College Freshmen Have the Blahs, Survey Indicates

Academic, Civic Apathy Reach Record Levels

By Rene Sanchez
Washington Post Staff Writer

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The nation's college freshmen sound more bored with school, less interested in politics or social issues, and just plain lazier than any class in a generation.

In a massive survey of their views, this year's freshmen are reporting record levels of academic and civic apathy and are continuing to embrace more conservative social values than college students from the last few decades. The survey, which has been conducted annually for the past 30 years, is being released today by researchers at the University of California at Los Angeles.

It contains a variety of revelations: A record percentage of freshmen have parents who are divorced or separated. The number of students who smoke cigarettes regularly, 16 percent, is at its highest point since the survey began and has nearly doubled since the late 1980s. Student support for keeping abortion legal has sunk to its lowest point since 1979. And the number of freshmen who admit to frequently drinking alcohol is declining.

But survey researchers said they were struck most this time by a pattern of growing indifference among many students to their studies and to important issues in American society. A record number of freshmen, for example, said they had missed classes or appointments because they had overslept. The time they say they spend on homework is

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declining. And record numbers of them also said they are frequently bored in classes.

More than 250,000 freshmen, nearly all of whom graduated from high school last year, took part in the survey. It was conducted last fall at 464 colleges and universities. Its size and scope are unrivaled, and its results have long been used to gauge how new college students view their lives and their futures.

The waning interest that freshmen have shown this decade in government and politics was evident again this year on the survey. Now, about 27 percent of them say that "keeping up to date with political affairs" is important. At the start of the decade, that percentage was above 40 percent. Social activism also seems to be less of a priority: The number of freshmen who say it's important to take personal steps to clean up the environment or to promote racial understanding continued a decline that began after 1992, when the survey found record levels of interest in those two issues.

At the same time, however, this year's freshman class seems to be raising its professional aspirations, even if it means a prolonged stay in an educational system that many of them say does not excite them. Nearly 40 percent of freshmen, an all-time high in the survey, said they wanted to obtain a master's degree.

"Academic credentials, rather than a love of learning, seem to be their motivation," said Linda Sax, a UCLA professor who directed the survey.

The analysis that accompanies the latest survey results is more pessimistic than those from recent years. Last year, for example, researchers said that despite rising political apathy among freshmen, they were heartened to see that record numbers of them were nevertheless participating in community service projects or volunteer work.

That tally is up again slightly in the latest survey—73 percent of freshmen say they volunteered in the last year—but now researchers sound less enthusiastic about it. Instead, the report suggests that the increases may be due mostly to new requirements in high schools across the country for students to perform community service to graduate. And it notes that only 19 percent of freshmen say that there is a "very good chance" they will continue volunteer work during college.

Alexander W. Astin, another UCLA professor who worked on the survey, called that trend and others illustrating student apathy "part of a larger pattern of disengagement of the American people from political and civic life in general."

Researchers note, however, that while the number of students expressing boredom or laziness about school has never been higher, it still amounts to a minority of all freshmen. The latest survey shows that 36 percent of them said that they frequently are bored in class, a figure that is 10 points higher than it was in 1985. Also, about 35 percent of students said that oversleeping caused them to miss classes or appointments. In 1968, 19 percent of freshmen said that.

On social issues, this year's survey showed that 32 percent of freshmen identified "promoting racial understanding" as an important life goal, down from 42 percent in 1992. Students were divided evenly over the question of whether using affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished.

Support for abortion, meanwhile, declined for the fifth consecutive year and stands at 54 percent—down from 65 percent in 1990. Support for gay rights, which had been growing for a decade, also has begun to decline slightly. Researchers suggest that shift may be due to the growing public discussion about gay marriage.

An increasing number of freshmen also want marijuana legalized—35 percent now, compared with 17 percent in 1989.

The results of the survey are quite dismal about politics: Only about 17 percent of this year's college freshmen expressed interest in "influencing the political structure." And the percentage of freshmen who say they vote in student elections has plummeted from a high of 77 percent in 1968 to 21 percent now.

In other findings, a record 26 percent of students said their parents either were divorced or not living together. That percentage is three times higher than it was when researchers first asked the question in 1972.

The mothers of freshmen are more likely than ever to be working. Less than 11 percent of them were identified by students in the survey as "homemakers," compared with 34 percent in 1976.

