

New Century College 1996 Freshmen Survey

"In Focus" is a vehicle for sharing information about learning and assessment in the George Mason community. "In Focus" is prepared by the Office of Institutional Assessment and is intended to make assessment-related information widely available. Comments and suggestions are welcome.

I. Introduction

This report examines the responses of the 1996 New Century College freshmen (n=191) who took the national freshmen survey developed by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP). Specifically, the responses of 1996 NCC freshmen are compared to the responses of freshmen attending public universities across the United States and to the 1995 NCC survey respondents (n=157). Only select items from the survey are shared in this report.

II. Students Characteristics/Background

As in 1995, 1996 NCC freshmen are a more ethnically diverse population and are twice as likely to be "non-native English speakers" than freshmen nationally. Within the college, NCC enrolled a greater proportion of African Americans, Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans in 1996 compared to 1995. Further, this year's NCC freshmen are more likely to describe themselves as "far left" or "liberal" in political orientation and to "live at home with parents or relatives" during their first year at college when compared to 1995 NCC freshmen and to freshmen nationally.

Characteristics & Background	'95 NCC Freshmen	'96 NCC Freshmen	'96 Public Univ. Freshmen
Ethnic Background*	%	%	%
White American	65.0	64.5	82.3
African American	12.7	15.1	7.6
Asian American	10.8	13.4	6.6
Hispanic American	7.0	8.7	3.7
All Others	11.5	10.3	4.7
Non-native English speakers	16.7	12.3	6.7
Parents divorced/living separately	29.9	28.0	23.4
Live w/parents/relatives Fall '96	36.5	44.7	13.9
Miles From college to home			
5 or less	8.4	10.3	3.8

6-10	14.8	16.8	5.0
11 to 50	44.5	41.8	20.2
"Far left" or "liberal" political orientation	33.8	37.1	26.1

*Percentages add to more than 100 due to students checking more than one category.

III. Reasons for Going to College

Altruistic reasons for attending college are still important for many NCC students. In greater proportions than freshmen nationally, 1996 NCC freshmen said that becoming a more cultured person, learning more about things, and gaining a general education were "very important" reasons for going to college. This year's NCC freshmen, however, are also more likely to say that making more money is a "very important" reason for attending college.

Reasons "Very Important" in deciding to go to college	'95 NCC Freshmen %	'96 NCC Freshmen %	'96 Public Univ. Freshmen %
become a more cultured person	59.9	55.9	40.3
make more money	69.4	75.7	73.5
learn about more things	82.2	81.7	77.3
gain general education	72.0	70.7	64.1
improve reading and study skills	55.8	56.4	41.3
role model/mentor encouraged me	19.9	17.2	12.4

IV. Reasons "Very Important" In Deciding to attend George Mason

In 1996, NCC freshmen are more likely than freshmen nationally to say that good academic reputation, offer of special programs, and encouragement of relatives are "very important" in their decision to attend. The desire to live near home decreased in importance among NCC students in 1996 and is now near the national average. Several reasons were more important to 1996 NCC freshmen when compared to 1995 NCC freshmen including good academic reputation, offer of financial assistance, relatives encouraging attendance, graduates going on to top graduate schools, special programs and the fact that graduates get good jobs.

Reasons "Very Important" in deciding to go to this college/GMU	'95 NCC Freshmen %	'96 NCC Freshmen %	'96 Public Univ. Freshmen %
relatives wanted me to come	11.0	12.7	7.5
good academic reputation	42.9	56.6	57.3
offered financial assistance	15.8	21.2	25.9
wanted to live near home	25.0	22.2	15.9
graduates go to top graduate schools	13.1	24.7	31.9
offers special programs	43.5	47.6	20.7
graduates get good jobs	27.0	47.1	51.3

V. Educational Choice, Goals and Experiences

GMU was the "first choice" institution and the "only college applied to" for substantially greater proportions of NCC freshmen in 1996. While this year's NCC freshmen are less likely to plan to earn Ph.D.'s or Ed.D.'s (18%), greater proportions said that they planned to earn Master's degrees (44%). Fewer (22%) planned to complete their Master's degrees at GMU.

