

# Trends

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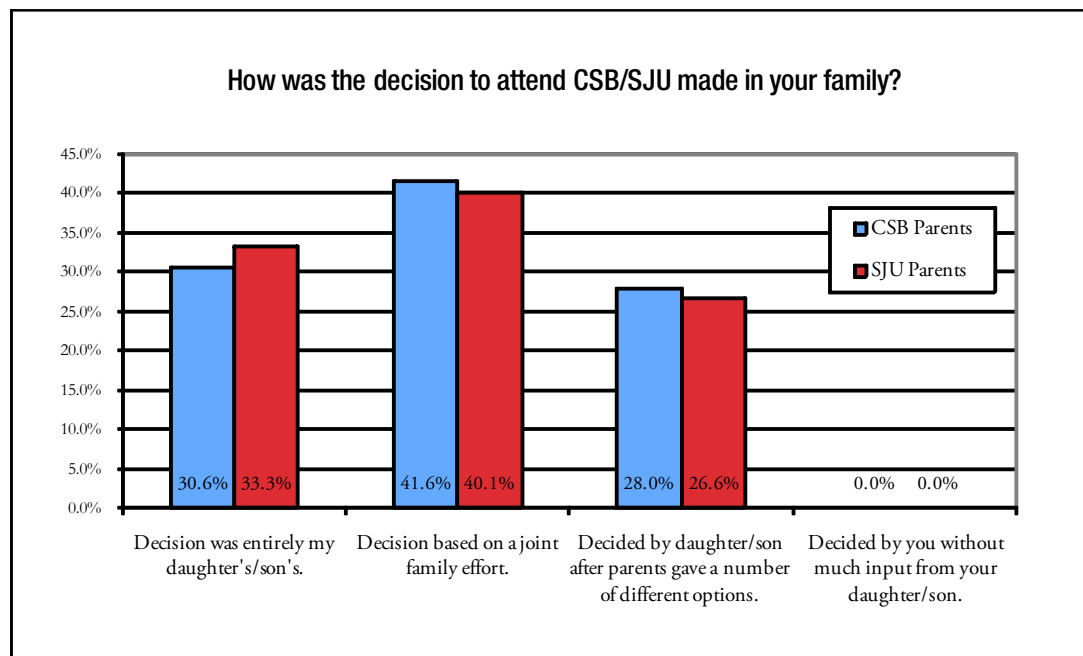
## Parents' College Choice Expectations and Impressions of CSB/SJU

In November 2007, the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University fielded their first survey of parents of new entering students. The Fall 2007 *CSB/SJU Parent Survey* provides a new opportunity to identify characteristics, experiences, and expectations of parents of incoming students. This fall 558 parents (one per household), representing about 53% of all new entering students' parents, completed the *Parent Survey*. CSB and SJU also survey new entering students, college seniors, and alumnae/i in the fall of each year.

This issue of *Trends* summarizes parents' involvement in the college selection process and their impressions of CSB/SJU. It also highlights areas of parity with the *New Entering Student Survey*, which collected data from students last fall.

### Deciding on CSB/SJU – How were parents involved?

Parents of new entering students were asked to describe the extent to which they were involved in making the decision for their daughter/son to attend CSB/SJU. Parents were involved in the decision to attend CSB/SJU in a majority of families, but never described themselves as the sole decision-makers. Similarly for most new women and men, the decision to attend CSB or SJU was a family effort. One third of all parents did note, however, that the enrollment decision was entirely their daughter's or son's.



### Why the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University?

Parents indicated how important certain characteristics were for their families in the college selection process. They then rated CSB/SJU in those same areas. Analysis of their responses revealed that parents considered many factors, and that Saint Benedict and Saint John's excel in many of those areas. (See charts at the end of this report.)

The following characteristics were cited as very important by over 80% of parents of new entering students at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University:

- *Academic reputation.* Over 92% of parents surveyed indicated that academic reputation was an important factor in their daughter or son's college decision. Nearly 77% indicated that CSB/SJU has an excellent academic reputation. Additionally, over 76% of parents said that learning in an environment that stressed academic rigor

Parents' perceptions and concerns about CSB/SJU are important because of their high involvement in college selection. Parents represent an essential section of enrollment market research.

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COLLEGE OF  
Saint Benedict



Saint John's  
UNIVERSITY

was important, and over half said that CSB/SJU's academic rigor is excellent.

