

1995 UNIVERSITY OF OREGON STUDENT SATISFACTION SURVEY
Executive Summary of Survey Results
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by Patricia A Gwartney,
Oregon Survey Research Laboratory

As one part of a continuing effort to better serve the needs of University of Oregon undergraduates, the University contracted with the Oregon Survey Research Laboratory (OSRL) to conduct a representative survey of students' attitudes, experiences and opinions. This Fall 1995 survey largely replicated a parallel survey conducted in Fall 1994 on UO students for the Oregon State System of Higher Education. This report summarizes the survey methodology and results, offering some comparisons between Fall 1995 and Fall 1994.

Survey Methodology

Survey Instrument

Original questions for the 1994 UO student survey were developed and pretested in six months of regular discussions with a cross-campus committee about UO's and OSSHE's assessment and information needs. Other questions were drawn from similar survey instruments implemented in national studies. The 1995 survey instrument was further revised and pretested by OSRL, in consultation with Anne Leavitt and Pamela Daener of the Office of Academic Affairs. The instrument underwent OSRL's standard three-pronged pretest procedure and was revised until it met the needs of the review and showed no bias.

The survey instrument comprised the following subject areas:

1. **Overall impressions of and satisfaction with UO**, including strengths, weaknesses, undergraduate teaching, integration of research into the classroom, library, and class registration;
2. **Reasons for choosing UO**, including location, size, prestige, financial aid, parents, friends, quality of the faculty, diversity, extracurricular activities, and potential majors;
3. **Freshman experiences**, including Freshman Interest Groups, perceptions of difficulty, and academic preparation;
4. **Difficulties encountered in the undergraduate career**, including course failure, incompletes and withdrawal, academic probation, remedial work, and problems with finances, academic ability, family, health, advising and getting needed classes;
5. **Participation in campus activities**, including sports, clubs and groups, cross-cultural contact, arts, employment, demonstrations, internships, employment, and faculty contact;
6. **Self-assessed gains in skills and knowledge** in critical thinking, gathering and analyzing data, understanding and tolerance, exercising leadership, appreciating the arts, and several other areas;
7. **Computer skills and ownership**, including classwork and internet access;
8. **Background information**, including year began at UO, year in school, out-of-state status, degree aspirations, commitment to UO, language proficiency (parallel to the Oregon Benchmarks), age, race/ethnicity, sex, citizenship, and employment.

A facsimile of the survey instrument is provided in Section 2 of this documentation. All interviews were completely confidential, and human subjects approval was obtained.

Sample and Data Collection

A random sample of 1,000 students was drawn by the Registrar's Office from a list of all current students in November 1995. The sample and survey instrument were programmed into OSRL's computer-aided telephone interviewing (CATI) system and further pretested.

Interviewer training was conducted on November 7, 1995; see Section 3 for interviewer instructions. Interviewing was conducted weekday afternoons and evenings and all day on weekends November 8 - December 6, 1995 (except for the Thanksgiving holiday). Altogether, OSRL interviewers made 6,148 telephone calls to complete 760 interviews. 117 telephone numbers were unusable because the number was wrong, disconnected, nonresidential, or the respondent was deceased or unable to be interviewed ever. The overall survey response rate was 86% and the refusal rate was 1.9% (see Section 4).

Survey sampling errors are calculated to assist data users in assessing how much confidence to place in a particular survey result. Large random samples, as in this study, reduce sampling error. Results for survey questions in which there is low variability also have less sampling error; for example, a variable with a 50/50 proportional split has wider confidence intervals than a variable with a 5/95 proportional split. For this study, the sampling error is ± 3.5 percentage points on a variable with a 50/50 proportional split (at the 95% confidence level). For a variable with a 5/95 proportional split, the sampling error is ± 1.5 percentage points.

Survey Results

This section provides a quick textual summary of the 1995 survey results, with comparisons to the parallel 1994 survey, as appropriate. Little attention is provided on sources of variation in the survey results, although these may be found easily in reading the banner results in Section 5.

Overall Impressions of and Satisfaction with UO

Fully 77% of students in Fall 1995 had generally positive feelings toward UO, 2% generally negative, and 21% neutral, compared with 75%, 4%, and 21% respectively in 1994. When asked what they considered to be UO's one greatest strength, 42% of respondents made comments related to the quality of education, while an additional 29% mentioned diversity. Students' actual narrative answers to open-ended questions about UO's strengths and weaknesses, as recorded by interviewers, are provided in Section 7 of this documentation; code categories developed for these answers are provided in Section 6.

