

The Challenges and Successes of College-Going Achievers  
Six Years after High School

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# The Challenges and Successes of College-Going Achievers Six Years after High School

## Introduction

To learn more about the educational paths and experiences of low-income students once they enter college, NORC, at the request of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, conducted an exploratory analysis of information in the longitudinal survey data from the inaugural cohort (Cohort I) of Washington State Achievers (WSA). At the time of the request, the Foundation was particularly interested in gathering information on the outcomes of students who interrupted their undergraduate studies. The first part of this report focuses on that subgroup of students comparing their experiences and outcomes with those of Achievers who did not interrupt their studies. The report then examines the educational paths and experiences of Achievers by degree attainment, beginning with students who had earned a bachelor's degree and concluding with students who had entered college but had not yet earned a postsecondary degree – a segment of the low-income population recently designated by the Foundation as a priority group in its postsecondary success strategy. Finally, in response to the Foundation's interest in two-year institutions as gateways to postsecondary success, the report ends with a more in-depth look at Achievers who began their postsecondary careers at two-year colleges, comparing the experiences and characteristics of students who did and did not earn a postsecondary degree within about six years after high school. By examining the enrollment patterns and degree attainment of the Cohort I Achievers, along with other information in the survey data, the exploratory analysis identified several factors that appear to facilitate or hinder the educational progress of Achievers in particular and of low-income students more generally.

## Background

NORC selected the inaugural cohort for the analysis because it provides the most extensive information on enrollment patterns and degree attainment of any WSA cohort to date. NORC has gathered information on the educational progress of Achievers in the inaugural cohort in three surveys over the course of the six years following their graduation from high school. The first two surveys took place about one and three years after most Achievers had graduated from high school. The most recent survey, the second follow up, took place about six years after most Achievers had graduated from high school. The report primarily relies on Achievers' responses to the second follow-up survey, but also draws on data from the baseline and first follow-up surveys of Achievers who took part in the second follow-up survey.

The objective of the analysis was to describe the experiences and characteristics of the various groups of Achievers and to explore the data for patterns among the groups. In the discussion, we point to patterns among the various groups of Achievers to indicate how they are likely to differ. In interpreting the findings, it is important to note that we did not test the differences for statistical significance.

The results of the analysis are presented in a series of graphs. The graphs display estimates of the population and subpopulation values of Achievers who had ever gone to college by the time of the second follow-up survey. The estimated percents were derived by weighting the data for non-response to the surveys. Please refer to the appendix for a more detailed account of how the information in the graphs was generated.

## Highlights of the Findings

College-going Achievers in the inaugural cohort were unusually successful in their educational pursuits with over two-thirds earning a postsecondary degree within about six years after high school. Nonetheless, almost one-third of all college-going Achievers were unable to earn a degree within that time. Regardless of whether they began college at a two- or four-year institution, one of the most distinguishing characteristics of Achievers who had not yet earned a postsecondary degree is that they tended to have children within the first few years after high school.

Among those who began their studies at two-year institutions, Achievers who did not earn a degree also tended to report more problems in their first year of college compared to their degree-earning counterparts. As a whole, they seemed to find keeping up with their schoolwork, managing their time effectively, and getting academic help when needed to be more difficult than their degree-earning counterparts. Even so, only a small share of these Achievers mentioned academic problems as a reason why they were no longer in school. Almost two out of every three, however, reported that they had left school because they needed or chose to work. Sizable shares also mentioned conflicts with demands at home or personal problems, financial considerations, or a change in family status as reasons why they were no longer in school.

In spite of their current circumstances, the large majority of Achievers without degrees believed that they would eventually earn a postsecondary degree. When asked what would help them succeed in completing a degree, they mentioned affordable childcare, more flexibility in their work schedules, and wider course offerings at night, among other factors. Their responses highlight the challenges low-income students face as their financial needs and family obligations compete with their desire to earn a postsecondary degree. They also point to changes in institutional policies and practices that could have a significant impact on their ability to be successful in their educational pursuits beyond high school.

## Key Findings

### **The inaugural cohort of college-going Achievers as a whole**

- Nearly all Achievers (96 percent) in the inaugural cohort enrolled in college at some point in time after high school.
- Roughly half of all college-going Achievers began their studies at two-year institutions, roughly half at four-year institutions.
- Nearly one in every five took one or more remedial courses as an undergraduate.
- By the time of the second follow-up survey, roughly six years after high school for most students, the majority of college-going Achievers in the inaugural cohort had earned a postsecondary degree. Forty-eight percent had earned at least a bachelor's degree and another 20 percent had earned an associate's degree, for a total of 68 percent of all college-going Achievers with postsecondary degrees.

### **Postsecondary experiences and outcomes by pattern of enrollment**

- More than half of all college-going Achievers interrupted their education after entering college and before earning a bachelor's degree.
- The large majority of Achievers who were continuously enrolled since entering college (88 percent) earned at least a bachelor's degree by the time of the second follow-up survey, roughly six years after high school.
- Only 12 percent of Achievers who interrupted their education after entering college completed at least a bachelor's degree within about six years after high school. Nonetheless, more than two out of every five completed at least an associate's degree.
- Well over half of all Achievers who deferred their studies mentioned family/personal reasons as one of the reasons they took time off from school.

### **Postsecondary experiences by degree attainment**

- The majority of Achievers who earned a bachelor's degree within about six years after high school began their college careers at four-year institutions, were continuously enrolled up until the time they received their degrees, and were not parents within about six years after high school.
- Bachelor's degree recipients who earned an associate's degree, interrupted their studies, took one or more remedial courses as undergraduates, or had children within about six years after high school tended to take longer to complete their degrees than other bachelor's degree recipients.
- The large majority of Achievers who earned an associate's degree as their highest degree began their college careers at two-year institutions and interrupted their studies sometime before or after earning their associate's degree. Only one out of every twenty was a parent within about a year after high school; less than one in every five was a parent within about three years after high school.
- The majority of Achievers who did not earn a postsecondary degree began their college careers at two-year institutions. About one-third began at four-year institutions. In striking contrast to Achievers who earned an associate's degree as their highest degree, almost one in every four was a parent within about one year after high school and nearly two out of every five were parents within about three years after high school.
- Achievers who did not earn a postsecondary degree mentioned a variety of factors that they thought would help them succeed in completing a postsecondary degree. Among others, they mentioned wider course

offerings at night, remote access to school resources, having a computer at home, more flexibility in their work schedule, availability of tutoring services, support of a mentor, affordable day care, scholarship support while going to school part time, and help with expenses other than tuition.

### **Postsecondary experiences and outcomes of Achievers who began their college careers at two-year institutions**

- Well over half (58 percent) of all Achievers who began their college careers at two-year institutions earned at least an associate's degree within about six years after high school.
- Regardless of whether they earned a postsecondary degree, less than one-fifth of all Achievers who began their college careers at two-year institutions took one or more remedial courses as undergraduates.
- Over half of all degree-earning Achievers who began their college careers at two-year institutions took time off from their studies either before or after completing an associate's degree. More than nine in every ten of their non-degree-earning counterparts interrupted their studies at least once since entering college.
- A little over one-fourth of all degree-earning Achievers who began their college careers at two-year institutions were parents within about six years after high school, but only 6 percent were parents within about one year after high school, 15 percent within about three years after high school. In striking contrast, almost half (48 percent) of their non-degree-earning counterparts were parents within about six years after high school. More than one in every four became a parent within about a year after high school. Almost two in every five were parents within about three years after high school.
- More than one-third of all degree-earning Achievers who began their college careers at two-year institutions were enrolled in school in the spring of 2007, the most recent academic year at the time of the survey, suggesting that many were continuing on with their education. A little less than one-fifth of their non-degree-earning counterparts were enrolled in the spring of 2007, suggesting that some of these students were pursuing a postsecondary degree at that time.
- Almost two out of every three non-degree-earning Achievers who began their studies at a two-year institution and were not enrolled in the spring of 2007 said that they had left school because they needed or chose to work. Sizable shares also mentioned conflicts with demands at home or personal problems, other financial reasons, or a change in family status as reasons why they were no longer in school. Less than one in every five, however, cited academic problems.
- Achievers who began their college careers at two-year institutions and did not earn a postsecondary degree tended to report more difficulties in their first year of college than did their degree-earning counterparts. Even so, they tended to rely less on others for support and encouragement compared to their degree-earning counterparts.
- In spite of the difficulties and challenges they faced, more than eight out of every ten Achievers who began their college careers at two-year institutions and did not earn a postsecondary degree aspired to complete at least two years of college sometime in the future. Three out of every five had their sights set on completing at least a bachelor's degree.
- Almost eight in every ten degree-earning Achievers who began their studies at two-year institutions reported that they had an Achievers Mentor assigned to them during their first year of college compared to about seven in every ten of their non-degree-earning counterparts.
- Regardless of whether they earned a postsecondary degree, the majority of Achievers with Mentors reported that they had a meaningful and supportive relationship with their Mentor during their first year of college at a two-year institution.

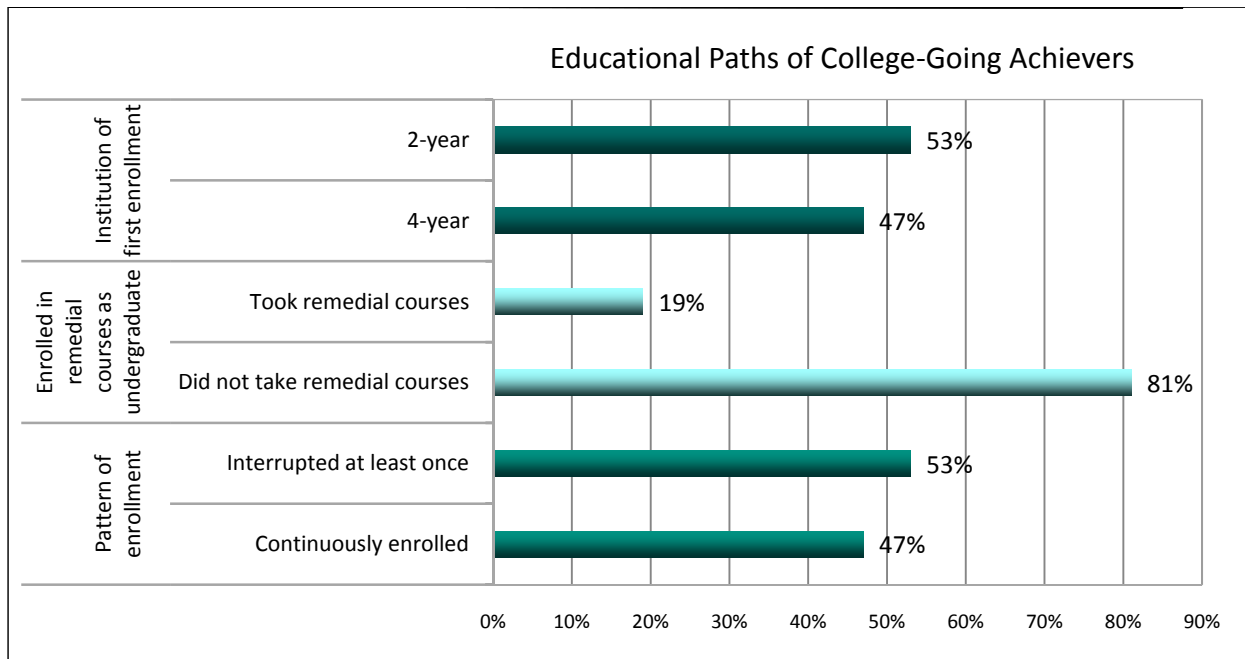
# The Inaugural Cohort of College-Going Achievers as a Whole<sup>1</sup>

## Overview

Nearly all Achievers (96 percent) in the inaugural cohort enrolled in college at some point in time after high school. Some followed traditional paths as they entered and progressed through school, while others followed less traditional paths, taking time off from school along the way. As a whole, college-going Achievers in the inaugural cohort were unusually successful in their educational pursuits with over two-thirds earning a postsecondary degree within about six years after high school.

## Educational Paths

Roughly half of all college-going Achievers began their studies at two-year institutions, roughly half at four-year institutions. A little less than half were continuously enrolled in an undergraduate program up until the time they earned a bachelor's degree or up until the time they completed the second follow-up survey. In other words, more than half of all college-going Achievers interrupted their undergraduate studies at least once since they began college and before completing a bachelor's degree.<sup>2</sup> Nearly one in every five took one or more remedial courses as part of their undergraduate programs.



