

# **Summary Findings of The 2005 Survey of Presently Attending Students**

**Gordon College Office of Institutional Research**

**May, 2005**

# Table of Contents

<b>1. Overview and Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Methodology and Sample .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Questionnaire Development and Administration.....	4
The Sample .....	4
Use of the Survey Data.....	5
<b>3. General Characteristics.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Demographic Characteristics.....	6
Marital Status and Children .....	6
Work.....	7
Parents' Education .....	7
Academic Characteristics .....	7
Class Preparation Time.....	8
Challenge .....	8
<b>4. Academic Achievement.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5. Time Expenditure by Full Time Students.....</b>	<b>10</b>
Commuting Time .....	10
Overall Time Expenditure .....	10
<b>6. Academic Plans .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Expectations for Earning Degree .....	10
Factors in Choosing Four Year Colleges .....	12
Preferences for Baccalaureate Degree in Barnesville .....	13
<b>7. Class Scheduling Preferences .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>8. Satisfaction with Advisement .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>9. Campus Life .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Participation in Campus Activities.....	14
Campus Housing .....	15
Public Safety.....	15
<b>10. Overall Satisfaction .....</b>	<b>16</b>

# 1. Overview and Executive Summary

In April, 2005, The Gordon College Office of Institutional Research administered its second annual Survey of Presently Attending Students (SOPAS). The questionnaire was administered to all students in a randomly drawn sample of class sections (cluster sample) yielding a sample of 515 students. The questionnaire sought social security numbers in order to link survey information to demographic and academic characteristics in the college database; approximately half of the sample gave their social security numbers.

The purpose of this report is to provide a broad summary of the survey data. Readers are encouraged to explore the results, reflect on the patterns and relationships reported, and offer hypotheses and scenarios for further exploration of these data as well for the design of future surveys.

Following are some of the more interesting findings of the survey:

- ✓ 65.9 per cent of the sample are first generation college students, with neither parent having completed a four year college degree.
- ✓ 79.4 per cent “intend” to obtain a two year degree from Gordon with a stronger commitment to the two year degree from the older, less traditional students. Over a third of those intending to earn an associates degree expect to complete it in 2007 or later.
- ✓ Regardless of intention to pursue a two year degree, a substantial majority—92.5 per cent—of the students intend to pursue a four year degree.
- ✓ 62.4 per cent of the sample indicated interest in pursuing a four year degree on the Gordon campus if a program in their intended major were available, with higher proportions of pre-nursing and teacher education majors expressing such interest.
- ✓ On average, Gordon students spend about a half hour in preparation for each class hour. Class time, preparation, and commuting take up an average of 20.7 hours each week for full time students.
- ✓ Students reported increased satisfaction with the registration and advisement process compared with last year’s survey.
- ✓ While cost and location were cited as the most frequent reasons for choosing Gordon, specific programs offered is the most frequent factor cited in choosing a four year college.
- ✓ 83.2 per cent of the sample said they would choose Gordon College again.
- ✓ Over a third of the students expressed a preference for more late afternoon classes, and 39.6 per cent wanted more evening classes at off campus locations.

## **2. Methodology and Sample**

### **Questionnaire Development and Administration**

Gordon College's second Annual Sample of Presently Attending Students was carried out between March 24 and April 15, 2005, by the Office of Institutional Research. The survey continued the practice established last year of covering a broad range of interests expressed across the academic and administrative units of the college. Several questions were repeated from last year both to validate last year's results and to measure change in certain areas. New questions were added in areas of more current interest.

Once again we drew a cluster sample of class sections. Unlike last year, however, we did not restrict the sample to just two time slots but instead selected a sample of sections across all time slots. Earlier in the semester, we had administered the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), and we eliminated sections which had been given CCSSE from the list of potential SOPAS sections. A significant change in this year's SOPAS was a question asking for social security number, which was provided by approximately half of the sample. Inclusion of social security number enabled us to link survey responses to academic records. We also used social security number, along with a filtering question, to eliminate students who had already answered the questionnaire.

