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Who Cares? How Students View Faculty and Other Adults in US Higher Education

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Discussion Paper No. 67

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Who Cares?

How Students View Faculty and Other Adults in US Higher Education

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Abstract

Using Mellon Foundation's College and Beyond survey of alumni from 34 colleges and universities spanning 40 years, Clotfelter found that those who reported that someone "... besides students [took] a special interest in you or your work" also reported greater general satisfaction with their college and, concretely, made larger alumni gifts. This paper uses those same data to see *who* it was who is reported to have cared – faculty, coaches, deans,... – how that differed by institutional type – public research universities, coed or women's liberal arts colleges, Ivy universities... – and how it changed over time – for entering cohorts of 1951, 1976, and 1989. Some of the results may be predictable – for instance, that faculty are the main 'care givers' in all times and places – while others are unexpected – that there's no indication of a decline in the faculty role over time, for instance, or that athletes, while they find coaches more caring than do non-athletes, still report that faculty are more caring than coaches.

Introduction

A recent poll in the Chronicle of Higher Education showed that Americans continue to have a high opinion of higher education in the United States (Selingo, 2003). Americans' confidence in private four-year colleges and universities is exceeded only by their confidence in the US military. Other kinds of institutions of higher education are also rated highly. In contrast, the public's confidence in religious organizations, doctors and hospitals, the federal government and lawyers is much lower. At the same time, there are some worrisome trends. The public wants colleges to focus on providing a broad-based general education to undergraduates and on preparing undergraduates for careers – those polled indicated that schools should put less emphasis on their research mission. These results seem to reflect disenchantment with at least some aspects of higher education. That disenchantment may have been fueled by such books as Charles Sykes' (1988) Profscam: Professors and the Demise of Higher Education. Sykes paints a picture of bloated, uncaring institutions where professors are interested only in esoteric research and work only with graduate students and post-docs. He quotes one source as saying “few of these specialists know how to teach well, and many seem not to care” (Sykes, p. 55).

Fortunately, we are now in a position to do more than speculate about whether faculty members, or anyone else, care about undergraduate students. Thanks to an ambitious research project by the Andrew W. Mellon foundation, we have some relevant data. In a large survey, alumni were asked who took “a special interest in you or your work” during their college years. The Mellon findings address directly the question of “who cares” and whether more recent graduates experienced less caring relationships with faculty and other important college and university personnel. It turns out, as we will see, that the view put forth in Profscam is not

supported by reports from alumni who were students in the early 1950's, the late 1970's, and the early 1990's. The aim of this paper is to examine the unique data set created by the Mellon foundation in order to address questions of what kinds of students felt cared for by what kinds of college personnel at what kinds of institutions at what periods of time in the past fifty years. In other words, who felt cared for by whom, when and where?

The data set we can use to explore these questions is unique. The Mellon Foundation collected a large amount of information about 90,000 students who attended thirty-four institutions of higher learning in the entering classes of 1951, 1976, and 1989. In the mid-1990s, these same students were surveyed as alumni. The resulting dataset, *College & Beyond (C&B)*, thus spans four decades. That data set and recent updates have been used for major studies of race and affirmative action (Bowen & Bok, 1998) and athletics (Bowen & Levin, 2003; Shulman & Bowen, 2001) in higher education. This paper uses those same data to examine *who* cared. We should note, as Bowen and Bok do, that the set of schools in the C&B data set are not intended to be representative of all of American higher education. Rather, the schools are selective colleges and universities and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

We must note at the outset important caveats about asking alumni retrospectively “who cared?” Their memories about who showed “a special interest” may be clouded by the mists of time, the more so as the time since graduation lengthens. Even assuming relatively accurate memories, there are ambiguities. Perhaps alumni in cohorts that report more caring really were looked after more than students in other cohorts. There may well have been someone who showed “a special interest” in them or their work. Or, it may be that alumni in those cohorts had a more generous view of “who cared?” Perhaps they were led to expect little caring, so that what

caring they perceived was more memorable. In light of all this, as we go forward, we will describe the data but remain cautious about their interpretation.

Why should anyone care who cares? First, there are some relevant data that suggest that colleges and universities themselves should care who cares. A recent study based on these same data (Clotfelter, 2001) showed that those alumni who reported that someone other than a fellow student had cared about them as an undergraduate also reported greater satisfaction with their college experience and in turn made larger alumni donations. Second, our recent work on peer effects (Goethals, Winston, & Zimmerman, 1999) strongly suggests that student engagement in their college work is affected by their peers. It is quite likely that the interest taken by adults, especially faculty, is an equally or more important influence on a student's intellectual engagement and academic performance.

In addition, conventional wisdom suggests several answers to the question "who cares?" Evaluating that conventional wisdom might teach us something new. First, as noted above, it is commonly believed that faculty have taken less interest in students over the years, with deans and other administrators taking over that role more and more. Women's colleges, likewise, are sometimes felt to have more faculty-student interaction than coeducational schools. Liberal arts colleges are believed to have more than research institutions. It is often assumed that athletes are cared for by coaches but not especially by faculty and that coaches give minimal attention to non-athletes. This study describes the patterns found in the data, helping to confirm or question these assumptions. In the future, further studies can be done to investigate the relationship between perceived caring and educational outcomes, such as graduation rates. For now we simply ask what alumni report about who cared about them during their undergraduate years.

There is not a great deal of literature directly bearing on who takes “a special interest in” undergraduates. That on “mentoring” focuses on business settings and is thus fairly different from the mentoring of undergraduates. Most researchers who have specifically studied student-adult relationships in college have looked not at a broad question like “did someone take an interest in you?” but at the results of formal institutional systems of advising. In these programs, a special bond (one likely to be recalled when answering such a survey question) may or may not be formed, but clearly, respondents to the College and Beyond survey question formed relationships with adults in many ways other than within the bounds of an institutional advising program. To the extent that advising does foster these types of relationships, however, its analysis bears on the topic at hand, so it is useful briefly to review the advising literature.

It has become a well-accepted fact that advising of undergraduates in colleges and universities is an important factor in student success, defined in various ways. Some researchers have been primarily interested in retention; others have looked at more specific outcomes like grades and satisfaction. What they generally agree upon, in the words of Susan Frost, is that "When advisers...involve students in their academic experiences, positive outcomes can result" (1991).¹

“Involvement” of students in their education and their college community in general is, for many researchers, the mediating factor that allows advising to bring about student success. The 1984 Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in Higher Education, commissioned to figure out how to help college students succeed, found involvement to be so central that it titled its report *Involvement in Learning*. They argue that it is a key factor in persistence, academic achievement, personal growth, and satisfaction with the college experience. And, they say, "research has demonstrated that frequent interaction with faculty is more strongly related to

¹ For a more extensive index of the advising literature, see Frost's bibliography (1991).

satisfaction with a college...than any other type of involvement" (18). Consistent with these results, as noted above, much theory and data suggest that peers can affect academic engagement and performance (Goethals, et al., 1999; Goethals, 2000, 2001; Zimmerman, 1999; Zimmerman & Winston, 2003).

