

CIRP 2005 Freshman Survey
Peer Comparison Report of Selected CIRP Items
Office of Institutional Effectiveness

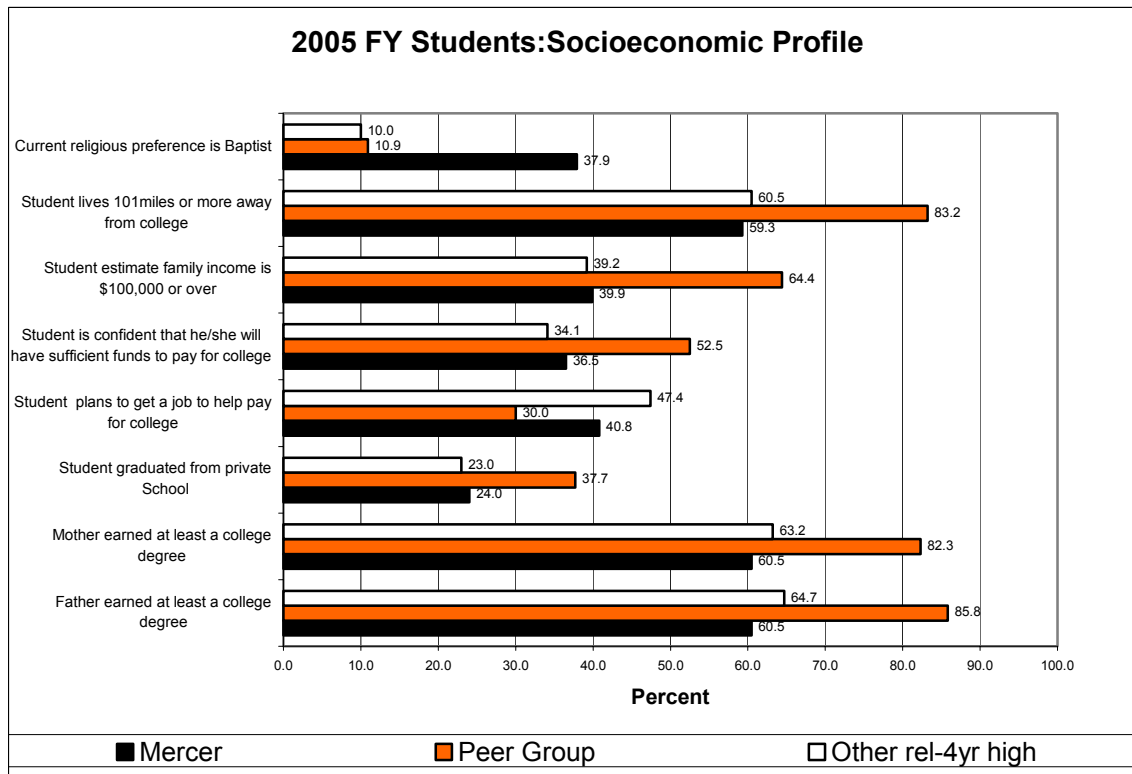
Mercer University Macon campus traditional first year students have participated in the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) since 1989. The CIRP is a national longitudinal study and is regarded as the most comprehensive source of information on college students.

Mercer students complete the survey during fall orientation of their first year. For Fall 2005, Mercer’s response rate was 85% of first year students (521). Below are selected findings from the Fall 2005 freshman class compared to a selected group of aspirational peers including Wake Forest, Emory, Furman, Rhodes, and Vanderbilt (Peer Group) and to CIRP participants categorized as “other religious 4-year highly selective institutions”.

For this report, selected items from the CIRP survey have been organized into the areas of socioeconomic profile, college choice, reasons noted as very important for attending institution, intended major field, career plans, student expectations, and student objectives.

