

# **The National Coalition of Girls' Schools Alumnae Survey 2005**

## **Final Evaluation Report**

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# The National Coalition of Girls' Schools Alumnae Survey 2005 Executive Summary

## INTRODUCTION

The National Coalition of Girls' Schools (NCGS) is an association of girls' schools across the United States and abroad that supports and promotes the values and benefits of single-sex education, including:

- Girls' academic achievement,
- Encouragement in sex-typed subject areas (e.g., science and math),
- Career aspirations, and
- Positive sex-role attitudes and self-esteem.

The NCGS has an established history of commissioning research on the contributions of girls-only education to females' growth and development, both in and out of class. In 1999, NCGS contracted with Goodman Research Group, Inc. (GRG), an educational research firm, to survey NCGS alumnae from four academic cohorts who graduated from high school between 1983 and 1995.

Six years after the original study, NCGS contracted with GRG to survey alumnae who graduated from an NCGS member school in 2004, with a focus on the role that the girls' schools played in women's transitions to college. The primary goals of the survey were to examine:

- Alumnae's perceived outcomes associated with girls' school attendance, and
- Alumnae's perceptions of the effectiveness of their schools in preparing them for the academic and social transition to college.

Following a brief description of the evaluation method, this Executive Summary presents the key findings from the study. The full report provides a detailed description of the method, additional findings, and conclusions.

## METHOD

GRG collected data from alumnae who graduated from an NCGS member school in 2004. Respondents completed a one-time retrospective Web survey consisting of 32 possible questions covering three areas of interest: (1) the girls' school experience, (2) alumnae's academic interests and career aspirations, and (3) the influence of NCGS member school attendance on academic and social transitions to college.

All NCGS member private schools in the United States having a program serving grades nine through twelve were invited to participate in the study.

Eighty-three schools were eligible to participate, and 61 schools ultimately participated by distributing the invitations and online survey to their alumnae. The school participation rate was 73%.

Contact information (either alumnae email address or parent's permanent mailing address) was available for 2,606 alumnae. Of the 2,606 possible respondents, GRG received completed surveys from 1,018 alumnae representing 61 schools. The estimated alumnae response rate was 39%.

The majority of respondents were 19-years old and Caucasian. The majority of respondents also attended a girls' school for some combination of elementary, middle and high school, and approximately one-third of the alumnae received financial aid from their schools.

## KEY FINDINGS

### **Alumnae were very satisfied with their academic experiences at their girls' schools, and the vast majority would recommend others to attend their schools.**

Nearly all respondents were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with their schools' ability to provide them with:

- Rigorous academic curriculums (95%),
- Individualized attention (93%), and
- Encouragement to develop their own interests (80%).

Ninety percent of respondents said they would *probably* or *definitely* attend a girls' school again, and 64% of respondents agreed that young women should be encouraged to attend girls' schools.

### **Alumnae experienced nurturing, supportive environments committed to their personal growth and development.**

More than 80% of the respondents were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with how well their schools fostered students' self-confidence, and more than 85% of respondents were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with the amount of encouragement they received from their schools to pursue new challenges.

### **NCGS member schools were commended for fostering a sense of community and encouraging students to become involved with community service and leadership.**

The majority of alumnae (87%) indicated that their schools excelled at fostering a sense of community at the schools, and most alumnae were impressed with their school's encouragement for students to seek out leadership positions (84%), and to become involved with community service (71%).

**Alumnae were more satisfied with some aspects of their girls' school experience when they were the primary decision-makers in deciding to attend an NCGS school.**

Compared to when parents made the decision that their daughter would attend a girls' school, when girls were the primary decision-makers (21% of the time), they held more positive opinions about their experiences. For example, alumnae who made the decision to attend were more satisfied with the schools' ability to foster self-confidence, more satisfied with the encouragement they received to pursue new challenges, and more likely to think that their schools fostered a "can do" attitude.

**The greatest piece of advice that alumnae would offer to prospective girls' school attendees was to "go for it."**

Alumnae's advice centered on a "go for it" attitude and encouraged prospective students to be active participants in the decision to attend the girls' school. Alumnae also advised prospective students to approach the experience with an open mind and to be reassured that an all girls environment had its advantages.

**Financial aid recipients held more positive opinions about some aspects of their girls' school experience.**

Compared to alumnae who did not receive financial aid, those who received financial aid (32% of respondents) reported more positive experiences with their girls' schools on several dimensions, including being more satisfied with the encouragement they received from their girls' schools to appreciate individual differences, to develop their own interests, and to become involved with community service.

**Alumnae of color were slightly less satisfied with three aspects of their girls' school experience.**

Regardless of race and ethnicity, alumnae were very satisfied with their girls' school experience. In fact, respondents consistently rated their school experiences above a 4.0 on the 1-5 scales. However, when direct comparisons were made between alumnae of color and Caucasian alumnae, the statistical analyses indicated that alumnae of color were slightly less satisfied with their schools' ability to foster a sense of belonging to a community, less satisfied with the amount of individualized attention they received, and less satisfied with the rigor of the academic curriculums.

**Alumnae's college selections were driven by the college's reputation and alumnae wanting to attend a coed school.**

The largest contributing factor to alumnae's college selection was the reputation (in particular, academic reputation) of the school. Although location, size of student body, and social climate weighed heavily on alumnae's decision, the majority of alumnae were also very interested in

selecting a coed college so that they could have an experience that mirrored the “real world” in terms of interacting with males.

**Nearly all of the alumnae expected to have careers and professions, and the majority felt it was important to hold positions of leadership and to contribute to their communities.**

Ninety-five percent of the respondents said that having a career and profession were *very* or *extremely* important to them, and three-quarters underscored the importance of leadership, community service, and volunteerism.

**The most significant career influences for alumnae were their families, teachers, and advisors.**

Alumnae were asked to describe who or what had been the greatest influence on their career aspirations. Thirty-eight percent indicated a family member, 20% specified that a teacher or advisor had influenced them, and 17% attributed their career aspirations to a specific life experience, such as an internship. An additional 10% of alumnae said that they were their own most significant influence and 8% cited specific non-familial people. Four percent said they either didn't know or that there had been no influences thus far.

**Alumnae felt they were more prepared for the academic transition to college than their peers who attended coed high schools, but somewhat less prepared for interacting with men, both in and out of the classroom.**

Overall, 93% of the respondents were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with how well their girls' school prepared them for the academic aspects of college, and 65% of respondents felt *somewhat more* or *much more* prepared than their coed peers for the overall transition to college.

Regarding specific academic skills, 84% of responding alumnae felt *somewhat more* or *much more* prepared for college writing, and 69% of respondents felt *somewhat more* or *much more* prepared for public speaking assignments. Approximately half of the respondents felt *somewhat more* or *much more* prepared with their math, science, and computer skills. Compared to other dimensions of preparedness, alumnae felt somewhat less prepared for dealing with gender bias in the classrooms and for academic and social interactions with men.

## SUMMARY

In summary, this study of NCGS alumnae who were completing their first year of college found that NCGS member schools provided young women with high quality and rigorous academic experiences that prepared them well for the academic demands of college. Alumnae also reported that their schools were to be commended for fostering a sense of community and that the schools showed a commitment to fostering self-esteem and individuality.

In slight contrast to the very positive ratings associated with girls' academic experiences and preparation, alumnae reported feeling slightly less prepared for interacting with men, both in and out of the classroom. A common theme among these first year college students was that regardless of actual outcomes, they shared anxiety that they were not prepared enough for the "real world."

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## INTRODUCTION

The National Coalition of Girls' Schools (NCGS) is an association of 105 girls' independent and public, day and boarding schools across the United States, with affiliate partners in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. NCGS members share a commitment to the values and benefits of single-sex schools for girls, including:

- Academic achievement,
- Encouragement in sex-typed subject areas (e.g., science and math),
- Career aspirations, and
- Positive sex-role attitudes and self-esteem.

