

Results of the Fall 2000 CIRP Freshman Survey

Introduction

Each year, the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA administers the CIRP Freshman Survey to students at a wide variety of colleges and universities. UC Santa Cruz participated annually from 1966 to 1992, and has participated biannually since then. UC Santa Cruz is classified by HERI as a highly selective public university, (with average combined SAT score of 1,140 or more). UCSC's national comparison group of other highly selective public institutions includes most other University of California campuses, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, the University of Michigan, the University of Colorado at Boulder, and the University of Illinois, Urbana. The results from the UC Santa Cruz survey are based on 1871 students, 64% of the fall 2000 entering class.

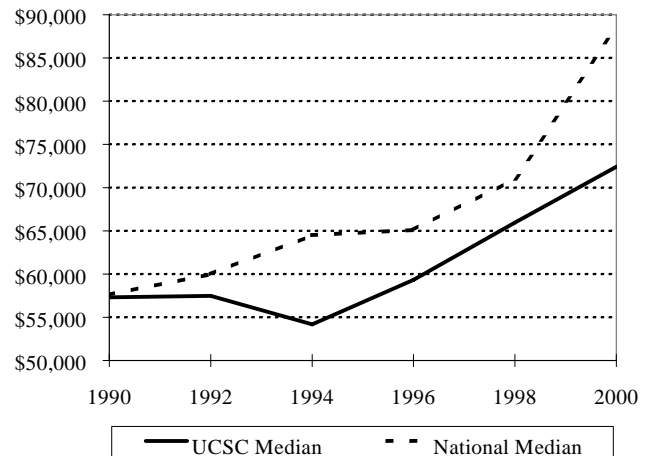
Student Characteristics

Respondents who took the CIRP were fairly representative of UCSC new frosh in terms of sex and ethnic composition, although more new UCSC respondents reported they were Asian or Asian American, or 'Other' than did all new Freshmen. Compared with their national peer group, significantly fewer UCSC students identified as White, and significantly more reported Asian or Asian American, Chicano, Latino, and Other ethnic identities. About 28% of UCSC frosh came from families where parents had divorced or separated compared to 20% nationally. New UCSC frosh were twice as likely to hold liberal or far left political views as those of students at highly selective public universities. About 60% of UCSC students self-identified as liberal or left-wing, one-third described their views as middle-of-the-road, and 7% held conservative views.

Student Finances

This year the self-reported median family income for UCSC freshmen climbed to \$72,000, up from \$66,000 in 1998. Although the median family income of UCSC students rose, it lagged behind the increase from \$71,000 to \$88,000 in reported family incomes of students at other selective public universities. Financing their college education was a major concern for 14% of UCSC freshmen compared with only 9% nationally. About 70% of UCSC freshmen received over \$1,500 in funds from their families, compared with 76% of students at other selective public universities.

Median Family Income of Frosh



College Choice and Academic Plans

UCSC was the first choice for 52% of entering freshmen, and second choice for 23%. The most frequent reason for choosing UCSC was the school's good academic reputation, but it was cited by only 28% of Santa Cruz students compared with 68% of the national peer group. Other important reasons for choosing UCSC were the prospect of getting a good job after graduation, college size, and reputation for social activities. Almost all new freshmen expected to complete a bachelors degree, but UCSC students were more likely to think that they would leave school for a while, need extra time to complete their degree, transfer to another college, change their major, or get a job than their peers at other selective schools. Any of these factors could affect retention and graduation rates, which are in fact lower than the overall UC-wide average rates.

Expectations of New Frosh for Fall 2000

	UCSC	Nat'l
Get job to pay expenses	44%	38%
Join student clubs/groups	36%	50%
Community service work	24%	24%
Change major field	21%	18%
Graduate with honors	15%	22%
Transfer out	12%	3%
Need extra time for degree	8%	6%
Drop out temporarily	2%	<1%

Forty-four percent of this year's entering class planned to complete a masters degree, and 44% intended to complete a doctorate or professional degree. New frosh at UC Santa Cruz were much more interested in studying the arts, humanities, biological sciences or social sciences than students from their national peer group, who tended to favor business, engineering, and professional fields.

