

OFFICE OF ANALYSIS, ASSESSMENT, AND ACCREDITATION

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

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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 this year's 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 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 1,008 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 1687 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 compare totals from the Freshman/Sophomore Student Survey 2005 with totals from the Graduating Student Survey 2005.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

As shown in Table 1, the sample of respondents from both groups contained a bare majority of females. However, the sample of females was slightly over represented, as the total undergraduate population for Spring 2005 had 51.4% males and 48.6% females. Also note that graduating students are much more likely to be married than freshman/sophomore students.

TABLE 1. RESPONDENTS CHARACTERISTICS

	FRESH-SOPH 2005	GRADUATING 2005
Gender		
Male	49.8%	46.5%
Female	50.2%	53.5%
Married	8.3%	47.4%

FINDINGS: SOURCES OF FINANCIAL AID

Questions were asked to determine how students supported themselves through college (Table 2). Students were asked to indicate the percent of their financial support for school (tuition, books, housing, food, etc.) that came from each of the following sources. The percentages in the table are the mean for each source.

TABLE 2. SOURCES OF FINANCIAL AID

	FRESH-SOPH 2005	GRADUATING 2005
Sources of Finances: (means)		
Parents or other relative	35%	21%
Spouse	1%	3%
Personal Savings	14%	11%
Employment	11%	16%
Scholarship	19%	15%
Loans	10%	15%
Grants	9%	17%
Other	2%	2%
On average, how much do you work while taking courses at USU?		
Not at all	39.2%	10.2%
One-fourth time	17.8%	20.2%
One-half time	24.8%	32.6%
Three-fourths time	8.6%	20.2%
Full-time	9.7%	16.8%

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 did not work at all. More graduating students worked in each time category (¼ time, ½ time, ¾ time, and full-time). As tuition and living costs rise students are usually forced to work more as time goes on.

FINDINGS: ADVISING

The survey included several questions about academic advising at USU (Table 3). When asked about the most important source of information used for academic planning, both freshman/sophomore respondents and graduating respondents said their academic advisor or the Major Requirement Sheets. However, the first choice for academic planning of the freshman/sophomore respondents was their academic advisor (46.2%), while the first choice for graduating respondents was the Major Requirement Sheets (43.6%). Where 23.8% of the freshman/sophomore respondents had never met with an advisor in the past school year, only 6.3% of the graduating respondents had not met with an advisor during the same period. The most common number of advisor visits for both groups was once a semester.

When asked if their advisor gave them good advice, nearly 59% of the freshman/sophomore respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while 73% of the graduating respondents agreed or strongly agreed. There were nearly equal ratings of disagreement between the groups on this item. Nearly 62% of the graduating respondents said their advisor cared about them as an individual but only 41% of the freshman/sophomore respondents felt the same way. When

responding to the question, "I often have difficulty getting an appointment with an advisor," 53.9% of the graduating respondents and 43.4% of the freshman/sophomore respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed they had difficulty getting appointments. Although more graduating respondents (25.2%) had difficulty getting an appointment with an advisor than freshman/sophomore respondents (17.4%), twice as many freshman/sophomore respondents marked neutral on this item. When asked to respond to the statement, "Overall I am satisfied with my advisor," more graduating respondents agreed or strongly (71.9%) than freshman/sophomore respondents (53%). When ranking the advising system at USU, both groups' satisfaction levels were similar, 52.2% for freshman/sophomore respondents and 57.6% for graduating respondents.

