

# First-Year Student Diversity Report

2013 Your First College Year Survey

In spring 2013, we asked first-year students at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) to participate in the *Your First College Year* survey. The survey was administered by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA in conjunction with the Office of Planning and Institutional Research. Due to low response rates, the results should be interpreted with caution.<sup>1</sup> This report provides information about students' social attitudes and experiences with diversity during college.



## Diversity Constructs

The survey instrument includes 16 constructs based on rigorous statistical methods. The constructs are designed to capture the experiences and outcomes that institutions are often interested in but find challenging to measure because of their complex and multifaceted nature. Constructs are particularly helpful in examining trends over time and making comparisons to other institutions. Construct scores should not be converted into percentages or compared to other constructs.

## Pluralistic Orientation

The pluralistic orientation construct measures students' skills and dispositions for living and working in a diverse society. CWRU's score on the pluralistic orientation construct did not change significantly from 2011 to 2013 (53 vs. 53). However, in 2013 it was significantly higher than the score for the private university comparison group (53 vs. 51).<sup>2</sup> The majority of students rated themselves above average in:

- Tolerance of others with different beliefs (84%)
- Ability to work cooperatively with diverse people (81%)
- Ability to see the world from someone else's perspective (80%)
- Ability to discuss and negotiate controversial issues (68%)
- Openness to having their views challenged (62%)

## Positive Cross-Racial Interaction

The positive cross-racial interaction construct measures students' level of positive interactions with students from a racial/ethnic group other than their own. Similar to the pluralistic orientation construct, CWRU's score on the positive cross-racial interaction construct did not change significantly from 2011 to 2013 (55 in 2011 vs. 56 in 2013), but was significantly higher than the 2013 comparison group (56 vs. 54). The results for the positive cross-racial interaction items are as follows (figure 1):

- 95% dined or shared a meal with students
- 92% studied or prepared for class

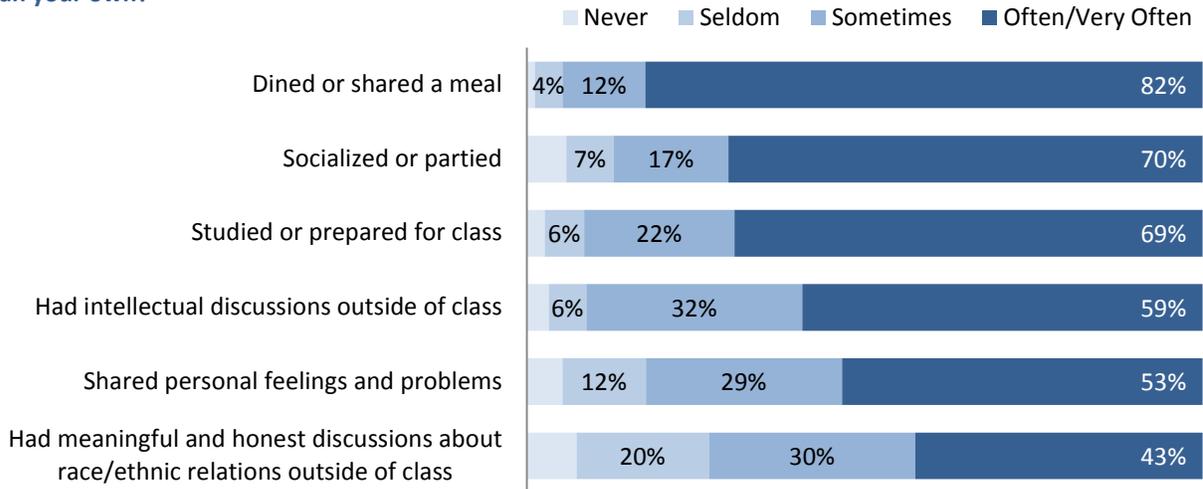
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<sup>1</sup> Of the 1,336 students who received the survey, 27% (n=361) answered at least 50% of the questions. Compared to their peers, women, Asian/White, U.S. citizens, and students in non-management majors responded to the survey at significantly higher rates.

