

## Memorandum

TO: Members of the Saint Mary's College Community

FROM: Mary McCall, Interim Director of Institutional Research

DATE: April 12, 2009

SUBJECT: CIRP "College Senior Survey" (CSS), Spring 2008

In an effort to better understand our graduating student population, the survey results from SMC's participation in the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) 2008 "College Senior Survey" are presented in this memorandum. What follows is a summary of some variables that stood out when looking at the differences between our students' responses compared to students at other four year Catholic colleges, as well as all other private four year colleges that participated in the survey. Additionally, comparisons by gender within SMC's student population are presented where significant differences were found.

The CIRP "College Senior Survey" is an instrument utilized to collect a broad array of information about graduating seniors at four-year institutions. This year's survey administration represents responses from 24,223 graduating seniors from the participating colleges (168 from SMC; 5,542 from other four year Catholic colleges; and 18,513 from all other private four year colleges).

Items surveyed in the CIRP "College Senior Survey" include: demographic characteristics, activities and behaviors during college, majors, degree, career, and life goals, college finances, attitudes, values, as well as overall college experiences. For more detailed information regarding the survey and methodology, please visit the Higher Education Research Institute website at: <http://www.heri.ucla.edu/>.

### *Demographic Characteristics*

Overall, the data reveals that SMC's graduating class of Spring 2008 is similar to that at other Catholic four year colleges, as well as the other private four year colleges that participated in the survey in many ways, yet with some differences that will be shared in the following report.

The majority of 2008 graduates from SMC (77.3%), as well as the other Catholic and private institutions represented in the profile (78.3%), entered their college in 2004. SMC had a higher transfer rate than the other colleges, both Catholic and private, as noted by students who entered between 2005-2008 (20.9% vs. 14.0%). By comparison, SMC has fewer 2008 graduates who started in 2003 or earlier than the other Catholic and private colleges (1.8% vs. 7.6%).

#### *Ethnicity*

SMC's graduating class of 2008 was more racially/ethnically diverse than other four year Catholic and private colleges (Table 1). Compared to the other Catholic colleges and private colleges, SMC had a larger percentage of graduates of color. In all minority racial/ethnic categories except American Indian/Alaska Native and Puerto Rican, SMC had a larger percentage than the other colleges in the

survey. SMC has a particularly larger percentage of Mexican American/Chicano and Latino students than all other colleges that participated in the CIRP “College Senior Survey”. Additionally, 7.2% of SMC’s graduates have a native language other than English, as compared to 5.9% at other Catholic colleges and 4.8% at all other private colleges.

**Table 1**

	<b>SMC</b>	<b>Catholic Colleges</b>	<b>Private Colleges</b>
White	73.1%	84.1%	86%
African American/Black	6.3%	5.2%	5.5%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.6%	1.2%	1.4%
Asian American/Asian	6.9%	4.4%	4.1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3.1%	1.2%	0.9%
Mexican American/Chicano	13.8%	2.4%	2.2%
Puerto Rican	0.6%	1.4%	1.0%
Other Latino	5.0%	2.7%	2.2%
Other	5.6%	3.4%	3.1%

*College Academic Performance*

A lower percentage of SMC graduates (25.3%) reported (Table 2) having average college grades of A/A+ or A-, as compared to other Catholic colleges, and all other private colleges (40.5% and 42.7%, respectively). There is a lot of similarity among SMC, the other Catholic colleges, and the other private colleges for graduates reporting average grades of B+ and B. In contrast, a higher percentage of SMC graduates (17.1%) report their average college grades as B-, as compared to other Catholic colleges (8.6%) and other private colleges (8.3%). This pattern was similar for grades reported within the graduate’s major. Table 3 shows some interesting differences among SMC’s male and female graduates with regard to their overall and major GPA.

