

**CIRP 2007 FRESHMAN SURVEY REPORT**  
**Webster University**  
**March, 2008**

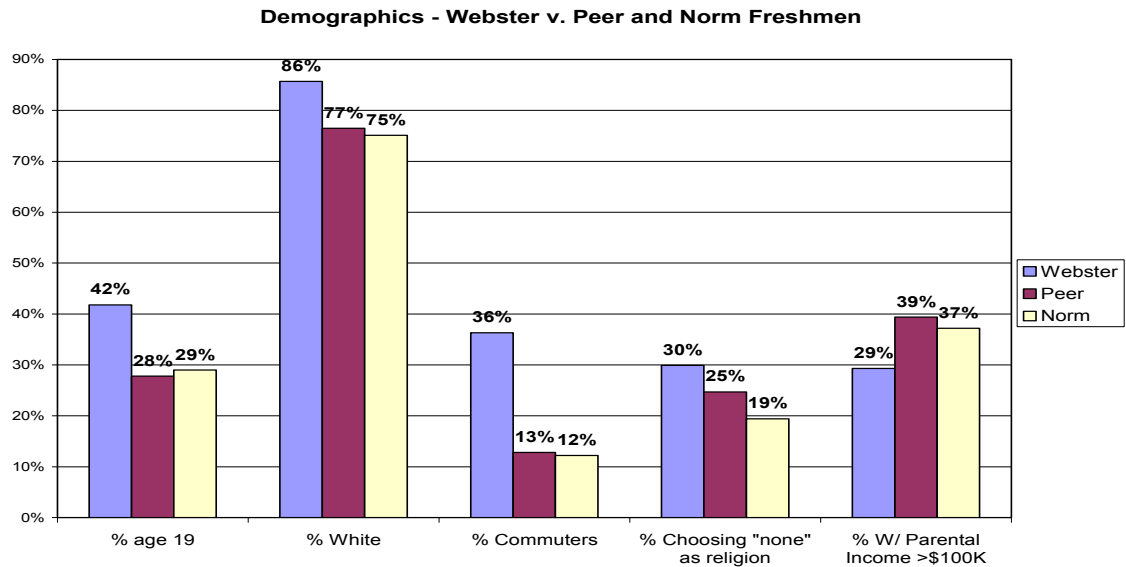
In fall 2007 Webster University participated for the 37<sup>th</sup> year in the Higher Education Research Institute's (HERI) Cooperative Institutional Research Program Freshman Survey (CIRP). The results of this annual survey provide insight into the academic and emotional preparedness, aspirations, motivations and expectations for college of full-time freshmen. The responses of 458 of Webster's 2007 freshmen were compared to those of 41,124 students attending nonsectarian four-year private institutions (Peer) and of 272,036 national norm students (Norm). Responses to Webster-specific questions were analyzed (Appendix A) and comparisons were also made between the responses of Webster's commuter and residential students.

**STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS**

Webster's 2007 freshmen resemble the Norm and Peer students in gender makeup, but have a higher percentage of 19-year-olds than Norm or Peer institutions. A higher percentage of the Webster freshmen are White (86%) than Norm (75%) or Peer (77%) students. Commuters comprise 36% of Webster's freshmen, compared to 13% of the Peer and 12% of the Norm students.

Among Webster's 2007 freshmen, 30% chose "none" as their religious preference, the highest percentage since the early 1970s when between 32% and 46% claimed no religious affiliation. Students' estimates of parental income show a disparity between Webster and Peer freshmen. Only 29% of Webster freshmen estimate their parental income to be \$100,000 or more, compared to 39% of Peer freshmen.

Figure 1



## FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS

Webster's 2007 first generation students had few significantly different characteristics from Webster freshmen with a parent who attended college.

