

*Office of
Analysis, Assessment & Accreditation*

2003

Comparison of Responses:
Freshman/Sophomore Students
versus
Graduating Students



November 2003

**COMPARISON OF RESPONSES:
FRESHMAN/SOPHOMORE STUDENTS VERSUS GRADUATING STUDENTS**

OFFICE OF ANALYSIS, ASSESSMENT, AND ACCREDITATION

NOVEMBER 2003

Description of Surveys

Each year, the Office of Analysis, Assessment, and Accreditation conducts a survey of freshmen and sophomore students and also graduating baccalaureate students to determine their attitudes and perceptions regarding their USU experiences. In addition to some general questions, the focus of this year's surveys was on general education courses, advising, and student computer use. With the exception of three demographic questions, both of these surveys are the same. The similarity of these surveys allows a comparison of responses of students early in their USU experience and upon completion of their USU academic programs in order to see how attitudes and perceptions may have changed.

Sample Selection and Survey Administration

The Freshman/Sophomore Student Survey was administered during class time to a random sample of classes with high proportions of freshmen and sophomores. All the students in each class filled out the questionnaires and freshmen and sophomores were sorted out later. Sorting was done using the student's identification number and a survey question that asked the student to report the number of credit hours she/he had completed. A total of 1,321 completed survey forms were obtained and these are the basis for the freshman/sophomore results.

With the Graduating Student Survey an attempt was made to survey all of the undergraduate, graduating student population. Surveys were distributed as part of the graduation application packet. All students were instructed to fill out the survey and return it with their graduation application materials. Upon payment of the graduation fee, surveys were collected by the Cashier's Office. A total of 2,451 undergraduate students graduated in 2003 and 2,110 usable surveys were returned for a return rate of 86.1%. These are the basis for the graduating student results.

Data Presentation

A subset of items from each survey is included in this comparison report. Tables and graphs compare totals from the Freshman/Sophomore Student Survey of 2003 with totals from the Graduating Student Survey of 2003.

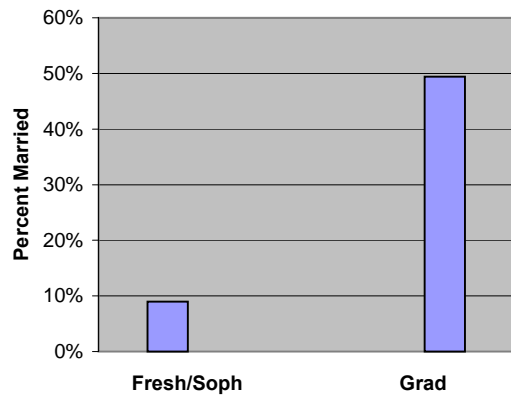
RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

As shown in Table 1, graduating students are more likely to be male and much more likely to be married than freshmen/sophomores. More than twice as many freshman/sophomore students than graduating students did not work at all while attending school, while more than three times as many graduating students worked full-time or three-fourths time.

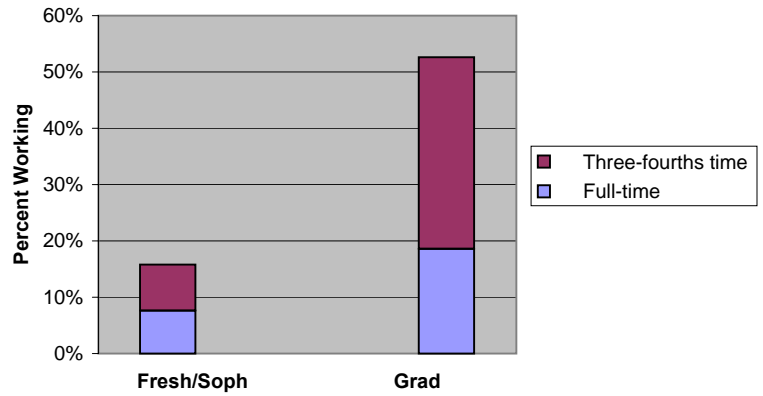
TABLE 1. RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

