

Future of the **First Amendment**

What America's High School Students Think About Their Freedoms

Key Findings

September

2006

Survey Update



A project sponsored by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Conducted by David Yalof and Kenneth Dautrich, New England Survey Research Associates

 John S. and James L.
Knight Foundation

Key Findings

September 2006

- 1.** Students in 2006 are far more likely than they were two years ago to take classes dealing with First Amendment issues. More teachers are teaching First Amendment classes.
- 2.** Today more students support First Amendment protections for news media. And students are more likely than two years ago to favor the right of high school students to report in their own newspapers without school officials' approval.
- 3.** At the same time, however, more students today think the First Amendment, as a whole, goes too far in the rights it guarantees.
- 4.** The same mixed results applied to teachers. More teachers understand and appreciate First Amendment rights in 2006. But more of them also admit that schools are not doing a good job educating students on the First Amendment.

*The research methodology and annotated surveys
can be found at the end of this report.*

Future of the **First Amendment** **2006 Follow-Up Survey**

Key Findings

A project sponsored by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.
Conducted by David Yalof and Kenneth Dautrich,
New England Survey Research Associates

September 18, 2006

www.firstamendmentfuture.org

 John S. and James L.
Knight Foundation

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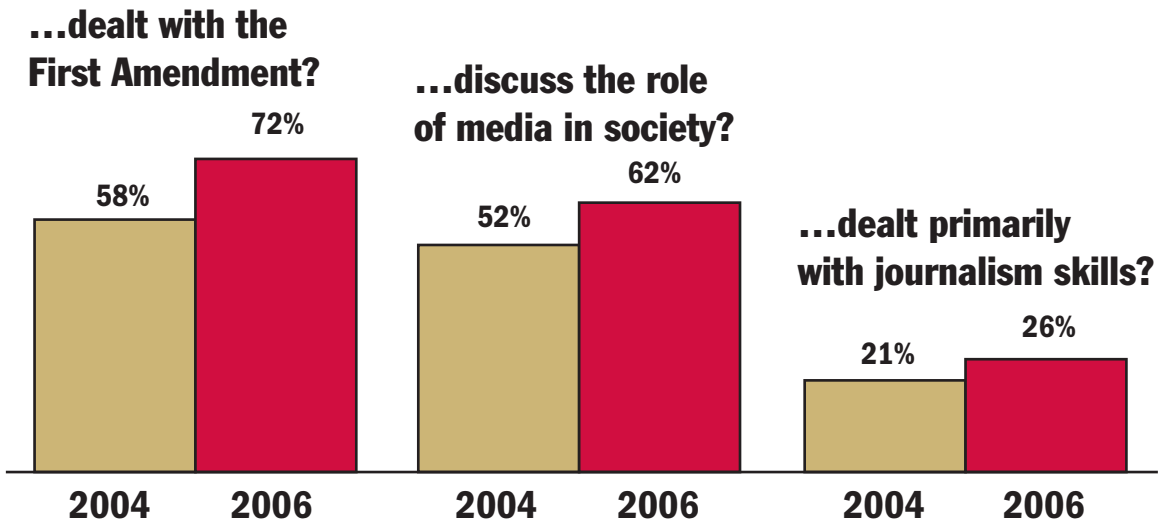
1

Students in 2006 are far more likely than they were two years ago to take classes dealing with First Amendment issues. More teachers are teaching First Amendment classes.

In 2006, 72 percent of students say they've taken classes that dealt with the First Amendment, compared to 58 percent in 2004. And more than 6 in 10 say they've taken classes that discuss the role of the media, an increase of 10 percentage points. Meanwhile, more than a quarter now say they've taken journalism classes.

