

## Choice

The American postsecondary education system is very diverse, and, taken as a whole, presents opportunities to those with any predilection and from virtually all walks of life. A young person just out of high school who contemplates the full range of possibilities might find the options overwhelming. However, choices are shaped by, among other things, abilities, interests, social influences, societal expectations, group membership, and resource limitations. These influences and constraints may reduce the decision task to a more tractable and comfortable set of alternatives. But in some ways they could also impose tight limits.

This section examines postsecondary education decisions made by the NELS:88 cohort members by 1994. Four factors are discussed: the choice of institutional type and sector, the influences of social and financial concerns, the role of institutional location, and the intensity of enrollment. These factors are considered for all 1988 eighth graders with postsecondary enrollment by 1994 and for that portion of this population who were in the highest cognitive test quartile in 1992. The population of 1988 eighth graders attending baccalaureate institutions by 1994 constitutes an additional focus in this section.

***Choice of institution type and sector*** One of the most important decisions a young person aspiring to postsecondary education must make is which type of institution to attend. This decision is affected by many factors, such as academic performance in high school, family background and parental influences, and the student's own career goals. Of course, financial and life circumstances also play a role.

About five percent of 1988 eighth graders with postsecondary enrollment by 1994 reported attending a private-for-profit institution, about two percent reported attending private not-for-profit institutions, and nearly one percent reported attending public less-than-two-year institutions (Table 10A). These three types of postsecondary institutions are most likely trade or technical programs. Thirty-six percent enrolled in community colleges (public two-year institutions), 38 percent matriculated at public four-year institutions, and 19 percent reported attending private four-year colleges or universities (Table 10A). A comparison of attendance rates for the three most frequently attended types of postsecondary institutions revealed a number of differences. Almost 50 percent of Hispanics first enrolled in community colleges; a smaller percentage of Hispanics than Asians, blacks, or whites enrolled in private not-for-profit four-year institutions. Blacks enrolled in private four-year institutions at rates comparable to Asians and whites. For four-year public institutions, a lower percentage of Hispanics were enrolled than whites. No other race/ethnicity differences were significant for four-year public institutions.

A higher percentage of 1988 eighth graders with postsecondary enrollment by 1994 from higher socioeconomic status and test quartiles enrolled in private four-year institutions. Attendance at public four-year schools is also associated with socioeconomic status and tested achievement. Furthermore, those in the lowest groupings on socioeconomic status and tested achievement reported a higher percentage of enrollments at public two-year institutions than did those in the middle and highest quartiles (Table 10A).

Of the 1988 eighth graders who were in the highest test quartile in 1992 and had attended

a postsecondary institution by 1994, 82 percent enrolled in either a public or private not-for-profit four-year institution. In contrast to the entire population of 1988 eighth graders attending postsecondary institutions by 1994, there were no significant differences by sex, race/ethnicity, or socioeconomic status with regard to enrollment in public four-year institutions by those in the highest 1992 test quartile. For enrollment in private four-year institutions by high test quartile students, there were no observed differences by sex or race/ethnicity, but there were differences by socioeconomic status: A higher percentage of 1992 high test quartile students in the highest socioeconomic quartile than in the mid or low socioeconomic quartiles attended private four-year colleges and universities. However, while a greater percentage of Hispanics overall first enrolled at public two-year institutions, this difference was no longer significant for Hispanics in the highest test quartile (Table 10B).

**Table 10A Percentage of 1988 eighth graders with postsecondary enrollment by 1994 by type of first institution attended, by various characteristics**