- Webster's first generation students represent 17.0% of the 2007 full time freshmen (15.0% of the residential students and 21.0% of the commuter students), compared with the 2005 national norm of 15.9%
- 84% indicate a parental income of less than \$100,000 (compared to 68% of students with a parent who attended college). More 1<sup>st</sup> generation students (77%) indicate that being well-off financially is a very important or essential goal than non-first generation students (62%).

## COLLEGE CHOICE

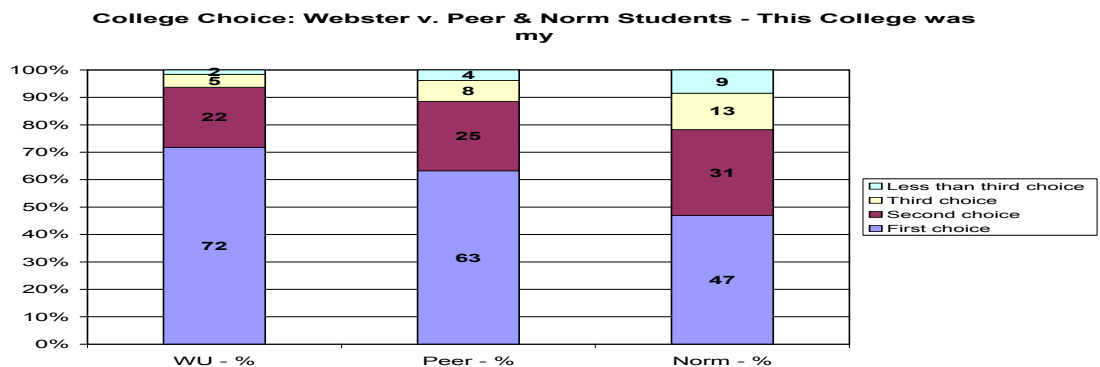
For the second year in a row, Webster's academic reputation had the most influence on our freshmen's college choice. Financial aid also continued to have a strong influence on Webster students' college choice.

Figure 2

Reasons noted as "very important" in choosing this college	WU - %	Peer - %	Norm - %
Academic reputation	64.6	68.1	63.0
I was offered financial assistance	63.0	49.2	39.4
This college's graduates get good jobs	52.8	56.6	51.9
A visit to campus	45.9	51.2	41.2
Size of this college	45.2	51.0	35.3
College's reputation for social activities	32.1	35.2	41.4
The cost of attending this college	32.1	28.1	47.5
I wanted to live near home	28.3	17.7	18.5
Colleges graduates attend top grad schools	26.7	38.2	43.4
Information from a website	17.7	20.2	24.1
Rankings in national magazines	12.1	18.7	21.7

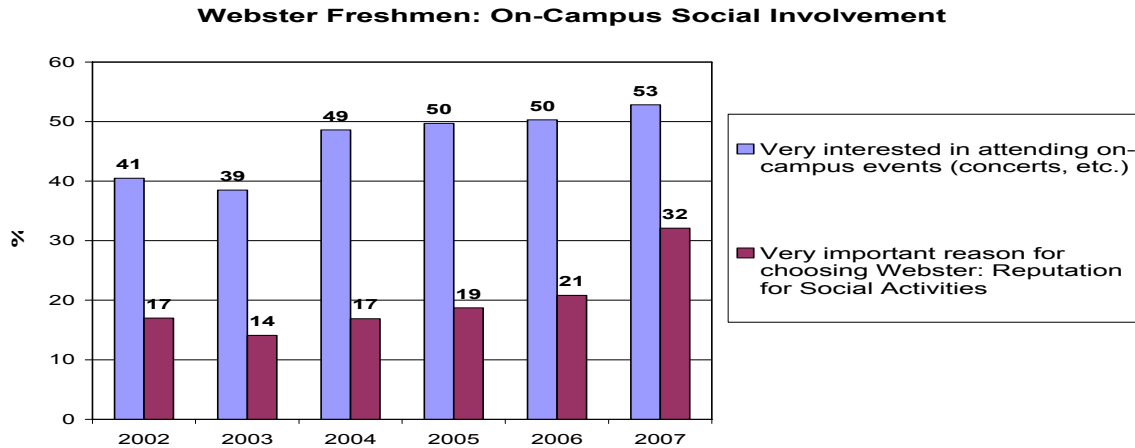
Webster students were significantly more likely to list their institution as their first choice than Peer or Norm students.

