

# FRESHMAN SURVEY FALL 2015

## Traditional Undergraduate Freshmen at Chalon and Doheny

Each fall, Mount Saint Mary's University (MSMU) participates in a national study about incoming college students. Developed by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) at the Higher Education Research Institute of UCLA, the **CIRP Freshman Survey** is designed to collect important information about the background, experiences, and expectations of first-year college students. This report summarizes the data for 476 freshmen respondents who were enrolled at MSMU in Fall 2015. The survey has a 90% response rate overall, including 277 Chalon participants (95% response rate) and 199 Doheny participants (85% response rate).

### Demographics and Background Characteristics

- 47% of all respondents attended a public high school, 30% attended a public magnet or charter school, 19% attended a religious/parochial high school, and 4% attended a private independent college-prep school.
- 56% are among the first generation in their family to attend college (46% at Chalon, 69% at Doheny). First generation students are defined as students without a parent who has had any college experience. Since a large percentage of our respondents are first generation students, a section focused on this group has been included in this report (see Appendix A). The analyses provide additional insight into the experiences and college expectations of first generation compared to continuing generation students.

### College Choice

Students were asked to rate the importance of various factors in their decision to attend MSMU (see Table 1). Over 80% of all MSMU respondents identified the following criteria as “very important” or “somewhat important”: good academic reputation, financial assistance packages, that graduates get good jobs and gain acceptance into top graduate/professional schools, the cost of attending this college, and college size.

On average, Chalon freshmen were more likely than their Doheny peers to identify the availability of financial assistance, and the influence of their parents and relatives as important factors in their decision to choose MSMU. Doheny freshmen had higher average ratings of importance than their Chalon peers on several factors, including: the size and religious affiliation of the university, rankings in national magazines, the percentage of students who graduate, a good reputation for social activities, and advice from high school counselors and teachers, and distance from their home.

**Table 1: Importance of Factors in College Choice**

How important was each reason in your decision to attend here?	MSMU	Chalon		Doheny	
	Very + Some- what (%)	Very (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very (%)	Somewhat (%)
This college has a very good academic reputation	97.5	78.1	19.0	79.2	18.8
I was offered financial assistance*	95.9	77.7	19.8	68.9	25.0
This college's graduates get good jobs	94.1	77.7	16.1	69.5	24.9
This college's graduates gain admission to top graduate/professional schools	86.6	49.5	35.5	48.2	40.6
The cost of attending this college	84.6	51.3	33.3	45.4	39.2
I wanted to go to a school about the size of this college	81.7	49.5	29.7	56.9	28.4
The percentage of students that graduate from this college	79.7	47.1	30.9	52.3	29.9
This college has a good reputation for its social activities*	76.5	30.0	42.5	40.8	41.3
A visit to this campus*	75.1	35.5	37.7	47.4	30.1
My parents/relatives wanted me to come here	68.7	28.9	42.5	27.9	37.1
I wanted to live near home	68.3	37.0	30.4	39.1	30.5
I was attracted by the religious affiliation/orientation of this college*	57.2	24.2	27.5	28.4	36.6
Rankings in national magazines	57.1	18.0	34.9	25.5	37.2
High school counselor advised me*	52.4	16.4	32.5	23.4	34.0
My teacher advised me*	44.2	7.7	32.8	12.2	37.1
I was admitted through an Early Action or Early Decision program	42.9	25.5	14.8	26.9	19.8
Not offered aid by first choice	39.9	16.2	22.5	16.9	24.6
Could not afford first choice	36.3	20.1	17.1	16.3	18.9
Private college counselor advised me*	31.0	7.7	18.0	13.3	25.1
The athletic department recruited me*	6.6	1.1	3.3	3.6	6.1

Note: \* indicates significant difference between Chalon and Doheny students in overall responses

## Financing a College Education

Of the top five factors impacting college choice for MSMU freshmen, two were related to net cost – financial assistance and cost of attending the institution (Table 1). Across the nation, students at participating Catholic institutions responded similarly to these same factors. Sixty-four percent (64%) considered the offer of financial assistance and 44% considered the cost of attendance as being “very important”; these numbers are even higher at MSMU, with 74% and 49% reporting on these two factors respectively.

