

Cornell University 1999 Cycles Survey Intra-Institutional Major Findings

The following is an analysis of Cornell's coded data from the 1999 Cycles Survey Office of Institutional Research and Planning (IRP) administered last spring in conjunction with a group of highly selective private universities and colleges. This year's Cycles Survey was administered as a web-based survey at Cornell for the first time. The survey targeted the entire freshman and sophomore classes, resulting in 2,163 respondents. The overall response rate was 36%; 39% for freshmen and 32% for sophomores. There are two sections to the analysis:

1. A three page executive summary of the major findings; and
2. A more extensive set of tables that provide numerical comparisons – within Cornell – by class, gender, race/ethnicity, and college.

Noteworthy findings from the Cycles Survey include:

- In general, students were satisfied with their overall experience at Cornell; freshmen were more satisfied than sophomores; females were more satisfied than males.
- Overall, students were satisfied with their academic experience, accessibility of faculty members, and availability of courses. However, students' experience with academic advising and size of classes were less satisfactory.
- In general, men were more satisfied with their academic experience at Cornell than women; freshmen were more satisfied than sophomores; White students were most likely to be satisfied.
- Overall, students were satisfied with their residential experience at Cornell, but less satisfied with residential life office and opportunity to meet students from other residences. Freshmen were more likely to have a positive view of residential experience, residential life office, and opportunity to meet students from other residences than sophomores.
- Underrepresented minorities were least likely to feel accepted as a part of university community; Underrepresented minorities were most likely to experience and witness racial harassment on campus.

As in the past, these distributions are intended to serve as conversation starters, not as the final or definitive word on any particular aspect of students' undergraduate experiences at Cornell. There is a host of other important information and a wealth of institutional knowledge and experience that also needs to be brought to bear in deliberating the issues raised by the findings of this analysis. We believe, however, that this is important information that deserves further consideration. And in fact, we know, for example, that:

1. As we begin to prepare for our decennial reaccreditation self-study with the Middle States Association/Commission on Higher Education, these data will play an integral role in our depiction of institutional assessment efforts;

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2. Susan Murphy and her colleagues within Student and Academic Services will be using these data in their continuing efforts to understand more fully student perceptions of and satisfaction with the services they provide;
3. These data will play a key role in helping to inform Cornell's participation in an American Academic of Arts and Sciences sponsored symposium on the educational inputs of the changing demographics of higher education that Mary Sansalone, Susan Murphy, Kathy Abrams, and Michael Matier are participating in;
4. As it has in the past, we anticipate that portions of these data will be considered by the Academic Leadership Series at one or more of its upcoming meetings;
5. Bob Harris, Bob Johnson, Bob Cooke and Campus Climate Committee will be utilizing portions of these data to have a better understanding of students' perceptions and experiences on campus climate; and
6. The Admissions and Financial Aid communities will be looking at this data in detail seeking information to assist them with more accurately and effectively marketing the university to prospective students. They will as well, utilize this information to help them identify ways they can enhance services to those students who are admitted and eventually matriculate with financial need.

We expect there will be many other possible venues for discussing this information. Please know that our office is prepared to assist you in framing such conversations with the appropriate components of these data, as well as to consider with you how to most effectively have the necessary debate and dialogue.

Your questions, suggestions, requests for further assistance, and any other feedback are welcomed, and I can be reached at hk4@cornell.edu or 255-7015.

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Executive Summary of Intra-Institutional Major Findings

Response Rates (Table Set 1)

- For a web-based survey of the entire freshman and sophomore classes, the overall response rate to the survey was 36%. Freshmen (39%) were more likely to respond than sophomores (32%).
- Women (42%) were more likely to respond than men (30%). Asian American (38%) students responded at the highest rate, followed by White (37%), international (35%), Native American (35%), Hispanic (31%), and African American (24%) students. Among the colleges, AAP had the lowest response rate (22%), ALS the highest (39%).

Satisfaction with Cornell experience (Table Set 2)

- Students' level of satisfaction with overall experience at Cornell varies significantly by class, college, race/ethnicity, and gender. On a four-point scale (1=very dissatisfied; 4= very satisfied) freshmen (3.43) were more satisfied with their overall experience than sophomores (3.33).
- Students in ILR (3.56) and Human Ecology (3.51) were the most satisfied; AAP (3.32) and A & S (3.34) students the least. White students (3.47) were more satisfied than international (3.21), underrepresented minority (3.22), and Asian American (3.24) students. Women (3.43) were generally more satisfied than men (3.33).
- Combined, the freshmen and sophomores expressed the highest degree of satisfaction (mean ≥ 3.25 on a 4-point scale) with the following services, facilities, and aspects of Cornell: "resources in the libraries" (3.53), "services provided by the libraries" (3.45), "security on campus" (3.32), "cultural activities" (3.32), and "on-campus job(s)" (3.25).
- Students were least satisfied (mean < 2.75 on a 4-point scale) with: "student government system" (2.45), "financial aid package" (2.46), "student health service" (2.70), "administration in general" (2.71), "residential life office" (2.71), "sense of community on campus" (2.74), and "financial aid office" (2.75).
- Generally speaking, looking at the full range of mean scores, facilities and aspects of college they were queried about freshmen were more satisfied than sophomores. "On campus job(s)" was the only factor where sophomores had significantly higher mean than freshmen.
- Men seemed higher than women only on "academic experience" and "security on campus."

