

Summary of the 2005 CIRP Freshman Survey

Background. The CIRP Freshman Survey is administered annually to incoming first-year students at Calvin and at colleges nationwide. Calvin has a nearly 40 year history of participation in the survey. The survey is coordinated by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA (<http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/heri.html>).

Calvin's results are compared with a group called Other Religious Four-Year Colleges, as distinguished from Catholic, Non-Sectarian, and Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities. Many in the Other Religious category are Protestant institutions with historical denominational ties, such as Alma, Carthage, Elmhurst, Valparaiso, and Wittenburg. In addition, CCCU schools with denominational affiliations are included--schools such as Abilene Christian, Bethel (IN), Messiah, Point Loma Nazarene, and Seattle Pacific. Detailed tables of these data comparisons can be found after the narrative.

HIGHLIGHTS

Reasons for Attending College. Calvin students are less likely than their peers at other institutions to view careers, graduate school, and making money as very important reasons for going to college. Sixty-four percent (64%) of students at Other Religious Four-Year Colleges said "To be able to make more money" was a very important reason in deciding to go to college compared to 47% of Calvin students. Similarly, 70% of comparison group students said "To get training for a specific career" was a very important reason compared to 54% for Calvin students. Preparation for graduate or professional school was also more important for students at Calvin's peer institutions, with 53% saying this was a very important reason compared to 44% of Calvin students.

The results on this last item appear to be related to gender differences. Calvin men are about equally likely as their male peers at other institutions to say that preparation for graduate school is a very important reason for them deciding to go to college (46% vs. 47%). However, Calvin women are significantly less likely than their female peers at comparison institutions to have rated this item as very important (43% vs. 57%).

Degree Aspirations. There appears to be increasingly less interest among first-year Calvin students in pursuing graduate degrees. When asked "What is the highest degree you plan to obtain at any college?" the percentage saying Bachelor's degree has increased over the past ten years, from 23% in 1995, to 33% in 2005. The percentage saying Master's, Ph.D. or various professional degrees has dropped from over 75% in 1995 to 66% in 2005.

Majors. Interest in Arts and Humanities majors is increasing, while teacher education appears to be in a bit of a slump. The proportion of incoming Calvin first-year students saying they plan to major in Arts and Humanities fields such as Art, English, Foreign Languages, Music, Theatre, Philosophy, Religion, etc. has increased from 13% and 12% in 1995 and 2000, respectively, to 16% in 2005. The percentage setting their sights on an education major dropped from 19% in 1995 and 2000 to 13% in 2005.

Reasons for Choosing Calvin. Academic reputation is becoming increasingly important to students in their decision to attend Calvin. When given a list of 18 factors potentially influencing their decision to attend, the item chosen most often as very important (79%) was “This college has a very good academic reputation.” The importance of this item has increased over recent years--in the 1995 CIRP survey, 67% selected this item as very important. Among our comparison group of Other Religious Four-Year Colleges, the percentage saying this item was very important in their decision was 59% in 2005 and roughly the same in 1995.

The second most important reason selected by Calvin students (69%) was “I was attracted by the religious affiliation/orientation of the college.” This item was selected by students at our group of comparison colleges (religious colleges, no less!) by only 28%. The importance of this item for Calvin students has increased over time, as the percent in 1995 saying this was very important in their decision was 53%.

Financial considerations were less important in Calvin student decision-making than for students choosing to go elsewhere. While 56% of students at comparison institutions said “I was offered financial assistance” was a very important reason in their decision-making, this was true for only 39% of Calvin students. In addition, the “cost of attending” was a very important factor for half as many Calvin students (12%) as for students at comparison institutions (23%).

Family Income. In a related vein, Calvin students are more likely to be from wealthier families than students from the comparison group of Other Religious Four-Year Colleges. The percentage of Calvin students who estimate their parent’s income to be \$60,000 or higher is 70% compared to 57% for students at comparison institutions.

Student Expectations. A higher percentage of Calvin students (75%) expect their religious beliefs/convictions to be strengthened during their college experience compared with those entering Other Religious Four-Year Colleges (44%). In addition, a higher percentage of Calvin students expect to participate in a study abroad program (44% vs. 29%). Sixty-three percent of Calvin students say chances are very good that they will be satisfied with their college choice compared with 55% of the comparison group. A slightly higher percentage of Calvin students say chances are very good that they will get a job to help pay for college expenses (56% vs. 47%) and that they will participate in volunteer or community service work (42% vs. 34%).

