

Executive Summary: 2007 CIRP Freshman Survey

prepared by

Office of Institutional Research
Harvey Mudd College

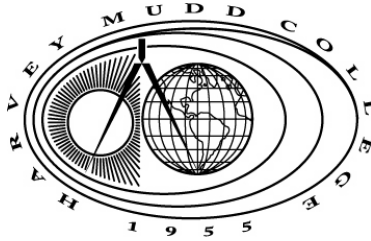
August 2008

During the fall 2007 new student orientation program, incoming freshmen at Harvey Mudd College were asked to participate in the Freshman Survey that is administered by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA. While this survey is conducted annually, Harvey Mudd College participates in the study approximately every three years.

A total of 97 men and 79 women completed and returned the survey instrument, for a total of 176 responses. This yielded an overall response rate of 90%.

The following report summarizes the responses of HMC students and students at comparative institutions. Key findings presented in this report include the following:

- *Family income* - HMC students, and students enrolled in comparative institutions, indicated that their parents' joint income typically fell between \$75,000 and \$199,999. The number of students at very highly-selective (VHS) liberal arts colleges whose parents' joint income levels exceeded \$250,000 was greater than students from other comparative cohorts, including HMC,
- *Parents' education* - Parents of HMC students are highly educated. Both mothers and fathers have completed undergraduate degrees and graduate degrees at equal or slightly higher rates than parents whose students attend other institutions.
- *Academic preparation for college* - HMC students came to college academically well prepared, with more than 70% of HMC freshmen boasting an A+ or A average in high school
- *Self-rating on academic and personal characteristics* - HMC students, on average, rate themselves higher in terms of their academic abilities in comparison to students at peer/comparative institutions. However, while HMC students also rated themselves more highly in terms of a personal drive to achieve, they rated themselves slightly lower than their peers on cooperativeness and competitiveness. HMC respondents were also less likely to rate themselves highly on leadership, physical health and emotional health than were their peers, and were much less likely to rate themselves highly on confidence-related skills, including public speaking, self understanding, spirituality, and social self-confidence.
- *College choice* – Approximately 70% of HMC freshmen stated that HMC was their first choice of college
- *Behaviors in high school* – Approximately 60% of HMC freshmen stated that they were frequently bored in class during high school; HMC freshmen also engaged more frequently in academic-related activities than in social and co-curricular-activities during high school.
- *Anticipated college experiences* – More HMC freshmen (approximately 85%) stated that they believed they would be happy with their choice of college than did students at comparative colleges. In addition, about 90% of HMC respondents anticipated that they would socialize with individuals of a different race/ethnicity.



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Introduction and Methodology

In fall 2007, Harvey Mudd College (HMC) participated in the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's (CIRP) Freshman Survey, an assessment that is administered annually by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA. HMC has been a regular participant in this national study of incoming freshman students, and typically take part in this study every three years.

Prior to the start of the 2007-2008 academic year, the CIRP Freshman Survey was distributed to all first-year students during Freshman Orientation. Freshmen were given hard copies of the survey instrument by their student sponsors during a scheduled meeting that took place during the Orientation program; sponsors collected the surveys and returned them to the Dean of Students Office for inclusion in the study. This process of survey distribution and collection resulted in an impressive response rate; 176 freshmen returned completed surveys, yielding a response rate of 90%.

In addition to data specific to the responses of HMC students, summary reports provide comparative data from peer institutions. This report compares the responses of HMC freshmen with those of freshmen from a select group of peer colleges who, along with HMC, are members of the Association of Independent Technological Universities (AITU)¹. In addition, data from respondents at very highly selective liberal arts colleges (VHS – LA)², and all four-year colleges (LA – ALL) across the nation, are included in this report.

The summary of results and data analyses included in this report have been categorized into five key themes:

1. Student characteristics
2. Academic preparation and goals
3. College choice
4. Activities, engagement and ambition: past and future
5. Financial considerations of college choice

¹ The AITU colleges that comprise the peer group for this report are: California Institute of Technology, Carnegie-Mellon University, Case Western Reserve University, Clarkson University, Drexel University, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Illinois Institute of Technology, Kettering University, Milwaukee School of Engineering, Polytechnic University, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and Webb Institute

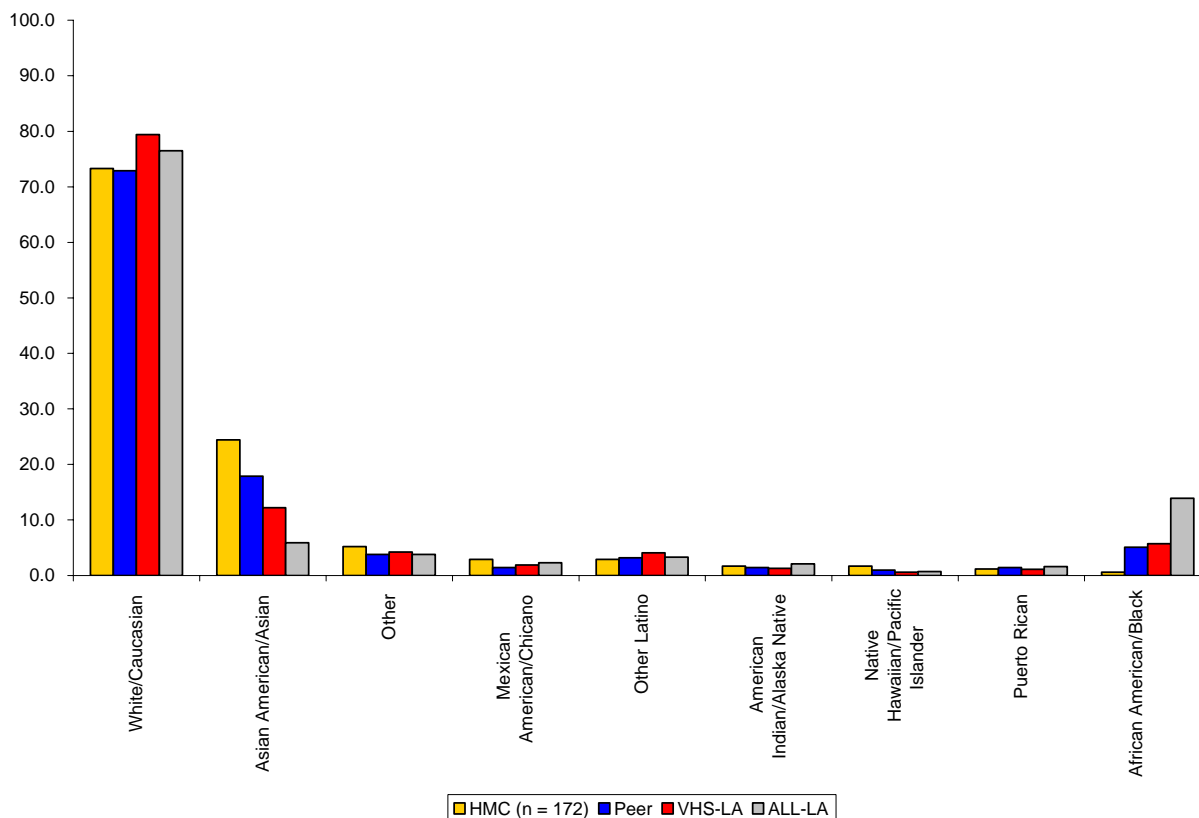
² This comparison group of liberal arts colleges is identified as Very Highly Selective, based on selectivity levels for non-sectarian four-year colleges that are defined by the average SAT Composite (V+M) score: Very High (>1,250), High (1,100-1,249), Medium (1,015-1,099), Low (<1,015).

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Table 1. Race/Ethnicity of CIRP 2007 Respondents, HMC

	Men (n = 97)	Women (n = 79)
White/Caucasian	70.5%	76.6%
African American/Black	1.1%	0.0%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2.1%	1.3%
Asian American/Asian	21.1%	28.6%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2.1%	1.3%
Mexican American/Chicano	4.2%	1.3%
Puerto Rican	0.0%	2.6%
Other Latino	4.2%	1.3%
Other	9.5%	0.0%

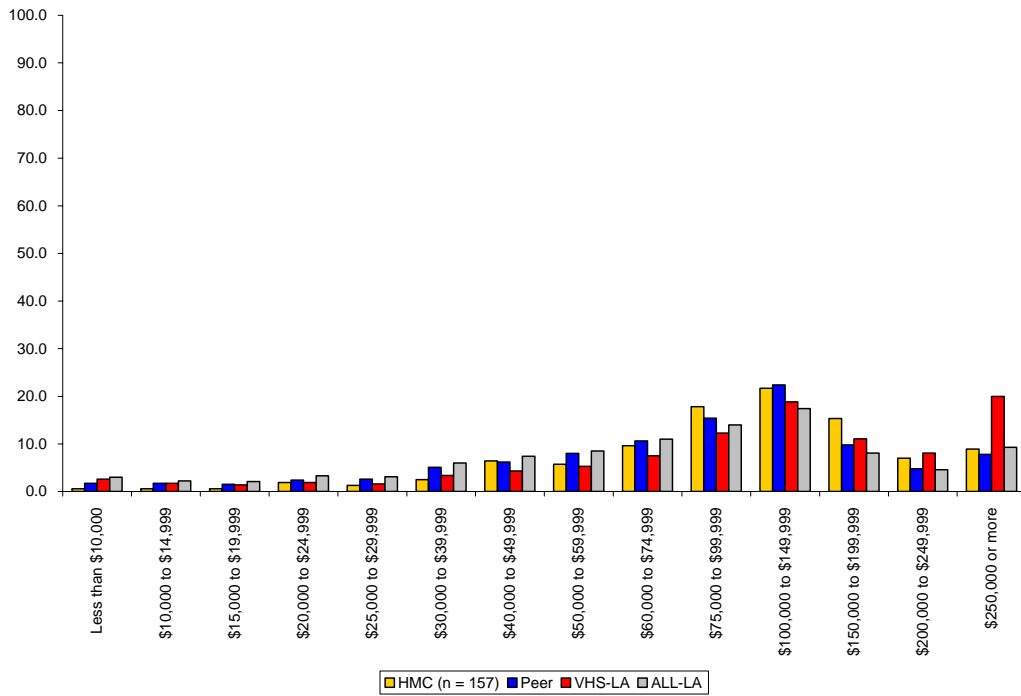
Figure 1. Race/Ethnicity of CIRP 2007 Respondents, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges



For HMC and all peer/comparative institutions, White/Caucasian and Asian-American/Asian students comprise the majority of those who participated in the survey.

