

Denison University

Denison Digital Commons

Faculty Publications

2022

Is There Political Diversity At Denison?

Paul A. Djupe

Denison University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/facultypubs>



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Djupe, Paul A., "Is There Political Diversity At Denison?" (2022). *Faculty Publications*. 1794.
<https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/facultypubs/1794>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Denison Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Denison Digital Commons. For more information, please contact eresources@denison.edu.

Is There Political Diversity At Denison?

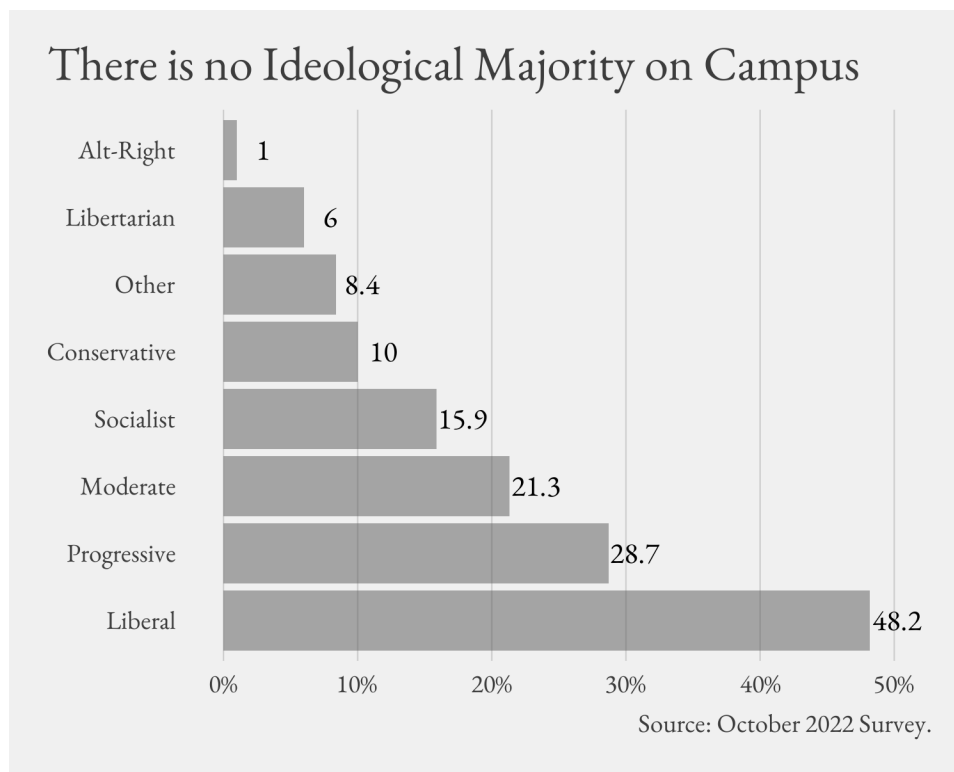
Paul A. Djupe

October 26, 2022

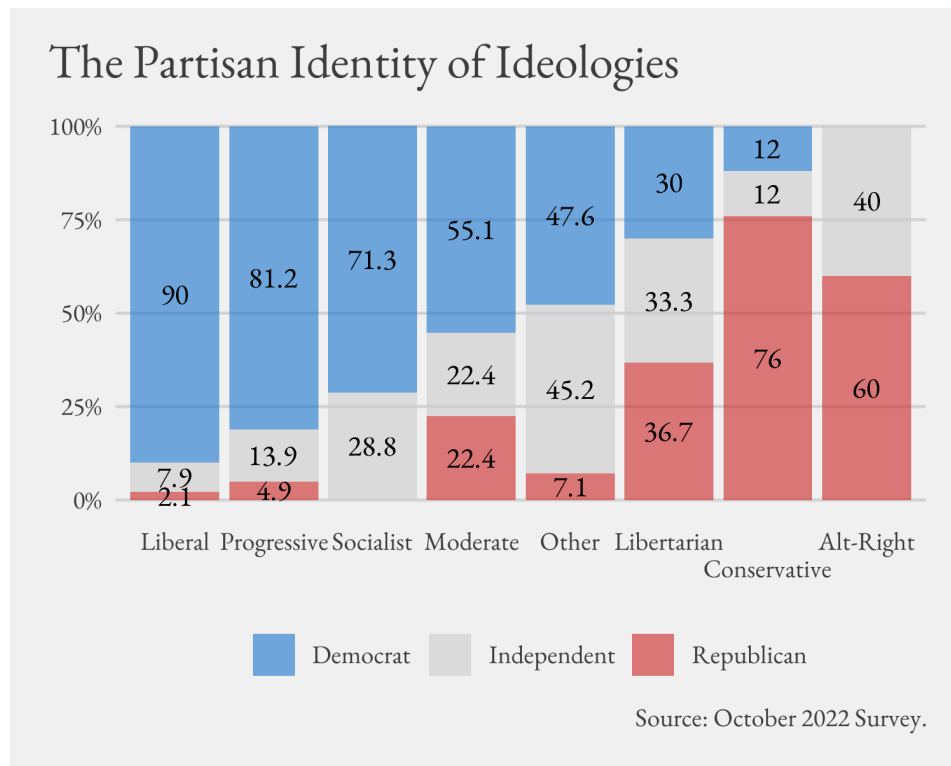
By Paul A. Djupe

Do you ever disagree about politics on campus? If not, you're missing out. While not nearly the only form of diversity that's important to experience, it is a consequential one. Politics is where people think through their values and interests and attempt to choose a future for us all. But higher education has a problem – conservatives are seeking a college education less and less for a variety of reasons, including perceptions of bias, lack of worth, and others. But there are other ways to think about political diversity that should be explored to see: Is there political diversity at Denison?

Using recently collected data from over 500 Denison students, the following figure shows ideological diversity on campus. Yes, there are not that many self-identified conservatives (just 10 percent), but there is no majority of any particular identity. Liberals come close with 48 percent, which represents a growth of about 10 percent since October, 2021. There are also more progressives than last year and, for the first time, we asked about a socialist identity, which 16 percent of campus adopts. In other countries, these ideological identity groups might be represented by different political parties. How about in the United States?

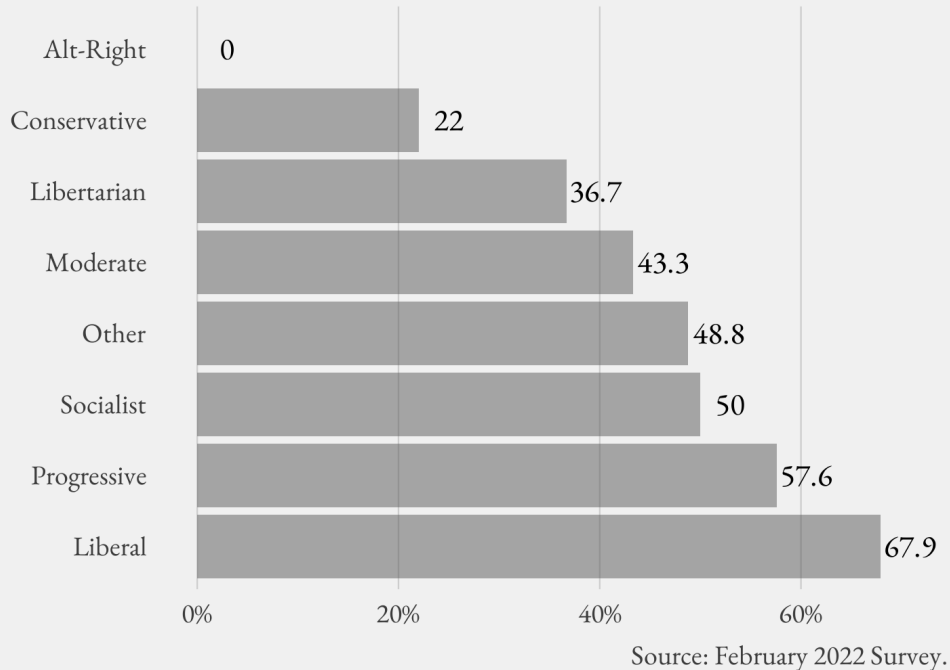


Perhaps it's no surprise that the ideological identities largely collapse onto the two parties, but with a very sizable lean to the Democratic Party. Despite the disagreement between the left and moderate wings of the Democrats, socialists, progressives, and liberals all are heavily Democratic identifiers. Even moderates are majority Democratic. Only the 10 percent of self-identified conservatives and the very few alt-right identifiers are heavily Republican. And that accords with academic work showing the far right movement of the Republican Party, which has little tolerance for RINOs (Republicans in Name Only – an epithet for moderates). But our students also show some signs of ill-fit with the parties, with sizable numbers of others, socialists, moderates, and the alt-right that line up outside the two party system. Put another way, it looks like parties constrain diversity, which is their role in an electoral system like the US's, but many are pushing against it.



