

## 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 2007

In an effort to better understand our graduating student population, the survey results from SMC's participation in the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) 2007 "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 22,730 graduating seniors from the participating colleges (280 from SMC; 5,294 from other four year Catholic colleges; and 17,156 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 2007 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 2007 graduates from SMC (70.0%), as well as the other Catholic and private institutions represented in the profile (79.2%), entered their college in 2003. SMC had a higher transfer rate than the other colleges, both Catholic and private, as noted by students who entered between 2004 and 2007 (23.8% vs. 13.9%).

#### *Ethnicity*

SMC's graduating class of 2007 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 African American/Black (and in this category, SMC was higher than other Catholic colleges, and about equal to other private colleges) 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, 10.7% of SMC’s graduates have a native language other than English, as compared to 4.8% at other Catholic colleges and 5.5% at all other private colleges.

**Table 1**

	<b>SMC</b>	<b>Catholic Colleges</b>	<b>Private Colleges</b>
White	62.0%	86.9%	84.8%
African American/Black	5.0%	3.9%	5.1%
American Indian/Alaska Native	2.3%	1.2%	1.6%
Asian American/Asian	8.5%	3.3%	4.7%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	6.2%	1.0%	0.8%
Mexican American/Chicano	20.5%	2.1%	2.5%
Puerto Rican	0.0%	1.5%	1.1%
Other Latino	5.0%	2.6%	2.6%
Other	8.5%	2.6%	3.4%

*College Academic Performance*

A lower percentage of SMC graduates (23.7%) reported (Table 2) having average college grades of A/A+ or A-, as compared to other Catholic colleges, and all other private colleges (39.3% and 41.5%, 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 (8.8%) and other private colleges (7.9%). 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+	6.6%	15.7%	16.1%
A-	17.1%	23.6%	25.4%
B+	19.5%	26.2%	25.9%
B	28.0%	20.9%	19.4%
B-	17.1%	8.8%	7.9%
C+	9.7%	3.7%	3.9%
C	1.9%	1.1%	1.2%

**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+	5.9%	7.1%	6.6%	A or A+	6.7%	13.6%	10.9%
A-	18.6%	16.1%	17.1%	A-	19.1%	16.4%	17.5%
B+	13.7%	23.2%	19.5%	B+	14.6%	21.4%	18.8%
B	28.4%	27.7%	28.0%	B	24.7%	26.4%	25.8%
B-	16.7%	17.4%	17.1%	B-	21.3%	14.3%	17.0%
C+	13.7%	7.1%	9.7%	C+	9.0%	5.7%	7.0%
C	2.9%	1.3%	1.9%	C	4.5%	2.1%	3.1%

### *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 also report being “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the college in terms of courses in the major field (90.5%), amount of contact with faculty (84.5%), class size (90.2%), interaction with other students (83.7%), overall quality of instruction (84.1%), and the overall college experience (80.2%).

SMC graduates reported lower levels of satisfaction, as compared to their counterparts at other colleges, in the areas of science and mathematics courses, library facilities, student housing facilities, opportunities for community services, leadership opportunities, and recreational facilities.

**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	86.5%	83.0%	83.1%
Science and math courses	51.6%	64.5%	64.1%
Humanities courses	72.6%	73.4%	75.7%
Social science courses	71.2%	74.1%	75.6%
Library facilities	61.3%	72.5%	73.5%
Academic advising	58.1%	62.3%	62.7%
Career counseling and advising	58.2%	56.0%	53.4%
Student housing facilities	44.8%	49.8%	56.5%
Financial aid package	53.1%	55.7%	57.5%
Opportunities for community service	64.3%	74.9%	69.8%
Student health services	54.5%	52.5%	52.0%
Leadership opportunities	57.0%	67.3%	68.5%
Recreational facilities	40.7%	59.5%	64.9%

