



Comparing Results 2004 Alumni Perspectives on College

Minnesota Private College Research Foundation

Minnesota invests in private higher education out of a trust that our colleges and universities successfully educate the state's youth, yielding high public and private returns in quality of life, service to others, income and economic growth. Indeed, as the educators of one-third of Minnesota's baccalaureate workforce, the 17 members of the Minnesota Private College Council perform a vital role in the state's economic growth.

Economic success for the state increasingly demands workers with critical thinking skills, broad experience and competencies, diverse viewpoints and the ability to learn and adapt to a dynamic global economy. How well our colleges carry out this duty is perhaps best measured by the level of educational engagement that our students experience on our campuses, and by the assessments of our graduates as they reflect upon the importance of the education they received to their professional, civic and personal lives.

Members of the Minnesota Private College Council initiated a comparative alumni survey project in 1999. Using interview data from graduates 1958–1993, the project attempts to quantify the skills and experiences that private and public investment in MPCC member institutions has yielded. Findings from the initial survey were presented in two reports: *Worlds of Difference* and *Comparing Results: Alumni Perspectives on College*. In 2004 the second phase of survey work was begun. *Comparing Results 2004: Alumni Perspectives on College* further provides important observations about what a representative sample of graduates actually experienced in college and how these experiences have impacted their lives. The findings are based on leading research that identifies the qualities most strongly associated with positive educational outcomes for undergraduates, including the frequency and types of student-faculty interaction, student involvement in academic and other campus activities, and students' application of relevant knowledge and skills in multiple settings.

The results presented here illustrate the lasting value of the experiences of our private colleges. Analysis suggests that many of the differences in educational outcomes between private colleges and large public research universities can be attributed to small class sizes, focused learning environments, strong academic and social support systems and faculty members who are deeply engaged in the educational process.

Research Methods

The Minnesota Private College Research Foundation worked with the research firm of Hardwick Day to survey the graduates of MPCC member colleges along with comparison groups of alumni from public universities in Minnesota, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, North Dakota and South Dakota. The research sought to identify whether and to what extent differences exist in the nature and quality of the undergraduate experience and in the subsequent life outcomes of graduates.

The three primary objectives in undertaking this research were:

- To improve understanding of the lasting effects of our campuses and culture on students;
- To broaden public awareness of how and why educational outcomes differ; and
- To explore the characteristics and the overall quality of the undergraduate education that member institutions provide.

The initial survey, completed in 1999, consisted of telephone interviews with nearly 850 alumni who had graduated between the years of 1958 and 1993. These included more than 300 MPCC graduates and approximately 550 graduates of research universities in the surrounding 6 states:

University of Minnesota-Twin Cities	Iowa State University
University of Wisconsin-Madison	University of North Dakota
University of Illinois-Champaign/Urbana	North Dakota State University
University of Iowa	University of South Dakota

Similar surveys were conducted nationally, providing samples of alumni from several other groups of institutions including the *U.S. News & World Report's* top 50 national public universities, the Great Lakes College Association membership, and a set of “most highly selective” private colleges and research universities, as defined by *U.S. News & World Report*.

Beginning in fall 2004, alumni were selected and the survey was administered to over one hundred additional MPCC graduates from the class years 1994–1999. The purpose of this second round of research was primarily to validate the earlier results. We also sought to learn whether there had been any changes between the earlier graduates and the later graduates in the comparison of the Minnesota private college educational experience to that of the public and national private groups.

Limitations

Our survey compares the responses of MPCC alumni and the alumni of the Midwest research universities, national selective colleges and top 50 public institutions. It should be noted that comparison groups differ across measures related to the institutional mission, breadth and diversity of student population as well as location, size and other characteristics.

The survey includes only college graduates. The sample is therefore affected by differences in transfer, dropout and graduation rates and does not represent all student experiences. The most recent four-year graduation rates for the 17 MPCC institutions range from 50 to 100 percent. Comparable rates for the Minnesota’s state universities and the University of Minnesota range from 18 to 54 percent (IPEDS 2004).

