

# The 7th Annual Hawaii International Conference on Education

4 – 8 January, 2009, Honolulu, Hawaii

***Title of the submission:***

A Survey Research of Satisfaction Levels of Graduate Students Enrolled in a Nationally Ranked Top-10 Program at a Mid-western University

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# **A Survey Research of Satisfaction Levels of Graduate Students Enrolled in a Nationally Ranked Top-10 Program at a Mid-western University**

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**Keywords:** Student Satisfaction, Survey Research, Workforce Education and Development

*The purpose of this study was to determine the satisfaction level of existing Workforce Education and Development (WED) Master's students attending the two-week summer session towards the WED Master's program at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Increased competition, dynamic educational environment, challenges such as budget cut, higher costs in obtaining college education, changing demographics in the population, declining enrollments, and a general public call for accountability have educational institutions realize the importance of student satisfaction (Cheng & Tam, 1997; Kotler & Fox, 1995). A survey research design was utilized to carry out this study. Findings indicate the majority of the students were either satisfied or extremely satisfied with the WED Master's program.*

## Introduction

The introduction of performance-based policies in the United States requires that higher educational systems to be more accountable. For instance, state systems are now putting policies in place to obligate state educational institutions to provide data and evidence to show that they are offering quality education and education-related activities to students in an effective and efficient manner (Hatcher, Prus, & Fitzgerald, 1992; Redd, 1998).

Student outcomes, student retention, attrition, and graduate rates are some of the key measures of the quality and overall effectiveness of the higher educational institution (Hatcher, et al., 1992; Redd, 1998). The implementation of these policies provides incentives and encouragement for higher educational institutions to study factors that affect the quality and overall effectiveness of their programs. Student satisfaction level has been found to be one of the factors that affects the quality and overall effectiveness of a university program (Aitken, 1982; Astin, Korn, & Green, 1987; Bailey, Bauman, & Lata, 1998; Love, 1993; Suen, 1983). In addition, student recruitment and retention have always been the core activities of higher educational institutions. Student satisfaction has been identified a factor that affects student recruitment and retention (Hatcher, et al., 1992; Love, 1993). This basically implies that the higher the level of satisfaction with the educational environment, the higher the likelihood that the student will stay at the educational institution and recommend the institution to others. As a result, student satisfaction has been integrated as a part of the discussion in respect of institutional effectiveness and student outcomes (Astin, Korn, & Green, 1987; Bailey, Bauman, & Lata, 1998).

## Problem Statement

Increased competition, dynamic educational environment, challenges such as budget cut, higher costs in obtaining college education, changing demographics in the population, declining enrollments, and a general public call for accountability have educational institutions realize the importance of student satisfaction (Cheng & Tam, 1997; Kotler & Fox, 1995). Studies have shown student satisfaction to have a positive impact on student motivation, student retention, recruiting efforts and fundraising (Borden, 1995; Frazer, 1999).

The students' positive feeling and satisfaction is contingent to the students' academic and social experiences obtained at the particular institution (Aitken, 1982; Betz, Menne, Starr, & Klingensmith, 1971; Danielson, 1998; Hatcher, et al., 1992; Stikes 1984; Tinto, 1993). However, most student studies in higher education focus more on intrinsic factors of student motivation. It is assumed that students who join graduate school are more highly motivated than college students and so attrition rates are lower in graduate schools (Suhre, Jansen & Harskamp, 2006). As a result, student satisfaction among graduate students is assumed and only usually considered when competition affects enrolment. There is need for more research in higher education that focuses more on student needs and concerns for the purposes of improving academic programs. In addition, extrinsic factors need to be considered as well.

Being able to identify and address students' needs and expectations allows educational institutions to attract and retain quality students as well as improve the quality of their programs (Elliott & Shin, 2002). Therefore, it is vital for educational institutions to determine and deliver what is important to students. Therefore, the

purpose of this study is to determine the satisfaction level of existing Workforce Education and Development Master's students attending the two-week summer session.

#### Research Questions

To achieve the purpose of this study, the following questions need to be addressed.

