

Parental Involvement Wanted

Jan. 24

For all the talk of "helicopter parents" making too many college-related decisions, perhaps today's students are happy with the hovering. The overwhelming majority of freshmen at four-year institutions think that their parents are involved the "right amount" in key college decisions, according to the annual survey of college freshmen, being released today by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles.

At the same time, the survey found some key differences among students in different racial and ethnic groups in attitudes about parental involvement. Generally, white students are the least likely to want more parental involvement, while Latino students are most likely to want more. The UCLA survey, the largest of its kind, is generally considered the best indicator of attitudes of freshmen as they arrive on campuses.

In terms of overall views of parental involvement in different aspects of arriving at college, freshmen are happy.

Percentage of Freshmen Who Think Parents Had 'Right Amount' of Involvement in Key Activities

Decision to go to college	84.0%
Applications to college	74.2%
Decision to go to college at which student enrolled	80.5%
Dealings with officials at college at which student enrolled	77.5%
Choosing college courses	72.5%
Choosing college activities	73.7%

In looking at the minority of freshmen who wanted more involvement in various areas, however, the UCLA researchers found notable differences by race and ethnicity.

Percentage of Freshmen, by Race and Ethnicity, Who See 'Too Little' Parental Involvement in Key Areas

Factor	White	Black	Native American	Asian	Latino
Decision to go to college	4.2%	8.2%	8.1%	8.4%	11.5%
Applications to college	11.9%	20.0%	20.0%	22.8%	27.3%
Decision to go to college at which student enrolled	7.6%	14.6%	13.8%	14.6%	18.4%

Dealings with officials at college at which student enrolled	12.1%	20.5%	20.7%	33.3%	32.2%
Choosing college courses	18.6%	33.4%	28.8%	37.4%	43.5%
Choosing college activities	16.1%	33.7%	27.8%	39.6%	43.3%

One part of the freshmen survey that may be instructive to professors frustrated with students' time management skills is a look at how the freshmen spent time during their senior year in high school. Contrary to reports that students rarely emerge from twittering at Facebook, the freshmen reported that they spent more time on homework and studying than on social networks. But study time was behind socializing, working for pay, and exercise/athletics.

Weekly Hours Per Week Reported During Last Year of High School

Activity	None or Less Than 1 Hour	1-5 Hours	6 or More Hours
Socializing with friends	1.7%	24.9%	73.4%
Working for pay	33.7%	11.5%	54.8%
Exercise or sports	13.6%	34.3%	52.1%
Studying/homework	15.0%	51.1%	33.9%
Watching television	21.8%	52.4%	25.8%
Partying	42.0%	37.1%	20.9%
Online social networks	31.9%	49.3%	18.9%
Student clubs and groups	42.3%	42.9%	14.8%
Video/computer games	61.8%	26.9%	11.3%
Reading for pleasure	50.6%	38.9%	10.5%
Volunteer work	51.4%	38.5%	10.1%

As has been the case in recent years, freshmen are generally seen as tolerant on social issues, but there is a notable gender gap. A majority of freshmen believe that same-sex couples should be able to have the right to legally recognized marital status, but the majority is slight (55.3 percent) for men and much larger (70.3 percent) for women.

One of this year's hot political issues — immigration — shows a similar gap. More than half of men (53.7 percent) believe that undocumented immigrants should be barred from public education, but only 43.5 percent of women have that view. On affirmative action, likely to be on ballots in several states this fall, the gap is visible as well, with 53.2 percent of men and 43.3 percent of women believing that affirmative action in college admissions should be eliminated.

Most questions about political views or social attitudes evolve slowly over time in the survey, but this year's data reflect growing student interest in environmental issues. The percentage of freshmen who believe it is essential or very important to be directly involved in programs to clean up the environment increased to 26.7 percent, from 22.2 percent, in a single year.