|                                    | Private<br>for-profit | Private<br>not-for-profit<br>less than 4-year | Public<br>less than<br>2-year | Public<br>2-year | Private<br>not-for-profit<br>4-year | Public<br>4-year |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| Total                              | 4.9                   | 1.5   | 0.7                           | 35.6             | 19.2                                | 38.0             |
| <b>Sex</b>                         |                       |   |                               |                  |                                     |                  |
| Male                               | 3.8                   | 1.6   | 0.9                           | 37.5             | 18.2                                | 38.2             |
| Female                             | 6.0                   | 1.5   | 0.5                           | 33.9             | 20.1                                | 37.9             |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>              |                       |   |                               |                  |                                     |                  |
| Asian or Pacific Islander          | 2.2                   | 0.8   | 0.0                           | 35.3             | 24.2                                | 37.5             |
| Hispanic regardless of race        | 7.1                   | 1.8   | 0.5                           | 49.2             | 10.5                                | 30.9             |
| Black not of Hispanic origin       | 11.9                  | 0.6   | 2.5                           | 29.9             | 18.6                                | 36.5             |
| White not of Hispanic origin       | 3.8                   | 1.7   | 0.5                           | 34.6             | 20.1                                | 39.2             |
| <b>Socioeconomic status (1992)</b> |                       |   |                               |                  |                                     |                  |
| Lowest quartile                    | 12.7                  | 1.3   | 1.5                           | 47.7             | 10.0                                | 26.8             |
| Middle two quartiles               | 5.1                   | 1.4   | 1.0                           | 41.8             | 14.7                                | 36.0             |
| Highest quartile                   | 1.9                   | 1.9   | 0.0                           | 22.5             | 28.9                                | 44.8             |
| <b>Test quartile (1992)</b>        |                       |   |                               |                  |                                     |                  |
| Lowest quartile                    | 8.7                   | 3.1   | 1.8                           | 62.1             | 7.0                                 | 17.3             |
| Middle two quartiles               | 5.4                   | 1.5   | 0.3                           | 41.6             | 15.5                                | 35.6             |
| Highest quartile                   | 0.9                   | 0.6   | 0.1                           | 16.4             | 30.3                                | 51.7             |

Source: NCES, National Education Longitudinal Study: 1988/4 9/25/95

Note: Rows may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

**Table 10B Percentage of 1988 eighth graders in the highest 1992 test quartile with postsecondary enrollment by 1994 by type of first institution attended, by various characteristics**

|                                    | Private<br>for-profit | Private<br>not-for-profit<br>less than 4-year | Public<br>less than<br>2-year | Public<br>2-year | Private<br>not-for-profit<br>4-year | Public<br>4-year |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| Total                              | 0.9                   | 0.6   | 0.1                           | 16.4             | 30.3                                | 51.7             |
| <b>Sex</b>                         |                       |   |                               |                  |                                     |                  |
| Male                               | 0.9                   | 0.4   | 0.0                           | 17.1             | 27.6                                | 53.8             |
| Female                             | 0.9                   | 0.8   | 0.1                           | 15.8             | 32.8                                | 49.6             |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>              |                       |   |                               |                  |                                     |                  |
| Asian or Pacific Islander          | 0.1                   | 0.0   | 0.0                           | 16.0             | 36.4                                | 47.4             |
| Hispanic regardless of race        | 2.0                   | 0.0   | 0.4                           | 21.9             | 28.1                                | 47.6             |
| Black not of Hispanic origin       | 0.0                   | 0.0   | 0.0                           | 8.7              | 30.5                                | 60.7             |
| White not of Hispanic origin       | 0.9                   | 0.7   | 0.1                           | 16.6             | 30.0                                | 51.7             |
| <b>Socioeconomic status (1992)</b> |                       |   |                               |                  |                                     |                  |
| Lowest quartile                    | 3.3                   | 0.0   | 1.2                           | 21.1             | 21.3                                | 53.1             |
| Middle two quartiles               | 1.4                   | 0.7   | 0.1                           | 22.0             | 22.3                                | 53.4             |
| Highest quartile                   | 0.3                   | 0.6   | 0.0                           | 11.8             | 37.0                                | 50.3             |

Source: NCES, National Education Longitudinal Study: 1988-9 9/25/95  
Note: Rows may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

*Enrollment in four-year postsecondary institutions* Overall, 57 percent of the NELS:88 eighth grade cohort members who had attended a postsecondary institution by 1994 were in a four-year college or university (Table 10A). Furthermore, most of those in the highest test quartile who had enrolled also chose a public or private four-year institution (Table 10B). For these reasons, the remainder of this essay will limit tables and analyses to those individuals who chose this type of postsecondary alternative.

There are many possible considerations that influence a student's choice of four-year postsecondary institution, including the availability of courses and awarding of degrees in the student's preferred field of study, as well as the institution's track record for placing its graduates in jobs or graduate/professional programs. Other considerations might include athletic programs, where one's parents went to college, the social environment, racial composition of the student body, and total enrollment at the institution. In light of considerations reported by 1988 eighth graders as very important in the Second Follow-up (1992), five variables were isolated for analysis: (1) the institution's reputation, (2) the expected expenses, (3) the availability of financial aid, (4) the option of living at home (which could include both financial benefits and more family support), and (5) the crime rate at or around the institution.

