

Civic Engagement:

Results of the 2012 CIRP Freshman Survey

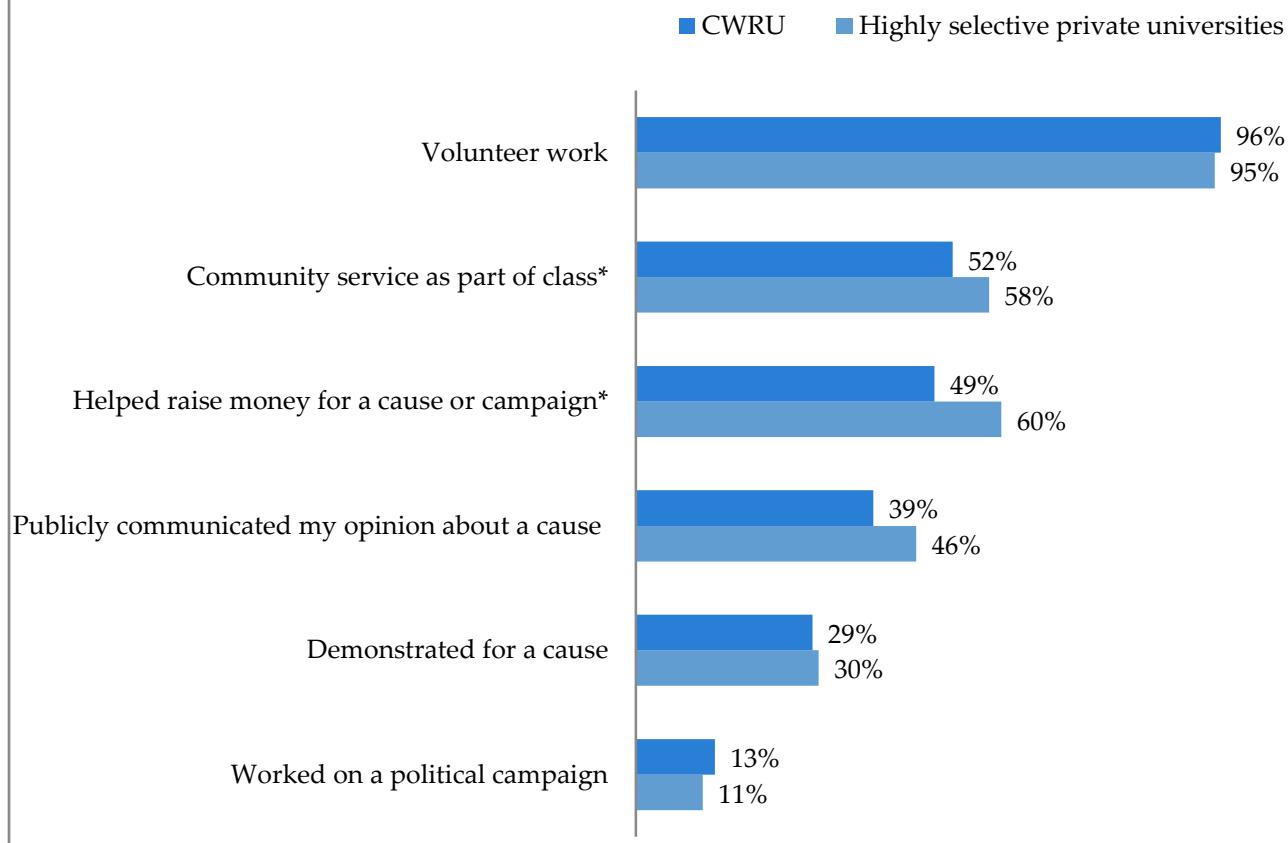
In the late summer and early fall of 2012, incoming first-year students were asked to complete the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's *Freshman Survey (FS)*. The *FS* includes a range of items pertaining to students' behaviors, goals, and views. Only first-time first-year students 18 years and older were eligible to participate in the study. Twenty-nine percent (29%, n=319) of all eligible students completed the *FS*. This report highlights *FS* results pertaining to students' perceptions of and participation in civic engagement.



Activities and Plans

The *FS* asks students about the activities they participated during the year before college. The top three civic engagement activities for CWRU first-year students were in volunteer work, community service as a part of class, and raising money for a cause or campaign. Compared to first-year students at other highly selective private universities, CWRU students were significantly less likely to participate in community service as part of their class and help raise money for a cause or campaign during the year before college.

