



CAMPUS  
**ASSESSMENT**  
WORKING GROUP

**Results of the**  
*University of Maryland Student Survey 2000*

**January 2001**

**By members of the**  
**Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG)**  
**Assessment of Campus Experiences Subgroup**

# Results of the University of Maryland Student Survey 2000

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## **SECTION 1 - Foreword**

By Jim Greenberg, Ph.D.  
Director, Center for Teaching Excellence

The data presented by the CAWG report on results of the UMSS Survey 2000 have potential to be tremendously useful to faculty and administrators concerned with improvement of teaching and learning. These student perception data give us insight into the areas that students find to be strengths, areas which they believe have been absent or neglected during their experience, and most importantly areas which appear to need our serious attention in the context of strategic planning goals. The data provide a great opportunity to ask important questions, such as: Are we accomplishing what we could or should be accomplishing in student outcomes and satisfaction? Where do we need to probe more deeply in order to learn more about what is behind certain student responses? If we are not satisfied with student responses to certain items, what can we do to change the student situation and to help ameliorate deficiencies and reach our goals? What additional data do we have, or do we need, to best inform an effective improvement process?

There is an international wave of interest and emphasis regarding student learning outcomes. At the same time, there is widespread skepticism among faculty regarding the validity, reliability, and importance of student perception data. This CAWG report is tremendously useful in providing straightforward results from a systematic survey of students and a critical analysis of responses to their experience of learning on our campus. If we give it serious attention, ask what it tells us and what it does not, we can move forward in launching a comprehensive effort to enhance the data gathering and analysis process in behalf of the goal of genuinely improving student learning outcomes and utilizing the expertise of the entire campus community.

## Results of the University of Maryland Student Survey 2000

### SECTION 2 - Executive Summary

The University of Maryland Student Survey 2000 (hereafter referred to as UMSS), administered in Spring 2000, measures upper-division undergraduate students' perceptions and experiences in a variety of areas. Students reported their perceptions of the quality of instruction, and of their academic advising experience. In addition, students answered questions about their involvement in research, their comfort level using various instructional technologies, and their financial concerns. They reflected on their ability level in areas that are thought to contribute to success in academic and career settings - sometimes referred to as learning outcomes. Examples of such learning outcomes are applying what is learned to other situations, presenting a persuasive argument, and acquiring knowledge and skills applicable to a specific career. The data help us to gain insight into students' experiences in these important aspects of their undergraduate education.

*Building on Excellence: The Next Steps: The Strategic Plan for the University of Maryland, College Park*, published in the spring of 2000, gave strong emphasis to many of the issues examined in this survey. Survey data such as these can provide suggestions for improving the University's effectiveness by identifying institutional strengths to highlight, by accelerating initiatives, by assisting in planning and prioritizing efforts, and by providing guidance for more closely aligning resource allocations with student priorities. We hope these findings will assist the many campus departments tasked with carrying out the Strategic Plan initiatives.

#### General Findings

- The Strategic Plan has as one of its initiatives continuing to enhance the quality of undergraduate education. The UMSS asked respondents about various behaviors of instructors in their major, some of which described the mechanics of good instruction, and some assessed the degree to which respondents reported that their instructors made efforts toward creating a supportive classroom climate for their students. The majority of students was in agreement that their instructors demonstrated the mechanics of good instruction. However, those behaviors that are conducive to a supportive classroom climate were, in the perception of our respondents, not as evident.
- A goal of the Strategic Plan is to "offer an enriched educational experience to all students that takes full advantage of the special strengths of a research university and prepares them to be productive members of society." The majority of respondents reported having engaged in basic research-related activities such as reading an article from a professional journal (84%), attending a lecture or scholarly presentation other than their regular classes (71%), and discussing research or professional interests with a faculty member (59%). One in five (21%) had assisted in a faculty/staff research project, 23% had attended an academic conference, and 6% had made a presentation at an academic conference.

