

# **2008 Survey Of America's College Students**

Conducted On Behalf Of:  
**The Leon & Sylvia Panetta Institute For Public Policy**

**By Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.**

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### **Methodology**

This report analyzes the findings of a survey among American college students conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc., for the Leon & Sylvia Panetta Institute for Public Policy. Since 2001, the Panetta Institute has sponsored a yearly survey of 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.

In an effort to reach a more representative sample of college students, the survey's methodology consists of interviews conducted by telephone and on-line. Hart Research interviewed 504 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; approximately one-half the telephone respondents were reached on their cell phone. In addition, Hart Research contracted with an on-line 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 multimillion-member respondent panel. In the on-line survey, screening questions limited participation to students enrolled in a four-year higher-learning institution. A total of 500 interviews were completed on-line, for a total combined sample of 1,004 college students. All interviews, whether by phone or on-line, were conducted from April 9 to 16, 2008. Some demographics were weighted in each sample to achieve representative samples of four-year college students nationwide. The margin of error is  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points for the overall sample and higher for specific subgroups.

## **The State Of The Nation**

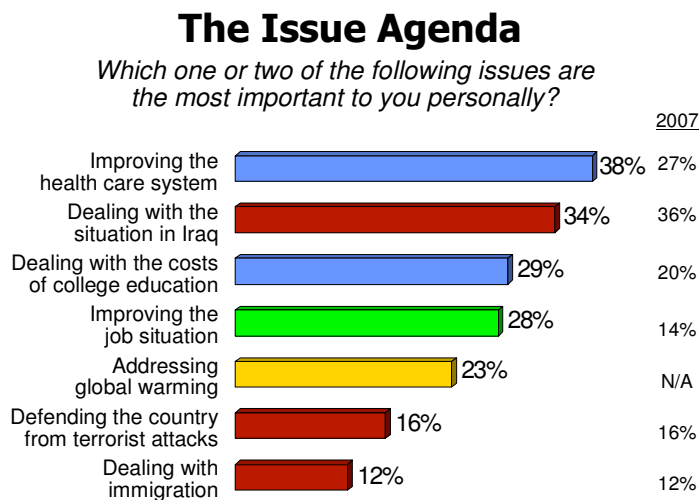
The mood of college students across the country continues to be dark and pessimistic, and it reflects the nation's mood overall. As the economy faces a series of shocks, from rising gas and food prices, to the uncertainties in the mortgage and housing sectors, to talk of a recession, college students highlight increased concern about economic issues.

Today, 32% of college students believe that the country is headed in the right direction and 47% say that it is on the wrong track. While this is a slight improvement over last year's survey (29% right direction, 50% wrong track), the numbers remain quite low and suggest a great deal of dissatisfaction. Party identification and one's financial standing and outlook do drive perceptions about the direction of the country. In terms of political views, Democrats and independents are more likely to say the country is off on the wrong track (56% and 50% respectively) while a plurality of Republicans (48%) say the country is headed in the right direction. Respondents who come from a family with a below-average or average income believe that the country is off on the wrong track (58% and 54% respectively), but those with an above-average family income are somewhat more likely to say the country is headed in the right direction (40% to 35%). Interestingly, there also are significant breaks by class year, with the mood darkening in each year—freshmen (43% right direction, 40% wrong track), sophomores (32%, 40%), juniors (31%, 51%), and seniors (26%, 53%).

Nearly two in three college students (64%) also are uncertain and concerned about the future of the country while 26% are more confident and secure. These proportions are nearly unchanged since last year (26%, 66%). And here, unlike the direction of the country, there is agreement across the political and economic spectrums as majorities of Democrats (71%), independents (62%), and Republicans (54%), as well as those with below-average (73%), average (64%), and above-average (58%) family incomes say they are more uncertain and concerned about the future of the country.

In terms of issues that are most important to college students, the situation in Iraq (34%) remains a first-tier issue, but the health care system has overtaken Iraq as the top issue. In fact, as the following chart shows, all items related to

economic concerns have increased in importance since last year's survey. Most notably, the proportion of college students who cite improving the job situation has doubled.



There also are significant partisan cleavages when it comes to the issues, as Democrats are more likely to say that improving the health care system (45%) is a concern to them personally while Republicans are much more likely to say that defending the country from future terrorist attacks (34%) and dealing with immigration (26%) are most important. Results among independents largely reflect the overall results, but independents are more likely to say that improving the job situation (34%) is most important to them. Differences also exist between Clinton and Obama voters in the Democratic primary, as Clinton voters cite improving the health care system (52%) as their top issue while Obama voters are nearly equally likely to cite dealing with Iraq (40%) and improving the health care system (38%).