**Table 2**

<b>Average college grades:</b>	<b>SMC</b>	<b>Catholic Colleges</b>	<b>Private Colleges</b>
A or A+	11.4%	16.7%	18.4%
A-	13.9%	23.8%	24.3%
B+	25.3%	25.5%	24.2%
B	25.9%	21.0%	19.2%
B-	17.1%	8.6%	8.3%
C+	5.1%	3.4%	4.1%
C	1.3%	0.9%	1.4%

**Table 3**

<b>Average college grades:</b>	<b>SMC Male</b>	<b>SMC Female</b>	<b>SMC Total</b>	<b>Average major grades:</b>	<b>SMC Male</b>	<b>SMC Female</b>	<b>SMC Total</b>
A or A+	7.5%	13.3%	11.4%	A or A+	10.0%	21.8%	17.9%
A-	11.3%	15.2%	13.9%	A-	16.0%	13.9%	14.6%
B+	18.9%	28.6%	25.3%	B+	24.0%	28.7%	27.2%
B	26.4%	25.7%	25.9%	B	18.0%	22.8%	21.2%
B-	20.8%	15.2%	17.1%	B-	16.0%	8.9%	11.3%
C+	11.3%	1.9%	5.1%	C+	10.0%	4.0%	6.0%
C	3.8%	0.0%	1.3%	C	4.0%	0.0%	1.3%

### *The College Experience*

Overall, most SMC graduates reported being “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the college on a variety of questions (Table 4) as did most respondents from the other Catholic and private institutions. SMC graduates reported higher levels in the areas of career counseling and advising but lower levels of satisfaction in the areas of library facilities, science and math courses, academic advising, opportunities for community services, leadership opportunities, and recreational facilities.

SCM graduates also report being “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the college in terms of courses in the major field (85.2%), amount of contact with faculty (86.1%), class size (90.5%), interaction with other students (90.5%), overall quality of instruction (86.3%), and the overall college experience (82.8%).

**Table 4**

<b>Students indicating they were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the college in:</b>	<b>SMC</b>	<b>Catholic Colleges</b>	<b>Private Colleges</b>
General education or core curriculum courses	84.8%	84.1%	83.2%
Science and mathematics courses	53.7%	66.4%	65.1%
Humanities courses	71.6%	74.0%	74.3%
Social science courses	76.2%	75.7%	76.1%
Library facilities	58.2%	67.6%	71.8%
Academic advising	57.1%	61.9%	66.0%
Career counseling and advising	62.9%	54.9%	55.5%
Student housing facilities	52.7%	53.1%	57.4%
Financial aid package	53.0%	56.6%	57.4%
Opportunities for community service	63.4%	73.7%	70.5%
Student health services	52.4%	50.9%	53.7%
Leadership opportunities	58.7%	67.7%	70.9%
Recreational facilities	45.0%	59.7%	63.5%

Given that SMC is more racially/ethnically diverse than other colleges in the sample, responses relating to experiences SMC graduates had with students from racial/ethnic groups other than their own are interesting. As would be expected with higher levels of interaction, SMC students report both higher positive and somewhat higher negative interactions with students from other ethnic/racial groups. Table 5 highlights some of these responses and how they differ between SMC, other Catholic colleges, and other private colleges.

**Table 5**

<b>Students indicating they “very often” or “often” experienced the following with students from a racial/ethnic group other than their own:</b>			
	<b>SMC</b>	<b>Catholic Colleges</b>	<b>Private Colleges</b>
Dined or shared a meal	75.8%	48.0%	48.2%
Had meaningful and honest discussions about racial/ethnic relations outside of class	53.5%	35.1%	34.3%
Had guarded interactions	21.9%	12.3%	12.4%
Shared personal feelings and problems	52.3%	40.0%	39.6%
Had tense, somewhat hostile interactions	15.0%	8.5%	7.4%
Had intellectual discussions outside of class	58.2%	40.7%	40.6%
Felt insulted or threatened because of your race/ethnicity	18.2%	6.2%	6.0%
Studied or prepared for class	61.7%	41.0%	39.2%
Socialized or partied	54.5%	45.5%	44.0%
Attended events sponsored by other racial/ethnic groups	37.3%	20.8%	20.1%

Table 6 and Table 7 indicate graduates' responses to questions relating to a variety of college experiences. Differences between male and female SMC graduates are noted.

