

Research in BRIEF

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LONGITUDINAL RESULTS FROM THE FRESHMAN SURVEY AND THE COLLEGE SENIOR SURVEY (Administered Spring 2010)

INTRODUCTION

The UCLA Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) administers the Freshman (FS) and College Senior Surveys (CSS) to college students across the nation on an annual basis. Chapman University participates in both of these surveys every year. Both surveys contain over 50 items inquiring how students spend their time, as well as questions related to their student involvement, cognitive and affective development, student values, attitudes and goals, degree aspirations, and future plans. Many of the survey items on the College Senior Survey and Freshmen Survey are identical in order to facilitate longitudinal analysis using the same respondents. HERI appends each respondent's data from the Freshmen Survey in the College Senior Survey dataset, thus allowing for assessment of change over time. This *Research in BRIEF* will focus on some changes that occurred among Chapman students between their freshman and senior years in college.

CSS Response Rate and Survey Sample

In 2010, the College Senior Survey was distributed online to 1042 graduating seniors and 280 questionnaires were completed resulting in a response rate of 26.9 percent. Out of these 280 graduating seniors who completed a questionnaire, HERI was able to match their Freshman Survey data for 161 students.¹ As a result, the total sample for analysis is 161 students, or about 15.5 percent of the total surveyed population.

The sample demographics show that the sample is heavily skewed toward female respondents. The college results show that Argyros School of Business and Economics and Dodge College of Film and Media Arts students are overrepresented while students enrolled in each of the other colleges are slightly underrepresented. As a result, the findings from this study may reflect a slight bias toward the thoughts and actions of females and students enrolled in the Business and Film schools rather than the true population as a whole.

Sample Demographics

	Sample (N=161)	Population (N=1042)
Gender		
Male	24.8%	42.5%
Female	75.2%	57.5%
College/School		
Argyros School of Business and Economics	16.0%	22.3%
College of Performing Arts	14.2%	12.4%
School of Education	8.0%	5.3%
Dodge College of Film and Media Arts	20.4%	23.2%
Wilkinson College of Humanities and Social Sciences	24.7%	23.5%
Schmid College of Science	14.2%	10.2%
Other/Double Majors	2.5%	3.3%

FINDINGS

Academic Performance and Engagement

The Freshmen Survey and College Senior Survey ask respondents to report their "average grade" in their senior year of high school and college respectively. The results show a 12 percent decline in the percentage of respondents reporting "A" but an 11.5 percent increase the percentage of "B" students.

Average Grade (Self-Reported)

	Freshman Survey	College Senior Survey
A	70.9%	58.9%
B	29.1%	40.6%
C	.0%	.6%

The next results show the level of academic engagement reported by students. Students reported studying more in college than in high school. The percentage of students who studied "over 10 hours" and "6 to 10 hours" increased between their senior years of high school and college. The FS and CSS also ask about levels of academic disengagement. Both measures show evidence of student engagement as fewer students report being bored in class and being tardy.

Academic Engagement

	Freshman Survey	College Senior Survey
Percent Studying:		
11 hours or more	24.3%	34.0%
6 to 10 hours	26.9%	33.3%
3 to 5 hours	27.6%	25.0%
Less than 5 hours	21.1%	7.7%
Percent answering "Frequently"		
Bored in class	45.3%	24.8%
Came late to class	10.0%	5.6%

Political Attitudes

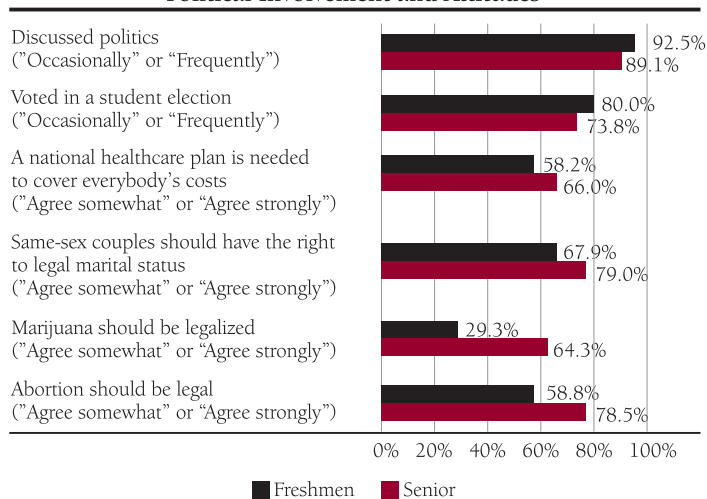
The FS and CSS ask students to characterize their political attitudes using "conservative," "middle-of-the-road," and "liberal" designations. The findings show that students reported becoming more liberal after attending college. The percent reporting liberal increased from 30.7 percent to 45.1 percent.

