

Freshman Survey Results, Fall 2017

Traditional Undergraduate Freshmen, Baccalaureate TUG and Associate TUG

Each fall, Mount Saint Mary's University 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 457 freshmen respondents who were enrolled at MSMU in the Fall 2017. The survey has a 95% response rate overall, including 293 Baccalaureate TUG participants (96% response rate) and 164 Associate TUG participants (93% response rate).

Demographics and Background Characteristics

- 47% are among the first generation in their family to attend college (39% Baccalaureate TUG, 60% Associate TUG).
- 35% of all respondents averaged A+/A/A- grades in high school, 62% averaged B+/B/B- grades, and 3% averaged C+/C grades in high school.

College Choice

Over 50% of the MSMU freshmen applied to six or more institutions. 43% of MSMU freshmen said MSMU was their first choice in 2017.

Financial assistance and academic reputation were the most important factors in the decision to attend MSMU. Students were asked to rate the importance of various factors in their decision, and over 70% of the freshmen identified being offered financial assistance and the college's good academic reputation as "very important".

On average, Baccalaureate TUG freshmen were more likely than their Associate TUG peers to identify the availability of financial assistance as an important factor in their decision to choose MSMU. Compared to Associate TUG freshmen, Baccalaureate TUG freshmen indicated that the influence of their parents and relatives was also important.

Associate TUG freshmen had higher average ratings of importance than their Baccalaureate TUG 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	Baccalaureate TUG		Associate TUG	
	Very + Somewhat (%)	Very (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very (%)	Somewhat (%)
This college has a very good academic reputation	98.0%	70.6%	27.7%	77.6%	19.9%
I was offered financial assistance	96.9%	77.9%	19.7%	74.1%	21.6%
This college's graduates get good jobs	93.0%	69.4%	23.3%	67.5%	26.1%
This college's graduates gain admission to top graduate/professional schools	85.0%	44.9%	38.2%	48.1%	40.1%
The cost of attending this college	84.6%	48.3%	37.2%	55.3%	28.0%
This college's graduates make a difference in the world	82.7%	50.4%	30.6%	52.2%	33.5%
I wanted to go to a school about the size of this college	81.3%	51.4%	26.4%	61.7%	25.9%
A visit to this campus	77.3%	36.8%	39.2%	52.8%	26.7%
This college has a good reputation for its social and extracurricular activities	76.5%	30.1%	41.5%	41.4%	43.8%
I wanted to live near home	67.4%	38.1%	27.3%	42.0%	29.0%
My parents/relatives wanted me to come here	63.7%	24.1%	39.7%	27.2%	36.4%
High school counselor advised me	56.5%	17.6%	35.2%	28.6%	34.8%
I was attracted by the religious affiliation/orientation of this college	54.3%	22.1%	30.5%	29.2%	28.0%
Rankings in national magazines	46.3%	13.0%	32.0%	18.0%	30.4%
My teacher advised me	45.0%	9.0%	32.1%	14.3%	37.9%
I was admitted through an Early Action or Early Decision program	41.1%	20.6%	18.5%	24.1%	20.4%
Not offered aid by first choice	40.7%	16.8%	23.8%	16.1%	24.8%
Private college counselor advised me	35.9%	10.4%	21.5%	16.8%	26.1%
Could not afford first choice	35.8%	17.8%	18.5%	21.1%	13.7%

Financing a College Education

Two of the top five factors impacting college choice for MSMU freshmen were related to net cost (Table 1). At MSMU, 50% of students rated cost as a “very important” factor.

After carefully exploring their options and choosing to attend MSMU, over 87% of freshmen have concerns about their ability to pay for college (see Table 2).

