

An Update to the Analysis of the AlaskAdvantage Education Grant Program

Produced by the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education,
Focusing on Data for
Academic Years 2011-12 and 2012-13

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report builds on the February 2011 report, *An Analysis of the Alaska Advantage Education Grant Program*. At the time of that report's writing, the AEG program had begun awarding students for the Spring semester of 2011. In that year, AY11, the program awarded the second largest amount in a single year ever, at just over \$1.5 million. (A special appropriation in AY09 allowed the fund to disburse nearly \$2 million in that year, more funds than had been awarded in the three prior years of the program.)

Since the release of the initial report, AEG funding levels continued to increase. AEG-eligible students attending approved institutions in the last two years of the program received \$4 million in grant funds each year. This significant increase in funding affects students in many ways. Awards have increased, and the makeup of the student populations receiving AEG funds has changed as more funds became available. This update focuses on the AEG in recent years, and how its impact has changed in light of additional funding.

FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

AEG FINANCIAL HISTORY

Over \$16.8 million has been awarded since the grant was first distributed in AY06, with nearly \$8 million awarded in the last two years alone. Excluding AY09, during the first five years of the program's existence annual disbursements were between \$500,000 and \$856,000 per year. At approximately \$1,000 per student, between 500 and 870 students per year received the grant.

In AY09 total disbursed funds were nearly \$2 million with more than 2,100 recipients. AY13 saw nearly \$4 million distributed to over 3,600 students.

AWARDING PATTERNS

AEG recipients take on considerable financial costs to attend school, with awards being based on the student's unmet need. Unmet need for purposes of AEG eligibility is based on a formula that considers average annual costs to attend postsecondary education in Alaska, including an allowance for cost of living items such as housing and transportation. In AY13, those costs ranged from \$22,397 for independent students attending full-time to a low of \$15,430 for dependent half-time students. After accounting for all other sources of funding, students had to have nearly \$11,400 in unmet need to receive the AEG. Even with a recent increase in the standard award amount to \$1,500, the average recipient still faced over \$10,000 in unmet need after receiving the grant.

Nearly three-quarters of AEG recipients received the grant for only one year, and 94% received only one or two years of funding. However, recipients generally attend school much longer than one or two years. Data provided by the University of Alaska show that less than 30% of its AEG recipients attended only one or two years, while 36% attended UA for five or more years.

Only 15% of AEG recipients received the award in the same year they first attended the University of Alaska, while nearly one-third had enrolled six or more years prior to receiving their first award.

RECIPIENTS' CHARACTERISTICS

Because over 80% of AEG recipients attend one of the University of Alaska schools, comparing recipients attending UA to the characteristics of the entire UA student body can provide a good comparison of any differences between the two groups. AEG recipients' ethnicity and gender approximate that of the overall University of Alaska student body. However, recipients' age profiles differ from the UA student body – recipients are more likely to be between 25 to 39 years old, and less likely to be under 20. AEG recipients are also predominantly independent students – 92% were in AY12, and 83% in AY13. In some years when funding levels were significantly less, dependent students made up only one to two percent of AEG recipients.

Because older and independent students are more likely to receive an AEG than are younger and dependent ones, the percentage of juniors and seniors receiving the AEG is higher than the percentage of freshmen and sophomore. However, these differences are minimized as the amount available for awarding increases.

Compared to non-AEG recipient UA students who also received some form of financial aid, UA's AEG recipients received larger Pell awards, but this was offset by their much lower scholarship awards. Even after considering their AEG funds, recipients' average non-self-help aid amounts were only between 4% and 18% higher than non-recipients receiving other financial aid between AY10 and AY12.

While the number of students participating in paid work study programs at UA is small, AEG recipients were much more likely than non-recipients to participate in them.

ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Compared to Alaska Performance Scholarship recipients, AEG recipients are less likely to attend full-time, and are more likely to attend school over the course of many years. Some of this may be explained by differences in the programs' award rules. The APS rules limit the number of semesters a student may receive an award, and the number of years after their high school graduation in which they are eligible to receive it. APS only limits the total amount which can be received, so students are not constrained from attending half-time or over many years.

AEG recipients are more likely than APS recipients to pursue an associate's degree or certificate versus a bachelor's degree.

In Fall 2012, 680 AEG recipients, or just over 20% of all UA recipients, declared Business and Public Administration as their discipline, followed closely by Health and by Letters, Communications and Philosophy majors. Foreign Languages was the discipline with the highest percentage of AEG recipients

at 22.4%, followed by Health at 18.3%. Students in the Engineering and Natural Resources programs comprised the smallest group of recipients.

AEG awarding rules recognize four priority programs of studies – Allied Health Sciences, Community & Social Services, Teaching & Paraprofessional Education, and Process Industry/Natural Resources Extraction programs. Historically, approximately 30% of AEG recipients receive priority awards, eligible for a 50% larger grant award.

All programs except the Process Industry/Natural Resources Extraction program have higher than average levels of AEG recipients, though that program has the greatest number of recipients of any of the programs.

Fifty-seven percent of recipients in AY06 through AY09, those students having had enough time to complete a four year degree, had earned at least some type of degree or certificate. Thirty-five percent of recipients had earned bachelor's degrees, 18% associates, 2% masters and 1% had earned a certificate. For all degrees and certificates, the majority of recipients were awarded for only one year.

Compared to non-recipients, AEG recipients in Fall 2012 took more credit hours on average, and completed a higher percentage of the hours attempted. Recipients' credit hours attempted fell in those years in which they did not receive the grant. In the year(s) a student received an award, the average credit hours earned was 23.8. In those years when these same students did not receive the grant, average hours earned dropped to 18.1.

AEG recipients are more likely to enroll in remedial courses than are non-recipients. Over the last three years, more than one in five grant recipients took at least one remedial course during the year.

Because AEG recipients are generally older and most have attended a postsecondary institution prior to receiving the grant, there are very few first-time full-time freshmen awarded at UA. However, those that were show second year retention rates that were 10% below those for the entire entering class in Fall 2012.

BRIEF BACKGROUND AND HISTORICAL USE OF THE ALASKADVANTAGE EDUCATION GRANT PROGRAM

The AlaskAdvantage Education Grant Program (AEG) was authorized by the legislature to “provide financial assistance to eligible students to enable them to attend, or continue their attendance at, postsecondary educational institutions.”¹ The first AEG awards were disbursed for the 2005-2006 academic year, and in early 2011 ACPE analyzed AEG data for the program’s first five complete years and Fall 2010 grant disbursements.

At that time, annual funding generally ranged between \$500,000 and \$850,000, with between 500 and nearly 900 students being awarded per year. Due to a one-time capital budget appropriation, award year 2008-2009 (AY09) was an exception, when nearly \$2 million was awarded to over 2,000 students. For the 2011 report only first semester award totals were available for AY11, but the total annual award for that year was projected to be \$1.5 million.

TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS AND COUNT OF RECIPIENTS, AVERAGE AWARD AMOUNT, AVERAGE UNMET NEED AND PERCENTAGE OF UNMET NEED AWARDED, BY ACADEMIC YEAR

Academic Year	Disbursed Funding Amount	Headcount of Students	Average AEG Award Amount	Minimum Required Unmet Need	Award As A Percentage of Minimum Need
2005-06	\$501,972	506	\$992	n/a	n/a
2006-07	\$586,639	581	\$1,010	n/a	n/a
2007-08	\$670,274	672	\$997	n/a	n/a
2008-09	\$1,977,584	2,106	\$939	\$8,000	11.7%
2009-10	\$855,800	869	\$985	\$14,000	7.0%
2010-11	\$1,521,190	1,026	\$1,483	\$14,300	10.4%
2011-12	\$2,829,112	2,276	\$1,243	\$12,781	9.7%
2012-13	\$3,938,477	3,616	\$1,089	\$11,392	9.6%

Beginning with AY12, annual appropriations to AEG increased significantly, to \$2.8 million in AY12 and nearly \$4 million in AY13. This report will focus on these two most recent years of AEG awards, with

¹ Authorized in Alaska Statute, Section 14.43.400.

limited comparisons to earlier years' data. (The 2011 AEG Program Report can be downloaded at http://acpe.alaska.gov/DATA-REPORTS/Reports/AEG_Outcomes_Report.)

To qualify for an AlaskAdvantage Education Grant a student must:

- be an Alaska resident and U.S. citizen or permanent resident
- have a high school diploma or GED
- complete the FAFSA each year no later than June 30
- be admitted into an undergraduate degree or certificate program at a qualifying Alaska institution
- be enrolled at least half time
- have unmet financial need of \$500 or more²
- not have earned a baccalaureate degree
- meet satisfactory academic progress standards

While significant numbers of Alaska students meet the eligibility criteria, only a segment of eligible students, those with the most substantial levels of unmet financial need, receive AEGs.

For the purpose of calculating need, the average annual cost of attending the University of Alaska is used. Enrollment and living costs are considered and are calculated based upon: 1) full-time enrollment; 2) half-time enrollment; 3) dependent students; and, 4) independent students' cost of living expenses. The cost of attendance includes tuition, room and board, and other student fees and necessary supplies. For AY13, these costs were calculated to be:

- \$22,397 for independent students attending full-time
- \$19,384 for independent students attending less than full-time but at least half time
- \$18,442 for dependent students attending full-time
- \$15,430 for dependent students attending less than full-time but at least half time

Students are awarded the AEG based on total unmet financial need, in order of the greatest to least need. Awarding continues until available funds are exhausted. As shown in the calculated costs above, changes in funding levels can greatly affect the grant recipient population's characteristics. When funding levels are low, recipients are more likely to be independent, and therefore older, students, since their calculated costs of attendance are higher than those for dependent students. As AEG funding levels increase, there is capacity to award greater numbers of AEGs to dependent students. Still, even with the increase in total annual awards experienced in these last two years, there was not sufficient funding to award all eligible students. As shown in the table above, in AY12 in order to receive the AEG, students unmet need had to be greater than \$12,781. In AY13, with AEG funding at \$4 million, the award threshold only fell to \$11,392.