The NCGS has an established history of commissioning research on the contribution of girls-only education to females' growth and development, both in and out of class. In 1999, NCGS contracted with Goodman Research Group, Inc. (GRG) to survey NCGS alumnae from four academic cohorts who graduated from high school between 1983 and 1995. Drawing from the 64 participating schools and more than 10,000 potential respondents, over 4,200 alumnae participated, resulting in a 41% response rate.

Results of the 1999 survey indicated that, in general, NCGS alumnae were positive about their girls' school experience and felt it had given them an academic advantage in college. An important insight from the 1999 study was that alumnae reported they would choose a girls-only school again if they had to make that choice, and that they would encourage their own daughter to attend one in the future.

Six years after the original study, NCGS has contracted with GRG to conduct a second survey of NCGS alumnae. This time, the selected sample consisted of alumnae who graduated from an NCGS member school in 2004, with the purpose of focusing on the role that the girls' schools played in women's transitions to college. More specifically, NCGS wanted to gain insight into recent alumnae's perceptions of the effectiveness of their schools in preparing them for the academic and social aspects of college.

## EVALUATION GOALS

The goal of this study was to examine the perceived outcomes associated with girls' school attendance, with an emphasis on collecting data from alumnae at the end of their first year of college. Research study participants were asked to reflect on and characterize their girls' school experience, their academic and career aspirations, and their perceptions of how well their schools prepared them for the academic and social transitions to college. The research questions for each of the three interest areas are presented below.

### **Girls' school experience**

1. How do alumnae from NCGS secondary schools rate their high school experience (academic, social, extracurricular)?
2. What advice would alumnae offer to prospective girls' schools attendees?

### **Academic interests and career aspirations**

3. What are the academic subjects of interest and career aspirations of NCGS alumnae?
4. What are the sources to which alumnae attribute their academic and career aspirations?

### **Academic and social transitions to college**

5. How prepared were alumnae for the academic and social transition to college, compared to their peers from co-ed schools?

## **METHOD**

GRG collected data from alumnae who graduated from an NCGS member school in 2004. The participants completed a one-time retrospective Web survey that was located on GRG's Web site. Prior to beginning the study, GRG and NCGS determined that an online survey would be an appropriate means for collecting data from this population, as NCGS alumnae have access to the Web in their college dorms or computer labs. GRG has found response rates to online surveys to be comparable to or better than those associated with mailed paper surveys, and use of the Internet is considerably more cost-effective. The use of a Web-survey was contingent upon the availability of electronic databases with alumnae email addresses.

The Web survey consisted of 32 possible questions covering three areas of interest: the girls' school experience, alumnae's academic interests and career aspirations, and the influence of NCGS member school attendance on academic and social transitions to college.

The majority of questions used a closed-response format, with six open-ended questions included. The survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete. GRG developed the survey in consultation with the NCGS Board of Directors, and pilot-tested the instrument with eight first-year college females. The Appendix includes a copy of the survey.

## **PROCEDURES**

As a first step, GRG drafted an invitation for NCGS to email to the private, national member schools with 2004 graduates. Members from public schools and international affiliates were excluded from the study because the contexts in which these schools operate differ significantly from the private, national schools. During the two weeks following the original sending of the letter, NCGS

and GRG followed up with the schools to determine their interest in participating.

As stated in the original email, participating schools were asked to select a staff member to act as the liaison between GRG and the school for the duration of the study (January - March 2005). The liaison was asked to assume the following responsibilities:

1. Create an electronic database with the contact information for their 2004 graduates.
2. Communicate with the alumnae on behalf of GRG via email or post-mail up to two times.
3. Insure confidentiality by being the only person to communicate with school alumnae.

GRG then provided each school with a range of ID numbers and asked the liaison to assign one ID to each 2004 graduate. For those schools with current email addresses for at least 25% of their 2004 alumnae, GRG asked the liaison to send individualized email invitations, drafted by GRG, to the alumnae. The email invitation introduced the study and included the Web site address to the online NCGS Alumnae Survey.

For those schools with email addresses for less than 25% of their 2004 alumnae, and for one school who could not send personalized emails, GRG provided the schools with a letter to send to parents containing the survey's Web site address. In addition, parents received a postage paid postcard for them to address and send to their daughters.

Two weeks after the liaisons contacted the alumnae, GRG provided the schools with either an electronic version or post-mail reminder to send to their alumnae. Four weeks following the original mailing of invitations, GRG ended the data collection. An incentive to complete the survey was offered to all alumnae. GRG randomly selected 20 respondents to each receive an Amazon.com gift certificate valued at \$20.

## **SAMPLE**

### **School Participation**

The school sample included all NCGS member private schools in the United States with a program serving grades nine through twelve. Eighty-three schools were eligible to participate, and 61 schools ultimately participated by distributing the invitations and online survey to their alumnae. The school participation rate was 73%.

Of the 61 participating schools, 56 schools communicated with their alumnae via email and sent the electronic invitations directly to the students. The remaining five schools had too few email addresses or couldn't successfully send the emails, and were asked to send letters and postcards to the

alumnae’s parents. Parents were then asked to tell their daughters about the survey or forward the postage paid postcard to them.

### Alumnae Response Rate

Contact information (either alumnae email address or parent’s permanent mailing address) was available for 2,606 alumnae. Of the 2,606 possible respondents, GRG received completed surveys from 1,018 alumnae representing 61 schools. The estimated alumnae response rate is 39%. This response rate is an approximation and does not account for incorrect email or permanent mailing addresses, emails that never reached the recipient, or cases where parents did not forward the invitations to their daughters. The number of alumnae who could be contacted from each school ranged from 13 to 144, and the response rates for individual schools ranged from 4% to 74%.

## EVALUATION FINDINGS

### RESPONDENT PROFILE

The majority of respondents attended a girls’ school for some combination of elementary, middle and high school, and approximately one-third of the alumnae received financial aid from their schools. Table 1 provides a detailed description of respondents’ demographic information.

		% of Respondents
<b>Age</b>	18 years	1%
	19 years	72%
	20 years	26%
	21-23 years	1%
<b>Race / Ethnicity*</b>	American Indian or Alaska Native	1%
	Asian	9%
	Black or African American	6%
	Hispanic or Latino	4%
	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1%
	White	83%
<b>Girls’ School Attendance</b>	Attended 3 years or less	10%
	Attended 4 years	39%
	Attended 5-9 years	33%
	Attended 10-13 years	18%
<b>Day or Boarding</b>	Day student	84%
	Boarding student	12%
	Both	4%
<b>Financial Aid Recipient</b>	Yes	32%
	No	68%

N = 1,018

\* Percentages exceed 100% because respondents could select more than one category.

Throughout this report, comparisons will be made between the 2005 and 1999 samples, where appropriate. There were both similarities and differences between the two samples. The percentage of Caucasian respondents was nearly identical across the two samples and the main difference concerned the age of respondents. The 1999 study surveyed alumnae from several cohorts, and their ages at the time of the 1999 survey ranged from 20 to 36 years. Additionally, the percentage of respondents who attended their schools as day students increased from 72% in 1999 to 84% in 2005, and the percentage of respondents who received financial aid from their schools increased from 22% in 1999 to 32% in 2005.

## THE GIRLS' SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

Alumnae were asked two main questions about their girls' school experience:

- How do alumnae from NCGS secondary schools rate their high school experience?
- What advice would alumnae offer to prospective girls' schools attendees?

An excellent indicator of alumnae's positive experiences with their girls' school was that 61% of the respondents said they would *definitely* attend a girls' school again if they had to do it over again, and an additional 31% of respondents said they would *probably* attend a girls' school again, if given the opportunity. Respondents' comments illustrate their positive attitudes about their girls' school.

*"I had the best time at my school. I made amazing friends and learned from incredibly talented and enthusiastic teachers. I think I am as well-prepared for college and for life afterward as I could possibly be."*

*"I love the fact that I went to an all girls' school for the friendships I made and the individualized attention from teachers. We were a close knit community."*

*"Now that I attend a coed college I miss an all girls learning environment so much. The faculty and students give you so much self-confidence and you really feel that you are just as capable and equal to males, a feeling I do not always have at college."*

Further, when presented with the statement, "Young women should be encouraged to attend girls' schools," 64% of respondents either *somewhat* or *strongly* agreed. An additional 29% of respondents had no opinion about this statement.

