

# RESEARCH BRIEF

No. 75-17

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## The Value of a Community College Education – Gallup Survey of ATD College Graduates: Preliminary NOVA Results

### Background Information

In early 2017, Achieving the Dream (ATD) partnered with Gallup and the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to conduct a survey of community college alumni from ATD institutions. The objective of the survey was to provide colleges and students with information about the long-term professional success and personal fulfillment of associate degree holders.<sup>1</sup>

NOVA participated in the study and Gallup contacted over 42,000 alumni who had graduated from NOVA with an associate's degree between 2000 and 2016. Just over 3,300 NOVA alumni completed the survey (8 percent response rate).

Presented in this Research Brief are the *preliminary* results to two parts of the survey:

Section 1: Results on the Gallup-Sharecare Well-Being Index (on a 3-point scale)

Section 2: Results on a select set of stand-alone questions (on a 5-point scale)

### Section I: Gallup-Sharecare Well-Being Index

#### Introduction

NOVA alumni and associate degree alumni across the nation rated themselves on the Gallup-Sharecare Well-Being Index. According to Gallup, "the Well-Being Index measures Americans' perceptions of their lives and their daily experiences through five interrelated elements that make up well-being: sense of purpose, social relationships, financial security, relationship to community, and physical health."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Survey of Achieving the Dream College Graduates to Reveal the Value of a Community College Education. (January 19, 2017). Retrieved from [http://achievingthedream.org/press\\_release/16271/survey-of-achieving-the-dream-college-graduates-to-reveal-the-value-of-a-community-college-education](http://achievingthedream.org/press_release/16271/survey-of-achieving-the-dream-college-graduates-to-reveal-the-value-of-a-community-college-education)

<sup>2</sup> Gallup. How Does the Gallup-Sharecare Well-Being Index Work? Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/175196/gallup-healthways-index-methodology.aspx>

Therefore, survey responses were grouped into five elements of well-being:

- A. Financial Well-Being
- B. Social Well-Being
- C. Community Well-Being
- D. Physical Well-Being
- E. Purpose Well-Being

The participants rated themselves on survey questions, and their responses were calculated into a score on a 3-point scale: Thriving, Struggling, or Suffering for each of the five elements. Thriving indicates strong, consistent, and progressing; Struggling indicates moderate or inconsistent; and Suffering indicates at high risk (see Table 1 for scoring scale and see *Results* in this section on pages 2-4 for detailed data.)

**Table 1. Elements of Well-Being: 3-Point Scale**

|                      |              |                                     |
|----------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>3-Point Scale</b> | Thriving ▲   | Strong, Consistent, and Progressing |
|                      | Struggling ■ | Moderate or Inconsistent            |
|                      | Suffering ▼  | At High Risk                        |

## Results

**Key Finding 1: When compared to the national data set, NOVA alumni were more likely to fall in the highest level of the scale, Thriving, on all five elements of the well-being index (Figures 1-5).**

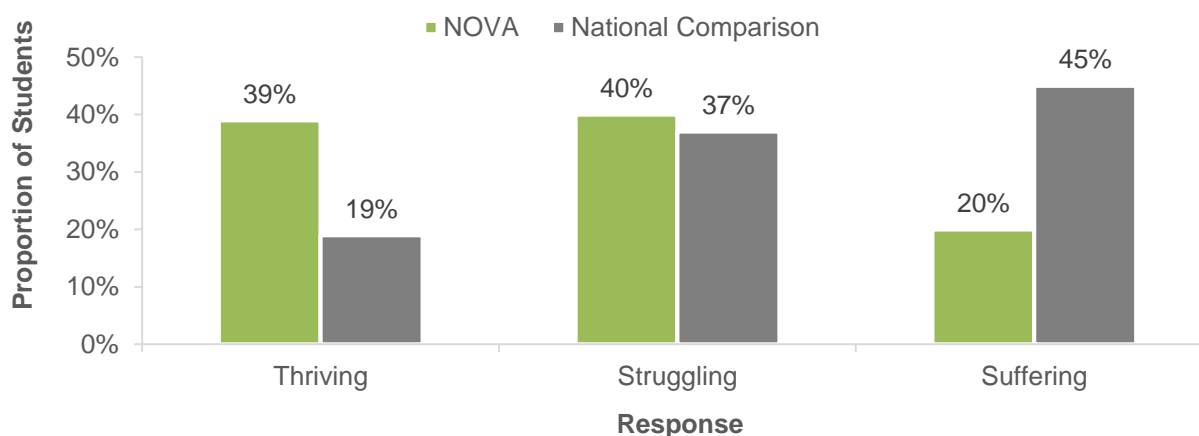
Figures 1-5 present NOVA alumni scoring on the Gallup-Sharecare Well-Being Index.

