

Office of International Student Affairs (OISA)

Self-Study Student Survey

Conducted via Survey Monkey, November 2010

The OISA completed four exercises in preparation for the DSA review and assessment:

- used the CAS Standards tool to reflect on our work as a staff;
- completed the DSA Review Questions for Department/Program Self-Assessment
- compiled a binder of supplementary materials central to the OISA; and
- conducted a survey of international and global nomad students via Survey Monkey, described below.

All 217 Grinnell College international and global nomad students were invited to participate in the survey and 129 (59%) responded. We asked about perceptions of the OISA (staff, mission, services) and the international student experience at Grinnell. **Here is a basic overview of the survey results by topic:**

The OISA:

- **96.9% of the respondents agreed that the OISA is successful in fulfilling its mission.** The vast majority felt that the OISA provides quality services in the areas of immigration and regulatory compliance (94%), guidance for non-resident tax returns (93%), social programming and community building (88.4%), and regular communication with students (93.8%).
- **53% of the respondents had initiated appointments with OISA staff, 65% had responded to a request from the office.** Smaller numbers visited us as the result of a faculty referral (11.3%), a parent referral (4.8%) or a host family referral (1.6%).
- **Regulatory issues accounted for the largest traffic flow to the office (68%), but personal issues (46%) and academic issues (35%) were also a significant reason for visiting.** Social programming (22%) and financial issues (22%) accounted for a smaller portion of visits.
- **95.9% agreed that the staff member they met with was knowledgeable; 94.3% said that the staff member was open and interested in them.**

Immigration Issues:

- **90% of the respondents said they can identify their immigration documents** (6% indicated that immigration issues do not apply in their case)
- **84.6% agree that “the OISA has appropriately informed me of these issues.”** (8 % marked ‘not applicable’)
- **96% said they would bring their legal questions to the OISA.**
- **79% indicated confidence about understanding the benefits and limitation of their status.**

Publications *MOSAIC* and *FYI*:

- **92% said that *MOSAIC* is a valuable endeavor.** 80 % felt the magazine reflected their experiences.
- **95% said that they read *FYI from the OISA* and find it useful.** 13% (16) said that they ‘usually just delete’ this weekly email.

The International Student Experience:

- **95% of the respondents said they are “happy with their decision to attend Grinnell.”**
- **97% of the students self-identified as “involved” in the campus community.** 45% listed participation in the International Student Organization (ISO), but there was a variety of student involvement – varsity athletics (17%), intramurals (26%); campus publications (13%), religious organizations (16%), and other multicultural groups (17%).
- **71% indicated that their closest friends are international students.**
- **86% said that they have close friendships with US Americans.**
- **25% of the students reported visiting a local school, club or service organization** to share information about their country or culture in the local community.

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19 ‘Trouble Spots’ for Students:

Respondents were asked to identify up to five issues which had been problematic for them. Each item on the list of options was marked at the least 10 times; one item – Time Management –was marked 62 times. (122 of the 129 student respondents answered this question):

- **Time Management (50%)**
- **Adjusting to the Weather (38%)**
- **Feeling homesick, lonely or isolated (36%)**
- **Assessing transportation to/from (36%) and in/around (35%) Grinnell**
- **Affording my text books (33%)**
- **Making U.S. Friends (28%)**
- **Adjusting to campus culture around the use of alcohol or other drugs (25%)**
- **Academic English Skills (24%)**

Academic Issues:

- **40% of the respondents indicated that teaching styles at Grinnell are similar to their secondary school experience; only 34% indicated that writing styles were similar.**
- **93% reported confidence in their understanding of academic honesty policies**
- **59% have taken advantage of free tutoring**
- **30% indicated that a ‘lack of English skills’ had caused academic difficulty**
- **87% said that their academic adviser had been “very helpful”**

Fall, Winter & Spring Breaks:

- **Only 19 of 121 students indicated that they always left campus during break periods.**
- **89 indicated staying on campus for fall break, 26 over winter break, and 57 over spring break.** (note: this question was not worded clearly, so may not be a valid representation of students who stay over break).
- **64% remained over breaks because they wanted to; 68% due to financial reasons; 58% for academic reasons. 73% enjoyed being in Grinnell over breaks; 38% felt very lonely over breaks.**
- **52% participated in OISA Break Programming, and 93% felt that programming is valuable to support students.**

Off Campus:

- **14 of the survey respondents have lived off campus.**
- **6 of them moved off campus to save money; 9 to gain more freedom; 6 to cook for themselves; 2 to escape campus culture around drug/alcohol use/abuse.**
- **11 of them really enjoyed living off campus, and 2 of them felt lonely and less connected as a result.**

Host Family Program:

- **108 students (89%) said that they participate in this program.**
 - 87 (81%) of them told us that they maintain regular contact with their host family
 - 99 (94%) identified their participation as a positive experience.
 - 83 predicted that they will maintain contact with their host family, even after leaving Grinnell.
 - 35 (32%) have stored luggage at their host families house, and 39 (36%) have received a ride to the airport from their host family.

What comes next (post Grinnell):

- **84 (54%) are planning to work or attend grad school in the US immediately following Grinnell. 24 are planning to go home or to another country upon graduation.**
- **55 (45%) said they would be living back home or in another country in 15 years.**