- Academic advising is an important contributor to the quality of undergraduate education. The UMSS asked respondents several questions about their advising experience. While a majority of respondents (60%) agreed that academic advising is accessible, under half reported their advisors have shown concern for them as individuals (45%), or had provided sound guidance about course work (47%). Forty-eight percent were, in general, pleased with the academic advising they have received.
- One way of assessing the impact of the undergraduate experience is first to ask students to rate themselves on several abilities considered to be learning outcomes, and then to ask them the extent to which they thought their experience at the University of Maryland directly affected these abilities. Responses to this set of learning outcomes questions were analyzed only for students who had been enrolled at UM for three semesters or more at the time of the survey. With few exceptions, over 70% of the respondents rated their various abilities as strong or very strong. Exceptions included speaking effectively, leading others effectively, and evaluating the reliability of information. With few exceptions, over 60% reported their experience at UM had directly affected these abilities.
- Among the efforts to improve the quality of undergraduate education stated in the Strategic Plan is to "systematically integrate the use of information technology into our instructional programs, so that all faculty and students can fully exploit new technology as an essential tool in teaching and learning." Over 80% of our respondents reported that they felt comfortable using information technology, and over half reported that their skills had been directly affected by their experience at UM.
- One of the challenges set forth in the Strategic Plan is to provide sufficient financial support for undergraduates to meet their educational and living expenses. Having enough money to cover the various expenses related to earning an undergraduate degree was considered difficult for over 40% of the UMSS respondents, with books and supplies (53%), and personal expenses (51%) of most difficulty.
- Improving the retention and graduation rates of undergraduate students is a salient goal in the Strategic Plan. Our findings suggest that there has been some improvement in students' overall satisfaction with the University of Maryland in the past two years. Seventy-one percent of the UMSS respondents agreed that they had made the right decision to come to UM. This is up from 68% in 1998. Sixty-seven percent agreed that if they had it to do over they would enroll here again, up from 60% two years ago.

## SECTION 3 - Background

The UMSS was developed in 1998 by the Assessment of Campus Experiences (ACES) subgroup of the Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) to address issues identified by the results of the 1997 administration of the Noel-Levitz *Student Satisfaction Inventory*. Keeping with the plan of identifying special issues to be addressed by each UMSS, given in alternate years, the 2000 version was significantly revised by CAWG to reflect the University's growing interest in student learning outcomes and information technology. Also reflecting the University's continued interest in classroom instruction and in students' financial concerns, the questions addressing these issues were repeated.

The results of this survey speak to the issues raised in *Building on Excellence: The Next Steps: The Strategic Plan for the University of Maryland, College Park* (May, 2000), and thus the Strategic Plan gave direction to the structure of this report. The findings help us gain insight into students' experiences in important aspects of the undergraduate experience. They suggest potential improvements in the University's effectiveness, by identifying institutional strengths to highlight, by accelerating initiatives, by assisting in planning and prioritizing efforts, and by providing guidance for more closely aligning resource allocations with student priorities.

### Campus Assessment Working Group

The Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG), chaired by Assistant Provost Ann Wylie, is dedicated to building a culture of evidence at the University of Maryland. One way of accomplishing this task is by administering large-scale surveys to cross-sections of undergraduates on a regular basis, thereby gathering evidence regarding the student experience from multiple perspectives. CAWG presently consists of six subgroups covering various aspects of the student experience. The members of the CAWG subgroup that worked on the project reflected by this report were:

Nehama Babin, Office of Institutional Research and Planning  
Chip Denman, Office of Information Technology  
Karen Douglas, Office of Institutional Research and Planning  
Adrienne Hamcke Wicker, Commuter Affairs and Community Service  
Pat Hunt, Counseling Center  
Julie Kromkowski, Facilities Management  
Sharon La Voy, Office of Institutional Research and Planning  
Rodney Petersen, Office of Information Technology  
Erin Rooney-Eckel, Engineering Student Affairs  
Terry Zacker, Stamp Student Union and Campus Programs

More information about CAWG is available on the website, [www.umd.edu/cawg](http://www.umd.edu/cawg), or from:

Sharon A. La Voy  
Assessment Coordinator  
Office of Institutional Research and Planning  
[slavoy@accmail.umd.edu](mailto:slavoy@accmail.umd.edu)

1101 Mitchell Building  
University of Maryland  
College Park, MD 20742  
301/405-3828

## **SECTION 4 - Methodology**

The ideal group of students to be given the University of Maryland Student Survey would reflect the University's diversity in term of race/ethnicity, academic performance, and native/transfer status. The UMSS was administered in the spring of 2000 to students enrolled in the Professional Writing Program. This group was selected in part because it closely matched the desired characteristics, and in part because it contained upper division undergraduate students with experience on campus, who would be most able to comment from personal experience. The Professional Writing Program enrolls students who have earned 56 credits prior to enrollment and who are meeting a writing requirement of their respective colleges. Instructors in the Program were given written instructions to read to students during a class the week before spring break, 2000. The Professional Writing Program was given incentives for their instructors' efforts. Students returned 1389 usable surveys.

