

# Understanding the Incoming Freshman: Results from the 2009 CIRP Freshman Survey

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COOPERATIVE INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAM  
*at the* HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH INSTITUTE AT UCLA



# THE AMERICAN FRESHMAN: NATIONAL NORMS FALL 2009

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# CIRP Freshman Survey

- Project of the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA
- Comprehensive survey of incoming first-time full-time college students
- 45th year
- Over 15 million students
- Beginning of longitudinal research program that continues with the YFCY and CSS

# TFS 2009

- Administered at
  - 418 colleges and universities
  - 278,012 students
- “Norms” (high response rates)
  - 297 colleges and universities
  - 219,864 students
  - Weighted to the 1.4 million entering students in four-year institutions

Financial Concerns

Changes in Political Issues

Personal and Social Responsibility

AP Classes and Exams

Remedial Work

Veterans Entering College

## **2009 FRESHMAN SURVEY FINDINGS**

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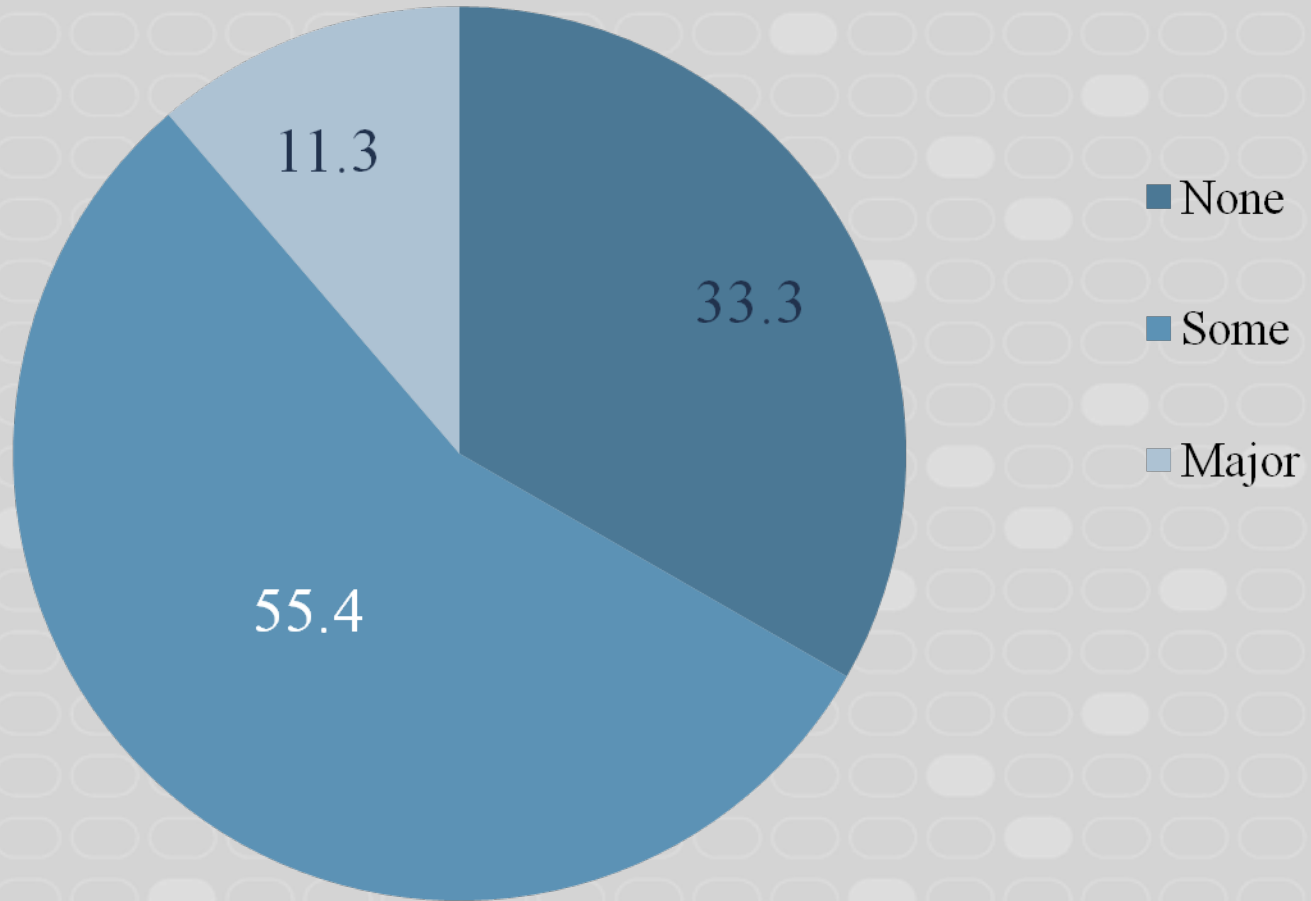
Remedial Work

