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Swipe No More?

Paul A. Djupe

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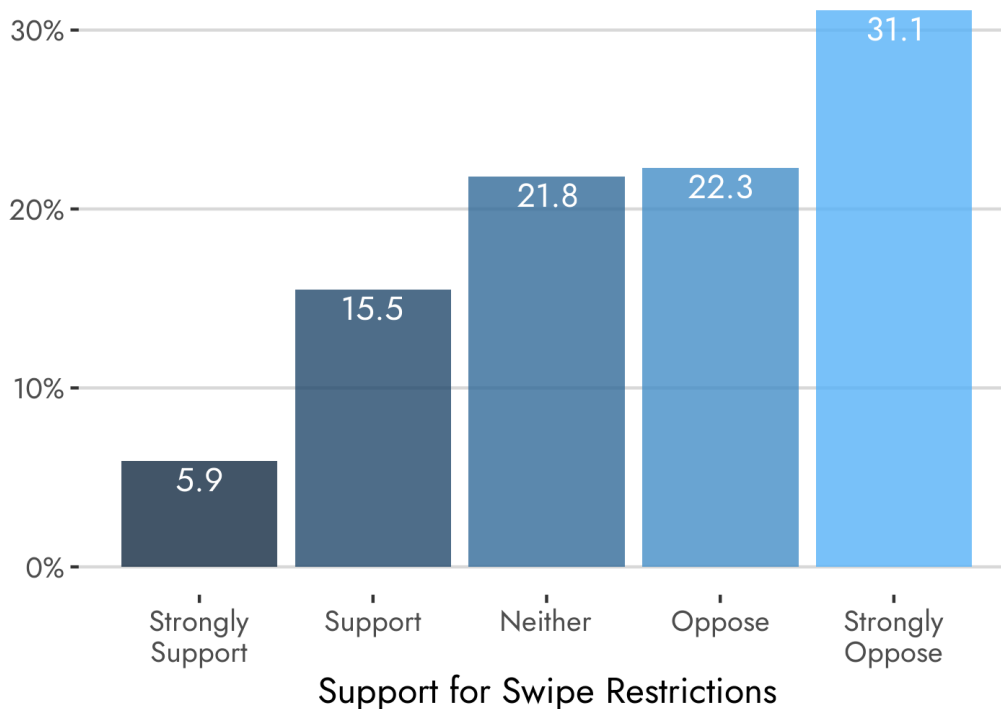
By Paul A. Djupe

One thing that changed during our pandemic academic year was that the Administration removed swipe access to residential buildings that are not your own. I believe this decision was made pre-COVID, but this reduced level of swipe access is now apparently a permanent fixture of campus life. How do students feel about it? We asked:

Starting this academic year, students no longer have swipe access to residential buildings other than their own. This decision was taken by the administration pre-COVID to maximize the safety of hall residents. Some students have reported that this decreases the chances of socializing and building connections with students who live in other dorm buildings, which may be an issue especially for first-year students. Do you support or oppose the decision to take away swipe access?

It comes as no surprise that very few Denisonians support such restrictions – just 21 percent support this new policy – though a fifth of campus is on the fence (22 percent).

Only A Small Minority Support Swipe Restrictions



Source: March 2021 Survey.

We would expect some variation among the student body, though exactly who would be most opposed is not obvious. There is no difference in support by gender, for instance. And parsing out gender among greeks and racial groups shows no differences either. Swipe access is not gendered, which is interesting because support for restricting swipe access is correlated with support for security cameras in res halls (which is gendered).

However, there are some differences by class year – freshmen are the most supportive (though only 30 percent) and sophomores are the least (at 13%). Seniors lag first years by 6 percent. Why? I suspect that some seniors like the exclusivity of their living arrangements. There’s actually some support for that from a different direction. We asked about support for “special housing options that enable students to live in dorms centered around a community experience.” It turns out that support for special housing is linked to support for swipe restrictions – both indicating greater levels of exclusion (or at least niching). And the level of support among freshmen is interesting given the framing of our question, which suggested that restricted swipe access may be the most problematic for new students.



It is no surprise that fewer Greeks support restricted swipe access and given the overlap (89% of Greeks are white in our data), fewer whites are supportive compared to non-whites on campus. However, these gaps are not enormous – just over 10% between whites and non-whites and just under 10% for Greeks and GDIs.

This year Denison introduced Silverstein as the first residence hall with swipe access to individual apartments, replacing the traditional lock and key doors. This is huge given that it avoids the expensive charge to Denison students when they misplace their key. Could this safer and cheaper method be the future of Denison housing?

While there are some small gaps between campus groups, there is very little support for restricted swipe access across campus. I have no dog in this fight and it's not my job to generate proposals to mediate the disagreement between students and the Administration. But other smart 127 writers suggested a compromise: adding swipe locks to individual doors and permitting students to have residence hall access, or allowing access restricted based upon quads (e.g., seniors having access to the Sunnies but not East Quad).

Paul A. Djupe is a local cyclist who coincidentally has taught social science research methods and political science at Denison for millenia. 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.

Note: The data represent much of the diversity of campus, though there are some gaps between the respondents and what Denison reports as the student body composition. The sample is 12% first-gen, but the campus is 15%. Campus is 51% women, but the sample is 60%. Campus has typically been about 30% Greek-affiliated, but the sample is 35% (Denison does not report that stat on Fast Facts).