

Troy University International Student Survey Fall 2006

Executive Summary

Troy University is enrolling more and more international students. From Fall 2001 to Fall 2006, international student enrollment has more than doubled. Over the past 3 years, the average increase in international student enrollment has been 24% each year, and currently over 700 international students are studying at Troy University. To better serve the needs of the international students and help them achieve their educational goals, the Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness conducted the first *Troy University International Survey* in Fall 2006. The purpose of the survey was to determine how well Troy University is serving the international student population, how satisfied the international students are with their TROY experiences, and what areas need to be improved for international students.

The online *International Student Survey* contained 16 questions regarding student demographics, academics, educational goals, and satisfaction with international student services, academic programs, faculty, university resources and facilities. In addition, students' opinions of Troy University were solicited. On August 24, 2006, the *Survey* was emailed to 630 international students who were currently enrolled and who had valid University email addresses. After two email follow-ups, the data collection was closed in early October. Two hundred twelve (212) international students responded to the *Survey*, which represented a 34% response rate.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics were used to explain the responses, and comparisons were made, as needed, to identify possible differences in students' satisfaction or opinions. A reliability test was performed on Q11 with 5 items, Q12 with 18 items, and Q13 with 11 items, and each of the questions had a reliability coefficient score of 0.80 or higher. These reliability scores suggest that data collected in the 3 questions are reliable. This report includes:

- a summary of the major findings,
- implications of findings,
- detailed reports for Q11 - Q13 and Q18 - Q23 of the *Survey* findings in tables,
- Frequencies/Results for *Survey* questions,
- a copy of the *Survey* instrument.

The Center for International Programs provided help and support in designing the *Survey* and collecting the data, and we appreciate the Center's assistance. We also thank Chancellor Jack Hawkins, who encouraged us in this effort and assisted by reviewing the questionnaire and providing feedback.

Major Findings

Overall, the international students who responded to the *Survey* were moderate in their ratings of satisfaction with TROY experiences and in their opinions about the University. However, the responses do not mean that the international students are not pleased with Troy University, because, according to empirical research, people from different countries respond to survey questions differently. The moderate ratings of the students are possibly due to the cultural differences or bias. Knowing this will aid in better understanding the findings of the *Survey*.

As indicated in Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 below, as well as in Reports 1-5, most of the areas surveyed received positive ratings ("Excellent" or "Good," "Very Satisfied" or Satisfied," and "Strongly Agree" or "Agree") from 50-70% of the respondents. A few areas were rated "Fair" or "Poor," "Dissatisfied" or "Very

Dissatisfied,” and “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” by more than 20% of the students. The survey found that students of different gender, from different countries, or at different academic levels shared about the same opinions of TROY; however, students from China gave positive ratings on their TROY experiences and their opinions about the University (See Report 5) more often than students from other countries.

Demographics of the Respondents The demographic information of the survey participants reflected that of the total international student population. The 212 respondents represented 28 countries and regions, with 32% from China, 24% from Nepal, 7.5% from Japan and South Korea respectively, 5.7% from India, and 30.8% from other countries. Of all respondents, 75% had a student (F-1) visa and 24% had visiting scholar (J-1) visa. The majority (60%) of the students were undergraduate students, with more than 52% males and 78% under the age of 25. Considering the response rate and the student characteristics, we may conclude that the students responding to the survey were a representative sample of the total international student population of the Troy University.

Educational Goals The international students at Troy University were ambitious in their educational goals. The educational goal of 51% of the respondents was a Bachelor’s degree at TROY, and the goal of 43% of the students was a Master’s degree. Educational goals in the United States were 50% for Master’s degrees and 26% for doctoral degrees. Of the 124 (60% of total) respondents currently enrolled at the undergraduate level, more than 15% indicated their educational goals were a Master’s degree at TROY, 44% intended to pursue a Master’s degree within the United States, and 21% hoped to receive a doctoral degree. Furthermore, of those who were currently graduate students at Troy University, 38% indicated their educational goals were a doctoral degree in the United States.

Learning about Troy University The largest number of international students learned about Troy University through educational exchange agencies. Over 30% of the respondents learned about TROY from those agencies. Additionally, students learned about TROY through the Internet (21%) and family members (18%) and about 12% of the students learned about Troy University through the universities in their countries.

