

2011 Survey Of America's College Students

Conducted On Behalf Of:
The Panetta Institute For Public Policy

By Hart Research Associates

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Introduction

This report analyzes the findings of a survey among American college students conducted by Hart Research Associates for the Panetta Institute for Public Policy. Since 2001, the Panetta Institute has sponsored a yearly survey among U.S. college students that yields invaluable insights into their opinions. Because of the research's continuity and depth, it truly is one of the best barometers for measuring college students' attitudes. Hart Research is honored to have conducted this important research on behalf of the Panetta Institute, and we present the results in this summary of key findings.

The 2011 Panetta Institute survey explores a wide range of issues, including college students' feelings about President Obama and the country's direction, news consumption, and how closely college students are following the issues of the day, the state of the economy and students' job prospects, an assessment of the American Dream and how likely college students think they are to achieve it, and interest in public service. These are among the highlights of this year's study:

- Half (50%) of college students now believe that the country is off on the wrong track while 37% say the country is headed in the right direction. This marks a major negative shift in attitudes from last year, when a majority of college students believed that the country was headed in the right direction (53%) and 39% said the country was off on the wrong track.
- Improving the job situation remains the issue that is most important for college students personally—fully 57% cite this as one of the most important issues to them. Dealing with the costs of college education (42%) is a distant second.
- Students remain very pessimistic about the state of the nation's economy today, with only 15% rating it as good (no one rates the economy as excellent) and 85% saying the economy is not so good (62%) or poor (23%).
- One potential positive on the economic front is that three in five (61%) college students believe that the worst of the country's economic recession is behind us, while 35% feel that the worst remains ahead of us.
- When it comes to achieving the American Dream, more than three in five (64%) college students believe that it will be more difficult for people in their generation to achieve than it was for people in their parents' generation.
- But most college students remain optimistic that they will be able to achieve various aspects of the American Dream, including owning their own home (91% likely to do so or have already accomplished) and being able to retire and be financially comfortable (75%).

- President Obama continues to receive greater support from college students than from the rest of the country: 65% approve of his job performance, compared with 48% of the public in a recent survey among all adults.
- College students remain supportive of a more activist federal government. By 48% to 26% students believe that government should do more to solve problems and help meet the needs of people rather than that government is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals.
- However, by 62% to 36% students also would prefer that government focus more on reducing the budget deficit than on spending money to help improve the economy.
- College students continue to become more progressive in their attitudes on social issues, including increased support for abortion in all or most cases (67% up from 60% in 2010) and same-sex marriage (74% favor, up from 65% in 2010).
- Despite the challenging economic times and employment situation, college students remain confident in their ability to find a job that is acceptable to them after graduation—fully 70% are confident in this, which is an increase from 2010 (64%).
- Interest in working for government (47%, up from 42% in 2010) and working for a nonprofit community organization or foundation (42%, up from 37% in 2010) both have increased, and the proportion with an interest in working for government is at the highest level recorded in the Panetta Institute poll's history.
- College students continue to be satisfied with the education that they have received in college to prepare them for life after graduation (84%) and they believe that the education they receive is a good value for the cost (83%).
- Nearly two in five (39%) college students, however, report that they have taken an online class, and 76% of college students believe that an online class does not offer the same quality of teaching and learning opportunities that a classroom provides.

Methodology: In an effort to reach a fully representative sample of college students, the survey's methodology consists of interviews conducted by telephone and online. Hart Research interviewed 400 college students using traditional telephone interviewing based on list samples of college students at four-year higher-learning institutions nationwide. This list included a considerable number of cell phone numbers; we reached more than half the telephone respondents on their cell phone. In addition, Hart Research contracted with an online survey vendor to administer an identical survey to a sample of people currently enrolled in some type of post-secondary institution drawn from the vendor's multi-million-member respondent panel. In the online survey, screening questions limited participation to

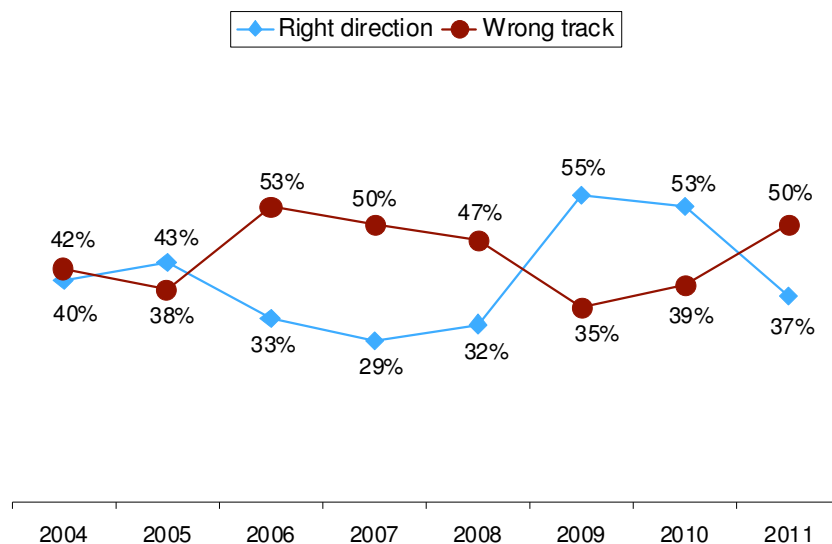
students enrolled in a four-year higher-learning institution. A total of 400 interviews were completed online, for a total combined sample of 800 college students. All interviews, whether by phone or online, were conducted from March 30 to April 4, 2011. Some demographics were weighted in each sample to achieve representative samples of four-year college students nationwide. The margin of error is ± 3.5 percentage points for the overall sample and is higher for specific subgroups.

State Of The Nation And The Issue Agenda

One of the most striking results in this year's survey is the staggering negative shift in students' feelings toward the direction the country is heading. Fully half (50%) of students say that things are off on the wrong track, while only 37% say things are heading in the right direction. Just one year ago, students felt that things were heading in the right direction by 53% to 39%. The 27-point change in margin from 2010 is striking, especially when you look at which groups are driving that change. Democrats and independents are among the groups that changed the most (40-point shift), while Republicans' views have not changed that much since previous years (only a six-point shift). Other members of the Democratic coalition in 2008 also show big negative shifts: African Americans (97-point shift), liberals (51-point shift), Democrats, and independents (40-point shifts) all soured drastically on the direction of the country. Interestingly, however, as discussed later in this report, while students have turned on the direction of the country, they remain strongly supportive of President Obama.

Historically, college students have been much more optimistic about the country's direction than their adult peers. Comparing the results of the Panetta Institute survey among college students with those of the NBC/WSJ polling among all adults, we find that when the country was divided (43% right track, 43% wrong direction) in 2009, a majority of students believed that the country was headed on the right track (55% right track, 35% wrong direction). As the public turned in 2010 (34%, 56%), students remained positive by 53% to 39%. Now, as the public is extremely negative (28% to 63%), even students have begun to turn, as half of them now see the country as being off on the wrong track (37%, 50%).