About 70 percent of freshmen said society shows "too much concern for criminals." About 82 percent said the federal government should do more to control handguns. Also, 42 percent of freshmen approved of casual sexual relationships, which is down from a peak of 52 percent when the same question was asked in 1987.

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File:
College Students

U.S. Official Begins Asian Rescue Drive

Selling Wave Continues On Regional Markets

By Paul Blustein
Washington Post Staff Writer

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SINGAPORE, Jan. 12 (Monday)—A top U.S. Treasury official dispatched to Asia by President Clinton began a series of urgent consultations on the region's financial crisis Sunday night amid signs that the leadership of Indonesia—Asia's most troubled economy—is bowing to demands for change in its policies.

Immediately after landing here, Deputy Treasury Secretary Lawrence H. Summers headed into several hours of meetings with top Singaporean officials to discuss the recent plunge in Indonesian financial markets, which Washington and Singapore view with alarm because of its impact on neighboring countries and the danger of social disorder it raises in the world's fourth most populous nation.

Indeed, even as Summers's mission was gathering steam, the Indonesian currency, the rupiah, fell a further 12 percent against the U.S. dollar in morning trading, dragging with it the crippled currencies of neighboring Thailand, Malaysia and other Asian nations. In Hong Kong, meanwhile, stocks plummeted 10 percent and led other Asian markets lower as a prominent investment bank appeared near collapse. [Story on Page A14.]

Summers's meetings here came as the Indonesian government appeared to start taking the sorts of steps both the United States and Singapore are eager to see as a precursor to the restoration of economic stability in the crisis-ridden region. Citing a need to save money, Indonesian President Suharto ordered postponement of seven massive infrastructure projects and a review of eight others, the country's official news agency reported Sun-

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day. These roads, airports and power plants include several projects that have been widely criticized as wasteful and as vehicles to enrich the president's relatives and other politically connected people.

But it is unclear if Indonesia is prepared to go as far as the Clinton administration and the International Monetary Fund are demanding in meeting the tough terms set by the IMF for a $43 billion rescue package the country was granted in early November. IMF Deputy Director Stanley Fischer met with a number of Indonesian cabinet members Sunday and said afterward, according to news service reports: "This is just the beginning. So far, so good."

A key test could come later today, when Summers, who is accompanied by Stanley Roth, assistant secretary of state for East Asia and the Pacific, will fly to Jakarta, the Indonesian capital. There he is to meet with Suharto either today or Tuesday, as is Fischer; IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus is due to arrive midweek.

It is unclear, however, whether those meetings will address an enormously delicate subject that is of great concern to the markets—Suharto's apparent reluctance to provide for a clear and orderly succession.

Rumors have been rife for months that the 76-year-old leader is ill, and the country's financial crisis has evoked an unprecedented spate of calls in recent days for him to resign or retire—along with speculation on the possibility of a military coup. Suharto's rise to power in a coup 32 years ago came amid nationwide rioting in which hundreds of thousands were killed, and both international investors and foreign officials are concerned that the absence of a strong designated successor could expose the country to another bout of civil strife.

U.S. officials on the Summers mission declined to discuss the succession issue, or whether they had consulted with the Singaporeans on how to address the matter. The fact that Summers, an economist, is leading the group suggests strongly that economic issues rather than political concerns will be the main topic in his discussions with Suharto. In a meeting with reporters late Sunday, the only thing Summers would say publicly was: "We are here on behalf of the president to consult with countries in the region on economic policy and to urge that steps be taken that can promote confidence and stability."

The urgent nature of Summers's visit was underscored in a speech delivered shortly before his arrival here by Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, who issued a strong appeal for concerted action by the United States, Japan and Europe to subdue what he called the "frenzy" of collapsing currencies and stock markets in the region.

"It is in everyone's interest to help calm down the situation and lessen the danger of economic meltdown leading to political turmoil," Goh said, according to an account in today's Straits Times. "The market is not an enemy; it is a faceless disciplinarian," Goh added. "But unfortunately, the disciplinarian has now overreacted. So, it has to be calmed."

On Sunday evening, Summers and Roth met with former Singaporean prime minister Lee Kuan Yew, who is one of Asia's most influential figures, as well as with Richard Hu, the finance minister, and a top policymaker in the Foreign Ministry, Kishore Mahbubani. The Americans are also scheduled to meet with Goh before flying to Jakarta this afternoon.

