time in which they first took the ACT, their participation in ACT's Educational Opportunity Service (EOS), and their score-sending behavior.

## Our Unique Added Value

ACT has been measuring the academic achievement of 11th- and 12th-grade students since 1959, their career aspirations since 1969, and their academic preparation in high school since 1985. Since 1996, and every three to five years thereafter, ACT surveys thousands of high school and college educators to pinpoint the knowledge and skills needed for first-year college coursework.

ACT is the only organization with decades of empirical information showing exactly what happens to high school

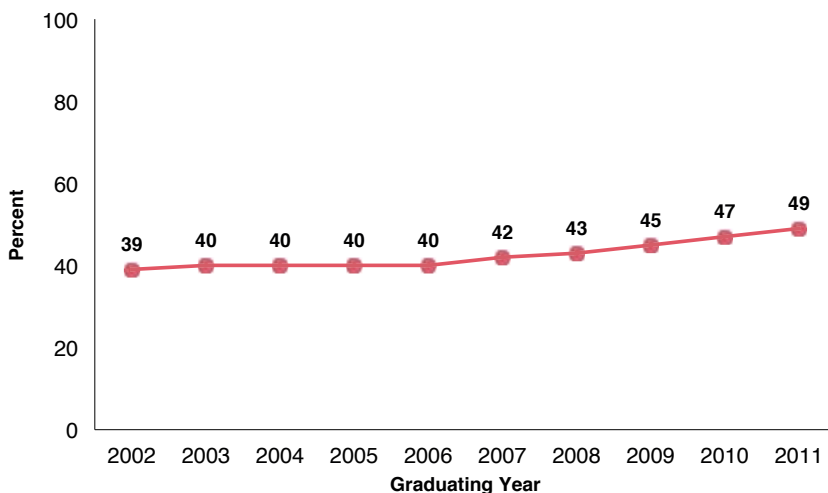
graduates once they get to college or to work and how they can maximize success—based on their preparation from kindergarten through high school. This unique information is an invaluable resource as ACT works closely with states, school districts, and postsecondary institutions to transform them into a better-aligned P–16 education system.

## Sources of Information

Unless otherwise noted, all information in this report comes from the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011. Information in this report—such as the students' background characteristics, time of testing, ACT scores, college preferences, participation in EOS, and college choices—is collected when students register for and take the ACT. Enrollment information for the ACT-tested graduating class comes from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) and is supplemented by enrollment information from ACT's Class Profile Service.<sup>1</sup>

ACT believes that the information provided in this report will give institutions insight into their current enrollment management practices and offer effective strategies for improvement.

## Percent of High School Graduating Class Taking the ACT, 2002–2011



Graph reads: 49% of the high school graduating class of 2011 took the ACT.

- Between 2002 and 2011, the number of high school graduates who took the ACT increased by 45%, from 1,116,082 to 1,623,112.
- As a share of all high school graduates, students who took the ACT increased by 10 percentage points, from 39% in 2002 to 49% in 2011.
- The upward trend in ACT participation is due in part to (1) a number of new states (KY, MI, TN, and WY) administering the ACT to all 11th graders, and (2) participation increases in large states such as California, Florida, New York, and Texas. As ACT participation rates have increased, the pool of ACT-tested students has become more representative of the nation's high school graduates.

<sup>1</sup> More than 3,300 colleges participate in the NSC, and these institutions enroll more than 96% of all undergraduates in the United States. Given this broad coverage, we make the assumption in this report that students not identified by the NSC or by ACT did not enroll in college; however, it is possible that some of these students attended a postsecondary institution that does not currently participate in the NSC or in ACT's Class Profile Service.

# College Readiness Benchmark Attainment

The ACT College Readiness Benchmarks are the minimum English, reading, mathematics, and science scores required for students to have a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher in the corresponding credit-bearing college course.

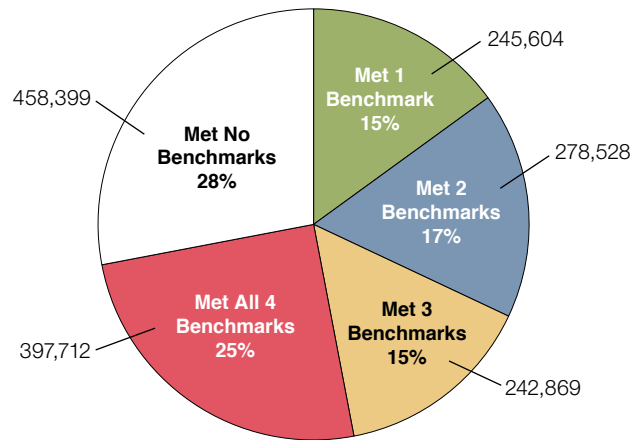
College Course	ACT Subject Test*	ACT Benchmark
English Composition	English	18
Social Sciences	Reading	21
College Algebra	Mathematics	22
Biology	Science	24

\* ACT Subject Test scores range from 1 to 36.

More than 1.6 million students of the high school graduating class of 2011 took the ACT during high school.

- Seventy-two percent of these students met at least 1 of the 4 College Readiness Benchmarks.
- There are far too many students—28%—who met none of the College Readiness Benchmarks. ACT research shows that these students are less likely to enroll in college, persist over time, and complete a degree program within 6 years.

## Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks Attained, 2011

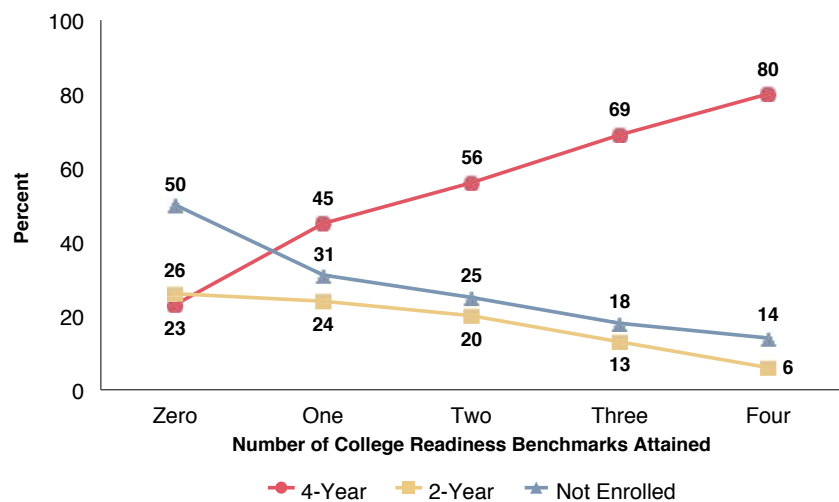


Graph reads: In 2011, 25% (or 397,712) of ACT-tested high school graduates met all 4 College Readiness Benchmarks.

Of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011, 53% enrolled in a 4-year college, 18% enrolled in a 2-year college, and 29% did not enroll in college.

- A student's likelihood of enrolling in a 4-year college increased with the number of College Readiness Benchmarks attained.
- A student's likelihood of either enrolling in a 2-year college or not enrolling in college decreased as the number of College Readiness Benchmarks attained increased.
- Of those high school graduates who met either 0 or 1 Benchmark, more than 300,000 did not enroll in college.

## College Type Attended by Number of College Readiness Benchmarks Attained, 2011



Graph reads: 80% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011 who met all 4 College Readiness Benchmarks enrolled at a 4-year college.

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

# Participation

Although both ACT and SAT® scores are accepted at virtually all postsecondary institutions that require an admissions test, there remain state and regional differences in the share of high school graduates who take each test.

- In 26 states, at least 60% of the high school graduating class of 2011 took the ACT. In 12 of these states, at least 80% of their graduates took the ACT.
- Comparatively, in 18 states and in DC, at least 60% of all 2011 high school graduates took the SAT. In 4 of these states, at least 80% of their graduates took the SAT.

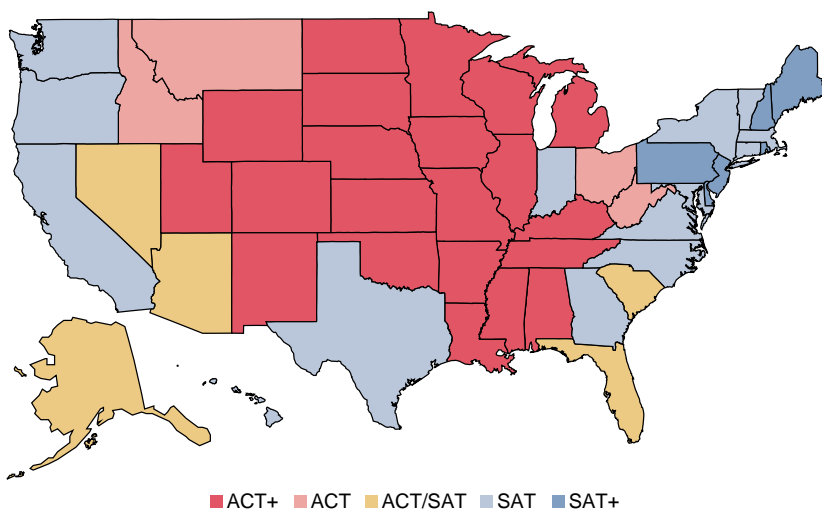
ACT research shows that ACT-tested students differ both in terms of their background characteristics and their college selection behaviors depending on the ACT and SAT participation rates in the state. To illustrate some of these differences in this report, we have classified states into

5 categories based on their ratio of ACT- and SAT-tested high school graduates. The table below lists for each of these state categories the ratio of ACT- and SAT-tested students that defines the category, the number of states in the category, and the number of ACT-tested students across those states. The table also provides for each state category the average ACT Composite score and the percentage of students whose family income is greater than \$60,000.