Direction Of The Nation



As with the current direction of the country, college students are becoming less optimistic about the future of the country, as 65% say they are more uncertain and concerned while just 32% say they are more confident and secure. Here again we see a shift in feelings since last year, when a slimmer majority (56%) said they were uncertain, and more (41%) students said they were hopeful. Underclassmen are more confident and secure (38%) than are their upperclassmen colleagues (27%). Business majors (72%) are more uncertain and concerned than are other college students.

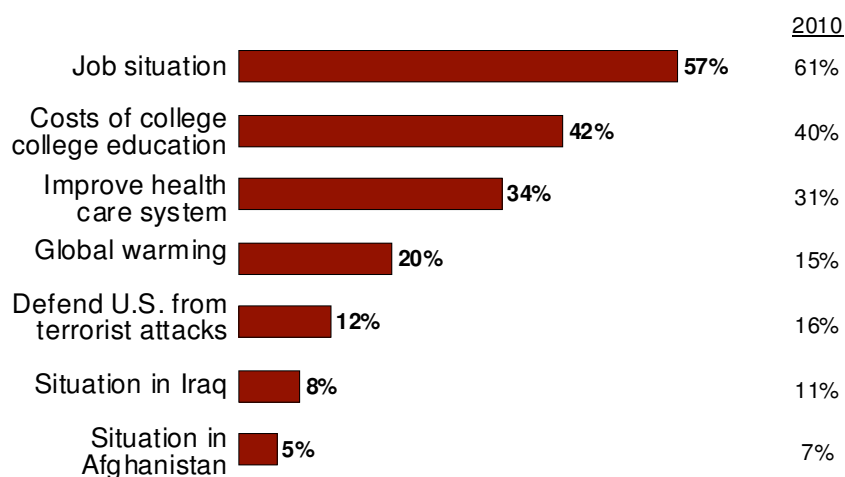
College Students' Issue Agenda

Students continue to focus on domestic issues that face their generation, focusing on jobs, the cost of education, and health care. When asked to consider the problems their generation will face, a majority (57%) of college students say the problems will be national in scope rather than international (39%). This actually shows a slight rise in focus on international issues from last year (33%). Not only are college students closely following the recent uprisings in the Arab world and Japan's earthquake and tsunami, but their views also seem to have been effected by these events. The earthquake and tsunami in Japan (88% following very/fairly closely) and the uprisings in Egypt, Libya, and other Arab countries (73%) are the top two stories in the news that students have followed in the past semester.

When asked to identify the specific issues that are most important to them personally, students ranked improving the job situation above all other concerns. A majority (57%) ranked improving the job situation first, and while that was a slight decline from last year (61%), it still ranks above any other issue. Dealing with the costs of a college education (42%) and improving the health care system (34%) also ranked high for students, as they have in past years. It is worth noting that improving the health care system actually has become more important to college students, despite passage of the health care reform law.

College Students' Issue Agenda

One or Two Issues Selected as Most Important



Seniors rank improving the job situation the highest (62%), followed by improving the health care system (49%). Improving the health care system is much more top of mind among seniors than among college students overall (34%). Republican students rank jobs as their top issue (61%), followed by the cost of education (36%). They rank defending the country from future terror attacks (29%) at the same level as improving the health care system (28%). This compares with Democrats, among whom 54% rate the job situation at the top of their list, followed by the cost of education (43%) and improving the health care system (40%). Only 5% of Democratic students (and 9% of independents) say defending the country from future terror attacks is one of the two top issues that are most important to them personally.

News Attentiveness

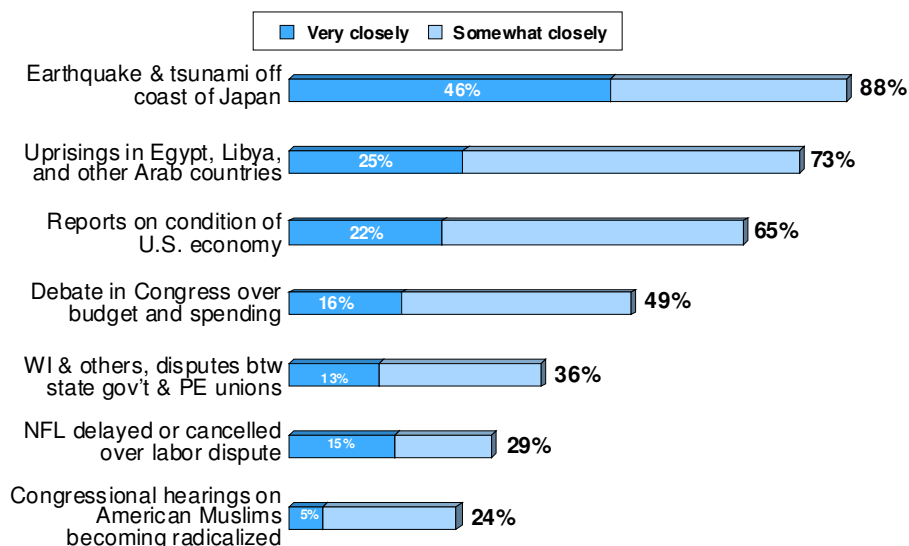
College students have been closely following a wide variety of current news stories, particularly the earthquake and tsunami in Japan and the uprisings in the Middle East. Fully 88% of students say they have followed the events in Japan over the past semester, including 46% who have been doing so very closely. This finding mirrors very closely the 85% of adults nationwide who said in a recent survey by the Pew Research Center that they have been following the events in Japan. The uprisings in Egypt, Libya, and other Arab countries also have held students' attention, as 73% say they are following these events.

Sixty-five percent (65%) of college students say they are following reports about the condition of the U.S. economy. Seniors report the most interest in the economic stories, as 73% are following them, compared with only 63% of all other college students. Not surprisingly, business majors are following the economy more closely than other majors (85%, compared with 61%).

Forty-nine percent of all students are following the Congressional debate on the budget and spending, however upper classmen (53%) show more interest in this issue than do their under-classmen cohorts (45%). While 36% of all students are following the disputes in Wisconsin and other states between state governments and public employee unions, interest varies significantly by partisanship—42% of college Democrats and only 29% of Republican have followed the story.

While results among college students mirror results among adults nationwide on the tragedies in Japan (88% college students, 85% national adults) and reports on the U.S. economy (65%, 68%), major differences exist on following other recent news stories. Forty percent of Americans have followed the Congressional hearings about some American Muslims becoming radicalized and joining terrorist organizations, but only 24% of college students followed this story. A similar gap emerges when it comes to the labor disputes in Wisconsin and other states (56% of adults; 36% of students).

