

Results of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Survey, West Chester University, 2002

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the American Freshmen Survey, imitated by CIRP at UCLA, is to ascertain the educational and career goals of new freshmen. It also seeks to identify study and social proclivities.

The CIRP was administered to both full and part-time freshmen at WCU during orientation in August 2002. Because of the small number of part-time respondents in the 2002 CIRP sample, the full-time sample is reported below.

There were 1547 full-time 2002 CIRP respondents. This was approximately (87.6%) of all new full-time freshmen enrolled in fall 2002. Of those CIRP survey respondents, almost all were Caucasian (88.9%). Seven percent of the 2002 CIRP respondents were African-American (7.3%). This is similar to the ethnic breakdown of the fall 2002 new freshmen enrollment.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Most (91.4%) of the 2002 CIRP respondents indicated that their High School GPA was between 3.00 and 4.00. This was slightly lower than the HS GPA reported by the 2001 CIRP respondents (93.8%). Conversely, only one-third (30.1% in 2002, 38.7% in 2001) of the 2002 CIRP respondents indicated that they enrolled in any AP courses. One-third of the 2002 CIRP respondents (28.6% in 2002, 24.4% in 2001) also indicated that they may need remedial help in mathematics.

Three-fourths (73.9% in 2002, 74.4% in 2001) of the 2002 CIRP respondents said that WCU was between 11-100 miles from their permanent residence. Ninety percent (90.2% in 2002, 87.3% in 2001) of the respondents indicated that they applied to more than one school. WCU was the first choice for seventy-one percent (70.6%) of the respondents.

ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

The CIRP participants were asked to indicate what activities they engaged during the last year. The results for some of the activities listed on the survey are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Student Activities, Percent Engaged			
Activity	2002	2001	Difference
Attended a religious service	82.8	82.5	+0.3%
Was bored in class	49.6	52.1	-2.5%
Tutored another student	41.2	43.7	-1.5%
Studied with other students	83.7	81.2	+1.5%
Drank beer	66.3	64.7	+1.6%
Drank wine or liquor	70.5	68.6	+1.9%
Felt overwhelmed by all I had to do	31.1	32.0	-0.9%
Felt depressed	9.3	10.5	+1.2%
Performed volunteer work	76.8	77.0	-0.2%
Asked a teacher for advice after class	23.6	21.8	-1.8%
Overslept and missed class or appointment	34.9	39.6	-5.3%
Discussed politics	14.4	14.3	+0.1%
Socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group	70.4	68.4	+2.0%

Table 1: Student Activities, Percent Engaged (continued)			
Activity	2002	2001	Difference
Communicated via e-mail	68.0	67.6	-0.4%
Used the Internet for research or homework	81.5	75.4	+6.1%
Participated in Internet chat rooms	16.9	21.0	-4.1%
Used a personal computer	85.6	81.6	+4.0%

The activities with the largest and smallest percents are denoted in bold. As seen in Table 1, *Using a personal computer* (82.8%) and *Studied with other students* (83.7%) were activities with the largest percent of engagement for the 2002 CIRP respondents. On the other hand, *Felt depressed* (9.3%) and *Discussed politics* (14.3%) were the activities with the lowest response rates for 2002 CIRP respondents. The largest decreases posted between the 2002 and 2001 CIRP survey samples were that of the *Used the Internet for research or homework* and *Overslept and missed class appointment*. Interestingly, there was a slight decline in the percent of 2002 CIRP participants over the 2001 CIRP respondents who indicated they *Participated in Internet chat rooms* (-4.1%).

PAYING FOR COLLEGE

Over half of the 2002 CIRP respondents (50.8%) indicated that none of their financial aid would have to be repaid. This is a slight decrease from the 2001 CIRP respondents (52.3%) but an increase over the 2002 national four-year public college CIRP respondents (40.1%). Additionally, only one-eighth (12.5% in 2002, 15.0% in 2001) of the 2002 CIRP respondents stated that none of their first year expenses would come from family resources (parents, relatives, spouses, etc). This result was less than the 2002 national four-year public college CIRP respondents (25.1%). Correspondingly, WCU freshmen were more likely to hail from households eligible for need based aid than the 2002 national four-year public college CIRP sample.

