

2002 ASQ Report #1: Cost, Scholarships, Academic Environment, and Reputation Among Groups of Schools

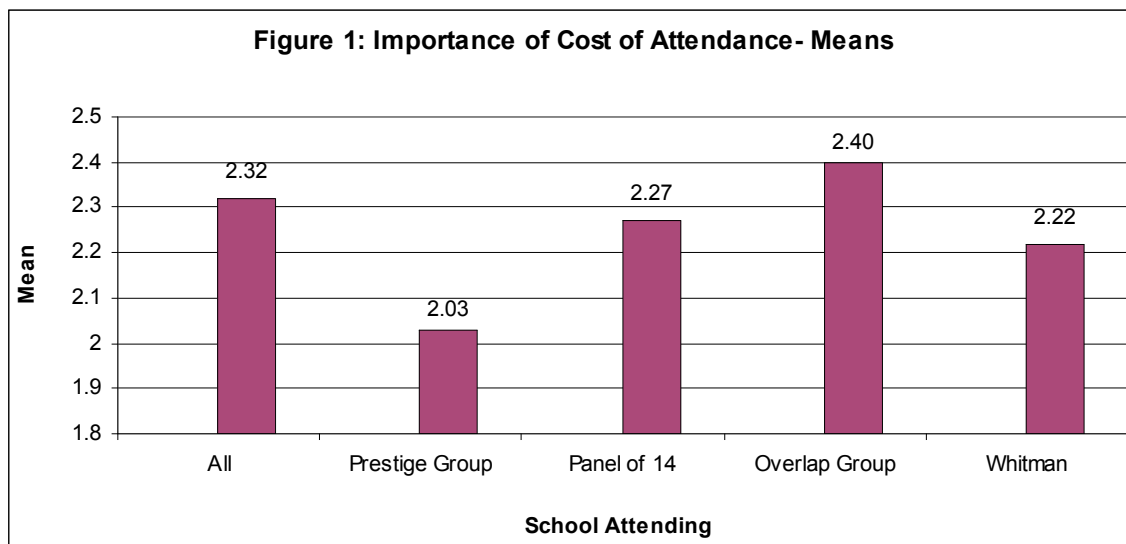
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This report examines data from the 2002 Admitted Student Questionnaire, focusing on questions relating to the cost of attendance, merit scholarship availability, an environment of academic excellence, and academic reputation. Comparisons are made between students attending Whitman College, and students attending selected groups of schools: an overlap group consisting of the private schools with which Whitman has the most cross-applicants and cross-admits, the Panel of 14, and a prestige group consisting of the top 10 liberal arts colleges and top 10 research universities as ranked by US News and World Report. See Appendix A for a list of schools in each group. All students rated Whitman College, as well as the school they planned to attend, on items related to the cost of attendance, merit scholarships, an environment of academic excellence, and academic reputation.

Cost of Attendance

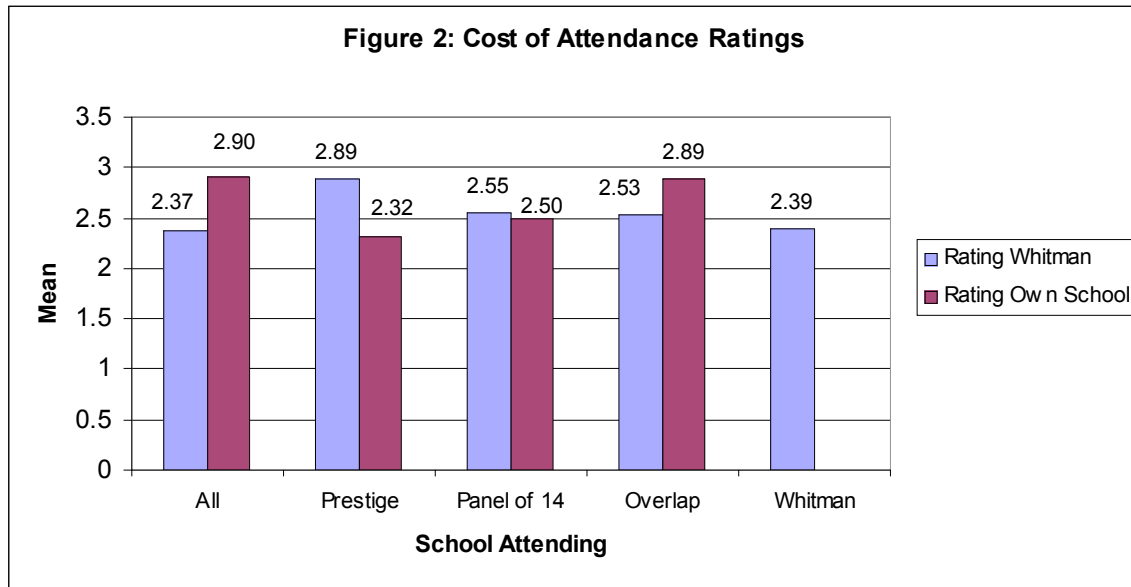
How important is the cost of attendance for students admitted to Whitman College? Do students who choose to not attend Whitman differ from those who choose to attend Whitman in their perceptions of Whitman's cost?

