

JANUARY 2021



Alaska Performance Scholarship

Program Review and Recommendations



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GROUP

PREPARED FOR



Alaska
Commission on
Postsecondary
Education



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Introduction and Methodology

Introduction

The Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) program has helped thousands of families afford postsecondary education, and is reported to have helped motivate students to set higher goals for themselves, and to pursue postsecondary education in Alaska. Evidence indicates APS recipients are better prepared for college.

However, the reach of these benefits has been limited because the scholarship has fallen short of expectations in eligibility and use. The program took off more slowly than anticipated, and after about five years of growth, began a steady decline in both eligibility and use. In 2019, only 644 Alaska high school graduates used the scholarship, just over one-fourth the number expected when lawmakers adopted the program. Rather than reaching \$20.6 million in annual awards, total awards peaked at \$11.3 million in 2017 and declined to \$9.4 million in 2019.

Low use of the APS means missed opportunities for Alaskans and Alaska. This program review seeks to understand what is driving low and declining award eligibility and use, and to identify changes that might help the program better meet its objectives.

The Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) contracted with McDowell Group to prepare a review of the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS). This report has the following components:

- Key findings and recommendations
- Trends in APS eligibility and use
- School district findings
- Postsecondary institution findings
- Literature review
- Surveys of high school graduates

It is important to note that all data and research associated with the 2019-20 academic year, including graduates' plans for the immediate future, is affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. APS waived standardized testing requirements due to test cancellations, creating a much higher qualification rate. In addition, many students' decisions to pursue postsecondary education were impacted by the pandemic.

Methodology

This program review relies on data and insights gleaned from new and existing research and analysis, detailed below. Taken together, these sources provide a rich basis for understanding how various program design features impact student eligibility, student use, and the success of the program in meeting its vision for advancing education in Alaska.

APS Outcomes Report

The study team reviewed and selected key findings from the *2021 APS Outcomes Report*, also conducted by McDowell Group for ACPE. The study team conducted additional analysis of data generated for the report to gain insight into areas with particular relevance to program improvement.

School Districts

The study team reviewed and identified key findings from the *Alaska Performance Scholarship Eligibility Survey*, a 2020 survey of 37 Alaska school districts regarding the APS, conducted by Northern Economics. This information was supplemented with data obtained from the Anchorage and Matanuska-Susitna Borough School Districts.

Postsecondary Institutions

The study team conducted interviews with representatives of the four institutions APS recipients most frequently attend. Collectively, those interviewed represent 98% percent of APS students.

Literature Review

The study team conducted a review of literature on trends in postsecondary aid, merit-based aid, and the role of standardized tests in postsecondary admissions and financial aid decisions. We also reviewed the legislative record surrounding the 2010 passage of the Alaska Performance Scholarship.

High School Graduate Surveys

The study team developed two survey instruments in cooperation with the ACPE team: one for APS-eligible graduates, and the second for APS-ineligible graduates. Both surveys were emailed to Alaska high school graduates from the years 2015 to 2020; both surveys offered an incentive of a prize drawing of a \$100 Amazon gift card.

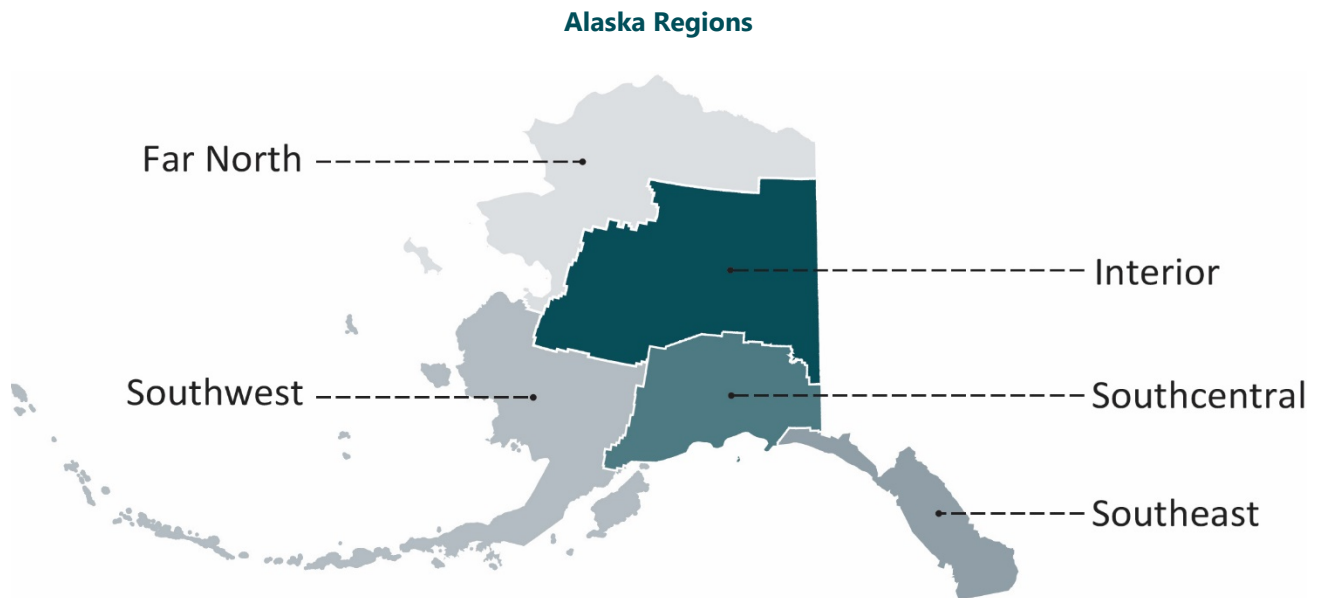
The APS-eligible survey was sent to 14,374 graduates via email, with a password-encrypted link to the survey. Of these graduates, 320 emails bounced back, for a total of 14,054 valid invitations; 3,121 participated, for a response rate of 22%.

The APS-ineligible survey was sent to 32,287 graduates; 613 emails were returned, for a total of 31,674 valid invites. A total of 2,995 ineligible graduates participated in the survey, for a response rate of 9%.

Both sets of survey data were compared to the total databases in terms of gender, region, ethnicity, graduation year, and APS utilization. Both survey populations closely matched the total population in terms of graduation year, ethnicity, region, and APS utilization. Data was weighted by gender, as women were more likely to participate in each survey.

Regions

Several sections in this report present data by region. The following map shows how ACPE defines these regions.



Alaska Performance Scholarship Background

The Alaska Legislature created the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) in 2010 under Alaska Statute 14.43.810. The statutory language provides little guidance on its purpose: “The Alaska performance scholarship program is established to provide scholarships for high school graduates who are Alaska residents to attend a qualified postsecondary institution in the state.” The legislative record attests to policymakers’ hopes for the program. Adapted from a proposal by Gov. Sean Parnell, policymakers expressed hope the program would:

- (1) Incentivize students to set and pursue high standards for their secondary school education
- (2) Drive increased rigor and higher expectations for Alaska’s K-12 education system
- (3) Improve students’ preparedness and success in postsecondary education or training
- (4) Increase the number of high-achieving students remaining in Alaska for postsecondary education, reducing “brain drain.”

In his letter transmitting his proposed “Governor’s Performance Scholarship” legislation to lawmakers, Parnell wrote, “The GPS will improve high school graduation rates, prepare students for college or job training, provide Alaskan students with affordable opportunities for higher education, sustain Alaska’s economy with a capable workforce, and retain equipped, hardworking Alaskan students.” Parnell said the legislation was patterned after successful legislation in 22 other states. Policymakers ultimately changed the name and a few program details, and adopted Parnell’s proposal as part of another piece of legislation, SB 221.

Documents accompanying the legislation anticipated 2,305 high school graduates per year would use the program the year following their graduation, and that \$20.5 million total would be awarded yearly once it was

fully phased in.¹ Legislators established a \$400 million Higher Education Investment Fund from which scholarships could be paid. The fund is not limited to that purpose due to the Alaska Constitution’s prohibition on dedicated funds, and as budget pressures have mounted in recent years the fund has been tapped for other uses.

APS Program Design

The APS program provides financial aid to graduating Alaska high school students who meet eligibility criteria in three areas: grade point average (GPA), high school curriculum requirements, and standardized test scores. For the class of 2020, standardized test requirements were waived due to the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on testing availability. There are three levels of academic awards, with higher-dollar awards going to the highest-achieving students, and a career and technical education (CTE) award. The only difference between the CTE and academic awards is the choice of standardized test.

Student eligibility and award levels are based on the following GPA, standardized testing, and high school curriculum requirements. Standardized testing requirements were waived for the high school class of 2020 due to COVID-related test disruptions. The statute prescribes the specific APS dollar awards. ACPE administers the program.

Table 1. APS Eligibility Requirements

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Award Amount	Up to \$4,755 per Year	Up to \$3,566 per Year	Up to \$2,378 per Year
Required GPA	3.5 or greater	3.0 or greater	2.5 or greater
Required Testing¹			
<i>ACT/SAT used for degree or certificate</i>	ACT 25/SAT 1210	ACT 23/SAT 1130	ACT 21/SAT 1060
<i>WorkKeys used for certificate only</i>	Combination score of 13 or higher with no score below 4 is required in Applied Math, Locating Information, & Reading for Information		
Required High School Curriculum	Math & Science Science 4 Credits Math 4 Credits Social Studies 4 Credits Language Arts 4 Credits	OR	Social Studies & Language Arts Science 3 Credits Math 3 Credits Social Studies 4 Credits Language Arts 4 Credits World Language 2 Credits ²

Notes:

- Standardized testing requirements were waived for high school class of 2020 due to COVID-19-related test cancellations.
- World Language courses include Alaska Native Language and American Sign Language.

Alaska high school graduates who meet initial eligibility requirements and ongoing requirements, including fulltime enrollment (to receive a full award) and minimum GPA requirements, are eligible to receive the scholarship. Awards may be used only at qualified Alaska postsecondary training and education programs; there are currently 24 qualified institutions. CTE awards cannot be used for academic programs, and vice versa.

¹ Anticipated fiscal impact analysis of SB 221: <http://www.akleg.gov/PDF/26/F/SB0221-6-2-041710-EED-Y.PDF>

Students may receive the award for up to eight semesters, and must use the award within six years of graduating. It can be used for graduate school if students complete undergraduate coursework. Students must meet the following continuing eligibility requirements:

- During the first year, students must earn 24 semester credits (12+ for partial award*) and maintain a 2.0+ cumulative GPA.
- During future years, students must earn 30 semester credits (15+ for partial award*) and maintain a 2.5+ cumulative GPA.
- As a graduate student, students must earn 18 semester credits (10+ for partial award*) and maintain a 2.5+ cumulative GPA.

*For students taking less than the full semester credits required, the APS award will be reduced *pro rata*.

Key Findings and Recommendations

This chapter summarizes the main findings and recommendations of this report, synthesizing data and research from eligibility and use trends, school district and postsecondary institution perspectives, surveys of recent high school graduates, and a review of relevant literature. In general, these sources corroborated each other, leading to relatively clear and consistent findings and recommendations.

Key Findings

APS Eligibility

There is a high level of interest in the APS among ineligible students. This indicates unmet demand for the program, particularly among underrepresented groups.

- A survey of APS-ineligible graduates from the classes of 2015-2020 revealed that among those who were aware of the APS in high school, three-quarters were interested in qualifying for it.
- School district representatives also report high levels of interest among ineligible students, including among strong students who they say would benefit from the program.
- APS usage rates (among eligible students) are higher among subgroups with the lowest eligibility rates including Far North, Southwest, first-generation, and Alaska Native students.

Standardized test requirements are the biggest barrier to APS eligibility.

- Of the three eligibility requirements (standardized testing, curriculum requirements, and grade point average), data reveals that students are most likely to fail to meet required scores on standardized tests, notably the SAT or ACT.
- School districts report that students are often unfamiliar or unprepared for tests, and that many otherwise successful students are barred from APS eligibility due to the test requirement.
- In the survey of ineligible high school graduates, the number one barrier among those interested in APS was standardized tests.
- Among all ineligible graduates who were aware of APS, nearly one-third said that “easier access to standardized tests” would have helped them qualify for the scholarship.

A change in state policy regarding standardized tests may be contributing to decreasing APS eligibility.

Eligibility peaked in 2016, the last year the state required and paid for high school students to take a standardized test (ACT, SAT, or WorkKeys).

- The number of students taking the SAT or ACT dropped sharply from about 4,100 in 2016 to 3,000 in 2017 when state policy changed.
- This reduction in the number of test takers is a likely driver of reduced APS eligibility. If a student does not take a standardized test, the student will automatically be ineligible for an APS award.

The complexity of the program serves as a barrier to eligibility.

- The program has two types of awards (academic and vocational), three levels within the academic award, two curriculum tracks, and three required components for eligibility. Students must take one of three tests, two of which qualify students only for the academic award, and one of which qualifies students only for the vocational award.
- A mistake can cost students eligibility or future flexibility. For example, if a student takes the WorkKeys test instead of the SAT or ACT, the student will not be able to use the APS award toward a bachelor's degree.
- Many districts have difficulty offering the curriculum and support students need to meet eligibility.
- Small schools may not have the staff and budget to offer the required variety of courses.

The distinction between the CTE and academic awards may unnecessarily limit some students' aspirations. Students who receive a vocational award and later discover an academic interest cannot apply the award toward a bachelor's degree.

- Postsecondary schools report that many students do not fully understand the implications when they take the WorkKeys test in high school.
- This lack of flexibility between the two awards also limits those with an academic award who want to pursue vocational training.

There are significant disparities in APS eligibility by race and ethnicity and, to a lesser extent, by region.

- In 2019, fewer than 10% of Alaska Native/American Indian and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander high school graduates met APS eligibility standards, well below the average eligibility of 23%.
- These disparities are largely driven by the test requirement. When the requirement was waived due to COVID-19 for the high school class of 2020, eligibility increased by 159% for Alaska Native/American Indian students, compared to an overall eligibility increase of 61%.
- These disparities may be exacerbated by APS curriculum requirements, which are more difficult for students in small schools.
- In a survey of APS-eligible graduates from the classes of 2015-2020, Alaska Natives reported first learning about APS later than their classmates: 27% first learned of it their senior year, compared with 12% of non-Natives, and fewer Alaska Natives first learned their freshman or sophomore year. Non-Natives also reported higher levels of familiarity with APS award levels and where to find APS information.

The predictive value of SAT and ACT scores is coming under increasing question nationally. More than 300 postsecondary institutions have shifted to "test-optional" admissions policies in the past 15 years, and many more are expected to make COVID-related suspension of test requirements permanent.

- A 2020 University of Chicago study found grades were five times better than the ACT at predicting college success.
- Research finds test scores disproportionately serve as barriers for underrepresented minorities, low-income students, and English language learners.
- Equity-minded programs and institutions are increasingly rethinking the role of standardized testing.

APS Use

Reduced appeal of in-state institutions is a contributor to declining interest in the APS. In a survey of APS-eligible graduates from the last five years, reasons for enrolling out-of-state reflect decreasing confidence in the University of Alaska.

- Among APS-eligible graduates who had enrolled out-of-state, those citing “quality of academics” as a reason grew from 53% among 2015 grads to 77% among 2020 grads. Those citing “reputation of school” also grew, from 49% among 2015 grads to 56% among 2020 grads (and 59% among 2018 grads).
- School district representatives cited concerns about the volatility of the University of Alaska system given recent programmatic and budget cuts as a contributing factor to the drop in APS interest.

The late timing of APS award notifications means it is not a factor in most students’ postsecondary decisions. Because APS eligibility determinations require senior year grades and curriculum data, students do not learn until the summer after they graduate whether they qualify.

- Most schools, including UAF, begin sending students financial aid letters in the late fall of their senior year.
- In recent years there has been a trend toward earlier federal aid application and college application timing, making it more difficult for students to incorporate the APS into their decision-making.
- “As far as competitiveness goes, the APS doesn’t benefit Alaska schools because students have already made their decisions when the awards come out,” an Alaska financial aid officer said.

Evidence suggests the APS scholarship is declining in competitiveness compared to other financial aid packages.

- APS-eligible survey respondents citing scholarship as a reason to enroll out-of-state grew from 31% among 2015 grads to 47% among 2020 grads, while those citing a financial aid package grew from 16% to 30%.
- The dollar amount of APS awards has stayed constant while costs of education have risen.

Continuing eligibility requirements are out of step with student needs and industry standards.

- APS continuing eligibility requirements are complex and inconsistent with most other scholarships.
- Many students have significant work or other responsibilities that make full-time enrollment burdensome.

Recommendations

The findings described above point to a variety of possible remedies. The encouraging news is that the various sources of evidence – eligibility data, school district and postsecondary surveys and interviews, survey data, and published literature – corroborate each other in terms of key findings.

We suggest that any potential changes be assessed in the light of some basic principles. The Education Commission of the States' recommends that in redesigning financial aid programs, states should aim to ensure programs are

- **student-centered**
- **goal-driven and data-informed**
- **timely and flexible**
- **broadly inclusive.**

With these principles in mind, we recommend program administrators and policymakers consider changes under three broad categories. Some recommendations will require statutory changes; others can be accomplished administratively.

1. Simplify program eligibility.

- Eliminate the distinction between CTE and academic eligibility.
- Offer multiple pathways and opportunities for students to demonstrate academic rigor as an alternative to the current rigid curriculum requirements.
- Base eligibility determinations on the first three years of high school so students have APS award information when they are making their decisions. This will also bring APS in line with other scholarships (including UA's University Scholars) and will help make Alaska postsecondary schools more competitive.
- Consider using round numbers for award levels to make them easier to remember and calculate.

2. Simplify and increase flexibility of APS awards.

- Eliminate the distinction between CTE and academic tracks to enable students to grow and change their goals.
- Reduce continuing eligibility requirements, particularly the number of credits required per semester, to give students the best chance of success.
- Consider adopting Satisfactory Academic Progress standards or University Scholars standards to simplify continuing eligibility tracking.
- Increase the number of semesters and years students are allowed to use the award to enable Alaska's high proportion of nontraditional students to achieve their goals.

3. Increase access and commit to equity.

- Eliminate standardized testing requirements. This will improve access for underrepresented groups, simplify program eligibility, and eliminate the distinction between academic and CTE award eligibility. This may increase rates of program use, because subgroups most adversely impacted by the testing requirements are typically those with the highest APS usage rates among eligible students.
- If testing requirements are not eliminated, reestablish state policy requiring and paying for all Alaska high school students to take a standardized test.

- Likewise, if testing requirements remain in statute, consider replacing numerical cut scores with qualitative criteria for establishing cut scores, as test creators periodically change the way tests are scored.
- Ensure all students get early and ongoing academic counseling to meet eligibility requirements.
- Include disparity analysis in annual outcomes reports.

