



UW-River Falls Summer School Survey Fall 2004

**David Trechter
Denise Parks**

**Survey Research Center Report 2005/1
January 2005**

Acknowledgements

The authors of this report would like to acknowledge the high degree of cooperation by the faculty and staff who provided their students with the “opportunity” to fill out the summer school survey. We would also like to thank the students who work in the Survey Research Center for diligently scanning the data sheets, cleaning up the database, and entering the written comments. Finally, we’d like to thank Dr. Charles Rader of the Geography Department, who in the week before his departure to teach in Europe, offered his time and expertise to this project.

Executive Summary – SRC Summer School Survey

On Tuesday, November 30, 2004 students in 49 sections of 9:35 – 11:00 a.m. classes were asked to complete a questionnaire asking them about past and expected participation in summer school. The intent of the survey was to determine who the current clientele are for summer school, what their preferences are in terms of course offerings (type of courses, when they should be offered, and so on), their plans and motivation for attending (or not) UW-River Falls' summer school in the coming year, and what our competition might have that gives them an advantage in attracting our students to their summer school program. The Survey Research Center (SRC) sent out approximately 1,470 questionnaires and 1,153 were returned (78%). The results reported in this paper should be accurate to within +/- 3 percent for the university as a whole and no worse than +/- 6 percent when discussing the individual colleges.

University-wide results

Twenty-five percent of the sample indicated that they would be attending summer school in 2005 and an additional 44 percent said they might. Eighteen percent indicated that they had attended UW-River Falls' summer school in the past. Fifteen percent said they had or expected to attend summer school elsewhere.

In contrast to a study done in 2002, which found that general education courses were those of greatest interest to our students, this survey found that students are more interested in courses in their major, required supporting courses or courses in the minor for summer 2005. However, students who have earned less than 50 credits have a stronger interest in general education courses. Students expressed a strong preference (76%) for the first session (May 31 – Jun 18), on-line courses (66%), and courses on campus (85%).

The most important market for summer school seems to be students with between 15 and 90 credits. Many students with fewer than 15 credits may not have a sufficiently clear idea of their educational trajectory and those with more than 90 credits are less likely to feel the need for summer school to accelerate their graduation date. A summer residence close to River Falls is a critical factor in student's plans to attend summer school.

The most significant barriers to attending summer school in 2005 are beyond UW-River Falls' control: many students want a break from school (74%) or say they can't afford to go to summer school (69%). However, a majority say that they don't plan to attend summer school for reasons over which we do have some control: difficulty finding class times that fit their schedules (57%) or uncertainty that classes they need will be offered (52%). Being unable to count on needed courses was a particular concern of a key market group, those who've earned 48 – 90 credits.

Students who have attended summer school at UW-River Falls did so to accelerate their graduation, take a course in their major or a required supporting course. Most students who have attended summer school appear to be satisfied with the length of terms, the hours at which classes were held, instructional quality, and the overall experience. Satisfaction is higher among women and those who've earned more credits.

The primary reason for going elsewhere for summer school is convenience of location. More convenient hours, was the second most commonly cited reason for going elsewhere.

College-specific results

CAFES. CAFES students are significantly less likely to have attended summer school than students from other colleges and are less likely to identify a specific reason for attending summer school (e.g. to accelerate graduation, deal with a scheduling problem, etc.). CAFES students were significantly less satisfied with the mix of courses available during summer school. CAFES students are more likely to cite their inability to afford summer school, family obligations and a desire to have a professional experience as barriers to attending summer school in 2005. While not a statistically significant difference, a higher proportion (68%) of CAFES (and CAS) students expressed interest in on-line courses than those in the other colleges or undeclared students. Finally, while CAFES students have participated in summer school at significantly lower levels, nearly two-thirds of the students from that college expressed interest in an accelerated-degree program that would require them to take courses during the summer and J-term.

CAS. Nearly half of the observations for CAS students reported majoring in math or sciences, another third in the social sciences, 14 percent in the arts and 5 percent in the humanities. Students from CAS tend to define the average with respect to the various aspects of summer school at which we looked. CAS students were slightly more interested in summer course offerings in their minors than students from other colleges.

CBE. CBE students who have attended UW – River Falls’ summer school were significantly more likely to have taken courses in their major but less likely to have taken general education courses. They were also more satisfied with the mix of courses available to them than students in other colleges. When asked about motivations for attending summer school in 2005, students in CBE were statistically less interested in general education courses but more interested in internships and less interested in afternoon classes.

