

**Profile of the American College Student Survey**  
**University of Missouri-Columbia**  
**April, 2007**

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**Profile of the American College Student Survey**  
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In April of 2007, the University of Missouri-Columbia (MU) participated in the initial Profile of the American College Student (PACS) survey. PACS was designed by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) in order to provide information on the characteristics, perceptions, and attitudes of college students in the United States. Data collected from MU's students are available to stakeholders of the institution. In August of 2007, comparative national data will also be provided in order to further enhance understanding of MU's students compared to college students in the United States. Information from the survey may be utilized to develop a greater understanding of the students who currently attend MU and how we, as an institution, can better meet their needs.

*Method*

In April, 2007, 5000 of the 19,880 undergraduate students attending MU were emailed a request to complete the survey along with a link to the survey. Students were sent an email if they were older than 18 years of age and had not informed the institution that they did not want their directory information shared with others. The sample was stratified by student level; thus of the 5000 students, 1372 were freshmen, 1156 were sophomores, 1147 were juniors, and 1325 were seniors. A total of 913 students responded for a response rate of 18%. Therefore, the survey results have a 4.2% error at the 99% confidence interval. Also, please note that 42 of the 913 returned surveys were not completed in their entirety.

In order to limit the number of questions asked of each student and increase the response rate, the survey was implemented utilizing matrix sampling. Matrix sampling is a method where a larger survey is broken up into sections and students are only given a few sections to answer. The MU version of PACS contained one mandatory demographic section, and six other randomly selected sections (Future Aspirations, Expectations of College, Use of Technology, Consumption of Media, Academic Dishonesty, and Opinions). Every student was given the demographic section and two of the six other sections. Ideally, the six random sections would be answered by the same amount of students. The average number of responses for the seven sections is shown below in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of Responses to PACS Sections Offered to MU Students

Section	Number of Responses
Demographics	913
Future Aspirations	299
Expectations of College	297
Use of Technology	299
Consumption of Media	285
Academic Dishonesty	290
Opinions	290

Since fewer students responded to each of the six sections, the error level for these sections is 7.5% for the 99% confidence interval.

Sample representativeness:

The following table, Table 2, shows the sample representativeness by student level and gender for MU (Elliott & Ellingworth, 1997).

Table 2: Sample Representativeness by Student Level and Gender for WS 2007

Group	Percent of Undergraduates at MU	Percent Responded to Survey	Over- or Under- Represented	P-Value
Freshmen	19%	25%	Over	0.00
Sophomore	24%	23%		0.61
Junior	25%	22%		0.10
Senior	33%	30%	Under	0.03
Male	48%	35%	Under	0.00
White	84%	86%		0.09

Freshmen were over-represented, while seniors and males were under-represented. It is important to be careful when generalizing the survey results to the population of MU undergraduates as the results may be biased due to the over-representation of freshmen and under-representation of seniors and males. Additionally, the low

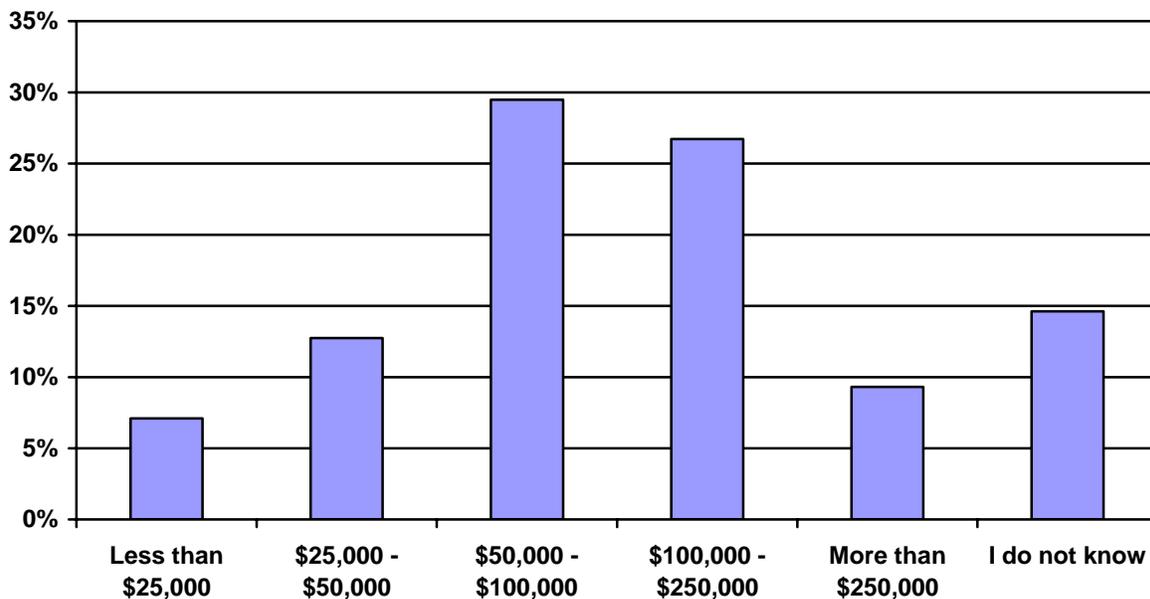
response rate (18%) indicates that the results may not be representative of the entire population (see Appendix A for more about response rates).

