

Trends

April 2008
Vol. 8, Issue 11

A Research Newsletter Prepared by the Office of Enrollment, Planning and Public Affairs

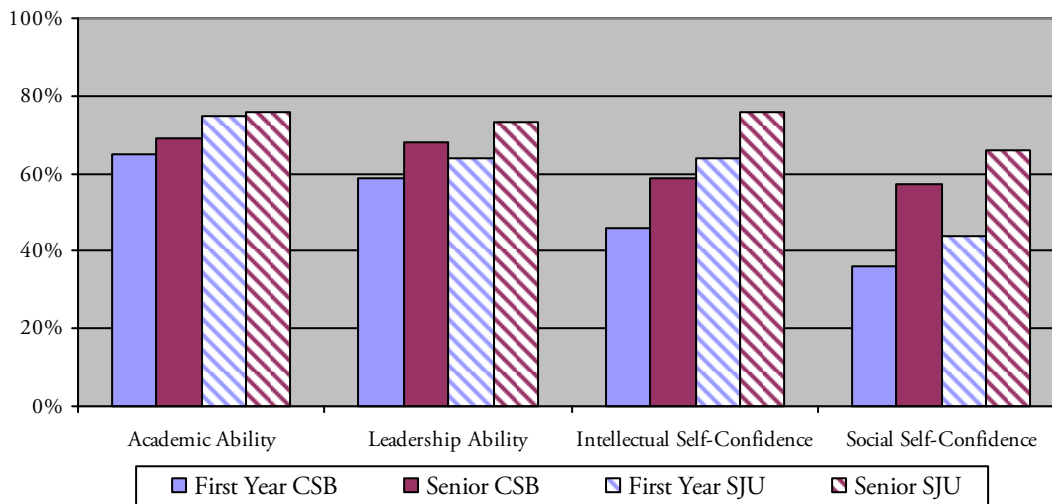
CSB/SJU Seniors' Perceptions of Self

On the 2007-2008 *Senior Survey*, administered to Saint Benedict and Saint John's seniors in fall 2007, students were asked to assess their abilities and describe themselves using words and phrases from a prescribed list. Most students indicated confidence in their academic and social skills, though women and men described themselves differently. During their time at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University, senior students reported gains in leadership and academic abilities, as well as intellectual and social self-confidence.

Self-Assessment

On the 2007-2008 *Senior Survey*, students were asked to rate themselves in relation to their peers in different areas of ability. Similar questions were included on the 2004 *New Entering Student Survey*.

**Percentage of students rating ability "above average" or "highest 10%"
in relation to their peers (fall 2004 cohort)**



- **Academic Ability.** In fall 2004, nearly 7 in 10 new entering students (69%) rated their academic ability as above average or in the top 10% when compared to their peers. When asked the same question as seniors in fall 2007, Saint Benedict and Saint John's seniors were even more convinced of their academic prowess. Almost three-fourths (72%) described their academic abilities as above average or in the top 10%.

Men rated their academic ability higher than women both as first year students and as seniors four years later. Fully three-fourths of SJU seniors rated their academic abilities as above average, compared to just 69% of CSB students. As has been the trend in the past five years, senior men were much more likely than senior women to rate their academic ability in the highest 10% (26% vs. 15%).

When controlling for grade point average—examining only those with a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher—the differences between men and women were even greater. Almost half of high

Most CSB/SJU seniors are confident in their academic and social skills, though men and women describe themselves differently.

Prepared by
Laura Hammond
Institutional Planning
and Research

COLLEGE OF
Saint Benedict



Saint John's
UNIVERSITY

achieving Saint John's seniors rated their academic ability among the highest 10%, compared to only 28% of Saint Benedict students. Regardless of gender, the highest achieving students expressed the greatest confidence in their academic ability—though the threshold for placing oneself among the highest 10% was higher for women than for men. The mean grade point average for senior women describing their academic ability as in the top 10% was 3.72, compared to just 3.56 among senior men.