Other Considerations

The dollar value of awards will need to be addressed. The statute currently prescribes award levels in absolute dollars, and these levels have not changed since the program's inception. At some point inflation will erode the value of awards significantly enough to reduce the competitiveness of the APS. Policymakers should consider when and how they will increase awards, possibly by introducing flexibility or a trigger mechanism into the statute.

Alaska's fiscal imbalance has an impact. This study found evidence of an upward trend in students wanting to leave Alaska for higher education. Indications suggest the shift is due more to students avoiding or leaving University of Alaska programs than affirmatively wanting to go out of state. Interviews and surveys indicate recent budget and program cuts and ongoing fiscal uncertainty are factors. In addition, a veto in 2018 of APS funding – though it was subsequently reversed – has left residual apprehension about the reliability of the scholarship. Both of these issues are symptoms of Alaska's systemic fiscal imbalance. Until this imbalance is resolved in a sustainable way, students may continue to lean away from Alaska.

Quality and relevant postsecondary education programs are essential. This study found that students consider more than money when making postsecondary choices. Alaska's postsecondary program offerings must meet contemporary needs in terms of quality, access, cost, and relevance.

School districts need adequate funding to provide necessary academic rigor and student supports. Both students and school districts report that district curriculum offerings, academic rigor, counseling, and encouragement are critical for supporting APS eligibility and student achievement more broadly. While money will not solve all the challenges Alaska districts face, inadequate funding makes it more difficult for districts to promote excellence and improve outcomes.

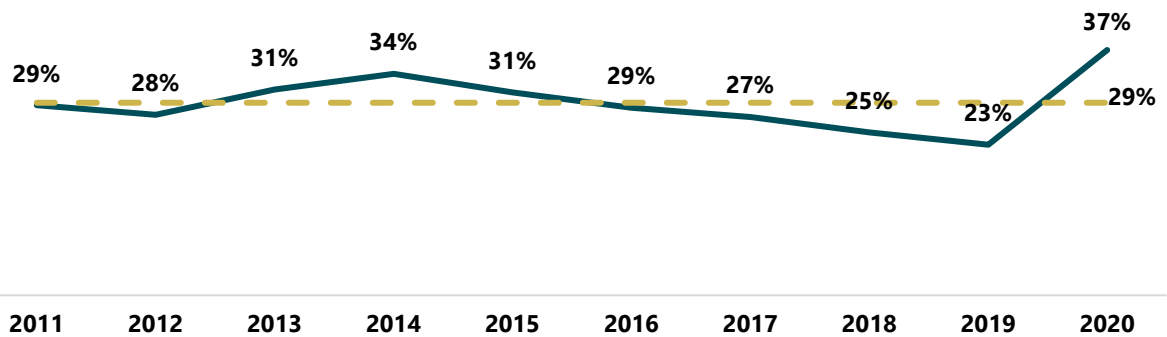
Trends in APS Eligibility and Use

McDowell Group conducted a comprehensive outcomes study looking at APS eligibility and use over time and by various subgroups. Key trends in eligibility and use, including new analysis by subgroups, is presented here. Throughout this analysis, eligibility and population numbers refer to public high school students.

APS Eligibility Trends

Public high school student eligibility rates for the APS fell steadily since 2014, decreasing from 34% (2014) to 23% in 2019. In 2020, eligibility rates reached a new high of 37% as the standardized testing requirements for eligibility were waived for the high school class of 2020 due to test cancellations related to the coronavirus pandemic.

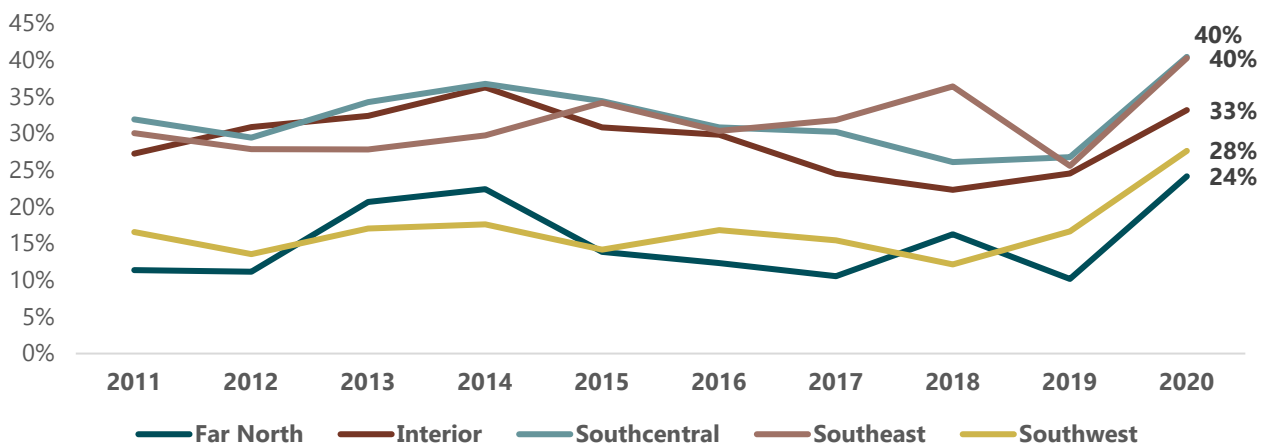
Figure 1. Percent of High School Graduates Eligible for APS by Graduation Year, 2011-2020



Source: Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education – Alaska Student Aid Portal data and McDowell Group calculations.

Eligibility rates generally increased between 2011 and 2014 in each region before beginning to decline in 2015. Southcentral and Southeast Alaska high school graduates generally have the highest eligibility rates, with 40% of 2020 public school graduates eligible. The Far North and Southwest regions have had consistently lower eligibility rates.

Figure 2. High School Graduate Eligibility for APS by Region, 2011-2020



Source: Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education – Alaska Student Aid Portal data and McDowell Group calculations.

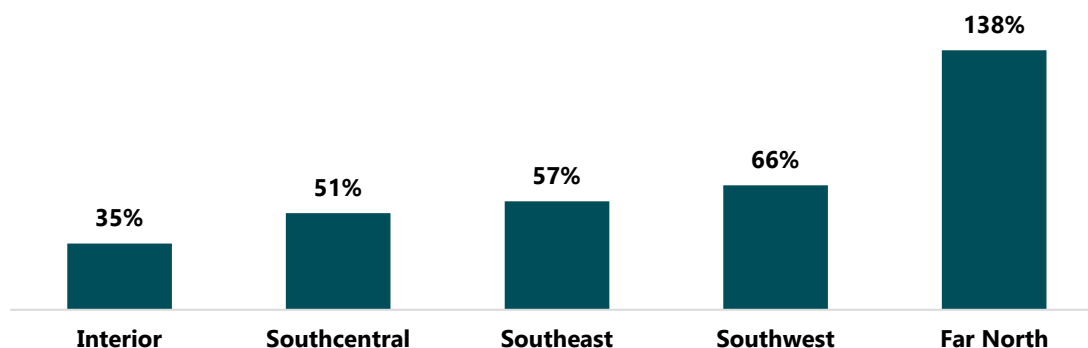
Eligibility rates rose in every region between 2019 and 2020 as standardized testing requirements were waived. For the Far North, student eligibility more than doubled, from 10% of graduates to 24% of graduates, suggesting disproportionate impact of the testing requirement in different regions.

Table 2. High School Graduate APS Eligibility Rate Change by Region, 2019-2020

Region	2019	2020	Change 2019-2020 (Percentage Points)	Change 2019-2020 (Percentage)
Far North	10%	24%	+14	+138%
Southwest	17%	28%	+11	+66%
Southeast	26%	40%	+15	+57%
Southcentral	27%	40%	+14	+51%
Interior	25%	33%	+9	+35%
Total	23%	37%	+14	+63%

Source: Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education – Alaska Student Aid Portal data and McDowell Group calculations.

Figure 3. Percentage Increase in APS Eligibility Rates by Region Between 2019 and 2020, High School Graduates



Source: Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education – Alaska Student Aid Portal data and McDowell Group calculations.

APS Use Trends

Not all students who are eligible for the APS opt to use the scholarship. While the percentage of public high school graduates eligible for the APS has declined in recent years, the percentage of eligible graduates using the scholarship in the fall following graduation has remained fairly consistent over the program’s history. Since the program’s inception, about one-third of eligible students have used the scholarship the fall following their high school graduation.

Use rates fluctuated between 33% and 39% from 2011 through 2019, and dropped to 24% in 2020. This 2020 outlier is likely a function of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in waived testing requirements for APS eligibility. This produced increased eligibility, while numbers of students using the scholarship did not significantly increase. Note that 2020 data is difficult to interpret due to multiple cross-cutting impacts of the pandemic, which are not yet fully understood.

Declining eligibility rates combined with stable rates of use (among those eligible) create a decline in the overall number of graduates using the APS immediately after high school graduation: the number of students using the APS fell from a high of 902 in 2016 to 644 in 2019.

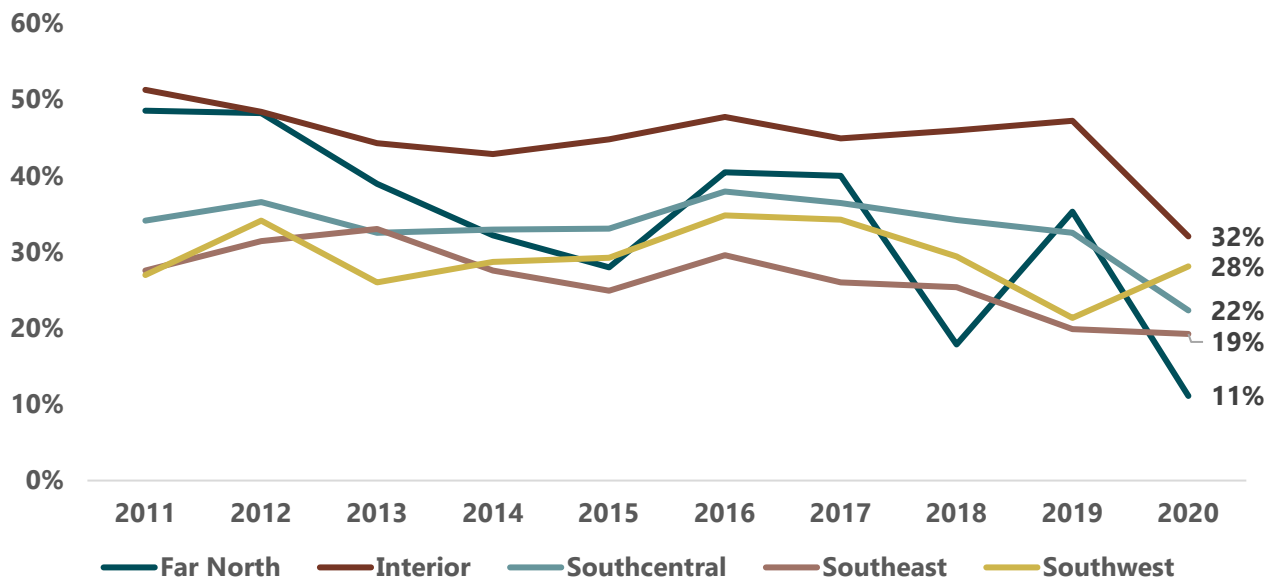
Table 3. APS-Eligible High School Graduates' Use of APS the Fall Following Graduation, 2011-2020

Graduating Class	APS Recipients	APS-Eligible Graduates	Percent Using APS
2011	844	2,338	36%
2012	846	2,211	38%
2013	858	2,482	35%
2014	888	2,602	34%
2015	869	2,565	34%
2016	902	2,328	39%
2017	835	2,289	36%
2018	721	2,106	34%
2019	644	1,942	33%
2020	707	2,989	24%
Average			34%

Source: Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education – Alaska Student Aid Portal data and McDowell Group calculations.

Of eligible students, the percentage using the APS the fall following graduation tended to be highest among Interior (47% using APS in 2019) and Far North (35%) graduates between 2011 and 2019. Eligible Southeast and Southwest region graduates have generally used the scholarship at lower rates, with 20% and 21% using the APS in 2019, respectively.

Figure 4. Percent of APS-Eligible Students Using APS Fall Following Graduation by Region, 2011-2020



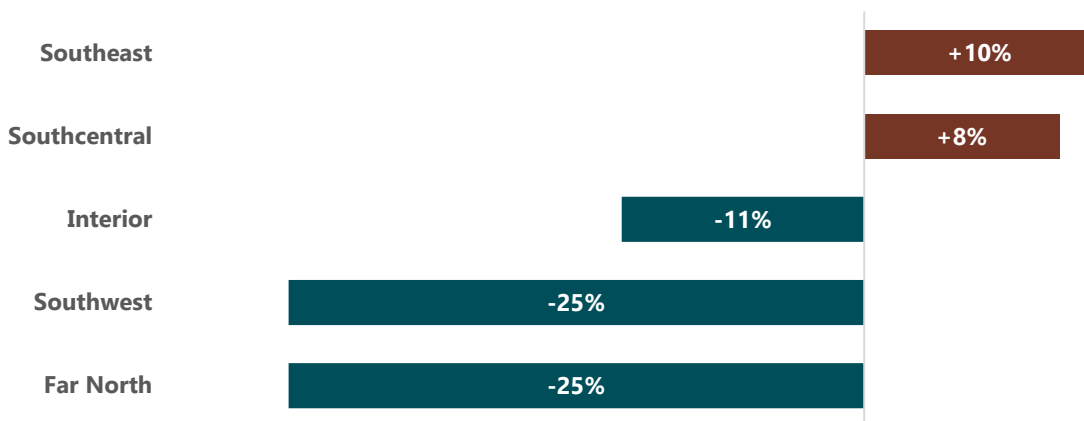
Source: Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education – Alaska Student Aid Portal data and McDowell Group calculations.

Disparity Analysis

Regional Disparities

As the tables above indicate, eligibility and use of APS differ among subgroups of Alaskans. The following figure illustrates the disparity among regions. This is calculated as the difference between the percent of APS-eligible 2020 graduates in a region and the percent of all 2020 graduates in that region. If students across Alaska were eligible for the APS at the same rates, students in the Far North would comprise 4% of all APS-eligible students, because the region has 4% of all graduates. Instead, eligible students in the region are underrepresented by 25 percentage points. Students in Southwest Alaska are equally underrepresented, and students in Interior Alaska are underrepresented by 11 percentage points. Conversely, students in Southeast Alaska are overrepresented among eligible students by 10 percentage points, and those in Southcentral by 8 percentage points.

Figure 5. Class of 2020 Percentage Difference Between APS-Eligible Graduates and Total Graduates by Region



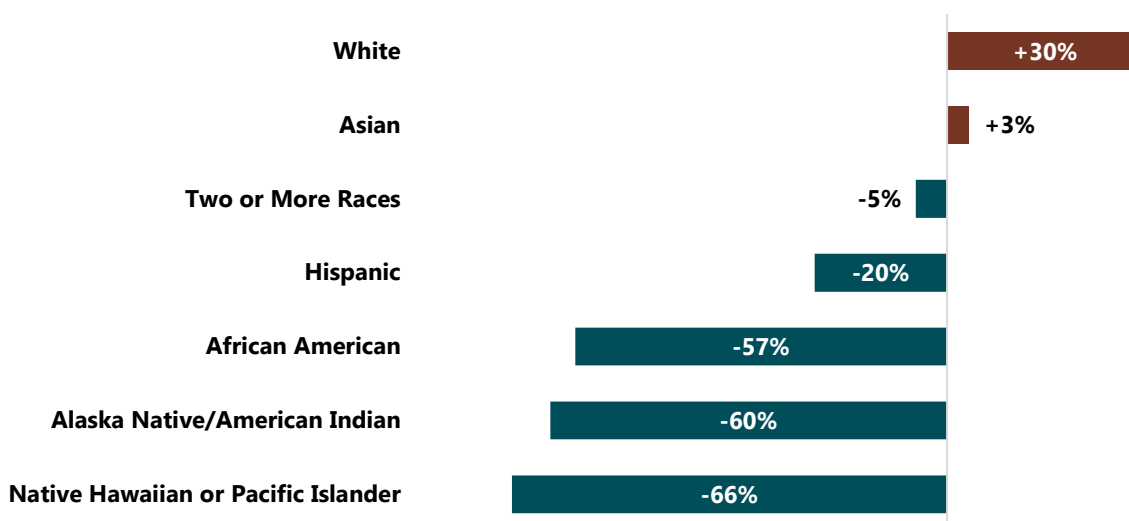
Source: Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education – Alaska Student Aid Portal data; Alaska Department of Education and Early Development; and McDowell Group calculations.

Race and Ethnicity Disparities

The same analysis can be done by student race and ethnicity. This analysis reveals even larger disparities than by region. The figure below is based on the difference between the percentage of APS-eligible students and the percentage of all graduates, by race, between 2015 and 2019.

As the figure below illustrates, Alaska Native/American Indian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Black/African American students are significantly less likely to be eligible for APS than Asian and white students. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students are underrepresented by 66%, while at the other extreme, white students are overrepresented by 30%. Possible reasons for these disparities are discussed elsewhere in this report. The most recent year, 2020, was excluded from this analysis because the testing requirement was waived, making it an atypical year.

Figure 6. APS-Eligible Graduates and Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity, Classes of 2015-2019



Source: Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education – Alaska Student Aid Portal data; Alaska Department of Education and Early Development; and McDowell Group calculations.

The table below provides a more detailed look at APS eligibility rates by race and ethnicity. The racial disparities reflected above are broadly consistent over the past six years. In 2019, fewer than 10% of Alaska Native/American Indian and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander high school graduates met APS eligibility standards, compared with 44% of white graduates.

Table 4. High School Graduate APS Eligibility Rates by Race/Ethnicity, 2015-2020

Race/Ethnicity	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Alaska Native/American Indian	12%	14%	11%	13%	8%	21%
Asian	38%	26%	31%	28%	26%	48%
Black/African American	16%	14%	13%	10%	10%	27%
Hispanic	25%	26%	28%	17%	20%	37%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	17%	11%	8%	9%	5%	22%
Two or More Races	34%	27%	30%	25%	23%	39%
White	42%	41%	37%	35%	33%	48%
Total	31%	29%	27%	25%	23%	37%

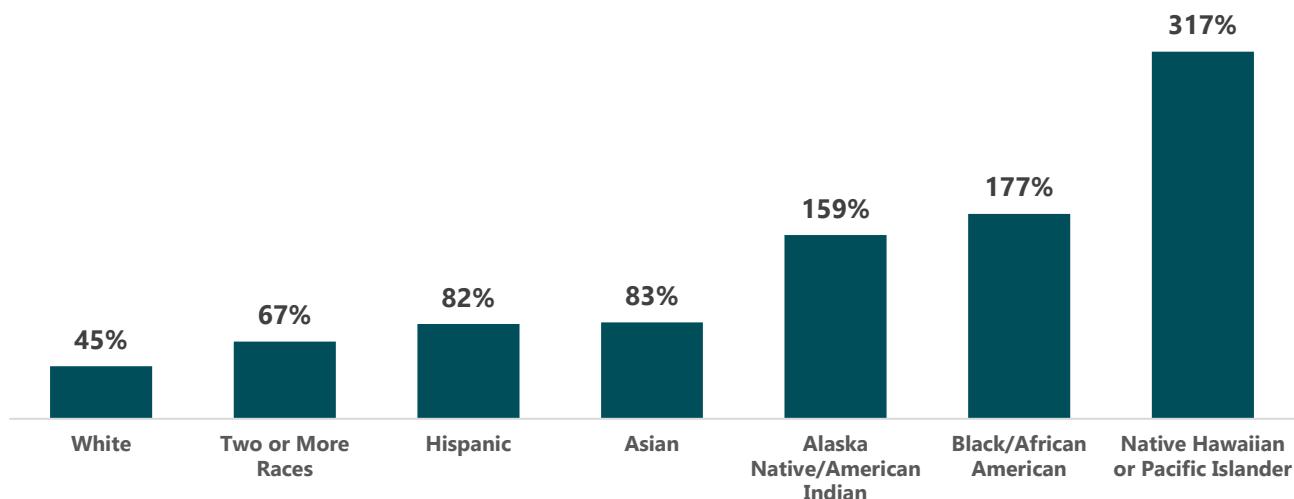
Source: Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education – Alaska Student Aid Portal data; Alaska Department of Education and Early Development; and McDowell Group calculations. Excludes “unknown” race.

