

# Lessons Learned: The Class of 2002

The results from the College Student Survey (CSS), given to students at the end of their senior year, have yielded important data regarding the impact of Sweet Briar College on last year's graduating class. Like Your First College Year (YFCY), the CSS can be linked to the Freshman Survey (CIRP), given during Freshman Orientation, to provide a longitudinal study whose results can be used to conduct accreditation self-studies and evaluate individual college programs and services.

Highlights from the 2002 CSS Institutional and Longitudinal Profiles are shown below. The full reports may be viewed online at: [www.ir.sbc.edu](http://www.ir.sbc.edu) under "Survey Results".

## Retention and Recruitment

Retention has become a main focus of all-women's colleges as the number of students interested in attending single-gender schools decreases each year. According to the CSS, the percentage of students withdrawing from Sweet Briar is actually less than that found at other nonsectarian four-year colleges. Of course, the greatest loss of students occurs between the first and second years. However, over 53% of students say they would choose to enroll at Sweet Briar if they had the decision to make all over again. This is higher than the 42% at peer schools.

The reasons vary as to why students decide to leave Sweet Briar. Some want majors not available at this college, others want to attend a larger or coed school, and still others have personal reasons such as family issues or simple homesickness. Involvement in student government, clubs and sports as well as fitting in, both socially and academically, increase the chances a student will

remain at Sweet Briar for her entire undergraduate career.

Since entering this college have you:	% Sweet Briar women	% Women at peer schools
Worked on group projects in class	98	97
Studied with other students	93	96
Felt supported by my family	90	85
Have been a guest in a professor's home	84	60
Discussed course content with students outside of class*	75	71
Took interdisciplinary courses	72	64
Participated in an internship program	55	48
Enrolled in honors or advanced courses	54	26
Participated in other (other than football and basketball) intercollegiate sport	48	21
Participated in leadership training	41	24

\*Percentage responding "frequently" only. Results for other items in this group represent the percentage reporting "frequently" or "occasionally".

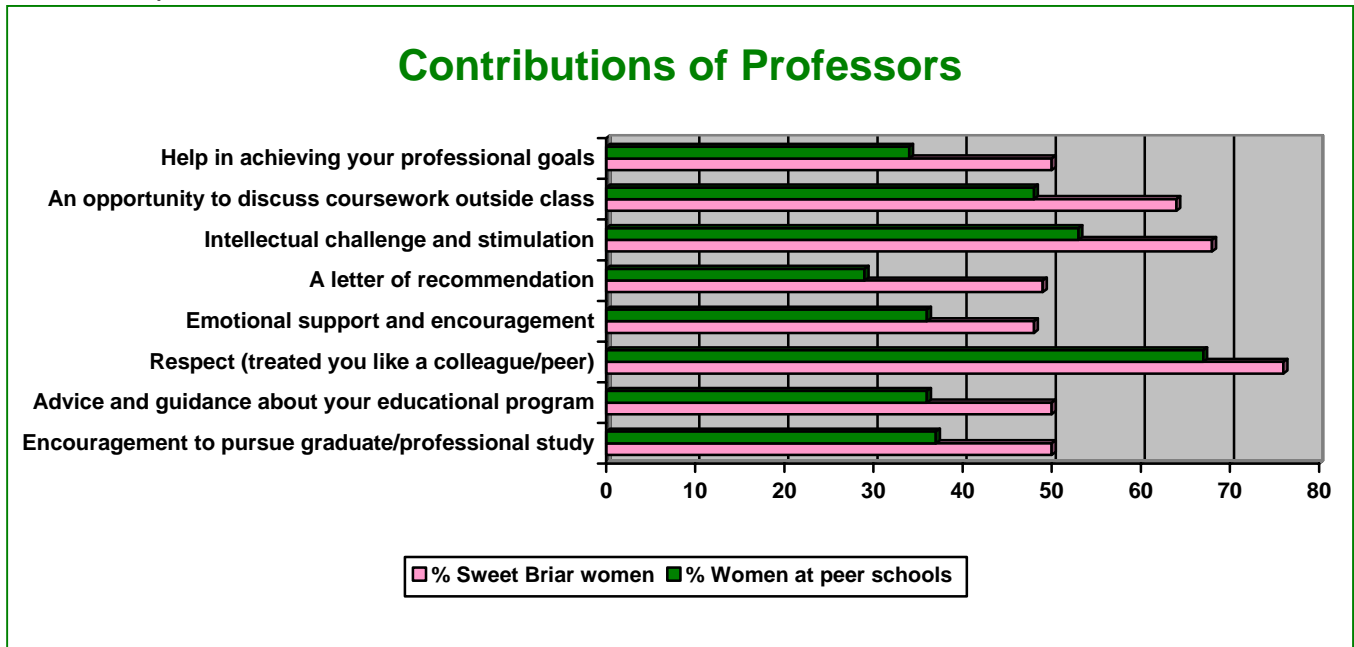
## Politics, Politics

Checks and balances are alive and well at Sweet Briar with twice as many students (by percentage) both participating in student government and voting in student elections than at peer colleges. Sweet Briar students are also almost three times more likely to be elected to a student office.

