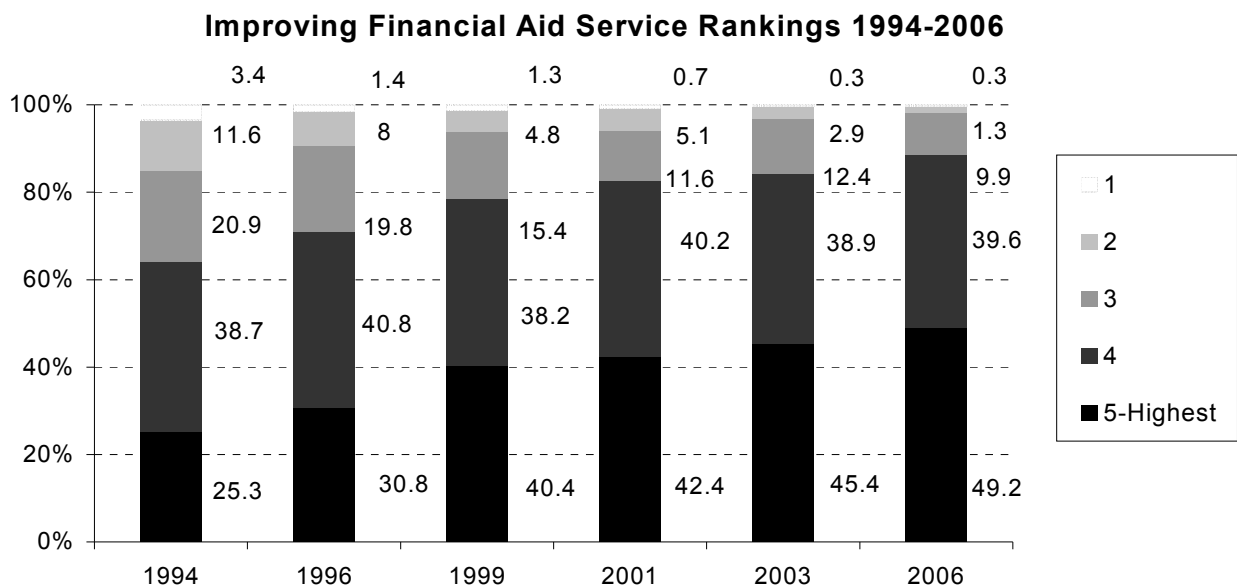


Student Satisfaction Survey  
Financial Aid Office  
Fall Semester 2006

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## Executive Summary: Student Satisfaction High, Continues Ascent

- As the chart below illustrates, student satisfaction with the Financial Aid Office continues to rise. In 12 years we have doubled the number of students who give us the very highest rating. Nearly half of all students give the Financial Aid Office a 5 (the highest possible rating). Nine in ten give us the two highest ratings. Mean ratings have increased from 3.61 in 1994 to 4.36 today (out of a possible 5).
- Our greatest asset continues to be an outstanding staff. We have reduced and refocused staff on changing needs. Students particularly note their courtesy and helpfulness.
- Student satisfaction with the speed of service recovered slightly after dipping in the last survey. This is our weakest area and where we intend to focus our efforts and allocate staffing resources toward.
- Student complaints about lines and phone access continued to be few due to our efforts to handle peak periods.
- Demand for electronic services continues to grow. Over half of students list the internet as their primary source of information, four times the number in 1999 when we first asked the question. Students relying on printed material is 1/5 the 1994 level. Nearly 80% of students find USU Access at least somewhat easy to use.
- Student perceptions of our services are *subjective* and colored by *factors outside our control*. Least happy students think the federal system is unfair, receive loans instead of grants, and are selected for verification (which requires them to submit tax forms to our office).



## Survey Analysis

### GENERAL SATISFACTION CONTINUES RISE

The Financial Aid Office continues its steady improvement in service to USU students. **Nearly half of all students (49%) gave Financial Aid a 5, the highest rating possible.** 89% gave us a 5 or 4; fewer than 2% give us a 2 or 1. Mean ratings have increased from 3.61 in 1994 to 4.36 in 2006.

When asked in an open-ended question for complaints about the Financial Aid Office, over half of students didn't report anything they would change.