Given that SMC is more racially/ethnically diverse than other colleges in the sample, responses relating to the experiences SMC graduates had with students from racial/ethnic groups other than their own are interesting. 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	74.1%	47.7%	54.8%
Had meaningful and honest discussions about racial/ethnic relations outside of class	58.8%	36.8%	39.8%
Had guarded interactions	26.7%	13.6%	13.4%
Shared personal feelings and problems	58.8%	37.6%	42.1%
Had tense, somewhat hostile interactions	17.8%	8.4%	7.9%
Had intellectual discussions outside of class	57.1%	37.4%	42.8%
Felt insulted or threatened because of your race/ethnicity	16.1%	6.9%	7.0%
Studied or prepared for class	64.3%	37.4%	40.1%
Socialized or partied	64.3%	44.8%	49.2%
Attended events sponsored by other racial/ethnic groups	41.1%	20.6%	23.5%

Tables 6 and 7 indicate graduates’ responses to questions relating to a variety of college experiences, including differences between male and female SMC graduates compared to students at other colleges. Of note is that almost twice as many of SMC students fail a course at one time or another, and take courses at other institutions. More of our students participated in study abroad, especially female students, while fewer participated in leadership training opportunities or internships.

In terms of more personal behaviors, more of female SMC students reported feeling lonely or homesick, while fewer of SMC males did (compared to other students). More SMC men reported drinking beer, while relatively more SMC women reported drinking wine or other liquor, compared to students at other schools. More SMC students reported seeking personal counseling than students from other institutions.

**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	22.5%	22.2%	22.3%	12.1%	12.3%
Worked full-time while attending school	27.0%	26.9%	27.0%	21.6%	17.7%
Taken an ethnic studies course	76.6%	75.6%	76.0%	59.7%	54.9%
Taken a women's studies course	29.7%	48.8%	41.2%	30.5%	28.8%
Attended a racial/cultural awareness workshop	27.9%	45.2%	38.3%	30.8%	34.0%
Participated in an ethnic/racial student organization	30.9%	41.9%	37.5%	16.8%	19.7%
Withdrew from school temporarily	9.9%	8.4%	9.0%	5.6%	6.4%
Participated in an internship program	33.6%	35.3%	34.7%	51.8%	53.8%
Participated in leadership training	27.5%	25.7%	26.4%	28.2%	32.1%
Participated in a study-abroad program	23.6%	38.7%	32.7%	21.9%	31.6%
Taken courses for credit at another institution	47.3%	57.7%	53.6%	41.5%	42.1%

**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	7.6%	7.5%	7.5%	7.5%	6.3%
Felt lonely or homesick	43.8%	63.4%	55.6%	48.0%	50.4%
Felt depressed	3.8%	6.8%	5.6%	5.8%	6.7%
Drank beer	85.7%	70.8%	76.7%	77.8%	72.2%
Drank wine or liquor	81.9%	87.0%	85.0%	87.2%	82.1%
Sought personal counseling	26.7%	31.7%	29.7%	20.4%	22.4%

### *Attitudes and Values*

Over 50% of all SMC 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 have administrative responsibility for the work of others, to be very well off financially, to help others in difficulty, to develop a meaningful philosophy of life, to help promote racial understanding, to keep up to date with political affairs, and to improve their understanding of other cultures and countries as being essential or very important.

This percentage was similar for students at other Catholic colleges, and other private colleges except for the following objectives: to have administrative responsibility for the work of others (SMC 54.9%, other private colleges 44.1%); to be very well off financially (SMC 74.5%, other Catholic colleges 67.3%, other private colleges 59.3%); to help promote racial understanding (SMC 52.2%, other Catholic colleges 41.2%, other private colleges 39.9%); and to improve their understanding of other cultures and countries (SMC 68.4%, other Catholic colleges 58.3%, other private colleges 60.6%).

Men and women responded similarly to many questions however, data from six questions reveal some differences of objectives among students at SMC.

