

Institutional Research and Assessment Report

July 31, 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2006 SURVEY OF GRADUATES CLASSES OF 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001

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 a minimum of three years prior from baccalaureate degree programs. 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.

In 2006 the survey was mailed to a random sample of 1,196 names on an official list of undergraduate degrees awarded for the Classes of 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001. Of the deliverable surveys, 423 completed surveys were returned in time for the analysis (35%). This is down from the response rates of the previous administration by eighteen percent (18%), consistent with declining response rates for all surveys we administered at the University of Idaho during the 2006-2007 academic year.

In general, alumni surveyed appeared to be slightly more satisfied with their University of Idaho experience than previous classes, except when asked about how well they were prepared for advanced study, where satisfaction rates declined. Despite this, sixty-six percent (66%) of respondents from the 2006 Survey of Graduates would choose the same major with "no or few changes" if they could do their undergraduate work over. Twenty-nine percent (29%) reported they would choose a different major, while only five percent (5%) reported they would select a different university.

Interestingly, when comparing the response rates of alumni in 2006 with their responses to the same items at the time they were graduating seniors, in almost all cases satisfaction rates went up. Again this year satisfaction rates were considerably higher in the areas of "growth/development of UI" and "quality of coursework/experiences" at UI than were satisfaction rates of alumni from the previous administration of the survey in 2001.

University of Idaho
ALUMNI SURVEY
CLASSES OF 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001

INTRODUCTION

The Survey of Graduates 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, as well as preparation for advanced studies or employment.

The survey was administered to a random sample of students from the graduating classes of 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001. A letter was mailed prior to the survey, then the survey itself with a cover letter, followed by a postcard reminder, a second mailing of the instrument itself, and a final postcard reminder. The survey was mailed to a random sample of 1,196 names on an official list of undergraduate degrees awarded for August and December 1997, May, August, and December of 1998, 1999 and 2000, and May of 2001. In the interests of time and cost, surveys were not sent to alumni with foreign addresses at the time of the survey distribution. The random sample contained a minimum of 20 names from each college. Completed surveys were returned in time for the analysis by 423 alumni (a 35% response rate). This rate is down eighteen percent (18%) from the 2001 administration of the Alumni Survey, disappointing but consistent with lower survey response rates across campus during the 2006-2007 academic year.

RESPONDENT DESCRIPTORS

Similar to previous results, the proportion of females among respondents was fifty-four percent (54%, up 3% from the most recent alumni survey in 2001). Ninety-two percent (92%) of respondents were Caucasian American up two percent (2%) from 2001, with the remaining responses distributed among African American, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Hispanic American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Mixed race, international and "other". The date of graduation was dispersed from 1997 through 2001, with the highest frequency of respondents reporting they graduated in 2000 (28%), and the lowest frequency reporting they graduated in 1997 (10%). Sixty-four percent (64%) of respondents graduated at the end of the semester in May, with seven percent (7%) graduating during the summer and twenty-nine (29%) percent graduating in December. *(B5, B6, and B7)*

PART I. UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCES

GENERAL SATISFACTION OF ALUMNI

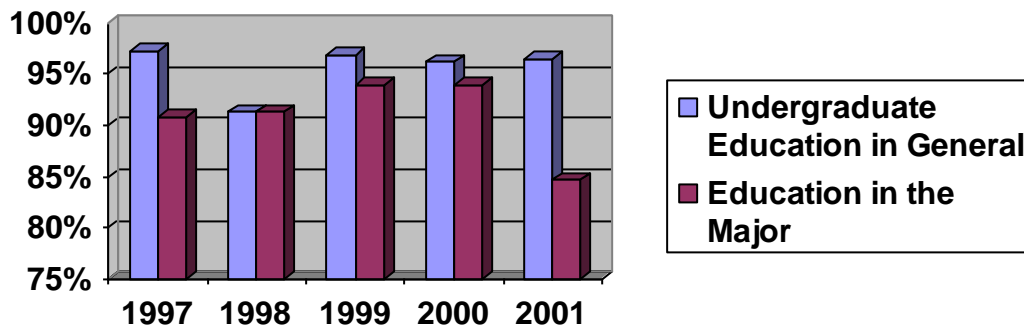
Ninety-six percent (96%, down 2%) of respondents reported being "satisfied" or "very satisfied" overall with their educational experiences at the University of Idaho. In addition, the survey inquires about the students' satisfaction with the quality of

experiences while at the UI for their "undergraduate education programs". Nine out of ten students reported being "satisfied" and "very satisfied" with:

- "undergraduate education in general" (95%, down 2%);
- "cost of UI education" (97%, up 1%);
- "education in my major field" (92%, up 1%);
- "quality of students attending UI" (93%, up 2%);
- "campus life, intellectual and cultural environment" (91%, up 2%); and
- "quality of teaching" (90%, up 1%).

