

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

In a continuing effort to understand the behavior and choices of Oregon's high school graduates, the Oregon University System conducted a telephone survey of a random sample of the Oregon high school graduating class of 1999. This study, the fourth in a series begun with the class of 1993, sought to identify the proportion of the graduating class that attended a postsecondary institution, the type of college they chose, and the reasons for that choice. The survey also attempted to discern graduates' reasons for not attending college.

ENROLLMENT

The college enrollment rates of the Oregon class of 1999 are similar to those of previous classes surveyed and to rates for the United States as a whole.

Percent of High School Graduates
Enrolled Fall Term Following Graduation

	Men	Women	Total
Oregon—1999	63.8	69.8	66.9
Oregon—1997	60.1	67.8	63.9
Oregon—1995	54.8	65.7	63.4
Oregon—1993	57.6	67.0	62.5
U.S.—1998*	62.4	69.1	65.6

* Source: U.S. Department of Education, *Digest of Education Statistics 1999, March 2000*.

Almost 67% of survey respondents were enrolled in a postsecondary institution during the fall of 1999, with an additional 3.6% enrolling winter term. With the additional delayed enrollment likely over the next year, the college attendance rate of the class of 1999 at the end of eighteen months following graduation could be as high as 84%, based on the findings of this survey.

CHOICES

Among all of the high school graduates surveyed, 41.0% were attending a four-year university or college after winter term and 28.7% had chosen a two-year college. As in previous years, the largest percentage of college-bound respondents selected an Oregon community college (25.5%), followed by OUS institutions, which enrolled 23.9% of respondents. While a significant percentage of respondents with a high school grade point average of 3.75 or better continue to choose an out-of-state institution (34.1%), that rate does not appear to be increasing. Survey results suggest that, though the flow of *high achievers* to out-of-state institutions may be holding even, more Oregon high school graduates *overall* are leaving the state for four-year colleges. The distribution for class of 1999 graduates is shown in the graph at the end of this summary.

REASONS

As in the earlier studies, the major reasons for choosing or not choosing a college are related to *academic reputation, availability of a desired major, costs to students, and proximity to (or distance from) home*.

- # The academic reputation of the institution continued to be the most important consideration for respondents choosing Oregon independent colleges or out-of-state four-year institutions.
- # The most important factor for respondents choosing an OUS institution was the availability of programs in their desired field of study.
- # Cost continues to be a dominant factor in respondents' choice of college. Scholarships played a significantly more important role for class of 1999 respondents. Over 50% of respondents attending an OUS institution, almost double the figure for the class of 1997, cited receipt of a scholarship as an important reason for their choice. Students attending other four-year institutions or Oregon community colleges were also more likely to note a scholarship offer as an important reason for their choice.
- # In an unexpected finding, a greater proportion of class of 1999 respondents reported concern about potential cuts to OUS academic programs or other activities, in spite of the fact that there have not been large-scale program cuts since 1993, in the two biennia following the passage of Ballot Measure 5.
- # A desire to stay close to home was a major factor for about 75% of respondents choosing either an OUS institution or an Oregon community college; it was also considered important by almost 58% of those selecting an Oregon independent college. Conversely, over 67% of students attending an out-of-state four-year institution cited "wanting to leave Oregon" as a major reason for their college choice.
- # For the respondents choosing not to go to college, *work*, *cost*, and the *desire for a break from school* were the reasons most frequently cited.

Where Did the Class of 1999 Go After Graduation?

