



## A profile of Case first-year students: Using the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's Freshman Survey to examine the characteristics of 2007's incoming first-year class

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program's Freshman Survey (CIRP) was administered to Case students during new student orientation this past summer. This report utilizes information from the Freshman Survey to present a profile of this year's incoming first-year students.

### Who are the Case freshmen?

- The vast majority (99%) of first-years entering Case in 2007 were 18 or 19 years of age. Most graduated from public schools (71%) with an A- average or higher (81%). For the majority, Case is over 100 miles from home (62%). The vast majority of students (79%) say that Case was either their first or second choice school, and 94% plan to pursue an advanced degree after graduation.

### How do they rate their abilities?

- The majority of this year's incoming class rate themselves as being above average in measures of academic ability (93%), competitiveness (64%), cooperativeness (75%), creativity (58%), drive to achieve (81%), emotional health (59%), leadership ability (65%), mathematical ability (72%), physical health (60%), intellectual self-confidence (75%), self-understanding (61%), and understanding of others (67%).
- Conversely, the majority of this year's class rate themselves as being average or lower in measures of artistic ability (68%), computer skills (54%), public speaking ability (56%), spirituality (63%), and writing ability (52%).
- An equal percentage of incoming first-years rated their social self-confidence to be above average (50%) and average or lower (50%).

### What do they believe?

- Case first-years are more likely to self-identify as middle-of-the-road (40%) or liberal (40%) than as conservative (20%).
- The majority of incoming Case students either "agree somewhat" or "agree strongly" that abortion should be legal (64%), that the wealthy should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now (64%), that same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status (70%), and that affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished (61%).
- Additionally, students believe that the federal government should do more to control the sale of handguns (72%), that only volunteers should serve in the armed forces (73%), that the federal government is not doing enough to control environmental pollution (85%), and that a national health care plan is needed to cover everybody's medical costs (70%).
- Students also believe that, through hard work, everybody can succeed in American society (61%), that dissent is a critical component of the political process (77%), and that the chief benefit of a college education is that it increases one's earning power (59%).
- Conversely, the majority of students who started at Case in 2007 either "disagree somewhat" or "disagree strongly" that there is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals (51%), that the death penalty should be abolished (58%), and that marijuana should be legalized (62%).
- Students also "disagree somewhat" or "disagree strongly" that it is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships (85%), that racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America (88%), that one individual can do little

to bring about changes in our society (78%), that federal military spending should not be increased (78%), that undocumented immigrants should be denied access to public education (57%), and that the federal government should raise taxes to reduce the deficit (68%).

### **How did they spend their senior year in high school?**

- In a typical week, students entering Case in 2007 spent an average of 6-10 hours on each of the following activities: studying or completing homework assignments, socializing with friends, and exercising or participating in sports.
- Incoming students also spent, in the typical week, an average of 1-2 hours on each of the following activities: volunteering, participating in student clubs or groups, participating in online social networks, talking with teachers outside of class, watching TV, and completing household duties.
- This year's first-years spent, on average, less than one hour in the typical week on each of the following activities: partying, working for pay, and playing video games.

### **How engaged were they in high school?**

- The majority of this year's incoming first-years reported that they frequently asked questions in class (62%), supported their opinions with a logical argument (74%), sought solutions to problems and explained them to others (65%), or sought alternative solutions to a problem (52%).
- Half of this year's incoming students said they frequently revised papers to improve their writing (50%).
- Fewer than half of this year's incoming first-years said they frequently evaluated the quality or reliability of information they received (46%), took risks because they felt they had more to gain (39%), looked up scientific research articles and resources (35%), explored topics on their own when not required for a class (42%), or sought feedback on their academic work (49%).

### **What influenced their decision to choose Case?**

- The majority of incoming first-years say that their parents (or legal guardians) were involved "the right amount" in their decision to go to college, their decision to go to Case, and their choosing of college courses and college activities.
- In 2007, incoming students ranked the extent to which the following factors contributed to their decision to choose Case. Items are listed in rank order based on the percentage of students saying the factor played a "very important" role in choosing Case (percentage saying "very important" in parentheses):
  1. This college has a very good academic reputation (85%)
  2. This college's graduates get good jobs (75%)
  3. I was offered financial assistance (68%)
  4. This college's graduates gain admission to top graduate/professional schools (63%)
  5. Campus visit (42%)
  6. Rankings in national magazines (40%)
  7. Cost of attending this college (35%)
  8. School's size (32%)
  9. Information from a website (25%)
  10. Not offered aid from their first choice school (14%)
  11. Accepted through an early action/early decision program (14%)
  12. Could not afford first choice school (12%)
  13. College's reputation for its social activities (12%)
  14. Desires of parents (11%)
  15. Recruited by the athletic department (10%)
  16. Desire to live near home (9%)
  17. Advice of a high school counselor (9%)
  18. Advice of a teacher (4%)
  19. Advice of a private college counselor (3%)
  20. Desires of relatives (3%)
  21. Attraction to the religious affiliation/orientation of the college (2%)

### **What do they plan to do while at Case?**

- A majority of incoming first-years said that there was "some chance" or "a very good chance" that, while at Case, they would get a job to help pay

for college expenses (73%), make at least a “B” average (99%), participate in community service work (74%), communicate regularly with their professors (93%), socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group (98%), participate in student clubs/groups (93%), study abroad (68%), and have a roommate of a different race/ethnicity (81%).

- This year’s freshmen enter Case with an open mind about both their intended major and their future plans. Specifically, half of the incoming first-years said there was “some chance” or a “very good chance” that they would change majors while at Case, and the majority (55%) says that there is “some chance” or a “very good chance” that they will change their career choice while at Case.
- Less than half of this year’s first-years said that there is “some chance” or a “very good chance” that they would participate in student government (33%), work full-time while attending college (19%), join a social fraternity or sorority (38%), play varsity or intercollegiate athletics (41%), need extra time to complete their degree requirements (37%), participate in student protests or demonstrations (35%), transfer to another college before graduating (21%), and seek personal counseling (30%).
- A full 97% of incoming students believe that there is some chance or a very good chance that they will be satisfied with their experience at Case.

### What are their life goals?

- A majority of students said it was “very important” or “essential” for them to become an authority in their field (61%), to obtain recognition from their colleagues for contributions to their field (56%), to

raise a family (67%), to be very well off financially (72%), help others who are in difficulty (68%), to develop a meaningful philosophy of life (55%), and to improve their understanding of other countries and cultures (58%).

- A majority of students said it was only “some-what important” or “not important” for them to become accomplished in the performing arts (86%), to influence the political structure (81%), to influence social values (64%), have administrative responsibility for the work of others (66%), to make a theoretical contribution to science (58%), to write original works (88%), to create artistic work (90%), to become successful in a business of their own (70%), to become involved in programs to clean up the environment (73%), to participate in a community action program (71%), to help promote racial understanding (65%), to keep up to date with political affairs (59%), and to become community leaders (67%).
- Though the majority admitted that there is some chance or a very good chance that they will change career paths while at Case, the top five probable careers for incoming first years were: engineer (28%), physician (18%), scientific researcher (7%), nurse (6%), and lawyer (5%).

