

Troy University Fall 2006 New Student Survey Report

Executive Summary

As an annual institutional effectiveness effort, the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness (IRPE) conducted the Troy University *New Student Survey* in Fall 2006. The purpose of the *Survey* was to identify the satisfaction of the Fall 2006 new students with their experiences at Troy University and to determine how well the University served their needs as new students.

The *Survey* was administered through an online survey program. The target population was new students who enrolled at the University for the first time in Fall 2006. On September 11, 2006, the survey was distributed via email to the first group of 6,869 students who enrolled in the first part of the Fall semester, and on October 25, the second group of 2,216 students who started in Term 2 and Session 2 of the Fall Semester were surveyed. After two follow-up emails to each group every two weeks after the first emailing, data collection was completed on November 27, 2006, and a total of 2,540 responses were received, representing a 29% response rate, excluding about 3% of the email addresses that were not valid.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics were first used to identify the areas with which students were most and least satisfied, based on campuses, colleges, and academic levels. Comparative analyses were then conducted to determine if significant differences existed in student satisfaction based on gender, ethnicity, age, and selection of Troy University as first choice. Comparison was also made between Fall 2005 and Fall 2006 responses to identify any improvement over the past year. The major findings are reported in “Highlights of the Findings,” and more detailed information, including frequencies of the responses, mean comparisons, demographic information and other related information can be found in the appendices.

Highlights of the Findings

Demographic Information:

Compared with responses to the *Fall 2005 Troy University New Student Survey*, this year’s survey yielded a better response rate (27% vs. 29%). The majority of the respondents were female (62%), white (53%), and non-traditional students (25 years or older) (73%) which reflected the distribution of the new students in Fall 2006 in terms of student demographics. However, almost half (47%) of the respondents were eCampus students, which alerts our caution in generalizing the findings to the entire new student population.

Of all the respondents, 60% were undergraduate students (24% first-time freshmen, 33% transfer students, and 3% transient students) and 32% were graduate students (24% new graduate students, 5% transfer, and 2% transient). Six respondents (0.2%) were dually-enrolled high school students and 196 (7.7%) enrolled with other admit statuses. Overall, 37% were business majors, 29% were Arts & Sciences students, 18% were from College of Education, 14% were Health and Human Services, and 2% were Communication and Fine Arts students. Additionally,

38% of the students were enrolled on in-state campuses (22% in Troy and Phenix City, 11% in Montgomery, and 5% in Dothan) (48% in Fall 2005 Survey), 15% were students of University College, and 47% were eCampus students (34% in Fall 2005 Survey).

College Choice and reason for choosing Troy University:

Of all the new students who responded to the survey, 74% selected Troy University as first choice when applying for college admission and 21% had Troy University as their second choice. The survey also found that approximately 55% of the students selected Troy University because of its flexibility of schedule, and approximately 50% indicated that they chose Troy University because of its location. The other two major reasons why students selected Troy University were “academic programs” (44%) and “affordability” (41%). Additionally, approximately 36% of the respondents had visited the Troy campuses before they enrolled at Troy University.

Student Satisfaction - Strengths:

Compared to the ratings from *Fall 2005 New Student Survey*, 57% of the ratings from this year’s survey were significantly higher (Appendixes 2 and 17). This is a strong indication of the improvement the University has made and of its commitment to serving its new students in the best way possible. As shown in Appendix 1.1, the percentages of “Agree” for all areas measured Fall 2006 were higher than those in Fall 2005, while the percentages of “Disagree” were lower in most of the areas. Furthermore, Appendix 17 illustrates that in 13 of the 23 areas compared, significant differences were found between students enrolled in Fall 2005 and Fall 2006 in their agreement ratings, signifying more satisfaction on the part of the Fall 2006 new students.

In particular, as indicated in Appendix 1, 85.8% of the new students in Fall 2006 agreed or strongly agreed that they were receiving a quality education at Troy University and 84.6% indicated that they would recommend Troy University to a friend planning to go to college. Additionally, 83% of the students had favorable ratings on “The semester/term format implemented at Troy University accommodates my learning,” “Classes are offered at convenient times,” and “Troy University has a good reputation in my community.” These areas were also ranked at the highest level in *Fall 2005 New Student Survey*.