² Unmet need is defined as annual cost of attendance minus the student's, and for dependent students their family's, expected annual contribution to their education, as determined by the FAFSA, and minus any available non-self-help financial aid. Non-self-help financial aid includes scholarships, grants and tuition waivers.

AEG RECIPIENT CHARACTERISTICS

The following tables provide some information on AEG recipients' characteristics, including some comparisons to the general population of students filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA.

Unlike the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS), in which approximately 95% of students are enrolled full time, AEG recipients are more likely to be enrolled part time, or to vary their enrollment intensity between part time and full time. This difference may be explained by considering the award rules governing the two programs.

The APS limits the number of awards a student may receive to eight semesters (or twelve quarters), and limits students to six years of eligibility after their high school graduation. APS recipients have an incentive to attend full-time, since part-time awards are one-half the value of full-time awards but still count against the eight semester limit, and if seeking a bachelor's degree the student needs to attain the degree within six years. The AEG limits the total amount a student may be awarded to \$12,000, but there are no restrictions on the number of awards or the timeframe in which the funds must be used.

AEG RECIPIENTS' ENROLLMENT INTENSITIES*

	AY09	AY10	AY11	AY12	AY13
Enrolled at least 1 FT term	1,509	697	950	1,536	2,580
<i>% Enrolled at least 1 FT term</i>	<i>71.7%</i>	<i>80.2%</i>	<i>92.6%</i>	<i>67.2%</i>	<i>70.5%</i>
Enrolled at least 1 HT term	867	359	245	1,042	1,719
Mixed FT & HT enrollments	280	191	173	330	658
Recipients enrolled at least 1 additional term with a non-qualifying enrollment status	64	41	64	93	178

* Students can be duplicated within the groups.

In this table, students may be counted in multiple statuses if their enrollment differed across terms. In the 2011 AEG report, students were classified as full time if they were enrolled full time in any term during the academic year. Under this definition, AEG recipients' full-time enrollments hit their peak in AY11, but 70% to 80% full-time enrollment has been more the norm in most years. Note that AY10 and AY11 were comparatively low funding years, so fewer students enrolled on a half-time basis had sufficient unmet need to actually receive the grant in that time period.

AEG AWARDS BY DECLARED DEGREE TYPE*

	Count		Percent	
	AY12	AY13	AY12	AY13
Associates Degree	846	1,250	37%	34%
Bachelors Degree	1,374	2,273	60%	62%
Collegiate Cert	36	6	2%	0%
Vocational Cert	109	240	5%	7%
# switching degrees/certs	108	126	8%	3%

* These numbers include students who were certified for two or more degree types in a single year, so totals will not add to 100%.

AEG recipients were also more likely than APS recipients to pursue an associate's degree or certificate versus a bachelor's degree. Less than two-thirds of AEG recipients were pursuing bachelor's degrees in AY12 or AY13, while roughly 85% of APS recipients were doing so. (Due to a change in the grant servicing system, degree/certificate data prior to AY12 is not available.)

PRIORITY AEG AWARDS BY TYPE, AY09 THROUGH FALL AY13

	AY09	AY10	AY11	AY12	AY13 (Fall only)
Priority ACT/SAT	78	33	38	68	118
Priority Program	532	223	265	576	749
Totals	610	256	303	644	867
% of Total Awards	29.0%	29.5%	29.5%	28.2%	23.7%

AEG-eligible students can qualify to receive 50% higher award amounts by either pursuing certain programs of study identified as Alaska workforce shortage areas, such as Allied Health Sciences or Teaching and Paraprofessional Education, or by scoring in the top quartile of students taking the SAT or ACT. Over the years, AEG priority award recipients are more likely to receive it based on their program of study versus their high school ACT or SAT scores.

PRIORITY AEG AWARD TYPES BY INSTITUTION, FALL AY13

	AY13 Fall AEG	ACT/SAT Priority	% of Recipients	Program Priority	% of Recipients
Total	3,614	118	3.3%	743	20.6%
UAA	2,262	63	2.8%	495	21.9%
UAF	810	54	6.7%	144	17.8%
UAS	241	1	0.4%	60	24.9%
Others	301	0	0.0%	44	14.6%

Priority awards based on a student’s SAT or ACT scores ran from a high of 6.7% of AEG recipients at UAF in Fall 2013 to 0.4% of recipients at UAS, and no priority SAT or ACT awards were received by students at any of the non-UA institutions. Student ACT/SAT scores are not collected by EED or ACPE; rather, the institution identifies students in a priority category. As a result, there is a distinct possibility that the Priority ACT/SAT populations may be underreported. Students generally know about the AEG only after they receive it, and most of these students would not know that their awards could be increased by 50% if they had scored within the upper quartile on standardized tests. Financial aid officials at the schools must actively validate students’ test scores to determine their eligibility for priority award categories.

ETHNICITY AND GENDER OF AEG RECIPIENTS

	RECEIVED AEG		% RECEIVING AEG	
	AY12	AY13	AY12	AY13
Caucasian	1,297	1,972	56.7%	53.9%
Two or More Races	233	460	10.2%	12.6%
American Indian/AK Native	220	329	9.6%	9.0%
Hispanic	179	274	7.8%	7.5%
Asian	135	222	5.9%	6.1%
Black/African American	112	189	4.9%	5.2%
Unknown	93	179	4.1%	4.9%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	17	32	0.7%	0.9%
Female	1,466	2,316	64%	63%
Male	812	1,336	36%	37%

AEG recipients were overwhelmingly Caucasian and female. While we lack information on the makeup of the student populations at all AEG-eligible schools, comparing AEG recipients to the Fall 2012 class at University of Alaska does not highlight any noteworthy differences between the two populations. Females made up 59.1% of students at UA , and Caucasians 57.5%. Because 17% of UA students did not report their ethnicity, and because UA records do not include a ‘two or more races’ category, it is difficult to make direct comparisons between attendance and AEG receipt for the other ethnic groups. However, in both populations American Indian/Alaska Natives are the second most likely group to both attend and to receive an AEG award, and Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander the least likely.

AGE OF RECIPIENTS VERSUS ALL UA STUDENTS

	AEG Recipients		UA Students	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Over 50	128	3.5%	3,035	9.0%
40-49	326	8.9%	3,140	9.4%
30-39	804	22.0%	5,299	15.8%
25-29	943	25.8%	5,359	16.0%
20-24	1,006	27.5%	9,723	29.0%
under 20	450	12.3%	6,999	20.9%

Compared to all UA students enrolling in Fall 2012, AEG recipients are more likely to be between 25 and 39 years old. Recipients are much less likely to be under 20 or over 50. Note UA student counts include students enrolling for any classes, and include those taking only one or two classes. This may explain the high percentage of older UA students in general as compared to older AEG recipients.

DEPENDENCY STATUS OF FAFSA FILERS AND AEG RECIPIENTS

FILED A FAFSA			RECEIVED AEG	
	AY12	AY13	AY12	AY13
Independent	27,059	26,499	2,108	3,030
Dependent	14,052	14,340	173	623
% Independent	66%	65%	92%	83%
% Dependent	34%	35%	8%	17%

Between AY09 and AY13, the percentages of dependent recipients were 25%, 1%, 2%, 8%, and 17% respectively, with higher percentages associated with greater funding availability.

As a result of the methodology for determining unmet need, independent students are substantially more likely to receive grants than dependent students. This outcome is especially true in years when grant funding was low. In AY09 and AY13, funding was high and dependent students made up 25% and 17% of AEG recipients. However, in low funding years like AY10 and AY11, they made up only 1% and 2%.

The primary factor creating these differences is the cost of attendance (COA) differences for independent and dependent students. (For more information on calculating the COA, see Appendix A.) As noted earlier, in AY13 the calculated COA for independent students was \$3,955 higher than for dependent students, driven by higher room and board costs based on independents renting off-campus housing and preparing meals versus dependents staying in dormitories and purchasing the university's

meal plan. Below are the COAs and representative calculations showing the differences between independent and dependent students in AY13 and AY12.

COST OF ATTENDANCE ALLOWANCES FOR AEG RECIPIENTS, AY13

	AY13 COA	Unmet Need Threshold = \$11,392		
		COA above Threshold	Potential Pell Grant	Unmet Need Above Threshold
Dependent Full-Time	\$ 18,442	\$ 7,050	\$ 5,550	\$ 1,500
Dependent Half-Time	\$ 15,430	\$ 4,038	\$ 2,775	\$ 1,263
Independent Full-Time	\$ 22,397	\$ 11,005	\$ 5,550	\$ 5,455
Independent Half-Time	\$ 19,384	\$ 7,992	\$ 2,775	\$ 5,217

COST OF ATTENDANCE ALLOWANCES FOR AEG RECIPIENTS, AY12

	AY12 COA	Unmet Need Threshold = \$12,781		
		Costs above Threshold	Potential Pell Grant	Unmet Need Above Threshold
Dependent Full-Time	\$ 18,348	\$ 5,567	\$ 5,500	\$ 67
Dependent Half-Time	\$ 15,501	\$ 2,720	\$ 2,750	\$ (30)
Independent Full-Time	\$ 21,543	\$ 8,762	\$ 5,500	\$ 3,262
Independent Half-Time	\$ 18,695	\$ 5,914	\$ 2,750	\$ 3,164

Using the AY13 table, in that year only students with an unmet need at or above \$11,392 received the AEG. Since dependent students had lower costs, their unmet costs were quickly reduced to the extent they were able (or were believed to be able based on their Expected Family Contribution or EFC) to provide funds for their attendance, making them ineligible for available grant funds. Assuming a dependent full-time student received a full Pell in AY13, if they were also expected to contribute more than \$1,500 towards their education, their unmet need dropped below the award threshold for the year. And, since they are dependent, their parents' income was factored into the EFC calculations.

This situation was more apparent in AY12, a year with lower funding and therefore a higher unmet need threshold. Dependent half-time students receiving the maximum half-time Pell grant were, as a result, automatically below the threshold. Similarly, dependent full-time students fell below it if they received the full Pell amount and could contribute over \$67 towards their expenses.