Overall, 64 percent of those enrolled in baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities indicated in 1992 that the institution's reputation was a very important factor in their enrollment decision. Across all sex, racial/ethnic, socioeconomic and tested achievement categories, the majority of 1988 eighth graders listed this factor as very important (Tables 11A and 11B). A higher percentage of women than men said that the reputation of the institution was a very important consideration, as did a higher percentage of those in the highest test quartile.

Only 24 percent of 1988 eighth graders indicated that the level of college expenses was very important in their decision as to where to enroll, and 44 percent indicated that the availability of financial aid was also very important (Tables 12A, 12B, 13A and 13B). Thus it appears that students may regard college expenses (including tuition, which is not shown separately) in tandem with financial aid.<sup>14</sup> A higher percentage of women than men, of blacks than Asians, whites, or Hispanics, of Hispanics than whites, and of those in the lowest socioeconomic and test quartiles indicated that the level of college expenses was a very important consideration. With regard to the availability of financial aid, the same pattern of differences was observed for sex, and race/ethnicity, except that Hispanics also had a significantly higher percentage than Asians, and blacks also had a significantly higher percentage than Hispanics, reporting that the availability of financial aid was a very important consideration. Among those in the highest tested achievement quartile, a greater percentage of women than men, of black students compared to all other racial/ethnic groups, and of those in the lowest socioeconomic quartile reported that financial aid was an important consideration.

An institution's location, whether it be urban versus rural, or close to one's home and family versus far from them, can be a criterion upon which students base an enrollment decision. On the NELS:88 Second Follow-up survey (1992), 1988 eighth graders did not indicate that location, measured on one of those dimensions--living at home--was a very important consideration in choosing a college; only 10 percent of baccalaureate-bound students indicated that being able to live at home was very important to them (Table 14A). However, a greater

percentage of women than men, of Hispanics than of whites or blacks and of those in the lowest and middle socioeconomic categories reported that it was a very important consideration for them. (Since this analysis is limited to four-year institutions, the higher incidence for Hispanics is not the community-college effect noted earlier.) Only five percent of 1988 eighth graders in the highest 1992 test quartile said that choosing an institution that would allow them to live at home was very important, a significantly lower percentage than in the other test quartile groups (Table 14B).

Of the 1988 eighth graders attending public or private four-year institutions by 1994, 27 percent listed a low crime environment as a very important consideration in their choice of a college. Not surprisingly perhaps, a higher percentage of women than men were interested in safe surroundings. Higher percentages of Asians and blacks exhibited concern about crime than did Hispanics and whites (Table 15A). The percentage of students indicating that crime was a very important consideration decreased as one moved up both the socioeconomic status and tested achievement quartiles; within the high tested achievement quartile, a higher percentage of women than men again indicated that a safe environment was important to them. There were no differences by racial/ethnic divisions (Table 15B).

**Table 11A Percentage of 1988 eighth graders attending public or private not-for-profit four-year institutions by 1994 who rated the reputation of the institution as very important in their consideration of which institution to attend, by various characteristics**

|                                    | Very important | Less than very important |
|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Total                              | 63.5           | 36.5                     |
| <b>Sex</b>                         |                |                          |
| Male                               | 58.9           | 41.1                     |
| Female                             | 67.6           | 32.4                     |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>              |                |                          |
| Asian or Pacific Islander          | 71.4           | 28.6                     |
| Hispanic regardless of race        | 62.3           | 37.7                     |
| Black not of Hispanic origin       | 66.7           | 33.3                     |
| White not of Hispanic origin       | 62.8           | 37.2                     |
| <b>Socioeconomic status (1992)</b> |                |                          |
| Lowest quartile                    | 60.4           | 39.6                     |
| Middle two quartiles               | 59.3           | 40.8                     |
| Highest quartile                   | 67.9           | 32.1                     |
| <b>Test quartile (1992)</b>        |                |                          |
| Lowest quartile                    | 53.1           | 46.9                     |
| Middle two quartiles               | 57.1           | 42.9                     |
| Highest quartile                   | 69.7           | 30.3                     |

