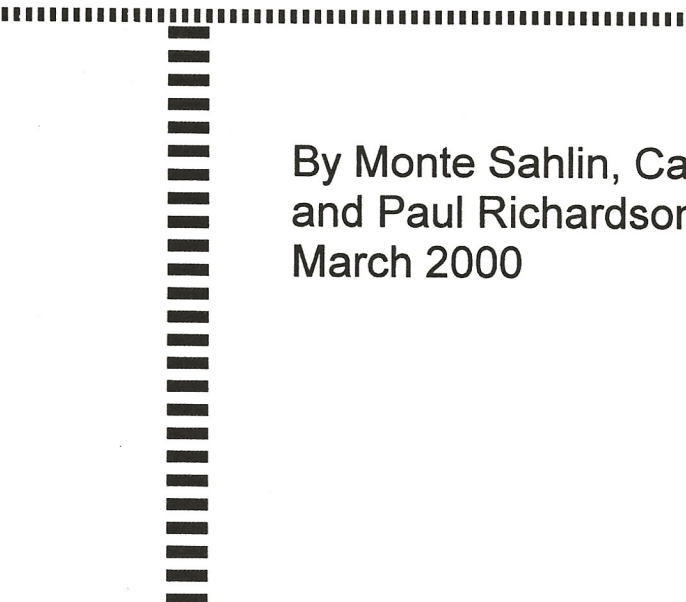




Research Report

Attitudes toward Columbia Union College by Adventist Church Members in the Eight-state Region



By Monte Sahlin, Carole Luke Kilcher
and Paul Richardson
March 2000

The purpose of this study is to explore the attitudes toward Columbia Union College (CUC) among Seventh-day Adventist Church members in the eight conferences which form the constituency of the college. This information can be useful in strengthening the strategic plan of the college and improving communication with the constituency, as well as student recruitment and alumni and development activities.

This study was conducted by the Center for Creative Ministry for the Columbia Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The data were collected as part of the 2000 Annual Survey of Church Members. The study is based on a random sample of 1,404 people attending Adventist congregations in February 2000. Based on the average Sabbath attendance of these congregations, the response rate is about 67%. An allowance must be made for sampling error in all sample surveys. In this study that allowance is 3% (plus or minus) at the 95th percentile of reliability.

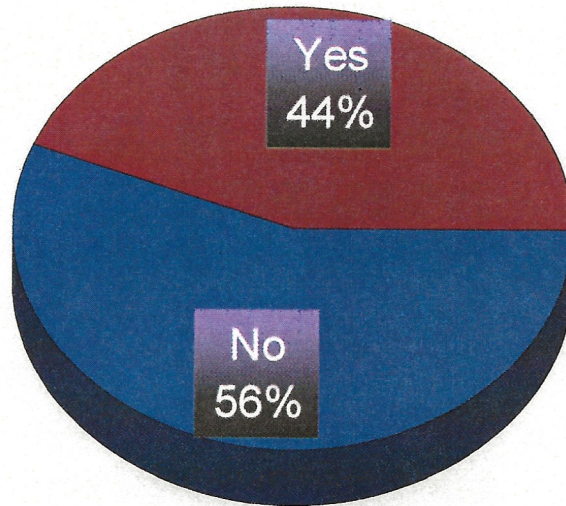
Potential Students in Church Families

The majority of church members in the Columbia Union Conference do not have school-age children. Only two in five church members (44%) report that they have school-age children. (See the upper graph on the next page.) Almost all of these members are in the Baby Boom generation, born from 1946 through 1964, and the Baby Bust generation, born from 1965 through 1976. Church members who have a college degree are more likely to have school-age children, as are those in households with annual incomes of \$50,000 or more. Church members with an African American or Asian ethnic background are also more likely to have school-age children, as are those who live in New Jersey, Maryland and Delaware. Respondents who have been baptized Adventists for more than 10 years are also more likely to have school-age children, while those baptized in the last five years are less likely to have school-age children.

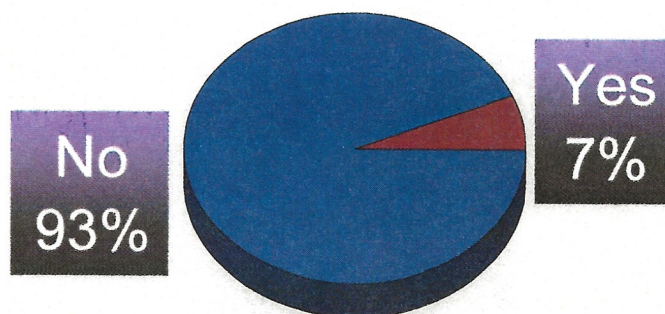
Far fewer church members have children of college age. In fact only about 7% of the members in the Columbia Union Conference have children of college age. (See the lower graph on the next page.) That means there are no more than 7,500 church members with college-age children, or about 4,000 households with about 5,000 college-age young adults. A quarter to a third of these church members are no longer active participants in the Adventist Church, and it is likely that this fact reduces the potential for enrolling the young adults from these households at Columbia Union College.

Church members who have earned a graduate degree are more likely to have college-age children, as are those from households with annual incomes of \$10,000 to 24,999 and those from households with annual incomes of \$75,000 or more. Respondents who have been baptized Adventists for more than 20 years are also more likely to have college-age children, as are those from the Baby Boom generation. Half of the church members with college-age children are found in just two of the eight states in the region served by the Columbia Union Conference; Maryland and Pennsylvania. The other half are scattered among the other six states.

With school-age children



With college-age children



Where Are These Young Adults Attending College?

The majority of the college-age children in church member families (55%) are not attending an Adventist college or university. (See the upper graph on the next page.) This includes those attending state universities, community colleges, private institutions and Christian colleges and universities not affiliated with the Adventist Church, as well as those who are not attending college. Only one in seven of the young adults in church-related homes in the Columbia Union Conference (15%) are currently attending Columbia Union College. Twice as many (30%) are attending other Adventist colleges and universities, including a few at Kettering College of Medical Arts in Dayton, Ohio.

