

# ORAP Research Bulletin

Office of Research, Assessment & Planning  
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## Selected Findings from the 2004 HERI Faculty Survey

### -- Perceptions of Student Preparedness --

The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA first conducted its triennial Faculty Survey in 1969. The survey is designed to collect basic data on college and university faculty, including background and demographic information, attitudes and values, pedagogy, and professional activities. The Fall 2004 administration of the HERI survey at Adelphi University marked the institution's second participation in this nationwide effort; Adelphi first participated in the HERI survey in 2001.

Selected findings from the 2004 HERI survey are presented below. These findings, especially when presented alongside Adelphi admissions data and results from the 2004 Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) survey of entering freshmen<sup>1</sup>, reveal a considerable gap between faculty and students in perceptions of students' academic abilities.

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### Students' Self-Perceptions:

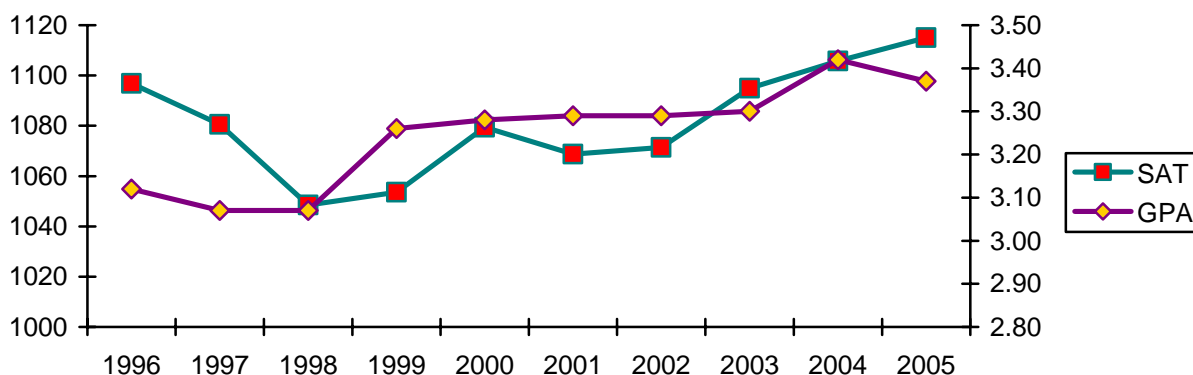
Two-thirds of Fall 2004 entering freshmen at Adelphi, a higher percentage than in any previous administration of CIRP, rated themselves as "above average" or "highest 10 percent" in academic ability. A larger proportion of students than ever before (44%) also reported their average high school grade as an "A-, A, or A+."

Recent trends in entering freshmen's average high school GPA and total SAT scores (shown in the following chart) may shed light on this self-perception. The average high school GPA has risen over the past decade, and although the SAT average has fluctuated over time, the past four years have seen consistent improvement.

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<sup>1</sup> The Fall 2004 CIRP survey was completed by 670 entering freshmen during summer orientation sessions.

## Trends in First-time Freshman<sup>i</sup> Average High School GPA and Total SAT Scores



<sup>i</sup> Excludes students in the Learning Disabilities and General Studies programs.

Note: The 2005 national average total SAT score was 1028. Adelphi's 2005 average was 1115.

### Faculty Views on Underprepared Students:

In stark contrast to students' perceptions, only one-third of Adelphi faculty respondents to the HERI survey<sup>2</sup> said that they were satisfied with the quality of their undergraduate students. Four in ten Adelphi professors (41%) reported that "most" of the students they teach lack the basic skills for college-level work. Even fewer (29%) agreed that faculty on their campus feel that most students are well-prepared academically.

There is wide variation in views on student preparedness among faculty at different types of colleges and universities. Generally speaking, Adelphi faculty's views are closer to those at two-year colleges and public four-year colleges and universities than they are to private four-year colleges and universities. Specific comparisons by institutional type, as well as overall figures, are shown in the table on the following page.

Working with what they consider to be underprepared students was a source of at least "some" stress for 56 percent of all faculty participants in the HERI survey (11% of these respondents reported "extensive" stress associated with this aspect of their work). This type of stress was most pervasive at two-year colleges, where 68 percent of faculty reported at least "some" stress within this realm and least common at private universities, where only 34 percent indicated similar stress levels. In comparison, 66 percent of Adelphi faculty respondents to the HERI survey reported at least "some" stress from working with underprepared students, and 10 percent considered that stress to be "extensive."

<sup>2</sup> All 254 Adelphi full-time faculty in Fall 2004 were included in the HERI survey sample. One hundred three completed HERI questionnaires, for an overall response rate of 41 percent. More than 40 percent of these respondents were recent hires at Adelphi, with 2002 to 2004 as the year of appointment.