Late in the first semester, we asked members of the President's Cabinet and chairs of the academic divisions for suggestions on specific topics to be addressed by the survey. We also sent a memo asking for suggestions to the entire faculty and staff. Consideration of their responses along with reexamination of last year's survey instrument resulted in a questionnaire consisting of 36 questions, all but one of which, asking for social security number, were closed ended. Our intent was to develop a survey instrument which could be administered within 20 minutes. The questionnaire was tested on an English 1102 section with no material problems.

### **The Sample**

A random sample of 31 class sections was drawn which yielded a total sample of 515 students. Class sections which participated in CCSSE were excluded from the sample so that no more than one survey was administered to any class section during the semester. The survey asked students to include their social security number which we used to identify demographic and academic characteristics of the respondents. Of the total 515 respondents, 255 provided social security numbers which we were able to link with college data. Sections of this report addressing specific demographic and academic characteristics (race, gender, age, course load, major, and GPA) are based on an analysis of those

255 respondents who provided social security numbers. All other items in this report are based on the entire sample of 515.

The total sample of 515 students is likely to be representative of the student body as a whole. While we did not ask ethnicity, gender, or age in this year's survey, we did do so last year and got a very representative sample of students; for those characteristics which we did include in this years survey, such as commuting time, living arrangement, marital status, parental status, and work status, characteristics of this year's sample were very close to last year's.

	<b>Actual Sample</b>	<b>Spring 2005 Enrollment</b>
<b>Number of Students</b>	515	3207
<b>Number Giving SSN</b>	255	
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
African American	18.4%	27.7 %
Hispanic	1.2%	1.7%
Asian	2.4%	1.9 %
White	76.9%	67.2 %
Other	1.1%	1.5%
<b>Gender</b>		
Men	27.1%	33.5%
Women	72.9%	66.5%
<b>Course Load</b>		
Full Time	79.6%	64.0%
Part Time	20.4%	36.0%
<b>Age</b>		
25 or under	86.5%	81.2 %
Over 25	13.5%	18.8 %

The subsample of students who gave their identification numbers, however, appears to underrepresent minorities and men and overrepresent younger and full time students. Since most of the analysis using the subsample classifies respondents by specific categories of those variables, however, these biases don't materially affect the overall integrity of the analysis

### **Use of the Survey Data**

To some extent, we've prepared this summary report bearing in mind some of the specific issues which motivated the questionnaire, but for the most part we've just attempted to provide an overview of the data. The terms "respondents," "sample," and "students" are used interchangeably throughout this report, implying that we can generalize from the sample to the student body. While such generalization is certainly the aim of the survey and is likely to be generally valid, we have not yet done formal statistical estimation to substantiate the claim.

While general characteristics of the sample are likely to reflect those of the student body, specific numbers will surely vary between sample and population.

We invite the reader both to pose further questions which can be asked of the present data and to suggest new questions to be explored in future surveys. A variety of analyses can be carried out with the present data. Last year's survey provided information which has been useful for several departments in their planning activities. From the present summary, we can continue to identify areas of the college which can benefit from further thought and development while assessing change which has taken place since last year.

### **3. General Characteristics**

Demographic characteristics such as those reported above in describing the sample are readily available from Gordon's Office of Institutional Research and in the Gordon College Fact Book. Gordon students tend to be "traditionally" young and full time, although somewhat less so in the past few years, with women comprising nearly two thirds of the student body and ethnic diversity which reflects the demography of nearby areas.

The Survey of Presently Attending Students allows us to explore further some of the characteristics of our students. In this year's survey as in last year's, we asked demographic questions of all respondents regarding marital status and children, living arrangement, work, and parents' education and largely confirmed what we learned last year.

