

# Trends

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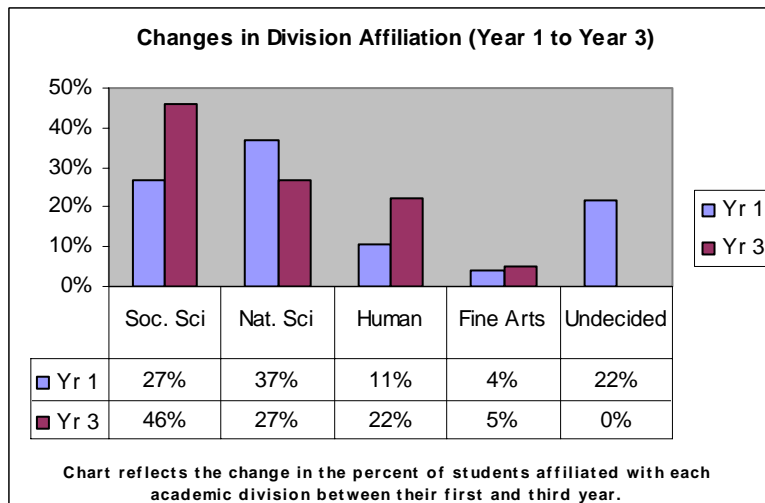
*A Research Newsletter Prepared by the Office of Institutional Planning, Research, and Communication*

## Trends in Academic Major Migration: 1998 to 2002 New Students

Over 4,300 new students entered the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University between fall 1998 and fall 2002. Though not required to select an academic major until their sophomore year, most new students identified an academic area of interest when they entered. Nearly 8 in 10 new CSB/SJU students from 1998 to 2002 identified a likely major upon entering. About 1 in 5 said they were undecided. Student choices influence academic planning, budgeting, and advising. Consequently, it is important to understand how the preferences expressed by students in their first-year of attendance change as they progress.

### Tracking Migration

- Each year, approximately two-thirds of all new students say there is at least some chance they will change their major field of study during their time at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University, though only 1 in 5 new students say there is a "very good" chance they will change their major. Between fall 1998 and fall 2002, 4,300 new students enrolled at the CSB/SJU. Fully two-thirds of those new entering students identified a departmental major preference and nearly 13% indicated a non-departmental preference (e.g. pre-medicine, pre-law, pre-engineering). Over the next two years, academic preferences and choices among those students changed significantly.



- Nearly 3,000 new students who enrolled at CSB/SJU between fall 1998 and fall 2002 identified a probable departmental major upon entering. Two years later, 62% of those students were doing something different: 44% had selected a different academic major and 18% were no longer enrolled at the College of Saint Benedict or Saint John's University. Only 38% of those who indicated a departmental major preference in their first year identified the same major two years later. [Note: This analysis reflects only first majors]
- Early identification of an academic area of interest apparently has little impact on student retention. New students who indicated they were undecided about their major were no more or less likely to leave CSB or SJU over the course of the next two years than those who identified a probable major. However, students who selected non-departmental majors were more likely to drop out than either those who had selected a departmental major or those who were undecided. Nearly a quarter of all new students who identified a non-departmental major upon entry were not enrolled at CSB/SJU two years later.

Though most new students identify a likely major when they initially enroll, nearly two-thirds do something different by their third year.

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- Nearly half (46%) of all new students who identified a probable major as first-year students selected Biology, Elementary Education, Management, Nursing, and Computer Science. Two years after entry, a large percentage of those students remained concentrated in a handful of majors, though the list changed in order and make-up. Among those still enrolled at Saint Benedict and Saint John's between fall 2000 and fall 2004, 46% had selected majors in Management, Psychology, Communication, Biology, Elementary Education, and Political Science.
- Though changes in the number of majors varied significantly among academic departments, fully 2 in 3 departments saw net increases in majors between the first and third year (gains made possible largely because of the major choices of students who were initially undecided or who had initially identified a non-departmental major). However, for both large and small majors, students who identified the major in their first year typically represented only one-third of the total affiliates two years later. Only four majors kept at least 50% of all 1998 to 2002 new students who identified them as a preference at entry. Ten disciplines lost at least 70% of those students who identified them as a probable major upon entering CSB or SJU (though in many cases those "losses" were made up by students moving into the major).

## Division Summary

- **Natural Sciences.** Over one-third of all new entering students from the fall of 1998 to fall 2002 identified an interest in a science-related discipline – 28% in a departmental science major and 9% in a non-departmental science program (e.g. pre-medicine, pre-engineering, etc.) Two years later, students majoring in the Natural Sciences represented a quarter of all majors. More than half (51%) of all new students from 1998 to 2002 who indicated an interest in the Natural Sciences at entry were not pursuing a science major two years later. Among science leavers, about two-thirds were majoring in a non-science discipline and one-third were no longer enrolled at CSB or SJU. Nearly 45% of all natural science majors who stayed within the sciences changed their major between their first and third year. There was little migration into the Natural Sciences from other academic divisions. Approximately two-thirds of all students who moved into a science major between their first and third year were initially undecided about their academic major.
- **Humanities.** Only 10% of all new students between fall 1998 and fall 2002 expressed an interest in a Humanities field. Two years later, more than 1 in 5 students had selected a major within the Humanities. The number of students affiliated with the Humanities grew by 66% between the first and third year, the largest growth of any academic division. Fully 40% of all students majoring in a humanities discipline in their third year had identified an interest in a different academic division when they entered CSB/SJU. The majority of students (60%) who initially expressed an interest in the Humanities ultimately chose a major within the division. Among the students who were no longer affiliated the division two years later, 60% were associated with a different academic division and 40% were no longer enrolled at CSB/SJU. Nearly 1 in 5 students who were initially undecided about their major ultimately chose a discipline in the Humanities – and over half of those chose either Communication (26%) or English (29%).
- **Social Sciences.** One-third of all new students from fall 1998 to fall 2002 who identified a probable major upon entering CSB/SJU selected one within the Social Sciences. Two years later, the Social Sciences represented nearly half (46%) of all majors—with Management, Psychology and Elementary Education comprising 55% of the division total. Out-migration among students who initially identified an interest in the Social Sciences was the lowest among all academic divisions. Over 60% of students who expressed an initial interest in a Social Science field ultimately chose a major within the division. However, among students who originally identified a major in the Social Sciences, about 22% were no longer enrolled at CSB/SJU two years later, a higher attrition rate than any other division. The Social Sciences attracted large numbers of students from all other divisions as well those who were undecided. Nearly half of all students who were initially undecided about their major chose one in the social sciences—most often Management and Psychology. In fact, these two majors accounted for the choices of nearly 7 in 10 students who were undecided as new students.
- **Fine Arts.** Nearly 4% of all new students from fall 1998 to fall 2002 cited an interest in the Fine Arts. Two years later, the total number of Fine Arts majors changed little. There was very little movement within the Fine Arts; only 4 of 165 students who indicated a likely major in the Fine Arts as new students changed their major within the division. More than half of all students who initially expressed interest in the Fine Arts remained in the division two years later. Among those no longer affiliated with the Fine Arts, two-thirds selected a major in a different academic division (most commonly the Social Sciences or Humanities) and one-third were no longer enrolled at CSB/SJU. Approximately 3% of all students who were undecided about their major as new entering students ultimately chose a Fine Arts discipline. Almost 40% of those who moved into the Fine Arts between their first and third year were initially undecided about their major.