CAFES New Student Survey Summary, 2017

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Survey Research Report 2017/29
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## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Overview</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Background of CAFES 2017 Entering Class</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Summary</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Incoming Students Learned about UW-River Falls</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Influenced Their Decision to Come to UW-River Falls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of Information About UWRF Quality</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Incoming CAFES Students Had with UWRF Prior to Arrival</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention Factors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A-New CAFES Student Survey, Fall 2017</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B-New CAFES Student Survey, Fall 2017</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

For the 11th consecutive year, the Survey Research Center collected data from students beginning their college career at UW-River Falls. The questionnaire used in 2017 differed considerably from those used during the first decade of data gathering. Where applicable, we compare the 2017 data to previous years.

During Academic Day, September 5, 2017, a record number of incoming freshmen and transfer students (441) in the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) completed a one-page survey (Figure 1). They were asked about:

- The information sources they used to investigate college options
- What sort of contact they had with the university prior to their arrival
- What were the two most important factors in their decision to come to UWRF
- What their current expectations are for their time at UW-River Falls (i.e. their commitment to their major, likelihood of participating in an international experience, etc.)
- A limited amount of information about the student (their state of residence, gender, if they are from a farm and their major)

This report summarizes students’ responses.

Appendix A summarizes the response frequencies for each question in the survey. We summarize responses to open-ended comments in Appendix B.

The proportion of CAFES’ in-coming students who grew up on a farm continues to trend downward; in 2017 41% of incoming students said that they grew up on a farm (Figure 2). Over the past 11 years, the percentage of new students who grew up on a farm has declined by an average of 1.3% per year. The rapid growth of the equine and companion animal program probably accounts for a good deal of this change in student demographics.

The proportion of new students in CAFES coming from Wisconsin in 2017 (65%) was slightly higher than in 2016, but the proportion of students from Wisconsin has been declining, on average, since 2007 (Figure 4).

The proportion of students who report that they are the first in their family (first generation students) to attend college increased for the fourth year in a row in 2017. However, CAFES remains well below the overall proportion of students at River Falls who are the first in their family to attend university. Only 24% of the incoming students in 2017 said they were the first in their family to go to college (Figure 5).

In 2017, about half (49%) of those who completed an academic day survey were enrolled in the Animal Science major (Figure 6). Over the past 10 years, the animal science major has increased the number of students responding to the academic day survey by an average of 13 students per year (Figure 7).

Over the 2007–2017 time-period, both the Ag Studies and Agribusiness programs have had variable but upwardly trending enrollments (Figure 8); the Agribusiness program has added an average of about two new students per year and the Ag Studies program about one per year.
In 2017, the Ag Education program continued the rebound in enrollment noted over the past three years. After a robust enrollment in 2017, enrollment in the new Agricultural Engineering program fell off considerably in 2017 (Figure 9).

The Crops and Soils and the Horticulture programs have been trending upward over the past two years or more (Figure 10). The more earth-science focused majors (Conservation and Environmental Planning, Geology and Environmental Sciences) have experienced a fair amount of volatility in Academic Day participation over time. Environmental Sciences logged its fourth year in a row of increasing enrollment (Figure 11).

About half the 2017 respondents said that college websites and campus visits were the most important sources of information for them as they considered their college options. Word of mouth from family/friends and from high school teachers and counselors were important to about one-third of the respondents. (Figure 12). Different majors within CAFES relied on different sources of information.

The University of Wisconsin-River Falls continues to be effective in sharing information about the University with prospective CAFES students (Table 1). Students in 2017 reported being contacted by an average of 3.6 different methods. A majority of students said they had visited campus (84%), visited our website (71%), received our mailings (63%), and received an email from us (55%). This is the seventh year UW-River Falls has had a Facebook page; in 2017, 10% of students stated they had accessed CAFES’ Facebook page.

The main reason students chose to attend UW-River Falls is the array of programs we offer (Figure 13). The size of campus, our relatively low cost, and our location were important to about one-third of respondents.

UW-River Falls was the first choice in colleges for an all-time high 91% of the incoming CAFES class (Figure 14). In addition, approximately three-quarters of these students (76%) agreed or strongly agreed they plan to stick with their current major (Figure 15). Only 7% of 2017 respondents indicate that they agree or strongly agree that they will transfer from UWRF (Figure 16). In 2017, more than one-third (38%) of the incoming class expected to include an international experience during their time at UWRF, and there is a slight upward slope over time in this proportion (Figure 17).

The 2017 survey contained two new open-ended questions:

- Top concerns of students after they had been admitted to UWRF were how to pay for college, how to navigate through their major, how to manage a number of collegiate logistical issues, and concerns about classes (Table 2)
- An overwhelming proportion of new student impressions of UWRF were positive. Many said they appreciated our beautiful and safe campus and the welcome they received from students, faculty and staff (Table 3)

In most respects, the 2017 results continued a number of positive trends the College has been seeing over the past 11 years:

- More CAFES students are attending Academic Day
- Students are less farm-focused
- We are drawing ever-more non-Wisconsin students
• A relatively low proportion of our students are the first in their family to have attended college.
• The Animal Science program continues to be the largest program in the college, is expanding at a sharp rate, and is attracting an increasingly diverse, non-farm oriented set of students.
• The University continues to be effective in connecting with incoming students via a variety of communication channels (campus visits, website, postal mailings, and email).
• UWRF continues to be the first choice of the overwhelming proportion of our incoming students, most of those students expect to stick with the major they declared when seeking admission, very few expect to transfer to a different university, and a substantial proportion are interested in including an international experience during their time at UWRF.
Sample Overview

This is the eleventh year that the SRC has conducted the New CAFES Student Survey for incoming students. Figure 1 shows the number of respondents from which the SRC received data (blue bars – left axis) and the proportion of all students starting their CAFES program at UW-River Falls who completed a survey (red line – right axis) over the 2007 – 2017 time-period. As indicated by the chart, the SRC received surveys from more students in the fall of 2017 than ever before. Further, the 441 responses represent a healthy 86% of the incoming cohort of students. With 441 observations, estimates included in this summary are expected to be accurate to within +/- 1.7% with 95% confidence.

