

Survey Of College Seniors

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National Association Of Scholars

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I. Methodology and Sample Characteristics

Methodology

Zogby International conducted interviews of 401 U.S. college seniors chosen at random. All calls were made from Zogby International headquarters in Utica, N.Y., from Tuesday, April 9 to Tuesday, April 16, 2002. The survey's margin of sampling error is +/- 5%. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups. ***Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percent and might not total 100.**

Sample Characteristics	Frequency	Valid Percent*
Sample size	401	100
East	39	10
South	94	23
Central/Great Lakes	185	46
West	83	21
Private school	74	19
Public school	327	82
Humanities/Social Sciences	96	24
Pre-Professional	26	7
Business/Accounting	54	14
Education/Teaching	45	11
Science/Math/Applied Sciences	103	26
Other majors	77	19
18-22	196	49
23-30	154	39
31+	48	12
<i>Did not answer age</i>	3	--
Mom less than high school graduate	17	4
Mom high school graduate	113	28
Mom some college	94	23
Mom college graduate	118	29
Mom post-graduate	57	14
Not sure of Mom's education	2	1
Dad less than high school graduate	19	5
Dad high school graduate	100	25
Dad some college	69	17
Dad college graduate	115	29
Dad post-graduate	95	24
Not sure of Dad's education	3	1
Male	194	48
Female	207	52

Regions: **(East)** CT,DC,DE,MA,MD,ME,NH,NJ,NY,PA,RI,VT **(South)** AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, MS,NC,SC,TX,VA,WV **(Central)** IA,IL,IN,KS,KY,MI,MN,MO,ND,NE,OH,OK,SD,TN,WI **(West)** AZ,CA,CO,ID,MT,NM,NV,OR,UT,WA,WY

II. Executive Summary

An overwhelming 97% of college seniors agree their college studies are preparing them to behave ethically in the future.

Business (28%) is deemed as the most likely profession to have an “anything goes” attitude. One-fifth of the students chose journalism and journalists as also having an attitude where they might cut corners to be successful. Law/lawyers drew 16% of the responses, followed distantly by teaching, science/medicine and civil service (5% each). Despite all the recent news about the alleged sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests, just 3% cited religion. In a time when U.S. forces are serving overseas and patriotism is fashionable, only 2% think the military has an anything goes attitude.

Students were asked to choose which one of four business practices they consider the most important. More than one-third (38%) says it is important to recruit a diverse workforce in which women and minorities are advanced and promoted. Next important is providing clear and accurate business statements to stockholders and creditors (23%). Tied for fourth (18% each) is minimizing environmental pollution by adopting the latest anti-pollution technology and complying with government regulations, and avoiding layoffs by not exporting jobs or moving plants from one area to another.

An overwhelming 73% of students say their professors are teaching one major theory on ethics: that what is right and wrong depends on individual values and cultural diversity. One-fourth says they are being taught there is one set of ethical standards by which everyone should be judged.

A majority (56%) of students agrees that the only real difference between the executives at Enron and those at most other big companies is that those at Enron got caught. Considering the previous question, the students were not asked whether they consider Enron’s activities unethical.

A majority (56%) of college seniors has a favorite author. The most popular writers are contemporary novelists. John Grisham is on top with 15 votes, Stephen King (12), and Tom Clancy (9), each of whom specializes in mystery and suspense, and whose works are popularized through movies and TV. An old favorite, Ernest Hemingway, surfaces in third, with 10 votes.

More than two-thirds of the students (69%) say they took musical lessons, and piano was the “hands-down” favorite with 126 votes. A similar percentage (68%) has no interest in acquiring a complete library of the world’s greatest classical music.

Of the twelve general knowledge questions presented, this year’s crop of seniors correctly answered eight. The best responses, 78% each, were given to “Who wrote a play entitled *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*” and “What is the name of the decoration given to those in the armed forces who are wounded in action against an enemy?”

One might be able to draw some general conclusions about what makes a student a “scholar.”

Broadly speaking, and based on the responses given to the 12 general knowledge questions, students in private colleges are likely to do better academically than those in public schools; science and math majors tend to answer more questions correctly than those who are majoring in education and teaching. In addition, young men still appear to have more superior academic knowledge than young women.

