



## Miami University Assessment

## First Year Students: A Profile of This Year's Class

Did you know the following about our first year students? This information was taken from the CIRP, administered by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. Over 3000 Miami first year students from the Oxford campus completed the survey at the beginning of Fall 2004. (All percentages refer to students who "strongly agreed" or "agreed somewhat" with the statement.)

### Opinions of Our First Year Students

- Almost one-third of our male first year students indicate that "the activities of married women are best confined to the home and family."
- About one-third of our first year students said that the death penalty should be abolished; about one-third also indicate marijuana should be legalized; and slightly more than one-half feel abortion should be legal.
- While 58% of them believe that "same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status," 27% say, "It is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships."
- One-fourth of the first year students feel that "racial discrimination [is] no longer a major problem in America; 60% indicate that "affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished;" and 78% say that "diversity is good for Miami and should be actively promoted."
- About one-half of the first year students say, "colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus"; 44% feel that "colleges have the right to ban extreme speakers."

### Implications for Working with Students

It is important to create environments that encourage a variety of opinions without students fearing ridicule or negative consequences from peers or instructors. Such an environment encourages ideas and perspectives that may contrast with students' current understandings.

- Include readings and data sources that will inform students about underlying evidence and new perspectives;
- Insist that students' work cites credible evidence, considers alternate points of view, and bases conclusions on sound reasoning and evidence.

### Some Facts about First Year Students' Academic Preparation

- Two-thirds of the first year students say their average high school grade was an A+, A or A-; 98% report their average grade was a B or better.
- Over one-half of the students studied less than 5 hours per week during their last year in high school and one-third spent 6 or more hours per week partying.
- Two-thirds of our entering students believe that their first year courses will be either difficult or extremely difficult.

### Implications for Working with Students

- As suggested in the last *Brief*, establish early-on how much time you expect students to spend preparing for class. Include this in your syllabus. Remember the old rule: 2 hours out of class for every hour in class;
- Suggest specific tips for how to spend their time preparing for class. For example, suggest that they review class notes after class and fill in commentary that they did not have time to write down during class.

### Other "Tidbits" about Our First Year Students

- Eight in ten first year students say they intend to do graduate work. Ten percent expect to become physicians and 7% expect to become lawyers.
- The top-ranked reason for going to college was "to learn more about things that interest me (72%)," followed by "to get training for a specific career (68%)" and "to be able to get a better job (67%)." Two-thirds of the students indicate that making more money is a very important reason for attending college.
- Over three-fourths of the students' fathers and 71% of their mothers have at least a college degree.
- Eleven percent of the students report no religious preference. Slightly more than one-third report they are Roman Catholic, the largest group.
- When asked to characterize their political views, 40% describe themselves as "middle-of-the-road," 24% as "liberal" and 32% as "conservative." "Far left" and "far right" were each chosen by 2% of the students.

Questions about this assessment brief? Suggestions for future research brief topics? Please feel free to contact Jerry Stonewater, [stonewjk@muohio.edu](mailto:stonewjk@muohio.edu) or one of the other members of the Assessment Team: Denny Roberts, Beverley Taylor, Denise Krallman, Andrea Bakker, and Rob Abowitz.