

Civic Engagement

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.¹ This report relates to the level of engagement and satisfaction with community and volunteer work during college, as well as items that reflect future orientation towards volunteer and community service.



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.

Civic Engagement Construct

The civic engagement construct measures the extent to which students are motivated and involved in civic, electoral, and political activities. CWRU's score on the civic engagement construct in 2013 did not differ significantly from the score for the private university comparison group (CWRU: 49 vs. private universities: 50) and was not significantly different from CWRU's score in 2011 (49 in 2011 vs. 49 in 2013).² The results for the items which make up the construct are provided below.

- ❖ 73% of 2012-13 CWRU first-year students performed volunteer work
- ❖ 44% helped raise money for a cause or campaign
- ❖ 41% publicly communicated their opinion about a cause (e.g., blog, e-mail, petition)
- ❖ 19% demonstrated for a cause (e.g., boycott, rally, protest)
- ❖ 14% worked on a local, state, or national political campaign

The majority of first-year students:

- ❖ Said it was at least somewhat important to keep up to date with political affairs (84%)
- ❖ Said it was at least somewhat important to influence social values (81%)
- ❖ Agreed that they are interested in seeking information about current social and political issues (66%)

¹ 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.

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

Civic Awareness Construct

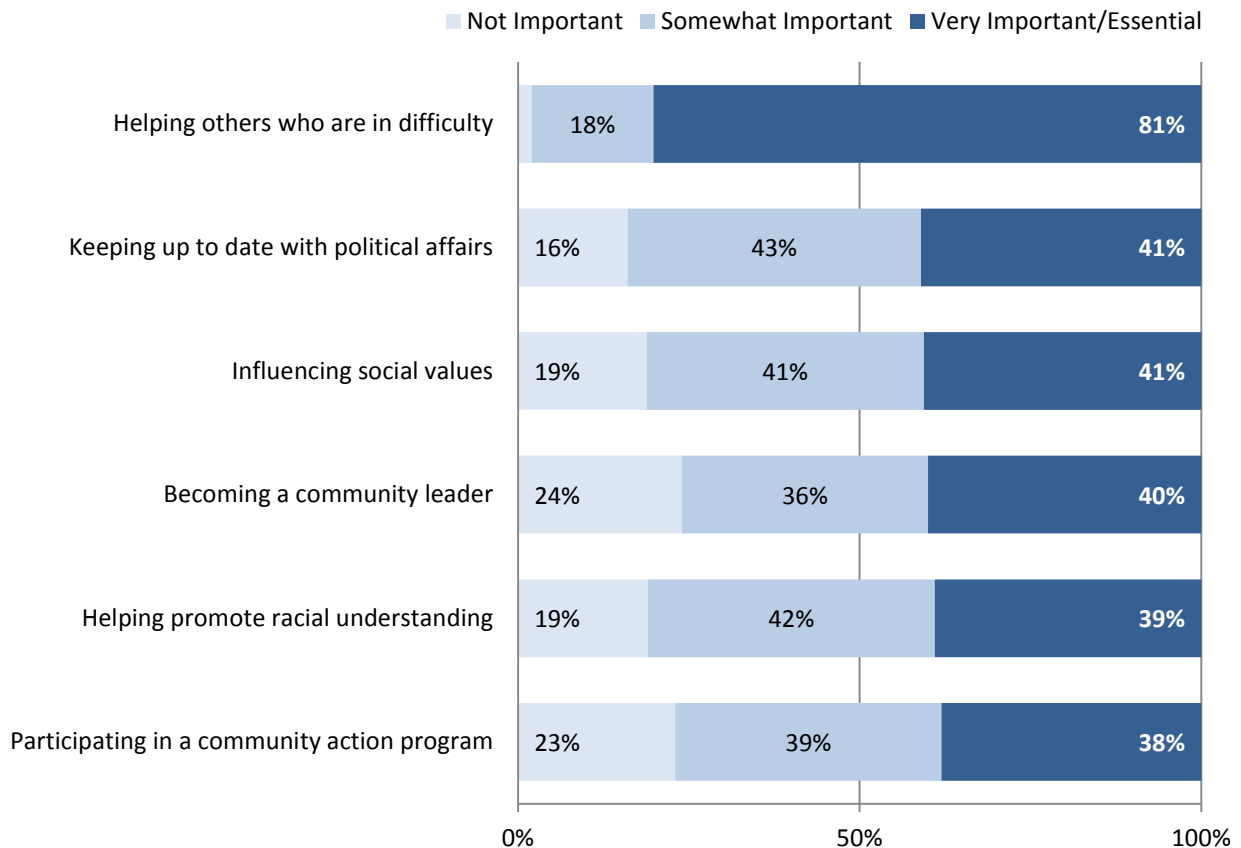
The civic awareness construct measures changes in students’ understanding of the issues facing their community, the nation, and the world. Compared to 2011, CWRU’s score on the civic awareness construct increased significantly (45 in 2011 vs. 50 in 2013) but remained significantly lower than the comparison group score (CWRU: 50 vs. private universities: 51). The results for the items which make up the construct are provided below.

