Who Are These People, What Are They Doing And Why Are They Here?

Characteristics, aspirations, attitudes, beliefs and experiences of Oberlin students
Survey of American Freshmen

- Administered at Oberlin since 1973 formally at the beginning of Orientation. Now via web a few weeks before arrival
- Baseline data on experiences, expectations, aspirations and traits
- Comparison with other four-year very highly selective private colleges
Freshmen Survey Highlights Through The Years

Compared to students at peer colleges, our students are generally more likely to

- to be searching for meaning and purpose in life
- to engage in self-reflection
- to view themselves as creative
- to believe they have a good sense of self-understanding
- to have come late to class in high school
- to have participated in an organized demonstration in high school
- to have felt overwhelmed by all they had to do in high school
- to aspire to a PhD and less likely to a professional degree
- to go to college to learn more things and become a cultured person
- to aspire towards writing original works, creating artistic work, developing a meaningful philosophy of life, influencing social values and political structure and improving understanding of other countries and cultures
- and of course to consider themselves liberal or far left
Freshmen Survey Highlights Through The Years

And they are generally less likely to

- to describe themselves as cooperative
- to describe themselves as driven to achieve
- to describe themselves as persistent
- to believe they possess leadership ability
- to go to college to get a better job, make more money or prepare for graduate school
- to choose Oberlin for its academic reputation but more likely to choose Oberlin for its social reputation
- to aspire towards raising a family, becoming well off financially, becoming a community leader and having administrative responsibility
- to have a specific career aspiration
- to participate in organized clubs and activities in high school
- to identify with a specific religion
In Sum

- Oberlin students enter college wanting to learn more ‘stuff’, rather than to follow a pre-defined path to a pre-defined outcome.
- They are bright, intellectually engaged, politically and socially active and creative.
- They are less engaged in ‘traditional’ activities and communities and therefore do not bond with institutions in the same way as many of their peers.
- More difficult to retain and require more help in focusing their academic and career goals.
2006 Traits Highest 10%

- Artistic ability
- Creativity
- Writing ability
- Public speaking ability
- Spirituality
- Computer skills
- Self-confidence (intellectual)
- Self-understanding
- Academic ability
- Understanding of others
- Mathematical ability
- Cooperativeness
- Religiousness
- Leadership ability
- Self-confidence (social)
- Emotional health
- Physical health
- Drive to achieve
"Very Important" Reasons for Attending College

- To get training for a specific career
- To prepare myself for grad or prof school
- To learn more about things that interest me
- To be able to make more money
- To gain a general ed and appreciation of ideas
- To be able to get a better job
- Wanted to get away from home
- My parents wanted me to go

Percent Responding

- Oberlin
- Peers
Objectives “Essential” or “Very Important” I

- Become accomplished in performing arts
- Writing original works
- Creating artistic work
- Developing a meaningful philosophy of life
- Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment
- Influencing social values
- Keeping up to date with political affairs
- Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures
- Participating in an organization like the Peace Corps or AmeriCorps/VISTA
- Helping to promote racial understanding
- Participating in a community action program
- Influencing the political structure

Percent Responding

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Objectives Considered "Essential" or "Very Important" II

Making a theoretical contribution to science
Obtain recognition from colleagues
Becoming an authority in my field
Helping others who are in difficulty
Becoming a community leader
Becoming successful in own business
Raising a family
Having administrative responsibility
Being very well off financially

Percent Responding

Oberlin Peers
Chances are "Very Good" That I

- Participate in student protests or demonstrations
- Make at least a "B" average
- Participate in volunteer or community service
- Communicate regularly with your profs
- Be satisfied with your college
- Socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group
- Get a job to help pay for college
- Change career choice
- Participate in student clubs/groups

Percent Responding

Oberlin Peers
Agree "Strongly" or "Somewhat Strongly"  