Church members who were raised in Adventist homes are more likely to have a child enrolled at Columbia Union College, as are those who have been baptized Adventists for more than 20 years. The same is true for church members who have earned a graduate degree and live in households with annual incomes of \$75,000 or more. Church members living in Pennsylvania, Maryland and New Jersey are more likely to have a child enrolled at Columbia Union College than are those living in the other five states within the Columbia Union Conference.

Contact with Columbia Union College

What is the extent of personal contact that church members have with the college? Three items were used to provide measures for answering this question. (See the lower graph on the next page.)

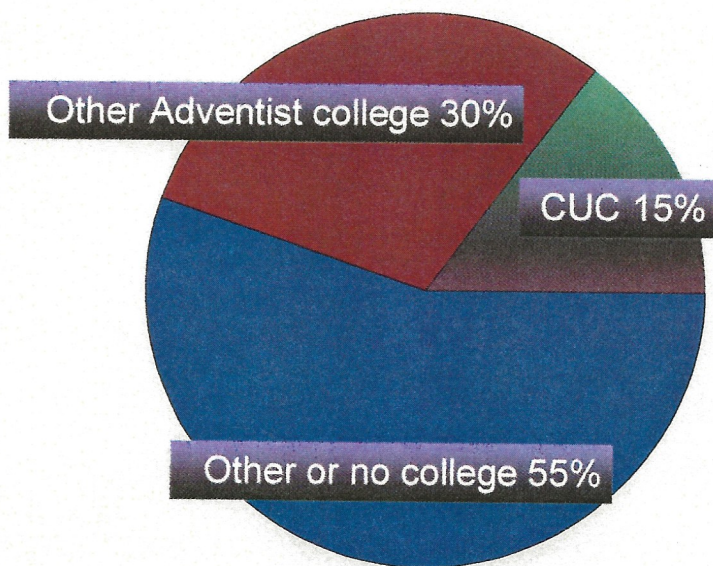
Nearly two in five church members (38%) have been on the CUC campus at least once in the last five years. Those living in Maryland are more likely to have done so, as are those with a college degree—especially those with a graduate degree—and those from households with an annual income of \$50,000 or more. The same is true for church members with an African American or Asian ethnic background, while those who are Hispanic or white are significantly less likely to have visited the campus. Church members born into an Adventist home are more likely to have a child enrolled at CUC, as are those who have been baptized Adventists for more than 20 years, and young Adventists from the Millennial generation, born from 1977 through 1994.

Almost as many church members (36%) report that a representative or group from Columbia Union College has visited their local church at least one time during the last five years. Hispanic and Asian church members are more likely to give this response, as are those who were recently baptized. The same is true for church members from households with an annual income of \$50,000 or more, and young Adventists from the Millennial generation, born from 1977 through 1994. Church members living in Maryland are almost twice as likely to have had a visit from CUC at their local church.

Only one in six church members in the Columbia Union Conference (16%) are alumni of CUC. More information on the demographic profile of these alumni are included later in this report.

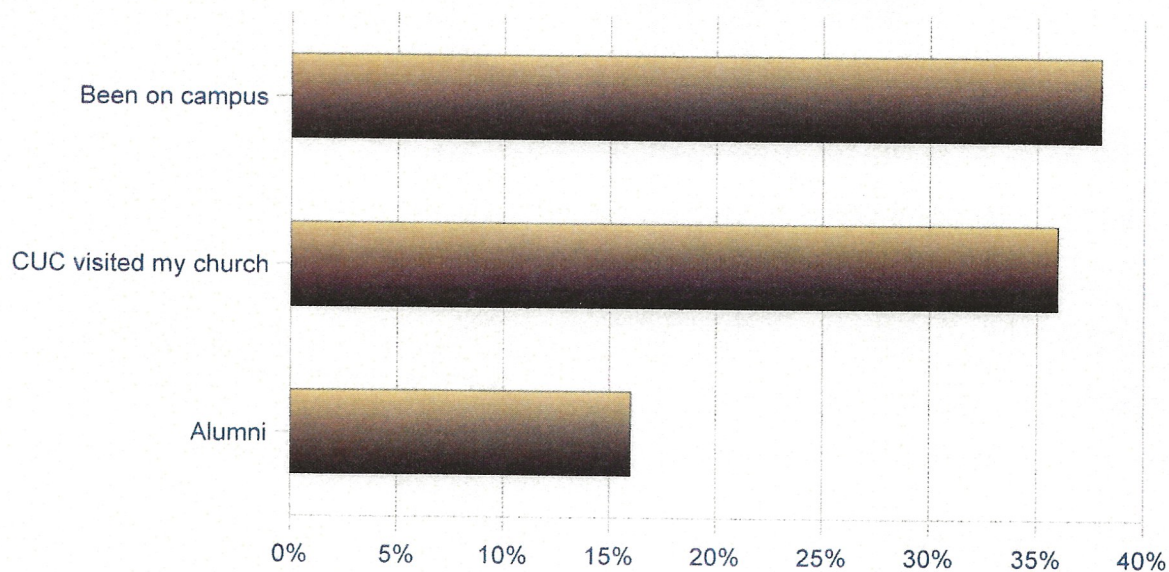
Families with college-age children

What school are they attending?



Contact with CUC

First two items: "in the last five years"