	FRESH-SOPH 2003	GRADUATING 2003
Gender		
Male	46.4%	56.5%
Female	53.6%	43.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Married	9.0%	49.4%
Minority	6.5%	6.1%
Time Spent Working		
Not working	41.7%	16.7%
Full-time	7.6%	18.6%
Three-fourths time	8.2%	34.0%
Half-time	24.9%	19.4%
One-fourth time	17.6%	11.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Married Students



Working Students

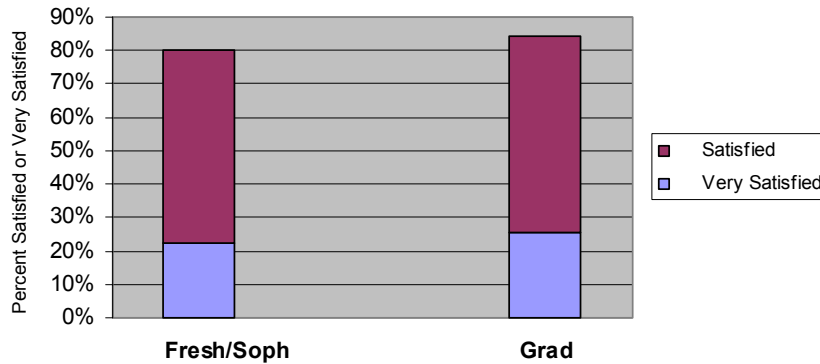


FINDINGS: OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF USU

Several questions in the surveys were included to determine the general perceptions students had of USU. Results are shown in Table 2. When asked how they felt about the overall quality of their education at USU, 80.2% of the freshman/sophomore respondents ranked this item satisfied or very satisfied, while 84.3% of the graduating respondents marked satisfied or very satisfied. Higher satisfaction levels were reported by graduating students on all items: the helpfulness of faculty, personal interest of faculty in students, teaching ability of faculty, and the degree to which students were treated fairly.

The respondents were asked what they would tell their friends about Utah State University. The five choices were: (1) It's great, come here, (2) Mostly positive things, (3) Nothing much, either positive or negative, (4) Mostly negative things, and (5) It's not great, don't come here. Eight-two percent of the graduating respondents compared to 77.4% of the freshman/sophomore respondents selected (1) or (2). This result probably is a combination of two factors – students who stayed enjoyed their USU experience more the longer they were here and those who didn't like USU chose to leave.

Overall Quality of USU Education



What would you tell your friends about USU?

