

**ALUMNI SURVEY  
CORNELL UNIVERSITY CLASS OF '89  
INTER-INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT**

**SURVEY DESCRIPTION**

The survey, designed by a consortium of institutional researchers from highly selective private research universities and liberal arts colleges, was sent to select alumni classes of 28 educational institutions during January-February 2000. A detailed analysis of Cornell University alumni responses, including analyses by gender, racial/ethnic background, and college, is presented in "Alumni Survey, Cornell University Classes of '89 and '94 Intra-Institutional Analysis, Executive Summary Report" and may be found in "pdf" format online by following the links for the Alumni Survey at the following URL: [http://www.ipr.cornell.edu/Reports/report\\_menu.htm](http://www.ipr.cornell.edu/Reports/report_menu.htm).

This report compares Cornell University results for the Class of '89 (10 years post-graduation) with those of alumni from groups of other universities comparable to Cornell on the basis of competition for undergraduate students. For purposes of comparison, three "norm" groups, each including four or more universities, were established, based on the following characteristics:

- Norm Group 1 includes universities that most often "win" when in direct competition with Cornell for admitted undergraduates.
- Norm Group 2 includes universities with which Cornell competes on a relatively even basis for admitted undergraduates.
- Norm Group 3 includes universities that most often "lose" when in direct competition with Cornell for admitted undergraduates.

Unless otherwise indicated, reported differences between groups are statistically significant.

**ALUMNI CHARACTERISTICS**

- The proportion of male and female respondents was equal among Cornell alumni (Chart 1, Table 1). Norm Group 1 and Norm Group 3 had more male respondents (52.6% and 53.6%, respectively), while Norm Group 2 had more female respondents (54.0%).
- Cornell and Norm Group 2 had larger proportions of White alumni respondents (84.5% and 84.1% respectively), while Norm Group 1 had a larger proportion of Asian American (11.1%), other (4.6%), and international (1.5%) alumni respondents (Chart 1, Table 1).
- Norm Group 1 alumni were most likely to have earned an advanced degree (92.9%), followed by Norm Group 3 (85.6%), Norm Group 2 (80.3%), and Cornell (77.9%) (Chart 2, Table 2). Nearly half of all alumni reported having earned a Master's degree. The Master's degree in business was the most frequently reported earned Master's degree for all groups.
- The current primary activity of most alumni is employment for pay in a management-related field (Charts 3a, 3b, 3c; Table 3). Most work for a private for-profit corporation. Cornell alumni were more

likely than other alumni to be raising a family (14.4%) or to be in military service (1.4%). They were more likely than other alumni to be working in a management (25.2%), engineering (7.2%), or marketing/sales (4.9%) position. Cornell alumni were more likely to have majored in business/management (12.5%) than were alumni from Norm Groups 1, 2 and 3 (3.2%, 10.8%, and 4.4% respectively). They were also more likely to have majored in engineering (17.6%) than alumni from Norm Groups 2 and 3 (10.0%, 15.9% respectively). Norm Group 1 had the highest percentage of engineering majors (19.7%), compared with Cornell, Norm Group 2, and Norm Group 3 (17.6%, 10.0%, and 15.9%, respectively).

- The median individual income of Cornell alumni was about \$67,500 (Chart 4a, Table 4a). Norm Group 1 respondents were more likely than other groups to have individual incomes over \$175,000, while Cornell alumni were less likely to have individual incomes in the over \$175,000 range. The median household income of Cornell alumni was about \$102,500 (Chart 4b, Table 4b). Norm Group 1 respondents were more likely to have household incomes over \$175,000.
- Most alumni reported being either "somewhat satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their lives. There were no significant differences among groups in regard to current satisfaction with life (Chart 5, Table 5).
- The goal rated most important by all responding alumni was "raising a family," followed by "helping others in difficulty," "being very well off financially," "recognition from colleagues for contributions to my special field," and "keeping up with science and technology." (Charts 6a, Table 6). Cornell alumni gave higher importance ratings to "being involved in environmental protection" (2.58, scale 1 = "not at all" to 5 = "essential"). Norm Group 2 alumni gave higher importance ratings to "keeping up with developments in the arts" (3.30).
- Achievement of alumni goals was greatest for the goal of "recognition from colleagues for contributions to my special field," followed by "being very well off financially," "keeping up with science and technology," "helping others in difficulty," and "keeping up with developments in politics" (Chart 6b, Table 6). "Raising a family" was the goal rated highest in importance, but relatively few alumni have achieved this goal. Cornell alumni were more likely than others to have accomplished "being involved in environmental protection" (2.05) (scale 1 = "not at all" to 5 = "very much"). Norm Group 2 alumni were more likely than other groups to have achieved "keeping up with developments in the arts" (2.96), "keeping up with developments in sports" (2.64), and "influencing social values" (2.49).

