Seventy-Five percent (75%) of first-time full-time BU students indicated that Binghamton University’s Academic Reputation was “Very Important” in their decision to choose to enroll at BU. Two other factors were Very Important to over half of the class of 2008: BU’s Low Tuition (59%) and “Graduates Get Good Jobs” (57%). Other top factors included “Graduates Gain Admission to Top Graduate/Professional Schools” (47%), “A Visit to Campus” (33%), and “Rankings in National Magazines” (29%). (See Figure 1 on page 2). Figure 1 also contains national norm comparisons and BU school level figures.

These and many other findings were discovered through the administration of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) survey to 1,813 incoming first-time full-time freshmen just prior to the beginning of the Fall 2004 semester. This represents 84% of the 2,158 incoming freshmen.

This report also contains comparisons to a national norm comparison group comprised of 13 other “highly selective public universities” (see page 11 for list). Additionally, Binghamton school-level figures and comparisons are included.

Finally, a section of this report will address changes in student attitudes and beliefs over the past 30 years. Binghamton University first participated in the CIRP survey in 1975. There are some differences between the incoming classes of 1975, 1990 and 2004.
Factors in Choosing Your College - National Norm and School Level Comparisons

Students were asked to rate a series of factors on a scale of “Not Important”, “Somewhat Important”, or “Very Important” to their college decision. Figure 1 shows the top six factors for BU students overall and compares them to the national norm group. BU school-level figures are also displayed for each factor. The following factors were cited as substantially (greater than a 5% difference) more important to BU freshmen than to their national norm counterparts: “Low Tuition” (59% of BU students compared to 33% of students at the national norm schools), “Grads go to Top Graduate Schools” (47% BU, 38% national norm), Academic Reputation (75% BU, 69% national norm), and Rankings in National Magazines (29% BU, 23% national norm). Also, one-in-three (33%) of BU respondents cited “A Visit to Campus” as being “very important” in their decision to attend BU. The national norm figure was somewhat higher at 37%.
Selected Beliefs and Behaviors – Comparing BU Students to the National Norm Schools

*Figure 2* contains responses to a variety of CIRP questions that campus constituents have been perennially interested in. For example, BU consistently has a larger percentage of non-native English speakers entering each year compared to the national norm. Fall 2004 was no exception, with fifteen percent (15%) of incoming first-time full-time students having a native language other than English. This compares to twelve percent (12%) for the national norm. At the school level, Arts & Sciences had the highest percentage at seventeen percent (17%).

![Figure 2](image)

*Figure 2*

Selected CIRP 2004 Questions: BU Overall, National Norm and BU School-Level Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>BU</th>
<th>Nat’l Norm</th>
<th>Arts &amp; Sciences</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Nursing</th>
<th>SEHD</th>
<th>Watson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is English your Native Language?</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently to How often did you do this Activity in Last Year?</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Choice to Is this College Your…</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate percent responding “Seven to Ten” to How many Colleges did you apply to?</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate Your Academic Ability compared to Persons Your Age</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Important is Becoming an Authority in Your Field?</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Important is Raising a Family?</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
(1) Percent responding “No” to “Is English your Native Language?”
(2) Percent responding “Frequently” to “How often did you do this Activity in Last Year?”
(3) Percent responding “First Choice” to “Is this College Your…”
(4) Aggregate percent responding “Five”, “Six”, “Seven”, “Ten”, or “Eleven” to “How many Colleges did you apply to?”
(5) Aggregate percent responding “Above Average” or “Top 10%” to “Rate Your Academic Ability compared to Persons Your Age”
(6) Aggregate percent responding “Very Important” or “Essential” to “How Important is Becoming an Authority in Your Field?”
(7) Aggregate percent responding “Very Important” or “Essential” to “How Important is Raising a Family?”
An overwhelming majority of students used the internet for research or homework in the previous year. *Figure 2* shows that seventy-nine percent (79%) of BU students used the internet, compared to eighty-two percent (82%) of the national norm respondents. At the school level, 2 schools had at least eighty-five percent (85%) of their incoming freshmen using the internet for research or homework: Nursing, with ninety-five percent (95%) and Management, with eighty-seven percent (87%).