Following News Stories



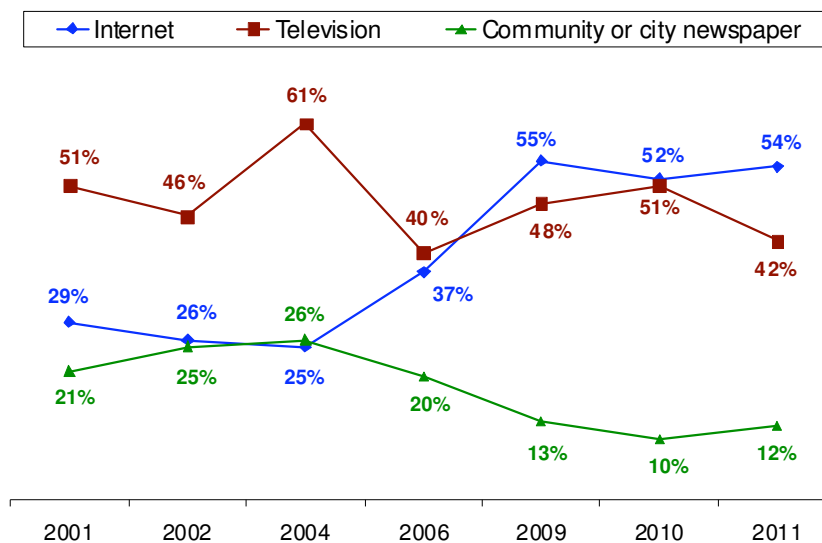
The way in which college students receive their news also has changed over the past few years. A majority (54%) say that they get most of their information about politics and civic affairs from Internet news Web sites, a consistent proportion since 2009. The biggest change in recent years is the decreasing proportion of students who get their news from television, as only 42% of students mention that medium this year, compared with 51% in 2010. This is one of the lowest proportions we have recorded in our 10-year trend on this question, down from a high of 61% in 2004. This year's results do, however, offer some potential good news for the newspaper business: since 2004, the Panetta Institute survey has tracked a steady decline in the proportion of college students who turn to community or city newspapers—from 26% in 2004 down to just 10% in last year's survey, with declines every year. While not necessarily a bump, newspapers have at least stemmed the tide a bit, with 12% of college students now reporting that they turn to

Sources Of Information About Politics And Civic Affairs

	<u>Internet</u> %	<u>Television</u> %
All students	54	42
Democrats	59	42
Independents	57	38
Republicans	45	45
Liberals	60	41
Moderates	57	43
Conservatives	43	46
Northeast	57	43
South	50	49
Midwest	52	44
West	60	31

newspapers for their news.

Source of Information on Politics and Civic Affairs



Strong majorities of Democrats (59%), independents (57%), liberals (60%), and moderates (57%) say that the Internet is their greatest information source, while Republicans and conservatives rate the Internet much lower and at the same level as television. Republicans and conservatives alike rate family or friends as a strong source of information (43% and 41% respectively), much more so than Democrats (26%), independents (25%), liberals (26%), and moderates (29%). Students living in the West rely more heavily on the Internet and less on television (60%, 31%) than do students in any other area.

Health Care

Students' feelings toward the health care bill remain the same as last year, when we measured students' views immediately following the passage of President Obama's health care reform law. They continue to support the health care law and do not accept the idea of repealing it now. Three in five (59%) students say that it was a good thing that Congress passed the bill, while only 35% say it was a bad thing. Moving forward, a majority (55%) of students favor keeping the new health care law, including 30% who say they feel that way strongly. Just under two in five

(38%) students think we should repeal the law, including 25% who feel that way strongly.

Divided partisan attitudes remain intact from last year, showing little change among solidified opinions. More than four in five (83%) Democrats say that Congress's passing the health care bill was a good thing, and a similar 80% also favor keeping the bill rather than repealing it. Republicans, however, reject the bill with 72% to 23% saying it was bad of Congress to pass it, and they favor repealing it by 59 points (76% to 17%). While independents are not as divided, they support the health care reform law: a majority (54%) say it was a good thing the bill passed, and they favor keeping the bill rather than repealing it by 14 points (50% to 36%).

Major differences in opinion exist on the health care bill among certain key subgroups. Race is a strong determining factor, as only 51% of whites say it was a good thing to pass the health care bill, compared with 68% of Hispanics and 86% of African Americans. Similarly, whites are divided over keeping or repealing the bill (47% to 45%), as Hispanics (68% to 26%) and African Americans (80% to 16%) favor keeping the bill by large margins.

Significant regional attitudinal differences toward the health care bill also exist. Northeasterners feel the most favorable toward the health care bill, as 71% say it was good that it passed, compared with 59% in the Midwest, 57% in the West, and 53% in the South. By 64% to 29% students in the Northeast want it to remain law instead of repealing it. Students in the South (51% to 41% keep law) and Midwest (50% to 41% keep law) are not as strong in their support.

A majority (51%) of business majors say it was a bad thing that the bill passed, and they are divided over keeping or repealing the law (50% keep, 48% repeal). Students in all other majors believe it is a good thing that the bill passed and support keeping it by at least 14 points.

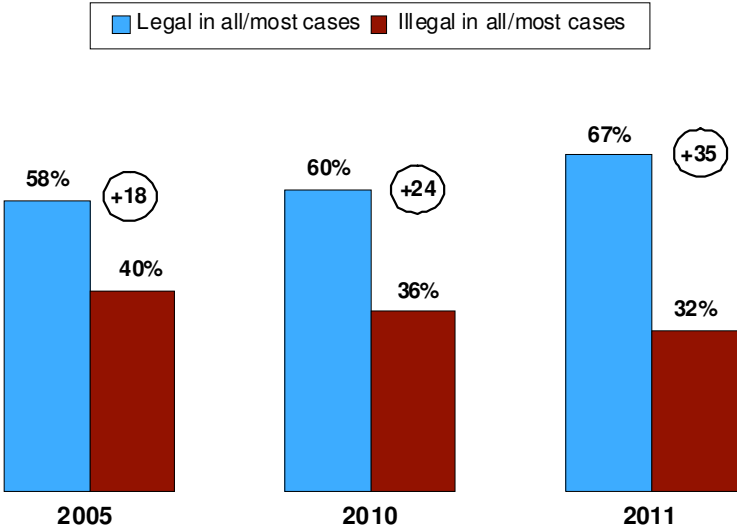
Abortion

The historical data shows that students are becoming more supportive of abortion in all or most cases. Fully two in three (67%) college students now believe that abortion should be legal in all or most cases, which is up from 58% in 2005. One in three (32%) college students think abortion should be illegal in all or most cases, and one in 10 (10%) says it should be illegal in all cases. This marks a seven-point increase from last year's 60% who supported abortion, and the trend line indicates a strong movement toward choice among college students.

A lot of change has occurred among Republican students, as support for abortion rose from 28% last year to 40% this year, including 13% who now say it should be legal in all cases. Democrats (82%) and independents (66%) remain strongly supportive of allowing abortion in all or most cases.