Percentage of first-year students who participated in civic engagement activities last year:

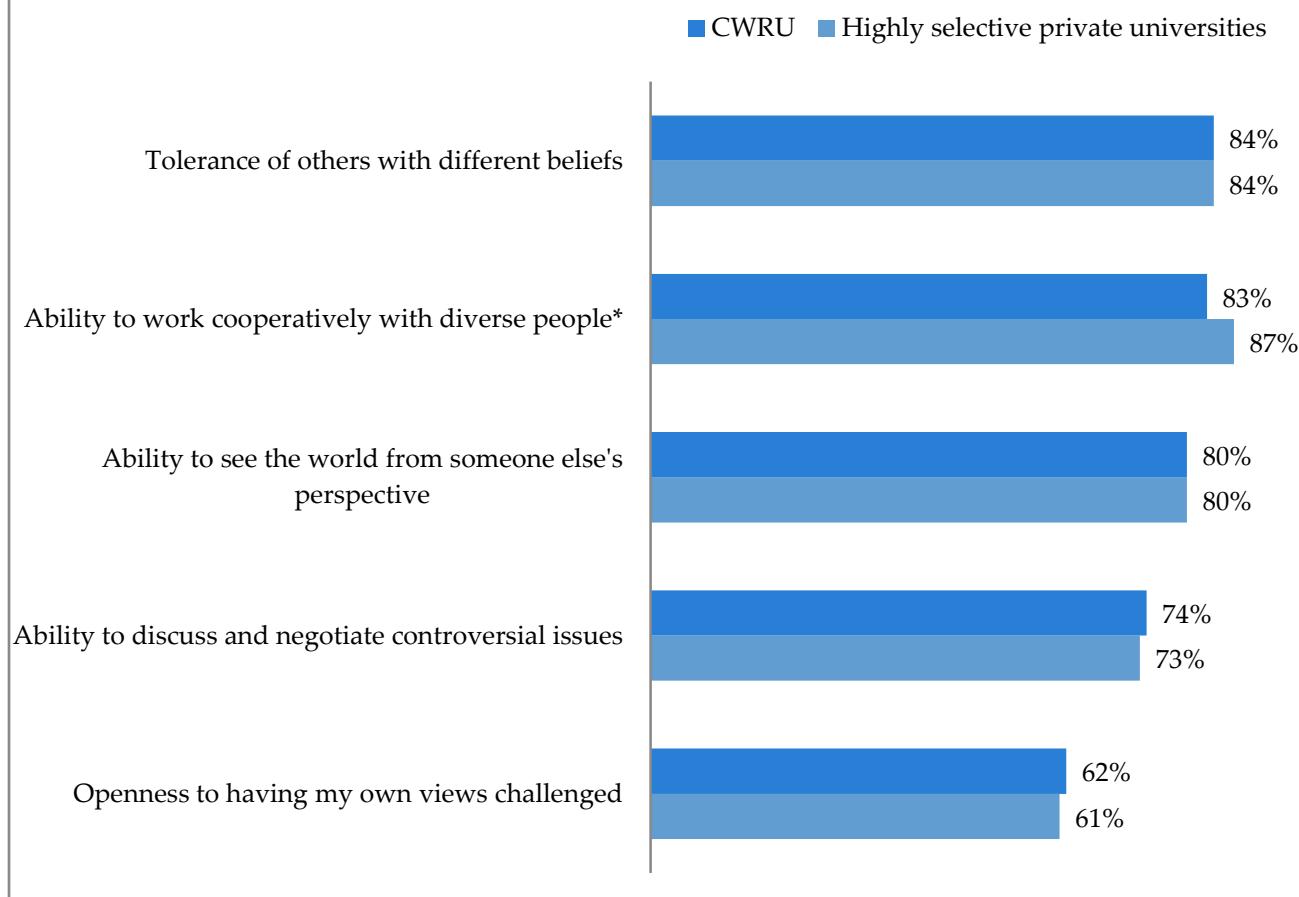


During the year before college, CWRU students had conversations about politics more often than did their peers (frequently: 47% vs. 41%) and approximately one-fourth of CWRU students voted in a student election that year. When asked about their plans for participating in future civic engagement activities, first-year students were more likely than their peers to say there was a “very good chance” they would participate in community service (57% vs. 49%) and student protests or demonstrations (7% vs. 6%). However, CWRU first-year students were less likely to say they would participate in student government (7% vs. 9%).