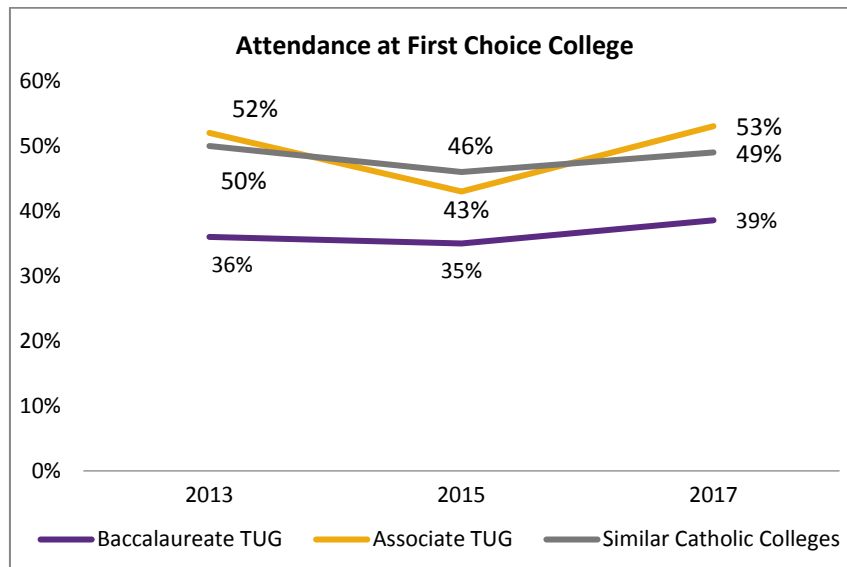
Table 2: Concerns about Financing College

Do you have any concerns about your ability to finance your college education?	Baccalaureate TUG %	Associate TUG %
None (I am confident that I will have sufficient funds)	15.8	7.5
Some (but I probably will have enough funds)	59.5	53.8
Major (not sure I will have enough funds to complete college)	24.7	38.8

A Few More Attending Their First Choice

In 2017, MSMU was the first choice for 53% of Associate TUG respondents and 39% of Baccalaureate TUG respondents. Compared to survey respondents in 2015, a higher percentage of students reported that MSMU is their first choice. A similar increase can be observed at other similar Catholic institutions across the nation (see Figure 1).¹

Figure 1



Students' Self-Perceptions

When asked to rate themselves relative to an average person their age, over half of MSMU freshmen rated themselves above average in terms of their understanding of others, drive to achieve, compassion, and leadership abilities. However, MSMU freshmen had significantly lower perceptions of their own abilities in their academic ability, physical health, and math abilities and intellectual confidence 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	Baccalaureate TUG		Associate TUG	
	Highest 10% + Above Average (%)	Highest 10% (%)	Above average (%)	Highest 10% (%)	Above average (%)
Understanding of others	78.9	30.1	50.9	38.3	37.0
Drive to achieve	77.8	33.6	43.6	43.2	35.8
Compassion	77.3	34.6	45.0	37.5	35.6
Leadership ability ◊	52.2	17.9	32.1	26.5	29.6
Academic ability ◊◊◊	50.1	6.9	48.6	7.5	32.9

¹ See Appendix A for participating similar Catholic colleges.

Rate yourself on each of the following traits as compared with the average person your age.	MSMU	Baccalaureate TUG		Associate TUG	
	Highest 10% + Above Average (%)	Highest 10% (%)	Above average (%)	Highest 10% (%)	Above average (%)
Creativity	48.1	13.1	33.2	18.5	32.7
Spirituality	41.4	13.8	25.5	20.4	24.7
Self-confidence (social)	40.5	13.4	25.5	19.1	24.1
Self-confidence (intellectual) ◊◊	40.4	9.7	29.4	19.8	22.8
Risk-taking	38.3	9.3	24.8	19.1	26.5
Emotional health ◊	37.0	9.7	27.7	16.7	19.8
Physical health ◊◊◊	35.8	7.6	27.6	12.5	24.4
Writing ability ◊	33.8	8.3	27.7	9.2	20.9
Public speaking ability	31.3	10.0	19.7	16.0	18.4
Mathematical ability ◊◊	26.2	5.9	25.3	7.4	9.8
Artistic ability	25.3	18.1	49.4	7.5	17.5
Computer skills	12.6	1.4	11.8	3.7	8.0

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

Expectations for College

When asked about their expectations for college, most students estimated that there was a “very good” chance that they would: get a job to help pay for college expenses (58%), and vote in a local, state, or national election (56%).

Students from both campuses did not differ in their top ten expectations overall, but a higher percentage of Baccalaureate TUG students expect to seek personal counseling (56% vs. 54%), to take a course exclusively online (40% vs. 38%), and to participate in a student club or group (86% vs. 84%). A higher percentage of Associate TUG students expect to take a temporary leave of absence from this college (16% vs. 7%), transfer to another college before graduating (34% vs. 24%), and take courses from more than once college simultaneously (39% vs. 27%).