Interestingly, 2020 data offers some inadvertent insight into the disparities. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the class of 2020’s standardized test-taking opportunities, leading ACPE (and many other institutions) to waive testing requirements for the class of 2020. Thus 2020 provided a natural, if not fully controlled, experiment on the impact of removing the testing requirement for APS eligibility. As might be expected, student eligibility increased significantly, from 23% of students to 37%. This increase represents a 61% increase in overall eligibility rate.

While all racial and ethnic groups benefited from the suspension of the testing requirement, these benefits were not equally distributed. As the figure below illustrates, subgroups with the lowest rates of APS eligibility saw the greatest increase in eligibility when the test requirement was removed. Eligibility among Native Hawaiian or

Pacific Islander students more than quadrupled, while Black students' eligibility almost tripled, and Alaska Native/American Indian students' eligibility more than doubled. At the other end, white students' eligibility grew by 45% with the suspension of test requirements. These findings corroborate concerns that the testing requirement disproportionately disadvantages these subgroups.

Figure 7. Increase in APS Eligibility Rates by Race/Ethnicity Between 2019 and 2020, Public High School Graduates



Source: Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education – Alaska Student Aid Portal data; Alaska Department of Education and Early Development; and McDowell Group calculations.

First-Generation College Student Representation

Sixteen percent of APS-eligible students who graduated high school in 2019 were first-generation college students. This number has fallen from 21% during the first four years of the program. (Note that about 10% of APS-eligible students' "first-generation" status is unknown.)

First-generation students tend to use the scholarship at slightly higher rates than others. Among the high school class of 2019, for example, 16% of eligible students were first generation, but 20% of students using the APS were first generation. This suggests the scholarship has greater appeal and/or value to first-generation students.

Table 5. First Generation Student Representation Among APS-Eligible Graduates, 2011-2020

Grad Year	% First Generation
2011	21%
2012	21%
2013	21%
2014	21%
2015	19%
2016	19%
2017	17%
2018	17%
2019	16%

Source: ACPE.
Note: 2020 data was insufficient for analysis.

School District Findings

In spring of 2020, Alaska school districts were surveyed in support of ACPE’s research into declining eligibility. Of 54 districts in the state, 37 (69%) responded, including some that provided partial responses. Respondents were generally high school principals and counselors. This section summarizes key findings from the eligibility survey along with follow-up data and interviews obtained by McDowell Group.

Barriers to Eligibility

For the class of 2019, districts were asked to provide the numbers of graduating seniors who did not meet APS eligibility. Districts were further asked to provide the number of students who did not meet eligibility *for each eligibility criteria*: grade point average, curriculum requirements, and standardized test scores. Overall, the data showed that scores were the most significant barrier to APS qualification, with about 63% of the cohort failing to meet this requirement. Curriculum requirements were a close second with 60% failing to qualify, followed by GPA requirements, which served as a barrier for 40% of the graduating class.

Figure 6. Percent of Graduating Seniors Who Did Not Meet Each APS Eligibility Requirement, 2019



Source: Northern Economics, Inc. *Alaska Performance Scholarship Eligibility Survey*. Prepared for Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, July 2020.

Note: Table reflects responses from 27 school districts representing less than half of Alaska students.

The data above does not include Anchorage or Matanuska-Susitna Borough School Districts, which together enroll 50% of Alaska’s K-12 students. McDowell Group obtained eligibility data for those districts, and found similar but more pronounced patterns. In Anchorage, the district reported that 76% of the class of 2019 was ineligible for APS: 70% of the class did not meet standardized test score requirements; 53% did not meet curriculum requirements; and 27% did not meet GPA requirements. Mat-Su, where 76% of the class of 2019 was ineligible for APS, reported a similar pattern to Anchorage.

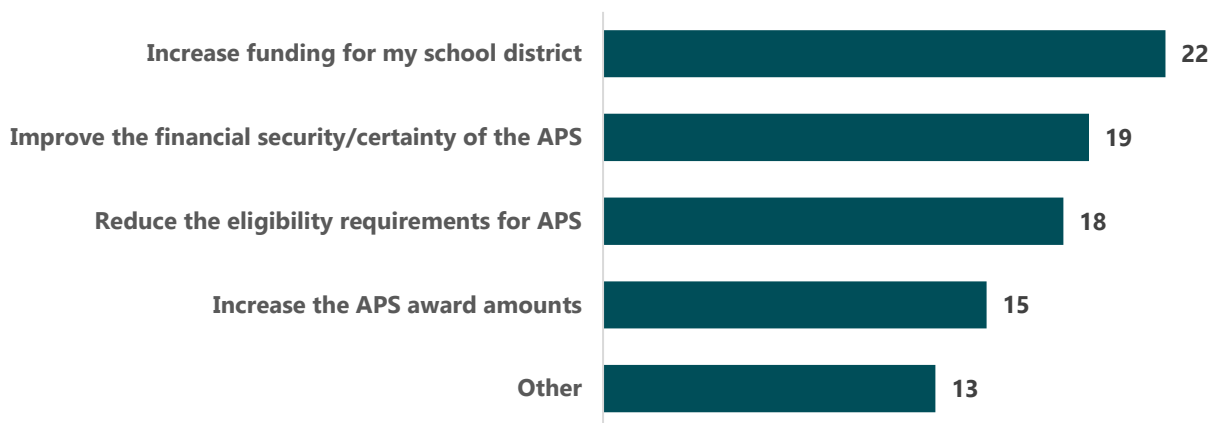
Suggestions to Increase Eligibility

School districts were asked what actions might increase students’ APS eligibility, and were offered the choices shown in the chart below. The most frequently chosen response was increased funding. Districts explained that funding would help districts offer required coursework, provide counseling to help students track eligibility

requirements, subsidize standardized test fees for students, and provide extra support for English Language Learners and other underrepresented groups.

The second-most frequent suggestion, improving the financial security and certainty of APS, is likely a reflection of a 2018 governor’s veto of APS funding. The action, which was unexpected and unprecedented in the relatively short history of the scholarship, was not directed at APS but rather part of a larger budget impasse. The veto was ultimately reversed, but it caused APS-eligible students significant stress and left lingering apprehension, according to school district and other sources.

Figure 7. School Districts’ Preferred Actions to Increase APS Eligibility



Source: Northern Economics, *Alaska Performance Scholarship Eligibility Survey*.

Testing

Survey respondents provided additional suggestions in comments. The most common theme concerned test scores. Suggestions included:

- Have alternative options for students who meet GPA and curriculum requirements but struggle with the standardized testing due to ELL status or lack of access to testing and practice opportunities.
- Remove the SAT/ACT requirement, and replace it with testing in University of Alaska general courses without needing remediation.
- Reduce the test score requirements.
- Provide flexibility with standardized test scores.
- Lower SAT cut scores.
- Review qualification rates for the three eligibility elements (GPA, coursework, and test scores) and reduce requirements for the element with low qualification rates to “balance” the issue.
- Eliminate the [standardized testing] cutoff score.
- Allow students who have been accepted into apprenticeship programs and/or trade schools to be eligible for some assistance even if they did not meet WorkKeys or ACT cutoff scores, as long as they are enrolled in and attend and complete the program.

Coursework

Respondents suggested increasing flexibility with regard to coursework requirements:

- Consider different requirements for students off the road system who lack exposure to test preparation options and varied coursework.
- Reduce curriculum requirements for students seeking CTE certification.

Other Findings and Observations

Positive Comments

The survey included multiple opportunities for open-ended responses to survey questions. Some respondents noted positive impacts of the APS. One respondent shared: "We have an 'advanced diploma' option for students that is directly linked to the APS requirements. This has provided motivation for some students."

Another respondent wrote, "Thank you for this amazing scholarship for our students."

Inequitable Impacts

School district respondents said English Language Learners (ELL students), low-income students, and rural students are particularly disadvantaged by standardized test requirements.

A typical comment was, "We have many students who are college-bound and who do very well, but the minimum test scores for some can prevent ELL students in particular from qualifying."

Others said due to their small size, their schools cannot offer the kinds of courses that help prepare students for the SAT and ACT. One respondent from a rural community said students have to travel to take the ACT or SAT.

Curriculum requirements, the second-biggest barrier, is a more significant hurdle for students in many rural schools, survey respondents said. This is because small schools often do not have enough staff to offer four years of science, four years of social studies, and two years of a foreign language.

Several respondents noted that disadvantaged students lack faith in themselves or vision for a different future. "[Our students] are extremely low income and feel they do not have the same options as those coming from wealth," said one. Another said the greatest challenge students face in attaining APS eligibility is "a belief in their ability to achieve personal learning goals."

Interest in Out-of-State Education

Numerous respondents observed that many students want to go out of state. Some said University of Alaska budget cuts and uncertainty are driving increased interest in out-of-state options. Comments include:

"With the cuts in funding this year to UA, I had a couple of students decide to go out of state."

"Concerns among staff and students regarding the volatility of the University of Alaska system given recent budget and programmatic cuts."

A related problem was noted by one:

"Some students do not plan to stay in Alaska until they reach their senior year and fully comprehend the cost associated with postsecondary schooling. At that point, it is too late to make up the curriculum requirements."

Other District Comments

On testing:

"Some very good students experience test anxiety, so they do more poorly on the test than their academic records reflect."

"Many of our students who would benefit from this funding and be willing to stay in Alaska receive [ACT] test scores of 17-20."

"The biggest challenge is reaching a qualifying score for the SAT or ACT."

"Students do not meet the ACT scores. This is the first standardized timed test that most of the students take. There is very little test prep in the district."

"The SAT cut scores are too high, they act as a deterrent."

"I have had many students who have the classes and the GPA for level 1 [award] but their test scores lower them to level 3 or they get disqualified completely."

On curriculum requirements:

"Lowering the curriculum requirements would be helpful, particularly for rural schools where students do not have the same academic variety available to them that students do in larger districts."

"We require 3.5 social studies credits to graduate and offer enough courses to allow for this. For students to acquire the additional .5 credit to meet APS requirements means our students have to plan ahead and then take a course online."

"APS requirements are just different enough from [our] graduation requirements and state requirements that many students miss it by just a semester of one or the other." [This appears to refer to the two different academic tracks, which have different curriculum requirements.]

On counseling:

"Increased funding for counselors would be very helpful in assisting students with researching postsecondary education options, as well as helping them stay on track with their schooling throughout high school."

"Our district does not have a counselor for advising to prepare for post high school options."

"As funding decreases, so do these opportunities. A good example of this would be that five years ago we had three counselors and they made regular in-person visits to all our schools, but now we only have one counselor for the entire district."

Postsecondary Institution Findings

Postsecondary institutions are an important piece of the APS program. They track and report continuing eligibility to ACPE, counsel students on maintaining eligibility, and help students integrate the scholarship into their education financing plan. This chapter summarizes findings from interviews and communications with representatives at the top four Alaska postsecondary institutions by number of APS recipients. These institutions enroll 98% of APS recipients.

Twenty-four Alaska postsecondary institutions qualify to enroll APS recipients. The vast majority of APS recipients (97%) enroll at one of the University of Alaska campuses, with 59% of APS students enrolled at Anchorage, 34% at Fairbanks, and 5% at the Southeast campus. All other institutions enroll 1% of APS recipients or fewer.

Table 8. Alaska Performance Scholarship Recipients by Institution, 2011-2020

	# of Recipients	% of Total Recipients
University of Alaska	25,745	97%
UA - Anchorage	15,577	59%
UA - Fairbanks	8,887	34%
UA - Southeast	1,281	5%
Alaska Pacific University	176	1%
AVTEC	157	1%
Charter College	132	1%
Alaska Career College	118	<1%
Alaska Bible College	49	<1%
Alaska Christian College	30	<1%
Trend Setters	19	<1%
All others*	43	<1%
Total	26,469	100%

Source: ACPE.

*Includes 10 institutions, each of which represented 10 or fewer APS recipients.

Interviewees noted program benefits and shared insights about why the scholarship may not be reaching its full potential.

Benefits

Provides meaningful financial support

Not surprisingly, financial aid advisors viewed the APS as a helpful source of aid for students. "I think it's valuable for students," said one. "As we evaluate our institutional funding, we're recognizing more and more that families need some sort of assurance of continued assistance, and APS offers that." Another said it is reasonably easy to use. Asked if there is benefit to having both needs-based and merit-based aid available to students, most said they see benefit to having both opportunities.

"It is significant funding," one financial aid director said. "It really helps bridge a gap. It's a significant source of funding and it's definitely helpful to students."

APS students are more successful than their peers in postsecondary education

University of Alaska data indicates APS recipients are succeeding at higher rates than their peers, indicating success in one key objective of the program – to ensure students are well prepared for postsecondary education. Findings include:

- Of first-time APS recipients enrolling at an institution in the UA system this fall, 95% were prepared to take college-level courses compared to 78% of other first-time students.
- Of APS recipients entering UA in fall 2018, 81% persisted into their second year, compared to 57% of other students.
- Of first-time, full-time APS recipients beginning their enrollment in fall 2014, 61% completed an undergraduate degree, certificate, or occupational endorsement within six years compared to 29% of non-recipients.

Consistent with the data, most financial aid staff said APS recipients are well prepared for postsecondary education. "I think it creates a bar of excellence for Alaska students," said one.

Issues and Barriers

Interviewees were asked to identify factors that might be contributing to the decline in APS eligibility and use. They cited the following potential contributing factors:

- Complexity and burden of eligibility and program design
- Timing of award decisions and notifications
- Declining real value of awards
- Continuing eligibility requirements
- Lack of flexibility between CTE and academic awards
- Unequal access
- External factors

Complexity and burden of eligibility and program design

One longtime administrator observed that students must decide in their first year of high school to commit to a curriculum that is required to be eligible for the APS: "It is that level of focus that is required for APS to be successful. A student cannot hope to be eligible for this award unless they start taking the right courses at the beginning of their high school career to assure they take the required curriculum."

In addition to coursework, students need to take a standardized test. These tests generally require advance planning, preparation, fees, and sometimes travel. It is not part of most schools' curriculum or schedules. A state law that required and paid for students to take a standardized test (SAT, ACT, or WorkKeys) expired in 2016. In 2016, according to one interviewee, the number of SAT and ACT tests taken by Alaska students was 4,100. The

following year, after the state stopped paying for the tests, that figured dropped to about 3,000. It is noteworthy that 2016 was also the peak year for APS eligibility.

“Small burdens in trying to gain eligibility for APS (lack of required curriculum, no free testing, etc.) build to a point at which students find it difficult to overcome progress and likely give up trying.”

The complexity of the program adds to the burden of planning, and can lead to mistakes that later cost students in terms of flexibility or money. The APS has two types of awards (vocational and academic), and within the academic award there are three award levels, two curriculum tracks, and three eligibility criteria. There are three tests that can be taken, two of which qualify students only for an academic award, and one of which qualifies students only for a vocational award.

Given this complexity, postsecondary interviewees note, it can be easy for a student to make a mistake that will limit their future options. This issue is discussed further below.

Timing of award decisions and notification

A significant drawback to the APS from the perspective of postsecondary institutions is the late award notification to graduating seniors. Because the APS requirements include four-year GPA and four-year curriculum requirements, students are not notified of their award until after they graduate, often not until August.

One financial aid director explained: “Because APS requires their senior-year data, [secondary] schools don’t even send the state information on whether a student is eligible until a student is graduated and gone. They’ve already made their decision. There’s nothing that makes the APS look like a value to a student on a financial aid offer letter – it doesn’t show up anywhere.”

APS award notifications are increasingly out of step with national trends. The federal government in 2016 moved the deadline for the Free Application For Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) back to October 1 from January 1 for the following school year. “Schools across the nation have significantly moved up their recruitment timeframe,” an Alaska financial aid director noted. Consequently, schools are sending financial aid letters to prospective students as early as October and November of their senior year in high school. Alaska institutions cannot include the APS in their financial aid letters:

“Students are going to get an award letter that lists everything they’re eligible for – but not the APS, because we don’t know.”

Another put it bluntly: “As far as competitiveness goes, the APS doesn’t benefit Alaska schools because students have already made their decisions when the awards come out.”

Declining real value of awards

Several interviewees noted that costs of attendance, particularly at the University of Alaska, which enrolls about 95% of APS recipients, are increasing. At the same time, APS awards are fixed at the amounts established in law in 2010. This means APS awards are slowly declining in real value.

"I think possibly the value of that award doesn't have as big an impact for some families," said one financial aid director.

Another aid director suggested it would be helpful to provide awards in round numbers like \$5,000, \$3,500, and \$2,500 so they are easier for people to remember and to use for estimating. "I'd love to see that change."

Continuing eligibility requirements

While most scholarships have requirements students must meet to maintain eligibility, financial aid directors say APS' continuing eligibility requirements are non-standard, complex, and in some cases out of sync with student academic needs and patterns. This can make the awards more difficult for students to maintain and use. Because APS requirements differ from Satisfactory Academic Progress, the standard for other sources of financial aid, postsecondary institutions have to do extra tracking. "That can slow down processing of APS awards because we have to check for all students."

The non-standard requirements can also create confusion. "The confusion that students and parents and academic advisors have on the continuing eligibility piece is very difficult," one aid director said. For example, some interpret the 30-credits-per-year requirement as requiring 15 credits per semester, but students are allowed to count summer classes. To meet eligibility requirements (or what they believe eligibility requires), some students take classes they are not prepared for or overload their schedules to ensure they get their full scholarship. While students are allotted a prorated award if they take fewer credits (provided they meet minimum credit requirements), this decreases the total value of their APS award because students are allowed only eight semesters of the award.

