

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2011-2012 GRADUATE ALUMNI SURVEY CLASSES OF 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007

The content of the Graduate Alumni Survey reflects elements of the Vision, Values and Directions for the UI, including the goals of developing innovative and distinctive curricula, engaging and expanding student minds, and providing integrated experiences in teaching, research, creative activity and outreach. The survey includes questions about major curriculum, quality of research experiences, the relationship of the graduate program to subsequent success in employment or further advanced study, and satisfaction with program quality and services.

This survey was administered simultaneously via the web and a paper mailing to a census of graduate students, including the graduating classes of 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. The instrument was identical for all classes and the data were summarized and analyzed together. Of the 2,155 students contacted 474 completed surveys were returned in time for the analysis (22%). This is significantly lower than response rates of the previous survey administrations.

Ninety-five percent (95%) of respondents reported they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their “graduate education overall”, down 1% from 2007. Nearly all responding graduate alumni were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their graduate education in their major field (93%, no change from last administration).

In a new item this year, fifty-seven percent (57%) of responding graduate students report they attended a relevant academic meeting or conference while in graduate school. Fifty-four percent (54%) of those who did reported that they presented a scholarly work at “a professional academic meeting/conference” as part of their graduate studies. Nearly forty-eight percent (48%) of respondents reported they had “scholarly articles/creative works” that were “published/exhibited” as a result of their graduate studies at UI, ranging from “1” article/work (21%) to “4 or more” (11%).

The top five aspects of departmental/academic experiences in which students “agree” or “strongly agree” were: “Overall quality of instruction in UI courses was good” (94%, up 2%); “Most UI faculty supported my progress as a graduate student” (92%, down 1%); “UI has a positive academic environment for graduate study” (91%, down 1%); “Professors in my department expect high-quality graduate students” (91%, up 2%); and, “Degree requirements corresponded well with the stated objectives of the program” (90%, down 1%).

University of Idaho
GRADUATE ALUMNI SURVEY
Classes of 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007

INTRODUCTION

The content of the Graduate Alumni Survey reflects elements of the Vision, Values and Directions for the UI, including the goals of developing innovative and distinctive curricula, engaging and expanding student minds, and providing integrated experiences in teaching, research, creative activity and outreach. In addition, the survey was designed in response to the policy of the state Board of Regents mandating assessment of student learning outcomes, as well as the assessment policy of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, the UI's regional accrediting agency. The survey includes questions about major curriculum, quality of research experiences, the relationship of the graduate program to subsequent success in employment or further advanced study, and satisfaction with program quality and services. This is the fifth administration of the survey since 1995; it is administered every four years on average.

For the first time this survey was administered simultaneously via the web and a paper mailing. Previous surveys were administered using paper only, mailed to a sample of students awarded graduate degrees, stratified by college and department. A census of graduate students (i.e. all eligible students) from the graduating classes of 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 were either emailed or mailed a pre-letter announcing the survey and asking for their participation. Following the initial contact, alumni notified us if they preferred to receive an email copy or a hard copy, and were then either mailed the survey instrument or were emailed the survey link. A follow-up postcard or email was sent, followed by a second mailing of the survey instrument itself or the survey link to those receiving email. The instrument was identical for all classes and the data were summarized and analyzed together. Of the deliverable surveys, 474 completed surveys were returned in time for the analysis (22%). This is significantly lower than the response rate of the previous survey administration. The response by college was relatively proportionate to the number of graduate students from each college, except in the case of the College of Law and the College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences where the response rates were disproportionately lower.

DESCRIPTIVE/DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The proportion of females among respondents was similar to the previous survey at forty-nine percent (49%, down 1%). Eighty-seven percent (87%) of respondents were Caucasian American, data which are not comparable to previous years' since the formatting of the question changed, allowing students to choose more than one race. A new question this year asked about ethnicity, with ninety-seven percent (97%) reporting they are not Hispanic or Latino. These percentages for respondents are fairly reflective of the general population of University of Idaho students.

