

Social Experiences and Perspectives

2014 College Senior Survey

In spring 2014, we asked graduating seniors at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) to participate in the *College Senior Survey*. The survey was administered by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) in conjunction with the Office of Planning and Institutional Research. It is a follow-up to *The Freshman Survey* (TFS) which was administered to this cohort in fall of 2010. Of 983¹ potential participants, 33% (n=326)² submitted responses. Their results are compared to students from a comparison group of universities³. Additionally, 154 students completed both the TFS and CSS, allowing us to make comparisons over time⁴. This report provides information about students' social experiences and perspectives on campus.



Measures

The results include constructs derived from multiple items on the survey instrument. 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. The construct scores detailed in this report are more than a basic summation of individual items. Rather, they are computed using Item Response Theory (IRT)⁵ and have been scaled such that the population means equal 50. *Construct scores should not be converted into percentages or compared to other constructs.*

In addition to the constructs, additional individual items are highlighted in the report. The full distribution for constructs and individual items is available on the IR website at: <https://www.case.edu/ir/srvyresults/>. All significant differences also include a measure of

¹ Population n=983: Women=399 (41%), Men=584 (59%); Caucasian=515 (52%), Asian=189 (19%), Black=41 (4%), Hispanic=33 (3%), Other=29 (3%), Unknown=106 (11%), International=70 (7%)

² Sample n=326: Women=166 (51%), Men=160 (49%); Caucasian=184 (56%), Asian=53 (16%), Black=10 (3%), Hispanic=8 (3%), Other=11 (3%), Unknown=42 (13%); International=17 (5%)

³ Pepperdine University, Northeastern University, Fordham University, Texas Christian University and Biola University

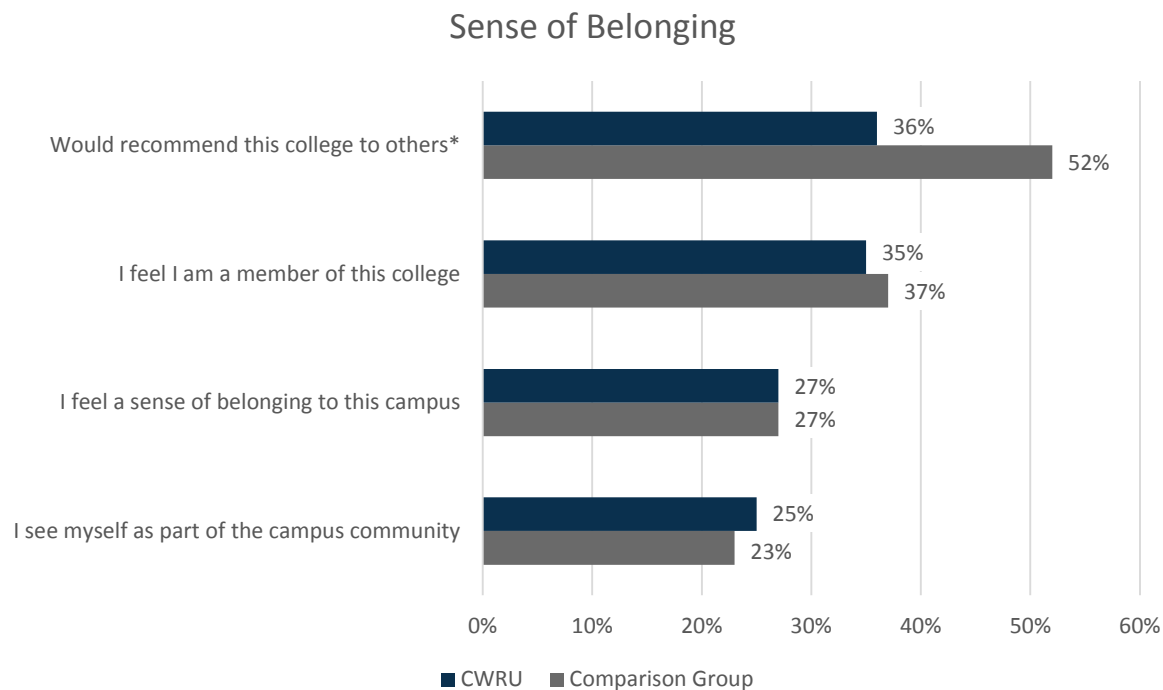
⁴ Longitudinal comparisons examine change in students who completed both TFS and CSS (includes data from 33 non-graduating seniors).

⁵ Item Response Theory (IRT) uses response patterns to derive construct score estimates while simultaneously giving greater weight in the estimation process to survey items that tap into the construct more directly. This results in more accurate construct scores.

effect size, Cohen's *d*. Effect size allows us to estimate the size of the differences between two means⁶. For ease of reference, bulleted items which demonstrate significant differences are italicized.