NUMBER OF AEG AWARDS RECEIVED PER STUDENT THROUGH AY13

AEG Awards	Percent of Recipients	Average Total Award Amount
1	74%	\$ 1,058
2	20%	\$ 2,391
3	5%	\$ 3,801
4	1%	\$ 5,013
5+	< 0.5%	\$ 7,070
TOTAL		\$ 1,512

Three-quarters of AEG recipients are awarded for only one year, and another 20% receive only two years of awards. While part of the short duration of awards could be caused by students completing their studies (since AEG recipients are older students), many students continued to attend school subsequent to receiving the AEG. Data provided by the University of Alaska, which follows, helps quantify differences in the patterns of students' enrollment and AEG receipt.

RECIPIENTS ATTENDING THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA

The majority of AEG recipients are enrolled at the University of Alaska – over 90% of all recipients in AY13. The University’s Institutional Research & Analysis staff provided information on UA’s AEG recipients, allowing for a more detailed analysis of the students receiving the award and how they were making use of it.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AEG RECIPIENTS AT UA

ACPE provided the University of Alaska with a list of students identified as ever having received an AEG award while attending UA, and the university provided information on AEG recipients’ attendance patterns. For the majority of these students, UA was the only postsecondary institution attended. However, a small number of recipients did attend other institutions, and may have also received the AEG at those institutions. For example, the table below shows that 874 recipients attended UA for only one year, but 2 received awards at other institutions. Of these two students, one received a total of two awards and the other three.

NUMBER OF YEARS ATTENDED AT UA BY NUMBER OF YEARS EVER AWARDED

Years Attended	Years Awarded ¹					Total
	1	2	3	4	5+	
1	872	1	1			874
2	1,286	141	1			1,428
3	1,123	326	31			1,480
4	914	313	83	9		1,319
5	749	269	96	23	7	1,144
6	554	248	99	36	4	941
7	333	131	53	24	9	550
8	155	76	33	9	10	283
Total	5,986	1,505	397	101	30	8,019

1 Students may be awarded at institutions other than the University of Alaska. This accounts for students having fewer years of attendance at UA than total years awarded.

Still most students attended UA for more years than they were awarded. Of the 5,986 students who attended UA and received one AEG award, just 872 attended only that one year. Larger numbers of students attended either two, three or four years, and there were more one-time AEG recipients spending six or more years in attendance at UA than there were single-year attendance recipients.

NUMBER OF YEARS ENROLLED AT UA PRIOR TO FIRST AWARD

First Enrolled At UA	First Award Year									
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total	Percent
Same Year	52	42	44	278	94	105	210	400	1,225	15%
1 year before	67	67	75	330	91	123	308	444	1,505	19%
2 years before	75	61	48	211	50	79	183	288	995	12%
3 years before	42	64	40	168	29	49	109	216	717	9%
4 years before	31	38	40	104	28	46	105	137	529	7%
5 years before	26	26	44	127	30	37	96	101	487	6%
6+ years before	130	171	185	453	162	249	524	680	2,554	32%

Only a small percentage of AEG recipients, about 15%, were awarded in their first year of attendance at UA. Nearly one-third had enrolled six or more years prior to receipt of the award, and over one-half of recipients had been enrolled three or more years prior to the receipt of the AEG.

MOST RECENT ENROLLMENT AT UA BY MOST RECENT AWARD YEAR

Most Recent Enrollment at UA	Most Recent Award Year ¹								
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	
2006	90								
2007	65	114							
2008	41	70	114						
2009	17	26	69	372					
2010	26	33	51	275	179				
2011	19	20	32	216	141	258			
2012	23	18	43	189	87	132	577		
2013	25	44	46	354	95	157	664	3,313	
Total	306	325	355	1,406	502	547	1,241	3,313	

1 Excludes students subsequently awarded at non-UA institutions.

Similarly, recipients often continued to attend UA after receipt of the AEG. For example, of the 306 students who received their most recent AEG award at one of the UA campuses in 2006, the first year of the AEG program, only 90 did not return to UA in future years even though they did not continue to receive AEG funds. Sixty-five attended the next year, but have not returned since, while 25 were still attending in AY13, seven years after their most recent AEG award was paid to them. Note that the

numbers reported for the most recent years are likely to see large changes in the future, as students subsequently return to UA to continue their studies.

CLASS STANDING OF STUDENTS AND RECIPIENTS, FALL 2009 & 2012

AEG Recipients	Fall 2009		Fall 2012	
	All Students	AEG Recipients	All Students	AEG Recipients
Freshmen (1st Time)	18.6%	11.5%	16.0%	11.4%
Freshmen (continuing)	20.2%	17.9%	19.5%	19.3%
Sophomore	20.4%	20.0%	21.3%	23.3%
Junior	16.1%	16.7%	17.1%	19.5%
Senior	24.7%	33.8%	26.0%	26.6%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The distribution of all UA students by class standing compared to AEG recipients indicates that students with higher class standings are more likely to receive the AEG than are freshmen. In Fall 2009, the year with the highest level of funding prior to the two most recent years of the grant, 18.6% of students at UA were first-time freshmen, but only 11.5% of AEG recipients were. In years with lower funding, recipients were even less likely to be freshmen students. With increased funding in 2012, possibly also affected by a decline in student enrollments, this gap closed somewhat. In 2009 the percentage of AEG recipients who were seniors was much larger than their proportion of all students attending – 33.8% compared to 24.7%. However, that difference had also shrunk significantly by Fall 2012.

HEADCOUNT OF RECIPIENTS AND PERCENT OF STUDENTS BY CLASS STANDING

AEG Recipients	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012
Freshmen (1st Time)	87	83	226	372
Freshmen (continuing)	135	176	412	629
Sophomore	151	196	453	759
Junior	126	165	368	635
Senior	255	264	617	867
Total	754	884	2,076	3,262

Percent of All Students	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012
Freshmen (1st Time)	2.4%	2.2%	6.0%	10.8%
Freshmen (continuing)	3.5%	4.2%	9.2%	15.0%
Sophomore	3.8%	4.7%	10.0%	16.6%
Junior	4.1%	4.8%	10.4%	17.4%
Senior	5.4%	5.2%	11.3%	15.6%
Percent of All Students	3.9%	4.3%	9.5%	15.2%

Increases in funding, and how such increases affect the types of students receiving the awards, are also apparent when analyzing the percentage of students in each class standing receiving the AEG. In Fall 2009, 3.9% of UA students admitted into degree programs were receiving the AEG.³ In Fall 2012, and with significantly increased funding, over 15% of students received the AEG. While there is still a noticeable award imbalance towards students in the higher class standings, the differences are not as stark as they once were. While higher funding levels increase the overall percentage of students receiving an award, the subgroup receiving the largest relative increases in funding have been first-time freshmen.

³ For comparison purposes, and because AEG recipients must be admitted into a degree program before they are eligible to receive the award, 9,500 to 12,000 non-degree seeking students, many attending part-time or less, were removed from the total UA students numbers for this table each year.

AREAS OF STUDY FOR AEG RECIPIENTS

ALL STUDENTS AND AEG RECIPIENTS BY DECLARED DISCIPLINE AREAS, FALL 2012

Discipline	All Students		AEG Recipients	
	Count	Percent of Students Pursuing Discipline	Count	Percent of Recipients Pursuing Discipline
Business and Public Administration	4,176	19.5%	680	20.8%
Letters, Comm and Philosophy	3,985	18.6%	559	17.1%
Health	3,352	15.7%	612	18.8%
Vocational Education	2,095	9.8%	280	8.6%
Social Sciences	1,569	7.3%	263	8.1%
Math, Physical and Life Sciences	1,512	7.1%	183	5.6%
Engineering	1,472	6.9%	165	5.1%
Education	1,098	5.1%	188	5.8%
Visual and Performing Arts	611	2.9%	104	3.2%
Interdisciplinary Studies	522	2.4%	79	2.4%
Computer and Information Science	421	2.0%	56	1.7%
Natural Resources	376	1.8%	42	1.3%
Foreign Languages	228	1.1%	51	1.6%
TOTAL DECLARED STUDENTS	21,417	100%	3,262	100.0%

As reported by UA, there were 21,417 students in Fall 2012 who had declared a major in one of the above discipline areas. The pattern of disciplines AEG recipients pursue closely matches those for the entire UA student body, with Business and Public Administration, Letters, Communications and Philosophy and Health chosen by over one-half of all students and AEG recipient students.

ALL STUDENTS BY DECLARED DISCIPLINE AREAS AND PERCENTAGE RECEIVING AEG, FALL 2012

Discipline	All Students	AEG Recipients	
	Count	Count	Percent In Discipline Receiving AEG
Foreign Languages	228	51	22.4%
Health	3,352	612	18.3%
Education	1,098	188	17.1%
Visual and Performing Arts	611	104	17.0%
Social Sciences	1,569	263	16.8%
Business and Public Administration	4,176	680	16.3%
Interdisciplinary Studies	522	79	15.1%
Letters, Comm and Philosophy	3,985	559	14.0%
Vocational Education	2,095	280	13.4%
Computer and Information Science	421	56	13.3%
Math, Physical and Life Sciences	1,512	183	12.1%
Engineering	1,472	165	11.2%
Natural Resources	376	42	11.2%
TOTAL	21,417	3,262	15.2%

When we look at the percentage of AEG recipients in each of the discipline areas, that relationship changes. AEG recipients represented 15.2% of the total students who declared a field of study as reported by UA in Fall 2012. (To be AEG-eligible, a student must be pursuing a degree, and all but 2 AEG recipients in Fall 2012 had declared a major.)

In Foreign Languages, 22.4% of students were AEG recipients. AEG recipients were also concentrated in the Health discipline, though this could be driven by the higher award levels given to priority programs of study, which include Allied Health Sciences. Recipients were less likely to be found pursuing Natural Resources, Engineering or Math, Physical and Life Sciences disciplines.

