

## Executive Summary of the Spring 2006 Student Opinion Survey Results

**Survey Results:** This *Executive Summary* of the SUNY Student Opinion Survey Results focus primarily on the most recent survey administration which occurred in spring 2006. Selected results from previous survey administrations are included below to provide a longitudinal context, as appropriate. Those wishing additional information about this survey program or the results should contact Joel Bloom, Associate Director for Survey Research, at [jbloom@uamail.albany.edu](mailto:jbloom@uamail.albany.edu)

### UAlbany's Improvement between 2003 and 2006:

- It is particularly notable that survey items that measure general student satisfaction show substantial improvement:
  - “How satisfied are you with this college in general?” – 3.82, up from 3.59 in 2003, an increase of 0.23 or 6%.<sup>\*</sup>
  - “If you could start over, would you choose to attend this college again?” – 3.75, up from 3.46 in 2003, an increase of 0.29 or 7%.
- The top five areas showing the greatest student satisfaction improvement between 2003 and 2006 were also the subject of considerable campus attention the preceding year and a half, although causality cannot be inferred from these results:
  - “Recreation/Intramural Programs” – 3.68, up from 3.16 in 2003, an increase of 0.52 or 13%.
  - “Parking Facilities” – 2.35, up from 1.91 in 2003, an increase of 0.44 or 11%.
  - “Classroom Facilities” – 3.73, up from 3.31 in 2003, an increase of 0.42 or 11%.
  - “Residence Hall Services and Programs” – 3.14, up from 2.76 in 2003, an increase of 0.38 or 10%.
  - “College Bookstore” – 3.48, up from 3.14 in 2003, an increase of 0.34 or 9%.

### *Summary of 2006 SOS Results:*

- Of 73 items asked in both 2003 and 2006, UAlbany's mean rating improved on 58, or 79% of items.
- UAlbany evaluations on all 73 survey questions asked in both years improved by an average of 0.21, equivalent to a 5% increase.
  - Other SUNY University Centers improved by an average of 0.15 (equivalent to a 4% increase).

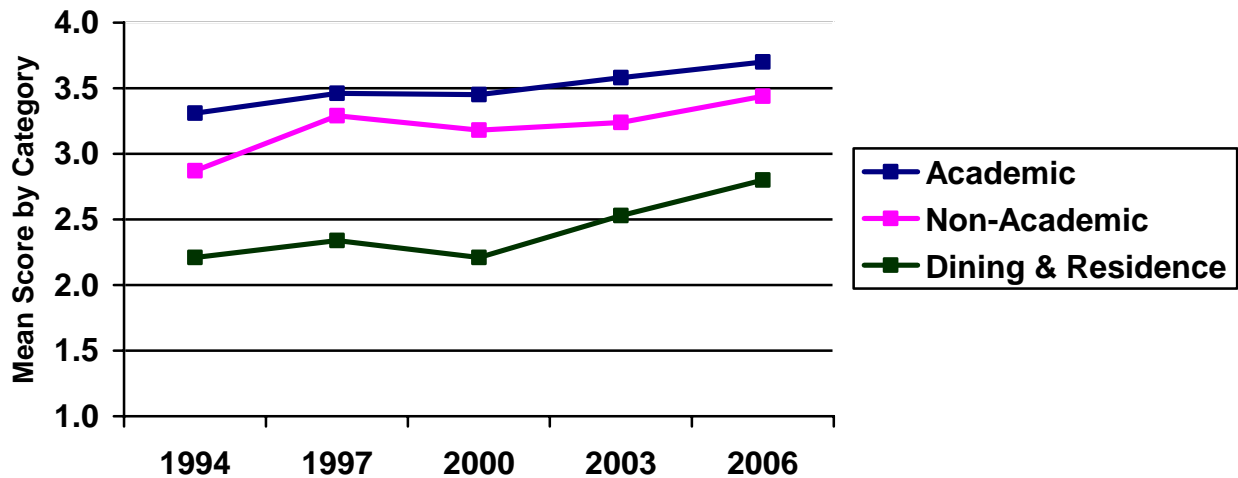
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<sup>\*</sup> Percent changes are calculated based on the possible responses to the survey questions between 1 and 5, or an actual range of four points. Thus in this case the calculation is  $(0.23/4) = 0.0575$ , or 6%.