As Metzner (1989) points out, the results of various studies of the impact of advising on retention have been mixed. Several found that advising did have a positive effect on student persistence. Others found no connection. Metzner suggests that the reason for this is that advising's effects on retention are indirect, mediated through other factors. She found that advising has a significant positive effect on grades, students' satisfaction with their education, and student perceptions of the utility of a college education. These, in turn, have a positive effect on persistence.

The conclusion drawn by many researchers is that advising can lead to a variety of positive outcomes. Unfortunately, many also feel that while advising's potential is great, the state of advising is such that, as Astin said, it is "one of the weakest areas in the entire range of student services" (1985, p.165). But perhaps weak advising programs are not the catastrophe they might seem. If informal interactions with various wise adults take the place of formal advising, students might be just as successful. Voluntary relationships, as opposed to the prescribed ones in a formal advising system, are probably more likely to be meaningful and helpful. The downside, of course, is that some students might fall through the cracks, finding no one to help them.

While we do not have information about the role of formal advising programs in the College and Beyond dataset and therefore cannot comment on the relative likelihood of students' being overlooked at schools with effective advising programs and those without them, we can

examine how much interest students in the dataset report being taken by various categories of potentially caring college personnel – specifically, faculty, teaching assistants (TAs), resident advisers (RAs), deans or administrators, coaches, and alumni. Outcomes, note, are not within the scope of this study; our aim is simply to describe the patterns of reported relationships found in the data. One might expect, though, that the outcomes of someone “taking an interest in you”, like the reported outcomes of formal advising programs, would be positive. Further studies could shed light on what, exactly, those positive outcomes are.

Data

The Mellon Foundation's College and Beyond dataset includes data on over 90,000 students from thirty-four, largely selective, colleges and universities in the United States, including public and private research universities, women’s and coeducational colleges, Ivy League universities and historically black colleges and universities. Three cohorts are included: the entering classes of 1951, 1976, and 1989. The dataset has two components. An institutional file contains information about the students provided by their schools – including GPA, athletic status or other co-curricular activity, etc. A survey file contains information provided by a subset of the students themselves in the 1990’s – what they have done since college, reflections on their college experience, etc.²

Method

² For more detail about the College and Beyond dataset, see Bowen and Bok (1998), Appendix A. Survey response rates and how we dealt with them are discussed in Appendix A of this paper.

It may be helpful to reiterate the precise question on the College and Beyond survey: "While you were an undergraduate, did anyone associated with your school, other than fellow students, take a special interest in you or your work – that is, was there someone you could turn to for advice or for general support or encouragement?"³ (So "caring" doesn't fully convey the sense of the question, but it's been used anyway.) Then, following up on that yes/no question, "Who was that?" Survey respondents could check one or more specific types of people. All respondents were given the following options: faculty member, teaching assistant, resident advisor, college dean or other administrator, athletic coach, and alumnus.

There were just over 45,000 alumni in the College and Beyond data set who answered the follow-up survey in the mid-1990s. Over 38,000 of those alumni were included in most of our analyses. Most of the missing data reflect over 3,000 alumni who did not respond to the "who cares" question (see Appendix A). Our analyses of changes in reported caring across the 1951, 1976, and 1989 cohorts are based on data from over 28,000 students. Only 19 of the 34 schools in the original sample were included in the 1989 sample. Analyses that examine differences between cohorts consider only the more than 28,000 students from the nineteen schools that were included in all three samples.

Results

Table 1 presents a tabulation of the percentage of students who indicated each type of carer on their survey by cohort, type of institution, gender, race, GPA, SAT, and athletic status. The number of students surveyed in each category is reported in the first column. The next column reports the percentage of each group of students who answered yes to the question "did

³ It should be noted that while we have encapsulated the idea behind this question in the term "caring" for the purposes of this paper, readers should keep in mind the actual wording of the question.

anyone ... other than fellow students, take a special interest in you or your work?" Following that are columns showing who took an interest.

Table 1
Who Cares?
 Percentage of College and Beyond respondents who checked each category by cohort, type of school, gender, race, GPA, SAT and athletic status

		Total Respondents	Someone Cared	Faculty	TA	Resident Advisor	Dean/Administrator	Coach	Alum
Cohort	1951	8515	47%	39%	3%	8%	13%	5%	4%
	1976	19742	48%	41%	4%	8%	9%	4%	3%
	1989	10191	64%	53%	7%	12%	15%	9%	6%
School Type	Public Research U.	8888	44%	36%	6%	7%	7%	5%	4%
	Private Research U.	13215	50%	41%	5%	9%	11%	4%	4%
	Liberal Arts	5043	67%	62%	2%	10%	14%	8%	4%
	Women's	2972	58%	52%	2%	10%	18%	3%	5%
	HBCU	1256	73%	64%	3%	10%	23%	4%	14%
	Ivy League	7074	49%	37%	8%	8%	14%	7%	5%
Student Gender	Male	20812	51%	41%	5%	8%	11%	7%	5%
	Female	17471	54%	46%	5%	9%	13%	4%	4%
Race	White	31967	51%	43%	5%	8%	10%	6%	4%
	Hispanic	1157	54%	44%	7%	12%	16%	4%	5%
	Asian	1362	54%	46%	8%	12%	14%	3%	4%
	Native American	113	48%	40%	3%	8%	10%	7%	10%
	Black	3178	64%	51%	5%	10%	24%	4%	9%
GPA	Bottom Third	11436	46%	35%	4%	8%	13%	7%	5%
	Middle Third	11450	50%	42%	5%	8%	11%	5%	4%
	Top Third	11576	59%	53%	6%	8%	11%	3%	3%
SAT	<1000	4301	56%	44%	5%	10%	16%	8%	8%
	1000-1099	4659	50%	41%	4%	8%	11%	7%	5%
	1100-1199	6608	50%	41%	5%	9%	11%	5%	4%
	1200-1299	7302	53%	45%	5%	9%	11%	5%	4%
	>1299	9644	54%	47%	6%	9%	11%	4%	3%
Athlete	Yes	3263	57%	38%	4%	7%	12%	30%	7%
	No	21381	48%	42%	5%	7%	10%	1%	3%

Caring over time

The first question we wish to address is whether there is any change over time in the overall percentage of reported caring. Do students in more recent cohorts feel relatively uncared for? The data for our three-cohort panel show quite clearly that there is, in fact, a reported increase in caring across time. In the 1951 cohort, 47% of the alumni reported that someone showed a special interest in them. This number was nearly identical in the 1976 cohort, 48%, but increased to 64% in the 1989 cohort (See Figure 1). Reported caring by alumni is higher among the 1989 cohort than the earlier cohorts.

