

Office of Educational Assessment

University of Washington

August, 1990

90-4-A

**Survey Of Older Than Average Students  
At The University Of Washington**

**Appendix D.  
Verbatim Comments**

Nana Lowell  
Gerald M. Gillmore

Survey of Older than Average Students  
At the University of Washington

COMMENTS

These comments were made in response to the following:

**Please briefly describe any age discrimination you have experienced and/or comment on any question.**

- 002 g Office hours to see faculty are too limiting - 2 hrs. a week during business hours - not very realistic for a self-supporting person. Classes are not offered at very accommodating times for working people. Office people: some are very helpful and some are darn rude. Coming back to the University after being away for 10 years was a frightening and aggravating experience that I still resent. Free 1 hr. parking on campus should be made available and monitored.
- 005 g No problems whatsoever. It's simply hard to attend daytime classes and maintain a daytime job, but all classes can't be offered evenings. The most difficult problem is that of finding study partners. One needs to have more time to spend on campus to get acquainted with fellow classmates. Other than that, I've been very satisfied.
- 008 g 1) Faculty should bring all class materials to class for distribution. Working students do not have time to stand in lines at copy centers.  
2) Faculty should teach from material in textbooks. Off-campus students don't have time to hang around campus for assistance from profs at their convenience.  
3) The biggest problem is that all instruction is geared toward the on-campus student. Don't assume I hang around here all day! Campus resources are irrelevant. Provide options!
- 010 g My only complaint, and it is minor, is that classes in my program are offered at inconvenient times, such as the middle of the day. More evening classes would be appreciated.
- 011 u The System does not take into account special circumstances of older students who must schedule courses around work and family obligations. More night courses would be very helpful and Professors could take these considerations into account when assigning the work load for a particular class. For example, four term papers and six books to read for just one course alone is excessive for a student who works full time and/or has a family to care for.
- 016 u Faculty like to "joke" about events that were "before your time." I really resent this, since it makes me feel unnoticed, uncounted, misunderstood. I do remember JFK, the 60's etc. I am 35, and I am graduating and glad to be done. I look forward to graduate school someday where I won't be part of the "masses"!
- 025 u The lower division courses' discussion sections are awkward in that the experience gap prevents real discussion with my fellow students.  
In upper division courses the more numerous graduate students make the classroom more comfortable.
- 026 g Hey - I'm not really that old!
- 028 g None I can think of.

- 029 g I am an adult. Yes, at 38 I finally admit it. While the student life isn't a holiday cruise I count myself among the privileged because I'm not 9 to 5'ing it.  
My age group may be discriminated against but this is lost on me because I am more aware of the subtle discrimination against students in general. I am appalled at the way some of my coevals treat the young adults. I only hope my graying presence minimizes this elitist bullying.  
Good luck America. Up the revolution.
- 030 g I have 4 children and a working wife so I spent all my time either studying or raising my family. I don't require nor have I sought University assistance or contacts except for financial aid.
- 031 g Those who are of the opinion that an advanced degree must result in a greater income or "higher" position have often expressed doubts about the benefits forthcoming to a student over 40. Money is a serious concern to this type of person. Agism seems to depend on personal values.
- 034 u In regards to the faculty advice - my program requires yearly contact with a faculty member. I dislike this, but feel that by being an older student I "generate" a more respectful and appreciative attitude on the part of the faculty.
- 036 g Not discrimination - but I'd like to make a comment: As an adult, working in the "real world" I have come to expect consideration & respect in my dealings with other persons - & of course give them in return. However, at the UW (from various staff i.e. - library, Schmitz Hall) this has not always been my experience. If, in the "real world" I or anyone else were to experience this, my business would be taken elsewhere - Thankfully these instances are few and far between, but still are amazing to me that they occur at all!
- 038 u People say the average age on campus is about 27 or so. Judging by my experience, this is because there is one retiree for every 5-6 eighteen year olds. The statistic is misleading. Students in my age group are the biggest minority on campus & it would be nice if some social events were geared toward us. We are so rare that we seldom cross paths otherwise.
- 039 g Family Housing unit staff are very unkind. I was very frustrated when I applied for family housing and gave up applying for it.
- 042 g I've been at the U since I was an undergrad so I "grew up" in the system. I was a TA during my grad school years and am currently employed by the UW so my relationship to the U and student body is probably very different than other older students.
- 043 u Instructors are sometimes condescending to the students in general as to their knowledge and/or motivation to learn. Also material presented assumes little historical background which many of the older students possess. This isn't a big problem, it's more an attitude than a hindrance.  
Adequate low cost private housing for older students is a big problem. Very difficult to find and/or afford.
- 044 g - lack of special funding  
- career counseling/financial aid counseling  
- special scholarships/loan programs  
- daycare for kids  
- daycare for off campus jobs
- 045 u Age discrimination only in the scheduling and lack of flexibility of class hours and offerings.

