



Results from the 2008 Your First College Year (YFCY) Survey - Academics

At the end of the 2007-2008 academic year, first-year students were invited to complete the “Your First College Year (YFCY)” survey. This survey asked students a series of questions about their first year at the university. A total of 336 students replied, representing approximately 30% of the first-year class. The sample favored women—52% of respondents were female and 48% were male—and those who took the YFCY had significantly higher SAT Math and SAT Verbal scores than did their peers. That said, the sample was not significantly different from the population in terms of high school class size, high school class rank, or intended major.

This report covers results from survey items focusing on students’ relationships with faculty, self reported gains in academic and personal development, study habits, satisfaction with coursework, satisfaction with the academic support provided by Case, and the overall satisfaction with their undergraduate experience.

Gains in Academic and Personal Development

The majority of students reported gains in a number of academic areas between when they started at Case in the fall of 2007 and when they took the YFCY in the spring of 2008. Specifically, the majority of students said that they were “stronger” or “much stronger” than when they started in terms of their :

- General knowledge (94%)
- Knowledge of a particular field or discipline (96%)
- Knowledge of people from different races or cultures (70%)
- Understanding of problems facing their community (60%)
- Ability to conduct research (60%)
- Ability to work as part of a team (56%)
- Critical thinking skills (79%)
- Analytical/problem-solving skills (80%)

Study Habits

The majority of students occasionally or frequently :

- Discussed course content with students outside of class (99%)
- Studied with other students (95%)
- Spoke up in class (91%)
- Received advice/counseling from another student (80%)
- Tutored another student (54%)

That said, a large percentage (and often a majority) occasionally or frequently:

- Turned in course assignments late (38%)
- Turned in course assignments that did not reflect their best work (84%)
- Skipped class (82%)
- Received tutoring (57%)
- Were bored in class (98%)
- Fell asleep in class (64%)
- Had difficulty getting the courses they need (67%)

Difficulty Getting Classes

It should be noted that having difficulty getting classes is more than just an annoyance for students. Results of a one-way ANOVA reveal that the 14% of students who “frequently” had trouble getting the classes they needed were significantly less satisfied than their peers with the overall college experience, the overall quality of instruction, and the overall academic experience at the university. Perhaps most importantly, only 25% of the students who frequently had trouble getting classes said they would “definitely” choose to attend Case if they could choose again, compared to 41% of students who never or only occasionally had trouble getting the courses they need .

Students in the arts and humanities were the least likely to say that they had trouble (55% had trouble), followed by natural sciences and math, management, and nursing (60% had trouble). Students reporting the greatest difficulty were those in engineering and students who started at the university undecided as to a major (74% of students in those groups had trouble).

Finally, only 39% of graduating students taking the College Senior Survey in the spring of 2008 said they frequently or occasionally had difficulty getting the courses they needed (only 1% said “frequently,” compared to 14% of first years).

