

Is Higher Education Educating?*

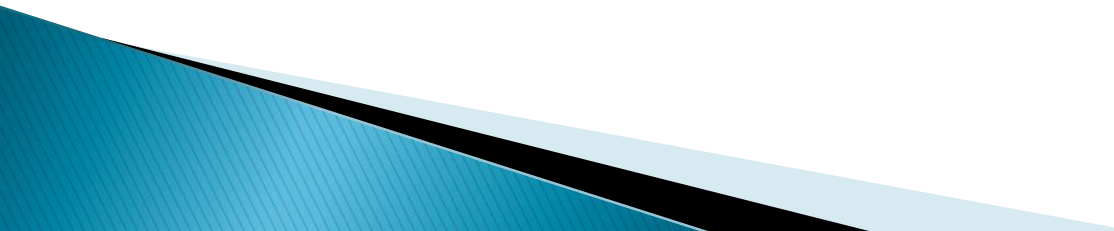
Richard Arum

June 20, 2013

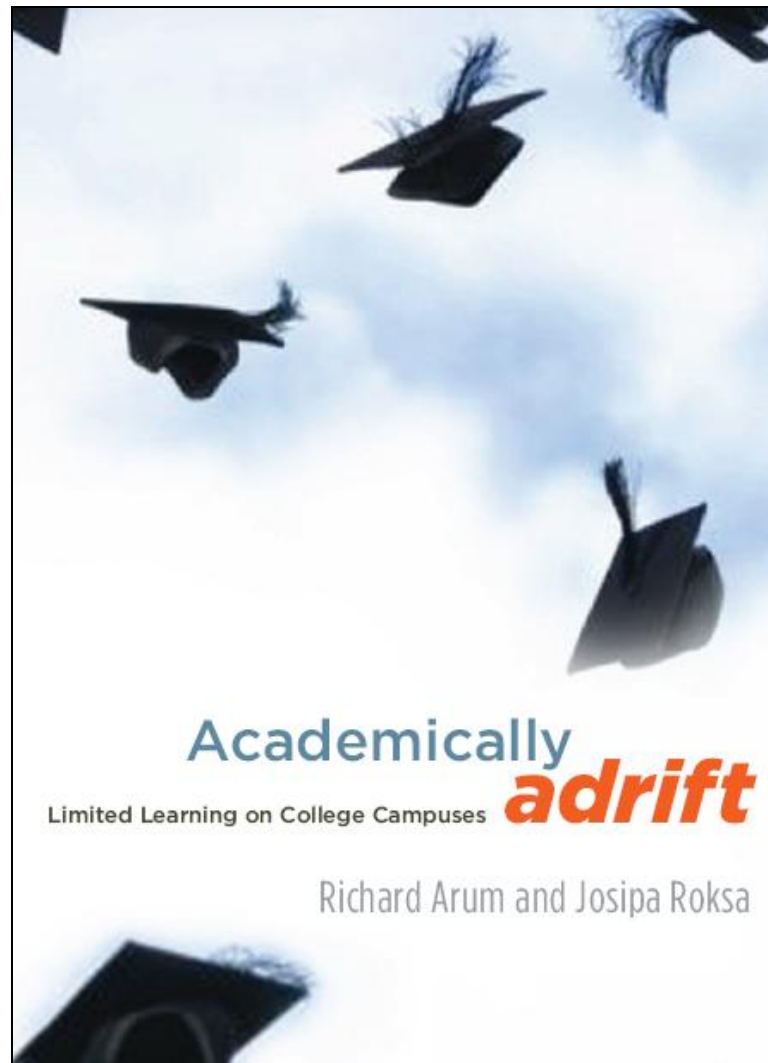
Maynooth Education Forum

*Thanks to the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Lumina, Ford and Teagle Foundations for their generous financial support and the Council for Aid to Education for collaboration and assistance with data collection.

Presentation Topics

- ▶ What skills do college students need for the 21st century and how can one assess these competencies?
 - ▶ What is the state of undergraduate education in the U.S. with respect to student learning? What specific experiences and college contexts are associated with improved student learning outcomes?
 - ▶ How are recent U.S. graduates faring after completing college? To what extent are postgraduate outcomes associated with collegiate academic performance?
 - ▶ Lessons for Irish education:
 - How do conditions of higher education differ in Ireland and the U.S.?
 - The role of assessment in improving undergraduate learning.
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Source (University of Chicago Press, January 2011):

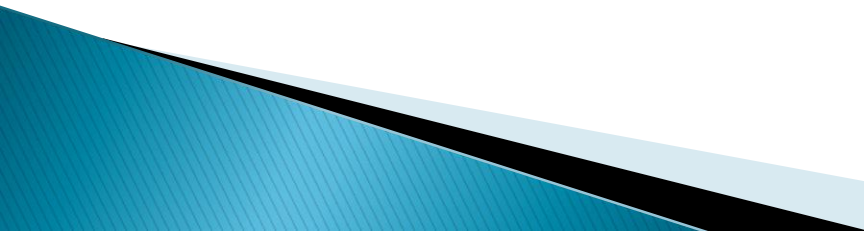


Determinants of College Learning Dataset

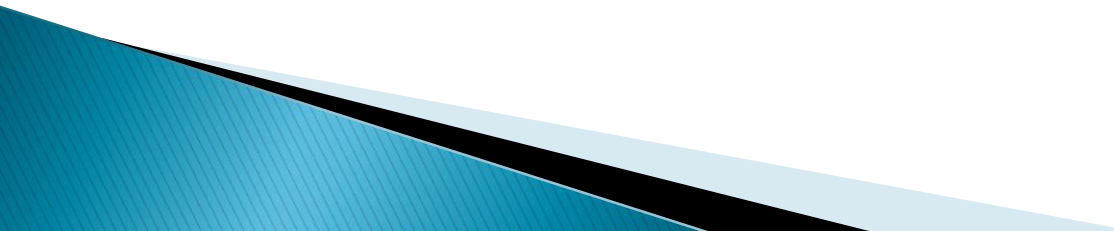
► Longitudinal Design

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

► Large Scale

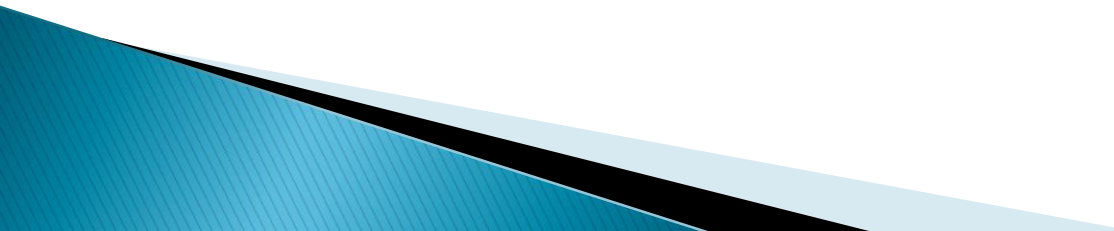
- 2005–2007: 24 diverse four-year institutions; 2,341 students (*Academically Adrift*)
 - 2005–2009: 29 diverse four-year institutions, 1,666 students
 - 2010 post-college follow-up: 976 respondents
 - 2011 post-college follow-up: 967 respondents
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Collegiate 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
 - Utilized in generic strand of OECD-AHELO project
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Performance Task (example)

You are the assistant to Pat Williams, the president of DynaTech, a company that makes precision electronic instruments and navigational equipment. Sally Evans, a member of DynaTech's sales force, recommended that DynaTech buy a small private plane (a SwiftAir 235) that she and other members of the sales force could use to visit customers. Pat was about to approve the purchase when there was an accident involving a SwiftAir 235.