First Impression As illustrated in Table 1, of the five areas rated for students’ first impression about Troy University, the highest rated was “Appearance of Troy Campus,” with approximately 70% of the students rating the campus appearance “Excellent” or “Good.” Between 30-43% of the respondents rated the other 4 areas positively.

Table 1. First Impression of Troy University:

	Excellent or Good	Fair or Poor
International student services	43%	32%
Campus housing for international students	30%	37%
Campus dining	30%	28%
Appearance of the Center for International Programs	39%	28%
Appearance of the Troy Campus	69%	10%

While most of the areas measured here had low ratings, students from China, as well as female students, were more likely to have an excellent or good impression of what they saw and experienced when they first arrived on campus. (See Report 5)

Satisfaction with Faculty Four areas measured the satisfaction of the students with TROY faculty’s care and concern towards international students. As indicated in Table 2, over half of the respondents were satisfied with the responsiveness of the faculty to their needs and the sensitivity of the faculty to their cultural

differences. However, around 17% of the students were dissatisfied with faculty’s help in overcoming language difficulties, and 18% were dissatisfied with faculty concern with their academic progress.

Table 2. Satisfaction with Care and Concern of Faculty:

	Very Satisfied or Satisfied	Very Dissatisfied or Dissatisfied
Faculty’s responsiveness to student needs	61.3%	11.6%
Faculty’s sensitivity to cultural differences	56.1%	11.1%
Faculty’s help in overcoming language difficulties	52.3%	16.6%
Faculty’s concern with academic progress of international students	49.5%	18.2%

Female students tended to agree that faculty were responsive to student needs and aware of the cultural differences, while Chinese students were satisfied with faculty’s concern with the academic progress of the international students.

Satisfaction with Academics Ratings for academic areas were better than other areas in terms of student satisfaction. According to the survey findings in Table 3, around two-thirds of the respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the “Quality of instruction in major programs” and “Quality of faculty in major programs.” However, percentages of students who were satisfied with “Course availability” and “Course sequencing” were less than 50%, and 14% indicated that they were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with “Course availability.”

Table 3. Satisfaction with Quality of Instruction:

	Very Satisfied or Satisfied	Very Dissatisfied or Dissatisfied
Quality of instruction in major programs	68.7%	4.0%
Quality of faculty in major programs	66.2%	5.0%
Academic challenge of major programs	62.1%	5.0%
Academic advising	56.2%	7.0%
Course availability	49.2%	14.1%
Course Sequencing	41.7%	9.0%

While students of different gender, academic level, living on and off campus, and from different countries were more or less the same in their satisfaction with the quality of education at Troy University, students from China were more likely than average to be satisfied with academic advising. (See Report 5)

Satisfaction with International Student Services and Activities The area of international student services and activities received the lowest satisfaction ratings. Except for “Opportunities to meet with people from other countries,” less than 50% of the students were satisfied with orientation, admissions, organizations and activities, and Career Center services.

Table 4. Satisfaction with International Student Services and Activities:

	Very Satisfied or Satisfied	Very Dissatisfied or Dissatisfied
Orientation for international students	46.7%	18.8%

International admission procedures	42.5%	17.5%
Opportunities to meet with people from other countries	59.0%	14.5%
Student organizations and activities	48.7%	15.6%
Support from Career Center for job placement	21.6%	40.7%

Undergraduate students, students under the age 25, and students from China seemed to be more satisfied with student organizations and activities. Additionally, Chinese students were found to like orientations for international students and international student admission procedures better. (See Report 5)

Satisfaction with University Resources and Facilities Around 60% of the respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the University resources and facilities. However, 14-18% of the students were not satisfied with campus computers or library resources and availability.

Table 5. Satisfaction with University Resources and Facilities:

	Very Satisfied or Satisfied	Very Dissatisfied or Dissatisfied
Quality of recreational facilities and activities	58.0%	9.0%
Availability of and access to campus computers	61.5%	14.0%
Library resources and availability	59.8%	17.6%

Student Opinions about Troy University As illustrated in Table 6, 55-65% of the students were positive in their opinions about 7 out of 11 areas measured. Over 20% of the respondents, however, disagreed or strongly disagreed with 3 of the areas, which were also the lowest in the agreement level: TROY's care and help and CIP's friendliness and help. These three areas should be researched to find means for improvement.