Figure 3



Historically, Webster freshmen have not listed its “reputation for social activities” as a top reason for choosing the University. In recent years, Webster’s freshmen have indicated increased interest in on-campus social events.

Figure 4

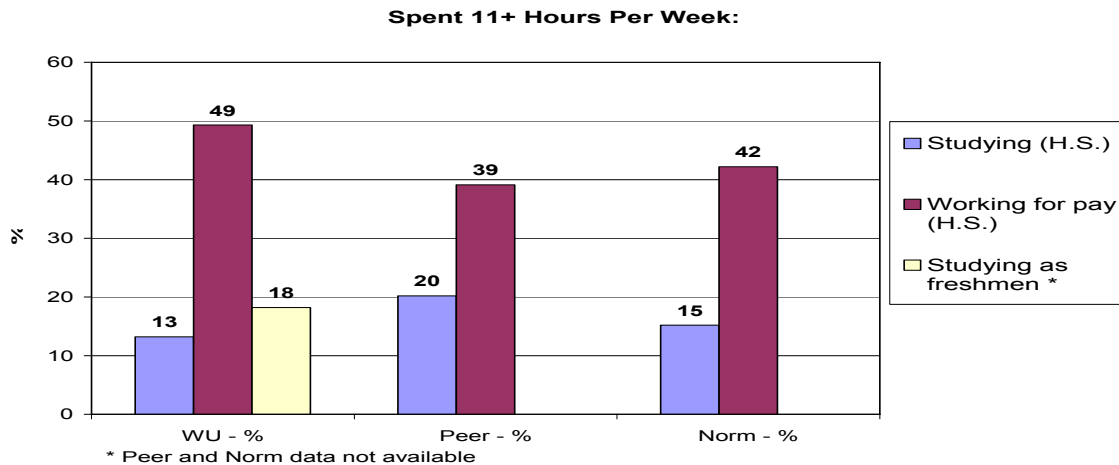


## ACADEMICS

### A) Academic Preparation

As in past years, Webster’s 2007 freshmen were less likely to spend more than 10 hours per week studying or doing homework during their senior year of high school and more likely to spend 11+ hours per week working for pay than the Peer and Norm students. At the time of the CIRP survey administration (less than one month into the fall term); Webster students indicated that they were spending slightly more time studying as college freshmen than they had spent in high school.

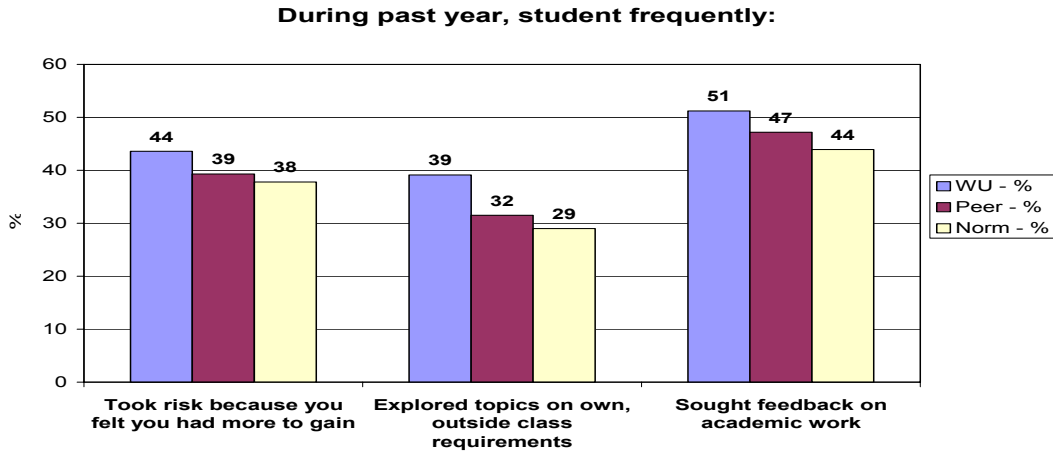
Figure 5



A new section of the CIRP survey in 2007 dealt with academic “habits of mind.” Webster freshmen indicated a level of academic effort greater than the Peer students and

