

RESEARCH BRIEF

HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH INSTITUTE AT UCLA



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2019 COLLEGE SENIOR SURVEY

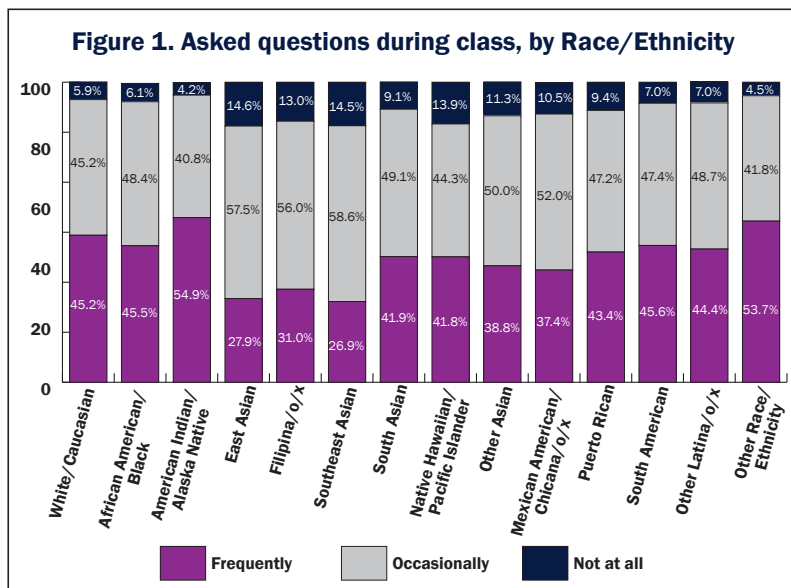
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The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) has administered the College Senior Survey since 1993; this year marked the 27th administration of the survey. This brief highlights data from 17,363 seniors graduating from 63 four-year colleges and universities across the United States. Below are findings about their learning experiences, ways they incorporate wellness and balance into their lives, aspirations for graduate education, and highlights of students who transferred from the community college system. Out of all the graduating seniors who responded to the survey, 83.3% reported satisfaction with their overall college experience. Students believe they are leaving their institutions with a stronger knowledge base around global (83.7%), national (81.8%), and community issues (77.9%).

ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT

Learning in the classroom

Students engaged in the classroom setting in a variety of ways throughout their college years. Nearly half of respondents (45.1%) reported frequently asking questions in class. As Figure 1 shows, students identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native (54.9%) and students who identified with a race/ethnicity not listed in the survey (53.7%) reported the highest levels of frequently asking questions in class. While the vast majority of students reported asking questions across race/ethnicity, East Asian and Southeast Asian seniors reported the highest levels of not asking questions in class, with 14.6% and 14.5%, respectively. Students were given the option to select multiple race/ethnicity groups so there may be some overlap in these proportions.



Students also enrolled in a range of courses. By the end of senior year, nearly one-third (29.1%) of students had taken a women's studies course and over half (55.0%) enrolled in an ethnic studies course. Black and Latina/o/x students reported the highest levels of taking a women's studies course, with 37.8% and 38.9%, respectively. Enrollment in women's studies varied greatly by gender with only 16.4% of men enrolling, compared with 36.5% of women and 39.3% of students identifying as genderqueer or gender non-conforming.

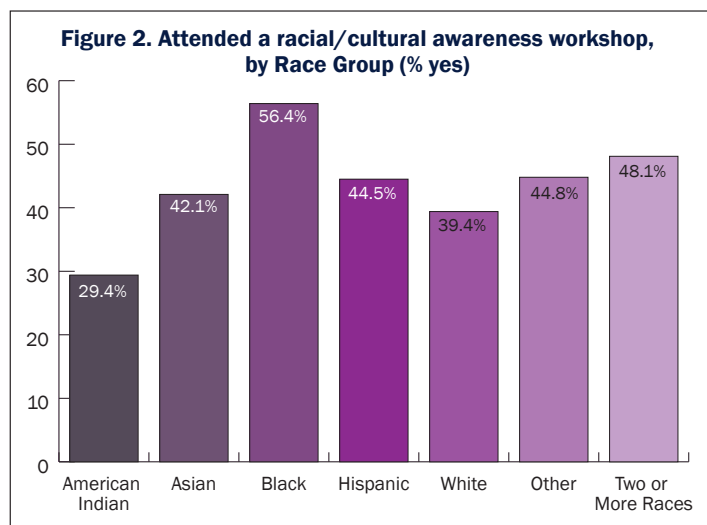
Regarding enrollment in ethnic studies courses, Black students showed the highest enrollment by far (75.4%), followed by two-thirds (66.5%) of Latina/o/x students. Nearly half (45%) of students who identified exclusively as American Indian/Alaska Native (n=20) enrolled in ethnic studies courses. However, when accounting for students who identified as two or more races with at least one being American Indian/Alaska Native (n=204), the rate rises dramatically to 61.3%, suggesting the importance of purposeful disaggregation for this population. Men reported lower enrollment in ethnic studies courses as well, though

