

**Report on the 2011 Graduate College
Entering Graduate Student Questionnaire
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Report on the 2011 Graduate College Entering Graduate Student Questionnaire

During Fall term 2011, the Graduate College administered an Entering Graduate Student Questionnaire. The on-line survey was administered to new degree-seeking and non-degree graduate students who first enrolled at UIC either Summer 2011 or Fall 2011 term. Through this initiative the College sought to gain a deeper sense of the background, plans and expectations of the students as they enter their graduate studies. Information from the survey may assist the campus and graduate study departments in improving services and programs for students. This report provides a brief summary of the responses of the students who participated in the survey.

Background

The Survey was initially developed in the Fall 2010. The Fall 2011 administration was the second year of the survey. The questions were developed with input from faculty and Graduate College staff. Prior to conducting the survey, an application for Determination was filed with the UIC Office for the Protection of Research Subjects. OPRS determined that the Survey (assigned Protocol #2011-0790) did not meet the definition of human subject research as defined by 45 CFR46.102(f). The survey was administered through UIC Toolbox which allows for Bluestem login for survey respondents. The UIC Toolbox allows the administrator to match respondents to UIC record data for more detailed analysis and reporting of demographic characteristics of the respondents.

The survey target sample was all new or readmitted graduate students (degree-seeking and non-degree) in Summer or Fall 2011. Students were sent a series of emails under the signature of the Interim Dean of the Graduate College asking them to participate in the survey. Students who submitted a survey were entered into a drawing for eight giftcards to the UIC Bookstore. The population of the targeted sample totaled 2628 (2232 degree-seeking and 396 Non-degree) students. A total of 895 (883 degree-seeking and 12 non-degree) students submitted surveys. The tables below show the distribution of the respondents by the academic division of their degree program.

<u>Response Rates by Academic Program Division</u>	Enrollment	Survey Respondents	Response Rate
Behav & Social Sc	746	294	39%
Engin, Math & Phys Sc	414	177	43%
Fine Arts & Humanities	172	79	46%
Life Sciences	900	333	37%
Other	396	12	3%
Total (Deg Seeking)	2628	895	34%

The racial/ethnic distribution of respondents was close, but not mirroring the sample. Fourteen percent of the respondents are underrepresented minorities (African American/Hispanic). This is a slightly lower proportion than the enrollment (17%).

The survey included 48 questions which fell into five general categories – student background, enrollment detail, financing education, decisions about attending graduate school and initial experiences since enrolling at UIC and future plans. Item by item response distributions are outlined in tables on pages 6 through 9.

Survey Results

Student Background

Parental Education: Students were asked the highest level of education for both their mother and father. Responses ranged from ‘No high school diploma or GED certificate’ to ‘Graduate or Professional degree’. From these results, a variable was computed to determine the Parental Level of Exposure to College ranging from ‘No exposure to college’ to ‘Both (or the only parent reported) with a college degree’. Overall, over 80% of the students reported some exposure to college; with 66% reporting at least one parent with a baccalaureate degree. In fact, 14% of the respondents reported that both (or their only parent) had earned a **graduate or professional** degree.

Citizenship Status: Students were also asked about their citizenship status. Almost 25% of the students reported to be of international citizenship, 71% responded that they are U.S. citizens, and 3% hold a green card.

Enrollment Detail

Students indicated their enrollment level (master’s, doctorate, etc), and primary enrollment site in addition to fulltime/parttime status. Almost 75% of the students indicated that they are pursuing a master’s degree; and over 95% are enrolled on the Chicago campus; with just over 10% primarily enrolled as on-line students.

Beyond these basic enrollment indicators, the survey gathered information on student residence and commuting. Only 6% of the students reported living in campus housing, another 12% live within walking distance of the campus. Forty-eight percent of the students live off-campus and use public transit to commute, while 4% reported bicycle as their mode of transportation to campus.

Financing Education

There were two sections of the survey which addressed how students are financing their graduate studies.

Concern about ability to finance education:

The first question was a single item to assess the student’s level of concern about their ability to finance their entire graduate education with a three level response option. Overall 27% of the students indicated ‘No concerns, I am confident that I have sufficient funds’, 14% reported ‘Big concerns, I am not confident that I have sufficient funds to complete my graduate education.’

Method of financing education:

A more detailed question asked students to estimate the proportion of their education that would be financed by various sources. Just over 30% of all respondents indicated that they would rely on loans for ‘25% or less’ of their education costs, yet about one-quarter of the students indicate that they will rely on loans to finance three-fourths or more of their education. Most students reported a mix of

sources for financing across the sources listed which included: *Fellowship/Scholarship; Assistantship; Employer; Loans; Self; Spouse or Partner; and Parents or other family.*

Decisions About Graduate School Enrollment

Three groups of questions related to the decision to enroll in graduate school and more specifically the decision to attend UIC.

