



Student College Decisions, Finances, Expectations, and Aspirations: Results from the 2010 Cooperative Institutional Research Program Freshman Survey

During the summer of 2010, the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey was sent electronically to first-year students at 279 colleges and universities across the United States. The survey results were collected and compiled by the Higher Education Research Institute. At Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), 1,021 first-year students received the survey and 453 responded (44%). This report provides an overview of the CWRU 2010 class' responses about their college decisions, finances, college expectations and life aspirations. The report compares the current class to (1) the class entering in 2007 and (2) first-year students enrolling at other highly selective private universities¹ in 2010.

Participant Demographics and Sample Quality

Of the students who were asked to complete the survey, 44% of the students responded (51% of all females; 38% of all males). The majority of participants were Caucasian (63%) and Asian American (16%). Other ethnic groups included Asian/Indian Subcontinent (6%), African-American or Black (5%), Hispanic or Latino (4%), Unknown Ethnicity (4%), and American Indian or Alaskan Native (1%). Overall response rates did not differ significantly among minority and majority participants.²

Similarly, participants did not differ significantly by intended major. Respondents to the survey had a significantly higher high school index³ on average (99) than did non-respondents (97). While respondents and non-respondents did not differ from each other on SAT Math, SAT Writing, or ACT Composite scores, respondents' SAT Verbal scores were higher (659 vs. 647).

College Decisions

CWRU 2010 First-Year Profile

The majority of participants indicated that the following were "very important" reasons for pursuing college:

- To learn more about things which interest me (89%);
- To be able to get a better job (84%);
- To gain general education and appreciation of ideas (83%);
- To get training for a specific career (78%);

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.

² We have defined "majority" students as the Asian/Indian Subcontinent, Asian American, and Caucasian or White ethnic groups. "Minority" students are made up of the Hispanic or Latino, African-American or Black, and American Indian or Alaskan Native ethnic groups.

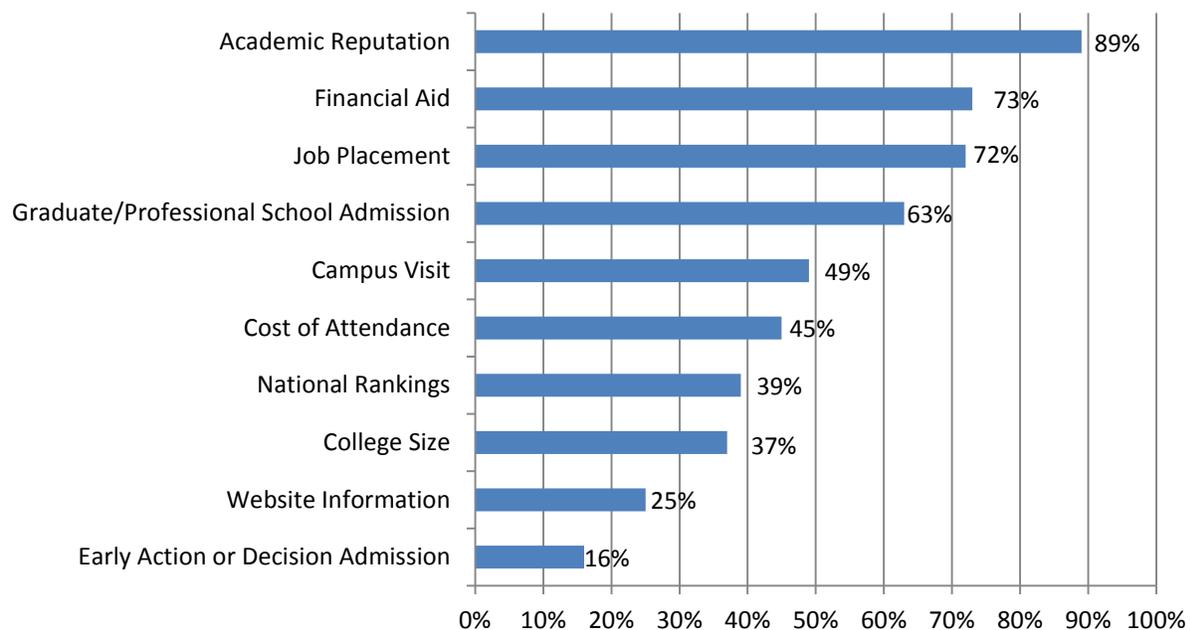
³ High school index is calculated by dividing the students' GPA by his/her high school's GPA scale and multiplying by 100.

