

Expanding Opportunities

A College Choice Report for the
Graduating Class of 2014

Part 2: Enrollment Patterns

ACT is an independent, nonprofit 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/collegechoice



The *College Choice Report* is an annual report series that follows an ACT-tested high school graduating class from high school through the second year of college. It focuses on an alternating set of student characteristics, preferences, and college search behaviors to assist enrollment managers, admissions personnel, and other college administrators with student recruitment, enrollment, and persistence.

This *College Choice Report* is part of a report cycle that focuses on a particular ACT-tested high school graduating class. Other reports in this cycle are *The Condition of College & Career Readiness*, which highlights the academic readiness of high school graduates to enter college or career training, and *The Reality of College Readiness*, which highlights the relationships among readiness, college enrollment, and retention.

College Choice Report: Expanding Opportunities

ACT-Tested Class of 2014

This *College Choice Report* series follows the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2014, focusing on specific testing behaviors that may expand college opportunities available to students. This is an important topic for enrollment managers and admissions officers to consider, as students' participation in these testing behaviors have implications for colleges' chances to recruit, advise, and place these prospective students.

Part 1 of this series, *Preferences and Prospects* (released October 2014), provides both 10-year trends and a profile of the current high school graduating class regarding testing behaviors such as the high school grade level in which students first took the ACT® test, the rate at which students elected to send score reports to colleges at the time of ACT registration, and the rate at which students opted into the ACT Educational Opportunity Service (EOS).

Part 2 of this series, *Enrollment Patterns* (released July 2015), focuses on the college enrollment of these ACT-tested high school graduates and examines some of the potential downstream effects of such student testing behaviors as time of first testing, participation in EOS, and score-sending behavior.

Key Findings from Part 1

- More high school students than ever before take the ACT.
- Students are taking the ACT earlier in high school.
- More students withhold their test scores during ACT registration.
- Additional score reports are rising, and most are sent by withholders.
- More students take advantage of the ACT Educational Opportunity Service.

Key Findings from Part 2

- The college enrollment rate of ACT-tested students remains stable despite significant growth in the number of ACT-tested students.
- Opting out of EOS could result in a loss of opportunity.
- Testing later in high school could result in a loss of opportunity.

- Withholding scores at ACT registration and using additional score reports does not appear to secure any advantage for students in admissions decisions.

For more detailed information about these key findings and the opportunity to view the report interactively by particular geographic regions (nation, region, state) and by student background characteristics (e.g., ACT scores, parents' education level, race/ethnicity), go to www.act.org/collegechoice.

How to Use This Report

More than half (57%) of the graduating class of 2014 took the ACT during high school. Whether you are searching for prospective students locally or in other parts of the country, a better understanding of the preferences and college choice behaviors of ACT-tested students can improve your marketing and recruitment strategies. The information presented in this report (and in the accompanying online charts and maps) can provide insights and inform discussions on your campus about the desired characteristics and locations of prospective students and your strategies for recruiting them. For colleges that participate in EOS, this information can help you to establish or refine your selection criteria to create more efficient student searches. Over time, the report can also help you gauge the effectiveness of your search, marketing, and recruitment strategies.

Sources

This report is based on the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2014. Student information provided in this report—such as students' background characteristics, grade level at time of testing, ACT scores, college choices, and participation in EOS—is collected when students register for and take the ACT. College enrollment during fall 2014 is determined by matching the test records of the ACT-tested graduating class of 2014 with enrollment records that colleges provide to the National Student Clearinghouse®. Data from the National Student Clearinghouse account for 95% of all enrollments in Title IV, degree-granting institutions in the nation.

The College Enrollment Rate of ACT-Tested Students Remains Stable Despite Significant Growth in the Number of ACT-Tested Students

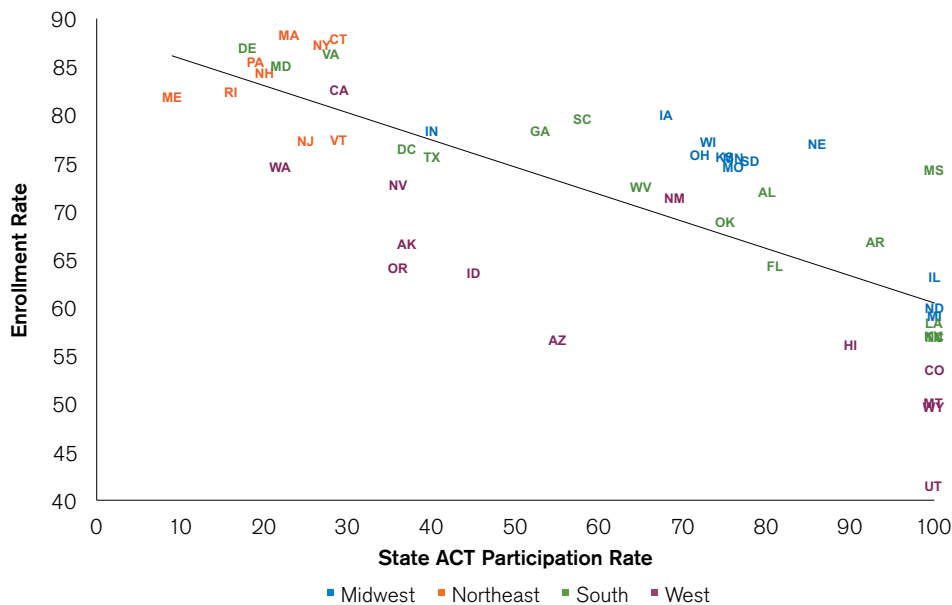
Of the 1,845,787 students in the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2014, 69% (1,275,485) enrolled in college in the fall after graduating from high school. The enrollment rate of ACT-tested students has remained relatively stable over the past few years (at roughly 70%) despite significant growth in both the number and representation of ACT-tested students during that time. As mentioned in *Part 1* of this report, the number of high school graduates who take the ACT has increased by 11% since 2012 (when the *College Choice Report* was first published) and the share of high school graduates who take the ACT has increased from 52% in 2012 to 57% in 2014.

The current rate at which ACT-tested students attend college immediately after completing high school varies considerably by state, however, from a low of 42% in Utah to a high of 88% in Connecticut and Massachusetts.¹ An important factor that drives state differences in the enrollment rates of ACT-tested students is the states' ACT participation rates. In states with lower participation rates, students who take the ACT tend to be higher-achieving students who plan to attend college, whereas in states with high participation rates, a more diverse population of students are taking the ACT, including lower-achieving students and those who may not consider attending college.

There is a strong negative relationship between a state's ACT participation rate and the rate at which students enroll in college upon completing high school, such that students in states with lower participation rates generally enroll in college at higher rates and students in states with higher participation rates generally enroll at lower rates. Figure 1 shows this relationship for the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2014. As seen in the figure, states with lower ACT participation rates (horizontal axis) tend to have a larger percentage of ACT-tested students who enroll in college (vertical axis), whereas states with higher ACT participation rates tend to have a smaller percentage of ACT-tested students who enroll in college. States in the Northeast are clustered in the upper-left area of the figure, having both lower participation rates and higher enrollment rates. Among the states that do not appear to exhibit this same pattern, Mississippi has a relatively high enrollment rate among the states with 100% ACT participation rates, whereas Arizona has a relatively low enrollment rate given its ACT participation rate.

¹ The lower enrollment rate in Utah is due in part to the higher proportion of Mormon students who delay college entry for mission trips.