Results

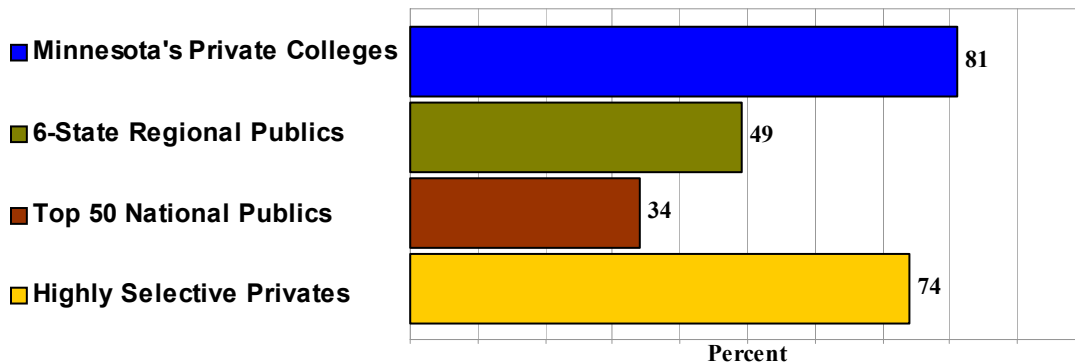
Private college alumni deeply value and appreciate their college educations. They give strong endorsements of the quality of student-faculty contact, the richness of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, and the integration of values, arts, leadership and service during their undergraduate experience. This most recent survey corroborates the initial 1999 survey findings. MPCC graduates clearly identify the advantages that our member colleges bring to the higher education marketplace when compared with the response of graduates from the regional public universities, national selective colleges and the Top 50 public institutions.

Our colleges are communities, not simply campuses

Minnesota’s private colleges have provided a distinct education from the first day of class. Approximately 80 percent of MPCC graduates began their education as freshmen. In response to the trust granted by parents and students, our institutions have offered a safe campus environment and a larger sense of community.

- 90% of MPCC graduates reported personally benefiting from a safe campus environment.
- 60% of MPCC graduates lived on campus for most of their college years.
- 81% of MPCC graduates agreed that there was a strong sense of community at their college as compared to 49% of regional public university graduates.

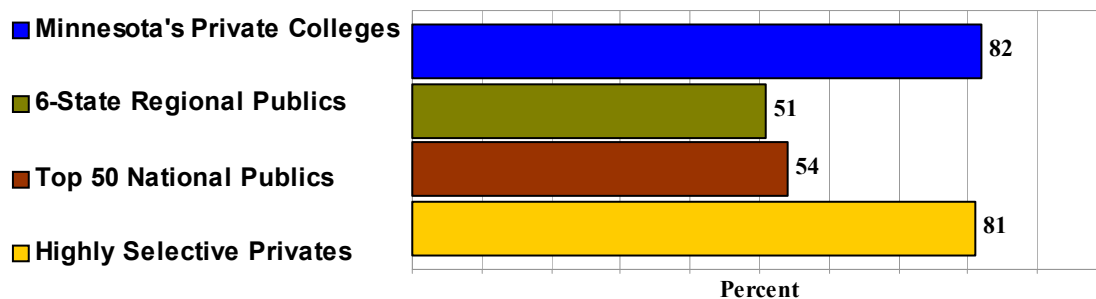
Graduates Who Identified a Strong Sense of Community



In such an environment, students not only developed lifelong friendships but the vast majority of graduates completed their degrees in 4 years or less.

- 65% of MPCC graduates developed friendships from their classroom experiences.
- 82% of MPCC graduates reported completing their degree in four years or less as compared to 51% of regional public university graduates.

