Troy University Fall 2005 New Student Survey Report

Executive Summary

As an annual institutional effectiveness effort, the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness (IRPE) conducted its first Troy University *New Student Survey* in Fall 2005. The purpose of the *survey* was to identify the satisfaction of the Fall 2005 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 the new students who enrolled at the University for the first time in Fall 2005. On October 14, 2005, the online survey was distributed via email to the first group of 5,936 students who enrolled during the first part of the Fall semester, and on December 9, the second group of 2,234 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 in the middle of January 2006, and a total of 2,203 responses were received, representing a 27% response rate.

The descriptive method of data analysis was used to identify the areas with which students were most and least satisfied, based on campuses, colleges, and academic levels. Comparative analyses were also conducted to determine if significant differences existed in student satisfaction based on gender, ethnicity, age, and selection of Troy University as first choice. 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 the response rates of similar surveys conducted previously on each of the campuses, the *Fall 2005 Survey* yielded a much better response rate, probably because the online survey mechanism was in place. The majority of the respondents were female (66%), white (54%), and non-traditional students (25 years or older) (70%). This distribution reflected the distribution of the new students in Fall 2005; however, because the TROY campuses serve different types of students (Troy serves traditional students and other campuses serve predominantly non-traditional students), the generalization of survey findings should be made with caution.

Of all the respondents, 59% were undergraduate students (24% first-time freshmen, 32% transfer students, and 2% transient students) and 33% were graduate students (26% new graduate students, 5% transfer, and 2% transient). Overall, 37% were business majors, 26% were Arts & Sciences students, 19% were College of Education students, 15% were Health and Human Services students, and 3% were Communication and Fine Arts students. Additionally, 48% of the students were enrolled on campuses in Alabama (28% in Troy and Phenix City, 14% in

Montgomery, 7% in Dothan), 18% were students of University College, and 34% were Distance Learning students.

College Choice and reason for choosing Troy University:

Of all the new students who responded to the survey, 71% selected Troy University as first choice when applying for college admission and 23% 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 44% indicated that they chose Troy University because of its academic programs and affordability. Additionally, approximately 39% of the respondents had visited the Troy campuses before they enrolled at Troy University.

Student Satisfaction - Strengths:

As indicated in Appendix 1, overall, new students were satisfied with their experiences at Troy University. The majority of the students (85%) agreed or strongly agreed that they were receiving a quality education at Troy University; 83% indicated that they would recommend Troy University to a friend; and 83% responded that the semester/term format implemented at Troy University accommodated their learning.

Among the top items ranked by agreement level were "The printed Schedule of Classes is informative and easy to follow" (80%) and "Troy University has a good reputation in their communities" (80%). Furthermore, the survey found that most of the new students were satisfied with the times classes were taught (79%), the classes they attended (78%), the knowledge and helpfulness of Troy personnel (77%), and care from the faculty (76%).

These were the strengths of the University as a whole, and these strengths were 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 the item Q13: "I would recommend Troy University to a friend who is planning to go to college". This item was ranked in second place of all satisfaction items (Appendix 1) and indicates that students might help advertise the University.

Student Satisfaction – Weaknesses

Based on the student agreement levels, the survey identified some areas of weakness. These include the convenience of on-campus bookstore hours, sufficiency of the convenience of tutorial services, purchasing textbooks through Troy Virtual Bookstore, the availability of student organizations, and the frequency of students getting the 'run around' when seeking information. In these areas, less than two-thirds of the respondents were satisfied. In particular, 25% of the respondents disagreed that "Students seldom get the 'run around' when seeking information" (18% were neutral; and 57% agreed). These items were also rated low or ranked at the bottom in most locations and colleges. Other areas, such as the registration process, academic advising, and class times, were in need of improvement on some campuses. Special attention should be directed to these items and plans to improve should be developed and implemented. (See reports in Appendixes 1 – 12.)