Figure 1. College Enrollment Rate by State ACT Participation Rate, 2014



Note: The trend line in Figure 1 shows a negative relationship. A correlation of -0.76 (out of a range of -1 to 1) suggests that the strength of the negative relationship between ACT participation rate and college enrollment rate is large in magnitude.

Although the majority of ACT-tested students enroll in college directly after graduating from high school, many ACT-tested students do not attend college at this time, if at all (see Table 1). Students who either postpone or do not attend college are more likely to be lower achieving, have lower degree aspirations, come from families with less-educated parents and lower incomes, be male, and be members of racial/ethnic groups that are neither Asian nor White.

Table 1. Which Students Are Less Likely to Enroll in College Directly After High School?

Less Likely to Enroll in College	More Likely to Enroll in College
Lower-achieving students	Higher-achieving students
Students with lower degree aspirations	Students with higher degree aspirations
Students with lower family incomes	Students with higher family incomes
Students with less highly educated parents	Students with more highly educated parents
Males	Females
All other racial/ethnic groups	Asian and White students

Of the 1,275,485 ACT-tested students who enrolled in college, 76% attended a four-year college, whereas 24% attended a two-year college; 78% attended a public college, whereas 22% attended a private college. Figure 2 shows the distribution of enrolled students by the selectivity of the college attended for the ACT-tested graduating class of 2014. To gauge the representativeness of ACT-tested students at

institutions of varying selectivity, Figure 2 also provides the distribution of all first-time degree-seeking undergraduates from the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).² As seen in the figure, nearly one out of three ACT-tested students enrolled in a college with an open admission policy, whereas more than half of all ACT-tested students attended either a less selective college—i.e., where the ACT Composite score of the typical entering student is 20 to 23—or a moderately selective college—i.e., where the ACT Composite score of the typical entering student is 24 to 27; about one out of 10 ACT-tested college students attended a highly selective college. Compared to the population of first-time degree-seeking undergraduates, a smaller percentage of ACT-tested students who enter college attend open admission colleges, whereas larger percentages of ACT-tested students attend colleges that are less selective, moderately selective, and highly selective.

Figure 2. Distribution of Enrolled Students by Selectivity of College Attended

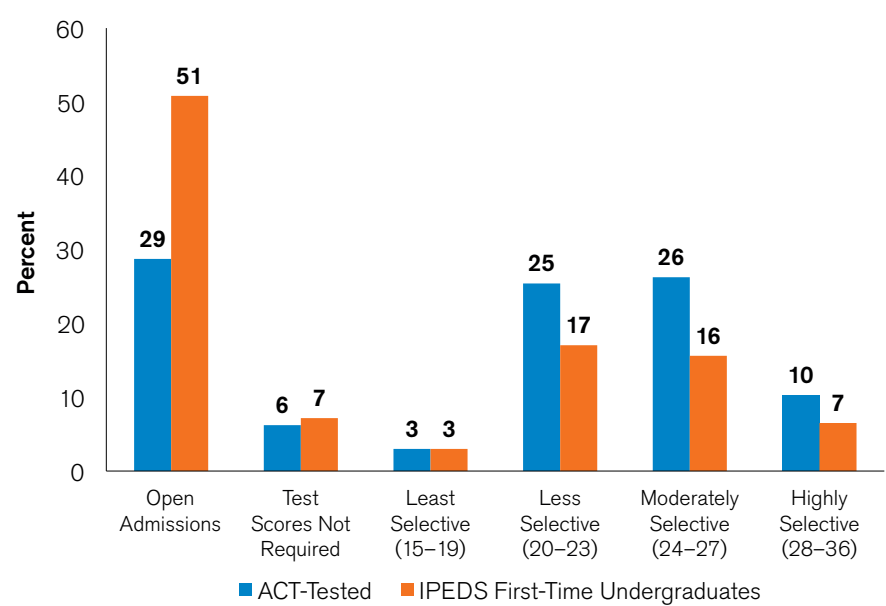


Table 2 shows the distribution of ACT-tested students across 20 different college types based on combinations of college level, selectivity, and control. Three out of five ACT-tested students who enrolled in college directly after high school attended one of three college types: 1) two-year public colleges with an open admission policy (23%), 2) four-year public colleges that are less selective (19%), and 3) four-year public colleges that are moderately selective (20%).

² Summary statistics for all enrolled students appearing in Figure 2 are calculated using the most recent IPEDS enrollment survey (efa2013) available to the public at the time of this publication.

Table 2. Distribution of Enrolled Students Across Different College Types

Level	Selectivity	Control	Count	Percent
2-year	Open Admissions	Private	1,107	< 1
		Public	289,394	23
	Test Scores Not Required	Private	337	< 1
		Public	3,766	< 1
	Least Selective (15–19)	Private	962	< 1
		Public	2,997	< 1
	Less Selective (20–23)	Private	27	< 1
		Public	4,499	< 1
4-year	Open Admissions	Private	9,340	< 1
		Public	66,565	5
	Test Scores Not Required	Private	41,073	3
		Public	34,107	3
	Least Selective (15–19)	Private	7,502	< 1
		Public	28,761	2
	Less Selective (20–23)	Private	73,689	6
		Public	245,861	19
	Moderately Selective (24–27)	Private	84,565	7
		Public	250,259	20
	Highly Selective (28–36)	Private	55,893	4
		Public	74,779	6

Opting Out of EOS Could Result in a Loss of Opportunity

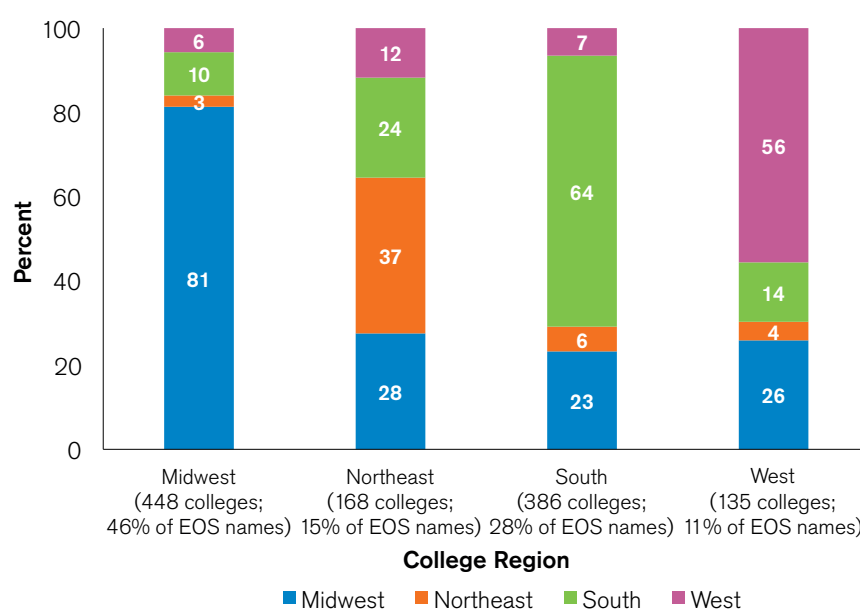
As introduced in *Part 1* of this report, students can opt into the ACT Educational Opportunity Service (EOS) when they register to take the ACT.³ EOS provides students with information about educational opportunities and scholarships by making their names available to colleges and scholarship agencies that meet EOS eligibility guidelines. Between 2005 and 2014, the share of ACT-tested students who entered the EOS pool increased from 79% to 86%. Although, as of 2014, student participation in EOS was at a decade high, 14% of ACT-tested students (more than 250,000) from the 2014 graduating class did not opt into EOS. This decision to opt out of EOS results in a loss of opportunity for these students to learn more about and to be potentially recruited by colleges that are not currently in their consideration set or even their awareness set. In this section of the report, we will attempt to quantify some of the opportunities that are lost.

