

Institutional Research and Assessment Report

November 19, 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY GRADUATING SENIOR SURVEY CLASS OF 2008-2009

The focus of the Graduating Senior Survey is to assess students' satisfaction with and opinions about their experiences at the University of Idaho. Results are used to improve our degree programs to enhance learning, as well as to provide feedback to faculty and student service units to improve student experiences. Potential respondents included the 1,591 baccalaureate degree recipients for August and December 2008 and May 2009. This year 1,370 (86%, up 1% from last year) responded in time for their surveys to be included in the analysis.

Responses to the questions on the Graduating Senior Survey seem to indicate more overall satisfaction in our graduating students. One item on the survey lists a variety of abilities and types of knowledge that may be developed in a bachelor's degree program and asks respondents to indicate the extent to which each capacity was enhanced by their UI undergraduate education. The ratings in most of these elements increased for the fourth year in a row. The top items reported by the highest frequencies of seniors to be those abilities "greatly" or "moderately" enhanced include: "think analytically and critically", "identify and solve problems", "function independently without supervision", "acquire new skills and knowledge on my own, continue to be intellectually curious", "formulate creative/original ideas and solutions", and "understand myself: abilities, interests, limitations, and personality".

Thirty-one percent (31%) of respondents reported that they study 23 or more hours each week outside of class, an increase of four percent (4%) since 2006-07. Despite the increase in study hours and a decline in the percentage of hours students work, it appears UI students continue to work more and study less than in the past.

Ratings for "overall helpfulness" of advisors increased this year (77%, up 3%), with "good" or "excellent" ratings for "counseling about study strategies" rising (up 1%, to 50%). In addition, respondents reported increases in the quality of advising for "planning your course of study/program" (75%, up 2% in "good" or "excellent" ratings), and "help with career selection" (56%, up 1%).

Over one-half of all respondents had begun their job search at the time they completed the survey, with twenty-one percent (21%) having been offered a position. There was no change in that statistic this year; however, it follows a four-year decline. Students who had been offered a position were asked if "this position was a result of an internship/practicum experience," with thirty percent (30%) responding "yes".

University of Idaho
GRADUATING SENIOR SURVEY
Class of 2008-2009

INTRODUCTION

Since the spring of 1992, seniors planning to graduate have been expected to complete a Graduating Senior Survey. The content of the survey is based on goals and objectives relative to academic programs and student services offered campus-wide. Student opinions, satisfaction with their experiences, and reflections on their learning are dimensions of this exit survey.

Questions on the survey elicit satisfaction ratings regarding experiences and learning in the general education programs and in the major, student services and resources for students, library and learning resources, academic computing, financial support for education, research experience and study patterns, career advising resources, semesters spent earning a degree and reasons for extended programs, and living and employment patterns. An entire section of this survey is devoted to the department, its teaching and learning environment, and another one to advising.

The Graduating Senior Survey is administered on-line. Students are notified that the survey is available when they log in to the University of Idaho Vandal Web using their ID and PINs, and informed that the survey should be completed at the time they complete the Application for Degree. When the survey has been completed and submitted, demographic data is gathered from Banner and retained along with the survey responses. These data include gender, campus location, college, major, ethnic group, and grade point average. When survey responses are submitted, the student ID is encrypted to preserve the confidentiality of the respondents. After the survey is completed the student is required to print the confirmation page, which is submitted with the Application for Degree to the student's dean's office. Deans' offices are asked to verify that the survey has been completed. This gives university personnel an opportunity to explain to students the importance of the process and the value of their responses to departments, colleges and the university as a whole.

As a part of the administration process Institutional Research and Assessment staff meet with representatives from each dean's office at the beginning of each academic year, to discuss ways to improve the process, address any problems that might have arisen, and remind staff of the importance of these data collection efforts to the university's overall assessment program. Recently, these meetings have led to the distribution in December, February and April, of emails to colleges that include survey non-respondents in order that colleges can contact them and encourage their participation.

Analysis of results occurs after spring graduation. Departments with twenty or more respondents receive a departmental frequency analysis along with the college and university frequency analyses for comparative purposes. Data are used only in the

aggregate, and no individual student identity is connected to any survey response or report.

DESCRIPTION OF GRADUATING SENIORS

Potential respondents included the 1,591 baccalaureate degree recipients for August and December 2008 and May 2009. This year 1,370 graduating seniors (86%, up 1% from last year) responded in time for their surveys to be included in the analysis.

As it has been since the survey's inception, the age of respondents at graduation ranged from 21 years or younger to 30 years of age or older, with a median age of 23 (mode of 22) years. Eighty-five percent (85%) of this year's graduating seniors report they are 25 years of age or younger. Forty-six percent (46%) of respondents are female, down slightly (1%) from the previous year. Eighty-six percent (86%) are Caucasian. Ninety-six percent (96%, up 1% from the previous year) of respondents took most of their UI coursework on the Moscow campus, while two percent (2%, down 1%) took coursework on the Coeur d'Alene campus. Thirty-four percent (34%, down 2%) report they will graduate in the summer or fall semesters rather than in May.

