

BRIEF: Senior Satisfaction with the UB Experience

The purpose of this brief is to examine the learning experiences of graduating seniors during their enrollment at UB, as well as their satisfaction with these experiences.

Survey Response and Representation

The data presented here ($N=914$) are taken from the Spring 2007 Senior Exit Survey described in an earlier brief¹. As in previous analyses, weighting procedures are used (based on gender, academic achievement, and minority status) to better reflect the responses of all graduates. The survey contains questions about general learning experiences and experiences within the academic major. For respondents with two majors (16.0%), two sets of major-specific items are asked. The analyses here include items only for the primary major.

Academic Experiences at UB

Graduates were asked to indicate how frequently they had experienced each of the academic items listed in Table 1 during their undergraduate course work -- never, sometimes, often, or very often. (The culminating senior experience item was a yes/no item.) With the exception of the culminating senior experience, the percentages of students who have *ever* experienced each of these activities are encouraging. Nearly all graduates have engaged in such higher-level thinking activities as applying mathematical and problem solving skills and scientific methods, creating original ideas and/or products, and examining ethical issues and values. In addition, respondents have experienced educational activities which make this higher-level thinking possible. For example, nearly all graduates report receiving prompt feedback from instructors, working with other students in and out of class, and completing assignments requiring them to integrate information from a variety of sources. They also report being evaluated according to their writing ability.

In terms of those who experienced each *frequently* (often or very often), the results were most promising for using computers to complete assignments, using problem-solving skills, and working on papers/projects that required integrating information. At least two-thirds of the graduates reported experiencing each of these frequently. Just under two-thirds receiving prompt feedback frequently. The lower percentages of students who report frequently applying mathematical skills and scientific methods, working with other students in and out of class, and examining ethical issues and values is understandable in that each of these is likely emphasized more strongly in some majors than in others. However, the lower percentages of students who report frequently creating original ideas and/or products, being evaluated based on speaking ability, and being evaluated based on writing ability is somewhat surprising given these skills are often cited learning objectives across the disciplines.

Most graduates report experiencing effective instructor behavior, such as instructors encouraging them to learn on their own, using innovative technology to facilitate learning, and actively engaging students, but smaller percentages report experiencing these frequently (42.6%, 48.8%, and 65.2%, respectively). While nearly all have experienced an instructor communicating ineffectively in class and over two-thirds have perceived a professor coming to class unprepared, the percentages of students who report frequently experiencing these negative behaviors are low (29.2% and 12.0%, respectively). The pattern is similar for negative student behaviors. Nearly all graduates have experienced disruptive classroom behavior, and three-quarters have observed student dishonesty on assignments and/or exams. Although the percentages of students who report experiencing these negative student behaviors *frequently* are lower (30.0% and 16.2%, respectively), they still are greater than ideal.

Table 1: Academic Experiences of Graduates

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Ever Experienced</i>	<i>Experienced Often or Very Often</i>
<i>Coursework Experiences and Activities</i>		
Applied mathematical skills	95.1	57.4
Applied scientific principles and methods	91.2	48.7
Completed assignments with other students <u>outside of class</u>	94.8	53.3
Completed culminating senior experience (yes/no response only)	13.0	N/A
Created original ideas and/or products	90.8	49.9
Evaluated by ability to speak clearly and effectively	79.2	37.8
Evaluated by ability to write clearly and effectively	95.5	58.7
Examined ethical issues and values	91.9	44.8
Received prompt oral/written feedback from instructors	98.8	62.1
Used computers to complete assignments	99.6	87.2
Used problem-solving skills	98.7	73.2
Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas/information from various sources	98.3	65.8
Worked with other students on assignments <u>during class</u>	94.2	46.2
<i>Faculty Activities and Behaviors</i>		
Had a faculty member encourage your ability to learn on your own	87.7	42.6
Had a faculty member use innovative technology to facilitate learning	93.9	48.8
Had a faculty member who came to class <u>unprepared</u>	69.0	12.2
Had a faculty member who communicated <i>ineffectively</i> in class	92.9	29.2
Observed professors actively engaging students during class	98.6	65.2
<i>Student Behaviors</i>		
Experienced classroom behavior by students that was disruptive to learning	92.0	30.2
Observed student dishonesty when completing assignments or exams	72.5	16.2

