

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 and Graduate Affairs initiatives to enhance graduate student advisor/advisee relationships, enhance graduate student mentoring, and promote inclusivity in our academic activities.

Study Sample: Approximately 950 COE graduate students received the online survey in June 2020. A total of 130 responses were received (14%) representing all seven COE departments. Of note, this year's survey was conducted in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused numerous unplanned changes and disruptions to student life.

Program Satisfaction and Progress

- 80% of students overall responded that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their current graduate program. Responses were consistent across gender, program, citizenship and race/ethnicity and similar to 2019 results.
- 79% of students expressed a need for documentation of expectations as the best way to improve their program.

Faculty/Advisor Interaction

- 78% of students overall responded that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their faculty-advisor interactions. This result was also relatively consistent across gender and program (3% drop from 2019).
- 88% of students feel that their advisors treat all students equally, down 2% from last year, and similar across gender.
- Preferential treatment of other students (43% of respondents) remained the top concern about faculty advisors (up from 34% in 2019). About 33% of respondents indicated at least one concern with their faculty advisor.
- 81% of students believe open channels of communications exist between faculty and graduate students, up from 75% in 2019. International students are slightly less likely to feel this way.
- Less than half of graduate students indicated that discussion on diversity issues or faculty emphasizing the importance of diversity in the workplace occurs with any frequency.
- Offensive behavior by faculty toward students because of their background/identity was not widely observed, similar to 2019 findings.
- Perception of COE faculty intimidation is more prevalent (39%) for female students than for male students (23%).

Coursework

- Student satisfaction with COE courses remained consistent with 2019 findings at approximately 60%. Satisfaction levels for female students (71%) was noticeably higher than for their male counterparts (54%), which is a reversal of last year's findings.
- Most graduate students perceive equal treatment by their instructors (96%).
- Female students were much more likely to perceive the absence of course content that reflects contributions of all engineers, including women and people of color, than male students.

Inclusion

- Slight increases were seen in the percentage of students indicating they had experiences at the COE they felt were based on their race, ethnicity or nationality (6% in 2019 vs 11% in 2020), as well as the observation of this behavior (12% in 2019 v. 15% in 2020).
- Little change from 2019 was seen in the number of student respondents who indicated they had experiences at the COE that were based on their gender identity or sexual orientation (6%) or students expressing they had observed this type of behavior (9%).

56% of respondents participate in a **GRADUATE STUDENT ORGANIZATION** (up from 41% in 2019)

Academic Persistence

- 93% of all graduate student respondents expressed they are very confident or somewhat confident in their ability to complete their program, similar to 2019.
- Despite the move to online classes during the semester, the percentage of students who indicated that their stress level related to their coursework was extreme or significant fell from 44% in 2019 to 34% in 2020.

Post-Graduation

- A career in a technical industry remained the most common pursuit for Masters and Doctoral students. Meeting with industry researchers and academic and research panels were the top-cited professional development sought by graduate students.
- 41% of graduate students' respondents indicated some level of satisfaction with available COE-sponsored professional development opportunities. 17% of respondents indicated they were not aware of such opportunities, up from 9% in 2019.

COE ACTIONS SINCE 2019

- ✓ Established the Office of Graduate and Post Graduate Education in the College of Engineering led by [Associate Dean Jill Higginson](#)
- ✓ Shared [Graduate Student Advising Resources](#)
- ✓ Communicate opportunities including social, health and wellness, and professional development events via [email](#)
- ✓ Open [invitation](#) to the Graduate Student Diversity Committee working group
- ✓ Implemented College-wide peer mentorship via [EMPOWER](#)
- ✓ Conducted proactive recruitment campaign

SPRING 2020