

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Methodology	1
<i>Questionnaire Design</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Procedure</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Analytic strategy</i>	<i>1</i>
Sample Composition	1
<i>Gender</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Geographic Location</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Family Income</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Academic Preparedness</i>	<i>3</i>
Financing a College Education	5
<i>Level of Financing Concern</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Determinants of Concern</i>	<i>5</i>
Decisions Related to Attending College	6
<i>Reasons for Attending College</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Reasons for Enrollment Decision</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Number of Applications and Acceptances</i>	<i>7</i>
Career and Educational Plans	7
<i>Probable Occupations and Fields of Study</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Highest Degree Intended</i>	<i>8</i>
Activities During High School	8
<i>In the Past Year How Often Did You...</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>How Many Hours Spent Per Week...</i>	<i>9</i>
Self Perceptions, Goals, and Expectations	10
<i>Perceived Abilities and Traits</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Personal Goals and Objectives</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Probable Occurrences During College Career</i>	<i>11</i>
Political Beliefs and Opinions	12
<i>Political Orientation</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Views on Controversial Issues</i>	<i>12</i>
Local Issues	13
Summary	15
References	15
Acknowledgments	15

Introduction

The University of Southern California has a long history of striving to understand the needs, interests, and aspirations of its undergraduate students. A major part of that effort has been participation in the national Freshman Survey conducted by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP). USC's participation in the CIRP survey, which began in 1974, continued in the summer of 1998 with the surveying of the freshman class. This report summarizes the results of that survey. Changes in responses from previous years are highlighted, and comparisons are made with freshmen from other universities, especially those at highly selective private universities.

Methodology

Questionnaire Design. The CIRP questionnaire is designed by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) and is distributed to participating campuses. Most of the questions on the 1998 instrument are ones that were included in previous years, although some questions were eliminated and some new ones were added. For example, given the exploding popularity of the internet, five new questions dealing with internet usage were added. In addition to the standardized questions, USC added several "local" questions on issues such as volunteer activity, campus living, working with faculty, and overseas programs.

Procedure. Questionnaires were administered primarily during seven orientation sessions held during the months of June and July, 1998 on the USC main campus. Between 300 and 370 freshmen attended each orientation session, and typically all of them completed the questionnaire. Each student received a HERI-designed questionnaire, a set of local questions, and an instruction sheet which explained the purpose of the research and stressed that responses would be treated confidentially. Smaller numbers of questionnaires were completed in two other venues -- during International Student Orientation, in August, and on "warm welcome flights," which involved groups of out-of-state students all traveling on the same flight.

Analytic Strategy. Nationwide, information was collected from a total of 275,811 students at 469 two- and four-year institutions. Results were statistically adjusted by HERI to reflect the responses of the 1.64 million first-time, full-time students that entered college as freshmen in Fall 1998. USC's results will be compared to those of four different national subgroups: private universities, highly-selective private universities, highly-selective public universities, and universities in general. Of these, most of the discussion will center on comparisons with highly-selective private universities (HSPRs), a distinction determined by entering SAT scores. Nationwide, a total of 19,050 freshmen from 17 different HSPRs completed the survey. While most analyses will involve the entire USC sample, a few will focus on selected sub-samples. Additional sub-sample and special issue analyses will appear in a series of smaller reports that will be made available on the Student Surveys web site: www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student_surveys.

Sample Composition

A total of 2,338 first-time full-time USC freshmen, representing 72.6 percent of the enrolled freshman population, completed the questionnaire. In this section, several aspects of the sample will be discussed: its representativeness, some of its characteristics, and finally how it compares to samples from other universities. Factors to be considered include gender, ethnicity, geographic location, family income, and academic preparedness.

Gender. For the second year in a row, women constitute a slight majority of the sample (50.4 percent) and of the freshman class in general (50.7 percent). During most of the 1990's, men held a slight majority and prior to that, a significant majority. With the exception of HSPRs, where men hold a 53.1 percent majority, women presently hold a slight majority at most institutions of higher education.

Ethnicity. Freshmen were presented with eight ethnic categories and were instructed to mark all that apply. Three categories, Mexican American/Chicano, Puerto Rican, and Other Latino, were combined into the Latino category. The table below displays the percentage of freshmen who indicated on the questionnaire that they were members of each category:

Ethnic Category	USC	Hi-Select Private	Hi-Select Public	All Private	All Universities
African American	6.7	5.9	6.3	5.5	6.8
American Indian	2.4	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.8
Asian American	25.4	17.9	19.0	12.6	8.6
Latino	16.7	7.8	7.4	7.9	4.6
Caucasian	56.5	71.5	68.6	75.3	81.0
Other	6.4	3.6	3.9	4.1	2.7
Note: Column totals exceed 100 percent because students could check more than one category.					

Although USC is one of the most ethnically diverse universities in the country, the percentage of freshmen checking the Caucasian category has risen since 1994, when it reached its lowest point of 50.4 percent. Conversely, the percentage of Asian American freshmen in the sample has dropped from its 1996 high of 29.4 percent. However, because the percentage of Asian American students in the entire freshman class has been fairly stable during this period, the reduction seems to be due to a change in their rate of participation in orientation. Regardless, USC enrolls a much larger percentage of Asian American students than do most other major universities. The 16.7 percent Latino share of the sample, which includes 10.5 percent Mexican American/Chicano, 5.7 percent Other Latino, and 0.5 percent Puerto Rican, has been stable in the 16 percent to 17 percent range since 1994, and also greatly exceeds national norms. Finally, the percentage of African American freshmen in the sample is higher than in any previous Freshman Survey.

