

# Research in BRIEF

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CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

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## CIRP 2007 FRESHMAN SURVEY

### Executive Summary

(Administered Summer 2007)

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program's (CIRP) Freshman Survey, administered by the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute, is completed every year by thousands of new college students across the United States as part of a national study of higher education. Since 1966, over 10 million freshmen across the nation have participated in the CIRP, establishing it as the nation's largest and oldest empirical study of higher education. Last summer, Chapman University (Orange Campus only) participated in the Freshman Survey for the 41st consecutive year—one of 524 institutions that participated in the 2007 administration. Chapman University freshmen were administered the survey during freshmen orientation (August 2007) in a proctored setting. Exactly 734 first-time, full-time freshmen completed the survey. This edition of *Research in BRIEF* highlights some of the results and compares the characteristics of Chapman University's first-time, full-time freshmen to a comparable national normative sample of freshmen from institutions of similar type—4-year private colleges (nonsectarian) of “high” selectivity.<sup>1</sup>

### Sample Representation

Almost 79% of Chapman University's Fall 2007 first-time, full-time freshmen population participated in the Freshman Survey.

As would be expected given their numbers on the Orange Campus, the survey sample is composed mostly of White students. The gender distribution for the survey sample overrepresents the number of females in the Chapman population. While the majority of the first-time, full-time freshmen population was sampled, the results presented in this summary may slightly overrepresent the viewpoints and behavioral patterns of females from the Fall 2007 first-time full-time, freshmen population of Chapman University.

### Background Characteristics

Almost all of the first-time, full-time freshmen identified themselves as U.S. citizens (96.6%) as well as native English speakers (95.6%). While 66.7% of the respondents reported being residents of California, only 35.6% indicated that their permanent home was 50 miles or fewer from Chapman University. Findings reveal that 71.9% of the students come from homes where the total parental income is \$75,000 or more. Findings also show that 17.2% of the 2007 entering first-time, full-time freshmen are first-generation college students—students whose parents never received a college degree. When asked to characterize their political views, 42.1% identified as “far left” or “liberal,” 36.6% “middle-of-the-road,” and 21.3% “conservative” or “far right.” National data indicates that Chapman University freshmen are no more liberal or conservative than other students at like institutions. Freshmen were also asked to identify their current religious preference from a list of twenty; over 29.3% indicated “none.”

### 2007 Student Population and Sample

	ORANGE CAMPUS FALL '07 First-Time, Full-Time Freshmen	
	Chapman Population* (n = 934)	Survey Sample (n = 635)
GENDER		
Male	41.0%	32.3%
Female	59.0%	67.7%
RACE/ETHNICITY~		
African-American	2.2%	2.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	7.9%	14.3%
White/Caucasian	68.8%	83.1%
Hispanic/Latino	10.5%	9.8%
Native-American	0.8%	3.3%
International Student	2.4%	n/a
Other/Unknown+	7.5%	6.1%

\* First-time, full-time population only; no transfers

~ Survey respondents allowed to mark multiple categories

+ Includes Multi-ethnic.

n/a Not applicable since it was not included as an option.

## FINDINGS

### Admission-Related Issues

A large proportion of students indicated that Chapman University was their first (62.5%) or second (26.3%) college choice. About 2.5% of the freshmen did not apply for admissions to another college. These findings suggest that the majority of freshmen are here because they want to be here. Other data from the Freshman Survey reveal that only 7.2% of entering freshmen report “major” financial concerns to complete college.

The survey asked freshmen to reveal which reasons influenced their decision to attend Chapman University. The top two reasons selected were: “This college has a very good academic reputation” (70.1%) and “I was offered financial assistance” (62.0%). Chapman University’s reputation for placing students at good jobs and its small size are other attractive features. It should be noted that the percentage for the above “academic reputation” question (70.1%) is the second highest number ever reported by entering freshmen. Other longitudinal data from the Freshman Survey show that the perceived importance of Chapman’s academic reputation and job placement ability among entering freshmen has steadily increased during the last twenty years.