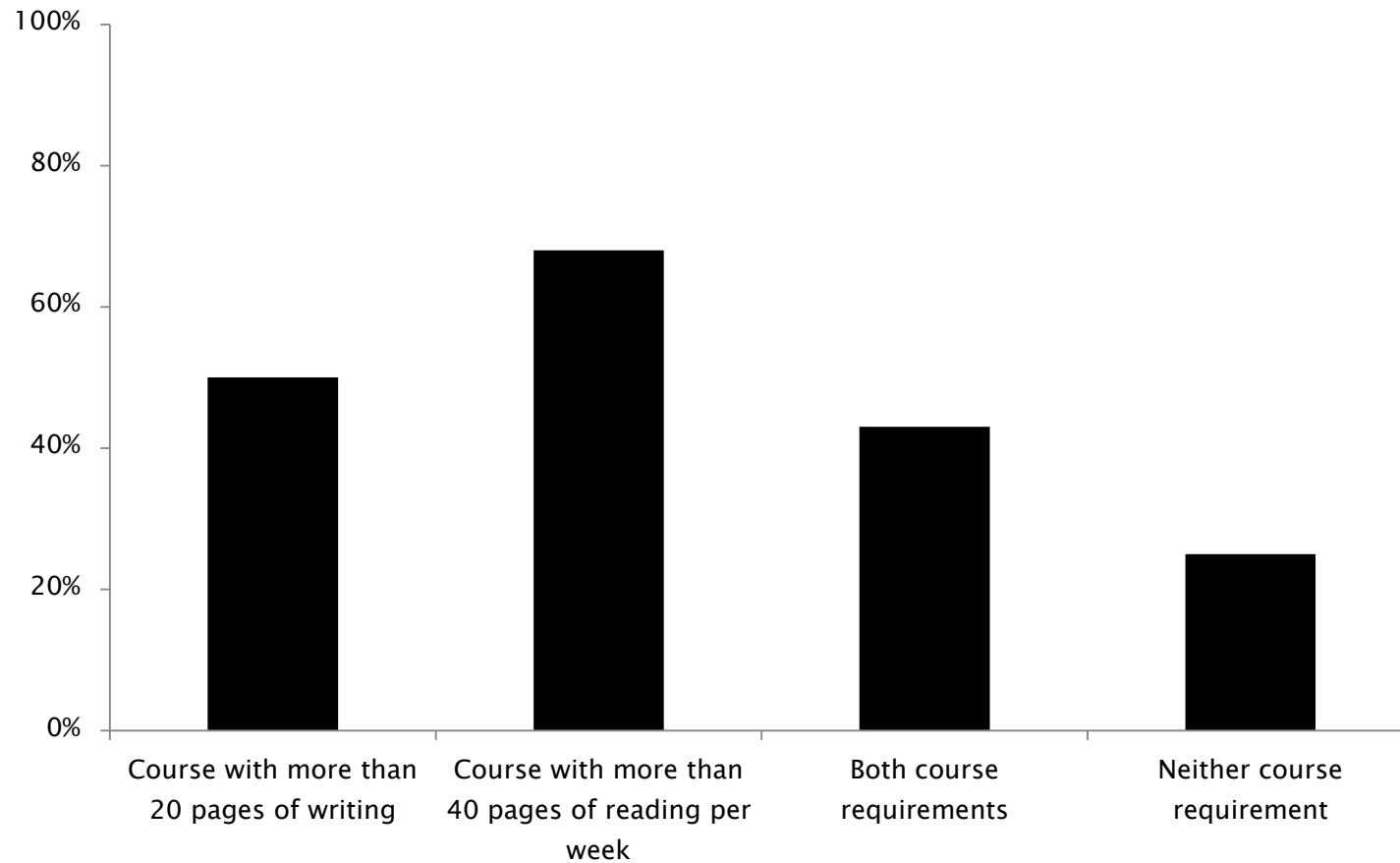


Performance Task (example, cont.)

Students are provided with a set of materials (e.g. newspaper articles, Federal Accident Report, e-mail exchanges, description and performance characteristics of AirSwift 235 and another model, etc.) and asked to prepare a memo that addresses several questions, including what data support or refute the claim that the type of wing on the SwiftAir 235 leads to more in-flight breakups, what other factors may have contributed to the accident and should be taken into account, and their overall recommendation about whether or not DynaTech should purchase the plane.

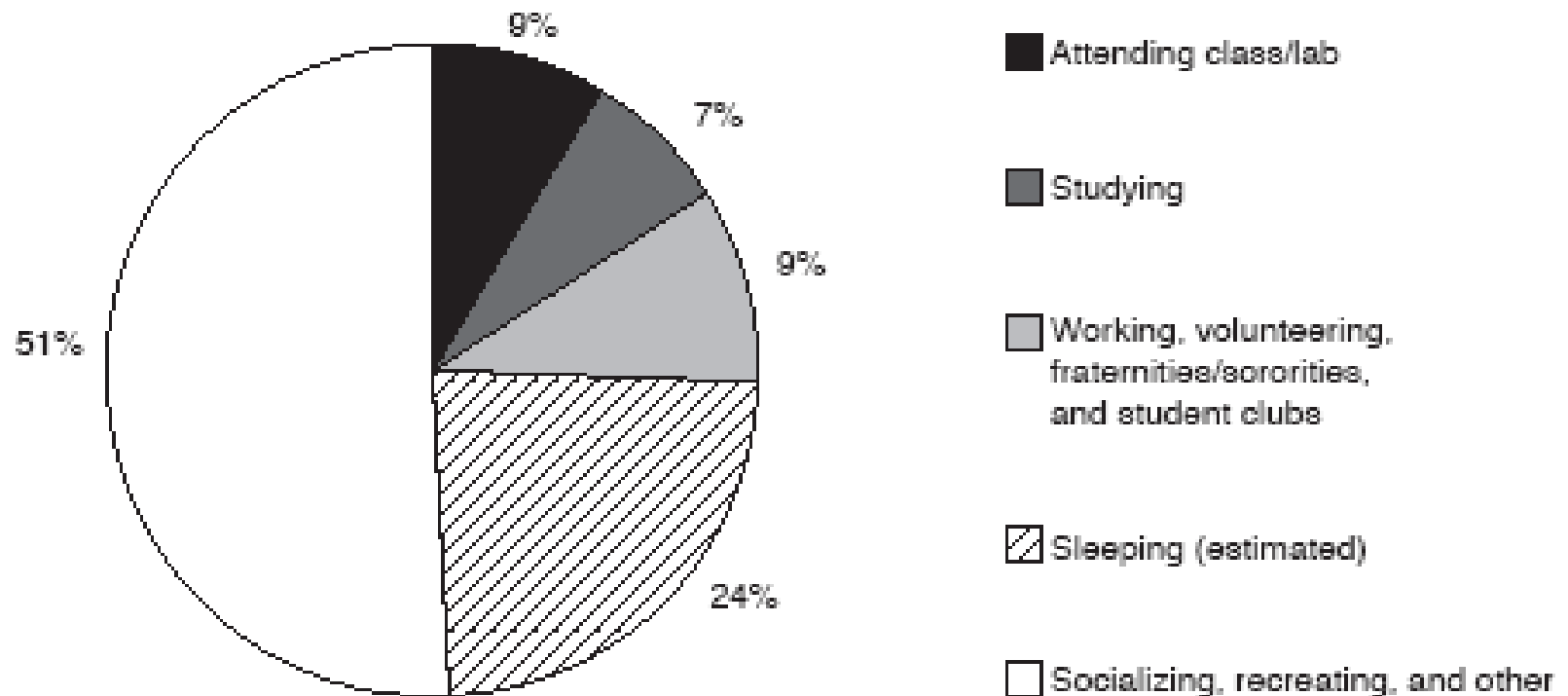
<http://www.collegiatelearningassessment.org/>

Course Requirements



Note: Based on Spring 2007 survey.

