

1998 Entering Student Survey: Methodology and Response Frequencies

OEA Assessment Group ¹
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INTRODUCTION

The Office of Educational Assessment (OEA) has conducted periodic surveys of students entering the University of Washington (UW) to learn about undergraduate expectations and aspirations from the newest members of the UW community.² These surveys have included common items for the purpose of comparisons over time, as well as particular items of current interest. Two questionnaires were administered to members of the University of Washington (UW) 1998 entering class as part of a comprehensive study examining student and alumni views about expectations and realities of the benefits of a college education at the UW. This larger study surveys different groups of students and alumni in order to discern how their perceptions about the value of a UW college education may change as they gain experience. This report describes the methodology used for the entering student surveys and provides tables of response frequencies.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

All students who attended the summer, 1998, [New Student Orientation](#) were asked to complete an Entering Student Questionnaire. Newly admitted undergraduates, both freshmen and transfer students, are invited to attend Orientation sessions and those offered during summer quarter serve by far the largest number of students. The 1998 entering class included 4168 new freshmen,³ of whom 3726 (89.4%) attended summer Orientation. Entering transfer students totalled 2061, of whom 1293 (62.7%) attended. Students who did not attend Orientation were surveyed during academic advising sessions prior to autumn quarter. Students who registered without attending Orientation or visiting an advisor did not receive a questionnaire.

A random sample of 1100 newly admitted undergraduates was selected to receive a second (New Student) questionnaire containing a number of follow-up questions.

Instruments

The **Entering Student Questionnaire** was a scannable two-page booklet composed of items relating to several aspects of students' educational expectations at the UW as well as their aspirations. A sizable portion of the survey focused on what the students expected to learn while at college: self-rating of skill levels, the perceived importance of those skills for their college education and beyond, the expected contribution of the UW to the skill development, and the expected satisfaction level with the skills. Additionally, the questionnaire included questions about what and how students expect to learn and

predictions about their level of preparedness upon graduating from the UW. Entering students were also queried about their expectations for contributing back to society and their participation in specific educational experiences such as working on a professor's research project or service-learning courses. The last portion of the survey revolved around students' level of comfort with different aspects of UW (such as, the size of the institution and classes, access to professors, advisors, campus services, housing, classes and majors). All questions were closed-ended, forced-choice items. The questionnaire is provided here in PDF format:

[Entering Student Questionnaire](#)

The primary purpose of the **New Student Survey** was to assess the usefulness of orientation sessions. However, for purposes of comparison, a small item set relating to student experiences and matched to the Entering Student Questionnaire was added. All questions on this single-page, back-to-back questionnaire were in a closed-ended, forced-choice format. The questionnaire is provided here in PDF format:

[New Student Survey](#)

Procedures

Students were asked to complete the **Entering Student Questionnaire** as they checked into their respective Orientation sessions. Three types of sessions were offered: 1) Freshman Overnight (nine sessions); 2) Freshman Two-day (six sessions); and 3) Transfer (fourteen sessions). Respondents were classified as freshman or transfer according to the type of session attended. Completed questionnaires were obtained from 3017 (81.0%) of the attending freshmen, and 893 (69.1%) of the transfer students. An additional 141 (18.4%) questionnaires were collected from 767 distributed to students during an advising session. From the undergraduate entering class of 6229, a total of 4051 (65.0%) completed Entering Student Questionnaires were obtained.

Two to three weeks after each Orientation session, the **New Student Survey** was sent to a randomly selected subset of attending students. Fifty students were selected from each freshman session, and 25 from each transfer session. The mailing included the survey instrument, a personalized cover letter, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope for survey return. This was followed by a second mailing (questionnaire, letter and envelope) to all students who hadn't returned a completed questionnaire within two to three weeks of the original mailing for their session. Respondents were asked to indicate the type of session they had attended and were classified as freshman or transfer on that basis. Of the 750 freshmen surveyed, 358 (47.7%) returned completed questionnaires, as did 173 (49.4%) of the 350 transfer students surveyed. Sixty-seven questionnaires returned with incomplete or missing identification contributed to the overall response of 531 (48.3%) but are necessarily excluded from analyses relying on comparisons with data from other sources.

RESPONSE FREQUENCIES

Response frequencies for each of the items on the Entering Student Questionnaire and the matched items on the New Student Survey are provided in PDF format:

[Response frequency tables](#)

Responses of students who entered the UW directly from high school (as "freshmen") were compared to those of students who transferred from another post-secondary institution. Items for which significant differences were found are reported in PDF format:

[Freshman-transfer comparisons](#)

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² Gillmore, G.M. (1994). *Characteristics of 1994 Entering University of Washington Undergraduates.*

OEA Reports, 94-9;

Gillmore, G.M. & Hamilton, F. (1996). *Results of the 1995 Entering Student Questionnaire.* **OEA Research Notes, N-96-2.**

³ These figures were taken from the files of the University of Washington Office of the Registrar. New freshmen were defined as those students who entered the UW directly from high school.