

SPOTLIGHT ON OU

The CIRP Survey Finds that Concerns about Cost Affect College Choice

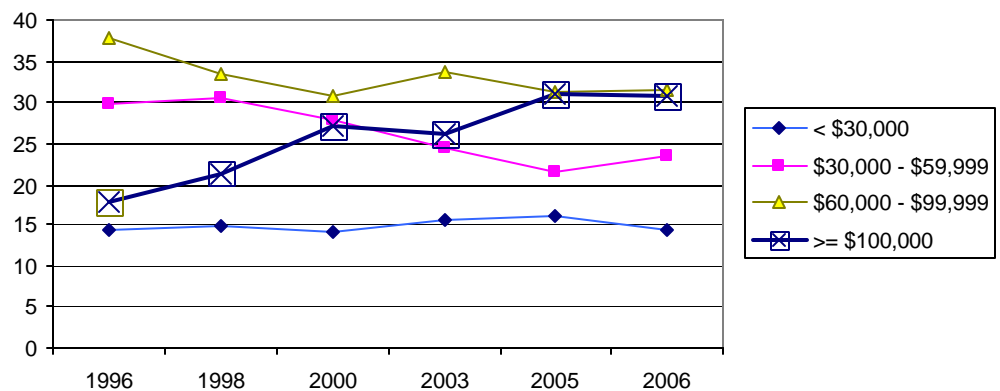
The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey issued by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA has been administered annually since 1966. The data reported in this survey provide a normative profile of the American freshman population. Oakland University (OU) has been a participant since 1967. The 2006 norms are based on the responses of 271,441 students at 393 of the nation's baccalaureate colleges and universities. Oakland University respondents included 1,683 (598 males and 1,085 females) first year students (FTIACs), surveyed during freshman orientation. Responses reflected the students' experiences in the last year of high school and their expectations for college.

Paying for College

61% of OU's 2006 FTIACs report having "some" or "major" concerns about financing the cost of college, which is down from about 70% in 1995. This decrease is probably a reflection of the change in OU students' family income over this period. The proportion of students from families with incomes less than \$30,000 is slightly lower, but the proportion from

families with incomes of \$100,000 or more has almost doubled. As expected, students from lower income families have more concern about cost; 52% of OU

Figure 1: Estimated Parental Income



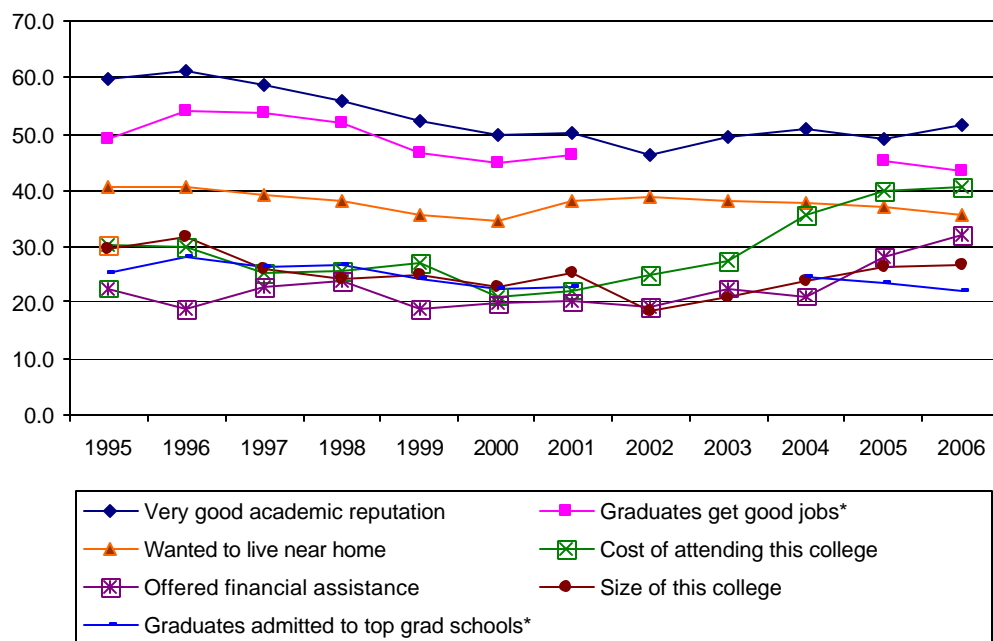
freshmen from families with incomes of less than \$50,000 have major concerns about