CEPS. When identifying motivations for attending UW – River Falls’s summer school in 2005, students in CEPS were significantly less interested in internships than students in other colleges. Like students in CBE, CEPS students are also less interested in general education courses and afternoon classes. In terms of barriers to attending summer school in 2005, students in CEPS were less likely to want a break from school or be seeking a professional experience. CEPS students who have attended summer school at UW – River Falls in the past are more likely to have done so to deal with scheduling problems, because they were in the area, or to take general education courses. These students are less satisfied with the mix of summer courses that were available to them.

Undeclared students. In considering summer school in 2005, undeclared students are more interested in general education courses and less in capstone or on-line courses. Key barriers to this set of students attending in 2005 are a perceived lack of need, uncertainty that courses they need will be offered, and because they would like a break from school.

A. Sample Demographic Profile

As Table 1 shows, nearly a third of the students surveyed have earned less than 15 credits; half of these have earned no credits. There are roughly equal numbers of observations in all the other categories (1 through 8 semesters at regular credit loads).

Table 1: Credits completed

1101 Observations

Credits	% of Sample	Credits	% of Sample
15 or less	30%	76 – 90	7%
16 – 30	11%	91 – 105	10%
31 – 45	10%	106 - 120	9%
46 – 60	13%	120 or more	8%
61 – 75	10%		

Table 2 summarizes the number and proportion of observations from each college. We had hoped to have at least 283 observations for CAFES, 327 for CAS, 263 for CBE, and 296 for CEPS for a total of 1,169 observations. We obtained at least 90% of the desired number of observations for CAFES, CAS and CBE but only 64% of the desired CEPS observations. For the university as a whole, the number of observations (1,153) means that confidence interval is +/- 3%. This increases to about +/- 5% for CAFES, CAS and CBE and a bit more than +/-6% for CEPS. So, the survey provides robust statistical results.

Table 2: College affiliation

1131 Observations

College	Number Observations	% of Sample	College	Number Observations	% of Sample
CAFES	259	22%	CEPS	189	16%
CAS	320	28%	Undeclared/Missing	110	8%
CBE	275	24%	Total	1,153	100%

Thirty-nine percent of the overall sample was male and 61 percent female, which closely approximates the overall gender distribution on campus. As Table 3 shows, there were comparable numbers of students in the 18, 19, 20 and 21 age categories. Thirty percent of the sample were 22 years of age or older. Again, the sample age distribution is similar to the overall student age distribution.

Table 3: Age distribution

1130 Observations

College	% of Sample	College	% of Sample
18	20%	21	19%
19	24%	22	14%
20	23%	23 or more	16%

Figure 1: Summer residences of respondents¹

¹ Dr. Charles Rader, Department of Geography created this map at the request of the authors.

B. Motivation to Attend UW-River Falls Summer School in 2005

Twenty-five percent (281 respondents) said that they plan to attend UW-River Falls' summer school this coming summer and another 44 percent said they might do so. There are no statistical differences by college in terms of who plans to attend our summer school this coming summer. Females are (weakly) more likely to attend than are males.

We divided the observations of credits completed into quartiles (0 – 14 credits, 15 – 48 credits, 49 – 90 credits, and 91 – 195 credits). Thus, the first quartile would be first semester freshmen, the second quartile includes both freshmen and sophomores, the third quartile include second semester sophomores through the junior year, and the last quartile is our seniors. Throughout the remainder of this report, we will be using these quartiles in examining demand for summer school. In terms of credits completed, as we might expect, the middle two quartiles (those with between 15 and 90 credits) are significantly more likely to say that they plan to attend summer school in 2005 than those in quartiles 1 or 4.

Dr. Charles Rader in the Department of Geography estimated, based on their summer zip codes, how far each respondent lives from River Falls. How far their summer residences are from River Falls is a highly significant predictor of their intent to attend summer school at UW-River Falls. Table 4 summarizes our findings regarding distance from River Falls. For ease of discussion, the respondents were divided into quartiles of ascending distance from River Falls. The differences indicated in table 4 are significant at the 1 percent level.

Table 4: Distance from River Falls and intention to attend summer school
1,108 Observations

Quartile	Ave Dist from UWRF (miles)	N	Percent Won't Attend	Percent Might Attend	Percent Will Attend
1	2	274	30	15	37
2	19	265	22	24	28
3	44	275	23	30	20
4	162	271	25	31	15

The students were asked a series of questions about the sorts of courses or other experiences they might be interested in if they attended summer school this coming summer. Table 5 shows the course-types about which we inquired, the number of students who answered each question, and the percentage of the sample that said they would be interested in that type of offering. The results in Table 5 suggest the summer courses of greatest interest to our students are those in their major. Unless a major has a large number of students, offering courses in the major are problematic in terms of finding enough students interested in a given class to make it worth offering. The bulk of the data suggest substantial potential interest in all of these categories of offerings with more than one-third of all respondents indicating an interest. Nearly 40 percent of the respondents expressed an interest in an international experience during the summer session, which is substantially higher than the current percentage of River Falls' students who have such experiences.

