

Report of the Results of the 1998 BGSU Short-Term and Long-Term Alumni Questionnaires

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ABSTRACT

This report describes the results of the 1998 administration of the BGSU Short-Term Alumni Questionnaire (1996 Bachelor's Degree graduates) and the BGSU Long-Term Alumni Questionnaire (1991 Bachelor's Degree graduates). The questionnaires were designed to collect information about the employment and continued education activities of alumni, their satisfaction with various aspects of the University, and their awareness of and satisfaction with various Alumni Association programs and services. Their use supports the University's assessment priority. Results are used in this report to provide a descriptive profile of the 1991 and 1996 baccalaureate alumni. They are also maintained in databases within the Office of Institutional Research for use in longitudinal studies.

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The need for information about the post-graduation activities and perceptions of alumni prompted the development of the BGSU Short-Term and Long-Term Alumni Questionnaires in late 1997. Records maintained in the Office of Institutional Research revealed that, while departmental and college-wide alumni questionnaires have been used periodically, no University-wide alumni questionnaire has been administered since 1980. This information constitutes a critical component of BGSU's assessment efforts. Since no single commercially-available questionnaire would provide the data specifically needed by BGSU in a timely and cost effective manner, short-term (1991 Bachelor's Degree graduates) and long-term (1991 Bachelor's Degree graduates) questionnaires were developed by the Office of Institutional Research following widespread consultation with various sectors of the University.

Alumni questionnaires were mailed to all 1991 and 1996 BGSU baccalaureate alumni using mailing labels provided by the Office of Alumni Affairs. A first mailing was done in April 1998 and a second mailing to non-respondents was done in May. A total of 786 short-term questionnaires were returned from the group of all 2,915 1996 alumni in the population, representing a 27% response rate. A total of 608 long-term questionnaires were returned from the group of 2,412 1991 alumni in the population; this represents a 25% response rate. The profile of the respondents generally matched that of all recent baccalaureate alumni with respect to gender, ethnicity, and college. Alumni questionnaire results were analyzed by noting the percentages of respondents who provided each response to each questionnaire item. Responses were compared by gender, ethnicity, and college for 1996 alumni and significant differences are noted in the following section of the report where they occurred. Demographic data were not available for the 1991 alumni.

EMPLOYMENT

Which best describes your current employment status?



	1991 %	1996 %
employed full-time in a job related to my major	68	69
employed part-time in a job related to my major	7	6
employed full-time in a job unrelated to my major	17	12
employed part-time in a job unrelated to my major	3	3
employed as a graduate assistant	1	6
unemployed and seeking employment	2	2
unemployed and not seeking employment	3	2

Men were more likely to report being employed full-time in jobs related to their majors; women were more likely to be employed part-time in jobs related to their majors. Alumni from the colleges of Musical Arts and Technology more frequently reported being employed full-time in jobs related to their majors.

What is the annual salary of your current job? (1991 Alumni)

What was the annual salary of your first job after graduation? (1996 Alumni)

	1991 %	1996 %
less than \$20,000	9	34
\$20,000 - \$29,999	20	43
\$30,000 - \$39,999	24	17
\$40,000 - \$49,999	20	5
\$50,000 and above	27	1

Males, on average, reported higher salaries than females. A significantly greater percentage of alumni from the College of Health and Human Services had salaries in the \$50,000+ range; a significantly greater percentage of Arts and Sciences alumni had salaries in the less than \$20,000 category.

How satisfied are you with your current job? (1991 Alumni)

How satisfied were you with your first job after graduation? (1996 Alumni)

	1991 %	1996 %
very satisfied	49	37
satisfied	42	43
dissatisfied	8	14
very dissatisfied	1	5

How satisfied are you with the way BGSU prepared you for your current job?

(1991 Alumni)

How satisfied are you with the way BGSU prepared you for your first job after graduation? (1996 Alumni)

	1991	1996
	%	%
very satisfied	31	26
satisfied	61	60
dissatisfied	6	10
very dissatisfied	2	4

Alumni from the colleges of Musical Arts and Technology more often said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their career preparation.