![Figure 1: Number of Respondents and Percent of New CAFES Students, 2007-2017](image)
The Background of CAFES 2017 Entering Class

Farm Background. The proportion of CAFES’ in-coming students who grew up on a farm continues to trend downward (see regression equation in Figure 1). In 2017, for the fourth year in a row, fewer than half the incoming students (41%) said that they grew up on a farm. This is the lowest percentage since the SRC started collecting these data. Over the 2007 – 2017 period, the proportion of incoming students coming from a farm declined by an average of 1.3% per year.

Across programs, there is a wide variation in the number and percentage of CAFES’ incoming students who grew up on farms (Figure 3). A majority of new students in five programs grew up on farms: Ag Engineering (70%), Ag Business and Dairy Science (65%), Ag Education (58%), and Crops and Soils (52%). The other programs have a minority of new students who grew up on farms. Animal Science had, by far, the most new students who grew up on a farm (70), but had more than twice that number who grew up somewhere other than a farm (145).
Three-quarters or more of new majors in the Horticulture, Conservation and Planning, Environmental Sciences and Food Science programs did not grow up on farms.

The results of Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the changing background of students in CAFES. In particular, these graphs reflect the explosive growth of the companion animal program and the on-going popularity of the equine program, both of which tend to draw students from more urban or suburban areas. These programs are altering the background of the average student served by the college.

State of Residence. The proportion of new CAFES students from Wisconsin has also been trending downward very slightly over the 2007 – 2017 period. As Figure 3 illustrates, the proportion of new CAFES students from Wisconsin has dropped by an average of 0.6% per year over the 2007-2017 period. Sixty-five percent of the new 2017, CAFES students reported that they were from Wisconsin. Slightly less than one-third (32%) of new CAFES students were from Minnesota and 15 students (3%) were from places other than these two states (four from Illinois, two each from Michigan and South Dakota and one from California, Colorado, Hawaii, Iowa, Nevada, Sri Lanka and Texas).
Particularly high proportions of majors in the Ag Engineering (100%), Horticulture (88%), Dairy (82%), Ag Education (79%), Food Science (75%), and Ag Engineering Technology (73%) majors were from Wisconsin. Between two-thirds and one-half of the new Crops and Soils (65%), Animal Science (64%), Ag Studies (54%), Ag Business (52%), and Conservation and Planning (50%) were from Wisconsin. Fewer than half the Geology (33%) and Environmental Sciences (21%) majors were from Wisconsin.

**First Generation College Students.** From 2007 through 2017, the proportion of students entering CAFES who reported being the first in their family to go to college declined (Figure 5). The coefficient on the regression equation in Figure 5 indicates that the proportion of first generation students has been declining by an average of 0.7% per year since 2007. However, since 2014, the proportion of first generation college students has been rising slightly in CAFES; in 2017 nearly one-quarter of the new class (24%) were the first in their family to attend college. Even at 24%, the proportion of CAFES students who are the first in their family to go to college is only about half the percentage for UWRF as a whole.

CAFES programs that in 2017 had higher than average proportion of first generation college students were: Ag Education (41%), Ag Engineering (40%), Food Science (38%), and Dairy Science (30%). Ag Studies and Geology had no first generation students starting their programs and the other programs (Horticulture, Conservation and Planning, Animal Science, Ag Business, Crops and Soils, Environmental Science and Ag Engineering Technology) all had between 20% and 25% first generation students in their incoming classes.
Figure 5: Percent New CAFES Students First in Family to Attend College, 2007 - 2017

\[ y = -0.007x + 0.2638 \]
\[ R^2 = 0.2955 \]
Program Summary

Figure 6 provides a breakdown of the majors of the 441 new CAFES students from whom we received a completed survey on Academic Day. Animal Science continues to be the largest major for incoming students and is responsible for about half of all new students. We discuss historic trends in individual programs below.

![Figure 6: 2017 New Students By Major]

Figure 7 illustrates the long-term growth in the Animal Science program over the 2007 – 2017 period (blue line). On average, the number of respondents from the Animal Science program has increased by more than 13 per year since 2007. The introduction of a companion animal option is likely to sustain or even accelerate this growth.

The number of responses from the Dairy Science program (red line) has been comparatively stable with a slight upwards tilt over time. After a hiatus on admissions to the Food Science program of five years, a modest number of students entered this major in the past two years (4 in 2016 and 8 in 2017).
With respect to Figure 8, both the Ag Business and the Ag Studies programs show an upward trend in the number of Academic Day respondents over the 2007 - 2017 time frame. The Ag Business program (blue line), which generally has the second largest number of entering students after Animal Science, has added an average of 2 students per year. The Ag Studies program (red line) has added an average of about 1 student per year. Both programs have experienced a fair amount of volatility in the number of respondents. The Marketing Communication major (shown in green) generally has a limited number of students who start in this program; in some years, none. Most Marketing Communication majors transfer into this major from other programs in CAFES.

