

# **EASTERN**

## **MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY**

---

### **INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT**

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **EMU STUDENT SATISFACTION AND USAGE ASSESSMENT 2008**

**Graduating Senior Assessment Survey 2008**  
**Sophomore\_Junior Assessment Survey 2008**

Office of Institutional Assessment  
Division of Academic Affairs

Denise Reiling, Ph.D.  
Director of Institutional Assessment  
Associate Professor of Sociology

September 18, 2008

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The following report resulted from two research projects undertaken by the Office of Institutional Assessment during the Winter 2008 academic term to assess the effectiveness of Eastern Michigan University in meeting the institutional needs of its students. Two different populations were addressed: undergraduate students who had applied for Winter 2008 graduation (complete census) and students who had earned enough credits by Winter 2008 to be considered either a sophomore or junior (random sample of 20% of this population). Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected, via online surveys: the Graduating Senior Survey 2008 (GSA 08) and the Sophomore\_Junior Survey 2008 (SJA 08). The online surveys were delivered to the respondents' University email addresses with the assistance of the Office of Institutional Research and Institutional Management (IRIM). The response rate to the GSA 08 was 39% and the response rate for the SJA 08 was 15%. Because of the much lower-than-desired response rate to the survey of sophomores and juniors and the near-duplicate design of the survey and research methodology, a separate report has not been generated. Instead, the SJA 08 findings have been reported alongside those for the graduating seniors.

Before reporting the findings, it is important to note that general surveys of usage and satisfaction such as these provide us, at best, with only gross measures of performance. Therefore, the findings should not be used as the sole measure of performance or as sole support for policy change. Instead, the data points should be used to identify areas in need of deeper understanding. The data are best utilized as support for further study of a particular issue, perhaps as an AQIP or Continuous Improvement project. Given the organizational diversity and complexity in functions of the university as an institution, care must be taken to not abstract these data points from their contextual grounding.

Summation of the findings has been organized into five sections: Leading with our Strengths; Identifying Challenges, Composite Senior Portrait, Identifying Relationships, and Recommendations. The full report, containing more specified data and detailed analyses, can be accessed through the IRIM website: (<http://www.emich.edu/irim>).

## **LEADING WITH OUR STRENGTHS**

This summary report will lead with our institutional strengths. The greatest strengths discovered thus far have actually not been quantified by a survey measure. Instead, they have been observed within numerous meetings with academic and administrative staff since the first graduating senior report was published in March 2007 (GSA 07). These strengths can best be described as follows: institutional loyalty, commitment to improvement, personal integrity, and a productive spirit of cooperation.

It is not easy for individuals that comprise institutions to withstand scrutiny of their performance, but members of the EMU community are to be commended for the manner in which they have received and responded to our performance measures. As

noted within the first graduating senior report (GSA 07), EMU has been plagued in recent years by very difficult, regrettable times and experiences, and on the heels of those troubles came the assessment of just how hard those times had been for our students. The list of measures that present challenges may indeed contain more items than the list of measures that identify strengths, but it could be argued that the relative weight of the strengths is greater.

In addition to our fundamental strength of character that will make improvement possible, the following measures suggest additional strengths upon which we can build. To qualify for this designation, at least 60% of the respondents had to report either a high or very high level of either satisfaction with the item or agreement with the given statement. Scores from the sophomore and junior assessment (SJA 08) have been provided for comparison purposes, however with the caveat that the response rate was only 15%.

The following measures suggest that some elements of the cultural climate within the classroom and the within respondents' Department/School are quite positive. The percentages given after each item reflect those who reported either a high or very high level of satisfaction with each item or agreement with the given statement. For example, the first item should be understood as: 75.9% of the GSA respondents were either highly or very highly satisfied with the level of respect they felt from faculty; a similar percentage (72.3%) of the sophomore\_junior sample felt the same.

- Satisfaction with level of respect felt from faculty (within major): 75.9% (72.3% SJA)
- Satisfaction with opportunities to interact with faculty in the classroom (courses within major): 73.1% (69.8% SJA)
- Satisfaction with classroom learning environment (courses within major): 72.2% (68.3% SJA)
- Satisfaction with opportunities to interact with faculty outside the classroom (courses within the major): 62.9% (61.7% SJA)
- Satisfaction with level of respect from front office staff (within Department/School): 62.9% (54.4% SJA)
- "I had good relationships with fellow students.": 75.6% (74.2% SJA)
- "I had good relationships with faculty.": 73.8% (69.7% SJA)
- "I felt safe from relational aggression, such as bullying, taunting, or having my thoughts and opinions disrespected.": 65.3% (62.1% SJA)

In addition, the following measures suggest that quality of instruction and related support is one of our strengths. The percentages listed reflect those who reported either a high or very high level of satisfaction with each item or agreement with the given statement.