Abilities and Activities of Freshpersons

Nearly three-quarters (72%) of UC Santa Cruz students rated themselves highly in academic ability, and most gave themselves high marks for cooperation (70%), creativity (66%), drive-to-achieve (66%) understanding of others (68%), self-understanding (61%). However, students from the national peer group rated themselves more highly on academic ability, drive-to-achieve, leadership ability, initiative, self-confidence, mathematical ability, computer skills, competitiveness, cooperation, popularity, and physical and emotional health. But UCSC students gave themselves higher marks on artistic ability and creativity. Certain activities and behaviors were also very different among UCSC entering frosh and their national peers. For example, UCSC frosh were more likely to socialize with an ethnically diverse group of friends (78% vs. 69%) and more often visited a gallery or

museum (79% vs. 63%) or played musical instruments (51% vs. 45%). They were less likely to play computer games (58% vs. 62%) or use the Internet for research (67% vs. 72%), and were more likely to ask teachers for advice (30% vs. 23%). UCSC students were more politically expressive in discussions and demonstrations compared with their national peer group. They attended fewer religious services but more often discussed religion than their comparison group. More UCSC frosh smoked cigarettes (11% vs. 9%) and drank alcohol, and fewer exercised regularly than students nationally. UCSC students were more likely to be late, miss class or feel bored in class, and they were more often overwhelmed or depressed than their national peers. Overall, UCSC frosh are less traditional, more expressive, artistic and sensitive, and less physically fit than their national comparison group.

Career and Life Goals

UCSC students had more pronounced altruistic and artistic life aspirations compared with their national peer group, who were more concerned with financial success, raising a family and administrative responsibility.

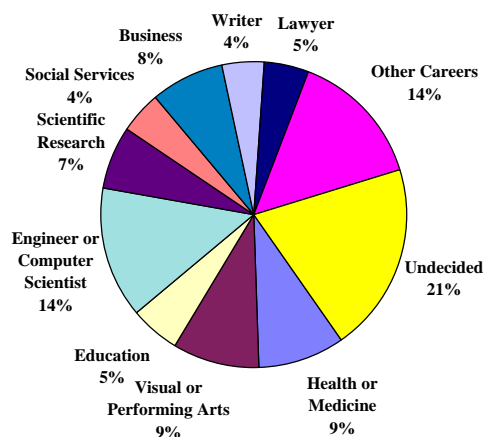
health professions, business or administration and engineering careers than students in the national comparison group. Instead, UCSC frosh more often cited the arts, scientific research, computer programming, and clinical psychology or social services as likely careers.

Life Goals of 2000 Frosh

	UCSC	National
Be well-off financially	62%	74%
Raise a family	61%	73%
Develop philosophy of life	55%	43%
Influence social values	42%	33%
Promote racial understanding	42%	28%
Help cleanup environment	32%	17%
Create artistic works	27%	13%
Influence political structure	26%	16%
Write original works	26%	12%
Administrative responsibility	24%	37%
Achieve in a performing art	21%	12%

Santa Cruz students choose a wide variety of possible careers, but were less likely to choose

Career Choices of UCSC Frosh



Student Satisfaction with Services

For fall of 2000 students were asked about a variety of aspects of their new environment. Almost all new frosh agreed that faculty and staff were friendly and approachable, and most were satisfied with their college, the social environment and housing. Overall, ratings of services were as high or higher in 2000 as in 1998, although freshmen had a slightly harder time finding their way around campus. Financial worries were among the greatest concerns for new frosh, including concerns about finding work, contacting financial aid counselors, and the amount of financial aid funding available. The accessibility of financial aid counselors was of special concern, but ratings in this area continued to improve in 2000. Worries about selecting a major, and the quality of dining hall food were some of the other problems experienced by frosh in their first days at UCSC.

Percent Satisfied with UCSC Services

	1998	2000
Staff friendly and approachable	94	94
Faculty friendly and approachable	94	94
College assignment satisfactory	86	88
Informal social college atmosphere	82	88
Satisfied with housing assignment	82	86
College sponsored social activities	79	83
Enough Ethernet connections in room	NA	79
Fall Orientation information helpful	77	77
Doing fairly well finding way around	78	74
No difficulty with Teleslug	76	74
No problems with campus shuttles	NA	71
Financial Aid offer timely	70	69
I would like help choosing major	63	63
Amount of financial aid is adequate	60	63
Satisfied with quality of dining hall food	58	59
Web page helped to acquaint w/ campus	59	59
Financial Aid counselors accessible	55	59
Know how to find non-work/study job	64	56
Understand how to find work/study job	61	55

Higher Education Research Institute's

Summary of the Fall 2000 CIRP Freshman Survey

The following is a press release from the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA. A copy of this summary may be found on the World Wide http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/00_exec_summary.htm.

