

Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses

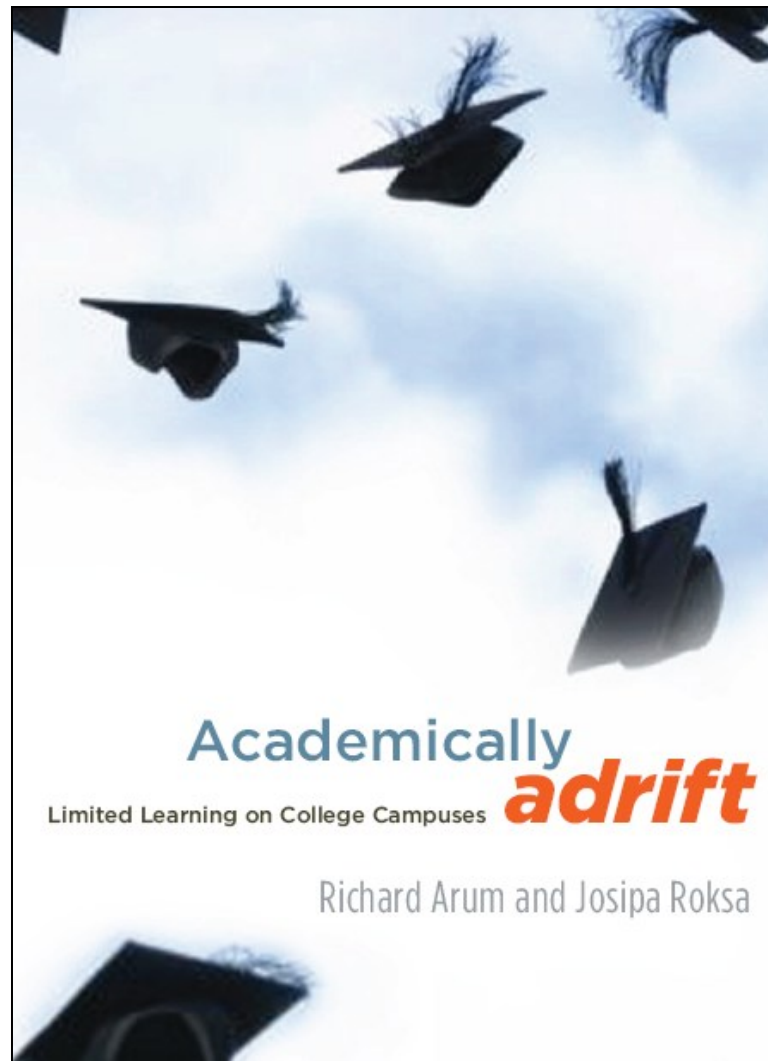
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Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

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Source (University of Chicago Press, January 2011):



Research Questions

- ▶ Are students improving their critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing skills during college?
 - ▶ Are students' ascriptive characteristics associated with inequality in college learning?
 - ▶ What specific experiences and college contexts are associated with student learning? To what extent does inequality in learning occur across campuses?
 - ▶ How are recent graduates faring after completing college? Did they develop attitudes and dispositions associated with civic engagement?
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Determinants of College Learning Dataset

▶ Longitudinal Design

- College surveys: Fall 2005, Spring 2007, Spring 2009
- Post-college surveys: Spring 2010 and Spring 2011

