

Reflection Option: Case Study

DIRECTIONS:

1. **Read the case-study article below.**
2. **Consider these after-thought questions.** According to a recent study, what events may have shaped college freshmen's ideas about social responsibility? Do you think there are other issues that are causing young people to feel more committed to their communities? If so, what are they? In your opinion, how important is it to volunteer? Have you volunteered in the last year? If so, has your charitable work given you insight into an issue or problem? Do you think you will continue to volunteer in college? What are some connections between academic studies and real-life challenges?
3. **(DO THIS) In writing,** list the classes that you currently take. Then, cite a global or local issue related to each subject (e.g., math: poverty; English: free speech, etc.). Finally, choose one of the connections on your list. Explain the effect that students in a particular class could have if they mobilized to combat the problem. Writing requirements: Minimum two (2) pages.

Applications: Civics, Geography: Human-Environment Interaction, Synthesis

Introduction: Civic Responsibility

Young people across the country have demonstrated an increased interest in public service and volunteer work. While some have linked this increase in philanthropic spirit to the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the 2003 tsunami disaster and the devastation and destruction wrought by Hurricane Katrina, general trends in society, such as broader celebrity activism, may also be catalysts. This case study examines growing community service outreach programs, and includes articles about student-led efforts, stories of celebrity influence and outreach, and letters from students themselves. Indeed, on a fundamental level, people are the agents of social and economic change.

Today's freshmen want to lend a hand: Survey finds record levels of civic, social responsibility

By Mary Beth Marklein USA TODAY

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This year's entering college freshmen show "a distinctive and widespread rise" in commitment to social and civic responsibility, a new survey finds, and researchers suggest that the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean and Hurricane Katrina played a key role in shaping those attitudes.

"This survey is evidence that last year's natural disasters impacted these freshmen in a significant way," says John Pryor, director of the 40-year-old Cooperative Institutional Research Project Freshman Survey. It is conducted each fall by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA's Graduate School of Education & Information Studies.

The 2005 survey, released Wednesday, is based on 263,710 students at 385 U.S. colleges and universities and adjusted to reflect the responses of the 1.3 million first-time full-time students who entered four-year colleges last fall.

This year's class exhibited record increases across several related questions, which is unusual, Pryor says, "unless a major event occurs." Because the Indian Ocean tsunami struck during their high school senior year in December 2004 and Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast as many

were starting college, he says, the student responses “could be a reaction to the worst global and national disasters witnessed in their lifetime.”

Among results:

- 66.3% said it is essential or very important to help others who are in difficulty, the highest response in 25 years.
- A record 83.2% said they had volunteered at least occasionally during their high school senior year, and 67.3% said there’s a good chance they will continue to volunteer at college, also an all-time high.
- 25.6% said it is essential or very important to participate personally in community action programs, up 4.1 percentage points over 2004 and the highest since 1996.
- 33.9% said becoming a leader is essential or very important, up 3.2 percentage points over 2004.

Carol Geary Schneider, head of the Washington-based Association of American Colleges and Universities, encourages schools to build on the opportunity.

“While earlier studies suggest that too few students sustain such commitments into their advanced college years, these new data should encourage educators to redouble their efforts to create new connections between academic study and challenges in larger society,” she says.

A number of schools already have leveraged the heightened concern among students. Many colleges, including Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Va., and McDaniel College in Westminster, Md., organized programs during their winter break in which student volunteered in cleanup efforts in Louisiana.

Numerous colleges are planning similar programs during spring break.

Other findings:

- A decline in support for military spending. In the first survey conducted after 9/11, 45% supported increased military spending; 34.2% supported it in 2005.
- A record low in high school drinking. Fewer than half (43.4%) said they frequently or occasionally drank beer as high school seniors, reflecting a steady drop from a high of 73.7% in 1982.