TABLE 3. ADVISING

	FRESH-SOPH 2005	GRADUATING 2005
Most important source of information used for academic planning.		
Advisor	46.2%	41.2%
Catalog	7.8%	4.4%
Other students	5.9%	4.2%
Faculty, not advisor	1.3%	3.7%
Major requirement sheets	32.0%	43.6%
Other	6.8%	2.9%
Met with advisor how often in the past school year.		
Once a week	1.0%	0.9%
Once a month	7.9%	17.0%
Once a semester	45.8%	58.2%
Once a year	21.6%	17.6%
Never	23.8%	6.3%
My USU advisors give me good advice.		
Strongly agree	22.7%	30.4%
Agree	36.2%	42.6%
Neutral	28.2%	16.9%
Disagree	7.5%	6.4%
Strongly disagree	5.4%	3.6%
My advisors care about me as an individual.		
Strongly agree	12.6%	27.3%
Agree	28.5%	34.6%
Neutral	40.5%	24.6%
Disagree	11.1%	8.1%
Strongly disagree	7.2%	5.4%

	FRESH-SOPH 2005	GRADUATING 2005
I often have difficulty getting an appointment with an advisor.		
Strongly agree	4.2%	8.9%
Agree	13.2%	16.3%
Neutral	39.2%	20.8%
Disagree	27.2%	27.8%
Strongly disagree	16.2%	26.1%
I am satisfied with my advisor.		
Strongly agree	17.6%	31.5%
Agree	35.4%	40.4%
Neutral	33.8%	17.4%
Disagree	8.0%	6.4%
Strongly disagree	5.1%	4.3%
Overall, I am satisfied with the advising system at USU.		
Strongly agree	14.1%	19.3%
Agree	38.1%	38.3%
Neutral	34.1%	24.2%
Disagree	8.4%	11.7%
Strongly disagree	5.3%	6.6%

FINDINGS: FACULTY/DEPARTMENT EXPERIENCES

Several questions in the survey were included to determine how students perceived their faculty and department interactions (Table 4). When responding to the statement, "I am satisfied with the quality of teaching in my department", responses between the two groups were similar, 76.3% (freshman/sophomore) and 77.4% (graduating) agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with teaching in their department. When rating the availability of faculty after classes and during office hours, 78.1% of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 84.7% of the graduating respondents agreed or strongly agreed faculty were available. More graduating respondents (85.5%) than freshman/sophomore respondents (76.8%) said they were treated fairly by their department. Only 30.7% of the freshman/sophomore respondents indicated that there was at least one faculty member that they considered a friend, while 66.5% of the graduating respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. It could be that it was too soon in the students' experience as freshmen or sophomores to have much of a chance for a friendship with faculty because students' are often in such large classes. Only 13.5% of graduating respondents indicated that they did not have a faculty member that they considered a friend, as opposed to 34.3% of the freshman/sophomore respondents.

When asked if requirements for their majors were clear and reasonable, 70.4% of freshman/sophomore respondents and 78.5% of graduating respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Five percent of the freshman/sophomore respondents and almost 8% of the graduating respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

More graduating respondents (84.2%) than freshman/sophomore respondents (71.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that overall they were satisfied with their department. Only two percent of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 3.6% of the graduating respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

TABLE 4. FACULTY/DEPARTMENT EXPERIENCES

	FRESH-SOPH 2005	GRADUATING 2005
I am satisfied with the quality of teaching my department.		
Strongly agree	19.6%	25.3%
Agree	56.7%	52.1%
Neutral	19.1%	15.3%
Disagree	3.5%	5.6%
Strongly disagree	1.0%	1.7%
I am treated fairly by my department.		
Strongly agree	19.3%	30.1%
Agree	57.5%	55.4%
Neutral	21.0%	11.3%
Disagree	1.9%	2.6%
Strongly disagree	0.4%	0.6%
Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours.		
Strongly agree	22.9%	32.5%
Agree	55.2%	52.2%
Neutral	19.7%	11.9%
Disagree	2.1%	3.0%
Strongly disagree	0.2%	0.5%
Requirements for my major are clear and reasonable.		
Strongly agree	20.3%	29.6%
Agree	50.4%	48.9%
Neutral	24.0%	13.7%
Disagree	4.4%	5.9%
Strongly disagree	0.9%	2.0%
There is at least one faculty member that I consider a friend.		
Strongly agree	11.4%	32.8%
Agree	19.3%	33.7%
Neutral	35.0%	20.0%
Disagree	23.5%	10.2%
Strongly disagree	10.8%	3.3%

