UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-STOUT'S STUDENT TUITION DIFFERENTIAL
- ACCESS TO LEARNING FEE:

A Cost Benefit Analysis

by

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ABSTRACT

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This research provides an analysis of the benefits, as well as the costs, associated with the implementation of the Student Tuition Differential - Access to Learning Fee at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. The research project examines the quantifiable, self-reported, and theoretical costs and benefits of the Student Tuition Differential Fee from the perspective of university students. In addition, administrative and educational costs and benefits are examined without the utility of self-report. University students’ perceptions, levels of satisfaction, and values of the Student Tuition Differential - Access to Learning Fee are measured through a survey administered either once or twice every year over the period of
three years. A benchmarking survey was administered in the spring of 1999, prior to the fee’s implementation, in order to assess students’ preceding perceptions. The costs of the Student Tuition Differential Fee were added to university student charges during the ensuing fall of 1999. Surveys were administered and analyzed each spring including the academic year of this research project, 2003-2004. The results of the aforementioned surveys, as well as those of a separately administered survey in the fall of 2003, provide the information necessary to evaluate students’ perceptions of the Student Tuition Differential - Access to Learning Fee. In addition, with the utilization of an administrative expenditure report, including a Student Tuition Differential Fund allocation table, this research project assesses the costs and benefits with regard to each applicable department or sector receiving funding. The utility of these tools and the examination of their findings lead to an exhaustive cost benefit analysis of the Student Tuition Differential Fee at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. Implications of the studies’ major findings and recommendations for future research are also discussed.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of research</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background of the Access to Learning Fee</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Learning Fee Goals</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Selection and Description</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentation</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER SIX: IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDITIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX C</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Satisfaction with access to Micheel's Hall. . . . 27

Figure 2. Satisfaction with access to the library. . . . 29

Figure 3. Satisfaction with access to laboratories. . . . 31

Figure 4. Satisfaction with training. . . . . . . . . . . . 34

Figure 5. Satisfaction with faculty and assistants. . . . 36

Figure 6. Satisfaction with number of co-op sites. . . . 37

Figure 7. Satisfaction with childcare. . . . . . . . . . . . 38

Figure 8. Satisfaction with cost of childcare. . . . . . . 40

Figure 9. Satisfaction with overall access. . . . . . . . . 41

Figure 10. Satisfaction with technology. . . . . . . . . . 42

Figure 11. Reasons for attending university. . . . . . . 43
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this research was to provide a cost benefit analysis of the University of Wisconsin-Stout’s Student Tuition Differential - Access to Learning Fee implementation. The differential tuition rate was implemented in the fall of 1999. The differential rate of increase on student tuition was 5 percent for undergraduate tuition and 5 percent for graduate tuition as well. The student fee is intended to assist the university’s student enrollment of roughly 8000 by increasing overall assistance and access to university resources. As of the spring of 2004, it had been over four years since its implementation and no formal cost benefit analysis had been completed. This research was necessary in order to assess the Student Tuition Differential - Access to Learning Fee’s levels of importance and effectiveness at the University of Wisconsin-Stout.

Background of the Access to Learning Fee

In 1996, the Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Stout, Charles Sorenson, proposed a student differential fee, which would increase undergraduate and graduate base tuition by 5 percent. The Chancellor presented his idea to the Student
Senate, which quickly rejected his proposal. Soon after, Mr. Sorenson revised the proposal and resubmitted it to the Student Senate. It was again rejected.

Henry Tyler was the President of the Student Body during that time. He took the project on himself. He worked in cooperation with a select group from the Student Senate to form a new proposal based on the Chancellor’s ideas. The new proposal for a student tuition differential fee called the Access to Learning Fee was brought to the Senate in 1998. It passed.

In particular, the fee was sponsored by the organization Students for Students. The Stout Student Association intended for the fee to benefit students by increasing access to university resources and increasing student help. The proposal was accepted by the Student Senate and the Financial Affairs Committee in 1998. The differential fee was to be called the Access to Learning Fee, and was to be implemented during the fall semester of 1999.

Access to Learning Fee Goals

Student Tuition Differential – Access to Learning Fee is paid by the students and is allocated and dispersed among several sectors. The monies are intended to eliminate most course fees, which would otherwise be additional expenses paid by the students through segregated fees, increase the visibility
and effectiveness of technicians in laboratories, increase the quantity of graduate assistants, support the Child and Family Study Center, eliminate co-op fees, allow library and laboratories to be better staffed and open longer, contribute to contingency funds, increase the quality of student services, and improve student help in general via indirect means. An associated goal of the Access to Learning Fee implementation is to increase students' satisfaction with university access, technical assistance, utility of resources, and elimination of previous fees.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cost benefit analysis is the attempt to measure the benefits of a proposed project and compare them with its costs (Britannica Concise Encyclopedia, 2003). It has been defined as, "A practical way of assessing the desirability of a project, where it is important to take a long view (in the sense of looking at repercussions in the further, as well as the nearer, future) and a wide view (in the sense of allowing for side-effects of many kinds of many persons, industries, regions, etc.), i.e. it applies the enumeration and evaluation of all the relevant costs and benefits." (Press & Turvey, 1965).

As far as investment appraisals are concerned, the cost benefit analysis, as far back as 1970, has attracted more attention than any other method of assessment (Blaug, 1970). Cost benefit analyses are becoming increasingly popular in the education sector as well (Hough, 1993).

The history of cost benefit analysis can be traced to a French engineer and economist, Arsène-Jules-Étienne-Juvénal Dupuit (1804-1866) who proposed the procedure in 1844 and wrote an article based on the method in 1848 (Scigliano, 2002). The practical development of cost benefit analysis was incorporated in the United States’ River and Harbor Act of 1902 (Hough, 1993). Further development came as a result of the impetus
provided by the Federal Navigation Act and the United States
Flood Control Act of 1936. United States Corps of Engineers were
instructed to carry out projects in which the benefits would
outweigh the associated costs. In order to do so, they utilized
cost benefit analysis of any possible projects (Scigliano,
2002). Since then, cost benefit analysis has become an
instrument used to evaluate whether, or to what extent, a
project or program is worthwhile (Scigliano, 2002).

