

## **Institutional Research Study 01-04**

### **Entering Student Needs Assessment Follow-up Survey A Report Spring 2001**

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Assessing student needs and measuring learning outcomes is a priority for the University. In the fall of 2000, the Office of Institutional Research and Planning administered a survey entitled, "Entering Student Needs Assessment Survey." The purpose of this survey was to ask entering first-time freshmen for their best estimate of the amount of help they would require in specific skill areas over the course of their academic career. The full results of this survey are available in IRS 01-01. This spring, the Office of Institutional Research and Planning administered a follow-up survey entitled "Needs Assessment Survey" to the freshmen that responded to the fall survey (please see Appendix A for a copy of the survey). The purpose of the follow-up survey was to measure to what extent the academic needs of entering students have been met by the University. This report highlights the principal findings from the spring 2001 follow-up survey administration.

The follow-up Needs Assessment Survey was mailed to 769 students. A total of 164 usable surveys were returned to the Office of Institutional of Research and Planning. The response rate for the follow-up survey was approximately 21%. The survey respondents therefore represent 5% of entering first-time freshmen students. While this sample is probably not representative, the results are interesting and provide useful information.

#### ***Need and Gain Analysis of Entering Students***

The fall Needs Assessment Survey gave entering students the opportunity to indicate areas in which they hoped to make significant gains while at the University while the follow-up Needs Survey gave entering students the opportunity to indicate the level to which their academic needs have been met by the University. Three skill areas stood out on the fall Needs Survey. Over half of the respondents indicated that they hoped to make moderate to great gains in the following skill areas: acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills for graduate school; identifying co-op and internship opportunities; and expanding the volume and range of literary works read.

The results of the follow-up Needs Survey provide evidence that the University has been most successful in helping students meet their academic and personal goals. For example, 45% of the respondents on the follow-up survey indicated that acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills for graduate school have been at least partially met. Forty-three percent of the respondents

indicated that identifying co-op and internship opportunities have been at least partially met. Close to three-quarters (73%) of the respondents indicated that expanding the volume and range of literary works read have been at least partially met. The complete statistics for the spring follow-up survey may be found in Appendix B while the summary of mean scores for the spring follow-up survey may be found in Appendix C.

The response patterns of the fall Needs Survey revealed five additional skill areas where nearly half of the respondents indicated that they hoped to make moderate to great gains. Interestingly enough, the follow-up Needs Survey showed that the needs in these specific skill areas of more than three-quarters of the respondents were at least partially met. These specific skill areas were as follows: improving the ability to synthesize and apply ideas and concepts from multiple disciplines (90%); improving study habits (84%); gaining a broader understanding of other cultures (82%); strengthening quantitative and mathematical skills (80%); and identifying clear career objectives (77%).

Close to three-quarters of the needs in two additional specific skill areas were at least partially met. These specific skill areas were gaining an appreciation of current events (73%) and learning to speak more confidently in front of people (72%). In addition, the University continues to excel at providing entering students with necessary computer skills. Thirty percent of the students indicated that the University has exceeded their needs in using computers as a learning tool. An additional 43% of the students indicated that the level to which computers are being used as a learning tool has met their needs. Table 1 highlights to what extent the needs of entering students in twelve specific academic and personal skill areas have been met after one year at the University. It is not surprising that the academic and personal needs of students may not be fully met as we are assessing entering students at the beginning of their academic career.

**Table 1. Level to Which Highlighted Academic and Personal Skill Areas Have Been Met**

<i>Academic and Personal Skill Area</i>	<i>Exceeded</i>	<i>Met</i>	<i>Partially Met</i>
Clarify academic goals and objectives	8.6%	49.4%	34.0%
Think analytically and logically	18.3%	48.2%	23.8%
Work independently and pursue own ideas	22.0%	47.6%	21.3%
Obtain a multi-disciplinary education	16.5%	47.0%	24.4%
Improve study habits	12.8%	46.3%	25.0%
Integrate concepts from different disciplines	12.9%	46.0%	30.7%
Understand, work, and live with a diverse population	22.4%	46.0%	18.6%
Use computer as a learning tool	29.9%	43.3%	17.7%
Improve library research skills	15.9%	40.2%	26.2%
Work effectively in groups to solve problems	18.9%	39.6%	22.6%
Budget time efficiently	22.1%	39.3%	23.9%
Gain broader understanding of other cultures	16.1%	29.8%	36.0%

The fall Needs Survey provided an open-ended comments section which gave students the opportunity to indicate other skill areas that they would like the University to assist them during their academic career. 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.

The follow-up Needs Survey indicated that the University was successful in assisting students in many of the above mentioned skill areas (see Table 1). For example, 49% of the students indicated that their academic goals and objectives have been clarified while an additional 34% indicated that these goals and objectives have been partially clarified and 9% indicated that the level to which their needs in this particular skill area have been met exceeded their expectations. Forty-six percent of the students indicated that their study habits have improved while an additional 25% indicated that these habits have partially improved and 13% indicated that the level to which their needs in this particular skill area have been met exceeded their expectations.

### ***Additional Need Areas of Entering Students***

The follow-up Needs Survey also gave students the opportunity to add comments regarding how the University can better address and meet their needs concerning their academic career. The most frequently mentioned need was providing more informative career advice. Students also mentioned the need for advisors to be more knowledgeable on University requirements and the need for more diversity at the University. In addition, students mentioned the need for better advertisement for special lectures, guest speakers, and club activities. Finally, students mentioned the need to meet with an academic advisor more often and requested that the University stop requiring courses that have no relationship to career path. A summary of the respondent's specific comments may be found in Appendix D. A summary of the comments ranked by frequency count may be found in Appendix E.

### ***Summary***

The last statement in each section of the survey asks students to assess their overall experience. Students have indicated that the University is taking the necessary steps to meet their academic and personal needs (see Table 2). For example, more than half (55%) of the students indicated that the University has helped them with their overall academic skills. Thirty-seven percent of the students indicated that the University has helped them with their overall academic and career objectives while an additional 45% indicated that the University has partially helped them in this skill area. Finally, 31% of the students indicated that the University has helped them with their personal, social, and cultural awareness while an additional 49% indicated that the University has partially helped them in this skill area. It should be noted that compared to spring 2000, students indicated an increase in the amount that the University has

*exceeded* meeting their needs in overall academic and personal skill areas. For example, the University experienced an eight percentage point increase in spring 2001 in meeting the overall personal, social, and cultural awareness of students. Furthermore, the University experienced a seven percentage point increase in helping with overall academic skills and a four percentage point increase in helping with overall academic and career objectives.

**Table 2. Level to Which Overall Academic and Personal Skill Areas Have Been Met**

	<b>Exceeded</b>		<b>Met</b>		<b>Partially Met</b>	
	<i>Spring 2000</i>	<i>Spring 2001</i>	<i>Spring 2000</i>	<i>Spring 2001</i>	<i>Spring 2000</i>	<i>Spring 2001</i>
Academic Skills	7.4%	14.0%	57.1%	54.9%	31.9%	27.4%
Academic and Career Objectives	2.5%	6.3%	36.2%	36.5%	45.6%	44.7%
Personal, Social, and Cultural Awareness	6.7%	14.3%	48.5%	31.1%	41.7%	49.1%

Please contact the Office of Institutional Research and Planning with any questions. Your comments and suggestions are welcome.