## **GENERAL VIEW OF THE UNIVERSITY**

- Most alumni were "generally satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their undergraduate education (Chart 7, Table 7). Among Cornell alumni, 50.9% were "very satisfied." Norm Group 1 alumni were more likely than other alumni to be "very satisfied" (58.6%) with their undergraduate education.
- Alumni from Cornell (72.0%) and from Norm Group 1 (72.6%) were more likely to consider recommending their university to a high school senior with similar background, ability, interests, and temperament (Chart 8, Table 8). Norm Group 3 alumni were more likely to indicate that they would "probably not" (6.6%) or "definitely not" (2.3%) recommend their university.
- When asked to indicate how much emphasis their university *currently* places on certain areas, alumni from all groups agreed that "faculty research" is the area that receives the most emphasis (Chart 9a, Table 9). Cornell alumni were less likely than other norm groups to report current university emphasis on the following (scale 1 = "very little/none" to 5 = "a great deal"):

- "teaching undergrads" (3.64)
- "broad liberal arts education" (3.63)
- "moral/ethical development" (2.75)

Norm Group 1 alumni were more likely than other groups to report university emphasis on:

- "intellectual freedom" (4.34)
- "teaching undergrads" (4.13)
- "need-based financial aid" (3.85)

Norm Group 2 alumni were more likely than other groups to report university emphasis on:

- "intercollegiate athletics" (3.36)
- "moral/ethical development" (3.06)

Norm Group 3 alumni gave higher ratings of their university's emphasis on "merit aid" (3.06) than did the other groups.

- In regard to their *desired* university emphasis on certain areas, alumni from all groups identified "teaching undergrads" as the area of greatest *desired* university emphasis (Chart 9b, Table 9). In general, alumni desired more university emphasis on "broad liberal arts education" than on "workforce skills." However, as shown in Figure 1, Cornell alumni desired more university emphasis than did other alumni on "workforce skills" (4.13) and less university emphasis on "broad liberal arts education" (3.91).

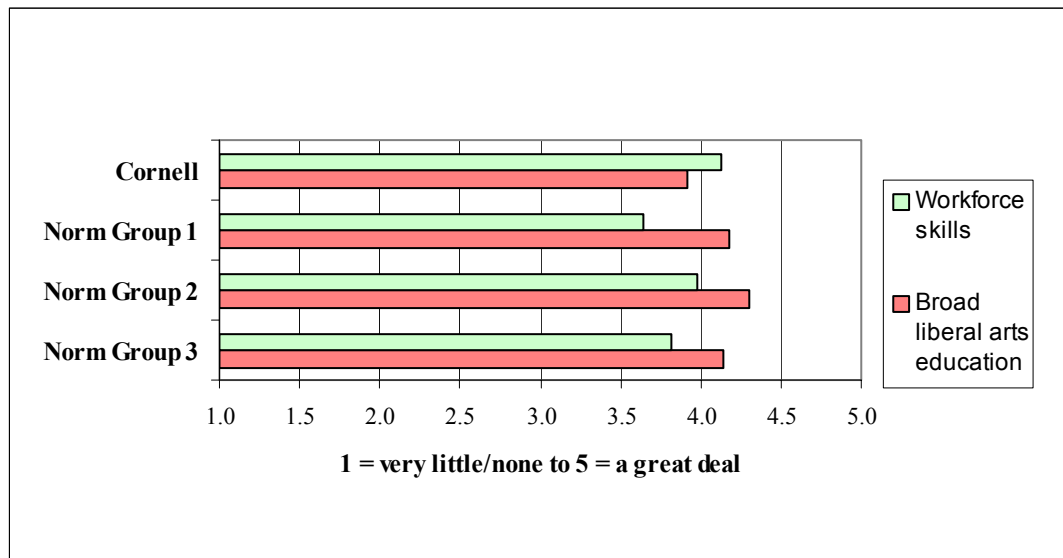


Figure 1. Desired University Emphasis: "Workforce Skills" and "Broad Liberal Arts Education"

Norm Group 1 alumni were more likely than other groups to report *desired* university emphasis on:

- "teaching undergrads" (4.79)
- "intellectual freedom" (4.56)
- "need-based financial aid" (4.31)

Norm Group 2 alumni were less likely to report *desired* university emphasis on “faculty research” (3.81). Norm Group 3 alumni were more likely to report *desired* university emphasis on “merit aid” (3.85).

