

THE 2007-08 POST-COLLEGIATE LIFE SURVEY

OF HOBART AND WILLIAM SMITH COLLEGES' GRADUATES:

Assessments of HWS Educational Experience

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The Post-Collegiate Life Survey is an ongoing research project conducted by Professor Perkins at Hobart and William Smith Colleges (HWS) that assesses the social and vocational life course experiences of our graduates through a comprehensive survey (see <http://people.hws.edu/perkins/PCLrep.htm>). The study was initiated in 1987 and at that time included the class of 1979, 1982, and 1985. Since then the survey has been conducted every three to four years adding newer graduating classes to the cohorts under study as the research has progressed. The survey process of contacting potential respondents who often change addresses (especially the younger cohorts) and following up on non-responders has taken about 12 months in each wave of the survey administration.

In the Fall of 2007 all members of the Hobart and William Smith graduating classes of 1979, 1982, 1985, 1989, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2005 and 2006 residing in the United States were sent the latest version of the Post-Collegiate Life Survey. By December 2008 a total of 1,897 HWS graduates in these classes had responded representing a 53% response rate from the targeted population. This large response continues a long tradition of very high participation among our graduates, a response rate that is two to four times higher than commonly experienced in other detailed surveys of college alums. The respondents are also quite representative of HWS graduates overall in terms of such characteristics as gender, religion, social backgrounds, academic majors, and graduating class years.

This survey regularly explores post-collegiate experiences and attitudes on a variety of topics including graduate school training, occupational activities, family and parenting experiences, health and well-being, personal values, and social relationships. For the purpose of the 2004 Middle States review the 2003 Post-Collegiate Life Survey was expanded by adding a special set of questions asking graduates to reflect on their undergraduate experience assessing to what degree it may have enhanced their intellectual capacities and improved their professional and personal lives. In particular, most of these questions focused on fulfillment of the primary goals set out as the academic mission of HWS. These questions were repeated and a few new questions were added in the 2007-08 survey. This report provides the latest survey results concentrating on findings most relevant to the educational goals of this institution.

The following findings for the 1979 through 2006 cohorts are presented as an itemized list with supporting figures. Percentages reported in brackets are the comparable percentages found in the previous 2003 survey of cohorts ranging from 1979 to 2001. In some instances supplementary figures are provided comparing the 2003 survey results with the 2007-08 findings. This comparison is provided as a check on the extent to which any pattern of results across cohorts on subjective assessments measures might be influenced by the passage of time. These results indicate very little change occurs and thus the comparison across cohorts is likely to reflect real differences between graduating classes.

1. 97% [96%] of HWS graduates say their undergraduate education was a valuable experience enabling them to read, write, and think more clearly in their daily lives. Almost-two thirds (65%) [62%] believe it was a “critically important contribution” or the “most important experience” they have had enabling these skills. A sharp rise to over 80% expressing this level of praise occurs among 2005 and 2006 graduates (see Figures 1 and 1A).

Figure 1

Percent of HWS Graduates Saying Their Undergraduate Experience Was a “Critically Important Contribution” or the “Most Important Experience” They Have Had in Enabling Them to Read, Write, and Think More Clearly

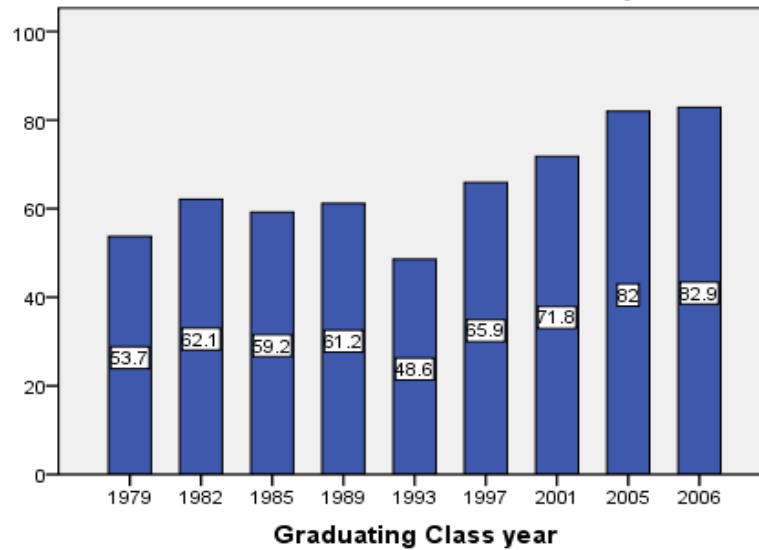
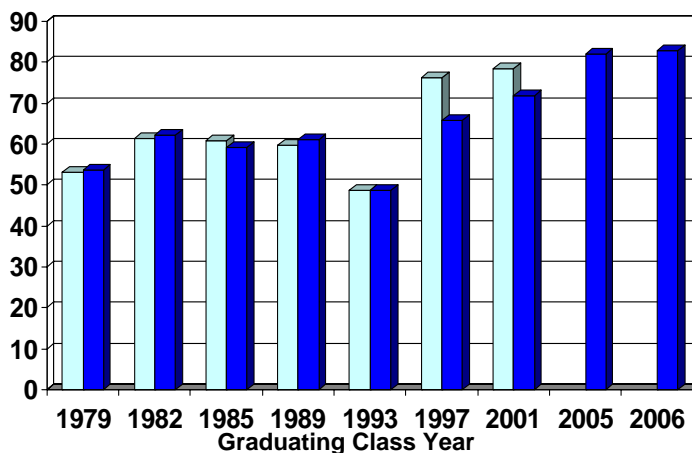