Source: NCES, National Education Longitudinal Study: 1988-94 9/25/95

Note: Rows may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding

**Table 11B Percentage of 1988 eighth graders in the highest 1992 test quartile attending public or private not-for-profit four-year institutions by 1994 who rated the reputation of the institution as very important in their consideration of which institution to attend, by various characteristics**

|                                    | Very important | Less than very important |
|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Total                              | 69.7           | 30.3                     |
| <b>Sex</b>                         |                |                          |
| Male                               | 65.3           | 34.8                     |
| Female                             | 73.8           | 26.2                     |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>              |                |                          |
| Asian or Pacific Islander          | 81.5           | 18.5                     |
| Hispanic regardless of race        | 65.3           | 34.8                     |
| Black not of Hispanic origin       | 72.4           | 27.6                     |
| White not of Hispanic origin       | 69.2           | 30.8                     |
| <b>Socioeconomic status (1992)</b> |                |                          |
| Lowest quartile                    | 64.6           | 35.4                     |

|                      |      |      |
|----------------------|------|------|
| Middle two quartiles | 66.7 | 33.3 |
| Highest quartile     | 72.0 | 28.0 |

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Source: NCES, National Education Longitudinal Study: 1988-94 9/25/95

Note: Rows may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

**Table 12A Percentage of 1988 eighth graders attending public or private not-for-profit four-year institutions by 1994 who rated expenses as very important in their consideration of which institution to attend, by various characteristics**

|                                    | Very important | Less than very important |
|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Total                              | 23.8           | 76.2                     |
| <b>Sex</b>                         |                |                          |
| Male                               | 21.3           | 78.7                     |
| Female                             | 25.9           | 74.1                     |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>              |                |                          |
| Asian or Pacific Islander          | 23.5           | 76.5                     |
| Hispanic regardless of race        | 31.2           | 68.8                     |
| Black not of Hispanic origin       | 44.4           | 55.6                     |
| White not of Hispanic origin       | 20.6           | 79.4                     |
| <b>Socioeconomic status (1992)</b> |                |                          |
| Lowest quartile                    | 41.3           | 58.7                     |
| Middle two quartiles               | 28.2           | 71.8                     |
| Highest quartile                   | 16.5           | 83.5                     |
| <b>Test quartile (1992)</b>        |                |                          |
| Lowest quartile                    | 39.3           | 60.7                     |
| Middle two quartiles               | 23.3           | 76.7                     |
| Highest quartile                   | 20.2           | 79.8                     |

Source: NCES, National Education Longitudinal Study: 1988-94 9/25/95

Note: Rows may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

**Table 12B Percentage of 1988 eighth graders in the highest 1992 test quartile attending public or private not-for-profit four-year institutions by 1994 who rated expenses as very important in their consideration of which institution to attend, by various characteristics**

|                                    | Very important | Less than very important |
|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Total                              | 20.2           | 79.8                     |
| <b>Sex</b>                         |                |                          |
| Male                               | 18.3           | 81.7                     |
| Female                             | 22.1           | 77.9                     |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>              |                |                          |
| Asian or Pacific Islander          | 14.4           | 85.6                     |
| Hispanic regardless of race        | 27.9           | 72.1                     |
| Black not of Hispanic origin       | 41.0           | 59.0                     |
| White not of Hispanic origin       | 19.3           | 80.7                     |
| <b>Socioeconomic status (1992)</b> |                |                          |
| Lowest quartile                    | 38.3           | 61.7                     |
| Middle two quartiles               | 26.9           | 73.1                     |

Highest quartile

14.6

85.4

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Source: NCES, National Education Longitudinal Study: 1988-94 9/25/95

Note: Rows may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

**Table 13A Percentage of 1988 eighth graders attending public or private not-for-profit four-year institutions by 1994 who rated financial aid as very important in their consideration of which institution to attend, by various characteristics**

|                                    | Very important | Less than very important |
|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Total                              | 43.8           | 56.2                     |
| <b>Sex</b>                         |                |                          |
| Male                               | 38.9           | 61.1                     |
| Female                             | 48.0           | 52.0                     |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>              |                |                          |
| Asian or Pacific Islander          | 41.6           | 58.4                     |
| Hispanic regardless of race        | 58.1           | 41.9                     |
| Black not of Hispanic origin       | 73.1           | 26.9                     |
| White not of Hispanic origin       | 38.9           | 61.1                     |
| <b>Socioeconomic status (1992)</b> |                |                          |
| Lowest quartile                    | 74.9           | 25.0                     |
| Middle two quartiles               | 51.8           | 48.3                     |
| Highest quartile                   | 31.0           | 69.1                     |
| <b>Test quartile (1992)</b>        |                |                          |
| Lowest quartile                    | 54.3           | 45.7                     |
| Middle two quartiles               | 43.0           | 57.0                     |
| Highest quartile                   | 43.3           | 56.7                     |