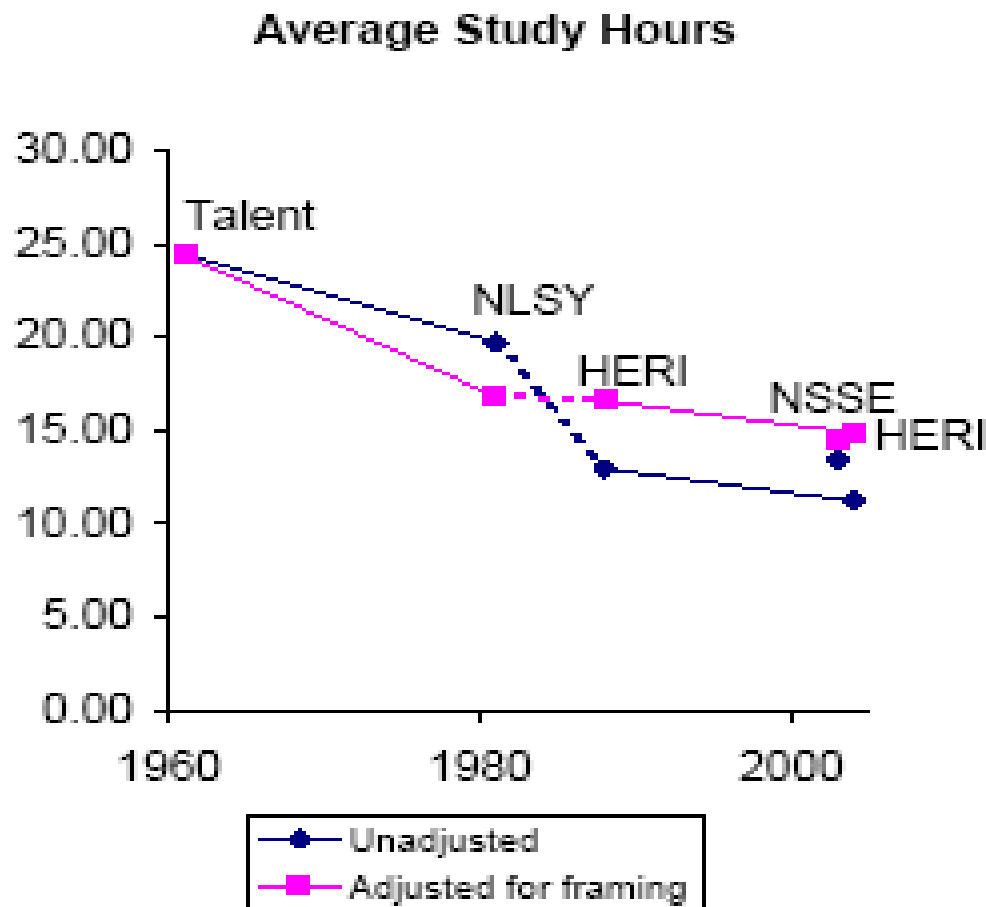
Students' Time Use



Note: Based on Spring 2007 survey.

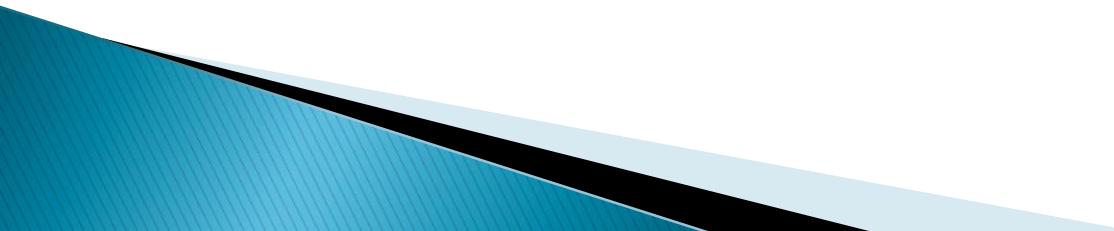
Academic Commitment Over Time

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

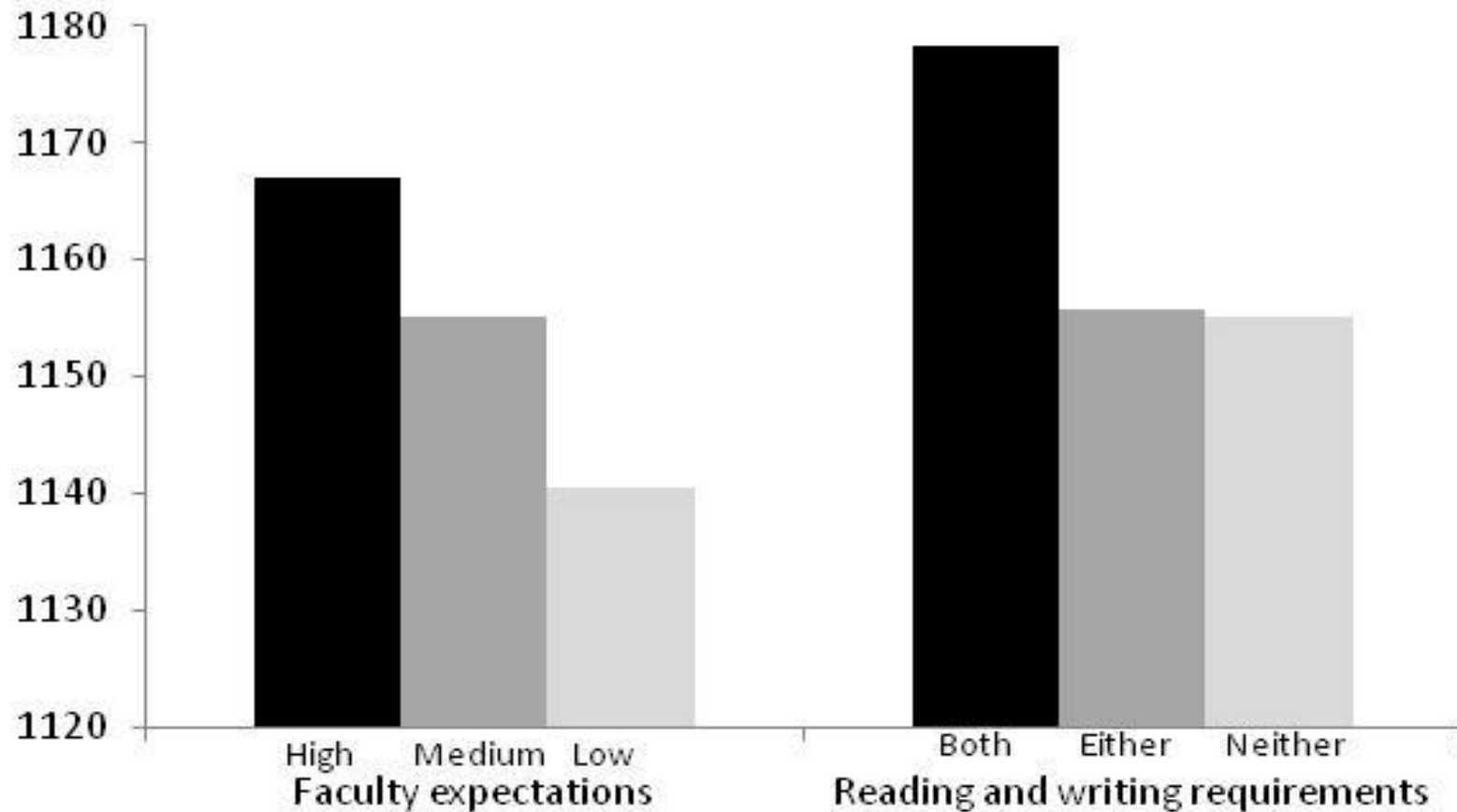


Academic time from 1925-1965 in time diaries relatively constant (39.2 to 34.1)

CLA gains (performance task)

