

BRIEF: Satisfaction with the UB Experience: Domestic Graduate and Professional Students

This brief presents the domestic student results for the 2009 Graduate-Professional Student Opinion Survey.

Survey Response and Representation

Of the 8,723 graduate and professional students enrolled for spring 2009 semester, 1,674 completed the survey (19.2%). The results presented here are based on responses of domestic students only ($N = 1,100$). Due to the lower representation of professional students in the sample, the results for professional students are presented separately in the text and tables that follow.

All 12 academic units and the Roswell Park Cancer Institute were represented among the respondents, with the greatest proportion enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences (22.3%). Of the graduate student respondents, most are seeking a master's degree (63.1%). Prior to enrolling in their current academic program at UB, 46.1% of respondents were enrolled in an undergraduate degree program, 10.0% were enrolled in a graduate program, and 40.0% were working. Just over a quarter of respondents (29.7%) received an undergraduate degree at UB

Overall Satisfaction with UB

There are no differences between graduate and professional students with regard to overall satisfaction. Most respondents (87.6%) are satisfied with the academic experience, and 80.0% are satisfied with the student life experience, and 87.0% are satisfied with UB overall. In addition, 79.0% indicate that they would choose to attend UB again, and 83.2% indicate that they would recommend UB to a friend.

Table 1: Satisfaction with the Academic Program

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Percent Satisfied</i>		
	Total (N = 1100)	Graduate (N= 822)	Professional (N = 278)
Assistance in career preparation and placement	63.9	63.6	64.5
Availability of assistantships in your field of study*	59.6	56.4	69.8
Availability of internships or applied training*	66.4	63.2	74.8
Intellectual quality of faculty*	93.6	94.5	75.5
Intellectual quality of other students	82.2	81.5	84.4
Number and variety of courses offered*	63.7	59.5	78.0
Opportunities for interdisciplinary work	71.4	69.8	76.3
Overall program quality	82.8	82.4	84.1
Program facilities*	67.0	71.0	55.6
Quality of teaching	77.0	77.4	75.9

Note: * Indicates a statistically significant difference between graduate and professional students.

Satisfaction with the Academic Program at UB

Students were asked to indicate their degree of satisfaction with various aspects of their academic program (Table 1). Overall, the students are most satisfied with the intellectual quality of faculty and their fellow students. Graduate students are slightly more likely to be satisfied with the intellectual quality of faculty than are professional students, but both groups are equally likely to be satisfied with the intellectual quality of their peers. Students are less likely to be satisfied with availability of assistantships in their fields, assistance in career preparation and placement, and availability of internships or applied training. Graduate students are significantly less likely to be satisfied with available of assistantships and internships than are professional students, while both groups are equally likely to be satisfied with the career assistance they receive. There are two additional differences between graduate and professional respondents: graduate students are less likely to report satisfaction with the number and variety of courses offered, and professional students are less likely to report satisfaction with program facilities as compared to graduate students.

Students were also asked to either agree or disagree with several statements about the climate of their academic programs. Most students agree that students are collegial (91.8%) and that they are treated with respect by faculty members (88.3%), and there are no differences in agreement to these two items between graduate and professional students. In addition, 84.9% of students believe that the overall climate of the program is positive. A slightly greater proportion of professional students agree with this statement, however (88.8% of professionals agree as compare to 83.6% of graduate students). “My advisor performs the role well” was the statement with the lowest proportion of agreement (78.5%). However, professional students were more likely to agree than were graduate students (80.3% and 69.7%, respectively).

Satisfaction with Campus Services and Facilities

Graduate and professional students were asked to indicate their degree of satisfaction with a variety of campus services and facilities (shown in Table 2). Around two thirds or more of respondents indicate that they are satisfied or very satisfied with each item. In this list, students are least satisfied with campus dining services (63.3%) and most satisfied with library resources and facilities (89.1%). Graduate and professional students differ on several items: campus dining services, classroom resources and condition, computing resources and services, general condition of buildings and grounds, library resources and services, sports and recreation facilities, student government association, and the student union.

In all cases, professional students are less likely to report satisfaction than are graduate students, and this difference may be a result of the campus location of professional students. Since most of the professional students are in the Schools of Dental Medicine and Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, their coursework is completed on South Campus, where there are limited dining options and limited student activity. Perhaps these students would feel more satisfied if they spent more time on the North Campus, the hub of student activity, where there are many dining options, many public use computer sites, two libraries, and exercise and recreation facilities in Alumni Arena.

Table 2: Satisfaction with Campus Services and Facilities

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Percent Satisfied</i>		
	Total	Graduate	Professional
Campus Bus/Shuttle Service (N = 615)	84.7	85.1	83.8
Campus Dining Services (N = 688)*	64.2	67.3	55.6
Career Planning/Placement Services (N = 518)	63.3	65.4	58.8
Child Care Services (N = 91)	63.7	59.7	72.4
Classroom Resources and Condition (N = 1057)*	72.6	77.6	58.1
Computing Resources and Services (N = 1019)*	81.5	84.4	73.0
Disability Services (N = 99)	81.8	79.2	90.9
Financial Aid Services (N = 865)	84.9	84.3	86.4
General Condition of Buildings and Grounds (N = 1047)*	69.2	74.4	54.4
Health Services (N = 666)	81.8	82.7	79.7
Library Resources and Services (N = 1039)*	89.1	93.0	78.2
Ombudsperson's Office (N = 80)	80.0	80.4	79.2
On-Campus Housing Services (N = 259)	68.3	68.6	67.8
Personal Safety/Security On Campus (N = 651)	71.8	72.8	68.8
Sports and Recreation Facilities (N = 718)*	80.1	83.5	72.4
Student Activities (N = 629)	74.2	74.5	73.6
Student Counseling Center (N = 284)	82.4	83.9	78.8
Student Government Association (N = 726)*	78.1	80.3	71.4
Student Union (N = 820)*	87.0	88.3	82.6
University Book Store (N = 913)	71.2	71.9	69.2

Note: For each item, the percent satisfied is based only on the number of students who found it to be relevant which is shown in parentheses following the item.