1. What personal demographics characterize current Workforce Education and Development (WED) graduate students attending the two-week summer session?
2. What geographic area is represented by the current Workforce Education and Development (WED) graduate students attending the two-week summer session?
3. What is the overall WED Graduate Program satisfaction level of all graduate students attending the two-week summer session?
4. What is the overall WED Graduate Program satisfaction level of graduate students enrolled in the off-campus course delivery program attending the two-week summer session?
5. What is the overall WED Graduate Program satisfaction level of graduate students enrolled in the on-campus course delivery program attending the two-week summer session?
6. To what extent does specific Graduate Program characteristics contribute to the satisfaction level of all graduate students attending the two-week summer session?
7. To what extent do specific Graduate Program characteristics contribute to the satisfaction level of graduate students enrolled in the off-campus course delivery program attending the two-week summer session? (please see "definition of characteristics" section for these program characteristics).

8. To what extent do specific Graduate Program characteristics contribute to the satisfaction level of graduate students enrolled in the on-campus course delivery program attending the two-week summer session?
9. To what extent are the specific WED Graduate Program characteristic related to overall program satisfaction/dissatisfaction level of all graduate students attending the two-week summer session?
10. To what extent are the specific WED Graduate Program characteristics related to overall program satisfaction/dissatisfaction level of graduate students enrolled in the off-campus course delivery program attending the two-week summer session?
11. To what extent are the specific WED Graduate Program characteristics related to overall program satisfaction/dissatisfaction level of graduate students enrolled in the on-campus course delivery program attending the two-week summer session?

#### Significance of the Study

First, the staff and the director of the WED graduate program can integrate the results and findings of the study in the retention strategies through necessary modification and improvement of the WED Master's program to meet the needs and concerns [as indicated in the results of the study] of the current students who are enrolled in 2-week Summer program. Moreover, the results of this study can also be used to assist in marketing the WED's graduate program to prospective students and their families. Last, but not least, this study adds to the importance of how student satisfaction assessment can be utilized as a tool to ensure the program's quality and effectiveness.

### Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations always exist in any study. In particular, this study has two limitations. First of all, the use of a convenient sample limits the generalizability of the results and findings of the study. In addition, the absence of random sampling does not permit the analysis of the data collected using inferential statistics. For the delimitations, this study only surveyed Master's students who are enrolled in the 2-week Summer program in 2008 in the Department of Workforce Education and Development, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

### Definition of Characteristics

*Student satisfaction*-Student satisfaction refers to the attraction, pride, or positive feeling that the students develop toward the program or institution (Danielson, 1998; Hatcher, et al., 1992).

*Determinants of satisfaction*- These refer to the academic and social factors that contribute to student satisfaction (Aitken, 1982; Betz, Menne, Starr and Klingensmith, 1971).

*Operational definition*-In this study, we will refer to determinants of satisfaction as graduate program characteristics. These include admission procedures; faculty members in the WED department; courses offered in the WED department; program advisement; other students in the WED graduate program; interaction with faculty in the WED department; networking opportunities among faculty and students: communication within WED department and with students; WED graduate program costs; distribution of courses delivered by distance; preparation for your desired career goal/position;

preparation for a PhD program; reputation of the WED Master's program; and the reputation of SIUC.

### Review of Literature

Student satisfaction refers to the attraction, pride, or positive feeling that the students develop toward the program or institution (Danielson, 1998; Hatcher, et al., 1992). Strike (1984) indicated that the level of students' positive feeling or satisfaction is associated with students' being able to find adequate resources to meet their academic and social interests. The students' ability to project and implement their self concepts as a students or viewing themselves as part of the institution is also related to their positive feeling of satisfaction (Sedlacek, 1987; Stikes, 1984). The students' positive feeling and satisfaction is also contingent to the students' academic and social experiences obtained at the particular institution (Aitken, 1982; Betz, Menne, Starr, & Klingensmith, 1971; Danielson, 1998; Hatcher, et al., 1992; Stikes 1984; Tinto, 1993). The academic and social experiences of students are the vehicles that drive students into the life of the institution (Tinto, 1993). In his Interaction theory into argues that student persistence can be predicted by their degree of integration. He refers to two kinds of integration; academic and social integration. Academic integration refers to how students perform academically (grades) and social integration is how the students interact with faculty (Suhre, Jansen, and Harskamp, 2006).