Of those students who opted into EOS, 84% had their names selected by at least one college. There are differences in the EOS selection rate by region of the country, with students from the Midwest and Northeast being selected at higher rates (at 92% and

³ See key finding entitled “More Students Take Advantage of the ACT Educational Opportunity Service.”

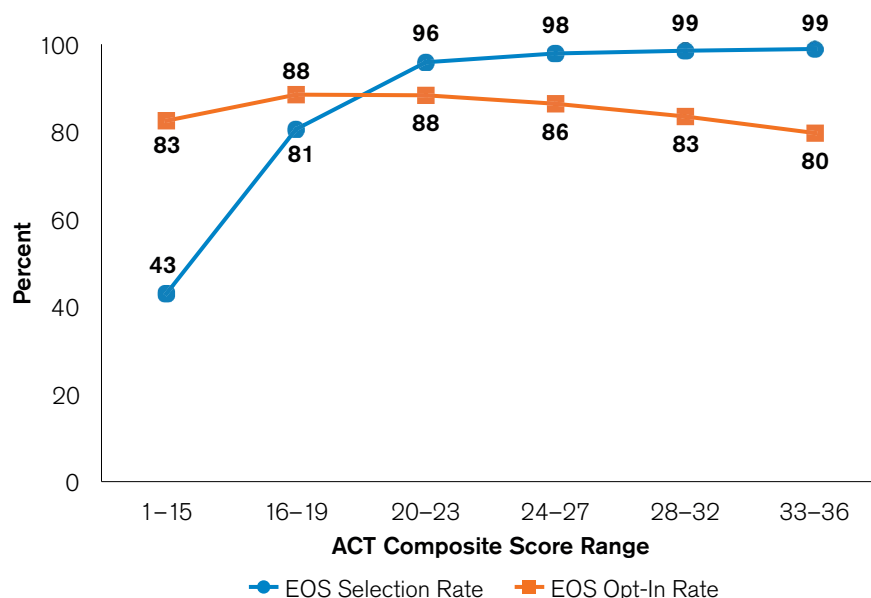
91%, respectively) than students from the West and South (at 80% and 78%, respectively). These regional differences in selection rates are driven in part by the location of colleges that participate in EOS and the regional differences in their recruitment strategies. Figure 3 illustrates these differences. As seen in the figure, almost half (46%) of all names selected through EOS are selected by colleges located in the Midwest. Four out of five names selected by Midwestern colleges are of students located in Midwestern states. A similar pattern of selecting a majority of EOS names within the same region is apparent among colleges in the South and in the West. Roughly two out of three names selected by Southern colleges are of students located in Southern states, and more than half of all names selected by Western colleges are of students located in Western states. In the Northeast, however, only roughly one out of three names selected are of students located in the Northeast. This may be due in part to the lower EOS opt-in rate of students in this region (81%), as seen in *Part 1*.

Figure 3. Percent of EOS Names Selected Within Each Region by the Region of the Participating Colleges



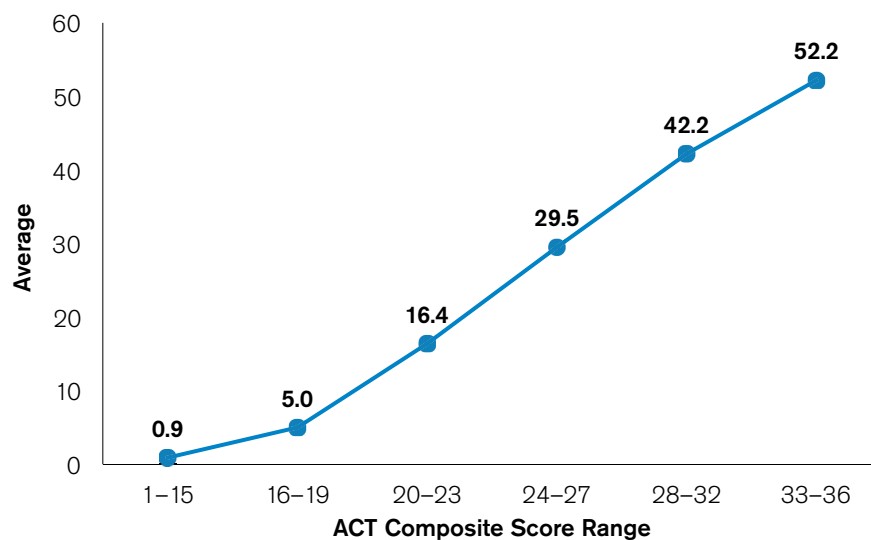
The rate at which students' names are selected by colleges through EOS also differs by academic achievement level, as measured by students' ACT Composite score. As the blue line in Figure 4 shows, nearly all students in the score range of 20–23 or higher were selected by at least one college through EOS. Worth noting from *Part 1*, however, is that students in the higher score ranges had some of the lowest rates of opting into EOS, as illustrated by the orange line.

Figure 4. EOS Selection Rate and EOS Opt-In Rate by ACT Composite Score



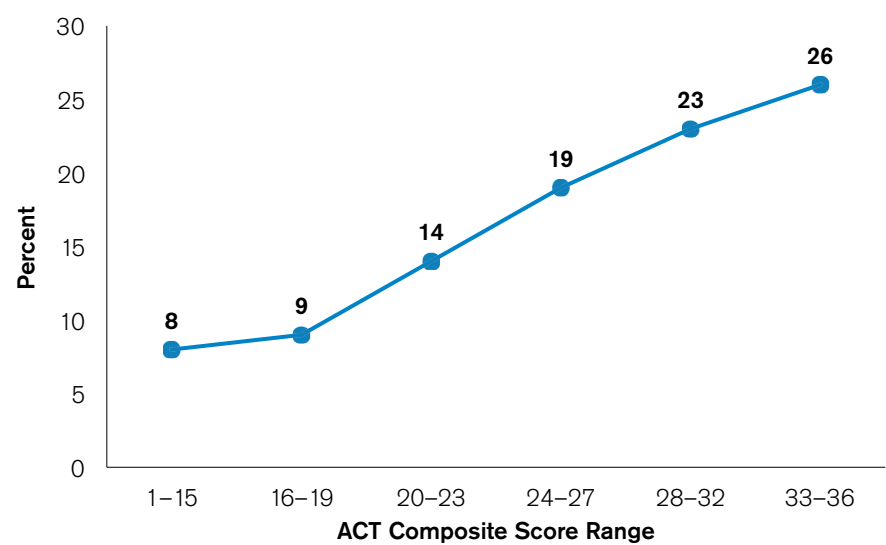
Not only does the likelihood of being selected by at least one college increase with students' academic achievement level, but the *number* of colleges that select students' names rises sharply as students' academic achievement increases. Among those students who opted into EOS, the average number of colleges that selected them was 16.7. As seen in Figure 5, the average number of colleges selecting students' names can be as low as 0.9 colleges on average for students in the ACT Composite score range of 1–15 and as high as 52.2 colleges on average for students in the range of 33–36 on the score scale.

