

POLITICAL APATHY AND THE YOUTH VOTE: A SURVEY OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Data from past national elections have illustrated that the 18-24 age group is the most apathetic to the democratic process. This paper surveys a broad percentage of students at a midsize regional university in the southeastern United States. The survey is done in order to measure voter registration and participation, civic awareness, and the students' average political leaning. I observe that while voting-age students are rather apathetic, they performed better than the national 18-24 age group in the presidential election of 2000. Upon surveying a small sample of faculty at the same university, it appears that the positive correlations of both age and education with voting activity are reinforced.

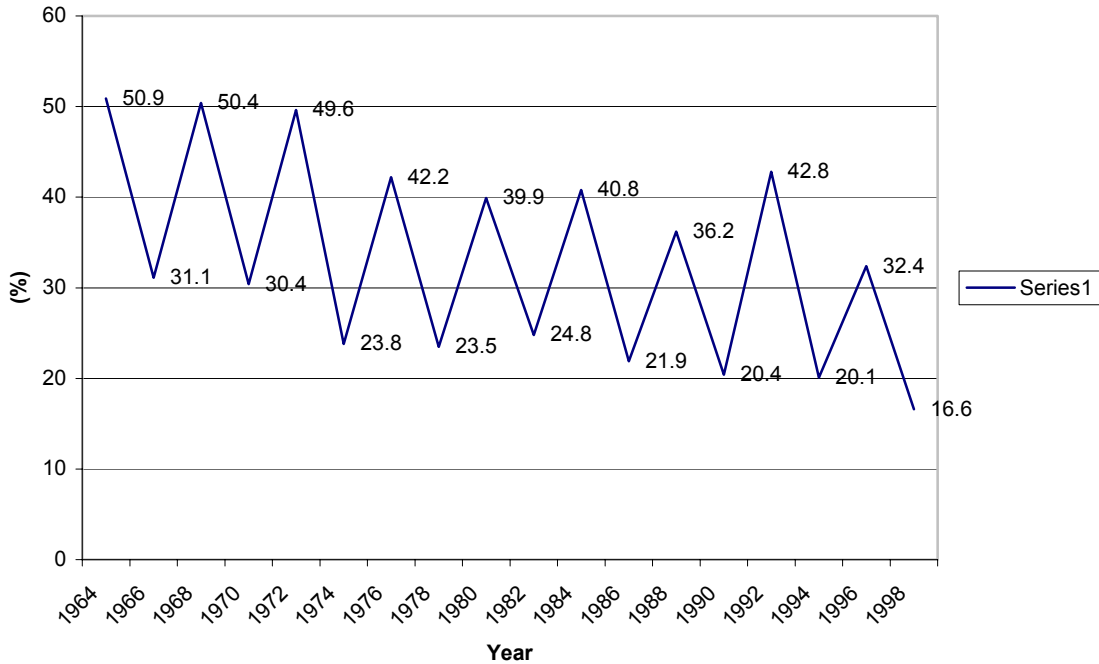
INTRODUCTION

Should college faculties be teaching civic awareness as well as capital budgeting, cost accounting, and Shakespeare? Compiled data from past national elections in the United States have had a common theme: the youth are the smallest voting bloc; therefore, they must be apathetic to the political process (note the downward trend in Figure 1). This paper investigates whether students at a regional university in the southeastern United States are more or less apathetic than overall national data suggests.

Lottes and Kuriloff (1994) echo the notion that college faculty feel it is their mission to do more than expose students to academics. In surveying predominantly Caucasian students at an East Coast, highly selective university, they found that students become more liberal and tolerant of homosexuality as college experience grows. Clearly, and Lottes and Kuriloff acknowledge this, these results cannot be applied to all universities. Interestingly, Loeb and Magee (1992) find similar results. In surveying 17-19 year old commuters in a beginning psychology course at a four-year university, they found that student prejudice toward many religions, ethnic, and stigmatized groups fell over time.

