

The YFCY survey: Freshman responses after one year at GVSU

The Your First College Year (YFCY) survey is an instrument that is intended to measure the opinions and experiences of students who are just wrapping up their first year of college. It shares much of its content with the CIRP, the survey administered to GVSU freshmen during summer orientation, so changes in responses for items that appear on both surveys can potentially measure changes that occurred during the students' first year.

The Office of Housing and Residence Life has administered the YFCY as part of its assessment strategy each of the last two springs. Each resident student is required to complete the survey before checking out at the end of the year. Although participation is mandatory, the surveys themselves are completely anonymous. Housing has graciously shared the results from the 2004 and 2005 YFCY surveys so they can add to our pool of knowledge about how GVSU affects students.

There are some major limitations to what these particular results can tell us about GVSU. Because the YFCY data are anonymous, we cannot link individuals' answers to answers they gave prior to attending GVSU. In future administrations, students will be asked to include their SID with their responses (as they do on the CIRP survey), so the two response sets can be linked. In addition, the fact that only on-campus residents take the survey at GVSU creates a significant response bias in relation to national norms based on responses of both resident and non-resident students. The table attached to this report shows survey items where GVSU responses differed by at least 3 percentage points from averages for all participating public four-year colleges nationwide (listed on p. 4). These findings fall into 3 general categories:

- a. Those where differences were relatively small and not consistent across the 2 survey years. These probably do not represent real and persistent differences between GVSU and the comparison group;
- b. Those that are intimately and inextricably linked to on-campus residence and therefore tell us nothing about differences between GVSU and other institutions;
- c. Those that do not appear to be significantly confounded with on-campus residence and therefore seem to be real indications of differences between GVSU and national norms.

The tricky part is distinguishing among the three groups. In the text that follows I focus on points that I perceive falling into the third category. Note that on-campus residence tends to be related to a variety of student behaviors, either as a consequence of living on campus or simply because students who elect to live on campus also tend to choose those behaviors. Some of the findings listed below may in fact be confounded by on-campus residence, but I find it unlikely that residence fully explains the difference, particularly in cases where YFCY findings corroborate findings of other surveys that were not restricted to residents. Readers are encouraged to form their own opinions, of course.

Student engagement

There are several indications here that GVSU students are slightly less engaged academically than their peers nationwide. These findings generally concur with results from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) administered in winter 2005.

- GVSU students interact less with faculty outside of class (both during and outside office hours) and with academic advisors.
- GVSU students were less likely to have performed volunteer work in the past year, particularly in 2004. On the other hand, students were more likely than national peers to express satisfaction with the opportunities for community service.
- GVSU students were more likely to say that they were frequently bored in class and more likely to indicate that they had skipped at least one class.
- In 2004, GVSU students were less likely to indicate that their courses had inspired them to think in new ways. In 2005 GVSU students' responses were similar to their peers'.
- GVSU students are less likely to have discussed course content with other students outside class.
- GVSU students are less likely to have received tutoring, to have participated in a learning community, to have received advice from an upperclassman, or to have worked with an advisor to select courses.
- Fewer GVSU students indicated that they received emotional support and encouragement from a professor.
- When asked in 2005, GVSU students indicated that their professors were interested in students' personal problems and appreciative of their academic preparation.

Satisfaction

The following indicators show considerable satisfaction among GVSU students with regard to quality of instruction and most student services. Results conform closely to those reported from our biennial survey of graduates.

- GVSU students are more satisfied with their overall college experience than their peers.
- GVSU students were quite satisfied with classroom and computer facilities.
- GVSU students express greater satisfaction with the Registrar's Office, the Housing Office, and Recreational facilities than their peers do.
- GVSU students were less satisfied with the Library than their peers.
- GVSU students also expressed less satisfaction with new student orientation.

Miscellaneous

Here are some other findings of interest that don't fit into the categories above. Some may also be confounded with the residence issue.

- GVSU students were more likely to have participated in a demonstration
- GVSU students are more likely to have drunk wine or liquor
- GVSU students apparently witnessed less academic dishonesty than their peers.
- When the 2004 survey asked about the inclusion of various pedagogic techniques in their classes, GVSU students indicated less use of the techniques across the board. This could indicate a more balanced distribution of techniques at GVSU (i.e. all of the techniques are used "occasionally" but few

are used “frequently”), or it could indicate that GVSU students interpret terms like “occasionally” and “frequently” differently than their peers. A last possibility, which I consider unlikely, is that we’re just doing less in our classes.

YFCY Participants -- Public 4-year colleges

2004

Bernard M Baruch College
Cal Poly State U-San Luis Obispo
California State U-Channel Islands

Central Missouri State University
Cleveland State University

Eastern Connecticut State U
Eastern Michigan University
Eastern New Mexico University

Grand Valley State University
Indiana U of Pennsylvania
Mansfield U of Pennsylvania

New College of Florida
New Mexico Inst of Mining & Tech

Northern Arizona University

Sonoma State University

SUNY College-Geneseo
SUNY College-Oneonta
SUNY Institute of Technology

Towson University
U of Arkansas-Fort Smith
U of Central Florida

U of Michigan-Flint
U of Nebraska-Omaha
U of Pittsburgh-Johnstown

University College of the Cariboo
Western Carolina University

William Paterson U of New Jersey
Worcester State College

2005

Bernard M Baruch College
Cal Poly State U-San Luis Obispo

California State U-Long Beach
California State U-Los Angeles
California State U-San Marcos
Central Missouri State University

College of Staten Island
East Central University

Eastern Michigan University
Eastern New Mexico University
Georgia Southern University
Georgia Southwestern State University
Georgia State University
Grand Valley State University

Michigan Technological University
Nevada State College

Northeastern Illinois University
Northeastern State University
Northern Arizona University
Oakland University
San Francisco State University
Sonoma State University
Southeastern Oklahoma State University

SUNY Institute of Technology
Texas A&M U-Commerce
Texas A&M U-Kingsville

U of Arkansas-Fort Smith

U of Louisiana at Lafayette

U of Nebraska-Omaha

U of South Carolina-Upstate
U of Texas-San Antonio

Western Illinois University

Worcester State College