

Research in BRIEF

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CIRP 2001 FRESHMEN SURVEY Executive Summary

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program's (CIRP) Freshmen 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 Freshmen Survey for the 35th consecutive year—one of 704 institutions that participated in the 2001 administration. Chapman University freshmen were administered the survey during freshmen orientation (August 2001) in a proctored setting.¹ Exactly 615 first-time, full-time freshmen completed the survey. This first 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.²

Sample Representation

Almost 84% of Chapman University's Fall 2001 first-time, full-time freshmen population participated in the Freshmen Survey.

Student Population and Sample	ORANGE CAMPUS FALL '01	
	First Time, Full-Time Freshmen	
	Chapman Population* (n = 734)	Survey Sample (n = 615)
GENDER		
Male	42.4%	42.3%
Female	57.6%	57.7%
RACE/ETHNICITY		
African-American/Black	2.2%	1.6%
Asian-American/Pacific Islanders	8.4%	11.1%
White/Caucasian	63.2%	69.6%
Hispanic or Latino	7.6%	9.1%
Native-American/Alaskan Native	0.3%	1.3%
International Student	2.0%	n/a
Other/Unknown+	16.2%	7.3%

* First-time, full-time population only; no transfers. (Admission and Registrar: 10-15-01)
+ Includes Multi-ethnic.
n/a Not applicable since it was not included as an option.

As would be expected given their numbers on the Orange Campus, the survey sample is composed mostly of Caucasian students. The gender distribution for the survey sample matches that of the Chapman population almost perfectly. Given that the majority of the first-time, full-time freshmen population was sampled, the results presented in this summary should closely reflect the perceptions and views of the majority of the Fall 2001 first-time full-time, freshmen population of Chapman University (Orange campus only).

Background Characteristics

Almost all of the first-time, full-time freshmen identified themselves as U.S. citizens (97.2%), as well as native English speakers (94.3%). While 70% of all entering students reported being residents of California, only 47% indicated that their permanent home was 50 miles or less from Chapman University. Findings reveal that 54% of the students come from homes where the total parental income is \$75,000 or more. Findings also show that 18% of the 2001 entering first-time, full-time freshmen are first-generation college students—students whose parents never attended college.

When asked to characterize their political views, 36.7% identified as "far left" or "liberal," 40.3% "middle-of-the-road," and 23% "conservative" or "far right." National data indicates that Chapman University freshmen are no more liberal or conservative than other students at like institutions. Students were also asked to identify their current religious preference from a list of 17 choices about one-quarter of the incoming freshmen indicated "none."

FINDINGS

Admission-Related Issues

A large proportion of the students indicated that Chapman University was their first (65.8%) or second (24.7%) college choice. About 7% 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 this survey reveals that even before students start at Chapman University and have the opportunity to immerse themselves on campus, 57% percent of the first-time, full-time freshmen report that there is a "very good chance" that they will be satisfied with their college choice.

Students were asked to rate how important certain factors were in influencing their decision to attend college. Data reveals that Chapman University freshmen, when compared to other freshmen at like institutions, appear to be slightly more interested in the learning and knowledge they will gain from attending college, as well as the financial benefits a college education will be able to afford them. As can be seen in the table below, 85.1% of the Chapman freshmen identified "to learn more about things that interest [them]" and 66.9% identified "to make more money" as "very important" reasons why they are attending college—compared to the national norm of 81.9% and 61.9%, respectively. Interestingly, these data also suggest that for Chapman University freshmen, making more money is secondary to learning, gaining a general education, and an appreciation of ideas. Compared to their counterparts, our freshmen also appear to be more interested in obtaining training in a specific career.

Top 5 Reasons For Deciding To Go to College

In deciding to go to college, how important to you was:	Chapman University		Private 4-yrs. High Selectivity	
	Rank Order	%	Rank Order	%
To learn more about things that interest me	1	85.1	1	81.9
To get training for a specific career	2	73.4	4	62.7
To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas	3	70.1	2	69.1
To be able to make more money	4	66.9	5	61.9
To be able to get a better job	5	63.0	3	67.5

% = indicating "very important" reason

The survey also asked freshmen to reveal which reasons influenced their decision to attend Chapman University. The top two reasons selected were, "I was offered financial assistance" (65.4%) and "I was offered a merit based scholarship" (62.1%). These reasons were the top two for both male and female Chapman University freshmen.

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	%
I was offered financial assistance	1	65.4	4	48.5
I was offered a merit-based scholarship	2	62.1	5	41.6
This college has a good academic reputation	3	56.3	1	70.1
I wanted to go to a school about the size of this college	4	53.2	3	50.6
This college's graduates get good jobs	5	48.8	2	60.9

% = indicating "very important" reason

Findings suggest that financial assistance is much more important to Chapman University freshmen than other students at like institutions. While they were not the top 2 reasons, also influencing over 50% of the freshmen was the desire to attend a small college and an institution with a good academic reputation such as Chapman University. Attending a college with a good academic reputation was noted as a "very important" reason for over 70% of the freshmen at like institutions.