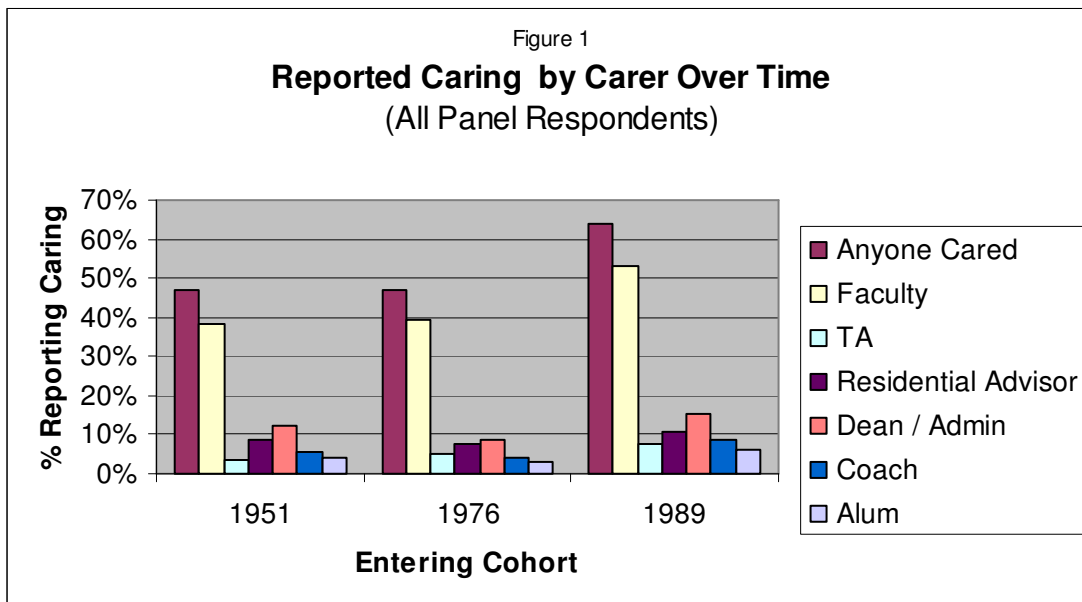
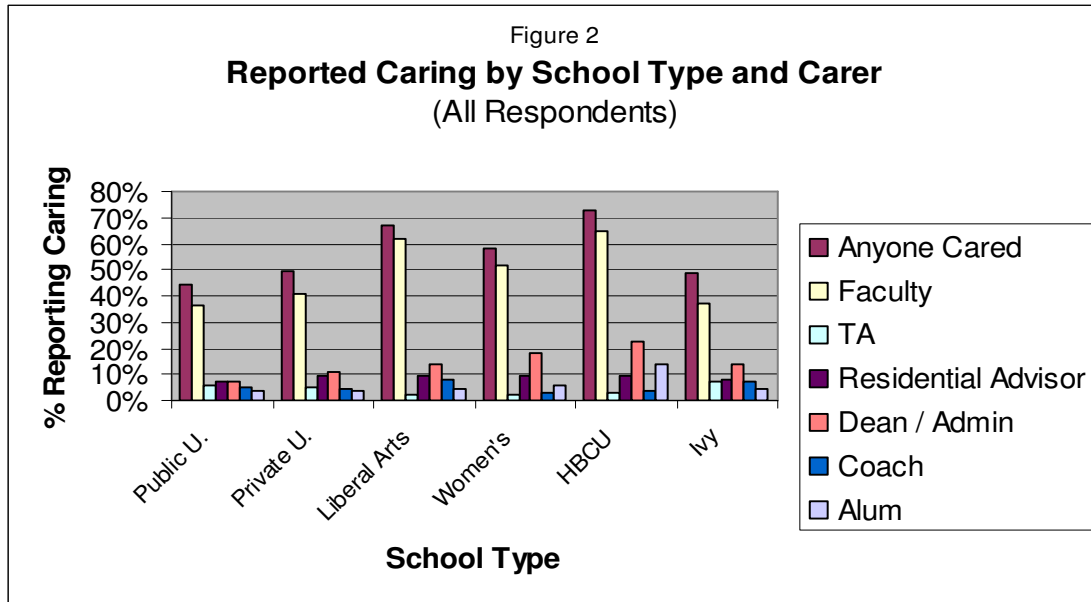


Figure 1 also shows that caring by faculty is reported at higher levels than caring reported by any other potential care givers (deans, coaches, et al.). This is true in all three cohorts. In the most recent, 1989, faculty caring was reported by 53% of the respondents, while the next highest level of caring was reported for deans and administrators, 15%. Figure 1 also shows the trend of increasing caring over time is essentially the same for faculty as it is for overall reported caring. Thirty-nine percent of the respondents from the 1951 cohort and 41% of the 1976 reported caring

by members of their faculty. In the 1989 cohort, roughly 53% of the respondents reported caring by faculty. Thus the increase in reported caring by faculty from 1951 to 1989, from 39% to 53%, or 14 percentage points, is similar to the overall increase in caring, from 47% to 64%, or 17 percentage points, between 1951 and 1989. Other categories of potential care givers (deans, coaches, et al.) similarly showed upward trends, but smaller ones. While there were no large differences in any of these categories, all of them reached their highest level in the 1989 cohort. Thus faculty, teaching assistants, resident advisers, deans and administrators, coaches, and alumni were all seen as most caring in the 1989 cohort.

Caring at different types of schools

Figure 2 shows the overall level of caring reported from different kinds of schools. The data show that reported caring was highest at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), 73%, and lowest at public universities, 44%. In between, reported caring was 67% at co-ed liberal arts colleges, 58% at women's colleges, 50% at private universities, and 49% at Ivy League universities. Thus, caring at HBCUs was notably higher than caring elsewhere, and caring at colleges was higher than at universities. Apparently, respondents from smaller schools were more likely to feel that someone took a special interest in them or their work than respondents from larger schools. And note that, contrary to conventional wisdom, overall caring is not greater at women's than at coeducational colleges.

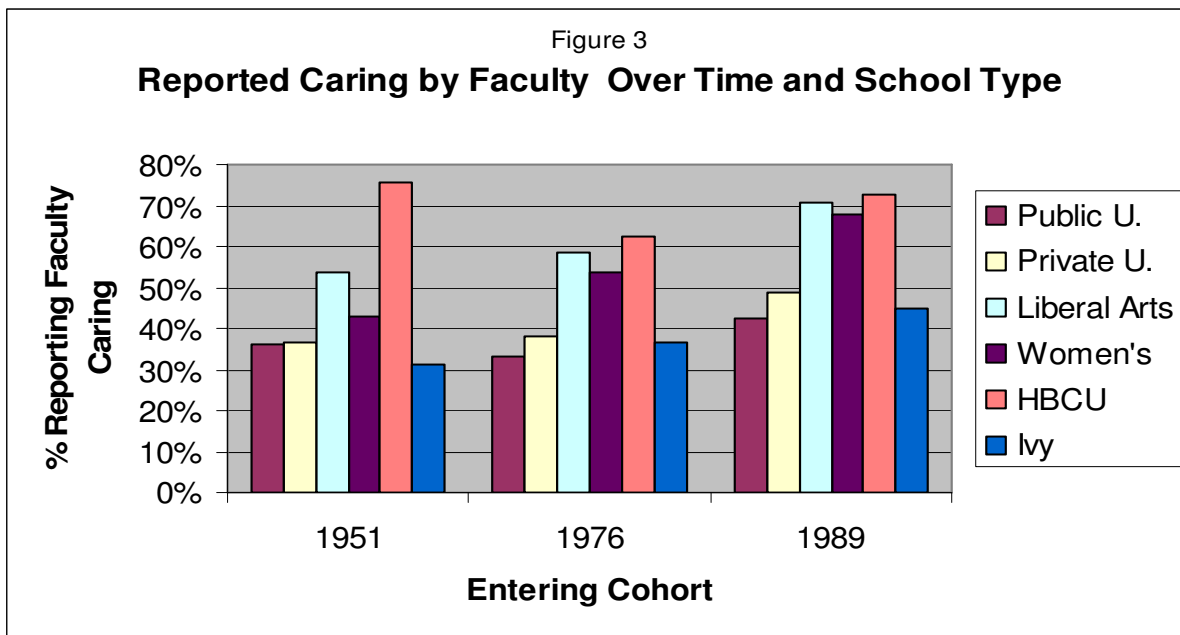


The very high overall rates of reported caring by faculty, noted above, is characteristic of all types of schools. At each type, there is more reported caring by faculty members, by far, than by other categories of college personnel. After faculty, deans and administrators are most frequently mentioned as “carers,” by 7% to 23% of the respondents, depending on type of school. The high levels of reported caring by deans and administrators at women’s colleges and HCBUs, 18% and 23% respectively, are especially notable. After faculty and deans/administrators, depending on the type of school, resident advisers, coaches, TAs, and alumni come next. The figures for these types of carers are all 10% or below, except that reported caring by alumni is 14% for HCBU respondents.

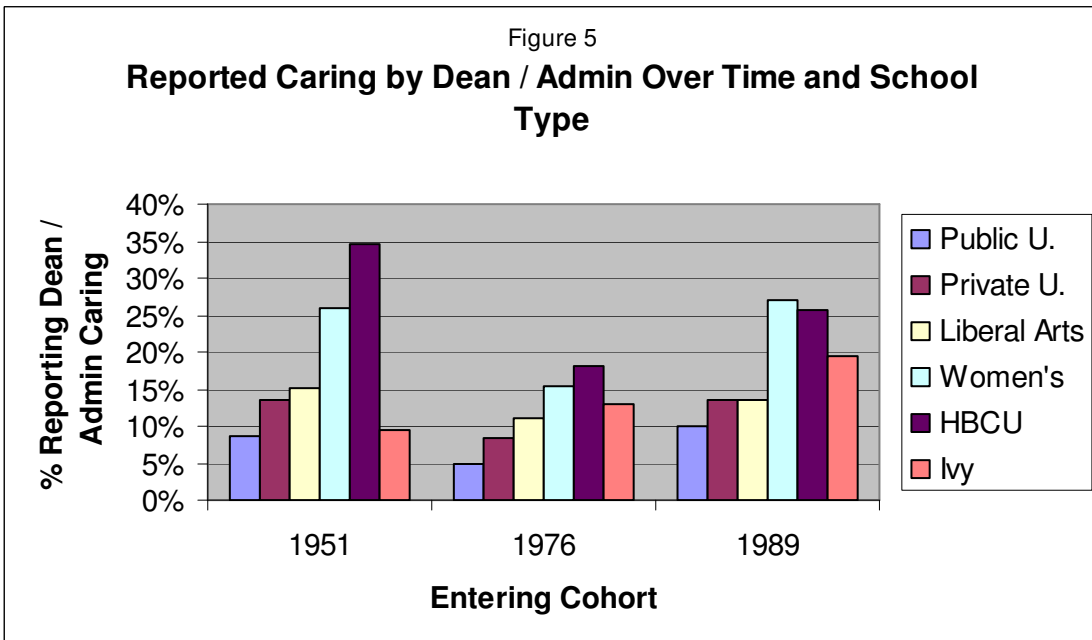
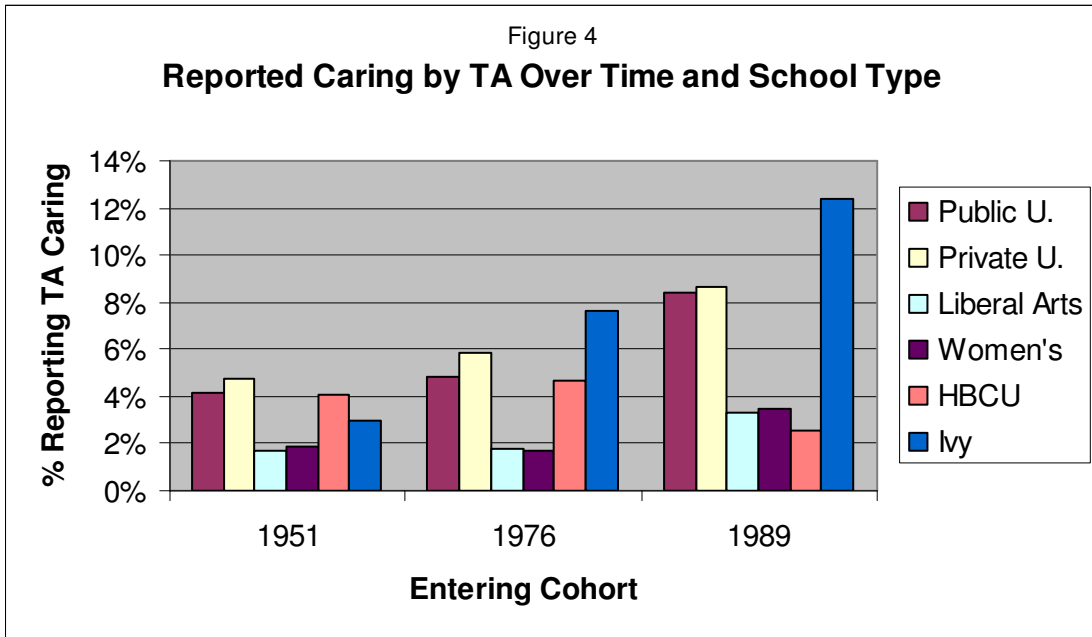
Caring by faculty, TAs, and deans over time and place

The data we have considered thus far make clear that reported caring has increased over time among all categories of carers and that caring is higher in some kinds of schools than others

– particularly HBCUs, liberal arts colleges, and women’s colleges, in comparison to public or private universities and Ivies. Another way to look at the data is to consider whether particular kinds of carers (faculty, deans, coaches, et al.) have shown different temporal changes in caring at different schools. Figures 3, 4, and 5, using the three-cohort panel data, show changes in reported caring over time for faculty, TAs, and deans, respectively, at different types of schools. Consider faculty caring first (see Figure 3). From the 1951 to 1989 cohorts, reported faculty caring has increased at all types of schools, except HBCUs, which did and still do show the most reported faculty caring (76% in 1951 and 72% in 1989). The largest increase, by far, is the 25 percentage points reported increase in faculty caring at women’s colleges between 1951 and 1989, from 43% to 68%. There is also a significant increase in reported faculty caring at liberal arts colleges (17 percentage points), Ivies (14 percentage points), and private universities (12 percentage points).



