

Trends

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Active, Collaborative and Experiential Learning

Findings from the most recent *National Survey of Student Engagement* show that students who participate in collaborative learning and educational activities outside the classroom get better grades, are more satisfied with their education, and are more likely to remain in college. The findings also suggest that the gains from those practices are even greater for students from underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds or those who come to college less prepared than their peers.

On the *2006-2007 CSB/SJU Senior Survey*, students at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University generally describe an active, collaborative and engaged learning experience.

- ❑ **Classroom Participation.** Fully eight in ten CSB/SJU seniors indicate that they frequently ("often" or "very often") ask questions in class or contribute to classroom discussions. Men and women are equally likely to contribute to class in this way. CSB/SJU students are as likely as their peers at liberal arts colleges nationally to indicate that they regularly participate in classroom discussions (80%).

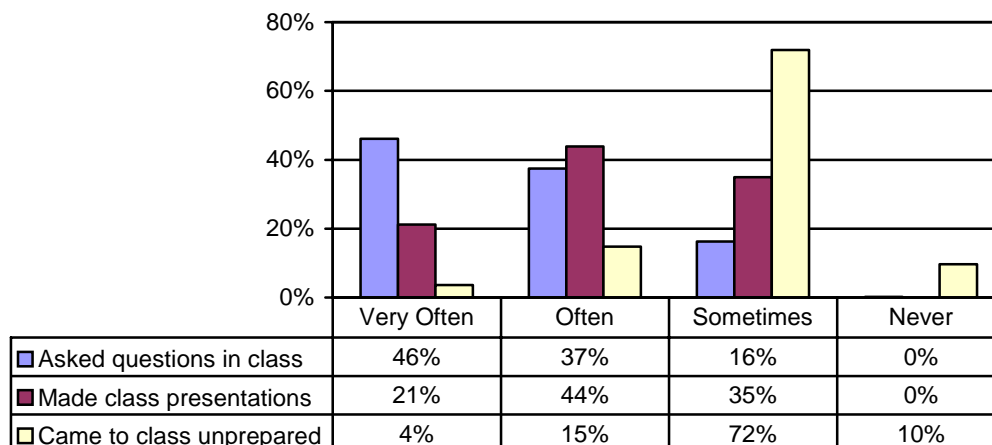
The vast majority of CSB/SJU students report that they typically come to class prepared to contribute, though only 1 in 10 indicate that they always complete their assigned work before coming to class. Men are statistically more likely than women to come to class without completing their reading or assignments.

About two-thirds of all Saint Benedict and Saint John's seniors say that they frequently make in-class presentations, similar to the response from students attending liberal arts colleges nationally (64%). Saint Benedict students are more likely than their Saint John's colleagues to indicate that they very often made a class presentation, but all CSB/SJU seniors indicated that they presented in class at least sometimes. Nationally, men and women are equally likely to indicate that they made in-class presentations.

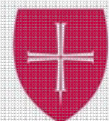
Students at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University describe an active, collaborative and engaged learning experience.

Prepared by Kathryn Enger
Institutional Planning
and Research

Classroom Participation Indicators, CSB/SJU Senior Responses



COLLEGE OF
Saint Benedict



Saint John's
UNIVERSITY

- **Collaborative Learning.** Fully eight in ten CSB/SJU seniors indicate that they frequently work in groups or on group projects, though women here are statistically more likely than men to say that they “very often” do group work. In contrast, men nationally are more likely than women to indicate that they work with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments.

Nearly three-quarters of CSB/SJU seniors report that they at least sometimes tutor or teach other students. This percentage is high compared to seniors at liberal arts colleges nationally (64%). Saint Benedict and Saint John’s students are equally likely to indicate that they tutor other students. Nationally, male students are more likely than females to tutor other students.

CSB/SJU students majoring in the natural sciences are the most likely to indicate that they frequently tutor or teach other students (40% compared to an average of 23% for all other divisions).