the difference is not as stark as enrollment in women’s studies courses. Genderqueer and gender non-conforming students enrolled in ethnic studies courses at a rate of 60.1%, compared with 57.9% of women and 50.1% of men.

Outside of the classroom

While much of their academic preparation happens within the classroom, students supplement their education outside of the classroom. Half of respondents (50.3%) reported frequently exploring topics independently when it was not required for class. Two of every five students (40.0%) worked on a professor’s research project since entering college. Students in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) majors were more likely to participate in research projects (53.8%) than students in non-STEM majors (33.1%). Nearly one-fifth of students (18.8%) participated in a campus program that promotes STEM careers. Of those who participated in such programs, 63.0% planned to graduate with a STEM degree. This effort appeared to be supplemented by the utilization of and satisfaction with campus resources, as 91.3% of STEM majors and 86.8% of non-STEM majors received tutoring and other forms of academic assistance. The majority of college seniors (59.7%) reported satisfaction with such tutoring services.

College seniors also spent time increasing their understanding of people from various racial and ethnic backgrounds. Overall, 41.9% of college seniors mentioned that they participated in a racial/cultural awareness workshop (see Figure 2). Black students reported the highest rate of attendance (56.4%) at racial/cultural awareness workshops, followed by 48.1% who identified with two or more races.



STUDENT WELLNESS AND SCHOOL-LIFE BALANCE

Students juggle multiple commitments during their college years. Wellness and school-life balance are important to keep them grounded and able to withstand the difficulties associated with college life. Half of college seniors (49.7%) reported they frequently felt overwhelmed by all they had to do. Comparing by gender, those who identified as genderqueer or gender non-conforming reported the highest rates of feeling frequently overwhelmed (62.5%). Over half of women (57.7%) stated that they were frequently overwhelmed as well, compared to just 35.5% of men. It may come as no surprise that 52.0% of students reported turning in homework late and 62.1% of seniors arrived late to class at least occasionally during their college years.

Involvement and Activities Outside of Academic Life

As they strive to meet academic commitments, students find myriad ways to remain engaged in what matters to them outside of academic life. The majority of respondents (53.8%) spend some time each week praying or meditating, with approximately one in ten (11.6%) dedicating 3 or more hours per week to the practice. Most students (92.1%) spent some time exercising or playing sports in a typical week, with a third of respondents (34.3%) spending 6 hours or more per week engaging in physical activity. Seniors also spent time watching television or streaming online video content. Two of five college seniors (41.0%) spent 6 or more hours per week watching such content, whether it be TV or online platforms (e.g., Amazon, Hulu, Netflix, YouTube). Another large proportion (47.4%) watched video content 1 to 5 hours, with the remaining 11.8% of respondents spending less than an hour (including no time at all) watching content each week.

Socializing with Friends

College seniors also valued socializing with their peers. While many seniors (38.0%) spent 11 hours or more per week socializing with friends in person, most (48.0%) spent 3-10 hours with friends, and some (14.0%) engaged in person for 2 or fewer hours per week. Among those who spent minimal time socializing with friends, men and women (13.4% each) reported the same rate of socializing with friends 0 to 2 hours per week while genderqueer students report rates over twice as high (27.7%). Rates for men (45.9%), women (49.0%), and genderqueer (47.5%) students of socializing from 3-10 hours per week are fairly consistent. However, gender differences emerge again when considering students who reported socializing with friends in person for 11 or more hours per week with men socializing the most (40.8%), followed by women (37.6%), and genderqueer students with the lowest rate (24.8%).