Because freshmen could check more than one ethnic category, it is possible to identify those who consider themselves “multi-ethnic.” A total of 11.7 percent checked more than one category, including 9.9 percent that checked two categories, and 1.8 percent that checked three or more categories. Adjusted, mutually exclusive ethnic category percentages appear in the following table. National percentages are not available for comparison because calculating these percentages requires access to individual-level data:

Ethnic Category (Mutually Exclusive)	Proportion of Sample	Proportion of Freshman Population*
African American	4.3	6.3
American Indian	0.0	1.0
Asian American	21.8	23.8
Latino	11.7	13.5
Caucasian	47.2	51.0
Other	3.2	0.6
Multi-ethnic	11.4	N/A
International	N/A	3.8
*Based on information taken from admission applications		

The sample proportions differ from those in the 1998 freshman population not only because of the multi-ethnic category, but also because of a lack of correspondence in how ethnicity is measured by HERI and USC. In particular, USC creates a separate “International” category for students who are not citizens or permanent residents, while the HERI instrument does not. Incidentally, 2.5 percent of the freshmen in the sample describe themselves as non-resident aliens, close to the 3.8 percent in the freshman population.

Looking specifically at the multi-ethnic category, the most common combination is Caucasian-Asian American ($n=64$), but most combinations are represented to some extent. Virtually all (97.4 percent) of the multi-ethnic students are U.S. citizens, compared to only 88 percent of those who list a single ethnic category, an indication of the degree to which the United States is a “melting pot.” Finally, accounting for multi-ethnicity led to a reduction in the American Indian category from 2.4 percent to 0.0 percent, which indicates that *every* USC freshman surveyed with American Indian ancestry considers himself or herself multi-ethnic.

The percentage of the sample holding a green card (non-citizen, permanent resident) is 8.1 percent. While this is almost twice the 4.7 percent found at other HSPRs, it is down from USC’s 1995 high of 11.7 percent. The sample also has a substantially larger portion of freshmen who report a language other than English as their native language: 20.5 percent versus 11.7 percent for HSPRs, and 10.7 percent for private universities in general.

Geographic Location. Eighty percent of the sample reports that their permanent residence is within the state of California, compared to 71 percent of the freshman population as a whole. Combining geographic location with ethnicity, African American and multi-ethnic freshmen are equally represented in the in-state and out-of-state portions of the sample, Caucasian freshmen are have greater representation in the out-of-state portion, and Latino and Asian American freshmen have greater representation in the in-state portion.

The tremendous population base of Southern California is an advantage that USC has over most other major private universities. Several hundred thousand potential students live within commuting distance of USC, and this shows up in the freshman statistics. Forty-six percent of the freshman class report that their permanent residence is within 50 miles of campus compared to only 17 percent at other HSPRs. Because of this proximity, a greater percentage of USC students choose to live at home: 8.3 percent versus 1.6 percent.

Family Income. The following table illustrates the family income distribution of the sample:

Family Income Category	USC	Hi-Select Private	Hi-Select Public	All Private	All Universities
\$19,999 or less	9.2	5.1	8.8	6.4	7.8
\$20,000 - 39,999	16.7	10.4	14.2	12.5	15.9
\$40,000 - 59,999	15.3	13.2	17.3	16.0	20.5
\$60,000 - 99,999	21.2	23.9	29.5	25.5	29.3
\$100,000 - 149,999	15.6	19.4	17.0	17.2	14.5
\$150,000 - 199,999	6.2	9.2	6.1	7.9	5.2
\$200,000 or more	15.6	19.3	7.2	14.6	7.0

USC continues to enroll more students at the lower end of the income spectrum than do most other universities. Low levels of inflation and wage increases in recent years are no doubt a major reason why these percentages have changed relatively little during that time span.

Academic Preparedness. Highly selective private universities achieve high graduation rates in part by restricting admission to academically prepared students. Three factors that are frequently taken into account in admission decisions are high school grades, test scores, and high school curriculum. On the CIRP questionnaire, freshmen were asked questions in each of these areas. While there is typically a small positive bias in self-reported grades and scores, there is no reason to believe that the degree of bias has changed over the years, and thus it is potentially useful to compare the results of different Freshman Surveys.

High School Grades. The following table indicates the percentage of students who marked various average high school grade categories:

Average High School Grade	USC	Hi-Select Private	Hi-Select Public	All Private	All Universities
A or A+	31.1	51.5	30.1	35.2	24.4
A-	32.8	28.9	29.6	27.0	23.6
B+	21.8	13.3	21.7	18.9	21.5
B	12.1	5.3	14.2	12.9	20.0
B-	1.7	0.8	3.2	4.0	6.5
C+	0.4	0.2	0.8	1.5	2.9
C	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.5	1.2
D	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Almost 64 percent of the 1998 sample report an average high school grades of A or A-, the highest of any survey to date. While this is still below the level of other HSPRs, it exceeds the norm for all other university categories. It also is a substantial increase compared to freshman classes surveyed during the late 1980's, when less than 40 percent of the sample reported grades of A- or better, and the modal reported high school average grade was a B+

Test Scores. Freshmen also reported their verbal and math SAT scores. Almost one third (31.1 percent) report combined scores of 1300 or higher, and 86.4 percent reported scores of 1100 or higher, again, the highest ever. For example, only 82.8 percent of the 1997 sample reported combined SAT scores of 1100 or higher.