Respondents rated their satisfaction with their girls' school in four areas: (1) academics, (2) individual development, (3) fostering community, leadership and community service, and (4) social and extracurricular opportunities. Respondents indicated their satisfaction by assigning numbers to each area

and using a 1-5 scale, with 1 equal to *not at all satisfied*, 2 equal to *a little satisfied*, 3 equal to *moderately satisfied*, 4 equal to *very satisfied*, and 5 equal to *extremely satisfied*.

### Satisfaction with Girls' School Academics

Looking back one year, alumnae were very satisfied with their academic experiences at their girls' schools. As shown in Table 2:

- 95% were either *very* or *extremely* satisfied with their schools' ability to provide them with a rigorous academic curriculum,
- 93% were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with their schools' provision of individualized attention, and
- 80% were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with their schools' encouragement of students developing their own interests.

Table 2  
Satisfaction with the schools' academics

How satisfied were you with your schools in the following ways:	Not at all satisfied (1)	A little satisfied (2)	Moderately satisfied (3)	Very satisfied (4)	Extremely satisfied (5)	Average rating
Providing a rigorous academic curriculum	<1%	1%	4%	24%	71%	4.6
Providing individualized attention	<1%	1%	5%	22%	71%	4.6
Encouraging students to develop their own interests	2%	3%	15%	35%	45%	4.2

N = 1,018

Alumnae also rated their satisfaction with how well their schools encouraged them to develop interests in a variety of academic areas. They were most satisfied with the Humanities and the Arts, followed by Science and Technology, and Math. This pattern of response was nearly identical to the findings from the 1999 study. See Table 3 and the bullets below for the distribution of responses to the 2005 survey questions.

- More than three-quarters of the respondents (83%) were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with the amount of encouragement that their schools gave to students' interests in the Humanities,
- More than two-thirds of respondents were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with their schools' encouragement in the subject areas of Arts and Music (68%), Technology (68%), and Science (66%), and

- Just under two-thirds of respondents (61%) were *very* or *extremely* or satisfied with their schools encouragement of students’ interests in Mathematics.

Table 3  
Satisfaction with the schools’ encouragement of academic areas

How satisfied were you with your schools’ encouragement of your interest in:	Not at all satisfied (1)	A little satisfied (2)	Moderately satisfied (3)	Very satisfied (4)	Extremely satisfied (5)	Average rating
Humanities	1%	4%	13%	36%	47%	4.2
Arts & Music	3%	8%	21%	30%	38%	3.9
Technology	2%	9%	21%	33%	35%	3.9
Science	2%	10%	22%	33%	33%	3.8
Mathematics	4%	11%	24%	32%	29%	3.7

N = 1,018

### Individual Development

One of the goals of the NCGS member schools is to provide students with opportunities for individual development, along with a supportive environment to nurture girls’ development. Respondents indicated that schools were doing a good job of this. As seen in Table 4:

- 85% of respondents were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with their schools’ encouragement for students’ to pursue new challenges,
- 82% of responding alumnae were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with their schools’ fostering of self-confidence, and
- 75% were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with their schools’ encouraging an appreciation of individual difference.

Table 4  
Satisfaction with the schools’ contribution to individual development

How satisfied were you with your schools’:	Not at all satisfied (1)	A little satisfied (2)	Moderately satisfied (3)	Very satisfied (4)	Extremely satisfied (5)	Average Rating
Encouragement to pursue new challenges	<1%	3%	12%	35%	50%	4.3
Fostering of self-confidence	2%	3%	13%	33%	49%	4.3
Encouragement to appreciate individual difference	2%	4%	19%	33%	42%	4.1

N = 1,018

## Fostering Community, Community Service, and Leadership

Respondents rated their satisfaction with their girls’ school in the areas of fostering community, encouraging community service, and developing girls’ leadership. The vast majority believed their girls’ schools accomplished these. Respondents shared their opinions of their schools in these areas using a 1-5 scale, with 1 equal to *not at all satisfied* and 5 equal to *extremely satisfied*.

As shown in Table 5, alumnae were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with their schools’ support and encouragement in all three areas.

- 87% of alumnae were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with how well their school fostered students’ sense of belonging to a community,
- 84% were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with their schools’ provision of leadership opportunities, and
- 71% of alumnae were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with the amount of encouragement schools showed for students’ involvement with community service.

Table 5  
Satisfaction with community, leadership and community service

How satisfied were you with your schools’:	Not at all satisfied (1)	A little satisfied (2)	Moderately satisfied (3)	Very satisfied (4)	Extremely satisfied (5)	Average rating
Fostering your sense of belonging to a community	1%	2%	10%	30%	57%	4.4
Providing you with leadership opportunities	1%	3%	12%	29%	55%	4.4
Encouraging you to become involved with community service	2%	8%	19%	34%	37%	4.0

N = 1,018

## Social and Extracurricular Opportunities

Alumnae were asked to think back on their girls’ school experience and to consider how satisfied they were with their schools’ social and extracurricular opportunities, and their preparation for the “real world.” Respondents were satisfied with the variety of extracurricular opportunities available to them, but were less satisfied with how well their schools prepared them for the “real world.”

- The majority of respondents (81%) were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with the variety of extracurricular activities available to them at their girls’ schools.
- More than three-quarters (78%) of respondents were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with the variety of athletic opportunities available to students, and
- More than half of the respondents (58%) said that they were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with how well their schools prepared them for the “real world.”

Table 6 presents the distribution of responses and average satisfaction ratings.

Table 6  
Satisfaction with social and extracurricular opportunities

How satisfied were you with:	Not at all satisfied (1)	A little satisfied (2)	Moderately satisfied (3)	Very satisfied (4)	Extremely satisfied (5)	Average rating
The variety of extracurricular opportunities	1%	2%	16%	35%	46%	4.2
The variety of athletic opportunities	1%	4%	17%	34%	44%	4.2
Your preparation for the “real world”	5%	10%	27%	31%	27%	3.7

N = 1,018

### Attitudes about Girls’ Schools

Alumnae were presented with several statements citing the possible benefits of a girls’ only education, and they were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statements using a scale representing:

- 1 = strongly disagreed
- 2 = somewhat disagreed
- 3 = neither disagreed or agreed
- 4 = somewhat agreed
- 5 = strongly agreed

As Table 7 shows, between 66-85% of respondents *somewhat agreed* or *strongly agreed* with the following statements:

Compared to coed schools,

- 85% agreed that girls’ school provide a greater “can do” attitude,
- 84% agreed that girls’ schools provide more leadership opportunities,
- 83% agreed that girls’ schools provide a better environment for personal development,
- 74% agreed that girls’ schools provide more encouragement in science, math and technology,
- 67% agreed that girls’ schools provide better preparation for college academics, and
- 66% agreed that girls’ schools contribute more to young women’s social self-confidence.

Table 7  
Agree or disagree with statements about girls-only education

Compared to coed schools, girls’ schools...	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Foster a greater “can do” attitude	1%	3%	11%	30%	55%
Provide more leadership opportunities	1%	3%	12%	28%	56%
Provide a better environment for personal development	2%	6%	9%	31%	52%
Provide more encouragement in the areas of science, math, and technology	2%	6%	18%	28%	46%
Better prepare young women for college academics	2%	6%	25%	36%	31%
Contribute more to young women’s social self-confidence	4%	13%	17%	28%	38%

N = 1,018

### Advice to Young Girls

Alumnae were asked, in an open-ended question, what advice they would offer to a young girl who was considering attending their girls’ school. Thirty-six percent of alumnae (363 of 1,018) provided advice that was coded into one of twelve themes. Table 8 shows the themes and the percentage of respondents who offered each type of advice.