Table 6. Student Opinions about Troy University:

	Strongly Agree or Agree	Strongly Disagree or Disagree
Troy University cares about international students.	50.0%	25.0%
Troy University helps international students adjust and transition well to college life in USA.	39.0%	22.9%
People at Troy University are nice and friendly.	64.7%	8.3%
Troy University personnel are knowledgeable and helpful.	55.7%	9.4%
Troy University faculty are readily available to discuss my academic concerns with me.	55.9%	7.4%
I get along well with American students.	51.0%	14.2%
Troy University is a safe place to live and study.	62.2%	9.0%
The cost of living in Troy is reasonable.	62.6%	9.4%
At Troy University, I will be able to achieve my educational goals in the USA.	63.5%	9.4%
The personnel in the Center for International Programs are friendly and helpful.	50.0%	21.8%
I am enthusiastic about Troy University.	57.9%	6.4%

Comparison found that Chinese students were more positive in their opinions about the areas measured above. In particular, as illustrated in Report 5, about two-thirds of the students from China agreed that Troy University cared about international students, helped international students adjust and transition well to college life in the USA, and agreed that personnel in the Center for International Programs were friendly and helpful. The Chinese students also thought that they got along well with American students. Students living on campus were more likely than those living off campus to agree that Troy University cared about international students and helped international students adjust and transition well to college life in the USA, and female students tended to agree more that Troy University personnel were knowledgeable and helpful.

Choice of Troy University and Satisfaction with TROY-Sponsored Recruiters According to the responses, 62% of the students selected Troy University as their first choice when they applied to come to study in the United States and 20% had TROY as their second choice. Additionally, 53 respondents (28%) indicated that they had used a TROY-sponsored recruiter in their recruitment to Troy University, and 85% of these respondents agreed that Troy University met the expectations promised by the recruiters.

Recommendations of Troy University as well as the United States The students were asked if they would choose Troy University and the United States if they were given the opportunity to begin their study again. Furthermore, the students were also asked if they would recommend Troy University and the United States to other students in their home countries who were planning to study abroad. As indicated in Table 7, the responses to the questions were positive, with the majority of the students indicating that they would select the United States as well as Troy University if they could choose again and they would recommend the United States and Troy University to other students in their home countries.

Table 7. Re-selection and Recommendation of the United States and Troy University:

	YES	NO
Would you select the USA again as your place to study...?	86%	14%
Would you select Troy University again as your location to study in USA...?	50%	50%
Would you recommend the United States to other students in your home country...?	86%	14%
Would you recommend Troy University to other students in your home country...?	61%	39%

Implications

1. Considering the response rate and the students' characteristics, the survey sample was representative of the international student population at the University.
2. Respondents to the survey were moderate in their ratings in terms of satisfaction with and opinions about Troy University possibly because of their cultural differences; therefore, interpretation of the survey results should be done with caution.
3. Considering cultural differences, Troy University has done a good job in meeting the needs of the international students in the following areas:
 - Appearance of Troy University
 - Quality of instruction in major programs
 - Quality of faculty in major programs
 - Academic challenge of major programs

- People at Troy University are nice and friendly
- Faculty's responsiveness to student needs
- Troy University is a safe place to live and study
- The cost of living in Troy is reasonable
- Availability of and access to campus computers
- Library resources and availability

Approximately two-thirds of the international students believed that they would be able to achieve their educational goals in the USA at Troy University.

4. The international students at Troy University were pleased that they selected the United States as the country in which to pursue their educational goals, and they indicated that they would select TROY again if they were given another opportunity to choose and that they would recommend the United States to other students in their home countries.

5. Over 60% of the international students would recommend Troy University indicates that Troy University international students were satisfied with their college experiences at the University.

7. While we acknowledge the cultural differences or bias that may have impact on the ratings of the international students, the following areas may require further research for improvement:

- International student services
- Orientation for international students
- International admission procedures
- Student organizations and activities
- Campus housing for international students
- Campus dining
- Faculty's concern with academic progress of international students
- Troy University's help with international students in their adjustment and transition to college life in US
- Support from Career Center for job placement