Key Findings of the University at Albany 2014 Graduate Student Assessment Survey

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University at Albany 2014 Graduate Student Assessment Survey

Executive Summary

Between March 10th and April 23rd, 2014, The University at Albany surveyed its graduate students on a wide variety of issues related both to their academic and non-academic experiences at UAlbany. This was the third administration of this survey, with nearly identical surveys having been previously administered in the Spring terms of 2008 and 2011. A total of 1,390 graduate students participated in the survey, representing 35% of the 3,970 matriculated graduate students at UAlbany in the Spring 2014 semester.1

Compared to previous administrations of the survey in 2008 and 2011, we find two major trends: high overall satisfaction and stability over time.

Survey Summary, by Section:

1) Overall Satisfaction. Overall, both doctoral and master’s students reported generally strong satisfaction with UAlbany, with no major changes since 2008. This includes 75% satisfaction with the “overall quality of graduate education in [their] program;” 80% whose academic experiences at UAlbany met or exceeded their expectations; 70% who would definitely or probably choose UAlbany again, and 74% saying that they would definitely or probably recommend UAlbany to a friend considering their program.

2) Faculty Characteristics. Both doctoral and master’s students rated faculty instruction and prestige, and with academic course content and requirements as “very good” or “excellent” over 75% in nearly every category.

3) Academic Advisement and Faculty Mentoring. Results are more mixed for advisement and mentoring, with high ratings on thesis/dissertation advising and more mixed ratings for overall advisement and mentoring.

4) Research Opportunities. UAlbany graduate students were generally satisfied with research opportunities, with doctoral students again showing higher levels of satisfaction than master’s students, the same trend as previously. Satisfaction was lower for areas related to professional development, particularly regarding preparation to write proposals for funding.

5) Research & Teaching Appointments/Financial Aid. While most doctoral students reported having had assistantships or other types of funding, the numbers were much smaller for master’s students, as expected. Assistantships were the primary source of funding for doctoral students, while loans and personal funds were the primary sources for master’s students. In both groups, those who received either teaching or research assistantships rated their experiences highly, but were somewhat less likely to feel that they had been adequately trained or supervised.

6) Facilities, Resources and Services. UAlbany graduate students were generally satisfied with academic services and facilities, particularly information technology and libraries. Satisfaction with non-academic services was more mixed, with satisfaction highest with bus services and the campus center, and lower with dining, parking, and study areas. Satisfaction with a variety of student support services was mixed.

7) Program/Campus Climate. This section of the survey shows some of the highest levels of satisfaction with UAlbany. Both master’s and doctoral students felt that faculty treated them with respect and collegiality and were happy with morale and student-faculty relations. Very large majorities agreed that faculty treat graduate students from a wide variety of demographic groups with respect. Master’s students felt much more satisfaction with student voice and equity in their program in 2014 than in previous years.

8) Campus Life/ Off-Campus Life. As in previous years, this section of the survey shows that doctoral students participated at a higher level than master’s students in a variety of student activities and groups, but both groups rated their satisfaction with campus events at roughly the same modest level. Both groups found work, finances, and family obligations to be major challenges to progressing toward their degrees.

9) Professional Development and Placement. UAlbany graduate students were generally very positive about their programs’ preparation for careers in their field, but less satisfied with preparation for the actual job search. Whether planning on continuing their graduate education or moving directly into their careers, UAlbany students indicated plans to study or work in a wide variety of fields and degrees.

1 This response rate was down slightly from 40% in 2011, (1,543 of 3,904 graduate students) and 44% in 2008, (1,652 of 3,778 students).
Introduction.
Between March 10th and April 23rd, 2014, The University at Albany surveyed its graduate students on a wide
variety of issues related both to their academic and non-academic experiences at UAlbany. This was the
third administration of this survey, with nearly identical surveys having been previously administered in the
Spring terms of 2008 and 2011. A total of 1,390 graduate students participated in the survey, representing
35% of the 3,970 matriculated graduate students at UAlbany in the Spring 2014 semester.2

Survey Results, by Section:
1) Overall Satisfaction. Overall, both doctoral and master’s students reported generally strong satisfaction
with UAlbany, with no major changes since 2008.
    When asked about their satisfaction with the “overall quality of graduate education in [their]
     program,” 75% of UAlbany graduate students responded that they were satisfied or very satisfied
     in 2011 and 2014 (about the same as the 74% in 2008).
    80% of respondents said that their academic experiences at UAlbany had met or exceeded their
     expectations (similar to the 78% in 2008, and 79% in 2011).
    70% said that they would definitely or probably choose UAlbany again (up from 67% in 2011
     but down slightly from 72% in 2008).
    85% said that they would definitely or probably choose the same field of study (about the same
     as the 86% in 2011, and 84% in 2008).
    Finally, about three-quarters (74%) of UAlbany graduate students said that they would definitely
     or probably recommend UAlbany to a friend considering their program (back up to 2008 levels
     after having dropped to 71% in 2011).

2) Faculty Characteristics. Both doctoral and master’s students indicated substantial satisfaction with
faculty instruction and prestige, and with academic course content and requirements.
    Large majorities of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with various faculty
     characteristics, with all items having averages above (and usually well above) the middle neutral
     response categories, among both master’s and doctoral students. Some of the most highly-rated
     items include:
        80% of doctoral students and 78% of master’s students rated “faculty knowledge of the field”
         as very good or excellent.
        83% of doctoral students and 85% of master’s students agreed or strongly agreed that “course
         readings are relevant to program content.”
        76% of doctoral students and 82% of master’s students agreed or strongly agreed that their
         “program's requirements are well-defined.”
        Among doctoral students, very large majorities agreed that “Faculty in my program are
         among the leaders in their field” (72%), that “Faculty in my field publish in the top journals
         in their field” (78%) and that “Faculty in my program are models of academic integrity and
         professional ethics” (78%).

2 This response rate was down slightly from 40% in 2011, (1,543 of 3,904 graduate students) and 44% in 2008, (1,652 of
  3,778 students).
• Between 2011 and 2014, satisfaction increased or stayed the same on only 9 of 27 items for doctoral students, and increased on 16 of 27 items for master’s students. (Between 2008 and 2011, satisfaction increased on 17 of 27 items among all graduate students and doctoral students, and on 22 items for master’s students.)

• Looking at changes between 2008 and 2014, satisfaction among doctoral students increased or stayed the same on 20 of 27 items, and on 19 of 27 items among master’s students.

• Observed changes overall were very small, the large majority smaller than +/- 0.10 on the item average on a five-point scale in which possible responses ranged from 1 (the lowest) to 5 (the highest). Therefore, the broad story told by the three surveys in this area is of both high overall satisfaction and stability over time.

3) Academic Advisement and Faculty Mentoring. Results are more mixed for advisement and mentoring, with high ratings on thesis/dissertation advising and more mixed ratings for overall advisement and mentoring.

• Looking at overall advising and mentoring, all items show average ratings above the middle category, but many of them not above it by much. On every single item, average ratings are higher among doctoral students than among master’s students, sometimes substantially.

• Satisfaction increased among master’s students on all 15 items related to general advising, both from 2008 and 2011, while responses among doctoral students tended to be down slightly from 2011 but still slightly above 2008.

