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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The spring 1996 Survey of Graduating Seniors represents a continuing effort to conduct student educational assessment at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa (UHM). This activity is one of a variety of ongoing University assessment programs/activities that produces evidence of effectiveness and serves as a vehicle for educational improvement.

This is the fourth campus-wide survey of UH Manoa baccalaureate degree candidates. It is intended to measure educational outcomes at the college-level, generate information about ways in which programs can be improved, and monitor changes in student behavior and perceptions. The results provide a wealth of data and comparative information on the experiences, activities, and background of students and their retrospective assessment of their undergraduate experience. This report also provides useful insights and suggests areas for further research and action.

The survey was mailed to 1,253 baccalaureate degree candidates who filed for graduation in spring 1996; 487 or 39% responded. Survey respondents were generally representative of spring 1996 seniors in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, and field of study. Therefore, the results may be taken as a reasonable reflection of the experiences and opinions of spring 1996 baccalaureate degree candidates as a whole.

Graduating seniors rated their overall academic experience at Manoa as good or excellent (67%) and felt that the quality of academic programs was about what they expected or better (83%). Increased academic knowledge, independence, understanding of people, and job preparation were the most frequently cited gains from their UHM experience.

Seventy-three percent reported earning most of their general education credits at Manoa. Over half were satisfied or very satisfied with the content (51%) and variety (54%) of general education courses, and with the knowledge gained (57%) and overall quality of instruction in these courses (54%). English is perceived as the most helpful general education core course for the undergraduate experience. Over three-fourths of the graduating seniors (77%) got to know two or more faculty well and over half (54%) got to know three or more well.

When asked to rate their satisfaction with various aspects of their major, 59% were satisfied or very satisfied with the adequacy of the related library collection, 61% with the organization or curriculum, 68% with the quality of printed information about their undergraduate program, and 76% with the quality of instruction.

Although 82% of the graduating seniors felt that the quality of campus life at Manoa was about what they expected or better, the largest proportion spent an average of 10 hours or less per week on campus outside of the classroom.
More than four out of five graduating seniors used and were satisfied with the quality of services, functions, and activities provided by the Cashier’s Office and Bookstore. Significant increases were noted in the percentage who used and were satisfied with registration procedures (+17%) & Financial Aid Services (7%). Eighty-five percent rated the quality of information about student services and activities as fair or good.

About 12% of the graduating seniors entered Manoa as participants in special programs. KOKUA and College Opportunities were the most frequently cited programs.

Over three-fourths reported taking five or more years to complete their baccalaureate programs, and 67% reported having a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher. The share of graduating seniors who report earning some credit at a UH Community College continues to increase and now stands at 40%. Work, availability of courses, and change of major were the most frequently cited reasons for taking more than four years to complete undergraduate programs. Change of major was identified as the single most important reason for taking more than four years to graduate.

Eighty-nine percent reported being employed while pursuing their undergraduate degree at Manoa. Of those employed, the largest share (35%) worked 16-20 hours per week; 91% worked 1-35 hours per week; 64% worked off-campus.

After graduation, 63% plan to pursue further higher education. Of those pursuing post-baccalaureate study, 46% plan to do it at Manoa and 43% plan to advance their higher education on the mainland. Education and Business Administration were the most frequently chosen post-baccalaureate fields of study by spring 1996 graduates. The majority (76%) plan to work on O’ahu.

When given the opportunity to comment about their undergraduate experience at Manoa, 46% or 226 responded. Negative comments expressed dissatisfaction with core requirements, instructors, and availability of courses. Positive comments reflected on personal growth, departments/programs, and instructors.
INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1996, the Office of the Vice President for Planning and Policy conducted a campus-wide survey to measure the educational outcomes of University of Hawai‘i baccalaureate degree candidates. The assessment instrument, a questionnaire consisting of 91 items in six sections, was designed to gather background information and post-graduation plans of graduating seniors, and elicit candid responses about their undergraduate experiences at UH Manoa.

A new section designed to gather information about the general education core experiences of baccalaureate degree candidates has been added to the questionnaire to assist the University in its effort to evaluate and improve general education across the system and to supplement the findings of the General Education Project Faculty Survey recently conducted by the University of Hawai‘i General Education Coordinating Committee.