Graduates Who Completed Their Degrees in Four Years or Less



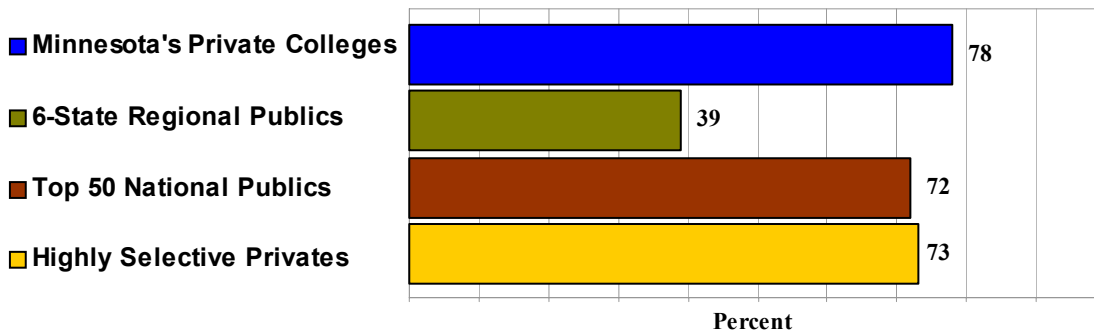
Our colleges seek to engage every student

MPCC graduates have thrived from interaction with high quality teaching-oriented faculty.

- 92% of MPCC graduates benefited from high quality, teaching oriented faculty.
- 98% of MPCC graduates enjoyed classes taught by professors rather than teaching assistants.
- 78% of MPCC graduates stated that professors challenged them academically but also personally helped them meet those challenges. Only 39% of regional public university graduates felt similarly challenged.

Graduates Who Identified Professors Who Challenged Students and Personally Helped Them Meet the Challenge

(top two rating on five-point scale)

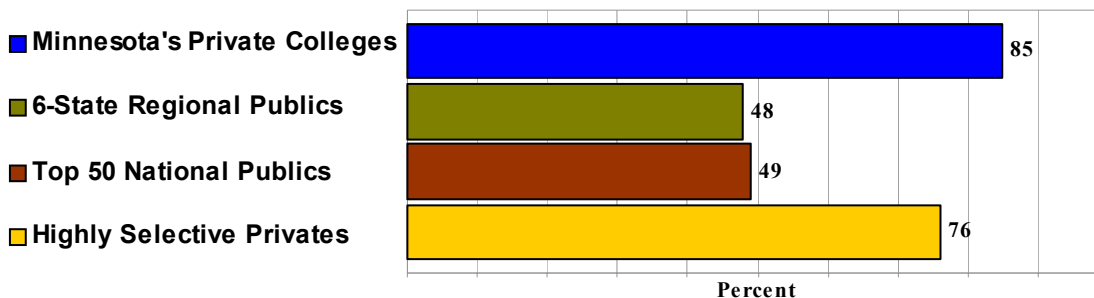


Such consistent and positive interactions with faculty extended beyond the classroom with many students relating to faculty as mentors and role models.

- 80% of MPCC graduates agreed that faculty were interested in students personally as well as academically.
- 53% of MPCC graduates stated they had conversations with professors outside of class.
- 62% of MPCC graduates listed a professor as their role model during college.
- 85% of MPCC graduates benefited from personal interaction with professors as compared to 48% of their regional public university counterparts.

Graduates Who Benefited from Personal Interaction with Professors

(top two rating on five-point scale)