There is no gender gap on abortion, as 66% of men and 67% of women want abortions to be legal. Among those who attend religious services once a month or more, a small majority (54%) say they want abortions to be illegal, while 45% say they want legal abortions, including 14% who say legal in all cases. The South is the least pro-choice region of the country, but still 61% say they want abortions to be legal there.

Position On Abortion

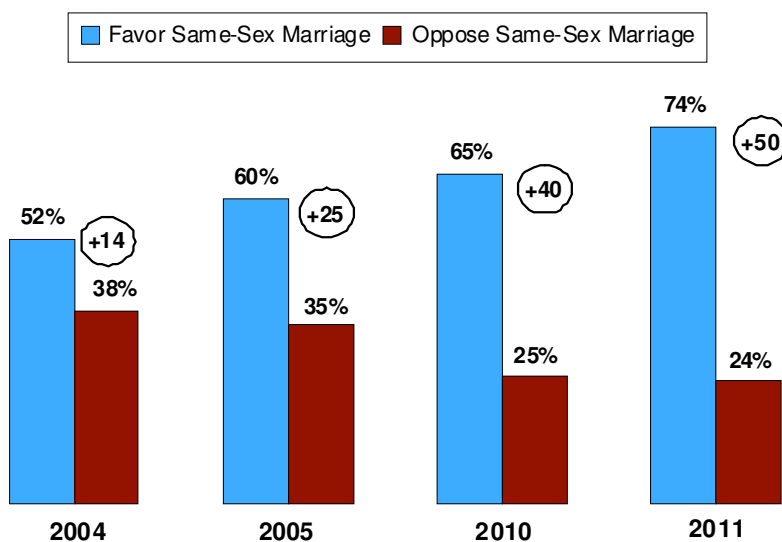


Gay Rights

Perhaps one of the best examples of college students' shift toward a more socially liberal viewpoint is the change in support for same-sex marriage over the past few years. When we first measured this in 2004, students supported same-sex marriage by 52% to 38%. Now, students favor same-sex marriage by 74% to 24%, with a majority (53%) saying they support it strongly. Support for same-sex marriage is now at the highest level recorded in the Panetta Institute poll.

There is near consensus support among Democrats (88% favor, 72% strongly) and strong support for same-sex marriage among independents (75% favor, 22% oppose). Republicans, who are now narrowly opposed (48% favor, 52% oppose), have shown a marked attitudinal change since 2004, when they overwhelmingly opposed same-sex marriage (29% favor, 67% oppose).

Views Of Same-Sex Marriage



Another gay rights issue addressed in the past year is allowing gay men and women to serve openly in the military, which students largely favor (69%). Another 27% say they favor allowing them to serve under the "don't ask don't tell" policy. Only 4% say they oppose any service by gay men and women in the military.

Four in five Democrats (80%) favor open service, as do 71% of independents. Among Republicans, a plurality (49%) favor open service, while a

sizable proportion (44%) favors “don’t ask don’t tell”. Even among Republicans, only 7% say that they oppose any service. African Americans favor open service (57%) less strongly than do whites and Hispanics, but they do give “don’t ask don’t tell” significant support (40%).

Labor Issues

A majority of college students are favorable toward labor unions, although there is weak intensity on either side. By 56% to 25%, students feel favorable toward labor unions, but only 11% are very favorable whereas 6% are very unfavorable. A recent Pew Research Center survey showed that all adults were 47% favorable, and 39% unfavorable—making college students more positive toward unions than their adult counterparts.

Fully 70% of Democrats are favorable toward labor unions, as are about half (51%) of independents.

College Republicans are more mixed in their views on labor unions, as they feel only narrowly unfavorable toward them (43% to 37%).

As with adults, white college students are much less favorable than Hispanics or African Americans. In addition, the Northeast and West provide the most favorable attitudes toward labor unions, contrasting less favorable views of labor unions in the South and Midwest.

When asked about specific labor issues that have been in the news, students believe in the collective bargaining rights for unionized employees who work for state and local governments over health care, pensions, and other benefits. Eighty-four percent of students say they want public employees to have the same collective bargaining rights as employees in the private sector; this belief cuts across partisan lines, as majorities of Democrats (91%), independents (84%), and Republicans (73%) all support this right for public employees.

Feelings Toward Labor Unions		
	Favorable	Unfavorable
	%	%
All students	56	25
Whites	53	28
Hispanics	68	22
African Americans	62	15
Asians	58	25
Democrats	70	15
Independents	51	25
Republicans	37	43
Northeast	62	21
South	52	29
Midwest	52	26
West	62	23

Middle East

Recent events in the Middle East have both sparked interest and gained the attention of college students over the past semester, and they have raised doubts about the need for American involvement. Nearly three-quarters (73%) say they are following the uprisings in Egypt, Libya, and other Arab countries. Their interest in these stories has given them definite opinions about what is happening and what they believe the outcomes of these events will be.

Students are divided on the current U.S. military actions in Libya, as 45% say they approve and 44% disapprove. This is less supportive than the country at large, as measured in a Gallup survey in March (47% approve, 37% disapprove). Moreover, a majority (60%) of students say that the United States does not have a responsibility to do something about the fighting in Libya between government forces and anti-government groups, with only 36% saying the United States does have a responsibility.

While attitudes on the U.S. government's responsibility to do something remain fairly uniform across demographic groups, including partisanship, gender, race, and region, approval of America's effort is mixed. Men approve of the current military action by eight points (49% approve, 41% disapprove), while women disapprove by six points (41%, 47%). Whites narrowly approve (47% to 42%), while Hispanics (36%, 48%) and African Americans (42%, 49%) disapprove. Regionally, college students in the Northeast are most supportive of the efforts in Libya (53%, 39%), while college students in the South (43%, 45%) and West (45%, 44%) are divided, and Midwesterners disapprove (40% to 48%).

Looking to the future, students also are divided on whether the current events in Egypt and protests in other Arab countries will increase or decrease the chances for peace and stability in the region. A plurality say it will not make much difference either way (34%), while 32% say it will increase the chances for peace and stability in the region, and 30% say it will decrease the chances. A recent NBC/WSJ survey found that adults nationwide similarly are divided in their opinions.

Attitudes toward the chances for peace and stability vary significantly by partisanship. A plurality (40%) of Democrats say it will increase the chances, while only 33% of independents and 16% of Republicans feel similarly.

Iraq And Afghanistan

Attitudes toward the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan remained mostly unchanged from last year's survey, though in both instances, college students are somewhat more pessimistic in their assessments than they were last year. A majority of students think that the wars in both countries have been unsuccessful. Fifty-five percent of students say that the war in Afghanistan against the Taliban and Al Qaeda has been unsuccessful, while 44% say that it has been successful. This compares to last year, when 51% of college students said the war had been unsuccessful and 47% said successful. The war in Iraq is seen even more negatively, as 65% say it is unsuccessful, up from 57% in 2010. One in three (34%) college students think the war in Iraq has been successful.

