

UWGB Select Mission:

The University of Wisconsin-Green Bay provides an interdisciplinary, problem-focused educational experience that prepares students to think critically and address complex issues in a multicultural and evolving world. The University enriches the quality of life for students and the community by embracing the educational value of diversity, promoting environmental sustainability, encouraging engaged citizenship, and serving as an intellectual, cultural and economic resource.



Project Background

Many faculty members at the university today aspire to make their classes more “student-centered”: to use evidence-based cognitive psychological research, for instance, to understand how students learn. Campus centers for teaching excellence, and sometimes specific programs focus on designing specific interventions for incoming new students. These programs often track all kinds of bird’s eye student information—including surveys and grade data—about the assets these students bring to the table and the challenges they face.

A more in-depth understanding of how these students perceive the college experience, their university’s mission, their own life experience, their existing emotional knowledge about the content of specific disciplines, and how they perceive their biggest challenges as learners is necessary to sufficiently assist incoming students and to facilitate a learning experience, to borrow from Paulo Freire, built around “student-teachers” and “teacher-students.” (See Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 1993) In short, we need to know more about our students at UWGB (and at similar regional comprehensive universities).

Research Design

This project uses the perspectives of my students from two classes I taught (my First Year Seminar and my History 206: US History since 1865 course in Fall 2017) to do a qualitative analysis of what perceptions UWGB students bring with them when they enter college.

Using surveys and one-on-one interviews, I investigated what incoming freshman expected to get out of college, and what they expected their experience to be like. I asked what challenges they thought they would face as incoming students. And, I investigated why they thought universities expected them to study liberal arts (at least as general education) fields such as history that typically did not equate to a very narrowly defined “job”.

In short, I wanted to see how well students see what they are doing here in line with our mission (See above).

Q6

Which of the following do you think best describes what a student should get out of a degree at UWGB?