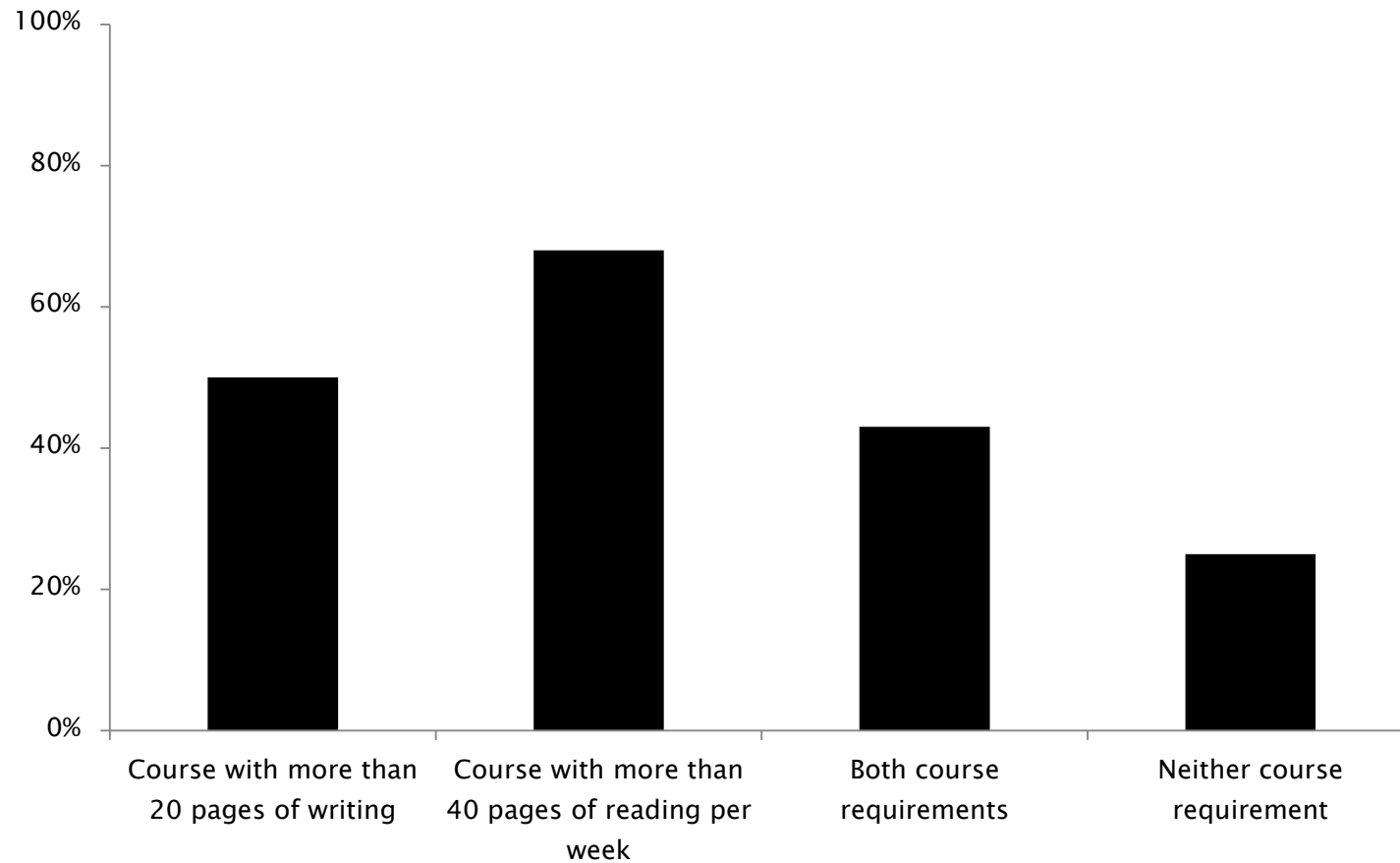
▶ Large Scale

- 2005–2007: 24 diverse four-year institutions; 2,341 students (*Academically Adrift*)
- 2005–2009: 29 diverse four-year institutions, 1,666 students
- 2010 post-college follow-up: 976 respondents
- 2011 post-college follow-up: 967 respondents

Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)

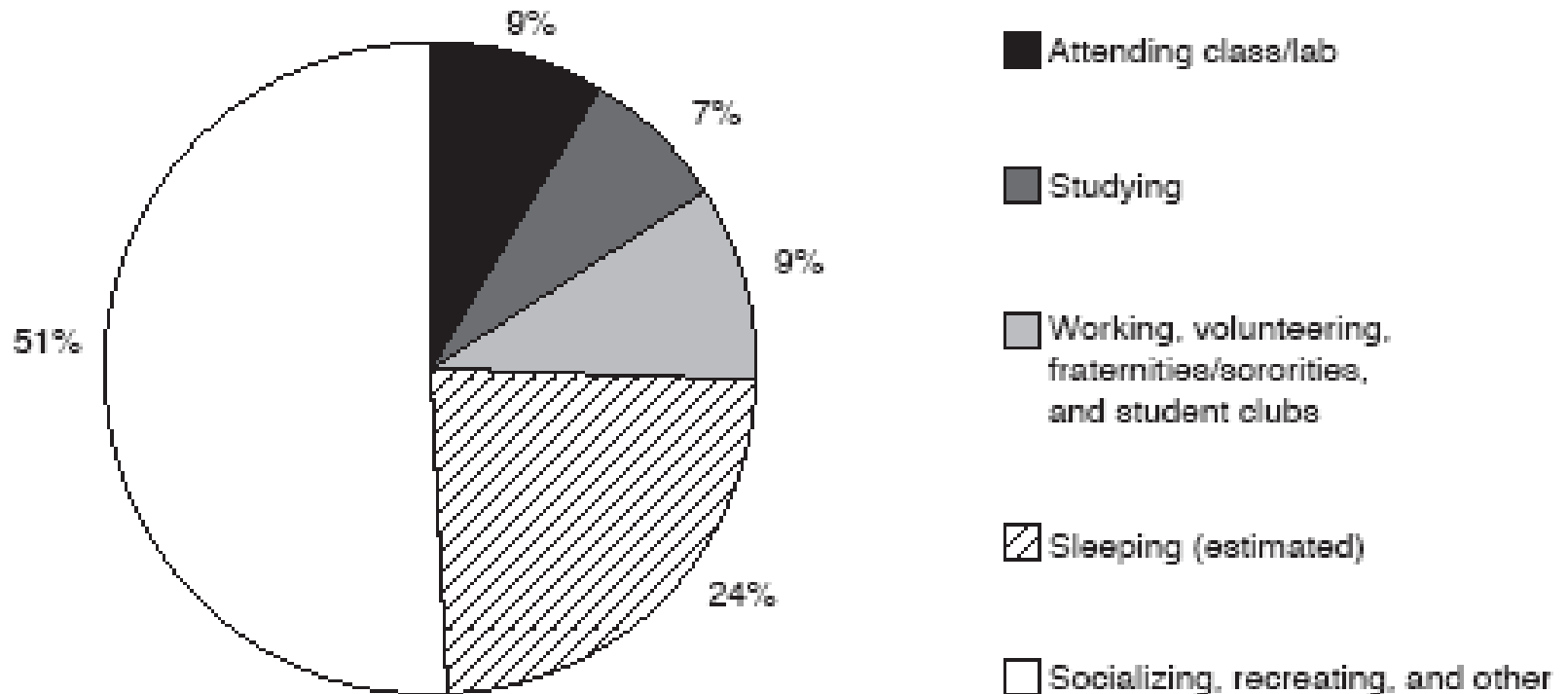
- ▶ Dimensions of learning assessed
 - critical thinking, complex reasoning, and written communication
- ▶ Distinguishing characteristics
 - Direct measures (as opposed to student reports)
 - NOT multiple choice
 - Holistic assessment based on open-ended prompts representing “real-world” scenarios
- ▶ Used in other contexts
 - One of the measures of learning used by VSA
 - Will be utilized in 2016 by OECD-AHELO project

