

Results of Survey of PHAA's College-Bound Senior Class:

College Choices and Homeschooling Plans

By Thomas Speakman

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[Thomas Speakman surveyed this year's seniors in the Pennsylvania Homeschoolers Accreditation Agency (PHAA) diploma program as part of his doctoral dissertation with Widener University. He is currently working as the Director of Enrollment Management at Penn State Berks-Lehigh Valley College. This article is taken from his dissertation]

Response Rate. Of the 453 questionnaires mailed on January 6, 2004, to seniors enrolled in PHAA, 207 or (46%) of the surveys were answered; only 4 of the 457 surveys were returned with an incorrect mailing address. This response rate was quite remarkable, considering the fact that the survey was specifically directed toward the high school senior in the homeschool family.

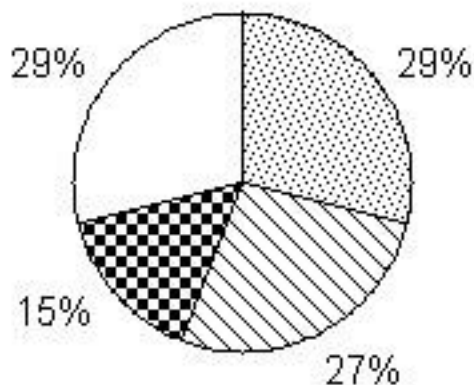
Demographic Data. The majority of the PHAA homeschool respondents in this study were Caucasian female Protestants, living within 30 miles of a college, and having an estimated household income of \$40,000.00 - \$50,000.00. The majority of the respondents have been homeschooling for 10 to 12 years, having their mother serve as the primary homeschool teacher in the family. Both mother and father are well educated, and almost 50% of the homeschoolers supplement their curriculum with college level coursework-credit.

When did the PHAA homeschool students begin thinking about attending college? Of the 207 respondents, 89% indicated that indeed they are planning to attend a college or university within the next two years. The PHAA female respondents had a college going rate was 93%, while the PHAA male respondents college going rate was 86%. In this study, the PHAA respondents have a college going rate that is well above the state and national college going rate. Of the 185 PHAA college going respondents, 32% indicated they began thinking about college during grades 1 - 6, 40% indicated they began thinking about college during grades 7 - 9, while 28% indicated that they first began thinking about attending college between grades 10 - 12. In this study, 77% of the PHAA female seniors indicated that they began thinking about college before tenth grade; while 63% of the PHAA males began thinking about college before tenth grade.

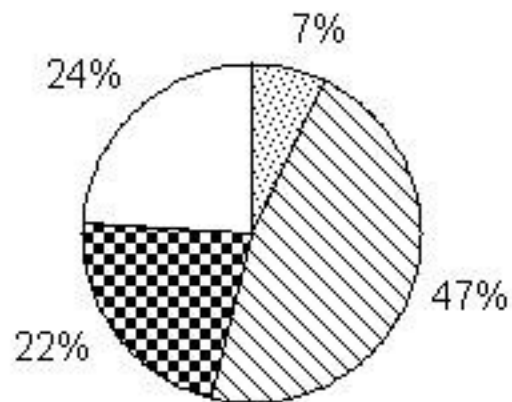
College selection process. The respondents were asked to indicate by circling on a Likert scale 1 (not at all influential) through 5 (extremely influential), the level of influence that each individual had on their college selection process. The results indicate that the parents (mother 4.08 and father 3.88) are the most influential in the college selection process, followed by their peers and friends (2.22). In the Other category, the majority of the respondents listed their brother and/or sister (8 responses), co-op teachers (5 responses), ROTC instructor (3 responses), and their dance and or music teacher (3 responses).

Preferred College

PHAA Students



School Students



-  4 Year Christian Liberal Arts College
-  4 Year Public College
-  4 Year Private College
-  Other College

Preferred college type. The respondents were asked to respond to the question regarding the type of college or university they plan to attend. The results indicate that 145 or 79% of the PHAA respondents are planning to attend a four year college or university, while 18% plan to start their college career at a two year institution, 3% listed Other. The four year Christian liberal arts college or university was the top choice among the four year college options, followed by the four year public college. The results of this study are unlike the national trends of college going seniors from www.stamats.com as shown in the chart above. In that chart, the category "Other College" includes: (1) two year community colleges, (2) two year trade and technical schools, and (3) four year Bible colleges. A higher percentage of PHAA students plan to attend four year Christian liberal arts colleges.

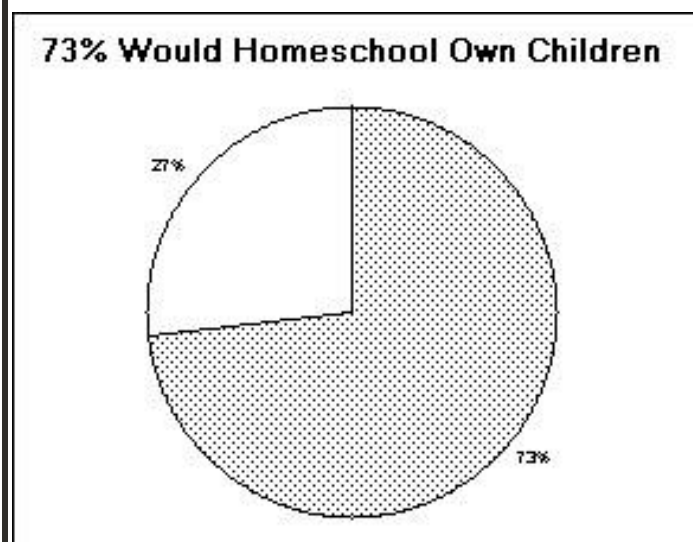
Intended college major. The respondents were asked to identify their intended major in college. The survey respondents indicated that Health related majors (12%), Humanities and Social Sciences majors (10%), and Undecided (11%) were the top choices. A substantial number of the respondents, (23%) indicated *Other*. The top choices in the *Other* category include; Journalism/English/Professional Writing, followed by Bible History/Theology, Communications, and Aviation.