This year, master's degrees were distinguished from specialist degrees. Sixty-eight percent of respondents (68%) completed master's degrees, fewer than one percent (1%) completed specialist degree, four percent (4%, up 1%) completed MFA programs, thirteen percent (13%, up 2%) JD programs, and fifteen percent (15%, 3%) doctoral programs. When asked where they took most of the courses that were applied to the degree program, sixty-four percent (64%, down 4%) of respondents reported the Moscow campus, thirteen percent (13%, up 3%) the Boise campus, five percent (5%, down 1%) the Coeur d'Alene campus, seven percent (7%, down 1%) the Idaho Falls campus, eight percent (8%, up 4%) by video outreach, and other UI locations (4%, no change).

CONTINUED GRADUATE STUDY AND EMPLOYMENT

The primary purpose reported for seeking an advanced degree was to "qualify for higher pay or job advancement" (24%, up 4%), followed by "obtain a professional license or certification" (17%, down 5%) and "extend my expertise in general" (14%, up 1%). Other reasons included prepare for scholarly research, college/university teaching, further graduate study; update and improve skills; personal enrichment; unable to find employment; necessary to retain position; and, "others."

Eighty-five percent (85%) of respondents reported that they are currently "employed full-time," an eight percent (8%) increase from the previous survey administration in 2007. Four percent (4%, down 3%) reported they are "self-employed," and five percent (4%, up 1%) are "employed part-time (less than 35 hrs/wk)". Two percent (2%, down 1%) of respondents reported this year that they are "primarily studying in an advanced degree program". One percent (1%) of respondents reported that their current occupation is "military service" (unchanged from previous surveys) and two percent (2%, also unchanged) are "caring for home/family/dependents". In addition, two percent (2%, up 1%) report being unemployed.

Sixty-two percent (62%, down 1%) of employees reported that "the knowledge and skills developed at UI" are "highly related" to their employment, while thirty percent (30%, no change) report that they were "moderately" or "slightly related."

When asked how long it took to find employment upon graduation, sixty-seven percent (67%, up 4%) responded they had a job, or had a job offer at time of graduation, with eighteen percent (18%, down 6%) reporting "0-6 months" and the remaining fifteen percent (15%, up 2%) reporting from seven months to more than one year. Alumni were also asked how many jobs they had since graduation, with seventy-seven percent (77%, down 1%) reporting "1-2", seventeen percent (17%, down 2%) reporting "3-4", and four percent (4%, up 1%) reporting "5 or more." Two percent (2%) report they have held zero jobs since graduation.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Graduate studies were supported financially in a variety of ways, but primarily through the use of student loans. In a new format asking students about their finances, these were the top five primary sources:

- sixty-nine percent (69%) used student loans;
- fifty-three percent (53%) received support from their employer;
- fifty-one percent (51%) had research assistantships;
- forty-three percent (43%) used personal savings; and,
- forty-one percent (41%) had teaching assistantships.

A new question this year asked students to estimate the amount of debt incurred during their studies for their graduate degree at the UI. Thirty-seven percent (37%) reported incurring no debt, twenty-two percent (22%) up to \$10,000, thirteen percent (13%) between \$10,001 and \$20,000, twenty-eight percent (28%) over \$20,000. Thirty-five percent (35%) of respondents reported that the “debt was worth the education received”, with an additional fourteen percent (14%) reporting “the value of the education exceeded the cost.” Overall, ninety-four percent (94%) reported they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the “cost of UI (relative to other options).”