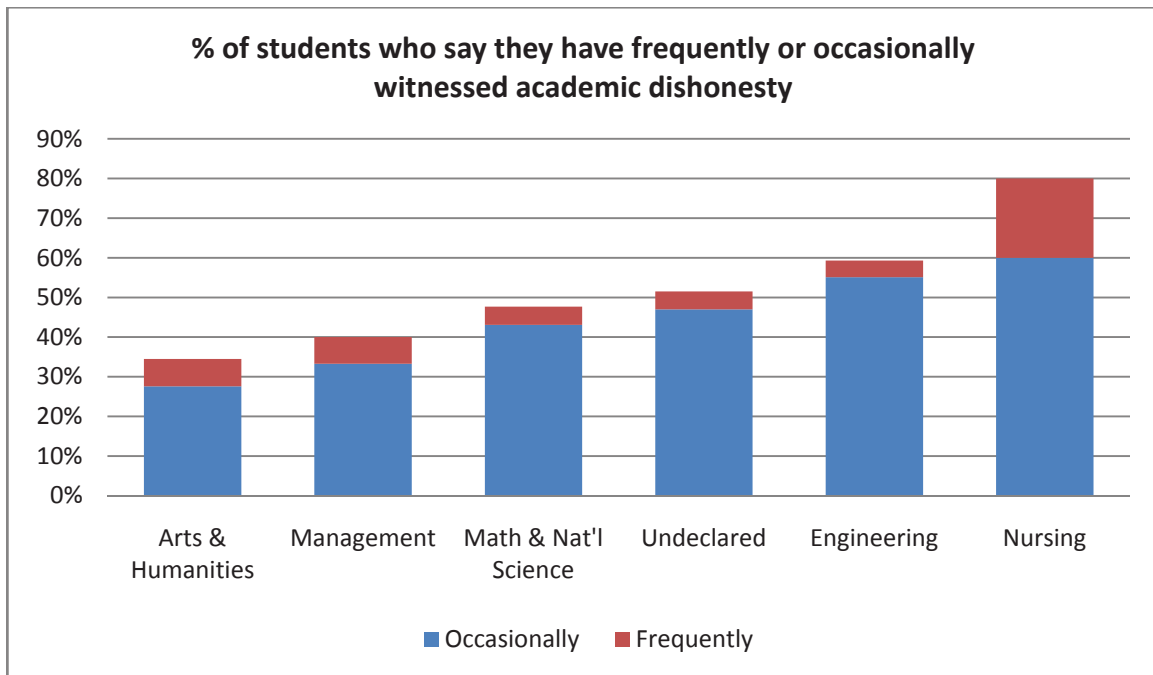
Academic Integrity

Sixty percent (60%) of students said that all of their professors addressed the Case Academic Integrity Policy in their courses through course discussions and/or by information on the course syllabus. A further 38% said that at least some of their professors addressed the policy in some manner. Only 2% of students said that none of their professors addressed the policy.

A second question asked students to indicate the role of academic integrity in their overall learning experience at Case during their first year. Thirty-one percent (31%) of students said that academic integrity played a significant role (“I consciously reflect on issues of academic integrity when completing assignments/tests and when interacting with peers”). A further 57% said that academic integrity was important to them (“I think about it sometimes as I complete course assignments/tests/projects”). The remaining 12% said that academic integrity was not that important to their learning experience (9%) or that they never thought about how academic integrity impacts their learning experience (3%).

Though most students say that the academic integrity policy played an important or significant role in their overall learning experience at Case, the majority at least occasionally witnessed academic dishonesty (6% said they “frequently,” and 48% said they “occasionally” witnessed academic dishonesty).

The graph below shows how this item breaks down by major. Results indicate that students in nursing are the most likely to have witnessed academic dishonesty (80%), whereas those in the arts and humanities are the least likely to have witnessed cheating (35%).



Relationships with Faculty

Students rate their professors positively. Most students are “satisfied” or “very satisfied ” with the:

- Amount of contact with faculty (61%)
- Racial/ethnic diversity of faculty (55%)

Most students had, at least once or twice per term:

- Visited faculty during office hours (90%)
- Visited faculty outside of class or office hours (84%)
- Visited academic advisors/counselors (99%)

Fifty-two percent (52%) of students said they communicated regularly with their professors, most frequently or occasionally asked a professor for advice after class (80%). A handful of students had worked on a professor’s research project (16%), and 11% had been a guest in a professor’s home during their first year at Case.

Most students “agree” or “strongly agree” that faculty are interested in students’ academic problems (89%). Less encouraging is the fact that a minority of students felt that their professors were interested in students’ personal problems (49%).

Transition to College

Students were asked a number of questions relating to the difficulty they had with the transition to college life. Large percentages of students said that it was “very” or “somewhat ” difficult for them to:

- Manage their time effectively (59%)
- Adjust to the academic demands of college (47%)
- Get to know faculty (46%)
- Develop effective study skills (45%)

Finally, students had less difficulty:

- Understanding what their professors expect from them academically (21% had difficulty)
- Utilizing services available to students (10% had difficulty)

Results of a follow-up analysis indicated that no differences existed by major on any of these items.

