

**AUGUSTANA COLLEGE**

**REPORT BASED ON A**

**SURVEY OF RECENT GRADUATES**

Submitted by:

GDA Integrated Services

January 2012

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**AUGUSTANA COLLEGE**

**REPORT BASED ON A SURVEY OF RECENT GRADUATES**

# INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2011, 832 Augustana alumni from the 1996 through 2010 class years completed an online survey designed by GDA Integrated Services.

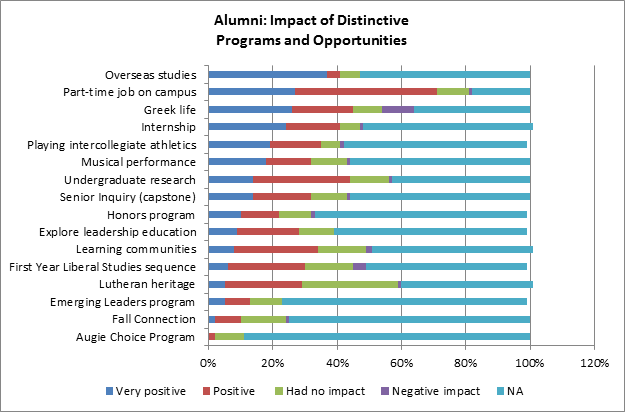
The objectives of this research were twofold:

* Determine what recent graduates think they gained from their Augustana experience and which activities and programs had the greatest impact.
* Provide the admission office and career services with information about the successes of recent graduates. For example, because of the growing importance of the major field to college-bound students, we wanted to learn what percentage of the recent graduates secured employment that was related to their major, somewhat related to their major, had no relationship with their major. (Below you will see that 53% said their first job was directly related to their major field and 28% said their first job was indirectly related to their major. About two out of ten said their first job had no relationship to their major.)

A thumbnail sketch of the survey participants reveals that about seven out of ten are alumnae; five out of eight live in Illinois; 75% have participated in at least one alumni activity; and, just over one-half give annually or occasionally to Augustana.

# IMPACT OF AUGUSTANA’S DISTINCTIONS

We provided a list of activities and opportunities that were distinctive, if not unique. We asked the alumni to tell us if the activity or opportunity had a very positive impact on their Augustana experience, a positive impact, neutral, or had no impact. We also allowed the alumni to indicate if they had no experience with the activity.



### Observations and Recommendations

Please keep in mind that many of these Augustana distinctions have only been introduced two or three years ago. This helps explain the high percentage of alumni who could not give a response.

* When we look just at those 23% of the alumni who graduated in 2009 and 2010, we see greater appreciation for the Augustana distinctions. If a distinction does not appear below, it means there was no significant difference between the 2009–2010 group and the other age groups.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Impact of program/activity:** | **2009–2010** |
| *Learning communities* |  |
| Very positive impact | 16% |
| Positive impact | 49% |
| Had no impact | 23% |
|  |  |
| *First Year Liberal Studies sequence (LSFY)* |  |
| Very positive impact | 8% |
| Positive impact | 41% |
| Had no impact | 24% |
| Negative impact | 13% |
| NA | 14% |
| **Impact of program/activity:** | **2009–2010** |
| *Undergraduate research* |  |
| Very positive impact | 22% |
| Positive impact | 36% |
| Had no impact | 14% |
| NA | 28% |
|  |  |
| *Senior Inquiry (capstone)* |  |
| Very positive impact | 29% |
| Positive impact | 28% |
| Had no impact | 12% |
| Negative impact | 3% |
| NA | 28% |
|  |  |
| *Overseas studies* |  |
| Very positive impact | 48% |
| Positive impact | 6% |
| Had no impact | 5% |
| NA | 41% |
|  |  |
| *Explore leadership education* |  |
| Very positive impact | 11% |
| Positive impact | 23% |
| Had no impact | 14% |
| NA | 52% |

* This younger group of alumni has a much better handle on the current Augustana experience. Clearly, overseas opportunities, senior inquiry, and undergraduate research had very positive impact on those who took advantage of the activity.
* A bit concerning is that these youngest of the alumni did not know about the Augie Choice option although it may not have been introduced until after they enrolled.
* Augustana may be missing an opportunity by not informing all alumni about the Augustana distinctions. This is an impressive list of activities and opportunities that should not only increase the alumni’s appreciation of the College but also contribute to word-of-mouth marketing.

# LEVEL OF AGREEMENT

We provided a number of statements regarding the alumni’s experience at Augustana. We then asked them whether they strongly agreed with the statement, agreed, were neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed.

### Observations and Recommendations

Later in this report, we will see how different segments of the alumni differ on their responses.

Please note that over eight out of ten alumni strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “My Augustana experience contributed greatly to my personal happiness.” This may be the highest compliment to any college since personal happiness generally trumps all other outcomes.

# ACQUIRED “SKILLS”

We provided the alumni a list of competencies or skills and then asked them to tell us how much Augustana contributed to their gaining this skill. Did Augustana contribute a great deal, contribute, contributed somewhat, or did not contribute at all to their gaining this skill?

Most of the skills tested are those that employers say they seek in a job candidate. The point of this exercise, therefore, was to learn how much alumni attribute the development of these skills to Augustana.

### Observations and Recommendations

* For the most part, Augustana alumni feel the College contributed to the development of these skills. The Augustana results pretty much parallel those of highly selective smaller liberal arts colleges.
* Augustana may wish to outline what formal or informal activities provided by the College help develop these skills. For example, writing skills are refined in first-year courses, in general courses that require writing, writing for the student newspaper, etc. The objective would be to make the development of these skills more tangible and less abstract.

# CURRENT ATTITUDE TOWARD AUGUSTANA

Prompted to describe their current attitude toward the College, the responses were as follows:

Very positive 52%

Positive 35%

Neutral (7%) or Negative (6%) 13%

For two-thirds of the very positive alums, Augustana was their first-choice college; this was also the case for just over one-third (36%) of the neutral and negative cohorts. Fifty-seven percent of the graduates with a positive attitude indicated that the College had been their first choice.