The following comparison (Figure 2) of *current* and *desired* university emphasis ratings for the most highly rated areas shows that alumni at Cornell and at norm group institutions believe that comparatively insufficient emphasis is being placed on “teaching undergrads” while more emphasis than necessary is being placed on “faculty research.”

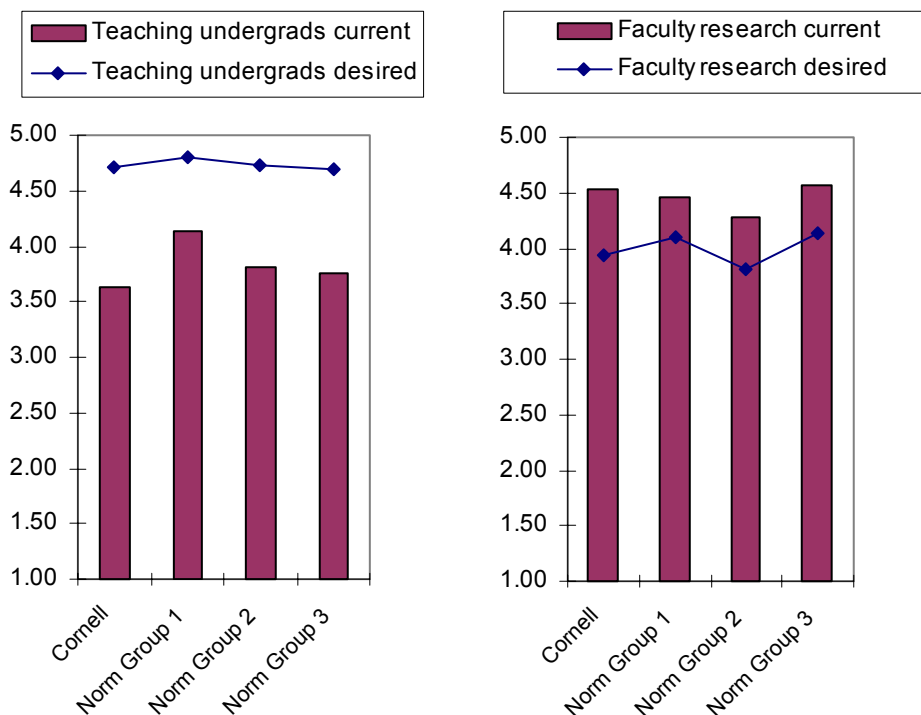


Figure 2. Current vs. Desired Emphasis of the University

Among Cornell alumni, large (greater than 1.0 on a 1-5 scale) differences between ratings of *current* university emphasis and ratings of *desired* university emphasis were present for “teaching undergrads” (*current* 3.64, *desired* 4.70), “workforce skills” (*current* 3.09, *desired* 4.13), and “moral/ethical development” (*current* 2.75, *desired* 3.72). A similar substantive difference was present for Norm Group 3 for “workforce skills” (*current* 2.74, *desired* 3.81).

## THE UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE

- During their college years, alumni from all groups had the greatest interaction with White students, followed in decreasing frequency by students of different religions, Asian Americans, students from outside the U.S., Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans (Chart 10a, Table 10). Norm Group 1 alumni reported more contact with students of different religions (3.96), Asian Americans (3.43), Blacks (3.02), and Hispanics (2.49) (scale 1 = “none” to 5 = “the most”). Cornell alumni reported more contact with Native Americans than did other alumni (1.46). Norm Group 2 alumni reported less contact with Asian Americans than did other groups (2.99).

