



FACES OF THE FUTURE



College Choice
Office of Institutional Effectiveness

www.jjc.edu/admin/ie

March 2006

This summary is part of a larger analysis related to the Faces of the Future Survey available on-line at <http://www.jjc.edu/admin/ie/information/Surveys/surveys.htm>

COLLEGE CHOICE

Students choose JJC for *three primary reasons*: 1) price 2) close proximity to home and 3) availability of a specific program of study. Secondary reasons for choosing JJC include the variety of courses offered, academic reputation, proximity to place of work, and the availability of financial aid or scholarship.

Over the last seven years, there have been changes in the role certain factors JJC and community college students in general place in their decision to attend college. Students are placing more importance on enrolling at colleges closer to home. More students are choosing community colleges based on their historical role of charging low tuition -- the lowest among all sectors in higher education. The increasing importance of this factor is probably related to increasingly higher prices charged by four-year colleges and universities. In contrast to national data, the availability of financial aid plays a much lesser role. The most basic model to capture how students in general choose colleges is shown above.

College Choice in Community Colleges

Model for How Students Choose Colleges¹



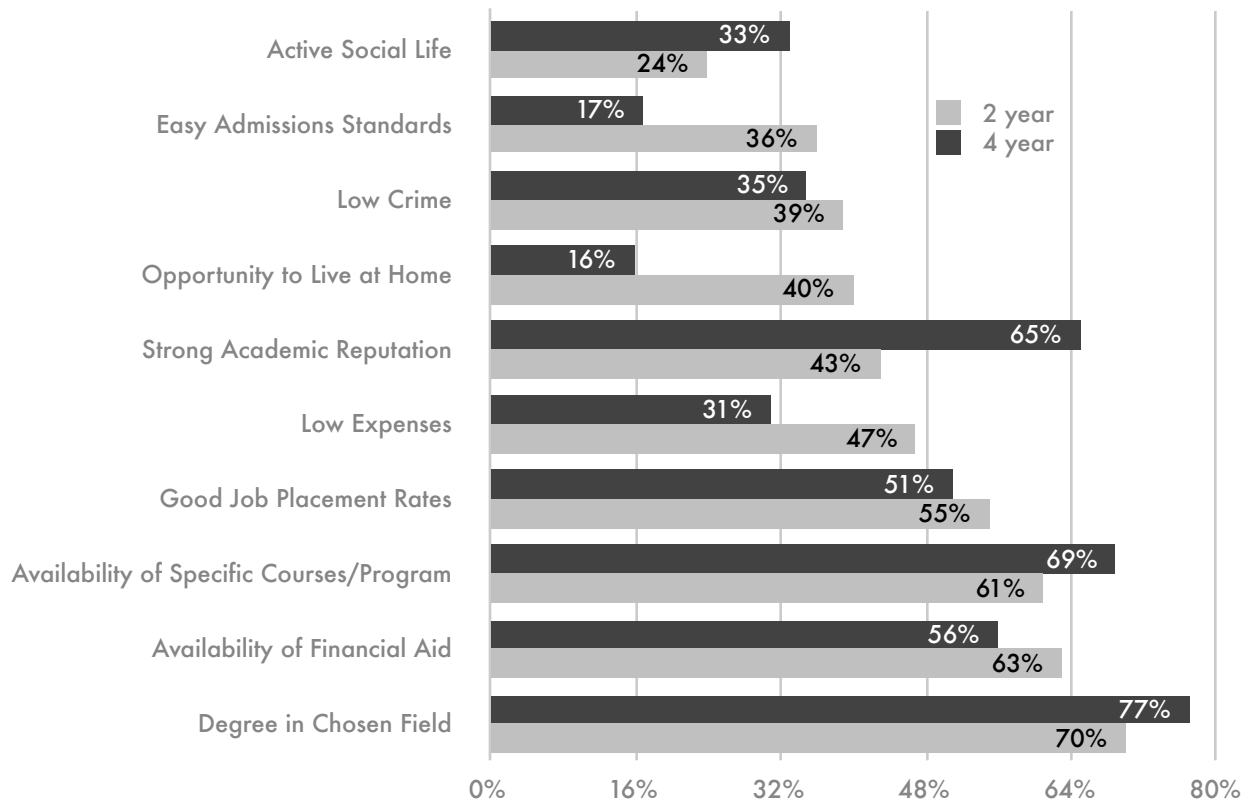
The most basic model to capture how students in general choose colleges is shown above. Research indicates predispositions to college are formed as early as junior high. In fact, 60% of all 9th-graders and 70% of all 10th graders follow through on plans they have for college.²

The figure on the next page shows the level of importance high school seniors place on certain institutional characteristics during the search stage, depending on whether they attend a community college or four-year college.