Details of Sunday night's meetings were not disclosed, but officials of both countries have made it clear that they believe Indonesia must embrace IMF-mandated financial discipline before the crisis will ease. Although Indonesia has enjoyed an enviable growth record during most of Suharto's tenure, the IMF argues that investors will not regain confidence in his country unless it addresses weaknesses that have built up in the nation's banking system—which is loaded with risky loans, notably to companies and ventures owned by the president's relatives and associates.

Pinning Suharto down on reform is likely to be tricky, because he holds almost unchallenged power and has swung back and forth on important economic decisions in recent months. In September, he impressed investors by postponing spending on many big-ticket infrastructure projects, including some in which his children had invested. But after intense lobbying by some of the aggrieved parties, a number of those projects were put back on the approved list in November.

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FINAL

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A Cloning Plan Leads to Vows To Outlaw It

WASHINGTON, Jan. 11 (AP) — Scientists, ethicists and political leaders said today that they would work aggressively to block human cloning by a Chicago physicist.

The physicist, Richard Seed, "will not do human cloning in this country," Health and Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala, said today on the CBS News program "Face the Nation."

After Scottish scientists cloned the adult sheep Dolly last winter, President Clinton sent Congress a bill that would ban similar procedures to replicate human beings, for at least five years. Mr. Clinton has demanded quick action, and today some Congressional leaders said they would push to pass the legislation.

"I think this is a nasty business, something that we should not be messing in," Representative Dick Armey, the House majority leader, said on "Fox News Sunday."

"We already have that legislation before the House," he said. "And even last week, I made the point that we are going to move that ban."

And many others, including Secretary Shalala, who said the term "mad scientist" came to mind as she listened to Dr. Seed, have cast serious doubt on the physicist's qualifications to undertake such a project.

Dr. Thomas Murray, director of the Center for Biomedical Ethics at Case Western Reserve University, said on the CBS News program, "The fact is he doesn't have any of the abilities to do these procedures — he's a physicist, not a physician, and by no means an expert in embryology or infertility treatment."

Dr. Seed reaffirmed his determination today to clone a child within the next two years, saying he would move his enterprise to Tijuana, Mexico, if Congress banned human cloning in the United States. "My target is to have a two-month pregnancy in a year and a half," Dr. Seed said. "It's not a difficult project.

Dr. Seed's endeavor would involve removing DNA from a woman's egg and replacing it with genetic material from the person being cloned. The embryo would then be implanted.

Many scientists and officials involved with science have expressed grave reservations about the safety and the ethics of human cloning.

"There are concerns about the freedom and autonomy of the child that arise," Ezekiel Emanuel of the National Bioethics Advisory Commission said on the Fox program. "There are concerns about treating children as objects rather than as cherished beings."

But Dr. Seed said on the same program that he has been "enormously encouraged in just one day by calls I have received from infertile couples who are in tears."

Dr. Seed, who has a Ph.D. from Harvard, said today that he had enough money to start his project but that he lackd the $2 million he estimated he would need to complete it.

College Freshmen Aiming For High Marks in Income

Developing a Philosophy of Life Can Wait

By ETHAN BRONNER

A survey of college freshmen confirms what professors and administrators said they have been sensing, that students are increasingly disengaged and view higher education less as an opportunity to expand their minds and more as a means to increase their incomes.

The annual nationwide poll by researchers at the University of California at Los Angeles shows that two suggested goals of education — "to be very well off financially" and "to develop a meaningful philosophy of life" — have switched places in the past three decades.

In the survey taken at the start of the fall semester, 74.9 percent of freshmen chose being well off as an essential goal and 40.8 percent chose developing a philosophy. In 1968, the numbers were reversed, with 40.8 percent selecting financial security and 82.5 percent citing the importance of developing a philosophy.

It is using education more as a means to an end, rather than valuing what is being learned, said Linda J. Sax, director of the survey, first taken 32 years ago, at the Higher Education Research Institute at U.C.L.A.

The trend has long been in the making, with students' strong interest in high incomes rising to a plateau in the mid-1980's. But the desire edged down a bit through the 1990's, rising again slightly with this latest survey.

Professor Sax said the trend took on more significance when added to the fact that incoming students showed unprecedented levels of academic and political disengagement.

The percentage of students who said that during their last year in high school they had been frequently "bored in class" hit a record high of 36 percent, compared with 26.4 percent in 1985, the second year the question was asked.

At the same time, a record 34.5 percent said they had "overslept and missed class," compared with a low of 18.8 percent in 1968.

