

Academic Experiences

2014 Your First College Year

Introduction

In spring 2014, we asked first-year students at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) to participate in the *Your First College Year survey* (YFCY).¹ The survey was administered by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA in conjunction with the Office of Planning and Institutional Research. It is a follow-up to *The Freshman Survey* (TFS) which was administered in fall of 2013 and the YFCY administered in spring 2013. This report provides information about students' academic experiences on campus.



Constructs

The results include 16 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. ***Construct scores should not be converted into percentages or compared to other constructs.***

Habits of the Mind

The *habits of the mind* construct is a unified measure of the behaviors and traits associated with academic success. These learning behaviors are seen as the foundation for lifelong learning. CWRU's score on *habits of the mind* did not change significantly from 2013 to 2014 (49 vs. 49). When compared to peer institutions², CWRU students scored significantly lower³ on this construct (49 vs. 51, $d=-.19^4$). As with other institutions, first-year students who took both *The Freshman Survey* (TFS) and YFCY showed a significant decline in *habits of the mind* score (TFS=54 vs. YFCY=49 $d=-.45$).

Academic Adjustment and Support

The *academic adjustment* construct measures the ease with which students adjust to the academic demands of college. Students at CWRU scored significantly lower on this construct when compared to

¹ Of the 1,217 students who received the survey, 27% (n=329) submitted responses.

² The private university comparison group included Benedictine, Boston College, Caltech, Fordham, Loyola University-Chicago, Polytechnic Institute of New York University, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, Seton Hall University, Southern Methodist, Tulane, University of Notre Dame, University of Rochester, University of Southern California, University of the Pacific, Vanderbilt, and Wake Forest.

³ Cohen's D, a measure of effect size, was included in this report and indicates the magnitude of difference between two means. Effect sizes of .1 would be considered small, .3 medium, greater than .5 would be large, and .8 and up would be very large (http://nsse.iub.edu/pdf/effect_size_guide.pdf)

peers (47 vs. 48 $d=-.17$). Since 2013, there has been no statistically significant change in *academic adjustment* scores (47 vs. 48).

Academic Disengagement

Academic Disengagement measures the extent to which students engage in behaviors that are inconsistent with academic success. Compared to students at peer institutions, CWRU students scored significantly higher on *academic disengagement* (50 vs. 49, $d=.15$). *Academic disengagement* did not improve significantly from the 2013 score (50 vs. 53).



Faculty Interaction: Contact and Communication

The *Faculty Interaction: Contact and Communication* construct measures the amount and type of contact students have with faculty that is appropriate for the first year of college, as well as satisfaction with these issues. In 2014, CWRU scored significantly lower on this measure when compared to peers (48 vs. 51, $d=-.30$). There was no significant change on this score when compared to the 2013 results (48 vs 48).

In addition to items included in the construct, when compared to students at peer institutions, students at CWRU reported that they less frequently (percentages reflect students who indicated ‘frequently’):

- Felt faculty provided them with feedback that helped them assess their progress in class: 40% vs. 46%, $d=-.15$
- Felt that faculty encouraged them to ask questions and participate in discussions: 54% vs. 63%, $d=-.19$
- Had been a guest in a professor’s home: 0% vs. 2%, $d=-.30$

Compared to students at peer institutions, CWRU students were also significantly less likely to agree with the following statements (percentages reflect those students who indicated ‘strongly agree’):

- Faculty empower me to learn here: 18% vs. 27%, $d=-.15$
- Faculty believe in my potential to achieve academically: 19% vs. 30%, $d=-.15$
- Faculty showed concern about my progress: 11% vs. 19%, $d=-.15$
- At least one faculty member has taken an interest in my development: 23% vs. 33%, $d=-.18$

Satisfaction with Coursework

The *satisfaction with coursework* construct measures the extent to which students see their coursework as relevant, useful, and applicable to their academic success and future plans. When compared to peer institutions, CWRU scored significantly lower on this construct (45 vs. 48, $d=-.30$). There was no significant difference between 2013 and 2014 on this measure (45 vs. 46).