AEG PRIORITY PROGRAM RECIPIENTS HEADCOUNTS

Priority Program	All Students			AEG Recipients			Percent of UA Students		
	2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012
Allied Health Sciences	895	925	937	60	126	182	6.7%	13.6%	19.4%
Community & Social Services	853	922	937	48	112	166	5.6%	12.1%	17.7%
Teaching and Paraprofessional Education	1,218	1,317	1,190	57	125	218	4.7%	9.5%	18.3%
Process Industry / Natural Resources Extraction	2,198	2,151	2,127	80	192	257	3.6%	8.9%	12.1%

An earlier table showed that AEG recipients accounted for 4.3%, 9.5% and 15.2% of the UA degree-seeking students in Fall 2010 through Fall 2012. When we compare AEG recipients' enrollments in priority programs of study, in each year there was a higher than average percentage of recipients enrolled in all but one of the priority area - Process Industry / Natural Resources Extraction.

DEGREES EARNED BY AEG RECIPIENTS IN AY06 THROUGH AY09 BY NUMBER OF AWARDS RECEIVED

# of Degrees / Certificates Awarded	Number of Years Awarded							Total	Percent
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
-	975	229	74	26	10	1	1	1,316	43%
1	924	308	123	39	15	1		1,410	46%
2	164	81	30	10	2			287	9%
3	16	9	3	3				31	1%
4	1	2						3	0%
Total	2,080	629	230	78	27	2	1	3,047	

When considering how many AEG recipients went on to earn a degree, we need to remove the most recent recipients who have not had adequate time to complete one. Looking at recipients first receiving the grant between AY06 and AY09 – students who would have at least five years to earn a degree, but likely more since few first-time freshmen receive the grant – 57% have been awarded one or more

degrees from UA.⁴ If we were to consider only AY06 and AY07 graduates, 61% would have completed at least one degree at UA. However, because a large share of AEG funds are going to students later in their postsecondary careers, it is not appropriate to compare completion rates for AEG recipients to the traditional measure of first-time, full-time freshmen entering a program of study. Many AEG recipients have already demonstrated their ability to persist in their programs of study before receiving the AEG.

DEGREES EARNED BY AEG RECIPIENTS IN AY06 THROUGH AY09 BY TYPES OF DEGREE

Highest UA Degree / Certificate Earned	Number of Years Awarded							Total	Percent
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Associates	323	137	51	25	7	1		544	18%
Bachelors	694	239	95	27	7			1,062	35%
Certificate	34	6	1		2			43	1%
Masters	47	14	6		1			68	2%
Occupational Endorsement ¹	7	4	3					14	0%
No Award ¹	975	229	74	26	10	1	1	1,316	43%
Total	2,080	629	230	78	27	2	1	3,047	

1 Note that students may earn credentials from the University of Alaska during their pursuit of a degree or certificate that would otherwise not qualify for AEG funding.

Keeping with this same population of students, recipients with first AEG awarded in AY06 through AY09, we identified the highest level of degree or certificate that they had earned through AY13. Nearly twice as many students had gone on to earn a bachelor's degree as had earned only an associates. However, the numbers of years awarded to students between the two showed very little difference after accounting for the total number of degrees awarded in each.

Given the difference in the number of credit hours required between an associates and a bachelor's degree, one would expect there to be fewer years awarded to students earning an AA compared to those earning a BA. The data above suggests AEG recipients earning an AA degree may have lower enrollment intensities than those earning a BA – enrolling half-time versus full-time, or enrolling in only one semester per academic year. Associates degree earners may also be taking more than the number of credit hours required for degree completion. This occurs when students take courses which cannot be applied towards their degree, or they continue to take courses in pursuit of a bachelor's degree.

⁴ A small number of these students may have only received an occupational endorsement while still pursuing a degree or certificate that was eligible for AEG funding.

STUDENTS USE OF FINANCIAL AID AND OTHER AID PROGRAMS

NON-SELF-HELP AID HEADCOUNTS AND AWARD AMOUNTS, AY10 TO AY12

	Non-AEG Recipients Receiving Financial Aid			AEG Recipients			
	2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012	
Number of Students	7,427	9,237	9,255	793	946	2,097	
Avg Non-Self-Help Aid Received	\$4,765	\$4,830	\$5,105	\$4,966	\$5,711	\$5,472	
Pell Grants	\$1,936	\$2,292	\$2,030	\$3,605	\$3,627	\$3,327	
Other Grants	\$1,553	\$1,379	\$1,610	\$1,268	\$1,952	\$1,841	
Scholarships	\$1,277	\$1,159	\$1,465	\$92	\$131	\$304	
Aid Received as Percentage of Non-Recipients' Aid				104%	118%	107%	
				Pell Grants	186%	158%	164%
				Other Grants	82%	142%	114%
				Scholarships	7%	11%	21%

University of Alaska supplied information on the numbers of students receiving financial aid, and the amounts of grants and scholarships for non-AEG recipient students compared to recipients. Only students receiving non-self-help aid are included in these counts. AEG recipients had more total aid than did non-recipients, 18% more in AY11 and 7% more in AY12. Most of this difference was accounted for by AEG recipients' larger Pell grants. In AY12, the average AEG recipient had nearly \$1,300 more in Pell grants than did non-recipients. However, AEG recipients had much less in scholarships than did non-recipients – over \$1,100 less in AY12.

HEADCOUNTS AND PERCENTAGES OF STUDENTS IN WORK STUDY

	Fall 2009 - 2011			Percent of Students		
	2009	2010	2011	2009	2010	2011
All Students	181	200	199	0.5%	0.6%	0.6%
AEG Recipients	18	15	49	2.4%	1.7%	2.4%

Note: Only includes students who were paid work study funds.

Finally, though the percentages are small, AEG recipients were between three and five times more likely to participate in Work Study than students as a whole.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT INDICATORS FOR AEG RECIPIENTS

STUDENT CREDIT HOURS TAKEN AND COMPLETED, ALL STUDENTS AND RECIPIENTS, FALL 2012

	Student Credit Hours			
	Taken	Completed*	Completed/ Taken	Avg. SCH Taken / Student
Non-Recipients				
Full-Time Students	158,191	119,347	75.4%	13.6
Half-Time Students	89,688	60,740	67.7%	4.9
Total Non-Recipients	247,879	180,086	72.7%	8.3
AEG Recipients				
Full-Time Recipients	27,894	21,933	78.6%	13.6
Half-Time Recipients	9,524	7,129	74.9%	7.8
Total AEG Recipients	37,418	29,062	77.7%	11.5

* Credits are defined as completed if a student earned a C or better in the course or a P. Auditors are not included.

AEG recipients not only enroll in more credit hours than the average student, but also have a slightly higher completion rate for courses they take than do non-recipients.

AVERAGE CREDIT HOURS EARNED BY AWARD RECEIPT AND FIRST YEAR OF RECEIPT

First AEG Award Year	Average Credit Hours Earned Per Year		
	In Awarded Years	Not In Awarded Years ¹	Percentage Increase
2006	24.2	15.7	54%
2007	24.8	20.1	24%
2008	25.3	18.8	35%
2009	23.2	18.5	26%
2010	23.9	17.9	33%
2011	24.3	18.3	33%
2012	22.9	17.6	30%
2013	24.1	17.7	36%
All Years	23.8	18.1	32%

1 Credit hour data is only available for AY06 through AY13, so Not In Awarded Year averages do not include credits earned prior to AY06.

AEG recipients generally earned more credit hours during the years they received the AEG than they did in years when they did not receive. Since AEG inception, recipients attending UA have earned on average 23.8 credit hours per year when they received funds, and 18.1 credit hours when they did not. Some of this difference occurs because students taking only a small number of credit hours are by definition not eligible to receive the AEG. In other cases, students may be attending full-time, but have insufficient unmet need to receive the award. In the 2011 survey of AEG recipients, more than one-half of the respondents reported that they worked during the academic year in which they received the AEG, and nearly three-quarters of these students responded that receipt of the AEG allowed them to work fewer hours. This could help explain the higher average credit hours earned in AEG award years.

REMEDIAL COURSE ENROLLMENT FOR ALL UA STUDENTS AND AEG RECIPIENTS, FALL 2010 – FALL 2012

Academic Year	Percent of Students		
	2010	2011	2012
All Students	14.5%	15.5%	15.1%
AEG Recipients	21.5%	22.0%	21.6%

Note: Numbers do not match the University of Alaska's Year In Review Table 1.14a because the courses classified as preparatory have changed since the publication.

However, while AEG recipients generally are enrolled in more courses than non-recipients and have a higher completion rate, they are also more likely to enroll in remedial courses than the average student. The table above considers only remedial courses taken by students during the fall of each single year. (That is, it is not a cumulative tally of all students who have ever taken remedial coursework.)

Given that AEG recipients are more likely to be older students, and more likely to receive the AEG in their junior and senior years, their increased tendency to enroll in remedial classes is even more startling. In Fall 2012, 54% of first-time freshmen at UA enrolled in remedial courses, compared to the all student remedial enrollment of 15.1%. This shows that students with higher class standings are enrolling in remedial classes at a much lower rate. With AEG recipients' remedial enrollment levels at 21.6% in that semester, it seems that many recipients may be poorly prepared to perform college-level work in certain academic areas.

RETENTION RATES FOR ALL UA FIRST-TIME FULL-TIME FRESHMEN AND AEG RECIPIENTS, FALL 2011

	All Undergraduates		
	Starting Cohort Fall 2011	Retained Fall 2012	Retention Rate (%)
All Undergraduates	2,673	1,813	67.8%
AEG Recipients	161	93	57.8%

Note: Starting cohort includes all first-time full-time freshmen.
Retention rates are based on opening data.

