

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Plattsburgh State University**

**CIRP FALL 2002**

## ***Background***

The Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, directed by Alexander Astin, has administered CIRP since 1966. Well over 1700 colleges and universities, and in excess of 10 million freshmen have participated. Annually, more than 350,000 students complete CIRP at over 700 colleges and universities nationwide. The vast majority of participating institutions implement CIRP during their freshmen orientation programs.

The 4-page survey provides information on a broad array of topics, including demographic characteristics, expectations for college experience, secondary school experiences, degree goals and career plans, college finances, attitudes-values-life goals, reasons for attending college and political views. Each year the survey is revised to delete select items from the previous administration and add new items that appear to be of interest. Thus, this summary only contains the 2002 items. Results of CIRP are reported in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and select analyses are widely circulated in a variety of national publications.

HERI categorizes institutions by combined SAT scores. According to HERI, **Plattsburgh State University is a medium select institution** and is in the same category as the following 2002 participating SUNY institutions: **Brockport, Buffalo, Cortland, Potsdam and A&T at Cobleskill**. In addition, the following SUNY institutions also participated in the 2002 survey but were placed in different categories: College of Environmental Science & Forestry, Fredonia, Geneseo, New Paltz, Old Westbury, Oswego, and Purchase. **Appendix A provides a list of all other participating 4-year public institutions by their selection categories. Appendix B is a copy of the 2002 CIRP survey questionnaire.**

This report contains data by item for PSU freshmen and transfer students who agreed to participate in the survey during the summer 2002 orientation sessions. The table in **Section 1** presents comparative percentage data on 2001 and 2002 participating PSU full-time freshmen with comparative percentage data for 2002 medium select 4-year public institutions. **Section 2** presents 2002 PSU comparative percentage data by gender with 4-year public medium select institutions and 4-year public institutions. **Section 3** provides data for CIRP 2002 PSU transfer students with a comparison to CIRP 2001 PSU transfers by gender and total percentage categories. HERI does not supply national data on incoming transfer students.

The remainder of this section contains an overview on freshmen returns, the study methodology, return rates, and caveats.

## **PSU 2002 FRESHMEN RESPONDENT OVERVIEW**

The following bullets summarize the key points for PSU freshmen under each of the CIRP major topics. For additional information, please see the item survey results in Section 1.

### **Select “Demographic Items”**

- 98.6% graduated high school in 2001
- 76.1% lived over 101 miles from campus (excludes international students)
- 35.1% of respondents’ fathers and 31.2% of their mothers had a high school degree or less
- 22.8% of fathers were employed in business while 11.1% were skilled workers, 13.8% of mothers were employed in business, 15.7% in elementary or secondary education, and 12.7% in nursing
- 58.0% of freshmen had not taken advanced placement courses while 66.9% had not taken advanced placement exams
- 84.7% worked for pay while in high school, while 78.3% indicated they socialized more than 6 hours a week with friends
- 67.4% rated themselves as above average in cooperativeness, 56.5% in drive to achieve, and 48.8% in intellectual self-confidence
- 69.3% attended a religious service in the previous year, while 71.9% drank beer, 72.2% drank wine or liquor, 83.7% attended a public recital or concert, and 82.7% used a personal computer
- 12.8% planned to major in Arts & Humanities, 24.1% in education, 10.1% in social science, 10.3% undecided and 11.8% in other fields

### **Select “Financial Items”**

- 78.0% expected to receive some type of assistance from family resources, 59.3% expected to finance their education from their own resources, 52.1% expected to receive some type of aid that not need to be repaid, while 56.2% indicated they expected to receive aid that must be repaid
- 33.1% were not concerned about their ability to finance their college education while 57.0% were somewhat concerned and 9.9% had a major concern

### **Select “Reasons to Attend College”**

- 80.2% to learn more about things that interest me
- 79.5% to make money
- 78.6% to get a better job
- 74.1% to get training for a specific career
- 69.9% to gain a general education and appreciation of ideas

