Past Surveys

Undergraduate Alumni State Council for Higher Education Survey (SCHEV) 1997

A survey of alumni who received undergraduate degrees for the University between July 1993 and June 1994. The survey is required by SCHEV of all public colleges and universities in Virginia. The purpose of the survey was to determine alumni satisfaction with their undergraduate education, their employment and education after graduation, and the financial aid required for their undergraduate education. During the summer of 1997, 735 Alumni from the College of Arts and Sciences and the Schools of Architecture, Commerce, Education, Engineering, and Nursing were surveyed out of an initial sample size of 1250, for a response rate of 59%. Surveys were sent by mail, and the results were weighted to ensure that the results reflect the proper proportion of alumni from the University's six schools.

Questionnaire (.pdf)

Data (Stored in IAS Data Catalog)

Frequencies

Overall

Methodology

Study Population and Sample

Between July 1, 1993 and June 20, 1994, the University of Virginia conferred 2,808 undergraduate degrees to students in the College of Arts and Sciences and the Schools of Architecture, Commerce, Education, Engineering, and Nursing. We wanted to end the study with at least 600 completed questionnaires so that we could make inferences with confidence about the study population and obtain reliable information from students of the smaller schools. Based on our past experiences with return rates and sample criteria, we arrived at an initial sample size of 1250. These potential respondents were selected randomly from a list of names and addresses maintained by the University’s Office of Development with quotas established for the Architecture, Education, and Nursing schools.

Study Design and Data Collection

Because of our study topic and objectives and the population to be surveyed, we chose to collect our data through an anonymous mail survey. On June 18, 1997, we sent each person in the sample a personalized cover letter signed by Institutional Assessment’s executive director, W. Edmund Moomaw, a two-page questionnaire and a postage-paid envelope in which to return the completed questionnaire. The cover letter explained the subject of the study and


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assured respondents that their answers would be treated with complete anonymity.

We guaranteed the anonymity of our respondents by printing each respondent’s “respondent number” on the return envelope rather than the questionnaire. We use this respondent number for tracking participation in our computer data-base system as questionnaires are received. Upon receipt of a completed questionnaire, we immediately separated the questionnaire from the return envelope. No identifiers of any kind were on the questionnaire making it impossible to link a respondents’ answers to his or her name. After the questionnaire was separated from its envelope, we hired the University’s Center for Survey Research to enter the responses into a data-base. Each set of responses was assigned a unique respondent number, a respondent number different from the one used for tracking returns. There is no way that a respondent’s tracking and data respondent numbers can ever be linked.

Three weeks after the initial mailing, every student in our sample was sent a postcard reminding them to return their questionnaire and thanking them if they had already done so. On July 22, we administered a second mailing addressed only to the 752 people who had not responded to date. The second mailing included a cover letter signed by Mr. Moomaw, a new copy of the questionnaire, and another postage-paid return envelope. By the end of the field period, which ended August 22, we had received 735 completed questionnaires, for a response rate of 59%. We also received back 54 unopened mailing packets marked “return-to-sender” which were undeliverable to the address given to us by the Office of Development. Excluding respondents whom we were unable to contact represents an impressive overall response rate of 61%.

**Weighting and Representativeness**

Because we initially oversampled alumni from the Schools of Architecture, Education, and Nursing, the surveys actually received do not represent the proper proportion of alumni from the University’s six schools. In order to generalize back to the population, we have applied weights to the data, giving greater weight to respondents who were underrepresented in the sample and giving lesser weight to those who were overrepresented. All results reported for the total sample throughout this report are based on the statistically weighted data to ensure representativeness of the results. All results reported by school are based on unweighted data. We employed this procedure because using the full sample weight would have produced too small a weighted N for the smaller schools, compromising our ability to make reliable and statistically valid inferences about their alumni.

The respondents in our sample are highly representative of the study population. Fifty-two percent of alumni who graduated between July 1, 1993 and June 20, 1994 are female and 48% are male; 50% of our sample is female and 50% are male. Seventy-eight percent of the population is white, 10% are African American, 9% are Asian American, and 3% are Native American, Hispanic, and non-resident aliens. In our sample, 80% are white, 10% are African American, and 8% are Asian American.
Margin of Error

At a 95% confidence level, the margin of error for the results of this survey is ±3.6%. Put simply, 95 out of 100 samples of this size, drawn from the same population, will generate a sample result that is within plus or minus 3.6 percentage points of the population value. When responses to the questions are reported by school, the margin of error is correspondingly greater. These statistics do not measure non-sampling sources of error which can occur in any survey or poll.

Questions regarding the administration of the survey, the questionnaire, or the results can be directed to Jonathan Schnyer, Assistant Director and Assessment Coordinator, Office of Institutional Assessment and Studies, P.O. Box 400427, Charlottesville, VA 22904-4727 (telephone: 434/924-3417 or schnyer@virginia.edu).