Previous studies have shown that students who report positive academic and social experiences expressed greater satisfaction with their overall college experience (Bailey, et al., 1998; Danielson, 1998; Tinto, 1993). Other key determinants of student satisfaction include academic performance, quality of curriculum, quality of instruction,

quality of academic advising, student satisfaction with major, and the level of isolation felt by the student (Aitken, 1982). Interaction between faculty members and students is also a factor affecting student satisfaction in their academic experiences (Allen, 1987; Betz, et al., 1971; Love, 1993; Tinto, 1993). This implies that sufficient and positive faculty-student interaction will contribute to overall student satisfaction (Danielson, 1998; Nettles, et al., 1986; Tinto, 1993). Interaction with fellow students is also associated with student satisfaction (Aitken, 1982).

### Research Methods

This study is a descriptive research study using survey method. The population included all the Master's students in the department of Workforce Education and Development about 243 students. The 86 students enrolled in the 2-week WED Master's program of Summer, 2008 are the sample chosen for this study.

A convenient sampling design was used in this study. This means that no random sampling or assignment was performed. Convenient sampling was used because of the time constraints imposed on this study, the researchers had only one week to collect the data. The sample frame was specified as all students enrolled in the 2-week WED Master's program of Summer, 2008. However, not all those enrolled were WED Masters students, some were from other departments taking WED summer courses as electives. The non-WED student responses were not considered and together with those who were absent or had dropped the courses, they totaled up to 29 students. The sampling units or those whose responses were considered in the study were 57 WED graduate students enrolled in the 2-week WED Master's program of Summer, 2008.

In terms of sample characteristics, there were 57 WED students enrolled in the 2-week WED Master's program of summer, 2008. Of the 57 students, 34 were classified as non-traditional. Non-traditional students enroll into the WED Master's degree through the off-campus degree program. If they are Illinois residents, then they must attend one (1) two-week summer session on SIUC campus and will not attend campus courses in either the fall or spring semester. If they are not Illinois residents, they must attend two (2) two-week summer sessions on SIUC campus and will not attend campus courses in either the fall or spring semester. The remaining 23 students were classified as traditional students.

In this study, traditional students were defined as students who enroll into the WED Master's degree through the on-campus degree program. For convenience, they attend the summer two-week session in addition to attending courses on campus in either or both the fall and spring semester.

#### *Instrument*

A 5-point Likert-type scale questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument in order to obtain student attitudes toward different characteristics. The questionnaire was divided into three main sections. The first section which contained only one item which asked participants to rate their overall satisfaction of the WED Master's program. The second section asked participants to rate their overall satisfaction on 14 different items. The forced choice statements presented were in order of Extremely Satisfied, Satisfied, Somewhat Satisfied, Unsatisfied and Extremely Unsatisfied. The last section asked participants to provide their demographic information.

### *Instrument Validity and Reliability*

The instrument developed by the WED graduate program [with slight modification] was used to collect the data. The modification included adding two extra questions to the second section, and the omission of “ethnicity and race” in the demographic section. Appropriate permission was elicited and granted to use the instrument with this slight modification. To establish the validity of the instrument, the WED graduate program conducted a review of literature and utilized a panel of experts to generate the items found in this instrument. In addition, the focus groups and pilot studies were performed in order to establish the reliability of the instrument. In addition, the instrument was reviewed by another panel of researchers before it was distributed to the subjects. As a result, the validity and reliability of this instrument were established.

### *Data Collection Process*

After resuming from class break, the researchers explained the nature of the survey and how the results were going to be used. The participants were invited to participate in the survey and were told that it would take only 10 to 15 minutes to fill out the questionnaire. It was emphasized that their participation was voluntary and their responses would be kept unanimous and confidential. Before the informed consent and questionnaire were handed to the participants, the participants were told that should they wish not to participate in the survey, they did not have to sign the informed consent nor fill out the questionnaire.

### *Data Analysis*

SPSS Version 14.0 was used to perform the analyses to address the research questions. Data analyses included descriptive statistics and a Spearman’s *rho* correlation.

Descriptive statistics included measurements of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The Spearman's *rho* correlation showed the degree to which subjects maintained the same relative position on two measures (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). A Likert-type scale falls within the ordinal level of measurement (Jamieson, 2004). That is, response categories have a rank order, but the intervals between the values can not be equal. Therefore, the appropriate statistics for ordinal data are nonparametric tests such as Spearman's *rho* correlation (Jamieson, 2004, p. 1217). The correlations are reported in isolation of all other related variables.