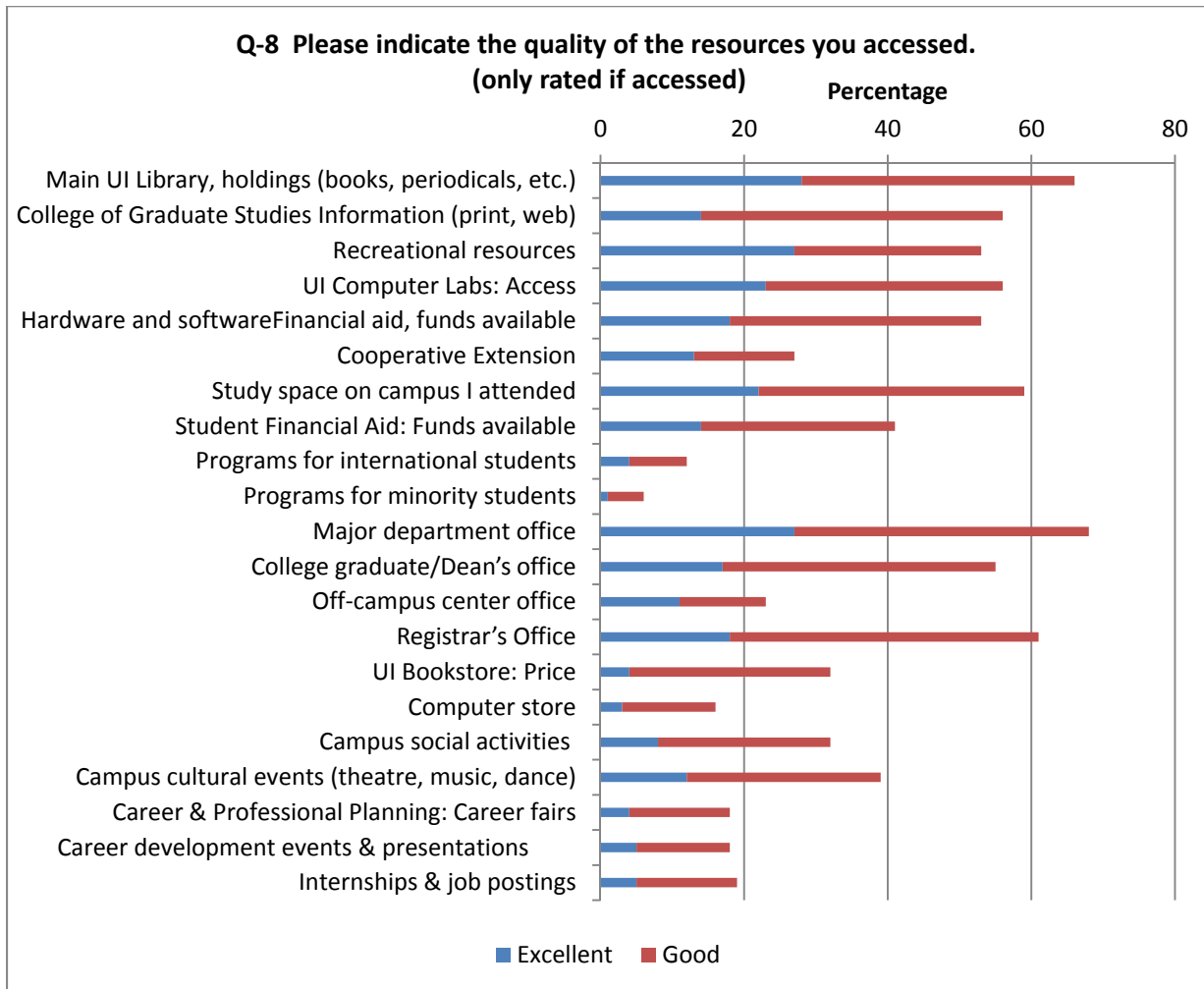
PART I. GENERAL UNIVERSITY

General Satisfaction of Alumni

Ninety-five percent (95%) of respondents reported they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their “graduate education overall”, down 1% from 2007. Nearly all responding graduate alumni were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their graduate education in their major field (93%, no change from last year). Additional elements in which eight of ten respondents reported being “satisfied” or “very satisfied” were “cost of UI” (94%, up 2%); “convenience of university location I attended” (91%, up 1%); “academic reputation of the UI” (89%, up 2%); and, “graduate admissions process” (96%, up 2%). Two new items this year asked students about their satisfaction with the “quality of curriculum” and the “quality of instruction,” with respondents reporting they were ninety-one percent (91%) and ninety-three percent (93%) “satisfied” or “very satisfied,” respectively.

General Services and Programs

The chart below illustrated student satisfaction with the quality of general resources they used while on campus:



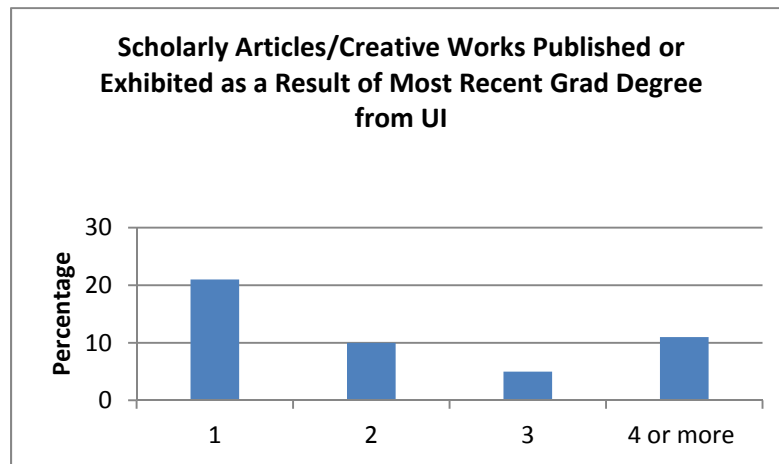
In addition, students were asked to rate some campus services. When adjusted for the students who reported they used the services, the following are the frequencies of “good” and “excellent” that graduate alumni reported for each:

- “Main UI Library services” (92%);
- “Business & Accounting: Cashier” (78%);
- “College of Graduate Studies services” (76%);
- “UI Bookstore services” (76%);
- “Help Desk support services” (74%);
- “Student Health Services” (65%);
- “Career Center internships & job postings” (39%); and,
- “Student Financial Aid services provided” (27%).

PART II. DEPARTMENTAL/ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES

Program Scholarship

In a new item this year, fifty-seven percent (57%) of responding graduate students report they attended a relevant academic meeting or conference while in graduate school. Fifty-four percent (54%) of those who did reported that they presented a scholarly work at “a professional academic meeting/conference” as part of their graduate studies. Nearly forty-eight percent (48%) of respondents reported they had “scholarly articles/creative works” that were “published/exhibited” as a result of their graduate studies at UI, ranging from “1” article/work (21%) to “4 or more” (11%).



Satisfaction with Graduate Program Experiences

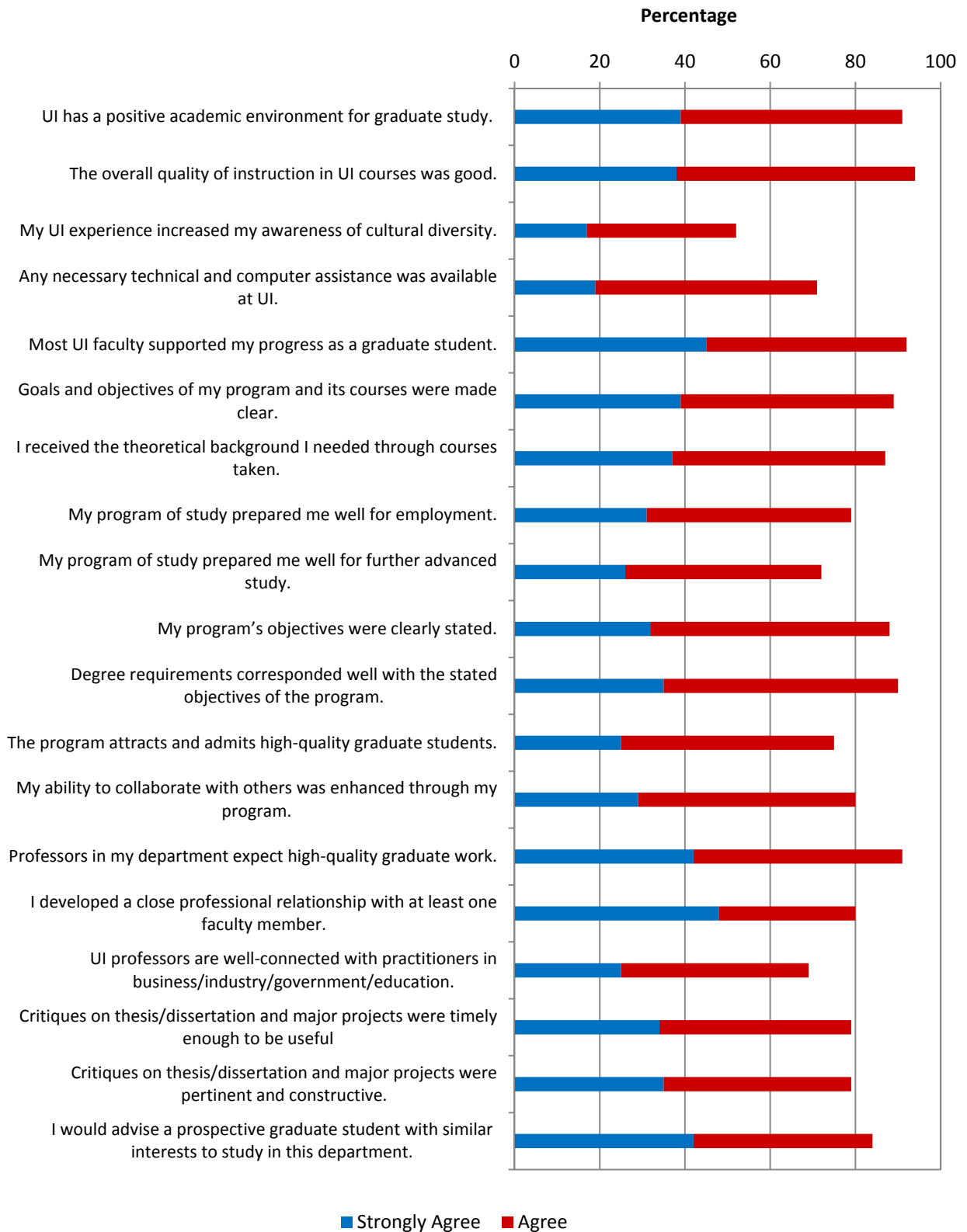
The top five aspects of departmental/academic experiences in which students “agree” or “strongly agree” were: “Overall quality of instruction in UI courses was good” (94%, up 2%); “Most UI faculty supported my progress as a graduate student” (92%, down 1%); “UI has a positive academic environment for graduate study” (91%, down 1%); “Professors in my department expect high-quality graduate students” (91%, up 2%); and, “Degree requirements corresponded well with the stated objectives of the program” (90%, down 1%). At least seven out of ten respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” they were satisfied with all other elements of their graduate education listed, except:

- “My UI experience increased my awareness of cultural diversity” (52%, up 4%); and,
- “UI professors are well-connected with practitioners in business/industry/government/education” (69%, up 1%).

Interestingly, eighty-four percent (84%, down 2%) of respondents “would advise a prospective graduate student with similar interests to study in this department.

The chart below illustrates additional alumni responses to the questions in general:

