



Institutional Research and Assessment Report

March 31, 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CIRP FRESHMAN SURVEY RESULTS FALL 2008

Each fall since 1992, the University of Idaho has administered the UCLA-HERI Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey, in order to better understand our incoming class of students. The survey yields information on student demographics, study patterns and social activities in the senior year of high school, academic self-assessment, career goals, ways of financing college education, and objectives of college study. In addition, we are able to compare how U Idaho students differ from students nationwide and from previous classes of U Idaho students. These data are used to plan and improve academic programs and student services.

This year, as in the previous two years, the survey was administered in the Core Discovery classes. This year's response rate was eighty-four percent (84%), higher than the previous year.

Freshmen are asked to rate themselves on a list of skills and abilities "compared with the average person your age". U Idaho students' ratings are typically lower than similar self-ratings provided by their peers at public universities on all attributes. The top five areas in which U Idaho students reported they rate "above average" or "highest 10%" were: "cooperativeness" (72%, up 3%), "drive to achieve" (70%, up 1%), "academic ability" (63%, down 3%), "understanding of others" (62%, up 3%), and "leadership ability" (60%, down 1%).

Student perception of the U Idaho's academic reputation and graduates getting good jobs rose. In addition, cost is more important to U Idaho students than their peers at public universities, while reputation is more important to peers than to U Idaho students in selecting their colleges.

Interestingly, U Idaho students spend less time than their peers "partying," with over one-half (51%) reporting they spent one hour per week or less, which is the lowest rate since the U Idaho began participating in the survey in 1992. However, they also spend less time than their peers in "volunteer work," with fifty-five percent (55%, down 3%, compared to 48% of peers) spending less than one hour per week, and spending less than one hour per week in "student clubs/groups" (50%, up 3%, compared to their peers' 39%).

Ninety-one percent (91%, no change from last year) of respondents report that their overall impression of the U Idaho is "very positive" or "positive."



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CIRP FRESHMAN SURVEY RESULTS FALL 2008

INTRODUCTION

Each fall since 1992, the University of Idaho has administered the UCLA-HERI Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey, in order to better understand our incoming class of students. The survey generates information on student demographics, study patterns and social activities in the senior year of high school, academic self-assessment, career goals, ways of financing college education, and objectives of college study. In addition, we are able to compare how U Idaho students differ from students nationwide and from previous classes of U Idaho freshmen. These data are used to plan and improve academic programs and student services.

The survey was administered in the Core Discovery courses, a required course for all freshmen; 1,212 first-time full-time freshmen responded, yielding an eighty-four percent (84%) response rate, up six percent (6%) from last year. Response rates are dependent on the cooperation of leadership and faculty in the CORE Discovery courses, which was excellent this year, and the University of Idaho is grateful for their time.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Consistent with previous years, ninety-two percent (92%, down 1%) of first-time full-time freshmen graduated from public high schools, charter schools or magnet schools, seven percent (7%) from private schools, and one percent (1%) were home-schooled. Ninety-five percent (95%, down 1%) reported that they had graduated from high school in 2008 (compared to 99% of their peers at all public universities). Ninety-seven percent (97%, no change from 2007) reported they are 19 years of age or younger. Freshman women have consistently reported being slightly younger than men, with sixty-four percent (64%) of women reporting they were 18 or younger on December 31, 2008 compared with fifty-four percent (54%) of men.

A greater number of respondents reported they had an average grade in high school of A-, A or A+ than those in 2007 (46%, up 2%), with a forty-seven percent (47%, down 2%) reporting a grade point average of B-, B or B+. Consistent with previous years, women reported higher grade point averages than men, with eleven percent (11%) more women reporting they received a GPA of A-, A or A+ during high school. Eighty-six percent (86%, up 5%) of respondents described the racial composition of the last high school they attended as "mostly" or "completely white." Additionally, eighty-six percent (86%, no change from 2007) described the neighborhood where they grew up as "mostly" or "completely white."