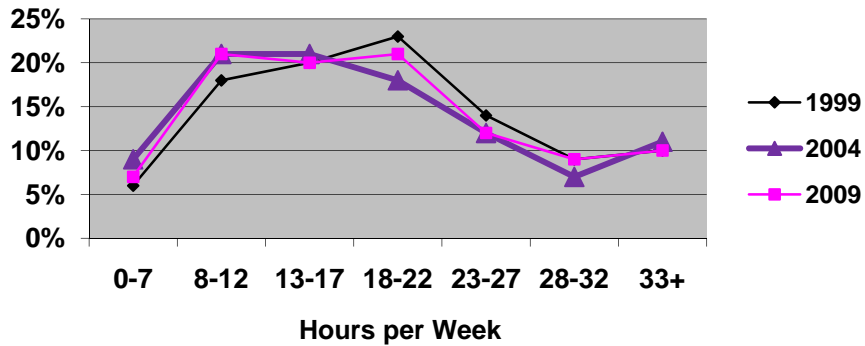
Forty-two percent (42%, down 4%) of respondents indicated they first entered UI as transfer students, with the median number of credits transferred between 35 and 49, and the mode between 1 and 19, similar to previous years. Respondents were also asked if they had transferred "to the college/department from another college/department within the university." Thirty-three percent (33%, down 1% from the last two years) responded that they had done so, with twenty-two percent (22%, up 2%) of those transferring doing so as freshman, forty-five percent (45%, up 2%) transferring as sophomores, and twenty-six percent (26%, down 3%) as juniors.

ACADEMIC AND STUDY COMMITMENTS

For graduating seniors, time spent on academic work outside of class spanned from fewer than 7 hours per week to more than 33 hours per week; the median time for the senior year was in the interval of 13 to 17 hours. Thirty-one percent (31%) of respondents reported that they study 23 or more hours each week outside of class, an increase of four percent (4%) since 2006-07. Respondents most frequently report meeting with faculty "outside of class, for advice, or about coursework or research," between zero and twenty-one or more times during their senior year, with a median interval of five to eight times, also consistent with previous years.

The chart below outlines how much time respondents reported spending on their academic work (studying, doing library research, writing papers, etc.) outside of the classroom over the past ten years.

**Hours Spent Per Week on Academic Work Outside of Class
10-Year Comparison**



EMPLOYMENT AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

During their senior year, sixty-four percent (64%, down 3%) of respondents reported that they were employed, with the median number of hours between 23 and 27 per week, as it has been in recent years. Eighteen percent (18%, down 2%) reported they were employed 23 hours or more per week during their senior year. While the percentage of students working has declined for the third year in a row, it appears UI students continue to work more and study less than in the past.

When asked about participating in a list of activities available on campus, about one-half of respondents report participating in “intramural or club sports” (53%, down 1% from last year), “civic, community service” (48%, no change from last year’s respondents), “professional organizations/clubs related to major” (46%, no change), and “internship” (45%, down 1%). Over one-quarter participated in an “independent study” (28%, no change), a “social fraternity or sorority” (26%, down 2%), and an “honors society” (23%, down 4%). Consistent with previous years, those areas reporting the lowest participation rates included “student government” (7%, no change), “intercollegiate athletics” (9%, down 1%), “arts productions” (12%, up 1%), and “national/international exchange” (12%, no change).

