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DO THEY DO WHAT THEY SAY THEY WILL DO?

SANDRA W. LUTZ

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Summary

In the spring of 1966, a follow-up study of the original form of the ACT Student Profile Section was conducted at 35 colleges. As a part of the larger study, the question of how accurately students' pre-college responses predicted their behavior and plans during the first year of college was investigated. The follow-up data were paired with original data for 5,617 students. The results indicate that students in their first year of college generally do what they say they will do, or something closely related to it. When students fail to follow through, their behavior seems to reflect not only a change of mind but also a change in the policies and opportunities presented by their colleges. These outcomes imply that the Student Profile Section data can be of value to colleges in planning for and counseling with entering students.

# DO THEY DO WHAT THEY SAY THEY WILL DO?

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In September, 1965, the Student Profile Section (SPS) was added to the ACT battery to provide colleges with more information about prospective students. In the SPS, the student provides three kinds of information: factual personal data (e.g., age, size of graduating class), self-reports of past nonclassroom achievements (e.g., performed an independent scientific experiment, had a lead in a high school play), and expected future needs and activities (e.g., need for financial aid, anticipated major field, expected extracurricular participation). Previous ACT Research Reports have examined the usefulness of the first and second areas of the SPS. (See ACT Research Reports Nos. 8, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23.) The present study is concerned with the third area of information--expected future needs and activities.

The "expectation" questions were written to serve two purposes: to provide an opportunity for a student to alert his college about his plans for the future; and to provide information which would enable colleges to make better plans for dealing with the needs and desires of incoming students. To serve these purposes effectively, the information gathered from the students must accurately reflect their actual behavior and planning in the college setting. This study aims to discover how accurately the information provided by the pre-college student reflects that student's

behavior during his first year of college.

## Method

### The Instruments

An initial and a follow-up questionnaire were used in this study. Previous research (American College Testing Program, 1965; Walsh, 1967) supports the use of these self-report devices to gather reliable information. The initial questionnaire, administered at national test centers, was the Student Profile Section (SPS) of the ACT battery. The follow-up questionnaire, administered at the end of the freshman year, contained items matched with the "expectation" items in the Student Profile Section. For example, the SPS asked "Will you need financial aid from either a scholarship or loan?" The follow-up questionnaire asked "Have you received financial aid from either a scholarship or loan?" In each case, students selected their response from among listed alternatives. No free response items were included and alternatives in the follow-up were matched with alternatives in the original SPS to allow cross-tabulation of responses. In all, we studied four kinds of student information--educational and vocational plans, financial need and work expectation, housing and car plans, and extracurricular plans.

### The Sample

The follow-up questionnaire was administered in the spring of 1966 to students completing their freshman year at 35 colleges. Fourteen colleges were two-year institutions and 21 were four-year institutions. These colleges were chosen from institutions participating in ACT's 1966

Class Profile Research Service (American College Testing Program, 1966). The colleges included are listed in Table 1.

The college sample was studied to determine the extent to which it is characteristic of American colleges generally. Data reported earlier (Richards & Lutz, in press) indicate that "our sample is more representative of ACT colleges than of colleges in general." However, since we are concerned with the usefulness of SPS information to ACT colleges, such a bias is of negligible importance.

For each college, the investigator picked a group of students to be included in the follow-up. At small institutions, all ACT-tested freshmen were followed up, and at large institutions every _n_th student listed on the Class Profile Service roster was followed up, with _n_ chosen so that no more than 475 students from any one institution were included. The total number of students surveyed was 8,708. The number of students included at individual institutions ranged from 33 to 471, with a median of 251.

Each college was responsible for the administration of the follow-up questionnaire. Each questionnaire sent to the college was stamped with the name of the student for whom it was intended. In addition, the college marked a roster of students included in the study, indicating, in part, the current status of students who did not complete the questionnaire (e.g., enrolled but did not respond, no longer enrolled, etc.) Completed follow-up questionnaires were obtained for 5,695 freshmen (3,267 males and 2,428 females). Students without follow-up data included 1,441 students no longer

Table 1

Colleges Included in the Sample

| Two-Year Colleges | |
|---|---|
| Fresno City College, California | Lake Michigan College, Michigan |
| Hartnell College, California | Mary Holmes Junior College, Mississippi |
| Santa Rosa Junior College, California | Murray State Agricultural College, Oklahoma |
| Otero Junior College, Colorado | Community College of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania |
| Thornton College, Illinois | Panola College, Texas |
| Fort Dodge Community College, Iowa | College of Eastern Utah |
| St. John's College, Kansas | Potomac State College, West Va. |
| **Four-Year Colleges** | |
| LaSierra College, California | Bluffton College, Ohio |
| Illinois Teachers College, Chicago South | Langston University, Oklahoma |
| Illinois College | Mount Marty College, South Dakota |
| University of Illinois | South Dakota School of Mines and Technology |
| Central College, Iowa | Tennessee State University |
| William Penn College, Iowa | Tusculum College, Tennessee |
| Wichita State University, Kansas | McMurry College, Texas |
| Mount St. Mary's College, Maryland | Midwestern University, Texas |
| Michigan Technological University | North Texas State University |
| Chadron State College, Nebraska | Wisconsin State University at Stevens Point |
| New Mexico Highlands University | |

enrolled in college as well as 1,772 students still enrolled who did not complete the questionnaire. The rate of return at individual colleges for students still enrolled ranged from 22.6% to 100%, with a median of 87.7%.