- ❖ 43% rated their understanding of the problems facing their community as somewhat strong or a major strength
- ❖ 42% rated their understanding of national issues as somewhat strong or a major strength
- ❖ 29% rated their understanding of global issues as somewhat strong or a major strength

Social Agency Construct

The social agency construct measures the extent to which students value political and social involvement as a personal goal. Compared to other private universities that participated in the survey, CWRU’s score was significantly lower (CWRU: 51 vs. private universities: 53). Compared to 2011, CWRU’s 2013 score did not change significantly (52 in 2011 vs. 51 in 2013). The results for the items which make up the construct are provided in figure 1.

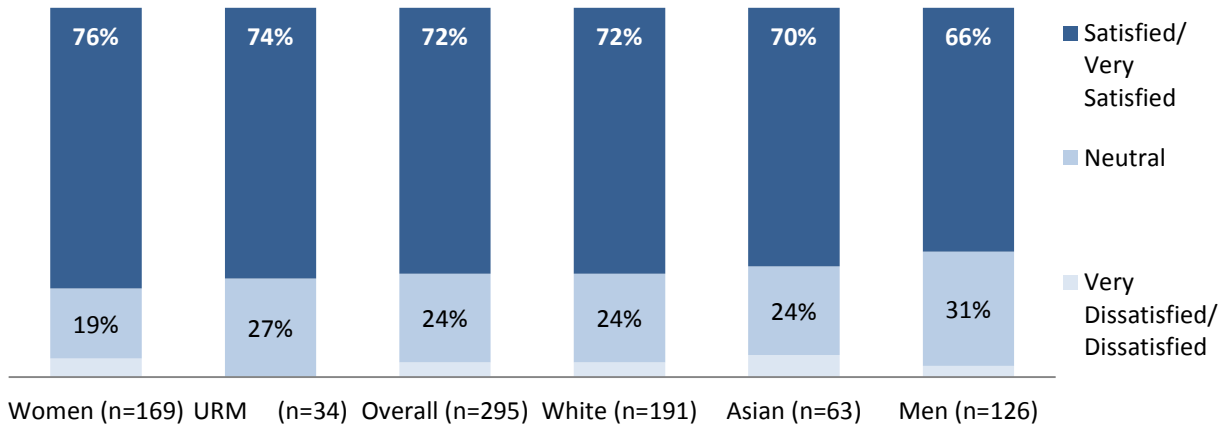
Figure 1. How important are each of the following to you personally?



What Else Do We Know About Civic Engagement?

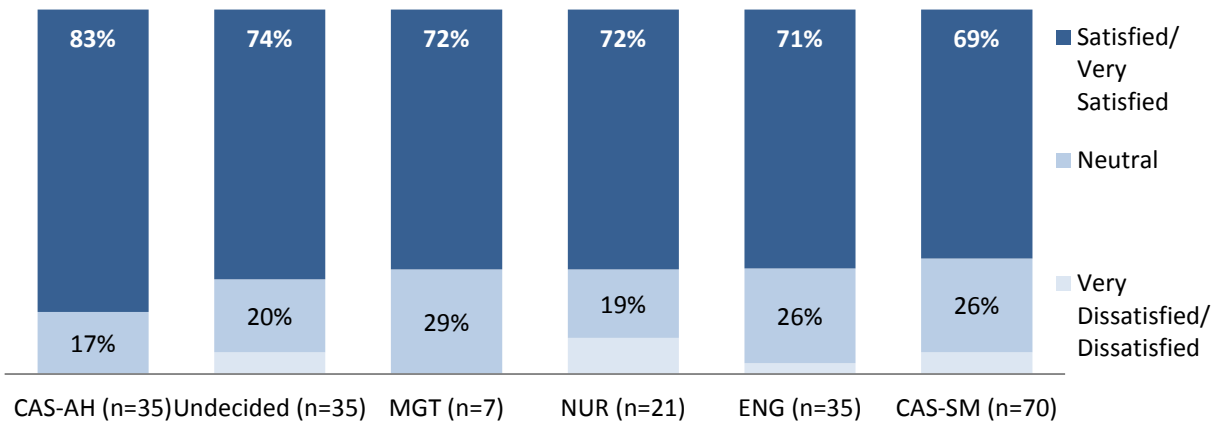
Several items on the survey related to civic engagement but were not included in the constructs listed above. For example, 72% of students were satisfied with community service opportunities. Women and underrepresented minorities were the most satisfied with CWRU’s opportunities for community service, while men and Asian students were the least satisfied (figure 2).

Figure 2. Satisfaction with Opportunities for Community Service at CWRU



A review of students’ satisfaction with opportunities for community service by college/school shows that Arts and Humanities majors (CAS-AH) and undecided students were the most satisfied while Science and Math (CAS-SM) and Engineering students were the least satisfied (figure 3).³

Figure 3. Satisfaction with Opportunities for Community Service at CWRU by College/School



³ College and school designations are based on the students’ intended and declared majors at the beginning of Fall 2012. Students are counted once for each of their majors.

In terms of politics, most students:

- ❖ Discussed politics during their first year of college (at least occasionally: 86%)
- ❖ Were registered to vote (85%, 4% are ineligible)
- ❖ Voted in a student election (at least occasionally: 77%)
- ❖ Voted in the fall 2012 election (70%)

Compared to the average person their age, most students rated themselves above average or higher 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%)

Additional Information

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