Figure 1 A

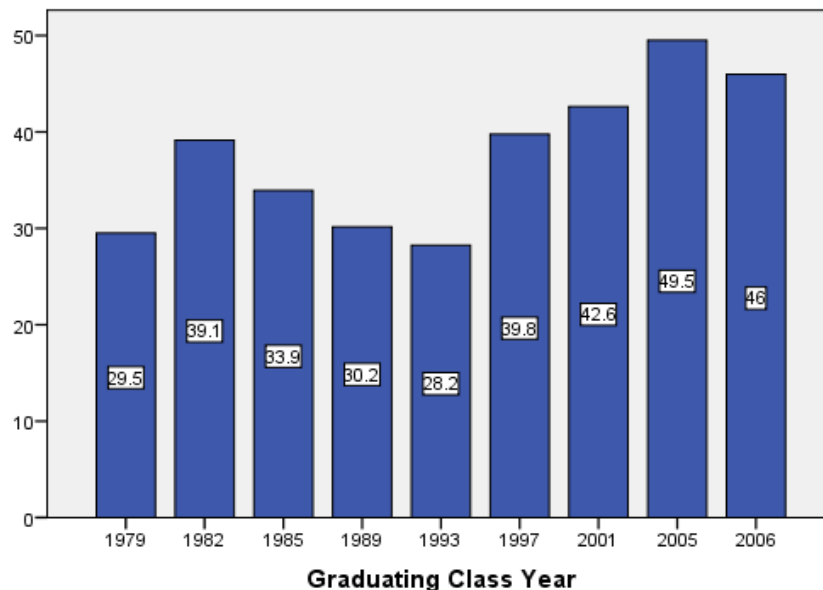
Percent of HWS Graduates Saying Their Undergraduate Experience Was a “Critically Important Contribution” or the “Most Important Experience” They Have Had in Enabling Them to Read, Write, and Think More Clearly



2. 64% [62%] of graduates reported that, as a result of their HWS education, their ability to reason quantitatively was “notably” or “greatly” improved with another 26% [28%] saying their ability was slightly improved while 10% [10%] thought their ability was “basically unchanged.” There was no appreciable trend in the mostly small differences appearing across cohorts.
3. 92% [89%] of graduates overall agree that the interdisciplinary studies offered at HWS were a valuable experience in their intellectual development—over 90% of each cohort except the Class of 1993 where only 81% held this view.
4. About half (48%) [49%] of the graduates (58% of women but only 35% of men) thought that the coordinate system dividing HWS into men’s and women’s colleges was useful in helping them gain a deeper understanding of gender differences (higher levels of support were noted in the 1989 and 1993 cohorts compared to earlier and later cohorts).
5. 90% [90%] of graduates “mostly” or “strongly” agree that their HWS education prepared them well for subsequent educational and vocational pursuits. The percent who strongly agree has increased in recent cohorts, however (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

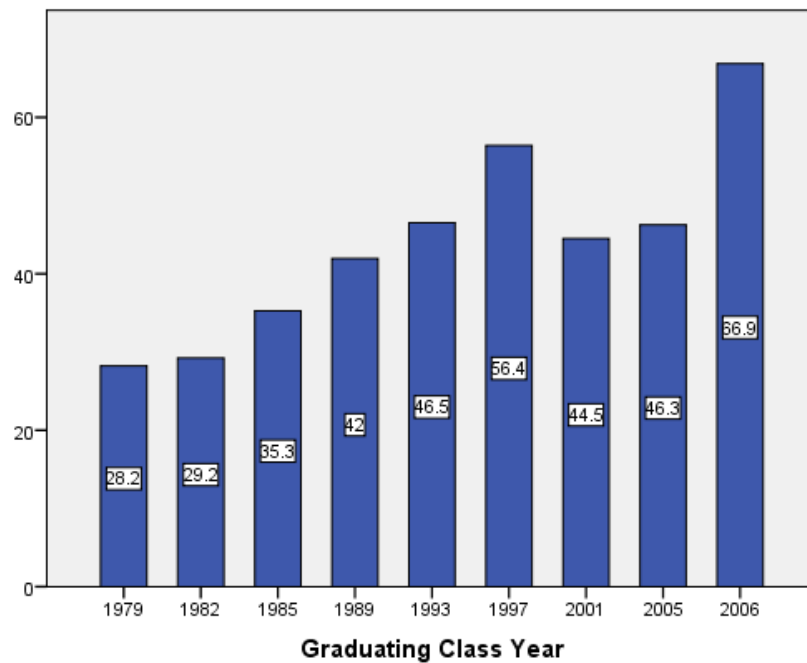
Percent of HWS Graduates That “Strongly Agree” (Compared to “Mostly Agree,” “Mostly Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree”) That Their HWS Education Prepared Them Well for Subsequent Educational and Vocational Pursuits



6. Participation in an HWS term abroad program was higher among respondents in more recent cohorts. It rose from 28% in the 1979 cohort to 56% in the 1997 cohort and then dropped off somewhat to 45% in 2001 after the conversion to semesters (required a 15 week program in contrast to the previous 10 week programs under the old trimester system) and then jumped dramatically to 67% in 2006 (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Percent of HWS Graduates Participating in an HWS Term Abroad Program



7. 97% [96%] of HWS graduates who studied on an HWS Off-Campus Program say their experience was valuable in developing a perspective on global interdependence and cross-cultural diversity. Over two-thirds (71%) believe it was a “critically important contribution” or the “most important experience” they have had in developing this perspective with a sharp rise to over 80% expressing this level of praise in the three most recent cohorts (see Figures 4 and 4A).