Figures 4 and 5 show smaller increases in caring among TAs and deans than the faculty increases, though it is noteworthy that TA and dean caring increased the most at Ivies from 1951 to 1989.

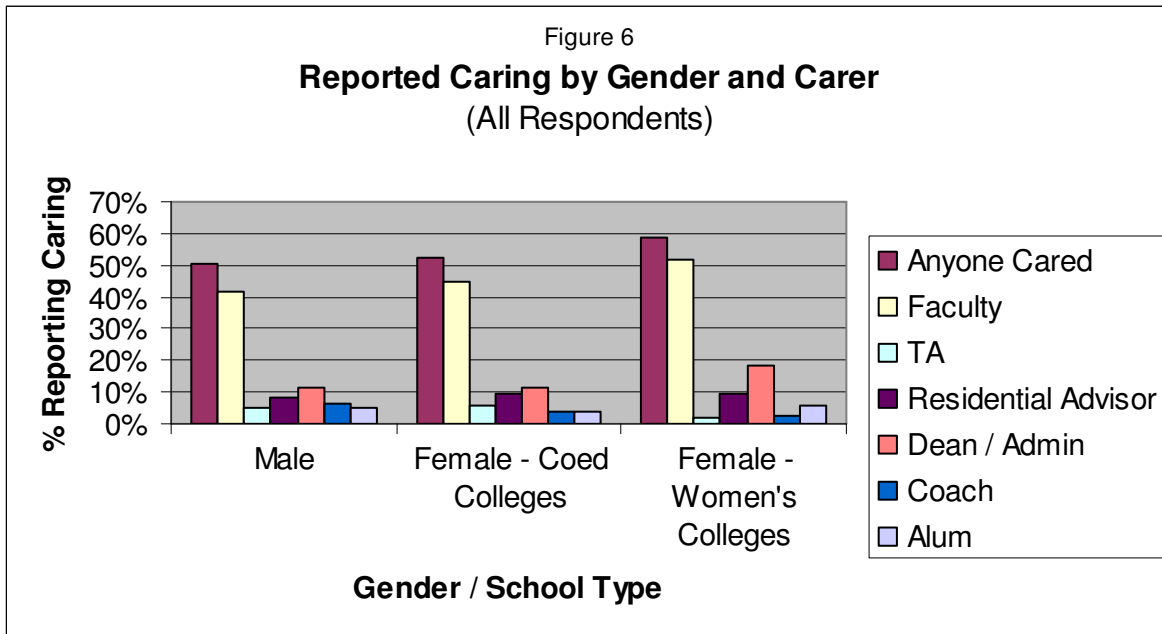


Overall, then, the data indicate that caring has increased over time, that faculty caring was and is the one most frequently reported, that faculty caring increased more than that by other categories of helpers, that caring is higher at HBCUs, women's colleges, and liberal arts colleges than at universities, and that faculty caring has increased more at women's colleges than at other types of schools.

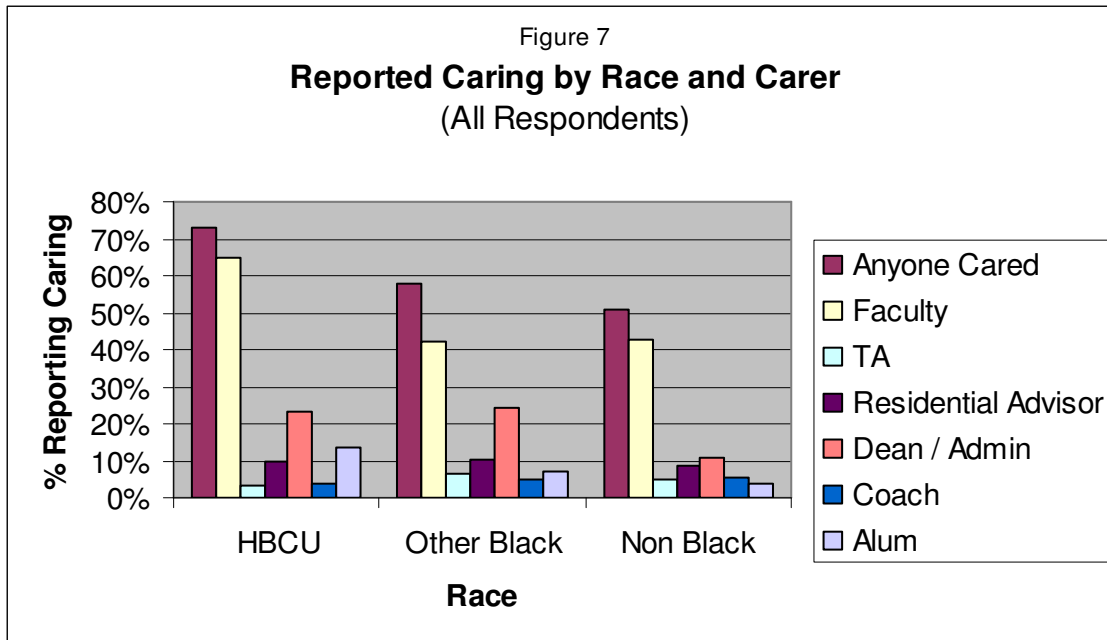
Caring reported by different kinds of students

The College and Beyond data allow us to consider different kinds of students, and whether there are differences among them in how much caring they report. We can also ask whether there are notable differences between these groups in their perceptions of caring across time, across institutional type, and across categories of college personnel.

Gender and caring. Figure 6 shows caring reported for men, women at coed schools, and women at women's schools. We focus on caring reported for faculty since the data for other categories of carers are largely consistent with the data for faculty. Overall, forty-six percent of women and forty-one percent of men in the sample report that a faculty member cared. Thus, women students were more cared for, or perceived that they were more cared for, than men. The overall figure for women may be higher in part because of the relatively high level of faculty caring reported at women's colleges, 52%. Excluding alumnae of women's colleges, the percent of women who reported caring by faculty in coed schools is 45%. Still, the difference between men and women, 41% vs. 45%, is significant.