### A. Financial Well-Being

Effectively managing your economic life to reduce stress and increase security.

The percentage of NOVA alumni respondents who were Thriving on the financial stability indicator (39 percent) was 20 percentage points higher than the national comparison group (19 percent).

**Figure 1. Financial Well-Being Results**



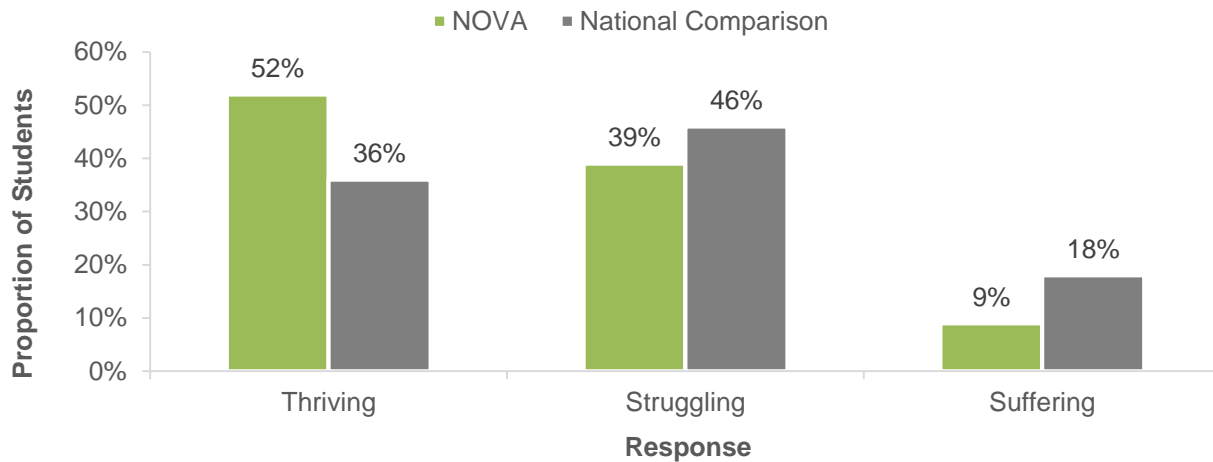
Note: Thriving: Strong, consistent, and progressing; Struggling: Moderate or inconsistent; Suffering: At high risk.

## B. Social Well-Being

Having strong and supportive relationships and love in your life.

Over half of NOVA alumni respondents reported having strong, supportive relationships (52 percent); this was 16 percentage points higher than the national comparison group (36 percent).

**Figure 2. Social Well-Being Results**



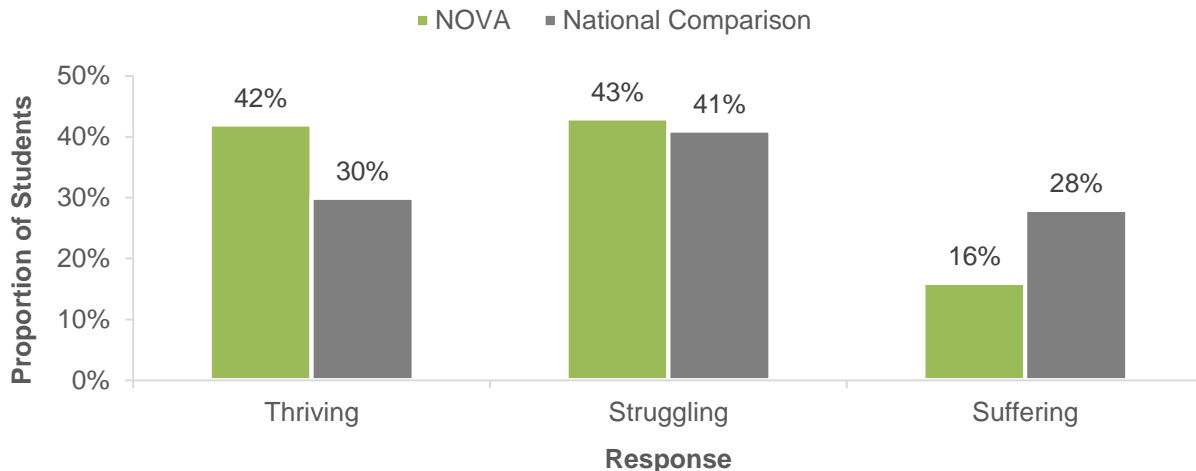
Note: Thriving: Strong, consistent, and progressing; Struggling: Moderate or inconsistent; Suffering: At high risk.

