

Apr 16th, 2:40 PM - 3:00 PM

The Political Affiliation Demographics of the Student Body

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Nelson, Daniel; Duerr, Glen M.E.; and Hwang, Chi-en, "The Political Affiliation Demographics of the Student Body" (2014). *The Research and Scholarship Symposium*. 5.

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The Political Affiliation Demographics of the Student Body

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Original Study: On Being Democrat at an All Republican Campus

To understand the social and academic life of a
Democrat/liberal on a largely Republican/conservative
campus

In essence, what is it like for a Democrat to be amongst
a conservative student body?

Two-Tiered Study

- Qualitatively assess the lives of Democrats on campus
- **Determine the political affiliation demographics of the student body**
 1. It was hypothesized that the student body would reveal a Democrat/liberal demographic of 10-15%

The Perception of Academia as a Left-Leaning “Institution”

- Without question, there stands a notable and unmistakable perception of a left-leaning academia
- “It’s no secret that academia is in the tank for Mr. Obama” - Jason Mattera, spokesman for Young America’s Foundation 2008
- “I understand why [Barack Obama] wants you to go to college. He wants to remake you in his image”- Rick Santorum, 2012
- “Academia, taken as a whole, has become dominated by freeze-dried 1960s radicals and their intellectual progeny” – Fred Siegal, Professor of History at New York City’s Cooper Union

The Professorate

- Demographics within the professorate do in fact indicate a largely liberal organ
- Overall, professors have been consistently found to be roughly three times more liberal on average
- Especially within the social sciences, faculty have revealed D:R ratios as high as 47:1
- The positive relationship between higher levels of educational attainment and social and political liberalism has been one of the most stable and consistent findings in empirical social research

The Student Body

- A modest “liberalizing” effect on the political views of those who attend liberal arts colleges, though most self-identify as moderates
- This trend, however, is akin to that of youth not attending college
- Instead of a party swing, college students have been shown to hold more progressive viewpoints on particular social issues (e.g. abortion, same-sex marriage, and affirmative action)
- Graduate and doctoral programs as well as the liberal arts attract and generate disproportionately left-leaning students

On Being Democrat at an All Republican University

- Firmin and Sims (2004) reported political preferences strongly favorable towards Republicans
 - 88.11% for Bush/Cheney
 - 1.73% for Kerry/Edwards
 - 1.63% for Nader/Camejo
 - 0.77% for unidentified candidate
 - 2.59% unsure