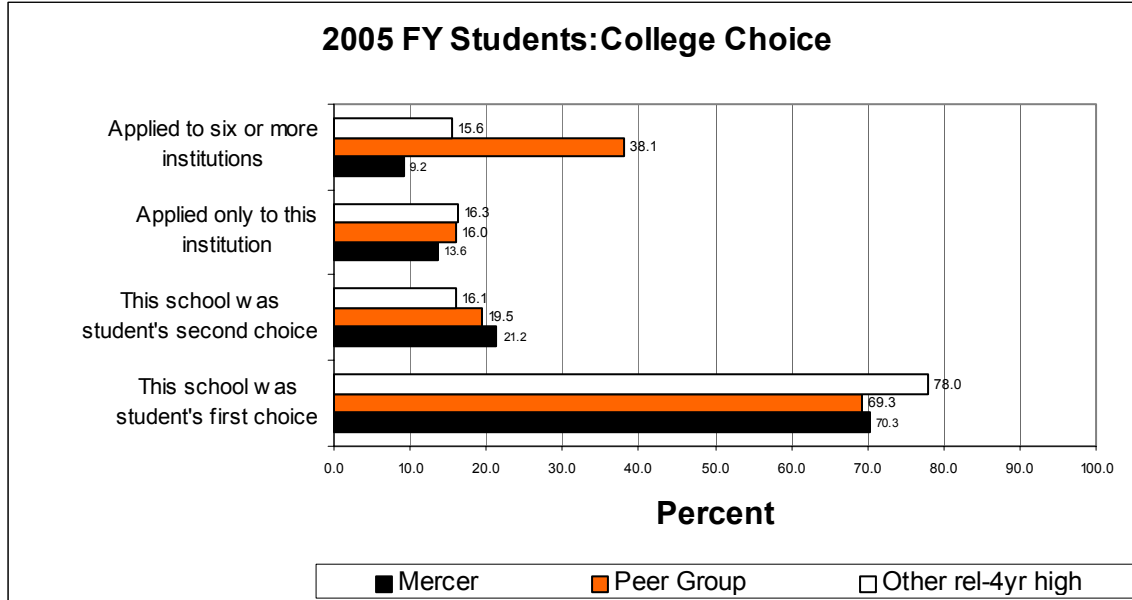
Socioeconomic Profile

In this category, Mercer traditional first year students are similar to students from other religious four-year highly selective institutions. A greater number of respondents from our aspirational peer group live further away from home, come from families with higher incomes, have more confidence about the ability to pay for college, do not plan to get a job to pay for college expenses, have gone to private schools, and have parents who have earned at least a college degree.



