

Institutional Research and Assessment Report

June 13, 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2012 SURVEY OF UNDERGRADUATE ALUMNI CLASSES OF 2007, 2008 and 2009

The Survey of Graduates was designed to study the alumni's perception of the impact of University of Idaho undergraduate degree programs and curricula on their subsequent lives. The survey assesses alumni satisfaction and opinions regarding emphasis and quality of general education and degree programs, as well as quality of preparation for employment and graduate school. The survey is administered to alumni who graduated from baccalaureate degree programs a minimum of three years prior. This time interval allows alumni the vantage point provided by their experience in advanced studies or employment from which to reflect on the benefits of the baccalaureate experience. Completed surveys were returned in time for the analysis by 432 alumni (a 10% response rate). This rate is down twenty-five percent (25%) from the 2006 administration of the Alumni Survey.

Ninety-six percent (96%, no change from 2006) of respondents reported being "satisfied" or "very satisfied" overall with their educational experiences at the University of Idaho. In addition, the survey inquires about the students' satisfaction with the quality of experiences while at the UI for their "undergraduate education programs". In all areas except "opportunity to get to know diverse people" (up 12%) and "opportunity to learn/use current technology" (up 1%), satisfaction stayed the same or declined.

Interestingly, alumni rated their satisfaction with the quality of the various aspects of their education higher in most areas than they rated them as graduating seniors. However, "undergraduate education in general" was rated between one percent (1%) and two percent (2%) lower by alumni three years out than it was rated at the time they graduated.

The area rated "good" or "excellent" most often is a new item: "critical thinking and problem solving" (85%), while "creative thinking," "confidence in my abilities," and "accessing and using information from electronic sources" remained high at eighty-two percent (82%). Another new item on this survey is "writing for professional purposes" where seventy-six percent (76%) of respondents reported "excellent" or "good" "growth/development at UI."

A new question this year asked respondents to describe their current primary activity. Eighty percent (80%) reported "employment," twelve percent (12%) "education," and seven percent (7%) "other."

SURVEY OF UNDERGRADUATE ALUMNI CLASSES OF 2007, 2008, and 2009

INTRODUCTION

The Survey of Undergraduate Alumni was designed to study the alumni's perception of the quality of the University of Idaho undergraduate degree programs and curricula. The content of the survey reflects the goals of enhancing undergraduate education, expanding the outreach service mission of the university, and providing quality preparation in various potential outcomes of college study (i.e. leadership, creative thinking, communications, ethical principles, and work habits). The survey assesses general education and the major, student satisfaction with departmental offerings and advising, preparation for advanced studies or employment, and employment experiences.

This year the survey was reviewed by a number of programs and support units across campus and significant changes were made to the question items. The review was completed in order to eliminate questions from which the data were no longer being used, and to add questions about employment since graduating.

The survey was administered to all alumni in the graduating classes of 2007, 2008 and 2009. For the first time the survey was administered using an online format. A letter was emailed prior to the survey to verify addresses and to allow alumni the option to have a paper survey mailed to them; then the link to the online survey was mailed, followed by an email reminder and then a final postcard reminder.

The survey was mailed to 4,341 names from an official list of undergraduate degrees awarded for August and December 2006, May, August, and December of 2007 and 2008, and May of 2009. Surveys mailed and responses received were representative of the colleges at the University of Idaho. Completed surveys were returned in time for the analysis by 432 alumni (a 10% response rate). This rate is down twenty-five percent (25%) from the 2006 administration of the Alumni Survey: disappointing, but consistent with lower survey response rates during the past two administrations of the survey.

RESPONDENT DESCRIPTORS

The proportion of females among respondents was forty-five percent (45%, down 9% from the most recent alumni survey in 2006). Eighty-eight percent (88%) of respondents were Caucasian American down four percent (4%) from 2006, with the remaining responses distributed among Black or African American, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Four percent (4%) reported their ethnicity was Hispanic or Latino.

The date of graduation was dispersed between August 2006 and May 2009, with the highest frequency of respondents reporting they graduated in May 2009 (23%), and the lowest frequency reporting they graduated in August 2006 (<1%). Forty-five percent (45%) of respondents graduated at the end of the semester in May, with four percent (4%) graduating during the summer.