BU was the “first-choice” institution for fifty-nine percent (59%) of incoming freshmen in Fall 2004. This compares to the national norm figure of sixty-eight (68%). (Note: The BU figure is higher in 2004 than in 1990. Please see page 8 for BU trend data). Looking at the BU schools, ninety-four percent (94%) of incoming SEHD freshmen said that BU was their “first-choice” institution, well above the BU average. Seventy-four percent (74%) of Nursing’s freshmen also indicated that BU was their first choice college.

Fifty-Seven percent (57%) of BU’s incoming freshmen applied to 5 or more colleges. This is considerably higher than the thirty-six percent (36%) of freshmen at the national norm comparison schools. Sixty-percent (60%) of respondents from Arts & Sciences indicated applying to 5 or more other colleges.

Regarding students’ self-perception of Academic Ability, eighty-five percent (85%) of the BU respondents rate themselves as Above Average or in the Highest 10 percent. This is one percent above the national norm figure of eighty-four percent (84%). At the school level, Management (88%) and Watson (86%) had the highest percentages.

“Becoming an authority in my chosen field” was “very important” or “essential” to sixty-two percent (62%) of BU’s incoming freshmen in Fall 2004, compared to 59% of the national norm respondents. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of BU’s freshmen in the school of Management said that becoming an authority in their field was very important or essential to them. This was the largest percentage of any BU school.

Raising a family is equally important to BU’s freshmen as it is to their national norm counterparts with seventy-four percent (74%) indicating this as “very important” or “essential”. SEHD and Nursing each had figures of ninety-four percent (94%), well above the BU and national norm average of 74%.
Highest Degree Planned at This Institution

When asked about “highest degree planned at this institution”, over seventy percent (71%) of BU freshmen said that a Bachelor’s degree was the highest degree they planned on receiving at BU. This is a good deal higher than the national norm figure of 64%. Figure 3 shows that another twenty-four percent (24%) of BU respondents said they planned on receiving a Master’s degree from BU. This is nearly identical to the national figure of 23%. Slightly over two percent (2.3%) of BU respondents said they are planning on earning a Doctorate at BU. The national norm figure of 5.4% was more than double the BU figure. Two BU schools had substantially higher percentages of freshmen planning on receiving their Master’s degree at BU: Fifty percent (50%) for SEHD and forty-four percent (44%) for the School of Management.

Figure 3

Highest Degree Planned at This University: BU, National Norm, and BU Schools
College Degree Attainment of Parents

Each CIRP respondent is asked about the educational attainment of their parents. More BU freshmen have a father without a college degree than a mother without a college degree. *Figure 4* shows that thirty-seven percent (37%) of BU respondents have a father without a college degree, while thirty-six percent (36%) have a mother without a degree. The national norm figures are thirty-four percent (34%) and thirty-seven percent (37%) respectively. Note: Twenty-seven percent (27%) of BU respondents are “first-generation” college students, with neither parent having a college degree (not shown in figure 4).

At the school level, the figure was thirty-nine percent (39%) for Arts & Sciences for both fathers and mothers without a college degree. One figure that stands out is the large difference in SEHD. Only twenty-two percent (22%) of SEHD freshmen have a mother without a degree, while thirty-nine percent (39%) have a father without a college degree.

![Figure 4]

*Percent of Fathers and Mothers Without a College Degree*
Religious Preference

BU respondents have a variety of religious preferences, indicating a high degree of “religious diversity” among the freshmen class. Religious preference is a topic of inquiry from constituencies both internal and external to campus. Figure 5 illustrates that Roman Catholic is the religious preference with the largest percentage of BU students at twenty-eight percent (28%). This is slightly higher than the 26% figure for the national norm group. “None” is the second largest category for BU students, at twenty-four percent (24%). This category is also very close to the national norm figure, which is 23%. The category with the third largest percentage of BU students is Jewish, at twenty-two percent (22%). This is substantially larger than the national norm figure of six percent (6%).
BU Freshmen Over Time

*Figure 6* illustrates BU response rates to the same questions appearing in *Figure 2* at three points in time: 1975, 1990 and 2004. (Binghamton University first participated in the CIRP survey in 1975). The percentage of BU freshmen having a native language other than English was nearly double in 2004 (15%) compared to 1987 (the first year the question appeared) when the figure was only eight percent (8%).