Veterans Entering College

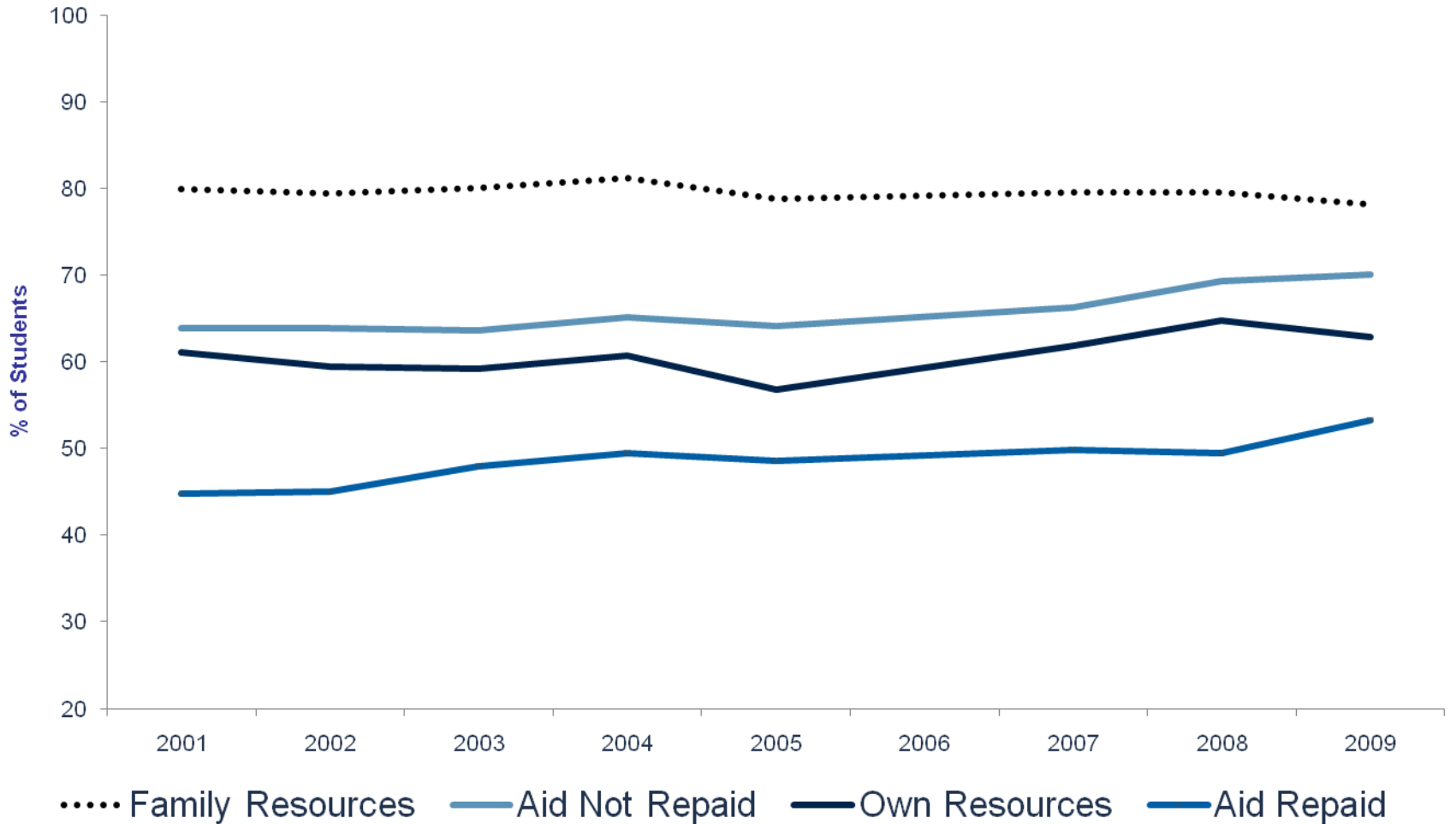
## **2009 FRESHMAN SURVEY FINDINGS**

# Concerns About Financing College

“some” concerns highest since 1971



# More Students Turning To Loans





# Funding College

## Fewer students had jobs as high-school seniors

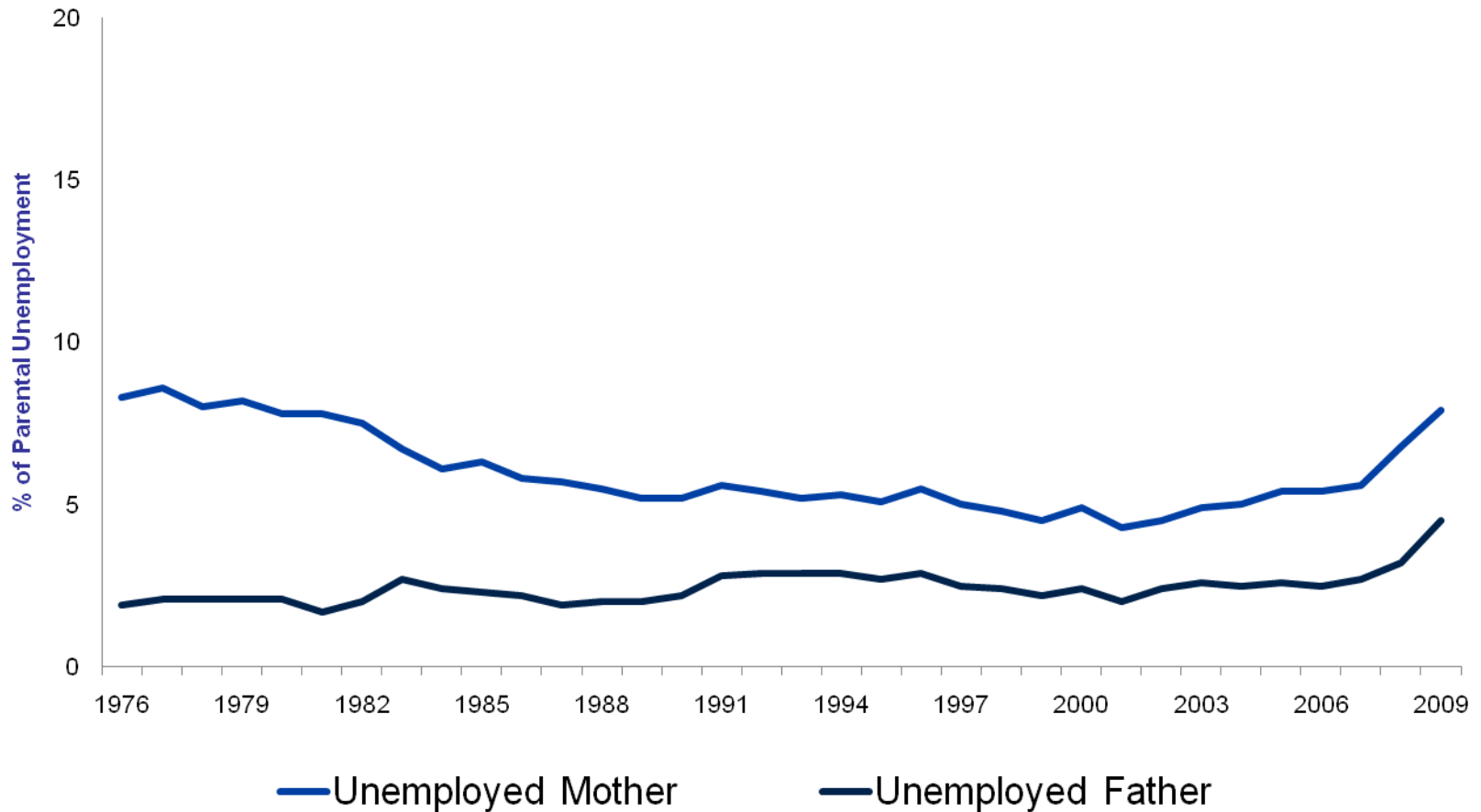