How many different jobs have you had since you graduated from BGSU?

	1991 Alumni only
none	4%
one	14%
two	26%
three or more	57%

What methods did you use to find your first job after you graduated from BGSU?

	1996 Alumnionly
personal contacts/networking	53%
newspaper ad	28%
BGSU Career Services	25%
co-op/internship contacts	16%
BGSU faculty	13%
other BGSU contacts	7%
employment agency	7%
recruiter	5%
alumni career programs	1%

How long did it take you to get your first job after you graduated from BGSU?

	1996 Alumnionly
I continued in a job I already had	13%
I found a job before graduation	28%
less than 3 months	32%
3 to 6 months	15%
6 to 12 months	9%
more than 12 months	4%

Men took less time than women to find their first job after graduation. Alumni from Business Administration and Technology reported taking the least time, on average, to find a job after graduation, while those from Education and Human Development took the most time.

If you are required to take a licensing or certification examination related to your area of study at BGSU, please choose one of the following options:

1996 Alumni only	
I have taken and passed the examination	95%
I have taken the exam but do not yet know the results	2%
I have taken the exam but did not pass	3%

CONTINUED EDUCATION

Since graduation from BGSU have you completed any additional college courses?

	1991 %	1996 %
No	39	60
Yes, I've completed courses, but not towards another degree.	18	12
Yes, I've completed courses towards another Bachelor's degree, but haven't yet earned it.	1	2
Yes, I've completed courses towards and earned another bachelor's Degree.	1	0
Yes, I've completed courses towards a Master's Degree, but haven't yet earned it.	11	12
Yes, I've completed courses towards and earned a Master's Degree.	22	8
Yes, I've completed courses towards a doctoral degree, but haven't yet earned it.	3	3
Yes, I've completed courses towards and earned a doctoral degree.	3	0
Yes, I've completed courses towards a law or medical degree, but haven't yet earned it.	0	2
Yes, I've completed courses towards and earned a law or medical degree.	3	1

Men were more likely to have taken additional course work. Alumni from Business Administration were less likely to have taken additional course work.

What is the most important reason that you continued your education after graduating from BGSU?

	1991 %	1996 %

for continued career preparation	56	54
for preparation for a new career	11	15
to increase my earnings	19	17
for general self-improvement	14	14

How satisfied are you with the way BGSU prepared you for additional college work?

	1991	1996
	%	%
very satisfied	32	33
satisfied	61	60
dissatisfied	6	7
very dissatisfied	1	1

GAINS AND EMPHASIS

For each of the following items, please indicated how much you feel you have gained as a results of your BGSU education. (Percentage "Quite a Bit" or "Very Much")

	1991 Alumni Only
writing effectively	70%
solving problems	67%
thinking critically	66%
relating to others	61%
speaking effectively	61%
understanding my own abilities, interests, and values	60%
using computers	39%

For each of the following items, please indicated how much emphasis you feel BGSU should place in each area (Percentage "Need to Emphasize More")

	1991 Alumni Only
using computers	67%
speaking effectively	45%
writing effectively	44%
thinking critically	39%
solving problems	37%
relating to others	35%
understanding my own abilities, interests, and values	27%

SATISFACTION WITH THE UNIVERSITY

Regardless of the financial benefits, has your college education improved the quality of your life so far?

	<u>1991</u>	<u>1996</u>
definitely	79%	69%
probably	18%	25%
probably not	2%	4%
definitely not	1%	2%

If you could start college over again, would you choose to enroll at BGSU?

	<u>1991</u>	<u>1996</u>
definitely	34%	40%
probably	52%	44%
probably not	13%	12%
definitely not	1%	3%

Alumni from the College of Technology were less likely, on average, to report that they would enroll again at BGSU.

If you could start college over again, would you choose the same major?

	<u>1991</u>	<u>1996</u>
definitely	25%	37%
probably	40%	34%
probably not	25%	21%
definitely not	10%	9%

Would you encourage others to enroll at BGSU?