Also reasonably consistent with previous years, ninety percent (90%, down 1%) are White/Caucasian, and over seven out of ten reported their permanent home is more than 100 miles away from the Moscow campus. Eighty-six percent (86%, up 3%) planned to live in on-campus housing during their fall term at the U Idaho, with over one-quarter (28%) reporting they will live in a fraternity or sorority house compared to less than one percent of their peers at public universities. Nearly all respondents are U.S. citizens (98%, no change) while ninety-five percent (95%, down 1%) reported English as their native language.

Seventy-one percent (71%, down 1%) of respondents estimate their parents make less than \$100,000 per year, with the median in the range of \$60,000 to \$74,999, consistent with last year. Over one-half reported their fathers and mothers had a college or graduate degree. Seventy percent (70%, up 1%) of freshmen reported their parents are “both alive and living with each other” compared to seventy-four (74%) of their peers at public universities. While twenty-six percent (26%, up 3%) percent of respondents reported their fathers have no religious preference and seventeen percent (17%, up 1%) reported their mothers have none, thirty-two (32%, up 3%) percent of freshmen reported they themselves have no religious preference.

In a question restored to the survey this year from the 2006 survey, freshmen were asked how many years during high school they studied a variety of subjects. Ninety-nine percent studied History/American Government for one year (about the same as their peers at other public universities); ninety-seven percent (97%) studied English for four years and mathematics for three years (1% and 2% fewer than peers, respectively); eighty percent (80%) studied a Foreign Language for two years (16% fewer than peers at other public universities); seventy-seven percent studied Arts and/or Music for one year (6% fewer than peers); sixty-five percent (65%) studied computer science for one-half year (8% more than peers); fifty-five percent (55%) studied physical science for two years (12% fewer than peers), and forty-two percent (42%) studied Biological Science for two years (11% fewer than peers).

In another item restored to the survey this year from 2004, UI students reported having a disability more often than their peers at other public universities. Over two percent (2%) reported having a “learning disability,” two percent (2%) are “partially sighted or blind.” Four percent (4%) reported having other disabilities including “hearing,” “orthopedic,” and “health-related” disabilities.

More students reported that the University of Idaho was their first choice for college this year (74%, up 2%), compared with only sixty-one percent (61%) reporting the same nationally regarding the university they are attending. Ninety-two percent (92%) reported they were accepted by their first choice college, compared with only seventy-four percent (74%) of their peers at public universities. Thirty-one percent (31%, down 1%) did not apply for admission to any colleges other than the U Idaho. Five percent (5%) have taken courses at the U Idaho prior to this term, while twelve percent (12%) have taken courses at other institutions since leaving high school.

