

News from Institutional Research

As you may have seen in the news, UCLA has just released a trend report entitled "The American Freshman: Forty-Year Trends 1966-2006" which highlights changes in the makeup of entering freshman classes over time.

While Creighton does not have 40 years of data from freshmen participating in the CIRP survey, we do have 20 ! Therefore, this issue of "News from Institutional Research" highlights some of the changes in the Creighton entering freshmen from 1987 to 2006.

Changes in Creighton Freshmen: CIRP Data 1987-2006

In 1987, the average freshman entering Creighton was overwhelmingly Caucasian and just as likely to be male as female. Families were relatively stable with one in seven having parents who were divorced. Almost one-fourth of their mothers did not work outside the home. Slightly more than half had fathers who had Bachelor's degrees while only forty-percent had mothers who had a college degree. The average family income reported by the students was \$68,000 and eighty-seven percent reported they were receiving some financial assistance from their parents for college expenses. Tuition and fees in 1987-88 were \$6,076.

By fall 2006, the Caucasian population had fallen slightly to 87% but women now made up the majority in the freshman class. One in six freshman had parents who were divorced and the percent of mother's who did not work outside the home dropped in half, to twelve percent. Seventy-one percent of the mothers and fathers of the 2006 freshmen have college degrees and the reported average family income was \$120,000. Almost ninety-two percent reported receiving some financial assistance from their parents for college expenses. Tuition and fees in 2006-07 are slightly over \$25,000.

Inflation between September 1987 and September 2006 was 76.43%. Income of \$68,000 in 1987 would be equivalent to income of \$119,972 in 2006. Therefore, in adjusted inflation dollars, families in 2006 have exactly the same buying power as they did in 1987 even though the average income is higher. Tuition and fees between 1987 and 2006 increased 311%, 4.1 times the rate of inflation.

Six out of ten reported they studied six or more hours per week during their senior year of high school in 1987 and four out of ten indicated their average high school grades were A's. Half anticipated achieving at least a "B" average their freshman year. Almost forty percent indicated they had worked (for pay) sixteen or more hours per week and half reported they had done volunteer work during their senior year. Three-quarters of the class had consumed beer at least occasionally, seventy-three percent had experience with wine or liquor and twenty-five percent smoked cigarettes. Almost one in five anticipated joining a social fraternity or sorority (seventeen percent of the men and twenty-one percent of the women).

By 2006, seventy percent of the entering class reported they achieved an A average in high school while only half reported studying six or more hours per week. Seven out of ten were confident they would achieve at least a "B" average their first year and, in fact, seventy-two percent did achieve at least a 3.0 semester grade point average at the end of first semester. While the percentage who reported working sixteen or more hours per week (for pay) during their senior year of high school dropped to twenty-two percent, the percentage who had done volunteer work almost doubled to ninety-four percent. Only four in ten admitted consuming alcohol beverages in high school and those that smoked cigarettes dropped to thirteen percent. By 2006, the percentage of freshmen who anticipated joining a social sorority or fraternity had fallen to twelve percent (eight percent of the men and fifteen percent of the women).

While meeting Creighton's requirements for high school course preparation, the high school courses taken by the 1987 men and women differed somewhat. While both ninety-five percent of both sexes had completed three years of mathematics and one-half year of computer science, a higher percentage of men than women had completed two years of physical science (66% and 58%, respectively) and a higher percentage of women than men had completed two years of biological sciences (53% and 42%, respectively).

By 2006, in terms of the number of years spent studying certain subjects, both men and women were more prepared for college and the gender gap in physical and biological science preparation had disappeared. In 2006 however, there was a eight percentage point gap in the percentage of men and women reporting they had completed one-half year of computer science.

Changes in Creighton Freshmen: CIRP Data 1987-2006

In 1987, three-quarters of the freshmen indicated “Roman Catholic” was their religious preference while five percent reported they had no faith tradition. Although the freshmen were just as likely to label themselves “liberal” as “conservative”, their political views tended to reflect conservative stances especially on homosexuality, the death penalty and the legalization of marijuana.

By fall 2006, the percentage of students who indicated their religious preference was “Roman Catholic” had declined to sixty-one percent and those reporting no faith tradition had almost doubled to nine percent. The political climate had shifted and one-third of the freshmen indicated they were “conservative” compared to twenty percent who labeled themselves “liberal”. Views on social issues, however, reflect a more liberal view than in 1987. Only one out of four (compared to almost fifty percent in 1987) agreed there should be laws to prohibit homosexual relationships. Almost half of the freshmen agreed the death penalty should be abolished in 2006 compared to three in ten in 1987. Finally, the percentage who agreed that marijuana should be legal jumped from sixteen percent in fall 1987 to twenty-eight percent in fall 2006.

The overwhelming reason for deciding to attend any college for the 1987 freshman was “getting a better job” followed by “learning more about things that interest me”. Less than twenty percent reported that having parents that wanted them to attend college was a “very important” reason for doing so. Seventy-one percent indicated Creighton was their first choice. Almost twenty percent of freshmen who applied to no other institutions and twenty-one percent applied to four or more. Freshmen were attracted by Creighton’s good academic reputation and the fact that graduates got good jobs. Eighteen percent planned to become physicians, fifteen percent hoped to become attorneys, five percent wanted pharmacy, three percent hoped to become dentists and two percent were aiming for physical or occupational therapy.

“Learning more about things that interest me” followed by “preparing for graduate school” were the first and second reasons listed for attending any college in 2006. The percentage who reported that a “very important” reason for attending college was that their parents wanted them to go more than doubled in 2006 to forty-six percent. While seventy-seven percent indicated Creighton was their first choice, only ten percent applied to no other institutions and forty-five percent applied to four or more. Freshmen are still attracted to Creighton in 2006 because of its good academic reputation and the fact that graduates got good jobs. Twenty-one percent of the 2006 freshmen plan to become physicians, six percent hope to become attorneys, ten percent want to be pharmacists, three percent hope to become dentists and five percent are hoping to become physical or occupational therapists.

Career and financial security was important to the 1987 freshmen. Becoming an authority in his/her field and being well off financially were the most important life goals cited in 1987 (80% and 74%, respectively listed them as “essential/very important”). Helping others in difficulty and obtaining recognition from colleagues for contributions to their field followed (65% and 61%, respectively)

The 2006 freshmen appear to value family and service. Raising a family and helping others in difficulty were the two most important life goals cited by Creighton freshmen in 2006 (80% and 78%, respectively listed them as “essential/very important”). Being well off financially and becoming an authority in his/her field dropped in importance for this group of freshmen with 67% and 58%, respectively, citing them as “essential/very important”. The other double digit change in life objectives from 1987 to 2006 related to “being successful in a business of my own” which dropped twenty percentage points from fifty percent to thirty percent.

The 2006 freshmen are also much more confident of their abilities than the freshmen of 1987. Eight in ten rank themselves “above average or top 10%” compared to their peers in academic ability and drive to achieve. Almost seventy percent rate themselves highly on leadership ability compared to sixty percent twenty years ago. The 2006 freshmen are also more confident of their math ability, public speaking ability, intellectual self-confidence and social self-confidence than the 1987 freshmen.

If any department would like to look at the changes in your particular students over the intervening years, please let me know.