*Indicates a statistically significant difference between graduate and professional students.

Satisfaction with Community and Co-Curricular Programming at UB

As shown in Table 3, most graduate and professional respondents are satisfied with the various aspects of community at UB. Most students are satisfied that there is freedom from harassment at UB and that there is a sense of respect for diversity of all kinds, in points of view, in ethnicity and culture, and in religion. In addition, they are satisfied that faculty members, staff members and students respect each other. The two areas of lowest satisfaction, sense of belonging in department/program and sense of belonging at UB, are also the two areas where there are differences between graduate and professional students with professional students expressing greater satisfaction for each.

Graduate and professional students were asked to rate their degree of satisfaction with educational activities that occur outside the classroom (shown in Table 4). At least 80.0% of each group is satisfied with all but two items: student input in UB policies/plans/decision-making, the area of least satisfaction for both groups, and student newspaper. The area of greatest satisfaction for both groups is health and wellness programs. Both groups were satisfied with cultural programs, but graduate students indicated slightly greater satisfaction than professional students.

Table 3: Satisfaction with Community at UB

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Percent Satisfied</i>		
	Total (N = 1100)	Graduate (N= 822)	Professional (N = 278)
Freedom from Harassment on Campus	92.9	92.3	94.8
Respect for Differing Points of View/Opinions	89.5	89.9	89.4
Respect for Ethnic/Cultural Diversity	93.8	93.1	96.0
Respect for Religious Diversity	91.8	91.1	93.8
Sense of Respect Among Faculty, Staff, and Students	86.5	86.0	86.5
Your Sense of Belonging in Your Department/Program*	82.0	79.9	88.2
Your Sense of Belonging at UB*	71.7	70.0	76.7

Note: * Indicates a statistically significant difference between graduate and professional students.

Table 4: Satisfaction with Co-Curricular Programming at UB

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Percent Satisfied</i>		
	Total	Graduate	Professional
Cultural Programs (N = 621)*	92.1	93.3	88.2
Distinguished Speakers Series (N =790)	93.2	93.2	92.9
Educational Programs Regarding Alcohol and Substance Abuse (N = 301)	92.4	93.5	90.2
Health and Wellness Programs (N = 487)	94.0	93.8	94.7
Number and Variety of Campus Clubs and Activities (N =633)	91.2	91.0	91.6
Number and Variety of Intercollegiate Sports (N = 451)	91.4	91.0	92.2
Recreation and Intramural Programs (N = 456)	87.7	87.4	88.5
Religious/Spiritual Activities and Programs (N = 362)	83.7	83.3	84.8
Sexual Assault Prevention Programs (N=317)	86.4	84.8	90.4
Student Input in UB policies/plans/decision-making (N = 691)	63.7	67.2	62.4
Student Newspaper (N = 693)	75.9	74.3	80.4

Note: For each item, the percent satisfied is based only on the number of students who found it to be relevant which is shown in parentheses following the item.

* Indicates a statistically significant difference between graduate and professional students.

Conclusions

The overall satisfaction of domestic graduate and professional students is very high, with 80.0% or more of each group indicating that they are satisfied with the academic experience, the student life experience, and their overall UB experience. In addition, around 80.0% of students indicate that they would choose to attend again and that they would recommend UB to a friend. Their satisfaction ratings of various academic aspects of their programs of study provide specific information about strengths and potential areas for improvement. Overall, most students (over 80.0%) report satisfaction with the intellectual quality of faculty and other students and overall program quality. However, professional students are much less satisfied with the intellectual quality of faculty as compared to graduate students, and the area of lowest reported satisfaction for professional students is program facilities. For graduate students, the lowest areas of satisfaction are availability of assistantships and number and variety of courses offered.

In terms of campus services and facilities, over 80.0% of students report satisfaction with half of the items, with their greatest level of satisfaction being for library resources and services. The five areas of lowest satisfaction (fewer than 70.0% of respondents indicated satisfaction) are: campus dining services, career planning/placement services, child care services, general condition of buildings and grounds, and on-campus housing services. Professional students report lower satisfaction in most items on the list as compared to graduate students, possibly because many of them are located on south campus and do not have access to the same quality of services as students who spend most of their time on the north campus. Particularly low areas of satisfaction for professional students are campus dining services, career planning/placement services, classroom resources and condition, and general conditions of buildings and grounds.

Finally, most respondents (at least 80.0%) are satisfied with most aspects of UB's campus climate. The area of least satisfaction is their own sense of belonging at UB, with around 75.0% expressing satisfaction. In addition, students report lower levels of satisfaction with student input in UB policies/plans/decision-making, with just under two-thirds expressing satisfaction, as compared to all other forms of co-curricular programming at UB. Perhaps they are less satisfied with their sense of belonging since they are not satisfied with their ability to influence policy-making at UB.

In conclusion, the results of this survey are primarily positive. Most graduate and professionals are satisfied overall and would choose to attend UB again. Specific areas that might be addressed to improve satisfaction are: career preparation and placement, at the program level and at the university level; availability of assistantships in specific fields of study; and the quality of services offered/condition of facilities on the south campus. Asking students directly how improvements might be made may increase their level of satisfaction with their input into UB decision-making which may, in turn, increase their satisfaction with their sense of belonging.

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