financing college, while fewer students (14%) from families with incomes greater than \$100,000 have similar concerns. Nationally, the percent of students with concerns about finances is higher than at OU (67% vs. 61%).

College Choice and Finances

Nationally, and at OU, fewer first year students are attending their first choice college. 69% of FTIACs reported that OU was their first choice, down 2% from last year and 4% from 2004. In addition, most of the FTIACs for whom OU was the second choice had also been accepted to their first choice college (see Table 1b, next page). The CIRP asked students about the reasons for their choice of college. Table 1a shows that academic and other non-financial reasons are most important to students who report that OU was their first choice. Among FTIACs who said OU was their first choice, the five most common reasons given are *very good academic reputation*, *graduates get good jobs*, *live near home*, *cost*, and *financial assistance*. *Cost* and *financial assistance* have moved up in importance in recent years (Figure 2), while *size of this college* and *graduates admitted to top grad schools* have been bumped from the top five.

Figure 2: Reasons for OU



Nationally, the top two reasons are the same as at OU, but *campus visit*, *size of this college*, and *good reputation for social activities* make up the rest of the top five.

* These questions were not asked from 2002 to 2004.

Cost was the number one reason for choosing OU given by students who said that OU was not their first choice, and these students' top five reasons were more likely to include other financial factors as well. The top five reasons given by the second choice group are the same as the first, although in different order, with cost at the top. However, there is less overlap in reasons as OU's rank in choice goes down. Academic reputation, which is the top reason for the 1st choice group, drops to the second spot for the 2nd choice group, third for the 3rd choice group and fourth for the 4th or lower choice group. *Could not afford first choice* is in the top five reasons of the 3rd and 4th choice groups. Of the OU freshmen who were admitted to their first choice school but enrolled at OU, 23% report that they could not afford their first choice and 14% of these students did not receive financial aid from the first choice college. Further study is in process to determine if there are implications for the retention of these students at OU.

Table 1a. Reasons for Attending This College by College Choice*

	Attending			
	1st Choice	2nd Choice	Third Choice	4th Choice and Lower
Very good academic reputation	57%	41%	36%	38%
Graduates get good jobs	48%	37%	26%	26%
Wanted to live near home	41%	24%	21%	8.3%
Cost of attending this college	39%	43%	41%	54%
Offered financial assistance	31%	33%	38%	39%
Size of this college	30%	18%	21%	8.3%
Good reputation for social activities	26%	17%	15%	12%
Graduates admitted to top graduate/professional schools	24%	18%	15%	29%
Visit to campus	19%	14%	12%	8.3%
My relatives wanted me to come here	13%	13%	9.7%	26%
Information from a website	10%	8.5%	9.8%	4.2%
High school counselor advised me	8.6%	4.9%	8.1%	0%
Rankings in national magazines	6.4%	4.4%	4.8%	4.2%
My teacher advised me	6.0%	3.7%	6.5%	4.2%
The athletic department recruited me	5.8%	4.5%	4.9%	0%
Could not afford first choice	4.9%	23%	27%	54%
Not offered aid by first choice	3.8%	14%	9.8%	42%
* Top 5 reasons in BOLD				
Financial reasons highlighted				
Table 1b.				
(If OU not first choice) Were you accepted by your first choice college?	N/A	70%	74%	67%

The First Year Students and Diversity

The CIRP report notes that as high schools and neighborhoods are increasingly segregated along both racial and socioeconomic lines, universities and colleges often provide a first opportunity to interact with students from different backgrounds.

