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Prepared by the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Accountability
Introduction

For the eighteenth time since 1982, the Office of Institutional Assessment, Research, and Accountability conducted a survey of alumni who graduated from Salisbury State University the previous academic year. This annual process was first initiated by the State Board for Higher Education (SBHE)—now known as the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC)—and the State Universities and Colleges—now the University System of Maryland. These surveys have always included University-specific questions, as well as a common core of State-initiated questions that provide a rich historical record of our graduates’ perspectives on several primary topics or indicators.

In May 2000, the Office of Institutional Assessment, Research, and Accountability continued its historical research of our alumni by surveying graduates from the 1998-1999 academic class. The analyses are complete and are contained within the enclosed report. The results of this year’s survey, coupled with the results from the previous three surveys assume significant importance when compared against previous reports.

Since the State of Maryland adopted the Managing for Results process, the need to validate outcomes has exponentially increased. Institutional performance against both mandated measures and institutionally-created measures will serve a primary role in future performance-based funding. The results of SSU’s ‘survey of alumni’ are significant to this process. Several primary indicators, i.e. graduate school attendance, employment levels, employment levels in Maryland, satisfaction ratings, and employment fields are all required performance indicators and can be assessed from the ‘survey of alumni.’

The following report may create as many questions as it generates answers. It should also create some reservations over instrument validity and whether or not self-reported data provide sufficient levels of information, particularly since performance-based funding may be impacted by these data. Due to the efforts of the Institutional Research directors from Maryland institutions and the willingness on the part of the Maryland Higher Education Commission to revise its instrument, the current instrument is a significant improvement over previous instruments.

On a final note, the report includes the comments that were solicited from the 1998-1999 graduating class. These comments represent those remarks that SSU graduates chose to communicate. The solicitation was objective and generic. As a result, the comments cover a wide array of topics. The remarks have been organized according to the academic major of the respondent, and a matrix created that categorizes the comments into general themes. The list is not exhaustive, but some common topics were readily apparent. Please note that the comments were transcribed exactly as they were written—in word, spelling, and grammar. The names have been withheld and so noted where any comments referenced individuals, regardless of the content. Additionally, comments are generally provided by individuals who feel strongly about a particular point(s) or issue(s). These comments may or may not represent the views of the majority who remain silent.

Survey Question 2:
Would you have been able to financially complete your degree without financial aid?

![Respondents’ Ability to Finance Education at SSU](image-url)
Purpose

The Office of Institutional Assessment, Research, and Accountability recently surveyed Salisbury State University baccalaureate degree recipients who completed their degree between August 1998 and May 1999. The results of the survey provide limited, but valuable insights into our graduates’ perception of their undergraduate educational experience and the degree to which that experience and the University has impacted their lives. Survey results are analyzed internally on an annual basis, and by legislative requirement, are submitted to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) on a biannual basis in even-numbered years. The following report provides highlights from the responses of the 1998-1999 class, which was surveyed in May 2000.

Instrumentation

The data used in this report were collected by a survey instrument (Appendix A) designed collaboratively by the Maryland Higher Education Commission, the University System of Maryland (USM) institutions, and the other Maryland independent colleges and institutions. The original instrument dates to the early 1980’s. Initiated in two parts, the 2000 survey instrument underwent considerable revision from prior years’ surveys. First, under pressure from and collaboration with the college and university Institutional Research directors, the Maryland Higher Education Commission agreed to update and improve the first 17 items that currently represent the core of the survey. These 17 items are collected, analyzed, and reported by the Maryland Higher Education Commission. Second, prior SSU surveys had asked an additional 40+ questions that were SSU-specific, and which covered a broad array of topics, including: general education, support services, and values-related queries. This section was reduced to 13 questions that focus exclusively on educational quality and general education. The revision to the SSU-specific section reduced the survey from 63 questions to 30, focused the research emphases, and provided additional space to solicit general comments.
Methodology

One thousand one hundred and thirteen of the 1,156 baccalaureate recipients (13 of whom received two degrees) from the 1998-99 graduating class were surveyed. Chart 1 provides a program breakdown of those students. In May 2000, students were sent a cover letter, survey, and self-addressed, prepaid, return envelope. Cover letters addressed each graduate personally and afforded the option of responding electronically or by the printed survey. All students were provided a numerical code that permitted them access to the Office of Institutional Assessment, Research, & Accountability’s survey web site, yet prevented duplication. Each survey was coded to permit follow-up mailings to non-respondents, who received a second cover letter and survey approximately 30 days after the initial mailing.