Overall, 42% of students were "very satisfied" with the education they have received at UO, 47% "somewhat satisfied," 10% "somewhat dissatisfied," and 1% "very dissatisfied." The parallel figures for 1994 were 38%, 53%, 7% and 1%. By year in school, 52% of Freshmen were "very satisfied," 43% of sophomores, 38% of juniors, 36% of seniors, and 53% of fifth-year seniors.

One quarter felt that UO does a "very good job" teaching undergraduates, 63% said a "somewhat good job," 10% said "somewhat bad job," and 1% said a "very bad job." The parallel figures for 1994 were 27%, 63%, 9% and 0.4%.

Twenty-seven percent of students felt that faculty do a "very good job" bringing research into the classroom, 53% "somewhat good," 12% "somewhat bad," 3% "very bad" and 6% "don't know." Comparable figures for 1994 were 28%, 51%, 12%, 2% and 7%.

Students' appreciation of the Knight Library collections and services improved notably between 1994 and 1995. In this survey, 63% reported that the library did a "very good job" in meeting their needs, 28% said "somewhat good," 5% "somewhat bad," and 1% very bad (plus 3% inapplicable and don't know). The same question last year received 55%, 27%, 7%, and 2% (plus 10%) responses, respectively.

Satisfaction with DUCKCALL also improved markedly: 64% said the UO does a “very good job” managing registration with DUCKCALL, 28% said “somewhat good,” 6% said “somewhat bad,” and 2% said a “very bad job.” Parallel responses for 1994 were 55%, 29%, 11%, and 5%.

In a survey question that has been asked of students periodically for over a decade at UO, 74% said that there is a faculty member who cares about them, compared to 71% in 1994. Ninety-three percent would recommend UO to a friend (88% in 1994), and about two-thirds in both years consider their UO education to be “very important” to their future success.

Reasons for Choosing UO

The answer categories to questions about reasons students chose to attend UO were “very important,” “somewhat important,” “not very important,” and “not at all important.” In reporting their responses, we focus upon “very important.” Location and size of UO’s campus and student body were “very important to 47% and 14%, respectively, of students, very similar to last year. Other questions which stayed about the same were having students from varying cultures at one-fifth “very important” and extra-curricular activities at just under one-quarter. Prestige of the degree increased from 32% in 1994 to 35% in 1995. The quality of the faculty increased from 35% to 38%. The importance of financial aid increased from 33% to 36%. Parents’ influence increased from 16% to 19%, and knowing other people attending UO increased from 12% to 14%. Fewer students reported that the variety of majors UO offers was “very important” in their decision to attend UO, down from 45% in 1994 to 40% in 1995, but the availability of a specific major increased from 63% to 65%.

Freshman Experiences

UO was the first choice of 57% of students in 1995, up from 51% in 1994. One-fifth of students had enrolled in a Freshman Seminar or Freshman Interest Group in 1995. (This question was not asked in 1994.)

Before coming to UO, 12% thought it would be “very difficult” and 68% thought it would be “somewhat difficult” in 1995, compared to 13% and 70% in 1994. Ten percent have actually found it to be very difficult and 66% somewhat difficult, compared to 11% and 66% last year.

Forty-one percent considered themselves “very prepared” to succeed academically when they came to UO and 47% were “somewhat prepared.” Lower division students reported feeling less well prepared than juniors and seniors. (This question was not asked in 1994.)

Difficulties Encountered

Students encounter various difficulties as they go through college, or they may make choices which interfere with the timely accomplishment of a degree. Some things seem to be going more smoothly for the 1995 cohort of UO students; figures for 1994 are reported in parentheses. Fifty-seven percent have never had an undeclared major (51% in 1994), 49% (58%) have ever withdrawn from a course, and 36% (44%) have felt the need for remedial work or tutoring, especially in math/statistics and foreign languages. However, 17% (15% in 1994) have received an incomplete, 22% (18%) have failed a course, 20% (17%) have had to repeat a course, 15% (11%) have been on academic probation, 7% (5%) have withdrawn from school partway through a term, and 14% (10%) have taken a leave of absence or stopped out for awhile. In both years, about one-third had changed their major.

Fully 93% plan to complete their degrees at UO (90% in 1994), but many students expressed concerns about issues interfering. When asked how big a concern finances were for completing their education, 42% said finances were a “major concern” (38% in 1994). If costs go up, 63% report finances will be a major concern (68%). One-fifth of students say that their own academic ability is a major concern for completing their degree (19%), while physical and mental health was a major concern for 13% (11%).

Family issues were a major concern for 17% (14%). Getting into classes students want or need was a major concern for 22% (27%), while getting proper academic advising was a concern for 25% (28%).

