The Undergraduate Student Survey has been conducted at Simon Fraser University every Fall semester since 1992 [except in 2002.] This annual survey provides essential feedback on the academic experiences and concerns of our undergraduate students. This year’s survey focused on course availability, academic advising, and a selected range of services. The academic advising and services questions were new to the survey this year.

It should be noted that a change in methodology, from in-class paper survey to online survey, was instituted in 2006. The paper surveys, administered to a random sample of classes, resulted in a “captive audience” and high response rates. In contrast, the online surveys, administered to the entire SFU undergraduate student population, resulted in larger samples but lower response rates, which could make the results less generalizable. Measures were taken to reduce potential biases resulting from a lower response rate.

A total of 4,053 students participated in this year’s survey, yielding an overall response rate of 17.7%. Highlights of the survey results are presented here. Statistics provided in this summary and in the full report are estimates based on survey respondents. The full report is available on the Institutional Research and Planning web-site: http://www.sfu.ca/irp/surveys/ugss/index.html

General Experience

- 89% of respondents are satisfied with their general SFU experience.
- When asked what single thing SFU could do to improve their student experience, the most common responses were:
  - improve student life,
  - improve the facilities (especially cleanliness/repairs, bathrooms, and study space),
  - improve course availability, variety and scheduling, and
  - improve food on campus.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>If SFU could do one thing to improve your student experience, what would it be? (Top 10 Suggestions)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course Availability, Scheduling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuition/Fees and Financial Aid</td>
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<td>Instructors/TAs</td>
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<td>Transportation</td>
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Course Availability

- In general, this year’s results show a decline in SFU’s course availability performance.
- 79% of respondents were able to register for the NUMBER of courses they wanted this Fall. This is a 5% drop from last Fall, but is higher than the previous Fall’s result.
- 54% registered in all of the SPECIFIC courses they wanted. This is down from 60% last Fall, but is slightly higher than the Fall 2006 result.
- 63% registered in all of the REQUIRED courses they wanted to take this Fall. Registration difficulty was most often due to:
  - full classes (66%)
  - scheduling conflicts involving the primary course component (lecture; 39%)
  - inconvenient scheduling (25%),
  - courses not being offered this term (25%),
  - scheduling conflict involving the secondary course component (lab/tutorial/etc; 24%), and
  - insufficient travel time between classes offered on different campuses (20%).
- Respondents in the Faculties of Arts & Social Sciences and Business Administration were less successful in registering for all of the required courses they wanted to take.

![Fall 2008 Registration Success, by Faculty](image)

- 54% of respondents reported that they are taking longer than expected to complete their credential, down from 60% last year. While this appears to be an improvement, the results do not indicate a corresponding increase in the percentage who are finishing on time or early. Instead, a greater percentage said that they don’t know how long their credential is taking.
- The most commonly cited reasons for delayed completion are:
  - students choosing to reduce their course load (42%),
  - students taking courses that don’t count towards their credential (37%), and
  - course availability issues (32%; usually due to full courses, scheduling conflicts, and courses not being offered in the desired term.)
Trends indicate that course availability has become generally more problematic over the past ten years.

- Satisfaction with course availability decreases as course level increases.
- 60 – 67% of respondents are satisfied with course frequency (how often courses are offered), course scheduling, and available registration spots in courses.

- 41% of respondents reported that they have, on at least one occasion, experienced a scheduling conflict between the different SFU campuses (two courses that did not overlap in time, but were offered on different campuses, and there was insufficient travel time between the classes to enroll in both.)
Other Course Data

- 57% of respondents were taking 4 or more courses in Fall 2008.
  - Only a third of respondents (33%) were taking general interest courses outside their program of study.
- Fewer than half of this year’s respondents agreed W/Q/B (writing-intensive, quantitative, and breadth) courses produce the benefits for which they were designed. This is similar to last year’s result, but represents a significant drop from Fall 2006 (see chart, below.)

Course Scheduling:
- Most respondents prefer daytime courses (80% say they are “ideal”, and another 17% say they are “acceptable”).
- Evening courses, distance/online courses, and Friday afternoon courses are roughly equivalent in popularity, with 40 – 50% of respondents saying they are “ideal” or “acceptable”.
- Friday evening courses are considerably less popular:
  - Only 18% of respondents said that Friday evening courses are “ideal” or “acceptable”.
  - However, an additional 51% indicated that they would take classes on Friday evenings “if there are no other options”.
  - 30% said that Friday evening courses are “absolutely impossible for me”.

Academic Advising

Preferred Modes of Academic Advising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live Help (Online)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• 85% of respondents know where to find an “official” academic advisor at SFU.

• 73% of respondents have used academic advising services at SFU:
  o 39% have accessed academic advisors in Student Services, and
  o 57% have accessed advisors in their department, Faculty, or cohort.

• Most respondents prefer “in-person” advising.

• Accessibility
  o Respondents reported greater accessibility to department/Faculty/cohort advisors than to the advisors in Student Services. (71% reported that they are always able to access a department/Faculty/cohort advisor within a week, compared to 64% for those accessing advisors in Student Services.)

• Quality:
  o ~ 70% of respondents report that they are always treated with respect by academic advisors. This result is the same regardless of where they seek advice.
  o In many other respects, respondents seeking advice from their department/Faculty/cohort advisors are generally more satisfied than those seeking advice in Student Services. They are more likely to report that the advisors:
    ▪ always gave them accurate information,
    ▪ appeared competent and knowledgeable, and
    ▪ helped them to resolve their advising issue.

### Services / General

• 9% of respondents have used study and learning skills assistance provided by the Student Learning Commons, and 25% indicated that they were unaware of this service.

• 51% participated in SFU’s Orientation Program when they first began their studies here.

• 49% of respondents have participated in SFU student clubs.

• 4% have participated in study abroad programs.

• 74% of respondents are satisfied with study space on campus, and 62% are satisfied with social space on campus (only 49% satisfaction at the Vancouver campus.)

• 64% are satisfied with public transit to the Burnaby campus (79% to Surrey; 80% to Vancouver.)

• 69% of respondents use public transit as their primary method of transportation to SFU [79%, including those who use “multiple methods”].

• 36% report that transportation issues have stopped them from taking a particular SFU course.

• 47% of respondents plan to pursue graduate studies and/or a professional degree after they complete their undergraduate credential (15% at SFU, 32% elsewhere.) 11% do not plan to pursue these types of further education, and 42% are undecided. Among those who have decided whether or not they wish to pursue graduate studies/professional degree:
  o Respondents in the Faculties of Arts & Social Sciences and Education are more likely to have plans for graduate studies at SFU (30% and 38%, respectively.)
  o Those in the Faculties of Science and Health Sciences are more likely than their classmates to have plans for graduate studies at UBC (39% and 42%, respectively.)
  o Finally, respondents in Applied Sciences, Business Administration, and Education are more likely than their classmates to indicate that they have no plans to pursue graduate studies (27%, 27%, and 26%, respectively.)