



## **Student Satisfaction Survey**

*A Special Report on Del Mar College Student Services*

*September 2000*

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# *Survey of Student Services*

*Spring 2000*

## **Purpose of the Survey**

In March and April 2000, based on recommendations received from the SACS accreditation team, directors of various student services areas met with the director of institutional research and effectiveness to discuss the need for a student satisfaction survey. After an intense development process, a multi-page survey instrument was created and produced for distribution in late April-early May. In order to obtain a representative cross-section of students, a stratified random sample of classes was selected with the intention of receiving at least 400 completed survey forms. Survey forms were printed, packaged, and sent to faculty of those selected classes on April 20 with instructions for completing the questionnaires. From the 34 classes (with a possible 602 students) that received forms, 31 packets were completed and returned, for a total of 330 respondents (a 54.8 percent return rate).

## **Student Demographics**

Chi-square analysis of the survey based on respondent demographics showed that, for the most part, there were no significant differences by gender or age. In several areas, however, there were significant differences by race/ethnicity. In general, the survey respondents showed the following characteristics:

- ❖ Female students outnumbered males by 58.4 percent to 41.6 percent.
- ❖ Half (50.7%) of the respondents were Hispanic, and 40.9 percent were white.
- ❖ Nearly half of the students reported that neither of their parents had attended college.
- ❖ Over 70 percent had never taken a course at other colleges or universities.
- ❖ Over three quarters were employed either full- or part-time, with only one percent employed on-campus.
- ❖ Over two-thirds of the students were unmarried. Over a third of all respondents have school-age (middle school or younger) children living with them.
- ❖ Over half of the respondents were 23 years of age or younger.
- ❖ Almost 70 percent were taking mostly day classes.
- ❖ Almost 40 percent were seeking an associate's degree; over 44 percent were planning to transfer to a 4-year institution. The remaining 13.7 percent indicated a technical program, certification, self-improvement, job training, or other goals.
- ❖ Of the students preparing to transfer to a 4-year institution, 62.2 percent indicated Texas A&M—Corpus Christi as their choice.
- ❖ The majority (94.7%) of the respondents took most of their classes on the East Campus. Just over 2 percent of the respondents were distance learning students.

## **Structure of the Survey Instrument**

The survey instrument was divided into sections by the individual service or area. One of the developers' major concerns was that responses of students who did not use a particular service should not be counted. For this reason, the first question in each segment asked whether a student used that service. If the student marked that he or she had not used the service, no responses from that section were tallied.

Some of the questions on the survey instrument were short answer, but the majority was scaled on a 5-point Likert scale with an option for "Does Not Apply." For many of the statements,

there were two parts for the student to complete. One was the level of importance a student attached to that service. The second part gauged the student's relative level of satisfaction based on the extent to which he or she agreed or disagreed with each positively phrased statement.

### **Responses to the Questions**

Each statement on the survey form was analyzed and the responses included in various tables appended to this report. For those statements having two parts, a gap analysis was performed: the mean for each item was computed, and then the difference calculated between the importance students placed on each item versus their level of satisfaction (agreement with the statement). It is generally understood that a negative number in the difference reflects student dissatisfaction. For example, if a student feels that a service is very important, but disagrees that the college performs well in that area, this is interpreted as a negative response, and may indicate an area that needs to be examined. On the opposite side, a very positive satisfaction rating for a service that students do not consider important may indicate an over-emphasis on that area to the detriment of others.

### **Section Analysis**

Attached are separate sections that summarize the responses for each individual area surveyed. The order of the sectional summaries follows the order of the questionnaire.

### **Suggestions for Further Surveys of Student Services**

Questions on the Survey of Student Services should be examined carefully and rephrased wherever necessary. The statements should be restated in neutral voice to avoid leading the student toward any particular response. The *Importance* and *Agreement* scales should be reworded with the responses evenly distributed among positive and negative. Discussion should address whether the gap analysis method is appropriate or if simple frequencies of positive and negative responses is sufficient, with corresponding omission of the *Importance* scale.

### **Summary**

Overall, across all student services, students tended to indicate that they were not as satisfied with services to the same degree as the importance they placed on those services. Some of difference can be attributed to a natural tendency for most people to believe there is always room for improvement. However, statements with large gaps between importance and satisfaction should be recognized and action plans may be necessary to identify areas for improvement.

