

Office of Analysis, Assessment, and Accreditation

UNIVERSITY CONNECTIONS SURVEY 2008

November, 2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each Fall Semester USU offers University Connections courses for incoming freshmen. The Connections course starts on the Wednesday before the semester begins and students attend Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and half day on Saturday. They then meet three more times in the first three weeks of the semester, each session is one hour. The objective of the course is to “provide an environment of challenge and support to help new students make a successful transition to USU. Class curriculum and activities provide an environment wherein students become familiar with the broad academic, social, and cultural opportunities offered by USU and the surrounding community” (USU Catalog).

The Connections Survey was designed to assess how helpful the Connections course was, and to evaluate satisfaction with various components of the course. A total of 1,597 students were enrolled in the courses and 1,510 students responded to the survey yielding a return rate of 94.6%.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

- 61.4% of the respondents were female.
- 76.1% of the respondents graduated from a high school in Utah.
- 61.9% of the respondents were living on campus.
- 94.5% of the respondents were between the ages of 17 and 19.

THE CONNECTIONS COURSE WAS PERCEIVED AS BEING MOST USEFUL IN HELPING STUDENTS TO:

- Learn about University policies (92.6%).
- Navigate the physical layout of the campus (88.7%).

OVERALL ATTITUDES ABOUT CONNECTIONS

- 83.9% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they received useful information in the Connections course.
- 69.4% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the Connections course to other students.

SELECTED FINDINGS

- 91.5% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the Convocations speaker enriched the literature assignment.
- 86.5% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that because of the course they were more informed about campus events.
- 80.3% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Connections course helped ease their transition to USU.
- 78.4% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their Connections experience.
- 75.6% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were glad there were evening activities for Connections students.
- 75.5% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the SAAVI presentation provided useful information.

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INTRODUCTION

Each Fall Semester USU offers University Connections courses for incoming freshmen. The Connections course starts on the Wednesday before the semester begins and students attend Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and half day on Saturday. The students then meet once a week for the first three weeks of the semester, each session is one hour. This year, the course was completed by September 26th.

The University Connections course was designed to give students an early introduction to the expectations and challenges of university life; to the academic, geographic, social/communal, and procedural maps of the University. Connections 2008 also emphasized some of the learning skills students would need to achieve their university goals successfully. The course explored problems common in the transition of students from high school to university life. The course provided an orientation to the breadth of University services and resources, to basic policies and procedures governing the conduct of staff and students, and to the physical layout of the USU campus and the Cache County community.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the survey was to evaluate student opinion in the 60 sections of the Connections course. The survey consisted of three parts: survey demographics, a section of questions evaluating students' experiences with the course, and a section asking students how useful Connections was in helping them with various goals. The Connections Survey was placed on Blackboard Vista and all students were asked to submit their responses by September 26, 2008. There were also five open ended questions which asked students to make comments and give more specific feedback about their impressions of the course. These questions will be addressed in a separate report.

A total of 1,597 students were enrolled in the Connections course during Fall Semester of 2008 and a total of 1,510 student responded to the course survey. This is a response rate of 94.6%. A copy of the Connections Survey appears as Appendix A.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS (See Table 1)

Of the 1,510 respondents 61.4% were female. A majority of respondents (76.1%) graduated from a Utah high school. Sixty-two percent of the respondents lived on campus. Ninety-five percent of the respondents were between the ages of 17 and 19.

When students were asked to report their high school grade point average, a majority of respondents (71.0%) said they had a GPA of 3.5 to 4.0. They were then asked to predict their Fall Semester grade point average, 55.7% of the respondents anticipated getting between a 3.5 to a 4.0 GPA. Students were asked how difficult their Fall Semester courses had been. A plurality of respondents (43.6%) said that they were moderately difficult while 6.8% said they were very difficult.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Gender: **Male** **Female**
 38.6% 61.4%

Graduated from (High School Location):

Utah High School	Non-Utah High School
76.1%	23.9%

Residence: **On Campus** **Off Campus**
 61.9% 38.1%

Age: **17-19 years** **20-22 years** **More than 22 years old**
 94.5% 4.5% 1.0%

High School GPA:

4.00 - 3.50	3.49 - 3.0	2.99 - 2.5	2.49 - 2.0	Less than 2.0
71.0%	22.3%	5.3%	1.4%	0.0%

Predicted GPA for Fall Semester:

4.00 - 3.50	3.49 - 3.0	2.99 - 2.5	2.49 - 2.0	Less than 2.0
55.7%	38.3%	4.9%	1.1%	0.0%

Before college, I expected my first semester classes to be:

Not Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Moderately Difficult	Very Difficult
2.0%	27.8%	55.1%	15.1%

How difficult have your Fall Semester courses been?

