

The 2009 Student/Faculty Gap Analysis

or

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Preamble

This inaugural Student/Faculty Gap Analysis Project is designed to provide GSW students, faculty, staff, and administration with a comparison of Student and Faculty attitudes, beliefs, and opinions, fall semester 2009.

It is hoped that this information will allow the faculty, staff, and administration to better understand our incoming students. It is also hoped that this information will allow the incoming students to better understand our faculty.

Ultimately, it is hoped that having a better mutual understanding of everyone's expectations and attitudes will enable both faculty and students to make everyone's experience(s) at GSW as successful as possible.

Summary of Key Findings

Different sections of this report will interest different readers. When evaluated separately, each section can stand alone. When evaluated as a whole, the data provides readers with a comprehensive comparison of student and faculty attitudes across a wide range of parameters.

For instance: According to the faculty, the students are much more likely to overestimate the importance of liking their professors, or liking the subject material, in order for them to do well in their courses. Students are much less likely to believe that being informed about current news events is important. And students are dramatically more likely to condone or support cheating behaviors. In fact, for the two cheating scenarios presented, a majority of the students did not even believe that the behaviors described constituted cheating.

If there is one especially disturbing pattern that seems to emerge from this data, it is the students' overwhelming sense of entitlement. Students are much more likely than faculty to believe that they should receive passing grades regardless of the quality of work they do. 78% of the students believe someone who essentially does failing work (but tries hard) deserves at least a 'C' for the course. Barely half (51.3%) of our incoming students expect to spend 10 hours a week studying or doing homework. More than a third (36.6%) of the incoming freshmen agreed with the statement that "a student who attends class every day deserves at least a 'B' for the course." Nearly half (48.1%) believe a student who "participates every day deserves at least a 'B' for the course." Additionally, our incoming freshmen are much less likely to believe that they should have their grades lowered if they come to class late, or if they turn in their assignments late.

While much of the data presented in this report clearly shows large attitudinal differences between the faculty and students, I hope this is not the end of the discussion. The purpose of this study is to collect objective data that can be used to open a dialogue between students and faculty that hopefully will lead to a more successful GSW experience for all.

Introduction

On August 16, 2009, 363 true freshmen who attended Freshman Orientation Day completed an in-depth comprehensive survey measuring their attitudes and opinions regarding a number of important educational, academic, and social issues. This “pen-and-paper,” self-administered, survey instrument contained approximately 135 different questions. In addition to the basic demographic questions, the survey questions focused on: the students’ previous high school experiences, their decision to attend GSW, their interest in various student organizations and activities, their perceptions of the academic process, professors, classroom behavior, studying, grades, on-line classes, their sense of academic entitlement, cheating, their self-assessed academic (and social) abilities, and their attitudes towards a number of contemporary social issues.

On September 15, 2009, 110 surveys were distributed to all full-time teaching faculty on the GSW campus. Ninety-two completed surveys (84%) were eventually returned. The faculty survey was dramatically shorter than the student version, containing only 38 substantive questions. The faculty survey questions were taken directly from the student survey in order to compare selected student responses to those of the faculty. Basically, with only very minor pronoun or wording variations, the faculty answered the same questions the students answered.

All completed surveys were reviewed, coded, and the raw data was entered into SPSS data files for analysis.¹

The Survey Instruments

Some of the questions and topics for this survey project were suggested by faculty members and administrators from across campus. Individual faculty members or administrators provided me with topic areas, suggestions for research, and in some cases specific survey questions. I then created, edited, formatted, and sequenced all the questions – integrating them into the overall survey instrument.

Some of the survey questions I used were culled from existing student surveys and published reports from: Alabama A&M University, Teachers College – Columbia University, Emory University, the University of Maryland, the University of Central Arkansas, the University of North Texas, New Jersey City University, the University of Wisconsin – Madison, the Pew Research Center, and selected peer-reviewed journal publications.

The wording for some of the questions was also replicated from national survey organizations such as the Associated Press, CBS News/NY Times, and the Gallup Center.