Same college as parents? 81% indicated that they would *not* attend the same college or university as their parents, while 19% indicated that they would attend the same college or university.

Preferred campus location. The survey respondents clearly preferred attending a college within 100 miles from their home. The most preferred campus enrollment was from 1000-5000 students. The majority indicated that they would prefer to live on the college campus (61%), followed by commuting from home (23%). A rather small percentage (15%) were still undecided.

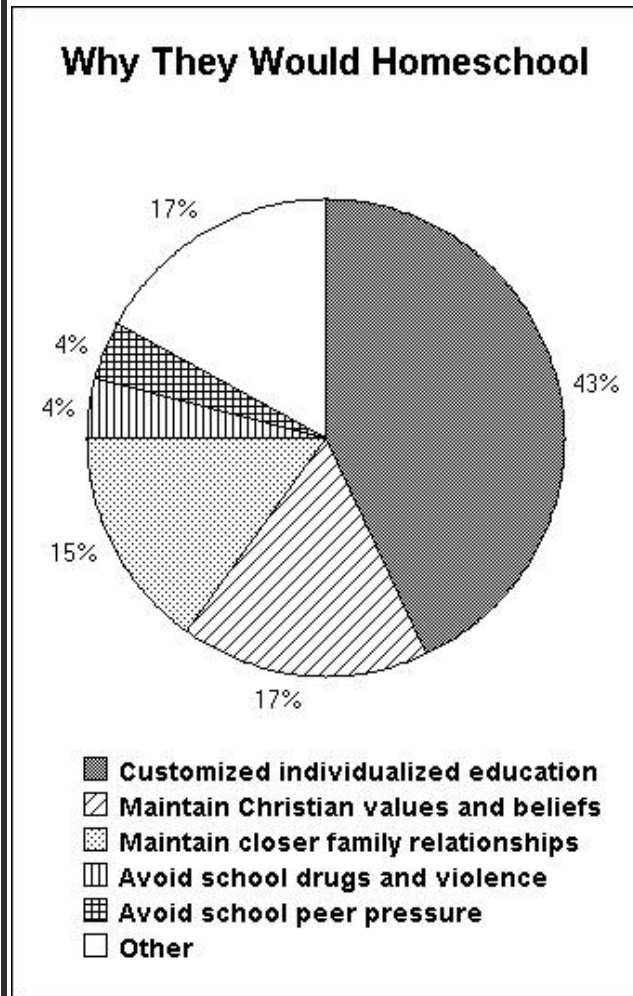
College generated information. The respondents were asked to circle in a Likert scale from 1 (not at all important), to 5 (extremely important). The respondents identified the campus visit (4.00) as the most important college generated source of information. The college website (3.15) and the college admissions counselors (3.14) were also important sources of information. The majority of the survey respondents that identified *Other* sources of information listed students attending the college (11 responses) as an important source of information.

College Image Factors. The respondents were asked to indicate on a Likert scale the level of importance for each image factor from (1) not at all important to (5) extremely important. The PHAA seniors identified the academic reputation (4.05), availability of financial aid (4.02), tuition cost (3.95), and the academic reputation of the faculty (3.89) as the four most important image factors. There were 13 respondents that listed *Other* as an important image factor. The majority of the *Other* responses indicated the availability and opportunity to study abroad (8) as most important.



Homeschooling Own Children

In this section the PHAA seniors were asked to reflect and respond to whether or not they would homeschool their own children. A total of 206 survey respondents answered this question. A total of 151 or (73%) indicated they would homeschool their children, while 55 or (27%) indicated that they would not homeschool their children.



An overwhelming majority of the respondents that indicated yes noted they would homeschool their children because of the opportunity to develop a customized, independent, and individualized educational plan. The PHAA homeschoolers felt that their educational plans were much more creative than the educational plans in their local schools, and thus they would receive a much better education through homeschooling. A second common theme was that the PHAA homeschoolers felt they wanted to maintain their Christian values and beliefs, and maintaining a strong Biblical worldview was very important to them. The third common theme was that the homeschoolers felt they could maintain closer family relationships, better family values, and have an opportunity to bond with their brothers and sisters. The fourth common theme was that the homeschoolers felt their local schools had too many drug and alcohol problems and that there was too much violence in their school system. The fifth common theme was that the homeschoolers felt

that there was too much peer pressure in the local schools and that homeschooling would help them work through and around this issue.

For those that indicated they would not chose to homeschool their children, there were two common responses or themes. An overwhelming majority of the PHAA seniors indicated that they were still undecided on this very issue. Many of the undecided indicated that they would need to have the support of their spouse and that they needed to be in a position (financially) to afford homeschooling without too many sacrifices. The second common theme was that they were greatly concerned about the lack of interaction with other students, and the inability to develop meaningful friendships.

Almost half of the total respondents that indicated that they would not homeschool their children were males. This constituted 31% of the total PHAA male respondents. While the other half that indicated no to homeschooling were females, this constituted only 23% of the total PHAA female respondents. The majority of the males indicating that they would not homeschool their children cited the concerns of isolationism and the lack of friendships, while the majority of the females indicating they would not homeschool their children cited that they were undecided, and that they wanted to see if their spouse would be in agreement on this issue, and would it be financially feasible to do so. The issue of isolationism was not a great concern to the female respondents.

I would like to thank the seniors in the PHAA diploma program for filling out their surveys and making this study possible.