Cost benefit analysis, as presently applied to education,
can be traced to the founding of the economics of education as a
subject area. During the annual meeting of the American Economic
Association in 1960, Professor Theodore Schultz presented a
seminal lecture to his colleagues. During this lecture, he
advocated the concept of human capital, which applied to the
education industry. He suggested that investment in people could
be as important, and as expensive, as investment in physical
capital. Professor Schultz appealed to his fellow economists to
take seriously this neglected branch of study (Hough, 1993).

Subsequently, a sizeable body of literature on related
issues was published (Hough, 1993). Much of this literature
addressed and sought to ascertain if investment in education
should be increased, and how that determination would transpire.

The underlying principle of any cost benefit analysis is
simple - a project or program is judged to be advisable, or cost
effective, if the benefits derived from it compensate for the costs of its implementation and execution (Dinwiddy, 1996). However, its outward appearance of simplicity becomes hastily convoluted once the intangible and immeasurable indirect costs and benefits are explored.

There is no single methodology for utilizing a cost benefit analysis. Traditionally the analysis included a common unit of measurement (usually money) for costs and benefits (Scigliano, 2002). Cost benefit analyses seek to identify both tangible and intangible costs and contrast them with the hypothesized or actual benefits (Dinwiddy, 1996). However, as previously stated, once the intricacies of the costs and benefits are scrutinized, there can logically be very few common units of measurement, and straightforward assessments develop into more convoluted evaluations (Dinwiddy, 1996).

Complicated appraisal of costs and benefits is particularly the quandary throughout a cost benefit analysis in the educational sector. In fact, some researchers have questioned whether cost benefit analysis should be used in education at all (Maunder, Myers, Wall, & Miller, 1996). Some 30 years ago, Vaizey and Sheehan (1972) concluded, "The usefulness of such studies is very limited." More recently, the Overseas Development Administration commented, "Recent studies have shown this method to be both fallacious and limiting" (Overseas
Development Administration, 1990). Others argue the notion that
cost benefit techniques can only be used when all the outcomes
are computable in financial terms (Fielden & Pearson, 1987).
Fielden and Pearson (1987) suggest, "...and this will never be
the case in education." Nevertheless, most researchers consider
cost benefit analysis to be a useful tool in educational
analysis by providing a focus and a coherent framework for
decision-making (Woodhall, 1980).

In fact, the application of educational cost benefit
analysis is currently widely accepted (Hough, 1993). It is
extensively considered preferable, both in theory and practice,
to the chief alternative techniques, i.e. manpower planning and
social demand approach (Hough, 1993). It is also commonly
referred to as "rate of return analysis" (Cohn & Geske, 1990).

There are presently three ways of presenting the
information of a cost benefit analysis in education (Woodhall,
1980). The first is by means of displaying a benefit to cost
ratio. This simply is carried out with a measurement of the
ratio of discounted future benefits, and comparing those to the
discounted costs. The second method is by a calculation of the
present net value of the project. This is completed by means of
assessing the value of the discounted benefits and subtracting
the discounted costs. The third technique, which is also the
most common, is by calculating the internal rate of return of
the investment. "The virtue of using the rate of return as a means of measuring the yield of educational investment is that the choice of an alternative rate of return is not built into the calculation as it is in the case of benefit cost ratios (Woodhall, 1980).

Prior to presenting the information of a cost benefit analysis, one must clearly manage any principle problems that might arise during an educational cost benefit analysis computation (Hough, 1994). One of the first assessments to be made is which type of cost benefit analysis is applicable or required. Hough (1994) suggests there are three possibilities in educational cost benefit analysis. The first is the social calculus, which relates the whole of the costs to society to gross incomes. A similar approach is the private calculus, which relates the costs borne by the students and their families to net incomes. The next method should be important for educational planning, according to Hough (1994), since it "gives the returns to society as a whole, but the private rate of return shows the basis on which individual students make their investment decisions" (Hough, 1994). Many studies incorporate aspects of each of these approaches. It is rare to encounter a situation in which one method will solely prove to be complete, and will produce a comprehensive, beneficial cost benefit analysis.
Another suggestion in educational cost benefit analysis proposed by Hough (1994) is that all costs, including opportunity costs, and all benefits should be included in the analysis. However, in practice, this might prove to be unattainable and the requirement of settling for some measure of approximation might be necessary.

Hough (1994) submits another potential problem in translating into monetary terms some elements, which may be difficult to quantify. This is in regard to both costs and benefits. Indeed, it is typically easier to quantify the majority of costs, but enumerating extensive benefits can present a particular challenge. In most cases, the costs in education can be computed due to the fact that the mass is based on money. Other measures will have to be taken to quantify and assess the costs of time, indirect financial expenditures, efforts, etc. The calculation regarding the benefits in a cost benefit analysis will customarily be the most scrupulous. The ability to gauge the benefits in the analysis is exceedingly problematical. Benefits are infrequently displayed in monetary terms, at least not directly. The benefits in educational cost benefit analyses are habitually indirect and intricate. This proves to be one of the most complex and controversial steps in educational cost benefit analysis (Hough, 1994).
An associated problem is the timing of the costs and benefits, particularly the latter, in education. Some of the costs and benefits might accrue many years later (Hough, 1994). The problem of timing in an educational cost benefit analysis leads to the immense complexity of the analysis as a whole.

Despite its associated complications and controversial utility, educational cost benefit analysis stands to be one of the most widely used and accepted processes to appraise the value of an educational program or intervention. Cost benefit analysis in education is extensively used more than its chief alternative techniques (Hough, 1994).