Source: NCES, National Education Longitudinal Study: 1988-94 9/25/95

Note: Rows may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

**Table 13B Percentage of 1988 eighth graders in the highest 1992 test quartile attending public or private not-for-profit four-year institutions by 1994 who rated financial aid as very important in their consideration of which institution to attend, by various characteristics**

|                                    | Very important | Less than very important |
|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Total                              | 43.3           | 56.7                     |
| <b>Sex</b>                         |                |                          |
| Male                               | 38.8           | 61.2                     |
| Female                             | 47.6           | 52.4                     |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>              |                |                          |
| Asian or Pacific Islander          | 36.7           | 63.3                     |
| Hispanic regardless of race        | 56.4           | 43.6                     |
| Black not of Hispanic origin       | 80.2           | 19.8                     |
| White not of Hispanic origin       | 41.1           | 58.9                     |
| <b>Socioeconomic status (1992)</b> |                |                          |
| Lowest quartile                    | 76.3           | 23.7                     |

|                      |      |      |
|----------------------|------|------|
| Middle two quartiles | 56.8 | 43.2 |
| Highest quartile     | 32.1 | 67.9 |

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Source: NCES, National Education Longitudinal Study: 1980-94 9/25/95

Note: Rows may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

**Table 14A Percentage of 1988 eighth graders attending public or private not-for-profit four-year institutions by 1994 who rated living at home as very important in their consideration of which institution to attend, by various characteristics**

|                                    | Very important | Less than very important |
|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Total                              | 9.7            | 90.3                     |
| <b>Sex</b>                         |                |                          |
| Male                               | 8.3            | 91.7                     |
| Female                             | 10.9           | 89.2                     |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>              |                |                          |
| Asian or Pacific Islander          | 14.3           | 85.7                     |
| Hispanic regardless of race        | 22.7           | 77.3                     |
| Black not of Hispanic origin       | 9.6            | 90.4                     |
| White not of Hispanic origin       | 8.4            | 91.6                     |
| <b>Socioeconomic status (1992)</b> |                |                          |
| Lowest quartile                    | 19.0           | 81.0                     |
| Middle two quartiles               | 12.2           | 87.8                     |
| Highest quartile                   | 5.6            | 94.4                     |
| <b>Test quartile (1992)</b>        |                |                          |
| Lowest quartile                    | 27.1           | 72.9                     |
| Middle two quartiles               | 11.4           | 88.6                     |
| Highest quartile                   | 5.0            | 95.0                     |

Source: NCES, National Education Longitudinal Study: 1988-4 9/25/95

Note: Rows may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

**Table 14B Percentage of 1988 eighth graders in the highest 1992 test quartile attending public or private not-for-profit four-year institutions by 1994 who rated living at home as very important in their consideration of which institution to attend, by various characteristics**

|                                    | Very important | Less than very important |
|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Total                              | 5.0            | 95.0                     |
| <b>Sex</b>                         |                |                          |
| Male                               | 3.8            | 96.2                     |
| Female                             | 6.1            | 93.9                     |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>              |                |                          |
| Asian or Pacific Islander          | 8.0            | 92.0                     |
| Hispanic regardless of race        | 14.9           | 85.1                     |
| Black not of Hispanic origin       | 6.6            | 93.4                     |
| White not of Hispanic origin       | 4.3            | 95.7                     |
| <b>Socioeconomic status (1992)</b> |                |                          |
| Lowest quartile                    | 6.7            | 93.3                     |
| Middle two quartiles               | 8.6            | 91.4                     |
| Highest quartile                   | 2.6            | 97.4                     |

Source: NCES, National Education Longitudinal Study: 19884 9/25/95  
Note: Rows may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