High School Curriculum. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) issued recommendations, sometimes referred to as the “new basics,” regarding courses that students should take in high school in order to prepare them for success after graduation (A Nation At Risk, 1983). The following are the percentages of students who indicate that they studied each subject the recommended number of years:

High School Subject*	USC	Hi-Select Private	Hi-Select Public	All Private	All Universities
English (4 years)	98.7	99.1	98.9	98.9	98.6
Mathematics (3 years)	99.2	99.6	99.4	99.3	98.8
Foreign language (2 years)	98.1	98.7	97.7	97.8	94.3
Physical science (2 years)	60.5	70.9	64.1	63.3	59.4
Biological science (2 years)	43.1	49.6	47.3	45.3	44.3
History/American government (1 year)	99.3	99.2	99.3	99.0	99.1
Computer science (½ year)	50.1	50.7	52.5	54.9	57.1
Art and/or music (1 year)	78.1	79.8	73.4	79.4	78.0

*In parentheses are the number of years of high school study recommended by the NCEE.

The above comparisons indicate that USC’s 1998 freshman class is on par with students enrolling at other HSPRs, except in the sciences (USC only requires two years of physical and/or biological science courses for admission). Nevertheless, the percent of USC freshmen that meet the physical science recommendation has risen from 57.9 percent in 1990 to 60.5 percent in 1998, while the percent that meet the biological science requirement has risen from 33 percent in 1990 to 43.1 percent in 1998.

Because the “new basics” recommendations were not designed specifically for college-bound students, the U.S. Department of Education has recently published new set of recommendations (Adelman, 1999) that are superior in their ability to predict college graduation. They are based not only on the number of courses taken, but also on their quality or “intensity.” For example, in mathematics, extra points are given for courses at the trigonometry level or above, and remedial courses are not counted. In the future, the revised recommendations

will provide an important additional means to gauge the academic preparedness of the freshman class.

Financing a College Education

Financing a college education at a quality private university such as USC can be quite a challenge. In this section, the level of concern freshmen have regarding financing their education is discussed as well as some of the factors that underlie the concern that some freshmen feel.

Level of Financing Concern. Freshmen were asked to indicate their level of concern regarding their ability to finance their college education. The following table indicates the percent that express no concern, some concern, or major concern:

Level of Financing Concern	USC	Hi-Select Private	Hi-Select Public	All Private	All Universities
No concern	29.4	38.8	36.1	36.4	34.6
Some concern	51.1	49.6	51.4	53.2	52.1
Major concern	19.5	11.6	12.5	13.1	13.3

The 19.5 percent expressing major concern at USC represents a considerable decline from the 1995 peak of 26 percent. Nevertheless, 19.5 percent is more than is found at most other private universities, and projected to the entire freshman class, it means that over 600 freshmen are beginning their college education with significant financial issues on their mind.

Determinants of Concern. The family income factor discussed above is perhaps the most important reason that USC freshmen have more concern over finances than freshmen at comparable schools. Quite simply, lower income students tend to express more concern about finances than do higher income students. For example, the percentage of freshmen expressing major concern varies from 2.8 percent for the highest two income levels to 35.3 percent for the lowest two income levels. Family income is not the sole determinant of financing concern, however. Loan debt, which is only partially related to income, is another correlate: while 35 percent of freshmen who took out two or more loans of \$1,500 or more express major concerns, only 11.5 percent of the freshmen did not have to take out any such loans express major concerns.

The impact of student loans on financing concern is a relatively new phenomenon at USC. In a review of a decade's worth of Senior Survey results, Pavelchak (in preparation) found that ten years ago, the large majority of graduating seniors left USC with little or no loan debt. In contrast, one third of USC graduates since 1996 left the University with \$20,000 or more in loan debt. Results from the 1998 Freshman Survey indicate that this pattern begins during the freshman year. Forty-two percent of freshman report taking out at least one loan of \$1,500 or more, and almost 20 percent report taking out two or more such loans.

As careful readers may have noticed, there is a bit of an inconsistency in the results presented thus far: over the past few years, freshmen are acquiring more loan debt than ever before and yet are becoming less concerned about financing their education. The resurgent U.S. economy is one possible explanation for this contradiction – it may be giving many freshmen an increased sense of “consumer confidence” -- a feeling that they will be able to repay any loans that they may have to take out. More definitive answers must await further research.

