2009 Undergraduate Student Survey

Survey Profile
The 2009 Autumn Undergraduate Survey was offered to both returning and new undergraduate students (sophomores, juniors, seniors, non-matriculated and fifth-year) and contained eighty-one questions developed to gather opinion data helpful to understanding the needs and expectations of this student population. Enrolled undergraduate students (2,434) were invited by email to participate in the Web-based survey and 275 (11.3%) responded. Some questions were multiple choice and others allowed for open-text responses. Additionally, “skip logic” was employed to provide opportunities for follow-up questions based on responses, thus in some instances, questions were only answered by a subset of respondents.

Undergraduate Student Overview
The majority of students responding to the survey said they were a returning UW Tacoma student (68.4%). Of those who identified themselves as a new student (74), eighty-five percent said they had transferred from a Washington State Community College, with most coming from Pierce College (28.3%), followed by Tacoma Community College (20.3%) and Highline Community College with 17.6%. Fifty-five percent said UW Tacoma was their first choice, followed by PLU (11.9%) and “An out-of-state college or university” at 9.5%. When new students were asked “If UW Tacoma did not exist”, the majority (90.4%) said they would have attended another four-year institution, with only 1.3% saying they would have “Attended a community or technical college.”

Most new students said their first awareness of UW Tacoma came via “family or friends” (24.7%) and that family or friends were also the most influential in their selection of UW Tacoma (23.5%). A UW Tacoma representative with 20.6% was the second most influential.

For new students, sixty-two percent said “The University of Washington’s overall reputation” was “very important” in their selection of UW Tacoma, and that “UW Tacoma offered the major/program I wanted” was also a primary reason for attending, saying it was either “Very important” or “Important” (85.1%). Twenty-four percent said they hope to attend UW Seattle in the future.

Forty-four percent of students responding to the survey told us they are primarily attending college “To receive an education.” Many of the surveys takers (42.9%) hope to eventually attain a master’s degree. However, most do not expect to continue graduate studies at UW Tacoma, with only 19.8% saying they would. Seventy-two percent expect to receive their bachelor’s degree in two years or less.

Undergraduate Academic Pursuits
Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences is the program most undergraduate respondents are pursuing (40.4%), with Self and Society (18.2%) and Communication (17.3%) being the most popular IAS concentrations. Among survey takers, Business is the second most selected program at 22.4% compared to the 16.5% of business majors in the general population. Accounting at 41% is decidedly the most desired business degree for respondents. Finance (16.4%) followed by Management (13.1%) are the second and third business degree choices. Of the 24 undergraduate respondents who identified the Institute of Technology as a program of choice, a B.S. in Computing and Software Systems (54.2%) is the most popular major.
Social Work, Urban Studies, Environmental Sciences, and Nursing make up the remaining majors with a combined 17.3% of respondents. A little less than 4% remain undecided.

Sixty percent of respondents say they are not pursuing a minor, but of those who said they were, Criminal Justice (5.6%) and Education (5.2%) were the top two choices.

Almost 74% of undergraduates are “Very certain” of their current choice of major. However, when asked to select from a list of 24 possible new major offerings, Sustainable Urban Development (9%), Psychology (8.7%), and Criminal Justice (7.2%) were the top choices. Nearly 13% were not interested in any of the choices.

Students told us that lectures (35.3%) are their most preferred way of learning followed by group discussion (13.6%). Internships with 9.9% were also seen as a preferred learning style. A little over 90% of students said they expect to maintain a grade point average of 3.0 or above, with nearly 35% saying they will study 11 to 15 hours per week, and 30% saying they will study 5 to 10 hours per week. Equally, 27% will work thirty hours or more per week or will not be employed.

Some students also told us they anticipate needing additional help with mastering certain subjects. Eighty survey takers said they “have had” and sixty said they “will need” special tutoring in mathematics. Forty-two survey takers identified a need for writing assistance, as did 38 requiring science help.

Just over seventy percent of respondents said they had a full understanding of UW Tacoma’s graduation requirements and 62% said they have plans to build a career in the Puget Sound area or “plan to stay in the area no matter what.”

**Undergraduate Profile**

Many undergraduates (40.7%) are renters, though 28.7% live with parents, and nearly as many (28.3%) are homeowners. Clearly, on-campus housing is not a large concern for UW Tacoma undergraduates as 48.3% said they are not interested in residential housing. Only 13.8% reported an interest in some form of traditional dorm housing.

A little over twenty-one percent of respondents speak another language other than English in the home, with Spanish (3.2%) tallying the most followed by American Sign Language and Korean, both at 2.1%.

Students say they are politically “moderate” (34.9%) though twenty-nine percent identify as “liberal” and about 12% say they are “Conservative.” A strong majority of 89% say they are registered to vote and most do (86.3%).

In response to a question asking where they “...typically get MOST of your access to news of your community, city, country, or world?” respondents told us the internet is the primary source (41.9%). Interestingly, some social networking websites are favored over others. Only 10% of students frequently use MySpace while 58% are frequent users of Facebook. Nearly 95% do not use Digg. Also, survey takers said Wikipedia (84.5%) and YouTube (85.5%) are popular resources, saying they use these sites frequently or sometimes.