This team of researchers are aware that the aspects of a graduate program are correlated amongst themselves and that multiple regression would have been a better method to account for the shared relationships; however, the sample size was too small to run multiple regression analysis. As a result, the *rho* and *p* values computed may not accurately reflect the relationship between all of the aspects of the WED department and overall program satisfaction due to shared variability and inflated type I error. The alpha level of .05 was predetermined for this study. The following section presents respondent data and results according to eleven research questions.

### Findings

*Research Question 1: What personal demographics characterize current Workforce Education and Development (WED) graduate students attending the two-week summer session?*

Data for Research Question 1 were analyzed via descriptive statistics. As reflected in Table 1, the ages of the respondents' ranged from 22 years old to 54 years old. The mean of the respondents' ages was 35.33, with a standard deviation of 9.59.

Table 1

*Age of Respondents*

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>sd</i>	Min	Max
Age	57	35.33	9.587	22	54

Table 2 contains other demographic characteristics of the respondents. All 57 of the respondents declared Workforce Education and Development as their major. Of the respondents, 30 (52.6%) were female, 27 (47.4%) were male, 29 (51.8%) were single and 27 (48.2%) were married. Twenty-three (40.4%) were identified as traditional students (defined by taking courses on campus year-around), 19 (33.3%) were identified as non-traditional students attending 1<sup>st</sup> summer session, and 15 (26.3%) were identified as non-traditional students attending 2nd summer session. The majority of students (62.5%) are either into their first or second year of the graduate program. Twenty-six (48.1%) of the students reported a 4.0 grade point average(GPA).

Table 2

*Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Major ( <i>n</i> = 57)		
Workforce Education and Development	57	100
Gender ( <i>n</i> = 57)		
Female	30	52.6
Male	27	47.4

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
<b>Marital Status (<math>n = 56</math>)</b>		
Single	29	51.8
Married	27	48.2
<b>Student Status (<math>n = 57</math>)</b>		
Traditional student	23	40.4
Non-traditional attending 1 <sup>st</sup> summer	19	33.3
Non-traditional attending 2 <sup>nd</sup> summer	15	26.3
<b>Years completed so far in Program (<math>n = 48</math>)</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup> semester (0.0)	4	8.3
One-half year (0.5)	9	18.8
One year (1.0)	20	41.7
One and half year (1.5)	3	6.3
Two years (2.0)	10	20.8
Two and half year (2.5)	1	2.1
Three years (3.0)	1	2.1
<b>Current Grade Point Average Range (<math>n = 57</math>)</b>		
3.0 – 3.4	10	18.7
3.5 – 3.91	18	33.2
4.0	26	48.1

*Research Question 2: What geographic area is represented by the current Workforce Education and Development (WED) graduate students attending the two-week summer session?*

Data for Research question 2 was calculated in miles from Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) campus area code and is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*Miles from SIUC area code 62901 (N=57)*

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>sd</i>	Median	Max	Min
Miles from 62901	51	266	409	65	1812	0
Range				Freq	Percent	
0				14	27.5	
7 - 22				10	19.7	
55 - 85				7	14.0	
165 - 520				11	21.9	
675 - 996				7	14.0	
1500 - 1800				2	4.0	

*Research Question 3: What is the overall WED Graduate Program satisfaction level of all graduate students attending the two-week summer session?*

Of the 55 respondents, 15 (27.3%) were Extremely Satisfied, 30 (54.5%) were Satisfied, 9 (16.4%) were Somewhat Satisfied, and 1 (1.8%) was Extremely Unsatisfied.

*Research Question 4: What is the overall WED Graduate Program satisfaction level of graduate students enrolled in the off-campus course delivery program attending the two-week summer session?*

Of the 32 respondents, 10 (31.3%) were Extremely Satisfied, 14 (43.8%) were Satisfied, 7 (21.9%) were Somewhat Satisfied, and 1 (3.1%) was Extremely Unsatisfied.

*Research Question 5: What is the overall WED Graduate Program satisfaction level of graduate students enrolled in the on-campus course delivery program attending the two-week summer session?*

Of the 23 respondents, 5 (21.7%) were Extremely Satisfied, 16 (69.6%) were Satisfied, and 2 (8.7%) were Somewhat Satisfied.

