

What do we know about our first-year students? Using institutional data to gain perspective on the student experience

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program's (CIRP) Freshman Survey was administered to CWRU students during new student orientation this past summer. The survey includes questions about the characteristics, educational goals, and aspirations of incoming first-year students. We have used the student responses to create a profile of CWRU's incoming first-year students. In addition, we used responses from the 2007 survey to provide information about how incoming students have changed over time. We also received CIRP results from peer institutions, which allowed us to compare CWRU students to those at other highly selective private universities¹. Some highlights from the 2010 survey are included below. For more information, please visit our website:

<http://www.case.edu/provost/raa/raafirstyears.html>.

First-Year Profile

College Plans

- Nearly all (99%) incoming students believe that there is “some chance” or a “very good chance” that they will be satisfied with their experience at Case.
- Most CWRU students expect to maintain a B average (99%), discuss course content with other students outside of class (98%), work on a professor's research project (97%), participate in tutoring for specific courses (82%), participate in a study abroad experience (73%), and communicate regularly with their professors (60%).

Self-Rated Abilities

- The majority of the survey respondents rate themselves as “above average” in measures of academic ability (95%), drive to achieve (89%), mathematical ability (82%), intellectual self-confidence (79%), cooperativeness (75%), leadership ability (69%), creativity (61%), competitiveness (75%), and writing ability (59%).
- Over half of the participants rate themselves as average or lower in their artistic ability (66%), public speaking ability (55%), social self-confidence (55%), and computer skills (51%).

Political Beliefs

A majority of the participants agree that:

- Gays and lesbians should have the legal right to adopt a child (87%);
- The federal government is not doing enough to control environmental pollution (84%);
- Addressing global warming should be a federal priority (72%);
- The federal government should do more to control the sale of handguns (70%);
- Affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished (67%);

¹ Highly selective private institutions in the 2010 comparison group include: Boston College, California Institute of Technology, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Duke University, Emory University, Northwestern University, Rice University, University of Chicago, University of Pennsylvania, University of Southern California, and Vanderbilt University.

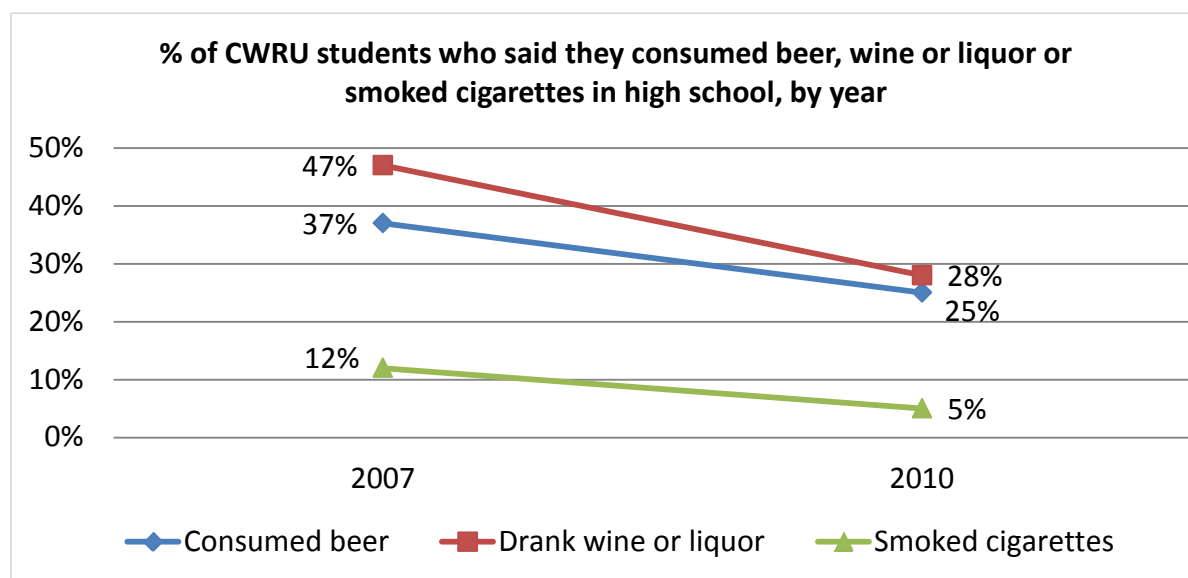
- A national health care plan is needed to cover everybody's medical costs (63%); and
- The chief benefit of a college education is increasing one's earning power (62%).

Changes in the First-Year Class

Results in this section highlight differences between students who responded to the CIRP Freshman Survey in 2010 and those who participated in 2007, the last time CWRU administered the survey.