• The highest satisfaction items in this category are that faculty members in their program:
  - “Advise me on academic matters” (70% of master’s students and 78% of doctoral students agree or strongly agree).
  - “Are approachable” (83% of master’s students and 82% of doctoral students agree or strongly agree).
  - “Are available to mentor graduate students” (59% of master’s students and 70% of doctoral students agree or strongly agree).

• Students writing a thesis or dissertation were much more satisfied with their own thesis or dissertation advisors. 62% of master’s students and 74% of doctoral students rated their own thesis advisors as “very good” or “excellent,” both down slightly from previous surveys.

• Among doctoral students, all items in this category showed well over 60% agreement with items on identifying research topics and developing a prospectus at 83% and 84% agreement respectively. Agreement was somewhat lower but still quite high among master’s students, with agreement on all items but one over 60%.

• Overall, responses to these items have been very stable over time. Among doctoral students, the trend has been of slightly increased agreement, with improvement in 6 of 8 items; among master’s students, 6 of 8 items went down – in both cases, differences were generally small.

4) Research Opportunities. UAlbany graduate students were generally satisfied with research opportunities, with doctoral students again showing higher levels of satisfaction than master’s students, the same trend as previously. Satisfaction was lower for areas related to professional development, particularly regarding preparation to write proposals for funding.

• Here the differences between doctoral students and master’s students were more striking. Average satisfaction ratings on all items but one (opportunities for collaboration with peers) are lower for master’s students than for doctoral students, some only slightly, but some by large margins.
On 13 satisfaction items, 12 showed slight improvement among doctoral students since 2008, but only 4 items showed improvement among master’s students. In both groups, responses in 2014 were a bit lower than in 2011 but still a bit higher than 2008. Again, all differences were small.

5) **Research & Teaching Appointments/Financial Aid.** While most doctoral students reported having had assistantships or other types of funding, the numbers were much smaller for master’s students, as expected. Assistantships were the primary source of funding for doctoral students, while loans and personal funds were the primary sources for master’s students. In both groups, those who received either teaching or research assistantships rated their experiences highly, but were somewhat less likely to feel that they had been adequately trained or supervised. Both groups averaged 26-27 hours of paid work per week, although for doctoral students, this was largely from assistantships and for master’s students, it was largely from outside employment.

- Between 2008 and 2011, overall hours worked decreased from around 29 a week to 25 a week, increasing again to 27 hours a week in 2014. Assistantships averaged 21 hours for students with assistantships, roughly the same as previous years, and outside work averaged around 30 hours a week for students with outside jobs.
- In this area, satisfaction among all graduate students and doctoral students increased in 12 of 13 items, while among master’s students, satisfaction increased in four items and decreased in nine between 2008 and 2011. However, between 2011 and 2014, satisfaction among doctoral students decreased on 11 of 13 items, while among master’s students satisfaction increased on all 13 items. Looking at changes between 2008 and 2014, ratings improved among doctoral students on 8 of 13 items, while among master’s students, ratings improved on 12 of 13 items.
- The highest-rated items on teaching among doctoral students in 2014 included 80% agreement that their teaching experience contributed to their professional development in their field, and 79% agreement that it contributed to their intellectual development in their field.
- On the research questions, the same two items were also the highest-rated: 77% said that their research experience contributed to their professional development in their field, and 79% agreed that it contributed to their intellectual development in their field.

6) **Facilities, Resources and Services.** UAlbany graduate students were generally satisfied with academic services and facilities, particularly information technology and libraries. Satisfaction with non-academic services was more mixed, with satisfaction highest with bus services and the campus center, and lower with dining, parking, and study areas. Satisfaction with a variety of student support services was mixed.

- Between 2008 and 2014, satisfaction among both doctoral and master’s students with facilities, resources and services increased on 23 of 26 items, often substantially; between 2011 and 2014 satisfaction among master’s students increased 21 of 26 items, while satisfaction among doctoral students increased on 18 of 26 items.

7) **Program/Campus Climate.** This section of the survey shows some of the highest levels of satisfaction with UAlbany. Both master’s and doctoral students felt that faculty treated them with respect and collegiality and were happy with morale and student-faculty relations. Very large majorities agreed that faculty treat graduate students from a wide variety of demographic groups with respect. Master’s students felt much more satisfaction with student voice and equity in their program in 2014 than in previous years.

- Between 2008 and 2014, satisfaction among master’s students with their program and campus climate increased or stayed the same on all 17 items; satisfaction increased among doctoral students on 13 of 17 items.
• Between 2011 and 2014, satisfaction decreased slightly, although still marked by high satisfaction on 13 of 17 items for doctoral students and increased or stayed the same on 15 of 17 items for master’s students.

8) Campus Life/ Off-Campus Life. As in previous years, this section of the survey shows that doctoral students participated at a higher level than master’s students in a variety of student activities and groups, but both groups rated their satisfaction with campus events at roughly the same modest level. Both groups found a variety of areas to be major challenges to progressing toward their degrees – particularly work, finances, and family obligations.

• Participation in campus organizations or activities among master’s students in 2014 was generally up slightly from previous years, while for doctoral students it was up slightly in some areas and down slightly in others.

• Looking at responsibilities that posed major challenges for UAlbany’s graduate students, the top five challenges have remained the same across the three survey administrations, and for both doctoral and master’s students: financial stresses, work commitments from both on- and off-campus jobs, family and parenting obligations, and the need to work unrelated jobs during the summers. Among doctoral students in 2014, 5 of 11 items were at their highest levels of any survey, while 4 were at their lowest, with the rest mixed. Among master’s students in 2014, 2 of 11 items were at their highest levels of any survey, while 2 were at their lowest, with the rest mixed.

9) Professional Development and Placement. UAlbany graduate students were generally very positive about their programs’ preparation for careers in their field, but less satisfied with preparation for the actual job search. A minority of UAlbany graduate students planned to continue their graduate education in a wide variety of fields and degrees. Those who planned on moving directly into their careers were heading toward a wide variety of fields, with a large majority of doctoral students planning on careers in academia. Master’s students were more mixed, with the majority seeking non-research, not-for-profit or academic jobs.

• The top two areas of satisfaction in 2014 among both doctoral and master’s students were preparation to work with people of diverse backgrounds (84% well or very well for master’s students, 76% for doctoral students) and preparation to adhere to research and/or professional ethics (80% and 84% respectively).

• Between 2008 and 2014, satisfaction in these areas improved or remained the same among doctoral students for 7 of 12 items; among master’s student’s satisfaction improved slightly on all 12 items.

• Among those with positions lined up, the median salary for doctoral students was between $50,000 and $60,000 a year, while the median salary for master’s students was between $40,000 and $50,000 a year. These figures have held steady for all three administrations of the survey.

• While median salaries were unchanged since 2008, more students in both doctoral and master’s programs were accepting jobs in the lower end of the salary scale (under $30,000). Doctoral students in that category increased from only 3% in 2008 to 14% in both 2011 and 2014; master’s students in that group increased from 4% in 2008 to 11% in 2011 and 16% in 2014.
Detailed Survey Report

I. Survey Administration.

Between March 10th and April 23rd, 2014, The University at Albany surveyed its graduate students on a wide variety of issues related to their academic experiences at UAlbany. This survey was developed by UAlbany’s Office of Institutional Research, Planning & Effectiveness (IRPE), in consultation with the Office of Graduate Studies, and was administered for the first time in the Spring of 2008. The survey was administered via e-mail invitations with links to a web survey in 2008, 2011 and 2014.