¹ Adapted from Hossler, D., Schmit, J., & Vesper, N. (1999). *Going to college: How social, economic, and educational factors influence decisions students make*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins.

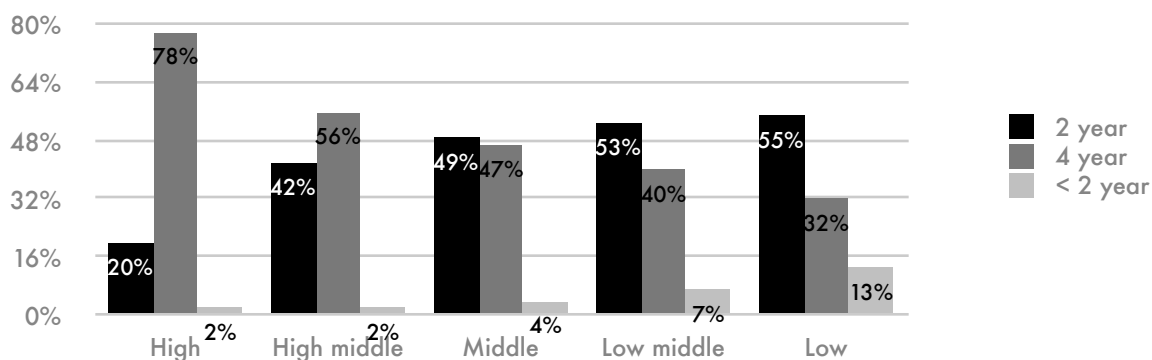
² Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper (1999).

“Very Important” Reasons for Enrolling in College by College Type, Based on National Data³



In terms of what type of students choose community colleges, research shows community college students are more likely to be first-generation. With the exception of Latinos, who are more likely to enroll at community colleges, there are no differences by race. The most significant differences exist by income, as illustrated in the chart below.

