

Illinois Wesleyan 2008 TechQual+ Student Survey Analysis

Fred Miller

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This report summarizes the results of the 2008 survey of Illinois Wesleyan University student perceptions of Information Technology service quality. This survey was conducted from April 10 to April 25, 2008, and used a web survey from the TechQual+ project.¹ This was our second survey of students using the TechQual+ survey instrument. It is interesting to note differences between this survey and the previous student survey from a year ago.

Invitations to participate were sent to 2035 students. We had 189 students complete the survey, and another 20 who provided a partial response, for a 10% response. This is slightly better than last year's TechQual+ student survey, but still below the 15% response to our 2005 web survey of IT Help Desk services. Last year there were 217 students who started, but did not finish the survey. This year the number who started, but didn't finish was down to 175. After the survey, we worked with the TechQual+ group to find out why there were so many abandoned survey responses. The TechQual+ group found and fixed a problem that affected some students using the My.IWU webmail software. Unfortunately, the problem was not resolved until after the survey was closed. With this bug fixed, we expect to see higher response rates in the future.

Service Area ratings

This year the TechQual+ project reduced the number of numeric rating question on the survey instrument. In 2007 we asked 25 rating questions in 5 service areas². For 2008, the survey asks 18 rating questions. The 18 questions were organized into three groups of six questions each:

- Connectivity and Access
- Technology and Technology Services, and
- The End User Experience

For each service question, students were asked to assign three numbers on a scale of 1 to 10. This allowed students to rate each service for:

- My minimum service level
- My desired service level
- Perceived service level at Illinois Wesleyan

In addition to the 18 questions seeking the three numerical ratings, we added two open-ended questions. These were the same two open-ended questions we used in the 2007 TechQual+ survey, and in our 2005 assessment of our IT Help Desk. In addition, as in the 2007 survey, if a survey respondent indicated that the perceived service level was below their minimum level, they were prompted to provide a suggestion to improve that service.

¹ See <http://www.TechQual.org>

² "2007 Student Survey Analysis" available from <http://www2.iwu.edu/IT/about/itreports.shtml>

Last year's survey showed Illinois Wesleyan meeting minimum service level expectations in all but four of the 25 measured services areas. The four 2007 questions that did *not* meet minimum student expectations were:

- Having adequate capacity (speed, bandwidth) on the wired network
- Having adequate capacity (speed, bandwidth) on the wireless network
- Having wireless network coverage in all the areas in which I teach, learn, or work.
- Having my help desk request resolved in a satisfactory amount of time

Since some survey questions changed on the 2008 survey, it's more difficult to directly measure changes, but we can see an increased level of student dissatisfaction with technology services. In 2008 had seven of the 18 questions reported as being below minimum expectations. The 2008 survey questions rated below minimum student expectations were:

- Having adequate capacity (speed, bandwidth) when using the wired network.
- Having adequate capacity (speed, bandwidth) when using the wireless network.
- Having wireless network coverage in all the areas that are important to me as a faculty, student, or staff member.
- Having a university network that is reliable, available, and performs in an acceptable manner.
- Access to timely and relevant information from university information systems (finance, HR, student, library, or portal) necessary to be successful in my role as a faculty, student, or staff.)
- Having online (i.e. web based) services that perform (or respond) in an acceptable manner.
- Getting timely resolution to problems I am experiencing with technology services at my university.

The first three, and the last, question are essentially the same questions rated below minimum in 2007. The question about wireless coverage had the largest deficiency in 2007; it was second in 2008. The "network reliability and performance" question is new. "Network reliability and performance" narrowly edged wireless as the biggest concern in 2008. The comments from students rating this service below minimum appear split between comments about: a) inadequate Internet bandwidth, and b) comments about the stability of our portal and network equipment. The other two questions were rated just below minimum expectations.