Decisions Related to Attending College

Reasons for Attending College. Freshmen were asked to indicate why they decided to attend college. The following table shows the percentage of freshmen who consider each reason as very important:

Reason for Attending College	USC	Hi-Select Private	Hi-Select Public	All Private	All Universities
Make more money	76.6	63.8	71.3	67.4	72.4
Get a better job	74.0	68.9	73.9	71.5	75.1
General education/appreciation of ideas	71.1	77.6	69.5	73.6	66.7
Prepare for graduate/professional school	62.7	67.7	63.7	62.9	55.2
Make me a more cultured person	59.8	64.2	55.6	61.1	52.3
Improve reading and study skills	43.1	41.0	42.5	43.7	40.9
Parents wanted me to go	37.2	35.4	40.3	37.3	37.1
Prove to others I could succeed	32.9	24.0	30.2	28.0	31.5

As in the past, many USC freshmen place a high priority on securing well-paying and worthwhile employment -- the relevant percentages have changed little over the past few years. In contrast, there has been a substantial increase in the percentage expressing “purer” goals. The proportion listing “to gain a general education and appreciation of ideas” has increased almost seven percentage points since 1997, while the proportion listing “make me a more cultured person” increased over eleven percentage points.¹

Reasons for Enrollment Decision. Students were asked about their reasons for deciding to enroll at their chosen institution. In the following table, the percentage of students listing each reason as very important is shown:

Reason for Enrollment Decision	USC	Hi-Select Private	Hi-Select Public	All Private	All Universities
Graduates get good jobs	77.5	74.0	61.2	68.8	56.1
Good academic reputation	70.7	85.9	71.5	75.9	61.7
Graduates go to top graduate schools	53.5	62.6	46.3	51.4	35.8
Was offered financial assistance	41.6	32.5	21.3	38.8	28.7
Good social reputation	37.8	30.4	33.8	30.5	31.4
Offers special programs	35.5	21.7	18.0	22.4	19.6
Size of college	27.0	36.8	22.3	40.6	27.6
Rankings in national magazines	19.8	30.6	21.7	20.1	13.2
Information in multicollge guidebook*	9.3	18.1	13.9	13.7	8.4
*Asked for the first time in 1998					

USC is similar to other HSPRs in that “graduates get good jobs” and “good academic reputation” are both listed as very important reasons by over 70 percent of respondents. In terms of differences, USC freshmen continue to list financial assistance as a major factor more frequently than do students at most other universities, although the percentage has declined from a 1995 high of 49.1 percent to the present 41.6 percent. USC is also unique because a substantial proportion of its students are attracted by the special programs offered by its many professional schools. Finally, relatively few USC freshmen list national publications and multi-college guidebooks as major influences in their enrollment choices.

¹HERI warns that the results regarding the “become a more cultured person” question should be interpreted with caution due to an apparent order effect. Specifically, the item immediately preceding this question had a positive tone in 1998 but a negative tone in 1997).

While it is useful to compare the reasons that freshmen give for their enrollment decision to those given on previous Freshman Surveys, it must be recognized that these results cannot provide an accurate weighting of the factors that students take into account, the decision-making process involved, or the outreach and recruitment strategies that may have influenced their enrollment decision. Such issues are more effectively addressed by an Admitted Student Survey, which is administered earlier in the decision-making process to both enrolling and non-enrolling admitted students. USC's Office of Enrollment Services has recently conducted such a survey, and its results will greatly expand our understanding in this area.

Number of Applications and Acceptances. Virtually all USC freshmen hedged their bets by applying to more than one college or university: 95 percent applied to at least one other school and 49 percent applied to five or more other schools. Despite this, USC was the first choice of 71.4 percent of the sample, which is slightly higher than the 70.3 percent at other HSPRs. Equally impressive is the fact that 82.3 percent of the sample was accepted to at least one other institution (some at more than *ten*) and yet decided to enroll at USC.

Career and Educational Plans

Probable Occupations and Fields of Study. The following two tables present the proportion of freshmen who indicate particular occupations as probable career paths, and fields of study as probable majors:

Probable Occupation	USC	Hi-Select Private	Hi-Select Public	All Private	All Universities
Business	23.2	14.2	11.4	16.8	13.7
Undecided	10.9	14.8	17.0	13.8	13.1
Engineer	8.6	13.5	4.2	9.0	10.5
Other Career	8.2	4.3	7.9	6.2	8.0
Physician	7.8	16.1	13.4	11.6	8.1
Actor or entertainer	6.2	2.1	1.4	2.4	1.4
Writer or journalist	5.4	3.9	3.5	3.6	2.8
Lawyer or judge	4.7	6.4	5.5	6.5	4.1
Musician	3.5	1.9	1.0	1.5	1.3
Architect or urban planner	3.1	1.5	0.8	1.0	1.9

Probable Field of Study	USC	Hi-Select Private	Hi-Select Public	All Private	All Universities
Business*	24.5	11.9	12.0	16.9	14.5
Engineering*	11.1	16.3	4.4	11.0	12.3
Pre-medicine	7.5	10.8	8.2	7.5	6.0
Undecided	7.1	7.8	10.4	7.6	7.9
Biology*	6.3	11.0	14.5	8.7	8.6
Communications	4.6	1.1	2.2	2.8	1.8
Theater	4.0	1.6	1.0	1.8	1.0
Journalism	3.7	1.9	2.2	2.2	2.1
Music	3.7	2.0	1.0	1.6	1.4
Political Science	3.3	6.8	3.7	6.0	3.1
Accounting	2.5	0.9	2.4	2.2	2.4
*These fields of study are aggregates of several sub-fields					

Business has been the most popular career choice and field of study at USC for the past fifteen years, much more so than at comparable universities. However, it is only now approaching the level of popularity it

enjoyed in the late 1980's. On the creative side, all-time highs were attained for actor/entertainer as an occupational choice, and theater as a field of study. Music is also close to its highest level. Finally, biology and pre-medicine also reached their all-time highs in 1998 as probable fields of study.