Enrollment by Income Quintile and College Type, Based on National Data⁴

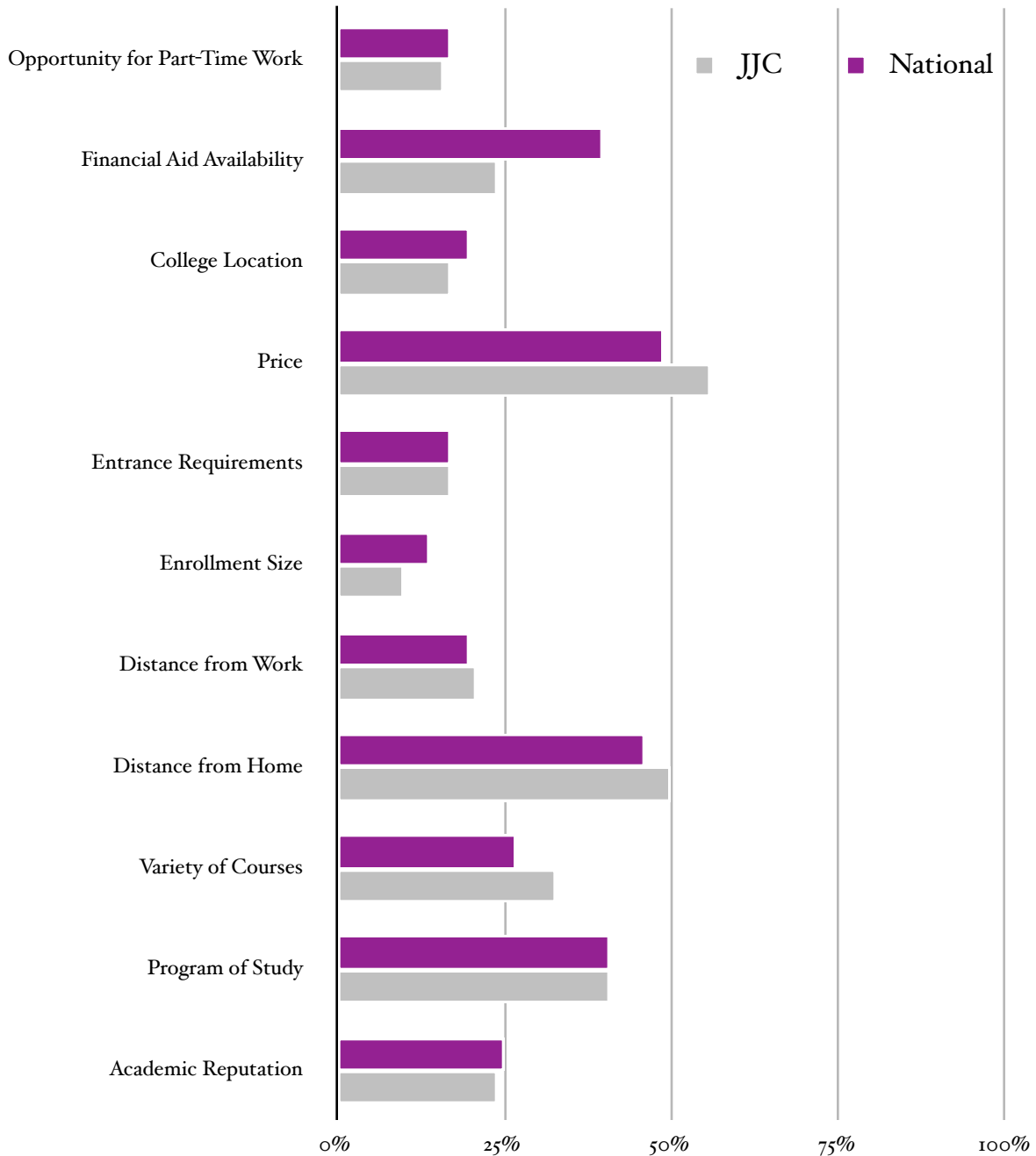


³ U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *A profile of the American high school senior*. Washington, DC: National Center for Ed. Statistics.

⁴ Adelman, C. (2005). *Moving into town and moving on: The community college in the lives of traditional-age students*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Table adapted from page 33. Based on composites of the high school classes of 1972, 1982, and 1992.

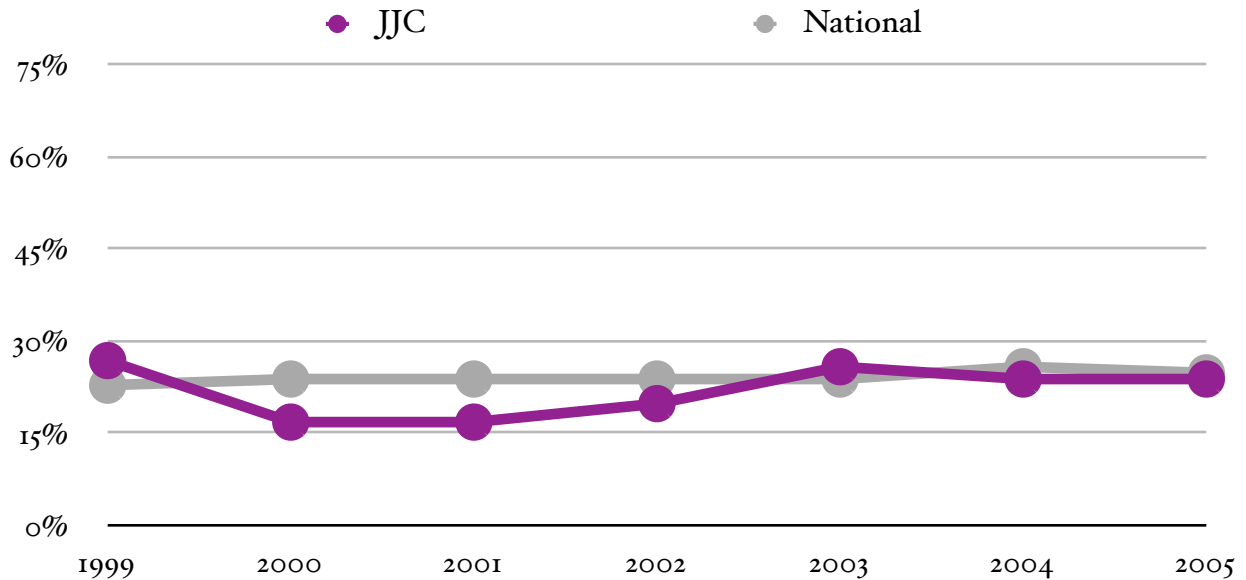
College Choice Summary

Percent of Students who Reported Certain Characteristics were Very Important in the Decision to Attend their College, Fall 2005



Academic Reputation

Percent of Students who Reported Academic Reputation was Very Important in the Decision to Attend their College, Fall 1999-2005



FALL	JJC			NATIONAL		
	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important
1999	26.5%	44.8%	28.7%	22.7%	57.1%	20.3%
2000	17.3%	66.4%	16.3%	24.0%	56.9%	19.0%
2001	16.5%	62.4%	21.2%	23.7%	57.4%	18.9%
2002	20.1%	60.1%	19.8%	23.8%	56.8%	19.4%
2003	26.2%	57.1%	16.7%	24.0%	56.7%	19.2%
2004	23.8%	57.4%	18.8%	25.5%	55.7%	18.9%
2005	24.1%	56.8%	19.2%	25.3%	55.9%	18.8%