Political Attitudes

	Freshman Survey	College Senior Survey
Liberal	30.7%	45.1%
Middle-of-road	45.1%	35.3%
Conservative	24.2%	19.7%

The FS and CSS ask students about their political involvement and opinions on social and political issues.

Political Involvement and Attitudes

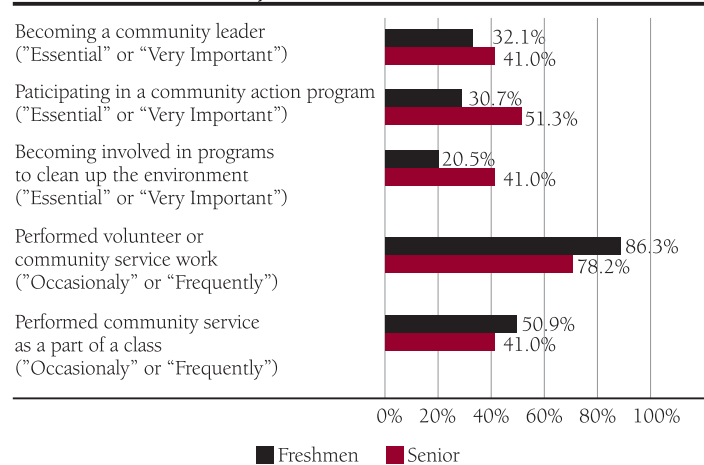


The political involvement items—discussed politics and voting behavior—showed declining participation between their senior years in high school and college. The attitudinal questions corroborate the aforementioned findings. The results show an increase in attitudes associated with liberal sentiments such as the expansion of government run health care, same sex marriage, marijuana legalization, and abortion. In particular, marijuana legalization and abortion gained 20 percent or more support between the two examined time periods.

Learner Engaged Community

The FS and CSS both asked about students' attitudes and behaviors regarding community work. Both surveys ask students to report the level of importance assigned to "becoming a community leader," "participating in a community action program," and "cleaning up the environment." In particular, the "environment" item shows a 20.5 percent increase in interest. But the behavioral items do not show an increase in participation between high school and college. Both the "performed volunteer work" and "community service work" items show about an eight or nine percent decrease in participation between high school and college.

Community Service and Volunteer Work



In addition, the results from the survey item asking students to indicate the number of hours spent doing volunteer "during a typical week" showed declining participation.

Volunteer Work Hours

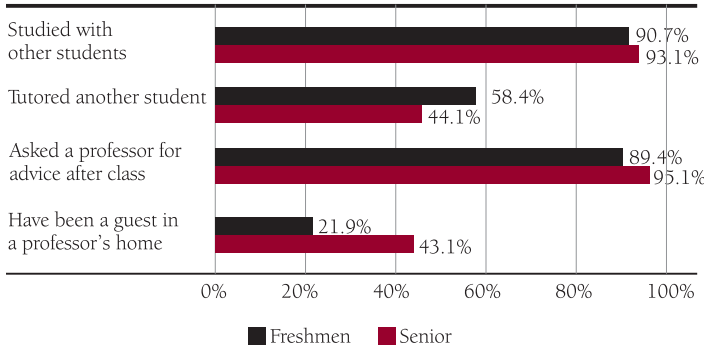
	Freshman Survey	College Senior Survey
<i>During the past year, how much time did you spend during a typical week doing volunteer work?</i>		
6 hours or more	9.7%	5.7%
3 to 5 hours	18.2%	14.3%
1 to 2 hours	24.0%	16.2%
Less than one hour	26.0%	26.6%
None	22.1%	37.0%

The percentage of respondents who indicated zero participation increased from 22.1 percent from the FS results to 37 percent in the CSS.

Peer and Faculty Interaction

The FS and CSS ask students about their level of interaction with peers and faculty. The results show studying with students is almost ubiquitous at both time points, but tutoring other students declined 14.3 percent. Student-faculty interaction though increases on two reported measures. "Asking for advice from faculty" increased only 5.7 percent between the FS and CSS, but visiting a faculty member's home increased 21.2 percent.