Lack of flexibility can have unintended consequences, aid directors said. One offered an example of a "fantastic" student who withdrew from a class due to a personal issue, and consequently lost APS eligibility for a semester. He then had to work while attending school, and his grades fell. "He went from a great student to a good student because of this one piece."

Another aid director said more students are entering degree-seeking postsecondary programs with some or all of their general education requirements already completed. This means they need program-specific coursework, and it may not make sense to take the 12 or 15 credits per semester if they can't fill their schedule with the right courses. This is especially true as students advance. "Juniors and seniors, depending on course rotations, can't always get all the courses they need each semester."

Notably, the University of Alaska is evaluating continuing eligibility requirements for its University Scholars program, in part due to the same concerns about flexibility and ease of use for students.

Lack of flexibility between CTE and academic award

Another barrier cited by multiple financial aid directors is the inability to transfer their APS award if a career and technical education (CTE) recipient decides to shift to an academic track, and to a lesser extent, the other way.

Students who receive the CTE or vocational award have to meet the same high school coursework and GPA requirements as students who receive the more common "academic" awards. The only difference is that CTE

award recipients take the WorkKeys test rather than the SAT or ACT. Financial aid directors say this decision is often made without full consideration of the impacts, and can limit student aspirations and achievements.

"You've got students in low-income groups who don't think they can aspire to a college education, so they don't take the SAT or ACT. Once they graduate, they may decide they want to pursue a bachelor's degree but they're not going to ... because they did the WorkKeys."

Another said, "I've seen students who are great students who don't realize they only qualify for the vocational award because they only took the WorkKeys, or maybe they took the SAT too late, so they end up stuck in a certificate program."

The University of Alaska Fairbanks, the only postsecondary institution in Alaska that requires the SAT or ACT for admission, has waived that requirement through 2023 due to the pandemic, and plans to suspend it permanently. "We didn't even have to try to sell [that change] to the faculty," the financial aid director said. This change is in line with national trends in postsecondary admissions, as explained elsewhere in this report.

A financial aid director said: "We have students who are bad test takers or never had an opportunity, but they want to work on a four-year degree program, and it's really frustrating for us and the student to have to tell them, 'You're not eligible for APS if you want to be a history major, you have to work on a [vocational] certificate if you want to use APS.' That's not their educational goal, and we're limiting funding for that."

It can go the other way as well. There is increasing interest in non-degree certificate programs, says one financial aid director. "I think a lot of families are less inclined to invest in a four-year education and are looking more for those short-term certificate and vocational training opportunities, and the APS can't be used for those as it stands now." Only about 5% of APS recipients receive the vocational award, and many short-term certificates are not considered eligible even under the APS vocational award.

Note: Removing the testing requirement from APS eligibility criteria would have the de facto effect of removing the distinction between the CTE and academic award.

Unequal access

Some financial aid directors expressed concerns about unequal access to the coursework, counseling, test preparation, and other supports needed to help students qualify for the APS. "I see it as a scholarship geared more for our urban students," one said. "There are villages out there that just can't get another science teacher. It's not the students' fault at all."

Students without strong family support are at a disadvantage, another suggested. "Anecdotally, students need the parent support to track the requirements and to make sure they're checking off all the things that are necessary to get it. If they don't have the parent support, then they might not receive it when they would otherwise be eligible."

Equity findings and related data are discussed elsewhere in this report.

External factors

Some contributing factors to declining APS use are not attributable to APS program design. Chief among these are budget uncertainty surrounding the University of Alaska, and the governor's veto in 2018 of APS funding.

Budget cuts and uncertainty. "The confidence in going to an Alaska school has been eroded," one financial aid director said, citing the state budget crisis, UA's declaration of fiscal exigency, and program cuts. "We have a lot to do to build that confidence back." Another said they had been in an area high school and heard a teacher advise a class, "You probably don't want to go to University of Alaska, you probably want to go outside the state because UA isn't going to exist." Given Alaska's fiscal uncertainty, this is an ongoing challenge.

2018 veto of APS funding. "It shook people's faith," one financial aid director said of the budget veto. The veto was part of a larger budget impasse, and full funding for the scholarship was ultimately reinstated, but damage was done to public confidence. "It was frightening for parents and students when it was defunded temporarily. ... We get a lot of phone calls even now." The aid director said if any information is not immediately available now, "There's some mistrust and there's a little bit of panic involved."

This brief literature review summarizes national research findings and industry trends that may help inform improvements to the APS.

Grades More Predictive Than Thought

A growing body of research suggests that grades may be better predictors of college success than standardized test scores.

A January 2020 study found that grades were five times better at predicting student success than ACT scores. The authors, from the University of Chicago, noted that high school grade point averages (HSGPAs or GPAs) are often thought to offer inconsistent measures of college readiness compared to test scores, which are “standardized.” The study tested this assumption using data from Chicago Public Schools, and found high school grades significantly more predictive than ACT scores: “[T]he relationship of HSGPAs with college graduation is strong and consistent and larger than school effects. In contrast, the relationship of ACT scores with college graduation is weak and smaller than high school effects, and the slope of the relationship varies by high school.”²

Other major studies have produced similar findings. A 2019 University of California study of California’s “Smarter Balanced Assessment” (SBAC, which includes test scores) in college admissions compared the SBAC with GPA and standardized test scores using measures of college success. Researchers found GPA was more predictive than the SBAC or test scores of first-year college success.

A study by the National College Access Network of student success at colleges and universities with “test-optional” admissions policies found that students who opted not to submit standardized test scores (“Non-Submitters”) were admitted at lower rates than those who submitted test scores (“Submitters”), but enrolled at higher rates and graduated at similar rates. Non-Submitters’ high school GPAs were slightly lower than Submitters, and their first-year college grades were lower. “However, they ultimately graduated at rates equivalent to, or marginally higher than, Submitters, the ultimate proof of success.” The authors concluded, “We do continue to question whether the value-add of testing is large enough to justify the price—time spent, financial cost, and emotional drain—being paid by students.”³

Inequitable Impacts

It has long been observed that underrepresented minorities have lower average scores on SAT and ACT standardized tests than white students. For example, in 2019, Alaska Native/American Indian students nationwide scored 202 points lower on the SAT than their white peers (912 compared to 1114, out of a total possible score of 1600). African American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students averaged 933 and 964,

² <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.3102/0013189X20902110>

³ <https://www.nacacnet.org/news--publications/Research/Defining-Access/>

respectively.⁴ These disparities serve as barriers to opportunity for higher education and financial awards. Yet the disparities, researchers suggest, reflect inequities such as unequal access to and awareness of test preparation opportunities, cultural expectations, bias in the test itself, and confidence and experience with respect to testing. A Brookings Institution analysis notes a strong correlation between family income and test scores.⁵

Conversely, research finds that removing testing requirements improves diversity at colleges and universities without reducing student quality or success. The National College Access Network study cited above of test-optional schools found that schools saw an increase in underrepresented student populations when they removed testing requirements for admissions.⁶ Overall application rates increased, and underrepresented minorities, first-generation-to-college students, and Pell grant recipients were more strongly represented among those who opted not to submit test scores. For example, 35% of Black students did not submit scores. This is 12 percentage points above the overall non-submitting rate, and 17 percentage points above the rate of white “Non-Submitters.”

Test-optional schools also enrolled students in underrepresented groups at higher rates, providing further evidence that SATs and ACTs serve as a barrier to equity, and that removal of such barriers can increase equity. As noted above, this study found those who did not submit test scores graduated at the same or slightly higher rates than those who submitted test scores.

The University of California study likewise found important considerations for equity. The study concluded that using high school GPA instead of standardized test scores for UC admissions results in greater representation among underrepresented minority students at the top of the applicant pool. Using high school GPA also results in a more socioeconomically and racially diverse applicant pool, the researchers found.⁷

Researchers caution that it is difficult to tease apart the impacts of test-optional policies. Many schools that adopt test-optional admissions policies may be making other changes with an eye to increasing equity. The test-optional policy itself can send a signal, as Akil Bello, director of equity and access for the Princeton Review, told *Inside Higher Ed*: “When a college announces a test-optional policy, it also conveys to students that the college is aware of and sensitive to issues that impact low-income and underrepresented students, and this awareness can signal to applicants an aware and inviting institutional culture.”⁸

There is some support in the literature for continuing use of the SAT and ACT. The College Board, which produces and sells the SAT, published a study in 2016 of its redesigned test. The College Board findings indicate that the redesigned SAT improves the ability to predict college performance above high school GPA alone.

⁴ <https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2019/09/24/minority-and-first-generation-sat-scores-fall-behind>

⁵ <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/12/01/sat-math-scores-mirror-and-maintain-racial-inequity/>

⁶ <https://www.nacacnet.org/news--publications/Research/Defining-Access/>

⁷ <https://edpolicyinca.org/publications/predicting-college-success-how-do-different-high-school-assessments-measure-2019>

⁸ <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/04/27/large-study-finds-colleges-go-test-optional-become-more-diverse-and-maintain>

Declining Role of the SAT and ACT

Given the relatively weak predictive value of tests and the disparities they perpetuate, many institutions are moving away from requiring or relying on SAT and ACT scores in admissions and financial aid decisions. According to FairTest, a nonprofit organization, more than 300 U.S. colleges and universities have switched to “test-optional” policies since 2005. In 2018, the University of Chicago, ranked third in the *U.S. News and World Report* among U.S. colleges and universities, became the first top-ten ranked school to drop the requirement that all undergraduate applicants submit SAT or ACT scores. Most recently, the University of California system became the biggest university system to drop testing requirements. A UC regent called the tests “a proxy for privilege.”

The COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted standardized testing in 2020, has led to a spike in the number of test-optional or “test-blind” schools to more than two-thirds of four-year colleges and universities in the U.S. It is unclear how many institutions will make the change permanent, but the pandemic’s impacts and an intensifying spotlight on equity are likely to accelerate the test-optional trend. The University of Alaska Fairbanks, which is among institutions that dropped standardized test requirements for admission due to the pandemic, expects to make the change permanent.⁹ No other Alaska postsecondary schools require standardized tests for admission.

The trend appears to be extending to an examination of SAT and ACT scores in the use of merit aid decisions. A recent Wall Street Journal Article provocatively titled, “Is it fair to award merit scholarships based on the SAT?” says, “Colleges are asking this question as they seek more diversity in their student bodies, worry that white students disproportionately score higher and compete for students with merit aid.”¹⁰

State Financial Aid Policies

According to the nonprofit organization Education Commission of the States, 46 of the 100 largest state financial aid programs are disbursed on the basis of financial need only. Eighteen use merit-based criteria. Fourteen are awarded based on a combination of need and merit. Twenty-two use other eligibility criteria, such as military status or intended profession. Of programs with merit requirements, 36 policies specify a minimum GPA, 15 a minimum SAT score, and 20 a minimum ACT score.¹¹

An ECS report on redesigning state financial aid programs provides four principles for state policymakers to consider: Financial aid programs should be

- student-centered
- goal-driven and data-informed
- timely and flexible
- broadly inclusive.¹²

⁹ Ashley Munro, Associate Director of Financial Aid, UAF, personal communication (December 10, 2020).

¹⁰ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/is-it-fair-to-award-scholarships-based-on-the-sat-11580639400>

¹¹ <https://www.ecs.org/50-state-comparison-need-and-merit-based-financial-aid/>

¹² <https://www.ecs.org/redesigning-state-financial-aid-principles-to-guide-state-aid-policy-making/>

The ECS report contends that state investments in financial aid programs are misaligned with the contemporary realities of postsecondary education: "While students enrolled today tend to be older and more diverse and make progress toward graduation through a variety of paths, state aid programs have continued to focus on traditionally aged students attending residential colleges or universities on an exclusively full-time basis for a nine-month academic year. While a broad array of students are in need of financial support to attend college, stagnation in state financial aid policy development compromises states' ability to reach articulated postsecondary attainment agendas."

Key Survey Findings

This section presents the most relevant findings from two surveys of high school graduates from the classes of 2015-2020. One survey targeted APS-eligible graduates, and the second targeted APS-ineligible graduates. Full survey results are presented in the subsequent chapters.

Over the last several years, the reasons for going out-of-state have shifted, reflecting a decline in confidence in Alaska institutions as well as better financial options elsewhere.

- Among APS-eligible graduates who had enrolled out-of-state, those citing “quality of academics” as a reason grew from 53% among 2015 grads to 77% among 2020 grads. Those citing “reputation of school” also grew, from 49% among 2015 grads to 56% among 2020 grads (and 59% among 2018 grads).
- Respondents citing scholarship as a reason to enroll out-of-state grew from 31% among 2015 grads to 47% among 2020 grads, while those citing a financial aid package grew from 16% to 30%.

Table 9. Top 10 Reasons for Enrolling Out-of-State (%)
Base: APS-Eligible; Attended postsecondary program outside of Alaska

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Quality of academics	53	58	59	68	63	77
Degree programs offered	63	58	62	66	64	59
Wanted to leave Alaska	55	59	60	53	55	63
Reputation of school	49	48	55	59	53	56
Scholarship	31	34	37	34	38	47
Wanted traditional college experience	37	44	39	38	40	43
Size of school	30	34	33	38	37	38
Better weather	27	31	36	31	29	38
Financial aid package	16	19	23	22	21	30
Athletics/extracurricular activities	22	25	23	24	26	25

APS-ineligible graduates who were familiar with APS report having had a high level of interest in the program; they also suggest a wide range of factors that could have influenced their eligibility. Their number one barrier was standardized tests.

- One-quarter of ineligible graduates who were aware of APS said they were very interested in qualifying (24%), while 46% said they were somewhat interested, and 18% said they weren't interested.
- Among ineligible graduates who were somewhat or very interested in qualifying for APS, the number one barrier was test scores (31%), followed by GPA (26%), didn't know enough about the program (26%), and not able to take necessary courses (17%).
- APS-ineligible graduates who were somewhat or very familiar with the APS were asked whether a variety of factors could have helped them qualify for the APS. Three-quarters of respondents had suggestions; just 14% said "nothing would have made a difference," while 10% didn't know. The top three responses were earlier information (45%), more information (44%), and more encouragement from school staff (44%).

Table 10. Interest in Qualifying for APS During High School (%)

Base: APS-Ineligible; aware of APS

	Base
Very interested	24
Somewhat interested	46
Not interested	18
Don't remember	12

Table 11. Top five barriers to qualifying for the APS (%)

Base: APS-Ineligible; Interested in qualifying for APS

	Base
Test scores	31
GPA	26
I didn't know enough about the program	26
Was not able to take necessary courses	17
Was not able to take necessary tests	8

Table 12. Looking back, would any of the following have helped you qualify for the APS (or want to qualify for it)? (%)

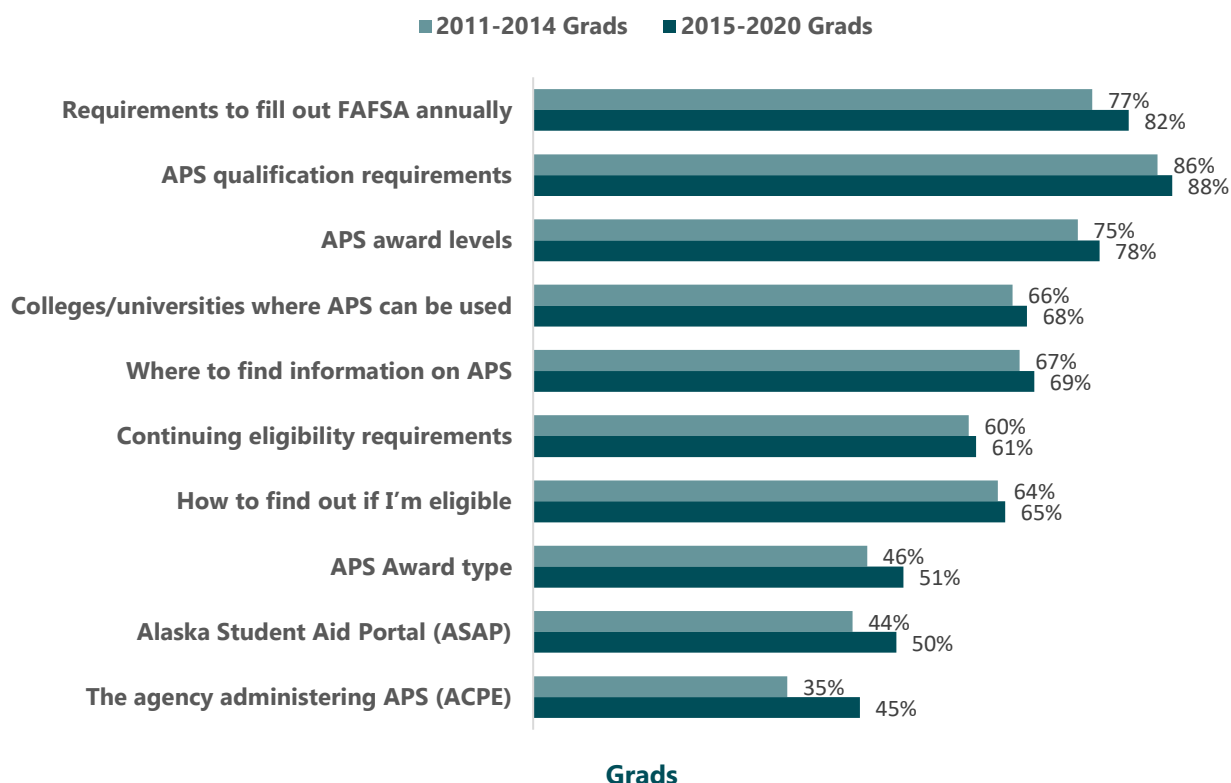
Base: Somewhat or very familiar with APS when high school student

	Base
Earlier information about the program	45
More information about the program	44
More encouragement from teachers, principals, and other school staff	44
Easier access to standardized tests like the PSAT, SAT, and ACT	29
More encouragement from family or community	28
Hearing from APS scholarship recipients	24
Availability of more challenging classes at my school	16
Other	6
None of the above; nothing would have made a difference	14
Don't know	10

Despite the decline in APS participation rates, APS awareness and familiarity among APS-eligible graduates has grown somewhat over the last decade, and students are learning about APS earlier.

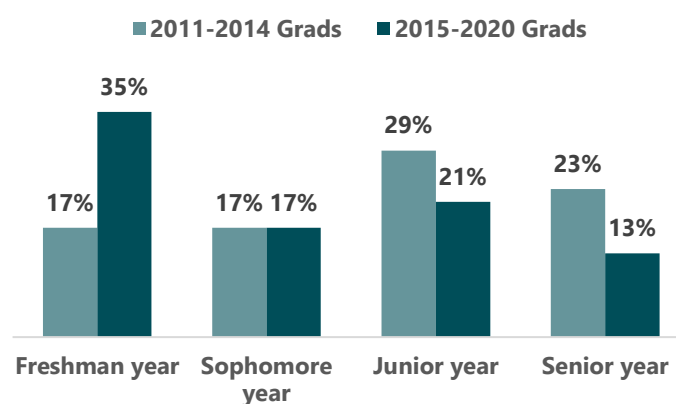
- When asked to rate their familiarity with a variety of aspects about the APS, APS-eligible graduates gave higher familiarity ratings for every category between the 2015 and the 2020 surveys. Aspects showing the most growth in familiarity were ACPE (from 35% to 45%), ASAP (44% to 50%), award type (46% to 51%), and FAFSA requirement (from 77% to 82%).