High School Experience

- In 2007, only a third of students (33%) spent 3 or more hours in a typical week on online social networks; by 2010 over half of participants (51%) said they spent 3 or more hours in a typical week on social networks.
- Compared to the 2007 CWRU participants, 2010 participants spent significantly less time exercising, playing sports, and partying.
- First year students in 2010 were more likely to have tutored others (80% in 2010 vs. 73% in 2007) and less likely to come late to class during high school (52% in 2010 vs. 60% in 2007).
- 2010 participants were significantly less likely than their 2007 peers to say that they had consumed beer, wine or liquor and were less likely to say they had smoked cigarettes during high school. The graph below displays this decrease in alcohol and cigarette use:



State of Mind and Self-Rated Abilities

- Students who completed the survey in 2010 were no more likely than those who participated in 2007 to report feeling depressed or feeling overwhelmed.
- 2010 participants rated themselves higher than those entering in 2007 on measures of overall academic ability, mathematical and writing ability, creativity, drive to achieve, and self-understanding.

- Students entering in 2010, however, did rate themselves lower than those entering in 2007 in terms of their computer and artistic abilities.

Political Beliefs

- Compared to participants who took the survey in 2007, participants in 2010 were more likely to agree somewhat or strongly that the federal government should raise taxes to reduce the deficit (47% in 2010, 32% in 2007) and that wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now (74% in 2010; 64% in 2007).
- Students in 2010 were less likely than their 2007 peers to somewhat or strongly agree that a national health care plan is needed to cover everybody’s medical costs (63% in 2010, 70% in 2007).

Case vs. Peers

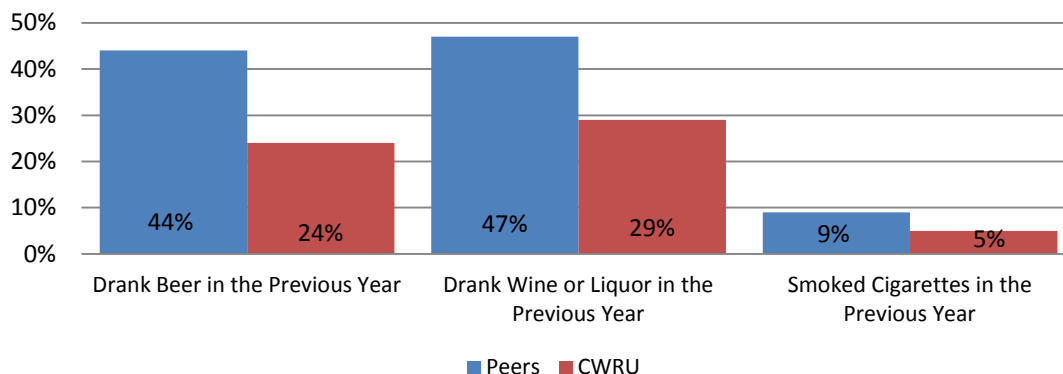
Results in this section highlight differences between CWRU and students from other highly selective universities who responded to the CIRP Freshman Survey in 2010.

High School Experience

- The majority of Case participants attended a public high school (73%) whereas just over half of those at the other highly selective private universities attended a public school (59%).
- During a typical week last year, a lower percentage of CWRU participants perused social networks (89% vs. 96%); spent more than 10 hours studying or doing homework (41% vs. 47%); and spent more than 10 hours socializing with friends (26% vs. 47%).
- Over the past year, CWRU participants spent more time reading for pleasure, performing household/childcare duties, and playing video/computer games than students at other highly selective private schools.

The chart below compares CWRU participant responses to questions about using alcohol and cigarettes during the past year with first-year student responses at other highly selective private institutions:

% of students who said they consumed beer, wine or liquor or smoked cigarettes in high school, students at CWRU versus those at other highly selective universities



Self-Ratings

- In comparison to their peers, a significantly higher percentage of CWRU participants rated their academic ability (61% vs. 54%), computer skills (14% vs. 9%), and mathematic ability (39% vs. 31%) in the “highest 10%” of all people their age.
- Fewer CWRU participants rated themselves in the highest 10% of their peers in terms of their competitiveness (25% vs. 30%), drive to achieve (46% vs. 54%), social self-confidence (14% vs. 19%), and writing ability (16% vs. 21%).

Political Beliefs

- In comparison to participants at other highly selective institutions, CWRU participants were more likely to agree that wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now (73% vs. 61%) .
- CWRU students were less likely than their peers at highly selective institutions to agree that the federal government should do more to control the sale of handguns (70% vs. 76%).

Additional Information

If you would like additional information about this report, please contact us at (216) 368-1500. To submit a request for data, please visit our website at:

<http://www.case.edu/president/cir/cirhome.html>.

