

2008-09 Recent Graduate Survey Executive Summary

Introduction:

The purpose of the Recent Graduate Survey was to determine the academic level of preparedness and satisfaction with Penn State Berks programs and services. Specifically, the Recent Graduate Survey ascertained:

- the reasons graduates chose Penn State Berks,
- perceptions of preparedness in the major and in the seven general education areas,
- satisfaction levels of the programs and services available on campus.
- future plans of graduates including job placement and continuing education aspirations, and
- career services used while a student at Penn State Berks.

The Recent Graduate Survey was administered in-person to all spring 2009 graduates who attended commencement. In addition, the survey was mailed to summer 2008, fall 2008, and spring 2009 graduates that did not attend commencement. Two follow-up mailings were made to non-respondents.

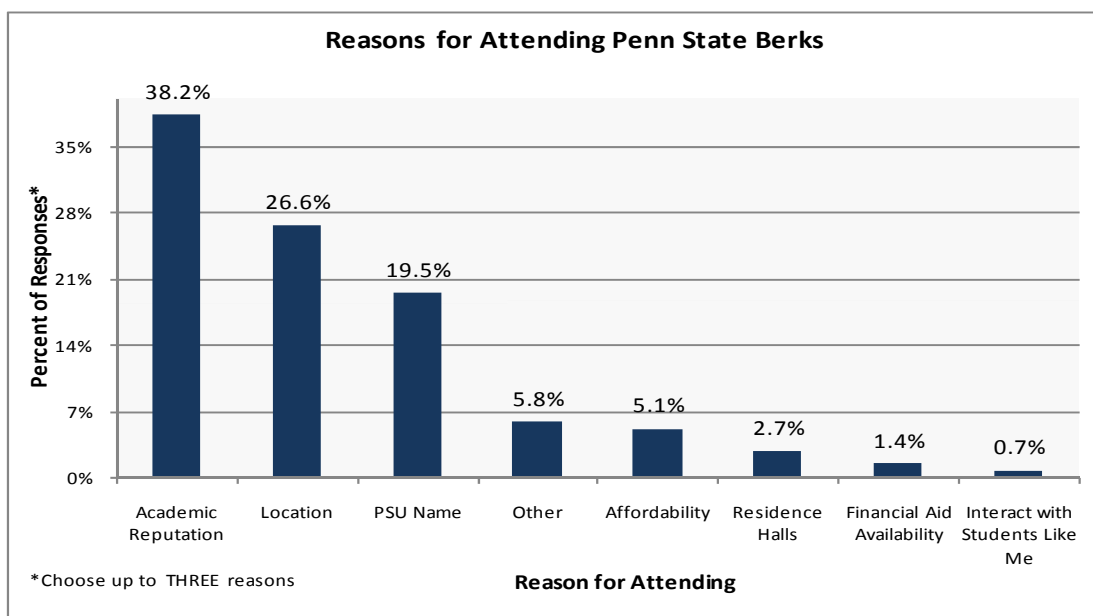
Over seventy-five percent (76.7%) of all the 2008-09 graduates completed the survey. Two-thirds (67.9%) of the associate degree recipients and almost ninety (78.6%) percent of those who were conferred baccalaureate degrees participated in the survey.

Results:

Reasons for Choosing Penn State Berks

Forty percent (38.8%) of the graduate respondents indicated that he/she chose Penn State Berks because of academic reputation. Another twenty-seven percent (26.6%) chose Penn State Berks based on location. The reasons for choosing Penn State Berks and corresponding proportion of responses are shown in Chart 1.

Chart 1: Reasons for Choosing Penn State Berks



Academic Programs & General Education

The percent of graduate respondents who responded very/somewhat prepared for the following areas is shown in Table 1. Also shown are the number responding and the mean rating for that item.

Table 1: General Education & Major Competency Means & Percent Very/Somewhat Satisfied

General Education Competencies	Count	Mean	Percent Very & Somewhat Prepared
Oral communication skills	208	3.62	97.6%
Written communication skills	208	3.68	97.6%
Problem solving skills	208	3.61	98.6%
Reason quantitatively	208	3.50	96.6%
Reason inductively & deductively	207	3.53	97.6%
Computer skills/literacy	208	3.59	95.2%
Relate <u>natural science fields</u> to my major	207	3.20	81.6%
Relate <u>art disciplines</u> to my major	207	3.02	74.4%
Relate <u>social & behavioral sciences</u> to my major	208	3.41	92.8%
Relate <u>humanities</u> to fields to my major	207	3.38	88.9%
Engage in healthful living	204	3.46	92.2%
Appreciation of cultural diversity	204	3.61	95.6%
Ability to work with a group/team environment	206	3.73	97.6%
Leadership ability	206	3.70	98.1%