### Findings

#### Demographics:

- Almost all of respondents (96 %) attended MU full-time.
- A majority of respondents (65%) were female.
- Ninety-three percent of respondents were born in or between 1984 and 1988.
- Less than one percent of respondents were international students.
- Most students identified the most with being white (86%). Some students chose not to respond to the question concerning racial identity (2%). The next largest racial/ethnic group was African American (4%), followed by Asian (2%).
- One out of ten respondents speaks two or more languages fluently.
- In response to a question concerning sexual orientation, 2% of the responds chose "I prefer not to respond to this question", while 94% indicated they identified themselves as heterosexual.
- Just over one third of respondents indicated they were in a committed partnership.
- One out of ten respondents reported that they were first-generation college students.
- Over half of respondents' families earned between \$50,000 and \$250,000 a year. See Chart 1 for family's total yearly income.

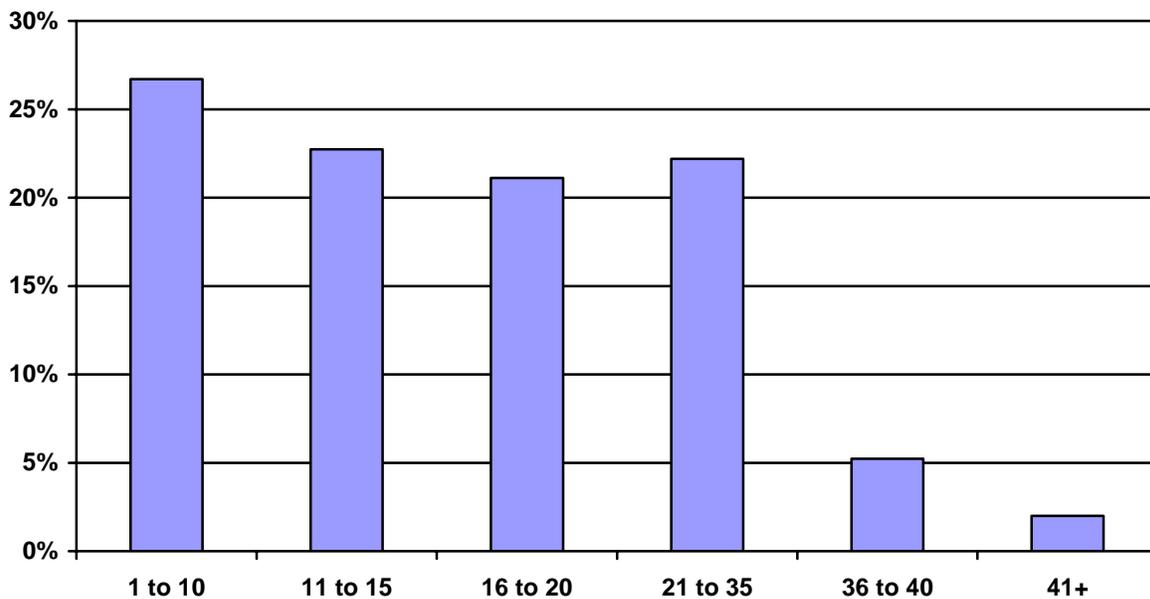
Chart 1: Percent of Students by Family Income, PACS, 2007



## Demographics (continued)

- The largest group of respondents (48%) lives off campus, alone or with friends and/or roommates.
- Sixty-four percent of respondents work for pay during the academic year. Of these respondents, 28% work more than one job, 49% work off campus, and 50% indicated that they have to work in order to pay for some/all of their school and personal expenses.
- See Chart 2 below for the total number of hours students work per week.

Chart 1: Percent of Working Respondents by Number of Hours Worked Each Week, PACS, 2007



- One-third of respondents communicate with their parents daily, while 47% indicated they communicate with their parents a few times per week.
- Most respondents discuss academics (37%) and their social life (31%) with their parents.
- Two-thirds of students have one or more credit cards in their name. Of those who carried debt, 12% had a credit card debt less than \$500. Ten percent indicated their credit card debt was greater than \$1000.
- Nine percent of the respondents transferred from another college. Forty-one percent of these respondents transferred from a two-year college while 59% transferred from a four-year institution.
- Five percent plan on transferring to another college.
- Fifteen percent of respondents have attended two colleges, including MU. Five percent have attended three or more.