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

Five Year History of "Satisfied" and "Very Satisfied"



Interestingly, alumni rated their satisfaction with the quality of "Campus life: intellectual and cultural environment" five to seven percent higher than they rated it as seniors on the Graduating Senior Survey. They rated their satisfaction with the "cost of UI education" thirteen to sixteen percent higher than at the time they graduated.

These elements have consistently been among the highest rated. On the 2006 alumni survey they are followed closely by "academic reputation" (87%, down 1%), "availability of specialized academic programs I wanted" (87%, up 2%), and "opportunity to learn/use current technology" (88%, up 4%).

One area that shows a continued decrease in satisfaction rates over the three to four year time from when alumni graduated to now was "opportunity to get to know diverse people". Only seventy-two percent (72%) reported they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their experiences at UI with diversity, a decrease of two percent (2%). (A5)

Alumni were also asked to rate the physical aspects of their UI experience with nine out of ten reporting they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the "convenience of the UI

campus I attended", "attractiveness of the UI campus I attended" and "instructional facilities." More than eight out of ten also reported being "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with "instructional facilities", "instructional technology and equipment" and "study space available". (A4)

CHOICE OF UNIVERSITY AND MAJOR

Sixty-six percent (66%) of respondents would choose the same major with "no or few changes" if they could do their undergraduate work over. Twenty-nine percent (29%, up 1%) reported they would choose a different major, while five percent (5%, down 1%) reported they would select a different university. (A3)

GENERAL EDUCATION EMPHASES AND QUALITY

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 a) its importance and the emphasis the field of study should have for students at the UI, and b) the quality of the coursework and other experiences they had in each area while at the UI. For each of the classes in the 2006 Survey of Graduates, "Computers/Technology", "Oral communications, speaking/ presentation skills", and "Written communications" were the top three competencies that students reported needed more emphasis, which is consistent with previous years' responses. Interestingly, it is also consistent with what students in each of the classes reported as needing more emphasis at the time they graduated.

This year's alumni reported much greater satisfaction with the quality of their coursework and experiences in these general education discipline areas than did alumni in the previous administration of the survey, as well as reporting much more satisfaction now than at the time they graduated. The area rated "good" or "excellent" most often continues to be "written communication" (84%, up 6%). This was also the highest rated at the time of graduation, with between sixty-seven (67%) for the class of 1999 and seventy percent (70%) for the class of 2000 reporting the quality of their coursework was "good" or "excellent". Other areas rating high frequencies in "quality of coursework/ experiences" were:

- "social sciences" (71%, up 3%);
- "oral communications speaking/presentation skills" (70%, up 5%);
- "biological and life sciences" (65%, up 8%);
- "mathematics" (64%, up 2%);
- "computers/technology" (63%, up 7%); and
- "literature" (60%, up 3%). (A6)

OUTCOMES OF UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

When provided a list of possible outcomes of undergraduate education and asked to rate the quality of their growth and development at U Idaho for each outcome, alumni again rated these as having higher quality than in the previous administration of the survey. Those aspects rated most often as "good" or "excellent" were "teamwork/ collaboration" (89%, up 12%), "confidence in my abilities" (89%, no change), and "accessing and using

information from print" (88%, up 10%). Other areas in which eight out of ten responded "good" or "excellent" included:

- "interpersonal communications" (87%, up 10%);
- "creative thinking" (86%, up 16%);
- "accessing and using information from electronic sources" (85%, up 14%);
- "adapting/responding to new challenges in life/at work" (85%, up 6%);
- "acting on ethical principles, values" (83%, up 4%).

Other areas which showed an increase of five percent (5%) or higher in "good" or "excellent" response rates included "independent and continued learning," and "leadership/ management skills." (A2)

PART II: COLLEGE AND DEPARTMENTAL EXPERIENCES

GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH DEPARTMENT OFFERINGS

In addition to rating their satisfaction with general university experiences, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with a variety of department offerings. The category receiving the highest proportion of "satisfied" or "very satisfied" ratings from all respondents was "courses in the major" (93%, up 4%). The elements with the biggest change from the previous survey in "satisfied and "very satisfied" were "computer support for undergraduate work in the major" (74%, up 11%) and "laboratory experiences" (68%, up 8%).