### Top 5 Reasons For Deciding To Go to “This” College

How important was each reason in your decision to come here?	Chapman University		Private 4-yrs. High Selectivity	
	Rank Order	%	Rank Order	%
This college has a very good academic reputation.	1	70.1%	1	72.3%
I was offered financial aid.	2	62.0%	3	54.0%
I wanted to go to a school about the size of this college.	3	60.0%	4	53.9%
A visit to campus.	4	57.6%	5	53.8%
This college’s graduates get good jobs.	5	54.2%	2	56.6%

% = indicating “very important” reason

Findings suggest that Chapman University freshmen and students at peer institutions both place high importance on the school’s academic reputation. Chapman University freshmen place greater emphasis on financial aid and school size than their peers. Campus visits and job placement are also equally important factors for the Chapman University freshmen and students at peer institutions.

### Academic Expectations & Self-Confidence

Chapman freshmen enter school with high degree aspirations. The vast majority of students intend to finish a master’s (47.7%) or doctorate (11.4%) degree. When compared to their peers nationally, entering freshmen are slightly more likely to aspire to a master’s degree, but less likely to pursue other post-secondary degrees.

### Highest Academic Degree Planned Anywhere

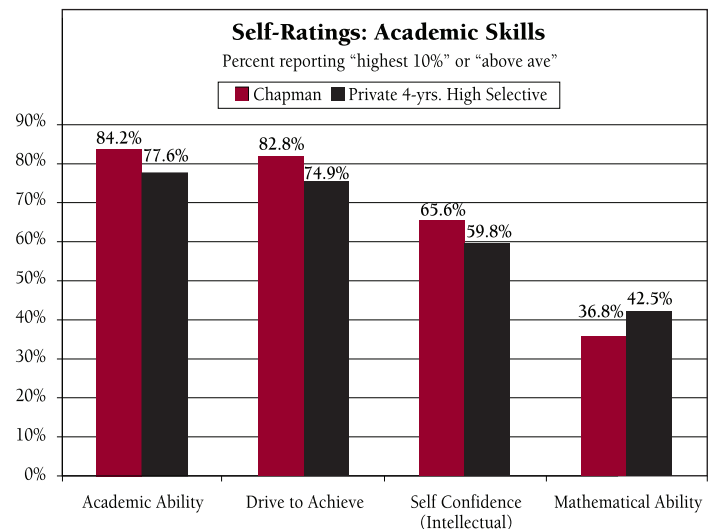
	Percent	
	Chapman University	Private 4-yrs High Selectivity
Bachelor’s degree	29.2%	16.8%
Master’s degree	47.7%	45.0%
Ph.D. or Ed.D.	11.4%	20.1%
M.D., D.O., D.D.S, D.V.M.	5.0%	9.5%
LL.B. or J.D. (Law)	5.2%	5.9%
Other (B.D., A.A.)	1.5%	2.0%

Congruent with their degree aspirations, 70.5% of Fall 2007 freshmen expected to achieve at least a B average and only 4.4% of students expected to take extra time to complete their degree requirements. Likewise, expected satisfaction with Chapman University was high (66.8%) and very few freshmen expected to transfer to another school (2.9%, not reported below). The 66.8% figure for expected satisfaction is the highest reported percentage since 1986. Students reported a strong sense of focus as indicated by the small percentage of respondents reporting a “very good” likelihood of changing their major (17%) or career choice (16.1%). In comparison to peers at like institutions, slightly more Chapman freshmen expect to make a “B” average and be “satisfied” with their college.

### Top 5 Chapman University Freshmen Expectations

	Percent	
	Chapman University	Private 4-yrs High Selectivity
Make at least a “B” average	70.5%	65.5%
Be satisfied with your college	66.8%	61.3%
Change major field	17.0%	15.6%
Change career choice	16.1%	17.8%
Need extra time to complete your degree requirements	4.4%	3.7%

Findings show that the majority of freshmen begin college with positive perceptions of their academic skills. The Freshman Survey asks students to rate themselves on several characteristics (as compared to the average person their age) using a five-point scale from “highest 10%” to “lowest 10%”.