All matriculated graduate students with e-mail addresses were sent an invitation e-mail. Two reminder e-mails were then sent to students who had not yet completed the survey; in addition, department chairs and program directors were asked to encourage their students to participate by sending e-mails to students in their programs and placing fliers around their departments or in student mailboxes.

II. Survey Participation.

As shown below, a total of 1,390 graduate students participated in the survey, including 1,065 completed surveys and 325 partials. These numbers represent 35% of the 3,970 matriculated graduate students at UAlbany in the Spring 2014 semester. While this response rate is lower than the response rates for the 2008 and 2011 surveys, it is substantially higher than those of other student surveys at UAlbany over the last few years and allows for a high level of confidence in the reliability of survey estimates. As shown in Appendix B, student participant demographics are roughly similar to those of the population as a whole on a number of dimensions, including gender, ethnicity, degree sought, age, and number of credits.

Groups with notably higher than average response rates include Hispanics and students taking nine or more credits, while men’s response rate was lower. Response rates varied by college, from a high of 53% for the School of Criminal Justice to lows of 25% and 26% respectively for the College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering and the School of Business.

Detailed survey responses were provided to the Office of Graduate Studies and the Office of the Provost in “topline” reports for the survey, for the overall sample and separately for master’s and doctoral students. In addition, topline reports by department and program are being made available to Deans, program directors and department chairs for program-specific assessments.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population of Matriculated Graduate Students:</td>
<td>3,970</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completed Surveys:</td>
<td>1,065</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partial Surveys:</td>
<td>325</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Surveys:</td>
<td>1,390</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response Rate (completes):</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response Rate (w/partials):</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confidence Interval:</td>
<td>+/- 2.6%³</td>
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</table>

³ Based on 95% confidence, and including completed surveys only. Questions answered by all respondents have a confidence interval as low as +/- 2.1%. Figures for master’s students have a confidence interval as low as +/- 2.8%; figures for doctoral students have a confidence interval as low as +/- 3.4%.
III. Survey Results. The following section summarizes results of the 2014 UAlbany Graduate Student Assessment Survey for all respondents, as well as separately for master’s and doctoral students. Most questions in this survey used 5-point Likert-type scales; in most cases the graphs show the combined percentages of students who chose either the top or the second highest response category. Each graph shows those combined percentages for all respondents (the “Total” bar) as well as separate bars for master’s students and doctoral students. For some items on post-graduation plans or activities, separate charts for master’s and doctoral students are shown, as merited by especially large differences in response patterns.

For a few questions, results for the 2008, 2011 and 2014 surveys are shown, but for most items, only 2014 results are shown, with any especially large differences highlighted in the discussion of the survey section they appear in. Results for all 2008 and 2011 survey items are contained in the 2008 and 2011 survey reports, available on the IRPE Assessment Report web page.4

The Graduate Student Assessment Survey is both lengthy and highly detailed in terms of the numbers of questions asked, and very broad with regard to the number of topics covered. The topics covered are reflected in the titles of the nine sections included in this report:

1) Overall satisfaction with UAlbany;
2) Graduate instruction and faculty characteristics;
3) Advisement and faculty mentoring;
4) Research opportunities;
5) Research and teaching appointments and financial aid;
6) Facilities, resources and services;
7) Program/campus climate;
8) Campus life/off-campus life;
9) Professional development and placement

Part 1: Overall Satisfaction with UAlbany

Overall, both doctoral and master’s students reported generally favorable satisfaction ratings with UAlbany.

- Most are satisfied with quality of graduate education (Q1): Three quarters of respondents were somewhat or very satisfied with the overall quality of graduate education in their program, especially among master’s students. For doctoral students, ratings increased from 2008 to 2011 (71% to 76%) and then decreased from 2011 to 2014 (76% to 71%). For master’s students, ratings stayed the same at 74% from 2008 to 2011 and then increased to 77% in 2014.

Q1: Percent satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of graduate education in their program.

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4 [http://www.albany.edu/ir/reports.htm](http://www.albany.edu/ir/reports.htm)
• UAlbany met or exceeded academic expectations (Q1a): A large majority of respondents – at or nearly 80% in all three years – felt that their academic experience met or exceeded their expectations, with satisfaction slightly higher among master’s than doctoral students in 2008, but essentially the same in 2011 and 2014.

Q1a: Percent stating their academic experiences at UAlbany have met or exceeded their expectations.

- UAlbany was first or second choice (Q1b): For large majorities of UAlbany’s graduate students, UAlbany was their first choice – about 67% in 2008, down to 61% in 2011 and up to 63% in 2014. Also, for over 80% UAlbany was either their first or second choice. Both of these figures are markedly higher for master’s students than for doctoral students.

Q1b: Percent stating that UAlbany was their first choice.
Q1b2: Percent stating that UAlbany was their first or second choice.

- Most students would choose UAlbany again (Q1c & Q1d): About 70% of all graduate students would choose UAlbany if they had to do it over again. From 2008 to 2011, this figure decreased somewhat for master’s students and increased for doctoral students. This figure increased for doctoral students from 2011 to 2014, but stayed the same for master’s students. In addition, for all three years, over 85% of graduate students said they would choose the same field of study again.

Q1c: Percent who would probably or definitely choose UAlbany again.

Q1d: Percent who would probably or definitely choose the same field of study again.
• Most would recommend UAlbany (Q1e): Over 70% of UAlbany graduate students would recommend UAlbany to someone considering their program, with master’s students again more positive than doctoral students. The same trend was seen in 2008 and 2011.

Q1e: Percent who would recommend UAlbany.

- Factors Influencing School Choice (Q1f): The top three factors influencing the decision to attend UAlbany overall were affordability, location and the overall reputation of the faculty. For doctoral students, the top three were overall affordability, the financial support offer, and the reputation of the faculty. The top three for master’s students were overall affordability, location, and the reputation of the faculty. These figures were largely unchanged from 2008 and 2011. However, in 2011 the top three factors influencing the decision to attend UAlbany overall were affordability, location and the financial support offer.

Q1f: Percent responding that factor was "very important" or "extremely important" in influencing the decision to attend UAlbany.

5 Response options for these items were: 1 (not at all important), 2 (slightly important), 3 (moderately important), 4 (very important) and 5 (extremely important).
• **Progress in Doctoral Program (Q1h):** Figure Q1h shows the progress of doctoral students toward their degree as measured by completion of important milestones. Responses range from a high of 82% who have completed all required coursework to a low of 14% who have written a complete or nearly-complete dissertation draft. The percentages for all these milestones were substantially higher than in 2008 and in 2011, indicating higher response rates among students who were further along in their graduate education. This difference should be considered when comparing results.
Part 2: Graduate Instruction and Faculty Characteristics

Both doctoral and master’s students indicated considerable satisfaction with faculty instruction and prestige as well as with academic course content and requirements.

