



# The Presbyterian Panel

*Listening to Presbyterians*



## SUMMARY

### Presbyterian Colleges and Universities The February 2004 Survey

The Presbyterian Panel consists of three nationally representative samples of groups affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): members, elders (lay leaders), and ordained ministers. For most analyses, ministers are split into two groups based on current call: *pastors*, serving congregations, and *specialized clergy*, serving elsewhere. New samples are drawn every three years. These pages summarize major findings from the seventh survey completed by the 2003-2005 Panel, initially sampled in the fall of 2002.

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## AWARENESS AND FAMILIARITY

### Awareness of Schools

- ✓ At least nine in ten in every sample are aware “that some colleges and universities in the United States are related to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)” (members, 90%; elders, 94%; ministers, 98%).
- ✓ Fewer than one in ten laity (members, 7%; elders, 9%) and less than one-half of ministers (pastors, 45%; specialized clergy, 36%) are “aware that there are a total of 66 PC(USA)-related colleges and universities.”
- ✓ Few panelists think there are more than 66 PC(USA) schools (no laity, and only 1% of ministers so respond). Instead, most *didn't know there were that many* (members, 53%; pastors, 39%) or *had no idea how many there were* (members, 43%; pastors, 15%).

### Closest PC(USA) School

- ✓ Most Presbyterians, ranging from 76% of members to 93% of pastors, report having a general idea of how close the nearest Presbyterian college or university is to where they live.
- ✓ Relatively few place the nearest PC(USA) school at *less than 25 miles* (members, 17%; pastors, 13%) or *500 or more miles* (5%; 6%). The remaining responses are split between *25-99 miles* (29%; 32%) and *100-499 miles* (25%; 43%).

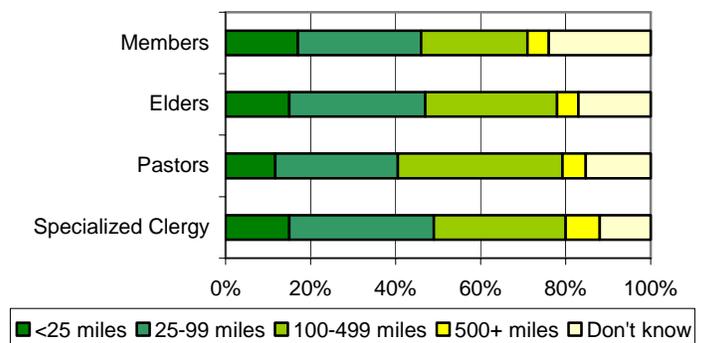
### Awareness of Scholarships

- ✓ Most ministers (pastors, 97%) but fewer laity (members, 65%) are “aware that the PC(USA) has scholarships available for Presbyterian students to attend Presbyterian colleges and universities.”

### Familiarity of Congregational Staff

- ✓ While many *don't know*, more laity with an opinion view their pastors as *very well informed* (members, 65%; elders, 62%) than *somewhat informed* (29%; 34%) “about Presbyterian colleges and universities.” Among pastors, the reverse is true (41%; 52%).
- ✓ In churches with Christian educators, more pastors view them as *somewhat* (53%) or *not informed* (35%) than as *very well informed* (13%). Opinions on youth directors are similar (53%; 31%; 16%).

Figure 1. Proximity of Nearest PC(USA) School



## OPINIONS ABOUT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

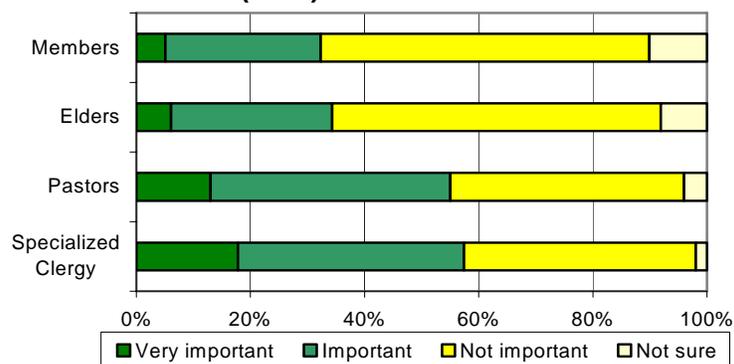
### Factors in Choosing a School

- ✓ According to a majority of members, the following issues are *very important* or *important* “for high school students today” in the “decision about which college or university to attend”:
  - Cost (65%, *very important*; 30%, *important*)
  - Academic reputation (39%; 54%)
  - That it offer a particular major field of study (38%; 49%)
  - Size of student body (12%; 53%)
- ✓ Issues that a majority of members view as only *somewhat important* or as *not important* in college choice among high school students are:
  - That it be church-related (40%, *somewhat important*; 37%, *not important*)
  - That it *not* be church-related (26%; 52%)
  - Diversity of student body (46%; 21%)
- ✓ Members are evenly split on how high school students view the importance of two issues related to college choice:
  - Social reputation (48%, *very important/important*; 50%, *somewhat important/not important*)
  - Proximity to home (49%; 49%)
- ✓ Were panelists themselves currently in the process of choosing a college or university to attend, around a third of laity and small majorities of ministers would rate having the option of a Presbyterian-related school as *very important* or *important*. (See Figure 2.)