The Agricultural Education program (blue line) has rebounded nicely in the past three years from a generally declining trend over the 2007 – 2014 time-frame (Figure 9). For the Ag Engineering department, there was a robust start to the new Agricultural Engineering degree program in 2016 (red line), but new student enrollment dropped by nearly half in 2017 (from 18 to 10). The combined enrollment of Ag Engineering (10) and Ag Engineering Technology (15) in 2017 is comparable to the
enrollement in the AET program (green line) in the three years prior to launching of the Ag Engineering degree program.

The Crops and Soils program (blue line) has been trending upward since 2010 (Figure 10). The number of Academic Day responses from Crops and Soils majors in 2017 (23) was higher than at any time in the past 11 years. This is a very encouraging sign and builds on growth in new Crops/Soils majors noted in last year’s report. Similarly, there were substantially more responses from Horticulture majors (16) in 2017 than in recent years. The number of new Horticulture majors (red line) in 2017 approached the high water mark of 19 new students attained in 2007 and again in 2008. The number of new Horticulture majors is also an encouraging development.

As has been true in past reports, Figure 11 indicates that there is a good deal of volatility in response numbers for the Conservation and Environmental Planning (blue line), the Environmental Science (red line), and the Geology programs (shown in green). Environmental Science experienced its fourth consecutive year of increasing numbers of new students, a positive development. New Conservation
majors were down in 2017 compared to 2016, but, at 14, matched the average number of new students in this major over the last 11 years. Similarly, the number of new Geology majors dropped in 2017 from year-earlier levels but, at 6, is greater than the 2007-2017 average.

Figure 11: Earth Science-Focused Majors, 2007 - 2017
Key Sources of Information for Investigating College Options

Entering students were asked, “What were the two most important information sources you used to investigate college options?” This was a new question in 2017 and, therefore, can’t be compared to responses gathered in prior years.

Figure 12 indicates that about half the 2017 respondents said that college websites and campus visits were the most important sources of information for them as they considered their college options. Word of mouth from family/friends and from high school teachers and counselors were important to about one-third of the respondents. Only about one-in-ten said that print material from the university or direct contact with faculty or staff were particularly influential. Few listed college social media as important. Seven students selected “other” key sources of information and these included college fairs, the student’s mentor, Google, the U.S. Marine Corps and knowledge of the array of agricultural majors offered.

Specific information sources appealed to different demographic groups:

- Students who grew up on a farm were significantly more likely to say friends/family and a campus visit were particularly important.
- Students from Minnesota also relied significantly more on friends and family, while those from Wisconsin were more likely to say high school teachers/guidance counselors were influential.
- For new Ag Education majors, college websites were less important but high school teachers/guidance counselors were more influential than for other majors.
- For new Ag Engineering majors, contact with college faculty/staff was more important than for other majors.
- For Ag Engineering Technology students, college websites were less influential.
- New Ag Studies students were more influenced by family/friends and less by campus visits than other majors.
- New Animal Science students cited college websites significantly more frequently and friends and family and high school teachers/counselors less frequently than other majors.
Family and friends were more important to new Crops/Soils majors.

What Contact Students Reported Having with UW-River Falls Prior to Arrival

Students were asked to identify all the ways in which they had contact with UWRF prior to their arrival on campus. The College has asked a similar question in all other Academic Day surveys. The choice options in 2017 were, however, somewhat different than in prior years. In earlier surveys “Meeting with Staff” was “Meeting with Faculty,” “CAFES Social Media” was “CAFES Facebook,” and two new categories were added “UWRF Booth at Show” and “On-Campus Event.” Despite these changes, the 2017 results were similar to earlier years (Table 1).

| Table 1: What Contacts Did You Have with UW-River Falls Prior to Arrival? |
|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Count                      | 190  | 310  | 289  | 246  | 246  | 353  | 305  | 282  | 322  | 425  | 441  |
| CampusVisit                | 74%  | 78%  | 79%  | 80%  | 80%  | 78%  | 74%  | 83%  | 80%  | 80%  | 84%  |
| Website                    | 62%  | 70%  | 73%  | 72%  | 63%  | 65%  | 54%  | 61%  | 60%  | 64%  | 71%  |
| Mailing                    | 68%  | 75%  | 71%  | 61%  | 59%  | 61%  | 62%  | 66%  | 60%  | 63%  | 63%  |
| EmailMessage               |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Meeting with Staff         | 18%  | 19%  | 19%  | 20%  | 22%  | 20%  | 22%  | 25%  | 24%  | 29%  | 24%  |
| Phone Calls                | 26%  | 23%  | 27%  | 28%  | 24%  | 23%  | 26%  | 18%  | 15%  | 18%  | 19%  |
| UWRF Booth at Show         |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 17%  |
| On-Campus Event            |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 17%  |
| CAFES Social Media         |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 10%  |

An astonishing 84% of new students said they had visited campus prior to matriculation. Compared to recent years, there was a sharp up-tick in the proportion of students who said they had visited the campus’ website. Nearly two-thirds of new students reported receiving a mailing or brochure from UWRF and just over half said they’d received an email from us. Nearly one-quarter had met with a staff member and about one-in-five had received a phone call from us, visited our booth at a show or had attended an on-campus event. Social media use has been pretty constant at 10% for the past 4 years.

