

## The Condition of College and Career Readiness

This report looks at the progress of the 2016 ACT®-tested graduating class relative to college and career readiness.

This year's report shows that **64%** of students in the 2016 US graduating class took the ACT test, up from 59% in 2015 and 49% in 2011. The increased number of test takers over the past several years enhances the breadth and depth of the data pool, providing a comprehensive picture of the current graduating class in the context of college readiness, as well as offering a glimpse at the emerging educational pipeline.

As a research-based nonprofit organization, ACT is committed to providing information and solutions to support the following:

- **Holistic view of readiness.** The 2014 ACT report, *Broadening the Definition of College and Career Readiness: A Holistic Approach*, shows academic readiness is only one of four critical domains in determining an individual's readiness for success in college and career. Cross-cutting capabilities, behavioral skills, and the ability to navigate future pathways are also important factors to measure and address. Together, these elements define a clear picture of student readiness for postsecondary education.
- **Providing meaningful data for better decisions.** ACT is focused on providing better data to students, parents, schools, districts, and states so that all can make more informed decisions to improve outcomes. We accomplish this goal by taking a holistic view and using consistent and reliable historical information so that individuals and institutions have a better context to make critical decisions about the journey they have undertaken.

# The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2016

## Mississippi Key Findings

### Performance

- The 2016 Mississippi graduating class file reflects census testing in Mississippi for the first time. Census testing began in the 2014–15 school year with all juniors. The number of 2016 Mississippi graduates taking the ACT rose to 35,678, a 18% increase (6,333 students) over the previous year and the largest number of Mississippi graduates ever to take the ACT.
- As seen in other states, the first time a census testing class hits the graduating class report, there is usually a drop in ACT scores and ACT College Readiness Benchmark attainment. Mississippi is no different, as the percent of Mississippi students meeting Benchmarks has declined from last year:
  - ~ The percent meeting zero Benchmarks increased to 50.2% in 2016.
  - ~ 11.3% met all four Benchmarks (12.8% in 2015).
- The average ACT Composite score and average ACT subject area scores declined from last year.
  - ~ Within each subject area and the overall Composite score, the average decrease ranged from 0.3 point (mathematics) to 0.8 point (English).
- More Mississippi graduates across all demographic groups are being exposed to postsecondary opportunities through the ACT than in 2015.
- 276 more Mississippi graduates across all demographic groups are prepared for college than in 2015, as indicated by meeting all four ACT Benchmarks.
- More Mississippi graduates are now meeting the ACT requirement for Mississippi state scholarships than ever before:
  - ~ Mississippi Tuition Assistance Grant (qualifying ACT score of 15)—3,143 additional graduates in 2016 earned the qualifying ACT score (27,737 qualified in 2016; 24,594 qualified in 2015).
  - ~ Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant (qualifying ACT score of 29)—146 additional graduates earned the qualifying ACT score (1,519 qualified in 2016; 1,373 qualified in 2015)  
Note that these two programs also have GPA requirements.
- 2,567 more Mississippi graduates are now meeting the minimum ACT score (16) required for admission into Mississippi's public universities:
  - ~ 24,438 graduates earned an ACT Composite score of 16 in 2016; only 21,871 achieved that score in 2015.

### STEM

- Mississippi graduates who took advanced science and math courses show higher levels of achievement:
  - ~ Students who took physics earned significantly higher average ACT science scores and were more likely to meet or surpass the ACT College Readiness Benchmark in science than those who did not.
  - ~ Students who took a fourth year of math in high school, regardless of course, significantly outperformed those students who did not, in both ACT mathematics scores and in Benchmark attainment.

## Career Readiness

- This year, for the first time, ACT has provided an indicator of career readiness based on ACT composite scores. Table 3.4 in the state ACT Profile Report details how ACT-tested Mississippi graduates are progressing toward the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate™ (ACT NCRC®).
- Progress toward career readiness is based on research linking ACT Composite scores to ACT NCRC levels. The ACT Composite cut score for each ACT NCRC level corresponds to a 50% chance of obtaining that level. If a student's ACT Composite score surpassed the cut score for an ACT NCRC level, they are categorized as making progress towards the next higher ACT NCRC level. Attainment of ACT NCRC levels indicates workplace employability skills that are critical to job success.
- In Mississippi, 50% of ACT tested graduates are considered making progress towards at least a gold ACT NCRC level. This compares to 68% nationally.