Table 8  
Alumnae advice to young girls

	% of responses
Get involved and take advantage of opportunities	20%
Make sure the decision is right for you (e.g., visit the school before enrolling)	18%
Be open minded about the experience/ Stay with it and give it time/ Be yourself /Don't get too stressed out	17%
Reassurance that a single-sex education is valuable	13%
Be prepared to work hard and to be challenged	12%
Seek outside experiences	7%
Social advice about how to navigate the school's climate	7%
Other / Miscellaneous	5%

N = 363

As seen in Table 8, alumnae's advice centered on a "go for it" attitude and encouraged prospective students to be active participants in the decision to attend the girls' school. Alumnae also advised prospective students to approach the girls' school experience with an open-mind, and to be reassured that an all-girls environment has its advantages.

### **The Decision to Attend a Girls' School**

Close to half of the respondents said that the decision to enroll in their girls' school was exclusively their parent's or guardian's decision. Thirty-two percent of respondents said that the decision was jointly made between the parent and daughter, and 21% of respondents said it was their decision alone.

Statistical analyses indicated that when girls, and not parents, were the sole decision-makers (21%), alumnae were more satisfied with their girls' school experience in the following ways:

- The schools' ability to foster self-confidence,
- The encouragement they received to pursue new challenges, and
- The school's encouragement of individual differences.

Furthermore, alumnae who made the decision to attend on their own:

- Felt more encouraged to develop their own interests,
- More strongly agreed that girls' schools contribute to social self-confidence, and
- More strongly agreed that girls' schools are better able to foster a "can do" attitude than are coed schools.

Table 9 shows the average satisfaction ratings when the student was the decision-maker, when the parent was the decision-maker, and when the decision was jointly made. Ratings were made using a 1-5 scale, with 1 equal

to *not at all satisfied / strongly disagree* and 5 equal to *extremely satisfied / strongly agree*. Although most alumnae were quite satisfied and the differences appear small, they represent statistically significant differences.

Table 9  
Average satisfaction ratings by decision-maker (Ratings made on a 1-5 scale)

	Student Decided	Parent Decided	Joint Decision
Schools' ability to foster overall self-confidence	4.5	4.2*	4.3
Encouraged to pursue new challenges	4.4	4.2*	4.3
Appreciation of individual differences	4.3	4.0*	4.1
Encouraged to develop own interests	4.4	4.1*	4.2
Girls' schools (compared to coed) contribute more to social self-confidence	4.0	3.7*	3.9
Girls' schools (compared to coed) foster more of a "can do" attitude	4.5	4.3*	4.4

N = 1,003

\* p<.01

Other aspects of alumnae's satisfaction with their girls' school experience were not influenced by who made the decision to attend. For example, perceptions of the academic rigor or the extent to which the experience mirrored the "real world" were the same regardless of who made the decision about attending the school.

In addition to learning about who influenced the decision to attend the girls' schools, alumnae were asked, in an open-ended question, to describe what factors contributed to their subsequent decision to enroll in their particular schools. Ninety percent of alumnae (920 of 1,018) responded, and responses were coded into six themes.

As seen in Table 10, academic quality and family legacy were the most influential factors in selecting a school. Individual school qualities (e.g., size, location) and school climate (e.g., atmosphere) also played an important role in school enrollment, and very few alumnae specifically mentioned the advantages of a single-sex education as a primary factor. Respondents offered the following comments to further explain what factors contributed to their decision to enroll in their particular schools:

*"My interest in pursuing academics seriously, and in finding a scholarly community with the same goals, was the primary factor that contributed to my ultimate choice of school."*

*"The academics were great and it seemed like the students were involved and ready to learn."*

Table 10  
Factors determining school enrollment

	% of responses
Academic Quality	30%
Family Legacy / Parent Influence	24%
Individual School Qualities	17%
School Climate	16%
Miscellaneous / Other	13%
Advantages of a Single-Sex Education	<1%

N = 920

### Financial Aid Recipients' Experiences

Approximately one-third of the respondents (32%) received financial aid while attending their girls' school. Of those who received financial aid, 31% were minority students. Compared to alumnae who did not receive financial aid, recipients rated their girls' school more positively on three dimensions.

As presented in Table 11, alumnae who received financial aid were more satisfied with the encouragement they received from their girls' schools to appreciate individual differences, to develop their own interests (especially in science, arts, and music), and to become involved with community service. Although the average ratings were high for both groups and differed by one or two-tenths of a point, the differences were significant from a statistical perspective.

Table 11  
Influence of financial aid on experiences

How satisfied were you with your school in the following ways:	Financial Aid Recipient	No Financial Aid
Encouraged students to appreciate individual difference	4.2	4.0*
Encouraged students to develop their own interests	4.3	4.2*
Encouraged students to become involved with community service	4.1	3.9*

N = 1,018

Ratings on a 1-5 scale, with 1 = not at all satisfied and 5 = extremely satisfied.

\* p<.05

Financial aid recipients were also more likely to agree with the following four statements than were alumnae who did not receive financial aid (See Table 12). As previously mentioned, although the average ratings were high for both groups, the differences were significant from a statistical perspective.

Table 12  
Influence of financial aid on experiences

To what extent do you agree with the statements?	Financial Aid Recipient	No Financial Aid
Girls' schools better prepare young women for college academics than do coed schools.	4.0	3.8*
Girls' schools provide a better environment for young women's personal development than do coed schools.	4.4	4.2*
Girls' schools provide young women with more encouragement in the areas of science, math and technology.	4.2	4.0*
Girls' schools contribute more to young women's self-confidence in social situations than do coed schools.	4.0	3.7*

N = 1,018

Ratings on a 1-5 scale; 1 = strongly disagreed and 5 = strongly agreed \* p<.01

### The Influence of Race/Ethnicity on Alumnae's Experiences

Seventeen percent of the respondents were non-Caucasian and 83% were Caucasian. Both groups rated their schools very positively. However, non-Caucasian respondents were less satisfied with their girls' school experiences regarding:

- Their schools' ability to foster a sense of belonging to a community,
- The amount of individualized attention their schools provided, and
- The rigor of the academic curriculums.

Table 13 displays the average ratings ascribed by each group. The ratings were made on a 5-point scale, with 1 equal to *not at all satisfied* and 5 equal to *extremely satisfied*. It is important to point out that the average ratings were very high for both groups, but that the difference of two-tenths of a point was significant from a statistical perspective.

Table 13  
Differences by race / ethnicity

	Caucasian Respondents	Non-Caucasian Respondents
Schools' ability to foster sense of belonging to a community	4.4	4.2**
Provision of individualized attention	4.7	4.5*
Rigorous academic curriculum	4.7	4.5**

N = 1,018

\*\*p<.01; \*p<.05

## **The Influence of Day and Boarding Student Status**

Although respondents were much more likely to have attended their schools as day students (84%), compared to boarding students (12%), there were a few differences between the two types of experiences. Day students were statistically more satisfied with the rigor of their academic curriculums than were boarding students (average ratings 4.7 versus 4.4 on a 5-point scale), and day students felt that their schools had better prepared them for the “real world” than did boarding students (average ratings 3.7 versus 3.4 on a 5-point scale).

## **ACADEMIC INTERESTS AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS**

The second set of research questions pertained to alumnae’s academic interests and career aspirations:

- What are the academic subjects of interest and career aspirations of NCGS alumnae?
- What are the sources to which alumnae attribute their academic and career aspirations?

### **Academic Interests**

At the time of the survey, 99% of the respondents were completing their first year of a four-year college. Alumnae rated their current interest in ten academic subject areas using a 1-5 scale, with 1 equal to *not at all interested* and 5 equal to *extremely interested*. Table 14 presents the distribution of responses and the average ratings across the ten academic subject areas.