The hypotheses of the study are as follows:
H1: University of Wisconsin Stout students will report more access to Micheel’s Hall after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee.
H2: University of Wisconsin Stout students will report more access to the Library after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee.
H3: University of Wisconsin Stout students will report more access to major-specific laboratories after implementation of the Access to Learning Fee.
H4: University of Wisconsin Stout students will report higher levels of sufficiently trained staff in Micheel’s Hall after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee.
H5: University of Wisconsin Stout students will report higher levels of sufficiently trained staff in the Library after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee.

H6: University of Wisconsin Stout students will report higher levels of sufficiently trained staff in major-specific laboratories after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee.

H7: University of Wisconsin Stout students will report higher levels of access to faculty after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee.

H8: University of Wisconsin Stout students will report higher levels of helpfulness from in-class graduate assistants after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee.

H9: University of Wisconsin Stout students will report higher levels of satisfaction with the number of co-op sites after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee.

H10: University of Wisconsin Stout students will report higher levels of satisfaction with the number of childcare slots available after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee.

H11: University of Wisconsin Stout students will report fewer incidences of childcare costs preventing utility of university services after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee.
H12: University of Wisconsin Stout students will report the University of Wisconsin Stout to have more overall access to its facilities than other universities.

H13: University of Wisconsin Stout students will report the University of Wisconsin Stout to have higher levels of technology than other universities.

H14: University of Wisconsin Stout students will report the University of Wisconsin Stout to have a better overall reputation than other universities.

H15: More than half of the University of Wisconsin Stout students will report choosing to attend the University of Wisconsin Stout because of overall access to the university.

H16: More than half of the University of Wisconsin Stout students will report choosing to attend the University of Wisconsin Stout because of advanced technology at the university.

H17: More than half of the University of Wisconsin Stout students will report choosing to attend the University of Wisconsin Stout because of its good reputation.

H18: More than half of the University of Wisconsin Stout students will report choosing to attend the University of Wisconsin Stout because of its low costs.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

This chapter will include the methodology used to assess students' perceived benefits associated with the University of Wisconsin - Stout's Access to Learning Fee. It will discuss the sample, population, instrumentation, analyses performed, and procedural weaknesses.

Subject Selection and Description

The subjects consisted of a sample of all the students enrolled at the University of Wisconsin - Stout during the academic year in which the survey was administered. The first survey administration, which was conducted in the spring semester of 1999, prior to the commencement of the Access to Learning Fee, incorporated a population of 7,067 students. The sample consisted of 415 students, with a return rate of 96 percent. The fee was then implemented the next academic semester in the fall of 1999, during which the first paralleled administration took place. The fall semester of 1999 included a population of students, which increased to 7,517. The sample size also increased to 790 students, with a response rate of 94 percent. The survey was then administered in each proceeding spring semester of the academic year. In 2000, total student
enrollment / research population was 7,024. The sample size was 780, with a return rate of 94 percent. The next spring semester showed an increase in population size to 7,168 and an increase in sample size to 916. The return rate was 92 percent. In the spring of 2002 the population size was 7,248 with a sample size 902. That fall, the population was the highest ever at 7,902. The return rate in 2002 was 93 percent. In the most current administration, in the spring of 2003, the research population was the same as the research sample due to the fact that every student received the survey via electronic mail. This included a university total enrollment of 7,326 students. The response rate, due to method of delivery, dropped to six percent. Of the total sample, 91 to 93 percent were undergraduate students, and there were almost identical numbers for males and females. The sample for each administration was 94 to 95 percent White, two percent Asian American, one percent Black, and less than one percent Hispanic and Native American. Rates of population sampled ranged from 3.5 percent to 10.7 percent and were as follows: spring of 1999, 6 percent; spring of 2000, 10.7 percent; spring of 2001, 10.3 percent; spring of 2002, 4.7 percent; fall of 2002, 3.5 percent; spring of 2003, 4.7%.
Instrumentation

In order to assess students' satisfaction and self-reported access to the university, a survey was administered. The original survey was developed in 1999 and has been slightly modified with each subsequent administration. The survey was developed based on objectives of the Access Fee and recommendations from university officials. The most imperative questions remained on the survey each year and consist of approximately 40 questions. The questions assessed specific demographics of the respondents as well as the access and satisfaction questions. Most responses were reactions to positively framed statements. A Likert response was required based on level of agreement from "strongly disagree, or one, to strongly agree, or five." It was designed to be completed with a number two pencil by manually darkening corresponding circles. When administered online, clicking the circles in order to darken them electronically was the process. The instrument used was titled the University of Wisconsin Stout's Technology Access Fee Survey (See Appendix A). This survey was modified in 2003 in order to administer it electronically via electronic mail. The survey has a reliability coefficient of .94.
Procedures

The survey was administered during class meetings from the spring of 1999 until the fall of 2002. Classes were selected randomly while ensuring a sufficient representation from each educational emphasis / major and level of student status. Approximately one thousand surveys were dispensed in approximately fifteen classrooms. The respondents were given a five-minute oral overview of the background, purpose, and significance of the Student Access Fee and their responses to the survey questions. They were also told the completion of the survey was voluntary, and strict confidentiality was assured. The instrument was then distributed and the respondents were provided with a number two pencil if necessary. They were given as much time as needed to adequately complete the survey. The completion of the survey usually took between five and ten minutes. The survey administrator or assistant collected the surveys. The respondents and the course instructor were expressed gratitude for their time and efforts. The entire administration process lasted approximately twenty minutes.

In the spring of 2003, the survey was administered entirely via email. All university students with an active university email were sent an electronic mail message with a World Wide Web hyperlink to the online survey. The survey was similar to the
in-class survey administered in prior years, with a few additional questions. A preface to the survey included a paragraph summarizing the background, purpose, and significance of the Student Access Fee and the responses to the survey questions. The completion of the survey usually took under five minutes.

Data collection

Data collection, during the first two years of administration, included a Graduate Assistant entering all of the data into an excel database. The next three years, data from the in-class survey administrations was scanned using a Scantron instrument by a Graduate Assistant and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). From the on-line survey administration in 2003, the data was automatically transferred into a data file.