Figure 4

Percent of HWS Graduates Saying Their HWS Off-Campus Term Was a “Critically Important Contribution” or the “Most Important Experience” They Have Had in Developing A Perspective On Global Interdependence and Cross-Cultural Diversity

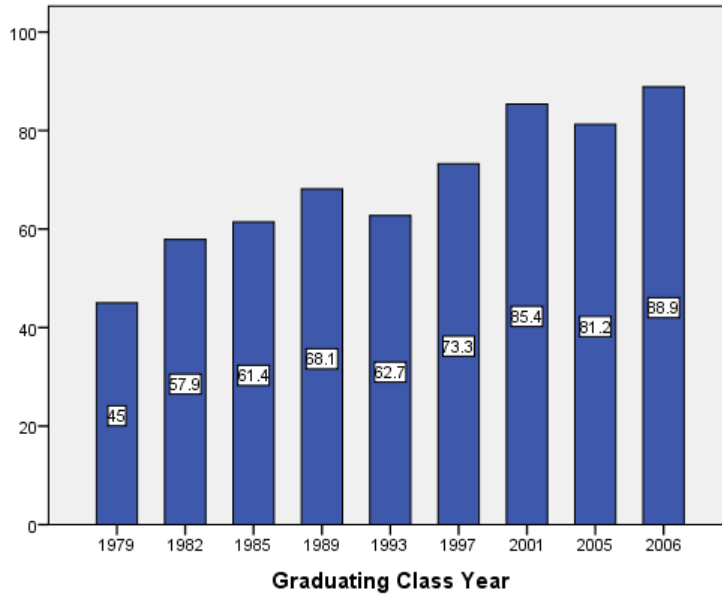
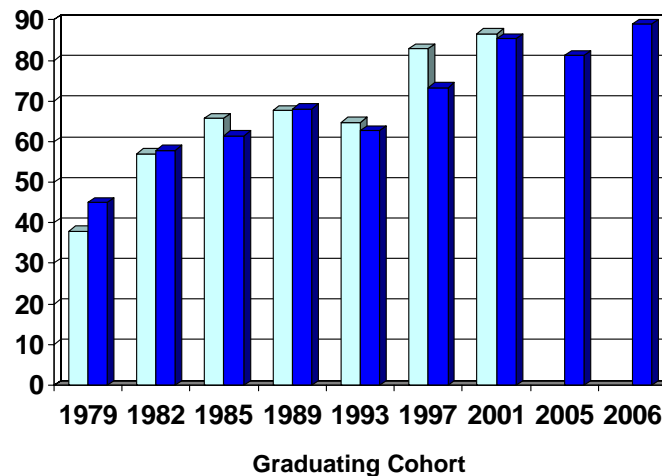


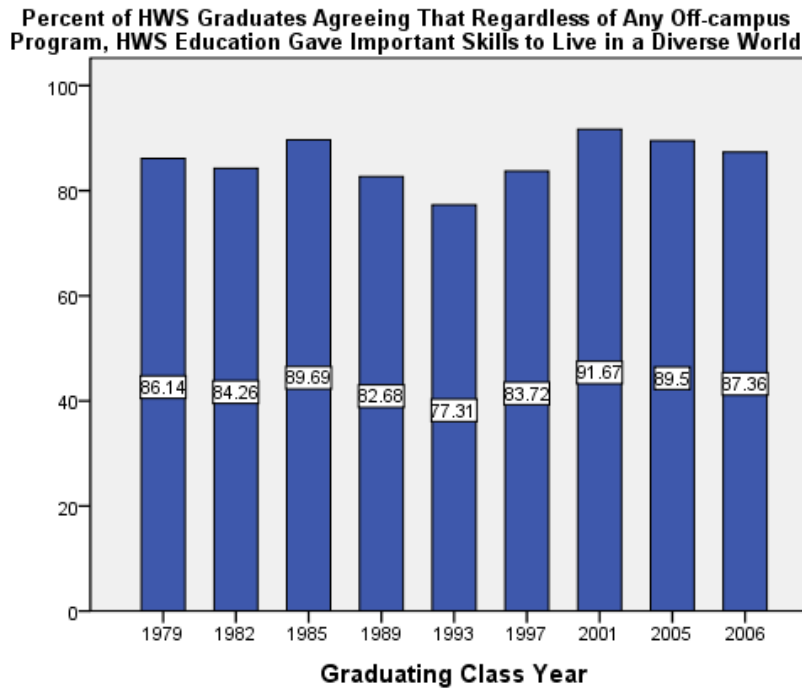
Figure 4A

Percent of HWS Graduates Saying Their HWS Off-Campus Term Was a “Critically Important Contribution” or the “Most Important Experience” They Have Had in Developing A Perspective On Global Interdependence and Cross-Cultural Diversity



8. 86% [85%] of graduates agree with the statement that, “regardless of any off-campus program, the rest of my HWS education gave me important skills (practical and otherwise) to live in a diverse world.” There is no clear trend in the modest variation occurring across cohorts (see Figure 5).