This is the fourth campus-wide survey of UH Manoa baccalaureate degree candidates. The three previous surveys were administered in the spring semesters of 1988, 1990, and 1993. This report provides the analysis of 1996 responses, and compares 1988, 1990, 1993, and 1996 responses to determine if significant changes have occurred over the eight-year period.

Mailing addresses of baccalaureate degree candidates were obtained from Manoa’s Integrated Student Information Systems (ISIS) after the Office of Admissions and Records had identified which students had petitioned for graduation in spring 1996. Questionnaires were mailed to 1,253 baccalaureate degree candidates. Completed surveys were received from 487 respondents, representing a 39% rate of return. With this sample size, a difference of five percentage points is considered significant.

For some data displays (especially the college-level data included in the Appendix), the number of responses may well be too small to permit definitive conclusions. Females, students 22-24 years old, individuals of Chinese ancestry, and business majors may be slightly over represented, and Arts and Humanities majors, Filipinos, and individuals 20-21 years old may be slightly under represented. These warnings should be kept in mind when using or commenting on the survey results.

This report highlights outcomes and information thought to be especially interesting. Resources permitting, the Office of the Vice President for Planning and Policy intends to periodically administer a UH Manoa campus-wide Survey of Graduating Seniors as an ongoing assessment activity. Future instruments and computer programs will be refined and improved as a result of this effort. However, when taken as a whole, the spring 1996 survey report can be viewed as a reasonable reflection of previous (1988, 1990, 1993) and prevailing experiences, plans, and characteristics of graduating seniors.
Overall Undergraduate Experience

Between 57% and 83% of the graduating seniors selected Academic Knowledge, Independence, Understanding of People, and Job Preparation as areas where they had gained from their Mānoa undergraduate experience.

As in previous graduating senior (1988, 1990, 1993) and alumni (1989, 1991, 1994) surveys, these results continue to suggest that the undergraduate experience at Mānoa is perceived by students to benefit their cognitive skills and affective growth/development.

Survey results indicate that Increased Knowledge in an Academic Field is perceived as the most important benefit of an undergraduate education at Mānoa. This was also the case in 1993.

Between 1993 and 1996, graduating seniors changed from Independence to Preparation for a Job as the second most important gain from their college experience.
63% of the spring 1993 bachelor's degree candidates plan to attend graduate school.

Between 1988 and 1996, the percentage of graduating seniors pursuing further higher education after earning their bachelor’s degree at Mānoa has steadily increased.

Education and Business Administration were the most frequently chosen post-baccalaureate fields of study by spring 1996 graduates.
Post-Graduation Plans

Forty-six percent of those planning to attend graduate school plan to attend programs at Mānoa.

Contrary to steady increases in 1988, 1990 and 1993, there was a double-digit decrease in the percentage of graduating seniors who plan to advance their higher education at Mānoa (from 59% in 1993 to 46% in 1996). Conversely, there was a large increase in those who plan to advance their higher education on the mainland (from 33% in 1993 to 43% in 1996).

As in 1993, Social Science and Business Administration majors had the largest proportions planning to attend mainland graduate schools.

Better Program Elsewhere (34%) was the most frequently cited reason for not attending UH Mānoa for post-baccalaureate studies.

Program Unavailability (22%) and Personal Reasons (18%), such as moved to the mainland, were also given as important factors for not attending UH Mānoa for post-baccalaureate studies.
Post-Graduation Plans

Although 9 percentage points lower than in 1993, most of the respondents (67%) expect to work on O’ahu, with the U.S. Mainland as the second most frequently mentioned location of intended employment.

All majors were well represented in the group that named O’ahu.

The preference for neighbor island employment has steadily increased over the last 8 years.

General Education Core Experience

Seventy-three percent of the respondents reported earning most of their general education credits at UH Mānoa. (In a separate item 40% reported earning some credits at a UH Community College; see page 14.)
General Education Core Experience

Spring 1996 graduating seniors felt their general education core experience was *Helpful* or *Very Helpful* in developing their writing skills (62%), their ability to put ideas together (66%), and their awareness of other cultures, peoples, and lifestyles (68%).

Over 59% of the respondents indicated that general education courses were *Somewhat Helpful* or *Not Helpful* in (1) developing their ability to express ideas using numbers and symbols (66%) and (2) contributing to their knowledge and enjoyment of music, art, and dance (59%).