	FRESH-SOPH 2005	GRADUATING 2005
Overall, I am satisfied with my department.		
Strongly agree	15.1%	30.4%
Agree	56.5%	53.8%
Neutral	26.3%	12.2%
Disagree	1.4%	2.7%
Strongly disagree	0.7%	0.9%

FINDINGS: GENERAL EDUCATION/UNIVERSITY STUDIES

Most freshman/sophomore students spend much of their time in general education courses, while graduating students often are trying to finish the general education courses they had not yet completed earlier. These courses are designed to enhance students' communication, quantitative, and computer literacy skills and to give them needed background in humanities and in the social, life, and physical sciences. As seen in Table 5, students were asked to respond to the statement "General Education is a useful part of my university experience." A few more freshman/sophomore respondents (49.6%) than graduating respondents (44.9%) agreed or strongly agreed, while 16.1% of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 21.4% of the graduating respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that general education was a useful part of their university experience. More freshman/sophomore respondents (40.5%), than graduating respondents (34.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that general education courses were well taught.

Similar percentages in both groups, 34.6% of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 34.8% of the graduating respondents, indicated that they had difficulty scheduling general education courses. When asked if general education requirements were confusing, 30.8% of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 34.0% of the graduating respondents agreed or strongly agreed that requirements were confusing.

When respondents were asked about their writing, computer and mathematics skills, graduating respondents marked each item higher than freshman/sophomore respondents. About 60% of the freshman/sophomore respondents compared to 73% of the graduating respondents said they had good writing skills. Sixty-seven percent of the freshman/sophomore respondents compared to almost 80% of the graduating respondents said they had good computer skills. When asked if they had the skills they needed in mathematics, 60% of the freshman/sophomore respondents compared to almost 74% of the graduating respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had these skills. Graduating students would be expected to have more confidence in their skills than freshman/sophomore students.

TABLE 5. GENERAL EDUCATION/UNIVERSITY STUDIES

	FRESH-SOPH 2005	GRADUATING 2005
I have difficulty scheduling general education courses.		
Strongly agree	9.0%	11.1%
Agree	25.6%	23.7%
Neutral	28.5%	26.4%
Disagree	28.3%	27.6%
Strongly disagree	8.5%	11.1%

	FRESH-SOPH 2005	GRADUATING 2005
General Education requirements are confusing.		
Strongly agree	6.6%	10.0%
Agree	24.2%	24.0%
Neutral	30.5%	28.0%
Disagree	31.3%	27.2%
Strongly disagree	7.3%	10.7%
General Education courses are well taught.		
Strongly agree	4.6%	4.5%
Agree	35.9%	29.6%
Neutral	41.2%	41.9%
Disagree	15.2%	17.1%
Strongly disagree	3.1%	6.8%
I am a good writer.		
Strongly agree	11.6%	18.8%
Agree	48.3%	54.4%
Neutral	25.3%	19.4%
Disagree	12.3%	5.4%
Strongly disagree	2.6%	1.9%
I have good computer skills.		
Strongly agree	16.7%	26.9%
Agree	50.6%	52.9%
Neutral	25.3%	16.6%
Disagree	6.5%	2.6%
Strongly disagree	0.9%	0.9%
I have the skills that I need in mathematics.		
Strongly agree	15.1%	23.9%
Agree	44.9%	49.8%
Neutral	24.2%	18.1%
Disagree	12.0%	5.9%
Strongly disagree	3.8%	2.4%
General Education is a useful part of my university experience.		
Strongly agree	8.9%	9.2%
Agree	40.7%	35.7%
Neutral	34.3%	33.7%
Disagree	10.9%	14.2%
Strongly disagree	5.2%	7.2%

FINDINGS: LIBRARIES/TECHNOLOGY

These items encompass experiences dealing with the library materials and staff, online courses, and classroom technology (Table 6). When asked if “USU libraries have the books, journals, materials I need”, 67.8% of freshman/sophomore respondents and 73.6% of graduating respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. About 47% of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 31% of the graduating respondents thought it was easy to locate materials in the USU libraries. But twice as many graduating respondents (24.9%) as freshman/sophomore respondents (12.7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this item. About 64% of freshman/sophomore respondents and about 68% of graduating respondents agreed or strongly agreed that USU library staff were available and helpful.