Data analysis

The design of the research utilized a structure of Within-Subjects Design. The same participants were surveyed using the same measurement tool with scheduled time period intervals. However, new participants were included in the design with each administration.
The independent variable was the presence of or absence of the Student Tuition Differential - Access to Learning Fee. The dependent variables were the students' responses regarding access to and satisfaction with the university.

The data was analyzed using automated statistical test operations within the *Statistical Package of the Social Sciences* (SPSS). Data analysis included breakdowns such as frequencies, and examinations such as analysis of variance (ANOVA), factor analysis and correlations, but the most beneficial data analysis was in the form of mean responses to questions.

*Limitations*

The limitations of the methodology of the study include the acute differences between the two methods of administration. For example, response rates for the in-class administrative processes were near 100 percent, while the online approach elicited closer to a 6 percent response rate. The emailed survey offered room for a more selective and voluntary responding sample of individuals.
Results

The first hypothesis, University of Wisconsin Stout students will report more access to Micheel's Hall after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee, was not supported. Survey responses to questions numbered six, nine, twelve, fifteen, twenty-one, and thirty were collectively added to measure overall access to Micheel's Hall (See Below).

In the spring of 1999, the baseline level for the composite score was 20.5 out of 30.0. In the spring of 2000 and 2001, levels approached 23.0. Reported access levels dropped in the spring of 2002, returning to the baseline point. In the fall of 2002, and the spring of 2003, the reported level of access to Micheel's Hall at the University of Wisconsin Stout reached an all-time low of 18.0 out of 30.0.
Figure 1. Satisfaction with access to Micheel's Hall

Bars are composite scores of responses to the following six statements:

6. I am satisfied with the quality of service provided by Micheel's Hall.
   
   \[ N = 2901 \quad \text{Mean} = 3.63 \]

9. The staff is sufficiently trained to meet my needs in Micheel's Hall computing center.
   
   \[ N = 2815 \quad \text{Mean} = 3.37 \]

12. Service hours are adequate to meet my needs in Micheel's Hall computing center.
   
   \[ N = 2793 \quad \text{Mean} = 3.76 \]
15. The ratio of staff to students is adequate in Micheel’s Hall computing center.

   N = 2773      Mean = 3.36

21. The software/equipment meets my needs in Micheel’s Hall computing center.

   N = 2818      Mean = 3.58

30. Micheel’s Hall computing center is easy to use.

   N = 2891      Mean = 3.80

Hypothesis number two, University of Wisconsin Stout students will report more access to the Library after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee, was not supported. Survey responses to questions numbered seven, ten, thirteen, sixteen, twenty-two, and thirty-one were collectively added to measure overall access to the Library (See Below).

In the spring of 1999, the baseline level for the composite score was 24.75 out of 30.0. Respondents reported higher levels of access during the spring of 2000 and 2001; levels elevated to 25.8. Over the course of the next three administrations in the spring of 2002, the fall of 2002, and the spring of 2003, perceived access levels continually dropped to 24.8, 24.4, and 23.9 respectively.
Figure 2. Satisfaction with access to the library.

Bars are composite scores of responses to the following six statements:

7. I am satisfied with the quality of service provided by the library.

\[ N = 3296 \quad \text{Mean} = 3.83 \]

10. The staff is sufficiently trained to meet my needs in the library.

\[ N = 3240 \quad \text{Mean} = 3.92 \]

13. Service hours are adequate to meet my needs in the library.

\[ N = 3238 \quad \text{Mean} = 3.70 \]

15. The ratio of staff to students is adequate in the library.
N = 3202       Mean = 3.60

22. The software/equipment meets my needs in the library.
    N = 3208       Mean = 3.69

30. The library is easy to use.
    N = 3265       Mean = 3.73

The third hypothesis, University of Wisconsin Stout students will report more access to major-specific laboratories after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee, was not supported. Survey responses to questions numbered eight, eleven, fourteen, seventeen, twenty-three, and thirty-two were collectively added to measure overall access to major-specific laboratories (See Below).

In the spring of 1999, the baseline level for the composite score was 19.4 out of 30.0. The spring of 2000, showed an increase in to a level of 21.1. Over the next three years, there was a steady decline in students’ perceived access to major-specific laboratories. From the spring of 2001, to the spring of 2003, levels were 20.2, 18.9, 18.0, and 17.6.
Figure 3. Satisfaction with access to laboratories.

Bars are composite scores of responses to the following six statements:

8. I am satisfied with the quality of service provided by the major specific laboratories.

\[ N = 3296 \quad \text{Mean} = 3.83 \]

11. The staff is sufficiently trained to meet my needs in the major specific laboratories.

\[ N = 3240 \quad \text{Mean} = 3.92 \]

14. Service hours are adequate to meet my needs in the major specific laboratories.

\[ N = 3238 \quad \text{Mean} = 3.70 \]
17. The ratio of staff to students is adequate in the major specific laboratories.

\[ N = 3202 \quad \text{Mean} = 3.60 \]

23. The software/equipment meets my needs in the major specific laboratories.

\[ N = 3208 \quad \text{Mean} = 3.69 \]

32. The major specific laboratories are easy to use.

\[ N = 3265 \quad \text{Mean} = 3.73 \]

The fourth hypothesis, University of Wisconsin Stout students will report higher levels of sufficiently trained staff in Michael’s Hall after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee, was supported. The relevant question for determining levels of sufficiently trained staff was question number nine (See below).

In the spring of 1999, the mean of all responses was 3.1 on a 5.0 scale. All subsequent perception levels were higher. The next spring, of 2000, showed a rise to 3.4. Then, in the spring of 2001, levels rose to the highest echelon of 3.6. The mean level during the spring of 2002 was 3.4. Finally, during the fall of 2002, and the spring of 2003, average responses leveled out at 3.6, one-half of a point higher than baseline levels, thus supporting the hypothesis.

Hypothesis number five, University of Wisconsin Stout students will report higher levels of sufficiently trained staff
in the Library after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee, was not supported. The question used for analysis was survey question number ten (See Below).