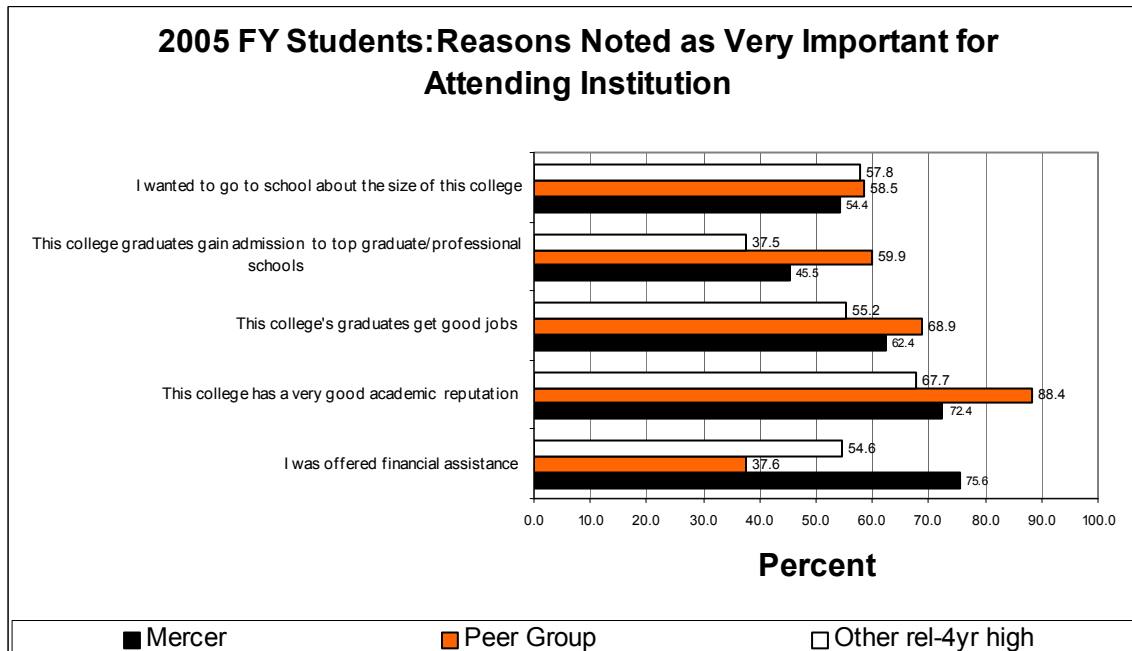
College Choice

Mercer students applied to fewer institutions than students from other religious 4-year highly selective institutions or from our aspirational peer group. The other religious 4-year highly selective group had the highest number of respondents who claimed they attended their first choice college.



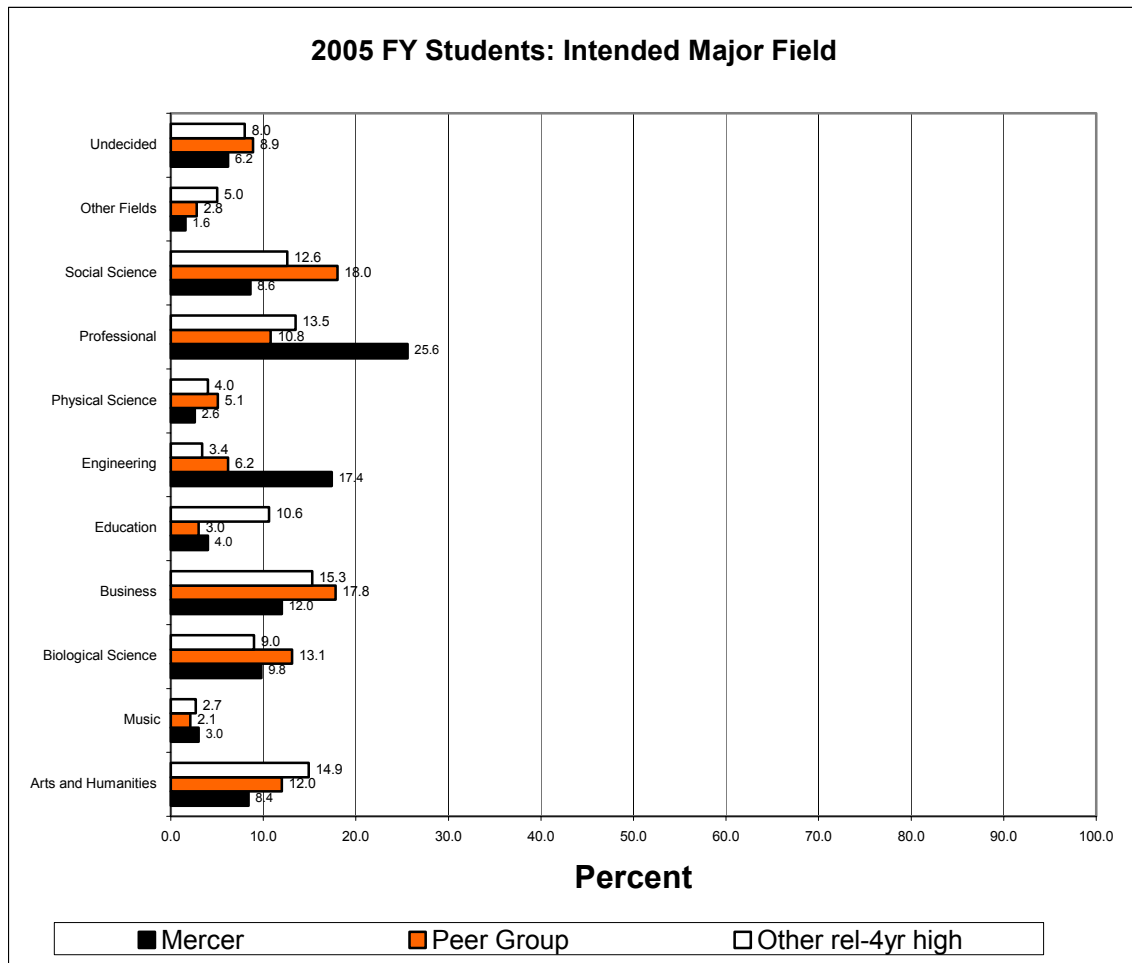
Reasons noted as very important for attending institution