(Percentage of high school students saying yes)

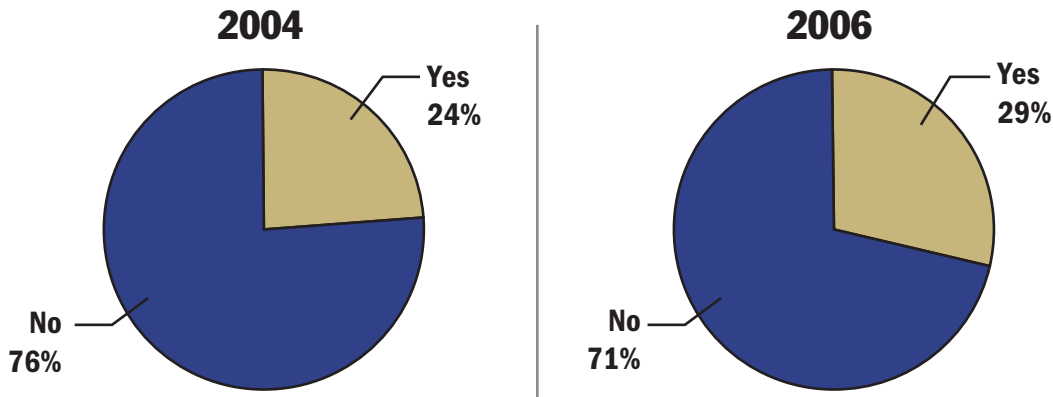
"Have you ever taken classes in high school that . . ."



Twenty-nine percent of high school teachers now say they've taught classes that deal with the First Amendment, and 44 percent say they've taught classes that discuss the role of media in society, as compared to just 42 percent in 2004.

(Asked of high school teachers)

"During the past year, have you taught any classes that deal with the First Amendment?"



2

Today more students support First Amendment protections for news media. And students are more likely than two years ago to favor the right of high school students to report in their own newspapers without school officials' approval.

Forty-one percent now say the press in America has about the right amount of freedom, a 4-point jump from 2004. Meanwhile, 30 percent say the press has too much freedom, a drop of two percentage points from the last survey.

(Student respondents only)

“Overall, do you think the press in America has too much freedom to do what it wants, too little freedom to do what it wants, or is the amount of freedom the press has about right?”

“Too much freedom”



“About the right amount of freedom”

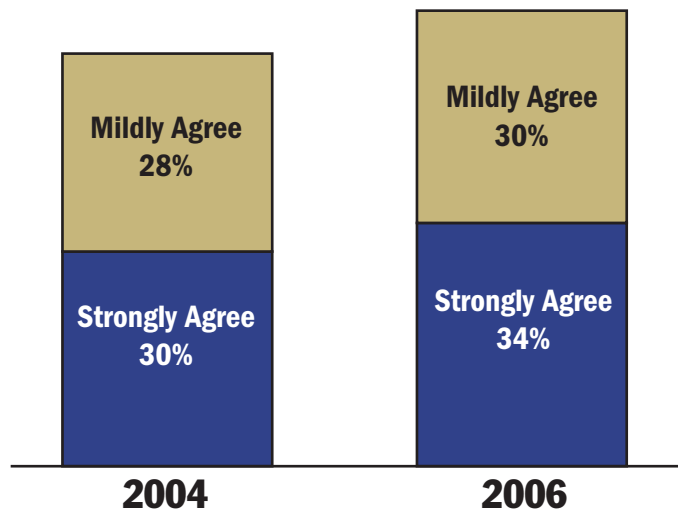


In 2006, 64 percent of students favored the right of high school students to report in their own newspapers without school officials' approval, up from 58 percent two years ago. Meanwhile, this year 54 percent say all newspapers should be allowed to publish freely without government approval, up slightly from the 51 percent who said so in 2004.