<sup>2</sup> The private university comparison group included Azusa Pacific University, Fordham University, Pepperdine University, University of the Pacific, Wake Forest University, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

- 91% had intellectual discussions outside of class
- 87% socialized or partied
- 82% shared personal feelings and problems
- 73% had meaningful and honest discussions about racial/ethnic relations outside of class

**Figure 1. How often have you interacted with students from a racial/ethnic group other than your own?**

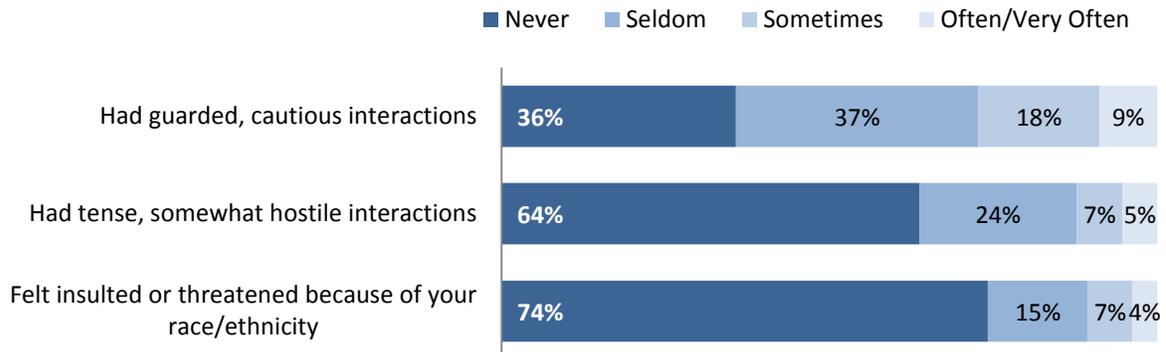


### Negative Cross-Racial Interaction

The negative cross-racial interaction construct measures students' level of negative interaction with diverse peers. Compared to the private universities that also participated in the survey, CWRU's score on the negative cross-racial interaction construct was significantly lower (50 vs. 52) and did not change significantly from 2011 to 2013. Results for the construct are as follows (figure 2):

- 9% had experienced guarded, cautious interactions often/very often
- 5% had experienced tense, somewhat hostile interactions
- 4% had felt insulted or threatened because of their race or ethnicity

**Figure 2. How often have you interacted with students from a racial/ethnic group other than your own?**



### What Else Do We Know About Students' Attitudes and Experiences with Diversity?

Several additional questions on the survey addressed diversity. For example, most students agreed that their college experiences have exposed them to diverse opinions, cultures, and values (89%). Since entering college, 14% of students participated in an ethnic/racial student organization. A little more than half of students said their knowledge of people from different races/cultures was somewhat strong or a major strength.

Ninety-one percent of students said it was at least somewhat important to improve their understanding of other countries and cultures and over half (55%) of students said this was very important or essential. The majority of students also said it was at least somewhat important to promote racial understanding.

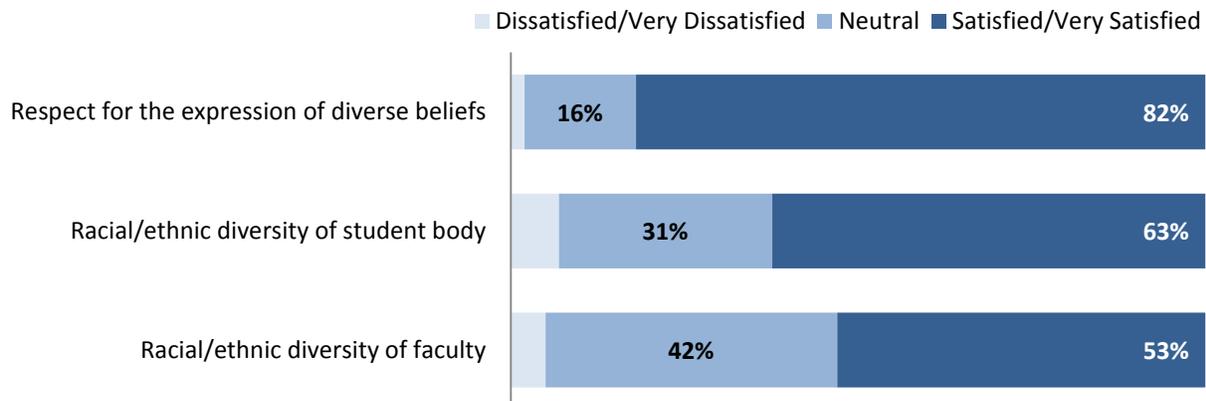
When asked, less than 15% of students agreed with the following statements:

- I have heard faculty express stereotypes based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation (13%)
- I have felt discriminated against because of my race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation (11%)
- There is a lot of racial tension on this campus (7%)

In terms of satisfaction with aspects of campus life, more than 90% of first-year students were satisfied with the:

- Respect for the expression of diverse beliefs at CWRU (98%)
- Racial/ethnic diversity of faculty (95%)
- Racial/ethnic diversity of the student body (94%)

**Figure 3. How satisfied are you with aspects of campus life at CWRU?**



#### Additional Information

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