	<u>1991</u>	<u>1996</u>
definitely	56%	57%
probably	40%	36%
probably not	4%	6%
definitely not	1%	1%

Musical Arts alumni were more likely to encourage others to enroll at BGSU.

How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of the department or college from which you earned your BGSU degree? (1996 Alumni Only)

	very satisfied	satisfied	dissatisfied	very dissatisfied
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the overall quality of instruction	33%	62%	5%	1%
the overall quality of advising	19%	51%	23%	8%
ease of access to instructors	33%	57%	9%	1%
helpfulness in preparing for employment	17%	55%	23%	6%
helpfulness in preparing for further education	18%	63%	16%	3%
concern for me as an individual	23%	57%	16%	4%

Alumni from the College of Technology were less satisfied with the ease of access to their instructors. Alumni from Musical Arts were more satisfied with the help they received in preparing for employment.

How satisfied with each of the following aspects of BGSU outside of the department or college from which you earned your degree (e.g., other departments where you took classes, administrative offices, etc.)? (1996 Alumni Only)

	very satisfied	satisfied	dissatisfied	very dissatisfied
the overall quality of instruction	16%	79%	5%	1%
ease of access to instructors	14%	73%	12%	1%
helpfulness in preparing for employment	10%	63%	24%	3%
helpfulness in preparing for further education	11%	71%	17%	2%
concern for me as an individual	11%	65%	21%	4%

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Are you familiar with the Alumni Association World Wide Web site?

	<u>1991</u>	<u>1996</u>
yes	17%	25%
no	83%	75%

Men and White/Caucasian alumni were more familiar with the web site than women or alumni of color.

How often do you use the Alumni Association web site to connect with Bowling Green State University?

	<u>1991</u>	<u>1996</u>
never	89%	90%
for special events	9%	9%
only	2%	1%
monthly	0%	0%
daily	0%	0%

Men were more likely to use the web site.

Which of the following roles do you think alumni chapters should fulfill?

	<u>1991</u>	<u>1996</u>
"welcome wagon"	27%	22%
career assistance	58%	60%
fundraising for the University	29%	31%
recruiting new students	28%	29%
special events	34%	35%
networking	54%	55%
community service	24%	23%
to keep alumni in touch with BGSU	59%	60%

Have you ever used the following Alumni Association programs and services? (have used)

	<u>1991</u>	<u>1996</u>
alumni chapters	14%	4%
alumni gift shop	9%	8%
"AT BG" magazine	69%	54%
BGSU visa card	7%	9%
career assistance	8%	10%
homecoming/reunions	18%	12%
insurance programs	1%	1%
on-line services	6%	7%

Women were more likely to have used the "AT BG" magazine. Alumni from Musical Arts were most likely to have used it and those from Health and Human Services were least likely. No alumni from Health and Human Services or Musical Arts reported using the BGSU visa card. Musical Arts alumni were most likely to use career assistance and Technology alumni were least likely. Women were more likely to have used insurance programs.

If you have used any of the following Alumni Association programs and services, how satisfied are you with them?

	1991	1996
	%	%
<i>alumni chapters:</i>		
satisfied	15	12
neutral	78	84
dissatisfied	7	4
<i>alumni gift shop:</i>		
satisfied	17	19
neutral	81	80
dissatisfied	3	1
<i>"AT BG" magazine:</i>		
satisfied	59	63
neutral	40	37
dissatisfied	2	1
<i>BGSU visa card:</i>		
satisfied	10	20
neutral	88	78
dissatisfied	2	3
<i>career assistance:</i>		
satisfied	10	15
neutral	81	75
dissatisfied	9	11
<i>homecoming/reunions:</i>		
satisfied	24	29
neutral	72	69
dissatisfied	4	2
<i>insurance programs:</i>		
satisfied	5	5
neutral	95	94
dissatisfied	1	2
<i>on-line services:</i>		
satisfied	7	18
neutral	91	80
dissatisfied	2	2

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

A total of 776 open-ended questionnaires were received. Among them 469 were short-term (1999) responses and 307 were long-term (1995) responses.