Course Requirements



Note: Based on Spring 2007 survey.

Students' Time Use

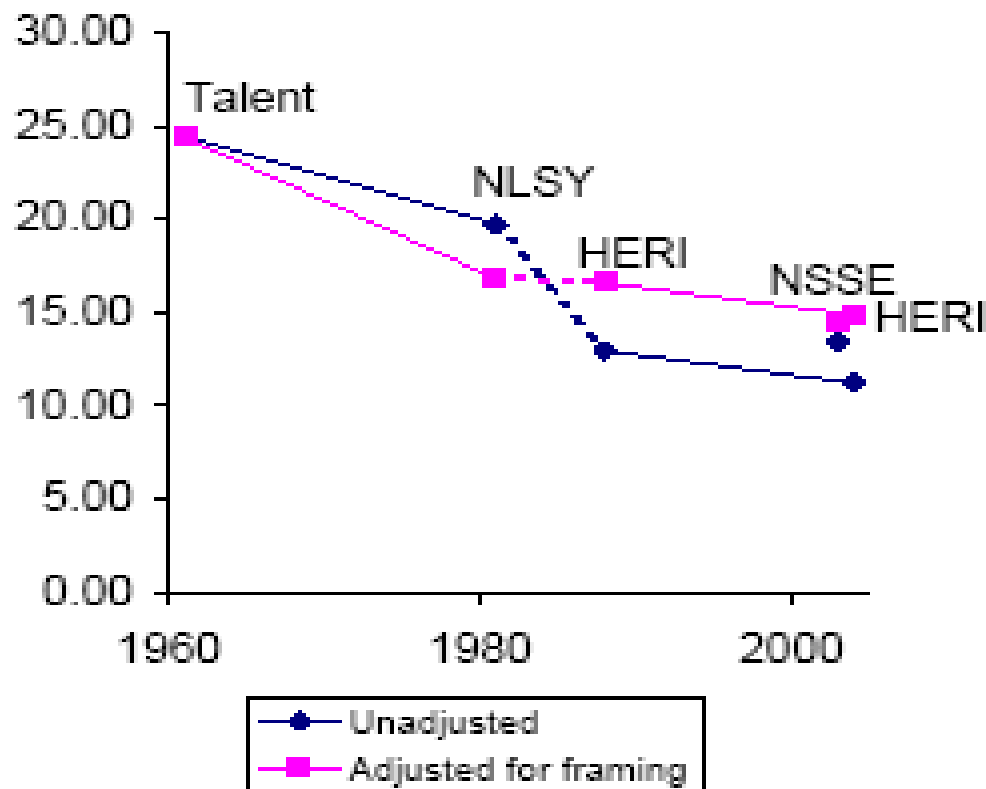


Note: Based on Spring 2007 survey.

Academic Commitment Over Time

(source: Phillip Babcock and Mindy Marks, *forthcoming* 2010)