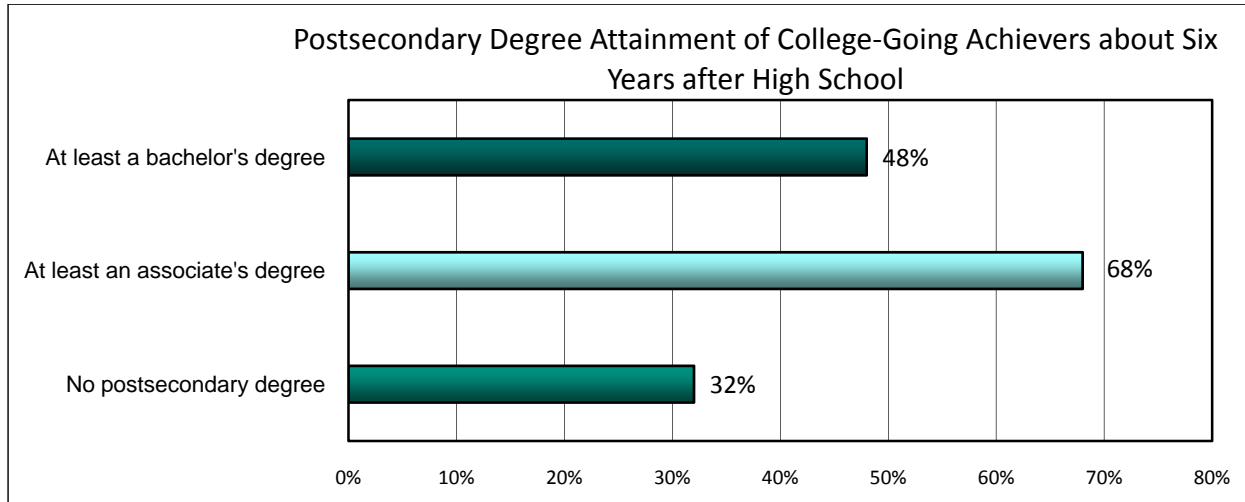
Sources: Cohort I second follow-up survey, College Success Foundation (CSF) program information  
Subpopulation: College-going Achievers, n = 393-396

<sup>1</sup> Respondents who were never enrolled in college by the time of the second follow-up survey were removed from the analysis along with three respondents for whom enrollment status and/or degree completion could not be determined.

<sup>2</sup> To determine whether an Achiever ever interrupted their education, we took into account the responses to several questions. Achievers who responded yes to a question asking whether or not they had ever deferred, where deferral was defined as having withdrawn from school for at least one term or taking a leave of absence from their undergraduate program, were classified as students who interrupted their education. Achievers who said that they had never deferred but were not enrolled in college in the spring of 2007 (the most recent academic year at the time of the survey) and had not yet completed a bachelor's degree were also classified as students who interrupted their studies.

## Degree Attainment

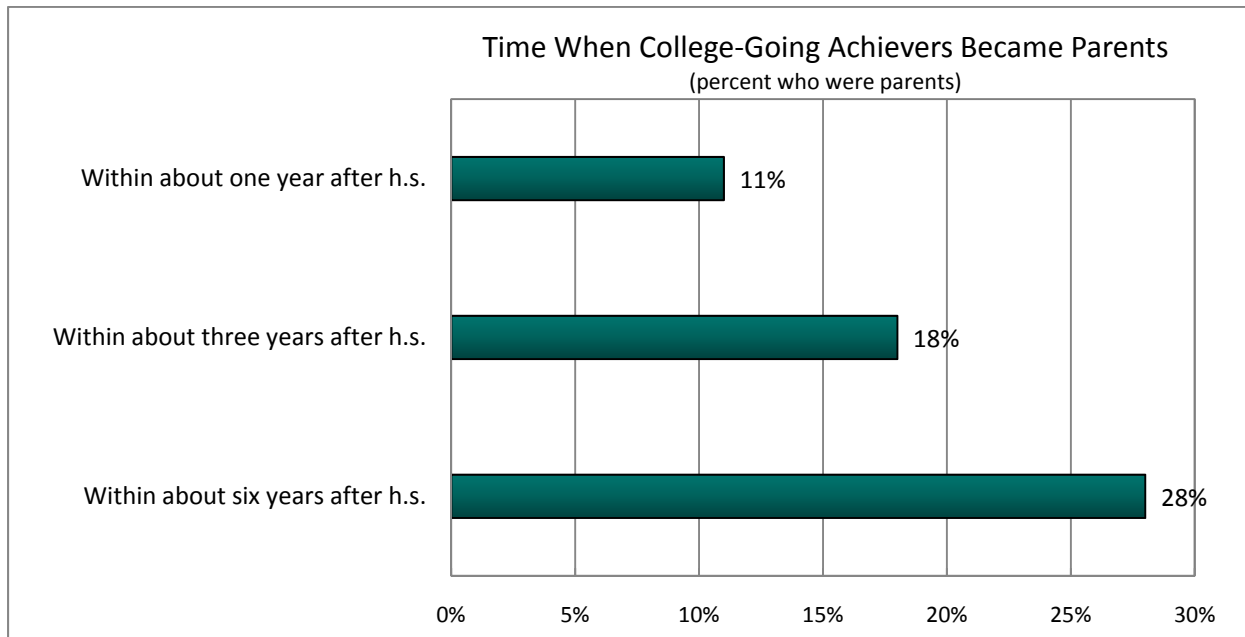
By the time of the second follow-up survey, roughly six years after high school for most students, the majority of college-going Achievers in the inaugural cohort had earned a postsecondary degree. Forty-eight percent had attained at least a bachelor's degree and another 20 percent had earned an associate's degree as their highest degree, for a total of 68 percent of all college-going Achievers with postsecondary degrees.



Source: Cohort I second follow-up survey  
 Subpopulation: College-going Achievers, n = 400

## Family Formation

During the course of the six years after high school, the lives of many college-going Achievers changed in another significant way: a sizable number became parents. Over one-fourth of all college-going Achievers had one or more children by the time of the second follow-up survey.



Sources: Cohort I longitudinal data – baseline and second follow-up surveys, Cohort I longitudinal data – first follow-up and second follow-up surveys, Cohort I second follow-up survey  
 Subpopulation: College-going Achievers, n = 349, 297, and 396, respectively

## Postsecondary Experiences and Outcomes by Pattern of Enrollment

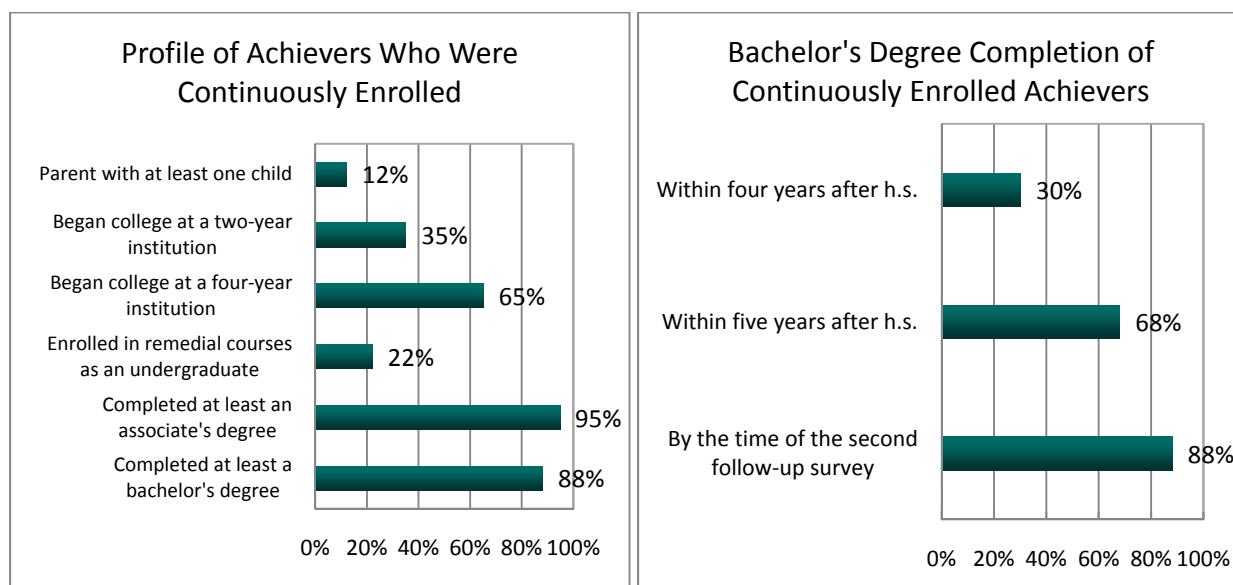
### Overview

Most Achievers who were continuously enrolled began their education at four-year institutions, earned a bachelor's degree within about six years after school, and were not parents by the time of the second follow-up survey. Most Achievers who interrupted their studies began their postsecondary education at two-year institutions and did not earn a bachelor's degree within about six years after high school. Many, however, earned associate's degrees. Many were also parents by the time of the second follow-up survey.

### Achievers who were Continuously Enrolled

Nearly two-thirds of all continuously enrolled Achievers began their college careers at four-year institutions. A little more than one-fifth took one or more remedial courses as undergraduates. A little more than one in every ten became a parent within about six years after high school. Only 5 percent were parents within about a year after high school, 6 percent within about three years after high school.

In terms of degree attainment, close to 95 percent of continuously enrolled Achievers earned at least an associate's degree within about six years after high school and 88 percent completed at least a bachelor's degree within that time period. Almost one-third of continuously enrolled Achievers completed their bachelor's degree within four years after high school and more than two-thirds completed their bachelor's degrees within five years after high school.



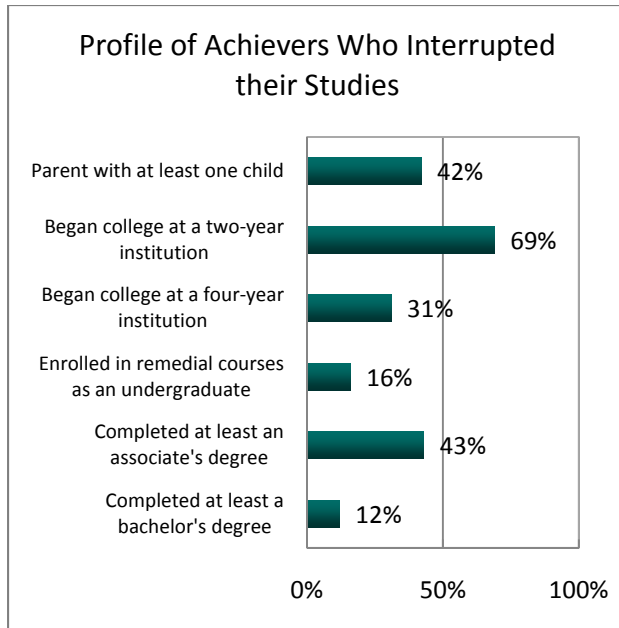
Sources: Cohort I second follow-up survey, CSF program information

Subpopulation: College-going Achievers who were continuously enrolled, n = 210-213

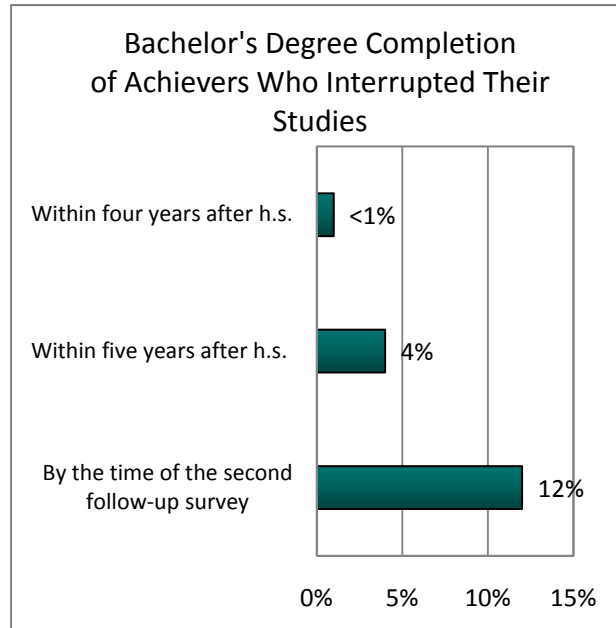
Source: Cohort I second follow-up survey  
Subpopulation: College-going Achievers who were continuously enrolled, n = 212

### Achievers who Interrupted their Studies

In contrast to Achievers who were continuously enrolled, over two-thirds of Achievers who interrupted their studies began their college careers at two-year institutions and less than one-fifth took one or more remedial classes as undergraduates. More than 40 percent were parents within about six years after high school, 16 percent within about a year after high school, and 29 percent within about three years after high school. Only 12 percent had earned a bachelor's degree by the time of the second follow-up survey. Nonetheless, more than two out of every five had earned at least an associate's degree within six years after high school.



