Student Experience in the Research University

Student learning in higher education is complex and multidimensional, leading to academic, social, and personal development. To gain a better understanding of student experiences at UI, we administered the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey to all degree-seeking undergraduates during Spring 2018.

Nearly 20% of students responded, and the profile of respondents was broadly representative of the undergraduate population in terms of academic characteristics, college, race/ethnicity, and year of study. This brief report provides an overview of student responses to questions about their satisfaction and interaction with faculty members.

For more information about SERU, visit uiowa.edu/seru

Student Satisfaction and Interaction with Faculty

This SERU Brief provides a sample of responses to SERU survey questions on student satisfaction and interaction with faculty members. The majority of students responded positively to questions about faculty (Figure One): 90% report being very satisfied, satisfied, or somewhat satisfied with the quality of faculty instruction, and 92% with the availability of faculty outside of class; 86% express satisfaction with academic advising by faculty.

Figure One: Reported Levels of Satisfaction with Faculty Members and TAs

The majority of students also reported high levels of engagement in specific types of interactions with faculty:

95% Agree that faculty maintain respectful interactions in class
91% Agree that students are treated equitably and fairly by faculty
90% Express satisfaction with the quality of courses in their major
89% Often have instructors who increase their enthusiasm for the subject
87% Often have opportunities for active participation in class
84% Often receive prompt and meaningful feedback on their work
While reported levels of satisfaction and engagement are consistently high, reported frequency of student interactions with faculty are somewhat more variable.

When asked how often they had a class in which the professor knew or learned their name, 58% of students indicated often or very often; fewer than 9% responded rarely or never. The remaining one-third of students fell in between, indicating occasionally or somewhat often, as shown in Figure Two.

While many report the perception that faculty know who they are, they report relatively fewer direct interactions with faculty. Only 29% reported that they often or very often sought academic help from an instructor or a tutor when needed; almost as many (25%) reported rarely or never. Students reported similar levels of frequency in talking with an instructor outside of class about concepts related to the course: Just under one-fourth reported often or very often, while slightly over one-fourth reported rarely or never.

These patterns of interaction are consistent with student responses to another item which asked them to identify obstacles to success in their academic work (Figure Three).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximately ...</th>
<th>Students report ...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 in 3</td>
<td>difficulty doing their best work on tests</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 in 4</td>
<td>not being comfortable asking for help with course work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 in 4</td>
<td>difficulty speaking up in class</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 in 4</td>
<td>concern about being judged negatively by other students</td>
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</tbody>
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To take a closer look at SERU data related to student perceptions of faculty, academic engagement, and obstacles to their success, or to explore how these perceptions vary among different segments of the student population, contact seru@uiowa.edu.