Major Program of Study	Count	Mean	Percent Very & Somewhat Prepared
Courses in my major relevant to employment	208	3.64	96.2%
Courses in my major relevant to further educational opportunities	207	3.68	97.6%
Variety of courses in major	208	3.48	92.8%
Selection of <i>advanced</i> courses/topics	208	3.43	91.3%
Ability to do research	207	3.60	95.2%
Ability to do independent projects	206	3.67	94.2%
Technological resources available for class assignments	208	3.63	95.7%
Other resources available for class assignments	207	3.58	95.7%

As seen in Table 1, the graduate respondents rated their academic experience favorably. Working in a team environment (M = 3.73) and leadership ability (M = 3.70) had the largest mean preparedness rating. The arts disciplines and natural science fields general education competencies posted the smallest mean preparedness ratings (M = 3.02 and M = 3.20 respectively).

Almost all of the graduate respondents (96.4%) stated that he/she were very or somewhat prepared for their career. Similarly, almost all of the graduate respondents (97.1%) stated that he/she were very or somewhat prepared for future education endeavors.

Faculty & Academic Support Services

The graduate respondents overwhelmingly (M = 3.73) indicated that the faculty were knowledgeable in their field. On the other hand, the graduates were less satisfied with faculty advising (M = 3.51).

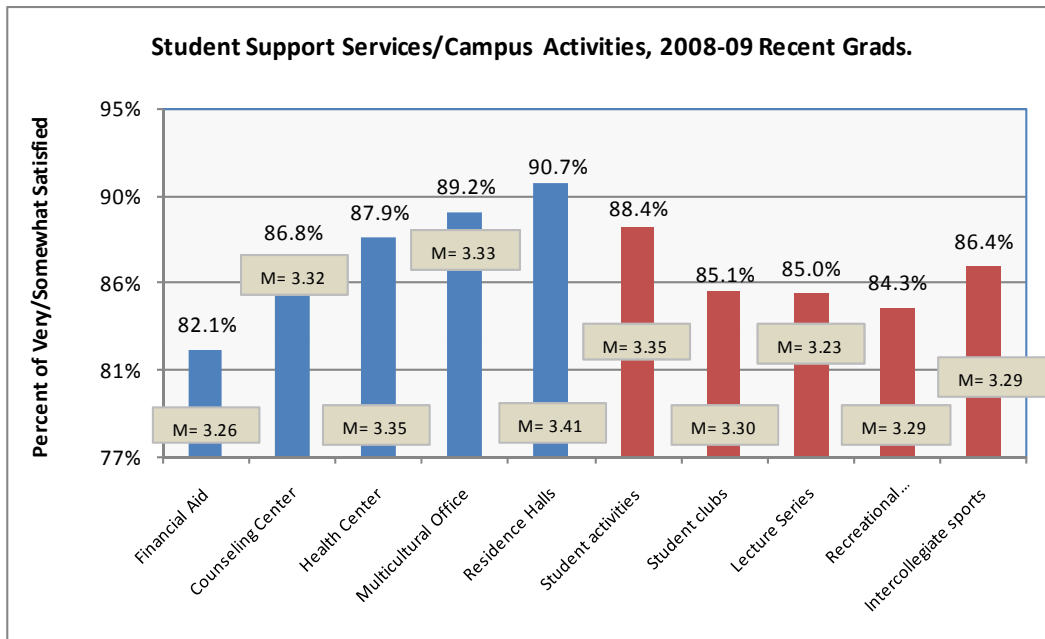
In parallel, Career Services and Academic Advising posted the smallest mean satisfaction ratings (M = 3.42 and M = 3.47 respectively). That said, over four-fifths (88.2% and 90.1% respectively) of the graduate respondents were very or somewhat satisfied with these two academic support services. The academic support services that received the largest mean satisfaction ratings were the

Thun Library (M = 3.64) and the Disability Services (M = 3.52). However, caution is warranted regarding the Disability Service ratings. More than half of the graduate respondents (58.4%) rated Disability Services. This is inconsistent with the proportion of students who use or consult with Disability Services in a given year. The Learning Center garnered the third largest mean satisfaction ratings (M = 3.51).

Student Services & Campus Activities

The mean satisfaction ratings for several student services and campus activities are listed in Chart 2.