- **Faculty Instruction (Q2a):** Both master’s and doctoral respondents rated faculty instruction highest on “knowledge in the field,” “up-to-date with the latest developments,” “expertise in research methods,” overall rating, and faculty supportiveness, with satisfaction at or above 60% in all of these areas. However, students provided less positive ratings for “faculty teaching ability,” “overall quality of curriculum,” and “faculty use of innovative instructional methods.” In all of these areas, the percentages rating their faculty as “very good” or “excellent” were slightly but consistently higher than in 2008.

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6 Response options for these items were: 1 (poor), 2 (fair), 3 (good), 4 (very good) and 5 (excellent). We should note that although the middle option in the five-point scale is often considered a neutral response, that is more the case for bi-polar scales, in which responses on one side of the midpoint are clearly negative and those on the other side are positive (e.g., agree/disagree or satisfied/dissatisfied). This scale is unipolar, indicating degrees of positivity, and even the middle option is “good.” If we were to include here students who rated their instruction as “good,” the numbers would be considerably higher.
• **Academic Course Content (Q2b):** Of the list of 10 statements about course content, 5 received agreement or strong agreement from over 60% of UAlbany graduate students, with “course readings are relevant to program content” receiving over 80% agreement. Seven response options for these items and all subsequent “agree/disagree” items were: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree) and 5 (strongly agree).

Two statements relating to interdisciplinary work and preparation for publication received more tepid support. Finally, two negatively-worded questions on the level of expectations or challenges received agreement from fewer than 20% of UAlbany graduate students (since the questions were worded negatively, low percentages agreeing with them are actually good).

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7 Response options for these items and all subsequent “agree/disagree” items were: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree) and 5 (strongly agree).
• **Program Requirements (Q2c):** Over 70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “program requirements are well-defined,” “core course requirements prepare them for subsequent courses,” and that their “curriculum provides a balanced scope for graduate-level competency in their field.” Over 60% agreed that “required courses are offered regularly as needed,” with only 23% agreeing that inadequate course offerings slowed their progress. All these figures are improved from 2008.

• **Faculty Characteristics (Q2d):** More than three quarters of respondents agreed that faculty in their program are “models of integrity and professional ethics,” while over two thirds agreed that they are “leaders in the field,” and “publish in top journals,” with doctoral students indicating more positive responses than master’s students in the latter two areas. All figures are largely unchanged since 2008.
Part 3: Academic Advisement and Faculty Mentoring

Results were more mixed for advisement and mentoring. Satisfaction with general advisement was only lukewarm, with some important exceptions. In general, doctoral students were more positive than master’s students about their programs’ advisement and mentoring. Students writing a thesis or dissertation were very satisfied with their own thesis or dissertation advisors.

- **Academic Advisement (Q3a):** In academic advisement, markedly lower ratings are shown than for other aspects of graduate education, with master’s students less positive than doctoral students on every measure. Doctoral students gave their highest ratings to their relationship with their own advisor, and their advisor’s knowledge about the content of courses in the program, while master’s students gave their highest ratings to knowledge of the curriculum. On the core question evaluating faculty advisement in their program overall, only 49% of doctoral students and 41% of master’s students rated their program as “very good” or “excellent.”8 Responses in general were similar to those in the previous surveys.

![Diagram showing percent evaluating aspects of faculty advisement as "very good" or "excellent"](chart.png)

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8 See the previous note regarding unipolar scales with “good” as the middle option. Even so, if we look at the mean score on the 1-5 scale, all are above the middle point of “3,” ranging from a low of 3.37 for Q3a1 to a high of 3.79 for Q3a6. Even for master’s students, the lowest rating (for Q3a1) is 3.16, slightly past the mid-point, meaning that the average rating is still “good” or better.
• General Faculty Mentoring (Q3b): Responses on faculty mentoring were higher than for advisement in specific areas, with large majorities agreeing that faculty members in their program are approachable, advise them on academic matters, and are available to mentor graduate students. Several other items received more mixed agreement, and the two items with the lowest levels of agreement relate to help with funding and jobs. As with advisement, nearly all items show systematically higher levels of agreement among doctoral students than master’s students. Again, agreement levels in 2014 were very similar to those in 2008.

![Q3b. Percent agreeing or strongly agreeing with statements about faculty mentoring by faculty members in their department](image)

- Q3b1. Advise me on academic matters.
- Q3b2. Discuss my research with me on a regular basis.
- Q3b3. Are approachable.
- Q3b4. Help me identify potential sources of financial support.
- Q3b5. Help me negotiate the challenges of graduate school.
- Q3b6. Help direct my search for professional employment in my field.
- Q3b7. Are sensitive to my unique needs.
- Q3b8. Are available to mentor graduate students.
- Q3b9. Help me prepare for my comprehensive exams.

The percentages above represent the agreement levels for each statement by faculty members in their department, with bars indicating agreement rates for master’s, doctoral, and total students.

• Thesis/Dissertation Advisor (Q3c & Q3d): While ratings of faculty advisement were not high in general, students with thesis or dissertation advisors were much more positive about their advisors. About 68% percent of doctoral and 13% percent of master’s students reported having a thesis or dissertation advisor. Of these students, about 75% of doctoral students and 62% of master’s students rated their advisor overall as very good or excellent, with the former group up from 2008, but down slightly from 2011.
Q3c: Percent who rated their dissertation or thesis advisor as “very good” or “excellent.”

- **Thesis/Dissertation Support and Guidance (Q3e):** (asked only of students with a dissertation or thesis advisor) As with the overall rating, large majorities of UAlbany graduate students also agreed or strongly agreed with a variety of more specific statements about their thesis or dissertation advisors. Over 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their thesis/dissertation advisor was helpful in finding a “suitable research topic,” “developing ideas into workable proposal/prospectus,” and “designing and implementing a research plan,” and nearly 80% agreed that their advisor provides “prompt feedback.” In these areas, master’s students working on theses had ratings very close to those of doctoral students. Other areas, including encouragement to present work at conferences or submit it for publication, helping with transition to a professional role, and research collaboration, indicated lower, but still high, agreement of around two thirds to three quarters. On each of those areas, master’s students had lower agreement than doctoral students. Once again, in all these areas, levels of agreement increased between 2008 and 2011.
Part 4: Research Opportunities

UAlbany graduate students were generally satisfied with research opportunities, with doctoral students again showing higher levels of satisfaction than master’s students. Satisfaction was lower for areas related to professional development, with particularly low satisfaction with preparation for writing funding proposals.