Perceptions about Columbia Union College

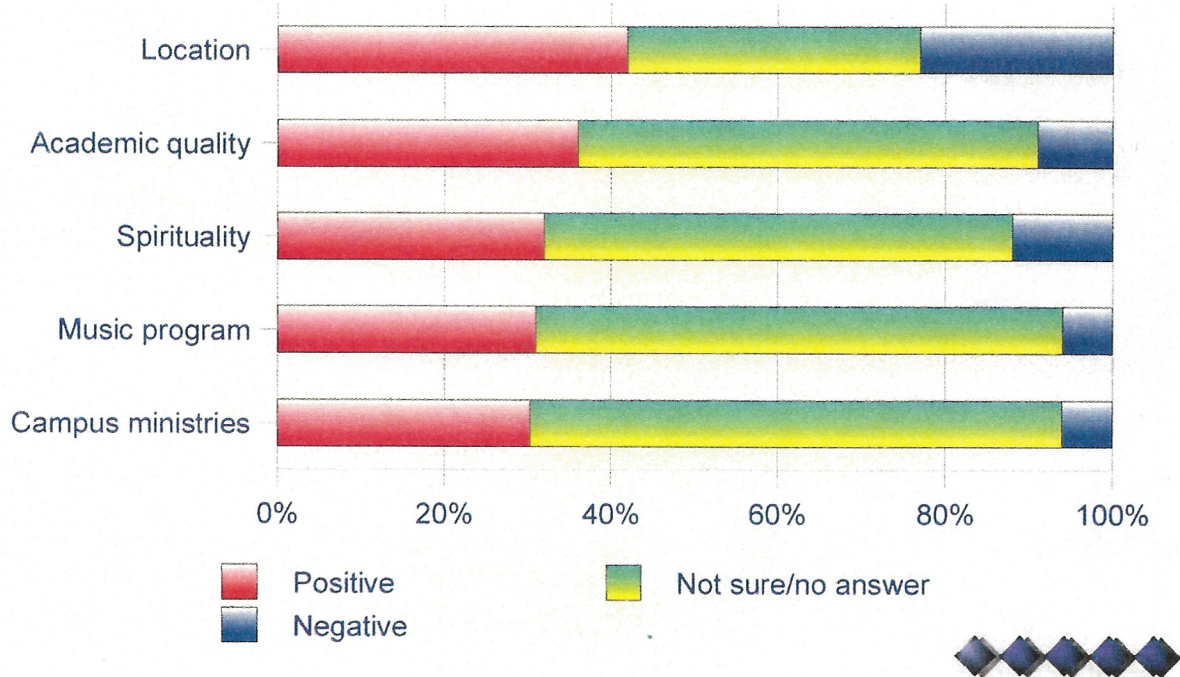
Church members were asked to respond to nine key items which are descriptive facts about Columbia Union College. Respondents could indicate to what degree they saw each factor as a positive attribute or strength of the college, a negative attribute or weakness of the college, or if they were not sure about it. (See graphs on the next page.)

The most widely held positive perception is related to ***CUC's location in a suburb of the nation's capital***. About 42% of church members see this as a positive strength of the college, while half that many (23%) see it as a negative and a third are not sure or have no opinion. Church members with a college degree are more likely to have a positive perception of the college's location, as are those from households with an annual income of \$50,000 or more. The same is true for those who have been baptized Adventists for six to 20 years, and young Adventists from the Baby Bust generation, born from 1965 through 1976. African American, Asian and Hispanic church members are more likely to have a positive perception on this item, while white church members are more likely to be negative. Church members from Maryland are also more likely to feel positive about the location of the college, while those living in New Jersey, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Delaware are more likely to be negative.

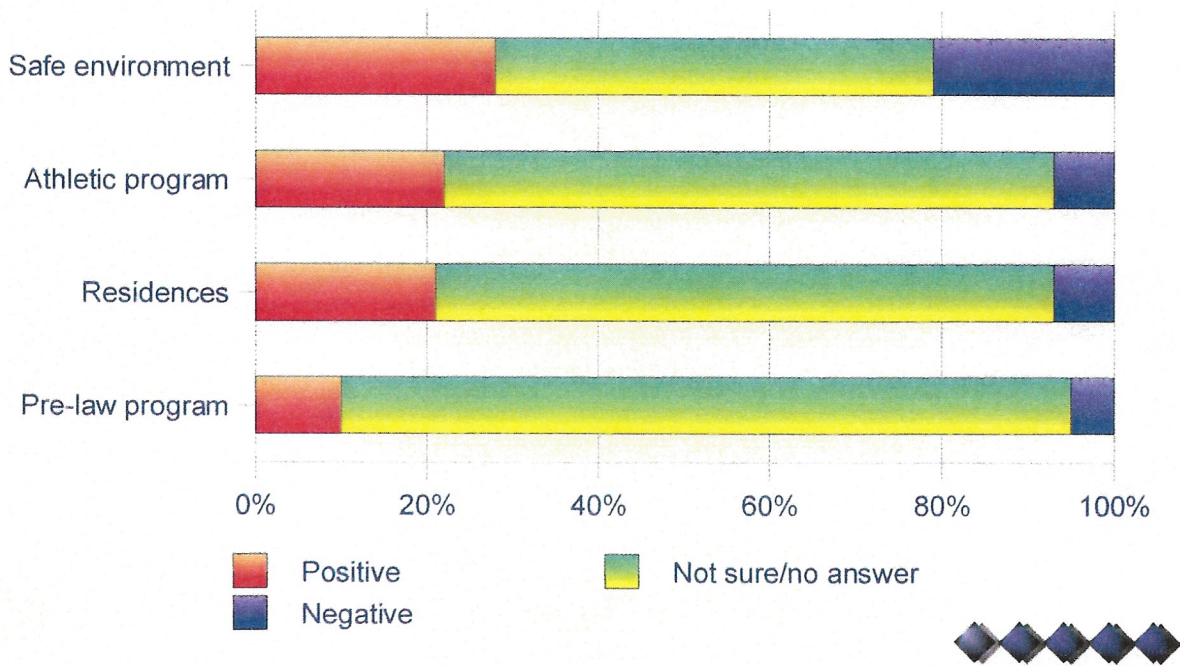
More than a third of church members (36%) believe that CUC provides ***a high-quality academic program***, while only 9% have the perception that this is not true. The majority of church members in the Columbia Union Conference are not sure about this item. Church members with a graduate degree are more likely to have a positive perception of academic quality at the college, as are those from households with an annual income of \$50,000 or more. The same is true for those who were raised in an Adventist family and those who have been baptized Adventists for more than 20 years, and older members born before 1946. Asian church members are more likely to have a negative perception on this item. Church members from Virginia and West Virginia are also more likely to feel positive about the academic quality of the college, as are those living in Maryland and Delaware, while those living in New Jersey are more likely to have a negative perception of the academic quality of CUC.