Seventy-six percent of Mercer's respondents chose "I was offered financial assistance" as a very important reason to attend Mercer. This percentage compares to 37% of our aspirational peer group respondents and 54% of respondents from highly selective institutions. Mercer's second and third ranked reasons are "this college has a very good academic reputation" and "the college's graduates get good jobs".



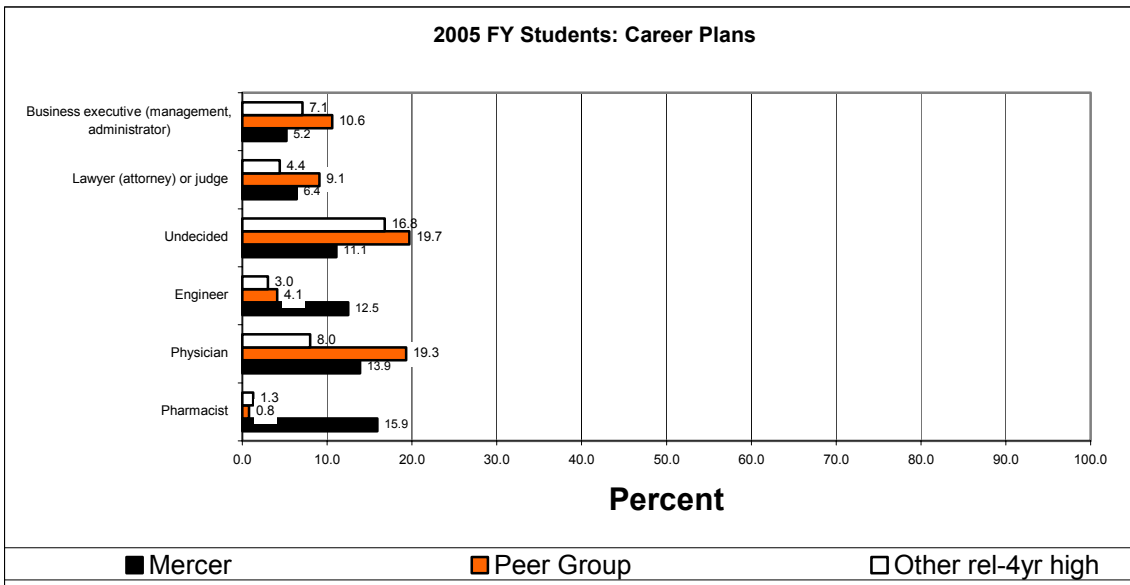
Intended Major Field

Twenty-five percent of Mercer's respondents plan to major in a professional field as compared to 11% of our aspirational peer group and 13% of the other religious 4-year highly selective group. The professional category includes the pharmacy major which accounts for the higher percentage of Mercer students interested in a professional major. Seventeen percent of Mercer's respondents are interested in an engineering major, compared to only 4% of students from our aspirational peer group and 3% of other religious 4-year highly selective peer institutions. Of our aspirational peer group only Vanderbilt has a school of engineering. Wake Forest, Emory, Furman and Rhodes have 3/2 engineering programs. All three groups have a very low percentage of students interested in music as a major.