As you will see throughout this report, ACT-tested students from “ACT+” and “ACT” states often exhibit the student testing and enrollment behaviors of the typical college-bound population in those states. ACT-tested students from “SAT” and “SAT+” states, however, frequently exhibit different testing and enrollment behaviors.

State Category	Criteria	States	ACT-Tested Students	Family Income > \$60K	Average ACT Composite
ACT+	ACT to SAT ratio of 4+ to 1	21	848,854	39%	20.7
ACT	ACT to SAT ratio of 1.5+ to 1	4	121,176	46%	21.7
ACT/SAT	ACT to SAT ratio of roughly 1 to 1	5	176,544	33%	19.8
SAT	SAT to ACT ratio of 1.5+ to 1	15	424,134	49%	21.9
SAT+	SAT to ACT ratio of 4+ to 1	6	52,404	65%	22.8

## Classification of States by ACT and SAT Participation, 2011



Map reads: For the high school graduating class of 2011, Michigan is categorized as an “ACT+” state. Note: State categories were determined by calculating a ratio of ACT-tested and SAT-tested students in each state. Washington, DC, not shown, is categorized as an “SAT” state.

- At 32 to 1, North Dakota had the largest ratio of ACT-tested to SAT-tested high school graduates. Maine had the largest ratio of SAT-tested to ACT-tested graduates, at 9 to 1.
- In 2011, 100% of the high school graduates in 6 states (CO, IL, KY, MI, TN, and WY) took the ACT. Maine had the largest share of students from the graduating class of 2011 who took the SAT, at 86%.

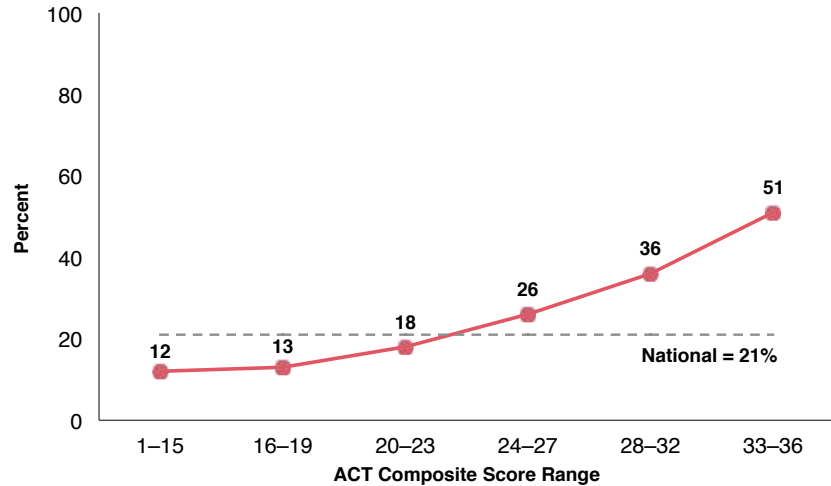
# Student Migration and Academic Achievement

Seventy-one percent of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011 enrolled in college. Of these students, 21% attended college out of state.

An enrolled student's likelihood of attending college out of state increased with his or her ACT Composite score.

- Students with a score of 24 or higher were more likely than average to attend college out of state, whereas students with a score of 23 or lower were less likely than average to enroll out of state.
- Just over one-half of all students with a score between 33 and 36 enrolled out of state, compared with only 12% of students with a score of 15 or lower.

**Percent of ACT-Tested College Students Enrolled Out of State by ACT Composite Score, 2011**

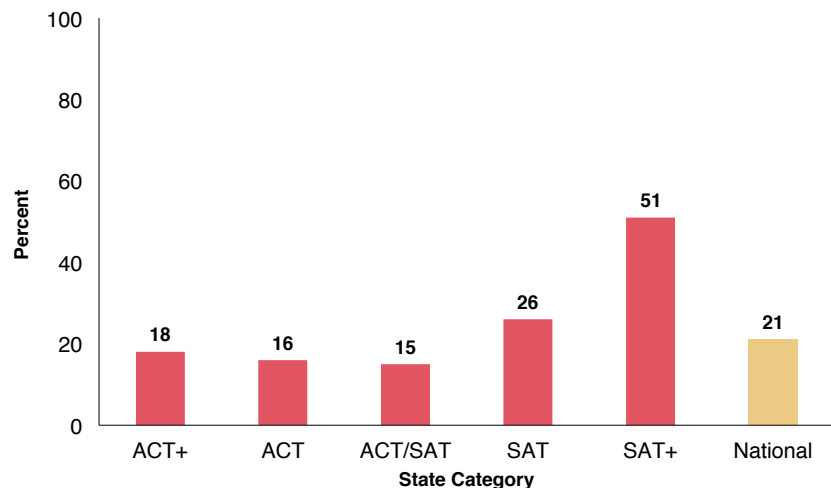


Graph reads: 51% of ACT-tested college students with an ACT Composite score between 33 and 36 enrolled out of state.

An enrolled student's likelihood of attending college out of state varied by the ACT and SAT participation rates in the state.

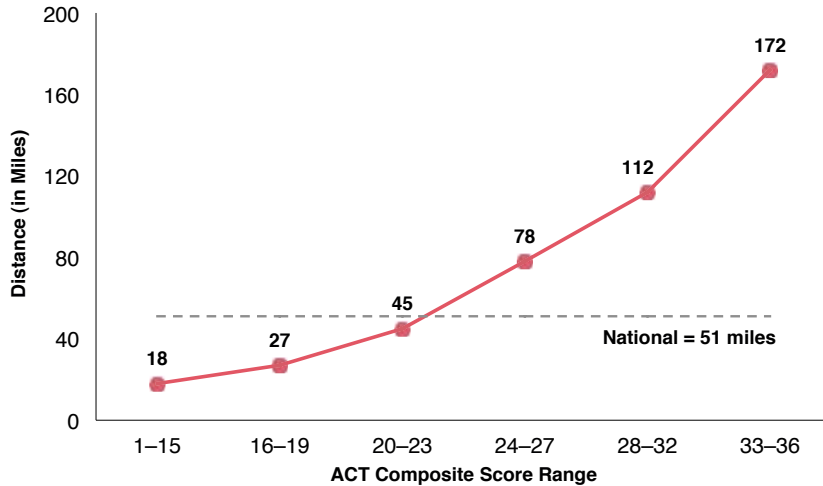
- Compared to the migration patterns of students from "ACT" and "ACT+" states, ACT-tested students from "SAT" and "SAT+" states had a higher likelihood of attending college out of state.
- In "SAT+" states, a little more than one-half of all ACT-tested students enrolled out of state. This is more than twice the out-of-state enrollment rate for students from "ACT+" states.

**Percent of ACT-Tested College Students Enrolled Out of State by State Category, 2011**



Graph reads: 18% of ACT-tested college students from "ACT+" states enrolled out of state.

## Median Distance to College by ACT Composite Score, 2011



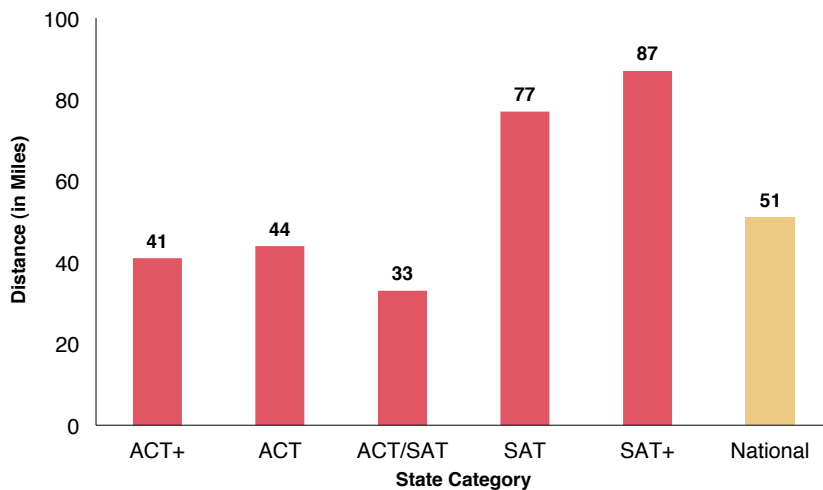
Graph reads: Among ACT-tested college students with an ACT Composite score between 33 and 36, the median distance between home and college was 172 miles.

Of those ACT-tested high school graduates who enrolled in college, the median distance between home and college was 51 miles.

The distance between a student's home and college increased exponentially with ACT Composite score.

- For students with a score of 15 or lower, the median distance to college was less than 20 miles.
- For students with a score between 33 and 36, the median distance to college was just over 170 miles.

## Median Distance to College by State Category, 2011



Graph reads: Among ACT-tested college students from "SAT" states, the median distance between home and college was 77 miles.

The distance between an ACT-tested student's home and college also differed considerably by the ACT and SAT participation rates in the state.

- A typical ACT-tested student from an "SAT" or "SAT+" state traveled farther to attend college than a student from an "ACT" or "ACT+" state.
- The median distance to college for ACT-tested students from "SAT+" states was 87 miles. This is more than twice the median distance to college traveled by students from "ACT+" states.

# Student Migration and Academic Achievement

As noted previously, student mobility increases with ACT Composite score and it differs by the ACT and SAT participation rates in the state. The maps on this page illustrate the variability across states in the share of their ACT-tested college students who enrolled out of state.