Private school students are slightly more likely than those in public colleges to say business is one profession known for its “anything goes” attitude. It is interesting also to note that students in private colleges are more likely to say their professors teach them one theory of ethics, that there is one uniform standard of right and wrong by which everyone should be judged. On the other hand, these same students are more likely than average to disagree that the only difference between the Enron executives and those at most other big companies is that those at Enron got caught.

More than three-fourths of students in public colleges believe their professors are telling them that what is right and wrong depends on differences in individual values and cultural diversity. One could argue that this latter theory is more “politically correct” and less socially responsible, and it might have even influenced the judgment of Enron executives.

Does heredity play a part in education? It looks from this survey as if a parent’s level of education can directly affect a student’s success in college, meaning it seems to expand a child’s cultural awareness, or at the very least, aids the students’ recall of academic knowledge. (We did not collect data on students’ household income, which also affects one’s likelihood of attending college, private or public, and earning an advanced degree.)

It appears that having a mother with a post-graduate degree has a greater impact on students than having a father with a similar high degree. College seniors whose mothers have a post-graduate degree are more likely to have a favorite author; to say they took music lessons, and more likely to say they would like to acquire a complete library of classical music on CDs.

If one is planning to track academic ability over the decades, one might choose to follow students who are majoring in education. It is startling to see that they are the least likely to have a favorite author. On many general knowledge questions in this survey, they gave surprisingly incorrect or not sure answers. Some of them admit that teaching is a profession that displays an anything goes attitude, and one wonders if that is an implied criticism of their professors, their courses of study, academic standards, or even the current state of education in America. Perhaps the best education is the one gained outside the classroom?

III. Narrative Analysis

3. *What is the name of your college or university?* (Numbers in parenthesis indicate similar responses)

University of Wisconsin (including Madison, Milwaukee, Stevens Point, Parkside) (19)
Brigham Young University (14)
Colorado State University (12); Miami University (11)
Arizona State University (9); Florida Atlantic University (9)
Oklahoma State University (8); University of Florida (8)
Purdue (7); San Diego State University (7); University of Iowa (7)
University of Tennessee (inc. Chattanooga) (7)
Montana State University (6); University of Nebraska (inc. Lincoln, Kearney) (6);
Washington State University (6)

Florida State University (5); Idaho State University (5); Indiana State University (5)
Louisiana State University (5); Oregon State University (5); Ohio University (5)
Texas Tech (5); University of Illinois (5); University of Michigan (5); University of Montana
(inc. Missoula) (5); University of North Carolina (5); University of North Dakota (5)
Indiana University (4); Michigan State University (4); University of Wisconsin (inc. Eau Claire,
Superior) (4); Valdosta State (4); Western Kentucky (4)
Kansas State University (3); Southern University-Edwardsville, Ill. (3); Southwest Missouri
State (3); Syracuse University (3); University of Kansas (3); University of Kentucky (3);
University of North Florida (3); University of Richmond (3); University of South Carolina (3)
Washington University (3); Wichita State (3)

Austin Peay State (2); Boston College (2); Brown University (2); Capital University (2)
Central Michigan (2); Colby Community College (2); East Tennessee State (2); Ferris State (2)
Illinois State University (2); Marshall University (2); MIT (2); Mount State University (2)
New Mexico State (2); North Dakota State University (2); Ohio State University (2)
Pennsylvania College of Technology (2); University of Baltimore (2); University of Idaho (2)
University of Louisiana at Lafayette (2); University of Maine (2); University of Nevada-Las
Vegas (2); University of North Texas (2); University of Northern Colorado (2); University of
Northern Iowa (2); University of Texas (2); University Of Tulsa (2); Valley City State University
(2); Villanova University (2); Weaver State University (2); Wesleyan (2); Western Illinois
University (2)

One each:

