

2009-10 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:

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

The Recent Graduate Survey was administered in-person to all spring 2010 graduates who attended commencement. In addition, the survey was mailed to summer 2009, fall 2009, and spring 2010 graduates that did not attend commencement. Two follow-up mailings were made to non-respondents.

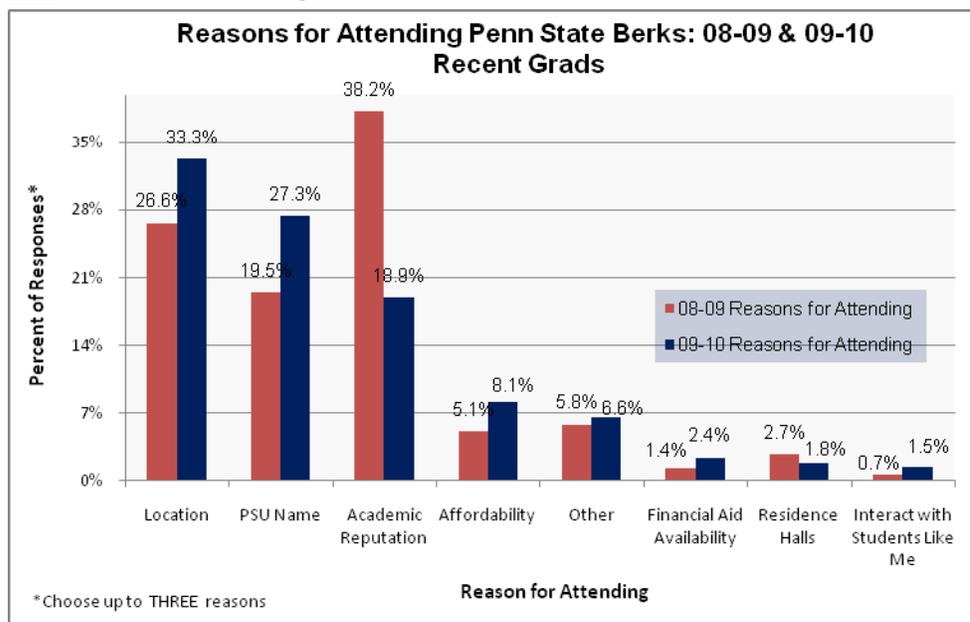
Over seventy-five percent (76.6%) of all the 2009-10 graduates completed the survey. Two-thirds (64.4%) of the associate degree recipients and almost eighty (78.6%) percent of those who were conferred baccalaureate degrees participated in the survey.

Results:

Reasons for Choosing Penn State Berks

One-third (33.3%) of the 2009-10 graduate respondents chose Penn State Berks because of its location. Twenty-seven percent (26.6%) chose Penn State Berks based on location in 2008-09. Only nineteen percent of the graduate respondents choose Penn State Berks because of its academic reputation in 2009-10 compared to forty percent (38.8%) of the 2008-09 graduate respondents. The reasons for choosing Penn State Berks and corresponding proportion of responses for the 2008-09 and 2009-10 graduate respondents 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	219	3.63	99.1%
Written communication skills	219	3.63	98.6%
Problem solving skills	220	3.66	98.6%
Reason quantitatively	219	3.58	96.8%
Reason inductively & deductively	218	3.63	97.7%
Computer skills/literacy	220	3.65	95.5%
Relate <u>natural science fields</u> to my major	218	3.21	81.7%
Relate <u>art disciplines</u> to my major	217	3.08	77.4%
Relate <u>social & behavioral sciences</u> to my major	218	3.43	90.8%
Relate <u>humanities</u> to fields to my major	216	3.41	90.3%
Engage in healthful living	219	3.50	94.5%
Appreciation of cultural diversity	219	3.57	93.2%
Ability to work with a group/team environment	219	3.79	99.5%
Leadership ability	220	3.73	97.7%