Table 14  
Academic interests

<b>How interested are you in:</b>	<b>Not at all interested (1)</b>	<b>A little interested (2)</b>	<b>Moderately interested (3)</b>	<b>Very interested (4)</b>	<b>Extremely interested (5)</b>	<b>Average rating</b>
Psychology, Sociology & Anthropology	3%	8%	22%	33%	34%	3.9
Arts & Music	4%	9%	26%	24%	37%	3.8
English & Literature	6%	12%	25%	30%	27%	3.6
History, Geography & Politics	7%	11%	24%	28%	30%	3.6
Foreign Languages	8%	12%	25%	29%	26%	3.5
Math & Sciences	14%	17%	24%	21%	24%	3.3
Athletics	14%	20%	27%	21%	18%	3.1
Economics & Business	20%	23%	27%	17%	13%	2.8
Computer Technology	22%	27%	33%	12%	6%	2.5
Engineering	48%	24%	16%	7%	5%	2.0

N = 1,018

As seen in Table 14, alumnae were most interested in the Social Sciences, Arts and Music, English and Literature, and Humanities. Respondents were less interested in Engineering, Computer Technology, Economics and Business.

Although many first year college students had not yet declared a major, alumnae were asked what they thought they might major in, once the time came. Eighty-five percent of alumnae (856 of 1,018) indicated a possible major, which differed somewhat from alumnae's academic interests described above. The top five areas of majors, as shown in Table 15, were:

- History, Geography or Politics,
- Psychology, Sociology or Anthropology,
- Math or Science,
- Economics or Business,
- Arts or Music, or
- English, Literature or Writing.

One possible explanation for the difference between subject area interests and intended majors is that alumnae may believe that some majors lead to marketable skills that their interests may not.

Table 15  
 Alumnae's intended majors

	% of responses
History, Geography or Politics	22%
Psychology, Sociology, or Anthropology	17%
Math or Science	15%
Economics or Business	12%
Arts or Music	7%
English, Literature or Writing	7%
Engineering	4%
Education	3%
Health Science	3%
Architecture	2%
Foreign Languages	2%
Athletics, Computer Technology, or an 'undefined' major	Approximately 2% each

N = 856

### College Selection

Alumnae were asked to identify, from a list of nine factors, what factors influenced their college choice. Alumnae were invited to select as many factors as applied.

As seen in Table 16, the academic and overall reputations of the colleges and universities, as well as location, had the most influence on selection. Size of student body and social climate were also large contributing factors in alumnae's decisions. Recommendations from family members and academic counselors, and the school's reputation in a particular area were influential, but to a lesser degree. Financial considerations played the least part in college choice.

Table 16  
Factors influencing college choice

	% of respondents
Academic reputation	79%
Overall reputation	74%
Location	74%
Size of student body	69%
Social climate	63%
Recommended by family member	40%
Recommended by academic counselor	38%
School strength in particular area	36%
Financial considerations	29%

N = 1,013

Ninety-five percent of the respondents were attending a coed college, and when selecting a college, 76% of the respondents said that the coed versus single-sex factor was *very* or *extremely* important. In order to explore this more thoroughly, alumnae’s explanations were coded thematically. Of those who said that attending a coed school was important (714 of 1,013), they gave the following reasons:

- 49% wanted experiences that mirrored the “real world” in terms of interacting with males,
- 44% simply wanted a new and different experience, and
- 3% wanted an opportunity to apply the benefits of their single-sex education to a coed setting.

Of the 5% of alumnae who were attending a women’s college, they specified that they wanted to continue with the single-sex education experience.

### **Career Aspirations**

The vast majority of alumnae view a career or profession as an integral part of their lives.

- 95% said that having a career and profession were *very* or *extremely* important to them, and
- 73% said that it was *very* or *extremely* important that they be recognized for their career success.

Leadership positions and volunteerism were also very important to alumnae. Seventy-seven percent of respondents said that holding a leadership position

was *very* or *extremely* important to them, and 73% of respondents felt it was *very* or *extremely* important to volunteer in their communities. Table 17 presents the distribution of responses and average ratings.

Table 17  
Ratings of career importance

How important is it for you to:	Not at all important (1)	A little important (2)	Moderately important (3)	Very important (4)	Extremely important (5)	Average rating
Have a career or profession	<1%	<1%	4%	14%	81%	4.8
Be recognized for career success	2%	5%	20%	26%	47%	4.1
Hold leadership positions in professional life	1%	5%	17%	29%	48%	4.2
Volunteer in community	1%	5%	21%	32%	41%	4.1

N = 1,018

When alumnae were asked to describe who or what had been the greatest influence on their career aspirations, 927 of 1,013 alumnae (92%) responded to the open-ended question. The most significant influences for alumnae were their families (38%), teachers and advisors (20%), specific experiences, such as internships and camps (17%), and other specific, non-familial people (8%). For example,

*“The creative and supportive teachers influenced me to want to become a teacher too.”*

*“My teachers have been quite a large influence, as well as my parents. I have expressed my interests to these people and they help encourage me to reach my goals.”*

Ten percent of the respondents said that they were their own most significant influence, and 4% said that they either didn’t know because they weren’t yet sure of their aspirations or that there have been no influences. Three percent of the responses were coded as “other.”

## ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL TRANSITIONS

The final area of interest was to learn about alumnae’s recent academic and social transitions to college, and to know how prepared they felt by their girls’ schools. Alumnae were asked:

- How prepared were you for the academic and social transition to college, compared to your peers from coed schools?

Respondents rated how satisfied they were with their preparation on a 1-5 scale, with 1 equal to *not at all satisfied*, 2 equal to *a little satisfied*, 3 equal to *moderately satisfied*, 4 equal to *very satisfied*, and 5 equal to *extremely satisfied*. With the highest possible rating being a 5.0, the distribution of responses and average satisfaction ratings were as follows:

Table 18  
Satisfaction with preparation for transitions

How satisfied were you with preparation for:	Not at all satisfied (1)	A little satisfied (2)	Moderately satisfied (3)	Very satisfied (4)	Extremely satisfied (5)	Average rating
Academic aspects of college	<1%	1%	6%	25%	68%	4.6
Extracurricular aspects of college	1%	3%	20%	35%	41%	4.1
Informal social aspects of college	4%	11%	30%	33%	22%	3.6

N = 1,013

As indicated in Table 18, 93% of alumnae were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with the preparation they received for the academic aspects of college, 76% were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with the preparation they received for the extracurricular aspects of college, and 55% were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with the preparation they received for the informal social aspects of college.

### Academic Transitions

In the absence of a comparison group, alumnae were asked to consider how well their girls' schools prepared them for college in comparison to their observation of female college peers who attended coed high schools. Respondents rated their preparation for college along 20 dimensions that covered the academic and social aspects of the transition to college. Respondents rated their preparedness using a scale representing:

- 1 = Much less prepared
- 2 = Somewhat less prepared
- 3 = Equally prepared
- 4 = Somewhat more prepared
- 5 = Much more prepared

Overall, 85% of respondents felt *somewhat more* or *much more* prepared than their coed peers for the academic demands of college. As shown in Table 19:

- 84% of respondents felt *more* prepared for college writing and 15% felt *equally* prepared.

- 69% of respondents felt *more* prepared for public speaking and 28% felt *equally* prepared.
- 50% of respondents felt *more* prepared for college science and 43% felt *equally* prepared.
- 50% of respondents felt *more* prepared with computer skills and 42% felt *equally* prepared.
- 51% of respondents felt *more* prepared for college math and 39% felt *equally* prepared.

Table 19  
Prepared for college academics

Compared to peers who attended coed schools:	Much less prepared	Somewhat less prepared	Equally prepared	Somewhat more prepared	Much more prepared
Writing skills	<1%	1%	15%	30%	54%
Public speaking	<1%	3%	28%	34%	35%
Science skills	<1%	7%	43%	30%	20%
Computer skills	<1%	8%	42%	28%	22%
Math skills	1%	9%	39%	28%	23%

N = 1,013

### Classroom Interactions

With regard to the dynamics and interactions taking place within the college classroom, alumnae believed their preparation was comparable or superior to that of their coed high school peers in several ways. As presented in Table 20:

- 78% of respondents felt *more* prepared to interact with faculty and 21% felt *equally* prepared.
- 80% of respondents felt *more* prepared to participate in class discussions and 17% felt *equally* prepared.
- 60% of respondents felt *more* prepared to take on leadership roles in college and 36% felt *equally* prepared.

