NSSE 2011: Survey Results Specific to AccessUVa

This report follows earlier analyses in 2005 and 2008, which are part of a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of AccessUVa, the financial aid program initiated in 2004-2005. The analyses compare measures of self-reported engagement by high-need (HN) and no-need (NN) students. The earlier reports can be found at https://www.web.virginia.edu/iaas/survey/data/reports/accessreports.shtm.

During the spring term in 2011, all first- and fourth-year students were invited to complete the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The University participates in NSSE every three years and has data dating back to 2000. NSSE data is one source of information used in support of the assessment of AccessUVa. For the 2011 NSSE administration first- and fourth-year high-need (HN) students were compared to their no-need (NN) peers to determine if students’ self-reported engagement differed between the two groups. With the exception of a few variables of interest, the high-need students and no-need students do not widely differ on their reported engagement.

Favorable Findings

First-year HN students report talking about career plans with faculty more than NN students and HN students also rate their academic advising experience more strongly than NN students. In terms of the institutional environment, first-year HN students report that the institution helps them more with coping with non-academic responsibilities, understanding people of other ethnic/racial backgrounds, and developing a deeper sense of spirituality.

Among fourth-year HN students, some of the significant differences in faculty interactions persist. HN fourth-years report discussing grades or assignments with an instructor, discussing ideas from readings with faculty outside of class, and “working harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor’s standards” more often than non-need students. Other academic differences that HN students report doing more than their NN peers include working with students on projects during class, memorizing facts or ideas from courses, completing problem sets, and preparing for class. For this reason, fourth-year HN students have a significantly higher score on the NSSE benchmark “Academic Challenge” than fourth-year NN students.

Areas for improvement

The areas where first-year HN students’ fall below their non-need peers is on the NSSE benchmark “Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE).” The mean differences on EEE are similar to 2008 results (although in 2008 it did not reach statistical significance). The mean difference on the benchmark can be traced to a few variables which contribute to the EEE score: completing a practicum, internship, or field experience; participating in volunteer work; and completing foreign language coursework; for all three items, HN students scored significantly lower. By students’ fourth year, there are no longer differences in foreign language coursework completion, but the other differences in practicum and volunteer service persist. Among fourth-years, fewer HN students also participate in research projects, study abroad, and culminating senior experiences when compared to NN students. For this reason, the mean EEE difference between the need groups is also significant in students’ fourth year.
First-year HN students report working more hours for pay on campus, and fourth-year HN students work more hours for pay off campus. Both report spending more time providing care for dependents, and exercising less than their NN peers. In addition, fourth-year HN students report spending less time participating in co-curricular activities, less time relaxing and socializing, and more time commuting to class. First-year HN students also report a lower institutional emphasis on attending campus events and activities and fourth-year HN students report a lower institutional emphasis on providing the support to thrive socially.

**Overall Satisfaction**

Although both HN first- and fourth-year students report a relatively high quality of relationship with other students (5.5 and 5.4 on a 7 point scale), it is slightly but significantly lower than their first- and fourth-year NN peers (5.8 and 5.8). Among fourth-years, HN students rate their satisfaction relatively high (3.4 on a 4 point scale) and their likelihood of attending UVA again if they had the chance (3.3 on a 4 point scale), but these ratings are slightly but significantly lower than fourth-year NN students (3.6 and 3.5, respectively).