Summary: 2014 Survey of New Students

The Survey of New Students was sent to incoming fall 2014 students in the summer before they entered Swarthmore College. The survey was sent to 418 students and was completed by 321 for a response rate of 77%. This summary provides a brief overview of the Class of 2018.

The majority of students reported that they are either Quite well or Very well prepared to get along socially (72%) and to succeed academically (63%) at Swarthmore. However, a proportion report being only Somewhat prepared socially (26%) or academically (36%) (Figure 1). An additional 2% replied that they were Unprepared on each question.

Figure 2 details how well prepared incoming students feel they are for particular activities. Over 25% of respondents said that they were only Somewhat prepared or Unprepared for these particular activities. Course selection seemed to be of particular concern, with just over half (51%) of respondents saying that they were only Somewhat prepared or Unprepared to select their courses.
As seen in Figure 3, over 90% of respondents said that they are *Very interested* or *Somewhat interested* in having an internship and in working with a professor on a research project. Over 60% of respondents said that they were *Very interested* or *Somewhat interested* in rest of the activities in Figure 3.

![Figure 3](image)

**How interested are you in doing the following during your undergraduate years at Swarthmore?**

- **Having an internship**
- **Working with a professor on a research project**
- **Studying abroad**
- **Volunteering or community service, not as part of a course**
- **Learning to speak and write in a new language**
- **Doing community service, as part of a course (e.g., service...**
- **Doing independent study (self-designed credit courses)**

What did incoming students do in their last year of high school that could have an impact on their academic success at Swarthmore? Students were asked how often they performed select activities in high school (Figure 4). Forty-six percent of respondents said that they *Never* or *Rarely* prepared for class with an informal study group. Approximately 20% said that they *Never* or *Rarely*: Discuss ideas from (your) readings with teachers outside of class; Revise a paper two or more times before handing it in; Perform volunteer work not for a class or graduation requirement; or Have a serious conversation with an individual from a background different from yours (e.g., politically, religiously, economically, ethnically).

![Figure 4](image)

**During your last year of high school, how often did you...**

- **Apply ideas from a class to other courses and interests**
- **Make a presentation in class**
- **Reconsider your position on a topic after evaluating the arguments of others**
- **Discuss ideas from your readings or classes with teachers outside of class**
- **Revise a paper two or more times before handing it in**
- **Perform volunteer work not for a class or graduation requirement**
- **Have a serious conversation with an individual from a background different from yours (e.g., politically, religiously, economically, ethnically)**
- **Prepare for class with an informal study group**
Incoming students were also asked how concerned they are about their family's ability to pay for their college education. The responses to this question were examined by whether or not the student had received financial aid from Swarthmore (those receiving financial aid from Swarthmore includes those who received any level of aid) (Figure 5).

Forty-two percent of those receiving any financial aid from Swarthmore said that they were *A great deal* or *Quite a bit* concerned about their family's ability to pay for their college education, and 20% of those who did not receive financial aid from Swarthmore said the same. ¹

In their survey responses, 56% of US Citizens said that both of their parents were born in the United States and 44% indicated that at least one parent was born outside of the United States (Figure 6). In order to confirm this surprising result, we looked at another source: the Common Application question asking the location of parents' births. The Common Application data confirmed the survey responses, with 44% of the 2014 incoming students who are US Citizens and who had a Common Application on file reporting that one or both parents were born outside of the United States.

US Citizens were also asked if English was their native/first language. While 90% said that English is their native/first language, 10% of US Citizens said that it is not. Additionally, 24% of US Citizens and 32% of all incoming students (Citizens plus non-Citizens) reported speaking *A mix of English and other languages* or *Mostly/entirely non-English* at home (see Figure 7 for US Citizens and Figure 8 for all respondents).

¹This is statistically significant based on a chi-square test with p<.000.
When asked to describe their political views, 62% said *Liberal* or *Very Liberal*. While only a small percentage (4%) identify as *Conservative*, a total of 38% identify as something other than *Liberal* or *Very Liberal*.

Incoming students were also asked about their sexual orientation, and responded:

- 81% Heterosexual
- 4% Gay/Lesbian
- 6% Bisexual
- 6% Unsure
- 2% Other (write in responses, which included one or more saying: asexual; pansexual; sapiosexual; largely homosexual, with rare exceptions; and prefer not to answer)
When asked how important certain activities/items are as they think about their own life and future, respondents highly valued diverse experiences with 70-80% saying that Getting to know people from diverse backgrounds; Learning about other cultures and nations; and Traveling abroad are Essential or Very important. Other measures with higher percentages of Essential or Very important responses include Being a leader in your field (78%) and Being well-off financially (70%).

Interestingly, in Figure 10, while 58% of respondents said that Participating in religious activities is Not important at all, when asked in another question which religious, spiritual, or philosophical traditions they currently practice (Figure 11), 60% of incoming students replied that they currently practice or identify with a religious, spiritual, or philosophical tradition (40% of respondents replied None or Atheist).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which religious, spiritual, or philosophical tradition do you practice or identify with?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atheist</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Another type of Christian (Orthodox, LDS, etc.)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual but do not identify with a religious tradition or group</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some other religious, spiritual, or philosophical tradition</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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