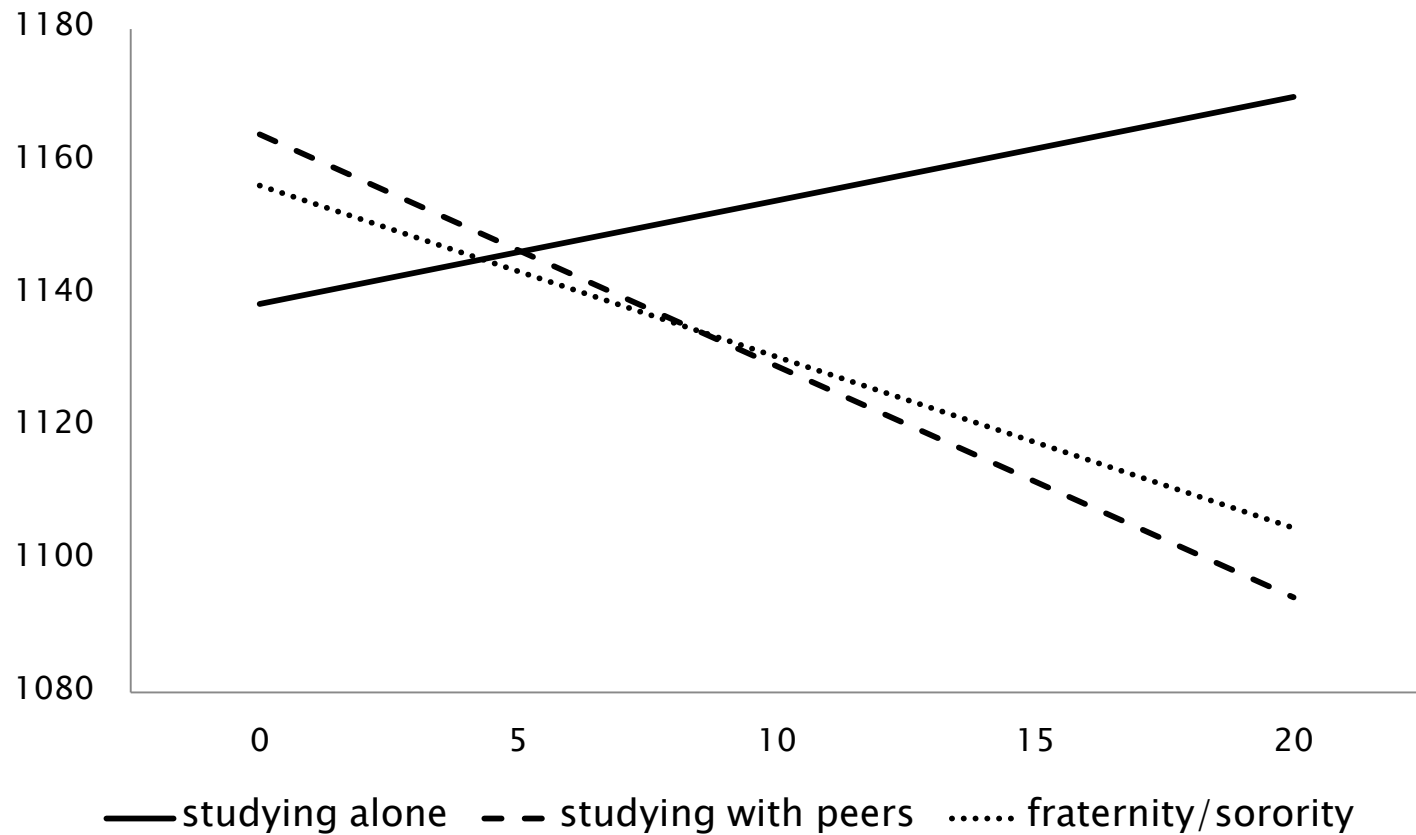
- ▶ 0.18 standard deviations, 7 percentile point gain (2005–2007); 0.47 sd, 18 percentile points (2005–2009).
 - ▶ No meaningful gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning and writing skills for large numbers of students: 45 percent of the students in the sample (2005–2007), 36 percent (2005–2009).
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CLA Performance: Faculty Expectations and Reading/Writing Requirements



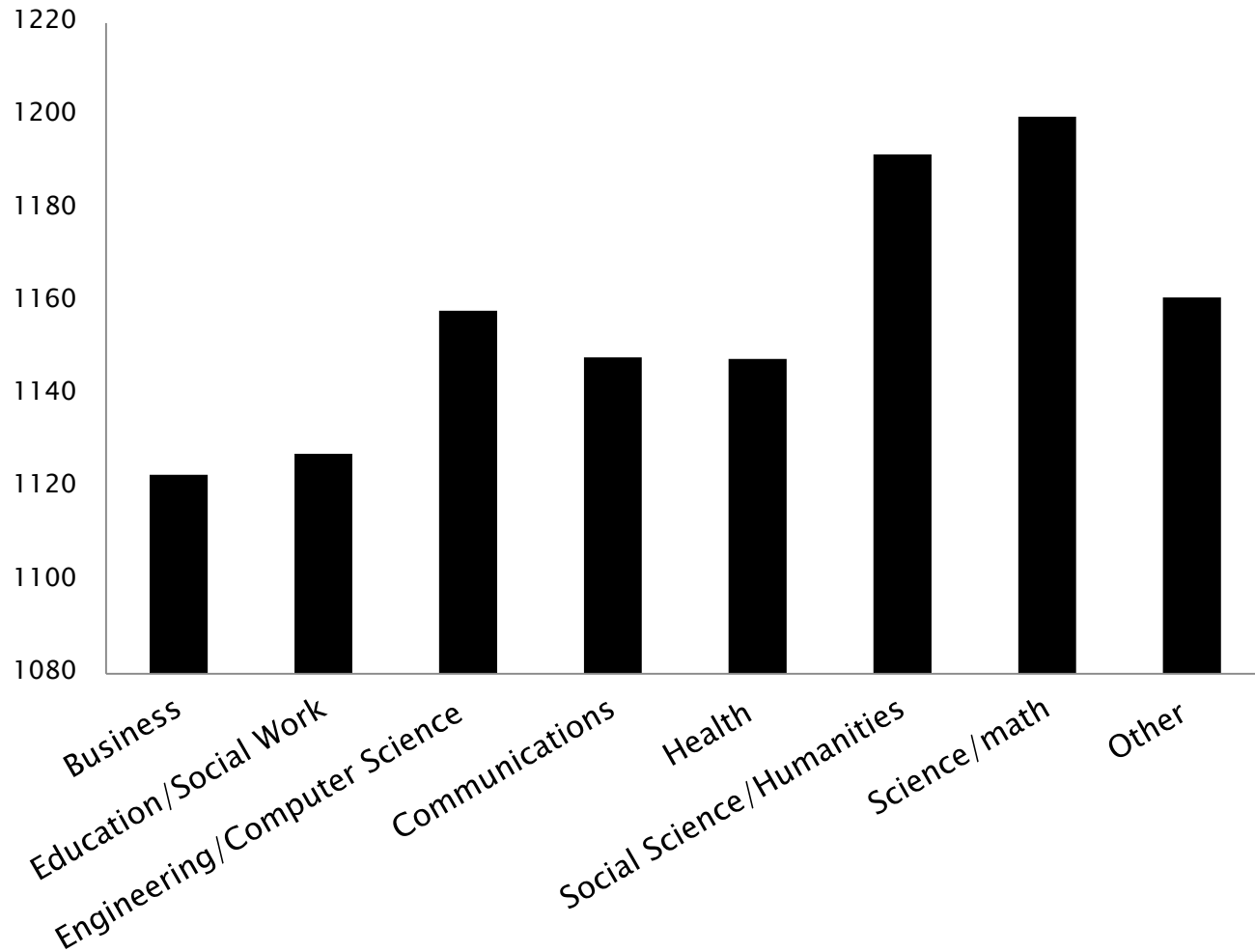
Note: Predicting 2007 CLA scores while controlling for 2005 CLA scores, student characteristics, and institutions attended.