Also among the top rankings by agreement level in this year’s survey were “The printed Schedule of Classes is informative and easy to follow” (81%) and “Troy personnel are knowledgeable and helpful” (79%). Additionally, the survey found that most of the new students were satisfied with the registration information they received prior to enrollment (78%), the online schedule of classes (78%), the classes they attended (78%), their being able to talk to faculty about their academic concerns (77%), and faculty’s care about students as individuals (77%).

These were the strengths of the University as a whole, which were also reflected in most of the campuses, colleges, and in different academic levels (Appendix 2 – 16). Analyses found strong positive correlations between all these areas and “I would recommend Troy University to

a friend who is planning to go to college.” This correlation suggests that the more students were satisfied with their college experiences, the more likely they would recommend the university.

Correlations between “Recommending TROY” and areas best rated:

	I would recommend Troy University to a friend planning to go to college
I am receiving a quality education at Troy University	0.888
Troy University has a good reputation in my community	0.821
The semester/term format at my location accommodates my learning	0.747
TROY personnel are knowledgeable and helpful	0.724
The classes I attend are well organized and well taught	0.721
Faculty care about students as individuals	0.708
Classes are offered at convenient times	0.678

Note: A correlation coefficient takes on values between -1.0 and +1.0, with “1” being the strongest correlation and “0” being no relationship.

Student Satisfaction – Weaknesses

Although the *Fall 2006 New Student Survey* found significant improvement in many of the areas measured, some areas of weakness still existed, and some of these weaknesses were found and reported in last year’s survey. These include on-campus bookstore hours, tutorial services, purchasing textbooks through Troy Virtual Bookstore, the availability of student organizations, and students having to “run around” when seeking information. With these areas, less than two-thirds of the respondents were satisfied. In particular, over 20% of the respondents disagreed that “Students seldom get the ‘run around’ when seeking information” (18% were neutral; and 62% agreed). These areas were also rated low or ranked at the bottom in most locations and colleges, even though some other areas, such as the registration process (either online or on-site) and academic advising were also in need of improvement on some campuses. It is recommended that special attention be directed to these items and improvement plans be developed and implemented in these areas. (See reports in Appendices 1 – 16.)

Comparison

Fall 2005 vs. Fall 2006 The mean agreement ratings of the Fall 2005 and Fall 2006 responses were compared to identify improvements the University made over the past year in the areas of academic programs, student services, and administration. As mentioned above, the mean ratings of 13 areas (out of 23) were significantly higher in Fall 2006 than Fall 2005, indicating that new students were more satisfied this Fall (See Appendix 17). Although some of the areas were still found to be areas of weakness that need further improvement, the significant

differences did suggest that all campuses, colleges, and administrative divisions had acted upon the findings of Fall 2005 New Student Survey and improved their services and operation to better serve the needs of the students. These improved areas include:

- Academic advising
- Sufficient financial aid options are available
- The online registration process is user-friendly
- The on-site registration process is user-friendly
- Students seldom get the “run around” when seeking information
- The online Schedule of Classes is informative and easy to follow
- Class drop/add procedures are appropriate
- Classes are offered at convenient times
- The University offers a variety of majors at my location
- On-campus bookstore hours are convenient for students
- Purchasing textbooks through Troy Virtual Bookstore is convenient
- Troy University has a good reputation in my community
- I would recommend Troy University to a friend who is planning to go to college

In addition, comparisons were also made of the percentages of “Agree” and “Disagree” between Fall 2005 and Fall 2006 responses by campus, college, and academic level, and these comparisons are found in the Appendices.

In-State Campuses vs. University College vs. eCampus Comparisons were made between campuses to determine if there were any significant differences between in-state campuses, University College, and eCampus in the areas measured. The findings showed that significant differences existed in 17 of the 25 areas and that University College respondents had higher levels of agreement in most of the areas than in-state campus students and eCampus students. In addition, it should be noted that University College and eCampus students were more satisfied that classes were offered at convenient times, compared to in-state campus students, and that University College students tended to respond that there were not sufficient tutorial services or enough majors offered through their locations. (See Appendix 18)

Undergraduate vs. Graduate As illustrated in Appendix 19, in 11 of the 25 areas measured, significant differences were identified between undergraduate and graduate students. Graduate respondents agreed at higher levels than undergraduate respondents in the following areas:

- Troy personnel are knowledgeable and helpful
- Faculty care about students as individuals
- I feel I can talk to faculty about my academic concerns
- Academic advising is adequate
- Class information provided prior to enrollment was helpful
- Students seldom get the “run around” when seeking information
- Classes are offered at convenient times
- The semester/term format at my location accommodates my learning

And undergraduate respondents tended to agree more than graduate respondents that:

- The University offers a variety of majors at my location
- Tutorial services are sufficient
- Student organizations are available for my participation.