- 62.8% in 2009
  - 66.4% in 2008
  - 69.3% in 2007
- 
- Youth labor force employment for July 2009 was down 4.6 percentage points from 2008

# Funding College

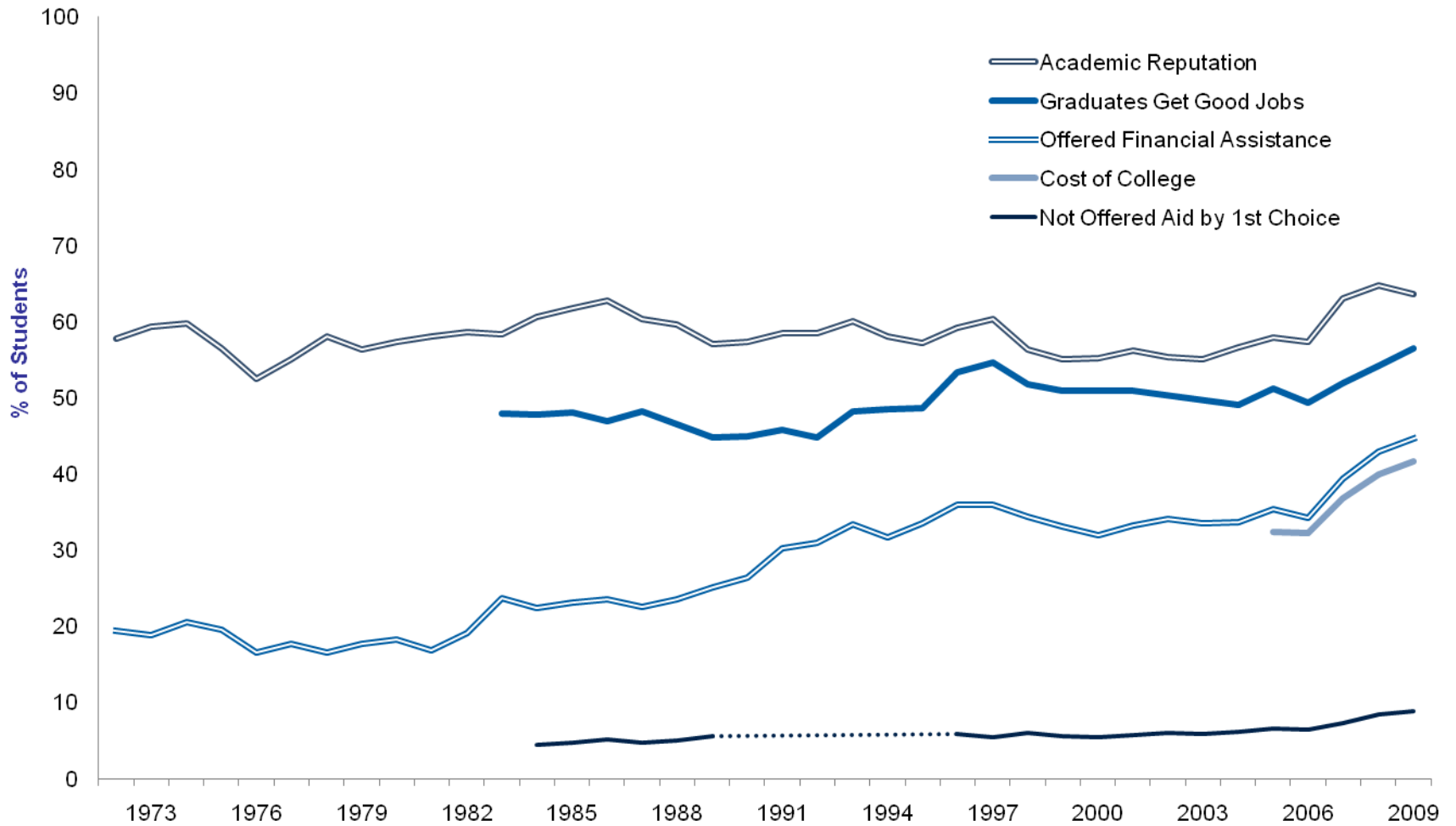
But just as many hope to have a job to help pay expenses while in college

