

2016-17 Senior Survey Executive Report

International Students

Introductory Paragraph

The UI Senior Exit Survey is administered by the Office of Assessment to all UI undergraduates at the time they file to graduate. This brief survey asks students about their experiences at UI, their participation in selected learning opportunities, and faculty or staff who made a difference for them during their time at UI. In 2016-17, a total of 380 international students responded to this survey.

Data Summary

Levels of satisfaction and engagement for international students are similar to or greater than those of their non-international classmates.

All students receive the following questions (on a 5-point scale):

UI Mean	UI SD	International Students	
4.4	0.74	4.4	My time at UI has helped me achieve my educational goals.
4.3	0.75	4.4	In my classes, I was challenged to do my best work.
4.3	0.76	4.5	My instructors seemed genuinely interested in helping students succeed.
4.2	0.77	4.3	I feel well-prepared to apply what I have learned in my classes to new situations in the future.

All students receive the following question:

2.5	1.16	2.5	How many UI faculty or staff do you know that you would be comfortable asking for a recommendation letter or professional advice?
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All students are asked to indicate participation in each of the following activities:

All UI	International Students	
65%	60%	A practicum, internship, or field experience
27%	39%	A course that awarded credit for community-based service learning
30%	40%	Research with a professor outside of my regular course assignments
45%	60%	A capstone course or senior project that integrated what I learned in other courses
24%	41%	International or cross-cultural academic work (such as study abroad)
14%	11%	None of the above

Finally, all students are asked to identify one faculty or staff member who made a difference for them at UI, and to respond to one of the following open-ended question about their experience at UI:

- What got in the way of achieving your educational goals at UI?
- What helped you be successful at UI?
- What suggestions do you have for improving undergraduate experiences at UI?
- What would you do differently if you could begin your UI career again?

- What got in the way of achieving your educational goals at UI?
 - o **Emerging themes include:** language, coursework, time management, major/finding passion, campus climate, communication, personal life, family, integrate in the community, instructor.
 - o Sample quotes:
 - “As an international student, I met a little bit language issue during my first semester, but things went well after that. Mostly I guess the challenges are based upon coursework like arranging time for multiple courses and dues.”

- What helped you be successful at UI?
 - o **Emerging themes include:** people, attitudes (hard work), coursework, involvement, challenges, personal interest and goals, campus and local environment.
 - o Sample quotes:
 - “My professors, the challenging classes, and the career fair.”
 - “The group works required in all the courses. Made me become able to work with others in a better way.”

International Students' Stories

Senior Survey Open-Ended Question Responses

All students are asked to respond to one of the following open-ended question about their experience at UI:

- What has helped you be successful at UI?
- What challenges have you faced in achieving your educational goals at UI?
- Knowing what you know now, what advice would you offer to students who are just getting started?
- What did you value most about your experience at UI?

Below are themes from stories that graduating international students shared.

The people and the Perspectives

In answering *"what has helped you be successful at UI?"* a lot of international students indicated that it was the people that they met, the relationships that they've built and the perspectives that they gained helped them to be successful.

"All the professors, they are responsible for us. They help a lot."

"I am an international student, and UI gave me different perspective on the whole world. In here, I made so many friends from different countries. I experienced many things that I could never experience in my home country."

"This tiny Midwestern town is so American and so International at the same time. I was able to explore many cultures and identities, as well as develop a deeper understanding of my own identities. UI has helped me become greater than who I used to be."

Students also responded the people that they've met are what they valued the most at UI.

"All the people I meet at UI. They made me experience what I've never experienced before."

"The mentorship I received from professors and graduate students."

"I came to UI for the Creative Writing Program and the IWP. I had the chances to hear from the very contemporary writers (the big names who are still alive!) and participate in academic works about their writing. This tiny Midwestern town is so American and so International at the same time. I was able to explore many cultures and identities, as well as develop a deeper understanding of my own identities. UI has helped me become greater than who I used to be."

When asked *"knowing what you know now, what advice would you offer to students who are just getting started?"* some suggested asking for help and get out of comfort zone.

"UI has so many great professors, and they are helpful and nice. Go to office hour if you have questions."

"Just feel free to asking something. All academic advisors will help you to prepare for future academic schedule, and most faculty will help you understand what you don't understand."

“Don’t be afraid to try new things.”

Sometimes, the people and the difficulty in building the relationships can also be the barrier preventing international students to achieve their educational goals.

“The American students are not so open to work with me in class. Mostly, it is because I have always been struggling with my English communication skill and we do not have a lot of common interests such as parties and football game.”

Opportunities & Involvement

Opportunities to be engaged in and out of class have been another important aspect of international students’ experience at the University of Iowa.

“Student Video Productions, a student organization, has helped me with my goals of networking and work experience.”

“Every students in UI has a chance to take part in the highest level research in their certain field, and I believe their research advisor and other post-doc in the research group will help the new student to work with any questions. Personally I did research for one and half year, and I truly appreciate all the assistance given by the faculty and all the people in the group.”

“Opportunity for good campus employment.”

When asked “*knowing what you know now, what advice would you offer to students who are just getting started?*” student responses are also reflecting that they value their involvement experiences in and out of the classroom.

“But writing an essay for her class, I had lots of feedbacks that helped my writing skills. “

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT COMMENT

“Try to get involved with different activities, it is a good way to know the campus you live in and it is going to help you in the next four years, and a good way to know different people.”

“Joining some organizations is really helpful for international students.”

The Knowledge and Skills

Many international students expressed that language and time management skills were challenges that they faced, especially at the beginning of their time here.

“As an international student, to be able to talk academically in English freely and fluently and express precisely and concisely is the most challenging thing for me.”

“Balancing my study, work, and campus involvements/leadership roles.”

However, they have enjoyed and learned from their challenging coursework, which helped them become more confident and successful.

“She taught me professional business communication skills which I can use in real world.”



“I am an international student and English is not my native language. This made it hard to write an essay in English, but writing an essay for her class, I had lots of feedbacks that helped my writing skills.”

“The group works required in all the courses. Made me become able to work with others in a better way.”

In addition to asking for help, some has offered additional suggestions in regards to the academics for future students.

“It is necessary to attend every class and listen to what professor said in class.”

“Study earlier, prepare your career beforehand. Don’t wait till the last minute.”

Summary

It’s about the people, the opportunities, and the growth during their time at Iowa that makes their experience special. As an international student summed up in their comment, “I learn a lot from both the academic side and the life experience side. Studying abroad become one of my best choices in my life. Thank you UI. It is a great honor to be a Hawkeye.”