Average Study Hours

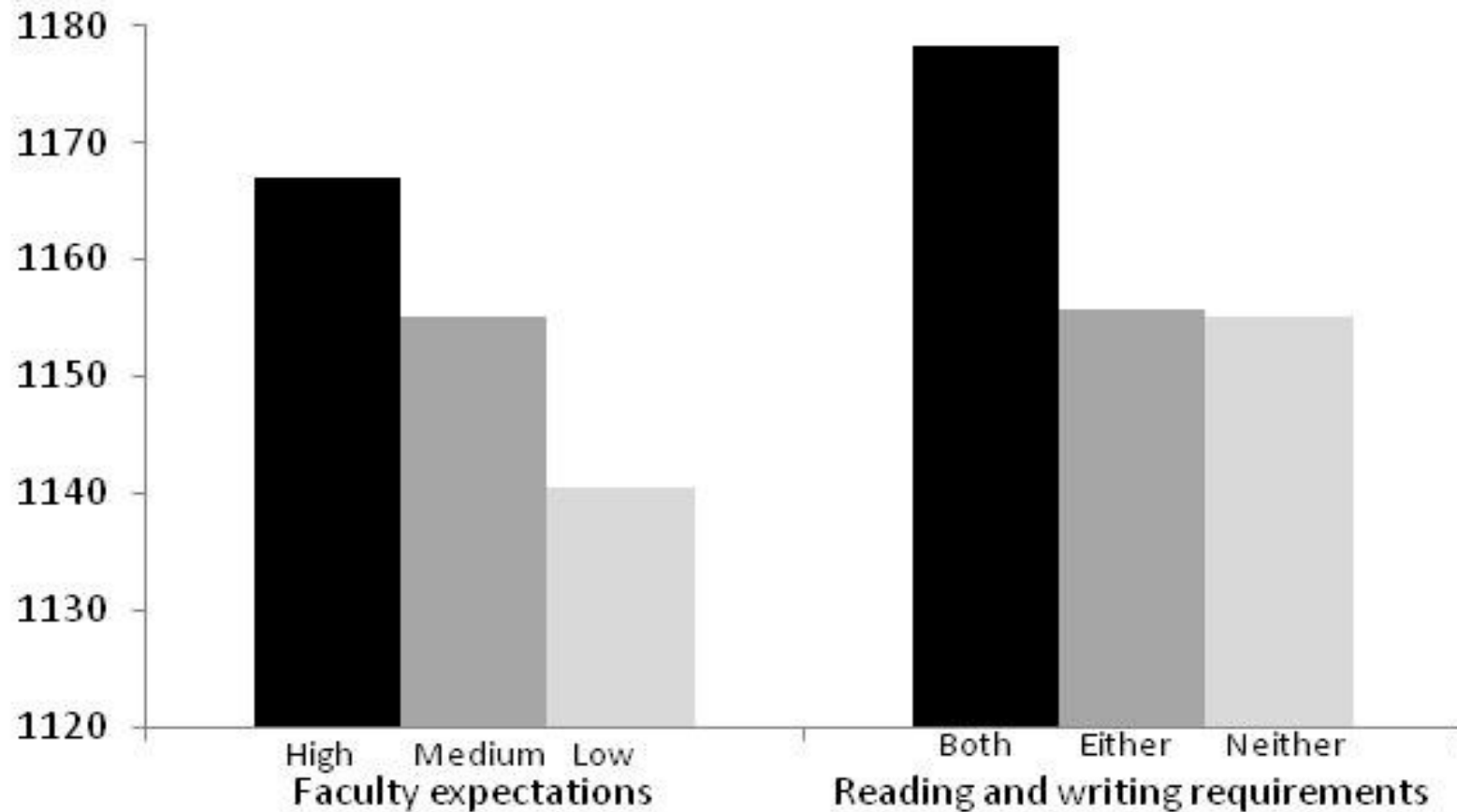


Academic time from 1925-1965 in time diaries relatively constant (39.2 to 34.1)

CLA Gains 2005–2007 (performance task)