## C. Community Well-Being

The sense of engagement you have with the areas where you live, liking where you live, feeling safe and having pride in your community.

The percentage of NOVA alumni respondents who were Thriving within their community relationships (42 percent) was 12 percentage points higher than the national comparison group (30 percent).

**Figure 3. Community Well-Being Results**



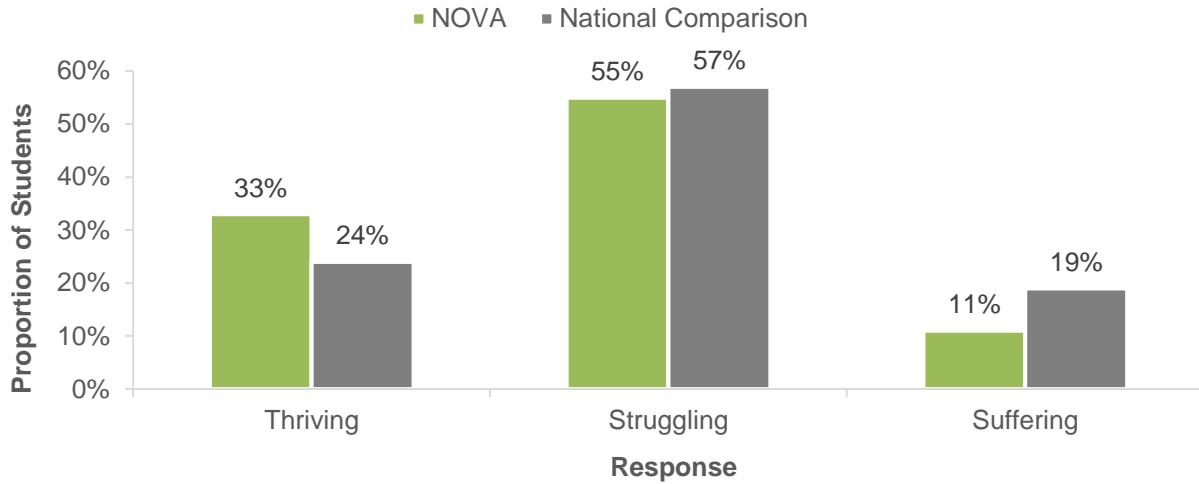
Note: Thriving: Strong, consistent, and progressing; Struggling: Moderate or inconsistent; Suffering: At high risk.

### D. Physical Well-Being

Having good health and enough energy to get things done on a daily basis.

While only one-third of NOVA alumni respondents (33 percent) felt that they were in good health and had enough energy to get things done on a daily basis ('Thriving' in terms of physical well-being), this was 9 percentage points higher than the national comparison group (24 percent).