Students were asked to provide their “best estimate” of their parents’ combined income in the past year. Figure 2 illustrates the responses of students at HMC and at peer/comparative colleges.

Figure 2. Joint Parental Income Level, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges



HMC students, and students enrolled in comparative institutions, indicated that their parents' joint income typically fell roughly between \$75,000 and \$199,999. The number of students at VHS liberal arts colleges whose parents' joint income levels exceeded \$250,000 was greater than students from other comparative cohorts, including HMC,

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the highest level of education completed by parents, both for HMC students and those at peer/comparative institutions.

Figure 3. Father's Education Level, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges

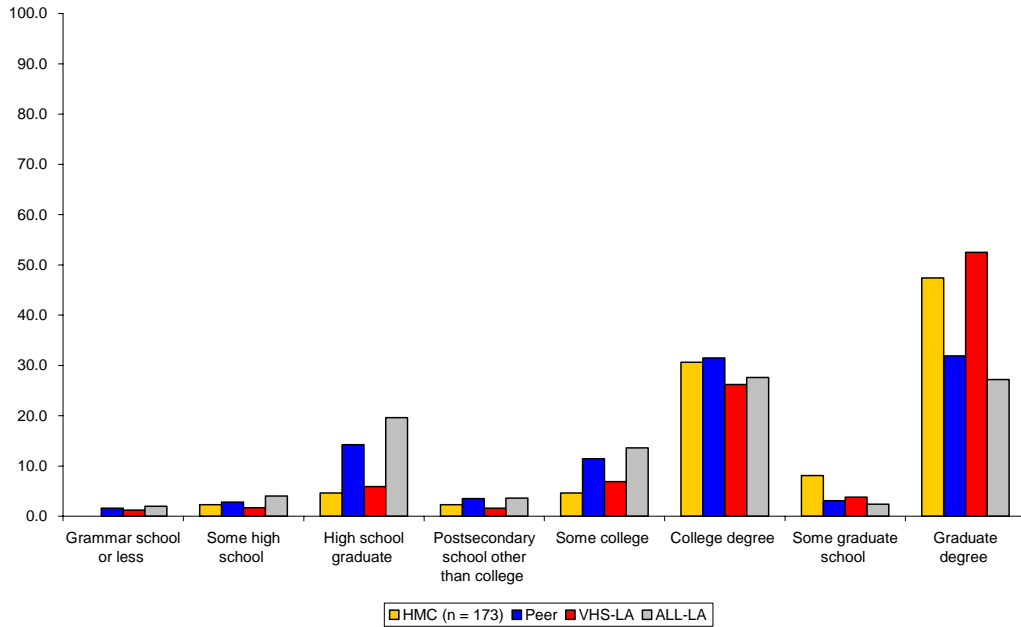
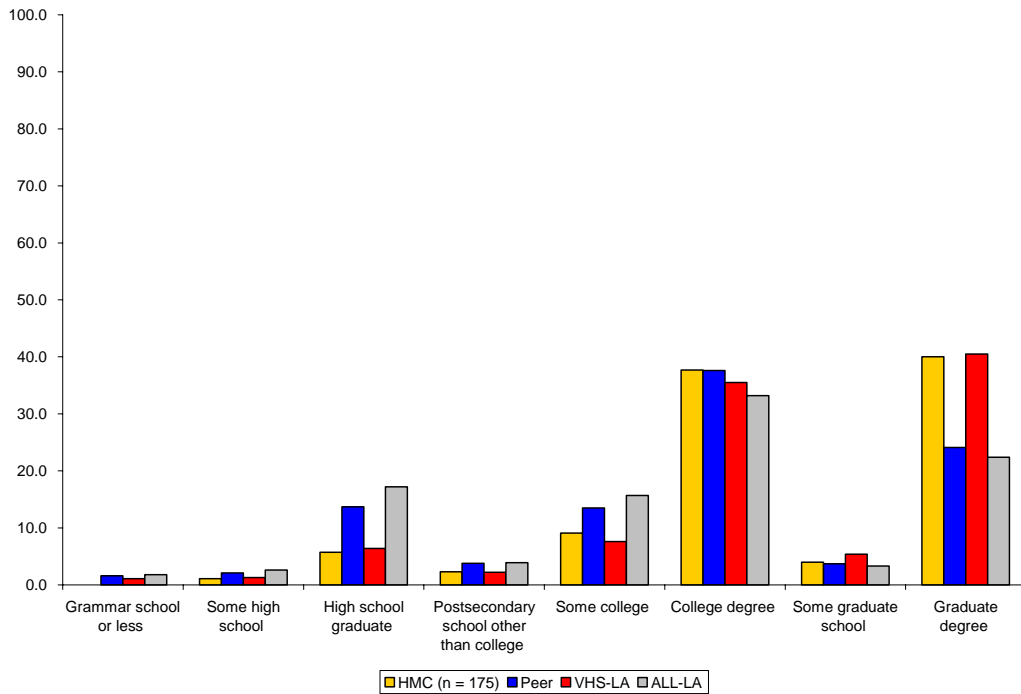


Figure 4. Mother's Education Level, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges

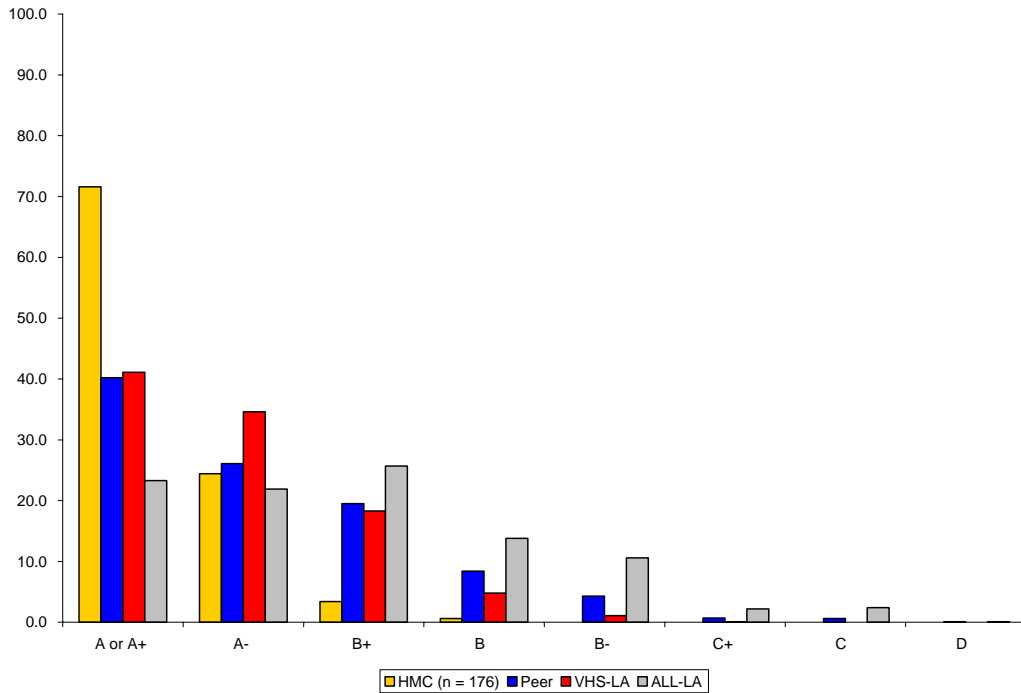


The data in Figures 2 and 3 show that the parents of HMC students are highly educated, and have typically completed undergraduate degrees and graduate degrees at equal or slightly higher rates than parents whose students attend other institutions.

ACADEMIC PREPARATION AND GOALS

Students were asked to respond to several academically-focused items on the survey instrument. Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of high school grades for incoming freshmen at HMC and at peer/comparative colleges. The data clearly that HMC students came to college academically well prepared, with more than 70% of HMC freshmen boasting an A+ or A average in high school.

Figure 5. Average High School Grade, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges



Survey respondents were also asked to rate themselves on specific personal traits in comparison with their peers. Data in Figure 6 show that HMC students, on average, rate themselves higher in terms of their *academic abilities* in comparison to students at peer/comparative institutions. Figure 7 illustrates that while HMC students rated themselves more highly in terms of a *personal drive to achieve*, they rated themselves slightly lower than their peers on *cooperativeness* and *competitiveness*. HMC respondents were less likely to rate themselves highly on *leadership*, *physical health* and *emotional health* than were their peers (Figure 8), and were much less likely to rate themselves highly on confidence-related skills, including *public speaking*, *self understanding*, *spirituality*, and *social self-confidence* (Figure 9).

