

*Office of
Analysis, Assessment & Accreditation*

2004

Comparison of Responses:
Freshman/Sophomore Students
versus
Graduating Students



August 2004

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

OFFICE OF ANALYSIS, ASSESSMENT, AND ACCREDITATION

AUGUST 2004

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 the completion of 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 1249 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 3038 usable surveys were returned and these are the basis of 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 2004 with totals from the Graduating Student Survey of 2004.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

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

TABLE 1. RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

	FRESH - SOPH 2004	GRADUATING 2004
Gender		
Male	49.1%	47.6%
Female	50.9%	52.4%
Married	9.3%	47.0%
Minority	5.8%	6.6%
Employment Status		
Full-time	6.2%	16.3%
3/4 time	8.5%	16.6%
1/2 time	24.4%	33.5%
1/4 time	18.6%	20.3%
None	42.4%	13.4%

FINDINGS: OVERALL PERCEPTIOS 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, 84.7% of the freshman/sophomore respondents ranked this item satisfied or very satisfied, while 85.3% of the graduating respondents marked satisfied or very satisfied. Higher Satisfaction levels were reported by graduating students on all but one item: the ranking of graduating respondents (85%) on the teaching ability of faculty was 2% lower than that of the freshman/sophomore respondents (87%). Graduating respondents ranked the remaining items higher: the helpfulness of faculty, personal interest of faculty in students, and 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. Eighty-three percent of the graduating respondents compared to 81.3% of the freshman/sophomore respondents selected (1) or (2).

TABLE 2. OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF USU

	FRESH - SOPH 2004	GRADUATING 2004
Overall Quality of Education		
Very Satisfied	22.0%	28.8%
Satisfied	62.7%	56.5%
Neutral	13.3%	11.3%
Dissatisfied	1.6%	3.2%
Very Dissatisfied	0.5%	0.3%
Helpfulness of Faculty		
Very Satisfied	21.7%	33.2%
Satisfied	47.3%	44.6%
Neutral	24.9%	17.0%
Dissatisfied	4.9%	4.4%
Very Dissatisfied	1.1%	0.8%
Personal Interest of Faculty in Students		
Very Good	29.9%	38.8%
Good	43.3%	38.3%
Fair	17.7%	15.5%
Poor	4.4%	3.6%
No Opinion	4.6%	3.9%
Teaching Ability of Faculty		
Very Good	43.1%	44.9%
Good	43.9%	40.1%
Fair	7.3%	9.8%
Poor	4.1%	1.8%
No Opinion	4.2%	3.4%
Degree to Which the Student Felt Treated Fairly		
Very Satisfied	26.0%	35.1%
Satisfied	50.1%	46.8%
Neutral	20.3%	14.1%
Dissatisfied	2.8%	3.2%
Very Dissatisfied	0.7%	0.8%
What Would You Tell Your Friends About USU?		
It's great, come here	43.9%	39.5%
Mostly positive things	37.4%	43.5%
Nothing much, positive or negative	16.8%	13.9%
Mostly negative things	1.4%	2.1%
It's not great, don't come	0.5%	1.0%

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 88.5% to 90.9% for freshman/sophomore respondents while the ranges for the graduating respondents were between 88.9% and 93.1%. As can be seen, differences were relatively small on most 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". Data from these respondents were not included 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, 65.5% of the freshman/sophomore respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied, while 58.8% of the graduating respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied. More graduating respondents (12.9%) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied than freshman/sophomore respondents (9.8%).