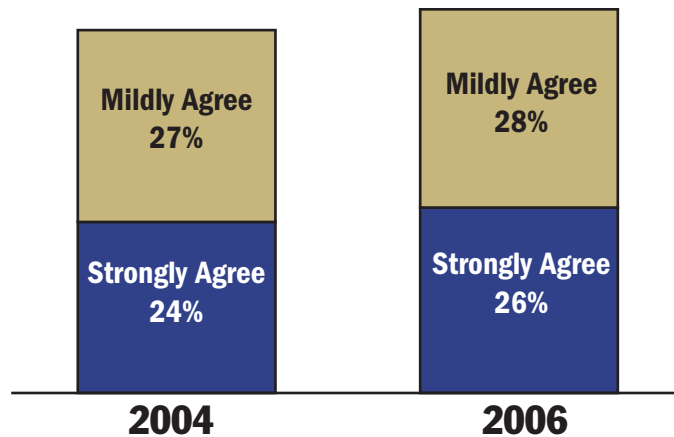
"Please check if you strongly agree, mildly agree, mildly disagree, or strongly disagree..."

(Student respondents only)

"High school students should be allowed to report controversial issues in their student newspapers without the approval of school authorities."



"Newspapers should be allowed to publish freely without governmental approval of a story."



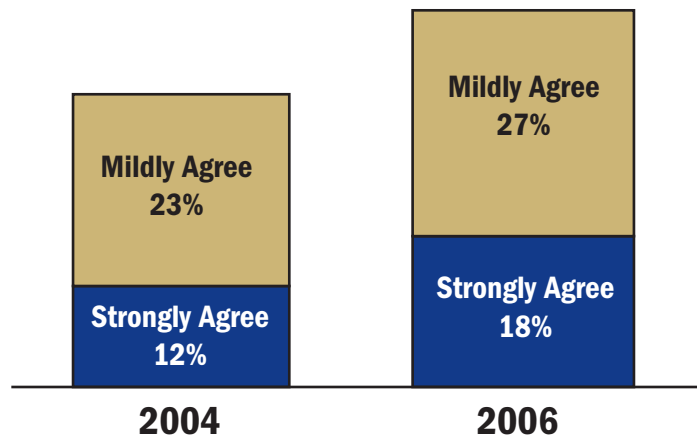
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At the same time, however, more students today think the First Amendment, as a whole, goes too far in the rights it guarantees.

Students show less tolerance than two years ago in their views of the First Amendment as a whole. In 2004, 35 percent of the students surveyed thought the First Amendment went too far in the right it guarantees. In 2006, 45 percent of the students surveyed said they felt the First Amendment goes too far.

(Student respondents only)

**“Based on your own feelings about the First Amendment, please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement:
The First Amendment goes too far in the rights it guarantees”**



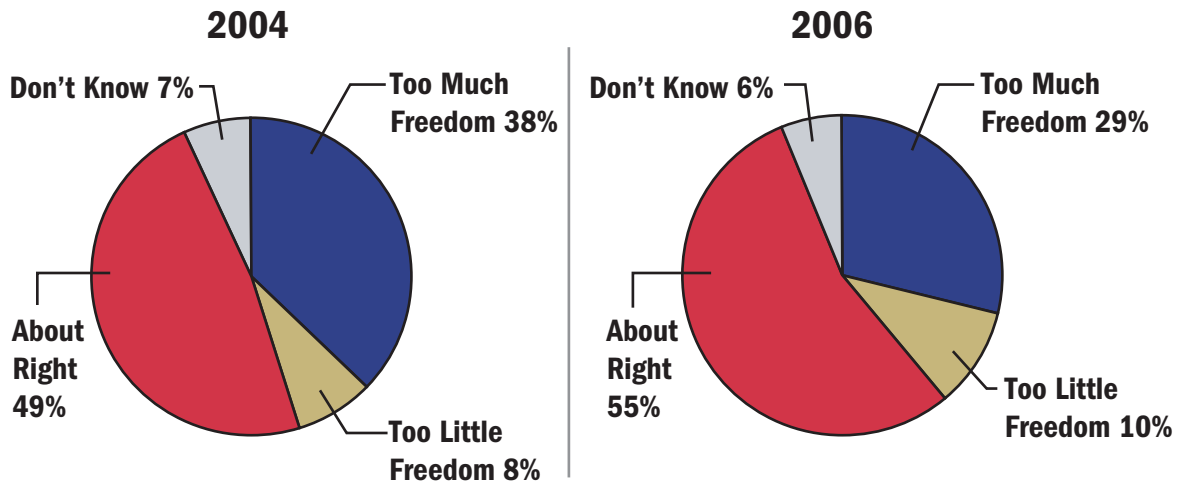
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The same mixed results applied to teachers. More teachers understand and appreciate First Amendment rights in 2006. But more of them also admit that schools are not doing a good job educating students on the First Amendment.

