

## Senior Survey 2014 Highlights



**Snapshot Summary.** Students in the graduating class of 2014 completed the Senior Survey before graduation. A total of 1,674 graduates (90 percent) completed the survey. In the survey, each graduate indicated postsecondary plans, FASFA completion, school challenges and motivations, perceptions of curriculum and instructional support, and advanced placement (AP) course participation.

The number of graduates that applied to a postsecondary institution is on the rise. Eighty-eight percent applied to a postsecondary institution and 80 percent reported being accepted to a postsecondary institution.

The assessment department, in collaboration with the learning services department, created and administered a Senior Survey for students graduating in 2014. Respondents included 2014 graduates enrolled in the five Des Moines comprehensive high schools plus Orchard Place, Ruby Van Meter, and Scavo Alternative Schools. In the survey, each graduate indicated his/her postsecondary plans, FASFA completion, school challenges and motivations, perceptions of curriculum and instructional support, and advanced placement (AP) course participation. The survey response rate was 90 percent. This is a 5 percent increase from the 2013 response rate of 85 percent.

**Table 1. Survey Response Rate**

	2012	2013	2014
Number of Graduates	1,789	1,822	1,858
Surveys Returned	1,426	1,554	1,674
Response Rate	80%	85%	90%

**Postsecondary Preparation.** Seventy-four percent of 2014 graduates intended to pursue postsecondary education (college, university, or trade school) and 88 percent of graduates indicated that they had applied to a postsecondary institution. This is an eight percent increase in graduates applying to postsecondary institutions from the graduating class of 2013. Eighty percent of graduates stated that they had been accepted to a postsecondary institution. Among graduates who applied to a postsecondary institution, 91 percent were accepted.

**Table 2. Postsecondary Preparation**

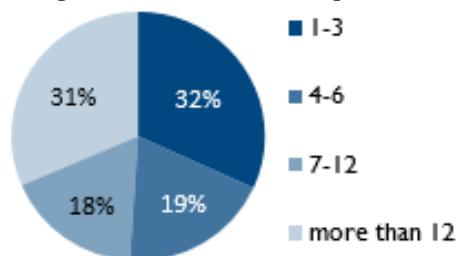
Percent of Graduating Class	2012	2013	2014
Planning to attend a postsecondary institution	75%	82%	74%
Applied to a postsecondary institution	60%	80%	88%
Accepted to a postsecondary institution	*	75%	80%
Earned at least one college credit in high school	*	71%	64%
Completed the FASFA	51%	60%	53%
Additional percent planning to complete the FASFA	25%	24%	22%

\*data was not collected in 2012

Of the graduates who indicated they planned to attend a postsecondary institution, 47

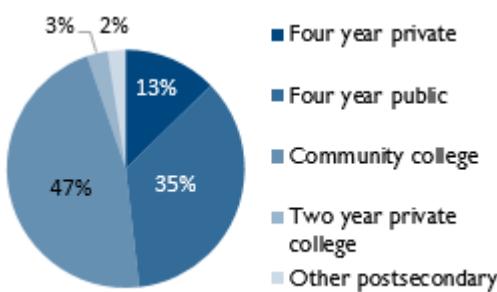
percent planned to attend a community college. Thirty-five percent planned to attend a 4-year public institution (such as Iowa State University, University of Northern Iowa, or University of Iowa), 13 percent planned to attend a 4-year private institution (such as Central College, Drake University, or Simpson College), three percent planned to attend a 2-year private college, and two percent planned to attend other postsecondary institutions or training schools.

**Figure 2. Number of Credits Earned Among Graduates with College Credit**



In preparation for attending a postsecondary institution, 64 percent of 2014 graduates earned at least one college credit while in high school. Of graduates who earned college credit, 32 percent earned 1-3 credits, 19 percent earned 4-6 credits, 18 percent earned 7-12 credits, and 31 percent earned more than 12 credits. By earning college credit while in high schools, graduates reduced the cost of postsecondary education by thousands of dollars.

**Figure 1. Postsecondary Institution Type**



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Completing the Free Application for Student Federal Aid (FASFA) is another critical step in preparing for postsecondary education. At the time of the survey, 53 percent of 2014 Des Moines graduates had completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA) in preparation for continuing their education. Of the 2014 graduates that had not completed the FASFA at the time of the survey, an additional 22 percent still planned to complete the FASFA.

### Motivators and Challenges of Graduates.

Graduates selected family expectations (62 percent of graduates), future college and career goals (58 percent), and connections with friends (41 percent) as the top motivators for attending school until graduation. Enjoyment of learning, sports, extracurricular activities, supportive school staff, and a safe school environment also kept graduates attending school until graduation.

The most common challenges graduates faced in attending school until graduation include: jobs outside of school (42 percent of

**Table 3. High School Graduation Motivators**

	Percent of Graduates*
Parent/family expectations	62%
Future college/career goals	58%
Connections/friendships with classmates	41%
Enjoyment of learning/classes that were fun	29%
Sports/athletics	24%
Clubs/extracurricular activities	24%
Supportive school staff	22%
School was a safe place	14%

\*Graduates could select multiple responses

**Table 4. High School Graduation Challenges**

	Percent of Graduates*
Job outside of school	42%
Poor study skills	41%
Family obligations	32%
Worries about not having enough money	28%
Time spent watching TV, video games, online, etc.	21%
Difficult courses	21%

\*Graduates could select multiple responses

More 2014 graduates agreed that students receive frequent timely feedback on their progress than 2013 graduates. However, only 65 percent of students agreed that classes provided preparation for the world of work.

Advanced Placement (AP) course offerings continue to grow in Des Moines. Fifty-two percent of 2014 graduates reported taking at least one AP course during high school, an increase of two

percent from last year. The percent of graduates that reported taking AP exams for all of their AP courses increased from 41 percent in 2013 to 44 percent in 2014.

graduates), poor study skills (41 percent), and family obligations (32 percent).

Worries about not having enough money, time spent watching TV, video games, and online, and difficult courses also provided challenges to graduates in attending school until graduation.

**Curriculum and Instruction.** Responses to curriculum and instruction remained relatively unchanged from 2013 to 2014.

**Table 5. Graduate Perceptions of Curriculum and Instruction: Percent of Graduates Who Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement**

	2012	2013	2014
Classrooms provide a variety of challenging learning activities	67%	76%	75%
Class sizes are appropriate	68%	77%	77%
Students receive frequent timely feedback on their progress	56%	64%	66%
Classes provide preparation for world of work	63%	70%	65%
Classes use material that treat students equally regardless of race and sex	79%	84%	81%
Technology is used as part of classroom learning	72%	77%	73%
Classes provide for different abilities/learning styles	69%	71%	71%

**Table 6. Percent of Graduates taking AP Courses and Exams**

	2013	2014
At least one AP course	50%	52%
Took AP exams for all AP courses	41%	44%