When asked if USU should have more online courses, 51.8% of the graduating respondents and 32.1% of the freshman/sophomore respondents agreed or strongly agreed. A majority of freshman/sophomore respondents (60.8%) were neutral, while 41.2% of the graduating respondents were neutral. When asked if their teachers used technology effectively in the classroom, 73.5% of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 74.1% of the graduating respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

TABLE 6. LIBRARIES/TECHNOLOGY

	FRESH-SOPH 2005	GRADUATING 2005
USU libraries have the books, journals, materials I need.		
Strongly agree	18.9%	18.1%
Agree	48.9%	55.5%
Neutral	28.7%	20.9%
Disagree	3.2%	4.0%
Strongly disagree	0.3%	1.5%
It is easy to locate materials in USU's libraries.		
Strongly agree	9.8%	10.0%
Agree	37.1%	20.8%
Neutral	40.5%	34.2%
Disagree	10.5%	18.8%
Strongly disagree	2.2%	6.1%
USU library staff are available and helpful.		
Strongly agree	17.0%	17.8%
Agree	47.3%	50.3%
Neutral	32.8%	25.9%
Disagree	2.5%	4.5%
Strongly disagree	0.4%	1.4%

	FRESH-SOPH 2005	GRADUATING 2005
USU should offer more online courses.		
Strongly agree	11.6%	23.2%
Agree	20.5%	28.6%
Neutral	60.8%	41.2%
Disagree	5.2%	4.6%
Strongly disagree	2.0%	2.5%
My teachers use technology effectively in the classroom.		
Strongly agree	15.6%	17.6%
Agree	57.9%	56.5%
Neutral	22.5%	19.1%
Disagree	3.0%	5.7%
Strongly disagree	0.9%	1.1%

FINDINGS: CAMPUS CLIMATE

This group of questions deals with student opinion regarding safety issues, tolerance of students and staff, diversity, and a sense of being cared about at Utah State University (Table 7).

An overwhelming majority of both freshman/sophomore respondents (87.8%) and graduating respondents (92.1%) felt safe on the USU campus. Seventy-four percent of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 67% of graduating respondents agreed or strongly agreed that professors at USU are tolerant of different points of view. Smaller percentages, 60.5% of freshman/sophomore respondents and 54.0% of graduating respondents, felt students' at USU were tolerant of different pints of view. Approximately 13% of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 17% of the graduating respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Similar percentages, 66.8% of freshman/sophomore respondents and 61.6% of graduating respondents, got to know students from other countries and of other races while attending USU. More freshman/sophomore respondents (70.3%) than graduating respondents (52.2%) agreed or strongly agreed that USU provides enough activities for its students. Eight percent of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 13.5% of the graduating respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

A majority of both groups of respondents, 57.3% (freshman/sophomore) and 63.6% (graduating), agreed or strongly agreed that faculty at USU care about students. Similar numbers of freshman/sophomore respondents (54.7%) and graduating respondents (55.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that staff at USU care about students. But twice as many graduating respondents (11.9%) than freshman/sophomore respondents (6.1%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that staff cared about students.

Neutral responses on these questions ranged from about 10% to 39% for freshman/sophomore respondents and 7% to 34% for graduating respondents. Overall a majority of respondents from both groups saw USU as safe, tolerant, and a caring place to be.