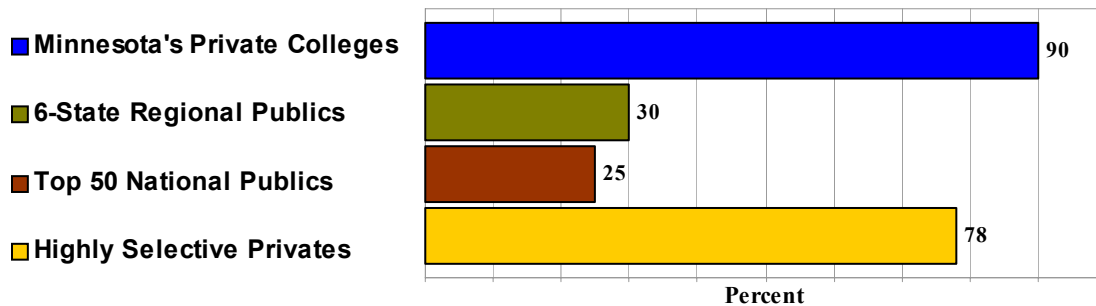


Our colleges offer outstanding educational experiences

The smaller, residential settings of our institutions were praised for their smaller class sizes, extensive classroom discussions, and interactive educational experiences.

- 90% of MPCC graduates benefited from small classes with fewer than 20 students as compared to only 30% of regional public university graduates.
- 70% of MPCC graduates reported having extensive classroom discussions.
- 68% of MPCC graduates asserted that course grades were based on essay exams and written reports.

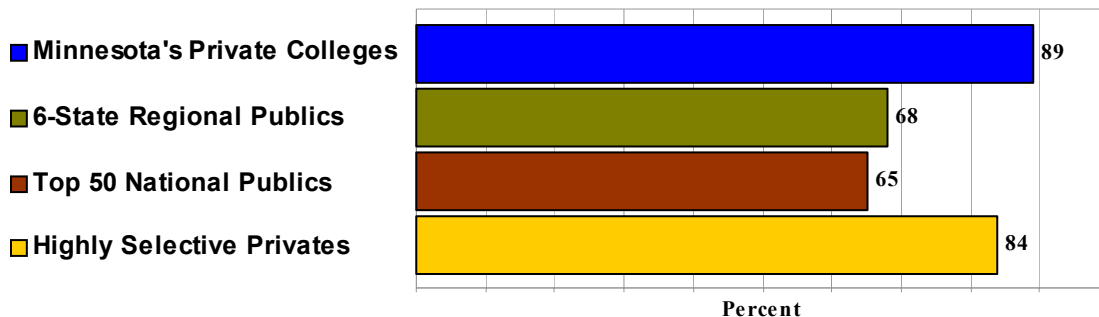
**Graduates Who Benefited from
Small Class Sizes (Fewer than 20 Students)**
(top two rating on five-point scale)



In addition to an outstanding curriculum, students gained life experiences and workforce preparation through off-campus study, faculty-directed research and internships.

- MPCC Graduates participated in numerous interactive educational experiences.
 - 53% participated in off-campus study.
 - 52% participated in faculty directed research or independent study.
 - 51% participated in college sponsored internships or other applied learning.
 - 36% participated in tutoring other students.
- 89% of MPCC graduates participated in an interactive educational experience as compared to only 68% of regional public university graduates.

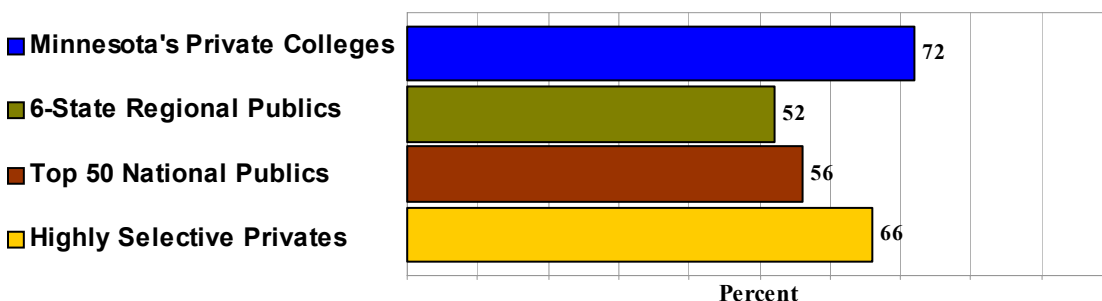
**Graduates Who Participated
in an Interactive Educational Experience**



Minnesota’s private colleges and universities have offered students a superior balance of opportunities for academic, social and personal development.