Student Self-Ratings. Calvin students rate themselves highest in Academic ability and Spirituality/Religiosity. When asked to rate themselves relative to their peers on 18 traits, Calvin students rate themselves highest in Academic Ability. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of Calvin first-time students rate themselves as either above average or in the top 10% in “Academic ability” when compared with the average person his/her age. This compares with 66% of students at comparison institutions. In addition, Calvin student’s ratings on this item have increased in the past decade, 69% answered the same way in 1995. Calvin students differ the most from their peers at Other Religious Four-Year Colleges in their self-ratings of religiousness and spirituality. Seventy percent (70%) of Calvin students

rate themselves above average or in the top 10% in religiousness compared to 45% of students at other institutions; and 69% of Calvin students rate themselves above average in spirituality compared with 49% of their peers.

Significant gender gaps exist among Calvin students in self-ratings of computer skills, mathematical ability, and physical health. While similar gender gaps exist between males and females at peer institutions, the computer skills and mathematical ratings differences between Calvin males and females are even more pronounced than the differences evident at comparison group institutions. Calvin women tend to rate themselves higher than Calvin men in “Drive to achieve” and “Understanding of others.”

Student Goals and Objectives. Integrating spirituality into one’s life and raising a family are the top rated objectives of incoming Calvin students, rated as Essential or Very important by 86% and 83% of students, respectively. While raising a family is also the top-rated objective of students at peer institutions (79%), the second most important objective for them is “helping others who are in difficulty (70%). A similar percentage of Calvin students rate this item as important (69%). Integrating spirituality into their lives is a much lower priority for students at other institutions (essential or very important for only 58%). Another of the large differences between objectives of Calvin students and those of their peers is the percentage saying “Being very well off financially” is an essential or very important objective (43% for Calvin vs. 66% for peer institutions). In addition, significantly fewer Calvin students today than ten years ago place a high importance on “Becoming an authority in my field” (44% in 2005 vs. 53% in 1995).

Political Views. Calvin students consider themselves to be more politically conservative than students at peer institutions. However, what may be surprising is that Calvin students today see themselves as more conservative than Calvin students did 10 years ago. Among the 2005 class of incoming students, 56% consider their political views “conservative” compared to 45% of the class of 1995. This compares with 33% of incoming students at Other Religious Four-Year Colleges in 2005 and 30% in 1995.

Two social/political issues on which Calvin students exhibit their political conservatism most emphatically are abortion and homosexuality. On the items “Abortion should be legal” and “Same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status,” only 12% and 17%, respectively, of Calvin students agreed, compared to 41% and 43% of students at Other Religious Four-Year Colleges. In addition, Calvin students differ substantially from their peers at other institutions in their views of casual sexual relations. Only 5% of incoming Calvin students agree that “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” compared with 32% of their peers at other institutions.

Student Activities/Behaviors. Fewer Calvin students have smoked cigarettes and drank beer than those entering ten years ago, mirroring a national trend. In addition, more have participated in volunteer work (96%) compared with ten years ago (86%).

First-Year Student Views and Development Educational Plans and Reasons for Selecting College Attended

	<u>2005 Survey</u>		<u>2000 Survey</u>		<u>1995 Survey</u>	
	Calvin College (N=833)	Other Religious Four-year Colleges ¹	Calvin College (N=841)	Other Religious Four-year Colleges ¹	Calvin College (N=857)	4 yr Private Protestant
Highest Degree Planned Anywhere						
None	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Bachelor's	33%	27%	28%	25%	23%	25%
Master's	41%	40%	44%	41%	46%	38%
Ph.D. or Ed.D.	12%	16%	14%	16%	15%	17%
M.D., D.O., D.D.S., D.V.M.	9%	9%	9%	9%	10%	12%
LL.B. or J.D.	3%	4%	2%	4%	4%	4%
B.D. or M.Div.	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Other	1%	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%
Student's Probable Career						
Business Executive	4%	7%	4%	8%	5%	7%
Clergy	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%
Computer Programmer	2%	2%	3%	4%	2%	2%
Engineer	11%	2%	10%	3%	10%	3%
Lawyer or Judge	2%	4%	2%	4%	3%	4%
Nurse	7%	4%	4%	2%	5%	3%
Physician	7%	6%	6%	8%	7%	9%
Scientific researcher	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%
Social, welfare, recreation worker	3%	1%	2%	1%	4%	2%
Teacher	13%	14%	20%	15%	18%	15%
Writer or journalist	2%	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%
Undecided	14%	14%	16%	13%	12%	13%
Other	33%	41%	27%	37%	27%	37%
Student's Probable Major						
Arts and Humanities	16%	17%	12%	15%	13%	13%
Biological Sciences	6%	7%	5%	8%	6%	9%
Business/Accounting	11%	16%	9%	16%	10%	14%
Education	13%	14%	19%	15%	19%	15%
Engineering	12%	2%	11%	3%	10%	3%
Physical Sciences	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Professional	17%	14%	13%	12%	14%	16%
Social Sciences	9%	11%	9%	11%	12%	11%
Undecided	7%	7%	11%	7%	8%	8%
Other	6%	9%	8%	11%	5%	8%
Reasons for selecting college*						
Relatives wanted me to come	12%	11%	9%	9%	9%	9%
Good academic reputation	79%	59%	73%	57%	67%	61%
Good social reputation	39%	31%	38%	28%	23%	25%
Offered financial assistance	39%	56%	36%	51%	34%	53%
Low tuition	12%	23%	2%	8%	4%	8%
Wanted to live near home	9%	17%	10%	15%	10%	15%
Religious affiliation/orientation	69%	28%	65%	28%	53%	25%
Size of college	55%	55%	54%	52%	50%	58%

