

**CIRP FRESHMAN SURVEY
CORNELL UNIVERSITY CLASS OF 2004
INTER-INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT**

SURVEY DESCRIPTION

- The Freshman Survey, developed by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) and sponsored by the American Council on Education and by the Graduate School of Education & Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, is administered annually to freshmen at over 1000 colleges and universities. At Cornell University, the survey was administered to approximately 3,220 freshmen on the first day of their university orientation period in August 2000. A detailed analysis of Cornell University freshmen responses, including analyses by gender and by racial/ethnic background, is presented in "CIRP Freshman Survey, Cornell University Class of 2004, Intra-Institutional Analysis, Executive Summary Report," which may be found in "pdf" format online by following the links for the Class of 2004 Freshman Survey at the following URL: http://www.ipr.cornell.edu/Reports/report_menu.htm.

This report compares the responses of Cornell freshmen with those of groups of other universities comparable to Cornell on the basis of competition for undergraduate students. For purposes of comparison, three "norm" groups, each including three or more universities, were established, based on the following characteristics:

- ❖ Norm Group 1 includes universities that most often "win" when in direct competition with Cornell for admitted undergraduates.
- ❖ Norm Group 2 includes universities with which Cornell competes on a relatively even basis for admitted undergraduates.
- ❖ Norm Group 3 includes universities that most often "lose" when in direct competition with Cornell for admitted undergraduates

CHARACTERISTICS OF FRESHMAN RESPONDENTS

- Cornell and Norm Group 3 had more male respondents (53.0% and 55.1%, respectively), while Norm Group 1 had more female respondents (53.1%) (Table 1).
- Cornell and Norm Group 3 proportionally had more international students (7.0% and 6.0%, respectively). Norm Group 1 had more "other" (identifying themselves as belonging to more than one racial/ethnic group or failing to identify a racial/ethnic group) respondents than did other groups (14.3%). Norm Group 2 had more white students than did other groups (62.1%).

CHARACTERISTICS OF FRESHMAN PARENTS

- Most freshmen in all groups reported that their parents are both alive and living with each other (Table 2).
- Most freshmen in all groups reported that both parents have earned graduate degrees (Table 3). Cornell freshmen were more likely than other freshmen to report grammar school (1.7% for fathers, 1.8% for mothers) or high school (8.4% for fathers, 10.4% for mothers) as their parents' highest level of

formal education. Norm Group 1 freshmen were more likely than others to report a graduate degree as their parents' highest level of education (61.8% for fathers, 43.9% for mothers). Norm group 3 freshmen were more likely than others to report their a college degree as being the highest level of their parents' formal education (25.5% for mothers, 35.7% for fathers).

- Cornell freshman parents were more likely than parents of other freshmen to have incomes less than \$30, 000 (Table 4). Norm Group 1 parents were more likely to have incomes greater than \$150, 000.

PREVIOUS FRESHMAN ACTIVITIES

- When asked to indicate the frequency of their involvement in a number of activities during the year before college, all freshmen were more likely to report having "frequent" involvement with the following activities (Table 5):
 - ❖ Personal computer use
 - ❖ Communication via e-mail
 - ❖ Internet use for research or homework
 - ❖ Socialization with someone of another racial/ethnic group
 - ❖ Other Internet use

Cornell freshmen were more likely than others to have performed the following activities frequently during the year before college:

- ❖ Used the Internet for research or homework (78.5%)
 - ❖ Felt bored in class (43.9%)
 - ❖ Participated in Internet chat room (18.5%)
 - ❖ Drank beer (12.2%)
 - ❖ Drank wine or liquor (11.1%)
- During their last year in high school, freshmen from all groups spent most of their time (16 or more hours per week) performing the following activities (Table 6):
 - ❖ Socializing with friends
 - ❖ Studying or doing homework
 - ❖ Exercising or playing sports
 - ❖ Working for pay

Cornell and Norm Group 3 freshmen were more likely than other groups to have spent most of their time working for pay (13.7% and 12.9%, respectively). Norm Group 1 freshmen were more likely than other groups to have spent time on studying/homework (33.1%) and on exercise or sports (19.5%). Norm Group 2 freshmen were more likely to have spent time socializing with friends (28.8%).