Not Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Moderately Difficult	Very Difficult
6.6%	43.0%	43.6%	6.8%

FINDINGS: THE USEFULNESS OF THE CONNECTIONS COURSE (See Table 2)

Students were asked if they agreed or disagreed with ten statements about how useful the Connections course was in helping them with various objectives. They were to rate each statement as Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree. Results are discussed in descending order of responses based on the percentage of respondents agreeing plus strongly agreeing with the statement.

Ninety-three percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Connections was useful in helping them learn more about university policies. Only 1% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Eight-nine percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Connections was useful in helping them navigate the physical layout of the campus. Approximately 4% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Connections was useful to 87.7% of the respondents in helping them get settled before school started, only 3.4% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. Approximately 87% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the course was useful in helping them learn about opportunities for involvement on campus, 2.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Seventy-five percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Connections was helpful in making friends with other new students, 8% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Sixty-nine percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Connections was useful in helping them gain a sense of what is expected in a college class. Ten percent of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that it helped them with college class expectations. Approximately 65% of the respondents said Connections helped them meet faculty and staff, 10.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Approximately 64% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Connections helped them understand what there was to do in Logan, 11.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed. When it came to obtaining valuable academic skills and techniques, 63.7% agreed or strongly agreed that Connections helped with that. Ten percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that it helped them obtain these skills. Approximately 54% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Connections helped them learn more about a possible major, while 14.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table 2. Connections was useful in helping me to:					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Learn about University policies.	27.1%	65.5%	6.4%	0.7%	0.3%
Navigate the physical layout of the campus.	42.8%	45.9%	7.7%	3.1%	0.4%
Get settled before school started.	40.8%	46.9%	8.9%	2.7%	0.7%
Learn about opportunities to be involved on campus.	27.3%	59.6%	10.9%	1.8%	0.5%
Make friends with other new students.	29.2%	45.7%	17.1%	6.9%	1.1%
Gain a sense of what is expected in a college class.	19.2%	49.8%	21.0%	8.1%	1.9%
Meet faculty and staff.	16.5%	48.3%	27.2%	7.3%	0.7%
Understand what there is to do in Logan.	18.8%	45.6%	24.4%	9.4%	1.8%
Obtain valuable academic skills and techniques.	16.5%	47.2%	26.1%	8.0%	2.1%
Learn more about a possible major.	15.6%	38.3%	31.8%	12.3%	2.1%

FINDINGS: STUDENS' EXPERIENCES WITH THE CONNECTIONS COURSE (See Table 3)

The survey included questions requiring students to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements about Connections in general as it related to course content and assignments. Results are discussed in descending order of responses based on the percentage of respondents agreeing plus strongly agreeing with the statement.

An overwhelming majority of respondents (91.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that the Convocations speaker enriched the literature assignment. Only 1.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Almost 87% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that because of the course they were more informed about campus events, 3.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed. When asked if students received useful information in the course, 83.9% agreed or strongly agreed, while 3.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Approximately 80% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Connections course helped ease their transition to USU, while 5.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Seventy-eight percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their Connections experience. Nine percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Seventy-six percent of the respondents said they were glad there were evening activities for Connections students. Four percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Seventy-six percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the SAAVI presentation provided useful information about rape/sexual assault/sexual harassment resources. Five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. A majority of respondents (73.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that the technology workshop provided useful information, while 5.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Seventy-three percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the course enabled them to feel more comfortable contacting their professors, while 6.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Sixty-nine percent of the respondents said they would recommend the Connections course to other students, while 9.3% said they would not. Almost 68% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that peer mentor assistance was important to the course. Eight percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents said the Kent Concert Hall Connections Opening helped them feel welcome at USU. Five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Connections Student Textbook was user friendly, while 9.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Nearly 66% of the respondents said that because of the library workshop they were more likely to ask for assistance from the library staff. Nine percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Sixty-four percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Connections course assignments helped them learn more about what is expected of a college student. Fifteen percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Sixty-two percent of the respondents indicated that the "Welcome to USU Fair" provided information that was helpful to them in connecting to USU and the local community. Five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Fifty-nine percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that making friends at USU was easier because of Connections. Thirteen percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. When asked if the course helped them to learn how to manage their time more effectively, 54.3% agreed or strongly agreed, while 16.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Fifty-three percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the literature assignment "A Long Way Gone" helped them to understand what would be required in a college course. Seventeen percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. When asked if they would encourage friends not to attend Connections, only 18.2% agreed or strongly agreed, while 60.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table 3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The Convocations speaker enriched the literature assignment.	59.5%	32.0%	6.9%	1.1%	0.4%
Because of the course I was more informed about campus events.	33.2%	53.3%	9.8%	2.9%	0.7%
I received useful information in this course.	27.0%	56.9%	12.4%	2.8%	0.8%
The Connections course helped ease my transition to USU.	28.6%	51.7%	13.8%	4.8%	1.1%
I am satisfied with my Connections experience.	28.0%	50.4%	12.6%	7.8%	1.2%
I was glad there were evening activities for Connections students.	34.5%	41.1%	20.2%	3.7%	0.5%
The SAAVI presentation provided useful information about rape/sexual assault/sexual harassment resources.	22.5%	53.0%	19.3%	4.3%	0.9%
The technology workshop provided useful information.	18.3%	55.3%	21.4%	4.3%	0.8%
The course enabled me to feel more comfortable contacting my professors.	25.6%	47.4%	20.3%	5.7%	1.1%
I would recommend the Connections course to other students.	27.6%	41.8%	21.3%	6.6%	2.7%
The peer mentor assistance was important to the course.	22.2%	45.4%	24.9%	6.0%	1.5%
The Kent Concert Hall Connections Opening helped me to feel welcome at USU.	21.8%	45.5%	27.3%	4.4%	1.0%
The Connections Student Textbook was user friendly.	18.3%	49.0%	22.7%	6.9%	3.0%
Because of the library workshop, I am more likely to ask for assistance from the library staff.	21.0%	44.5%	26.0%	7.3%	1.2%
The Connections course assignments helped me learn more about what is expected of a college student.	17.0%	47.0%	21.2%	12.2%	2.6%
The "Welcome to USU Fair" provided information that was helpful to me in connecting to USU and the local community.	16.3%	45.6%	33.4%	3.5%	1.1%
Making friends at USU was easier because of Connections.	23.7%	35.7%	26.7%	12.3%	1.7%
The course helped me learn how to manage my time more effectively.	14.3%	40.0%	29.0%	14.1%	2.5%
The literature assignment "A Long Way Gone" helped me to understand what would be required in a college course.	12.5%	40.5%	30.3%	13.7%	2.9%
I would encourage my friends NOT to attend Connections.	6.9%	11.3%	21.8%	37.5%	22.6%

