

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY'S FALL FRESHMAN CLASS THEN AND NOW: A SUMMARY OF THE CIRP FRESHMAN SURVEYS FOR FALL 1991 AND FALL 2001

Part 1: A Statistical Comparison Of Entering Full-Time Freshmen and Their Parents

Background

Once again this fall (2001), Montclair State University participated in the national Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey administered by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). The survey is extensive and questions range from demographic background information to students' political views, high school behaviors, and college expectations. The survey provides the University with baseline information about our entering freshman class. It also gives us the option of administering follow-up surveys to assess the effects of college participation. This year the University will follow up by participating in the Your First Year of College survey, also administered by HERI.

The Office of Institutional Research's CIRP summary reports will provide a statistical portrait of our current freshman class as well as comparing current responses to those who entered as Montclair State College freshmen ten years ago in fall 1991. The survey has a set of core questions that are asked each year allowing trends in freshmen experiences and beliefs to be traced over time. In addition, fall 2001 responses are put in a national perspective. The large number of participants, over 400 baccalaureate colleges and universities, that take part in this survey allows the Institute to develop nationally normed results for all four-year public institutions participating in the study as well as our comparator sector of four year, medium selective public institutions (this is MSU's classification as determined by HERI).

This Year's Sample

With a good deal of help from the New Student Experience staff, the Freshman Survey was administered to almost all entering fall 2001 full-time freshmen attending new student orientation sessions. Older adults, admitted through the Center for Adult Learning (CAL), and foreign students were not part of these particular orientation sessions. All told, 1,063, or 80 percent, of the entering freshman class responded (although each student did not answer every question). This is an excellent survey completion rate. The sample group mirrors the sex and racial/ethnic distribution of MSU's fall 2001 enrolled full-time freshman class.

What are the Demographic Characteristics of Entering Fall Freshmen Over the Past Ten Years?

- In fall 1991, 61.0 percent of respondents were female and in fall 2001, 62.1 percent were. This fall nationally, the percent of females, at four-year public medium-selective colleges, was 57.0.
- In the past ten years MSU's freshman class has become racially and ethnically more diverse. In 1991, 18 percent of the freshman sample identified themselves as members of a racial or ethnic minority group. Ten years later, a third identify themselves as members of a racial/ethnic minority group (see Table 1).

Table 1
% Freshmen Reporting This as Their Racial/Ethnic Identification

Racial/Ethnic Group:	Montclair State Univ.		4 Yr Med.
	Fall 1991	Fall 2001	Selective
	%	%	%
African American	9.6	11.8	7.4
Asian	3.1	7.3	2.5
Latino/a	5.4	13.7	6.8
White	80.1	63.9	82.5
Other	5.0	7.6	4.3

Totals may be greater than 100.0% because of multiple responses.

- In 1991, 82.3 percent were 18 years of age when they entered college and an additional 12.7 percent were 19 years old. This fall 75.7 percent were age 18 when they entered MSU, 20.4 percent were 19, and 1.8 percent were aged 20 years and older. While the percent of 18 year olds has declined and the percent of 19 year olds increased since the beginning of the 1990s, the University's fall 2001 freshman class is still somewhat more traditional in its age distribution than freshmen at other four-year public institutions. At medium-selective institutions, 66.4 percent are 18 years of age, 30.2 are 19 and 1.9 are 20 and older. However, since our sample does not include older adult freshmen that entered through the Center for Adult Learning the difference may not be quite as large as these percents suggest.
- Nearly 93 percent reported their permanent home is within a hundred-mile radius of the University. Both now and ten years ago, the majority of freshmen, approximately 50 percent, reported that MSU is 11 to 50 miles from their permanent homes. Freshmen at other public four-year colleges tend to live farther away from their campuses. For example, only 7.1 percent of MSU freshmen report their permanent residences were 100 or more miles away while the comparable percent for all four-year public colleges is 34.8 percent. This is not as surprising as it may initially seem since one of the reasons freshmen give for choosing MSU is its proximity to their homes. As well, we are not a predominantly residential university.
- The percent of freshmen holding permanent resident status increased, reflective of the State's continuing role as a center for newly arrived immigrant groups. In fall 1991, 3.9 percent held permanent resident status and 95.9 percent were U.S. citizens. In fall 2001, 9.0 percent hold permanent resident status and 90.2 percent are U.S. citizens. A larger percentage of the comparator groups are U.S. citizens, 98.1 for medium-selective public colleges and 96.6 for all four-year public colleges.
- The percent of MSU freshmen reporting English is their native language decreased over the ten-year period. At the beginning of the last decade, 88.4 percent reported English was their native language; this fall, 81.6 percent did. The percent at other similarly selective colleges is 96.2 percent; for all public institutions, it is 91.1 percent.
- Today slightly more than half, 52.9 percent, of MSU freshmen report they are Roman Catholic. In 1991, the percent was 59.8. The comparable fall 2001 figure at other four-year public institutions is 30.3 percent. Table 2 lists the religious preferences from which students were able to choose and the percent choosing that particular religion.

Table 2
% Reporting This is Their Religious Preference

	Montclair State Univ.		4 Yr Med.
	Fall 1991	Fall 2001	Selective
Religious Choice:	%	%	%
Baptist	5.6	5.9	13.0
Buddhist	0.3	0.6	0.4
Eastern Orthodox	1.8	1.3	0.4
Episcopal	1.1	1.4	1.2
Islamic	1.0	2.2	0.4
Jewish	3.9	2.0	0.8
LDS (Mormon)	0.0	0.1	3.1
Lutheran	1.5	0.9	5.3
Methodist	2.7	2.2	7.0
Presbyterian	3.9	2.2	3.3
Quaker	0.5	0.2	0.1
Roman Catholic	59.8	52.9	31.2
Seventh Day Adventist	0.5	0.1	0.2
United Church of Christ	0.6	0.7	1.8
Other Christian/Protestant	2.9	8.0	12.7
Other religion	3.5	4.8	3.5
None	10.3	14.6	15.4

- Seventeen percent of MSU's fall 2001 freshmen report their parents' total income as less than \$25,000 a year; in fall 1991 the percent was 13.8. Thirteen percent of freshmen at medium selective public colleges and 17 percent at all four-year public colleges reported total parental income of less than \$25,000 annually. At MSU slightly more female than male respondents report family incomes in this category, 18.7 percent and 14.8 percent, respectively. Almost half, 46.3 percent, of MSU's fall 2001 freshmen report their family income as \$60,000 or more and the comparable figure for 1991 was 31.9 percent. In 1991, 14.9 percent estimated that their parents had incomes over \$75,000 and this fall 33.5 percent did. Table 3 summarizes family income information. (Respondents were asked to give their best estimate of their parents' total income last year, considering all sources before taxes.)