Figure 5



9. The percentages of graduates saying that their HWS education made the following contributions to their lives have all risen sharply among the more recent cohorts:
- “cultivated in me an understanding of the public good and public needs” (see Figures 6 and 6A);
 - “helped develop a commitment to public service” (see Figures 7 and 7A);
 - helped them gain an understanding of differences and inequalities of gender, race and class that was helpful in post-collegiate life (see Figures 8 and 8A);
 - helped them reflect ethically on their actions in post-collegiate life (see Figures 9 and 9A).

Figure 6

Percent of HWS Graduates Agreeing That Their Undergraduate Experience Cultivated in Them an Understanding of the Public Good and Public Needs

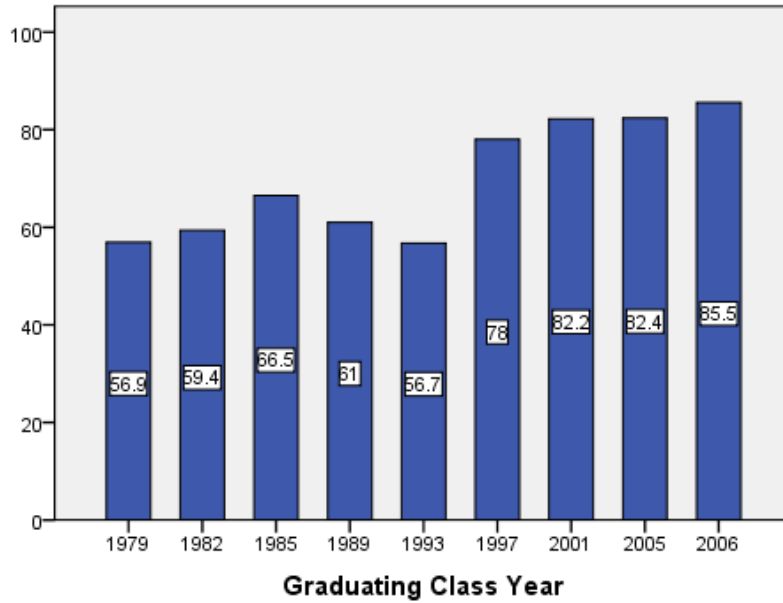
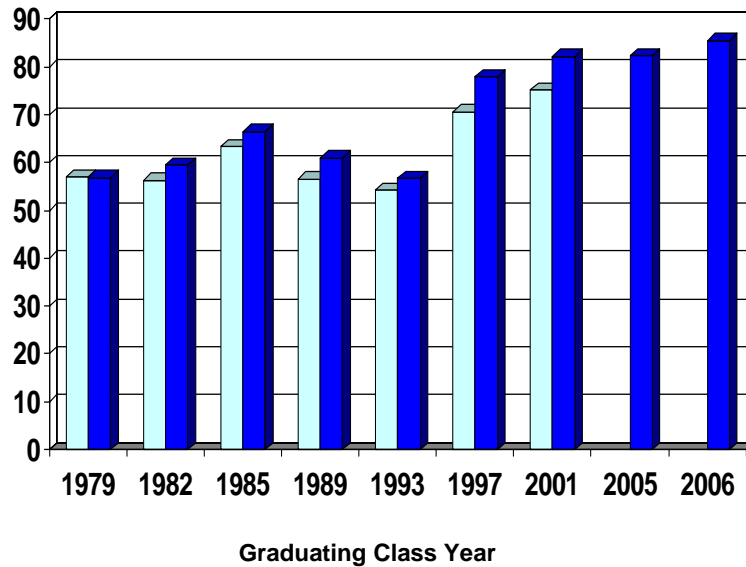


Figure 6A

Percent of HWS Graduates Agreeing That Their Undergraduate Experience Cultivated in Them an Understanding of the Public Good and Public Needs



2003 Survey = Light Bars 2007-08 Survey = Dark Bars

Figure 7

Percent of HWS Graduates Agreeing That Their Undergraduate Experience Helped Develop a Commitment to Public Service