- Departmental/Programmatic Opportunities for Developing Research Interests and Skills (Q4a):
  Overall, around two thirds of both master’s and doctoral students were satisfied or very satisfied with department/program opportunities provided to develop their research skills. In most other areas, doctoral students’ satisfaction was greater than 60%, while that of master’s students was in the 50-60% range. Interestingly, master’s students were substantially more satisfied with regard to opportunities to collaborate with their peers, and neither group was satisfied when it came to opportunities to collaborate with faculty or students from other departments. Satisfaction was generally slightly higher across-the-board in 2014 compared to 2008.

| Q4a. Percent satisfied or strongly satisfied with opportunities provided by their department to: |
| Q4a7. Collaborate with peers | Master’s 58%  | Doctoral 67%  | Total 72% |
| Q4a1. Develop research skills | Master’s 61%  | Doctoral 66%  | Total 72% |
| Q4a4. Pursue my own research interests | Master’s 52%  | Doctoral 62%  | Total 74% |
| Q4a2. Conduct independent research | Master’s 55%  | Doctoral 68%  | Total 68% |
| Q4a6. Learn about research conducted outside UAlbany (e.g., guest speakers) | Master’s 57%  | Doctoral 64%  | Total 64% |
| Q4a5. Learn about other research conducted at UAlbany (e.g., colloquia, brown bags) | Master’s 52%  | Doctoral 58%  | Total 65% |
| Q4a3. Obtain faculty mentoring in developing research skills | Master’s 47%  | Doctoral 53%  | Total 61% |
| Q4a8. Collaborate with faculty or students from other departments | Master’s 36%  | Doctoral 41%  | Total 39% |
• **Departmental/Programmatic Preparations for Professional Activities (Q4b):** In these areas, master’s and doctoral students once again showed markedly different patterns. For doctoral students, the top two areas of satisfaction were with preparation to present their research to academic audiences and preparing articles for publication. For master’s students, the highest satisfaction was with preparation in forging professional connections and networks. Both groups showed their lowest satisfaction with preparation to write proposals to obtain funding.

![Q4b. Percent satisfied or strongly satisfied with the way their department has prepared them to:](image)

• **Student participation in field-related academic activities (Q4c):** Over 60% of doctoral respondents presented at a regional or national conference while in graduate school, compared to only 8% of master’s students. Over a third of doctoral students submitted an article for publication, and a quarter had an article actually accepted. (Looking only at third-year or higher doctoral students, 51% reported submitting an article for publication, and 41% have been published.) These numbers represent a substantial increase since 2008. As expected, far smaller numbers have performed or presented artistic work.

![Q4c. Percent who have engaged in the following activities:](image)
Part 5: Research & Teaching Appointments/Financial Aid

This section of the survey is consistent with institutional data showing that most doctoral students have had assistantships or other types of funding, while fewer master’s students receive these types of support. In fact, assistantships are the primary source of funding for doctoral students, while loans are the primary source for master’s students. In both groups, those who received either teaching or research assistantships rated their experiences highly, but were somewhat less likely to feel that they have been adequately trained or supervised. Both groups averaged 26-27 hours of paid work per week, down from 28-29 hours in 2008, but up from 24-26 hours in 2011; for doctoral students, those hours were largely from assistantships and for master’s students, they were largely from outside employment.

- **Assistantships and Financial Supports (Q5a):** Of the ten sources of financial support listed, the top five sources of funding for doctoral respondents were teaching assistantships, department-funded research assistantships, part-time instructorships, grant-funded research assistantships, and administrative graduate assistantships.

The numbers for master’s students reflect the lower levels of funding opportunities compared to doctoral students. For master’s students, the highest percentages were the 9% who served as administrative graduate assistants (down from 14% in 2008) and the 7% who have served as teaching assistants (down from 9%). All of these funding sources were down since 2008, reflecting a greater allocation of existing resources toward doctoral students.

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**Q5a. Percent who have had the following types of appointments:**

- Q5a1. Served as a teaching assistant: 7% (Master’s), 59% (Doctoral)
- Q5a31. Served as a department-funded research assistant: 3% (Master’s), 35% (Doctoral)
- Q5a51. Served as a part-time instructor: 2% (Master’s), 30% (Doctoral)
- Q5a41. Served as a grant-funded research assistant: 2% (Master’s), 30% (Doctoral)
- Q5a21. Served as an administrative graduate assistant: 9% (Master’s), 22% (Doctoral)
- Q5a91. Other (please specify below): 7% (Master’s), 15% (Doctoral)
- Q5a11. Received a Diversity Teaching/Research Fellowship: 1% (Master’s), 10% (Doctoral)
- Q5a71. Received a fellowship from an external source: 3% (Master’s), 7% (Doctoral)
- Q5a81. Received a state-funded fellowship (other than Diversity): 2% (Master’s), 5% (Doctoral)
- Q5a61. Received an equal opportunity tuition scholarship (GTOP): 2% (Master’s), 3% (Doctoral)

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9 These figures are averages; they are not evidence of individual students with assistantships working more than 20 hours per week.
Percentage of graduate school expenses met, by category (Q5b): Survey respondents were asked to estimate which percentage range of their graduate school expenses for the year were met by a variety of sources. The chart below shows combined percentages of those who checked the categories of 41-60%, 61-80% and 81-100%.

Again, the survey results show markedly different results for master’s students and doctoral students. For doctoral students, the top sources were teaching assistantships, personal funds and other sources, while for master’s students the top three categories were loans, personal funds and family assistance. The most striking figure on the chart is the 48% of master’s students who relied so heavily on loans, down from a high of 53% in 2011 and close to the 49% figure in 2008. In fact, 30% of master’s students relied 81-100% on loans to cover their graduate school expenses. Interestingly, both groups are relying less on personal funds than in previous years.
Teaching Assistant Training and Experiences (Q5c): Regarding teaching experiences, majorities of both doctoral and master’s students who have taught agreed or strongly agreed that their teaching experience contributed to professional and intellectual development in their field, with agreement much stronger among doctoral students than master’s students. Over two thirds of doctoral students and nearly as many master’s students reported that their teaching experience was in subjects related to their research expertise. (Interestingly, in 2008, when more master’s students were teaching, that number for master’s students was below 50%).

However, while survey respondents appreciated the value of their teaching experiences, they were far less sanguine about their training and supervision. Fewer than 50% of graduate students were satisfied with their program’s training of teaching assistants, which represents a large drop among doctoral students from 60% in 2008. On the other two questions related to training and supervision of teaching, agreement among doctoral students has declined while agreement among master’s students has increased, so that the two groups’ responses are now similar where they once were markedly different. Among both groups, agreement that they have received adequate instruction in teaching and that they have received adequate supervision are at or below 50%.

![Q5c Percent agreeing or strongly agreeing with statements about their teaching assistantship](image-url)
- **Research Assistant Training and Experiences (Q5d):** In this area, we see only modest differences between the responses of doctoral and master’s students who have held research assistantships. Large majorities of both doctoral and master’s students agreed or strongly agreed with all statements, ranging from lows of 56 and 59%, indicating satisfaction with training and guidance for research assistants, to highs of 77-79%, indicating that their assistantship contributed to their intellectual and professional development.