## **SECTION 5 - The Instrument**

The UMSS contains over 120 items which measure upper-division undergraduate students' perceptions and experiences in a variety of areas, such as the quality of instruction and academic advising, their involvement in research, their use and comfort level with various technologies, and their financial concerns. For the first time, the UMSS asked respondents to reflect on their abilities in areas that are thought to contribute to success in academic and career settings - often referred to as learning outcomes.

## **SECTION 6 - Limitations**

As with other surveys, caution should be exercised when interpreting these results. All of these results reflect the respondents' perception of these issues, and not their behaviors or actual learning. This is especially important to remember when reviewing the results of the learning outcomes questions. We are not measuring what students have actually gained at the University of Maryland; rather, we are measuring what students say they have gained. The instrument asks respondents to reflect back to when they began at UM, rate the level of various abilities on a scale from very weak to very strong, and then rate their current level of these abilities. They were then asked the extent to which they thought their experiences at UM directly affected those abilities. In a pilot test of that part of the instrument, students reported understanding those questions, and being able to answer them with little or no trouble. However, the questions are complex in nature, and the results are probably best understood in relation to each other, rather than as stand-alone statements of student learning in those abilities.

## **SECTION 7 - The Sample**

In part to limit the number of demographic questions asked on the survey, respondents were told their student ID number was requested for research purposes. Of the 1389 respondents, all but 199 (14%) gave a valid student identification number. This provided access to

institutional data to obtain demographic information on the remaining 1190 respondents. Among these respondents, males (52%) slightly outnumbered females (48%). There were 60% White Americans, 14% Black/African Americans, 11% Asian Americans, 6% Hispanic Americans, 5% who were American with race unknown, and 4% international students. Sixty-five percent entered the University of Maryland as freshmen; 21% as transfers from a two-year institution; 11% from a non-UM 4-year institution; and 3% transferred from another UM campus.

Several informational items were included on the survey, and are available for all respondents. The number of semesters respondents had been enrolled at the University of Maryland, College Park as of Spring 2000 was 1-2 for 17%, 3-4 for 22%, 5-6 for 45%, and 7 or more for 16%. Forty-four percent reported they lived in off-campus housing, 26% lived with their parents or other relatives, 24% lived in campus residence halls, and 6% lived in Greek housing.

### **SECTION 8 - UMSS Findings**

In April 1996, the University formally adopted a plan, *Charting a Path to Excellence: The Strategic Plan for the University of Maryland at College Park*. In May 2000, President C.D. Mote updated and revised the Strategic Plan in a document entitled *Building on Excellence: The Next Steps: The Strategic Plan for the University of Maryland, College Park*. In it, the University community is encouraged to fulfill the expectations outlined in the 1996 document as well as to accomplish further ambitious goals that have refined the University's Strategic Plan. This updated mission has been and will be utilized by CAWG as it develops its assessment and reporting plans.

As is indicated in the Strategic Plan, "a necessary part of any strategic planning effort is an assessment of the University's current strengths, the challenges we face, and the opportunities that are open before us." The findings of the *University of Maryland Student Survey* are discussed in a manner to assist the University community in meeting the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan. Areas of the Strategic Plan are highlighted with accompanying evaluative descriptions of the UMSS data.

**Strategic Plan Initiative One: Continue to elevate the quality of undergraduate education in order to provide all students an enriched and challenging educational experience.**

**Educational Opportunities**

*(Sub-initiative 1.1) Provide enriched educational opportunities and personally fulfilling and challenging academic curricula that prepare all our graduates for productive roles in this increasingly complex world.*

In order to measure the level at which the University is meeting this initiative, twenty-three learning outcomes were created. Students were asked to assess their level of competence in each of the 23 areas at the time they began their Maryland experience and at the present. They were also asked the extent to which their experiences at the University directly affected their development in each area. Recent transfers, that is respondents who were enrolled at UM for fewer than three semesters, were not included in these particular analyses.

The 23 outcomes measure a number of areas critical in undergraduate education and include both academic and social competencies. Table I shows the degree to which students reported each of the 23 learning outcomes was affected by their experience at UM.