To this end, I have surveyed a rather broad, representative sample of students at the university. With this information, I seek to get a feel for student participation in the national elections of 2000 and 2002, as well as the political leaning of the average student. I also provide an analysis of basic civics knowledge to determine if this provides any insights into political activism or apathy among the student population.

Figure 1--Vote Participation--18-24 Years Old



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, July 19, 2000

In 1966, UCLA began surveying freshmen. At that time, 86% of students desired to foster a “meaningful philosophy of life.” That number has fallen to 39% now. Additionally in 1966, 42% thought “being very well off financially” was necessary. That number is 74% now (Vanderkam, 2004). New York writer Laura Vanderkam uses this information to conclude that these survey numbers in 1966 were the impetus for conservative movements to claim that academic institutions lean decidedly to the left (Vanderkam, 2004). But notice the reversal in these numbers from 1966 to today. With this information, are universities (or at least UCLA) beginning to lean rightward?

This study leads to the conclusion that while some students are rather apathetic to the political process (participation in 2000 and 2002 was less than 50% of those of voting-age), they tend to be more active in a presidential election than national numbers would imply from the 18-24 age group. Additionally, using a small sample of faculty and staff at the same institution, it appears that participation and civic awareness increase with age, which is in line with standard thinking.

MOTIVATION AND METHODOLOGY

As alluded above, a common theme echoed by many conservative pundits is that college faculties lean to the left. For example, young syndicated columnist Ben Shapiro has written a book that accuses liberal faculty members of indoctrinating students with dogma. He writes,

“Leftists dominate the universities...and they use their power to mold impressionable minds. From the administration to the student government, from the professorate to the student media, college students cannot escape the clutches of rabid liberalism” (Shapiro, jacket, 2004).

Can liberal teaching then lead to liberal students? In reality, most students flock to a college or university that is a fit for them, not necessarily based on political activity alone. In an article in *The Princeton Review*, the top 10 most politically liberal and top 10 most politically conservative colleges were provided, culminating from the *Review*'s survey data of thousands of college students.

The top 10 liberal colleges in the *Review* were:

1. Bard College (NY), 2. Hampshire College (MA), 3. Sarah Lawrence College (NY), 4. New College of Florida (FL), 5. Wesleyan University (CT), 6. Grinnell College (IA), 7. Reed College (OR), 8. Macalester College (MN), 9. Oberlin College (OH), and 10. Vassar College (NY).

Of interest in this list is how many of the schools (five) are located in the northeastern United States, which in 2000 went decidedly “blue” for Al Gore. Three are in New York alone. Of the other five schools, Gore carried the states of Oregon, Minnesota, and Iowa (and losing Florida by only 537 votes). Gore thus carried eight of the ten locations. Kerry carried seven of the ten in 2004.

The top 10 conservative colleges listed in the *Review* were:

1. Washington and Lee University (VA), 2. Hampden-Sydney College (VA), 3. Brigham Young University (UT), 4. United States Naval Academy (MD), 5. Samford University (AL), 6. United States Air Force Academy (CO), 7. University of Mississippi (MS), 8. Texas A & M University (TX), 9. University of Dallas (TX), and 10. Wheaton College (MA).

These schools are mainly in the mid-Atlantic, near west, southwest, and Deep South. With the glaring exception of Wheaton College in Massachusetts, these locations are not much of a surprise (not even the USNA, given that many in the military stereotypically are thought to lean right of center). Of these locations, Bush carried eight of ten, with Texas (Bush's home state), Virginia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Utah being solid “red” states in 2000 and 2004.

But the prime motivation of this paper is not to place the surveyed university in one of these lists (even though Bush solidly carried the university's location--South Carolina--in 2000 and 2004), but to get a gauge of who a representative sample of the students are, as well as their knowledge of basic civics and political participation. Interestingly enough, Michael Negrón and Princella Smith, two youths who won MTV's Choose or Lose essay contests, dispute the notion of political apathy, and claim that the current generation of 18-29 year-olds does not believe that politics can improve communities. Additionally, they correctly state that the current youth should care the most about presidential elections, given that their generation is the voting bloc that will have to live the longest with the outcome (Negrón and Smith, 2004).