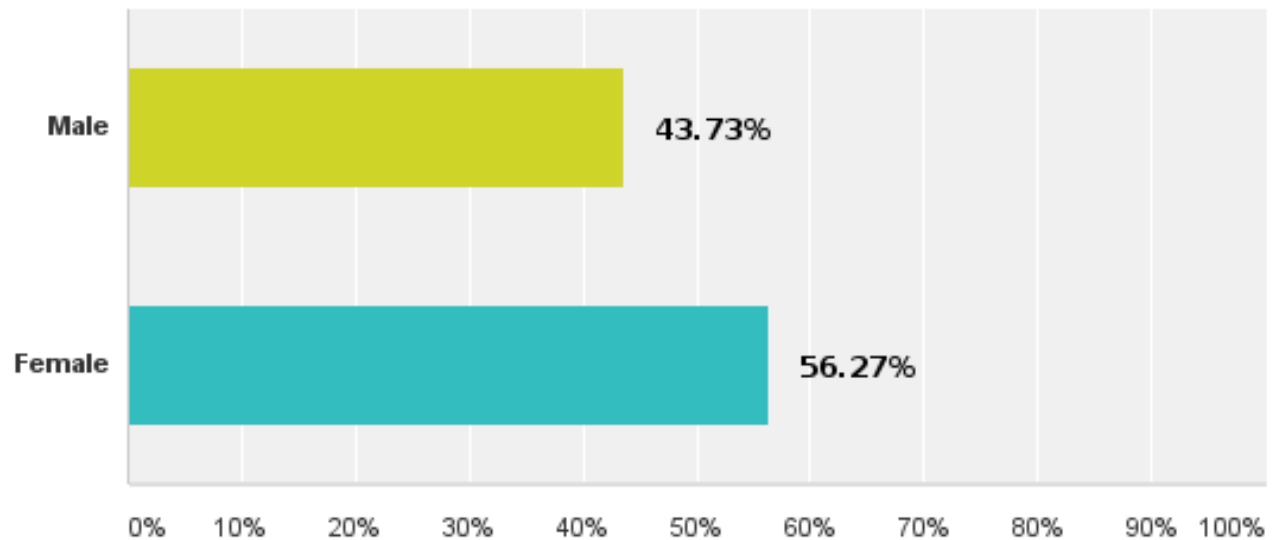
Method

- Online survey was administered to the student body asking the following questions:
 1. Overall, where on the political spectrum do your views most line up?
 2. Of which party do you most affiliate with?