TABLE 3. GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES

	FRESH- SOPH 2004	GRADUATING 2004
Overall Quality of University Studies/General Education Courses		
Very satisfied	13.1%	14.4%
Satisfied	52.4%	44.4%
Neutral	24.7%	28.3%
Dissatisfied	7.8%	9.7%
Very Dissatisfied	2.0%	3.2%
How Well Have University Studies Courses Prepared You In the Areas Of:		
Communication		
Very well	25.4%	35.8%
Well	65.0%	57.3%
Poorly	7.9%	5.6%
Very poorly	1.7%	1.3%
Quantitative Skills		
Very well	27.7%	32.3%
Well	60.8%	57.3%
Poorly	8.4%	7.8%
Very poorly	3.1%	2.6%
Computer Literacy		
Very well	32.0%	37.4%
Well	58.0%	52.2%
Poorly	7.7%	8.3%
Very poorly	2.3%	2.1%

	FRESH – SOPH 2004	GRADUATING 2004
Humanities and Arts		
Very well	39.6%	38.5%
Well	51.1%	50.6%
Poorly	6.9%	8.8%
Very poorly	2.4%	2.1%
Social Sciences		
Very well	30.5%	36.5%
Well	59.9%	54.9%
Poorly	7.8%	7.3%
Very poorly	1.8%	1.3%
Life Sciences		
Very well	30.2%	29.7%
Well	59.6%	59.2%
Poorly	7.5%	9.2%
Very poorly	2.7%	1.9%
Physical Sciences		
Very well	31.7%	32.0%
Well	59.2%	57.5%
Poorly	7.1%	8.8%
Very poorly	2.0%	1.7%

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, 39.7% of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 42.5% of the graduating respondents said the Major Requirement Sheets, with advisors second at 31.4% and 38.7% respectively. Where 24% of the freshman/sophomore respondents had never met with an advisor in the past school year, only 8.9% of the graduating respondents had not met with an advisor during the same period. 31.3% of the graduating respondents had seen an advisor four or more times, while only 5.4% 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 (39.6% of freshman/sophomore respondents, and 28.6% of graduating respondents). Eighteen percent of the freshman/sophomore respondents did not know who their advisors were. This percentage drops to 7.2% for graduating respondents.

Approximately 86% of both groups said that the average duration of appointments with an advisor was twenty minutes or less and almost 40% of both groups said ten minutes or less. Freshman/Sophomore respondents were not content with the frequency of advisor contacts; 60.6% would have preferred to visit with their advisors more often. Nearly half of the graduating respondents wanted more contact with their advisors. A third of the freshman/sophomore respondents said they would like to meet with their advisors monthly or more, while only 23.6% of the graduating respondents wanted that frequency in meetings. A plurality of the respondents (37.2% freshman/sophomore and 45.4% graduating) 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 agreed or strongly agreed (76.1%) than freshman/sophomore respondents (67.6%). Given a similar statement about USU's advising system in general, agree plus strongly agree dropped for both groups (60% freshman/sophomore respondents and 62.3% graduating respondents).

TABLE 4. ADVISING

	FRESH - SOPH 2004	GRADUATING 2004
Major Source of Information for Academic Planning		
Advisor	31.4%	38.7%
Other faculty/staff	4.9%	6.3%
USU Catalog	13.1%	4.5%
Requirement Sheets	39.7%	42.5%
Other Students	6.9%	5.0%
Other	4.0%	2.9%
Number of Times Met with Advisor During the Past School Year		
Zero	24.0%	8.9%
One	39.7%	16.3%
Two	21.5%	22.9%
Three	9.4%	20.6%
Four or more	5.4%	31.3%
If There Were No Obstacles I Would Visit My Advisor More Frequently		
Yes	60.6%	47.4%
No	39.4%	52.6%
Number of Times Would Like to Have Met with Advisor		
Weekly	1.9%	2.5%
Every other week	4.3%	2.7%
Monthly	26.9%	18.4%
Every couple months	21.9%	18.4%
Once per semester	37.2%	45.4%
Once a year	3.8%	9.3%
Never	3.9%	3.3%
Average Length of Advising Appointments		
1-10 minutes	40.0%	37.9%
11-20 minutes	46.9%	47.2%
21-30 minutes	10.9%	12.2%
30+ minutes	2.2%	2.8%

