

## FOCUS TOPIC

### Campus Climate

#### Demographic Information

Tables 10 and 12 contain data on the racial/ethnic mix of the UIC student body. From 1996 to 2000, Asians, Latinos, and foreign students have increased both in number and proportion, while Caucasian enrollment has declined by 943 students. Caucasians currently comprise 46% of the total campus enrollment and 45% of the undergraduate population. African American enrollment remained fairly stable at 9-10%, although in actual numbers there were 172 fewer African American students in 2000 than in 1996. African Americans comprised 9.6% of the undergraduates, 8.5% of the graduate, and 7.8% of the professional students in Fall 2000. The number of both Asian Americans and Latinos continues to increase. In Fall 2000, the proportion of the student population at UIC that were Asian American had climbed to 19.6%, with Asian American students at 23% of the undergraduates, 6.5% of the graduate students, and 31.5% of the professional students. Latinos comprised 13.7% of the total student body of UIC in Fall 2000. They represent 17.1% of the undergraduates, 6.6% of the graduate and 8.1% of the professional students.

Looking at the distribution of underrepresented students in various colleges (Table 13), we see that the proportion of African American students is highest in Liberal Arts and Sciences (11.2%), Applied Health Sciences (10.7%) and Social Work (10.3%). Medicine has a substantial proportion of African American students (9.4%). However African American students are not well represented in the Colleges of Architecture and the Arts (4.9%), Pharmacy (5.4%), Dentistry (5.8%), and Engineering (6%). Considering this distribution, it appears that a concerted effort to attract and graduate African American students has been successful in Medicine. It also indicates that among undergraduates, some African American students are either unprepared to meet the admission standards of colleges such as Engineering or are not sufficiently aware of their career possibilities. It is interesting that Engineering has a relatively lower proportion of African Americans considering the success of that college in retaining these students. (The program deemed responsible for this success, the Minority Engineering Recruitment and Retention Program will be reviewed in the section of this report on Formally Organized Units.) Looking at the distribution of Latino students, we see a different pattern. Undergraduates are heavily represented not only in Liberal Arts and Sciences but also in Business Administration, Education, and Architecture and the Arts. The proportion of the undergraduate student body in Engineering that is Latino (13.3%), is similar to the proportion of Latinos in the total UIC student body (13.7%). What is troubling here is the relatively poor representation of Latinos among students seeking advanced degrees (6.6%).

The percentage of women students increased steadily over the five year period from 1996 to 2000 (Table 8). In Fall 2000, 55% of UIC students were women and 45% were men. Women students have comprised more than 50% of the student population since 1996. Table 9 shows that in Fall 2000 women represented greater than half of all undergraduate and graduate enrollments and slightly less than half (49.6%) of the professional enrollments. The distribution of students by gender varies considerably from college to college. In Fall 2000, the proportion of college enrollments that were women ranged from 21.4% in Engineering to 91.9% in Nursing (Table 14). The enrollment pattern of

women and men mirror the traditional conception of men's and women's professions although less strongly than in the past.

### **National Survey Data Sources**

Drawing on data from three national surveys, we will illustrate the experiences, attitudes and expectations of incoming freshmen, as well as students later in their college experience. The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) conducts an annual survey of first-time, full-time freshmen at colleges and universities across the United States. The survey is sponsored by the American Council on Education and the University of California, Los Angeles. UIC has been a participant for the past few years. UIC has also participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), an initiative of the Pew Charitable Trusts. Data from this national survey of college student experiences is published annually. In 1996, UIC participated in the Student Satisfaction Survey. Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) is a survey conducted on a national basis among both two-year and four-year colleges and universities by the Noel-Levitz consulting firm. Reviewing the responses to these surveys administered at different times in a student's career and in the case of the CIRP in different calendar years, provides a moving rather than static view of the campus climate at UIC. Although we see little change, trends might be apparent in these data.

### **Attitudes of Entering Students**

The information on incoming students is of particular relevance to this report since they provide a snapshot of the attitudes and past experience of incoming students. Of particular import for campus climate is their past experience with fellow students from racial and ethnic groups different from their own, and their commitment to personally enhance racial/ethnic understanding.

Table 15 shows that the majority of students entering UIC in 1999 and 2000 report frequent interaction with students from different ethnic groups. Table 16 shows that incoming White students are less committed to personally improving race/ethnic understanding than are students from underrepresented groups.