FRESHMAN SELF-RATINGS

- When asked to rate themselves on 20 different personal traits, freshmen in all groups rated themselves highest ("above average" or "highest 10%") on "academic ability" and "drive to achieve" (Table 7). As shown in Figure 1, Cornell freshmen rated themselves lower than did other freshmen on the following 11 of 20 traits:

- ❖ Self-confidence (intellectual)
- ❖ Cooperativeness
- ❖ Understanding of others
- ❖ Self-understanding
- ❖ Creativity
- ❖ Competitiveness
- ❖ Writing ability
- ❖ Emotional health
- ❖ Self-confidence (social)
- ❖ Public speaking ability
- ❖ Spirituality

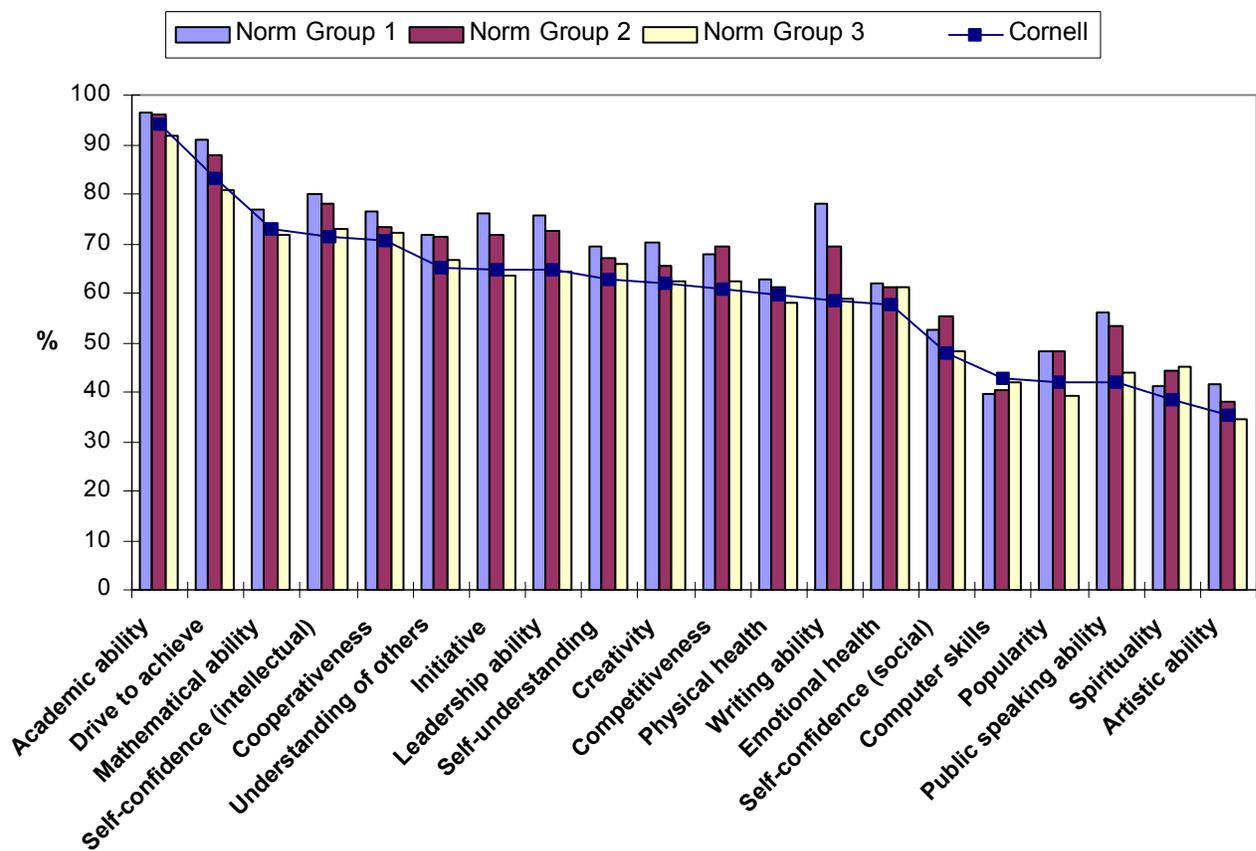


Figure 1. Highest Self-Ratings on Personal Traits

However, Cornell freshmen rated themselves higher than did other freshmen on the trait “computer skills” (42.6%). Norm Group 1 freshmen gave themselves the highest ratings for 16 of the 20 traits. In general, Norm Group 2 freshmen gave themselves higher ratings on personal traits than did Cornell and Norm Group 3 freshmen. Norm Group 3 freshmen rated themselves lowest on nine of the 20 traits.

