

The Freshman Survey Fall 2010

Office of Institutional Research

Prepared by Mary Ann Weaver

April 7, 2010

Each year the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) and the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) sponsor a national freshman survey for entering college students. In the fall of 2010 this survey was completed by 201,818 first-time full-time students from 279 institutions across the nation. This number included 286 of Earlham's entering students. The data provides interesting findings that compare Earlham students with the national sample concerning their personal history, family characteristics, educational goals, values, attitudes on social issues, behavioral patterns and a variety of other issues.

Tables in this report include

- Table 1 – Time spent during a typical week doing activities in high school
- Table 2 – Political views
- Table 3 – Probable careers
- Table 4 – Reasons noted as being very important in choosing their college
- Table 5 – Probable major field of study
- Table 6 – Life objectives considered to be essential or very important
- Table 7 – Views on social and lifestyle issues
- Table 8 – Activities engaged in by students in the past year
- Table 9 – Areas in which student rated self above average or top 10%
- Table 10 – Students estimate chances are very good that they will...

As a member of the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS), the responses of Earlham's first-year students are compared to the responses from students at Earlham's peer schools. See Appendix for a list of the institutions represented in Earlham's peer group.

Women comprise 57% of Earlham's first-year student respondents which is similar to our peer group (60%). Looking at the ethnicity of the first-year students who completed the Freshman Survey, 15% were African-American compared to 6% in the peer group sample. Earlham's peer group had a higher percentage of Asians (13%) compared to 7% at Earlham. 6% of the Earlham respondents and 4% of the peer group respondents indicated they considered themselves from a race other than one of the options on the survey.

In religious preference, 8% of Earlham first-year respondents were Quaker (versus .2% nationally and 1.2% in the peer group), 2% were Jewish, and 3% reported being Muslim. Catholic affiliation among the first-year Earlham students was 10% compared to 1% at our peer institutions and 27% nationally. 23% of the Earlham respondents reported their religious preference as one of the various Christian denominations. 30.6% of entering Earlham students had no religious preference compared to 23% of students nationally.

Only 2% of the Earlham respondents' homes are less than ten miles from Earlham; 53% come from homes over 500 miles away from Earlham. These findings confirm that

Earlham continues to be a “national” institution. Nationwide, a mere 15% of students attend an institution more than 500 miles from their home. In compliance with Earlham’s housing policy, 98% of the Earlham first-year students are living in college housing. This compares to 82% of students nationally.

Parental income estimated to be below \$25,000 was reported by 31% of these new students at Earlham; income of \$50,000 or more by 57%. Students were asked to estimate how much of their first year educational expenses they expect to cover from family resources. Based on their responses, 35% of the Earlham first-years expect family resources to cover over \$10,000 of their college expenses compared to 62% of students from our peer institutions and 32% nationally. Student expectations of financial aid that does not need to be repaid are greater at Earlham and our peer institutions than it is nationwide. Nearly 75% of Earlham first-year students expect to receive over \$10,000 in grants and scholarships compared to 57% of students from our peer institutions and 26% of the students nationwide.

The study revealed several aspects of the students’ family life. Among Earlham students, 32% reported having parents who are divorced or separated compared to 19% from our peer group institutions. Earlham students tend to come from well-educated families. 39% of the fathers of entering EC students hold graduate degrees compared to 23% nationally and 50% of the peer group. Of the Earlham students’ mothers, 37% have graduate degrees (19% nationally and 42% of the peer group). All but 6% of Earlham first-year students’ fathers have at least a high school diploma while the peer group has 5%. Nationally, 10% of the fathers do not have a high school diploma.

There continues to be a sizeable number of students’ parents with careers in education with 10% of their fathers and 16% of their mothers in the field of education. The college teacher profession is most popular for the fathers (6%) while the mothers are more inclined to be elementary education teachers (7%). 4% of Earlham students’ mothers are homemakers compared to 10.9% of the mothers of students at our peer institutions and 7.6% of the mothers of students nationwide.