TABLE. 7. CAMPUS CLIMATE

	FRESH-SOPH 2005	GRADUATING 2005
I feel safe on the USU campus.		
Strongly agree	33.6%	44.3%
Agree	54.2%	47.8%
Neutral	9.6%	6.8%
Disagree	1.8%	1.0%
Strongly disagree	0.8%	0.1%
Professors at USU are tolerant of different points of view.		
Strongly agree	15.2%	17.6%
Agree	58.6%	49.7%
Neutral	20.5%	23.4%
Disagree	4.8%	7.4%
Strongly disagree	1.0%	1.9%
Students at USU are tolerant of different points of view.		
Strongly agree	8.8%	11.0%
Agree	51.7%	43.0%
Neutral	27.0%	28.5%
Disagree	8.4%	12.2%
Strongly disagree	4.1%	5.2%
USU provides enough activities for its students.		
Strongly agree	16.4%	15.1%
Agree	53.9%	37.1%
Neutral	21.7%	34.4%
Disagree	6.0%	9.6%
Strongly disagree	2.0%	3.9%
I got to know students from other countries and of other races.		
Strongly agree	18.2%	15.4%
Agree	48.6%	46.2%
Neutral	20.3%	20.7%
Disagree	10.6%	12.9%
Strongly disagree	2.3%	4.8%
Faculty at USU care about students.		
Strongly agree	9.6%	13.4%
Agree	47.7%	50.2%
Neutral	36.6%	27.8%
Disagree	4.9%	6.5%

	FRESH-SOPH 2550	GRADUATING 2005
Strongly disagree	1.2%	2.1%
Staff at USU care about students.		
Strongly agree	8.9%	10.9%
Agree	45.8%	44.9%
Neutral	39.2%	32.3%
Disagree	5.1%	8.6%
Strongly disagree	1.0%	3.3%

FINDINGS: OVERALL USU EXPERIENCES

Several questions in the survey were included to determine the general perceptions students had of USU (Table 8). When students were asked if they were satisfied with the education they were receiving at USU, 83.5% of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 87.7% of the graduating respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Only 3.7% of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 3.3% of the graduating respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

In evaluating whether tuition was a worthwhile investment for USU students, 53.7% of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 69.5% of the graduating respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it was. A little over 16% of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 9.6% of the graduating respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

When students were asked, "If I had to make the decision again, I would still come to USU", 70.8% of the freshman/sophomore respondents and 75.3% of the graduating respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Ten percent of both groups disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Students were asked what they would tell a graduating high school student about Utah State University. The four choices were (1) It's great, come here, (2) Mostly positive things, (3) Mostly negative things, (4) It's not great, don't come here to school. A little over 4% of both groups selected (3) and (4), while a little over 95% of both groups said USU was great or at least mostly positive things about the university.

TABLE 8. OVERALL USU EXPERIENCES

	FRESH-SOPH 2005	GRADUATING 2005
I am satisfied with the education I am receiving at USU.		
Strongly agree	23.2%	29.1%
Agree	60.3%	58.6%
Neutral	12.8%	8.9%
Disagree	3.2%	2.6%
Strongly disagree	0.5%	0.7%
The tuition I pay at USU is a worthwhile investment.		
Strongly agree	12.4%	20.8%
Agree	41.3%	48.7%
Neutral	30.0%	20.8%
Disagree	11.8%	6.1%
Strongly disagree	4.5%	3.5%

	FRESH-SOPH 2005	GRADUATING 2005
If I had to make the decision again, I would still come to USU.		
Strongly agree	28.5%	32.5%
Agree	42.3%	42.8%
Neutral	19.2%	14.9%
Disagree	7.1%	6.5%
Strongly disagree	2.9%	3.3%
What would you tell a graduating high school student about Utah State University?		
It's great come here to school	47.6%	44.6%
Mostly positive things	47.8%	50.7%
Mostly negative things	3.5%	3.2%
It's not great, don't come here	1.0%	1.4%

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>).