

# ORAP Research Bulletin

Office of Research, Assessment & Planning  
Adelphi University

February 2008

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## Highlights from 2007 Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE)

The Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) measures entering first-year students' pre-college academic and co-curricular experience, and their expectations for participating in educational activities during college. Adelphi University participated in the BCSSE for the first time in fall, 2007. The survey was administered during freshmen orientation.<sup>1</sup> It is designed to be used in conjunction with the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).<sup>2</sup> The longitudinal profile of BCSSE-NSSE can help the institution explore the possible gap between students' expectations and their first-year experience in college. Addressing the gap is critical, as past research has shown adverse consequences for unmet expectations.<sup>3</sup> Disappointed students may fail to optimize their college experience, leave the institution or sometimes abandon higher education altogether. ORAP plans to investigate this issue when follow-up 2008 NSSE results become available. In the meantime, this bulletin highlights high school experiences and first-year college expectations of Adelphi freshmen.<sup>4</sup>

### Respondents' Characteristics

- Close to 70% of Adelphi respondents were female; 30% of Adelphi respondents were from minority groups.
- More than 40% of Adelphi respondents reported that neither parent graduated from college.
- Almost all respondents reported attending Adelphi full-time.
- Almost all of Adelphi respondents reported earning either 'A's or 'B's in high school.
- Seventy-three percent of Adelphi's respondents graduated from public high schools, and the rest were from private high schools (20% from religiously-affiliated schools; 6% from independent schools).
- Sixty-six percent of Adelphi respondents had worked for pay during high school; 18% of them had worked more than 20 hours per week. An even higher proportion of respondents (89%) were expecting to work during college, with 16% of them expecting to do so for more than 20 hours per week.

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<sup>1</sup> Seventy-five percent of all entering freshmen who attended freshmen orientation responded to the survey.

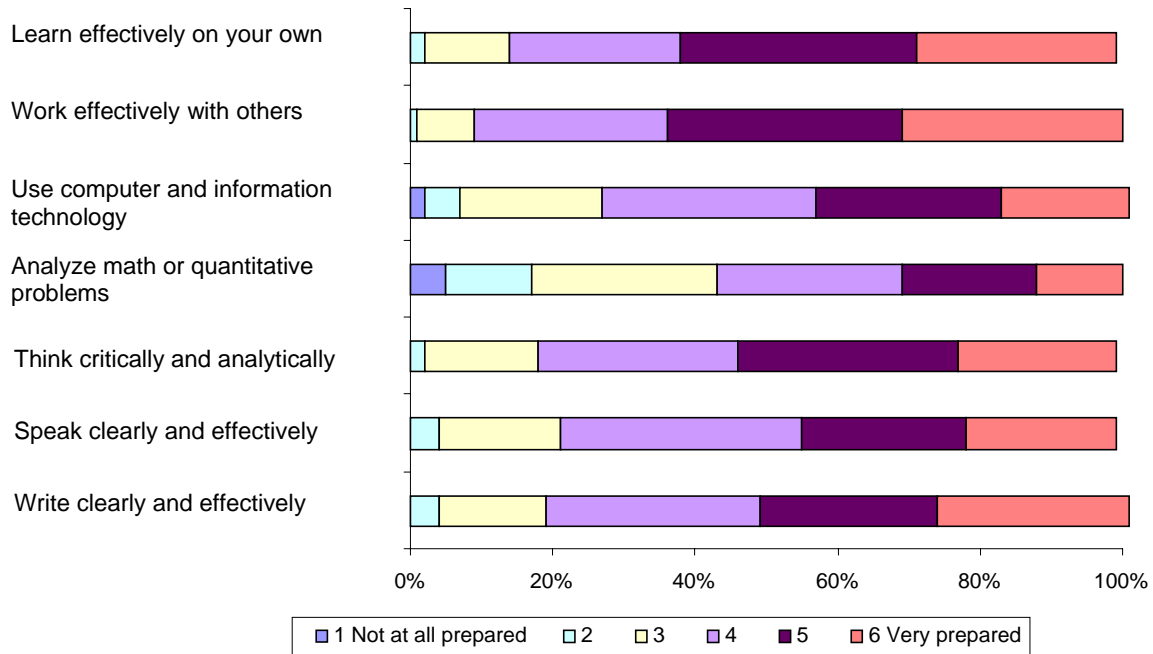
<sup>2</sup> NSSE assesses the extent to which students engage in a variety of educational practices that are empirically linked to positive learning and development outcomes.