The CIRP Freshman Survey

Conducted in continued association with the American Council on Education, the UCLA survey is the nation's longest-standing and most comprehensive assessment of student attitudes and plans. UCLA's HERI has conducted the nationwide freshman survey since 1973. Since the survey's inception in 1966, more than 9 million students at more than 1,500 institutions have participated. The 2000 freshman norms are based on the responses of 269,413 students at 434 of the nation's baccalaureate colleges and universities. These data have been statistically adjusted to reflect the responses of the 1.1 million first-time, full-time students entering four-year colleges and universities as freshmen in 2000. The sections that follow summarize the 2000 results as well as major trends in the survey since Fall 1966.

Women close gender gap in computer use, but lag behind in computing confidence

Reflecting the growing reliance on technology in education, student use of personal computers has escalated in recent years. A record 78.5 percent of college freshmen report using a personal computer frequently during the year prior to entering college. This signifies a major increase in computer use, up from 68.4 percent last year and 27.3 percent when this question was introduced to the survey in 1985. Further, the gender gap in use has nearly closed, with 77.8 percent of women and 79.5 percent of men reporting frequent computer use in 2000 (see Figure 1).

Despite the closing of the gender gap in computer use, a new survey item suggests that women lag far behind their male counterparts when asked about their computing self-confidence: Women are half as likely as men are to rate their computer skills as "above average" or "top 10%" relative to people their age (23.2 percent among women, versus 46.4 percent among men). This gap in self-confidence likely contributes to the fact that men are five times more likely than women are to pursue careers in computer programming (9.3 percent of men, versus 1.8 percent of women). While the gender gap in computer confidence has always favored men, the gap among the 2000 freshmen is the largest in the history of the survey.

Other gender differences in computing are found in questions related to Internet use. Women are less likely than men are to participate frequently in Internet chat rooms (17.1 percent of women, versus 23.4 percent of men) and less likely to report frequent Internet use for "other" reasons or activities (47.7 percent of women, versus 57.7 percent of men). The survey also points to a marked difference in the amount of time freshman men and women devote to playing computer/video games: 35.4 percent of men report playing video/computer games for three or more hours per week, compared to only 9.6 percent among women.

Election year interest in politics hits record low

In a continuing trend, the political engagement of entering college students reached an all-time low. Only 28.1 percent of entering college students are interested in keeping up to date with political affairs, compared with last year's record low of 28.6 percent and the high of 60.3 percent in 1966 (see Figure 3). Further, a record low 16.4 percent of freshmen discuss politics frequently, compared to 16.9 percent last year and a high of 33.6 percent in 1968. The percent of freshmen who voted in a student election also hit an all-time low of only 22.8 percent, compared to 23.9 last year and 78.7 in 1968. Although the 2000 results reflect a long-term decline in students' political interest, the persistent downward trend is noteworthy since freshman interest in politics traditionally increases during a presidential election year.

In terms of students' political orientation, the 2000 survey reflects the fourth consecutive increase in the percent of students identifying as "liberal" or "far left," which rose from 26.0 percent in 1999 to 27.7 percent in 2000. The movement to the left of the ideological spectrum resulted in fewer students

identifying as "middle of the road" (51.9 percent, compared to 53.4 percent last year). The percent identifying as "conservative" or "far right" remained fairly constant between 1999 and 2000, but has generally declined over the past four years, and currently stands at 20.3 percent.

Freshmen less driven by status

Results suggest that responsibility, recognition, and authority are less appealing to today's freshmen. The percent of freshmen who feel it is very important or essential to become an "authority" in their chosen field dropped from 60.1 percent in 1999 to 59.7 percent in 2000, which marks an all-time low for this item and 19 percentage points below the item's record high in 1987. The freshman goal of obtaining "recognition from colleagues" is at its lowest since point in twenty-three years (51.2 percent), a full 9.3 percentage points below the item's high in 1987. Finally, only 36.9 percent of today's freshmen are committed to "having administrative responsibility for the work of others," another item that peaked in 1987 at 45.5 percent. Notably, declining interest in status and authority does not correspond to declining interest in affluence: 73.4 percent of today's freshmen are interested in being very well off financially, which points to a fairly stable trend in the past decade after a steep climb during the 70s and 80s.