Figure 6. Self-Rating of Above Average/Highest 10% on Academic Abilities, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges

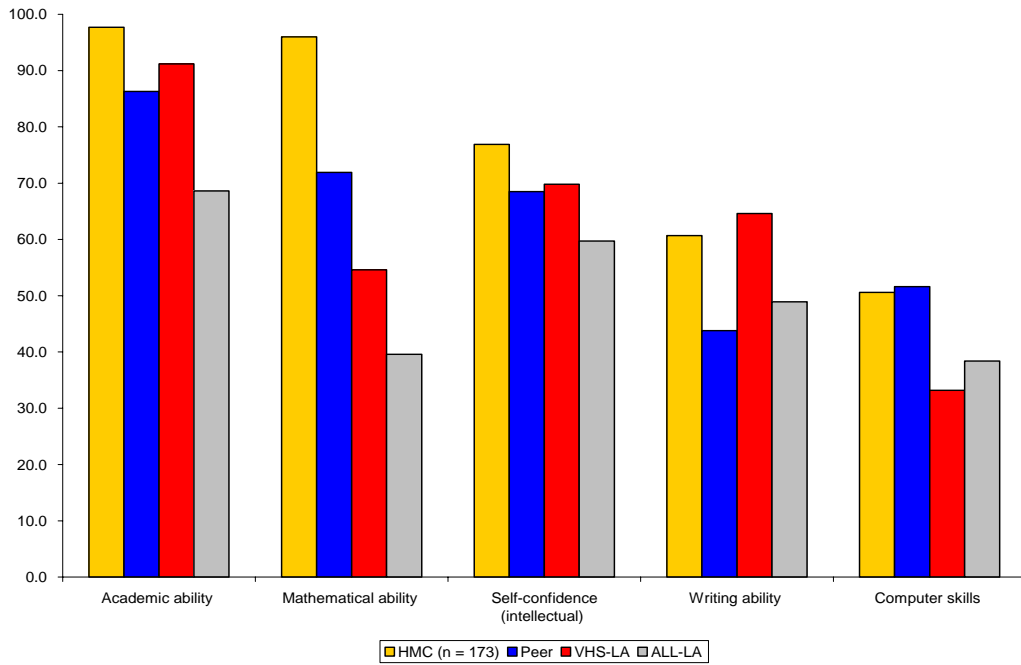


Figure 7. Self-Rating of Above Average/Highest 10% on Ambition-related Abilities, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges

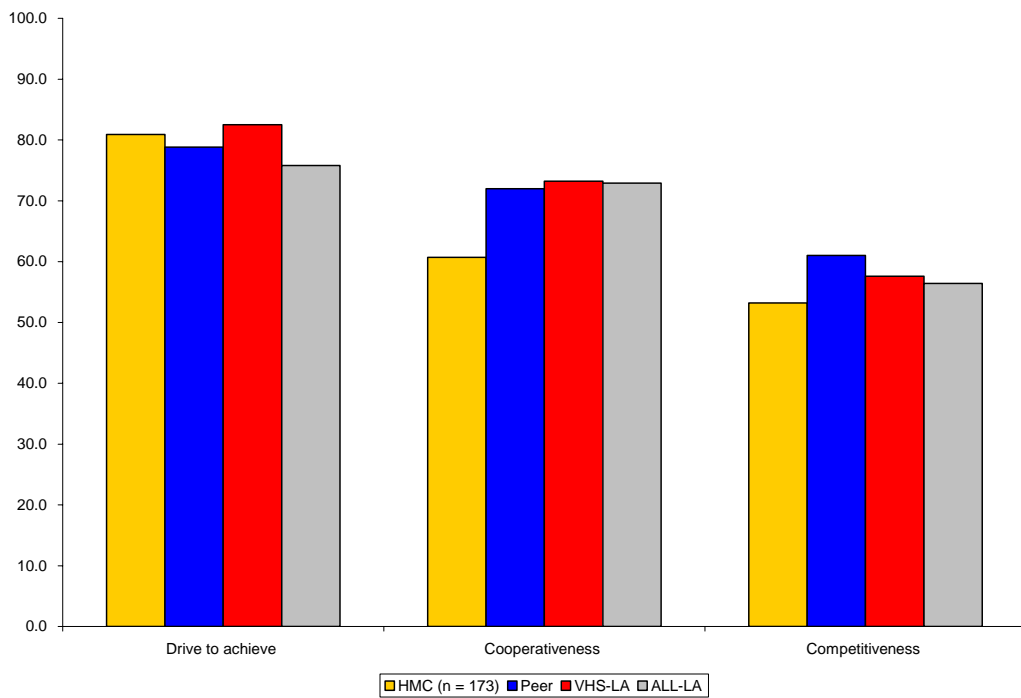


Figure 8. Self-Rating of Above Average/Highest 10% on Health and Leadership, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges

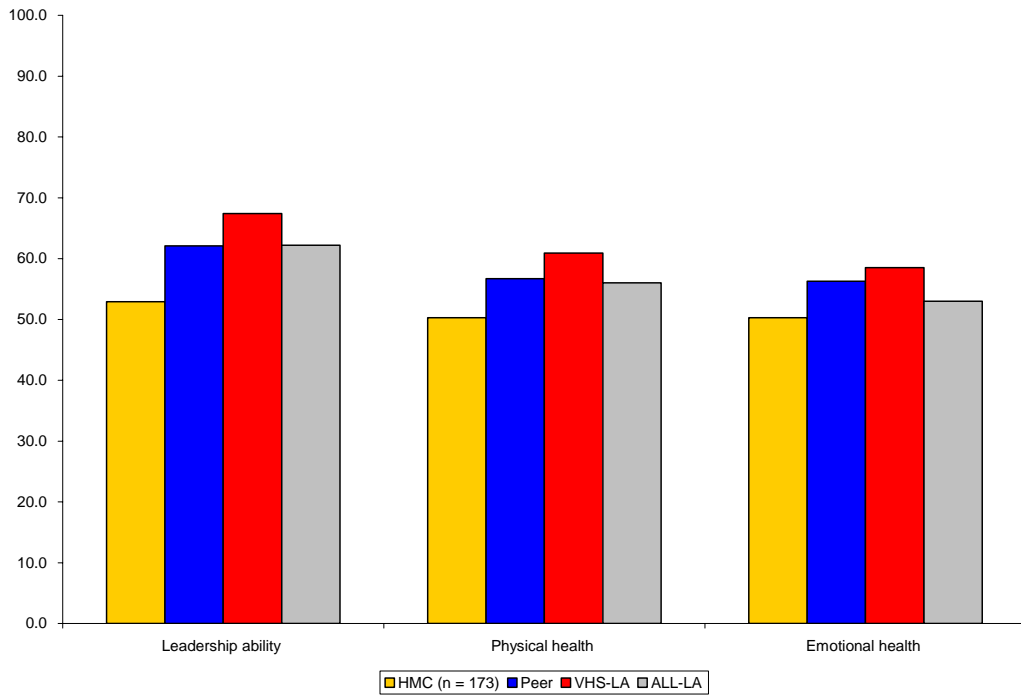
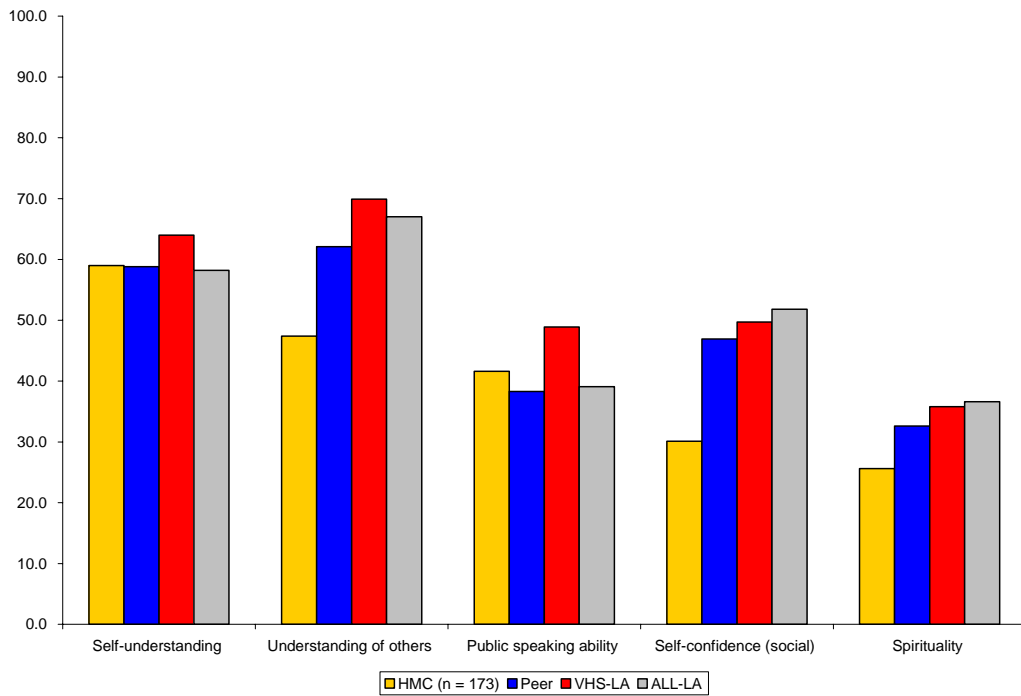


Figure 9. Self-Rating of Above Average/Highest 10% on Confidence-related Abilities, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges



COLLEGE CHOICE

The CIRP Freshman Survey asked respondents several questions about what prompted them to ultimately choose the college in which they matriculated in fall 2007. The data in Figure 10 show that HMC students believed the college had a *good academic reputation* at a slightly higher rate than did students at peer colleges. In addition, HMC students were more likely than their peers to believe that graduates are given admission to *top graduate programs*.

Figure 11 suggests that the students' *visits* to HMC played a greater role in their college choice than did national college rankings or the college's website. And the data in Figure 12 illustrate that HMC was the *first choice* of college for first-year students more frequently than were other campuses at which their peers enrolled.