Less than 3 in 10 teachers now think the press in America has too much freedom, as compared to the 38 percent that thought so in 2004. Fifty-five percent now think the press in America have about the right amount of freedom, up from 49 percent who thought so in 2004. At the same time, 42 percent think schools are doing a fair or poor job teaching students about the First Amendment, compared to 36 percent in 2004.

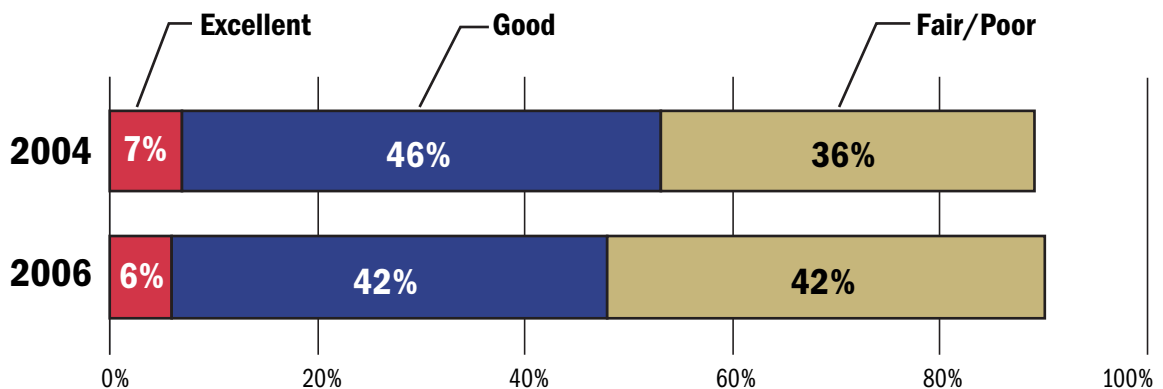
(Responses by teachers)

“Overall, do you think the press in America has too much freedom to do what it wants, too little freedom to do what it wants, or is the amount of freedom the press has about right?”



(Responses by teachers)

“Overall, how would you rate the job that the American educational system does in teaching students about First Amendment freedoms?”



Summary of Methodology

The overall design for conducting this project featured a multi-stage cluster sampling methodology. Employing this technique produced a scientific, and thus generalizable, survey of high school students and teachers in the United States. This technique involved drawing an initial sample of 45 high school buildings in the United States.

For each of these 45 schools, a phone call was placed to the school principal, asking if his/her school would be willing to participate in the project. Thirty-four principals agreed to have their schools participate in the survey.

These 34 school administrators were asked to coordinate the administration of surveys to all students and teachers in the school building. Principals themselves were also asked to complete a survey. Partial copies of the surveys that were administered to students and teachers may be found in the appendix to this report.

In total, 14,498 students, 882 teachers, and 34 principals completed the questionnaires.

This project was designed and conducted by Dr. David Yalof and Dr. Kenneth Dautrich.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT SURVEY (partial) – 2006

1. What grade are you currently in?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Below 9th	2%	0%
<input type="checkbox"/> 9th	29%	30%
<input type="checkbox"/> 10th	27%	27%
<input type="checkbox"/> 11th	23%	24%
<input type="checkbox"/> 12th	19%	18%

2a. Have you ever taken classes in high school that dealt with the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	58%	72%
<input type="checkbox"/> No	42%	28%

2b. Have you ever taken classes in high school that discuss the role of media in society?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	52%	62%
<input type="checkbox"/> No	48%	38%