Regarding political apathy, Pedersen (1978) analyzed the relationship between apathy and electoral change, using data from the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan for the six presidential elections from 1952 to 1972. He found that in instances where apathy does influence elections, the apathetic citizens tend to assist incumbents. Pedersen also claims that apathetic voter behavior is not standard, but varies according to individual campaigns.

Do apathetic, noninformed voters disproportionately influence party shifts in elections? Past convention (although by no means unanimously accepted), claims that the least informed voter is the most likely to change his or her vote, owing to no party allegiance. See studies by: Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Dreyer 1971 for support of this convention. Studies opposing this supposition can be found in Key (1966) or Benewick, Birch, Blumler, and Ewbank (1969).

An interesting work by McDonald and Popkin (2001) claims that it isn't nonvoting that has increased since 1972, but the ineligible population of the country (which is included in voting-age population, such as noncitizens and felons). However, Boyte (1991) refers to the film *Pump Up the Volume* to claim that youth are not apathetic, but actually disgusted with adults' seeming inability to solve age-old social problems. He goes on to say that civic education should focus less on conventional politics and more on problem-solving skills.

Michael Nelson (1995), professor of political science, tells of an interesting game of word association he uses on the first day of introductory American government classes. When he says "politics," students reply with "corrupt, dirty, games-playing, ego trip, a waste (p. 72)." Mark Strama (1998), of *Rock the Vote*, echoes this sentiment, explaining that youth do not trust politicians or the political process. In fact, this demographic substitutes volunteer work for participation in politics. Similar arguments can be found in Cone, Cooper, and Hollander (2001).

Also regarding the youth vote, an interesting work by Levine and Cureton (1998) explains that previous generations had one momentous "where were you when" moments, such as the bombing of Pearl Harbor or the Kennedy assassination. During their comprehensive work spanning data from 1993-1997, they claim the youth generation of the time did not have that one historical moment. The work is outdated now, however. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 have likely changed that notion. One curious result from their data however, was that students painted a bleak picture about politics, but had an upbeat feel for the future. Levine and Cureton's work also makes the same claim that the youth feel they inherited the world's problems from prior generations, and it is up to them to fix things. In order to do this, students are becoming more activist. Keiser (2000) is also trying to reverse the apathy trend, having formed the Foundation for Individual Responsibility and Social Trust (FIRST). Her organization is trying to bring the goals of Generation X to the attention of presidential campaigns.

With respect to the youth bloc, an editorial in *USA Today* just before the 2004 Democratic National Convention accused both the president and Senator John F. Kerry of ignoring the under-30 vote. The allusion was that both candidates are more focused on Electoral College arithmetic than on specific demographics (*USA Today* Editorial, 2004). Both chairs of

the major political parties countered the editor's viewpoint. Then-Democratic National Committee Chairman Terry McAuliffe described that the DNC's voter-registration drives, issue-based seminars, and college campus training sessions (for Democratic campaigns) have served to connect with young people (McAuliffe, 2004). Then-Republican National Committee Chairman Ed Gillespie argued that student leaders are conducting grassroots efforts for voter registration and dissemination of the party message. Additionally, the RNC rolled out "Reggie the Registration Rig" (an 18-wheeler) to travel to youth events (Gillespie, 2004). Meanwhile, Bennett (1997) makes an interesting claim that even in instances where youth are politically interested, it is usually about events abroad, moreso than in the United States.

In gathering data for this paper, surveys were distributed to thirteen classes without prior warning. The surveys were given on the spot in the Spring 2004 semester, with no student collaboration allowed. Appendix 1 lists the course names, category, and the estimated percentage of juniors and seniors (those most likely to have been of voting-age in 2000 and/or 2002) in each class. Seven of the thirteen courses surveyed were business courses, while four were humanities or social science courses (so-called soft sciences vis-à-vis sociology). Lastly, two courses were chemistry sections (or so-called hard sciences). I feel this provides a viable cross sample of student data.

