

Senior Survey 1999: Methodology and Response Frequencies

Debbie E. M^cGhee
November, 1999

INTRODUCTION

Each year, the Office of Educational Assessment (OEA) surveys University of Washington (UW) seniors regarding their university experiences. These surveys vary somewhat in content from year to year, in order to examine contemporary issues, but they also contain many items in common, so that longitudinal comparisons of student responses can be made. In an attempt to increase response rate, the 1999 Senior Survey was shorter than in previous years, but consisted mainly of a subset of items from the 1998 survey.¹ This report describes the methodology used for the 1999 Senior Survey and provides tables of response frequencies.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The initial sample consisted of 1500 seniors enrolled at the Seattle campus during spring quarter, 1999. Seniors were defined as those undergraduates who had earned at least 135 credits toward graduation. Students were randomly selected from the entire population of 8489 seniors; thus the initial sample was 18% of the population of seniors.

Survey mailings

Questionnaires were mailed the first week of May, 1999. Accompanying each questionnaire were a personalized cover letter and a self-addressed, stamped envelope in which to return the survey. In mid-May, a follow-up mailing went to students who had not returned completed surveys. That mailing included another copy of the questionnaire, a personalized letter, and a return envelope.

A total of 610 students returned completed questionnaires. Eight students asked to be removed from the study, and 34 questionnaires were returned as undeliverable. There were also two pairs of surveys with identical student identification numbers, and the method for handling these was to discard the second questionnaire received. The final sample size was 1466 (7.2% of the 8489 eligible UW seniors), of whom 41.6% returned completed questionnaires. The decreased length of the questionnaire (relative to 1998) appears not to have had an appreciable effect on the response rate, inasmuch as this year's rate was 2% lower than that obtained previously. On the other hand, this response rate was achieved with one less follow-up mailing than in 1998. Of the completed questionnaires, 22 were returned without usable student identification numbers and are therefore unavailable for any analyses requiring linked demographic data.

Survey Instrument

The one-page, double-sided questionnaire included items relating to several aspects of students' educational experiences at the UW. Students were asked about their level of satisfaction with several aspects 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. Additionally, there were questions about paid employment and volunteer activities, as well as a section on computer use. Except for an invitation to make any comments the participant wished, all questions were closed-ended, forced-choice items.

The questionnaire is provided here in PDF format:

[Senior Survey](#)

RESPONSE FREQUENCIES

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

[Response frequency tables](#)

¹OEA Assessment Group. (1998). *The 1998 Senior Survey: Methodology and Response Frequencies*. [OEA Reports, 98-5](#).