Partisanship plays a heavy role in opinions on these conflicts, as Democrats see both as unsuccessful and Republicans think the opposite, with independents seeing them as unsuccessful, but with much less intensity. Two-thirds of Democrats (67%) say the war in Afghanistan has been unsuccessful. As for the war in Iraq, overall 74% of Democrats say it has been unsuccessful, and more Democrats say it has been *very* unsuccessful (37%) than say it has been very or somewhat successful (24%). Republicans see successful wars in both Afghanistan (65% success) and Iraq (53%). Independents see the war in Afghanistan as unsuccessful (55% to 44%) and the war in Iraq as even more unsuccessful (66% to 31%).

A significant gender gap also exists on attitudes toward these two wars, as men are much more positive than women, particularly on Afghanistan. Men see Afghanistan as successful (53% to 46%) and Iraq as unsuccessful (41% to 59%). Women, on the other hand, see Afghanistan (37% to 62%) and Iraq (37% to 62%) as equally unsuccessful.

Importantly, this year's Panetta Institute survey was conducted prior to the killing of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan. While we have no way of knowing for sure how this momentous event may have changed attitudes among college students toward the war in Afghanistan, based on polling data among adults nationally, it does stand to reason that attitudes about the war in Afghanistan have improved significantly, if not dramatically, among college students. Among adults nationally, the President's job rating and overall direction of the country have also received

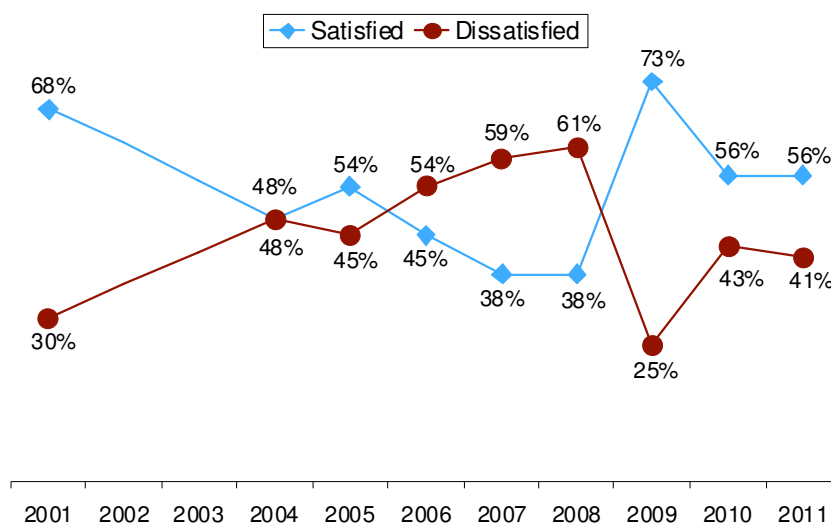
significant improvements, though it is unclear how deep and lasting this movement will be.

Attitudes Toward Government

College students remain largely satisfied with the country's political leadership and continue to prefer an activist government that does more, rather than leave things to business and individuals. They would, however, rather see the federal government work to reduce the budget deficit than spend money to help the economy.

A majority of college students remain satisfied with the quality of the country's political leadership. Fully 56% say they are satisfied with the country's political leadership while 41% are dissatisfied. This is a decline from the 73% high-water mark after President Obama took office, but unchanged from last year's survey (also 56%). Majorities of Democrats (72%) and independents are satisfied (54%), while seven in 10 (70%) Republicans report being dissatisfied with the country's political leadership. Women (60%) also are generally more satisfied with the nation's political leadership than are men (51%).

Satisfaction With The Country's Political Leadership



College students are largely a Democratic-leaning group, but on campuses

across the country the Tea Party has attracted a significant proportion of college students that identify with the movement. One in six (16%) college students is a supporter of the Tea Party compared with 29% of adults overall in a recent NBC/WSJ survey. Among college students, Tea Party support is more likely to be found among conservatives (37%), Republicans (33%), and business majors (24%).

To get a general sense of how involved college students want government to be, we asked whether they want government to do more to solve problems and help meet the needs of people or whether they believe that government is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals. By 22 points (48% to 26%) college students prefer that government do more rather than leave things to businesses and individuals, with one in four (25%) students wanting government to do both. This differential (a 22-point preference for government doing more) is virtually unchanged from last year's survey (21 points). There are significant partisan breaks on government's role, with Democrats being more likely than Republicans to support a more activist government. While students are strongly in support of more government action, adults are much more divided between the government doing more (51%) and less (46%).

Government's Role			
	<u>Do More</u>	<u>Doing Too Much</u>	<u>Both</u>
	%	%	%
All students	48	26	25
Democrats	62	11	26
Independents	49	26	24
Republicans	22	50	27

While college students want government to do more, by 62% to 36% they also would rather see the federal government reduce the budget deficit than spend to help the economy recover. Given students' preference for an activist government, this is a pretty surprising finding, and it underscores how much the current budget debate in Congress is coloring attitudes at this time. Consider that about half (49%) of students report following the debate in Congress over the budget and spending very (16%) or fairly (33%) closely. Even a majority (54%) of Democrats prefer that government reduce the budget deficit rather than spend to help the economy recover (44%). And attitudes among independents (33%

spending to help the economy recover, 64% reduce budget deficit) and Republicans (24%, 74%) are even more one-sided in favor of reducing the budget deficit. White college students are firmly on the side of reducing the budget deficit (31%, 67%), as are Hispanics (42%, 58%), while African Americans (50%, 45%) and Asians (51%, 48%) have more mixed feelings.

When it comes to the debate in Congress, college students are clear in their preference that both parties compromise to reach agreement (76%) rather than stand up for their principles (21%). Majorities across the political spectrum share this viewpoint, including Democrats (81%), independents (76%), and Republicans (66%). Even a majority (61%) of Tea Party supporters, who have earned a reputation for refusing to compromise, favor compromise over standing up for principles.

We also asked college students which value is more important in our country—the value of community and looking out for each other or the value of individual responsibility and self-reliance. In all three Panetta Institute surveys where this question has been asked (2002, 2006, and 2011) a majority of college students cite community as a more important value. In this year’s survey, 57% say community, the highest proportion that the Panetta Institute poll has recorded, and 40% believe individual responsibility to be more important. A number of demographic differences in attitudes exist on which value is more important, with

	Community Or Individual Responsibility?	
	Community	Individual Responsibility
	%	%
All students	57	40
Public school	59	38
Private school	51	45
Social sciences	62	35
Humanities	47	46
Science/math/CS	58	39
Business	50	44
Democrats	68	30
Independents	54	39
Republicans	41	57

Democrats and students from families with below-average household incomes more likely to say that community is a more important value than individual responsibility. College students attending a public school also are more likely than private school students to select community over individual responsibility.

Barack Obama

Attitudes toward Barack Obama hold steady from 2010 and most college students still believe that Barack Obama is doing what they expected he would.

