

RESULTS OF OPUS SURVEY – Spring 2006

This study was conducted from March through to the end of April 2006, by the Organization of Part-time University Students (OPUS). The ultimate goal of this study was to identify areas in which there is a need for the OPUS Board of Directors to increase its efforts to advocate and lobby effectively and efficiently on behalf of part-time students.

The survey was sent by e-mail to 3400 part-time students explaining the purpose of the survey and assuring confidentiality. The survey was also available as a hard copy from OPUS. Twelve hard-copy surveys were returned and 237 surveys were completed on line, for a total of 249 surveys which is a 7.3% response rate.

Demographics

The survey was completed by 159 females and 84 males with 6 not indicating gender. Forty nine percent of the participants indicated being 30 years of age or younger. The marital status of the participants was almost equal for single and married students, 48.6% and 43.3% respectively. Sixty five percent had no children under 18 years of age living at home.

The majority, 63.5% reside in the Windsor area and 69.5% have less than a 30 minute commute to the University. Of the respondents 79.1% are employed outside of the home and of these, 60.6% are employed in managerial/professional, clerical/labour and the health services, 59.4% receive no tuition reimbursement from their employers. When asked about internet access, 94.7% have internet access at home.

When asked for their reasons for taking courses at the University;

- * 45.3% stated career advancement
- * 21.6% for professional qualifications
- * 19.2% for general interest.

When asked why they attend University part-time versus full-time many people chose more than one response:

1. Some desired courses are not offered	6 %
2. Prefer a partial course load	21.7
3. Have extensive family responsibilities	23.7
4. Need less than a full course to finish program	9.2
5. Can't afford full-time study	20.9
6. Work full-time	48.6
7. Person with a disability	3.6

Education, Program and Course History

Of the participants responding to the survey 31.3% already have a college diploma and 20.9% have a University degree.

When asked about which program they are enrolled in;

- * 53.2% are enrolled in a BA program
- * 22.1% in BComm.
- * 17.9% BSc.

When asked which time is most desirable to attend classes, 38.7% indicated between 9:00 am and 4:00 pm. The respondents were asked to indicate their interest in taking classes during the following times (many respondents indicated more than one response):

Intersession – daytime	25.7%
Summer Session – daytime	39.4
Twelve week – daytime	25.7
Intersession – evening	39.0
Summer Session – evening	23.3
Twelve week – evening	34.1

Student Opinions – Programs and Courses

When asked if they had any interest in classes on Saturdays the results were polarized with 29.8% stating they strongly disagree and 28.6 % stating they strongly agree, but when asked about classes on alternate Saturdays 35.7% strongly disagreed.

When asked whether courses offered during intersession and summer session were adequate, 50.4% disagree and 36.7% neither agree nor disagree for intersession classes and 49.0% disagree and 36.5% neither agree nor disagree for summer session classes. For exam times, 50.2% agree that times are convenient.

The response when asked if they were satisfied that they were learning what they need for their program of study 64.7% agree.

Student Opinions on University Services

For several questions the majority (over 50%) chose neither agree nor disagree for their response. The following statements were included in this group:

- There is adequate financial assistance available for part-time students.
- Accessibility of the campus for those with physical disabilities
- On-campus child care services
- Services of OPUS
- The University IT services
- Workshops on Study Skills
- Availability of distance education courses
- Availability of athletic/fitness facilities
- Cafeteria hours
- Availability of the Academic Writing Centre
- Availability of the Financial Awards office
- Availability of the Student Information Resource Centre
- Availability of the Special Needs office
- Availability of the Student Counseling Centre
- Availability of safety features such as WalkSafe, emergency call buttons, etc.

