



Using the CIRP Freshman Survey to compare incoming Case first-years to first-years at other highly selective research universities

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program's (CIRP) Freshman Survey was administered to Case students during new student orientation in summer 2007. The survey is designed to provide information about the characteristics, educational goals, and aspirations of incoming first-year students. Because the survey is given to students at other schools around the nation, it is possible to compare answers provided by Case students to those provided by students at similar schools.

The present report compares the Case class that started in 2007 to students at other highly selective private universities. Specifically, Case will be compared to the following schools:

Brandeis University, California Institute of Technology, Carnegie Mellon University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Duke University, Emory University, Georgetown University, Johns Hopkins University, Northwestern University, Princeton University, Rice University, University of Notre Dame, University of Pennsylvania, University of Rochester, Vanderbilt University

The comparative data provided to Institutional Research from CIRP contained sample sizes and percentages only. As such, a precise calculation of significant differences between Case and other highly selective private universities is not possible. However, by multiplying the sample size by the percentage of students answering questions in a particular way, we were able to conduct reasonably accurate Chi-Square analyses on many of the CIRP survey items. That being said, this technique remains somewhat imprecise. Differences reported below are all significant at the $p < .01$ level. Even with this conservative approach to significance, results should be read with caution.

Parental Characteristics

- Case students are less likely to have fathers with graduate degrees (40%) compared to students at the other highly selective universities (59%). Likewise, Case students are less likely to have mothers with graduate degrees (30%) compared to those in the comparison group (39%).
- Case students are more likely to have parents who are divorced or living apart (19%) than are those at highly selective universities (15%).

High School Experience

- The vast majority of Case students attended a public high school (71%) whereas just over half of those at the other highly selective private universities attended public school (56%).
- Compared to students at other highly selective universities, Case students are more likely to have attended schools they describe as “mostly white” (67% vs. 60%) or “completely white” (12% vs. 8%). Likewise,

Case students were less likely to say that, during their senior year of high school, they had socialized with someone of another race (68% vs. 76%)

- Case students are less likely to say that their average grades in high school were in the A- to A+ range (81%) than were students in the comparison group (89%).
- Compared to students at other highly selective universities, Case students were less likely to say that, during their senior year of high school, they had tutored another student (73% vs. 79%), consumed beer (38% vs. 45%), wine or liquor (47% vs. 52%), asked a teacher for advice after class (25% vs. 31%), voted in a student election (20% vs. 27%), used the internet for research (82% vs. 87%) or used the internet to read news sites (52% vs. 58%).

Self-Ratings

- Although in general Case students expressed confidence in their own abilities, they were less likely than those at other selective universities to rate themselves as above average on measures of competitiveness (64% vs. 69%), drive to achieve (81% vs. 89%), public speaking ability (44% vs. 52%), self-understanding (61% vs. 67%), and writing ability (48% vs. 63%).

Classroom Engagement

- Case students were less likely than those in the comparison group to say that they “frequently” supported their opinions with logical arguments (74% vs. 79%), sought solutions to problems and explained them to others (65% vs. 71%), revised papers to improve their writing (50% vs. 59%), evaluated the quality or reliability of the information they received (46% vs. 53%), or sought feedback on their academic work (49% vs. 55%).

Influences on College Choice

- Compared to students at other highly selective universities, Case students were less likely to say that they considered the following as being “very important” when choosing a college:
 - This college has a very good academic reputation (85% vs. 88%)
 - This college has a very good reputation for its social activities (12% vs. 34%)
 - I was admitted through early action/early decision (14% vs. 29%)
 - A visit to campus (42% vs. 49%)
- Compared to students at other highly selective universities, Case students were more likely to say that they considered the following as being “very important” factors in their college choice:
 - This college’s graduates gain admission to top graduate/professional schools (64% vs. 57%)
 - This college’s graduates get good jobs (75% vs. 68%)
 - I was offered financial assistance (69% vs. 35%)
 - The cost of attending this college (35% vs. 20%)
 - Not offered aid by my first choice (14% vs. 4%)
 - Could not afford first choice (13% vs. 4%)

Fewer Case students say that this is their first choice school (52%) than do students at the other selective universities (64%).

College Plans

- Case students are more likely than their peers to say that the chances are “very good” that they will get a job to help pay for college expenses (50% vs. 41%), play varsity or intercollegiate athletics (22% vs. 16%), and need extra time to complete their degree requirements (5% vs. 3%).
- Compared to students at other highly selective universities, Case students are less likely to say that the chances are “very good” that they will change their major field (11% vs. 18%), change their career choice (14% vs. 22%), participate in student government (6% vs. 9%), join a social fraternity or sorority (8% vs. 11%), participate in student protests or demonstrations (7% vs. 10%), and be satisfied with their college (55% vs. 74%).
- Case students were also less likely to say that they planned to participate in volunteer or community service work (34% vs. 46%), communicate regularly with their professors (42% vs. 48%), socialize with someone of a different racial/ethnic group (76% vs. 83%), participate in student clubs/groups (61% vs. 70%), participate in a study abroad program (32% vs. 47%), or have a roommate of a different race/ethnicity (37% vs. 49%).

Future Plans

- Compared to students at other highly selective universities, Case students are less likely to say that it will be “essential” or “very important” for them to become accomplished in one of the performing arts (14% vs. 19%), become an authority in their field (61% vs. 67%), influence the political structure (19% vs. 26%), influence social values (36% vs. 43%), have administrative responsibility for the work of others (35% vs. 40%), or help others who are in difficulty (68% vs. 73%).
- Additionally, Case students were less likely to feel that it would be “essential” or “very important” for them to write original works (12% vs. 18%), create artistic work (11% vs. 14%), become successful in a business of their own (30% vs. 39%), become involved in programs to clean up the environment (27% vs. 31%), develop a meaningful philosophy of life (55% vs. 63%), participate in a community action program (28% vs. 38%), help promote racial understanding (35% vs. 42%), keep up to date with political affairs (41% vs. 54%), become a community leader or improve their understanding of other countries and cultures (59% vs. 69%).
- Conversely, compared to students at other highly selective universities, Case students are more likely to say that it will be “essential” or “very important” make a theoretical contribution to science (42% vs. 29%).

Political Views

- Case students are less likely to self-identify as “Liberal” than are their peers (37% vs. 42%).
- Case students were more likely than their peers to “somewhat” or “strongly” believe that:
 - There is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals (49% vs. 44%)
 - Wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now (64% vs. 58%)
 - Undocumented immigrants should be denied access to public education (43% vs. 36%)

- The chief benefit of a college education is that it increases one's earning power (59% vs. 51%).
- Compared to students at other highly selective universities, Case students were less likely to "somewhat" or "strongly" believe that:
 - Abortion should be legal (64% vs. 72%)
 - The death penalty should be abolished (42% vs. 51%)
 - Marijuana should be legalized (39% vs. 44%)
 - Racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America (12% vs. 16%)
 - Same sex couples should have the right to legal marital status (70% vs. 75%)
 - The federal government should do more to control the sale of handguns (72% vs. 81%)
 - Through hard work, everybody can succeed in American society (61% vs. 67%)
 - Dissent is a critical component of the political process (77% vs. 83%).