Abilene Christian University; Atlantic University; Auburn
Baylor University; Bemidji University; Bloomsburg University; Bowling Green State University;
Carlton College; Clarkson University; Clayton State; Clemson University; Clinton University;
Colorado College; Concordia; Connecticut College; Corning Community College;
Eastern Milwaukee; Eastern New Mexico; Eastern Oregon; Eula Heights Bible College;
Felician College; Florida A&M; Florida Baptist University; Florida SAU; Forte University;
Francis Mary University; Franklin and Marshall; Furman State; Hope College; Ithaca College;
James Madison; Kansas; Kentucky; Kenyon College; Keuka College; Kutztown University
Letourneau; Loras College; Lyon College; Market University; Mary Washington College
University of Massachusetts; New Mexico University; Nichols State; North Dakota; Northwestern State;
Notre Dame; Ohio Northern University; Ohio West; Oklahoma Baptist University; Rice; RPI;
Saint Cloud University; Shawnee State University; Sioux St. Marie- Lake Superior State; South Dakota
School of M & T; South Florida University; Southern Illinois; St. Thomas; St. Anselm; St. Cloud State;
Statenbiv; Stevens Point; Tennessee Tech University; TST
Unavista University; University of Arkansas; University of Delaware; University of Evansville;

University of Greensboro; University of Houston-Victoria; University of North Carolina at Charlotte; University of Oklahoma Science & Arts; University of Pennsylvania; University of South Carolina – Columbia; University of Southern Colorado; University of Southern Mississippi; University of St. Thomas; University of Texas-El Paso; University of Utah; University of W. Alabama; Weber State University; Webert International; Westchester; Westminster College; Weston State University; Wilke University; Williams College

4. *What is your major?*

Science/math/applied sciences	26%
Humanities/social sciences	24
Business or accounting	14
Education/teaching	11
Pre-professional	7
Other	19

Now we’re going to ask some questions about what you’ve been taught in college.

5. *Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree that your college studies are preparing you to behave ethically in your future professional life?*

Strongly agree	63%	Agree	97%
Somewhat agree	34		
Somewhat disagree	2	Disagree	4
Strongly disagree	2		

An overwhelming 97% of college seniors agree their college studies are preparing them to behave ethically in the future. Note that 100% of those students majoring in pre-professional and in education/teaching agree.

Approximately two-thirds in all regions, except the East, strongly agree. Half of the students in the East (54%) are more likely to say they “somewhat agree.”

6. *Based on what you’ve been taught about these professions in college, in which of the following professions is an “anything goes” attitude most likely to lead to success?*

Business	28%
Journalism	20
Law	16
Teaching	5
Science/medicine	5
Civil service	5
Religion	3
The military	2
None	8
Not sure	8

The business profession appears to have the worst reputation among college students, perhaps because the Enron scandal has been in the news constantly over the past

months. Journalism ranks second, followed by the law, as the top professions where an “anything goes” attitude persists.

Seniors majoring in the Humanities/social sciences (37%) and students whose fathers have a post-graduate education (39%) are the most likely to point the finger at *business* people. An average 31% of men, those attending private schools, and even those majoring in business, believe the business profession tolerates an anything goes attitude.

Students who are majoring in pre-professional careers (35%), and those whose mothers and fathers have some college education (31% average), are the most likely to say *journalism* and journalists also share this attitude.

Seniors majoring in teaching are most likely to cite journalists first (22%), but another 18% also think this is a problem in both *teaching* and business. Almost one-fifth (18%) of education majors say they are not sure.

Respondents over the age of 22 are more likely than younger students to say the *science/medicine and civil service* professions have an anything goes attitude. Those who are age 31 and older are likely to say they are not sure (13%).

*7. I will give you several examples of business practices that are generally regarded as good. Based on what you’ve been taught at college, tell me which **one** of these good business practices would probably rank as the most important?*

Table 1. Most Important Business Practices (ranked by importance)

	%
1. Recruiting a diverse workforce in which women and minorities are advanced and promoted	38
3. Providing clear and accurate business statements to stockholders and creditors	23
2. Minimizing environmental pollution by adopting the latest anti-pollution technology and complying with government regulations	18
4. Avoiding layoffs by not exporting jobs or moving plants from one area to another	18
Not sure	4

A plurality of seniors (38%) believes the most important business practice is one in which companies recruit a diverse workforce that promotes women and minorities. The second-best business practice, one which might be related to the Enron scandal, is that which provides clear and accurate business statements to stockholders and creditors (23%).