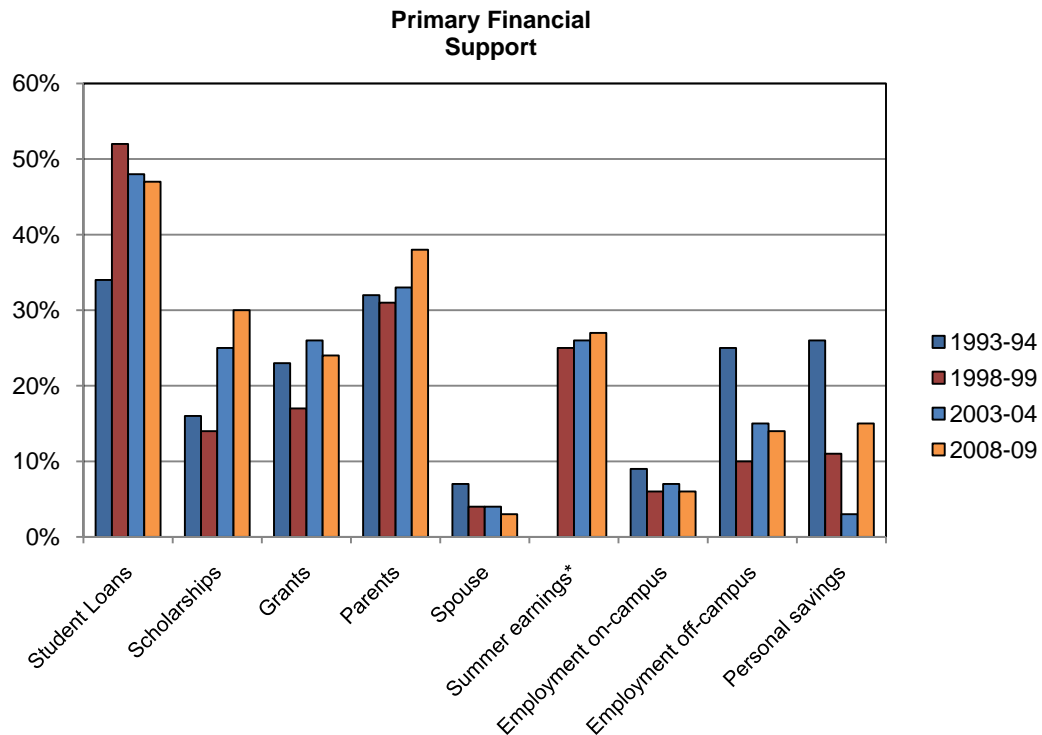
FINANCIAL SUPPORT

As in previous years, student loans are most frequently reported as the primary source of funding to support education (47%, down 3% from 2007-2008), with an additional twenty percent (20%, up 1%) using loans as a lesser source of support. Other areas most frequently used as primary sources include “parents or guardians” (38%, up 2%), and “scholarships” (30%, down 1%). Seventy-seven percent (77%, no change) of respondents use “summer job earnings” as a primary or lesser source of support for their education.” Over one-half use personal savings as a primary or lesser source (56%, up 2%), and forty-six percent (46%, down 2%) use off-campus employment. Only thirty-seven percent (37%, down 3%) use on-campus employment as a primary or lesser source. Ten percent (10%, no change) of respondents reported they used “internship/cooperative education earnings” as a lesser source of financing, while three percent (3%, up 1%)

reported using these earnings as a primary source of support; this is consistent with previous years' results. Ten percent (10%) of respondents used other sources for primary funding, including "Veterans' benefits," "Disability benefits," "Internship/Cooperative Education earnings," and "others."

Sixty-five percent (65%, up 1%) of responding seniors received scholarships, and thirty percent (30%, down 1%) relied on scholarships as a primary source of funding, while fifty percent (50%, up 2%) relied on them as a lesser source of funding for their undergraduate education. This is a significant change from the survey's inception in 1992 when only forty-two percent (42%) of seniors reported that they had received a scholarship, and sixteen percent (16%) relied on them as a primary source of support.

The chart below identifies changes to the primary sources of financial support for respondents' undergraduate education since 1993-94:



*No data available prior to 1996-97

SATISFACTION WITH CHOICE OF MAJOR

Fifty-six percent (56%, down 4%) of graduating seniors report having changed their majors while in college, with twenty-three percent (23%, down 1% from 2007-2008) having changed it two or more times. Fewer than one-half of students (49%, up 4%) selected the major in which they graduated during their freshman year, with over one-quarter (26%, down 2%) selecting their major in their sophomore year, and over one-fifth (21%, down 1%) waiting until their junior year to decide.

FUTURE PLANS

Fewer than one-half (47%, up 3%) of all graduating seniors report that they expect their principle activity after graduation to be "full-time employment in my major field." Eleven percent (11%, down 1%) anticipate being employed in some other field. Nearly one-quarter (24%, no change from the previous year) expect to be in "graduate school", while an additional four percent (4%, down 1%) plan to be enrolled in "continuing education for credential/professional certificate." Eight percent (8%, down 1%) are "completely undecided" about their principle activity after graduation, though sixty-two percent (62%, no change) of respondents report that they plan to pursue further studies at some point in the future.

Over one-half (53%, up 3%) of all respondents had begun their job search at the time they completed the survey, with twenty-one percent (21%) having been offered a position. There was no change in that statistic this year, following a four-year decline. Six percent (6%, no change) of respondents reported that the positions they were offered had been listed with the Career and Professional Planning Office. Thirty percent (30%, up 3%) of students who have been offered a position indicated this was a result of "internship/practicum experience." Twenty percent (20%, down 1%) of respondents reported that an internship was required in the major, with thirty-five percent (35%, up 2%) reporting that they had completed the internship at the time they were responding to the Graduating Senior Survey.

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH QUALITY OF LIFE AND EDUCATION

One element of the Graduating Senior Survey measures various aspects of undergraduate programs and living experiences; and students are asked about their satisfaction with the University of Idaho. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of respondents (down 1% from 2006-2007 but no change from last year) reported that they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the quality of education overall.

More than nine out of ten graduating seniors indicated they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with "increased confidence in my knowledge and abilities" (96%, up 1% from last year), "undergraduate education in general" (95%, down 3%), "valued friendships" (95%, no change), "education in my major field" (95%, up 2%), "campus life, social interactions" (90%, up 2%), and "opportunity to interact with faculty informally" (90%, up 2%). Eight out of ten respondents reported they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" in all other areas except the cost of their UI education, where seventy-nine percent (79%, down 1%) of respondents reported being "satisfied" or "very satisfied".

Student satisfaction with services in general, and services "from my department" in particular, went down (2%) and up (2%) respectively this year. Interestingly, satisfaction with "opportunity to get to know diverse people" went up to eighty-five percent (85%), a four percent (4%) increase.

SATISFACTION WITH THE UI AND THE COLLEGE/DEPARTMENT

Since the survey's inception, graduating seniors have been asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with their college/major department in several areas. The top areas in which students reported their satisfaction was "good" or "excellent" were "class size" (88%, up 1%), "student-student interactions" (88%, up 2%), "currency of curriculum content" (87%, up 3%), and "academic rigor" (86%, up 1%).