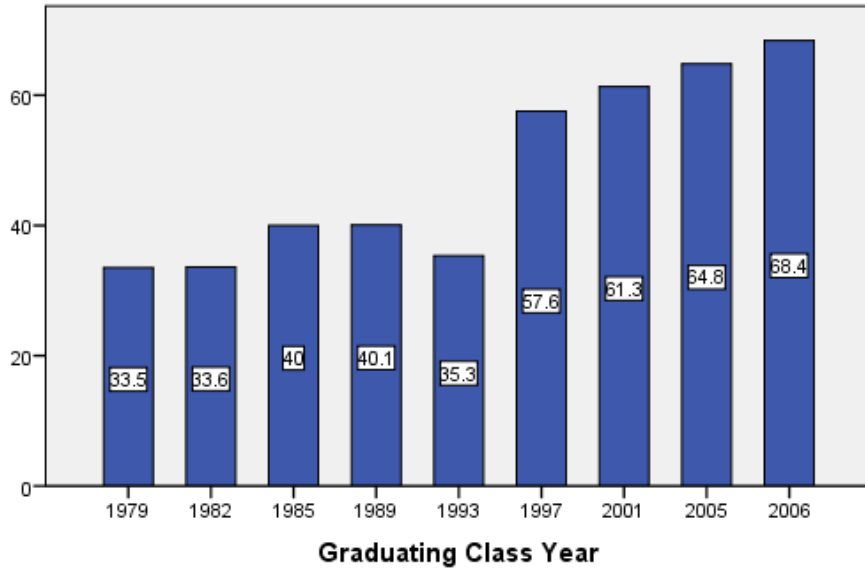
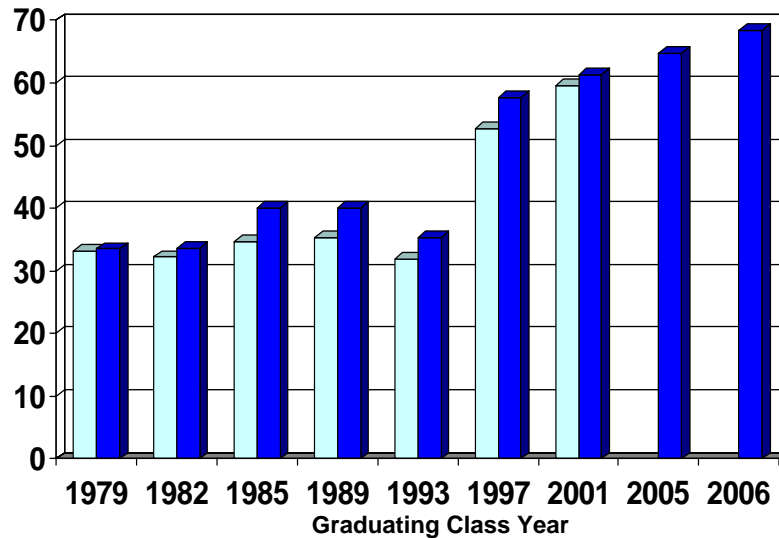


Figure 7A

Percent of HWS Graduates Agreeing That Their Undergraduate Experience Helped Develop a Commitment to Public Service



2003 Survey = Light Bars 2007-08 Survey = Dark Bars

Figure 8

Percent of HWS Graduates Agreeing That Their Undergraduate Experience Helped Them Gain an Understanding of Differences and Inequalities of Gender, Race, and Class That Was Helpful in Post-Collegiate Life

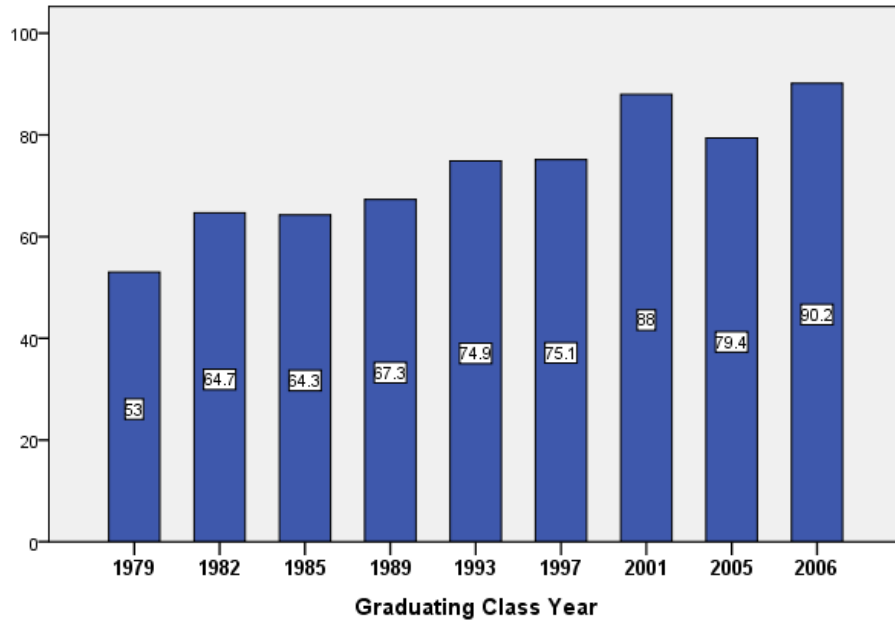


Figure 8A

Percent of HWS Graduates Agreeing That Their Undergraduate Experience Helped Them Gain an Understanding of Differences and Inequalities of Gender, Race, and Class That Was Helpful in Post-Collegiate Life

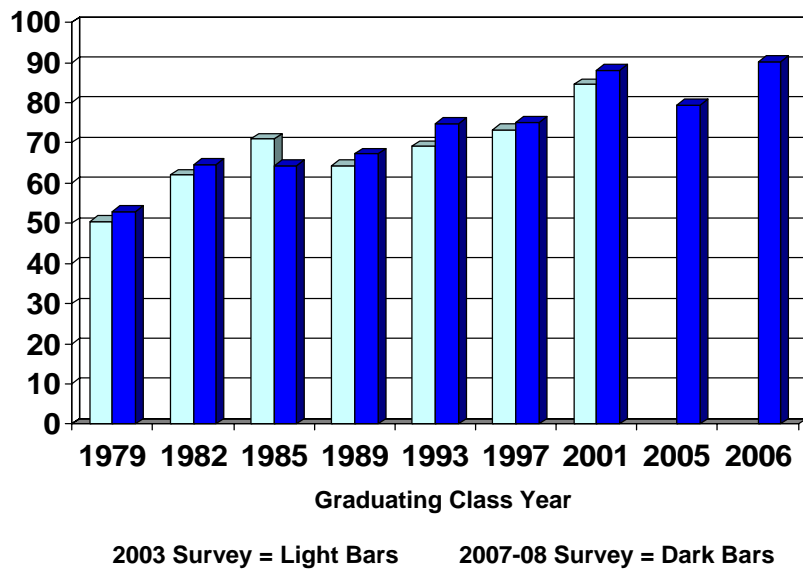


Figure 9

Percent of HWS Graduates Agreeing That Their Undergraduate Experience Helped Them Reflect Ethically on Their Actions in Post-Collegiate Life