Today, the President's job approval rating is 65%, with 31% disapproving. In 2009, that margin was 66% approve and 30% disapprove. And during the early honeymoon period of his presidency, fully 75% of college students approved of his job performance. Young Americans, and particularly college students, remain a bastion of support for the President. Consider that Barack Obama's approval rating in a recent NBC/WSJ survey among all adults was 48% compared with the 65% that he receives in this year's Panetta Institute survey among college students. That having been said, even among college students, support for the President is far from uniform; partisan, racial, and regional variations emerge that also exist among all adults.

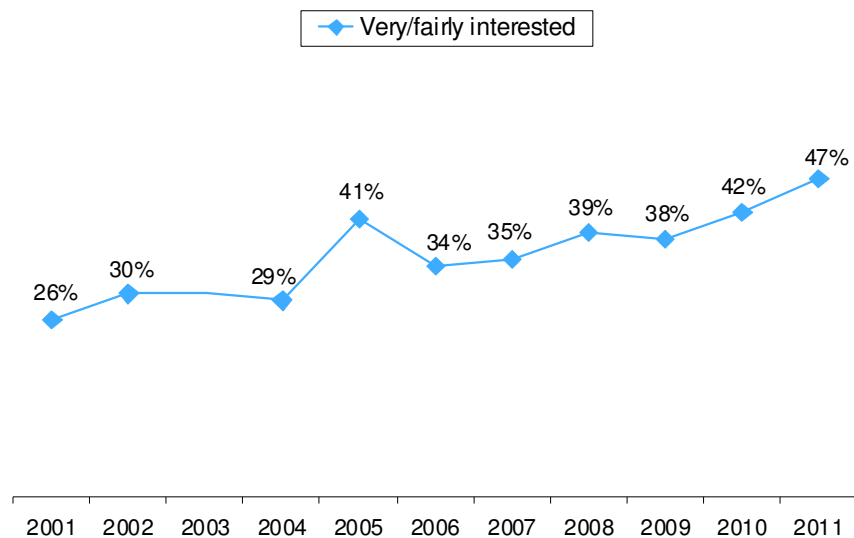
President Obama's Job Rating		
	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
All students	65	31
Democrats	88	9
Independents	64	28
Republicans	26	70
Whites	57	38
Hispanics	73	24
African Americans	91	5
Asians	71	25
Northeast	71	24
South	58	37
Midwest	67	30
West	68	28

Two in three (67%) college students say that President Obama is living up to the expectations that they had for him when he took office, with 23% saying he is doing worse than they expected, and 9% saying that he is surpassing their expectations. This result is unchanged from last year's survey. And this is one instance of partisan agreement on the President's performance. While partisan expectations for the President undoubtedly are set at differing levels, Democrats (67%), independents (67%), and Republicans (66%) all agree that the President has met their expectations.

Public And Community Service

Interest in working in public service, particularly in government and for a nonprofit, continues to increase. However, interest in running for elected office, both federal and state or local, remains unchanged from recent survey data and men are much more likely than women to say they are interested in pursuing a run for office. Compared with last year's survey, more college students report that they have been asked by someone to get involved in politics or public service; and a large majority of college students say they have become active in their community during their time in college.

Interest In Working For Government



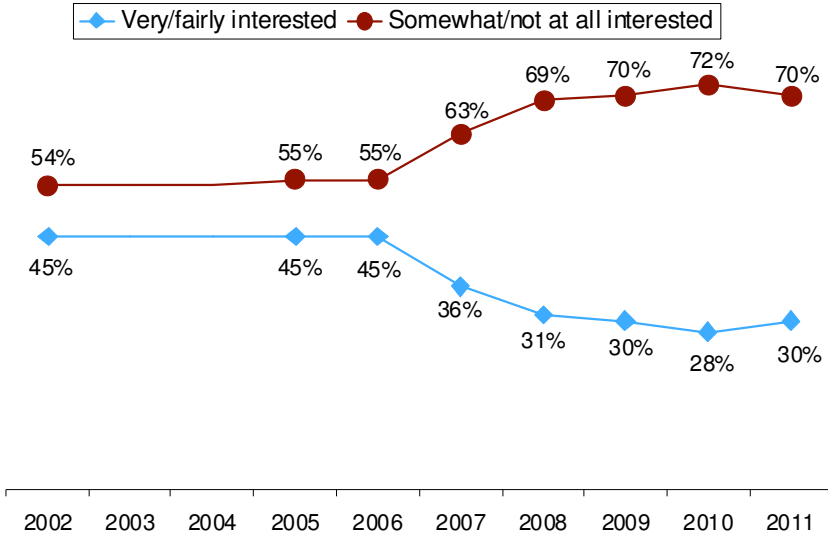
Fully 47% of college students report that they are either very (20%) or fairly (27%) interested in working for government. This marks the highest interest in working for government that we have recorded since we first asked about it in 2001. The previous high (42%) was recorded last year. Seniors (52%) and those majoring in social sciences (56%) are among the most interested in working for government, while freshmen (38%) and those majoring in humanities (37%) are at the lower end of the spectrum. Men (53%) are more likely to have high interest in working for government than women (42%). And Democrats (51%) have more

interest in working for government than independents (42%) and Republicans (43%).

Interest in working for a nonprofit community organization or foundation also has increased over the past few years and is near an all-time high, with 42% of college students expressing high interest in this job or career. The highest interest in working for a nonprofit was recorded in 2006 (43%). Interest has increased from 34% in 2009 to 37% last year to 42% today. Social sciences majors (61%) are much more likely than other college students to have high interest in working for a nonprofit, and African Americans (57%) also are more likely to have high interest than other college students. Those with a below-average family income (50%) also are more likely than those with an average (42%) or above-average family income (38%) to be interested in working for a nonprofit. And as is the case for working for government, Democrats (49%) also are more likely than independents (38%) and Republicans (36%) to be interested in working for a nonprofit.

Three in 10 (30%) college students say they are very (13%) or fairly (17%) interested in teaching in a public school. This proportion has held steady in recent years. There is significant variation by major, as those majoring in social sciences (40%) and humanities (37%) are significantly more interested in teaching than are those business (19%) or science, math, or computer science (25%) majors. Upperclassmen, both seniors (32%) and juniors (32%) are somewhat more interested in teaching than are sophomores (26%) and freshmen (25%). And college students who attend a school with 5,000 students or less (38%) are more likely than college students overall to be interested in teaching.

Interest In Teaching In A Public School



Interest in serving in the military continues to remain very stable, with 11% saying they are very (5%) or fairly (6%) interested in pursuing a career in the military. Going back to 2005, this proportion has stayed at approximately one in 10 college students.