The graduates were presented with eighteen programs or opportunities distinctive to the College and were prompted to indicate whether they had a very positive impact, positive impact, no impact, negative impact or did not participate in such a program or opportunity.

As expected, the alumni contingent with a very positive attitude was most likely to record that a particular program or attribute had a very positive or positive impact.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Attitude** | | |
|  | **Very positive** | **Positive** | **Neutral/Negative** |
| **Very positive or positive impact:** |  |  |  |
| Greek life | 50% | 42% | 30% |
| Explore leadership education | 35% | 26% | 13% |
| Lutheran heritage | 33% | 28% | 12% |

Survey participants were presented with eight statements concerning their College experience and prompted to record their agreement or disagreement. First, the statements provoking strongly agree responses:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Attitude** | | |
|  | **Very positive** | **Positive** | **Neutral/Negative** |
| **Strongly agree:** |  |  |  |
| My Augustana experience contributed greatly to my personal happiness | 71% | 29% | 6% |
| I learned as much from my out-of-class experience as I did from the academic program | 55% | 36% | 29% |
| My Augustana experience prepared me well for my current position | 53% | 22% | 14% |
| My Augustana experience contributed greatly to my readiness for graduate school | 51% | 23% | 9% |
| My Augustana experience prepared me well for my first job out of college | 46% | 16% | 10% |
| My advisors effectively guided me through Augustana | 39% | 16% | 9% |

In the brief table that follows are the biggest disappointments of the neutral/negative attitude group:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Attitude** | | |
|  | **Very positive** | **Positive** | **Neutral/Negative** |
| **Disagree / Strongly disagree:** |  |  |  |
| My first year advisor encouraged me to explore a variety of courses | 17% | 35% | 44% |
| My Augustana experience prepared me well for my first job out of college | 3% | 12% | 42% |
| My advisors effectively guided me through Augustana | 11% | 20% | 39% |
| Augustana was more challenging than I expected | 15% | 30% | 38% |

Eleven possible outcomes resulting from one’s Augustana education were presented and the survey participants were prompted to indicate how much Augustana contributed to gaining the skill. As expected, the very positive cohort was the most satisfied with their College experience.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Attitude** | | |
|  | **Very positive** | **Positive** | **Neutral/Negative** |
| **Contributed a great deal:** |  |  |  |
| Critical thinking | 71% | 52% | 29% |
| Demonstrating problem-solving skills | 61% | 34% | 23% |
| Reasoning ability | 58% | 33% | 24% |
| Writing effectively | 55% | 35% | 29% |
| Appreciating literature and fine arts | 49% | 34% | 16% |
| Understanding how different fields relate | 48% | 33% | 22% |
| Performing as a self-starter | 47% | 25% | 11% |
| Speaking effectively | 43% | 22% | 16% |

The alumni expressing a very positive current attitude toward Augustana were most likely to have gone on to earn an advanced degree(s) and were most likely to express their readiness for their graduate program.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Attitude** | | |
|  | **Very positive** | **Positive** | **Neutral/Negative** |
| **Graduate program:** |  |  |  |
| Earned advanced degree | 50% | 40% | 32% |
| Has not earned advanced degree | 30% | 37% | 45% |
|  |  |  |  |
| Much better prepared than graduates from other colleges for my graduate program | 42% | 22% | 14% |

The very positive contingent was far and away the most enthusiastic about the quality of their Augustana education and their willingness to recommend the College to a college-bound student.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Attitude** | | |
|  | **Very positive** | **Positive** | **Neutral/Negative** |
| **Quality of Augustana education:** |  |  |  |
| Outstanding | 74% | 20% | 7% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Likelihood of recommending Augustana:** |  |  |  |
| Extremely likely | 90% | 25% | 2% |

Recall that close to one-half (46%) of the very positive cohort strongly agreed that their Augustana experience prepared them well for their first jobs out of college. Recall also that 42% of the neutral/negative attitude group strongly disagreed or disagreed with the same statement.

The following responses reinforce this first job experience:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Attitude** | | |
|  | **Very positive** | **Positive** | **Neutral/Negative** |
| **First job:** |  |  |  |
| Directly related to undergraduate major | 58% | 52% | 38% |
| Not at all related to undergraduate major | 15% | 18% | 35% |
|  |  |  |  |
| Was below/well below my expectations | 20% | 36% | 54% |

### Observations and Recommendations

* Nearly nine out of ten of the responding alumni said their current attitude toward Augustana was very positive or positive. The fact that 58% said they were very positive is especially impressive. At even our most selective clients, we have not seen a “very positive” higher than mid-40%.
* A negative or neutral attitude of less than 15% is also quite impressive. Of course, there may be less enthusiastic alumni who never even opened the survey.
* We also see the importance of Augustana being the first choice of many of these alumni. Two-thirds of the very positive alums said Augustana was their first-choice college but just over one-third (36%) of the neutral and negative cohort said Augustana was their first choice. Augustana may wish to develop a “faux early decision” process. We found in a number of our studies that students admitted under Early Decision tend to be the most positive about their college experience.
* Perhaps the most telling about this section is the difference in responses between the very positive and positive. For example, 74% of the very positive alumni, compared with only 20% of those who are positive, described their Augustana education as “outstanding.” The section above shows many differences in “intensity” between the very positive and positive alumni. About four out of ten of the very positive, but only 16% of the positive, alumni strongly agreed with the statement “my advisors effectively guided me through Augustana.”
* We can assume that those who are negative or neutral about their experience at Augustana are likely to be unhappy across the board, but it is important to look at the big gaps between the very positive and the positive alumni. Below we repeat the areas of possible concern.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Very positive** | **Positive** |
| **Strongly agree:** |  |  |
| My Augustana experience contributed greatly to my personal happiness | 71% | 29% |
| I learned as much from my out-of-class experience as I did from the academic program | 55% | 36% |
| My Augustana experience prepared me well for my current position | 53% | 22% |
|  | **Very positive** | **Positive** |
| **Strongly agree:** |  |  |
| My Augustana experience contributed greatly to my readiness for graduate school | 51% | 23% |
| My Augustana experience prepared me well for my first job out of college | 46% | 16% |
| My advisors effectively guided me through Augustana | 39% | 16% |

* We know from other recent graduate surveys that the best predictor of a willingness to contribute funds to an alma mater include personal happiness, preparation for current employment, and readiness for graduate school. Gaining as much from their out-of-class experience as their academic program is also a predictor of financial loyalty.

