

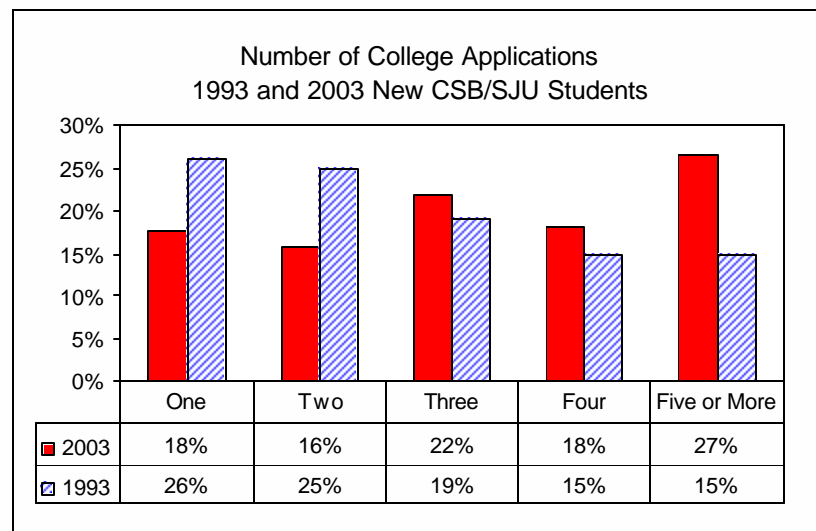
Most new students choose the College of Saint Benedict or Saint John's University because of their reputation for academic excellence.

College Choice Characteristics of new CSB/SJU Students

The College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University have participated in the ACE-sponsored *American Freshman* survey for most of the last 25 years. The survey provides colleges with an opportunity to identify and evaluate their students' characteristics, experiences, and expectations. This fall, 765 CSB/SJU students, representing nearly 80% of the new entering class, completed the survey. The data that follow summarize the key characteristics influencing their college choice. The next issue of *Trends* will review our new students' collegiate expectations.

Choosing a College

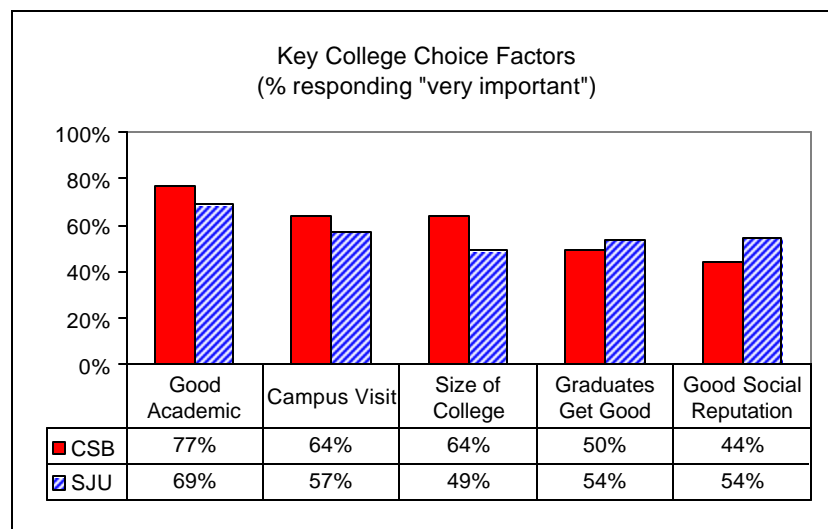
- As our academic profile has improved, and as on-line admission applications have simplified the college admission process, the number of new students applying to multiple colleges has increased. Fully two-thirds of all new CSB/SJU students in fall 2003 applied to three or more colleges, and 26% applied to five or more colleges. Fewer than 1 in 5 new Saint Benedict and Saint John's students this fall applied only to CSB or SJU. By comparison, in 1993, fully one-quarter of all new CSB/SJU students applied only here, while only 15% applied to five or more colleges.