Table 20  
Prepared for the college classroom

Compared to peers who attended coed schools:	Much less prepared	Somewhat less prepared	Equally prepared	Somewhat more prepared	Much more prepared
Interactions with faculty	<1%	1%	21%	32%	46%
Participation in class discussions	<1%	3%	17%	27%	53%
Taking on leadership roles in college	<1%	4%	36%	32%	28%

N = 1,013

Compared to other dimension of preparedness, alumnae felt less prepared than their coed peers to deal with gender bias in the classrooms and for academic interactions with men.

- 51% of respondents felt *more* prepared for gender bias in the classroom and 33% felt *equally* prepared.
- 29% felt *more* prepared than their coed high school peers for academic interactions with men and 39% felt *equally* prepared.

Table 21 shows the distribution of responses.

Table 21  
Prepared for the coed classroom

Compared to peers who attended coed schools:	Much less prepared	Somewhat less prepared	Equally prepared	Somewhat more prepared	Much more prepared
Gender bias in the classrooms	2%	13%	33%	23%	28%
Academic interactions with men	8%	24%	39%	16%	13%

N = 1,013

### Social Transitions and Informal Aspects of College

The majority of alumnae indicated that they were either *equally* prepared or *more* prepared than their coed peers for the social transition to college.

- 66% of respondents felt *more* prepared and 29% felt *equally* prepared to balance the time they spent on academics with the time they spent on social activities,
- 60% of respondents felt *more* prepared and 33% felt *equally* prepared to meet new people from different backgrounds than were their coed peers,

- 42% of respondents felt *more* prepared and 50% felt *equally* prepared to make new friends, and
- 22% of respondents felt *more* prepared and 42% felt *equally* prepared for social interactions with men.

Table 22 shows the distribution of responses.

Table 22  
Prepared for social transitions

Compared to peers who attended coed schools:	Much less prepared	Somewhat less prepared	Equally prepared	Somewhat more prepared	Much more prepared
Balancing time spent on academics with time spent on social activities	1%	4%	29%	32%	34%
Meeting new people from different backgrounds	1%	6%	33%	26%	34%
Making new friends	<1%	8%	50%	21%	21%
Social interactions with men	9%	27%	42%	11%	11%

N = 1,013

The survey concluded with two open-ended questions: (1) What challenges, if any, did you experience in your transition to college; and (2) What, if anything, could your girls' school have done to better prepare you for college?

Seventy-three percent of alumnae (735 of 1,013) responded to the question about challenges experienced in the transition to college and, of these, 122 (17%) indicated that they had not experienced any challenges. The remaining 613 responses (83%) represented a range of transitional challenges, many of which are common challenges for young adults transitioning to college.

- **30% of alumnae experienced challenges associated with social adjustments.**

*The roommate situation for me was the hardest. Making friends was also just as hard.*

*The entirely different social climate [was challenging]. Dealing with the male gender. Adapting to a completely different lifestyle.*

- **21% of alumnae indicated that they experienced challenges around the issues of living away from home and being on one's own.**

*The biggest challenge that I faced was being away from home for such a long period of time and not seeing my family, friends from home, or being able to ride horses.*

*Money balancing. It is quite difficult to manage the use of money without the parents.*

- **20% of responding alumnae reported that they experienced a challenging academic adjustment.**

*Adjusting to the new/different ways college professors grade- I was at the same school for so long and knew the teachers almost too well-I knew exactly what to expect from them.*

*Being in a classroom with guys was a bit of a shock after 4 years of an all girls school.*

- **13% of the responses indicated the challenge of learning to manage one's own time.**

*Time management was the hardest thing to adjust to. That is, I was used to having classes every minute of every day, and when I suddenly had my afternoons free I thought, "Oh, I'll do my work later." But when "later" rolled around, my work still wasn't done, and I was left in a bind.*

- **Lastly, 13% found the differences (e.g., school size, type of community, and location) between their high school experience and their college experience challenging.**

*It was hard adjusting at first from being in the tight-knit community of my high school to being at a coed school with 15,000 people.*

Three percent responded with an "other" challenged that was not coded into one of the above themes.

Six hundred alumnae (59% of the total sample) responded to the question asking "What, if anything, could your girls' school have done to better prepare you for college?" Of the 600 respondents, 209 (35%) said that their schools didn't need to do anything additional because they entered college feeling prepared. The remaining 391 responses (65%) clustered around five recommendations:

- 35% recommended having more academic and social interaction with the opposite sex.
- 28% indicated that they needed better preparation for college courses.

- 8% said they wished they had received more exposure to the world outside their girls' schools.
- 7% would have liked more freedom and personal responsibility in preparation for college.

Twenty-three percent of the responses reflected a wide range of unique statements that did not fit general patterns and therefore were not coded.

## CONCLUSIONS

This report presents the findings from a survey conducted with recent graduates of NCGS member schools. The purposes of this study were to examine the perceived outcomes associated with girls' school attendance, with focus on learning about recent alumnae's perceptions of the effectiveness of their schools in preparing them for the academic and social aspects of college. Drawing on the responses of more than 1,000 alumnae representing 61 schools, the following conclusions are made.

**Alumnae were very satisfied with their academic experiences at their girls' schools, and the vast majority would recommend others to attend their schools.**

Nearly all respondents said that they were either *very* or *extremely* satisfied with their schools' ability to provide them with rigorous academic curriculums, and the majority felt that they had received beneficial individualized attention, and encouragement to develop their own interests.

More than 90% of the alumnae said they would *definitely or probably* attend a girls' school again, and 64% agreed that young women should be encouraged to attend girls' schools.

**Alumnae experienced nurturing, supportive environments committed to their personal growth and development.**

According to their survey responses, alumnae clearly felt that their schools contributed to their self-confidence, and provided them with an environment that supported their development as individuals. More than 80% of alumnae were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with their schools' fostering of students' self-confidence, and more than 85% were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with their schools' encouragement for students to pursue new challenges.

**NCGS member schools were commended for fostering a sense of community and encouraging students to become involved with community service and leadership.**

The majority of alumnae indicated that their schools excelled at fostering a sense of community at the schools, and that most alumnae were impressed with their school's encouragement for students to become involved with community service and to seek out leadership positions.

**Alumnae were more satisfied with some aspects of their girls' school experience when they had been the primary decision-maker in deciding to attend an NCGS school.**

Compared to when parents decided on their own that their daughter would attend a girls' school, when girls were the primary decision-makers they held more positive opinions about their experiences. For example, alumnae who made the decision on their own to attend were more satisfied with the schools' ability to foster self-confidence, more satisfied with the encouragement they received to pursue new challenges, and more likely to think that their schools fostered a "can do" attitude.

**The greatest piece of advice that alumnae would offer to prospective girls' school attendees was to "go for it."**

Alumnae's advice centered on a "go for it" attitude and encouraged prospective students to be active participants in the decision to attend the girls' school. Alumnae also advised prospective students to approach the experience with an open mind and to be reassured that an all girls environment has its advantages.

**Financial aid recipients held more positive opinions about some aspects of their girls' school experience.**

Compared to alumnae who did not receive financial aid, recipients had more positive experiences with their girls' school on several dimensions, including being more satisfied with the encouragement they received from their girls' schools to appreciate individual differences, to develop their own interests (especially in science, arts, and music), and to become involved with community service.

**Alumnae of color were less satisfied with certain aspects of their girls' schools experiences.**

Statistical analyses indicated that alumnae of color were less satisfied with their schools' ability to foster a sense of belong to a community, less satisfied with the amount of individualized attention they received, and less satisfied with the rigor of the academic curriculums, compared to alumnae who did not receive financial aid from their schools.