After carefully exploring their options and choosing to attend MSMU, over 90% of freshmen have concerns about their ability to pay for college (see Table 2).

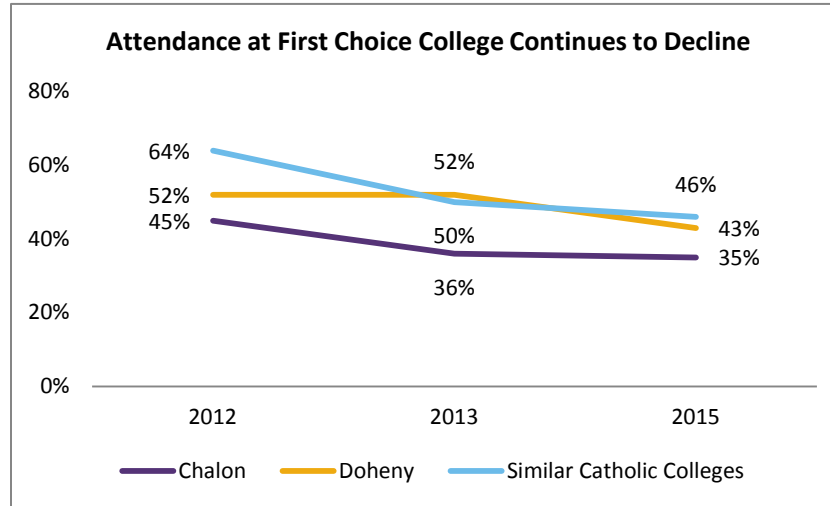
**Table 2: Concerns about Financing College**

Do you have any concerns about your ability to finance your college education?	Chalon %	Doheny %
None (I am confident that I will have sufficient funds)	8.3	7.6
Some (but I probably will have enough funds)	56.9	56.3
Major (not sure I will have enough funds to complete college)	34.8	36.0

## Fewer Attending Their First Choice

In 2015, MSMU was the first choice for 43% of Doheny respondents and 35% of Chalon respondents. Since 2012, attendance at students' first choice colleges has declined at MSMU and at other similar Catholic institutions across the nation (see Figure 1).<sup>1</sup>

Figure 1



## Students' Self-Perceptions

When asked to rate themselves relative to an average person their age, over half rated themselves above average in terms of their drive to achieve, understanding of others, cooperativeness, self-understanding and leadership and academic abilities. However, MSMU freshmen had significantly lower perceptions of their own abilities in their intellectual self-confidence, physical health, and math and writing abilities than did women at similar participating Catholic colleges (see Table 3).

Table 3: Self-Ratings

Rate yourself on each of the following traits as compared with the average person your age.	MSMU	Chalon		Doheny	
	Highest 10% + Above Average (%)	Highest 10% (%)	Above average (%)	Highest 10% (%)	Above average (%)
Drive to achieve	80.3	42.1	38.8	36.4	42.9
Understanding of others	78.3	33.9	48.5	30.1	42.3
Cooperativeness	75.8	29.7	50.2	29.6	40.7
Self-understanding	55.9	21.9	35.4	18.2	35.9
Leadership ability	54.3	22.4	27.2	31.3	29.3
Academic ability	52.5	8.0	49.6	7.6	37.9
Creativity	49.5	16.8	31.4	19.6	31.7
Competitiveness	47.4	14.6	29.9	16.1	35.2
Self-confidence (intellectual) ∅∅	43.9	13.6	28.2	15.7	31.3

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B for participating similar Catholic colleges.