Comparison

Group means for students with different characteristics were compared to identify possible significant differences in student satisfaction for these groups. The analyses found that the satisfaction means for males and females were significantly different with males more satisfied for:

- Knowledge and helpfulness of personnel
- Faculty's concern for students as individuals
- Feeling of being able to talk with faculty about academic concerns
- Adequacy of academic advising
- User-friendliness of on-site registration
- Students seldom getting the 'run-around' when seeking information
- Online schedule of classes being informative and easy to follow
- Classes being offered at convenient times
- The University's offering of a variety of majors
- Sufficiency of tutorial services, and
- Semester/term format accommodating students' learning

(See Appendix 17)

Furthermore, the satisfaction means for students of Other Minorities/Blacks and Whites were significantly different, with Whites more satisfied for:

- Faculty's concern for students as individuals
- Feeling of being able to talk with faculty about academic concerns
- Availability of sufficient financial aid options
- Tuition payment plan being beneficial for students
- The University's offering a variety of majors
- Sufficiency of tutorial services
- Convenience of on-campus bookstore hours
- Convenience of purchasing textbooks through Troy Virtual BookStore
- Availability of student organizations
- Semester/term format accommodating student's learning
- Troy University having a good reputation in student's community
- Student's receiving a quality education at Troy University
- Student's recommending Troy University to a friend planning to attend college

(See Appendix 18)

Additionally, the satisfaction means for non-traditional students (aged 25 or older) and traditional students (under age 25) were significantly different with non-traditional students more satisfied for:

- Knowledge and helpfulness of personnel
- Faculty's concern about students as individuals
- Availability of sufficient financial aid options
- Tuition payment plan being beneficial for students
- User-friendliness of the on-site registration process
- Classes being offered at convenient times
- Classes being well-organized and well-taught
- Convenience of on-campus bookstore hours
- Convenience of purchasing textbooks through the Troy Virtual BookStore
- Availability of student organizations
- Semester/term format accommodating student's learning

(See Appendix 19)

Further analysis found that the satisfaction means for students who selected Troy University as their first choice were significantly different than the means of students who did not select Troy as their first choice for:

- Knowledge and helpfulness of personnel
- Faculty's concern about students as individuals
- Feeling of being able to talk with faculty about academic concerns
- Adequacy of academic advising
- Availability of sufficient financial aid options
- User-friendliness of the online registration process
- User-friendliness of the on-site registration process
- Students seldom getting the 'run-around' when seeking information
- Online schedule of classes being informative and easy to follow
- Appropriateness of the class drop/add procedure
- The University offering a variety of majors at student's location
- Troy University having a good reputation in the student's community
- Student recommending Troy University to a friend planning to attend college

(See Appendix 20)

Learning about Troy University: 46% of the new students indicated that they learned about Troy University through "Word of Mouth" (Question 12) while 45% learned about the registration dates and times via "Internet" (Question 13). (See Appendix 27)

Best way to advertise Troy University: 46% of the new students thought that "Word of Mouth" was the best way to advertise Troy University and 23% indicated that the best way was through "Internet" (Question 14). (See Appendix 27)

New Student Description of Troy University:
68% of the new students described Troy University as "Convenient," 46% thought it was of a "Good Value for the price," 43% considered it to be academically challenging, and 41% believed that the staff of the University were "Friendly" (Question 15). (Appendix 27)

Implications

1. Troy University has done a good job in meeting the needs of new students even though there are areas that need to be improved.
2. The University might use the following in its recruitment and advancement efforts:
   - 85% of new students responded that they were receiving a quality education at Troy University;
   -83% of the new students indicated that the semester/term accommodated their learning;
   -83% of the new students indicated that they would recommend Troy University to a friend;
   -68% of the new students described Troy University as convenient;
   -55% of the new students selected Troy University because of its flexibility of schedule.
3. New student satisfaction results may be used as information to assist student recruitment efforts.
4. Efforts should be made to maintain the strengths of the University and improve areas of weakness.
5. Significant differences in satisfaction of students with different characteristics should be considered as student services personnel work to meet the needs of a diverse student population.

Note: In Appendices 1-16 which follow, the instruction for all items was: "Q11: Please rate your agreement with the following statements with regard to academic programs, student services, and administrative procedures at Troy University."