- 49.3% in 2009
- 49.4% in 2008

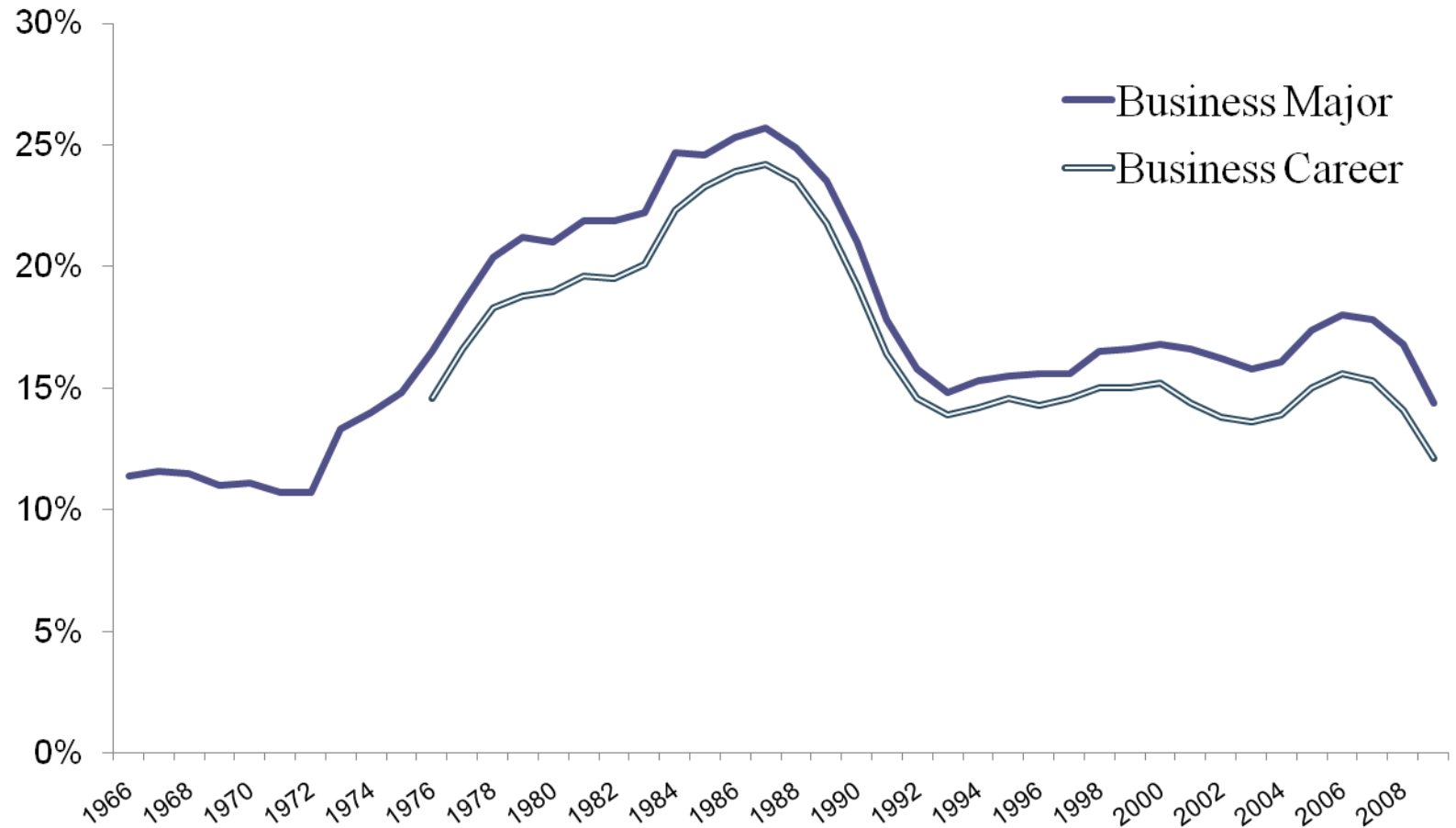
# Parental Unemployment Increases



# Affordability Impacts College Choice



# Business Interest Declines



# Conclusion

Financial downturn impacts multiple areas of the college experience

- Debt
- College choice
- Major and career aspirations

Colleges will need to be able to deal with increasingly anxious students.