<sup>3</sup> Miller, T, Kuh, G.D., & Schuh, J.H. (2005). *Promoting Reasonable Expectations: Aligning Student and Institutional Views of the College Experience*. Jossey-Bass.

<sup>4</sup> Although the BCSSE administrator provided the results from doctoral comparison group, the peer group consisted of only 7 institutions due to relatively low participation rate. On the majority of items, Adelphi students were very similar to the peers. In addition, BCSSE is most useful when used in conjunction with NSSE. Therefore, this report focuses only on Adelphi students.

## Academic Preparation

Academic preparation has been found to be one of most powerful predictors of college success.<sup>5</sup> Students' reports of academic preparedness can also reflect on likelihood of success. On the scale of 1 (not at all prepared) to 6 (very prepared), students were asked how prepared they were to do the following in college: 1) "learn effectively on your own", 2) "work effectively with others", 3) "use computer and information technology", 4) "analyze math or quantitative problems", 5) "think critically and analytically", 6) "speak clearly and effectively", and 7) "write clearly and effectively". Close to, or more than 80% of students felt prepared (i.e., ratings of 4 or higher) on all items, except for two; students were less certain about their preparedness in computer and quantitative skills.



## High School and Expected First-Year Academic Engagement

Students learn more when engaged in their education and other purposeful activities. The educationally relevant behaviors during the last year of high school often persist into the first-year of college. Expectations for the first year set the stage for upcoming experiences and influence future behaviors. The following three indicators of academic engagement demonstrate that Adelphi students expected to work harder in college than in high school.

- Less than 30% of students reported that they spent more than 10 hours preparing for classes per week; in contrast, more than three-quarters expected to do so in college, with most of them expecting to spend 11 to 20 hours.

Time Spent Preparing for Class Per Week		
Hours	During High School	Expected First-Year
0	3%	0%
1 to 10	68%	22%
11 to 20	22%	53%
21 to 30	6%	21%
More than 30	1%	4%

<sup>5</sup> Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*. University of Chicago Press.

- Seventy percent of respondents indicated that they ‘very often’ or ‘often’ contributed to class discussions during high school. For their first-year in college, an even higher percentage of students (77%) expected to do the same.

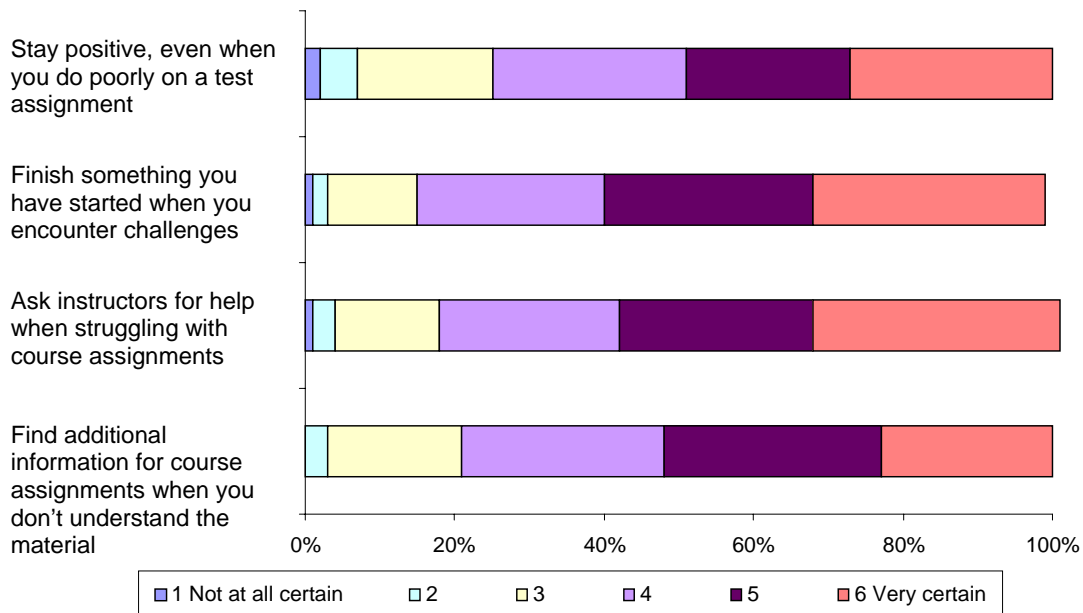
Ask Questions in Class or Contributed to Class Discussions		
Frequency	During High School	Expected First-Year
Never	2%	0%
Sometimes	29%	23%
Often	37%	46%
Very Often	33%	31%

- Close to 70% of students expected that they would discuss their assignment grades with their instructors during their first-year in college, compared with less than half who indicated that they did so in high school.