*Figure 6*
Selected CIRP Questions: BU Responses 1975, 1990 and 2004

* 1987 was first year “English Non-Native Language” question appeared. Data are for 1987, 1990 and 2004
Binghamton University was the “first-choice” institution of seventy-three percent (73%) of incoming BU freshmen in 1975. This figure dropped to 54% in 1990, but has edged up back up to 59% in 2004.

There has been a dramatic increase in the percentage of BU freshmen applying to 5 or more colleges. The figure increased substantially from thirty-six percent (36%) in 1975 to fifty-four percent (54%) in 1990. The figure edged up to fifty-seven percent (57%) in 2004. For at least the past fifteen years, it appears that a majority of Binghamton University’s incoming freshmen have been applying numerous other colleges.

BU freshmen have a long history of being very confident in their academic abilities. In 1975, ninety-three percent (93%) of BU respondents rated themselves as either “Above Average” or “in the Top 10%” when it comes to comparing their academic ability to others students their age. The figure was still above ninety percent (91%) in 1990. This dropped to eighty-five percent (85%) in 2004 – still a very high percentage, but eight percentage points below the 1975 figure.

“Becoming an authority in my field” was considered to be “very important” or “essential” to sixty-nine percent (69%) of BU respondents in 1975. The figure remained virtually identical in 1990 at sixty-eight percent (68%), and dipped to sixty-two percent (62%) in 2004.

The percentage of BU respondents indicating that “Raising a Family” is “very important” or “essential” to them has seen a steady increase since 1975, when the figure was sixty percent (60%). The figure jumped to 70% by 1990 and stands at seventy-four percent (74%) in the most recent survey. It is interesting to view the “becoming an authority in my field” series next to “raising a family.” They are nearly mirror images. Raising a family has increased in importance, while becoming an authority in a field has decreased in importance.

**Religious Preference of BU Respondents Over Time**

*Figure 7* illustrates that there have been some dramatic shifts in the BU student body with respect to the self-reported religious preference of CIRP respondents. For example, forty-four (44%) of respondents in 1975 identified themselves as Jewish. This dropped to twenty-six percent (26%) in 1990 and stood at twenty-two (22%) in the 2004 survey. To note, the current figure of 22% is still substantially higher than the national norm figure of six percent (6%) (see *Figure 5*).
Roman Catholic was indicated by the largest percentage of 2004 respondents, at twenty-eight percent (28%). This is actually an eight point decrease from the thirty-six percent (36%) figure in 1990. In 1975, twenty-four percent (24%) of BU respondents identified themselves as Roman Catholic.

Figure 7 clearly illustrates the large increase in those indicating no religious preference, particularly since 1990, when sixteen percent (16%) of respondents
selected “None”. This figure jumped to twenty-four percent (24%) in the 2004 survey. Also, the percentage of freshmen identifying themselves as “Other Christian” has increased to six percent (6%) in 2004, from two percent (2%) in 1975 and three percent (3%) in 1990.

Summary

Once again, the Fall 2004 CIRP survey has revealed that students choose BU for its academic reputation, low tuition, and excellent prospects of getting a good job or entrance into a top graduate program after leaving BU. These factors were more important to BU students than their national norm counterparts.

More than one in four (27%) are “first-generation” college students and fifteen percent (15%) do not speak English as their native language. The class of 2008 has a good deal of religious diversity, which runs counter to the “conventional wisdom” that the BU student body is predominantly Jewish. The actual figure is twenty-two percent (22%) for the 2004 freshmen class. More freshmen identify themselves as Roman Catholic (28%) than any other religious group.

By and large, BU freshmen are very confident in their academic ability, applied to several other colleges, and are looking forward to raising a family in the future. A large majority plan on staying at BU to receive a Bachelors degree and roughly one-quarter (24%) plan on staying at BU to receive a Masters degree.

National Norm Schools (Highly Selective Public Universities)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miami University (Ohio)</th>
<th>SUNY – Buffalo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UC – Riverside</td>
<td>Virginia Polytechnic Inst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCLA</td>
<td>Univ of Minn. - Twin Cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Tech</td>
<td>Univ of Pittsburgh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa State</td>
<td>University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Vermont</td>
<td>University of Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMASS – Amherst</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prepared by Daniel Jardine – April, 2005