Funding Sources

Funding for supplies, printing, miscellaneous expenses, and data entry was provided by the following sources: The GSW Office of Student Affairs, The College of Arts and Sciences, The School of Education, The School of Nursing, and the School of Math/Computer Science.

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The Analyses

The data presented in this “gap analysis” report simply examines the overall student responses and compares their aggregate percentages to those percentages provided by the faculty. This report does not look “within” the numbers. For example, there are no breakdowns by students’ sex or race. Likewise there are no faculty breakdowns by school/college, or length of service.

This analysis presents the overall percentage of students who “agreed” with a specific statement compared to the overall percentage of faculty who “agreed” to the same question.

The specific wording of the survey questions asked to both of the groups is also provided.

The data being presented are displayed in three columns. Column (A) contains the students’ aggregate percentages. Column (B) contains the faculty’s aggregate percentages. The third column (C) describes how confident we can be in determining whether or not statistically significance differences exist between the student and faculty responses.

The majority of comparison tests in this report utilize the Pearson Chi-Square test (there is also one t-test) and use a .05 (95%) confidence level to ensure statistical significance. If we can be at least 95% confident that the differences between the student and faculty responses are not due to sampling error or chance, the actual confidence level is presented. If we cannot be at least 95% confident, “Not Sig.” or “No Significant Difference” is reported.

When the differences between the two groups are large, we are more likely to be very confident that the differences are “real” or statistically significant.

When the differences between the two groups are small, we are less likely to be confident that there really are “true” differences.

Additional (More Complex) Analyses

As previously mentioned, the student survey is dramatically longer and infinitely more complex than the faculty companion survey. There are potentially tens of thousands of possible variable combinations with this data. If anyone is interested in me conducting a more in-depth analysis (for example: multiple recoding options, controlling for variables, regression models, and/or more sophisticated variable construction (indexes and/or scales)) please let me know and I’ll be happy to work with individual faculty or administrators.

Data from the entire 2009 Incoming Freshmen Survey is currently being analyzed in much more depth, and the detailed results will be presented in a future report.

QUESTIONS IN SECTIONS 1-4 USE RESPONSE CATEGORIES THAT RANGE FROM: *NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT* TO *VERY IMPORTANT*. RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED TO SELECT THE DEGREE OF IMPORTANCE THAT MOST ACCURATELY REFLECTS HOW THEY FEEL. WHAT IS REPORTED BELOW ARE PERCENTAGES COMPARING STUDENTS' AND FACULTY'S VERY IMPORTANT RESPONSES.

- 1A. For you to do well in your college courses, how important is it to: (student question)
 1B. For students to do well in your GSW courses, how important is it for the students: (faculty Q.)

	(A) Students Very <u>Important</u>	(B) Faculty Very <u>Important</u>	(C) Statistically <u>Significant</u>
a. To like the professor.	50.8%	5.4%	99.9%
b. To like the subject material.	56.1%	25.0%	99.9%
c. To have small classes (less than 25 students.)	40.2%	38.0%	Not Sig.

Discussion: Overall, more than half of all incoming students felt it was *very important* to like the professor for them to do well in their courses. Only 5% of the faculty believes it is *very important*. Students are also twice as likely as professors to believe it is *very important* for them to like the subject material to do well.

- 2A. How important is it to you that the professors at GSW have: (student question)
 2B. For you as a GSW professor, how important is it for you to: (faculty question)

	(A) Students Very <u>Important</u>	(B) Faculty Very <u>Important</u>	(C) Statistically <u>Significant</u>
a. Have a genuine interest in your (student's) learning?	74.9%	85.9%	97.4%
b. Have a genuine interest in your (student's) personal lives?	18.7%	6.5%	99.9%
c. Have a genuine interest in your (students') future after they leave GSW.	54.6%	43.5%	95.0%

Discussion: Overall the faculty is a bit more likely than the incoming freshmen to believe it is *very important* to have a genuine interest in students' learning. Interestingly, students were three times more likely to believe it is *very important* for faculty to have an interest in their personal lives.

