Executive Summary for the 2004 Cooperative Institutional Research Program

The profiles of the 2004 Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) freshman survey for Cleveland State University (CSU) and other public universities in the United States reveal some unique characteristics of CSU’s 2004 freshmen and some of the commonalities they share with their counterparts from other public universities in the nation.

The Age of the 2004 Entering First Year Class

Analysis of the data indicates that nationwide, a majority of the entering first year students chose to enroll in colleges in the same year that they finished high school. The analysis further shows that CSU’s enrollment of students who graduated in 2003 and earlier was proportionally higher than comparable urban public universities. Indeed, 7.9% of the CSU students stated they were 20 – 29 years old as compared to only 2.5% of students from comparable public universities.

Reasons for Attending College

The nation’s 2004 entering first year class selected “to get training for a specific career”, “to learn more about things that interest me”, “to be able to get a better job”, and “to be able to make more money”, high on the list of very important reasons for attending college. However, fewer CSU students (11.4%) listed the need to get away from home as a major reason in deciding to go to college as compared to 17.3% of their counterparts from similar universities. Conversely, the inability to find a job was listed by more CSU students as a reason why they decided to go to college than their peers from similar universities (12.5% to 7.5% respectively).

On the question of what influenced them to choose the universities they are currently attending, for CSU students, the cost of attending college and offer of financial aid were overriding factors as to why they chose to attend CSU. 51.3% of the CSU students listed cost of attending college, and 38.5% of them listed the offer of financial assistance as the reasons why they chose to enroll at CSU. In comparison only 30.6% of their peers in similar universities listed cost of attending college, and 22.6% listed offer of financial aid as their reasons for choosing their university.

Proximity of the university to their home was also more important to the CSU students than their peers from comparable universities (42.9% to 21.2% respectively). This is corroborated by the fact that 85.3% of CSU’s respondents stated that they lived within fifty miles from the school, as compared to 49.1% of the respondents from similar universities. Perhaps due to the proximity of their homes to the university, more CSU students stated that they intended to live with family/relatives during their first semester at college than their peers from similar public universities (62.8% to 27.6%).

Financing College Education

CSU students are perhaps more concerned about the cost of attending college because they are more likely to be financially independent. 37.5% indicated that they did not have any expectation of support from family resources. In comparison, only 21.1% of students from comparable universities stated that they were financially independent. Furthermore, only 13.3% of CSU students indicated expectation of
financial support of $6000 or more from family resources as compared to 30.3% of their counterparts from similar universities. More CSU students expected to receive grants (aid that need not be repaid) of $10,000 or more than their peers from similar schools (11.1% to 7.9% respectively). Not surprisingly 20.5% of CSU students believed that there was a very good chance that they would have to work full-time while attending college. Only 8.8% of their counterparts from similar universities expected to work full-time while attending college.

Intended Majors

Among the 2004 entering first year class, business appears to be a popular major with both genders. Gender differences, however, were apparent in some majors. Proportionally more females chose elementary education and nursing than males. The difference between females and males was even bigger among the CSU respondents—9.7% to 0.8% for elementary education, and 16.8% to 2.5% for nursing. In contrast, engineering appears to be a favorite among male students than their female cohorts. 17.1% of the CSU male students selected this major as compared to only 2.2% of the female students.

Social Activities

There are gender differences in the activities of the 2004 freshman class. It appears that during their last year in high school, females expended more time in the following activities: volunteer work, household/childcare duties, working for pay, studying/doing homework, reading for pleasure and participating in student clubs/groups. On the other hand, males spent more time watching TV, playing video/computer games, exercising or playing sports, socializing with friends, and partying.

Looking at the differences in activities of the males and females, it appears that the 2004 male students were more adept at engaging in stress reducing activities than their female counterparts. It is not surprising that more females reported feeling overwhelmed and depressed than the males.

With regards to cigarette smoking and drinking there was a difference between CSU students and students from peer universities. The survey results showed that CSU 2004 freshmen tend to smoke more but drink less than their peers in similar universities.

Implications of the 2004 CIRP Survey Results for CSU

Recruitment

The results of the 2004 CIRP survey suggests that CSU will do well to concentrate its recruitment activities locally because it appears that the majority of CSU’s students live within 50 miles from campus. Another attractive feature of attending CSU is the affordable cost. Therefore, ‘close to home and affordable’ could make a good recruitment campaign slogan

Non-traditional Students
Analysis of the data suggests that CSU's enrolled a substantial number of non-traditional students. According to National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) these students have to juggle many roles including that of being a student, a worker, and sometimes a parent. Due to the heavy demands for their time (from commitments at work and home) and the longer break from school, adult learners usually have special needs for flexible schedules and instruction appropriate for their developmental level.

Some of the services that have been recommended to better meet the needs of these students include:

- Separate registration, advising and orientation
- Greater availability of and access to parking
- Affordable and flexible (evening and weekend as well as full-time and part-time schedule) childcare facilities close to the campus
- More evening and weekend course offerings and student services
- Special assistance with financial aid and housing
- Better preparation of faculty and staff to meet the needs of adult students. Both staff and faculty advisors will need to know the correct sequencing of courses in order to be able to help students meet course requirements for their majors, and
- Career advising and help in matching students' skills and abilities with the employers who have need for them.