Program of Study

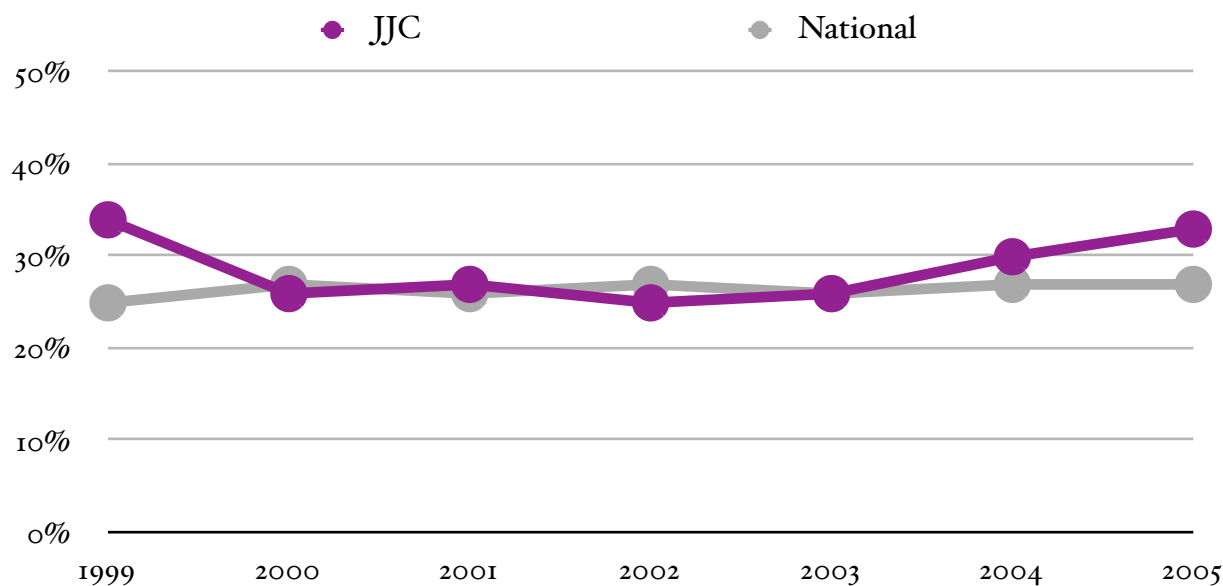
Percent of Students who Reported a Particular Program of Study was Very Important in the Decision to Attend their College, Fall 1999-2005



FALL	JJC			NATIONAL		
	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important
1999	52.6%	24.7%	22.6%	38.1%	44.1%	17.8%
2000	35.2%	46.6%	18.2%	39.6%	44.3%	19.0%
2001	24.7%	52.3%	23.0%	40.8%	43.6%	15.6%
2002	33.3%	46.8%	19.8%	41.2%	42.8%	16.0%
2003	41.4%	42.9%	15.7%	41.1%	43.0%	15.9%
2004	32.7%	48.9%	18.4%	41.3%	42.9%	15.9%
2005	40.5%	44.0%	15.5%	41.2%	42.8%	16.0%

Variety of Courses

Percent of Students who Reported the Variety of Courses Offered was Very Important in the Decision to Attend their College, Fall 1999-2005



FALL	JJC			NATIONAL		
	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important
1999	33.5%	45.1%	21.4%	24.8%	57.8%	17.3%
2000	25.9%	62.3%	11.8%	26.5%	57.4%	16.1%
2001	26.8%	61.9%	11.2%	26.2%	57.5%	16.2%
2002	24.6%	59.9%	15.5%	26.9%	57.4%	15.7%
2003	26.2%	61.3%	12.5%	26.3%	57.8%	15.8%
2004	30.4%	56.6%	13.0%	27.0%	57.3%	15.6%
2005	32.5%	56.7%	10.8%	26.6%	57.3%	16.1%

Distance from Home

Percent of Students who Reported the Distance of the College from Home was Very Important in the Decision to Attend their College, Fall 1999-2005



FALL	JJC			NATIONAL		
	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important
1999	60.8%	25.3%	13.9%	45.3%	39.9%	14.8%
2000	41.8%	45.4%	12.7%	46.4%	39.5%	14.2%
2001	45.9%	47.0%	7.1%	45.8%	39.8%	14.4%
2002	44.2%	44.8%	11.0%	45.3%	40.5%	14.2%
2003	46.3%	45.1%	8.6%	45.2%	40.6%	14.2%
2004	47.1%	41.0%	11.9%	44.9%	40.8%	14.3%
2005	50.4%	41.4%	8.2%	46.0%	40.2%	13.9%