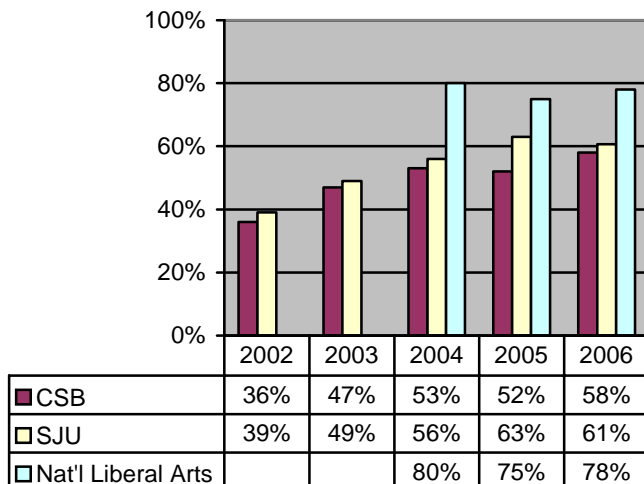
- **Integrative Learning.** Eight in ten CSB/SJU students indicate that they frequently put together ideas from different courses when completing assignments or participating in classroom discussions. About nine in ten students report that they frequently work on projects that required integrating ideas or information from various sources. Women are more likely than men to indicate that they very often integrate ideas.

Not surprising at residential colleges, classroom discussions often continue after class. Nearly two-thirds of all seniors indicate that they frequently discuss ideas from their reading or classes outside of class. This response is similar to responses from seniors at liberal arts colleges nationally (69%). Saint Benedict students are more likely than their Saint John’s peers to report that they frequently continue classroom discussions outside of class.

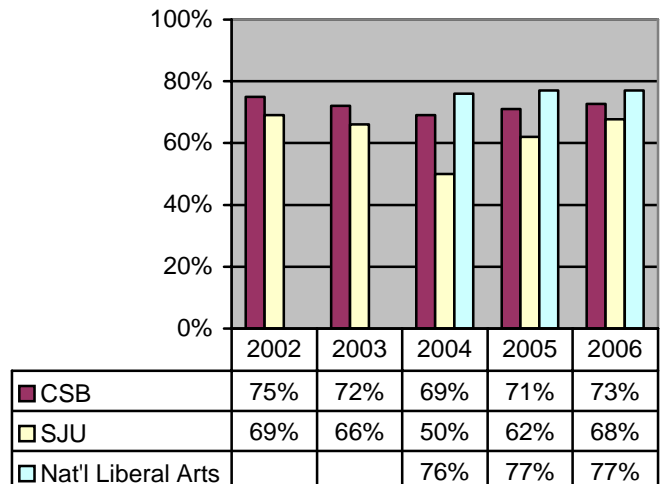
- **Experiential Learning Experiences.** Fully nine in ten (94%) of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s students agree that their experiences outside of the classroom improved or enhanced the quality of their academic experience. Seven in ten (71%) senior students indicate that Saint Benedict and Saint John’s strongly emphasize (“very much” or “quite a bit”) learning outside of the classroom or in non-academic experiences. Women are more likely than men to indicate that CSB/SJU emphasize experiential learning.

Seven in ten seniors complete clinical assignments, internships, field experiences, or practicums. Students with majors in the social science division are most likely to have these learning experiences. Two-thirds of all seniors indicate that these experiences are very important to the CSB/SJU experience.

**Percentage of Students Participating in...
Culminating Senior Experience**



**Practicum, Internship, Field Experience
or Clinical Assignment**



Nearly six in ten senior students have participated or will participate in a culminating senior experience, such as writing a thesis or taking a capstone course. Fully one-third have engaged in a semester-long research or creative activity in which they developed new knowledge or original work. The number of students participating in a culminating senior experience has increased over the past five years, though the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University continue to lag the national liberal arts average in this area (59% at CSB/SJU vs. 78% nationally).