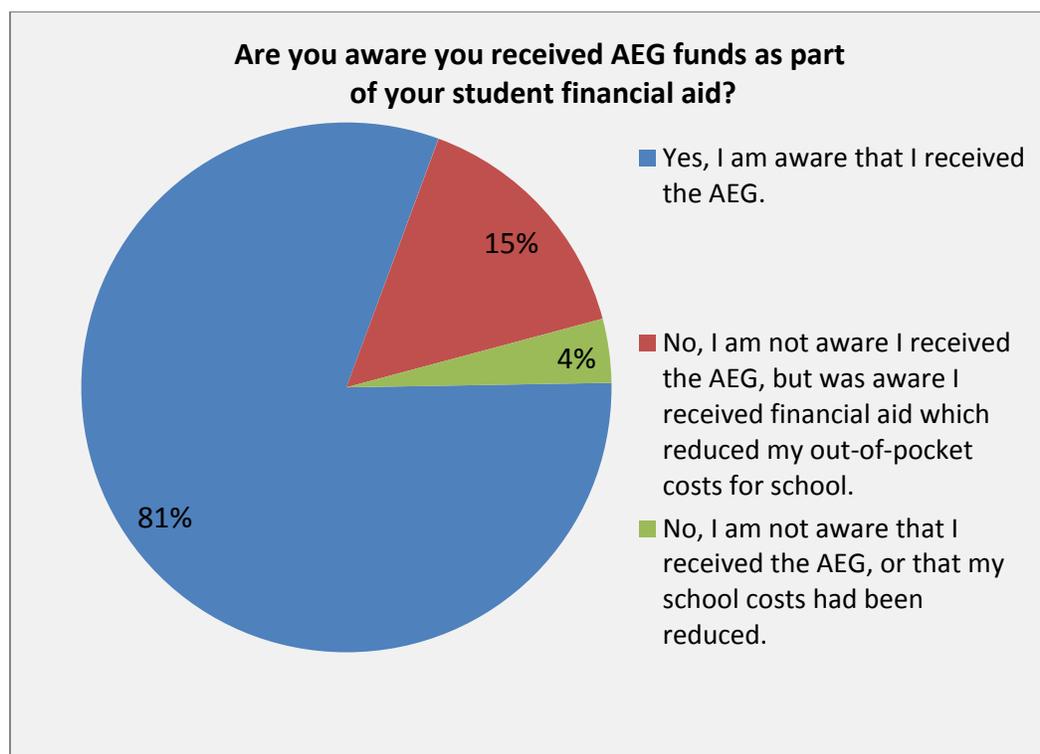
The number of grant recipients receiving the AEG as first-time full-time freshmen in Fall 2012 is very small. However, these AEG recipients had a ten percentage point lower second-year retention rate than did the entire first-time full-time freshmen class in that year.

SURVEY RESPONSES OF RECENT AEG RECIPIENTS

ACPE surveyed recipients of the AlaskAdvantage Education Grant, or AEG, in the 2012 and 2013 academic years using email addresses provided on recipients' FAFSA filings. A request to participate in the survey was emailed to 2,215 AEG recipients, and two follow-up reminders were sent to non-responders. A total of 342 recipients began the survey and 328 completing it, for a response rate of 15%.

Based on comments received during a prior survey conducted in December 2010, the first question asked addressed recipients' awareness that they had actually received an AEG award:

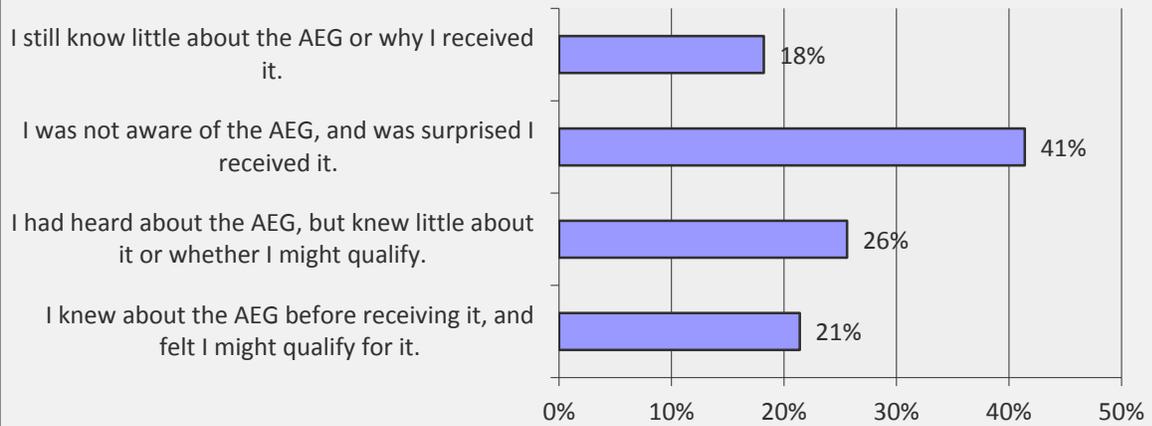
It is possible for the college to directly apply an AlaskAdvantage Education Grant to a student's outstanding tuition/housing bill. Are you aware you received AEG funds as part of your student financial aid?



Because a similar question was not asked in the 2010 survey, we cannot determine if students are now more aware of the AEG. Still, nearly one-in-five recipients did not know that they had received funding through the AEG program, and 4% did not realize that they had received a grant of any type.

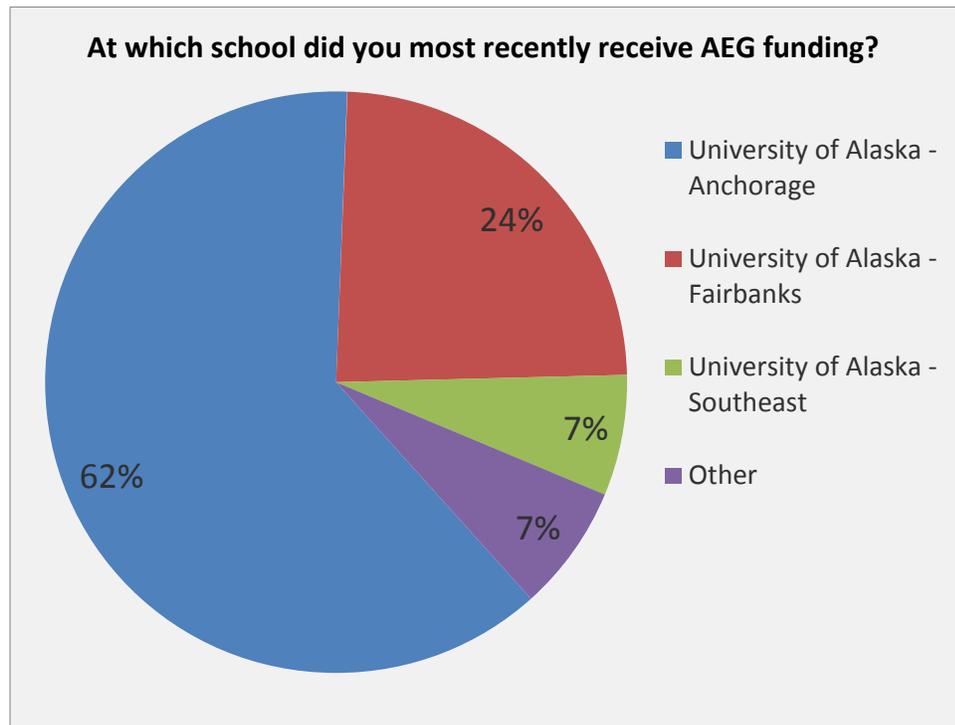
Recipients' awareness of the AEG before receiving it was even less, with a plurality of recipients surprised that they actually received funds.

How much did you know about the AEG, and when did you first realize that you might receive it? Please check all that apply.

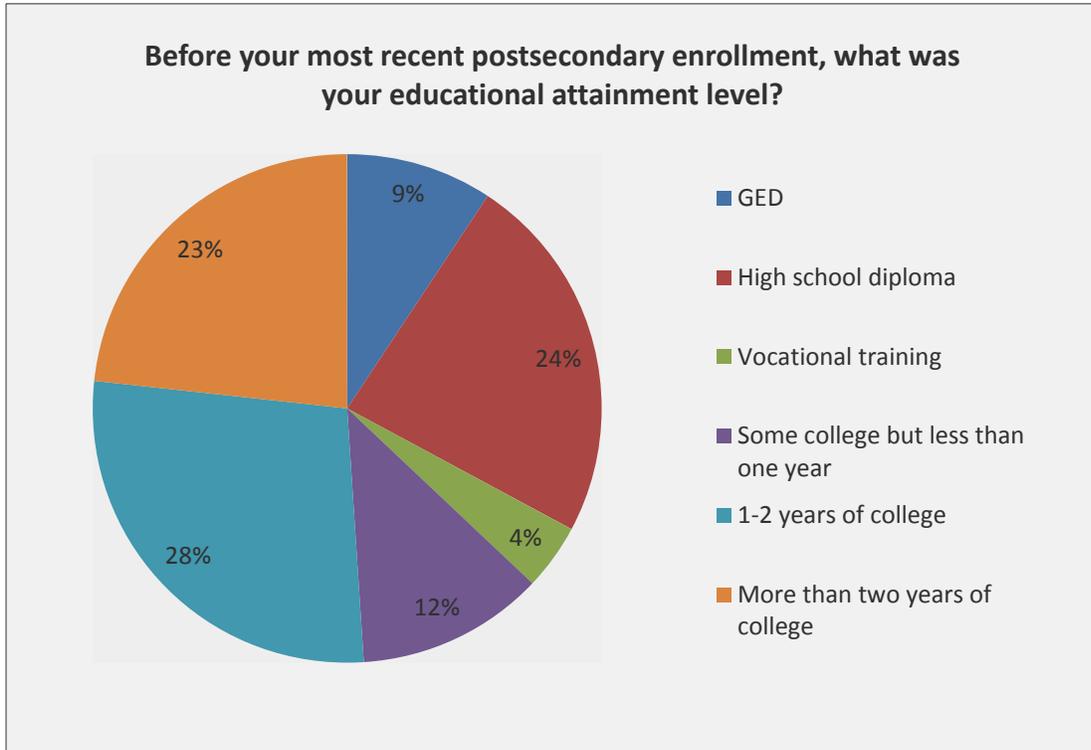


We also asked which school the recipients were attending when they received their AEG. Like the total population of recipients, respondents were much more likely to have attended either the University of Alaska Anchorage or Fairbanks campuses than any other school, most likely attributable to the sheer size of these campuses. Respondents from other institutions were slightly underrepresented in the survey, since nearly 9% of AEG recipients attended a non-UA institution in AY12 or AY13.