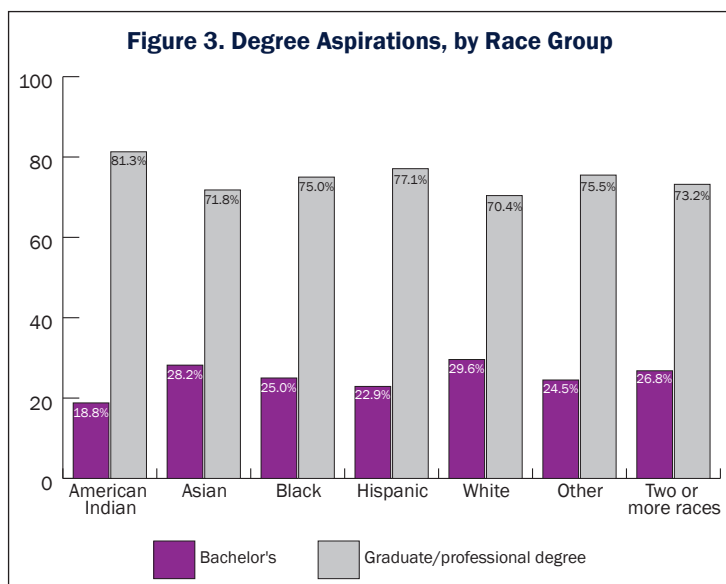
DEGREE ASPIRATIONS OF COLLEGE SENIORS

Degree Aspirations

In 2019, students were more likely to report a graduate degree as their ultimate degree objective as opposed to a bachelor's degree. Overall, 71.8% of college seniors reported that they aspire to earn some form of post-baccalaureate degree, with a master's degree (M.A., M.S., etc.) being the most common (40.4%). As Figure 3 shows, students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds demonstrated a greater interest in a graduate/professional degree rather than a bachelor's degree. Though smaller in total numbers, American Indian students were most likely to aspire to some form of post-baccalaureate degree, with 81.3% wishing to enroll in some form of graduate/professional school. Roughly three in four Latina/o/x (77.1%) and Black (75.0%) college seniors aspire to earn a graduate or professional degree. Similarly, 75.5% of those that marked "other," 73.2% of students who identified as multiracial, and 71.8% of Asian students indicated a degree objective beyond the bachelor's. Lastly, 70.4% of White students aspire to earn some form of post-baccalaureate degree.

Fall Graduate/Professional School Enrollment

Nearly one-third (31.2%) of survey respondents reported that they would be attending graduate/professional school either part-time or full-time in the fall. When reviewing between-group comparisons from college seniors of different racial/ethnic backgrounds, seniors who identified as "other" were most likely to report their upcoming graduate enrollment (41.4%), followed closely by Black (40.8%) and American Indian (37.5%) students. STEM undergraduate majors immediately enrolled in graduate/professional school at a higher rate (44.5 %) when compared with students from other undergraduate majors/disciplines. Students from the Life Sciences alone represented the greatest majority (20.4%)



of all undergraduate majors pursuing graduate/professional school in the fall; a relatively large proportion, considering that Life Science majors represented only 14.1% of identified majors amongst all seniors who completed the survey, as noted on Table 1. This was similar for the 16.3% of students majoring in the Social Sciences, with 19.0% intending to embark on a post-baccalaureate journey for fall of 2019.