Academic Support

The majority of students were satisfied with Case’s academic facilities and services. Specifically, the majority of students said they were satisfied or very satisfied with:

- Classroom facilities (84%)
- Computer facilities/labs (90%)
- Library facilities and services (93%)
- Lab facilities and equipment (77%)
- Quality of computer training/assistance (67%)
- Availability of internet access (96%)
- Tutoring or other academic assistance (76%)

Satisfaction with Academic Advising

In general, students had a positive view of academic advising, with 63% saying that they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with academic advising. In addition to overall satisfaction, most said that their first-year advisor:

- Seemed interested in them (85%)
- Was easy to find/contact/reach (90%)

Students generally said that their advisor was “knowledgeable” or “highly knowledgeable” about policies, procedures, programs, and opportunities (82%). Most agreed or strongly agreed that their advisor was responsive to their questions, concerns and interests (93%) and that their advisor gave

helpful advice and/or referrals (83%). When asked to assign their advisors a grade, the majority of students either gave their advisors an “A” (41%) or “B” (42%). Similarly, when asked to assign themselves a grade as an advisee, most students gave themselves an “A” (63%) or a “B” (32%).

Satisfaction with Academic Advising by Intended Major

For the most part, students were satisfied with their academic advisor regardless of intended major. Specifically, there were no significant differences by major with overall academic advising satisfaction, the frequency with which students worked with advisors, students’ perceptions of their advisor’s interest in them, and ease of finding/contacting/reaching their advisor. Where differences did exist, a clear pattern emerged. In all cases, management students were the least satisfied of all groups, nursing students were the most satisfied, and students pursuing all other majors fell somewhere in between.

For example, only 14% of students pursuing a management degree said that their advisor was “highly knowledgeable” of policies, procedures, programs and opportunities. This is compared to 20% of those pursuing a math or science degree, 30% pursuing an engineering degree, 33% of arts, humanities and social science majors, and 82% of those in nursing.

Likewise, only 29% of management students “strongly agreed” that their advisor gave helpful advice and/or referrals. This was followed by 30% of engineers, 33% of those pursuing arts, humanities and social science degrees, 35% of math and science majors, and 82% of those in nursing.

Interestingly, when asked to assign themselves a grade as an advisee, management students were significantly less likely to give themselves an “A” and significantly more likely to give themselves a “B” or a “C” than were other students. It may be that students pursuing management degrees do not know how best to utilize the services of their advisors.

Advising by Gender

For the most part, students were satisfied with their academic advisor regardless of the student’s gender. There were no significant gender differences on measures of overall academic advising satisfaction, the frequency with which students worked with advisors, and ease of finding/contacting/reaching their advisor. Differences did emerge on the item assessing students’ perceptions of their advisor’s interest in them.

Specifically, 19% of women felt that their advisor “did not seem to care” about them, compared to only 11% of men. Though the difference is statistically significant, it’s worth noting that over 80% of both men and women said that their advisors “seemed interested” in them.

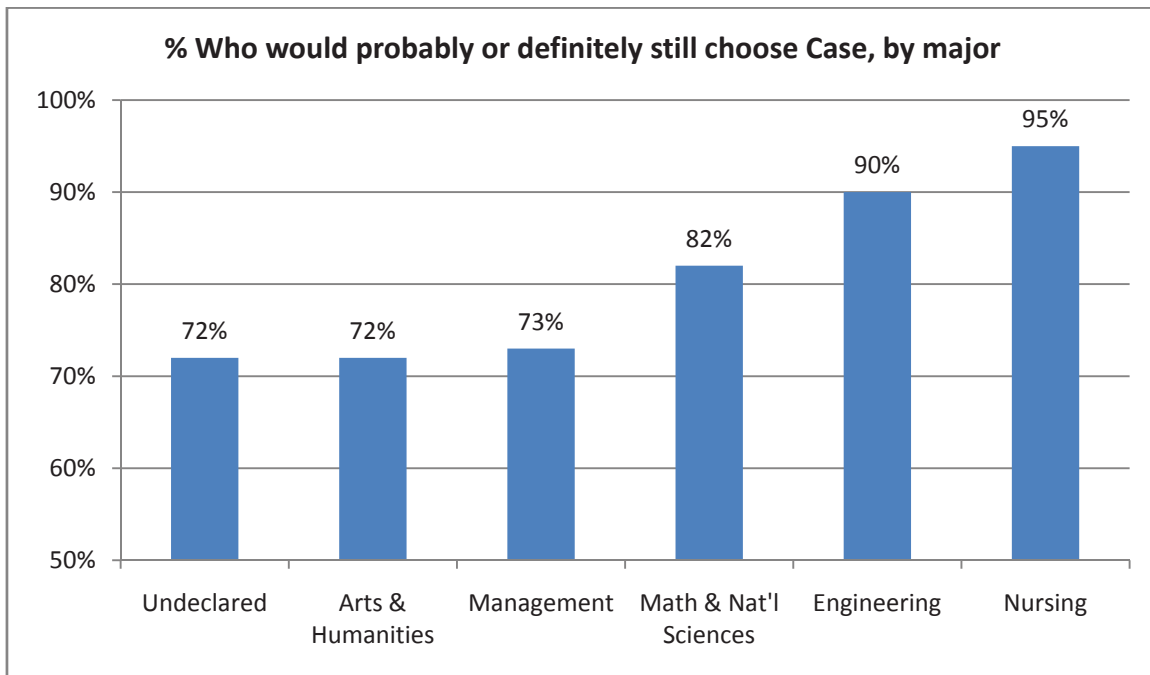
Women, on average, gave themselves a significantly higher grade as advisees than did men. Specifically, 68% of women felt they earned an “A,” compared to 57% of men.