Rate yourself on each of the following traits as compared with the average person your age.	MSMU	Chalon		Doheny	
	Highest 10% + Above Average (%)	Highest 10% (%)	Above average (%)	Highest 10% (%)	Above average (%)
Self-confidence (social)	43.4	15.3	24.8	18.2	29.8
Spirituality	43.2	20.8	22.6	19.9	23.0
Emotional health	39.7	14.7	23.1	13.1	29.3
Risk-taking	39.7	12.8	26.4	12.8	27.6
Computer skills	37.2	8.4	25.9	9.5	31.7
Writing ability ◊	36.5	7.8	30.7	7.6	26.3
Physical health ◊◊	33.8	12.5	22.9	9.1	22.3
Public speaking ability	31.0	11.8	19.5	11.2	19.4
Artistic ability	26.4	7.3	23.0	6.5	14.6
Mathematical ability ◊◊◊	23.7	7.0	20.9	3.6	14.3

Note: ◊ indicates MSMU students were significantly lower than their peers at similar participating Catholic colleges, with ◊◊◊ indicates areas of greatest difference.

## Expectations for College

When asked about their expectations for college, most students estimated that the chances were “very good” that they would: socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group (73%), make at least a “B” average (60%), be satisfied with their college choice (58%), discuss course content with students outside of class (56%), and get a job to help pay for college expenses (55%). Most students felt that there was “little to no” chance that they would take a leave of absence temporarily (93%), play intercollegiate sports (85%), or take a course exclusively online at another institution (74%).

Students from both campuses did not differ in their top ten expectations overall, but a higher percentage of Chalon students expect to socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group (79% vs. 15%) and to participate in student clubs/ groups (54% vs. 39%). A higher percentage of Doheny students expect to communicate regularly with their professors (49% vs. 44%) and to work full-time while attending college (14% vs. 9%).

Several aspects here may serve as early warning signs and should warrant careful attention by MSMU faculty and staff. Over 60% of respondents indicated that they expect seek personal counseling, 35% expect to work full-time while attending college, and 25% expect to transfer to another college before graduating (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Expectations for College**

What is your best guess as to the chances that you will:	MSMU	Chalon		Doheny	
	Some + Very Good (%)	Very good (%)	Some (%)	Very good (%)	Some (%)
Socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group *	96.0	79.3	18.5	64.1	29.2
Be satisfied with your college	95.6	59.3	37.1	55.3	39.1
Make at least a 'B' average?	95.1	61.9	34.8	55.1	37.8
Communicate regularly with your professors	92.8	43.6	48.7	48.7	44.7
Discuss course content with students outside of class *	92.1	60.0	33.8	50.8	39.0
Get a job to help pay for college expenses	89.4	55.5	32.1	54.3	37.6
Participate in volunteer or community service work	86.6	46.0	41.6	41.6	43.7
Participate in student clubs/groups *	82.3	53.5	33.0	38.6	38.1

What is your best guess as to the chances that you will:	MSMU	Chalon		Doheny	
	Some + Very Good (%)	Very good (%)	Some (%)	Very good (%)	Some (%)
Work on a professor's research project	79.4	44.7	30.9	45.9	38.8
Vote in a local, state, or national election	77.9	48.9	28.5	51.0	27.6
Have a roommate of different race/ethnicity	65.3	39.1	27.4	33.7	30.1
Seek personal counseling	63.3	21.5	40.7	27.4	37.6
Participate in a study abroad program	59.2	25.5	28.7	27.0	39.3
Participate in student government	40.5	8.8	30.7	10.8	31.3
Play club, intramural, or recreational sports	38.7	9.5	26.9	11.8	30.3
Participate in student protests or demonstrations	36.8	8.8	27.1	8.7	29.2
Take a course exclusively online at this institution *	36.7	15.4	25.3	11.7	19.4
Join a social fraternity or sorority	36.2	8.1	26.0	9.2	30.1
Work full-time while attending college *	35.2	9.1	19.3	14.2	30.5
Change career choice	31.1	7.3	25.1	4.1	25.4
Change major field	29.0	5.8	22.5	4.6	25.4
Take courses from more than one college simultaneously	28.5	7.3	18.9	9.2	22.4
Transfer to another college before graduating *	25.5	5.9	14.7	9.1	23.4
Take a course exclusively online at a different institution	17.8	4.8	12.9	4.6	13.3
Play intercollegiate athletics (e.g. NCAA or NAIA-sponsored) *	14.8	2.6	8.1	9.8	10.9
Take a leave of absence from this college temporarily	7.1	2.2	2.2	2.6	8.3