PART I. UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCES

GENERAL SATISFACTION OF ALUMNI

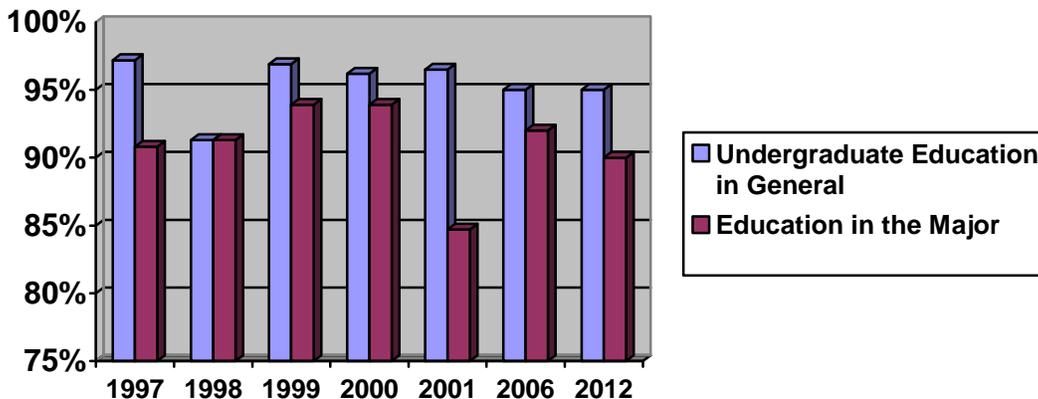
Ninety-six percent (96%, no change from 2006) of respondents reported being "satisfied" or "very satisfied" overall with their educational experiences at the University of Idaho. In addition, the survey inquires about the students' satisfaction with the quality of experiences while at the UI for their "undergraduate education programs". In all areas except "opportunity to get to know diverse people" (up 12%) and "opportunity to learn/use current technology" (up 1%), satisfaction stayed the same or declined. Nine out of ten students reported being "satisfied" and "very satisfied" with:

- "undergraduate education in general" (95%, no change);
- "cost of UI education" (94%, down 3%);
- "campus life, intellectual and cultural environment" (92%, no change);
- "education in my major field" (90%, down 2%); and,
- "quality of teaching" (90%, no change).

These elements have consistently been among the highest rated. On the 2012 Alumni Survey they are followed closely by "academic reputation" (85%, down 2%), "availability of specialized academic programs" (87%, no change), and "quality of students attending UI" (85%, down 8%).

The chart below provides a history of alumni satisfaction with their education.

"Satisfied" and "Very Satisfied"



Interestingly, alumni rated their satisfaction with the quality of the various aspects of their education higher in most areas than they rated them as graduating seniors. However, "undergraduate education in general" was rated between one percent (1%) and two percent (2%) lower by alumni three years out than it was rated at the time they graduated.

CHOICE OF UNIVERSITY AND MAJOR

Sixty-four percent (64%, down 2%) of respondents would choose the same major with "no or few changes" if they could do their undergraduate work over. Twenty-nine percent (29%, no change) report they would choose a different major, while eight percent (8%, up 3%) reported they would select a different university.

GENERAL EDUCATION EMPHASES

As in prior years, alumni were provided a list of general education disciplines and competencies included in many UI degree programs. They were asked to indicate their view, based on life experience since completing their degree program, on their importance and the emphasis each field of study should have for students at the UI. The top five competencies in which alumni reported more emphasis was needed were "Written communications" (51%), "Oral communications, speaking/ presentation skills" (50%), "Computers/Technology" (50%), "Curriculum integration/interdisciplinary courses" (42%), and "Foreign Languages" (33%). Interestingly, this is consistent with what students in each of the classes reported as needing more emphasis at the time they graduated.

GENERAL EDUCATION OUTCOMES

When provided a list of possible outcomes of undergraduate education and asked to rate the quality of their growth and development at UI for each outcome, all areas were lower than in the previous administration of the Alumni Survey, except "working with persons from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds." While it was still among those with the lowest rating of "excellent" and "good," the percentage reporting "excellent" or "good" increased by five percent (5%) to fifty-four percent (54%).

