CWRU First-Year Students and Politics

In the late summer and early fall of 2012, over 350 CWRU incoming first year students completed the *CIRP Freshman Survey (TFS).* The *TFS* includes a range of questions pertaining to students' behaviors, goals, and views. While not the focus of the *TFS*, several items pertain to students' political views and activities. This report highlights how incoming CWRU students responded to those items.
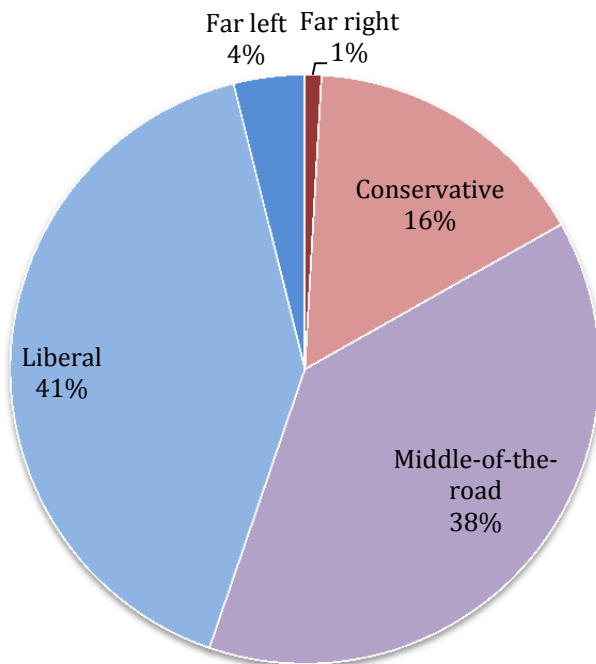
Political Orientation and Activities

When asked their political orientation, most incoming CWRU students identified themselves as "liberal" or "far left" (45%). Conservatives represented the smallest group, with 17% of students identifying themselves as "conservative" or "far right." Still, a large proportion of students identified themselves as "middle of the road" (38%).
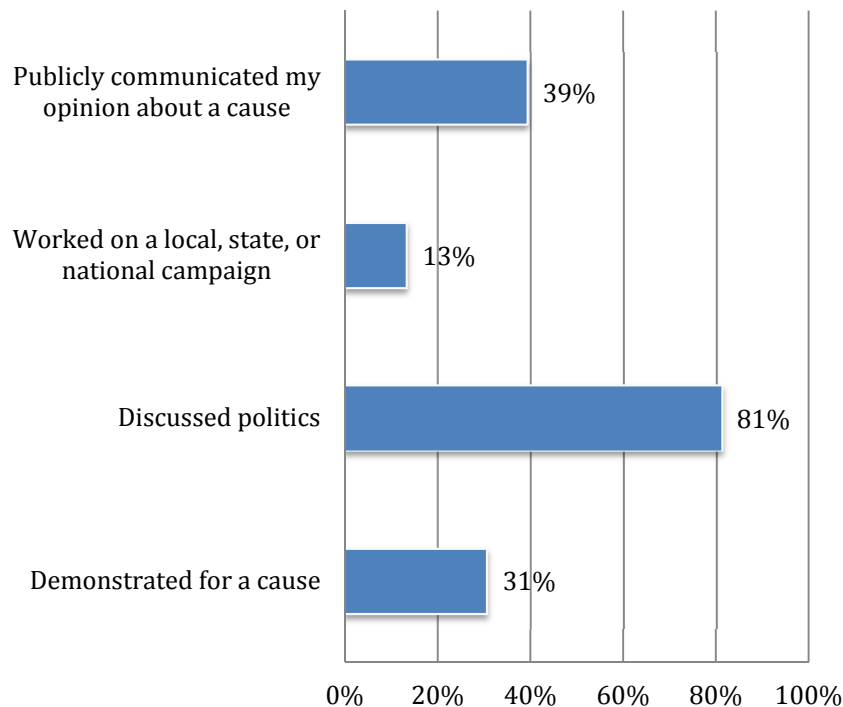
In addition to their political leanings, many students reported being engaged in politics. The vast majority of students (81%) reported they had discussed politics frequently or often. Nearly 40% of students reported publicly communicating their position about a cause frequently or often and approximately 1/3 of students demonstrated for a cause often or frequently.

Poltical Orientation

Far left 4%
Far right 1%
Conservative 16%
Liberal 41%
Middle-of-the-road 38%

Activities

Publicly communicated my opinion about a cause — 39%
Worked on a local, state, or national campaign — 13%
Discussed politics — 81%
Demonstrated for a cause — 31%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Views

In addition to political orientation, the TFS also asks the extent to which students agree or disagree on a range of controversial statements. Majorities of students believed that abortion should be legal (86%), that same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status (85%), that the wealthy should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now (76%), that a national health care plan is needed to cover everybody's medical costs (67%), and colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus (64%). Most CWRU students (65%) disagreed that students from disadvantaged social class backgrounds should be given preferential treatment in college admissions. However, 79% believed racial discrimination was still a problem in the United States.

First Year Student's Views

Legend: ■ Disagree Strongly ■ Disagree Somewhat ■ Agree Somewhat ■ Agree Strongly

Statement	Disagree Strongly	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree Strongly
Colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus	8%	28%	35%	29%
Students from disadvantaged social backgrounds should be given preferential treatmeant in college admissions	22%	46%	28%	4%
Dissent is a critical component of the polticial process		13%	54%	32%
A national health care plan is needed to cover everybody's medical costs	14%	19%	43%	24%
Same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status	5%	10%	20%	65%
Wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now	10%	15%	36%	40%
Realistically, an individual can do little to bring about changes in our society	33%	40%	25%	2%
Racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America	33%	46%	20%	2%
The death penalty should be abolished	15%	38%	31%	15%
Abortion should be legal	14%	14%	29%	43%