### **Institutional Attractiveness (Recruitment)**

UIC's diversity is a recruitment asset. Results of the national survey (CIRP) administered to incoming first-year students at UIC (Table 17) show that the diversity of UIC was a factor considered in students' decision to attend UIC. Data from both the 1999 and 2000 administration of this survey showed that diversity was not only important to students of color but also to White students.

A survey of a random sample of undergraduates (SSI) resulted in 2,898 returned questionnaires. Analyses of these data provide critical information on the level of satisfaction students of various race/ethnic groups felt about the UIC recruitment experience.

Table 18 presents mean ratings of students' satisfaction with the way admissions counselors portray the campus, the way they respond to unique needs and requests, the level of knowledge of admissions staff, and the reputation of UIC in their community. Although all these mean ratings are positive, African American and Latino students are generally more satisfied with the admissions

process than Whites and Asian Americans. African American and Latino students also give a more positive evaluation of UIC in their community. In addition to the campus-wide Office of Admissions and Records, UIC has four special units -- the African American Academic Network (AAAN), the Latin American Recruitment and Educational Services (LARES), Minority Engineering Recruitment and Retention Program (MERRP), and Native American Support Program (NASP) -- that are devoted to recruitment and retention of African American, Latino, and Native American students. The special attention provided by these units may be the cause for the more positive evaluations given by African American and Latino students.

### **Institutional Attractiveness (Retention)**

The UIC six-year graduation and retention rates are low for all race/ethnic groups (Table 19) compared to some public institutions, but they are similar to those at comparable urban universities.

Data from both the Student Satisfaction Survey and the National Study of Student Engagement (1999) give some idea of the attractiveness of UIC for continuing students. The variations in ratings given by students from different race and ethnic groups are generally very small but they may give some clue as to the similarities and differences of their experience and perception of UIC.

In Table 20, mean satisfaction scores of students responding to the Student Satisfaction Survey show that there is little variation in students' assessment of their experience at UIC on the basis of their race/ethnicity. Of interest is the greater positive response from Latino students on most items. Latino students were the most satisfied with the college experience at UIC, with their overall experience at UIC, and the availability of financial aid. In addition, African American, Asian American and Latino students were more likely to endorse the statement "Most students feel a sense of belonging here" [UIC] than were White students. However, White students expressed the greatest satisfaction with campus security and Asian American students expressed the least.

Tables 21 and 22 present data from the National Survey of Student Engagement in 1999. Mean ratings of all respondents on the educational experience at UIC and likelihood of making the same choice again were positive. Variations among the various race/ethnic groups were too small to be meaningful but they are similar to the results of the Satisfaction Survey. In particular, Latino students at both the Sophomore and Senior level were the most likely to say they would choose UIC again if they were starting over. Mean scores for all respondents are slightly below the mean for other urban institutions but not significantly different.

The results of these surveys confirm the importance of AAAN and LARES to the retention of African American and Latino students. It is through these programs that students develop a sense of belonging and are counseled and tutored to assure academic success. Although the six-year graduation and retention rates (Table 19) of African-American and Latino students are not as high as those of Asian Americans and Whites, the relatively strong graduation rate of Latino students reflects the strength of the LARES initiatives. As noted in the first section of this report, UIC is ranked 36<sup>th</sup> in the number of baccalaureate degrees awarded to Latinos. The high number of Engineering baccalaureate degrees (20<sup>th</sup> in the nation) earned by students from underrepresented minority groups demonstrates the importance of targeted programs such as MERRP.

## **Faculty and Classroom Behavior**

Fall 1999 Sophomores and Seniors asked to give an overall rating of their relationships with faculty gave a mostly positive response (Table 23). Here again there are slight differences in the means for the different years and race/ethnic groups but the only data point that warrants comment is that the mean rating of the 23 African American sophomores was not positive and stands in contrast to the mean ratings of other sophomores and to African American seniors. These ratings have sparked discussion and indicate an area of concern. The recent introduction of “Freshman Seminars” and “Orientation Courses” in the colleges with the majority of undergraduate enrollments is one attempt to address this issue.

The positive ratings of relationships with faculty was also evident in the results of the Satisfaction Survey (Table 24). Students of all race/ethnic groups rated faculty as fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students and also saw them as adjusting their teaching to address student differences.

