

**OFFICE OF ANALYSIS, ASSESSMENT, AND ACCREDITATION**

**COMPARISON OF RESPONSES:  
FRESHMAN/SOPHOMORE VERSUS GRADUATING STUDENTS  
2005 – 2006 – 2007**

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## **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 experience. In addition to some general demographic questions, the focus of the surveys included topics on: Advising, Faculty/Department Experiences, General Education, Libraries/Technology, Campus Climate, and Overall USU experiences.

With the exception of some demographic questions, both of these surveys are the same. The similarity of the instruments allows a comparison of responses of students early in their USU experience and upon the completion of their USU academic programs in order to see how attitudes and perceptions may have changed over time.

## **SAMPLE SELECTION AND SURVEY ADMINISTRATION**

The Freshman/Sophomore Student Survey was administered during class time to a sample of classes with high proportions of freshmen and sophomores. All of the students in each class filled out the survey and freshmen and sophomores were sorted out later. Sorting was done using a survey question that asked the students to report the number of credit hours they had completed. Over 1,000 surveys are completed each year 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 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. Over 1,600 usable surveys are completed each year and these are the basis of the graduating student results.

## **DATA PRESENTATION**

This comparison report focuses on a subset of the items from the two surveys and includes data collected over a three year period. The tables compare results from the Freshman/Sophomore Student Survey for 2005, 2006, and 2007 with those from the Graduating Student Survey for the same three year period. In the narrative portion of the report, the number "triplets" (e.g., 70%, 71%, 74%) represent the survey results for one of the groups for 2005, 2006, and 2007.

## **YEAR-TO-YEAR VARIATIONS**

An interesting and important finding that resulted from evaluating the data over a three year period was that there tends to be little variation over time. That is, for most of the survey questions, the numbers from the Freshman/Sophomore Survey and also from the Graduating Student Survey did not change very much from year-to-year. For example, the proportions of freshman/sophomore students who said they were treated fairly by their department were 77% in 2005, 79% in 2006, and 78% in 2007. For graduating students the proportions were 86% in 2005, 87% in 2006, and 88% in 2007.

## **RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS (See Table 1)**

In 2005 the sample of respondents from both groups contained a bare majority of female students. In 2006 there were a bare majority of male freshman and sophomore students and a bare majority of female graduating students. In 2007 there were more male freshmen and sophomores and more female graduating students. Note that in all years graduating students were about five times more likely to be married than freshman/sophomore students.

**TABLE 1. RESPONDENTS CHARACTERISTICS**

|                | <b>FRESH-SOPH<br/>2005</b> | <b>GRADUATING<br/>2005</b> | <b>FRESH-SOPH<br/>2006</b> | <b>GRADUATING<br/>2006</b> | <b>FRESH-SOPH<br/>2007</b> | <b>GRADUATING<br/>2007</b> |
|----------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Gender</b>  |                            |                            |                            |                            |                            |                            |
| <b>Male</b>    | 49.8%                      | 46.5%                      | 50.6%                      | 45.4%                      | 54.6%                      | 46.3%                      |
| <b>Female</b>  | 50.2%                      | 53.5%                      | 49.4%                      | 54.6%                      | 45.4%                      | 53.7%                      |
| <b>Married</b> | 8.3%                       | 47.4%                      | 10.5%                      | 50.4%                      | 10.9%                      | 48.8%                      |

## **FINDINGS: SOURCES OF FINANCIAL AID (See Table 2)**

Questions were asked to determine how students supported themselves through college. Students were asked to indicate the percent of their financial support for school (tuition, books, housing, food, etc.) that came from each of the sources mentioned. The percentages in the table are the averages for each source.

For both freshman/sophomore and graduating respondents, self and families were the most important sources of funds. A few more graduating respondents received loans or grants.

Fewer graduating students than freshman/sophomore students did not work at all. Typically, more graduating students work more hours than freshman and sophomore students. The increased tuition costs for students usually forces them to work more as time goes on.

## **FINDINGS: ADVISING (See Table 3)**

The survey included several questions about USU's academic advising program. When asked about the most important source of information used for academic planning, the first choice of the freshman/sophomore respondents was their academic advisor, while the first choice for graduating respondents was the Major Requirement Sheets, except in 2007 where the advisor was the first choice. More freshman/sophomore respondents than graduating respondents had not met with their advisor during each school year. The most common number of advisor visits for both groups was once a semester.

When asked if their advisor gave them good advice, fewer freshman/sophomore respondents (59%, 61% and 62%) agreed or strongly agreed than graduating respondents (73%, 74% and 73%). There were nearly equal ratings of disagreement between the groups on this item. About 62%, 64%, and 62% of the graduating respondents said their advisor cared about them as an individual, but only about 41%, 42%, and 44% of the freshman/sophomore respondents felt the same way. When responding to the question, "I often have difficulty getting an appointment with an advisor," more respondents in both groups disagreed or strongly disagreed that getting an appointment was difficult. When asked if they were satisfied with their advisor, more graduating respondents (72%, 73% and 72%) agreed or strongly agreed than freshman/sophomore respondents (53%, 52% and 57%). When rating the advising system at USU, 52%, 51%, and 56% of the freshman/sophomore respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the advising system at USU, while 58%, 61%, and 59% of the graduating respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

## **FINDINGS: FACULTY/DEPARTMENT EXPERIENCES (See Table 4)**

Several questions about faculty and department interactions were included in the survey. When responding to the statement, "I am satisfied with the quality of teaching in my department", responses between the two groups and the three years were very similar, 76%, 79%, and 76% agreement for freshman/sophomore respondents and 77%, 82%, and 81% agreement from graduating respondents. More graduating respondents (86%, 87% and 88%) than freshman/sophomore respondents (77%, 79%, and 78%) said they were treated fairly by their departments. When rating the availability of faculty after classes and during office hours, graduating respondents rated this item slightly higher in all years (85%, 88% and 87%) than freshman/sophomore respondents (78%, 80%, and 81%).

When asked if requirements for their majors were clear and reasonable, more graduating respondents (79%, 82% and 83%) agreed or strongly agreed than freshman/sophomore respondents (71%, 71% and 72%). When asked if there was at least one faculty member students considered a friend, graduating respondents clearly had more opportunities for such to happen as 67%, 68%, and 69% agreed or strongly agreed, while 31%, 35%, and 35% of the freshman/sophomore respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

More graduating respondents (84%, 87% and 86%) than freshman/sophomore respondents (72%, 74% and 73%) agreed or strongly agreed that, overall, they were satisfied with their department.