Table 3
% Freshmen Reporting Various Family Incomes

	Montclair State Univ.		4 Yr Med.
	Fall 1991	Fall 2001	Selective
Income Category:	%	%	%
Less than \$19,999	8.9	12.2	8.9
\$20,000 to \$24,999	4.9	4.9	4.2
\$25,000 to \$29,999	6.8	3.9	4.4
\$30,000 to \$39,999	13.1	10.5	9.1
\$40,000 to \$49,999	14.1	11.6	10.5
\$50,000 to \$59,999	20.3	10.6	11.9
\$60,000 to \$74,999	17.0	12.8	15.7
\$75,000 to \$99,999	7.7	14.2	15.6
\$100,000 to \$149,999	4.0	12.0	12.5
\$150,000 or more	3.2	7.3	7.2

What Are the Parental Background Characteristics of Entering Fall Freshmen?

The CIRP study asked freshmen several questions about their parents' background: mother and father's religious preferences; their living status; their educational levels; and their occupations. Not

surprisingly, as in fall 1991, the religious preferences of entering fall 2001 freshmen reflect the preferences of their parents; 56.4 percent of their mothers and 56.2 percent of their fathers were Roman Catholic.

In fall 1991, 75.6 percent reported that their parents were living with each other, 19.2 percent were divorced or separated and 5.2 percent had one or both parents deceased. Fall 2001 figures changed somewhat: 69.3 percent have parents living with each other, 24.5 percent are divorced or separated and 6.2 percent have one or both parents deceased. MSU's freshmen figures mirror medium-selective institutions. While not a large percent of the sample, MSU freshmen did report the highest percent of one or both parents deceased, 6.2 percent.

This fall more than one out of three freshmen have at least one parent with a college or graduate degree. As Table 4 shows, 34.5 percent of fathers and 32.5 percent of mothers had a college or graduate degree. Ten years ago the comparable figures were 28.5 percent of fathers and 17.3 percent of mothers with college or graduate degrees. Not only has the percent of college educated parents increased but the gap between father's and mother's education has also significantly narrowed; the accessibility to higher education has especially benefited women. MSU's fall figures are somewhat lower than those of other medium-selective four-year public institutions.

Table 4
% Freshmen Reporting Various Parental Education Levels

Education Level:	Montclair State Univ.				4 Yr Medium Selective	
	Fall 1991		Fall 2001		Father	Mother
	Father	Mother	Father	Mother		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Some high school or less	16.6	13.5	14.7	11.4	6.9	5.4
High school graduate	31.8	45.9	28.5	33.4	28.5	29.8
Some college	14.8	11.6	16.5	14.7	18.6	20.6
College degree	16.6	12.5	22.3	22.5	26.1	25.6
Graduate degree	11.9	4.8	12.2	10.0	14.1	11.5
Other	8.3	11.7	5.7	8.0	5.7	7.0

Table 5 represents the most frequently reported parental occupations. Most freshmen have both parents in the labor force. Nearly all parents are employed outside of the home; only 3.9 percent of fathers and 4.4 percent of mothers are unemployed and an additional 9.9 percent of mothers are full-time homemakers. There have been small shifts in occupations over the decade. Two noticeable changes occurred in mothers' occupations: a decrease in the percent of freshmen with mothers in business-related clerical positions (15.2 percent in fall 1991 and 7.7 percent in fall 2001) and a modest increase in the number of mothers who are elementary and secondary teachers (9.1 percent in fall 1991 to 13.1 percent in fall 2001).

Table 5
% Freshmen Reporting Parents Having This Occupation

Occupational Category:	Montclair State Univ.				4 Yr Medium Selective	
	Fall 1991		Fall 2001		Father	Mother
	Father	Mother	Father	Mother		
	%	%	%	%	%	%

Business	25.0	10.1	25.6	13.6	26.6	16.2
Business (clerical)	--	15.2	1.4	7.7	1.0	7.7
Skilled worker	13.9	3.8	11.8	3.2	10.7	2.1
Engineer	6.5	0.5	6.4	0.5	8.1	0.5
Education (elementary & secondary)	4.6	9.1	3.4	13.1	4.2	14.1
Nurse	--	6.0	0.6	8.8	0.4	8.7
Homemaker (full-time)	--	12.7	0.2	9.9	0.2	9.6
Clergy/professor/MD/research scientist/ lawyer/health professions	4.5	3.0	3.6	3.0	4.7	4.2
Unemployed	3.9	7.5	3.9	4.4	2.1	4.1

A new parental background question was added to the CIRP survey this fall—parental ethnic and racial background. Table 6 summarizes this information.

Table 6
% Freshmen Reporting This as Parents' Ethnic/Racial Background

Race/Ethnicity:	Montclair State Univ.		4 Yr Medium Selective		4 Yr Public Colleges	
	Mother %	Father %	Mother %	Father %	Mother %	Father %
White	64.5	64.7	83.0	83.0	67.5	67.7
African American	11.5	10.6	6.9	7.2	14.3	14.7
Asian	6.7	6.7	2.3	1.8	5.0	4.5
Latino/a	12.9	13.7	6.1	6.1	10.4	10.2
Other	6.0	7.0	3.3	3.4	4.7	5.0

Totals may be greater than 100.0% because of multiple responses.

Next Report: Academic Characteristics and High School Senior Year Activities of Entering Full-Time Freshmen

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY'S FALL FRESHMAN CLASS THEN AND NOW: A SUMMARY OF THE CIRP FRESHMAN SURVEYS FOR FALL 1991 AND FALL 2001

Part 2: Academic Characteristics and Senior Year Activities of Entering Full-Time Freshmen

This is the second in a series of three Institutional Research reports summarizing and comparing the results from the 1991 and 2001 national CIRP Freshman Survey. This report focuses on the questions respondents were asked about their academic achievements in high school and their senior year activities. If there are significant differences between the 2001 MSU freshman responses and the national normative data, these differences are noted as well.