Additional areas in which at least eight out of ten students reported that their satisfaction was "good" or "excellent" include:

- "quality of instruction" (85%, no change from the previous year);
- "fairness of grading" (85%, up 1%);
- "personal attention to students" (85%, up 3%);
- "practical relevance of content" (84%, up 1%);
- "academic advice from faculty" (82%, no change);
- "quality of students in classes" (82%, up 2%); and,
- "faculty-student interactions" (85%, no change);

Consistent with previous years, the three elements in which less than three-fourths of students reported that their satisfaction was "good" or "excellent" were:

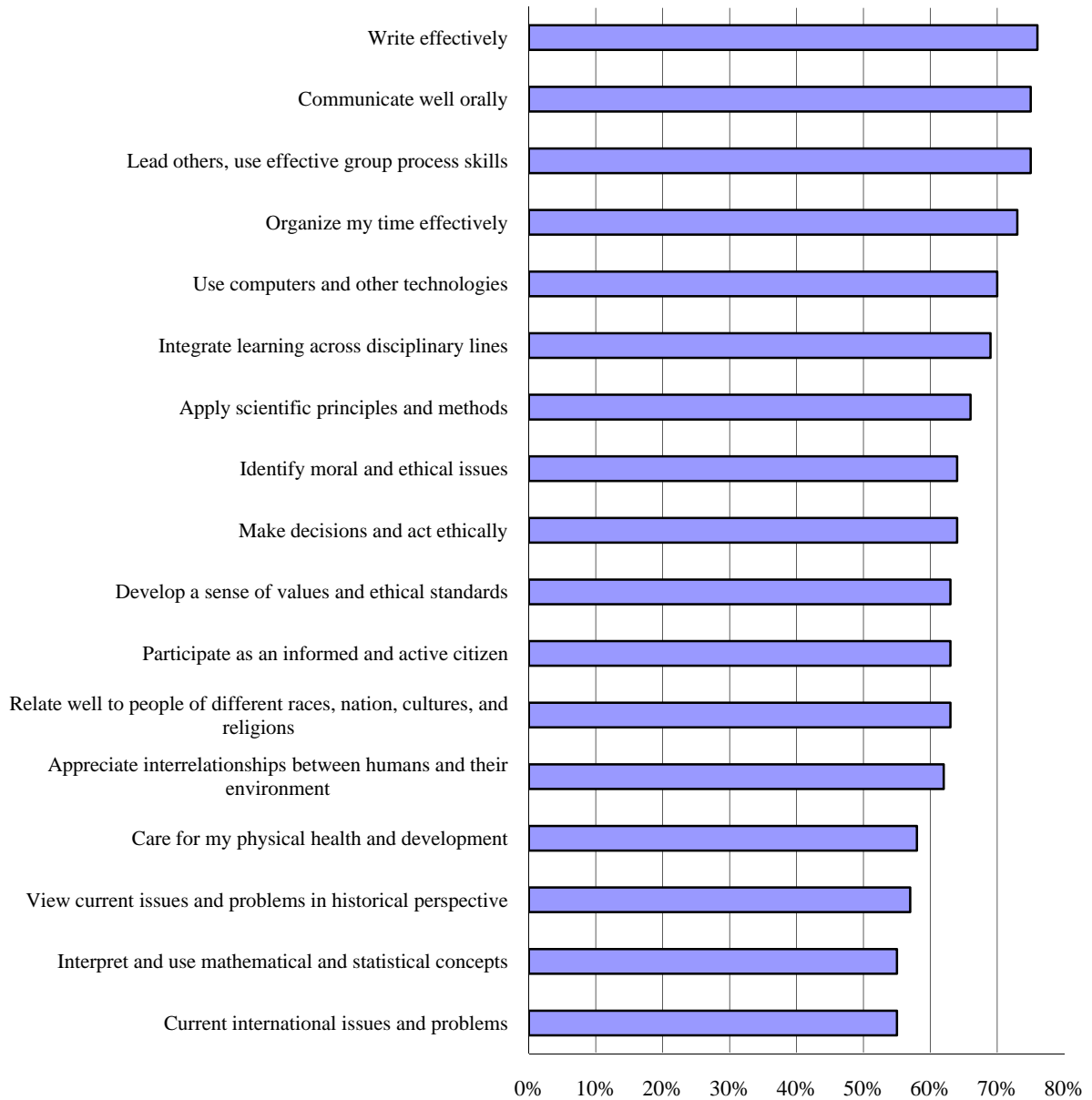
- "collaborative learning opportunities" (73%, no change);
- "availability of required courses" (73%, up 2%); and,
- "research reputation" (62%, up 1%).

GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS

One item on the senior survey lists a variety of abilities and types of knowledge which correspond with the university learning outcomes and that may be developed in a bachelor's degree program, and asks respondents to indicate the extent to which each capacity was enhanced by their UI undergraduate education. The ratings in most of these elements increased for the fourth year in a row. The top items reported by the highest frequencies of seniors to be those "greatly" or "moderately" enhanced include: "think analytically and critically" (84%, no change from last year), "identify and solve problems" (84%, up 2%), "function independently without supervision" (82%, up 3%), "acquire new skills and knowledge on my own, continue to be intellectually curious" (82%, up 5%), "formulate creative/original ideas and solutions" (up 4%), and "understand myself: abilities, interests, limitations, and personality (up 1%) both seventy-eight percent (78%).

The chart below includes additional areas in which one-half or more of seniors report their skills and knowledge are "moderately" or "greatly" enhanced:

Reported Capacity Moderately or Greatly Enhanced



Conversely, abilities reported by graduating students as being "not at all" enhanced at the UI are also important goals of general education. Those areas in which more than half report their abilities have increased "not at all" or "a little" include "contributions to knowledge and culture by ethnic minorities" (58%, down 1%), "contributions to knowledge and culture by women" (56%, down 3%), "understand another culture, know another language" (55%, down 2%), and "knowledge of the evolution of economic, social, and political institutions" (51%, no change from last year).