Academic Preparation & Self-Confidence

While this campus attracts and admits academically well prepared freshmen, there are still a few students who arrive expecting to need special tutoring or remedial work on more than one subject. As can be seen below, Chapman University freshmen are slightly more likely to report, when compared to their peers, that they will need remedial work in mathematics, foreign language, and to a lesser extent science.

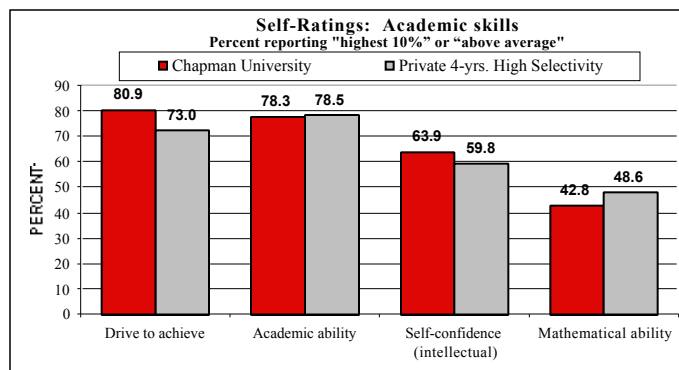
Special Tutoring or Remedial Work

Do you feel you will need any special tutoring or remedial work in any of the following subjects:	PERCENT			
	Private 4-yrs. High Selectivity	Chapman University		
	All	All	Men	Women
Mathematics	17.4	21.5	16.2	25.4
Foreign Language	10.1	12.2	12.7	11.8
Science	8.0	8.8	6.9	10.1
Writing	10.3	7.3	6.5	7.9
English	6.7	5.2	6.5	4.2
Reading	3.4	3.3	3.5	3.1

Percent who reported they "will need" special tutoring or remedial work.

Data also show that female freshmen, compared to the males at Chapman University, are substantially more likely to report that they will need special tutoring or remedial work in mathematics (25.4% females, 16.2% males). This gender gap is not unique to Chapman University but a trend nationwide.

While some students may arrive feeling like they will need special tutoring or remedial work, the majority begin college with healthy perceptions of their academic skills. The Freshmen 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 just as confident in their academic ability and slightly more secure in their drive to achieve and intellectual self-confidence. Given that Chapman University freshmen were more likely than their peers to report needing special tutoring or remedial work in mathematics, it is not surprising to also find that they are slightly 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 and communication (i.e., writing and public speaking) skills.

Academic Expectations & Aspirations

Freshmen Survey data suggest that less than one percent of freshmen enter Chapman University expecting to drop out of college. Freshmen were asked to estimate the chances (1-"very good chance" to 4-"no chance") they would participate in certain activities or engage in certain behaviors while in college. Specifically, freshmen were asked to indicate if there was any chance they would drop out of college temporarily or permanently (excluding transferring). Results show that .2% of the 2000 incoming freshmen reported that there was a "very good chance" that they would drop out temporarily and .2% reported that there was a "very good chance" they would drop out of Chapman University permanently. This small number validates earlier findings that the majority of the freshmen entering Chapman University come with strong perceptions of their academic ability.

As would be expected, the majority (83.1%) of Chapman University freshmen report that there is a "very good chance" that they will get a bachelor's degree. In addition, data reveals that most Chapman University freshmen arrive with graduate degree aspirations. Students were asked to indicate the highest academic degree they intended to obtain at any college.

Highest Academic Degree Planned Anywhere

	PERCENT	
	Chapman University	Private 4-yrs. High Selectivity
Bachelor's degree	26.2	17.7
Master's degree	47.2	44.2
Ph.D. or Ed.D.	14.8	20.2
M.D., D.O., D.D.S, D.V.M.	3.9	9.7
LL.B. or J.D. (Law)	5.2	5.8
Other	2.4	1.7

Findings reveal that 71.1% of Chapman University freshmen arrive with the aspiration of someday attaining a master's, doctorate, medical, or law degree. When compared to their peers nationally, Chapman University freshmen are slightly more likely to aspire to master's

degrees. Interestingly, almost twice as many Chapman University females as males reported that they aspired to obtain a medical degree (4.8% women, 2.7% men). Over 22% of all freshmen expressed interest in continuing their graduate studies at Chapman University.

When asked about their probable career occupation, Chapman University freshmen were more likely than their peers to select careers such as actor or entertainer, business executive, artist, or writer/journalist. As would be expected, the most popular probable careers selected by incoming freshmen reflect several of the more popular programs at Chapman University.