Areas of educational interest differ to a small extent by gender and in more significant ways by college and number of credits earned. In terms of gender, male students were statistically more likely to express interest in the senior capstone and females in courses for their majors and in international experiences.

Table 5: Areas of Educational Interest

Educational Offering	Observations	Percent Indicating Interest
Courses in Major	1136	89%
Required Supporting Courses	1120	75%
Courses in Minor/Emphasis	1130	72%
General Education Courses	1131	61%
Internship	1127	59%
International Experience	1121	39%
Senior Capstone	1128	34%

In terms of college differences, CAFES students are significantly less interested in capstone courses but more interested in summer internships than are students in other colleges. CAS students are slightly more interested in summer courses in their minors. Students in CBE are significantly less interested in general education courses and, like their counterparts in CAFES, more interested in summer internships. CEPS students are significantly less interested in summer general education course offerings or internships. Undeclared students are significantly more interested in general education courses other than the capstone course.

Interest in summer school offerings, when considered by credits already earned, displays a logical pattern. The first two quartiles are significantly more interested in general education courses. The last two quartiles are significantly more interested in the capstone course. The last quartile is significantly less interested in courses in their majors and minors.

Nearly two-thirds of the sample reported an interest in morning classes during the summer session (Table 6). More than one-third indicated an interest in evening classes. By far the most popular (76 percent interest) summer session for this sample was the first (May 31 – Jun 18). Half or fewer indicated an interest in the other three sessions. Eighty-five percent of the sample indicated an interest in classes on the UW-River Falls campus. Interestingly, two-thirds of the respondents expressed interest in on-line courses. Twenty-six percent said they'd be interested in courses offered at a venue in Hudson.

Areas of statistical differences appeared when we looked at gender, college and credit levels. Interestingly, females were statistically more likely to be interested in morning classes and males in evening classes. CAFES students are less likely to be interested in courses offered in session 3, July 11 – July 29. CBE and CEPS are less likely to be interested in afternoon courses. Undeclared students are significantly less likely to be interested in on-line courses.

Table 6: Timing of offerings

Time of Day	Observations	% of Sample	Session of Summer School	Observations	% of Sample
Morning	1127	66%	May 31-June 18	1132	76%
Afternoon	1123	58%	June 20-July 9	1122	52%
Evening	1118	36%	July 11-July 29	1120	45%
			Aug 1-Aug19	1117	41%

Differences by credits completed, divided into the quartiles discussed above, indicate a number of statistical differences. Students falling into the third quartile of credits earned (49 – 90 credits), are

significantly different than other students in a host of dimensions. They are more likely than the other quartiles to prefer morning classes but shun afternoon classes and to be interested in classes in sessions 1, 2 or 3 (this is true for the 4th session also but not at a statistically significant level).

C. Barriers to Attending UW-River Falls' Summer School in 2005

Students who said they don't plan to attend UW-River Falls' summer school next summer and those who said they might, were asked to identify reasons for not spending the summer with us. The primary reasons for not attending summer school are completely or largely outside of UW-River Falls' control. In particular, nearly three-quarters of those who won't or may not attend summer school simply want a break from school. More than two-thirds don't take summer school classes because of financial constraints. The variables over which the University does have direct control and which appear to have a substantial impact on attendance are the times of offerings and the variety of classes taught. Table 6 summarizes our findings relative to why students won't or may not attend school this coming summer.

Table 7: Why students don't attend summer school at UW-River Falls

Reason won't (may not) attend	Observations	Percent Indicating Interest
Want a break	872	74%
Can't afford	874	69%
Class times don't fit my schedule	872	57%
Can't count on needed classes	871	52%
I'm graduating	885	33%
Length of terms don't meet my needs	869	27%
Gain professional experience elsewhere	870	20%
Family obligations	871	6%

Undeclared students are significantly more likely to say that they are not attending summer school because they don't need to or because they can't count on classes they need being offered. They are more likely to say they want a break from school; the lack of a clear direction for their studies may contribute to this feeling. CAFES students are more likely to cite their inability to afford summer school, family obligations that preclude participation or a desire to have a professional experience. CEPS students are significantly less likely to feel the need for a break from school or for a professional experience during the summer.