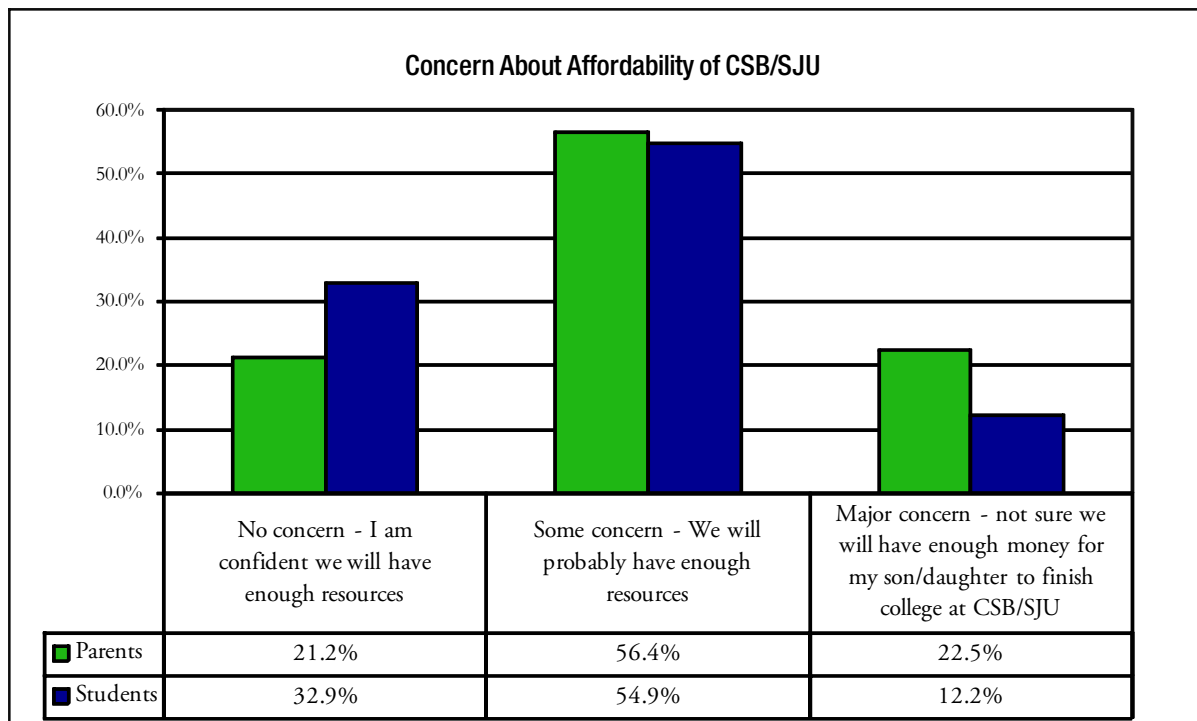
- *Accessible professors.* More than eight in ten parents indicated that accessible professors were a very important factor in their college choice decision. Similarly, over 82% of parents cited access to support to help students succeed academically as very important. Almost two-thirds said that they believed the accessibility of CSB/SJU faculty was excellent, and half described the support for academic success as excellent.
- *A sense of campus community.* Of all parents surveyed, nearly 84% said that a sense of community was very important for their daughters'/sons' college choice. The sense of community on the CSB/SJU campuses was rated "excellent" by over 64% of new entering students' parents. 90% of parents selected "community" as an adjective that describes CSB/SJU.
- *Emphasis on developing personal values and ethics.* Nearly 84% of parents reported that emphasis on ethics is a very important characteristic of a college. The religious identity of the colleges may well be linked to this item, as over 6 in 10 parents cited CSB/SJU's religious identity as excellent.
- *Friendly people on campus.* Both parents and students described the colleges as friendly. Eight in ten parents indicated that friendly people on campus were important in their college selection process, while 7 in 10 rated friendliness among people at CSB/SJU as excellent.
- *Graduates get good jobs.* Over 81% of parents noted this characteristic as very important in choosing a college. Career preparation and acquiring job skills were also very important college outcomes for their daughter or son.

### Opportunities and challenges

The quadrant chart that follows also points to areas needing improvement – areas where the percentage of parents with positive impressions of CSB/SJU did not match the percentage who viewed the area as very important in their college selection process. In general, points to the left of the 45 degree line on the quadrant graph indicate areas where improvement is needed ("concerns") and points to the right of the 45 degree line are areas where CSB/SJU are overachieving parents' expectations ("strengths"). Points on the line represent areas where CSB/SJU are exactly meeting parents' expectations of quality.

When separated by campus, quadrant analyses revealed that new CSB parents and new SJU parents have similar (though not identical) expectations or impressions of Saint Benedict and Saint John's. Data from parents of students on both campuses indicate a need for improvement in quality or a need for improvement in *articulation of quality* at CSB/SJU in a number of areas:

- *Cost.* While over 71% of new parents indicated that cost to their family (after financial aid) was an important factor in their college selection process, fewer than 2 in 10 described the cost of a CSB/SJU education as excellent. Not surprisingly, parents expressed more concern about college cost than students. Only 12 % of new students last fall expressed major concern about their ability to pay for college, compared to more than 22% of parents.