A Master’s degree is the eventual educational goal of 36% of these first-year Earlhamites; 34% plan to seek an Ed.D. or Ph.D. (versus 19% nationally); an additional 8% of these entering students expect to earn a doctorate in a medical field. This is a smaller percentage than at our peer group institutions where 13% plan to get a medical degree.

Earlham was their first college choice for 51% of the entering Earlham cohort. This compared to 58% of students in the peer group and 60% nationwide attending their first-choice college. Among Earlham’s entering students, 8% did not apply at any other college; 37% applied at seven or more other colleges. Responses from the peer group students show that 46% of their students applied to seven or more other college and 11% applied only to the school they are attending. Nationwide, 14% applied to only one college and 18% applied to seven or more.

How did students spend their time in the last year? We see that the biggest block of time was spent socializing with friends. 62% of Earlham’s entering students spent six or more

hours per week socializing; 24% spent sixteen or more hours per week. Nearly half of the respondents (47%) spent six or more hours a week studying or doing homework, and 18% of these students spent more than sixteen hours a week studying. These figures are much higher than the national percentages yet lower than the peer group. Only 37% of students nationally reported spending more than six hours studying, and a mere 8% spent over sixteen hours a week on homework. 69% of the students from our peer group spent more than six hours studying; 22% spent over sixteen hours a week on homework. Many of the Earlham students held a job during the last year. 7.7% of the Earlham students spent sixteen or more hours working for pay each week while 28% spent six or more hours doing the same. Among Earlham students, 66% spent one or more hours in student organizations which is slightly less than the peer group (71%) and more than the national norm (58%). Table 1 shows the mean scores for the time spent on various activities in high school. Students from our peer group reported spending more time on studying or homework and/or exercise than the Earlham students. Earlham students reported spending more time reading for pleasure and playing video or computer games compared to students from our peer institutions.

Table 1
Time spent during a typical week doing the following activities in high school

Activity	Earlham	Peer Group
Socializing with friends	5.2	5.4
Studying homework	4.6	5.3
Exercise or sports	4.3	4.8
Reading for pleasure	3.3	3.0
Watching TV	3.0	3.3
Working (for pay)	2.9	2.6
Volunteer work	3.0	2.9
Household/childcare duties	2.6	2.6
Partying	2.7	2.7
Playing video computer games	2.4	2.1
Online social networks	3.5	3.7
Talk with teachers outside class	2.8	2.9
Student clubs/groups	3.1	3.3

Table 2
Political Views

Political views	% Earlham				% Peer Group	% All Institutions
	2010 Male	2010 Female	2010 Total	2009 Total		
Far left	12	16	14	12	8	3
Liberal	44	62	56	58	58	27
Middle of the road	33	19	26	23	26	46
Conservative	7	0	3	4	7	22
Far right	3	0	1	1	0	1

Earlham students continue to be much more liberal than their national counterparts. While 14% of Earlham first-year students reported being “far left”, only 8% of the peer group and 3% of the national sample have “far left” political views. Unlike prior years, the 2010 Earlham male students are significantly more conservative than the females. All of the ten students who consider themselves conservative or far right are males.

Table 3
Probable Career Occupation

Occupation	% Earlham			% Peer Group	% All Institutions
	2010 Male	2010 Female	2010 Total		
Accountant	.8	0	.4	.4	2.2
Actor or entertainer	1.7	.6	.8	.8	1.2
Artist	.8	3.7	2.8	1.5	1.7
Business executive	2.5	1.9	2.0	.39	6.0
Business owner	2.5	1.2	2.0	1.6	2.7
Business sales	.8	.6	.4	.3	.7
Clinical Psychologist	.8	.8	0	2.0	1.4
College teacher	5.0	1.9	2.8	1.4	.5
Computer analyst	3.3	.6	1.6	.9	1.7
Engineer	1.7	.6	.4	2.3	8.2
Foreign service worker	1.7	4.3	1.2	3.9	.9
Lawyer	1.7	4.9	4.0	4.9	3.5
Musician	2.5	.6	1.2	1.1	1.5
Physician	2.5	3.7	3.6	8.9	6.9
Govt Policymaker	5.0	3.7	4.4	2.8	1.0
School counselor	0	.6	.4	.2	.4
Scientific researcher	5.0	4.9	5.6	5.6	2.4
Social worker	1.7	1.2	2.0	1.1	1.1
Teacher elementary	1.7	1.9	1.2	1.4	3.6
Teacher secondary	10.0	3.1	6.9	2.6	3.9
Therapist	2.5	1.2			3.7
Veterinarian		1.2	.8	.8	1.4
Writer	1.7	1.9	1.6	5.4	2.4
Other	8.3	11.7	10.9	6.4	8.8
Undecided	26.7	32.1	33.5	32.5	14.8