In earlier studies, two Infrequency Scales were developed to check the effect of a student's exaggerating his achievements. These scales,

one using high school achievements (Holland & Richards, 1967), and the other college achievements (Richards & Lutz, in press), were based on the rationale that a student who is exaggerating his achievements is likely to claim rare accomplishments in several different areas. Combining male and female data, we identified the rarest item on each of the six achievement scales. The score on the Infrequency Scale is simply the number of these rare achievements claimed by the student; thus student scores can range from 0 to 6. This procedure provides a simple method for identifying students who inadvertently mismarked their answer sheets (e.g., marked "yes" for "no").

For this study, we eliminated the 78 students with high scores on either or both of the Infrequency Scales (a high score was defined as a score of four or higher). The final sample, then, included 3,218 males (1,987 in four-year colleges and 1,231 in two-year colleges) and 2,399 females (1,373 in four-year institutions and 1,026 in two-year colleges).

The corresponding initial and follow-up items for these students were cross-tabulated to determine the percentage of students who actually did what they said they would, or who still had the same plan for future activity.

## Results

### Educational-Vocational Plans

On both the SPS and follow-up questionnaires, students were asked to select their major field and future vocation from among a number of possibilities. The 84 specific fields were grouped under 7 headings; the

student also could mark "housewife," "undecided," or "my field is not listed" (labeled "other" in Table 2). The data are presented in Table 2, showing the freshman year responses for the four freshman groups (four-year college males, four-year college females, two-year college males, and two-year college females). The table shows the percent of students with a particular pre-college choice who, at the end of the freshman year, selected each field grouping.

Major fields. In general, the data indicate that about half the students selected the same class or group of majors after one year. The rate of consistency for major field groups varied from 28 to 71%. The lowest consistency, 28%, was for four-year college males who originally planned to major in medicine. Upon follow-up 36% of the medical aspirants indicated a science major. Because medical vocations had a consistency rate of 58%, these changes in major probably reflect undergraduate major requirements rather than actual changes of intention. The highest consistency percentage, 71%, was for four-year college females who selected a social, educational, or religious major. The median for all major field groups was 52%.

The pattern of major field changes is not unexpected. Changing students tend to move to the most closely related group of majors. For example, 30% of the two-year college females changed from administrative, political, or persuasive majors to business and finance majors; 31% of two-year college males moved in the reverse direction.

Table 2

Distribution of Freshman Year Choices of Major Field and Vocation for Students with the Same Pre-College Choice

| | Pre-College Choice | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 4-yr males | | 4-yr females | | 2-yr males | | 2-yr females | |
| College Choice | Maj | VC | Maj | VC | Maj | VC | Maj | VC |
| | Social, Religious, and Educational Fields | | | | | | | |
| Soc, rel, educ | 51 | 60 | 71 | 70 | 51 | 58 | 62 | 66 |
| Undecided, no ans | 16 | 20 | 8 | 13 | 18 | 18 | 12 | 16 |
| Admin, polit, persuasive | 12 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 11 | 3 | 2 |
| Arts & humanities | 9 | 3 | 11 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 11 | 4 |
| Scientific | 6 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| Eng, agric, tech | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Business, finance | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 4 |
| Medical | 0 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Other | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Housewife | | | | 4 | | | | 4 |
| N | 282 | 222 | 619 | 565 | 162 | 125 | 385 | 336 |
| | Administrative, Political, & Persuasive | | | | | | | |
| Ad, pol, persuasive | 50 | 51 | 29 | 30 | 51 | 42 | 41 | 29 |
| Business, finance | 18 | 15 | 20 | 4 | 10 | 9 | 30 | 17 |
| Soc, rel, educ | 12 | 9 | 27 | 30 | 9 | 14 | 11 | 21 |
| Und, no answer | 10 | 17 | 4 | 22 | 15 | 21 | 7 | 17 |
| Arts & humanities | 4 | 3 | 14 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 8 |
| Scientific | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Eng, agric, tech | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Medical | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 2 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| Housewife | | | | 4 | | | | 4 |
| N | 250 | 190 | 70 | 54 | 154 | 124 | 44 | 48 |
| | Business & Finance | | | | | | | |
| Business, finance | 56 | 41 | 42 | 31 | 46 | 36 | 65 | 49 |
| Ad, pol, persuasive | 19 | 22 | 13 | 10 | 31 | 27 | 7 | 4 |
| Und, no answer | 6 | 22 | 11 | 27 | 13 | 22 | 9 | 20 |
| Eng, agric, tech | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Arts & humanities | 5 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Soc, rel, educ | 4 | 6 | 23 | 22 | 5 | 3 | 9 | 12 |
| Scientific | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Medical | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Other | 2 | 0 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 3 |
| Housewife | | | | 2 | | | | 9 |
| N | 126 | 97 | 79 | 68 | 120 | 92 | 211 | 162 |

Table 2 con't.

