

The American Freshman

National Norms for Fall 2005

Interest in Social and Civic Responsibility Increases and Support for Military Spending Declines

American Freshmen Increase Commitment to Social and Civic Responsibility

The freshman entering class of 2005 shows a distinctive and widespread rise in attitudes reflecting social concerns and civic responsibility behaviors compared with previous cohorts. This is perhaps a reaction to the worst global and national disasters witnessed in their lifetime. The Indian Ocean tsunami occurred during their high-school senior year and Hurricane Katrina hit the southern Gulf Region in August, as many students began college. Two out of three (66.3 percent) entering freshmen report they believe it is essential or very important to help others who are in difficulty, the highest this figure has been in the last twenty-five years, and a marked increase of 3.9 percentage points over last year (an increase of roughly 50,000 students nationally).

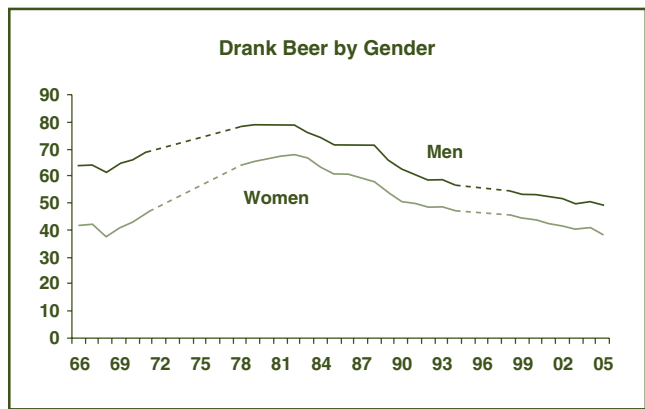
The beliefs of entering freshmen are reflected in their actions, as an all-time high of 83.2 percent report that they volunteered at least occasionally during their high-school senior year and 70.6 percent report that they typically volunteered on a weekly basis. Also at an all-time high is the percentage of students who believe there is a very good or some chance that they will participate in volunteer or community service in college, at 67.3 percent, and only 8.2 percent believe there is no chance they will do so.

Students are not only interested in helping others through service; they believe it is important to personally take action at different levels. Approximately one in four students (25.6 percent) reports that it is essential or very important for them to personally participate in a community action program, an increase of 4.1 percentage points over 2004, the highest since 1996. An even larger number of students, 33.9 percent, find the goal of becoming a community leader essential or very important. Larger still is the percentage of students who believe it is essential or very important for them to influence social values (41.3 percent), a figure that shows an increase of 3.0 percentage points over last year.

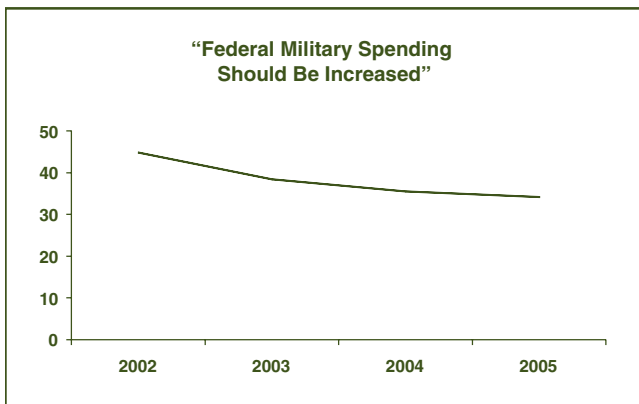
Support For Military Spending Wanes and Political Participation Increases

Freshman support for military spending continues an annual downward trend, perhaps reflecting larger public concerns about the costs of the current war in Iraq. Two-thirds of freshmen (65.8 percent) disagree with the statement that “federal military spending should be increased,” and 63.1 percent agree with the statement that “only volunteers should serve in the armed forces.” In the year after the events of September 11th, 45.0 percent of American freshmen supported increased military spending, whereas 34.2 percent express the same opinion in 2005. One new

item on the survey revealed that 63.0 percent of freshmen believe that “dissent is a critical component of the political process.” In addition, nearly half (49.7 percent) of all freshmen report that they participated in an organized demonstration during high school, the highest reported percentage in the survey’s history. More than a third (36.4 percent) of freshmen report they believe it is important or essential to “keep up to date with political affairs,” a response that has rebounded to levels reported among freshmen in 1994. Some of this increased political involvement may be due to 2004 and 2005 election activity, as 12.0 percent of freshmen report that they worked in a local, state, or national political campaign during high school. Though the percentage is small and many students were not eligible to vote a year ago, it is the highest it has been since 1971, the year that posted a record 15.4 percent participation rate in electoral politics among entering freshmen.



year. While both sexes showed similar declines from 2004 to 2005 (1.9 percentage points for men and 2.2 percentage points for women), over the past few decades the difference between men’s and women’s drinking patterns has become smaller.