The area rated "good" or "excellent" most often is a new item "critical thinking and problem solving" (85%). Another new item on this survey is "writing for professional purposes" where seventy-six percent (76%) of respondents reported "excellent" or "good" "growth/development at UI."

Other areas in which eight out of ten respondents reported "excellent" or "good" "growth/development at UI" were:

- "confidence in my abilities" (83%, down 6%);
- "creative thinking" (82%, down 4%);
- "accessing and using information from electronic sources" (82%, down 3%); and,
- "teamwork/collaboration in professional situations" (80%, down 9%).

Areas with the greatest decline in "good" or "excellent" responses include:

- "accessing and using information from print" (down 21%);
- "adapting/responding to new challenges in life/at work" (down 12%);
- "acting on ethical principles, values (down 10%);
- "leadership/management skills" (down 10%);
- "interpersonal communication" (down 8%).

Those areas with the highest ratings of “fair” or “poor,” which increased considerably in this administration of the survey were:

- “understanding current global and societal issues” (41%, up 7%);
- “working with persons from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds” (41%, down 6%);
- “leadership/management skills” (33%, up 14%); and,
- “accessing and using information from print” (31%, up 19%).

PART II: COLLEGE AND DEPARTMENTAL EXPERIENCES

GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH DEPARTMENT OFFERINGS

In addition to rating their general university experiences, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with a variety of college and department offerings. The category receiving the highest proportion of "satisfied" or "very satisfied" ratings from all respondents was a new item this year: “faculty accessibility (kept office hours, responded to emails, etc.)” (94%). Two additional new elements rated highly as well: “theory courses related to my major” (85%, “satisfied” or “very satisfied”) and “application courses related to my major” (82% “satisfied” or “very satisfied”).

Overall alumni satisfaction with department offerings increased from the time of graduation until the 2012 Alumni Survey was administered in all but two areas. The two areas where there was a decrease in “satisfied” and “very satisfied” ratings were: “field experiences/practica” (55%, down 10% from the 2006 Alumni Survey) and “help with career selection” (49%, down 5% from the previous survey.)

Other areas in which one-half or more of respondents reported they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” were: “opportunities for participation in faculty or individual research” (62%, up 2%); “laboratory experiences” (64%, down 4%); “availability of clubs/professional activities in the major” (71%, up 3%); “seminars, colloquia, presentations” (69%, up 1%); “computer support for undergraduate work in the major” (78%, up 4%); and, “facilities and equipment preparing you for career/employment” (69%, up 3%) and “for graduate or professional school” (63%, up 11%).

Conversely, the top three items respondents rated "very dissatisfied" or "dissatisfied" most often were similar to the previous year's:

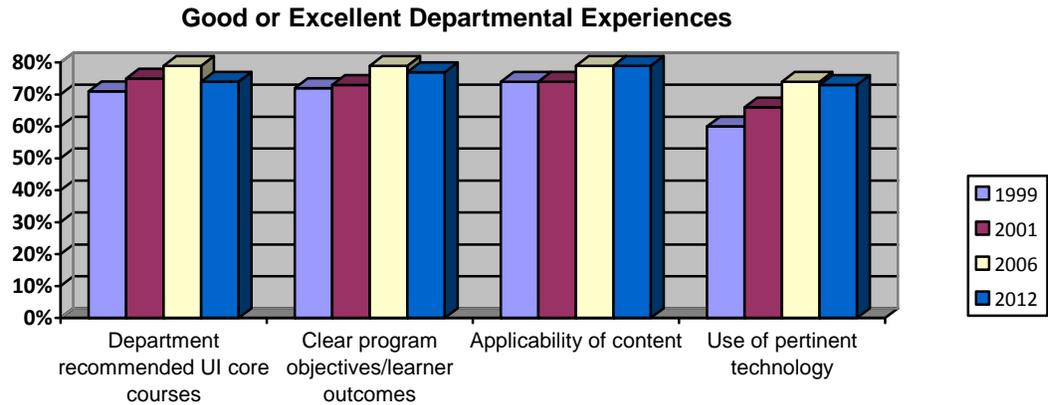
- “help with career selection” (39%, up 4%);
- "internships" (34%, up 10%); and,
- "field experience/practica" (27%, up 5%).