**Figure 4. Physical Well-Being Results**



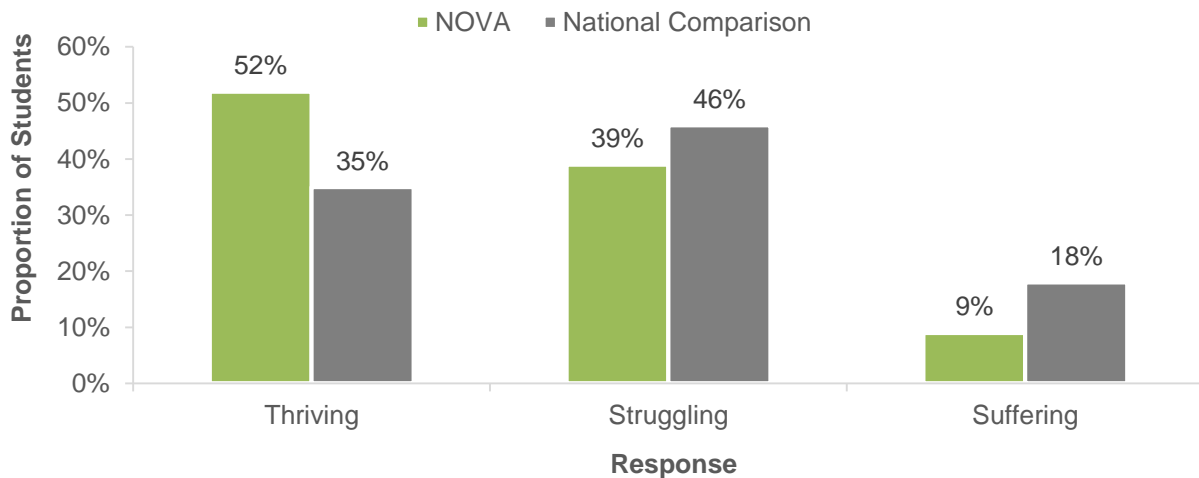
Note: Thriving: Strong, consistent, and progressing; Struggling: Moderate or inconsistent; Suffering: At high risk.

### E. Purpose Well-Being

Liking what you do each day and being motivated to achieve your goals.

Over half of NOVA alumni respondents reported enjoying what they did every day (52 percent were Thriving); this was 17 percentage points higher than the national comparison group (35 percent).

**Figure 5. Purpose Well-Being Results**



Note: Thriving: Strong, consistent, and progressing; Struggling: Moderate or inconsistent; Suffering: At high risk.

## Section 2: Select Stand-Alone Questions

### Introduction

NOVA alumni and associate degree alumni across the nation rated themselves on additional questions on the ATD-Gallup survey. NOVA alumni responses were compared to a national dataset collected by Gallup. The national comparison includes alumni from community colleges across the country, including colleges that are not a part of the ATD network. Responses to a select set of stand-alone questions on the ATD-Gallup survey are presented here. These stand-alone questions are related to:

- A. Cost of Education,
- B. Academic Preparation, and
- C. Support from Faculty.

Responses to these questions are on a standard Likert scale: 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree (see Table 2 for scale and see *Results* in this section on pages 5-7 for detailed data).

**Table 2. Stand-Alone Questions: 5-Point Likert Scale**

|                          |   |                   |
|--------------------------|---|-------------------|
| <b>5-Point<br/>Scale</b> | 1 | Strongly Disagree |
|                          | 2 | Disagree          |
|                          | 3 | Neutral           |
|                          | 4 | Agree             |
|                          | 5 | Strongly Agree    |

### Results

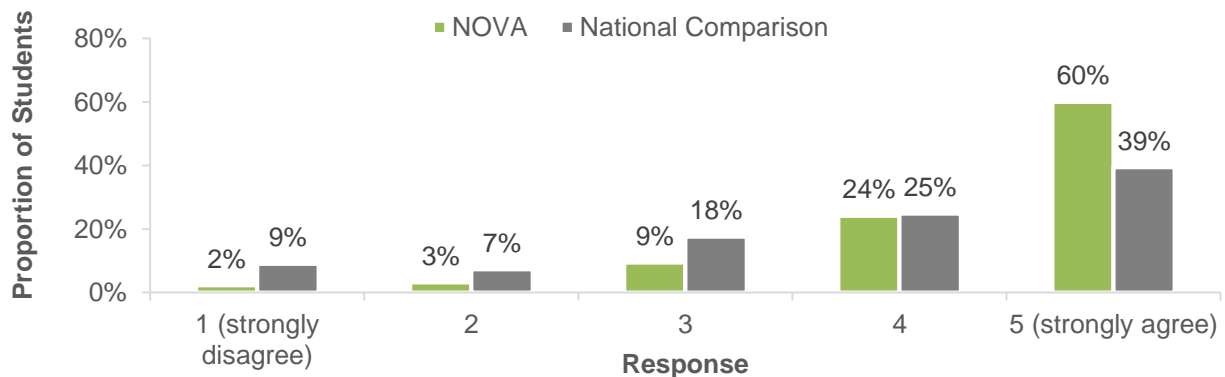
**Key Finding 2: When compared to the national data set, NOVA alumni were far more likely to strongly agree that their education had been worth the cost, but were about as likely as the national average to strongly agree they received support from faculty (Figures 6-10).**

Figures 6-10 present NOVA alumni scoring on the select set of stand-alone questions.