**Table 6**

<b>Since entering college have you:</b>					
	<b>SMC Males</b>	<b>SMC Females</b>	<b>SMC Total</b>	<b>Catholic Colleges</b>	<b>Private Colleges</b>
Failed one of more courses	27.3%	16.2%	19.9%	13.7%	14.1%
Worked full-time while attending school	36.4%	29.7%	31.9%	23.6%	18.3%
Taken an ethnic studies course	74.5%	72.7%	73.3%	52.6%	49.8%
Taken a women's studies course	25.5%	51.8%	43.0%	27.8%	25.5%
Attended a racial/cultural awareness workshop	42.6%	45.9%	44.8%	32.7%	36.2%
Participated in an ethnic/racial student organization	47.3%	38.2%	41.2%	21.8%	21.1%
Participated in an internship program	42.6%	28.8%	33.3%	49.0%	53.0%
Participated in leadership training	31.5%	36.9%	35.2%	29.8%	34.1%
Participated in a study-abroad program	32.7%	52.7%	46.1%	24.2%	29.1%
Taken courses for credit at another institution	45.5%	59.1%	54.5%	42.3%	44.6%

**Table 7**

<b>During the past year, students "frequently" or "occasionally":</b>					
	<b>SMC Males</b>	<b>SMC Females</b>	<b>SMC Total</b>	<b>Catholic Colleges</b>	<b>Private Colleges</b>
Smoked cigarettes	6.1%	2.9%	3.9%	7.5%	5.9%
Felt lonely or homesick	41.2%	53.8%	49.7%	51.7%	55.0%
Felt depressed	13.7%	3.0%	6.6%	6.7%	7.0%
Drank beer	84.0%	60.2%	68.2%	76.8%	65.9%
Drank wine or liquor	92.0%	79.4%	83.6%	87.1%	76.8%
Sought personal counseling	30.6%	32.3%	31.8%	25.6%	28.3%
Contributed money to help support my family	60.4%	30.7%	40.3%	32.5%	28.4%

### *Attitudes and Values*

Over half of all students reported (Table 8) that to become an authority in their field, to obtain recognition in their field, to influence social values, to raise a family, to be very well off financially, to help others in difficulty, to become successful in a business of their own, to develop a meaningful philosophy of life, to help promote racial understanding, to become a community leader, and to improve their understanding of other cultures and countries as being very important. Men and women responded similarly to many questions however, data from six questions reveal some differences of concern among students at SMC.

**Table 8**

<b>Objectives considered to be "essential" or "very important"</b>					
	<b>SMC Male</b>	<b>SMC Female</b>	<b>SMC Total</b>	<b>Catholic Colleges</b>	<b>Private Colleges</b>
Being very well off financially	78.8%	66.0%	70.3%	65.8%	55.5%
Helping others who are in difficulty	73.1%	83.5%	80.0%	78.7%	78.9%
Becoming successful in a business of my own	69.2%	51.0%	57.1%	36.2%	32.8%
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	69.2%	51.9%	57.7%	56.7%	58.4%
Helping to promote racial understanding	57.7%	45.2%	49.4%	38.4%	37.6%
Becoming a community leader	55.8%	46.5%	49.7%	41.4%	40.1%

Over 50% of SMC students agreed that abortion should be legal, that marijuana should be legalized, and that same sex marriage should be legal (Table 9).