- Satisfaction with quality of instruction (within major): 68% (71.2% SJA)
- Satisfaction with length of time to receive feedback from faculty on their work (within major): 64.7% (61.9% SJA)

- Satisfaction with quality of feedback from faculty on their coursework (courses within major): 63.8% (65.2% SJA)
- Satisfaction with degree of difficulty of their coursework (courses within major): 63.6% (64.5% SJA)
- Satisfaction with quality of academic advising from faculty: 62.7% (60% SJA)
- Satisfaction with clarity of degree requirements for major: 61% (53.6% SJA)
- Satisfaction with availability of faculty for academic advising: 62.7% (54.1% SJA)
- "I received a high quality education from EMU." 61.9% (63.7%)
- "Courses within my major were academically challenging.": 71.5% (72.7% SJA)
- "Generally speaking, I felt that faculty really cared about my academic performance.": 60.7% (58.9% SJA)

Fairly high levels of satisfaction with certain technology-based course delivery systems and technology-based service were also expressed by those who reported having used these systems. The percentages reflect those who reported either a high or very high level of satisfaction with the item:

- Electronic reserve system: 67.6% (72.2% SJA)
- Power Point lecture delivery: 67% (66.2% SJA)
- My.emich course homepages: 64.3% (66.5% SJA)
- Online course delivery: 62.9% (71.3% SJA)
- EMU's main website: 69.5% (66.5% SJA)

For those who reported usage, satisfaction with the following academic and student support services and one facility met the criterion for inclusion as strengths.

- Halle Library holdings: 69.9% (65.4% SJA)
- Halle Library services: 69.3% (70% SJA)
- Length of wait to be seen at Snow Health for mental health services: 65.8% (53.2% SJA)
- Length of wait to be seen at Snow Health for physical health services: 61.2% (62.5% SJA)
- Quality of Snow Health mental health services: 60.7% (51.6% SJA)
- EMU Student Center (as a facility): 69.9% (73.7% SJA)

## **IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES**

As already suggested, our strengths have the potential to outweigh our challenges, but we do face numerous, significant challenges. As with our strengths, our challenges are the same as those identified within the previous assessment of graduating seniors (2007). Given the late publication date of the 2007 report, however, this is a predictable circumstance as there was insufficient time for improvement efforts to be undertaken. Because the measures receiving lower-than-desirable levels of satisfaction are numerous, only those considered most critical will be mentioned within this Executive Summary.

Perhaps most concerning is the fact that agreement with statements measuring students' opinions regarding management and reputation are lower than desired, and in fact, some of the measures are more than 10 points lower than when measured in 2007.

- "Overall, I think that EMU is well managed": 31.8% (39% SJA)
- "I think that EMU is managed as well as most universities its size": 33.5% (42.6% SJA)
- "I believe that EMU has a good reputation within the general public": 26.4% (25.4% SJA)
- "I am proud to be associated with EMU": 48.2% (49.4% SJA)
- "I would recommend EMU to others": 48.8% (53% SJA)
- "If I had it to do over again, I would choose to attend EMU": 50% (52.7%)

Feelings toward what students define as the "administration" continue to be problematic. The fact that students reported a very low level of belief that the administration cared about their academic performance or their personal well-being is particularly troublesome.

- "I had positive interactions with the office staff in administrative and support services": 49.4% (54.6% SJA)
- "Generally speaking, I felt that the administration really cared about my personal well-being": 30.6% (35.2% SJA)
- "Generally speaking, I felt that the administration really cared about my academic performance": 35.2% (35.8% SJA)

Similarly concerning are students' feelings of safety while on campus. Please remember that the percentages represent those who reported either high or very high level of agreement with the statement.

- "I felt safe from physical assault": 39.7% (29.5% SJA)
- "I felt safe from personal theft": 33.7% (23.4% SJA)
- "I believe that changes in security measures have made the campus safer": 40% (32.1% SJA)

As evidenced by the measures of well-being below, our students struggle with much more than their coursework. These measures support the need for mental health services, as well as the need for more in-depth study into the factors that cause our students to be stressed, anxious, and/or depressed, and how, if at all, EMU could assist students with family and work-related responsibilities as they impact their academic performance. Remember that the percentages represent those who reported either a high or very high level of agreement with the statement.