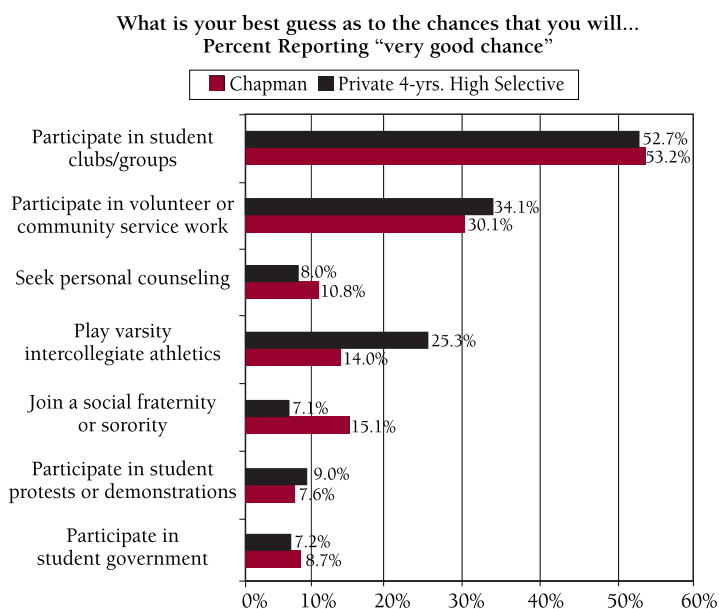


The bar graph illustrates that compared to their peers, Chapman University freshmen are slightly more secure in their academic ability, drive to achieve, and intellectual self-confidence. Chapman University freshmen, however, were less likely to rate themselves as favorably with regard to their mathematical ability. Other findings reveal that compared nationally, a sizable proportion of Chapman University

freshmen also arrive with strong perceptions of their leadership ability and communication skills (i.e., writing and public speaking).

### Anticipated Activities at Chapman University

Chapman University freshmen enter college with the proclivity of becoming involved in a wide variety of extracurricular activities. Using a 4-point scale from “no chance” to “very good chance,” freshmen were asked to take their best guess as to the chances they would get involved in a variety of academic and non-academic activities.



Close to half of entering freshmen indicated that there was a “very good chance” that they would participate in a student club/group and 30.1% of Chapman freshmen indicated that they would volunteer or participate in community work. Between seven to fifteen percent of Chapman freshmen also indicated that they planned to get involved with student government, sororities/fraternities, student protests, or intercollegiate athletics.

### Political Attitudes

While college will undoubtedly shape and reshape political attitudes, the Freshman Survey provides an initial snapshot of how entering students feel about various social issues. Among Chapman freshmen, the findings reveal strong support for governmental programs to fix environmental pollution, hand gun control, and health care coverage, but Chapman freshmen appear to be fiscally conservative, particularly in comparison to freshmen at comparable institutions. For example, other data from the Freshman Survey show that Chapman freshmen do not support higher taxes for wealthy individuals (47.9%) or a tax increase to reduce the deficit (30.9%). Finally, it is interesting to note that reported support for military spending has drastically declined since 2002. In 2002, 40.4% of

Chapman students supported increased military spending. Most likely stemming from increasing opposition to the Iraq War, this same measure decreased to 25% in 2007. In comparison to peers at like institutions, Chapman freshmen slightly favor a volunteer only military.

### Political Attitudes

	Percent	
	Chapman University	Private 4-yr. High Selectivity
<b>“Strongly Agree” or “Somewhat Agree”</b>		
The federal government is not doing enough to control environmental pollution.	84.4%	83.6%
The federal government should do more to control the sale of handguns.	78.5%	76.4%
Same sex couples should have the right to legal marital status.	76.4%	72.0 %
Only volunteers should serve in the Armed Forces.	76.2%	70.7%
A national health care plan is needed to cover everybody’s medical costs.	72.5%	75.5%

### Post Graduation Goals

When asked about their probable occupation, Chapman University freshmen were much more likely than their peers to select a career in the arts. This wide disparity is most likely attributable to the popularity of arts-oriented majors at Chapman University. Given that 16.3% of students chose “other career,” CIRP’s classification scheme does not adequately capture the range of occupational choices preferred by a small portion of Chapman freshmen. Other occupations attracted no more than 4% interest. Freshman Survey data also reveal that Chapman University’s males were more likely to express an interest in artistic or business careers than females.