Conversely, the items respondents rated "very dissatisfied" or "dissatisfied" most often were

- "internships" (24%, down 3%)
- "seminars, colloquia, presentations" (23%, down 4%).
- "field experience/practica" (22%, down 5%)
- "availability of clubs/professional activities in the major" (20%, up 1%)
- "opportunities for participation in faculty or individual research" (20%, down 8%).

In all of the items, ratings of "satisfied" and "very satisfied" were reported more frequently by alumni three to four years after graduating than they reported as graduating seniors. (B3)

QUALITY OF DEPARTMENT CURRICULUM

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of the curriculum in their major relative to its value for them in their work experience or graduate studies. Over three-quarters of respondents reported their experience as "good" or "excellent" in "department-recommended UI core curriculum courses" (79%, up 4%), "clear program objectives/learning outcomes" (79%, up 6%), and "applicability of content" (79%, up 13%). Seventy-three percent (73%, up 7%) reported "use of pertinent technology" as "good" or "excellent". (B2)

DEPARTMENTAL ADVISING

In this section alumni were asked their perception of the quality of advising in four areas. These areas all showed higher satisfaction ratings than the previous survey. "Planning your course of study/program" had sixty-six percent (66%) reporting the quality was "good" or "excellent" (up 6%), "help with career selection" had fifty-four percent (54%) reporting "good" or "excellent" quality (up 13%), "counseling about study strategies" had forty-one percent (41%) reporting "good" or "excellent" (up 11%); and "overall helpfulness of adviser" had sixty-six percent (66%) reporting "good" or "excellent" quality (up 7%). **(B4)**

CURRENT PRIMARY OCCUPATION

Seventy percent (70%, down 2%) of alumni reported that they were employed full-time or part-time, while only three percent (3%, down 4% from the previous survey) reported they were "graduate students", four percent (4%, no change) reported being "employed part-time", one percent (1%) reported being "employed more than 50% and continuing with education" or "students earning a second bachelor's degree or a professional certificate or license". Nine percent (9%, up 7%) reported they were "self-employed", two percent (2%, no change) "in military service", and eight percent (8%, up 4%) "caring for dependents or home". Fewer than one percent (<1%) of respondents reported being "unemployed." **(B8)**

Respondents were directed to Part III for employed graduates or Part IV for graduates continuing their studies depending on their response to this question.

PART III: EMPLOYED GRADUATES AND THOSE IN MILITARY SERVICES

Of those alumni responding to Part III, ninety percent (90%) reported that they were employed full-time, down two percent (2%) from the previous survey. Fifty-seven percent (57%) reported holding their current job for three or more years (up 13%), while the number reporting they had held their current position for two to three years increased by two percent (2%) to thirteen percent (13%). Those reporting they have held their current position for "less than six months" up to two years declined by fourteen percent (14%). **(C1 and C2)**

When asked about the "knowledge and skills developed at the UI", sixty-seven percent (68%, up 1%) of alumni rated them as "moderately" or "very closely" related to their current job, and sixty-nine percent (69%, up 6%) rated them as "moderately" or "very closely" related to their first job after receiving a bachelor's degree. Ten percent (10%, down 2%) reported that their education was "not at all" related to their current job, while twenty-two percent (22%, up 3%) reported this for their first job after receiving their bachelor's degree. **(C3)**

This year only nine percent (9%, down 4%) reported using Career Services/Placement at the University of Idaho to find and apply for their jobs, with sixty-three percent (63%, down 1%) reporting they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the services received. **(C4 and C5)**

PART IV: GRADUATES IN ADVANCED/CONTINUING STUDIES

The primary reason alumni reported for continuing their education was to "extend my expertise in my major field" (54%, consistent with the previous survey results). Alumni also reported to "obtain a professional license or certification" (27%, down 2%), and "unable to find employment with undergraduate degree/major" (14%, up 4%) as major reasons for continuing their education.

As in prior years, when asked how they selected their university for their advanced studies, the most frequent reason was "convenience of location" (38%, up 6%). Also at thirty-eight percent (38%, up 6%), was "most appropriate program for my needs". Forty-nine percent (49%, down 8%) reported that their undergraduate program prepared them "very well" or "quite well" for advanced studies, while five percent (10%) reported being "poorly" prepared, an increase of five percent (5%). (*D1 to D3*)

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.

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