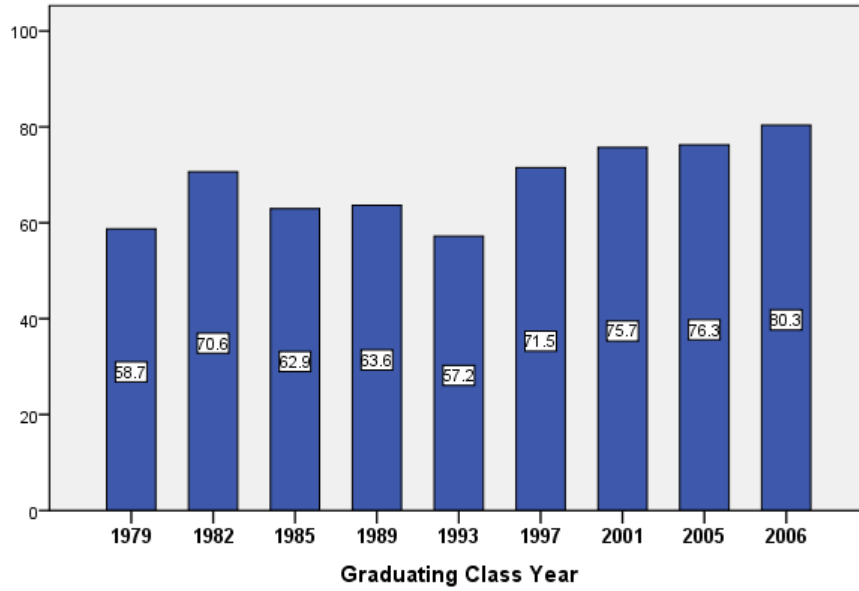
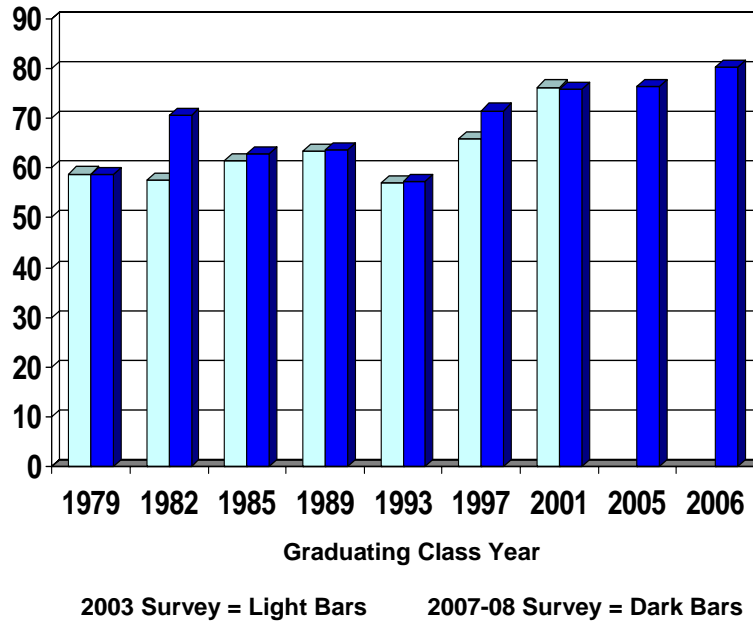


Figure 9A

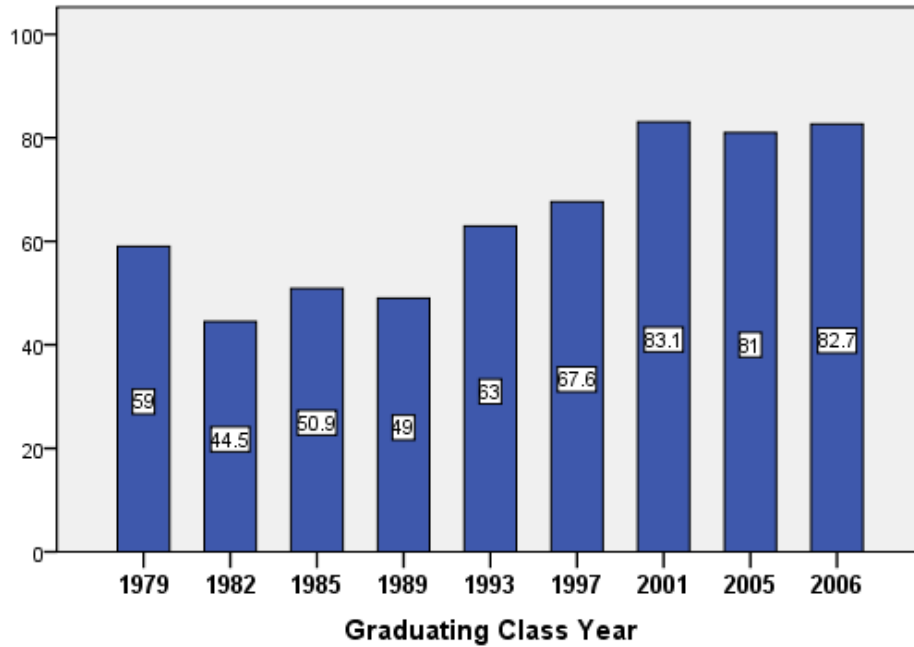
Percent of HWS Graduates Agreeing That Their Undergraduate Experience Helped Them Reflect Ethically on Their Actions in Post-Collegiate Life