First-year students often have difficulty considering what careers they expect to pursue; however Earlham students are somewhat more undecided than students nationwide. 33% of Earlham’s entering cohort were undecided about their probable careers compared to

14.8% of students nationwide. Only 2% of Earlham first-years are considering being a business executive compared to 3.9% of students from our peer schools and 6% of students nationwide. The peer group sample had a greater percentage of students expecting to be physicians (9%) compared to 4% of Earlham students and 7% of the national sample. Another difference is seen in students interested in becoming a writer or journalist. 5.4% of students from our peer schools expressed this interest compared to 1.6% at Earlham and 2.4% nationwide.

Table 4
Reasons Noted as Being Very Important in Choosing Their College

Occupation	% Earlham			% Peer Group	% All Institutions
	2010 Male	2010 Female	2010 Total		
Offered financial assistance	66.1	68.6	70	52	46
College has a very good academic reputation	60.8	59.9	62	77	62
Wanted to go to a school the size of this college	58.3	61.1	62	62	39
A visit to campus	48	54.0	54	60	42
Graduates get good jobs	41.7	33.3	39	45	54
Grads gain admission to top graduate schools	40.8	30.9	37	39	32
Cost of attending this college	24.2	36.4	33	30	41
Good social reputation	37.5	28.4	32	36	40
Information from a web site	11.7	17.3	15	24	18
Recruited for athletics	25.0	5.6	15	13	9
Admitted through early action/decision	11.7	14.8	15	28	14
Rankings in national magazines	15.8	11.7	14	22	17
High School counselor advice	9.2	10.5	11	12	10
Could not afford 1 st choice college	4.2	13.0	10	8	12
Religious affiliation of college	9.2	12.3	10	3	7
Not offered aid by first choice	4.2	11.1	9	7	9
Teacher's advice	7.5	5.6	6	6	6
Private college counselor advice	5.8	4.9	6	8	4
Wanted to live near home	6.7	4.9	6	8	19
Parents wanted me to come	4.0	4	4	8	14
Relatives wanted me to come	.8	25.0	2	2	6

A higher percentage of Earlham first-year students considered being offered financial assistance a very important reason for choosing their college compared to students from other colleges. 70% of the Earlham student respondents placed a great deal of importance on their financial aid offer compared to 52% at our peer schools and 46% nationwide. 28% of students from our peer schools placed importance on being admitted through early action or early decision compared to 15% at Earlham and 14% nationwide. Being recruited for athletics was noted as being very important in choosing Earlham for 15% of the first-year respondents compared to 13% at our peer schools and 9% nationwide.