UI GENERAL EDUCATION CORE CURRICULUM COMPARED WITH SBOE GENERAL EDUCATION CORE CURRICULUM

This year, for the first time, we were able to compare the responses of students who took the UI Core Curriculum and those who took the State Board of Education Core Curriculum. UI Core students reported they are more satisfied (97%) than SBOE Core students (94%) with their education in general, though overall satisfaction with their experiences at UI is no different between the two groups (87%).

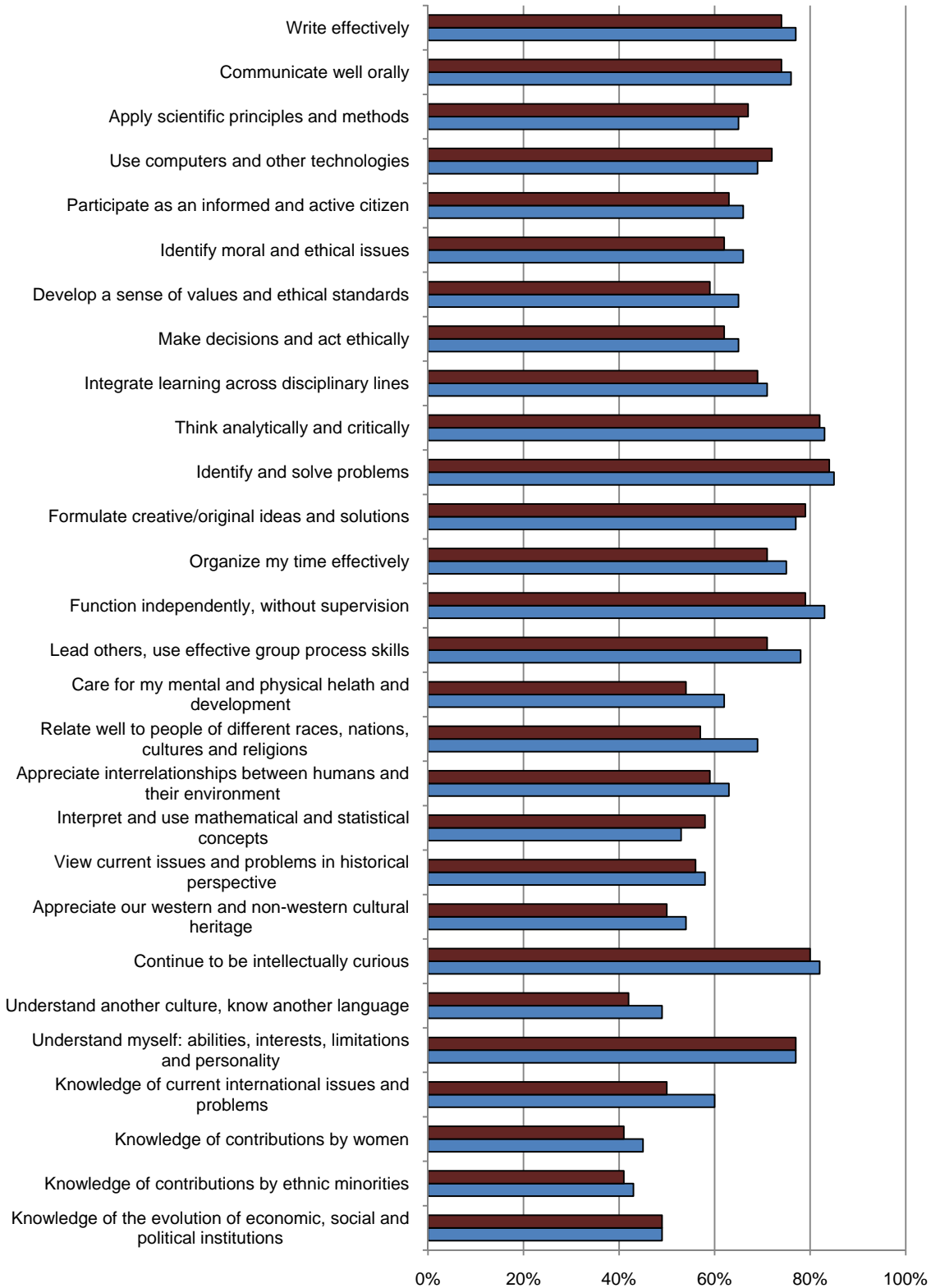
UI Core Curriculum students reported greater satisfaction in other areas as well:

- UI Core students are more satisfied with campus life and social interactions (93%), than SBOE Core students (87%);
- UI Core students were consistently more satisfied with department offerings than SBOE Core students;
- UI Core students were much more likely to report that they had successfully decided on an academic major by the end of their first year (57%), compared with SBOE Core students (40%);
- UI Core students reported participating in co-curricular activities more often than SBOE Core students;
- UI Core students report being more involved in community service (54%) than SBOE Core students (40%);
- UI Core students were more satisfied with the quality of their experience in every area related to the university-wide learning outcomes, except “research experience” where both groups reported the quality of their experience was “good” or “excellent” (37%);
- UI Core students reported that emphasis in general education should remain the same more often than SBOE Core students who reported less emphasis is needed; and,
- UI Core students were more likely to respond that courses in their major were high quality than were SBOE Core students.