	FRESH – SOPH 2004	GRADUATING 2004
Reasons Why Student Did Not Meet With Advisor More than Once		
Not necessary	16.0%	16.2%
Got info on first visit	39.6%	28.6%
Got info from other source	12.6%	24.9%
Don't know who advisor is	18.0%	7.2%
Advisor kept me informed	6.7%	14.8%
Advisor was not helpful	7.1%	8.3%
Advisor Was Readily Available for Consultation		
Strongly agree	18.2%	30.0%
Agree	33.8%	38.3%
Neutral	31.7%	19.6%
Disagree	12.0%	8.6%
Strongly disagree	4.3%	3.5%
Advisor is Friendly Toward Me		
Strongly agree	41.0%	53.6%
Agree	35.7%	33.0%
Neutral	15.5%	9.3%
Disagree	4.3%	2.6%
Strongly disagree	3.5%	1.5%
My Advisor Does Not Make Me Feel Rushed During Our Meetings		
Strongly agree	23.9%	36.7%
Agree	38.4%	38.4%
Neutral	21.7%	15.7%
Disagree	10.0%	6.4%
Strongly disagree	6.0%	2.8%
My Advisor Gives Me Correct Information on Services/Programs		
Strongly agree	23.1%	35.1%
Agree	44.4%	36.9%
Neutral	24.7%	19.6%
Disagree	4.3%	4.6%
Strongly disagree	3.5%	3.8%
My Advisor Gives Me Advice in a Straight- Forward and Understandable Manner		
Strongly agree	26.4%	40.1%
Agree	44.2%	38.3%
Neutral	22.2%	15.5%
Disagree	4.6%	3.5%
Strongly disagree	2.7%	2.6%

	FRESH – SOPH 2004	GRADUATING 2004
My Advisor is Prepared for Appointments With Appropriate Transcripts & Degree Requirement Analyses		
Strongly agree	27.3%	38.5%
Agree	40.7%	37.7%
Neutral	23.2%	17.0%
Disagree	4.0%	4.6%
Strongly disagree	4.8%	2.2%
Overall I Am Satisfied With My Advisor		
Strongly agree	30.5%	43.8%
Agree	37.1%	32.3%
Neutral	18.8%	13.3%
Disagree	6.9%	5.5%
Strongly disagree	6.7%	5.1%
Overall I Am Satisfied with the Advising System at USU		
Strongly agree	20.4%	29.0%
Agree	39.6%	33.3%
Neutral	25.1%	20.3%
Disagree	9.0%	9.9%
Strongly disagree	5.9%	7.5%

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, 68.3% of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 65.8% 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. Over 80% of the respondents in both groups expressed overall satisfaction with the open access labs. When asked whether they received a good value for their computer fee, 57.2% of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 62.7% 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. Approximately 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 2004	GRADUATING 2004
I Don't Wait Long for an Available Computer in the Lab		
Strongly agree	25.7%	21.6%
Agree	42.6%	44.2%
Neutral	21.3%	20.5%
Disagree	8.3%	10.4%
Strong disagree	2.1%	3.3%
Lab Consultant Provide Me The Help Needed		
Strongly agree	21.7%	23.9%
Agree	43.0%	39.0%
Neutral	28.4%	26.3%
Disagree	5.7%	7.6%
Strong disagree	1.2%	3.2%
Overall I Am Satisfied with Open Access Labs		
Strongly agree	32.9%	31.2%
Agree	51.3%	50.6%
Neutral	13.0%	13.7%
Disagree	2.4%	3.2%
Strong disagree	0.4%	1.3%
I Received Good Value for My Computer Fee		
Strongly agree	20.3%	22.4%
Agree	36.9%	40.3%
Neutral	29.0%	23.1%
Disagree	9.0%	9.1%
Strong disagree	4.8%	5.1%
Number of Privately Owned Computer Student Had Access to During the Year		
None	5.2%	7.7%
One	43.5%	53.1%
Two	30.6%	27.2%
Three or more	20.6%	12.0%
For Students Who Had Access, How Often Did They Use the Privately Owned Computer(s)		
Never	2.2%	2.3%
Sometimes	29.2%	32.8%
Most of the time	39.1%	41.8%
All of the time	29.5%	23.2%

LOCATION OF FULL REPORTS

The reports and additional data for each of these studies can be found on the Analysis, Assessment, and Accreditation Web Site (<http://aaa.usu.edu/FactsFigures/surveys.asp>).