Figure 5. Average Number of Colleges Selecting the Student Through EOS by ACT Composite Score



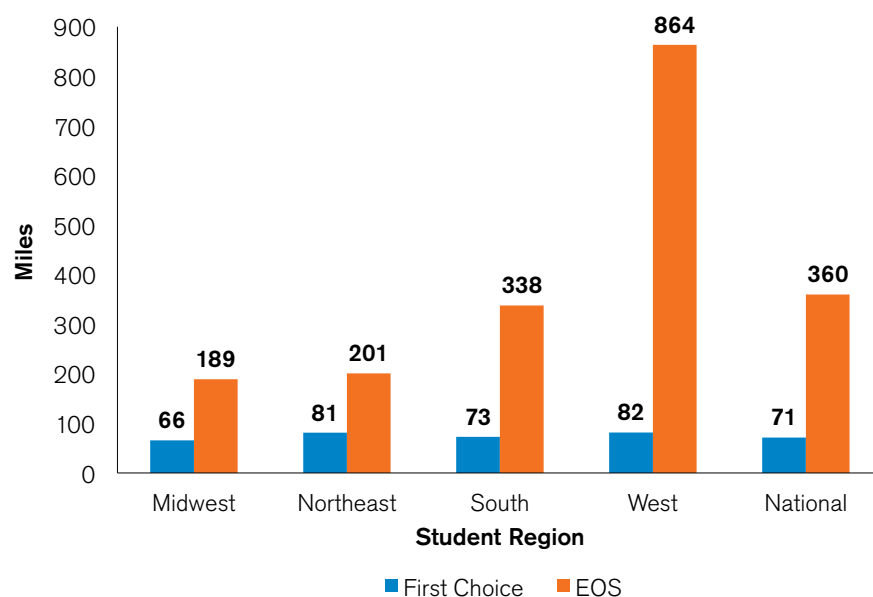
Not only is a typical ACT-tested student who opts into EOS selected by an average of 16.7 colleges, but 16% of those who were selected by at least one college and who enrolled in college attended a college that selected them through EOS. As Figure 6 illustrates, the rate at which students enrolled in a college that selected their names through EOS increases with students' academic achievement level. This positive relationship between students' ACT Composite Score and the rate at which they enroll in a college that selected their names through EOS is due in part to the number of college opportunities that higher-achieving students receive through their participation in EOS. Again, it is important to note that high-achieving students—who seem to benefit the most from their participation in EOS—have some of the lowest rates of opting into EOS.

Figure 6. Percent of Students Enrolling in a College that Selected Them Through EOS by ACT Composite Score



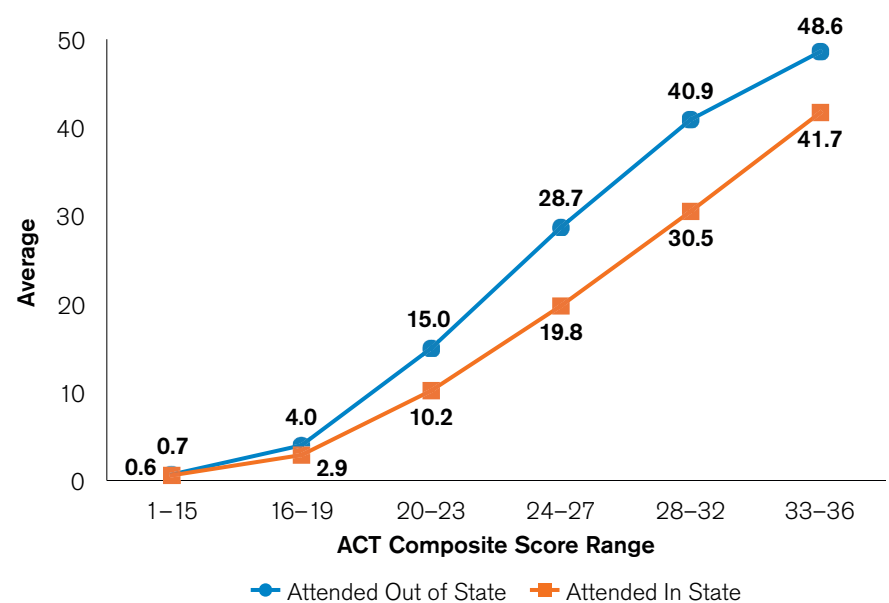
Opting into EOS not only increases the number of colleges that students could potentially consider, it also expands the geographic boundaries of colleges that students consider. Among students who elect at the time of ACT registration to have official score reports sent to colleges, the median distance between students' homes and their first-choice college is 71 miles. This finding suggests that, at the time students register for the ACT, they are not necessarily considering colleges outside of a fairly restricted geographic boundary. Yet, among those students whose names are selected by at least one college through EOS, the average median distance between the students' homes and the various colleges that selected their names is 360 miles. Figure 7 shows by region of the country both the median distance to students' first-choice college and the average median distance between students' homes and the colleges that selected their names through EOS. As seen in the figure, this pattern of expanding the geographic boundaries of the colleges that students consider is evident across every region of the country.

Figure 7. Median Distance to Students' First-Choice College and the Average Median Distance Between Students' Homes and the Colleges that Selected Them Through EOS by Region



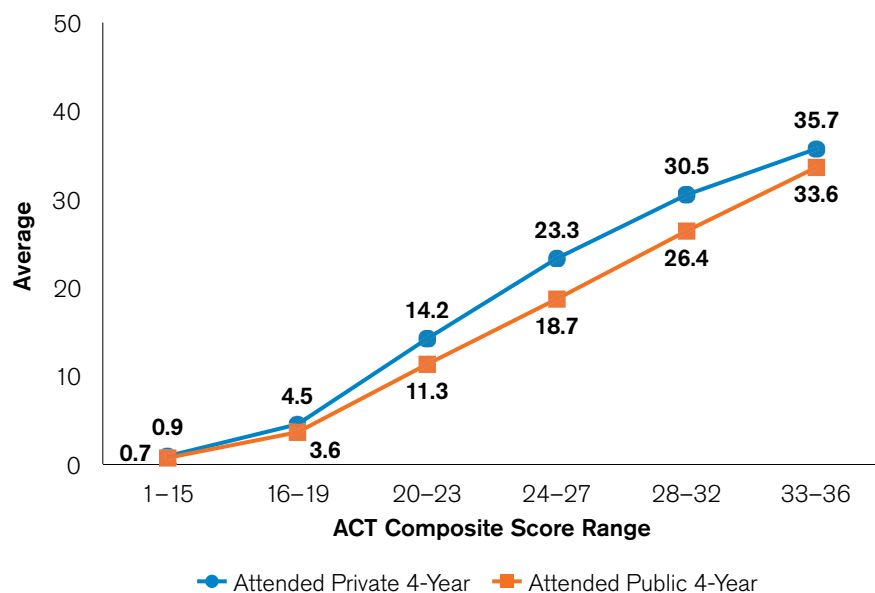
There is also some indirect evidence that the marketing and recruitment strategies of colleges within EOS can change some students' preference regarding the location of the college in which they enroll. For example, among those EOS students who indicated that they planned to attend college in their state of residence, students who eventually enrolled out of state were selected by an average of 21.1 out-of-state colleges compared to an average of 11.8 out-of-state colleges among students who enrolled in-state. Figure 8 provides the average number of out-of-state colleges that selected student names by whether they actually enrolled in college in state or out of state and by their ACT Composite score range. As is evident from the figure, students who planned to attend an in-state college but subsequently enrolled in an out-of-state college had their names selected through EOS, on average, by a greater number of out-of-state colleges than their peers who attended college in state. With the exception of students in the score range of 33–36, this gap between the two groups gets wider as academic achievement increases.