## **Student Needs and Concerns**

The Student Satisfaction Survey provides information on student assessment of a large number of university services. Table 25 presents data on nine of these. Mean ratings on all are positive and show a pattern which has been noted above. African American and Latino students appear more satisfied than White and Asian American students. This is true of their assessment of academic support services, and tutoring services as well as rating of staff/faculty in the following areas: advising, counseling, library services, registration support, and administrators.

Results of the Fall 1999 National Survey of Student Engagement present a similar pattern in students assessment of their relationships with administrative personnel and offices (Table 26) and with the impact of their university experience on understanding themselves (Table 27). Responses of African American and Latino students on these items are generally more positive than the average ratings given by all students at other urban institutions.

Student responses concerning support for academic and personal success are also positive (Table 28). Except for a lower mean for the 12 African American seniors, the pattern of more positive responses from Latino and African American students is consistent with other measures. Perhaps the small number of African American respondents is the reason for this inconsistency. The other means for African American and Latino UIC students are higher than the national average for urban institutions.

### **Institutional Responsiveness/Institutional Racial Climate**

Review of the data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (Tables 29 and 30) supports the view that UIC encourages contact among students from different economic, social and racial/ethnic backgrounds, as well as promotes understanding among people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Data drawn from the Student Satisfaction Survey (Table 31) documents students' assessment of the campus commitment to meeting the need of underrepresented populations. The means in Table 29 show that all students have a positive evaluation of the campus commitment to underrepresented groups. However the responses from African American students are lower than that of other groups. Many of our recent changes in support services and recruitment have targeted African Americans for this reason. As noted in the Highlights section of this report, the African American Academic Network (AAAN) introduced several new events or programs over the past two years. Some are targeted at specific sub-groups, such as the Single Parents Support Group, Sista Circle, and Male Student Success Initiative. One program aimed at all African American students is especially noteworthy. It is a mentoring program through which African American undergraduates are matched with African American faculty and staff on UIC's campus. We hope that any current and future assessments will find the African American students' evaluations to be more positive.

Two items on the Student Satisfaction Survey provide information on the racial climate at UIC. Means of these two items are presented in Table 32. This table reveals overall positive mean ratings of the commitment to racial harmony at UIC and the degree to which all students are made to feel welcome.

### **Student Racial Climate/Student Life**

One measure of the racial climate among students is their rating of their relationships with other students. The Fall 1999 National Survey of Student Engagement asked

sophomore and senior respondents to rate the quality of the relationships among students at UIC. All respondents regardless of race/ethnicity or class rank rated student relationships positively (Table 33). Latinos gave the most positive evaluations. We also see that the means for all UIC respondents are similar to those of other urban institutions.

The African American Cultural Center, the Rafael Cintrón-Ortiz Latino Cultural Center, and the Latino Committee on University Affairs join with AAAN and LARES in nurturing African American and Latino students. Not only do the Centers celebrate the students' culture and the past and present accomplishments of people like them, they also allow students to test their leadership skills in a friendly and welcoming environment. The Latino Committee on University Affairs provides role models for Latino students, sponsors the Association of Latino Parents, and co-sponsors a Financial Aid Workshop for Latino students.

## **Overview**

Taken together, these data paint a picture of students who enter UIC with previous experience with people different from themselves, and who are attracted to UIC because of its diverse student body. Race/ethnicity does not have a major impact on evaluations of the recruitment process, interactions with faculty, staff, and other students. In fact, where we do see differences, the majority show a pattern of more positive evaluations from African American and Latino students. In a few instances, the mean ratings of African American students were less positive than those given by students from other groups. This difference appeared in some of the older survey data but not in the more recent surveys. In response to the earlier results, several initiatives have been launched. It is hoped that more positive responses will occur on future survey. In the meantime, the areas of deficiency have been noted and will continue to be addressed.

One possible explanation of the general pattern of more positive view of the UIC climate by African American and Latino students is the success of attempts to support African American and Latino students with special initiatives and support activities. Perhaps the successful programs offered by the support programs need to be expanded to cover all students. Despite the lack of consistent race/ethnic differences, these data also indicate areas that need attention & particularly in communicating the concern of faculty and staff for individual students.