Office of Institutional Research and Planning
October 18, 2018

2017-18 Senior Exit Survey Report

Introduction

The Senior Exit Survey is conducted by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning at Portland State University (PSU) to understand seniors’ perceptions about PSU’s undergraduate program. The survey asks questions about students’ overall PSU experience, interaction with faculty and staff while attending PSU, and post-graduation plans. It was emailed to 3,820 students who applied to graduate with a bachelor’s degree in fall 2017, winter 2018, and spring 2018. There were 1,276 students who completed the survey, a 33% response rate. A majority of the 3,820 students graduated in the 2017-18 academic year. The figures below present the number of degrees earned by the survey respondents and the recipients.

![Figure 1. Number of bachelor’s degrees earned by the 2017-18 senior exit survey respondents and recipients.](image)

90% of the survey recipients earned a bachelor’s degree in 2017-18. The percentage of the respondents was 94%.

Highlights

- Of the 1,206 students who responded to the question about their overall experience at PSU, 77% rated their experience as good or excellent.
- If they could start over again, 77% would attend PSU. 83% rated their experience in their academic major as good or excellent.
- Of the 1,261 students who responded to the question about their main activity after graduation, 58% of the respondents planned to work full-time. 20% of them planned to attend a graduate school.
Demographics of the survey recipients and respondents

It is necessary to have an overview of the demographics of the survey recipients and the survey respondents. The figures below present the demographics of the two groups by gender, race, and residency in percentages.¹

**Gender**

![Gender distribution chart](image)

*Figure 2. Gender distribution of the 2017-18 senior exit survey respondents and recipients.*

The percentage of female survey respondents (62%) was slightly higher than the percentage of female recipients (58%).

¹ There are two out of the 3,820 survey recipients whose demographic information is too old for Banner to capture. The total number of the recipients are therefore 3,818.
**Race/Ethnicity**

*Figure 3.* Race/ethnicity distribution of the 2017-18 senior exit survey respondents and recipients.

The distribution of race/ethnicity between survey respondents and recipients is similar. The respondents have a higher proportion of white students (63%), but a lower proportion of international students (3%).

**Residency**

*Figure 4.* Residency distribution of the 2017-18 senior exit survey respondents and recipients.
The proportion of residents and non-residents for respondents and recipients are about the same. Recipients have a higher percentage of international students (6%) than the respondents (3%).

More about the Survey Respondents

After reviewing demographics between respondents and recipients, we now delve into the survey respondents to understand their performance at PSU. Enrollment status, academic standing, and college distribution are examined to answer this question.

Enrollment Status

![Enrollment status chart]

*Figure 5.* Enrollment status of the 2017-18 senior exit survey respondents.

70% out of the 1,276 responding seniors entered as transfer students (893). A higher proportion of the respondents are full-time students (65%).
Academic Standing

Figure 6. Total credit hours earned from PSU by the 2017-18 senior exit survey respondents.

96% of the respondents (1,226) earned a total of 225 credit hours or less from PSU. This indicates that a majority of them graduated within 5 years.

Figure 7. Cumulative GPA of the 2017-18 senior exit survey respondents.

Many of the respondents are in good academic standing. 637 of them earned a cumulative GPA between 3.51 and 4.00, accounting for 50% of the total respondents.
College Distribution

Figure 8. College distribution of the 2017-18 senior exit survey respondents.

A large proportion (42%) of respondents came from the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. The School of Business, the College of the Arts, and Maseeh College of Engineering/Computer Science also provided 38% of the respondents.

Investigation between STEM\(^2\) and non-STEM respondents

Figure 9. Number of respondents who graduated from STEM and non-STEM graduates.

A large proportion of the respondents (1,028) graduated from a non-STEM major, which accounts for 81% of the total respondents. The figures below present their responses to the

\(^2\) The STEM majors include those in Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Computer Science, Math and Statistics, General Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geology, and Environmental Sciences/Studies.
three questions: main activity after graduation, employment during enrollment, and respondents’ reason for major selection. Since there is a distinction between the number of STEM and non-STEM major respondents, the following figures are presented by the percentage of each group.

**Figure 10.** Respondents’ main activity after graduation by STEM and non-STEM graduates.

More than half of the respondents started a full-time position after graduation. A large difference in STEM vs. non-STEM is identified for those who attended a graduate or professional school full-time. 23% of the STEM respondents pursued a graduate degree after college, but only 16% of the non-STEM respondents planned to do so. STEM students also have a noticeably lower proportion of part-time work and are not sure about their plans.
Figure 11. Respondents’ employment during enrollment at PSU by STEM and non-STEM graduates.

About 40% of the respondents had an off-campus, part-time position while enrolling in PSU. 16% of the STEM respondents had an off-campus, full-time position. This proportion is 5% lower than the non-STEM respondents. A higher percentage (18%) of STEM respondents held on-campus, part-time positions than their counterparts (12%).

Figure 12. Respondents’ reason for major selection at PSU by STEM and non-STEM graduates.

Four in ten (42%) of the non-STEM respondents selected their major because of personal interest. A higher proportion (35%) of the STEM respondents tended to choose a major for employment purposes after graduation.
Program Participation and Advising Experience

One component of the senior exit survey is to inquire about students’ PSU program participation and advising experience. Figure 11 and Figure 12 show the percentage of respondents’ engagement in these two types of programs.

**Figure 13.** Percentage of respondents’ PSU program participation.

PSU offers a wide range of high impact educational practices that are recommended by the Association of American Colleges & Universities. These programs have been widely tested to be beneficial for college students (AACU, 2018). The purpose of offering these programs is to increase students’ involvement in active learning in order to raise institutional retention rates. Students’ participation in these programs is also expected to contribute to their overall satisfaction with their PSU experience. The capstone course, upper division cluster and sophomore inquiry had the highest participation rates, 86%, 83%, and 43% respectively.
Figure 14. Percentage of respondents’ PSU advising experience.

The majority of the respondents chose to talk with their academic advisor concerning choice of a major, program requirements, degree completion planning, course scheduling, academic performance, financial concerns, career plans, employment outcomes of their degree program, and graduate school plans.

Summary

A large proportion of the respondents to the senior exit survey had a positive experience while attending PSU. Half of the respondents were in good academic standing (GPA above 3.50). However, no sampling procedures were used and relatively few students chose to participate in the survey. Any inferences to the general PSU undergraduate student population should be made with caution.

References


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