While most students classified themselves as being in the "middle of the road" politically, over seventy-five percent felt that abortion should be legal, over seventy-seven percent thought that same sex couples should have the right to legal marital status and over forty-two percent believed that marijuana should be legalized.

## A Little Inspiration

It may come as no surprise, given the high ranking of student engagement that Sweet Briar has received, especially in the National Survey of Student Engagement (see “Survey Results” online for details), that Sweet Briar professors do much more than instruct, they become mentors, write the recommendations that help pave the way for future careers, and sometimes, they even become extended family. As shown on the graph below, Sweet Briar students consistently rate professors from 10 – 20 percent higher on engagement measures than women at peer schools.



And, thanks to Sweet Briar professors, more than half the seniors reported having much stronger abilities and skills in the following areas: General knowledge, Analytical and problem-solving skills, Knowledge of a particular field or discipline, Ability to think critically, and Writing skills.

## In Addition

Supplemental questions were included in the CSS that were geared specifically towards evaluating specific courses or areas of study for the General Education committee and it’s assessment requirements. The results are as follows:

Rate the extent to which Sweet Briar has helped you make progress towards the following goals:	% of Respondents			
	Very Great	Great	Moderate (Average)	Little
Appreciate creative expression through the study of the arts	35	33	21	9
Appreciate creative expression through the practice of the arts	33	33	19	13
Develop critical insights and extend experiences through the study of literature	28	43	23	6
Appreciate how class, gender, ethnicity and ethical and religious values affect world views and decision making	24	33	33	8
Understand how economic, political and legal systems shape the modern world	24	26	36	13
Understand the origins and assumptions of Western culture through a study of the past	23	31	35	10

Experience another culture through the study of a foreign language	18	27	35	18
Understand the world through scientific theory	18	28	28	27
Become acquainted with non-Western cultures to better understand the world	16	32	40	12
Understand the world through scientific experiment and observation	21	22	31	26

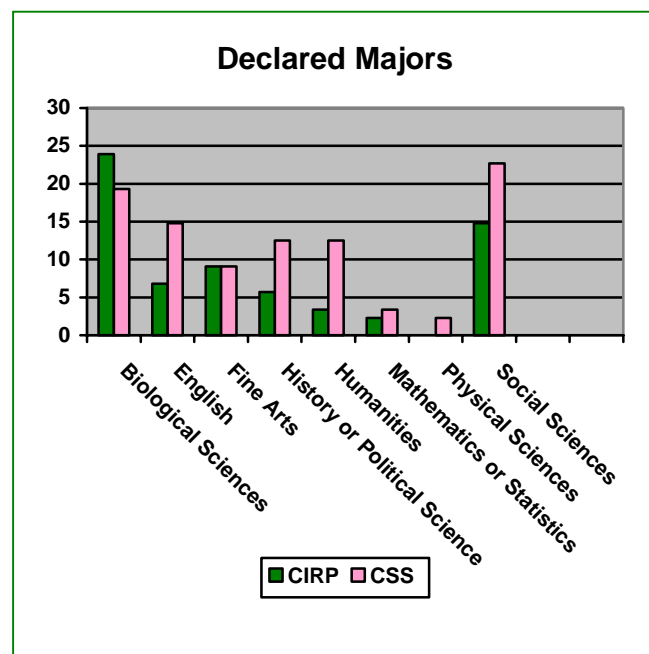
## Personal and Professional Change

Since the Freshman Survey, more students considered themselves “above average” or “highest ten percent” in Competitiveness, Emotional health, Leadership ability, Physical health, Popularity, Public speaking ability, Intellectual and social self-confidence, and Self-understanding. Creativity, Mathematical ability, and Spirituality were the only categories that seemed to suffer during their tenure as Sweet Briar students. More students aspired to go on to graduate/professional school, and they studied more than when they were first-years, averaging 11-15 hours per week as opposed to 6-10. Perhaps this time spent studying caused the decrease in time spent exercising, participating in student clubs/groups and reading for pleasure.

Visions of fame and fortune seemed to become less important as seniors prepared for the real world; Becoming an authority in my field, Being very well off financially, Making a theoretical contribution to science, Writing original works (poems, novels, short stories, etc.), and Becoming a community leader were no longer considered as “very important” or “essential” to some seniors, while altruistic aims such as “Influencing social values”, “Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment” and “Creating artistic work (painting, sculpture, decorating, etc.)” increased in importance.

Compared to choices made in the Freshman Survey, career paths in Business increased while those in Health professional (including MD or DDS) decreased.

The combined Humanities “major” had the largest overall growth. As Fine Arts, English, and History are accounted for separately, this major includes Foreign Languages and Literature, Music, Philosophy, Theatre, and Religion. The Biological Sciences include Biology, Biochemistry and Microbiology, and Environmental Science; Physical Sciences include Chemistry and Physics; and the Social Sciences include Anthropology and Sociology, Economics, Government, International Affairs, and Psychology. The chart below depicts the percentage of respondents and their declared majors for both the Freshman Survey and the CSS.



**Fast Facts:** The CSS was administered to a total of 155 institutions, 41 of which were nonsectarian four-year colleges, including Sweet Briar College. Sixty-six percent of respondents at the nonsectarian colleges had matching CIRP data. 113 Sweet Briar students were included in this percentage.