Nonetheless, both the 2002 WCU CIRP and 2001 WCU CIRP samples were similar in response to their ability to finance their college education. The response rates for both the 2002 and 2001 CIRP samples are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Concerned about Ability to Finance College Education			
	2002	2001	Difference
None (I am confident I have sufficient funds)	34.4	34.3	+0.1%
Some (but I will have enough funds to complete college)	55.7	55.8	-0.1%
Major (not sure I will have enough funds to complete college)	10.0	9.9	+0.1%

EDUCATIONAL & CAREER OBJECTIVES

As with the 2002 national four-year public college CIRP respondents, the 2002 WCU CIRP respondents were more likely to say they wanted *To be well-off financially* (77.9% for 2002 WCU, 76.1% for 2002 national). The next most important objective for the 2002 WCU CIRP sample was *Recognition from colleagues in their field* (60.8%).

The most cited objective for attending college was *To learn more about things that interest me* (77.9% in 2002, 75.7% in 2001) and *To get training for a specific career* (81.4% in 2002, 76.3% in 2001). The reasons for attending college that was least frequently cited was *Could not find a job* (5.7% in 2002, 3.6% in 2001).

Students were asked to cite the reasons that influenced their attendance at WCU. The response rates for both the 2002 and 2001 CIRP samples are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Reasons for Attending WCU			
Reason	2002	2001	Difference
My relatives wanted me to come here	7.2	6.6	+0.6%
My teacher advised me	5.0	4.2	+0.8%
This college has a very good academic reputation	51.5	47.1	+4.3%
This college has a good reputation for social activities	39.2	37.8	+1.4%
I was offered financial assistance	17.5	18.4	-0.9%
This college offers special educational programs	21.4	19.0	+2.4%
This college has low tuition	36.7	36.6	+0.1%
High school guidance counselor advised me	7.9	8.8	-0.9%
Private college counselor advised me	1.6	2.4	-0.8%
I wanted to live near home	23.1	27.0	-3.8%
Not offered aid by first choice	5.3	6.4	-1.1%
I was attracted by the religious affiliation/orientation of college	1.8	2.9	-1.1%
This college's graduates gain admission to top graduate/professional school	NA	22.5	NA
This college's graduates get good jobs	NA	47.1	NA
I wanted to go to a school about the size of this college	40.6	36.8	+3.8%
Not accepted anywhere else	NA	3.3	NA
Rankings in national magazines	4.3	4.6	-0.3%
Information from a website	10.2	7.7	+2.5%
I was admitted through an Early Action or Early Decision	3.5	4.5	-1.0%
My friends are attending	NA	7.7	NA
The athletic department recruited me	5.2	NA	NA
Reputation for campus safety	9.6	NA	NA
I was offered a athletic scholarship	NA	6.1	NA
I was offered a merit based scholarship	NA	7.5	NA
I was offered a need scholarship	NA	5.8	NA

The reasons with the largest and smallest percents are denoted in bold. As seen, the reason for attending WCU that posted the largest percent for the 2002 CIRP respondents was *The college has a very good academic reputation* (51.5% for 2002, 47.1% in 2001). Interestingly, the next largest percent for the 2002 CIRP sample was *I wanted to go to a college of this size* (40.6% in 2002, 36.8% in 2001). This was followed by *This college has a good reputation for social activities* (39.2% in 2002, 37.8% in 2001). There was a slight increase in the percent of respondents in 2002 CIRP respondents over the 2001 CIRP respondents who indicated they attended because of the *Information on the web site* (+2.5%) but a slight decrease in those who stated they attended because *Rankings in national magazine* (-0.3%).

SUMMARY

Ninety percent of the full-time freshmen participated in the 2002 CIRP. As with the 2001 CIRP sample, only one-third of the CIRP respondents were enrolled in AP classes in high school. Further, one-third of both samples indicated that they may need remedial assistance, especially in mathematics. However, most engaged in studying with other students and research over the Internet previous to their attendance at WCU.

WCU was the first choice for seventy percent of the 2002 CIRP respondents. Additionally, the respondents are anticipating that their studies at WCU will help them gain specific training for their career. In sum, the 2002 CIRP respondents enrolled at WCU because of its academic reputation.