### Top 4 Probable Careers

	Percent			
	Chapman University		Private 4-yr High Selectivity	
	All	Men	Women	All
Artist	31.9%	33.0%	31.5%	12.1%
Other Career	16.3%	18.8%	15.2%	7.4%
Business	15.4%	20.9%	12.7%	14.4%
Undecided	14.6%	11.2%	16.3%	19.8%

The Freshman Survey asks respondents to assign a level of importance to a series of future objectives. Knowing students’ future goals gives us an idea of what students value, what motivates them, as well as what activities (academic or non-academic) they may be interested in pursuing while in college.

## Top 7 Future Objectives

	Percent			
	Chapman University		Private 4-yrs High Selectivity	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
Raising a family	1	76.3%	1	71.9%
Being very well off financially	2	73.1%	3	65.0%
Helping others who are in difficulty	3	67.6%	2	69.0%
Becoming an authority in my field	4	67.1%	4	56.4%
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	5	64.2%	5	55.5%
Obtaining recognition from my colleagues for contributions to my special field	6	63.0%	6	53.4%
Becoming successful in a business of my own.	7	52.6%	7	39.6%

% = indicating goals were "very important" or "essential"

Findings suggest that the majority of Chapman University freshmen are interested in raising a family and attaining financial security, as well as helping others who are in difficulty. In comparison to students at like institutions, a higher proportion of entering freshmen value financial and symbolic success (e.g., becoming an authority in my field and obtaining recognition from my colleagues for my contributions). However, over 60% of entering students desire to develop a meaningful philosophy of life and help others who are in difficulty. These inclinations suggest a willingness to participate in intellectual and civic campus activities in order to foster a well-rounded education.

## CONCLUSION

*What do we know about Chapman University's 2007 entering freshmen class?* Data from the Freshman Survey show that the majority of incoming freshmen ranked Chapman University as their first choice because of the school's academic reputation, size, and generous financial aid. In addition, they report high self-confidence in their academic and intellectual abilities and appear committed to finishing a bachelor's degree in a timely fashion. While attending Chapman University, about half of incoming freshmen express an interest in participating in student clubs and around a third of students appear willing to engage in community service work.

In moving to anticipated post-graduation plans, 31.9% of incoming freshmen express an interest in starting a career in the arts. This high percentage, which is substantially higher than peer institutions, is most likely attributable to the growing enrollment in the Dodge College of Film and Media

Arts and the College of Performing Arts. Upon joining the workforce, incoming freshmen place great importance on achieving monetary and symbolic success. But the importance of raising a family surpasses these goals. Other activities such as intercollegiate sports, Greek life, student government, and student protests did not garner much attention. Lastly, over half of incoming freshmen express an interest in developing a life philosophy and helping others in difficulty. Given Chapman University's mission to foster civic engagement and self-development, the university is well positioned to further develop these goals.

## IMPLICATIONS

Chapman University can use findings from the Freshman Survey to measure its own progress and plan future initiatives. The consistency of questions in the Freshman Survey each year allows for a variety of ways to benchmark progress in a number of areas. For example, the vast improvement in the caliber of incoming students and reported academic reputation of Chapman University during the last twenty years serves as evidence of continued progress in school enrollment. The Office of Admission can track the enrollment competitiveness of Chapman University versus peer institutions using the data on reported rank preferences for matriculated college. Additionally, the data on reasons for why students come to Chapman University may be useful in assessing the reach of various promotional channels (e.g. Chapman's website).

At a planning level, academic administrators may take note of the large market for post-graduate degrees, as indicated by reported degree aspirations among Chapman freshmen, when discussing future plans to expand degree options. Toward this end, the Freshman Survey contains a wealth of data on career and major preferences to track future needs in degree choices. The Fish Interfaith Center may be interested in the religious composition of the incoming student body in order to anticipate student needs. Lastly, the data on future campus activities may be helpful in directing resources to activities in order to meet anticipated demand. For example, student clubs and community service work attracted interest from at least 30% of entering students. In conclusion, the Freshman Survey continues to provide Chapman University with interesting and valuable information about our freshmen.

<sup>1</sup>Selectivity is an estimate of the mean score of entering freshmen on the verbal plus mathematical portions of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Private four-year colleges (non-sectarian) with "high" selectivity levels are those institutions with entering freshmen with 1100-1249 SAT composite scores. (See *The American Freshmen: National Norms for Fall 2007* by Pryor, Hurtado, Sharkness, and Korn, 2007.)