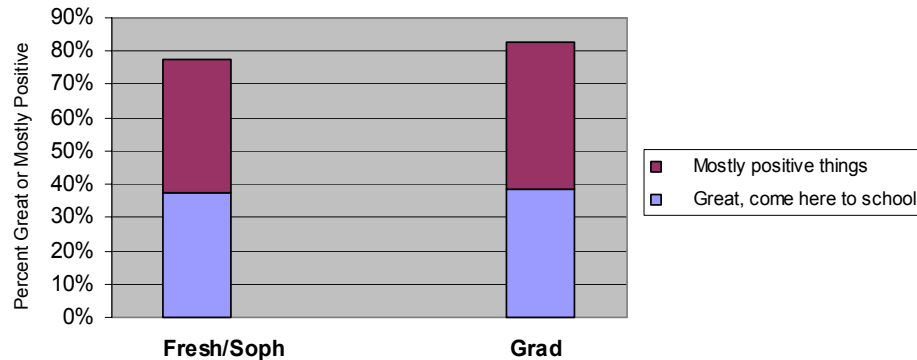


TABLE 2. OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF USU

	FRESH-SOPH 2003	GRADUATING 2003
Overall Quality of Education		
Very Satisfied	22.5%	25.7%
Satisfied	57.7%	58.6%
Neutral	16.9%	12.3%
Dissatisfied	2.6%	3.1%
Very Dissatisfied	0.4%	0.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Helpfulness of Faculty		
Very Satisfied	20.1%	32.6%
Satisfied	43.4%	45.4%
Neutral	28.5%	15.7%
Dissatisfied	6.7%	5.2%
Very Dissatisfied	1.3%	1.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Personal Interest of Faculty in Students		
Very Good	28.9%	38.0%
Good	42.2%	39.4%
Fair	17.9%	15.7%
Poor	4.9%	4.2%
No Opinion	6.2%	2.7%
Total	100.1%	100.0%
Teaching Ability of Faculty		
Very Good	41.9%	44.5%
Good	40.1%	41.2%
Fair	10.7%	10.9%
Poor	0.9%	1.3%
No Opinion	6.4%	2.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Degree to Which the Student Felt Treated Fairly		
Very Satisfied	23.4%	34.8%
Satisfied	47.5%	48.6%
Neutral	24.0%	12.5%
Dissatisfied	3.9%	3.1%
Very Dissatisfied	1.2%	1.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
What Would You Tell Your Friends About USU?		
Great, come here to school	37.5%	38.5%
Mostly positive things	39.9%	44.0%
Nothing much, positive or negative	18.6%	13.4%
Mostly negative things	2.8%	3.0%
Not great, don't come here	1.2%	1.1%
Total	100%	100.0%

FINDINGS: GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES

The students were asked how well University Studies Courses (i.e., general education) prepared them in seven domains: communication, quantitative skills, computer literacy, humanities and arts, social sciences, life sciences, and physical sciences. As shown in Table 3, “Well + Very Well” responses on these domains ranged from 88.7% to 93.4% for freshman/sophomore respondents while the ranges for the graduating respondents were between 86.6% and 91.1%. As can be seen, differences were relatively small or non-existent on all items. It should be noted that if respondents took some but did not take all of their general education at USU, they could mark these items “Not at USU” or “Not Applicable”. These respondents were not considered in order to reflect only those who had some or all of these experiences at USU.

When asked about the overall quality of University Studies/general education courses, 63.9% of the freshman/sophomore respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied, while 52.7% of the graduating respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied. More graduating respondents (15.6%) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied than freshman/sophomore respondents (10.7%).