*Research Question 6: To what extent does specific WED Graduate Program characteristics contribute to the satisfaction level of all graduate students attending the two-week summer session?*

*Research Question 7: To what extent do specific WED Graduate Program characteristics (listed above) contribute to the satisfaction level of graduate students enrolled in the off-campus course delivery program attending the two-week summer session?*

*Research Question 8: To what extent do specific WED Graduate Program characteristics (listed above ) contribute to the satisfaction level of graduate students enrolled in the on-campus course delivery program attending the two-week summer session?*

Research Question 6, 7, and 8 defined specific characteristics of the WED Department that contributed to the Graduate Program. More specifically, 14 characteristics were identified that were particular to the two-week summer session. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

## Specific characteristics of the WED Department

Characteristic and Student Status	<i>n</i>	Extremely Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Extremely Unsatisfied
<b>Admission Procedures</b>						
All graduate students	57	20(35.1)	29(50.9)	4(7.0)	4(7.0)	0
Non-traditional students	34	10(29.4)	19(55.9)	2(5.9)	3(8.8)	0
Traditional students	23	10(43.5)	10(43.5)	2(8.7)	1(4.3)	0
<b>Faculty Members in WED Department</b>						
All graduate students	57	29(50.9)	23(40.4)	4(7.0)	1(1.8)	0
Non-traditional students	34	21(61.8)	11(32.4)	1(2.9)	1(2.9)	0
Traditional students	23	8(34.8)	12(52.2)	3(13.0)	0	0
<b>Course Offered in WED Department</b>						
All graduate students	57	21(36.8)	27(47.4)	7(12.3)	1(1.8)	1(1.8)
Non-traditional students	34	13(38.2)	16(47.1)	3(8.8)	1(2.9)	1(2.9)
Traditional students	23	8(34.8)	11(47.8)	4(17.4)	0	0

Note. *n* = responses (percentage)

Table 4 (continued)

## Specific characteristics of the WED Department

Characteristic and Student Status	<i>n</i>	Extremely Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Extremely Unsatisfied
Program Advisement						
All graduate students	57	9(15.8)	27(47.4)	10(17.5)	6(10.5)	5(8.8)
Non-traditional students	34	6(17.6)	17(50.0)	4(11.8)	3(8.8)	4(11.8)
Traditional students	23	3(13)	10(43.5)	6(26.1)	3(13.0)	1(4.3)
Other students in WED Graduate Program						
All graduate students	56	23(41.1)	25(44.6)	5(8.9)	3(5.4)	0
Non-traditional students	34	15(44.1)	16(47.1)	3(8.8)	0	0
Traditional students	22	8(36.4)	9(40.9)	2(9.1)	3(13.6)	0
Your interaction with faculty in the WED Department						
All graduate students	57	28(49.1)	21(36.8)	8(14)	0	0
Non-traditional students	34	18(52.9)	11(32.4)	5(14.7)	0	0
Traditional students	23	10(43.5)	10(43.5)	3(13.0)	0	0

Note. *n* = responses (percentage)

Table 4 (continued)

## Specific characteristics of the WED Department

Characteristic and Student Status	<i>n</i>	Extremely Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Extremely Unsatisfied
Networking opportunities among faculty and students						
All graduate students	57	19(33.3)	23(40.4)	13(22.8)	1(1.8)	1(1.8)
Non-traditional students	34	10(29.4)	15(44.1)	8(23.5)	0	1(2.9)
Traditional students	23	9(39.1)	8(34.8)	5(21.7)	1(4.3)	0
Communications within WED Department and with students						
All graduate students	57	20(35.1)	27(47.4)	5(8.8)	3(5.3)	2(3.5)
Non-traditional students	34	10(29.4)	15(44.1)	4(11.8)	3(8.8)	2(5.9)
Traditional students	23	10(43.5)	12(52.2)	1(4.3)	0	0
WED Graduate Program costs						
All graduate students	56	11(19.6)	23(41.1)	16(28.6)	4(7.1)	2(3.6)
Non-traditional students	34	7(20.6)	10(29.4)	14(41.2)	1(2.9)	2(5.9)
Traditional students	22	4(18.2)	13(59.1)	2(9.1)	3(13.6)	0

Note. *n* = responses (percentage)

Table 4 (continued)

