

IRAP Brief

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Educational Goals: What's Most Important?

By ChrisTina Leimer

Director, Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning

With the committee on the Characteristics of a Fresno State Graduate forming to determine what the most valuable characteristics of California State University, Fresno graduates should be, I examined full-time faculty responses to the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) Faculty Survey conducted in Spring 2005.

Fresno State faculty were asked to rate the importance of 16 educational goals for undergraduates. Using descriptive statistics, ANOVAs and T-tests, I analyzed the responses by academic rank, gender and race. Differences noted in this report are statistically significant at or below the .05 level. (For the complete methodology, see the longer report at the url listed at the end of this paper.)

Across academic ranks, the full-time faculty believes that the most important educational goals for undergraduates are developing the ability to think critically, mastering knowledge in a discipline, the ability to write effectively, and preparing for employment. (Table 1). These are the only goals that rate above 3.0 on a scale in which 4 means essential.

Table 1

Educational Goals 2005

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Develop Ability to Think Critically	208	3.82	0.416
Prepare for Employment	209	3.06	0.799
Prepare for Graduate Education	209	2.74	0.703
Develop Moral Character	209	2.80	0.898
Provide for Emotional Development	209	2.34	0.903
Help Develop Personal Values	208	2.55	0.913
Enhance Self-understanding	206	2.69	0.878
Instill Commitment to Community Service	208	2.39	0.813
Prepare for Responsible Citizenship	207	2.93	0.808
Enhance Knowledge of Racial/Ethnic Groups	208	2.90	0.937
Help Master Knowledge in Discipline	209	3.58	0.589
Develop Creative Capacities	209	2.91	0.804
Instill Appreciation of Liberal Arts	208	2.58	0.855
Enhance Spiritual Development	206	1.72	0.850
Promote Ability to Write Effectively	209	3.47	0.629
Facilitate Search for Meaning/Purpose	208	2.26	0.941

Scale:

1=not important, 2=somewhat important

3=very important, 4=essential

Goals scored above 2.5 but less than 3.0 include:

- Prepare for graduate education
- Develop moral character
- Help develop personal values
- Enhance self-understanding
- Prepare for responsible citizenship
- Enhance knowledge of racial/ethnic groups
- Develop creative capacities
- Instill appreciation of liberal arts

Women are more likely than men to find the following educational goals important.

- Enhance self-understanding
- Enhance knowledge of racial/ethnic groups
- Instill appreciation of liberal arts
- Promote ability to write effectively

Faculty of color are more likely than white faculty to find these educational goals important.

- Prepare for graduate education
- Develop moral character
- Instill commitment to community service
- Enhance knowledge of racial/ethnic groups
- Develop creative capacities

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**See the full report that includes the methodology and additional
tables at the IRAP website:
csufresno.edu/ir/data_research/reports_studies.shtml**