## Political Landscape

The political landscape on campus reflects attitudes among college students about the general direction of the country. College students are dissatisfied with their leaders and hungry for change. The dissatisfaction has not, however, led to a lack of participation in the political system. In fact, college students are paying more

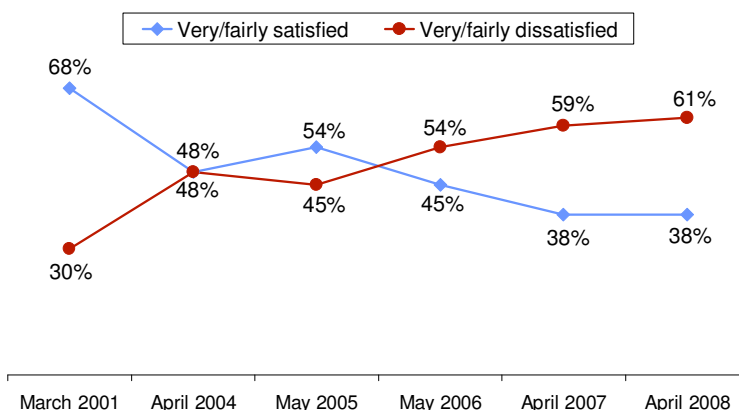
attention to this year's presidential campaign than in the past, and more are getting involved.

While President Bush will not be on the ballot in November, there is perhaps no better figure to look at to understand the feelings about this election year. The President's approval rating stands at just 25%, with 69% disapproving. This is his lowest rating in the survey's history, and slightly lower than last year (26% approve, 65% disapprove).

Related, only 38% of college students say that they are very or fairly satisfied with the quality of the country's political leadership, and 61% are dissatisfied. Back in March 2001, 68% said they were satisfied. Among those who disapprove of the President's job, only 23% are satisfied with the country's political leadership. Interestingly, those who are following this year's election most closely are more likely to be dissatisfied with the country's political leadership (72% dissatisfied). While upperclassmen are largely dissatisfied, freshman have a mixed view of the country's political leadership, as 47% are satisfied and 52% are dissatisfied. There also are significant breaks on this measure by party identification, as majorities of Democrats (73%) and independents (66%) are dissatisfied, but 63% of Republicans are satisfied.

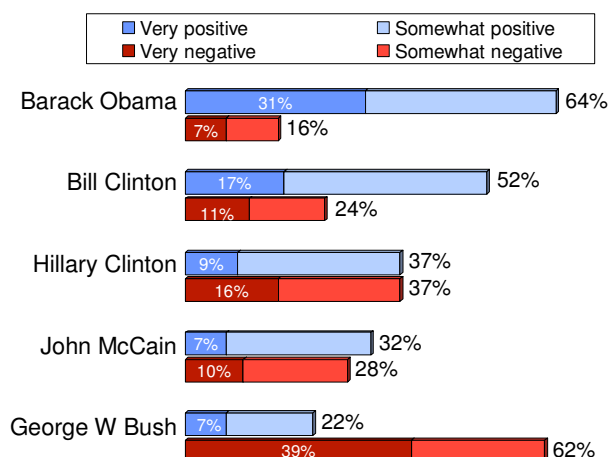
### Satisfaction With Leadership

*How satisfied are you with the quality of the country's political leadership today?*



While college students mostly view the country's political leadership negatively, they feel favorable toward several political leaders, most notably Barack Obama and Bill Clinton. What is particularly interesting is that John McCain actually receives slightly better marks with college students than does Hillary Clinton (McCain is a net positive at 32% positive, 28% negative, while college students are divided on Hillary Clinton at 37% positive, 37% negative). This is surprising because we consistently have found college students to be a predominantly Democratic constituency. And to reinforce President Bush's poor standing, college students have mostly negative personal feelings toward him, matching their view of the job that he is doing.

### Feelings Toward Political Figures



Fully 82% of college students say that they are paying a lot or some attention to the 2008 presidential campaign, including 29% who say they are paying a lot of attention. In April 2004, 22% of college students said they were paying a lot of attention to the presidential campaign. Republicans (88%) and Democrats (85%) are more likely than independents (70%) to be paying attention at this time.

Not only are college students paying attention, they are getting involved. Today, 16% of college students say that they already have become active in a presidential campaign and 20% have plans to become involved in the future. Not surprisingly, respondents who are paying a lot of attention to the campaign are

more likely to already be involved (33%). College students who say that social networking Web sites or blogs are a major source of news and information also are more likely to already be involved in a campaign (28%). Although it is not a great difference, Democrats (19%) are more likely than Republicans (14%) to say they already are involved in a campaign. And African-American college students (25%) also are more likely to already be involved in a campaign.