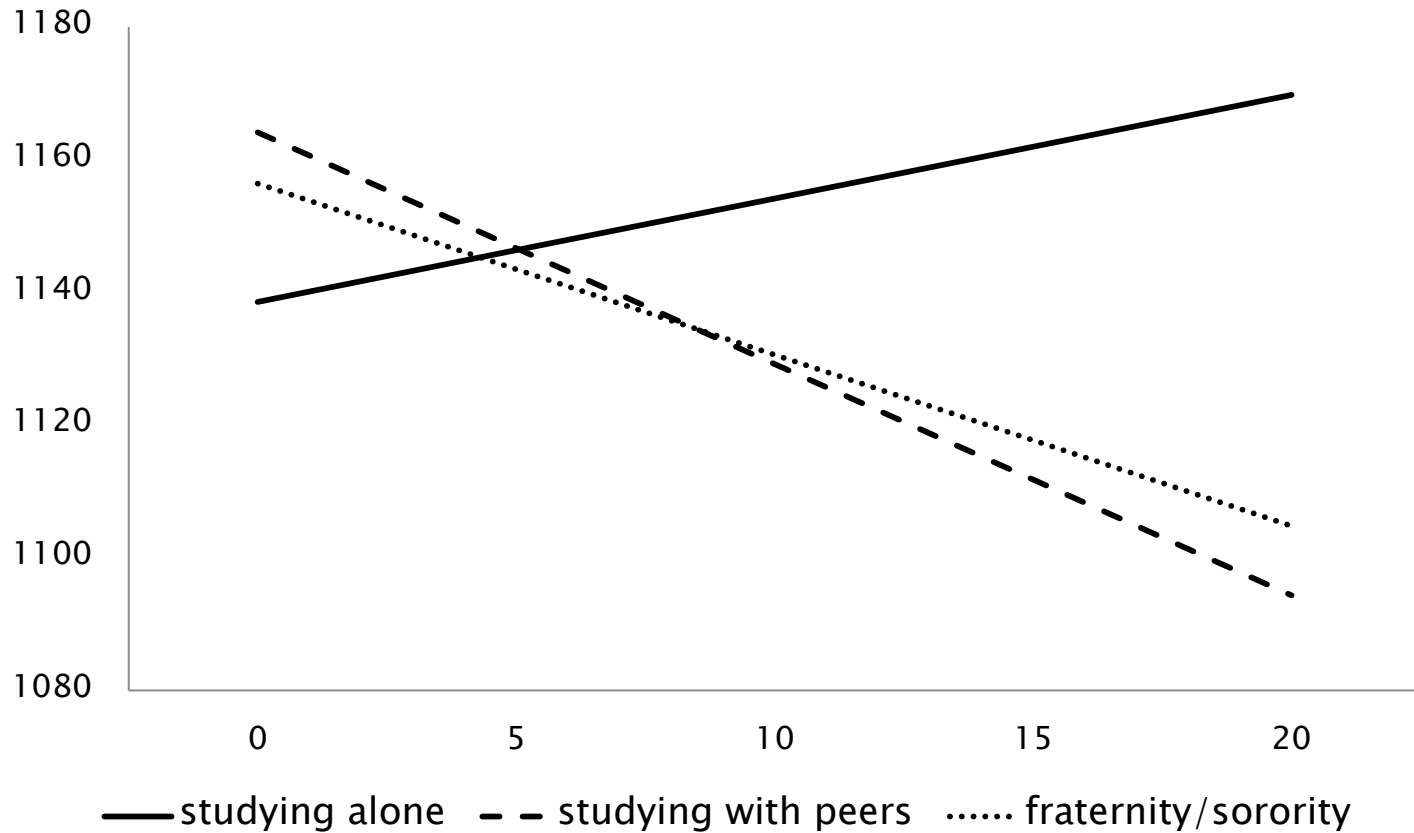
- ▶ 0.18 standard deviations – 7 percentile point gain (0.47 sd, 18 percentile points, 2005–2009)
- ▶ No statistically significant gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning and writing skills for 45 percent of the students in the sample (36 percent, 2005–2009)

CLA Performance: Faculty Expectations and Reading/Writing Requirements



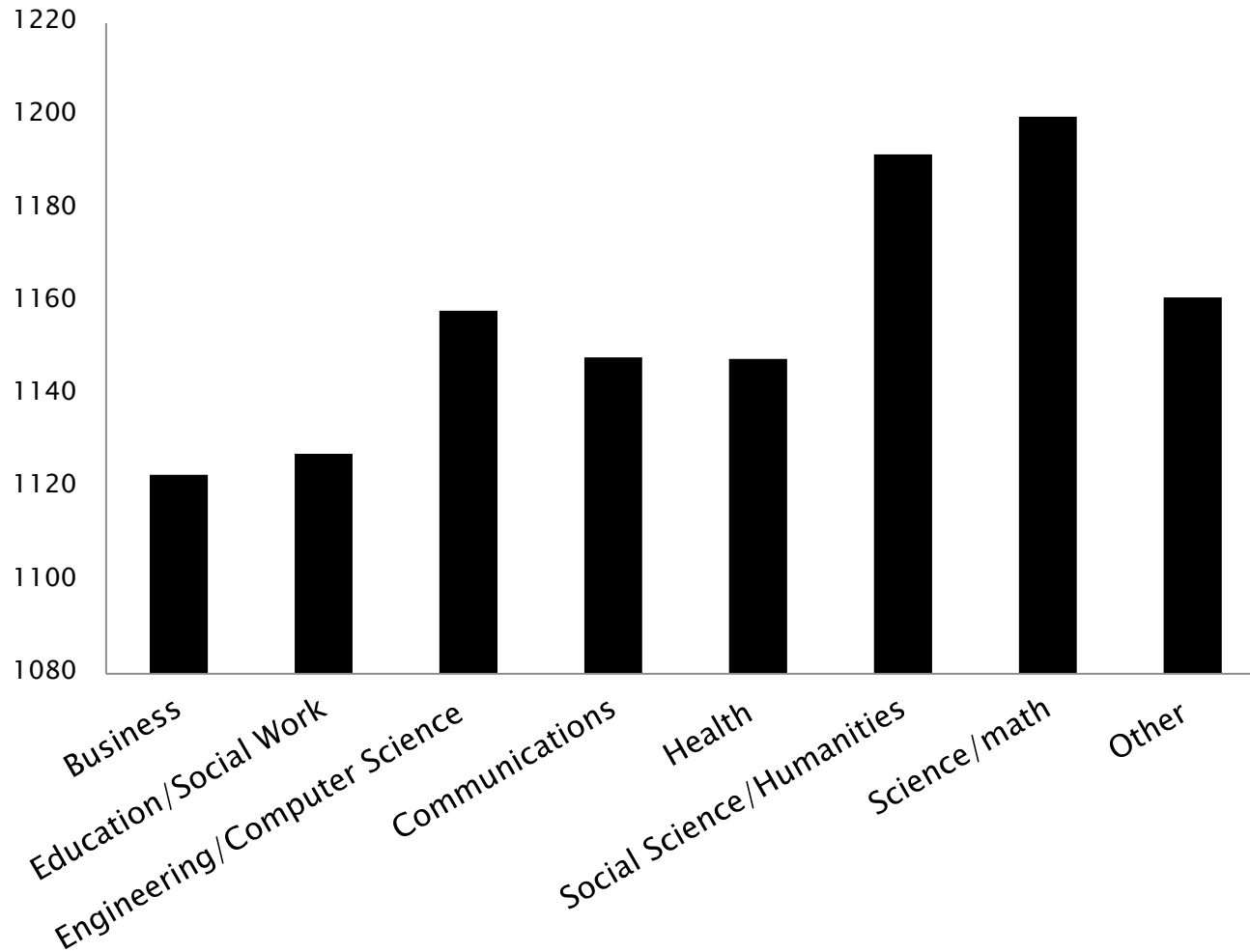
Note: Predicting 2007 CLA scores while controlling for 2005 CLA scores, student characteristics, and institutions attended.