Table 5
Probable Major Field of Study (Percentage of Students)

Probable Major	2010	2009	2000	1996	1990	1988	1984	1980
English	3	4	6	9	5	4	4	4
Fine arts	4	4	5	1	5	2	2	4
Languages and Literatures	7	6	3	3	4	4	--	4
Philosophy	1	1	3	0	3	2	--	1
Theology/Religion	0	0	2	1	1	0	--	2
Other Humanities	1	3	--	--	--	--	--	--
Humanities Total	16	18	19	14	19	17	--	16
Biological Sciences	15	12	18	7	7	13	6	17
Engineering	1	1	1	3	2	3	5	5
Health Professions	6	3	2	7	2	5	8	1
Math/Comp. Sciences	1	3	6	3	0	1	3	2
Physical Sciences	3	5	2	3	2	4	2	6
Other Natural Sciences	0	1	2	1	1	0	2	1
Natural Sciences Total	26	25	31	14	14	27	26	42
Anthropology/Sociology	6	4	3	5	4	1	--	3
Business	5	7	2	5	3	5	5	3
Economics	2	1	1	0	1	0	--	2
Education	6	4	4	5	5	3	4	2
History	6	4	2	3	2	4	--	0
Political Science	10	11	10	4	12	11	--	6
Psychology	6	9	6	8	9	6	--	5
Other Social Sciences	3	5	5	3	5	4	--	2
Social Sciences Total	44	45	33	33	41	34	--	23
Other Fields	1	4	3	3	5	2	5	6
Undecided	12	6	15	17	22	17	15	12

First year students' probable major field of study has remained fairly consistent over the last 3 decades. Many students (44%) come to Earlham expressing an interest in pursuing a social science major. 15% expect to study Biology. The percent of students undecided about their field of study this year was 12%.

Table 6*Life objectives considered to be essential or very important*

Objective	Peer Group %'s	Natl Norm %'s	Earlham %'s									
	2010	2010	'10	'09	'04	'01	'94	'90	'86	'82	'78	'74
Improve understanding of other countries and cultures	74.7	49.1	79.4	75	76.5	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Help others in difficulty	74.0	69.1	72.1	74	71.3	71	76	75	67	80	75	66
Adopting "green" practices	62.8	42.3	61.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Develop a meaningful philosophy of life	63.8	46.9	59.8	30	65.2	68	71	71	68	71	73	78
Help to promote racial understanding	46.5	33.8	54.0	53	55.2	55	60	73	55	69	58	--
Raise a family	63.1	73.4	51.3	53	52.6	57	55	59	55	51	54	41
Influence social values	47.4	41.6	50.8	53	54.5	56	56	67	46	49	38	40
Become an authority in my field	51.9	58.0	50.0	50	43.5	53	59	57	63	65	65	55
Be very well off financially	53.5	77.4	49.2	58	29.4	33	34	28	28	29	30	20
Keep up to date with political affairs	49.9	33.2	48.9	59	59.3	52	49	73	--	--	47	52
Participate in a community action program	39.3	29.3	45.3	45	39.7	42	46	48	--	--	41	36
Obtain recognition from colleagues for contributions	47.9	54.8	42.4	44	35.8	42	42	39	--	--	37	27
Becoming a community leader	38.7	35.8	41.2	51	34.2	39	--	--	--	--	--	--
Be involved in programs to clean up the environment	38.5	27.3	37.1	39	36.2	41	44	63	38	46	46	35
Influence political structure	24.9	20.2	29.5	30	38.7	35	30	41	-	-	19	23
Make a theoretical contribution to science	21.5	22.7	25.0	15	17.7	17	17	14	-	-	14	15
Become successful in own business	27.0	40.5	23.2	32	20.3	20	19	20	23	25	32	19
Write original works	22.6	15.5	21.8	23	30.6	27	31	29	-	-	25	26
Create artistic work	18.5	14.5	19.8	22	27.7	31	31	25	22	26	28	30
Become accomplished in one of the performing arts	19.6	15.8	18.8	22	21.3	19	25	21	18	20	22	22

“Improving understanding of other countries and cultures” was an essential or very important life goal for 79% of the first-year student respondents at Earlham which is considerably higher percentage than the national average (49%). “Helping others in difficulty” and “Adopting green practices to protect the environment” are also objectives that the majority of first-year students consider essential or very important. Although “raising a family” and “being very well off financially” are very important to a majority of students nationwide (73% and 77%), only 51% of the Earlham sample feel that raising a family is very important and 49% indicate being very well off financially is important to them. “Influencing social values” is a goal of Earlham student which is not as important to students from other schools. “Helping to promote racial understanding” has always been considered of greater importance to Earlham students compared to the national average. In accordance with previous year responses, Earlham students were less concerned with “being successful at a business of their own” and “obtaining recognition from colleagues”. Overall, the importance of each goal differed among Earlham students and the national sample, once again confirming the distinctiveness of the Earlham population. More trends for past years can be found at http://www.earlham.edu/~ir/cirp_trends/objectives.htm.