Several aspects here may serve as early warning signs and should warrant careful attention by MSMU faculty and staff. Overall, 55% of respondents indicated that they expect seek personal counseling and 28% 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	Baccalaureate TUG		Associate TUG	
	Some + Very Good (%)	Very good (%)	Some (%)	Very good (%)	Some (%)
Communicate regularly with your professors	90.3	40.3	47.3	55.6	39.4
Get a job to help pay for college expenses	87.6	49.1	37.5	66.7	22.6
Participate in student clubs/groups	85.3	42.0	44.1	45.6	38.1
Participate in volunteer or community service work	84.0	37.1	46.3	42.5	42.5
Vote in a local, state, or national election	81.9	53.7	29.0	58.1	22.5
Participate in a study abroad program *	56.3	18.4	31.8	29.6	37.7

What is your best guess as to the chances that you will:	MSMU	Baccalaureate TUG		Associate TUG	
	Some + Very Good (%)	Very good (%)	Some (%)	Very good (%)	Some (%)
Work on a professor's research project *	55.8	14.6	36.1	22.6	42.1
Seek personal counseling	55.2	18.3	37.7	20.0	33.8
Take a course exclusively online	39.1	10.2	29.7	5.6	31.9
Participate in student government	37.9	8.5	28.5	14.5	25.2
Join a social fraternity or sorority	33.6	8.1	24.7	15.0	20.0
Take courses from more than one college simultaneously *	31.2	8.1	18.4	11.3	28.1
Change major field	27.0	4.6	20.8	4.4	25.6
Change career choice	28.2	2.5	23.6	1.3	30.6
Transfer to another college before graduating	27.7	4.2	20.1	10.0	23.8
Take a leave of absence from this college temporarily	10.4	1.1	6.0	5.0	11.3

Note: * indicates significant difference between Baccalaureate TUG and Associate TUG students in responses

Goals and Future Achievements

The three most important potential goals and future achievements for MSMU freshmen were: being very well off financially (92%), helping others in difficulty (87%), and raising a family (79%). Over half of the MSMU freshmen who responded rated the following as “not important”: creating artistic work (57%), writing original works (55%), and becoming accomplished in the performing arts (55%). When comparing the differences between “essential” or “very important” achievements for Baccalaureate TUG and Associate TUG freshmen, improving their understanding of other countries and cultures and developing a meaningful philosophy of life garnered more responses for Baccalaureate TUG than Associate TUG. Obtaining recognition for their contributions and becoming successful as business owners or community leaders were “essential” or “very important” to more Associate TUG than Baccalaureate TUG 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	Baccalaureate TUG		Associate TUG	
	Essential + Very (%)	Essential (%)	Very important (%)	Essential (%)	Very important (%)
Being very well off financially	92.1	65.5	24.3	73.8	22.5
Helping others who are in difficulty	86.9	52.8	34.2	56.9	30.0
Raising a family	78.7	47.2	29.9	54.0	27.3
Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures	71.2	32.5	40.0	39.2	29.7
Helping to promote racial understanding	68.0	33.2	33.9	33.5	36.1
Integrating spirituality into my life	60.1	34.2	24.6	40.6	21.9
Obtaining recognition from my colleagues for contributions to my special field	59.0	22.3	34.3	25.3	38.0
Becoming an authority in my field	58.5	21.6	34.4	25.2	37.7
Influencing social values	55.1	18.3	36.3	23.3	32.7
Becoming a community leader	49.1	22.3	26.1	22.6	27.7
Keeping up to date with political affairs	49.1	20.1	28.6	18.2	31.4
Participating in a community action program	46.0	18.4	27.3	21.7	24.8

Please indicate the importance to you personally of each of the following:	MSMU	Baccalaureate TUG		Associate TUG	
	Essential + Very (%)	Essential (%)	Very important (%)	Essential (%)	Very important (%)
Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment	44.3	15.2	27.9	19.1	27.4
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	40.6	17.3	23.7	15.8	24.1
Becoming successful in a business of my own *	39.4	17.0	18.0	22.6	24.5
Influencing the political structure	31.7	10.2	19.1	14.5	21.4
Making a theoretical contribution to science *	29.0	9.5	16.2	14.6	20.3
Becoming accomplished in one of the performing arts (acting, dancing, etc.) *	17.2	7.7	8.8	7.6	10.8
Creating artistic work (painting, sculpture, etc.)	15.6	5.6	8.5	8.8	9.4
Writing original works (poems, novels, etc.) *	15.1	6.4	5.7	11.8	8.7

Note: * indicates significant difference between Baccalaureate TUG and Associate TUG students in overall responses

Implications

The data suggest that the entering freshman class of 2017 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 table below sheds light on a few challenges and opportunities that we face in serving the incoming class of 2017. The factors identified as “challenges” are among a larger set of factors that have often been associated with attrition in other research.