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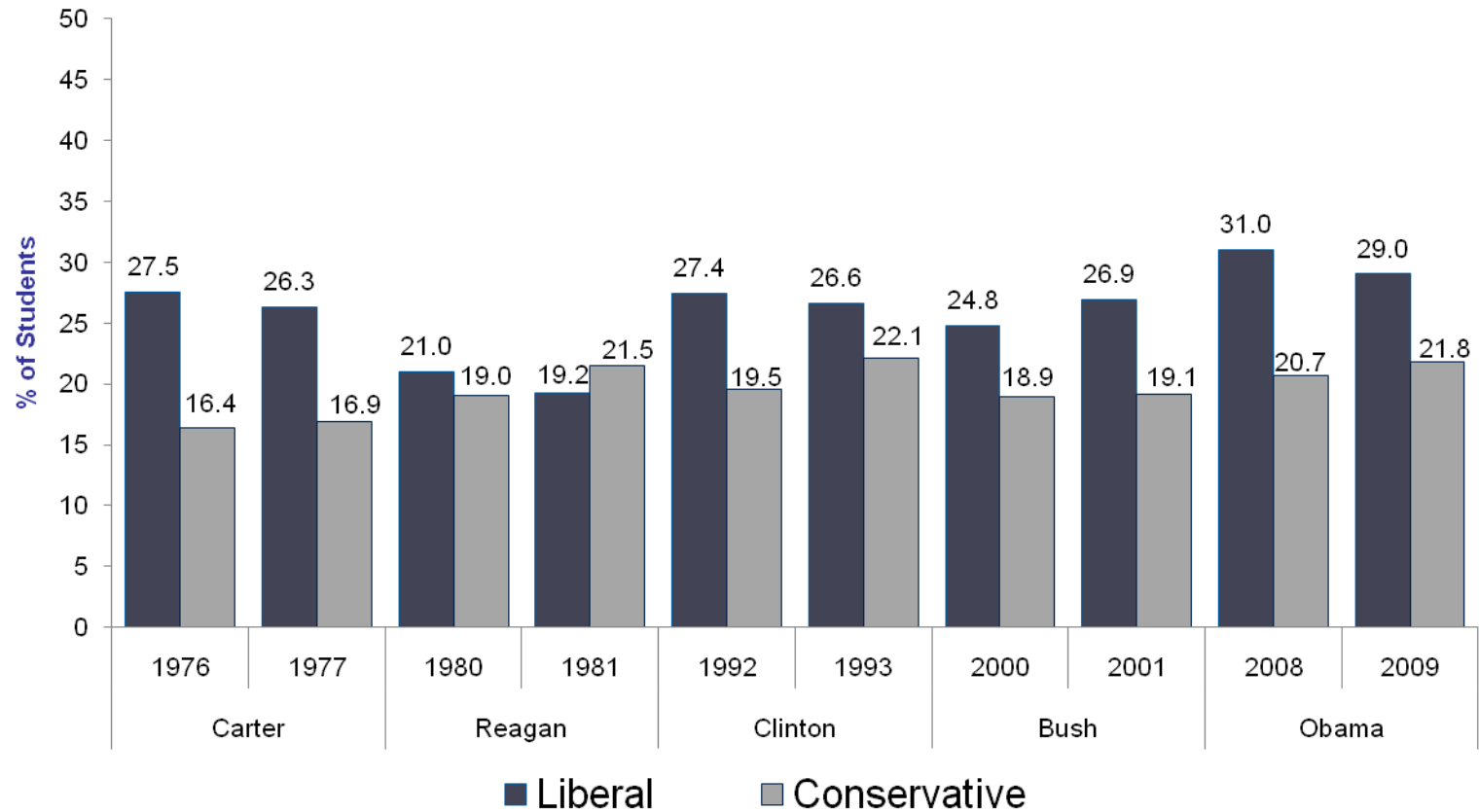
## **2009 FRESHMAN SURVEY FINDINGS**

# Political Orientation

- In 2008, 31.0% of incoming four-year students identified as liberal
  - Highest percentage since 1973
- Dropped in 2009 to 29.0%
  - Returning to pre-election levels
    - 29.3% in 2007



# Post-Election Trends in Political Orientation



# Political Engagement

Fewer students discussed politics “frequently”

- 33.1% in 2009
- 35.6% in 2008

# Political and Social Views

## Keeping up to date with political views

("very important" or "essential")

- 36.0% in 2009
- 39.5% in 2008

## Promoting Racial Understanding

("very important" or "essential")

- 33.1% in 2009
- 37.3% in 2008

# Political and Social Views

## Developing a Meaningful Philosophy of Life

("very important" or "essential")

- Dropped 3.4 percentage points

## Being Well Off Financially

("very important" or "essential")

- Top goal (78.1%)

# Conclusion

Financial downturn impacts multiple areas of the college experience.

- Turning inward towards financial security
- Drop in goals more in line with “social agency”

Colleges with missions that encompass social agency will likely need to address student financial concerns first.