Peer and Faculty Interaction
Percent Reporting "Frequently" or "Occasionally"



The FS and CSS also ask a question about specific hours spent talking to faculty outside of class. In contrast to the previous findings, these results show student-faculty decreasing between high school and college. The percentage of students who said they spent zero hours talking to faculty out of class increased from 5.2 percent to 17.4 percent between the FS and CSS. The categories representing higher hours also decreased. For example, the "3 hours or more" category decreased from 17.4 percent to 4.5 percent between the two time periods.

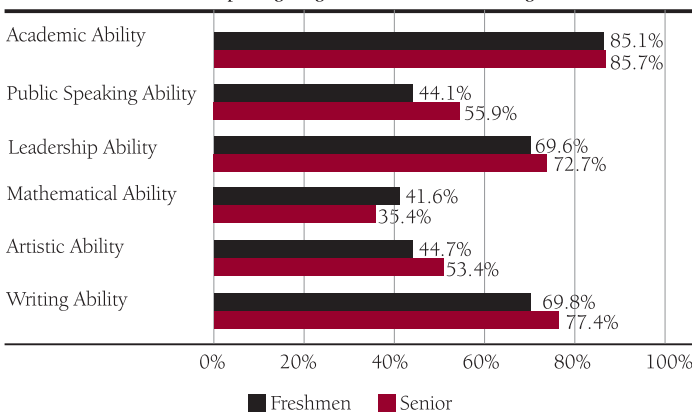
Talking with faculty outside of class

	Freshman Survey	College Senior Survey
<i>During the past year, how much time did you spend during a typical week talking to faculty outside of class?</i>		
3 hours or more	17.4%	4.5%
1 to 2 hours	39.4%	18.7%
Less than one hour	38.1%	59.4%
None	5.2%	17.4%

Self-Growth

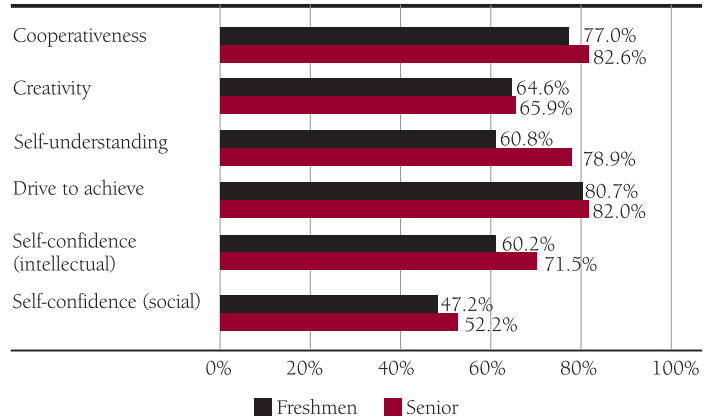
The FS and CSS ask students to compare themselves against their peers and rank themselves on various skills and personality traits. The results from the first chart display findings about self-reported ability in several areas. Self-reported ability increases for all of the items except for the mathematical ability item. For this item, the percent of student reporting "highest 10%" or "above average" decreased from 41.6 percent to 35.4 percent. The writing ability and artistic ability items though increased 7.6 percent and 8.7 respectively.

Skills and Abilities in Comparison with Peers
Percent Reporting "Highest 10%" or "Above Average"



The bar chart below displays students' self-perceptions on a series of personality traits. The self-understanding item followed by the intellectual self-confidence item stand out in comparison to the rest of the items. These items increased 18.1 percent and 11.3 percent respectively during the examined time period.

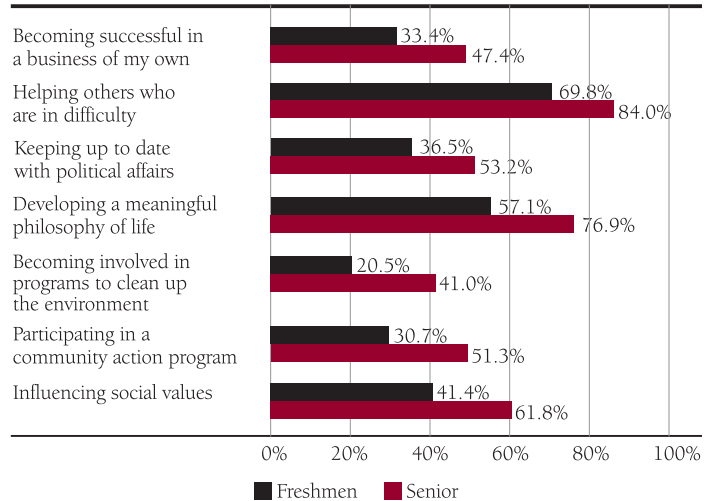
Personality Traits in Comparison with Peers
Percent Reporting "Highest 10%" or "Above Average"