Regarding the survey itself, students were asked if they were residents of South Carolina or out-of-state, whether they were male or female, and whether they were over 21 years of age. These were the only demographics sought, given that the focus was not solely on what motivated students' votes.

Students were also asked four basic civics questions, most if not all which are covered in a high school civics class. Students were asked how many people made up the U.S. House of Representatives, how many people made up the U.S. Senate, who the president of the Senate is, and where tax legislation originates. People were also asked to identify themselves with a political party (Republican, Democrat, or Independent), as well as if they were registered to vote. Voter participation was also asked regarding the national elections of 2000 and 2002. In the case of the presidential election, students were asked their voting choice (Bush, Gore, Other, Did not vote, Not old enough to vote), while in the midterm 2002 election, they were merely asked about participation (Yes, No, Not old enough to vote). All responses were anonymously received.

The reader should be aware that the survey results tabulated below are not scientific, in that no error margin is calculated for non-responses. In other words, only the respondents' answers are tabulated as a percentage of the entire number of surveys. In situations where the students did not respond to a civics question, this wasn't counted as incorrect. Only the students who answered correctly as a percentage of the whole are reported. With respect to the questions pertaining to voting choice, only the students who gave an answer are reported as the total *n* number of surveys for the elections of 2000 and 2002. Additionally, to account for the fact that some of the classes had international students, certain results should be interpreted as a percentage of *voting-age* and not *eligible* voters. This is in line with terminology used by the Federal Election Commission.

RESULTS

Table 1 simply lists the general demographics compiled in the survey data. The total number of surveys, 446, represents 6.58% of the university's Fall 2003 enrollment. Therefore, I feel confident in the following approximations given that this is a higher percentage of the population surveyed than is done in presidential polling. Of the students surveyed, just over half were residents of South Carolina and male. This is closely representative of the general population of South Carolina. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, in 2000, just over half the population in South Carolina was female. Additionally, 36% of those surveyed indicated they were over 21 years of age.

Table 1—General Demographics

Course	n	SC Resident	Male	Over 21
1	55	38	24	9
2	13	9	6	11
3	21	7	10	11
4	40	25	24	11
5	41	19	23	7
6	24	17	8	17
7	30	16	21	5
8	40	23	27	12
9	35	19	26	22
10	57	30	29	14
11	20	9	14	11
12	70	35	22	31
Totals	446	247	234	161
(%)		55.38	52.47	36.10

*Note: A total of 28 students identified themselves as *international* (or 6.3% of respondents). I did not wish to exclude these students from study, which is why the term *voting-age* is used instead of *eligible*, as described above.

When asked to identify their political affiliation, Table 2 shows that 43% of students indicated they were Republicans, with 29% reporting as Democrats. It is interesting to note that nearly the same percentage (28%) responded as Independent. Perhaps students are increasingly wishing that they not be labeled when it comes to politics. This could be an important finding for Republican and Democratic grassroots organizations and party voting drives. For seminal works on measuring party identification, see Craig (1985) and Miller and Wattenberg (1983).

Table 2—Political Affiliation

Course	n	Party			(% R)	(% D)	(% I)
		Republican	Democrat	Independent			
1	53	25	13	15	47.17	24.53	28.30
2	12	6	4	2	50.00	33.33	16.67
3	21	9	3	9	42.86	14.29	42.86
4	39	14	15	10	35.90	38.46	25.64
5	40	16	12	12	40.00	30.00	30.00
6	24	9	10	5	37.50	41.67	20.83
7	27	17	7	3	62.96	25.93	11.11
8	39	18	7	14	46.15	17.95	35.90
9	33	10	14	9	30.30	42.42	27.27
10	51	25	15	11	49.02	29.41	21.57
11	19	13	3	3	68.42	15.79	15.79
12	65	21	20	24	32.31	30.77	36.92
Totals	423	183	123	117			
(%)		43.26	29.08	27.66			