Figure 10. Opinions about the college in which students enrolled, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges

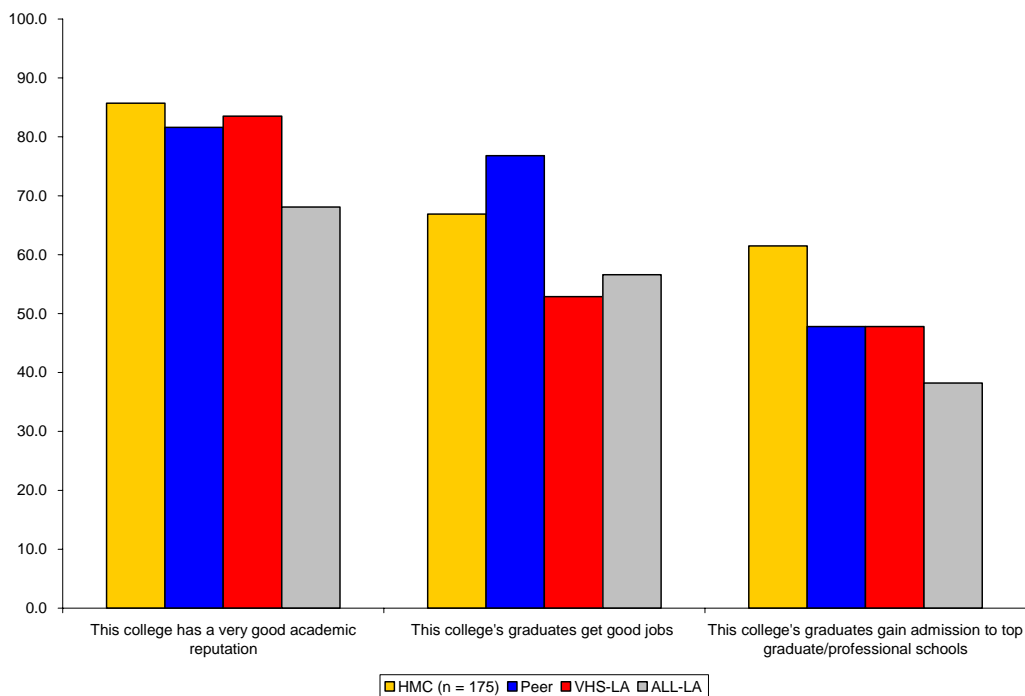


Figure 11. Factors that helped college choice process, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges

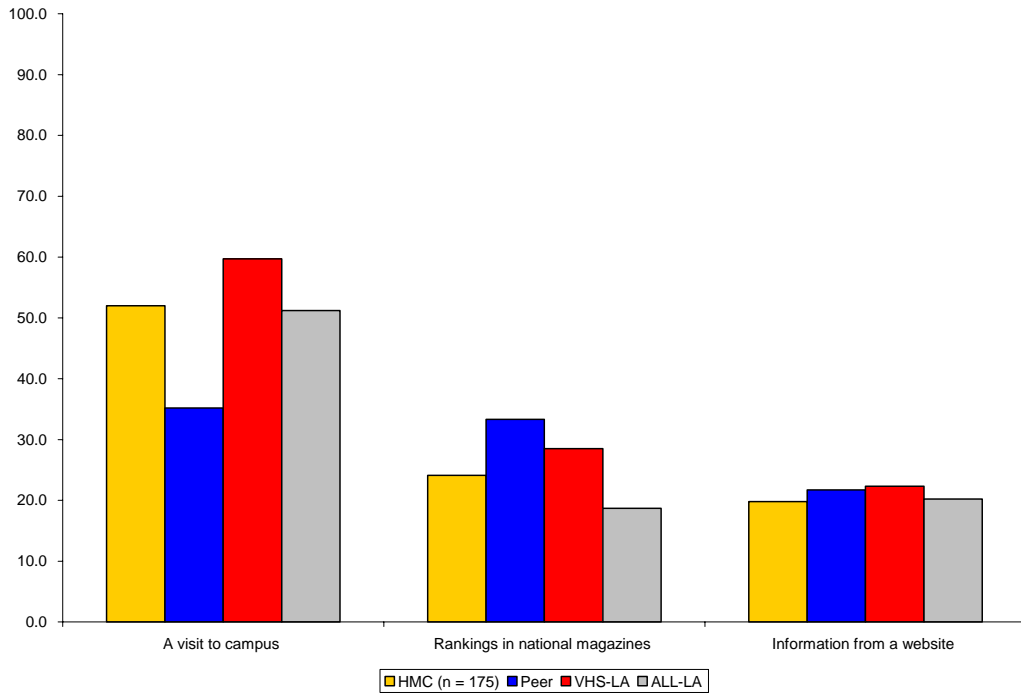
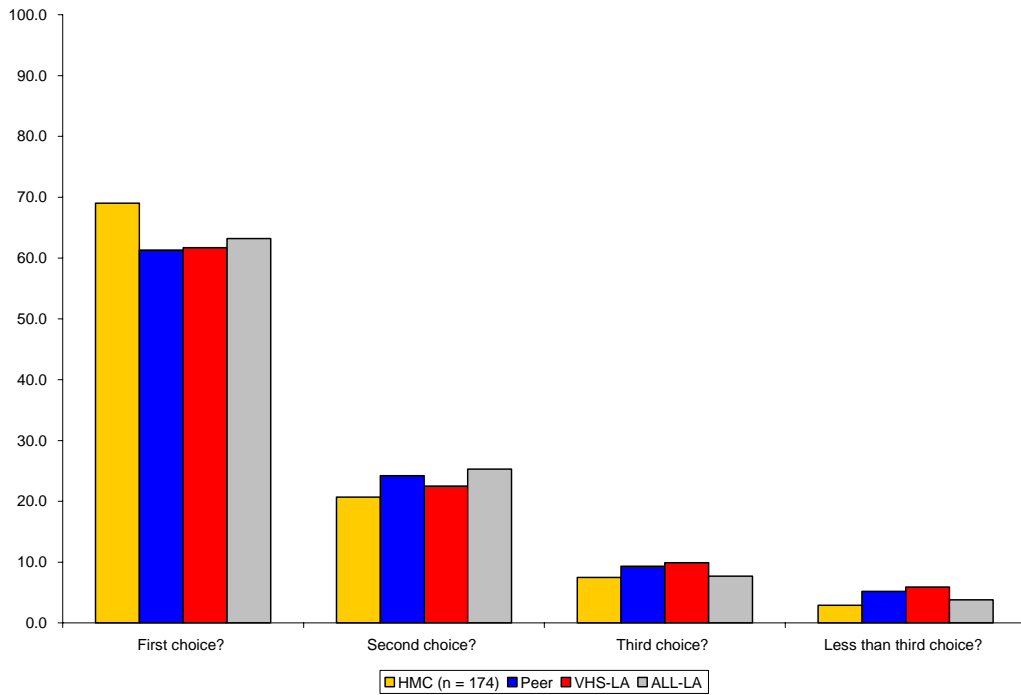


Figure 12. Students' ranking of college choice, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges



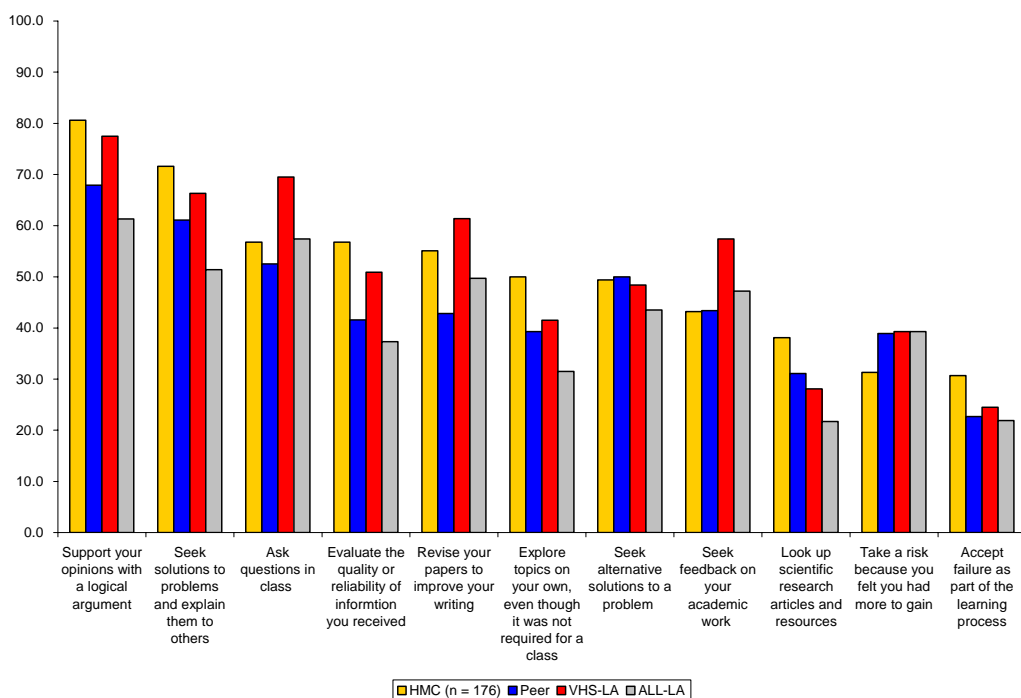
ACTIVITIES, ENGAGEMENT AND AMBITION: PAST AND FUTURE

Respondents were also asked questions regarding frequent activities in which they participated during their high school years, as well as those activities they anticipated taking part in during college. Survey participants were also asked to report the average amount of time they spend on academic work, social activities and personal interests.

