

# Student Life Research

Center for Campus Life ~ Texas Tech University ~ Spring 2004

## Insight Gained on 2003 Freshmen

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The Cooperative Institutional Research Project (CIRP) is the nation's largest and oldest survey of entering college students. The 2003 CIRP Freshman Survey was the 38<sup>th</sup> Freshman Survey conducted by the Higher Education Institute at UCLA in collaboration with the American Council on Education (ACE). During the 2003 administration of the CIRP, 413 four-year colleges and universities participated nationwide.

The CIRP survey was designed to provide colleges and universities with a cost-effective method of collecting comparative data on their entering students for use in institutional decision-making, research and assessment activities. This will be Texas Tech's 13<sup>th</sup> year of participation in the CIRP study. An Executive Summary of the research comparing the Texas Tech results to similar public institutions is currently available at the Center for Campus Life website

at [www.campuslife.ttu.edu/slr](http://www.campuslife.ttu.edu/slr). This newsletter will focus on selected findings about Texas Tech students from the CIRP study.

### Students Express Interest in Religious / Spiritual Matters

Developing a meaningful philosophy of life dropped to its lowest point in the history of the CIRP study. Developing a meaningful philosophy rated 33.8% for Texas Tech students and 38.8% nationally, as compared to the all-time high of 85.8% in 1967.

The CIRP study reported that

The goal of the Student Life Research area in the Center for Campus Life is to provide information about the contemporary American college student with an emphasis on the Texas Tech student body. Research studies conducted have provided data used to assist faculty and staff in understanding students, reporting and accreditation activity, graduate and undergraduate research projects, and to support on-going campus programs and services.

the overall interest in religious involvement had declined nationally as well. Attending religious services frequently or occasionally during the last year of high school was at the lowest point in 35 years for other public universities at 79.2%, although Texas Tech students reported a significantly higher percentage attending religious services at 93.5%.

Discussing religion was significantly more important to Texas

Tech students at 40.2% as compared to other public universities at 28.6%. In general, Tech students view themselves as "more" spiritual and rated themselves above average or in the highest 10% of incoming freshman. Compared with the average person of his/her age 53.7% Tech respondents rated themselves above average in spirituality as compared to 36.8% students from other public institutions. Even beyond discussing religion and viewing themselves as more spiritual, 43.2% Texas Tech students esti-

### Service Activity Increases

mated that chances were very good that he/she would strengthen religious beliefs and convictions during their tenure at college, as compared to 22.3% students at other public universities. Volunteer activities increased again nationally for incoming freshman in 2003. Texas Tech freshman students indicated that 85.4% had participated in volunteer activity in high school as compared to 83.9% of students from other public universities. Tech students rated 53% and students from other public universities 51.7% in reportedly having participated in service activity as part of a class during the

past year. Although most high schools do not require a service activity as part of graduation, students indicated that participating in a community action program could be considered "essential" or "very important" to them. The percentage of Tech freshman with this view toward service activities was 22.1% and for other public university freshmen 21.6%. For a look at the number of hours that students reported having completed doing volunteer work as part of a week's activities as high school seniors, see Table 1.

Table 1. 2003 Freshmen Civic Engagement

Number of Hours	Texas Tech	Other public universities
None	27.3%	28.4%
Less than one	24.2%	24.0%
1 to 2 hours	25.2%	24.2%
3 to 5 hours	13.6%	14.0%
6 to 10 hours	5.9%	5.3%
11 to 15 hours	1.5%	1.8%
16 to 20 hours	0.9%	0.9%
Over 20 hours	1.5%	1.4%

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**Political Awareness Increases, Tech Students More Conservative**

Still nowhere near the interest levels exhibited in politics during the 1960s when 60.3% of university freshman valued keeping up with politics, students continue to show increasing interest in political affairs. Students who view “keeping up to date with political affairs” as very important were at 34% for Tech students and 34.8% for students at other public universities. Only 18.5% Tech students had “discussed politics” prior to their freshman year as compared to 23.4% at other public universities. Despite expressing increasing interest in political events, most incoming freshmen did not vote in their high school elections; 20.7% Tech students voted in their high school elections as compared to 21.7% at other public universities.

Freshman perception of their political orientation continues to show a modest shift to the right with Texas Tech students viewing themselves as conservative at 40.3% and far right at 2.2%; indicating a higher level of political conservatism when compared to other public universities reporting conservative at 21.1% and far right at 1.4%.

Tech student preference in far left political beliefs were lower than the national average with the liberals at 12.3% and far left 0.6%, as compared to other public universities liberal political interest at 25.1% and far left 2.6%. The vast majority of all 2003 freshman students view themselves as “middle of the road” with Tech students at 44.6% and other public universities at 49.7%.

**College Causes Financial Pinch/ Tech Students Better Off**

Increasing costs of higher education and reductions in federal and state resources can be a concern for many students entering college. The CIRP study asked students about their expectation that chances were “very good” they would need to get a part-time job

to help to pay for college expenses. Responses for having to work during school were lower for Texas Tech freshman students at 36.3% as compared to other public universities at 45.4% participating in the study. A gender difference was noted in this particular finding; more Tech females at 40.4% expected to work than their male counterparts at 29.2%. Similar findings were revealed for other public universities in the study, with the percentage of females planning to work part-time at 51.6% as compared to males 38.2% expecting to work.

The high cost of tuition did not seem to be as great a concern for Tech students at 18.7% as it was for students from other public universities at 23.5%. For many students participating in the study receiving offers of financial aid were considered “very important” in the decision to attend a particular college. Financial concerns

**Table 2. Estimated Parental Income before Taxes of 2003 Freshmen**

<u>PreTax Income</u>	<u>Texas Tech</u>	<u>Other public universities</u>
\$ -10,000 to \$59,999	22.4%	37.7%
\$ 60,000 to \$149,999	50.8%	47.2%
\$150,000 to \$250,000+	26.8%	15.2%

were slightly less important for Tech students with 22% indicating financial aid was influential in their decision to attend a particular college, as compared to students from other public universities at 25.2%. However, Tech student parental income showed higher levels when compared to students at other public universities (Table 2).



If you have questions or comments about Student Life Research, contact Sandra Marquez Hall Ph.D. in the Center for Campus Life:

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