Distance from Work

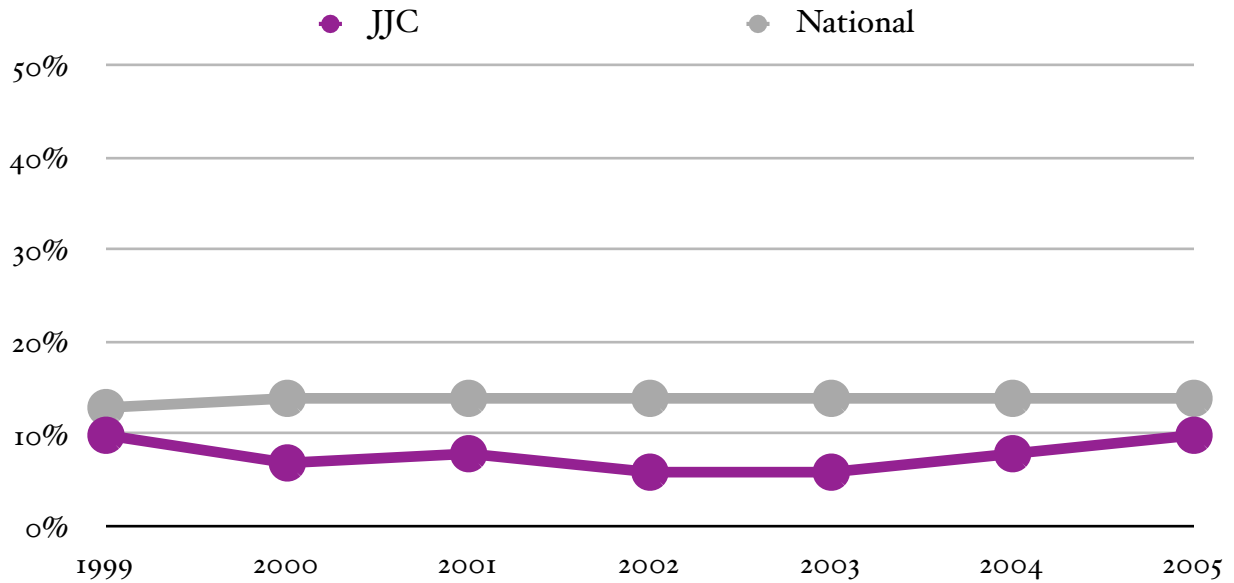
Percent of Students who Reported the Distance of the College from Work was Very Important in the Decision to Attend their College, Fall 1999-2005



FALL	JJC			NATIONAL		
	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important
1999	21.8%	20.8%	57.4%	20.1%	32.3%	47.6%
2000	20.0%	36.4%	43.6%	21.0%	32.3%	46.7%
2001	15.8%	36.8%	47.4%	20.2%	32.1%	47.8%
2002	17.2%	36.8%	46.0%	19.8%	32.3%	48.0%
2003	16.4%	39.9%	43.8%	19.4%	32.1%	48.6%
2004	19.7%	34.7%	45.6%	19.8%	32.3%	47.9%
2005	21.2%	36.5%	42.4%	20.2%	31.9%	47.9%

College Enrollment Size

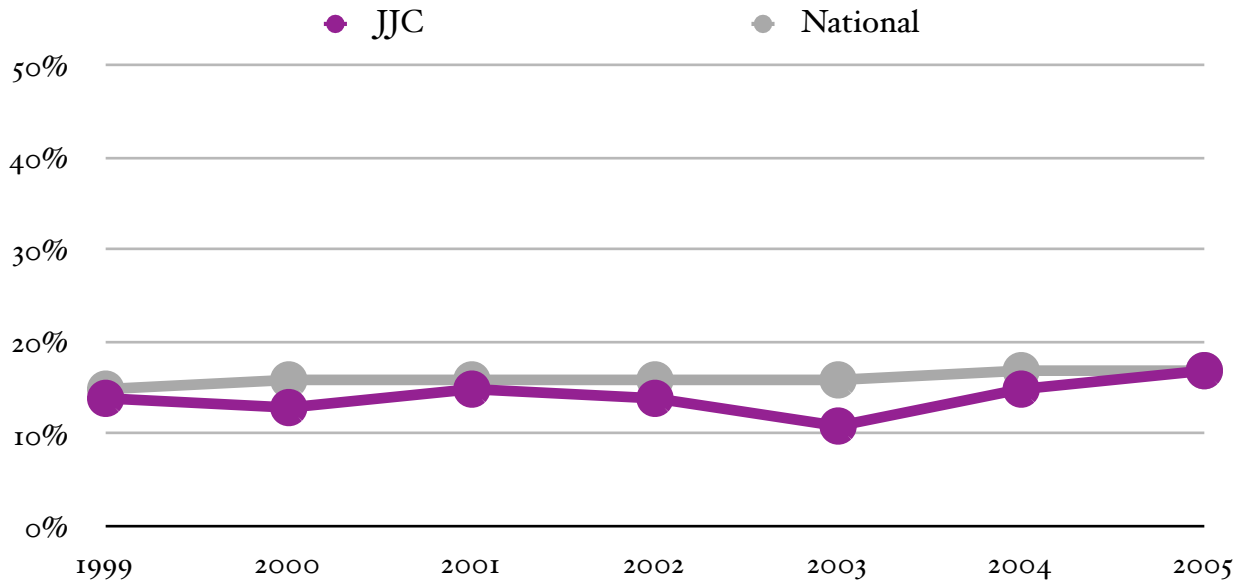
Percent of Students who Reported the Size of the College was Very Important in the Decision to Attend their College, Fall 1999-2005