We did not exceed desired expectations in any area. However, the areas that most exceeded minimum expectations were:

- Getting training or self-help resources that help me become more effective with technology services at my university
- Opportunities to provide feedback regarding technology services at my university
- Participating in a university wide community of end users seeking to make the best use of technology resources
- Having a sufficient number of online (i.e. web based) services that are helpful to me
- Having technology within classrooms or meeting areas that enhances the presentation of information

This survey also lets us see service areas that students indicate as less important. These four questions had remarkably lower “desired” service levels than the other survey questions:

- Having access to important university provided technology service from my mobile device
- Getting training or self-help resources that help me become more effective with technology services at my university
- Opportunities to provide feedback regarding technology services at my university
- Participating in a university wide community of end users seeking to make the best use of technology resources

Open-ended questions and suggestions

As in 2007, we used these categories to analyze the responses to our open ended questions:

- Class/Lab – regarding equipment or software for classrooms or computer labs
- Good – indicates a positive response to an open-ended question or suggestion
- Helpdesk – a comment regarding a need to improve help desk responses
- Library – indicates a comment directed towards a library service
- MyIWU – a suggestion or comment about the university portal
- Net – Any network issue other than wireless (e.g., bandwidth, email, file storage, etc.)
- Other – any service not categorized by the other service areas
- Reg – a comment or suggestion about the web registration process
- Staff – indicates a realization that the office of Information Technology is understaffed
- Training – response indicated the need for more training
- Website – a comment about the University website
- Wireless – requested increased wireless network coverage on campus

When analyzing the 2008 open-ended responses, we saw some similarities to our 2007 survey. The first open-ended question asked respondents to suggest a “single improvement for information technology”. The second question asked “what should most be improved in the next two years”. Requests for additional wireless coverage continued to be the largest response for both open-ended questions. We see 35% of students suggesting more wireless as the “one thing to improve”, and 40% suggesting more wireless in the next two years. Both findings are consistent with the 2007 survey results.

We received 382 suggestions from students who rated a service below their minimum expectation. In our 2007 analysis we noted a strong need for more resources for technology training. In 2008 we saw suggestions categorized for more training drop by more than half (22% to 9%), and we also saw an increase to responses related to the campus network nearly double (9% to 17%). Some of the factors that may contribute to these changes include:

- The differences in the number, and wording, of questions from 2007 to 2008.
- An increased attention to technology training from IT staff.
- Increased unhappiness with the campus network (bandwidth or reliability.)

This last bullet is most troubling; especially considering the negative ratings in the “Connectivity and Access” part of the survey. In order to better quantify why these numbers are so negative, we went back to the 2007 data and re-categorized the network suggestions into two categories: “Bandwidth” and “Other Network”. We found that the suggestions were evenly split between these two categories for both the 2007 and 2008 surveys.

Additional detail

The survey also has more detail comparing responses by class year, and male versus female. Observations from looking at these population segments include:

- As in 2007, female students perceive campus Internet bandwidth to be above minimum expectations, while male students see it below minimum.
- Both male and female students rate network reliability as the biggest service deficiency.
- The class of 2011 had the fewest service areas rated below minimum expectation (6.)
- The class of 2010 appears to have had a drop in satisfaction with IT services. In the 2007 survey only “access to wireless networking” was rated as below their minimum expectation. In 2008, 9 of 18 survey questions were rated as below minimum.

