During the fall 2009 semester, the University of Nevada, Reno (Nevada) participated in the American Freshman survey, sponsored by the American Council on Education. The CIRP survey was first instituted in 1966 and provides national nominative data about the characteristics of first-time, full-time freshmen. The CIRP survey was conducted annually on the Nevada Campus from 1991 to 2002, and then biannually beginning in 2005. For the purposes of this report, data reported as “national” represent the responses of 62,216 first-time, full-time freshman attending public universities.

The CIRP survey was administered using instruments provided by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), UCLA. The survey collected student data including biographic and demographic data, high school background, career plans, educational aspirations, financial arrangements, high school activities, and current attitudes.

For the first time on the Nevada campus, the CIRP survey was administered online in 2009. The electronic survey was sent out in September to 2,193 freshmen students, and was followed by three reminder emails. A total of 210 first-time, full-time freshmen completed the survey, representing a response rate of 10%.

In addition to the 2009 Nevada and national figures, data from the 2005 and 2007 administrations of the CIRP survey on the Nevada campus are included to gain insight into any potential trends.

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Profile of the Nevada 2009 Freshman Class

Table 1 compares the demographics of the last three administrations of the CIRP survey and the responses nationally from 2009.

In prior years the Nevada freshman class has been disproportionately female compared to the national freshman class. The gap appears to be even wider based on the 2009 administration, but this result may reflect a response bias rather than students’ actual gender distribution, considering the relatively low response rate.

The enrollment of students of color has remained fairly constant over the last four years, although the percentage of Mexican American/Chicano and Other Latino freshmen has steadily increased. The percentage of White/Caucasian students continues to be higher than the national average.

Parents’ Level of Education

Table 2: Parents’ Level of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CIRP 2005</th>
<th>CIRP 2007</th>
<th>CIRP 2009</th>
<th>National</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No College Experience</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Degree or higher</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No College Experience</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Degree or higher</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Mother:** Half of the Nevada respondents indicated that their mother has a college degree or higher, and this percentage has steadily increased since 2005. Although mothers’ education level is still lower than that of students nationally, the figures are getting closer to national data.

It is important to note that Nevada students are still more likely than students nationally to be first generation college students. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents indicated that neither of their parents had a college degree.

**Financial Considerations**

The ability of many students to attend college depends on such factors as parental income and other resources available for educational expenses.

Estimated parental income as reported by Nevada students was considerably less that the national norms. Income levels were also lower compared to those reported in 2007.

Respondents were asked to identify sources available for their first year college expenses. They were specifically asked about how much they expected themselves and their parents to contribute to their education, and how much aid they expected that would and would not need to be repaid. Finally they were asked about their concern about their ability to finance their college education.
Nevada students are less likely (by a 1:2 margin) than students nationally to expect their family to contribute a considerable amount of money ($6,000 or more) to support their college education.

The majority of Nevada students expect to contribute minimally to their own education, which is similar to the contribution expected by students nationally.

Nevada students in general expect more medium-sized aid that will not need to be repaid than students nationally. The expected amount of medium-level aid has increased among Nevada students during the last four years.

The amount of aid that must be repaid has increased considerably among Nevada students, although fewer students expect large amounts of aid ($6,000 or more) than the national average. The majority of Nevada students only expect less than $1,000 in aid which must be repaid, although the proportion of these students has decreased significantly in the last four years.
Nevada students have significantly higher concerns about financing their college education than students nationally (p < .001), and their concerns have increased since the last administration of the survey in 2007.

**Educational History**

The average student at Nevada has a comparable achievement level to students nationally. The high school GPA of Nevada students was higher in 2009 compared to 2007.

Nevada students indicated having spent more time studying/doing homework and less time socializing with friends during their last year in high school, compared to students nationally. Nevada freshmen were also less likely to have exercised and/or engaged in sports and more likely to have read for pleasure (for all of these comparisons, p < .001).

While in high school, 14% of Nevada students had special tutoring or remedial work in Mathematics, 8% in English and 6% in Science and Writing.
**Educational and Future Plans**

**Why college?** The Nevada first-time, full-time freshman class is generally comparable to students nationally on their reasons for attending college. However, Nevada students were more likely to have been influenced by their parents ($p < .001$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>CIRP 2009</th>
<th>National 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My parents wanted me to go</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be able to get a better job</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To gain general education and appreciation of ideas</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make me more cultured person</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be able to make more money</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To learn more about things that interest me</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sixty-five percent of the respondents indicated that the University of Nevada, Reno was their first choice, compared to nearly 75% in 2007. Almost 40% of the respondents did not apply to any other college, compared with only 15% of students nationally.
Why Nevada?

Table 8: Reasons noted as “very important” in influencing student’s decision to attend this particular college

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My relatives wanted me to come here</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This college has a very good academic reputation</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This college has a good reputation for its social activities</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was offered financial assistance</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cost of attending this college</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to live near home</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This college’s graduates gain admission to top graduate schools</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranking in national magazines</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information from a website</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A visit to the campus</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students nationally were more likely to indicate that they chose their specific college because of various aspects related to the college’s prestige (e.g., reputation for academics and social activities, ranking in national magazines, the college’s graduates gain admission to top graduate schools).