- To prepare for graduate or professional school (76%);
- To be able to make more money (61%); and
- To become a more cultured person (53%).

Approximately 10% of respondents had taken a course at a higher education institution other than CWRU. Seventeen percent (17%) of participants intended to complete courses from more than one college simultaneously. Over half of the participants applied to six or more colleges (52%) and 57% of students were accepted by their first choice college. Of the participants who were accepted by their first choice school, 83% reported that CWRU was their first college choice. Approximately 17% of participants indicated that there was “some chance” or a “very good chance” they would transfer to another college before graduating from CWRU. In contrast, nearly all of the participants believed there was “some chance” (22%) or a “very good chance” (77%) that they would be satisfied with CWRU. The top 10 college decision factors listed by students are as follows:

Factors Ranked as "Very Important" in College Decisions

CWRU Participants on Freshman Survey



Comparisons by Gender and Race/Ethnicity

Females were significantly more likely than males to say that becoming a more cultured person was an important reason to attend college (93% vs. 89%). Twice as many males said that athletic recruitment was a “very important” factor in their college decision (males: 10%, females: 5%), while a higher percentage of females said that financial aid awards (female: 78% vs. male: 69%) and campus visits (female: 56% vs. male: 44%) were “very important” in selecting their college.

Seventy-three percent (73%) of minority participants said that it was “very important” to pursue college in order to become a more cultured person, while only 51% of majority participants said the same. A higher percentage of minority students also said that it was “very important” to attend college in order to make more money (77% vs. 59%) and get training for a specific career (93% vs. 76%). More minority students also said that the website information was “very important” when they selected a college (41% vs. 23%).

Comparison to 2007 CWRU First-Year Class

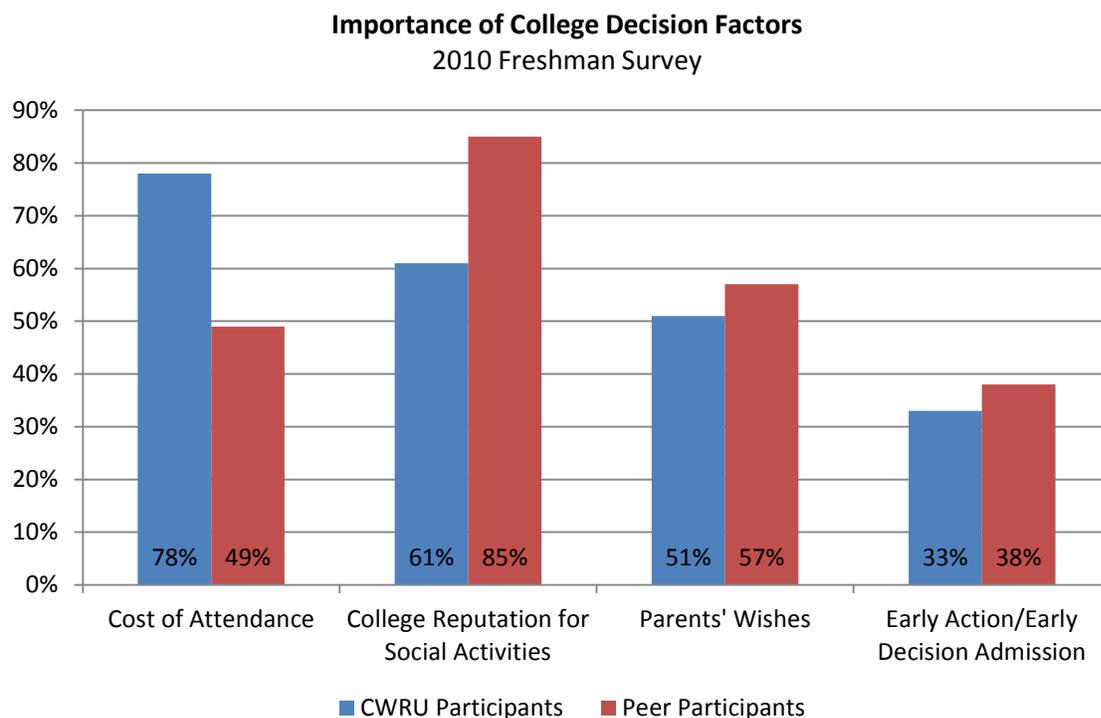
Students who responded in 2010 were significantly more likely to have applied to six or more schools (40% in 2007, 52% in 2010). Perhaps related to this fact, a significantly smaller number of participants in 2010 said that CWRU was their first or second choice school (72% in 2010, 79% in 2007). Similarly, survey respondents in 2010 were significantly less likely to say they had gotten into their first choice school (57%) when compared to students who responded in 2007 (66%).