On average, new students in 2017 listed 3.6 types of contact from UWRF prior to coming to campus. None of the 441 respondents said they had not received any contacts from the University.

In terms of majors:

- **Ag Business** majors were less likely to report receiving an email (41% vs. 57% other majors), but more likely to say they’d attended a campus event (33% vs. 15% other majors)
- **Ag Education** majors were more avid users of campus social media (27% vs. 8% other majors), more likely to have visited a UWRF booth at a show (44% vs. 15% other majors), and to have attended an on-campus event (29% vs. 16% other majors)
- **Ag Engineering** majors were more likely to report having attended an on-campus event (40% vs. 17% other majors)
- **AET** majors were more likely to have met with a UWRF staff person (47% vs. 23% other majors)
• **Animal Science** majors were more likely to say they received a phone call (24% vs. 13% other majors) or visited our website (75% vs. 67% other majors), but less likely to have met with staff (18% vs. 29% other majors) or attended an on-campus event (11% vs. 23% other majors)

• **Dairy Science** students were more likely to have visited a UWRF booth at a show (32% vs. 16% other majors), but less likely to say they received a mailing/brochure (49% vs. 65% other majors) or a phone call (6% vs. 20% other majors)

• **Environmental Science** majors were less likely to have made a campus visit (64% vs. 85% other majors)

• **Food Science** students were more likely to have met with staff (75% vs. 23% other majors)

In terms of differences in pre-arrival contacts from UWRF across demographic groups:

• **First generation** students were more likely to have reported visiting a UWRF booth at a show (25% vs. 15% of non-first generation students)

• **Students from Wisconsin** were more likely to report receiving a brochure (68% vs. 57% for Minnesota and 48% other states), to have been to an on-campus event (20% vs. 12% for Minnesota and 0% for other states), and to have visited our booth at a show (23% vs. 8% for Minnesota and 0% for other states)

• **Students from farms** were more likely to have attended an on-campus event (29% vs. 9% of non-farm students) and visited a UWRF booth (26% vs. 11% of non-farm students)
Two Most Important Factors in Deciding to Attend UWRF

Another question that was new to the 2017 questionnaire asked students what the two most important factors were in their decision to come to UW-River Falls. Figure 13 suggests that one of the reasons for attending UW-River Falls for most students is because of the College’s program array; 86% of students cited this as one of their top reasons. About one-third of students noted the size of the campus (37%), the relatively low cost of our UWRF (30%), and our location (28%). The remaining items listed in Figure 13 were of importance to relatively few incoming students. Eight students specified other reasons for deciding to attend UWRF; two mentioning the University farms, two the look of campus, two the atmosphere/environment on campus, one the rodeo team, and one the recommendation of an alumnus.

In terms of reasons given for attending UW-River Falls by new students in specific programs:

- **Program offerings** were particularly important to Animal Science majors (91% vs. 81% other majors), but relatively less important to Conservation and Planning majors (64% vs. 87% other majors)
- **Cost** was relatively unimportant to Dairy Science majors (15% vs. 31% other majors), but more important to Conservation and Planning majors (57% vs. 29% other majors)
- **Location** was particularly important to AET majors (53% vs. 27% other majors)
- **Co-curricular activities** were more important to Animal Science majors (12% vs. 6% other majors)
- **Family members** were a bigger influence on Crop/Soil majors (17% vs. 3% other majors)
- **High school teachers** were a more significant influence for Ag Education (12% vs. 3% other majors) and Ag Studies (15% vs. 3% other majors)

In terms of demographic characteristics:
• **Program offerings** was more influential to students from Wisconsin (91% vs. 78% Minnesota and 80% other states)

• **Cost** was more important to non-farm students (35% vs. 23% farm kids)

• **Location**, surprisingly, was more influential with Minnesota students (42% vs. 21% Wisconsin and 13% other states)

• **Co-curricular interests** were more important to students from Wisconsin (11%) and other states (20%), than those from Minnesota (4%)

• **Friends/UWRF Students** were more important to Wisconsin students (8% vs. 2% Minnesota and 0% other states)

• **Family** was more important to students raised on farms (7% vs. 2% non-farm students) and those **not** the first in their family to attend college (5% vs. 0% for first generation students)
Retention Factors

The incoming students were asked four questions pertaining to their commitment to UW-River Falls and CAFES, and their expectations about participating in an international experience. We expect that a student’s level of attachment to and expected participation in campus opportunities might influence their commitment to remain at UW-River Falls until they graduate.

Answer options to the following questions included Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. In the graphs, Strongly Agree and Agree responses were combined into a single “Agreement” category (shown in green), Strongly Disagree and Disagree were combined into a “Disagreement” category (in red) and the Neutral response are shown in yellow.

Figure 14 indicates that, since 2007, more than 80% of respondents have said that UWRF was their first choice of colleges. For 2017, 91% of incoming students said UWRF was their first choice of colleges, an all-time high, and only 3% disagreed.

Incoming students from Wisconsin agreed significantly more strongly that UW-River Falls was their first choice of colleges than was the case for those from Minnesota or other states.

The proportion of students who plan to keep the major they had when starting at UWRF (Figure 15) has been very steady from 2007 – 2017. The minimum percentage who said they expect to keep their major was 71% in 2010 and the maximum was 79% in 2013. In 2017, 76% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they will stick to their major.