A third of church members (32%) see ***a strong spiritual emphasis at CUC***, while less than half that number (13%) say it is spiritually weak. The majority of church members in the Columbia Union Conference are not sure about the spirituality of the college. Church members with a graduate degree are more likely to have a positive perception of the spiritual emphasis of the college, as do older members born before 1946. The same is true for those who were recently baptized and those who have been baptized Adventists for 11 to 20 years. Hispanic church members are more likely to have a positive perception of the spirituality of the campus, while African American members are more likely to have a negative perception. Church members from Virginia and West Virginia are also more likely to feel positive about the spiritual emphasis of the college, while those living in New Jersey are more likely to have a negative perception.

Perceptions about CUC



Perceptions about CUC - 2



Another third of the respondents (31%) believe that *CUC has an exceptionally strong music program*, while only 6% disagree. Nearly two-thirds of church members evidently do not have enough knowledge of the CUC music program to develop a strong perception either way. Church members with a graduate degree are more likely to have a positive perception of the music program at the college, as do those from households with annual incomes of \$50,000 to \$74,999. The same is true for older members born before 1946, those raised in an Adventist home and those who have been baptized Adventists for more than 20 years. Asian and white church members are more likely to have a positive perception of the music program, while African American members are more likely to have a negative perception. Church members from Maryland are also more likely to feel positive about the music program at CUC, while those living in Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and New Jersey are more likely to have a negative perception.

An equal number of church members (31%) believe that CUC's *campus and community ministries are making a significant impact* in the Washington area, while only 6% disagree. Again, nearly two-thirds of church members evidently do not have enough knowledge of the campus and community ministries programs at CUC to have a strong perception either positive or negative. Church members with a graduate degree are more likely to have a positive perception of campus and community ministries at CUC, as do older members born before 1946. The same is true for those recently baptized and those who have been baptized Adventists for more than 20 years. Hispanic and Asian church members are also more likely to have a positive perception of campus and community ministries at CUC.

More than one in four church members (28%) believe that CUC provides *a safe environment for students*, while almost as many (21%) feel that it does not. Half of the respondents are not sure about this item. Church members with a graduate degree are more likely to say that CUC provides a safe environment for students, as are those from households with an annual income of \$50,000 or more. The same is true for Asian, Hispanic and African American church members, while white members are more likely to disagree. Members who live in Maryland, Delaware and Ohio are more likely to feel that CUC provides a safe environment for students, while those from New Jersey, Virginia, West Virginia and Pennsylvania are more likely to disagree.

More than one in five church members (22%) see the *athletic program* as one of the strengths of CUC, while 7% have a negative perception of the athletic program. More than two-thirds are not sure about this item with significant numbers who simply do not know enough about the athletic program to form an opinion. Church members with a graduate degree are more likely to see the athletic program in a positive light, as are those from households with an annual income of \$50,000 to \$74,999 and the youngest church members from the Millennial generation, born from 1977 through 1994. The same is true for those raised in an Adventist family and for Hispanic church members. Church members who live in Maryland are more likely to see the athletic program as a positive, while those who live in the other seven states in this region are more likely to view it negatively.

About one in five church members (21%) are of the opinion that CUC operates *an excellent residential program* for students, while 7% have a negative perception of the dormitories. More than two-thirds are not sure about this item and a large portion of these do not know enough about the student residences on campus to form an opinion. Church members with a graduate degree are more likely to see the dormitories in a positive light, as are those from households with an annual income of \$50,000 to \$74,999 and older church members born before 1946. The same is true for those who have been a baptized Adventist for more than 20 years and for Hispanic church members. Church members who live in Ohio and Maryland are more likely to see the campus residences in a positive light, while those who live in Virginia, West Virginia and New Jersey are more likely to view the residences negatively.

The fact that *CUC has the top pre-law program among the Adventist colleges and universities* in North America has not reached more than five out of six church members (84%) in the Columbia Union Conference. Only 11% are aware of this strength at the college, while nearly half that number (5%) doubt the veracity of this statement or view it negatively. Church members with a graduate degree are more likely to be aware of the pre-law program and feel positive about it, as are Hispanic church members.

Attitudes of Parents

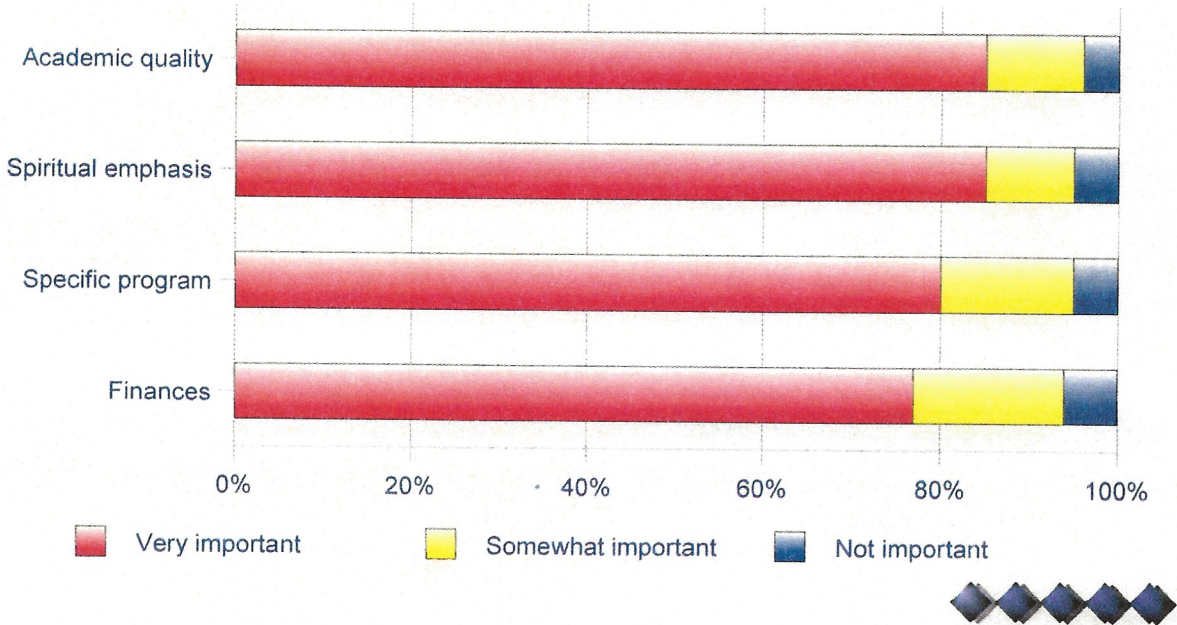
Parents of school-age children were asked to indicate the importance of each of eight items in making a decision about sending their child to CUC or some other college. (See graphs on the next page.) Included are parents with children who are not yet of an age to attend college, so these data indicate future projections at this time. Of course, as time goes by opinions change based on more current events, information and feelings.