- "My level of stress at times negatively affected my classroom performance": 40% (44.1% SJA)

- “My level of depression at times negatively affected my classroom performance”: 26.4% (30.8% SJA)
- “My level of anxiety at times negatively affected my classroom performance”: 29.2% (33.1% SJA)
- “My physical health at times negatively affected my classroom performance”: 25.4% (28.3% SJA)
- “My family responsibilities at times negatively affected my classroom performance”: 27.9% (25.5% SJA)
- “My work responsibilities at times negatively affected my classroom performance”: 31.6% (32.9% SJA)

Although some aspects of the cultural climate within the students’ department/school were identified as strengths, the following measures identify targets for improvement.

- Satisfaction with sense of belonging within Department/School: 54.9% (54.1% SJA)
- “I experienced a sense of belonging at EMU”: 51.2% (51.9% SJA)
- Satisfaction with number of opportunities created by Department/School to interact with fellow students: 54.4% (47.9% SJA)
- Satisfaction with extent mentored by Faculty: 50.7% (45.7% SJA)
- Satisfaction with extent of career counseling from faculty: 44.9% (50.4% SJA)
- Satisfaction with quality of career counseling from faculty: 48.7% (50.4% SJA)
- “Generally speaking, I felt that faculty really cared about my personal well-being”: 53.7% (48.6% SJA)

This last set of challenges involves the physical plant and the quality of nutrition available on campus. While these dissatisfactions may seem minor compared to others that have been identified, given the magnitude of the dissatisfaction and the fact that they impact other measures, they warrant attention. As noted in the full report, each of these issues impacts students’ sense of well-being, especially their sense of belonging and being cared about.

- Satisfaction with parking facility and parking lots: 23.8% (22.6% SJA)
- Satisfaction with physical appearance of classroom buildings: 25.3% (31.3% SJA)
- Satisfaction with variety of food available through on-campus food services: 42.5% (39.7% SJA)
- Satisfaction with nutritional value of food available through on-campus food services: 23% (24.1% SJA)

## **COMPOSITE SENIOR SAMPLE PORTRAIT**

The following items provide some description of the sample of graduating seniors that completed the survey.

- The average age of the sample was 27.6 years, with 65 being the age of the oldest respondent.
- 67.5% of the sample was female; 86.5% identified as White or Caucasian.
- Approximately 35% had fathers and mothers who had only a high school degree (or GED) or less.
- Only 45.3% begin their education at EMU without transfer credit.
- Only 8.7% did not have any student loan debt.
- 14.6% of the sample represented Honors College graduates.
- Almost 60% reported themselves to be commuters.
- Most had rather long commutes: Only 13.9% had a commute of less than 10 minutes, 43% commuted between 10 and 30 minutes, almost 33% commuted between 30 and 50 minutes, and more than 10% reported commuting at least 50 minute.
- Most respondents were single. Approximately 20% had either childcare or other caregiver responsibilities.
- Only 8.5% of graduating seniors reported having not been employed while a student at EMU. About one-third reported working part-time, but most reported working more than 20 hours per week (58.9%).
- 76% had attended mostly full-time.
- Only 29% had secured employment after graduation that was related to their major.
- 48.4% reported that they would be seeking employment related to their major.
- 77.9% reported plans to pursue a Masters degree; 5% to pursue a law or medical degree; and 15.3% reported plans to pursue a Ph.D.
- 93.7% reported a high or very high likelihood that they would reside in Michigan, with 61.9% planning to remain in southeast Michigan.

## IDENTIFYING RELATIONSHIPS

Statistical analyses relevant to the level of measurement were conducted to examine the relationship between willingness to recommend EMU to others, which was conceptualized as a measure of overall satisfaction, and the measures of satisfaction, well-being, and opinions about the quality of education, the quality of management, and EMU's reputation within the general public. Examinations began with correlation analyses, which revealed the following measures to have the strongest relationships to willingness to recommend EMU, listed in descending order. The values given represent the strength of the relationship, on a continuum of increasing strength, with the values of .4-.6 representing moderate strength and values of .7 or higher representing a strong relationship to willingness to recommend EMU to others.