Not surprisingly, women (49%), plus 58% of education majors, strongly agree with the practice of *recruiting and promoting women and minorities*. Students majoring in Humanities/social sciences (49%) and those attending college in the West (42%) also

agree strongly with this business practice. All age groups (38% average) agree this is the best business practice.

Business majors (43%) and men (29%) are more likely to think providing *clear and accurate business statements* should be the most important business practice. College seniors in the South are more likely than those in any other region to choose this practice (31%). Just 18% of students in the East agree that providing clear and accurate statements is the most important business practice.

One-fourth each of respondents in the Central/Great Lakes region and those age 31 or older say it is important for businesses to *avoid layoffs by not exporting jobs or moving plants* out of the local area.

Students in public colleges are much more likely than those in private schools, 19%-11%, to support a business practice that *minimizes environmental pollution*.

8. Which one of the following statements, A or B, about ethics was most often transmitted by those of your professors who discussed ethical and moral issues?

Table 2. Ethical And Moral Viewpoints

	%
B. What is right and wrong depends on differences in individual values and cultural diversity	73
A. There are clear and uniform standards of right and wrong by which everyone should be judged	25
Not sure	2

By a three-to-one margin, 73%-25%, students say their professors are more likely to teach them that what is right and wrong depends on individual values, rather than the theory that there is one set of standards by which everyone should be judged.

Generally, all sub-groups are in agreement on this viewpoint. However, there is no way of telling if the responses indicate the students' personal viewpoints or if it is actually what they think their professors are teaching them.

Note the biggest difference of opinion is between those attending private schools and those in public colleges and universities. Seniors in private colleges are almost twice as likely as those in public schools, 41%-22%, to support statement A, there are *clear and uniform standards of right and wrong* by which everyone should be judged.

Others who back a clear and uniform ethical standard are students in science/math and "other" majors (33% each).

Students who are more likely to think their professors are telling them that *what is right and wrong depends on individual or cultural differences* includes those majoring in education or pre-professional (85% average), or Humanities (79%). Those in the Central/Great Lakes region, who attend public schools, and are ages 23-30 also agree with this statement (77% average).

9. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following question. The only real difference between the executives at Enron and those at most other big companies, is that those at Enron got caught?

Strongly agree	22%		
Somewhat agree	34	Agree	56%
Somewhat disagree	21		
Strongly disagree	20	Disagree	41
Not sure	4		

A majority of students overall agrees (56%) with the statement that the only real difference between the executives at Enron and those at most other big companies is that those at Enron got caught.

Pre-professional and students majoring in education (64% average) have the highest level of *agreement* with this statement. A majority of business majors (57%) also agrees that Enron executives made the mistake of getting caught. Women agree more than men, 59%-52%.

Among the respondents likely to *disagree* are those in private colleges and men (46% each).

10. Do you have a favorite author?

Yes	56%
No	43

About half of the students in every sub-group, and especially 65% of students in the West, gave us the name of a favorite author.

Students majoring in Humanities are the most likely to have a favorite author (67%). However, the seniors preparing for careers in teaching and education have one of the lowest percentages who say “yes” (44%). Majorities in science and math (58%) and business/accounting (54%) have a favorite, compared to 46% of pre-professional majors.

It is interesting to note that 65% of those whose mothers have a post-graduate education named a favorite author, versus 56% among those whose fathers have a similar high level of education.

11. Who is it?

John Grisham (15)
Stephen King (12)
Ernest Hemingway (10)
Tom Clancy (9); J. R. R. Tolkien (7); Edgar Allen Poe (6); Mark Twain (6)
Toni Morrison (5); Jane Austen (5)
Maya Angelou (4); Michael Crichton (4); Robert Frost (4); C. S. Lewis (4)
Mary Higgins Clark (3); James Patterson (3); John Steinbeck (3)
Steven Ambrose (2); Charlotte Bronte (2); Orson Scott Card (2); Steven R. Covey (2);
Herman Hesse (2); Ralph Waldo Emerson (2); Terry Goodkind (2); W. E. B. Griffin (2);
Victor Hugo (2); John Irving (2); Dean Koontz (2); Madeline L'Engle (2); Michael Moore (2);
J. K. Rowling (2); Nicholas Sparks (2); Kurt Vonnegut (2)