Despite that, a record high of 39.4 percent said they aspired to obtain a master's degree and 49.7 percent said they expected to earn a B average.

Some professors expressed little surprise when told of the seemingly contradictory mix of boredom and ambition.

"Schooling has become more about training and less about transformation," said Mark W. Edmundson, a professor of English at the University of Virginia who wrote of the growing consumerist view of education by students in the September issue of Harper's magazine.

"You go there to prepare yourself for the future," Professor Edmundson said, "to learn a skill, a capacity that you can convert into dollars later on. And being trained is boring. Being educated is not, but that is going on less and less."

The disengagement was also reflected in attitudes toward politics.

A record low 26.7 percent of freshmen thought that "keeping up to date with political affairs" was a very important or essential life goal, compared with 29.4 percent in 1996 and a high of 57.8 percent in 1966.

Similarly, an all-time low 13.7 percent said they frequently discussed politics, compared with 16.2 percent last year and a high of 29.9 percent in 1968.

Advocating social activism, which declined in the 1980's and then rose again in the early 1990's, again appears to be on the wane.

The percentage of students who said that "becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment" was an important life goal declined to 19.4 percent from 33.6 percent in 1992.

Commitment to "helping to promote racial understanding" fell to its lowest point in a decade, 31.8 percent, compared with 34.7 percent in 1996 and a high of 42 percent in 1992.

The survey, sponsored by the American Council on Education, included 348,465 students at 665 two- and four-year colleges and universities in the United States. The data were statistically adjusted to be representative of the 1.6 million students entering as first-time full-time freshmen last fall.

A survey suggests a reversal in educational goals since the 1960's.

The enormous size of the sample means that even shifts of half a percentage point have statistical significance, its authors said.

Alexander W. Astin, director of the Higher Education Research Institute and founder of the survey, said he thought the growth in materialism, boredom and disengagement stemmed, at least in part, from television watching.

"Kids who started college in the late 60's had much less television," Mr. Astin said. "Today's kids never didn't have it. We tracked freshmen of 1985 for four years to see how much TV they watched during college. The more TV they watched, the more their materialistic tendencies were strengthened."

Daniel S. Cheever, president of Simmons College in Boston, said the apparent increase in materialism may also have to do with the rise in the cost of college education.

"What my education is going to do for me in getting me a job becomes more important," he said.

Lee Bollinger, president of the University of Michigan, took exception to the prevailing view of freshmen.

"I have come to the conclusion that this is a quieter and softer but no less dedicated generation of students toward their education and public affairs," he said.

Continued From First Business Page

Microsoft, the Justice Department and Europe's antitrust authorities were poring over a proposed consent decree that focused mainly on slightly altering Microsoft's licensing practices.

On July 13, 1994, Microsoft's legal team was in Washington going over the language of the decree. The draft of the settlement terms said that Microsoft was prohibited from tying the use of one of its products to another. But the provision in the decree included the qualification that "this shall not be construed to prohibit Microsoft from developing integrated products which offer technological advantages."

At 10:30 P.M., William H. Gates, the Microsoft chairman, called the company's general counsel, Mr. Neukom, and the head of the company's outside legal team, Richard J. Urowsky, a partner of the firm Sullivan & Cromwell, at a Washington hotel. Mr. Gates demanded that the last four words — "which offer technological advantages" — be stricken from the decree.

Mr. Gates, according to Mr. Urowsky's account in a court deposition, successfully insisted "that Microsoft would not accept any limitations on its right to design new products."

Microsoft sees its crusade in the current case not as arrogance, as its critics charge, but as an uncompromising defense of principle. It is saying that Microsoft and Microsoft alone should be the arbiter of what goes into its products, and how it defines an integrated product.

Microsoft insists that the Government's consent-decree case, though narrow in some respects, represents a challenge to the way it does business. At stake, Microsoft contends, is nothing less than who will control innovation in the economy — entrepreneurial companies like Microsoft or Washington and the courts.

To the Justice Department, the case is not about innovation but about the abuse of market power. The heart of the suit, Government officials say, is that Microsoft's Windows operating system and its Internet browser, Explorer, are separate products. By forcing PC makers to bundle Explorer with Windows, they add, Microsoft is using its near-monopoly in operating-system software to restrict competition in the market for Internet browsing software, where its main competitor is the **Netscape Communications** Corporation.