| | 4-yr males | | 4-yr females | | 2-yr males | | 2-yr females | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Maj | VC | Maj | VC | Maj | VC | Maj | VC |
| | | | | Scientific Fields | | | | |
| Scientific | 55 | 33 | 54 | 30 | 63 | 51 | 53 | 20 |
| Eng, agric, tech | 13 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Und, no ans | 11 | 25 | 17 | 27 | 5 | 24 | 10 | 27 |
| Soc, rel, educ | 6 | 8 | 22 | 30 | 5 | 8 | 17 | 33 |
| Ad, pol, pers | 6 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Business, finance | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Arts & humanities | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 7 |
| Medical | 2 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 7 |
| Other | 2 | 5 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 7 |
| Housewife | | | | 0 | | | | 0 |
| N | 286 | 166 | 78 | 30 | 93 | 37 | 30 | 15 |
| | | | | Engineering, Agriculture, & Technology | | | | |
| Eng, agric, tech | 66 | 58 | | | 61 | 47 | | |
| Scientific | 12 | 9 | | | 7 | 8 | | |
| Und, no ans | 8 | 17 | | | 9 | 23 | | |
| Soc, rel, educ | 4 | 4 | | | 4 | 4 | | |
| Business, finance | 3 | 3 | | | 3 | 5 | | |
| Ad, pol, pers | 3 | 6 | | | 5 | 6 | | |
| Arts & humanities | 2 | 1 | | | 2 | 2 | | |
| Other | 1 | 2 | | | 6 | 4 | | |
| Medical | 0 | 1 | | | 2 | 2 | | |
| N | 447 | 394 | <10 | <10 | 277 | 198 | <10 | <10 |
| | | | | Medical Fields | | | | |
| Medical | 28 | 58 | 50 | 50 | 45 | 63 | 52 | 50 |
| Scientific | 36 | 5 | 16 | 5 | 11 | 5 | 6 | 3 |
| Und, no ans | 11 | 18 | 10 | 20 | 12 | 11 | 11 | 16 |
| Ad, pol, pers | 7 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 3 |
| Soc, rel, educ | 7 | 8 | 18 | 12 | 11 | 8 | 16 | 15 |
| Business, finance | 4 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 10 | 3 |
| Eng, agric, tech | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Arts & humanities | 3 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Other | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Housewife | | | | 5 | | | | 3 |
| N | 138 | 158 | 148 | 147 | 83 | 75 | 116 | 117 |

Table 2 con't.

| | 4-yr males | | 4-yr females | | 2-yr males | | 2-yr females | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Maj | VC | Maj | VC | Maj | VC | Maj | VC |
| | | | | Arts & Humanities | | | | |
| Arts & humanities | 49 | 41 | 67 | 30 | 51 | 28 | 57 | 44 |
| Soc, rel, educ | 14 | 18 | 19 | 41 | 5 | 25 | 28 | 38 |
| Und, no ans | 14 | 21 | 9 | 17 | 14 | 28 | 11 | 12 |
| Eng, agric, tech | 7 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| Business, finance | 4 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Other | 4 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Ad, pol, pers | 4 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Scientific | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Medical | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Housewife | | | | 2 | | | | 3 |
| N | 114 | 93 | 170 | 111 | 57 | 57 | 72 | 34 |
| | | | | Other | | | | |
| Other | 7 | 5 | 0 | 13 | 14 | 16 | 35 | 11 |
| Und, no ans | 40 | 31 | 9 | 30 | 25 | 21 | 10 | 23 |
| Soc, rel, educ | 13 | 13 | 9 | 28 | 7 | 11 | 7 | 14 |
| Scientific | 13 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 3 |
| Arts & humanities | 13 | 6 | 55 | 6 | 0 | 5 | 7 | 5 |
| Ad, pol, pers | 7 | 15 | 18 | 4 | 11 | 11 | 17 | 3 |
| Eng, agric, tech | 7 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 36 | 22 | 0 | 2 |
| Business, finance | 0 | 8 | 0 | 9 | 7 | 7 | 24 | 22 |
| Medical | 0 | 5 | 9 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 10 |
| Housewife | | | | 5 | | | | 8 |
| N | 15 | 128 | 11 | 78 | 28 | 115 | 29 | 93 |
| | | | | Undecided | | | | |
| Und, no ans | 26 | 38 | 23 | 35 | 33 | 40 | 38 | 41 |
| Soc, rel, educ | 17 | 14 | 38 | 40 | 13 | 12 | 24 | 25 |
| Eng, agric, tech | 13 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 13 | 1 | 1 |
| Ad, pol, pers | 12 | 15 | 4 | 4 | 18 | 11 | 2 | 3 |
| Scientific | 11 | 7 | 12 | 4 | 9 | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| Business, finance | 8 | 8 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 18 | 12 |
| Arts & humanities | 7 | 4 | 12 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 10 | 3 |
| Medical | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 4 |
| Other | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Housewife | | | | 4 | | | | 8 |
| N | 285 | 468 | 173 | 252 | 244 | 382 | 125 | 187 |

Table 2 con't.

| | 4-yr females VC | 2-yr females VC |
|---|---|---|
| | Housewife (Female Vocational Choice Only) | |
| Housewife | 35 | 40 |
| Soc, rel, educ | 29 | 10 |
| Und, no ans | 24 | 30 |
| Business, finance | 12 | 20 |
| Ad, pol, pers | 0 | 0 |
| Science | 0 | 0 |
| Eng, agric, tech | 0 | 0 |
| Medical | 0 | 0 |
| Arts | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 0 | 0 |
| N | 17 | 10 |

Note. All figures with the exception of Ns are percents and indicate the percent of those in the column category who one year later gave the row response.