Nevada students were more likely to indicate that they chose the University of Nevada, Reno because of financial reasons (i.e., the relatively low cost of attending Nevada, financial assistance offer).

**Tutoring or Remedial Work:** Twenty-five percent of Nevada freshmen indicated that they felt they would need tutoring in Mathematics, 17% in Foreign Language, 15% in Science and 13% in Writing. Nevada students feel that they will need special tutoring or remedial work at about the same rate of students nationally.

**Intended Degree Attainment:** Although 59% of the incoming students plan on getting a bachelor’s degree at Nevada, only 16% intend to finalize their education at this level. Seventy-seven percent of the freshmen plan to obtain a master’s, doctoral, or professional degree.
Probable occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9: Top 5 Probable Occupations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CIRP 2007</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Physician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Business executive (management, administrator)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Writer or journalist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nevada students’ ranking of probable occupations has remained fairly stable over the last four years.
Personal Objectives

Table 10: Top 5 personal objectives of Nevada students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CIRP 2005</th>
<th>CIRP 2007</th>
<th>CIRP 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Being very well off financially</td>
<td>Being very well off financially</td>
<td>Being very well off financially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Raising a family</td>
<td>Raising a family</td>
<td>Raising a family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Helping others who are in difficulty</td>
<td>Helping others who are in difficulty</td>
<td>Helping others who are in difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Becoming an authority in my field</td>
<td>Becoming an authority in my field</td>
<td>Becoming an authority in my field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Obtaining recognition from my</td>
<td>Obtaining recognition from my</td>
<td>Obtaining recognition from my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>colleagues for contributions to</td>
<td>colleagues for contributions to</td>
<td>colleagues for contributions to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my special field</td>
<td>my special field</td>
<td>my special field</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal objectives of Nevada Students, in order of endorsement, from highest to lowest:
(Essential = 4, Very important = 3, Somewhat important = 2, Not important = 1)

- Being very well off financially (3.26)
- Raising a family (3.07)
- Helping others who are in difficulty (3.07)
- Becoming an authority in their field (2.77)
- Obtaining recognition from their colleagues for contribution to their special field (2.63)
- Improving their understanding of other countries and cultures (2.56)
- Influencing social values (2.43)
- Developing a meaningful philosophy of life (2.36)
- Becoming successful in a business of their own (2.33)
- Adopting “green” practices to protect the environment (2.33)
- Keeping up to date with political affairs (2.30)
- Becoming a community leader (2.13)
- Helping to promote racial understanding (2.11)
- Participating in a community action program (2.07)
- Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment (2.05)
- Making a theoretical contribution to science (2.00)
- Influencing the political structure (1.97)
- Writing original works (poems, novels, short stories, etc.) (1.86)
- Creating artistic works (painting, sculpture, decorating, etc.) (1.76)
- Becoming accomplished in one of the performing arts (acting, dancing, etc.) (1.70)
Behaviors and Activities

In the past year, Nevada students were more likely than students nationally to have…
(*Differences were statistically significant, p<.01)

- Skipped school/class (+16%)
- Felt depressed (+15%)
- Participated in political demonstrations (+14%)
- Been a guest in a teacher’s home (+9%)
- Used the Internet to read news sites (+2%)

In the past year, Nevada students were less likely than students nationally to have…
(*Differences were statistically significant, p<.01)

- Attended a religious service (-11%)
- Come late to class (-8%)
- Asked a teacher for advice after class (-4%)

Activities that at least 50% of Nevada students engaged in frequently or occasionally were:

- Used the Internet for research or homework (99%)
- Socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group (97%)
- Discussed politics (91%)
- Used the Internet to read news sites (90.5%)
- Studied with other students (86%)
- Asked a teacher for advice after class (82%)
- Discussed religion (82%)
- Performed volunteer work (81%)
- Voted in a student election (67%)
- Performed community service as part of a class (62%)
- Attended a religious service (61%)
- Tutored another student (60%)
- Used the Internet to read blogs (56%)
- Drank wine or liquor (50.5%)

Activities that at least 50% of Nevada students did not engage in at all:

- Skipped school/class (54%)
- Participated in political demonstrations (60%)
- Was a guest in a teacher’s home (72%)
- Smoked cigarettes (84%)
- Drank beer (59%)
- Played a musical instrument (58%)
- Came late to class (51%)
• Used the Internet to blog (67%)

Self Perceptions, Attitudes, and Expectations

Perceived Strengths: Students were asked to compare themselves to the average person their age and rate themselves on a 5-point scale (1 = highest 10%, 2 = above average, 3 = average, 4 = below average, 5 = lowest 10%) for a number of personal traits.