A relatively high percentage of graduating seniors indicated that the general education core did not help them at all in developing computer skills (23%).
Over half of the graduating seniors were **Satisfied** or **Very Satisfied** with the content of general education courses (51%), the variety of general education courses (54%), knowledge gained in these courses (57%), and the overall quality of instruction in general education courses (54%).

More than 20% of the respondents were **Not Satisfied** with general education courses relative to: availability (22%), relevance to their life (22%), preparation for work in their major (24%), use of teaching assistants (27%), and the number required (29%).

For fields of study with 30 or more responses, Art and Humanities majors appeared the most satisfied with the adequacy of core courses in preparing them for upper division courses and the quality of instruction in core courses. Natural Science majors appeared the least satisfied with the adequacy of core courses, and Social Science majors appeared the least satisfied with the quality of instruction in core courses.
When asked to rate their satisfaction with selected aspects of their major, between one-half and three-fourths were Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the adequacy of related library collection (59%), organization of curriculum (61%), quality of printed information about their undergraduate program (68%), and quality of instruction (76%).

Survey results indicate that English is perceived as the most helpful general education core course for the undergraduate experience.

When asked to rate their satisfaction with selected aspects of their major, between one-half and three-fourths were Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the adequacy of related library collection (59%), organization of curriculum (61%), quality of printed information about their undergraduate program (68%), and quality of instruction (76%).

Less than half of the respondents were Very Satisfied or Satisfied with the availability of courses in the major and laboratory facilities.
Between 60% and 70% of the graduating seniors rated Good to Excellent the quality of instruction to: improve oral communication skills (60%), increase knowledge of other cultures and world affairs (61%), improve writing (63%), improve critical thinking (69%), and increase ability to gather information and learn on your own (70%).

Of interest are the comparatively large percentage of respondents who felt that the quality of instruction to improve computer skills was Excellent (19%) and the equally large proportion who felt it was Poor (16%).

Less than half of the respondents rated the quality of instruction to (1) improve mathematical ability and (2) increase appreciation of literature and the arts as Excellent or Good.
Over 67% rated the overall quality of their academic experience at Manoa as either Good or Excellent.

Breakdown by field of study shows that of the five majors with the largest number of total responses, graduating seniors in Social Science and Engineering seemed the most pleased with their overall academic experience.

Over 23% thought their degree was Above Average. The largest share (69%) perceived their degree from Manoa as being of Average quality.

Similar perceptions were reported by alumni in 1991 and 1994.

1991, 1994 UH Manoa Alumni Outcomes Surveys
Over 83% of the respondents felt that the quality of academic programs at Mānoa was About What They Expected or Better.

Of interest is the percentage of respondents who felt that the quality of their academic program was better than expected (-3.6% from 1993) and those who felt that it was Worse Than Expected (+6.6% from 1993).

Over three-fourths (77%) of the respondents got to know 2 or more faculty well, and over half (54%) got to know 3 or more well.
Experiences Outside The Classroom

When comparing expectations with their actual experiences regarding the quality of campus life, 82% felt that it was About What They Expected or Better.

Compared to 1993, there was a noticeable increase in the percentage of respondents (+6.2%) who felt that their actual experiences were Worse Than Expected.

Slightly more than half (52%) lived at home.

From 1988 to 1996, the number of students residing in off-campus rentals has increased steadily.
Experiences Outside The Classroom

Survey results indicate that students are increasing the amount of time they spend on campus outside the classroom.

The largest proportion of respondents (44%) spent an average of 10 hours or less per week on campus outside the classroom.

Most rated the quality of information about student services and activities as either Fair (43%) or Good (42%).
Experiences Outside The Classroom

More than four out of five graduating seniors at Mānoa Used and were Satisfied with the quality of services, functions, and activities provided by the Cashier's Office (83%) and Bookstore (88%).

Food services (34%) and academic advising (24%) had the highest percentage of Dissatisfied users.

Compared with 1993, there was a significant increase in the percentage of respondents expressing satisfaction with registration procedures (from 60% in 1993 to 77% in 1996). Conversely, there was a large increase in the percentage of respondents dissatisfied with the quality of services, functions and activities provided by the Library (from 12% in 1993 to 21% in 1996).

More than 65% Knew about but Never Used--or never had the opportunity to use--on-campus housing (65%), tutoring services (68%), and campus security (70%).

From 1993 to 1996, there was a noticeable increase in the percentage of respondents who Used and were Satisfied with financial aid (+6.6%).