significantly more vigorous than the Norm students in the following areas: risk-taking, exploring topics on their own and seeking feedback on their academic work.

Figure 6

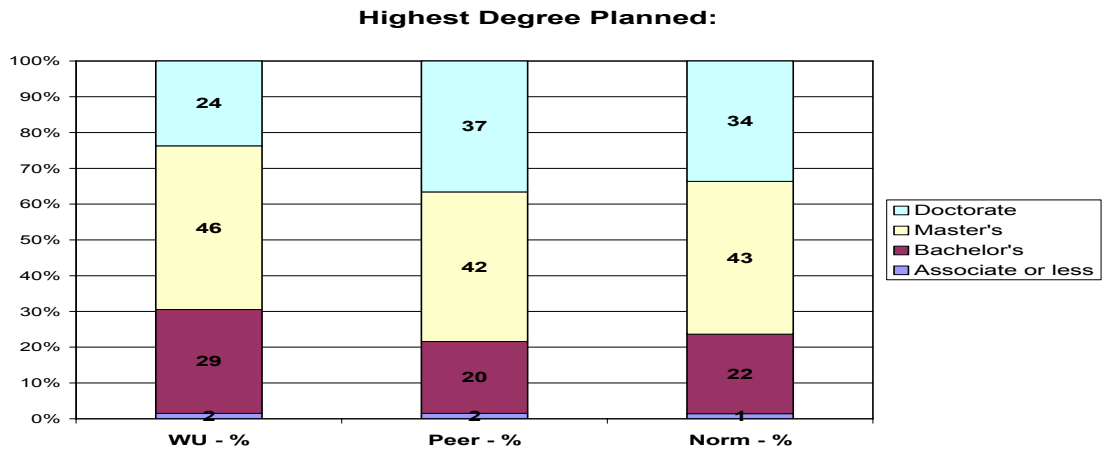


Another “habit of mind” explored whether students evaluated the quality or reliability of information they received. Only 37.5% of Webster students, 37.3% of Peer students and 35.0% of Norm students said they frequently checked the reliability of data. Among students who said they frequently used the Internet for research, Webster students (41.3%) were slightly more likely than Norm students (38.8%) to evaluate the quality or reliability of the information (Peer data not available).

## B) Academic Expectations

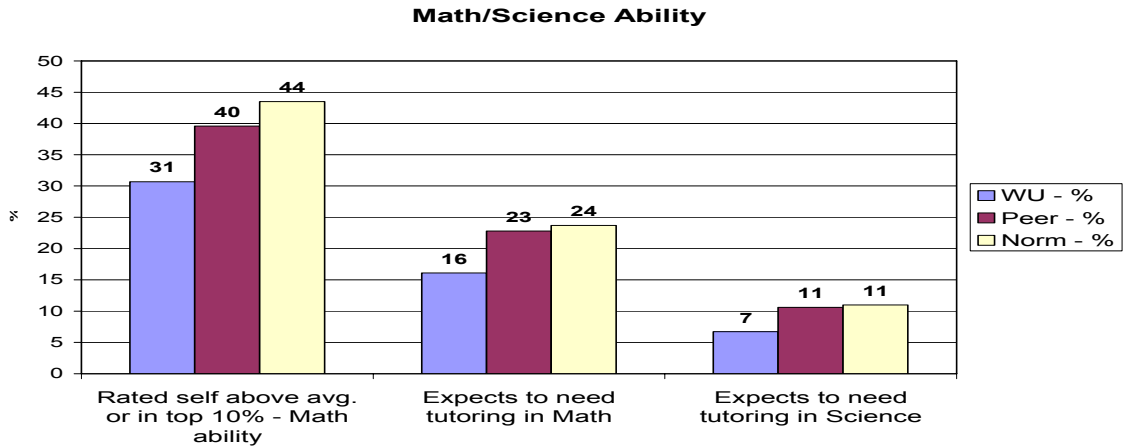
Webster’s 2007 freshmen were less likely than Norm or Peer students to plan on pursuing a doctorate degree. 23% of the 2007 Webster freshmen expected to get an advanced degree from Webster.

