What are students learning at The University of Iowa?

Student Experience in the Research University

During Spring 2013, UI administered the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey. UI is one of 15 universities in the SERU Consortium, an initiative of the Center for Studies in Higher Education at UC-Berkeley.

All degree-seeking undergraduates were invited to take the survey online between spring break and the end of the semester. A total of 5914 students (29.8%) responded to the survey. For more information about the survey and a profile of respondents, visit uc.uiowa.edu/about-survey

This SERU Brief provides an overview of responses to SERU survey questions related to how students use their time. Other Briefs in this series present data on different dimensions of being a student at UI, including student satisfaction and interaction with faculty members and student perceptions of their majors.

SERU presents students with a list of academic and non-academic activities and asks them to estimate the average number of hours they spend per 7-day week on each activity. Response options are in 5-hour intervals (1-5, 6-10, and so on, through 25-30). Students also have the option of selecting “zero” or “more than 30.” Individual students vary widely in how they use their time, and responses to this question make it possible to identify patterns of time use that are relatively more or relatively less typical.

Figure One presents the distribution of responses for activities for which students, on average, report using most of their time. The median response for attending class and for academic activities outside of class was 11-15 hours per week; for all other activities identified in Figure One, the median response was 6-10 hours per week. While nearly one-third of students reported working more than 15 hours per week, 37% reported working zero hours week.

Figure One: Activities for which median reported time use is 11-15 or 6-10 hours per week

- Attending classes, discussion sections or labs
- Studying and other academic activities outside of class
- Using the computer or other electronic device for non-academic purposes
- Socializing with friends
- Paid employment (include paid internships)

Options: More than 30 - 26-30 - 21-25 - 16-20 - 11-15 - 6-10 - 1-5 - Zero
Sample Invitation to Complete the SERU Survey:

Student Voices
Make a Difference

The University of Iowa has over 21,000 undergraduates, in more than 100 different fields of study, and we want to know what each of you thinks.

Tell us by taking a survey that lets us hear from all of you - about your classes, your major, life as a student here, and your overall experience at UI. When we hear from you, everybody benefits.

Digging Deeper

This Brief provides a snapshot of responses to just a few SERU questions. Other sections of SERU address a wide range of topics, including:

- satisfaction and interaction with faculty
- perceptions of majors
- future plans
- student financial concerns
- perceptions of their learning and development
- climate for diversity
- community involvement
- suggestions for improving the undergraduate experience at UI

The full survey is online at uc.uiowa.edu/about

To view student responses to other SERU questions, or to explore responses by college, major, class level, or other demographic variables, contact seru@uiowa.edu

Figure Two identifies the activities for which the median student response was either zero or 1-5 hours per week. These responses identify the activities for which a greater number of students are likely to report relatively little participation or none at all.

For example, approximately one-third of students report participating in community service, student organizations, or time with family 1-5 hours per week, but a slightly greater number of students report zero hours per week in each of these activities. About one-fourth report participating 1-5 hours per week in spiritual or religious activities, but nearly two-thirds report zero.

On the other hand, over 40% report participating in exercise or recreational sports 1-5 hours per week, and the majority of students report more than that. Only about one in ten report zero hours of exercise or recreational sports per week.

Just over a third of students report partying 1-5 hours per week; 33% report zero hours per week. On aggregate, reported hours of partying per week are roughly equivalent to reported hours of commuting, or to reported hours attending movies, concerts, sports, or other entertainment events.

When asked to estimate their amount of time sleeping, more than half of students reported an average of 7-8 hours per weeknight (Figure Three); 39% reported an average of 5-6 hours. Only a few reported either higher or lower average hours of sleep per weeknight.

To take a closer look at student time use, or to explore its relationship to other student characteristics and outcomes, contact seru@uiowa.edu.