



Exit Survey Highlights (Class 2006)

Last May, we invited 1,136 students in the Class of 2006 to evaluate their TC experiences as they relate to: courses, instruction, faculty, community, diversity, program organization, internship, technology, and resources. We also asked students to identify two specific strengths and two specific weaknesses of their programs or the College in general. We received 347 responses for a total response rate of 30.5%. Here are the main findings from our survey.

February 1, 2007

Teachers College's Strengths

More than 80% of our respondents agreed that their program was an intellectually stimulating place, and that program courses provided a solid theoretical background, were applicable to the anticipated professional work, and were academically rigorous. They also agreed that class activities were appropriate for student learning and encouraged critical thinking, teamwork, and collaboration.

The respondents agreed that program faculty provided timely feedback on assignments, used a variety of assessment methods, and were fair in evaluating student work. Faculty members were open to different scholarly points of view and encouraged students with diverse backgrounds and experiences to participate in class discussions.

The respondents also agreed that the student body reflected a diversity of backgrounds and experiences, that fellow students demonstrated high academic abilities, and that students supported each other to meet academic demands of the program.

More than 80% percent of the

students who responded to the internship-related questions agreed that the internship experience contributed to their academic development, that they got to apply what they learned, that they got to practice a variety of professional skills, and that their placement sites were conducive to learning and professional development.

A majority of the respondents agreed that their programs had clear requirements and were free of discrimination.

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Areas for Improvement

Over 40% of the respondents did not feel that they had the flexibility to choose courses based on their academic interests.

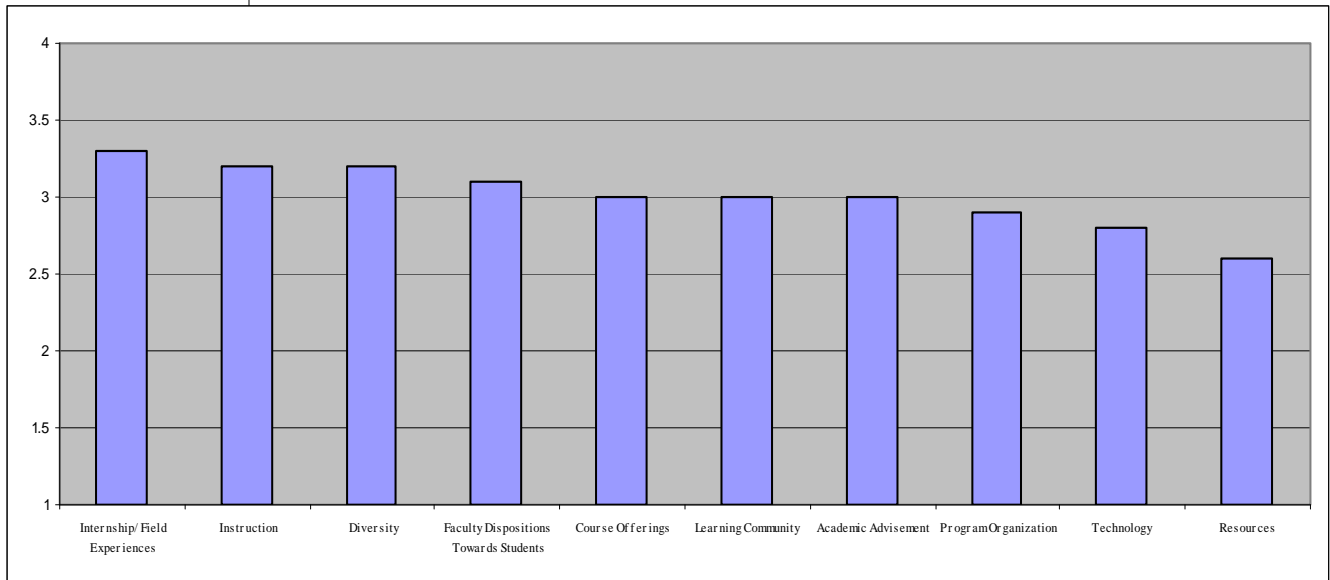
More than one-third of the respondents did not agree that communication between faculty and students regarding student needs, concerns and suggestions was good, that their program encouraged collaboration with faculty and other students, and that their program was receptive to student input regarding cur-

riculum or program improvement. The respondents did not feel that there was a sense of community in their program.

Over one-third of the respondents did not think that their program provided good academic advisement, that it clearly communicated program and degree requirements to students, or that it assessed student professional knowledge and skills and monitored student progress toward the degree.

More than one-third of the respondents did not agree that specialized and classroom facilities were adequate, or that student support services were helpful. The statement that financial aid was adequate drew the highest number of respondents who disagreed (64%).

Composite Student Experience Ratings (1-low to 4-high)



“My experience at TC was positively life-changing. I deeply appreciated the camaraderie I felt with my classmates. I felt the faculty was extremely knowledgeable yet did not dictate their opinions to us; rather they listened to us, debated, and helped us construct our own knowledge. I felt accepted and appreciated for who I was. I didn't feel I had to change into a different person. This meant the world to me. I'll never forget that.”

