The University of Michigan at Ann Arbor has participated in the entering student study of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) each year since 1993. With the 2003 entering class year, UM has ten years of trend information about incoming students. By learning about the changes in student views and choices over this time, we can better prepare to educate these students during their undergraduate years, and ask questions about these future students that may aid in their education and graduation.

CIRP is a national longitudinal study of the American higher education system that was started in 1966 by the American Council on Education, and is now conducted jointly with the University of California at Los Angeles. At the University of Michigan, Student Affairs Research administers the CIRP survey. This study serves as a baseline profile of the entering full-time undergraduate student population. The items within this survey include students' self-reported reasons for attending college and reasons students choose UM, as well as student hopes and expectations for the educational experience. The responses also provide family background, high school activities, and give insight into attitudes and viewpoints regarding selected social issues. During the past 11 years, 47,826 University of Michigan entering students have participated in this survey, giving our community a unique ability to study trends over time and changes that may affect fundamentally how we create meaningful learning experiences for undergraduate students, as well as prepare for the arrival of many of them as graduate students in a few years. During 2003, 3,092 students responded (a 61.2% response rate). This sample was representative of our entering first year class in most respects (such as residency, gender, and high school grades).

Statistical significance
Throughout this report, when results are reported as being “significantly” different, this refers to a statistically significant difference (a difference which is most likely not by chance), at p<0.05.

Lingering effects of recent events?
In recent years, the nation has experienced many events that could have a profound effect on University of Michigan students.

September 11, 2001
The events of September 11, 2001 continue to create sharp images and evoke strong feelings both of loss and of national pride. Entering students demonstrate a wide variety of shifts that may show some impacts of this day and the events that followed. The 2002 survey administration was the first one to take place following this day. Within the 2002 administration, UM entering students demonstrated significant increases over recent years in desires to pursue artistic and creative endeavors, such as writing original works, creating visual art, and making theoretical contributions to science. As well, community minded goals rose, such as a desire to participate in environmental programs, promote racial understanding, be community leaders, integrate spirituality into life, help others in difficulty, and participate in community action programs.
In 2003, many responses indicate a return to pre 9/11 perspectives. This is particularly true of self confidence, spirituality, and academic goals. While in 2002, entering students reported lowering levels of self confidence in intellectual pursuits, and at the same time more aspiration to artistic goals, in 2003 self confidence is rebounding.

**U.S. Supreme Court hearing of admissions lawsuits**

The recent University admissions lawsuits were at the front and center of the news while most of this year’s entering class completed their surveys. About half of our class completed surveys before the announcement of the Supreme Court opinions, and half completed surveys after these announcements.

Conversations and media reporting about our admissions lawsuits may have had an impact upon entering students’ notions of privilege and discrimination in society, in spite of where they place themselves on the political spectrum. More entering students placed themselves at the “middle of the road” point of the political spectrum, moving in from both right and left. At the same time, fewer indicated agreement with the statement “racial discrimination is no longer a problem in society.” In 2003, 16.8% agreed with this statement, a significant decrease from 20.3% of students agreeing in 2002. Other questions about civil liberties and privilege demonstrated similar shifts. Agreement with the statement, “There is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals,” is down to an all-time UM low of 49.3% in 2003, a statistically significant decline from 55.9% in 2002 and responses ranging from 60% - 67% in the 1990s. At the same time, there is more agreement with the statement, “Wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now,” which increased to 51.2% in 2003, the highest percentage of students agreeing with this statement since 1997. These responses may indicate that our incoming students (53.3% of whom report a family income above $100,000) are becoming more aware, on some level, about privilege and its responsibilities, and are working to expand their knowledge of related issues.

**The economy**

As the economy continues to create hardships for both families and higher education institutions, the shift in the nation’s financial priorities emerges through an examination of student financial situations.

A much higher reliance on financial aid (particularly loans) has emerged in the last two years. While the breakdown of 2003 entering students’ estimated parental income remains similar to 2002 (and in fact, most of the 2000s), there is a shift in reliance on various forms of financial aid, in a similar fashion to the rest of the nation. Of special note is the shift upward in the number of students anticipating at least some amount of loans. In the last two years, an additional 25% of our entering students are taking some form of loans to fund their educations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students anticipating receiving aid from these sources:</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aid which need not be repaid</td>
<td>67.3%</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
<td>81.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid which must be repaid</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>55.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other source</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This seems to indicate that, although more than half of entering students in all three years reported family incomes over $100,000, that these families are seeing a greater proportion of the aid package shift toward loans. That said, the percentages indicate that a large proportion of students even in the higher income categories are still receiving grant forms of aid (which may speak to the growth of merit types of aid which are based on test scores).

