



The changing face of Case first-year students: Using the CIRP Freshman Survey to compare students entering Case in 2003 to students entering in 2007

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program's Freshman Survey was administered to Case students during new student orientation this past summer. The survey is designed to provide information about the characteristics, educational goals, and aspirations of incoming first-year students. Because similar questions are asked year-to-year, it is possible to compare changes in these characteristics over time.

The present report will compare this year's entering class to those students who entered Case in 2003. There are many similarities between those who entered in 2003 and those who started attending in 2007. This report, however, will focus specifically on how the two classes differ. All differences reported are significant at the $p < .05$ level.

High School Experience

- Students who entered Case in 2007 participated in more collaborative learning during high school than those who entered in 2003. Specifically, 2007 first-years were more likely to have studied with other students and were more likely to have tutored others during high school than were their 2003 peers.
- This year's entering first-years were more likely to say that they have consumed alcoholic beverages, and spent more time partying than those entering in 2003. Although the overall percentage of students who say they have consumed alcohol has increased, half of the students entering in 2007 said they had never consumed alcohol of any kind.

- Students entering in 2007 spent more time exercising or participating in sports than those entering in 2003.
- This year's students spent more time taking care of household or childcare duties. As with alcohol consumption, however, even though the time spent on chores increased, the vast majority of students (78%) spent 2 or fewer hours per week on household or childcare duties.
- During high school, this year's first-years were less likely than students entering in 2003 to have participated in political demonstrations, to have been a guest in a teacher's home, or to have played a musical instrument. This year's incoming students also spent less time working for pay than students entering in 2003.

Self-Rated Abilities

- This year's entering first-years generally had more confidence in their abilities. Specifically, students entering in 2007 rated themselves higher than those entering in 2003 on measures of leadership ability, emotional health, physical health, cooperativeness, intellectual and social self-confidence, and self-understanding.
- Students entering in 2007, however, did rate themselves lower than those entering in 2003 on the measure of writing ability.

Political Views

- This year's first-years were significantly more likely than those entering in 2003 to identify as politically left-of-center. The same percentage of

students in both classes identified themselves as “middle of the road” politically (40%); however, from 2003 to 2007 the percentage who identified as right-of-center dropped from 26% to 20%, whereas the percentage who identified as left-of-center rose from 34% to 40%.

- This political shift can also be seen in students’ opinions on various political topics. Specifically, students entering in 2007 were more likely than those entering in 2003 to believe that abortion should be legal and that same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status. Additionally, they were less likely to believe that it is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships, that racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America, that affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished, or that federal military spending should be increased.
- This year’s first-years were also more likely to believe that an individual can bring about changes in our society.

Future Priorities

- Compared to students entering in 2003, this year’s first-years place more importance on being very well off financially, becoming successful in a business of their own, and having administrative responsibility for the work of others.
- This year’s students place less importance on becoming accomplished in one of the performing arts, creating artistic work (painting, sculpture, etc), and writing original works (poems, novels, etc).
- Compared to 2003’s first-years, students entering Case in 2007 placed a higher priority on becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment.

College Plans

- This year’s first-years were more likely than those entering in 2003 to say that they plan to participate in student government or participate

in a study abroad program.

- Students entering in 2007 were more likely to say that they plan to get a job to help pay for college expenses, and were more likely to say that they plan on working full-time while attending college.

Influences on College Choice

- Students entering in 2003 and those entering in 2007 were equally likely to list Case as either their first or second choice school (79%).
- Though both groups of students were equally likely to list Case as their first or second choice school, those entering in 2007 were more influenced by Case’s academic reputation, Case’s reputation for social activities, a high school or private counselor’s advice, the future job prospects of a typical Case student, the size of the school, rankings in national magazines, information available on the web, and visits to campus. Entering students in 2007 were also more likely to have been accepted through Case’s early action program.

Changing Importance of Influences on College Choice

The table on the next page lists nine factors of the college decision making process. For each of the nine items, the percentage of students who considered the factor to be “very important” in 2007 and in 2003 is listed, as is the percentage change between the two groups. An asterisk denotes a significant change ($p < .05$) from 2003 to 2007 in the percentage of students who considered a factor to be “very important.”

	2003 % “Very Important	2007 % “Very Important”	Change
This college has a very good academic reputation	81%	85%	+4%
I was offered financial assistance	70%	68%	-2%
Rankings in national magazines	32%	40%	+8%*
This college has a good reputation for its social activities	7%	12%	+5%*
I wanted to live near home	8%	9%	+1%
I was admitted through Early Action or Early Decision	6%	14%	+8%*
Not offered aid by first choice	15%	14%	-1%
I wanted to attend a school of this size	22%	32%	+10%*
A visit to campus	33%	42%	+9%*

The percentage of students who rate each factor as being “very important” in their college decision making process is on the rise for nearly every factor measured in both 2003 and 2007¹. In fact, a significantly higher percentage of students say that rankings in national magazines, Case’s reputation for social activities, the fact that they were accepted through an Early Action program, Case’s size, and a campus visit were “very important” in making the decision to attend Case. Only two items, both having to do with financial aid, dropped in importance, and the decrease in percentage saying these two items were “very important” was not significant.

¹ Please note that CIRP regularly changes their questionnaire. The nine items listed in the table do not represent all of the questions asked in either year but, rather, the questions asked with identical wording in both years. For those interested in a complete list of items asked in 2007 ranked by percentage of students saying the factor was “very important,” please refer to: “A profile of students who entered Case in 2007,” available on our website.