### A. Cost of Education

Eighty-four percent of NOVA respondents *agreed or strongly agreed* that their NOVA education was worth the cost, while only 64 percent of alumni in the national comparison group felt the same about the college they had attended (Figure 6).

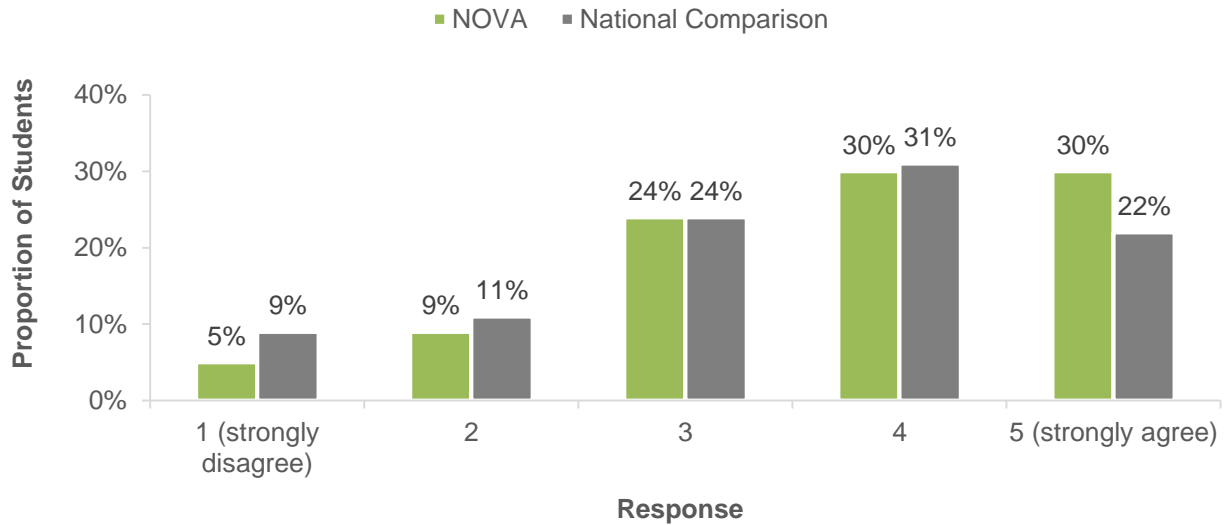
**Figure 6. Survey Question: My Education from NOVA Was Worth the Cost**



## B. Academic Preparation

Sixty percent of NOVA respondents *agreed or strongly agreed* that their NOVA education prepared them for life outside of college, while only 53 percent of alumni in the national comparison group felt the same about the college they had attended (Figure 7).

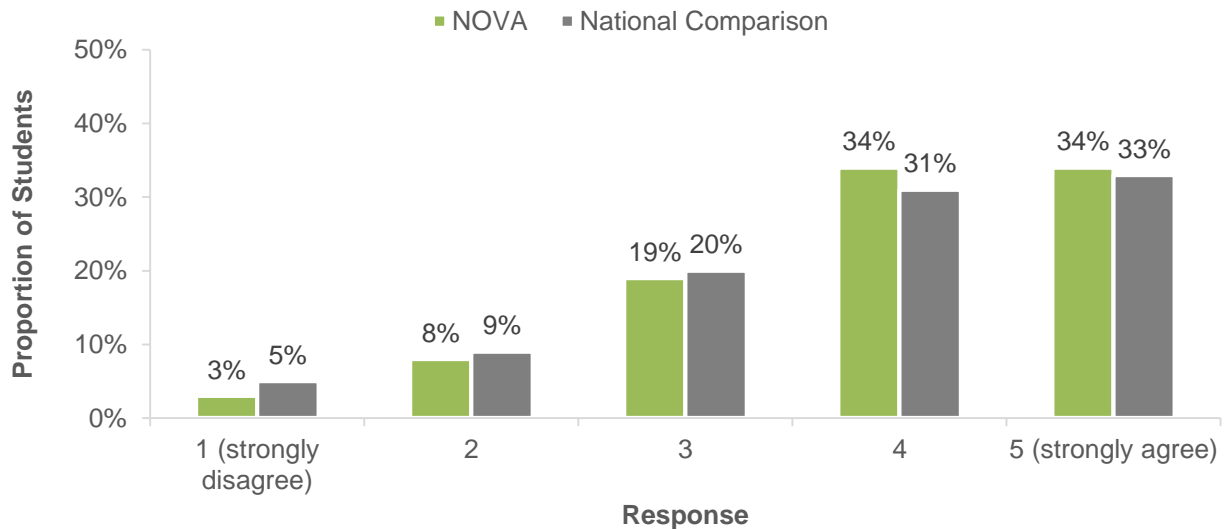
**Figure 7. Survey Question: NOVA Prepared Me Well for Life Outside of College**