CLA Performance: Studying and Fraternities/Sororities



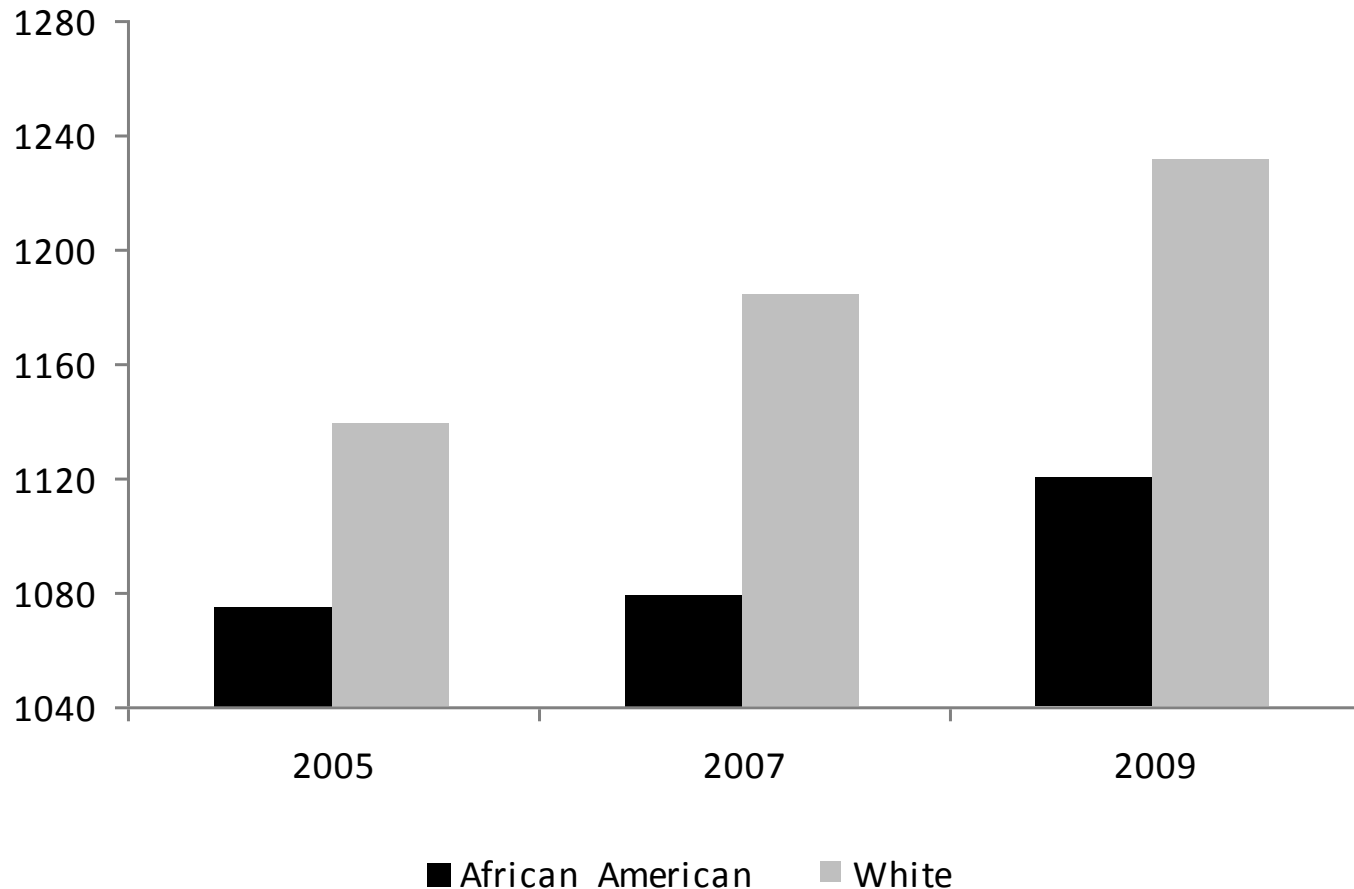
Note: Predicting 2007 CLA scores while controlling for 2005 CLA scores, student characteristics, and institutions attended.