Discussed Grades or Assignments with An Instructor		
Frequency	During High School	Expected First-Year
Never	7%	1%
Sometimes	50%	31%
Often	31%	42%
Very Often	13%	26%

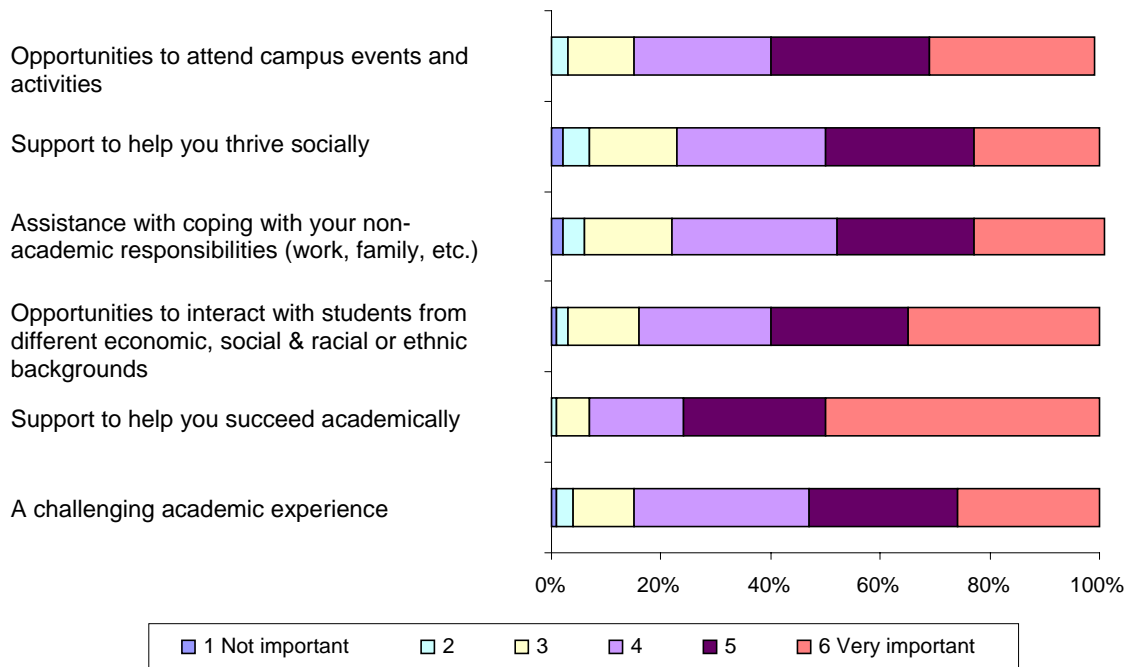
### Academic Persistence

First year in college can be challenging. Successful students can overcome difficult situations with appropriate strategies and problem solving skills. The majority of students indicated they would utilize some positive coping skills when encountering challenging academic situations, such as: 1) “stay positive, even when you do poorly on a test assignment”, 2) “finish something you have started when you encounter challenges”, 3) “ask instructor for help when struggling with course assignments”, and 4) “find additional information for course assignments when you don’t understand the material”. On the scale of 1 (not at all certain) to 6 (very certain), approximately 80% of student reported being certain (i.e., ratings of 4 or higher) about utilizing the mentioned strategies.



## Importance of Campus Environment

The university can do many things to support students both in and out of the classroom. On a scale of 1 (not important) to 6 (very important), students were asked how important it is that the college provides the following: 1) “opportunities to attend campus events and activities”, 2) “support to help you thrive socially”, 3) “assistance with coping with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)”, 4) “opportunities to interact with students from different economic, social and racial backgrounds”, 5) “support to help you succeed academically”, and 6) “a challenging academic experience”. When examining “very important” ratings, students indicated that “support to help you succeed academically” is most important (50%), followed by “opportunities to interact with students from different economic, social, and racial backgrounds” (35%), and “opportunities to attend campus events and activities” (30%).



## Conclusion

Overall, Adelphi first-time entrants reported feeling academically prepared for college, except in the areas of computer and quantitative skills. The majority of respondents expected to work harder and be more engaged during college as compared to high school. Many of them also possess positive coping skills. Adelphi has a long tradition of offering challenging academic programs, fostering a high-level of student-faculty interaction, and providing a supportive campus environment. Hopefully, the 2008 NSSE results will point to a rewarding first-year college experience for students.

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