One each:

Edward Albee, Mitch Albom, Lloyd Alexander, Isabella Allende, D.C. Andrews, Dr. Glenn Antizzo, John Archer, Maryann Ziller Bradled, Pat Buchanan, Terry Brooks, Pearl Buck, Angela Carter, Deepak Chopra, Philip Cick, James Clavell, Robert Cormier, Patricia Cornwall, Bill Cosby, Clive Cussler, Nelson Demille, Tommy DePola, Jared Diamond, Charles Dickens Emily Dickinson, Dostoevsky, Alexander Dumas, David Eddings, T. S. Elliot, Brett Easton Ellis Charles Frasier, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ken Follett, Shelly Foot, Howard Garder, Julie Garwood, Khalil Gibran, God, Laural K. Hamilton, Tony Hawks, Robert Heinlein, O. Henry, Tracy Hickman, Alice Hoffman, Aldous Huxley, Thomas Jefferson, Robert Jordan, Jack Kerouac

Steven Kelley, Steven Kellogg, Milan Kundera, Tim Lahaye, Wally Lamb, Alan Lightman Gene Mall, Garcia Marquez, Terry McMillan, Henry Miller, James Mitchener, Pablo Neruda, Henry Nouwen, Tim O'Brien, Dan Olsburgh, Michael Oneaatje, Norman Vincent Peale, Elizabeth Peters, Tom Peters, Frank Peretty, Robert Pirsing, Plato, Patrick Polacco, Chuck Pollonuck, Ayn Rand, Easy Rawins, Christopher Rice, Nora Roberts, Tom Robbins, Bertrand Russell, J. D. Salinger, John Sanford, David Schwartz, Dr. Seuss, Anita Shreve, Christopher Stashass, Danielle Steele, James Smiley, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Rebecca Wells, Cornel West, Margaret Weis, Tennessee Williams, Tom Wolfe, Bill Wilson, Zig Ziegler

12. Did you ever take lessons to play a musical instrument?

Yes	69%
No	31

A very high percentage of respondents in the East say they took musical lessons (82%). In addition, pre-professional (81%) and business majors (78%) and those in the West (78%) took lessons.

Those students whose parents have a high degree of education (84% of those whose mothers were post-graduates) are very likely to have had music lessons.

Those who did *not* take lessons includes students in the South, are age 31 or older (44% average), and whose mother (47%) or father (57%) had less than a high school education.

13. Which ones?

Piano (126)
Guitar (44); Clarinet (37); Saxophone (34)
Flute (31); Violin (30); Trumpet (25)
Drums (11); Trombone (11)
Voice (8); Cello (7)
French Horn (4); Tuba (4); Percussion (4)
Viola (3); Bass (2); Piccolo (2); Brass instruments (2); Recorder (2); Band (2)

One:

Accordion; Banjo; Keyboard; Marimba

14. Would you like to build up a fairly complete library of the world's greatest classical music on CDs?

Yes	30%
No	68
Not sure	1

The students have no overwhelming desire to acquire a complete library of the world's greatest classical music (68%).

This includes 78% of business majors, 75% of students age 31 and older, and 74% of those in the Central/Great Lakes region.

Students in the East (51%) and seniors in private colleges (45%) go against the grain and are more likely to say "yes," they would like to build up a complete library of the world's greatest classical music. Those who are science/math majors and whose mothers have a post-graduate degree (39% each) also are more likely to agree. This does not apply as significantly to students whose fathers have a post-graduate degree (31%).

Now some questions of general knowledge. (Note: interviewers did not read the choices for questions 15-25.)

15. Which is the largest lake in North America?

Lake Superior	38%
Other	42
Not sure	20

Students in the Central/Great Lakes region (46%) and men (47%) are most likely to give Lake Superior as the correct answer.

Science/math majors (45%) and students whose mothers are college graduates (48%) also were more likely to answer correctly.

A 48% average of students enrolled in colleges in the West; majors in education or business/accounting, and whose fathers had a high school diploma or less education

were most likely to give an “other” response. A plurality of those whose mothers or fathers were post-graduates (45% average) and students in private colleges (46%) also gave a wrong answer.

