

# The 2016 Winter Term Experience

## Miami University's Winter Term

Winter term enrollments have grown significantly since it was first offered in winter 2014. During the first winter term, 3,338 students enrolled for courses. By 2016, 4,994 students, including 209 graduate students and 4,785 undergraduates, enrolled in courses.

All winter term faculty and registered students were invited to participate in the online Winter Term Survey conducted by the Office of Institutional Research. Response rates for the students ranged from 27.3% for the Oxford campus undergraduates (n = 1,104) to 36.9% for the Regional undergraduates (n = 218). Among graduate students, there was a 34.6% response rate (n = 71). There was a 51.0% response rate for Oxford faculty (n = 131) and a 45.1% response rate for Regional faculty (n = 23).

## Student Experiences

Overall, the majority of students reported being satisfied with their winter term experience; 94.9% of Oxford undergraduates, 94.2% of Regional campus undergraduates, and 95.4% of graduate students reported being satisfied. Satisfaction with the winter term experience has increased for Oxford undergraduates (from 91.1%) and graduate students (from 77.1%) compared to the first year that it was offered.

For many students, the winter term provided opportunities that they would not have otherwise had. 52.5% of Oxford undergraduates and 46.0% of regional campus undergraduates reported that they would not have been able to study abroad or study away if their winter term course had been offered during a different term. Among graduate students, 73.3% indicated they would not have been able to study abroad or away had it not been for the winter term.<sup>1</sup>

Students reported spending less time preparing for class during the winter term than they did during the fall term; 70.0% of Oxford students spent 11 or more hours prepping each week during the fall term compared with only 55.4% during the winter term. Among Regional campus students, 64.0% spent 11 or more hours prepping during the fall while 56.4% spent 11 or more hours during the winter term. 43.3% of graduate students spent 11 or more hours prepping during the fall term, but only 34.3% spent the same amount of time preparing in the winter term.

Because students enrolled for fewer credit hours over a shorter period of time during the winter term compared with the fall term, the average hours spent preparing per credit hour per term was calculated.<sup>2</sup> Using this calculation, students still reported spending fewer hours preparing for class during the winter term than they did during the fall term. Over the course of an entire term, Oxford undergraduates spent an average of 15.8 hours per credit hour preparing for class in the winter compared with 19.4 hours during the fall term. Regional undergraduates spent an average of 14.5 hours per credit hour in the winter compared with 22.0 hours in the fall. Graduate students spent an average of 12.0 hours preparing per credit hour in the winter, compared with 26.3 hours per credit hour in the fall term.

The results suggest that some of the undergraduates may find the compressed winter term to be a challenge. 43.9% of Oxford undergraduates and 45.5% of Regional undergraduates agreed that their winter term course(s) was much more challenging than other Miami courses they had taken, even though the majority reported that they were able to keep up with the pace of the course (Oxford – 92.2%; Regional - 95.2%). However, roughly a quarter of undergraduates reported that they did not do as well as expected in their winter term course(s) (Oxford - 27.8%; Regionals – 22.2%). Graduate students were less likely to report difficulties with the winter term; 33.3% said the course was much more challenging than their other Miami courses, and only 13.6% of graduate students reported that they did not do as well as expected in the course.

In the open-ended comments this year, both Oxford and Regional campus undergraduates were more likely than in past years to indicate that there were no additional supports needed during the winter term. They were also more likely to report that additional academic services or resources would have improved their winter term experience. This theme did not appear in the open-ended comments during the previous years' Winter Term Surveys. Students who were dissatisfied with their 2016 winter term experience were also more likely than in previous years to cite the heavy workload as an issue.

### **Faculty Experiences**

Overall faculty satisfaction with their winter term experience remains high, with 96.0% of Oxford faculty and 100% of Regional faculty reporting being satisfied.

Compared to the first year of the winter term, faculty this year were more likely to agree that communications on the winter term were helpful (Oxford – 70.5% agreement in 2014 vs. 89.7% in 2016; Regional – 88.2% agreement in 2014 vs. 100% in 2016). Oxford faculty also reported higher levels of satisfaction with access to on-campus resources this year (93.3% satisfaction in 2014 vs. 98.2% in 2016), although Regional faculty reported lower levels of satisfaction with on-campus resources (93.3% in 2014 vs. 88.9% in 2016).

Some faculty reported being dissatisfied with student understanding of workload related to courses taught in a shorter time frame (Oxford – 20.2% dissatisfied; Regionals – 22.7%). However, fewer faculty members reported being dissatisfied with how well students learned the course material in the winter term (Oxford – 11.2% dissatisfied; Regionals – 13.6%). Only 42.2% of Oxford faculty and 59.1% of Regional faculty agreed that students should be able to take 6 credit hours during the winter term.

Like the students, open-ended comments from faculty indicated an increased concern about the heavy student workload during the winter term. Compared with previous years, there were also more suggestions that Miami limit the number of courses or credit hours for which students could register.

### **Summary**

Both student and faculty satisfaction with the winter term remains high, and students report that the winter term provides them with study abroad/study away opportunities that they would not otherwise have had. However, both students and faculty report concerns about the challenge of winter term courses compared with other courses. Students were more likely this year to report that additional academic supports would be beneficial to their winter term experience. Faculty reported some concerns about student understanding of the workload during the winter term; student reports of the amount of time spent preparing for class also suggest that they may underestimate the amount of time required for their winter term coursework.

The full results for the Winter Term Survey are available online at [www.miamioh.edu/oir/Surveys/Winter\\_Term/](http://www.miamioh.edu/oir/Surveys/Winter_Term/).

<sup>1</sup> This question was asked of all students, including those who were not enrolled in a winter term study abroad or study away course. Some students would not have been able to study abroad/away without the winter term because they were enrolled in a study abroad or away course during the winter term session. For other students, they would not have been able to study abroad/away without the winter term because they were able to complete courses during the winter term that opened up their schedule for study abroad/away during a different term.

<sup>2</sup> A description of the methodology for this calculation is available in the full Winter Term Survey reports online at [www.miamioh.edu/oir/Surveys/Winter\\_Term/](http://www.miamioh.edu/oir/Surveys/Winter_Term/).