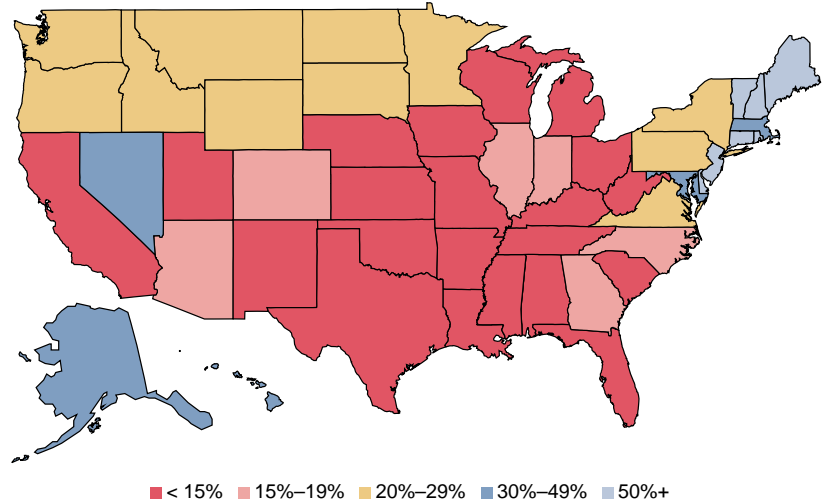
The first map focuses on the migration patterns of enrolled students who had an ACT Composite score of 23 or lower. Students within this score range were less likely than average to attend college out of state.

- Twenty-one states, most of which are located in the southern and Midwestern parts of the country, had fewer than 15% of students in this score range enroll out of state; DC and 7 states located mostly in the northeastern part of the country had 50% or more of these students attending college out of state.

The second map focuses on the migration patterns of enrolled students who had an ACT Composite score of 24 or higher. Students within this score range were more likely than average to enroll out of state.

- Only 2 states, Arkansas and Utah, had fewer than 15 percent of students in this score range attending college out of state; DC and 12 states located mostly in the northeastern part of the country had 50% or more of these students enrolling out of state.

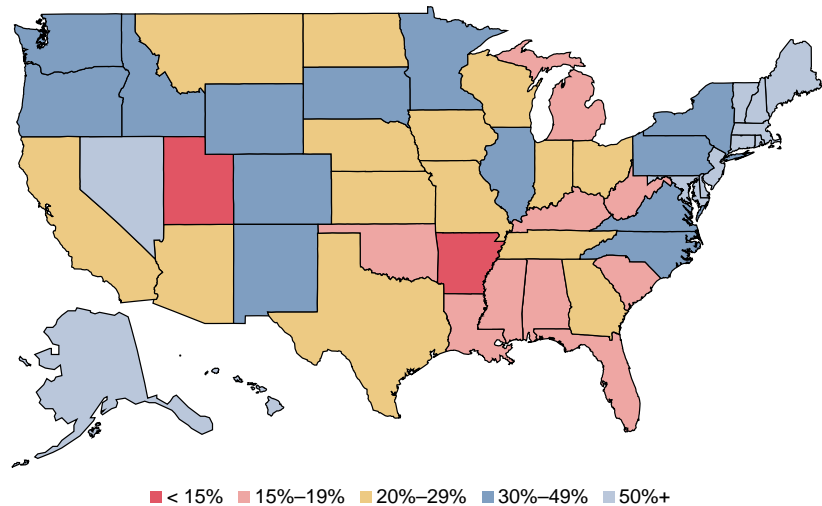
## Percent of ACT-Tested College Students Enrolled Out of State (ACT Composite Score 1–23), 2011



Map reads: In California, less than 15% of ACT-tested college students with an ACT Composite score between 1 and 23 enrolled out of state.

Note: Washington, DC, not shown, is categorized as “50%+.”

## Percent of ACT-Tested College Students Enrolled Out of State (ACT Composite Score 24–36), 2011



Map reads: In Maine, 50% or more ACT-tested college students with an ACT Composite score between 24 and 36 enrolled out of state.

Note: Washington, DC, not shown, is categorized as “50%+.”



The graph below shows the intersection of college student migration and academic achievement for ACT-tested students in each state and DC. Student migration is measured by college enrollment patterns, and academic achievement is measured by ACT Composite score.

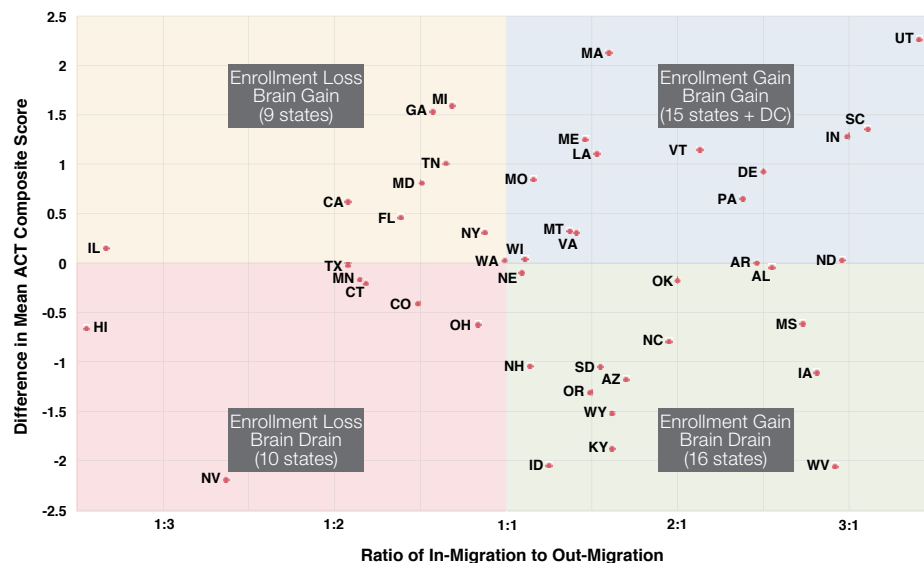
Along the horizontal axis is the college migration ratio for each state. Ratios that are greater than 1 to 1 represent a net gain of ACT-tested students for the state, whereas ratios that are less than 1 to 1 represent a net loss of ACT-tested students for the state. For example, West Virginia gained about 3 ACT-tested college enrollees from other states for each of its ACT-tested high school graduates that attended college out of state. California, on the other hand, lost about 2 of its ACT-tested high school graduates to colleges in other states for each ACT-tested college enrollee who came into California.

Along the vertical axis is the difference in the average ACT Composite score between students coming into the state to attend college and those leaving the state to attend college.

Positive numbers represent a net gain in the average achievement level of ACT-tested students enrolled in that state, whereas negative numbers represent a net loss. For example, the average ACT Composite score for students who migrated into Tennessee to attend college was about 1 point higher than the average score for students who migrated out of Tennessee. In contrast, the average ACT Composite score for students who migrated into Idaho was about 2 points lower than the average score for students who migrated out of the state.

In looking at the intersection of college student migration and academic achievement, states fall into 1 of 4 categories based on their ACT-tested population: states that have (1) enrollment gain and brain gain, (2) enrollment gain but brain drain, (3) enrollment loss but brain gain, and (4) enrollment loss and brain drain.

### State Migration Patterns and Academic Achievement, 2011\*



Graph reads: West Virginia gained about 3 ACT-tested college enrollees from other states for each of its ACT-tested high school graduates who enrolled out of state. The average ACT Composite score for students who migrated into West Virginia to attend college was about 2 points lower than the average score for students who migrated out of West Virginia.

- Thirty-one states and DC had migration ratios that were greater than 1 to 1; 19 states had migration ratios that were less than 1 to 1.
- Roughly half of all states had an average ACT Composite score for in-migrating students that was higher than the average score for out-migrating students.

#### \* States Not Shown

State	Migration Ratio	Difference in Mean ACT
AK	1 : 7.1	-2.8
DC	4.2 : 1	+5.0
KS	1.2 : 1	-3.4
NJ	1 : 12.5	-2.4
NM	1 : 1.5	-3.5
RI	4.4 : 1	-0.8

## Time of First Testing

Seventy percent of the ACT-tested graduating class of 2011 first tested in 11th grade, whereas 30% first tested in 12th grade. Relative to their peers who test earlier, students who first test in 12th grade have been largely overlooked by the recruitment efforts of colleges and scholarship agencies. In this section of the report, we highlight a few of the characteristics of these test takers.

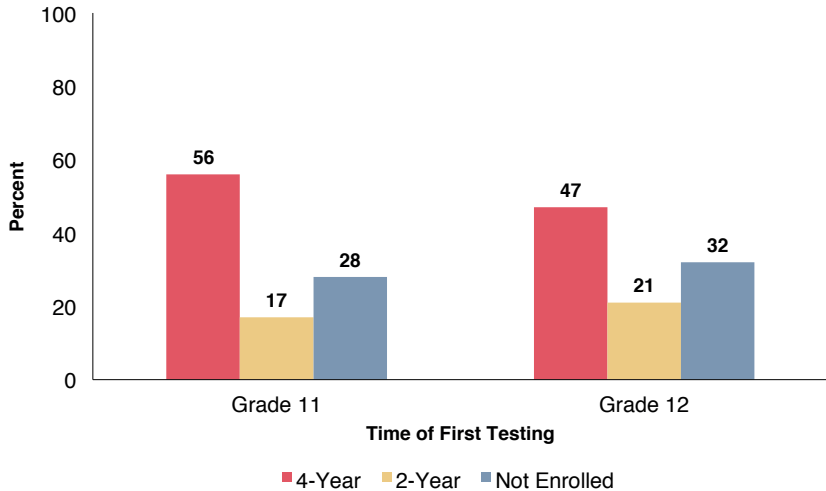
Although there are some differences in the postsecondary destinations of the ACT-tested graduating class of 2011 by the time of first testing, the overall pattern is similar.

- Of those students who first tested in 12th grade, 68% went on to college; among those who first tested in 11th grade, 72% went on to college.
- Compared to a student who first tested in 11th grade, a student who first tested in 12th grade had a lower likelihood of enrolling in a 4-year college and a higher likelihood of enrolling in a 2-year college.