10. In the last decade the percent of graduates reporting having taken courses in scientific inquiry at HWS has risen substantially from a low of 45% in the 1982 cohort to over 80% in the post 2000 cohorts (see Figure 10).

Figure 10

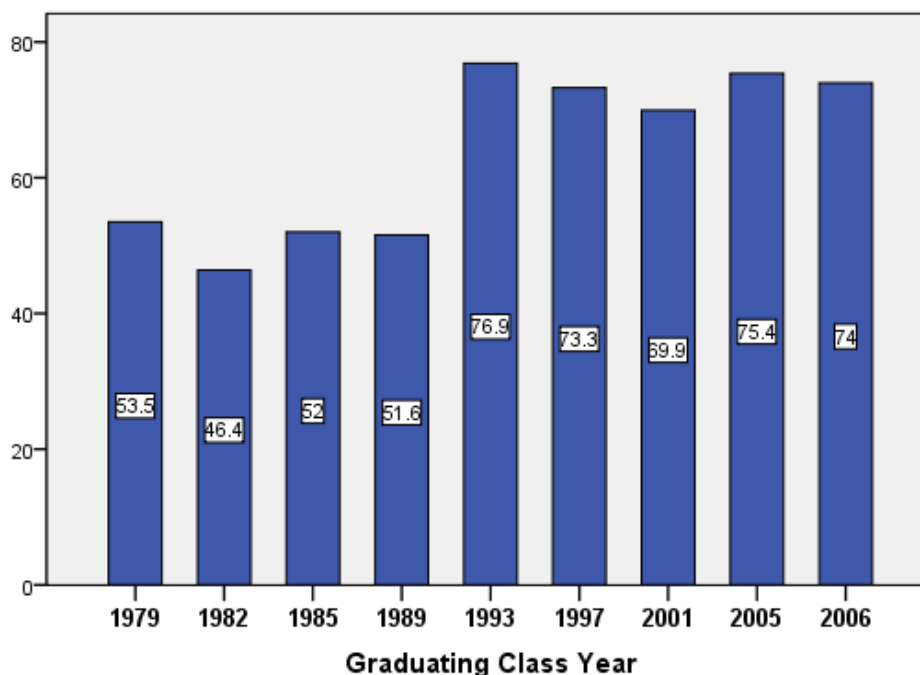
Percent of HWS Graduates That Report Having Taken Courses at HWS Involving Scientific Inquiry



11. About half of all graduates from 1979 through 1989 report having taken courses in the fine and performing arts while at HWS. Beginning with the 1993 cohort the percentage jumped to about three-quarters of the class, a finding that has been essentially the same in all subsequent cohorts that were surveyed (see Figure 11).

Figure 11

Percent of HWS Graduates That Report Having Taken Courses at HWS in the Fine and Performing Arts



12. Between 35% and 52% of each cohort had participated in intercollegiate athletics (no clear trend over time). Among participants, between 87% and 95% of student athletes in each cohort indicated that, at least to some extent, their athletic involvement enhanced their learning experience at HWS. Between 40% and 51% of athletic participants in each cohort said it “definitely” (as opposed to “for the most part,” “to some extent” or “not at all”) enhanced their learning experience.

13. The pattern of residing on campus has changed significantly over time. The late 1980's was the time of lowest on-campus residence. The most recent cohorts reflect the highest levels of campus residency as new housing for seniors and new residence halls for other students were built (see Figure 10). From 46% to 64% of each cohort believed their campus residency was "very important" or "one of the most important aspects" of their learning experience (see Figure 11).

Figure 12

Percent of HWS Graduates Residing on Campus for at Least Three Years (dark bar) and for All Four Years (light bar)