High School

Figure 14 provides a summary of frequent process used when completing academic work and/or research. HMC freshmen were more likely than their peers to *support opinions with logical arguments, seek solutions to problems and explain them to others and evaluate the quality and reliability of information*, but were slightly less inclined to *seek feedback on their academic work, ask questions in class, or revise papers*.

Figure 13. Frequent processes/methods used in academics, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges



Data in Figures 14 through 21 provide a snapshot of how HMC freshmen and students at peer colleges spent their time in academic, social and personal pursuits. Figure 14 illustrates that HMC freshman, more than their peers, were likely to report *feeling bored* in class in high school. HMC students were also more inclined to *tutor other students, play a musical instrument, study with other students and socialize with people of a different race/ethnicity* than were their peers at comparative colleges (Figure 15). HMC students were less likely than their peers at other colleges to *volunteer in political campaigns, take part in a political demonstration, or perform community service as part of a class* (Figure 16).

Figure 14. Frequent behaviors in high school HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges

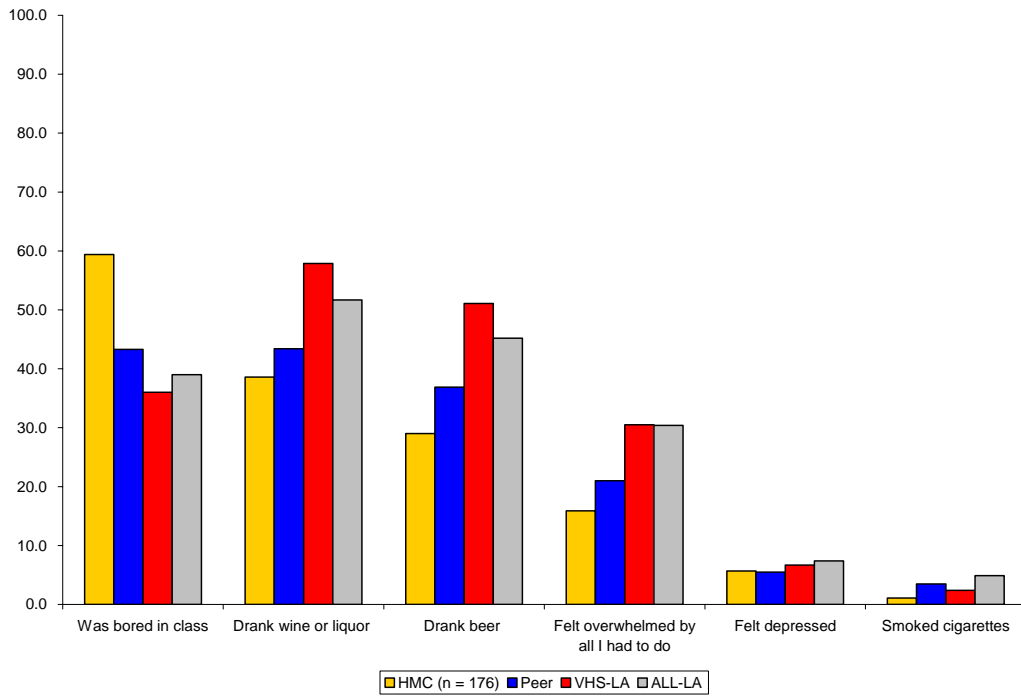


Figure 15. Frequent academic activities in high school, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges

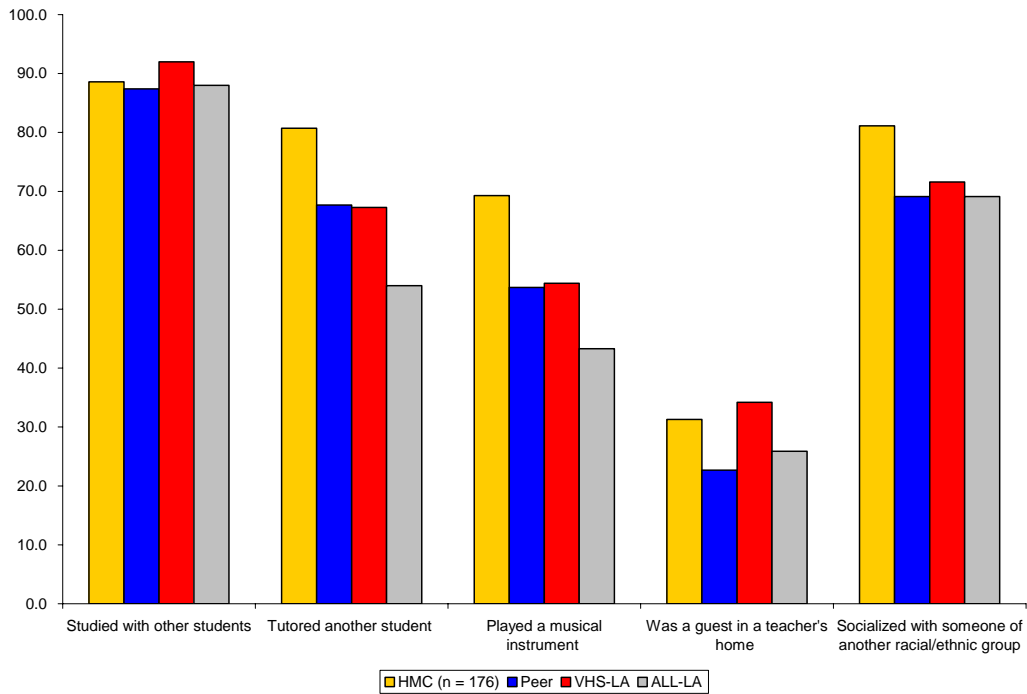
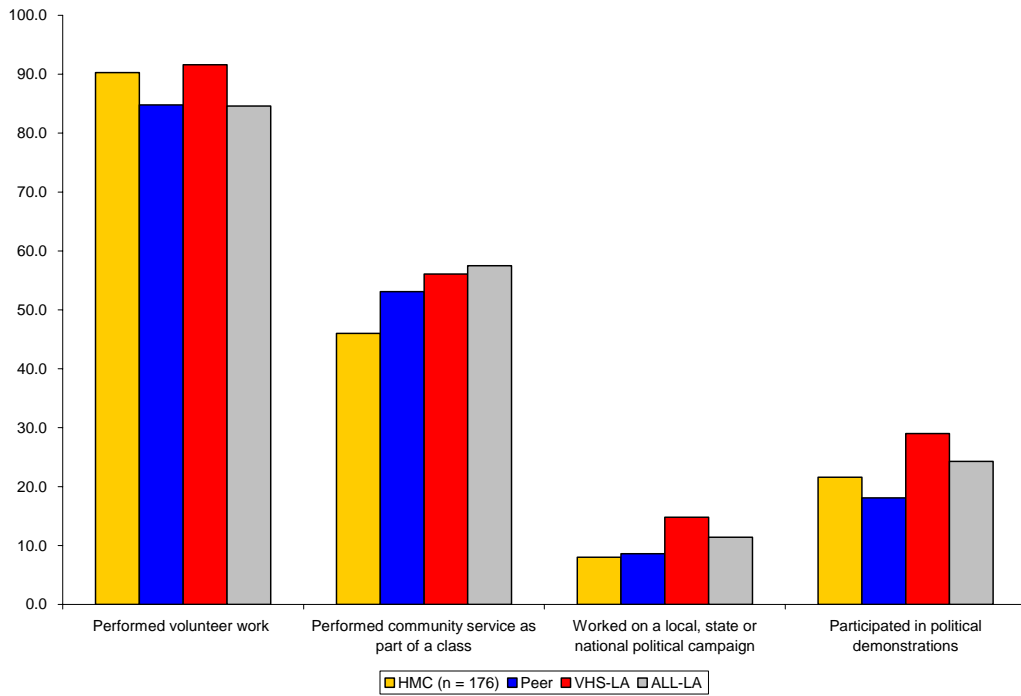


Figure 16. Frequent social activities in high school, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges



Figures 17-20 describe the time HMC freshmen and students at peer colleges typically spent on academic and social activities. These data figures show that HMC students, on average, devoted more time to *studying* (Figure 17) than their peers, and about the same amount of time *socializing* (Figure 18) and *taking part in clubs and organizations* (Figure 21). However, HMC students spend noticeably less time engaged in *partying* (Figure 19) or *working for pay* (Figure 20).