# RATING THE QUALITY OF THE AUGUSTANA EDUCATION

Disregarding the small fraction (10%) of respondents who rated their Augustana education as average or below average, in this section, we review the responses of those who rated their education as outstanding (52%) vs. those who indicated it was above average (48%).

As with the alumni who were very positive toward the College, two-thirds of the outstanding quality contingent indicated that Augustana had been their first choice (vs. 54% of the above average quality group). The first group’s responses will closely match the very positive: five out of six were also very positive in their current attitude. One-fifth of the first group (21%) indicated that undergraduate research had a very positive impact vs. 8%.

Several statements that elicited strong agreement among the outstanding quality cohort are in the following table:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Quality of education:** | |
|  | **Outstanding** | **Above average** |
| **Strongly agree:** |  |  |
| Augustana experience contributed greatly to my personal happiness | 70% | 34% |
| Augustana experience contributed greatly to my readiness for graduate school | 56% | 22% |
| I learned as much from my out-of-class experience as I did from my academic program | 53% | 41% |
| My Augustana experience prepared me well for my first job out of college | 50% | 17% |
| My advisors effectively guided me through Augustana | 44% | 14% |
|  |  |  |
| **Disagree / Strongly disagree:** |  |  |
| My first-year advisor encouraged me to explore a variety of courses | 16% | 35% |

About one-half or more of all alums who rated their education outstanding indicated that it contributed a great deal to the following outcomes/skills:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Quality of education:** | |
|  | **Outstanding** | **Above average** |
| **Contributed a great deal:** |  |  |
| Critical thinking | 78% | 48% |
| Demonstrating problem-solving skills | 65% | 34% |
| Reasoning ability | 62% | 33% |
| Writing effectively | 57% | 39% |
| Understanding how different fields relate | 52% | 32% |
| Performing as a self-starter | 51% | 24% |
| Appreciating literature and fine arts | 51% | 34% |
| Speaking effectively | 45% | 24% |

Similarly to the very positive attitude cohort, one-half of the outstanding quality group has an advanced degree and were pleased with their readiness for graduate school.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Quality of education:** | |
|  | **Outstanding** | **Above average** |
| **Graduate program:** |  |  |
| Earned advanced degree(s) | 51% | 38% |
| Have not earned advanced degree | 29% | 38% |
|  |  |  |
| Much better prepared than graduate from other colleges for my graduate program | 47% | 20% |
|  |  |  |
| **First job:** |  |  |
| Directly related to my undergraduate major | 62% | 48% |

Lastly, nine out of ten from the outstanding group were extremely likely to recommend Augustana to a college-bound student (vs. 32%).

### Observations and Recommendations

* Two-thirds of the outstanding quality contingent indicated that Augustana had been their first choice (vs. 54% of the above average quality group). This is further evidence that those who said that Augustana was their first choice are more likely to be very positive alumni.
* One issue that Augustana might wish to pursue further is what does the College do to prepare students for “effective speaking”? Only 45% of the alumni who rated their education as “outstanding” and fewer than one out of four who said their Augustana education was above average said the College contributed a great deal to “effective speaking.” Current students may need to be reminded that participation in class discussion, oral presentations, leadership in student organization, etc. all contribute to effective speaking.
* Those who believe Augustana provided an outstanding education seem to indicate that some of the quality has to do with the College’s residential nature. More than half of those who said they received an outstanding education and four out of ten of those who felt their Augustana education was above average strongly agreed with the statement “I learned as much from my out-of-class experience as I did from my academic program.”
* On the other hand, academic preparation is also critical. Nearly six out of ten who said their Augustana education was outstanding compared with only about two out of ten of those who said it was just above average strongly agreed with the statement “the Augustana experience contributed greatly to my readiness for graduate school.” The same is true about first job preparation. Half of those who felt their education was outstanding agreed with the statement “my Augustana experience prepared me well for my first job out of college.”
* It is also worth noting that half of those who said their Augustana education was outstanding, compared with only 38% of those who said their education was above average, had earned a graduate degree. Promoting graduate and professional school preparation should be an important message to prospective students.
* Not surprisingly, perhaps, it appears that Augustana should put greater emphasis on advising. Only four out of ten of those who felt their Augustana education was outstanding, but only 14% of those who said their education was above average, strongly agreed with the statement “my advisors effectively guided me through Augustana.” Equally telling, one out of three of those who said their Augustana education was above average **disagreed** with the statement “My first-year advisor encouraged me to explore a variety of courses.”

# GENDER

A little more than twice as many alumnae (69%) responded to the survey instrument.

Over one-half of alumni indicated that playing intercollegiate athletics had a very positive or positive impact (vs. 28% of the alumnae).

The women were considerably more enthusiastic about overseas studies: 42% indicated very positive impact vs. 24% of the men.

### Observations and Recommendations

Obviously there are more differences between men and women, but the two above are the most telling.

# MAJOR FIELD

We categorized the fifty-eight majors listed in the survey into five major fields as follows:

Science & Math 37%

Arts & Humanities 31%

Social Science 17%

Education 16%

Business 20%

In this section, we identify a few highlights within each of the major fields.

Close to one-half of **Science & Math** majors (46%) enrolled at Augustana for professional school or graduate school preparation. Roughly the same percentage (43%) strongly agreed that Augustana contributed greatly to that preparation. And, just over one-half have earned an advanced degree or two and another one-quarter are presently earning an advanced degree.