## **I. Library Services and Facilities**

The library director and staff had specific issues to ask of students pertaining to usage of the libraries on each campus. The responses to the statements are as follows:

- ❖ Over 17 percent of Del Mar College students had never used the library. Of those students who never or seldom use the library, over half (50.6%) said that their courses do not require the use of the library. Over a third (38.7%) said they did have time to go to the library. About 14 percent said they use another library.
- ❖ Over 96 percent of those using a college library use the White Library; 9 percent use the Technical Library on the West Campus, and 5.7 percent use both.
- ❖ The three areas of highest importance, according to the survey, were:
  - ❖ The library's book and reference collection is sufficient to support my instructional and research needs (mean: 4.52 on a 5.0 scale)
  - ❖ When I need assistance in using any of the library's resources, library staff members are willing and able to help me (mean: 4.49)
  - ❖ The library has quiet places to study (mean: 4.49)
- ❖ The three areas of lowest satisfaction (agreement with the statement) were:
  - ❖ Library staff listen to suggestions about their services (mean: 3.49)
  - ❖ The library staff are friendly and helpful (mean: 3.87)
  - ❖ The library's audiovisual collection is sufficient to support my needs (mean: 3.92)
- ❖ The areas with the largest gap between the mean level of importance and the mean level of satisfaction were:
  - ❖ Library staff listen to suggestions about their services (mean difference: -0.61)
  - ❖ The library's book and reference collection is sufficient to support my instructional and research needs (mean difference: -0.56)
  - ❖ Library staff are friendly and helpful (mean difference: -0.48)

## **II. Academic Advising**

This section asked students for their opinions on various aspects of the advising process at Del Mar College, such as availability of counselors, information on careers and transfers, and preparation of educational plans.

Of the 311 students marking responses in this section, 18 percent said they were not advised. Over 40 percent said that they had received their advising in faculty offices, while one quarter of the students were advised in the counseling office and six percent in the TASP office. Over 25 percent was advised during regular registration and about six percent during late registration.

One of the statements read: "The advisor(s) was/were able to answer my question accurately or refer me to the appropriate resource for " several areas. For assistance in areas such as career information, course prerequisites, program requirements, and educational goals, between 75.9 percent and 87.1 percent of those responding agreed the statement was true. However, less than 64 percent answered positively about transfer information received and only 60.8 percent were positive about financial aid information received.

- ❖ The three areas of highest importance, according to the survey, were:
  - ❖ The advising process met my needs (mean: 4.55 on a 5.0 scale)
  - ❖ I felt comfortable meeting with my advisor (mean: 4.50)
  - ❖ The advisor provided guidance, but allowed me to make my own decisions (mean: 4.49)
  
- ❖ The three areas of lowest satisfaction (agreement with the statement) were:
  - ❖ I did not have to wait long for an appointment with an advisor (mean: 3.67)
  - ❖ The advisor discussed course load with me regarding time commitments (mean: 3.68)
  - ❖ The advisor prepared an educational plan (degree or certificate) for me (mean: 3.74)
  
- ❖ The areas with the largest gap between the mean level of importance and the mean level of satisfaction were:
  - ❖ The advisor discussed course load with me regarding time commitments (mean difference: -0.76)
  - ❖ The advising process met my needs (mean difference: -0.74)
  - ❖ The advisor prepared an educational plan (degree or certificate) for me (mean difference: -0.72)
  - ❖ I did not have to wait long for an appointment with an advisor (mean difference: -0.72)

### **III. Admissions and Registrar**

Statements in this section pertained to services such as the admissions and registration processes, tuition payment, class withdrawal procedures, Veteran's services, and the overall helpfulness of office staff within these areas.