Sources: Cohort I second follow-up survey, CSF program information  
 Subpopulation: College-going Achievers who interrupted their studies, n = 179-183



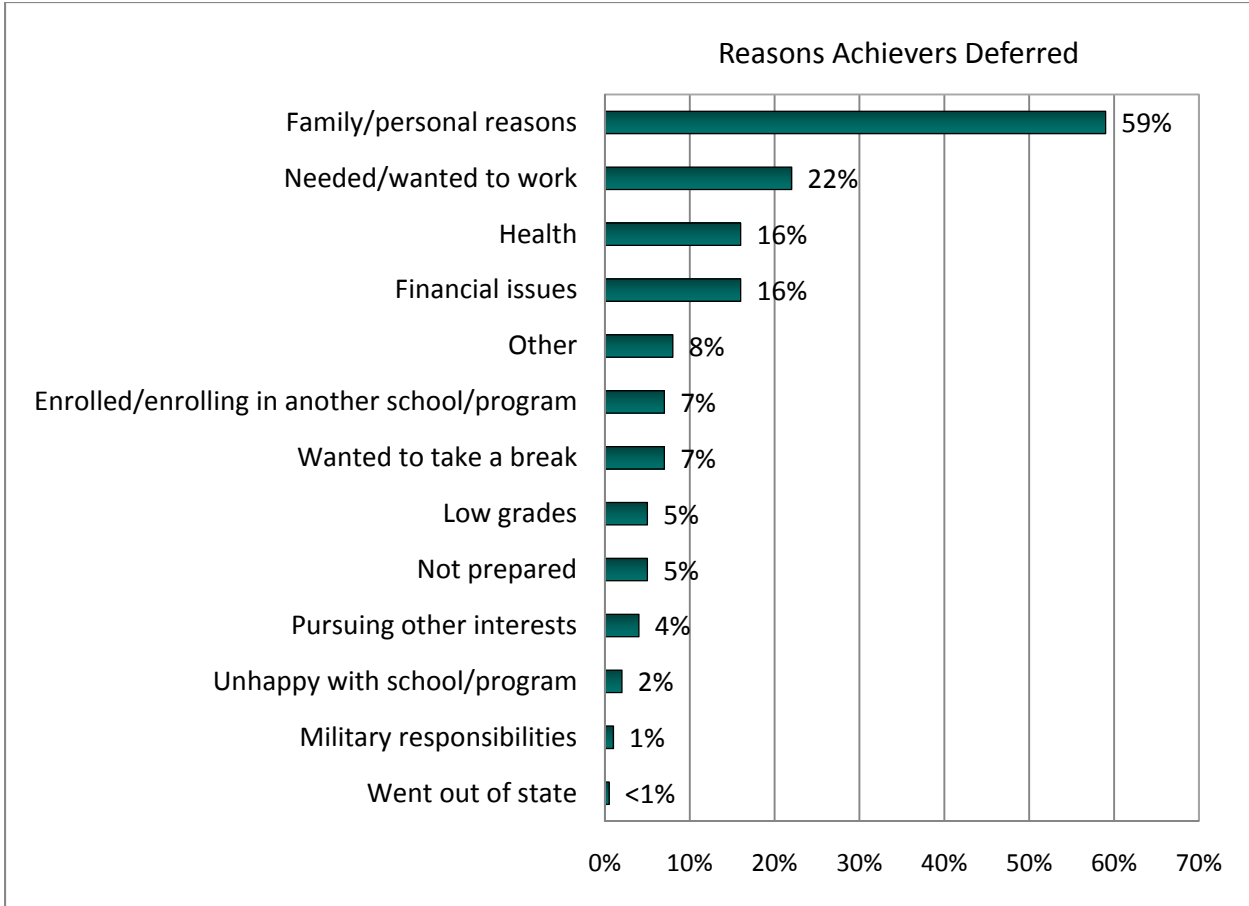
Source: Cohort I second follow-up survey  
 Subpopulation: College-going Achievers who interrupted their studies, n = 181

Three-fourths of all Achievers who interrupted their studies said that they had deferred at least once, where deferment was defined as taking a leave of absence or withdrawing from college for at least one term. The other one-fourth of Achievers who interrupted their studies said that they had never deferred, but were not enrolled in the spring of 2007 (the most recent academic year at the time of the survey) and had not yet earned a bachelor's degree.<sup>3</sup>

Achievers who stated that they had deferred at least once were asked to specify their reasons for deferring.<sup>4</sup> Regardless of whether they had earned a bachelor's degree, the majority of Achievers deferees mentioned *family/personal* considerations as one of their reasons for deferring, including close to 72 percent of all Achievers deferees with children. The other three top reasons for deferring were *needed/wanted to work*, *health*, and *financial issues*, with more than 10 percent of all Achievers deferees mentioning each of them.

<sup>3</sup> It is not entirely clear why these students said that they had never deferred. Perhaps they were continuously enrolled up until the time they left school, had never returned or had no intentions of returning, and therefore did not consider their time off as a deferment. Nearly half of Achievers in this category had completed an associate's degree.

<sup>4</sup> Students were asked the open-ended question, "Why did you defer?" Students who deferred more than once were asked to give a reason for each deferment up to three deferments. NORC developed code frames for the responses by identifying the most common themes in respondents' answers. The responses were coded and then combined across deferments to capture any time a particular reason was given by a respondent. For example, if any of a respondent's verbatim responses (first deferment, second deferment, or third deferment) were coded as *family/personal reasons*, the variable would reflect this. The majority of the verbatim responses required only one code (66%); 23 percent required two codes. Less than 5 percent required three codes.

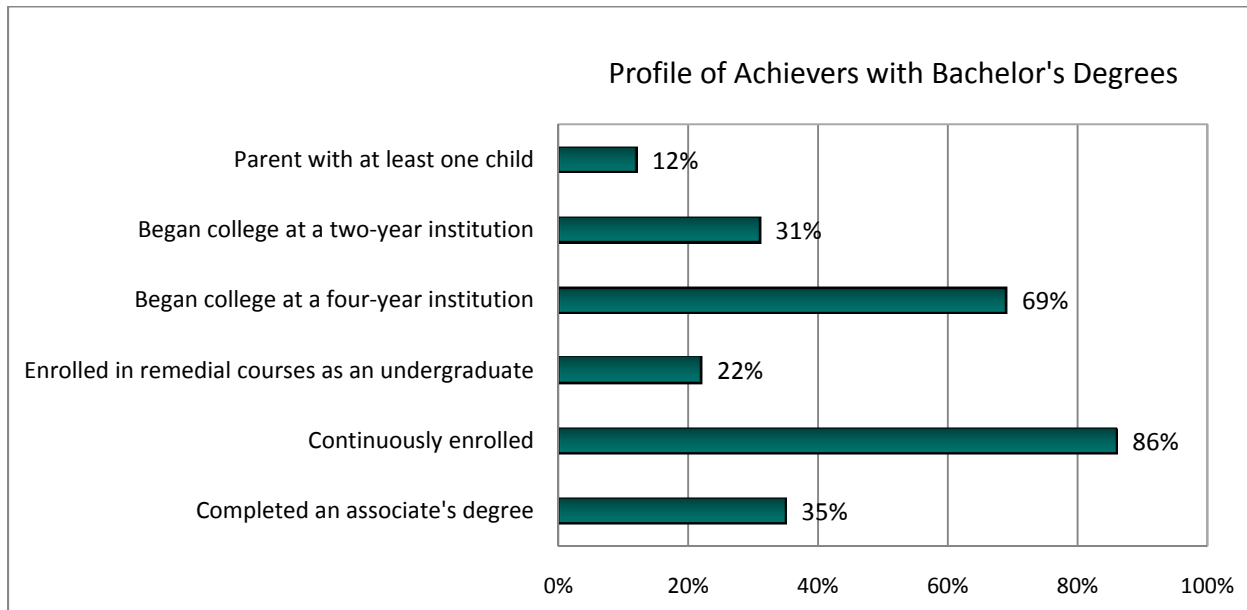


Sources: Cohort I second follow-up survey, CSF program information  
 Subpopulation: College-going Achievers who said that they had deferred, n = 142

## Postsecondary Experiences by Degree Attainment

### Achievers with Bachelor's Degrees

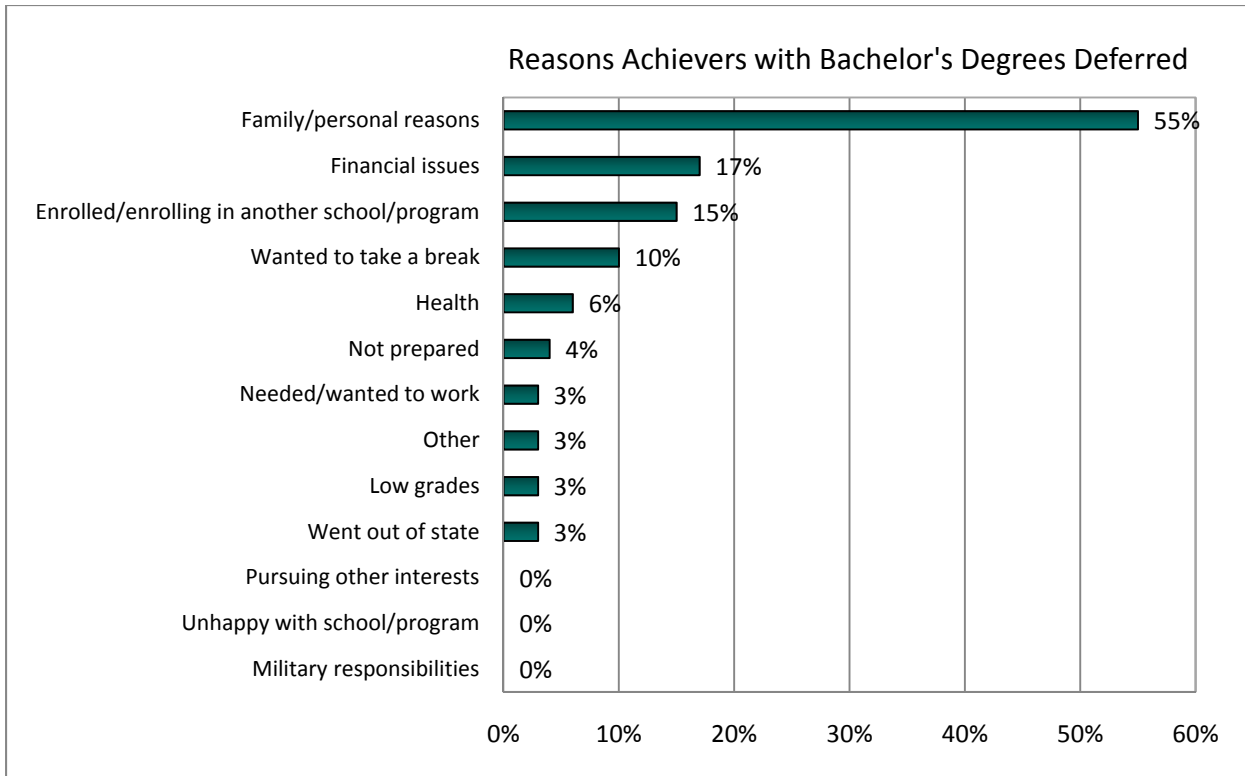
The majority of Achievers with bachelor's degrees began their college careers at four-year institutions. Over one-third (35 percent) earned an associate's degree on their way to completing a bachelor's degree and over one-fifth took one or more remedial courses as undergraduates. Most were continuously enrolled up until the time they completed their bachelor's degrees with only 14 percent interrupting their studies at least once along the way. Just 12 percent were parents within six years after high school, 5 percent within the first year after high school, and 6 percent within the first three years after high school.