The top three areas that students reported were directly affected by their experience at Maryland (percent responding “some” and “very much”) were: acquiring knowledge and skills applicable to a specific career (73%), writing effectively (76%), and knowing what additional education is needed to pursue your career/job interests (66%).

Table I: Learning Outcomes and Abilities

<b>OUTCOME / ABILITY</b>  Sorted by % UM directly affected “Some” + “Very Much”	<b>UM experience directly affected</b>		<b>When BEGAN at UM</b>			<b>At PRESENT</b>		
	<b>Some + Very Much</b>	<b>Very Much</b>	<b>Weak + Very Weak</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>Strong + Very Strong</b>	<b>Weak + Very Weak</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>Strong + Very Strong</b>
Writing effectively	76	38	20	42	38	3	27	71
Acquiring knowledge and skills applicable to a specific career	73	41	26	43	30	5	21	74
Finding information that you need	72	33	16	48	36	2	23	75
Acquiring IT skills	70	35	27	42	31	5	25	71
Applying what you learn to other situations	68	28	8	44	48	1	16	82
Understanding diverse cultural, political and intellectual views	67	32	18	40	42	4	22	74
Presenting a persuasive argument	67	26	19	47	34	3	30	67
Knowing what additional education is needed to pursue your career/job interests	66	37	32	39	29	7	21	72
Listening effectively	66	22	11	38	51	3	21	76
Identifying careers that reflect your values, interests and abilities	64	30	26	37	37	7	21	72
Being confident in your ability to be successful in your career	63	29	24	38	39	8	22	70
Speaking effectively	63	28	21	42	38	5	29	66
Revising your thinking based on new information	63	25	9	41	50	1	18	81
Seeing relationships, similarities and differences among ideas	63	24	8	38	54	1	16	82
Working collaboratively	63	24	13	43	44	4	25	71
Evaluating the reliability of information	63	21	19	50	31	4	30	66
Leading others effectively	59	23	17	45	38	6	29	66
Working independently	55	22	7	30	63	1	13	85
Making friends	53	22	11	34	55	5	23	71
Managing the unexpected in life	51	23	16	37	47	4	20	76
Clarifying your values	50	18	9	40	51	3	20	77
Building self-esteem	49	20	13	39	48	5	24	71
Being creative	48	17	8	35	57	5	26	69

## **Innovative Course Design**

*(Sub-initiative 1.1a) Support and encourage innovative course design that stresses student participation, team-based problem solving, and technology enhancement and ensure that high academic standards are maintained in all our courses.*

Nearly three-quarters of our respondents (73%) agreed that instructors in their majors make it comfortable for them to participate in class discussions. This percentage differs minimally from the 1998 administration of the UMSS. Fifty-nine percent (59%) reported the instructors make assignments for group projects clear. This percentage is the same as in the 1998 survey. Notably, 70% agreed that instructors in their major use email to communicate with them. This percentage is up from 64% in 1998.

## **Research Opportunities**

*(Sub-initiative 1.1b) Seek additional ways for students to take advantage of the special opportunities that are available at a world-class research university and increase substantially the opportunities for students to be involved in research with a faculty member.*

Only students who had been enrolled at the University of Maryland for three or more semesters were included in this particular analysis, thereby excluding recent transfer-ins. The majority said that they had read an article from a professional journal (84%), attended a lecture or scholarly presentation other than their regular classes (71%), and discussed research or professional interests with a faculty member (59%). Slightly over one in five (23%) indicated that they had attended an academic conference, and/or had assisted a faculty/staff research project (21%). Six percent had made a presentation at an academic conference. Half of the respondents said they had participated in three or more of these activities.

## **Faculty & Teaching**

*(Sub-initiative 1.1h) Encourage faculty to make greater use of the Center for Teaching Excellence and its resources and introduce faculty members early in their academic career to best practices in pedagogy.*

Most of the ratings of the 28 items concerning instructors in students' majors have remained relatively steady since the 1998 administration of the survey; see Table II. The most positive items include that instructors set expectations at the beginning of the course (88% agreed), were well prepared for class (88% agreed), and set expectations for honesty and integrity in academic work (87% agreed). These are the same items that received the highest percentage of agreement in the 1998 administration of the UMSS. The items with the greatest improvement were those that relate to use of information technology. According to students' perceptions, instructors' use of email to communicate with students increased by 6% (to 70%) and instructors' use of Web-related resources for instructional purposes increased by 13% (to 61%).