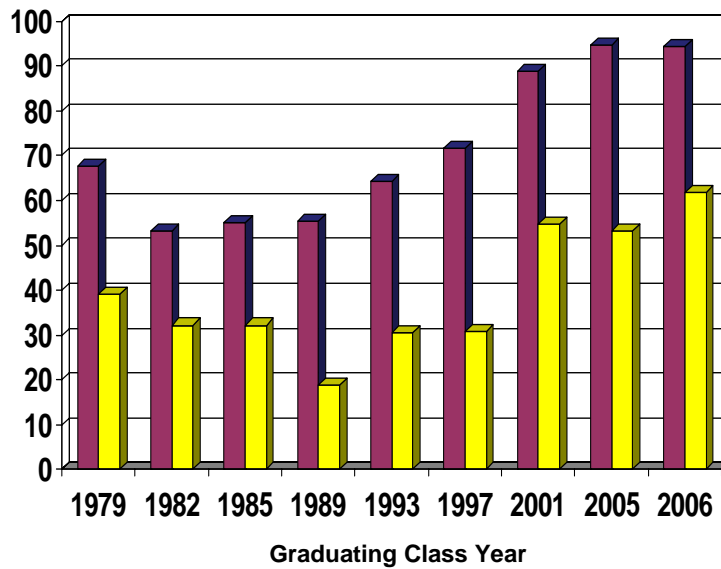
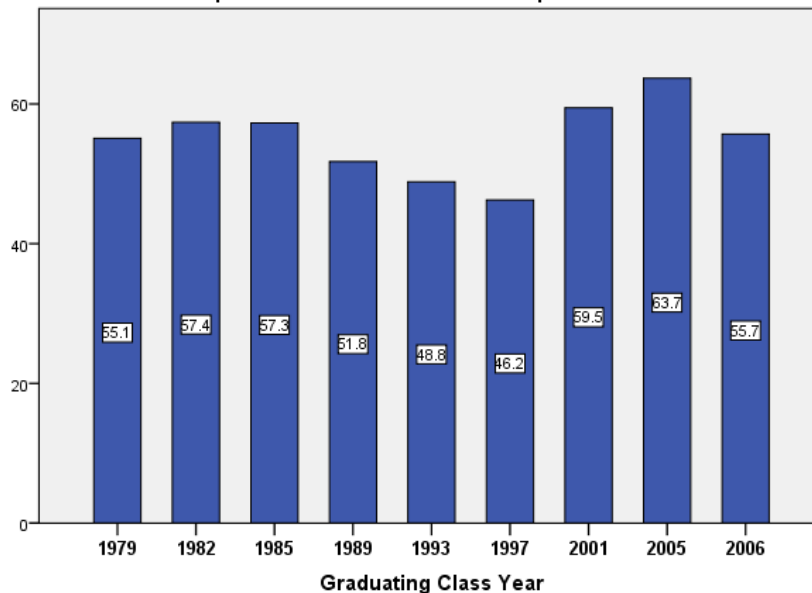


Figure 13

Percent of HWS Graduates That Reported Their Campus Residence Was "Very Important" or "One of the Most Important Aspects" of Their Educational Experience and Personal Development



Appendix: Selected Survey Items

The items that follow here are extracted from the

POST-COLLEGIATE LIFE SURVEY

Hobart and William Smith Colleges

Alumni/Alumnae Classes of 1979, 1982, 1985, 1989, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2005 and 2006

11. Have you completed or are you currently involved in any graduate or professional programs? (Specify all degrees completed and all programs in which you are currently enrolled.)

	<i>M.A.</i>	<i>M.S.</i>	<i>M.B.A.</i>	<i>M.S.W.</i>	<i>M.S.E.</i>	<i>M.S.N.</i>	<i>M.Div.</i>	<i>J.D./L.L.B.</i>	<i>M.D.</i>	<i>D.D.S.</i>	<i>D.V.M.</i>	<i>D.O.</i>	<i>Ph.D.</i>	<i>Ed.D.</i>	<i>Sci.D.</i>	<i>D.B.A.</i>	<i>Other</i> <i>(specify)</i>	
Completed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
Currently Enrolled	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____

The following items concern your assessment of your HWS education from the perspective of post-collegiate life.

13. Thinking back to your undergraduate education at HWS, in general how important was it compared to other prior and subsequent educational experiences in enabling you to read, write and think more clearly in your daily life?

- The most important experience I've had.
- A critically important contribution to developing my abilities.
- A valuable experience enhancing my abilities to some extent.
- Contributed little to developing these abilities.

14. As an undergraduate did you study for one or more terms in an HWS off-campus program? Yes No

If yes, how important was that experience for you in developing a perspective on global interdependence and cross-cultural diversity.

- The most important experience I've had.
- A critically important contribution to developing this perspective.
- A valuable experience enhancing my perspective to some extent.
- Contributed little to developing my perspective.

Please indicate your personal level of agreement with each of the following statements:

Strongly agree
Mostly agree
Mostly disagree
Strongly disagree

- | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 15. Regardless of any off-campus study, the rest of my HWS education gave me important skills (practical and otherwise) to live in a diverse world. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 16. The interdisciplinary studies offered at HWS were a valuable experience in my intellectual development. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 17. My HWS education cultivated in me an understanding of the public good and public needs. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 18. My HWS experience helped develop a commitment to public service. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 19. I gained an understanding of differences and inequalities of gender, race and class through my HWS educational experience that has been helpful to me in post-collegiate life. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 20. The coordinate system dividing HWS into men's and women's colleges, in particular, was useful in helping me gain a deeper understanding of gender differences. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 21. My HWS education has been important in helping me reflect ethically on my actions in post-collegiate life. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 22. Overall, my HWS education has prepared me well for my subsequent educational and vocational pursuits. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

23. As a result of my HWS education, my ability to reason quantitatively was:

- Greatly improved Notably improved Slightly improved Basically unchanged

24. Did you take courses at HWS involving scientific inquiry? Yes No

If yes, have these experiences been of value to you in your subsequent professional or leisure interests?

- Definitely For the most part To some extent Not at all

25. Did you take any courses in the fine or performing arts? Yes No

If yes, have these experiences been of value to you in your subsequent professional or leisure interests?

- Definitely For the most part To some extent Not at all

26. Were you involved in intercollegiate athletics at HWS? Yes No

If yes, did this involvement enhance your learning experience at the Colleges?

- Definitely For the most part To some extent Not at all