Conclusions

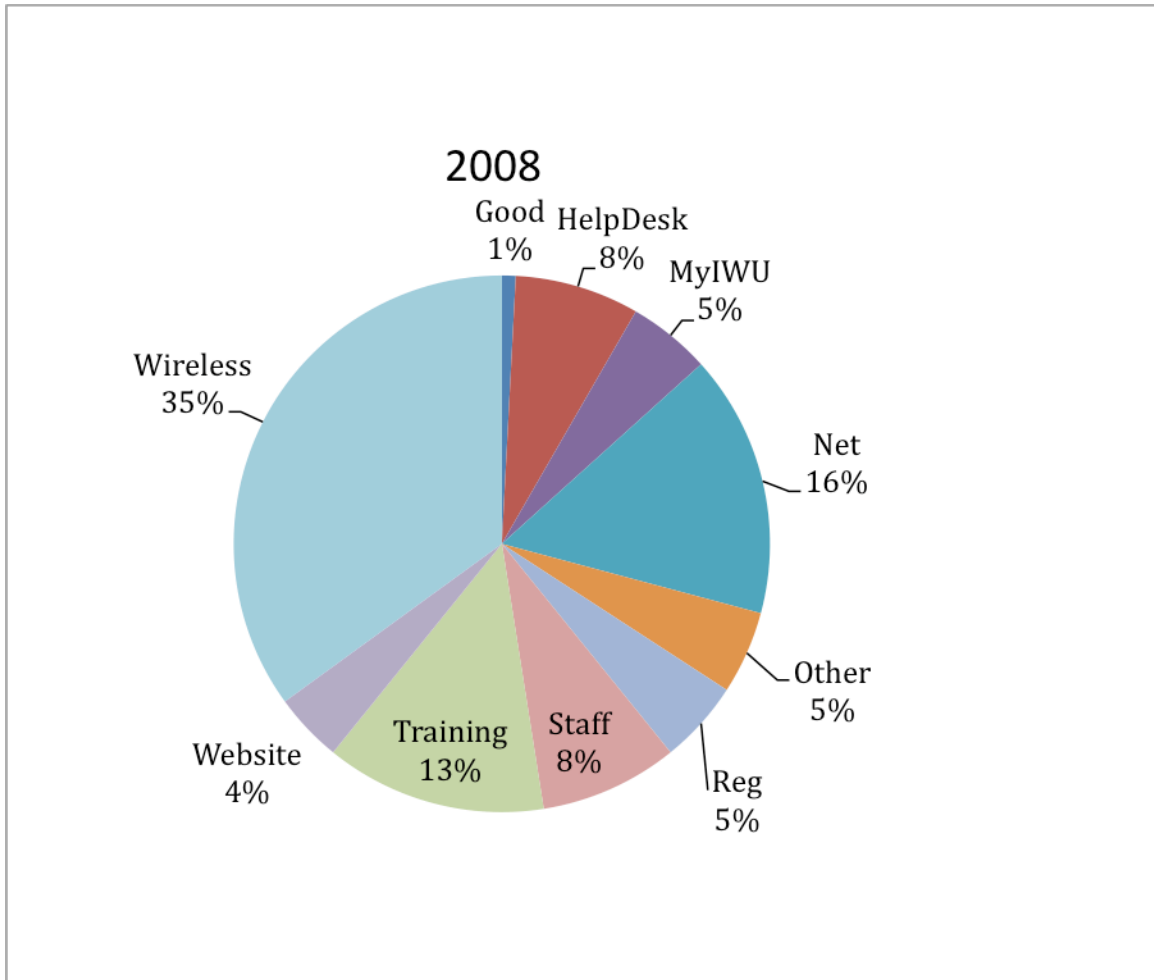
This was our second survey of students with TechQual+, and the first we can compare to a prior year. Regrettably, it appears students are *more dissatisfied* with IT services. The 2007 survey identified wireless networking as needing priority in technology planning. While IT made progress by increasing wireless access in classroom buildings, this was not enough. In the 2008-2009 academic year IT will begin a capital project to add wireless to all campus buildings and update campus network electronics. Unfortunately, the project budget spreads funding over the next four years (not two.) The capacity of the campus Internet connection is also a concern. While IT requested funding to increase the Internet connection capacity for the 2008-2009 academic year, sufficient funds were not allocated to the IT budget. Since Internet access affects nearly all aspects of University business, teaching, and learning; finding funding to improve the University’s Internet connection should be given the highest priority.

This fall we plan to again survey faculty and staff perceptions of IT service quality at Illinois Wesleyan. Our survey last fall showed faculty and staff to have more negative perceptions of technology services than students. It will be interesting to compare changes in faculty and staff perceptions of technology service quality.