## Behaviors that Impact Access and Opportunity

- Testing patterns
  - ~ In 2008, 41% of the ACT-taking graduates waited until their senior year to test. After the adoption of ACT statewide testing in Mississippi, only 6% of 2016 graduates waited until their senior year to test.
  - ~ 2016 Mississippi graduates who retested on the ACT often obtained higher scores than students who took the ACT only once.
  - ~ Of the graduates who tested multiple times:
    - 26% first tested in their sophomore year. These graduates increased their score by 2.8 points and scored 4.7 points higher than 10th-grade students who tested only once.
    - 71% first tested in their junior year. These graduates increased their score by 1 point and scored 2.7 points higher than 11th-grade students who tested only once.
    - 4% first tested in their senior year. These graduates increased their score by 0.5 point and scored 0.5 point higher than 12th-grade students who tested only once.
- Below are the top five colleges and universities to which Mississippi graduates sent their ACT scores:
  - ~ Mississippi State University (12,731)
  - ~ University of Mississippi (8,932)
  - ~ University of Southern Mississippi (6,680)
  - ~ Jackson State University (3,342)
  - ~ Jones County Junior College (2,727)
- Colleges and universities received 100,353 ACT score reports from 2016 Mississippi graduates—the largest number in Mississippi's history.

- 82.9% of ACT-tested 2016 Mississippi graduates opted in to EOS. By opting in, students allow colleges and universities to communicate with them about various academic majors, scholarships, and student life opportunities.
- ACT has made many underserved students' names available to colleges free-of-charge through the "Get Your Name in the Game" campaign. Nine Mississippi colleges and universities have communicated with these students.
- Fee Waiver Usage
  - ~ In Mississippi, there were 20,927 fee waivers issued and 16,080 of those were used. This equates to a 76.8% usage rate. The national rate was 74.5%.
  - ~ ACT provides students fee waivers to provide more access and opportunity for students.

## Pipeline

- Aspirations matter. Students in Mississippi who aspire to a higher level of postsecondary education achieve higher ACT Composite scores:
  - ~ Graduates who aspire to a graduate degree earn an average Composite score of 20.8.
  - ~ Graduates who aspire to a bachelor's degree earn an average Composite score of 18.3.
  - ~ Graduates who aspire to an associate's degree earn an average Composite score of 15.6.
- It is notable that 87% of Mississippi graduates would like to attend some type of postsecondary institution after graduating.

## ACT Footprint

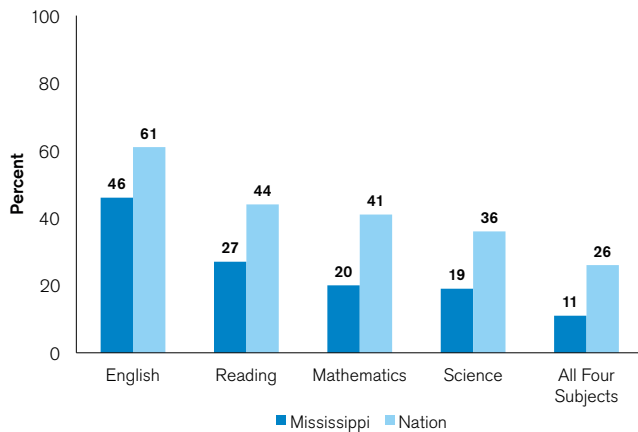
| ACT Aspire® Summative | ACT Aspire® Periodic | ACT Engage® | ACT QualityCore® | PreACT™ | ACT WorkKeys® |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------|------------------|---------|---------------|
| 57,616                | 5,412                | 251         | 141              | —*      | 31,386        |

\* PreACT refers to preorders for FY17.