2c. Have you ever taken classes in high school that dealt primarily with journalism skills?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	21%	26%
<input type="checkbox"/> No	79%	74%

2d. Have you ever taken a class in high school where the teacher required as a class assignment that you read a newspaper or watch television news?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	75%	81%
<input type="checkbox"/> No	25%	19%

3. Please indicate whether or not you have been involved in any of the following activities at your high school (check all that apply):

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Student newspaper	8%	10%
<input type="checkbox"/> Student magazine with a news component (does not include literary magazines or yearbooks)	4%	2%
<input type="checkbox"/> Student-run radio station with a news component	4%	2%
<input type="checkbox"/> Student-run television station with a news component	5%	5%
<input type="checkbox"/> Student Internet or World Wide		

<input type="checkbox"/> Web publication with a news component	5%	4%
<input type="checkbox"/> Any other form of student media with a news component	5%	4%

4. The First Amendment became part of the U.S. Constitution more than 200 years ago. This is what it says:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

Based on your own feelings about the First Amendment, please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: The First Amendment goes too far in the rights it guarantees.

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	12%	18%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly agree	23%	27%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly disagree	19%	16%
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	25%	21%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	21%	19%

5. Overall, do you think the press in America has too much freedom to do what it wants, too little freedom to do what it wants, or is the amount of freedom the press has about right?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Too much freedom	32%	30%
<input type="checkbox"/> Too little freedom	10%	11%
<input type="checkbox"/> About right	37%	41%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	21%	18%

6a. People should be allowed to express unpopular opinions.

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	51%	52%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly agree	32%	33%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly disagree	5%	5%
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	2%	2%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	10%	8%

6b. People should be allowed to burn or deface the American flag as a political statement.

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	8%	7%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly agree	8%	9%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly disagree	11%	12%
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	63%	64%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	10%	8%

6c. Musicians should be allowed to sing songs with lyrics that others might find offensive.

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	40%	37%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly agree	30%	32%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly disagree	14%	16%
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	7%	7%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	9%	8%

6d. Newspapers should be allowed to publish freely without government approval of a story.

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	24%	26%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly agree	27%	28%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly disagree	22%	23%
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	14%	13%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	13%	10%

6e. High school students should be allowed to report controversial issues in their student newspapers without the approval of school authorities.

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	30%	34%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly agree	28%	30%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly disagree	18%	17%
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	11%	8%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	13%	11%

7. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"Americans don't appreciate First Amendment freedoms the way they ought to."

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	17%	15%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly agree	33%	38%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly disagree	18%	17%
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	9%	7%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	23%	23%

8. Are the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment something you personally think about or are they something you take for granted?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Personally think about	27%	24%
<input type="checkbox"/> Take for granted	36%	42%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	37%	34%

9. Are you male or female?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Male	50%	50%
<input type="checkbox"/> Female	50%	50%

10. Are you Spanish/Hispanic/Latino?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	15%	12%
<input type="checkbox"/> No	85%	88%

11. What is your race?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> White/Caucasian	68%	73%
<input type="checkbox"/> Black/African-American	14%	11%
<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaska native	2%	1%
<input type="checkbox"/> Asian	4%	3%
<input type="checkbox"/> Some other race	12%	12%

12. Thinking about your family's current financial situation do you consider yourself to be rich, upper income, middle income, lower income, or poor?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Rich	5%	4%
<input type="checkbox"/> Upper income	23%	24%
<input type="checkbox"/> Middle income	59%	61%
<input type="checkbox"/> Lower income	10%	9%
<input type="checkbox"/> Poor	4%	2%

13. What is your approximate overall high school grade point average?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> 0.0-2.0 (or 0-75)	7%	6%
<input type="checkbox"/> 2.1-3.0 (or 76-85)	31%	31%
<input type="checkbox"/> 3.1-3.5 (or 86-90)	31%	32%
<input type="checkbox"/> 3.6-4.0 (or 91-95)	22%	23%
<input type="checkbox"/> Over 4.0 (over 95)	9%	8%