Educational Choice/Goals /Experiences	'95 NCC Freshmen %	'96 NCC Freshmen %	'96 Public Univ. Freshmen %
College they're attending was their 1st choice	59.6	68.1	71.9
Applied only to the college they're attending	18.5	25.3	27.2
Highest degree student plans to earn			
Bachelor's	18.5	24.0	22.5
Master's (M.A. or M.S.)	33.1	43.5	39.5
Ph.D. or Ed.D.	29.0	18.2	18.1
Highest degree planned where currently enrolled			
Bachelor's	65.1	68.5	58.7
Master's	26.5	21.6	25.0

VI. Educational Preparation

NCC freshmen continue to rate themselves similar to freshmen nationally on their leadership ability, popularity, and intellectual self confidence. They rate themselves substantially higher in artistic ability, social self confidence and understanding of others. Similar to 1995, 1996 freshmen continue to rate themselves lower than freshmen nationally on mathematical ability and physical health and are dramatically less likely to say their average grade in high school was between a B+ and an A+.

Educational Preparation - Proportion who rated self "above average" or "top 10%" in...	'95 NCC Freshmen %	'96 NCC Freshmen %	'96 Public Univ. Freshmen %
artistic ability	40.8	37.8	28.7
leadership ability	61.8	56.4	58.9
mathematical ability	27.4	31.9	48.8
physical appearance	52.9	NA*	NA*
physical health	51.0	50.0	60.3
popularity	44.2	38.8	43.8
intellectual self confidence	60.0	57.5	61.5
social self confidence	60.9	57.2	51.5

understanding of others	86.0	71.3	66.6
High School grade was B+ - A+	28.1	28.8	63.4

*NA - This question was not asked in 1996

VII. Important College Objectives

NCC freshmen, are still more likely than freshmen nationally, to say that the college objectives listed below are "essential" or "very important." This year's NCC freshmen are more likely than the 1995 NCC freshmen to want to achieve in a performing art, be a community leader, and be involved in community action. They are less likely than 1995 NCC freshmen to think that environmental clean-up and developing a meaningful philosophy of life are "essential" or "very important" college goals.

College Objectives Considered to be "Essential" or "Very Important"	'95 NCC Freshmen %	'96 NCC Freshmen %	'96 Public Univ. Freshmen %
achieve in a performing art	17.0	22.7	11.9
influence political structure	33.1	32.6	18.3
write original works	27.1	28.8	13.4
create artistic work	19.4	25.3	13.3
be involved in environmental clean-up	34.8	30.1	21.0
participate in community action	37.4	39.1	23.7
promote racial understanding	52.3	52.5	33.8
be a community leader	41.9	45.1	34.2
develop a philosophy of life	59.4	48.9	43.4

VIII. Opinions and Activities

NCC freshmen are more likely than freshman nationally to say they will participate in students protests and volunteer community service. This year's freshmen, however, are less likely to say they will participate in these activities than last year's NCC freshmen. Although they mirror the national freshman responses, 1996 NCC students were less likely than those in 1995 to say that "sex is OK if the people liked each other" and almost twice as likely to think "married women are best at home" (25%). Fifteen percent of the 1996 NCC freshmen said that racial discrimination is no longer a problem.

Opinions and Activities	'95 NCC Freshmen %	'96 NCC Freshmen %	'96 Public Univ. Freshmen %
Chances are "very good" that student will...	%	%	%
participate in student protests	18.3	13.6	5.3
participate in volunteer/community service	32.7	29.9	19.6
Agrees "strongly" or "somewhat" that...			
married women are best at home	14.5	24.6	21.6

sex OK if people like each other	53.2	47.6	43.6
racial discrimination is no longer a problem	7.8	15.0	15.7

IX. Activities Engaged in During the Past Year

During the past year, 1996 NCC freshmen were more likely than freshmen nationally to say they felt depressed, overwhelmed, bored in class, had overslept and missed class or an appointment, and found it difficult to study at home. They are also more likely to have worked in a political campaign and to have socialized with a different ethnic group than freshmen nationally.

Activities "<i>Frequently</i>" or "<i>Occasionally</i>" Engaged in During Past Year	'95 NCC Freshmen %	'96 NCC Freshmen %	'96 Public Univ. Freshmen %
drank beer	51.6	46.8	56.1
drank wine or liquor	58.0	53.7	58.0
felt overwhelmed*	29.9	32.4	29.9
felt depressed*	15.9	10.6	8.9
worked in a political campaign	24.2	22.3	8.8
felt bored in class*	47.1	45.2	39.4
overslept and missed class/appointment	49.7	44.7	34.4
difficult to study at home	NA**	64.4	56.4
socialized with different ethnic group*	86.6	77.7	64.1

*Percentage reporting "frequently" only. Percentages for other items in this group reflect responses of "frequently" or "occasionally." **NA - This question was not asked in 1995.

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