### Future Aspirations:

- The largest percent of respondents (45%) plan on earning a Master's degree, followed by those who plan on earning a Bachelor's degree (31%).
- Plans immediately after graduation included getting a job (45%), attending graduate school (32%), traveling for a month or more (6%) and volunteering (5%).
- The two factors rated the highest for selecting a first full-time job were "Love for what you will be doing" (21%) and "Salary" (20%).
- During their first year of employment, most respondents (47%) expect to earn between \$20,000 and \$39,000 per year. The next largest group (29%) expects to earn between \$40,000 and \$59,999 per year.
- Over half of respondents did not know how long they expected to be with the company that first hires them.
- Most respondents (64%) expect that it will take four years to graduate. A sizable group (25%) expects to take five years to graduate.

### Expectations of College:

- Sixty-five percent of respondents applied to more than one college.
- For the majority (75%), MU was their first choice.
- The top five factors that respondents indicated as "Very important" or "Moderately important" when selecting a college were academic reputation (88%), choice of major (87%), campus location (79%), cost (71%), and campus size (63%).
- Parental influence was rated as "Very important" or "Moderately important" by 29% of respondents, and peer influence was important to 26% of respondents.
- Seventy-eight percent of respondents felt prepared for the academic demands at MU. Nineteen percent of respondents expected the coursework would be less difficult than they experienced.
- One fourth of students reported missing class "Sometimes" as opposed to 68% who miss class "Never" or "Rarely".
- Most respondents think they learn the most from class discussions (44%). The most common approach in respondents' courses overall is lectures (77%).
- Three out of four respondents reported communicating with faculty outside of class. The most common approach to communication with faculty outside of class is via e-mail (75%).

### Use of Technology:

- Over half of respondents indicated that they owned a laptop computer (82%), MP3 player (76%), Flash drive (71%), and/or a cell phone (96%).
- 3 out of 4 respondents send text-messages with their cell phone. Of those, 77% reported sending text messages "Occasionally" or "Frequently" during class.

## Use of Technology (continued)

- Over three-fourths of respondents used the internet more than five times per week to email or instant message. Participating in online social networks (such as Facebook, MySpace, and Friendster) is also popular among students as 71% used the internet for these purposes more than five times per week.
- Ninety-five percent of students have a profile on an online social network.
- Ninety-four percent report that they “Never” use the internet for online dating websites/services.
- Almost all (97%) of respondents had internet access where they live and the largest percent of students (43%) use it for 3-5 hours a day.
- Forty-seven percent of respondents felt college administrators looked at their online profile, whereas 67% felt that potential employers look at their online profile.
- Sixty-one percent think that they should be held accountable for actions depicted in posted photographs.
- All but one respondent reported using an electronic course-management system (Blackboard, WebCT, etc.).
- Thirty-one percent have used a website to rate a professor.
- Over half of respondents have two or more e-mail accounts.

## Consumption of Media:

- Over three-fourths of respondents feel that today’s media coverage of events influences their opinions “somewhat” or “a lot”.
- Seventy-three percent of respondents indicated that they stay current with national and international/world news, while only 58% stay current with local news.
- The most common source of national news for respondents was the internet (25%), followed by television (23%), and newspapers (20%).
- Respondents were the most interested in the following topics: Entertainment (20%), Politics (19%), Sports (15%), Science/health (15%), and Technology (11%).
- Forty-two percent of respondents read an online newspaper three or more times per week. Of all respondents, 15% read an online newspaper daily.
- Only 28% of respondents read a paper copy of a newspaper three or more times per week.
- Few respondents (17%) read the college newspaper.
- Sixty-nine percent of respondents watch two or less hours of television everyday. Over half indicated they watch television for both educational and entertainment purposes.
- Over half of respondents listen to the radio for less than an hour everyday, and over half read one to two magazines per month.

## Academic Dishonesty:

It is important to note that the questions in the survey did not distinguish between cheating at a time before college or cheating after students entered college. Thus, some of these responses reference incidents that may have occurred prior to attendance at MU.