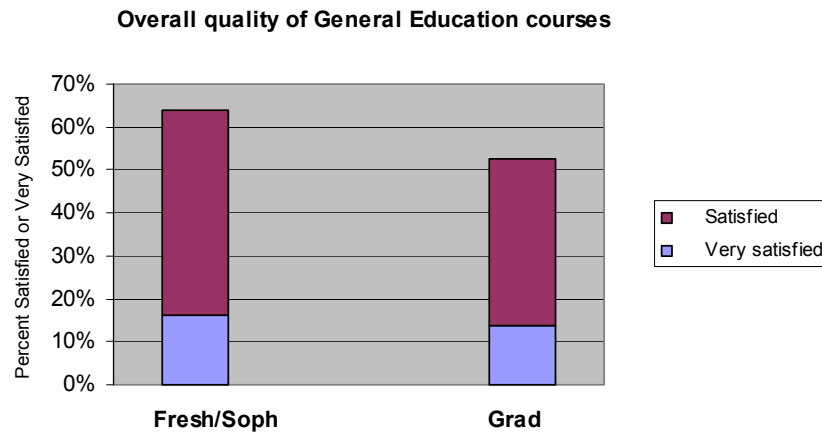


TABLE 3. GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES

	FRESH-SOPH 2003	GRADUATING 2003
OVERALL QUALITY OF UNIVERSITY STUDIES/GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES		
Very satisfied	16.3%	13.8%
Satisfied	47.6%	38.9%
Neutral	25.5%	31.8%
Dissatisfied	8.6%	12.2%
Very Dissatisfied	2.1%	3.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
HOW WELL HAVE UNIVERSITY STUDIES COURSE PREPARED YOU IN THE AREAS OF:		
COMMUNICATION		
Very well	29.9%	34.0%
Well	62.5%	57.1%
Poorly	6.2%	7.8%
Very poorly	1.3%	1.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
QUANTITATIVE SKILLS		
Very well	26.9%	29.9%
Well	61.8%	56.7%
Poorly	9.1%	11.4%
Very poorly	2.1%	2.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
COMPUTER LITERACY		
Very well	35.8%	35.4%
Well	53.8%	54.7%
Poorly	8.2%	8.0%
Very poorly	2.2%	1.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
HUMANITIES AND ARTS		
Very well	38.4%	35.9%
Well	52.5%	54.5%
Poorly	6.5%	7.8%
Very poorly	2.7%	1.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
SOCIAL SCIENCES		
Very well	36.3%	36.5%
Well	57.1%	54.5%
Poorly	4.9%	7.5%
Very poorly	1.6%	1.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
LIFE SCIENCES		
Very well	30.7%	30.3%
Well	59.7%	56.6%
Poorly	7.1%	10.7%
Very poorly	2.5%	2.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
PHYSICAL SCIENCES		
Very well	30.5%	31.3%
Well	60.0%	55.5%
Poorly	7.2%	11.4%
Very poorly	2.3%	1.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

FINDINGS: ADVISING

Both surveys included a long list of questions about advising at USU, but only a subset, listed in Table 4, is reported here. When asked about their major source of information for academic planning, 38.9% of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 45.0% of the graduating respondents said the Major Requirement Sheets, with advisors second at 27.1% and 37.1% respectively. Where 27% of the freshmen/sophomores had never met with an advisor in the past school year, only 7.6% of the graduating respondents had not met with an advisor in the past school year. 30.9% of the graduating respondents had seen an advisor four or more times, while only 6.1% of the freshman/sophomore respondents had seen an advisor this often. The most frequently-mentioned reason for not meeting more often with an advisor was that respondents felt they had already obtained the needed information on their first visit (34.6% of freshman/sophomore respondents, and 26.2% of graduating respondents). One fourth of the freshman/sophomore respondents did not know who their advisors were. This percentage drops to about 8% for graduating respondents.

Eighty-six percent of both groups said that the average duration of appointments with an advisor was twenty minutes or less and approximately 41% of both groups said ten minutes or less. Freshman/sophomore respondents were not content with the frequency of advisor contacts – since 65.4% would have preferred to visit with their advisors more often. Nearly half of the graduating respondents wanted more contact with their advisors. Almost a third of the freshman/sophomore respondents said they would like to meet with their advisors at least monthly, while only 21.7% of the graduating respondents wanted that frequency in meetings. Over 40% in both groups preferred no more than once per semester.

Graduating respondents ranked advisors higher on all other items than did freshman/sophomore respondents. When asked to respond to the statement, “Overall I am satisfied with my advisor,” more graduating respondents strongly agreed or agreed (75.0%) than freshmen/sophomores (64.6%). Given a similar statement about USU’s advising system in general, agree plus strongly agree dropped for both groups (55.5% freshman/sophomore respondents and 60.1% graduating respondents).