### Comparing Church-Related, Other Schools

- ✓ Of 21 items related to higher education, more elders with an opinion ranked PC(USA) schools as doing a better job than other schools on the following:
  - Meeting a student’s spiritual needs (*church-related schools*, 94%; *other schools*, 1%; *both similarly*, 4%)
  - Nurturing moral and ethical values (92%; 1%; 7%)
  - Meeting a student’s personal and emotional needs (80%; 1%; 19%)
  - Retaining students till graduation (59%; 2%; 38%)
  - Graduating students in four years (55%; 1%; 44%)
  - Providing help for students outside the classroom (52%; 4%; 44%)
  - Providing help for students in the classroom (52%; 2%; 47%)

**Figure 2. Importance of Having the Choice of a PC(USA)-Related School**



- ✓ On only one of the 21 items do more panelists rate other schools as doing better than church-related ones: “providing big-time athletics” (elders: *other*, 88%; *church-related*, 2%; *both similarly*, 9%).

### Rating the Education at PC(USA) Schools

- ✓ Majorities (members, 54%; elders, 62%; pastors, 81%) *strongly agree* or *agree* that “Presbyterian colleges and universities provide some of the best education available in the U.S.”
- ✓ While a third of laity and a sixth of ministers *don’t know*, a large majority of panelists with an opinion believe “the benefits of education and experience at a Presbyterian school [are] worth the extra costs.”
- ✓ Among the subset of panelists who attended a PC(USA) college or university, most rate the education they received as *excellent* (members, 51%; pastors, 64%) or *very good* (28%; 28%).

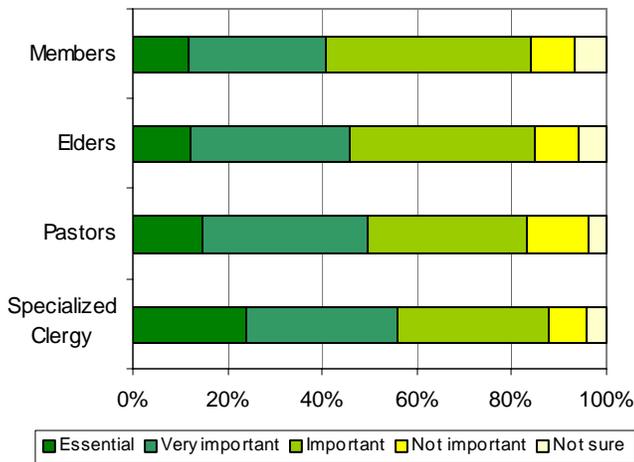
### Financial Status

- ✓ Majorities are *not sure* whether Presbyterian colleges and universities “are in financial trouble” (members, 80%; pastors, 58%). More with an opinion *strongly agree/agree* (13%; 23%) than *strongly disagree/disagree* (8%; 19%).
- ✓ Most laity (elders, 58%) and three in ten ministers (pastors, 28%) are *not sure* whether PC(USA) schools “depend on the Presbyterian Church for a large share of their budgets.” Among those with an opinion, more laity *strongly agree/agree* (elders, 22%) than *strongly disagree/disagree* (20%), while the reverse is true for ministers (12%; 61%).

**Church Ties**

- ✓ More laity *strongly agree* or *agree* (members, 37%; elders, 38%) than *strongly disagree* or *disagree* (14%; 13%) that “Presbyterian colleges and universities don’t emphasize their church ties as much as they should.” Half in both groups are *not sure*. More pastors (61%) and specialized clergy (48%) *strongly agree/agree*.
- ✓ More panelists *strongly agree/agree* (members, 45%; pastors, 45%) than *strongly disagree/disagree* (27%; 32%) that PC(USA) schools “should give priority to Presbyterians over others who want to attend.”
- ✓ More panelists *strongly agree/agree* (members, 31%; pastors, 42%) than *strongly disagree/disagree* (11%; 22%) that “the PC(USA) should increase the financial support it currently provides to Presbyterian colleges and universities.”
- ✓ Few panelists believe church-related colleges and universities are *essential* “for the overall mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)” (members, 12%; pastors, 15%), but large majorities believe such schools are either *very important* (29%; 35%) or *important* (44%; 34%).

**Figure 3. Importance of Church-Related Schools for Mission of PC(USA)**



**Teaching the Faith**

- ✓ Majorities in every group (elders, 59%; specialized clergy, 67%) *strongly agree/agree* that PC(USA) schools “should do more to help students grow in their own spirituality.”

- ✓ Somewhat smaller percentages *strongly agree/agree* that PC(USA) schools “should do more to teach students about Christian faith” (49%; 48%).