Highest Degree Intended. Freshmen were asked to indicate the highest degree they intend to pursue at any school. The percentages are as follows:

Highest Degree Planned at Any School	USC	Hi-Select Private	Hi-Select Public	All Private	All Universities
Bachelor's	15.9	8.1	12.0	12.4	21.0
Master's	46.4	35.1	41.5	40.2	42.0
Ph.D. or Ed.D.	18.5	27.3	21.3	22.5	18.2
M.D., D.O., D.D.S., or D.V.M.	11.2	19.5	18.1	14.7	11.7
LL.B. or J.D.	6.1	8.7	5.8	8.1	4.7

They were also asked to indicate the highest degree they intend to pursue at USC:

Highest Degree Planned at USC	USC	Hi-Select Private	Hi-Select Public	All Private	All Universities
Bachelor's	55.9	69.6	64.3	67.5	62.1
Master's	28.9	19.4	22.5	21.2	24.6
Ph.D. or Ed.D.	7.0	4.2	5.1	4.4	4.8
M.D., D.O., D.D.S., or D.V.M.	4.8	4.3	4.5	3.2	4.1
LL.B. or J.D.	1.8	1.5	1.1	1.7	1.1

As in past years, USC freshmen are more likely than students at other HSPRs to list a bachelor's or a master's degree as their ultimate educational goal, but are less likely to target other advanced degrees. On the other hand, USC freshmen are more likely to pursue advanced degrees at their own institution, especially at the master's level. However, this is only true for in-state freshmen, suggesting the latter difference is due to the geographic concentration of the freshman class.

Activities During High School

It is important to understand the behavioral patterns that freshmen established during their high school years because they tend to persist into the college years. On the CIRP questionnaire, freshmen were asked two sets of questions regarding behaviors that occurred during their senior year of high school. One set asked about the frequency of certain activities while the other set asked about the number of hours spent per week engaged in certain activities.

In the Past Year How Often Did You... Freshmen were asked to indicate their frequency of participation in certain activities during the past year. The table below displays the percentages citing frequent or occasional participation:

Activity (Frequency of Participation)	USC	Hi-Select Private	Hi-Select Public	All Private	All Universities
Studied with other students	92.8	91.1	89.7	90.6	88.9
Performed volunteer work	88.2	90.5	83.0	87.5	81.9
Socialized with different ethnic group*	83.9	76.6	72.7	73.8	66.3
Tutored another student	70.9	76.6	65.9	68.1	59.1
Visited art gallery or museum	66.6	75.7	64.2	70.2	61.6
Drank wine or liquor	54.4	57.3	56.4	59.8	56.5
Drank beer	46.2	51.0	51.1	54.8	52.9
Played a musical instrument	45.6	51.1	44.0	44.2	43.3
Was bored in class*	42.3	41.0	43.0	38.2	40.2
Overslept & missed class or appointment	36.9	33.1	34.4	32.6	34.3
Participated in organized demonstrations	36.3	28.2	37.0	36.1	41.0
Voted in a student election	35.0	32.5	25.1	30.7	25.3
Felt overwhelmed*	34.1	28.7	31.2	29.6	29.8
Was a guest in a teacher's home	28.1	36.8	26.3	31.8	28.5
Asked a teacher for advice after class	26.3	30.1	25.8	29.4	25.2
Discussed politics	24.8	28.7	18.6	23.8	18.4
Smoked cigarettes*	6.9	6.4	10.0	9.8	12.2

* On these questions, percentages only include those citing "frequently."

Compared to freshmen at other HSPRs, a smaller percentage of USC freshmen report that they engaged in culturally enriching activities during high school, such as playing a musical instrument or visiting a museum. On the other hand, their social interactions were more enriched in the sense that a greater percentage report having socialized with someone from a different racial or ethnic group.

For the first time in 1998, several questions were asked regarding internet-related activities:

Internet-related Activity (Frequency of Participation)	USC	Hi-Select Private	Hi-Select Public	All Private	All Universities
Used internet for research or homework	91.3	91.2	89.4	90.2	88.8
Other internet use	78.9	81.5	79.1	78.7	78.1
Communicated via e-mail	75.2	86.7	77.1	80.1	74.4
Played computer games	70.2	71.5	75.9	72.2	77.3
Participated in internet chat rooms	55.7	50.2	57.1	53.2	54.9

These results show that computer usage is becoming a virtually indispensable tool for education. USC freshmen compare favorably with those at other HSPRs except in the use of e-mail for communication. Exploring this a bit further, it was found that USC African American and Mexican American freshmen report having had significantly less experience with e-mail during high school than other USC freshmen. Mexican American freshmen also used the internet significantly less for homework. These results reflect the "digital divide" pattern, characterized by lower levels of computer usage and internet access by Latino and African American students, observed at the national level for the past several years. According to a recent Department of Commerce Report (1999), this gap appears at all economic levels and appears to be widening. The unique aspect of the USC results is that, in the case of Latino students, the gap was found for Mexican American freshmen but not for Other Latinos.

