

# What Makes for a Satisfied 1<sup>st</sup>-Year Student?

## Results of Your First College Year Survey (2011)

In spring 2011, we asked first-year students to tell us about their satisfaction with their first year at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU). Here's what they had to say<sup>1</sup>...

**80%** were satisfied with their overall college experience.

**80%** were satisfied with their academic experience.

**80%** would choose CWRU again.

**89%** would recommend CWRU to others.

**96%** planned to return to CWRU in the fall.

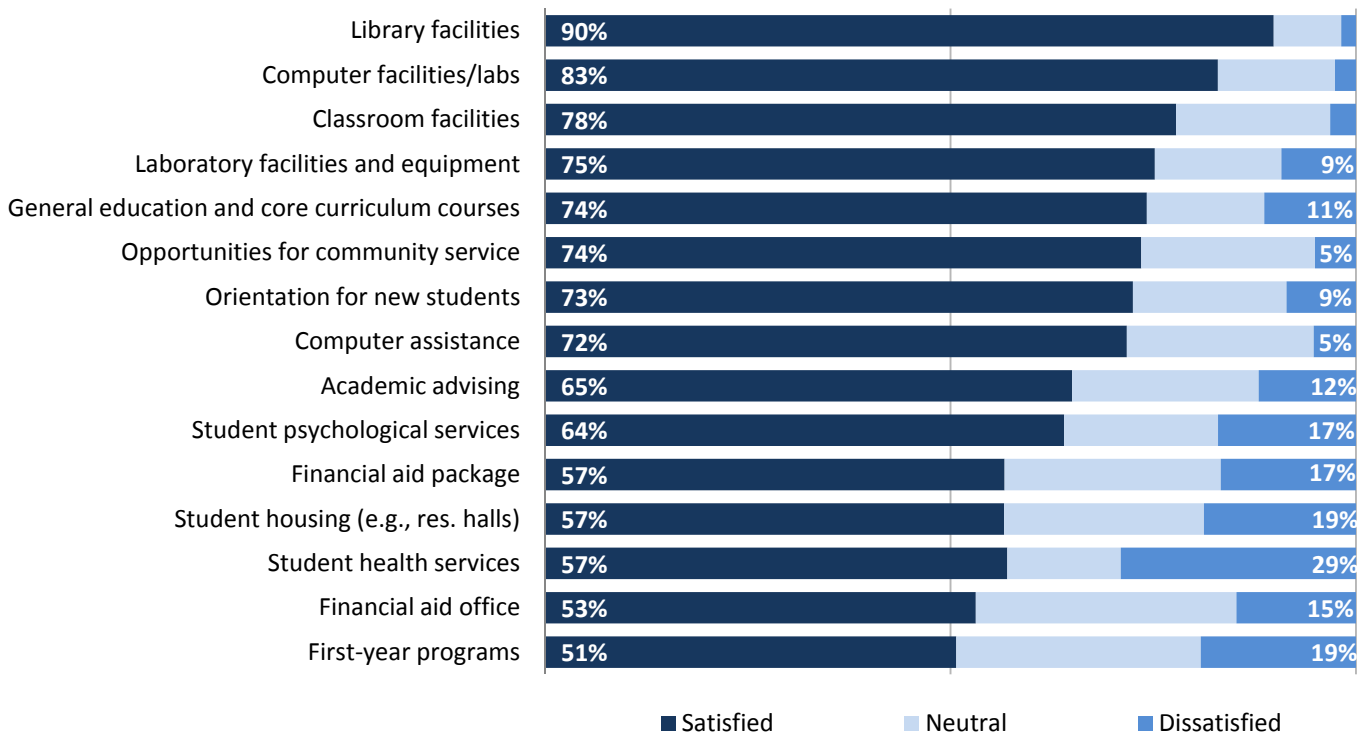
**Table 1. Satisfaction with Academic Experience**

Overall quality of instruction	77%
Relevance of coursework to future career plans	69%
Class size	68%
Racial/ethnic diversity of faculty	63%
Amount of contact with faculty	61%
Relevance of coursework to everyday life	51%

**Table 2. Satisfaction with Social Experience**

Respect for the expression of diverse beliefs	84%
Interaction with other students	76%
Racial/ethnic diversity of student body	71%
Availability of campus social activities	68%
Overall sense of community among students	66%
Social life	62%

**Figure 1. Satisfaction with Support, Services and Facilities**



<sup>1</sup> Of the 1001 students who received the survey, 29% (n=293) responded. A significantly larger proportion of women responded to the survey than did men (35% vs. 25%). Participants were also enrolled in significantly more credit hours during fall 2010 than were non-respondents (17.23 vs. 17.03). Participants did not differ significantly in race/ethnicity, citizenship, or age.

## Factors Related to Satisfaction with Overall College Experience

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**Academic Activities:** First-year students who communicated with their professors on a regular basis were significantly more satisfied with their overall college experience than were their peers (98% vs. 82%). The level of participants' satisfaction was directly related to how often they reported studying with other students, using the internet for research or homework, attending office hours, interacting with faculty outside of class or office hours, and interacting with graduate students/teaching assistants.

**Learning:** Students' satisfaction with the college experience was directly related to how much they had grown over the past year in their general knowledge, knowledge of a particular field or discipline, knowledge of people from different races/cultures, and understanding of the problems facing their community. Satisfaction was also related to how much they had grown in critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, leadership ability, ability to conduct research, and ability to work as part of a team.

**Social Activities:** The more participants shared personal feelings and problems, had intellectual conversations outside of class, studied or prepared for class, dined or shared a meal, or socialized/partied with students from other racial/ethnic groups, the more satisfied they were with their overall college experience. The level of students' satisfaction was also directly related to how often they voted in a student election, discussed politics, and helped raise money for a cause or campaign. Additionally, students who participated in groups/clubs (94% vs. 83%) or had led an organization (99% vs. 88%) were significantly more likely to be satisfied with their overall college experience than those who had not.



**Time Management:** The more time first-year students spent on class/labs, studying/homework, and socializing with friends, the more satisfied they were with their overall college experience. That said, during the typical week *satisfied* students spent between 16-20 hours in class and labs, 11-15 hours on studying/homework, and 6-10 hours socializing with friends.

**Family and Health:** Students who were more satisfied with their overall college experience reported feeling family support to succeed more often and felt their family responsibilities interfered with their schoolwork less often. The more satisfied students were, the more often they reported getting adequate sleep and maintaining a healthy diet. Perhaps not surprisingly, the more satisfied they were the less often they reported feeling depressed.

**Finances:** First-year students who were more satisfied with their overall college experience used financial aid services more frequently and were less concerned about their ability to finance their college education. They were no different from less satisfied students in terms of accumulating excessive credit card debt or holding full-time jobs during the past year.

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