RESPONSE COMPARISONS

Skills and Abilities

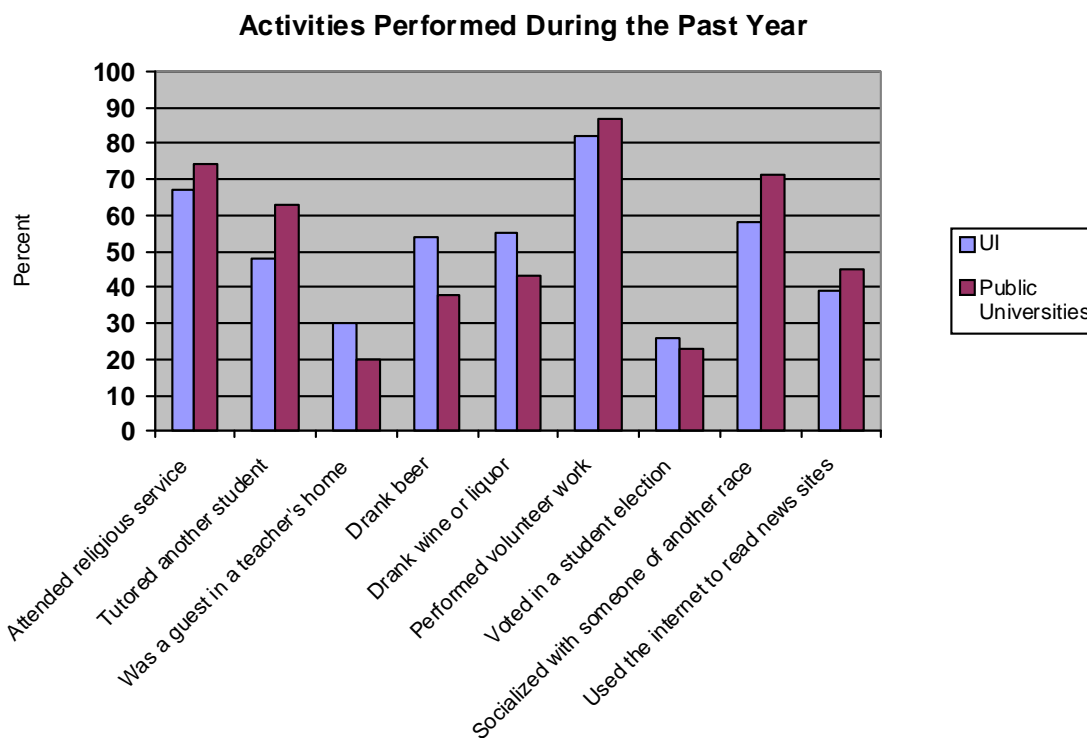
Each year, freshmen are asked to rate themselves on a list of skills and abilities "compared with the average person your age". U Idaho students' ratings are typically lower than similar self-ratings provided by their peers at public universities on all attributes. The top five areas in which U Idaho students reported they rate "above average" or "highest 10%" were: "cooperativeness" (72%, up 3%), "drive to achieve" (70%, up 1%), "academic ability" (63%, down 3%), "understanding of others" (62%, up 3%), and "leadership ability" (60%, down 1%). The top five items with the greatest difference in ratings between U Idaho and public universities were "academic ability" (16% below peers), "mathematical ability" (12% below peers), "computer skills" (8% below peers), "drive to achieve" (8% below peers), and "emotional" (8% below peers).

Several additional items were added to this question this year:

- "Ability to work cooperatively with diverse people" (78%, 4% below peers);
- "Tolerance of others with different beliefs" (77%, 1% below peers);
- "Ability to see the world from someone else's perspective" (62%, 7% below peers);
- "Ability to discuss and negotiate controversial issues" (61%, 6% below peers);
- and,
- "Openness to having my own views challenged" (60%, <1% below peers);

Activities

Each year students are asked to report on their activities during the previous year, typically their senior year in high school. The top five activities in which students reported participating "frequently" were "studied with other students" (84%, down 5%), "performed volunteer work" (82%, up 3%), "used the Internet for research or homework" (75%, no change), "attended a religious service" (67%, down 2%), and "performed community service as part of a class" (63%, up 8% and new to the top five this year). While the top five are slightly different from last year, they are similar to those reported by their peers at other public universities; the only difference is that "came late to class" appears in the top five list of peer universities. The table below illustrates the areas with the greatest differences between U Idaho students and students from other public universities. U Idaho new freshmen reporting more experience with alcohol than their peers at other public universities has been observed every year on this survey.



Financing College Education

Consistent with the last several years, sixty-four percent (64%) of U Idaho students are concerned about their ability to finance their college education, about the same as their peers. U Idaho students are less likely to use "family resources" than are their peers, with forty percent (40%, down 6%), reporting they will use less than \$1,000, compared with only twenty-six percent (26%) at public universities. Seventy-one percent (71%, up 6%, compared to 68% of peers) expect to help pay for college with their "own resources." More U Idaho students are receiving aid which need not be repaid (grants, scholarships, military funding, etc.) than last year. In addition, U Idaho students receive more aid than their peers at public universities do, though their peers receive slightly higher amounts. Sixty-six percent (66%, up 1%) anticipate using more than \$1,000 from "aid which need not be repaid" (about 9% higher than their peers), and forty-two percent (42%, up 2%) from "aid which must be repaid" (the same as their peers). About five percent (5%, up 1%) will use money from other sources.