- There are actions schools can take to move students towards higher levels of social agency

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## **2009 FRESHMAN SURVEY FINDINGS**

# Personal And Social Responsibility

- Renewed emphasis
- AAC&U's five dimensions of personal and social responsibility:
  - Striving for Excellence
  - Cultivating Personal and Academic Integrity
  - Contributing to a Larger Community
  - Taking Seriously the Perspectives of Others
  - Developing Competence in Ethical and Moral Reasoning

# Personal And Social Responsibility

- Predispositions in CIRP Freshman Survey
  - CIRP Constructs
    - Social Agency
      - Contributing to the larger community
    - Pluralistic Orientation
      - Taking seriously the perspectives of others



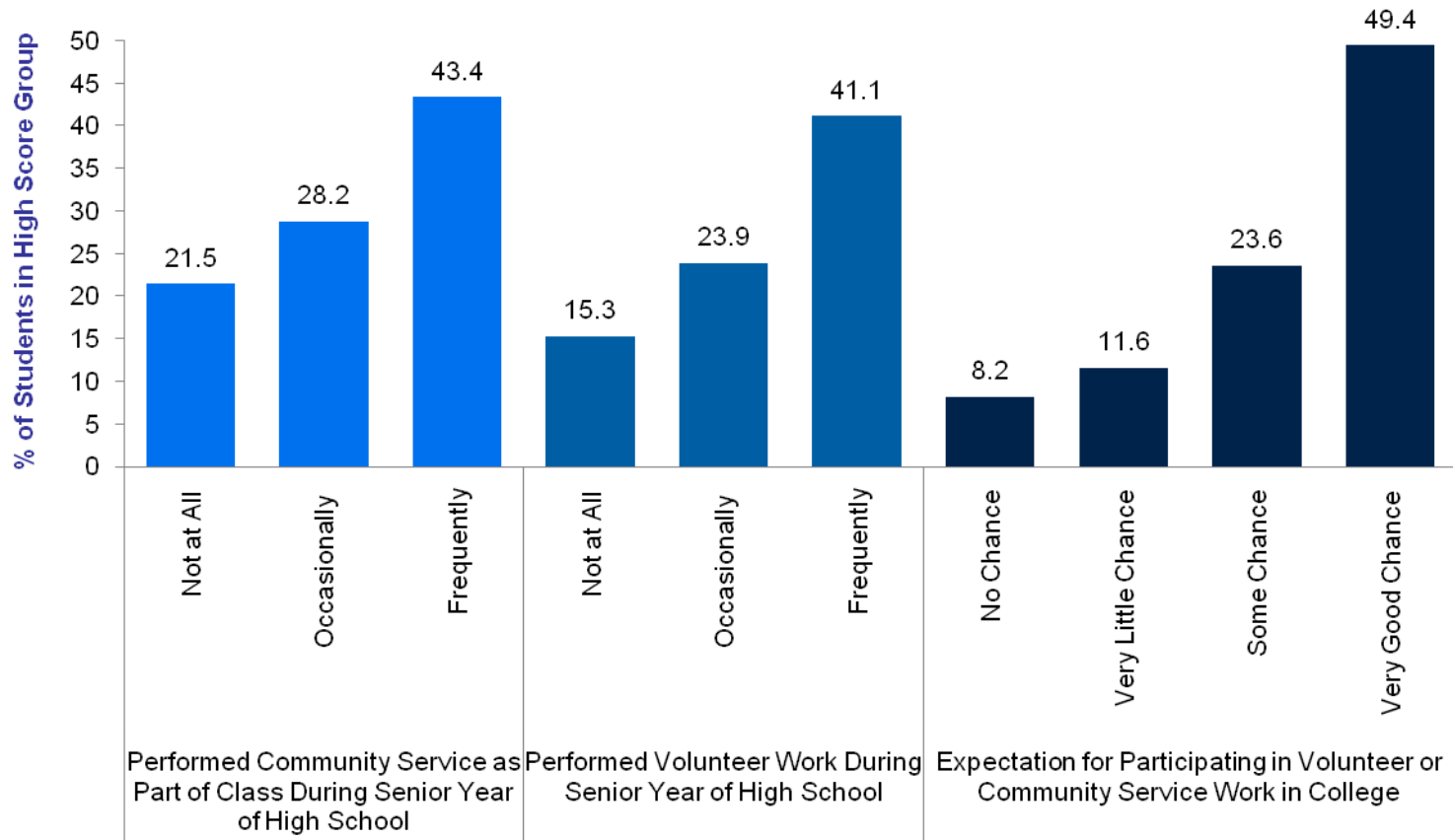
# Intent to Volunteer At All-Time High



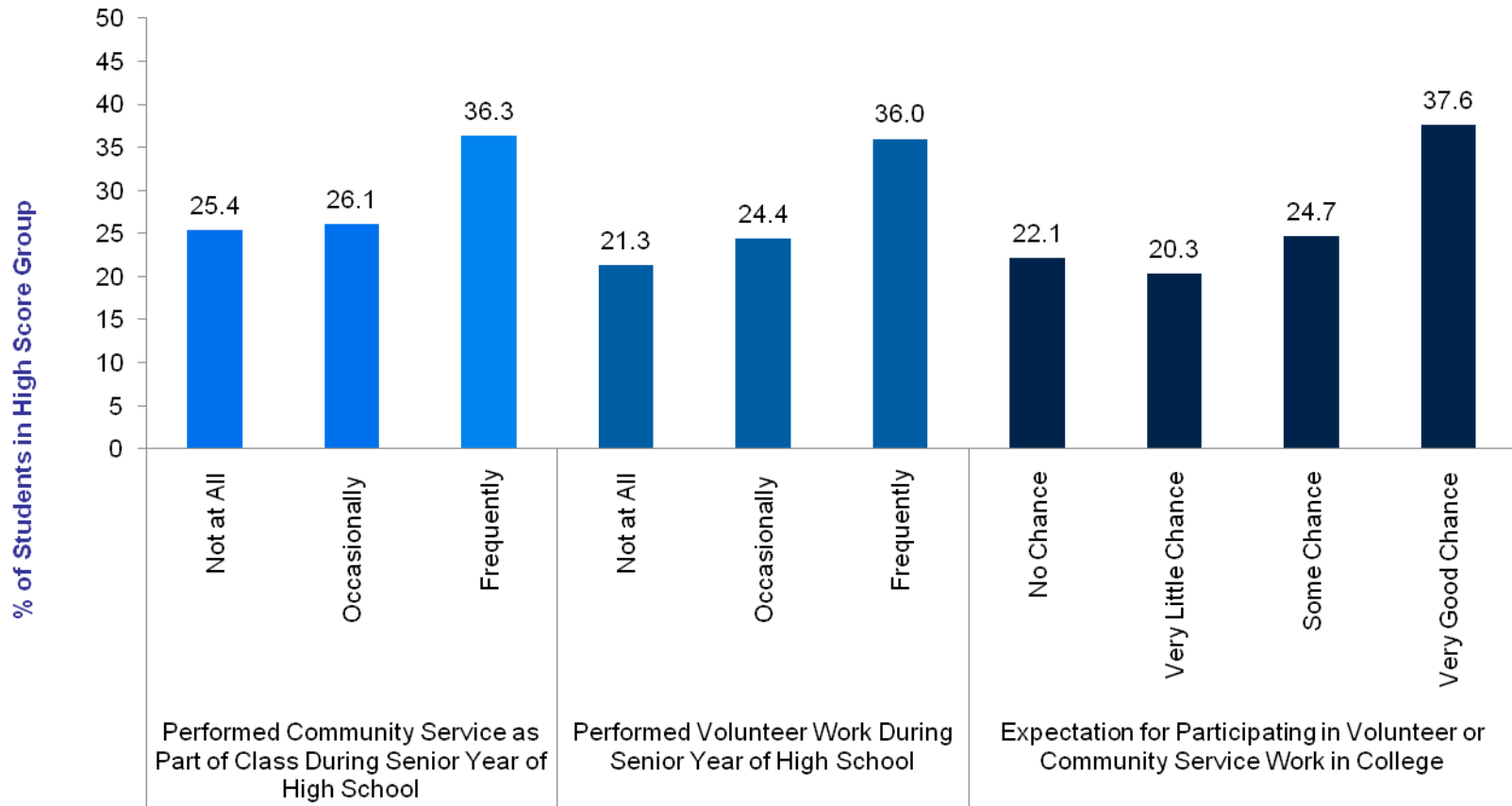
# Students Who Volunteer in High School Expect to Volunteer in College

Expectation for Volunteering	Frequency of Volunteering in High School		
	<i>Not at All</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Frequently</i>
No Chance	20.9	4.9	1.7
Very Little Chance	40.2	24.2	8.0
Some Chance	30.8	48.5	33.4
Very Good Chance	8.2	22.3	56.9
	100%	100%	100%

# Social Agency and Volunteering



# Pluralistic Orientation and Volunteering



# Conclusion

Volunteering in high school predisposes students towards volunteering in college, and is correlated with higher scores in social agency and pluralistic orientation.