The grade level in which students first took the ACT differed by family income level.

- A student's likelihood of first taking the ACT in 12th grade decreased as family income level increased.
- Despite this downward trend by family income level, roughly a quarter of all ACT-tested high school graduates whose family earned \$60,000 or above first tested in 12th grade.

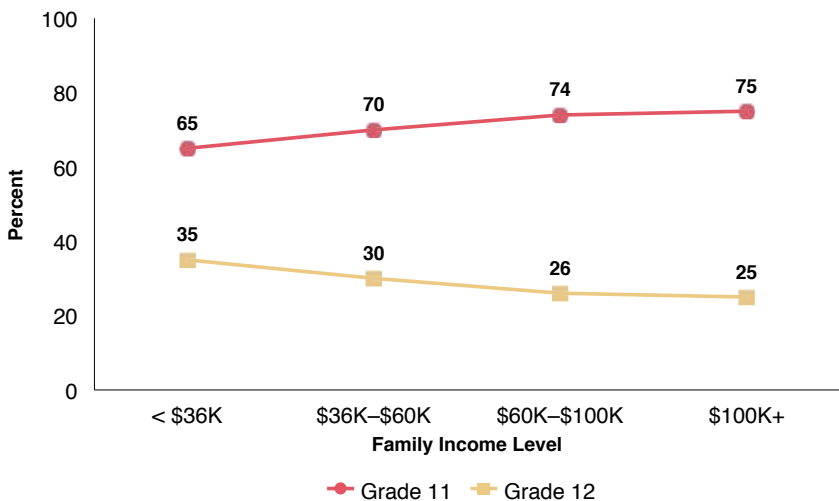
## College Type Attended by Time of First Testing, 2011



Graph reads: 47% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011 who first tested in 12th grade enrolled at a 4-year college.

Note: ACT tests taken before 11th grade were not included. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

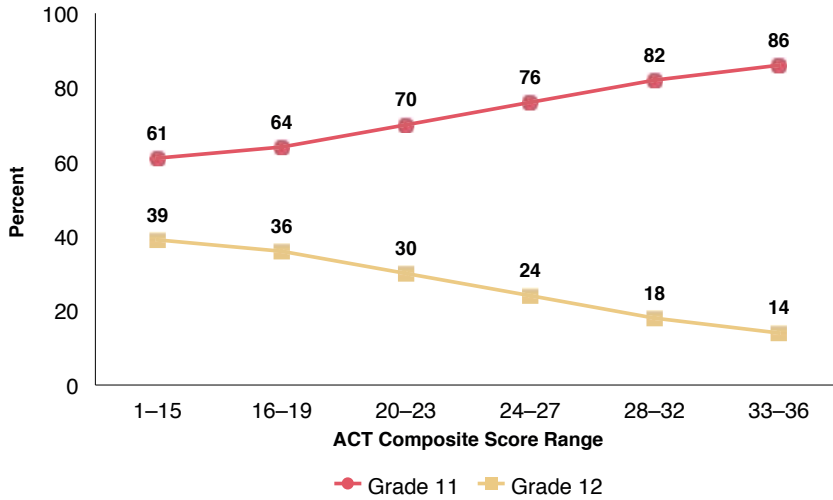
## Time of First Testing Among ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Family Income Level, 2011



Graph reads: 26% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011 whose family earned between \$60,000 and \$100,000 first tested in 12th grade.

Note: Based on 74% of the ACT-tested graduating class of 2011 who reported family income level when registering for the ACT. ACT tests taken before 11th grade were not included.

## Time of First Testing Among ACT-Tested High School Graduates by ACT Composite Score, 2011



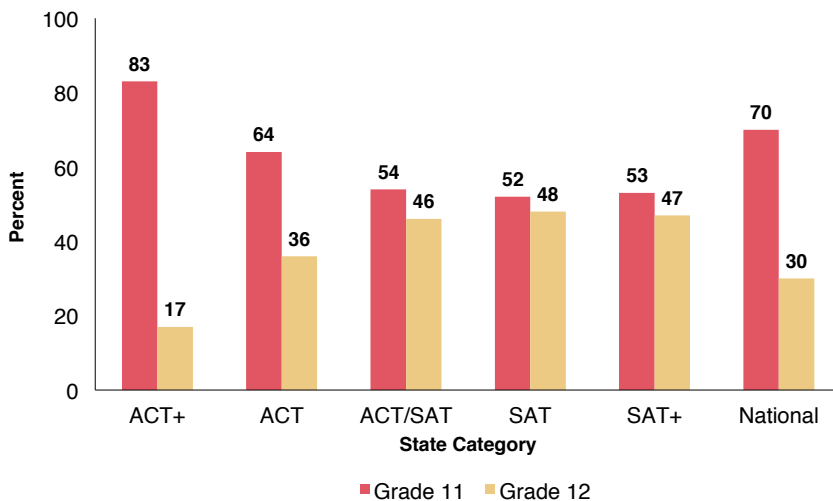
Graph reads: 18% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011 with an ACT Composite score between 28 and 32 first tested in 12th grade.

Note: ACT tests taken before 11th grade were not included.

The grade level in which a student first took the ACT differed by his or her ACT Composite score.

- A student's likelihood of first taking the ACT in 12th grade decreased as ACT Composite score increased.
- Nonetheless, 1 in 5 students with an ACT Composite score of 24 or higher first tested in 12th grade.
- A student's likelihood of first taking the ACT in 11th grade increased as ACT Composite score increased.

## Time of First Testing Among ACT-Tested High School Graduates by State Category, 2011



Graph reads: 47% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011 from "SAT+" states first tested in 12th grade.

Note: ACT tests taken before 11th grade were not included.

The grade level in which a student first took the ACT varied considerably by the ACT and SAT participation rates in the state.

- In "ACT+" states, 17% of students tested for the first time in 12th grade and 83% tested for the first time in 11th grade. This large share of students who first tested in 11th grade is due in part to the "ACT+" category comprising those states (CO, IL, KY, MI, TN, and WY) that administered the ACT statewide to all public high school 11th graders.
- In contrast, about half of all ACT-tested students in "ACT/SAT," "SAT," and "SAT+" states tested for the first time in 12th grade.

## EOS Participation

Students can opt into the ACT Educational Opportunity Service (EOS) when they register to take the ACT. EOS provides students with information about educational and financial aid opportunities by making the names of ACT-tested students available to colleges and scholarship agencies that meet EOS eligibility guidelines. About 88% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011 opted into EOS during high school.

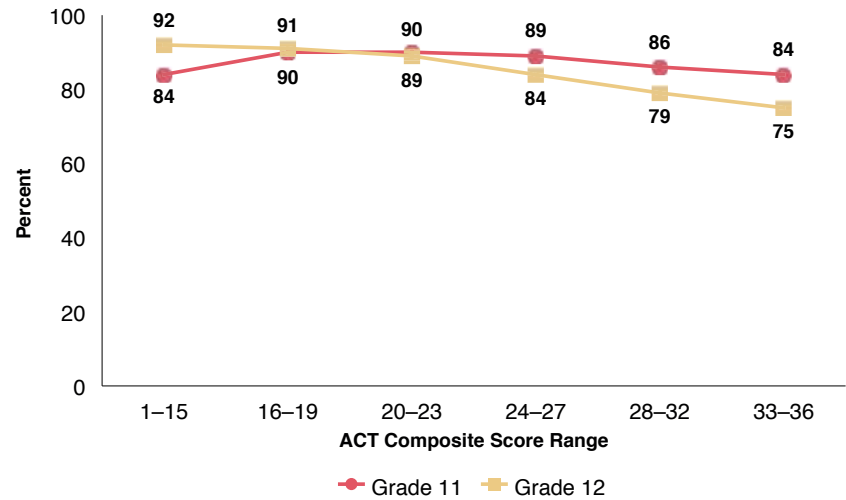
A student's likelihood of opting into EOS differed by the intersection of the time of first testing and the students' ACT Composite score.

- For students who first tested in 11th grade, a larger share of students with scores in the middle ranges of the score scale opted into EOS relative to the share of students at either the lower or upper ranges of the score scale.
- For students who first tested in 12th grade, the share of students who opted into EOS declined steadily as their scores increased.

An ACT-tested student's likelihood of opting into EOS differed very little by the ACT and SAT participation rates in the state.

- Compared to the other state categories, a smaller percentage of students in "SAT+" states opted into EOS. Opt-in rates for "SAT+" states, however, were higher than 80%.
- Within each state category, the EOS opt-in rate did not differ much by time of first testing. Across all state categories, a large majority of students who tested for the first time in 12th grade were interested in more information from colleges and scholarship agencies through EOS.

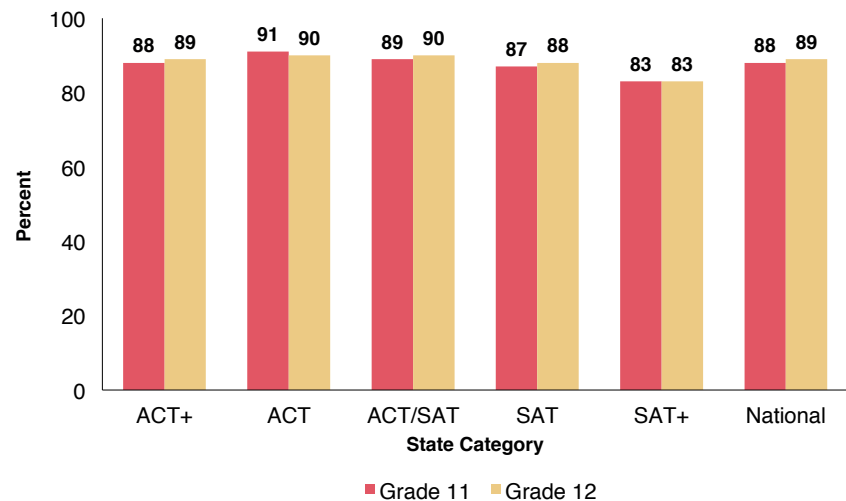
### Percent Opting Into EOS by Time of First Testing and ACT Composite Score, 2011



Graph reads: 79% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011 who first tested in 12th grade and had an ACT Composite score between 28 and 32 opted into EOS.