- 50% of MPCC graduates described classes as including the perspectives of women and minorities.
- 83% of graduates personally benefited from an emphasis on personal values and ethics.
- 70% of graduates stated that classroom discussions integrated values and ethics.
- 72% of MPCC graduates credit their undergraduate education with helping them develop a sense of purpose in life as compared to 52% of regional public university graduates.

Graduates Who Credit their College with Helping Them Develop a Sense of Purpose in Life
(top two rating on five-point scale)



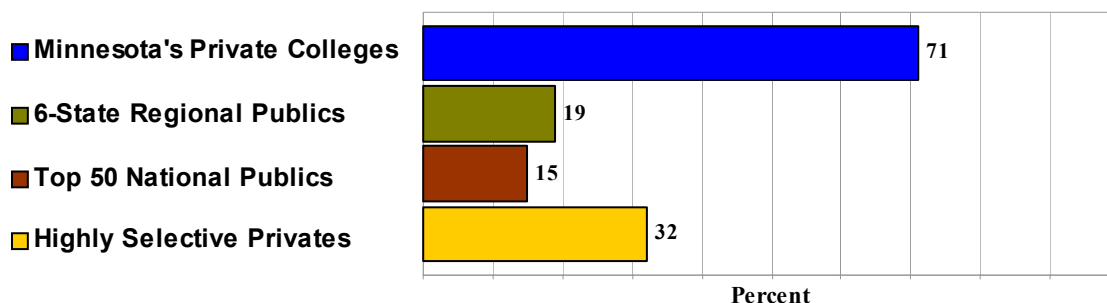
Academic, social and personal development gains result from greater personal attention and support for students, and closer interaction with campus role models.

- 89% of MPCC graduates were satisfied with the quality of the education they received.
- 81% of MPCC graduates listed a faculty, staff or student as their mentor or role model.

Minnesota’s Private Colleges also offered students the opportunity for spiritual development.

- 58% of MPCC graduates stated their college helped them integrate their faith into other aspects of their lives.
- 34% of MPCC graduates modeled their spiritual life after a faculty or staff member.
- 54% of MPCC graduates learned more about their faith during their college years.
- 71% of MPCC graduates personally benefited from college opportunities for spiritual development as compared to 19% of regional public university graduates.

Graduates Who Benefited from Opportunities for Spiritual Development
(top two rating on five-point scale)

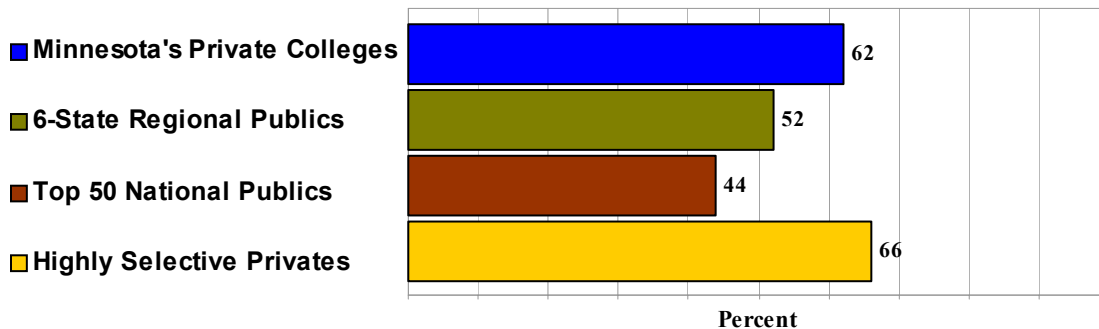


The undergraduate experience continues beyond the classroom

More Minnesota private colleges students took advantage of extracurricular and co-curricular opportunities than students at the other institutions surveyed. MPCC students participated in more organizations and had more opportunities to take on leadership roles.