Expressed Goals

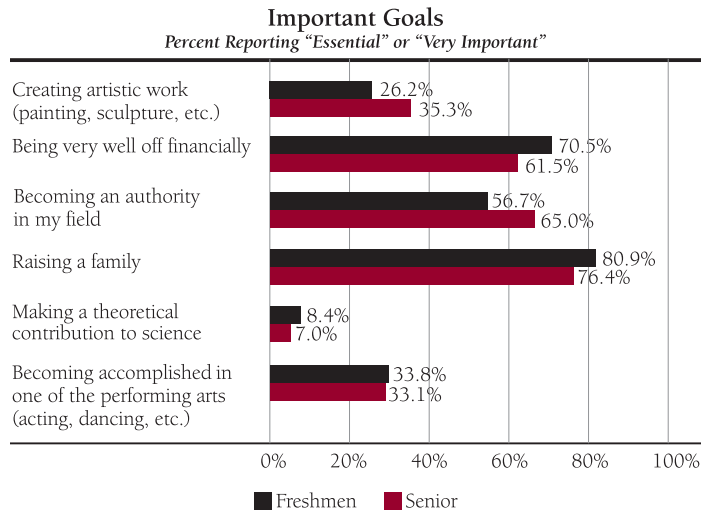
The FS and CSS asked students to identify "essential" or "very important" goals. The first chart highlights the items which demonstrate the greatest change between high school and college. The results show evidence that Chapman University may help instill a social consciousness among students. The three items that experienced the greatest change—influencing social values, participating in a community action program, becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment—are about civic awareness and participation. And the item that experienced the sixth highest change, helping others who are in difficulty, is also about civic participation.

Important Goals
Percent Reporting "Essential" or "Very Important"



CONCLUSION

The next chart lists the areas that changed the least between high school and college. The importance of raising a family, making a theoretical contribution to science, and becoming accomplished in one of the performing arts remained almost the same between the two studied time points. The importance of creating artistic works and becoming an authority in my field increased about eight to nine percent, while the importance of being well off financially dropped nine percent.



DISCUSSION

College plays an influential part in the development of young adults. In this longitudinal analysis of the graduating class of 2009-10, college students reported becoming increasingly liberal, which is a consistent finding throughout much of the research on higher education. Students also report developing in ways important toward their ability to participate in the labor force after graduation. For example, Chapman students are now studying longer and report being more engaged in class and less tardy in comparison to high school. These measures point to better self-discipline. Not only are students working harder, they are bringing more self-confidence to the workforce. Measures of self-confidence in public speaking, intellectual self-confidence, and writing ability all increased about 10 percent or more between their freshmen and senior years. And as students embark upon their next steps after graduation, the evidence shows that Chapman University affected how they will prioritize certain goals. The results show greater importance placed on entrepreneurship and engaging in civic participation.

The findings also show that high levels of studying with peers during high school and this continues in college. The activity "tutoring another student" declines from high school but this is expected as the caliber of students is better in college versus high school. The number of hours spent talking to faculty outside of class or during office hours has declined since high school, but students are much more likely to visit a professor's home in college.

How have students changed during their time at Chapman University? The university aims to produce "inquiring, ethical and productive global citizens." A variety of measures show a growing social, ethical, and civic consciousness among Chapman graduates. Specifically, there is a vast growth in percentage of students interested in participating in social improvements programs, developing a meaningful philosophy of life, and self-confidence all point to cognitive development. Behavioral measures show a slight decline in volunteer work in terms of hours participated and the percentage responding "frequently" and "occasionally," but 78.2 percent of students said they engaged in volunteer and community service work despite a small percentage drop from high school.

The findings also allow an opportunity to identify areas of improvement. For example, fostering an interest in math and science remains a challenge to Chapman and other universities. Only seven percent of Chapman seniors saw making a theoretical contribution to science as "very important" or "essential" and self-reported confidence in mathematical skills declined between high school and college. New faculty members in sciences and the creation of a new science building may help increase interest in this area.

¹While all graduating seniors in this study completed the CSS in 2010, not all completed the FS four years earlier. Some students who took longer to complete their degree may have older FS data. Therefore, the time between the administration of these two surveys varies for some students. However, for most students there is a four year gap between the FS and CSS.

Prepared by Chapman's Institutional Research Office (CIRO)
www.chapman.edu/Chancellor/ciro