

Institutional Research Study 01-01

Entering Student Needs Assessment Survey A Report Fall 2000

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In order to assess the needs of entering students, the Office of Institutional Research and Planning administers a survey each fall entitled, "Entering Student Needs Assessment Survey" (see Appendix A for a copy of the survey). The purpose of this survey is to ask entering first-time freshmen for their best estimate of the amount of help they will require in specific skill areas over the course of their academic career. This is the second fall that such a survey has been administered.

The "Entering Student Needs Assessment Survey" was included in the packet of materials distributed to entering freshmen this summer at Delaworld101. A total of 720 first-time freshmen returned usable surveys to the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. This represents a 21% response rate. A comparison of the survey respondent population to the actual first-time freshmen population reveals that the ethnic distribution of the survey sample is almost identical to the actual population. Females are somewhat overrepresented in the sample, while Delaware residents are underrepresented. Due to the fact that non-residents are overrepresented in the sample, we observe that survey respondents have higher SAT scores than the actual population. Although this sample may not reflect the opinions of *all* first-time freshmen, the survey respondents do represent a sizeable number of academically talented students and provide information that has not been available to date. The full comparison of the survey respondents and the actual population is presented in Appendix B. The results of the survey are summarized in this report.

Need Analysis of Entering Students

The Fall Needs Survey gives entering students the opportunity to select from 27 different areas in which they hope to make significant gains while at the University. Table 1 shows that a number of skill areas stood out on the Fall Needs Survey. Over half of the respondents indicated that they need to make moderate to great gains in the following skill areas: acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills for graduate school (67%); identifying co-op and internship opportunities (64%); and expanding the volume and range of literary works read (53%). Interestingly enough, these exact three skill areas stood out on the previous Fall Needs Survey. In addition, half of the respondents indicated that they need to make moderate to great gains in understanding science and technology applications.

The response patterns of the Fall Needs Survey showed additional skill areas where a number of the respondents indicated that they need to make moderate to great gains. These specific skill areas were as follows: speaking more confidently in front of people (49%); improving the ability to synthesize and apply ideas and concepts from multiple disciplines (49%); strengthening quantitative and mathematical skills (48%); gaining an appreciation of current events (47%);

gaining a broader understanding of other cultures (44%); identifying clear career objectives (43%); and improving study habits (42%). Table 1 highlights eleven (11) specific academic and personal skill areas where entering students would like to make the most gains (based on percentage that need to gain a great deal and percentage that need to gain a moderate amount) during their careers at the University.

Table 1. Expected Educational Gains in Specific Academic and Personal Skill Areas for Entering First-Time Freshmen

<i>Academic and Personal Skill Area</i>	<i>Great Deal</i>	<i>Moderate Amount</i>	<i>Small Amount</i>
Acquire skills to prepare for graduate school	23.8%	42.7%	23.6%
Identify co-op and internship opportunities	23.0%	40.7%	28.3%
Speak more confidently in front of people	17.7%	31.3%	29.3%
Strengthen quantitative and mathematical skills	14.7%	32.8%	36.3%
Identify clear career objectives	14.5%	28.8%	35.2%
Expand volume and range of literary works read	12.8%	40.2%	38.5%
Improve study habits	12.8%	29.6%	40.8%
Understand science and technology applications	10.3%	39.6%	34.4%
Gain appreciation of current events	10.2%	36.9%	39.4%
Integrate concepts from different disciplines	9.4%	39.4%	39.3%
Gain broader understanding of other cultures	7.0%	37.1%	36.0%

Appendices 1A, 1B, and 1C present the tabulations of the full survey results. Appendix 1A contains the frequency distribution; 1B rank orders each section of academic and personal skill areas by mean score; and 1C rank orders each section of academic and personal skill areas but excludes responses from students who indicated no expected need to start or if the skill area was not relevant.

Additional Need Areas of Entering Students

The Fall Needs Survey gives entering students the opportunity to add comments regarding additional areas where they feel they will require University assistance during their academic careers. The most frequently cited need was gaining the necessary preparation for specific career goals and graduate or professional school. Students also cited the need to improve study skills and work habits. In addition, students cited the need to participate in internships, expand knowledge in a specific major or minor, and study abroad. Finally, students cited the need for interaction with advisors and personal counseling. A number of students indicated that they are looking to receive the best possible overall education at the University. A summary of the respondent’s specific comments may be found in Appendix C.

The Fall Needs Assessment Survey will continue to be administered in order to monitor the current and changing needs and expectations of entering students. A follow-up survey will be administered this spring to determine to what extent the University has met the academic and social needs of entering students. Please contact the Office of Institutional Research and Planning with any questions. Your comments and suggestions are welcome.