

Wake Forest University HERI Freshman Survey Results 2014

Several trends emerged from analysis of Wake Forest University (WFU) students' responses to the fall 2014 Higher Education Research Institute's Freshman survey. In several ways, Wake Forest freshmen indicated being more focused -- WFU was their first choice, they chose Wake Forest to achieve post-graduation plans (i.e. career or further education), and they indicated being less distracted about financing their education. Also, there was a significant increase in students' interest in Business, almost one-third of Wake Forest respondents. However, they reported less confidence in their own academic abilities, less interest in getting involved, and placed less emphasis on pluralistic orientation, including studying abroad.

The Freshman Survey (TFS) is a national survey directed at UCLA by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). TFS results are useful for determining from incoming freshmen their background, reasons for choosing Wake Forest, and their plans and expectations during and after college. The TFS was first administered to Wake Forest freshmen entering in the Class of 1979 and has been administered regularly since 2005.

TFS was distributed in the residence halls to all Wake Forest freshmen entering in the fall of 2014. A total of 790 freshmen submitted responses, representing 61% of the entering freshmen. The respondents were mostly representative of the freshmen class. Hispanics/Latinos and Asians were slightly underrepresented whereas white and two or more races were slightly overrepresented. The overall gender representation from TFS closely matched that of the actual gender division in the freshmen class.

[Construct Breakdown](#)

Due to the large quantity of individual questions asked and the complexity of assessing specific areas of potential concern, HERI developed a number of constructs which group information gathered from numerous items into a more reliable, cumulative measure. These construct scores, which provide a way of looking at overall trends among survey responses, have a population mean of 50 across all administering institutions and a standard deviation of 10.

Overall, WFU scored similarly to other very highly selective, private universities in most constructs. Wake Forest scored below the average on two constructs, "Likelihood of College Involvement" (52.9 vs. 53.4) and "Pluralistic Orientation" (50.2 vs. 51.2).

The average scores this year for WFU students were lower compared to last year's WFU student scores, particularly in "Likelihood of College Involvement" (52.9 vs. 56.1), "Academic Self-Concept" (52.4 vs. 55.3), "Habits of the Mind" (53.8 vs. 55.1) and "Social Self-Concept" (50.5 vs. 53.2). Investigation into the differences in respondent demographics from 2013 and 2014 did not yield any insights explaining the decrease in these average construct scores.

Within Wake Forest, female students scored higher in "Likelihood of College Involvement" (54.7 vs. 50.8), "College Reputation Orientation" (53.6 vs. 51.5), and "Social Agency" (51.4 vs. 49.8); whereas male students scored higher than females in "Academic Self-Concept" (53.3 vs. 51.7) and "Social Self-Concept" (51.8 vs. 49.3). [See all construct results by gender.](#)

Individual Item Analysis

Analysis was also conducted on individual survey items, although they may be less reliable than constructs. Longitudinal analysis found a continuing drop in respondents' probable field of study as a professional discipline, but a large rise in intended Business majors. Also, more incoming freshmen said they [drank alcohol last year](#), while fewer indicated a likelihood to socialize with someone of another race or study abroad.

More Wake Forest incoming freshmen compared to [freshmen at six very highly selective private universities](#) reported:

- The following were all “very important” in his or her decision to attend
 - School size
 - Rankings in magazines
 - College has a very good academic reputation
 - Percentage of students that graduate from this college
- Currently attending his or her 1st choice school
- Attending this college to prepare for graduate or professional school
- Attending this college to gain admission to top graduate/professional schools
- His or her probable field of study is Business
- Do not need to use his or her own resources to pay for college
- Not worried about financing his or her education
- Frequently attended religious services
- Conservative political views

Overall, Wake Forest's incoming freshmen indicated having had more remedial work in mathematics and writing than freshmen at other very highly selective private universities. Also, 41% of Wake Forest's freshmen reported there was a “very good chance” he or she would get tutoring help in specific courses.

WFU Custom Questions:

In addition to HERI items, WFU added a number of custom items to the survey. Trends from these items include:

- Rising
 - On campus course work will be most significant in shaping his or her understanding or foreign culture and society
 - He or she gets distracted from class assignments to the extent that grades suffer
 - Responsibilities as a student compromise his or her responsibilities in life
- Falling
 - Overseas study will be most significant in understanding foreign culture and society