When separating the business classes surveyed from those that are non-business (a 7:5 course ratio), the percentages do not significantly change from the combined affiliation data:

	<u>Business</u>	<u>Non-Business</u>
Republican	44%	43%
Democrat	29	29
Independent	27	28

Table 3 reports student registration and their voting choices in 2000. Only 275 out of 406 respondents (roughly 68%) indicated they were registered voters. Given that nearly all college students are at least 18 years of age, this statistic highlights student apathy for the political process. Nationally, close to 70% of citizens indicated they were registered in 2000 (Jamieson, Shin, and Day, 2002). Among those aged 18-24 (hence the majority of students in the survey), the percentage registered is only 50.7%. Accordingly, the sample may not be as apathetic as the overall population. This is likely due to the notion that the higher educated tend to be more active politically.

Table 3—Registration and Voting Choice (2000)

Course	n	Registered	Bush	Gore	Other	Underage	Did not vote
1	51	29	7	6	0	29	9
2	11	6	3	1	0	0	7
3	21	13	7	0	1	2	11
4	37	25	3	4	0	17	13
5	40	25	7	3	0	14	16
6	24	21	7	4	0	2	11
7	21	17	4	2	0	9	6
8	36	26	9	2	0	13	12
9	33	24	10	3	0	6	14
10	49	31	8	3	0	22	16
11	18	15	6	2	1	5	4
12	65	43	8	8	4	20	25
Totals	406	275	79	38	6	139	144

Lack of enthusiasm for the political process is further illustrated by the fact that only 123 votes were cast out of 275 registered voters in 2000, or 45%. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, an impressive 86% of registered voters cast their vote in the presidential election of 2000 (Jamieson et al., 2002). The 41% deficiency to the national percentage overwhelmingly shows the apathy among the youth. Among the 18-24 age group however, only 36.1% voted in the presidential election (Jamieson et al., 2002). While the sample's participation is still low, it is above the national level. It should also be noted that over one-third of the survey respondents indicated they were not old enough to vote in 2000. This most likely represents freshmen and sophomores who were surveyed.

When again separating the business and non-business courses vis-à-vis voting choice:

	<u>Business</u>	<u>Non-Business</u>
Bush	20%	18%
Gore	7	12
Other	0	3
Underage	35	34
No	38	33

Of the business students, 20% indicated they voted for Texas Governor George W. Bush (a plurality among the candidates), 7% went for Vice President Al Gore, and a marginal percentage for Other. What is alarming is that 38% of business students replied that they did not vote in 2000.

Regarding the non-business students, Bush again wins a plurality of voters, but his margin over Gore is smaller (18% to 12%). The percentage spread dropping from thirteen to six

when looking at the non-business students is not surprising due to political stereotypes. It has long been accepted that Republicans favor business and vice-versa, while the humanities tend to be more liberal. This stereotype is reinforced in this data. Also, notice that the percentage that voted Other rises from marginal to 3%. Again of concern is that 33% of non-business students replied that they did not cast a vote in 2000.

Of the actual votes cast in 2000:

	<u>Business</u>	<u>Non-Business</u>
Bush	72%	54%
Gore	26	37
Other	2	9

George W. Bush captured 72% of the business student vote, compared to only 26% for Gore and 2% for Other. When looking at the non-business students, again Bush's victory spread diminishes. Bush still wins a majority (54%), but Gore's percentage jumps to 37% among the non-business courses.

Recall that the next part of the survey dealt with the individual students' political leanings and the leanings of their primary caregiver. Table 4 reports the average political leaning for each class surveyed, as well as the average primary caregiver's leaning. Notice that most courses report an average of around five (which is middle of the road on the 1 to 10 liberal to conservative scale). Course 2, which is the Social Inequality class, had a 3.5 leaning, which favors the liberal side. Course 3 had an average leaning of 6.4, which is noticeably conservative.