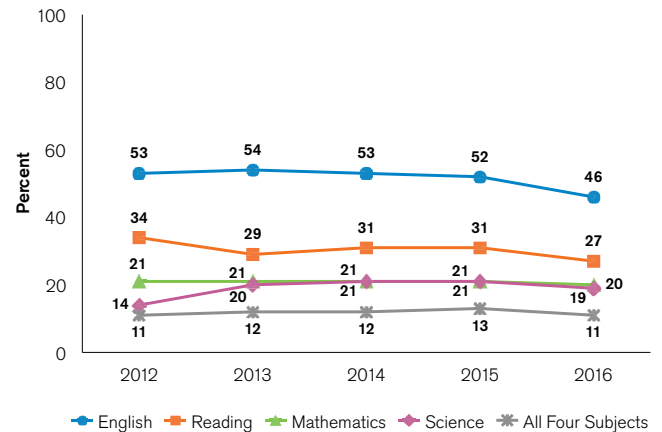
# Your State College and Career Readiness Attainment, Participation, and Opportunity

## Mississippi

Percent of 2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject



Percent of 2012–2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks\*



Note: Percents in this report may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

\* ACT College Readiness Benchmarks in reading and science were revised in 2013.

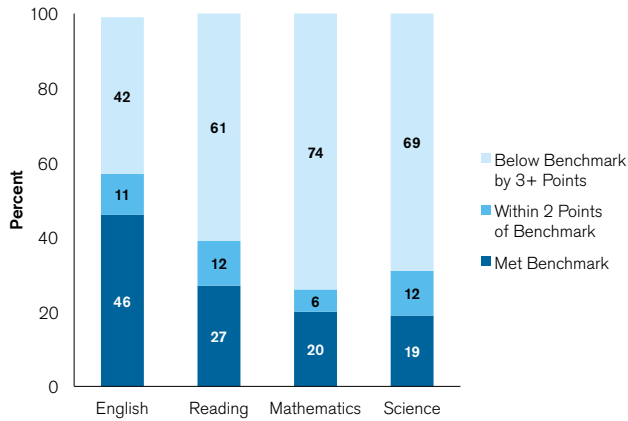
## Student Data Trends

- Between 2012 and 2016, the number of students taking the ACT in Mississippi increased by 26.1%.

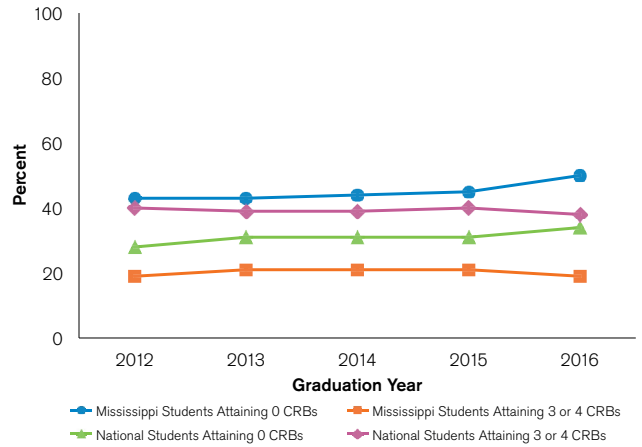
Student Condition Data Interest Trends: 2012–2016, State vs. Nation

| Outcome                   | Cohort      | 2012      | 2013      | 2014      | 2015      | 2016      |
|---------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Percent Tested            | Mississippi | 100%      | 95%       | 100%      | 100%      | 100%      |
|                           | Nation      | 52%       | 54%       | 57%       | 59%       | 64%       |
| N Tested                  | Mississippi | 28,288    | 27,749    | 28,481    | 29,345    | 35,678    |
|                           | Nation      | 1,666,017 | 1,799,243 | 1,845,787 | 1,924,436 | 2,090,342 |
| Average English Score     | Mississippi | 18.6      | 18.8      | 18.8      | 18.7      | 17.9      |
|                           | Nation      | 20.5      | 20.2      | 20.3      | 20.4      | 20.1      |
| Average Reading Score     | Mississippi | 18.9      | 19.1      | 19.4      | 19.3      | 18.7      |
|                           | Nation      | 21.3      | 21.1      | 21.3      | 21.4      | 21.3      |
| Average Mathematics Score | Mississippi | 18.3      | 18.3      | 18.3      | 18.3      | 18        |
|                           | Nation      | 21.1      | 20.9      | 20.9      | 20.8      | 20.6      |
| Average Science Score     | Mississippi | 18.7      | 18.8      | 18.9      | 19        | 18.5      |
|                           | Nation      | 20.9      | 20.7      | 20.8      | 20.9      | 20.8      |
| Average Composite Score   | Mississippi | 18.7      | 18.9      | 19        | 19        | 18.4      |
|                           | Nation      | 21.1      | 20.9      | 21        | 21        | 20.8      |