*Percentages are of students who chose "very important" to each line item

¹Includes same schools as 4 Year Private Protestant stratification in earlier years.

² This question was worded differently in the 2000 survey, so we provide more comparable 1999 data here.

First-Year Student Views and Development

Family Background, Reason for Attending College, Religious Preference

	<u>2005 Survey</u>		<u>2000 Survey</u>		<u>1995 Survey</u>	
	Calvin College (N=833)	Other Religious Four-year Colleges ¹	Calvin College (N=841)	Other Religious Four-year Colleges ¹	Calvin College (N=857)	4 yr Private Protestant
Father's Education						
HS graduate or less	12%	29%	14%	28%	16%	28%
Some College or Postsecondary Educ	14%	20%	14%	21%	15%	22%
College Graduate	35%	28%	32%	27%	30%	26%
Some Graduate School	4%	2%	4%	2%	4%	3%
Graduate Degree	36%	21%	35%	21%	34%	21%
Mother's Education						
HS graduate or less	11%	25%	14%	27%	16%	30%
Some College or Postsecondary Educ	17%	24%	22%	25%	22%	26%
College Graduate	49%	33%	42%	31%	42%	28%
Some Graduate School	4%	3%	4%	3%	5%	3%
Graduate Degree	19%	16%	17%	15%	14%	14%
Estimated Parental Income						
Less than \$30,000	7%	16%	10%	20%	12%	22%
\$30,000 - \$59,999	23%	27%	31%	33%	42%	38%
\$60,000 - \$99,999	35%	28%	32%	27%	29%	25%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	20%	15%	16%	11%	9%	8%
\$150,000 or more	15%	14%	11%	9%	7%	7%
Average grade in high school?						
A or A+	30%	23%	29%	23%	23%	20%
A-	34%	23%	31%	21%	29%	19%
B+	18%	20%	17%	20%	20%	20%
B or below	18%	33%	23%	37%	28%	41%
Concern about financing college						
None	27%	32%	28%	33%	25%	27%
Some	59%	54%	60%	53%	58%	54%
Major	14%	14%	13%	14%	18%	19%
Reason for attending college*						
Become a more cultured person	40%	41%	39%	41%	35%	44%
Get a better job	66%	69%	64%	68%	61%	73%
Make more money	47%	64%	48%	63%	40%	64%
Gain general education	69%	64%	61%	64%	58%	65%
Parents wanted me to go	37%	43%	29%	36%	23%	34%
Learn more about things that interest me	80%	77%	74%	75%	69%	74%
Prepare for grad/prof. school	44%	53%	41%	54%	na	na
Get training for a specific career	54%	70%	67%	72%	na	na
Student's Religious Preference						
Baptist	5%	18%	8%	22%	6%	22%
Lutheran	3%	8%	3%	6%	4%	8%
Methodist	2%	9%	2%	9%	2%	11%
Presbyterian	15%	6%	13%	6%	13%	6%
Roman Catholic	1%	14%	2%	15%	2%	16%
Other Christian	68%	20%	69%	27%	68%	22%
Other religions	2%	3%	3%	7%	4%	7%
None	1%	9%	2%	9%	1%	9%

*Percentages are of students who chose "very important" to each line item

¹Includes same schools as 4 Year Private Protestant stratification

First-Year Student Views and Development ***Student Self-Ratings, Important Objectives, and Political Views***