Note: \* indicates significant difference between Chalon and Doheny students in overall responses

## Goals and Future Achievements

When asked about the relative importance of potential goals and future achievements, the three most important or MSMU freshmen were: being very well off financially (93%), helping others in difficulty (91%), and raising a family (75%). Over half of the MSMU freshmen who responded rated the following as “not important”: creating artistic work (61%), writing original works (59%), and becoming accomplished in the performing arts (51%). When comparing the differences between “essential” or “very important” achievements for Chalon and Doheny freshmen, becoming an authority in their field and improving their understanding of other countries and cultures garnered more responses for Chalon than Doheny, while obtaining recognition for their contributions and becoming successful as business owners or community leaders were “essential” or “very important” to more Doheny than Chalon students (see Table 5).

**Table 5: Future Achievements Considered Essential and Very Important**

Please indicate the importance to you personally of each of the following:	MSMU	Chalon		Doheny	
	Essential + Very Important (%)	Essential (%)	Very important (%)	Essential (%)	Very important (%)
Being very well off financially	93.4	64.6	28.8	57.7	35.7
Helping others who are in difficulty	91.3	51.1	42.7	44.9	42.9
Raising a family	75.3	43.4	32.8	38.8	35.2
Obtaining recognition from my colleagues for contributions to my special field	63.2	22.3	39.4	26.5	38.8
Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures	63.1	33.1	32.0	24.1	36.1
Becoming an authority in my field	62.4	27.0	36.5	23.4	37.5
Influencing social values	56.2	16.8	39.8	16.1	39.6
Helping to promote racial understanding	55.2	24.5	30.8	20.1	35.1
Becoming a community leader*	42.6	13.4	26.0	22.8	24.4

Please indicate the importance to you personally of each of the following:	MSMU	Chalon		Doheny	
	Essential + Very Important (%)	Essential (%)	Very important (%)	Essential (%)	Very important (%)
Becoming successful in a business of my own*	42.5	15.5	22.5	23.1	25.6
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	40.4	15.8	26.4	12.8	25.1
Participating in a community action program	39.2	12.5	26.8	14.9	24.1
Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment	37.4	13.6	20.1	16.4	26.2
Keeping up to date with political affairs	33.5	9.2	24.4	13.8	19.5
Making a theoretical contribution to science	29.1	8.0	19.7	12.4	18.6
Influencing the political structure*	24.6	6.2	15.0	11.9	17.5
Becoming accomplished in one of the performing arts (acting, dancing, etc.)	20.3	10.6	8.0	12.8	9.7
Writing original works (poems, novels, etc.)	16.8	6.2	7.7	9.2	11.8
Creating artistic work (painting, sculpture, etc.)*	14.9	5.1	7.3	9.2	9.2

Note: \* indicates significant difference between Chalon and Doheny students in overall responses

## Implications

The data suggest that the entering freshman class of 2015 includes students who are highly engaged and striving for ambitious and fulfilling life goals. Eighty percent (80%) of MSMU students rate their drive to achieve as above average, 91% reported that they want to help others who are in difficulty, and 87% reported they will want to volunteer or perform community service work. At the same time, the data reveal some patterns that warrant careful attention and planning. The factors identified as “challenges” below are among a larger set of factors that have often been associated with attrition in other research.

### Opportunities

- 80% rate their drive to achieve as above average.
- 91% want to help others who are in difficulty.
- 96% expect to be satisfied with MSMU.

### Challenges

- 21% of Chalon freshmen indicate that they are likely to transfer to another college.
- 28% of Chalon and 45% of Doheny freshmen think they are likely to work full-time to help pay for college.
- 38% of all freshmen (and 57% at Chalon) indicate that MSMU was not their first choice.

