

## **UW DIVERSITY OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT**

### **Shaping Your Future 2000**

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*August 2000*

#### **ABSTRACT**

The Office of Educational Assessment, commissioned by the University of Washington (UW) President's Advisory Committee on Diversity, is conducting an evaluation of minority outreach and recruitment efforts. An important event connected to these efforts is *Shaping Your Future* (SYF), previously known as the UW Fall Preview. Held most recently in April of 2000 on the UW campus, this event involved students and their parents and included a variety of activities aimed at increasing the number of underrepresented and disadvantaged freshman and transfer students attending the UW. At the conclusion of the program, attendees were asked to complete a survey regarding their preferences for certain activities and suggestions for program improvements. Fifty-five of the 75 student attendees (73%) completed the one-page questionnaire. Results of the survey found that student panels and small group discussions were held in the highest regard by respondents. Indeed, the majority of students noted that the overall effort was valuable and enjoyable, and that even more time devoted to opportunities to interact with college students would be desirable.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Each spring as part of outreach and recruitment efforts, the UW hosts SYF, formerly known as the UW Fall Preview. The purpose of SYF is to increase the number of underrepresented and disadvantaged freshman and transfer students attending the UW. A variety of activities are offered to inform students and their parents of the range of educational options available at the UW and the benefits of pursuing post-secondary courses of study. The program serves as an occasion for students and parents to ask questions and become more comfortable with the campus.

Shaping Your Future most recently was held on April 15, 2000. In preparation for it, over 800 invitations were mailed to admitted students and their parents. The event was held at the Husky Union Building (HUB) Auditorium at the UW, with 75 students and 150 parents in attendance. The keynote speaker, James Harrington, Chair of the UW Geography Department, gave his views on ways in which students can take maximum advantage of the privilege and investment in a college experience. He encouraged students to reflect on their strengths, shortcomings and goals, and observed that the true measure of their lives is not what they have, but what they have become.

During the day, students attended sessions that included panels of UW students who shared stories and talked with the visiting students informally, a UW video highlighted student perspectives on life at the university, and presentations on college life. In addition, nine special interest discussion groups addressed a variety of academic issues, including the Arts & Sciences general education requirements, and majors in Psychology, Communications, American Ethnic Studies, Sociology, Business Administration, Education, Computer Science and Engineering, and Health Sciences. Each group

consisted of a staff facilitator from the Office of Minority Affairs, a UW student, and a department representative.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to determine the effectiveness of SYF, a questionnaire was developed by the SYF coordinators and administered to students in attendance. The one-page questionnaire asked respondents to rate the overall event, the keynote speaker, video, student panels 1 and 2, Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) counseling presentation, Instructional Center (IC) presentation, and small group discussions. Responses were indicated on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "poor" and 5 being "outstanding." There were also open-ended questions, which allowed individuals to give further details about the best part(s) of the event, and to provide suggestions for improvements and other general comments. Respondents completed and returned the survey to OMA staff before leaving for the day. Fifty-five of the seventy-five questionnaires were completed and returned; a 73% response rate. Responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

## FINDINGS

Results of the analysis of the SYF survey responses revealed that the majority of students had positive experiences at the event (see Figure 1). Eighty-four percent of respondents rated the overall event as *good* or *outstanding*, seven percent rated it as *satisfactory*, and no one rated the experience as less than satisfactory.

Responses for individual sessions were also highly positive. The majority of attendees (80%) felt that the keynote speaker was *good* or *outstanding*, but a few written comments (see Figure 2) suggested that the speech was somewhat difficult to follow for the student audience (7%). The video presentation, "A Diverse Perspective," was rated as good or outstanding by 71% of the students, with an additional 20% responding that it was satisfactory.

The panels in which UW students shared individual stories of college life were the most well-received -- with 91% of respondents rating student panel #1, *Why the University of Washington?*, and 86% of respondents rating student panel #2, *Making the Transition*, as good or outstanding (see Figure 1). Many written comments (42%) revealed that the student panels were the best part of the program (see Figure 2). The EOP counseling presentation was also highly regarded, with all ratings being satisfactory or better (64%), plus 35% of the respondents rated the presentation as outstanding. Similarly, the majority of the students (53%) rated the Instructional Center presentation as good, and an additional 31% felt it was outstanding.