Figure 17. Average time spent studying, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges

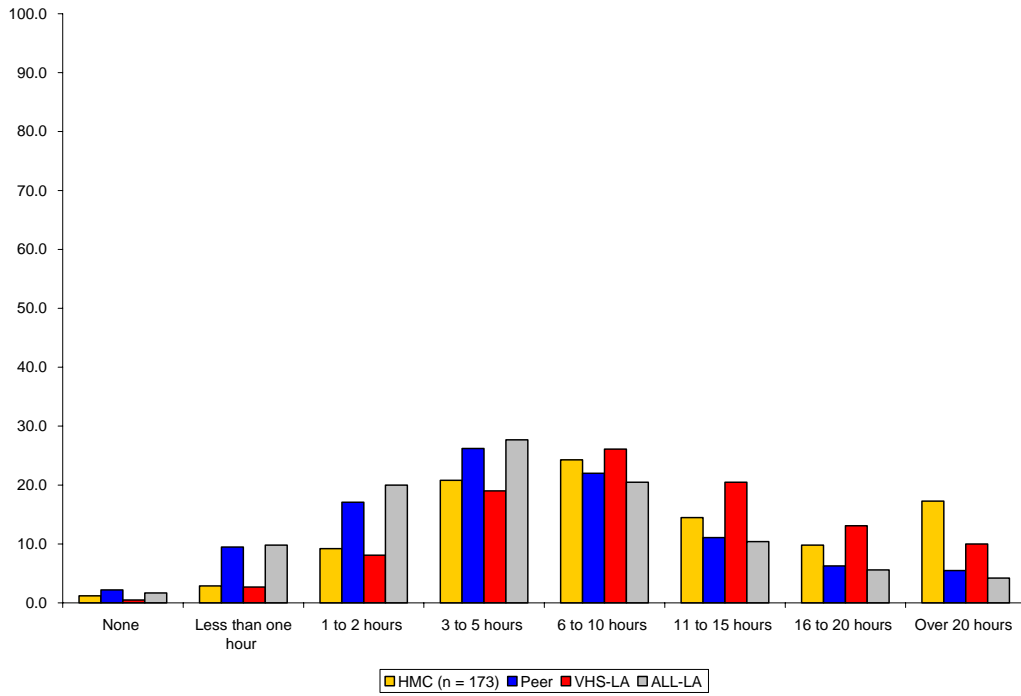


Figure 18. Average time spent socializing, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges

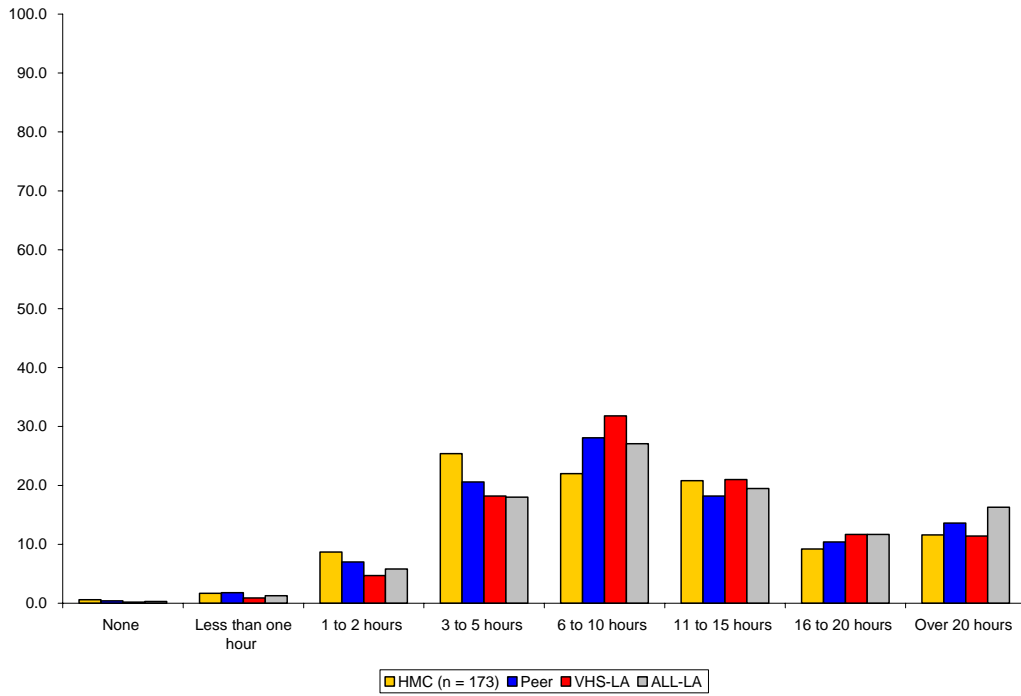


Figure 19. Average time spent partying, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges

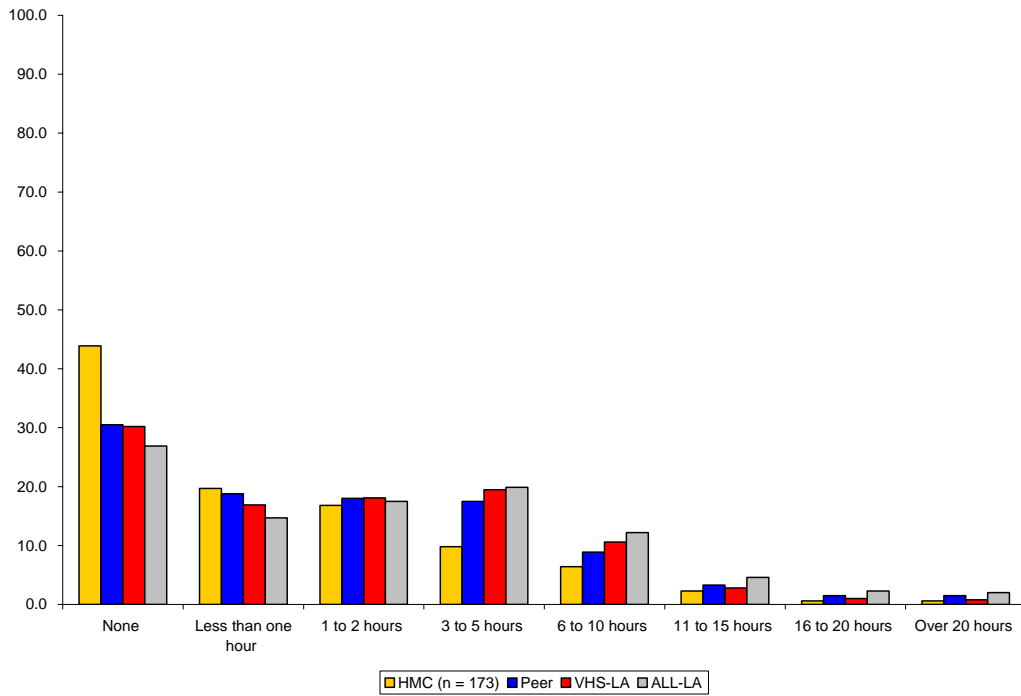


Figure 20. Average time spent working for pay, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges

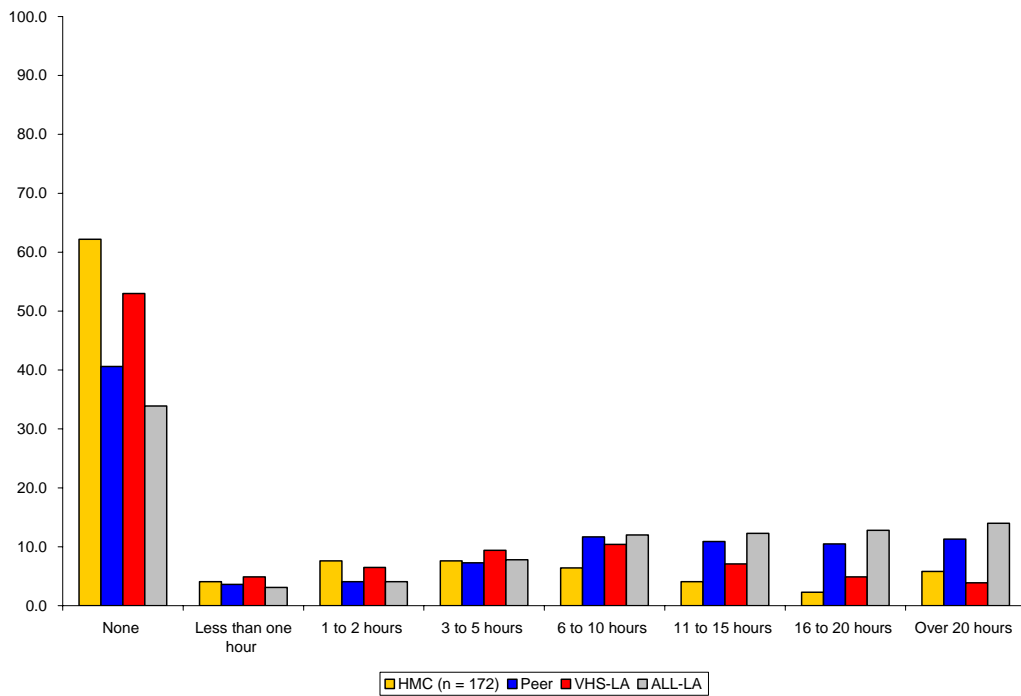
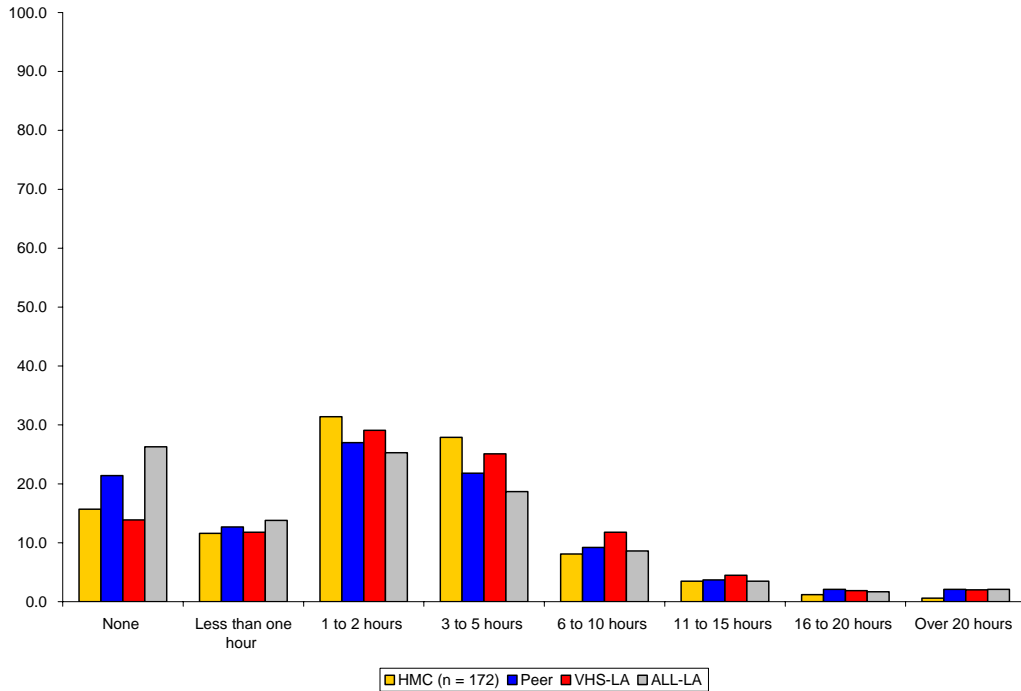


Figure 21. Average time with clubs and organizations, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges



College

Survey respondents were asked to rate the likelihood of their engagement in particular activities while in college. The data in Figure 22 suggest that HMC students are about as likely as their peers to *change their anticipated career choice*, but are less likely to *participate in student government* or *change their intended academic major*. Figure 23 shows that HMC students appear to be noticeably more likely to be *satisfied with their college choice* than their peers, but do not anticipate as frequently that they will be able to *maintain a “B” average*.