In a new survey question, half of students reported preferring to get academic advising from professors, 19% preferred the advisors in Oregon Hall, 17% preferred peer advisors, 2% prefer to advise themselves, 2% had never received academic advising, and the remaining were "other." Thirty percent were "very satisfied" with the advice they had received (26%), 42% were "somewhat satisfied" (42%), 19% were "somewhat dissatisfied" (18%), and 7% were "very dissatisfied" (8%).

Participation in Campus Activities

Overall, 8% of students in Fall 1995 felt "very involved" in campus life, 37% felt "somewhat involved," 44% "not very involved" and 11% "not at all involved." These figures are nearly identical to 1994.

Some participation in campus activities have increased noticeably: pledged a fraternity or sorority - 17% (up from 15% in 1994), participated in demonstrations - 17% (14%), employed for pay on the UO campus - 38% (32%), volunteered or interned off campus in the community - 44% (37%), spoken with a faculty member outside of class - 88% (83%), been a guest in a professor's home - 17% (15%), worked on a professor's research project - 12% (9%), and assisted a faculty member in teaching - 10% (7%).

Others have stayed virtually the same in the year: taken part in student activities - 27%, taken part in sports activities - 33%, discussed course material outside a class - 90%, taken part in religious activities - 19%, had social contact with someone from another race/ethnic group - 94% - or from another country - 90%, attended a campus play or other art event - 80%, volunteered or interned on campus - 21%, and been elected to an honor's society - 15%.

Self-assessed Gains in Skills and Knowledge

Students were asked how much their UO experience had improved a variety of academic, learning, social and personal skills, using the answer categories "a lot," "some" or "not at all." Here, we report responses to "a lot." Again, comparisons to 1994 are provided in parentheses.

"A lot" of improvement was attributed by students to their UO experience for writing skills 34% (27% in 1994), skills in speaking before an audience 21% (17%), skills in gathering information and data 44% (35%), skills in analyzing data 45% (39%), the ability to exercise leadership 19% (15%), critical thinking skills 41% (35%), knowledge of basic facts 50% (44%) and theories 41% (34%), and the ability to recognize and appreciate art 32% (30%). Students' ability to manage their time improved "a lot" for 37% (36%) and their ability to manage their finances improved "a lot" for 35% (30%). Just 38% said their UO experience improved their ability to tolerate differing views "a lot," down from 46% in 1994.

Twenty-two percent of students said most of their learning comes from inside the classroom (17%), 11% said most of their learning comes from experiences outside of classrooms (11%), and 66% said in-class and out-of-class learning experiences are about equal (71%).

Computer Skills and Ownership

The effects of UO's massive infrastructure investments in computing and teaching technology are seen clearly in this section. In Fall 1995, 76% of students said they had a computer account for internet and e-mail connections, compared to 42% in Fall 1994. Use of campus computer labs has increased to 35% "often" (21% in 1994), 25% "sometimes" (19%), 20% "rarely" (18%), and 20% "never" (41%). Over half of students had assigned coursework that often required computer use - 56% "often" (46% in 1994), 27% "sometimes" (28%), 12% "rarely" (16%), and 5% "never" (10%). The labs most often used are at the EMU (32%), Knight Library (19%, not including Janus stations), and Klamath Hall (17%). Fully 64% of students own a personal computer in their place of residence, up from 55% in 1994. Half own IBM compatible machines and 46% own MACs (nearly identical to 1994). Ninety-one percent say that they

know how to use a computer; in 1994, 81% said they knew how and an additional 8% volunteered they knew how “a little.”

Background Information

The demographic composition of the survey sample is similar to the population, as expected. Fifty-one percent of respondents were female, two thirds were less than 23 years old, 54% worked for pay, 3% were of Hispanic origin, 75% were white and 16% Asian/Pacific Islander, 85% were U.S. citizens, 85% speak English as a native language, but 38% are fluent in a language other than English (compared to 15.5% of adult Oregonians in the 1994 Oregon Population Survey). Academic aspirations were for 38% of students to stop at a bachelor’s degree, 40% at a master’s degree, and 17% at a doctorate degree.

Over half of respondents had majors in the College of Arts & Sciences (14% humanities, 18% social sciences, 24% natural sciences), 15% were from business, 10% from AAA, 9% undeclared, 7% J&C, and 1% or less from the other colleges or post-baccalaureate. The class break-out of respondents is 9% freshmen, 19% sophomores, 30% juniors, 27% seniors, and 13% fifth-year seniors. Seventy percent of the respondents pay in-state tuition. Eighty-five percent live off-campus.