Vocations. The pattern for vocational choices closely followed that for major fields with a slightly higher rate of change. Percentages of students remaining in the same vocational group ranged from 20% for two-year college females in science to 70% for four-year college females in social, educational, and religious vocations. For all vocational groups, the median was 46%.

Although vocational changers also tend to move to a closely related group, there is a greater tendency to select "undecided" or give no answer at the end of the freshman year than was apparent in the major field data. For example, 20% of four-year college females originally selecting administrative, political, or persuasive vocations selected

"undecided" or gave no answer after one year. On the follow-up questionnaire, the "undecided--no answer" category also claimed 21% of four-year college males from arts and humanities vocations, 23% of two-year college males from engineering, agricultural, or technical vocations, 27% of two-year college males from business and finance vocations, 27% of four-year college females from science vocations, and 28% of two-year college males from vocations in the arts and humanities. To summarize, about one-quarter of the students who express initial preferences are undecided after one year, and only about one-quarter of the students change to another vocational choice.

Educational aspirations. On both the SPS and follow-up questionnaires, students were asked to indicate the highest level of education they planned to attain. The comparison of pre-college and freshman year responses is presented in Table 3.

The data indicate a fair degree of consistency over the one year high school-to-college transition period. The least change occurred among students who originally planned on the BA (52 to 63% consistency) or the MA (51 to 60% consistency). Apparently, there is a greater tendency for four-year college students originally planning less than the BA to raise their level of aspiration than there is for two-year college students who originally planned on the BA to lower their aspiration suggesting that, at least during the first year, there may be a "warming up" phenomenon occurring in four-year colleges that is as potent as the

Table 3

Distribution of Freshman Year Educational Aspiration for Students with the Same Pre-College Level of Aspiration

| College Choice | Pre-College Response | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Less than BA | | | | BA | | | | MA | | | | PhD | | | | Other[a] | | | |
| | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | |
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Less than BA | 23 | 22 | 47 | 61 | 3 | 5 | 12 | 16 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 20 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 13 | 1 | 4 | 8 | 28 |
| BA | 54 | 56 | 37 | 24 | 52 | 63 | 54 | 57 | 21 | 30 | 25 | 24 | 9 | 11 | 7 | 38 | 13 | 22 | 17 | 31 |
| MA | 15 | 17 | 8 | 7 | 37 | 27 | 25 | 22 | 60 | 59 | 57 | 51 | 31 | 50 | 38 | 25 | 20 | 25 | 17 | 10 |
| PhD | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 49 | 32 | 36 | 25 | 9 | 7 | 3 | 7 |
| Other[a] | 6 | 4 | 8 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 3 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 10 | 5 | 13 | 0 | 57 | 41 | 54 | 24 |
| N | 114 | 183 | 230 | 321 | 800 | 725 | 539 | 446 | 608 | 349 | 261 | 182 | 141 | 38 | 45 | 8 | 280 | 55 | 143 | 58 |

Note. All figures with the exception of Ns are percents and indicate the percent of those in the column category who one year later gave the row response.

[a]"Other" includes responses of MD, DDS, LLB, BD, and other.

"cooling out" function attributed to two-year institutions (Clark, 1960; Simon, 1967).

College goals. Tables 4 and 5 present data pertaining to college goals. On both questionnaires, students selected their first and second most important goals for attending college from among ten alternatives. Among ten alternatives, only three were selected by a large number of students. In fact, the other seven alternatives[1] accounted for less than 7% of student responses. Therefore, the three most frequently selected goals--to develop my mind and intellectual abilities, to secure vocational or professional training, and to earn a higher income--are presented separately, and the seven other goals are combined under the heading "other." (This grossly uneven distribution was noted following the first administration of the SPS; the "college goals" item was revised in subsequent SPS forms.) There is greater consistency over one year in the first goal choice than in the second, especially if the original choice was to develop my mind and intellectual abilities or to secure vocational training. Also, female students were more likely than males to change from an original first choice of to earn a higher income--19% and 24% consistency for females as compared to 37% and 33% consistency for males. Further, the

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[1]These seven goals were: to learn how to enjoy life, to make a desirable marriage, to develop moral standards, to become a cultured person, to develop my personality, to develop a satisfying philosophy, and none of these.

Table 4

First Year Distribution of Most Important College Goals

for Students with the Same Pre-College Goal

| | Pre-College Choice | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Develop intellect | | | | Secure training | | | | Earn higher income | | | | Other | | | |
| | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | |
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Dev intell | 52 | 62 | 53 | 58 | 27 | 35 | 28 | 28 | 22 | 16 | 20 | 24 | 41 | 33 | 30 | 47 |
| Sec trng | 29 | 26 | 26 | 31 | 57 | 57 | 54 | 64 | 36 | 54 | 42 | 48 | 24 | 37 | 29 | 28 |
| High inc | 10 | 3 | 10 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 10 | 3 | 37 | 19 | 33 | 24 | 10 | 3 | 16 | 1 |
| Other | 9 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 11 | 5 | 3 | 26 | 27 | 25 | 23 |
| N | 681 | 537 | 332 | 340 | 958 | 683 | 633 | 570 | 185 | 37 | 163 | 29 | 123 | 100 | 91 | 76 |

Note. All figures with the exception of Ns are percents and indicate the percent of those in the column category who one year later gave the row response.