- 62% of MPCC graduates participated in volunteer or community service organizations.
- 56% of MPCC graduates were active in church or religious activities.
- 35% of MPCC graduates were active in college music or theater.
- 25% of MPCC graduates were involved with campus publications or student government.
- 23% of MPCC graduates participated in varsity athletics.
- 62% of MPCC graduates reported having a leadership role in at least one college organization as compared to 52% of regional public university graduates.

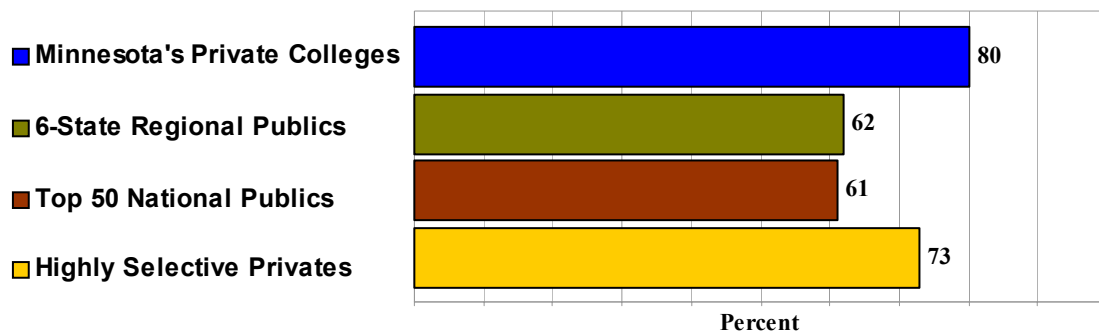
Graduates Who Had a Leadership Role in College



Friendships have formed from students interacting with others who shared their interests and more importantly shared their values.

- 82% of MPCC graduates reported interacting with other students who shared their interests.
- 80% of MPCC graduates stated that they interacted with students who shared values similar to their own as compared to 62% of regional public university graduates.

Graduates Who Reported that Students Shared Similar Values (top two rating on five-point scale)

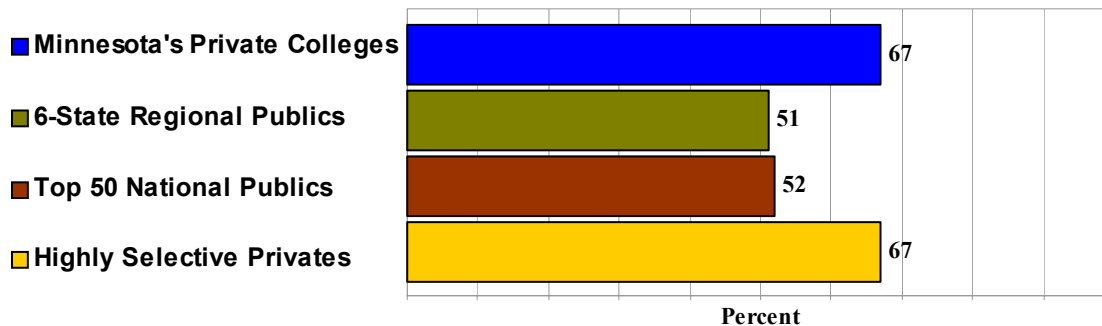


Success in college leads to success in life after college

Minnesota's private colleges and universities have shaped graduates by enhancing leadership, analytical thinking, writing and public speaking skills – better preparing them for successful careers.

- 82% of MPCC graduates were better prepared for economic and career changes because they have the ability to learn new skills.
- 85% of MPCC graduates credited their college with developing analytical thinking.
- 78% of MPCC graduates asserted that college helped them develop writing skills.
- 66% of MPCC graduates reported having effective speaking skills after college.
- 79% of MPCC graduates stated that college was effective in helping them solve problems and make effective decisions.
- 67% of MPCC graduates agreed that college helped them to become a leader as compared to 51% of regional public university graduates.