- "I am proud to be associated with EMU." (.859)
- "If I had it to do over again, I would choose to attend EMU." (.834)
- "I believe that the quality of education I received from EMU is comparable to that from other universities that I could have attended." (.689)
- "Overall, I think that EMU is well managed." (.689)

- “I think that EMU is managed as well as most universities its size.” (.687)
- “I received a high quality education from EMU.” (.674)
- “EMU prepared me well for my future career.” (.648)
- “I believe that EMU has a good reputation within the general public.” (.633)
- “I believe that employers will have a great deal of respect for my degree.” (.608)
- “I experienced a sense of belonging at EMU.” (.577)
- “Generally speaking, I felt that the administration really cared about my academic performance.” (.524)
- “Generally speaking, I felt that the administration really cared about my personal well-being.” (.521)
- “Generally speaking, I felt that the faculty really cared about my academic performance.” (.502)
- Satisfaction with general learning environment in the classroom (.471)
- “Generally speaking, I felt that the faculty really cared about my personal well-being.” (.460)
- “I felt safe from physical assault.” (.452)
- “I felt safe from personal theft.” (.442)
- Satisfaction with quality of career counseling from faculty (.442)
- Satisfaction with quality of instruction (courses within major) (.440)
- “I had positive interactions with the office staff in administrative and support services.” (.426)
- Satisfaction with level of respect felt from faculty (.425)
- Satisfaction with level of respect felt from front office staff (Department/School) (.421)
- Satisfaction with extent of career counseling from faculty (.419)
- Satisfaction with quality of feedback on coursework (courses within major) (.415)
- Satisfaction with sense of belonging within Department/School (.413)
- “I felt safe from relational aggression, such as bullying, taunting, or having my thoughts and opinions disrespected.” (.405)
- Satisfaction with degree of difficulty of coursework (.404)

An examination was also made into the relationship between whether EMU had been the respondent's first choice school (true of 61.1% of the respondents) and various measures of satisfaction. Indeed, employing independent sample t-tests of differences in means revealed that being the first choice school was predictive of high or very high satisfaction on almost every measure.

While it may be true that being respondents' first-choice school was important, this measure lost its predictive value when tested against other variables within a multiple regression model. Regression analysis revealed that the following variables were predictive of students' willingness to recommend EMU to others, listed in order of influence: level of pride in EMU; level of willingness to choose EMU again; level of belief that EMU has a good reputation within the general public; and level of sense of belonging within EMU.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Clearly, as noted in last year's report, the administration must continue its efforts to rebuild students' trust and restore its reputation as a well-managed institution. The importance of restoring trust in management cannot be overstated.
- All members of the EMU community must continue efforts to create an environment where our students feel safe from physical harm, and where students feel they belong and are cared about by faculty and the administration, both academically and personally. For faculty, the strongest correlations with feeling cared about are with measures of quality of instruction and feeling respected; for administrators, the strongest correlations are with quality of management and reputation of EMU.
- An assessment of mental health service needs and utilization should be conducted under the auspices of the Office of Institutional Assessment. Included in this study should be an examination of the factors that contribute to students' experience of stress and anxiety as none of the measures associated with their education had more than a very weak relationship, if any, to levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Given the moderately strong relationships, however, between mental health states (stress, anxiety, and depression), family and work responsibilities, and physical health, this study should also examine ways in which EMU might be able to support students with these challenges.
- The fact that only 29% of the GSA respondents had employment related to their field of study and 48% were seeking employment underscores the importance of career counseling, from both faculty and the Career Services Office. Efforts should be made to support both sources.
- Continued effort must be directed toward creating a cultural climate that encourages student participation in EMU's assessment endeavors, particularly from minority students. Future data collection efforts should enlist the support of Department Heads and School Directors to encourage student participation. Students might be more willing to respond to a request for participation from their Department Head or School Director rather than someone farther removed, such as the Director of Institutional Assessment. While a 39% response rate (GSA 08) may be considered acceptable, certainly a much higher rate is preferable. Most would not, however, view as acceptable the 15% response rate to the sophomore\_junior survey. This very low response rate is regrettable given that understanding the experience of this population is critical to our retention efforts.
- It is recommended that the Office of Institutional Assessment establish an EMU Facebook page from which students can access results of student surveys such as these and register their comments. Establishing a line of communication such as this would signal to students the administration's commitment to the recently articulated key values: accountability; integrity, management; and service to students (President Martin's remarks to Regents, September 16, 2008). A Facebook page would also demonstrate that their voices are heard, and would call attention to the importance of student participation in the surveys.