Race and caring. There are three racial groups whose reported levels of caring are of interest: black students at HBCUs, black students at non-HBCUs, and non-black students. Figure 7 shows data for these three groups. Comparing the two groups of black students, consistent with the finding noted above – of very high levels of reported caring at HBCUs – 73% of black students at HBCUs report that someone cared, and 65% reported that a faculty member cared. The comparable figures are 58% and 42% for black students at non-HBCUs. Interestingly, black students at the two kinds of schools reported essentially equal levels of caring by TAs, deans, and coaches. However, there was a higher level of caring by alumni reported at HBCUs than at non-HBCUs. Thus, while faculty members and alumni were less frequently reported as caring about black students at non-HBCUs, there were similar levels of caring by other categories of potential carers.



The amount of caring by faculty reported by black students at non-HBCUs is very similar to that reported by non-black students at non-HBCUs, about 42%. However, the overall level of caring reported by black students at those schools is higher than the level reported by non-black students, 58% vs. 51%. While black students did not report more caring by faculty than did non-black students, they did report more caring by deans (24% vs. 10%), and alumni (7% vs. 4%). It should be noted that the non-black respondents are overwhelmingly white, but include Hispanic, Asian, and Native American students. The figures for these three groups are quite small. However, they are more similar to those for white students than for black students.

GPA, SAT, and caring. Figure 8 shows reported caring by students in the bottom third, middle third, and top third of the distribution of grade point averages. Overall levels of reported caring increase with GPA, from 46% to 50% to 59%. The reported increase for faculty members is even steeper, 35% to 42% to 53%. Not surprisingly, students with better grades feel more

cared for, especially by faculty. We do not know why. Perhaps when faculty take a special interest in students, they perform better or perhaps, brighter and more highly achieving students attract positive faculty attention.

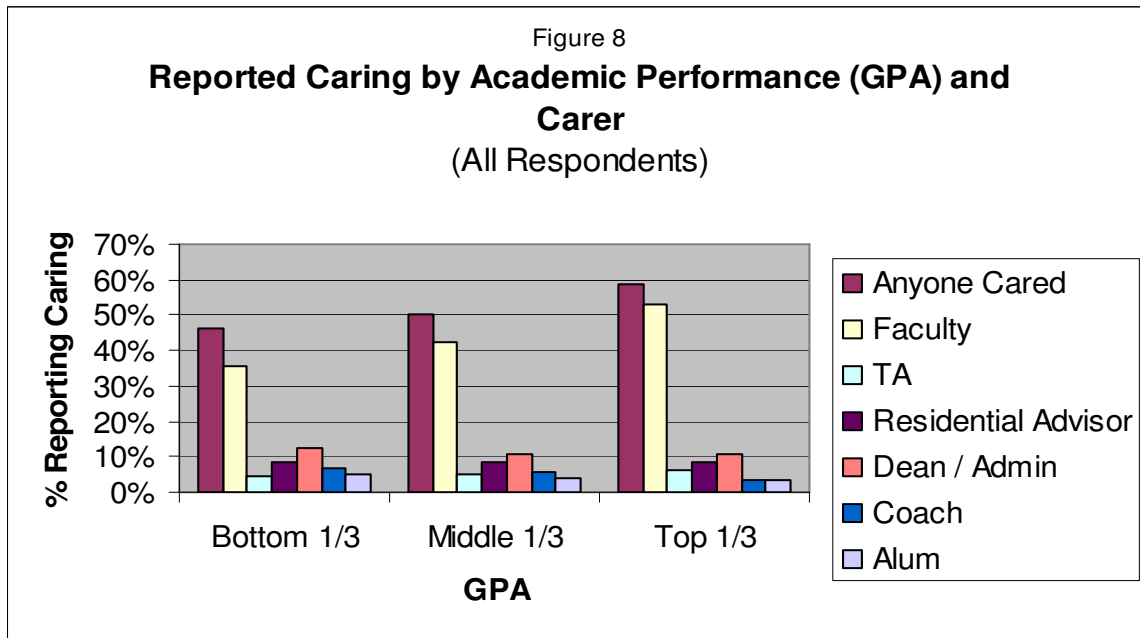
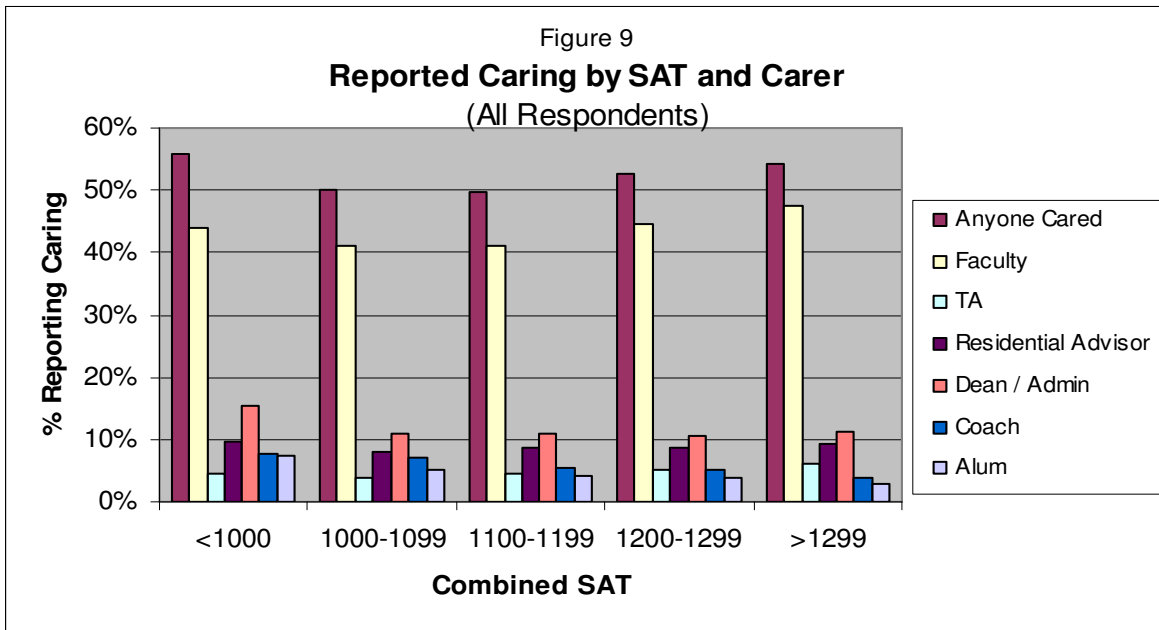
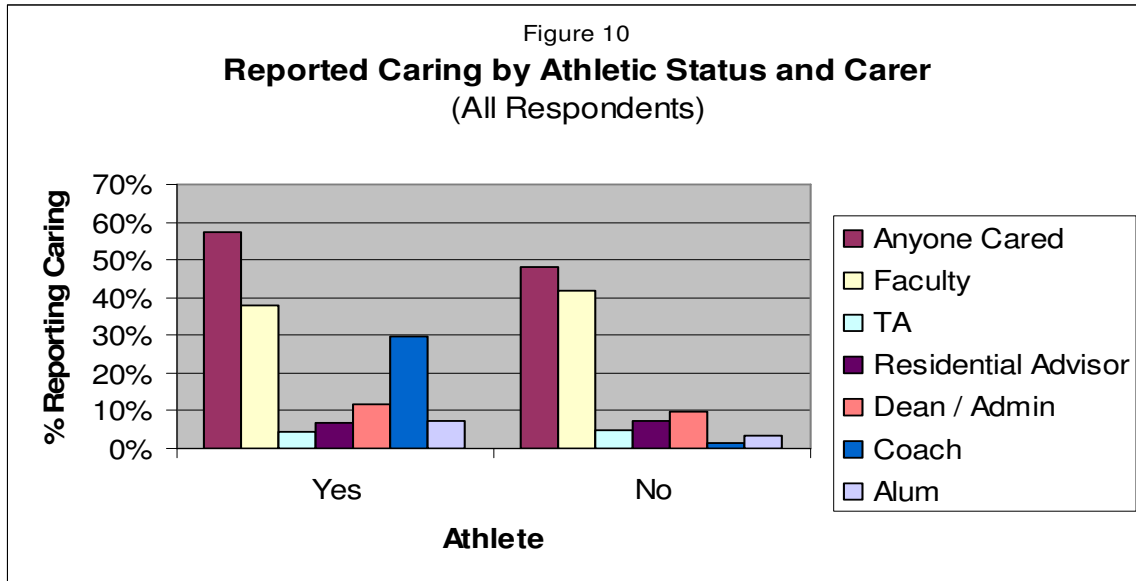