## Specific characteristics of the WED Department

Characteristic and Student Status	<i>n</i>	Extremely Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Extremely Unsatisfied
Distribution of courses delivered by distance						
All graduate students	54	12(22.2)	22(40.7)	14(25.9)	5(9.3)	1(1.9)
Non-traditional students	34	8(24.2)	13(39.4)	8(24.2)	4(12.1)	0
Traditional students	21	4(19.0)	9(42.9)	6(28.6)	1(4.8)	1(4.8)
Preparation for your desired career goal/position						
All graduate students	57	17(29.8)	31(54.4)	6(10.5)	3(5.3)	0
Non-traditional students	34	10(29.4)	18(52.9)	5(14.7)	1(2.9)	0
Traditional students	23	7(30.4)	13(56.5)	1(4.3)	2(8.7)	0
Preparation for a PhD program						
All graduate students	50	10(20.0)	24(48.0)	12(24.0)	4(8.0)	0
Non-traditional students	32	7(21.9)	12(37.5)	9(28.1)	4(12.5)	0
Traditional students	18	3(16.7)	12(66.7)	3(16.7)	0	0

Note. *n* = responses (percentage)

Table 4 (continued)

## Specific characteristics of the WED Department

Characteristic and Student Status	<i>n</i>	Extremely Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Extremely Unsatisfied
Reputation of MS WED Program						
All graduate students	57	25(43.9)	27(47.4)	4(7.0)	1(1.8)	0
Non-traditional students	34	18(52.9)	13(38.2)	2(5.9)	1(2.9)	0
Traditional students	23	7(30.4)	14(60.9)	2(8.7)	0	0
Reputation of SIUC						
All graduate students	57	20(35.1)	27(47.4)	9(15.8)	1(1.8)	0
Non-traditional students	34	14(41.2)	16(47.1)	3(8.8)	1(2.9)	0
Traditional students	23	6(26.1)	11(47.8)	6(26.1)	0	0

Note. *n* = responses (percentage)

*Research Question 9: To what extent are the specific WED Graduate Program characteristic(listed above)related to overall program satisfaction/dissatisfaction level of all graduate students attending the two-week summer session?*

*Research Question 10:To what extent are the specific WED Graduate Program characteristics(listed above) related to overall program satisfaction/dissatisfaction level of graduate students enrolled in the off-campus course delivery program attending the two-week summer session?*

*Research Question 11: To what extent are the specific WED Graduate Program characteristics(listed above) related to overall program satisfaction/dissatisfaction level of graduate students enrolled in the on-campus course delivery program attending the two-week summer session?*

The purpose of Research Questions 9, 10, and 11 was to examine the relationship of respondents' overall program satisfaction to the 14 characteristics associated with the two-week summer session using Spearman's *rho* correlation. Results of the analysis are presented in Tables 5, 6, and 7.

Table 5

Spearman Correlation between Overall Program Satisfaction level of all graduate students attending the two-week summer session and characteristics of the WED Graduate Department

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	<i>rho</i>
Preparation for your desired career goal/position	55	.635**
Courses offered in the WED Department	55	.619**
Program advisement	55	.593**
Reputation of MS WED Program	55	.505**
WED Graduate Program costs	54	.482**
Other students in WED Graduate Program	54	.473**
Networking opportunities among faculty and students	55	.443**
Preparation for a PhD program	49	.430**
Communication within WED Department and with students	55	.418**
Your interaction with faculty in the WED Department	55	.415**
Faculty members in the WED Department	55	.399**
Reputation of SIUC	55	.312*
Distribution of courses delivered by distance	52	.260
Admission procedures	55	.249

Note. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 6

Spearman Correlation between Overall Program Satisfaction level of graduate students enrolled in the off-campus course delivery program attending the two-week summer session and characteristics of the WED Graduate Department off campus

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	<i>rho</i>
Courses offered in the WED Department	32	.697**
Program advisement	32	.683**
Preparation for your desired career goal/position	32	.683**
Communication within WED Department and with students	32	.605**
WED Graduate Program costs	32	.583**
Reputation of MS WED Program	32	.543**
Networking opportunities among faculty and students	32	.540**
Other students in WED Graduate Program	32	.519**
Your interaction with faculty in the WED Department	32	.514**
Faculty members in the WED Department	32	.501**
Preparation for a PhD program	31	.406*
Admission procedures	32	.327
Reputation of SIUC	32	.239
Distribution of courses delivered by distance	31	.197

Note. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 7

Spearman Correlation between Overall Program Satisfaction level graduate students enrolled in the on-campus course delivery program attending the two-week summer session and characteristics of the WED Graduate Department.