Overall Satisfaction

The majority of students said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall college experience (78%). Additionally, most students were satisfied with the overall academic experience (88%) and the overall quality of instruction (79%). Eighty-two percent (82%) said that, if they could start over and make their college choice again, they would “probably” (43%) or “definitely” (39%) still choose to enroll at Case.

Overall Satisfaction by Intended Major

In order to determine whether differences existed in overall satisfaction by intended major, we conducted a series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs). Results indicated that there were no significant differences by intended major on measures of the overall satisfaction with the college experience, the overall satisfaction with the academic experience, or the overall quality of instruction. Results did, however reveal differences by major on the measure of whether students would still choose to enroll at Case. As shown in the chart below, students who started at Case unsure of their major, or intending to declare an arts or humanities major, were the least likely to say they would still choose to enroll at Case. On the opposite end of the spectrum, students intending to major in nursing or engineering were the most likely to say they’d reenroll at Case.



Overall Satisfaction by Gender

A second series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted to determine if there were any gender differences on overall measures of satisfaction at Case; however, no significant gender differences were observed.

Overall Satisfaction and Factors Related to College Choice

A total of 160 students who took the YFCY survey also took the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's sister survey, the Freshman Survey, before starting at the university. As part of this earlier survey, students were given a list of 21 factors related to choosing a college and asked to indicate how important each item was in their decision to attend Case. Items included the importance of their parents' influence, the academic reputation of the college, perceived job opportunities after college, and a number of financial factors.

In order to determine if the factors related to college choice before starting at the university were related to whether they would still choose to enroll after their first year, we conducted a stepwise multiple regression analysis. Because we wanted to consider the possible effects of all 21 items, a backwards elimination procedure was selected. The 21 college choice items were entered as independent variables and the reenrollment item was entered as the dependent variable. In the final model, four of the 21 college choice items were retained as significant predictors of whether students would reenroll at Case if given the choice.

Two of the four items ("this college has a good reputation for its social activities," and "I was offered financial assistance") were positively related to the outcome. In other words, the more important students said these two items were to their decision to choose Case in the survey they filled out during orientation, the more likely they were to say they would choose to reenroll at the university at the end of their first year.

The other two items ("The cost of attending this college," and "I could not afford my first choice") were negatively related to the outcome. The more important these items were to students in their decision to choose Case, the less likely they were to say they would reenroll.

The fact that financial and social factors are so highly related to students' opinion of the university is consistent with results from other institutional research that has been conducted at Case. For example, students with larger financial aid packages in their first year are retained to their second year at higher rates than are their peers with smaller financial aid packages. Additionally, research using the National Survey of Student Engagement has shown that some of the strongest predictors of overall student satisfaction are students' opinions of the social life on campus. Taken together, these results highlight the importance of finances and social life to the students of the university.