- The pattern of current alumni interaction with people from various groups is similar to the pattern during college, with the exception of slightly more current contact with people from outside the U. S. and less current contact with Asian Americans (Chart 10b, Table 10). Norm Group 1 alumni reported more current interaction with Asian Americans (3.17).
- “Beliefs about the nature of humans or society” was the area where undergraduate questioning most often produced the most valuable insights (Chart 11, Table 11). Cornell alumni were more likely than other groups to report that questioning about “own political beliefs” produced the most valuable insights (16.6%). Norm Group 1 alumni were more likely to identify “beliefs about people with other sexual orientation” (11.8%), Norm Group 2 alumni were more likely to identify “own religious beliefs” (12.5%), and Norm Group 3 alumni were more likely to identify “beliefs about the nature of humans or society” (37.4%) than were other groups.
- “Lectures and course-related readings” was the campus contact identified by alumni as having the greatest contribution to their questioning of beliefs and values (Chart 12, Table 12). Cornell alumni, however, were least likely (45.6%) to report this activity has having a great contribution to their questioning of beliefs and values. Norm Group 1 alumni were more likely than other groups to report the greatest effect from “contact with student from different race” (35.9%) and from “contact with student from similar background” (31.8%). Norm Group 2 alumni were more likely than other groups to identify “lectures, course-related readings” (51.5%), “employment during college” (15.4%), “community service” (17.4%), and “off-campus internships” (5.5%) as having the greatest contribution to their questioning of beliefs and values.
- All alumni groups reported more involvement in “coursework in major” than in other listed undergraduate activities (Chart 13, Table 13). Cornell alumni reported more involvement than other groups in “fraternity/sorority” (2.46) and less involvement than other groups in “residential hall life” (2.58), “performing arts/music” (1.57), “student publications” (1.33), and “student or campus government” (1.26) (scale 1 = “none” to 5 = “very high”). Norm Group 1 alumni reported more involvement than others in “independent study/research” (2.89), “interaction with major advisor” (2.65), and “intercollegiate athletics” (2.17), and less involvement in “off-campus employment” (1.86). Norm Group 2 alumni reported more involvement than others in “study abroad” (1.87) and less involvement in “participation in faculty research” (1.41). Norm Group 3 alumni reported more involvement than others in “student or campus government” (1.62) and less involvement than others in “community service” (1.96) and “fraternity/sorority” (1.67).
- For all alumni groups, “coursework in major,” “coursework outside major,” and “residential hall life” were identified as the activities contributing most to their personal development (Chart 14, Table 14). In comparison with other alumni groups, Cornell alumni reported higher university contributions to personal development from “fraternity/sorority” (2.54) and “off-campus study in the U.S.” (1.41) and lower contributions from “residential hall life” (2.68), “performing arts/music” (1.77), “student publications” (1.43), and “student or campus government” (1.30) (scale 1 = “none” to 5 = “very high”). Norm Group 1 alumni were more likely than other groups to report higher university contributions to personal development from “coursework outside major” (3.99), “independent study/research” (3.07), and “intercollegiate athletics” (2.36) and lower contributions from “off-campus employment” (1.98). Norm Group 2 alumni were more likely than other groups to report higher contributions to personal development from “community service” (2.71), “study abroad” (2.11), and “religious groups/organizations” (2.04) and less contribution from “intramural sports” (2.00), “interaction with major advisor” (1.97), and “participation in faculty research” (1.49). Norm Group 3 alumni were more likely than other groups to report higher contributions to personal development from “intramural

sports" (2.42) and " student or campus government" (1.67) and lower contributions from "fraternity/sorority" (1.75).

- In general, alumni rated "residential hall life" as contributing more to their personal development than "fraternity/sorority." However, as shown in Figure 3, Cornell alumni reported relatively higher contributions to personal development from "fraternity/sorority," while Norm Groups 1, 2, and 3 each reported comparatively higher contributions from "residential hall life."