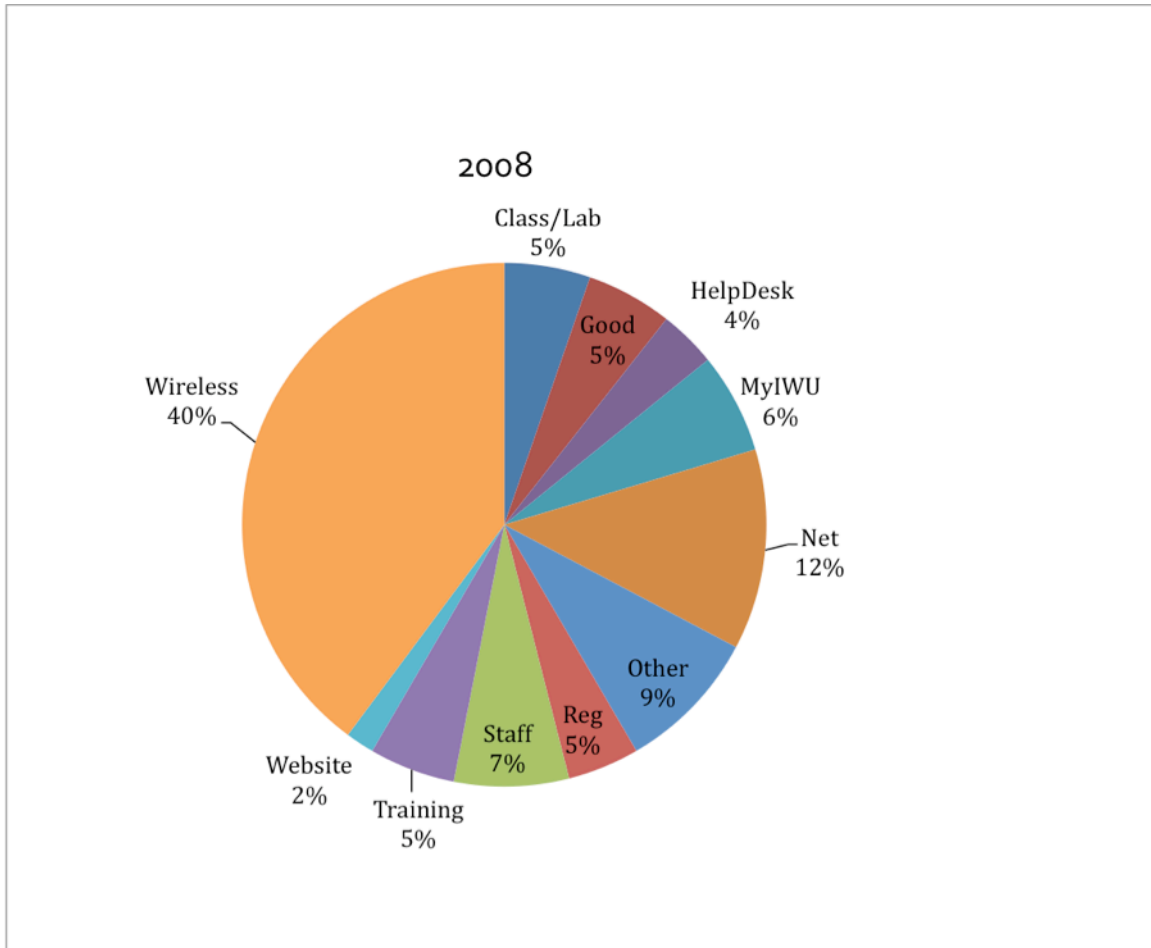
Illinois Wesleyan University is still among the early users of the TechQual+ survey. Other institutions are watching our progress, and we have heard from a few similar institutions planning to use the survey. It will be interesting to compare, not only our internal results, but also the results of other institutions. We continue to believe this is an important project for improving technology service quality. Our thanks to all the students who responded, and to the people and institutions that make the TechQual+ project possible.

Open-ended Questions

1. If you could suggest a single improvement for information technology at Illinois Wesleyan University, what would it be?



2. In your opinion, how would you most like to see technology services improve at Illinois Wesleyan University in the next 2 years?



**Summary of Respondent suggestions for areas perceived as below minimum expectations:
2007 versus 2008**