#### **Demographic Characteristics**

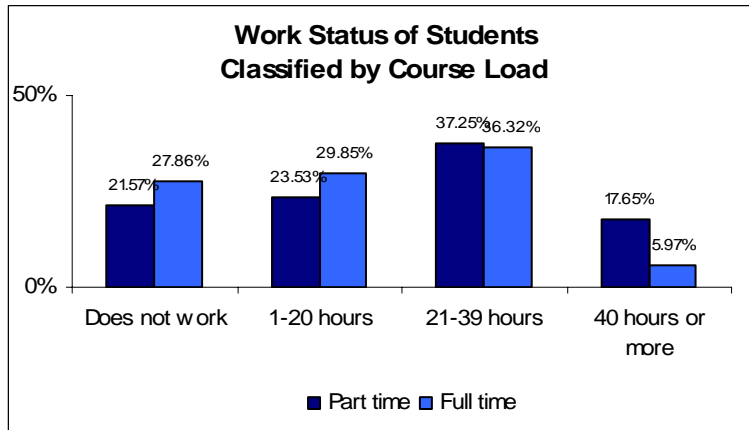
##### **Marital Status and Children**

Reflecting the prominence of traditional students at Gordon, only 13.7 % of the students were married. Among the married students, fully two thirds had at least one child living at home while 7.1 per cent of the unmarried students had children living at home.

	<b>2004 sample</b>	<b>2005 sample</b>
<b>Not married, no children at home</b>	80.2%	82.3%
<b>Not Married, children at home</b>	6.1%	6.4%
<b>Married, no children at home</b>	4.6%	4.2%
<b>Married, children at home</b>	9.1%	7.0%

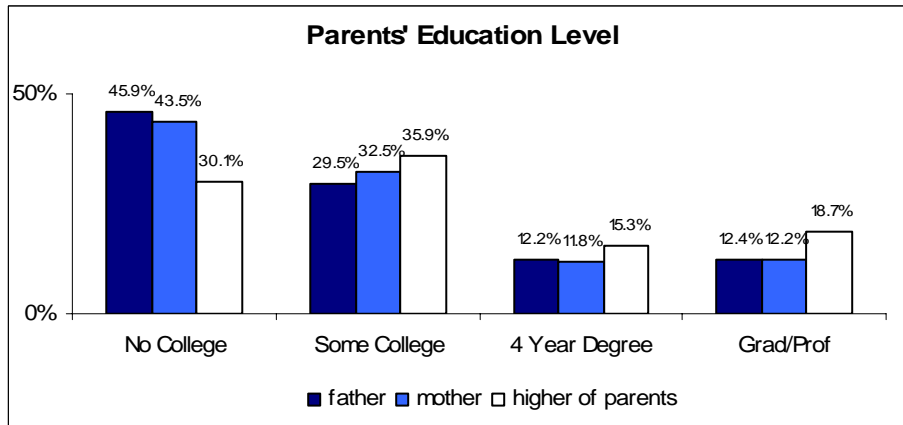
**Work**

Over seventy per cent of Gordon students work at least part time during the semester. Just under 30 per cent of our students did not work, regardless of class load. Among students who held jobs, most of the full time students worked part time while nearly one fifth of the part time students worked full time.



**Parents' Education**

Nearly two thirds of Gordon's students are first generation college students,



defined as students with neither parent having obtained a four year college degree. The first generation college students in

the sample were close to evenly split between those with parents having some college and those whose parents had no education beyond high school.

**Academic Characteristics**

Our use of student identification numbers enabled us to link survey data to academic records, enabling us to get precise data on respondents' course loads, academic performance, and specific demographic characteristics. As a result, this year we've been able to more accurately look at academic characteristics of the sample.

**Class Preparation Time**

On average, Gordon students reported spending 0.53 hours (or 32 minutes) weekly in out of class preparation for each credit hour of enrollment. Just under 10 per cent reported spending one hour or more weekly in preparation time for each credit hour.

**Challenge**

Gordon students reported themselves as finding the classes moderately challenging, with most students finding class material to be either “just right” or “somewhat difficult.”

	<b>2004 Sample</b>	<b>2005 Sample</b>
<b>Very easy</b>	1.6%	1.6%
<b>Somewhat easy</b>	6.7%	6.7%
<b>Just right</b>	55.3%	55.2%
<b>Somewhat difficult</b>	35.4%	35.5%
<b>Very difficult</b>	1.0%	1.0%

**4. Academic Achievement**

Collecting respondents’ identification numbers enabled us to look at students’ academic performance as it related to a number of attributes which the survey addressed. In this section, we analyzed GPA’s for students who had completed at least 3 credit hours prior to the present semester. Average GPA’s were computed for groups of students classified according to various attributes.