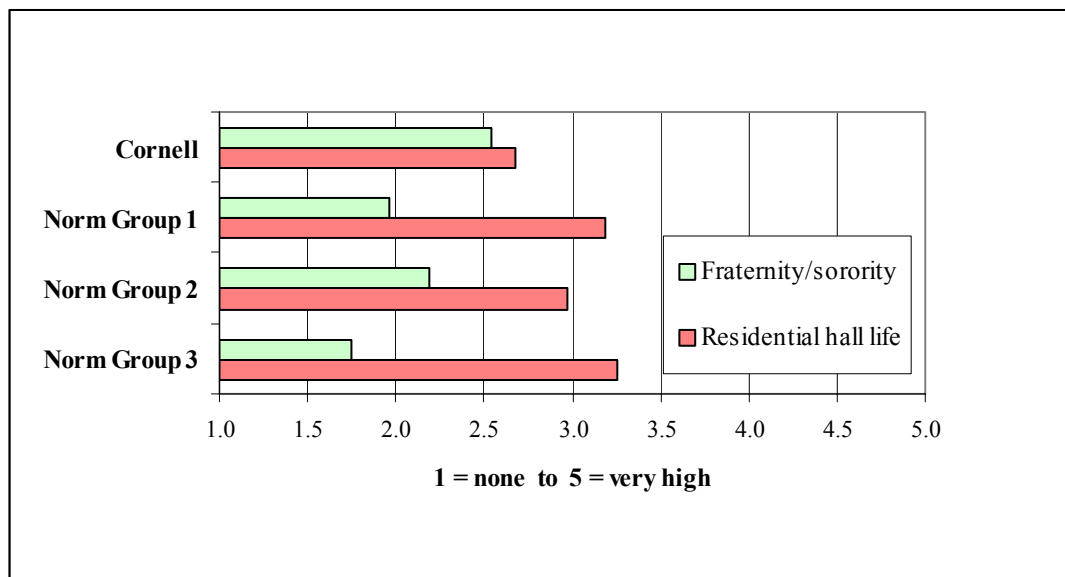


Figure 3. Contribution to Personal Development: "Fraternity/Sorority" and "Residential Hall Life"

As shown in Figure 4, Norm Group 1 alumni indicated that "independent study/research" contributed more to their personal development than did "contact with faculty outside class." Conversely, alumni from Cornell, Norm Group 2 and Norm Group 3 indicated that "contact with faculty outside class" contributed more to their personal development than did "independent study/research."

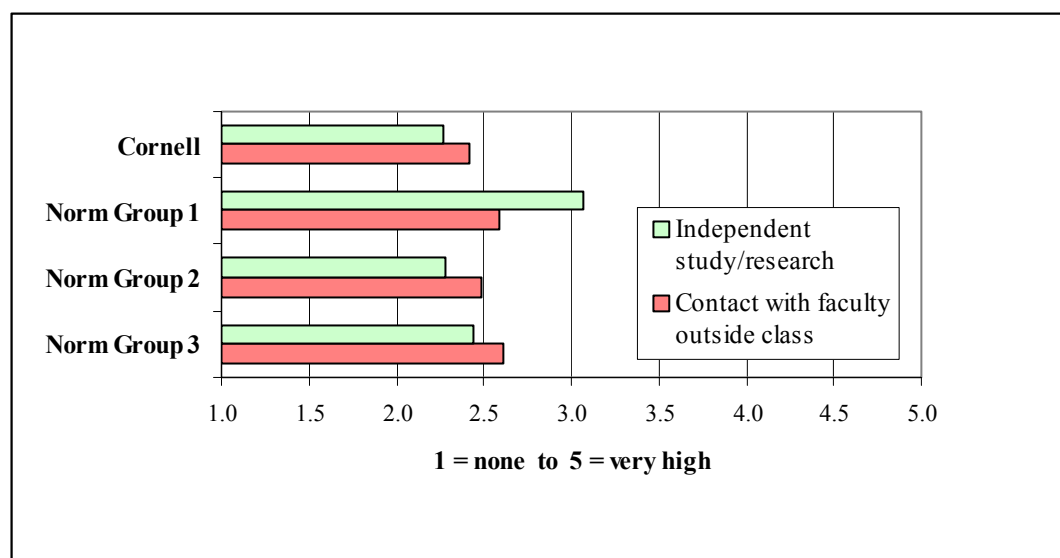


Figure 4. Contribution to Personal Development: "Independent Study/Research" and "Contact With Faculty Outside Class"

For all activities, level of involvement in an activity correlated highly with the perceived level of that activity's contribution to personal development.

- Considering various skills, types of knowledge, and personal qualities important in their lives since college, alumni from all groups rated the following as the most *important* (Chart 15, Table 15):
  - “Communicate well orally”
  - “Acquire new skills and knowledge on my own”
  - “Write effectively”
  - “Synthesize and integrate ideas and information”
  - “Formulate creative/original ideas and solutions”

Cornell alumni gave lower *importance* ratings than did other groups to “appreciate art, literature, music, and drama” (3.45), “broad knowledge of arts and sciences” (3.16), and “historical perspective on current problems” (3.06) (scale 1=“not at all important” to 5=“very important”). Norm Group 1 alumni gave higher *importance* ratings than did other groups to “synthesize and integrate ideas and information” (4.61). Norm Group 2 alumni gave higher *importance* ratings than did others to “identify ethical/moral issues” (3.18). Norm Group 3 alumni gave higher *importance* ratings than did others to “quantitative abilities” (3.59).