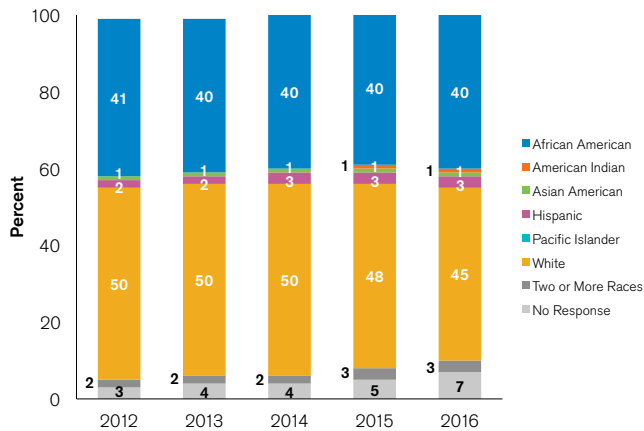
**Percent of 2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment and Subject**



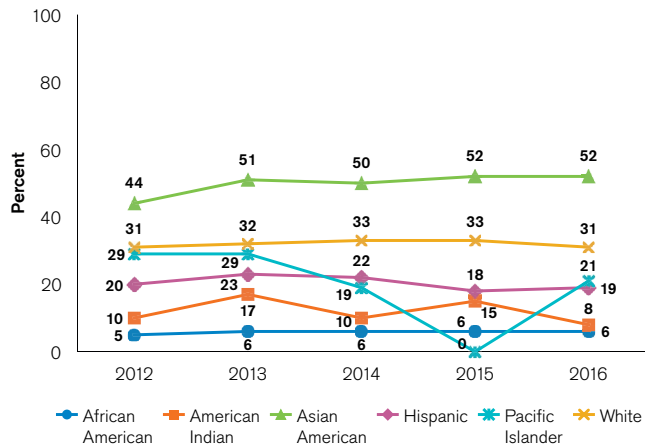
**Trends in Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks (CRBs) Attained**



**Percent of 2012–2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity**

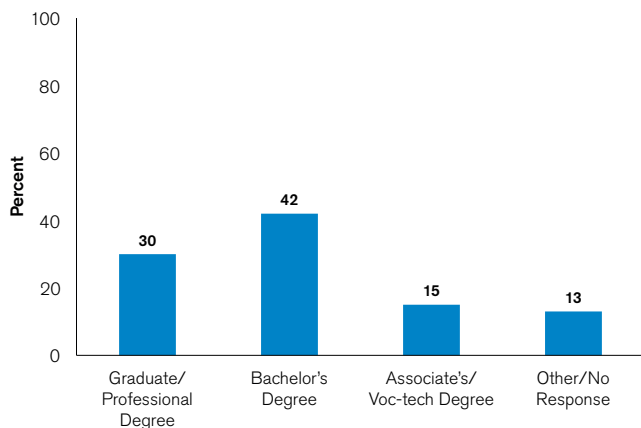


**Percent of 2012–2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting Three or More Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity**



Note: Values less than 0.5% will not appear.

**Percent of 2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Educational Aspirations**



There is good news in that 87% of Mississippi's 2016 ACT-tested graduates aspired to postsecondary education. Interestingly enough, 91% of Mississippi's 2015 ACT-tested graduating class aspired to enroll in postsecondary education, compared to 71% who actually did enroll. If we fully closed the aspirational gap, an additional 5,794 of the 2015 ACT-tested graduates from Mississippi would have enrolled in postsecondary education.

## What You Need to Know

At ACT, we are inspired every day to make a positive difference. Here are a few ways we are making an impact each day in the lives of students, teachers, education, policy makers, and workforce leaders.

