

Spring 2019 UD COE Graduate Student Climate Survey

The UD College of Engineering is committed to broadening participation and fostering inclusion among its students, faculty, and staff. The purpose of this college-wide graduate student survey is to gain perspectives and suggestions on ways to support graduate student recruitment and retention. These efforts will complement key COE Diversity work group initiatives to enhance graduate student advisor/advisee relationships, enhance graduate student mentoring and promote inclusive teaching techniques for COE faculty.

2019 Summary of Key Survey Results

Study Sample

- Approximately 860 COE graduate students received the online survey in May 2019; 208 completed it for a 24% response rate. Respondents represented all seven COE departments. 78% of respondents were Ph.D. students, 37% were women, 4.3% were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups (domestic), and 11% were students of color (domestic and international).

Program Satisfaction and Progress

- 80% of responding students expressed satisfaction with their current graduate program. This was not consistent for students of color nor underrepresented student groups who responded with 73% and 66% satisfaction respectively.
- Almost half of students responding indicated that their stress level is extreme or significant.
- 75% of students, primarily Doctoral, expressed a need for documentation of expectations as the best way to improve their program progress - comments revealed concerns related to program completion.

Advisor/Faculty Interaction

- 80% of respondents expressed satisfaction with faculty advisor interactions.
- 90% of students feel that their advisors treat all students equally. However, perception of equal treatment was lower for female than male students. Preferential treatment of some students was the most common concern expressed about faculty advisors.
- Overall, only 75% of students agree or sometimes agree that open channels of communication exist between faculty and graduate students. This percentage is somewhat lower for students from underrepresented racial or ethnic groups (67%).
- One-third of female students and a quarter of male students report feeling intimidated by COE faculty at least sometimes.

Student Interaction

- Of the 80% of respondents currently working in a lab, satisfaction with their interactions with other students in the lab was high at 93%. Some want to be mentored by a senior student, others were concerned about competition.

Coursework

- 60% of respondents expressed satisfaction with their COE courses. Masters students significantly outpaced Doctoral students in course satisfaction and differences among departments are evident.
- Female students are less comfortable asking questions in, and contributing to, their classes compared to male students.
- Less than 50% of female students responded that students of all backgrounds/identities fully participate in classes in the "often" category. Students from underrepresented groups and students of color responded at less than 40%.

Inclusion

- Few students (6%) indicated they had experiences at the COE they felt were based on race, ethnicity or nationality, although 12% indicated they had observed such behavior.
- Less than 50% of all responding students often feel that they are a valued member of the COE community. And, perceptions among students from underrepresented groups lag behind their counterparts at 33% - Females lag behind at 43%, while males responded at 52%.

Post Graduation

- A career in the technical industry is the most common pursuit for both Masters (87%) and Doctoral students (67%).
- Meeting with industry researchers and touring industrial facilities were among the top-cited professional development opportunities sought by graduate students.