Sense of Belonging

The *Sense of Belonging* construct measures the extent to which students feel a sense of academic and social integration on campus. There was no meaningful difference between CWRU students and those at the comparison institutions in terms of sense of belonging; ($M=50, SD=9.61$) vs. ($M=50, SD=9.22$). However, of the four items in this construct, there was a moderate difference on one ("If asked, I would recommend this college to others"). A breakdown of the items is outlined below. The percentages represent the frequency with which students rated "strongly agree".



*Moderate difference: $d=-0.35$

Social Self-Concept

The *Social Self-Concept* construct is a unified measure of students' beliefs about their abilities and confidence in social situations. There was no meaningful difference between CWRU students and students in the comparison group in terms of *social self-concept*; ($M=53, SD=9.29$) vs. ($M=53, SD=8.77$). Following is a breakdown of the individual items.

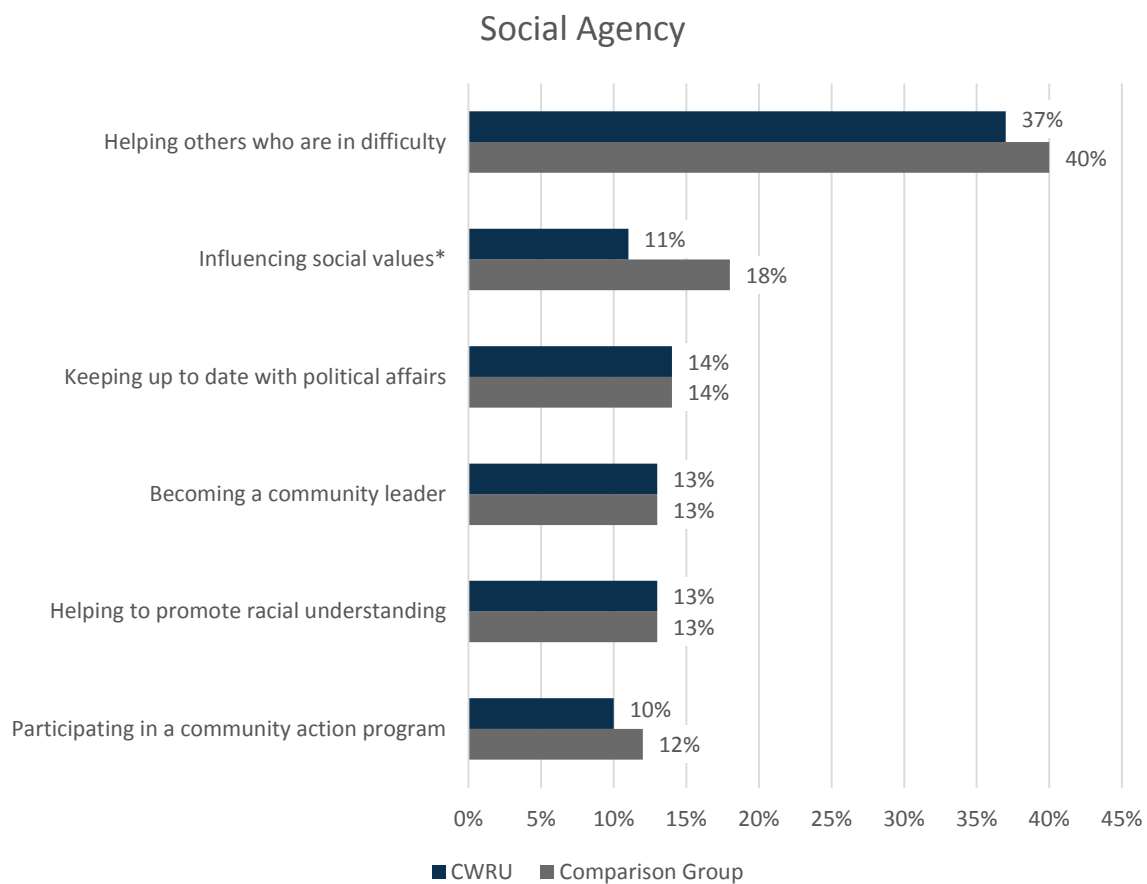
- Leadership ability: 30% vs. 28% self-rated as highest ten percent; ($M=3.97, SD=0.88$) vs. ($M=3.94, SD=0.85$); No meaningful difference

⁶ The effect size is the size of the difference between two means. Cohen's *d* values were interpreted according to the criteria used by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research: small $\sim .1$, medium $\sim .3$, large $\sim .5$, very large $\sim .7$. These benchmark criteria were applied unilaterally to both constructs and individual items for simplicity.