Freshmen investing less time in their studies, but earning higher grades

Today's freshmen are spending less time studying and doing homework than any previous entering class. Only 36.0 percent of entering college students report studying or doing homework six or more hours per week in the past year. This marks the lowest figure since this question was first asked in 1987, when 47.0 percent reported studying six or more hours weekly. Despite the reduction in time devoted to schoolwork, students' high school grades continue to soar. A full 42.9 percent of freshmen report earning "A" averages in high school, compared to 42.7 percent last year, and a low of 17.6 percent in 1968. Conversely, the percent reporting "C" averages or lower remained at last year's record low 6.6 percent, compared to a high of 23.1 percent in 1968.

Escalating grades appear to translate into rising academic aspirations. The percent of students who believe that there is a very good chance they will earn at least a "B" average in college rose dramatically from 52.0 percent in 1999 to 58.1 percent in 2000. When this question was first asked in 1971, only 26.7 percent of freshmen anticipated earning "B" or better grades in college. The 2000 survey also shows that a record 20.7 percent of freshmen expect to graduate from college with honors. This figure compares to 18.3 percent in 1999 and a low of only 4.1 percent in 1967.

Alcohol and cigarette use down over time

Rates of beer drinking continue to decline among freshmen. Just 48.3 percent of today's students report drinking beer frequently or occasionally during the past year, compared to 48.6 percent in 1999 and a high of 73.7 percent in 1982. Frequent or occasional consumption of wine or liquor rose slightly between 1999 and 2000 (from 53.2 percent to 53.9 percent), but is far below the high of 67.8 percent reported in 1987. Similarly, the number of hours per week that students spend "partying" has remained relatively constant in recent years (currently 51.1 percent of freshmen reporting partying three or more hours per week), but is ten percentage points lower than when this question was first asked in 1987.

Also on the decline is frequent cigarette smoking, which dropped for the second straight year to 10.0 percent, compared to 10.7 percent in 1999 and a high of 15.2 percent in 1967. However, this year's decline in smoking represents a reversal of recent trends: between 1985 and 1999, the percent of students who frequently smoked cigarettes increased steadily from a low of 6.5 percent. Finally, although the survey does not ask about marijuana usage, the belief that marijuana should be legalized stands at 34.2 percent, representing a significant liberalization of attitudes since the record low of 16.7 percent in 1989. Nevertheless, today's figures are significantly lower than the item's record high of 51.3 percent in 1977.

Declining interest in medical and health careers

Interest in medicine has seen a steady decline since it peaked on the survey in 1995. Currently, 6.0 percent of freshmen plan to become physicians, compared to 6.4 percent last year and a high of 7.6

percent in 1995. Similar declines are found in other health-related fields (e.g., nursing, physical therapy), with 5.4 percent of freshmen expecting to enter the health professions, compared to 6.2 percent last year and a high of 8.4 percent in 1995. Although not record lows, these recent declines are reflective of a general downward trend in the popularity of medical and health fields.

A consideration of gender differences sheds some light on these figures. While the field of medicine has historically attracted more men than women, the percentage of women freshmen who plan to become doctors surpassed men in 1994, and this gap continues to widen (see Figure 5). Currently, 7.0 percent of women aspire to become physicians, compared to 4.8 percent of men. This contrasts to 7.1 percent of the men and only 2.4 percent of the women in 1971. Nevertheless, when it comes to interest in the health professions in general, women have outnumbered men throughout the history of the survey.

Rising opposition to death penalty; growing support for gay rights

Freshman opposition to the death penalty rose sharply, with 31.2 percent agreeing that "The death penalty should be abolished" (compared to 26.7 percent in 1999 and 24.1 percent in 1998). While considerably lower than in 1971, when 60.2 percent agreed with this statement, the last six years attest to a reversal in the trend for this item, which had dropped to a low point of 21.2 percent in 1994 (see Figure 6).

In addition, agreement with the statement "there is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals" has dropped substantially, from 71.2 percent in 1999 to 66.5 percent in 2000. Although the trends for this item have not been as clear as those for the death penalty issue, they do show a drop of almost seven percentage points since the high of 73.2 percent in 1995.

Changing attitudes about the role of government also are reflected in students' growing anti-tax sentiment. A record low 52.2 percent of freshmen agree that "Wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now," compared to 54.6 percent last year and a high of 75.8 percent in 1974.

Finally, the vast majority of college freshmen appear to be open-minded about gay rights. Only 27.2 percent of students feel that "It is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships." This represents a significant decline from the record high 50.4 percent of students agreeing with that statement in 1987. Further, 56.0 percent of freshmen believe that "Same sex couples should have the right to legal marital status." This marks the highest level of support for this item since it was introduced on the survey in 1997 (at 50.9 percent).

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