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**Q5d. Percent agreeing or strongly agreeing with statements about their research assistantship**

- Q5d5. My assistantship contributed to my intellectual development in my field.
  - Master’s: 79%
  - Doctoral: 79%
  - Total: 79%
- Q5d4. My research assistantship contributed to my professional development in my field.
  - Master’s: 78%
  - Doctoral: 77%
  - Total: 77%
- Q5d3. My research assistantship was in subjects related to my research expertise.
  - Master’s: 74%
  - Doctoral: 71%
  - Total: 72%
- Q5d6. My assistantship was with my advisor.
  - Master’s: 67%
  - Doctoral: 72%
  - Total: 71%
- Q5d7. My assistantship led to research presentations or publications.
  - Master’s: 70%
  - Doctoral: 65%
  - Total: 66%
- Q5d2. I have received adequate formal supervision and evaluation regarding my research assistantships.
  - Master’s: 66%
  - Doctoral: 64%
  - Total: 65%
- Q5d1. I am satisfied with the quality of my graduate program’s training and guidance for research assistants.
  - Master’s: 56%
  - Doctoral: 57%
  - Total: 57%

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- **Hours worked by type of position (Q5e-f):** As shown in the figure below, outside employment is by far the most important category for master’s students, with 60% reporting only outside work (down from 63% in 2011 and 75% in 2008), along with 12% and 13% respectively for assistantships only and with both assistantships and outside work (both numbers are essentially unchanged from previous years). In contrast, 51% of doctoral students reported working only at assistantships (down from 60% in 2011 and 53% in 2008), along with 23% who did only outside work (down from 31% in 2011 but above the 19% figure for 2008) and 17% who worked both. Overall, 44% of respondents reported working only outside the University (essentially the same as in 2011 but down from 58% in 2008), followed by 29% working only at assistantships (down from previous years), and 15% working some hours at both types of position (up from previous years).
Number of hours worked (Q5e-f): Doctoral students working only at an assistantship reported working 22 hours per week on average; doctoral students who only had “another” type of job reported working on average 37 hours per week. A small but important minority of 14% of doctoral students reported working at both an assistantship and another job, and they reported working on average 42 hours per week. A number of combinations of full and/or part-time assistantships, fellowships, research assistantships, and outside work both related to and completely separate from their doctoral work are possible, so care should be taken when making any inferences about this latter population.

Master’s students working only at an assistantship reported working 21 hours per week on average. Those with only “another” type of job reported working 32 hours per week. About 13% of master’s students reported working at both an assistantship and another job, and they reported working on average 35 hours per week. As with doctoral students, a number of combinations of full and/or part-time assistantships, research assistantships, and outside work both related to and completely separate from their academic work are possible, so care should be taken when making any inferences about this latter population.
Part 6: Facilities, Resources and Services

UAlbany graduate students were generally satisfied with academic services and facilities, particularly information technology and libraries. Satisfaction with non-academic services was more mixed, with high satisfaction with bus services and the campus center and lower satisfaction with dining, parking, and study areas. Satisfaction with a variety of other student support services was mixed.

- **Academic Facilities and Resources (Q6a):** Graduate students at UAlbany were most satisfied with the university email system, university web resources, and access to software. Respondents were least satisfied with laboratories or other research space and equipment and personal work space. Satisfaction on all of these items was consistently higher among master’s students than among doctoral students, as was the case in both 2008 and 2011.
Non-academic Facilities and Resources (Q6b): UAlbany graduate students were most satisfied with both CDTA and UAlbany bus services, followed by the Campus Center and the Financial Aid Office. Consistent with recent undergraduate surveys, two of the three areas of lowest satisfaction were dining and parking facilities. The other low satisfaction item, however, was with “lounges or study areas at your department.” Satisfaction in all of these areas was higher in 2014 than in 2008 or 2011. Doctoral students had slightly higher satisfaction than master’s students regarding public bus service, while master’s students had substantially higher satisfaction with the Campus Center, dining, parking, and study lounges.

- Overall, satisfaction increased for all seven items from 2008 to 2011 and then again from 2011 to 2014, in some areas by large amounts.
• **Library Facilities and Services (Q6c):** Overall, survey respondents expressed very high satisfaction with various library services. Both master’s and doctoral students had satisfaction levels over 70% – and more often into the 80% range for all items related to UAlbany Libraries. These satisfaction levels are also consistent with recent undergraduate surveys. Satisfaction with libraries was essentially unchanged between the 2008 and 2011 surveys. Among doctoral students, mean responses on all five items was higher in 2014 than in either previous survey year; among master’s students, that was the case for four of the five items.
Use of General Student Support Services (Q6d): The chart below shows percentages of UAlbany graduate students who reported having used each of several facilities at least 2-3 times during their time as a graduate student at UAlbany. The highest reported usage was for the Graduate Student Association (GSA), the Office of Graduate Studies, and the Health Center. The lowest reported areas of usage were the Disability Resource Center, the Counseling Center, and the Career Development Center (CDC). Doctoral students were more likely than master’s students to have used the Institute for Teaching, Learning and Academic Leadership (ITLAL), the GSA, the Health Center, and International Student Services, while master’s students were more likely to have used the Office of Graduate Studies and the CC.

- The most striking change was an increase among doctoral students using ITLAL from 10% in 2008 to 16% in 2011 and 21% in 2014. Use of International Student Services declined from 25% to 19% from 2008 to 2011 before increasing slightly to 21% in 2014. This follows initiatives by the Office of Graduate Studies and ITLAL since 2011, to strengthen teaching-related training for UAlbany graduate students.
Quality of General Student Support Services (Q6e): In the next set of questions, students were asked to evaluate the quality of services received at these offices. The top three ratings regarding service quality were ITLAL, the Disability Resource Center and International Student Services. The lowest three were for the GSA, the Office of Graduate Studies and the Counseling Center. While in 2008, master’s students tended to give higher ratings than doctoral students, the trend was more mixed in 2011, after more improved ratings among doctoral students. The biggest differences in 2011 were for ITLAL (60% for doctoral students but only 30% for master’s students) and the Disability Resource Center (50% and 38% respectively). The biggest differences in 2014 were for the GSA (32% for doctoral students and 52% for master’s students) and the ITLAL (64% for doctoral students and 45% for master’s students).

Among doctoral students, ratings were down in six out eight areas, with the largest changes being decreases from 44% to 35% for the Career Development Center and 48% to 40% for the Counseling Center facilities from 2011 to 2014. Among master’s students, ratings increased in all eight areas. The biggest changes were an increase from 30% to 45% for ITLAL and 42% to 52% for the GSO from 2011 to 2014.

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10 Only those who did not select “NA/Have Not Used” are included in these percentages. Nonetheless, it is clear from the raw numbers that many people who did not use the services evaluated them anyway; most of these respondents chose the middle option, “good,” which had a tendency to reduce the percentages of those choosing the top two categories, as shown in the chart for Q6e. Also, please see previous notes on unipolar scales with “good” as the middle option.
Part 7: Program/Campus Climate

This section of the survey shows some of the highest levels of satisfaction with UAlbany. Both master's and doctoral students felt faculty in their program treat them with respect and collegiality; students were also happy with morale and student-faculty relations. Very large majorities agreed that faculty treat graduate students from a wide variety of demographic groups with respect. Questions related to students’ role in governance were more mixed, with doctoral students feeling more included than master’s students.

- **Faculty/Graduate Student Relations (Q7a):** A large majority of respondents agreed that faculty in their program treat graduate students with respect and collegiality and that faculty manage methodological or ideological disagreements in a professional manner. However, respondents reported less agreement with the existence of a sense of community among faculty and students. Only around a quarter of UAlbany graduate students felt that faculty in their programs allowed methodological or ideological disagreements to impact their relations with students. Changes in these areas between 2008 and 2011 were small but largely positive. Changes in these areas between 2011 and 2014 were also small, with two items increasing and two decreasing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Master's</th>
<th>Doctoral</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q7a1. Faculty in my program treat graduate students with respect and collegiality.</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7a2. Faculty in my program manage their methodological or ideological disagreements in a professional manner.</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7a4. There is a sense of community among faculty and graduate students.</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7a3. Faculty in my program sometimes allow their methodological or ideological disagreements to negatively impact on their relations with students.</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Faculty Respect for Diverse Students (Q7b): By very large majorities (84%-91%), UAlbany graduate students agreed that faculty respect students regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religious beliefs, or political views. Overall, agreement was up very slightly but consistently between 2008 and 2011. Agreement was also up slightly or stayed the same between 2011 and 2014.