Adventist parents are *equally concerned about high academic quality and a strong spiritual emphasis*. Both items were selected as “very important” by six out of seven parents (85%) with only 4% saying academic quality is “not important” and 5% that a strong spiritual emphasis is not important. From unsolicited marginal notes, it appears that a number of the respondents listing these items as not important have already made up their minds to send their children to other colleges and feel exceptionally strongly in their negative attitude toward CUC, perhaps even irrationally so.

Parents with an Asian ethnic background are more likely to say that *high academic quality* is very important to them, as are those with a college degree and those from households with an annual income of \$25,000 or more. The same is true for church members who have been baptized Adventists for 11 to 20 years, while it is less likely to be important for those baptized more recently. Adventist parents who live in Delaware, Virginia and West Virginia are more likely to feel that academic quality is important to them, while those in Ohio are less likely to say the same.

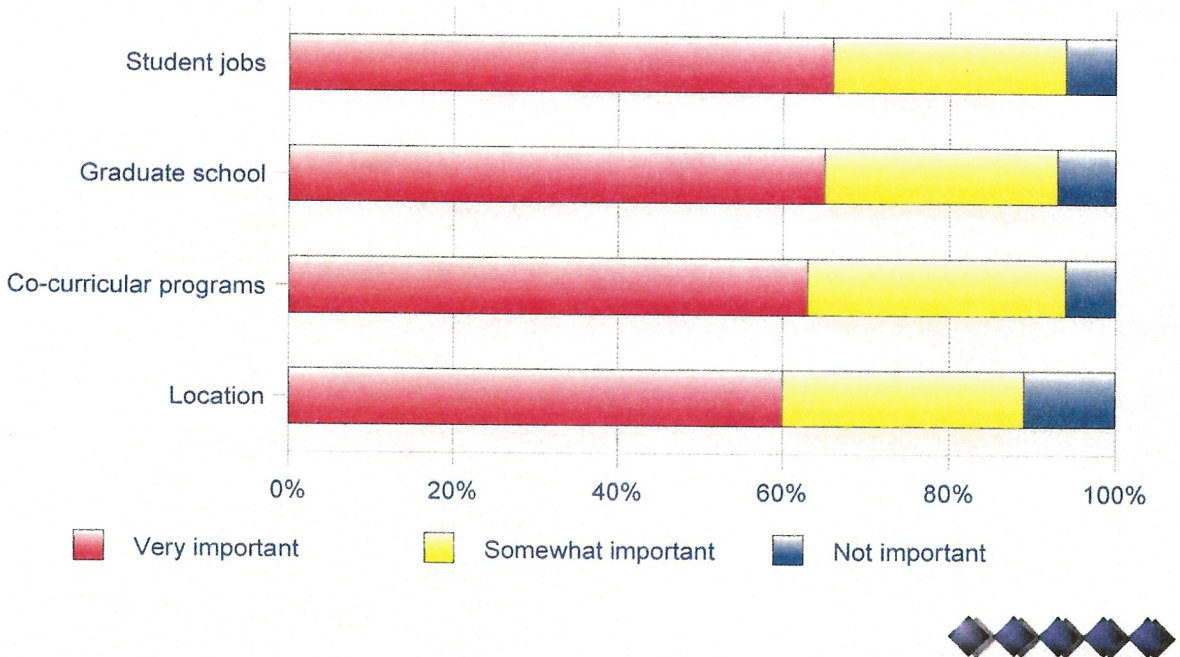
Attitudes of parents

Factors in deciding about sending their child to CUC



Attitudes of parents - 2

Factors in deciding about sending their child to CUC



Lower middle-class parents with a college degree are more likely to say that *a strong spiritual emphasis* is very important to them in deciding about sending their child to CUC. The same is true for parents in the Baby Boom generation, born from 1946 through 1964, and for those who have been baptized Adventists for more than 20 years. Parents living in Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania are more likely to feel that a spiritual emphasis is important to them, while those living in New Jersey and Ohio are less likely to have this opinion.

Four out of five Adventist parents in the Columbia Union Conference report that *whether or not CUC offers the specific academic program their child wants* will be very important in making a decision about where that child will go to college. This is more likely to be true for Hispanic and Asian parents, and for mothers as compared to fathers. It is also more likely to be a very important consideration for parents who have a college degree and those from households with a middle income of \$25,000 to \$49,999 per year. The same is true for those who have been baptized Adventists for 11 to 20 years, while it is less likely to be true for those baptized more recently. Parents living in Virginia, West Virginia and Maryland are more likely to say that the availability of specific programs is very important to them, while those living in Ohio and Pennsylvania are less likely to do so.

Three out of four Adventist parents say that *the cost of education and the amount of financial aid available to them* will be very important in making a decision about sending their child to CUC. This is more likely to be the response of younger parents and those from middle class households with annual incomes of \$10,000 to \$74,999, while those from both lower income and higher income households are less likely to say costs and financial aid are important. Parents with an Asian or African American ethnic background are more likely to see this item as very important, as are those who have been baptized Adventists for 11 to 20 years. Parents living in Virginia, West Virginia and New Jersey are also more likely to see this item as very important.