Pluralistic Orientation

Students were also asked to rate their pluralistic orientation. Although students rated themselves lowest in being open to having their own views challenged, they rated themselves highest in tolerance of others with different beliefs. They also rated themselves highly in their abilities to see the world from someone else’s perspective and to discuss and negotiate controversial issues. While 83% said their ability to work cooperatively with diverse people was above average or higher, this was significantly lower than the 87% of their peers who said the same. In summary, the majority of students were confident in their ability to interact with diverse populations prior to entering college.

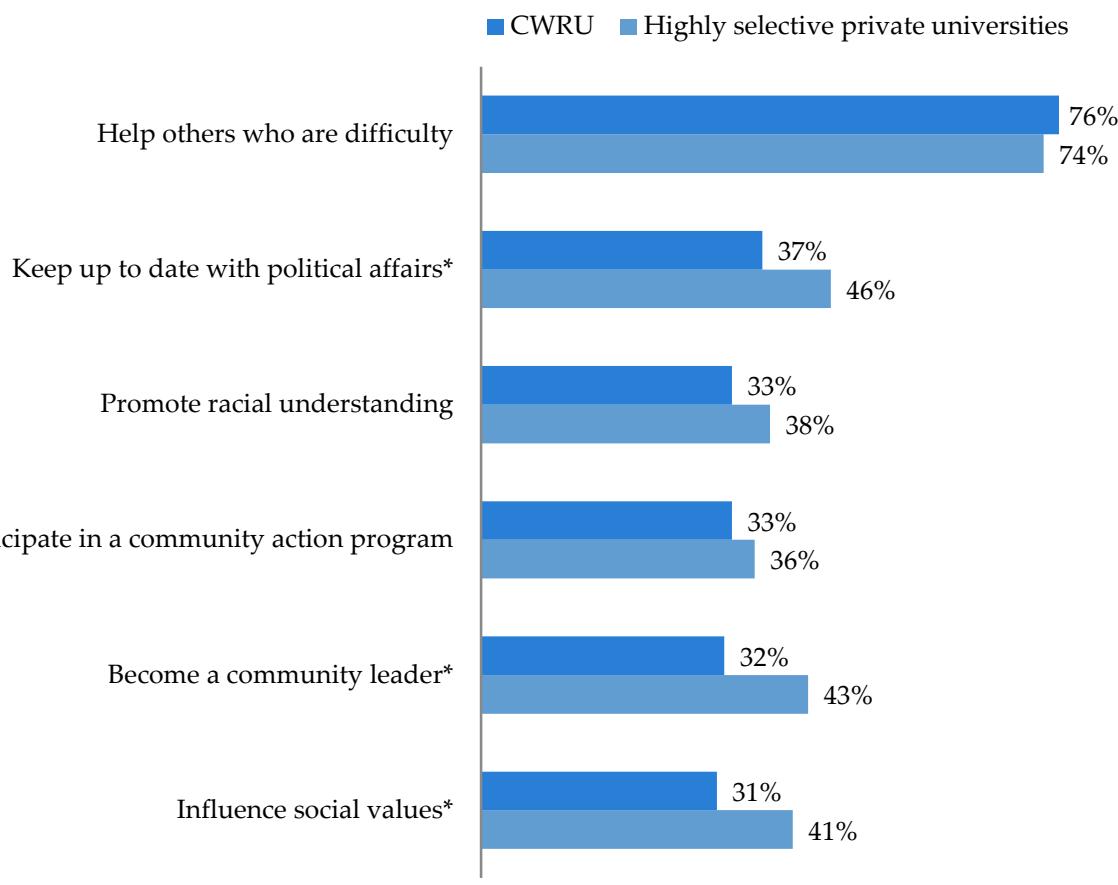
Percentage of first-year students who rated themselves above average or higher in:



Attitudes

Lastly, participants were asked about their attitudes toward civic engagement. The majority of students said it was very important/essential to help others who are in difficulty. Compared to their peers, CWRU students placed less importance on keeping up to date with political affairs, influencing social values, and becoming a community leader.

Percentage of first-year students who said it was very important/essential to:



Additional Information

For additional information about this report, please contact Amanda Thomas at ast27@case.edu or 216-368-6119.