- 3A. For each of the following campus items, please indicate how important they are to you:**
3B. For each of the following items, please indicate how important it is for students at GSW:

	(A) Students Very <u>Important</u>	(B) Faculty Very <u>Important</u>	(C) <u>Statistically Significant</u>
a. To work with a professor on one of his/her research or scholarship projects.	43.7%	18.0%	99.9%
b. To regularly meet with and communicate with your (their) professors outside of class.	40.3%	25.8%	98.8%
c. To be able to freely express your (their) opinions in class.	61.9%	69.7%	Not Sig.

Discussion: Overall, incoming students were much more likely than professors to believe it is *very important* to work on faculty research or projects, and/or be able to regularly meet with and communicate with professors outside of class.

- 4A. Overall, for you as a person, how important do you think it is for you to be:**
4B. Overall, how important do you think it is for GSW students to be:

	(A) Students Very <u>Important</u>	(B) Faculty Very <u>Important</u>	(C) <u>Statistically Significant</u>
a. Well-informed about current political news.	29.3%	46.2%	99.9%
b. Well-informed about current economic news.	38.2%	49.5%	95.0%
c. Well-informed about newsworthy global events.	30.7%	53.8%	99.9%
d. Well-trained in basic English skills like reading and writing.	71.0%	93.4%	99.9%
e. Well-trained in basic math skills.	63.7%	78.0%	99.0%

Discussion: In all three current-event news scenarios, professors are much more likely than incoming students to say it is *very important* to be well-informed. The faculty also believes it is more important for students to be well-trained in both English and math than students think it is.

THIS NEXT QUESTION ASKS RESPONDENTS TO THINK SERIOUSLY ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENT AND PROFESSOR AS IT PERTAINS TO THE LEARNING PROCESS.

Education is said to be a collaborative process between student and instructor.

If we assume GSW professors have an obligation to provide an environment where learning is possible, students still have an obligation to make the effort to learn.

5. What percentage of the overall educational process should be the professor's responsibility? And what percentage should be the student's responsibility? Fill in the percentages that you believe are:

	(A) <u>According to Students</u>	(B) <u>According to Faculty</u>	(C) <u>Statistically Significant</u>
The Professor's Responsibility?	38.4%	41.3%	} No Sig Diff.
+ The Student's Responsibility?	61.6%	58.7%	

Remember: the total must = 100%

Discussion: Interestingly, there are no statistical differences between the faculty and student allotment of responsibility to the overall educational process. Both groups assess approximately 60% of the responsibility to be the students', and 40% to be the faculty's.

THE NEXT QUESTION ASKS YOU TO THINK ABOUT A HYPOTHETICAL STUDENT TAKING A REQUIRED CORE COURSE.

6. A student takes a required core course and performs unsatisfactorily, failing to meet the minimum course requirements. At the same time, he or she did work very hard, and put a great deal of effort into the course. What grade would you recommend the student receive? (Circle one letter grade.)

		(A) According to <u>Students</u>	(B) According to <u>Faculty</u>	(C) <u>Statistically Significant</u>
Grade Issued	A	1.4%	0.0%	} 99.9%
	B	16.0%	1.1%	
	C	60.6%	11.0%	
	D	18.3%	40.7%	
	F	3.7%	47.3%	

Discussion: When asked to provide a grade for a student who worked very hard, but essentially failed a core required course, dramatic differences are noted. Only 22% of the incoming students thought the hypothetical student should receive a 'D' or 'F.' Contrasted, 88% of the faculty assigned a 'D' or 'F.' A whopping 60% of the students believed this failing student deserved a 'C.' Only 11% of the faculty did.

- 7A. In general, did the teachers in your high school usually provide extra credit opportunities (extra work, papers, projects, etc.) to help students improve their final grades?
- 7B. In general, do you usually provide extra credit opportunities (extra work, papers, projects, etc.) to help students improve their final grades?