At which school did you most recently receive AEG funding?

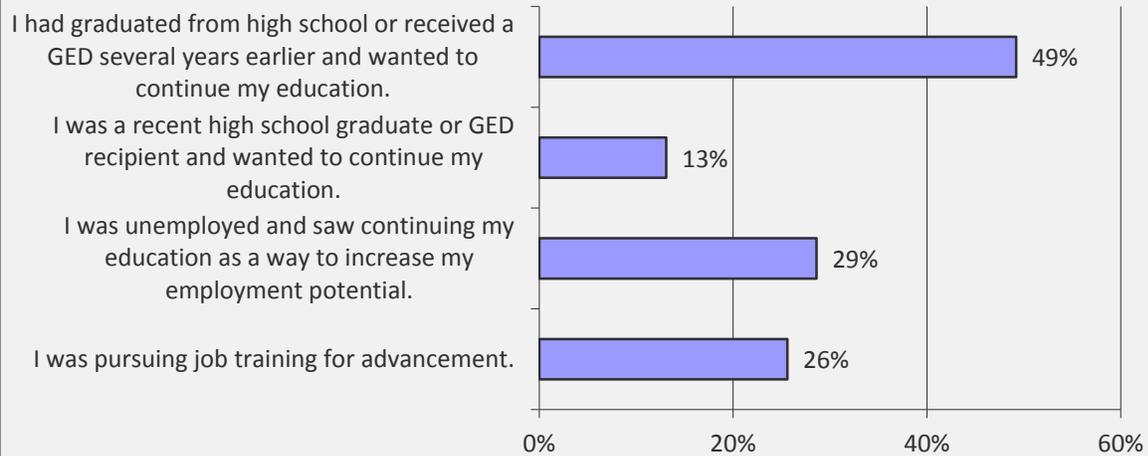


Approximately one-half of AEG survey respondents had attended at least one year of college, while one-third had only received a high school diploma or a GED.



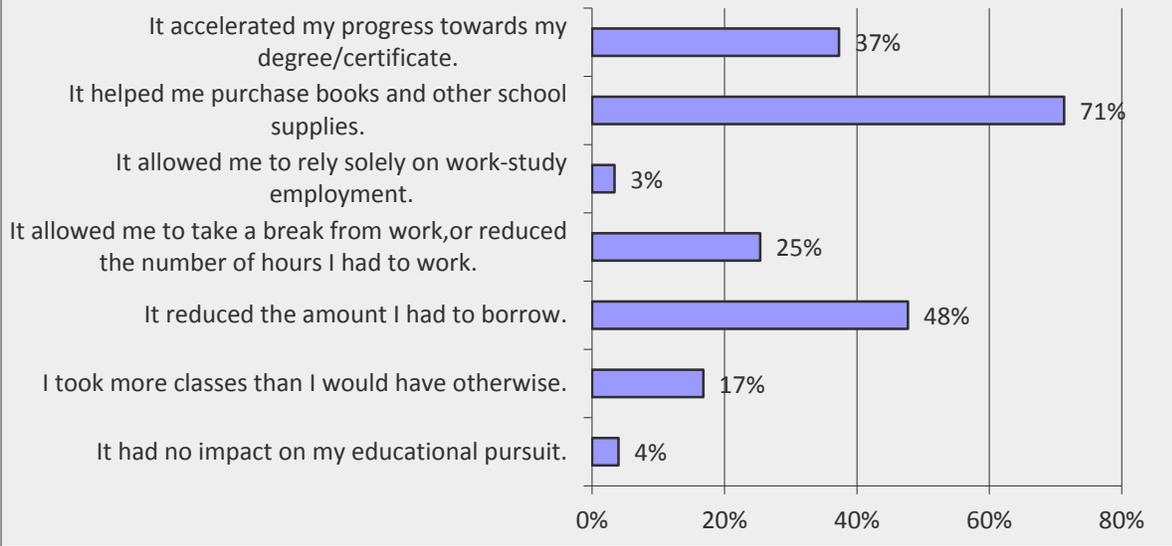
Very few AEG recipients were recent high school graduates or GED recipients – nearly one-half of all recipients responded that they had been out of school for several years and were returning to continue their education. More than one-quarter said they were unemployed and saw continuing their education as a way to increase their employment potential, and another quarter said they pursued additional training for advancement in their jobs. Note that respondents could choose more than one response, so recipients might be included in two or more categories.

When you received the AEG, what was your goal or goals for pursuing postsecondary education? Please check all that apply.



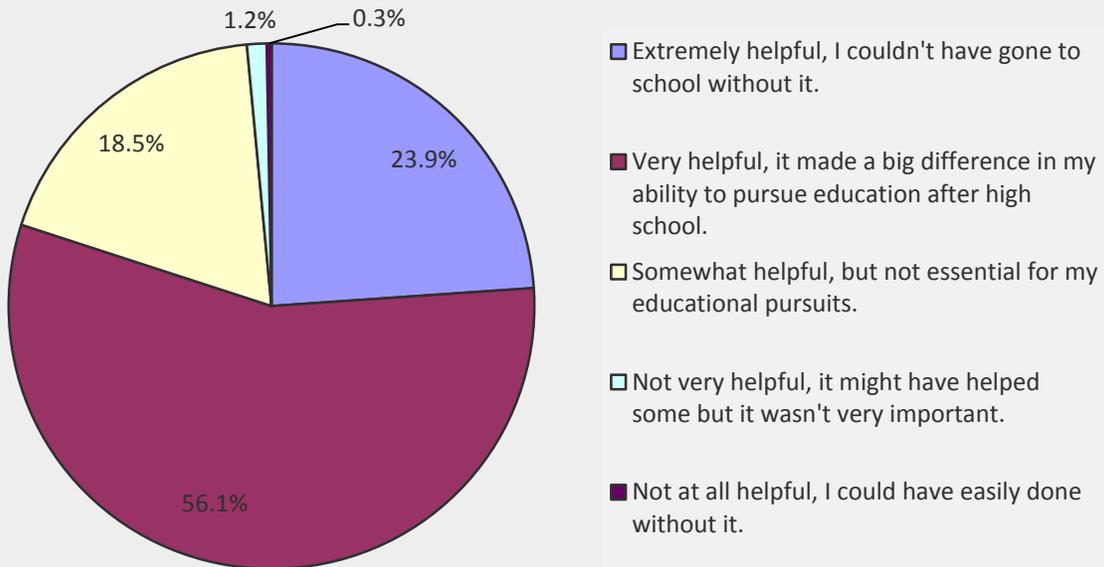
Once students received the AEG, they were most likely to use it to purchase books and supplies. Again survey responders could choose more than one answer, but recipients said the grant allowed them to reduce the amount they needed to borrow in order to attend school, it helped them meet their educational goals more quickly than if they had not received the additional funds, and it allowed them to work fewer hours in order to attend.

Please let us know how the AEG helped in your pursuit of postsecondary education. Please check all that apply.

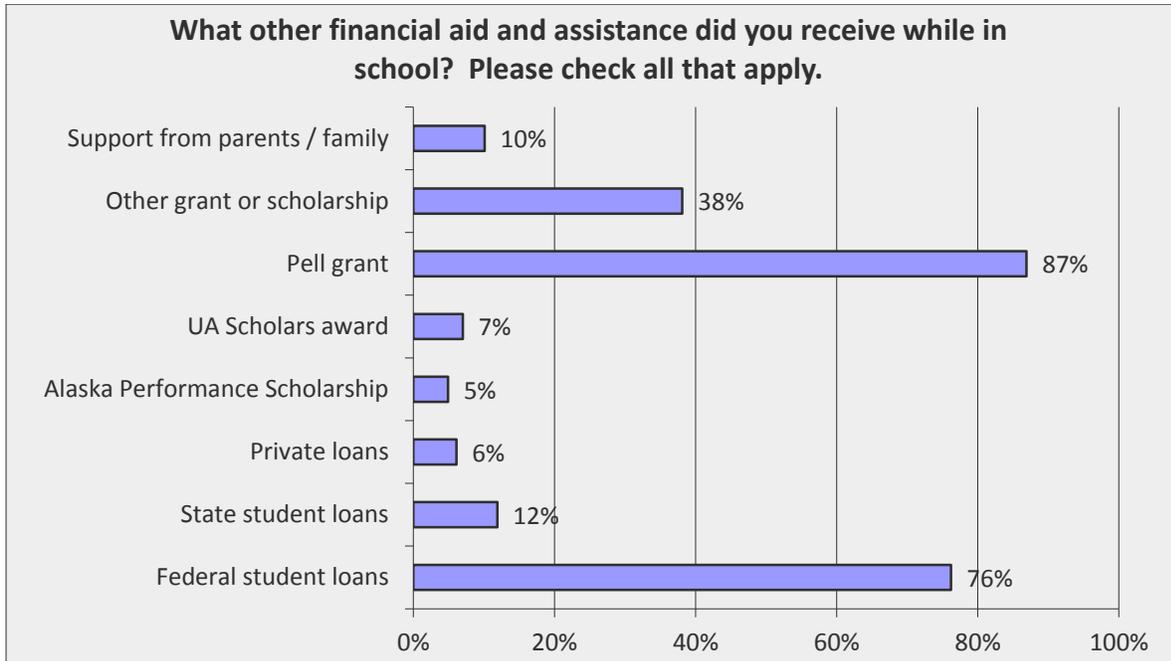


Four out of five survey respondents considered their AEG award either very or extremely helpful in their pursuit of postsecondary studies. Less than 2% of respondents said that their receipt of the AEG was not at least somewhat helpful in to them.

In your experience, how helpful was it to receive the AEG?