## Looking Ahead

When asked, 79% of MSMU freshmen believe they will graduate in four years. However, our research shows that recent cohorts of Chalon freshmen graduated at a rate of 52% in 4 years, and 66% in 6 years.<sup>2</sup> The HERI Expected Graduation Rate Calculator estimates that 35% of 2015 MSMU freshmen will graduate in 4 years, and 53% will graduate in 6 years.

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<sup>2</sup> IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey, Winter 2016

# Appendix A

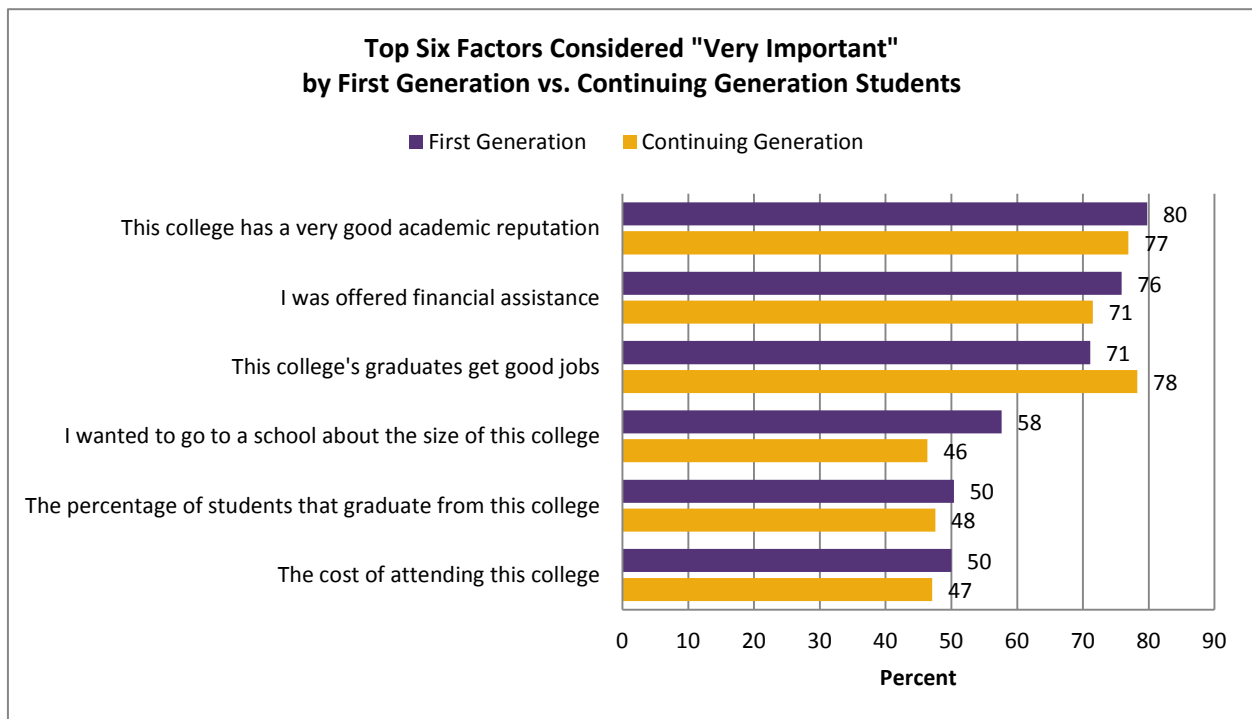
## Special Focus on First Generation College Students

As noted in the report, 56% of the respondents are among the first generation in their family to attend college (46% at Chalon, 69% at Doheny). Compared to continuing generation students (those who have at least one parent with some college education), first generation students may face additional challenges as they begin their college career and learn how to navigate the higher educational system. The following analyses compare responses between these two groups regarding their factors in choosing a college, self-perceptions and college expectations.

### Factors in Choosing a College

More first generation students than continuing generation students responded that MSMU was their first choice (43% vs. 33%). First generation students and continuing generation students do not differ significantly in their perceptions of the three most important factors affecting choice: academic reputation, financial assistance, and graduates getting good jobs. However, first generation students were more likely than continuing generation students to consider financial assistance, the size of the college, and the cost of attendance, as important factors in their decision to attend the Mount (see Figure A-1).