POLITICAL/SOCIAL VIEWS AND GOALS

- Most freshmen considered their political orientation to be “liberal” (Table 8). Norm Group 1 had proportionally more freshmen who considered themselves to be “liberal” (48.2%) or “far left” (5.3%). Cornell and Norm Group 3 freshmen were more likely to consider themselves “middle of the road” (40.3% and 38.9% respectively). Norm Group 2 and Norm Group 3 freshmen were more likely than other freshmen to identify themselves as being “conservative” (17.0% and 17.4% respectively).
- When asked their views on a broad range of political/social topics, freshmen were most likely to agree or strongly agree with the following five views (Table 9):
 - ❖ Federal government should do more to control the sale of handguns
 - ❖ Same sex couples should have the right to legal marital status
 - ❖ Abortion should be legal
 - ❖ Employers should be allowed to require drug testing of employees/applicants
 - ❖ Wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes

Cornell freshmen were more likely than other freshmen to agree or strongly agree with the following views:

- ❖ Wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes (57.1%)
- ❖ Colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus (55.4%)
- ❖ If two people really like each other, it’s all right for them to have sex even if they’ve known each other for only a very short time (51.6%)
- ❖ An individual can do little to bring about changes in our society (26.3%)
- ❖ Activities of married women are best confined to the home and family (16.2%)

Norm Group 1 freshmen were more likely than other freshmen to agree or strongly agree with the following views:

- ❖ Federal government should do more to control the sale of handguns (89.3%)
- ❖ Same sex couples should have the right to legal marital status (77.2%)
- ❖ Abortion should be legal (78.6%)

Norm Group 3 freshmen were more likely than other freshmen to agree or strongly agree with the following views:

- ❖ Affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished (58.8%)
- ❖ There is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals (56.8%)
- ❖ Racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America (18.0%)
- ❖ It is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships (16.5%)

- Asked to rate the importance of various life goals, freshmen chose the following as the five most important goals (Table 10):
 - ❖ Raising a family
 - ❖ Being very well off financially
 - ❖ Becoming an authority in my field
 - ❖ Helping others who are in difficulty

Cornell freshmen were more likely than other freshmen to consider the following goals “essential” or “very important”:

- ❖ Being very well off financially (67.7%)
- ❖ Becoming successful in own business (40.1%)
- ❖ Having administrative responsibility for the work of others (35.4%)
- ❖ Making a theoretical contribution to science (31.4%)

Norm Group 1 freshmen gave higher ratings than did other freshmen to the following ten goals:

- ❖ Helping others who are in difficulty (69.2%)
- ❖ Developing a meaningful philosophy of life (69.6%)
- ❖ Keeping up to date with political affairs (50.1%)
- ❖ Helping to promote racial understanding (42.6%)
- ❖ Influencing social values (39.6%)
- ❖ Participating in community action program (37.2%)
- ❖ Being involved in environmental clean-up (25.0%)
- ❖ Influencing the political structure (23.1%)
- ❖ Writing original works (23.3%)
- ❖ Creating artistic work (painting, sculpture, etc) (16.7%)

As shown in Figure 2, Norm Group 1 freshmen gave the highest importance ratings to seven life goals rated lowest by Cornell freshmen. Conversely, Cornell freshmen gave the highest importance ratings to three life goals rated lowest by Norm Group 1 freshmen.