Figure 13. “Somewhat” plus “Very” Familiar with Aspects of APS: 2011-2014 Grads versus 2015-2020



- More recent graduates reported learning about APS earlier: 35% of respondents to the 2020 survey learned about APS their freshman year, up from 17% in the 2015 survey. Rates of learning in their junior or senior year declined accordingly.

Figure 14. Year First Learned of APS: 2011-2014 Grads vs. 2015-2020 Grads



APS plays a bigger role in the behaviors of Alaska Native APS-eligible graduates when compared with non-Native graduates. Yet, they learn about APS later than their classmates.

- When asked whether APS had made them more likely to participate in various high school behaviors, Alaska Natives cited a higher degree of influence. For example, 44% of Alaska Native APS-eligible graduates said APS made them much more likely to take placement exams, compared with 36% of non-Natives.
- Alaska Natives were more likely than non-Natives to have first learned about APS their senior year: 27% versus 12%.

Table 15. Much More Likely to Engage in High School Behaviors due to APS (%)
Base: APS-Eligible

	Alaska Natives	Non-Natives
Take placement exams	44	36
Achieve better grades	41	31
Prepare for placement exams	34	24
Take challenging courses	29	20
Seek out college counseling	29	23

APS-Eligible High School Graduate Survey

This section presents results to a survey of high school graduates from the classes of 2015 through 2020 who were eligible for APS, conducted in October 2020. Where relevant, comparisons are provided to a similar survey conducted in 2015 of graduates of the classes of 2011 through 2014.

Activities and Enrollment Status

Post-Graduation Activities

- APS-eligible respondents were most likely to have pursued undergraduate study (88%) and/or worked (83%) in the years since graduating high school. Other common activities included travel (35%), internship (23%), and volunteer service/religious mission (17%).
- Likelihood of having participated in any of the activities increased over time, with 2015 graduates reporting the highest participation rates, and 2020 graduates reporting the lowest.
- APS recipients were more likely to have participated in undergraduate study (92% versus 84% of non-recipients). They were also more likely to report employment (87% versus 79%).
- Non-Natives were more likely to report undergraduate study than Alaska Natives (89% versus 76%).

Table 16. Which of the following have you participated in since graduating from high school? (%)
All respondents

	Total n=3,121	2015 n=631	2016 n=579	2017 n=530	2018 n=498	2019 n=461	2020 n=422
Undergraduate study	88	90	89	93	89	88	76
Working/employment	83	94	90	80	81	80	65
Travel	35	52	44	39	29	24	13
Internship	23	37	32	28	15	7	6
Volunteer service/religious mission	17	19	18	18	20	15	7
Study abroad	8	12	13	13	6	1	1
Graduate study	8	20	12	4	3	1	3
Vocational/technical school	6	8	6	4	5	5	3
Starting/raising a family	5	8	8	4	3	2	1
Military/armed services	4	5	4	4	5	3	2
Apprenticeship	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Other	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
Don't know	<1	-	<1	-	<1	<1	1

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- Comparing the results of this survey to a similar survey conducted of 2011-2014 APS-eligible graduates does not yield meaningful results due to the difference in age between the two cohorts. The 2020 survey included six years of graduates, while the previous survey included four years of graduates, resulting in small increases in participation for most activities.

Enrollment Status

- Bachelor's degrees were the most commonly pursued postsecondary program among APS-eligible graduates, with 56% currently enrolled, 23% completed, and 8% enrolled/did not complete.
- One-quarter of graduates (24%) pursued an Associate degree, including 10% who completed and 10% who are currently enrolled. Nine percent of graduates pursued a vocational certificate.
- Likelihood of completing naturally increased as respondents got older.
- Non-Natives were much more likely to have completed a Bachelor's degree: 23% versus 9% of Native Alaskans. Native Alaskans were more likely to have enrolled/not completed both a Bachelor's degree (15% versus 8% of non-Natives) and an Associate degree (15% versus 4% of non-Natives).

Table 17. Please indicate your current enrollment status for each of the following programs. (%)
All respondents

	Total n=3,121	2015 n=631	2016 n=579	2017 n=530	2018 n=498	2019 n=461	2020 n=422
Bachelor's degree							
Completed	23	65	46	5	1	-	-
Currently enrolled	56	15	32	76	80	77	70
Previously enrolled but did not complete	8	12	11	10	7	5	2
Never enrolled	14	8	11	9	12	18	28
Associate degree							
Completed	10	15	16	12	9	3	1
Currently enrolled	10	4	6	7	11	17	22
Previously enrolled but did not complete	4	5	5	4	6	4	2
Never enrolled	75	75	73	76	75	76	75
Vocational certificate							
Completed	5	9	5	3	5	4	1
Currently enrolled	3	2	2	2	3	4	5
Previously enrolled but did not complete	1	1	2	1	1	<1	1
Never enrolled	91	88	90	93	90	92	92

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- Comparing rates to the previous survey is difficult as the two extra years of graduates make enrollment and completion rates much higher in the most recent survey. For example, only 1% of 2011-2014 graduates had completed their Bachelor's degree, compared with 23% of 2015-2020 graduates. The "never enrolled" rates are more comparable: those who never enrolled in a Bachelor's program were 14% for both surveys; those who never enrolled in an Associate program went from 79% to 75%; and those who never enrolled in a vocational certificate went from 94% to 91%.

Reasons for Not Pursuing Further Education

- Respondents who never enrolled in a postsecondary program cited a wide variety of reasons, most commonly “not sure what I want to study yet” (43%), couldn’t afford it/not enough financial aid (41%), planned to enroll later (38%), and needed a break from school (38%). COVID was cited by 21% of respondents.
- The small sample size precludes analysis by subgroup.

Table 18. What are the main reasons you didn’t pursue further education after high school? (%)
Base: Never enrolled in postsecondary program

	Base n=145
Not sure what I want to study yet	43
Couldn’t afford it/not enough financial aid	41
Planned to enroll later	38
Needed a break from school	38
Already had/have job	23
COVID-related reasons	21
Not interested/I don’t like school	17
Other personal/family issues	14
Degree not necessary	9
Joined military	7
No programs available in my community	7
Raising a family	7
Pursued apprenticeship instead	6
Not prepared academically	5
Religious service	5
Medical issues	4
Other	7
Don’t know	3

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- There were several differences between the two sets of survey results, some attributable to the older graduates in the latest sample. For example, “planned to enroll later” naturally decreased as age increased.

Table 19. Top Ten Reasons for Not Pursuing Postsecondary Education, 2011-2014 vs. 2015-2020

	2011-2014 Graduates	2015-2020 Graduates	Difference
Not sure what I want to study yet	38	43	+5
Couldn’t afford it/not enough financial aid	32	41	+9
Planned to enroll later	53	38	-15
Needed a break from school	39	38	-1
Already had/have job	21	23	+2
Not interested/I don’t like school	13	17	+4
Other personal/family issues	15	14	-1
Degree not necessary	6	9	+3
Joined military	15	7	-8

Reasons for Not Completing Degree/Certificate

- Graduates who had enrolled in a program but hadn't completed yet cited a wide variety of reasons, most commonly couldn't afford it (37%), needed a break from school (36%), and changed to a different program (27%). COVID was cited by 13%.

Table 20. What are the main reasons you didn't complete the degree or certificate program? (%)

Base: Enrolled but did not complete

	Base n=356	2015 n=91	2016 n=86	2017 n=66	2018 n=59	2019 n=35	2020 n=19
Couldn't afford it	37	36	41	42	37	*	*
Needed a break from school	36	33	48	32	31	*	*
Changed to a different degree or certificate program	27	26	27	27	29	*	*
Was not interested in subject matter	21	21	22	30	16	*	*
Not interested/I don't like school	20	23	21	26	19	*	*
Other personal/family issues	20	24	21	20	13	*	*
Job demands	13	15	14	10	10	*	*
Lost scholarship/financial aid	13	14	18	13	9	*	*
COVID-related reasons	13	4	6	5	19	*	*
Moved from community	12	15	14	6	9	*	*
Not prepared academically	10	15	8	9	13	*	*
Medical issues	9	16	4	9	9	*	*
Lost APS eligibility	6	12	7	2	1	*	*
Raising a family	6	8	7	7	1	*	*
Recruited for job in my career field	5	5	8	5	3	*	*
Religious service	1	1	3	2	-	*	*
Lost loan qualification	1	-	2	-	2	*	*
Other	9	9	7	13	7	*	*
Don't know	1	-	2	-	1	*	*

*Sample size too small for analysis.

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- Most responses were consistent between the two surveys, as seen in the below table.

Table 21. Top Ten Reasons for Not Completing Program, 2011-2014 vs. 2015-2020

	2011-2014 Graduates	2015-2020 Graduates	Difference
Couldn't afford it	38	37	-1
Needed a break from school	33	36	+3
Changed to a different degree or certificate program	32	27	-5
Was not interested in subject matter	18	21	+3
Not interested/I don't like school	19	20	+1
Other personal/family issues	21	20	-1
Job demands	12	13	+1
Lost scholarship/financial aid	14	13	-1
COVID-related reasons	n/a	13	n/a
Moved from community	10	12	+2

Awareness of APS

APS Awareness and Usage

- One-half of graduates (49%) reported receiving the APS, while one-third (34%) said they qualified but didn't use it, and 12% said they didn't know if they were eligible. (The 5% of respondents who said they'd never heard of the APS were discontinued from the survey as all subsequent questions required a familiarity with APS.)
- Those reporting receiving the APS were highest among 2016 grads at 55% and lowest among 2020 grads at 41%. Those who qualified but didn't use it ranged between 31% (2016) and 37% (2019). The rate of never hearing of APS was 5% to 6% for every year other than 2020 at 8%.
- Among graduates who did not use the APS (according to student records), 62% said they didn't use it, 20% said they had heard of the APS but didn't know if they were eligible, and 10% said they had never heard of the APS.

Table 22. The Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) is a scholarship program offered to Alaska high school graduates with qualifying GPA and test scores. Which of the following best describes you? (%)

All respondents

	Total n=3,109	2015 n=630	2016 n=578	2017 n=528	2018 n=498	2019 n=459	2020 n=416
I received the APS	49	50	55	48	48	47	41
I qualified for the APS but did not use it	34	32	31	37	35	37	35
I've heard of the APS but didn't know if I was eligible	12	13	9	10	12	11	16
I've never heard of the APS*	5	5	6	5	5	5	8

*These respondents were screened out of subsequent questions.

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- Responses to this question fell within three percentage points between the two surveys.

Familiarity with APS

- When asked to rate their familiarity with 10 different aspects of APS, graduates reported the highest familiarity with requirements to fill out FAFSA annually (58% very familiar), APS qualification requirements (46%), and APS award levels (44%). They were least familiar with ACPE (14%), ASAP (18%), and APS award type (20%).
- Responses by grad year were very similar year-to-year.
- Familiarity was much higher among APS users, unsurprisingly. For example, 62% of APS users were very familiar with APS qualification requirements, compared with 31% of non-users. Similarly, 64% of APS users were very familiar with APS award levels, compared with 25% of non-users.
- Familiarity was consistently higher among Interior respondents. For example, 58% of Interior respondents were very familiar with the APS qualification requirements, compared with between 40% and 45% in other regions. Similarly, 57% of Interior respondents were very familiar with APS award levels, compared with between 35% and 44% in other regions.
- Non-Natives showed higher familiarity than Alaska Natives in two categories: APS award levels (44% of non-Natives very familiar versus 33% of Alaska Natives); and where to find information on APS (28% versus 21%).

Table 23. How familiar are you with the following aspects of the APS? (%)

Base: All respondents aware of APS

	Base n=2,916	2015 n=590	2016 n=542	2017 n=499	2018 n=470	2019 n=434	2020 n=381
Requirements to fill out FAFSA annually							
Very familiar	58	61	55	59	60	58	53
Somewhat familiar	24	20	24	25	22	26	27
Not familiar/don't know	18	18	22	16	18	15	19
APS qualification requirements (GPA, ACT/SAT score, high school curriculum)							
Very familiar	46	43	47	43	46	49	49
Somewhat familiar	42	42	39	44	45	40	39
Not familiar/don't know	13	15	14	13	10	10	13
APS award levels (Level 1, Level 2, Level 3)							
Very familiar	44	42	45	41	45	49	43
Somewhat familiar	34	32	32	40	35	32	33
Not familiar/don't know	22	25	23	19	20	18	24
Colleges/universities where APS can be used							
Very familiar	31	29	31	34	29	32	34
Somewhat familiar	37	40	39	37	37	38	32
Not familiar/don't know	31	31	30	30	34	30	34
Where to find information on APS							
Very familiar	29	28	28	27	31	30	28
Somewhat familiar	40	38	38	40	42	43	41
Not familiar/don't know	31	34	35	32	28	27	30

Continuing eligibility requirements							
Very familiar	27	24	26	29	30	27	25
Somewhat familiar	34	32	34	30	34	39	37
Not familiar/don't know	39	43	40	41	36	34	38
How to find out if I'm eligible							
Very familiar	26	23	24	24	31	30	28
Somewhat familiar	39	37	38	40	38	42	41
Not familiar/don't know	34	39	37	36	32	28	31
APS Award type (collegiate versus career/technical)							
Very familiar	20	20	18	22	20	22	19
Somewhat familiar	31	28	30	32	31	32	33
Not familiar/don't know	49	52	52	47	49	45	48
Alaska Student Aid Portal (ASAP)							
Very familiar	18	17	17	16	19	18	19
Somewhat familiar	32	28	31	29	36	36	33
Not familiar/don't know	50	55	52	54	45	45	48
The agency administering APS (ACPE)							
Very familiar	14	15	15	15	13	14	12
Somewhat familiar	31	29	30	29	34	31	33
Not familiar/don't know	55	57	55	56	53	55	55

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- “Very familiar” responses between the 2015 and 2020 surveys were within two percentage points with one exception: those very familiar with the FAFSA requirement increased from 51% to 58%.
- A few more increases emerge when combining “very familiar” plus “somewhat familiar” responses: familiarity increased for APS award type (from 46% to 51%), ASAP (from 44% to 50%), and ACPE (from 35% to 45%).

Table 24. Familiarity with APS Aspects, 2011-2014 vs. 2015-2020 (%)

	VERY FAMILIAR			SOMEWHAT + VERY FAMILIAR		
	2011-14	2015-20	Difference	2011-14	2015-20	Difference
Requirements to fill out FAFSA annually	51	58	+7	77	82	+5
APS qualification requirements	47	46	-1	86	88	+2
APS award levels	45	44	-1	75	78	+3
Colleges/universities where APS can be used	32	31	-1	66	68	+2
Where to find information on APS	31	29	-2	67	69	+2
Continuing eligibility requirements	28	27	-1	60	61	+1
How to find out if I'm eligible	28	26	-2	64	65	+1
APS Award type	21	20	-1	46	51	+5
Alaska Student Aid Portal (ASAP)	17	18	+1	44	50	+6
The agency administering APS (ACPE)	12	14	+2	35	45	+10

Plans to Use APS Before Expiration

- Most respondents who said they qualified for APS but didn't use it did not plan to use it in the future (58%), while 8% did plan to do so, and 34% didn't know.
- The rate of those planning to use it in the future declined with age, from 17% of 2020 grads to 3% of 2015 grads.
- Alaska Natives were more likely to plan to use APS: 22%, versus 7% of non-Natives.

Table 25. Do you plan to use the APS before your eligibility expires (six years from high school graduation)? (%)

Base: Qualified for APS but did not use it

	Base n=1,066	2015 n=197	2016 n=180	2017 n=192	2018 n=178	2019 n=169	2020 n=150
Yes	8	3	5	5	10	10	17
No	58	75	68	61	56	43	35
Don't know	34	22	27	34	33	47	48

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- Those planning to use the APS fell from 15% in 2011-2014 to 8% in 2015-2020; those not planning to use it increased from 42% to 58%; and those responding "don't know" fell from 43% to 34%. The larger cohort of older graduates in 2020 likely accounts for some of these shifts.

Table 26. Plans to Use APS Before Eligibility Expires, 2011-2014 vs. 2015-2020

	2011-2014 Graduates	2015-2020 Graduates	Difference
Yes	15	8	-7
No	42	58	+16
Don't know	43	34	-9

Reasons for Not Using APS

- Nine out of ten graduates who didn't use the APS (91%) said it was because they had enrolled or planned to enroll out of state. Only a fraction of respondents cited other reasons, including I don't need financial aid (6%), not planning to pursue degree/certificate (4%), and didn't complete FAFSA (3%).
- There were few differences in responses among subgroups.

Table 27. Why aren't you using the APS? (%)

Base: Did not/doesn't plan to use APS

	Base n=606	2015 n=148	2016 n=122	2017 n=114	2018 n=99	2019 n=73	2020 n=50
Enrolled/will enroll out-of-state	91	89	94	89	90	93	93
I don't need financial aid	6	5	8	5	7	7	4
Not planning on pursuing degree or certificate	4	6	3	5	5	6	-
Didn't complete FAFSA	3	2	3	5	5	4	-
I qualified at certificate level, but decided to pursue a bachelor's/associate	2	2	1	3	1	1	-
Didn't realize I qualified	<1	-	1	-	-	-	-
Other	3	2	1	5	-	5	8

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- Responses to this question fell within two percentage points between the two surveys.

Learning About APS

First Awareness of APS

- The most common year for learning about APS was freshman year (35%) followed by junior year (21%), then sophomore year (17%) and senior year (13%).
- Responses fluctuated somewhat by graduation year: 2015 graduates were the least likely to say freshman year (31%), while 2017 graduates were the most likely (41%) followed by 2020 graduates (38%).
- Interior respondents were more likely to have learned about APS their freshman year: 51%, versus 35% of all respondents.
- Alaska Natives were more likely than non-Natives to have learned about APS their senior year: 27% versus 12%.

Table 28. When did you first learn of the Alaska Performance Scholarship? (%)

Base: All respondents aware of APS

	Base n=2,893	2015 n=585	2016 n=537	2017 n=496	2018 n=466	2019 n=430	2020 n=379
Freshman year	35	31	33	41	36	36	38
Sophomore year	17	15	19	16	19	21	12
Junior year	21	22	20	21	21	21	18
Senior year	13	14	13	12	11	13	17
When I enrolled in degree or certificate program	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Don't remember	12	17	14	9	11	9	14

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- More recent graduates reported learning about APS earlier than those in the 2015 survey, with those responding with freshman year up by 18% in 2020.