Ag Studies majors (not surprisingly) were significantly less likely to agree that they will stick with the major they declared when they applied for admission to UWRF. Students from states other than Minnesota or Wisconsin were significantly more committed to their major. Those who are the first in their family to attend college were less committed to their major than those who had family members who had attended university.
In most years since 2007, between 75% and 80% of incoming students disagreed that they are likely to transfer from UW-River Falls (Figure 16). In 2017, 77% disagreed that they are likely to transfer.

Students in the Animal Science program were, for the third year in a row, significantly more likely to expect to transfer from UWRF, while those in Agricultural Education were less likely to think they will go elsewhere.

In 2017, nearly four of 10 (38%) of the incoming class expected to include an international experience during their time at UWRF, even more (43%) were unsure about this and about one-fifth (19%) said they don’t plan to include an international experience. There is a slight upward slope over time in the proportion of CAFES students looking for an international experience.
Students starting in the Agribusiness Business program were significantly less likely to say they expect to include an international experience during their time at UW-River Falls and Animal Science majors (were) significantly more likely to do so. Students from states other than Minnesota or Wisconsin were more likely to say they will do an international experience.

Figure 17: I Plan to Have International Experience, 2009 - 2017
Concerns Post-Admission to UWRF

Another question asked for the first time in 2017 was, “After you were admitted, did you have any concerns or unanswered questions about coming to school at UWRF?” The twenty percent (86 students) of the new students who said they did have unanswered concerns or questions were asked to specify what those concerns were. The SRC grouped the comments into the thematic sets shown in Table 2.

Nearly one-quarter of the responses expressed concerns about being able to pay for their education and/or bewilderment about the financial aid process (20 comments). The 15 comments about majors ranged from uncertainty about their choice of major to how to get through their major to how their major and UWRF might affect their chances of getting into vet school. Students noted a wide range of logistical or planning concerns (14 comments). A number were worried about finishing in 4 years, others where/how to pay for parking and other things. Some were concerned about learning to navigate the UWRF website and others weren’t sure how they would get to the lab farms. A few students were worried about getting to classes on time and others about finding a work-study job on campus. The 10 comments about classes were mostly about uncertainty that they were in the right classes for their major. The full set of responses to this question is included in Appendix B.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Categories of Students Concerns Post-Admittance to UWRF, 2017</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions about Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistical/Planning Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues about Classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Transfer Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homesickness/Social Concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Concerns</td>
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<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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Impressions of UWRF

In another new, open-ended question, new students were asked, “Before you moved to campus, what was your most memorable impression of UWRF (good or bad)?” New CAFES students provided a whopping 424 responses to this question! The majority of responses to this question were positive. Again, the SRC placed the comments into categories and the number of responses in each category is shown in Table 3.

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<th>Table 3: Students’ Impressions of UWRF, 2017</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Programs/Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location/Size of Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty and Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campus Visit/Orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family</td>
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<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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Forty-nine students simply said that their most memorable impression of UWRF was “good.” Many also noted our beautiful campus, its homey feel, its safety, and our welcoming students and faculty. One student said, “The minute I walked on
In terms of campus programs and facilities, numerous students mentioned our lab farms, the equine program, and the animal and dairy science programs. Students also remembered being impressed by UWRF when they attended the Ag Tech contest, FFA or 4-H events or athletic events on campus. A number also liked that we offer a number of “hands-on” learning opportunities and that agriculture is a significant component of campus life, as one said, “Good people, agriculture was an important part of the school.”

Many students like the size of the campus and its location in a small town. For some, UWRF is, “In a small town but close to city” and for others “In the middle of nowhere. Country school. :(” A number of students noted the relatively small class sizes and the proximity of campus to downtown.

A number of students generically noted the friendliness, approachability and teaching reputation of the staff while others singled out specific staff with whom they interacted (“Don Taylor is a cool guy,” “Meeting with Dr. Graham (good),” “Meeting with faculty, Bonnie Walters, and talking about program,” “Met with Dr.Rausch during campus visit to learn more about program”).

The complete list of comments is included in Appendix B.
Conclusions

A record number of in-coming students completed the Academic Day survey in 2017. In terms of demographic features of the 2017 entering class, they continued the trend of lower proportions being from a farm and a lower proportion from Wisconsin (though still high compared to the campus as a whole). For the fourth year in a row, the proportion who said they are the first in their family to attend college rose in 2017. All of these trends may be the result of the on-going growth of the Animal and Food Science department, particularly the equine and companion animal programs, which tend to attract students who are less tightly tied to the agriculture sector.

Though Animal Science accounted for nearly half the total responses to the 2017 Academic Day survey, there were positive enrollment outcomes for Agricultural Business, Agricultural Education, Crops and Soils, Horticulture, and Environmental Science.

Students starting in 2017 gathered the information they used to select a college from three types of information: websites, campus visits and word of mouth (from friends, family and high school teachers and counselors). In terms of college visits, UWRF has been extremely successful in getting students to visit campus and the impact of those visits were evident from the many open-ended comments that referenced coming to campus and having a positive impression.

Most of the top reasons students gave for coming to UWRF tend to play to our strengths as enumerated by student comments. We have programs/majors they want to pursue, they like the size of our campus and they like its location.

As in past years, most students reported that UWRF was their first choice of colleges, most expected to stick with their declared major (Ag Studies is an exception to this), relatively few expect to transfer from UWRF and a growing minority expect to include an international experience during their time at UWRF.