Though participants in 2010 were less likely to say CWRU was a top choice, there was no difference by year among students who said they planned to transfer to another institution, and participants in 2010 were significantly more likely than their 2007 counterparts to say that there was some chance or a very good chance that they would be satisfied with their college. In fact, the proportion of students who said there was a very good chance they would be satisfied with CWRU jumped from 55% in 2007 to 77% in 2010.

In terms of the important factors they considered when deciding to attend the university, participants in 2010 were significantly more likely to say that financial aid was very important in deciding whether or not to attend CWRU (73% in 2010, 68% in 2007); students in 2010 were also more likely to say that the cost of attending CWRU played a very important role in their decision (45% in 2010, 35% in 2007).

Comparison to Other Highly Selective Private Institutions

In comparison to students surveyed at other highly selective schools, more CWRU participants felt it was “very important” to attend college in order to prepare for graduate or professional school (76% vs. 67%) and to get training for a specific career (78% vs. 65%). CWRU participants were less likely to attend their first choice college (48% vs. 62%). Sixty-eight percent (68%) of CWRU participants chose a college located within 500 miles of their home versus 55% of participants at other highly selective private institutions. The chart below displays the differences in college decision factors between CWRU participants and their peers.



Finances

CWRU 2010 First-Year Profile

Roughly 10% of respondents have “major concerns” and almost 60% of participants have “some concerns” that they will not have enough funds to complete college. Fifty-six percent (56%) of respondents reported that the current economic situation had “significantly affected” their choice in college. Half of the survey respondents expected to use a combination of family and personal resources, gift aid, and loans to pay for their first year of college. The median points for each type of resource were as follows:

- Family resources, \$10,000 or more;
- Aid which would need to be repaid, \$6,000 to \$9,999;
- Aid which would not need to be repaid, \$3,000 to \$5,999; and
- Personal resources, \$1,000-\$2,999.

The average participant estimated his/her parents’ total annual income to be between \$75,000 and \$99,999. In the past year, the average participant worked between 3 and 5 hours per week. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of CWRU participants plan to work in order to help pay for the cost of college and 58% plan to do so while in college. Approximately one in four participants said there was at least some chance they would work full-time while attending college (23%).

Comparisons by Gender and Race/Ethnicity

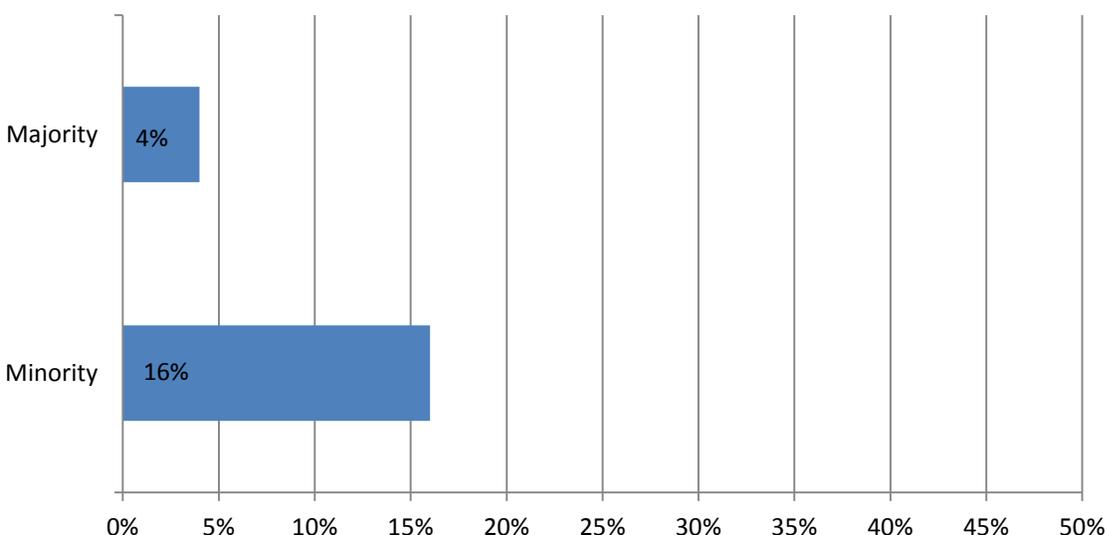
In comparison to males, female participants expected to bear a greater personal responsibility in paying for their college education and were more concerned about financial issues overall. Specifically, the average female reported a lower parental income than the average male (\$60,000-\$74,999 vs. \$75,000-\$99,999) and females overall were significantly less likely than males to expect their parents to contribute more than \$10,000 to their college education (51% vs. 66%). During a typical week in the past year, more females than males worked 11 or more hours for pay (20% vs. 11%).

