Survey Profile

The 2009 Autumn Entering Freshmen Student Survey was offered to students of the UW Tacoma entering freshman class. This is the fourth consecutive year this survey has been administered. The 2009 survey consisted of three sections designed to provide an overall profile of the population as well as elicit opinion data about issues that may influence student success. One hundred and thirty-six students responded.

Part One: Why UW Tacoma

Entering freshmen were asked to tell us what factors influenced their selection of UW Tacoma. Almost 47% indicated UW Tacoma was their first choice four-year institution to attend, followed by UW Seattle at 35.7%. The third most frequent response was 6.3% of respondents opting for an out-of-state college or university. A clear majority of respondents (84.9%) were only interested in attending a four-year institution.

First awareness of UW Tacoma as a college choice came via family or friends (25.4%) with nearly 32% indicating this was also their most influential awareness. Though a current UW Tacoma student also played an important role in first awareness (15.9%), a UW Tacoma representative at nearly 18% was the second most influential source for UW Tacoma awareness. The UW Tacoma website also played a key role as 12.7% said it was “most influential” and 54.8% said it was either “extremely, or very helpful.”

Over 85% said UW Tacoma’s academic reputation was either “very important” or “important” as a factor in choosing to attend UW Tacoma. Almost 32% of entering freshmen said that “small campus size” was “very important” and 39.7% said availability of their chosen major was also important in their decision to enroll at UW Tacoma. Nearly forty percent of respondents told us that the possibility to enroll at UW Seattle in the future was “very important” in selecting to attend UW Tacoma, nearly as many who indicated UW Seattle was their first choice institution (35.7%).

Twenty percent of respondents are largely students with a parent or guardian having attended any campus of UW, and 15% have had a sibling attend UW.

Part Two: Academic Pursuits

For the 2009 entering freshmen, the primary reason for attending college was “to receive an education” (44.4%), while “to get a good job” (28.6%) scored as the second reason.

When asked what major they were planning to pursue, the majority (25.4%) were undecided, but for those who selected an option, Business was the top choice for area of study at 23.8%, followed by Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences (23%). Most popular new undergraduate majors of interest if offered were: Arts, Media, and Culture (13.5%), Psychology (12.7%), and Communications with 8.7% selecting this possible major.

Twenty-five percent plan to participate in study abroad, while 33% Plan to apply for Global Honors.
Over forty-three percent of respondents indicated they hope to receive a Master’s degree, while 30.3% are seeking a BA or BS degree, and 13% hope to obtain a doctorate. When asked “How long do you intend to stay at UW Tacoma?” 43.7% answered “Until I complete my Bachelor’s degree.” Most (86.5%) hope to achieve this goal in four years. However, 33% of freshman respondents plan to leave UW Tacoma after one or two years.

Almost 44% said they would need “special tutoring or help” with Mathematics and 30.2% said writing assistance would be needed.

Students were optimistic about their expectations for grade point average (GPA) at the end of the first quarter of study; 3.5 – 4.0 (50.8%), 3.0 – 3.49 (42.9%). A little over 41% of students plan to spend 11 to 15 hours per week studying while 38.9% plan to spend 16 hours or more.

Entering freshmen ranked “group discussions” as a first choice (17.5%) for their preferred learning style, with “lectures” (16.7%) following. Group projects and study groups also scored high in learning style preference.

Part Three: About You

In this last section of the survey, students were asked to share information about themselves. “Maintaining at least a 3.0 GPA while at UW Tacoma” was ranked as “extremely” important to them personally (84.1%). “Being financially successful” (71%) and “Becoming a better person” (65.1%) were also extremely important. Entering freshmen are “extremely” concerned with “School workload” (46.8%) and “Financing my education” (47.6%), while only 19.0% are slightly concerned that “Classes might be academically too challenging.” However, 54.7% of respondents are “extremely” or “very” concerned about “Access to adviser when needed.”

Seventy-seven percent of entering freshmen will live with parents but only 14.3% expect parents to pay for all their college expenses. Of those receiving financial aid, 38.1% are “satisfied” and 14.3% are “very satisfied” with the financial aid amount they are receiving. Twenty-four percent did not apply.

Interestingly, 38.8% of respondents speak a language other than English in the home; Korean (8.7%) was the leader among other languages, followed by Spanish (7.9%).

Students told us that, in the past year, they “frequently” asked questions in class (41.3%) worked with other students on a class assignment (54.8%), never drank an alcoholic beverage (65.9%), but needed help or assistance in understanding or completing class work (55.6%).

Politically, forty-six percent of students consider themselves “moderate”, with 20.6% identifying themselves as “conservative” and 16.7% choosing “liberal” as a political identity. Almost sixty-four percent are not registered to vote.

For respondents, the internet is where they receive the most “news of your community, city, country, or world” (43.7%) followed by the television (35.7%). Thirty-eight percent frequently use Facebook; however, 77% of respondents use neither Twitter nor Wikipedia.

When asked about staying in the area after graduation, 34.1% “hope to find career opportunities in the area” but most students (42.1%) have made no plans.

Survey Statistics

Detailed results of the survey are available by request to:

UW Tacoma
Office of Academic Affairs
Survey Administration