Choice of Troy University In all the 25 areas measured, the means of the students who selected Troy University as their first choice were significantly higher than the means of students who did not select Troy as their first choice (See Appendix 23). This suggests that university choice level is important to the students' satisfaction with the university, and satisfaction with choice of university may lead to student success in academic pursuits.

Gender Group means for students with different characteristics were compared to identify possible significant differences in student satisfaction for these groups. Males and females shared about the same opinions regarding the academic programs, services, and administration except in the following 5 areas, in which male students were found to agree significantly more than females (See Appendix 20):

- Troy personnel are knowledgeable and helpful
- I feel I can talk to faculty about my academic concerns
- Students seldom get the 'run-around' when seeking information
- The University offers a variety of majors at my location
- Purchasing textbooks through Troy Virtual BookStore is convenient

In last year's Fall 2005 findings, significant differences were found between males and females in approximately 50% of the areas measured.

Ethnicity The satisfaction means for students of different ethnic backgrounds were found significantly different for the following items, with Blacks agreeing more often than other ethnic groups (See Appendix 21):

- Academic advising is adequate
- Sufficient financial aid options are available
- Class information provided prior to enrollment was helpful
- The on-site registration process is user-friendly
- Students seldom get the "run around" when seeking information
- Classes are offered at convenient times
- On-campus bookstore hours are convenient for students
- Purchasing textbooks through Troy Virtual BookStore is convenient
- The semester/term format accommodates my learning
- Troy University has a good reputation in my community
- I am receiving a quality education at Troy University
- I would recommend Troy University to a friend planning to attend college

(Whites were found more satisfied in *Fall 2005 New Student Survey*)

Traditional vs. Non-Traditional Compared with responses to the *Fall 2005 New Student Survey*, there were less differences found between traditional students (under the age of 25) and non-traditional students (aged 25 or older). For these two groups of students there were significant differences in approximately 50% of the areas measured in Fall 2005 with higher

means for non-traditional students. In the *2006 New Student Survey*, significant differences were found between the traditional and non-traditional students in only 4 areas. Traditional students rated significantly higher in their agreement with (Appendix 22):

- Tutorial services are sufficient
- On-campus bookstore hours are convenient for students
- Student organizations are available for my participation

And non-traditional students agreed more with:

- Classes are offered at convenient times

Learning about Troy University: 43% of the new students indicated that they learned about Troy University through “Word of Mouth,” while 48% learned about the registration dates and times via “Internet.”

Best way to advertise Troy University: 48% of the new students thought that “Word of Mouth” was the best way to advertise Troy University and 26% indicated that the best way was through the “Internet.”

New Student Description of Troy University: The new students of Fall 2006 shared about the same opinions as those in Fall 2005 in their descriptions about Troy University:

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| • Troy University is convenient | 67% |
| • Troy University is of a good value for the price | 45% |
| • Troy University is academically challenging | 40% |
| • Troy University is a friendly institution | 39% |
| • Troy University is student-centered | 38% |

Implications

1. Overall, the new students of Fall 2006 were satisfied with their experiences at Troy University. There was an overall improvement in student ratings when compared to those of Fall 2005 new students.
2. Student college choice plays a significant role in students' attitudes and perceptions about a university.
3. The higher ratings of the Fall 2006 new students indicate the effectiveness of the University's programs and services in assisting new students in their transition to a new college environment and in helping them meet their needs.
4. The difference between Fall 2005 and Fall 2006 responses suggest that the University used the assessment results to make changes to improve programs and services for new students, and using assessment results to improve is the essence of institutional effectiveness and will enable the University to continue improving in the future.
5. The significant differences between different campuses and students of different characteristics should be considered as the University works to meet the needs of a diverse student population.
6. Because almost half of the respondents were eCampus students, generalizations should be made with caution. It is recommended that the results for each campus and college be used when considering changes to be made.