Table 7
Views on social and lifestyle issues

Agree strongly or somewhat that...	Earlham			Peer Group	National
	Male %	Female %	Total %	Total %	Total %
The federal government is not doing enough to control environmental pollution	88	92	91	92	78
Gays and lesbians should have the legal right to adopt a child	73	93	86	93	77
Wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now	79	81	83	80	64
A national health care plan is needed to cover everybody’s medical costs	74	85	83	83	61
Addressing global warming should be a federal priority	73	81	80	85	63
The federal government should do more to control the sale of handguns	71	80	79	82	68
The federal government should raise taxes to reduce the deficit	49	51	51	55	33
The chief benefit of a college education is that it increases one’s earning power	51	48	51	55	73
Affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished	34	32	37	45	50

Earlham first-year students’ views on social issues are quite different from the national norm. While 91% of Earlham student sample feel that the federal government is not

doing enough to control environmental pollution, only 78% of the national sample felt the same. 33% of the national sample and 51% of the Earlham sample felt that the federal government should raise taxes to reduce the deficit. There was a strong gender difference among Earlham students on the issue of gays and lesbians adopting children. Females are more likely to feel gays and lesbians should have the legal right to adopt a child.

Table 8
Activities engaged in by students in the past year “frequently” or “occasionally”

Activity	Earlham			Peer Group %	All Institutions %
	Male %	Female %	Total %		
Performed volunteer work	86	92	91	93	86.7
Studied with other students	83	85	85	92	87.2
*Used the Internet for research or homework	83	82	84	87	81.3
*Socialized with a different ethnic group	78	73	77	74	68.0
*Failed to complete homework on time	69.1	60.5	66	54.1	53.9
Publicly communicated opinion about a cause	60	67	65	50	44.9
Helped raise money	57	63	62	59	61.0
Attended a religious service	61	60	60	62	74.8
Came late to class	59	55	58	61	57.0
Performed community service as part of a class	55	58	58	56	57.4
Tutored another student	52	54	56	65	56.9
Drank wine or liquor	53	58	55	59	43.3
*Discussed politics	46	48	48	46	31.7
Drank beer	53	47	48	52	38.4
*Fell asleep in class	52	42	46	40	48.6
*Was bored in class	41	41	43	35	39.2
*Discussed religion	43	40	42	38	30.9
*Asked a teacher for advice after class	43	32	36	40	29.8
Was a guest in a teacher's home	36	35	35	30	20.5
*Felt overwhelmed by all they had to do	21	44	34	36	29.1
*Voted in a student election	20	20	20	25	22.7
*Felt depressed	7	7	7	8	6.6
*Smoked cigarettes	6	6	5	3	3.7
*Skipped school/class	6	4	5	2	2

*Percentage reporting frequently only. Other percentages are responses of “frequently” or “occasionally”

During the year prior to coming to college, the activities among college students nationwide appear to be similar, although Earlham students were more likely to have socialized with someone from a different ethnic group, discussed politics, publicly

communicated their opinion about a cause, or was a guest in a teacher's home. Students in the national sample were more likely to have attended a religious service.

The greatest gender difference among Earlham students is seen in students who felt overwhelmed by all they had to do where 44% of the females often felt this way during the previous year, but only 21% of the males felt the same. Males were more like than females to frequently skip class and females were less likely than males to have drank beer in the past year and more likely to have had wine or liquor.

In comparison with our peer group, a greater percentage of Earlham first-year respondents publicly communicated their opinion about a cause, but they also were more likely to be bored in class. Students from the peer schools were more likely to have tutored another student.