Responses did not fluctuate much from the baseline level in 1999 of 3.9. They remained at that same level through the spring of 2003, with an exception during the spring of 2002 when levels dropped a fraction to 3.8. The lack of increase in response levels equated to a lack of support for the hypothesis.

The sixth hypothesis, University of Wisconsin Stout students will report higher levels of sufficiently trained staff in major-specific laboratories after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee, was partially supported. The question used for analysis was survey question number eleven (See Below).

In the spring of 1999, the baseline level was 3.5 on a five-point scale. Perceived levels of training in Micheel's Hall fluctuated up and down over the next few years. In the spring of 2000, responses averaged 3.7; in the spring of 2001, mean response was 3.6; in the spring of 2002, levels dropped below baseline levels to 3.4; in the fall of 2002, levels matched the high of 2000 at 3.7; in the spring of 2003, perceived levels of training were slightly higher than the baseline levels of 1999 at 3.7. Due to certain response years being above baseline levels, the hypothesis was supported.
Figure 4. Satisfaction with training.

Bars include responses to the following three statements:

Red Bars - 9. The staff is sufficiently trained to meet my needs in Micheel's Hall computing center.

Green Bars - 10. The staff is sufficiently trained to meet my needs in the library.

Blue Bars - 11. The staff is sufficiently trained to meet my needs in the major specific laboratories.

The seventh hypothesis, which was University of Wisconsin Stout students will report higher levels of access to faculty after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee, was partially supported. The responses to statement number thirty-three were used for analysis (See Below).
Response levels for the baseline year, 1999, averaged 3.6 out of five. The mean escalated slightly to 3.6 in the spring of 2000, and to 3.7 in the spring of 2001. In the year 2002, levels dropped to their lowest point of 3.4. The next fall, in 2002, the mean response climbed to 4.0. In the last spring of administration, 2003, the mean leveled out matching the baseline year at 3.6 out of five.

Hypothesis number eight, University of Wisconsin Stout students will report higher levels of helpfulness from in-class graduate assistants after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee, was supported. Statement number thirty-nine in the questionnaire was used for this examination (See Below).

From the baseline point in 1999, there was no significant change in mean response levels until the spring of 2002. In 2002, the mean dropped from the previous level of 3.3 to a lower level of 3.0. The fall of 2002 showed a rise back to baseline levels, and the final analysis in 2003 illustrated a dramatic increase to a pinnacle of 4.5 out of five.
Figure 5. Satisfaction with faculty and assistants.

Bars include the following two statements:

Red Bars - 33. Access to facility is adequate for my needs.
Green Bars - 39. In-class graduate assistants have been helpful to my education.

The ninth hypothesis, University of Wisconsin Stout students will report higher levels of satisfaction with the number of co-op sites after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee, was supported.

In the spring of 1999, the baseline level for comparison was 3.2 on the five-point scale. Mean responses remained at this level until the spring of 2002, when it dropped significantly to an average of 2.8. During that fall, however, levels returned to match the baseline at 3.2. Then, in the spring of 2003, response
means climbed significantly to 3.8 out of five, supporting the thesis.

Figure 6. Satisfaction with number of co-op sites.

Bars include the following question:

36. The number of co-op sites is adequate.

The tenth hypothesis of the study, University of Wisconsin Stout students will report higher levels of satisfaction with the number of childcare slots available after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee, was not supported. For determination, results for questions numbered five and thirty-seven were evaluated (See Below).

These questions were not on the survey in 1999, thus a baseline measure prior to implementation of the Access to
Learning Fee, was not available. The mean response for the first administration, in the spring of 2000, was 3.1 out of five. In 2001, levels rose to 3.2. Levels dropped to 2.9 in the spring of 2002, rose to 3.4 in the fall of 2002, and declined to 2.9 in the spring of 2003. From the spring of 2000 to the spring of 2003, 4.6% of students had children receiving, or in need of, childcare. The hypothesis could not be supported.

Figure 7. Satisfaction with childcare.

Bars include the following 2 questions:
5. Do you have a child / children that receives or is in need of childcare?
37. The child and family study center reserves adequate slots for students' children.
The research's eleventh hypothesis, University of Wisconsin Stout students will report fewer incidences of childcare costs preventing utility of university services after the implementation of the Access to Learning Fee, was not supported. Survey questions numbered five and thirty-eight were used for evaluation (See below).

The questions at hand were not part of the 1999 survey; thus there was no measure by which to compare prior to the Access to Learning Fee's implementation. The first results in the spring of 2000 showed a mean of 3.4 out of five. In this case, a higher mean equated to a negative perception (See Below). The following spring displayed a mean of 3.1. In 2002, during the spring, levels dropped significantly to an all-time low of 2.6. They rose back up in the fall to 3.0, and dropped back down in the spring of 2003 to 2.8. From the spring of 2000 to the spring of 2003, 4.6% of students had children receiving, or in need of, childcare. The hypothesis could not be supported.
Figure 8. Satisfaction with cost of childcare.

Bars include the following two questions:

5. Do you have a child / children that receives or is in need of childcare?

38. The cost of childcare prevents me from utilizing its services on campus.

Hypothesis number twelve, University of Wisconsin Stout students will report the University of Wisconsin Stout to have more overall access to its facilities than other universities, was supported. Question number forty-four was used for assessment, and question number two was used for additional analysis (See Below).
The mean response was 3.6 out on a five-point scale. The freshman students' mean response level was the highest at 3.9. The sophomore students indicated a mean of 3.7, while the juniors and seniors indicated a mean of 3.4. Lastly, the graduate students' mean response level was 3.5. In each case, the hypothesis was supported.

![Bar graph showing mean response levels by level in college](image)

**Figure 9.** Satisfaction with overall access.

Bars include the following two questions:

5. Year in college.

44. Compared to other universities UW-Stout has more overall access to its facilities.
The thirteenth hypothesis of the study, University of Wisconsin Stout students will report the University of Wisconsin Stout to have higher levels of technology than other universities, was supported. Question number forty-five was used for assessment, and question number two was used for additional analysis (See Below).