Challenges	Opportunities
44% of all freshmen (38% Baccalaureate TUG) indicated that MSMU was not their first choice.	The majority of all freshmen who chose MSMU did so because they believed that the university’s graduates get good jobs (69%) and make a difference in the world (51%).
28% of Baccalaureate TUG freshmen indicated that they are likely to transfer to another college.	74% of all freshmen plan on pursuing graduate degrees.
56% of all freshmen indicated they have frequently felt overwhelmed by all they have to do.	49% of all freshman indicated that becoming a community leader is “Very Important” or “Essential” to them.

Looking ahead

When asked, 77% of MSMU freshmen believe they will graduate in four years. However, our research shows that recent cohorts of Baccalaureate TUG freshmen graduated at a rate of 46% in 4 years, and 70% in 6 years.² The HERI Expected Graduation Rate Calculator estimates that 32% of 2017 MSMU freshmen will graduate in 4 years, and 59% will graduate in 6 years.

² IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey, Winter 2018

Appendix A

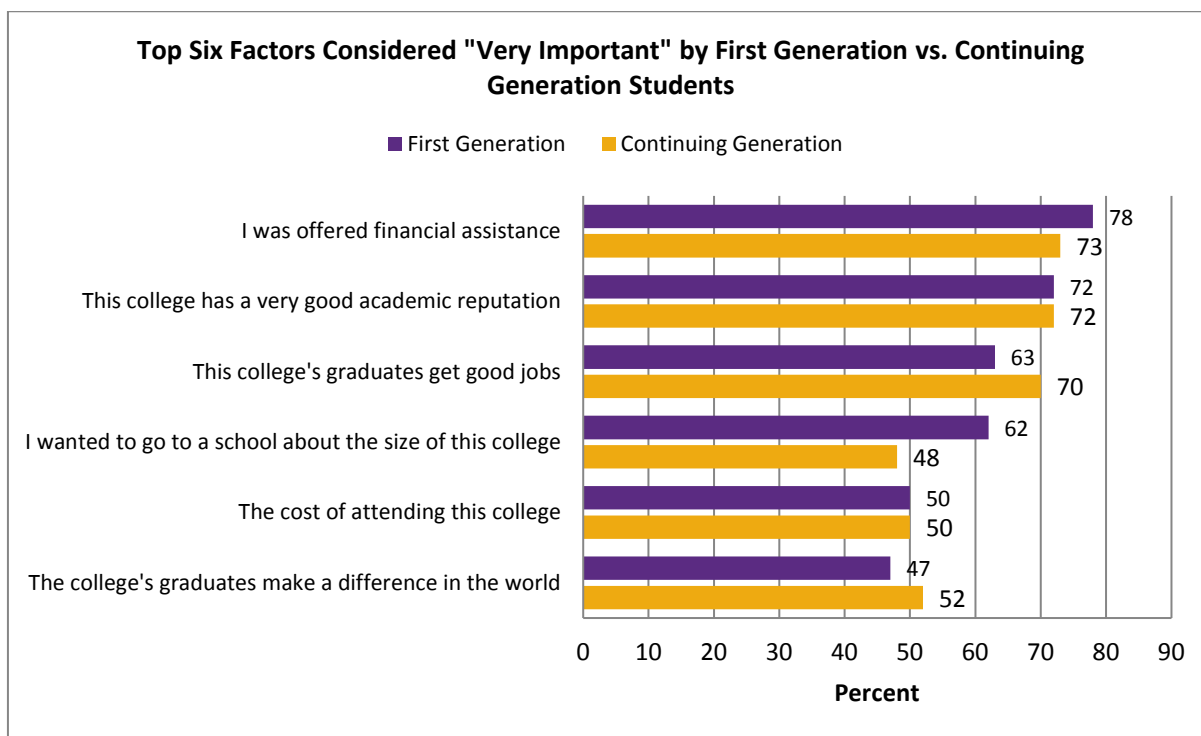
Special Focus on First Generation College Students

First Generation College Students

More first generation students (those from families without a parent who had any college experience) than continuing generation students (those from families in which at least one parent had some college education) responded that MSMU was their first choice (48% vs. 40%).