Sample

Q1 Gender

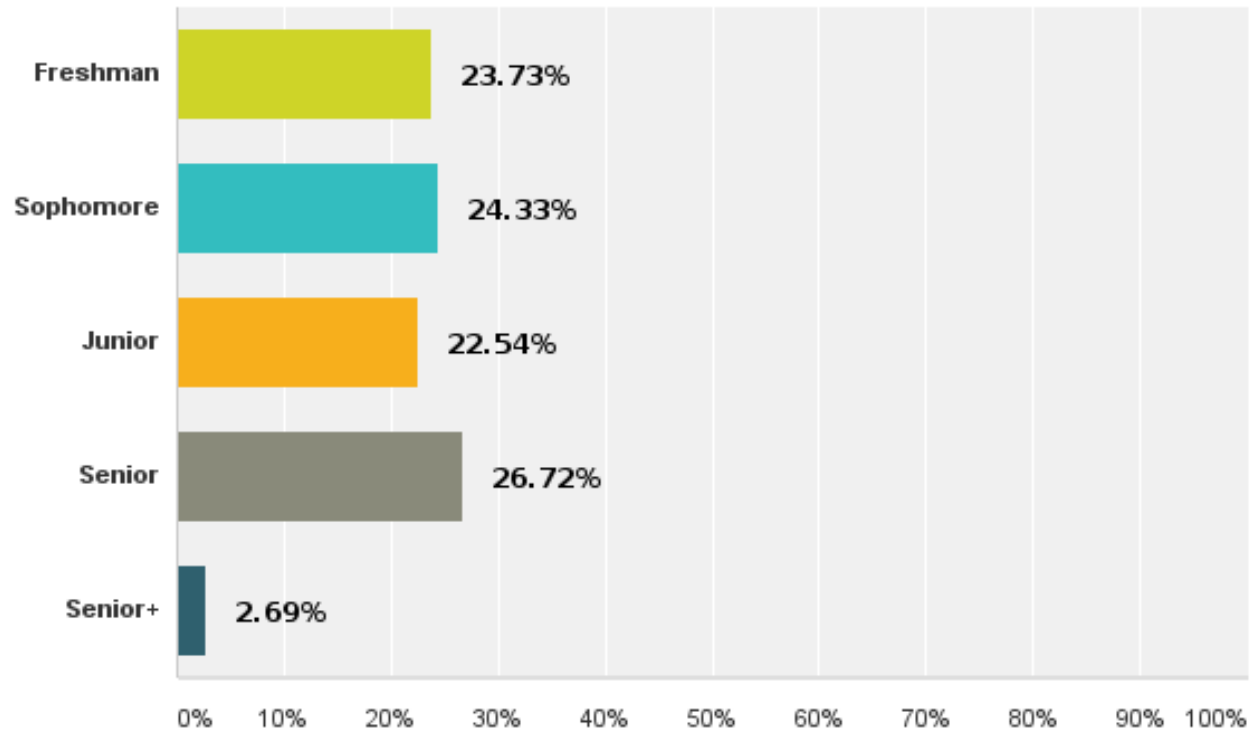
Answered: 670 Skipped: 0



Sample

Q2 Class Year

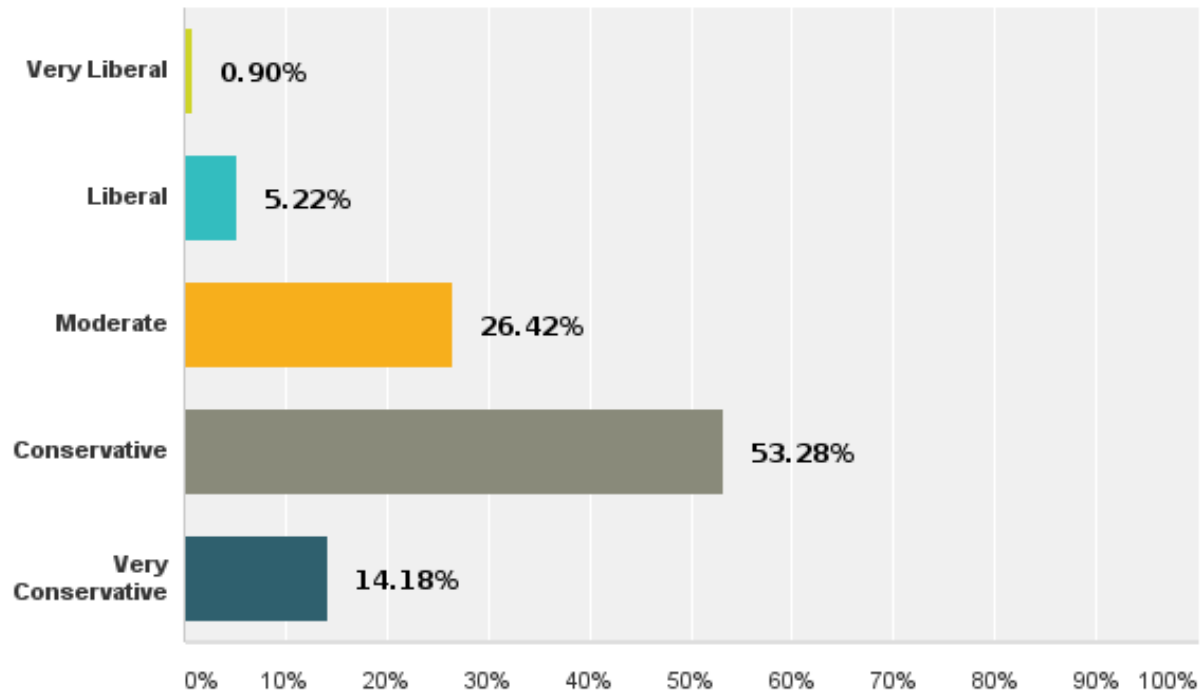
Answered: 670 Skipped: 0



Results

Q3 Political Spectrum Demographics

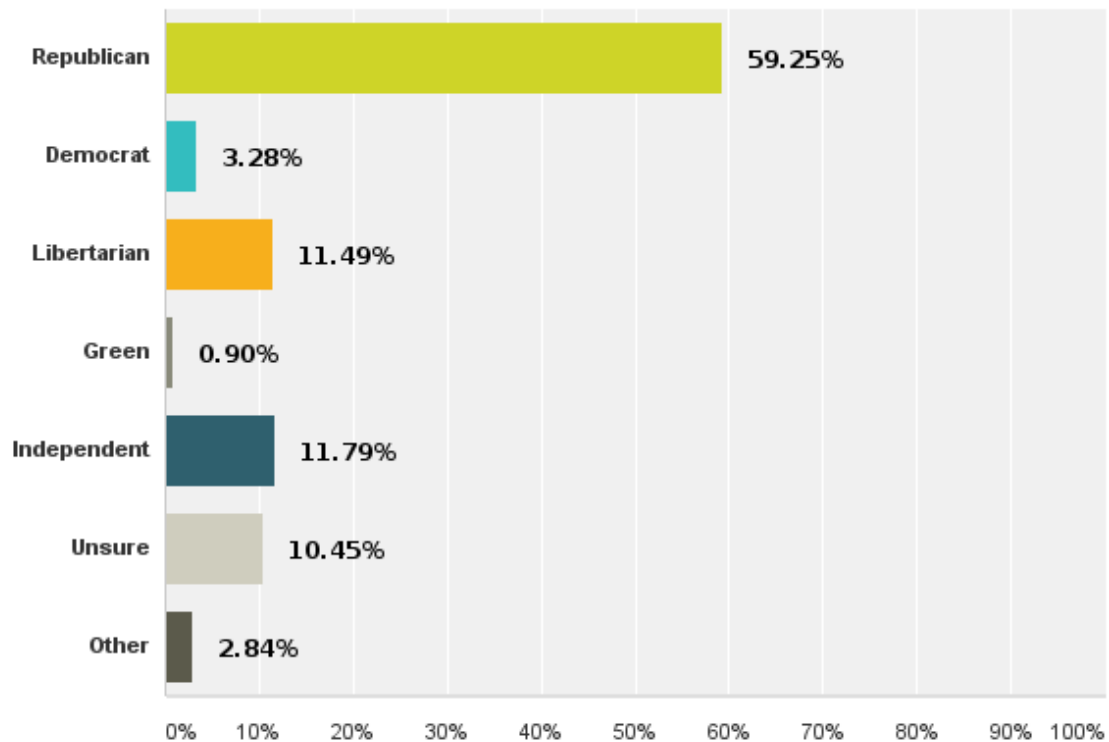
Answered: 670 Skipped: 0



Results

Q4 Of which party do you most affiliate with?

Answered: 670 Skipped: 0



Summary of Findings

- Contrary to the hypothesis, findings yielded results indicating very low Democrat/liberal rates
 1. 3% Democrat
 2. 6% Liberal
- Findings indicate an overwhelmingly conservative demographic
 1. 60% Republican
 2. 67% Conservative

Chi-Square Data: Party Identification by Class Year*

	Rep.	Dem.	Lib.	Green	Ind.	Other	?
Fresh	56.0%	2.5%	8.2%	0.0%	14.5%	5.0%	13.8%
Soph.	67.5%	1.2%	14.1%	1.2%	7.4%	1.2%	7.4%
Junior	64.9%	4.6%	10.6%	0.7%	7.9%	0.7%	10.6%
Senior	52.0%	4.5%	12.3%	1.7%	15.6%	3.9%	10.1%
Sen. +	38.9%	5.6%	16.7%	0.0%	22.2%	5.6%	11.1%

* significant at $p < .0001$

Chi-Square Data: Party and Political Identification by Gender

	Rep.	Dem.	Lib.	Green	Ind.	Other	?
M*	57.3%	1.4%	16.4%	1.4%	12.6%	5.1%	5.8%
F*	60.7%	4.8%	7.7%	0.5%	11.1%	5.8%	14.1%

- Proportionally, men reported themselves as more conservative (69.9%) than did women (65.5%)*
- Proportionally, women reported themselves as more liberal (6.6%) than did men (5.5%)*
- Men self-reported as “outliers,” falling within the extremes on the political spectrum (very conservative/very liberal); women self-reported as moderates, displaying higher proportions for moderate, conservative, and liberal*

Suggestions for Further Research

- Biannual Survey
- Consider election years
- Follow the political affiliation of classes
- Limitations
 1. Inability to replicate format of survey (lack of election year)
 2. Inability to measure demographic spread by candidate preferences
 3. Trends among particular class groups cannot be verifiably attributed to class year itself

Conclusion

- Survey yielded favorable results for the qualitative aspect of the study; without question, there stands a solid conservative/Republican majority amongst a very small liberal/Democrat minority
- Preliminary results of the interview process do indicate common phenomena seen between majority/minority groups; ingroups/outgroups