



NEWS

The RGK Center for Philanthropy &
Community Service
LBJ School of Public Affairs
The University of Texas at Austin

Survey Demonstrates Volunteering a Vibrant Practice on The University of Texas at Austin Campus

74% of Undergraduate Students Volunteered During the 2001-2002 Academic Year

About 27,000 University of Texas at Austin undergraduate students performed volunteer service between August 2001 and May 2002 according to a study conducted by the University's Office of Survey Research for the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service. The survey was designed through a collaborative effort of researchers and staff from the RGK Center, Office of Survey Research, Department of Sociology, and University Volunteer Center. The 1,514 respondents were chosen through a random selection of all UT undergraduates enrolled in the spring of 2002. Surveying was done via 20-minute telephone interviews administered by the Office of Survey Research.¹

- Seventy-four percent (74%) of students performed volunteer service: 45% reported serving in the community; 25% served in both University and community functions; and 4% volunteered solely for University functions.
- Volunteers spent a mean of 111 hours volunteering.
- On average, students volunteered for two different types of organizations.
- The volunteer rate was higher among women than men.
- Students who volunteered were most likely to have done so because they felt compassion towards people in need, or because they wanted to gain a new perspective.
- Students gave as well as served – 60% of the respondents contributed to charitable causes.

CHARACTERISTICS OF VOLUNTEERS

According to the survey, 27,000 students, or 74 percent of the undergraduate student body, participated in volunteer activities during the 2001-2002 academic year. Women accounted for 55 percent of the volunteers, men for 45 percent. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of African American and Hispanic students volunteered, followed by 74 percent of Anglos, 73 percent of Asian Americans, and 65 percent of international students.

¹ For more information about the volunteerism survey, see the Technical Notes.

Slightly more underclassmen volunteered than upperclassmen, although service figures remained fairly consistent across the academic spectrum. Seventy-six percent of freshmen, 74 percent of sophomores and juniors, and 73 percent of seniors reported serving. The College of Education reported the largest percentage of students engaged in service at 82 percent, followed by Business majors (76%), Liberal Arts (76%), Fine Arts (76%) and “other,” which includes schools such as Pharmacy, Nursing and Social Work, with 76 percent of these students volunteering.

Almost all students who volunteered in high school also volunteered during the collegiate academic year. For example, 86 percent of students who volunteered in high school and did so with a family member also volunteered during the period under study. Of the students who volunteered in high school but not with a family member, 76 percent volunteered during the college year. Finally, 55 percent of students who did not volunteer in high school volunteered during the college year. In short, volunteering in high school, especially with a family member, is a strong precursor to collegiate volunteering.

TOTAL HOURS SPENT VOLUNTEERING

Between August of 2001 and May of 2002, undergraduate women spent more hours in service than their male counterparts. Men served an average of 76 hours, women an average of 89 hours. Hispanic students reported 100 hours of service, Asian American students 85 hours of service, Anglo students contributed 81 hours of service, African American students volunteered 67 hours, and international students served 47 hours.

Upperclassmen volunteered more hours than underclassmen. The average senior spent 87 hours in service, the average freshman served 71 hours. Students who reported membership in Greek as well as other organizations served the most, reporting an average of 144 hours of service. Students who reported membership in non-Greek groups volunteered 92 hours, while students with no membership affiliation volunteered 60 hours.

The survey results indicate that some of the smaller schools, such as Pharmacy, Nursing and Social Work, showed some of the highest hours of volunteer service. However, these schools are not well represented in the survey due to their relatively small student populations. As a consequence, these results cannot be stated with certainty. Outside of those schools, students from Fine Arts put in the most volunteer hours over the academic year followed by students from Liberal Arts.

Students found time both to work and to volunteer. Students who worked full-time volunteered more than students who did not work at all. Students who worked 40 or more hours a week reported volunteering 82 hours, students who worked 20 to 39 hours a week volunteered almost 85 hours, students who worked 1 to 19 hours a week volunteered 97 hours. Students who did not work at all volunteered 69 hours.

Forty-three percent of students cited a full personal schedule as the primary reason for not volunteering more.

The Independent Sector, a national coalition of more than 700 national organizations, foundations, and corporate philanthropy programs that collectively represent the nonprofit sector, calculates the value of volunteer time and updates the value annually. The dollar value figure is based on the average hourly earnings of nonagricultural workers as determined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, which is then increased by 12 percent to estimate for fringe benefits. At the 2001 value of \$16.05 per hour, the estimated dollar value of the 2,997,000 hours of volunteer service provided by UT undergraduate students is \$48,101,850.

NUMBER AND TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS SERVED

Students performed volunteer work in a wide variety of organizations both on and off campus. Students most frequently reported serving in the community (45%) or in both community and University functions (25%). Only 4 percent volunteered solely for University functions. African American students participated in the greatest variety of volunteer activities (slightly more than 2 affiliations), followed by Hispanic, Asian American, Anglo and international students. While much of the volunteering activity took place off campus, it is important to point out that much of that activity was organized by on-campus student organizations.

Students of Education, Fine Arts, and unidentified academic majors served in at least two organizations. Topping the list with three affiliations are students who were members of both Greek and other student organizations.