- Considering the university's *contribution* to the skills, types of knowledge, and personal qualities important in their lives since college, alumni from all groups gave the highest ratings to the following (Chart 16, Table 16):
  - “Synthesize and integrate ideas and information”
  - “Acquire new skills/knowledge on my own”

Figure 5 shows a comparison of university *contributions* to the skills, types of knowledge, and personal qualities that were rated by all alumni as being most important. Cornell alumni gave higher (not statistically significant) university contribution scores to “communicate well orally” (3.42) and “write effectively” (3.80). Norm Group 1 alumni gave higher university contribution scores to “acquire new skills and knowledge on my own” (4.20), “synthesize and integrate ideas and information” (4.21), and “formulate creative/original ideas and solutions” (3.95).

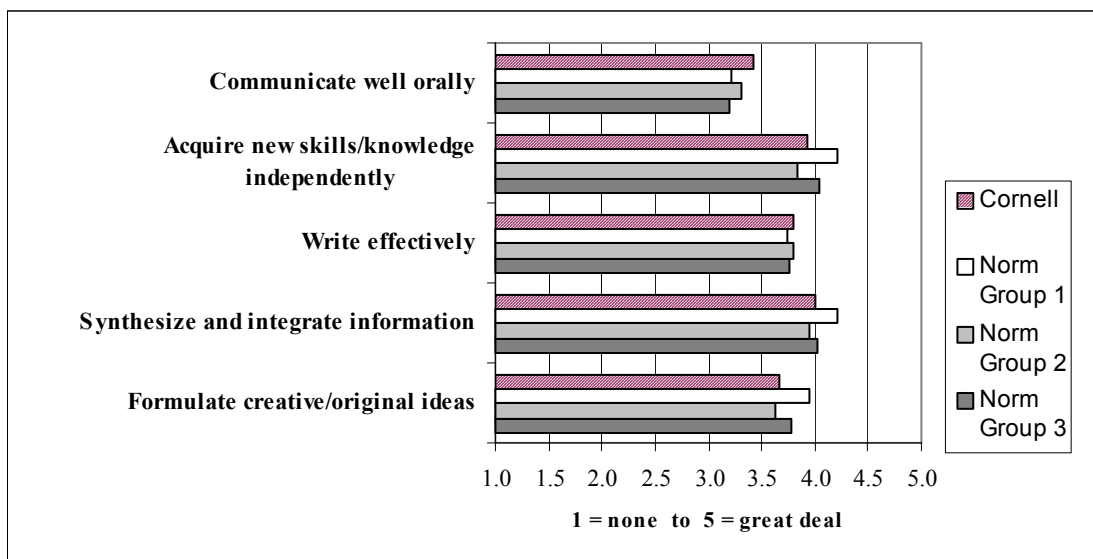


Figure 5. University Contributions to Selected Skills, Types of Knowledge, and Personal Qualities

As shown in Figure 6, Cornell alumni gave higher ratings than did other alumni groups to the university's contribution to "use computers" (3.39) and lower ratings than did other alumni groups to the following:

- "Broad knowledge of arts and sciences" (3.46)
- "Historical perspective on current problems" (3.18)
- "Appreciate art, literature, music, and drama" (3.11)
- "Identify ethical/moral issues" (2.85)
- "Read or speak foreign language" (2.19)