Figure 8. Average Number of Out-of-State Colleges Selecting Students' Names by Location of College Attended and ACT Composite Score Among Students Who Planned to Enroll In State



Similar indirect evidence suggests that the marketing and recruitment strategies of colleges within EOS can change some students' preference regarding the type of the college in which they enroll. For example, among EOS students who indicated that they planned to attend a public four-year college, students who eventually enrolled in a private four-year college were selected by an average of 16.2 private four-year colleges compared to an average of 13.6 private four-year colleges among students who enrolled in a public four-year college. Figure 9 shows the average number of four-year private colleges that selected student names by whether they actually enrolled in a private or public four-year college and by their ACT Composite score range. As is evident from the figure, students who planned to attend a public four-year college but subsequently enrolled in a private four-year college had their names selected through EOS, on average, by a greater number of private four-year colleges than their peers who attended a public four-year college.

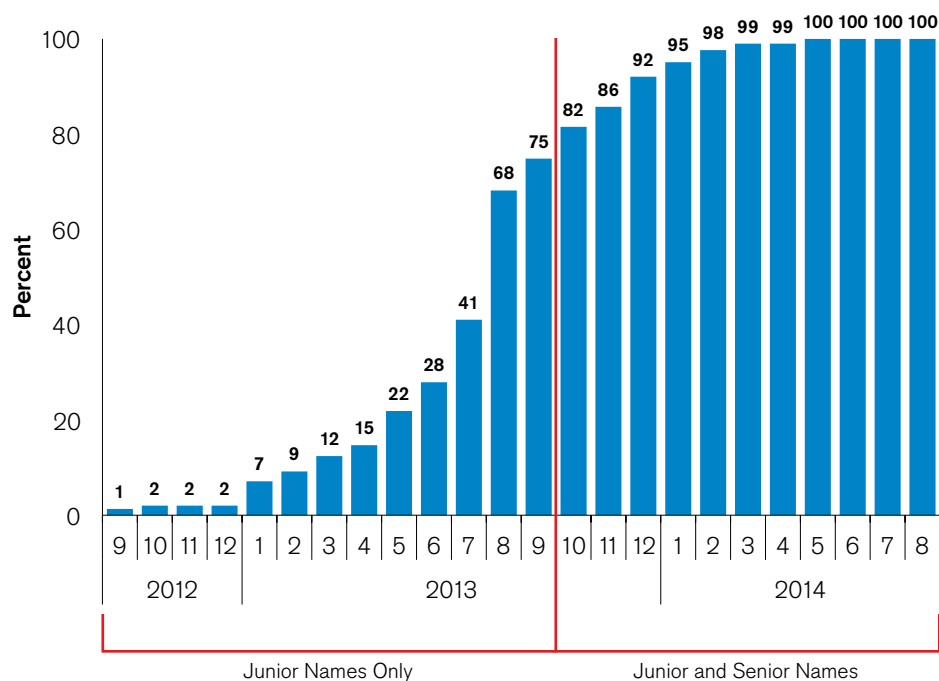
Figure 9. Average Number of Private 4-Year Colleges Selecting Students' Names by Type of College Attended and ACT Composite Score Among Students Who Planned to Enroll in a Public 4-Year College



Testing Later in High School Could Result in a Loss of Opportunity

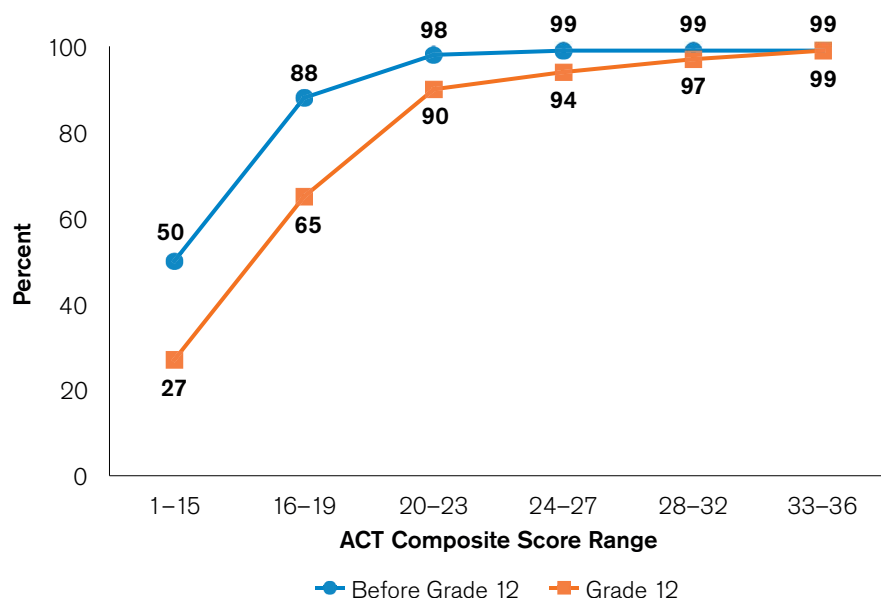
As indicated in *Part 1* of this series, there has been an increase over the past 10 years in the share of ACT-tested students who take the ACT for the first time before the 12th grade. Among the high school class of 2014, three out of four students first tested before the 12th grade. Taking the test earlier has several advantages in terms of expanding college opportunities for students. The first advantage is that, by testing earlier, students' names become available within the ACT Educational Opportunity Service at a time when colleges are most often using EOS to select student names for marketing and recruitment. Figure 10 shows the cumulative percentage of names selected by colleges through EOS over the course of 24 months that correspond with students' 11th- and 12th-grade years of high school. As seen in the figure, by the end of September of students' 12th-grade year, 75% of all names selected by colleges have already been chosen. This means that 75% of all names selected by colleges through EOS do not include any students who test for the first time in 12th grade, as these students' names do not enter EOS until October of their 12th-grade year at the earliest. By January of the students' 12th-grade year, 95% of all student names selected by colleges through EOS have been chosen.

Figure 10. Cumulative Percentage of Names Selected by Colleges Through EOS



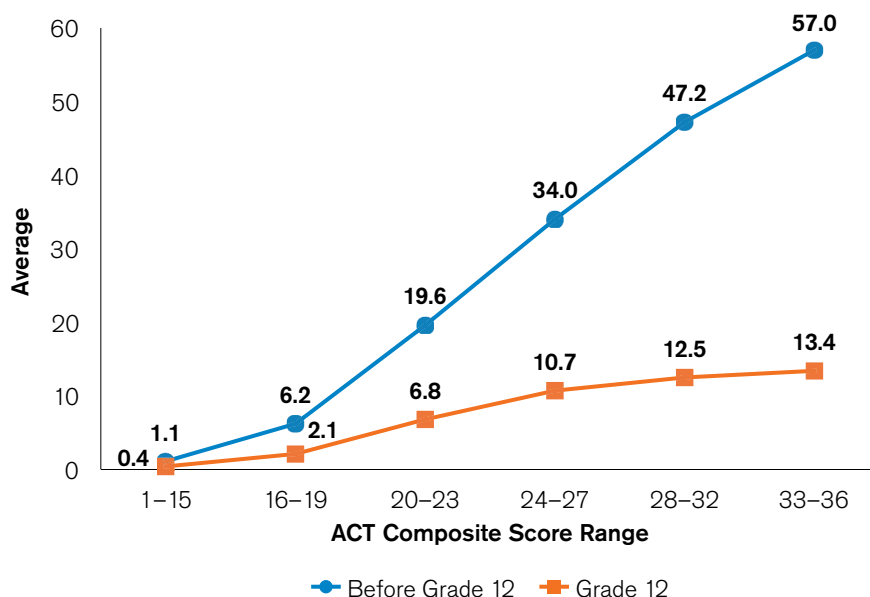
Overall, 84% of students who opted into EOS had their names selected by at least one college. Yet, as suggested by Figure 10, students who tested earlier were far more likely than students who tested later to be selected by at least one college through EOS. In particular, 88% of students who first tested before 12th grade had their names selected by at least one college through EOS, compared to only 70% of students who first tested in 12th grade. Figure 11 shows the difference in EOS selection rates by time of first testing and ACT Composite Score range. As the figure illustrates, differences in EOS selection rates were more pronounced among students in the lowest ACT Composite ranges. For example, among students in the lowest ACT Composite score range—i.e., 1–15—students who first tested before the 12th grade were nearly twice as likely as their peers who first tested during the 12th grade to have their names selected by at least one college through EOS. These differences in EOS selection rate by time of first testing diminish as ACT Composite increases.

Figure 11. EOS Selection Rate by Time of First Testing and ACT Composite Score



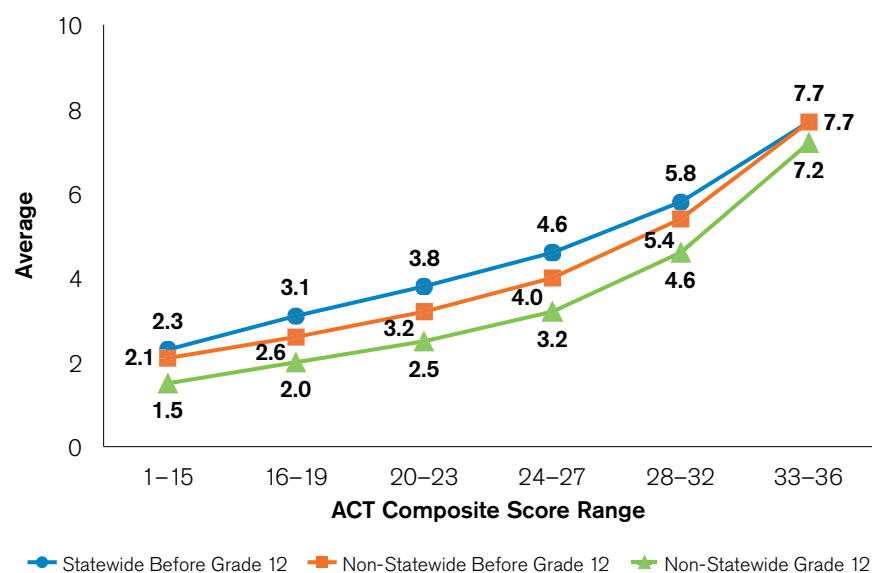
Among those students who opted into EOS, the average number of colleges that selected them was 16.7. This overall average, however, masks some important differences by the grade level in which students first took the ACT. Specifically, students who first tested before 12th grade had their names selected by an average of 20.8 colleges, compared to an average of only 4.9 colleges among students who first tested during 12th grade. Although, in general, students who first test in 12th grade tend to be lower achieving than those who first test prior to 12th grade, differences in the average number of colleges that select a student's name appear to be due to test timing more than student achievement. Figure 12, which shows the average number of colleges selecting a student's name by time of first testing and ACT Composite score range, illustrates this point. As the figure shows, within all ACT Composite score ranges, EOS students who first tested during 12th grade had their names selected by a smaller average number of colleges than their peers who first tested before 12th grade, and this gap by time of first testing widens substantially as students' ACT Composite score increases.

Figure 12. Average Number of Colleges Selecting the Student Through EOS by Time of First Testing and ACT Composite Score



The second advantage is that, by testing earlier, students have a longer window in which to make contact with colleges in order to express interest in attending. One common way for students to signal interest to a college is to request that an official ACT score report be sent to the admissions office. Although there are differences in the average number of official score reports sent to colleges by grade level first tested, these grade level differences may be attributed to differences in students' motivation to attend college as opposed to the actual timing of the test. To try to account for the fact that students who test earlier in high school may be more motivated to attend college, we looked at the average number of colleges to which students had score reports sent by students' achievement level and by whether or not they took the ACT before 12th grade on a voluntary or a mandatory (i.e., statewide administration) basis. Figure 13 illustrates these differences. As seen in the figure, as ACT Composite score increases, so does the average number of colleges to which official score reports are sent. Also worth noting from the figure is that within each score range, students who took the ACT before 12th grade on a mandatory basis sent their scores to either a larger or a comparable average number of colleges as their peers who tested before 12th grade on a voluntary basis. Compared to these two student groups, students who took the ACT during 12th grade on a voluntary basis sent their scores to a lower average number of colleges.

Figure 13. Average Number of Official ACT Score Reports Sent to Colleges



Withholding Scores at ACT Registration and Using Additional Score Reports Does Not Appear to Secure Any Advantage for Students in the Admissions Decision

As seen in *Part 1* of this series, both the number and share of students who choose not to send their ACT scores at time of registration has increased over the past decade. As of 2014, nearly half of all students (48%) withhold their test scores at time of ACT registration. Over the past 10 years, both the number and share of students sending colleges an additional score report (ASR)—i.e., an official score report that students can send to colleges or scholarship agencies after they have completed the ACT registration process—has also increased. By 2014, the share of students who sent an additional score report had grown to more than one out of four students (28%), and the majority of these students (60%) had withheld their test scores from colleges at the time of ACT registration. In *Part 1*, we acknowledged that these upward trends in both withholding and sending ASRs are occurring in every region of the country and across *all* student achievement levels.

In this section of the report, we take a closer look at the admission rates of students who applied to college by their score-sending status and their achievement level. Our goal is to examine whether implementing a strategy of withholding scores from colleges at the time of ACT registration gives students any advantage in the admissions process. Previously in *Part 2*, we noted that a little more than half of all ACT-tested students attended either a less selective college (25%)—i.e., where the ACT Composite score of the typical entering student is 20–23—or a moderately selective college (26%)—i.e., where the ACT Composite score of the typical entering student is 24–27—and that an additional 10% attended a highly selective college—i.e., where the ACT Composite score of the typical entering student is 28–36. In this

section, we use admissions data from 45 less selective colleges, 39 moderately selective colleges, and seven highly selective colleges that participated in the ACT Class Profile Service between 2009 and 2015 to look at differences in admissions rates among students with three types of score-sending statuses: 1) those who requested during ACT registration that their test scores be sent to that college—i.e., sent as part of choice set; 2) those who requested during ACT registration that their test scores be sent to other colleges and then subsequently requested that their test scores be sent to that college—i.e., sent in addition to choice set; and 3) those who withheld their scores from all colleges during ACT registration and then subsequently requested that their test scores be sent to that college—i.e., sent in lieu of choice set.

Figures 14–16 show the admission rates of students who applied to less selective, moderately selective, and highly selective colleges, respectively, by the students' score-sending status and by the highest ACT Composite score that the students sent to the college. As is evident from Figures 14 and 15, the admission rates of students who applied to less selective and moderately selective colleges by score-sending status are comparable between those students who withheld their test scores at the time of ACT registration and those students who did not withhold their test scores. At highly selective colleges (Figure 16), the admission rates of students who sent their test scores to that college as part of ACT registration were higher than the admission rates for students who sent their test scores to the college after registration, and this gap gets substantially wider as students' academic achievement increases. Although these findings are not definitive given the small number of colleges upon which they are based, they do suggest that a strategy of withholding test scores at the time of ACT registration and subsequently sending an additional score report does not offer the student an advantage in the admissions decision.