Table 5

First Year Distribution of Second Most Important College Goals

for Students with the Same Second Pre-College Goal

| | Pre-College Choice | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Develop intellect | | | | Secure training | | | | Earn higher income | | | | Other | | | |
| | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | |
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Dev intell | 35 | 39 | 31 | 38 | 25 | 24 | 19 | 31 | 23 | 26 | 23 | 23 | 21 | 22 | 25 | 25 |
| Sec trng | 24 | 27 | 23 | 24 | 27 | 43 | 32 | 35 | 16 | 20 | 20 | 17 | 22 | 24 | 18 | 22 |
| High inc | 23 | 12 | 25 | 14 | 24 | 8 | 28 | 11 | 42 | 36 | 41 | 38 | 24 | 10 | 26 | 13 |
| Other | 18 | 22 | 22 | 25 | 24 | 25 | 22 | 23 | 19 | 18 | 17 | 22 | 34 | 44 | 32 | 39 |
| N | 499 | 405 | 305 | 315 | 422 | 324 | 225 | 207 | 593 | 171 | 382 | 172 | 434 | 451 | 306 | 318 |

Note. All figures with the exception of Ns are percents and indicate the percent of those in the column category who one year later gave the row response.

proportion of students selecting goals other than the three most popular ones decreases still more after one year.

Financial Aid Information

Several questions were included in both questionnaires relating to the student's plans for financing his education. These included items about his need for scholarships or loans, part-time work plans, and, on the original SPS, estimated family income. These data are presented in Tables 6 through 8.

Need for scholarship and loans. On the original SPS, the student was asked whether he would need financial aid (scholarships or loans): (a) all through college, (b) after the first year, or (c) never during college. On the follow-up questionnaire, students indicated whether they had (a) received a scholarship or loan during their first year, (b) had not received such aid but had been promised a scholarship or loan for the future, or (c) had neither received nor been promised such aid. The original and follow-up responses were matched, and the data are presented in Table 6.

The figures indicate that slightly more than one-half (54 to 66%) of those students who indicated they needed aid throughout college actually received aid during their first year. For all categories, the percent receiving aid is slightly higher for four-year college students than for two-year college students. Based on stated need, the proportion of female students who received aid is as high as or slightly higher than the proportion of males.

Table 6

Distribution of Freshman Year Financial Aid Status

for Students with the Same Anticipated Financial Need

| | Anticipated Financial Need | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Need aid throughout | | | | After freshman year | | | | No aid needed | | | |
| Aid | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | |
| received | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Have rec'd aid | 60 | 66 | 54 | 55 | 27 | 30 | 21 | 28 | 13 | 14 | 9 | 9 |
| None rec'd but promised | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 11 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 4 |
| No aid rec'd | 31 | 26 | 38 | 35 | 58 | 59 | 67 | 62 | 78 | 79 | 84 | 85 |
| No answer | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| N | 882 | 723 | 360 | 340 | 504 | 234 | 341 | 257 | 540 | 373 | 507 | 404 |

Note. All figures with the exception of Ns are percents and indicate the percent of those in the column category who one year later gave the row response.

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Aid status by family income. A comparison was made between financial aid status at the end of the first year and the estimated family income reported on the original SPS. These data are presented in Table 7. As would be expected (or at least desired), the proportion of students receiving financial aid decreases as family income increases. The proportion of aid drops off more quickly for two-year college students than for

Table 7

Distribution of First Year Financial Aid Status

for Students with the Same Estimated Family Income

| Aid received | Estimated family income: Less than $5,000 | | | | $5,000-7,499 | | | | $7,500-9,999 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | |
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Rec'd aid | 59 | 66 | 51 | 56 | 46 | 50 | 26 | 29 | 33 | 44 | 20 | 16 |
| None but promised | 9 | 9 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 10 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| No aid rec'd | 29 | 24 | 40 | 40 | 44 | 41 | 66 | 57 | 57 | 49 | 73 | 77 |
| No answer | 3 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| N | 237 | 162 | 164 | 137 | 453 | 254 | 330 | 222 | 314 | 161 | 224 | 105 |

| | $10,000-14,999 | | | | $15,000-19,999 | | | | $20,000-24,999 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | |
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Rec'd aid | 30 | 32 | 18 | 25 | 24 | 24 | 10 | 4 | 14 | 29 | 14 | 0 |
| None but promised | 8 | 3 | 3 | 9 | 13 | 11 | 3 | 13 | 6 | 10 | 14 | 0 |
| No aid rec'd | 61 | 62 | 77 | 64 | 62 | 65 | 83 | 75 | 81 | 62 | 71 | 100 |
| No answer | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| N | 297 | 133 | 146 | 77 | 68 | 37 | 29 | 24 | 36 | 21 | 14 | 7 |

| | $25,000+ | | | | Confidential | | | | Don't know | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | |
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Rec'd aid | 18 | 10 | 33 | 11 | 28 | 41 | 15 | 27 | 37 | 42 | 27 | 28 |
| None but promised | 4 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 9 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 4 |

Table 7 con't.

| | Estimated family income | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | $25,000+ | | | | Confidential | | | | Don't know | | | |
| Aid received | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | |
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| No aid rec'd | 71 | 90 | 58 | 89 | 59 | 54 | 75 | 69 | 54 | 49 | 64 | 66 |
| No answer | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| N | 28 | 10 | 12 | 9 | 103 | 68 | 81 | 67 | 407 | 509 | 219 | 366 |

Note. All figures with the exception of Ns are percents and indicate the percent of those in the column category who one year later gave the row response.