Females were also more likely to:

- Say that the current economic situation had “significantly affected” their college choice (66% vs. 48%);
- Say that getting a better job was a “very important” reason to attend college (87% vs. 81%);
- Say that financial assistance was a “very important” factor in selecting a college (79% vs. 69%);
- Take out \$6,000 or more in aid which would have to be repaid (46% vs. 35%); and
- Use more than \$1,000 of their personal resources to pay for college (63% vs. 51%).

The average minority student also reported a lower parental income than the average majority student (\$50,000-\$59,999 vs. \$75,000-\$99,999) and expected to rely less on family to help pay for college (\$3,000-\$5,999 vs. \$6,000-\$9,999). A higher percentage of minority students also planned to pay for college using more than \$3,000 in aid that would have to be repaid (74% vs. 58%).

Plans to Work Full-Time While in College
By Race/Ethnicity on Freshman Survey



Comparison to 2007 CWRU First-Year Class

Students who completed the survey in 2010 were significantly more likely than those who started at CWRU in 2007 to say that they had major concerns about their ability to finance their college education (10% in 2010, 7% in 2007). Students who took the survey in 2010 were also more likely to say that they would be using \$10,000 or more of their family's resources to fund their education (59% in 2010, 51% in 2007).

Compared to those who participated in 2007, students who took the survey in 2010 spent fewer hours working for pay in a typical week last year. In 2010, 24% of respondents said they spent six or more hours working for pay, compared to 37% in 2007. Compared to students who participated in 2007, those who took the survey in 2010 were more likely to say there was some chance or a very good chance they would get a job to help pay for college expenses (88% in 2010, 82% in 2007) or work full-time while attending college (23% in 2010, 19% in 2007).

Comparison to Participants at Other Highly Selective Private Institutions

In comparison to the participants at other highly selective institutions, CWRU participants were more likely to say that they have some concerns about their ability to finance their college education (59% vs. 49%) and that the current economic situation significantly affected their college choice (56% vs. 41%). In terms of employment, more CWRU participants planned to get a job to help pay for college (88% vs. 73%) and work full-time while in college (23% vs. 17%). More than a third (34%) of respondents in the comparison group estimated their parents' income as \$200,000 or more, but only 10% of CWRU respondents did so.

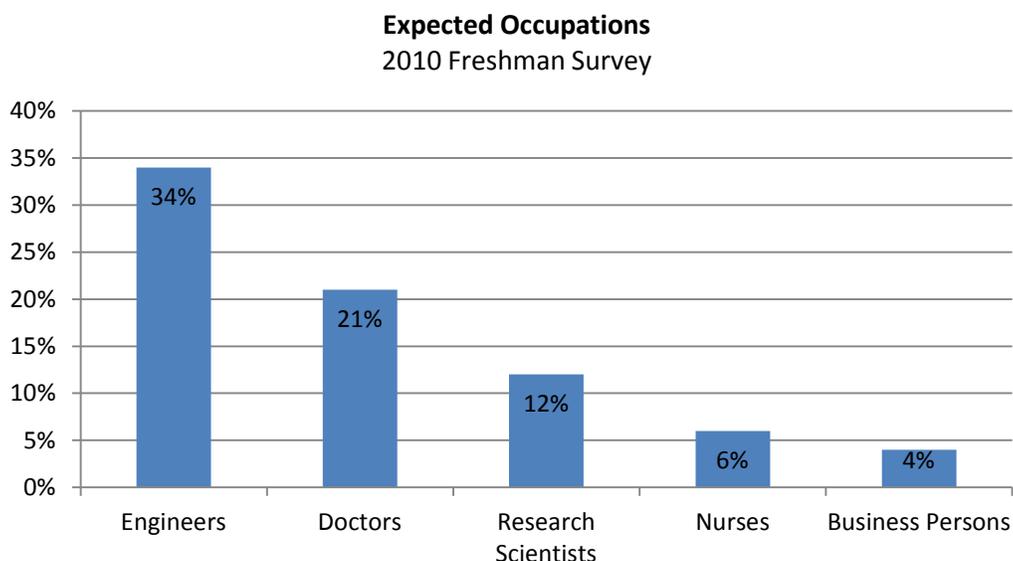
College Expectations and Long-Term Aspirations

