



Goals, Expectations, and the Early Academic Adjustment of New Freshmen

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Students' goals and their expectations for college may be correlated with their academic adjustment, as may their self-assessment. This report looks at those factors and how they are related to new freshmen's self-reported academic adjustment a few weeks into their first semester at Loyola.

This report draws on results from two surveys. The first is the HERI CIRP Freshman Survey, which is administered annually to new freshmen at participating institutions across the United States. It is administered to new freshmen during the "Discover Loyola" sessions **prior to students' first semester at Loyola**. It asks about, among other things, students' goals and college-related expectations, as well as their assessment of themselves.

The second survey is Loyola's President's Questionnaire for New Students (PQNS). It is administered to all new students about **two weeks into their first semester** at Loyola; the survey runs for one week, so it concludes at the end of the third week of the semester. It asks about very early academic and social adjustment. The measures of academic adjustment include whether the students feel stressed by coursework, are doing as well as they expected academically, are managing their time well enough to complete their coursework, and know where to go if they have academic difficulties.

This report includes only new freshmen who responded to both the Freshman Survey and the PQNS, a total of 377 students.¹ Thirty percent of the students who answered the Freshman Survey also answered the PQNS.

Key findings

Self-assessment

- New freshman respondents who rated themselves as above average in computer skills were less likely to be stressed by coursework during their first few weeks at Loyola, compared to those who rated themselves as average or lower (see Table 1).
- Students who rated themselves as above average in

¹ Transfer students are excluded from these analyses, since they are not coming directly from high school and do not take the Freshman Survey.

intellectual self-confidence were also less likely to be stressed by coursework.

- Freshmen who said they had an above average drive to achieve were more likely to be managing their time during the first few weeks of the semester well enough to complete their required work.

College expectations

- Students who, during the summer before their freshman year, thought there was a very good chance that they would earn at least a B average in college were more likely to be managing their time well enough to complete their required coursework (see Table 2).
- Freshmen who thought there was a very good chance that they would need extra time to complete their degree requirements were less likely to know where to go with academic difficulties at Loyola.
- Students who thought there was a very good chance they would study abroad were more likely to be doing as well academically at Loyola as they expected.

Goals

- Freshmen for whom becoming an authority in their field was a very important or essential goal were less likely to know where to go with academic difficulties at Loyola (see Table 3).
- Students who saw obtaining recognition from colleagues for contributions to their field as a very important goal were more likely to feel stressed by coursework and less likely to know where to go with academic difficulties.
- Freshmen for whom becoming successful in a business of their own was a very important goal were less likely to know where to go with academic difficulties.
- Students for whom improving their understanding of other countries and cultures was a very important goal were less likely to feel stressed by coursework and more likely to be managing their time well enough to complete that coursework.

Conclusions

- Levels of stress due to coursework during the first few weeks of the semester are lower for those who rate themselves as above average in computer skills and intellectual self-confidence, as well as those with

a very important goal of improving their understanding of other countries and cultures.

- Freshmen who expect to get a 'B' average do better at managing their time early in the semester.

- Freshmen with stronger practical/professional goals are less likely to know where to go with academic difficulties..

Table 1 New Freshmen: Self-ratings and Early Academic Adjustment at Loyola								
Freshman Survey: Future acts	President's Survey for New Students							
	Stressed by course work		Doing as well as I expected academically		Managing time well enough to complete required work		Know where to go with academic difficulties	
	% <i>agree</i>	% <i>disagree</i>	% <i>agree</i>	% <i>disagree</i>	% <i>agree</i>	% <i>disagree</i>	% <i>agree</i>	% <i>disagree</i>
Academic ability								
Above average	60	40	89	11	84	16	84	16
Average or below	64	36	84	16	78	22	76	24
Writing ability								
Above average	57	43	89	11	84	16	84	16
Average or below	66	34	86	14	83	17	80	20
Computer skills								
Above average	53	47	89	11	85	15	81	19
Average or below	65	35	88	12	83	17	84	16
Self-confidence (intellectual)								
Above average	56	44	90	10	85	15	85	15
Average or below	69	31	84	16	80	20	79	21
Drive to achieve								
Above average	60	40	88	12	86	14	84	16
Average or below	61	39	90	10	70	30	74	26

Source: CIRP Freshman Survey, 2008; President's Survey for New Students, 2009

Note: Bolded red indicates statistically significant difference.

Table 2 New Freshmen: Expectations and Early Academic Adjustment at Loyola								
Freshman Survey: Future acts	President's Survey for New Students							
	Stressed by coursework		Doing as well as I expected academically		Managing time well enough to complete required work		Knowing where to go with academic difficulties	
	% <i>agree</i>	% <i>disagree</i>	% <i>agree</i>	% <i>disagree</i>	% <i>agree</i>	% <i>disagree</i>	% <i>agree</i>	% <i>disagree</i>
Change major field								
Very good chance	55	45	87	13	79	21	83	17
Some, very little, or no chance	61	39	88	12	85	15	83	17
Change career choice								
Very good chance	53	47	92	8	83	17	78	22
Some, very little, or no chance	61	39	87	13	85	15	84	16
Make at least a 'B' average								
Very good chance	59	41	89	11	87	13	83	17
Some, very little, or no chance	63	37	85	15	73	27	80	20
Need extra time to complete your degree requirements								
Very good chance	63	37	100	0	89	11	63	37
Some, very little, or no chance	60	40	87	13	84	16	84	16
Be satisfied with your college								
Very good chance	60	40	89	11	86	14	84	16
Some, very little, or no chance	61	39	86	14	81	19	82	18
Transfer to another college before graduating								
Very good chance	67	33	83	17	71	29	89	11
Some, very little, or no chance	60	40	88	12	85	15	83	17
Communicate regularly with your professors								
Very good chance	59	41	87	13	86	14	83	17
Some, very little, or no chance	61	39	89	11	82	18	84	16
Participate in a study abroad program								
Very good chance	61	39	91	9	87	13	85	15
Some, very little, or no chance	58	42	84	16	81	19	81	19

Source: CIRP Freshman Survey, 2008; President's Survey for New Students, 2009

Note: Bolded red indicates statistically significant difference.

Table 3 New Freshmen: Goals and Early Academic Adjustment at Loyola								
Freshman Survey: Future acts	President's Survey for New Students							
	Stressed by coursework		Doing as well as I expected academically		Managing time well enough to complete required work		Knowing where to go with academic difficulties	
	% <i>agree</i>	% <i>disagree</i>	% <i>agree</i>	% <i>disagree</i>	% <i>agree</i>	% <i>disagree</i>	% <i>agree</i>	% <i>disagree</i>
Becoming an authority in my field								
Very important or essential	60	40	89	11	84	16	79	21
Somewhat or not important	60	40	88	13	83	17	88	13
Obtaining recognition from my colleagues for contributions to my special field								
Very important or essential	65	35	89	11	84	16	80	20
Somewhat or not important	52	48	88	12	83	17	88	12
Becoming successful in a business of my own								
Very important or essential	58	42	86	14	83	17	77	23
Somewhat or not important	61	39	89	11	85	15	85	15
Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures								
Very important or essential	57	43	90	10	87	13	83	17
Somewhat or not important	69	31	83	17	75	25	82	18
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life								
Very important or essential	61	39	90	10	84	16	83	17
Somewhat or not important	58	42	85	15	84	16	83	17

Source: CIRP Freshman Survey, 2008; President's Survey for New Students, 2009

Note: Bolded red indicates statistically significant difference.