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four-year college students, apparently reflecting the generally lower student fees at two-year institutions.

Part-time work. Because many students finance part or all of their college education through part-time work and because many colleges and universities have developed programs to assist students in this effort, we should learn how reliable the student's pre-college work expectations really are. Four questions relating to part-time work were included in both the original and follow-up questionnaires. First, students were asked whether or not they planned to obtain part-time work and whether they actually did work. Second, they were asked how many hours per week they planned to work and how many hours per week they actually did work. The third and fourth questions concerned their first and second choices of type of work and the type of work they actually did during the

Table 8

Distribution of College Work Status for Students with the Same Pre-College Work Expectations

| College response | Pre-college part-time work expectations | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Plan to work part-time | | | | Do not plan to work | | | |
| | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | |
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Have worked | 51 | 54 | 73 | 74 | 24 | 24 | 48 | 40 |
| Have not worked | 47 | 45 | 25 | 25 | 75 | 73 | 51 | 59 |
| No answer | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| N | 1128 | 790 | 853 | 604 | 796 | 546 | 362 | 397 |

Note. All figures with the exception of Ns are percents and indicate the percent of those in the column category who one year later gave the row response.

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first year. Data relating to the first pair of questions are presented in Table 8.

Several things are apparent from these data. First, about the same proportion of females as males planned to work and actually did work. Second, the proportion of students who planned to work and actually did during their first year is considerably higher for two-year college students (73% and 74% for males and females, respectively) than for four-year college students (51% and 54%). Also, a substantial proportion of students at two-year colleges who did not plan to work actually did work during their first year (48% for males and 40% for females).

The questionnaire responses pertaining to planned and actual hours of work and to type of work planned and engaged in yielded ambiguous or unreliable data, and, therefore, they are not included here. With the exception of those who plan to work many hours, students do not estimate their future hours of work with any high degree of accuracy. The "type of work" alternatives offered included such things as babysitting, odd jobs, waitress, and typist. The majority of students selected "other" on both the original and follow-up questionnaires. In current forms of the SPS, the "type of work" item has been completely revised to include a more appropriate variety of work alternatives.

Housing. On the original SPS, students were asked to indicate where they planned to live during college, selecting from among six alternatives. These responses were matched with their freshman year response to the question "Where have you lived during your first year of college?" The data are presented in Table 9.

Table 9 reveals that two categories, "college dorm" and "at home" (or "with relative"), account for the housing plans of nearly all students (92% of four-year college students and 89% of two-year college students). The other four categories (fraternity or sorority house, college apartment, off-campus apartment, and off-campus room) are, of course, more subject to outside influences; e.g., housing regulations set by the institution, especially for freshman women, and the requirement of group selection for fraternity or sorority residence. Students do, however,

Table 9

Distribution of Freshman Year Residence for Students with the Same Pre-College Housing Plans

| Actual college housing | Expected college housing | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | College dormitory | | | | At home | | | | Fraternity, sorority | | | |
| | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | |
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Dorm | 90 | 94 | 56 | 59 | 13 | 11 | 2 | 3 | 58 | 80 | 6 | 44 |
| At home | 4 | 5 | 33 | 35 | 83 | 87 | 95 | 94 | 8 | 11 | 94 | 56 |
| Fraternity, sorority | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 27 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Coll apt | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Off-campus apartment | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Off-campus room | 2 | 0 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| No answer | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| N | 1329 | 981 | 349 | 356 | 399 | 317 | 678 | 591 | 62 | 35 | 17 | 9 |

| | College apartment | | | | Off-campus apartment | | | | Off-campus room | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | |
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Dorm | 74 | 86 | 30 | 10 | 44 | 46 | 11 | 3 | 39 | 71 | 8 | 20 |
| At home | 10 | 0 | 53 | 10 | 17 | 18 | 54 | 38 | 2 | 14 | 27 | 25 |
| Frat, sor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Coll apt | 0 | 0 | 3 | 30 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Off-camp apt | 10 | 14 | 10 | 40 | 24 | 18 | 25 | 48 | 12 | 14 | 31 | 20 |
| Off-camp rm | 7 | 0 | 3 | 10 | 11 | 18 | 10 | 7 | 44 | 0 | 33 | 35 |
| No answer | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| N | 31 | 7 | 30 | 10 | 70 | 11 | 94 | 29 | 57 | 7 | 49 | 20 |

Table 10

Percentages of Students with the Same Car Plans

Who Did and Did Not Have A Car During the First Year

| | Pre-college expectation | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Will have car | | | | Will not have car | | | |
| | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | |
| Actual | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Have car | 62 | 58 | 74 | 65 | 14 | 5 | 27 | 20 |
| Do not have car | 36 | 39 | 22 | 34 | 83 | 92 | 70 | 78 |
| No answer | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| N | 671 | 213 | 626 | 275 | 1266 | 1131 | 587 | 737 |

predict with a high degree of accuracy whether they will live at home or in a college residence.

