

Cornell University Class of 1998 Senior Survey Intra-Institutional Major Findings

The following is an analysis of Cornell's coded data from the Class of 1998 Senior Survey, administered last spring in conjunction with a group of highly selective private universities and colleges. There are two sections:

1. An executive summary of the major findings; and
2. A set of tables that provide numerical comparisons – within Cornell – by college, race/ethnicity, and gender.

This is the first of two general distributions of analysis from the Class of 1998 Senior Survey. The second will be comparisons of Cornell with the other universities that participated in this survey.

These distributions are intended to serve as conversation starters, not as the final or definitive word on any particular aspect of students' undergraduate experiences at Cornell. There is a host of other important information and a wealth of institutional knowledge and experience that also needs to be brought to bear in deliberating the issues raised by the findings of this analysis. We believe, however, that this is important information that deserves further consideration. And in fact, we know, for example, that:

1. Bob Harris, Bob Cooke and their colleagues organizing conversations this spring in academic departments across campus relating to issues of campus climate will be utilizing portions of these data;
2. As it has in the past, we anticipate that portions of these data will be considered by the Academic Leadership Series at one or more of its upcoming meetings;
3. As we begin to prepare for our decennial reaccreditation self-study with the Middle States Association/Commission on Higher Education, these data will play an integral role in our depiction of institutional assessment efforts;
4. Susan Murphy and her colleagues within Student and Academic Services will be using these data in their continuing efforts to understand more fully student perceptions of and satisfaction with the services they provide; and
5. Don Saleh, Nancy Meislahn, Tom Keane and their colleagues in Admissions and Financial Aid will be looking at this data in more detail seeking information to assist them with more accurately and effectively marketing the university to prospective students. They will as well, utilize this information to help them identify ways they can enhance services to those students who are admitted and eventually matriculate with financial need.

We anticipate that there will be many other possible venues for discussing this information. Please know that we are prepared to assist you in framing such conversations with the appropriate components of these data, as well as to consider with you how to most effectively have the necessary debate and dialogue.

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Questions, suggestions, requests for further assistance, and any other feedback should be directed to Heather Kim (hhk4@cornell.edu or 255-7015).

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Executive Summary

Response Rates (Table Set 1)

- The overall response rate to the survey was 61%, with women (70%) more likely to respond than men (53%). Black (34%), Native American (36%), and Hispanic (44%) students responded at lower rates than Asian American (60%), international students (63%), and White (64%) students. Among the colleges, Architecture, Art, & Planning had the lowest response rate (31%), Industrial & Labor Relations the highest (64%).

Satisfaction (Table Set 3, Tables 4a, 4b, 4c)

- Respondents' overall satisfaction with their undergraduate experience at Cornell varies significantly by college, race/ethnicity, and gender. On a five-point scale (1=very dissatisfied; 5=very satisfied) students graduating from Hotel (4.26) and ILR (4.16) were the most satisfied, Engineering (3.88) and AAP (3.94) students the least. White students (4.11) were the most satisfied racial/ethnic group, Asian Americans (3.82) the least. Women (4.10) were generally more satisfied than men (3.96).
- The respondents expressed the highest degree of satisfaction (mean ≥ 3.25 on a 4-point scale) with the following services, facilities, and aspects of Cornell: "library facilities and services" (3.66), "campus security" (3.32), "foreign language facilities" (3.31), "opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities" (3.31), "extra-curricular speakers/cultural offerings" (3.28), and "courses in your major field" (3.28).
- Students were least satisfied (mean ≤ 2.65 on a four point scale) with: "pre-major academic advising" (2.23), "administration's responsiveness to students" (2.34), "sense of community on campus" (2.37), "student health services" (2.57), "climate for minorities" (2.63), "financial aid award" (2.63), and "financial aid office" (2.65).

Campus Climate Issues (Tables 4a, 4b, 4c, Table Sets 11a, 11b, 11c)

- International students had the most positive view of the "climate for minorities," "sense of community on campus," and "ethnic/racial diversity on campus." Underrepresented minorities consistently had the most negative view.
- Engineering students were significantly less likely than students in other colleges to report having "learned about different cultures and ways of life." Among racial/ethnic groups, underrepresented minorities were more likely to have done this, while White and Asian American students were less likely.
- AAP respondents reported the most enhancement to their capacity to "relate well to people of different races, nations, and religions;" Engineering students reported the least.
- 84% of Asian American students had a roommate of a different racial/ethnic background while at Cornell. This was also true of 70% of underrepresented minority students, but only 51% of Whites.

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Campus Climate Issues (Tables 4a, 4b, 4c, Table Sets 11a, 11b, 11c) -- Continued

- Overall, less than a quarter (22%) of all respondents reported participating in a racial/cultural awareness workshop while at Cornell. By college, this ranged from a low of 12% in Engineering to a high of 41% in AAP. 55% of underrepresented minority students participated in such a workshop, while only 16% of Whites reported doing so. Women (27%) were more likely than men (17%) to have participated.
- With respect to participation in a sexual harassment seminar only 18% of all respondents indicated they had, ranging from 12% in AAP and Engineering to 31% in ILR. Only 13% of Asian American and international students participated; but 30% of underrepresented minorities. By gender, 13% of men participated, 23% of women.

Advising & Availability of Faculty (Tables 4a, 4b, 4c)

- Between 45% and 88% of students in ALS, AAP, Human Ecology, and ILR indicated that the question asking about satisfaction with pre-major advising was not relevant to them.
- However, in A&S and Engineering nearly 60% and 50% respectively were very dissatisfied or generally dissatisfied with their pre-major advising.
- Students in Hotel and ILR were more likely to find faculty accessible out-of-class; AAP students the least likely. Among racial/ethnic groups, Asian American students found faculty the least accessible, international students the most. Women found faculty more accessible out-of-class than men.

Financial Matters (Tables 4a, 4b, 4c, Table Sets 8a, 8b, 8c)

- 54% of underrepresented minorities come from families with parental income of less than \$50,000 per year; with fully a third coming from families with parental income of less than \$25,000. On the other hand, 48% of White students come from families with greater than \$100,000 in annual income.
- Respondents indicated that the debt they incurred to attend Cornell, for the most part, did not “cause me to postpone enrolling for an advanced degree,” “restricted my graduate school choice,” “caused me to choose a professional degree,” or “focused my job search on higher paying fields.”
- As a group, underrepresented minorities had the most positive view of “financial aid office,” “financial aid award,” “financial services (student accounts, etc.),” and “student employment programs.”

How They Spent Their Time (Table Sets 9a, 9b, 9c)

- On average, respondents reported spending between 23-32 hours per week in “scheduled classes or labs,” “scheduled courses outside of class or labs,” and “other academic work.” However, AAP students reported spending 40-50 hours per week on the same activities. Conversely, AAP students spent less time than students in the other colleges on “clubs/organized groups,” “intercollegiate sports,” “intramural sports,” and “other exercise/fitness.”

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How They Spent Their Time (Table Sets 9a, 9b, 9c)--Continued

- Hotel students, on average, spend less time on “volunteer work,” but more time “working for pay” than students in other colleges.
- Among racial/ethnic groups, White students spent significantly more time at “partying,” and “other socializing with friends.”
- Men spend more time than women on “intramural sports,” “partying,” “other socializing with friends,” “watching TV,” and “computer for non-academic activities.” Women spend more time than men on “scheduled classes/labs,” “other exercise/fitness,” “working for pay,” and “volunteer work.”