The staff is by far our best asset. When asked what they liked best about the Financial Aid Office, the overwhelming majority picked out the staff for praise. **The two words most commonly used to describe office staffers are "helpful" and "friendly."** Other comments include: "answer questions for other offices;" "go the extra mile;" "more helpful than other offices;" "easy to get answers from;" "awesome."

### COURTESY AND KNOWLEDGE OF COUNSELORS HIGH

Counselors continue to receive high marks in both courtesy and knowledge. 93% gave counselors a 5 or 4 in courtesy. 89% gave their knowledge a 5 or 4. Fewer than 3% in both categories gave them a 2 or 1.

### COURTESY AND KNOWLEDGE OF GENERAL STAFF UP

Staff members are rated nearly as high as counselors. 89% gave general staff the highest two ratings in courtesy. 83% gave a first or second rating in knowledge. Fewer than 3% gave them a 2 or 1.

### SPEED OF SERVICE RECOVERS SOMEWHAT

**Satisfaction improved here slightly after a dip on the last survey.** 70% gave us a 5 or 4. However, new federal grants (ACG, SMART) require time-consuming manual review, so this is a continuing concern, and the area we will focus on this coming year.

Student concerns about long lines and staff availability continue to decline. Our efforts have clearly made a difference. The extra stations on the front (staffed by counselors and senior staff) service the lines of students quickly during the crunch surrounding the first day of school. No student waited in line for more than ten minutes on the busiest day of the year.

More important than servicing students who come in or phone are our efforts to reduce their need to contact us at all. Our office's implementation of Banner and the regular reports we run to fix problems before students are even aware of them continues to reduce the need for personal intervention. Students appreciate being able to complete their business online. Nearly 80% of students find USU Access at least somewhat easy to use.

Student turn more and more to the internet for financial aid information. **51% reported using the Internet as their primary source** (up from 39% in 2003, 22% in 2001 and 11% in 1999). 98% of students find Financial Aid material useful or very useful. Students relying on printed material is 1/5 the 1994 level.

## PERCEPTION OF FEDERAL FAIRNESS DROPS

Students are less inclined to view the federal aid system as fair. Only 27% of students felt the system was very fair (down from 35% on the last survey). The percentage who felt the system was very unfair doubled to 5%. A change in the Pell grant formula has resulted in lower Pell grants for Utah students at the same time they have faced increased tuition. The new ACG and SMART grants reach few students and have arcane rules that are difficult to understand and administer.

Student perceptions of fairness strongly correlate with satisfaction with the Financial Aid Office (see below). Rising satisfaction with the Financial Aid Office in light of this external drag is testament to the dedication of a remarkable staff.

### *Will we ever get a 5?*

Student satisfaction improved this past year as it has every time we have conducted this survey. We continue to improve our service to students with rigorous weekly staff training, clearer materials, increasing automation, and systematic reporting to correct problems. However, student perceptions are *subjective* and influenced by factors *outside our control*.

Cross-tabulating the data reveals that student perception of the fairness of the federal system and the type of aid received were strongly correlated with student satisfaction with the Financial Aid Office. Students receiving grants and work-study felt much better about our office than those receiving loans. (If we could give everyone a full grant, perhaps we could get a 5 after all.) Being selected for verification (and being required to submit additional forms and copies of taxes) decreased satisfaction.

The strongest effect on scores is perception of fairness. Students who see the system as unfair might be expected to have lower overall satisfaction. However, their dissatisfaction with the federal system leads them to also report

- that the staff is less knowledgeable and courteous;
- that service seems slower;
- **and** that phone access is poorer!

With this kind of coloring, no matter how good we become, as long as people think the system is unfair, we face an uphill battle to satisfy them completely.