More than two thirds (68%) of the 2006 OU first-year students reported that they attended an all or mostly White high school, and 79% reported that the neighborhood they grew up was all or mostly White (Table 2). Not surprisingly, most OU students who attended all or mostly White high schools grew up in all or mostly White neighborhoods (72%). For students in the income range of \$100,000 or more, 90% lived in all or mostly White neighborhoods, while 76% attended all or mostly White schools. (The lower percent of all or mostly White schools may reflect higher levels of racial integration found in some private schools.) Almost 9 out of 10 White students grew up in all or mostly White neighborhoods. On the other hand, only 3% of OU respondents from all or mostly **non**-White neighborhoods reported annual incomes of \$100,000 or more and 35% of these students came from families where the annual family income is less than \$30,000.

Table 2. Racial Composition of High School and Neighborhood by Demographic Characteristics of OU FTIACs, 2006

	High school I last attended			Neighborhood where I grew up		
	All/Mostly non-White	All/Mostly White	Roughly Half non-White	All/Mostly non-White	All/Mostly White	Roughly Half non-White
Total	11.7%	68.2%	20.1%	12.0%	78.8%	9.1%
Male	8.5%	72.7%	18.8%	9.3%	80.7%	10.0%
Female	13.5%	65.7%	20.9%	13.5%	77.9%	8.6%
Income Categories						
Less than \$30,000	36.9%	44.9%	18.2%	34.8%	50.5%	14.7%
\$30,000-\$59,999	12.0%	66.7%	21.4%	14.0%	73.2%	12.8%
\$60,000-\$99,999	8.0%	74.2%	17.9%	8.7%	84.7%	6.6%
\$100,000 or more	2.8%	76.4%	20.8%	2.6%	89.7%	7.7%
Race/Ethnicity						
White/Caucasian	3.6%	76.2%	20.2%	3.7%	88.8%	7.5%
African American/Black	74.2%	14.6%	11.2%	72.0%	12.6%	15.4%
American Indian/Alaska Native	13.0%	73.9%	13.0%	8.7%	69.6%	21.7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	12.5%	55.4%	32.1%	16.7%	64.8%	18.5%
Latina/o	21.4%	60.7%	17.9%	16.0%	72.0%	12.0%
Other	11.1%	48.1%	40.7%	14.5%	69.1%	16.4%

The data is almost identical for students from all or mostly non-White schools (3% and 37%). 72% of African Americans grew up in all or mostly **non-White** neighborhood, while 74% of them attended a high school with the same profile. An average of 70% of other races (Asian, Latino, etc.) reported that they grew up in all or mostly White neighborhoods. The national data presents a similar picture, except nationally, Asians and Latinos are evenly distributed among the three racial composition categories in the high schools they attended. Also, compared to White and African American, Asian and Latino students were more likely to report they grew up in integrated neighborhoods.

Advanced Placement Course

In 2006, 47% of OU freshmen took at least one AP course, only 1% more than in 2001, when the survey first asked this question, but 2% higher than the nationally. Only 6.5% of them report that their high school did not offer AP courses.

Table 3 shows differences by race among students taking AP courses and exams.

Table 3. Percentage of OU Students Reporting Advanced Placement Courses/Exams Taken by Race			
	No AP Courses Offered at My High School	Took 1 or More AP Courses	Took 1 or More AP Exams
White/Caucasian	5.0%	48.2%	30.2%
African American/Black	18.1%	32.7%	14.8%
American Indian/Alaska Native	9.1%	63.6%	36.4%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	3.8%	49.1%	28.3%
Latina/o	11.1%	44.4%	18.5%
Other	1.9%	48.1%	30.0%
Total	6.5%	46.7%	28.8%

More OU African American students reported that their high school did not offer AP courses (18%) than other ethnic groups. Only 33% of their students took 1 or more AP courses and only 15% report taking AP exams, the lowest percentage among the races. This is similar to the national data, although in the national data, a higher percentage of Asian students took 1 or more AP courses and exams (73% and 66%) than at OU.