What is the Educational Background of Entering Freshmen?

MSU's 2001 freshman class is overwhelmingly educated in public schools; only 12.9 percent reported graduating from a private denominational secondary school. For the first time this year, freshmen were asked about their academic curriculum during high school. The curriculum recommendations are based on the ones made by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. Table 1 summarizes this information. Of note is the lower percent, 53.9, of MSU freshmen reporting at least a half-year of computer science compared to other four-year medium-selective colleges, 66.1 percent, and all four-year public institutions, 63.7 percent. Three-quarters of our entering freshmen have had at least one year of art or music; this is slightly less than the two comparator groups. MSU freshmen had more high school foreign language studies than the other groups; this is especially true when compared to other public four-year medium-selective colleges.

Table 1
% Freshmen Reporting They Met or Exceeded the Recommended Years of High School Study in Various Academic Areas*, Fall 2001

Recommended years of high school study in:	MSU %	4 Yr Med. Selective %	All 4 Yr Public %
English (4 years)	98.9	96.5	97.3
Mathematics (3 years)	99.1	96.4	97.3
Foreign Language (2 years)	96.9	88.0	91.4
Physical Science (2 years)	48.6	50.6	52.2
Biological Science (2 years)	38.5	41.1	41.4
History/American Govt. (1 year)	99.2	98.5	98.5
Computer Science (1/2 year)	53.9	66.1	63.7
Arts and/or Music (1 year)	75.3	79.6	79.6

* Based on the curriculum recommendations of the National Commission on Excellence in Education

Respondents were asked about their average grades in high school. Table 2 shows that in fall 1991, 23.3 percent of entering Montclair freshmen had average high school grades ranging from A- to A+. This fall the comparable percent was 31.2. At four-year medium-selective public institutions it was 31.8 percent. More females than males reported grades in the A- to A+ range; at MSU the percents are 38.7 and 19.1, respectively. Approximately 85.0 percent of MSU's freshmen reported they had a B or better high school average, up from 78.4 percent in 1991.

Our freshmen are following the national norm. As the CIRP researchers noted, in spite of a reduction in the time devoted to schoolwork, students' high school grades continue to soar. In a little over thirty

years, this percent has more than doubled the 1968 survey figure of 17.6 percent, the lowest percent to date for this question. (Table 5 in this report confirms the reduction in hours seniors spend studying.)

Table 2
% Freshmen Having This as Their Average High School Grade

Grade Range:	Montclair State Univ.		4 Yr Med.
	Fall 1991	Fall 2001	Selective
	%	%	%
A or A+	8.8	11.7	12.4
A-	14.5	19.5	19.4
B+	24.8	27.9	22.5
B	30.3	26.2	26.7
B-	14.4	8.5	10.9
C+	4.7	4.6	5.7
C	2.4	1.6	2.3
D	0.0	0.0	0.1

In fall 1991, about 28.0 percent of all entering MSU freshmen reported having had some special tutoring or remedial work in high school and in fall 2001 the percent was 34.2. The comparable percent for four-year medium-selective colleges this fall is 40.8. For specific remediation areas, Table 3 looks at the percents of freshmen that took high school remediation courses in these areas and those that feel they will need help while at MSU. The two areas in which entering freshmen felt they would need the most help in were: mathematics, 27.8 percent and foreign languages, 15.4 percent.

Table 3
% Reporting Having Had High School Remediation & % Feeling They Will Need College Remediation

Had High School Remediation			Remedial Area	Will Need College Remediation		
Montclair State Univ. Fall 1991	Montclair State Univ. Fall 2001	4 Yr Med. Selective		Montclair State Univ. Fall 1991	Montclair State Univ. Fall 2001	4 Yr Med. Selective
%	%	%	%	%	%	
10.8	12.4	13.3	Mathematics	20.0	27.8	29.2
3.6	4.7	5.1	English	8.9	8.0	8.9
3.1	3.6	4.8	Reading	8.0	6.9	4.6
3.6	4.0	4.8	Science	6.9	8.8	11.2
3.9	3.8	5.0	Foreign Languages	14.7	15.4	11.1
2.7	2.6	3.6	Social Studies	2.5	2.8	3.6
--	3.1	4.2	Writing	--	8.7	10.2

Even though females had higher high school averages, they were more likely to report that they will need help with all remediation areas. Thirty percent of females thought they would require help with mathematics while 25 percent of males thought so. For help with science the female/male gap was smaller, 9.7 percent and 7.4 percent, respectively.

Freshmen were asked to rate themselves in relation to others their age on a number of attributes and abilities. Table 4 summarizes the responses for those rating themselves above average or in the highest 10 percent. For this particular table rather than comparing the results to 1991 the comparison will be between MSU fall 2001 freshmen men and women and other public four-year medium-selective colleges and universities.

Table 4
% Rating Themselves on Certain Characteristics as Above Average or in the Highest 10% as Compared to the Average Person of His/Her Age, Fall 2001

	Montclair State University		4 Yr Pub Med Selective	
	Men %	Women %	Men %	Women %
Attributes/Abilities:				
Academic ability	64.5	59.9	60.9	53.4
Artistic ability	28.5	32.0	29.2	28.0
Computer skills	42.0	20.7	45.3	24.4
Competitiveness	67.9	40.2	67.5	41.5
Cooperativeness	72.3	71.5	68.6	71.2
Creativity	63.0	56.3	56.9	52.1
Drive to achieve	70.3	64.5	61.9	64.4
Emotional health	54.9	40.5	56.2	43.0
Leadership ability	64.6	49.1	59.9	51.4
Mathematical ability	45.5	27.7	42.9	27.2
Physical health	63.0	40.6	63.5	41.4
Persistence	66.7	55.2	59.4	51.4
Popularity	46.8	27.0	45.5	30.8
Public speaking ability	36.7	29.6	36.1	30.1
Religiousness	25.5	29.1	28.2	30.7
Self confidence (intellectual)	62.1	48.7	61.3	44.0
Self confidence (social)	56.7	42.7	54.8	42.9
Self-understanding	60.3	50.6	56.1	44.7
Spirituality	36.3	38.2	35.3	36.8
Understanding of others	65.9	71.3	60.0	65.0
Writing ability	47.6	47.9	39.0	42.3