Figure 14. Admission Rate at Less Selective Colleges by Score Sending Status and ACT Composite Score Range

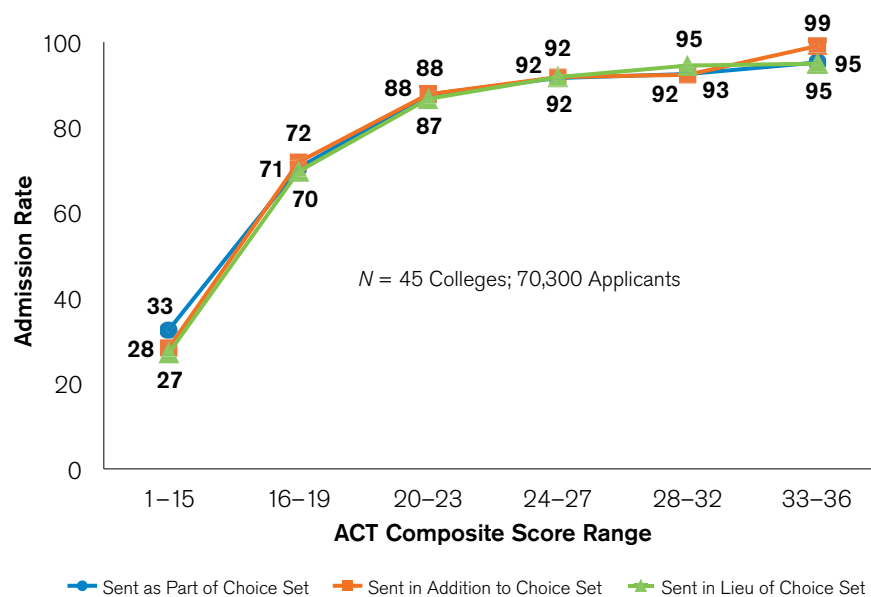


Figure 15. Admission Rate at Moderately Selective Colleges by Score Sending Status and ACT Composite Score Range

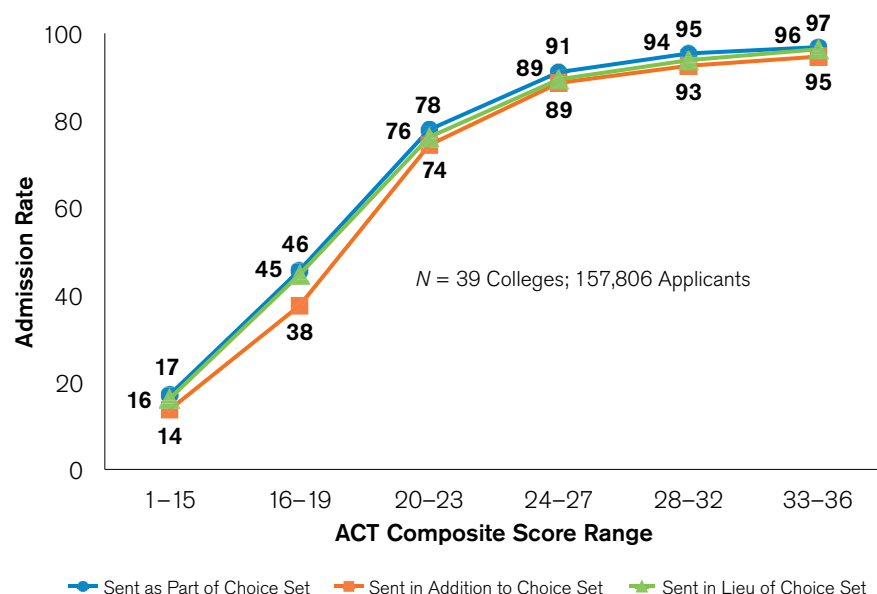
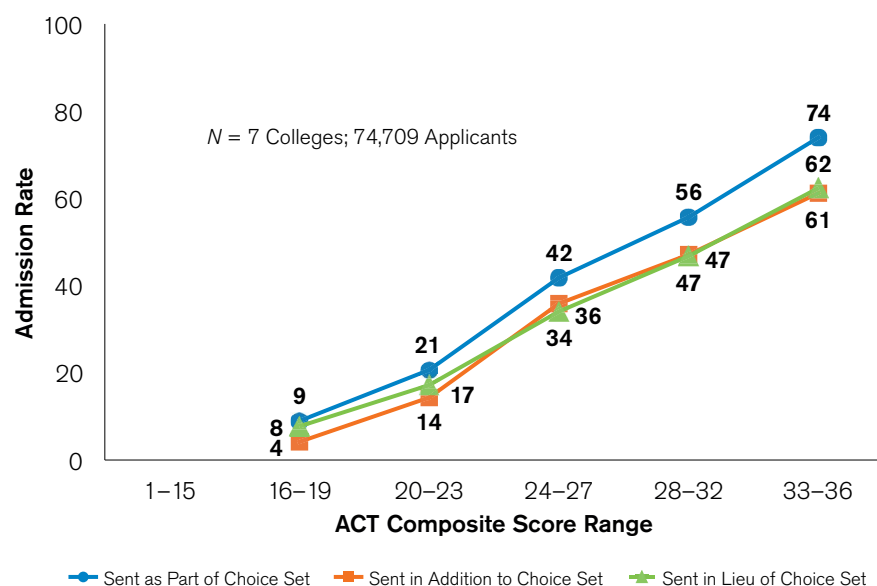


Figure 16. Admission Rate at Highly Selective Colleges by Score Sending Status and ACT Composite Score Range

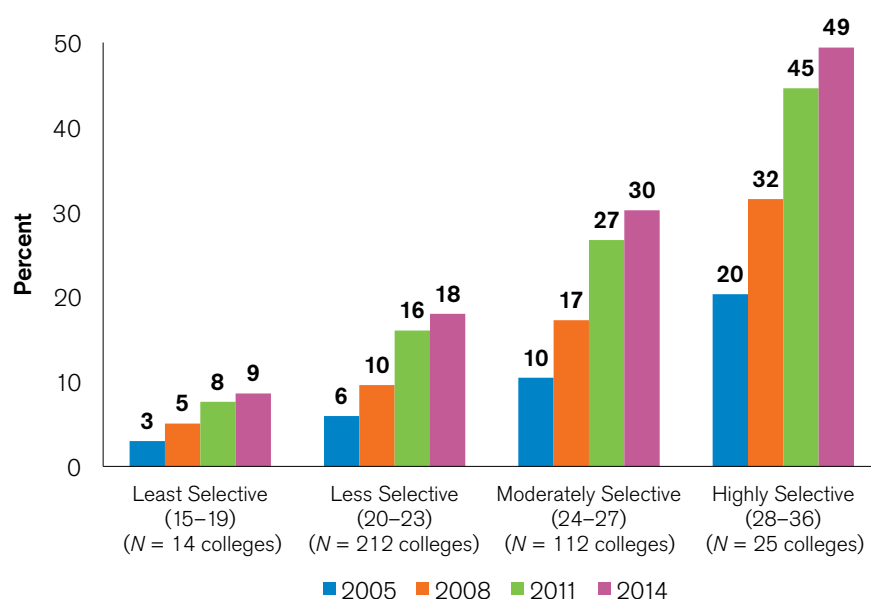


One negative consequence of an increase over time in the number of students who withhold their test scores at the time of ACT registration and then send an official score report after registration is that colleges will have less information about their relative rank within the students' college consideration sets. To demonstrate just how much the current trends in withholding ACT scores and sending additional score reports has changed the type of information that colleges receive about their relative

rank, we've provided the rates at which students send additional score reports to colleges of varying selectivity. This rate is summarized for four different points in time over the past decade: 2005, 2008, 2011, and 2014. The analysis is based on 363 colleges in which more than half of all first-time enrolled students submit an ACT score report to the college. The student sample is limited to students who are presumably admissible to the college—i.e., the students have an ACT Composite score that is no lower than two score points below the midpoint for the college to which they have sent a score report.