Table 2: Supportive Behaviors Exhibited by Professors in Major/Department

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Ever Experienced</i>	<i>Experienced Often or Very Often</i>
Emotional support and encouragement	73.3	24.5
Feedback on academic work outside of class time	79.8	31.4
Help achieving professional goals	82.9	41.1
Intellectual challenge and stimulation	93.3	54.8

Satisfaction with Major Program

Graduates were asked to provide information about interactions with faculty within the major program (Table 2) and to rate satisfaction with various aspects of the program and/or department (Table 3). Nearly all report that they had experienced a faculty member who provided intellectual stimulation, while around three-quarters report receiving emotional support and encouragement, feedback on work outside of class, and help achieving professional goals. The percentages of graduates who report frequently experiencing each of these are much lower (54.8%, 24.5%, 31.4%, and 41.1%, respectively).

Table 3: Satisfaction with Major/Department

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Satisfied or Very Satisfied</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied</i>
Academic advising	63.6	20.5	15.9
Availability of classes required for graduation	66.7	21.4	11.9
Availability of faculty	71.1	20.6	8.3
Availability of practicum/internship experiences	48.7	31.7	19.6
Career counseling advice	53.0	30.9	16.1
Clarity of program requirements	74.4	17.8	7.8
Encouragement to pursue graduate/professional study	47.8	33.9	18.3
Faculty interest in personal welfare	47.0	35.0	18.0
Opportunities for useful non-classroom experiences	47.7	34.5	17.8
Overall quality of assistance provided by department	61.9	24.9	13.2
Quality of courses	70.8	19.7	9.5
Relevance of coursework to expected career	60.9	25.7	13.4
Usefulness of texts and course materials	55.8	29.2	15.0

In terms of satisfaction with the program and department, around half of the graduates are satisfied or very satisfied with all aspects included on the survey. The greatest areas of satisfaction include the availability of faculty, the clarity of program requirements, and the

quality of courses. The areas where the fewest students report satisfaction are availability of practicum/internship experiences, encouragement to pursue graduate/professional study, faculty interest in personal welfare, and opportunities for useful non-classroom experiences. When asked to rate how difficult they perceived their major program to be, half of the graduates (55.5%) reported it to be at the appropriate difficulty level. Nearly a third of the graduates believed the major program to be more difficult than appropriate (29.0%), and a small percentage (15.5%) believed it to be too easy.

Overall Satisfaction with UB

Students were asked to rate overall satisfaction in five specific areas (shown in Table 4) and to indicate if they would choose UB again if given the opportunity to repeat the undergraduate experience. Overall, 31.7% indicate that they would *definitely* attend UB again, and 51.3% indicate that they would *probably* attend UB again. The areas of greatest satisfaction are the overall college experience and the overall quality of instruction, with availability of campus activities coming in third. The areas where the fewest students report satisfaction are amount of contact with faculty outside of class and general education courses.

Table 4: Overall Satisfaction Ratings

<i>Survey Item</i>	Satisfied or Very Satisfied	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied</i>
Amount of contact with faculty outside of class	41.5	40.1	18.4
Availability of campus social activities	55.5	34.8	9.7
General education courses	42.8	29.5	27.7
Overall college experience	79.3	14.4	6.3
Overall quality of instruction	64.6	24.7	10.7

Conclusions

Overall, these results paint a positive picture of the UB experience. Most students indicate that they have experienced the types of educational activities which promote higher-order thinking and that they are *engaging in several aspects of higher-order thinking frequently*. While many graduates have experienced negative faculty and student behaviors at least once during their enrollment, only a small percentage have experienced these frequently. In general, students are experiencing supportive behavior from the faculty within their majors, and they are satisfied with their programs/departments and with their experiences at UB, so much so that most would choose UB again. Potential areas of opportunity include enhancement of faculty/student interaction within the department (including more contact with faculty outside of class), increasing the availability of practicum/internship experiences and non-classroom learning activities, and providing more encouragement to pursue graduate/professional study.

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¹ 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>.