- Saint Benedict and Saint John's students are not only applying to more colleges today than they were a decade ago, they also are applying to different colleges. In 1992, the colleges' top admission competitors were the University of St. Thomas, the College of St. Catherine, St. Cloud State University, and the University of Minnesota campuses at Morris and Duluth. In 2003, our top competitors were St. Thomas, Gustavus Adolphus College, the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, the College of St. Scholastica, and St. Olaf College.
- Consistent with prior years, the overwhelming majority of new CSB/SJU students this fall (87%) identified the College of Saint Benedict or Saint John's University as their first choice institution. CSB and SJU were similarly ranked by students of all academic abilities. Saint Benedict and Saint John's students have been much more likely than their peers at all other types of institutions nationally to indicate that they were attending their first choice college. Typically, only 70% of all new students nationally – irrespective of institution type – indicate that they enrolled at their first choice college.
- Like college students across the country, new Saint Benedict and Saint John's students indicate that opportunities to become more educated, get better jobs, make more money, and prepare for particular careers are the primary reasons for going to college. At least two-thirds of all students cite one of those reasons as being "very important" factors influencing their decision to go to college.

Why CSB/SJU?

- Academic reputation. Nearly three-quarters of all 2003 new entering CSB/SJU students said that the academic reputation of the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University was a very important factor influencing their decision to enroll. New CSB and SJU students consistently have been more likely than their peers nationally to identify academic reputation as a very important factor influencing their enrollment choice. The significance of reputation increasingly is reflected in the rising importance of national guidebook rankings. This fall, fully half of all new entering Saint Benedict and Saint John's students cited rankings in national magazines as an important factor influencing their college decision, up from just 39% in 1999. One in eight students this fall identified national magazine rankings as a very important influence, almost double the percentage in 1999.
- Campus visit. For the first time ever, the *American Freshman* survey this year included a question about the importance of the campus visit. More than 90% of all new entering CSB/SJU students identified a visit to campus as an important factor influencing their decision to enroll here. More than 60% described their campus visit as very important.
- College size. Nearly 6 in 10 new students said that the size of the college had a very important impact on their college decision. Enrollment was particularly important to new CSB students – two-thirds cited enrollment as an important decision-making factor, compared to only half of new SJU students. The standard by which students judge the size of a college is not clear. Among private colleges in the state, only the University of St. Thomas enrolls more students than CSB/SJU together. However, combined enrollment at Saint Benedict and Saint John's is significantly less than undergraduate enrollment at the state's public four-year colleges.



- Other important choice factors:
 - Even though half of all new students this year reported an alumnae or alumni family connection to the colleges, the choice to attend CSB or SJU appears to be their own. More than half (51%) said that a relative's wish was not an important factor influencing their enrollment decision.
 - Teachers and guidance counselors often play an important role in helping students choose the College of Saint Benedict or Saint John's University. More than 40% of all new students this fall said that the advice of a teacher or a guidance counselor played an important role in their college choice.
 - More than half (52%) of all new entering CSB/SJU students said that a desire to live close to home was an important factor influencing their decision to enroll at Saint Benedict or Saint John's. Almost 60% of all new CSB/SJU students traveled less than 100 miles from home to college.
 - About two-thirds of all new students indicated that the religious identity of the colleges was important. Not surprisingly, the colleges' Catholic identity was comparatively more important to students who identified themselves as Catholic than to non-Catholics. Among new entering Catholic students, 74% said that the Catholic religious affiliation was important, compared to 40% of non-Catholics.
 - New students clearly value the integrated CSB/SJU experience. Fully 9 in 10 said that the ability to attend classes, participate in activities, and utilize facilities on two campuses positively influenced their decision to enroll at CSB/SJU. At the same time, only 35% indicated that the opportunity to attend a single-sex college positively influenced their enrollment decision – and 40% said it had a negative influence (not surprising given that less than 5% of all ACT test-takers nationally indicate a preference for a single-gender college).

For additional information, please contact Jon McGee at 5287 or at jmcgee@csbsju.edu. If you would like to read past issues of *Trends*, please visit our website at <http://www.csbsju.edu/institutionalresearch/Trends/trends.htm>.