



Graduate Student Needs Assessment Survey 2002 Executive Summary

In the fall of 2001, the newly appointed Coordinator of Graduate Student Involvement working in conjunction with the Stamp Student Union and Campus Programs Research Advisory group started work on a survey to assess graduate student quality of life. The survey was intended as a co-curricular complement to the academically focused 2000 Graduate Student Survey conducted by a Continuous Quality Improvement team and the Campus Assessment Working Group. The survey was administered in April of 2002 via the web to 2,000 randomly selected graduate students and resulted in a 32.5% response rate. A copy of the survey can be found at: <http://cgi.umd.edu/survey/display?grad/GSNAS>

Demographics

- The respondents were evenly split between males (48.6%) and females (51.4%). Racial/ethnic identification of respondents was White/Caucasian (58.9%), Asian American/Pacific Islander (12.9%), Hispanic/Latino/Spanish (5.4%), Black/African American (4.8%), American Indian/other Native American (0.2%) with 15.2% indicating “other”. The responses are similar to the Fall 2001 admissions demographics, with the exception of slightly fewer respondents selecting “Black/African American” and slightly more selecting “Hispanic/Latino/Spanish” and “Asian American/Pacific Islander”. Thirty-two percent reported being non-U.S. citizens or non-permanent residents.
- There was a higher ratio of doctoral respondents to masters students compared to the graduate population, and as found in the 2000 study, there were a higher proportion of male doctoral students and female masters students. Seventy percent of respondents reported being full-time students compared to 60% of the total graduate population.
- Doctoral students are twice as likely as masters students to be married or have a domestic partner and twice as likely to have children. Thirty-five percent of respondents reported being married, 2.2% divorced, and 3.7% reported having a domestic partner. Almost 15% of graduate students have children with ages ranging from 5 weeks to 33 years.
- Respondents represented all colleges: 4.2% in AGNR, 1.1% in ARCH, 17.2% in ARHU, 12.6% in BSOS, 1.7% in BMGT, 1.8% in CLIS, 11.7% in CMPS, 11.4% in EDUC, 21.2% in ENGR, 2.8% in HLHP, 0.6% in JOUR, 6.5% in LFSC, and 6.2% in PUAF.

Campus Climate

- When asked if they enjoyed being graduate students at Maryland, 81.8% of graduate students strongly agreed or agreed. Almost half (46.7%) feel that there is a campus commitment to racial harmony and 44.8% feel comfortable expressing concerns to administrators/staff on campus.
- In contrast, 42.9% don't feel safe on campus at night, 54.8% rarely or never interact with graduate students outside their field of study and 36.1% have had a difficult transition to graduate school.

Orientation

- Respondents tended to use the orientation programs through their department most (10.6% did not attend and 11.5% unaware of program) followed by International Education Services (IES)

with 14.6% not attending and 20.6% unaware, and the Graduate School with 22.6% not attending and 25.8% unaware.

- For those that attended, IES has the highest ratio of people who agreed (20.5%) the program was effective vs. those who disagreed (3.8%). This was followed 39.7% agreeing and 14.8% disagreeing that the departmental orientation was effective. The Graduate School's orientation had 16.7% agreeing it was effective and 13.4% disagreeing.

Services

- Overall the respondents agreed that Campus Recreation Services (61.9%), the Stamp Student Union (61.1%), and the Health Center (47.6%) met their needs.
- A number of areas had high percentages of respondents indicating that they "Have Not Used" their services including: the Health Center (31.8%), Dining Services (42.6%), Athletics (53.4%), Office of Campus Programs (55.2%), Career Services (62.9%), Graduate Legal Services (67.1%), Counseling Center (69.7%), and Center for Young Children (74.2%).
- When asked whether Graduate Student Government (GSG) represents graduate student interests, 27.7% agreed and 8.8% disagreed. Twenty-nine percent of respondents were unaware of GSG.
- When asked how their health insurance needs were met, 46.9% of respondents have health insurance through their assistantship, 18.3% pay for their insurance costs by themselves, 15.7% have parents or spouse pay for health insurance, 15.2% use university MAMSI health insurance, and 5.4% use financial aid for health care. Five percent have no health insurance.