Survey Highlights

Characteristics of the Respondents

Of 1,113 surveys mailed in mid-May, 422 surveys were returned by September 5, 2000, while seven were undeliverable. This represents a response rate of 38%, which is a significant improvement and virtually double the 22% return rates for both 1998 and 1999. The sample population was 40% male and 60% female. Thirty-two percent of the males responded compared to 42% of the females. The racial/ethnic composition of the sample population was 7% black (non-Hispanic), 91% white (non-Hispanic), and 2% foreign and other minorities. The response rates for each ethnic category were 26%, 39%, and 31%, respectively. Fifty-two percent of the respondents came to SSU as transfer students. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents were legal residents of Maryland when they first enrolled. (Refer to Appendix B for a complete record of survey responses.)

Employment

Four hundred and three of the 422 respondents are in the job market (defined as working full-time, working part-time, or seeking employment), while 333 or 83% of these are employed full-time.

- 65% of those employed full-time are employed in Maryland. This proportion or indicator is of particular importance to Maryland’s governing agencies. (Chart 2)
- 20% of respondents who are employed full-time are employed as teachers. Since the B.S. in Elementary
Education was the most frequent undergraduate degree awarded at SSU in 1998-1999, and given the current market demand for qualified teachers, this proportion would be anticipated. Professional health occupations were reported as another high frequency career (11%) by respondents working full-time. The Henson School disciplines of Biology, Nursing, Medical Technology, and Respiratory Therapy feed the health professions, which made up 16% of the undergraduate degree recipients in 1998-1999. The Perdue School disciplines of Accounting, and Marketing and Management also accounted for 17% of the undergraduate degrees awarded in 1998-1999. These disciplines supplied two other high frequency occupations reported by respondents working full-time: accountant, financial analyst or banker (11%), and sales or marketing (11%).

- 85% of respondents working full-time report that they are working in a field directly related or somewhat related to their major or area of study at SSU.
- 76% of respondents working full-time and who reported their salary range are making $25,000 or more. 48% are making $30,000 or more. (Chart 3)
- Student satisfaction with job preparation is a key indicator that must be reported annually in various accountability reports. Of the 328 respondents who reported their level of satisfaction, 93% reported that Salisbury State University provided fair, good or excellent preparation for their current job.

Graduate or Professional Study

Since graduating from SSU, 135 or 32% of the respondents have enrolled in school again. (Chart 4)

- Of those, 111 or 82% are pursuing a Master’s Degree or higher, which provides a total graduate school going rate of 26.3%.
- 29% are pursuing a Master’s Degree in Education or an education-related field. 16% are pursuing a Master’s Degree in Social Work.
- 86% are pursuing graduate study in the same major of their undergraduate degree, or a different, but related major.
- Student satisfaction with graduate school preparation is another key indicator that must be reported annually in various accountability reports. Of the 108 respondents who reported their level of satisfaction, 98% reported that Salisbury State University provided fair, good, or excellent preparation for graduate school.
Student Satisfaction

When questioned “if they were to do it over, would they choose to attend Salisbury State University again,” 88% of respondents replied probably or definitely yes, 8% were unsure, and 4% replied probably or definitely no. Of those who were unsure or replied negatively, 2% were unemployed and 44% reported that a bachelor’s degree was not required to obtain their current job. Thirty percent of the same group (unsure or replied negatively) is currently employed in a health profession.

- 97% of respondents were satisfied with their level of access to full-time faculty.
- 98% of respondents were satisfied with the quality of education they received at the University.

The results shown in this report will differ slightly from those presented in Managing for Results (MFR). Several goals were established against baseline averages of multiple-year data. Annual results on the MFR are reported in a similar fashion.

![Chart 5: Student Satisfaction with the Educational Experience Received at SSU](chart5.png)