



Confident Class of 2013 Heads Back to Campus In Record Numbers and Toting Greater Consumer Clout and Connections Than Any Class Before Them

-Latest Alloy College Explorer survey finds current crop of students more concerned and conservative than years past, yet positive about their personal impact and optimistic on the economy.

-Undergrads name top brands evoking “Happy” and “Trusted” feelings amid current economic climate.

August 31, 2009 (New York, NY) – 2009 has been a rollercoaster of a year so far, with daily headlines broadcasting news of the demise of the nation’s financial institutions, alongside promises of hope, as a new commander in chief has been sworn into office. While there is no dismissing the troubling financial picture of the past year, and although overall consumer spending remains challenged, it appears the economy on campus is showing initial signs of recovery. In findings released today, Alloy Media + Marketing’s 9th annual College Explorer, powered by Harris Interactive®, shows this year’s class heading to campus in both heftier numbers and, reportedly, with heftier wallets.

Now the largest class in history, with 13.8 million college students (ages 18-30) arriving on campus this year, this growing and influential group totes back a record \$250 billion in spending power - up nearly 6% over 2008 figures.

Discretionary spending shows a comparable gain, with 18-30 year old college students reporting peak figures at \$56 billion. In just four short years, these numbers mark a significant 37% spending hike. Monthly college student discretionary expenditures also increased 5% among 18-30 year old college students since 2008. According to these current figures, it appears this generation of college students is leading new consumer confidence.

“This year’s survey offers an important view of the impact a challenging economic period has had on this ever-growing college market”, commented Dana Markow, VP, Senior Consultant, Youth Center of Excellence, Harris Interactive. “Today’s college students are showing more care when it comes to their purchasing decisions; however, they continue to spend their hard earned discretionary dollars and a large number express optimism for a brighter economic future.”

Still Gotta Have It

Given the downturn of the economy, college students may be showing greater consideration when it comes to their discretionary purchases, but by no means does it appear they are significantly cutting back on their “must have” items.

Food purchases remain a top category for active college students, showing the largest increase in category discretionary spending overall. Clothing and shoe purchases, entertainment spend, and technology purchases also show a slight lift over last year’s figures. Notably, when it comes to “tech” purchasing decisions, it is college students who



make the final call. A weighty 70% of college students state they are the key decision makers when purchasing their cell phones, while 63% make the ultimate choice for their digital camera and 60% do so when deciding on their choice of computer.

Added Value

While cost remains top of mind for budget conscious students, the study finds that a substantial 61% of college students are open to trying new brands. Moreover, they are always open to a good “deal”, with more than half (58%) of college students finding samples most useful when it comes to advertising.

College students continue to put value on brands that are contributing positively to the causes that matter to them. This year’s findings demonstrate an increasing preference for socially responsible brands. In fact, preference for purchasing brands tied to good deeds has grown by 30% in just four short years. Today, 43% (net) of college students state their preference for purchasing socially responsible brands.

Powerful Connections

Advancing technologies and new digital offerings continue to revolutionize the modern campus. Just two years ago, just under one-third of college campuses offered blanket “wireless” coverage. Today, that figure has doubled, with 60% of college campuses meeting the demands of today’s “totally connected” co-ed¹.

Students’ increasing mobility and need for 24-7 connection is confirmed by rapid year over year increases in ownership of both laptops and MP3 players. For the first time since the study’s inception, desktop ownership slides below half of the college student population (48%), while the laptop is now the preferred model on campus with three-quarters (75%) of students reporting ownership.

In four years, the MP3 player has almost doubled to 74% ownership. Digital camera ownership also jumps to three-quarters (75%) – a 17 percent increase since 2006 and an apparent reflection of the daily documentation taking place on social networking sites and blogs that now seems a prerequisite to campus life.

Input from friends and family continues to be a strong influence on students’ decision-making with respect to brands, products and services, with 62% of students placing particular importance on word of mouth from friends. Nearly half (44%) trust the advice of family and four in ten are influenced by seeing others using products.