In response to an open-ended question, the biggest source of nervousness students noted was how to pay for their college degree and how to navigate their major’s requirements and the university generally. In a second open-ended question about their impression of UWRF the vast majority of comments were positive and focused on the beauty and safety of the campus, the friendly and welcoming students, faculty and staff, and the size and location of the university.

In sum, there were a number of quite positive outcomes summarized in this report. At least starting the academic year, most students seemed pleased with their choice of universities.
### 1. What were the 2 most important info sources you used to investigate college options? (mark 2 only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Info Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College websites</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College print material (e.g. brochures)</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school teachers/counselors</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with college faculty/staff</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/Friends</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus visits</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: See Appendix B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2. What contact did you have with UW-River Falls prior to your arrival? (mark all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mailings/brochures</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal meeting with faculty/staff</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited website</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone calls</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus visit</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAFES social media</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Campus event (FFA contest, Colt Sale, etc.)</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWRF Booth at a show (e.g. Dairy Expo)</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email message</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAFES social media</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: See Appendix B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3. What were the 2 most important factors in your decision to come to UW-River Falls? (mark 2 only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program/Major I want</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost (including financial aid)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location/Distance from home</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of campus</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-curricular interests (athletics, clubs, etc.)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school teachers/counselors</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with UWRF faculty/staff</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends/Other UWRF students</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: See Appendix B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. UWRF was my first choice of colleges</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. I am sure I’ll stick with my current major</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. I expect to transfer from UWRF</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. I plan to include an international experience (e.g. study tour) during my time at UWRF</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5. After you were admitted, did you have any concerns or unanswered questions about coming to school at UWRF?

- Yes: 20%
- No: 80%

### 6. If you had concerns/questions, what were they?

See Appendix B

### 7. Before you moved to campus, what was your most memorable impression of UWRF (good or bad)?

See Appendix B

### 8. I grew up on a farm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (see Appendix B)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 9. I am from

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (see Appendix B)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 10. Others in my family have gone to college

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>76%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 11. My major is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ag Bus</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ag Ed</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ag Eng</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ag Eng Tech</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ag Studies</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Sci</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cons &amp; Env Planning</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crop/Soils</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envir Sci</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Sci</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geology</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hort</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar Com</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B New CAFES Student Survey, Fall 2017

Q1. What were the 2 most important info sources you used to investigate college options? Other-TEXT (7 Responses)

- After School program
- Ag Majors
- College Fairs
- Google
- Had degree
- Mentor
- USMC

Q3. What were the 2 most important factors in your decision to come to UW-River Falls? Other-TEXT (9 Responses)

- Atmosphere of the campus
- Environment
- Farm
- Layout of campus
- Location-generally
- Look of Campus
- Rodeo Team
- The campus farm
- Veterinarian I worked for is a UWRF Alumni

Q6. If you had concerns/questions, what were they? Other-TEXT (86 Responses)

**Financial Concerns (20 Responses)**
- My ability for afford college
- Book costs-nobody informed me of my total
- Concerned with my ability to pay for college
- Cost
- Financial Aid (4X)
- Financial aid questions
- Financial Aid, classes, major
- Financial questions regarding Aid and Loan
- How financial aid worked
- How financial aid/ tuition worked
- I had questions about financial aid
- Loans and financial aid
- Loans-how was I going to pay
- Some financial aid questions
- Very confused with financial aid
- What was all happening in terms of school and financial aid
- Whether or not I would have enough financial aid to attend UWRF

**Questions About Major (15 Responses)**
- Am I choosing the right major?
- Best option of what to major in
- Do I have to finish all 4 years to go to vet school
- Do I need to choose a minor if I am double majoring
- Do they have any internships with my major
- How to go about my major
- I want to know when is it right to change or add to your major
- If the major I wanted could get me to my dream career?
- The ease of changing majors.
- Vet tech is a 5 year program but I can get a job as one with a bachelor's degree which is 4 years
- What do I need to ensure my chances of getting into vet school
- What UWRF major would do for me
- Why am I still listed as vet tech?
- Will my major be right for me at this school?
- Would UWRF affect my chances of getting into vet school?
Logistical/Planning Issues (14 Responses)
- Finishing in 4 years
- Food plan details
- Getting a work study job on campus
- Getting to classes on time
- How do I pay, parking, meal plans
- How to set transportation to the barns without vehicles. How to combine companion animal and equine
- How to use the website
- How to use UWRF website
- I’m hard of hearing currently contacting ability services
- Just general questions about commuting ie. parking, where to get materials
- Location of classrooms.
- Parking
- The logistics of how things work, IE meals, parking.
- When we get books and ID

Issues about Classes (10 Responses)
- Am I taking classes that meet my reg. and pre-vet reg.
- Clearing up pre-vet courses/pathway to vet school
- Do I have the right classes for my major
- How to pick classes
- I’m conservation, will I have to do classes w/The Food INC. College
- Just didn’t know about classes (how they ran)
- Not sure if all my classes have the appropriate labs with them
- Right Classes
- What classes should I take?
- What classes/credits do I need

Credit Transfer Questions (6 Responses)
- How the transfer process for vet tech works
- My transferring college credits
- Overall transfer questions
- Transfer credits from PSEO
- Which of my transfer credits will transfer from previous school
- Will my credits transfer over to my next school when I finish my degree?