CLA Performance: College Major



Note: Predicting 2007 CLA scores while controlling for 2005 CLA scores.

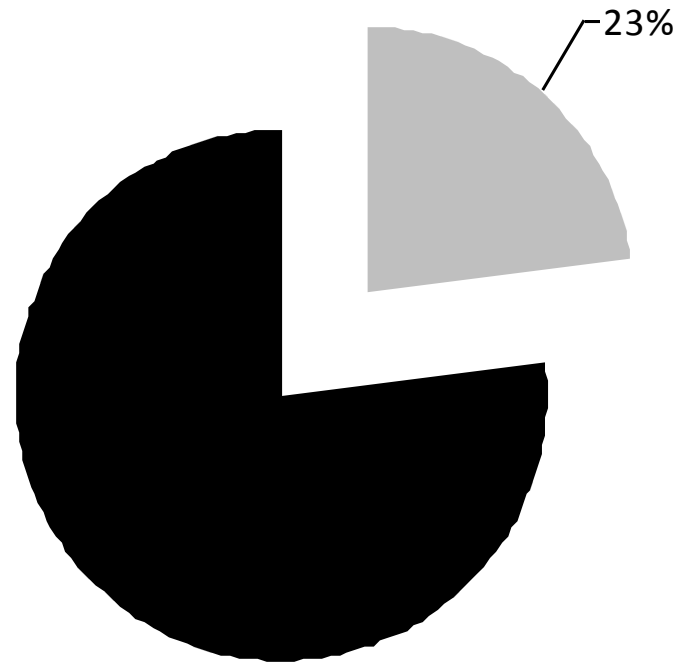
Inequality in CLA Performance: African American vs. White



Note: Based on a 3-level HLM model, controlling for a range of demographic/family characteristics.