Male students are more likely to say that they might not attend summer school this summer because they can't count on courses they need being offered and to feel that instructional quality wouldn't be adequate.

The largest number of significant differences regarding why students might not attend our summer school are related to the number of credits they've earned. Not surprisingly, significantly more students in the fourth quartile (more than 90 credits) indicate that they won't be attending because they don't need to (since many in this group will be graduating prior to summer school), and significantly fewer because they want to gain a professional experience (since many will presumably be seeking full-time employment), or because residence halls and the food service aren't available (since many would be living in apartments or other off-campus residences). Interestingly, those in the third quartile, a prime target for summer school, were significantly more likely to say that they won't attend because they can't

count on needed classes being offered. Newer students (those in quartiles 1 and 2) are significantly more likely to cite their inability to afford summer school, lack of residence halls and the food service and, interestingly, the need for a break from school. Students in the second quartile were more likely to say that their desire for a professional experience outweighs their interest in summer school.

D. Experience of Those Who Have Attended UW-River Falls Summer School

Eighteen percent (202) of the 1138 students who responded said they had attended UW-River Falls’ summer school in the past?” There appears to be no gender differences in terms of propensity to attend summer school. Students falling into the 4th quartile in terms of credits earned are substantially more likely to have attended summer school, which is to be expected since they have generally been at UW-River Falls longer and had more opportunities to attend summer school. Students from CAFES are significantly less likely to have attended summer school. Given that many CAFES students work in agricultural businesses, which are busiest in the summer, it is understandable why they are less likely to have attended summer school.

Those who have attended UW-River Falls’ summer school were asked about their motivation for attendance. Table 7 summarizes these results. More than half the respondents indicate that they take classes in order to accelerate their graduation date, to take a required supporting course or a course in their major. Forty-one percent of those who have attended summer school at UW-River Falls report having done so to deal with a scheduling problem. Given on-going budget pressures, this motivation for attending summer school is likely to increase. Only 10 percent reported retaking classes in the summer.

Table 8: Motivation for Attending Summer School at UW-River Falls

Reason attended	Observations	Percent Indicating Interest
Accelerate graduation	303	57%
To take required supporting course	254	57%
To take course in major	253	55%
Deal with scheduling problems	266	41%
In area	261	36%
To take general education course	258	31%
To take course in minor	246	21%
Retake classes	276	10%

Statistically, women were weakly more likely to report that they attended summer school to accelerate graduation. CAFES students were statistically less likely to report having attended summer school in order to accelerate graduation, deal with scheduling problems, because they were in the River Falls area, or to take courses for their major or minor. CEPS students are statistically more likely to have attended summer school to deal with scheduling problems, because they were in the area, or to take general education courses. CBE students who have attended summer school were more likely to have done so to take courses in their majors but less likely to have taken general education courses.

Differences by credit-quartile are consistent with the different pressures felt by students during their collegiate career. Those nearing graduation (quartile 4) are statistically more likely to report attending summer school to accelerate graduation, deal with scheduling problems, and to take courses in their major. Those just beginning their collegiate career (quartile 1 and 2), are statistically less likely to

report having attended summer school to accelerate graduation, deal with scheduling issues, take required supporting courses or take courses in their major.

Table 8 indicates that for the most part students who attended UW-River Falls' summer school were reasonably satisfied. Approximately three-quarters of this set of students were satisfied with the length of terms, instructional quality, the overall experience and the time at which classes were offered. Only half were satisfied with the mix of classes offered and with the cost.

Women were significantly more satisfied with their UW-River Falls summer school than were males with respect to overall satisfaction, and, weakly, with the quality of instruction, time of day classes were offered, and the length of the courses. Students from CBE were significantly more satisfied with the mix of classes offered and those from CAFES and CEPS less so. Finally, the more credits already earned by a student, the higher the level of satisfaction. For instance, students who've earned more than 90 credits are significantly more satisfied with the overall summer school experience, the quality of instruction and the length of summer terms than were those who've earned less than 49 credits. Familiarity, in this case, doesn't seem to translate into contempt!

Table 9: Evaluation of Summer School at UW-River Falls

Reason attended	Observations	Percent Indicating Interest
Length of terms met my needs	232	78%
Instructional quality was good	234	77%
I was satisfied with experience	241	75%
Time classes offered met my needs	232	72%
Mix of classes met my needs	232	50%
Cost was acceptable	228	48%

E. Why Students Attend Summer School Elsewhere

Fifteen percent, or 168 respondents, indicated that they have or will attend summer school elsewhere. The dominant reason for attending a different summer school is convenience of location. The issue of more convenient hours is something that River Falls does have some control over. This result is consistent with the data included in Table 8, where 57 percent complained about the hours at which UW-River Falls offers its classes. The only significant demographic feature regarding students attending summer school elsewhere is that undeclared students are more likely to report that they have or expect to attend summer school elsewhere. This could be problematic for UW-River Falls in terms of retention if their lack of a major also means they are less attached to the university.