The mean response to question forty-five was 3.7. The freshman perceived the highest levels at 4.2. Sophomore students and graduate students both reported a mean of 3.8. Juniors and seniors reported the lowest means of 3.4. In each case the hypothesis was supported.

Figure 10. Satisfaction with technology.
Bars include the following two questions:

5. Year in college.

45. Compared to other universities UW-Stout has more advanced technology.

Hypothesis number fourteen, University of Wisconsin Stout students will report the University of Wisconsin Stout to have a better overall reputation than other universities, was supported. Question number forty-six was used for assessment, and question number two was used for additional analysis (See Below).

The mean response level was 3.2. The freshman students' mean response was the highest at 3.6. The sophomores and seniors indicated a mean of 3.1, while the juniors indicated a mean of 3.0. Lastly, the graduate students' responses showed an average of 3.4.
Figure 10. Satisfaction with reputation.

Bars include the following two questions:
5. Year in college.
45. Compared to other universities UW-Stout has a better overall reputation.

The fifteenth hypothesis of the study, more than half of the University of Wisconsin Stout students will report choosing to attend the University of Wisconsin Stout because of overall access to the university, was not supported. Question number forty-two was used for analysis (See Below).

Seventeen percent of students chose this response to question forty-two. The hypothesis was not supported because fewer than half of students selected this answer.
Hypothesis number sixteen in the study, more than half of the University of Wisconsin Stout students will report choosing to attend the University of Wisconsin Stout because of its advanced technology, was not supported. Question number forty-two was used for analysis (See Below).

Twenty-one percent of students chose this response to question forty-two. The hypothesis was not supported because fewer than half of students selected this answer.

The seventeenth hypothesis of the study, more than half of the University of Wisconsin Stout students will report choosing to attend the University of Wisconsin Stout because of its overall reputation, was not supported. Question number forty-two was used for analysis (See Below).

Thirty-one percent of students chose this response in question forty-two. The hypothesis was not supported because fewer than half of students selected this answer.

The eighteenth hypothesis of the study, more than half of the University of Wisconsin Stout students will report choosing to attend the University of Wisconsin Stout because of its low costs, was not supported. Question number forty-two was used for analysis (See Below).

Fifty percent of students chose this response in question forty-two. The hypothesis was not supported because more than fifty percent of students did not select this answer.
Figure 11. Reasons for attending university.

Bars are responses to the following question:

42. I chose to attend this university because of UW-Stout's:
(check all that apply)
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This piece of research marks the first formal analysis, of any sort, conducted in regard to the University of Wisconsin Stout's Student Tuition Differential - Access to Learning Fee. The purpose of the fee was covered in the eighteen hypotheses found in this research paper. Six of the eighteen hypotheses were supported; numbers four, eight, nine, twelve, thirteen, and fourteen were supported. Two were partially supported; numbers six and seven were partially supported. The remaining ten hypotheses, numbers one, two, three, five, ten, eleven, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen, were not supported.

Access to the university's chief resource centers was covered in the first three hypotheses. None of these hypotheses was supported. In fact, there were statistically significant drops in perceived access to Micheel's Hall computing center, the library, and to major-specific laboratories.

In the spring of 2000 and 2001, students' perceptions regarding access to Micheel's Hall was about twenty-three out of thirty. This was a compilation of six separate questions, all with responses on a Likert scale ranging from one to five. The total response mean was twenty-three out of the possible thirty. This equates to an individual mean of 3.8, which equates to just
shy of agreement; remember one equals strongly disagree, two equals disagree, three is neutral, four equals agree, and five equals strongly agree. Then, just recently, in the fall of 2002, and the spring of 2003, perception levels have dropped into the neutral levels, and in some cases slightly below, closer to disagreement. This is important to note because students used to, before the implementation of the Access Fee, agree with and were satisfied with Micheel’s Hall’s quality of service, training of staff, service hours, ratio of staff to students, software and equipment, and its ease of use. Just recently satisfaction has dropped into a dangerous, unsatisfactory zone of neutral and beyond.

The library, which traditionally and informally, has a reputation for receiving favorable student feedback and reviews, has also seen a negative shift in student satisfaction shown in this survey analysis’ results. The most significant change has occurred gradually from the spring of 2000 and 2001, when levels were extremely high and approaching a mean of strongly agree, to the spring of 2003. However, students’ satisfaction with the library’s quality of service, training of staff, service hours, ratio of staff to students, software and equipment, and its ease of use still remains extremely high with a mean of 4.0. This means that students, on average, agree with statements made regarding the effectiveness of the library. The library remains,
as tradition and popular beliefs indicate, to be one of the best facilities on the University of Wisconsin Stout’s campus.

Major-specific laboratories, on the other hand, did not receive as favorable of ratings as did the library. However, it is extremely important to note that satisfaction before the fee’s implementation was considerably lower than that of the library. In all cases of perceptions of access within this study, spring of 2003 results were lower when compared to baseline levels.

Shifting to a good note, one of the most apparent increases in student satisfaction has been with the helpfulness of in-class Graduate Assistants. From the fall of 2002, to the most recent survey administration during the spring of 2003, perceptions of Graduate Assistants and their helpfulness has shifted from a 3.3, or slightly higher than neutral, to a 4.5, or in between agree and strongly agree.

According to the University of Wisconsin’s 2003-2004 Access to Learning Fund Allocation table (see appendix C), $175,611 of the fund’s $1,157,798 in 2003-2004 was poured into the training, availability, and number of Graduate Assistants. Satisfaction with in-class Graduate Assistants did not rise above the baseline levels until just recently in the spring of 2003.

Also, the spring of 2003 showed a significant rise in student satisfaction with the number of co-op sites available.
Baseline levels were near neutral, and have risen to just under agreement at 3.8. Monies dedicated to this effort, as listed in the University of Wisconsin’s 2003-2004 Access to Learning Fund Allocation table (see appendix C), totaled $169,000 during the 2003-2004 academic year.