Figure 9 shows reported caring by SAT. For overall caring, the figure shows a curvilinear pattern with the highest caring levels reported by students with SATs below 1000 (55%), the lowest levels reported by students in the 1000-1099 range (50%), and then increased caring for each increasing 100-point SAT level after that. This pattern is similar for reported caring by faculty, though the highest level of faculty caring is reported in the top SAT range – 47% for respondents with SATs of 1300 or above. The curvilinear pattern holds up for TAs and RAs, though the percentages and percentage differences are small. For deans and administrators, the highest caring (16%) is reported by those with SATs below 1000, while for other SAT groups reported caring is at 11%. Interestingly, caring reported for coaches and alumni declines consistently by SAT level. Both coaches and alumni are reported as carers by 8% of the sub-

1000 SAT group, while the 1300+ SAT group reported caring by coaches at the 4% level and by alumni at the 3% level.



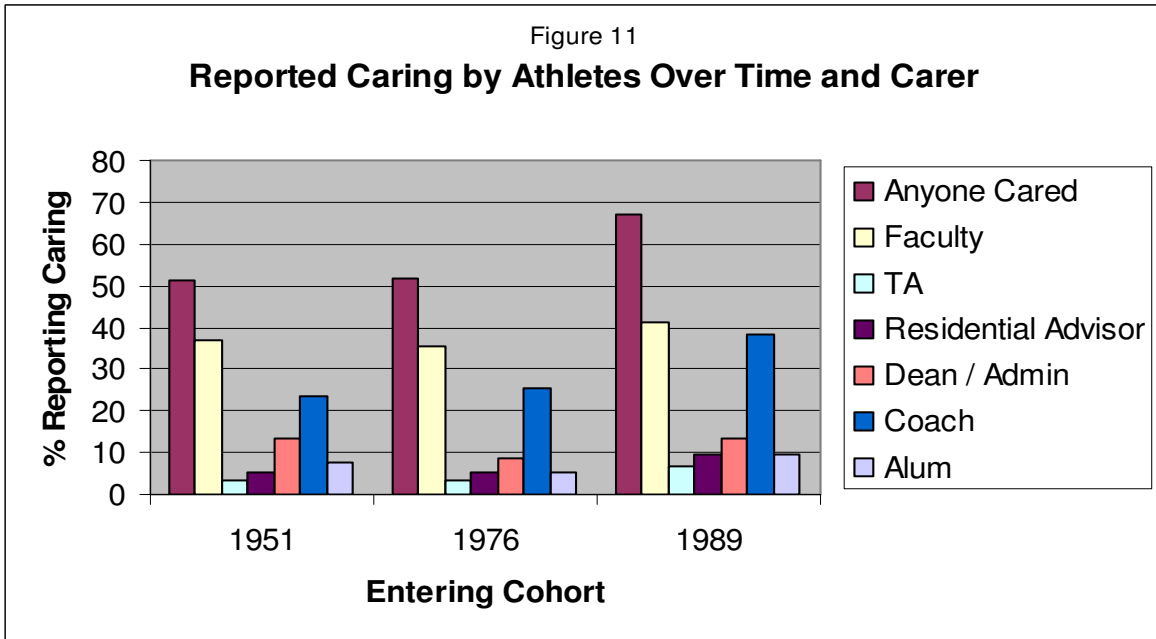
Athletics and caring. There are large differences between athletes and non-athletes in the amount of caring they report (see Figure 10). Athletes more frequently reported that someone cared (57% vs. 48%), but fewer athletes than non-athletes reported that faculty cared (38% vs. 42%). The difference, of course, is that athletes reported that other school personnel cared disproportionately, most notably coaches. Thirty percent of athletes but only 1.5% of non-athletes reported caring by a coach. In addition, athletes reported slightly more caring by alumni than did non-athletes (7% vs. 3%).



While athletes report relatively less caring by faculty and more by coaches than do non-athletes, the faculty difference, 38% vs. 42%, is small relative to the coach difference, 30% vs. 1.5%. Also, while athletes reported more caring by coaches and less caring by faculty when compared to non-athletes, they still reported substantially more caring by faculty (38%) than by coaches (30%).