At the same time, changes continue in entering student career aspirations. One change that has continued is the diversification of career aspirations. While in recent years, over 60% of our students described themselves as aspiring business executives, engineers, doctors, or lawyers, 43.7% of students entering in 2003 clustered in these ways, a significant shift in this cluster, as well as a significant increase in the proportion of students indicating being “undecided” about probable careers.

While medicine is rising slightly as an aspiration, this is largely carried by women’s growing interest in pursuing careers as doctors or dentists. About 15.5% of women have this aspiration, compared with 10.8% of men.
Political and civic engagement
Political and civic engagement have many facets, including service to the community, activism, and views of various national issues. In terms of self-reported political views, a slightly higher number of entering students in 2003 picked the “middle of the road” (43.5%), but the shifts have been negligible over the past few years. However, this trend to the “middle of the road” does not necessarily indicate apathy on the part of students. Those reporting an interest in “keeping up to date with politics” rose to 44.9% in 2003.

| Keeping up to date with politics as an interest up to 44.9% in 2003. |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|                 | 53.4% | 45.9% | 42.8% | 40.9% | 39.9% | 37.1% | 36.9% | 35.7% | 40.0% | 40.6% | 44.9% |

Fewer students are required to volunteer as a condition of high school graduation (31.9% at Michigan) than in recent years. Despite the lack of requirement, performing volunteer work while in high school is at an all-time high of 92.8% in 2003, representing a steady increase in this response throughout the years.

Several markers of active political engagement are evident in this year’s UM entering class. The percentage of UM students who reported participation in organized demonstrations while in high school at an all time high of 35.3% in 2003. Along with this, many more entering students reported discussing politics in high school: 30.0% in 2003, compared to 23.7% in 2002 (a significant increase). This level of activity suggests that students feel they can make changes in society through some form of political activism. As a result, it is not surprising that a declining number of students agree with the survey statement: “Realistically, an individual can do little to bring about changes in our society.” In 2003, this statement saw an all-time UM low 21.5% agree, a statistically significant decrease from 26.2% in 2002.
Academic engagement

Students are reporting ever rising high school grade point averages, largely lifted by the grade point averages of women. In 2003, 55.9% of women had average high school grades of A or A+, compared to 50.8% of the entering men (a significant difference between the genders). This represents a sharp rise since 1999, when 41.1% of entering students reported A or A+ averages. Interestingly, in 2002, students reported sharp drops in intellectual self-confidence during a time when reported grade averages were rising. Intellectual self-confidence rebounded in 2003 (69.8%) compared to 2002 (66.6% - an all-time Michigan low), but is still lower than in previous years. Along with this increase in confidence is an increase in students’ expectations that they will make “at least a B average” in college, up to 73.3% in 2003, from 68.4% in 2002 (a statistically significant increase).

While students are demonstrating higher grades in high school, and higher expectations for college grades, they are describing lessening engagement with high school teachers outside of class periods. The number of students reporting being a guest in a teacher’s home is at a Michigan low of 24.7% in 2003, a significant decrease from previous years, when this response hovered between 28% and 30%. A significantly lower percentage of students also “Asked teacher for advice after class,” at 23.4% in 2003, down from 29.9% in 2002.

What events might shape the students entering in 2004?

Just as many events shaped this year’s entering first year students, next year’s entering class will also have its areas of focus. We continue to see the U.S. presidential election take shape, and can imagine that political issues will be heavily influenced as the campaigns continue during the next survey administration. The economy continues to fluctuate (in Michigan, mostly downward), with various parts of the country seeing differing predictions.

As our next entering class of students arrives, these influences will appear in various ways in the survey results, and will help everyone in the campus community know how to continue efforts to structure the best college experience possible for the undergraduate student population.

Student Affairs Research Publications

If you would like more information about Student Affairs Research publications, view descriptions at: http://www.umich.edu/~rsa/