

Troy University 2005-2006 Graduating Student Survey Report

Executive Summary

The Troy University Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness began administering the *Troy University Graduating Student Survey* on all campuses of the University in Fall 2005. The purpose of this survey is to identify students' satisfaction with their experiences at Troy University, recognize students' development as a result of their Troy education, and determine areas that Troy University needs to improve. Data collected in this survey are used to help the University strengthen its academic programs, better serve the needs of its students, and become more effective and efficient in accomplishing its mission and goals.

Data for the *Graduating Student Survey* are collected using an online survey program in Fall, Spring, and Summer of each year. The *Survey* can be accessed either through a survey link sent to the students via email or from the IRPE website. The results are reported annually after Summer data collection is completed.

This survey contains 33 questions. The first 22 questions ask for information regarding student demographics, academics, employment, and financial aid. Questions 23 – 31 of the survey are designed to identify students' perceptions about and satisfaction with their Troy experiences. Question 32 seeks information regarding student involvement in student organizations or social activities, and Question 33 encourages respondents to provide additional comments about their University experiences.

Based on the responses to the survey, reliability tests were conducted and the following results were found:

Question	Number of Items	Reliability Coefficient
23	18 items	0.95
24	18 items	0.97
25	24 items	0.95
26	10 items	0.95
27	3 items	0.91
28-31	4 items	0.86

These reliability coefficients suggest a high reliability of the questions used in the survey.

For data analysis, descriptive methods were used for the overall university as well as for each individual campus. Results for Questions 23-27 were tabulated, and using a scale of Excellent or Very Satisfied = 5, Good or Satisfied = 4, Average or Neutral = 3, Fair or Dissatisfied = 2, and Poor or Very Dissatisfied = 1, items were ranked based on the means of each item so that comparisons could be made between campuses or between campuses and the overall university. For Questions 23, 24, and 25, which contain measures in 60 areas, factor analyses were applied to reduce the areas to just a few factors for better understanding of the

responses. In the end, frequency/results tables for all survey questions were provided for the overall Troy University responses as well as for each of the campuses.

Major Findings

The Troy University Graduating Student Survey 2005 – 2006 started in Fall 2005 and continued through Summer 2006. During this time, students who intended to graduate in Fall 2005, Spring 2006, and Summer 2006 were provided with the link to the *Survey* via email and asked to complete and submit the *Survey* online. Students were sent emails at least three times reminding them to complete the *Survey*. When the *Survey* was closed at the end of August 2006, 1,779 students had responded to the *Survey*. Of all responses received, 1,770 responses were valid and used for data analyses, and 9 responses were not used because they were incomplete.

In academic year 2005 – 2006, Troy University graduated 5,203 students, with 2,265 in Fall 2005, 1,914 in Spring 2006, and 1,024 in Summer 2006. The 1,779 respondents to the survey represented a 34% survey participation rate with 27% of the sample from Fall 2005, 37% from Spring 2006, and 36% from Summer 2006.

Demographic Information

Of the 1,770 respondents, 68% were female, 62% were White, 31% were Black, and 73% were aged 25 or older. While US citizens made up the majority of the respondent sample, the 2% international student sample represented 27 countries and regions in various parts of the world. Of all the respondents, 45% were residents of Alabama, 19% were from Georgia, and 14% had their homes in Florida. Approximately 31% of the respondents were graduating from the Troy Campus, 29% were University College students, and students from Dothan, Phenix City, and Montgomery made up 11%, 13%, and 16% of the respondents respectively. Additionally, University College students responded from over 30 different sites.

Academic Information

Academically, 55% of the respondents were expecting to receive a Bachelor's degree and 31% would be awarded a Master's degree while the Associate and Education Specialist degree receivers made up 10% and 4% respectively. In addition, over 37% of the respondents would be graduating from College of Arts and Sciences, approximately 30% from the College of Business, and about 25% from the College of Education. Students from the College of Communication & Fine Arts and the College of Health & Human Services had the smallest number of the respondents to the *Survey*.

More than 60% of the students transferred credit hours from other institutions, and over half of these students transferred more than 30 credit hours. While attending TROY, approximately two-thirds of the students took online courses, and over 50% reported their cumulative GPAs as between 3.5 and 4.0 while 29% had GPAs between 3.0 and 3.49. Of the 1,770 respondents, approximately 50% indicated that they had studied at Troy University for 2-3 years while the longest time a student studied at Troy University was over 10 years and the

shortest time was just 1 year. The overall average of the number of years studied at TROY was 3.02 years with 2.45 years for graduate students and 3.34 years for undergraduate students.