Homesickness/Social Concerns (5 Responses)
- Being 4 hours from everyone I’m used to
- Distance from home
- Meeting new people
- Moving so far away from home
- How to get a bigger social circle

Academic Preparedness (3 Responses)
- My likeliness for success
- The process of preparation
- Was worried about not being good enough

Housing Concerns (3 Responses)
- Housing
- How does it work? Where to live? What will I be doing?
- The size of dorm room with the built in closet, pick a roommate

Miscellaneous (9 Comments)
- About ROTC
- Am I missing something?
- First day information was answered later
- If it was the right school for me.
- Minor issues with communication
- Normal stress and worries
- What do I do from here on out?
- What my first year was going to be like
Q7. Before you moved to campus, what was your most memorable impression of UWRF (good or bad)? Other-TEXT (424 Responses)

Campus Environment (191 Responses)
- Good (49x)
- Beautiful Campus! (25x)
- It feels like home (13x)
- Friendly (8x)
- My first campus visit was very welcoming with staff being so friendly (8x)
- Welcoming Campus (8x)
- Everyone on campus was super friendly and helpful (7x)
- Good Impression (7x)
- Great Atmosphere (6x)
- Friendly People (5x)
- I love the campus (4x)
- Friendly Students (3x)
- Very good (3x)
- I loved all the trees! (2x)
- Very homey (2x)
- Lots of students similar to me (good)
- I loved all the nature!
- Hardworking campus.
- Amazing
- During my first visit everyone was friendly and nice and the campus was nice (not too big)
- Family day-good
- Rodeo town
- Functional and cozy campus
- Good Campus
- Good experience, how nice and knowledgeable everyone was
- Good impression, many people I know went here
- Good people were nice
- Good, clean campus
- Good, everyone seemed very happy and welcoming!
- Good, everything about UWRF seemed to fit me perfectly

- Good, felt very homey and welcoming
- Good, heard a lot of good things
- Good, I remember visiting and being surprised how pretty it is, and the community
- Good, we had come on a campus tour and everyone was super kind
- Good, when I visited a friend who was here
- Good-nice campus
- Great
- I just liked the feel of campus
- I really like the campus the first time I saw it
- It was very good, loved the community feel
- It was very inviting and I liked the layout
- Safe community
- Seeing the falls
- Seeing the large clock in the middle of campus
- The agricultural environment
- The campus and all of the animals that are here, also the town, just like my home town (good)
- The campus and surrounding areas
- The campus and town people were nice and willing to help
- The campus felt very inviting and safe.
- The campus was nice
- The minute I walked on campus it felt like home and opportunity
- The politeness of everyone here, and how helpful they are
- The people willing to be helpful and answer questions
- The vibe the school gives
- The wonderful campus
- When I visited it was always a nice environment to be in
Campus Programs and Facilities (109 Responses)

- The lab farms (11x)
- Dairy science program is amazing (4x)
- During FFA contests (4x)
- The animal science department (4x)
- The awesome Ag. Program (4x)
- Falcon Center (3x)
- Equine program (2x)
- Touring the equine barn (2x)
- A big equine program
- Activities held on the lab farms were good
- Ag. Tech Contests
- Ag-tech contest-I got to tour greenhouse
- Being shown the greenhouse
- Breeding program, colts in training
- Colt starting
- Coming here for a variety of FFA events, that was great
- Coming here with an ag class in high school
- Community, animal science program/farm
- Doing agronomy contests here
- Everything you can get involved with
- Extremely customized major
- FFA horse judging-good
- FFA judging events on lab farms
- FFA Trips here
- Football game, good
- Free Laundry
- Friendly place and good programs
- Good ag school
- Good colt training program
- Good I’ve been here for 4-H and FFA events
- Good impression due to popularity of AS-Equine program.
- Good impression from booth at horse expo
- Good impression of school from FFA Contests
- Good people, agriculture was an important part of the school
- Good, I loved their horse barn
- Good, I’m on the football team and I made a lot of friends
- Good, lots of horsey clubs/activities
- Good, provide hands-on experiences
- Good, was close to home and it’s a big farm community
- Great Ag. school and came highly recommended
- Great school/program
- Hearing about how great the campus is from Veterinarians
- How many agricultural opportunities I will receive
- How much I loved the lab farm (dairy/meat animal farm)
- How put together the campus was and the Ag. Program
- I helped with the rodeo last year and loved it
- I loved the campus and the river as well as the fine arts building
- I really liked their agriculture program and that they are big into agriculture
- I toured the horse farm and I remember thinking it seemed a little run down
- Immediate hands on experience
- It had the major I wanted (Equine Science)
- Lots of free stuff, laundry, books, overall cheap
- Majors were interesting
- Meet the track coach and meeting athletes on the team
- Moo-U, (farmer school which is good)
- Nice facilities
- Poultry club
- Seems nice, the lab farm is well set up
**Campus Programs and Facilities (cont.)**

- Students were very involved with club, internships
- That it had a very good pre-vet program
- That it was a big farm school
- The barns and hands on with animals (good)
- The colt I met on a visit encouraging me to do the colt training
- The faculty sale which was great
- The faculty were all very happy to meet with me and help me see how amazing the campus and programs are
- The glass blowing class
- The hands on programs along with the lab farms, good
- The hockey game and people I meet when I visited
- The horse farm and hearing about the colts in training program was incredible
- The horse program and clubs
- The programs that it offered
- The Shadow Day for Ag. Ed Majors- very good
- The students in the equine program seemed to really like it.
- The variety and the things they had offer
- The very nice facilities
- They have animal barns on/close to campus
- Tour of horse barn from a friend of a friend
- Touring the barns, it was pretty amazing seeing the facilities
- Touring the building
- Very good equine program, very hands on
- Visiting all of the facilities was amazing
- Visiting Equine facility/meeting people with vast knowledge of program
- Watching the success of the IHRA teams