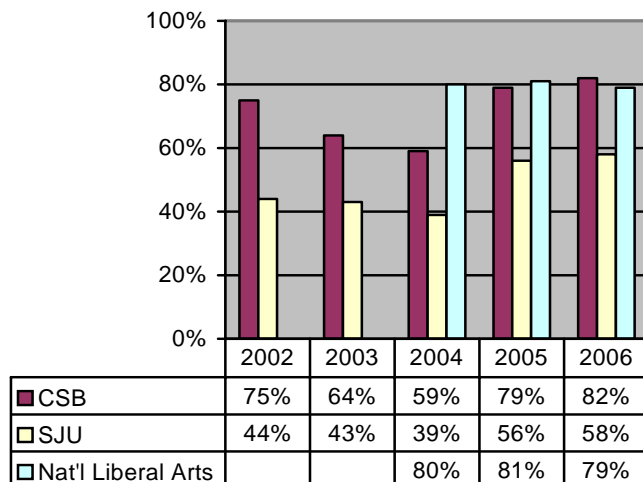
- Study Abroad.** International education is one of the most popular experiential learning programs at CSB/SJU. Eighty percent of new students in fall 2003 indicated that there was at least some chance they would study internationally while at CSB/SJU. Four years later, 55% of senior students indicate that they studied abroad as a part of their college experience. Participation rates are even higher than the survey responses suggest; for the 2003 cohort, 70% of Saint Benedict students who graduated or remained enrolled four years later and 58% of Saint John's students in the same cohort studied abroad. More women than men continue to study abroad on semester-long and summer term trips, though the gap has narrowed in recent years. The College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University are ranked number two nationally among baccalaureate institutions for total number of students studying abroad in the annual report on international education, *Open Doors 2006*, published by the Institute of International Education. Nationally, only 37% of senior students at undergraduate liberal arts institutions study abroad.

Sixty-eight percent of CSB/SJU students indicate that international education opportunities are very important to the CSB/SJU experience. Though there are significant differences in participation by gender, men and women are equally likely to indicate that studying abroad is important.

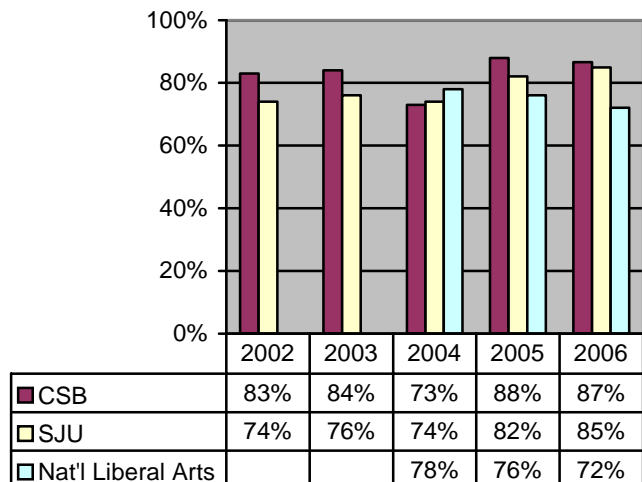
- Community Service Experiences.** Fully seven in ten senior students indicate that they plan to or have already participated in a community service or volunteer program. Women are much more likely than men to volunteer, both at CSB/SJU and nationally. Eighty-two percent of women participated in or plan to participate in a volunteer program, whereas only 58% of men have done or intend to do so. Reflecting the difference between men and women in eagerness to do community service, women are more likely than men to take a course with a service learning component. Overall, half of CSB/SJU seniors completed a service learning course.

CSB/SJU rates of volunteerism significantly exceed national averages and have increased over the past five years. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, 30% of all college students had volunteered in 2005, up from 28% of all students in 2002. Nationally, the most popular volunteer activities for students are tutoring and mentoring programs.

**Percentage of Students Participating in...
Community Service or Volunteer Work**



**Co-curricular Activities
(student clubs, campus publications, etc.)**



- ❑ **Extracurricular Experiences.** Fully 85% of CSB/SJU seniors indicate that they spend some time each week participating in co-curricular activities such as student organizations, clubs, campus publications, or student government. A similar percentage spends time each week exercising or participating in intercollegiate athletics or intramurals. Saint Benedict and Saint John's students spend similar amounts of time each week participating in co-curricular activities.
- ❑ **Gender-specific Experiences.** Only 16% of CSB/SJU seniors indicate that they frequently participated in gender-specific programs or activities while in college, though nearly six in ten had participated in a gender-specific program at some time in college. Similarly, only 16% of CSB/SJU students indicate that the opportunity to attend a single-sex college was very important to them, though an additional 39% say the opportunity was somewhat important. Women are more likely to indicate that they participated in gender-specific activities and that attending a single-sex college was important.

The data collected on the *CSB/SJU Senior Survey* not only describe students at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University; they also help inform academic and co-curricular planning and decision-making. For additional detail from the *Senior Survey*, please contact Kathryn Enger at 320-363-5452 or kenger@csbsju.edu.

Past issues of the *Trends* research newsletter are available at <http://www.csbsju.edu/institutionalresearch/trends/>.