Putting aside any questions about the accuracy of these self-assessments for either group, for most of the 21 attributes or abilities men rated themselves in a more favorable light, as above average or in the highest 10 percent, than women. This was the case for MSU freshmen as well as for the comparator group. Understanding of others was the only aptitude for which women had a somewhat higher assessment of themselves than men, 71.3 percent and 65.9 percent, respectively. MSU women reported a slightly higher sense of artistic talent. Women also had slightly higher percentages for spirituality and religiousness and assessed themselves at nearly the same level as men for cooperativeness and writing ability.

For all the rest of these characteristics women saw themselves less favorably than men. Some of the differences are substantial and have persisted as areas of concern for decades. Half as many women as men, 27.7 percent and 45.5 percent, feel they have above average mathematical ability. Half as many women as men, 20.7 percent and 42.0 percent, feel their computer skills are better than other people their own age. In spite of better high school grades, women have somewhat less confidence in their academic ability, their drive to achieve and significantly less confidence in their persistence. It is no surprise then to find that 48.7 percent of women compared to 62.1 percent of men report intellectual self-confidence that is above the average for students their own age. As well, fewer women report feeling socially self-confident about themselves and women are less likely to report being above average in emotional and physical health.

What Did a High School Senior's Week Typically Look Like?

Freshmen were asked how they spent their time during a typical week as high school seniors. The activities ranged from studying/doing homework to socializing with friends. Table 5 summarizes the time spent in each activity.

This year 81.3 percent worked for pay, up by 7.9 percent from 1991, and 41.2 percent reported working 16 or more hours per week. Nearly everyone socialized with friends and 36.8 percent reported they spent 16 hours or more a week that way. Sixty-four percent reported spending some time volunteering, significantly more than 1991's 8.1 percent. Some of this change is due to the increasing part volunteering now plays in high school courses. Nearly everyone, 93.9 percent, exercised or participated in sports to some degree (ranging from one to 20 or more hours per week) and 76.5 percent were active in student clubs or groups on a weekly basis. Another 73.1 percent reported spending some time reading for pleasure each week.

Table 5
% MSU Freshmen Spending Time in Activities in a Typical Week During the Last Year of High School

Activities:	Hours Spent in Activity							
	None	< One	1 to 2	3 to 5	6 to 10	11 to 15	16 to 20	20 +
Studying/homework	5.6	19.9	26.8	27.7	12.9	3.8	1.1	2.1
Socializing with friends	0.7	1.4	7.5	15.7	20.8	17.0	12.3	24.5
Talk w/teachers outside of class	8.6	41.1	29.2	13.4	5.1	1.4	0.5	0.6
Exercise or sports	6.1	11.5	19.8	21.0	13.8	9.0	8.4	10.4
Partying	12.9	11.7	18.3	25.3	15.5	6.4	3.1	6.9
Working (for pay)	18.7	1.9	2.2	4.5	13.1	18.4	16.9	24.3
Volunteer work	36.1	20.1	18.9	13.3	5.4	2.2	1.3	2.7
Student clubs/groups	23.5	14.7	25.3	17.2	8.8	4.2	2.7	3.7
Watching TV	4.7	15.6	22.8	27.3	15.4	5.9	2.5	5.8
Household/childcare duties	16.6	18.8	31.4	20.1	7.7	2.5	0.8	2.2
Reading for pleasure	26.9	27.0	23.8	12.0	6.3	1.7	0.5	1.8
Playing video/computer Games	34.4	23.6	18.3	10.9	5.8	2.6	1.5	2.9
Prayer/meditation	41.2	32.5	16.5	4.7	1.9	1.0	0.3	1.9

There are differences in how males and females spend their time. More females worked the last year of high school than males, 83.4 percent and 77.8 percent, respectively. Males worked 20 or more hours slightly more often than females, 26.7 percent to 22.9 percent. The number of hours spent in household/childcare duties also varied; 69.9 percent of females and 56.1 percent of males reported spending at least one hour in these activities. While both groups certainly watched TV, males tended to watch a bit more; 38.3 percent compared to 24.4 percent, viewed six or more hours per week. Females were less likely to play video/computer games; 43.6 percent of females and 18.8 percent of males reported spending no time playing video games. "Partying" seems to be an exception; males and females participated equally.

Perhaps reflecting the slower pace of senior year in high school, most students put five or fewer hours a week into studying and doing homework; this year only 19.9 percent reported they studied for six or more hours a week; in 1991 31.3 percent reported they did. CIRP researchers cite this as one of the indicators of student academic disengagement.

What Are Some of the Academic, Computing, Health, and Political Activities Seniors Participated In During the Past Year?

Respondents were asked if they had participated “frequently”, “occasionally”, or “never” during the past year in a list of activities. Table 6 summarizes these activities and responses. Four broad areas are highlighted: computer proficiency, academically related activities/behaviors, health or student well-being issues and political interest.

Table 6
% Freshmen Indicating They Participated in Activity During the Past Year

Activities:	Participated Frequently/Occasionally		
	Montclair State Univ.	4 Yr Med.	
	Fall 1991 %	Fall 2001 %	Selective %
Studied with other students	82.6	81.8	84.0
Attended a religious service	81.3	78.3	82.6
Attended a public recital or concert	--	77.6	79.3
Performed volunteer work	--	77.1	77.4
Came late to class	56.9	59.5	66.1
Visited an art gallery or museum	--	57.9	52.6
Drank wine or liquor	61.6	56.9	56.2
Participated in organized demonstration	49.9	58.0	55.1
Tutored another student	43.2	52.8	47.2
Performed community service as part of a class	--	52.2	53.1
Drank beer	60.5	46.4	50.2
Played a musical instrument	37.3	34.8	39.0
Overslept and missed class or an appointment	--	31.6	37.6
Was a guest in a teacher’s home	25.0	23.5	28.0
Socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group*	--	79.2	65.9
Used a personal computer*	31.6	76.9	77.4
Used the Internet for research or homework*	--	73.7	71.7
Communicated via e-mail*	--	66.7	63.7
Was bored in class*	33.7	42.5	44.5
Other Internet use*	--	55.6	55.5
Felt overwhelmed by all I had to do*	21.0	29.0	29.6
Discussed religion*	--	26.2	27.3
Participated in Internet chat rooms*	--	21.1	20.2
Asked a teacher for advice after class*	--	25.1	23.2
Voted in a student election*	--	24.6	22.3
Discussed politics*	--	15.6	16.7
Felt depressed*	10.6	10.9	8.4
Smoked cigarettes*	10.1	12.1	12.6

