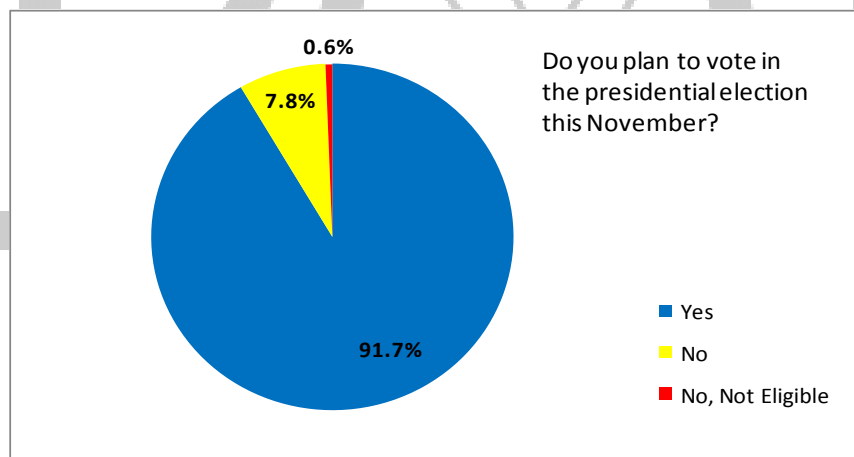


## University of Delaware Students Interested in Politics

University of Delaware students have a reputation for not having any interest in the political theatre. A 2007 survey by the Princeton Review ranked UD 4th in the most apathetic campuses “Election What Election?” category. The Princeton Review’s methodology was not based on a scientific survey methodology in using a volunteer based survey, offering incentives for those who respond. Based on the 2008 *Blue Hen Poll*, we found that University of Delaware students are interested in following the current political season. A consensus of students reported having either somewhat or very much interest in following the ongoing campaign events in the lead up to November.

Being that 75% of UD students are interested in politics, they are also exhibiting a number of key political behaviors that can be associated with this interest. We found that



when students are more interested they are more aware and seek out more information from the media.

The more interest students have, the more frequently they are reading online daily

newspapers and watching National and Local news networks. More interested students also are discussing politics more with their friends, family, and co-workers.

A strong consensus, 91.7% of students, reported that they intend to vote in November’s election. Interestingly, we found that students demonstrate more personal political and civic

engagement behaviors such as intending to vote and trying to change others opinions about political candidates or parties. Also, a majority of students have found time in the past twelve months to devote to volunteering. UD students are not engaging in certain behaviors such as protesting, wearing buttons, posting signs, calling government officials, or attending political rallies. This may be associated with student's fears of being judged for their opinions or actions. Or this could be due to UD students having more tolerance, and therefore do not want to offend others by *wearing their views on their sleeves*. Overall, the Blue Hen Poll researchers found that UD students are engaged and interested in politics.

### **Opinions on current policies and issues**

What American issues and policies do University of Delaware students think of as very important today? We asked students to rate several pressing policy issues facing the United States today.

Simply put, University undergraduates do not see the US helping bring about democracy as a top priority. Students generally consider other actions the US could take or is taking as priorities of higher importance. Interestingly, combating world hunger, the issue that a plurality of students (about 41%) considered to be a very high priority for the US is also one of the things that students were most likely to not consider a priority at all (about 23%). This is not to say that 85% of students are opposed to the US helping bring democracy to other countries. In fact, 71% favor giving assistance to promote democracy around the world. However, again, it is important to reiterate that a consensus of students (85%) does not consider helping to bring democracy to other nations a top policy priority for the United States. The fact that a consensus of UD students did not see bringing democracy elsewhere as a high

priority is generally not statistically relevant to the political party a student identifies himself or herself with. There is however a significant relationship between political ideology and where

one ranks the importance

of bringing democracy

abroad. However, more,

very conservative

students do not consider

this a priority at all than

do their very liberal

colleagues. The fact is,

most of the feelings UD students have on the policy issues we asked about, do not correlate to

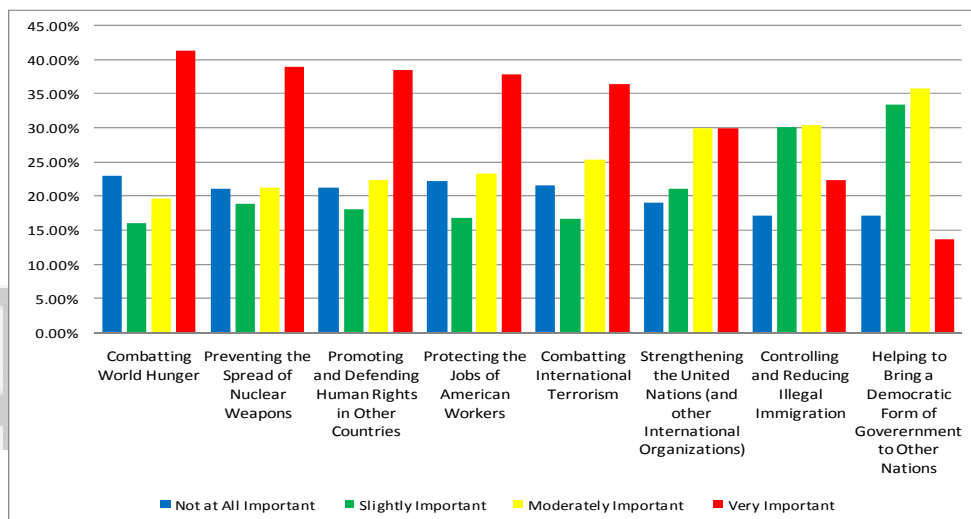
the party identification of respondents. One of the few factors that could be related to party