Figure 7



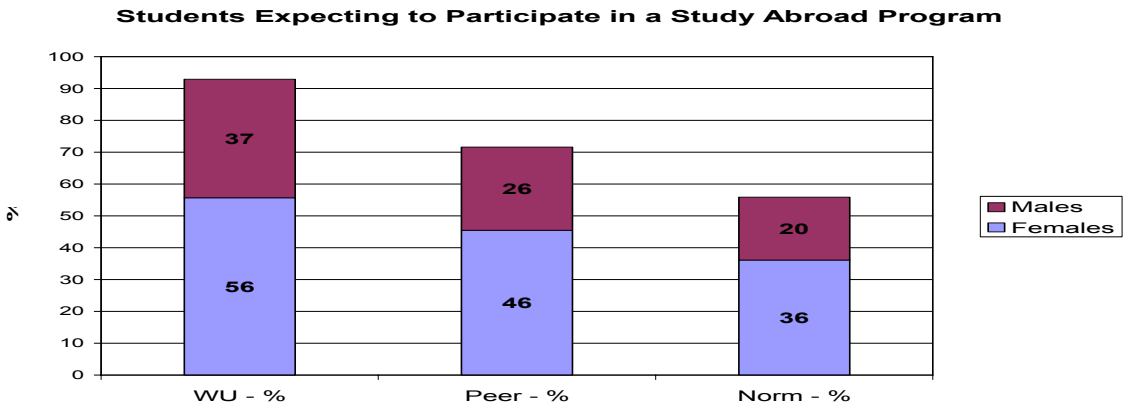
Although Webster students rated their mathematical ability significantly lower than Peer and Norm students, the Webster freshmen were less likely to expect that they would need tutoring or remedial work in either mathematics or science.

Figure 8



Webster's 2007 freshmen were significantly more likely to plan on studying abroad than Peer or Norm students. In all three respondent groups, females were more likely than males to expect to study abroad.

Figure 9



## SELF-RATINGS

The following table depicts the five categories in which Webster students rated themselves the highest and also the lowest. Webster freshmen have consistently rated their academic ability and creativity higher and their physical and emotional health significantly lower than Peer and Norm students.

Figure 10

Rates Self Above Average or in Top 10%	WU - %	Peer - %	Norm - %
Creativity *	75.2	59.5	55.8
Academic ability *	75.1	68.6	69.1
Drive to achieve	72.6	75.8	74.8
Cooperativeness	69.6	72.9	72.6
Understanding of others	67.1	67.0	65.6

Figure 10 (Continued) Rates Self Above Average or in Top 10%	WU - %	Peer - %	Norm - %
Physical health *	41.2	56.0	56
Computer skills	41.2	38.4	39.9
Emotional health *	40.3	53.0	54.5
Spirituality	40.2	36.6	37.9
Mathematical ability *	30.7	39.6	43.5
*Statistically significant difference between Webster and Peer and/or Norm students			

## SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES

A higher percentage of Webster freshmen (47.3%) claimed to be either politically far left or liberal than Peer (39.6%) or Norm (32.0%) students. Webster freshmen were significantly more likely to have discussed religion (41.2%) than Peer (31.9%) or Norm (30.6%) students and also more likely to have discussed politics (35.4%) than Peer (32.6%) or Norm (30%) students during the previous year.