The data in Figure 24 suggest that, overall, HMC students anticipate that they will be less *engaged in social/co-curricular activities* than their peers at other colleges, whereas in Figure 25 HMC students reportedly see themselves as *communicating with their professors* and *socializing with people of different races/ethnicities* more frequently than students at comparative colleges.

Figure 22. Likely or very likely academic activities while in college, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges

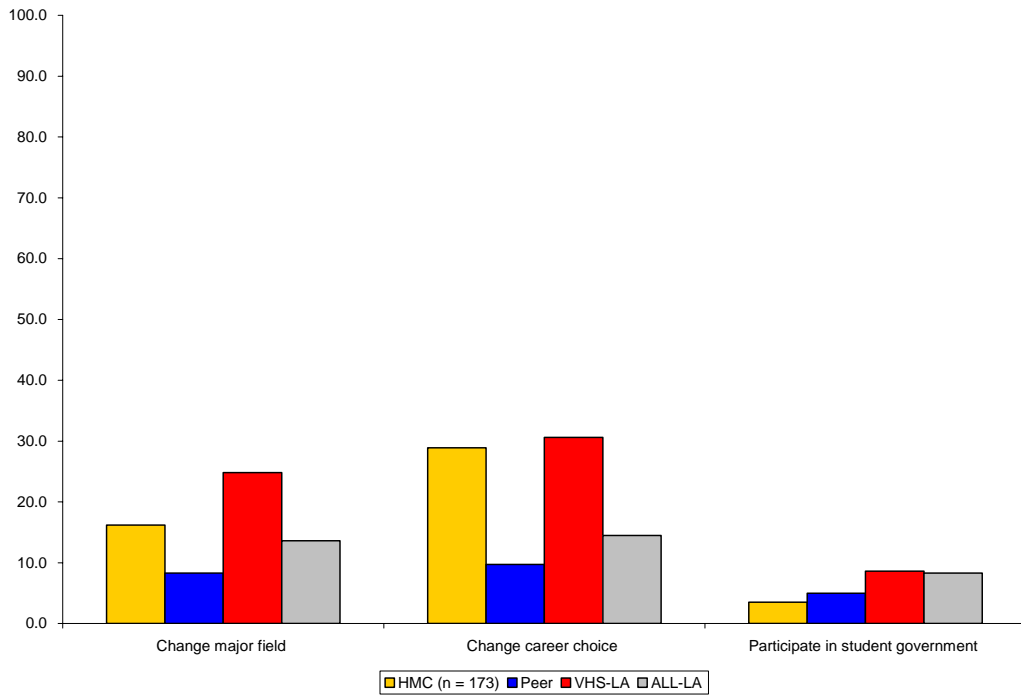


Figure 23. Likely or very likely enrollment/financial implications while in college, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges

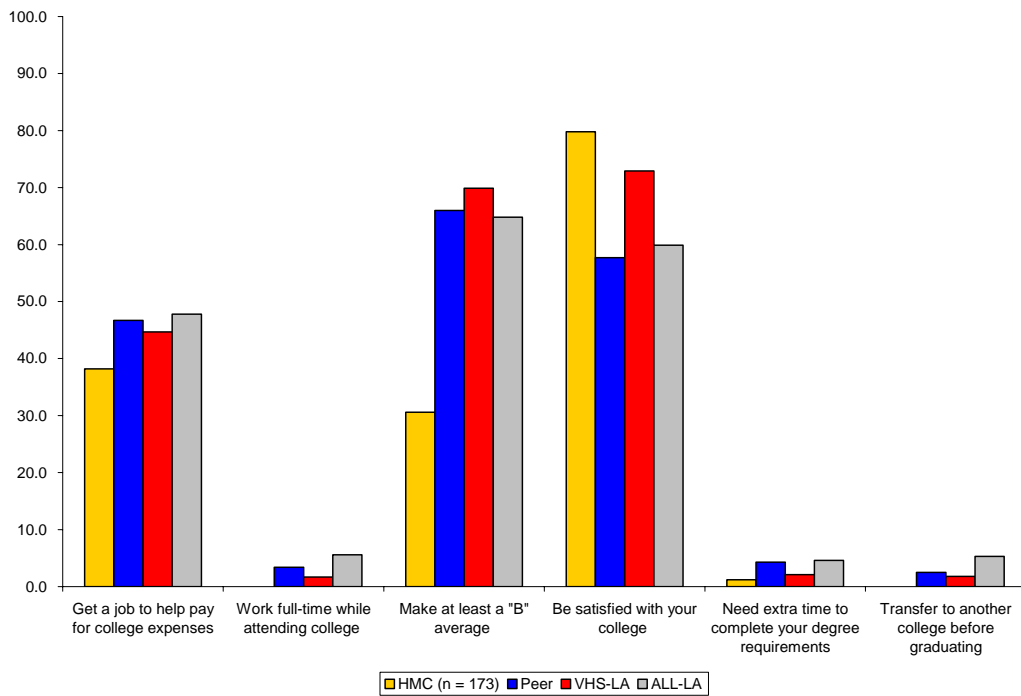


Figure 24. Likely or very likely extracurricular engagement while in college, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges

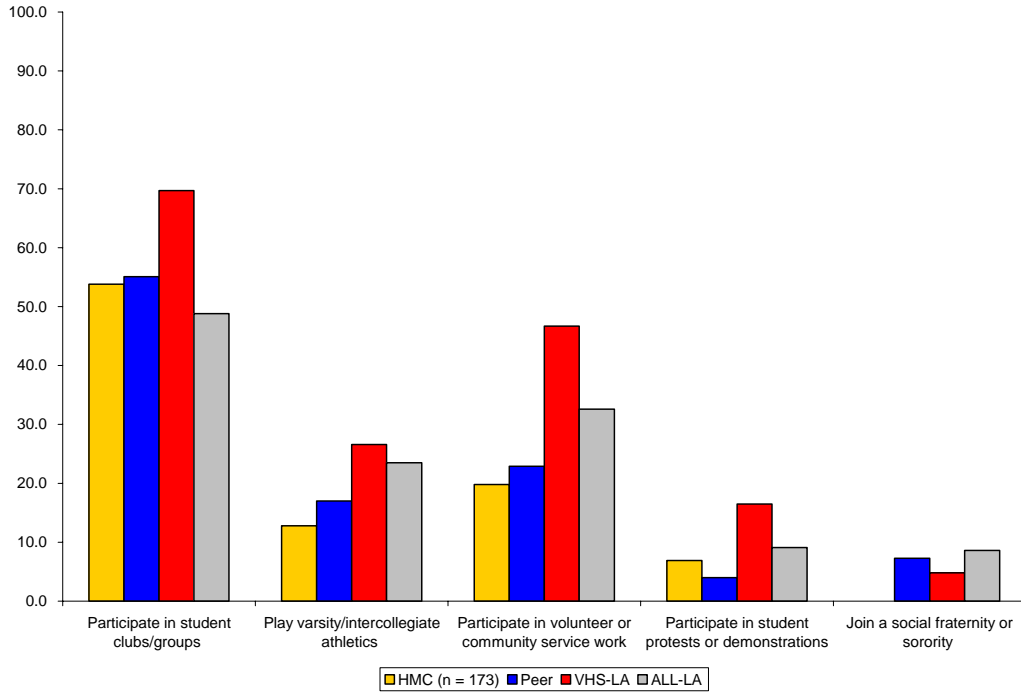
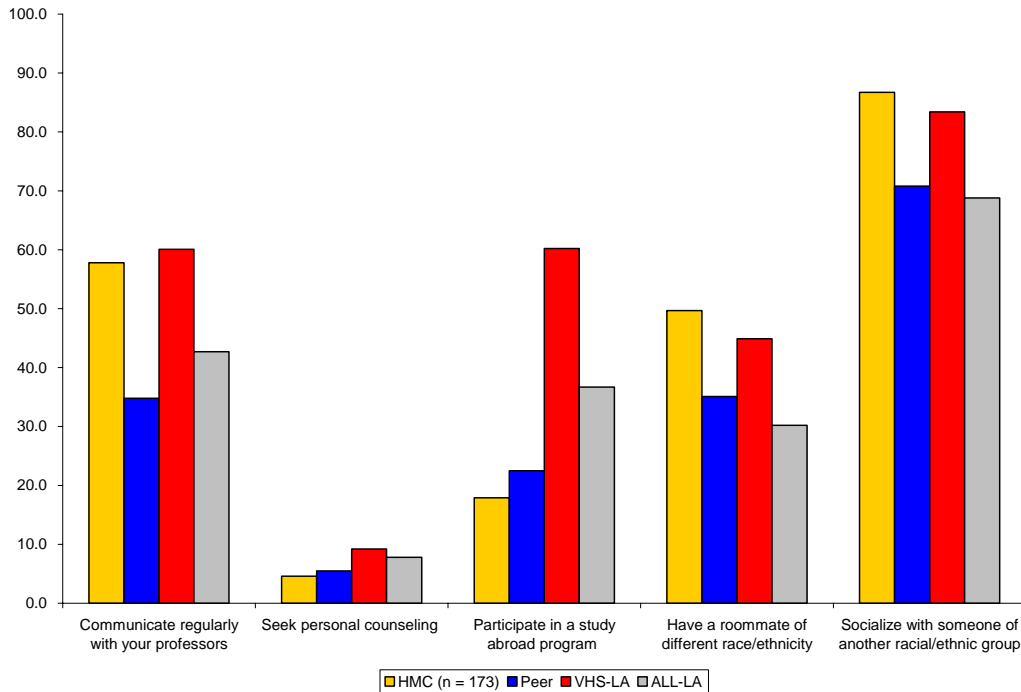
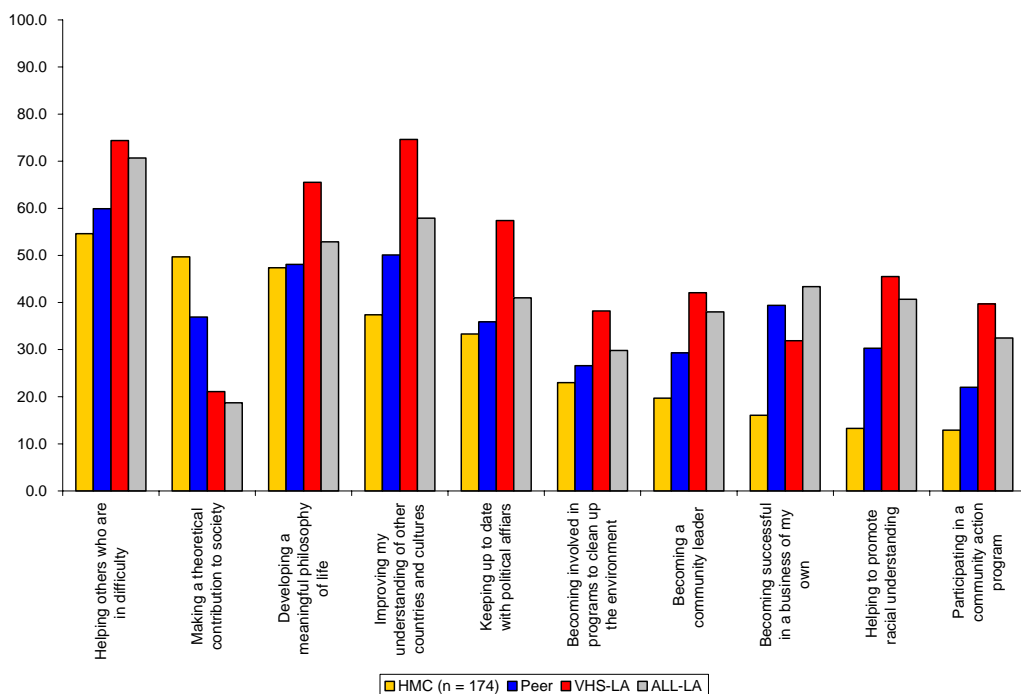


