REPORT: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: FRESHMEN, FALL 1999

Introduction

UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) has once again issued the findings of their national survey of college freshmen. This year 261,217 students at 462 two-year and four-year institutions completed the survey, including Buffalo State.

The survey was administered to 1,140 first-time full time freshmen entering Buffalo State during fall, 1999. It was completed during mandatory summer orientation sessions. The data was returned from HERI in January, 2000 in hard copy table form with comparisons to other four-year colleges.

Eighty (80) percent of Buffalo State freshmen gave us permission to use their responses for institutional research purposes. This data helps enrich our institutional database.

"Student Stress" and Buffalo State

HERI identified rising levels of stress reported by freshmen as the 1999 theme. In 1985, 16% of all college freshmen said they frequently felt overwhelmed by all I have to do." Stress is very much an issue with Buffalo State students. In 1999, the national percentage rose to 30% and at Buffalo State it is 34%.

Nationally as well as at Buffalo State, women were about twice as likely to report feeling stressed as men. (National: 39% women, 20% men; Buffalo State 41% women, 24% men.) This does not necessarily mean men feel less stressed, but more likely means that they are less likely to acknowledge or report it. Sources of student stress are many. For example, most Buffalo State freshmen will choose to or have to work while in college, with more women than men (54% versus 36%) saying it is very likely they will need to work to pay for college.

During the last year, Buffalo State women report spending more time studying/doing homework, volunteering and tending to housework or child care than men do. Men report spending more time exercising/playing sports, watching television and playing video games. The research analysts at the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) conclude that "these findings suggest that women spend time on goal-oriented and potentially stress-producing activities whereas men more often participate in activities that provide a recreational outlet and possible release from stress."*

Nationally, students are less likely to try to reduce their stress by smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol, but these behaviors remain popular at Buffalo
State. So, while smoking is down to 14% of the national sample of freshmen, 23% Buffalo State freshmen still smoke. Nationally, half of the freshmen said they drank beer frequently or occasionally last year which is down from 75% in 1981 and likewise the percentage who drank wine/liquor dropped from 67% in 1987 to 54% in 1999. At Buffalo State, freshmen drinking rates remained high with 65% reporting they drank beer frequently or occasionally last year and 70% reporting they drank wine or liquor frequently or occasionally last year.

Academic Disengagement

The level of academic disengagement of Buffalo State freshmen upon entry remains higher than the national norm. Forty-five (45) percent said they were frequently bored in class and almost three out of four (72%) "came late to class" frequently or occasionally last year.

Perhaps most disturbing is their reported study habits prior to entering Buffalo State. Only 19% said they spent six or more hours a week studying/doing homework; 24% studied three to five hours; 29% studied one to two hours a week and 28% studied less than an hour per week. Interestingly, 19% reported having an A average in high school.

At the same time, 17% of all Buffalo State freshmen report taking remedial work/special tutoring in high school mathematics, 8% in remedial science and 6% in remedial English work. Notwithstanding their high school preparation, 1/3 (33%) feel they will need special tutoring or remedial work in mathematics, 10% in English and 16% in science.

**"Growing Stress Among College Freshmen, Especially Women," The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 1999.**

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