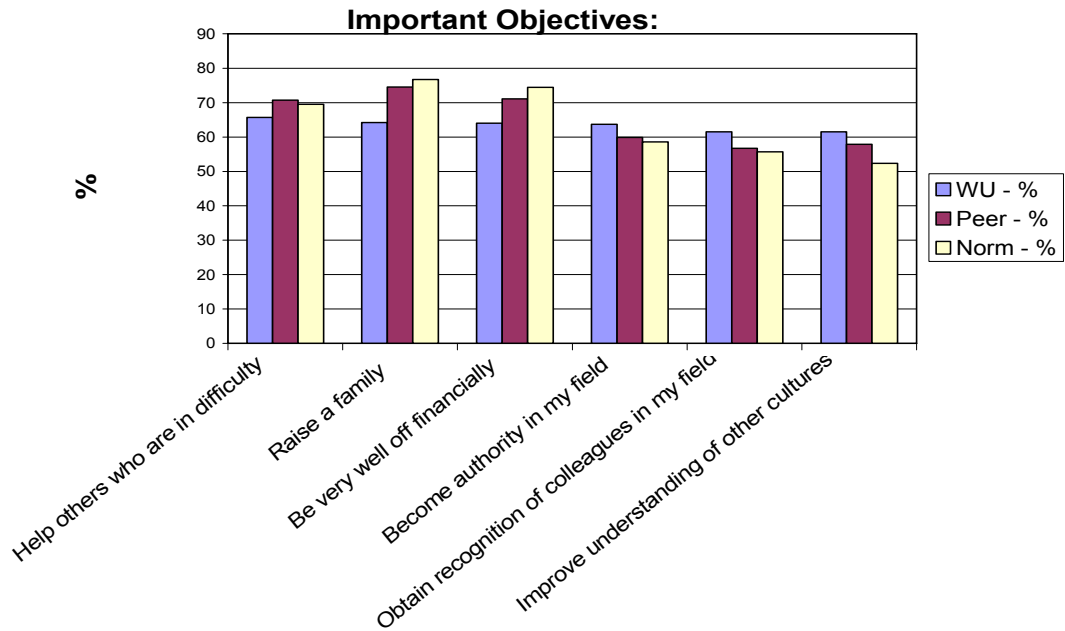
Another new section of the 2007 CIRP Freshman Survey dealt with parental involvement with their college-bound students. The expectation was that students would be disdainful of the “helicopter parent,” but results showed that up to 24% of the nation’s freshmen reported “too little” parental involvement in various aspects of their preparations to attend college. This held true for Webster freshmen, who would have liked more parental input than Peer or Norm students in most of the examined activities.

Figure 11

Students Reporting "Too Little" Parental Involvement in:	WU - %	Peer - %	Norm - %
Decision to go to college	7.1	5.2	5.7
Application(s) to college	16.6	13.6	15.1
Decision to go to this college *	12.2	8.7	10.0
Dealing with college officials	16.4	12.8	16.7
Choosing college courses	25.4	20.9	24.0
Choosing college activities	24.9	19.9	22.5
*Statistically significant difference between Webster and Peer students			

For the first time since 1971, when Webster first participated in the CIRP Survey, Webster’s freshmen chose “helping others who are in difficulty” as their top objective. As in past years, “raising a family” and “being very well-off financially” were more important to Peer and Norm students than Webster students, while career-related objectives were more important to Webster freshmen than Peer and Norm students. Webster students placed more importance on gaining an understanding of other countries and cultures than Peer and Norm students.

Figure 12



The social/political statement with which Webster students agreed most strongly was “The federal government is not doing enough to control environmental pollution.” The statement with which Webster students least agreed (12.3%) was “Racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America” (Peer = 16.8%, Norm = 19.5%).