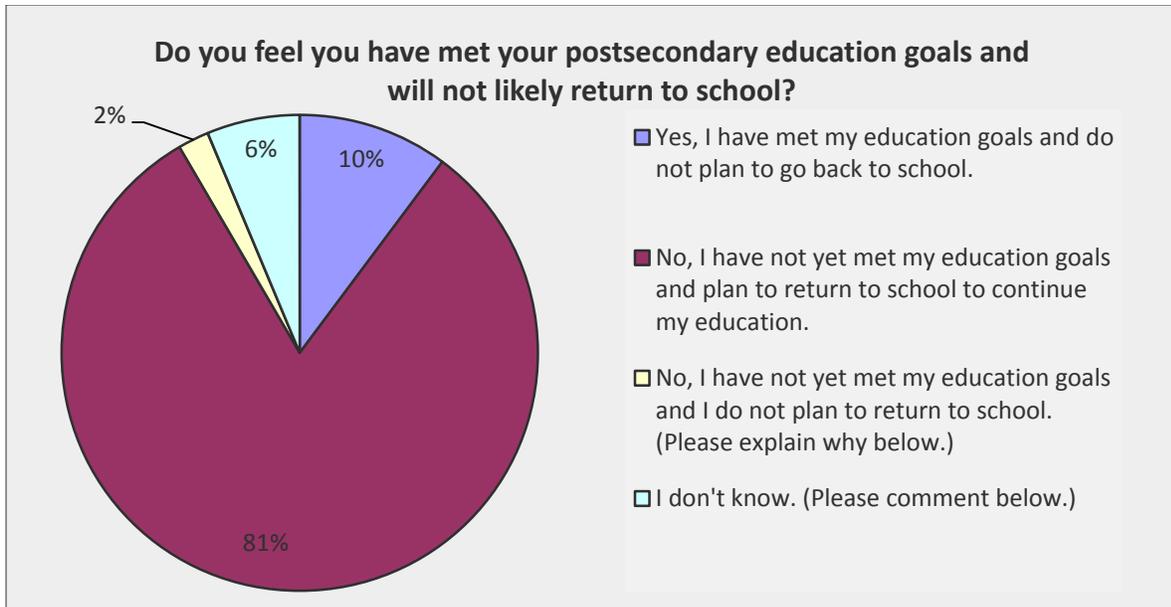


The majority of survey respondents received a Pell grant, and over three-quarters of respondents had taken out federal student loans while only 12% reported having taken out state student loans. Over one-third received some additional form of grant or a scholarship.



One survey question served to split respondents into one of three groups:

- 1) those who had met their educational goals and did not plan to return to school, making up 10% of respondents;
- 2) those who had not yet met their goals and were planning to return, accounting for 80% of respondents; and
- 3) those who had not met their educational goals and were not planning to return, or were not sure of their future plans, 2% and 6% of all respondents respectively.



Respondents in each group were then asked a series of similar questions – how far had they progressed in their studies, did they feel that their studies had an impact on their life, and those not planning to return to school were asked if they would like to return if possible, and what factors might be preventing them from returning.

Only a very small percentage of students having completed their studies did so at a school other than the one where they last received their AEG – and the total number of completers who responded to the survey is small. For those responders who plan to continue with their education, more than 10% plan on doing so at a school outside of Alaska, and 5% plan on attending a different Alaska school than the one where they last received an AEG. All but one of the non-completers last attended the school at which they received the grant.

I completed or plan to complete my studies at, or last attended:	Have completed their studies. (34 respondents)		Plan to return to school. (270 respondents)		Not completed and don't intend to return or don't know. (27 respondents)	
	Response Percent	Response Count	Response Percent	Response Count	Response Percent	Response Count
The Alaska school where I received my most recent AlaskAdvantage Education Grant.	94.1%	32	83.0%	224	96.3%	26
Another Alaska school.	2.9%	1	5.2%	14	3.7%	1
A school in another state.	2.9%	1	11.9%	32	0.0%	0

Across the board, responders believe that their studies improved their employability, even those who believe they have not completed their educational goals but who do not plan on returning to school. Nearly as many believe that they also enjoy increased earning potential because of their studies, and about one-half of respondents reported that they are now more active in their communities because of their postsecondary attendance.

Do you feel that your studies after high school have impacted your life, and if so, in what ways? Please check all that apply.	Have completed their studies. (34 respondents)		Plan to return to school. (270 respondents)		Not completed and don't intend to return or don't know. (27 respondents)	
	Response Percent	Response Count	Response Percent	Response Count	Response Percent	Response Count
I have increased employment opportunities.	88.2%	30	81.8%	220	77.8%	21
I have increased earning potential.	79.4%	27	74.3%	200	70.4%	19
I am more active in my community.	41.2%	14	50.2%	135	55.6%	15

Finally, respondents were asked four questions to get some information on their original and current places of residence, their age and dependency status. For AEG recipients graduating from an Alaska high school, those coming from rural areas were slightly more likely to now reside in a rural area than an urban area of Alaska. However, nearly 90% of those students graduating from an Alaska high school in an urban area continue to reside in an urban area. In fact, these students were more likely to have left Alaska than they were to be living in rural Alaska. Not surprisingly, the majority of AEG recipients who graduated from a high school outside of Alaska currently reside in an urban area of the state.

Location of high school attended and current residence:	High School's Location		
	Rural AK (67 respondents)	Urban AK (152 respondents)	Other State (108 respondents)
Currently Residing			
Rural AK (61 respondents)	49%	4%	19%
Urban AK (254 respondents)	43%	89%	74%
Other State (43 respondents)	7%	7%	7%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Respondents graduating from a rural Alaska high school fell predominantly into the oldest age grouping in our survey – 29% were 35 years old or older when they received the grant. Urban graduates were most likely to report their age as 22 to 25 years when they received the AEG, while out-of-state high school graduates receiving the AEG were much more likely to be older students. Ninety percent were 26 years old or older, and one-half were 35 or older.

Location of high school attended and recipient's age:	Graduating High School's Location		
	Rural AK (67 respondents)	Urban AK (152 respondents)	Other State (108 respondents)
Recipients' Age			
<= 21 (27 respondents)	17%	11%	0%
22-25 (69 respondents)	17%	30%	10%
26-29 (64 respondents)	23%	18%	20%
30-35 (66 respondents)	14%	24%	20%
35+ (100 respondents)	29%	18%	50%
Total	100%	100%	100%

OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES TO SURVEY QUESTIONS

We also asked survey respondents to provide feedback on the AEG: how much did they know about the grant; their goals in pursuing postsecondary education; how the AEG helped in that pursuit; how the pursuit of postsecondary studies has affected their lives; what factors affect their decisions to return to school; and ways that the program could be improved. Below are a few examples of their replies.

How much did you know about the AEG, and when did you first realize that you might receive it?

Most respondents didn't know about the AEG:

The first time I received the AEG it was a welcome surprise.

I become aware of it when I started receiving it, I know little about it. I did look up some information online.

Some knew of the AEG, but knew little about the grant:

As a graduate from 1985 I did not think I would qualify. I graduated with honors but thought the program was only for new graduates.

My first year in school I did not receive the AEG and had felt that maybe I was not eligible for it based on age. And, that it was available only to recent graduates of Alaska High Schools. After having received the AEG I now am happy for the grant program. This helps off-set school related costs.

I knew grants were available, but not specific details about them. I was fairly sure I would qualify because I have been receiving them for a few years.

Very few respondents knew any details about the AEG:

I knew I would likely qualify because I had researched my options for financial aid, but having to wait and not getting much information from my school or AlaskaAdvantage was frustrating.

When you received the AEG, what was your goal or goals for pursuing postsecondary education?

Most respondents mentioned job and career advancement as their primary goal:

I was employed; however, postsecondary education seemed this most likely means of increasing my earning potential.

The career(s) I wanted to go into required a college degree.

Didn't like what I was limited to with jobs without a bachelor's degree, so I went back to school.

Many mentioned their desire to continue and/or complete their education:

I am a stay-at-home mom and have been working toward my BS in Biology for a number of years.

Just trying to finish my degree that I've been working on for some time now.

I took a 5 year break from college after having my son, then returned to finish up my degree.

Several mentioned the sense of accomplishment that came with pursuing postsecondary studies:

I want to improve my life, gain insight on science, and better the future of myself, my unborn children, and others.

I wanted something better for my kids and I.

Midlife divorce resulted in being self-sufficient. I have the desire to sharpen my skills to better myself and those I work for.

Please let us know how the AEG helped in your pursuit of postsecondary education.

Many respondents' comments related to one of the topic areas available using the survey check boxes, mostly focused on on-time degree completion and reducing the amount of debt they accrued. Others focused on how the AEG increased the quality of their daily life as a student:

Being a single mother and trying to go back to school, it significantly reduced my stress level and allowed me to better care for my family.

It helped me with purchasing food for when I had classes all day on Tuesdays & Thursdays & had to eat at school!! What a load that was lifted off of my shoulders to have the extra money.

I wouldn't have survived my 1 year unpaid internship without the AEG, THANK YOU!

With 4 children at home last year it made a huge difference and for some reason was the only grant I received outside of UAA even though I have been working hard to get a good GPA.

It allowed me to pay for childcare expenses instead of having my child go to work/school with me because I couldn't afford to pay a babysitter.

Receiving the AEG make me want to push even harder, succeed and not be a failure. It was a nice surprise.

Do you feel that your studies after high school have impacted your life, and if so, in what ways?

Most responses included aspects of self-improvement associated with their education:

It has taught me perseverance and I believe it will increase the quality of my life. My sibling and I are first generation college degree students.

So much more self-confidence, fulfillment and personal pride. A greater sense of community and world awareness. Education is the key to a better, fuller life.

My studies have helped solidify what I want to do in my life, why I want to go into this field, and how to go about making it happen.

Professional and academic achievements were also cited by many respondents:

Increased my knowledge about photography and provided me with the skills needed to compete with professionals.

My degree has provided me the opportunity to work for a great company, with ample room to advance.

Still others were ambivalent or cited negative impacts on their lives through pursuing postsecondary studies:

I do not feel that it has increased my employment opportunities, or increased my earning potential. After \$40,000 in loans, I am only making \$15.00/hr. I feel like I did not learn anything substantially that I didn't already have a background knowledge in or that I could have learned without the assistance of teachers. If I could go back in time, I probably would have either gotten a degree in a different field or not have gone to college at all and saved the money.