The **Arts & Humanities** majors were most likely to have indicated that their Augustana education contributed a great deal to their appreciation of literature and fine arts (57%), understanding the relationship of different fields (49%), speaking effectively (40%), and understanding international issues (33%). Forty percent enrolled to gain a broad-based education. A third indicated that their honors program had a very positive or positive impact.

**Social Science** majors were the most likely by a considerable margin to report that undergraduate research (60%) and the Capstone (53%) had a very positive or positive impact. Six out of ten indicated on the survey that the College had contributed a great deal to writing effectively.

Three-quarters of **Education** majors enrolled at Augustana for career preparation. While none claimed that graduate school preparation was a most important outcome, almost two-thirds (64%) have earned master’s degrees. For seven out of ten, Augustana was their first-choice college. By a meaningful margin, these majors were most likely to strongly agree (47%) that the Augustana experience prepared them well for their first jobs out of college and for their current positions (52%). A solid majority of 78% indicated that their first jobs out of college were directly related to their majors.

About one-half of **Business** majors indicated that playing intercollegiate sports at Augustana had a very positive (27%) or positive (20%) impact. About 60% said the same was true of internships (37% very positive, 21% positive impact). They were most likely to report the College contributed a great deal to developing quantitative skills (33%). Very few enrolled to obtain graduate or professional school preparation; however, 28% have earned an MBA. Business majors were much more likely than their classmates in other fields to have received their first job offers prior to commencement (52%); another 30% received an offer by the fall following graduation. Lastly, they were about twice as likely as other majors to earn a starting salary of $30,000 or more (70%).

Below are selected excerpts from this segmentation analysis:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Science & Math**  **37%** | **Arts & Humanities**  **31%** | **Social Science**  **17%** | **Education**  **16%** | **Business**  **20%** |
| **When you enrolled at Augustana College, which of these outcomes was most important to you?** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Career preparation | 27% | 35% | 35% | 76% | 64% |
| Preparation for graduate school | 14% | 6% | 9% | 0% | 2% |
| Preparation for professional school | 30% | 6% | 9% | 0% | 1% |
| Gaining a broad-based education | 17% | 40% | 35% | 22% | 25% |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Very positive impact:** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Senior Inquiry (capstone) | 9% | 23% | 26% | 14% | 9% |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **When you were searching for a college, was Augustana your first choice?** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Yes | 62% | 58% | 55% | 70% | 58% |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Strongly agree:** |  |  |  |  |  |
| My Augustana experience contributed greatly to my readiness for graduate school | 43% | 35% | 42% | 30% | 20% |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **What is your highest level of educational attainment?** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Master's degree | 40% | 53% | 48% | 64% | 39% |

### Observations and Recommendations

* This section can be a valuable resource for the admissions effort. For example, we know that arts and humanities majors have a much greater appreciation of the liberal arts and over half have earned a master’s degree, both useful bits of information for prospective humanities majors.
* Prospective business majors would be impressed that alumni business majors were much more likely than their classmates in other fields to have received their first job offers prior to commencement (52%) with another 30% receiving an offer by the fall following graduation and about twice as likely as other majors to earn a starting salary of $30,000 or more (70%).
* Career services should find helpful the interactive Excel file we developed. For example, a current student who wants to know about alumni in aviation who are making more than $30,000 can use Excel’s sorting function to find how many alumni who completed the survey meet those criteria.

# CLASS YEAR

For this segmentation analysis, we combined the years of graduation as follows:

1996 to 2000 24%

2001 to 2008 53%

2009 and 2010 23%

Within this section, we look for general trends arising from the responses of the three groups.

With respect to important outcomes, over time there has been a gradual increase in the importance of career preparation vs. gaining a broad-based education.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **1996–2000** | **2001–2008** | **2009–2010** |
| **Upon enrollment, most important outcome:** |  |  |  |
| Career preparation | 38% | 41% | 46% |
| Gaining a broad-based education | 29% | 29% | 19% |

This is a national phenomenon.

Of some concern is the decline in the graduates’ satisfaction with their Augustana experience in preparation for first jobs and current positions.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **1996–2000** | **2001–2008** | **2009–2010** |
| **My Augustana experience prepared me well for my first job out of college:** |  |  |  |
| Strongly agree | 35% | 32% | 23% |
| Agree | 44% | 37% | 29% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **My Augustana experience prepared me well for my current position:** |  |  |  |
| Strongly agree | 38% | 37% | 36% |
| Agree | 44% | 38% | 33% |

Additional responses to questions regarding the first job out of college are also disquieting.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **1996–2000** | **2001–2008** | **2009–2010** |
| **Was your first job out of Augustana related to your undergraduate major:** |  |  |  |
| Yes, directly related | 60% | 53% | 47% |
| No, not at all related | 17% | 16% | 26% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **How would you describe your level of employment compared with your expectations for your first job:** |  |  |  |
| Below/well below expectations | 21% | 30% | 44% |

Of course, the great recession is a major contributing factor to those responses of the most recent graduates. The recession and increase in the accumulation of student loans are very likely important factors in the following ratings:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **1996–2000** | **2001–2008** | **2009–2010** |
| **How would you rate the quality of your Augustana education:** |  |  |  |
| Outstanding | 56% | 44% | 44% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **How would you describe your current attitude toward Augustana:** |  |  |  |
| Very positive | 60% | 57% | 46% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **How likely are you to recommend Augustana to a college-bound student:** |  |  |  |
| Extremely likely | 65% | 54% | 53% |

The following table may indeed reflect a trend:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **1996–2000** | **2001–2008** | **2009–2010** |
| **What best describes your philanthropic giving to Augustana:** |  |  |  |
| Annually | 29% | 18% | 6% |
| Occasionally | 41% | 37% | 27% |
| Not at all | 30% | 45% | 68% |

Lastly, it is quite important to point out the responses to one question that was not highlighted in the segmentation analysis. There is no appreciable difference in these responses:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **1996–2000** | **2001–2008** | **2009–2010** |
| **My Augustana experience contributed greatly to my personal happiness:** |  |  |  |
| Strongly agree / Agree | 89% | 85% | 84% |

### Observations and Recommendations

It is no surprise to us that the most recent graduates are somewhat less positive. We have found over and over that alums’ appreciation of the institution tends to increase the further in years they are from their college experience. Only 44% of the alumni from 2009–2010 compared with 56% of the alumni from 1996–2000 describe their Augustana education as outstanding. On the other hand, we do see some trends in the data above.