Respondents were offered a list of items to rate for importance to them “personally.” The most highly rated item was “Becoming a better person” with 64.2% judging this as extremely important to them. “Being financially successful” (57.2%), “Raising a family” (49.4%), and “Thinking in new ways” (48.3%) also were seen as extremely important.
Undergraduate Concerns

Students were asked to tell us about any concerns they may have with various aspects of their student and personal lives as well as the degree to which they were satisfied with aspects of their relationship with UW Tacoma.

Nearly 74% of undergraduates stated they were “Extremely” or “Very” concerned about financing their education. Of 229 students who selected “myself” as being responsible for paying a portion of their college expenses, only 11% expected to be completely responsible while about 83% said up to sixty percent would be paid by other sources. Though 180 students report parents or guardians would contribute, more than 61% of these say parents would pay less than twenty percent. Eleven percent said grants/scholarships would pay their full college expenses, but almost 30% said they expected no funds from these sources. Almost 18% of respondents did not apply for financial aid, though nearly 30% of those who did say they are very satisfied with the award amount. However 21.5% are either “Dissatisfied” or “Very dissatisfied” with their aid amount.

Few students are “Extremely” or “Very” concerned that “classes might not be academically challenging enough” (10.7%) but more are “Very” concerned (16.6%) they may be too academically challenging. About 40% told us they are either “Not at all”, or only “Slightly” satisfied with course availability. When asked to offer additional comment about their concerns, class availability was often discussed, as represented in these comments:

- There are a limited amount of classes offered per quarter, which often does not allow for students to take the courses in a certain order or according to a specific plan.
- There seem to be very limited options for student who work full-time from 8 to 5. Rarely could I find classes within my concentration at 8 a.m. (then I would work late) or classes at 4 p.m. (I would start work early). When I asked about more 8 a.m. classes, the response I rec'd was that they were not popular with students or faculty.
- Being able to take all courses required to obtain a specific major and/or minor, and knowing which courses will be offered in advance so one can plan ahead.
- With limited availability of classes, it is a concern that I won't be able to take all of the required classes for my major, in efficient time. I may be going longer in school because classes are so limited and offered at only certain times.

As expected, students feel getting good grades is a key focus with 54.4% saying they are extremely concerned with this aspect of student life. This is further underscored when respondents told us getting “...at least a 3.0 GPA while at UW Tacoma” is “Extremely” (75.1%) important to them personally. Undergraduates feel “School workload” (36.40%) and “Balancing studies with work and/or family responsibilities” (52.01%) are also causes for extreme concern. Given these concerns, many UW Tacoma undergraduates are non-the-less “Extremely” or “Very” satisfied (76.6%) with their decision to attend UW Tacoma, as well as their choice of program (74.3%).

Faculty score well with students evidenced by high “Extremely” or “Very” satisfied ratings. “Approachability of faculty” and “Quality of instruction” received a high degree of satisfaction as well, with 72.8% and 74.5% respectively. However, student comments did show some concerns, such as “having professors be available to help students more often.”

Parking continues to be an issue for undergraduates with 30.6% saying they are “Not at All” satisfied with parking options.
Undergraduate Comments

Throughout the survey, respondents were offered an opportunity to freely comment on various topics. Here is a sampling of those comments:

- I STRONGLY recommend adding wait-listing to the online class registration process. This would save time, energy, and heartache. The last school I was in had this feature, and I greatly appreciated it.

- There should be more fun clubs on campus, not just leadership clubs and academic clubs. Not everything is about student government and majors!

- I am 55yrs. old so I don't know if my answers help with the survey. I have absolutely loved being a part of the UW - T student body. I already have a professional career, but with my degree that will be obtained from UW, it has already enhanced my thought processes, and how I interact with people.

- It would be great to have more places on campus for students to hang out during lunch. We often end up going to class rooms because every seat is taken.

- Financial aid counselors are too busy. They are always helpful but there needs to be someone that only handles the veterans.

- I went to Central Washington a year before I went to UW Tacoma and I did not like it so I moved back home and transferred to UW Tacoma and I love this school. It is close to home, I have so many resources to help me, the faculty and my peers are very friendly and helpful, and I like going to school everyday because of these reasons. I wouldn't change anything, but since UW Tacoma has done such a great job so far I would support them a 110% if they did want to add or change something. Thank you UW Tacoma!

- Technology in the way you pay for classes, and the customer service is atrocious. A student should be able to use a credit card to pay for anything on campus, and not rely on cash or checks. Not to mention the hours of operation for the cashier. They are not very productive for a working adult.

- I am concerned about finding a job after graduation. I don't really know who the technology employers are in the area, and I don't have any idea if my education has prepared me for employment.

- That on Saturdays and Sundays the buildings are not open, such as the MAT, and the Library closes early (5 p.m.) on Saturdays and Sundays as well. Although this is a commuter campus, I believe that we should be able to accommodate the various students' schedules.

Survey Statistics

Detailed results of the survey are available by request to:

UW Tacoma
Office of Academic Affairs
Survey Administration