“Outstanding Faculty”

The strength of an institution of higher learning is determined to a large degree by the quality of its faculty. By this measure, based on student perception, Teachers College enjoys a very strong position. Faculty knowledge, expertise, and teaching earned our respondents' applause and approval. Most (92%) agreed that program faculty were scholarly and professionally competent. Students admired faculty for their scholarship, expertise,

professional experience, dedication, and passion in their respective fields.

Over two-thirds of the respondents were pleased with the quality of instruction. However, many (42 respondents) were disappointed that there were not enough tenured or full-time professors, that most of the Masters courses were taught by adjuncts, that there was too much reliance on teaching assistants, and that high faculty turnover made it

hard to get to know the professors and affected the consistency of class offerings.

Most respondents agreed that faculty treated all students fairly (87%) and with respect (89%). However, fewer students agreed that communication between faculty and students was good (64%), or that faculty cared about the professional development and welfare of students (69%).

“Fantastic Courses”

About 85% of the respondents were satisfied with the strong theoretical content and academic rigor of their coursework. The number of positive comments about course academic value exceeded the number of complaints (40 vs. 32). Positive comments described courses as providing “well-rounded theoretical foundation,” “cutting-edge” theo-

ries, and exposure to current educational trends and philosophies.

Even though most of the respondents agreed that course content was applicable (80%) and that program requirements were relevant (79%) to their anticipated work in the field, students' comments revealed that they would like to see more useful and practi-

cal courses that deal with “real world issues.”

Our respondents were disappointed when there was “too much theory” and “no practical application,” when there was no focus on developing their capacity as researchers and scholarly writers, or when courses focused on one aspect (multicultural issues) and left “everything else for students to learn on their own.”

Diversity and Community

More than two-thirds of the respondents gave a positive evaluation of diversity. Respondents, who identified themselves as European American, gave diversity a more positive evaluation than other respondents. Since the former represent a majority of the respondents (and of the TC students in general), readers should bear in mind that this finding may not be representative of the respondents from other ethnic or cultural groups. Open-ended comments related to students' experiences with bias and

discrimination on campus showed that 22 respondents reported that they had either experienced or observed discrimination against certain groups of students.

Students' perceptions of learning community in their program was somewhat less positive than their perceptions of diversity. Only 52% of the respondents agreed that their program was receptive to student input; 66% agreed that their program encouraged collaboration between faculty and students; and

62% felt that there was a sense of community in their program. Twenty-seven (of 52) students identified the lack of community among program weaknesses. According to the respondents, programs did not make an effort to encourage a sense of community and support among students, and between students and faculty. Part-time and commuter students found it difficult to feel they were a part of the TC community.

“Strong Philosophy” but “No Flow”

An academic program is more than just a collection of individual courses. Our respondents' comments about program philosophy and curriculum showed program design to be of high importance for students. About 69% of the respondents agreed that their program had a clear philosophy. They appreciated an emphasis on multicultural and multiracial issues, on self-awareness, on diversity, on promoting collaboration, and on strong quantitative

and qualitative research.

Our respondents were less satisfied with the curriculum design of their program. While many agreed that their program provided a well-integrated set of courses (69%) and courses that were not repetitive (71%), students wanted faculty to do more in creating “meaningful, deep and rich curricula for the programs.” Many (68 respondents) found “no coherence;

no understandable order of courses; no flow” in their program of study. Others commented that courses often overlapped, that students were given the same articles to read, and that students were made to learn the same theories “over and over.” According to one student, “it was as though the faculty never gathered together to cross-check their curriculum.”

Critical Thinking, Research, and Teamwork

Teaching students to be reflective and critical thinkers is one of the main goals of most, if not all, of the TC programs. According to our respondents, academic programs were successful in achieving this goal. Most respondents (89%) agreed that class activities and assignments encouraged critical thinking and reflection; and 70% agreed that class activities and assignments allowed

them to practice research skills. Students' responses to the open-ended questions showed that both critical thinking/reflection and research skills were likely to be perceived as program strengths.

While 89% of the respondents agreed that class activities and assignments encouraged teamwork and collaboration, students also felt that team-

work was somewhat less important to them than to their program.

“TC was the most incredible academic experience I've encountered. I love my program and the professors within it; we are still in touch and it was the true epitome of a “learning community.” Outside my program, however, I was disappointed ... with the lack of professionalism and commitment to education ...”

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“Being ignorant is not so much a shame as being unwilling to learn.” Benjamin Franklin

We are on the Web!
[http://www.tc.edu/
administration/oa/](http://www.tc.edu/administration/oa/)

If you would like to find out more about the Exit Survey or about the Office of Accreditation and Assessment, please contact us by mail, phone, or e-mail. You can also visit us on the web.

If you are a current student and planning to graduate in February or May 2007, please consider taking a part in our next Exit Survey, which will be sent out the first week of May.

As always, we appreciate any comments or suggestions.

Academic Advising

Academic advising (or, rather, the lack thereof) was perceived as a major weakness by a large proportion of the respondents. Only 51% agreed that their program provided good academic advisement. Further analysis showed a big difference between how important academic advising was to students

and how little of it they received. The responses to the open-ended questions corroborated the quantitative findings—84% of the comments about academic advising were identified as weaknesses.

We shared these findings with the President's Advisory Group to inform

its discussions of how departments/programs provide academic advisement to masters and doctoral students.