- ❑ **Leadership Ability.** Seventy-two percent of all CSB/SJU seniors rated their leadership ability as above average or in the top 10%. Similar to other self-evaluated abilities, CSB seniors were less likely than SJU seniors to rate their leadership abilities as above average or among the highest 10% (68% vs. 74%).

The percentage of all seniors describing their leadership abilities as above average or in the top 10% among their peers grew between their first and fourth years. CSB and SJU students identified equal amounts of growth during their college experiences.

When asked how much their experience at CSB and SJU contributed to the development of leadership skills, 42% of all seniors said “quite a bit” or “very much.” Men and women were equally likely to credit the college and university with helping them develop leadership skills.

- ❑ **Intellectual Self-Confidence.** Sixty-nine percent of all CSB/SJU seniors rated their intellectual self-confidence as above average or in the highest 10% among their peers, a rating far exceeding their assessment as first-year students. Gender differences that existed among new Saint Benedict and Saint John's students in fall 2004 continued through their senior year. Seven in ten senior men (76%) rated their intellectual self-confidence as above average, while only six in ten senior women (59%) responded similarly. Gender gaps persisted even among high achieving students. Of SJU seniors with grade point averages at or above 3.75, 79% described their intellectual self-confidence as above average or in the top 10%, compared to only 69% of CSB seniors with similar grade point averages. Not surprisingly, seniors with lower grade averages were less likely than their high achieving peers to rate their intellectual self-confidence highly.
- ❑ **Social Self-Confidence.** Fully 61% of all CSB/SJU seniors consider their social self-confidence to be above average or in the top 10%. Seniors' assessment of their social self-confidence more than doubled compared to their evaluation as first year students. Gender gaps in social self-confidence remained from the first-year to the senior year. Sixty-six percent of Saint John's seniors rated their social self-confidence as above average or in the top 10%, compared to only 57% of all Saint Benedict seniors.

Ninety-five percent of students credited the colleges with developing their intellectual and social self-confidence. Men and women were equally likely to credit their experience at CSB/SJU as “very much” developing their intellectual and social self-confidence.