CWRU 2010 First-Year Profile

The vast majority of participants planned to live on campus throughout the fall semester (96%), participate in student clubs/groups (96%), and perform volunteer or community service work (90%). Over half of participants planned to play club, intramural or recreational sports (74%). Less than half planned to participate in student government (42%), participate in student protests or demonstrations (43%), or play intercollegiate athletics (24%). Forty-eight percent (48%) of students intended to join a social fraternity or sorority.⁴ Sixty-four percent (64%) of participants believed they would complete their degree requirements on time. When asked more specifically about their anticipated academic experience, the majority of students expected 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%).

The top five positions to which participants aspired are displayed in the chart below.



Five percent (5%) of participants had not chosen a career and 10% of participants planned to pursue a career that was not listed as an option on the survey. That said, exactly half of the survey respondents said there was some chance or a very good

⁴ Although this number is less than half of the first-year students, it should be noted that the CWRU Greek population makes up approximately 33% of the current CWRU student body.

chance their career choice would change. Additionally, 43% of students said there was at least some chance that they would change their major while at CWRU.

Nearly all respondents (95%) plan to pursue a Master's degree or higher, and 66% of participants plan to complete a professional or academic doctorate. When asked about the highest degree they plan to earn at CWRU, 59% of participants indicated that they would earn their Bachelor's degree; 25%, a Master's degree; 7%, a medical degree (M.D., D.O., or D.D.S); 5%, a Ph.D.; and 1%, a J.D.

Comparisons by Gender and Race/Ethnicity

When reviewing the responses based on gender, we found that females were more likely than males to say there was a very good chance they would change majors (12% vs. 4%) and females were also more active in their overall academic activities. In comparison to majority participants, minority participants were significantly more likely to say there was a very good chance they would attend tutoring for specific courses while in college (52% vs. 31%). The top positions to which minority students aspired were engineers (21%), doctors (16%), research scientists (16%), and accountants or actuaries (11%).

Comparison to 2007 CWRU First-Year Class

Students who participated in 2010 were more likely than those who took the survey in 2007 to say that there is a very good chance they will participate in student clubs/groups (75% in 2010, 61% in 2007). First-year students in 2010 were also more likely to say that there was some chance or a very good chance that they would participate in student government (43% in 2010, 33% in 2007), participate in student protests or demonstrations (43% in 2001, 35% in 2007), or join a social fraternity or sorority (48% in 2010, 38% in 2007).

In terms of academics, participants in 2010 were more likely to say that there was some chance or a very good chance that they would participate in a study abroad program (73% in 2010, 68% in 2007). Similarly, a significantly higher proportion of participants in 2010 said there was a very good chance that they would maintain a B average (89% in 2010, 75% in 2007) and communicate regularly with their professors (60% in 2010, 42% in 2007).

Comparison to Participants at Other Highly Selective Private Institutions

In comparison to their peers, a higher percentage of CWRU participants said there was a very good chance they would maintain a "B" average in college (89% vs. 73%). Ninety-seven percent (97%) of CWRU participants indicated that there was some chance or a very good chance that they would work on a professor's research project, whereas 87% of their peers expected to do the same. CWRU participants placed a lower importance on participating in a study abroad program. Thirty-three percent (33%) of CWRU participants said there was some chance they would need extra time to complete their degree requirements, whereas only 20% of their peers said the same. Fewer CWRU students believed that they would change their major field (87% vs. 90%),

change their career choice (86% vs. 91%), or take classes at multiple institutions simultaneously (16% vs. 35%).

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>.