### The ACT<sup>®</sup>

- Enhancements to ACT Score Reports starting in September 2016
- Introduction of ACT Kaplan Online Prep Live in September 2016
- New Score Reports

### Pre ACT<sup>™</sup>

- Affordable cost—\$12 per student tested for schools, districts, and states
- Flexible administration—Schools, districts, and/or states may administer on any date between September 1, 2016 and June 1, 2017
- Structured test environment—Similar to what the student will experience when taking the ACT test

### Online Prep Live

#### ACT<sup>®</sup> KAPLAN

- A virtual classroom experience that delivers all the benefits of ACT Online Prep, plus an interactive teaching experience
- Live learning experiences available at no cost to students who register for the ACT using a fee waiver
- Recorded sessions available on demand to provide maximum flexibility to students

### ACT<sup>®</sup> Aspire<sup>®</sup>

- New Performance Level Descriptors coming in August 2016
- More than 5 million ACT Aspire online assessments administered to US students since January 2016, a major milestone for the program and up by more than 130% compared to the previous year
- New Score Reports

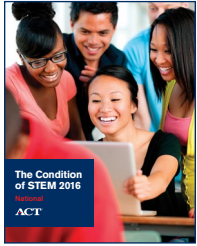
### ACT<sup>®</sup> Engage<sup>®</sup>

- Helps schools face the challenge of preparing students for success after high school. Read the latest white paper, *Identifying Skills to Succeed in School, at Work, and in the "Real World."*
- New Score Reports

### ACT<sup>®</sup> WorkKeys<sup>®</sup>

- Updated versions of the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate (ACT NCRC) assessments and credential coming in summer 2017
- Fully updated ACT WorkKeys curriculum and test prep available in summer 2017 to support the updated ACT NCRC assessments
- Will include a new test delivery platform that will introduce features and functionality important to ACT WorkKeys customers

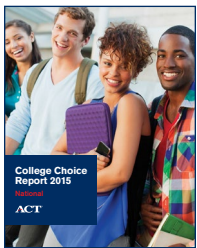
## Key ACT Research



### **The Condition of STEM 2016— Releasing November 2016**

This report provides national and state data about the 2016 graduating class in

the context of STEM-related fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) to determine student interest levels in specific STEM fields and, more importantly, readiness in math and science of those interested in STEM careers.



### **College Choice Report 2015**

This report follows the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2015, focusing on specific testing behaviors that

may expand college opportunities available to students. This is an important topic for enrollment managers and admissions officers to consider, as students' participation in these testing behaviors have implications for colleges' chances to recruit, advise, and place these prospective students.

## Recommendations

### **1. Create an assessment model that measures a variety of skill domains and competencies required for college and career success.**

Historically, college and career readiness assessments have focused only on academic skills. ACT research has clearly established areas of competency important for college and career readiness success. While our research shows that ACT solutions independently measure key components of college AND career readiness, we and others have begun to realize that no single solution can measure the full breadth of this readiness, nor should it. Simply put, the ACT alone is not enough to measure the full breadth of career readiness. A more holistic assessment model, incorporating multiple domains and specific skills associated with career clusters or occupations, will typically be most appropriate for describing and evaluating student readiness for college and career.

### **2. Optimize opportunities to influence awareness and engagement of underserved learners.**

Initiatives designed to aid underserved learners are only as effective as they are visible. We must inform advocates and ALL underserved learners about the available and effective programs designed for this purpose. For example, in the 2015–2016 academic year, approximately 730,000 students registered to take the ACT using fee waivers valued at more than \$36 million. Yet, not all eligible students took advantage of this offer. Similarly, institutions must use data to inform intervention strategies if they are going to help underserved students be prepared for postsecondary success.

### **3. Take the guesswork out of STEM.**

It is critically important to align STEM initiatives to capitalize on performance, measured interest, and expressed interest. Essential to this effort is expanding and nurturing interest in STEM, which will impact the emerging pipeline of STEM majors, teachers, and workers. This requires capturing a wider range of students and employing concrete measures to inform intervention and programming. To do so, states and districts must look for partnering opportunities from K–12 to postsecondary education to the workplace.

### **4. Focus on the implementation of fewer, higher, clearer, standards in K–12 classrooms to raise the bar for all students.**

No matter the adopted standards, proper implementation must focus on the most critical component for increasing readiness—effective, high-quality teaching. This requires investment in postsecondary teaching programs, professional development, and state-level collaboration among K–12 and higher education.

### **5. Don't over test students.**

When states, schools, and districts build an assessment strategy that recognizes the limits and promise of test scores, they will reduce the likelihood of over testing. Used ethically and appropriately, assessments can inform decisions at individual and institutional levels. Misunderstood, misused, or abused, assessments cause confusion, can be perceived as punitive, or result in ill-conceived strategies. To quote ACT founder E.F. Lindquist, "Assessment is valuable to the extent it bridges teaching and learning."