Note: ACT tests taken before 11th grade were not included.

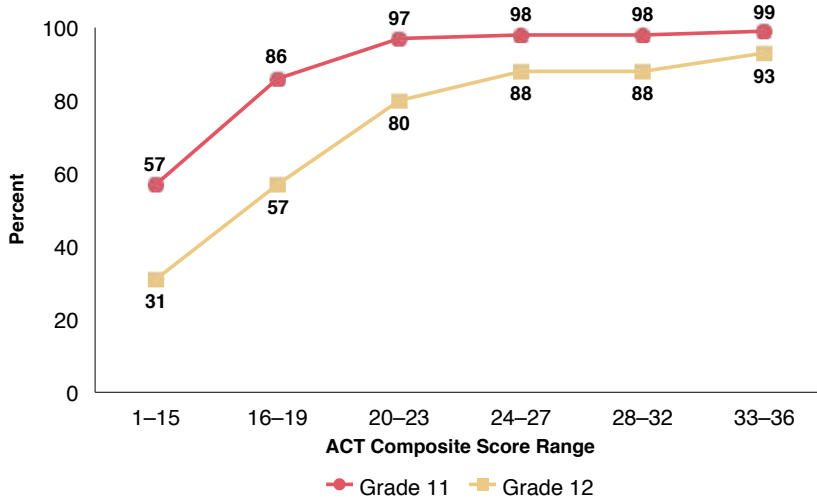
### Percent Opting Into EOS by Time of First Testing and State Category, 2011



Graph reads: 89% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011 from "ACT+" states who first tested in 12th grade opted into EOS.

Note: ACT tests taken before 11th grade were not included.

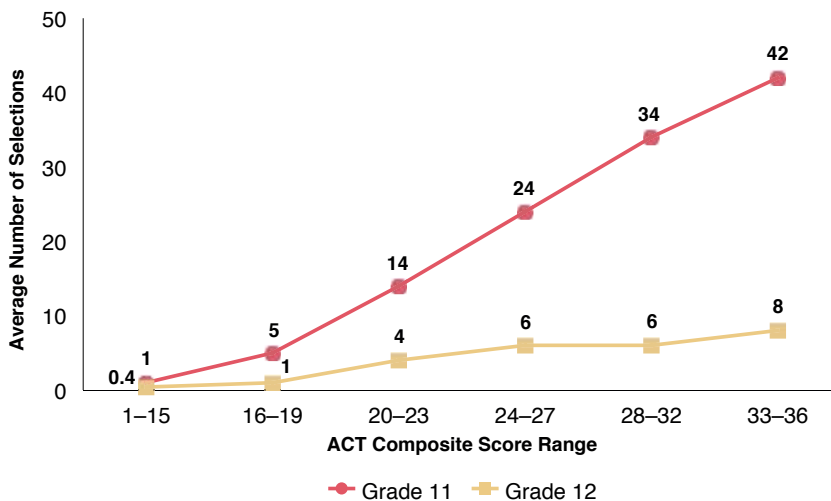
## Percent of EOS Students Selected by Time of First Testing and ACT Composite Score, 2011



Graph reads: 88% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011 who first tested in 12th grade, opted into EOS, and had an ACT Composite score between 24 and 27 were selected at least once through EOS.

Note: ACT tests taken before 11th grade were not included.

## Average Number of Times EOS Students Were Selected by Time of First Testing and ACT Composite Score, 2011



Graph reads: ACT-tested high school graduates from the class of 2011 who first tested in 12th grade, opted into EOS, and had an ACT Composite score between 33 and 36 were selected an average of 8 times through EOS.

Note: ACT tests taken before 11th grade were not included.

Colleges and scholarship agencies that are eligible can use ACT's EOS to identify and select prospective students whose backgrounds and academic achievement levels align with the mix of desired characteristics of the students in their applicant pool. Among those students who opted into EOS, a student's likelihood of being selected by a college or scholarship agency differed by both the time of first testing and the student's ACT Composite score.

- Within all score ranges, a student who first tested in 12th grade was less likely than a student who first tested in 11th grade to be selected through EOS.
- For students who first tested in 11th grade, the percentage who were selected leveled off beginning in the score range of 20 to 23.
- For students who first tested in 12th grade, the percentage who were selected increased similarly by ACT Composite score.

The number of times that a student was selected by a college or scholarship agency through EOS also differed by both the time of first testing and the student's ACT Composite score.

- Within all score ranges, students who first tested in 12th grade were selected by fewer colleges and scholarship agencies than students who first tested in 11th grade.
- The grade-level gap in the average number of colleges and scholarship agencies that selected students widened as the students' ACT Composite score increased.

## Score-Sending Behavior

Students can send their test scores at no cost to up to 4 colleges or scholarship agencies when they register for the ACT. Many students do not take advantage of this opportunity to get their information to the colleges that they are considering. Of the high school graduating class of 2011, only 54% sent their test scores to at least 1 college at time of first testing.

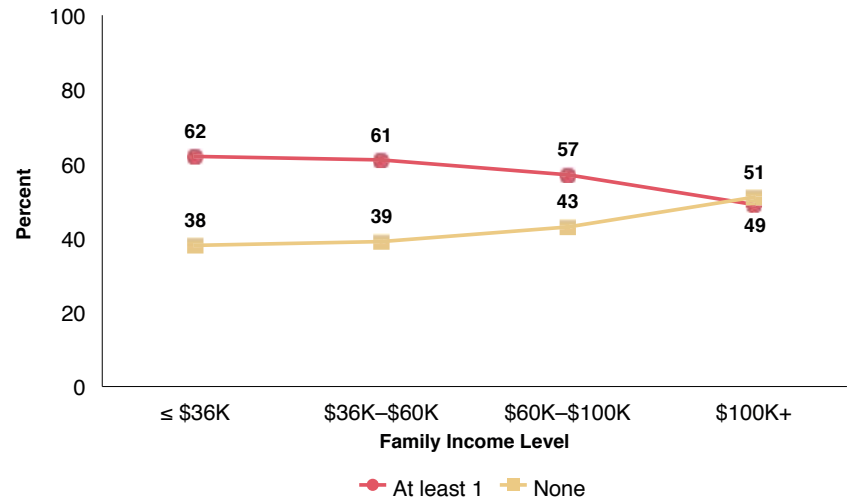
Score-sending behavior at time of first testing differed by the family income level of the student.

- A student's likelihood of submitting test scores to at least 1 college decreased as family income level increased.
- Conversely, a student's likelihood of not submitting any test scores at the time of ACT registration increased with family income level.

A student's score-sending behavior at time of first testing differed substantially by the ACT and SAT participation rates in the state.

- In "ACT" and "ACT+" states, more than 50% of graduates sent their ACT scores to at least 1 college.
- In contrast, fewer than 50% of graduates in "SAT" or "SAT+" states sent their ACT scores to at least 1 college.

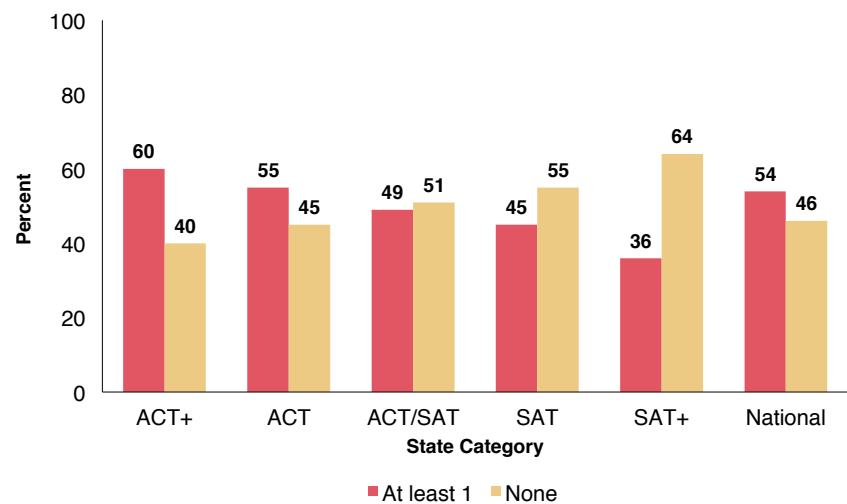
## Number of College Choices at Time of First Testing by Family Income Level, 2011



Graph reads: 57% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011 whose family earned between \$60,000 and \$100,000 sent their ACT scores to at least 1 college at time of first testing.

Note: Based on 74% of the ACT-tested graduating class of 2011 who reported family income level when registering for the ACT.

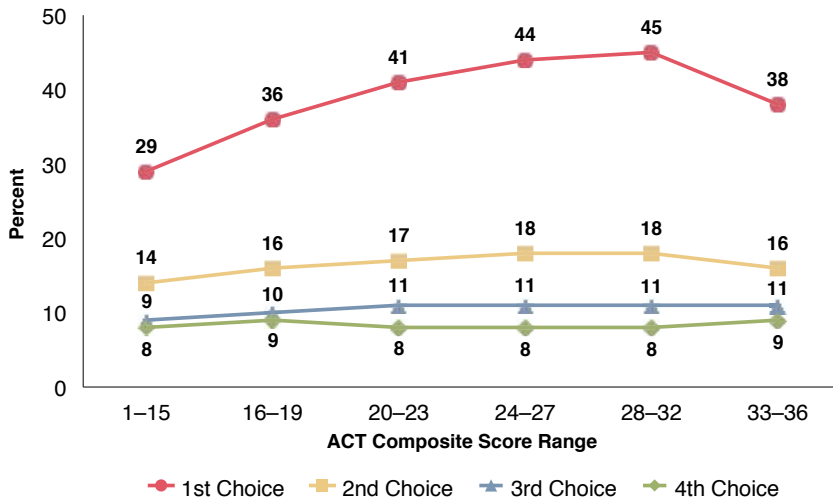
## Number of College Choices at Time of First Testing by State Category, 2011



Graph reads: 60% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011 from "ACT+" states sent their ACT scores to at least 1 college at time of first testing.