Chart 2: Satisfaction Ratings for Student Services and Campus Activities



The student support services that received the largest satisfaction ratings was the residence halls (M = 3.41). Student Activities and the Health Center posted the second highest mean rating (M = 3.35). Lecture Series and Financial Aid (M = 3.23 and M = 3.26 respectively) post the smallest mean ratings of all student services and campus activities listed in Chart 2.

Computers/ Laboratories

Graduate respondents were generally favorable about the computer and laboratory facilities on campus. However, not all the graduates were satisfied with the availability of computers. One in five (18.0%) of the graduate respondents were very or somewhat dissatisfied with computer workstation availability. That said almost ninety percent of the graduate respondents were satisfied with the availability of hardware (88.4%) and software (88.4%). Laboratory availability posted the smallest mean satisfaction ratings (M = 3.20).

Career Services

Of the services provided by the Career Center, two in five (41.1%) graduate respondents stated he/she attended a Career Fair. Twenty-three (22.7%) percent took advantage of Berks Campus Recruitment. Only sixteen percent (15.5%) used the available Postings/Bindings while forty (40.1%) percent went directly to the company website. A complete list of services and corresponding percent of responses are listed in Appendix 1.

One-third (33.3%) of the graduate respondents indicated that he/she would work in Berks County. However, ninety-six (96.0%) percent of the graduate respondents said he/she would work in Pennsylvania after graduation.

Limitations:

Note that not all the 2008-09 graduates participated in the Recent Graduate Survey. The number summer graduates has increased four-fold in the last five years (5 in summer 2002, 24 in summer 2008). However, the response rate for summer graduates lags behind fall and spring graduates (2008-09: 85.2% for spring graduates, 67.1% for fall graduates, and 33.3% for summer graduates). In part, summer graduates are less likely to participate in commencement than fall and spring graduates. However, the summer graduates may have a different perspective of their academic and campus experiences than that of the fall and spring graduates.

Recommendations:

- Continue administering the Recent Graduate Survey in-person at commencement. For spring 2009, the survey garnered a ninety-seven (97.4%) percent return rate for graduates that attended graduation. That is, almost all the graduates that attended spring 2009 commencement, completed the survey. Also, in-person administration reduces the cost of mailing the survey.
- An online Recent Graduate Survey was available for non-respondents in spring 2009. Incentives to encourage the use of the online survey need to be identified.
- Comparisons of the 2008-09 Recent Graduate Survey results with the 2007-08 Recent Graduate Survey results will be made available in fall 2009. These results could help affirm areas of quality programming at Penn State Berks as well as areas for improvement.
- Incorporating comparisons of graduate survey results conducted by other campuses would be useful in the identification of areas for improvement.
- The results are drilled down for each program with at least four graduate respondents. Comparisons to the overall results and other programs may provide useful in the identification for areas of improvement.
- Graduates should be asked about their job and educational aspirations one year after graduation. At the time of the survey, several graduates indicated he/she were still seeking for employment or waiting for confirmation of employment.

Summary

Arguably, the graduates of Penn State Berks are in the best position to rate the campus programming and facilities. These are the students that are not only successful but have had the opportunity to repeatedly use a variety of campus programming and facilities. Hence, the graduates are potentially the harshest critics of the College's programs and services.

The Penn State Berks graduates rated the academic programming, student services, faculty, and facilities very favorably. In particular, the faculty are perceived as qualified and knowledgeable. The graduate respondents attest to critical workforce skills such as problem solving, leadership, appreciation for diversity, and the ability to work in teams. Importantly, graduate respondents are confident in their level of preparedness for both future career and educational aspirations. A commitment to quality academic programming and the continued evaluation of the academic and student support services will ensure that Penn State Berks remains as one of the best regional colleges and premier Penn State college campus.

Appendix 1: Career Services Used

Service Used	Overall		
	Count	Response Percent*	Percent of Graduate Respondents (n = 207)
Internship with Current Employer	73	18.1%	35.3%
Academic Department/Faculty	44	10.9%	21.3%
University Park Campus Recruitment	32	7.9%	15.5%
Internet/Company Web Page	83	20.6%	40.1%
Postings/Binders in Career Services	32	7.9%	15.5%
Berks Campus Recruitment	47	11.7%	22.7%
Career Fairs	85	21.1%	41.1%
Other	7	1.7%	3.4%
TOTAL	403	100.0%	--

* Multiple Responses

Other Responses	Overall Count
Self Seeking Internships	1
Promotion	1
Online Service	1
Kelly Scientific	1
EVERYTHING! WHERE ARE THE JOBS?	1
Emails from IST Director	1