

November 2008

The American College Senior

College Senior Survey Spring 2007

PLANS AFTER COLLEGE

Graduation from college produces both excitement and anxiety for college seniors. The spring of senior year is often consumed with end of the year graduation activities, final paper submissions, and, most likely, planning for the next steps in life. In 2007, the CIRP College Senior Survey (CSS) (a follow-up to the CIRP Freshman Survey (TFS)) asked 20,710 seniors at 109 colleges and universities about their plans for the immediate and distant future. Figure 1 shows some of the activities these students planned to be involved in during the coming fall. The most popular Fall 2007 activities were full-time work and/or graduate or professional school, which 66 percent and 26 percent of seniors planned to be involved in, respectively. While most students indicated plans to either work *or* attend graduate or professional school, some students planned to do both—approximately 7 percent of students reported they would be working full time in the fall while simultaneously attending graduate/professional school. This represented 10 percent of those who were planning to work in the fall and 27 percent of those on their way to graduate or professional school. Among those planning on

attending graduate/professional school, another 23 percent planned to have a part-time job while they attended school.

In addition to working and graduate/professional school, other activities that a good number of seniors planned to do in the upcoming fall included traveling (16 percent), performing volunteer work (14 percent), participating in community service organizations (9 percent), attending undergraduate college full-time (8 percent), and staying home to be with or start a family (4 percent).

JOB OFFERS AND GRADUATE SCHOOL ACCEPTANCES

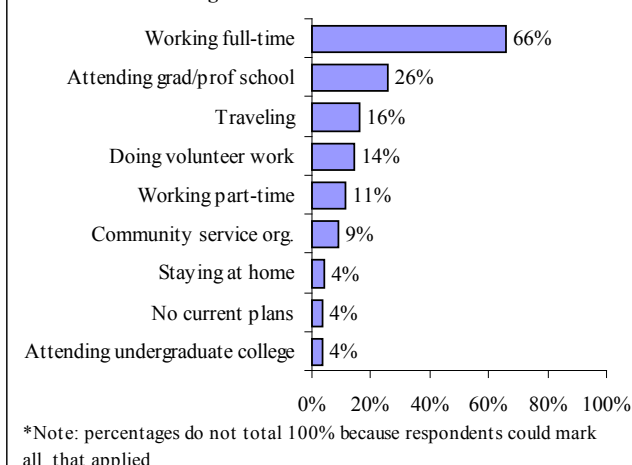
Among students who were planning on working full-time in the coming fall, almost half (48 percent) indicated that they had already received a job offer by the time they took the CSS. About four in ten (41 percent) had not yet received an offer but were looking, and the remaining 11 percent reported that they were not yet actively looking for a position.

Among the students who reported plans to attend graduate/professional school in the fall, almost six in ten (57 percent) had already applied and accepted an offer of admission. Eighteen percent had applied but had not received any acceptances, and 2 percent were accepted and decided to defer admission. The remaining 22 percent of students reported that they had not yet applied to graduate school but were planning to do so in the future.

CAREER PATHS

In terms of long-term career goals, the CSS asks students to indicate the lifetime career they will most likely pursue. The most common careers that students selected were in business (19 percent), elementary or secondary education (12 percent), art (7 percent), medicine (6 percent), law (6 percent), engineering (4 percent), nursing (4 percent) and other health professions (4 percent), although 9 percent of students were undecided. Interestingly, there were some notable differences in likely careers between students who planned to work, attend graduate school, or do both in the coming fall (Table 1). Specifically, students who planned to work full time in the fall were the most likely to indicate that they planned

Figure 1: Plans for Fall 2007



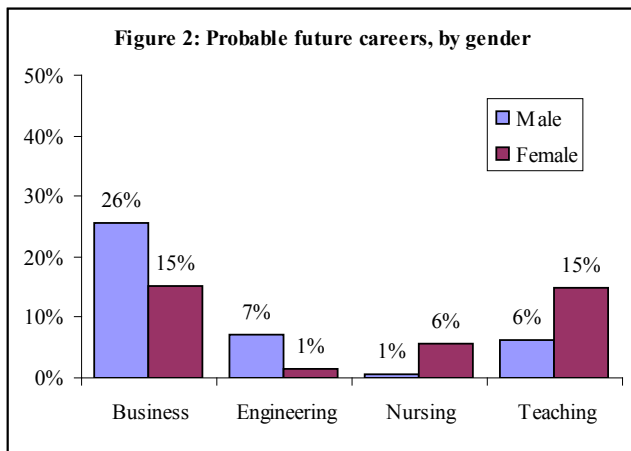
to be businessmen or women (25 percent did so, compared to 8 percent of those attending graduate school in the fall and 16 percent of those working and attending school), while those who planned to only attend graduate school in the fall were the most likely to want to be doctors or lawyers (15-16 percent of students attending graduate school in the upcoming fall planned to be lawyers or doctors, compared to 2-4 percent of all other students). Those who indicated that they would be working full time while attending school in the fall were the most likely to be planning careers in elementary or secondary education (25 percent of these students indicated they planned to be teachers, compared to 10 percent to 11 percent of those who would only be working or only attending grad school).

Table 1: Probable future career, by fall plans

Percent indicating probable career	Fall Plans		
	Working full-time only	Grad./ prof. school only	Working full-time & grad school
Business	25%	8%	16%
Teacher	10%	11%	25%
Lawyer	4%	15%	4%
Doctor (MD or DDS)	2%	16%	4%

For the most part, there were no significant gender differences in plans for Fall 2007 among men and women. However, females were more likely than males to indicate plans to participate in community service organizations and/or do volunteer work (10 percent and 17 percent of females did so, respectively, compared to 6 percent and 10 percent of males), and females were also more likely to plan to do some traveling (18 percent of females and 13 percent of males planned to travel in the fall).

In terms of long-term career goals, there were also very few differences among males and females. However, males were much more likely than females to report plans to go into business or engineering, while females were much more likely than males to indicate interests in nursing or teaching (Figure 2).



CHANGE IN CAREER GOALS FROM FRESHMAN YEAR

Approximately 15,000 students participated in both the 2007 CSS and the 2003 TFS, and 14,000 of these reported what they expected their careers to be on both surveys. Different career paths seemed to hold students' interest over the course of college at different rates. Elementary education had the highest rate of maintained interest; 67 percent of the students who reported expecting to go into this field when they entered college also reported that they intended to pursue it when they exited college. By contrast, farming/forestry had the lowest rate of maintained interest—only 14 percent of the students who expected to go into this field when they entered college still expected to go into it during their senior year. See Table 2 for more details.

Table 2: Maintenance of interest in specific careers

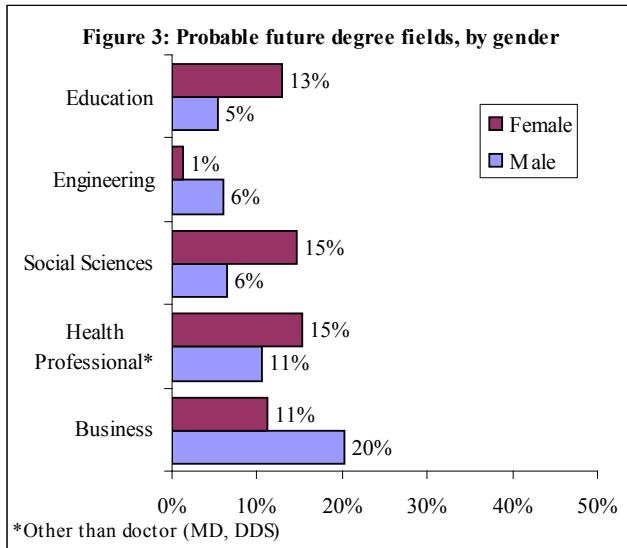
	Percent indicating career interest on CSS and TFS	# indicating interest in career on TFS
Education (elementary)	67%	538
Business	63%	2002
Engineer	58%	569
Military	52%	976
Artist	45%	1127
Doctor (MD or DDS)	45%	117
Education (secondary)	43%	1422
Social worker	32%	388
Research scientist	29%	339
Farmer or forester	14%	781

GRADUATE STUDY FIELDS

The CSS asks students who are planning on graduate study to indicate the field they intend to study. About 43 percent of students reported planning to attend graduate school at some point in the future, and the most common fields that these students intended to study were business or health-related professions, which 15 and 14 percent of students planned to obtain advanced degrees in, respectively. Approximately 12 percent of students indicated that they wanted to pursue an additional degree in the social sciences, and 10 percent planned to get degrees in education. Six percent intended to get advanced degrees in a humanities field, 5 percent intended to get an advanced degree in the biological sciences, and 4 percent planned a degree in history, political science or the fine arts. Approximately 3 percent of graduating seniors indicated an interest in obtaining a graduate degree in engineering.

As with ultimate career plans, there were few differences in graduate study fields between men and women. However, there were some differences that were similar to the differences in careers (Figure 3). Specifically, far more of the men than women who planned on graduate school desired an advanced degree in business (20 percent vs. 11 percent) or engineering (6 percent vs. 1 percent), while more women than men intended to obtain a degree

in education (13 percent vs. 5 percent), a health-related profession (15 percent vs. 11 percent) or a social science field (15 percent vs. 6 percent).



CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CHOOSING A CAREER

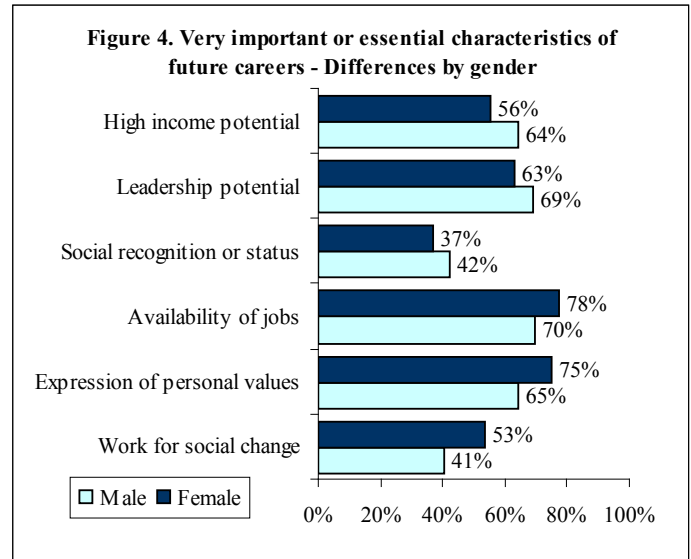
When considering future career paths, students can take many factors into account, and the CSS asked students to rate the importance of a variety of criteria when choosing a career path (Table 3). The two career characteristics that the most students rated very important or essential were having a stable, secure future, and having a good availability of jobs; 86 percent and 74 percent of students felt that these career attributes were essential or very important, respectively. On the low end, relatively few students (fewer than 40 percent) felt that having limited working hours or receiving social recognition or status are essential or very important aspects of a future career.

Table 3: Importance of various considerations when choosing a future career path

	Very important	Essential
Stable, secure future	43%	43%
Availability of jobs	49%	25%
Expression of personal values	45%	26%
Creativity and initiative	41%	25%
Leadership potential	41%	24%
High income potential	37%	22%
Work for social change	29%	20%
Social recognition or status	29%	10%
Limited working hours	22%	6%

To some extent, men and women tended to value different career characteristics (Figure 4). More men than women felt that having a high income potential was an essential or very important characteristic of their future career (64 percent of men felt this way vs. 56 percent of women), as was having leadership potential

(69 vs. 63 percent) and/or social status and recognition (42 vs. 37 percent). By contrast, more women than men felt that essential or very important career characteristics were good availability of jobs (78 percent of women valued this characteristic highly vs. 70 percent of men), being able to express personal values (75 vs. 65 percent), and working for social change (53 vs. 41 percent).



COLLEGE SENIORS HAVE GOOD IDEA OF FUTURE PLANS; MEN AND WOMEN GENERALLY PLAN ON DIFFERENT CAREER PATHS

Almost all of the 2007 CSS respondents had concrete plans for the coming fall; most often these plans included working and/or attending graduate school. The vast majority of seniors also had a good idea of what they wanted to do long-term as a career, and it seemed that many students were selecting fall 2007 activities with their long-term career goal in mind. The most popular careers that students aspired to were in business, education, law and medicine, and each of these careers pulled students in different ways immediately after graduation. Students who wanted to go into business as a career were most likely to go straight into full-time work, while those who wanted to be doctors or lawyers were most likely to go straight to graduate or professional school. Students who wanted to be teachers were most likely to plan on both work and school in the fall.

Although there were very few differences in immediate and long-term goals among men and women, there were some disparities that seemed to follow a general pattern. Specifically, men were more likely than women to desire technical careers and degrees, such as those in engineering and business. Women, by contrast, were more likely than men to aspire to more service-oriented careers and degrees, such as those in nursing, education, and other health professions (besides medicine). Part of the differences in career paths might be related to the differences between men and women in terms of what is valued in a career; among the seniors in our sample, men were more likely to value the extrinsic rewards of a career, such as high income and status, while women were more likely to value a career's intrinsic rewards, such as working for social change or expressing personal values.

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HERI

The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) is based in the Graduate School of Education & Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. The Institute serves as an interdisciplinary center for research, evaluation, information, policy studies, and research training in postsecondary education.

CIRP

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) is a national longitudinal study of the American higher education system. It is regarded as the most comprehensive source of information on college students. Established in 1966 at the American Council on Education, the CIRP is the nation's largest and oldest empirical study of higher education, involving data on some 1,900 institutions and over 13 million college students. The Higher Education Research Institute has administered the CIRP since 1973. The CIRP longitudinal program consists of The Freshman Survey, Your First College Year Survey, the College Senior Survey, and the triennial Faculty Survey. Information on the CIRP Freshman Survey, research and publications based on these data, and other research projects conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute can be found on the HERI website at: www.heri.ucla.edu

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