"This portion of the consent decree adopts a basic antitrust principle," Mr. Klein, the antitrust chief, said. "It prohibits use of monopoly power to beat back a competitor."

In a temporary order on Dec. 11, Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson of the United States District Court in Washington agreed with the Government on that point. He also ordered the company to come up with a temporary plan for offering PC makers a choice of loading Windows onto their machines with Explorer or without Explorer. A final decision in the case is expected later this year.

Microsoft rivals cheered the December ruling, but it was seen mainly as a moral victory with little impact on the fortunes of the software powerhouse. Because PC makers get Explorer free, few, if any, would choose Windows without Explorer.

Microsoft's solution for complying with the judge's order — offering Windows without Explorer, but only in an outdated version of Windows — seemed designed to prove its point: Windows and Explorer have become a single integrated product.

Under Microsoft's reading of the consent decree, the company has the absolute right to declare Windows and Explorer an integrated product and market it as it sees fit.

"This is not about thumping Netscape on the head," Steven A. Ballmer, a Microsoft executive vice president, said. "This is really about the fundamental right to innovate."

Is Microsoft a relentless innovator or a modern monopolist? The current case will not settle that question, but in its thousands of pages of court filings, corporate documents and E-mail memos, it will add grist for both sides of that debate.

The court documents and interviews do clearly show that from drafting the language of the consent decree to responding to the rise of the Internet, Microsoft has kept one central objective in mind — protecting and extending the reach of its Windows operating-system software, the corporation's crown jewel.

An operating-system program serves as the central nervous system of a computer. More than 80 percent of the world's personal computers run Microsoft's Windows, giving the company a leg up in new markets like Internet software. That is especially true if Microsoft decides, as it has with the browser, that what other companies are selling as a stand-alone product will be an "integrated feature" of Windows for which nothing extra is charged.

That kind of behavior presents a quandary for antitrust policy. The goal of antitrust is to safeguard competitive markets in the interests of consumer welfare. By pulling stand-alone programs into its operating system, Microsoft is giving computer users more product for less money — a consumer benefit.

For nearly two decades, Microsoft has steadily added more and more to its program, from point-and-click icons to facsimile software. By bringing new features into its operating system, Microsoft has made computers more powerful and easier to use for millions of consumers.

But as its market power has increased over the years, Microsoft has been able to crush competitors — eliminating competition and perhaps innovation, which could harm consumers. Microsoft can crimp competition with the same strategy it employs to help consumers. What were once separate products, markets and profitable businesses for other companies can be pulled in to become "features" of Microsoft's Windows operating program.

Once it determines that a new company is a threat, Microsoft can deploy its integration strategy with a vengeance. In September 1995, Paul Maritz, the executive in charge of Microsoft's operating-system business, met with executives of the Intel Corporation, the leading microchip maker. It was a month after Netscape had sold shares to the public and the Internet start-up was suddenly a hot company. When the discussion turned to Netscape, one Intel executive, who asked not to be identified, recalled Mr. Maritz saying: "We are going to cut off their air supply. Everything they're selling, we're going to give away for free."

Since August 1995, when Microsoft's Windows 95 was introduced, the Explorer browser has been both marketed as a separate product in retail stores and bundled onto the operating system by PC makers. Each new version of Explorer has been improved and more closely integrated — sharing more and more programming files — with the operating system.

An E-mail on Dec. 20, 1996, from Jim Allchin, a senior vice president, to Mr. Maritz, the operating-system executive, urged a hastening of that integration. "The current path is simply to copy everything Netscape does packaging and product wise," Mr. Allchin wrote. He added, "We should think first about an integrated solution — that is our strength."

The Allchin memo is included in one of the Justice Department's court filings. Microsoft says the memo should be read mainly as a recommendation for improving Windows, which benefits users and Microsoft.

Microsoft's strategy has certainly pounded Netscape. Last week, the Internet pioneer announced that it would report a sizable loss for 1997.

Still, antitrust policy is not intended to protect companies but to protect economic and consumer welfare. Economists who study high-technology markets say the issues in the Microsoft case are complex.

"An operating system is an evolving creature, adding more features and functions over time," said Carl Shapiro, a professor of economics at the University of California at Berkeley and a former chief economist in the Justice Department's antitrust division. "But there is a problem if Microsoft can use its market power to stifle innovation because start-ups never really get a market test if they are killed in the crib before they become a core threat to Microsoft."

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