Survey of Non-Returning Graduate Students

Spring 2006

Office of Institutional Research & Assessment
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Method

Participants

The survey population was 699 graduate students who were not enrolled in Spring 2006, but had been enrolled in Spring 2005. None of these students had received a Masters degree from Southeastern. Of the population, 13.4% (n=94) had bad telephone numbers, 1.4%, (n=10) had been asked by the university not to return and 0.3% (n=2) were deceased. Institutional Research and Assessment attempted, but was unsuccessful, in contacting 56.2% (n=393) of the population. Of the 200 contacted, 16.5% (n=33) refused to complete the survey. One hundred sixty-seven (167) participants completed the survey, for a response rate of 83.5%.

Table 1 provides a comparison of the demographics between the survey sample and the population.

Procedure

The survey was administered by telephone, using trained and experienced IR staff and student workers. The survey was conducted Monday-Friday, during the day and evening, from March 15th – April 21st, 2006.
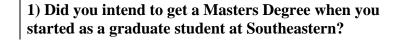
Instrument

The first section of the survey asked participants if they had intended to get a Masters degree when they began as a graduate student at Southeastern. Respondents who indicated they did not intend to get a Masters degree were then asked if they had completed their goal for attending Southeastern, while those who indicated that they did intend to get a Masters degree were then asked a series of questions to determine if they planned on returning to Southeastern in the future. Participants who indicated they did not plan on returning to Southeastern were given a list of forty possible reasons why a student might leave college, and were asked to rate whether it was a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason at all in their decision to leave Southeastern. Students who indicated that they did plan to continue their education at Southeastern were first asked when they planned to return to Southeastern. They were then given a list of ten possible reasons why a student might stop attending Southeastern for a while, and were asked to rate whether each item was a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason at all in their decision to "stop-out." The final section asked for demographic information that is not collected as part of the application or registration process, such as how far they had to travel (one way) to Southeastern's main campus. The entire survey can be found in Appendix A.

Results

Comparison of Survey Participant Responses to University Records

The first question of the survey instrument asked participants if they intended to get a Masters degree when they first enrolled as a graduate student at Southeastern. Based on the responses, 52.7% (n=88) said they did intend to get a Masters degree and 47.3% (n=79) said they did not. However, the students' responses to their degree intentions do not necessarily agree with Southeastern's official records. According to official Spring 2005 records, 40.7% (n=68) of the respondents were enrolled in a degree seeking program, while 59.3% (n=99) were not. Table 2 provides a comparison of the degree seeking status of the participants based on their responses and the type of degree program they were enrolled in.

Table 2
Comparison of Participant Responses to
Introductory Question 1 and Official University Records

	1) Did you intend to get a Masters Degree when you started as a graduate student at Southeastern?

plan to return to Southeastern to complete their degree. Based on these definitions, 41.7% (n=25) are Drop-Outs and 58.3% (n=35) are Stop-Outs.

Degree-Seeking Stop-Outs

The majority of the Stop-Outs (45.7%, n=16) plan on returning to Southeastern in Fall 2006, with 37.1% (n=13) planning on returning within the next year, 2.9% (n=1) planning on returning in the next five years and 11.4% (n=4) not sure when they will be returning.

Stop-Outs were then asked to indicate whether each of ten possible reasons was a Major Reason, a Minor Reason, or Not a Reason for their decision to stop attending Southeastern for a while. The two most cited reasons for their decision not to return to Southeastern were "had family responsibilities to take care of" (76.5%, n=26), "needed a break from school" (47.1%, n=16) and "work interfered with school" (44.1%, n=15).

Table 3 provides the percentage of endorsement for Major Reason, Minor Reason, and Not a Reason for each item.