## **2008 Elections: Democratic Primary**

To reinforce the level of interest in this year's campaign, large proportions of college students report that they have voted in this year's primaries. While John McCain has wrapped up the Republican nomination, the Democratic race remains competitive, with a general cross section of Democratic primary voters. Among college students, however, Barack Obama holds a large lead over Hillary Clinton.

A surprisingly high proportion (30%) of college students report that they have voted in this year's Democratic primary or plan to do so, and 13% indicate that they voted or plan to vote in the Republican primary.

Reflective of national, cross section polls, the late-March NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* survey showed Barack Obama tied with Hillary Clinton in the Democratic primary, with both candidates receiving 45% of the vote. Among college students, however, we find that Obama receives stronger support, with college students favoring the Illinois senator over the New York senator by 66% to 20%. In last year's Panetta Institute survey, Obama received 50% of the vote, with Clinton at 27%, and John Edwards at 11%.

As the adjacent table shows, some subgroup differences exist among Democratic primary voters, and many of them

<b>Democratic Primary Trial Heat By Subgroup</b>		
	<u>Obama</u>	<u>Clinton</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
All voters	66	20
Men	77	14
Women	57	25
Whites	67	23
Hispanics	51	21
African Americans	78	11
Asians	54	24
Northeast	61	25
South	76	11
Midwest	66	20
West	62	23
Freshmen	71	15
Sophomores	68	17
Juniors	64	26
Seniors	61	21
Income: Below avg.	59	22
Income: Avg.	66	21
Income: Above avg.	71	19



mirror the overall Democratic primary electorate. For example, Barack Obama fares better among men than among women and he receives strong support from African-American college students. Divides also exist by class, as Obama does best among those with higher family incomes, which we also see in national, general cross section polling.

### **2008 Elections: General Election**

Turning to the general election, as is the case in the primaries, the data suggest that college students are planning to turn out in large numbers. While college students overwhelmingly support Barack Obama over John McCain, the race between Hillary Clinton and McCain is much closer. This is particularly surprising considering that a majority of college students consider themselves to be Democrats. Regardless of who becomes president, this president will be a first: the first African American, the first woman, or the first president to take office at age 70 or over.

When assessing the candidates on the issues, college students' preference for Obama is clear, as he fares better than McCain on every issue, except dealing with an international crisis. When college students compare Clinton and McCain on the issues, their decision is more closely divided.

Overall, 79% of college students report that they are registered to vote. This is on par with past survey results. Among registered voters, however, fully 81% say that they definitely will vote. In 2004, 73% of college students who were registered to vote said they definitely planned to vote. College students who are paying a lot of attention to the race are more likely to say they definitely will vote (88%) than those who are paying some attention (70%), or not much or no attention (39%). Democrats (75%) and Republicans (73%) also are more likely than independents (55%) to say they definitely plan to vote. And Asian students (50%) are less likely to say they definitely plan to vote.

College students clearly prefer Barack Obama to John McCain in the general election, with Obama leading by 32 points. The race between Hillary Clinton and McCain is much closer, however, as she leads by only seven points. Overall, Barack Obama leads John McCain by 59% to 27% and Hillary Clinton also leads McCain,

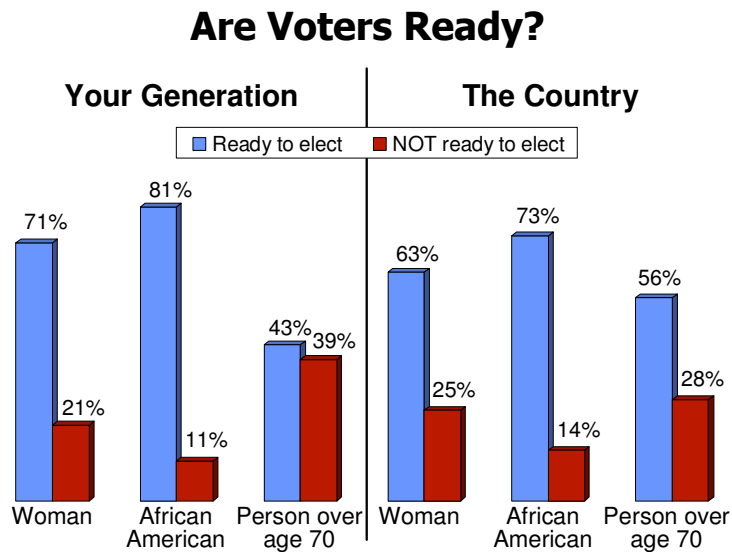
but with a much smaller margin (46% to 39%). Statistically, both trial heats are the same as last year.

A look at the subgroups tells reveals why Obama fares much better than Clinton in the McCain trial heat. Obama does much better than Clinton does against McCain among men, where he leads by 29 points and Clinton trails by seven points. Similarly, Obama receives 51% among whites, while Clinton garners only 39%. And Obama receives 49% among independents to just 32% for Clinton. Even among women, a core voting constituency for Clinton, Obama receives a higher proportion of the vote than does Clinton (60% to 51%).

