

BRIEF: Student Satisfaction with the UB Experience: International Graduate and Professional Students

This brief presents the results for international students who responded to the 2009 *Graduate-Professional Student 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 proportion of international students who completed the survey is significantly higher than the proportion of international students among all spring 2009 enrolled graduate and professional students (34.5% versus 26.5%). In addition, while the proportion of professional students is significantly lower among the respondents as compared to all students (18.0% versus 23.0%), the proportion is even lower among international respondents (4.4%). Thus, the results presented here reflect primarily the opinions of international *graduate* students. An additional 13 students who were enrolled through fall 2008 completed the survey, and their responses are also included in these analyses ($N = 1687$).

All 12 Colleges/Schools and the Roswell Park Cancer Institute are represented among the international respondents, with the greatest proportion of them being enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences (25.3%). Of the international respondents who are graduate students, most are seeking a master's degree (59.8%). Only 6.2% of international respondents received an undergraduate degree at UB, while 32.4% of respondents were enrolled in an undergraduate degree immediately prior to enrolling in the current graduate or professional program. Nearly 30.0% of international respondents were enrolled in a graduate program immediately prior to enrolling in the current program, and 37.4% were working.

Overall Satisfaction with UB

In terms of overall satisfaction with UB, it appears that international students experience the same degree of satisfaction as domestic students. Most international respondents (89.6%) are either satisfied or very satisfied with the academic experience at UB, and 83.0% are satisfied with the student life experience at UB. In terms of overall satisfaction with UB, 88.9% of respondents indicate that they are satisfied or very satisfied, and there are no differences between international and domestic students in satisfaction in these three areas. When asked if they would enroll at UB again, 77.6% indicated that they either probably or definitely would do so, which is lower than the proportion of domestic students who say they would do so (79.3%), and, when asked if they would recommend UB to a friend, 84.6% indicated that they probably or definitely would do so, which is equivalent to the proportion of domestic students who indicate they would do so.

Table 1: Satisfaction with the Academic Program

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Percent Satisfied</i>		
	Total (N = 1687)	International (N= 586)	Domestic (N = 1100)
Assistance in career preparation and placement*	61.4	57.3	63.9
Availability of assistantships in your field of study*	54.7	47.2	59.6
Availability of internships or applied training*	53.7	33.1	66.4
Intellectual quality of faculty	93.1	92.1	93.6
Intellectual quality of other students	81.5	80.2	82.2
Number and variety of courses offered	63.0	61.7	63.7
Opportunities for interdisciplinary work*	67.4	61.0	71.4
Overall program quality	82.7	82.7	82.8
Program facilities*	69.9	75.2	67.0
Quality of teaching*	78.9	82.3	77.0

Note: * Indicates a statistically significant difference between international and domestic students.

Satisfaction with the Academic Program at UB

International students differ from domestic students in important ways with regard to their degree of satisfaction with their academic program (see Table 1). They are more likely than domestic students to report satisfaction with the quality of teaching and program facilities, but less likely to report satisfaction with assistance in career planning and placement, availability of assistantships and internships, and opportunities for interdisciplinary work. When asked to either agree or disagree with several statements about the climate of their academic programs, the responses of international students are very similar to those of domestic students. Most agree that peers are collegial (90.4% as compared to 91.8% for domestic students) and that students are treated with respect by faculty members (90.3% versus 88.3% for domestic students). In addition, over 87.3% believe that the overall climate of the program is positive (versus 84.9% of domestic students). However, a greater proportion of international students that, “My advisor performs the role well,” as compared to domestic students (87.5 versus 78.5%).

Satisfaction with Campus Services and Facilities

When asked to indicate their degree of satisfaction with a variety of campus services and facilities (shown in Table 2), international students were generally as satisfied as domestic students. The only area where international students are less satisfied is in the area of financial aid services (59.3% of international students report satisfaction as compared to 84.9% of domestic students). It is very encouraging, however, that 89.7% of international students report satisfaction with International Student Services. In addition, there are several areas where international students are *more* likely than their domestic peers to report satisfaction. These areas include: campus bus/shuttle service, campus dining services, classroom resources and condition, computing resources and services, disability services, general condition of building and grounds, personal safety/security on campus, sports and recreation facilities, student activities, and the student union. These differences may be attributable to students’ past experiences. Similar services and facilities in the student’s home country may pale in comparison to those at UB, while most domestic students have come from an undergraduate institution where services and facilities may be more comparable.

