

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, retention, and training. These efforts will complement key COE Diversity work group and Graduate Affairs initiatives to enhance graduate student advisor/advisee relationships, strengthen graduate student mentoring, and promote inclusivity in our academic activities.

Study Sample: Approximately 950 COE graduate students received the online survey in June 2021. A total of 249 responses were received (26%) representing all seven COE departments, from MS, PhD, 4+1 and certificate programs. 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

- 77% of students overall responded that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their current graduate program. Male students (82%) were more likely to express satisfaction than female students (74%), and international students were especially satisfied (87%).
- 58% of students are aware of a document about department expectations and find this helpful.
- Student perception of COE staff interactions is quite positive

Faculty Advisor/Lab Interaction

- 85% 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 for international students.
- 95% of students feel that their advisors treat all students equally.
- On average, students agree that the faculty advisor meets with them regularly (86%), answers email (90%), provides guidance on research problems (86%), encourages timely progress toward graduation (85%), and communicates openly about funding (77%).
- 83% of students indicate that their faculty advisor gives time off for holidays, vacation, or family.
- Satisfaction with lab interactions (81%) fell seven points from last year and was down twelve points from two years earlier, likely related to the disruption in normal lab activities.
- Student perception of equal treatment by other students was very high at 96%, with some gaps seen by disabled and LGBTQ+ students.

Coursework

- Overall satisfaction with COE courses rose to 73% after averaging about 60% for the last two years. Percentages seen for disabled (50%) and LGTBQ+ students (53%) were much lower.
- The perception of equal treatment of students by course instructors (96%) was very high except among disabled students.
- Female students (51%) are much less likely than male students (73%) to feel comfortable participating in and contributing to their classes.

Inclusion

- Relatively few students (8%) reported having a negative experience based on their ethnicity, race, nationality, gender or disability while 13% have observed such behavior, consistent with prior findings. Female, minority, disabled and LGBTQ+ students were more likely to report having these types of negative experiences.
- Roughly three out of four students believe that open communication exists between faculty and students and that they are a valued member of the COE; these figures are lower for disabled and LGBTQ+ students.

41% of respondents participate in a **GRADUATE STUDENT ORGANIZATION** (down from 56% in 2020)

Academic Persistence

- Consistent with prior findings, less than 10% of all graduate students expressed some lack of confidence in their ability to complete their program. Figures for minority, disabled and LGBTQ+ students were higher.
- 55% students indicated their **stress level was extreme or significant** this year. For female students, this percentage was 65% versus 49% for male students. Disabled (100%) and LGBTQ+ (70%) also reported higher than average stress levels.

Post-Graduation

- A career in a technical industry remained the most common pursuit for Masters and Doctoral students. National conferences and meeting with industry researchers were the top-cited professional development opportunities sought by graduate students.
- 84% of students indicate that their faculty advisor supports their chosen career path.

COE ACTIONS SINCE 2020

- ✓ Shared [Graduate Student Advising Resources](#) at department faculty meetings
- ✓ Hosted [workshop](#) on how to effectively recruit and advise graduate students
- ✓ Advocated for department seminars on individual development plans
- ✓ Introduced weekly grad newsletter to communicate social, health and wellness, and professional development events
- ✓ Established anonymous feedback [form](#) for COE graduate students and post docs
- ✓ Shared open [invitation](#) to the Graduate Student Diversity Committee working group (will transition to advisory group in Fall 2021)