* Nearly half of the most recent graduates, but fewer than four out of ten of the earliest group of alumni, we surveyed said “career preparation” was the most important outcome to them. On the other hand, fewer than two out of ten of the most recent graduates compared with nearly three out of ten 1996–2000 alumni said “gaining a broad-based education” was the most important outcome. This provides a clue why promoting the liberal arts is so difficult.
* Another trend of concern has to do with the relationship of their first job to their major field. The interest in this relationship has become more important as more students seek out the strong major, not necessarily the best college. We see that six out of ten of the 1996–2000 alumni compared with only 47% of the most recent graduates said their first job was directly related to their major field.
* There is some good news and bad news in the philanthropic record of these alumni. Three out of ten of 1996–2000 alumni claim to be annual givers to Augustana. That’s the good news. But the same percentage say they do not give at all. This suggests that alumni become more generous as they move further from their graduation. That is good news because only 6% of the 2009–2010 alumni say they contribute annually with two out of three saying they do not give at all. Recent graduates may be in graduate school, just launching careers and families, and paying off student loans. Plus the present-day job outlook remains poor.
* The best news is the fact that more than eight out of ten of all three groups strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “my Augustana experience contributed greatly to my personal happiness.” As we said earlier, that is about the best testimonial a college can expect from alumni.

# ETHNICITY

Ninety-two percent of the survey participants describe their racial background as White. Minorities and people of mixed heritage comprise the balance.

Minorities were less likely to report that Augustana was their first choice college (48% vs. 60% of Whites). They were somewhat more likely to have majored in the field of social science (38% vs. 26% of Whites). This likely explains the following responses:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Whites** | **Minorities/Mixed** |
| **Was your first job out of Augustana related to your undergraduate major:** |  |  |
| Yes, directly related | 55% | 39% |
| Yes, but only indirectly | 27% | 42% |

Students of color have a greater appreciation of some of Augustana’s strengths.

* Four out of ten students of color compared with only three out of ten Caucasians had a very positive or positive view of the First Year Liberal Studies sequence.
* About one out of four (23%) of the students of color compared with only 17% of the Caucasian students said musical performance had a very positive impact on them.

### Observations and Recommendations

The most important take away in this section is that there are not huge differences in interests and attitudes between students of color and Caucasians. This might be expected since these graduates of color actually got through Augustana. Of greater importance would be revelations from a survey of current students to look at the differences between students of color and Caucasians, if there are many, or survey a number of college-bound students with no connection to Augustana to learn what the College might do to attract more students of color who will persist.

# AUGUSTANA WAS FIRST-CHOICE COLLEGE

Slightly fewer than six out of ten survey participants indicated that the College had been their first choice:

First choice 59%

Not first choice 22%

Did not have a first choice 19%

As we have observed in many alumni surveys over the years, young men and women who do not attend their first-choice college harbor a disappointment with their enrolling college that is rarely overcome. The following are illustrations:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **First choice** | **Not first** | **No first** |
| **Strongly agree:** |  |  |  |
| My Augustana experience contributed greatly to my personal happiness | 54% | 36% | 41% |
| My Augustana experience contributed greatly to my readiness for graduate school | 40% | 27% | 31% |
| My Augustana experience prepared me well for my first job out of college | 37% | 23% | 19% |
| My advisors effectively guided me through Augustana | 32% | 22% | 16% |

This comparative dissatisfaction extends to the experience with his or her first job and feelings towards Augustana.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **First choice** | **Not first** | **No first** |
| **Was your first job out of Augustana related to your undergraduate major:** |  |  |  |
| Yes, directly related | 59% | 48% | 42% |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **First choice** | **Not first** | **No first** |
| **How would you describe your level of employment compared with your expectations for your first job:** |  |  |  |
| Below/well below expectations | 24% | 39% | 35% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **How would you rate the quality of your Augustana education:** |  |  |  |
| Outstanding | 53% | 36% | 39% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **How likely are you to recommend Augustana to a college-bound student:** |  |  |  |
| Extremely likely | 64% | 42% | 47% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **How would you describe your current attitude towards Augustana:** |  |  |  |
| Very positive | 59% | 39% | 46% |

### Observations and Recommendations

* As noted above, nearly six out of ten of the survey respondents said Augustana was their first choice. That percentage places Augustana with other highly selective colleges. Generally, in a survey of alumni at a small midwestern college, we would expect to see slightly less than half would call their alma mater their first-choice college.
* We also see an emerging trend in these data. Nearly two out of ten of these recent graduates said they did not have a first choice when they applied to Augustana. In our most recent survey of college-bound students, nearly three out of ten said they did not have a first choice. This is a problem. Financial aid leveraging often works with students who are very enthusiastic about the institution, but with a choice of “no choice,” it is a level playing field. Those who do not report a first choice, suggest brand parity. That is, if there are no substantive advantages, any college will do.
* Earlier in this report, we discussed the importance of attracting students who describe Augustana as their first choice. Obviously, that is easier said than done. We recommend an online survey of current students to determine who did not view Augustana as their first choice. The survey would seek demographic clues as well as attitudinal views. For example, it would be helpful to have the names of the institutions that those students for whom Augustana was not their first choice preferred in order to have a better idea if the competition is reasonable (a smaller liberal arts college) or unreasonable (Ivy League). We would also like to know if the first-choice students are academically superior or in the middle of the class. It would be helpful to know when as prospective students those who said Augustana was their first choice actually made that determination.

# EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Alums participating in the survey were prompted to respond to the question: have you earned or are you earning an advanced degree?

Yes, earned 44%

Yes, earning 22%

No, have not 34%

Almost two-thirds of the alums (62%) pursuing an advanced degree at present graduated in 2008, 2009 or 2010. Many, but not a majority, of those men and women who have not sought further education are recent graduates (39%) and six out of ten of this group enrolled at Augustana seeking career preparation as the most important outcome.

A plurality of those alumni with and/or earning advanced degrees majored in math or the sciences. The cohort without additional education attainment was much more likely to be business majors.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Yes, earned** | **Yes, earning** | **No, have not** |
| **Major field:** |  |  |  |
| Math & Science | 44% | 45% | 22% |
| Business | 13% | 12% | 36% |

The alums with graduate degrees are generally more satisfied with the Augustana experience.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Yes, earned** | **Yes, earning** | **No, have not** |
| **Strongly agree:** |  |  |  |
| My Augustana experience contributed greatly to my personal happiness | 55% | 45% | 40% |
| My Augustana experience prepared me well for my first job out of college | 36% | 24% | 28% |
| My advisors effectively guided me through Augustana | 34% | 26% | 19% |

A majority (57%) of the alumni group with advanced degrees also strongly agreed that Augustana contributed greatly to their readiness for graduate school.

Armed solely with an Augustana degree, two-thirds of alumni without advanced degrees had their first job offer prior to commencement (38%) or in the summer months following graduation. Interestingly, these men and women were least likely to have had a first job related to their major.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Yes, earned** | **Yes, earning** | **No, have not** |
| **Was your first job out of Augustana related to your undergraduate major:** |  |  |  |
| Yes, directly related | 59% | 53% | 46% |

One-quarter of this group without advanced degrees had a first job not at all related to their major. Forty percent indicated that the first job was below or well below their expectations.

The Augustana alumni with advanced degrees are concentrated in the education and healthcare industries.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Yes, earned** | **Yes, earning** | **No, have not** |
| **Industry of first job:** |  |  |  |
| Education | 37% | 41% | 18% |
| Healthcare | 18% | 5% | 6% |

The higher satisfaction level of the survey participants with advanced degrees are reflected in this table:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Yes, earned** | **Yes, earning** | **No, have not** |
| **Rate the quality of your Augustana education:** |  |  |  |
| Outstanding | 54% | 43% | 39% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Describe your current attitude towards Augustana:** |  |  |  |
| Very positive | 59% | 49% | 46% |

It is important to bear in mind that very few—less than 10%—of the graduates without an advanced degree were negative and almost no one claimed their Augustana education was below average.

### Observations and Recommendations

Not surprisingly, those alumni who have earned an advance degree or are currently working toward earning a graduate degree are more positive about their Augustana experience than those who have not pursued a graduate degree.

It seems to us, that Augustana not only has to reassure prospective students that the College can prepare them for a job immediately after college but also promote the College’s graduate and professional school placement record.

# 

# GRADUATE SCHOOL PREPARATION

There were two questions related to preparation for graduate school in the survey. This segmentation analysis reviews the responses of the two-thirds in the survey population who have earned or are earning an advanced degree.

These were the responses when asked, “Compared with students in your graduate program who attended another undergraduate institution, how well did you think you were prepared?”

Much better prepared 34%

Better prepared 35%

Equally prepared 30%

A very small percentage (6%) reported they were less prepared; their responses were comparatively inconsequential.

As expected, the better the (perceived) preparation for graduate/professional school, the more satisfied they were with all things Augustana.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Preparation** | | |
|  | **Much better** | **Better** | **Equal** |
| **Strongly agree:** |  |  |  |
| My Augustana experience contributed greatly to my readiness for graduate school | 80% | 58% | 25% |
| My Augustana experience contributed greatly to my personal happiness | 67% | 52% | 39% |
| My Augustana experience prepared me well for my current position | 58% | 46% | 23% |
| My Augustana experience prepared me well for my first job out of college | 46% | 36% | 16% |
| My advisors effectively guided me through Augustana | 41% | 33% | 21% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Augustana contributed a great deal to gaining this skill:** |  |  |  |
| Critical thinking | 78% | 64% | 43% |
| Demonstrating problem-solving skills | 65% | 51% | 34% |
| Reasoning ability | 64% | 51% | 31% |
| Writing effectively | 62% | 49% | 33% |
| Performing as a self-starter | 47% | 35% | 25% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Rate the quality of your Augustana education:** |  |  |  |
| Outstanding | 74% | 55% | 29% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **How likely are you to recommend Augustana to a college-bound student:** |  |  |  |
| Extremely likely | 77% | 62% | 44% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Describe your current attitude toward Augustana:** |  |  |  |
| Very positive | 72% | 58% | 41% |

While not particularly revealing with respect to preparation for graduate school, the following table shows the major fields pursued as undergraduates by these alumni.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Preparation** | | |
|  | **Much better** | **Better** | **Equal** |
| **Major field:** |  |  |  |
| Math & Science | 41% | 52% | 41% |
| Arts & Humanities | 33% | 27% | 34% |
| Social Science | 31% | 27% | 22% |
| Education | 15% | 17% | 22% |
| Business | 12% | 11% | 12% |

### Observations and Recommendations

* It is testament to Augustana’s experience that one out of three young alumni believe they were much better prepared for graduate school than their graduate school peers. An additional 35% said they were better prepared. In other surveys of this kind, we generally find about half of those who earned a graduate degree described their preparation as equal to their peers and only about two out of ten who said their preparation was much better.
* We also see above, that those alumni with graduate school experience who say they were much better prepared than their graduate school peers are far more appreciative of many of Augustana’s characteristics.