- 047 g The classes required are not set up for people that also have to work.
- 048 u Resources need to be made available & presented to reach our attention regarding making adjustments from a working situation/environment to university level expectation about changes to expect and meet in home life once enrolled in a full-time program such as nursing. Also having an orientation geared towards older students would be of some benefit. Especially for those whose family members never entered college & who were "breaking ground." For those of us who weren't able to begin college at age 18 due to lack of financing, knowledge of the "system" & encouragement from our families - This is important.
- 053 u People estimate my age as 25 yrs so I fit in well w/younger group.
- 057 u Questions 26-42 did not apply to me or I honestly didn't know the answer, so I responded as neutral! I suspect that I am an exception to the rule, regarding older students, since my husband is supporting me and my education, and I am able to attend full-time, without the responsibility of a job or the financial worries many older students must face!
- 059 u I have had two TA's behave toward me in a manner which made me feel inferior because I could not respond fast enough (to learning). They have actually been humiliating!
- 065 u I can't recall a single instance where I felt my age was a problem in contacts with faculty, other students or financial aid officers. And I feel comfortable with and well accepted by the students and faculty in the School of Communications. I'm very happy with my experience as an OTA student at UW all around.
- 070 g I enrolled over the phone. I was very impressed with the professionalism of those I spoke with and with the way the whole procedure was handled. It was very easy. I liked that a lot! I was interested in a graduate program. But - the way the classes were scheduled I'd have to quit my job for one year. That doesn't make economic sense for me. Thus - I'm not going to pursue it.
- 074 g I observe fewer older students here than I did for my BS degree or masters. This may or may not be true but, the rigor your University offers may partly be responsible (esp for senior citizens). Thank you for this opportunity.
- 080 g I feel that older students have a great deal of life experience which often goes beyond the academic experience. These life experiences don't seem to be allowed to be expressed by older students and, a great deal of knowledge is lost to younger students when they don't get a chance to explore the experiences and knowledge of older students. Need more programs for older students that have to work for a living and are unable to attend full-time programs. Need non-traditional programs to take advantage of older students life experience.
- 082 u I have definitely not experienced any age discrimination.
- 085 g It is not uncommon for college to be oriented toward youth and at times kids. There is an anonymous student body comprised of young to middle aged adults i.e., 25-40 yrs. And, there seems to be little student body assoc. resource allocated toward such students at the U. Wash. Ideally, older students could meet and strengthen the learning process for all students. A GPSS program that is much more than a private interest or special interest pet project group would be a good start.

- 086 u Lack of variety for evening courses (the only time I can go).  
Lack of financial aid for anyone taking less than, I believe, 12 credits.  
What do you mean "Older Than Average Students"!?!?  
I'm average (with respect to years) in my classes. How 'bout, if you really have to label me, just call me a student.
- 087 u I was told when I auditioned for a music instructor that I was too old to be a performance major (he later retracted the statement).  
I find the patriarchy of this institution to be disrespectful of individual differences, needs, and development potential, particularly those of older students, who are more resistant to being treated like sheep.
- 088 g Not really experienced discrimination, but lack many common interests with younger students. Feel a little "out of it" at times.
- 091 u There is discrimination that is based on the attitude that students have all day to go to school and study and pick up papers, older students have to work and sometimes it is almost impossible to do basic tasks - such as get time schedules, they should be available somewhere at night like the libraries or the Hub; add or drop after week one, change to audit or C/NC or S/NS - after 1st week. Why can't that be done thru STAR? It is very difficult to get on campus before 5 pm to go to Sections - or why can't Sections be open late till 8 pm after 1st week?  
Another almost impossible project for older students working full time is to get special permission to take a class when there is not a schedule line # in the catalog and you have to go get an entry card from the professor. They are never around - have very limited office hours. Why can't their secretaries handle that? Why can't they be given over the phone if the student is a senior or junior w/high grade point average? It wastes so much time for working student running around the campus.  
There should be more classes that meet MWF or TuesTh for 2 hours or 1 1/2 instead of 50 minutes 5 days a week, these classes are very difficult to get to, for working students - yet many are required for the major and not offered at night.  
Why are extension college, correspondence, and time schedule classes all treated differently? It's ridiculous! I pay twice as much in registration fees because I am forced to go to extension college classes that meet at night and day classes but each group acts like the other one does not exist. If I am registered already with University of Wa. day programs, why do I have to pay more fees for going to extension? Why can't extension classes be listed in time schedule as night classes as well?  
Finally, the parking situation is horrendous, too expensive and extremely inconvenient. I was shocked when I was told (I am supposed to rush to school from work, skip lunch, find parking, drive back) I could not park in Burke Museum area parking lot - it was not for students? Then who the hell is it for? How can someone waste 1/2 hour walking each way from Montlake parking? Why are parking permits so expensive?
- 092 u Have experienced none to my knowledge.
- 096 g It was very difficult to get into the system initially - I had to wait almost a full year to the summer quarter to enroll - No one was particularly interested in my gaining entrance. It was an extremely frustrating experience.
- 099 g I have felt no age discrimination. I confess I'm somewhat baffled by the concept. You don't really think 32 is old for a masters student, do you?