identification was the level of priority students felt towards protecting Americans jobs. Again,

there is a surprising relationship here; more people whose views are in line with those of the

Democratic Party consider protecting the jobs of American workers a very important policy

priority in the United States.



## November 2008

Which 2008 presidential candidate has grabbed up the most support from University of Delaware students? Knowing that about 92% of students intend to vote in November's general election, we have analyzed who UD students would like to see as our country's next Commander in Chief.

In the race to Pennsylvania Avenue, with the three remaining viable (Senator Clinton of New York, Senator Obama of Illinois, and Senator McCain of Arizona) candidates, it is clear that Senator McCain really did not really gain a significant percentage of support from University of Delaware students. Students collectively did not favor one candidate above the other two. That is, there is no significant difference between Senator Obama's UD following and that of Senator Clinton. However, it is again important to report that the two Democratic candidates, separately, would have beaten McCain if a presidential election were isolated to UD students. Senator Obama does however have a large following as the second favorite choice for many respondents. What may be most interesting is that many of those who selected Republican John McCain as a first choice candidate would actually choose Democrat Barack Obama as their second candidate of choice. In fact, Clinton has almost no support as a second choice candidate. That is, less than 1% of respondents selected the New York Democrat as a second

choice candidate.

Also very interesting

is that people do

have another

candidate in mind

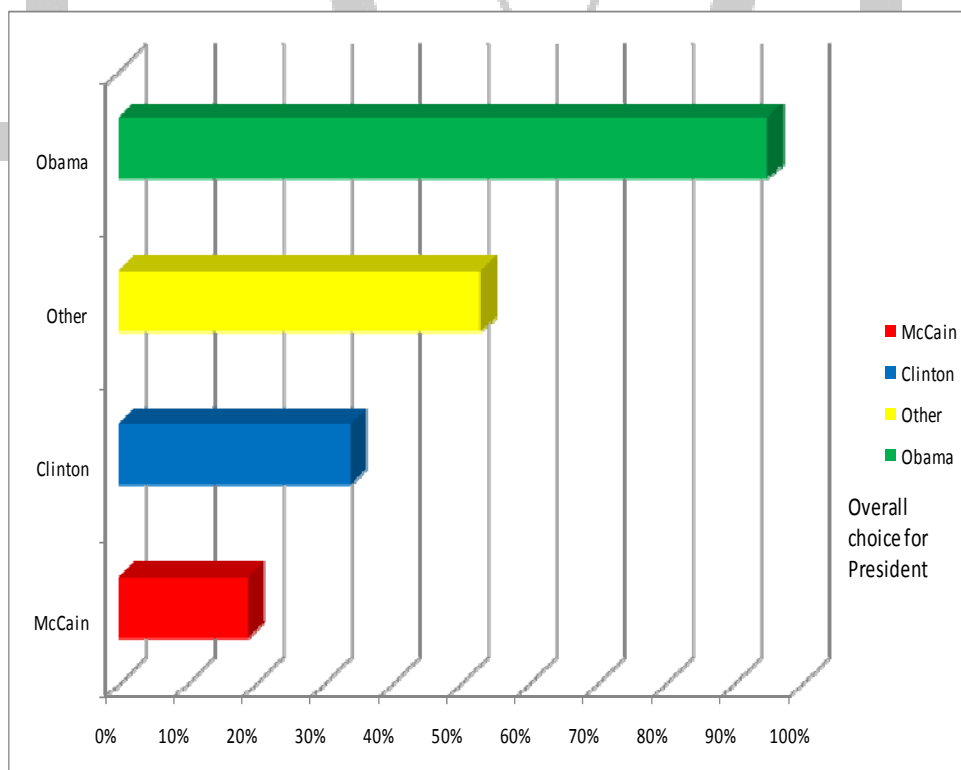
other than the three

viable ones still in

this race. A still

significant portion of

students would



chose fourth person as either a first or second choice candidate as their choices to become the forty-fourth President of the United States.

### **Survey Methodology**

Results are based on web based questionnaires submitted by 643 University of Delaware full-time under-graduates, aged 18 and older, conducted March 13-April 11, 2008.

For results based on the total sample of these students, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is  $\pm 4$  percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