Table 4—Political Leanings

Course	n	Leaning	Primary Caregiver's Lean	Difference
1	51	5.2451	5.8431	-0.5980
2	10	3.5455	4.3636	-0.8181
3	20	6.3810	7.3500	-0.9690
4	37	5.1757	5.7432	-0.5675
5	39	4.8974	7.1500	-2.2526
6	23	4.8696	4.6957	0.1739
7	28	5.7321	5.6250	0.1071
8	39	5.6410	5.3590	0.2820
9	34	5.2647	5.3143	-0.0496
10	53	5.5377	5.5377	0.0000
11	18	6.2778	6.7222	-0.4444
12	68	5.1765	5.9265	-0.7500
Totals	420	63.7441	69.6303	-5.8862

When looking at the last column of Table 4, which subtracts the primary caregiver's leaning from student leaning, the biggest differences are seen in Courses 2, 3, and 5. A negative difference indicates that the average student leaning is less than (or less conservative than) that of the average primary caregiver. Of the twelve courses surveyed, eight have a negative difference value, suggesting that the average student is perhaps slightly less conservative than the average caregiver.

A t-test was performed on the average student leaning and the average caregiver leaning. With a t-statistic of -2.43 ($\alpha = 0.05$), we can reject the hypothesis that these two values are statistically the same (for both one and two-tailed tests). This may suggest that how a student is reared is not a primary factor in their future political beliefs. While we know that several factors will shape an individual student, perhaps too much emphasis is placed on upbringing. Be aware, how the student is reared is indeed meaningful. The Pearson correlation statistic is reported as 0.65 , suggesting strong correlation. In future study, other variables such as student job/income, geographic location, parental income, classification, and age are but a few that should be included in assigning source of political leaning.

Table 5 reports the results obtained by course from the four basic civics questions. Of 446 respondents, only 17.5% knew how many people are in the U.S. House of Representatives. Notice this number jumps to over 55% for knowing how many senators. Does this suggest the power of even numbers (either 2 senators per state or the number 100)? Only one-third of students knew who the Senate president is. In accepting either *Richard Cheney* or *the vice president* as the correct response, this is still a rather low number. The following were other responses to the question "Who is the president of the Senate?":

George W. Bush; Tom Daschle; the member who has been there the longest; George Bush, Sr.; the House speaker; there isn't one; Bill Frist; Strom Thurmond; Tom Ridge; a middle-aged white male; Newt Gingrich; Colin Powell; Howard Dean; the president pro-tempore; Donald Rumsfeld; John Ashcroft; John McCain; Richard Gephardt; Condi Rice,

and other permutations of the above. These responses are not reported here in order to be humorous, but simply to make a point. Two-thirds of the respondents did not know the answer, and of those who even attempted to know, clearly took names heard from the news media. Some of the above responses, while incorrect, can be interpreted as somewhat encouraging. For example, Tom Daschle (the Senate minority leader at the time), Bill Frist (the Senate majority leader), and the president pro-tempore (Ted Stevens) are not wildly incorrect answers. However, Thurmond (deceased former senator from South Carolina), Rumsfeld (the secretary of defense), Ashcroft (the attorney general at the time), Gephardt (former House speaker, not even in the Senate), and Rice (the national security adviser at the time) are clearly proverbial shots in the dark.

Table 5 also reports the number who correctly chose the House of Representatives as the origin of tax legislation. In my opinion, this is the most difficult of the four questions, but the 60% correct responses undoubtedly arise given the fact that students were given a choice

between the House and Senate. If students had to write in the response (as with the other three questions), this number would have been starkly lower.

Table 5—Basic Civics Questions

Course	n	# House	# Senate	Senate President	Tax Legislation
1	55	1	25	12	33
2	13	4	4	5	7
3	21	1	9	6	13
4	40	3	19	7	21
5	41	0	20	6	21
6	24	7	13	13	9
7	30	9	18	5	17
8	40	8	20	16	28
9	35	5	23	10	23
10	57	17	35	25	31
11	20	5	13	10	15
12	70	18	48	34	50
Totals	446	78	247	149	268

Regarding the midterm election of 2002, Table 6 illustrates voter participation. Of the voting-age voters (respondents minus underage), only 13% cast a vote in 2002.¹ This is in line with the overall electorate in midterm elections, but a much smaller figure. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the voting turnout was 46% of the citizen population (Day and Holder, 2004). It should be noted however that 18-24 year-olds turned out at only 19% (with 43% reported registered), which is above the sample's average (Day and Holder, 2004). As far as the business/non-business analysis in the survey, the percentage of those of voting age that voted in 2002 was 10.5% and 17%, respectively.

As a control group, the faculty and staff of the College of Business (COB) at the university were also surveyed. Table 7 shows the political affiliation of the COB faculty and staff. Nearly 45% classify themselves as Republican. Surprisingly, in line with the student results described above, the number of Independents is quite large.

Table 6—Voter Participation--2002

Course	n	Underage	No	Yes
1	38	15	20	3
2	11	0	9	2
3	21	0	20	1
4	37	8	24	5
5	40	6	32	2
6	24	0	19	5
7	21	1	19	1
8	36	5	27	4
9	33	2	28	3
10	49	6	37	6
11	18	0	12	6
12	65	6	52	7
Totals	393	49	299	45

13.08

Table 7—Faculty and Staff Political Affiliation

Party						
n	Republican	Democrat	Independent	(%) R	(%) D	(%) I
36	16	8	12	44.44	22.22	33.33

Table 8 illustrates the seriousness of civic responsibility as age increases. Thirty-four of 37 were registered, and over 90% of the registered faculty and staff cast a vote in 2000. In the COB, Bush beats Gore by a 2:1 margin.

Table 8—Faculty and Staff Registration and Voting Choice (2000)

n	Registered	Bush	Gore	Other	Did not vote	No response
37	34	20	10	1	3	3

Votes cast 31
 Percentage of registered faculty/staff who cast a vote 91.18

As far as the civics questions go however, the faculty and staff also performed poorly. In Table 9, only 24% knew how many individuals make up the U.S. House of Representatives. (Although this is up from the 17.5% of students who knew.) The faculty and staff of the COB did perform better than the students on each question, but the overall performance of the faculty and staff as a whole was not noticeably better.

Table 9—Faculty and Staff Basic Civics Questions

N	# House	# Senate	Senate President	Tax Legislation
37	9	22	17	31
(%) Correct	24.32	59.46	45.95	83.78

Lastly, the faculty and staff vote participation in 2002:

Yes	54%
No	41
N/A	5

Over half of the respondents voted in the 2002 midterm election. This is above the percentage of the eligible national electorate who cast a vote in 2002 (46%), and well above the student sample.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has shown that while the sample of students from the university are more politically active than the national level for the 18-24 age group, they are still generally apathetic to the political process. A small sample of faculty and staff in the College of Business was also conducted, and it was found that both civic awareness and political participation increase with age. Table 10 shows a summary of the participation statistics of the national elections of 2000 and 2002. Notice that of the voting-age voters in the student survey, the non-business students had a higher participation rate in both 2000 and 2002 than the business students. Both performed better than the national 18-24 group in 2000 (although not 2002). The COB faculty and staff participated in far greater numbers than either category of students. This reinforces the notion that political activity increases with age. Additionally, the faculty and staff performed at a higher percentage than the national level in both elections, suggesting reinforcement of the positive relationship between vote participation and education.

Table 10—Summary Statistics

Demographic	% Registered 2000	% Registered 2002	% Vote 2000	% Vote 2002
Total Student Sample	--	*68.0	46.1	13.1
Business	--	*67.9	42.9	10.5
Non-Business	--	*67.5	50.4	17.0
COB Faculty/Staff	--	*91.9	83.8	54.0
Total Population	69.5	66.5	59.5	46.1
National 18-24	50.7	43.0	36.1	19.3

* denotes 2004

The percentages for the student and faculty & staff samples in 2000 and 2002 reflect the percentage of the voting-age who voted (n - Underage).

