

BRIEF: Trends in Undergraduate Student Satisfaction with Services, Facilities, Community (2000-2009)

The SUNY Student Opinion Survey (SOS) is administered every three years to undergraduates at all SUNY campuses. This brief presents the spring 2009 results for UB, along with results from the previous three administrations (2000, 2003, and 2006).

Survey Response and Representation

For the 2000 and 2003 administrations of the SOS, a paper survey was administered to a sample of UB undergraduates, and, typically, 600-700 students responded. Beginning in 2006, the survey was administered on-line, and the entire population of UB undergraduates was asked to respond. During the first web administration, 2,272 undergraduates completed the survey. The same procedures were used for the 2009 administration, and 3,194 responses were received. The data presented here are based on responses from the 3,044 students (16.7%) who responded appropriately to a control question and were enrolled as undergraduates for the spring 2009 semester.

Respondents differ from non-respondents in several ways. First, they are more likely to be female as compared to non-responders (53.6% versus 44.9%) and less likely to be from under-represented minority groups (11.2% versus 14.1%) and to be international students (15.5% versus 17.5%). Respondents are more likely to be enrolled full-time (96.7% versus 92.2%) but equally likely to be upper-division students as compared to non-responders (38.3% versus 37.9%). Finally, respondents are more academically qualified as compared to non-responders in both grades (QPA's; 3.06 versus 2.89) and selectivity status, with respondents more likely to be from Selectivity Group 1 (52.0% versus 38.9%).

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Academic Services and Experiences

<i>Academic Service/Experience</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2009</i>
Academic Advising in Major	----	----	3.85	3.82
Availability of Computers	3.40	3.27	3.72	----
Availability of Courses in Major	----	----	3.56	3.63
Availability of General Education Courses	----	----	3.77	3.78
Availability of Instructors Outside Class	3.46	3.66	3.90	3.90
Availability of Internships	3.02	3.06	3.25	3.27
Class Size	3.35	3.58	3.79	3.79
Computer Network	----	4.29	4.22	4.16
Computer Support Services	----	3.69	3.84	3.97
General Academic Advising	----	3.70	3.71	3.75
Library Resources	----	----	4.26	4.27
Library Services	3.88	----	4.17	4.20
Quality of Instruction	3.49	3.71	3.86	3.84
Tutoring Services	3.20	3.29	3.63	3.78

Satisfaction with Academic Services and Experiences

The SOS includes fourteen items related to student satisfaction with various academic experiences and services. For each item, satisfaction is rated on a five-point Likert scale, where a rating of 1 indicates “very dissatisfied” and a rating of 5 indicates “very satisfied.” Average satisfaction ratings on these items are shown in Table 1. Satisfaction ratings are quite stable across the 2006 to the 2009 administrations and, where change occurs, it is in the positive direction. These findings suggest that student satisfaction at UB is stable or continuously improving. The areas of greatest satisfaction in 2009 are Computer Network, Computer Support Services, Library Resources and Library Services. The largest increases in satisfaction occur for Availability of Courses in Major, Computer Support Services, and Tutoring Services. Although satisfaction with the Availability of Internships has shown continuous improvement since 2000, this remains the area where the greatest need is expressed.

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Student Services and Facilities

<i>Student Service/Facility</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2009</i>
Athletic and Recreational Facilities	3.89	3.89	4.05	4.15
Billing and Payment Process	3.53	3.83	3.95	3.85
Bookstore	3.20	3.42	3.54	3.44
Career Planning Services	-----	3.62	3.84	3.86
Classrooms	3.47	3.89	4.05	4.05
Condition of Buildings and Grounds	3.36	3.72	3.96	3.92
Condition of Residence Halls	2.59	3.06	3.58	3.57
Course Registration Process	3.64	3.75	3.94	3.87
Course-Related Labs	3.55	3.70	3.79	3.86
Financial Aid Services	3.32	3.63	3.64	3.62
Fine and Performing Arts Studios	-----	3.83	3.96	4.09
Food Services	2.78	3.06	3.16	3.20
Job Placement Services	-----	3.29	3.48	3.68
Library Facilities	4.02	4.22	4.22	4.21
Parking	2.05	2.24	2.77	2.75
Student Health Services	3.27	-----	3.82	3.96
Student Union	3.67	4.02	4.07	4.12
Study Areas	3.64	3.79	3.97	4.00

Satisfaction with Student Services and Facilities

Students mean satisfaction ratings with student services and facilities at UB are shown in Table 2. Several campus facilities represent the areas of greatest satisfaction: Athletic and Recreational Facilities, Classrooms, Fine and Performing Arts Studios, Library Facilities, the Student Union, and Study Areas. In addition, the ratings for four of these items are among those with the largest increases in satisfaction from the 2006 administration: Athletic and Recreational Facilities, Fine and Performing Arts Studios, the Student Union, and Study Areas. Other areas where satisfaction ratings increased substantially from 2006 include Course-Related Labs, Food Services, Job Placement Services, and Student Health Services.

Areas where satisfaction decreased slightly in 2009 include: Billing and Payment Process, Bookstore, Condition of Buildings and Grounds, and Course Registration Process. All of these areas have shown substantial improvements since 2000, and the leveling off in 2009 may simply be regression to the mean. In addition, with Condition of Buildings and Grounds, 2009 ratings may reflect the impact of recent campus improvements, where construction “messes” are in full view and traffic patterns are altered. It will be interesting to see the ratings for this item after much of the rehab and renovation work is complete.

