Executive Summary
ACUI/EBI College Union/Student Center Student Study 2003
University of West Florida
University Commons and Student Activities Office

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Introduction

The 2003 ACUI/EBI College Union/Student Center Student Study covered all areas of the traditional college union, including bookstore and food service, which are not in our department’s mission. The study identifies and reports on 12 factors (factors that we have direct influence over are in bold):

1. Publicizes the Union and Promotes Campus
2. College Union has a Positive Environment
3. College Union is Student Oriented
4. College Union is a Source of Entertainment
5. College Union Enhances Life and Leadership
6. Union Food Variety/Quality/Price
7. Aspects of Dining Service
8. Bookstore Staff
9. Bookstore Items Variety and Price
10. Union Cleanliness
11. Union Staff
12. Overall Satisfaction with College Union

Clearly, some of the items identified as being under our influence are also impacted by food service and bookstore operations. For examples, complaints about cleanliness in the Cafeteria restrooms may be directed at our operation but those restrooms are the responsibility of the food service contractor. Similarly, we share responsibility for the daily cleaning of Argos. However, it is reasonable to assume that our operation is primarily involved in those particular factors.

This study is an national scale assessment which provides student feedback in a systematic way across a broad range of operations. The survey provides information on both performance (how our students think we are doing) and on impact (how important a particular thing is to student satisfaction). This allows us to focus attention and resources on areas that might be low performing and important to student satisfaction while simply maintaining areas that have limited impact on student satisfaction. In addition to the statistics related to our students responses, we also have comparative data which allows us to benchmark against a Select 6 Group (UWF plus six institutions we chose), against all schools in our Carnegie
Classification that participated in the program (17 in this study), and against all participating schools cumulatively (50 in this study).

**Findings**

In the comparison with the Select 6 institutions UWF scored statistically higher on factors 4 (College Union has a Positive Environment), 5 (College Union Enhances Life and Leadership), 9 (Bookstore Items Variety and Price), and 12 (Overall Satisfaction with College Union). There were no statistical differences on factors 1 (Publicizes the Union and Promotes Campus), 2 (College Union has a Positive Environment), 3 (College Union is Student Oriented), 7 (Aspects of Dining Service), 8 (Bookstore Staff), 10 (Union Cleanliness), or 11 (Union Staff). We scored statistically lower on factor 6 (Union Food Variety/Quality/Price).

In the comparison with the Carnegie cohort group UWF scored statistically higher on factors 1 (Publicizes the Union and Promotes Campus), 3 (College Union is Student Oriented), 4 (College Union is a Source of Entertainment), 5 (College Union Enhances Life and Leadership), 9 (Bookstore Items Variety and Price), 10 (Union Cleanliness), and 12 (Overall Satisfaction with College Union). There was no statistical difference on factors 2 (College Union has a Positive Environment), 6 (Union Food Variety/Quality/Price), 7 (Aspects of Dining Service), 8 (Bookstore Staff), and 11 (Union Staff).

In the comparison with All Other Participating Institutions UWF scored statistically higher on factors 1 (Publicizes the Union and Promotes Campus), 4 (College Union is a Source of Entertainment), 5 (College Union Enhances Life and Leadership), 9 (Bookstore Items Variety and Price), and 12 (Overall Satisfaction with College Union). There was no statistical difference on factors 3 (College Union is Student Oriented), 7 (Aspects of Dining Service), 8 (Bookstore Staff), 10 (Union Cleanliness), and 11 (Union Staff). UWF scored statistically lower on factors 2 (College Union has a Positive Environment) and 6 (Union Food Variety/Quality/Price).

In the comparison with our own 2001 mean scores UWF posted at least modest gains in 6 of 12 factors: 4 (College Union is a Source of Entertainment), 5 (College Union Enhances Life and Leadership), 6 (Union Food Variety/Quality/Price), 8 (Bookstore Staff), 9 (Bookstore Items Variety and Price), and 12 (Overall Satisfaction with College Union). Compared to our own 2000 mean scores we posted increases in 8 factors: 2 (College Union has a Positive Environment), 3 (College Union is Student Oriented), 4 (College Union is a Source of Entertainment), 5 (College Union Enhances Life and Leadership), 6 (Union Food Variety/Quality/Price), 8 (Bookstore Staff), 9 (Bookstore Items Variety and Price), and 12 (Overall Satisfaction with College Union).

The study results provide a “priority matrix” which plots factors according to two axises: students’ reported satisfaction with particular factors and the degree to which a factor is a predictor of overall satisfaction. For example, students may rate a factor very highly but the factor may have little impact on overall satisfaction so maintaining that high rating may not be
essential. Conversely, a low rated factor may have high impact on overall satisfaction and should therefore be a high priority item for improvement.

The 2003 Priority Matrix (Not Including Bookstore Factors) Table suggests that our top priorities should be factors 2 (College Union has a Positive Environment), 3 (College Union is Student Oriented), 4 (College Union is a Source of Entertainment), 5 (College Union Enhances Life and Leadership), and 11 (Union Staff). Our strongest performance was in factor 3 (College Union is Student Oriented) followed closely by factor 4 (College Union Is a Source of Entertainment) and factor (College Union has a Positive Environment). All of these factors have moderate impact as predictors of student satisfaction. Our performance was good on each, being plotted just below the mean for the top performing programs participating in the study.

Factor 10 (Union Cleanliness) should be maintained. While our performance was excellent on this factor, it has a negligible impact as a predictor of student satisfaction.

Factor 1 (Publicizes Aspects of Union) should be monitored. While our performance was good, this factor has statistically no impact as a predictor of student satisfaction so additional resources in this area are not essential.

UWF’s University Commons and Student Activities department compares quite favorably to the Select 6 group and the Carnegie cohort group on Overall Satisfaction with the College Union. We rank 2 of 7 in the Select 6 and 2 of 17 in the Carnegie cohort. We are particularly proud that on factor 5 (College Union Enhances Life and Leadership), which is the top predictor for student satisfaction, UWF ranked 1 of 7 in the Select 6, 3 of 17 in the Carnegie cohort, and 8 of 50 in all participating institutions.

**Action Indicated**

Four of the six factors associated with student satisfaction are on the upper edge of the range of scores categorized as “good” [2 (College Union has a Positive Environment), 3 (College Union is Student Oriented), 4 (College Union is a Source of Entertainment), and 11 (Union Staff)]. For example, factor 3 (College Union is Student Oriented) is only 0.02 points away from the “excellent” range. It is recommended that the various units of the University Commons and Student Activities operation be challenged to develop strategies to move these factors up the scale to “excellent.”

**Conclusion**

These benchmark results continue to be both encouraging and indicative of areas that we need to work on. We are pleased that our raw scores again improved in all the areas we have direct influence over. We plan to continue to participate in this program bi-annually so that we can continue establishing a longitudinal basis for assessing our activities.