Figure 17 provides the rate at which students send additional score reports to colleges by the selectivity of the college and the high school graduation year of the ACT-tested students. As the figure shows, regardless of the extent of selectivity of the college, the share of all official score reports sent to those colleges that is comprised by additional score reports—i.e., those that are sent after ACT registration—has increased over the past 10 years. In highly selective colleges, nearly one out of two ACT score reports that are currently sent are additional score reports, compared to only one out of five official ACT score reports a decade ago. In moderately selective colleges, roughly one out of three score reports sent are additional score reports, compared with about one out of 10 score reports a decade ago. To the extent that colleges are using the information about their relative rank in the recruitment process, in understanding their market position, or in predicting their enrollment yield, the usefulness of this information is likely becoming compromised as fewer students are sending relative rank to colleges by sending official score reports at the time of ACT registration.

Figure 17. The Percent of Admissible Students Who Sent an Additional Score Report to the College by College Selectivity and High School Graduation Year



Recommendations

For college admissions personnel

- Monitor and consider the implications of both the historic trends and future state policy changes that impact the ACT participation rates in your state and other states in which you recruit ACT-tested students. For example, between the 2013 and 2014 graduating classes, Hawaii's ACT participation rate increased from 40% to 90% due to a recent policy decision to administer the ACT to all public high school 11th graders in the state. ACT research has consistently found that students from states with lower ACT participation rates tend to have different background characteristics, achievement levels, college preferences, and test-taking behaviors (e.g., opting into EOS, sending test scores) and enrollment rates than students from states with higher ACT participation rates.
- Be strategic about the timing with which you select names and the parameters you use to make your selections through EOS. More students are taking the ACT, deciding to test earlier, and opting into EOS, and these trends have implications on the size and characteristics of the EOS pool at different times in the academic year. Take special note that in states not administering the ACT statewide, students who are traditionally underserved by colleges (e.g., first-generation students, lower-income students, and students from racial/ethnic minority groups) are more likely than other students to test later in high school.
- Make it clear to prospective students how scores from multiple test dates are evaluated in admissions decisions at your institution. For example, your institution may use scores from all test dates provided, the test date with the highest scores, scores from the most recent test date, or some other variation. More students are electing to withhold their ACT scores during registration and send them at a later date. When students withhold their scores, you lose an opportunity to more actively recruit the student (especially if score sending is the first contact that the student has with your college). When students rely on additional score reports, you also lose information about your college's rank in each student's choice set, and past ACT research has shown that a college's ranking in the choice set has historically been one of the best predictors of student enrollment at that college.

For high school counselors

- Encourage students to take full advantage of the opportunity to send their test scores to up to four colleges or scholarship agencies as part of the ACT registration process. Sending ACT scores during registration is viewed by colleges as an expression of student interest in the school; it provides colleges with a chance to reach out sooner to interested students, giving students more timely information and time to weigh their postsecondary options.

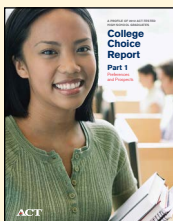
- Learn and help students to understand the different approaches colleges take in evaluating scores from multiple test dates in admissions decisions. Although there may be a few specific colleges and students for which the delay in sending test scores is a reasonable strategy, as suggested by the findings in this report, withholding test scores as a universal strategy would be disadvantageous for many students and colleges.
- Recommend that students opt into the ACT Educational Opportunity Service. Past ACT research has shown that the median distance between a student's home and his or her college is about 50 miles, and this report showed that the median distance to the student's first-choice college at the time of ACT registration is about 70 miles. Students may not be aware of the numerous postsecondary opportunities available to them, especially those that are located farther from home. The findings of this report show that participation in EOS broadens the geographic area of the colleges that students can consider and changes the location and type preferences of some students. The additional information they receive from colleges through their participation in EOS may lead to a better-informed decision or a better-fitting postsecondary environment.
- Encourage students to take the ACT earlier in high school as part of their educational and career planning and preparation. In addition to providing colleges with information that can assist with recruiting, advising, and course placement, results from the ACT can help students identify academic strengths and weaknesses, explore educational and career interests, and prepare to meet their educational and career goals. Although it's important for all students, early testing may be of particular benefit to students who are traditionally underserved by colleges (e.g., first-generation students, lower-income students, and students from racial/ethnic minority groups), as these students tend to test later and may need additional guidance in understanding the college preparation and choice process.

ACT Research

As a nonprofit 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.

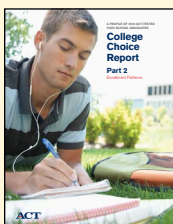
College Choice Report 2012

Part 1: Preferences and Prospects



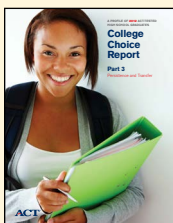
Contains the self-reported college preferences and EOS participation rates of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012.

Part 2: Enrollment Patterns



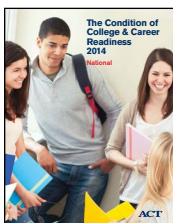
Examines college enrollment trends of the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2012, focusing on student mobility, how college choices match preferences, and student enrollment rates.

Part 3: Persistence and Transfer



Reports on student persistence within postsecondary education and examines the relationships between students' reported college preferences and their transfer patterns.

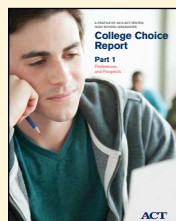
The Condition of College & Career Readiness



Highlights the college and career readiness of the ACT-tested high school class of 2014. This report is updated annually. www.act.org/newsroom/data/2014/

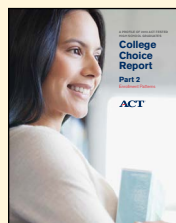
College Choice Report 2013

Part 1: Preferences and Prospects



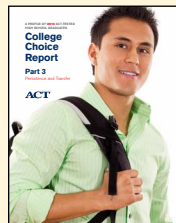
Focuses on students' choice and certainty of planned major, Interest-Major Fit, best-fitting major, and selection of major.

Part 2: Enrollment Patterns



Focuses on college enrollment, consistency of college major choice, persistence within majors, and changes in Interest-Major Fit.

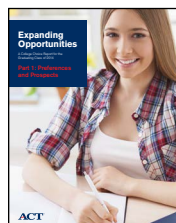
Part 3: Persistence and Transfer



Focuses on student persistence within majors between the first and second year of college, changes in Interest-Major Fit among students who changed majors, and the relationship between Interest-Major Fit and student persistence.

College Choice Report 2014

Part 1: Expanding Opportunities



Focuses on testing behaviors that may expand college opportunities available to students, covering such topics as the grade level in which students test, the timing and number of score reports students send to colleges, and their participation in the ACT Educational Opportunity Service.

In addition to the printed national reports for this series, we are providing interactive charts and maps online that allow you to view and compare information. This interactive format gives you an opportunity to customize and expand your view of the report content to better address your information needs. To view this content, go to www.act.org/collegechoice.

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