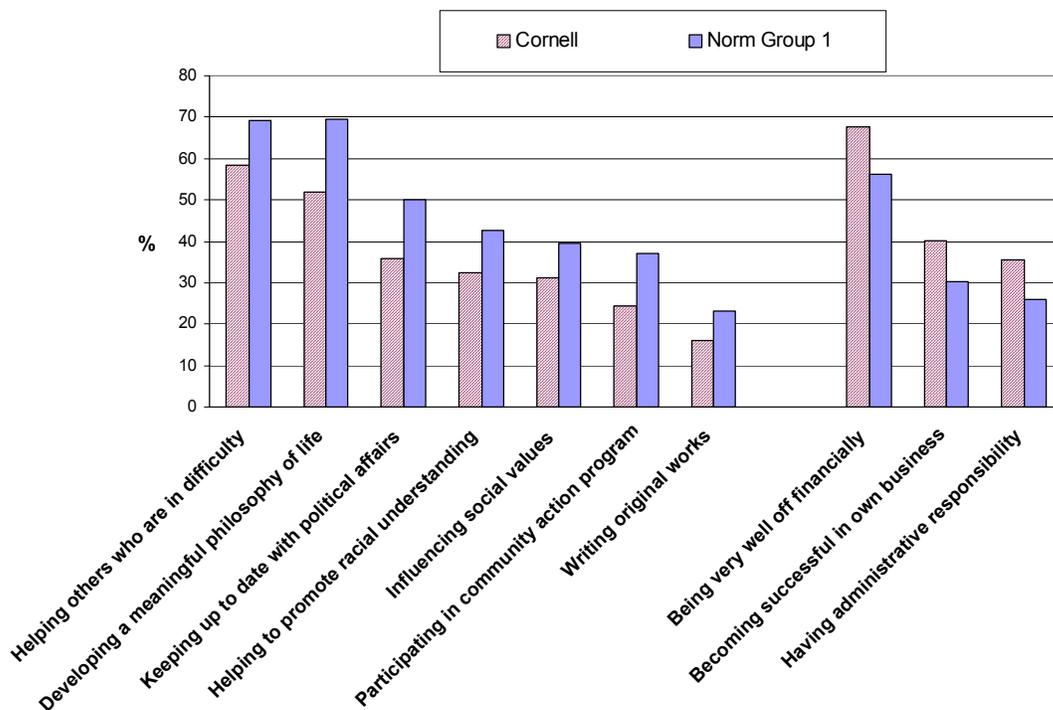


Figure 2. Highest Importance Ratings of Life Goals: Cornell Freshmen and Norm Group 1 Freshmen

COLLEGE: CHOICES, PLANS, AND CONCERNS

- Freshmen reported the following as the most important reasons for deciding to go to college (Table 11):

- ❖ To learn more about things that interest me
- ❖ To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas
- ❖ To prepare myself for graduate/professional school
- ❖ To be able to get a better job

“To be able to make more money” (60.9%) and “to get training for a specific career” (56.1%) were more important reasons for going to college for Cornell freshmen than for other freshmen. For Norm Group 1 freshmen, “to learn more about things that interest me” (92.8%), “to gain a general education and appreciation of ideas” (87.5%), “to make me a more cultured person” (66.4%), and “my parents wanted me to go” (32.3%) were more important reasons for going to college than they were for other freshmen. For Norm Group 2 freshmen, “to be able to get a better job” (64.8%) and “to improve my reading and study skills” (40.8%) were more important reasons for going to college than they were for other freshmen.

- Most freshmen either applied only to their current college or applied to seven to ten other colleges (Table 12). Cornell freshmen did not differ significantly from other freshmen in the number of their college applications. Norm Group 1 freshmen were more likely than others to have applied to seven or more colleges (35.5%).
- The majority of freshmen plan to earn post-graduate degrees, with most reporting the master’s degree as their highest intended degree (Table 13). Cornell and Norm Group 2 freshmen were more likely intend to earn a master’s degree (38.5% and 38.1% respectively). Norm Group 1 freshmen were more likely to intend to earn a doctoral degree (34.9%). Norm Group 2 freshmen were more likely than other freshmen to intend to earn a law degree (10.8%). Norm Group 3 freshmen were more likely than other freshmen to intend to earn a medical or dental degree (21.7%).
- Most freshmen indicated that they have “some” concern about their ability to finance their college education (Table 14). Cornell freshmen were more likely to have “some” concern about financing their college education (49.6%), while Norm Group 2 freshmen were more likely to have “no” concern about financing their education (46.7%).

CORNELL: CHOICES, NEEDS, AND EXPECTATIONS

- For most freshmen, their current undergraduate institution was the college of their choice (Table 15). Cornell and Norm Group 3 freshmen were more likely than other freshmen to report their colleges as being their second or third choice. Norm Group 1 freshmen were more likely to report their college as being their first choice (82.8%).
- Freshmen in all groups rated the following as being the most important reasons for choosing their college (Table 16):
 - ❖ Good academic reputation
 - ❖ Graduates get good jobs
 - ❖ Graduates go to top graduate schools

- ❖ Rankings in national magazines
- ❖ Size of college

Cornell freshmen were more likely than others to indicate that “this college’s graduates get good jobs” (73.2%) and “this college offers special programs” (24.6%) were important reasons for coming to Cornell. Norm Group 1 freshmen were more likely than others to report the following as important reasons for choosing their college:

- ❖ Good academic reputation (90.0%)
- ❖ Good social reputation (36.7%)
- ❖ Need-based scholarship offered (21.7%)

Norm Group 2 freshmen were more likely than others to choose their institution because of the following reasons:

- ❖ Graduates go to top graduate schools (62.9%)
- ❖ Rankings in national magazines (34.7%)
- ❖ Early action/decision program (31.4%)

Norm Group 3 freshmen were more likely than others to indicate the following as important reasons for choosing their college:

- ❖ Financial assistance offered (36.2%)
- ❖ Size of college (35.3%)
- ❖ Merit-based scholarship offered (25.7%)