**Table 9**

<b>Student agrees "strongly" or "somewhat":</b>					
	<b>SMC Males</b>	<b>SMC Females</b>	<b>SMC Total</b>	<b>Catholic Colleges</b>	<b>Private Colleges</b>
There is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals	48.1%	35.6%	39.9%	46.1%	46.0%
Abortion should be legal	69.2%	69.6%	69.5%	58.5%	54.7%
The death penalty should be abolished	42.3%	42.6%	42.5%	45.6%	42.3%
Marijuana should be legalized	69.2%	45.5%	53.6%	43.5%	41.1%
It is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships	26.9%	10.8%	16.2%	14.4%	22.3%
Racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America	21.2%	20.8%	20.9%	15.9%	15.8%

Realistically, an individual can do little to bring about changes in our society	33.3%	18.8%	23.7%	23.3%	22.9%
Colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus	41.2%	52.0%	48.4%	55.0%	56.2%
Same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status	71.2%	80.4%	77.3%	72.6%	62.5%
Affirmative action should be abolished	39.2%	39.4%	39.3%	52.5%	49.8%
Federal military spending should be increased	29.4%	13.1%	18.7%	23.7%	23.7%
Colleges have the right to ban extreme speakers from campus	36.5%	32.3%	33.8%	47.7%	50.3%

The major differences were among males and female students at SMC. Female graduates from SMC reported (Table 11) being more liberal and their political beliefs are reflected in their response differences to a number of the above questions.

**Table 11**

<b>How would you characterize your political views?</b>					
	<b>SMC Males</b>	<b>SMC Females</b>	<b>SMC Total</b>	<b>Catholic Colleges</b>	<b>Private Colleges</b>
Far left	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	3.4%
Liberal	28.0%	48.1%	41.6%	32.5%	30.9%
Middle-of-the-road	48.0%	40.4%	42.9%	44.9%	39.9%
Conservative	24.0%	11.5%	15.6%	19.2%	24.7%
Far right	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	1.1%

### *Future Goals*

When considering factors that were important in thinking about their future career paths (Table 12), SMC graduates responded similarly to those from other Catholic colleges and other private colleges. There was one indicator where SMC graduates responded at a markedly different rate—limited work hours.

**Table 12**

<b>Considerations noted as “essential” or “very important” in thinking about student’s career path:</b>			
	<b>SMC</b>	<b>Catholic Colleges</b>	<b>Private Colleges</b>
Working for social change	48.1%	46.4%	46.6%
High income potential	65.8%	62.1%	51.2%
Social recognition or status	43.6%	37.6%	32.2%
Stable, secure future	92.3%	89.9%	82.4%
Creativity and initiative	66.5%	65.1%	64.3%

Expression of personal values	68.0%	70.7%	71.5%
Availability of jobs	81.5%	81.1%	75.5%
Limited working hours	40.5%	28.6%	25.9%
Leadership potential	67.1%	66.0%	62.2%
Discovery/enhancement of knowledge	77.9%	77.7%	74.7%

Similar to graduates from other Catholic colleges (67.8%) and other private colleges (66.5%), SMC graduates (60.1%) plan to be working full time in the fall following their graduation. Other plans include: attending graduate/professional school (SMC 25.0%, Catholic colleges 26.9%, private colleges (24.2%), traveling (SMC 29.8%, Catholic colleges 19.8%, private colleges (18.6%), and doing volunteer work (SMC 17.3%, Catholic colleges 17.1%, private colleges (16.8%).

A large proportion of all 2008 graduates plan to attend another institution for a graduate or professional degree (SMC 84.9%, Catholic colleges 86.1%, private colleges (83.6%).

Future career paths and goals are shown in Table 13.

**Table 13**

<b>Probable career/occupation:</b>			
	<b>SMC</b>	<b>Catholic Colleges</b>	<b>Private Colleges</b>
Artist	5.4%	5.1%	7.4%
Business	33.1%	18.9%	16.2%
Doctor (MD or DDS)	4.7%	4.5%	4.2%
Education (secondary)	7.4%	6.8%	7.6%
Education (elementary)	6.8%	7.3%	7.6%
Health professional	4.1%	4.6%	4.5%
Lawyer	4.7%	4.8%	4.0%
Nurse	2.7%	8.9%	5.5%
Other	15.5%	19.0%	20.1%
Undecided	10.8%	8.3%	8.5%

If you have any questions regarding the data presented here or would like to obtain additional data from this survey instrument, please do not hesitate to contact Mary McCall at mmccall@stmarys-ca.edu or x4754.