APPENDIX A

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY CONNECTIONS SURVEY 2008



Connection Survey

Mark one response to each question.

1. My Connections course instructor is: Select your instructor
2. I am male female
3. I from a Utah High School Non-Utah High School
4. I live on campus off campus
5. I am 17-19 years old 20-22 years old More than 22 years old
6. My high school gpa was:
 4.00-3.50 3.49-3.0 2.99-2.50 2.49-2.00 Less than 2.00
7. What do you predict your grade point average will be at the end of the Fall Semester?
 4.00-3.50 3.49-3.0 2.99-2.50 2.49-2.00 Less than 2.00
8. Before college, I expected my first semester classes to be:
 Not difficult Somewhat difficult Moderately difficult Very difficult
9. How difficult have your Fall Semester courses been?
 Not difficult Somewhat difficult Moderately difficult Very difficult

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

- | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. The Connections courses helped ease my transition to USU. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Making friends at USU was easier because of Connections. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. The literature assignment ("A Long Way Gone") helped me to understand what would be required in a college course. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. I received useful information in this course. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. The course enabled me to feel more comfortable contacting my professors. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. I would encourage friends not to attend Connections. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Because of the course I was more informed about campus events. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. I am satisfied with my Connections experience. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. The course helped me learn how to manage my time more effectively. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. The SAAVI presentation provided useful information about rape/sexual assault/sexual harassment resources. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 11. The technology workshop provided useful information. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

- | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 12. The peer mentor assistance was important to the course. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 13. I was glad there were evening activities for Connections students. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 14. The Connections course assignments helped me to learn more about what is expected of a college student. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 15. I would recommend the Connections course to other students. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 16. Because of the library workshop, I am more likely to ask for assistance from the library staff. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 17. The Kent Concert Hall Connections Opening helped me to feel welcome at USU. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 18. The Convocations speaker enriched the literature assignment. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 19. The Connections Student Textbook was user friendly. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 20. The "Welcome to USU Fair" provided information that was helpful to me in connecting to USU and the local community. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Connections was useful in helping me to:

- | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. make friends with other new students. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. learn about University polices. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. navigate the physical layout of the campus | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. get settled before school started. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. learn more about a possible major. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. learn about opportunities to be involved on campus. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. understand what there is do to in Logan. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. meet faculty and staff. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. obtain valuable academic skills and techniques | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. gain a sense of what is expected in a college class | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Please answer the following questions in the box provided below the question:

1. What aspects of the teaching or content of thise course do you feel were especially good?

2. What changes could be made to improve the teaching or the content of this course?

3. Should the required literature reading and assignment be continued as part of the Connections curriculum? Why or why not?

4. How effective was your Connections instructor in helping you to transition to Utah State University? Please explain.

5. What was the primary reason you enrolled in the Connections course?

Submit