Figure 25. Other activities engagement that are likely or very likely while in college, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges



While more than 50% of HMC respondents identified particular personal objectives as being very important or essential to them, including *helping others who are in difficulty* and *developing a meaningful philosophy of life*, students at peer/comparative colleges identify these ambitions as more important more frequently. There is one exception: HMC students, more frequently than their peers, identify *making a theoretical contribution to society* as an important personal goal more often than did their peers. Given the research and scientific engagement that the students experience first-hand at HMC, this further illustrates the unique and talented academic focus of HMC students.

Figure 26. Important or essential personal objectives, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges



FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS OF COLLEGE CHOICE

The CIRP Freshman Survey participants were asked about the extent to which financing their college education was a concern to them, and the finance-related reasons that prompted them to choose the college in which they matriculated in fall 2007. The data in Figure 27 show that most HMC freshmen were either *not at all concerned* about how to pay for their college education, or had only *minor concerns* about this issue. Their responses were in line with the responses provided by their peers at comparative colleges.

Figure 28 explains the finance-related reasons students ultimately choose the college they attended. For HMC freshmen, *being offered financial assistance* and the *price of tuition* were the two most frequently mentioned financial factors mentioned. However, HMC respondents were much less likely to note these as considerations than were students at comparative institutions.

Figure 27. Concerns about financing college, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges

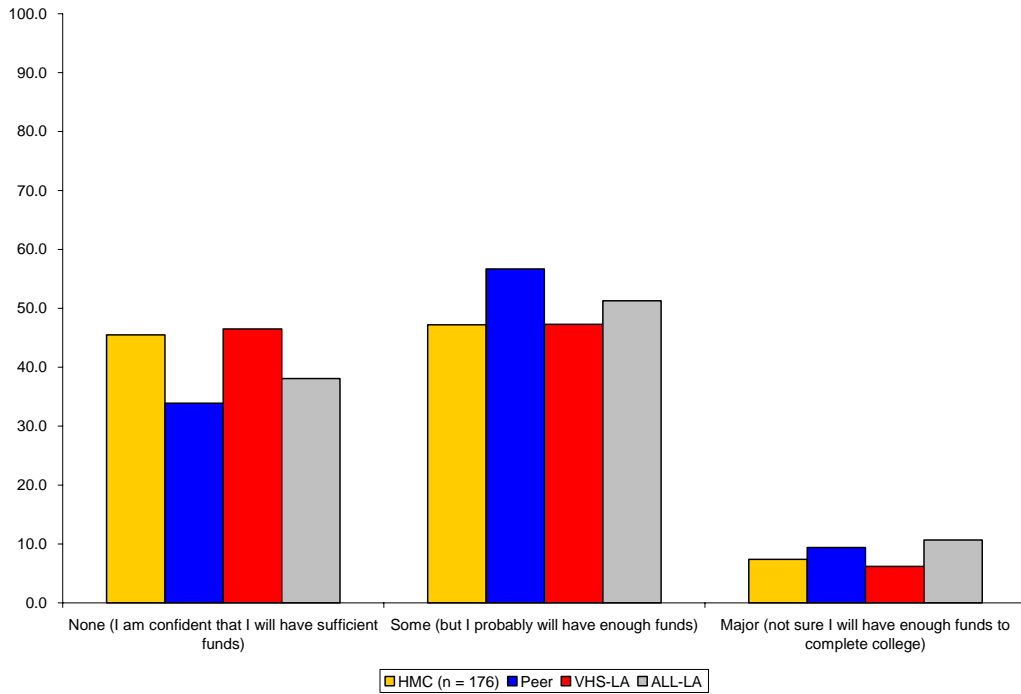
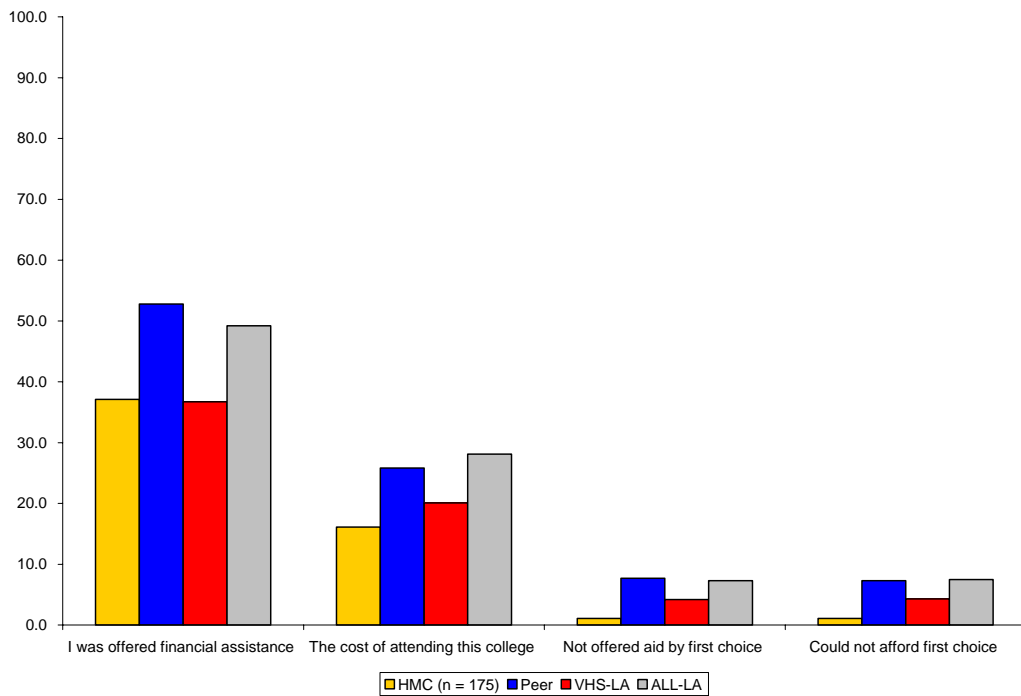


Figure 28. Financial reasons for attending college of choice, HMC and Peer/Comparative Colleges



SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The data from the 2007 CIRP Freshman Survey suggest that Harvey Mudd College students are academically engaged and motivated, thrive in a challenging social and academic environment, and appreciate the diversity of the community of scholars with whom they interact on a daily basis. Harvey Mudd College students have benefited from the educational and financial accomplishments of their family, and have likely been inspired to work hard to achieve their goals as did their parents. It does appear that, in the years leading up to college, HMC freshmen were reportedly less engaged in social and extra-curricular activities, and did not anticipate that their college years would see them altering their time commitments to many co-curricular opportunities.