**Promoting Presbyterian Schools**

- ✓ Most panelists believe that *congregations* (members, 76%; pastors, 67%) and *the colleges/universities themselves* (74%; 75%) are the primary Presbyterian entities responsible for “making Presbyterian high school students aware of the existence of Presbyterian colleges and universities.”
- ✓ One in five members (18%), one in four elders (24%), and 54% of pastors indicate that their “congregation has taken steps to promote one or more Presbyterian colleges and universities among high school students in the congregation” during the previous three years.
- ✓ The most frequent way that congregations have promoted PC(USA) schools, according to pastors, is:
  - Providing information on financial aid available from the PC(USA) or the congregation (83%)
  - Distributing bulletin inserts and other resources related to higher education (54%)
  - Making a directory of Presbyterian schools available in the church library or office (35%)
- ✓ Less frequent ways congregations have promoted PC(USA) colleges and universities include:
  - Having a “minute for mission” about PC(USA) schools (reported by 19% of pastors)
  - Celebrating “Higher Education Sunday” (18%)
  - Offering special information programs for youth, parents, and families (16%)
  - Having guest preachers or speakers talk about Presbyterian schools (15%)
  - Organizing campus visits (9%)

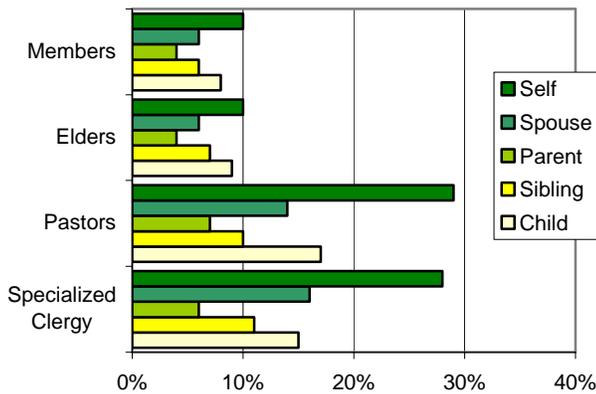
**Campus Ministry or PC(USA)-Related Schools?**

- ✓ Panelists split on whether “Presbyterian colleges and universities or Presbyterian-supported campus ministry at public universities” better “serve the church’s mission.” Around half respond either *both equally* (elders, 30%; specialized clergy, 39%) or *don’t know* (19%; 12%).
- ✓ Of the rest, among laity, a few more support *campus ministry* (members, 24%; elders 28%) than *PC(USA) schools* (21%; 22%), while the reverse is true for ministers: 20% favor *campus ministry*, while 29% favor *PC(USA) schools*.

**Past Enrollment**

- ✓ One in four members (24%) and elders (25%) and one-half of ministers (pastors, 49%; specialized clergy, 48%) have themselves attended a PC(USA) college or university or have a close family member who has done so. (A list of all 66 PC(USA) colleges and universities was sent with the questionnaire.)
- ✓ One in ten members (10%) and elders (10%) and three in ten ministers (pastors, 29%; specialized clergy, 28%) have attended a PC(USA) college or university. An overlapping 6%, 6%, 14%, and 16% have a spouse who attended a PC(USA) school.

**Figure 4. Past Enrollment of Panelists and Close Relatives at PC(USA) Schools**



- ✓ Around one in ten members (8%) and elders (9%) and one in six ministers (pastors, 17%; specialized clergy, 15%) have at least one child who has attended a PC(USA) school.

**Graduation and Degrees**

- ✓ Of panelists who ever attended a Presbyterian college or university, two in three members (65%), three in four elders (77%), 87% of pastors, and almost all specialized clergy (97%) graduated from such a school.
- ✓ Most panelists who graduated from Presbyterian schools received bachelor’s degrees (e.g., members, 93%; pastors, 99%). A small (and overlapping) share received master’s degrees (14%; 8%). Only ministers (pastors, 2%; specialized clergy, 3%) report receiving doctoral degrees at such schools.
- ✓ Four in ten laity (members, 44%), three in four pastors (75%), and 85% of specialized clergy who attended a PC(USA) school report that it was *very influential* or *influential* in their “choice of career.”
- ✓ One in five laity (members, 23%), 30% of pastors, and 36% of specialized clergy who attended a PC(USA) school report that it was *very influential* or *influential* in their “decision on whom to marry.”

	<b>Members</b>	<b>Elders</b>	<b>Ordained Ministers</b>
Number of surveys mailed.....	1,013	1,257	1,382
Number returned.....	449	679	850‡
Response rate.....	44%	54%	61%

‡Of the 850 returned surveys, 548 came from pastors and 302 from specialized clergy.

This survey was initially mailed in February 2004, and returns were accepted through May 2004. Results are subject to sampling and other errors. Small differences should be interpreted cautiously. As a general rule, differences of less than 8% between samples are not statistically meaningful.

**For more numbers and interpretation** of the February 2004 Presbyterian Panel results, a longer report with additional charts is available for free on the Web ([www.pcusa.org/research/panel/index](http://www.pcusa.org/research/panel/index)) or for \$10 from PDS (1-800-524-2612; order PDS# 65100-04282). It includes tables showing percentage responses to each survey question separately for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.

**For more information on Presbyterian colleges and universities**, contact Gary Luhr (888-728-7228 ext. 5364; [gluhr@ctr.pcusa.org](mailto:gluhr@ctr.pcusa.org)).

**LISTENING TO PRESBYTERIANS SINCE 1973**  
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