

Office of Analysis, Assessment, and Accreditation

UNIVERSITY CONNECTIONS SURVEY 2009

October 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each Fall Semester USU offers the University Connections course for incoming freshmen. This year there were 59 sections. 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 Connections is, and to evaluate satisfaction with various components of the course. A total of 1,557 students were enrolled in the courses and 1,046 students responded to the survey, yielding a return rate of 67.2%.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

- 61.8% of the respondents were female.
- 74.4% of the respondents graduated from a high school in Utah.
- 66.3% of the respondents were living on campus.
- 95.2% 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 (90.7%).

OVERALL ATTITUDES ABOUT CONNECTIONS

- 88.2% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that because of the course they were more informed about campus events.
- 87.4% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they received useful information in the Connections course.

PRIMARY REASONS FOR ENROLLING IN CONNECTIONS

- 75.6% of the respondents said that earning two academic credits was very important.
- 68.8% of the respondents said that helping them become acclimated with Utah State/college life before the start of the rest of their classes was very important.
- 66.1% of the respondents said that learning the physical layout of the campus was very important.

SELECTED FINDINGS

- 84.5% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they were glad there were evening activities for Connections.
- 82.5% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the Connections course helped them ease their transition to USU.
- 80.8% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they were satisfied with their Connections experience.
- 80.5% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the Convocations speaker enriched the literature assignment.

2009 UNIVERSITY CONNECTIONS SURVEY

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INTRODUCTION

Each Fall Semester USU offers the University Connections courses to incoming freshmen. This year there were 59 sections. 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 25th.

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 2009 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 59 sections of the Connections course. The survey consisted of five parts: survey demographics, a section of questions evaluating students' experiences with the course, a section asking students how useful Connections was in helping them with various goals, a section dealing with students' primary reasons for enrolling in Connections, and a set of five opened-ended questions allowing students to make comments and give more specific feedback about their impressions of the course. The open ended questions will be addressed in a separate report. The Connections Survey was placed on Blackboard Vista and all students were asked to submit their responses by September 25, 2009.

A total of 1,557 students were enrolled in the Connections course during Fall Semester of 2009 and a total of 1,046 students responded to the course survey. This is a response rate of 67.2%. A copy of the Connections Survey appears as Appendix A.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS (See Table 1)

Of the 1,046 respondents 61.8% were female. A majority of respondents (74.4%) graduated from a Utah high school. Sixty-six percent of the respondents were living 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 (74.8%) said they had a GPA of 3.5 to 4.0. They were then asked to predict their Fall Semester grade point average; 56.2% of the respondents anticipated getting between a 3.5 to a 4.0 GPA. Students were asked how difficult they thought their first semester of classes would be. A majority of respondents (55.8%) said that they would be moderately difficulty while 17.4% said they would be very difficult.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Gender: **Male** **Female**
 38.2% 61.8%

Graduated from (High School Location):

Utah High School	Non-Utah High School
74.4%	25.6%

Residence: **On Campus** **Off Campus**
 66.3% 33.7%

Age: **17-19 years** **20-22 years** **More than 22 years old**
 95.2% 4.1% 0.7%

High School GPA:

4.00 - 3.50	3.49 - 3.0	2.99 - 2.5	2.49 - 2.0	Less than 2.0
74.8%	20.9%	3.7%	0.5%	0.1%

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
56.2%	38.9%	4.3%	0.5%	0.1%

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

Not Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Moderately Difficult	Very Difficult
1.3%	25.5%	55.8%	17.4%

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, and 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 1.4% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Ninety-one percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Connections was useful in helping them navigate the physical layout of the campus. Approximately 2% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Connections helped 88.9% of the respondents get settled before school started. Only 3.6% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. Eighty-eight percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the course was useful in helping them learn about opportunities for involvement on campus, 2.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Seventy-six percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Connections was helpful in making friends with other new students, 6% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Seventy-two percent of the respondents agreed or strong agreed that Connections helped them understand what there was to do in Logan. Eight percent of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Approximately 71% of the respondents said that Connections helped them gain a sense of what is expected in a college class, 10.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Sixty-six percent of the respondents indicated that the course was useful in helping them meet faculty and staff; 8% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Approximately 64% of the respondents said Connections helped them obtain valuable academic skills and techniques. Ten percent of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that it helped them obtain these skills. Sixty percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the course helped them learn more about a possible major, while 13.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table 2. Connections was useful in helping me to:					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Learn about University policies.	30.2%	62.4%	6.1%	1.2%	0.2%
Navigate the physical layout of the campus.	43.9%	46.8%	7.1%	1.7%	0.6%
Get settled before school started.	42.5%	46.4%	7.6%	2.9%	0.7%
Learn about opportunities to be involved on campus.	29.7%	58.4%	9.5%	2.1%	0.3%
Make friends with other new students.	30.5%	45.2%	18.3%	5.1%	0.9%
Understand what there is to do in Logan.	24.3%	47.6%	20.7%	6.6%	0.9%
Gain a sense of what is expected in a college class.	20.6%	50.2%	18.9%	8.0%	2.2%
Meet faculty and staff.	19.1%	46.8%	26.7%	6.9%	0.6%
Obtain valuable academic skills and techniques.	19.6%	44.8%	25.7%	8.8%	1.2%
Learn more about a possible major.	20.2%	40.0%	26.5%	11.4%	1.9%

FINDINGS: STUDENTS' 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.