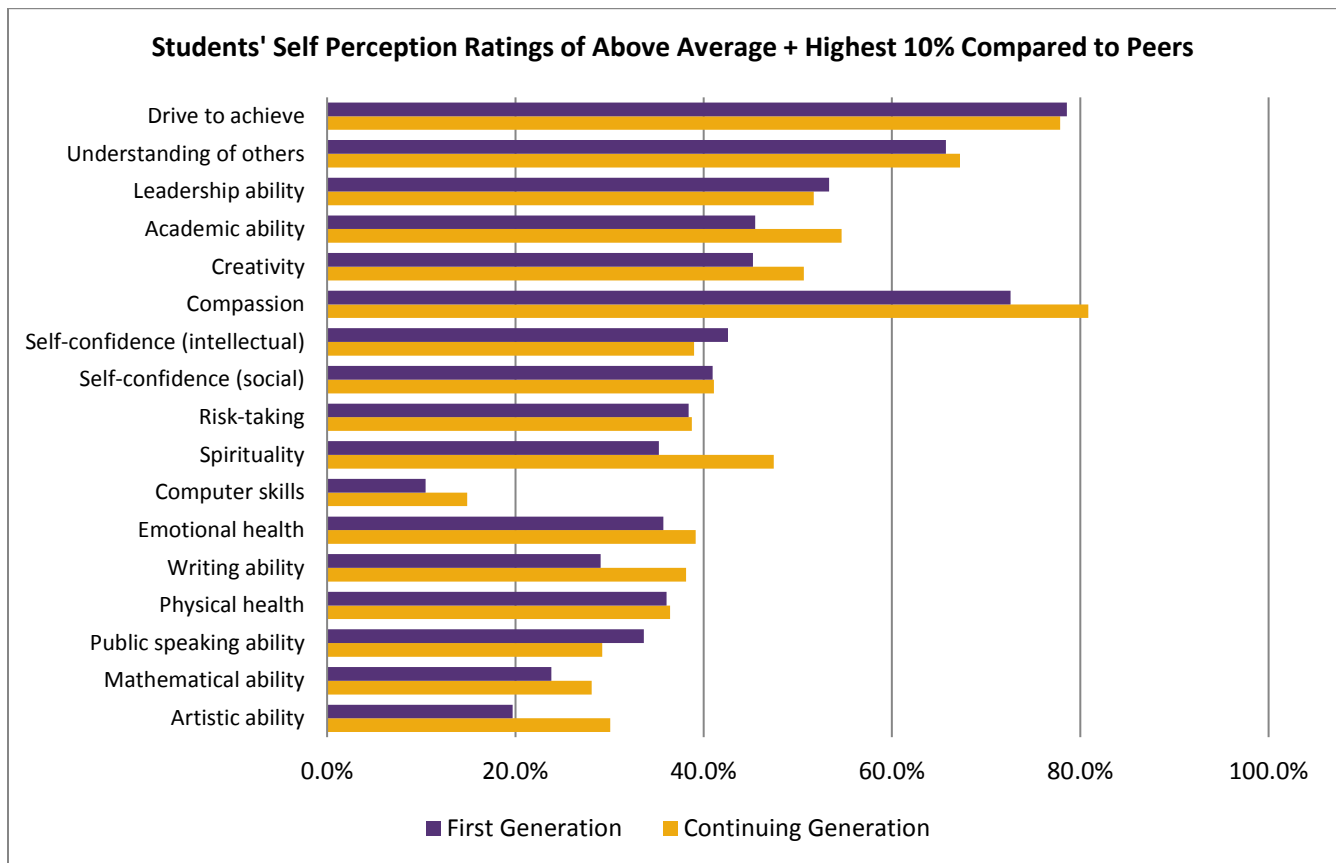
First generation students and continuing generation students do not differ significantly in their perceptions of the factors affecting choice, including: financial assistance, academic reputation, and graduates getting good jobs. However, more first generation students considered the size of the college an important factor in their decision than did continuing generation students (see Figure 2).