CLA Performance: Studying and Fraternities/Sororities



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

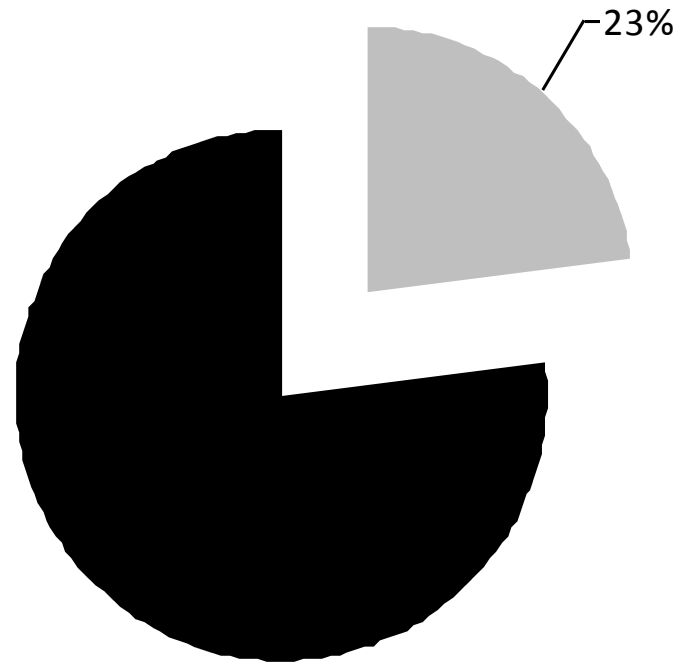
CLA Performance: College Major



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

Institutional Variation

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



Documenting Uncertain Times: Post-graduate Transitions of the *Academically Adrift* Cohort

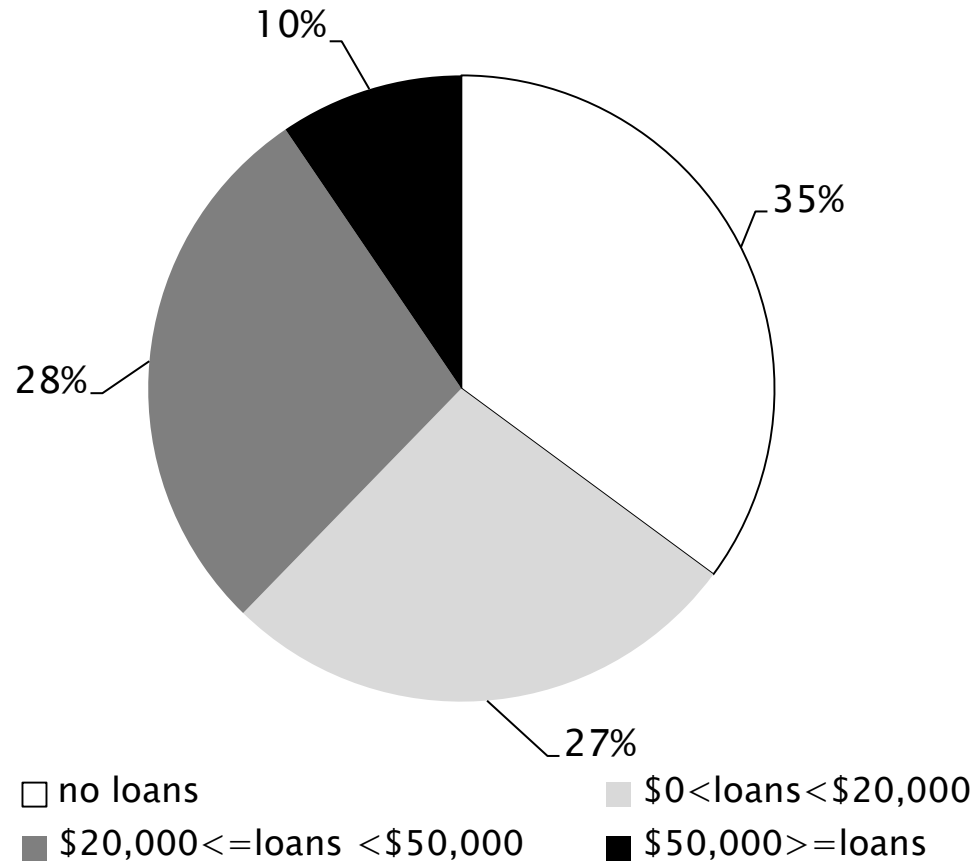
RICHARD ARUM
ESTHER CHO
JEANNIE KIM
JOSIPA ROKSA