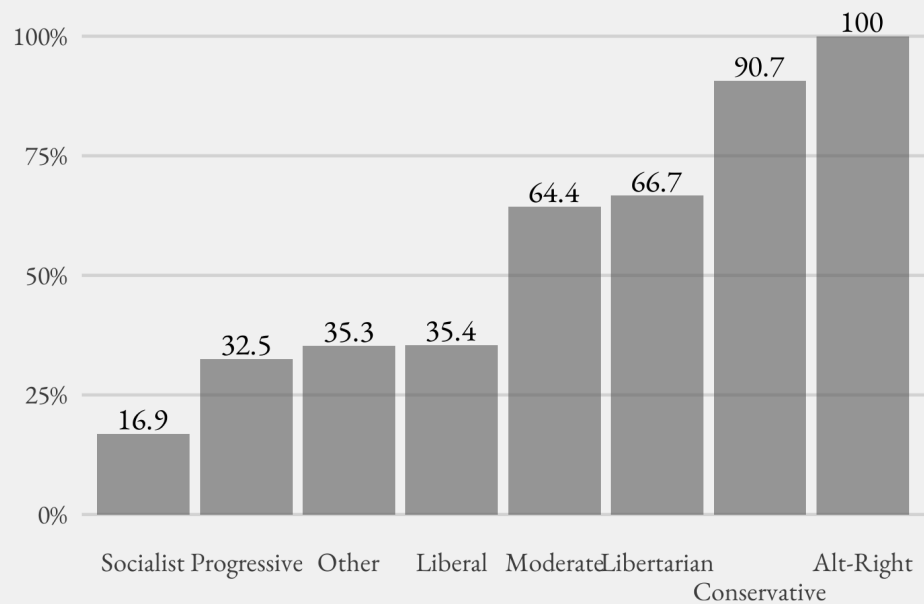
Though most feel confined to the two party system as the only games in town, we might look for diversity in the evaluations of the president. As 127 just covered (by Alex Lazo), Biden's approval rating on campus is an anemic 55 percent. Liberals gave him the highest marks, while fewer progressives and socialists approve (though still slim majorities do). Approval drops steadily from there, with a minority of moderates and libertarians approving. There are clearly different views of how the president is handling his job, which is surely a reflection of the political priorities of student ideologues.

Lefties Still Support Biden, but Not Strongly



We also tried to get at exposure to political diversity through friendship by asking, “Think about the 5 people you are closest to at Denison. How many of them are the following?” One of the options was “Republican.” Republicans constitute about 14 percent of the sample, but Denisonians have an average of 0.9 Republican friends, which is slightly *above* what we would expect by chance. Of course, that distribution is not remotely even. I’ve switched the metric to be whether the student has at least one Republican friend. That’s nearly unanimous among conservative ideological identifiers, but drops off considerably from there. Only a third of liberals and progressives have a Republican friend, while few socialists do (17%). So, some are finding some exposure to disagreement in this way, assuming they actually talk about politics.

Who Has At Least One Republican Friend?



Source: October 2022 Survey.

We desperately need citizens who are able to talk across lines of difference. That does not mean you have to agree, but it means listening and looking for opportunities for establishing common ground. Unfortunately, that is becoming far less common as conservatives are sorting out of higher education. At least at Denison, Republican identifiers have cratered, but there are other ways to think about diversity. Among Democrats, there is a lot of ideological diversity with no majority identity. Those folks – liberals, progressives, and socialists – do not nearly always agree on priorities for the nation, who Democratic candidates should be, and more. While this post is not all sunshine and rainbows, it does suggest that there numerous ways to think about and recognize political diversity on campus.

Paul A. Djupe is a local cyclist who runs the Data for Political Research minor. He started onetwentyseven.blog a few years ago in a bid to subsidize collective action. He's on Twitter and you should be too, along with your president.