## Faculty Views on Underprepared Students, by Institutional Type (percentages)

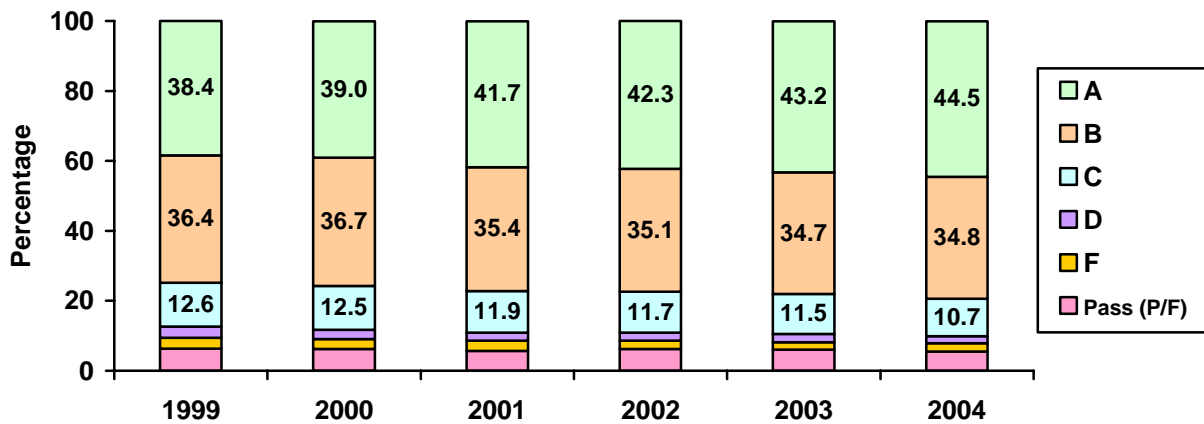
	<u>Adelphi</u>	<u>All</u>	Universities		Four-Year Colleges		Two-Year Colleges	
			Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private
Agreed “somewhat” or “strongly” that “faculty at my institution feel that most students are well-prepared academically”	29	36	37	67	28	45	22	21
Agreed “somewhat” or “strongly” that “most of the students I teach lack the basic skills for college level work”	41	41	33	16	45	30	65	52
Were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the “quality of undergraduate students at my institution”	35	50	52	75	43	56	39	43

Apart from the inherent pedagogical challenges associated with teaching students who they feel are not adequately prepared for college-level work, faculty may be frustrated by their perceived mismatch between responsibility and reward. For example, while 62 percent of faculty nationally agreed that their institution takes responsibility for educating underprepared students, just 6 percent agreed with the proposition that it is “very descriptive” of their campus that faculty are rewarded for their efforts to work with underprepared students. At Adelphi, the comparable figures were 74 percent (agreeing that Adelphi takes responsibility for educating underprepared students) and 10 percent (believing that it is “very descriptive” of Adelphi that faculty are rewarded for their efforts to work with underprepared students).

### Grades and GPAs:

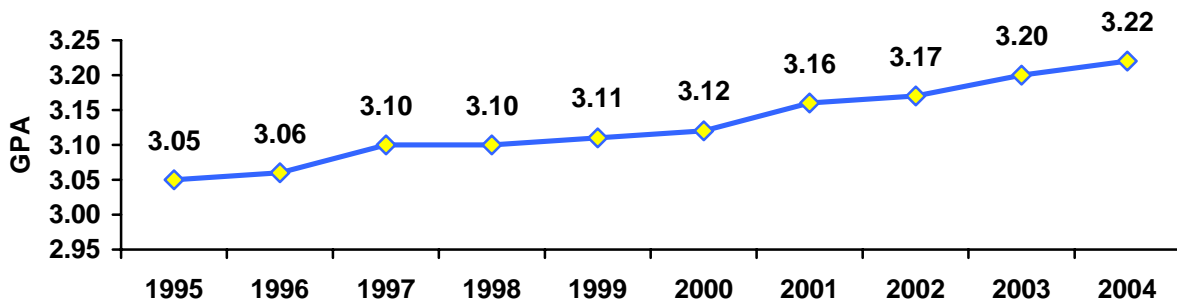
Yet another aspect of this perceptual gap is the official feedback given to Adelphi undergraduates when they are graded. As the following charts illustrate, students receive increasingly positive messages regarding their academic abilities by the grades they receive from Adelphi faculty.

## Grade Distribution in Adelphi Undergraduate Courses: Fall 1999 to Fall 2004



Note: Percentages of D, F, and Passing (P/F) grades are available in Adelphi's annual Databooks.

## Trends in Adelphi Undergraduate Grade Point Average (Semester GPA): Fall 1995 to Fall 2004



Far from unique, Adelphi's increasing GPA mirrors national trends. One source estimates that in 2001-2002, the average GPA was 3.26 at private four-year colleges and universities and 2.97 at four-year public institutions. This same researcher notes that GPAs for all schools have increased by roughly 0.15 per decade over the last 35 years (see <http://www.gradeinflation.com/>). As the above chart details, Adelphi's increase over the last decade was 0.17.

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