Decision to Pursue Graduate Studies:

Students were asked the level of importance that they placed on seven factors in their decision to attend graduate school. The two factors leading the decision were: *Train for a career* and *Learn about things of interest to me*, followed by *obtain a certification or credential for work*; a desire to *Contribute to human knowledge*, and *Be able to make an academic contribution to my field*. The least important of the factors was: *I could not find a job*.

Number of Institutions in the Decision:

Students were asked the number of institutions to which they applied and the number of institutions to which they were admitted. This question provides a sense of the scope of the graduate school search. Thirty-six percent of all the respondents reported that they applied to no other institution and an additional 5% indicated that UIC was the only institution to which they were admitted. On the other end of the spectrum, almost 14% of the students applied to 6 or more institutions (with 2% reporting that they were admitted to 6 or more institutions

Decision to Attend UIC:

The survey asked students to quantify which factors they considered ‘Very Important’, ‘Somewhat Important’, or ‘Not important at all’ in their decision to enroll at UIC. The two factors that are clear leaders that attract students to UIC graduate programs are *Quality of the Program* and *Quality of Faculty*; a second tier of factors clustered around location (*Convenient location* and *Wanted to attend school in Chicago*); followed by a group of financial factors related to tuition and financial assistance.

Initial Experiences and Future Plans

The final section addressed how students spend (or plan to spend) their time as graduate students. This section included three groups of questions: Match of workload expectations and the reality of workload demands; and Student’s Plans while a Graduate Student.

Time Allocation and Expectations:

When designing the survey, faculty from graduate programs were particularly interested in understanding if the time demands for graduate study matched students’ expectations. Students were asked if the time required in classes; studying/research and doing lab or field work matched, exceeded or was less than their expectation for time required for each of these activities.

Overall, of the students who had a lab or field work component to their education, 68% felt their expectation of time to devote to **lab/field work** matched.

The expectation and reality for **time spent in class** was a good match with 77% of the respondents indicating that the time spent in class matched or was less than their expectation.

There appears to be some level of mismatch between student’s expectations for time necessary for **studying and researching outside of class** and time actually required. Only 54% of the students

indicated that the time required for studying matched their expectations and about 38% of the respondents indicated that the time needed for study/research outside of class exceeded their expectations.

Plans While Enrolled at UIC:

A final group of questions asked students to indicate the likelihood of spending time in eight activities while enrolled at UIC. In total:

- 27% stated ‘Some chance’ or a ‘Very good chance’ that they will work fulltime off-campus in their field; and 40% say they anticipate working parttime off-campus in their field of study;
- 30% reported ‘Some Chance’ or a ‘Very good chance’ that they will work fulltime off-campus, not in their field of study, with 37% saying they will work parttime off-campus not in their field;
- 37% reported a ‘very good chance’ or ‘some chance’ that they will work parttime on-campus excluding a TA or RA appointment;
- 14% anticipate (‘Very good chance’) taking more than 3 years to complete their coursework;
- 7% felt they would take more than 5 years to complete their degree.

Summary Tables

Enrollment

Please indicate the level of the degree that you are pursuing at UIC	
Master's degree	74.9%
Doctorate degree	21.9%
Certification only	1.9%
Non-degree	0.8%
Other	0.3%

Indicate your primary campus site.	
Chicago	96.3%
Peoria	1.3%
Quad Cities	0.6%
Rockford	1.3%
Urbana	0.1%

Indicate your plans to enroll for a majority of your coursework.	
Fulltime	75.1%
Parttime	24.8%

Background

Citizenship Status	
U.S. Citizen	71.1%
Perm resident	3.1%
International stdt	24.8%
None of above	0.7%

Parental Education	
No exposure to college	18.2%
Some college exposure	15.1%
One bachelor degree	24.5%
Both/only parent bachelor deg	42.1%
Both or only parent graduate/professional degree	13.5%