The death penalty should be abolished
Marijuana should be legalized
Wealthy should pay larger share of taxes than they do now
The federal government should raise taxes to reduce the deficit
Abortion should be legal
Same sex couples should have right to legal marital status
Only volunteers should serve in the armed forces
A national health care plan is needed to cover everybody's medical costs
Dissent is a critical component of the political process
Fed govt not doing enough to control env pollution
The federal government should do more to control the sale of handguns
Individual can do little to bring about changes in society
Racial discrimination no longer major problem in America
Important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships
Affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished
Colleges have the right to ban extreme speakers from campus
Federal military spending should be increased
Through hard work, everybody can succeed in American society
Undocumented immigrants should be denied access to public education
To much concern in courts for the rights of criminals
Chief benefit of college ed is to increase one's earning power
Other Tidbits

- Oberlin students are more likely to be on need-based financial aid than those at peer institutions (except for women’s colleges)
- They tend to spend less time on physical recreation, passive activities and organized social activities
- They are more engaged with the faculty and rely on them more heavily for advice of all kinds
Senior Survey

- First administered in 1994 – generally every two years
- Measures satisfaction, life objectives, college participation, skills/knowledge enhancement, future plans among other things
Senior Survey Highlights

- Full-time graduate school attendance has been declining slowly.
- Oberlin students not attending graduate school are less likely to have a job in hand or even to have begun searching.
- Overall satisfaction has increased since 1994.
- Differences in life objectives are consistent with Freshmen Survey data.
2006 Senior Survey Satisfaction with Undergrad Education

Very dissatisfied | Generally dissatisfied | Ambivalent | Generally satisfied | Very satisfied

Oberlin | Coed | Women's
2006 Senior Survey Encourage High School Senior to Attend

Oberlin
Co-ed
Women's

Definitely would not
Probably would not
Maybe
Probably would
Definitely would
2006 Senior Survey Fall Plans

- Employment, full-time paid
- Employment, part-time paid
- Graduate or professional school full-time
- Graduate or professional school part-time
- Additional undergraduate coursework
- Military Service
- Volunteer activity
- Starting or raising a family
- Traveling
- Completely undecided
- Other activity
- Completely undecided
- Co-ed
- Women's
Learning Outcomes

- Senior Survey a good source of indirect assessment, including student learning
- All schools report fairly high gains
- Oberlin consistently lower in scientific and quantitative areas
- Oberlin has recently shown gains in teamwork and oral communication skills
Percent Reporting Stronger/Much Stronger

- Lead and supervise tasks and groups of people
- Evaluate and choose between alternative courses of action
- Formulate/create original ideas and solutions
- Think analytically and logically
- Acquire new skills and knowledge on own
- Communicate well orally
- Write effectively

Legend:
- Oberlin
- Co-ed
- Women's
Relate well to people of different races, nations, and religions
Function effectively as a member of a team
Use quantitative tools
Place current problems in historical/cultural/philosophical perspective
Identify moral and ethical issues
Understand own abilities, interests, limitations, and personality
Function independently, without supervision
Gain in-depth knowledge of a field

Plan and execute complex projects

Read or speak a foreign language

Appreciate art, literature, music, drama

Acquire broad knowledge in the arts and sciences

Develop an awareness of social problems

Develop self-esteem/confidence
Percent Responding Stronger/Much Stronger

- Evaluate the role of science and technology in society
- Understand the process of science and experimentation
- Synthesize and integrate ideas and information
- Resolve interpersonal conflicts positively

- Oberlin, Co-ed, Women's
Enrolled Student Surveys

- Generally administered in Senior Survey “off years”
- Favored over NSSE
- Measure much of what the other surveys do but also capture information on learning engagement
2007 ESS Evaluate Undergrad Education

Oberlin Co-ed Women's
Enrolled Student Survey Often/Very Often

- Read and discussed critics
- Did creative writing project
- Participated in art or theater
- Participated in music event
- Attended campus concert
- Published or presented research
- Revised paper at least twice

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Other Surveys

- Student Life First Year Initiative (YFCY)
- National survey of faculty attitudes, expectations, experiences
- Parent Surveys
- Alumni Surveys
- Departmental major surveys
- Results posted on IR web site
  http://oberlin.edu/instres/irhome/assessment
What Do We Do With All This?

- Fold into planning and self study processes
- We need to help our students focus their educational and career goals (strategic planning)
- Take pride in the seriousness with which our students approach education
- Use in conjunction with direct measures to assess student learning