**Q7b. Percent agreeing or strongly agreeing with statements about respect for diversity in their program.**

"Faculty in my program respect graduate students regardless of..."

| Q7b3. Sexual orientation or identity | 91% | 90% | 89% |
| Q7b1. Race, ethnicity or citizenship | 91% | 88% | 90% |
| Q7b5. Religious beliefs or practice | 89% | 90% | 91% |
| Q7b2. Sex or gender | 86% | 89% | 91% |
| Q7b4. Disability | 87% | 88% | 90% |
| Q7b6. Political views or ideology | 84% | 87% | 89% |
• **Student Voice and Equity (Q7c):** About 73% of UAlbany graduate students agreed that students in their program are treated fairly by their faculty and 65% agreed that student morale in their program is positive. Agreement was stronger among master’s students than among doctoral students, the same trend as in 2008 and 2011. Over 60% of respondents agreed that students are consulted appropriately in matters that concern them. More modest levels of agreement (around 50%) were found with statements regarding student representation at faculty meetings and department committees. Master’s students had slightly higher levels of agreement with these items, while in 2008 doctoral students had substantially higher levels of agreement with these items. The lowest levels of agreement were for items addressing fair distribution of financial resources and the representation of graduate students on department committees.

Between the 2008 and 2011 surveys, agreement on these items consistently increased overall, with improved ratings for five out of seven items among doctoral students and improvement on all seven items for master’s students. Between the 2011 and 2014 surveys, agreement on these items was mixed, with five of seven items decreasing for doctoral students and five of seven items increasing for master’s students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q7c. Percent agreeing or strongly agreeing with statements about graduate student voice and equity in their program.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q7c5. Graduate students in my program are treated equitably and fairly by the faculty.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q7c7. Generally, the morale of graduate students in my program is positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7c1. Graduate students in my program are consulted about issues that concern them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q7c4. My department or program has an effective, formal procedure for addressing student-faculty disputes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7c2. Graduate students are represented at faculty meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7c3. Graduate students are represented on department committees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7c6. The financial resources available to students in my program are distributed fairly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master’s</th>
<th>Doctoral</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>68%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>73%</td>
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<td>57%</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<td>42%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>46%</td>
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Part 8: Campus Life/ Off-Campus Life

This section of the survey shows that doctoral students participated at a higher level than master’s students in a variety of student activities and groups, but both groups rated their satisfaction with campus events at the same modest level. Satisfaction among all students dropped slightly from 2008 to 2014. Both groups found a variety of areas to be major challenges to progressing in their programs, particularly work, finances, and family obligations.

- Participation in campus life (Q8a): The most striking finding related to the questions on participation in campus groups was the large gap between the relatively high levels of participation among doctoral students compared to master’s students. Almost 75% of doctoral students, but less than half of master’s students reported having participated in events sponsored by their program’s graduate student group, either in the current or previous years. Over half of doctoral students and less than a third of master’s students attended events sponsored by the University’s GSA. Around one in three doctoral students but only 16% of master’s students served in a leadership role in a student organization. Finally, only around 20% of both groups reported participating in events sponsored by identity groups. These results are largely consistent with the 2011 survey. Overall, participation was up slightly between 2008 and 2011 and down slightly from 2011 to 2014.
Overall Satisfaction with Campus Events (Q8b): Despite the large gap in participation between doctoral and master’s students, the two groups were equally satisfied with those activities. Satisfaction increased slightly from 2008 to 2011, but dropped in 2014 (from 45% to 37% for master’s students and from 46% to 30% for doctoral students).

Challenges Surrounding Graduate Work (Q8d): As in 2008 and in 2011, the top three major challenges for respondents were financial stresses, work commitment for an off-campus job, and the need to work at an unrelated job during the summers in 2014. Family and parenting obligations were also major challenges for almost 30% of UAlbany graduate students. The items cited least frequently as major challenges were related to transportation, housing, and immigration regulation. While immigration regulations were cited by only 9% overall, among 25% of international students listed it as a major challenge, including 21% of doctoral students and 30% of master’s students. Thus, even among international students it was not a top factor – financial stresses, work commitments both on- and off-campus, and the need to work unrelated summer jobs are the top challenges for international students just as they are for UAlbany’s graduate students overall.

Although fewer students reported major challenges in 2011 than in 2008, the results were more mixed in 2014. More doctoral students reported major challenges, with percentages increasing for eight of eleven items. On the other hand, four of eleven items for master’s students increased and four items remained the same.
Q8d. Percent indicating that the following factors have been "a major challenge" to their progress through their program

- **Q8d4. Financial stresses**
  - Master's: 52%
  - Doctoral: 54%
  - Total: 58%

- **Q8d1. Work commitments, off-campus job**
  - Master's: 48%
  - Doctoral: 45%
  - Total: 49%

- **Q8d5. The need to work at an unrelated job during the summers**
  - Master's: 32%
  - Doctoral: 39%
  - Total: 39%

- **Q8d3. Family and parenting obligations**
  - Master's: 27%
  - Doctoral: 29%
  - Total: 28%

- **Q8d2. Work commitments, on-campus job**
  - Master's: 22%
  - Doctoral: 27%
  - Total: 26%

- **Q8d8. (Problems with) course scheduling**
  - Master's: 18%
  - Doctoral: 16%
  - Total: 17%

- **Q8d7. (Problems with) program structure or requirements**
  - Master's: 15%
  - Doctoral: 14%
  - Total: 14%

- **Q8d6. (Problems with) faculty advisement or mentoring**
  - Master's: 13%
  - Doctoral: 14%
  - Total: 14%

- **Q8d9. (Problems with) immigration regulations**
  - Master's: 9%
  - Doctoral: 9%
  - Total: 9%

- **Q8d10. (Problems with) housing**
  - Master's: 8%
  - Doctoral: 8%
  - Total: 8%

- **Q8d11. (Problems with) transportation**
  - Master's: 8%
  - Doctoral: 6%
  - Total: 7%
Part 9: Professional Development and Placement

UAlbany graduate students were generally very positive about how their programs prepare them for careers in their field, although they were less satisfied with preparation for the actual job search. A minority of UAlbany graduate students planned to continue their graduate education in a wide variety of fields and degrees. Those who planned on moving directly toward their careers are also heading toward a wide variety of fields, with a large majority of doctoral students planning on careers in academia. Among those who had positions lined up at the time of the survey, the median reported salary for master’s students was between $40,000 and $50,000, while the median for doctoral students was between $50,000 and $60,000 a year, both unchanged over the years. Around 15% of master’s and doctoral students were going to be earning below $30,000 a year, both up substantially since 2008 (4% for master’s students, 3% for doctoral) and 2011 (11% for master’s students and 14% for doctoral students). At the other end of the spectrum, 12% of master’s students and 35% of doctoral graduates will be earning over $70,000 a year, which is higher than in 2008 but roughly the same as in 2011.