- Almost all of respondents (99%) indicated that MU has a policy on academic dishonesty.
- Seventy-one percent of respondents learned about the policy in their courses or from a faculty member.
- Twenty-three percent of respondents indicated that they have cheated on an exam, paper, assignment, etc. However, 97% indicated that it was “Very unlikely” or “Somewhat unlikely” that they would cheat in the future.
- Of the 23% who indicated that they have cheated, 59% indicated that they cheated because they “wanted to get a good grade in the course”. Half indicated that it was “easy to cheat”, and just under a half (45%) indicated that they cheated in order to maintain their GPA.
- Over half of respondents (51%) did not know how to report cheating.
- A few respondents (2%) indicated that they had reported another student for cheating, while another 43% indicated that although they had not reported cheating, they were aware of it.
- Of those respondents who reported cheating, 71% indicated that the reason why was because “I did not want a student gaining an unfair advantage over me”. Additionally, 57% indicated the reason to be “It was the right/honest/ethical thing to do” and/or “I thought my professor needed to know”.
- Of those who were aware of cheating but did not report it, 68% felt that it was not their business and 45% thought that it was the responsibility of the professor to notice cheating. Additionally, 40% did not want to be responsible for the student’s punishment.
- Only 5% of respondents were “Somewhat likely” or “Very likely” to report cheating in the future.
- During exams, the largest percent of respondents (37%) admitted to using a calculator. This may have been permitted. 12% of respondents admitted to copying from another student during an exam, 12% admitted to using old, unauthorized exams to study for an exam, and 11% admitted to letting another student copy answers from them.
- When writing papers, 16% of respondents admitted to listing sources in a bibliography after only reading an abstract of the article and 13% admitted to summarizing from a source without citing. Twelve respondents (4%) admitted to writing a paper for someone else to submit.
- One third of respondents admitted reading the “cliff’s notes” rather than the actual work. Sixty-three respondents (23%) admitted to signing in another student’s name on an attendance sheet, while forty-five (16%) have asked another student to sign them in to a class or event that they did not attend.

## Academic Dishonesty (continued)

- Twenty-seven respondents (16%) indicated that they had created fake research data or lab results.

## Opinions:

- Nine out of ten students agreed (responded “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree”) that it is important for them to give back to their community.
- The majority of respondents (83%) agreed that they enjoy learning for the sake of learning.
- Almost all respondents (97%) agreed that they treat others with respect. However, only 30% agreed that people are generally treated the same.
- Almost a fourth of respondents (24%) disagreed (responded “Somewhat disagree” or “Strongly disagree”) with the statement “I believe that if you work hard enough, you can achieve the ‘American Dream’.” Sixty percent agreed with the statement.
- Seventy-three percent of respondents agreed they were concerned with social issues.
- Seventy-five percent disagreed with the statement, “I think people can live off of minimum wage.”
- Almost half of respondents (47%) agreed that the death penalty should be legal.
- An almost equal percent of respondents agreed (38%) and disagreed (36%) that affirmative action is no longer necessary. One fourth of respondents were “Neutral” on this issue.
- Ninety percent of respondents believe that racial discrimination still occurs in the US. Eighty-nine percent of white students agreed that racial discrimination still occurs in the US, while 94% of students from other racial/ethnic categories agreed.
- Eighty-six percent agree that gender discrimination still occurs in the US. Seventy-eight percent of men agreed, while ninety-one percent of women agreed.
- Over half of respondents (56%) disagreed with the statement, “I support the war in Iraq.”
- Eighty-two percent indicated they were concerned about the environment, while 62% indicated that they recycle on a regular basis.
- Just over half of respondents (53%) disagreed with the statement, “I believe abortion should be illegal.” Sixty-percent indicated they were pro-choice.
- Fifty-five percent of respondents indicated they pay close attention to national politicians, while 25% indicated they pay close attention to local politicians.
- Sixty-one percent of respondents agreed that same-sex couples should be allowed to marry, and 66% of respondents agreed that same-sex couples should be allowed to adopt children.
- Over three-fourths of respondents (77%) agreed that single mothers and fathers should be allowed to adopt children.

## Appendix A

### Response Rates and Response Bias

Studies which utilize surveys to collect data must rely on acceptable response rates in order to generalize their findings to the population from which the sample was drawn. In general, there is no agreed upon minimal acceptable response rate (Fowler, 2002). The federal Office of Management and Budget strives for a 75% response rate. Babbie (2004) defines a response rate of 50% to be adequate for analysis, a response rate of 60% as good, and a response rate of 70% as very good. Baruch (1999) found that in the educational sector the average response rate was 57.6% with a standard deviation of 15.9. The 18% response rate of this survey falls below two standard deviations away from the norm. However, Krosnick (1999) showed that a low response rate does not necessarily increase nonresponse error.

Response representativeness is a larger contributor to survey bias and nonresponse error than response rate. Therefore, when presenting the findings of this survey it is important to note the sample representativeness as shown in Table 2 on page 2.

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