Table 3
Percentage of Endorsement for Major Reason, Minor Reason, and Not a Reason

	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason
Had family responsibilities to take care of	64.7%	11.8%	23.5%
Needed a break from school	14.7%	32.4%	52.9%
Work interfered with school	29.4%	14.7%	55.9%
Needed to earn more money	23.5%	11.8%	64.7%
Dealing with hurricane related problems	14.7%	17.6%	67.6%
Health reasons	14.7%	5.9%	79.4%

Table 4
Institutions Where Respondents Have or Plan to Enroll

Institution	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
LSU	4	20.0%
Southern University	4	20.0%
University of New Orleans	2	10.0%
A school in Colorado	1	5.0%
LRCE (Louisiana Resource Center for Educators)	1	5.0%
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary	1	5.0%
Nicholls State University	1	5.0%
Southern University or LSU	1	5.0%
University of Denver	1	5.0%
University of Illinois	1	5.0%
University of Phoenix	1	5.0%
University of South Alabama	1	5.0%
Webster University or University of Phoenix Online	1	5.0%

Respondents were then asked what was their main reason for deciding to attend another school. Twenty percent (20.0%, n=4) of the respondents indicated they were either dropped from the program they were in or not accepted into the program they wanted in, with an additional 15.0% (n=3) of the respondents signifying they decided to attend another school because the major or program they were interested in was not available at Southeastern.

Next, Drop-Outs were asked to indicate whether each of forty possible reasons was a Major Reason, a Minor Reason, or Not a Reason in their decision to leave Southeastern. "Decided to attend a different college" was the item with the largest endorsement, with 52.0% (n=13) of the respondents indicating it was a reason they left Southeastern. This was followed by "Impersonal attitudes of college faculty and/or staff," which 32.0% (n=8) of respondents endorsed as a reason they left.

Table 5 provides the percentage of endorsement for Major Reason, Minor Reason, and Not a Reason for each item.

Table 5
Percentage of Endorsement for Major Reason, Minor Reason, and Not a Reason

	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason
Decided to attend a different college	41.7%	12.5%	45.8%
Impersonal attitudes of college faculty and/or staff	16.7%	16.7%	66.7%
Had problems scheduling classes	16.7%	8.3%	75.0%
Tired of commuting to Southeastern	16.7%	8.3%	75.0%
You were disappointed with the quality of instruction at Southeastern	12.5%	12.5%	75.0%
Academic advising was inadequate	16.7%	4.2%	79.2%
Dealing with hurricane related problems	12.5%	8.3%	79.2%
Unhappy with Southeastern's rules and regulations	12.5%	8.3%	79.2%
Problems with the graduate coordinator or your advisor	8.3%	12.5%	79.2%
Wanted a break from graduate studies	0.0%	20.8%	79.2%
Too much conflict between the responsibilities of work and school	16.7%	0.0%	83.3%
Could not get into the program you wanted	12.5%	4.2%	83.3%
Moved to a new location	12.5%	0.0%	87.5%
Southeastern did not promote an atmosphere that was conducive to learning	8.3%	4.2%	87.5%
Too much conflict between the responsibilities of family and school	8.3%	4.2%	87.5%
Did not feel like you fit in	4.2%	8.3%	87.5%
Encountered unexpected expenses	4.2%	8.3%	87.5%
Accepted a full-time job	8.3%	0.0%	91.7%
The major you wanted was not available at Southeastern	8.3%	0.0%	91.7%
Dissatisfied with your grades	4.2%	4.2%	91.7%
Too much stress	4.2%	4.2%	91.7%
There were too many required courses	0.0%	8.3%	91.7%
Wanted to get work experience	0.0%	8.3%	91.7%
Did not have the study skills required to succeed in graduate school	4.2%	0.0%	9ills rej12 0

Table 5

Percentage of Endorsement for Major Reason, Minor Reason, and Not a Reason, Cont.

	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason
Courses were too difficult	0.0%	4.2%	95.8%
Family responsibilities were too great	0.0%	4.2%	95.8%
Could not find affordable housing you liked	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Could not find and/or afford child care	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Could not find part-time work	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Courses were not challenging	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Did not intend to get a graduate degree when you started at Southeastern	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Inadequate facilities for physically handicapped students	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Southeastern was too large for you	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Southeastern was too small for you	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Your relatives influenced you to quit	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

What are Non Degree-Seeking Students' Intentions?