<b>Presidential Trial Heats By Subgroup</b>				
	<u>Obama</u>	<u>McCain</u>	<u>Clinton</u>	<u>McCain</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
All students	59	27	46	39
Men	58	29	39	46
Women	60	25	51	34
Northeast	64	21	55	33
South	62	24	43	39
Midwest	53	34	37	48
West	57	27	50	35
Whites	51	33	39	47
Hispanics	79	19	55	31
African-Americans	87	4	65	15
Asians	68	17	54	27
Social sciences	65	27	51	37
Humanities	62	22	50	40
Science/math/CS	57	30	45	41
Business	60	26	42	44
Income: Below avg.	64	24	54	32
Income: Avg.	59	27	46	38
Income: Above avg.	57	27	41	45
Democrats	87	6	73	17
Independents	49	26	32	38
Republicans	15	68	7	84
Obama Dem primary	94	3	64	24
Clinton Dem primary	70	14	98	1
TV: Network	60	27	46	39
TV: Daily Show/Colbert	65	22	47	39
TV: Fox	50	38	39	49

Regardless of who the next president is, it will be a historic day, as either the first woman, African American, or person over age 70 at the time they take office

will be inaugurated. And majorities of college students believe that American voters are ready to elect a qualified African American (73%), woman (63%), or person over 70 (56%). Interestingly, college students believe that their generation is more likely to be ready to elect a qualified African American (81%) and woman (71%), but believe that their generation is less likely to be ready to elect a qualified person over age 70 (43%).



Looking at specific issues, respondents were asked who would better handle a series of issues between John McCain and each of the Democratic candidates. Barack Obama leads McCain on five out of six issues, and he trails McCain only on dealing with an international crisis (39% to 33%). It is worth noting that McCain does well on Iraq against both Obama and Clinton, even though students favor a timeline for withdrawal and imposing limits on President Bush and his Iraq policy. In part, this could be explained by McCain's strength on national security issues. Obama holds large leads over McCain on uniting the country (56% to 19%), college affordability (53% to 14%), health care (51% to 22%), and jobs and the economy (46% to 25%). Obama leads McCain 42% to 36% on the war in Iraq. Conversely, college students are divided on the issues between Clinton and McCain—saying that Clinton would better handle health care (55% to 21%), college affordability (50% to 17%), and jobs and the economy (44% to 30%), while McCain has a narrow

edge on uniting the country (39% to 37%), and larger leads on the war in Iraq (43% to 34%), and dealing with an international crisis (46% to 31%).

The following table shows the differential on each issue between McCain and the Democratic candidates. What is particularly striking is the gap between Obama and Clinton on uniting the country—a key issue in this year’s election. Consider that independents are divided over whether Clinton (33%) or McCain (32%) would be better on uniting the country, but they say that Obama would be better than McCain by 50% to 15%.

<b>Candidates on The Issues: Who would be better?</b>		
	<b>Differential: Obama- McCain</b>	<b>Differential: Clinton- McCain</b>
College affordability	39	33
Uniting the country	37	-2
Health care	29	34
Jobs and the economy	21	14
The war in Iraq	6	-9
Dealing with an international crisis	-6	-15

## News Sources

For college students, television and Internet news Web sites continue to be the primary sources of information about politics and civic affairs. Well over half (57%) of students say that television is a *major* source of information. More than half (54%) also say that news Web sites are a major source of information. The number of students who say that they rely on news Web sites as a major source of information is on the rise. In 2005, 48% of students said that news Web sites were a primary source of information—11-points behind television. This year, however, news Web sites (54%) are in a statistical dead heat with television (57%) as the highest-ranked major source of information for college students. A notable ideological gap exists between the two media, with 60% of liberals and only half of conservatives (50%) saying that news Web sites are a major source of information. Perhaps related, 61% of those majoring in business say that television is a major news source, with 46% citing news Web sites. Those studying social sciences rely

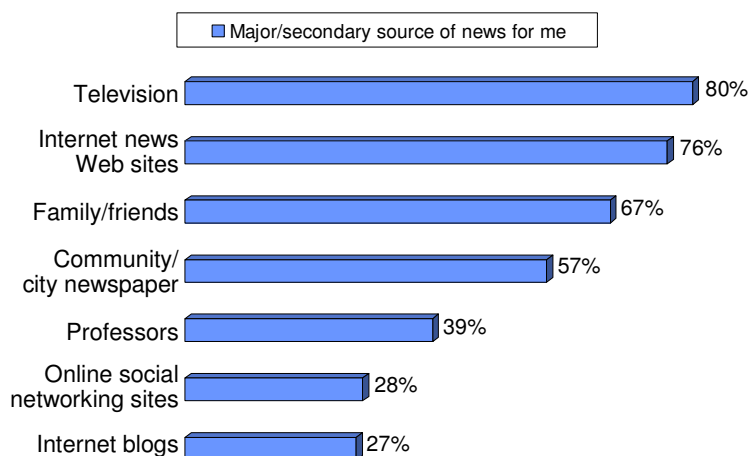
more on news Web sites (64%) than television (53%).