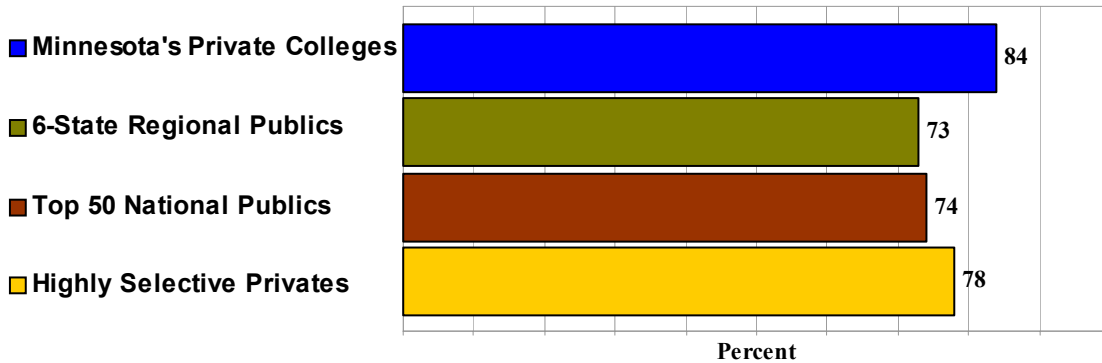
Graduates Who Credit their College with Helping Them Become an Effective Leader
(top two rating on five-point scale)



Our colleges produced graduates who are more than successful professionals; they are successful citizens. MPCC graduates credited their college with enhancing their community experiences.

- 68% of MPCC graduates reported being more politically and socially aware after college.
- 75% of MPCC graduates asserted an increased appreciation for the fine arts, such as music, literature and theater.
- 54% of MPCC graduates volunteered with community service organizations.
- 76% of MPCC graduates listed promoting equality and other social justice issues as important.
- 69% of MPCC graduates stressed the importance of affiliating with organizations that help disadvantaged members of society.
- 76% of MPCC graduates were actively involved in a church or religious organization.
- 84% of MPCC graduates asserted the importance of contributing to their communities as compared to 73% of regional public university graduates.

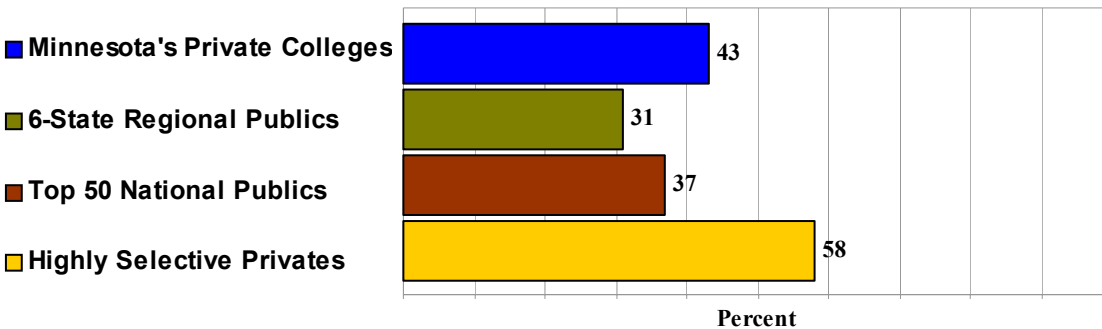
**Graduates Who Reported that
Contributing to Their Community is Important**
(top two rating on five-point scale)



Most importantly, Minnesota's private colleges instilled in their students a commitment to lifelong learning.

- 43% of MPCC graduates pursued post-graduate education.

Graduates Who Pursued Advanced Education



MPCC member institutions can take pride in the reconfirmation of the quality and characteristics of the education they provided. Whether measured by the extent and quality of student-faculty contact, the richness of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, or the integration of values, arts, leadership and service, our alumni deeply respect and appreciate their college education. Minnesota's private colleges and universities bring to the higher education roundtable an extraordinary array of options – ones that foster the future success of graduates.