Questions five and thirty-eight, in conjunction with hypothesis number eleven, assessed the need for childcare and the associated costs. Two things need to be discussed in regard to this analysis. The first is that the two questions were not addressed in the baseline survey of 1999. Thus, the hypothesis could not be supported regardless of how dramatic a shift might have been. Secondly, what is most important in this analysis is the sample of students who actually need or are using childcare resources at the university. If view these students’ perceptions alone, we find that their satisfaction has increased dramatically since the year 2000. However, that is not a valid comparison, and is not what we are analyzing in this study. It is interesting, but without knowing perceptions in 1999, we can not conclude anything.

The results to hypothesis number twelve, in conjunction with questions five and forty-four, might serve as a prime example offering an explanation for many of the unknowns in this study’s results.
The chart displays the breakdown based on year / level in college, and access to the University of Wisconsin - Stout compared to other universities. It is interesting to analyze which cohorts agree, and to what extent. Freshman-level students agree with the statement of more overall access to its facilities. Sophomore-level students agree slightly less, and when the remaining student body with more than two years college experience is asked, results show lower agreement levels than the newer / less experienced cohorts.

Perhaps this is due to a partially innate, partially socialized, tendency to continually expecting more, and each year, raising expectations at the University of Wisconsin - Stout. This conclusion would also offer explanations for most of the study’s results, which showed drops in satisfaction at the university, and support for only six out of eighteen hypotheses. Other judgments, implications, and suggestions for future research will be covered in the next section.

An important question to analyze, based on a cost-benefit analysis is question number forty-two. The results of this question help us understand why students are attending the University of Wisconsin - Stout and not some other university. One of the most quantifiable benefits in education is an enrollment fee. If a program, such as the Access Fee, costs x
amount, and the derived benefit equates to x+1, then the program was a success, from a financial aspect at least.

Results show that seventeen percent of students attending this university due to its access, twenty-one percent due to advanced technology, thirty-one percent by its overall reputation, and thirty-three percent by ratio of staff to students. All of these are intended to be effects of the Access Fee. We could then, very roughly, equate how many more students are attending the University of Wisconsin - Stout due to changes inspired by the Access Fee. We could then multiply that number by the financial gain to the university based on each student, and compute a financial benefit. However, the Access Fee is not the sole factor contributing to students attending because of access, technology, reputation, or ratios. Determination of the weight of the financial effects of the Access Fee, or in turn a financial cost benefit analysis, is not possible. Let us estimate that half of the seventeen percent of students, who are attending this university due to it access, chose that response due to the Access Fee's effects. That would equate to 8.5 percent or about 680 students per year. Based on resident tuition alone, that would equal more than 4 million dollars. Adding in non-residents, room, board, and other revenues for the university, this total would approach 10 million dollars. The cost of the Access Fee has been about 5.5 million dollars since
its implementation (from 1.1 – 1.3 million per academic year). In conclusion, utilizing this approach, the cost benefit ratio of the Access Fee would be about 1:8.

Another cost benefit analysis could be completed using other survey information, including support or non-support of specific hypotheses. The only hypotheses that were supported were numbers four, eight, nine, twelve, thirteen, and fourteen. These included training of staff in Micheel’s Hall, usefulness of in-class Graduate Assistants, number of co-op sites, better access, better technology, and better reputation compared to other universities. One could conclude that because only one-third (6 out of 18) of the hypotheses were supported, the benefits are not sufficient enough. Two-thirds of the Access Fee’s objectives would have not been met. The costs might possibly outweigh the benefits, however the final interpretation would be made by university officials based on results of this report.

Due to all of the extraneous variables, unknown costs, unknown benefits, indirect associations and effects, and a hundred other uncertainties, an accurate, comprehensive, quantified cost-benefit analysis is nearly impossible. As was covered, in great detail, in the Literature Review of this paper, cost benefit analyses in education can be difficult, impossible, and even unacceptable. However, this study did show
the monetary costs of the implementation of the University of Wisconsin Stout's Student Tuition Differential - Access to Learning Fee, and it showed the benefits in terms of student satisfaction levels; but to conclude that a rise from neutral to agree, for example, is worth x amount of dollars is ludicrous and, in cases, unethical. The author will leave final interpretation of the fund's successes based on this piece of research, up to reader.
CHAPTER SIX

IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of this research can be used to draw some tentative conclusions regarding students' perceptions on most issues related to the University of Wisconsin - Stout's Student Tuition Differential - Access to Learning Fee. They can also be used to formulate one's own cost versus benefit analysis. However, this study was not without its limitations, and recommendations can be made to improve and further increase its effectiveness and utility.

To begin with, the author suggests qualitative analyses such as focus groups in the future. A quantitative analysis offers no explanation as to why students respond the way they do. There were two questions, within the survey; questions numbered forty and forty-one, that were open-ended, however they were not general enough. These questions were not analyzed in this paper.

Focus groups would provide ample opportunities for student feedback and involvement, in addition to furthering the value of this ongoing research project. It is suggested that focus groups, with a random sample selection to avoid biases, and with five to ten students in each group, begin in the fall of 2004.
Also, the author suggests a numeration of usage rates to each facility affected by the Access Fee is either gathered from archival sources if relevant, or is gathered by facility personnel. This will provide quantifiable usage numbers to be used in determination of actual access and usage. If these numbers have been calculated in the past, relevant analyses should be completed. If not, descriptive counting should begin in the fall of 2004.

This would also inspire a recommendation for further breakdown of descriptive analyses. This research would benefit from knowing who is responding to which questions and how. The only demographical breakdowns thus far have been in terms of year/level in college, age, and gender. Recommendations include, but are not limited to, matching responses with usage rates, separating out transfer students, non-traditional students and international students, and analyzing current Grade Point Averages.