- Freshmen from all groups were most likely to identify mathematics not only as the subject area where they had already had remedial work but also as the subject area with greatest anticipated need for remedial work (Table 17). Cornell freshmen were more likely than other freshmen to report needing remedial work in writing (9.0%). Norm Group 3 freshmen were more likely than others to report needing remedial work in English (5.9%).
- When asked to rate the likelihood of their having certain future experiences or events at college, freshmen were most likely to choose the following (Table 18):
 - ❖ Get a bachelor’s degree
 - ❖ Socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group
 - ❖ Develop close friendships with other students
 - ❖ Make at least a “B” average
 - ❖ Be satisfied with this college

Norm Group 1 freshmen were more likely than other freshmen to anticipate the following experiences/events:

- ❖ Get a bachelor’s degree (93.1%)
- ❖ Socialize with different racial/ethnic group (91.3%)
- ❖ Develop close friendships with other students (90.0%)
- ❖ Be satisfied with this college (79.1%)
- ❖ Make at least "B" average (74.3%)
- ❖ Participate in student clubs/groups (73.9%)

- ❖ Communicate regularly with professors (56.5%)
- ❖ Participate in volunteer/community service work (50.4%)
- ❖ Get a job to help pay for college expenses (40.3%)
- ❖ Change career choice (33.6%)
- ❖ Change major field (31.9%)
- ❖ Play varsity/intercollegiate athletics (18.7%)
- ❖ Participate in student protests or demonstrations (11.5%)
- ❖ Seek personal counseling (8.1%)

Norm Group 2 freshmen were more likely than other freshmen to anticipate graduating with honors (28.6%). Norm Group 3 freshmen were more likely than others to anticipate the following:

- ❖ Need extra time to complete degree (5.2%)
- ❖ Transfer to another college (2.7%)
- ❖ Work full-time while attending college (1.9%)
- ❖ Drop out permanently (1.1%)

Cornell freshmen did not differ statistically from other groups in their estimates of college experiences/events. However, they gave the lowest ratings for ten of the 22 possible experiences/events. As shown in Figure 3, Cornell freshmen were least likely to anticipate the experiences/events that Norm Group 1 freshmen were most likely to anticipate.

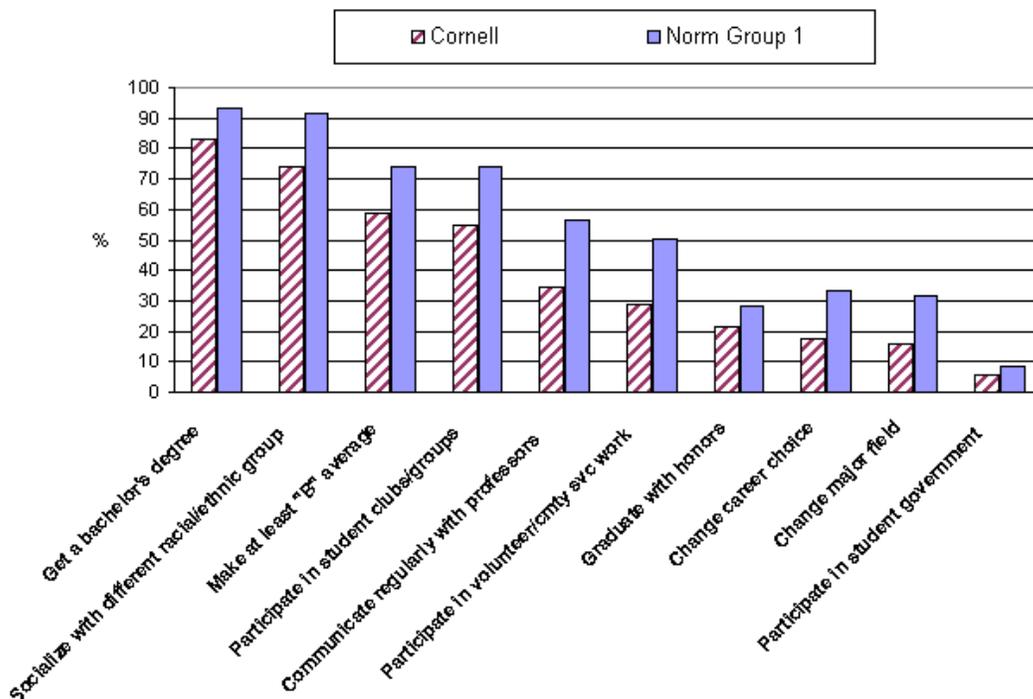


Figure 3. "Very Good" Chance of Experience/Event Occurring in College: Cornell Freshmen and Norm Group 1 Freshmen