



PANETTA INSTITUTE

update

Panetta Poll Finds College Students Pessimistic About the Future, Yet Civically Engaged

In its latest nationwide survey of college students, the Panetta Institute for Public Policy has found a significant decline in optimism on campus about where the country is headed, with 55 percent of students saying America is on the wrong track, compared to 43 percent who felt that way a year ago, and with 73 percent saying it will be harder for their generation to achieve the American dream than it was for their parents.

The gloomy outlook aligns with a more negative view of the U.S. economy, with only 44 percent of students rating it as excellent or good in the late April poll, as opposed to 52 percent who gave the economy positive marks at the same time last year.

However, the survey finds continuing high levels of student interest in public service. A clear majority (58 percent) express interest in a program that would help them pay for college in exchange for two years of national service. And, in line with last year's findings, about one-third of students say they might be interested in running someday for elective office.

The Panetta Institute commissions Hart Research Associates in the spring of each year to examine U.S. college students' attitudes and opinions on a wide range of subjects, including social trends, personal career expectations, level of political interest, and a variety of public policy issues. The results

help guide the Institute's efforts to promote greater civic involvement.

Although students express serious concerns about the negative tone of this year's presidential campaign, this does not appear to have diminished their interest in the contest or their belief that the outcome will make a difference for them personally. Fully 74 percent say they are closely following the presidential race (up from 62 percent last year) and 59 percent say that politics is relevant to their lives (unchanged from last year). A remarkable 32 percent report that they are personally involved in a presidential campaign.

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- Reading Program's Children Score Big Gains

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Local students attend May 9 session with Panetta Lecture Series speakers. Nationally, college students show keen interest in the political scene.

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When asked about their candidate preferences, self-identified Democrats preferred Senator Bernie Sanders over former secretary of state

Hillary Clinton by 74 to 16 percent in the April 22-28 poll, but Clinton led presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump in a general election matchup by 60 to 26.



Each year, student government officers from 26 California universities gather for the Institute's Leadership in Public Service Seminar.

Interestingly, while media attention has focused in recent years on efforts to police campus discourse so as not to offend various groups and individuals, this survey shows a strong commitment among students to freedom of speech. Seventy percent agree that protecting a free flow of ideas on campus is a more important priority than protecting people's feelings.

For this year's study, online interviews were conducted with 801 students at four-year colleges across the country. A more extensive summary of the findings is posted at PanettaInstitute.org.

A Message from the Chairman**Helping Prepare a New Generation of Leaders**

By **Leon E. Panetta**

Once again this summer, we welcomed student government officers from campuses throughout California to the Panetta Institute's Leadership in Public Service Seminar.

We launched this nonpartisan program seventeen years ago to help promising young men and women learn the essential skills of leadership and to encourage their engagement in the nation's political life.



Looking at our recently completed survey of U.S. college students, there appears to be plenty of interest on campus in the current political scene, at least when it comes to

the presidential campaign. But the question remains whether fascination with this high-decibel contest will translate into a long-term commitment to learning the issues and participating in the process at a deeper level than simply attending a rally or tweeting an opinion.

The student leaders I meet with give me hope in this regard. They do seem to sense the seriousness and complexity of the problems our country faces, and they know these problems will be solved only through the hard work of negotiation and compromise. I fully expect that, like so many of their predecessors in the program, a number of them will go on to lives of public service.



Panetta Lecture Series Looks at the Challenges that Will Confront the Next President

This spring the Panetta Institute's nationally renowned Leon Panetta Lecture Series is examining four major challenges that our country's next president will face, asking in each case whether America is in "Renaissance or Decline." With Secretary Panetta as moderator, the series kicked off at Carmel's Sunset Cultural Center on March 14 with three national security experts offering their thoughts on "War, Terrorism and Other Global Threats."

Former House intelligence committee chairman **Mike Rogers** (R-MI) cited a litany of international dangers, from cyber-attacks to the militarization of space, and former undersecretary of state **Wendy Sherman** extended that list to include the emergence of violent non-state actors such as ISIS and the disruptive effects of climate change. Former U.S. Army chief of staff **Ray Odierno** warned against trying to isolate America from the rest of the world, which he said would only make the threats worse.

On April 18 the topic turned to "Jobs, Debt and Taxes." Former Indiana governor **Mitch Daniels** (R) exchanged views on how the next president might bolster the U.S. economy with **Austan Goolsbee**, former chair of President Obama's council of economic advisers, and **Ron Insana**, who serves as senior economic analyst for CNBC.

"Gridlock, Partisanship and Executive Action" was the theme on May 9, as Secretary Panetta discussed problems of national political



Institute chairman **Leon E. Panetta** (left) moderates the May 9 session with **Mark Shields**, **J.C. Watts**, **Gloria Borger** and **Chris Matthews**.

dysfunction with three longtime Washington journalists – PBS NewsHour analyst **Mark Shields**, U.S. News & World Report columnist **Gloria Borger** and MSNBC Hardball host **Chris Matthews** – along with former congressman **J.C. Watts** (R-OK). The conversation inevitably turned to the two leading presidential contenders and how they might perform if elected.

The series will conclude on June 27 as former ABC Nightline anchor **Ted Koppel**, FOX News host **Howard Kurtz** and PBS NewsHour co-anchor **Judy Woodruff** will discuss key changes in American society, technology and media. The lectures are accessible live via webcast, TV and radio and are posted also on YouTube.

**"WE MUST STAY
ENGAGED IN THE
WORLD."**

Gen. Ray Odierno



Our speakers: former U.S. Rep. **Mike Rogers**, former undersecretary of state **Wendy Sherman**, former Army chief of staff **Ray Odierno**, former Indiana governor **Mitch Daniels**, economics adviser **Austan Goolsbee**, CNBC commentator **Ron Insana**, PBS NewsHour analyst **Mark Shields**, MSNBC host **Chris Matthews**, US News columnist **Gloria Borger**, former U.S. Rep. **J.C. Watts**, former Nightline anchor **Ted Koppel**, FOX News host **Howard Kurtz** and PBS NewsHour co-anchor **Judy Woodruff**.



The Panetta Institute for Public Policy
100 Campus Center, Building 86E
CSU Monterey Bay
Seaside, CA 93955

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Struggling Young Readers Score Major Gains With Help from Monterey County Reads

Since 1997, the Panetta Institute has headed an ambitious effort to help area children who have difficulty learning to read. Over the years, the program's success has been measured in the number of reading assistance volunteers trained and placed, number of students helped, and testing of the first through third grade participants to see how they perform before and after receiving the extra attention.

Over the past two years, Monterey County Reads has added expert staff to get a more detailed, statistically reliable picture of student performance, with striking results. Assessment data for the 2014-2015 school year shows students achieving increases in reading fluency far above the national average for children who don't have access to such a program. Gains for student participants were 131 percent for first graders, 87 percent for second graders and 51 percent for third graders.

"These numbers are truly remarkable," says Institute co-chair and CEO **Sylvia Panetta**, who oversees the reading effort. "They show we are indeed having the kind of impact we've witnessed anecdotally and they help us win more participation."

The Institute's literacy specialists measure students' reading ability before the reading



MCR readers at Foothill Elementary in Monterey show off their new books.

assistance begins and again upon completion. The results are analyzed by a researcher at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey.

Monterey County Reads recruits and trains volunteers from area colleges, businesses, military installations, faith groups and community organizations and places them in participating schools. The effort has involved nearly 3,000 volunteers since its founding and has helped approximately 16,000 students. Volunteers are honored at an annual recognition event and participating students receive a free book.