Survey results may serve as a barometer to gauge student perceptions about campus programs and services.
Nearly three-fourths of the spring 1996 graduating seniors attended public (53%) or private (21%) high schools in Hawai‘i.

The share of graduating seniors (40%) who report earning some credits at a UH Community College continues to increase. This finding suggests that facilitating transfer is an important UH system activity.

Note: Multiple responses permitted.
Although females were somewhat overrepresented, respondents were generally representative of spring 1996 seniors in terms of age, ethnicity and field of study. Survey results can be taken as an approximate reflection of the graduating class as a whole.

Gender results reflect enrollment trends in Hawai‘i and nationally where the proportion of women undergraduates has increased relative to men.

Those 20-21 years old were underrepresented and those 22-24 were overrepresented, but respondents were generally representative of spring 1996 seniors in terms of age.

The majority of survey respondents were 22-24 years old.

In terms of ethnic background, the respondents were generally representative of the entire senior class. Chinese were slightly overrepresented and Filipinos were slightly underrepresented.
Over three-fourths (78%) of the baccalaureate students reported taking 5 or more years to complete their program.

The most frequently reported (32%) time-to-degree was 5 years.

For UHM colleges with more than 20 responses, over 50% of the Arts and Humanities, Nursing, and Engineering majors took 6 or more years to complete their baccalaureate degree.

About 12% of the respondents indicated they entered UH Mānoa as participants in special programs.

The KOKUA Program provided academic access services to 2.9% of the respondents—those with disabilities such as mobility restrictions, hearing impairments, visual impairments, chronic health conditions, etc.

The College Opportunities Program assisted 2.5% of the respondents—those who were able and qualified for college but whose low SAT scores, limited college preparation, and/or economic difficulties might have prevented them from attending Mānoa.

Selected Studies, National Student Exchange, Study Abroad, and Honors were other special programs mentioned by respondents.
Work, Availability of Courses, and Change of Major were cited as the three most important reasons for taking more than 4 years to graduate.

Graduating seniors felt that Change of Major (20%) was the single most important reason for taking more than 4 years to complete their undergraduate programs.
Respondents were generally representative of the 1993 senior class in terms of field of study--business students were somewhat overrepresented and Arts and Humanities were slightly underrepresented.
The largest proportion (35%) reported completing their undergraduate study with a cumulative grade-point average (GPA) of 3.0-3.4.

Of interest is the relatively large change in the percentage of graduating seniors who, since 1993, reported cumulative GPA's of 3.0-3.4 (-9%) and 3.5-4.0 (+7%).

Although there was a slight decrease in the percentage of graduating seniors reporting cumulative GPA's of 3.0 or higher (from 69% in 1993 to 67% in 1996), the issue of grade inflation may deserve attention.

Education had the highest proportion of majors who completed their undergraduate program with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher (86%).

A vast majority (89%) of respondents indicated that they worked while attending Mānoa.

Of interest is the steady increase from 1990 in the percentage of respondents who did not work while completing their undergraduate program at Mānoa.
Of those employed, 64% reported being employed off-campus.

Ninety-one percent of those employed worked less than 36 hours per week.

The largest proportion (35%) were working an average of 16-20 hours per week during their last two years of undergraduate study at Mānoa.
Forty-six percent or 226 of the survey respondents provided comments about their undergraduate experience at UH Mānoa. It needs to be recognized that those providing comments may tend toward the negative and, given the small number of comments provided, results are not necessarily representative of the entire population of degree candidates (1,253). With these caveats, highlights of these comments are worth sharing.

Of those providing comments, 80% (182) were negative. Most were dissatisfied with Core Requirements, Instructors, and the Availability of Courses. Generally, they felt core requirements--especially foreign language--are excessive and need to be re-evaluated relative to their (1) usefulness/relevance to personal growth and (2) adequacy in preparing students for upper-division courses and work in their major.

Standards, counselors and advisors, and administrative policies/procedures were other frequently mentioned problem areas.
Of those providing favorable comments, *Personal Growth*, their *Departments/Programs*, and *Instructors* were most frequently mentioned as factors contributing to their educational gains.

Contrary to those dissatisfied, graduating seniors also identified *Instructors* as a factor that contributed most to their educational gain while at Mānoa--again, the student-teacher relationship emerges as a critical factor affecting the quality of undergraduate experiences.