Sources: Cohort I second follow-up survey, CSF program information

Subpopulation: College-going Achievers who earned at least a bachelor's degree, n = 220-221

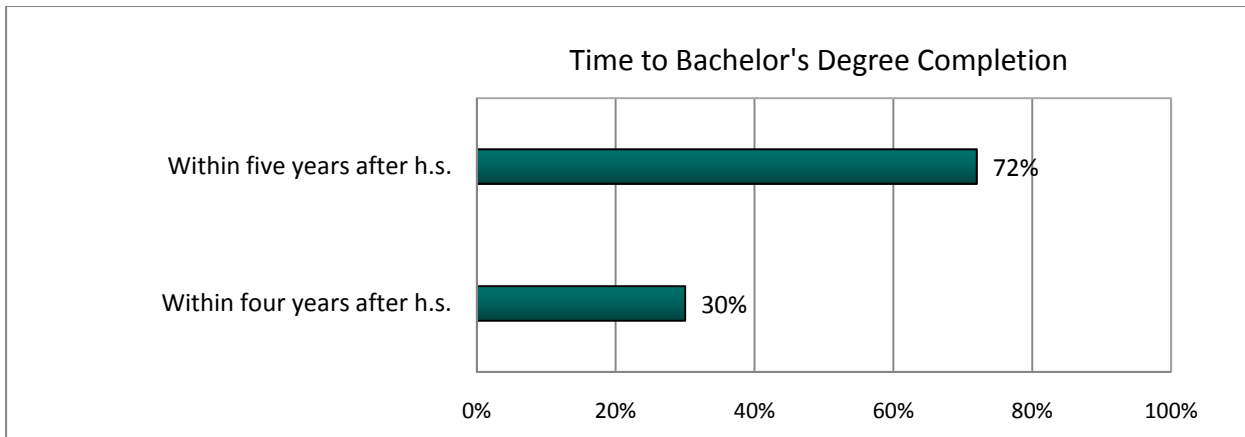
**Reasons for deferring.** Over half of the small share (14 percent) of bachelor's degree recipients who deferred mentioned *family/personal* reasons as one of their reasons for deferring. More than 15 percent also reported financial reasons. Unlike Achiever deferees as a whole, *enrolling in another school/program* and *wanted to take a break* were among the top four reasons given by Achievers deferees with bachelor's degrees.



Source: Cohort I second follow-up survey

Subpopulation: College-going Achievers who earned at least a bachelor's degree and said that they had deferred at least once, n = 29

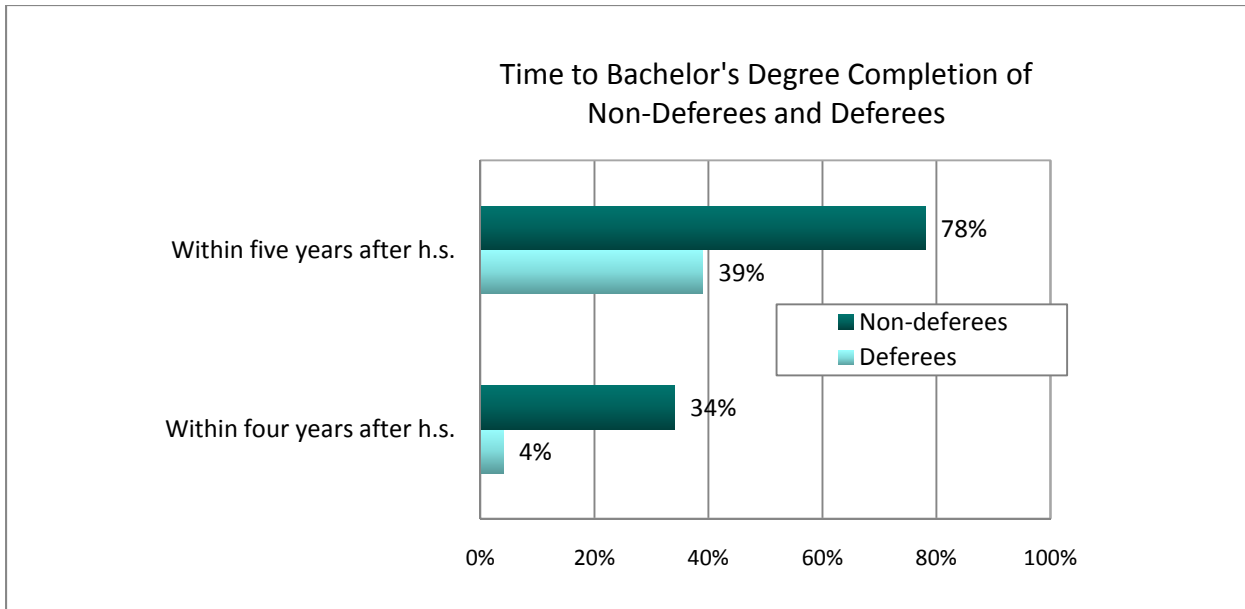
**Time to degree completion.** Close to one-third (30 percent) of all bachelor's degree recipients earned their degrees within four years after high school; 72 percent, within five years after high school.



Source: Cohort I second follow-up survey

Subpopulation: College-going Achievers who earned at least a bachelor's degree, n = 218

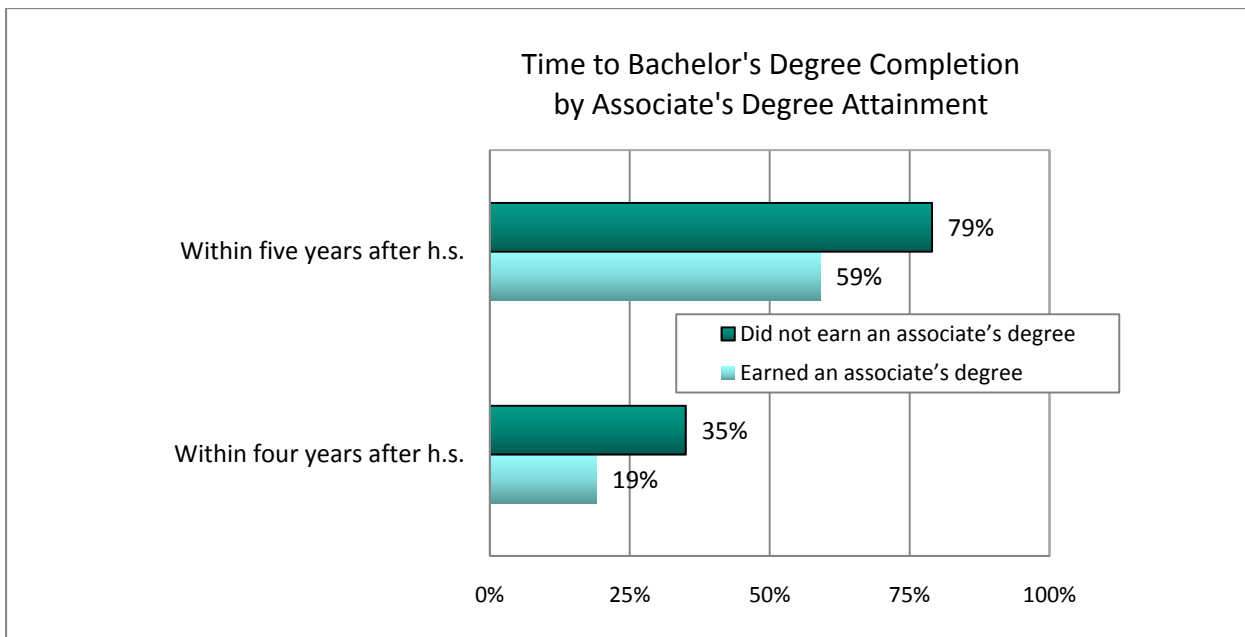
**Time to degree completion by enrollment pattern.** Not surprisingly, bachelor's degree recipients who deferred their studies tended to take longer to complete their degrees than recipients who never deferred. The large majority (78 percent) of bachelor's degree recipients who never deferred earned their degrees within five years after high school compared to only 39 percent of recipients who deferred.



Source: Cohort I second follow-up survey

Subpopulation: College-going Achievers who earned at least a bachelor's degree, n = 27 and 190, respectively, for those who did and did not defer

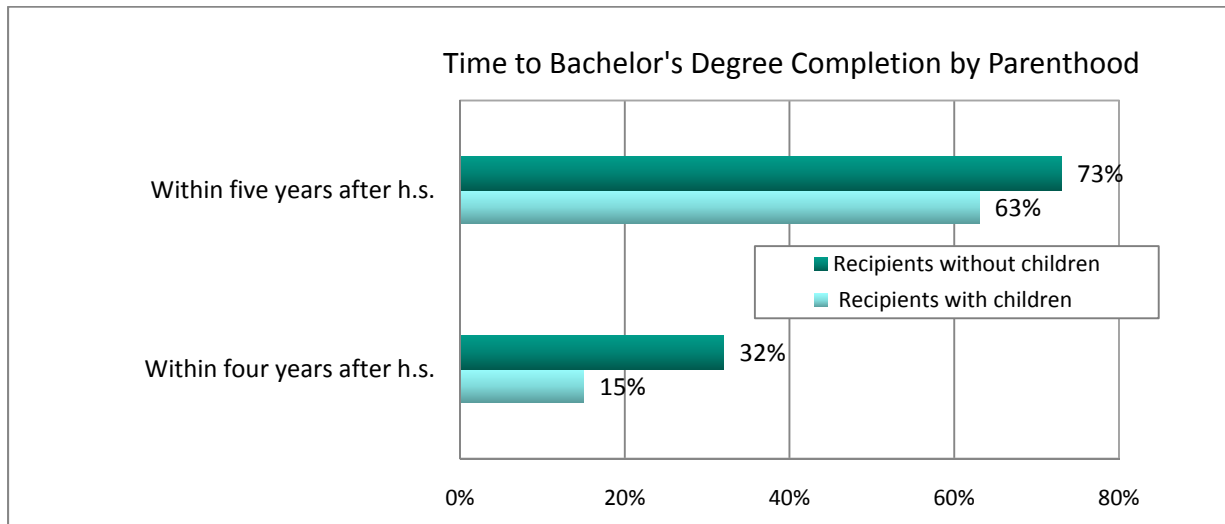
**Time to degree completion by associate's degree attainment.** On average, bachelor's recipients who earned an associate's degree tended to take longer to complete their bachelor's degrees than recipients who did not earn an associate's degree. Only 19 percent of recipients who earned an associate's degree completed their bachelor's degree within four years after high school compared to 35 percent of recipients who did not earn an associate's degree. Close to 59 percent of bachelor's degree recipients with an associate's degree earned their bachelor's degree within five years after high school compared to 79 percent of recipients without an associate's degree.



Source: Cohort I second follow-up survey

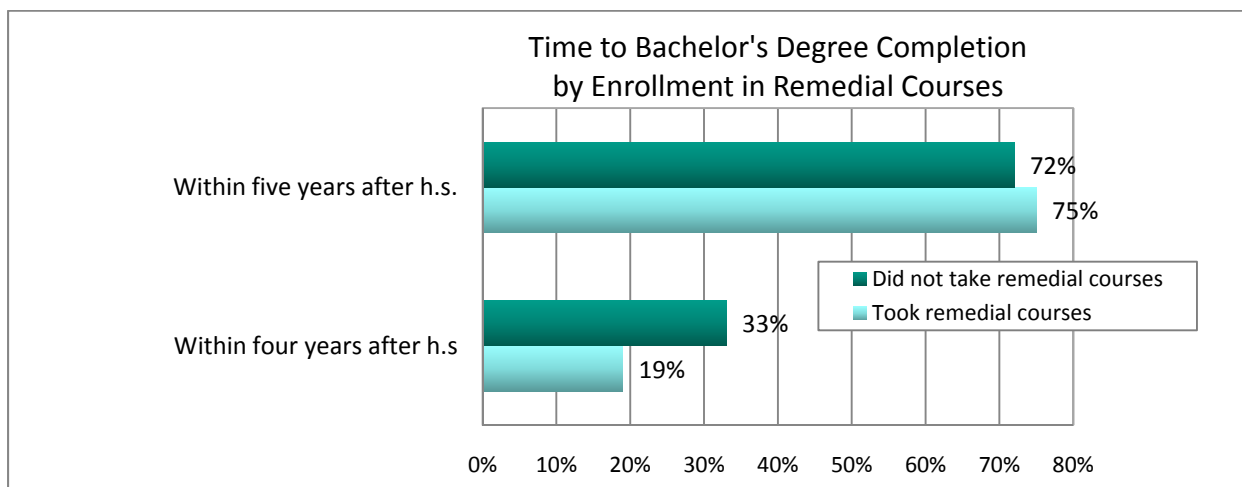
Subpopulation: College-going Achievers who earned at least a bachelor's degree, n = 74 and 144, respectively, for those who did and did not earn an associate's degree

**Time to degree completion by parenthood.** The small share of bachelor's degree recipients with children (12 percent) tended to take longer to complete their bachelor's degrees than recipients without children. Close to 73 percent of bachelor's degree recipients without children completed their bachelor's degrees within five years after high school compared to 63 percent of recipients with children.