Employment and Plan after Graduation

Eighty-five percent (85%) of the respondents reported that they worked while attending Troy University with over 70% working full-time (40 hours or more). Upon graduation, approximately 40% of respondents were planning to work in areas related to their major areas of study at Troy University, around 20% would continue to work in the jobs they already had, and 32% indicated that they would continue their education. The *Survey* also found that over 40% of the respondents planned to pursue a Master's degree after they graduated, 24% would study for a doctoral degree, and around 6% planned to seek an educational specialist degree or a professional degree.

Financial Aid Information

The survey found that 82% of the graduating students had received financial aid while going to school at Troy University. While the financial aid options varied, over half of the respondents (53%) had received Federal student loans, 24% obtained grants, 17% had scholarships, and approximately 15% received tuition assistance. Additionally, about 12% of respondents received a third party pay or other type of financial aid with most of this aid coming from military or VA benefits. Approximately 17% of the respondents did not receive any financial aid.

Student Satisfaction

- Student self-rated development (Report 1 – Q23)

In question 23, eighteen items related to knowledge, skills, and abilities were provided for the students to rate their development as a result of their Troy University education. A factor analysis was used and identified 2 factors – Intellectual Development and Leadership Development—that could explain all 18 items. Intellectual Development which included writing skills, speaking/presentation skills, reading skills, critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, mathematical skills, computer technologies, research skills, scientific principles & methods, understanding different philosophies & cultures, and appreciation of the arts had a mean rating of 4.09 on a 5-point scale with 1 as “Poor” and 5 as “Excellent.” Leadership Development included leadership skills, management & organization skills, time management, working cooperatively in groups, planning & carrying out projects, citizenship skills, and strategies for applying skills (in my field). Leadership Development had a mean rating of 4.26 on the same 5-point scale. The highest rated Intellectual Development areas were:

❖	Critical thinking skills	(M=4.28)	(90%)
❖	Problem solving skills	(M=4.26)	(89%)
❖	Reading Skills	(M=4.26)	(87%)

And the highest ratings in Leadership Development items included:

❖ Planning and carrying out projects	(M=4.35)	(89%)
❖ Management and organizational skills	(M=4.31)	(88%)
❖ Strategies for applying skills in the field	(M=4.28)	(88%)
❖ Time management	(M=4.28)	(86%)

For the areas given above, more than 85% of the respondents rated each area either as “Excellent” or “Good.” Additionally, over 80% of the respondents rated their development in 6 other areas as “Excellent” or “Good,” with a mean between 4.12 and 4.27. These areas included:

❖ Working cooperatively in groups	(M=4.27)	(86%)
❖ Research skills	(M=4.22)	(86%)
❖ Writing skills	(M=4.21)	(87%)
❖ Leadership skills	(M=4.21)	(87%)
❖ Citizenship skills	(M=4.13)	(82%)
❖ Speaking/presentation skills	(M=4.12)	(81%)

All items and statistics are given in Report 1.

• Student ratings for quality of education and academic support services (Report 2 – Q24)
 In question 24, eighteen (18) items were measured in terms of education and academic support services, and factor analysis identified 2 factors – Academic Support Services and Instruction/Academics—which could explain these areas. Academic Support Services included library, computer labs, laboratory/instructional equipment, Testing Center, Writing Center, Reading Center, Natural Science Center, and Center for International Programs, the average rating for the Academic Support Services factor was 3.85 on a 5-point scale with 1 as “Poor” and 5 as “Excellent.” All means for Academic Support Services items were less than 4.0 with a range of 3.80 to 3.90. Instruction/Academics included overall quality of academic programs, academic advising, faculty accessibility, instruction in major courses, instruction in general education courses, faculty’s use of technologies to enhance teaching, course availability in the major, communication between faculty and students, registration procedures, and IMPACT/New Student Orientation Program. The Instruction/Academics factor had a mean rating of 4.02 on the same 5-point scale. The highest rated items related to Instruction/Academics were:

❖ Overall quality of academic program	(M=4.24)	(87%)
❖ Instruction in major courses	(M=4.19)	(85%)
❖ Communication between faculty and students	(M=4.07)	(80%)
❖ Instruction in general education courses	(M=4.02)	(80%)
❖ Faculty’s use of technologies to enhance teaching	(M=4.02)	(78%)
❖ Faculty accessibility	(M=4.02)	(76%)
❖ Course availability in your major	(M=4.00)	(77%)

Three items related to Instruction/Academics with average ratings below 4.00 were Registration Procedures, Academic Advising, and IMPACT/New Student Orientation Program. As noted above none of the areas in Academic Support Services had an average rating of 4.00 or higher. All items and statistics are given in Report 2.