How Many Hours Spent Per Week... Incoming freshmen were asked how many hours they spent per week last year engaging certain activities. The results are summarized in a manner that highlights differences between USC and other institutions:

Activity (Hours per Week)	USC	Hi-Select Private	Hi-Select Public	All Private	All Universities
Student clubs/groups 1 or more hours	64.2	76.5	64.8	70.6	61.3
Volunteer work 1 or more hours	56.3	58.4	49.3	56.3	46.7
Reading for pleasure 1 or more hours	51.6	58.0	50.9	53.7	48.6
Housework/childcare 1 or more hours	51.2	45.6	55.5	50.8	55.5
Partying more than 2 hours	49.0	46.9	49.9	52.6	52.5
Exercise or sports more than 5 hours	48.1	54.8	48.6	54.6	52.0
Talking with teacher outside class >10 hours	47.4	56.0	46.4	54.3	47.5
Studying/ homework more than 10 hours	32.0	41.7	48.8	31.9	42.3
Socializing with friends more than 15 hours	30.7	28.9	32.2	32.3	34.0
Watching TV more than 5 hours	28.5	26.9	29.9	27.4	27.6
Working for pay more than 10 hours	26.7	21.5	27.3	33.3	33.4
Prayer/mediation 1 or more hours	25.1	30.3	26.4	31.5	29.4

Compared to freshmen at other HSPRs, USC freshmen spent less time engaged in several academic-related activities during their senior year: they studied less, were less involved in high school clubs or groups, talked to teachers outside class less, and spent less time reading for pleasure. On the other hand, USC freshmen reported that they spent slightly more time than those at other HSPRs working for pay and on housework/childcare, but it was not enough of a difference to make up for the disparity for academic activities. Because little is known regarding how USC students spend their discretionary time, a survey on the subject is planned in the near future.

Self Perceptions, Goals, and Expectations

This section concerns questions regarding how freshmen see themselves in the present and how they expect their future to unfold.

Perceived Abilities and Traits. Students were asked to rate themselves on certain attributes in comparison to “the average person your age.” The table below presents the percentages of students who rate themselves at least above average:

Perceived Ability or Trait	USC	Hi-Select Private	Hi-Select Public	All Private	All Universities
Academic ability	89.7	93.8	84.2	83.8	75.8
Drive to achieve	85.4	85.9	76.7	80.3	74.1
Cooperativeness	76.1	73.8	73.3	74.1	72.9
Self-confidence (intellectual)	75.8	77.6	66.4	69.4	64.1
Self-understanding	71.4	69.5	62.4	64.9	61.1
Understanding of others	71.1	70.9	69.0	70.4	67.1
Leadership ability	70.3	69.3	60.5	65.4	61.8
Competitiveness	68.9	67.2	59.3	62.3	59.5
Creativity	66.7	63.8	58.2	59.5	57.2
Emotional Health	66.4	64.5	58.6	61.2	58.8
Physical health	63.9	66.1	50.5	63.8	61.6
Mathematical ability	63.2	72.0	58.9	59.1	52.6
Self-confidence (social)	61.0	54.8	52.2	54.0	53.2
Writing ability	60.2	65.4	52.9	57.3	49.5
Public Speaking ability	49.7	50.6	39.5	44.3	38.6
Artistic ability	40.6	36.9	32.1	32.4	30.9

USC freshmen are very confident in their academic abilities and are highly motivated to succeed at USC. They also rate themselves very strongly in terms of interpersonal characteristics such as social self-confidence, understanding of others, leadership ability, and public speaking ability. Finally, many see themselves as good writers and as having a great deal of creativity and artistic ability. The USC freshman self concept profile is very similar to the HSPR profile, with the exception of perceived ability in mathematics, where USC is lower.

Personal Goals and Objectives. Freshmen were asked to indicate the personal importance of various goals and objectives. The table below includes the percentage of freshmen who indicate that a given goal or objective is either very important or essential:

Personal Goal or Objective	USC	Hi-Select Private	Hi-Select Public	All Private	All Universities
Be very well off financially	81.6	66.6	75.3	70.8	73.7
Become authority in my field	73.2	67.2	64.5	66.7	64.0
Raise a family	73.9	74.8	74.0	75.7	74.1
Obtain recognition from colleagues	62.0	55.0	54.8	55.8	54.0
Help others in difficulty	63.2	64.9	62.7	65.6	61.4
Develop meaningful philosophy of life	51.7	58.7	48.9	53.0	46.0
Be successful in my own business	49.9	34.9	38.4	38.2	38.5
Become a community leader	42.2	41.0	34.0	40.4	34.5
Keep up to date with political affairs	41.8	45.5	35.1	41.4	32.8
Influence social values	38.6	36.4	35.1	39.1	36.0
Promote racial understanding	37.9	37.6	34.6	36.6	31.2
Participate in community action program	29.1	32.5	25.1	30.5	24.3
Become accomplished in a performing art	21.1	18.1	14.0	16.4	13.5
Influence the political structure	20.6	21.1	18.5	21.0	17.7
Be involved in environmental cleanup	20.4	20.5	20.9	19.9	19.8
Create artistic work	19.4	14.5	14.0	13.8	14.1
Write original works	19.3	18.6	15.4	16.5	14.1
Make a theoretical contribution to science	17.1	23.7	22.0	19.5	19.0

As in past years, USC students tend to emphasize monetary and business success more than freshmen nationally. This difference is not merely due to the relatively large proportion of prospective business majors in the USC freshman class, however. When business majors are excluded, the percent of freshmen who value financial well-being is still above 80 percent, and the percent who hope to be successful in business only drops to 47 percent, both still far above comparative norms. This is part of a very clear difference between USC and other HSPRs: for USC freshmen, developing a philosophy of life and being successful in business are approximately of equal importance while at other HSPRs, the former goal is much more of a priority. With high ratings for “obtain recognition from colleagues” and “become an authority in my field,” it is clear that the social aspect of success is also somewhat more important to USC freshmen. Finally, the artistic aspect of the freshman class appears again in comparatively high ratings for “create an artistic work,” “achieve in a performing art,” and “write original works.”