Department or Academic Experience



Quality of Department's Environment, Resources, Teaching, and Preparation

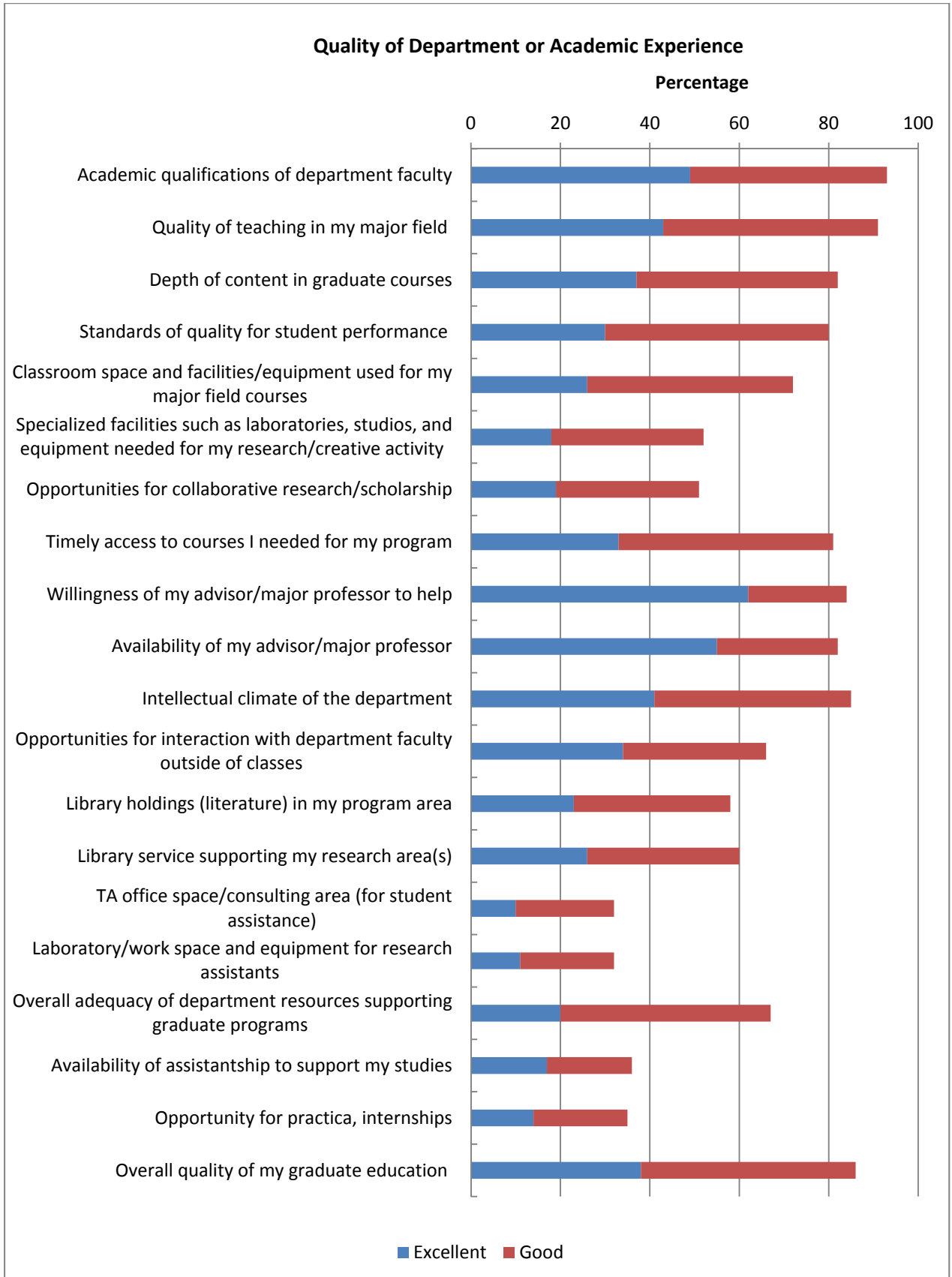
Quality ratings (excellent, good, fair, poor) of the department's environment and resources were sought in this item. The elements receiving the highest ratings of "excellent" or "good", when adjustment is made for the proportion that responded "don't know" or "not applicable" were: "academic qualifications of department faculty" (93%, up 1%), "quality of teaching in my major field courses" (91%, up 4%); "depth of content in my graduate courses" (82%, no change from previous survey); "timely access for courses I needed for my program" (81%, down 1%); and, "standards of quality for student performance" (80%, down 4%).

Additional items related to departmental recourses and support which rated the highest frequencies of "good" or "excellent" were: "willingness of my advisor/major professor to help" (84%, down 3%); "availability of my advisor/major professor" (82%, down 2%); "overall quality of my graduate education" (86%, down 3%); and, "intellectual climate of the department" (85%, up 2%).

A new item this year asked respondents about their satisfaction with academic advising. The following were the frequencies in which students reported being "satisfied" or "very satisfied":

- "departmental advising/guidance" (77%);
- "major professor mentoring" (78%);
- "overall quality of graduate instruction" (88%);
- "professional relationship with graduate committee" (66%);
- "level of financial support" (46%);
- "resources available for student research" (56%).

The chart below outlines student ratings of the quality of their department and academic experiences:



OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS

The remainder of the survey consisted of broad, open-ended questions regarding the greatest strengths and weaknesses of the respondents' graduate programs, and any recommendations respondents might have to improve the programs or services offered. These responses are forwarded to each college for review.

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