Two thirds of the parents responding feel that the *availability of part-time jobs for students* will be a very important consideration as they decide about sending their child to CUC. There is a strong negative correlation between this item and the level of annual household income; the lower the income of a family, the more likely the parents are to say that access to jobs is very important in their decision about where to send their child for college. Younger parents are also more likely to say access to student jobs is very important, as are those from an ethnic minority background and those who have been baptized Adventists for more than 20 years. Parents living in New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia are more likely to see the importance of access to student jobs, while those in Ohio and Delaware are less likely to share this view.

Getting into graduate school after college is a very important consideration for two out of three parents from the Columbia Union Conference (65%). Parents who have a graduate degree are more likely to say this is very important, as do those in the Baby Boom generation, born from 1946 through 1964. This consideration is more likely to be very important to mothers than to fathers, and to parents from an ethnic minority background than to white parents. Getting into graduate school is more likely to be very important to parents living in New Jersey, Virginia,

West Virginia, Delaware and Maryland, and less likely to be important to parents living in Pennsylvania and Ohio.

Nearly two out of three Adventist parents (63%) say that the *co-curricular activities* available to students at CUC, such as volunteering in community ministries, working at the radio station or participating in music groups or the athletic program, are very important in their decision about where to send their child for college. Parents from an Asian or Hispanic ethnic background are more likely to say this is very important for them, as are those from the lowest and highest income households. Parents living in Maryland are more likely to say this is very important, while those living in Ohio, Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey are less likely to do so.

The *location of the CUC campus* in a suburb of the nation's capital is the item that the fewest parents say is very important in deciding about where to send their child to college, although it is still rated as very important by 60% of the respondents and only 11% say that it is not important to them. Parents from Asian and Hispanic ethnic backgrounds are more likely to say that the location of the campus is very important to them, as are those from lower-middle income households—\$10,000 to \$49,999 per year—and those with a college degree, but not a graduate degree. Parents living in Ohio and Delaware are more likely to report that location is very important to them, while those living in Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia are less likely to do so.

Opinion About Campus Rules

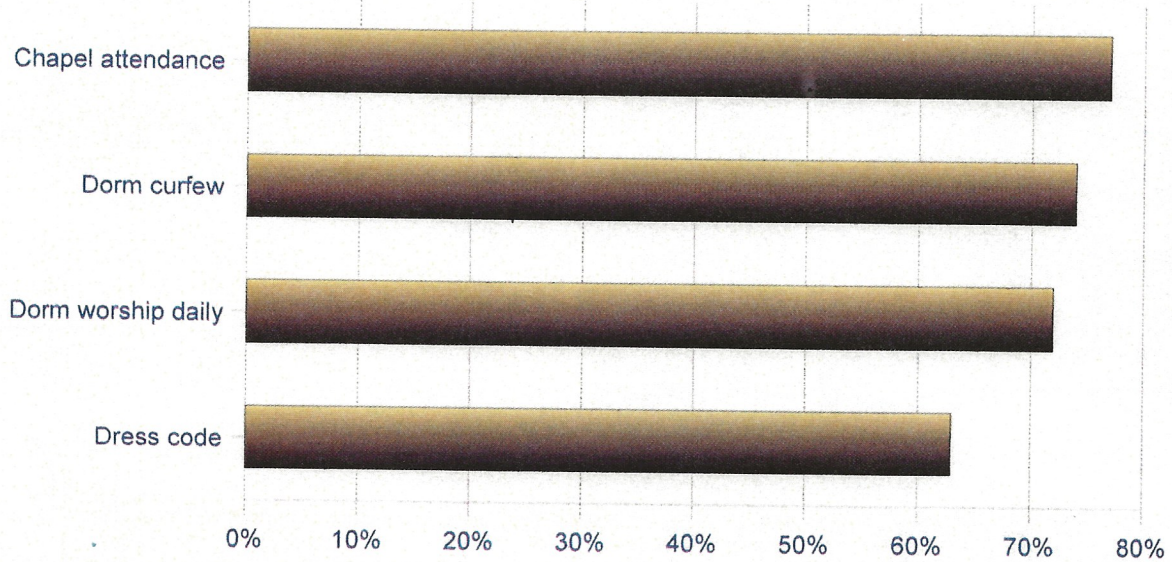
What kind of student requirements do constituents see as important to retain on the campus of Columbia Union College? Church members were asked specifically about four such rules which are currently in force and have been maintained at CUC for many years. (See the upper graph on the next page.)

Nearly four out of five church members (78%) believe that it “may be” or “definitely is” important for CUC to retain *a requirement that students attend chapel services*. The longer a respondent has been a baptized member of the Adventist Church, the more likely he or she is to express this view. Those with a college degree are more likely to support required chapel attendance, as are those from households with annual incomes of \$25,000 or more. The same is true for church members born before 1965, while younger adults are less likely to agree. Church members living in Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia are more likely to support required chapel attendance, while those living in New Jersey and Ohio are less likely to do so.

Three out of four church members (74%) want CUC to retain *a curfew for students living in the dormitories* on campus. The longer a respondent has been a baptized member of the Adventist Church, the more likely he or she is to express this view. The same is true for white church members, those with a college degree, and those from lower middle income households. Church members born before 1965 are more likely to want the college to have a curfew, while younger adults are less likely to agree. Church members living in Virginia, West Virginia and Delaware