Traditionally, on *all* college campuses, the lowest satisfaction ratings are given for campus food service and parking. Although Parking represents the area of lowest satisfaction in the 2009 administration, satisfaction has increased drastically from 2000. In the area of Food Services, satisfaction has also increased dramatically across the nine-year period from 2000, and ratings again show an increase from 2006 to 2009. Campus Dining and Shops has been making every effort to improve the quality, nutrition, and variety of food, as well as the availability, and these efforts are paying off in the form of increased ratings.

Table 3: Mean Ratings of Campus Community and Student Life

<i>Campus Community/Student Life Experience</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2009</i>
Acceptance of Individual Differences	----	----	4.12	4.15
Alcohol and Drug Education Programs	----	----	3.71	3.78
Campus Safety and Security	3.53	3.91	4.16	3.83
Clarity of Residence Hall Policies	3.33	3.57	3.83	3.81
Clarity of Rules for Student Conduct	----	----	4.00	----
Cultural Arts Programs	3.57	3.90	4.07	4.05
Faculty Respect for Students	3.53	3.74	3.99	4.00
Freedom from Harassment	3.83	4.00	4.27	4.22
Guest Speakers	----	----	4.15	4.19
Health and Wellness Programs	----	----	4.01	4.12
Help in Finding Part-Time Jobs	2.73	2.89	3.15	3.19
New Student Orientation	3.33	3.62	3.82	3.83
Openness to Different Opinions	----	----	4.05	4.07
Opportunities for Campus Involvement	3.54	3.83	4.12	4.13
Opportunities for Community Service	3.35	3.56	3.84	3.81
Personal Counseling Services	3.10	3.37	3.83	3.86
Racial Harmony	3.33	3.73	3.97	4.00
Recreation and Intramural Programs	3.66	3.78	4.10	4.10
Religious Programs	3.34	3.54	3.74	3.83
Residence Hall Programs	2.81	3.19	3.65	3.66
Sense of Belonging	3.14	3.49	3.67	3.72
Sexual Assault Prevention Programs	----	3.82	3.85	3.86
Social Activities	3.22	3.69	3.80	3.83
Social Support Network	----	----	3.89	3.92
Staff Respect for Students	3.45	3.74	4.03	4.06
Student Input to College Policies	2.66	2.99	3.25	3.41
Student Government	2.95	3.14	3.17	3.39
Student Newspaper	----	----	4.07	4.00
Student Radio Station	----	----	3.71	3.67
Use of Student Activity Fees	2.41	2.85	3.13	3.21

Satisfaction with Campus Community and Student Life

Shown in Table 3 are the average satisfaction ratings for items relating to campus community and student life. The areas of greatest satisfaction include Acceptance of Individual Differences, Cultural Arts Programs, Faculty Respect for Students, Freedom from Harassment, Guest Speakers, Health and Wellness Programs, Openness to Different Opinions, Opportunities for Campus Involvement, Racial Harmony, Recreation and Intramural Programs, Staff Respect for Students, and the Student Newspaper. Those areas with substantial increases in satisfaction ratings from 2006 to 2009 include Alcohol and Drug Education Programs, Guest Speakers, Health and Wellness Programs, Help in Finding Part-Time Jobs, Religious Programs, Sense of Belonging, Student Input to College Policies, Student Government, and Use of Student Activity Fees. Ratings of Help in Finding Part Time Jobs have increased slightly since 2006, but this item remains the area of lowest satisfaction.

Although students, in general, are quite satisfied with Campus Safety and Security, Freedom from Harassment, the Student Newspaper, and the Student Radio Station, the level of satisfaction in each of these areas decreased slightly from 2006 to 2009. Again, these decreases may simply be related to regression to the mean. However, additional factors may be related to the decrease in ratings for Campus Safety and Security, such as several incidents on or near the south campus that have gotten much attention within the last year and/or the increased attention that is being given to the topic of safety around the south campus as a result of the newly formed Office of Off Campus Student Relations.

Conclusions

Overall, the results presented here paint a very positive picture of student satisfaction with UB. Not only have satisfaction ratings in many areas increased or stayed the same since 2006, nearly all average ratings are on the positive side (3.00 or higher). Faculty, staff, and administrators at UB should be extremely pleased with these results as satisfaction ratings tend to be normally distributed, and, statistically, it is difficult to earn ratings that are substantially higher than the scale mid-point (2.5). UB has done that, however. In addition, very large gains have been made, in two areas that are very important for students: Food Services and Job Placement Services. Although Parking represents the lowest area of satisfaction in the survey, UB can still be proud of the increases that have been made since 2000. The most concerning decrease in satisfaction is for Campus Safety and Security. It is likely that, over time, students will be less satisfied with their experience at UB, in general, if they have concerns about their personal safety and security. The use of focus groups to explore factors related to this decrease in satisfaction may be a helpful first step in determining if the decrease is related simply to increased attention given to safety on and around campus. Focus groups may also help in identifying campus changes that might result in greater satisfaction with Campus Safety and Security.