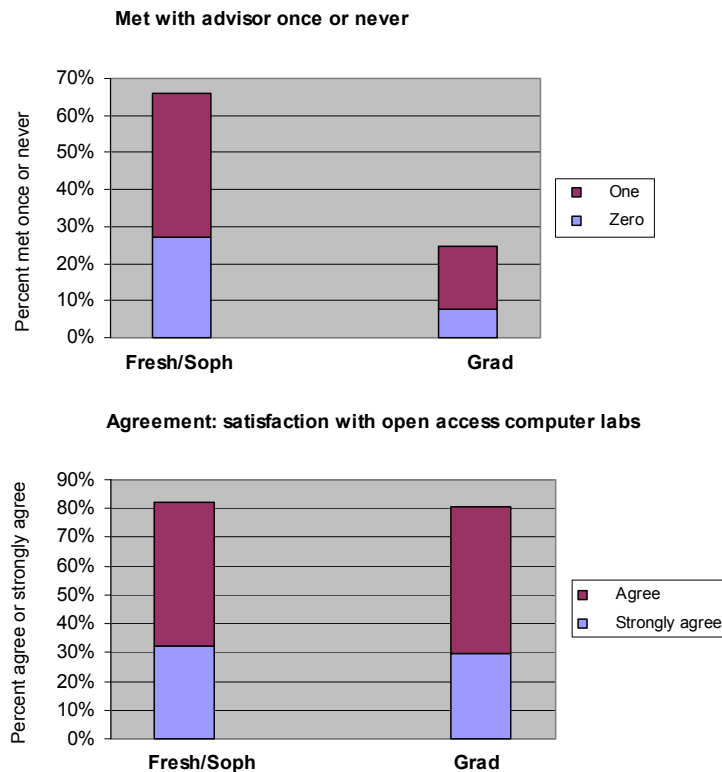


TABLE 4. ADVISING

	FRESH-SOPH 2003	GRADUATING 2003
Student's Major Source of Information for Academic Planning		
Advisor	27.1%	37.1%
Other faculty/staff	4.3%	5.9%
USU Catalog	12.9%	4.6%
USU Major Requirements Sheets	38.9%	45.0%
Other Students	11.9%	5.1%
Other	4.9%	2.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Number of Times Student Met with Advisor During the Past School Year		
Zero	27.0%	7.6%
One	38.9%	17.1%
Two	20.3%	23.6%
Three	7.7%	20.8%
Four or more	6.1%	30.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Would like to visit with their advisor more if there were no obstacles		
Yes	65.4%	47.8%
No	34.6%	52.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Number of Times Student Would Like to Have Met with Advisor		
Weekly	2.3%	1.9%
Every other week	4.7%	2.6%
Monthly	25.8%	17.2%
Every couple of months	20.7%	18.9%
Once per semester	40.4%	46.6%
Once per year	3.9%	9.8%
Never	2.2%	3.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Average Duration of Appointments		
1-10 minutes	41.3%	40.4%
11-20 minutes	45.3%	46.0%
21-30 minutes	10.8%	10.6%
More than 30 minutes	2.6%	3.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Reasons Why Student Did Not Meet With Advisor More than Once		
Not necessary	17.4%	16.3%
Got information on first visit	34.6%	26.2%
Got information from another source	12.1%	25.2%
Did not know who advisor was	24.5%	7.7%
Advisor kept the student informed	4.4%	17.1%
Advisor was not helpful on first visit	7.1%	7.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Advisor Was Readily Available for Consultation		
Strongly agree	16.9%	28.4%
Agree	35.8%	40.5%
Neutral	29.8%	18.0%
Disagree	12.2%	8.7%
Strongly disagree	5.3%	4.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

	FRESH-SOPH 2003	GRADUATING 2003
Advisor is Friendly Toward Me		
Strongly agree	38.0%	53.3%
Agree	36.9%	33.1%
Neutral	16.2%	10.2%
Disagree	5.2%	2.0%
Strongly disagree	3.6%	1.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
My Advisor Does Not Make Me Feel Rushed During Our Meetings		
Strongly agree	23.1%	35.9%
Agree	36.2%	38.4%
Neutral	23.4%	15.0%
Disagree	11.5%	7.2%
Strongly disagree	5.8%	3.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
My Advisor Gives Me Correct Information on Services/Programs		
Strongly agree	24.6%	34.8%
Agree	43.8%	37.0%
Neutral	24.0%	18.5%
Disagree	4.0%	5.3%
Strongly disagree	3.5%	4.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
My Advisor Gives Me Advice in a Straight- Forward and Understandable Manner		
Strongly agree	26.3%	39.1%
Agree	42.4%	37.9%
Neutral	20.1%	15.2%
Disagree	7.4%	4.2%
Strongly disagree	3.8%	3.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
My Advisor is prepared for appointments with appropriate transcripts and degree requirement sheets		
Strongly agree	25.0%	37.1%
Agree	42.7%	37.1%
Neutral	21.6%	17.6%
Disagree	5.0%	4.6%
Strongly disagree	5.8%	3.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Overall I Am Satisfied with my advisor		
Strongly agree	29.5%	42.5%
Agree	35.1%	32.5%
Neutral	22.5%	13.0%
Disagree	6.6%	5.8%
Strongly disagree	6.3%	6.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Overall I am satisfied with the advising system at USU		
Strongly agree	19.7%	25.9%
Agree	35.8%	34.2%
Neutral	25.3%	18.4%
Disagree	11.7%	12.3%
Strongly disagree	7.5%	9.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