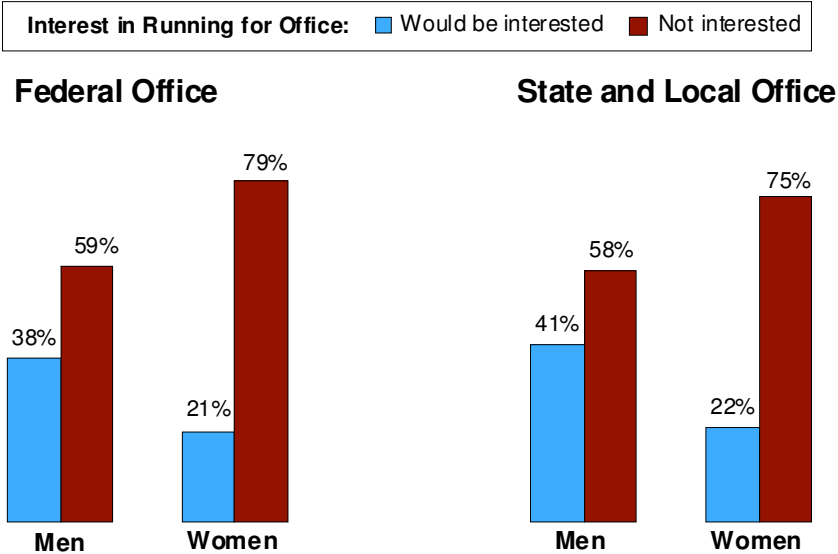
Nearly three in 10 (29%) college students are interested in running for a federal elected office such as Member of Congress or senator. This proportion is up from 26% in 2010 and has remained around three in 10 since 2001. And a nearly equal proportion (30%) of college students say they are interested in running for a local or state elected office such as city council member or state

Interest In Running For Office (Proportion who say they would be interested)		
	Federal	Local/State
	%	%
All students	29	30
Social sciences	29	42
Humanities	25	47
Science/math/CS	28	32
Business	39	32
Freshmen	22	29
Sophomores	23	37
Juniors	37	37
Seniors	36	38
Democrats	34	41
Independents	27	36
Republicans	27	25
Men	38	41
Women	21	22

legislator. The results for interest in running for local office have varied since 2005, ranging from 47% in 2005 to 25% in 2008. When it comes to running for both federal and local/state office, upperclassmen generally are more interested, as are Democrats. As we have found in previous surveys, there also is a very significant

and concerning gender gap, with men being much more interested in running for office than women.

Gender Gap On Running For Office



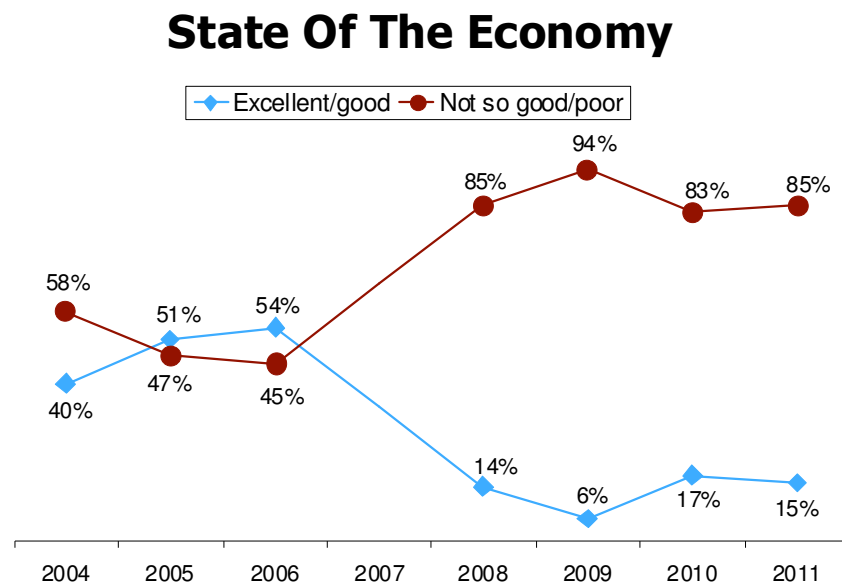
Roughly one in three (35%) college students has considered pursuing a post-graduation service-oriented experience, such as Teach for America, VISTA, or AmeriCorps. This proportion has remained essentially unchanged since we started tracking this question in 2007. As with interest in working for government, freshmen are less interested (29%) than sophomores (37%), juniors (37%), or seniors (38%). Democrats (41%) also are more interested in pursuing a service-oriented experience upon graduation than are independents (36%) or Republicans (25%). And those majoring in humanities (47%) and social sciences (42%) are more likely to have considered this.

Nearly half (49%) of college students report that during their time in high school or college someone spoke to them about getting involved in politics or public service. This marks an increase from last year, when 44% said this was the case, but still it is a decline from 59% recorded in 2007. It is difficult to know which is the cause and which is the effect, but among those who are very interested in working for government, 58% say that someone spoke to them about getting involved in politics or public service. And more than seven in 10 (73%) college students report that during their time in college they have been involved in

activities to help the local community, such as volunteering their time or helping to solve a local community problem. And it appears that students are being engaged early, as even 68% of freshmen say this is the case.

The Economy And Employment Outlook

While college students have soured dramatically on the state of the nation, they remain hopeful about their own futures and believe they will be able to achieve the American Dream. Their outlook on the job market after they graduate also is improving slowly, as they feel more confident in their ability to find acceptable work.



Students' feelings toward the nation's economy remain very poor, as has been the trend since 2008. Only 15% say that the economy is good these days (with no students saying excellent), and a resounding 85% saying it is not so good or poor. Interestingly, business majors, those who presumably study the economy the most, give it a higher rating than other areas of study, even though they still are very negative toward the status of the economy (23% excellent or good, 77% not so good or poor).

One potential ray of light in these dark economic times is that three in five (61%) students say that the worst of the economic recession is behind us, while only 35% think the worst is yet to come. This result mirrors the feelings among adults in a November 2010 NBC/WSJ survey (60% worst behind us, 35% worst is yet to come). Democrats are more likely to feel that the worst is behind us (69%), while a slimmer majority of independents and Republicans agree (55% and 52%). Students who say they support the Tea Party, as well as those who say they voted for John McCain in 2008, are more likely than college students overall to feel that the worst is yet to come (49% and 47% respectively). Men are more optimistic that the country has cleared the worst of the recession (65%), compared with women (57%). Regionally, college students in the Northeast believe strongly that the worst is behind us (70%), while a smaller majority in the South believes the same (55%). Midwesterners (64%) and Westerners (58%) fall somewhere in between.

Students' optimism extends to their future socioeconomic class status. A plurality predict they will be middle class (44%), followed by the upper- or upper-middle class (42%). Only 14% say they will be below the middle class. While only 30% identify their current family's socioeconomic status as upper or upper-middle class now, 42% say they will be in that category in the future. This 12-point increase shows that although economic times are tough now, students are confident in their ability to succeed and move up the socioeconomic ladder. Of the students who currently claim to be in the middle class, 30% think they will be in the upper or upper-middle class, and 64% think they will stay in the middle class. Even those already in higher classes think they can continue to be at the top, as 73% of upper and upper-middle class students think they will stay there, while only 26% expect to be in the middle class, and 1% say below the middle class. Finally, in a display of economic optimism, only 11% of students think their social standing will decrease.