- Public speaking ability: 16% vs. 13% self-rated as highest ten percent; ($M=3.55, SD=0.93$) vs. ($M=3.50, SD=0.91$); No meaningful difference
- Self-confidence (social): 15% vs. 14% self-rated as highest ten percent; ($M=3.38, SD=1.01$) vs. ($M=3.44, SD=0.96$); No meaningful difference

Social Agency

The *Social Agency* construct measures the extent to which students value social involvement as a personal goal. Graduating seniors at CWRU scored slightly lower on *social agency* than their peers; ($M=51, SD=10.16$) vs. ($M=53, SD=9.73$); $d=-0.18, p<.01$. This difference was influenced by ratings for one item in particular: influencing social values. CWRU students rated this item as “essential” moderately less than students at the comparison institutions. A breakdown of the construct items is detailed below.



*Moderate difference: $d=-0.33$

Civic Awareness

The *Civic Awareness* construct measures changes in students’ understanding of the issues facing their community, nation, and the world. There was no meaningful difference between CWRU students and the comparison group in terms of *civic awareness*; ($M=49, SD=9.43$) vs. ($M=50, SD=9.38$). Following are details on the individual items.

- Understanding of the problems facing your community: 18% vs. 18% self-rated as a major strength; ($M=3.61, SD=0.92$) vs. ($M=3.65, SD=0.88$); No meaningful difference
- Understanding of national issues: 11% vs. 13% self-rated as a major strength; ($M=3.30, SD=0.97$) vs. ($M=3.34, SD=0.97$); No meaningful difference
- Understanding of global issues: 12% vs. 13% self-rated as a major strength; ($M=3.27, SD=1.02$) vs. ($M=3.33, SD=1.00$); No meaningful difference

Leadership

The *Leadership* construct is a unified measure of students’ beliefs about their leadership development, leadership capacity, and their experiences as a leader. Graduating seniors at CWRU scored slightly higher on leadership than the comparison group; ($M=52, SD=9.01$) vs. ($M=50, SD=8.56$), $d=0.14, p<.05$. However, in terms of individual construct items, there was no meaningful difference in self-rated leadership ability. Results for the construct items are described below.



*Slight difference: led a group to a common purpose ($d=0.19$); rating information provided was for frequency of “strongly agree”

Civic Engagement

The *Civic Engagement* construct measures the extent to which students are motivated and involved in civic, electoral, and political activities. Graduating seniors at CWRU scored slightly lower on civic engagement than students in the comparison group; ($M=50, SD=8.32$) vs. ($M=51, SD=8.19$), $d=-0.14, p<.05$. While CWRU students scored slightly lower on civic engagement, most items within this construct demonstrated no meaningful difference. This difference between construct scores was largely driven by a single item: “influencing social values”.

- *Demonstrated for a cause (e.g., boycott, rally, protest):* 3% vs. 3% frequently; ($M=1.18, SD=0.45$) vs. ($M=1.24, SD=0.50$); $d=-0.12, p<.01$

- Helped raise money for a cause or campaign: 20% vs. 15% frequently; ($M=1.75, SD=0.77$) vs. ($M=1.67, SD=0.72$); No meaningful difference
- *Publicly communicated your opinion about a cause (e.g., blog, email, petition): 11% vs. 15% frequently; ($M=1.55, SD=0.68$) vs. ($M=1.67, SD=0.72$); $d=-0.17, p<.01$*
- Performed volunteer or community service work: 26% vs. 24% frequently; ($M=2.02, SD=0.70$) vs. ($M=1.97, SD=0.72$); No meaningful difference
- Worked on a local, state, or national political campaign: 1% vs. 2% frequently; ($M=1.06, SD=0.27$) vs. ($M=1.10, SD=0.35$); No meaningful difference
- I am interested in seeking information about current social and political issues: 18% vs. 18% strongly agree; ($M=2.75, SD=0.86$) vs. ($M=2.77, SD=0.84$); No meaningful difference
- *Influencing social values: 11% vs. 18% rated as essential; ($M=2.32, SD=0.92$) vs. ($M=2.62, SD=0.91$); $d=-0.33, p<.001$*
- Keeping up to date with political affairs: 14% vs. 14% rated as essential; ($M=2.39, SD=0.89$) vs. ($M=2.43, SD=0.92$); No meaningful difference