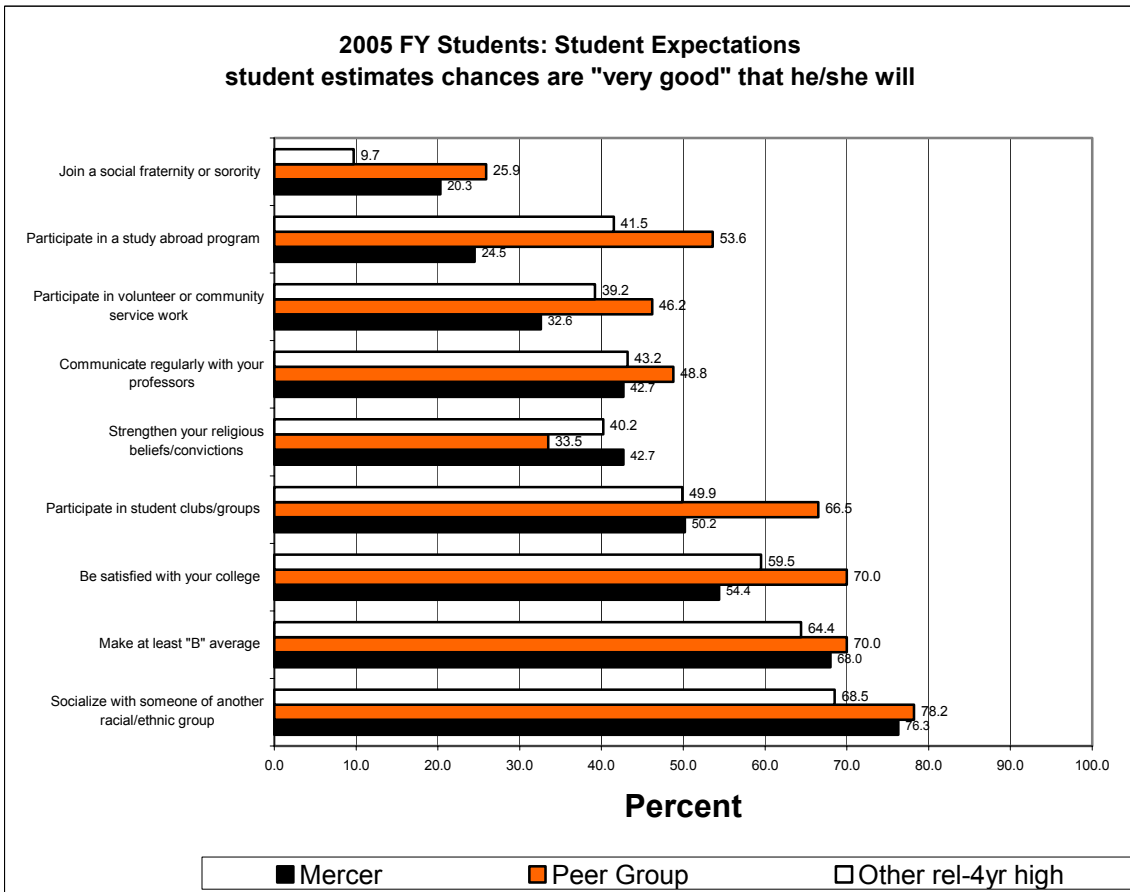
Career Plans

Only 11% of Mercer students consider themselves undecided about their career plans. At Mercer, the most selected career plans are pharmacists (16%) followed by physicians (14%), and then engineers (13%).



Student Expectations

Only 25% of Mercer first year students plan to study abroad, whereas 54% of respondents from the aspirational peer group and 42% from the other religious 4-year highly selective institutions plan to study abroad. Other areas where Mercer students' expectations fall below our aspirational peer group include the percentage that think they will be satisfied with Mercer (54% Mercer vs. 70% peer group), plan to participate in student clubs or groups (50% vs. 67%), and plan to volunteer or participate in community service (30% vs. 46%).



Student Objectives

All three groups of respondents had similar objectives; however, a smaller percentage of Mercer students (49%) consider “improving my understanding of other countries & cultures” an essential or very important objective compared to 65% of the aspirational peer group and 55% of other religious 4-year highly selective group.