Reasons for Attending College

While the top five "very important" reasons in influencing students' decisions to attend the University of Idaho were nearly the same as they have been in previous years, there was a shift in the importance of those reasons. Student perception of the U Idaho's academic reputation and graduates getting good jobs rose. In addition, cost is more important to U Idaho students than their peers at public universities, while reputation is more important to peers than to U Idaho students in selecting their colleges. The top five reasons noted include: "the cost of attending this college" (56%, down 3%, and 19% higher than peers); "I was offered financial assistance" (50%, down 2%, and 16% higher than peers); "this college has a very good academic reputation" (47%, up 7%, but 20%

below peers); “this college’s graduates get good jobs” (40%, up 8% and 15% below peers); and “a visit to campus” (37%, up 1%, the same as peers).

Those items with the least impact on the decision to attend the U Idaho, and reported as “very important” by the fewest number of respondents, included “private college counselor advised me” (2%), “I was attracted by the religious affiliation/orientation of the college” (2%), “my relatives wanted me to come here” (5%), and “I was admitted through an Early Action or Early Decision program” (5%).

Nearly three-quarters of U Idaho respondents reported that the highest academic degree they intend to obtain “at any college” was either a bachelor’s or master’s degree, with an additional twenty-four percent (24%, no change from previous years) reporting they plan to obtain a Ph.D., Ed.D., J.D., medical, or divinity degree. Ninety-five percent (95%) of U Idaho respondents reported they intended to obtain their degree at the University of Idaho. However, when asked specifically “do you expect to complete your degree at U Idaho”, only seventy-four percent (74%, up 6%) responded “yes”, while seventeen percent (17%, down 4%) reported, “I don’t know,” and eight percent (8%, down 3%) do not plan to earn a degree or plan to transfer. For the seven percent (7%, down 3%) that are planning to transfer, the primary reason is “personal” (35%, up 2%), with an additional twenty-eight percent (28%, down 2%) reporting that they are looking for a “stronger program in major/career interest.” Other reasons for transferring included: “financial reasons” (14%), “the UI doesn’t offer a major in my chosen field” (12%), and “other college/university closer to home” (11%).

Student Effort and Engagement

One component of an effective teaching and learning environment is an understanding of the attitudes and experiences beyond academia of our incoming freshman. Several items in the CIRP Freshman Survey ask students to report on elements of their engagement in specific activities during their last year in high school.

It is interesting to note that U Idaho students spent slightly more time studying than reported in the previous year, but less than their peers at public universities, consistent with previous years’ responses. Seventy-two percent (72%, no change from the previous year) of the respondents reported spending five hours or less in a typical week studying or doing homework during their last year in high school, with the largest group of students (34%, up 2%) reporting they spent “3 to 5 hours” in a typical week, and eighteen percent (18%, no change) reported spending “6 to 10 hours.” Nineteen percent (19%, up 4%) of their peers from public universities reported spending 11 or more hours studying per week, compared to ten percent (10%, up 1%) from the U Idaho.

In addition, U Idaho students reported spending about the same or slightly less time this year than last “socializing with friends,” “partying,” “working,” in “student clubs/groups,” “playing video/computer games,” and “watching TV.” However, they are reporting having spent slightly more time in “volunteer work,” “household/childcare duties,” “exercising or sports,” and “talking with teachers outside of the class.”