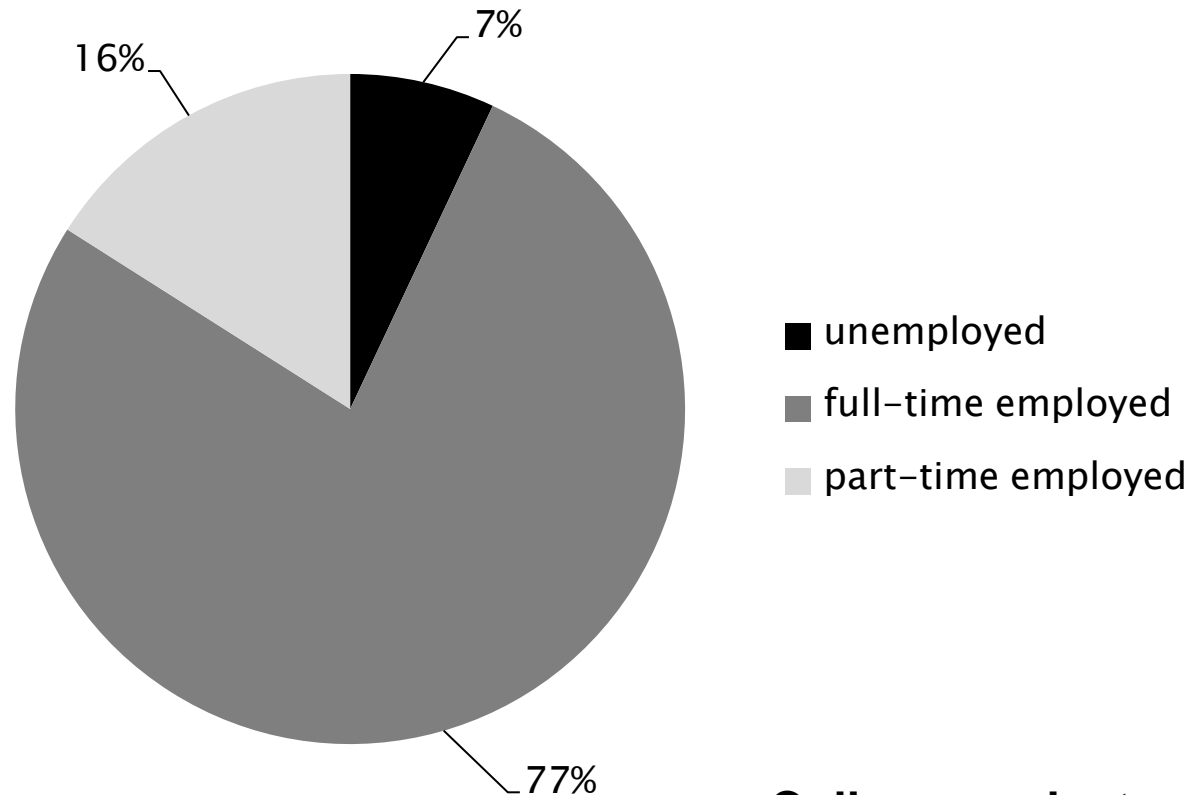
January, 2012

College Debt

**65% have loans,
owing on average \$27,200**

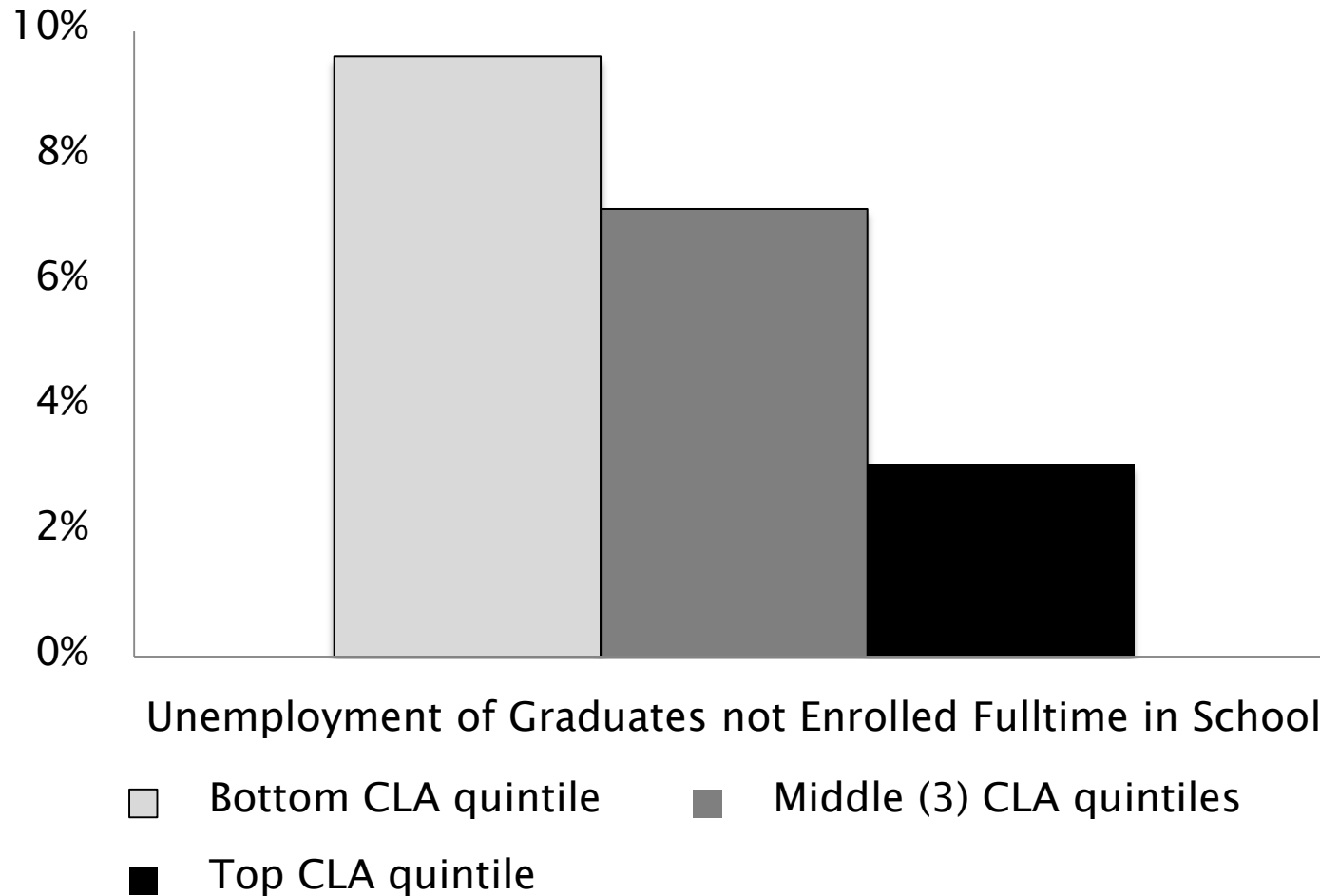


Employment Status (for respondents not enrolled in graduate school full-time, 2011)