Drinking in High School at Record Low

The percentage of entering college students who report that they frequently or occasionally drank beer as high school seniors dropped to an all-time low in 2005. This figure continues to drop from the high of 73.7 percent reported in 1982. More men (49.1 percent) than women (38.8 percent) report drinking beer frequently or occasionally in their high-school senior

Men and Women Differ in Motivations for Attending College

Men are more likely than women to report that they are attending college to be able to make more money (73.5 percent vs. 69.0 percent for women). Women’s top reasons include “to learn more about things that interest me” (81.4 percent), followed by getting training for a specific career (73.1 percent). Men and women are equally likely to report they decided to attend college in order to be able to get a better job (72.1 and 72.2 percent respectively). The biggest gender differences in students’ college-going motivations are most prominent with respect to aspects of personal and intellectual development, with women more likely than men to cite gaining a general education and appreciation of ideas (71.1 vs. 58.3 percent for men), becoming a more cultured person (48.3 vs. 35.3 percent), and finding my purpose in life (57.4 percent vs. 35.3 percent). Substantial differences are also evident in the extent to which women and men prioritize attending college to prepare for graduate or professional school (63.5 percent for women vs. 51.3 percent for men).

A Focus on First-Generation College Students

First generation college students are those students whose parents have had no college or university experiences. Within the 2005 norms data, about one in six (15.9 percent) students falls under the definition of first-generation college student.

First-generation college students are more likely than their peers to report that their ability to get a better job (77.3 percent vs. 71.2 percent) and make more money (76.4 percent vs. 70.0 percent) were very important reasons for going to college. Similarly, more first-generation students cite the cost of college and being awarded financial assistance as important reasons in determining which college they will attend. First-generation students are also more likely than their peers to expect that there is a very good chance that they will get a job to pay for college expenses (55.1 percent vs. 45.2 percent) and expect that there is some or a very good chance that they will work full time while attending college (36.7 percent vs. 24.7 percent).

Also noteworthy is that almost half (49.9 percent) of first-generation students chose to attend an institution within 50 miles of their permanent home, compared to only 35.5 percent of their peers. In addition, almost one-third (30.7 percent) plan to live off-campus during their first year of college, compared to only 16.0 percent of their peers. Their strong expectations to work and live off campus do not portend well for enhancing the quality of their college experiences during the critical first few years on campus. Indeed, each of these behaviors is at odds with those practices (e.g., living on campus, more opportunities for campus involvement) that are seen as conducive for a smoother transition to college and a successful academic experience. First-generation students arrive in college with a unique set of concerns and expectations, and it is important for institutions to acknowledge the exceptional needs of this student population in order to best facilitate a successful college experience.

The CIRP Freshman Survey

The CIRP Freshman Survey has been conducted annually since 1966, and this fall's administration marks the 40th anniversary of this research program. The data in this report come from weighted responses of 263,710 students at 385 of the nation's baccalaureate colleges and universities. Participating institutions receive a detailed profile of their entering freshman class, as well as national normative data for comparison purposes. Published each year in *The American Freshman*, results of the CIRP Freshman Survey provide a comprehensive portrait of the changing character of entering students and American society at large. Later this year HERI will release a comprehensive report that will focus on the first-generation college student.

Information on the CIRP Freshman Survey, research and publications based on these data, and other research projects conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute can be found on the HERI website (www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/heri.html) or via email to heri@ucla.edu.

Additional reports for campuses based on first generation status, or any other survey items, can be requested by contacting the HERI Data Services at heridata@ucla.edu.

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Participate in the 40th Anniversary of student data collection in 2006!

Upcoming CIRP Surveys

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) will offer three student surveys during the academic year. The next administration of the HERI Faculty Survey will take place during the 2007–2008 academic year. For further information about any of these surveys, please refer to the HERI website: www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri.

The Freshman Survey

The annual survey of entering college students covers an array of demographic, experiential, and attitudinal issues. The questionnaire covers degree aspirations, major and career plans, and expectations about college. Participating institutions receive a campus profile report, plus national normative data. Institutions can merge their Freshman Survey data with other campus data to create a longitudinal data file for institutional research, planning, and accreditation studies.

Your First College Year (YFCY) Survey

The YFCY Survey provides information on the academic, social, and personal development of first-year college students. When coupled with CIRP Freshman Survey data, YFCY data are especially useful for studying persistence, adjustment, and other first-year outcomes. Students' responses are compared to national and institutional peer group aggregates to enable institutions to determine where their first-year cohort "stands" relative to the first-year experience at large.

The College Student Survey (CSS)

The CSS permits institutions to assess how their students have changed since they entered college. The survey includes measures of self-assessed academic, social, intellectual, and emotional capabilities, and more conventional measures of academic success such as undergraduate GPA and GRE test scores. When combined with the CIRP Freshman Survey data, the CSS serves as a longitudinal measure of cognitive and affective growth in students.

The HERI Faculty Survey

Designed for both faculty and administrators, the survey collects data on career satisfaction; perceptions of campus climate; preferred methods of teaching; and educational goals for students. Demographic information and background characteristics are also queried. In addition, the instrument includes a section that permits individual institutions to ask their faculty/administrators up to 21 locally developed questions. Participating campuses receive a detailed profile of their faculty, as well as national normative data for similar types of institutions. The survey is offered on a triennial basis.

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