14. Which of the following grades is closest to your current overall grade point average?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> A	28%	30%
<input type="checkbox"/> B	42%	45%
<input type="checkbox"/> C	23%	21%
<input type="checkbox"/> D	4%	3%
<input type="checkbox"/> F	2%	1%

15. Which of the following best describes you?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> I was born a U.S. citizen	90%	94%
<input type="checkbox"/> I was born in another country, but became a U.S. citizen	5%	3%
<input type="checkbox"/> I was born in another country, and I am not a U.S. citizen	5%	3%

HIGH SCHOOL FACULTY SURVEY (partial) - 2006

1. What subject or subjects do you currently teach? (Please check all that apply):

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Art/Music/Drama	8%	8%
<input type="checkbox"/> English	21%	18%
<input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Language (e.g. Spanish, French)	8%	8%
<input type="checkbox"/> History	11%	8%
<input type="checkbox"/> Journalism	2%	2%
<input type="checkbox"/> Math (Algebra/Calculus/Geometry)	17%	14%
<input type="checkbox"/> Physical Education	6%	6%
<input type="checkbox"/> Physical sciences (e.g. Biology/Chemistry/Physics)	14%	12%
<input type="checkbox"/> Psychology	2%	1%
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies	12%	12%
<input type="checkbox"/> Special Education	9%	10%
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	26%	25%

2. During the past year, have you taught any classes that dealt primarily with journalism skills?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	7%	8%
<input type="checkbox"/> No	93%	92%

3. During the past year, have you taught any classes that deal with the First Amendment?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	24%	29%
<input type="checkbox"/> No	76%	71%

4. During the past year, have you taught any classes that discuss the role of media in society?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	42%	44%
<input type="checkbox"/> No	58%	56%

5. During the past year, have you required as an assignment that your students read a newspaper or watch the television news, and if so, how often were they required to do so?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Never	44%	45%
<input type="checkbox"/> Once per year	12%	11%
<input type="checkbox"/> On a quarterly basis	17%	16%
<input type="checkbox"/> On a monthly basis	12%	11%
<input type="checkbox"/> On a weekly basis	14%	17%

6. If you did require that students read a newspaper or watch the television news, which (if any) of the following activities did you require as part of that class assignment? (Check all that apply):

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Students wrote reports	48%	26%
<input type="checkbox"/> Students wrote a letter to the editor/station manager	8%	3%
<input type="checkbox"/> Students gave oral presentations to the class	39%	21%
<input type="checkbox"/> No activities required	9%	8%
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	34%	21%

7. Do you currently serve as faculty adviser to any of the following clubs or activities?

(Please check all that apply, or check "None"):

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Student newspaper	4%	2%
<input type="checkbox"/> Student magazine (Category does not include student literary magazines or yearbooks)	1%	0%
<input type="checkbox"/> Student-run radio station with a news component	0%	0%
<input type="checkbox"/> Student-run television station with a news component	1%	1%
<input type="checkbox"/> Student Internet or World-		

Wide Web publication with a news component	2%	1%
<input type="checkbox"/> Any other form of student media with a news component	5%	2%

<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly agree	20%	21%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly disagree	16%	12%
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	50%	50%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	5%	5%

8. How important do you feel it is that ALL students participate in some extracurricular activities or clubs?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	73%	69%
<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	24%	28%
<input type="checkbox"/> Not too important	2%	2%
<input type="checkbox"/> Not important at all	1%	0%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	0%	1%

9. How important do you feel it is that ALL students learn some journalism skills?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	35%	31%
<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important	52%	55%
<input type="checkbox"/> Not too important	10%	11%
<input type="checkbox"/> Not important at all	1%	1%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	1%	3%

10. How much do you trust journalists to tell the truth? Do you believe they tell the truth....

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> All of the time	4%	5%
<input type="checkbox"/> Some of the time	79%	84%
<input type="checkbox"/> Little of the time	13%	7%
<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	2%	2%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	2%	2%

11. The First Amendment became part of the U.S. Constitution more than 200 years ago. This is what it says:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

Based on your own feelings about the First Amendment, please tell me whether you strongly agree, mildly agree, mildly disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: The First Amendment goes too far in the rights it guarantees.