What activities, events, programs, or individuals contributed the most to your educational and personal development at BGSU?

Short-Term Alumni Responses:

Individuals, mentioned by name or as a group (375), were most often credited with significantly impacting educational and personal development. Faculty (252) were the most frequently mentioned individuals or group, followed by staff (57) and peers (35). Activities were the second most frequently mentioned (310) as having contributed significantly to students' educational and individual development. Student activities/clubs/organizations (157), Greek life (79), campus employment, internships, co-ops, field experiences (85), and athletics (74) were mentioned most frequently. Academic programs (94) and Residence Life (38) were the two most influential programs. Finally, Orientation (19) was the most often mentioned event that impacted students' development.

Long-Term Alumni Responses:

Activities were most frequently mentioned (242) as having contributed significantly to students' educational and individual development. Student activities/clubs/organizations (96), Greek life (63), athletics (43), and campus employment, internships, co-ops, and field experiences (40) were mentioned most frequently. Individuals (226) were mentioned as the second most influential element of these alumni. Faculty (177) were the most frequently mentioned individuals or group, followed by peers (22) and staff (17). Several program areas were mentioned by this sample. The three mentioned most frequently were academics (91), Residence Life (63), and the Recreation Center (28). Events such as the fine arts (9), Orientation (5), job fairs (4), and several other events were mentioned as being important.

What does BGSU do well?

Short-Term Alumni Responses:

Alumni mentioned a wide range of factors that they believed were strengths. Responses that pertained to the overall campus climate were most often mentioned (354). The sense of community (87), variety of activities (86), physical environmental factors (81), and care for students (65) were subcategories with the highest frequencies. The academic experience (138) was often described as providing breadth, variety, and assistance in getting a job. Faculty and staff (74) were described as caring, open, available, and helpful. Several respondents (65) noted that BGSU had done well to assist them in finding employment. Career Services (40) and receiving a practical education and experiences (25) were described as most helpful. Some alumni (27) mentioned that BGSU's strength is the price and value of its education.

Long-Term Alumni Responses:

The general climate of the campus and associated factors (208) were most often mentioned as a strength of BGSU. Activities (46), sense of community (40), care for students (31), and campus beauty (25) were the most frequently described strengths. Academics (143) was the second most frequently mentioned strength. The variety of courses and programs, along with the quality of skills learned and instruction, were common sources of alumni academic experiences. Faculty and staff (39) were described as friendly, helpful, and caring. Preparation for employment (34) was area receiving some praise. Career services, job preparation, and practical experiences were most often described.

What does BGSU need to improve?

Short-Term Alumni Responses:

Academic and service issues were the broad areas of concern for alumni. Academic (171) areas in need of improvement included providing students with more "relevant and real world" information/experience in and out of the classroom (53), specific programs needing adjustments in curriculum (43), improvement in the quality and evaluation of faculty and graduate assistant teaching skills and faculty availability (29).

Alumni believe that BGSU needs to improve several services. Career services, job placement, and academic advising (145) were often mentioned as having potential to be more beneficial. Several alumni (59) hoped that more parking would become available and that fewer tickets could be written as a result. Service and coordination of information in and among the offices of Student Financial Aid, Bursar, and Registration and Records (50) were believed to be areas that could enhance students' satisfaction.

Addressing specific student issues (81) could improve the campus climate. There were some alumni (23) who advocated for more student input in campus decision making and budgeting. Being more accommodating to non-traditional students (22) was mentioned as a means for increasing satisfaction and enrolling more of this student population. Increasing the availability of non-fraternity and sorority activities on weekends was suggested (13) as a means for enhancing involvement.

Interestingly, diversity (18) was a concern, but in different ways. Some alumni expressed a need to address the "lack of" ethnic and social diversity on the campus. Other alumni suggested that the university over-emphasizes diversity.

