

Senior Survey, 2001: Methodology and Response Frequencies

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INTRODUCTION

This report documents the Office of Educational Assessment's (OEA) 2001 survey of University of Washington (UW) seniors regarding their university experiences. OEA has conducted surveys of seniors semi-annually since 1992, and annually in spring quarter since 1994. The 2001 survey marks the first year that the survey was conducted completely electronically (i.e., via the Internet). This report describes the methodology used for the 2001 Senior survey and provides tables of response frequencies and comparisons of male and female respondents.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample was drawn from the UW Student Database (SDB). All seniors were eligible to participate, but because recruitment was conducted via email, students who did not have email addresses listed in the SDB were necessarily excluded.

On April 30, 2001, the Director of OEA sent an email to all eligible students to inform them of the survey and direct them to its online location. In this initial mailing, students designated "fifth-year" inadvertently were included. These fifth-year students were subsequently deleted from the roster, and the follow-up mailing in late May was sent only to 8605 eligible seniors. A total of 1460 students completed the survey by the cutoff date in early July.

In sum, the final sample included 596 men and 859 women; the response rate was 17.0%; and of 8627 seniors, 16.9% participated in the survey.

Survey Instrument

This year, all students completed the survey via the Web (online). In the [Year 2000 Senior Survey](#), a random sample of 1500 seniors was given the choice of responding on paper or via the Internet. In contrast to the Year 2000 survey, students were not required to verify their eligibility by entering their student identification number.

The content of the questionnaire was identical to the Year 2000 version. The questionnaire included items relating to several aspects of students' academic and social experiences at the UW. Students were asked about self-perceptions of their skills, their level of satisfaction with various facets of their UW

education, the extent to which they felt the UW prepared them for post-college life, and how connected they felt with the UW community. The survey also included questions about paid employment, volunteer activities, and computer usage. All questions were closed-ended, forced-choice items.

RESULTS

Although there was some concern that non-eligible persons (including the inadvertently sampled fifth-year students) might have completed the survey because verification via student identification number was not required, examination of frequency distributions and means revealed results that were highly similar to those of previous years. Moreover, there seems to be little or no motivation for ineligible persons to take the time to complete the survey, or for seniors -- busy completing Spring quarter -- to take the survey multiple times. Thus, it appears we may assume that the vast majority of participants were eligible seniors.

Here are some findings of interest:

- Eighty percent of respondents worked for pay during their junior or senior years; the mean number of hours worked was 16.
- In general, seniors appear to have been satisfied with their UW education. Specifically, 83% indicated that they were "mostly" or "very" satisfied with the quality of instruction in their major field, 80% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I have found my experience to be positive," and 66% indicated that they would choose the UW if they had to make their college choice over again (but 20% were neutral on this item).
- On the other hand, only 60% of the respondents said they were "mostly" or "very" satisfied with the quality of instruction outside their major field, and only 47% were satisfied with their interactions with faculty outside the classroom.
- When asked about the sufficiency of their exposure to various educational opportunities, most seniors (65%) felt their exposure to writing opportunities was "just right" or "more than enough". Similar results were observed for exposure to math or other quantitative analyses (70%) and opportunities to think critically about knowledge (71%).
- Turning to life post-graduation, 54% of seniors responded that their UW experience had well-prepared them for their future careers. Nearly half (44%) were satisfied "a little" or "not at all" with assistance in finding employment, and 37% of respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with assistance by faculty in pursuing a career.
- Seniors showed a high level of comfort with technology. For example, 84% used a residential computer at least 2-3 times per week to do coursework, 92% used the Internet daily or nearly every day, 95% used email daily, and 65% reported frequent (or greater) exposure to computer opportunities through the UW.

Because participants were asked to indicate their gender, the distributions or means (as appropriate) of female and male students could be compared. Overall response frequencies for all of the items on the Senior Survey, as well as all significant differences between male and female respondents (at $p < .01$), are provided here in PDF format: [Response Frequency Tables](#)