## C. Support from Faculty

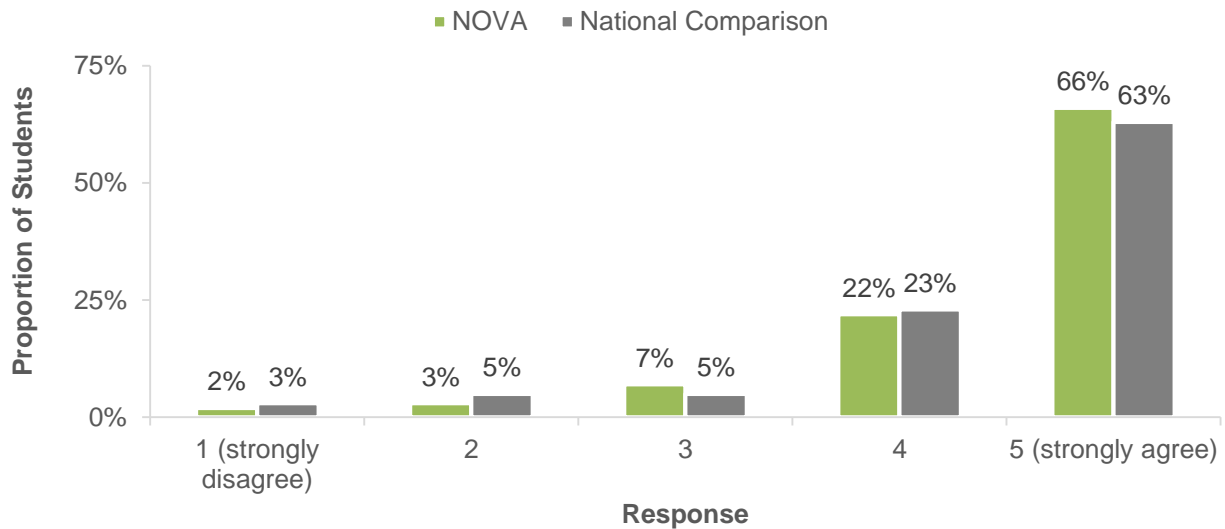
NOVA alumni respondents and alumni in the national comparison group indicated slightly higher agreement with the statement that their professors/instructors had cared about them as a person (68 percent from NOVA and 64 percent nationally *agreed or strongly agreed* with the statement) (Figure 8).

**Figure 8. Survey Question: My Professors/Instructors at NOVA Cared About Me as a Person**



NOVA alumni respondents and alumni in the national comparison group indicated slightly higher agreement with the statement that at least one professors/instructors had made them excited about learning (88 percent from NOVA and 86 percent nationally *agreed or strongly agreed* with the statement) (Figure 9).

**Figure 9. Survey Question: I Had At Least One Professor/Instructor at NOVA Who Made Me Excited About Learning**



NOVA alumni respondents and alumni in the national comparison group indicated slightly lower agreement with the statement that while in college, they had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals (37 percent from NOVA and 40 percent nationally *agreed or strongly agreed* with the statement) (Figure 10).

**Figure 10. Survey Question: While Attending NOVA, I Had a Mentor Who Encouraged Me to Pursue My Goals and Dreams**