**Table 15A Percentage of 1988 eighth graders attending public or private not-for-profit four-year institutions by 1994 who rated a low crime environment as very important in their consideration of which institution to attend, by various characteristics**

|                                    | Very important | Less than very important |
|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Total                              | 27.2           | 72.8                     |
| <b>Sex</b>                         |                |                          |
| Male                               | 20.3           | 79.7                     |
| Female                             | 33.3           | 66.7                     |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>              |                |                          |
| Asian or Pacific Islander          | 42.4           | 57.6                     |
| Hispanic regardless of race        | 26.5           | 73.5                     |
| Black not of Hispanic origin       | 43.1           | 56.9                     |
| White not of Hispanic origin       | 24.2           | 75.8                     |
| <b>Socioeconomic status (1992)</b> |                |                          |
| Lowest quartile                    | 39.9           | 60.1                     |
| Middle two quartiles               | 28.8           | 71.2                     |
| Highest quartile                   | 23.4           | 76.6                     |
| <b>Test quartile (1992)</b>        |                |                          |
| Lowest quartile                    | 43.0           | 57.0                     |
| Middle two quartiles               | 30.2           | 69.8                     |
| Highest quartile                   | 20.7           | 79.3                     |

Source: NCES, National Education Longitudinal Study: 1988-95 9/25/95

Note: Rows may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

**Table 15B Percentage of 1988 eighth graders in the highest 1992 test quartile attending public or private not-for-profit four-year institutions by 1994 who rated a low crime environment as very important in their consideration of which institution to attend, by various characteristics**

|                                    | Very important | Less than very important |
|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Total                              | 20.7           | 79.3                     |
| <b>Sex</b>                         |                |                          |
| Male                               | 15.6           | 84.4                     |
| Female                             | 25.6           | 74.4                     |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>              |                |                          |
| Asian or Pacific Islander          | 27.3           | 72.7                     |
| Hispanic regardless of race        | 18.1           | 81.9                     |
| Black not of Hispanic origin       | 21.1           | 78.9                     |
| White not of Hispanic origin       | 20.5           | 79.5                     |
| <b>Socioeconomic status (1992)</b> |                |                          |
| Lowest quartile                    | 22.9           | 77.2                     |
| Middle two quartiles               | 20.3           | 79.8                     |
| Highest quartile                   | 20.9           | 79.1                     |

Source: NCES, National Education Longitudinal Study: 1988-9 9/25/95  
Note: Rows may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

***Out-of-state attendance*** To the extent that geographic location matters to students, whether it comes in the form of being able to attend a postsecondary institution close to home and family or far away from them, the lack of desirable programs within a given area could restrict choice. (For that matter, it could restrict access as well.) Enrollment in an out-of-state institution may reflect a positive personal preference or a location constraint. The decision to pursue postsecondary education out of state may depend on a number of factors, including the types of in-state alternatives and the student's available financial resources. While many states offer a wide range of postsecondary education, in general, students who can attend postsecondary institutions outside of their home state have access to an even wider range of options, albeit in most instances at a higher net financial cost to them. Unfortunately, some students may not be able to afford to take advantage of this wider range of opportunities.

Almost three-fourths of 1988 eighth graders who subsequently enrolled in a four-year postsecondary institution did so in their home state (Table 16A). A higher percentage of blacks than Hispanics indicated attendance at an out-of-state college or university. Also, a higher percentage of students in the highest socioeconomic and/or highest tested achievement quartiles reported out-of-state enrollment (Table 16A).

In the highest test quartile, about one-third of males and females attended out-of-state colleges, and over 40 percent of the highest socioeconomic quartile did as well, the latter being a significantly higher percentage than the other socioeconomic groups.

**Table 16A Percentage of 1988 eighth graders attending public or private not-for-profit four-year institutions by 1994 who attended their first postsecondary institution in or out of their home state, by various characteristics**

|                                    | Home state | Different state |
|------------------------------------|------------|-----------------|
| Total                              | 72.0       | 28.0            |
| <b>Sex</b>                         |            |                 |
| Male                               | 70.4       | 29.6            |
| Female                             | 73.5       | 26.5            |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>              |            |                 |
| Asian or Pacific Islander          | 77.8       | 22.2            |
| Hispanic regardless of race        | 83.2       | 16.9            |
| Black not of Hispanic origin       | 65.5       | 34.5            |
| White not of Hispanic origin       | 71.7       | 28.3            |
| <b>Socioeconomic status (1992)</b> |            |                 |
| Lowest quartile                    | 84.8       | 15.2            |
| Middle two quartiles               | 80.0       | 20.0            |
| Highest quartile                   | 62.3       | 37.7            |
| <b>Test quartile (1992)</b>        |            |                 |
| Lowest quartile                    | 81.4       | 18.5            |
| Middle two quartiles               | 78.4       | 21.6            |
| Highest quartile                   | 67.5       | 32.5            |