Interestingly, U Idaho students spend less time than their peers “partying,” with over one-half (51%) reporting they spent one hour per week or less, which is the lowest rate since the U Idaho began participating in the survey in 1992. However, they also spend less time than their peers in “volunteer work,” with fifty-five percent (55%, down 3%, compared to 48% of peers) spending less than one hour per week, and spending less than one hour per week in “student clubs/groups” (50%, up 3%, compared to their peers’ 39%).

In addition, when asked about time spent with online social networks (MySpace, Facebook, etc.) eighteen percent (18%, down 4%) of U Idaho students reported they had spent no time with the networks, while only eleven percent (11%) of their peers reported the same.

Consistent with previous years, U Idaho women’s responses about their activities during their last year in high school were slightly different from those of the men. Women were likely to report they spent more time studying, volunteering, in student clubs or groups, talking with teachers, and reading for pleasure than were men, but less time socializing with friends, exercising, partying, or watching TV. Women were also considerably less likely to spend time playing video or computer games than were men, but slightly more time in online social networks.

In one item students are asked to estimate the chances that they will complete certain activities that research shows can increase student engagement. The top most frequently reported areas in which U Idaho respondents reported the chances were “very good” are:

- “Socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group” (59%, up 2%);
- “Make at least “B” average” (58%, up 2%);
- “Be satisfied with your college” (51%, up 4%); and,
- “Get a job to help pay for college expenses” (49%, down 1%).

In addition, several items were restored from previous versions of the survey:

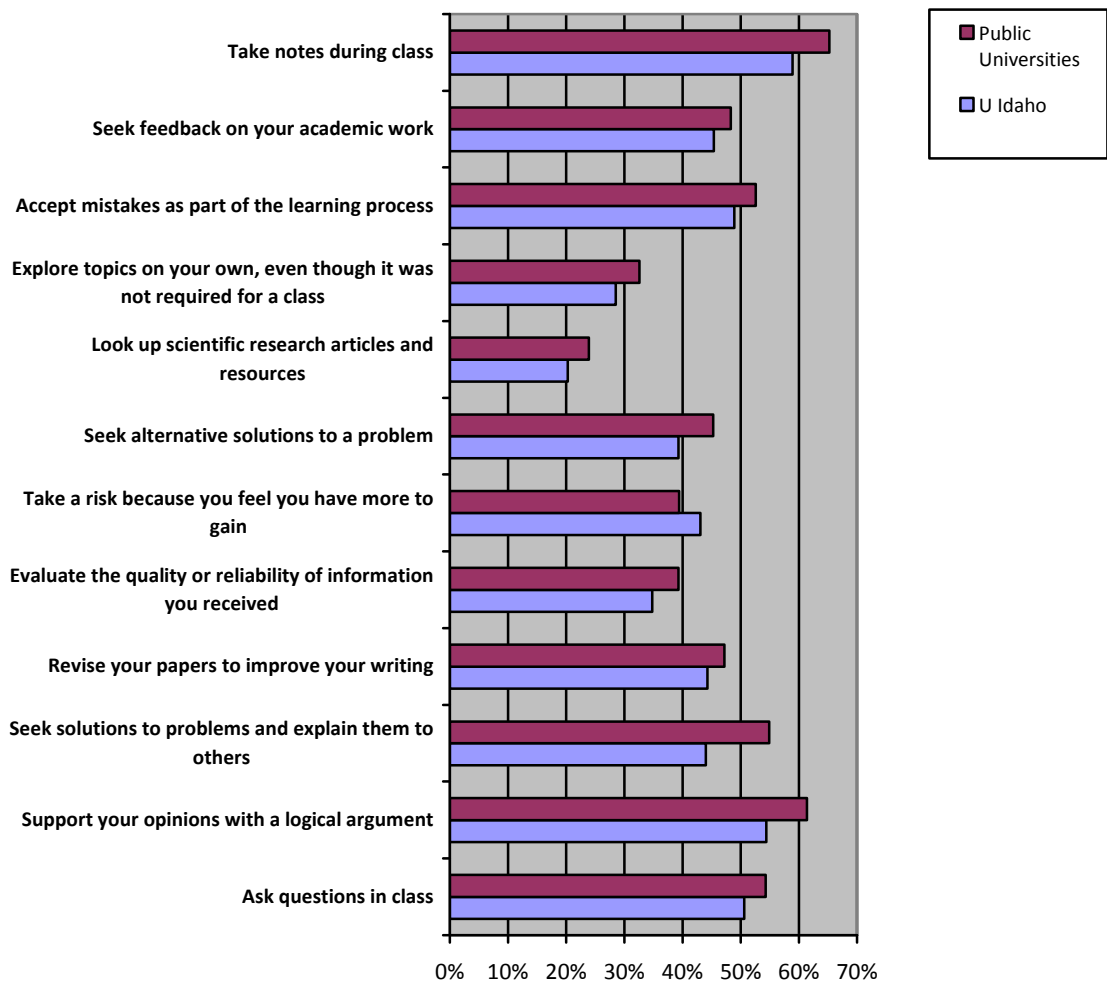
- “Discuss course content with students outside of class” (44%);
- “Work on a professor’s research project” (22%); and,
- “Get tutoring help in specific courses” (22%).