Probable Occurrences During College Career. Students were asked to estimate the likelihood that certain events would occur during the course of their college career. The corresponding table lists the percentage who estimate that there is a very good chance that the event will occur:

Probable Occurrence	USC	Hi-Select Private	Hi-Select Public	All Private	All Universities
Get a bachelor's degree	86.0	86.4	81.6	82.6	78.8
Make at least B average	64.0	63.9	59.2	61.6	56.1
Be satisfied with your college	63.7	66.7	51.3	60.6	53.2
Get job to pay for college expenses	41.1	37.6	36.5	37.8	39.9
Do volunteer/community service work	32.0	40.5	24.8	36.4	24.8
Graduate with honors	27.9	28.4	22.5	24.6	20.4
Join fraternity, sorority, or club	26.8	22.1	19.0	21.9	19.6
Change major field	15.6	18.7	19.4	16.5	15.7
Change career choice	13.4	19.9	18.3	17.0	15.2
Play varsity/intercollegiate athletics	8.1	15.8	9.6	14.9	11.5

Academic self-confidence shows in these results as well, with a relatively large proportion of USC freshmen predicting that they will make at least a B average and graduate with honors. They are also optimistic that their college experience will be a positive one. The principle of the “self-fulfilling prophesy,” which suggests that expectations influence behaviors and eventually outcomes, is thus working in favor of their academic success.

USC freshmen are less likely to intend to perform volunteer work during college than their contemporaries at other private universities. Finally, although the proportion of the freshman class that intends to get involved in the Greek system or in campus clubs has declined noticeably in the past decade, it is still higher than at many other universities.

Political Beliefs and Opinions

Political Orientation. Students were asked to place themselves on the political continuum. The following table presents the percent of freshmen who place themselves in each category:

Political Orientation	USC	Hi-Select Private	Hi-Select Public	All Private	All Universities
Far left	2.1	2.8	2.5	2.3	2.2
Liberal	30.3	33.4	30.6	29.1	25.5
Middle of the road	45.2	41.0	49.5	46.5	51.5
Conservative	21.3	21.4	16.4	20.8	19.6
Far right	1.2	1.4	0.9	1.3	1.2

USC freshmen have become more liberal over the past decade. For example, only 21.3 percent describe themselves as conservative in 1998 compared to 30 percent in 1988. That said, USC freshmen are still slightly more conservative overall than students at other HSPRs.

Views on Controversial Issues. Students were asked their opinions regarding currently controversial topics. The following table lists the percentage of freshmen who agree strongly or somewhat with statements addressing these topics:

Controversial Issue	USC	Hi-Select Private	Hi-Select Public	All Private	All Universities
Abortion should be legal	69.9	67.4	67.6	62.4	59.2
Legal marital status for same sex couples	62.1	64.2	64.9	61.6	56.9
Prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus	55.9	51.4	55.6	56.9	57.5
Wealthy should pay more taxes	48.5	51.9	58.9	52.3	56.8
Regulate material on the internet*	39.0	35.1	39.7	38.8	39.1
Marijuana should be legalized	37.5	35.2	35.6	33.7	33.8
Abolish death penalty	22.5	33.7	27.1	31.3	24.7
Prohibit homosexual relations	20.4	17.0	18.9	19.3	25.3
Racial discrimination no longer a problem	17.6	16.5	16.5	16.7	19.2
* Asked for the first time in 1998.					

Opinions on most of these issues have changed very little over the past few years. USC freshmen continue to express opinions that are slightly more conservative than at other HSPRs on most issues.

Local Issues

Freshmen completed an additional set of questions that centered on issues of interest at USC in the areas of community service, campus living, and working with faculty. For unknown reasons, a large percentage of the sample (30 percent) did not complete these questions. A check of orientation records ruled out factors related to particular orientation sessions or advisors. Students who did complete the additional questions are of somewhat of higher academic quality, defined in terms of reported high school GPA and perceived academic ability, than students who did not. These factors should be taken into account in evaluating the results in this section.

Community Service. In previous sections, it was reported that almost 90 percent of USC freshmen did at least some volunteer work while in high school, but less than one third plan to volunteer at USC. In order to increase volunteerism at USC, we need to understand more about the nature of the volunteer experiences that freshmen had in high school. Toward this end, two sets of questions were added to the Freshman Surveys of 1996, 1997, and 1998. One set of questions explored the types of service that students volunteered for, while the other explored students' reasons for participating. Results to be presented are from the 1998 survey, but the discussion will center on what we have learned across the three surveys.