Internet blogs continue to be only a minor source of information, but are used slightly more than they were last year. Only one in 10 (10%) students say that blogs are a major source of information, compared with just 6% who said so last year. Among those who say they are involved in a presidential campaign, however, nearly one in five (18%) say that blogs are a major source of information.

As with other Internet news media, the use of on-line social networking Web sites (such as MySpace and Facebook) is on the rise, though these sites are used more as a secondary source of information than as a primary source. In 2007, only 20% of students said they used social networking sites as a major or secondary source of information; this year, that number is 28%. Still, on-line social networking Web sites clearly are on the rise as three in five (59%) college students now say that this is at least a minor source of information for them, up from 44% in last year's survey. Four-in-five (85%) students say they have a Web page on a social networking site, with some notable demographic differences. First, female students are more likely than male students to say they have a Web page on a social networking site, with 89% of women and 79% of men saying they have a page. Second, ideological differences exist as well: 89% of liberals but only 80% of conservatives say they have a page.

Social interaction with family, friends, and professors play an important but secondary role in providing students with news on current events. Two-thirds of students (67%) say they use family and friends as a major or secondary source of information, with women being somewhat more likely than men (by nine points) to rely on family and friends. Students are less likely to rely on professors for information than family and friends, as only 39% say that their professors are a major or secondary source of information. Nearly three in five (57%) college students say that community and city newspapers are a major source of information.

## News Sources



As mentioned earlier, television continues to be a major news source for college students, especially cable television. Well over half (56%) of students say they watch cable news (CNN, MSNBC, or Fox News), while only a third (35%) say they watch nightly network news (on NBC, CBS, or ABC). CNN stands out as the clear leader among cable news stations, with two in five (39%) students saying they watch it regularly, followed by Fox News (28%), and then MSNBC (23%). Also worth noting, two in five (40%) college students say they regularly watch self-proclaimed “fake-news” programs such as *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*. Definite partisan differences exist on this measure, as Democrats are much more likely than Republicans to watch these shows. *Daily Show/Colbert Report* viewers also are more likely to be paying a lot of attention to the presidential race (38% compared with 29% overall), are more likely to be men (55% compared with 45% overall), and are more likely to be white (76% compared with 68% overall).

CNN and Fox News viewers also differ on several political issues, including the presidential ballot, President Bush’s ratings, and the war in Iraq.

<b>Television Viewers: CNN &amp; Fox News</b>			
	<u>All College Students</u> %	<u>CNN Viewers</u> %	<u>Fox News Viewers</u> %
<b>Bush Job Rating</b>			
Approve	25	22	34
Disapprove	69	74	60
<b>Should Congress Restrict War Funding</b>			
Favor	59	60	48
Oppose	38	39	50
<b>McCain/Clinton Trial Heat</b>			
McCain	39	36	49
Clinton	46	53	39
<b>McCain/Obama Trial Heat</b>			
McCain	27	25	38
Obama	59	64	50

Finally, in quite possibly the most important popularity contest of 2008—besides the presidential election—college students decidedly prefer Stephen Colbert to Bill O’Reilly. A plurality (43%) of students say they feel positive (very or somewhat) toward Colbert, while only 11% of students say the same of O’Reilly. Furthermore, only 8% of students say they feel negative (very or somewhat) toward Colbert, while nearly one-third (31%) feels negative toward O’Reilly. There are definite breaks by ideology, as Colbert holds a 53% positive, 7% negative rating among liberals while O’Reilly is 7% positive, 41% negative. Among conservatives, O’Reilly is net positive, at 21% positive, 16% negative, but Colbert also receives strong support from conservatives (31%, 13%). Colbert even leads O’Reilly among college students who watch Fox News (Colbert: 36% positive, 9% negative; O’Reilly: 21%, 21%).

## **The Economy And Employment Outlook**

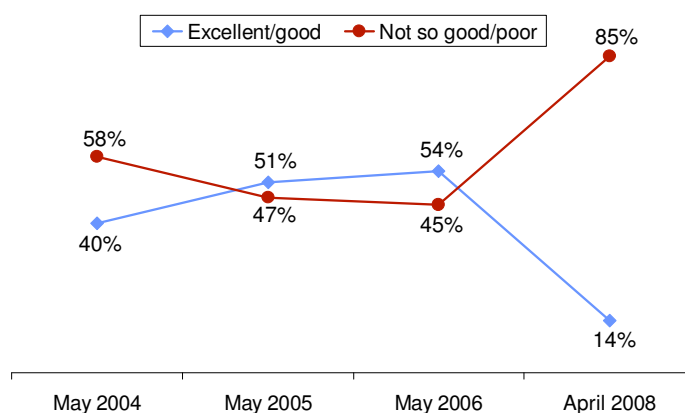
College students are very pessimistic about the current state of the nation’s economy, dramatically more so than they have been in past years. Moreover, most college students believe it is harder for their generation to achieve the American Dream than it was for their parents’ generation, and fewer than half expect to be better off than their parents. Only 1% of students describe the economy as excellent, and just 13% say the economy is good. Just two years ago, 54% said

that the economy was excellent or good, and the 40-point drop in that time is truly staggering. More than half (53%) of students say the economy is not so good, and one-third (32%) of students say the economy is poor. The proportion of college students who say the economy is poor is more than three times what it was in 2006 (9% poor). Although college students' views of the current economy are especially pessimistic, they are still slightly more optimistic than the general public overall.

Among college students, Democrats are particularly concerned about the economy, as nine in 10 (90%) say the economy is not so good/poor, compared with three in four (76%) Republicans. Upperclassmen, who are preparing to graduate and potentially preparing to enter the workforce, also are very concerned: 88% of juniors and seniors say the economy is not so good/poor, compared with 81% of freshmen and sophomores who say the same. Views of the economy vary by academic majors as well, with only 79% of business and finance majors saying the economy is not good/poor, which is noticeably lower than humanities (87%) and social science (89%) majors.

### Pessimism About The Economy

*How would you describe the state of the nation's economy?*



Students also have a mixed view about their personal financial future. Despite negative feelings about the economy, a plurality (47%) of students believe that they will be better off financially than their parents, with only 14% believing they will be worse off than their parents, and one-third (33%) believing they will be



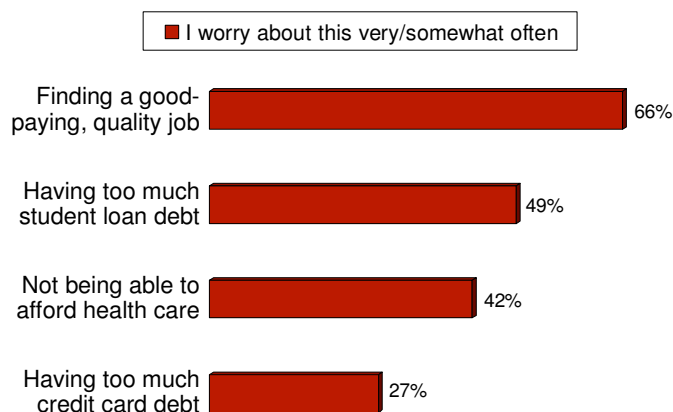
financially about the same as their parents. However, a strong majority of students (58%) say they believe it is harder to achieve the American Dream for their generation than it was for their parents' generation, with only 14% saying it is easier, and one in four (24%) saying it is about the same.

Finding a good-paying quality job continues to be the biggest economic worry among college students. Two-thirds (66%) of students say they worry very or somewhat often about this, with the other third (32%) saying they worry only from time to time or almost never. Students who describe their family income background as below average are particularly worried about finding a job, with three in four (74%) saying they worry very or somewhat often about this, compared to just two in three (64%) students from families with incomes that are above average. There is a significant gender gap on this issue as female students are considerably more worried (74% very/somewhat often) than are their male counterparts (57%) about finding a good-paying job after college.

After finding a good-paying job, students' next biggest worry is graduating with too much student loan debt. About half (49%) of students say they worry very or somewhat often about loan debt, up from 38% in 2007. As with worries over finding a good-paying job after college, worries over student loans vary by family income. Nearly three in five (59%) students from families with a below-average income say they worry very/somewhat often, considerably higher than students from families with average incomes (53%) or above-average incomes (41%). When it comes to paying off student loans, there are also considerable differences by race, as Hispanic (63%), African-American (57%), and Asian-American (54%) students are more concerned than are white students (46%).

Similar to worries over student loan debt, worries over not being able to afford health care are on the rise. Two in five (42%) students say they worry very or somewhat often about not being able to afford health care, up from just 29% in 2007. Upperclassmen, juniors (49%), and seniors (47%), are more concerned about this point.

## Student Worries



## Public And Community Service

College students continue to show significant interest in working for government and other public service-related fields. Moreover, most college students consider public service to be a major part of careers in teaching, working for a not-for-profit, the military, government, and nursing. And college students who say that someone has spoken to them about getting involved in politics or public service are more likely to do so.

