Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) - Freshman Survey

History
For the past 10 years, entering freshmen who have participated in Boiler Gold Rush have been asked to take the CIRP Freshman Survey. The CIRP is a part of the national longitudinal study from the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. Information from these surveys is used to better understand the characteristics of Purdue’s incoming freshmen and to benchmark against peer institutions. The survey covers a wide variety of student characteristics: parental income and education, ethnicity and other demographic items; financial aid; secondary school achievement and activities; educational and career plans; and values, attitudes, beliefs, and self-concept.

National results are published annually in “The American Freshman.” The results from these surveys continue to provide a comprehensive portrait of the changing character of entering students and American society at large.

Purdue results are posted on the OIR website: http://www.purdue.edu/oir/assessment.html. Presented in this report are results for first-time full-time freshmen.

Incoming Students: What Are They Doing?

Using Social Networks

When asked, "During your last year in high school how much time did you spend during a typical week doing the following activities? - Online social networks (MySpace, Facebook, etc.)." the majority of students in 2010 reported spending 3-5 hours a week using online social networks (29%). This item has seen a steady increase since 2007 when 25% of respondents reported spending 3-5 hours a week on online social networks. In addition, 21% spent 6 or more hours of their time on this activity in 2010.

Purdue as Top Choice University for Students

The percentage of respondents indicating that Purdue was their first choice has decreased from 80% in 2001 to 69% in 2010. This decline of first choice institution may be explained by the fact that Purdue is now attracting better qualified students who also may apply to other elite research universities. This fall, Purdue attracted nearly 50% of the best Indiana high school students (measured by a SAT total of 2100 or more and self-reported GPA of A or A+).
"Very important" influences for attending Purdue

Over the years, respondents have consistently rated Purdue high in having "a very good academic reputation" as an important influence in their decision to attend college. In 2001, 80% reported this as a very important influence; this increased to 88% in 2010. The percentage of students that have reported that Purdue has a very good reputation for social activities has nearly doubled in the past ten years. Additionally, entering students are increasingly using websites and rankings to determine which college to attend.

National Trends

Nationally, results from the Freshman Survey have shown an emotional health self-rating at 25-year low. Overall, 64% of respondents in 1985 indicated 'Highest 10%' or 'Above Average' when asked to rate themselves as compared with the average person their age on the 'emotional health' item. In 2010, this dropped to 52%. However, Purdue is above the national average with 62% of respondents reporting 'Highest 10%' or 'Above Average' emotional health as compared to their peers.

In addition, when asked if they feel overwhelmed with all they had to do, students who reported feeling overwhelmed 'frequently' has increased nationally; 18% reported this sentiment in 1985 increasing to 29% in 2010. Purdue students fall below this national average with 21% of respondents reporting feeling overwhelmed 'frequently' with all they had to do.

The percent of entering students who have major concerns about financing their education was at its lowest in 2008 with 8%, and has reached a high in 2010 with 11% of respondents. This is not surprising given the country’s current economic climate. Consequently, the number of students who have some concern about finances has risen to 54% from 50% in 2003. The percent of entering students who have no concerns about their ability to finance their education has fluctuated over the past ten years with the highest at 46% in 2007. In 2010 the percent of students with no concerns was at its lowest at 35%, ideally we would like this to be higher.