QUALITY OF DEPARTMENT CURRICULUM

Respondents were also asked to rate the quality of the curriculum in their major relative to its value for them in their work experience or graduate studies. Not quite three-quarters of respondents reported their experience as "good" or "excellent" in "department-recommended UI core curriculum courses" (74%, down 5%), "clear program objectives/learning outcomes" (77%, down 2%), and "applicability of content" (79%, no

change from the previous administration of the survey). Seventy-three percent (74%, up 1%) reported "use of pertinent technology" as "good" or "excellent".

The chart below provides a history of responses to the quality of the curriculum relative to its value for work experience or graduate studies.



CURRENT PRIMARY ACTIVITY

A new question this year asked respondents to describe their current primary activity. Eighty percent (80%) reported “employment,” twelve percent (12%) “education,” and seven percent (7%) “other.” Respondents were then directed to answer the questions in the section regarding employment or continuing their education, depending on their responses. They could also document education and employment after graduation if they had pursued both activities.

PART III: EMPLOYED GRADUATES AND THOSE IN MILITARY SERVICES

Of alumni responding to Part III (n = 346), eighty-six percent (86%) reported that they were “employed full-time,” ten percent (10%) were “employed part-time,” two percent (2%) were “in military service,” and two percent (2%) were “self-employed.” Respondents reported that their primary employers were most frequently in:

- “Education” (19%);
- “Engineering/Technology” (12%);
- “Business/Financial Services” (8%); and,
- “Other” (10%).

When asked about the "knowledge and skills developed at the UI related to your current employment", forty-three percent (43%, up 9% from 2006) rated them as “highly” related, thirty-one percent (31%, no change) as “moderately” related, fifteen percent (15%, down 7%) as “slightly” related, and eleven percent (11%, up 1%) as “not at all” related.

For the first time this year alumni were asked how long it took them to find employment. Forty-eight percent (48%) had a job or a job offer at the time of graduation. It took thirty-four percent (34%) “0-6 months” to find employment, eight percent (8%) “7-12

months,” and eleven percent (11%) “more than one year.” Three-quarters of respondents have had “1-2” jobs since graduation with nearly twenty-five percent (25%) having had three or more. One percent (1%) report having “0” jobs since graduation. A new item this year asked respondents how they found their first job after graduation. The top four areas reported were “worked for employer prior to graduation” (27%), “internet” (26%), “contacted company on my own” (19%), and “referred by a professor, advisor, friend, or family member who knew this employer” (16%).

This year fourteen percent (14%, up 5%) reported using Career Services/Placement at the University of Idaho to find and apply for their jobs. When adjusted for those who reported using the Career Center, in a new question on this survey at least 6 out of 10 reported their experiences were “good” or “excellent”: “career advising services” (68%); “career development events & presentations” (69%); “career fairs” (63%); “internship & job postings” (62%).

PART IV: ALUMNI IN GRADUATE STUDIES OR CONTINUING EDUCATION

In a newly revised question this year of the 54 respondents (12%) who reported continuing their education, forty percent (40%) responded that they were “enrolled as a student in a graduate program” while nine percent (9%) are “earning a second bachelor’s degree, or professional certification/license.” An additional fifty-one percent (51%) have “completed a graduate degree program, second bachelor’s degree, or received professional certification. When asked how well their undergraduate program prepared them for advanced studies, twenty-eight percent (28%, up 5%) reported “very well”, thirty-four percent (34%, up 8%) “quite well”, twenty-six percent (26%, up 20%) “adequately”; seven percent (7%, down 19%) “some ‘gaps’”; while four percent (4% down 6%) reported “poorly”, and fewer than one percent (<1%) “don’t know.”

In a revision of a previous question, this year those students who are neither employed nor in school reported they were “caring for home/family/dependents” (46%) or “unemployed” (54%).

OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS

The remainder of the survey consisted of three broad, open-ended questions regarding the most positive experiences at the university, as well as aspects most dissatisfying. In addition, respondents were asked if there was anything else about their experiences they would like to share. The responses to the open-ended comments are forwarded to the college from which each respondent graduated. Additionally, the institutions students are attending/did attend for further studies and their field of study will be forwarded to the colleges.

Complete results of the frequency analysis of responses can be found on-line at <http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/ira/assess/surveys.htm>.

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