Those areas in which there was the greatest difference between U Idaho students and their peers were:

- “Join a social fraternity or sorority” (28% U Idaho, 11% peers);
- “Participate in student clubs/groups” (33% U Idaho, 50% peers);
- “Participate in a study abroad program” (21% U Idaho, 32% peers);
- “Socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group” (59% U Idaho, 68% peers);
- “Get tutoring help in specific courses” (22% U Idaho, 32% peers);
- “Discuss course content with students outside of class” (44% U Idaho, 52% peers);
- “Be satisfied with your college” (51% U Idaho, 59% peers);

One item, new last year, asked students how “frequently” they participated in a variety of activities during the past year. The chart below illustrates the differences between U Idaho student responses and those of their peers at public universities. This being a high profile election year, it might be worthwhile pointing out that a lower percentage (11.2%) of UI new frosh reported they “worked on a local, state or national political campaign” this year than last year (12.1%). There was no change in our peer institutions on this item (11.5% both 2007 and 2008), but nationally, across all public universities, the percentage rose slightly from 11.7% to 12.5%.

During the Past Year, Students Would Frequently



Objectives Considered Important

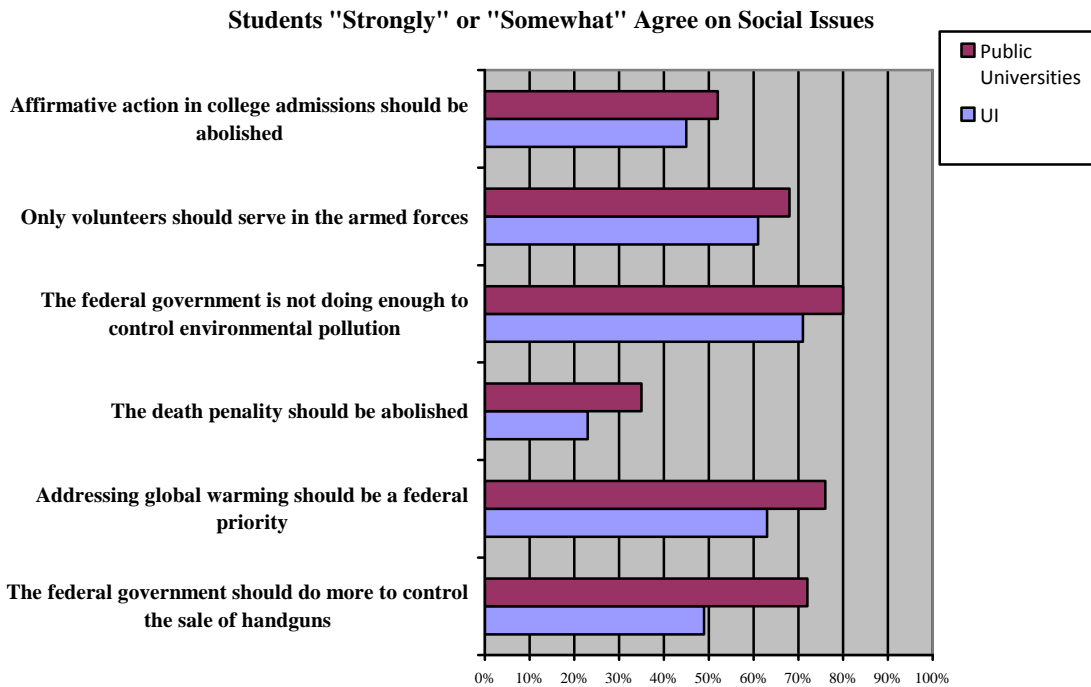
The top five objectives that U Idaho students considered “essential” or “very important” are similar to the top five of last year and the same as those selected by all public universities. They include “raising a family” (72%, down 2%), “being very well off financially” (71%, up 1%), “helping others who are in difficulty” (64%, no change),