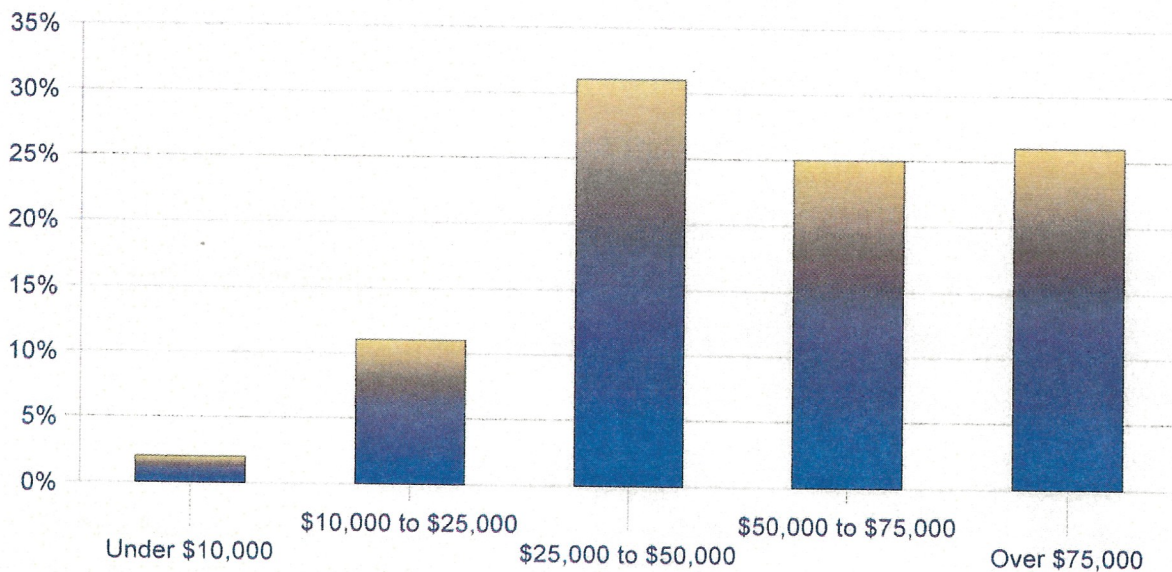
Opinion about campus rules

It "may be" or "definitely is" important for CUC to retain ...



Alumni demographics

Annual Household Income



are more likely to support dormitory curfews, while those living in New Jersey and Ohio are less likely to do so.

Nearly three quarters of church members (73%) want dormitory students to be required to attend *daily worship* at CUC. Again, the longer a respondent has been a baptized member of the Adventist Church, the more likely he or she is to express this view. The same is true for those with a college degree. Church members born before 1965 are more likely to want the college to require dormitory students to attend daily worship, while younger adults are less likely to agree. Church members living in Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and Delaware are more likely to support daily worship in the dormitories, while those living in New Jersey and Ohio are less likely to do so.

There is less support for *a campus dress code* at CUC, although nearly two-thirds of church members (64%) say it “may be” or “definitely is” important for the college to retain such rules. On this item also, the longer a respondent has been a baptized member of the Adventist Church, the more likely he or she is to express this view. The same is true for white church members, those with a graduate degree and those from middle income households. Church members born before 1965 are more likely to want the college to retain a dress code, while younger adults (born after 1964) do not see a need for it. Church members living in Virginia, West Virginia and Delaware are more likely to support a dress code, while those living in New Jersey and Ohio are less likely to do so.

Demographics of Adventist Alumni

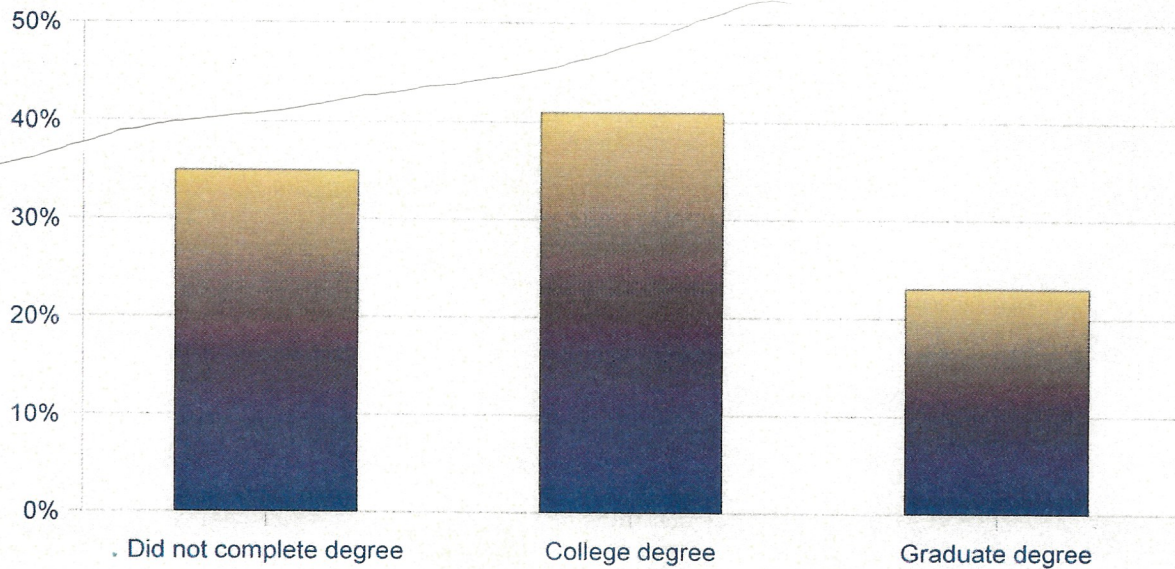
Information about the demographics of the demographics of CUC alumni who attend the Adventist Church in the eight-state region is provided by this study. Of course, this does not provide a complete picture of the college’s alumni, which include a number of people who are no longer active church members or never did belong to the Adventist Church, as well as active church members who have moved outside the territory of the Columbia Union Conference.

Adventist alumni within the constituency are primarily found in middle and upper income households. (See lower graph on the previous page.) This is consistent with the considerable research showing the relationship between a college education and increased income in the United States. It is significant that a quarter of the alumni are in households with annual incomes of \$75,000 or more. These alumni have the capacity to give strong financial support to the college if they are approached in an effective manner.

More than a third of CUC’s alumni among the Adventists in the Columbia Union Conference did not complete a college degree. (See upper graph on the next page.) It is possible that these alumni are less inclined to support the college both because they may have dropped out under unhappy circumstances and because they may have less financial resources. At the same time, they should be good candidates for an extension, degree-completion program which may also serve to heal old wounds and increase their positive attitude toward CUC.