Top Four Probable Careers

	PERCENT					
	Chapman University			Private 4-yrs. High Selectivity		
	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women
Actor entertainer	12.1	14.5	10.4	1.9	1.5	2.2
Business Executive (management, administrator)	9.5	12.0	7.6	7.8	10.2	5.8
Artist	7.2	10.8	4.6	3.9	3.0	4.7
Writer or Journalist	5.1	5.0	5.2	3.4	2.0	4.6

Freshmen Survey data also reveal that Chapman University's males were more likely to select careers as actors/entertainers, business executives, or artists, while females were slightly more likely to select a career as a writer or journalist.

Important Future Goals

Knowing students' future goals give 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 Seven Goals

Please indicate the importance to you personally of each of the following:	Chapman University		Private 4-yrs. High Selectivity	
	Rank Order	%	Rank Order	%
Raising a family	1	71.8	1	71.0
Being very well off financially	2	71.2	2	64.9
Becoming an authority in my field	3	69.1	4	57.6
Obtaining recognition from my colleagues for contributions to my special field	4	60.1	5	48.4
Helping others who are in difficulty	5	59.0	3	60.8
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	6	54.2	6	47.1
Integrating spirituality into my life	7	49.5	7	44.0

Percent indicating goals were "very important" or "essential"

Findings suggest that the majority of Chapman University freshmen, very much like students at similar types of institutions nationwide, are interested in attaining financial security and recognition, as well as developing a spiritual and meaningful philosophy of life. However, among all the goals listed, it was "raising a family" that the majority of students found "most important" or "essential," "being well off financially" following closely. While prestige

and financial security may motivate students to excel in their chosen field or discipline, the desire to help others who are in difficulty, grow spiritually, and bring meaning into their life may prompt them to search for campus activities that nurture these outcomes.

CONCLUSION

What do we know about Chapman University's 2001 entering freshmen class? Data from the CIRP Freshmen Survey reveal that the majority of Chapman University's 2001 first-time, full-time freshmen enter with healthy perceptions of their academic skills, have high degree aspirations, and are driven to achieve. Also evident is that Chapman University is well respected among the freshmen class. Over 55% of the 2001 freshmen cohort indicated that they are attending Chapman University because of its "good academic reputation." In fact, the majority of the 2001 first-time, full-time freshmen, selected Chapman University as their first or second choice college.

While data reveal that Chapman University freshmen may be slightly more interested in the financial benefits of a college education than their counterparts at similar U.S. institutions, they are also more interested in learning, gaining a general education, growing spiritually, and developing a meaningful philosophy of life. At Chapman University, students have the opportunity to graduate from this university with a valuable degree, as well as with a well-rounded education. As stated in the Chapman Plan,³ we are a university committed to helping each student develop as a whole person, as represented in the traditions of Chapman's "four pillars" symbolizing intellectual, spiritual, social and physical growth. It appears that the goals and aspirations of the majority of our incoming freshmen are aligned with what Chapman University deems important. Regardless of whether this occurred by design—some freshmen, in part, selected Chapman University because they knew we are an institution committed to these values—or it happened haphazardly, we are in an exceptional position to serve our students well.

IMPLICATIONS

While it is important to know how we compare nationally to our counterparts, the value of this survey lies in the opportunity it provides us to understand our student population. It is only in this way we can best plan to meet the needs of our students. For example, Admission and Financial Aid might be interested in knowing that a large proportion of the 2001 first-time, full-time freshmen choose Chapman University because they were offered

financial assistance. Those individuals responsible for outreach, recruitment, and marketing might find it valuable to know the reasons why students decided to attend college in the first place. Since knowing students' expectations, goals and aspirations can be used to better understand the type of academic programs and extracurricular activities our students may be more apt to participate in, administrators might be able to use such information to better anticipate students' needs.

According to Dey and Hurtado (1994)⁴, the changing demography of higher education has made it impossible for institutions to ignore this ecological perspective. Dey and Hurtado propose that "although we have a tendency to think of students in one of several unidimensional ways, a more complete view is one in which the relationship between students and the college environment is seen as both reciprocal and dynamic" (p. 265). Fortunately, Chapman University is in a position to be true to its mission and values and at the same time focus on how it can change to better meet the needs of the students it serves.

¹All Chapman University freshmen were administered the survey before September 11. According to HERI, a small percentage of the participating institutions administered the survey after 9/11 (2.5% of the normative sample). While HERI notes that this small number would have had little effect on the overall results, they are conducting further analyses to detect significant differences, if any.

²Selectivity 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 2001* by Sax, Lindholm, Astin, Korn, & Mahoney, 2001.)

³Chapman University: The Chapman Plan. (September, 2001).

⁴Dey, E. L. and Hurtado, S. (1994). College students in changing context. In P.H. Altbach, R.O. Berdahl, and P.J. Gumport (Eds.), *Higher Education in American Society* (Third Edition). Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

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