**Select “Reasons to Attend PSU”**

- 61.7% of the respondents indicated PSU was their first choice, 26.6% their second choice, 7.7% their third choice, and 4.0% less than their third choice.
- 8.4% indicated they did not apply to any other colleges, 10.5% to one, 14.6% to two, 23.8% to three, 16.2% to four, 12.8% to five, 6.0% to six, 7.4% seven to ten, and .4% eleven or more.
- 6.6% came to PSU because a relative wanted them to come.
- 4.4% because a teacher advised them.
- 38.0% because the college has a very good academic reputation.
- 30.9% because the college has a good reputation for social activities.
- 20.0% because they were offered financial assistance.
- 21.8% because the college offers special educational programs.
- 35.8% because the college has a low tuition.
- 29.7% because they wanted a school the size of this college
- 3.9% because of rankings in national magazines
- 9.1% because of information from a website
- 11.8% because of reputation for campus safety

**Select “Objectives Considered to be essential or very important”**

- 76.4% being very well off financially
- 63.3% raising a family
- 59.1% helping others who are in difficulty
- 55.2% becoming an authority in my field

**Select “Chances are very good that participants will”**

- 43.5% get a job to help pay for college expenses
- 54.5% make at least a B average
- 70.2% get a Bachelor’s degree
- 66.2% establish close friendships with other students
- 56.4% socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group

**Select “Personal and Political Views”**

- 32.2% searching for mission/purpose in life.
- 67.0% being honest in my relationships with others.
- 28.8% indicated they were liberal, 56.8% were middle of the road, 10.3% conservative, 1.2% far right, and 4.6% were far left.

- 64.6% indicated there is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals.
- 71.4% felt abortion should be legal.
- 57.7% felt marijuana should be legalized.
- 78.4% felt the federal government should do more to control the sale of handguns.
- 60.0% felt wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now.
- 55.3% felt colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus.
- 73.1% felt same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status.
- 48.3% felt affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished.
- 40.5% people should not obey laws that violate their personal values.
- 42.7% federal military spending should be increased.
- 68.5% federal government should do more to discourage energy consumption.

### ***Study Methodology***

HERI documents include a disclaimer to be read to survey participants prior to administration. The disclaimer explains the substance of the survey and states “all individual responses will be used only for research purposes and will be kept in the strictest confidence,” and indicates individuals do not have to participate. An application was made to the PSU Human Subjects Committee and approved. Materials were prepared for distribution to new freshmen and transfers at PSU summer orientation sessions. The surveys were distributed at appropriate orientation sessions after the disclaimer was read. At the end of orientation, the surveys were tallied and sent to HERI for processing. The results were received by PSU in January 2003.

### ***Return Rates***

The PSU Office of Institutional Research received 983 returns from the summer 2002 orientation session administrations. Of that total 784 were freshmen and 199 were transfers. In the fall 2002, PSU enrolled 1013 matriculated first-time students, and 615 matriculated transfer students. Thus, a 77.4% returned rate was received for freshmen and a 32.4% return rate for transfers. Concurrently, the matriculated freshmen class was composed of 45.2% male and 54.8% female which compares to a 46.7% male survey return rate and a 53.3% female return rate.

## *General Caveats*

The following general caveats apply to the study as a whole with an emphasis on the PSU CIRP first-time full time freshmen respondents as compared to the PSU entire freshmen cohort:

1. 4 year-public medium select CIRP participating institutions had 40.7% male and 59.3% female respondent breakdown as opposed to PSU 45.2% male, and 54.8% female. Thus, the gender disparity between PSU and the 4-year public medium select category could be an important factor in any percentage differences and comparisons should be viewed with caution.
2. PSU enrolled 76 first-time full-time international students during the fall 2002 semester. Due to late campus arrivals, the vast majority of those students did not participate in the survey.
3. While PSU is able to generate the actual useable number of responses for each item (N), HERI does not supply the number of actual useable survey returns for the various items by institutional category. Thus, it is difficult to ascertain if any true statistical differences exist. Concurrently, all PSU participants did not respond to every survey item. It is impossible to determine what impact those missing responses have on the overall returns.
4. HERI is designed to track the freshmen cohorts to ascertain if any visible trends occur in attitudes or demographic characteristics based on percentage differences between PSU and similar select institutions. This was the second administration of CIRP at PSU. Thus, longitudinal PSU CIRP data extends for only two years.
5. The survey was administered at the end of the day. CIRP is a perceptual survey. Survey length and administration time of day may influence responses. There are any numbers of confounding variables that could have influenced the respondents' immediate perceptions from fatigue to the "halo effect" of the first college experience
6. Approximately 384 of the participants choose not to list their social security numbers on the survey. Thus, the Office of Institutional Research cannot track those individuals or determine their fall 2002 Plattsburgh State University enrolled major.