**Average GPA by Various Attributes**

First Generation Student	
No	2.75
Yes	2.64
Weekly Preparation Time per Credit Hour	
Less than 45 Minutes	2.60
45 Minutes or More	2.97
“When I started at Gordon, I was well prepared for the classes here. “	
Strongly Disagree	2.19
Somewhat Disagree	2.34
Neutral	2.86
Somewhat Agree	2.53
Strongly agree	2.97

Some of the findings were clear and expected. Average GPA’s were:

- Lower for first generation college students than students whose parents had college degrees.
- Higher for students who had a computer available at home.
- Higher for students spending more time preparing for class.
- Higher for students that felt well prepared when they started at Gordon.

"My advisor provides me with useful information for selecting my classes."	
Strongly Disagree	2.64
Somewhat Disagree	2.59
Neutral	2.87
Somewhat Agree	2.55
Strongly agree	2.83
"I have a computer available at home."	
No	2.53
Yes	2.72
"How often do you visit the campus library?"	
Never	2.74
Less than Once a Month	2.57
A Few Times Each Month	2.62
At Least Once Each Week	2.79
Belongs to Campus Organization	
No	2.66
Yes	2.66
Participates in Intramural Sports	
No	2.70
Yes	2.28
How challenging do you generally find the courses at Gordon College?	
Very easy	2.21
Somewhat easy	3.09
Just right	2.76
Somewhat difficult	2.50
Very difficult	2.15
Presently Married	
No	2.63
Yes	2.99
Presently Working	
No	2.77
1 to 9 hours	2.41
10 to 19 hours	2.78
20 to 39 hours	2.64
40 hours or more	2.54

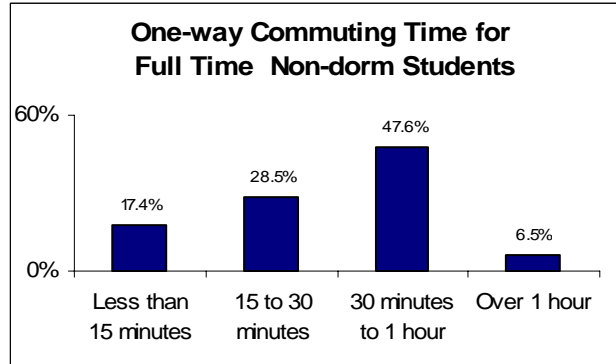
- Higher for married students.

Other findings were less obvious, however. Participation in campus organizations, for example, had no bearing on average GPA while playing intramural sports had a clear negative relationship with average GPA. Students who found classes at Gordon to be "very difficult" had an average GPA which was much lower than students who found classes "somewhat difficult," "just right," or "somewhat easy," but only slightly lower than students who found courses "very easy." Use of the library has no clear relationship with GPA. Further exploration of the data along these lines may enhance our understanding of what factors contribute to students' academic success.

## 5. Time Expenditure by Full Time Students

### Commuting Time

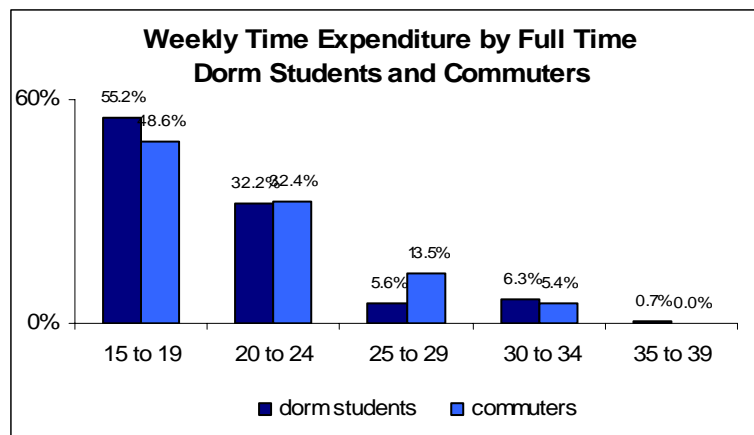
Among full time students who do not live in the dorm, nearly half live between 30 minutes and one hour away from campus. Fewer than seven per cent lived over an hour away with the remainder living within a half hour of campus.



### Overall Time Expenditure

Combining commuting time, preparation time, and class enrollment provides an estimate of time expenditure at Gordon by full time students.

On average, Gordon Students spent 20.7 hours a week in commuting, preparing, and attending class. Not surprisingly, commuting students make a greater overall time expenditure than students living in residence halls although the difference isn't large.



## 6. Academic Plans

### Expectations for Earning Degree

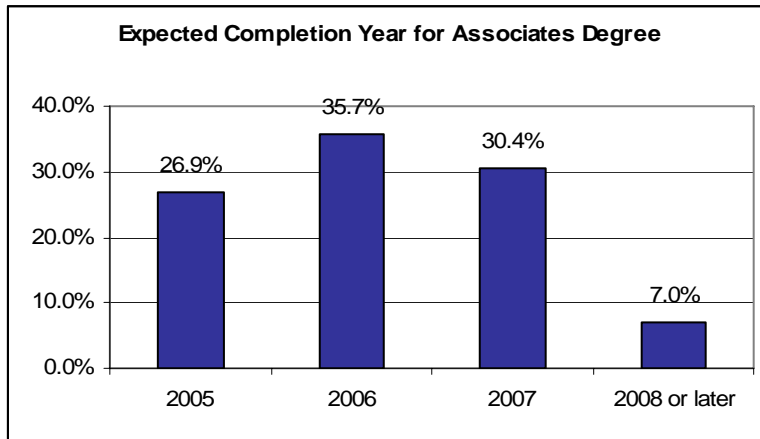
Once again this year we note that a high proportion of students—79.4 per cent—say that they “intend” to earn an associates degree at Gordon, an interesting

finding in light of the fact that only about one quarter of new freshmen actually end up graduating from Gordon. More noteworthy in the context of Gordon's transfer mission, however, is that fully 92.5 per cent of respondents intend to pursue a four year degree.

**Intention of Students to Pursue Specific Degrees**

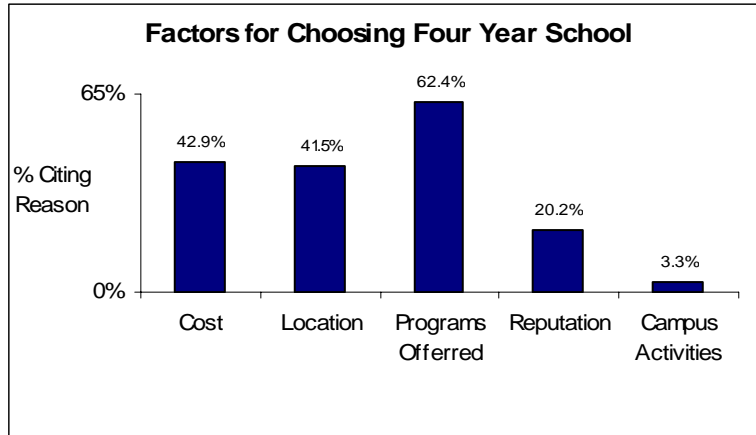
<b>Bachelor's Degree</b>	<b>Associates Degree at Gordon</b>		Total Bachelors Degree
	Do not Intend to Receive	Intend to Receive	
Do Not Intend to Receive	1.8%	5.7%	7.5%
Intend to Receive	18.8%	73.7%	92.5%
Total Associates Degree	20.6%	79.4%	100.0%

Of students who do expect to complete an associates degree at Gordon, over a third expect to complete their degrees in 2007 or later. Very few respondents in the spring semester would be new freshmen, hence this finding is very much in line with our frequent observation that Gordon students on average take between three and four years to complete their degrees.

