

AICUP First-Year Student Survey—Spring 2003

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Highlighted Facts

- Messiah men are significantly less prepared and are significantly more challenged than women in the area of study skills during the first year.
- Messiah students think that study skills and writing skills are the two biggest first-year skill challenges.
- Women at Messiah are significantly more likely than men to be homesick. Messiah students, in general, are more likely to be homesick than at our comparison institutions.
- Messiah men report significantly less *perceived* college help in the areas of: (1) dealing with roommate problems, (2) dealing with personal problems, (3) working with advisor, (4) understanding teachers' expectations, and (5) obtaining financial aid services.
 - Comparison group students reported higher levels of college help with: (1) managing time, and (2) improving study skills.
 - Messiah students reported more help with: (1) dealing with roommate problems, (2) student clubs, (3) organized social events, (4) recreational athletic activities, (5) providing health services, and (6) using the library.
- Gender was not typically a factor in the self-rating of Messiah students' skills nor with the degree of change in these skills during the first year. The only two exceptions were significantly lower self-ratings by men in the areas of persistence and the understanding of others.
- Self-ratings in spirituality, ability to manage time, ability to manage stress, cooperativeness, and persistence were significantly higher at Messiah than for comparison students.
- Assessment of first-year skills improvements for Messiah students was significantly higher in the area of spirituality, but lower in creativity than for comparison students.
- Messiah men preferred to rely significantly more on themselves for academic advice than did women (M-28.6%, W-15.4%).
- Messiah students indicated a much higher emphasis on soliciting academic advice from family members than did comparison students (Mess-25.9%, Comp-15.1%), while comparison students indicated a higher reliance on the assigned advisor (Mess-21.4%, Comp-29.0%).
- Messiah women reported having 3.26 meetings per year with the advisor, compared to 2.55 meetings for men (3.11 meetings combined). Comparison students indicated an average of 3.80 advisor meetings.
- Nearly 20% of Messiah students solicit career advice from the advisor, compared to only 13.3% for comparison group students.
- Messiah students rated the advisors significantly better than comparison group students in knowledge level, availability, and overall satisfaction.
- Messiah students indicate spending nearly 22 hours per week attending class or studying/doing homework.

- Men at Messiah spend significantly more time than women watching TV and playing video/computer games, while women spend significantly more time in prayer and meditation.
- Compared to the comparison group, Messiah students spend significantly more time in prayer/meditation, studying and completing homework, and participating in student clubs/groups.
- Overall college satisfaction ratings showed Messiah women significantly more satisfied in the areas of: (1) quality of academic advising, (2) quality of academic offerings, (3) availability of academic offerings, (4) Internet access, (5) faculty attitude toward students, and (6) personal counseling.
- Messiah students indicated significantly higher satisfaction than comparison students in the areas of: (1) library facilities and resources, (2) food services, and (3) the quality of roommates and resident assistants.
- 93.7% of Messiah students indicated that they would definitely (82.9%) or probably (10.8%) return for the second year. Only 90.2% of comparison students indicated the same.
- For those not planning to return, the most prominent reasons cited were transferring, dissatisfaction with social atmosphere, and lack of financial resources.

Highlights—Retention Analysis

- Attrited students reported significantly higher levels of homesickness and loneliness, as well as significantly lower levels of belongingness. The difference is more prominent in women than men.
- Neither retained nor attrited students felt the college offered much help dealing with homesickness.
- Significantly less college help was indicated by attrited students in (1) dealing with personal problems, (2) involvement in student clubs, (3) organized social events, and (4) recreational athletic activities.
- When asked to perform a self-assessment, attrited students rated themselves significantly lower in: (1) intellectual self-confidence, (2) social self-confidence, (3) ability to function independently, (4) leadership ability, (5) reading analytically, and (6) spirituality.
- Incoming skill levels appear to be a stronger factor in determining retention, as attrited students only differed significantly from retained students in their first-year skill improvements in the area of “understanding complex issues,” where attrited students indicated significantly less improvement.
- When soliciting academic advice, attrited students were significantly more likely to indicate the advisor as the primary source, with equally less reliance on themselves.
- Retained students indicated spending over 7 hours per week socializing with friends, compared to around 4 hours for attrited students.
- While both groups of students indicated similar academic, residence hall, and social life expectations when entering college, attrited students indicated significantly lower levels of having those expectations met during the first year.
- Only 4 of 199 returning students responded that they were uncertain or not planning to return for their second year. However, 15 of the 25 attrited respondents had indicated that they probably or definitely would return, indicating that a rather large number of non-returning students have not made the decision to withdraw by mid-spring semester.