Issues

- When asked to select three issues of greatest importance to graduate students, respondents indicated that: assistantship stipends (69.2%), accessible night parking (36.3%), bookstore discounts (32.5%), office space (30%) and assistantship workloads (29.5%) were most important. Student service issues such as on-campus graduate student housing (17.2%), assistance finding housing (14.9%), construction of a graduate center (13.8%) and daycare options for children (6.8%) ranked 7, 9, 10, and 12 respectively.
- If new study spaces were created on campus, students would prefer study spaces with: coffee shop, couches, tables and chairs (55.2%), areas in the buildings where they work or take classes (49.7%), more access to the internet (44.3%), designated library space (36.5%) and a lounge in a graduate student center (30.6%).
- Top stressors for graduate respondents were (in order of preference): money/finances/paying bills, classes/school, time management, class workload, family/marital/romantic issues, personal relationships/social life, and research.
- When asked what one thing they believed the university does well, the top responses were (in order of preference): athletic teams/sporting events, provides a high quality education, Shuttle UM, excellent professors/faculty, libraries, Campus Recreation Services, and informing student of events/activities.
- When asked what one thing respondents would change at the university, the top responses were (in order of preference): better/closer/more parking, increased assistantship stipends, improved campus safety, increased routes and hours for Shuttle UM, increased social activities for graduate students, healthier food options, and more money for campus/departments.

Social

- When asked where they would prefer social programs to be held, 39.5% of respondents selected campus-wide social programs for all graduate students, 25.1% selected social programs through their department and 15.2% selected social programs through their school or college. Graduate respondents indicated that 82.8% are interested in socializing with other graduate students.
- A large number of graduate students remain on campus during the following breaks from school: Winter break (32.9%), Thanksgiving break (49.1%), Spring break (54.9%), Winter Term (59.4%) and Summer break (61.5%).
- While 37.8% of respondents indicated that they are not involved in any organizations on- or off-campus, others were involved in one or more of the following: national organization related to field of study (33.5%), organization associated with academic department (28.9%), organization with undergraduate and graduate membership (14.2%), intramural sports team (8.8%), and off-campus ministry/religious group (8.3%).
- When asked which graduate programs they would attend, the top choices of respondents were: thesis/dissertation writing seminars (54.2%), distinguished lecture series (46.3%), outdoor recreation event (37.2%), happy hour socials (35.5%), seminars on presentation/speaking skills (32.3%), film screenings for graduate students (30%), and graduate student/faculty/staff intramurals (20.8%).

Housing

- The most important issues related to housing for graduate respondents are: the cost of housing in general (65.4%), the distance of housing from campus (43.1%), safety of housing (42.3%), affordability of a single bedroom apartment (32.9%), available graduate student housing (29.7%), and proximity to public transportation (21.2%).
- The average direct cost of monthly housing and utilities is around \$601-\$700, however only 9.4% of respondents fall within that range. Instead, the results are distributed bi-modally with 18.8% indicating they pay \$401-\$500 per month and 16.9% indicating they pay more than \$900. Of the graduate students who pay more than \$900 per month, 24.5% live alone, 65.4% live with a spouse/partner/significant other and 4.5% live with one or more roommates.
- Forty-one percent of respondents live with a spouse/partner/significant other, 24.3% live with more than one roommate, 16.5% say they live alone, and 13.7% live with one roommate. For a graduate student living alone, 64.4% pay over \$700 per month with an average cost of \$840.

Commute

- When commuting to campus, 77.7% of respondents drive their own car, 26.0% use Shuttle UM, 19.4% walk or bike, 7.2% use Metro, 5.7% carpool, 5.1% use Metro bus and 0.9% use the MARC train.
- The average commute for a graduate student respondent is 29.9 minutes.