- Program Preparation for Professional Development (Q9a): About 80% of respondents rated their program’s preparation highly regarding adhering to research and/or professional ethics and working with people of diverse backgrounds. Almost 75% of respondents rated their program highly in terms of preparing them to work with people of varied educational levels. Master’s students were more satisfied than doctoral students in seven out of eight categories. The only item rated higher by doctoral students was “preparation in adhering to research and/or professional ethics,” the highest rated item among that group, with 84% reporting that they were prepared “well” or “very well.” The highest-rated item for Master’s students (84%) was “working with people of diverse backgrounds” the. UAlbany graduate students were less positive regarding items directly related to preparation for job searches. About 50% or fewer felt they were prepared well or very well to search for a job, prepare for a job interview or prepare a curriculum vitae or résumé. Looking only at master’s students admitted at least a year ago, percentages were actually slightly lower than among master’s students overall. Looking only at doctoral students admitted for at least two years, the percentages were essentially identical to the numbers overall.

- The changes over time in this section have been modest but largely positive. For master’s students, mean responses improved slightly on 6 of 8 items and decreased slightly on the other two from 2008 to 2011, and again from 2011 to 2014. Among doctoral students, mean responses went up on all eight items between 2008 and 2011, and then down in six of eight in 2014. All changes are modest.
Internships and Career Advice (Q9b): Just under half of all students were satisfied with availability and quality of internships and applied training in their field, with satisfaction higher among master’s students (53 and 55% for the two items among master’s students, but only 38% and 39% of doctoral students were satisfied). Fewer than half overall were satisfied with career advice, with doctoral students slightly happier about advice regarding academic jobs and master’s students substantially happier with advice regarding non-academic jobs.

Satisfaction was substantially higher in 2011 than in 2008 – on all four items for both doctoral and master’s students. However, between 2011 and 2014 master’s and doctoral students shifted in opposite directions – master’s responses remained virtually identical, while doctoral students’ responses declined substantially on all four items. For doctoral students, the largest decrease was on quality of internships or applied training, which dropped from 53% to 39%. For master’s students, changes in satisfaction only changed by about a percent or stayed the same. These particular results are perhaps best explored at the program level, which is possible from the program-specific toplines provided to department chairs and graduate program directors.

11 The finding regarding internships is likely another example of respondents using the middle option of “neutral” as the equivalent of “not applicable.” Only a small minority of doctoral students were actually dissatisfied with internships. This may also be the case with master’s students’ responses related to academic jobs and doctoral students’ related to non-academic jobs.
Further Education (Q9c): Only a small minority of UAlbany graduate students planned to pursue another degree immediately after completing their work here. Not surprisingly that number was higher for master’s students than doctoral students, although the numbers converged somewhat from 2008 to 2014. There was a large drop among master’s students and a slight increase among doctoral students in 2011. In 2014, there was a decrease among doctoral students while master’s students stayed the same.

Future Educational Plans: Type of Degree (Q9d): Of those respondents who planned to attend further degree or certificate programs, the plans of doctoral students and master’s students were very different. For doctoral students, the two most popular options were another doctoral or “other” category. For master’s students, nearly two thirds reported plans to proceed towards a doctoral-level degree, with certificates being the next most common response.

Compared to the 2008 responses, the largest change for doctoral students in 2011 was a 14% increase in the percentages planning postdoctoral work. Among master’s students, the biggest
changes were an 8% increase in the percentage planning to continue toward a doctoral degree, and an 8% drop in the percentage planning on working towards a professional master’s degree.

Compared to 2011 responses, the largest change for doctoral students was a 14% increase in the percentages planning another doctoral degree. Among master’s students, the largest changes were a 9% increase in the percentage planning to obtain another professional master’s degree and a 9% decrease in those planning to pursue a law degree.
Future Educational Plans: Field of Study (Q9e): For master’s students, the top three fields for future study were education, science and engineering, and social sciences (compared to 2008 when the top three were public affairs, humanities, and education and 2011 when they were social sciences, humanities and health care). For doctoral students, the top three were science and engineering, education and public health (compared to 2008 when the top three were sciences, social sciences and education and 2011 when they were sciences, education and health care).
Primary Post-graduation Plan or Activity (Q9f): For master’s students not continuing their education, the top post-graduation plans were for non-research jobs in the private sector, jobs in the not-for-profit sector, non-research jobs in the government, and academic jobs with teaching as the primary focus, nearly identical to the 2008 and 2011 numbers.

For doctoral respondents, the top plans were academic jobs with teaching as the primary focus, academic jobs with equal focus on teaching and research, postdoctoral fellowships, and academic jobs with research as the primary focus, again, nearly identical to the responses from 2008 and 2011.

12 It seems likely that master’s students citing academic jobs involving teaching are thinking of K-12 education rather than university-level teaching. We will make the wording clearer in the next administration of this survey.
Fields of Employment (Q9g): The top free fields of post-graduation employment for master’s students were general private sector, general not-for-profit and higher education faculty (as compared to education, business and counseling in 2008 and education, social work and business in 2011). For doctoral students, academia dwarfed all other fields at around 60%; research followed at around 25%, nearly identical to the 2008 and 2011 numbers. However, doctoral students’ employment in research increased almost 10% from 2011 to 2014.
Salary Ranges of Post-graduation Jobs (Q9h): When survey respondents who already have their post-graduation employment lined up were asked what their salary was going to be, the majority of respondents (23%) overall, master’s students (23%), doctoral students (21%) stated their salary would be between $50,000 and $60,000 a year. Looking at the low and high ends of the scale, 16% of master’s students and 14% of doctoral students expected to be earning below $30,000 a year (which was the same in 2011 and compared to 4% of master’s graduates and 3% of doctoral graduates in 2008). On the high end of the scale, 12% of master’s graduates and 35% of doctoral graduates expected to be earning over $70,000 a year (compared to 15% for master’s graduates and 22% of doctoral graduates in 2011 and 9% of master’s graduates and about 30% of doctoral graduates in 2008).
IV. Looking Ahead.

This survey was conducted in Spring 2014, as the third iteration of a survey first conducted in 2008 and then repeated in 2011 in recognition of the fact that we had not previously conducted a comprehensive assessment survey of UAlbany’s graduate students. The larger-than-expected response in both prior years enabled us to share program-level survey results with most of UAlbany’s department chairs and graduate program directors; this will be repeated for 2014 even with the somewhat smaller overall response rate. The success of this assessment project has made it a regular part of UAlbany’s Assessment Program, with planned re-administration every third year, with the next planned administration in the Spring of 2017.
### Appendix A: Respondent and Population Demographic Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Respondent Demographics</th>
<th>Population Demographics</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>2441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian, non-Hispanic</td>
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<td>3.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Resident Alien</td>
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<td>19.3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race and ethnicity unknown</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic</td>
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<td>.1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two or more races, non-Hispanic</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
<td>62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1390</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>3970</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>928</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>2401</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>33.0</td>
<td>1559</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1390</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>3970</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>2358</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
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<td>38.5</td>
<td>1484</td>
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<td>36.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Certificates/Other</td>
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<td>3.3</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1390</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>3923</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College of Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>1096</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Public Health</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Education</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>858</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Business</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Criminal Justice</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>412</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3.1</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Computing &amp; Information</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1390</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>3970</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Demographics</th>
<th>Average or Percent</th>
<th>Average or Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or fewer credits</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 or more credits</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 or more credits</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>