# Enrollment by College Preference

## Enrollment by College Choice Number and ACT Composite Score, 2011



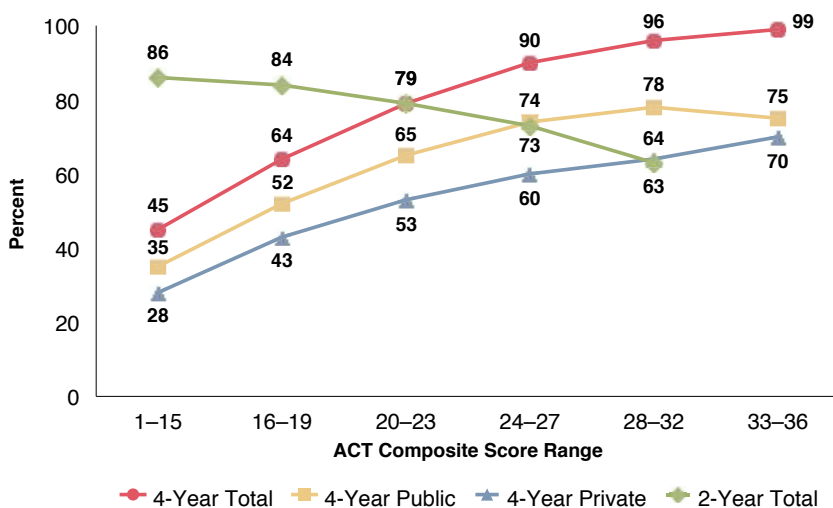
Graph reads: 45% of ACT-tested college students with an ACT Composite score between 28 and 32 enrolled at their 1st choice college.

Note: Based on ACT-tested college students who sent scores to at least 1 college when registering for the ACT. For students who tested more than once, the college choice set from the last ACT test was used.

Students can send their test scores to up to 4 colleges or scholarship agencies in preferential order when they register for the ACT. This ranking of their college choices provides an early indicator of students' intentions and has been shown by ACT research to be an important predictor of college enrollment.

- Regardless of ACT Composite score, ACT-tested college enrollees attended their 1st choice college at significantly higher rates than that for their 2nd, 3rd, and 4th choice colleges.
- The rate at which students enrolled at their 1st choice college increased steadily between the ACT score ranges of 1 to 15 and 28 to 32, and then decreased for the score range of 33 to 36. The rates at which students enrolled at their 2nd, 3rd, and 4th choice colleges varied far less by ACT Composite score.

## Enrollment at Same College Type as Preference by ACT Composite Score, 2011



Graph reads: 99% of ACT-tested college students with an ACT Composite score between 33 and 36 who preferred a 4-year college enrolled at a 4-year college.

Note: Based on ACT-tested college students who provided college type preference when registering for the ACT. Enrollments rates not provided for ACT Composite score ranges where sample size is less than 50.

When students register for the ACT, they can indicate the type of college that they prefer to attend. In general, the students' college type preference is a good indicator of the type of college that they eventually attend.

- Regardless of whether the college is public or private, students with a 4-year college preference are more likely to attend this college type as their ACT Composite score increases.
- Students with a 2-year college preference are less likely to attend this college type as their ACT Composite score increases.

# Interest-Major Fit

College majors have different academic cultures. Selecting a college major that is rewarding—that provides opportunities to do preferred activities and express one’s values—is an example of interest-major *fit*. While many students gravitate toward majors that fit their interests, many do not. This has important implications. Evidence is accumulating that the fit between students’ interests and their college major is important in understanding and predicting student outcomes. Research at ACT and elsewhere suggests that if students’ measured interests are similar to the interests of people in their chosen college majors, they will be more likely to:

- remain in their major
- persist in college
- complete a college degree in a timely manner

Interest-major fit clearly benefits both students and the college they attend: students engaged in good-fit majors are more likely to stay in college, stay in their major, and finish sooner.

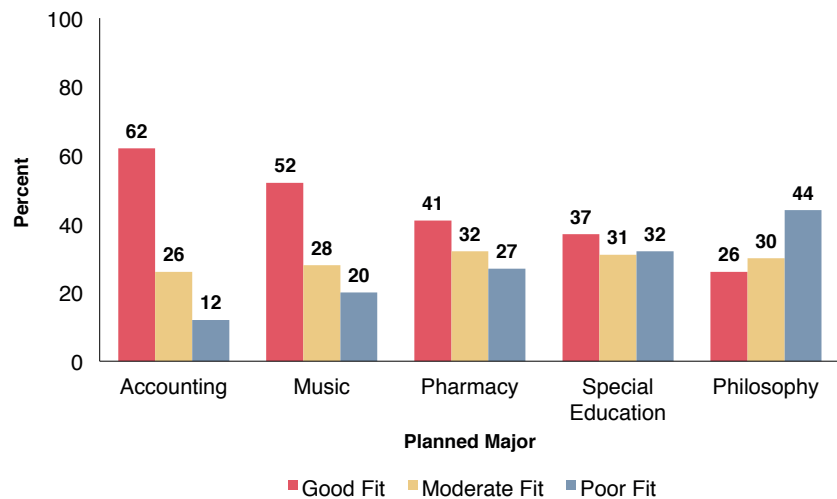
Interest-major fit is derived from two data elements that are collected during ACT registration: (1) the student’s ACT Interest Inventory scores and (2) the student’s intended major from a list of 294 college majors.

The interest-major fit score used here measures the strength of the relationship between the student’s profile of ACT Interest Inventory scores and the profile of interests of students in a given major. Interest profiles for majors are based on a national sample of undergraduate students with a declared major and a GPA of at least 2.0. Major was determined in the third year for students in 4-year colleges, and in the second year for students in 2-year colleges.

There is a lot of variation by planned major in the share of ACT-tested high school graduates who selected a major that is a good fit with their personal interests. The chart shows the level of interest-major fit for a subset of college majors selected by the graduating class of 2011.

- Sixty-two percent of students who planned to major in accounting had personal interests that were a good fit for this major, and only 12% had personal interests that were a poor fit for accounting.
- In contrast, only 26% of students who planned to major in philosophy had personal interests that were a good fit for this major, whereas 44% had personal interests that were a poor fit for philosophy.

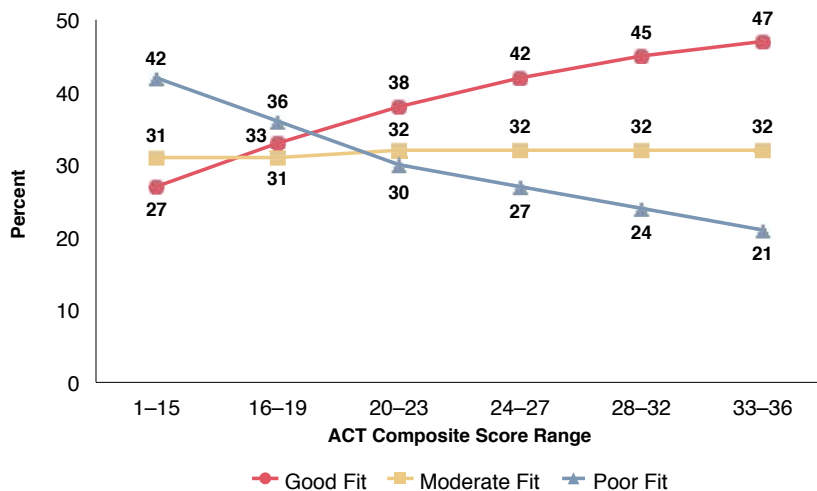
### Interest-Major Fit for a Subset of Planned Majors, 2011



Graph reads: 62% of the ACT-tested graduating class of 2011 with a planned accounting major and an interest-major fit score had good fit between their personal interests and the major environment. Note: Not all planned college majors are included in the graph. Based on 66% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011 for which the interest-major fit index could be calculated. For students who tested more than once, planned major from the last ACT test was used. Interest-major fit ranges from 0–99, with values of 80 and higher indicating good fit, values between 60 and 79 indicating moderate fit, and values less than 60 indicating poor fit.



## Interest-Major Fit by ACT Score Range, 2011



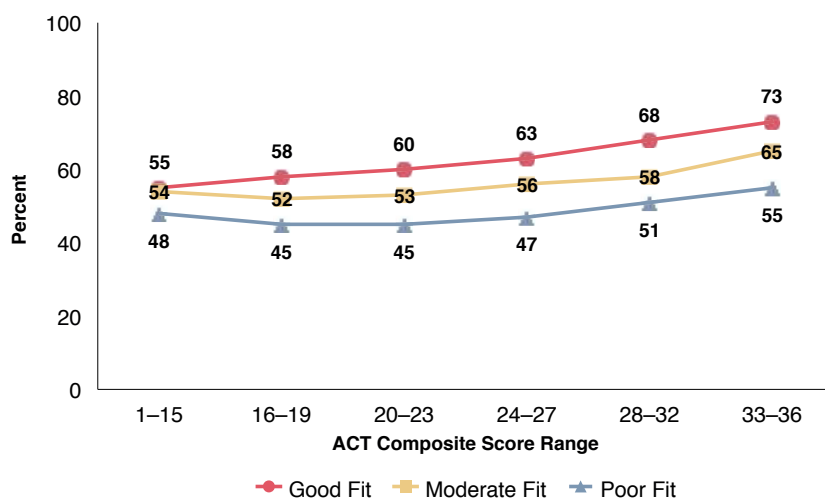
Graph reads: 27% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011 with an ACT Composite score between 24 and 27 and an interest-major fit score had poor fit between their personal interests and the major environment.