Among the students more likely to say “not sure” are those in the South (31%) and women (28%).

16. What is the national language of Brazil?

Portuguese	55%
Spanish	29
English	2
Other	4
Not sure	11

A majority of seniors (55%) correctly answered Portuguese as the national language of Brazil.

Private school students trounced those in the public schools, 70%-51%, when it comes to providing the correct answer. Two-thirds of students each in the East and science/math majors, 64% in the West and 63% of men answered *Portuguese*.

A parent’s education distinctly affected the percentage that gave the correct response, including 70% of students whose mother has a post-graduate degree and 73% among those whose father similarly has a high degree of education.

Among those who say *Spanish* is the national language are students in the Great Lakes region (37%); pre-professionals and education/teaching majors (38% average), and “other” majors (43%).

Minor percentages gave an “*other*” language as a choice, including 5% of women. The sub-groups who say English is the official language are too small to count.

One-fifth of those over the age of 31, and students attending college in the South and women (16% each) are more likely to say they are *not sure* of Brazil’s official language.

17. In what country was the Battle of Waterloo fought?

France	40%
U.S.	20
England	7
Belgium	3
Other	10
Not sure	20

A plurality of college seniors gives France as the incorrect answer, followed by the U.S. (20%), not sure (10%) and England (7%). Just three percent correctly say Belgium.

The sample sizes of those who pinpointed *Belgium* are extremely small, but it includes those whose fathers have a post-graduate degree (10%), men (5%) and science/math majors (6%).

Students who are more likely to believe the battle was fought in *France* include seniors in the West and men (51% each), and a 47% average of those whose mothers and fathers are either college graduates or post-graduates. Those in private colleges are more likely than those in public schools, 46%-39%, to incorrectly cite France.

Those with an “other” major, along with one-fourth of students in the Central region and 22% of women, are most likely to say the *U.S.* was the site of the famous battle.

One-tenth each of women, Southerners, Humanities majors and whose mothers are high school graduates choose *England*.

Students more likely to say the battle was fought elsewhere or “other” are Humanities majors (15%); seniors whose mothers have a post-graduate degree (16%), and those attending college in the South or West (12% average).

Close to one-third of students whose fathers are high school graduates (31%), 28% of women and one-fourth of education majors say they are not sure where the Battle of Waterloo was fought.

18. Who made the first non-stop transatlantic solo flight?

Charles Lindbergh	49%
Other	17
Not sure	34

Three-quarters of a century after his historic flight, half of college seniors (49%) recognize Lindbergh for making the first non-stop transatlantic solo flight.

An average 54% majority of seniors in the West and Central/Great Lakes, those majoring in Humanities and science/math, and those older than 30 correctly name

Lindbergh. Nearly 50% more men than women (58% to 41%, respectively) responded correctly. Respondents whose parents have a higher education are also much more likely than those whose parents have lesser education to correctly answer Lindbergh.

One-fourth of seniors in the East (26%) and those majoring in education (27%) are among the most likely to answer someone other than Lindbergh.

A majority of pre-professionals (50%) and a 39% average of 23-30 year-olds, respondents in the South and East, and women are among those who are not sure.

19. What professions do you associate with Florence Nightingale?

Nursing/medicine	53%
Other	30
Not sure	18

A majority of college seniors (53%) correctly knows Florence Nightingale is associated with nursing and medicine. Three in ten (30%) incorrectly named other professions.

A majority of seniors in all regions except the Central/Great Lakes (49%) answered correctly. A large difference in the percentages of correct responses are seen among private school students (68%) compared to public school students (49%); women (59%) compared to men (46%), and seniors who are older than 30 (88%) compared to younger students (47% average).

Pre-professionals (69%), and a 57% average of those majoring in Humanities and science/math are correct, compared to a 42% of seniors in business and education.

Nearly two in five men and seniors in the East (39% average) named other professions. Seniors majoring in business (33%) and education (27%), along with one-fifth of public school students and those in the South, say they are not sure about Nightingale.