		(A) According to <u>Students</u>	(B) According to <u>Faculty</u>	(C) <u>Statistically Significant</u>
Yes	73.4%	27.5%	} 99.9%	
No	26.6%	72.5%		

Discussion: There are nearly opposite responses from the incoming students and faculty regarding extra credit. 73.4% of our incoming freshmen are accustomed to having regular extra credit opportunities available in high school. However, only 27.5% of the GSW faculty actually offer extra credit.

IN SECTIONS 8-10 I ASKED RESPONDENTS TO IDENTIFY HOW STRONGLY THEY AGREE OR DISAGREE TO A SERIES OF STATEMENTS. WHAT IS REPORTED BELOW ARE THE COMBINED PERCENTAGE OF THE *AGREE* AND *STRONGLY AGREE* RESPONSES.

8A. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

8B. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	(A) % Students Str. Agree & Agree	(B) % Faculty Str. Agree & Agree	(C) Statistically Significant
a. Meeting deadlines is an important academic skill for students to learn.	85.0%	98.9%	99.9%
b. Attending classes is an important part of a student's overall learning experience.	88.4%	95.6%	95.8%
c. Students should expect to spend at least 10 hours a week studying or doing homework.	51.3%	86.8%	99.9%
d. Students will have to work a lot harder at GSW than they did in high school to maintain their GPA.	79.0%	93.4%	99.9%

Discussion: Faculty are more likely than the incoming freshmen to *agree* or *strongly agree* that meeting deadlines is an important academic skill; and that attending classes is an important part of a student's learning experience. Faculty are also more likely to believe that students should expect to spend at least 10 hours a week or more studying or doing homework; and that students will have to work harder to maintain their GPA at GSW than they did in high school.

9A. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about cheating?

9B. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about cheating?

	(A) % Students Str. Agree & Agree	(B) % Faculty Str. Agree & Agree	(C) Statistically Significant
a. A student who is caught cheating for the <u>first time</u> deserves to be expelled from the university.	9.2%	13.2%	Not Sig.
b. A student who is caught cheating for the <u>second time</u> deserves to be expelled from the university.	35.2%	85.8%	99.9%
c. It is cheating if someone gives a student the answers to a homework assignment they could have done correctly if s/he had enough time.	40.3%	91.3%	99.9%
d. It is cheating if someone helps a student do a homework assignment that s/he is supposed to do on their own.	27.5%	64.4%	99.9%

Discussion: There are no statistical differences between the incoming freshmen and faculty when it comes to a first cheating episode. However, there are large differences when it comes to the second episode. The faculty are much more likely to *agree* or *strongly agree* that students caught cheating deserve to be expelled from the university. Additionally, faculty were also much more likely than the incoming students to believe that it is cheating if someone gives a student answers to homework assignments, or if someone helps a student do assignments they are supposed to do on their own. It should be pointed out that a majority of the incoming freshmen did not even believe the two scenarios above ('c' and 'd') were cheating behaviors.

10A. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

10B. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	(A) % Students Str. Agree & Agree	(B) % Faculty Str. Agree & Agree	(C) Statistically Significant
a. If a student attends class every day (or almost every day) s/he deserves at least a 'B' for the course.	36.6%	2.2%	99.9%
b. If a student participates in class every day (or almost every day) s/he deserves at least a 'B' for the course.	48.1%	3.3%	99.9%
c. If a student does all the homework for a class, s/he deserves at least a 'B' for the course.	57.0%	4.3%	99.9%
d. If you know that a student worked hard this semester, s/he deserves at least a 'B' for the course.	55.5%	2.2%	99.9%
e. A professor should let a student turn in an assignment late, if the due date interferes with the student's scheduled vacation plans.	12.5%	3.3%	99.0%
f. A professor should be willing to lend a student his/her lecture notes if a student asks for them.	29.3%	15.2%	99.9%
g. A professor who won't let a student take an exam at a different day or time because of a student's plans (e.g. a vacation or other trip that is important to him/her) is too strict.	19.8%	14.1%	Not Sig.
h. If a student is not happy with their final grade for a course, a professor should allow the student to do an extra credit assignment to bring their grade up.	34.7%	8.7%	99.9%
i. A professor should be willing to meet with students at a time that works best for the student, even if it's inconvenient for the professor.	11.8%	22.0%	98.8%

Discussion: There are huge differences between the incoming freshmen and faculty when it comes to a student's sense of entitlement. While large percentages of students believe they deserve at least a 'B' for attending class, doing homework, working hard, or participating -- regardless of academic achievement; hardly any professors agreed. Additionally, in every scenario presented, except one, more students than faculty believed that professors should allow them to turn in assignments late, lend them their notes, allow them to take exams on different days, and give them extra credit.