**Table 8**

<b>Objectives noted as “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>
Helping others who are in difficulty	75.0%	83.2%	80.0%	80.5%	77.7%
Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment	46.0%	34.2%	38.8%	30.5%	30.4%
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	62.6%	59.4%	60.6%	56.0%	58.2%
Keeping up to date with political affairs	58.0%	51.6%	54.1%	48.2%	49.4%
Becoming a community leader	52.0%	45.2%	47.8%	43.4%	42.7%
Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures	63.3%	71.7%	68.4%	58.3%	60.6%

Over 50% of all SMC students agree that abortion should be legal, that the death penalty should be abolished, that marijuana should be legalized, that colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus, that same sex couples should have the right to legal marital status, and that the federal government should do more to encourage energy conservation (Table 9). Differences between SMC male and female students are noted.

**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>
Abortion should be legal	65.6%	78.8%	73.7%	60.4%	64.1%
The death penalty should be abolished	50.0%	55.7%	53.5%	45.9%	44.4%
Marijuana should be legalized	59.2%	55.9%	57.2%	44.3%	46.1%
It is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships	21.9%	10.5%	14.9%	14.4%	18.2%
Racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America	14.9%	11.7%	12.9%	13.6%	13.7%
Colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus	47.4%	54.7%	51.8%	53.9%	53.8%
Same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status	59.1%	80.9%	72.7%	72.5%	68.3%
Affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished	48.4%	36.7%	41.2%	53.6%	50.8%
Federal military spending should be increased	25.5%	16.3%	19.9%	28.9%	25.9%
The federal government should do more to encourage energy conservation	83.0%	89.9%	87.2%	91.1%	91.3%

When looking at political views, the major differences were among male and female students. Female graduates from SMC reported being more liberal (Table 10), which is reflected in their responses to a number of the above questions.

**Table 10**

<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	3.1%	3.9%	3.6%	2.8%	4.3%
Liberal	34.4%	45.1%	41.0%	34.5%	35.3%
Middle-of-the-road	39.6%	37.9%	38.6%	41.0%	36.6%
Conservative	19.8%	13.1%	15.7%	20.6%	22.5%
Far right	3.1%	0.0%	1.2%	1.1%	1.3%

### *Future Goals*

When considering factors that were important in thinking about their future career paths (Table 11), SMC graduates responded similarly to those from other Catholic colleges and other private colleges.

**Table 11**

<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>
Work for social change	51.4%	47.4%	47.4%
High income potential	70.0%	65.2%	57.5%
Social recognition or status	49.8%	44.1%	37.8%
Stable, secure future	87.6%	91.1%	85.9%
Creativity and initiative	68.9%	66.1%	66.0%
Expression of personal values	76.2%	72.3%	70.9%
Availability of jobs	76.1%	81.6%	74.5%
Limited working hours	39.3%	31.2%	27.5%
Leadership potential	67.7%	69.3%	64.9%

Similar to graduates from other Catholic colleges (68.4%) and other private colleges (68.0%), SMC graduates (56.8%) plan to be working full time in the fall following their graduation. Other plans include: attending graduate/professional school (SMC 21.1%, Catholic colleges 28.0%, private colleges (24.7%), traveling (SMC 27.5%, Catholic colleges 16.2%, private colleges (16.7%), and doing volunteer work (SMC 17.1%, Catholic colleges 13.7%, private colleges (13.6%).

A large proportion of all 2007 graduates plan to attend another institution for a graduate or professional degree (SMC 87.3%, Catholic colleges 88.4%, private colleges (87.4%) at some point following graduation.

Future career paths and goals are shown in Table 12.

**Table 12**

<b>Probable career/occupation:</b>			
	<b>SMC</b>	<b>Catholic Colleges</b>	<b>Private Colleges</b>
Artist	5.7%	5.6%	8.0%
Business	31.9%	21.7%	19.0%
Doctor (MD or DDS)	2.1%	4.7%	5.1%
Education (secondary)	3.5%	6.4%	6.3%
Education (elementary)	4.3%	7.2%	6.2%
Health professional	4.3%	4.2%	3.9%
Lawyer	5.7%	5.5%	5.6%
Nurse	7.1%	8.0%	4.2%
Other	17.7%	16.8%	18.9%
Undecided	12.8%	9.0%	9.4%

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](mailto:mmccall@stmarys-ca.edu) or x4754.