“becoming an authority in my field” (56%, down 1%), and “obtaining recognition from my colleagues for contributions to my special field” (52%, up 3%).

Political Views and Opinions

Respondents from both public universities and the U Idaho are continuing to move slightly to the left when describing their political views, though, as in the past, U Idaho students appear to be slightly more conservative than their peers overall. Nonetheless, most U Idaho students characterize themselves as middle-of-the-road (45%, up 2%), while not quite one-third characterize themselves as conservative or far right (26%, down 2%) and liberal or far left (29%, up 1%).

U Idaho students consistently demonstrate their conservative views more than their peers at public universities as well. The table below lists a series of items in which students responded “strongly” or “somewhat” agree to social issues and in which the difference between U Idaho students and their peers were the greatest.



SUPPLEMENTAL U IDAHO QUESTIONS

The final set of items on the Freshman Survey is a series of supplemental questions provided by the University of Idaho for U Idaho students only. As in the past, nearly seven of ten freshmen (68%, down 1%) reported that they made the decision to attend the University of Idaho in their senior year in high school. Fifty-five percent (55%, up 1%) reported that they had considered seriously other non-Idaho public institutions, while slightly fewer considered only Idaho schools this year (26%, down 2%) and nineteen percent (19%, up 1%) only considered attending the U Idaho.

Fifty-six percent (56%, no change from last year) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that participating in events such as the Jazz Festival, JEMS, FFA or other U Idaho-sponsored events influenced their decision to attend U Idaho. World Wide Web admissions and information sites and personal letters from a college representative continue to be considerably more effective than Viewbooks, recruitment videos, or CD-ROMs in assisting students to make the decision to attend the U Idaho.

Nearly eight of ten students reported they were satisfied with the advising process, and nine of ten were satisfied with their class schedules. Whereas eighty-eight percent (88%, up 2%) were “very certain” or “somewhat certain” about their career goals, seventeen percent (17%, down 2%) were uncertain of their choice of major.

About 55% (up 3%) of respondents report they expect to be working during the fall semester. Of those, 66% (up 6%) expect to be working 12 hours or less per week while the remainder expect to be working more than 12 hours per week. Thus, more students expect to be working but are expecting to work fewer hours per week.

Finally, ninety-one percent (91%, no change from last year) of respondents report that their overall impression of the U Idaho is “very positive” or “positive.”

Details of the frequency distribution of responses are available on the web. Also available on the web is the frequency distribution of responses for men and women, part-time, and transfer students, and charts on selected items with some historical comparisons between U Idaho and public university responses. In addition, an overview of The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2008 produced by the Higher Education Research Institute is available in the Institutional Research and Assessment office.

Institutional Research and Assessment would like to thank the faculty in the Core Discovery program for their invaluable assistance in administering this survey.

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