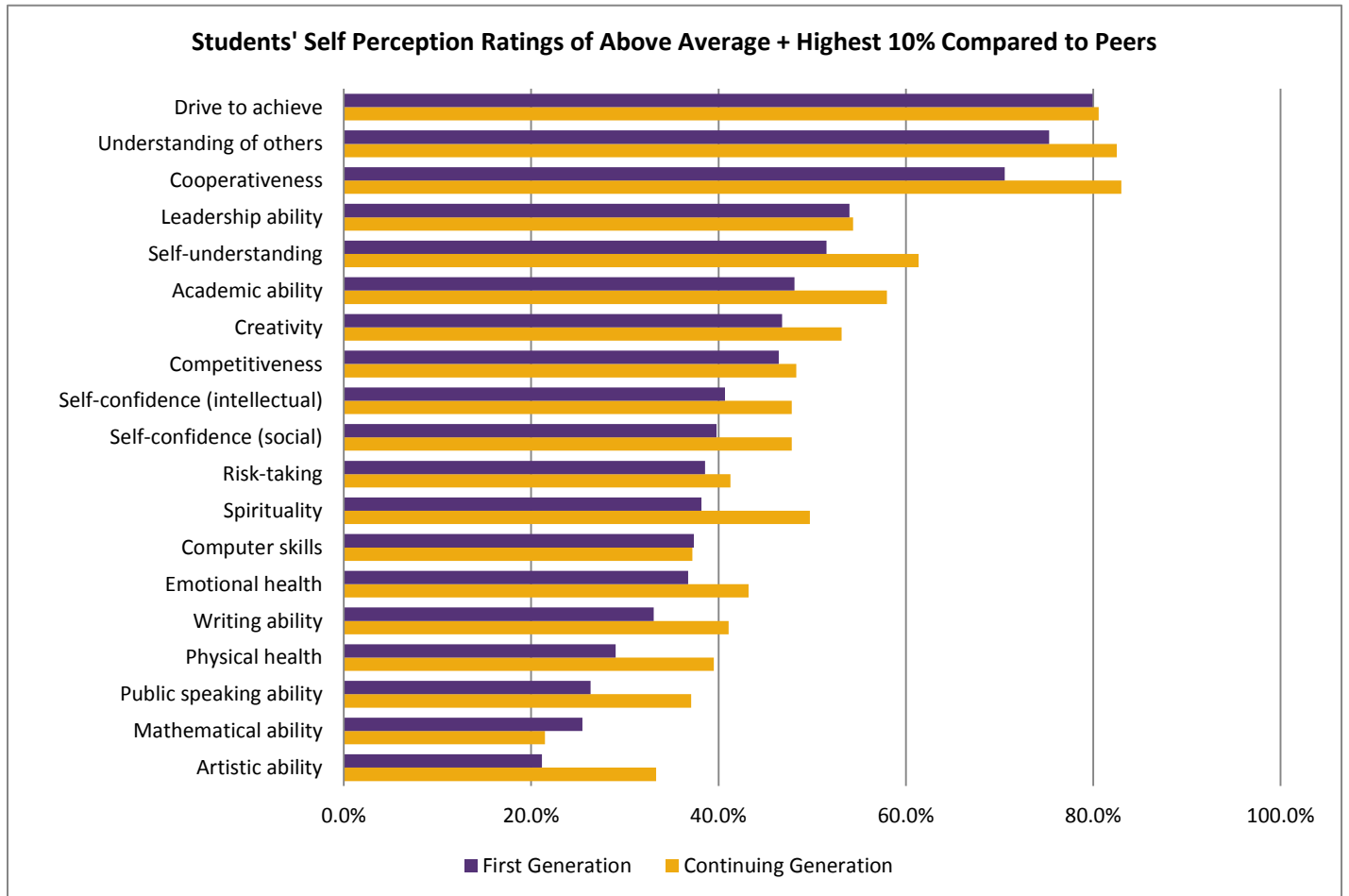
Figure A-1



# Self-Perception

First generation and continuing generation students rated themselves almost exactly the same in three areas: drive to achieve, leadership ability and computer skills, and first generation students rated themselves higher on their mathematical abilities. However on the other fifteen measures, first generation students rated themselves lower than continuing generation students, perhaps indicating a lack of self-confidence overall (see Figure A-2).