* Percentages reported are for those responding frequently or occasionally except where an asterisk (*) indicates responses only for those responding frequently

As the CIRP researchers point out, nationally over three-quarters of college freshmen report using a personal computer frequently during the year prior to entering college. This signifies a major increase in computer use since this question was introduced to the survey in 1985; 17 years ago only 27.3 percent reported using a personal computer frequently. In the fall of 1991, not even a third of MSU freshmen, 31.6 percent, reported frequently using a personal computer; this fall more than three-quarters, 76.9 percent, did. Almost three-quarters, 73.7 percent, of the MSU fall 2001 freshman

sample reported frequent use of the Internet for research or homework and 66.7 percent frequently communicated via e-mail (neither question was asked in 1991).

MSU's figures also confirm the CIRP researchers' finding that "the gender gap in use has nearly closed"; 78.9 percent of our male and 75.8 percent of our female freshmen reported frequently using a personal computer. Women tended to communicate more frequently by e-mail than men, 71.4 percent and 59.0 percent, respectively.

Turning to academically related activities and behaviors, eight out of ten respondents reported studying with other students frequently or occasionally. Slightly more than half, 52.8 percent, tutored another student and 52.2 percent performed community service as part of a class during the past year. Over three-quarters, 79.2 percent, of our freshmen reported they frequently socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group. This is significantly larger than the 65.9 percent for similar medium-selective four-year colleges.

Respondents also engaged in a number of extracurricular activities. Freshmen reported frequent or occasional attendance at cultural events during the past year; 77.6 percent attended a public recital or concert and 57.9 percent visited an art gallery or museum. Slightly over a third reported they played a musical instrument.

Two factors --coming late to class and boredom in class-- have been used as a barometer for student academic disengagement. The percent of MSU freshmen reporting that they occasionally or frequently came late to a high school class is slowly creeping upwards; in 1991, 56.9 percent reported this and in 2001, 59.5 percent did. At the beginning of the last decade, the percent reporting frequently being bored in class during senior year was 33.7 percent and increased to 42.5 percent for fall 2001 respondents.

The percent of freshmen reporting they "felt overwhelmed by all they had to do" in the past year increased from 1991's 21.0 percent to 29.0 percent for fall 2001 MSU freshmen. Mirroring the national trend, more of our female respondents reported this than male respondents, 35.2 percent and 18.8 percent, respectively. The percentage of MSU freshmen saying they frequently felt depressed remained the same over the ten-year period, 11 percent, but more women than men reported feeling frequently depressed.

Overall, the percent of MSU freshmen reporting they drank wine, liquor or beer frequently or occasionally decreased some over the decade. In 1991 60.5 percent reported drinking beer and 61.6 percent wine or liquor. In 2001 the percents were 46.4 for beer and 56.9 percent for wine and liquor. Twelve percent reported they smoked cigarettes frequently.

CIRP researchers reported that nationally the percent (29.9) of entering college freshmen identifying themselves as politically liberal reached a two-decade high this fall. The most popular political label continued to be the middle of the road. Table 7 shows MSU's freshmen mirror the national findings.

Political interest as indicated by two questions shows a decline on the part of students. The national percentages for voting in a student election and frequently discussing politics were at their highest in the late 1960's. In 1968, a third of the national sample reported they talked about politics frequently and slightly over three-quarters voted in a student election. In fall 2001 a quarter of MSU freshmen reported they voted frequently in student elections and 16 percent frequently discussed politics. Perhaps the shift is away from formal political involvement and not from civic participation per se.

When asked if they had frequently or occasionally participated in an organized demonstration during the past year, 58 percent of MSU freshmen said they had. This is up from the beginning of the decade when half said they had. As well, half reported some level of participation in community service as part of their classes and over three-quarters performed some volunteer work.

Table 7
% Freshmen Holding This Political View

Political Views:	Montclair State Univ.		4 Yr Med.
	Fall 1991	Fall 2001	Selective
	%	%	%
Far left	2.9	4.9	2.9
Liberal	24.2	29.4	23.1
Middle of the Road	56.1	54.0	55.9
Conservative	15.9	9.5	16.6
Far Right	0.9	2.2	1.5

Part 3: Admission Choices, College Expectations and Expenses, and Summary

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY'S FALL FRESHMAN CLASS THEN AND NOW: A SUMMARY OF THE CIRP FRESHMAN SURVEYS FOR FALL 1991 AND FALL 2001

Part 3: Personal Objectives, Admission Choices, College Aspirations, Expectations and Expenses of Entering Full-Time Freshmen

This is the third and last in a series of Institutional Research reports summarizing the results of the 2001 national CIRP Freshman Survey in which Montclair State University participated. This particular report focuses on questions about life goals, the factors that affected their decision to attend college in general and MSU in particular, expected career and major choices and how students plan to pay for college. As in the previous two reports, comparisons to entering fall 1991 MSU freshmen and national norms for fall 2001 will be included.

What Are Students' Personal Life Objectives?

Approximately three-quarters of the entering MSU freshmen began both the last decade and this one with two major personal life objectives: being financially well off and raising a family. As Table 1 shows, the importance of being financially well off was very important to 78.9 percent of this fall's respondents, slightly higher than 1991's and the national average for other four-year medium-selective public colleges. A considerably larger percent of MSU freshmen (46.3) than those from four-year medium-selective colleges (38.1) want to reach financial success through having a business of their own.