Colleges with missions that encompass these values can take advantage of the existing high desirability for volunteering and facilitate such opportunities.

- Potential to ameliorate the overarching financial concerns

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## **2009 FRESHMAN SURVEY FINDINGS**

# Advance Placement Courses and Exams

- Since 2006, gradual increases in students taking AP courses and exams
  - 67.9% take at least one AP course
  - 60.3% take at least one AP exam
    - Up 10 percentage points

# Gaps by Race/Ethnicity in AP Courses

Race/Ethnicity	Not offered at my HS				
	None	1 to 4	5 to 9	10 to 14	
American Indian	9.1	41.0	39.1	9.2	0.8
Asian	5.8	11.0	42.5	33.8	6.4
Black	6.8	39.2	45.3	7.6	0.8
Hispanic	3.6	21.0	54.3	18.9	1.9
White	5.3	27.8	49.9	15.4	1.5
Multi-Racial	4.9	24.8	50.0	17.8	2.0
Other	7.8	24.7	47.6	17.1	2.5



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## **2009 FRESHMAN SURVEY FINDINGS**

# Remedial Work

- Steady rise in the percentage of full-time, first-time students entering four year colleges who report that they had remedial work in high school
  - Highest levels ever
    - (except for social studies in 1980)

# Remedial Work and Special Tutoring

Subject Area	Had in High School	Need in College
English	7.2	9.2
Reading	6.5	5.0
Mathematics	14.5	24.4
Social Studies	4.5	3.9
Science	6.1	12.3
Foreign Language	5.9	11.3
Writing	5.8	11.9
One or More Subjects	21.2	38.7