On the Admitted Student Questionnaire, students were asked to indicate how important various college characteristics were in choosing their college. In this rating system, 3 = Very Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, and 1 = Not Important. Students attending Whitman are, on the whole, less concerned with cost than those attending the Overlap Group, but more concerned than those attending the Prestige Group (**Figure 1**). Report #2 shows that students attending Puget Sound, Willamette, and Lewis and Clark are all much more concerned about cost than students attending Whitman.



Students were also asked to rate different schools on various items, such as cost of attendance, using the following scale: 1 = Poor/Fair, 2 = Good, 3 = Very Good, 4 = Excellent. Whitman was rated differently depending on the school a student chose to attend (**Figure 2**). The rating of Whitman is somewhat consistent across groups, but overall students tend to rate their own

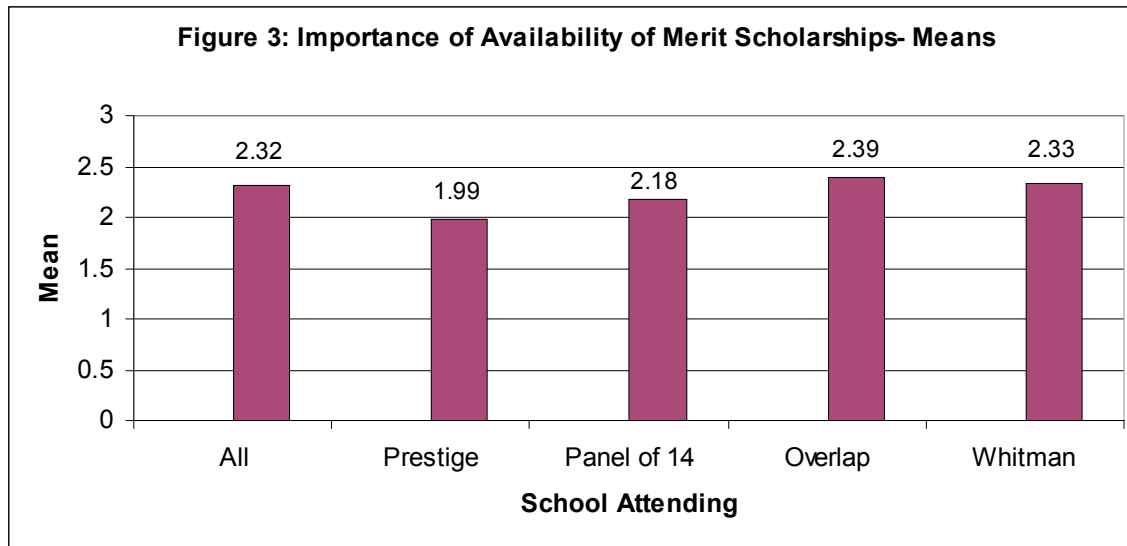
school as better than Whitman on this issue, especially students in the Overlap group. Again, Report #2 shows that students attending Puget Sound, Willamette, and Lewis and Clark rate their schools much better on cost of attendance. Students attending schools in the Prestige Group tend to rate Whitman’s cost better than those attending other schools, and much better than their own school. Students attending Panel of 14 schools rate Whitman as slightly better than their schools. Looking at the chart below, it is important to remember that *a higher score indicates a more favorable rating of cost*).