Table 2: Satisfaction with Campus Services and Facilities

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Percent Satisfied</i>		
	Total	International	Domestic
Campus Bus/Shuttle Service (N = 1149)*	87.6	91.0	84.7
Campus Dining Services (N = 1169)*	67.9	73.2	64.2
Career Planning/Placement Services (N = 955)	63.6	63.8	63.3
Child Care Services (N = 269)	69.5	72.5	63.7
Classroom Resources and Condition (N = 1637)*	78.7	89.8	72.6
Computing Resources and Services (N = 1592)*	84.4	89.7	81.5
Disability Services (N = 272)*	87.1	90.2	81.8
Financial Aid Services (N = 1305)*	76.2	59.3	84.9
General Condition of Buildings and Grounds (N = 1620)*	74.9	85.2	69.2
Health Services (N = 1171)	82.0	82.2	81.8
International Student Services (N = 546)	89.7	89.7	N/A
Library Resources and Services (N = 1616)	89.8	91.0	89.1
Ombudsperson's Office (N = 279)	82.4	83.4	80.0
On-Campus Housing Services (N = 508)	67.7	67.1	68.3
Personal Safety/Security On Campus (N = 1463)*	74.9	80.0	71.8
Sports and Recreation Facilities (N = 1233)*	82.6	86.2	80.1
Student Activities (N = 1119)*	87.2	81.0	74.2
Student Counseling Center (N = 607)	81.2	80.2	82.4
Student Government Association (N = 1193)	78.7	79.7	78.1
Student Union (N = 1355)*	87.7	89.0	87.0
University Book Store (N = 1452)	70.8	70.1	71.2

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 international and domestic students.

Satisfaction with Community and Co-Curricular Programming at UB

As shown in Table 3, most international students are as satisfied as domestic students with the various aspects of community at UB. However, international students are significantly more satisfied with the sense of respect among faculty, staff, and students and with their sense of belonging at UB as compared to domestic students. They are slightly less satisfied than domestic students with respect for ethnic and cultural diversity, but still 90.5% do report satisfaction.

In terms of co-curricular programming at UB, international students report more satisfaction than domestic students in only three areas: sexual assault prevention programs, student input in UB policies/plans/decision-making, and student newspaper (see Table 4). However, international students report less satisfaction in four areas: cultural programs, Distinguished Speakers Series, number and variety of campus clubs and activities, and number and variety of intercollegiate sports. These are generally small differences, but someone interested in offering programs more relevant to international students might seek further information in order to determine what additional offerings might be most satisfactory.

Table 3: Satisfaction with Community at UB

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Percent Satisfied</i>		
	Total	International	Domestic
Freedom from Harassment on Campus	92.7	92.3	92.9
Respect for Differing Points of View/Opinions	90.5	92.4	89.5
Respect for Ethnic/Cultural Diversity*	92.6	90.5	93.8
Respect for Religious Diversity	92.2	92.9	91.8
Sense of Respect Among Faculty, Staff, and Students*	87.9	90.6	86.5
Your Sense of Belonging in Your Department/Program	81.7	81.0	82.0
Your Sense of Belonging at UB*	76.5	85.3	71.7

Note: * Indicates a statistically significant difference between international and domestic students.

Table 4: Satisfaction with Co-Curricular Programming at UB

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Percent Satisfied</i>		
	Total	International	Domestic
Cultural Programs (N = 1108)*	90.5	88.5	92.1
Distinguished Speakers Series (N = 1293)*	91.2	88.1	93.2
Educational Programs Regarding Alcohol and Substance Abuse (N = 651)	91.9	91.4	92.4
Health and Wellness Programs (N = 967)	94.0	94.0	94.0
Number and Variety of Campus Clubs and Activities (N = 1135)*	89.3	87.1	91.2
Number and Variety of Intercollegiate Sports (N = 874)*	88.8	86.1	91.4
Recreation and Intramural Programs (N = 916)	88.8	89.8	87.7
Religious/Spiritual Activities and Programs (N = 402)	85.1	86.3	83.7
Sexual Assault Prevention Programs (N = 695)*	89.2	91.5	86.4
Student Input in UB policies/plans/decision-making (N = 477)*	68.4	75.3	63.7
Student Newspaper (N = 1221)*	80.8	87.1	75.9

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 international and domestic students.

Conclusions

Overall, international graduate students seem to be well-satisfied with their experiences at UB. They are slightly more satisfied than domestic students with the quality of teaching and program facilities, and they agree that their advisor performs the role well. However, they are less satisfied than domestic students with the applied side of their programs, including career assistance from the department and availability of assistantships and internships. Perhaps most encouraging are the findings that, for nearly all of the campus facilities and services and aspects of campus community they were asked to rate, international students were either as satisfied as or more satisfied than their domestic peers.