The chart below indicates areas in which UI Core Students report their skills and knowledge are “moderately” or “greatly” enhanced compared with SBOE Core Students:

UI Core Students Compared to SBOE Core Students Capacity Moderately or Greatly Enhanced

■ SBOE Core Students
■ UI Core Students

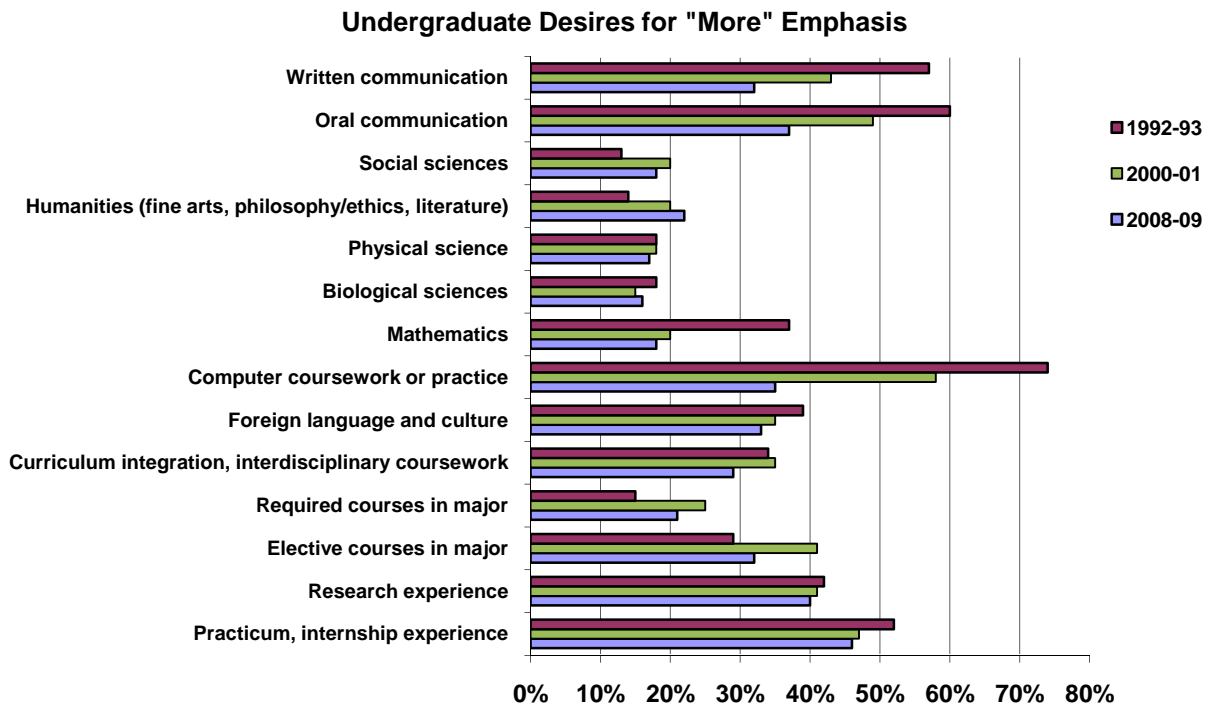


EMPHASIS AND SATISFACTION IN GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The Graduating Senior Survey asks students to evaluate some of the goals and objectives of our general education core curriculum. These elements ask for student views regarding how much emphasis the core curriculum should place on a variety of skills and abilities. This is done by asking students to indicate where they believe more, less, or the same emphasis should be applied for future undergraduates' study. This question also asks seniors about the quality of the educational experiences they received in these areas while at the UI. Each of these items correlates with one or more of the University Learning outcomes that broadly describe expected and desired consequences of learning through integrated curricular and co-curricular experiences.

The top five areas in which seniors recommended *more* emphasis for future students were: "practicum, internship experience" (46%, up 6%), "research experience" (40%, up 11%), "oral communication" (37%, down 4%), "computer coursework and practice" (35%, up 2%), and "foreign language and culture" (33%, no change.) Conversely, the top areas in which respondents recommended the *same or less* emphasis for future students were: "required courses in the major" (71%, up 1%), "statistics" (69%, up 1%), "mathematics" (69%, up 3%), "literature" (68%, up 4%), "physical sciences" (66%, up 1%), and "social sciences" (66%, no change.)

When comparing student responses from the survey's inception in 1992 to the current graduating class, we can see some significant shifts in the areas that respondents report should be emphasized (see chart below.)

