



# Measuring Aspirations and Participation 2006

## *Executive Summary*

Since 2002, over 32,000 high school seniors from 84 public and private New Hampshire high schools have completed *Measuring Aspirations and Participation*. This annual survey captures information about seniors' postsecondary education and career plans, as well as their perception of the education they received in high school.

In 2006, the response rate for student participation in the survey was 68% (8,042 seniors completed and returned surveys out of a possible 11,776 eligible seniors at participating high schools). For the first time, schools were given the option of having students complete the survey online. Over seven hundred students at eight schools took advantage of this feature.

### *What do students say about their high school experience?*

- Public high school seniors who planned to continue their education in the fall of 2006 reported taking more years of English, math, foreign languages, sciences, social studies and history, and the arts than did students with no immediate education plans. Seniors who reported studying more hours also self-reported higher grade point averages. Since 2003, the percentage of students who reported having an "A" average has increased, with 26% of the class of 2006 reporting an "A" average.
- Since 2002, seniors overall have given "satisfactory" ratings to the skills they were taught in school. Almost one quarter rated the instruction as "excellent" in all areas. Seniors who planned to continue their education gave higher ratings in all areas of instruction than did seniors with no immediate education plans.

### *Do most NH students aspire to continue their education?*

- The proportion of public high school seniors who planned to attend an institution of higher education in the fall of 2006 remained high, ranging from 77% in 2003 to 81% in 2006 (with 57% planning to attend a four-year school).
- The proportion of private school students who reported they planned to attend an institution of higher education in the fall ranged from 96% in 2003 to 97% this year, with 92% planning to attend a four-year college.

- The gender gap in college aspirations persisted. Females planned to continue their education in 2006 at a rate almost ten percentage points higher than males (86% vs. 77%), and more females planned to attend a four-year college (65% vs. 54%). This holds for all levels of postsecondary education (associate's degree, bachelor's degrees, etc.) over the past five years.

### *When do students make choices about their future?*

- Many students who planned to continue their education immediately after high school stated they either always knew they would continue their education or made the decision by sixth grade. These figures ranged from 55% to 62% over the five-year period, with 2006 seeing the highest figure (62%).
- Conversely, a similar proportion of seniors not planning to continue their education immediately after graduation made this decision in the eleventh and twelfth grades. However, 62% of these students said they had considered pursuing further education or training sometime after high school.
- Throughout the five-year period, seniors reported their high school guidance counselor was the person most likely to provide them with information about postsecondary education, and they found this information to be "helpful" or "very helpful."

## Do parents have influence?

- Between 2002 and 2005, the percentage of students who reported that their parents expected them to continue their education beyond high school remained stable. However, the 2006 results saw an increase of eleven percentage points over the 2005 level, from 71% to 82%. The percentage for private school students ranged from a low of 85% in 2005 to 94% in 2006.
- Those seniors from public schools who planned to continue their education were significantly more likely to have parents with a college education than were those seniors from public schools who did not plan to continue their education.

## Where do students plan to attend college?

- Over the past five years, there has been a small increase in public school seniors who chose to attend college in New Hampshire (from 47% in 2002 to 52% in 2006).
- Between 70% and 72% of seniors at private high schools chose to attend school out of state for the last five years, although there was a 7% increase in those who planned to attend the University of New Hampshire.
- The top three reasons that public school seniors gave for choosing the institution they plan to attend have remained remarkably consistent over the five year period. They are:
  1. "offers the best education in field of study",
  2. "is affordable", and
  3. "has a good academic reputation."
- The top three reasons reported by private school seniors also remained consistent. They are:
  1. "offers the best education in field of study",
  2. "good academic reputation" and,
  3. "graduates get good jobs."

## What are the top fields of study?

- For students who planned to attend a four-year college, the top three fields of study for each of the five years of the survey are business, health professions, and education. Male seniors were most likely to prefer business, engineering, biology and life sciences, and computers and information technology as their likely major. Females were most likely to prefer health professions, business, education, and biology and life sciences.
- For students who planned to enroll in a two-year college, business, health professions and education are the top three choices for each of the five years of the survey. This was true whether they chose an in-state or out-of-state school. When broken down by gender in 2006, females chose health professions, followed by education and business. For males, the top three were business, mechanics/repairs, and computer information technology.

## Do students plan to live in New Hampshire?

- Since 2003, the survey has asked seniors whether they intend to live in New Hampshire after they have completed their education. The past four years have seen consistent results: approximately half of students attending public schools, but less than one-third attending private schools, said they intend to live in New Hampshire after completing their education.

**The 2006 Measuring Aspirations and Participation report and past years' reports can be found at [www.nhpaper.org](http://www.nhpaper.org).**

For more information about the survey, please contact Sarah Lowe at 800.525.2577 ext. 432 or [slowe@gsmr.org](mailto:slowe@gsmr.org).



The 2006 Measuring Aspirations and Participation senior survey is an ongoing collaborative project of the New Hampshire Partnership for the Advancement of Postsecondary Education Research (NH PAPER). The New Hampshire Higher Education Assistance Foundation (NHHEAF) Network Organizations provide funding and survey coordination.

### Member organizations of NH PAPER include:

New Hampshire College and University Council  
New Hampshire Community Technical College System  
New Hampshire Department of Education  
New Hampshire Postsecondary Education Commission

Saint Anselm College  
The NHHEAF Network Organizations  
University of New Hampshire Survey Center  
University System of New Hampshire