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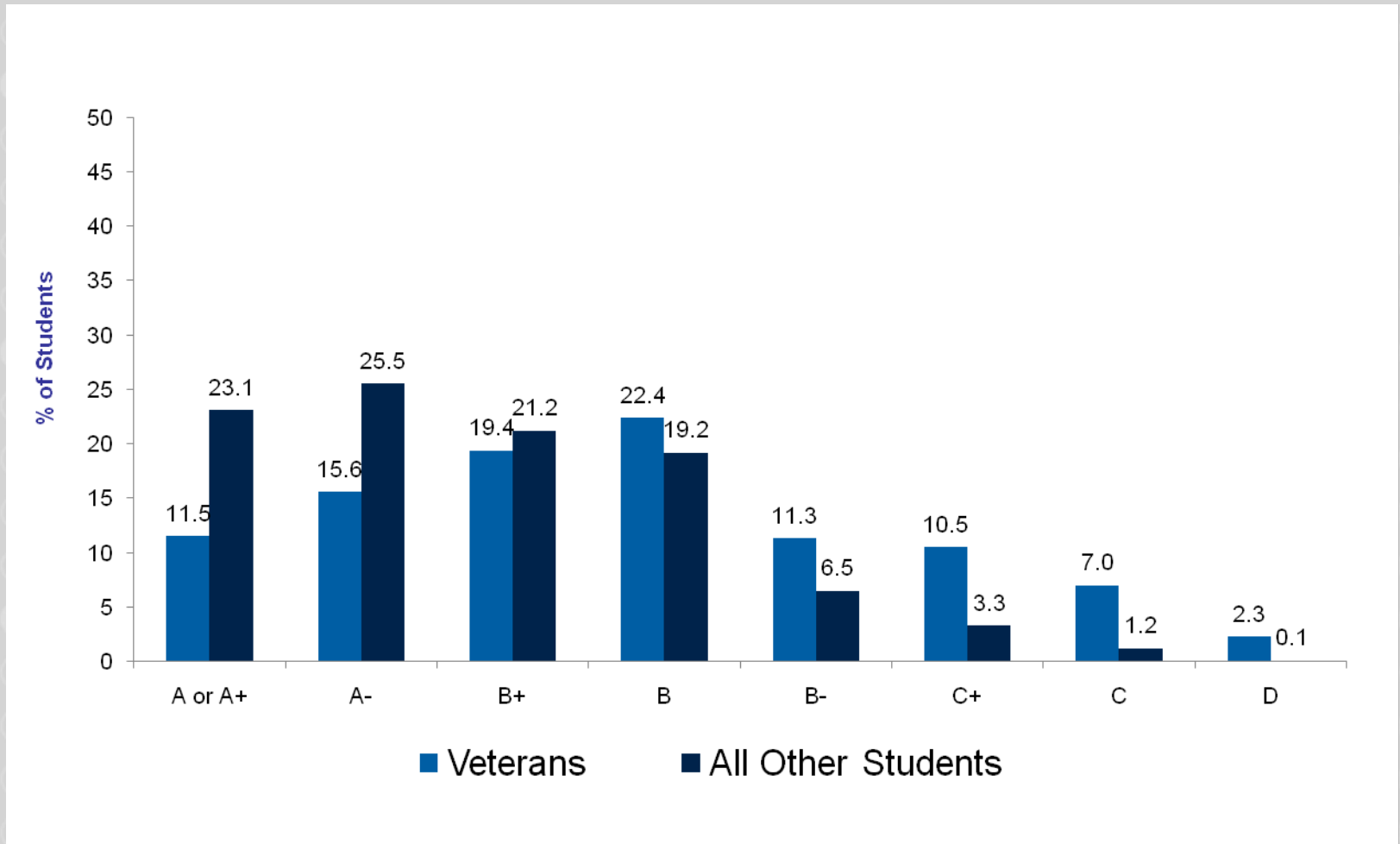
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## **2009 FRESHMAN SURVEY FINDINGS**

# Veterans Have Lower H.S. Grades



# Veterans Compared to Other Students

Survey Item	Veterans	Other Students
AP Courses take during high school		
<i>Not offered at my HS</i>	<b>9.0</b>	5.3
<i>None taken</i>	<b>48.6</b>	27.0
Will need special tutoring or remedial work in:		
<i>Mathematics</i>	<b>35.8</b>	24.3
<i>Writing</i>	<b>20.7</b>	11.6

# Veterans Compared to Other Students

Survey Item	Veterans	Other Students
CIRP Constructs “High Score Group”		
<i>Academic Self-Concept</i>	21.0	<b>24.9</b>
<i>Social Self-Concept</i>	<b>43.6</b>	29.6
Self-Ratings: “Highest 10% or Above Average”		
<i>Leadership ability</i>	<b>72.2</b>	62.2
“Very good chance” That I Will:		
<i>Participate in student clubs/groups</i>	34.6	<b>45.9</b>
<i>Discuss course content w/students outside of class</i>	37.1	<b>46.1</b>

# Conclusion

Veterans are coming from different academic backgrounds and have lower academic self concepts.

Veterans have higher social self concepts, and in particular in leadership skills.

Veterans are also less likely to believe they will engage in activities that have been shown to help integrate students into campus life.

It will be important for campuses to introduce veterans to both the academic and social milieu in college, engaging them socially and assisting them in meeting their academic goals.



# Summary

- The global economic downturn is having an impact on the characteristics, attitudes, and beliefs of our students.
  - More concerned about finances
  - More likely to take out loans
  - Need grants in higher amounts
  - Likely be graduating with larger debts
  - Shifted major and career aspirations from business

# Summary

- Values show a slight retrenching towards financial security and away from social agency
- Increased desire for volunteering, if manifested, can foster an increase in social agency and pluralistic orientation.

# Summary

- Although more students are taking AP classes and exams, record numbers of students are coming to college having had, and feeling that they will need, remedial work.
  - Disparity between racial/ethnic groups still exists

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# Summary

- Influx of veterans indicates that to maximize success in college
  - need for special services such as tutoring
  - encouragement from faculty and staff to become involved in the college community

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