Source: NCES, National Education Longitudinal Study: 1988-94 9/25/95

Note: Rows may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

**Table 16B Percentage of 1988 eighth graders in the highest 1992 test quartile attending public or private not-for-profit four-year institutions by 1994 who attended their first postsecondary institution in or out of their home state, by various characteristics**

|                                    | Home state | Different state |
|------------------------------------|------------|-----------------|
| Total                              | 67.5       | 32.5            |
| <b>Sex</b>                         |            |                 |
| Male                               | 67.1       | 32.9            |
| Female                             | 68.0       | 32.0            |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>              |            |                 |
| Asian or Pacific Islander          | 73.1       | 26.9            |
| Hispanic regardless of race        | 73.8       | 26.2            |
| Black not of Hispanic origin       | 69.0       | 31.0            |
| White not of Hispanic origin       | 66.8       | 33.2            |
| <b>Socioeconomic status (1992)</b> |            |                 |
| Lowest quartile                    | 84.3       | 15.7            |
| Middle two quartiles               | 81.2       | 18.8            |
| Highest quartile                   | 57.3       | 42.7            |

Source: NCES, National Education Longitudinal Study: 1988-94 9/25/95

Note: Rows may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

***Institution of choice*** Those who eventually matriculated at a postsecondary institution had to employ their considerations and selection criteria, from net cost to reputation to location, as well as an assessment of their own abilities and constraints, in coming to a decision about which college or university they would like to attend. When they weighed all of these factors and available information, completed the application process, and finally were accepted, to what degree were their hopes to attend a particular postsecondary institution fulfilled?

In 1992, 1988 eighth grade cohort members were asked to list the names of their first and second postsecondary institutions of choice. Of those who then had actually attended at least one four-year college or university in the interim (i.e., 1992 to 1994), 71 percent indicated in 1994 that they were able to attend their first or second choice institution (Table 17A). <15> There was no significant difference across sex, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic, and test groups with regard to the percentage of students who were able to attend one of their preferred institutions.

Within the highest tested achievement quartile, 69 percent reported that they were able to attend one of their preferred institutions. There was no significant difference with regard to attendance in a preferred institution within the high achievement test group by sex, race/ethnicity, or socioeconomic status (Table 17B).

For 71 percent of the students to have been matched with an institution of choice is a strong indication that the widely varied preferences of baccalaureate-bound students are being satisfied by the postsecondary education system, at least in terms of admission. Of course, this does not mean that these students' preferences and expectations will be met, or remain constant, once they enroll and progress toward their undergraduate degree and program objectives. But it does suggest that the availability of information and the varied postsecondary landscape are serving high school graduates well as they leave one educational environment and begin the task of adapting to a new one.

***Intensity of enrollment*** Not being able to attend college at a level of intensity that assures timely degree completion may limit one's ability to establish and to achieve educational and career goals. Among 1988 eighth graders who attended four-year institutions, over 96 percent were enrolled full-time, a path that one would expect to lead to more timely program completions as they work toward the baccalaureate; the percentage was 98 for those in the highest test quartile (Tables 18A and 18B). There were no significant differences by sex or race/ethnicity with regard to the intensity of enrollments. However, a greater percentage of those in the highest socioeconomic and tested achievement quartiles attended full-time, compared to those in the lowest and middle two quartiles. Within the highest tested achievement quartile, however, no significant differences were observed by sex, race/ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