Mom & Dad to the Rescue

This year’s report dove into college students’ personal concerns and the findings reveal that finances weigh heavily on students’ minds. While peer pressure, including persuasion to drink alcohol or pressure to look a certain way, is identified as a problem area, students’ finances and getting good grades appear to put the real pressure on them. Financial pressure tops the list as a major concern for one-third of college students.

¹ The Campus Computing Survey, 2008



For many college students, the economic downturn appears to be driving fiscally responsible behaviors. Four in ten report saving more than years past and one-quarter (25%) are either working for the first time, grabbing more hours at their current job or getting a second job.

According to the study, it appears parents may be sympathetic to the struggles of their newly “independent” offspring. A substantial 65% of 18-24 year old college students who talk with their parents state they are openly speaking to their parents about their spending habits. For 18-24 year olds, over four in ten (41%) are receiving money from their parents directly into a personal account and one-fifth are receiving gift cards for nearby retail stores.

Room for Improvement

The class of 2013 represents our next generation of leaders, so it should be heartening to see the high level of confidence they place with their age group, especially the youngest group of college students. When asked which group has the greatest ability to impact positive change in the world, four in ten 18-24 year olds rank their age group at the top - higher than the overall 18-30 market response and more than twice the confidence they place with the federal government and nearly five times that of Fortune 500 companies.

While a majority of college students expressed they are feeling less secure about their financial situation compared to the previous year, they also appear hopeful. When asked their feelings on the outlook of the economy, more than one-third (35%) of college students expressed optimism, stating the economy will improve in the coming year.

How Does This Make You Feel

Finally, and new to this year’s report, Alloy asked college students to think of the brands that evoke feelings of “Happiness” and “Trust”. Amidst a challenging year filled with corporate failures and economic uncertainty, the following brands garnered college students’ top votes in these “feel good” categories:

HAPPY

- | | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|
| 1- CLINIQUE | 6- WRIGLEY (tied with) |
| 2- APPLE | 7- SONY |
| 3- MCDONALD’S | 8- WALMART (three-way tie with) |
| 4- COCA-COLA | 9- DOVE |
| 5- TARGET | 10- HERSHEY |

TRUSTED

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 1- JOHNSON & JOHNSON | 7- TOYOTA |
| 2- SONY | 8- NIKE (tied with) |
| 3- APPLE | 9- BANK OF AMERICA |
| 4- COLGATE | 10- TARGET (tied with) |
| 5- MICROSOFT (tied with) | 11- DELL |
| 6- COCA-COLA | |



“Today’s college class is clearly in control, from their media consumption and expanding connections to their feelings of empowerment as agents for change, their wide influence is indisputable,” stated Andy Sawyer, EVP, Media Services for Alloy Media + Marketing. “For marketers striving to gain clout with this commanding community, the College Explorer uncovers important nuances of student behaviors and offers key insights to forging a bond with them that can last well beyond graduation day.”

Survey Methodology

The 2009 Alloy College Explorer study was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of Alloy Media + Marketing between April 1 and April 27, 2009 among 1,521 U.S. 18-34 year old college students (2-year, 4-year and graduate students, including 1,433 18-30 year old college students). Results were weighted as needed for age, sex, race/ethnicity, region and school status (full-time, part-time, 4-yr., 2-yr.). Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the U.S. 18-34 year old college students. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to be invited to participate in the Harris Interactive online research panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

About Alloy Media + Marketing

Alloy Media + Marketing (AM+M) (NASDAQ: ALOY) is one of the country’s largest providers of media and marketing programs reaching targeted consumer segments. Alloy manages a diverse array of assets and services in interactive, display, direct mail, content production and educational programming. Alloy works with over 1,500 companies including half of the Fortune 200. For further information regarding Alloy, please visit our corporate website at www.alloymarketing.com.

About Harris Interactive®

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