I have not had the opportunity to put my educational achievements to use in the job market at this time. I would hope that my employment opportunities and earning potential would increase.

Much better quality of life. Aside from the \$45,000 debt that I accrued while going to school.

If you are unsure of your future education goals and plans, please let us know what factors are affecting your decision on returning to school, and what types of assistance would be beneficial to you.

The majority of recipients cited a lack of or limited funds as the reason they were uncertain of returning to school:

I needed to take out loans in order to afford school and cost of living expenses. After I took out \$20k in federal loans, I decided that I cant afford any more loans. I work as a custodial supervisor and have applications out at a couple of unions for electrical apprenticeships.

My educational loans are currently too high to contemplate returning to school at this time.

Many respondents mentioned family obligations as a deterrent to continuing their education:

I have 5 months left for my Accounting Associates Degree. I plan to go back to school for that, however right now I am a single parent and cannot afford to go back to school.

My only problem with finishing is not having enough time. I work full time to support my family and have a very demanding job. Once I am off of work I have to cook, clean, take care of my kids and by the time that is over I am exhausted and don't have time to do my research, reading and writing.

A few mentioned the lack of a program of study available in Alaska that interested them, including one respondent who cited all three of these factors in their reply:

I've spent too much money on college already without earning a degree. To study what I'd really like to study I would have to leave the state, and since I'm a single mom with two young kids I don't think that's the best choice for my family right now.

Graduated with my bachelors, unsure about continuing on to graduate school. There are limited options within Alaska, and I haven't found any correspondence programs which I am drawn to.

Do you have any other thoughts on how the grant program could be improved?

Most respondents said improved awareness or marketing of the grant was the top priority for improving it:

The program is not very well known to students until they find out they are recipients. Additionally, there was some confusion regarding whether I had applied for it or not and at first I was worried it was a scam.

Maybe more advertisement to let others who may be looking for scholarships. Not finding scholarships can be stressful but if the scholarship is known, then others can feel safe knowing that their tuition and books are covered.

The timing of receipt of the AEG was also a priority for many:

It would be very helpful to know if and how much I will be receiving prior to accepting financial aid. The AEG allows me to accept a partial loan amount and reserve the remainder for summer enrollment if needed. Regardless, receiving the AEG has been a very pleasant surprise; one which I am grateful for.

It would be great to get it before the semester begins, not 3 weeks after.

Several respondents suggested increased award amounts and the ability to count on continued receipt of the grant:

If we were able to receive it every semester if we qualify because I didn't get last semester and I'm not sure if I got it this semester.

I know I can log into MyAlaska and see what my eligibility amount is, but I've never been able to estimate what I will actually get. It would be better for planning if you could at least estimate what you're getting.

APPENDIX A. CALCULATING COST OF ATTENDANCE FOR AEG

Cost of attendance, or COA, is calculated for full-time and half-time students, and for dependent and independent students. This creates four different COAs used to determine students' eligibility to receive the AEG. There are two components used when calculating COA for each group: the average tuition and fees associated with full-time and half-time attendance at the University of Alaska; and the average cost of living for students living on campus (dependent students) and those living in off-campus housing (independent students.)

For AY13, tuition and fees for full-time and half-time attendance were based on the following costs amounts reported by the three main UA campuses:

Full-Time Tuition & Fees				
	UAA	UAF	UAS	Average
Tuition (12 Credits/Term)	\$4,276	\$5,580	\$4,464	\$4,773
Fees	\$871	\$1,732	\$1,229	\$1,277
RESIDENT TOTAL	\$5,147	\$7,312	\$5,693	\$6,051

Half-Time Tuition & Fees				
	UAA	UAF	UAS	Average
Tuition (6 Credits/Term)	\$2,138	\$2,790	\$2,232	\$2,387
Fees	\$436	\$866	\$615	\$639
RESIDENT TOTAL	\$2,574	\$3,656	\$2,847	\$3,025

The cost-of-living component includes a student's room and board, books and supplies, personal and miscellaneous expenses and transportation, as determined by the UA MAU. For AY13, the following costs were used to calculate the average cost of living for both independent and dependent students:

Room, Board, Transport & Miscellaneous Expenses				
	UAA	UAF	UAS	Average
Independent Students	\$17,004	\$16,150	\$16,869	\$16,674
Dependent Students	\$13,473	\$11,500	\$12,964	\$12,646

Using these amounts, the COA for students based on their dependency and attendance statuses were calculated to be:

COST OF ATTENDANCE		
	Full-Time	Half-Time
Independent Students	\$22,725	\$19,700
Dependent Students	\$18,696	\$15,671

When certifying a student's eligibility to receive an AEG, financial aid staff must use the lessor of either the cost of attendance as calculated above or the student's actual costs. For example, a student with a tuition waiver would need to have the amount of the waiver deducted from their average cost of attendance. The tuition waiver, and any other similar assistance, would be considered Other Non-self Help Aid for AEG students, and would be subtracted from the calculated average costs.

APPENDIX B. GLOSSARY⁵

Academic Year: A period of time schools use to measure a quantity of study. For example, a school's academic year may consist of a fall and spring semester during which a full-time undergraduate student must complete 24 semester hours. Academic years vary from school to school and even from educational program to educational program at the same school.

Alaska Advantage Education Grant Program (AEG): The state's need-based financial aid program, providing assistance to eligible Alaska residents attending qualifying postsecondary educational institutions in Alaska. The AEG was the aid program developed to allow the state to participate in the federal LEAP grant program. The program was specifically designed to set aside a portion of available grant funds as priority awards for applicants demonstrating exceptional academic preparation for higher education (as documented by top quartile SAT or ACT scores), and for otherwise eligible applicants enrolled in qualifying workforce shortage programs

Certification (of student roster data): Certification is a process where a school verifies the data reported on a student's FAFSA, and confirms that the student has qualifying enrollment and unmet need at that school.

Cost of Attendance / Standard Cost of Attendance: For purposes of the AEG, Alaska Administrative Code defines cost of attendance as the average annual cost of tuition and required fees at the University of Alaska system for both full-time and half-time attendance, plus the annual average cost of living for both dependent and independent students.

Dependency Status (Independent / Dependent): Federal financial aid regulations define an independent student as one of the following: at least 24 years old, married, a graduate or professional student, a veteran, a member of the armed forces, an orphan, a ward of the court, or someone with legal dependents other than a spouse. Independent students do not include their parents' income and asset information on their FAFSAs. A student who does not meet any of the criteria for an independent student is considered to be dependent. Dependent students are required to provide parent income and asset information on their FAFSAs. The AEG program is partially funded by federal LEAP funds which require consideration of the dependency status of grant recipients.

⁵ Some definitions provided by the U.S. Department of Education, available at <http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/Glossary.jsp>, and by "FinAid! The SmartStudent Guide to Financial Aid," available at www.finaid.org.

Enrollment Status (full-time, half-time): For undergraduates, "full-time" generally means taking at least 12 credit hours in a term or 24 clock hours per week. "Half-time" generally means taking at least 6 credit hours in a term or 12 clock hours per week.

Expected Family Contribution: The Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is a dollar amount that is used for determining a student's eligibility for federal student financial aid. This amount is derived from the financial information provided in the student's FAFSA application, and is reported to a student on their Student Aid Report (SAR).

First-Time Freshman: An entering freshman who has never attended college. It includes students enrolled in the fall term who attended college for the first time in the prior summer term.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA: Federal form used to apply for federal need-based aid, such as Pell Grants, federal student loans, and many state grants. Submitting a FAFSA by April 15th is one of the requirements for a student to receive an AEG award.

Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership Program (LEAP): This U.S. Department of Education program provides grants to states to assist them in providing need-based grants and community service work-study assistance to eligible postsecondary students. States must administer the program under a single state agency and meet maintenance-of-effort criteria.

Non-Self Help Aid: Non-self help aid is considered "gift" financial aid, in that the recipient is not committed to repaying or working in exchange for the aid. Examples include Pell Grants or other institutional or private scholarships or grants.

Priority Awards (See also "Standard Awards."): Priority awards are supplemental award amounts to qualifying AEG recipients. Students may qualify by enrolling in a program of study designed to lead to employment in an Alaska workforce shortage area, or by documenting, via a qualifying ACT or SAT score, participation in a secondary education program of study that is a predictor of postsecondary education success.

Priority Programs: Each year, ACPE awards a portion of the available grant money to applicants enrolled in a program of study designed to lead to employment in a workforce shortage area. For 2010-11, those programs included Allied Health Sciences, Process Industries, Protective and Social Services, and Teaching and Education. Priority program participants receive a priority award, which is twice the amount of funding as a standard award recipient.

Satisfactory Academic Progress: To be eligible to receive an AEG award, students must meet and maintain their school's standards of satisfactory academic progress toward a degree or certificate offered by that institution. There are no federal- or state-defined standards for satisfactory academic progress. However, each school is required to establish its own satisfactory academic progress policy in order to comply with Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

Standard Awards: (See also "Priority Awards."): All AEG recipients receive a Standard Award, though some students are eligible to receive a Priority Award in addition to a Standard Award. From 2005-06 through 2009-10, the Standard Award amount was \$1,000 for full-time students and \$500 for half-time students. These amounts increased by 50% beginning with the 2010-11 academic year.

Unmet Need: Unmet need is the difference between the Expected Family Contribution plus any available Non-Self Help Aid and the Standard Cost of Attendance. Unmet Need is based on the student's enrollment and dependency status. A student must have at least \$500 in unmet need to be eligible for an AEG award. (See Unmet Need Threshold.)

Unmet Need Threshold: The amount of unmet need required to be eligible to receive an AEG award, determined annually. Students with the highest levels of unmet need must be awarded first, and given the funding constraints of the AEG program, this creates a "threshold" that divides the AEG recipients and non-recipients. In 2008-09, the threshold was \$8,000, rising to \$14,300 in 2010-11.