Table II: UMSS Instruction items

Instructors in my major...	Percent Agree + Strongly Agree	
	1998	2000
set expectations at beginning of course about what is required.	87	88
are well prepared for class.	88	88
set expectations for honesty and integrity in academic work.	88	87
are receptive to questions.	87	86
are available during scheduled office hours.	83	81
offer me help when I ask for it.	79	80
expect me to attend class.	77	80
provide me grading info in a timely manner.	77	75
link material to issues beyond course.	74	74
give clear, understandable explanations.	72	74
assign grades fairly.	74	73
make it comfortable to participate in class discussion.	72	73
provide constructive feedback.	69	71
<b>use email to communicate w/students.</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>70</b>
respect student points of view that are different from their own.	66	68
manage disruptive behavior in classroom.	61	63
<b>use Web-related resources for instructional purposes.</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>61</b>
use a variety of teaching methods (e.g., media, small group, lectures, etc.)	61	61
make assignments for group projects clear.	59	59
make exceptions for personal emergencies.	54	54
inspire me to do better work.	53	54
know my name.	50	49
adjust course content based on feedback from students.	48	47
make it possible for me to know classmates.	47	44
encourage me to participate in intellectually challenging activities or organizations.	44	44
make use of student talents and experiences in class.	41	38
intervene in group projects when group work is stalled.	35	30
can be approached for help with a non-academic problem.	32	30

Note: This table was revised to include recent transfers who were excluded in the CAWG Fall 2000 forum handout.

## Academic Integrity

(Sub-initiative 1.1j) *Increase the emphasis on academic integrity and ethical development among our students.*

A large majority of students responded that instructors in their major set expectations for honesty and integrity in academic work (87%). In terms of knowing the rights and responsibilities for use of campus computing resources, 34% of the students reported that they were satisfied with their knowledge of these rights and responsibilities. It is important to note that 55% responded "neutral" to this item, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their knowledge. On a different note, 57% of the students agreed that the University's code of Academic Integrity is an effective system for maintaining intellectual and academic honesty. This percentage is up from 47% who agreed with this item in the 1998 survey.

## Remain School of Choice

(Sub-initiative 1.2) *Remain the school of choice for the most talented students in Maryland and for outstanding out-of-state students by strengthening efforts to recruit students who contribute to and benefit from an enriched educational environment and by improving the conditions for their enrollment and success.*

Seventy-one percent of all of our respondents agreed that they made the right decision to come here. This is up from 68% in 1998. Sixty-seven percent reported if they had it to do over they would enroll here again, up from 60% in 1998.

## Raise an Endowment

(Sub-initiative 1.2e) *Raise an endowment for undergraduate scholarships sufficient to ensure that no student admitted to the University of Maryland has to leave solely for economic reasons or has to work to an extent that hinders academic progress.*

Students were asked to respond to what degree it had been easy/difficult for them to find money to cover the various expenses related to earning an undergraduate degree. Table III presents the student responses and the comparison to the 1998 survey. The changes in student responses on these items are relatively small, with only Books and Supplies becoming slightly more difficult to afford, and Personal Expenses becoming slightly less difficult.

Table III: Perception of Financial Constraints

Percent finding having enough money to cover the following easy or difficult:	Very Easy + Easy		Very Difficult + Difficult		Not Applicable	
	2000	1998	2000	1998	2000	1998
Tuition	46	44	46	48	8	8
Rent and Food	43	43	42	41	15	16
Books and Supplies	41	46	53	49	5	5
Transportation	58	++	34	++	8	++
Personal Expenses	45	41	51	57	4	2

++ No comparative data; question was phrased differently in the 1998 survey.

Students were asked about their employment both on and off campus. The two questions can be combined to determine their work status. Half of the respondents reported working only off campus, while 10% reported working both on campus and off.

Table IV: Employment Status

Percent working on and/or off campus:	%
Not employed	25
On campus only	15
Off campus only	50
Both	10

### **Academic Advising**

(Sub-initiative 1.2g) *Significantly enhance academic advising for all students by making greater use of peer mentoring, improving the availability of both faculty and professional advisors, and increasing the use of technology in advising.*

The majority of students (62%) responded that they do have an assigned academic advisor. Seventy-five percent indicated that a member of their College's academic advising staff advised them. When asked in general about advising, 60% agreed it was easily accessible, 45% agreed that an advisor had shown concern for them, and 47% agreed that academic advisors had provided sound guidance about course work. In general, 48% were pleased with the academic advising that they have had. On a different note, 90% thought that their access to Web-based student services (e.g., Testudo) was important. Eighty-two percent were satisfied with their access to Web-based student services.