Table 29. Year First Learned of APS, 2011-2014 vs. 2015-2020 (%)

	2011-2014 Graduates	2015-2020 Graduates	Difference
Freshman year	17	35	+18
Sophomore year	17	17	-
Junior year	29	21	-8
Senior year	23	13	-10
When I enrolled in degree or certificate program	3	1	-2
Don't remember	12	12	-

First Awareness of APS Eligibility

- Just over half of graduates (24%) learned they might be eligible for APS their senior year, while one-quarter (24%) learned their senior year. The remainder either didn't remember (13%), didn't know they were eligible (6%), or learned when they enrolled in their program (3%).
- There were no statistically significant differences by grad year.
- Interior respondents were more likely to learn their junior year: 63%, versus 55% of all respondents.
- Non-Natives were more likely to learn their junior year (56% versus 41% of Alaska Natives). Alaska Natives were more likely to learn their senior year (35% versus 22% of non-Natives).

Table 30. When did you first learn that you might be eligible for the APS? (%)

Base: All respondents aware of APS

	Base n=2,893	2015 n=585	2016 n=537	2017 n=496	2018 n=466	2019 n=430	2020 n=379
Junior year	55	51	56	57	56	58	51
Senior year	24	23	25	26	20	23	24
When I enrolled in degree or certificate program	3	3	2	2	5	2	3
Don't remember	13	17	14	12	12	10	12
Didn't know I was eligible	6	6	3	4	7	7	11

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- More recent graduates reported learning about APS eligibility earlier than those in the survey of 2011-2014 graduates.

Table 31. Year First Learned of Eligibility, 2011-2014 vs. 2015-2020 (%)

	2011-2014 Graduates	2015-2020 Graduates	Difference
Junior year	44	55	+11
Senior year	32	24	-8
When I enrolled in degree or certificate program	3	3	-
Don't remember	10	13	+3
Didn't know I was eligible	10	6	-4

APS Information Sources

- The most common information source for APS was high school counselors (72%) followed by teachers (59%), parents (38%), friends (24%), and APS website (20%).
- There were few statistically significant differences by grad year.
- APS users reported higher use of most information sources, including teachers (65% versus 55% of non-users), parents (44% versus 32%), friends (27% versus 20%), and APS website (29% versus 11%).
- Non-Natives were more likely to cite parents/family: 39%, versus 25% of Alaska Natives.

Table 32. Where did you get information on the APS? (%)

Base: All respondents aware of APS

	Base n=2,893	2015 n=585	2016 n=537	2017 n=496	2018 n=466	2019 n=430	2020 n=379
High school counselors	72	71	68	75	73	75	72
Teachers	59	58	60	62	58	62	56
Parents/family	38	36	39	38	37	41	36
Friends	24	18	21	25	26	32	23
APS website	20	22	20	21	19	19	16
College fair	12	11	12	11	11	15	11
College/technical school	10	10	12	11	9	9	8
Flyers	10	8	11	10	12	11	6
Mailings	9	7	8	10	10	10	11
Other websites	2	1	2	1	3	2	2
Media (TV, radio, newspaper)	2	2	1	3	1	2	<1
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	2	1	1	2	1	2	2
Other	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Did not get information	1	1	<1	1	2	1	2
Don't remember	3	4	5	4	1	1	1

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- Responses were very similar between the 2015 and 2020 surveys; the largest differences were for teachers (up by 6%) and mailings (down by 10%).

Table 33. Top 10 APS Information Sources, 2011-2014 vs. 2015-2020 (%)

	2011-2014 Graduates	2015-2020 Graduates	Difference
High school counselors	71	72	+1
Teachers	53	59	+6
Parents/family	35	38	+3
Friends	21	24	+3
APS website	19	20	+1
College fair	12	12	-
College/technical school	10	10	-
Flyers	12	10	-2
Mailings	19	9	-10
Other websites	2	2	-

Awareness of Continuing Eligibility Requirements

- When APS recipients were asked whether they were aware of how to regain eligibility for APS, one-quarter said they were aware, while three-quarters said they weren't aware (56%) or they weren't sure (20%).
- There were no notable differences among subgroups.

Table 34. The APS has continuing eligibility requirements related to college GPA and credit hours completed. Do you know how students who have lost eligibility due to low GPA or insufficient credit hours can become eligible again for the APS? (%)

Base: APS recipients

	Base n=1,452	2015 n=299	2016 n=306	2017 n=253	2018 n=229	2019 n=207	2020 n=159
Yes	24	24	25	22	25	25	23
No	56	51	58	57	56	59	57
Not sure	20	24	18	21	20	15	20

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- More recent graduates were more aware of how to regain eligibility: 24%, compared with 17% in 2015.

Table 35. Awareness of Continuing Eligibility Requirements, 2011-2014 vs. 2015-2020 (%)

	2011-2014 Graduates	2015-2020 Graduates	Difference
Yes	17	24	+7
No	66	56	-10
Not sure	18	20	+2

Impact of APS on Behavior and Decisions

Impact of APS on High School Preparation

- When asked whether the availability of APS impacted their behavior in high school, the behaviors most impacted were taking placement exams (37% were much more likely to do so because of the availability of APS) and achieving better grades (33%). Between 21% and 25% of graduates said they were much more likely to engage in the other behaviors: preparing for placement exams, seeking out advising, taking challenging courses, and considering career options.
- APS users noted a higher degree of influence for most categories.
 - Achieve better grades: 48% of APS users were much more likely, versus 18% of non-users
 - Take challenging courses: 28% versus 14%
 - Take placement exams: 55% versus 20%
 - Prepare for placement exams: 38% versus 14%
 - Seek out college counseling: 34% versus 14%.
- Alaska Natives noted a higher degree of influence for most categories.
 - Achieve better grades: 41% of Alaska Natives were much more likely, versus 31% of non-Natives
 - Take challenging courses: 29% versus 20%
 - Take placement exams: 44% versus 36%
 - Prepare for placement exams: 34% versus 24%
 - Seek out college counseling: 29% versus 23%.

Table 36. Did the availability of APS make you more likely to do any of the following in high school? (%)

Base: All respondents aware of APS

	Base n=2,865	2015 n=577	2016 n=533	2017 n=491	2018 n=463	2019 n=428	2020 n=373
Take placement exams (SAT, ACT)							
Much more likely	37	36	38	39	35	41	34
Somewhat more likely	20	18	18	18	20	20	25
APS had no effect	41	44	40	40	43	38	38
Don't know	2	3	3	3	2	1	3
Achieve better grades							
Much more likely	33	29	37	34	29	36	31
Somewhat more likely	28	29	25	29	29	30	29
APS had no effect	36	38	35	34	39	33	37
Don't know	3	3	4	3	2	1	3
Prepare for placement exams							
Much more likely	25	24	26	26	26	25	26
Somewhat more likely	25	25	24	22	24	30	27
APS had no effect	47	48	47	48	48	44	44
Don't know	3	3	4	3	2	1	3

Seek out college counselor/academic advising							
Much more likely	24	24	22	24	21	31	20
Somewhat more likely	27	25	30	26	28	25	30
APS had no effect	46	49	45	47	48	43	46
Don't know	3	3	3	3	2	2	5
Take challenging courses							
Much more likely	21	21	22	21	19	23	21
Somewhat more likely	26	26	22	26	23	29	29
APS had no effect	51	51	52	50	56	47	47
Don't know	3	3	4	3	2	1	3
Consider career options							
Much more likely	21	20	22	22	18	23	20
Somewhat more likely	22	23	22	19	21	22	26
APS had no effect	54	54	53	56	58	52	49
Don't know	3	4	4	3	3	3	5

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- The rate of “much more likely” responses declined slightly between 2015 and 2020 for all six behaviors.

Table 37. “Much more likely” to engage in behaviors due to APS, 2011-2014 vs. 2015-2020 (%)

	2011-2014 Graduates	2015-2020 Graduates	Difference
Take placement exams	39	37	-2
Achieve better grades	38	33	-5
Seek out advising	31	24	-7
Prepare for placement exams	29	25	-4
Consider career options	28	21	-7
Take challenging courses	24	21	-3

Impact of APS on Postsecondary Enrollment Decision

- When asked how the APS affected their enrollment decision, the most common response was “APS was a major factor” (36%) followed by “APS was a minor factor” (30%), “APS had no effect on my decision to enroll” (22%), and “I would not have enrolled without APS” (10%).
- There were a few differences by grad year but no discernible trends over time. For example, 2019 grads were slightly more likely to say they would not have enrolled without APS (14% versus 10% of all respondents), while 2016 respondents were more likely to say APS was a major factor (41% versus 36% of all respondents).
- APS users were much more likely to say APS was a major factor in their decision to enroll: 39%, versus 10% of non-users. Non-users were much more likely to say APS had no effect on their enrollment decision: 49%, versus 19% of APS users.

Table 38. How did the APS affect your decision to enroll in a degree or certificate program? (%)
Base: APS recipients

	Base n=1,467	2015 n=304	2016 n=308	2017 n=253	2018 n=230	2019 n=211	2020 n=161
I would not have enrolled without the APS	10	9	7	9	12	14	11
APS was a major factor in my decision to enroll	36	37	41	37	35	34	29
APS was a minor factor in my decision to enroll	30	31	30	31	29	25	35
APS had no effect on my decision to enroll	22	21	21	21	23	25	21
Don't know	2	1	1	2	1	2	4

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- Responses saw a few shifts between the two surveys: those saying APS had no effect dropped from 35% to 22%, while those saying it was a major factor increased from 27% to 36%, and those saying they would not have enrolled without the APS increased from 6% to 10%.

Table 39. Impact of APS on Enrollment Decision, 2011-2014 vs. 2015-2020 (%)

	2011-2014 Graduates	2015-2020 Graduates	Difference
I would not have enrolled without the APS	6	10	+4
APS was a major factor in my decision to enroll	27	36	+9
APS was a minor factor in my decision to enroll	30	30	-
APS had no effect on my decision to enroll	35	22	-13
Don't know	3	2	-1

Impact of APS on School/Program Decisions

- When asked how the APS affected their decisions about their postsecondary program, the decision most impacted by APS was the one to attend an in-state school, with 72% saying APS was a major influence. This compares with 40% for the decision to enroll part-time versus full-time, 34% for the number of hours needed to work, and 10% for the degree or certificate program.
- APS users were much more influenced by APS in their decisions.
 - Enrollment part-time versus full-time: 43% of APS users said APS was a major influence on this decision, versus 14% of non-users
 - Decision to attend in-state school: 76% versus 20%
 - Number of hours needed to work: 35% versus 15%

Table 40. How much of an influence was the APS in the following decisions regarding your degree or certificate program? (%)

Base: APS recipients

	Base n=1,467	2015 n=304	2016 n=308	2017 n=253	2018 n=230	2019 n=211	2020 n=161
My decision to attend an in-state school							
Major influence	72	75	75	72	68	72	63
Minor influence	15	14	14	15	15	17	21
No influence	12	11	11	12	16	9	14
Don't know	1	1	<1	1	<1	2	2
My decision to enroll full-time versus part-time							
Major influence	40	39	42	43	39	43	34
Minor influence	23	23	25	22	22	24	26
No influence	34	36	32	34	38	31	36
Don't know	2	2	1	2	1	2	4
The number of hours I needed to work while in school							
Major influence	34	35	37	34	28	36	29
Minor influence	29	27	25	29	31	24	40
No influence	35	35	36	35	41	34	27
Don't know	3	4	2	2	<1	5	4
The degree/certificate program I chose							
Major influence	10	7	9	11	7	14	12
Minor influence	20	18	24	18	15	22	24
No influence	69	73	67	71	77	61	61
Don't know	1	2	-	1	<1	2	2

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- Ratings of APS as a “major influence” increased for each of the decisions between 2015 and 2020.

Table 41. APS as Major Influence on Program Decisions, 2011-2014 vs. 2015-2020 (%)

	2011-2014 Graduates	2015-2020 Graduates	Difference
My decision to attend an in-state school	61	72	+11
My decision to enroll full-time versus part-time	32	40	+8
The number of hours I needed to work while in school	28	34	+6
The degree/certificate program I chose	7	10	+3

Enrollment In-State vs. Out-of-State

- Among all APS-eligible graduates who reported attending a postsecondary program, one-half (50%) attended in Alaska, 38% attended out-of-state, and 12% attended both in and out of state.
- Rates of attending out-of-state increased from 32% among 2016 grads to 42% among 2020 grads.
- Rates of attending both in-state and out-of-state increased with age, from 3% among 2020 graduates to 17% among 2015 graduates.
- Non-Natives were more likely to enroll out-of-state: 40% versus 30% of Alaska Natives.

Table 42. Since graduating from high school, have you enrolled in a degree/certificate program in Alaska, outside of Alaska, or both? (%)

Base: Currently or previously enrolled, or completed postsecondary program

	Base n=2,418	2015 n=485	2016 n=470	2017 n=430	2018 n=397	2019 n=358	2020 n=278
In Alaska	50	46	52	45	51	52	55
Outside of Alaska	38	37	32	42	40	40	42
Both in Alaska and out of Alaska	12	17	15	12	10	7	3

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- The in-state attendance rate dropped slightly between the 2015 and 2020 surveys: from 56% to 50%. The out-of-state attendance rate went from 35% to 38%, and the rate of attending both went from 9% to 12%.

Table 43. Enrollment In-State versus Out-of-State, 2011-2014 vs. 2015-2020 (%)

	2011-2014 Graduates	2015-2020 Graduates	Difference
In Alaska	56	50	-6
Outside of Alaska	35	38	+3
Both in Alaska and out of Alaska	9	12	+3

Reasons for Enrolling In-State

- Among APS-eligible students, APS was the number one reason cited for attending in-state (82%), followed by lower cost (77%), can live with parents/family/friends (55%), and wanted to live near parents/family/friends (46%). Note that COVID was a factor for only 1% of respondents.
- APS was more often cited by non-Natives: 83%, versus 66% of Alaska Natives. Can live with parents/family/friends was also more often cited by non-Natives: 56% versus 42%. Alaska Natives were more likely to cite wanted to live near parents/family/friends (55% versus 45% of non-Natives), other scholarship (40% versus 25%), and size of school (31% versus 17%).

Table 44. What are the main reasons you chose to continue your education in Alaska? (%)

Base: APS-eligible students who attended postsecondary program in Alaska

	Base n=1,475	2015 n=309	2016 n=316	2017 n=250	2018 n=234	2019 n=210	2020 n=156
APS	82	80	80	86	80	84	80
Lower cost	77	79	76	79	78	79	74
Can live with parents/family/friends	55	56	55	48	52	61	61
Wanted to live near parents/family/friends	46	46	43	50	39	53	44
UA Scholars	42	34	43	46	47	44	42
Degree programs offered	33	35	33	34	31	34	29
Other scholarship	27	26	28	24	23	33	27
Size of school	17	15	17	20	18	18	16
Financial aid package	15	15	15	15	16	12	19
Quality of academics	14	13	14	15	16	11	17
Better career opportunities	13	14	11	12	15	11	19
Reputation of school	10	10	9	9	10	8	14
Want to live in Alaska	1	1	2	1	1	1	1
COVID	1	-	<1	1	-	2	2
Athletics	<1	1	<1	<1	1	1	-
Other	3	2	3	2	4	2	1
Don't know	1	<1	<1	<1	-	1	2

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- Responses were similar between the two surveys for most of the top responses. The largest shifts were for “lower cost” (down by 7%) and “can live with parents/family/friends” (up by 5%).

Table 45. Top 10 Reasons for Enrolling In-State, 2011-2014 vs. 2015-2020 (%)

	2011-2014 Graduates	2015-2020 Graduates	Difference
APS	78	82	+4
Lower cost	84	77	-7
Can live with parents/family/friends	50	55	+5
Wanted to live near parents/family/friends	45	46	+1
UA Scholars	37	42	+5
Degree programs offered	37	33	-4
Other scholarship	23	27	+4
Size of school	20	17	-3
Financial aid package	17	15	-2
Quality of academics	16	14	-2

Reasons for Enrolling Out-of-State

- Respondents who had enrolled out-of-state were most likely to cite degree programs (62%), quality of academics (61%), and wanted to leave Alaska (57%) as factors in their decision.
- Quality of academics was cited by 53% of 2015 grads, increasing to 77% of 2020 grads.
- Scholarship was cited by 31% of 2015 grads, increasing to 47% of 2020 grads. Similarly, financial aid package was cited by 16% of 2015 grads, increasing to 30% of 2020 grads.
- Reputation of school was cited by 55% of non-Natives, compared with 39% of Alaska Natives. Alaska Natives were more likely to cite other scholarship (32% versus 20% of non-Natives).

Table 46. What are the main reasons you chose to continue your education outside of Alaska? (%)

Base: Attended postsecondary program outside of Alaska

	Base n=1,233	2015 n=267	2016 n=230	2017 n=233	2018 n=203	2019 n=172	2020 n=128
Degree programs offered	62	63	58	62	66	64	59
Quality of academics	61	53	58	59	68	63	77
Wanted to leave Alaska	57	55	59	60	53	55	63
Reputation of school	53	49	48	55	59	53	56
Wanted traditional college experience	40	37	44	39	38	40	43
Scholarship	36	31	34	37	34	38	47
Size of school	34	30	34	33	38	37	38
Better weather	32	27	31	36	31	29	38
Athletics/extracurricular activities	24	22	25	23	24	26	25
Financial aid package	21	16	19	23	22	21	30
Family/friends nearby	16	13	18	18	15	20	16
Recruited by school	9	10	8	10	5	11	13
Moved out of state	9	11	10	14	4	5	8
Religious reasons	7	6	9	6	7	7	9
Military	1	1	1	-	2	1	-
UA struggling	<1	-	-	1	1	1	-
Cheaper to go out of state	<1	1	-	-	1	<1	-
Other	3	3	4	4	2	2	1

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- The top reasons for going out of state were fairly consistent between the two surveys, although there were a few shifts up or down. The biggest shifts were in “wanted to leave Alaska” and “financial aid package,” each down by 8%.

Table 47. Top 10 Reasons for Enrolling Out-of-State, 2011-2014 vs. 2015-2020 (%)

	2011-2014 Graduates	2015-2020 Graduates	Difference
Wanted to leave Alaska	65	57	-8
Degree programs offered	57	62	+5
Quality of academics	57	61	+4
Reputation of school	50	53	+3
Wanted traditional college experience	46	40	-6
Size of school	37	34	-3
Scholarship	35	36	+1
Better weather	33	32	-1
Athletics/extracurricular activities	22	24	+2
Financial aid package	29	21	-8

Completing Program In-State vs. Transferring

- Three-quarters of graduates enrolled in-state (72%) planned to complete their program at their current school, while 6% planned to complete at a different Alaska school; 10% planned to transfer out-of-state; and 3% didn't plan to complete.
- There were no notable differences among subgroups.