Type of Service. Freshmen were asked to indicate their level of participation in various types of service while in high school:

Type of Service	Level of Participation			
	Heavily Involved	Moderately Involved	Once or Twice	Never
Fund-raising	15.3	32.2	30.8	21.8
Tutoring/teaching	12.9	33.7	34.3	19.0
Church volunteer	10.2	15.0	18.5	56.3
Campaigning/political activities	6.3	10.5	24.3	58.9
Medical/health services	5.4	9.1	18.0	67.4
Physical labor/construction	3.9	10.6	25.3	60.2
Homeless shelter volunteer	2.7	11.2	24.5	61.6
Counseling/hotline	2.2	4.6	15.2	77.9

Two areas that clearly receive the most time are fund-raising and tutoring. Fifty-six percent of the sample reported at least moderate involvement in at least one community service activity, which is virtually identical to the 56.3

percent who reported spending at least one hour per week on volunteer work on the main part of the survey. These percentages have been very consistent over the past three years, suggesting that the relative ranking of where high school students (that attend USC) spend their volunteer time can now be considered a known quantity.

Reasons for Participating. Freshmen were then asked to indicate the level of importance they assigned to different reasons for why they participated in community service:

Reasons for Participating in Service Activity	Level of Importance		
	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Makes me feel good	51.0	38.2	10.8
Improve my community	40.5	46.3	13.2
Enhance my resume/college application	38.8	47.4	18.1
Improve society as a whole	38.0	43.7	18.2
Fulfill an academic requirement	37.3	28.9	33.8
Chance to work with people different from me	33.4	45.3	21.3

The rank-ordering of these reasons has remained relatively consistent over the past three years, suggesting that the “why” of volunteering is also essentially clear. There has been a slight decrease in “pure” reasons such as “makes me feel good,” “improve society,” and “improve my community,” and a corresponding slight increase in more pragmatic reasons such as “enhance my resume” and “fulfill an academic requirement.” Whether these trends signify a return to the “me generation” values of the 1980’s or merely reflect natural year-to-year variation cannot be answered until additional data have been collected.

Campus Living. Living on campus or in the immediate campus environment will be a major contributor to the experiences of this freshman class: 73 percent planned to live in the dorms and another 16 percent planned to live in other campus housing. One’s campus living arrangements can potentially add greatly to a student’s intellectual stimulation and personal growth. Recognizing that improvement is needed in this area, USC has embarked on an ambitious effort to enhance the intellectual quality of living arrangements, led by the creation of residential colleges on campus. Knowledge of these efforts has apparently created high expectations in the minds of freshmen because 95.8 percent indicate that it is likely or very likely that living on campus will contribute positively to their overall education. It will be interesting to monitor how students respond to the administration’s recent efforts to fulfill these expectations.

Working on Faculty Research Projects. Since USC is one of the premier research universities in the nation, interested students can potentially gain valuable experience working with faculty on research projects. To provide a measure of the degree of interest in working with faculty, freshmen were asked to estimate the likelihood that they would work with faculty on research projects as part of their education. Almost one third (33.1 percent) indicate that it is very likely while almost an additional half (47.8 percent) indicate that it is somewhat likely. These percentages are in line with the fact that according to recent Senior Survey results, approximately 70 percent of graduating seniors report having worked with faculty in some capacity (Pavelchak, in preparation).

Overseas Program Participation. Despite the fact that USC offers a wide range of opportunities for students to broaden their educational experiences overseas, Senior Survey results suggest that only about 10 to 12 percent of USC students participate in an overseas program during their undergraduate career (Pavelchak, in preparation). To gauge the level of interest in overseas programs among the freshman class, students were asked to indicate the likelihood that such programs would be a part of their USC education. Fifteen percent indicate that participation is very likely and another 19.9 percent indicated that it is somewhat likely, which suggests that enrollment levels may be increasing in the next few years. One factor driving this level of interest is the reduction of concern over finances: freshmen who express no concern or only moderate concern regarding finances are somewhat more certain in their intentions to participate in an overseas program than those with major financial concerns.

Summary

The 1998 freshman class at USC is academically strong, optimistic, and confident. In many ways, the profile of USC's freshman class resembles the profile at other highly selective private universities, but in other ways, it is unique. As a whole, USC freshmen tend to express greater interest in financial, interpersonal, and creative career goals. They come from a greater variety of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, and are more likely to live within commuting distance of the University. Some have developed patterns of behavior in high school, such as time spent on homework, that will require a period of adjustment. However in general, they have a positive, academically-focused attitude, which will help ensure their academic and personal success at USC.

References

- Adelman (1999). *Answers in the Tool Box: Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor's Degree Attainment*. Jessup, MD: Education Publications Center, US Department of Education.
- National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. Washington, D.C.: The Commission.
- Pavelchak (in preparation). *USC Senior Survey: 1990-1998*. Student Outcomes Research Report Number 22. University of Southern California, Division of Student Affairs.
- U.S. Department of Commerce (1999). *Falling Through the Net: Defining the Digital Divide.* Washington D.C.: National Telecommunications and Information Administration, July, 1999.

Acknowledgments

Thanks go to Karen Rowan-Badger and her entire staff of orientation advisers for collecting the data, to Dr. Darla Cooper for her thoughtful comments on an earlier draft of this report, and to Dr. Michael Jackson for his encouragement and support.