Response frequencies (2006, 2003, 2001, 1999, 1996 and 1994)

**1. On a scale of one to five, with 5 being the highest and 1 the lowest, how satisfied are you with the service you receive from the financial aid office?**

	mean rating	5 (high)	4	3	2	1 (low)
2006:	4.36	49.2	39.6	9.9	1.0	0.3
2003:	4.26	45.5	38.9	12.4	2.9	0.3
2001:	4.18	42.4	40.2	11.6	5.1	0.7
1999:	4.11	40.4	38.2	15.4	4.8	1.3
96:	3.80	30.8	40.8	19.8	8.0	1.4
94:	3.61	25.3	38.7	20.9	11.6	3.4

**On a scale of one to five with 5 being the highest and 1 the lowest how would you rate the following aspects of the financial aid office:**

**2. courtesy of counselors**

	mean rating	5 (high)	4	3	2	1 (low)
2006:	4.58	67.5	25.1	5.5	1.5	0.4
2003:	4.47	59.6	30.4	7.6	2.0	0.3
2001:	4.41	59.5	27.5	9.3	2.3	1.4
1999:	4.34	52.4	34.0	9.4	4.2	0
96:	4.24	48.2	34.9	11.8	2.6	2.6
94:	4.18	46.6	32.8	14.2	4.7	1.6

**3. knowledge of counselors**

2006:	4.38	51.3	37.5	8.8	1.9	0.4
2003:	4.30	47.5	38.3	11.2	2.7	0.3
2001:	4.25	49.6	35.0	9.2	3.7	2.6
1999:	4.26	49.8	32.5	13.4	2.9	1.4
96:	4.16	44.2	35.7	13.4	4.9	1.8
94:	4.00	38.5	36.1	17.1	3.6	4.8

**4. courtesy of general staff**

2006:	4.50	61.5	27.8	10.1	0.3	0.3
2003:	4.40	53.9	34.6	9.9	1.3	0.3
2001:	4.28	49.4	36.2	9.4	3.2	1.7
1999:	4.22	48.2	35.3	9.8	4.0	2.7
96:	4.12	41.5	37.5	13.7	5.7	1.7
94:	3.99	38.1	35.0	17.5	6.3	3.1

**5. knowledge of general staff**

2006:	4.17	38.0	44.6	14.5	2.2	0.7
2003:	4.10	32.9	48.4	15.2	3.0	0.5
2001:	4.12	38.3	41.3	15.6	3.5	1.3
1999:	4.04	35.2	41.6	16.9	4.6	1.8
96:	4.00	33.9	41.9	16.1	6.6	1.4
94:	3.75	25.4	40.5	21.8	8.5	3.9

**6. speed of service**

2006:	3.99	38.1	31.5	22.8	6.3	1.3
2003:	3.93	33.2	35.8	23.5	5.6	1.9
2001:	4.00	34.7	40.1	17.6	5.9	1.7
1999:	3.70	24.7	37.0	24.7	10.6	3.1
96:	3.47	19.8	30.4	32.0	12.7	5.2
94:	3.26	18.1	25.4	28.6	20.6	7.3

**7. telephone access**

	mean rating	5 (high)	4	3	2	1 (low)
2006:	3.87	35.6	30.7	23.1	6.7	4.0
2003:	3.90	32.8	34.3	26.1	5.2	1.5
2001:	3.82	32.4	33.1	22.7	7.9	4.0
1999:	3.89	37.6	29.8	21.3	6.4	5.0
96:	3.76	36.5	28.5	17.0	10.1	8.0
94:	3.60	33.5	23.9	22.0	10.0	10.5

**8. What is your primary source of information about financial aid?**

	FA staff	printed info from FA office	friends and family	Internet	Other
2006:	33.0	5.9	6.9	50.8	3.3
2003:	34.7	17.7	6.9	39.2	1.6
2001:	35.4	28.6	10.9	21.8	3.4
1999:	41.7	31.6	11.4	11.0	4.4
96:	45.5	36.4	13.6	(NA)	4.5
94:	45.7	31.3	14.1	(NA)	8.9

**9. Would you say the materials provided by the financial aid office were:**

	very helpful	somewhat helpful	less than helpful	not helpful
2006:	46.9	51.9	0.4	0.8
2003:	42.6	52.9	1.6	1.3
2001:	41.6	48.7	1.7	1.0
1999:	41.2	51.8	0.9	0.4
96:	36.9	60.3	2.3	0.5
94:	34.3	54.5	11.2	0.0

**10. On the whole, would you say the way the federal government awards financial aid is:**

	very fair	somewhat fair	somewhat unfair	very unfair
2006:	26.6	55.8	12.4	5.1
2003:	34.7	51.5	11.7	2.2
2001:	31.4	51.9	13.2	3.4
1999:	28.3	50.7	18.5	2.4
96:	18.6	52.5	23.8	5.1
94:	24.1	55.8	14.7	5.4

**14. On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being easy to use and 1 being difficult to use, how would you rate USU Access (the system you use to register and pay for classes)?**

mean rating	difficult	2	3	4	easy to use
4.09	1.3	5.0	15.3	39.9	38.5

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS:

**12. If anything, what would you change about the financial aid office?**

**Generally satisfied (155 comments):**

- 116 I wouldn't change anything/Nothing/Had a great experience/Survey needs to be done for Registration
- 39 Don't Know/Not Sure

**Improved Service (81 comments):**

- 23 more knowledgeable staff/able to do more/more helpful
- 12 speed of service/paperwork too slow/AC grant
- 11 phone access/beginning of semester
- 10 lines beginning of semester
- 8 courtesy of staff /front desk/counselors should be more approachable/treated stupid/ act put out
- 7 larger staff/more scholarship staff/had to wait to pay (registration)/more help during peak times/more one-on-one help
- 5 availability of staff/direct access to counselors (instead of through front)/people out too much
- 2 want better treats (cookies) at counter
- 1 don't like Work-Study reward process
- 1 disburse funds earlier to buy books
- 1 problems with SMART grants

**Improved Communication (31 comments):**

- 9 better communication/tell problems so don't need to ask/faster response from counselors/clearer emails
- 3 publicize aid more
- 3 longer office hours, evenings
- 3 easier to get info online/update computer more often/Banner sends in circles
- 3 know when have missing requirements
- 2 faster response to queries
- 1 lost application
- 1 tracking down checks difficult
- 1 emergency loan changes
- 1 need to be notified when new MPN needed
- 1 all forms in one packet
- 1 better info/confusion about dates
- 1 more information on departmental scholarships
- 1 call instead of email

**Aid system (28 comments):**

- 7 unfair aid formula
- 6 application process needs to be easier/FAFSA/verification
- 2 look deeper into individual student situations
- 3 federal independent status rule unfair/ unfair to use parent information
- 2 federal marriage rule unfair
- 3 want more aid
- 2 more grants/don't push loans

- 2 not enough Work-Study awards/Work-Study students should be guaranteed jobs
- 1 more help paying loans back

**Other Offices/Miscellaneous (8 comments):**

- 2 want to pick up checks instead of mail
- 2 want fin aid people at extension offices/want Tooele office and bookstore
- 1 want more coordination with Admissions
- 1 dislikes having to go to Registration office
- 1 locate FA and Registration on same floor
- 1 accept VISA

**13. If anything, what do you like best about the Financial Aid Office?**

**Staff (197 comments):**

- 102 helpful staff/good customer service/more helpful than most offices/they care/  
always there when you need them/go extra mile/knowledgeable/competent/  
get things done/professional/no red tape/easier than I thought/very user friendly/  
answers questions for other offices
- 56 friendly staff /courteous/very nice/kind/easy to talk to/treat me nice/don't make me feel stupid/  
treat better than other schools/
- 17 counselors/ease of access/awesome/
- 15 easy to get ahold of/easy to get answers/never busy/easy to get appointment/  
never wait too long/individual attention/one-on-one help
- 7 staff in general/more than one person to help/good people

**Service (98 comments):**

- 24 office facility/location/accessibile
- 19 speed of service/quick
- 16 money/getting aid/grants/opportunity to go to school/glad it exists
- 12 easy to apply/don't need to come in/can do it all online/USU Access
- 10 good information/website easy to use/internet/ checklists helpful/  
aid pays charges automatically/easy online loan counseling
- 8 email updates/prompt return of calls/help available through email/can ask questions on web
- 6 short lines/accessibile/little or no waiting/no crowds
- 2 direct deposit
- 1 single scholarship application

**Don't Know (45 comments):**

- 45 Not Sure/Don't Know/Blank/Nothing

SURVEY METHODOLOGY: Survey was taken October 2006 from a random sample of all current recipients of federal aid. The sample of 303 students gives us a 95% confidence level that results are + or - 5.4% of the views of all student aid recipients. Students were contacted by phone at home.