# FIRST JOB: RELATIONSHIP TO UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR

The survey inquired of all participants whether the first job out of Augustana was related to their undergraduate majors. Below are the responses on which this segmentation analysis is based and the major fields.

Related to undergraduate major:

Yes, directly 53%

Yes, but only indirectly 28%

No, not related 19%

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **First Job / Major Related:** | | |
|  | **Directly** | **Indirectly** | **Not at all** |
| **Major field:** |  |  |  |
| Math & Science | 39% | 31% | 25% |
| Arts & Humanities | 27% | 32% | 41% |
| Social Science | 21% | 31% | 37% |
| Education | 25% | 11% | 4% |
| Business | 24% | 22% | 15% |

Close to one-half of the first group whose first job was directly related to their undergraduate studies enrolled at the College for career preparation; close to one-third had a very successful internship; and for almost two-thirds, Augustana was the first choice for college.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **First Job / Major Related:** | | |
|  | **Directly** | **Indirectly** | **Not at all** |
| **When enrolling at Augustana, the most important outcome:** |  |  |  |
| Career preparation | 48% | 41% | 33% |
| Gaining a broad-based education | 27% | 27% | 33% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Impact of your internship at Augustana:** |  |  |  |
| Very positive impact | 31% | 17% | 14% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Was Augustana your first choice:** |  |  |  |
| Yes | 65% | 53% | 50% |

A successful job search results in greater satisfaction with the College experience.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **First Job / Major Related:** | | |
|  | **Directly** | **Indirectly** | **Not at all** |
| **Strongly agree:** |  |  |  |
| My Augustana experience contributed greatly to my personal happiness | 54% | 44% | 37% |
| My Augustana experience prepared me well for my current position | 48% | 26% | 25% |
| My Augustana experience prepared me well for my first job out of college | 43% | 24% | 20% |

It is interesting to note that these men and women fortunate enough to get a first job directly related to their undergraduate major are most likely to go on to pursue an advanced degree.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **First Job / Major Related:** | | |
|  | **Directly** | **Indirectly** | **Not at all** |
| **After Augustana, have you earned an advanced degree:** |  |  |  |
| Yes, earned advanced degree(s) | 52% | 44% | 35% |
| No, have not | 31% | 40% | 46% |

This group was also considerably more likely to be especially pleased with the first job.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **First Job / Major Related:** | | |
|  | **Directly** | **Indirectly** | **Not at all** |
| **Describe your level of employment compared with your expectations for your first job:** |  |  |  |
| Greatly exceeded/exceeded expectations | 29% | 18% | 17% |
| Below/well below expectations | 15% | 41% | 57% |

Over one-half of the third group has experienced a major disappointment with their first jobs. More positively, one-half of this cohort (57%) now feel (strongly agree or agree) well prepared for their current jobs or positions. That is progress.

The first group with the successful first job search is most enthusiastic about Augustana.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **First Job / Major Related:** | | |
|  | **Directly** | **Indirectly** | **Not at all** |
| **Rate the quality of your Augustana education:** |  |  |  |
| Outstanding | 55% | 43% | 30% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Describe your current attitude towards Augustana:** |  |  |  |
| Very positive | 57% | 52% | 42% |

### Observations and Recommendations

* The fact that the first job of over half of the recent graduates was related to their major compares favorably with the results of other surveys of recent alumni at similar institutions.
* The fact that only two out of ten alumni had first jobs that had no relation to their major is also no surprise. As we saw above, the two areas that had the highest percentage of alumni who did not find first jobs in their fields were arts & humanities (41%) and social sciences (37%). Compare this with only 15% of the business majors and 4% of the education majors who said their first jobs had no relationship to their majors.
* It appears that an internship is a thread that helps students find jobs related to their major field.
* Finally, perhaps the most telling figure is that 42% of those recent graduates who did not have a first job related to their major said their attitude toward Augustana was very positive.

# FIRST JOB: STARTING SALARY

Ninety-one percent of the alumni survey participants had begun their first job out of Augustana. They reported starting salaries as follows:

Less than $30,000 51%

$30,000 to $39,000 27%

$40,000 or more 22%

One-third of the highest salaried alumni enrolled at Augustana for career preparation and another third for graduate/professional school preparation. This implies that for many from this cohort, their first job was post-graduate or post-professional school.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **First Job / Starting Salary:** | | |
|  | **Under $30,000** | **$30,000 to $39,000** | **$40,000 or more** |
| **When enrolling at Augustana, what was most important outcome:** |  |  |  |
| Career preparation | 40% | 57% | 34% |
| Preparation for graduate/professional school | 15% | 11% | 36% |
| Gaining a broad-based education | 33% | 22% | 23% |

Five out of eight of the alums with the highest initial salary have earned an advanced degree; one-half are very satisfied with their graduate school preparation while at Augustana.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **First Job / Starting Salary:** | | |
|  | **Under $30,000** | **$30,000 to $39,000** | **$40,000 or more** |
| **Have you earned or are you earning an advanced degree:** |  |  |  |
| Yes, earned | 40% | 44% | 63% |
| Yes, earning | 20% | 14% | 13% |
| No, have not | 40% | 42% | 24% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Strongly agree:** |  |  |  |
| My Augustana experience contributed greatly to my readiness for graduate school | 27% | 33% | 48% |

Just over one-half of the most affluent group of alumni played intercollegiate athletics and for 25%, their participation in athletics had a very positive impact.