FINDINGS: COMPUTER FACILITIES AND USAGE

One focus of these surveys was to solicit student views about open access computer laboratories at USU. As shown in Table 5, 66.9% of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 62.2% of the graduating respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they did not have to wait long for a computer. A similar proportion of respondents believed that lab consultants provided them with the help that they needed. A little over 80% in both groups expressed overall satisfaction with the open access labs. When asked whether they received a good value for their computer fee, 62.6% of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 64.1% of the graduating respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Respondents marking “Not Applicable” were not considered in order to reflect only those respondents who had experience with the USU computer labs.

Several survey questions focused on whether students had access to privately-owned computers while they were at USU. Less than one student in ten in both groups indicated that they did not. Over two-thirds of the respondents (in both groups) who had access to privately owned computers used them most or all of the time to do their school work.

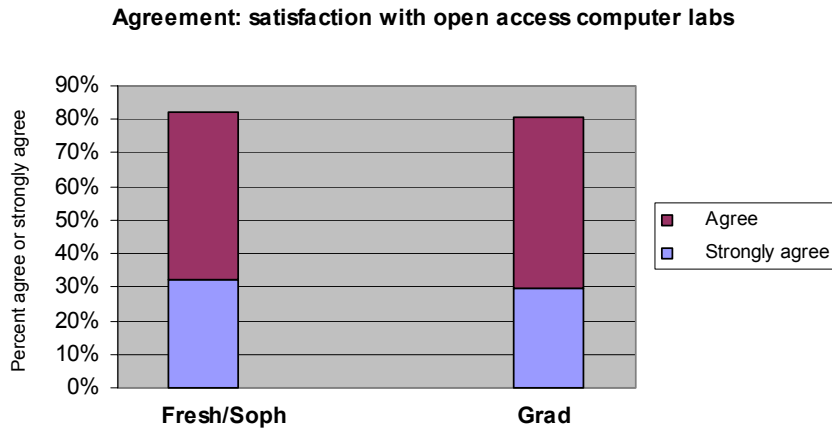


TABLE 5. COMPUTER FACILITIES AND USAGE

	FRESH-SOPH 2003	GRADUATING 2003
I Don't Wait Long for an Available Computer in the Lab		
Strongly agree	25.7%	19.6%
Agree	41.2%	42.6%
Neutral	21.9%	19.4%
Disagree	8.3%	12.9%
Strong disagree	3.0%	5.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Lab Consultant Provide Me the Help I Need		
Strongly agree	25.0%	21.3%
Agree	40.5%	40.1%
Neutral	27.2%	27.2%
Disagree	5.6%	7.5%
Strong disagree	1.6%	3.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Overall, I Am Satisfied with the Open Access Labs		
Strongly agree	32.5%	29.4%
Agree	49.8%	51.3%
Neutral	14.7%	14.4%
Disagree	2.5%	3.5%
Strong disagree	0.6%	1.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
I Received Good Value for My Computer Fee		
Strongly agree	24.8%	21.0%
Agree	37.8%	43.1%
Neutral	27.0%	21.1%
Disagree	5.6%	9.4%
Strong disagree	4.7%	5.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Number of Privately Owned Computers the Student Had Access to During the Year		
None	7.6%	8.0%
One	43.3%	51.6%
Two	29.2%	26.9%
Three or more	19.9%	13.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
For Students Who Had Access, How Often Did They Use the Privately Owned Computer(s)		
Never	4.0%	2.7%
Sometimes	28.3%	29.3%
Most of the time	36.3%	45.0%
All of the time	31.4%	23.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

LOCATION OF FULL REPORTS

The raw data and reports for each of these studies appear on both the University Assessment Web Site (www.usu.edu/asmnt/rep.html) and the Facts & Figures Web Site (<http://planning.usu.edu/analysis/surveys.asp>).