### **Course Availability**

(Sub-initiative 1.2h) *Adjust as necessary the time distribution of our course offerings and the number of sections offered to assure that students are able to register for the courses required for graduation in a timely manner.*

When students were asked about building their schedule, they reported the following were somewhat to very important: getting required general education or CORE courses (71%, up from 63% in '98), getting major courses (97%, the same as in '98), getting a particular faculty member or section (69%, up from 62% in '98), and arranging a schedule that does not conflict with work schedule (69%, down slightly from 71% in '98). Half of the students (50%) said they would like more courses offered outside of the 9am to 2pm time period.

## **Technology in the Classroom**

(Sub-initiative 1.3b) *Set expectations that every academic course will have an online syllabus and an established protocol for remote communication between student and instructor.*

Sixty-one percent of our respondents agreed that instructors in their major use Web-related resources for instructional purposes. This is up from 48% in 1998. Seventy percent said that instructors in their major use email to communicate with students, up from 64% in 1998.

## **Information Technology Proficiency**

(Sub-initiative 1.3c) *Bring all students to a level of information technology proficiency appropriate to their disciplinary needs. Establish information technology fluency and information literacy requirements for all undergraduates.*

Seventy percent of the respondents who had been here more than two semesters reported that the University directly affected their ability to acquire IT skills, an ability that ranked 4<sup>th</sup> out of the 23 learning outcomes in terms of the University's impact on students' abilities. While only 31% reported they had strong IT skills when they arrived on campus, fully 71% said their IT skills at present were strong. More specifically, eighty percent or more reported feeling comfortable with word-processing (95%), using e-mail (95%), using the Web (93%), navigating on-line course materials (83%), and using electronic information resources, such as CD-ROMs, databases, on-line catalogs and e-journals (80%).

## **Computer Access**

Sub-initiative 1.3(d) *Strongly encourage all students to have access to a networked personal computer, and require computer ownership for students in selected disciplines.*

Eighty-six percent (86%) of our respondents own a computer, with 74% reporting they own a desktop model and 29% that they own a laptop. Students were asked to indicate where they used a computer for academic purposes. Most (96%) reported they sometimes or regularly used a computer where they live, and 72% reported they use the campus labs. While 83% indicated that access to a computer connected directly to a high-speed network is a high priority, only 66% were satisfied with the access they currently have.

## **Strategic Plan Initiative Three: Ensure a university environment that is inclusive as well as diverse and that fosters a spirit of community among faculty, staff, and students.**

Of the respondents who were enrolled at UM for more than two semesters (i.e., recent transfers were not included in this particular analysis), 42% reported they had a strong or very strong understanding of diverse cultural, political, and intellectual views when they began at UM. A much higher percentage (74%) reported a strong or very strong understanding at the time of the survey. Sixty-seven percent reported that the UM experience directly affected this understanding. On a different note, however, fewer than half (40%) of our respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there was a strong commitment to racial harmony on this campus; 37% were neutral on this question.

In addition to the emphasis placed in UM's Strategic Plan regarding the value of diversity, the Report and Recommendations of the President's Diversity Panel, released to UM community August 15, 2000, called for continued analysis of the campus climate. To that end, parts of the UMSS are analyzed below for differences by sex and race/ethnicity. The UMSS 2000 included thirteen questions that related to students' perceptions of aspects of the campus climate. Seven of these questions pertained to instructors in their major, four to academic advising. One question concerned students' perception of their ability to understand diverse cultural, political, and intellectual views, and one general question concerned students' perception of the institution's commitment to racial harmony. In the remainder of this section of the report, responses to these 13 questions are examined for differences by sex and race/ethnicity. See Section 7 for a breakdown of the demographics of this sample.

### **Instructors In Their Major**

There were no statistically significant differences among the racial/ethnic subgroups in the percent who agreed/strongly agreed that instructors in their major:

- made it comfortable for them to participate in class discussion;
- assigned grades fairly;
- inspired them to do better work;
- respected student points of view that may be different from their own;
- knew their name;
- made it possible for them to know their classmates; and,
- made use of student talents and experiences in class.