The chart below shows a clear overall trend of steadily improving SOS evaluations as measured by scales that show average item ratings on academic programs, non-academic programs, and residential and dining services.

In summary, UAlbany has maintained consistent and considerable improvement in the past two SOS administrations, both as measured against our own past performance and against that of the other SUNY University Centers.

**UAlbany Improvement in SOS Scores, 1994-2006**



Overall College Impressions:

- When comparing academic expectations to their experience, a large majority (71 percent) of respondents indicated that Albany met their academic expectations, and another 13 percent indicated that their expectations were exceeded. Only 15% responded that UAlbany had not met their academic expectations.
- More than two thirds of respondents (68 percent) indicated that they would definitely or probably choose Albany again if starting over, up from 57 percent in the 2003 survey and 56 percent in the 2000 survey. Another 17 percent were uncertain, while only 16 percent definitely or probably would not choose Albany again, down from 23 percent in 2003 and 25 percent in 2000.
- Only 3 percent of respondents gauged Albany’s overall quality of education as low or very low, while a majority (54 percent, up from 46 percent in 2003) rated the overall quality of education very high or high, and the remaining 43 percent rated it as average (down from 48 percent in the 2003 survey).
- As in the past, Albany was the first college choice of nearly half of respondents, or 45 percent. Another 31% indicated that UAlbany was their second choice, for a total of 77 percent of UAlbany students who arrived here as either their first or second choice school. Only 23 percent of students surveyed initially ranked UAlbany as their third choice or lower.

Student Satisfaction with Academic Services, Facilities, and Environment:

- Academic facilities: Majorities of respondents continue to be satisfied or very satisfied with all academic facilities at the University at Albany, with the lone exception of course-related laboratories. The top-ranked facilities include library resources (83%), library facilities (81%), study areas (71%), and various aspects of campus computing facilities and services (74%-78%).
- Instruction: Student similarly shows high levels of satisfaction with various components of instruction at the University, with majorities of respondents reporting satisfaction with regard to all items except availability of general education courses. 76 percent of respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with “this college in general”; two thirds of respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the out-of-class availability of instructors and faculty respect for students. Sixty one percent of respondents were satisfied with quality of instruction and 58% were satisfied with class size. Finally, 55 percent were satisfied with course availability within their major.
- Academic Services: More than three quarters of students who participated in the survey reported being satisfied or very satisfied with library services; another 61 percent were satisfied with computer support services. Other services were rated below the fifty percent mark. Almost half (48%) of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with centralized academic advisement services, another 26 percent neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Further analysis shows that lower division students, those who have been exposed to the advisement learning outcomes assessment program instituted in ASC/US, rated these services higher (62% satisfied or very satisfied) than upper division students (40%). This finding is also consistent with other research recently conducted by ASC/US and Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness. Satisfaction was lowest for academic advising within the major (43%), college tutoring services (41%, n=222) and availability of internships (37%; n=239). The last two of these figures are particularly interesting, since only students who had actually used the services were asked to evaluate them.

#### Frequency of Academic Experiences:

- In this section of the survey, students were asked how frequently they have had a variety of academic experiences, using the following range: *never, rarely, sometimes, frequently or very frequently*. These items are perhaps best evaluated against campus expectations. For example, while it is clearly encouraging that 74 percent of students reported working hard to meet an instructor’s expectations either frequently or very frequently, or that 65 percent have frequently or very frequently been required to think critically, it is less clear what to make of a figure like the 55 percent who report frequently or very frequently having been intellectually stimulated by the material covered in class, or the similar 51 percent who have been satisfied with their academic experiences at UAlbany, which does not appear to be a strong endorsement. In both of those cases, however, fewer than ten percent reported having had the positive experience rarely or never. In general, the trend on these items is in a positive direction since previous surveys.
- Several new pedagogically-related questions were added to the 2003 and 2006 surveys (e.g., “worked with other students on class assignments,” “received feedback...from instructors,” “...made judgments in class about the value of information, arguments, or

methods”). In some cases, these items show areas of academic challenge for UAlbany (and other SUNY schools). Again, however, student responses to these items are best evaluated by the faculty leadership responsible for overseeing the instructional experience.