Fifty-nine percent (59%, n=99) of the 167 survey participants were officially enrolled as non degree-seeking students in Spring 2005. Seventy-two percent (72%, n=71) of the non degree-seeking students indicated that they indeed did not intend to get a Masters degree when they started as graduate students at Southeastern. Of these students, 78.9% (n=56) have completed their goal for attending Southeastern. For the students who have not completed their goal for attending Southeastern, "to get additional certification" was most often stated as their goal.

On the other hand, of the ninety-nine non degree-seeking students, 28.3% (n=28) indicated that they did intend to get a Masters degree when they started as a graduate student at Southeastern. These students can be classified into two groups: 1)Drop-Outs, those respondents who no longer plan on continuing their education at Southeastern, including those who plan on or have transferred elsewhere; 2)Stop-Outs, those respondents who plan to return to Southeastern to complete their degree. Based on these definitions, 39.3 % (n=11) are Drop-Outs and 60.7 % (n=17) are Stop-Outs.

Non Degree-Seeking Stop-Outs

The majority of the Stop-Outs (41.2%, n=7) plan on returning to Southeastern within the next year, with 29.4% (n=5) planning on returning in Fall 2006, 5.9% (n=1) planning on returning

The two most cited reasons for their decision not to return to Southeastern were "had family responsibilities to take care of" and "work interfered with school".

Table 6 provides the percentage of endorsement for Major Reason, Minor Reason, and Not a Reason for each item.

Table 6
Percentage of Endorsement for Major Reason, Minor Reason, and Not a Reason

	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason
Had family responsibilities to take care of	43.8%	0.0%	56.3%
Work interfered with school	18.8%	25.0%	56.3%
Needed a break from school	12.5%	25.0%	62.5%
Dealing with hurricane related problems	18.8%	6.3%	75.0%
Needed to earn more money	12.5%	12.5%	75.0%
Could not schedule the classes you needed	0.0%	18.8%	81.3%
Health reasons	6.3%	0.0%	93.8%
Academic problems	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Military obligation	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Religious obligation	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Non Degree-Seeking Drop-Outs

Most of the Drop-Outs a0.72003 17.94 ref5eCID 51 ₿-uts

Table 9

Demographic Characteristics of Degree-Seeking and Non-Degree Seeking Participants

	Degree-Seeking	Non Degree-Seeking
Sample Size	68	99
Distance Traveled (one way) to Southeastern's Main Campus		
Live on Campus	1.5%	0.0%
Less than 5 Miles	11.8%	11.1%
Between 5 and 10 Miles	10.3%	8.1%
Between 11 and 20 Miles	2.9%	8.1%
Between 21 and 30 Miles	17.6%	17.2%
More than 30 Miles	52.9%	52.5%
Where Students Work		
Did Not Work	10.3%	15.2%
Work On Campus	8.8%	4.0%
Work Off Campus	72.1%	76.8%
Worked Both On and Off Campus	7.4%	3.0%
Number of Hours Per Week Worked (Only for those who worked)		
1-10 Hours	0.0%	3.7%
11-20 Hours	10.0%	6.1%
21-30 Hours	6.7%	3.7%
More Than 30 Hours	83.3%	86.6%
Highest Level of Parental Education		
No High School Diploma	4.4%	11.1%
High School Diploma/GED	26.5%	29.3%
Some College	17.6%	9.1%

Associate D

Appendix A
Survey of Non-Returning Graduate Students

Non-Returning:

I am now going to read some reasons why a student might leave graduate school. For each reason, please tell me whether it was a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason that you decided to leave Southeastern.

(1=Major Reason, 2=Minor Reason, 3=Not a Reason)