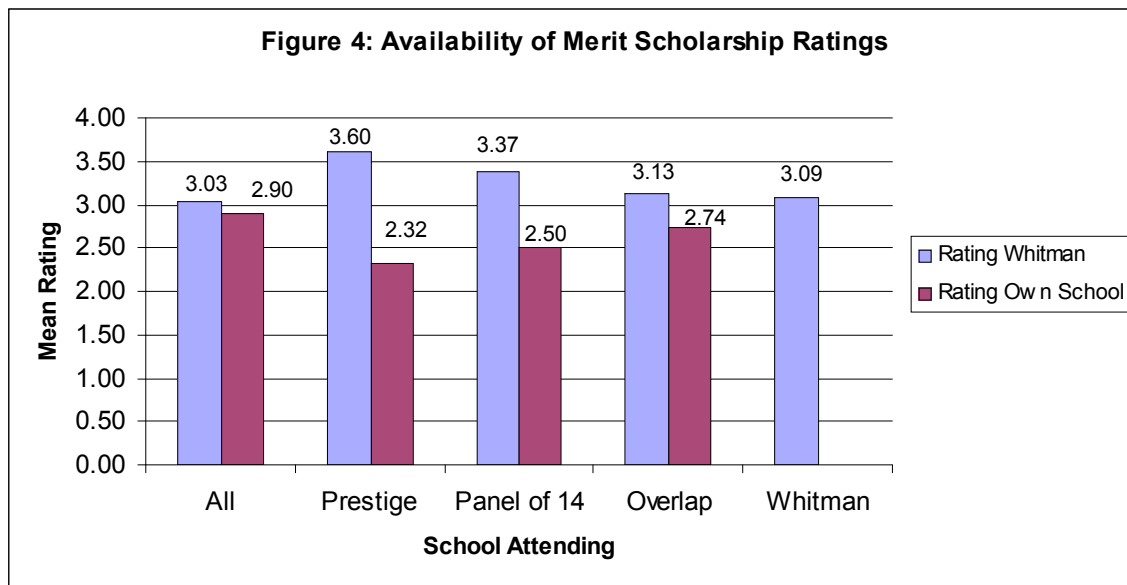
There is consistency between the *importance* of cost and the *rating* of cost questions. From the start, students who eventually attend more expensive schools (the Prestige Group, the Panel of 14) are less concerned about cost, and rate Whitman more favorably on cost than the schools they eventually attend. Conversely, students more concerned about cost tend to gravitate towards schools that are less expensive, or that give them more financial aid.

Availability of Merit Scholarships

Merit Scholarships are also important to many students. Students completing the Admitted Student Questionnaire were asked to indicate the importance of the availability of merit scholarships in choosing a school. In this rating system, 3 = Very Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, and 1 = Not Important. Merit scholarships are less important for those attending schools in the Prestige group, and slightly less important than those attending schools in the Panel of 14 Group (**Figure 3**).

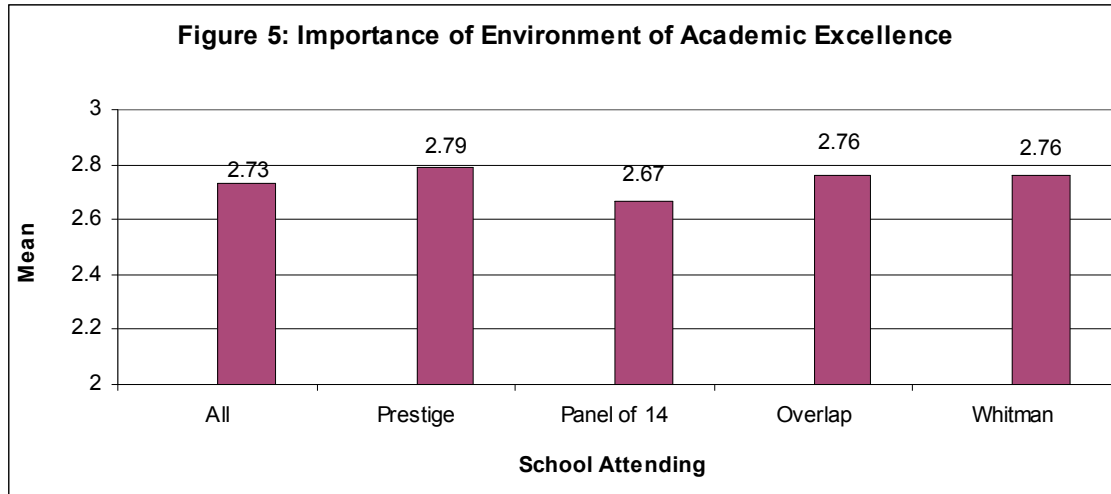


Students were also asked to rate different schools on various items, such as the availability of merit scholarships, using the following scale: 1 = Poor/Fair, 2 = Good, 3 = Very Good, 4 = Excellent. For availability of merit scholarships, Whitman was rated consistently higher than the other groups (**Figure 4**). Students attending schools in the Prestige group and the Panel of 14 rated their schools the lowest on this item.