Over one-half majored in the field of science and math as undergraduates and close to a third earned (or is earning) an advanced degree in the health professions or medicine.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **First Job / Starting Salary:** | | |
|  | **Under $30,000** | **$30,000 to $39,000** | **$40,000 or more** |
| **What was your major field at Augustana:** |  |  |  |
| Science & Math | 28% | 29% | 54% |
| Business | 13% | 32% | 29% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **In what field did you earn or are you earning your advanced degree:** |  |  |  |
| Business | 3% | 13% | 11% |
| Education | 27% | 36% | 7% |
| Health Professions | 3% | 3% | 14% |
| Law | 4% | 5% | 11% |
| Medicine | 1% | 2% | 17% |

For the men and women who comprise the group with the lowest initial salary, a majority did not obtain a job directly related to the undergraduate major. For seven out of ten, that undergraduate major was in the arts & humanities (39%) or social science (30%). Close to one-half reported the first job was below or well below expectations.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **First Job / Starting Salary:** | | |
|  | **Under $30,000** | **$30,000 to $39,000** | **$40,000 or more** |
| **Was the first job out of Augustana related to your undergraduate major:** |  |  |  |
| Yes, directly related | 42% | 66% | 65% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Describe your level of employment compared with your expectations for your first job:** |  |  |  |
| Was below/well below expectations | 46% | 17% | 10% |

Less than one-half (42%) of the least compensated in the survey population strongly agreed that their Augustana experiences contributed greatly to their personal happiness. One-half did not give to the College at all.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **First Job / Starting Salary:** | | |
|  | **Under $30,000** | **$30,000 to $39,000** | **$40,000 or more** |
| **Strongly agree:** |  |  |  |
| My Augustana experience contributed greatly to my personal happiness | 42% | 57% | 51% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Describe your philanthropic giving to Augustana:** |  |  |  |
| Annually | 16% | 18% | 25% |
| Not at all | 50% | 41% | 35% |

### Observations and Recommendations

* The Augustana recent graduates fare fairly well on the job front. Although about half of the recent alumni earned less than $30,000 in their first job out of college, at similar colleges, we generally see that about six out of ten report salaries of under $30,000. Additionally, 22% of the recent graduates report an income of $40,000 or more in their first job compared with about 15% of the young alumni at similar colleges.
* Perhaps money can buy some happiness. Half of the young alumni with incomes over $40,000 compared with 42% of those with incomes under $30,000 strongly agree that their Augustana experience contributed greatly to their personal happiness. In all fairness, however, it is reasonably impressive that more than four out of ten of the lowest income alumni still say the College contributed greatly to their personal happiness.
* The Augustana data replicate what we have found at other selective colleges—just over one-half of the most affluent group of alumni played intercollegiate athletics.

# GIVING TO AUGUSTANA

Almost one-fifth of the alumni survey participants claim to contribute annually to the College.

Philanthropic giving to Augustana:

Annual 18%

Occasionally 36%

Not at all 47%

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Giving to Augustana:** | | |
|  | **Annual** | **Occasionally** | **Not at all** |
| **Strongly agree:** |  |  |  |
| My Augustana experience contributed greatly to my personal happiness | 62% | 54% | 38% |
| My Augustana experience contributed greatly to my readiness for graduate school | 49% | 38% | 30% |
| My Augustana experience prepared me well for my first job out of college | 49% | 34% | 21% |
| My advisors effectively guided me through Augustana | 34% | 29% | 23% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Have you earned or are you earning an advanced degree:** |  |  |  |
| Yes, earned advanced degree | 66% | 50% | 32% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Educational attainment:** |  |  |  |
| Master’s degree | 65% | 46% | 42% |
| Ph.D. or doctorate | 11% | 14% | 9% |
|  | **Giving to Augustana:** | | |
|  | **Annual** | **Occasionally** | **Not at all** |
| **Compared with students from other undergraduate institutions, how well prepared were you for your graduate program:** |  |  |  |
| Much better prepared | 45% | 29% | 29% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Describe your level of employment compared with your expectations for your first job:** |  |  |  |
| Below expectations | 13% | 21% | 28% |
| Well below expectations | 2% | 6% | 11% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **If different from first job, current salary:** |  |  |  |
| Less than $30,000 | 1% | 8% | 20% |
| $30,000 to $39,000 | 13% | 19% | 21% |
| $100,000 or more | 20% | 8% | 9% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Rate the quality of your Augustana education:** |  |  |  |
| Outstanding | 65% | 53% | 35% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **How likely are you to recommend Augustana to a college-bound student:** |  |  |  |
| Extremely likely | 79% | 61% | 43% |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Describe your current attitude towards Augustana:** |  |  |  |
| Very positive | 77% | 59% | 38% |

### Observations and Recommendations

* Not surprisingly, annual donors are the most highly educated, the oldest, most successful, most affluent, most pleased with the Augustana experience and their first job after graduation. The problem is this: only 18% of these recent graduates describe themselves as giving annually to Augustana compared with 47% who say they have never given.
* We also see above that beyond a shadow of doubt, regular giving is directly proportional to their satisfaction with their Augustana experience.
* It pays to encourage Augustana students to attend graduate or professional school. Two out of three young alumni say they give annually to the College compared with one out of three of those who do not give at all to Augustana.

# CONCLUSION

As a final note…

* The Augustana community should be proud of the findings in this survey. The results compare very favorably with liberal arts colleges throughout the nation.
* One real concern is that too high a percentage of recent graduates were not satisfied with their advisors or advising in general.
* A relatively high number of recent graduates do not feel that the College actually prepared them for a job. We recognize that is not necessarily the major objective of an Augustana education, but the College must do more to demonstrate how it does prepare students for a career. We believe the Career Sorter that we produced should convince a prospective or current student that Augustana graduates felt well prepared for their first job and the wide variety of industries in which alumni work. We also urge the college to look at the “skills” we tested and then produce an inventory of how Augustana, formally or informally, delivers them.
* The happiest recent graduates are those who have earned or earning an advance degree. In our national studies, most college-bound students believe that large universities with graduate and professional schools are best if you want to pursue a graduate degree. Obviously, this is not true, but it suggests that Augustana, if it doesn’t already, should promote heavily its record in placing students in graduate programs. Much of what we learned from this study can also be useful in promotion.

For example, we see that 34% of recent graduates who attended or were attending a graduate program said that compared with students in their graduate program who attended another undergraduate institution, they were much better prepared, with an additional 35% saying they were better prepared.

Finally, we would like to thank the many members of the Augustana community who assisted us in this research effort.