One final result regarding athletes is shown in Figure 11, which compares cohorts and thus uses the panel data. Athletes, like the whole sample, report more caring by someone in the 1989 cohort than in the earlier cohorts, an increase of 15 percentage points from 52% to 67%. They also reported an increase in caring by faculty from 36% to 41%, an increase of five percentage points. Not surprisingly, perhaps, Figure 11 shows that the athletes' increase in overall caring is generated by the 15 percentage point increase in reported caring by coaches – from 23% in the earliest cohort to 38% in the 1989 cohort. In this figure, as in Figure 10, athletes still report more caring by faculty than by coaches, though the gap has shrunk from 14 percentage points in 1951, to 9 percentage points in 1976, to 3% in 1989. Athletes feel more, not

less, cared for by faculty in the latest cohort, but the extent to which they feel looked after by coaches has increased much more dramatically. While we do not know how to account for the dramatic increase over time in reporting caring by coaches, one possibility is that there were simply more of them available to care for athletes in the later cohort.⁴



Conclusions

The number of students reporting that someone took a special interest in them or their work varies widely over time, by type of school, category of carer and a variety of student characteristics. One of the strongest findings in the data set is that alumni from more recent cohorts report more caring than those in the two earlier cohorts. The more recent graduates,

⁴ To ensure the robustness of these findings, we have also estimated multivariable regression models for all of the categories of carers. These models control for cohort, institutional type, race/ethnicity, gender, SAT scores, and GPA (in some models). The patterns of the coefficients confirm those depicted in the preceding figures. Tables are available from the authors upon request.

those who entered college in 1989 and graduated in 1993, report feeling more looked after, not less, than students from earlier cohorts. As noted at the outset, one must be cautious in interpreting these data. As suggested above, perhaps students in the 1989 cohort really were looked after more than students in earlier cohorts. Or, it may be that those in the most recent cohort had a more generous view of “who cared?” Or, it may be that over time people remember, or otherwise believe, and therefore report, less caring than they would have if they had been surveyed fewer years after graduation. These ambiguities aside, the data clearly show that students in the class of 1993 perceived higher levels of caring than alumni from earlier cohorts.

There were marked differences in the responses of alumni from different types of schools. Those from HBCUs report higher overall levels of caring than any other group of alumni. They also report the highest levels of caring by faculty, deans and administrators, and alumni. The mission of these potential carers at HBCUs may be unusually salient, leading to more involvement with students than those at other kinds of institutions. Liberal arts colleges, both coeducational and women's colleges, generate significantly higher rates of reported caring among their alumni than universities: overall, by faculty, and by deans and administrators. This is consistent with their own vision of what sets them apart as providers of undergraduate education – you’re more likely to get “the personal touch” if you attend a liberal arts college. The kind of caring reported differs at coeducational vs. women’s colleges. While women's institutions have higher rates of caring by deans and administrators, the coeducational schools clearly excel in caring by faculty and overall caring.

Over time, across types of schools, coaches seem to have increased in importance, particularly, of course, among athletes. Alumni as carers have also shown a slight increase in

importance over time. And, while it is often thought that deans and administrators have taken over much of the faculty's role in caring for students, we find that faculty have actually increased in importance much more over time than deans and administrators.

Higher grades are associated with higher rates of reported faculty caring. Lower grades and lower SATs are associated with somewhat increased caring by coaches. This may be attributable to the fact that athletes typically have lesser academic credentials than non-athletes at the types of elite institutions in our study.⁵ Not surprisingly, athletes report much higher rates of being cared for by coaches than do non-athletes. Athletes also report slightly less caring by faculty than non-athletes and slightly higher rates for alumni. Consistent with these results for specific categories of potential carers, athletes report much higher levels of overall caring. Still, it is important to remember that the category of potential carer most cited by athletes is faculty, not coaches. The role of coaches is clearly increasing for athletes, but the faculty are still their leading care givers. The increasing role of coaches is consistent with Shulman-Bowen's reported changes in the status of athletics at these schools.

Overall, it seems clear that college-affiliated adults do take an interest in undergraduates quite frequently such that approximately half of the survey respondents felt, in retrospect, that someone had taken a special interest in them while they were students. Of course, whether this means the glass is half empty or half full is open to interpretation. But it is clear that this caring, as we have termed it, is not random. Faculty are its chief purveyors. And certain types of students at certain types of colleges are much more likely to perceive or remember themselves on the receiving end of caring than are other students. Some of these patterns are unexpected while others are quite in line with conventional wisdom. Perhaps these findings will provide a better understanding of what's actually going on in this facet of higher education.

⁵ See Shulman and Bowen (2001).

Appendix A: Response Rates

The College and Beyond dataset includes students from the entering cohorts of 1951, 1976 and 1989. These students were from a broad range of schools⁶, and the data were meant to show different student experiences at different types of schools. At the large public universities, a sample of the cohort was surveyed. The number from each cohort was approximately 2,000 and included all known minorities, all those with SATs above 1350, all athletes and a random sample to fill the remaining spots. Institutional sample weights were used so that the overall population of the school was reasonably represented. In all the other schools, the whole entering student population was included in each cohort.

All those from the 1951 and 1976 cohorts for whom there was institutional data were sent the follow-up survey in the mid-'90s. The entering cohort of '89, on the other hand, was reduced in both number of schools and number of students surveyed. At the private and public research universities, a subset of the enumerated cohorts was sampled. All blacks, Native Americans, Hispanics and athletes, along with 500 other random students were included and, again, weighted so that the population was representative of the school's entire cohort. At the women's, HBCUs, and coeducational colleges, all students were sampled.

Institutional information was available for 95,194 students distributed among the entering cohorts of '51 (21,359), '76 (35,068) and '89 (38,767). There were 45,158 students providing data from the follow-up survey (10,135 from '51; 23,573 from '76, and 11,450 from '89). From these 45,158 respondents, 3,230 students did not respond to the question about caring, leaving 41,928 students.

⁶ The schools with students participating in this study are the following: Barnard, Bryn Mawr, Columbia, Denison, Duke, Emory, Georgetown, Hamilton, Howard, Kenyon, Miami OH, U Michigan, Morehouse, Notre Dame, Northwestern, Oberlin, U Pennsylvania, Princeton, Penn State, Rice, Smith, Spelman, Stanford, Swarthmore, Tufts, Tulane, U North Carolina, Vanderbilt, Washington U St. Louis, Wellesley, Wesleyan, Williams, Xavier and Yale.

Furthermore, an additional 3,480 students had inconsistencies in graduate reporting. (These were people who have institutional data from one school, Princeton, for example, yet are not shown to have graduated there as they were expelled, withdrew, died, or had an unknown graduation status.) That leaves the 38,448 students, who make up our population and are used for the majority of the comparisons. To keep as many respondents as possible, we made use of dummy variables regarding SAT score, GPA and athletic status⁷.

To be able to make valid comparisons across time, we created a panel of schools – an unchanging set over all three cohorts. This left 19 schools and 28,384 students. All five categories were represented. The panel was made up of: Public Research Universities (8,888): Miami OH, U Michigan, Penn State & UNC; Private Research Universities (6,523): Duke, Stanford, Vanderbilt, Wash U; Liberal Arts Colleges (3,927): Kenyon, Oberlin, Wesleyan, Williams; Women’s Colleges (1,844): Bryn Mawr, Wellesley; HBCU (757): Morehouse, Xavier; Ivy Universities (6,445): Penn, Princeton, Yale.

⁷ The continuous scale reported for SATs was changed into discrete variables with <1000, 1000-1099, 1100-1199, 1200-1299, 1299+ and unknown values. Athletic status had a column added for unknown, and GPA was also changed from a continuous variable into discrete thirds (bottom 1/3 etc.) and an unknown value.

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