Note: Based on 66% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011 for which the interest-major fit index could be calculated. For students who tested more than once, planned major from the last ACT test was used. Interest-major fit ranges from 0-99, with values of 80 and higher indicating good fit, values between 60 and 79 indicating moderate fit, and values less than 60 indicating poor fit.

A student's likelihood of having a good fit between personal interests and planned major increased with ACT Composite score.

- Slightly less than half of all students with a score between 33 and 36 selected a major that was well aligned with their interests, compared with only 27% of students with a score of 15 or lower.
- Conversely, 42% of students with a score of 15 or lower had a poor interest-major fit, whereas only 21% of students with a score between 33 and 36 selected a major with poor fit.

## Persistence in Major by ACT Score Range and Interest-Major Fit



Graph reads: 58% of ACT-tested college students with an ACT Composite score between 16 and 19 and good fit with their entering college major persisted in the same college major family through the start of their third year of college.

Note: Based on a sample of 62,494 ACT-tested students who entered college between 2000 and 2006 and remained enrolled in the second (2-year students) or third (4-year students) year of college. College major family represented by 2-digit CIP code. Interest-major fit ranges from 0-99, with values of 80 and higher indicating good fit, values between 60 and 79 indicating moderate fit, and values less than 60 indicating poor fit.

Evidence from a sample of ACT-tested college students illustrates the added value of interest-major fit in predicting student persistence within their major.

- Students with a good interest-major fit persisted in their major at higher rates than students with moderate and poor fit, with the largest difference at the upper ranges of the ACT Composite score scale.
- A student with an ACT Composite score between 33 and 36 who had a poor fit between personal interests and college major had the same chance of persisting in the major as a student with an ACT Composite score of 15 or lower with a good interest-major fit.

## Predictors of Success

ACT continues to recommend the use of multiple criteria when assessing the college readiness of students. Two of the more commonly used criteria for assessing academic readiness are highlighted in this section of the report.

The distribution of high school GPAs among the ACT-tested graduating class of 2011 has a sizable concentration of students with GPAs at the upper end of the range and relatively few students with GPAs in the lower end of the range.

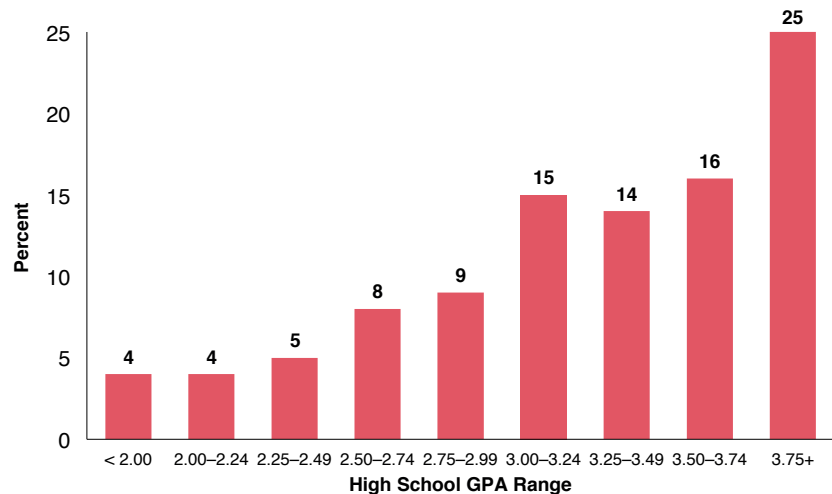
- 41% have a GPA over 3.5
- 55% have a GPA over 3.25
- 30% have a GPA under 3.0

Given the skewed shape of this distribution, it is difficult to further differentiate the achievement levels of a large number of students at the upper end of the distribution. As such, ACT recommends that high school GPA not be the sole measure of academic achievement in making admissions, scholarship, and course placement decisions.

The distribution of ACT Composite scores among the graduating class of 2011 who reported high school GPA is more symmetrical, with a concentration of students in the middle of the score range and fewer students with scores in the upper and lower ends of the range.

Compared to the GPA distribution, it is easier to differentiate the achievement levels of students at the upper end of the ACT score distribution. While the largest number of GPAs is in the range of 3.75 and higher, the largest number of ACT scores is in the range of 19 to 21.

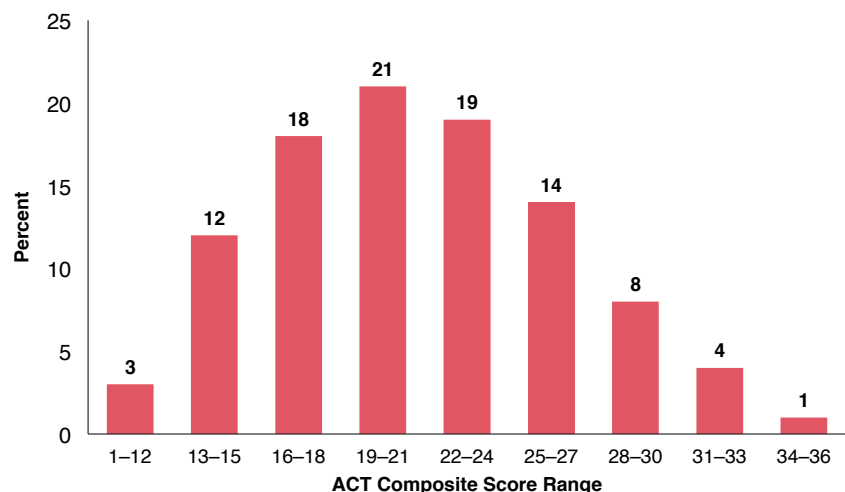
### High School GPA Distribution Among ACT-Tested High School Graduates Who Reported Grades, 2011



Graph reads: 25% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011 who reported high school grades earned a GPA of 3.75 or higher.

Note: Based on 86% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011 who reported high school grades in core subjects.

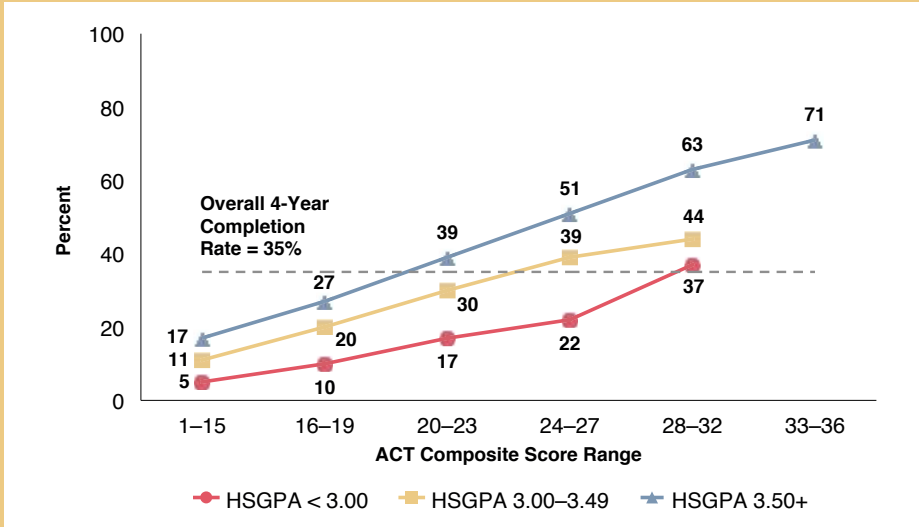
### ACT Composite Score Distribution Among ACT-Tested High School Graduates Who Reported Grades, 2011



Graph reads: 14% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011 who reported high school grades earned an ACT Composite score between 25 and 27.

Note: Based on 86% of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2011 who reported high school grades in core subjects.

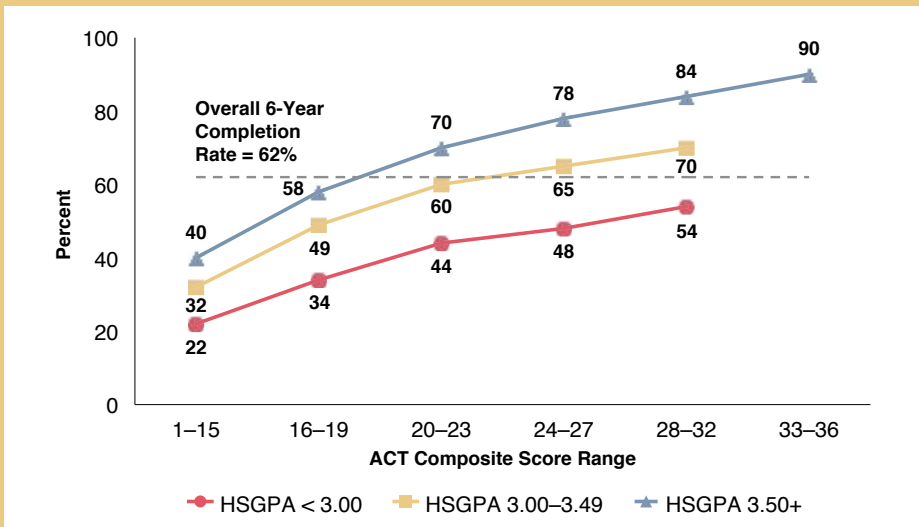
## Bachelor's Degree Completion Within 4 Years by ACT Composite Score and High School GPA



Graph reads: 39% of ACT-tested students at 4-year colleges with an ACT Composite score between 20 and 23 and a high school GPA of 3.5 or higher obtained a bachelor's degree within 4 years.