	<u>2005 Survey</u>		<u>2000 Survey</u>		<u>1995 Survey</u>	
	Calvin College (N=833)	Other Religious Four-year Colleges ¹	Calvin College (N=841)	Other Religious Four-year Colleges ¹	Calvin College (N=857)	4 yr Private Protestant
Student Rated Self Above Average or Highest 10%						
Academic ability	79%	64%	77%	65%	69%	64%
Artistic ability	31%	29%	33%	28%	28%	25%
Computer skills	31%	33%	30%	30%	na	na
Competitiveness	na	na	49%	56%	53%	59%
Cooperativeness	75%	74%	70%	74%	69%	76%
Creativity	54%	56%	55%	56%	50%	51%
Drive to achieve	69%	72%	66%	72%	67%	73%
Emotional health	57%	54%	54%	56%	59%	59%
Leadership ability	60%	62%	58%	64%	57%	61%
Mathematical ability	48%	38%	49%	39%	49%	41%
Physical health	56%	56%	54%	58%	52%	57%
Popularity	na	na	30%	39%	34%	38%
Public speaking ability	38%	37%	37%	39%	36%	36%
Self-confidence (intellectual)	64%	59%	61%	61%	60%	57%
Self-confidence (social)	50%	51%	43%	53%	42%	49%
Self-understanding	57%	56%	54%	59%	na	na
Spirituality	69%	49%	61%	55%	na	na
Understanding of others	67%	67%	64%	67%	68%	74%
Writing ability	54%	46%	55%	46%	49%	45%
Objectives Considered to be Essential or Very Important						
Becoming accomplished in performing arts	15%	18%	13%	16%	12%	15%
Becoming an authority in my field	44%	57%	47%	57%	53%	63%
Obtaining recognition from my colleagues	34%	48%	33%	45%	37%	50%
Influencing the political structure	16%	20%	9%	18%	13%	18%
Influencing social values	47%	45%	41%	44%	46%	46%
Raising a family	83%	79%	78%	77%	78%	76%
Being very well off financially	43%	66%	43%	64%	35%	63%
Helping others who are in difficulty	69%	70%	64%	68%	64%	68%
Making a theoretical contribution to science	14%	15%	10%	14%	10%	15%
Writing original works (poems, novels, etc.)	16%	16%	14%	15%	13%	14%
Creating artistic work	15%	16%	13%	14%	10%	12%
Becoming successful in my own business	25%	38%	18%	37%	21%	35%
Cleaning up the environment	15%	19%	8%	17%	11%	21%
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	44%	46%	41%	44%	47%	45%
Helping to promote racial understanding	29%	32%	18%	32%	24%	35%
Keeping up to date with political affairs	30%	34%	20%	28%	26%	32%
Becoming a community leader	28%	35%	21%	35%	26%	36%
Integrating spirituality into my life	86%	58%	87%	64%	na	na
Political Views						
Far left	1%	3%	1%	3%	1%	2%
Liberal	9%	20%	12%	19%	9%	19%
Middle-of-the-road	32%	42%	39%	47%	42%	46%
Conservative	56%	33%	46%	29%	45%	30%
Far right	3%	3%	2%	2%	3%	3%

¹Includes same schools as 4 Year Private Protestant stratification

First-Year Student Views and Development Past Activities, Predictions of Future Activity, and Social/Political Views