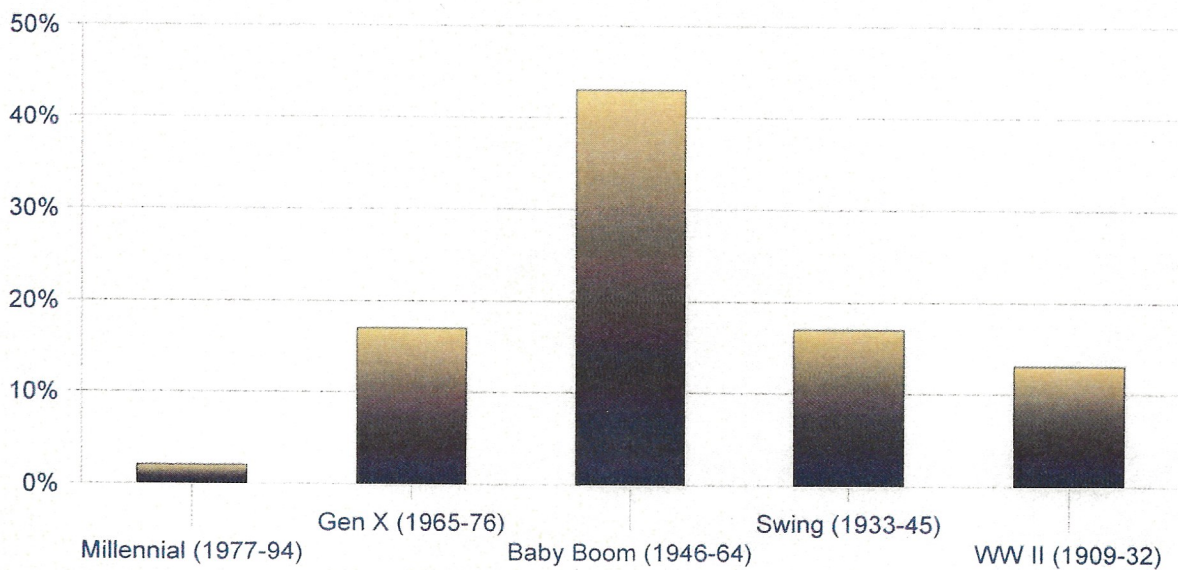
Alumni demographics

Highest education completed



Alumni demographics

Generations



At the same time, more than a quarter of CUC's Adventist alumni living in the eight-state region have completed post-graduate degrees. It is estimated that this consists of 2,400 to 3,700 individuals—alumni who have graduate degrees and belong to an Adventist congregation within the Columbia Union Conference—with the lower estimate including only those who still attend church. Most people with a graduate degree are also among the higher-income households and it should be possible to use available, public data bases to identify almost all of these alumni for targeted appeals.

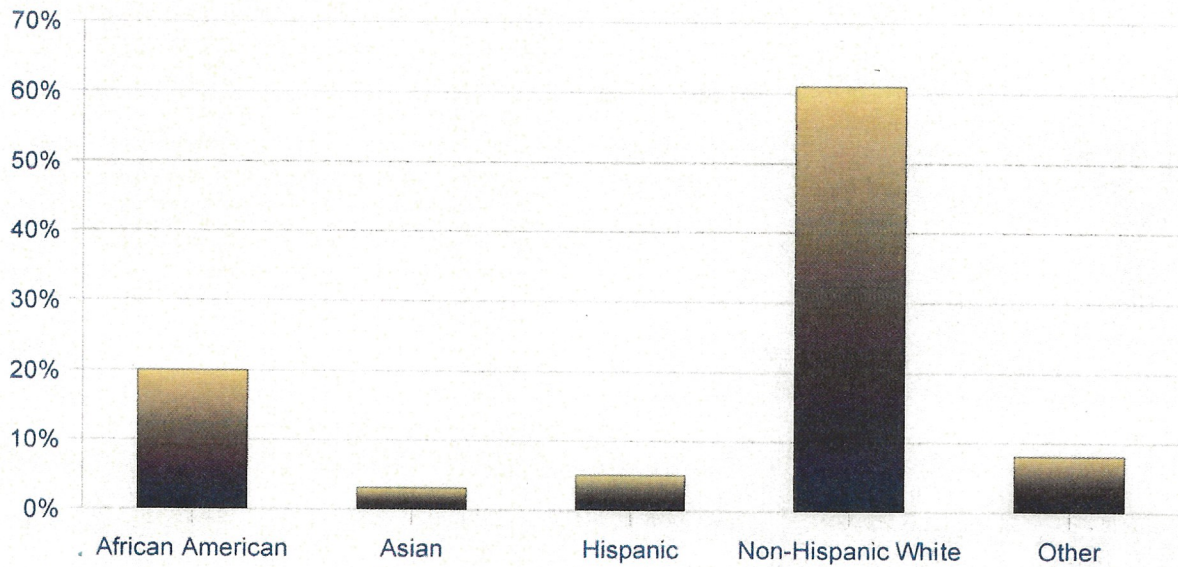
Nearly half of the alumni within the constituency are from the Baby Boom generation. (See the lower graph on the previous page.) If those born during the six years prior to the beginning of the Baby Boom in 1946, who are described by some scholars as part of the Vietnam generation, were included, then certainly this group makes up the majority of the Adventist alumni. This is evidence of how the Adventist Church responded to the Baby Boom by expanding its program of Christian education and motivating the families of the Boomers to place their children in Adventist schools. There are a number of studies showing that this generation has had an ambivalent relationship with the Adventist organization and there are likely an equal number of alumni from this age group who are no longer active church members. These considerations are important in crafting a successful strategy to seek the support of CUC's alumni.

Three in five of the CUC alumni in the Columbia Union Conference are non-Hispanic whites. (See the upper graph on the next page.) One in five are African Americans, and, surprisingly, nearly a tenth are in the "Other" ethnic category, which includes those with a multi-ethnic background, as well as a few Native Americans, etc. There are very few Asian and Hispanic alumni among the constituents.

The Adventist alumni have strong roots in the Church. (See the lower graph on the next page.) Nearly four out of five were raised in Adventist homes and three quarters have been baptized Adventists for more than 20 years. Among those who still attend church, more than two-thirds currently serve in an office or volunteer ministry in their local congregation. These strong ties to the Church and the experience with Christian education should be the source of considerable motivation for the alumni to support the future of Columbia Union College.

Alumni demographics

Ethnic self-identification



Alumni demographics

Relationship to Adventist Church

