

For Immediate Release

June 1, 2015

Johnson County Residents Support Local School Boards Setting School Start Dates, and Partisanship Divides Support Free Community College

A University of Iowa Hawkeye Poll conducted March 23-29, 2015 of 612 Johnson County, Iowa residents asked respondents whether local or state officials should set school start dates and their level of public support for a free community college policy. The results indicate that most residents prefer local rather than state officials set school start states. Additionally, Johnson County respondents' support free community college, but support breaks down along traditional partisan lines.

As for the setting of school start dates, 68.4 percent of residents who feel that local school districts officials should set school start dates, compared with 19.5 percent of Johnson County respondents said that state officials should set these dates. Accounting for individuals' party identification, 60.9 percent of Democrats, 73.6 percent of Independents, and 82.1 percent of Republicans support local school district officials setting school start dates. Breaking down individuals into different age categories, a majority of those 18-34 years old (64%), 35-54 (70.4%), 55-59 (76.1%), and 70 and over (69.3%) support this position, too.

The Iowa City School Board also prefers having local district officials rather than state officials set school start dates. School Board President Chris Lynch says that local school officials better understand the unique circumstances of the Iowa City school community, and should be the ones setting the school start date.

There is also strong support for free community college, although this support tends to vary across partisan and age groups. 46.0 percent and 24.8 percent of Johnson County respondents strongly or slightly support free community college. 9.3 percent of respondents strongly oppose free community college. Support for the policy breaks down by party identification; a majority of Democrats and Independents support free community college, while Republicans oppose the policy. 53.7 percent of Democrats and 56.3 percent of Independents strongly support the policy. Only 17.3 percent of Republicans strongly support free community college.

Younger individuals in the 18-34 (52.1%) and 35-54 (45.1%) age categories are more supportive of free community college than older individuals in the 55-69 (35.9%) and 70 and older (36.3%) age categories. However, large portions of 55-69 (26.4%) and 70 and older (27.2%) individuals slightly support free community college, indicating that while older Johnson County residents do not as strongly support the policy idea as much as younger residents, there is still broad support across all age groups for a free community college policy.

Background: The Hawkeye Poll was conducted March 23-29, 2015 by the Hawkeye Poll. The poll was conducted by the Hawkeye Poll Cooperative, comprised of UI faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students in political science, with the cooperation and facilities of the Iowa Social Science Research Center, directed by UI Political Science Professor Frederick J. Boehmke. The

faculty adviser for the poll is UI Professor of Political Science Frederick J. Boehmke. The poll is a teaching, research and service project of the UI Department of Political Science. The Department of Political Science, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Office of the Provost fund the poll.

Respondent identification: A random sample was acquired with 50 percent household landline numbers and 50 percent mobile phone numbers. For households, an initial attempt was made on answering the phone to reach the “youngest male who is 18 years or older.” All who stated they were over age 18 and willing to participate in the survey were included.

Sample: The survey consisted of 657 Johnson County, Iowa residents; the margin of error is +/- 3.9 percent. Among these respondents, 50.08 percent were Democrat, 13.36 percent Republican and 31.72 percent Independent. 39.91 percent considered themselves moderate, while 43.15 percent self-identified as liberal and 16.95 percent as conservative.

Weighting: Reported results are weighted by sex and age.

MEDIA CONTACTS: Michael Ritter, Hawkeye Poll, 319-335- 2319 (office), 715-529-6772 (cell), michael-ritter@uiowa.edu; Frederick Boehmke, Hawkeye Poll, 319-335-2342 (office), 716-866-9277 (cell), frederick-boehmke@uiowa.edu.

END