

## 2007 MIT Freshman Survey

October 2007

The 2007 Freshman Survey was administered via the web in the summer of 2007 to all incoming first year students. 1,001 students responded to the survey, yielding an overall response rate of 94%. The survey asked students about their time in high school, confidence in their current skills and abilities, expectations for college and freshman year, learning styles, perceptions of MIT priorities, expectations for their major, background information, and concern about finances.

The attached report shows overall frequencies for each question on the survey, along with summary charts. Below are some of the major findings.

### Time in High School

- During senior year of high school, students reported spending the majority of their time outside of school working on homework (average of 15 hours per week). Students reported spending the least amount of time doing volunteer work and working for pay (average of 3 hours per week each).
- Females spent, on average, four more hours per week on homework than men.
- 7% of students said that they felt overwhelmed very often by all they had to do during their last year in high school; 14% never felt overwhelmed.

### Confidence in Skills and Abilities

The survey asked students to rate their confidence on a wide range of skills and abilities. The 11-point scale ranged from “Not at all confident (0%)” to “Completely confident (100%).”

- Students reported being 75% confident or more on 20 of the 26 skills and abilities.
- Students were most confident in their ability to function independently, without supervision; function effectively as a member of a team; think analytically and logically; and relate well to people of different races (mean of 84% or above).
- Students reported lower confidence in their ability to place current problems in historical/cultural/philosophical perspective; write effectively; communicate well orally; and read or speak a foreign language (mean of 72% or below).
- Females and males indicated high levels of confidence in most areas. However, females tended to be more confident than males in their ability to write effectively, read or speak a foreign language, and appreciate art. Males tended to be more confident than females in their ability to think analytically and logically.

### Time in College

- Students anticipated spending nine more hours per week doing homework in college than high school (24 hours per week in college versus 15 in high school).
- 11% of females and 5% of males anticipated spending more than 40 hours per week on homework.
- 85% of students anticipated working for pay during their first year of college, compared to 40% of students who worked for pay during high school.



**Expectations for College**

- Virtually every student said that there is some chance or greater that they will be satisfied with their college; socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group; know some faculty well enough to get a good letter of recommendation; and make at least a B average.
- 97% of students reported that there is some or a very good chance that they will communicate regularly with their professors.
- Nearly a third of students said that there is a chance that they will seek personal counseling during college.
- Females were more likely than males to say that they would participate in student protests; volunteer; participate in student clubs; have a roommate of a different race; and have an educational or public service experience abroad.
- Males were more likely than females to indicate a very good chance of joining a fraternity/sorority and playing varsity/intercollegiate athletics.

**Expectations for Freshman Year**

- Almost all students agreed that they will be challenged intellectually during their first year (95% strongly agreed).
- 84% agreed that they will be involved in a research project during their first year.
- Of the 18 items on the list, students were least likely to agree that they will be able to maintain a balance between academic work and other aspects of their life. Still, 77% agreed somewhat or strongly with this statement.
- Males were more likely than females to strongly agree that their classes will be more exciting than their high school classes.
- Females were more likely than males to say that they would work harder than they thought they could to meet the instructor's standards or expectations (45% of females said very often, compared to 30% of males).

**Perceptions of MIT Priorities**

On the survey, students were asked how much emphasis they believe MIT currently places and how much emphasis MIT should place on 12 different areas.

- The top three areas for current emphasis were faculty research; a commitment to intellectual freedom; and a racially/ethnically diverse student body – 58% or more of students said that MIT currently places a great deal of emphasis on these areas.
- Only one of these items (commitment to intellectual freedom) appeared in the top three areas students said MIT should emphasize. The top three areas were teaching undergraduates; a commitment to intellectual freedom; and need-based financial aid – 74% or more of students said that MIT should place a great deal of emphasis on these areas. Faculty research dropped to fifth on the list, and a racially/ethnically diverse student body dropped to seventh on the list.
- The bottom three areas for current emphasis and preferred emphasis were the same: a broad liberal arts education; intercollegiate athletics; and non-need (merit) aid.

- Below are the gaps between current emphasis and preferred emphasis, looking at the percent of students who selected “a great deal” of emphasis. A positive number means “emphasis should be” is greater than “current emphasis.” A negative number means “current emphasis” is greater than “emphasis should be.”
  1. Faculty research: -12
  2. A commitment to intellectual freedom: +8
  3. A racially/ethnically diverse student body: -4
  4. Skills valuable in the workforce: +15
  5. Teaching undergraduates: +28
  6. Need-based financial aid: +21
  7. Quality of residence life: +26
  8. Moral/ethical development: +18
  9. Extra-curricular activities other than intercollegiate athletics: +8
  10. A broad liberal arts education: +6
  11. Intercollegiate athletics: +4
  12. Non-need (merit) aid: +15

### **Expectations for Major**

- When asked which major they were most interested in, 20% of students said EECS, followed by Mechanical Engineering (11%) and Biological Engineering (10%).
- 43% of students were confident or very confident that the major they selected will be right for them. 14% were not confident at all or did not know enough yet.
- Males were more likely than females to be very confident in the major they selected.
- Half of students said that they expect to earn a Ph.D. in the future, at MIT or elsewhere. Only 1% said a bachelor’s degree would be their highest academic degree.

### **Financial Concerns**

- 10% of students were not sure they will have enough funds to complete college.
- Those who were concerned about their ability to finance their education were more likely to agree that they will be burdened by loan payments when they graduate and more likely to get a job during college to help pay for expenses.
- 30% of students agreed that they will be seriously burdened by loan payments when they graduate.
- Females were more likely than males to have concerns about their ability to finance their education and be burdened by loan payments.