At least 50% of Nevada students rated themselves as either the highest 10% or above average in the following areas:

• Ability to work cooperatively with diverse people (82%)
• Academic ability (80%)
• Drive to achieve (74%)
• Tolerance of others with different beliefs (74%)
• Ability to see the world from someone else’s perspective (71%)
• Cooperativeness (69%)
• Ability to discuss and negotiate controversial issues (69%)
• Understanding of others (66%)
• Openness to having their own views challenged (63%)
• Creativity (62%)
• Leadership ability (62%)
• Self-confidence (intellectual) (62%)
• Self-understanding (58%)
• Emotional health (53%)
• Writing ability (52%)
• Mathematical ability (51%)

Political and Social Attitudes

At least 50% of Nevada students agree strongly or somewhat strongly that:

• Same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status (74%)
• Dissent is a critical component of the political process (73%)
• Abortion should be legal (68%)
• Colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus (67%)
• Only volunteers should serve in the armed forces (66.5%)
• There is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals (65%)
• Marijuana should be legalized (56%)
In general, Nevada students are *more likely* to agree strongly with the following than students nationally:
(*Differences were statistically significant, p<.05)

- There is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals (+6%)
- Abortion should be legal (+13%)
- Same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status (+8%)
- Dissent is a critical component of the political process (+4%)

**Expectations**

At least 50% of Nevada students expect that there is a *very good chance* of the following happening while in college:

- Get a job to help pay for college expenses (64%)
- Make at least a “B” average (76%)
- Be satisfied with their college (56%)
- Socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group (67%)
- Discuss course content with students outside of class (54%)
While in college, Nevada students are *more likely* to expect to do the following than students nationally:
(*Differences were statistically significant, p<.05)
- Get a job to help pay for college expenses (+13%)
- Work full-time while attending college (+14%)
- Make at least a “B” average (+9%)
- Need extra time to complete their degree requirements (+5%)
- Participate in student protests or demonstrations (+3%)
- Transfer to another college before graduating (+9%)
- Participate in volunteer or community service work (+9%)
- Have a roommate of a different race/ethnicity (+7%)

While in college, Nevada students are *less likely* to expect to do the following than students nationally:
(*Differences were statistically significant, p<.05)
- Change major field (-2%)
- Change career choice (-1.5%)
- Join a social fraternity or sorority (-2%)
- Play club, intramural, or recreational sports (-11%)
- Communicate regularly with their professors (-9%)
The Average Nevada Student

The average Nevada student can be characterized as an 18 or 19 year old, Caucasian student whose parents are likely to have obtained at least some college education. The average Nevada student does not expect that their parents or themselves will contribute significant financial resources to their college education. The average Nevada student expects to receive scholarships and grants and does not expect to take out any loans to finance their college education. The average Nevada student will have maintained a GPA above 3.5 and will have not required any special tutoring or remedial work while in high school. The average Nevada student chose Nevada as their first choice and either did not apply to any other college or applied to only one or two other colleges. The average Nevada student came to Nevada because they were offered financial assistance and the cost of attending Nevada was low. The average Nevada student expects to eventually obtain a graduate or professional degree.

The average Nevada student frequently or occasionally used the internet for research or homework, socialized with someone of another racial or ethnic group, studied with other students, discussed politics and religion, and performed volunteer work. The overall level of alcohol drinking appears to have decreased since the previous administrations of the survey in 2007.

The average Nevada student rated themselves above average in their ability to work cooperatively with diverse people, academic ability, drive to achieve, tolerance of others with different beliefs, ability to see the world from someone else’s perspective, cooperativeness, ability to discuss and negotiate controversial issues, understanding of others and openness to having their own views challenged. While it is important to remember that these ratings reflect students’ perceptions of themselves and may not always coincide with the evaluations of an external observer, these characteristics nevertheless suggest a desire on the part of Nevada students to be open to diversity and novel perspectives.

The average Nevada student feels strongly that same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status, dissent is a critical component of the political process, abortion should be legal, colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus, only volunteers should serve in the armed forces, there is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals, and Marijuana should be legalized.
Other Major Findings

Nevada students are more likely to come from families where the parents are either divorced or separated than students nationally.

Top 3 reported parental occupations are as follows, for fathers, 1) business, 2) skilled worker, and 3) engineer, and for mothers, 1) business, 2) education, and 3) nurse. A considerable proportion of fathers (12%) and of mothers (11.5%) is unemployed.

One third of students reported having no religion, 23% indicated that they were ‘Other Christian,’ and 17% Roman Catholic. Students’ religious preferences were very similar to those reported for their parents, suggesting a strong link between parents’ and students’ religious beliefs.

Half of the freshmen planned to live in college residence halls during their first semester at Nevada, whereas one third planned to stay with their family or other relatives. Only a small percentage of students (14%) indicated that they were planning to live in a private home, apartment, or room.

Nevada students are more likely to expect to get a job to help pay for college (64%) than students nationally (51%).

Nevada students are more likely to expect to transfer to another institution before graduating (13%) than students nationally (5%).

Nevada students are as likely as students nationally to expect to be satisfied with their college, which represents an improvement compared to previous years, when Nevada students has lower expectations of satisfaction compared to the national average.
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