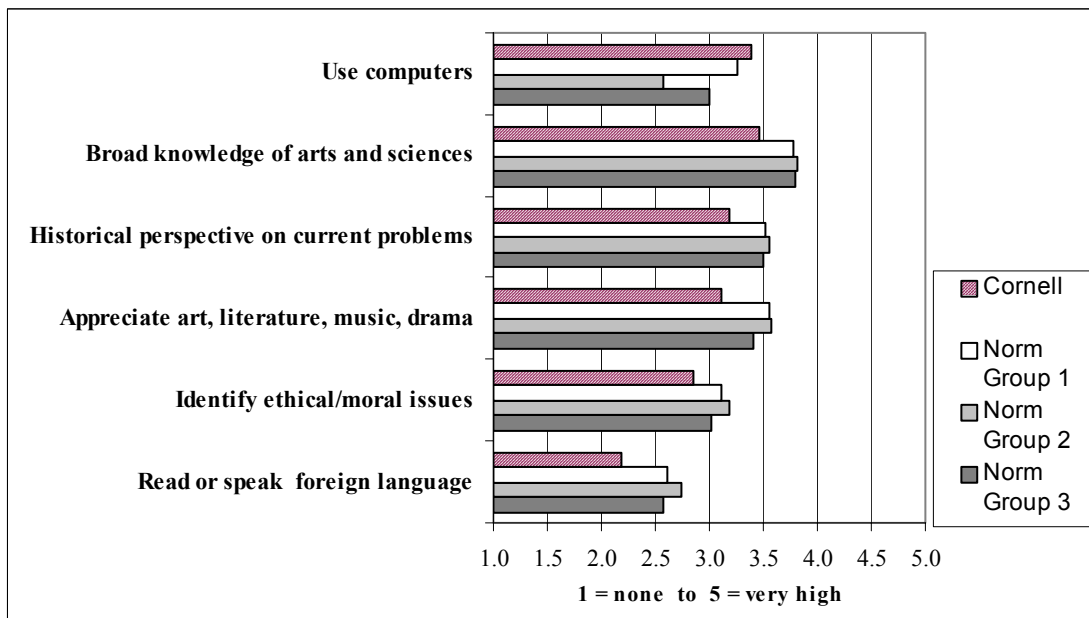


Figure 6. Significantly Different Cornell Ratings of University Contributions to Selected Skills, Types of Knowledge, and Personal Qualities



- As shown in Figure 7, alumni ratings of attribute *importance* generally exceeded ratings of the university's *contribution* to that attribute, with the largest discrepancies between *importance* and university *contribution* being present for the following:

- “Communicate well orally”
- “Use computers”
- “Develop self-esteem/self-confidence”
- “Function effectively as a member of a team”
- “Lead and supervise tasks and groups of people”
- “Healthy lifestyle”

Ratings of university *contribution* to the development of attributes exceeded ratings of attribute *importance* for the following:

- “Broad knowledge of arts and sciences”
- “Historical perspective on current problems”
- “Read or speak foreign language”