**Alumnae's college selections were driven by reputation and a desire to attend a coed school.**

The largest contributing factor to alumnae's college selection was the reputation (in particular, academic reputation) of the school. Although location, size of student body, and social climate weighed heavily on alumnae's decision, the majority of alumnae were also very interested in selecting a coed college so that they could have an experience that mirrored the "real world" in terms of interacting with males.

**Nearly all of the alumnae expect to have careers and professions, hold positions of leadership, and contribute to their communities.**

Ninety-five percent of the respondents said that having a career and profession were *very* or *extremely* important to them, and three-quarters underscored the importance of leadership, community service, and volunteerism.

**The most significant career influences for alumnae were their families, teachers, and advisors.**

Alumnae were asked to describe who or what had been the greatest influence on their career aspirations. Thirty-eight percent indicated a family member, 20% specified that a teacher or advisor had influenced them, and 17% attributed their career aspirations to a specific life experience, such as an internship.

**Alumnae felt they were more prepared for the academic transition to college than their peers who attended coed high schools, but somewhat less prepared for interacting with men, both in and out of the classroom.**

Overall, 93% of the respondents were *very* or *extremely* satisfied with how well their girls' school prepared them for the academic aspects of college, and 65% of respondents felt *somewhat* or *much more* prepared than their coed peers for the overall transition to college.

Regarding specific academic skills, 84% of responding alumnae felt *somewhat more* or *much more* prepared for college writing, and 69% of respondents felt *somewhat more* or *much more* prepared for public speaking assignments. Approximately half of the respondents felt *somewhat more* or *much more* prepared with their math, science, and computer skills. Compared to other dimensions of preparedness, alumnae felt less prepared for both academic and social interactions with men.

## SUMMARY

In summary, this study found that NCGS member schools are providing young women with high quality and rigorous academic experiences that prepare them well for the academic demands of college. Alumnae respondents reported that their schools were to be commended for fostering a sense of community and for showing a commitment to fostering self-esteem and individuality. In slight contrast to the very positive ratings associated with girls' academic experiences and preparation, alumnae respondents reported feeling slightly less prepared for interacting with men, both in and out of the classroom. A common theme among these first year college students was that regardless of actual outcomes, they shared an anxiety that they were not prepared enough for the "real world."

**Appendix A:  
NCGS Alumnae Survey**

## **National Coalition of Girls' Schools Alumnae Survey**

**Welcome to the national study of 2004 girls' school graduates! This survey was developed by Goodman Research Group, Inc. (GRG) and will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.**

**Most questions are required, which means that you will need to answer them in order to proceed to the next page. At the bottom of each page, you will see two buttons, one labeled "Next" and the other labeled "Back." Use these buttons to move from page to page in the survey. Do not use the internet browser buttons, because doing so will result in lost data.**

**To begin the survey, enter your identification number in the field below:**

**Identification number:**

---

**Section I. Your Girls' School Experience**

**1. For how many years did you attend a girls' school (including elementary, middle and high school)?**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than one year | <input type="checkbox"/> Seven years    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> One year           | <input type="checkbox"/> Eight years    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Two years          | <input type="checkbox"/> Nine years     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Three years        | <input type="checkbox"/> Ten years      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Four years         | <input type="checkbox"/> Eleven years   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Five years         | <input type="checkbox"/> Twelve years   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Six years          | <input type="checkbox"/> Thirteen years |

**2. What type of school did you attend? (Select one of the following.)**

- |                          |                          |                                  |                                       |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>         | <input type="checkbox"/>              |
| Day                      | Boarding                 | Day / Boarding<br>(over 50% Day) | Boarding / Day<br>(over 50% Boarding) |

**Were you a:**  Boarding student or  Day student or  Both

**3. Rate your satisfaction with the girls' school that you graduated from in 2004.**

<b>How satisfied were you with your girls' school in the following areas:</b>	<b>Extremely satisfied</b>	<b>Very satisfied</b>	<b>Moderately satisfied</b>	<b>A little satisfied</b>	<b>Not at all satisfied</b>
fostering your sense of belonging to a community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
fostering your overall self-confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
encouraging you to pursue new challenges	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
encouraging you to appreciate individual differences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
encouraging you to become with community service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
encouraging you to develop your own interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
encouraging your interest in the arts and music	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
encouraging your interest in the humanities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
encouraging your interest in mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
encouraging your interest in science	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
encouraging your use of technology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**4. Rate your satisfaction with the girls' school that you graduated from in 2004.**

<b>How satisfied were you with your girls' school in the following areas:</b>	<b>Extremely satisfied</b>	<b>Very satisfied</b>	<b>Moderately satisfied</b>	<b>A little satisfied</b>	<b>Not at all satisfied</b>
offering you a variety of extracurricular activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
providing you with individualized attention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
providing you with a variety of athletic opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
providing you with leadership opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
providing you with a rigorous academic curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
preparing you for the "real world"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**5. What first triggered your interest in attending a girls' school?**

**6. Who in your family had the most input in the decision to enroll in your particular school?**

Parent or Guardian     
 Yourself     
 Both had equal input     
 Other person     
 If other, who?

**7. What factors ultimately contributed to your decision to enroll in your particular school?**

**8. What advice would you offer to a young girl who is considering attending your girls' school?**

9. Are you currently in contact with any faculty or staff from your girls' school?  Yes  No

10. Are you in currently in contact with any classmates from your girls' school?  Yes  No

11. Reflecting on your girls' school experience, how strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Girls' schools better prepare young women for college academics than do coed schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Girls' schools provide a better environment for young women's personal development than do coed schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Girls' schools provide young women with more encouragement in the areas of science, math, and technology than do coed schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leadership opportunities are greater for young women attending girls' schools than for young women attending coed schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Young women should be encouraged to attend girls' schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Girls' schools contribute more to young women's self-confidence in academic areas than do coed schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Girls' schools contribute more to young women's self-confidence in social situations than do coed schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Girls' schools are better able to foster a "can do" attitude for young women than are coed schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. If you had it to do over again, would you attend a girls' school?

Definitely Yes

Probably Yes

Probably Not

Definitely Not

Explain the reasons for your rating.

*Section II. For the next set of questions we're interested in learning about your current academic interests and career aspirations.*

**13. How interested are you in the following academic subject areas?**

	<b>Extremely interested</b>	<b>Very interested</b>	<b>Moderately interested</b>	<b>A little interested</b>	<b>Not at all interested</b>
Arts & Music	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Athletics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computer Technology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Economics & Business	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
English & Literature	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foreign Languages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
History, Geography, or Politics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Math & Sciences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Psychology, Sociology, & Anthropology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (specify: _____ )	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**14. How important is it for you to:**

	<b>Extremely important</b>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Moderately important</b>	<b>A little important</b>	<b>Not at all important</b>
Have a career or profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Be recognized for your career success	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hold leadership positions in your personal or professional life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volunteer in your community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**15. Who or what has been the greatest influence on your career aspirations?**

16. In which of the following areas, if any, would you like to pursue leadership positions? (Check all that apply.)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts association             | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional association |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charitable organization      | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious group          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> College organization or club | <input type="checkbox"/> Women's organization     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community or civic group     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____    |

17. Are you currently enrolled in college?  Yes  No

*If yes, continue to question 18. If no, skip to question 29.*

18. What college do you attend?

Is this a  two-year college or  four-year college

Are you pursuing a/an:  Associate degree  Bachelor degree  other degree (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

19. What do you intend to major in at college?

20. What factors led you to choose your particular college? (Check all that apply.)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Academic reputation               | <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended by family members                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial considerations          | <input type="checkbox"/> School's strength in a particular academic area (specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Location                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Size of student body  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overall reputation                | <input type="checkbox"/> Social climate  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended by academic counselor | <input type="checkbox"/> Other factors (specify) _____                                   |

21. Is your college:  coed  single-sex

22. In selecting a college, how important was the coed versus single-sex factor?

Extremely important       Very important       Moderately important       A little important       Not at all important