The American Dream

The impact of students' economic anxieties is seen clearly in their attitudes toward the American Dream. Students believe that the American Dream will be more difficult for them to achieve than it was for their parents' generation, but they have ambition to and are confident that they will own a home, get married, and have children.

When asked whether their generation will have an easier or more difficult time achieving the American Dream compared with their parents' generation, nearly two-thirds (64%) say that it will be more difficult, while only 14% say it will be easier. Another 21% say that the challenge of achieving the American Dream will be about the same as it was for their parents' generation. These results are very similar to the opinions students shared in 2008, when 58% said it would be more difficult, and 14% said it would be easier to achieve the American Dream.

This survey also discusses specific aspects of the American Dream and asks students to rate whether they want to accomplish each goal (and whether they think they are likely to do so). Owning their own home, getting married, and having children, all goals typically considered a part of the basic American Dream, rise to the top for students. Fully 88% say they want to and think they are likely to own their own home. Similarly, 82% and 79%, respectively, say they want to and expect to get married and have children. Although gender stereotypes might predict otherwise, men actually are more interested than women in having children (92%, 82%) and getting married (85%, 80%).

When it comes to being able to retire and be financially comfortable, a nearly universal 97% want to accomplish this goal, but more than one in five (22%) college students believes that they are unlikely to accomplish this. Humanities majors are the most worried about retiring comfortably, as 30% say they do not think they are likely to do so; business majors, on the other hand, are the most confident, with only 9% predicting that they will be unlikely to retire with financial security. As expected, students' self-reported income levels play a role, as those who identify as having below-average family incomes are more concerned (30%) than students with average (24%) or above-average family incomes (17%).

More than three in four (77%) students want to be involved in their community. Among social sciences majors, this goal is tied for the top item they

want to or already have accomplished (90% total). While men and women both want to be involved in their communities, women are more confident that they are likely to accomplish that goal (70% vs. 60%).

The one goal for which the desire to attain is not nearly universal is having a strong religious or spiritual connection. Here, 27% indicate that they do not want to accomplish this goal. Among those who never attend a religious institution, 63% say that having a strong religious or spiritual connection is not something they want to accomplish, compared with just 2% for those who attend a religious institution monthly or more frequently.

Aspects Of The American Dream				
	Want to Accomplish		Not Want To Accomplish	Already Accomplished
	Think Likely To Do So	Do Not Think Likely To Do So		
	%	%		
Owning your own home	88	7	2	3
Marriage	82	7	4	6
Having children	79	8	8	4
Retire/be financially comfortable	75	22	2	0
Involved in community	66	11	5	18
Traveling around the world	52	32	6	10
Strong religious or spiritual connection	32	14	27	23

Employment Concerns

Although students say the country is heading in the wrong direction, their confidence in finding an acceptable job after graduation has increased. Seven in 10 (70%) say they are very or fairly confident in finding a job, while only 30% say they are just somewhat or not at all confident. This is the highest rating since the economic recession, as students are nearly back to the strong confidence (72%) they felt in 2006. Seniors, those closest to facing graduation and the job market, show the least confidence, as only 61% say they are very or fairly confident in finding an acceptable job. Social sciences (64%) and humanities (50%) majors are much less confident than their fellow students in the business (72%) and math, science, and computer science fields (79%).

Mirroring the slight rise in confidence in the job market, students this year also are more likely to say they will wait to find the right job (30%), rather than

just take the best one they can find (70%) after graduation than they were last year (25% wait, 75% take the best job they can find). Social sciences majors are most patient, as 37% say they will wait for the right job. Humanities majors, who are the least confident in finding a job, are the most willing to take the first job (76%) rather than wait for the right one (24%).

The real life experience of going through the job battle might influence how students would advise younger siblings or friends on how to pick a major to best compete to get jobs in today's global economy. Similar to past years, science or math (31%), computer science (28%), and business, finance or management (21%) majors top the list as the best majors to select to compete in the global marketplace. Seniors, who are closest to the job market, are most likely to recommend computer science as a major (42%). Both business and math and sciences majors recommend their own fields strongly (54% and 46%), while social sciences and humanities majors do not (12% and 10%).

Recommended Major By Current Area Of Study				
	Current Student's Area of Study			
	<u>Social Sciences</u>	<u>Humanities</u>	<u>Science/Math/CS</u>	<u>Business</u>
	%	%	%	%
Science or math	26	36	46	10
Computer science	28	24	31	22
Business, finance, or management	20	17	13	54
Social sciences	12	8	1	1
Technical training in a trade	4	2	5	3
Humanities	4	10	2	5

Assessment Of Education

College students remain largely satisfied with the education that they receive and believe that in general, the education that college students receive leaves them well prepared for competing in the global economy. However, attitudes about online classes are not nearly as positive, as the vast majority of college students report that these classes do not offer the same quality of instruction and learning as in-person classes.

Sixty-two percent of college students say that students overall are very (13%) or fairly (49%) well prepared by the education they receive to compete with

students from other countries for jobs in today's global economy. This marks a slight decline from 2006, when 66% of college students felt this way. Asian students (76%) are more likely to believe that students are well prepared, while African-American students are much less likely to feel that this is the case (49%). Freshmen (72%) generally believe that college students are better prepared than do upperclassmen (sophomores 60%, juniors 59%, and seniors 62%). And those attending private colleges (70%) are more likely to feel that students overall are better prepared than are those in public schools (61%).

Looking at their own level of satisfaction with the education that they have received so far in college to help prepare them for life after graduation, college students remain largely satisfied, with 84% saying that they are very (39%) or fairly (45%) satisfied. This proportion is essentially unchanged from 2006 (83%), when this question was first asked. Again, freshmen (91%) generally take an even more positive opinion than do upperclassmen (sophomores 81%, juniors 81%, and seniors 84%).

And along with a high level of satisfaction in the education that they receive, despite rising tuition costs, 83% believe that based on the cost, for what they receive, their education is a very (33%) or fairly (50%) good value. This mark is down from the Panetta Institute's 2006 data (89%), but an overwhelming majority continue to believe that they receive good value for what they (or their parents) are paying.

Even though college students believe that their education is a good value, when asked what they would change to help improve their college education the top item they volunteer is reducing the cost or leaving school with less debt.

Nearly two in five (39%) college students report that they have taken an online class for credit that does not meet in person. Upperclassmen are much more likely to have taken an online course (seniors 53%, juniors 54%) than have underclassmen (freshmen 15%, sophomores 31%). And students attending a public institution also are more likely than those attending a private college to have taken an online class (43% to 27%).

It is clear that college students do not find online classes to be equal to in-person classes. By 76% to 21% students say that online classes that do not meet in person in general do not offer the same quality of teaching and learning as in-

person classes. And while the margin narrows a bit, among college students who have taken an online class, 66% say the experience does not match an in-person class in terms of quality (32% say the online class does).