Student Perspectives on the UI Undergraduate Experience

SST Retreat - September 14, 2012

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
UI Senior Exit Survey

Further Steps

• High-Impact Census Project
• Student Experience in a Research University (SERU)
We see this:

Students see this:
Focus of NSSE:

“NSSE annually collects information at hundreds of four-year colleges and universities about student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college.”

“Time and effort students put into ... educationally purposeful activities.”

Most recently administered at UI during Spring 2011, Spring 2008

- First-year and senior students invited to take the survey online
- 85 questions, plus demographic information
- 28% response rate in 2011 (27% for first-year students, 30% for seniors)
NSSE Responses: Overall Satisfaction

Overall Satisfaction

How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seniors</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Year</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Probably</th>
<th>Definitely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seniors</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Year</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples of Other NSSE Questions

+ Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
+ Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance
- Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own

+ Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together
- Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.)
- Community service or volunteer work

• Very often
• Often
• Sometimes
• Never

• Have not decided
• Do not plan to do
• Plan to do
• Done

+ examples of high-scoring UI responses
- examples of low-scoring UI responses
# UI Responses Relative to Peer Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmarks</th>
<th>UI FY relative to Carnegie Peers</th>
<th>UI SR relative to Carnegie Peers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of Academic Challenge</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active &amp; Collaborative Learning</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Faculty Interaction</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enriching Educational Experiences</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive Campus Environment</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UI Senior Exit Survey

Goal: To contribute to faculty and staff understanding of how students experience the university

All students are asked 11 questions:

- Five ratings questions related to learning outcomes and student experiences, based on UI Shared Learning Outcomes and the IOWA Challenge
- Four questions related to participation in selected high-impact activities
- Name one faculty or staff member who made a positive difference ...
- One open-ended reflection question

Administered online at the time students file to graduate

- > 90% response rate
UI Senior Survey: Learning Questions

The overwhelming majority of graduating seniors strongly agree (SA) or agree (A) that their UI experiences helped them achieve their own educational goals and each of the shared learning outcomes:

(SA)  (A)  My time at UI has helped me ...

44%  50%  Achieve my educational goals.
45%  50%  Build a broad **knowledge** base in subjects inside and outside my major.
50%  47%  Gain intellectual and practical **skills**.
56%  39%  Develop social, intellectual, and personal **responsibility**.
47%  46%  Learn to **apply** my knowledge and skills in new situations.
## UI Senior Survey: Challenge Questions

Frequency of “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” Responses to IOWA Challenge Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample “Excel” Question</th>
<th>During my time at UI ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>In my classes, I was challenged to do my best work.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excel</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stretch</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples of Senior Survey Questions

+ In my classes, I was challenged to do my best work
+ I benefited from interacting with people who had beliefs or values different from my own.
+ My instructors seemed genuinely interested in helping students succeed.

- I took advantage of opportunities to get involved in activities on campus.
- I benefited from interacting with students who had cultural or ethnic backgrounds different from my own.
- I took advantage of opportunities to participate in community service or volunteer projects.

+ examples of high-scoring UI responses
- examples of low-scoring UI responses

• Very often
• Often
• Sometimes
• Rarely
• Never
Sample Responses to the Open-Ended Question,  
*What got in the way of achieving your educational goals at UI?*

“Myself. I had to take a break from school and come back when I was more mentally prepared for it.”

“Just because of the sheer size of the university, I felt as though I was not individually cared about at times.”

“A lot of my struggles were due to the fact that I wasn't attending classes.”

“I really did not face any significant difficulty during my time at the University of Iowa besides the challenges I was purposely given to acquire the knowledge and the skills during my coursework.”
Observations

The majority of students are graduating with a strong sense of achievement, community, and appreciation for their time at the university.

“I think I was successful at UI because of the people I surrounded myself with. Not only my friends, but the faculty at UI as well, really strived to remind us why we are all here ...

“The professors did everything within their power to help me succeed. UI also made me feel comfortable even though I am the minority. The University's interest in diversity was a great thing for me.”

“The constant support of the department helped me succeed. Their unfailing confidence and high expectations pushed me to achieve beyond what I believed was possible for me.”
When asked what helped them succeed, or what got in the way of achieving their goals, students are as likely to refer to themselves as to the institution or to faculty and staff.

“I believe that I was most successful because I took great interest in the classes I was taking, and what I was learning about.”

“I made a point to find things I'm passionate about. By doing this, I surrounded myself with good people and meaningful organizations that helped form a memorable college experience!”

“I would have been more involved with student organizations, and ... I would have been more interactive with my professors by attending office hours more frequently.”
Students express great respect for faculty and staff, and appreciate being intellectually challenged - especially when they know that support is there for them when they need it.

“I'm challenged in my coursework every day, all the while knowing that my professors and TAs are on my side, going out of their way to make sure I learn what I need to learn. This has been made apparent throughout my entire time here.”

“The UI pushed me to be the best I could be. What really helped me is the University's staff made it real easy to talk to and approach them if I had a problem.”

“The faculty in my department were phenomenal, and really wanted to see their students succeed. However, at the same time the faculty continued to challenge us in a learning environment.”
Faculty and Staff Observations

We often think of the university in terms of programs we provide, but students tend to describe their experience of the university in terms of the people they interact with.

“We need to get the word out ... Clearly one-on-one interactions matter.”

“We need to be reminded of the importance of trying to personally connect with students.”

“I have these kinds of interactions with students every day. For me, they’re routine. I don’t usually think of them as having a potentially significant impact on the student.”
Further Steps

Census of High-Impact Learning Opportunities

What opportunities do departments facilitate for students to experience high-impact learning activities beyond the first year, in or out of the classroom?

Student Experience in the Research University (SERU)

“The SERU Consortium was established in 2000 to develop a survey of students geared toward the research university environment, and to promote both institutional and scholarly uses of the data to help improve undergraduate education.”

• All undergraduates are asked to complete an online survey (Spring 2013)
• Allows us to include a limited number of institution-specific questions
• Reports aggregate institutional responses as well as department-specific responses