TRANSFER STUDENTS FROM A 2-YEAR COLLEGE

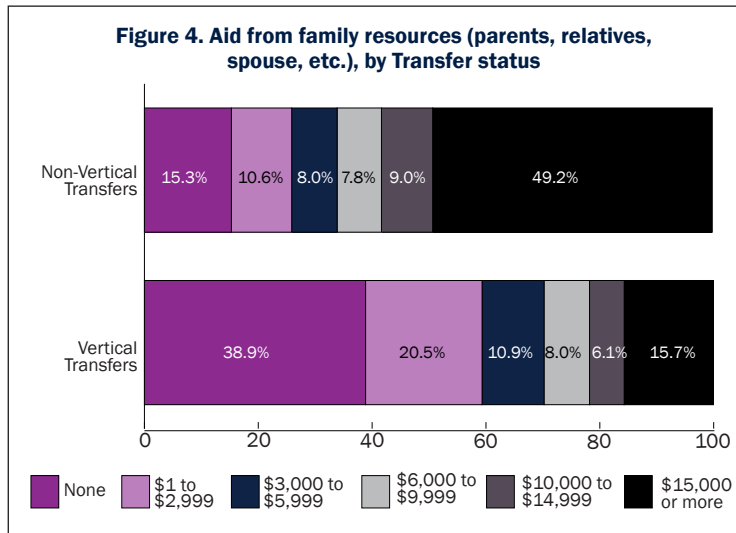
Another sub-population to consider consists of those who transferred into their current institution from a 2-year college. Approximately one in ten (11.4%, n=1,863) respondents transferred into their current institution from a 2-year college (also known as vertical transfer students). Latina/o/x (29.6%) students were most likely to have transferred from a 2-year college, followed by students who identified as "other" (20.1%), Native American (20.0%), Black (19.1%), Asian (12.5%), multiracial (11.1%), and White (7.2%) students. With respect to gender identity, 24.5% of genderqueer or gender non-conforming students were transfers; 11.4% of women transferred in from a 2-year college, and 10.0% of male college seniors indicated they were vertical transfer students.

Navigating Finances

Vertical transfer students may have differing financial needs and circumstances than other students. As Figure 4 shows, nearly two of five transfer students (38.9%) reported receiving no aid from family resources, compared to just 15.3% of

Undergraduate Major Field	Percentage of Fall Graduate/Professional Enrollment	Percentage of Survey Respondents
Life Sciences	20.4%	14.1%
Social Sciences	19.0%	16.3%
Arts and Humanities	15.9%	18.2%
Business	14.8%	22.4%
Allied Health Majors	7.4%	6.7%
Engineering	7.3%	8.0%
Math & Computer Science	4.9%	5.4%
Physical Sciences	4.7%	2.7%
Other	3.9%	4.3%
Education	1.8%	2.0%

non-transfer students. In fact, that was the most common response for vertical transfers. By contrast, nearly half (49.2%) of non-transfers received \$15,000 or more in aid from family resources, by far the most common response for this group, compared to just 15.7% of transfer students who received the same. While transfer students were more likely to use their own resources overall, the majority of both transfer (21.2% using none and 37.2% using \$1-\$2,999) and non-transfer students (37.1% using none and 35.5% using 1-\$2,999) used less than \$3,000 of their own funds.



Financial Support for Transfer Students

Vertical transfers also received myriad forms of financial support allocated in the form of aid that doesn't need to be repaid (grants, scholarships, etc.) and aid that must be repaid (loans, etc.). For instance, 19.3% of transfer students

reported receiving \$15,000 or more in aid that does not need to be repaid, compared to nearly twice the proportion of non-transfer students (38.1%) reporting the same amount. The most common response for transfers was not receiving any aid that did not need repayment at 22.6%; for non-transfers, it was their second-highest marked response at 27.0%. Consistently, vertical transfer students reported slightly higher proportions in each level of aid that must be repaid, with the exception of those who took out \$15,000 or more in aid (19.7% of transfers; 20.3% of non-transfers).

Lastly, 42.7% of transfers stated that they did not acquire aid that needed repayment, where close to half (48.1%) of non-transfers marked the same.

CONCLUSION

The responses highlighted from the 2019 administration of the College Senior Survey demonstrate graduating seniors' diverse learning experiences and degree aspirations. Most respondents indicated participation in various on- and off-campus activities throughout their undergraduate years. For more information about the CSS, including the current survey instrument and details regarding registration and administration of the CSS, please visit our website: <https://heri.ucla.edu/college-senior-survey/>.

HERI The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) is one of the premier research and policy organizations on postsecondary education in the country. Housed in the Graduate School of Education & Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, the institute is an interdisciplinary center for research, evaluation, information, policy studies, and research training in postsecondary education.

HERI administers the national Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) surveys, including the CIRP Freshman Survey, Your First College Year survey, Diverse Learning Environments survey, College Senior Survey, Staff Climate Survey, and the triennial HERI Faculty Survey. CIRP has collected data on over 15 million college students from more than 1,900 colleges and universities since 1966.

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