Major Program of Study	Count	Mean	Percent Very & Somewhat Prepared
Courses in my major relevant to employment	220	3.66	95.9%
Courses in my major relevant to further educational opportunities	220	3.67	97.3%
Variety of courses in major	220	3.48	92.7%
Selection of <i>advanced</i> courses/topics	217	3.47	91.7%
Ability to do research	216	3.60	96.3%
Ability to do independent projects	218	3.64	95.0%
Technological resources available for class assignments	218	3.68	95.9%
Other resources available for class assignments	218	3.61	96.8%

As seen in Table 1, the graduate respondents rated their academic experience favorably. Working in a team environment ($M = 3.79$) and leadership ability ($M = 3.73$) had the largest mean preparedness rating. The arts disciplines and natural science fields general education competencies posted the smallest mean preparedness ratings ($M = 3.08$ and $M = 3.21$ respectively).

Almost all of the 2009-10 graduate respondents (97.5%) stated that he/she was very or somewhat prepared for their career. This was slightly higher than the percent posted for the 2008-09 graduate respondents (96.4%). Similarly, almost all of the 2009-10 graduate respondents (95.5%) stated that he/she were very or somewhat prepared for future education endeavors. This was slightly lower than the percent posted for the 2008-09 graduate respondents (96.4%).

Faculty & Academic Support Services

Both the 2009-10 and 2008-09 graduate respondents overwhelmingly ($M = 3.73$ & $M = 3.74$ respectively) indicated that the faculty were knowledgeable in their field. On the other hand, as with the 2009-10 graduate respondents the 2008-09 graduate respondents were less satisfied with faculty advising ($M = 3.57$ & $M = 3.51$ respectively).

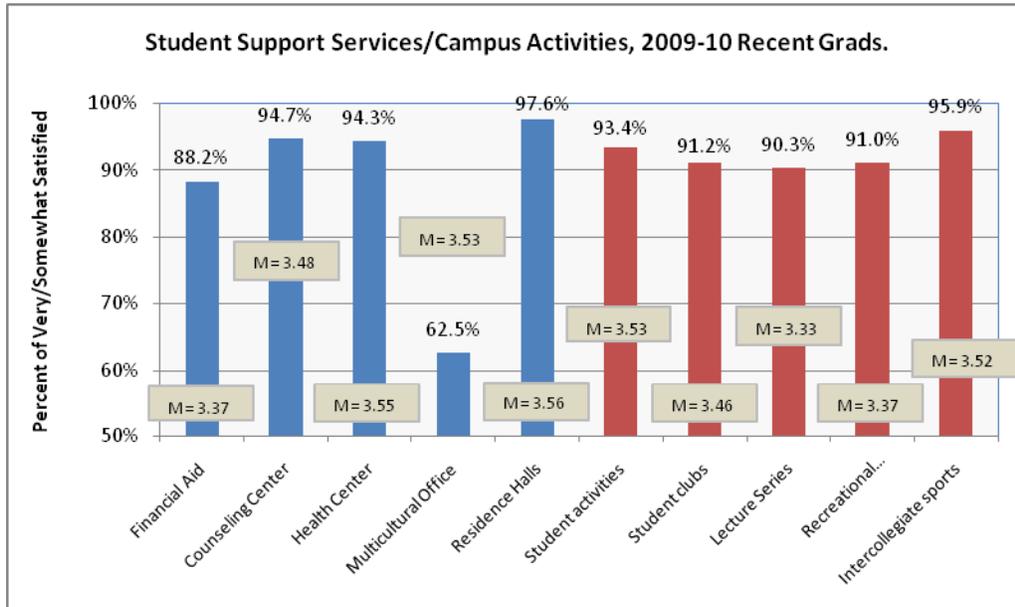
The academic support services that received the largest mean satisfaction ratings were the Thun Library (2009-10: $M = 3.70$; 2008-09: $M = 3.64$ respectively) and Disability Services (2009-10: $M = 3.60$;

2008-09: $M = 3.52$). Caution is warranted regarding the Disability Service ratings. More than half of the graduate respondents (57.9%) rated Disability Services. This is inconsistent with the proportion of students who use or consult with Disability Services in a given year. Career Services posted the smallest mean satisfaction ratings (2009-10: $M = 3.49$; 2008-09: $M = 3.42$). That said, in 2009-10 over ninety percent (91.4%) of the 2009-10 graduate respondents were very or somewhat satisfied with Career Services.