The small group discussions were very popular with the attendees, as indicated by 100% of the responding attendees rating the discussions as good or outstanding. In fact, on 20 of the 55 completed questionnaires (36%) students commented that the small group discussions were the best part of the program.

**Figure 1.** Shaping Your Future Student Response Rates

	Poor (1)	Fair (2)	Satisfactory (3)	Good (4)	Outstanding (5)	Mean
1. Overall Session:	0	0	4 7%	29 53%	17 31%	4.3
2. Keynote Speaker	0	0	5 9%	24 44%	20 36%	4.3
3. Video	0	2 4%	11 20%	28 51%	11 20%	3.9
4. Student Panel #1 (Why the UW?)	0	0	3 5%	10 18%	40 73%	4.7
5. EOP Counseling	0	0	8 15%	27 49%	19 35%	4.2
6. Instructional Center	0	1 2%	6 11%	29 53%	17 31%	4.2
7. Student Panel #2 (Making the Transition)	0	1 2%	7 13%	28 53%	18 33%	4.2
8. Group Discussion	0	0	0	24 44%	31 56%	4.6

Analysis of the responses to the open-ended questions supported these findings and offered additional suggestions for improvements (see Figure 2). In addition to the student panels and small group discussions, respondents found the opportunity to talk with college students and obtain general information about college life extremely useful. The most common suggestion for improvement of the SYF experience was to allow more time for the small group sessions (16%), thus providing more interaction with other students and more time for questions on areas of interest.

**Figure 2.** Response frequencies for open-ended questions on SYF survey.

<i>What was the best part(s) of the SYF program?</i>			<i>Suggestions for Improvement.</i>		
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
Student Panels	23	42%	Allow more time	9	16%
Small Groups	20	36%	Speaker easier to follow	4	7%
Info on the UW	4	7%	Great as is	4	7%
Talk with other students	4	7%	Improve IC presentation	1	2%
Opening session	2	4%	Provide more to do	1	2%
Video	2	4%	RSVP topic for small group	1	2%
Speaker	2	4%	Wider campus involvement	1	2%
IC presentation	2	4%	UW tour not tied to HSF	1	2%
EOP presentation	1	2%	Parking info	1	2%
			Hear from high achieving HS students	1	2%

A few written suggestions indicated areas for improvement. As mentioned earlier, there appeared to be some concern regarding ability of the attendees to easily follow the message of the keynote speaker. Comments suggested that the speaker should be more organized, that the message was too complex,

and that the message was somewhat redundant in nature. Other individual comments are included in Figure 2.

One way to understand the nature of a particular program is to hear the words of those involved in that program. The following comments, among others, were received from students attending the event:

Great program. Very encouraging	SYF eased the stress
I think it's a good preview and should continue	Now feel more comfortable re: UW
I'm not a minority, but SYF was very interesting	Overall great experience
Good job, you guys are great!	Really good program for entering minorities
They offered a first-hand perspective	Program excellent, OMA has genuine concern
I am glad I came	

While the majority of comments were positive, there were a few responses that stressed the need for improvement:

- Speakers need to be more organized
- More time to interact with students and seniors
- Small group was not a match for me
- Want to hear from high-achieving high school students

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Analysis of questionnaires indicated that, overall, the students were very satisfied with the *SYF* program and enjoyed the activities and sessions that were offered. The majority of comments were extremely positive, confirming that the students left the event feeling encouraged, less anxious and more informed.

Responses revealed that the most enjoyable and effective components of *SYF* were the student panels and the small group discussions. It appears that the opportunity to interact with and ask questions of current college students was most useful for the visiting students. Allowing the students to ask general questions concerning the UW and what it is like to be a college student was highly valued, and, in fact, comments indicated that the attendees would have liked more time to talk with other high school seniors and college students, more time to ask questions, and more time in small groups.

Although rated highly, the keynote speaker's address was the subject of some concern because it appeared that several students had difficulty understanding the primary points of the speech. Future speakers may want to ensure that their message is specifically adapted to this audience.

The vast majority of the feedback indicated a successful event. Ratings for all sessions were very high, and comments received from the students were encouraging. If improvements are implemented based on student feedback, SYF should continue to serve underrepresented and disadvantaged students of the community, promoting educational advancement at the UW in an inviting and stimulating environment.