11A. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

11B. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	(A) % Students Str. Agree & Agree	(B) % Faculty Str. Agree & Agree	(C) Statistically Significant
j. If a student frequently comes to class late s/he deserves to have his/her final grade lowered.	35.4%	52.2%	99.9%
k. If a student's cell phone rings (goes off) in class s/he deserves to have their final grade lowered.	15.6%	14.3%	Not Sig.
l. If a student hands in his or her homework assignments late, s/he deserves to have his/her final grade lowered.	37.0%	68.9%	99.9%

Discussion: In two of the three scenarios presented, faculty were much more likely than incoming freshmen to say that students grades should be lowered if they come to class late, or if they hand in their assignments late.

FOR THIS FINAL QUESTION, WE ASK RESPONDENTS TO ASSUME THAT A STUDENT IS ABOUT TO GRADUATE FROM GSW WITH A FOUR-YEAR DEGREE.

- 11A.** In terms of the benefit(s) your GSW degree will bring to you later in life, do you think all the time, money, and effort you spent to get your college education will have been worth it?
- 11B.** In terms of the benefit(s) their GSW degree will bring to them later in life, do you think all the time, money, and effort they spent to get their college education at GSW will have been worth it?

	(A) According to <u>Students</u>	(B) According to <u>Faculty</u>	(C) Statistically <u>Significant</u>
Definitely not worth it.	3.3%	0.0%	} No Significant Differences
Probably not worth it.	2.2%	1.1%	
Feel neutral, not sure if it will be worth it or not.	12.7%	9.8%	
Probably worth it.	30.2%	30.4%	
Definitely worth it.	51.5%	58.7%	

Discussion: There were no statistical differences between the incoming students and the faculty when it comes to the future benefits of a GSW degree. Nearly 82% of incoming freshmen and 89% of the faculty said the degree would *probably* or *definitely be* worth it.

QUALITATIVE COMMENTS:

At the conclusion of the faculty survey, GSW professors were asked to comment about anything that they thought our incoming freshmen students needed to know.

I will not reproduce each and every comment here. But the faculty comments tended to fall into one of three categories: (1) Specific comments addressing the transition from high school to college; (2) Specific advice for doing well academically; and (3) Specific advice regarding student attitudes.

Specific Comments Addressing the Transition from High School to College:

Students need to understand that there is a vast difference between high school and college; and between teachers and professors. They are largely responsible for themselves.

They need a clear understanding that this is NOT high school, but college.

The faculty is here to present the information, but it is still up to the students to help themselves.

To Do Well Academically:

Read your books!

Attend class, do your homework assignments, and study outside of class. At least pretend to be a little interested in your classes.

Faculty are here to help and want to help, however students must be proactive and are ultimately responsible for themselves.

To succeed as a full time student, a person must spend 25-30 hours studying outside the classroom per week.

Students need to know how to study effectively. Students need to know how to take a test and use logic. Students need to read their textbooks, even if they don't like it or aren't motivated to do it.

You must study to succeed in college. Your GPA will reflect your effort in most cases.

Most faculty have clear policies for each course for lateness, cheating, cell-phones, makeup work, and extra credit. Read the syllabi is my advice.

Specific Advice Regarding Attitude:

Take your education seriously.

Be better prepared. Have better manners.

I wish GSW students were more aggressive, more curious, and more determined to learn.

Relationships with professors are professional relationships not social ones.

Work ethic is an important life skill and important to learn.

Come to class with a strong work ethic instead of excuses.

If you're not prepared to work hard in college, drop out now.

Students need to learn to take more personal responsibility for their learning.