- 102 u Myself & the other older students in our program feel that the faculty don't take us seriously - they don't believe we are seriously committed to becoming professionals in our field. Ironically, this discrimination has been most apparent from a female faculty member who has been discouraging the older women who after raising their families have returned to school & want to become jewelers - she views these women as hobbyists even though they've tried to make their goals clear to her - usually the final result is that these people stop taking classes with her and study with the male faculty member in our department. I don't think she is aware that she is doing this.
- 103 g Older students need more support groups, especially for older women students, and older single parents. The University should find a way to more fully subsidize childcare costs for all students.
- 105 u Though I am "only" about ten years older than most students, I am made to feel that the gulf is much wider. I often feel that my presence is merely tolerated by students, and that my input is unwelcome. On an intellectual level, I realize this hostility arises because younger students feel threatened by my experience; nevertheless, I find their attitude difficult to bear. On the other hand, all of my professors have been extremely helpful and encouraging. On #50, I indicated that I felt there was systemic discrimination because I do not feel the university has done enough for older students. The younger students need sensitivity training.
- 107 g I have encountered more events of sexism, or a combination of sexism and agism, than agism alone.
- 113 g Seems to be an unstated assumption that as an experienced adult, we have no need for guidance (we already know what we want), that we don't need clear expectations (we have our own agenda), and that we don't need lots of feedback (we can self-assess) or positive reinforcement/encouragement (we're not grade-schoolers anymore, so unnecessary to say we're doing well). Yet I'm no longer acquainted with academia after an absence of 16 years - so I'm not experienced in that arena, I'm not sure how I'm measuring up, or whether I'm doing what's expected. And it would certainly help to have professors to verbally indicate that I'm doing well. Very hard on confidence - on the one hand, we're adults, so need no special attention - on the other hand, we're treated as idiots "you're only a grad student, you don't have the experience to understand." I'd rather have my intellect treated as adult, with more care for my emotional state, instead of the reverse!
- 116 g Hopefully, most students returning as older students have reached some degree of maturity and do not require "hand-holding." However, we often do need specific advice on classes and programs. My observation is that we know less than the regular student about the system, yet people think we know the answers already because we are older. Specific, logical advice is what we need. It is very difficult to go back, but for some, it is our only chance. Some of us "older than average" people might have something to offer if given the chance. Specific incident - went to advisor for help in planning program and it was a waste of time - no specific advice.
- 117 g Older students are more likely to have children. The university should provide a quality drop-in center for preschoolers & babies so that parents can keep appointments with faculty etc. more easily. Childcare should be provided at the IMA building so that parents can utilize its important offerings in exercise and recreation
- 118 u Not much discrimination - just passing comments about my age. I do feel some understanding needs to be there for those of us who not only have the same amount of school work but are also self-supporting and trying to keep a family intact.

- 122 g Although I consider it commendable that UW admits older students to its professional programs, and although there are individuals within the system who are sensitive and supportive, there are still serious gaps in the financial and academic services necessary to see the older student through the process. The emphasis on short-term-memory-based examinations and the "keeping-up-appearances" games inherent in professional training are especially difficult for the older student. The quandary of spouse's income disqualifying the older student from eligibility for financial aid yet still inadequate to pay for tuition and other expenses produces more obstacles.
- 123 u - I have heard a few comments by students, but most seem to accept others for who they are, not their age.  
 - Most faculty have been supportive.  
 - The one who isn't doesn't seem to be supportive of younger students, either.  
 I don't fit into the system at the school of Music because I preferred "popular" music, and went that route after high school. At age 18, I could read music much better, and played many "classical" pieces, but after years of making my own arrangements, using both knowledge of harmony, and developing an "ear," I don't fit the requirement of the "classically" oriented U. of W. despite having a possible talent for composition and arranging.
- 124 g None that I am aware of!
- 125 g I've lived in Seattle for 8 years, and have built up my own social network outside of law school. I wish I had more involvement with main campus (e.g. non-law) students, but haven't attempted too many times to join groups.  
 I'm about as alienated from school as I was as an 18-21 year old undergrad, so my age is not a "burden" I'm living under.
- 133 g Generally older students are much more mature. If there has been any age discrimination against me I have not let it bother me. I am secure in myself and therefore less affected by others in a negative way, plus I just do not take crap from ignorant people.  
 Money is the biggest problem -- financial aid isn't (in my limited experience) geared to the older student with a family. The following are not considered: 1) pregnancy insurance 2) auto insurance 3) life insurance. We are insurance poor, but continue to keep our policies intact because we feel it is the responsible thing to do. It would be well if these things were considered in calculating financial aid! Most of the questions in this survey are not too important to me. I have a family, etc and am not too concerned about the typical undergrad activities -- money is the biggest concern of this "older than average student."
- 135 u Nine years ago, I was discouraged by an advisor to pursue an architecture degree based on length of time to attain it and the fact that it was a "man's field."  
 Hard to believe we were so unenlightened at that time - Had I ignored him, I might be an architect today.
- 137 g Average current MBA age is (I think) 30. I'm 31. I don't feel particularly "older," because my peers are approx. the same age.
- 139 g The only age discrimination I fear is in the future...e.g. - that I will apply for jobs & people will say, "Must not be too goal-oriented if it took him so long to get a PhD" (Though I haven't experienced it yet...)