When compared to students at peer institutions, students at CWRU reported that they less frequently (percentages reflect students who indicated 'frequently'):

- Felt that courses inspired them to think in new ways: 39% vs. 47%, $d=-.15$
- Felt that their contributions were valued in class: 36% vs. 48% , $d=-.29$
- Contributed to class discussions: 33% vs. 47%, $d=-.29$
- Posted on a course-related on-line discussion board: 8% vs. 16%, $d=-.27$
- Performed community service as part of class: 1% vs. 5%, $d=-.19$
- Had difficulty getting in to the courses they needed: 8% vs. 14%, $d=-.19$
- Applied concepts from their courses to everyday life: 15% vs. 26%, $d=-.27$

CWRU students were also significantly more likely to report being bored in class (46% vs. 36%, $d=.24$). Additionally, CWRU students reported spending significantly more time in classes, with 61% of students reporting spending over 16 hours in classes/labs compared to 42% at peer institutions ($d=.32$). Compared to students at peer institutions, 35% of CWRU students reported an A or A+ average in their most recent term. At peer institutions, 22% of students reported an A or A+ average ($d=.18$)

CWRU students were also significantly less satisfied with the following (percentages reflect those students who indicated 'very satisfied'):

- Classroom facilities: 15% vs.30%, $d=-.38$
- Laboratory facilities and equipment: 22% vs. 33%, $d=-.29$
- Computer facilities/labs: 22% vs. 31%, $d=-.20$

Overall Satisfaction

The Overall Satisfaction construct is a unified measure of students' satisfaction with the college experience. When compared to peer institutions, CWRU students were significantly less satisfied with their experiences at CWRU (48 vs. 49, $d=-.19$). There was no significant change in this indicator from the 2013 YFCY (48 vs. 48).

Academic Self-Concept

The Academic Self-Concept construct is a unified measure of students' beliefs about their abilities and confidence in academic environments. CWRU students were no different than peers on academic self-concept (50 vs 50). For those students who took both the TFS and YFCY, academic self-concept declined from 53 to 50 ($d=-.31$). This decline also occurred for students at peer institutions, who dropped from 52 to 50 ($d-.26$).

Advising

The YFCY included several items related to academic advising that were not included in construct scores. When asked how frequently they saw their advisor in the last year, CWRU students reported they saw their academic advisors significantly less frequently when compared to students at peer institutions (percentage reporting frequently 14% vs. 20% $d=-.20$). The table below highlights responses to a similar

item. On this item, CWRU students again indicated they saw their advisor less often when compared to peers (2.39 vs. 2.52, $d=-.14$).

Since entering this college, how often have you interacted with the advisors/counselors	CWRU	Peers
Daily	0%	1%
2 or 3 times per week	3%	3%
Once a week	5%	6%
1 or 2 times per month	24%	28%
1 or 2 times per term	63%	58%
Never	5%	3%

CWRU students were significantly less satisfied with academic advising than students at peer institutions, with 17% of students very satisfied with advising compared to 28% at other institutions ($d=-.17$).

The CWRU version of the survey also included the following item: How satisfied are you with the advising you received from your first year coordinator. Although 4% of students were very satisfied with their first-year coordinator, most 57% were neutral.

First-year programs

First-year students were asked to rate their satisfaction with their first-year program (e.g., first-year seminar, learning community, linked courses). The table below highlights responses about pertaining to this item.

Please rate your satisfaction with this institution on each of the aspects of college life: First-year programs (e.g., first-year seminar, learning community, linked courses)	CWRU	Peers
Very satisfied	15.5%	31.3%
Satisfied	43.2%	40.5%
Neutral	26.1%	20.7%
Dissatisfied	12.1%	5.8%
Very dissatisfied	3.0%	1.7%

CWRU students were significantly less satisfied with their first year program than students at peer institutions (3.56 vs. 3.93, $d=-.39$). The CWRU version of the survey also included an item on SAGES advising. 17% of CWRU students indicated they were very satisfied with their SAGES Advisor.

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