FALL	JJC			NATIONAL		
	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important
1999	9.6%	31.1%	59.4%	13.3%	47.0%	39.7%
2000	7.2%	46.2%	46.6%	13.7%	47.3%	39.0%
2001	8.2%	51.1%	40.7%	14.1%	47.0%	38.9%
2002	6.1%	47.4%	46.5%	14.1%	47.0%	38.9%
2003	5.9%	46.7%	47.3%	14.0%	47.2%	38.8%
2004	8.2%	48.5%	43.3%	13.9%	47.4%	38.7%
2005	9.6%	46.6%	43.8%	14.0%	47.2%	38.8%

Entrance Requirements

Percent of Students who Reported Entrance Requirements were Very Important in the Decision to Attend their College, Fall 1999-2005



FALL	JJC			NATIONAL		
	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important
1999	13.8%	28.2%	58.1%	15.4%	45.7%	38.9%
2000	12.7%	48.0%	39.2%	16.0%	47.4%	36.7%
2001	15.1%	48.9%	36.0%	16.1%	47.5%	36.4%
2002	13.5%	46.7%	39.8%	16.4%	47.3%	36.3%
2003	10.9%	45.6%	43.5%	16.3%	47.8%	35.9%
2004	14.8%	45.6%	39.7%	16.7%	47.8%	35.4%
2005	17.2%	44.7%	38.1%	17.0%	48.0%	35.0%

Price

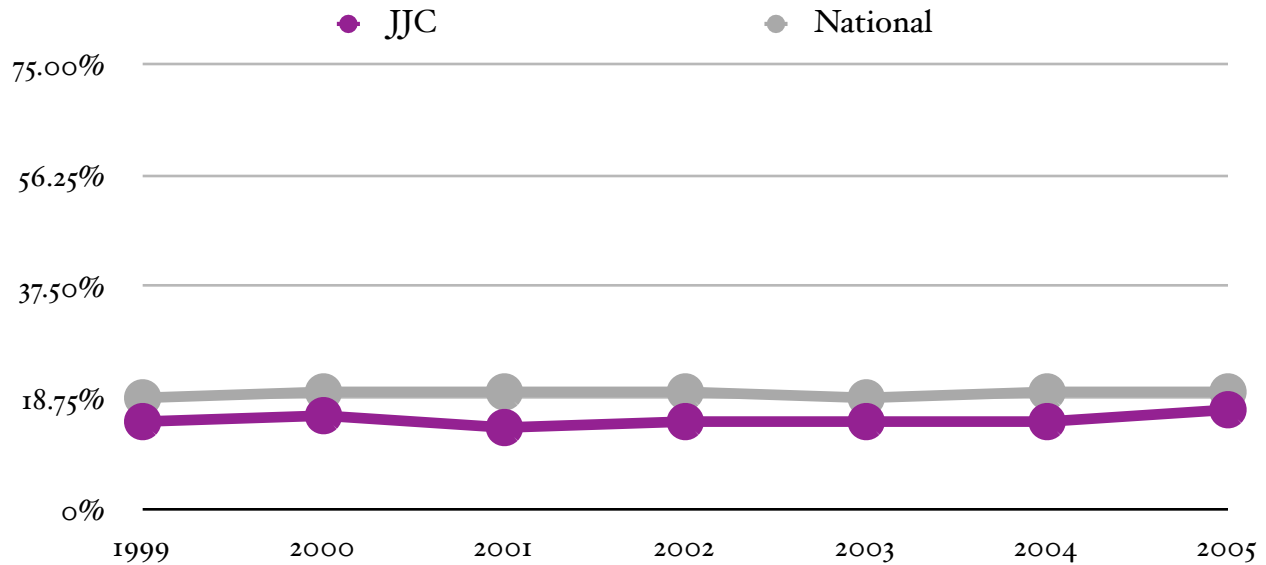
Percent of Students who Reported College Price was Very Important in the Decision to Attend their College, Fall 1999-2005