**Table 1
% Freshmen Considering Various Objectives Essential or Very Important**

Objectives:	Montclair State Univ. Fall 1991	Fall 2001	4 Yr Med. Selective
Being very well off financially	77.1	78.9	75.6
Raise a family	72.0	73.9	71.8
Helping others who are in difficulty	61.6	64.8	59.3
Becoming an authority in my field	65.1	64.4	57.6
Obtain recognition from colleagues for contributions to my field	58.1	58.5	49.9
Becoming successful in a business of my own	47.9	46.3	38.1
Having administrative responsibility for the works of others	39.2	40.7	36.5
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	46.3	45.0	37.6
Influencing social values	44.4	44.1	36.9
Integrating spirituality into my life	--	36.9	36.9
Helping to promote racial understanding	44.1	37.6	28.6
Becoming a community leader	--	28.0	28.3
Keeping up to date with political affairs	38.4	25.9	25.2
Influencing the political structure	23.0	22.5	17.4
Participating in a community action program	28.4	24.0	19.3
Writing original works (poems, novels, short stories, etc.)	18.3	20.3	14.8
Creating artistic work (painting, sculpture, decorating, etc.)	16.4	20.4	16.1
Becoming accomplished in one of the performing arts	19.7	22.5	15.2
Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment	34.9	16.9	15.5
Making a theoretical contribution to science	14.5	14.3	13.6

MSU freshmen also viewed several other life goals as more important to them than freshmen in other four-year medium-selective colleges: becoming an authority in my chosen field, obtaining recognition

from colleagues for contributions to my field, becoming accomplished in one of the performing arts, influencing social values, developing a meaningful philosophy of life and helping promote racial understanding. Finally, MSU freshmen interest in the environment changed over the ten-year period. In 1991, 34.9 percent had as a goal becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment and in 2001 the percent was half that, 16.9.

What Are Freshmen's Higher Education Aspirations?

Freshmen were asked what was the highest degree they planned to pursue anywhere and then, specifically which degrees they planned to earn at Montclair. Over half, 51.4 percent, reported they planned on earning a master's degree and 15.9 percent said a Ph.D. or Ed.D. was part of their higher education plans. Fifty-seven percent planned on earning their bachelor's degree at MSU and 38 percent are currently planning to earn post-baccalaureate degrees here.

At the beginning of the last decade 58.3 percent said Montclair was the first choice of colleges they wanted to attend. This fall 62.9 percent said MSU was their first choice; this is somewhat below the 67.8 percent for other public four-year medium-selective colleges. An additional 26.1 percent said that MSU was their second choice and 7.3 percent said it was their third or lower-ranked choice.

Why Are Freshmen Attending College?

Respondents were asked to choose from a list of 13 possible reasons for attending college. Table 2 summarizes these responses. The most important reason for all freshmen was to get training for a specific career, followed by learning about things that interest me. MSU freshmen were more likely to view their undergraduate education as preparation for graduate school than those at other medium-selective institutions, 59.6 and 50.5 percent, respectively. As well, MSU freshmen put more emphasis on gaining a general education and appreciation of ideas as an important reason for attending college than those in the comparator group, 71.1 percent and 60.8 percent, respectively.

Table 2
% Of Freshmen Responding Reason Is Very Important in Deciding to Go to College

Reasons:	Montclair State Univ.		4 Yr Med.
	Fall 1991	Fall 2001	Selective
	%	%	%
To get training for a specific career	--	78.7	75.6
To learn more about things that interest me	74.1	77.6	73.6
To be able to make more money	73.0	71.6	72.6
To be able to get a better job	75.8	68.1	71.9
To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas	60.1	71.1	60.8
To prepare myself for graduate or professional school	47.3	59.6	50.5
To improve my reading and study skills	36.8	49.2	39.9
My parents wanted me to go	36.5	34.9	33.9
To make me a more cultured person	38.3	43.2	34.7
Wanted to get away from home	15.1	18.1	21.5
A mentor/role model encouraged me to go	--	17.2	12.9
I could not find a job	6.1	8.1	6.0
There was nothing better to do	5.3	4.4	3.2

What Factors Are Important to a Freshman's Decision to Attend Montclair State University?

Table 3 lists the reasons freshmen gave as very important in their decisions to attend MSU. The three most important reasons cited were: the university's very good academic reputation; graduates get good jobs and the university's low tuition. Academic reputation plays a significantly larger role for MSU freshmen than for those in other four-year medium-selective colleges. Low tuition and graduates getting good jobs are still top reasons for attending MSU but the role each plays in current decision making has changed a bit. Today, 42.4 percent say low tuition is very important compared to 48.3 percent in fall 1991. Getting a good job was very important to a third of entering 1991 freshmen compared to 47.0 percent in 2001.

Table 3
% Of Freshmen Responding Reason Is Very Important in Deciding to Go to MSU

Reason:	Montclair State Univ.		4 Yr Med.
	Fall 1991	Fall 2001	Selective
	%	%	%
This college has a very good academic reputation	48.9	54.2	40.6
This college's graduates get good jobs	33.3	47.0	40.2
This college has low tuition	48.3	42.4	31.3
I wanted to live near home	38.0	36.5	21.2
I was offered financial assistance	23.0	25.1	26.6
I wanted to go to a school about the size of this college	28.4	30.0	33.1
This college has a good reputation for its social activities	29.4	30.6	24.4
This college's graduates gain admission to top graduate/professional schools	16.2	27.5	18.6
This college offers special educational programs	18.9	24.9	19.4
High school guidance counselor advised me	10.0	12.4	6.7
Private college counselor advised me	--	2.4	1.4
My relatives wanted me to come here	11.1	8.9	7.3
My teacher advised me	7.1	7.0	4.0
Not offered aid by first choice	--	7.1	5.5
I was attracted by the religious affiliation of this college	2.4	3.2	2.5
Rankings in national magazines	--	5.7	3.8
Not accepted anywhere else	3.4	3.6	3.6
Information from Website	--	7.5	6.4
My friends are attending	--	6.6	8.3
I was offered:			
An athletic scholarship	--	2.9	3.7
A merit-based scholarship	--	12.3	16.3
A need-based scholarship	--	7.8	7.4
I was admitted through an Early Action program	--	5.2	3.6

What Careers and Majors Do Freshmen Wish to Pursue?

