



Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

## CIRP 2007-08 and NSSE 2008-09

# Are Incoming Students for Whom Loyola Was Their First Choice School Different from Those for Whom It Was Not?

Prepared by the Office of Institutional Research

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Just before they started at Loyola, over a third of recent incoming new freshmen said that Loyola had not been their first choice school, according to the HERI CIRP Freshman Survey. That so many incoming students would have preferred to have been attending a different institution raises questions about what kinds of outcomes might be expected for such students, compared to those for whom Loyola was their first choice. Such students might be less likely to be satisfied overall with Loyola. They may also be less likely to perform well here. Finally, they may tend to be less engaged as students.

This report looks at the 2007 and 2008 incoming cohorts of new freshmen who completed the Freshman Survey during their Discover Loyola orientation the summers before beginning at Loyola and who also completed the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) at the end of their first year.<sup>1</sup> With this sample, we can compare students for whom Loyola was not their first choice to those for whom it was (as identified in the Freshman Survey), in terms of various outcomes measured in the NSSE. Of the 914 respondents eligible for inclusion in the analysis, 63% reported that Loyola was their first choice institution ("first choice students"), while the other 37% reported that it was not their first choice ("non-first choice students"; see Table 1).

This report looks at differences between the two groups in overall satisfaction with Loyola and its environment, self-reported GPA, NSSE benchmarks of student engagement,<sup>2</sup> and students' assessment of how much Loyola had contributed to their personal and academic development, all at the end of their first year. Statistically significant differences between the two groups are highlighted.

### Key Findings

#### Group characteristics

- The gender composition of the first choice and non-first choice student groups was essentially the same (see Table 2).

<sup>1</sup> They must also have given their permission to link their FS data to other data sets.

<sup>2</sup> NSSE benchmarks constitute summary indices in five areas of student engagement and effective educational practice; they are measured on a scale from 0 to 100. See Appendix for descriptions of and questions included in the benchmarks.

- White students were slightly more likely to report that Loyola was their first choice school, while students of Asian background were slightly more likely to say it was not their first choice.
- Students whose native language was not English were less likely to have had Loyola as their first choice, compared to those with English as their native tongue. There was no difference, however, between first generation college students and those with at least one parent with college experience.
- The two groups had statistically similar high school grade point averages, but first choice students had very slightly lower average composite ACT scores. There was no difference in average composite SAT scores, though.
- While first choice students were less likely to plan to get a doctoral or professional degree, they were more likely to plan to get a master's level degree, compared to non-first choice students.
- There were no significant differences between the groups in parental income or in level of concern about paying for college.

#### Student satisfaction and GPA

- Not surprisingly, students for whom Loyola was their first choice were somewhat more satisfied with their overall educational experience at Loyola; they were more likely than non-first choice students to report their experience as excellent (see Table 3). Nevertheless, the vast majority of students in both groups rated their first year Loyola educational experience as good or excellent.
- Again not surprisingly, first choice students were more likely than non-first choice students to say that they would go to Loyola again if they were starting over. They were more likely to say that they definitely would, and less likely to say that they only probably would or definitely/probably would not.
- There was no statistically significant difference between the two groups in their satisfaction with academic advising at Loyola.
- Students in both groups gave similar ratings to their relationships with other students and with

administrative staff at Loyola, but first choice students rated their relationships with faculty higher than did non-first choice students.

- First choice students were no more likely to report having earned at least a B average during their first year at Loyola than were non-first choice students.

#### Student engagement benchmarks

- There were no significant differences between first choice and non-first choice students in four of the NSSE benchmarks of student engagement, Level of Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, and Enriching Educational Opportunities. (see Table 4).
- However, first choice students had slightly higher average Supportive Campus Environment than did non-first choice students.

#### Loyola contribution to students' development

- There were almost no significant differences between first choice and non-first choice students in how much they thought Loyola had contributed to their personal and academic development during their first year (see Table 5).
- First choice students were a little more likely to say that Loyola had contributed quite a bit or very much to their development in learning effectively on their own than were non-first choice students.

- There was no difference between the two groups in the percentage who thought that Loyola had contributed quite a bit or very much to their acquisition of a broad general education or to their acquisition of job or work-related knowledge and skills.

### Conclusions

- Non-first choice students were slightly more educationally ambitious, in that they were more likely to plan to eventually pursue a doctoral degree.
- As measured by self-reported first year GPA, first choice students and non-first choice students performed equally well in their first year at Loyola.
- There were almost no differences between the two groups in level of student engagement, as measured by the NSSE benchmarks.
- There were almost no differences between the two groups in how much they felt Loyola had contributed to their development.
- Although first choice students were a little happier overall at Loyola than were non-first choice students, there were very few differences between them in how they evaluated specific aspects of their Loyola experience.
- The one notable difference is that first choice students saw their relationships with faculty more positively than did non-first choice students.