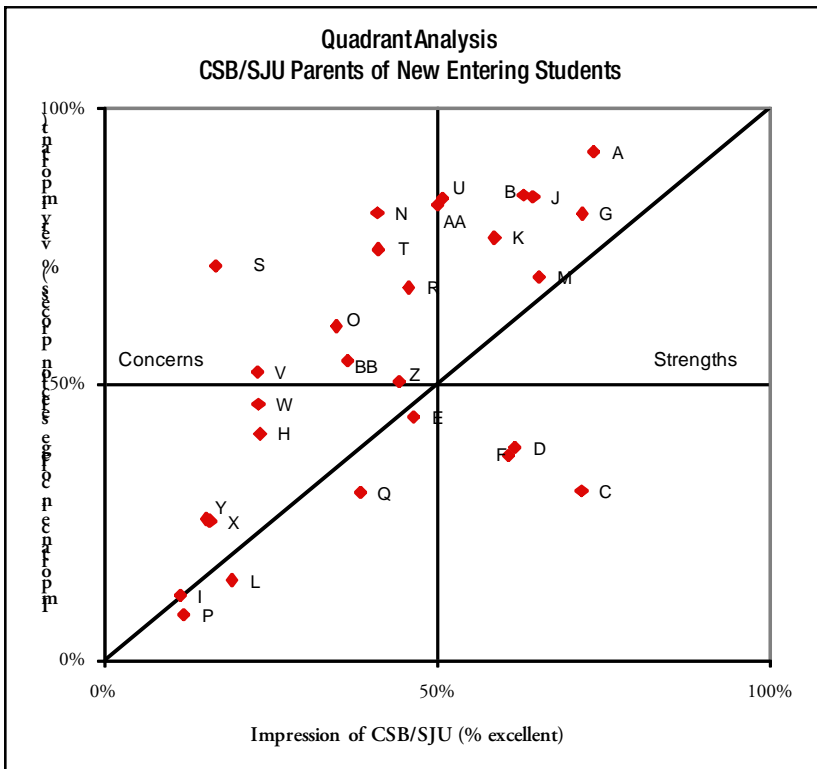


- *Opportunities for internships.* 52% of parents cited internship opportunities as important, but only 23% stated that CSB/SJU provided excellent opportunities for their daughters'/sons'. More than one third of parents said they didn't know about the internship opportunities available at CSB/SJU. The colleges likely would benefit from increased articulation of quality about internship opportunities.

- *Quality of campus residence halls.* Parents' expectations and impressions differed significantly between the two campuses. CSB parents were more than twice as likely as SJU parents to cite this factor as very important in their families' college search. Almost 30% of CSB parents stated that the residence halls were excellent, while only 17% of parents held the same impression at SJU.
- *Technology in the classroom.* 46% of new CSB/SJU parents indicated that technology in academic courses was very important, but 23% said that the colleges performed excellently in this area. Over one quarter of new parents didn't know about technology in the classrooms at the schools.
- *Ability of graduates to get into top graduate or professional schools.* 6 in 10 parents said that top graduate or professional school admittance rates were important to their daughters'/sons' college choice. However, over 27% didn't know about CSB/SJU's graduates' ability to gain entry into the top schools. In a college market where prospective students are increasingly likely to attend graduate school, CSB and SJU could better articulate to parents the advantages its alumnae/i have in getting into the best programs.

Parents play a significant role in college selection, and their impressions of CSB/SJU are vital tools for scanning the competitive college enrollment environment. Saint Benedict and Saint John's stand to benefit from understanding the language parents use to describe their experiences with the colleges, and their expected outcomes.

For additional information, please contact Raj Chaphalkar '08 at 5287 ([eppaintern@csbsju.edu](mailto:eppaintern@csbsju.edu)). Past issues of the *Trends* research newsletter are available at <http://www.csbsju.edu/institutionalresearch/trends/>.



A	Academic reputation
B	Accessible professors
C	Beauty of the campus
D	Opportunities to study internationally
E	Social reputation
F	Religious identity of the college
G	Friendly people on campus
H	Quality of campus residence halls
I	Racial and ethnic diversity of the student body
J	A sense of campus community
K	An environment that stresses academic rigor
L	Rankings in national magazines
M	My campus visit
N	Ability of graduates to get good jobs
O	Ability of graduates to get into top graduate or professional schools
P	Geographic diversity of the student body
Q	Quality of extracurricular programs such as athletics, student clubs, performing arts, etc.
R	Quality of academic facilities, such as the library, laboratories, and classrooms
S	Cost to your family (after financial aid)
T	Campus safety
U	Emphasis on developing personal values and ethics
V	Opportunities for internships
W	Technology in the classroom
X	Opportunities to experience cultures and traditions different from your own
Y	Opportunities to meet students whose beliefs, opinions, and values are different from your own
Z	Opportunities for spiritual growth and development
AA	Access to support to help you succeed academically
BB	Access to support to help you thrive socially