FALL	JJC			NATIONAL		
	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important
1999	58.5%	23.3%	18.1%	45.9%	41.0%	13.1%
2000	48.7%	39.2%	12.1%	47.8%	40.1%	12.1%
2001	47.9%	41.9%	10.1%	47.0%	40.4%	12.5%
2002	47.8%	39.5%	12.7%	47.0%	40.6%	12.4%
2003	51.3%	35.1%	13.6%	46.8%	41.0%	12.2%
2004	54.3%	36.4%	9.3%	47.9%	40.4%	11.7%
2005	56.1%	36.9%	7.0%	48.6%	39.9%	11.5%

Community College is Located In

Percent of Students who Reported the Type of Community the College was Located in Was Very Important in the Decision to Attend their College, Fall 1999-2005



FALL	JJC			NATIONAL		
	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important
1999	14.8%	37.5%	47.8%	19.1%	49.7%	31.2%
2000	15.5%	51.0%	33.6%	19.9%	50.2%	29.9%
2001	14.2%	52.9%	32.9%	19.5%	49.8%	30.7%
2002	15.2%	44.5%	40.3%	19.5%	49.8%	30.7%
2003	14.8%	52.4%	32.8%	19.0%	50.3%	30.7%
2004	14.5%	52.5%	33.0%	19.7%	50.2%	30.1%
2005	17.4%	53.9%	28.7%	19.9%	50.2%	29.9%

Availability of Financial Aid

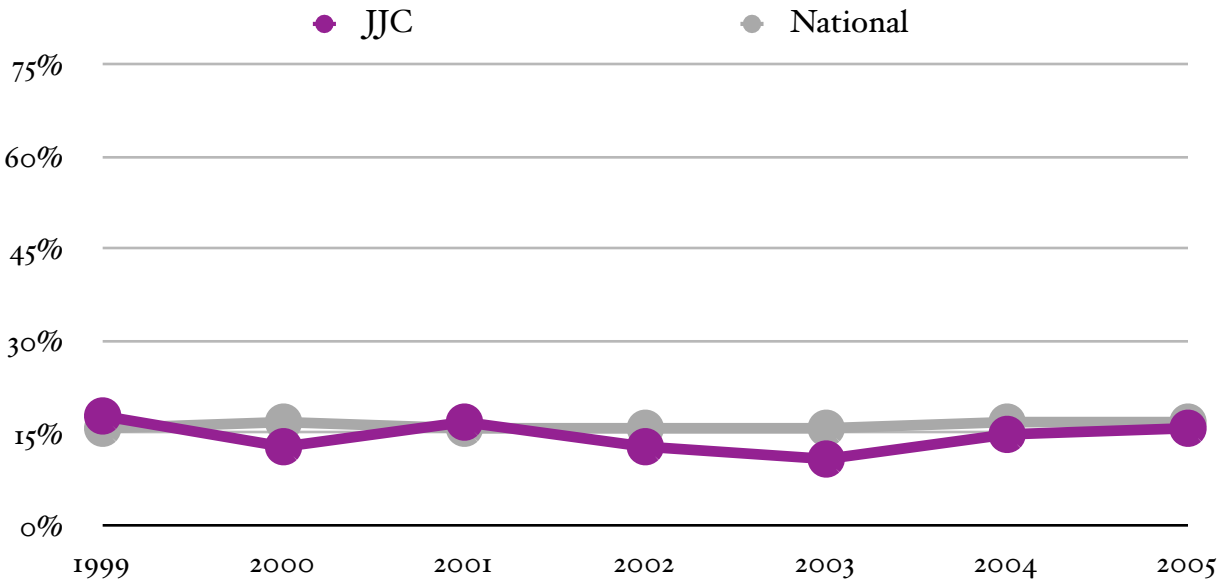
Percent of Students who Reported the Availability of Financial Aid or a Scholarship was Very Important in the Decision to Attend their College, Fall 1999-2005



F A L L	J J C			N A T I O N A L		
	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important
1 9 9 9	21.9%	19.9%	58.2%	35.0%	31.2%	33.8%
2 0 0 0	21.8%	34.3%	43.9%	36.8%	31.6%	31.5%
2 0 0 1	20.9%	34.3%	44.8%	37.8%	31.6%	30.6%
2 0 0 2	19.1%	35.9%	45.0%	37.5%	31.9%	30.6%
2 0 0 3	22.9%	32.1%	44.9%	38.4%	32.2%	29.4%
2 0 0 4	23.2%	34.0%	42.9%	38.8%	32.5%	28.6%
2 0 0 5	23.9%	37.6%	38.5%	40.4%	32.5%	27.1%