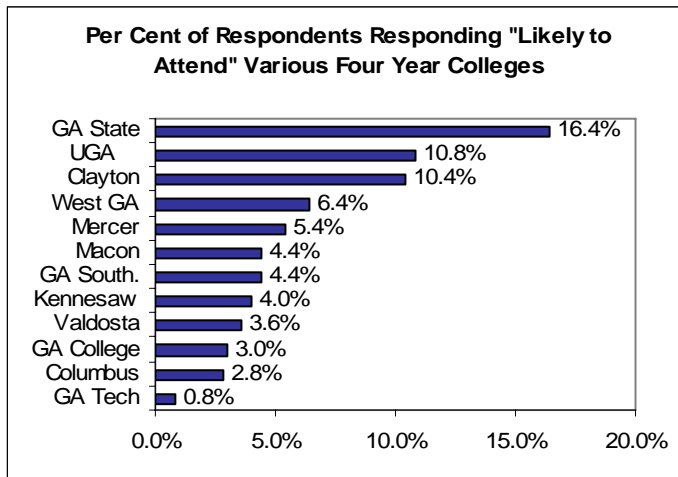


## Factors in Choosing Four Year Colleges

Students indicated that specific programs offered would be the most important factor in selecting a four year school, followed by cost and location.

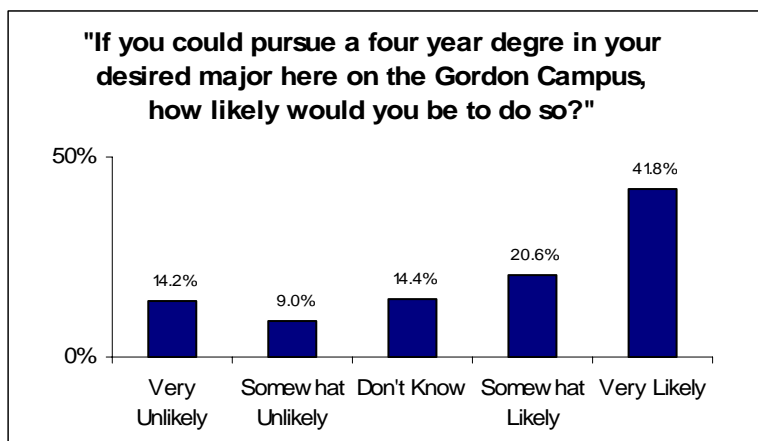


Respondents were asked to indicate what four year college they were "most likely to attend" among a list of twelve schools. Georgia State was most frequently mentioned, followed by the University of Georgia and Clayton State. Nearly 20 per cent of the respondents listed other schools which were not on the list.



## Preferences for Baccalaureate Degree at Gordon

The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated a preference for pursuing their four year degree at Gordon if an appropriate program were available, hardly surprising in light of the importance the respondents gave to cost and location as factors for selecting a four year school.



While 62.8% of the entire sample indicated they were “somewhat likely” or “very likely” to pursue a four year degree at Gordon, students in some of the more popular majors at Gordon showed even more interest in four year programs at Gordon. Specifically, 68.4% of the Teacher Education majors, 78.7% of the Pre-nursing majors, and 75.0% of the General Studies majors answered as “somewhat likely” or “very likely” that they would attend a four year program in their areas of interest in Barnesville.

## 7. Class Scheduling Preferences

Over a third of the respondents indicated a preference for more late afternoon and evening classes on campus. An even larger proportion, 39.6%, had a preference for more evening classes off campus.

Students were asked how likely they would be to enroll in classes at various times and frequencies.

“How likely is it that you’d attend classes in each of the following time slots?”

	Very unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Don't know	Somewhat likely	Very likely
Three Mornings Each Week	12.6%	9.1%	3.0%	24.3%	51.0%
Two Mornings Each Week	11.5%	9.2%	6.7%	30.4%	42.3%
Three Afternoons Each Week	21.4%	16.8%	7.9%	33.1%	20.8%
Two Afternoons Each Week	1.4%	17.3%	12.3%	7.2%	34.6%
Two Evenings Each Week	38.1%	15.0%	10.1%	16.8%	16.8%
One Evening Each Week	50.2%	13.8%	8.7%	13.6%	10.9%
Saturdays	65.8%	7.7%	7.5%	7.7%	8.1%

Mornings are our most popular class times, reflecting the students’ clear preferences. Yet over half our students would be likely to attend afternoon

classes given three days a week, and a substantial proportion would attend evening classes.

