

BRIEF: Employed Seniors' Satisfaction with the UB Experience

This brief examines the satisfaction of employed graduates with their undergraduate experience at UB. Previous analyses¹ have shown that students work many hours during their last year of enrollment but that this employment does not detract from the overall learning or social experience. The aim of the present analyses is to determine if the added time commitment and stress of working undermines students' satisfaction with the undergraduate experience.

Survey Response and Representation

The data presented here ($N=914$) are taken from the Spring 2007 *Senior Exit Survey* described in an earlier brief². As in previous analyses, weighting procedures are used (based on gender, academic achievement, and minority status) to better reflect the responses of all graduates. Survey items included in the present analyses involve experiences within the academic major. Although 16.0% of respondents report a dual major, analyses here include only primary major items. For this brief, students are categorized as not working (21.4%), working part-time (up to 20 hours per week; 31.4%), and working full-time (more than 20 hours per week; 47.2%). On average, students in the part-time group worked 10 hours per week ($SD = 4.5$), and those in the full-time group worked 30 hours per week ($SD = 8.7$).

Satisfaction with Major Program

Graduates were asked to rate the frequency of occurrence of learning supportive behaviors of program faculty (Table 1), as well as their satisfaction with various aspects of the program and department (Table 2). In terms of behaviors of faculty within the major, all three groups of students were equally likely to have experienced feedback outside of class time. Regardless of the number of hours worked per week, those working more frequently experienced emotional support and encouragement and assistance achieving professional goals. In addition, those working the most hours (i.e., full-time) most frequently experienced intellectual challenge and stimulation.

Table 1: Supportive Behaviors Exhibited by Professors in Major/Department (Percentages Indicate How Many Students Experienced Often or Very Often)

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Not Working (N=195)</i>	<i>Part-Time (N=286)</i>	<i>Full-Time (N=430)</i>
Emotional support and encouragement	18.5 ^a	24.6 ^b	27.6 ^b
Feedback on academic work outside of class time	29.1 ^a	33.6 ^a	31.4 ^a
Help achieving professional goals	34.2 ^a	42.9 ^b	43.3 ^b
Intellectual challenge and stimulation	52.3 ^a	52.3 ^a	57.7 ^b

Note: Use of the same superscript across groups indicates statistical equivalence. When the superscript of a percentage differs from those in the same row, a statistical difference is indicated.

*Table 2: Satisfaction with Major/Department
(Percentages Indicate How Many Students are Satisfied or Very Satisfied)*

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Not Working (N=195)</i>	<i>Part-Time (N=286)</i>	<i>Full-Time (N=430)</i>
Academic advising	60.8 ^a	59.3 ^a	68.2 ^b
Availability of classes required for graduation	67.9 ^a	63.6 ^a	68.2 ^b
Availability of faculty	73.1 ^a	66.0 ^b	74.0 ^a
Availability of practicum/internship experiences	41.3 ^a	48.6 ^b	52.8 ^b
Career counseling advice	50.9 ^a	50.4 ^a	56.3 ^b
Clarity of program requirements	74.1 ^a	69.9 ^b	78.1 ^c
Encouragement to pursue graduate/professional study	42.7 ^a	48.8 ^b	48.7 ^b
Faculty interest in personal welfare	43.5 ^a	49.0 ^b	47.9 ^b
Opportunities for useful non-classroom experiences	44.9 ^a	54.2 ^b	44.9 ^a
Overall quality of assistance provided by department	63.0 ^a	61.0 ^a	61.9 ^a
Quality of courses	67.5 ^a	71.1 ^{ab}	72.7 ^b
Relevance of coursework to expected career	58.3 ^a	62.1 ^a	61.7 ^a
Usefulness of texts and course materials	60.1 ^a	55.0 ^b	54.3 ^b

Note: Use of the same superscript across groups indicates statistical equivalence. When the superscript of a percentage differs from those in the same row, a statistical difference is indicated.

All three groups are equally satisfied with the relevance of the coursework for their expected careers and with the overall quality of assistance provided by the department (see Table 2). The only item for which the expected pattern was followed was usefulness of texts and course materials: both working groups were significantly less likely to report satisfaction than were non-working students. Most of the remaining items are opposite from what was expected, with working students reporting more satisfaction than non-working students: availability of practicum/internship experiences, clarity of program requirements, encouragement to pursue graduate or professional study, and faculty interest in person welfare.

When rating the difficulty level of the major program, nearly half of each group chose appropriately challenging. Students in the full-time group were more likely to rate the major program as too easy and less likely to rate it as too difficult as compared to the other two groups.

Table 3: Difficulty of Major Program

<i>Difficulty Level</i>	<i>Not Working (N=195)</i>	<i>Part-Time (N=286)</i>	<i>Full-Time (N=430)</i>
Too Easy	13.4 ^a	13.0 ^a	18.6 ^b
Appropriately Challenging	55.7 ^a	55.7 ^a	55.6 ^a
Too Difficult	30.9 ^a	31.3 ^a	25.8 ^b

Note: Use of the same superscript across groups indicates statistical equivalence. When the superscript of a percentage differs from those in the same row, a statistical difference is indicated.

*Table 4: Overall Satisfaction Ratings
(Percentages Indicate How Many Students are Satisfied or Very Satisfied)*

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Not Working (N=195)</i>	<i>Part-Time (N=286)</i>	<i>Full-Time (N=430)</i>
Amount of contact with faculty outside of class	39.4 ^a	43.7 ^a	41.3 ^a
Availability of campus social activities	61.3 ^a	57.5 ^a	51.6 ^b
General education courses*	51.9 ^a	41.0 ^b	40.0 ^b
Overall college experience	77.2 ^a	78.9 ^{a,b}	80.8 ^b
Overall quality of instruction	70.8 ^a	61.3 ^b	64.7 ^b

Note: Use of the same superscript across groups indicates statistical equivalence. When the superscript of a percentage differs from those in the same row, a statistical difference is indicated.

Overall Satisfaction with UB

Graduates were asked to rate overall satisfaction in five specific areas (shown in Table 4). Ratings for three of the items follow the expected pattern, with working students indicating lower satisfaction than non-working students: availability of campus social activities, general education courses, and overall quality of instruction. Surprisingly, students in the full-time group were more satisfied with the overall college experience than those who were not working. Further, regardless of how many hours worked, working students are more likely than non-working students to indicate that they would attend UB again if given the opportunity. Among non-working students, 78.0% indicate they would attend UB again, while in the part-time and full-time groups, 82.9% and 85.7%, respectively, would choose to attend UB again.

Conclusions

In contrast to what one might expect, working students are *more* satisfied with their undergraduate experience than those who did not work during their last year. In most areas, those who worked were more likely to report greater satisfaction. Since previous analyses¹ have suggested that working students are more engaged in many facets of academic life than non-working students, an explanation may be that lower engagement leads to lower satisfaction. Future research efforts might be directed to increasing the understanding of how working and not working impact engagement and satisfaction.

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¹ The brief is entitled, *Educational Experiences of Working and Non-Working Seniors*, available at: <http://apb.buffalo.edu/reports/briefs/studentexperiences/EducationalExperiencesofEmployedSeniors.pdf>.

² The brief is entitled, *Profiles of Graduating Seniors: Differences Between Those Who Entered as Freshmen and Those Who Entered as Transfers*, available at: <http://apb.buffalo.edu/reports/briefs/studentexperiences/index.php>.