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	9%	12%

12. Overall, how would you rate the job that the American educational system does in teaching students about First Amendment freedoms?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	7%	6%
<input type="checkbox"/> Good	46%	42%
<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	29%	33%
<input type="checkbox"/> Poor	7%	9%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	11%	10%

13. Overall, do you think the press in America has too much freedom to do what it wants, too little freedom to do what it wants, or is the amount of freedom the press has about right?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Too much freedom	38%	29%
<input type="checkbox"/> Too little freedom	8%	10%
<input type="checkbox"/> About right	49%	55%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	6%	6%

14a. People should be allowed to express unpopular opinions.

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	72%	75%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly agree	25%	21%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly disagree	2%	3%
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	1%	1%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	1%	0%

14b. People should be allowed to burn or deface the American flag as a political statement.

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	15%	16%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly agree	13%	13%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly disagree	11%	11%
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	59%	58%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	2%	2%

14c. Musicians should be allowed to sing songs with lyrics that others might find offensive.

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	28%	35%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly agree	30%	29%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly disagree	19%	19%

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	21%	15%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	2%	2%

<input type="checkbox"/> Take for granted	86%	89%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	7%	6%

14d. Newspapers should be allowed to publish freely without government approval of a story.

Finally, please answer the following questions for classification purposes only...

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	53%	57%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly agree	27%	22%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly disagree	12%	13%
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	6%	7%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	2%	1%

18. What is the highest level of education that you have attained?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> High School diploma	1%	1%
<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelors	41%	41%
<input type="checkbox"/> Masters	52%	53%
<input type="checkbox"/> ABD (all but dissertation)	3%	3%
<input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate	1%	2%
<input type="checkbox"/> Post-doctorate	0%	0%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know	2%	0%

14e. High school students should be allowed to report controversial issues in their student newspapers without the approval of school authorities.

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	13%	13%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly agree	26%	27%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mildly disagree	27%	28%
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	33%	31%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	1%	1%

19. Have you ever received any formal instruction in the First Amendment?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	51%	57%
<input type="checkbox"/> No	49%	43%

15. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

“Americans don't appreciate First Amendment freedoms the way they ought to.”

	2004	2006
Strongly agree	30%	32%
Mildly agree	43%	47%
Mildly disagree	14%	12%
Strongly disagree	5%	4%
Don't know	7%	5%

20. IF YES, would that have been before high school, during high school, and/or after high school? (Check all that apply):

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Before high school	21%	13%
<input type="checkbox"/> During high school	75%	43%
<input type="checkbox"/> After high school	54%	35%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	1%	0%

16. Are the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment something you personally think about or are they something you take for granted?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Personally think about	50%	49%
<input type="checkbox"/> Take for granted	46%	47%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	4%	4%

21. Age?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> 18-28	11%	14%
<input type="checkbox"/> 29-39	27%	27%
<input type="checkbox"/> 40-50	27%	28%
<input type="checkbox"/> 51-61	32%	29%
<input type="checkbox"/> 62-72	3%	2%
<input type="checkbox"/> 73+	0%	0%

17. What about most people in the United States—do you think the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment are something people specifically think about or are they something they take for granted?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Personally think about	7%	5%

22. Are you male or female?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Male	42%	42%
<input type="checkbox"/> Female	58%	58%

23. Are you Spanish/Hispanic/Latino?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	3%	6%
<input type="checkbox"/> No	97%	94%

24. What is your race?

	2004	2006
<input type="checkbox"/> White/Caucasian	92%	94%
<input type="checkbox"/> Black/African-American	4%	3%
<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaska native	0%	0%
<input type="checkbox"/> Asian	1%	0%
<input type="checkbox"/> Some other race	2%	3%