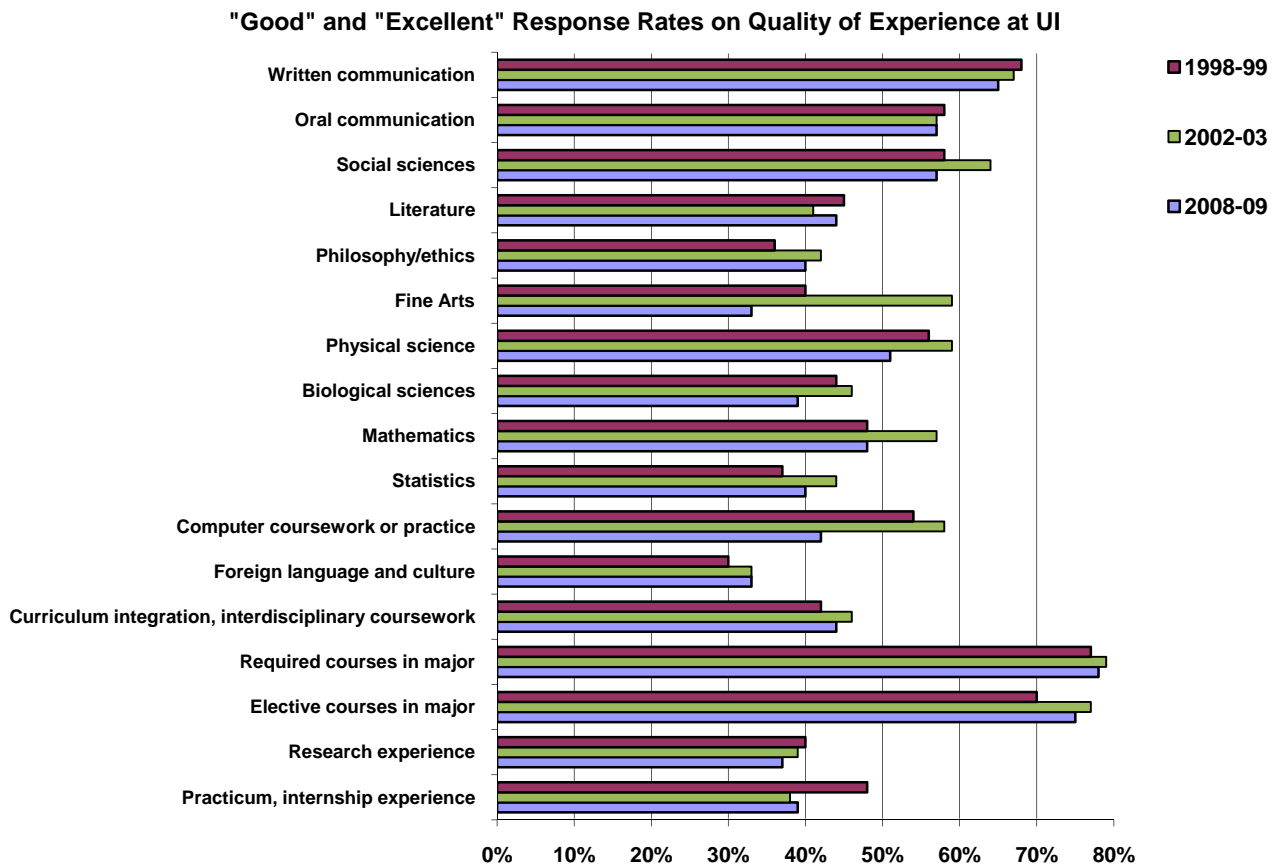


Students were also asked to rate their satisfaction with the quality of their experiences in each of these areas at the UI. Consistent with the last several years, the top five elements

in which students reported the quality of their experience as "excellent" or "good" were "required courses in the major" (78%, up 2%), "elective courses in the major" (75%, up 3%), "written communication" (65%, no change), "social sciences" (57%, down 2%), and "oral communication" (57%, up 1%).

It is important to note that for nine of the seventeen elements in this item, one third or more of the students reported that these were not experiences or courses completed at the University of Idaho. When the frequency distribution is adjusted by eliminating the responses for students who have not had the experience at the UI, nearly six out of ten respondents report the quality of their experience as "good" or "excellent" for every item.

The chart below shows the change in student satisfaction with the quality of their experiences at the UI over the past ten years. This chart shows that in several areas (for example, oral communication, foreign language and culture, and required courses in the major) student satisfaction with their experience in general education areas has remained fairly constant, even though student desires for more emphasis have changed over the years.



Finally, fifty-one percent (51%) of all respondents reported taking a freshman Core Discovery course.

SATISFACTION WITH SERVICES AND FACILITIES FOR STUDENT SUPPORT

In two items seniors are asked to rate their level of satisfaction with a variety of support services, facilities, and activities available to students. Support services and offices receiving ratings of "satisfied" or "very satisfied" from eight of ten or more of respondents included:

- "Attractiveness of campus" (95%, up 2%);
- "Recreation center" (93%, up 4%);
- "Library services" (91%, no change from last year);
- "Computer lab access" (90%, up 1%);
- "Registrar's Office" (89%, down 1%);
- "Idaho Commons" (88%, up 1%);
- "Adequacy of classrooms" (88%, up 1%);
- "Help Desk support services" (87%, up 1%);
- "Admissions Office" (87%, down 2%);
- "Library holdings" (85%, up 1%)
- "Bookstore services" (84%, up 2%);
- "Individual study space on campus" (84%, up 3%);
- "Business and Accounting, Cashiers" (83%, up 3%); and,
- "Group study/work space on campus" (83%, up 2%).

When adjusted for students who reported that they had not used the services, additional elements become prominent for student satisfaction: "Tutoring and Learning Services," "Student Disability Services," "Academic Assistance Center," "International Programs Office," "International Student Advisor," "Multicultural Affairs Office," the "Women's Center," "adequacy of laboratories and studios," "music/theatre/dance/art performances," "intramural sports," and "campus organizations, clubs, special interest groups," all receiving ratings of "satisfied" or "very satisfied" by ninety percent (90%) or more of respondents who reported actually using these services.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Fifty-six percent (56%, down 3%) of responding seniors reported they had an opportunity to participate in research during their undergraduate coursework. When asked to describe the type of research in which they were involved, seniors reported their experiences as "field study" (33%, down 2%), "experimental research" (33%, up 1%), and "historical, philosophical original writing" (22%, down 2%). Thirty-five percent (35%, down 3%) reported their experiences were "independent," forty-one percent (41%, down 1%) "collaborative with students," and twenty-eight percent (28%, up 3%) "collaborative with faculty."