1. Health-related problem (family or personal)
2. Wanted a break from graduate studies
3. Moved to a new location
4. Did not intend to get a graduate degree when you started at Southeastern
5. Tired of commuting to Southeastern
6. Could not find and/or afford child care
7. Family responsibilities were too great
8. Southeastern was too small for you
9. Southeastern was too large for you
10. Did not feel like you fit in
11. Your relatives influenced you to quit
12. Dissatisfied with your grades
13. Suspended or placed on probation
14. Courses were too difficult
15. Courses were not challenging
16. Southeastern did not promote an atmosphere that was conducive to learning
17. There were too many required courses
18. You were disappointed with the quality of instruction at Southeastern
19. The major you wanted was not available at Southeastern
20. Could not get into the program you wanted
21. Dissatisfied with your major
22. Academic advising was inadequate
23. Had problems scheduling classes
24. Did not have the study skills required to succeed in graduate school
25. Could not find affordable housing you liked
26. Unhappy with Southeastern's rules and regulations
27. Impersonal attitudes of college faculty and/or staff
28. Experienced racism, prejudice or sexism
29. Inadequate facilities for physically handicapped students
30. Encountered unexpected expenses
31. Did not receive enough financial aid
32. Decided to attend a different college
33. Could not find part-time work
34. Wanted to get work experience
35. Accepted a full-time job
36. Too much conflict between the responsibilities of work and school
37. Too much conflict between the responsibilities of family and school
38. Too much stress
39. Problems with the graduate coordinator or your advisor
40. Dealing with hurricane related problems

Go to Demographic Questions

Stop-Out questions

1. When do you plan to return to Southeastern?
   - 1 = Next semester
   - 2 = Within the next year
   - 3 = Within the next two years
   - 4 = Within the next five years
   - 5 = Not sure at this time

For the following reasons I read, please tell me if they were a minor reason, a major reason, or no reason at all for why you decided to stop attending Southeastern for a while.
(1=Major Reason, 2=Minor Reason, 3=Not a Reason)

2. Needed to earn more money
3. Had family responsibilities to take care of
4. Needed a break from school
5. Military obligation
6. Religious obligation
7. Work interfered with school
8. Academic problems
9. Health reasons
10. Could not schedule the classes you needed
11. Dealing with hurricane related problems

Demographics

1. How far did you have to travel (one way) to Southeastern's main campus?
   - 1 = Live on campus
   - 2 = Less than 5 miles
   - 3 = Between 5 and 10 miles
   - 4 = Between 11 and 20 miles
   - 5 = Between 21 and 30 miles
   - 6 = More than 30 miles

2. Did you work on or off campus?
   - 1 = Did not work **(Skip to Question 4)**
   - 2 = Worked on campus
   - 3 = Worked off campus
   - 4 = Worked both on and off campus

3. How many hours did you work a week?
   - 1 = No more than ten hours
   - 2 = Eleven to twenty hours
   - 3 = Twenty-one to thirty hours
   - 4 = More than thirty hours

4. What was your Mother's highest level of education?
                1 = No high school diploma
                2 = High School diploma/GED
                3 = Some college
                4 = Associate Degree
                5 = Bachelor's Degree
                6 = Graduate or Professional Degree
                7 = Unknown or refused

5. What was your Father's highest level of education?
                1 = No high school diploma
                2 = High School diploma/GED
                3 = Some college
                4 = Associate Degree
                5 = Bachelor's Degree
                6 = Graduate or Professional Degree
                7 = Unknown or refused

That is all the questions I have, thank you for your time. If you have any questions regarding this survey, please contact Dr. Michelle Hall at (985) 549-2077.

Appendix B
Non-Degree Seeking Students Stated Goals for Attending Southeastern Louisiana University

1. I already have a doctorate degree. My goal was to complete a prerequisite for a Pre-Med track in chemistry. I am not enrolled at Southeastern now because we have been displaced by Katrina to West Virginia.
2. I am getting an add-on certification.
3. I am working on a Plus-30.
4. I am working on my add-on certification.
5. I am working on my Plus-30.
6. I am working to get my certification of Administration in Elementary Education.
7. I plan on going to Summer school and take one course in the Fall and I will have an add-on in Principleship.
8. I want to get additional certification.
9. I want to get certification in Administration.
10. To get a few more courses to finish my Special Education degree.
11. To get add-on certification. I am also interested in getting into the new Ed.D. program.
12. To get alternate certification in teaching.
13. To get certification in Music Education. Katrina has delayed that.
14. To get certified in Special Education.
15. To take some prerequisite courses

Appendix C
Reasons Students Stated for Deciding to Attend another University