Figure A-2

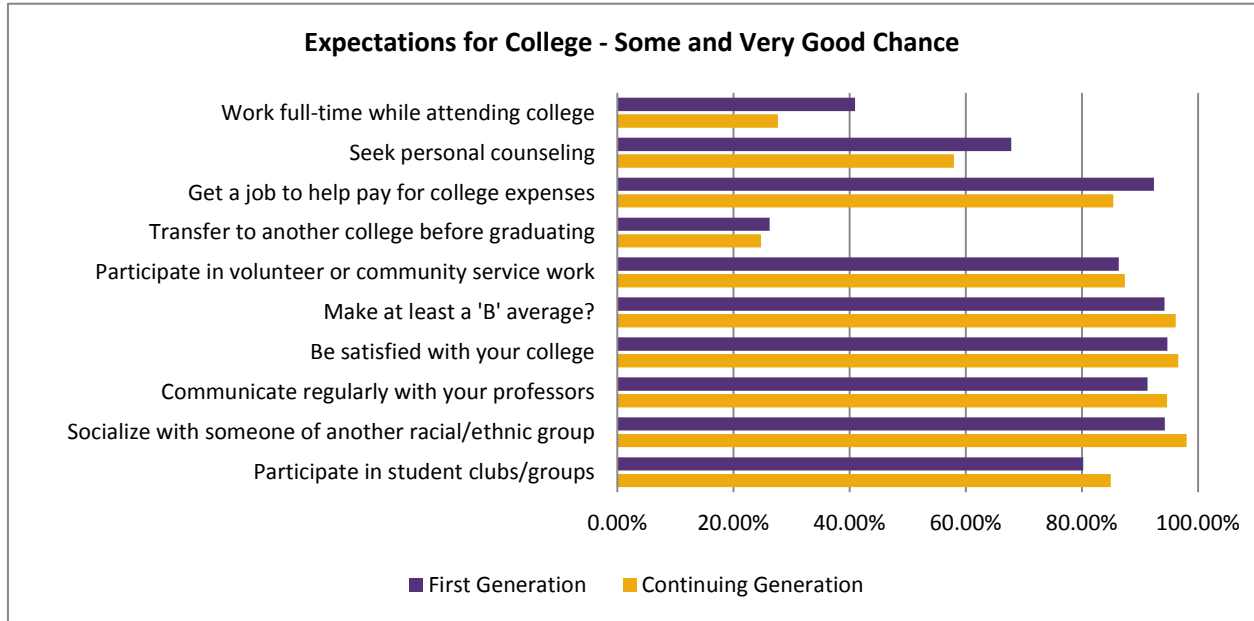




# College Expectations

More first generation students than continuing generation students indicated that they will likely get a job to help pay for college, work full-time, and seek personal counseling. Conversely, continuing generation students responded that they would be more likely to participate in student clubs/ groups, socialize with someone of another racial or ethnic group, and communicate with their professors (see Figure A-3).

Figure A-3



## Appendix B

### Similar Catholic Colleges Which Participated in the Fall 2015 Freshman Survey

<b>College or University</b>	<b>State Abbreviation</b>
Albertus Magnus College	CT
College of Mount St. Vincent	NY
Holy Names University	CA
Iona College	NY
Marygrove College	MI
Mount Saint Mary's University	CA
Regis College	MA
Rosemont College	PA
Saint Catherine College	KY
Saint Peter's University	NJ
Silver Lake College of the Holy Family	WI
Trinity Washington University	DC
Villa Maria College	NY