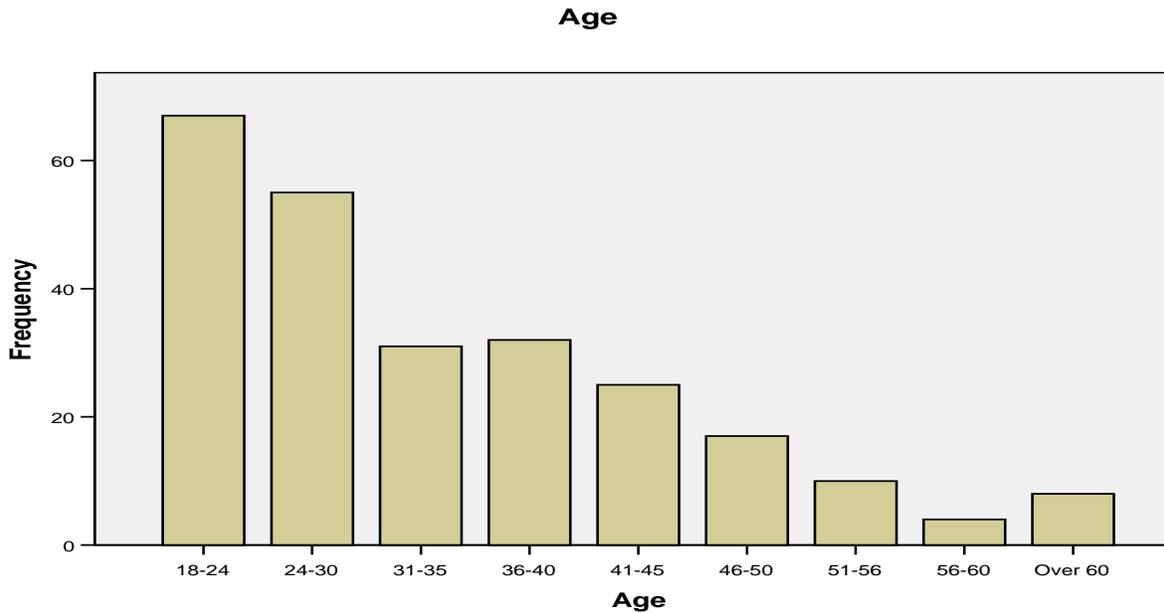
When asked about the availability of parking 47.4% disagree, but on the positive side 58.1% agree with the access to academic counseling from faculty in their program area, 64.8% agree with the Library services on campus, 65.8% agree with bookstore hours.

Discussion and Findings

The response rate for this survey was very low which puts doubt as to the reliability of this survey. There are several possible reasons for this including; filters placed the e-mail in the junk pile, no rewards were offered for filling out the survey, the survey was sent during final exam time, and the survey was too long. The abandonment rate for filling out the survey was not available.

There was a disproportionate number of females (65.8%) who responded to the survey, the percentage of female part-time students registered in the winter 2006 term was 52.3% according to the Office of Institutional Analysis.

The age distribution is positively skewed with 26.9% indicating they were 18-24 years of age and 22.1% stating they were 24-30. According to the Office of Institutional Analysis the average age of part-time students has been decreasing steadily. In 1996 the average age was 31.9 and in 2005 it was 28.1 years of age. This is an interesting trend and worth considering for future studies.



The majority of part-time students are registered in a BA program. The Faculty of Arts and Social Science offers a higher number of programs that can be completed on a part-time basis. Only 17.9% are registered in a BSc. program and less than 1% in Nursing. Perhaps having more programs offered on a part-time basis would allow more people to advance their education or partake in part-time studies while still working and/or continuing with their family responsibilities.

The area of courses offered during intersession and summer session is an area that should be addressed. When asked if the courses offered during intersession and summer session were adequate, 50.4% disagreed that intersession and 49.0% disagreed that summer session courses were adequate.

The issue of childcare on campus was addressed. With only 34.9% of respondents indicating they have one or more children under the age of 18 living at home, it is not surprising

that 82.2% indicated neither agree nor disagree with availability of childcare on campus. With the question worded as “Children under the age of 18 living in the home”, there is no way of knowing how many children are of preschool age and could actually use on-campus daycare during the regular school year or how many have children under 12 years of age to use daycare for evening or summer session classes.

There were 15 statements that more than 50% of the respondents chose the neutral response. There are a couple of possibilities for answering this way; they were all in Part 3 of the survey and perhaps the survey was too long and tiring reading and answering all the questions so they chose the middle response. Another possible explanation could be that the part-time students are not aware of some of these services or offices.

As a side note, several of the surveys were submitted not fully completed. Part 1 and Part 2 were completed, but Part 3 was a likert scale where the participants were asked to choose on a scale of 1 to 5, was omitted or only partially completed.