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 service or campus activity area that received the largest satisfaction ratings was the residence halls ($M = 3.56$). The Health Center ($M = 3.55$) and Student Activities ($M = 3.53$) posted the next highest mean ratings. Financial Aid ($M = 3.37$) and Recreational Activities ($M = 3.37$) post the smallest mean ratings of all student services and campus activities listed in Chart 2. Note that all student support service and campus activity mean ratings for the 2009-10 graduate respondents were higher than the corresponding 2008-09 graduate respondent ratings.

Computers/ Laboratories

Graduate respondents were generally favorable about the computer and laboratory facilities on campus. Almost ninety percent of the graduate respondents were satisfied with the availability of hardware (2009-10: 94.6%; 2008-09: 88.4%) and software (2009-10: 92.1%; 2008-09: 88.4%). However, not all the graduates were satisfied with the availability of computers. One in eight (11.7%) of the 2009-10 graduate respondents were very or somewhat dissatisfied with computer workstation availability. Regardless, this is a decrease from 2008-09 graduate respondents (18.0%).

Career Services

Of the services provided by Career Services, two in five (2009-10: 40.3%; 2008-09: 41.1%) graduate respondents stated he/she attended a Career Fair. Almost one-fifth of the 2009-10 graduate respondents (18.6%) took advantage of Berks Campus Recruitment. This is a decrease from 2008-09 (22.7%). Only fifteen percent (2009-10: 14.5%; 2008-09: 15.5%) used the available Postings/Bindings while forty (2009-10: 40.7%; 2008-09: 40.1%) percent went directly to the company website. A complete list of career services, career search capabilities, and corresponding percent of responses are listed in Appendix 1.

One-third (33.2%) of the 2009-10 graduate respondents indicated that he/she would work in Berks County. However, ninety-four (93.9%) percent of the graduate respondents said he/she would work in Pennsylvania after graduation.

Limitations:

The results reported in this executive summary aggregate associate and baccalaureate degree graduate respondents. A separate analysis by degree type may be warranted.

Note that not all the 2009-10 graduates participated in the Recent Graduate Survey. The number summer graduates have increased by almost fifty percent (46.7%) in the last three years. However, the response rate for summer graduates lags behind fall and spring graduates (2009-10: 86.3% for spring graduates, 57.6% for fall graduates, and 36.4% 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.

Differences between graduate respondents who completed the survey in-person at commencement and those who returned a survey by mail have not been ascertained. It is possible, that the responses gleaned at commencement may be different than a survey completed elsewhere.

Recommendations:

- Continue administering the Recent Graduate Survey in-person at commencement. For spring 2010, 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 2010 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 but rarely used. Incentives to encourage the use of the online survey need to be identified.
- Use the 2008-09 and 2009-10 Recent Graduate Survey result comparisons. These results could help affirm areas of quality programming at Penn State Berks as well as identify 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.
- A survey to graduates one year after graduation is being administered by some programs. A one-year graduate follow-up may give a more accurate depiction of the 2009-10 graduates' job placement and graduate school acceptance rates.

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 to be 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*	2009-10 Overall		
	Count	Response Percent*	Percent of Graduate Respondents (n = 221)
Internship with Current Employer	73	17.6%	33.0%
Academic Department/Faculty	55	13.3%	24.9%
University Park Campus Recruitment	22	5.3%	10.0%
Internet/Company Web Page	90	21.7%	40.7%
Postings/Binders in Career Services	32	7.7%	14.5%
Berks Campus Recruitment	41	9.9%	18.6%
Career Fairs	89	21.5%	40.3%
Other	12	2.9%	5.4%
TOTAL	414	100.0%	--

* Multiple responses

Other Responses	Overall
	Count
Friend	1
Internet	1
Networking	1
PSU Alum Career Center is NOT Helpful	1