	%	N
First choice	63	572
Not first choice	37	342
Total	100	914

Source: HERI CIRP Freshman Survey 2007 -08 and National Survey of Student Engagement 2008-09

<b>Table 2</b>		
<b>Descriptive Characteristics by Loyola as First Choice</b>		
	Loyola first choice	
	First choice	Not first choice
Gender (%)		
Male	26	27
Female	74	73
Race/ethnicity (%) *		
White	79	66
Black	2	6
Am. Ind/Alaskan native	1	1
Asian	5	13
Native Hawaiian/Pac. Islander	1	1
Latino	9	9
Other	1	3
Non-native English speaker (%) *	11	18
First generation college student (%)	16	15
High school GPA (%)		
C+	0	1
B-	1	2
B	11	10
B+	25	22
A-	27	25
A OR A+	36	40
ACT composite score (average) *	26	27
SAT composite score (average)	1,162	1,186
Highest degree planned (%) *		
Doctoral or professional	48	63
Master's	39	29
Parental Income (%)		
Less than \$50,000	19	23
\$50,000 to 99,9999	37	36
\$100,000 or more	44	41
Concern about paying for college (%)		
None	30	26
Some	56	61
Major	14	13

Source: HERI CIRP Freshman Survey 2007 -08 and National Survey of Student Engagement 2008-09

\* indicates difference between groups is statistically significant at .05 level.

<b>Table 3</b>		
<b>Student Satisfaction and Performance by Loyola as First Choice School</b>		
	Loyola first choice	
	First choice	Not first choice
	%	%
How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution? *		
Poor	2	2
Fair	12	18
Good	51	56
Excellent	35	24
If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending? *		
Definitely no	4	6
Probably no	11	20
Probably yes	44	46
Definitely yes	40	27
Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your		
Poor	7	6
Fair	21	26
Good	47	47
Excellent	24	21
Relationships with other students		
Friendly, supportive, sense of belonging	78	75
Relationships with faculty members *		
Available, helpful, sympathetic	72	65
Relationships with administrative personnel and offices		
Helpful, considerate, flexible	50	48
Made at least B average during first year	86	82

Source: HERI CIRP Freshman Survey 2007 -08 and National Survey of Student Engagement 2008-09

\* indicates difference between groups is statistically significant at .05 level.

<b>Table 4</b>		
<b>Student Engagement Benchmarks<sup>1</sup> by Loyola as First Choice School</b>		
<i>Average on scale from 0 - 100</i>	Loyola first choice	
	First choice	Not first choice
Academic Challenge	59	58
Active and Collaborative Learning	40	40
Student-Faculty Interaction	31	32
Enriching Educational Experiences	29	30
Supportive Campus Environment *	61	57

Source: HERI CIRP Freshman Survey 2007 -08 and National Survey of Student Engagement 2008-09

\* indicates difference between groups is statistically significant at .05 level.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix for descriptions of and questions included in the benchmarks.

<b>Table 5</b>		
<b>Perception of Institutional Contribution to Development by Loyola as First Choice School</b>		
	Loyola first choice	
	First choice	Not first choice
<i>% saying Loyola has contributed quite a bit or very much</i>	%	%
Acquiring a broad general education	89	88
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	58	55
Writing clearly and effectively	77	72
Speaking clearly and effectively	56	54
Thinking critically and analytically	85	84
Analyzing quantitative problems	73	71
Using computing and information technology	69	69
Working effectively with others	68	68
Voting in local, state, or national elections	36	31
Learning effectively on your own *	75	68
Understanding yourself	65	61
Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	63	61
Solving complex real-world problems	59	57
Developing a personal code of values and ethics	67	64
Improving the welfare of your community	57	56
Developing a deepened sense of spirituality	47	47

Source: HERI CIRP Freshman Survey 2007-08 and National Survey of Student Engagement 2008-09

\* indicates difference between groups is statistically significant at .05 level.

## APPENDIX

### NSSE benchmark definitions and items included

#### Level of Academic Challenge

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Colleges and universities promote high levels of student achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance.

- Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, etc. related to academic program)
- Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings
- Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more; number of written papers or reports of between 5 and 19 pages; and number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages
- Coursework emphasizes: **Analysis** of the basic elements of an idea, experience or theory
- Coursework emphasizes: **Synthesis** and organizing of ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships
- Coursework emphasizes: **Making of judgments** about the value of information, arguments, or methods
- Coursework emphasizes: **Applying** theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
- Working harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations
- Campus environment emphasizes: Spending significant amount of time studying and on academic work.

#### Active and Collaborative Learning

Students learn more when they are intensely involved in their education and asked to think about what they are learning in different settings. Collaborating with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material prepares students for the messy, unscripted problems they will encounter daily during and after college.

- Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
- Made a class presentation
- Worked with other students on projects **during class**
- Worked with classmates **outside of class** to prepare class assignments
- Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)
- Participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)

#### Student-Faculty Interaction

Students learn firsthand how experts think about and solve practical problems by interacting with faculty members inside and outside the classroom. As a result, their teachers become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, life-long learning.

- Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor
- Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class
- Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student-life activities, etc.)
- Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance
- Worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements

#### Enriching Educational Experiences

Complementary learning opportunities enhance academic programs. Diversity experiences teach students valuable things about themselves and others. Technology facilitates collaboration between peers and instructors. Internships, community service, and senior capstone courses provide opportunities to integrate and apply knowledge.

- Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, social fraternity or sorority, etc.)
- Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment
- Community service or volunteer work
- Foreign language coursework / Study abroad
- Independent study or self-designed major
- Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.)
- Serious conversations with students of different religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values

- Serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own
- Using electronic medium (e.g., listserv, chat group, Internet, instant messaging, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment
- Campus environment encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds
- Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together

### **Supportive Campus Environment**

Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relations among different groups on campus.

- Campus environment provides the support you need to help you succeed academically
- Campus environment helps you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
- Campus environment provides the support you need to thrive socially
- Quality of relationships with other students
- Quality of relationships with faculty members
- Quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices