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.

Awareness and Familiarity

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 (31%) 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%)

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%).

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Not important</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elders</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastors</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized Clergy</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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%).

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.

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%).
ATTENDING 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

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.”

Members Elders Ordained Ministers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of surveys mailed</th>
<th>Number returned</th>
<th>Response rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>1,013</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elders</td>
<td>1,257</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordained Ministers</td>
<td>1,382</td>
<td>850‡</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‡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) 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).

LISTENING TO PRESBYTERIANS SINCE 1973

The Presbyterian Panel
A Ministry of the General Assembly Council
Research Services, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville KY 40202-1396
http://www.pcusa.org/research