Source: Cohort I second follow-up survey  
 Subpopulation: College-going Achievers who earned at least a bachelor's degree, n = 27 and 191, respectively, for those who did and did not have children

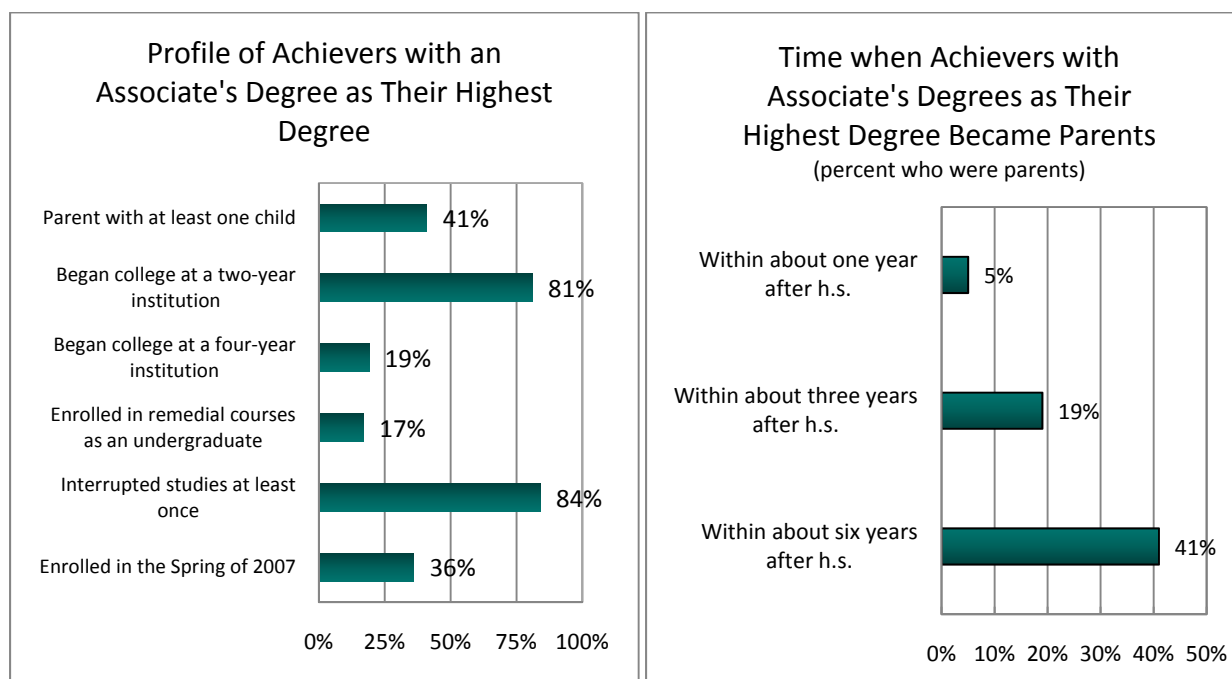
**Time to degree completion by enrollment in remedial courses.** On average, bachelor's degree recipients who took remedial courses while in college tended to take a little longer to complete their bachelor's degrees than recipients who did not take remedial courses. Only 19 percent of recipients who took remedial courses completed their bachelor's degrees within about four years after high school compared to 33 percent of recipients who did not take remedial courses. Nonetheless, more or less comparable shares earned their bachelor's degrees within five years after high school.



Source: Cohort I second follow-up survey  
 Subpopulation: College-going Achievers who earned at least a bachelor's degree, n = 46 and 171, respectively, for those who did and did not take remedial courses

## Achievers with an Associate's Degree as their Highest Degree

As one might expect, the large majority of Achievers who earned an associate's degree as their highest degree began their college careers at two-year institutions. A small share (19 percent) began their studies at four-year institutions, suggesting that they either earned an associate's degree at the institution where they began or transferred to a two-year college. Close to 17 percent took one or more remedial courses as undergraduates and the large majority (84 percent) interrupted their studies at least once before or after completing an associate's degree. Close to 36 percent were enrolled in college in the spring of 2007, the most recent academic year at the time of the second follow-up, suggesting that many were continuing on with their education. More than two out of every five Achievers with an associate's degree as their highest degree were parents by the time of the second follow-up survey. However, only 5 percent were parents within about one year after high school, 19 percent within about three years after high school.

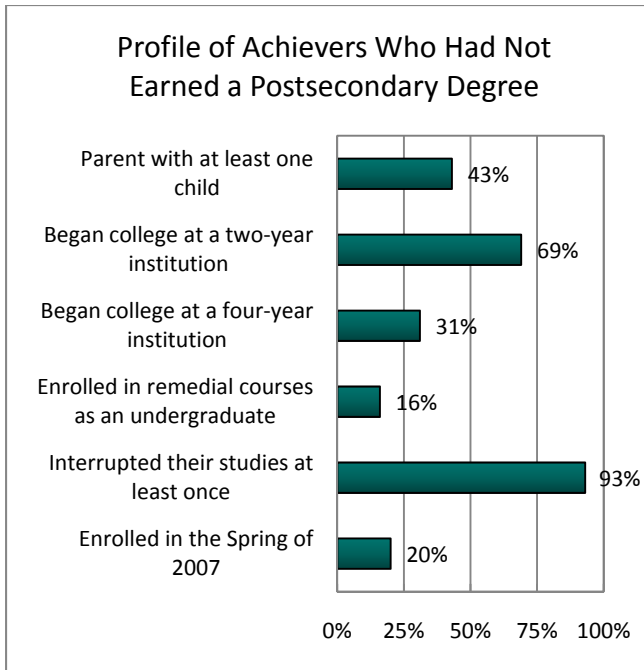


Sources: Cohort I second follow-up survey, CSF program information  
 Subpopulation: Achievers with an associate's degree as their highest degree, n = 68-72

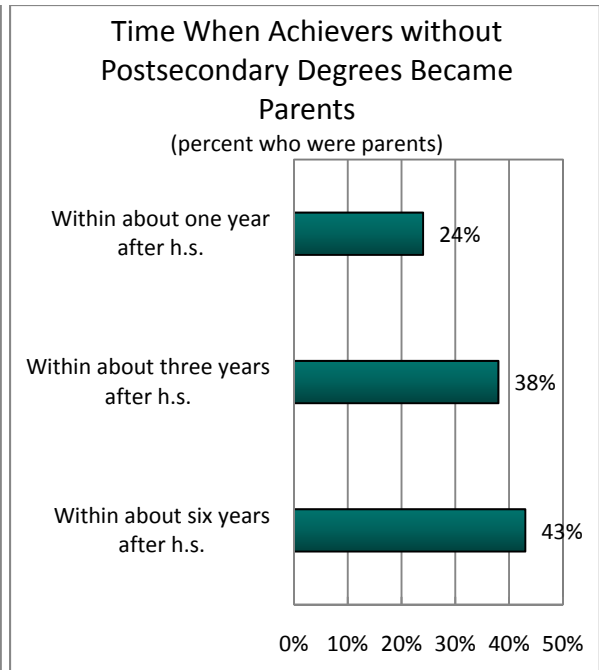
Sources: Cohort I longitudinal data – baseline and second follow-up surveys, Cohort I longitudinal data – first and second follow-up surveys, Cohort I second follow-up survey  
 Subpopulation: Achievers with an associate's degree as their highest degree, n = 58, 52, and 71, respectively

## Achievers without Postsecondary Degrees

Achievers who had not earned a postsecondary degree within about six years after high school were similar to Achievers who earned an associate's degree as their highest degree in a couple of ways. Less than one-fifth took remedial courses as part of their undergraduate programs and more than two out of every five were parents at the time of the second follow-up survey. However, Achievers without postsecondary degrees tended to become parents at an earlier point in time than their degree-earning counterparts. Nearly one in every four was a parent within about a year after high school and almost two in every five were parents within three years after high school. Compared to Achievers with associate's degrees as their highest degree, a larger share of Achievers without postsecondary degrees began their college careers at four-year institutions, a larger share interrupted their studies, and a smaller share were enrolled in college in the spring of 2007, the most recent academic year at the time of the second follow-up survey.

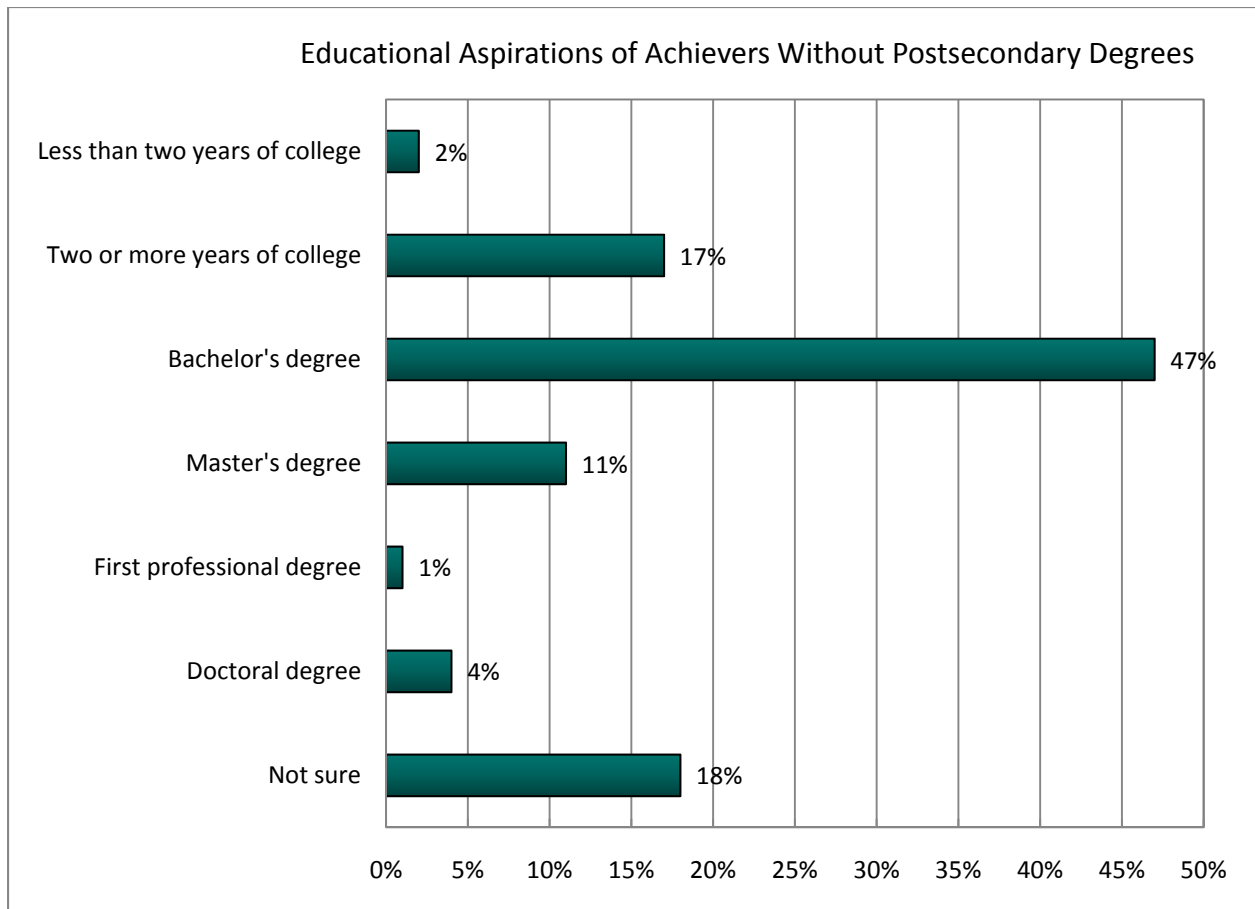


Sources: Cohort I second follow-up survey, CSF program information  
 Subpopulation: Achievers without postsecondary degrees, n = 104-106



Sources: Cohort I longitudinal data – baseline and follow-up surveys, Cohort I longitudinal data – first and second follow-up surveys, Cohort I second follow-up survey  
 Subpopulation: Achievers without postsecondary degrees, n = 80, 59, and 104, respectively

When asked about the highest level of education they expected to complete, the large majority of Achievers without postsecondary degrees (80 percent) said that they anticipated completing at least two years of college. Almost two-thirds said that they expected to earn at least a bachelor's degree.



Source: Cohort I second follow-survey  
 Subpopulation: Achievers without postsecondary degrees, n = 107

When asked what they thought would help them succeed in completing a degree, Achievers without postsecondary degrees mentioned a variety of factors, including:

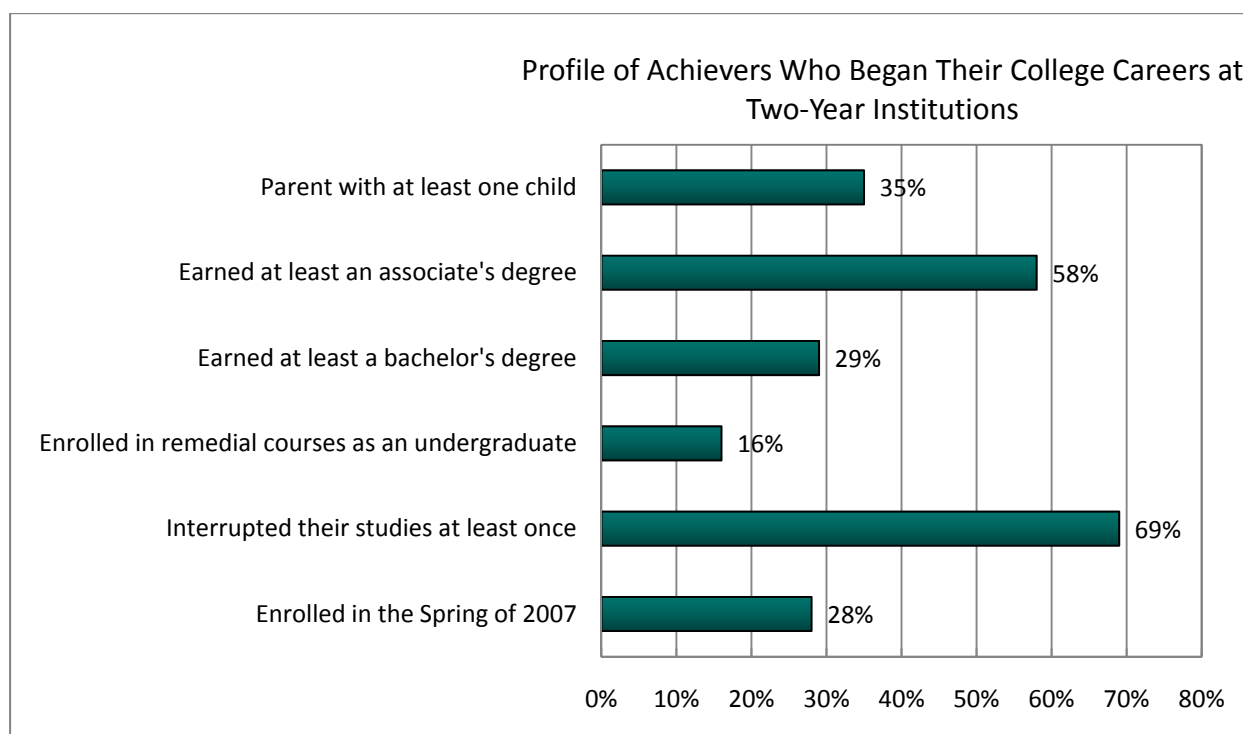
- wider course offerings at night,
- remote access to school resources,
- having a computer at home,
- more flexibility in work schedule, ability to work split shifts,
- support of a mentor,
- guidance on which courses to take,
- availability of tutoring services,
- affordable day care,
- more help with expenses other than tuition, and
- scholarship support while attending college part time.

Many of their responses highlight the challenges low-income students face as work, school, and family obligations compete for their time and attention. Many of their responses also point to changes in institutional policies and practices, such as wider course offerings at night, more scholarship support for part-time students, and flexible work hours, which could have a significant effect on their ability to succeed in completing a postsecondary degree.

## Postsecondary Experiences and Outcomes of Achievers who began their College Careers at Two-Year Institutions

### Overview of Achievers who Began their Studies at Two-Year Institutions

Nearly three out of every five Achievers who began their postsecondary studies at two-year institutions earned at least an associate's degree within about six years after high school and nearly three in every ten earned a bachelor's degree within that time period. Over one-fourth were enrolled in college or graduate school in the spring of 2007, the most recent academic year at the time of the survey. Less than one in every five took remedial courses as part of their undergraduate programs and over two-thirds interrupted their studies at least once since entering college and before earning a bachelor's degree. A little over one-third became parents within about six years after high school.

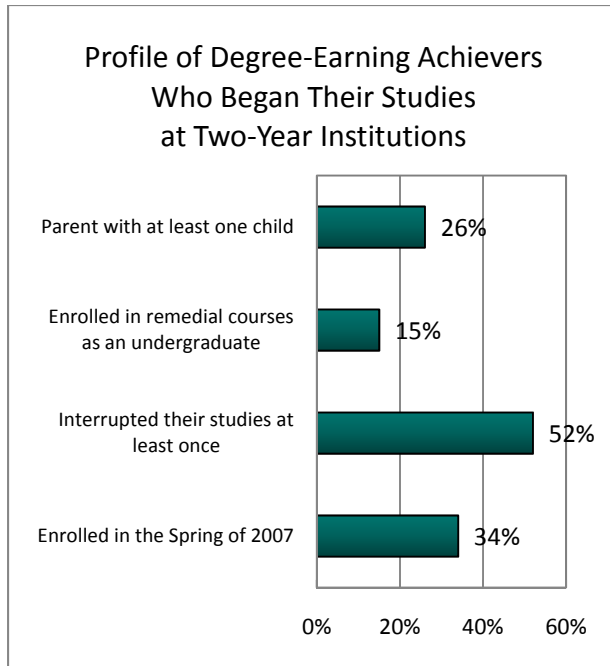


Sources: Cohort I second follow-up survey, CSF program information

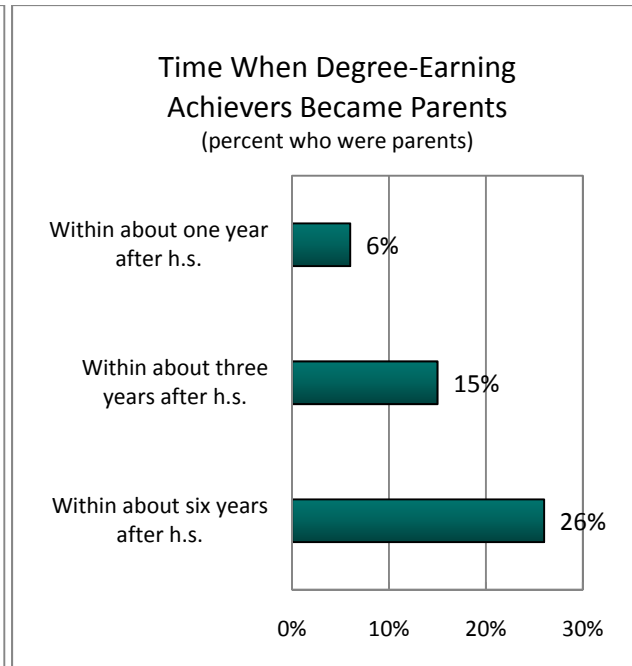
Subpopulation: Achievers who began their college careers at two-year institutions, n = 191-194

### Postsecondary Experiences by Degree Attainment

**Achievers who earned at least an associate's degree.** Over half of all degree-earning Achievers who began their studies at two-year institutions took time off from their studies at least once since entering college. A little more than one in every three was enrolled in college or graduate school in the spring of 2007, suggesting that many were continuing on with their education beyond their current degree. Less than one in every five took remedial courses as an undergraduate and about one in every four was a parent by the time of the second follow-up survey. Only 6 percent were parents within about one year after high school, 15 percent within about three years after high school.

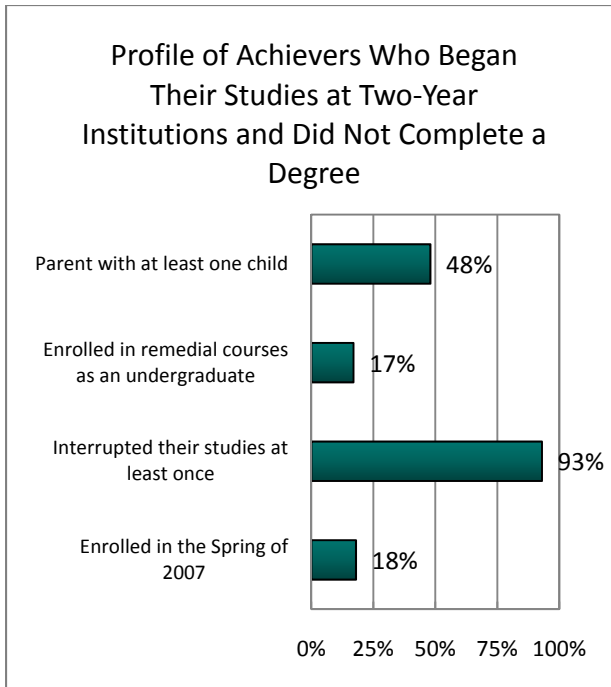


Sources: Cohort I second follow-up survey, CSF program information  
 Subpopulation: Degree-earning Achievers who began their college careers at two-year institutions, n = 122-124

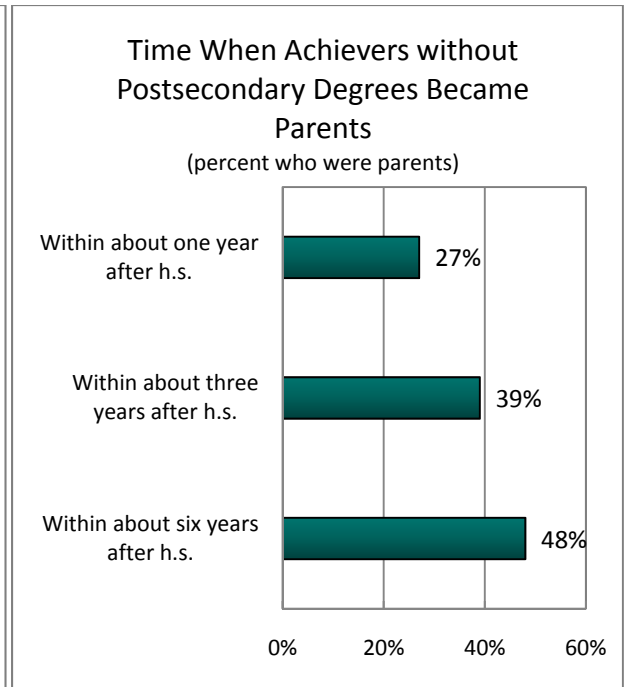


Sources: Cohort I longitudinal data – baseline and second follow-up surveys, Cohort I longitudinal data – first and second follow-up surveys, Cohort I second follow-up survey, CSF program information  
 Subpopulation: Degree-earning Achievers who began their college careers at two-year institutions, n = 112, 99, and 124, respectively

**Achievers without postsecondary degrees.** In contrast to Achievers who earned at least an associate’s degree, more than nine in every ten Achievers without degrees interrupted their studies at least once since entering college and almost half were parents within about six years after high school. More than one in every four became a parent within about a year after high school; almost two in every five were parents within about three years after high school. Like Achievers who earned a postsecondary degree, less than one in every five took remedial courses as part of their undergraduate work.



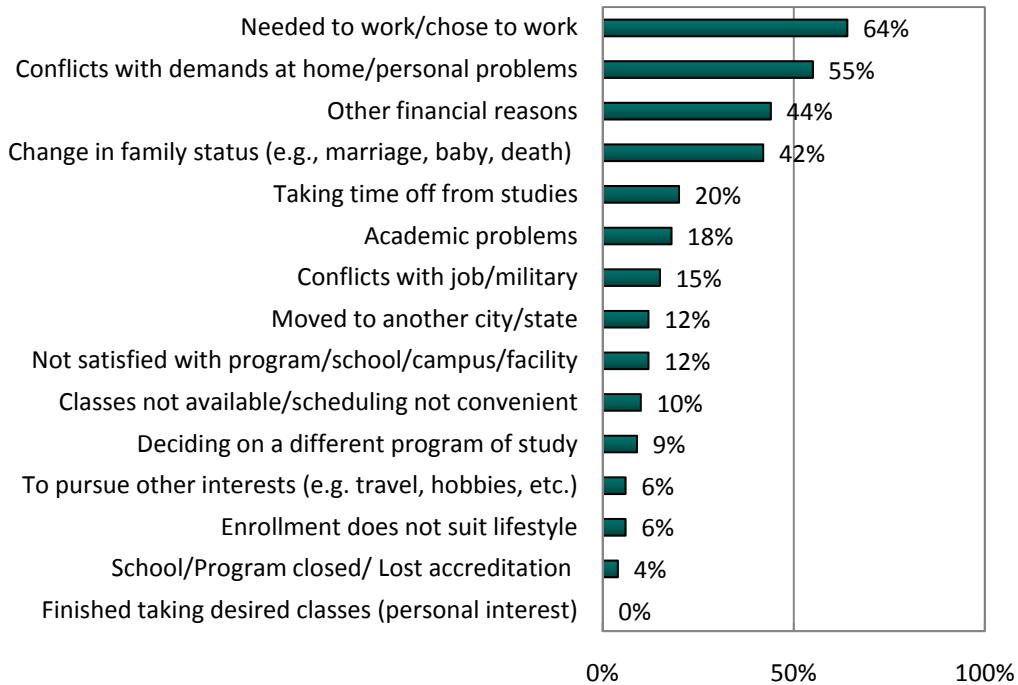
Sources: Cohort I second follow-up survey, CSF program information  
 Subpopulation: Achievers without postsecondary degrees who began their college careers at two-year institutions, n = 68-70



Sources: Cohort I longitudinal data – baseline and second follow-up surveys, Cohort I longitudinal data – first and second follow-up surveys, Cohort I second follow-up survey, CSF program information  
 Subpopulation: Achievers without postsecondary degrees who began their college careers at two-year institutions, n = 49, 35, and 68, respectively

Only 18 percent of Achievers who began their college careers at two-year institutions and did not earn a postsecondary degree were enrolled in college in the spring of 2007. Almost two out of every three who were not enrolled in the spring reported that they were not in school because they *needed or chose to work*. Sizeable shares also mentioned *conflicts with demands at home/personal problems, other financial reasons, or a change in family status* as reasons why they were no longer in school.

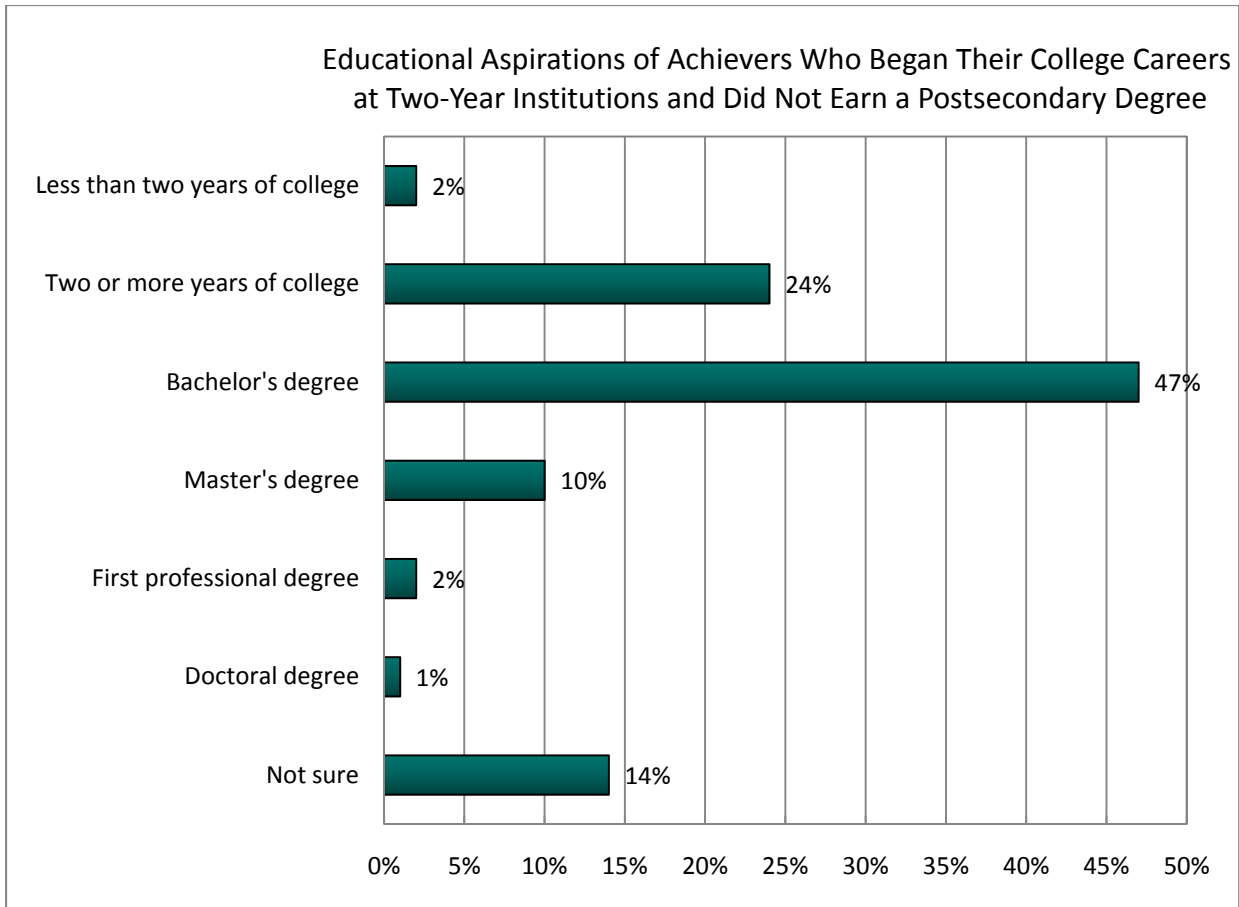
### Reasons Why Achievers Who Began Their College Careers at Two-Year Institutions Were Not Enrolled in School



Sources: Cohort I second follow-up survey, CSF program information

Subpopulation: Achievers without postsecondary degrees who began their college careers at two-year institutions and were not enrolled in the spring of 2007, n = 55

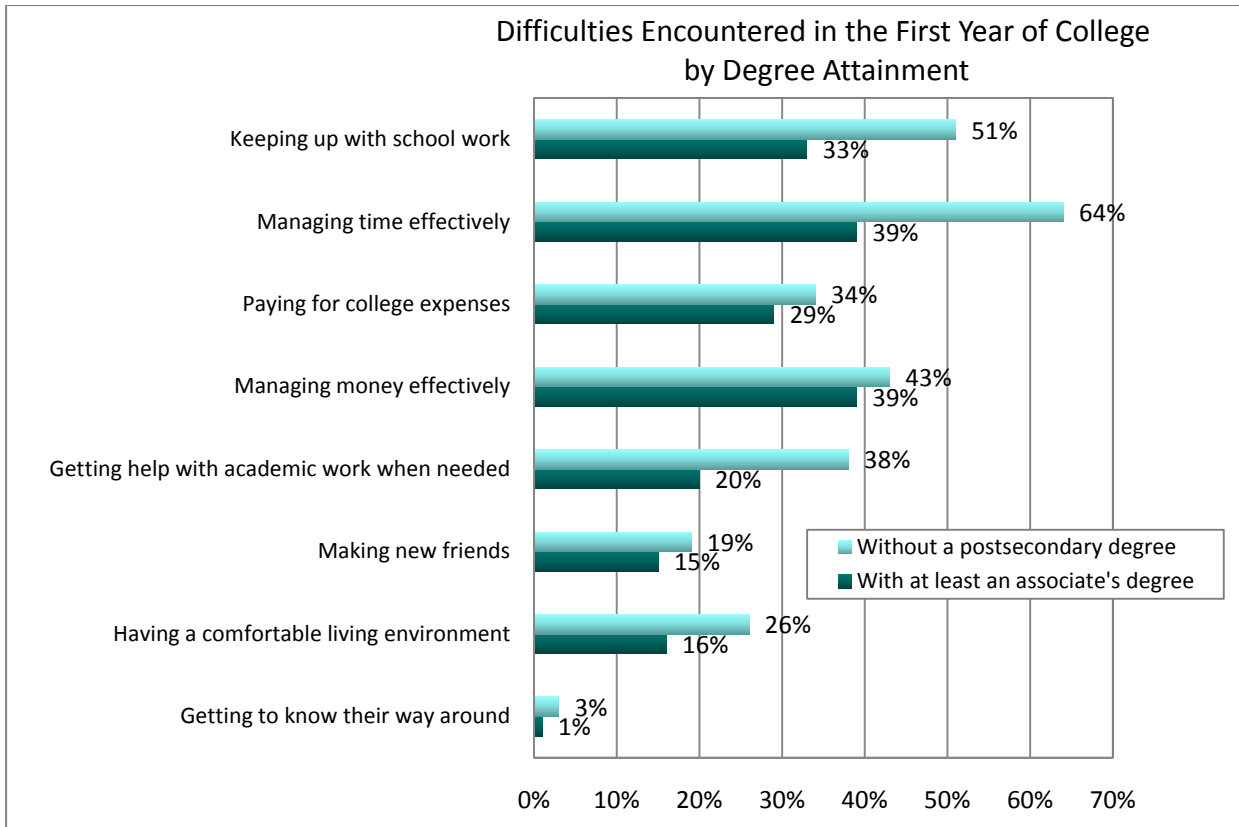
In spite of the difficulties and challenges they faced, 84 percent of Achievers who began their college careers at two-year institutions and did not earn a postsecondary degree aspired to complete at least two years of college sometime in the future, with three out of every five setting their sights on earning at least a bachelor's degree. Fourteen percent were not sure about the highest level of education they expected to complete.



Sources: Cohort I second follow-up survey, CSF program information  
 Subpopulation: Achievers without postsecondary degrees who began their college careers at two-year institutions, n = 70

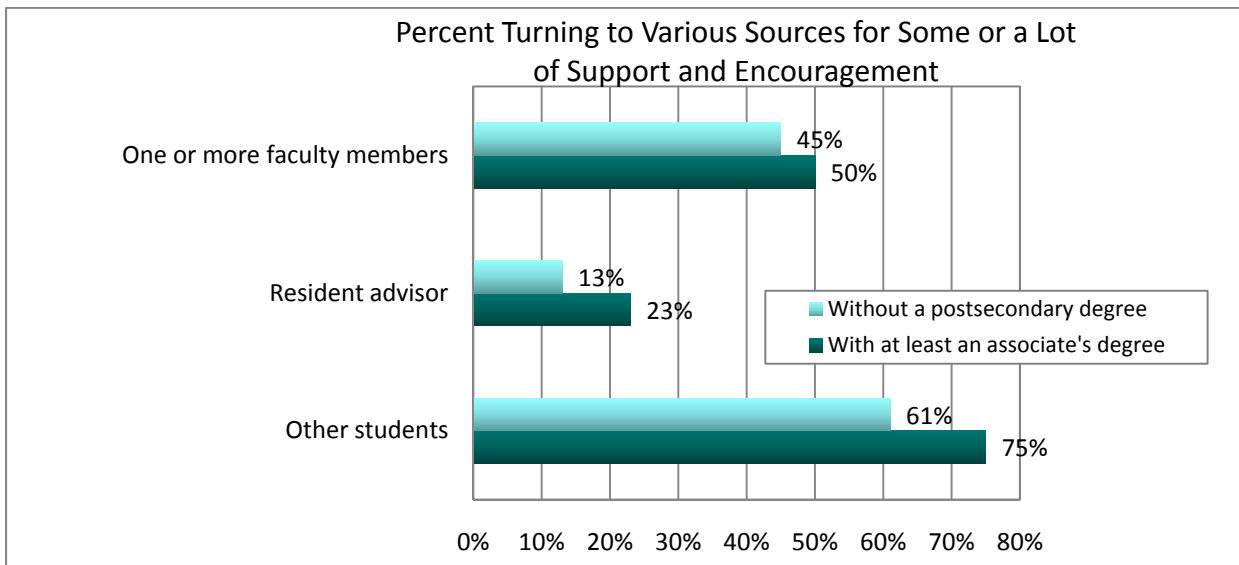
### First Year Experiences by Degree Attainment

**Difficulties and seeking support.** Regardless of whether they earned a postsecondary degree, less than one-fifth of all Achievers who began their college careers at two-year institutions took one or more remedial courses as undergraduates. Even so, Achievers without postsecondary degrees tended to report more academic difficulties in their first year of college than their degree-earning counterparts did. Over half of Achievers without postsecondary degrees said that it was difficult or very difficult for them to keep up with their schoolwork during their first year of college, compared to only one-third of Achievers who earned a postsecondary degree. Almost two out of every five Achievers without postsecondary degrees reported that it was difficult or very difficult for them to get help with academic work when needed, compared to only one in every five who earned a postsecondary degree. Achievers without postsecondary degrees also reported more difficulty effectively managing their time during the first year of college than their degree-earning counterparts did.