Table 48. Do you plan to complete your degree/certificate at an Alaska school? (%)

Base: Currently enrolled in-state

	Base n=1,475	2015 n=308	2016 n=316	2017 n=251	2018 n=234	2019 n=209	2020 n=157
Yes, complete degree at the first Alaska school I enrolled in	72	72	70	70	72	76	70
Yes, complete degree at a different Alaska school	6	4	8	7	4	6	3
No, complete degree at an out-of-state school	10	11	10	12	12	9	8
Don't plan to complete	3	5	3	4	4	1	-
Don't know	10	8	9	8	8	9	19

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- Responses were similar between the two surveys, with the biggest change for completing at their first Alaska school, down by 5% between 2015 and 2020.

Table 49. Plans for Completion Among In-State Enrollees, 2011-2014 vs. 2015-2020 (%)

	2011-2014 Graduates	2015-2020 Graduates	Difference
Yes, complete degree at the first Alaska school I enrolled in	77	72	-5
Yes, complete degree at a different Alaska school	8	6	-2
No, complete degree at an out-of-state school	7	10	+3
Don't plan to complete	<1	3	+3
Don't know	8	10	+2

Reasons for Transferring Out-of-State

- In-state students intending to transfer out-of-state most frequently cited degree programs (61%), wanting to leave Alaska (49%), and quality of academics (45%) as reasons for transferring.

Table 50. Why do you plan to complete your degree out-of-state? (%)

Base: Currently enrolled in-state; intends to transfer

	Base n=159
Degree programs offered	61
Want to leave Alaska	49
Quality of academics	45
Better career opportunities	43
Reputation of school	33
Better weather	31
Want traditional college experience	27
Family/friends nearby	19
Scholarship	17
Size of school	17
Athletics/extracurricular activities	14
Financial aid package	9
Cheaper	2
UA struggles	1
Other	11
Don't know	1

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- Responses were very similar between the two surveys: the top five responses were the same on both surveys and within several percentage points.

Reasons for Not Intending to Complete

- In-state students not planning to complete their degree/certificate most commonly said it was because they can't afford it (32%), job demands (30%), they don't like school (29%), and not interested in subject matter (25%). (Note the small sample size for this question: 51.)

Table 51. Why don't you plan on completing your degree/certificate? (%)

Base: Currently enrolled in-state; doesn't plan to complete

	Base n=51
Can't afford it	32
Job demands	30
I don't like school	29
Not interested in subject matter	25
Need a break from school	21
Not interested	18
Lost APS eligibility	15
Recruited for job in my career field	13
Other personal/family issues	12
Moving from community	12
Changing to a different degree or certificate program	11
Lost scholarship/financial aid	10
Not prepared academically	7
Medical issues	4
Raising a family	3
Other	11
Don't know	6

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- Not enough respondents answered this question in the earlier survey for analysis.

Out-of-State Students Completing, Continuing, and Using APS

- Out-of-state students were most likely to plan to complete their degree at their current school, then pursue an additional degree out-of-state (41%), or to complete their degree at their current school without an additional degree (36%).
- Non-Natives were more likely to plan on completing a degree at their current school and pursuing an additional degree out-of-state (42% versus 28% of Alaska Natives); they were also more likely to plan on completing a degree at their current school with no additional degree planned (37% versus 21%). Alaska Natives were more likely to plan on pursuing an additional degree at an Alaska school (16% versus 7%); they were also more likely to say they don't know (31% versus 13%).

Table 52. Which of the following best describes your plans for completing your degree and continuing your education? (%)

Base: Currently enrolled out-of-state

	Base n=1,210	2015 n=258	2016 n=222	2017 n=231	2018 n=200	2019 n=172	2020 n=127
Complete degree at current school; pursue additional degree out-of-state	41	35	36	44	44	48	43
Complete degree at current school; no additional degree planned	36	38	43	34	34	33	29
Complete degree at current school; pursue additional degree at Alaska school	7	4	5	10	10	7	10
Transfer to an Alaska school for completion of current degree	2	2	1	1	3	3	1
Don't know	14	21	16	10	9	9	17

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- The 2020 survey showed a lower rate of completing degree at current school/pursue additional degree out of state (down by 8%), and a higher rate of completing degree at current school/no additional degree (up by 9%).

Table 53. Plans for Completion Among In-State Enrollees, 2011-2014 vs. 2015-2020 (%)

	2011-2014 Graduates	2015-2020 Graduates	Difference
Complete degree at current school; pursue additional degree out-of-state	49	41	-8
Complete degree at current school; no additional degree planned	27	36	+9
Complete degree at current school; pursue additional degree at Alaska school	11	7	-4
Transfer to an Alaska school for completion of current degree	3	2	-1
Don't know	10	14	+4

- Among out-of-state students planning to transfer to an Alaska school, 78% said they would use APS if they were still eligible when they returned to Alaska.

Table 54. If you remain eligible for the APS when you return to Alaska, will you use it? (%)

Base: Enrolled out-of-state; planning to transfer to Alaska school

	Base n=113
Yes	78
No	-
I won't be eligible	9
Don't know	13

Plans for Graduation and Residency

Planned Graduation Year

- Currently enrolled students were asked what year they planned to graduate; responses depended heavily on their graduation year.

Table 55. What year do you plan on graduating from your current degree or certificate program? (%)

Base: Currently enrolled

	Base n=1,237	2015 n=39	2016 n=73	2017 n=177	2018 n=354	2019 n=333	2020 n=261
2020	4	*	22	9	2	2	-
2021	20	*	44	60	13	11	3
2022	31	*	18	21	67	16	10
2023	21	*	10	8	12	54	6
2024	18	*	-	-	3	12	67
2025	2	*	2	-	1	2	8
2026 or later	<1	*	2	-	<1	<1	1
Do not plan on graduating	-	*	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know	3	*	3	3	2	3	5

*Sample size too small for analysis.

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- Results between the two surveys are not comparable due to the different time periods. The majority of graduates in each year (between 50% and 70%) planned to graduate four years later in both surveys.

Course Plan

- The vast majority of enrolled students (85%) with a planned graduation year had a course plan to achieve that date. The class of 2020 were less likely to have this plan (69% versus 85% of all respondents).

Table 56. Have you developed a course plan to achieve that graduation date? (%)
Base: Currently enrolled; has planned graduation year

	Base n=1,166	2015 n=40	2016 n=69	2017 n=173	2018 n=343	2019 n=314	2020 n=227
Yes	85	85	90	92	89	87	69
No	11	13	8	7	6	10	21
Don't know	4	2	1	<1	5	3	10

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- Responses to this question matched those in the earlier survey: 85% of respondents in each survey said they had a course plan.

Alaska Residency

- When asked about their plans for residency in Alaska, the most common plan was to live in Alaska indefinitely (25%), followed by live out-of-state temporarily then move to Alaska (18%), live out-of-state indefinitely (17%), and live in Alaska temporarily, then move out-of-state (16%). One-quarter (24%) didn't know.
- 2020 grads were most likely to plan on living in Alaska temporarily before moving out-of-state (23%, compared with 16% of all respondents). 2015 grads were most likely to plan on living out-of-state indefinitely (22% versus 17% of all respondents).
- APS users were more likely to plan on living in Alaska indefinitely (32%, versus 18% of non-users) and to plan on living in Alaska temporarily, followed by moving out-of-state (21%, versus 11% of non-users). Non-users were more likely to plan on living out-of-state temporarily, then moving to Alaska (22%, versus 14% of APS users) and to plan on living out-of-state indefinitely (23%, versus 10% of APS users).
- Alaska Natives were more likely to plan on living in Alaska indefinitely (37%, versus 23% of non-Natives). Non-Natives were more likely to plan on living out-of-state indefinitely (18% versus 7% of Alaska Natives).

Table 57. Which of the following best describes where you plan to live in the future? (%)

Base: All respondents aware of APS

	Base n=2,823	2015 n=568	2016 n=526	2017 n=486	2018 n=459	2019 n=421	2020 n=363
Live in Alaska indefinitely	25	26	31	21	24	24	21
Live in Alaska temporarily, then move out-of-state	16	14	14	13	19	16	23
Live out-of-state temporarily, then move to Alaska	18	18	16	20	20	18	14
Live out-of-state indefinitely	17	22	18	19	13	13	14
Don't know	24	20	21	25	23	29	28

COMPARISON TO 2011-2014 GRADUATES

- Responses were similar between the two surveys. The largest shift was in "live out-of-state indefinitely," which increased by 7%, while those planning to live in Alaska indefinitely fell by 4%.

Table 58. Residency Plans, 2011-2014 vs. 2015-2020 (%)

	2011-2014 Graduates	2015-2020 Graduates	Difference
Live in Alaska indefinitely	29	25	-4
Live in Alaska temporarily, then move out-of-state	15	16	+1
Live out-of-state temporarily, then move to Alaska	19	18	-1
Live out-of-state indefinitely	10	17	+7
Don't know	27	24	-3

Respondent Characteristics

The following tables compare survey respondents to the total population of APS-eligible Alaska high school graduates from the years 2015 through 2020. In general, survey respondents closely resembled the total APS-eligible population. One exception was gender: because women were more likely to participate in the survey, all survey data was weighted by gender.

Table 59. Graduation Year (%)

	Survey Sample n=3,068	Total APS-Eligible Population n=14,374
2015	20	18
2016	18	16
2017	17	16
2018	16	15
2019	15	14
2020	13	21

Table 60. Region

	Survey Sample n=3,068	Total APS-Eligible Population n=14,374
Southcentral	64	64
Interior	17	16
Southeast	13	11
Southwest	5	5
Far North	2	2

Table 61. Gender

	Survey Sample n=3,119	Total APS-Eligible Population n=14,374
Male	34	45
Female	66	55

Table 62. Ethnicity
Based to Records with Ethnicity

	Survey Sample n=2,953	Total APS-Eligible Population n=13,710
White	70	67
Asian	8	8
Alaska Native/American Indian	8	9
Two or more races	8	9
Hispanic	5	5
African American	1	1
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	<1	1

Table 63. Received APS

	Survey Sample n=3,121	Total APS-Eligible Population n=14,374
Yes	46	40
No	54	60

Table 64. Collegiate Eligibility

	Survey Sample n=2,983	Total APS-Eligible Population n=14,374
Level 0	4	8
Level I	54	44
Level II	24	27
Level III	17	22

Table 65. Career Eligibility

	Survey Sample n=3,121	Total APS-Eligible Population n=14,374
Level I	61	50
Level II	24	28
Level III	15	21

APS-Ineligible High School Graduate Survey

This section presents results to a survey of high school graduates from the classes of 2015 through 2020 who were *ineligible* for APS, conducted in October 2020.

Activities and Enrollment Status

Post-Graduation Activities

- Working was by far the most common post-graduation activity among ineligible graduates, at 85%, followed by undergraduate study (41%) and travel (25%).
- As with the eligible graduate survey, likelihood of having participated in any of the activities increased over time.
- Non-Natives were more likely to report undergraduate study (43%, versus 30% of Alaska Natives).
- Compared with eligible graduates, ineligible graduates were less than half as likely to report undergraduate study: 41% versus 88%.

Table 66. Which of the following have you participated in since graduating from high school? (%)

	Total n=2,995	2015 n=452	2016 n=510	2017 n=547	2018 n=592	2019 n=586	2020 n=308
Working/employment	85	90	86	88	87	83	70
Undergraduate study	41	45	43	41	44	37	31
Travel	25	30	31	27	26	16	16
Starting/raising a family	12	23	18	15	8	6	3
Vocational/technical school	12	13	13	11	15	10	8
Volunteer service/religious mission	12	12	15	14	11	10	6
Internship	8	14	10	9	8	4	4
Military/armed services	7	8	8	7	9	5	3
Apprenticeship	6	8	9	7	3	6	3
Graduate study	3	6	4	3	3	2	3
Study abroad	2	3	3	2	3	1	<1
Other	4	4	4	4	4	4	7
Don't know	2	1	2	2	1	2	4

Enrollment Status

- Ineligible graduates showed low completion rates for postsecondary programs: 4% completed a bachelor's degree, 6% completed an associate degree, and 10% completed a vocational certificate.
- One-fifth of ineligible graduates (22%) were currently enrolled in a bachelor's program, 11% were currently enrolled in an associate program, and 6% were currently enrolled in a vocational program.
- Likelihood of enrolling and completing naturally increased as respondents got older.
- Ineligible graduates showed much lower rates of bachelor's program enrollment compared with eligible graduates: 36% versus 87% for bachelor's (including completed, previously enrolled, or currently enrolled). Rates of associate's program enrollment were similar: 26% among ineligible graduates and 25% among eligible graduates. Rates of vocational program enrollment were higher among ineligible graduates: 19%, versus 9% among eligible graduates.

Table 67. Please indicate your current enrollment status for each of the following programs. (%)

	Total n=2,983	2015 n=442	2016 n=509	2017 n=547	2018 n=592	2019 n=585	2020 n=308
Bachelor's degree							
Completed	4	13	9	1	<1	<1	-
Currently enrolled	22	16	18	24	27	23	22
Previously enrolled but did not complete	10	13	13	13	10	6	2
Never enrolled	64	58	60	62	63	71	76
Associate degree							
Completed	6	10	11	6	6	1	1
Currently enrolled	11	7	9	10	12	16	14
Previously enrolled but did not complete	9	13	11	12	9	4	3
Never enrolled	74	69	69	72	72	79	82
Vocational certificate							
Completed	10	12	12	10	13	6	3
Currently enrolled	6	2	6	5	5	8	9
Previously enrolled but did not complete	3	4	4	5	3	2	2
Never enrolled	81	81	78	80	80	84	87

Enrollment In-State versus Out-of-State

- More than half (62%) of ineligible graduates who enrolled in postsecondary programs did so in Alaska, while 27% enrolled out-of-state, and 10% enrolled both in and out of state.
- Out-of-state enrollment increased over time: 22% of 2015 graduates enrolled out of state, growing to 33% of 2020 graduates.
- Ineligible graduates were more likely to enroll in-state: 62%, compared with 50% of eligible graduates.

Table 68. Did you attend college or voc/tech school in Alaska, outside of Alaska, or both? (%)
Base: Previously or currently enrolled, or completed postsecondary program

	Base n=1,828	2015 n=301	2016 n=332	2017 n=339	2018 n=377	2019 n=324	2020 n=155
In Alaska	62	65	65	61	60	60	63
Outside of Alaska	27	22	25	27	31	29	33
Both in and outside of Alaska	10	13	10	12	9	11	4

Awareness of APS

APS Awareness and Familiarity

- Seventeen percent of ineligible students (mistakenly) said they qualified for the APS, while 38% correctly said they did not qualify, and 45% didn't remember. Note: Those that said they qualified for APS were screened out of subsequent questions.
- Interestingly, those saying they "don't remember" were highest among more recent graduates at 49% among 2019 graduates and 56% among 2020 graduates; this compares with 41% to 42% among 2015-2017 graduates.

Table 69. The Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) provides financial assistance to Alaska high school students who meet certain academic qualifications to attend Alaska colleges, universities, or voc/tech programs. Did you qualify for the APS? (%)

	Total n=2,983	2015 n=442	2016 n=509	2017 n=547	2018 n=592	2019 n=585	2020 n=308
Yes	17	17	16	19	16	19	14
No	38	41	43	39	40	31	30
Don't remember	45	42	41	42	45	49	56

- Only 9% of ineligible graduates said they were very familiar with the APS when they were high school students, while 31% were somewhat familiar, and 60% said they were not familiar or didn't remember.

Table 70. Thinking back to when you were a high school student, how familiar were you with the APS? (%)

	Total n=2,480	2015 n=364	2016 n=425	2017 n=442	2018 n=494	2019 n=472	2020 n=263
Very familiar	9	10	8	7	11	10	8
Somewhat familiar	31	30	31	33	32	29	30
Not familiar/don't remember	60	60	61	60	57	61	62

Learning About APS

First Awareness of APS

- Among ineligible graduates who said they were somewhat or very familiar with APS, the most common year for learning about APS was freshman year (27%) followed by junior year (20%), then sophomore year (15%) and senior year (15%). One-fifth (21%) said they didn't remember.
- More recent graduates were more likely to cite freshman year: 29% to 31% among 2018-2020 graduates, compared with 20% to 26% among 2015-2017 graduates.
- These responses are generally similar to those of eligible graduates, although ineligible graduates were slightly less likely to note freshman year (27% versus 35%), and were more likely to say they didn't remember (21% versus 12%).

Table 71. When did you first learn of the Alaska Performance Scholarship? (%)

Base: Somewhat or very familiar with APS when high school student

	Base n=999	2015 n=150	2016 n=164	2017 n=181	2018 n=213	2019 n=184	2020 n=107
Freshman year	27	26	20	24	31	31	29
Sophomore year	15	12	15	16	11	23	11
Junior year	20	18	18	25	20	16	24
Senior year	15	13	15	15	18	14	17
When I enrolled in degree or certificate program	2	5	3	1	<1	1	-
Don't remember	21	26	29	18	20	15	19

- Ineligible graduates remembered receiving information most commonly in their senior year (42%), followed by junior year (39%), sophomore year (26%), then freshman year (23%). Over one-quarter said they didn't remember.

Table 72. In what years do you remember receiving information about the APS? For example, mailings, school announcements, school counseling, and presentations. (%)

Base: Somewhat or very familiar with APS when high school student

	Base n=999	2015 n=150	2016 n=164	2017 n=181	2018 n=213	2019 n=184	2020 n=107
Freshman year	23	23	19	19	27	23	25
Sophomore year	26	24	26	28	23	26	28
Junior year	39	43	35	42	35	42	38
Senior year	42	42	42	42	39	44	41
Don't remember	28	32	33	25	26	27	25

Qualification Status and Interest

- Among those aware of APS, 41% said they were aware of whether or not they qualified, while 30% said they were not aware.

Table 73. During high school, were you aware of whether or not you qualified for the APS? (%)

Base: Somewhat or very familiar with APS when high school student

	Base n=999	2015 n=150	2016 n=164	2017 n=181	2018 n=213	2019 n=184	2020 n=107
Yes	41	42	34	43	46	40	39
No	30	30	25	30	29	32	32
Don't remember	29	28	41	28	25	27	29

- One-quarter of ineligible graduates who were aware of APS said they were very interested in qualifying (24%), while 46% said they were somewhat interested, and 18% said they weren't interested.

Table 74. During high school, how interested were you in qualifying for the APS? (%)

Base: Somewhat or very familiar with APS when high school student

	Base n=999	2015 n=150	2016 n=164	2017 n=181	2018 n=213	2019 n=184	2020 n=107
Very interested	24	27	18	26	24	26	17
Somewhat interested	46	40	46	48	48	44	53
Not interested	18	20	17	16	17	20	18
Don't remember	12	12	19	10	11	10	12

Barriers to APS Qualification

- Among ineligible graduates who were somewhat or very interested in qualifying for APS, the number one barrier was test scores (31%), followed by GPA (26%), didn't know enough about the program (26%), and not able to take necessary courses (17%).