- ❖ The areas of highest importance, according to the survey, were:
  - ❖ The bill for tuition and fees was easy to understand (mean: 4.54 on a 5.0 scale)
  - ❖ The admissions and registrar staff were helpful during registration (mean: 4.53)
  - ❖ The registration process is clear (mean: 4.52)
  - ❖ The application process for graduation is clear (mean: 4.52)
  
- ❖ The three areas of lowest satisfaction (agreement with the statement) were:
  - ❖ The application process for graduation is clear (mean: 3.65)
  - ❖ Services for veterans are adequate (mean: 3.78)
  - ❖ The process for dropping a class is clear (mean: 3.91)
  
- ❖ The areas with the largest gap between the mean level of importance and the mean level of satisfaction were:
  - ❖ The application process for graduation is clear (mean difference: -0.86)
  - ❖ The admissions and registrar staff were helpful during registration (mean difference: -0.54)
  - ❖ The registration process is clear (mean difference: -0.52)
  - ❖ The process for dropping a class is clear (mean difference: -0.52)

### **IV. Student Activities**

This section of the survey asked for student opinion on student activities and cultural programs, the student center and their treatment at the Student Activities Office. Less than half of the total survey respondents answered this section.

While there was only a very small variance in importance (0.11 difference on all measures on a 5.0 point scale), students attributed the most importance to being treated well at the Student Activities Office (mean: 4.09). The lowest level on the satisfaction scale was for the statement *the Student Activities Office provides good cultural programs* (mean: 3.66). The difference between importance and satisfaction for three of the four statements in this section were nearly equal at -0.32 to -0.33; the other statement, *the student center is comfortable and is a good place to socialize and spend free time*, had a mean difference of -0.14.

## **V. Career Planning and Placement**

Statements in this section of the survey asked about services provided at the Career Planning and Placement Office, and included job search assistance and Career Fairs, résumé writing, interviewing techniques, and overall helpfulness of office staff.

Over 87 percent of those surveyed said that they had never used the services of the Career Planning and Placement Office. Since only 37 students answered one or more statements in this section, the data are provided for informational purposes but conclusions should not be drawn due to small sample size.

- ❖ The areas of highest importance, according to the survey, were:
  - ❖ Career Planning and Placement staff are friendly and helpful (mean: 4.43 on a 5.0 scale)
  - ❖ The website provides current and useful job information (mean: 4.33)
  - ❖ Printed job search materials provided by the office are useful (mean: 4.32)
  
- ❖ The three areas of lowest satisfaction (agreement with the statement) were:
  - ❖ Learning interviewing techniques helped me in my job search (mean: 3.48)
  - ❖ Assistance in writing a résumé is helpful (mean: 3.50)
  - ❖ The Career Planning and Placement Office provides the job search assistance I need (mean: 3.72)
  
- ❖ The areas with the largest gap between the mean level of importance and the mean level of satisfaction were:
  - ❖ Learning interviewing techniques helped me in my job search (mean difference: -0.73)
  - ❖ Assistance in writing a résumé is helpful (mean difference: -0.67)
  - ❖ The Career Planning and Placement Office provides the job search assistance I need (mean difference: -0.58)

## **VI. Financial Aid**

This section was designed to gauge student opinion on financial aid processes and the overall helpfulness of office staff. Over half (50.3%) stated that they had never applied for financial aid at Del Mar College.

Large differences between the level of satisfaction and the level of importance were apparent in this section of the survey.

- ❖ The areas of highest importance, according to the survey, were:
  - ❖ The financial aid process is easy to understand (mean: 4.77 on a 5.0 scale)
  - ❖ The financial aid staff is professional and helpful (mean: 4.77)
  - ❖ The financial aid office has helped me to meet my college costs (mean: 4.76)
  
- ❖ The three areas of lowest satisfaction (agreement with the statement) were:
  - ❖ The financial aid process is easy to understand (mean: 3.59)
  - ❖ The financial aid workshops available through the office have met my needs (mean: 3.59)
  - ❖ The financial aid office has helped me to meet my college costs (mean: 3.80)
  
- ❖ The areas with the largest gap between the mean level of importance and the mean level of satisfaction were:
  - ❖ The financial aid process is easy to understand (mean difference: -1.18)
  - ❖ The financial aid workshops available through the office have met my needs (mean difference: -1.00)
  - ❖ The financial aid office has helped me to meet my college costs (mean difference: -0.96)

## **VII. Counseling**

Topics covered in this portion of the survey included assessment of counselor interaction with students (concern and respect for students, good communication, sincerity, assistance with personal problems, and so on), assistance with major selection, development of an education plan, and help with transfer information. Over half of the students surveyed (52.8%) stated that they had not sought the assistance of a counselor.