**Location and Size of Campus (58 Responses)**

- The size of the campus was good (9x)
- Small and comfortable campus (6x)
- Campus size was perfect (4x)
- Location of school (3x)
- Small town friendly environment (2x)
- The beautiful location and the people on campus (2x)
- Beautiful small campus
- Campus was not in the city
- Charming community
- Good- location and size
- Good, large campus that I am excited to explore
- Good, small but friendly
- Good, small campus
- Good, the small town feel
- Good. Beautiful location. Lots of opportunities
- Good-gives me a small town feel-people are nice
- Great, loved the campus, distance from home and all the great people
- Home feeling and good class sizes
- How close all the building are, which I like
- How close the campus was to the town and how it was laid out
- How much it felt like my little hometown
- How pretty the campus was and the size
- I knew the dorms were going to be super small
- I liked how close it was to home, only 45 minutes
- I loved the size during a campus visit
- I loved the small scale of the school
- I really liked the size of campus
- In a small town but close to city
- In the middle of nowhere. Country school. :( 
- It is very pretty and has small classes.
Location and Size of Campus (Cont.)
- It was a good experience with a small and friendly campus
- It was good and I like how the campus is small
- Nice size and nice town
- Small campus
- Small enough but big enough
- The close community and small
- The community size
- The layout of the campus, how close everything is

Faculty and Staff (48 Responses)
- Good, the staff are so friendly (7x)
- How helpful and friendly the staff was (5x)
- Staff is very personable. (2x)
- Ag Ed staff
- All of the advisors/campus helpers were very friendly
- At orientation the OTL's were nice, but at times overbearing
- Dedicated staff
- Don Taylor is a cool guy
- Experience of my advisor
- Faculty and everyone had nothing bad to say
- Faculty and staff are very willing to help students succeed
- Faculty was super nice and supportive
- Friendliness, and passion towards majors and faculty to student ratio
- Friendly faculty and students and tight knit family feeling
- Friendly staff/upperclassmen
- Going to visit and everyone being friendly
- Good ag and nice staff
- Good Friendly staff at Ag. Tech, Dairy Judging
- Good- friendly/ helpful program staff
- Good staff was very nice
- Good teachers
- Good, the AET building and staff
- Good. Highly spoken of by my advisor
- Good-seeing the lab farms and meeting helpful teachers
- Great Campus and faculty
- How nice the professors were and how clean campus is
- I loved the community and the staff I met with.
- Meeting people at the booths-made me extremely interest in UWRF
- Meeting with Dr. Graham (good)
- Meeting with faculty, Bonnie Walters, and talking about program
- Meeting with the professors
- Meeting with the staff when I came to visit
- Met with Dr.Rausch during campus visit to learn more about program
- Student/teacher ratio
- The professors seem approachable and passionate
- The staff and students made me feel at home
- Very nice, encouraging faculty, staff and students

Campus Visits and Orientation (16 Responses)
- Orientation was organized very well (3x)
- Campus visit (2x)
- A great campus visit
- I know I want to come here since freshmen year of high school, my most memorable experience was my campus visit and registration
- My campus visit day was good to get the University feel
- My tour guide with a crazy perfect Minnesotan Accent
- Taking a tour of the campus
- The campus visit which was welcoming
- The cool people I met at orientation
Campus Visits and Orientation (Cont.)
- Good because my visit was very informational
- The leaders who helped me at the visit and orientation Touring UWRF with my high school and knowing people
- Visited it once
- Visiting campus
- Visiting friends who were enrolled and exploring campus
- Visiting my on campus friends
- Visiting my sister and getting a "personal" tour

Family/Friends (12 Responses)
- Both of my parents graduated from UWRF, Good campus, good opportunities
- Brother came here and the stories he had
- Coming to visit family members
- I helped move my older brother into UWRF so I guess his freshman move in
- It was where my dad met his best friend, good spot
- My dad said it was a good school
- My friend told me it was a great school
- My friend who went here liked the school so I thought I'd check it out and I loved it
- My sister went here and she really liked it
- Part of the Ag buildings were built on my great grandpa’s land. So that was pretty cool.
- Staying with Rachel Houey
- Stories my dad told me

Miscellaneous (18 Responses)
- Commuter student (2x)
- Didn’t have any (2x)
- After Shadow Day, it was great!
- Campus
- Getting lost at FFA contest, attending a class with my sister
- I felt like I fit in perfectly with the college
- I really like how everyone was very helpful
- Meeting a lot of new people
- School for country folk (bad for me)
- Seeing all the networking opportunities during a tour
- The bad vanilla ice cream
- The food choices
- The food was pretty good
- The ice cream-good-like the campus
- The pilot plants
- UWRF is very involved with its students and high school students

Q9. I am from. Other-TEXT (15 Responses)
- Illinois (4x)
- Michigan (2x)
- South Dakota (2x)
- California
- Colorado
- Hawaii
- Iowa
- Las Vegas
- Sri Lanka
- Texas