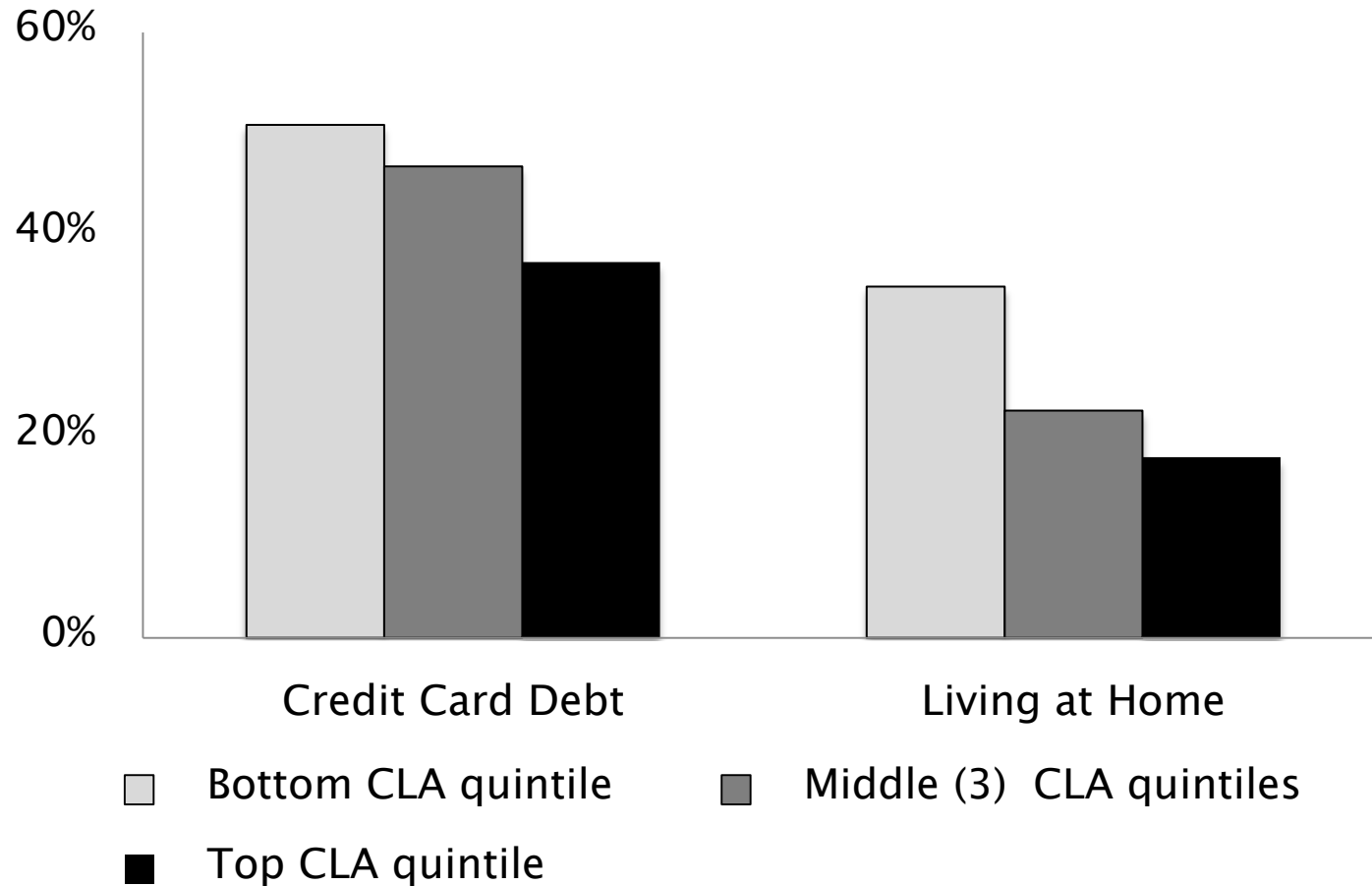


**College graduates
working full-time earn
on average \$34,900**

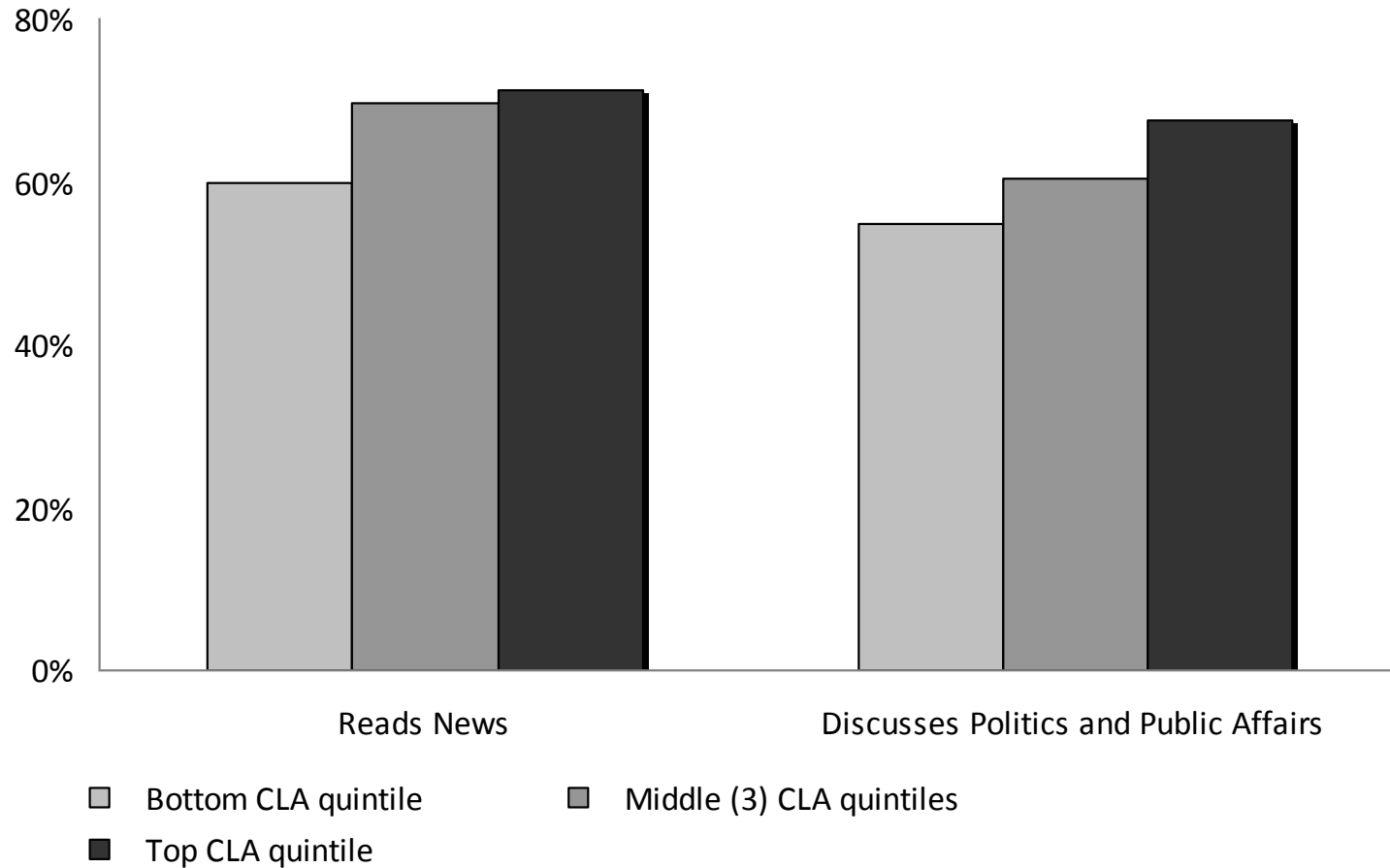
Unemployment by CLA Performance



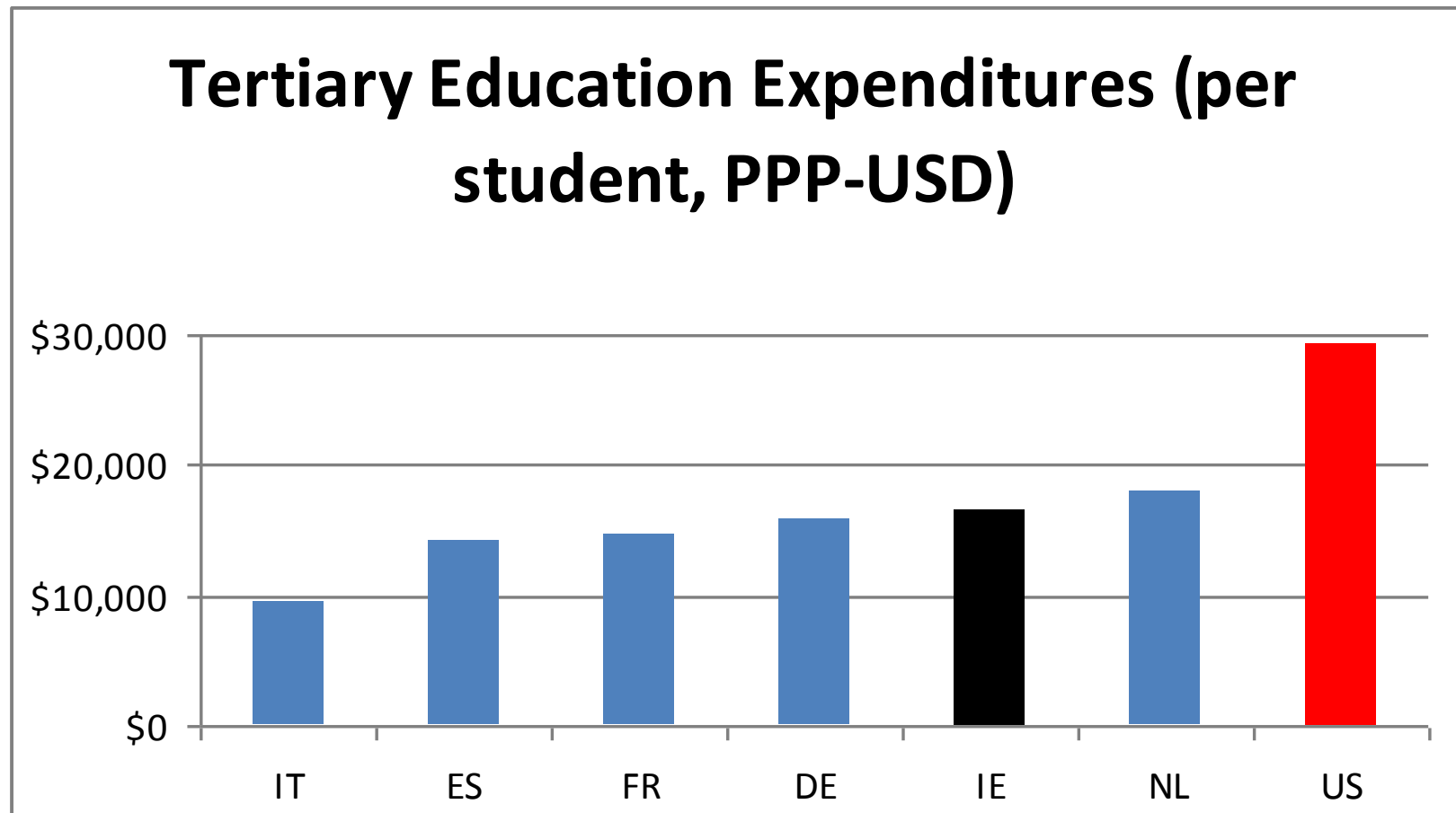
Forms of Support by CLA Performance



Civic Engagement by CLA Performance

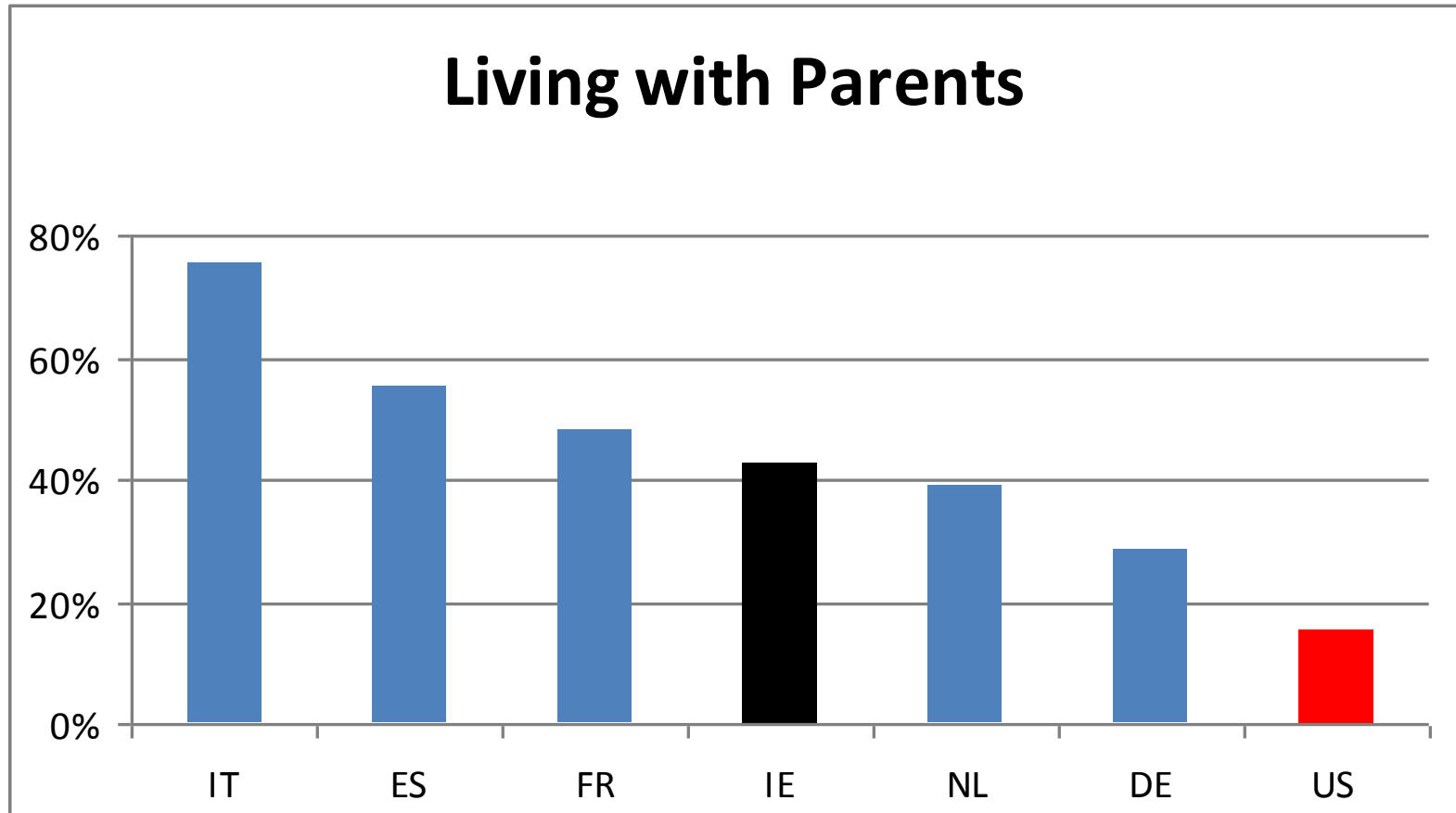


Comparative higher education costs



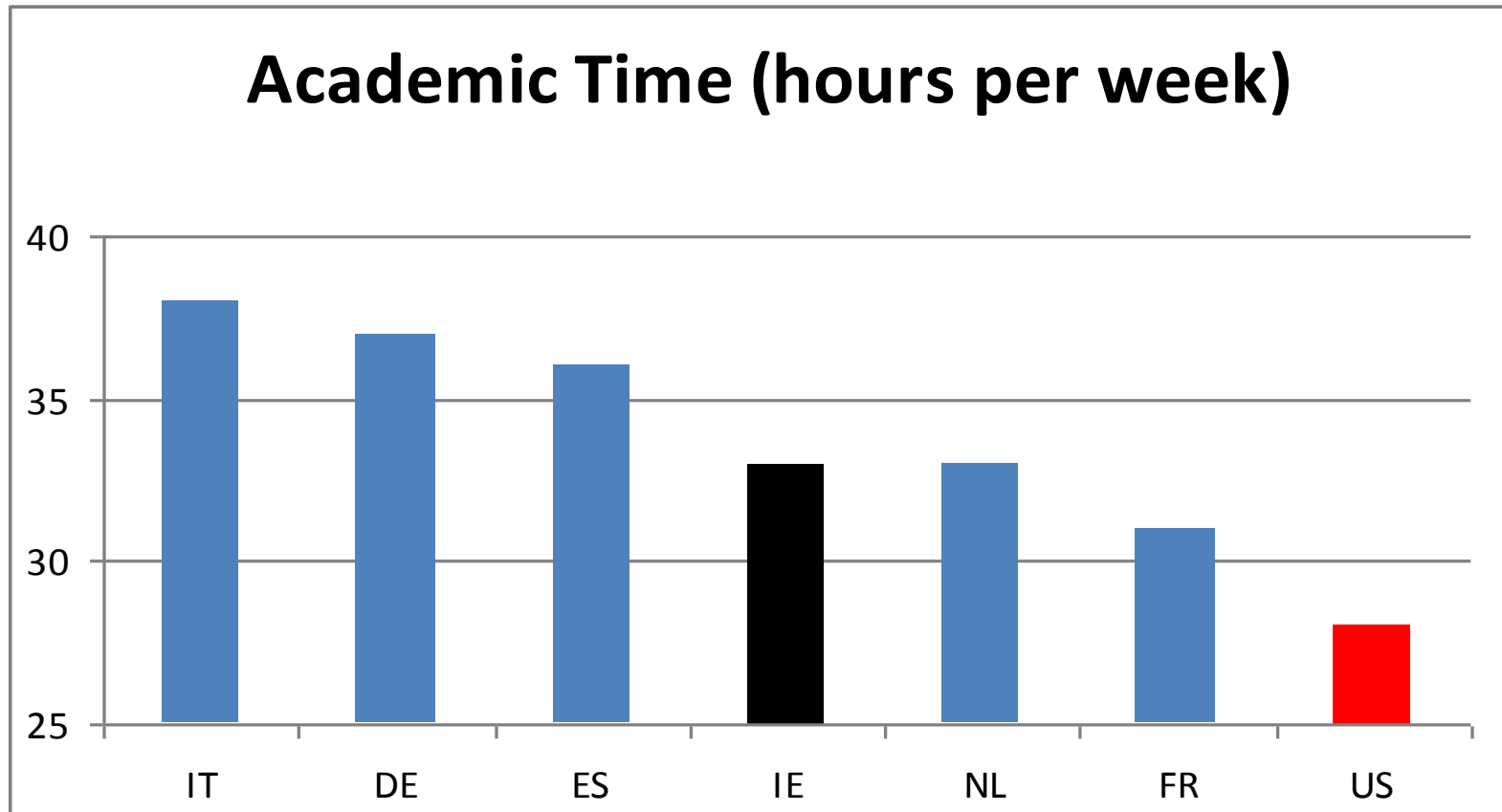
Source: OECD, *Education at a Glance 2012*

Comparative reliance on residential model




Eurostudent 2009-11 data; U.S. HERI 2010 freshmen.
SE/NO/FI/DK lower than U.S.

Comparative academic commitment



Eurostudent 2009-11 data; U.S. AA 2007 Sophomores. SK lower than U.S.

Conclusion/Recommendations

- ▶ Need for improved assessment tools
 - ▶ Accountability should operate at lower levels in the system – promote institutional cultures of assessment
 - 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; realignment of organizational incentive structures.
 - 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 and demonstrated competency
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<http://highered.ssrc.org/>

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