Table 9: Why students attend summer school elsewhere

Reason attend elsewhere	Observations	Percent Indicating Interest
More convenient	292	61%
More convenient hours	285	46%
Length of terms match my needs	286	39%
Less expensive	308	38%
Offers courses not available at UWRF	278	34%
Higher quality	290	17%

In terms of specific features of summer school programs offered by other universities, males are less likely to say that these offerings are offered in a more convenient location, are less expensive, or are offered at more convenient hours. Students with more credits (quartile 4) are less likely to cite location convenience than those with fewer credits earned (quartile 1). There were no statistical differences across the colleges on this set of questions.

F. CAFES and CAS Questions

CAFES has been considering an accelerated degree program that would enable students to graduate one semester early by taking classes during the summer and/or J-term. Slightly more than one-half of all students who responded (805) indicated that they would be interested in such a program. Since only 259 respondents identified themselves as CAFES students, clearly a substantial number of students from other colleges answered this question. There are several potential conclusions we might draw from this. First, like many survey respondents, students don't always read directions on surveys very well! Second, while CAFES has been discussing this option, it appears that such an option might have appeal in other colleges as well. Third, if we consider only those who identified themselves as CAFES majors, interest in this accelerated degree program is particularly strong; 66% of the 254 respondents indicated an interest. Looking at interest in the accelerated degree program for CAFES and undeclared students only, there are no statistical differences in terms of gender or credits earned.

Finally, CAS was interested in the area (science/math, social science, humanities, art) in which respondents are majoring. There were 131 (46%) math or science majors, 96 (34%) in the social sciences, 15 (5%) in the humanities, and 41 (14%) in the Arts.

Appendix: Student's Open Ended Comments

Q18. If I attended UWRF Summer School this summer I would be interested in courses being offered (*place*):

- UW Schools 25x
 - River Falls 8x
 - Eau Claire 5x
 - Other 3x
 - Barron 2x
 - Waukesha 2x
 - LaCrosse 2x
 - Green Bay 1x
 - Whitewater 1x
 - Madison 1x
- Minnesota 16x
 - Twin Cities area 8x
 - U of M 2x
 - Minnesota 2x
 - Metro State 1x
 - Blain 1x
 - Washington County 1x
 - Medford 1x
- Community Colleges 5x
 - Inver Hills 3x
 - Century 1x
 - Other 1x
- Technical Colleges 6x
 - New Richmond 2x
 - Madison Area 1x
 - Indian Head 1x
 - Chippewa Valley 1x
 - Northwestern 1x
- Other 2x
- Mexico 1x
- In Hometown 1x

Q28. I attended UWRF Summer School to...

- Classes I wanted to take 2x
- Internships 2x
- If I didn't I would be here 6 years 1x
- Certification 1x
- Transition to college 1x
- Shorter time to complete courses 1
- Physical education 1x
- Took lower level business courses 1x
- For education 1x
- General education classes 1x
- To see if I liked the area enough for a minor 1x
- Smaller class size 1x

Q47. I don't plan on attending UWRF Summer School because:

- The commute is too far 8x
- Taking classes in hometown 4x
- I will not be attending UWRF next semester 2x
- Classes too long- 3 hrs I would lose interest 2x
- Classes I need/want are not offered here 2x
- International student 2x
- Location 2x
- Takes too long to know summer schedule, hard to plan ahead 2x
- Housing/ Residence halls available 2x
- Cost / More expensive than regular semester 2x
- I can graduate in four years 1x
- Not enough online 1x
- I don't know much information about Summer school 1x
- Lazy 1x
- Not convenient 1x
- Don't have time 1x
- I'll graduate before summer 1x
- There needs to be more classes offered 1x
- Cramming hard classes into a few weeks sucks 1x
- Just transferred here 1x
- Has industry involvement and banquets 1x

Q56. I have or will attend Summer School elsewhere because:

- I'm transferring back to the school and it makes credit transfer easier 1x
- I don't know if hours match my work schedule 1x
- Very close to home 1x
- Cost 1x
- I went to school there and had to spend the summer there so I took classes 1x
- I was able to enter the class with no prerequisites 1x
- I live in Mexico 1x
- Glass blowing 1x