Self Descriptors

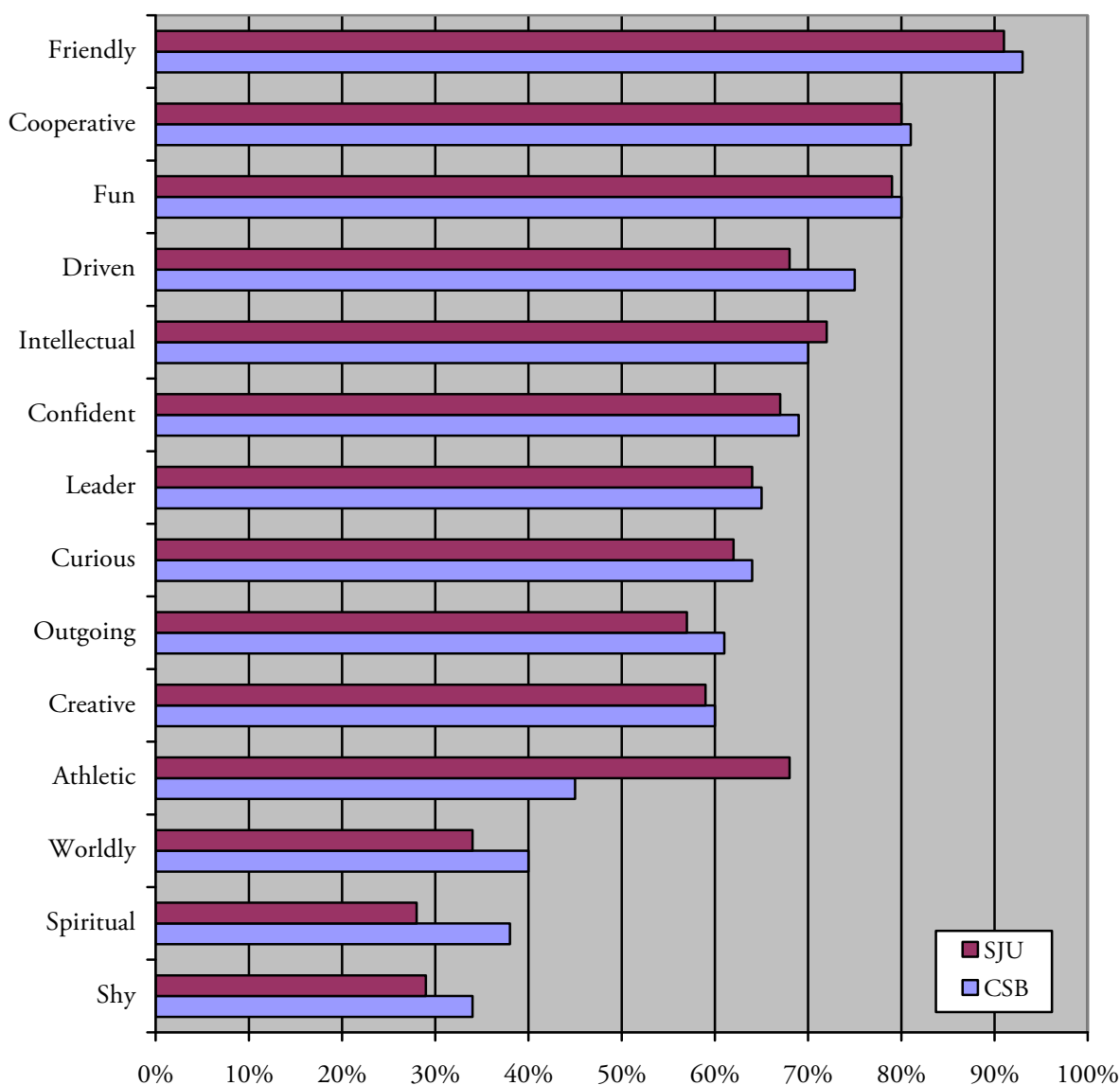
For the second year on the *CSB/SJU Senior Survey*, students were asked to select words from a list of 14 adjectives that characterize themselves. Saint Benedict and Saint John's students most often described themselves as friendly, cooperative and fun. (These adjectives are similar to those most often selected by seniors to describe the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University – friendly, community and comfortable.) Men and women selected many similar descriptors, as noted in the chart below. They did, however, differ in their selection of six particular adjectives:

- ❑ **Confident.** Though men were more likely than women to highly rate their intellectual and social self-confidence, they were equally likely to describe themselves as confident. More than two-thirds of all CSB and SJU seniors selected “confident” as an adjective to describe themselves.
- ❑ **Driven.** Women were significantly more likely than men to describe themselves as driven. Fully three-fourths of women selected this adjective compared to 68% of men.
- ❑ **Athletic.** Men were much more likely than women to describe themselves as athletic. Fully two-thirds of men (68%) and

only 45% of women selected this adjective. Men also spent more time per week playing sports and exercising than did women.

- ❑ **Spiritual.** As noted above, more women than men credited the colleges with contributing to their spiritual growth. Senior women were more likely than senior men to describe themselves and the colleges as spiritual; over one-third of women (38%) and only 28% of men characterized themselves in this way.
- ❑ **Worldly.** Corresponding to their higher rates of participation in study abroad programs, women were more likely than men to describe themselves as worldly. Forty percent of CSB seniors versus 34% of SJU seniors selected this adjective.
- ❑ **Shy.** Reflecting the gender differences in assessments of social self-confidence above, more senior women described themselves as shy than senior men. Fully one-third of CSB seniors (34%) opted to describe themselves as shy compared to 29% of SJU seniors.

Adjectives selected by CSB/SJU seniors to describe themselves



For additional information about the 2007-2008 Senior Survey, please contact Jon McGee at 5287 or jmcgee@csbsju.edu. Past CSB/SJU Senior Survey reports are available at <https://www.csbsju.edu/institutionalresearch/reports/seniorsurvey/default.htm>, while past issues of the Trends research newsletter are available at <http://www.csbsju.edu/institutionalresearch/trends/>.