Figure 2



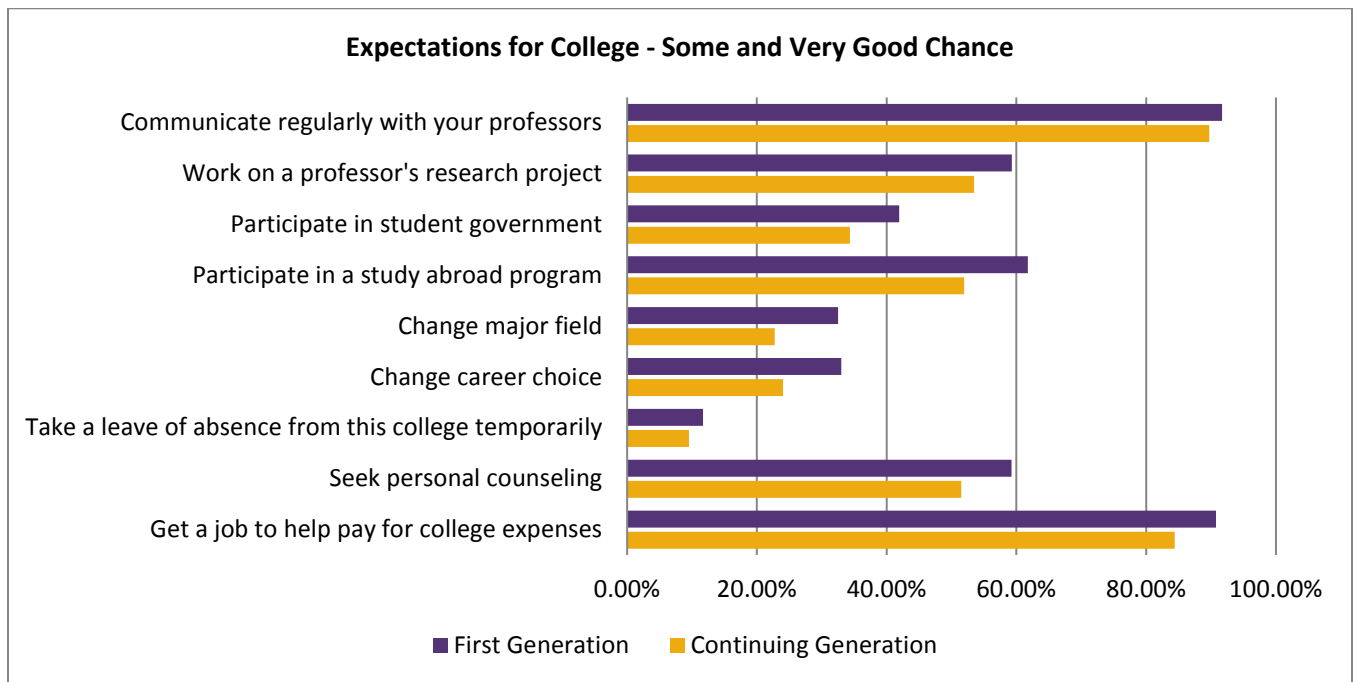
Self-Perception

First generation and continuing generation students rated themselves almost exactly the same in four areas: drive to achieve, physical health, risk-taking and social self-confidence, and first generation students rated themselves higher on their leadership ability, public speaking abilities and intellectual self-confidence. However on the other ten measures, first generation students rated themselves lower than continuing generation students, perhaps indicating a lack of self-confidence overall. In particular, first generation students rated themselves much lower on their academic, artistic, writing, and mathematical abilities, as well as their computer skills.



College Expectations

More first generation students than continuing generation students indicated that they will communicate regularly with their professors, work on a professor’s research project, participate in student government, and participate in a study abroad program. At the same time, they indicated they were much more likely change their major and career choice, take a leave of absence, seek personal counseling, and get a job to help pay for college expenses.



Appendix B

Similar Catholic Colleges Which Participated in the Fall 2017 Freshman Survey

College or University	State Abbreviation
Holy Names University	CA
Marian University	WI
Marygrove College	MI
Mount Saint Mary's University	CA
Regis College	MA
Rivier University	NH
Saint Peter's University	NJ
Trinity Washington University	DC
University of Saint Joseph	CT
Villa Maria College	NY