Institutional Variation

23 percent of CLA growth between 2005 and 2009 occurs across institutions

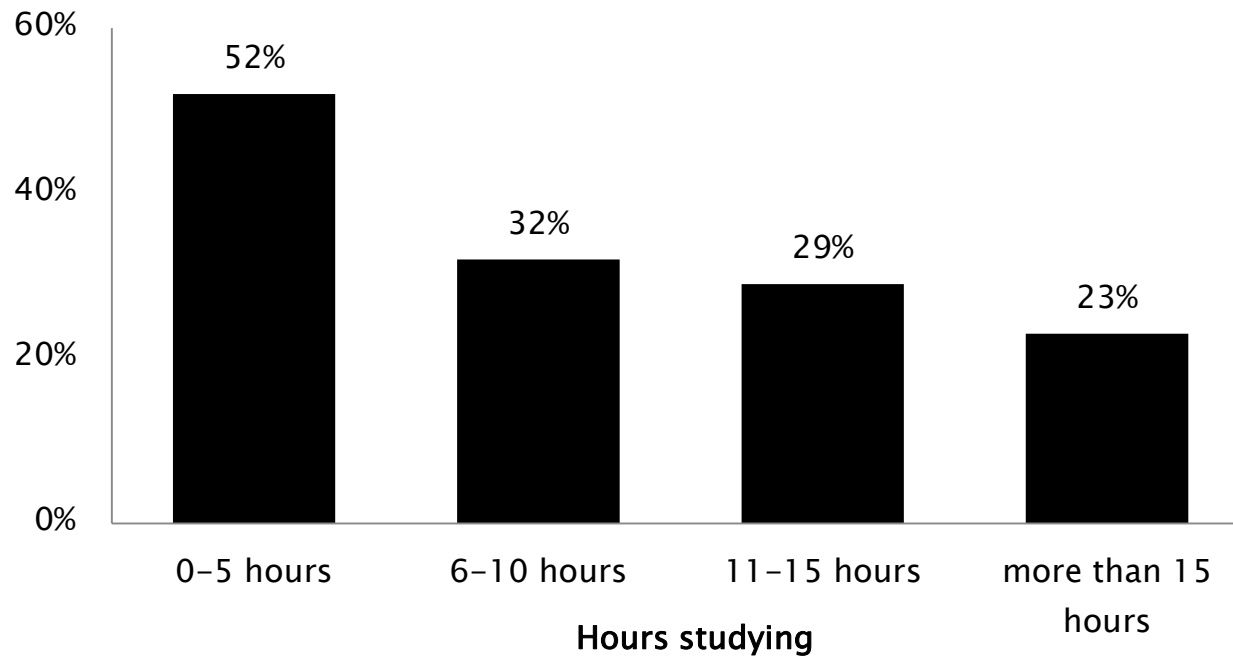


Graduate transitions

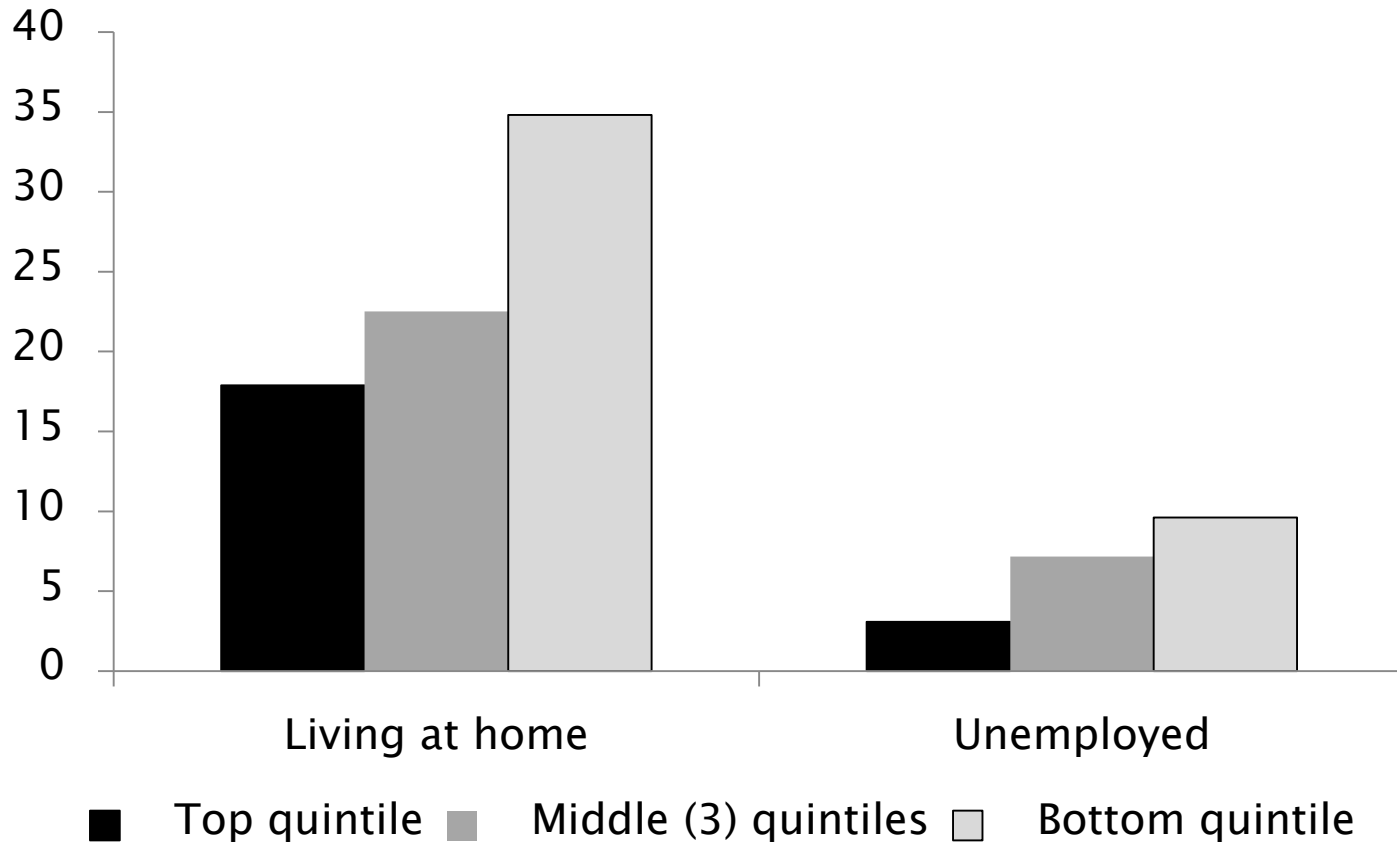
- ▶ **Status – Spring 2011 follow-up (about 2 yrs. out)**
 - 31% enrolled in graduate school full-time
 - 52% full-time employment (\$35,000 mean earnings)
 - 11% part-time employment (16% of non FT students)
 - 5% unemployed (7% of non FT students)
- ▶ **Other outcomes**
 - 66% report college loans (\$26,000 mean)
 - 24% are living with parents/relatives
 - Low civic engagement
 - 32% monthly or never read newspapers on-line/in-print
 - 39% monthly or never discuss politics/public affairs

College Graduates – News Awareness (2010 Survey)

Read print or on-line news – monthly or never



Transitions by 2009 CLA Performance Task Score



Policy Recommendations

- ▶ Federal imposed regulation – i.e., increased accountability – would be counterproductive
- ▶ Accountability should operate at lower levels in the system
 - Trustees should ask administrators: How are you measuring learning? Where are areas that need improvement? How are problems being addressed?
 - Administrators – symbolically and substantively should support undergraduate learning and academic rigor; organizational incentive structures require realignment
 - Faculty must assume individual and collective responsibility for ensuring academic rigor
 - Students could be evaluated on the basis of meaningful academic standards – e.g., (employers could demand) transcripts that included information on course difficulty

<http://higherred.ssrc.org/>

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