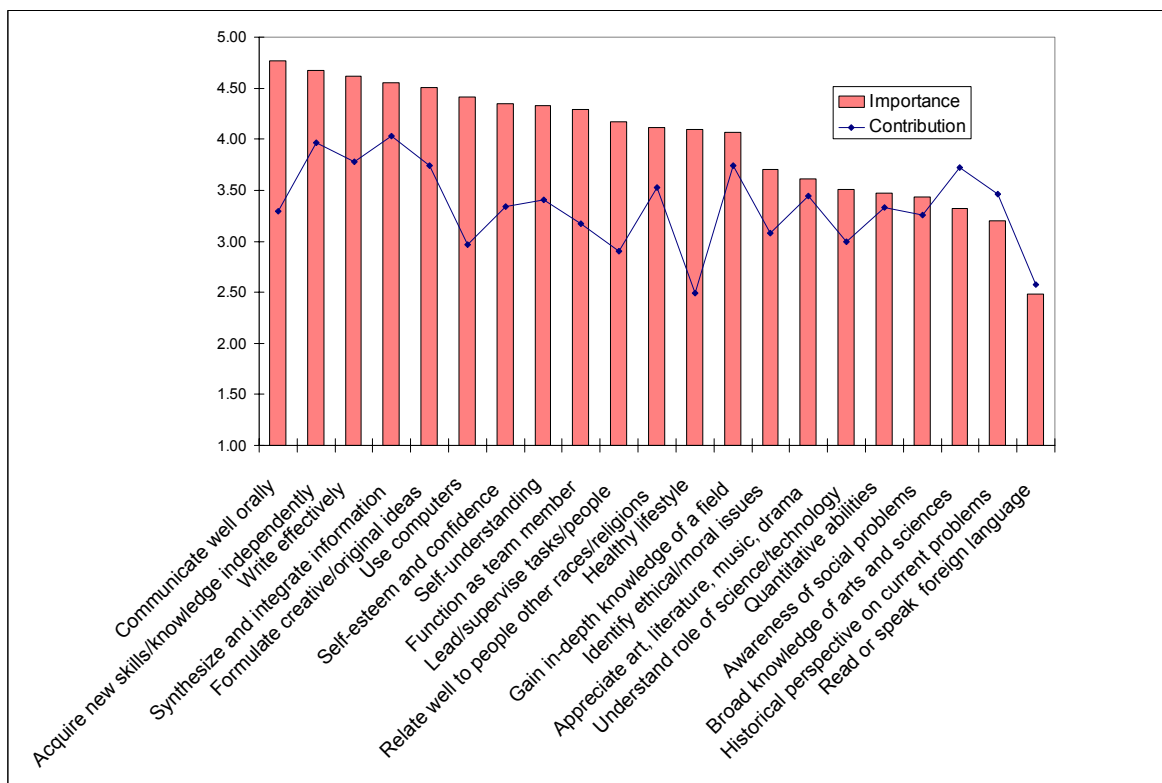


Figure 7. Skills, Types of Knowledge, and Personal Qualities: Importance vs. University's Contribution

Compared with the norm groups, Cornell alumni indicated greater discrepancies between the *importance* of an attribute and the university's *contribution* to personal development of that attribute for the following:

- “Formulate creative/original ideas” (*importance* 4.50, *contribution* 3.66)
- “Identify ethical/moral issues” (*importance* 3.63, *contribution* 2.85)

- "Appreciate art, literature, music, drama" (*importance 3.4, contribution 3.11*)

These differences suggest that, in comparison with the norm group institutions, Cornell fared worse in contributing to the personal development of those attributes to a level comparable to attribute importance.

However, suggesting that Cornell did better than the comparison institutions in contributing to the personal development of other attributes, *importance* and *contribution* ratings were closer than for other groups for the following:

- "Communicate well orally" (*importance 4.77, contribution 3.42*)
- "Historical perspective on current problems" (*importance 3.0, contribution 3.18*)
- "Read or speak foreign language" (*importance 2.37, contribution 2.1*)

### **FINANCIAL AID**

- Parental resources were the major source of undergraduate education financing for all groups, more for Norm Group 1 alumni (80.5%) than for other groups (Chart 17, Table 17). Norm Group 3 alumni were more likely than other groups to have identified "institutional financial aid" (50.6%) and "other personal resources" (23.0%) as major sources of financial aid.
- The median undergraduate student loan amount was about \$11,250 for each of the alumni groups (Chart 18, Table 18). Cornell alumni were more likely to have borrowed less than \$7,500. Norm Group 1 alumni were more likely to have borrowed more than \$15,000. Norm Group 2 alumni were less likely than other alumni (48.9%) to have taken out undergraduate loans. Norm Group 3 alumni were more likely to have borrowed in the range of \$7,500 to \$14,999.
- Cornell alumni were less likely than other alumni to have pursued a post-graduate education (Chart 19, Table 19). Among all alumni who did attend graduate school, Norm Group 1 alumni were less likely to have borrowed money to finance their studies. Of those who borrowed money for their graduate school education, Norm Group 1 alumni were more likely to have borrowed more than \$60,000.

### **ALUMNI ACTIVITIES AND CONTRIBUTIONS**

- "Reading campus publications" was the most frequently reported alumni activity for all groups (Chart 20, Table 20). Cornell alumni were more likely than other alumni to have attended functions off campus (32.2%). Norm Group 1 alumni were more likely than other groups to have read campus publications (86.6%), visited their institution's web site (63.7%), visited their campus (65.3%), attended a function on campus (45.9%), participated in annual fundraising (22.3%), or served as a class agent or representative (3.2%). Norm Group 2 alumni were more likely to have participated in an undergraduate career advisory program (5.6%).

For all groups, alumni who were "generally satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their undergraduate education were more likely than others to participate in the following alumni activities:

- "Alumni admissions volunteer"
- "Annual fundraising"
- "Attend functions on campus"
- "Attend functions off campus"
- "Visit the campus"

- "Read campus publications"

For Norm Groups 1 and 2, alumni with individual annual incomes of \$90,000 or more were more likely than others to participate in the following alumni activities:

- "Annual fundraising"
- "Attend functions on campus"
- "Attend functions off campus"
- "Visit the campus"
- "Visit the institution's web site"

There were no alumni activity participation differences by income among Cornell or Norm Group 3 alumni.

- Most alumni contributions were in the range of \$1-\$99 for all groups (Chart 21, Table 21). Norm Group 1 alumni were more likely than other groups to have contributed this lower amount, while Norm Group 2 alumni were more likely to have made contributions in the \$1,000 - \$4,999 range. Cornell and Norm Group 3 alumni were less likely to have contributed any amount. Among all groups, there were no associations between the level of satisfaction with undergraduate education and the amount of alumni contribution.