

# ENVIRONMENT FOR UNDERGRADUATE WOMEN IN THE COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

## CONCLUSIONS

- Sexual discrimination is more of a problem than sexual harassment.
- Most female students of all ages agree that they do not have a role model of their sex in the college of engineering.
- Half of the students would like a role model or mentor of either sex.
- Around 50% of all students in each category believe the teaching quality is good.
- Male students see sexual discrimination towards women as a problem more than the female students.
- Involvement in activities increases with year.
- Juniors had the highest level of inactive involvement.
- 68% of the men feel non-engineering classes are more conducive to learning for women while only 43% of the women believe this is true.
- Electrical and Computer Engineering ranked first in fair treatment of the sexes among the different departments. The Mechanical and Industrial Engineering Department ranked second.
- 50% of the women believe they are treated differently because of their sex while 50% believe they are not.

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by Stephanie Ball  
Dean's Student Advisory Committee  
December 8, 1993

## INTRODUCTION

A survey was taken in the spring of 1992 in order to assess the environment for undergraduate women in the College of Engineering. A copy of this survey is in Appendix A. Questions ranged from feelings on sexual discrimination and harassment to how students felt about the overall college atmosphere. 443 surveys were collected. Of those 75% were male. Most of the students were in the departments of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering and Electrical and Computer Engineering. In addition, most of these students were sophomores as well.

After receiving a copy of the overall results, it was decided that additional evaluations should be made to more closely evaluate the results based on 3 variables:

1. Sex
2. Year
3. Major

By studying the sex, we could distinguish between how male students felt about these issues and how they compare and contrast to the views of their female counterparts.

By studying the year in school, we could determine how attitudes differ from one year to the next. By analyzing each year separately, we could also distinguish between a younger students first impressions and an older students experienced view on the same issues.

By studying major, we could determine which departments are handling these important issues the best and those that may need some improvement.

This report is divided and analyzed into the above mentioned sections. A conclusion follows listing the major results of this survey.

## RESULTS

### OVERALL SURVEY RESULTS

Looking solely at the overall results, we see the following breakdown in majors and years:

Table 1: Majors

Aero	9%
Ag Eng	1%
Chem Eng	13%
Civil	12%
ECE	26%
General	11%
Mat Sci	5%
M&IE	20%
Nuc Eng	4%
Physics	1%
TAM	1%

Table 2: Year

Freshmen	20%
Sophomore	35%
Junior	23%
Senior	21%

### STUDENT ACTIVITY INVOLVEMENT

Involvement in activities both in engineering and on the entire campus was low. 28% always participated while 40% hardly participated. 32% had moderate involvement.

### SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION & HARASSMENT

Sexual discrimination was seen as a problem to 18% of the students while 81% believed it was not a problem. Of those who saw it as a problem, occurrences were hardly observed (8% observed discrimination often while 45% hardly observed discrimination).

Sexual harassment was not believed a problem at all. Only 7% saw harassment as a problem in our college. Of this 7%, occurrences (as seen in the case of sexual discrimination) were very rare. 5% observed harassment often while 42% observed it hardly to never.

From this we can see that discrimination based on sex does exist and is much more apparent to students than harassment. Occurrences of this however are few and far between.

## TREATMENT OF STUDENTS

The next question we will discuss addressed student's feelings about being treated differently because of sex. (It is important to note that students were to consider times when they were treated differently in a positive or negative way). 18% felt they had been treated differently while 80% felt they had not been treated differently because of their sex. Along this same line, students were asked if they felt discouraged from leadership opportunities or jobs because of their sex. 18% felt they had not been discouraged from leadership positions because of sex while 14 % felt discouraged from a job or research position due to their sex. Students were asked if they felt alienated in class due to their sex. 72 % of the students said they hardly ever felt alienated because of their sex. 9% felt alienated often.

## OVERALL COLLEGE

Most students (54%) believed there is a high level of teaching quality but 58% believed environment for women is more conducive to learning for women in non-engineering classes. 69% of the students felt their department treated them fairly. In the area of TA's and professors, 64% felt they had not been discouraged by a TA or professor because of their sex. Another question addressed the make up of the college faculty. The students felt that the make up of the faculty should have an equal number of both sex (49%).

## ADVISORS AND ROLE MODELS

71% of the students believed an advisor of any sex could efficiently address their needs. A shocking outcome in this area was 54% of the students said they did not have a role model of the same sex in the College of Engineering. 57% said they would like a role model that was the same sex. One reason for this could be that this survey was comprised mostly of sophomores that may not have had the opportunity to meet many members of the engineering faculty.

## GENERAL TOPICS

As expected, 84% of the students preferred working in co-ed groups. 60% of the students would feel comfortable in class with only members of the opposite sex while 34% would feel uncomfortable.

## SEX

The following tables give a breakdown of the sexes according to year.

### Year - Male

Freshmen	21%
Sophomore	37%
Junior	22%
Senior	19%

### Year - Female

Freshmen	20%
Sophomore	35%
Junior	23%
Senior	21%

## STUDENT ACTIVITY INVOLVEMENT

In terms of active involvement, the men were slightly less active than the women. 35% of the women were active while 26% of the men said they were actively involved.

## SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

The issue of discrimination was seen very differently between the sexes. The women were split in their decision. 54% felt discrimination was a problem while 44% said it was not. Of those women who did answer yes, only 11% observed it often while 49% hardly observed it at all. The men saw no discrimination towards themselves (94%) while 79% saw it as a problem for women. It is interesting to note that the men saw discrimination against women as a problem more so than the women. Harassment was viewed as not much of a problem at all. 20% of the women saw harassment as a problem while 77% did not. Occurrences again were small. 45% of those who saw harassment as a problem hardly observed it. The men saw no harassment at all (97%).