



Alaska Performance Scholarship

BREAKING BARRIERS: Student Insights on the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS)

SUPPORTING THE APS SUPPORTS ALASKA'S STUDENTS



Since 2011, the APS has helped retain educated & skilled Alaskans as contributors to the Alaskan economy. Despite the award's benefits, APS usage has declined. This decline prompted ACPE to connect with Alaska's students to **IDENTIFY APS BARRIERS & THE SOLUTIONS NEEDED** to make APS relevant for future Alaskans.



APS offers incentive for Alaska students to **excel in high school & prepares them for college & career training**.^{3,4}



APS helps Alaska students **persist & complete college**: APS students are over two times more likely to graduate with a Bachelor's degree.⁴



APS retains **skilled Alaskans in Alaska**: APS influences high school graduates to attend college & career training in-state, & APS recipients have higher residency rates after college graduation.⁴

(see APS At-A-Glance @ ACPE.Alaska.gov/Portals/3/APS/Pubs/APS_At-A-Glance_2023.pdf)



Earlier Award Notification & Program Awareness

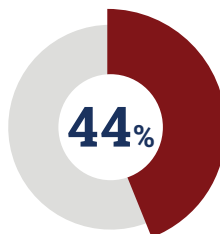
BARRIER: TIMING OF AWARD NOTIFICATION

LATE AWARD NOTIFICATION



#1 BARRIER EXPERIENCED by APS-eligible students (39%)²

#2 BARRIER EXPERIENCED by ineligible students (53%)³



Late timing of award notification eliminates the APS as a factor in **nearly half of students' postsecondary decisions**.^{1,4}

"As far as competitiveness goes, the APS doesn't benefit Alaska schools because students have already made their decisions when the awards come out."

- FINANCIAL AID DIRECTOR

BARRIER: PROGRAM AWARENESS

Both APS-eligible & ineligible students cite lack of knowledge as a major barrier to qualifying for the APS.^{1,2,3}

5 IN 10 ●●●●●
Knew APS qualification status

Ineligible students during high school³

3 IN 10 ●●●●●
Were familiar with the APS

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior
43%

+ SENIOR YEAR
When most students receive information about the APS.^{1,3}

For seniors hearing about the APS, there is little time to prepare or make up missing APS eligibility requirements.^{2,3}

RECEIVING MORE INFORMATION SOONER ABOUT THE APS

Top factor that would have helped ineligible students achieve APS eligibility (over 50%).^{1,3}

+ LEARNING ABOUT APS ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS LATE
Top factor contributing to qualification difficulties for APS-eligible students.²



Reassess Standardized Testing

BARRIER: TEST SCORES

Across all surveys, the most common feedback provided by students conveyed **difficulties with standardized test scores.**^{1,2,3}



7 IN 10

of Alaska's graduating high school seniors who did not meet APS eligibility requirements fell short of the testing score requirement.¹

LOW STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES

Top reason for not qualifying among ineligible graduates interested in the APS.^{1,3}

ACT, SAT, & WorkKeys

"We have many students who are college-bound & who do very well, but the minimum test scores... prevent English Language Learners (ELL students) in particular from qualifying."

- FINANCIAL AID DIRECTOR

BARRIER: LACK OF ACCESSIBILITY TO TESTS

DIFFICULTY ACCESSING TESTING

#3 BARRIER EXPERIENCED

by APS-eligible students (22%)² & ineligible students (31%)³

+ **Unable to physically access** testing locations, particularly students from rural areas¹

+ **Limited testing accommodations** & preparation opportunities^{1,2,3}



Student aspirations are further restricted by academic & CTE award distinction (separate pathways require different tests & scores).¹



Increase Award Value

APS COMPETITIVENESS IS **DIMINISHING** IN AMOUNT & FUNCTIONALITY



Key contributor to reduced award use.¹

BARRIER: AWARD AMOUNT

Award level amounts have remained the same since the program's inception, but the **ABSOLUTE VALUE OF THE DOLLAR AMOUNT HAS DECLINED** with rising costs & inflation.¹

THE AWARD'S DECLINING VALUE HAS NOT GONE UNNOTICED BY STUDENTS:²

"Increase the money offered to students per level as inflation & tuition rises."

"It is a great help to have the APS, though the reward levels aren't that high, even at the highest level. Any increase in scholarship amounts for the student's efforts would be helpful."

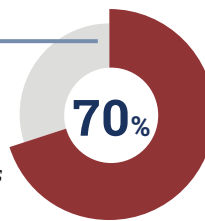


"It could be improved by offering some more money to higher level individuals."

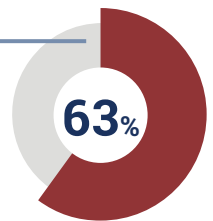
BARRIER: AWARD USE

Despite low eligibility & use, the majority of APS-eligible & ineligible students show an interest in the award, suggesting **significant unmet demand** for the APS.¹

INTERESTED IN QUALIFYING FOR THE APS (ineligible graduates aware of the APS).¹



INTENDING TO USE THE APS BEFORE AWARD EXPIRES (APS-eligible graduates).²



Student insights from both APS-eligible & ineligible high school graduates indicate **timing of award notification, test scores, & award value** are barriers that need to be examined to keep the APS award relevant.

ACPE SUPPORTS ONGOING EFFORTS to remove existing barriers in order to increase access & use of the APS. Specific recommendations to address these barriers are outlined in the Recommendations Report.

(visit acpe.alaska.gov/Portals/3/APS/Pubs/ACPE_APS_Program_Review_and_Recs_2021.pdf)

1 - McDowell Group (now McKinley Research Group). 2021. Alaska Performance Scholarship Program, Review and Recommendations. Prepared for ACPE, January 2021. https://acpe.alaska.gov/Portals/3/APS/Pubs/ACPE_APS_Program_Review_and_Recs_2021.pdf

2 - Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education. 2022. APS-Eligible Student Surveys. 249 responses from a population of 1,154 APS-eligible graduates (22% response rate).

3 - Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education. 2022. APS-Ineligible Student Surveys. 243 responses from a population of 4,156 APS-ineligible graduates (6% response rate).

4 - Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education. 2022. Alaska Performance Scholarship Outcomes Report. https://acpe.alaska.gov/Portals/3/APS/Pubs/APS_OutcomesReport_2023.pdf