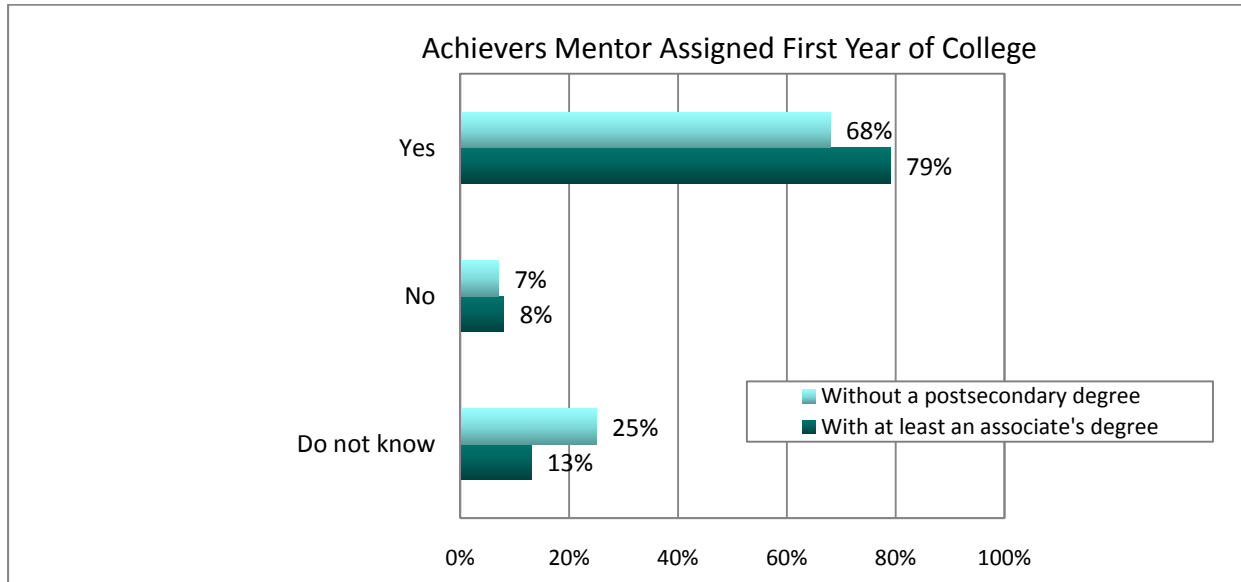
Sources: Cohort I longitudinal data – baseline and second follow-up surveys, CSF program information  
 Subpopulation: Achievers who began their college careers at two-year institutions, n = 111-112 and 47, respectively, for Achievers with and without postsecondary degrees

In spite of their higher levels of difficulty, Achievers without postsecondary degrees tended to seek support and encouragement from faculty members, resident advisors, and other students at lower rates than their degree-earning counterparts.



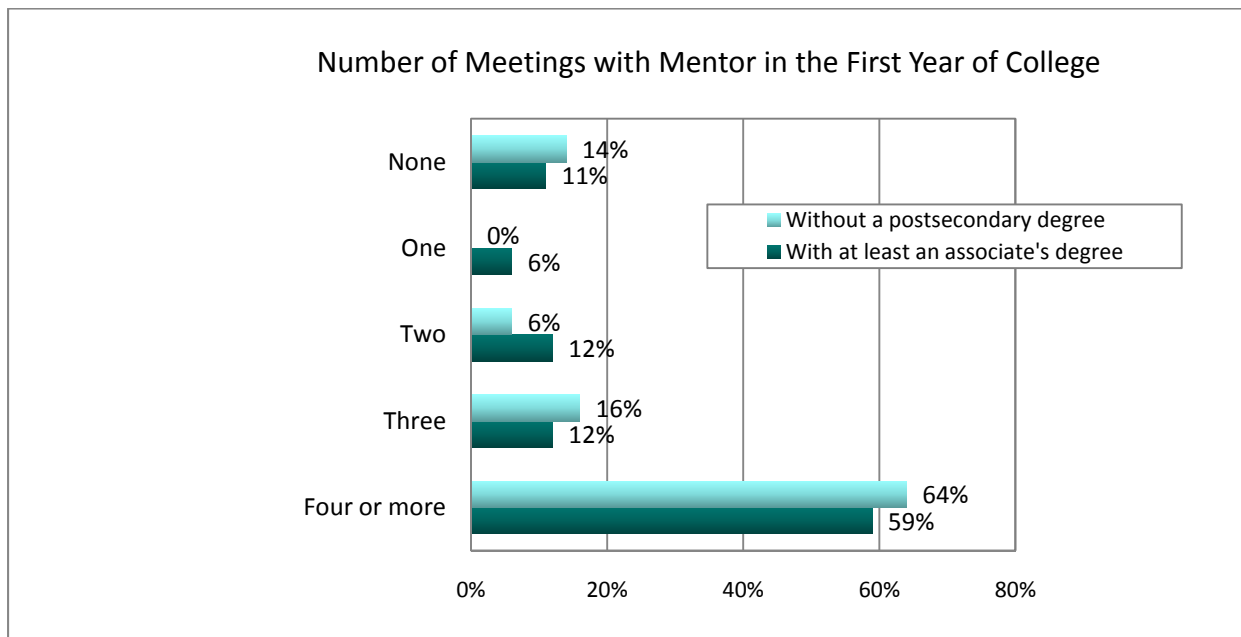
Sources: Cohort I longitudinal data – baseline and second follow-up surveys, CSF program information  
 Subpopulation: Achievers who began their college careers at two-year institutions, n = 112 and 47, respectively, for Achievers with and without postsecondary degrees

**Experiences with the Achievers Mentor Program.** Almost eight in every ten degree-earning Achievers who began their studies at two-year institutions reported that they had an Achievers Mentor assigned to them during their first year of college. About seven in every ten of their non-degree-earning counterparts reported that they had a Mentor assigned to them.



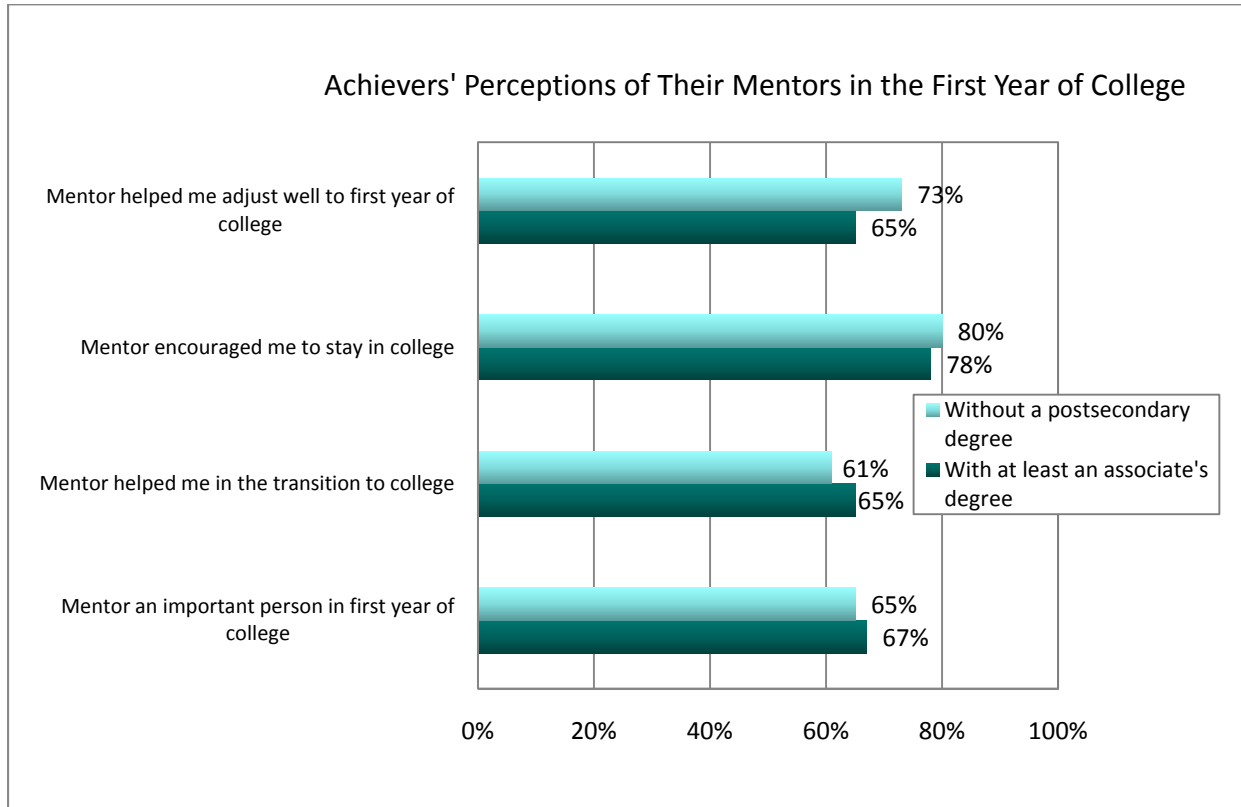
Sources: Cohort I longitudinal data – baseline and second follow-up surveys, CSF program information  
 Subpopulation: Achievers who began their college careers at two-year institutions, n = 112 and 48, respectively, for Achievers with and without postsecondary degrees

Regardless of whether they earned a postsecondary degree, more than eight out of every ten Achievers with Mentors reported that they met with their Mentors at least twice during their first year in college and well over half reported that they met with their Mentors four or more times during the first year.



Sources: Cohort I longitudinal data – baseline and second follow-up surveys, CSF program information  
 Subpopulation: Achievers with Mentors who began their college careers at two-year institutions, n = 92 and 33, respectively, for Achievers with and without postsecondary degrees

Regardless of whether they earned a postsecondary degree, the majority of Achievers with Mentors reported that they had a meaningful and supportive relationship with their Mentor during their first year of college. Well over half of Achievers with Mentors agreed or strongly agreed that their Mentors helped them adjust to their first year of college, helped them with the transition to college, encouraged them to stay in college, and were important persons to them in their first year of college.



Sources: Cohort I longitudinal data – baseline and second follow-up surveys, CSF program information  
 Subpopulation: Achievers with Mentors who began their college careers at two-year institutions, n = 92 and 33, respectively, for Achievers with and without postsecondary degrees

## Appendix

### Content of the Graphs

The graphs include information from the baseline, first follow-up, and second follow-up surveys of college-going members of the inaugural cohort of Achievers who completed the second follow-up survey. The large majority of the graphs draw on information in the cross-sectional dataset from the second follow-up survey.<sup>5</sup> However, several graphs rely on a combination of information in the cross-sectional dataset for the second follow-up survey and the longitudinal datasets from the baseline and second follow-up surveys and the first and second follow-up surveys.<sup>6</sup>

For any given analysis, we chose the datasets that would provide the most precise estimates of the subpopulation values. To explore the relationship between the first-year experiences of Achievers who began their studies at two-year institutions, for example, we relied on the longitudinal dataset from the baseline and second follow-up surveys. That dataset contains the largest number of respondents for whom data are available on first-year experiences in college and degree attainment about six years after high school. To obtain estimates of the subpopulation percents, the data were weighted for non-response using the longitudinal weights for the baseline and second follow-up surveys to take into account Achievers who did not respond to both surveys. Similarly, to estimate the percent of college-going Achievers who were parents within six years after high school we relied on the cross-sectional dataset for the second follow-up survey. To estimate when those Achievers became parents, we relied on information in the longitudinal dataset from the baseline and second follow-up surveys and the longitudinal dataset from the first and second follow-up surveys. To obtain estimates of the subpopulation percents, the data were again weighted for non-response using the corresponding cross-sectional or longitudinal weights.

Below each graph we note 1) the source(s) of the information in the graph, 2) the subpopulation of Achievers it represents, and 3) the number of respondents (denoted as “n”) on which the subpopulation estimates in the graph are based. Note that in some graphs the number of respondents is shown as a range rather than a single value to indicate that the number varied slightly from measure to measure because either a few Achievers declined to answer all the questions or program information was not available for a few Achievers. In graphs where we drew the information from more than one dataset, we show the number of respondents in the subpopulation under consideration separately for each dataset in the order the datasets are listed as sources.

Several of the graphs reference the College Success Foundation (CSF) program as a source of information. All of these graphs relied on information kindly provided by CSF on the type of institution of first enrollment.

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<sup>5</sup> The cross-sectional dataset from the second follow-up survey includes the responses of all Achievers who took part in the second follow-up survey.

<sup>6</sup> The longitudinal datasets include survey responses from more than one round of data collection. They include the responses of Achievers who took part in all of the surveys represented in the longitudinal dataset. The baseline and second follow-up longitudinal dataset, for example, includes the responses to the baseline and second follow-up surveys of all Achievers who participated in both of those surveys.