20. What is the capital city of Spain?

Madrid	63%
Other	15
Not sure	22

More than three in five college seniors – including majorities in all sub-groups, except education majors (49%) – know that Madrid is the capital of Spain. One in seven (15%) name other cities, and more than one in five (22%) are not sure.

Respondents who correctly named Madrid include more private school (74%) than public school students (61%); more 18-22 year-olds (70%) than seniors 23 and older (54% average), and more men (71%) than women (56%).

Also responding correctly were students majoring in Humanities (70%), science/math (65%), and “other” majors.

About one-third of respondents in the South, those older than 30, and business and education majors are among the most likely to be uncertain of Spain’s capital city.

21. *What composer wrote The Messiah?*

Handel	35%
Other	22
Not sure	43

Just more than one in three college seniors (35%) correctly name Handel as the composer of *The Messiah*. One in five (22%) name someone else, while a plurality (43%) is not sure.

Most likely to name Handel are seniors in the West (47%), private school students (51%), 18-22 year-olds (42%), and science/math majors (43%).

Seniors ages 23-30 (27%) and those with “other” majors (30%) are the most likely to give an incorrect answer. Majorities of students in the South, pre-professionals and business/accounting majors are not sure (average 54%).

22. *Who wrote a play entitled, A Midsummer Night’s Dream?*

Shakespeare	78%
Other	4
Not sure	18

More than three-quarters of respondents (78%) know William Shakespeare wrote *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, while only 4% named someone else. Less than one in five (18%) are not sure.

More seniors in the East (90%), West (83%), and Central/Great Lakes (80%) than those in the South (65%) correctly named the Bard of Avon. Also, students ages 18-22 (84%) are more likely than those 23-30 (73%) and older than 30 (67%) to know the correct author. Seniors majoring in Humanities (85%) and science/math (84%) are most likely to answer correctly.

A 29% average of respondents in the South, those older than 30, and seniors majoring in business and education are most likely to be not sure.

23. *Which planet is nearest the sun?*

Mercury	59%
Other	29
Not sure	12

Three in five college seniors (59%) correctly named Mercury as the planet nearest the sun. Less than one-third (29%) named another planet, and one in eight (12%) is not sure.

A majority in most sub-groups gives the correct answer. Students in the Central/Great Lakes and private schools (65% average); science/math majors (68%), and men (74%) are among the most likely to have this basic knowledge of our solar system.

A 38% average of students in the East and West, business and education majors, seniors older than 30, and women, named other planets as that nearest the sun.

Those in the South (21%) are the most likely to say they are not sure.

24. *What is the name of the decoration given to those in the armed forces who are wounded in action against an enemy?*

Purple Heart	78%
Other	4
Not sure	18

More than three-quarters of respondents (78%) know the decoration is called the Purple Heart. Nearly one in five (18%) is not sure, while only 4% called the decoration something else.

Among the most likely to answer correctly are seniors older than 30 (94%), those in the West (87%), and men (85%).

Students in the East and those majoring in business/accounting (28% each), education majors (24%), and women (22%) are among the respondents who are not sure.

25. *What great scientist do you associate with the Theory of Relativity?*

Einstein	72%
Other	16
Not sure	12

Close to three-quarters (72%) of college seniors nationwide correctly associate Albert Einstein with his Theory of Relativity. Approximately one in six (16%) named another scientist, and one in eight (12%) are not sure.

More than three in four pre-professionals (77%), science/math majors (85%), students in the West (81%), and men (79%) correctly named Einstein.

Education majors (29%) were the most likely to give an incorrect answer.

A 20% average of students in the South, education majors, and women are not sure.

26. Which of the following states border on Canada?

Montana	25%
Michigan	23
Minnesota	22
Maine	21
All	10
Not sure	1

This was perhaps the trickiest of the general knowledge questions because our interviewers provided the choices.

Ninety-three students or 10% of the total responses supplied the correct answer, “all,” and more men than women, 12%-7%, answered it this way. The public school students were more likely than those in private schools, 10%-7%, to give the correct answer.

Science/math majors, and those students whose parents have a post-graduate degree, led the way with the highest percentage of right answers (12% average).

Students in the West region were the most likely to name Montana (28%), while more collegians in the East said Maine (27%), and those in the Central states chose Minnesota (24%).