Students heard descriptions of potential job or career opportunities and were asked to rate their level of interest in each one. College students are most interested in working for a socially responsible corporation (52% very or fairly interested), followed by a not-for-profit community organization or foundation (40%), government (39%), teaching in a public school (31%), being a lawyer (22%), nursing (16%), and the military (10%). At 39%, the proportion of college students who are interested in working for the government approaches 2005's high watermark of 41%. In fact, 16% of college students are very interested in working for the government, and this is slightly higher than the 15% who felt similarly back in 2005.

As the following table shows, significant differences occur by gender and course of study regarding the level of interest that college students have in various careers. Women (47%) and those in the social sciences (48%) and humanities

## Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.

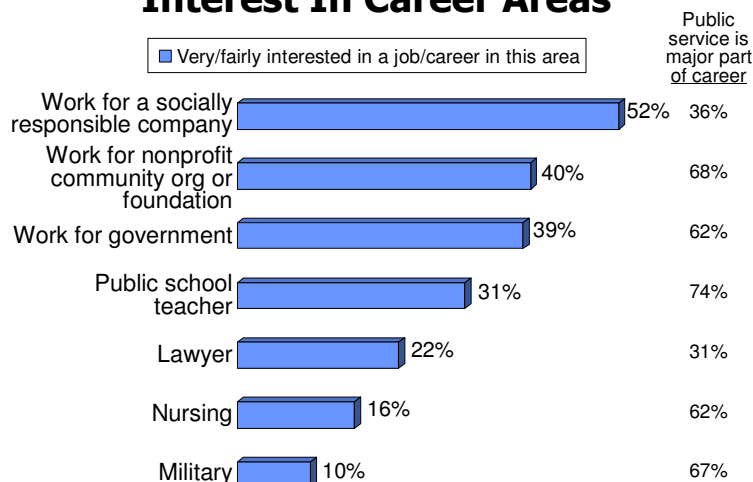
(55%) are more interested in working for a nonprofit. Women (36%) and those in the humanities (48%) are also more interested in teaching in a public school, while men (44%) and those in the social sciences (48%) are more interested in working in government.

Over the past three years, there has been a decline in the proportion of college students who say they are interested in becoming a teacher. In 2006, 45% of college students indicated that they were interested in becoming a teacher. In 2007, the proportion fell to 36%, and now it is 31%. Looking back to the 2006, survey, the drop in interest is more pronounced among those attending schools with 5,000 or fewer students (27 points), men (21 points), and freshmen (20 points).

<b>Level Of Interest In Various Careers</b>							
<i>% Very/Fairly Interested</i>							
	<b>All College Students</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Social Sciences</b>	<b>Human- ities</b>	<b>Science/ Math/CS</b>	<b>Business</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Working for socially responsible organization	52	54	51	50	54	55	56
Working for a not-for-profit community organization or foundation	40	30	47	48	55	37	25
Working for government	39	44	34	48	28	42	38
Teaching in a public school	31	24	36	35	48	27	12
Lawyer	22	23	21	36	21	15	24
Nursing	16	12	18	10	14	24	7
The military	10	12	7	9	7	12	10

Respondents also were asked to rate each career based on whether they considered public service to be a part of that career. On this measure teaching in public schools topped the list, with fully three in four (74%) college students indicating that public service was a major part of teaching. At least three in five college students felt similarly about working for a nonprofit community organization or foundation (68%), the military (67%), working for government (62%), and nursing (62%). Working for a socially responsible corporation (36%) and being a lawyer (31%) ranked lower on the list in terms of public service being a major part of this career.

### Interest In Career Areas



Over time, we also have tracked college students and their level of interest in seeking public office, both federal and state or local. Today, we find that 29% say they would be interested in running for federal elected office, which is on par with past surveys. Of concern is that there continues to be a dramatic gender gap between male and female college students on this measure, as 45% of men say that they are interested in running for federal elected office while only 16% of women say this is the case. Those studying in the social sciences tend to be more interested (40%) as well as college students who watch *The Daily Show* or *The Colbert Report* (40%).

At the local and state level, one in four (25%) college students is interested in running for elected office and this does mark a decline from the past. Just last year, 37% expressed an interest, and this year marks the lowest proportion that we have recorded on this measure. Again, we find a significant gender gap, as more men (36%) are interested in running for state and local elected office than women (16%).

A majority of college students (55%) say that someone has spoken to them about getting involved in politics or public service and this proportion has held steady in the mid- to upper-50s over the past few years. Students in private schools (64%) are more likely than public school college students (52%) to say this

is the case, and those studying in the humanities (68%) also are more likely to say this is the case. Of concern is that just 47% of African-American college students say that someone has spoken to them about getting involved in politics or public service. And having someone speak to them about getting involved does matter. Overall, 33% of college students say that they have considered pursuing a service-oriented experience after graduating, such as Teach for America, VISTA, or AmeriCorps. Among those who have been spoken to about getting involved, however, that proportion rises to 41%, compared with 23% for those who have not been spoken to.

