

Senior Survey 2004: Descriptive Statistics and Gender Differences

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INTRODUCTION

This report documents the year 2004 survey of University of Washington (UW) seniors regarding their university experiences. This report describes the methodology used for the 2004 Senior Survey and provides item descriptives and differences in responses of male and female students.

METHOD

Participants

The population was drawn from the UW Student Database (SDB). The initial population consisted of all 9297 Seattle campus seniors (undergraduates who had completed at least 135 credits) enrolled as of the 10th day of Spring quarter 2004. Students who had been recruited for either of two other surveys being conducted in the same time frame were excluded from the pool. All 8,546 remaining seniors (aged 18 years or older) were contacted for the Senior Survey.

At the beginning of the 6th week of spring quarter (May 3), the Director of OEA sent an email to all eligible students informing them of the survey, inviting them to participate, and directing them to the online questionnaire. Approximately 10 days later students who had not responded were sent a reminder email. The third and fourth email reminders followed approximately one and two weeks later.

In order to access the questionnaire, students were required to verify their eligibility by entering their UWNetID and password. A total of 2132 students submitted a questionnaire by the cutoff date in early June. The final sample included 1292 women and 829 men, and the response rate was 24.9%.

Survey Instrument

The *Senior Survey* is a multi-part questionnaire that includes sections on computer use, volunteer activities, paid employment, satisfaction with various aspects of the UW experience, self-ratings of academic skills, and frequency and sufficiency of exposure to educational opportunities. For this administration, new items were added that asked about most and least challenging courses and learning goals. The questionnaire can be viewed here:

[Senior Survey](#)

RESULTS

Because participants were asked to indicate their gender, the responses 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:

[Descriptives and Gender Differences](#)

Here are some findings of interest:

- Nearly eighty percent of respondents worked for pay during their junior or senior years; the mean number of hours worked senior year was 16.
- In general, seniors appear to have been satisfied with their UW education. Specifically, 81% indicated that they were "mostly" or "very" satisfied with the quality of instruction in their major field, and 76% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I have found my UW experience to be positive."
- However, a much smaller number (63%) indicated that they would choose the UW if they had to make their college choice over again. 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 mostly or very satisfied with their interactions with faculty outside the classroom.
- Seniors were also asked about their satisfaction with the UW's contribution to their development in 18 areas. The percentages who said they were "mostly" or "very" satisfied in the areas of writing effectively, understanding and applying quantitative principles or methods, and critically analyzing written information were 54%, 43%, and 60%, respectively.
- On the other hand, when asked about the *sufficiency* of their exposure to various educational opportunities, a large majority of seniors (76%) 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 (72%).
- Seniors showed a high level of comfort with computing. Residential access was high, with 79% owning or having access during their first year of college and increasing to 89% by senior year. The vast majority (91%) used a residential computer at least 2-3 times per week to do coursework, 96% used the Internet daily or nearly every day, and 94% used email daily. One computer use result that showed a decrease from the 2002 survey was the reported frequency of computer/Internet opportunities. In 2002, 71% of respondents reported frequent (or greater) exposure to computer opportunities through the UW, but in 2004 only 63% did.
- On the topic of learning goals, a surprising 43% of respondents reported that most of the classes in their major had explicit learning goals, and another 20% indicated that all of their major classes had. When asked about how they felt the specification of learning goals affected their learning, 50% of students reported that they felt they learned more in courses with goals, but 47% said they learned about the same amount regardless of whether there were stated goals or not.
- Turning to life post-graduation, 53% of seniors responded that their UW experience had prepared them for their future careers "mostly" or "very" well. Fewer than half (43%) of the sample said

they were satisfied only "a little" or "not at all" with assistance in finding employment, and approximately one-third (36%) of respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with assistance by faculty in pursuing a career.