## 8. Satisfaction with Advisement

This year's survey showed a measurable improvement in students' satisfaction with the advisement process over last year. Increased satisfaction with the computerized registration system was indicated by a shift to "Strongly agree" from "Somewhat agree." Students indicated greater ease in meeting with their advisors, and most significantly, the proportion of students agreeing that their advisors provide them with useful information increased substantially, from 60.2% last year to 70.6% in this year's survey. 83.3% of the sample were "generally able to get a convenient class schedule."

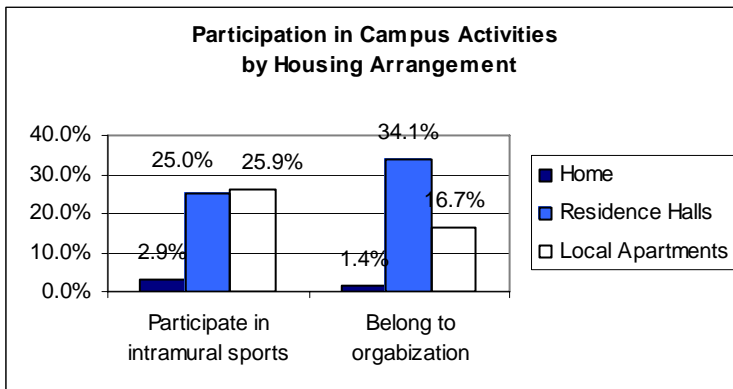
Survey Items Pertaining to Advisement

	"The computerized registration process is easy to use"		"I am able to meet easily with my advisor during registration periods."		"My advisor provides me with useful information for selecting my classes."		"I am generally able to get a convenient class schedule."
	2004 sample	2005 sample	2004 sample	2005 sample	2004 sample	2005 sample	2005 only
Strongly Disagree	4.3%	2.4%	11.2%	9.2%	13.9%	9.6%	6.4%
Somewhat Disagree	8.1%	6.2%	20.8%	16.6%	22.3%	17.6%	17.7%
Don't Care	1.9%	1.2%	2.4%	2.2%	3.5%	2.2%	2.6%
Somewhat Agree	37.4%	27.5%	43.3%	37.3%	34.0%	35.6%	45.3%
Strongly Agree	48.3%	62.7%	22.2%	34.7%	26.2%	35.0%	28.0%

## 9. Campus Life

### Participation in Campus Activities

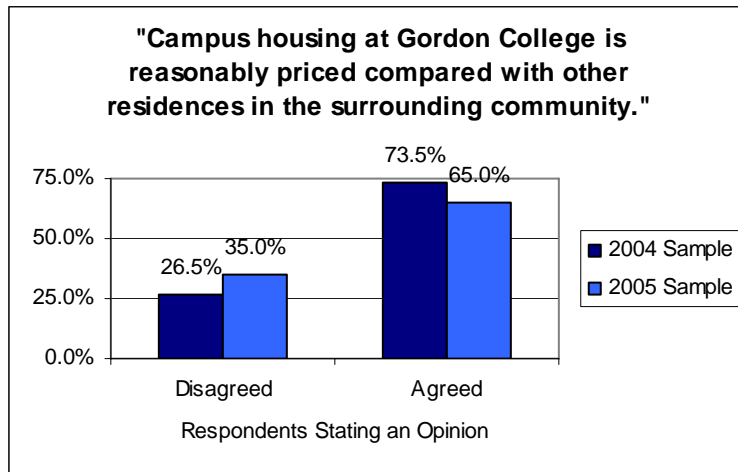
Participation in campus activities by commuting students living at home is quite low. The participation rates for commuters are substantially lower than those reported in last year's survey because students living in local apartments were not broken out from students living at home. Actually,



students living in local apartments participate in intramural sports in equal numbers with residence hall students. While apartment dwellers belong to organizations less frequently than residence hall students, they still join organizations substantially more frequently than students living at home.