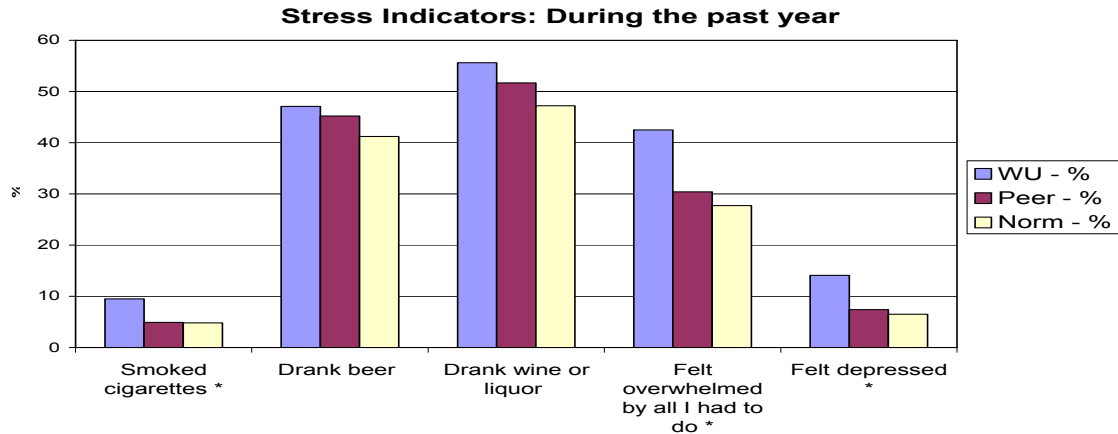
Figure 13

	WU - %	Peer - %	Norm - %
The federal government is not doing enough to control environmental pollution	84.6	82.7	79.8
A national health care plan is needed to cover everybody's medical costs	83.2	78.2	74.5
The federal government should do more to control the sale of handguns	75.3	78.3	75.9
Same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status	74.4	68.6	63.5
Only volunteers should serve in the armed forces	72.4	68.8	66.2

## STRESS LEVELS

Webster students have consistently expressed higher levels of stress than Peer and Norm students and have admitted to more stress-related behaviors, e.g. smoking cigarettes and consuming alcohol. Although Webster freshmen are nearly twice as likely to be smokers as Peer and Norm students, the bright side of the 2007 statistic is that it is the lowest percentage of Webster students who smoke “frequently” in the history of Webster’s CIRP Survey participation.

Figure 14



\* "Frequently" only. Other responses represent "frequently" or "occasionally".

Webster's female freshmen were more likely to express feeling overwhelmed or depressed, while Webster's male freshmen were more likely to smoke and drink alcohol.

## COMMUTERS v. RESIDENTS

Webster's commuter and residential freshmen are similar in their demographics, their academic preparation and effort, and in their expectations about college. One area where they differ significantly is the amount of time that commuters worked for pay in the previous year and that they expect to work during their freshmen year. 42% of the commuter respondents (n=66) and 84.3% of the residential respondents (n=220) said they were very interested or interested in living on campus next year. Appendix B lists all areas where commuters and residents were significantly different.

## CONCLUSIONS

- Webster students' left-leaning political views continue, as evidenced by the combined facts that they are more white than Peer or Norm students and yet are less likely to agree that race discrimination is no longer a problem in America.
- Webster's academic reputation had the most influence on college choice for the second year in a row and its reputation for social activities has nearly doubled in importance since 2004.
- Among the "habits of mind" explored, checking the reliability of data was frequently done by only 35% of Norm students, with Webster students only a little higher at 37.4%.
- More than 90% of Webster's 2007 freshmen expect to study abroad, compared to 72% of Peer and 56% of Norm students.
- Webster freshmen would have liked more parental involvement in various aspects of college preparation than either Peer or Norm students. Apparently, "helicopter parents" are not prevalent among Webster students' families.