Note: Based on 18,860 ACT-tested students who entered college in fall 2003. Degree completion rates not provided for ACT Composite score ranges where sample size is less than 50.

## Bachelor's Degree Completion Within 6 Years by ACT Composite Score and High School GPA



Graph reads: 54% of ACT-tested students at 4-year colleges with an ACT Composite score between 28 and 32 and a high school GPA of less than 3.0 obtained a bachelor's degree within 6 years.

Note: Based on 18,860 ACT-tested students who entered college in fall 2003. Degree completion rates not provided for ACT Composite score ranges where sample size is less than 50.

High school GPA and test scores often provide unique information about a student's achievement level that is predictive of his or her academic success in college. ACT recommends that high school GPA and ACT scores be used together when measuring the academic achievement of students, and that these measures are combined with other evidence in making decisions about the college readiness of students.

Among a random sample of ACT-tested students who entered 4-year colleges in fall 2003, 35% earned a bachelor's degree within 4 years and 62% earned a bachelor's degree within 6 years.

Whether one looks at 4-year or 6-year rates, degree completion rates increase with both high school GPA and ACT Composite score.

- Within each GPA range, there are large differences in completion rates by ACT Composite score. For example, for students with a high school GPA in the range of 3.5 or higher, 4-year completion rates vary from 17% to 71%, depending on ACT Composite score.
- Similarly, within any ACT Composite score range, there are large differences in completion rates by high school GPA. For example, for students with an ACT Composite score between 24 and 27, 6-year completion rates vary from 48% to 78%, depending on high school GPA.

## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Finding 1: Students tend to enroll at institutions that match the preferences they report to ACT.

As illustrated in this report, regardless of ACT Composite score, ACT-tested college enrollees attend their 1st choice college at significantly higher rates than their 2nd, 3rd, and 4th choice colleges. As also seen in this report, students' college type preference is a good indicator of the type of college that they eventually attend.

Student score reports sent to colleges and universities contain more than 265 data fields that can be used to assess student enrollment intentions and their level of interest in your institution. The score reports also provide information on student interests, plans, and needs, which colleges can use to personalize and target communications. In addition to this information, beginning in September 2012, ACT will append scores for five predictive modeling indexes to every student's ACT score report sent to colleges:

- (1) a Mobility Index, which predicts how likely a student is to attend college out of state.
- (2) an Institution Type Index, which predicts how likely a student is to enroll at a private college or university.
- (3) a Selectivity Index, which indicates how selective an institution a student is likely to attend.
- (4) an Institution Size Index, which predicts the size of the institution a student is likely to attend.
- (5) an Interest-Major Fit score, which indicates the extent to which the students' personal interests fit with their planned major.

#### Recommendations:

- Colleges should require official ACT score reports for admission so they have access to all the student information in this report at a time when it can make a difference in student recruitment and retention.
- When placing ACT Educational Opportunity Service (EOS) orders, admissions personnel should use information on the students' ACT score reports that speaks most directly to student enrollment intentions, such as their institution type preference, institution size preference, preferred distance from home to campus, and highest degree expected. ACT research suggests that these student preferences accurately describe student enrollment intentions and provide colleges with actionable data to recruit students more effectively.

### Key Finding 2: Students' testing and enrollment behaviors tend to differ by academic achievement level.

ACT enrollment research has consistently found that student academic achievement as measured by ACT scores is an important indicator of testing and enrollment behaviors. As ACT scores increase, students are more likely to test in the 11th grade, enroll in four-year institutions, enroll out of state or a greater distance from home, and attend the type of college (4-year public or 4-year private) they prefer to attend.

ACT research also suggests that students with higher ACT Composite scores make more appropriate and predictable enrollment-related decisions. For example, as ACT score increases, students are more likely to attend their 1st choice college. Moreover, students with higher scores select college majors that have a better fit with their personal interests. This higher degree of interest-major fit means that these students are more likely to stay in their major, persist in college, and finish sooner.

#### Recommendations:

- Admissions personnel should use ACT score ranges to track yield rates for students at different stages of the enrollment funnel. This tracking will help colleges to better understand the differences in testing and enrollment behaviors by academic achievement level that are unique to that institution.
- When placing EOS orders, admissions personnel should segment their search strategy by ACT score ranges to better target their recruitment efforts toward students that exhibit different testing and enrollment behaviors.
- In general, colleges should avoid selecting the names of students whose ACT Composite scores are too high or too low (especially with out-of-state students), as these students are very unlikely to enroll.

### Key Finding 3: Students' testing and enrollment behaviors tend to vary by the ACT and SAT participation rates in the state.

Compared with students from “ACT+” and “ACT” states, ACT-tested students from “SAT+” and “SAT” states are more likely to first test in 12th grade, are less likely to send their test scores to any college when they register for the ACT, and are only slightly less likely to opt into EOS. These students are also significantly more likely to enroll out of state and to travel a greater distance from home to attend college.

#### Recommendations:

- Colleges should take into consideration both the historic trends and future state policy changes that may have an impact on the ACT and SAT participation rates in their state and other states in which they recruit ACT-tested students. For example, in the 2013 graduating class, North Carolina will likely change from an “SAT” state to an “ACT” state given North Carolina’s recent policy to administer the ACT to all public high school 11th graders.
- When placing EOS orders, admissions personnel should segment their search strategy by the ACT and SAT participation rates of states in order to better target their recruitment efforts toward students who exhibit different testing and enrollment behaviors.

### Key Finding 4: Students who first take the ACT in 12th grade are a largely overlooked subset of ACT-tested high school graduates.

A considerable number of students first take the ACT in 12th grade—close to 500,000 high school graduates from the class of 2011. Although these students have somewhat lower levels of academic achievement than students who first test in 11th grade, roughly two-thirds of these students enroll in college in the fall after they graduate from high school, with the majority attending a 4-year college.

Although students who first test in 12th grade are about as likely to participate in EOS, they have a lower likelihood of being selected by any college through EOS and are selected by far fewer colleges than students who first test in 11th grade.

#### Recommendations:

- When placing EOS orders, colleges should consider selecting those students who first test as 12th graders and meet their search criteria. Since few colleges currently select these ACT-tested students, there is more of an opportunity in the short term for a college to have a recruiting advantage with these students.
- When placing EOS orders, colleges should consider selecting first-time senior testers as a part of their strategy to recruit students who are underrepresented on college campuses. Many underrepresented populations—male, first-generation, lower income, and minority students—test for the first time in 12th grade.

### Key Finding 5: Many high school graduates are not prepared academically for college success.

Twenty-eight percent of the ACT-tested graduating class of 2011 did not meet any of the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. This means that these students did not meet the minimum subject test scores required to have a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher in English Composition, College Algebra, Biology, and an introductory social science course. Many of these students will require a semester or more of remediation to help them prepare for college-level coursework, which delays their time to degree and places an additional financial burden on them. ACT research shows that students who do not meet any of the ACT Benchmarks have a lower likelihood of persisting in college and completing a degree in a timely manner.

#### Recommendations:

- As states look to increase their standards, colleges should have a clear voice in conversations with K–12 and other state officials about what it takes to be prepared academically for success in college.
- Colleges should continue to reach out to those high schools and middle schools in their service regions or states to offer academic and other support services to increase the number of students who are academically prepared to enter college.
- College faculty should review current state standards as they relate to college readiness standards and the results of the ACT National Curriculum Survey®. Results of the ACT National Curriculum Survey provide information about what entering college students should know and be able to do to be ready for college-level coursework in English, math, reading, and science.

# ACT Research

As a not-for-profit educational research organization, ACT is committed to producing research that focuses on key issues in education and workforce development. Our goal is to serve as a data resource. We strive to provide policymakers with the information they need to inform education and workforce development policy and to give educators the tools they need to lead more students toward college and career success. What follows are some of ACT's recent and most groundbreaking research studies. To review these studies, go to [www.act.org/research/summary](http://www.act.org/research/summary).

## The Condition of College and Career Readiness



Using ACT test scores and the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks, *The Condition of College and Career Readiness 2011* provides a series of graphics highlighting the college and career readiness

of the ACT-tested high school class of 2011. This report is updated annually.

## The Reality of College Readiness



Matching data from ACT's high school graduate file and the National Student Clearinghouse, these state-level reports identify the 2011 enrollment and migration status of 2010 ACT-tested high school graduates. Data are

provided for two-year, four-year public, and four-year non-public colleges and include percentages of students meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. This report will be available in fall 2012 and will be updated annually.

## A First Look at the Common Core and College and Career Readiness



Forty-five states have adopted the Common Core State Standards. Now, efforts to implement the standards take on primary importance. ACT provides this first look at student performance relative to the Common Core State Standards and college and career readiness.

## Enrollment Planners Conference



The ACT Enrollment Planners Conference is ACT's national enrollment management conference that draws more than 600 presenters and attendees from across the country every July.

## Mind the Gaps



In the research report *Mind the Gaps: How College Readiness Narrows Achievement Gaps in College Success*, ACT looks at steps that can be taken to improve college and career readiness and success among underserved populations. As a nation, we must close the achievement gap across racial/

ethnic and family income groups. The report shows the types of policies that work to improve college and career readiness and success.

## Enrollment Management Briefs



ACT's **Information Brief Series** presents quick snapshots of recent ACT research findings on a variety of topics in education and work, drawing on our extensive college readiness and career skills data. As part of that series, **Enrollment Management Briefs** focus on topics that are of particular interest to enrollment managers.

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A copy of this report can be found at

**[www.act.org/emtrends](http://www.act.org/emtrends)**

