

1998 Senior Survey: Methodology and Response Frequencies

OEA Assessment Group ¹
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INTRODUCTION

Since 1992, the Office of Educational Assessment (OEA) has conducted an annual survey of University of Washington (UW) seniors, providing a view of undergraduate educational programs from the vantage of students who have had the longest exposure to the UW environment.² Questionnaires have included common items to allow comparisons over time, and idiosyncratic items dealing with contemporary issues. For the 1998 Senior Survey, items were added as part of a comprehensive study soliciting student and alumni views regarding the academic and practical value of attending the UW. In order to capture the evolving nature of students' perceptions regarding college education, different groups of students and alumni were surveyed at several points in time during the college process. Some of the items on the Senior Survey were matched to a supplementary, norms-based questionnaire ([1998 College Student Survey](#)) administered to an independent sample of UW seniors. This report describes the methodology used for the 1998 Senior Survey and provides tables of response frequencies.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

In spring, 1998, questionnaires were sent to 1500 randomly selected seniors (18% of the 8472 total). For the purposes of this study, seniors were defined as those students who had earned 135 or more credits towards graduation and who were enrolled at the Seattle campus during spring quarter, 1998. Many, but not all, of these students graduated at the end of that quarter. Students who were sent the 1998 College Student Survey were not eligible for inclusion.

Instrument

The two-page back-to-back booklet included items relating to several aspects of the students' educational experiences at the UW as well as their aspirations. A sizable portion of the survey focused on what the students had learned while at college: self-rating of skill levels, the perceived necessity of those skills, UW's contribution to the skill development, and satisfaction with skill level. Additionally, the questionnaire included questions about how students learned and their level of preparedness for life beyond UW. Finally, seniors were queried about their contribution to society. All questions were closed-ended, forced-choice items. The questionnaire is provided in PDF format:

[Senior Survey](#)

First mailing

Questionnaires were mailed at the end of April, along with a personalized cover letter and self-addressed, stamped envelope for survey return. Students in one-half of the sample were also sent a UW "Husky" sticker to test the effectiveness of such enclosures as an incentive to return the survey. A total of 453 (30.0%) students returned the first mailing. Of those students who had been sent a sticker, 255 (34.0%) returned a survey, compared to 198 (26.4%) of those who had not been sent a sticker. The additional 7.6% response corresponds to the 8.0% increase found with the CSS mailing and seems well worth the use of this type of incentive.

Follow-up mailings

Two follow-up mailings were sent to students who had not returned a completed survey. The first of these, conducted in mid-May, consisted of another copy of the questionnaire, a personalized letter and a return envelope. This was followed by a post-card reminder in late May.

The follow-up mailings increased the overall response rate to 42.6% (n=638). This rate was subsequently adjusted by: 1) reducing the original sample size by the number of questionnaires returned as undeliverable (n=55), and 2) by eliminating the second questionnaire of each of nine pairs returned with duplicate student identification numbers. The adjusted overall rate of response was 43.5%. Of the completed questionnaires, seventeen were returned without usable student identification numbers, and are therefore unavailable for analyses requiring linked demographic data.

RESPONSE FREQUENCIES

Response frequencies for each of the items on the Senior Survey are provided in PDF format:

[Response frequency tables](#)

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² Gillmore, G.M. (1992). *The Winter, 1992, Survey of University of Washington Seniors*. **OEA Reports, 92-2**;
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