Freshmen were given a long list of possible majors and asked which one they thought might be their choice. Table 4 groups majors by area as well as selected majors within an area. The three top areas freshmen expect to major in are: education, the arts and humanities, and business. Freshman interest in business declined since 1991, while interest in education increased and interest in the arts and humanities was relatively stable over the ten-year period.

Table 4
% Of Freshmen Indicating This Area as Their Probable Major

Probable Major Areas With Selected Majors:	Montclair State Univ.		4 Yr Med.
	Fall 1991	Fall 2001	Selective
	%	%	%
Arts and Humanities	16.4	17.7	12.6
Art, fine and applied	4.1	3.7	3.3
Music	2.1	1.9	2.0
Theatre or drama	3.4	4.0	1.3
Biological Sciences	4.9	5.1	4.5
Biology (general)	4.0	4.2	2.7
Business	25.3	17.5	15.6
Accounting	9.1	3.3	2.6
Business administration (general)	6.9	2.2	3.1
International business	--	1.7	0.9
Marketing	2.6	3.7	2.9
Management	3.1	4.2	3.8
Education	13.8	18.3	19.0
Elementary education	5.3	7.9	9.2
Physical education or recreation	3.3	1.9	1.5
Secondary education	3.1	5.0	4.7
Physical Sciences	3.0	2.3	2.0
Professional (e.g. physical therapy)	6.0	4.5	10.2
Social Science	8.4	9.7	9.2
Psychology	5.9	6.0	5.2
Other fields	7.0	9.5	10.6
Computer science	--	4.3	3.4
Undecided	13.8	12.6	9.2

Another set of questions asked freshmen to speculate a bit on their actions during their upcoming college years, e.g., do they think they will transfer to another college, complete their degrees or work full-time. Table 5 summarizes the percents for freshmen saying they thought chances were very good that they would participate in the activity.

MSU freshmen are entering college with high expectations: 72.1 percent expect to get a bachelor's degree, more than half expect to earn at least a "B" average, and 21.2 percent expect to graduate with honors. Only 11.2 percent think it very likely they will need extra time to complete their degrees.

This year 39.1 percent report there is a very good chance they will be satisfied with their choice of MSU. This is lower than 1991's 47.5 percent, by eight percentage points, but in line with other medium-selective institutions. Last fall, 10.9 percent of freshmen at other four-year medium-selective colleges planned to transfer to another college rather than completing their degrees at their current college; only 6.4 percent of MSU freshmen came with this expectation.

Table 5
% Reporting Chances are Very Good That S/he Will Participate in This Activity

Activity:	Montclair State Univ.		4 Yr Med.
	Fall 1991	Fall 2001	Select
Change major field	17.3	14.6	13.7
Change career choice	15.7	11.3	12.2
Graduate with honors	16.4	21.2	16.3
Make at least a "B" average	49.0	58.5	50.9
Get a job to help pay for college expenses	41.8	48.8	48.5
Work full-time while attending college	6.9	10.8	8.1
Get a bachelor's degree	75.0	72.1	72.6
Need extra time to complete your degree requirements	12.9	11.2	7.0
Be satisfied with your college	47.5	39.1	40.2
Transfer to another college before graduating	7.0	6.4	10.9
Participate in volunteer or community service work	16.1	18.1	16.8
Seek personal counseling	6.0	8.9	6.0
Participate in student protests or demonstrations	9.0	7.1	4.3
Play varsity/intercollegiate athletics	16.8	12.9	11.9
Develop close friendships with other students	--	62.5	64.5
Participate in student government	--	10.1	6.5
Participate in student clubs/groups	--	41.2	35.5
Join a social fraternity or sorority	--	13.3	10.1
Communicate regularly with your professors	--	32.6	28.6
Socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group	--	68.0	61.9

Freshmen expect to be engaged in social activities as well as extracurricular ones while they are attending MSU. Sixty-three percent expect to develop close friendships with other students and over two-thirds are pretty certain they will socialize with someone of another race or ethnic group. Thirteen percent want to join a social fraternity or sorority. Forty-one percent expect to participate in student clubs or groups, 13 percent want to play college sports, and 10 percent think they will join in student government activities.

As we saw earlier, freshmen see the University's low tuition as one of its selling points. Nevertheless, 48.8 percent say there is a very good chance they will get a job to help pay for college expenses; but only 10.8 percent think they will have to work full-time while attending college.

How Will Freshmen Finance Their College Education?

Freshmen were asked if they had any concerns about their ability to finance their college educations. 27 percent said they had no concerns and were confident that they will have sufficient funds, 55 percent said they had some concerns but they probably would have enough funds and 18 percent said they had major concerns and were not sure they would have enough funds to complete college.

In fall 2001, HERI dropped the list of 20 individual sources of college funding in favor of a more condensed format. Students were asked how much of their first year's educational expenses such as room, board, tuition and fees, they expected to cover from a variety of sources. Table 6 summarizes their responses. Family resources is the major source cited for funding college by all three categories of respondents. For MSU, 68.8 percent of freshmen say some amount of their college expenses will be paid for from family resources, 77.4 percent report this at medium-selective colleges and 73.4 percent at all public institutions taking part in this survey. A smaller percent of our freshmen also say their own personal resources will be used as a source of funding: 46.8 percent for MSU, 61.9 percent

for medium-selective institutions and 58.3 percent for all public four-year colleges. This is also the case for aid which need not be repaid, such as scholarships and grants: 45.9 percent of MSU freshmen say this is a source for some of their college expenses, 58.4 percent and 59.5 percent respectively, cite this at other medium-selective colleges and all four-year public colleges. For aid that must be repaid such as loans etc., 34.9 percent of fall 2001 MSU freshmen report this as a source of funding. The comparable percents are 42.7 for medium-selective and 38.1 for four-year public institutions.