Student cars. Because campus parking and traffic are increasing problems, colleges and universities have become involved in motor vehicle registration and regulation. As a planning aid, an item was included in the SPS asking the prospective college student whether or not he planned to take a car to campus. The data in Table 10 indicate that students who say they will not have a car on campus are more accurate in their prediction than are those who say they will.

Extracurricular Involvement

Planned and actual participation in special activities. The original SPS provided the opportunity for students to indicate whether or not they planned to participate in nine different extracurricular activities.

On the follow-up questionnaire, we listed the same nine activities and asked students to indicate whether or not they had participated in them during their freshman year. The data comparing planned and actual participation are presented in Table 11, whose format differs from that used in earlier tables. This format reflects both numbers of participants and accuracy of prediction, with the table showing the total number of students in the four classifications who planned and who did not plan to participate in the particular activity, as well as the number of planners and non-planners who did participate and the percent of each group this number represents. Thus we can see that although only 2% of four-year college males who did not plan to participate in acting actually did participate, these 27 students accounted for 42% of all four-year college males who said they did participate.

The variation in both rate of participation and numbers participating among the various activities is notably large. Music and intra-mural athletics generally have the highest "predicted participation" accuracy. Intra-mural athletics and departmental clubs seem to do the best job of recruitment from among non-planners, with intra-mural athletics leading for males (33% of four-year college males and 24% of two-year college males who did not plan to participate in intra-mural athletics actually did participate) and departmental clubs leading for females (25% and 15% participation among non-planners). Some of the variation and the generally low follow-through rates must be attributed, of course, to the time period involved; i.e., the freshman year only. One would expect, and probably could justify, the

Table 11

Extra-Curricular Plans and College Participation for Specific Activities

| Area of participation | Pre-college expectation | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Plan to participate | | | | Do not plan to participate | | | |
| | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | |
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Inter-collegiate athletics | | | | | | | | |
| Total N | 835 | 232 | 564 | 182 | 1097 | 1120 | 650 | 823 |
| N participating | 302 | 23 | 162 | 33 | 56 | 45 | 26 | 33 |
| %participating | 36 | 10 | 29 | 18 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Music | | | | | | | | |
| Total N | 535 | 709 | 283 | 457 | 1394 | 642 | 930 | 549 |
| N particip | 236 | 294 | 128 | 188 | 43 | 36 | 26 | 31 |
| % particip | 44 | 42 | 45 | 41 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 6 |
| Writing | | | | | | | | |
| Total N | 497 | 600 | 292 | 364 | 1426 | 744 | 919 | 643 |
| N particip | 74 | 92 | 52 | 64 | 61 | 46 | 23 | 28 |
| % particip | 15 | 15 | 18 | 18 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 4 |
| Student government | | | | | | | | |
| Total N | 946 | 807 | 507 | 546 | 971 | 539 | 704 | 463 |
| N particip | 104 | 130 | 74 | 70 | 43 | 54 | 30 | 24 |
| % particip | 11 | 16 | 15 | 13 | 4 | 10 | 4 | 5 |
| Science clubs | | | | | | | | |
| Total N | 938 | 315 | 471 | 207 | 988 | 1032 | 737 | 800 |
| N particip | 73 | 36 | 39 | 12 | 21 | 20 | 28 | 20 |
| % particip | 8 | 11 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| Debate | | | | | | | | |
| Total N | 409 | 324 | 238 | 173 | 1512 | 1021 | 972 | 826 |
| N particip | 32 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 11 | 9 | 25 | 9 |
| % particip | 8 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| Acting | | | | | | | | |
| Total N | 357 | 535 | 222 | 334 | 1564 | 805 | 990 | 667 |
| N particip | 37 | 77 | 32 | 61 | 27 | 29 | 19 | 34 |
| % particip | 10 | 14 | 14 | 18 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 5 |
| Dept clubs | | | | | | | | |
| Total N | 1650 | 1243 | 930 | 886 | 277 | 108 | 278 | 124 |
| N particip | 322 | 396 | 162 | 239 | 35 | 27 | 25 | 18 |
| % particip | 20 | 32 | 17 | 27 | 13 | 25 | 9 | 15 |
| Intra-mural athl | | | | | | | | |
| Total N | 1359 | 465 | 809 | 369 | 563 | 862 | 398 | 622 |
| N particip | 906 | 154 | 329 | 137 | 188 | 137 | 95 | 89 |
| %particip | 67 | 33 | 41 | 37 | 33 | 16 | 24 | 14 |

rather low rate of student government participation during the freshman year. The low participation rate for those with expressed interests in science clubs, debate, and acting are less easily explained. Overestimation of talent seems a dubious explanation when 41% to 45% of music planners say they have participated during the freshman year. The low proportion of follow-through in specific areas may be due to many things: the lack of opportunity and encouragement; the lack of interest; unrealistic plans; the attraction of other, unanticipated activities; etc.