Table 75. Which of the following were barriers to you qualifying for the APS? (%)

Base: Somewhat or very interested in qualifying for APS

	Base n=715	2015 n=103	2016 n=110	2017 n=137	2018 n=155	2019 n=133	2020 n=77
Test scores	31	27	39	33	32	28	20
GPA	26	26	31	35	21	18	32
I didn't know enough about the program	26	19	25	25	29	27	33
Was not able to take necessary courses	17	17	8	17	17	19	25
Was not able to take necessary tests	8	6	5	7	9	12	11
Class selection/credits	3	4	1	2	2	4	3
Went out of state	1	-	1	2	<1	3	1
School counselor/advisor issues	1	3	1	-	1	-	-
Other	7	9	9	3	8	6	3
Don't know	15	20	15	14	14	13	15

Lack of Interest in APS Qualification

- Respondents who said they were not interested in qualifying for APS were asked why not. The most common responses were: knew I would not meet requirements (40%), no plans to go to college or voc/tech school (26%), planned to attend college or voc/tech school out-of-state (25%), and did not have enough information (15%).

Table 76. Why weren't you interested in qualifying for the APS? (%)

Base: Not interested in qualifying for APS

	Base n=166
Knew I would not meet requirements	40
No plans to go to college or voc/tech school	26
Planned to attend college or voc/tech out of state	25
Did not have enough information	15
No need for financial aid/scholarships	8
Other	6
Don't know	5

Impact of APS on Behaviors

- When ineligible grads who were familiar with APS were asked whether the availability of APS made them more likely to engage in positive behaviors in high school, the behavior most influenced was taking placement exams: nearly one-quarter (23%) said APS made them much more likely to do so. The behavior least influenced was taking challenging courses: only 12% said APS made them much more likely to do so.

Table 77. Did the availability of APS make you more likely to do any of the following in high school? (%)
Base: Familiar with APS

	Total n=983	2015 n=149	2016 n=161	2017 n=180	2018 n=209	2019 n=181	2020 n=103
Take placement exams (SAT, ACT)							
Much more likely	23	25	22	24	25	18	26
Somewhat more likely	22	22	18	25	22	24	26
APS had no effect	44	40	44	44	47	47	34
Don't know	11	13	17	7	6	11	14
Achieve better grades							
Much more likely	20	17	20	20	23	19	25
Somewhat more likely	27	26	21	30	29	26	27
APS had no effect	42	43	41	40	42	45	38
Don't know	11	14	18	10	6	10	10
Seek out college counselor/academic advising							
Much more likely	20	19	17	21	22	15	27
Somewhat more likely	23	22	23	25	22	24	22
APS had no effect	46	44	43	47	50	50	37
Don't know	11	15	17	8	6	11	14
Consider career options							
Much more likely	20	16	18	22	19	17	31
Somewhat more likely	21	23	15	20	22	20	25
APS had no effect	50	47	52	48	52	55	35
Don't know	10	15	14	10	6	8	10
Prepare for placement exams							
Much more likely	17	18	12	18	19	14	18
Somewhat more likely	23	19	19	27	25	23	29
APS had no effect	48	47	48	47	50	51	38
Don't know	12	16	21	8	7	11	15
Take challenging courses							
Much more likely	12	11	9	15	13	11	16
Somewhat more likely	27	26	22	25	30	24	38
APS had no effect	51	48	52	52	51	56	39
Don't know	10	15	17	7	7	9	7

Potential Factors in Increasing APS Interest

- Ineligible graduates who were familiar with APS noted a wide variety of factors that would have helped them qualify, or want to qualify, for APS. Only 14% said “none of the above; nothing would have made a difference.”
- Nearly half of respondents cited one of three factors: earlier information (45%), more information (44%), and more encouragement from teachers, principals, and other school staff (44%). Around one-quarter cited three additional factors: easier access to standardized tests (29%), more encouragement from family or community (28%), and hearing from APS scholarship recipients (24%).

Table 78. Looking back, would any of the following have helped you qualify for the APS (or want to qualify for it)? (%)

Base: Familiar with APS

	Total n=980	2015 n=148	2016 n=161	2017 n=180	2018 n=207	2019 n=181	2020 n=103
Earlier information about the program	45	46	41	50	46	41	51
More information about the program	44	47	38	45	46	47	43
More encouragement from teachers, principals, and other school staff	44	45	45	54	42	36	39
Easier access to standardized tests like the PSAT, SAT, and ACT	29	26	24	33	31	33	25
More encouragement from family or community	28	34	32	32	26	22	18
Hearing from APS scholarship recipients	24	25	27	26	17	23	27
Availability of more challenging classes at my school	16	13	17	19	19	13	11
Other	6	6	5	5	10	6	6
None of the above; nothing would have made a difference	14	15	16	12	14	12	13
Don't know	10	10	14	7	8	11	6

APS-Eligible Survey: Open-Ended Responses

Which of the following have you participated in since graduating from high school? (Other)

Athletics (3)
Building my own house.
CNA program
Community / volunteer theatre.
COVID-19 postponed my plans for trade school.
Gap year
I am in a psychology club at my university that is working on designing a community project, so I have done a little bit of volunteer service.
Investing in real estate.
Married (2)
Moving (2)
Pain and suffering, as well as agonizing over the doom that would have been had I not been heretical.
Preventative health treatments and counselling.
Purchased a home.
Research (4)
Started a family by adopting a dog.
Student organizational leadership.
Subsistence
Taking time to work on myself.
Unemployment
Vocational rehab
Work away program.
Workshops
Writing & learning subsistence skills.

What are the main reasons you did not pursue further education after high school? (Other)

American education system is an inefficient, obsolete joke.
Attending flight school before enrolling to college.
Did not believe in the high cost, low reward of higher education.
High school presentations were traumatizing and I never wanted to do them ever again.
I did pursue education after high school, I just went straight for a doctorate degree (graduate May 2021) instead of getting an associate's or bachelor's beforehand.
I will not participate in remote learning since you cannot go to college and refuse to wear a mask.
Moved out of state due to family death.
Not interested in the absolute brainwashing necessary to complete university.
Personally, I do not learn very well online, so I decided to take some time until school became in person again.
Postsecondary education is pushed on every high schooler. If you choose not to go to school it is made to seem as though you will be a failure, you will be much less successful than your peers.

What are the main reasons you did not complete the degree or certificate program? (Other)

Academic field turned to be different than I anticipated.
Became satisfied with my vocational certification.
Decided it was not my passion and went on to find success beyond higher education.
Did not pass exam.
Did not want to take out a loan.
Do not need my degree for my job.
Feels like a waste of time, with bad teaching.
Financial reasons, I did not receive my full awards.

Found that my love and passion was in hospitality.
I am in my first year of college.
I did not enjoy the field I was studying and had an opportunity to go into a job field that had on the job training.
I do not know what career I want.
I was in middle college, getting an associate degree would mess with first year scholarships that I needed.
I was uprooted.
Joined the military. (2)
Learned what I needed to learn for what I intended to do.
Loved the classes pertaining to my degree but other classes required for the degree turned me away from completing my degree.
Negative and discouraging environment at UAF.
Profit outlook for my chosen career path was not equal to education costs.
Recruited for job in a different field that I enjoy more.
Started a business. (2)
Suicide attempt.
Supporting older family.
The school went bankrupt.
UAA lost the accreditation for my degree.
Unhappy with the quality of education.
Was not sure what to major in.
Work provided more knowledge than school.
Would love to go back to school sometime soon.

Why aren't you using the APS? (Other)

Because it was taken away for a couple of years by the government and I had to reapply for everything if I wanted it.
College would cost me more money and time than would pay off in the future.
I am going to use my GI bill.
Military Academy.
Moved out of state. (2)
None of the Alaska schools offer the degree I want. (2)
Received full ride scholarship offers.
Still just trying to figure everything out.
Tuition was covered by Pell Grant.
Was not confident in Alaska schools. (3)
Went into the trades and joined a union.
When I am ready to use it, meaning when I figure out what career I want to pursue, I will be 6 years out of high school and no longer qualify.
WUE is worth more than APS.

Where did you get information on the APS? (Other)

ANSEP
Charter School
Dunleavy's press conference with DEED.
Education Talent Search Program.
Email (3)
Email from university financial aid.
FAFSA Workshop
IDEA homeschooling (2)
My high-school counselor did not do anything.
My own research.
My sister received the APS.
Our principle and vice principle) really pushed so we all knew the requirements.
PowerSchool (4)
Required parent student school session event.
SAT
School handouts.

This survey.
TRIO Program (3)

What are the main reasons you chose to continue your education outside of Alaska? (Other)

Alaska has a doctoral program with UAA, but it is technically ISU.
Attending online while in Alaska.
Cheaper tuition than in state. (4)
Culture
Film Industry.
Free admission to museums.
Free Tuition for Native Americans.
Get away from family/have some space. (3)
Hockey
I am getting my BSN and I wanted the opportunity to have clinicals at an array of hospitals and clinics.
I enlisted in the military. (3)
I had no money.
I returned after one year.
I wanted to join the army, but my parents said no. So, I chose to go to UAA with the APS, but they got mad since they are paying for it and said AK schools are bad. Now I am in college in Washington.
Immigrating to Canada.
Indigenous focused courses, they provided a different perspective.
Leaving an abusive situation.
Legacy to my parent's university.
Liberal Arts Education.
Medical School, WWAMI rejected me.
Military has a community college that offers associates degrees.
Military PCS.
Military Service via Academy. (2)
Moved to New Zealand.
My boyfriend was moving.
My husband got stationed outside of Alaska
My job sent me to another school.
Number of AP credits accepted were greater at the school out of state I chose.
Opportunities in region.
Required
Safety concerns while remaining in Alaska.
Sexual assault UAA blamed me for instead of my assaulter who remained on campus.
Starting a family.
Study abroad.
To experience something new.
To extend my degree.
Tuition Waiver. (2)
UAF/CSU Veterinary Collaborative Program.
Went to online school so I could work more.
WWAMI program.

What are the main reasons you chose to continue your education in Alaska? (Other)

After touring some colleges out of state, I liked the Juneau Campus the best.
Alaska 529 college plan.
Alaska middle college program.
Alaska Pacific University.
Already had a job in state to support college costs.
Already own a home in Alaska.
AVTEC was here and I did not need to waste my time with classes nobody cares about.
Building the economy of the state.
Can graduate faster in Alaska.
Career licensing requirements.
Certifications offered.

CNA certification
Completed college credits while still in high school.
Convenient at the time.
Degree applies to current employment.
God led me to UAF
Going to UAA was the simplest option
Got hurt, could not play college sports any longer.
Halfway finished when I graduated high school.
Health.
I am full time Alaska Air National Guard.
I am stuck here.
I have a really good job currently, and I would like to keep this job for the remainder of my undergraduate degree.
I own investment properties up here and wished to stay here.
I was a track athlete.
Issues in life have kept me here.
It did not matter where I went, I knew this would play out this way. My path is not college and I am the only one who understands that.
Opportunities to work with arctic fish and wildlife.
Parents forced me to go to an Alaska school.
Relationship.
Scared to move out of state. (2)
Sisters went to same school.
Small online classes available.
Will be going for a doctorate one day; at that point bachelor's degree is irrelevant, so no need for expensive undergrad.

Why do you plan to complete your degree out-of-state? (Other)

Concern about future of Alaskan politics and economy.
Continuity of education.
Going to Europe where school is free
I am no longer a resident of Alaska; I receive reduced tuition at all universities in Arizona because my mom works at one of the state universities.
I want to come back to Alaska after completing my degree.
Immigrating to Canada.
It is difficult/inconvenient to reestablish Alaska residency.
Joined the WSU Army ROTC program.
Location
Low cost
Military obligations. (5)
Moved for family. (4)
Moved out of state. (7)
My family said I had to, complete my degree or I would be disowned.
Offers degree that corresponds to my career path.
Online degree
Religion
They accepted more of my AP test scores.
Wanted to attend my church's university.
Worried about credits transferring.
Would not have to deal with people I know - more stable school system/gov.
WUE program
WWAMI program at UW.

Why don't you plan on completing your degree/certificate? (Other)

Changed career paths and got a job right away.
College has low returns in normal times. During COVID, it is useless. There is no point being in a dorm that robs you of your personal agency just to go to school on Zoom.
Disappointed with the current UA system and the requirements needed to achieve my degree.

I am forced to take and pay for classes I do not have any interest in. It is like high school, but it costs me thousands of dollars.
Pointless pain, pointless agony, pointless stress. I need people skills, not things I could literally research online in a fraction of the time college requires of me.
The school does not offer a program for what I want to do. I have found that on the job experience is better than going to school.

What are your main reasons for transferring to an Alaska school for completion of your current degree? (Other)

Acceptance into the program is quicker.
Athletics
COVID-19 (2)
Economic program was cut from UAF, so I transferred to UAA.
In person classes.
UAA cancelled my degree program so I transferred to UAF.
UAA lost accreditation. (2)

APS-Ineligible Survey: Open-Ended Responses

Which of the following have you participated in since graduating from high school? (Other)

Adopted my baby girl to my parents.
AFJROTC
AHEC Scholar
Alaska Christian College
ANSEP
Arc training work program (2)
Au Pair year in Germany.
Aviation, Biblical studies, volunteer work.
Beauty school
Became a certified medical assistant. (3)
Became a licensed esthetician.
Being homeless because I was not able to continue school after leaving my parents' home.
Bible college (3)
Bought a house.
Business owner (6)
Cared for sick family member. (5)
Career college (3)
Certification
Certified Doula
Church functions
CNA License (2)
College (3)
Commercial Fishing
COVID-19 Quarantine (3)
Deployment
Diesel Technician Training.
DVR program
Entrepreneur (4)
Farming, commissions, retail.
Figure skating
Fishing
Flight school
General studies
Got married/started a family. (5)
Getting licensed
Health Aide training.
Health coach certification.

Investing
Job Corps (2)
King career center
Law enforcement
Maintenance
Medical Assistant Certification
Medical treatment
Joining the military, not finalized.
Motherhood (2)
Moved to a different state. (2)
Music
Subsistence hunting.
None (4)
Online career specific courses. (2)
Online Certification
Part time job.
Patient Advocate
Personal flight instruction.
Point Hope program, online work readiness with Goldbelt, and elders and youth conference.
Project Search
Real estate classes.
Rural Alaskans Honors Institute program.
Self-learning
Self-employed artist.
Slope
Some college (8)
Sports (2)
Stayed home.
Study for possible future events.
Surviving cancer/getting married.
Taking some time off/mental health break. (2)
Trade school (4)
Unable to work/disabled. (2)
Unemployed/Laid off due to Covid-19. (3)
Vocal, Dance, and Acting Lessons.
Volunteer fire fighter/ EMT
Volunteer work (2)
Working on my health.
Working out family issues.

Which of the following were barriers to you qualifying for the APS? (Other)

Could not get in contact with anyone to help me. They kept giving me numbers to different people or no call backs.
Decided to not take a math class senior year (3)
Depression
Did not count towards hair school
Did not take extra classes. (3)
Did not take SAT/ACT exam (3)
Dual enrollment courses counting for necessary requirements.
Focused on career classes instead of required APS credits.
Funding cut from program.
Getting qualifying score on the ACT after completing qualifying classes and more to receive the scholarship.
Going to school outside of Alaska (6)
Governor saying, he was going to cut program
I did not meet the qualifications for either route.
I did not take enough classes my senior year.
I do not think I qualified for it.
I never saw my test scores.
I only just moved to the state.

I qualified but I do not remember what I qualified for. I think I qualified in the science section.
I scored a 20.

I thought it was only the valedictorian who got the APS, I was salutatorian.

I was told classes would count that did not end up counting meaning I would have had to take a year and 3 subjects over my senior semester. My school messed up my transcript making me ineligible.

Just a decimal below the top 10% after my junior year but finished at the top 10 senior year.

Medical Issues

No interest in college immediately following high school.

Not as motivated to learn about it as I wish I were.

Parental blocks

Parents did not want to fill out the FASFA.

Pretty sure test scores were the reason, do not remember.

Sudden disability

The correct credits.

The IDEA office no longer gave the work keys.

The uncertainty of whether I could afford a higher education.

Took the necessary courses but they were not accounted for in my eligibility as I was told they would be.

Transcript errors I could not resolve disqualified me.

Uninterested (2)

Went through domestic violence and could not keep my grades up while trying not to kill myself.

Went to different high schools and did not qualify for APS in the last high school.

Work keys score

Why weren't you interested in qualifying for the APS?

APS was phased out.

Did not want to invest in Alaska.

Had family issues, so was not keeping up with my grades therefore not meeting any qualifications.

I already have free college.

I did not meet the deadline.

I was not aware of it. I would have loved to take some technical classes in the state.

Personal reasons

Trade school

Was not very motivated.

Was planning getting aid through the U.S Navy.

Looking back, would any of the following have helped you qualify for the APS (or want to qualify for it)?

A competent advisor for classes.

A lower math test score requirement.

A more flexible schedule.

A proper educational experience at school.

ACT/SAT prep courses that also give you high school credit during the normal school day. (2)

Being able to get my GED or restudy to get the scholarship because the circumstances were out of my control.

Being able to truly make up the credit.

Being able to use it at other universities.

Being more motivated myself.

Being told about how to qualify for the APS scholarship would have been nice.

Better colleges in Alaska. (2)

Better grades

Better SAT scores. (2)

Better selection of courses.

Better specialized classes that could address my learning delays, which prevented me from achieving better testing scores.

Career goal before graduation.

Could not qualify because I graduated early, despite taking AP and college classes.

Counselor gave me incorrect information.

Counselors/staff having an afternoon session on how to sign up.

Ditch the class credit requirements they are dumb.

Getting a better start on my education.

Governor said he was going to cut program (3)
Guest speakers
Having more time to prepare for the SAT/ACT.
Having people actively helping with the process.
High schoolers understanding the importance of the grades in the near future.
I ended up going out of state for college because my test scores were not good enough to get the APS scholarship, I graduated at the top of my class at BYUH.
I moved to Alaska halfway through high school and could not have completed the requirements in time.
I needed different classes that were suited to my apprenticeship.
I think we received amazing encouragement and support from the staff, I did not fully understand how it worked or how I could apply.
If I were told about it during freshman or sophomore year, it would have helped immensely.
It was a solution for a problem that did not exist.
Less emphasis on GPA, and more on extra curriculars, recommendation, and financial need.
Lower SAT and ACT scores.
Lower the GPA requirement.
Making it seem more important.
Making sure I was given classes to be able to qualify.
Mock standardized test.
More motivation all the way around.
More reasonable qualifications for test placement.
My school did not offer the necessary courses needed to qualify. (2)
None of these. I should have asked.
Not having to graduate a semester early to be able to focus on school instead of having to focus on getting a job to pay for my own living expenses.
Parents not having to give out information for the FASFA.
Requirement for teachers to introduce APS to students every quarter/semester-- repetition of information.
Schools knowing what would count for the scholarship. IDEA poorly managed their help in ensuring students would be eligible for the scholarship.
Self-discipline
Therapy
Tutoring or review class for work keys