## **Other Issues Of The Day**

When it comes to the war in Iraq, most college students believe that the United States must set a timeline for withdrawal of troops and that Congress should restrict funding for the war to prevent more troops being sent to Iraq. When asked to choose between the two statements below, three in four (76%) students side with *Statement B*, which calls for a set timeline for withdrawal.

**Statement A:** We need to keep our troops in Iraq as long as necessary to stabilize the situation and prevent Iraq from becoming a haven for terrorists.

**Statement B:** We need to set a timeline for withdrawing our troops from Iraq to make clear to Iraqis that the United States will not remain in Iraq indefinitely and that Iraqis need to stand up and fight for their country.

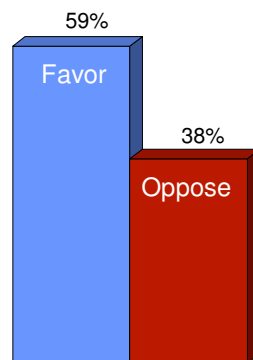
Among subgroups, we find typical partisan breaks: the “set a timeline” statement wins over the “as long as necessary” statement by 80 points among Democrats and 57 points among independents. Republicans are divided evenly on the issue, with 48% siding with “set a timeline” statement and 49% siding with “as long as necessary” statement. A considerable gender gap exists on the issue. While both men and women largely support withdrawing troops, a greater proportion of women than men feel this way (84% to 65%). This gender gap can be seen on nearly all issues concerning national security discussed in the survey.

A majority of college students (59%) favor Congress restricting funding for the Iraq war as a way to limit President Bush's ability to send additional troops to

Iraq, with only 38% saying they oppose restricting funding. Again, we see partisan differences: Democrats (75% favor) and independents (57%) both favor restricting funding, while a large majority of Republicans oppose funding restrictions (69%). Similar to the debate on setting a timeline for withdrawal, women are more likely than men to say they favor restricting funding as a way to limit troop numbers (64% and 52% respectively).

### **Restricting Funding For The Iraq War**

*Would you favor or oppose Congress restricting funding for the Iraq war as a way to limit President Bush's ability to send additional troops to Iraq?*



When asked about whether the federal government should be allowed to wiretap American citizens suspected of having ties to terrorists, students are decidedly in favor (67%) of requiring that the federal government obtain a court order, with only 16% saying the government should be able to wiretap without an order. By a substantial margin, Democrats (+70) and independents (+53) believe that court orders should be required, and by a smaller margin (+10) Republicans feel the same. Also, women (54%) more than men (45%) believe that court orders are necessary, though both men and women are decidedly against wiretapping without a court order.

Finally, a clear majority (59%) of college students believe that torturing suspected terrorists is rarely or never justified, with 30% saying it is sometimes justified and only 8% saying it is often justified. The same subgroup differences are visible on this issue as with other national security issues discussed. Among

political parties, majorities of Democrats (71%) and independents (51%) say that torture is rarely or never justified, while only 40% of Republicans say the same— 57% of Republicans say it is often or sometimes justified. Female students are decidedly against torture, with two-thirds saying it is rarely (33%) or never (34%) justified, while male students are divided (47% rarely/never justified, 50% sometimes/often justified).

<b>National Security Issues</b>						
	<b>All Students</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Independents</b>	<b>Republicans</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Iraq War</b>						
Set timeline	76	89	77	48	65	84
No timeline	22	10	19	49	31	15
Restrict funding	59	75	57	30	52	64
Don't restrict funding	38	22	37	69	45	33
<b>Wiretapping</b>						
Court order required	67	78	65	47	65	68
No court order	16	8	12	37	20	13
<b>Torture</b>						
Often/sometimes justified	38	27	43	57	50	29
Rarely/never justified	59	71	51	40	47	67

Changing subjects and closer to home for students, a year after the Virginia Tech shooting most students say they are not very worried about an attack taking place on their campus, even though students are divided on whether their campus is prepared for such an attack. Only 18% of students say they worry a great deal or quite a bit about such an attack taking place on their campus. One in four (25%) students worries just some, one in three (34%) worries very little, and one in four (23%) does not worry at all. When asked how prepared their school is for such an attack, however, students are divided nearly evenly: 47% say their school is very or fairly prepared, and 49% say their school is just somewhat or not that prepared. Students at smaller schools seem less confident than students at larger schools: in schools with 5,000 or fewer students only 39% say their school is very/fairly prepared, compared with 48% in schools with 5,000 to 20,000 students, and 52% in school with more than 20,000 students.