Twenty-nine percent (29%) of the students volunteered in education-related activities, 23 percent in religious organizations, 17 percent in professional groups and organizations, 17 percent in youth development/mentoring programs and 16 percent in student government and related work. Revealing a significant trend in undergraduate student volunteerism, episodic or short-term volunteering accounts for 10 percent of student service.

MOTIVATION, ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS

Students volunteered for many different reasons. Respondents were given a variety of choices and the opportunity to rank the importance of each choice. Compassion towards those in need was ranked as a very or somewhat important reason to volunteer by 94 percent of the undergraduates. Based on the same scale, 92 percent felt that volunteering provided a new perspective on things; 88 percent expressed interest in the activity; 80 percent believed volunteering is part of one's civic duty; 74 percent believed volunteering to be important to people they respect; 53 percent reported feeling needed; 40 percent reported networking as a motivation, and 36 percent said that volunteering helped them deal with personal problems.

Students shared their thoughts about the importance of public service. Ninety-three percent agreed or strongly agreed that "charitable organizations help make communities better"; 92 percent believed it to be within their power to do things that improve the welfare of others; and 74 percent believed the need for charitable organizations to be greater today than five years ago.

Nearly three quarters (73%) of the students agreed that academic credit should be given for volunteer work tied to a classroom experience. A slightly larger percentage of students (74%) agreed or strongly agreed that the University should not expect students to volunteer. Less than two fifths (37%) of the student respondents recommended that additional attention be given to promoting volunteer opportunities.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

Students were asked how they learned about volunteering. The five most frequently cited sources for gaining information about volunteer opportunities were, in rank order: student groups and organizations, West Mall table exhibits, media publicity, personal invitation, and places of worship. Fifty percent of the students had heard of the University Volunteer Center.

GIVING BEHAVIOR

Students were generous with their resources as well as their time. Sixty percent of students gave money; 21 percent gave only to non 9-11 causes, 19 percent gave only to 9-11 causes and 20 percent gave to both types of causes. Of the students who contributed money, 65 percent reported giving less than \$50 to all causes, while 35 percent contributed more than \$50. Churches and religious organizations received 12 percent of the student donations and health organizations received 10 percent of the contributions.

About the RGK Center for Philanthropy & Community Service

The RGK Center for Philanthropy & Community Service (www.rgkcenter.org) seeks to build a more caring society through initiatives in philanthropy and volunteerism. Part of a nationally recognized program of policy research at the LBJ School of Public Affairs, at The University of Texas at Austin, the RGK Center was established in January 2000 with initial funding of \$5 million from the RGK Foundation of Austin, Texas. Guided by a three-part mission of Education, Research and Outreach, the Center supports civil society, volunteerism, and the nonprofit-philanthropic sector by expanding the academic base for the growing study of its practices and by advancing awareness of the sector within academic and professional communities. RGK Center initiatives emphasize collaborative approaches and international perspectives in order to foster research and dialogue across fields and across borders.

TECHNICAL NOTES

Data for this report come from a survey of 1,514 University of Texas at Austin undergraduate students completed in the Spring of 2002. The sample was composed of students who were enrolled in the Spring of 2002 and who had correct phone numbers on record with the University. Sampling was performed by the Office of the Registrar using a systematic random sampling technique. After the sample was completed, potential student respondents were phoned by the UT Office of Survey Research and asked to take the survey. Students who agreed to take the survey were interviewed over the telephone by Survey Center staff. The survey itself took about fifteen to twenty minutes to complete. The refusal rate for the survey was about 27 percent. In other words, of the students successfully contacted, 63 percent completed the survey.

Analyses reveal that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely match those of the student population from which it was drawn. For example, 53 percent of the sample is female compared to 51 percent of undergraduate students enrolled in the Spring of 2002. In terms of race, the sample matches the undergraduate population enrolled during that period. About 4% of the student population and sample were African American, 16 percent of both were Asian American, 14 percent of the student population and 13 percent of the sample were Hispanic, 4 percent of both the sample and population were international, and 62 percent of the population versus 63 percent of the sample were Anglo. Similarly, the sample closely matches the population in terms of student classification. The population figures for freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors were 14 percent, 22 percent, 25 percent, and 39 percent, respectively. For the sample, the same figures were 14 percent, 21 percent, 26 percent, and 39 percent. Finally, the student sample closely matched the population in terms of college enrollment. For example, 30 percent of the sample was enrolled in Liberal Arts compared to 31 percent of the population. Even smaller colleges, such as Fine Arts and Education, were evenly represented between the sample and population.

Table 1. Percentage of Students Volunteering by Selected Respondent Characteristics.

