

The Availability, Use and Effectiveness of Support Services: Comparisons by Race/Ethnicity

KEY FINDINGS

Supplementing the classroom environment are students' perceptions regarding support services in the campus community. Students were asked about their perceived comfort levels in a variety of settings or activities. In addition, they were asked about their use of and satisfaction with a series of campus services and programs. Findings are derived from the responses of the aggregate sample as well as from differences between and among racial/ethnic groups.

Students were asked to rate their comfort level regarding how they would feel in each setting or activity. Regarding students' comfort level participating in a number of campus events and activities and using campus facilities, the following highlight the findings: (See the full report for a complete list of services.)

- Generally, students of color (with 44% to 56% responding that they would be “very comfortable”) were more comfortable attending ethnic/cultural activities than white students were (with only 24% responding that they would be “very comfortable”).
- While most students (over 70%) felt they would be comfortable attending an OSU football/basketball game, African American students were significantly less comfortable than Caucasian students were.
- Regarding joining a fraternity or sorority or attending Greek events, African American students felt most comfortable compared to the other racial/ethnic groups. In many cases, these differences were significant. Such findings may speak to the sense of community historically black fraternities and sororities provide for African American students on campus.
- On average, students were at least “somewhat comfortable” using recreational facilities, the library, and computing labs as well as hanging out in the union and in outdoor areas on campus (based on the aggregate sample).
- However, African American students expressed the lowest comfort level using campus facilities and hanging out on campus compared to the other groups. In many cases, the differences were significant.

Because the surrounding community often influences students' college experiences, students were also asked about their comfort level in Columbus, specifically about eating at a restaurant, shopping, and looking for a place to rent.

- Of the aggregate sample, most students felt comfortable eating at a restaurant in Columbus (over 88%), shopping in Columbus (over 87%), and looking for a place to rent (over 78%).
- However, African American students felt significantly less comfortable in these settings than white students did and with regard to shopping in Columbus were the least comfortable of all groups.

Students were also asked about their comfort level utilizing a number of campus services including academic advising, counseling services, residence life, on-campus employment, student cultural/support offices, administrative offices, and campus police.

- While over 63% of Caucasian and Asian American students responded that they would be either “very comfortable” or “comfortable” living in a residence hall, African American students responded that they would be significantly less comfortable living in a residence hall than were Caucasian and Asian American students.
- Of all the campus services included, students expressed the highest comfort level when getting advising on courses to take, with over 50% of all groups responding that they would be “very comfortable.” Moreover, students were the least comfortable interacting with OSU police, with only 18% to 28% responding that they would be “very comfortable.”
- African American students were significantly less comfortable than white students were using these campus services with the exceptions of the student cultural/support offices where African Americans were significantly more comfortable and Counseling and Consultation Services where the two groups responded similarly.

In addition to their perceived comfort level, students were asked about their use of and satisfaction with a variety of campus support services. A total of 16 services were included in the survey; the following statements highlight the findings:

- The majority of students had used Fees and Deposits (at least 77%), academic advising (at least 78%), and Financial Aid (at least 50%). With academic advising and Financial Aid, African American students were significantly less satisfied than Caucasian students were. However, African American students were significantly more satisfied with Fees and Deposits.
- Over half of the African American respondents (59%) responded that they had used the Hale Cultural Center, a much higher percentage than the other racial/ethnic groups (ranging from 6% to 17%). Furthermore, African American students expressed strong satisfaction with the Center as over 90% responded with “medium” or “high satisfaction.”
- Similarly, while only 5.8% of the aggregate sample reported that they had used the office of Ethnic Student Services, over 19% of African Americans, over 25% of American Indian/Alaskan Native students, and over 15% of Hispanic American students reported having used the office.
- Over 23% of the aggregate sample reported having used Off-Campus and Commuter Student Services. African American and Hispanic American students reported being significantly more satisfied than white students with the office. Given the reported difference in the comfort levels in the Columbus community, Off-Campus and Commuter Student Services may be especially important to students of color.

- African American students (60%) were slightly more likely to use Student Health Services than were other racial/ethnic groups (ranging from 44% for Asian American students and 57% for American Indian/Alaskan Native students). Hispanic American students were significantly less satisfied with the services than the other groups.
- With 51% of all students reporting that they had used Recreational Sports, Caucasian students were significantly more satisfied with the facilities and services than Asian American students and Hispanic American students were.
- The percent of students who had used Campus Police Services ranged from 25% of Asian American students to 43% of African American students. White students expressed the greatest level of satisfaction, a rate significantly higher than African American and Asian American students.
- Although not surprising given the nature of these services and the constituents they serve, Career Connection, Disability Services, the Student Advocacy Center, and Student Gender and Sexuality Services were not used by a majority of the respondents thereby making it difficult to discuss differences in satisfaction levels by race/ethnicity.