- ❖ The areas of highest importance, according to the survey, were:
  - ❖ The counselor(s) show genuine concern and respect for students (mean: 4.66 on a 5.0 scale)
  - ❖ The counselor(s) communicated effectively with me (mean: 4.65)
  - ❖ The counselor(s) were open and honest with me (mean: 4.63)
- ❖ The areas of lowest satisfaction (agreement with the statement) were:
  - ❖ I would seek assistance of a counselor for a personal problem (mean: 3.21)
  - ❖ The counselor(s) assisted me in selecting a major (mean: 3.57)
  - ❖ The counselor(s) provided me with accurate university transfer information (mean: 3.65)
- ❖ The areas with the largest gap between the mean level of importance and the mean level of satisfaction were:
  - ❖ I would seek assistance of a counselor for a personal problem (mean difference: -1.18)
  - ❖ The counselor(s) assisted me in selecting a major (mean difference: -1.04)
  - ❖ The counselor assisted me with my education plan (mean difference: -0.75)

## **VIII. Testing**

The Testing section of the survey asked students their opinion on the Testing Center facility and its staff.

Over two-thirds of the students surveyed (67.0%) said they had never used the Testing Center. Those who had used the center gave uniformly high marks for importance on all statements (between a mean of 4.61 for *Test administration was conducted in a fair, professional, and courteous manner* and a mean of 4.53 for *The office staff was helpful and friendly*).

The level of satisfaction (disagreement with the positively phrased statement) was comparatively lower, but still uniform in response. The mean for the statement *Test administration was conducted in a fair, professional manner* was 4.20, representing a difference from importance of -0.40, meaning that students were somewhat dissatisfied in that area. The other two statements, *The office staff was helpful and friendly*, and *The office staff treated me with dignity and respect*, each rated a mean of 4.10 on the satisfaction scale. These represented a difference from the importance scale of -0.43 and -0.45, respectively, also indicating a moderate degree of student dissatisfaction.

## **IX. Tutoring**

This section looked at student opinions on tutoring services provided by the college. The vast majority of the students surveyed (83.8%) have never requested tutoring services at Del Mar College. Information below is based on student response, but with only 42 to 47 respondents per statement, caution should be used in interpreting these data and large-scale inferences should be avoided.

Those who responded to the three statements on tutoring ranked them all as highly important, with means ranging from 4.76 for *Having a tutor helped me in my classes* to a mean of 4.82 for *Tutoring services were available for the courses I needed help in* and *the tutor was well prepared for the tutoring sessions*.

The mean level of satisfaction for the three statements (the degree to which students disagreed with the statement) was substantially lower than the means on the importance scale. The statement *The tutor was well prepared for the tutoring session* rated a mean of 3.72, representing a difference of -1.10, indicating a notable degree of dissatisfaction. The statement *Having a tutor helped me in my classes* rated a mean of 3.72, a difference of -0.90, also signifying a substantial level of dissatisfaction. The last statement, *Tutoring services were available for courses I needed help in*, rated slightly higher with a mean of 4.02, but this still represents a difference of -0.80 from the importance scale.

## **X. Special Services**

The Special Services section was small and focused mainly on the services the office provided and the attitudes of the staff.

Of the 299 students responding to the question, only five percent (15 students) had ever visited the Special Services Office. With so few responses, the validity of the data is highly questionable. The students highly rated the importance of *The services provided by the Special Services Office met my needs* (a mean of 4.69 on a 5.0 point scale), but their satisfaction level (agreement with the statement) was quite low (a mean of 3.17, for a difference of -1.53). The other statements *The office staff were friendly and helpful* and *The office staff treated me with dignity and respect* rated even higher in importance (each with a mean of 4.79), but still somewhat low in satisfaction (means of 4.00 and 3.93, respectively, representing differences of -0.79 and -0.86).

## **XI. Recruitment and Outreach**

The Recruitment and Outreach section attempted to determine how effective the office had been at getting information to prospective students, and included statements about mailings and telephone contacts and the recruitment staff.

Substantial numbers of students marked Does Not Apply for many of the statements.

Of the four statements, the one that read *Information from recruitment staff influenced my decision to enroll at this college* ranked the lowest in both importance and satisfaction, but with the largest difference between the two scales (mean importance 4.12, mean satisfaction 3.51, for a difference of -0.61). The highest level of satisfaction (agreement with the statement) was for *Mail that I received from the college before I enrolled was clear and concise* with a mean of 4.16.