A majority of respondents (88.2%) agreed or strongly agreed that because of the course they were more informed about campus events. Three percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they received useful information in the course. Only 1.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Approximately 85% of the respondents said they were glad there were evening activities for Connections students, while 1.9 % disagreed or strongly disagreed. A majority of respondents (82.5%) said the Connections course helped ease their transition to USU. Four percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Eight-one percent of the respondents were satisfied with their Connections experience, while 4.8% were not satisfied. Eighty-one percent of the respondents indicated that the Convocations speaker enriched the literature assignment, while 5.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

A majority of respondents (75.2%) agreed or strongly agreed that the peer mentor assistance was important to the course. Seven percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Seventy-four percent of the respondents indicated that the technology workshop provided useful information; while 5.6% did not think it provide useful information. Seventy-three percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the SAAVI presentation provided useful information about rape/sexual assault/sexual harassment resources. Seven percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Seventy-two percent of the respondents said the course enabled them to feel more comfortable contacting professors, while 6.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Sixty-nine percent of the respondents indicated that because of the library workshop, they were more likely to ask for assistance from the library staff. Seven percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents would recommend the Connections course to other students, while 8.5% would not. Approximately 68% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the "Welcome to USU Fair" provided information that was helpful to them in connecting to USU and the local community. Three percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Sixty-five percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Connection course assignments helped them learn more about what is expected of a college student. Fourteen percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Sixty-four percent of the respondent said the Kent Concert Hall Connections Opening helped them feel welcome at USU. Seven percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Sixty-one percent said making friends at USU was easier because of Connections, but 11.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Fifty-three percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the course helped them to learn how to manage their time more effectively. Fifteen percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Only a plurality of respondents (46.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that the literature assignment (Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child) helped introduce them to college academic work. Twenty-six percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. When asked if they would encourage friends not to attend Connections, 19.4% agreed or strongly agreed, while 58.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

FINDINGS: REASONS FOR ENROLLING IN THE CONNECTIONS COURSE (See Table 4)

This section of the survey included a series of statements relating to reasons students may have chosen to enroll in the Connections course. Results are presented in descending order of responses based on the percentage of respondents indicating the reason was very important.

A majority of respondents (75.6%) indicated it was very important to enroll in Connections to earn two academic credits, while 6.1% said this was not important to them. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents thought that enrolling in Connections was very important in helping them become acclimated with Utah State and college life before they started the rest of their classes. Four percent of the respondents said it was not important. Sixty-six percent of the respondents said learning the physical layout of the campus was a very important reason for enrolling, while 8% said it was not. When considering enrolling in Connections, learning about campus resources was very important to 55% of the respondents. Six percent said it was not important. Fifty-two percent of the respondents said learning about opportunities to be involved on campus was very important to them as a reason for enrolling, while 7.1% said it was not.

A plurality of respondents (49.3%) indicated that it was very important to enroll in Connections to learn college level study strategies. Twelve percent indicated it was not important to them. Forty-five percent of the respondents said they enrolled to develop a clearer understanding of what attending college means to them. Fourteen percent said this was not important to them. For 44.2% of the respondents an advisor, friend or family member highly recommended they participate in Connections. Twenty-one percent of the respondents said this reason was not important to them. Forty-two percent of the respondents said that enrolling in Connections was very important in order to make friends with other new student, while 13.3% said this was not important. Hearing that the course was informative and fun was a very important reason for enrolling for 41% of the respondents, while this was not important to 18.4% of the respondents.

Thirty-five percent of the respondents thought it was very important to enroll in order to learn what there is to do in Logan. Twenty percent of the respondents thought this was not important. Thirty-two percent of the respondents enrolled because they wanted to learn more about a possible major, while 26.2% did not. Thirty-two percent of the respondents thought that enrolling was very important to learn about University policies. Fifteen percent did not think this was important. Thirty percent of the respondents said it was very important to enroll in order to meet faculty and staff, while 15.8% said this was not important. Twenty-five percent indicated that friends' enrolling was a very important reason for enrolling in Connections, but 47% indicated this was not important to them. Fifteen percent marked "Other".

APPENDIX A

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY CONNECTIONS SURVEY 2009



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

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

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The Connections course helped ease my transition to USU.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2. Making friends at USU was easier because of Connections.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3. The literature assignment (Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child) helped to introduce me to college academic work.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4. I received useful information in this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5. The course enabled me to feel more comfortable contacting my professors.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6. I would encourage friends not to attend Connections.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
7. Because of the course I was more informed about campus events.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
8. I am satisfied with my Connections experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
9. The course helped me learn how to manage my time more effectively.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
10. The SAAVI presentation provided useful information about rape/sexual assault/sexual harassment resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
11. The technology workshop provided useful information.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

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

Connections was useful in helping me to:

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

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

- | | Very Important | Somewhat Important | Not Important |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. To make friends with other new students | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. To learn University policies | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. To learn the physical layout of the campus | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. To learn about campus resources | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. To learn college level study strategies | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. To earn two academic credits | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 7. To learn more about a possible major | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. To learn about opportunities to be involved on campus | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. To learn what there is to do in Logan | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. To meet university faculty and staff | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. Develop a clearer understanding of what attending college means to me | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. Friends were enrolling | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. Heard that it was a course that was informative and fun | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. To help myself become acclimated with Utah State/college life before the start of the rest of my classes. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. Highly recommended by an advisor, friend, or family member | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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

1. What aspects of the teaching or content of this 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?