

Incoming Student Survey 2016/2017: Executive Summary

Introduction

The Incoming Student Survey is an effort to explore the socio-economic, pre-university experience and expectations of university experience of incoming first degree students for the 2016/2017 academic year. It is anticipated that the results of this study would provide the empirical evidence that will guide decision making as it pertains to initiatives geared towards improving student performance and student support services in keeping with the University's strategic goal of Improving the quality of Teaching, Learning and Student Development.

Studies much like the present study are also in keeping with international best practice as collecting data concerning student background has provided the basis for developing predictive models for student retention and academic performance. Therefore, it is hoped that this study will provide a baseline for developing models for improving student retention at the St Augustine campus in the near future.

In order to gain more in-depth understanding of the incoming cohorts of the St Augustine campus, this study was conducted taking the following objectives into consideration:

1. To examine the nature of the socio-economic background, pre-university educational experience and expectations of incoming students.
2. To determine how socio economic background and pre-university factors impact expectations of students 'university experience and academic performance.

Methodology

The data collection process resulted in a response rate of 29.8% and tested variables as it relates to socio economic background, pre-university educational experience, university life expectations and academic performance. All variables were tested in the survey instrument except academic performance which were extracted from the Campus Business Intelligence system. Additionally, in respect of data analysis, a combination of descriptive and multivariate techniques were used such as frequency distributions, cross tabulations, mean scores and linear regression analysis.

Findings

The findings of this study can be summed up as follows:

- In terms of the socio-economic profile of respondents, approximately 49.5% of respondents came from households earning \$15000 or less monthly, with 40% of respondents also being first generation university students. It was noted that for those who had family members who were pursuing or had pursued tertiary level education, approximately half of them had attended or were attending UWI.
- UWI was a first choice institution for approximately 1 out of 2 respondents and this is likely to be attributed to the fact that financial assistance (GATE) was provided and also that they perceived UWI St Augustine to be an institution which had a good academic reputation.
- In respect of student pre-university activities, survey results indicated that most respondents spent more time on academic work and using social media platforms and were less inclined to participate in extracurricular activities on a regular basis.
- Respondents indicated that they would want to participate in non-academic activities or extracurricular activities at The UWI, such as student clubs/organisations/activities, participating in internships and taking co-curricular courses. More specifically, it was noted that respondents who were more interested in participating in non-academic activities at The UWI, were also more likely to have had pre-university experiences such as participation in in-class and extracurricular activities, and also perceived themselves as possessing leadership skills.
- Respondents who were inclined to look forward to in-class participation at The UWI were more likely to have higher scores with respect to leadership skills, writing, thinking and communication skills, pre-university in class participation and study habits.
- Respondents with higher cumulative GPA scores corresponded with higher scores for attributes such as study habits and pre-university in-class participation but was negatively correlated with non-academic activities.
- Respondents anticipated that they would encounter challenges with time management as well as keeping up with academic work but were looking forward to completing their degree and maintaining a good GPA.