One limitation of this study, which leads to a recommendation for the next, is a further, more specific breakdown, of budget allocation. The only Access Fee budget figures used were from the 2003-2004 and the 2004-2005 Access to Learning Fund Allocation Tables. By knowing where each dollar was going, the methodology could then be adjusted to evaluate the effectiveness of each sector or department allocation.
This leads to one of the most important recommendations for future research, which will lead to a more achievable cost-benefit analysis. The recommendation is to operationally define the University of Wisconsin - Stout's Student Tuition Differential - Access to Learning Fee's objectives. Clear, written objectives have not been documented or even established, at least not to the author's knowledge. This is an absolute must when evaluating a program on any level. Not knowing what exactly the fee's goals are makes it even further implausible to conduct a cost-benefit analysis or even derive usable conclusions. The hypotheses stemmed from what the author assumed to be the fund's objectives.

On a methodological note, the recommendation is made for a larger sample size to increase the chance for statistical significance. Changes in responses are often minuscule, and a larger sample size would provide more power for significance.

With these modifications being made in future research, the complete cost-benefit analysis would be possible, and the University of Wisconsin - Stout could benefit further from its findings. The research has been extremely valuable, nevertheless, and university officials will utilize its findings in ways they deem appropriate.
References


Prest, A. & Turvey, R. (1965). Cost benefit analysis: A


Appendix A: University of Wisconsin - Stout

Technology Access Fee Survey

UW-Stout Technology Access Fee Survey

UW-Stout students are spending thousands of dollars on improving campus support services and laboratories through the student access fee. It has been used to improve access to childcare, laboratories, support services, and to eliminate current Co-op fees. The information you provide here is vital in helping to ensure these fees are used to your best advantage. Please take time to carefully complete the following questions. Thank you.

I understand that by electronically returning this questionnaire, I am giving my informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of this study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. I am aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that no identifiers are necessary and so that confidentiality is guaranteed. I realize that I have the right to refuse to participate and that my right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice, if you agree please continue with the survey and when finished select the submit button located at the bottom of this survey, if you do not agree please disregard this survey.

Please identify and describe yourself:

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Sex ☐ Male ☐ Female

1. Choose one of the following majors:

[Please Choose One]
2. Year in college

3. Do you live on or off campus?
   - On-Campus
   - Off-Campus

4. Do you have internet access to UW-Stout?
   - yes
   - no

5. Do you have a child/children that receives or is in need of childcare?
   - yes
   - no

6. I am satisfied with the quality of service provided by Micheels Hall

7. I am satisfied with the quality of service provided by the library.

8. I am satisfied with the quality of service provided by the major specific laboratories.

9. The staff is sufficiently trained to meet my needs in Micheels Hall computing center.

10. The staff is sufficiently trained to meet my needs in the library.

11. The staff is sufficiently trained to meet my needs in the major specific laboratories.
12. Service hours are adequate to meet my needs in Micheels Hall computing center.

13. Service hours are adequate to meet my needs in the library.

14. Service hours are adequate to meet my needs in the major specific laboratories.

15. The ratio of staff to students is adequate in Micheels Hall computing center.

16. The ratio of staff to students is adequate in the library.

17. The ratio of staff to students is adequate in the major specific laboratories.

18. Additional staff support would be beneficial to me in Micheels Hall computing center.

19. Additional staff support would be beneficial to me in the library.

20. Additional staff support would be beneficial to me in the major specific laboratories.
21. The software/equipment meets my needs in Micheels Hall computing center.

Please Choose One

22. The software/equipment meets my needs in the library.

Please Choose One

23. The software/equipment meets my needs in the major specific laboratories.

Please Choose One

24. Additional technical assistance in using computers would be useful to me, (i.e. web site, software assistance) in the Micheels Hall computing center.

Please Choose One

25. Additional technical assistance in using computers would be useful to me, (i.e. web site, software assistance) in the library.

Please Choose One

26. Additional technical assistance in using computers would be useful to me, (i.e. web site, software assistance) in major specific laboratories.

Please Choose One

27. I am satisfied with the maintenance of Micheels Hall computing center.

Please Choose One

28. I am satisfied with the maintenance of the library.

Please Choose One

29. I am satisfied with the maintenance of the major specific laboratories.

Please Choose One
30. Micheels Hall computing center is easy to use.

Please Choose One

31. The library is easy to use.

Please Choose One

32. The major specific laboratories are easy to use.

Please Choose One

33. Access to facility is adequate for my needs.

Please Choose One

34. Quality of education at UW-Stout meets my needs.

Please Choose One

35. Employment opportunities on campus meets my needs.

Please Choose One

36. The number of co-op sites is adequate.

Please Choose One

37. The child and family study center reserves adequate slots for students' children.

Please Choose One

38. The cost of childcare prevents me from utilizing its services on campus.

Please Choose One

39. In-class graduate assistants have been helpful to my education.

Please Choose One
40. Please list any specific computer software you think the lab assistants should be trained in.

41. Please list any courses or labs that would benefit from additional staff.

42. I chose to attend this university because of UW-Stout's: (check all that apply)
   - Overall reputation
   - Reputation within my major
   - Advanced technology
   - Access to facilities
   - Childcare services
   - Ratio of staff to students
   - Cost
   - Friends
   - Other

43. The top 3 reasons why I chose to attend UW-Stout are:
   
   a. Overall reputation
   b. Reputation within my major
   c. Advanced technology
   d. Access to facilities
   e. Childcare services
   f. Ratio of staff to students
   g. Cost
   h. Location
   i. Friends
   j. Other
44. Compared to other universities UW-Stout has more overall access to its facilities.

Please Choose One

45. Compared to other universities UW-Stout has more advanced technology.

Please Choose One

46. Compared to other universities UW-Stout has a better overall reputation.

Please Choose One
## Access to Learning Fund Allocation 2004-05

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Revised 3-9-04
## Appendix C: Access to Learning Fund Allocation 2003 - 2004

### Access to Learning Fund Allocation 2003-04

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<tr>
<th>College/Unit</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Grad Asst.</th>
<th>Student Help</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Spec Course Fees</th>
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68