Opportunity for Part-Time Work

Percent of Students who Reported the Opportunity for Part-Time Work was Very Important in the Decision to Attend their College, Fall 1999-2005



FALL	JJC			NATIONAL		
	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important
1999	18.4%	15.2%	66.3%	15.6%	33.6%	50.8%
2000	13.3%	35.2%	51.5%	16.9%	33.7%	49.5%
2001	17.3%	37.4%	45.3%	16.4%	33.5%	50.1%
2002	13.0%	38.8%	48.2%	16.3%	33.7%	50.0%
2003	11.0%	35.0%	54.0%	16.2%	33.9%	50.0%
2004	15.2%	37.4%	47.4%	16.9%	34.7%	48.4%
2005	15.8%	33.3%	50.8%	16.8%	34.3%	48.8%

Reasons for Taking Classes at JJC

Reason(s) for Taking Classes at Their College, Fall 1999-2005

JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Take courses related to current work/job	9.5%	6.6%	2.3%	5.9%	6.1%	4.2%	4.6%
Take courses related to future work/job	24.7%	24.5%	22.2%	22.9%	25.3%	22.5%	25.1%
Maintain a license or certification	2.4%	4.9%	2.4%	3.7%	4.4%	3.3%	3.8%
Take courses for personal enrichment or self-improvement	10.3%	5.6%	9.3%	9.8%	10.1%	7.3%	9.2%
Transfer to a 4-year college	24.2%	28.8%	34.0%	28.6%	23.2%	33.5%	24.2%
Complete vocational or technical program	2.7%	3.6%	0.9%	3.0%	3.7%	1.2%	2.8%
Complete an associate's degree	22.2%	21.8%	20.9%	20.9%	22.8%	22.2%	24.9%
Prepare for GED or high school program	0.1%	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%
No definite purpose in mind	1.8%	0.5%	2.3%	2.0%	1.1%	1.4%	1.1%

NATIONAL	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Take courses related to current work/job	5.7%	5.7%	5.6%	5.5%	5.3%	5.1%	5.0%
Take courses related to future work/job	23.2%	23.5%	23.7%	23.6%	23.8%	23.5%	23.8%
Maintain a license or certification	3.5%	4.0%	4.2%	4.2%	4.1%	4.0%	4.1%
Take courses for personal enrichment or self-improvement	11.6%	10.7%	11.1%	11.4%	11.3%	10.6%	10.4%
Transfer to a 4-year college	26.8%	25.7%	24.1%	24.3%	24.1%	26.1%	25.5%
Complete vocational or technical program	3.5%	3.3%	3.8%	3.9%	3.7%	3.4%	3.1%
Complete an associate's degree	20.4%	20.8%	21.3%	21.0%	21.6%	21.3%	21.9%
Prepare for GED or high school program	1.4%	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%	0.5%	1.2%	1.3%
No definite purpose in mind	3.4%	4.3%	4.3%	4.2%	4.3%	4.3%	4.4%

Note. Students were asked to check all that apply, as long as it was a reason for taking classes at their college.

The “Cooling Out” Hypothesis & Community College Choice

Under the “cooling out” hypothesis, students enroll in community colleges because their grades are not good enough, they do not feel like they are ready for a residential university, or because they failed out of another institution. National data, however, shows this may not be the case for many community college students. While historical research showed that community colleges may lower educational aspirations, new models indicate that students who exhibit a higher levels of uncertainty about educational aspirations may be more likely to choose community colleges.⁵

A recent longitudinal study by the U.S. Department of Education showed students who attend community colleges can raise their educational expectations.⁶ Another showed that nearly 40% of community college students are academically qualified to attend four-year colleges, with 24% scoring in the highest proficiency levels for math and 17% in reading during their senior year in high school.⁷ This means that between 20% and 25% of community college students are more than proficient in reading and math.

The results of this survey suggest students choose community colleges primarily for three reasons: low price, proximity to home, and the availability of a specific program. An open admissions policy and entrance requirements, college choice variables consistent with the “cooling out” hypothesis, play less significant roles in the decision to attend a community college. This seems to confirm that, rather than providing a place to “cool out” or “divert” other aspirations, practical considerations play a more prominent role in the college choice process for community college students.⁸

⁵ Romano, R.M. (2004). “Cooling out” revisited: Some evidence from survey research. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, 28.

⁶ Adelman (2005).

⁷ U.S. Department of Education. (2003). *Community college students: Goals, academic preparation, and outcomes*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

⁸ Absher, K., & Crawford, G. (1996). Marketing the community college starts with understanding students’ perspectives. *Community College Review*, 23.