

### *Executive Summary*

The College Student Characteristics Inventory (CSCI) has been administered at UWSP since the mid-1970s, with several updates made through the years. The purpose of the CSCI is to understand the incoming freshman class, why and how they chose UWSP, their academic preparation and expectations, and their values and needs. This executive summary provides a thematic overview of the findings that characterize the 2009 incoming class, with relevant trends noted. In addition, methods are reviewed and a description of the available formats of the results is provided.

### *Findings Overview*

#### **The new freshmen class continues to include a wide range of students.**

- Nearly half (45%) are first-generation college students, which is defined as neither parent having completed a four-year degree. This percentage has remained fairly constant over the past 10 years.
- The majority of new students are from cities or towns of less than 50,000.
- Half of new students came from graduating classes of 250 or more students, a number that has been on the rise over the last 10 years.

#### **New freshmen value academically-oriented experiences.**

- 92% rated completing a college degree and 89% rated “really learning something” as very important to them.
- 80% rated making good grades as very important to them.
- 92% rated job search assistance for graduates and career counseling as very important services that UWSP can provide.

#### **Aside from academic success, new students place a high degree of importance on their personal well-being and social development.**

- 61% rated taking good care of their bodies as very important.
- 53% rated being physically active as very important.
- 52% view maintaining personal safety as very important.
- Having many friends, being socially accepted, and having a good personal reputation were rated very important or somewhat important by over 80% of the new students.

#### **New freshmen are career-oriented.**

- 92% say that career preparation is a very important reason why they are attending college. This is the highest percentage ever recorded for the importance of this item.
- 91% of students rated academic advising as a very important service that UWSP can provide.

### **New freshmen may benefit from assistance to help them transition to college, adjust to the rigors of college, and balance academic and work experiences.**

- Approximately one-fifth (19%) reported being yet undecided on their major; 28% say they have no idea or only a vague idea of what they plan to do for their career.
- 97% reported studying less than 10 hours per week during their senior year of high school, yet 59% of them predict that they will study 10 or more hours per week in college.
- New students report little or no experience writing a lab report (35%), utilizing online environments for academic work (29%), writing a research paper with citations (20%), and taking notes during a lecture (19%).
- 65% plan to work for pay either on or off campus (or a combination) during the coming year; only 14% are not planning to work.
  - 90% of those who work will work 20 hours or less per week.
  - Students who plan to work off campus will spend more time working.
- 88% rated financial advising services as a very important or important service that UWSP can provide.

### **New students' technology habits reflect those of the "Net Generation."**

- 88% spend time on social networking sites every week; more females than males report social networking (93% vs. 83%).
- 49% of new students spend time playing video games. However, playing video games is more predominant among males than females; 73% of males reported playing video games compared to only 23% of females.

### **New freshmen have strong positive opinions about UWSP.**

- 77% believe that UWSP is one of the best or above average among colleges in Wisconsin.
- Over 80% of new students chose UWSP because of strong academic programs, the size of the institution, and the beauty of the campus.

## ***Methods***

In 2008, the CSCI instrument was updated with assistance from the Student Affairs Assessment Team and input from many units in Student and Academic Affairs. Several new questions were added and others were eliminated. In previous years, the survey was mailed to a sample of incoming students prior to orientation. The response rate was quite high, with a 10-year average of over 80%, and the data reflected approximately 30-45% of the incoming class. In 2008, data were collected with the cooperation and assistance of the New Student Orientation program. In 2009, several additional modifications were made to the CSCI, specifically to increase the consistency among the scales and response choices. As a result, some noticeable shifting in the frequency distributions occurred. The CSCI was administered during summer orientation sessions, resulting in 1,545 completed surveys or 97% of the orientation participants.

## ***Presentation of Results***

The results of the CSCI are divided into four sections: (a) demographics and characteristics; (b) college choice; (c) academic preparation and expectations; and (d) values and needs. Results are presented in two formats: graphs that illustrate the 2009 data and contain summary points, and tables that contain longitudinal data for examining trends for each item over time.