

Senior Survey 2006: Descriptive Statistics and Gender Differences

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INTRODUCTION

This report documents the UW Senior Survey 2006. A brief section on the methodology of the survey precedes an overview of the results. Links to the survey instrument as well as item-by-item response frequencies and differences in responses by male and female students are provided below.

METHOD

Participants

All UW Seattle seniors were included in this study, with the exception of those aged 17 years or younger. Participants were identified as those students who were enrolled at the UW Seattle campus and who had completed at least 135 credits as of the 10th day of Spring quarter 2006. A total of 9,250 students were included in the final survey sample.

The Senior Survey 2006 was administered over the Internet. An introductory e-mail was sent out to all eligible students in mid-April 2006. In this e-mail, the Director of the UW Office of Educational Assessment informed the students of the background and purpose of the survey, invited them to participate, and directed them to the online questionnaire. Three reminder e-mails (each approximately two weeks apart) were sent to all students who had not responded.

In order to access the questionnaire, students were required to verify their eligibility by entering their UWNetID and password. A total of 1,916 students submitted a questionnaire by the closing date of the survey in May, yielding an overall response rate of 20.7%. Of these, 780 (40.8%) were men and 1,132 (59.2%) were women.

Survey Instrument

The Senior Survey 2006 consisted of 18 fixed-choice items, some of which had several subquestions. The survey covered topics such as academic abilities, computer use, frequency of and satisfaction with paid employment and volunteer service, degree expectations, satisfaction with various aspects of the UW experience, as well as frequency and sufficiency of exposure to

educational opportunities such as research and internships. The questionnaire can be viewed here:

[Senior Survey](#)

RESULTS

The following section provides a brief overview of the major findings from the Senior Survey 2006. Complete item-by-item summaries as well as analyses of significant differences between male and female respondents (at $p < .01$) are accessible through the following link:

[Descriptives and Gender Differences](#)

Here are some findings of interest:

- When asked to rate (on a five-point scale) various aspects of their undergraduate education, seniors awarded their highest ratings to *quality of library services* (4.4) and *quality of instruction in [their] major field* (4.1). The lowest ratings were given to *assistance by faculty in pursuing [their] career* (3.2) and *assistance in finding employment* (3.0). It is noteworthy that women gave significantly lower ratings than men (2.9 vs. 3.2, respectively) on *assistance in finding employment* ($p < .001$).
- On a subsequent question, roughly 60% of the respondents indicated that their UW experience had “mostly” or “very much” *prepared them for their future career*.
- A strong majority of the respondents (82%) found their *UW experience to be positive* and 72% *would choose UW, if [they] had to make their college choice again*, suggesting a high level of general satisfaction with the UW.
- In rating (on a five-point scale) the University’s contribution to their development in various areas, respondents gave their highest rating to *using the knowledge, ideas or perspectives gained from major field* (4.0), followed closely by *critically analyzing written information* (3.8), *defining and solving problems* (3.8), and *working and and/or learning independently* (3.8). The lowest ratings were awarded *using a foreign language* (2.9), *understanding and appreciating the arts* (3.1), *using management or leadership capabilities* (3.2), and *recognizing rights, responsibilities, privileges as citizens* (3.2).
- When asked to indicate the frequency of exposure to educational activities, a strong majority of the respondents indicated “frequently” or “nearly always” to having been exposed to *opportunities to think critically about knowledge* (76%), *opportunities to define and solve problems* (75%), and *writing opportunities* (72%).
- On a less positive note, a sizable proportion of students had “never” or “seldom” worked on a *professor’s research project or publishing* (69%), had *informal contact with professors outside of class* (48%), or *community service opportunities* (48%). Moreover, on a

subsequent item, a majority of respondents described their opportunity to *work on a professor's research project or publishing* as less than "barely adequate" (70%), and 64% had the same to say about their *opportunities for informal contact with professors outside of class*.

- Among those who had participated in faculty research, a majority (69%) felt their participation provided a "strong" or "major" contribution to their overall education.
- Whereas men rated their own abilities significantly higher ($p < .001$) than women on *understanding and applying quantitative principles and methods* (3.7 vs. 3.2), *working effectively with modern technology* (4.2 vs. 3.8), and *understanding and applying scientific principles and methods* (3.7 vs. 3.3), men awarded themselves significantly lower ratings ($p < .001$) than women on *understanding and appreciating the arts* (3.2 vs. 3.6) and *understanding and appreciating diverse philosophies and cultures* (3.7 vs. 4.0). A similar pattern of gender differences was detected on items gauging the importance attributed these abilities in relation to academic work and success. As just one example, women awarded significantly higher ratings ($p < .001$) than men to the importance of *understanding and appreciating diverse philosophies and cultures* (3.9 vs. 3.4, on a five-point scale).
- On the topic of volunteer service, women were significantly more likely ($p < .001$) than men to have participated in a *community volunteer service outside of UW* (67% vs. 54%) or a *service learning activity as part of a UW course* (39% vs. 19%).