This year, forty percent (40%, up 11%) of graduating seniors reported that the UI should have more emphasis on "research experience", with thirty-seven percent (37%, up 1%) reporting that the quality of their research experience was "good" or "excellent." When asked about satisfaction with departmental offerings, slightly over one-half (54%, up 3%)

reported being “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with "opportunities for participation in faculty or individual research."

TIME TO GRADUATION

The Graduating Senior Survey asks students a series of questions about their progress to their degrees. Students were asked how many semesters their undergraduate studies took to complete, with response options ranging from fewer than seven semesters to more than 15. While the most frequent response, as in the past, was eight semesters (31%, up 2%), forty percent (40%, down 1%) of students reported that it took 10 or more semesters to complete their undergraduate studies. The reason cited by the greatest number of respondents for why they took longer than eight semesters to complete their studies was the same as in the past several years, "changed majors or selected major late" (29%, down 2%). Other top reasons cited were also consistent with previous years: “took difficult and/or time-consuming courses” (15%, down 1%), “needed to repeat a course” (13%, down 3%), “needed to work ½ time or more to meet college costs” (13%, no change), and “had double major” (12%, down 1%).

CAREER CHOICE

When graduating seniors were asked how certain they are of their career choices, slightly more than one-half (54%, down 1%) responded that they were "very certain," while twelve percent (12%, no change) were still undecided at the time of graduation. In addition, fifty-six percent (56%, up 1%) reported that the quality of "help with career selection" they received from their academic departments was “good/excellent.”

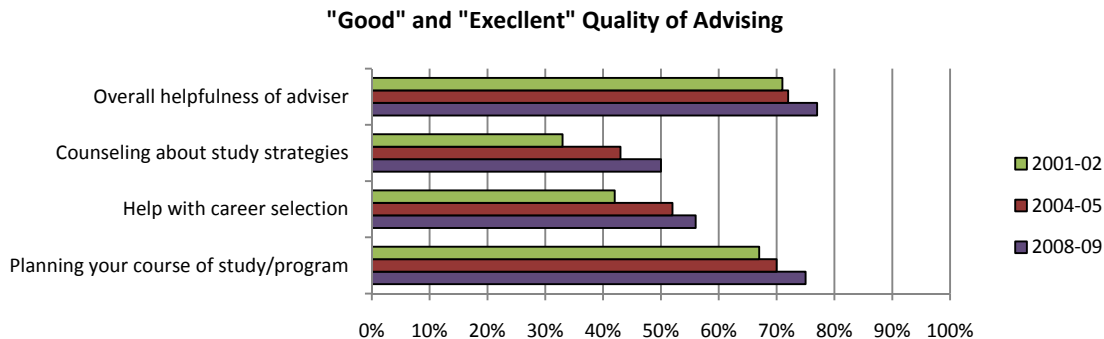
DEPARTMENTAL FACULTY

An important portion of the UI Graduating Senior Survey relates to student assessment of their departments, its faculty, curriculum instruction, advising, and services. Consistent with previous years, students responded with their most positive rating of their department faculty in "knowledge and competence in area of expertise" (91%, down 2%). "Professional stature and reputation" received "excellent" or "good" ratings from ninety percent (90%, up 2%) of responding seniors, with "teaching performance" at eighty-six percent (86%, up 1%), and "helpfulness to students" receiving eighty-eight (88%, up 1%). Students were also asked to rate the graduate assistants in their department, with fifty-four percent (54%, up 2%) of students rating them "good" or "excellent."

ADVISING

Each year students are asked their perception of the quality of advising they received from their department. Ratings for "overall helpfulness" of their advisors increased this year (77%, up 3%), with "good" or "excellent" ratings for “counseling about study strategies” rising (up 1% to 50%) as well. Other elements of this question include the quality of advising for "planning your course of study/program" (75%, up 2% in “good” or "excellent" ratings), and "help with career selection" (56%, up 1%).

The chart below provides a picture of the changes in advising in the past few years.



DEPARTMENTAL RATINGS

Level of satisfaction with department offerings is also elicited from graduating seniors each year. For the second year in a row, students appear to be slightly more satisfied with department offerings, with response options ranging from "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied," and including a "not applicable" option. Consistent with previous years, the highest percentage of combined "satisfied" and "very satisfied" ratings were: "helpfulness of department office staff" (93%, up 1%), "advanced courses in the major" (88%, no change), "printed information about the program and requirements" (83%, up 1%), "introductory courses in the major" (81%, up 3%), and "quality of courses and experience in preparing you for career/employment" (79%, up 1%). Over one-half of all students were "satisfied or "very satisfied" in all areas except "quality of internships," which has the highest rating of "not relevant" responses (50%, up 3%).

Areas in which students reported the greatest amount of dissatisfaction were "facilities and equipment support for the major" (14%, down 3%), "opportunities for participation in faculty or individual research" (16% report "very dissatisfied" or "dissatisfied", no change from last year), and "quality of courses and experiences in preparing you for career/employment" (15%, no change).

OPEN ENDED COMMENTS

The remainder of the survey elicited, through open-ended questions, the most salient experiences the respondents had at UI, both positive and negative. These written comments are distributed to the deans' and department offices, as they often yield information that is helpful for program improvement.

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