Of these items, one showed a statistically significant difference based on sex. Women (56%) were more likely than men (50%) to agree that instructors in their major inspired them to do better work.

### **Advising**

Similarly, there were no statistical differences among the racial/ethnic subgroups nor between men and women in the percent who agreed/strongly agreed that:

- academic advising is easily accessible;
- their academic advisors have shown concern for them as individuals;
- their academic advisors have provided sound guidance about course work; and,
- in general, they have been pleased with the academic advising they have had.

### **Understanding Diverse Views**

As mentioned earlier in this report, students were asked to rate their abilities on a number of abilities, as of two time periods: when they began at UM, and the present time. They were also asked to indicate to what extent they thought their UM experience had directly affected those abilities.

There were no statistically significant differences among the racial/ethnic subgroups in their perceptions of their ability to understand diverse cultural, political, and intellectual views, at either time period. However, there were statistically significant differences among subgroups in the perception of the extent to which students perceived that UM directly affected this ability, as can be seen below. Students of color were more likely than White students to perceive a direct impact on this ability by their experiences at UM.

Table V: UM Affect on Understanding Diverse Views

Percent UM directly affected ability to understand diverse cultural, political, and intellectual views:						Total
	Asian	Black/ Af.Am.	Hispanic	Unknown	White	
Some	45	34	43	38	34	36
Very much	28	35	28	27	30	30
Some + Very much	73	69	71	65	64	66

There were no statistically significant sex differences on this variable at either of the time periods or on the impact of experiences at UM on students' ability to understand diverse cultural, political and intellectual views.

### Perceived Commitment to Racial Harmony

In light of the lack of statistically significant differences in diverse students' perceptions of behaviors demonstrated by their instructors and advisors, it is interesting that there were differences among the racial/ethnic subgroups in student perception of the commitment to racial harmony on this campus. Overall, 40% of the sample agreed with this statement. Among the ethnic subgroups, this was true for 35% Asians, 21% Black/African Americans, 46% Hispanics, 45% Whites, and 32% of those whose race is unknown. There was no difference between men and women on this variable.

### Financial Issues

There were five items designed to ascertain the difficulty students had in covering expenses related to higher education:

- Tuition
- Rent and food
- Books and supplies
- Transportation
- Personal expenses

The only statistically significant difference among the racial/ethnic subgroups in the degree of perceived difficulty in covering these expenses was in covering tuition. Specifically, while overall 44% of the sample expressed difficulty in having enough money to cover tuition, this was true of 49% Asians, 55% Black/African Americans, 51% Hispanics, 39% Whites, and 52% whose race was unknown. There were no statistically significant differences between men and women on these items.

## SECTION 9 - Using the UMSS Data

The UMSS data allow us to know more about our upper division students' perceptions on a variety of issues, and, for certain items, how these perceptions have changed over the past two years. The data can also provide a blueprint for improving the University's effectiveness by identifying institutional strengths to highlight; accelerating student retention initiatives; advancing efforts in strategic planning; and, more closely aligning budget decisions with student priorities.

There are several ways that these data can be used:

**Review and discuss items with colleagues in colleges, departments, and offices.**

Determine which items are most critical to the success of the individual unit and look for ways to make changes in current policy and/or budget to reflect student interests. CAWG can help individual units analyze and interpret specific components of the report.

**Clarify the data with focus groups.** Small discussion groups with students can help units to learn more about student opinions related to the items on the instrument.

**Look for low-cost interventions.** Some areas reflecting low satisfaction can be addressed with little money and high creativity.

**Look for areas that can be addressed with information.** Some items reflect student lack of awareness. Look for items that indicate a greater need for information sharing with students, and brainstorm ways to better educate students about what already exists but might be underutilized.

**Build solutions into long-range planning.** Some areas may require significant lead-time for improvements to be made. Identify areas that should be included in long-range budget planning and start to plan now for future changes.

CAWG can assist in your analysis and utilization of these data by:

- Incorporating specific items into future data collection efforts for further clarification.
- Providing data to specific units for your own analyses.
- Targeting students from your college or unit on future CAWG surveys.
- Consulting in the design of a focus group process to address additional areas of concern.
- Conducting additional subgroup or other analyses.