Table 6
% Freshmen Reporting This as a Source for College Funding

Sources:	MSU %	4 Yr Med. Selective %	All 4 Yr Publics %
Family resources (parents, relatives, spouse etc.)			
None	31.2	22.6	26.6
Less than \$1,000	11.1	15.0	17.0
\$1,000-2,999	14.1	19.0	18.7
\$3,000-5,999	18.1	17.8	15.1
\$6,000-9,999	10.9	12.5	10.5
\$10,000+	14.6	13.2	12.0
My own resources (savings from work, work-study, other)			
None	53.2	38.1	41.7
Less than \$1,000	27.0	31.1	30.9
\$1,000-2,999	15.1	22.3	20.1
\$3,000-5,999	2.7	6.2	5.3
\$6,000-9,999	0.8	1.3	1.2
\$10,000+	1.1	0.9	0.8
Aid which need not be repaid (grants, scholarships, etc.)			
None	54.1	41.6	40.5
Less than \$1,000	10.3	11.8	10.1
\$1,000-2,999	15.7	23.2	21.4
\$3,000-5,999	10.7	15.4	15.1
\$6,000-9,999	5.1	5.3	7.0
\$10,000+	4.1	2.8	5.9
Aid which must be repaid (loans, etc.)			
None	65.1	57.3	61.9
Less than \$1,000	5.3	6.4	5.9
\$1,000-2,999	14.0	18.4	17.0
\$3,000-5,999	8.2	10.9	9.1
\$6,000-9,999	3.8	4.6	3.9
\$10,000+	3.7	2.4	2.2
Other than above			
None	95.2	95.1	95.1
Less than \$1,000	2.5	2.4	2.3
\$1,000-2,999	0.8	1.2	1.2
\$3,000-5,999	0.5	0.6	0.6
\$6,000-9,999	0.2	0.3	0.2
\$10,000+	0.8	0.4	0.5

Summary With Some Suggestions for Action

Montclair State University participates in the national CIRP Freshman Survey as a way of introducing the University community to what our new freshmen are thinking, doing and concerned about. In addition, the survey allows us to place their answers in the broader context of freshmen from across the country. More specifically, the results should be useful in addressing parents and students during

orientation. As well, knowing freshman college goals and choices should be of interest to undergraduate admissions, academic advisors and faculty and learning about freshman concerns, feelings and senses of well-being can help Student Development plan wellness and other outreach programs.

Much of the higher education literature cites exposure to different ideas and values as an important ingredient in an effective college education. A diverse student body is one way of bringing these different ideas and values into the classroom. As New Jersey becomes more racially and ethnically diverse, MSU is reflecting this diversity in its freshman class composition. In 1991, 18.0 percent of the freshman sample identified themselves as members of a racial or ethnic minority group; ten years later, a third identify themselves this way.

The percent of freshmen holding permanent resident status increased over the decade, also reflective of the state's continuing role as a center for newly arrived immigrant groups. Closely connected to this is the 18.0 percent of fall 2001 freshmen who report that English was *not* their native language. One way of helping these students is to determine early on if English as a Second Language courses are needed and then making sure there are enough sections available for those who would benefit from this kind of help.

Nearly 93.0 percent reported their permanent home is within a hundred-mile radius of the University. Both now and ten years ago, approximately 50.0 percent reported that MSU is 11 to 50 miles from their permanent homes. As the University continues to build new residence halls the geographical diversity of our freshmen has the opportunity to increase as well.

College freshmen need help in refocusing their energies on academic achievement and performance. Two factors --coming late to class and boredom in class -- were used as a barometer for student academic disengagement. These factors have been steadily increasing as reflected in the national and MSU percents. In addition, as high school seniors, MSU freshmen were putting in fewer hours studying and getting higher percents of A grades. Perhaps freshman orientation, freshman seminar and other entry-level courses can serve as good starting places for discussions about academic expectations and how to meet them.

A number of students enter MSU requiring academic remediation in various subject areas. Some have already had this kind of help in high school. As we saw in the final report of the Presidential Task Force on Student Achievement those who require three or four basic skills courses have significantly reduced chances of completing an undergraduate degree here. As a first step making sure students can and do take these courses in their first year of college is important. Some more campus-wide discussion about students who require more than two basic skills courses would also be useful.

Entering freshmen are now coming to college with, at the very least, a familiarity with various computer functions such as e-mail and Internet searches. This is a good jumping-off place for other academic computing skills students need to learn or hone in college such as using spreadsheets, making Power Point presentations and calculating basic statistics. The University's continuing investment in academic technology, such as computer labs and the integration of technology into the classroom, certainly helps us meet the expectations and skill levels of today's freshmen.

As seniors almost all, 91 percent, reported talking with teachers outside the classroom for at least one hour a week. While opportunities for this type of interaction at a college are not as frequent as in a

high school setting, e-mail may be a good way of overcoming this and encouraging connections to the campus and its academic and student services.

Like freshmen nationally, over half of MSU freshmen reported drinking wine or liquor as high school seniors and slightly less than the national figure, 46 percent, reported drinking beer frequently or occasionally. Nationally almost 30 percent of freshmen, and at MSU 29 percent, reported frequently feeling overwhelmed by all they had to do. Almost twice as many women as men reported frequently feeling overwhelmed. Eleven percent of freshmen respondents said they were frequently depressed. The first year is especially difficult and freshmen need help to successfully make the transition to college life. Wellness Services' and The Woman's Center's increased programming is most welcome and addresses a number of the health and wellness issues freshmen, women and the campus as a whole encounter.

Finally, a number of authors – Kuh, Pascarella, Terenzini, Springer, Nora – point out that intellectual and cognitive development are complemented by a variety of learning opportunities that take place outside of the classroom. When in-class and out-of-class academic and social experiences are mutually supportive, students gain more from their college experience. Educational experiences such as internships and community service provide students with opportunities to synthesize, integrate and apply their knowledge. These authors also point out that gains in cognitive complexity are a function of a combination of peer interactions and leadership responsibilities.

Many of our freshmen come here already experienced in these activities, laying a foundation on which to build. As high school seniors, almost two-thirds of fall 2001 freshmen reported spending at least an hour a week in volunteer work. More than half performed community service as part of a class. Half reported tutoring another student while more than eight of ten studied with other students. Three quarters invested at least an hour a week in student clubs or groups. The upcoming March 25th ***Building Bridges Conference*** is one way students, faculty and other community-at-large members can learn about and discuss these opportunities.