**Table 17A Percentage of 1988 eighth graders attending public or private not-for-profit four-year institutions by 1994 who attended their first or second choice postsecondary institution, by various characteristics**

|                                    | Attended | Did not attend |
|------------------------------------|----------|----------------|
| Total                              | 70.8     | 29.2           |
| <b>Sex</b>                         |          |                |
| Male                               | 69.0     | 31.0           |
| Female                             | 72.3     | 27.6           |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>              |          |                |
| Asian or Pacific Islander          | 65.8     | 34.2           |
| Hispanic regardless of race        | 72.0     | 28.0           |
| Black not of Hispanic origin       | 64.8     | 35.2           |
| White not of Hispanic origin       | 71.9     | 28.1           |
| <b>Socioeconomic status (1992)</b> |          |                |
| Lowest quartile                    | 74.0     | 26.0           |
| Middle two quartiles               | 73.0     | 27.0           |
| Highest quartile                   | 68.5     | 31.5           |
| <b>Test quartile (1992)</b>        |          |                |
| Lowest quartile                    | 64.7     | 35.3           |
| Middle two quartiles               | 71.8     | 28.2           |
| Highest quartile                   | 68.9     | 31.1           |

Source: NCES, National Education Longitudinal Study: 1988-94 9/25/95

Note: Rows may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

**Table 17B Percentage of 1988 eighth graders in the highest 1992 test quartile attending public or private not-for-profit four-year institutions by 1994 who attended their first or second choice postsecondary institution, by various characteristics**

|                                    | Attended | Did not attend |
|------------------------------------|----------|----------------|
| Total                              | 68.9     | 31.1           |
| <b>Sex</b>                         |          |                |
| Male                               | 67.1     | 32.9           |
| Female                             | 70.6     | 29.4           |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>              |          |                |
| Asian or Pacific islander          | 57.9     | 42.1           |
| Hispanic regardless of race        | 66.8     | 33.3           |
| Black not of Hispanic origin       | 61.3     | 38.7           |
| White not of Hispanic origin       | 69.9     | 30.0           |
| <b>Socioeconomic status (1992)</b> |          |                |
| Lowest quartile                    | 76.6     | 23.4           |
| Middle two quartiles               | 72.9     | 27.1           |
| Highest quartile                   | 65.9     | 34.1           |

Source: NCES, National Education Longitudinal Study: 1988-94 9/25/95

Note: Rows may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

**Table 18A Percentage of 1988 eighth graders attending public or private not-for-profit four-year institutions by 1994 who were enrolled in their first postsecondary institution full-time or less than full-time, by various characteristics**

|                                    | Full-time | Less than full-time |
|------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| Total                              | 96.2      | 3.8                 |
| <b>Sex</b>                         |           |                     |
| Male                               | 96.1      | 3.9                 |
| Female                             | 96.3      | 3.7                 |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>              |           |                     |
| Asian or Pacific Islander          | 96.1      | 3.9                 |
| Hispanic regardless of race        | 92.2      | 7.8                 |
| Black not of Hispanic origin       | 96.9      | 3.0                 |
| White not of Hispanic origin       | 96.5      | 3.5                 |
| <b>Socioeconomic status (1992)</b> |           |                     |
| Lowest quartile                    | 92.6      | 7.4                 |
| Middle two quartiles               | 95.5      | 4.5                 |
| Highest quartile                   | 97.5      | 2.5                 |
| <b>Test quartile (1992)</b>        |           |                     |
| Lowest quartile                    | 92.2      | 7.8                 |
| Middle two quartiles               | 94.9      | 5.1                 |
| Highest quartile                   | 98.4      | 1.6                 |

Source: NCES, National Education Longitudinal Study: 1988-94 9/25/95

Note: Rows may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

**Table 18B Percentage of 1988 eighth graders in the highest 1992 test quartile attending public or private not-for-profit four-year institutions by 1994 who were enrolled in their first postsecondary institution full-time or less than full-time, by various characteristics**

|                                    | Full-time | Less than full-time |
|------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| Total                              | 98.4      | 1.6                 |
| <b>Sex</b>                         |           |                     |
| Male                               | 98.4      | 1.6                 |
| Female                             | 98.4      | 1.5                 |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>              |           |                     |
| Asian or Pacific Islander          | 99.4      | 0.6                 |
| Hispanic regardless of race        | 97.5      | 2.5                 |
| Black not of Hispanic origin       | 97.4      | 2.6                 |
| White not of Hispanic origin       | 98.5      | 1.5                 |
| <b>Socioeconomic status (1992)</b> |           |                     |
| Lowest quartile                    | 96.1      | 3.9                 |
| Middle two quartiles               | 98.0      | 2.0                 |
| Highest quartile                   | 98.9      | 1.1                 |

Source: NCES, National Education Longitudinal Study: 1988-94 9/25/95

Note: Rows may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