Interpersonal Skills

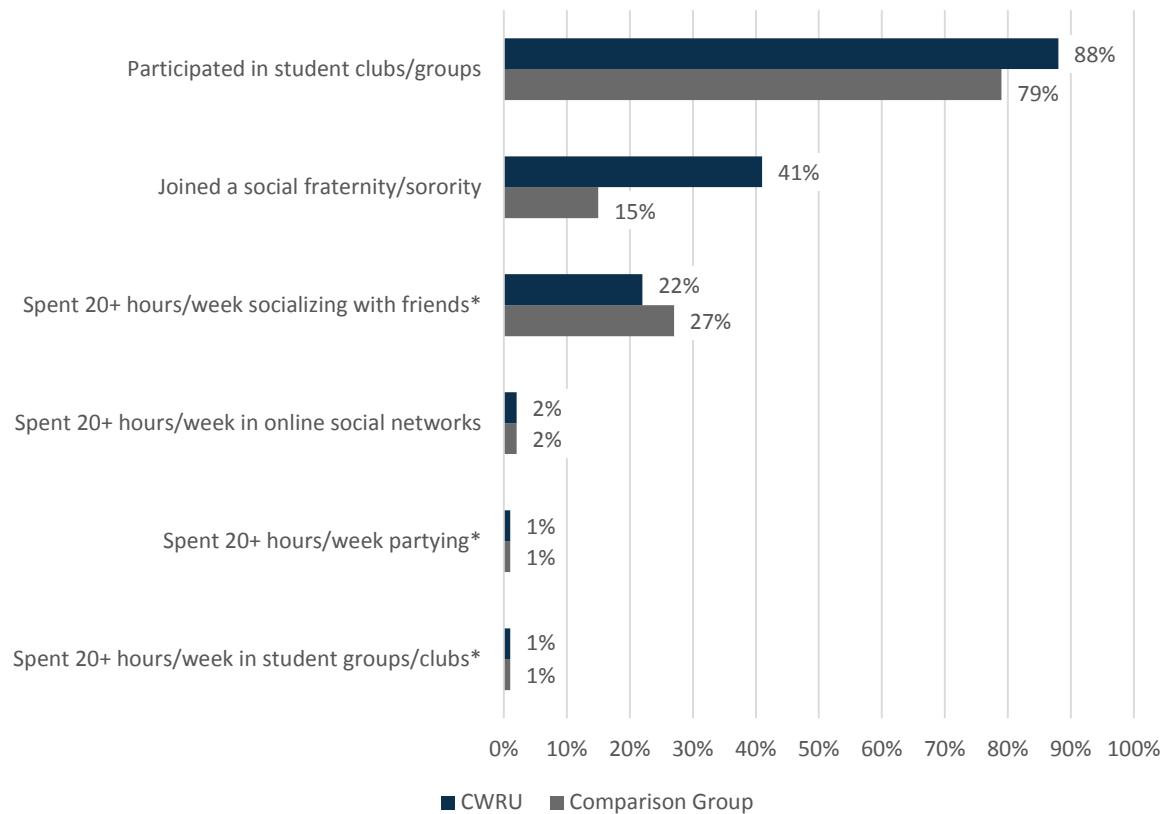
CWRU students were also asked about their interpersonal skills. There were no meaningful differences between CWRU students and the comparison group.

- Interpersonal skills: 4% vs. 6% self-rated as a major strength; ($M=4.92, SD=1.24$) vs. ($M=5.08, SD=1.31$); No meaningful difference
- Ability to work as part of a team: 52% vs. 53% self-rated as a major strength; ($M=4.40, SD=0.70$) vs. ($M=4.39, SD=0.75$); No meaningful difference

Social Activity

The following items evaluate the frequency of student involvement in social activities. CWRU students spent slightly less time with friends or participating in student clubs/groups than students at the comparison institutions. However, while CWRU students spent slightly less *time* on the aforementioned activities, a greater *proportion* of CWRU students reported participating in student clubs/groups and joining social fraternities/sororities. That is, while more CWRU students were involved in such activities, they each tended to spend less time participating in these activities than the comparison group.

Social Organizations



*Slight difference: 20+ hours/week socializing with friends ($d=-0.21$), 20+ hours/week in student clubs/groups ($d=-0.21$)

Additional Items

The CSS includes several items that are also pertinent to student social experiences and perspectives. While CWRU students were not different from the comparison group in terms of feeling encouraged to participate in campus activities or their self-rated understanding others, CWRU students were slightly less likely to indicate that they feel valued at their institution.

- *I feel valued at this institution*: 30% vs. 35% strongly agree; ($M=3.00$, $SD=0.87$) vs. ($M=3.15$, $SD=0.76$); $d=-0.20$, $p<.01$
- Staff encouraged me to get involved in campus activities: 18% vs. 15% strongly agree; ($M=2.80$, $SD=0.80$) vs. ($M=2.82$, $SD=0.72$); No meaningful difference
- Understanding of others: 29% vs. 27% self-rated as highest ten percent; ($M=4.04$, $SD=0.75$) vs. ($M=4.01$, $SD=0.75$); No meaningful difference

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