Financing Graduate Education

Best guess of proportion of education (Tuition & Fees) financed by:					
	0 to 25%	26 to 50%	51 to 75%	76 to 100%	No Resp
Fellowship/Scholarship	43.4%	3.9%	2.0%	2.3%	48.4%
Assistantship	41.0%	8.6%	10.1%	15.2%	25.1%
Employer Paid	48.8%	5.0%	3.5%	5.4%	37.3%
Loans	30.7%	8.9%	10.2%	23.5%	26.7%
Self	47.8%	11.7%	4.8%	8.3%	27.4%
Spouse/Partner	53.7%	2.7%	0.4%	0.8%	42.3%
Parents/Family	49.2%	5.7%	3.7%	5.6%	35.9%
Other	52.2%	0.6%	0.7%	2.0%	44.6%
Concerns about ability to finance graduate education.					
None-Confident sufficient funds			26.6%		
Some, but probably enough funds			59.6%		
Major-Not sure enough to complete degree			13.5%		

Residence and Commute

Residence and commute while attending UIC (typical day)

On-campus in Campus Housing	5.7%
Off campus, walk to campus	12.3%
Off campus, drive to campus	17.9%
Off campus, public transit	47.5%
Off campus, bicycle	3.8%
On-line courses only	12.8%

On a typical day, how much time is spent commuting to UIC (Roundtrip)

Live on campus	3.5%
LT 30 minutes	23.5%
31 to 60 minutes	23.9%
61 to 90 minutes	14.7%
91 to 120 minutes	13.3%
MT 121 minutes	7.8%
On-line courses only	13.2%

Decision to pursue Graduate Studies and Attend UIC

Importance of various reasons <u>seeking a graduate degree</u>:			
	Not Impt	→→	Very Impt
Certification/Credential for work	11.7%	29.5%	56.8%
Training for specific career	3.9%	20.0%	74.7%
Learn more about things that interest me	2.6%	24.0%	72.2%
Be able to make an acad contr to my field	11.8%	32.5%	54.0%
Contrib to human knowledge/society	7.6%	35.4%	55.1%
A mentor encouraged me	38.3%	37.2%	22.1%
A friend(s) encouraged me	44.9%	36.4%	16.0%
Couldn't find a job	67.0%	19.1%	10.3%
Improve my earning potential	9.9%	34.1%	54.0%
 Importance of various factors in <u>decision to attend UIC</u>			
	Not a factor	→→	Very Impt factor
Quality of faculty	4.2%	28.9%	66.3%
Quality of program	1.0%	15.2%	82.9%
Convenient location	10.2%	31.3%	57.3%
Mentor/Advisor recommended UIC	44.4%	32.7%	21.1%
Recvd. Fin asstnce from UIC	46.3%	20.2%	32.3%
Tuition waiver as employee	61.1%	11.8%	25.0%
Low tuition compared to other schools	40.4%	28.9%	27.6%
1st choice didn't provide fin asstnc	79.2%	9.8%	6.6%
Wanted to attend a univ in Chicago	30.2%	26.3%	40.3%
Not admitted to first choice school	77.5%	11.5%	7.2%
Recvd. Scholarship/ fellowship	72.2%	8.0%	15.9%

To how many other institutions applied/admitted:		
	Applied	Admitted
None	35.9%	41.2%
1 to 3	33.3%	42.0%
4 to 5	16.5%	9.8%
6 to 9	9.2%	1.8%
10 or more	4.5%	0.3%

Initial Experiences and Future Plans

	Requires less time than expected	About what expected	Requires more time than expected
Time in Class	12.7%	77.1%	8.6%
Lab/Field Work	16.0%	68.4%	15.6%
Studying	6.8%	54.1%	38.2%

On average, how many hours/week anticipate need to devote to graduate studies:

Less than 10 hrs/week	1.5%
10 to 30 hrs/week	40.7%
31 to 50 hrs/week	37.0%
51 to 80 hrs/week	17.1%
More than 80 hrs/week	3.1%
No response	41.3%

Plans to work as TA or RA during enrollment at UIC

	Current	Plan
Teaching Asst	14.6%	20.1%
Research Asst	9.9%	30.6%

During enrollment at UIC, student anticipates doing the following:

	No chance	Little chance	Some chance	Very good chance
Work fulltime off campus in field of study	48.3%	24.6%	13.9%	13.3%
Work parttime off -campus in field of study	34.9%	25.3%	25.0%	14.9%
Work fulltime off -campus not in field	50.9%	19.4%	10.8%	18.8%
Work parttime off -campus not in field	40.0%	23.4%	19.8%	16.9%
Recv TA or RA appt	27.5%	17.0%	21.1%	34.4%
Work parttime on -campus (not TA/RA)	40.8%	22.6%	18.2%	18.4%
Take more than 3 yrs to complete coursework	47.0%	26.6%	12.1%	14.3%
Take more than 5 yrs to complete degree	68.5%	17.2%	7.5%	6.8%