Long-Term Alumni Responses:

For longer-term alumni, academic issues (138) were a frequently mentioned area for improvement. Increased "relevant and real world" material and experience in the classroom (62) was important given the work experience and changing economy. More specifically, increased computer and communication skills were suggested. Class availability and size (25), especially for new students, was a concern given the university's attempts to expand enrollment.

Career services, job placement, and academic advising (85) were services viewed as needing improvement. Generally, alumni expressed the need for these services to engage students as early as possible in their academic career. Several alumni thought that career networking with and for alumni would be helpful.

Some student concerns were focused in the area of specific student populations (18) and non-fraternity and sorority weekend activities (12). Student input and accommodations for graduate and non-traditional students were most frequently mentioned. Several alumni wrote about their personal experience as graduate or non-traditional students.

Both groups mentioned publicity and image of BGSU (40) as an area for improvement. Some described how BGSU needed to better sell its caring and community environment, quality academic programs, and value. Others mentioned that athletic programs, grant awards, and research should be improved and given more publicity.

What other information would you like to share with us?

Many of the comments in this section of the survey were very positive. Numerous respondents exclaimed that they were proud and happy with their BGSU education. "Great People, Good Education, Affordable Price" was contributed by one alumnus. Several short-term alumni expressed appreciation for the work of Dr. Ribeau in making changes to improve the quality of student life at BGSU.

Alumni expressed the need to improve alumni services and connections. Some alumni asked to be contacted to assist in providing internships or speaking in classes on the "real world" experiences.

What other questions should we ask on future surveys?

Primarily, alumni expressed the need to have the survey separate graduate and undergraduate experiences and residential and commuter experiences. Also, alumni thought future surveys should be used to assess interest on the part of alumni for providing service to the university (internships, speaking, committees, career advising, research opportunities).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Bowling Green State University should be pleased with the results of its first institution-wide baccalaureate alumni questionnaire in nearly twenty years. Most alumni are employed in jobs related to their majors and the vast majority are satisfied or very satisfied with the way that the University prepared them for employment. Most found their post-graduation jobs in a timely manner and nearly all who were required to take a certification examination passed it. Nearly all 1991 alumni have taken additional college courses and a considerable portion of this group have earned additional college degrees. Nearly all alumni who took additional college courses were satisfied or very satisfied with the way that BGSU prepared them for doing so.

The vast majority of alumni agreed that having a college education has improved the quality of their lives. More than 80% of alumni would choose to attend BGSU if they could start over again, more than two-thirds would choose the same major, and more than 90% would encourage others to enroll at BGSU. A considerable majority of respondents were satisfied with the quality of instruction, the quality of advising, the ease of access to instructors, with helpfulness in preparing for employment, with helpfulness in preparing for further education, and with the concern shown for them as individuals, both within and outside of their major field of study.

The majority of alumni responding to the questionnaire are not familiar with the Alumni Association World Wide Web site and have not used it. Keeping in touch with BGSU, networking, and career assistance were roles that the majority of respondents felt that alumni chapters should fulfill. The majority have read the "AT BG" magazine and are satisfied with it. Most alumni were unfamiliar with and neutral toward other Alumni Association programs and services.

A few significant differences between genders and across colleges were noted in the questionnaire results. Additionally, the open-ended results reinforced and provided greater depth to the basic questionnaire results. BGSU's faculty and staff, programs and services, and the general institutional climate were cited as most helpful and positive. Changes to the curriculum, providing more "real world" experiences in the classroom, advising, and career services were among the areas identified as needing improvement.

The major limitation of the alumni questionnaires was the low response rate (25% to 27%), which occurred despite a second follow-up mailing and an incentive offered by the Alumni Affairs office. Nevertheless, results from 1,394 alumni, which generally matched the profile of all recent alumni with respect to gender, ethnicity, and college, allow many useful conclusions to be reached. It is important that alumni follow-up efforts be continued, both at the program and institutional levels.

The Office of Institutional Research welcomes feedback concerning this and other studies and how they can continue to be improved.