	<u>2005 Survey</u>		<u>2000 Survey</u>		<u>1995 Survey</u>	
	Calvin College (N=833)	Other Religious Four-year Colleges ¹	Calvin College (N=841)	Other Religious Four-year Colleges ¹	Calvin College (N=857)	4 yr Private Protestant
Activities Noted as Frequent in the Past Year						
Smoked cigarettes	2%	4%	4%	7%	8%	8%
Felt overwhelmed by all I had to do	29%	29%	28%	30%	26%	28%
Felt depressed	6%	8%	6%	8%	7%	9%
Used a personal computer	83%	84%	80%	77%	56%	53%
Used internet for research/homework	80%	77%	60%	64%	na	na
Socialized with another racial/ethnic group	56%	70%	49%	67%	49%	64%
Activities Noted as Frequent or Occasional in the Past Year						
Attended a religious service	100%	90%	100%	91%	100%	91%
Participated in organized demonstrations	42%	54%	35%	48%	36%	45%
Drank beer	23%	35%	23%	35%	31%	42%
Performed volunteer work	96%	87%	89%	85%	86%	79%
Played a musical instrument	68%	47%	63%	45%	59%	46%
Studied with other students	89%	86%	87%	87%	87%	89%
Tutored another student	48%	50%	46%	52%	50%	54%
Student Spent 6 or More Hours Per Week During Senior Year:						
Studying/homework	41%	32%	38%	36%	49%	41%
Socializing with friends	74%	74%	79%	78%	80%	79%
Exercise or sports	50%	54%	49%	55%	49%	56%
Partying	8%	17%	9%	23%	15%	24%
Working (for pay)	50%	54%	63%	59%	62%	58%
Volunteer Work	7%	10%	6%	11%	7%	9%
Watching TV	24%	29%	20%	29%	23%	30%
Student's Estimates: Chances are Very Good that he/she Will:						
Change major field	16%	12%	17%	13%	17%	13%
Get a job to help pay for college expenses	56%	47%	57%	43%	57%	41%
Make at least a "B" average	56%	62%	65%	60%	55%	52%
Get a bachelor's degree	na	na	82%	77%	76%	76%
Be satisfied with this college	63%	55%	61%	53%	55%	54%
Do volunteer or community service work	42%	34%	31%	33%	36%	29%
Socialize with another racial/ethnic group	61%	66%	57%	66%	na	na
Participate in student clubs/groups	43%	44%	41%	47%	na	na
Play varsity/intercollegiate athletics	14%	28%	12%	27%	14%	27%
Participate in a study abroad program	44%	29%	na	na	na	na
Student Agrees Strongly or Somewhat						
Abortion should be legal	12%	41%	10%	39%	11%	46%
The death penalty should be abolished	39%	30%	40%	31%	26%	21%
Marijuana should be legalized	17%	29%	16%	26%	17%	26%
Colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech	63%	64%	72%	66%	66%	67%
No affirmative action in college admissions	54%	46%	58%	46%	63%	53%
Married women best at home	16%	22%	17%	24%	20%	25%
Right to legal marriage for same sex couples	17%	43%	14%	39%	na	na

¹Includes same schools as 4 Year Private Protestant stratification

First-Year Student Views and Development Selected Gender Differences 2005

	Calvin College		Other Religious 4-yr Colleges	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Student Rated Self Above Average or Highest 10%				
Computer skills	49%	17%	43%	26%
Drive to achieve	63%	74%	68%	74%
Emotional health	63%	52%	60%	49%
Leadership ability	63%	57%	67%	59%
Mathematical ability	60%	41%	45%	32%
Physical health	69%	46%	70%	46%
Public speaking ability	43%	35%	40%	35%
Self-confidence (intellectual)	72%	59%	67%	53%
Self-confidence (social)	54%	47%	57%	47%
Understanding of others	61%	72%	64%	69%
Objectives Considered to be Essential or Very Important				
Becoming an authority in my field	51%	38%	59%	55%
Obtaining recognition from my colleagues	41%	29%	50%	47%
Influencing social values	41%	51%	42%	48%
Being very well off financially	50%	37%	69%	63%
Helping others who are in difficulty	60%	76%	62%	75%
Becoming successful in a business of my own	33%	19%	44%	34%
Improving understanding of other countries and cultures	49%	62%	43%	54%
Keeping up to date with political affairs	34%	27%	37%	32%
Reason for Attending College*				
To be a more cultured person	31%	47%	32%	47%
Make more money	53%	43%	68%	61%
Gain general education	62%	75%	55%	70%
Student's Estimates: Chances are Very Good that he/she Will:				
Get a job to help pay for college expenses	49%	62%	38%	54%
Do volunteer or community service work	29%	51%	22%	43%
Socialize with another racial/ethnic group	55%	65%	59%	71%
Be satisfied with your college	58%	67%	47%	61%
Communicate regularly with professors	28%	35%	32%	44%
Strengthen religious beliefs and convictions	65%	82%	35%	51%
Seek personal counseling	5%	6%	6%	8%
Participate in student clubs/groups	37%	47%	31%	54%
Participate in a study abroad program	29%	55%	20%	35%
Student Agrees Strongly or Somewhat				
Colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech	60%	66%	59%	67%
No affirmative action in college admissions	55%	53%	51%	42%
Marijuana should be legalized	21%	14%	34%	25%
Married women best at home	23%	11%	29%	16%
Important to have laws against homosexual relationships	53%	51%	37%	25%
Federal military spending should be increased	43%	30%	43%	35%
The death penalty should be abolished	31%	45%	25%	33%
Reasons for Selecting College Attended*				
Religious affiliation/orientation	63%	74%	22%	32%
Offered financial assistance	31%	44%	51%	60%
Size of college	42%	64%	43%	63%
Activities Done Occasionally or Frequently During the Past Year				
Studied with other students	86%	91%	83%	89%
Drank beer	28%	20%	43%	28%
Felt overwhelmed by all I had to do	21%	35%	17%	37%