While the survey was given to more than six percent of the student body, one must remember that these results are only from a representative sample. Since the audience was captive, and that not all students necessarily attended class the day the surveys were given, some may dispute that the sample is random. But it cannot be disputed that the sample is broad. It would add considerably to the literature if colleges and universities nationwide would give specific surveys to incoming freshmen and outgoing seniors. This would more properly show if university faculties are imparting civic awareness and social responsibility to their students.

In discussing youth voter apathy with the students at the university, students have replied that some reasons they don't vote are either that their vote won't matter (which the 2000 election should have proven incorrect), political decisions do not personally affect them, or they are uninformed. This would seem to be in line with Downsian theory (1957), in that given an infinitesimal probability that one person can affect the result of a general election, the costs of voting will exceed the benefits from voting for an individual. It would be interesting to provide a survey to several age groups about whether they indeed feel that their vote does not matter, especially with a polarized electorate. Somewhat related work on this has been done by Hofstetter (1973), who found that with the increased competitiveness of a race, there will be increased civic participation. This was most certainly true for the recently completed presidential election of 2004. According to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), the turnout of 18-24 year-olds in the 2004 election was around 42.3 percent, which was higher than in the 2000 election. Additionally, CIRCLE estimates that voters 18-24 years of age backed Senator Kerry over President Bush by a margin of 56 percent to 43 percent. Lastly, overall turnout was nearly 60 percent of those eligible, which the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate (CSAE) estimates is the highest since the close election of 1968. This would tend to add robustness to Hofstetter's results.

Nevertheless, the future appears to be brighter for the 18-24 age group, if the data from these students is any indication. The continuing participation of students in national essay contests is a beginning. Also, the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University oversees the Vanishing Voter Project, which is trying to energize the electorate. With the actions of both major political parties working to engage the youth, this may lead to a much-needed active response from this target audience.

ENDNOTES

1. Michael Negron addressed the Democratic National Convention 2004 in Boston. Princella Smith addressed the Republican National Convention 2004 in New York.
2. One professor gave the survey in two of his General Organic Chemistry II sections. The author folded these two sections into one course given that is how they were received. From this moment on then, the paper will discuss the surveying of twelve courses.
3. It should be noted that one class did not have enough surveys for every student (Course 1). Only half the students in that class could therefore participate.

4. It should be noted that at the surveyed university, business students are required to take Business Ethics. I did not include this in the listing of business courses because philosophy students may also take this course if they wish.
5. Given that the surveys were provided to each student and returned by the faculty member overseeing the surveyed class, I have no way of knowing if each student completed a survey. Undoubtedly, if anyone chose not to participate, this number would be very small given the number of responses that were returned. Accordingly, no response rate was calculated, and hence no error margin. Where reported, of students that decided not to respond to a question, the exact number of non-responses (N/A) is given.
6. Looking back on the results, students should have been given the option of “Other” as well, as a couple of students identified themselves as “Reform” or “Libertarian.” The idea when the survey was given was to allow students to opt out of identifying themselves with one of the two major parties. I feel this does not significantly affect any of the results reported here.
7. It should be noted that a few students in junior and senior level classes indicated they were not old enough to vote in the midterm election of 2002. This is unlikely. If the typical junior is 20 years old, then that person would likely have been able to vote in 2002. Perhaps a handful of these students do not know their 26th Amendment right.
8. My thanks to Dr. Pam Martin for pointing out this project. Information can be found at www.vanishingvoter.org.

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APPENDIX 1—COURSE LEGEND

Number	Course Name	Category	Estimated (%) Jr. and Sr.
1	Introduction to European Civilization from 1648 to the Present	Humanities	25
2	Social Inequality	Social Science	78
3	Managerial Economics	Business	100
4	Macroeconomics	Business	30
5	Macroeconomics	Business	30
6	Methods in the Social Sciences	Social Science	100
7	Microeconomics	Business	30
8	Microeconomics	Business	30
9	Human Resource Management	Business	100
10	Financial/Managerial Accounting II	Business	0
11	Business Ethics	Humanities	95
12	General Organic Chemistry II	Science	100

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