Table 9
Areas in which student rated self above average or top 10%

Area	Earlham%					Peer Group %	All Institutions %
	Male	Female	'10 Total	'09 Total	'08 Total		
Academic ability	73	78	78	75	74.7	88	71.2
Cooperativeness	68	67	68	78	70.9	73	71.8
Drive to achieve	69	63	67	70	60.8	76	75.8
Understanding of others	60	69	66	71	67.9	71	66.4
Self understanding	63	61	62	73	64.6	73	57.1
Self-confidence (intellectual)	65	56	62	61	61	63	59.3
Creativity	53	65	60	62	69.4	61	54.0
Leadership ability	60	53	57	63	52	60	60.4
Writing ability	48	61	56	64	53.7	62	46.8
Physical health	66	40	52	57	42.4	57	56.1
Emotional health	59	35	46	51	41.1	49	51.9
Self-confidence (social)	48	36	42	61	45.5	43	50.5
Competitiveness	53	32	42	-	-	49	58.0
Public speaking ability	39	35	39	47	38.2	42	36.4
Artistic ability	25	39	33	39	42	38	29.2
Mathematical ability	38	26	31	31	37.8	45	44.8
Spirituality	29	33	31	40	37.2	30	35.7
Computer skills	43	19	30	30	25.6	28	37.2
Popularity	43	19	30	-	-	33	37.8

Compared to the national sample, a higher percentage of Earlham students rated themselves above average in academic ability, creativity, self understanding and a lower percentage of the Earlham students considered themselves above average in their mathematical ability, competitiveness and drive to achieve.

A higher percentage of students from our peer institutions rated their perception of their academic ability, cooperativeness, self understanding, drive to achieve and mathematical ability as above average compared to the Earlham students.

This year's Earlham students have significant gender differences in their perceptions of their abilities. Only 19% of the females rated themselves above average in popularity and in computer skills compared to 43% of the males. 38% of the males rated their mathematical ability above average compared to 26% of the females. 65% of the females consider themselves to be above average in creativity compared to 53% of the males and 61% of the females felt their writing ability was above average compared to 48% of the males.

Table 10
Students estimate chances are very good that they will...

Activity	Earlham			Peer Group %	All Institutions %
	Male %	Female %	Total %		
Socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group	67	80	77	84	64
Make at least a "B" average	64	63	66	72	66
Study Abroad	48	70	64	63	32
Discuss course content with students outside class	54	70	64	74	47
Be satisfied with their college choice	54	63	62	69	58
Communicate regularly with professors	54	60	58	63	38
Participate in student clubs/organizations	39	61	54	67	47
Get a job to help pay for college expenses	38	56	51	49	48
Have a roommate of a different race	49	48	50	48	28
Participate in volunteer or community service work	33	56	46	49	32
Work on a professor's research project	33	28	31	30	30
Play club, intramural, or recreational sports	25	28	28	36	33
Play intercollegiate athletics	35	17	26	23	14

64% of Earlham's first-year respondents indicated that there is a very good chance they will study abroad. This compares to 32% of the national sample and 63% of the peer group sample. 62% of Earlham students expect to be satisfied with their college choice compared to 69% of the peer group sample and 58% of the national sample. Only 28% of the national sample thinks there is a very good chance they will have a roommate of a different race compared to 50% of Earlham students.

Some of the gender differences among the Earlham students are significant. Only 48% of the males feel there is a very good chance they will study abroad compared to 70% of the females. There are also differences in their expectations of involvement in student organizations, discussing course content outside of class, getting a job to help pay for college expenses, participating in volunteer work, where a higher percentage of females expect to participate. A higher percentage of males expect to be working on a professor's research project and/or playing intercollegiate athletics compared to the females.

APPENDIX

Peer Group

Beloit College
College of Wooster
Colorado College
Connecticut College
Grinnell College
Haverford College
Macalester College
Occidental College
Scripps College
Whitman College