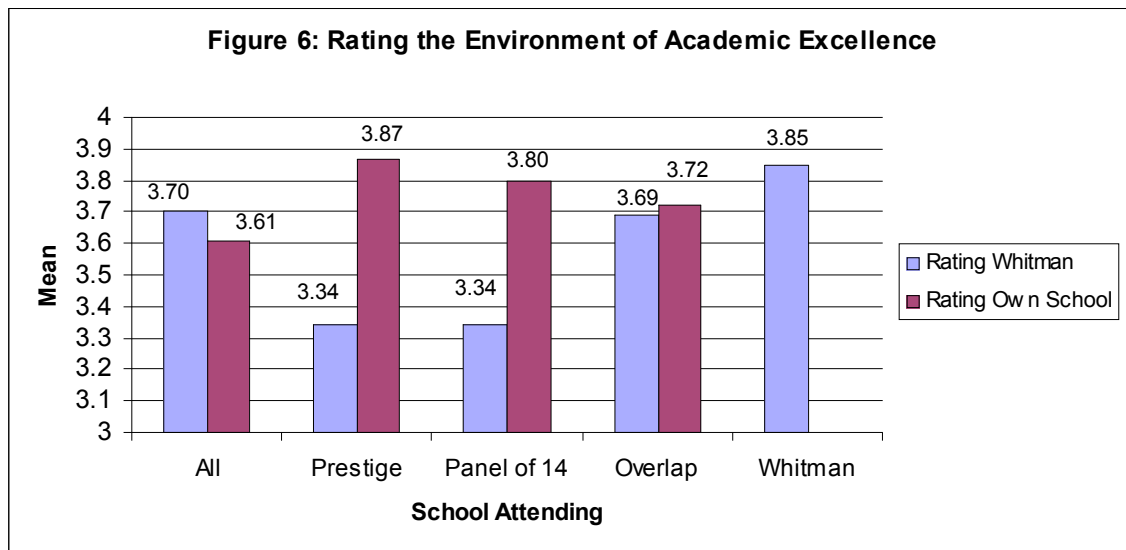


Environment of Academic Excellence

Students completing the Admitted Student Questionnaire were asked to indicate the importance of the environment of academic excellence in choosing a school. In this rating system, 3 = Very Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, and 1 = Not Important. Students attending Whitman rate this item slightly higher than all groups except the Prestige Group (**Figure 5**), but overall there is not much difference between groups.