- Student satisfaction with services provided by Troy University (Report 3 – Q25)

In question 25, twenty-four offices and services of the University were measured in terms of student satisfaction. Two factors— Student Services and Administration—were identified by factor analysis. The factor of Student Services included 16 areas: adaptive needs services, Student Support Services (SSS), career services, placement service, counseling services, bookstore services, food services, buildings and grounds, housing & residential life, student health services, recreational and intramural activities, athletic programs, Trojan Fitness Center, student organizations, University media (website, newsletter, radio, TV, etc.), and safety & security services. The factor of Administration consisted of 8 areas: Admissions Office, Registrar/Records Office, Veteran services, Business Office, Financial Aid services, Information Technology (IT) services, Trojan Web Express, and parking facilities. Student Services areas had a mean rating of 3.84 and the Administration areas had a mean rating of 3.80 on a 5-point scale with 1 as “Very Dissatisfied” and 5 as “Very Satisfied.”

Trojan Web Express and Admissions Office in Administration had average ratings of 4.07 and 4.01 respectively while all other areas in Administration and Student Services were rated below 4.00. Half of the areas measured had relatively low levels of satisfaction ratings from the students with less than two-thirds of the respondents giving ratings of “Satisfied.” In particular, over 30% of the students indicated that they were “Very Dissatisfied” or “Dissatisfied” with Parking facilities, and less than 60% of the students were “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with Student Health Services, Recreational and Intramural Activities, Trojan Fitness Center, Placement Service, and Housing and Residential Life of the University. These items and statistics are found in Report 3.

- Student perceptions about Troy University (Report 4 – Q26)

In this section (question 26), 10 statements regarding the University were provided for the students to rate their agreement. As evidenced in Report 4, over 80% of the students “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with the following 4 statements, and this high level of agreement indicates strong satisfaction with the academic programs and confirms the findings in Report 2 above:

- ❖ Courses in my curriculum contributed to the skills and knowledge required in my field. (86%)
- ❖ My academic program was intellectually challenging and stimulating. (85%)
- ❖ The degree program in which I enrolled is valuable for me in my employment. (83%)
- ❖ The goals, objectives, and requirements for my academic programs were clearly defined. (81%)

The lowest rating in this section was for “The University faculty were helpful with my

career plan” which had only 65% of the students indicating their agreement and which had an average agreement rating of 3.74 in a 5-point scale with 1 as “Strongly Disagree” and 5 as “Strongly Agree.”

- Overall ratings of Troy University (Report 5 – Q27)

In question 27, students were asked to rate their Troy preparation for employment and further education as well as to give an overall rating of their college experiences at Troy University. Eighty-four (84%) of the respondents rated their overall college experiences at Troy University as “Excellent” or “Good,” with an average rating of 4.07 while 75% and 77% of the respondents gave ratings of “Excellent” or “Good” to Troy’s preparation of them for employment and further education respectively.

- Recommendation of Troy University (Report 6 – Q28-Q31)

One of the important satisfaction indicators used by colleges and universities is whether their students would recommend their universities to others. The *Survey* found that 94% of respondents indicated that they would recommend Troy University to someone who was planning to go to college (62% - Definitely yes and 32% - probably yes). Ninety-three percent (93%) of respondents would recommend their academic programs to other students (59% - Definitely yes and 34% - Probably yes). Furthermore, 89% of the respondents would attend Troy University again if they could start college over, while 86% indicated they would enroll in the same programs if they were starting over.

Implications

1. Overall, Troy University graduating students for fall 2005 through summer 2006 were satisfied with their college experiences at Troy University.
2. The fact that over 85% of the graduating students would attend Troy University and enroll in the same program again if they were starting over and at least 93% would recommend Troy University and their academic programs of study to others is a strong indication of student satisfaction and Troy University’s effectiveness in providing quality education to its students.
3. Troy University’s graduating students rated highly their intellectual and leadership development that resulted from their education at Troy University. In particular, they were very satisfied with the instruction, the quality of education, and their academic programs at Troy University.
4. The *Graduating Student Survey’s* satisfaction measures identified areas needing improvement, especially in academic support services, student services, and services provided by administrative offices. According to the *Survey* respondents, student intellectual caliber needs to be raised, the University should be more responsive to student needs, and faculty should do more to help students develop their career plans.
5. Because only about one third of the graduating students participated in the *Survey*, generalization of the *Survey* results to all graduating students should be done with some caution.