Competency vs. participation. We made another comparison to examine extracurricular participation patterns still further. On the original SPS students were asked to select the one activity among the nine alternatives which they believed was their area of greatest competency. Responses to this item were matched with actual participation as indicated on the follow-up questionnaire. This comparison is presented in Table 12. The table shows the number of students who selected a particular activity as their area of greatest competency and the percentage of these "competent" students who actually participated in that activity during their freshman year. In general, the participation rates for these "competent" students follow the same pattern as and are not appreciably higher than those for students who said they planned to participate. It is interesting to note how similar the rates of participation for specific activities are for males at two-year colleges as compared to males at four-year colleges and for females at two-year colleges as compared to females at four-year colleges.

Table 12

Number and Percent of Students with Pre-College Competency in a Specific Activity Who Actually Participated in that Activity

| College activity | Number indicating pre-college competency | | | | Percent with competency participating | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 4-yr | | 2-yr | | 4-yr | | 2-yr | |
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Inter-coll athletics | 424 | 42 | 286 | 43 | 48 | 10 | 38 | 30 |
| Music | 274 | 368 | 165 | 242 | 58 | 54 | 48 | 49 |
| Writing | 76 | 149 | 37 | 120 | 28 | 24 | 30 | 21 |
| Student government | 91 | 85 | 45 | 62 | 30 | 19 | 38 | 10 |
| Science clubs | 190 | 27 | 87 | 22 | 15 | 30 | 9 | 14 |
| Debate | 58 | 35 | 31 | 21 | 24 | 9 | 6 | 14 |
| Acting | 44 | 91 | 30 | 62 | 27 | 35 | 37 | 35 |
| Dept clubs | 248 | 336 | 163 | 249 | 19 | 33 | 20 | 29 |
| Intra-mural ath | 448 | 124 | 308 | 113 | 72 | 40 | 40 | 38 |
| N | 1853 | 1257 | 1152 | 934 | | | | |

## Discussion

The data for this study were gathered primarily to learn whether students' answers to questions asked prior to college attendance are sufficiently predictive to be of value in college planning and counseling. The results suggest a qualified "yes."

The data suggest that two important questions must be considered in interpreting students' pre-college responses to items in the SPS. First, for a particular item, what degree of certainty is necessary and

appropriate at this time in the student's life? Is this an area in which educators could hope that a student has done some thinking and perhaps reached some tentative decisions while still being open to new ideas? Vocational choice illustrates this type of planning. The fact that many students change their vocational plans during the first year of college may indicate the success of the college experience in broadening horizons for students. The overall pattern of moderate consistency coupled with most changes being to closely related areas suggests a rather appropriate condition for this period in a student's life.

For other items, prospective college students might be expected to have made firmer decisions. For example, we would expect a college applicant to know whether he will live at home or seek other housing during college. We would also expect him to know whether he will be working part-time. The proportion of correct predictions in these areas is rather high.

The area of work plans illustrates the second important consideration in evaluating the results: that is, to what degree is the student's actual behavior limited by the institution he attends--does he "change" because he must? The proportion of students who follow through on planned work is lower among four-year college students than it is for two-year college students (51% and 54% for four-year college males and females as compared to 73% and 74% for two-year college males and females). Four-year institutions may be more likely to discourage or limit a student's part-time work during the first year, while two-year

college classes are often set at times to allow or encourage part-time work.

Similarly, follow-through in planned extracurricular participation should be examined in relation to the actual college situation. If freshmen are not allowed to hold student government posts, the participation rate of "planners" will clearly be much lower than it would be if there were freshman representatives on all student government committees. On most college campuses, the opportunity for freshman participation is greatest in music (band, choir, orchestra, etc.) and intra-mural athletics (dorm teams, club teams, etc.); these two areas have the highest proportion of planners who become doers. We could reasonably assume that an increase in opportunity for participation in other areas would produce similarly high rates of "doing."

Thus, much of the follow-up data may reflect the actions and policies of the college as much as the consistency or self-knowledge of the pre-college student. Obviously, financial aid policies as well as student estimates of need are reflected in the proportion of students with expressed need who receive scholarships or loans for the first year.

It must also be kept in mind that, for many students, SPS data were gathered prior to their final acceptance by and commitment to attend a particular college. The results may reflect this fact. For example, a student may need and receive a scholarship or loan if he attends College A, while finances may not be a problem if this student attends College B,

providing another reason for evaluating such data in terms of the particular college situation.

To summarize, the data suggest three generalizations. First, students do tend to do what they say they will do, or something closely related to it, during their first year of college. Second, lack of follow-through may reflect a change of mind by the student, the policies and opportunities presented by the college he attends, or a change in choice of college or goals. Third, when appropriately evaluated, SPS data can help colleges plan for and counsel with entering students.

The results of this study are generally encouraging; they both support the underlying intent of the Student Profile Section and reaffirm revisions that have already been made since the introduction of this fifth part of the ACT Assessment. And, although the present study has provided much needed data, more is needed to answer other questions: What would happen if a college were to use the pre-college automobile question to estimate parking requirements? How accurately can demands for dormitory space be anticipated by the SPS housing item? Here we are interested in the value of group estimates rather than the reliability of individual student responses. Such studies at individual colleges would expand our knowledge of how the characteristics of prospective students could be used for administrative planning.

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