	Percentage Volunteering		
	All	Off campus	UT
Gender			
Female	77.0%	72.0%	32.0%
Male	70.7%	66.9%	27.0%
Race			
African American	76.8%	73.2%	39.3%
Hispanic	76.7%	72.1%	34.0%
Asian American	72.8%	69.0%	26.8%
International	64.8%	59.3%	22.2%
Anglo	74.1%	69.6%	29.3%
Class Standing			
Freshman	76.4%	69.0%	33.8%
Sophomore	73.7%	68.9%	28.9%
Junior	74.2%	70.6%	25.3%
Senior	73.3%	69.6%	31.5%
College			
Business	76.3%	71.3%	33.1%
Education	81.7%	79.3%	28.0%
Engineering	67.4%	63.2%	31.6%
Fine Arts	75.5%	73.5%	28.6%
Communications	70.2%	67.4%	25.5%
Natural Sciences	73.7%	68.6%	28.3%
Liberal Arts	75.9%	70.7%	29.3%
Others	76.3%	74.6%	37.3%
Work Hours per Week			
0 hours (didn't work)	74.9%	70.1%	28.4%
1 – 19 hours	76.0%	73.1%	31.8%
20 – 39 hours	72.0%	66.7%	29.6%
40+ hours	71.3%	67.0%	28.7%
Group Memberships			
Greek only	82.6%	77.2%	32.6%
Other group only	82.9%	78.0%	39.8%
Greek and other group	93.0%	91.4%	50.8%
No membership	60.2%	55.9%	14.9%

Table 2. Levels of Volunteering by Selected Respondent Characteristics.

	Volunteering Areas ¹			Volunteering Hours		
	All	Off-campus	UT	All	Off-campus	UT
Gender						
Female	1.96	1.61	.35	88.62	74.50	14.12
Male	1.73	1.42	.31	75.55	61.16	14.38
Race						
African American	2.21	1.77	.45	67.38	58.98	8.39
Hispanic	1.99	1.61	.38	100.18	84.85	15.33
Asian American	1.87	1.60	.30	85.41	71.19	14.22
International	1.43	1.19	.24	47.37	39.59	7.78
Anglo	1.82	1.49	.33	80.64	65.92	14.72
Class Standing						
Freshman	1.89	1.50	.38	70.55	60.30	10.24
Sophomore	1.86	1.55	.31	79.95	67.07	12.89
Junior	1.80	1.51	.29	83.83	72.65	11.18
Senior	1.87	1.52	.35	87.34	68.83	18.50
College						
Business	1.84	1.48	.36	72.28	59.63	12.92
Education	2.06	1.74	.32	83.00	65.66	17.34
Engineering	1.57	1.22	.35	66.26	47.90	17.35
Fine Arts	2.12	1.80	.33	97.92	84.00	13.92
Communications	1.87	1.55	.32	81.44	63.84	17.60
Natural Sciences	1.78	1.47	.32	80.15	65.71	14.44
Liberal Arts	1.94	1.62	.32	92.30	80.23	12.07
Others	2.03	1.64	.39	98.31	87.87	10.44
Work Hours per Week						
0 hours (didn't work)	1.77	1.46	.31	68.9	56.4	12.5
1 – 19 hours	2.02	1.66	.36	97.2	80.6	16.6
20 – 39 hours	1.81	1.49	.32	84.9	71.0	13.9
40+ hours	1.78	1.44	.34	82.1	68.3	13.8
Group Memberships						
Greek only	2.30	1.96	.35	88.99	75.16	13.84
Other group only	2.22	1.77	.45	92.13	76.28	15.84
Greek and other group	3.08	2.47	.61	144.20	107.05	37.15
No membership	1.18	1.02	.15	59.82	51.62	8.19

Notes: ¹ Means reflect the number of areas (as shown in Table 1) mentioned. The potential range of responses was 0 – 13 for all areas, 0 – 11 for Non-UT areas, and 0 – 2 for UT areas.

Table 3. Percentage of Students Volunteering by Service Area.

	Percentage Volunteering
Arts, Culture or Humanities	10.2%
Education and tutoring	28.5%
Youth development and mentoring	16.6%
Nursing home, senior center or other similar organization	10.6%
Health organizations (e.g., hospitals, hospice)	10.6%
International or ethnic organizations	8.7%
Political organizations or campaigns	8.8%
Adult or youth recreation	8.3%
Religious organizations	23.2%
Work-related and professional organizations	17.4%
Environmental causes	9.7%
UT student government or other committees	15.6%
Any other volunteering	16.8%

Table 4. Motivations for Volunteering and Attitudes Towards Public Service.

	Total
Motivations for Volunteering¹	
Makes respondent feel needed	52.6%
Feels compassion towards people in need	94.1%
Helps respondent make new contacts	40.3%
Important to the people the respondent respects	73.8%
Allows respondent to gain a new perspective	92.0%
Helps respondent deal with own personal problems	35.8%
Respondent has an interest in the activity	87.7%
Volunteering is a civic responsibility	79.5%
General Attitudes Towards Public Service²	
Need for charitable organizations is greater now than 5 yrs. ago	74.0%
Charitable organizations help make communities better	92.8%
Respondent believes in power to help improve others' welfare	92.5%
Attitudes Towards UT Volunteering²	
University should do more to promote volunteering	36.5%
Should be possible to get academic credit for volunteering	72.9%
University should <i>not</i> expect students to volunteer	74.0%

Notes: ¹ Percentages reflect respondents reporting a reason was a very or somewhat important reason for volunteering.

² Percentages reflect respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement.