

# Graduate Studies Program Student Survey

## METHOD

Vice Provost of Academic Affairs George Brown, in conjunction with the Graduate Council, developed a survey to assess graduate students' perspective of their departmental programs in connection with the departmental review process. This web-based survey was similar to a prototype originally developed in conjunction with Academic Planning and Institutional Research staff in 2002. Students affiliated with the Environmental Studies, Mathematics, and Physics departments participated in this year's pilot survey process. The survey was conducted over the Internet in during the last three weeks of Spring Quarter, 2004.

Students were asked to rate the quality of many aspects of the their department program in terms of teaching, advising, instructional resources, curricular concerns, faculty-student relations, as well as overall student morale. Students were specifically told the purpose of the survey was to assess their departmental degree program, not individual faculty or staff.

## RESULTS

Descriptive survey results are in the attached table, followed by student comments about the program. The survey questioned students about quality ratings only, and students were not asked to rank the program aspects in terms of personal importance or priority. While the results describe student satisfaction in many areas, it is useful to keep in mind that students may be very satisfied or very dissatisfied with areas they consider less important. Therefore these results should be interpreted with some caution.

### **Environmental Studies Department**

Out of the 51 graduate students in Environmental Studies enrolled at some time during the 2003-2004 academic year,<sup>1</sup> 47 completed the surveys for a response rate of 92%.

#### *Departmental Quality*

Environmental Studies graduate students were predominantly enthusiastic about the program, and 85% rated the overall quality of the graduate program 'Good' or 'Excellent.' For perspective, this was a very high rating among the three departments under review. Particular strengths of the Environmental Studies graduate program included the quality of the teaching faculty, and the quality of library resources/facilities (both received a 91% approval rating of 'Good' or 'Excellent'). Graduate students also gave high marks to the quality of teaching in their specialization, the quality of computer resources, and the quality of advising and mentoring available in the department.

Problematic areas included the quality of introductory courses (44% rated this 'Fair' or 'Poor') and the training of teaching assistants, which received 38% 'Fair' or 'Poor' ratings.

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<sup>1</sup> Graduate students counts per third-week 2003-04 SIS demographic file.

### *Graduate Student Preparation*

About three-quarters of the Environmental Studies graduate students felt well prepared to enter academic careers and teach courses, and most (70%) felt they had received quality preparation for conducting independent research. Somewhat fewer graduate students felt prepared to enter a non-academic career; an area of possible concern given the realities of the economy and job market. Although most students were well pleased with the preparation for their future research and careers, nearly a third gave 'Fair' or 'Poor' ratings to the quality of preparation for conducting independent research, and this may also be an area warranting further attention.

### *Curricular Concerns*

Almost everyone (96% of respondents) agreed that courses were offered regularly and as scheduled, and about 70% were satisfied with the structure, scope and balance of the curriculum. Overall, Environmental Studies was similar to other departments under review in the general ratings of curricular matters. Many of the comments from students addressed these issues, and Environmental Studies students were most concerned about introductory courses, methods courses, and lack of flexibility in the requirements.

### *Faculty and Departmental Relations*

Over 85% of Environmental Studies graduate students felt they were treated fairly and consulted about program issues. Most students (85%) also felt there were open channels of communication with faculty, and the vast majority (93%) experienced an exchange of ideas and between students and faculty. Environmental Studies students were more likely to report a good interchange of ideas between faculty and students, and also felt they were consulted about program issues that concerned them. Overall, satisfaction in this area was high.

### **Student Comments**

Asked to comment on curricular concerns and on the program in general, students responded freely with a wide range of perspectives. However, readers should note that students who were less satisfied with Environmental Studies were slightly more likely to present written comments than those who were more satisfied, therefore, comments should be interpreted in the overall context of the statistical information presented.

Environmental Studies Majors Survey  
Graduate Students

Impressions of Major/Department Quality	Responses					Total	
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Valid	Don't Know	Total
<b>Quality of Teaching Faculty</b>	number	1	3	23	18	45	47
	%	2%	7%	51%	40%	100%	
<b>Quality of Teaching in Your Specialization</b>	number	4	4	9	27	44	47
	%	9%	9%	21%	61%	100%	
<b>Training and Guidance of Teaching Assts.</b>	number	4	12	19	7	42	47
	%	10%	29%	45%	17%	100%	
<b>Advising/Mentoring</b>	number	4	5	15	21	45	47
	%	9%	11%	33%	47%	100%	
<b>Linking Grad Students w/ Thesis Advisors</b>	number	3	7	16	20	46	47
	%	7%	15%	35%	44%	100%	
<b>Quality of Computer Resources/Facilities</b>	number	1	7	14	23	45	47
	%	2%	16%	31%	51%	100%	
<b>Quality of Library Resources/Facilities</b>	number	1	3	13	29	46	47
	%	2%	7%	28%	63%	100%	
<b>Quality of Introductory Courses</b>	number	3	17	19	7	46	47
	%	7%	37%	41%	15%	100%	
<b>Overall Quality of the Graduate Program</b>	number	1	6	19	20	46	47
	%	2%	13%	41%	44%	100%	
<b>Graduate Student Morale</b>	number	0	11	24	11	46	47
	%	0%	24%	52%	24%	100%	

Quality of Preparation For:	Responses					Total	
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Valid	Don't Know	Total
<b>Conducting Independent Research</b>	number	4	9	13	17	43	47
	%	9%	21%	30%	40%	100%	
<b>Teaching Own Courses</b>	number	4	7	21	10	42	47
	%	10%	17%	50%	24%	100%	
<b>Entering an Academic Career</b>	number	3	8	17	15	43	47
	%	7%	19%	40%	35%	100%	
<b>Entering a Non-academic Career</b>	number	5	9	15	11	40	47
	%	13%	23%	38%	28%	100%	

Environmental Studies Majors Survey  
Graduate Students

Curricular Concerns and Faculty Relations	Responses	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Valid	Don't Know	Total
<b>Program Requirements Well Defined/Appropriate</b>	number 3	7%	10 22%	23 50%	10 22%	46 100%	1	47
<b>Foundation Courses Provide Adequate Preparation</b>	number 4	9%	8 18%	26 58%	7 16%	45 100%	2	47
<b>Instruction Available in Suitable Areas</b>	number 5	11%	8 17%	17 37%	16 35%	46 100%	1	47
<b>Curriculum Balanced for Competency in Dept</b>	number 4	9%	10 22%	17 38%	14 31%	46 100%	1	47
<b>Required Courses Offered Regularly</b>	number 1	2%	1 2%	11 24%	33 72%	46 100%	1	47
<b>Graduate Students Treated Fairly</b>	number 1	2%	5 11%	12 26%	28 61%	46 100%	1	47
<b>Students are Consulted about Program Issues</b>	number 2	4%	5 11%	19 41%	20 44%	46 100%	1	47
<b>Student and Faculty Exchange Ideas</b>	number 2	4%	1 2%	14 30%	29 63%	46 100%	1	47
<b>Open Channels of Communication</b>	number 2	4%	5 11%	9 20%	30 65%	46 100%	1	47

Unduplicated Graduate Count in Department 2003-04 51  
 Responding 47  
 Response Rate 92%