**Explain the reasons for your rating.**

**23. How do you spend your time when not in class? (Check all that apply.)**

- Athletics                                       Religious activities and involvement  
 Employment                                       Studying  
 Participating in college clubs               Volunteering for community or civic groups  
 Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**24. Compared to your female college peers who attended coed high schools, how prepared were you for the following transitions into college?**

<b>Were you more, equally, or less prepared than your peers for the following:</b>	<b>Much more prepared</b>	<b>Somewhat more prepared</b>	<b>Equally prepared</b>	<b>Somewhat less prepared</b>	<b>Much less prepared</b>
Public speaking skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Science skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Math skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computer skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The academic demands of college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participation in class discussions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender bias in the classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interactions with faculty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic interactions with men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking on leadership roles in college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meeting new people from different backgrounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social interactions with men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making new friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Balancing the time spent on academics with time spent on social activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall academic preparation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall transition to college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

25. Overall, how satisfied are you with how well your girls' school prepared you for the following?

	Extremely satisfied	Very satisfied	Moderately satisfied	A little satisfied	Not at all satisfied
The <u>academic</u> aspects of college?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The informal <u>social</u> aspects of college?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The <u>extracurricular</u> (e.g., clubs, sports) aspects of college?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

26. What challenges, if any, did you experience in your transition to college?

27. What, if anything, could your girls' school have done to better prepare you for college?

28. What was your college G.P.A. at the end of your first semester? \_\_\_\_\_

29. Did you receive financial aid while attending your girls' school?  Yes  No

30. In what year were you born? 19\_\_ \_\_

31. How do you describe yourself? (Check all that apply.)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White

32. Are you an international student?  Yes  No

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey! Twenty gift certificates from Amazon.com, each valued at \$20 will be raffled away before the end of the school year. Your girls' high school will contact you if you have won.**

**If you have any questions please contact Dreolin Fleischer at Goodman Research Group, Inc. (GRG) by phone (1-866-577-4377).**

**Appendix B:**  
**Email from NCGS to member schools**

Insert the following into the email subject heading: NCGS Alumnae Research Project

January 12, 2005

Dear NCGS Head of School,

We are writing about an exciting research project that NCGS will be conducting in the next few months. The main goal of the research is to gather data about our graduates in their first year of college and to learn more about their experience in our schools, their transition into college, and their perceived academic, social, and career outcomes. This research will be enormously valuable in helping to make our case and it comes as a *member benefit to all participating schools at no cost*. Your dues are hard at work!

Goodman Research Group, Inc. (GRG), a firm specializing in the evaluation of educational programs, materials, and services, will conduct the research for NCGS. The firm is no stranger to us and its 15 years of experience will serve us well (for additional information you can access their web site at [www.grginc.com](http://www.grginc.com)). As many of you will remember, GRG worked with us in 1999 in a major study of over 4,200 of our graduates – a study that continues to yield dividends for all of us. The findings from this study can be referenced on our web site ([www.ncgs.org](http://www.ncgs.org)).

We know that you will want to support this research project! In addition to receiving information about very recent graduates in the aggregate, all participating schools will receive an individualized school data report.

Your **first step** is to select a staff member to act as the liaison between GRG and your school for the duration of the project (January - March 2005). **Please have your liaison contact Dreolin Fleischer at GRG either by e-mail: [dreolin@grginc.com](mailto:dreolin@grginc.com) or by phone: 1-866-577-4377 by January 19<sup>th</sup>.**

#### **LIAISON RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 1) Create an electronic database with the contact information for your 2004 graduates.
- 2) Communicate with these alumnae on behalf of GRG via e- or snail mail up to three times
- 3) Insure confidentiality by being the only person to communicate with school alumnae. [GRG will provide the liaison with the web site address to the online survey and accompanying correspondence, which the liaison will then e-mail to the 2004 graduates.]

If you have any questions or would like to know more please contact Dreolin at GRG using the contact information listed above. You are always welcome to call us at the NCGS office (978.287.4485). We look forward to working alongside you in this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

Meg Milne Moulton/Whitney Ransome  
Executive Directors

**Appendix C:**  
**Email invite (to alumnae)**

Insert the following into the email subject heading: [School name] Alumnae Research Project

Dear [Student's name],

We are writing about an exciting research project that [School name] is involved with, and we want to ask for your participation. The research is being commissioned by the National Coalition of Girls Schools (NCGS), and [School name] is an active member in the NCGS Association.

The purpose of the research is for [School name] and other girls' schools associated with NCGS to gather information from their recent graduates about their girls' school experience and transition to college. This research will be enormously valuable to [School name] and NCGS!

We invite you to participate in this research by asking you to complete an online survey that was developed by Goodman Research Group, Inc. (GRG). GRG is a firm specializing in the evaluation of educational programs, materials, and services, and is the firm conducting the research for NCGS.

The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. You have been assigned a unique identification number that will allow you to complete the survey anonymously.

**Your identification number is:**

**To begin the survey, go to this Web address:** [www.grginc.com/grad2004.htm](http://www.grginc.com/grad2004.htm)

**Once you complete the survey you will be eligible to receive one of 20 gift certificates from Amazon.com, each valued at \$20.** If you have any questions or would like to know more about this research please contact Dreolin Fleischer at GRG at 1-866-577-4377 or by email at [dreolin@grginc.com](mailto:dreolin@grginc.com).

Sincerely,  
[Liaison's signature]

**Appendix D:**  
**Paper invite (to the parents of alumnae)**

[school's letter head]

[date]

[standard/generic greeting of your choosing to parents of 2004 alumnae/graduates],

We are writing about an exciting research project that [School name] is involved with, and we want to ask for your daughter's participation. The research was commissioned by the National Coalition of Girls Schools (NCGS), and [School name] is an active member in the NCGS Association.

The purpose of the research is for [School name] and other girls' schools associated with NCGS to gather information from their recent graduates about their girls' school experience and transition to college. This research will be enormously valuable to [School name] and NCGS!

We invite your daughter to participate in this research by asking her to complete an online survey that was developed by Goodman Research Group, Inc. (GRG). GRG is a firm specializing in the evaluation of educational programs, materials, and services, and is the firm conducting the research for NCGS.

The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your daughter has been assigned a unique identification number that will allow her to complete the survey anonymously.

**Because we do not have an email address for your daughter, we ask that you forward the enclosed postcard to your daughter. The postcard is stamped and only needs to be addressed. If you prefer to tell your daughter about the survey directly, please share the identification number and Web address from the enclosed postcard with her.**

Once your daughter completes the survey she will be eligible to receive one of 20 gift certificates from Amazon.com, each valued at \$20. If you have any questions or would like to know more about this research please contact Dreolin Fleischer at GRG at 1-866-577-4377 or by email at [dreolin@grginc.com](mailto:dreolin@grginc.com).

Sincerely,

[Liaison's signature]

## Schools with Alumnae Responses

Agnes Irwin	Newton Country Day
Albany	Nightingale-Bamford
Annie Wright	Oldfields
Archer	Our Lady of the Elms
Baldwin	Roland Park
Brearley	Sacred Heart
Bryn Mawr	Santa Catalina
Buffalo Seminary	Schools of the Sacred Heart
Castilleja	Spence
Chapin	Springside
Chatham	St Catherine
Columbus	St Margaret
Convent of the Sacred Heart	St Mary (NC)
Dana Hall	St Mary (TN)
Ellis	St Timothy
Emma Willard	Stone Ridge
Ethel Walker	Stoneleigh-Burnham
Forest Ridge	Stuart Country Day
Foxcroft	Ursuline
Garrison Forest	Vivian Webb
Girls Prep	Westover
Greenwich	Winsor
Harpeth	
Hathaway Brown	
Hewitt	
Hockaday	
Holton-Arms	
Hutchison	
Kent Place	
La Pietra	
Laurel	
Lincoln	
Louise McGehee	
Madeira	
Marlborough	
Marymount (CA)	
Marymount H.S. (NY)	
Miss Hall	
Miss Porters	

\*Westridge school had no alumnae respond to their invite.