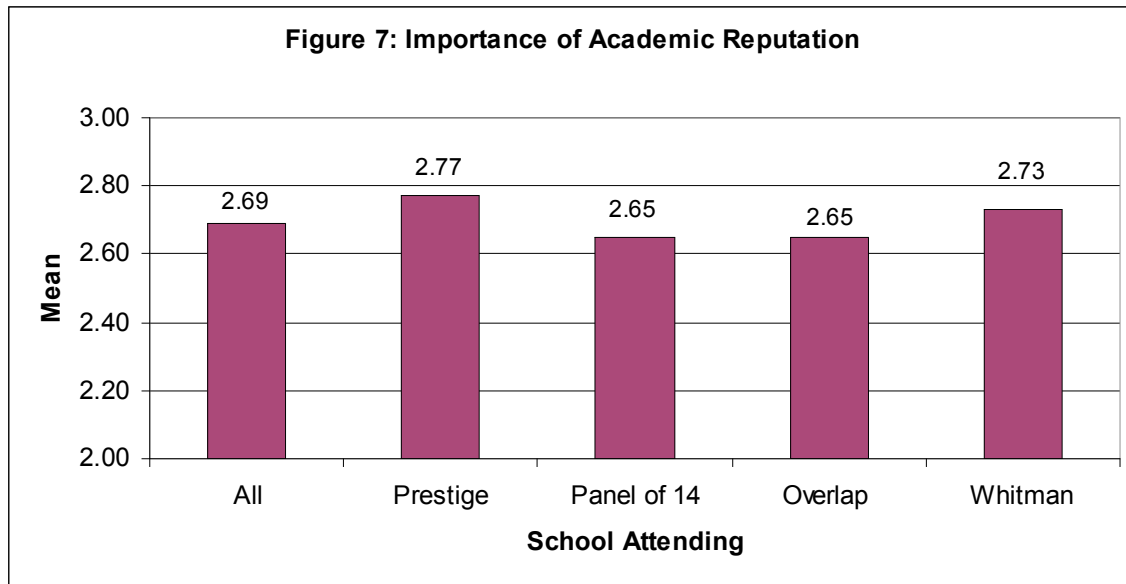


Students were also asked to rate different schools on various items, such as the environment of academic excellence, using the following scale: 1 = Poor/Fair, 2 = Good, 3 = Very Good, 4 = Excellent. Interestingly, Whitman was rated much lower by students attending schools in the Prestige group and by students attending schools in the Panel of 14 (**Figure 6**).

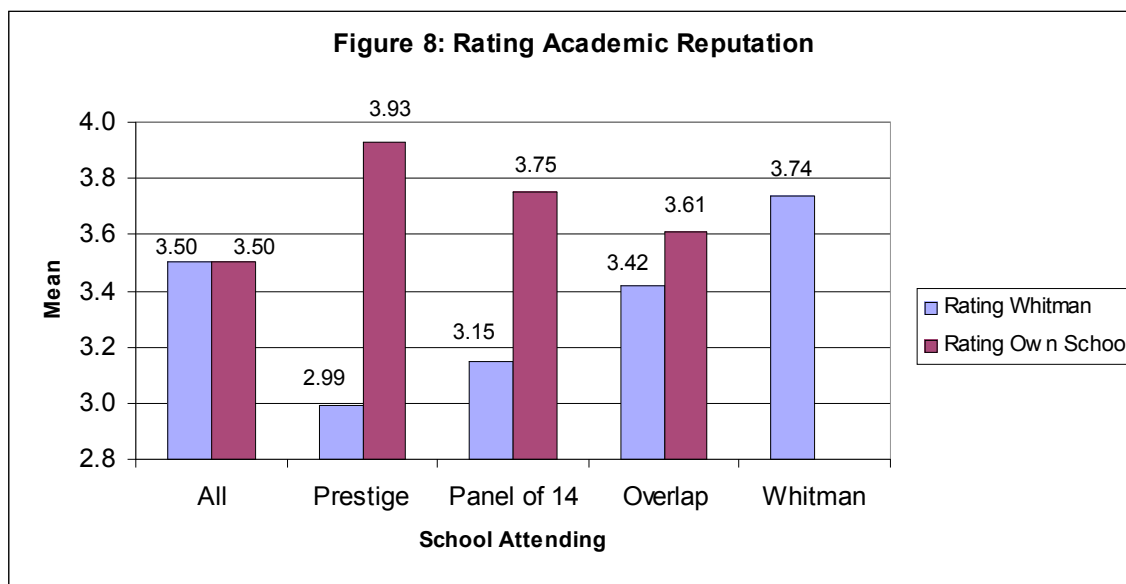


Academic Reputation

Students completing the Admitted Student Questionnaire were asked to indicate the importance of academic reputation in choosing a school. In this rating system, 3 = Very Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, and 1 = Not Important. Like the Environment of Academic Excellence question, students attending Whitman rate this item slightly higher than all groups except the Prestige Group (**Figure 7**), but overall there is not much difference between groups.



Students were also asked to rate different schools on various items, such as the academic reputation, using the following scale: 1 = Poor/Fair, 2 = Good, 3 = Very Good, 4 = Excellent. Again, Whitman was rated much lower by students attending schools in the Prestige group and by students attending schools in the Panel of 14 (**Figure 8**). Overall, students seemed to think that the school they were attending had a better academic reputation than Whitman.



Conclusion

Based solely on these four items, a quick conclusion we can draw is that students attending the Overlap group believe Whitman offers a high-quality education, but attend a different school because of the cost, or possibly because of a better financial aid package. Students who choose to attend schools in the Prestige group or the Panel of 14 do so because they believe their school is better academically—that it offers a better environment of academic excellence and has a better academic reputation.