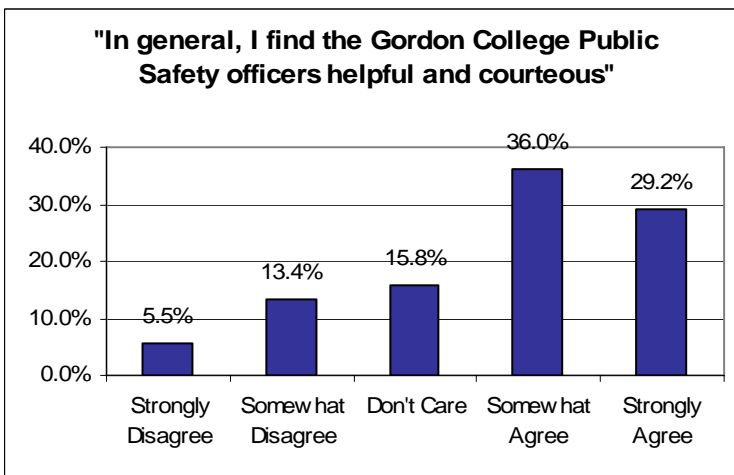
### Campus Housing

Nearly two thirds of the respondents who cared about campus housing costs said that campus housing at Gordon is reasonably priced compared with local alternatives. Note, however, that this proportion is substantially lower than for last year's sample.



### Public Safety

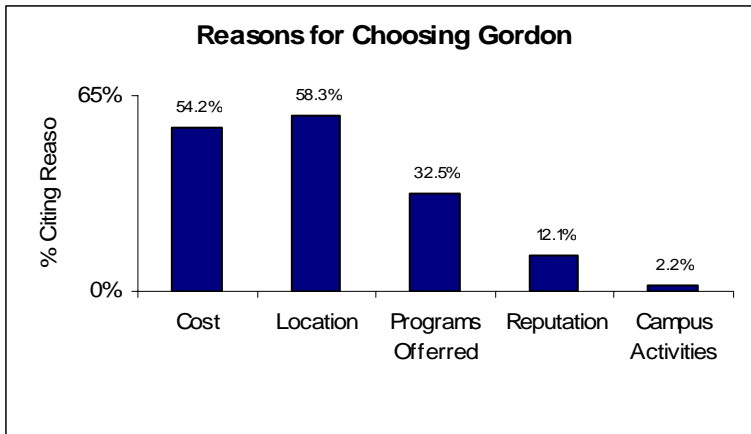
Last year's survey found that students had few concerns regarding their personal safety on campus. This year a question was included on satisfaction with the campus safety officers.



Students reported a high level of satisfaction with the Campus Safety Office, with nearly two thirds finding public safety personnel helpful and courteous.

## 10. Overall Satisfaction

Students choose Gordon primarily because of cost and location. One third of the



sample also cited programs offered as a reason for choosing Gordon. While “reputation” was cited less frequently as a reason for choosing Gordon, 84.9 per cent of the sample either “Somewhat agreed” or “Strongly agreed” that Gordon’s “reputation for quality teaching” was

important in their choice of Gordon, a similar percentage agreed that Gordon’s “reputation for attention to students” was important. Fully 85.2 per cent of the respondents said that the admissions office gave “clear and easy to understand information” when they applied to Gordon.

83.2 per cent of the sample for whom we had demographic characteristics reported that if again choosing a college for the first time, they would choose Gordon. Examining the question on choosing Gordon along various demographic dimensions results in some interesting observations. African-American students were less likely than white students to say they’d choose Gordon again, but this difference decreased over the last year. Older students were more likely than more traditional students to say that they’d choose Gordon again. Students in residence halls reported being less likely to choose Gordon again than commuters, a shift from last year which may warrant further analysis as we open our new residence halls.

**Per Cent Who Would Choose Gordon Again**

	2004 Sample	2005 Sample
<b>Entire Sample</b>	81.3%	83.2%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
African American	73.5%	79.1%
White	84.1%	84.6%
<b>Living Arrangement</b>		
Residence Halls	84.3%	76.5%
Local Apartment	87.1%	60.3%
Home	69.5%	83.2%
<b>Course Load</b>		
Full Time	80.5%	82.2%
Part Time	83.7%	87.2%
<b>Age</b>		
25 or under	79.8%	81.1%
Over 25	91.0%	92.3%