Characteristic	<i>N</i>	<i>rho</i>
Preparation for your desired career goal/position	23	.548**
Courses offered in the WED Department	23	.486*
Reputation of SIUC	23	.471*
Reputation of MS WED Program	23	.448*
Other students in WED Graduate Program	22	.445*
Preparation for a PhD program	18	.430
Program advisement	23	.424*
Distribution of courses delivered by distance	21	.389
Faculty members in the WED Department	23	.279
Networking opportunities among faculty and students	23	.257
Your interaction with faculty in the WED Department	23	.218
WED Graduate Program costs	22	.178
Admission procedures	23	.106
Communication within WED Department and with students	23	-.032

*Note.* \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

## Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine the satisfaction level of existing Workforce Education and Development Master's students attending the 2008 two-week summer session. More specifically the study (a) compiled a demographic profile, (b) determined the level of satisfaction with characteristics particular to the WED graduate program, and (c) measured their degree of satisfaction regarding overall satisfaction with the WED graduate program.

### *Demographic Profile*

Respondents' age ranged from 22 to 54 with a mean of 35 years old. The WED graduate program is more desirable for persons of maturity or otherwise known as non-traditional students (meaning upper age), which is typical of the type of students who enroll graduate school. Students who are admitted into the WED graduate program must have completed at least two years of work experience; this may be an additional reason for the age of students enrolled in this program.

The majority of students reside at least 55 miles from the SIUC campus. The dedication of time off away work, away from family, and the financial burden of room and board for the two weeks is a testament of their commitment and need for this graduate degree.

The 2008 summer session was designed for the non-traditional students which were reported as the majority (59.6%) in this present study. A non-traditional student was defined as a student enrolled in the off-campus degree program (OCDP). As a requirement, students residing outside of Illinois must commit to two summers of on-

campus (SIUC) instruction, while in-state residents must commit to attending for one summer. Therefore, the results are indicative of the program format.

#### *Satisfaction of Characteristics*

Of the 55 respondents, the majority were overall satisfied with the WED graduate program. However, the on-campus students and non-traditional students differ on their level of overall satisfaction. Of the 23 on-campus respondents' 91.3% were extremely satisfied or satisfied while 75.1% of the non-traditional students (n = 32) were extremely satisfied or satisfied.

The results continue with the differences between non-traditional students and on-campus students with regards to the satisfaction of characteristics of the WED graduate program. The non-traditional students were most satisfied with faculty members in the WED department while the on-campus students were most satisfied with communications within the WED Department and with students.

#### *Overall Satisfaction with Characteristics*

Both groups of students indicated the characteristics of WED graduate program does prepare you for your desired career/goal position, courses offered in the WED program, program advisement, and the reputation of the MS WED program contribute to the overall satisfaction level with the WED graduate program.

Interestingly, the reputation of SIUC by the on-campus students is moderately correlated while the off-campus has low correlation to overall satisfaction with the WED graduate program.

The characteristics of communication within the WED Department and students, networking opportunities among faculty and students, interaction with faculty in the

WED Department, and faculty members within the WED Department while these are moderately positive correlated among the non-traditional students, these characteristics ranked low among on-campus students.

Not surprisingly, the distribution of courses by distance was indicated as the lowest positive correlation with overall program satisfaction. This could be contributed to the limited number of online courses offered by the WED program.

### Implications

The WED graduate program should continue to market their program to experienced workers who want to further their education. The WED graduate program caters to two distinct groups of students (a) on-campus and (b) non-traditional students. This study proved that each group of students has different needs. The WED graduate program director, WED faculty, the WED chair need to focus on sustaining the characteristics with which each group of students are satisfied and develop a strategic plan to improve the characteristics with which they are dissatisfied. These characteristics should be communicated between and among graduate students, faculty, and administration.

The WED graduate program accommodates the needs of their students through the design of the program format. This study has allowed the stakeholders to pinpoint what each group (on-campus and non-traditional) of students need to be successful in obtaining their Master's degree. Not only current students needs need to be addressed but for the improvement of quality of the WED graduate program to attract and retain future students.

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