Campus Climate Issues (Tables Sets 2, 3, 4, & 9)

- Overall, students' sense of community on campus was almost satisfactory (a mean of 2.74 on a 4-point scale).
- White students were most likely to feel "accepted as a part of university community," while Underrepresented minorities were least likely.
- 67% of Asian American freshmen and sophomores had a roommate of a different racial/ethnic background while at Cornell. This was also true for 61% of underrepresented minority students, but only 38% of Whites.
- Female students were more likely to have made progress in "relating to people of different races, nations, and religions" than their male counterparts. Underrepresented minorities were more likely to have done this, while White and Asian American students were less likely. AAP students reported the most development to their ability to "relating to people of different races, nations, and religions," while Engineering students reported the least.
- Overall, the students viewed "alcohol use" (a mean of 3.15 on a 5-point scale) as a problem at Cornell to some or great extent. Alcohol use was the most highly scored item among various problems on campus.

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- Overall, freshmen and sophomores perceived "racial harassment" (a mean of 2.48 on a 5-point scale) and "harassment on the basis of sexual orientation" (2.01) as problems at Cornell to some extent.
- Females were more likely to have experienced or witnessed sexual and racial harassment than their male counterparts. Underrepresented minorities were most likely to have experienced or witnessed sexual and racial harassment, while White and international students were least likely. Sophomores were more likely to view sexual and racial harassment as problems at Cornell than freshmen.
- Overall, about 8% of students reported experiencing sexual harassment, and about 18% reported witnessing. Approximately 7% of students responded experiencing racial harassment, and nearly 20% responded witnessing.
- 14% of females reported experiencing sexual harassment at Cornell, while only 2% of males reported the same. 20% of females witnessed sexual harassment, while 15% of males did.
- 27% of Underrepresented minorities reported experiencing racial harassment, while only 2% of Whites did. 45% of Underrepresented minorities witnessed racial harassment, while only 15% of Whites did.
- 18% of Hotel students reported experiencing sexual harassment, while only 5% of Engineering students did. 12% of Hotel students experienced racial harassment, while only 4% of Engineering students did. 30% of AAP students indicated witnessing sexual harassment, while only 12% of Engineering students did. 35% of ILR students indicated witnessing racial harassment, while only 12% of Engineering students did.

Advising, Availability of Faculty, and Academic Life (Table Sets 2 & 9)

- Overall, freshmen and sophomores were satisfied with "academic experience" (a mean of 3.18 on a 4-point scale), "accessibility of faculty members" (3.09), and "availability of courses" (3.04). However, students' experience with "academic advising" (2.79) and "size of classes" (2.92) at Cornell were less satisfactory.
- Freshmen were more likely to be satisfied with "academic experience," "accessibility of faculty members," "size of classes," and "availability of courses" than sophomores.
- White students were most likely to be satisfied with "academic experience," "size of classes," and "availability of courses" at Cornell. Asian American students were least likely to be satisfied with "accessibility of faculty members" and "availability of courses."
- Students in Hotel were most likely to be satisfied with "accessibility of faculty members," while ILR students were least likely. Students in ALS were most likely to be satisfied with "academic advising," while students in A&S and AAP were least likely. Students in Hotel and AAP were most likely to be satisfied with "size of classes," while students in Human Ecology were least likely. Students in A&S were most likely to be satisfied with "availability of courses," while students in Hotel were least likely.
- Freshmen were more likely to agree that faculty members care about students, are easy to contact or talk with, and have been responsive to students' needs than sophomores. Among racial/ethnic groups, White students were most likely to find faculty caring, responsive to students' needs, easy to contact or talk with, and willing to spend time outside of classroom. Asian American students were least likely.
- White students were most likely to believe having interaction with faculty members outside of classroom is beneficial to them for their academic and personal growth, while Asian American students were least likely.
- On average, sophomores met with their advisor or another faculty for academic advising less frequently than freshmen during the fall 1998 semester. 11% of sophomores reported never meeting with their advisor; 6% of freshmen.

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- On average, Underrepresented minorities received academic advising most frequently, while Asian American and White students did least frequently. More than one fifth of Underrepresented minorities met with their advisor or another faculty member at least 5 times during the semester, while 13% of Whites and 14% of Asian Americans did.
- On average, students in Engineering received academic advising most frequently; students in ILR least frequently. 33% of ILR students never met with their advisor during the semester, while only 4% of ALS students and 5% of Engineering students did.

Financial Matters (Table Sets 2 & 7)

- Freshmen were more satisfied with "financial aid office," "financial aid package," and "controller's office (student accounts)" than sophomores. Underrepresented minorities had the most positive view of "financial aid office," "financial aid package," and "controller's office (student accounts)," while international students had the most negative view.
- More than 19% of Underrepresented minorities reported not renting or owning a personal computer, while only 6% of Whites and 7% of Asian Americans reported the same.

Residential Life (Table Sets 2 & 11)

- Overall, students were satisfied with residential experience at Cornell (a mean of 3.20 on a 4-point scale). However, students' experience with "residential life office" (2.71) and "opportunity to meet students from other residences" (2.76) were less than satisfactory.
- Freshmen were more likely to have a positive view of "residential experience," "residential life office" and "opportunity to meet students from other residences" than sophomores. Women were more satisfied with "residential experience" and "residential life office" than men. Underrepresented minorities were most likely to be satisfied with "residential experience," while international students were least likely.
- 98% of freshmen reported living on campus residence hall (either traditional hall or program house), and 59% of sophomores did.
- 19% of freshmen and 24% of sophomores were the members of fraternity or sorority. 17% of males and 24% of females belonged to a fraternity or sorority. 27% of White students, 15% of Underrepresented minorities, 8% of Asian American students, and 5% of international students belonged to a fraternity or sorority.
- Freshmen were more satisfied with Greek life than sophomores. Women tended to be more satisfied with Greek life than men.