#### Satisfaction with Non-Academic College Services, Facilities, and Environment:

- **Campus Environment.** Majorities of students reported being satisfied with twelve of the fourteen areas related to the campus environment; satisfaction levels surpassed 60 percent on eight of those items. The highest levels of satisfaction were reported with regard to freedom from harassment (75%), campus acceptance of individual differences (69%), opportunities for involvement in campus clubs/activities (65%), respect for students by non-teaching staff (65%), campus openness to opinions of others (62%), opportunities for community service (61%), racial harmony (60%) and students’ social networks (60%). The lowest levels of satisfaction were related to student input in college policies/plans (28%) and student government (27%).
- **Non-Academic Facilities:** Students who participated in the survey reported strong levels of satisfaction with regard to three types of non-academic facilities: campus center/student union (64% satisfied or very satisfied), athletic and recreational facilities (61%) and the college bookstore (61%). Satisfaction was lower with the condition of buildings and grounds (49%), the condition of residence halls (33%) and parking facilities (18%).
- **Non-Academic Services:** Student satisfaction with non-academic services was not nearly as high as it was for the campus environment and facilities, with only five of eighteen items reaching the 50 percent level in satisfaction. This section of the survey points to areas of substantial student dissatisfaction, including areas that the University administration is currently making efforts to address.
- **Low-Satisfaction Items – Improvement Over Time:** As with past surveys, UAlbany received some of its lowest student satisfaction ratings for parking facilities (18%), campus food services (19%), the purposes for which student activity fees are used (25%) and the general condition of residence hall facilities (33%). However, it should be underscored that these items have exhibited meaningful shifts from the very dissatisfied or dissatisfied to satisfied or very satisfied categories.

#### Agreement/Disagreement with Various College Aspects:

- This portion of the survey contains questions in which students were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with statements on a wide variety of topics, many addressed in other formats elsewhere in the survey. Large majorities of students agreed that they have developed an openness to opinions other than their own (76%) and that UAlbany is a good value given the cost (69%). Smaller majorities agreed that academic advising is available when they need it (56%), that acts of racial prejudice seldom appear on campus (52%) and that UAlbany has helped them meet the goals they came here to achieve (50%). Also on the positive side, only 33 percent agreed that it has been difficult to finance their education. The finding that more than half of respondents (54 percent, up from 49 percent in 2003) disagreed that they had developed a mentoring relationship with a faculty/staff member is interesting considering that our faculty receive high satisfaction ratings for their out-of-class availability. The importance of student faculty interaction outside of class is widely

recognized in the higher education research community. As expected, juniors and seniors reported more agreement with the statement that they have formed mentoring relationships with faculty or staff. However, 50 percent of senior respondents (70 out of 139) still disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had developed a mentoring relationship with a faculty/staff member, and only 28 percent (39 out of 139) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

#### Albany Contribution to Educational Outcomes:

- Intellectual Outcomes: Large majorities of respondents reported that Albany contributed at least to a moderate degree to educational outcomes related to intellectual growth and development. These include: acquiring information, ideas and concepts (92%); acquiring skills needed for further academic study (86%); acquiring analytical skills (85%); acquiring knowledge and skills for intellectual growth throughout life (84%); and acquiring knowledge and skills needed for a career (80%). All of these figures also represent increases from the 2003 survey. As expected, juniors and seniors reported larger gains in the growth areas than did lower division students. Students also assessed highly Albany's contribution to more concrete outcomes such as writing or speaking clearly and effectively (72% and 65% respectively) – both of which figures also increased substantially since 2003; and using computers and information technology (64%).
- Personal Outcomes: Students were also asked to rate UAlbany's contribution to their abilities in areas related to personal growth. These included: developing self-understanding (74%); understanding and appreciating ethnic/cultural diversity and other individual differences (70%); understanding political and social issues (69%); working with others (69%); understanding one's rights, responsibilities, and privileges as a citizen (63%); acquiring knowledge and skills to maximize health and well-being (61%); or developing leadership skills (59%).

#### UAlbany's Progress as Compared with the Other Three SUNY University Centers.

In addition to showing considerable improvement as measured against our own student evaluations in previous surveys, the 2006 Student Opinion Survey at the University at Albany shows important progress as compared to the other three SUNY University Centers.

Some figures that stand out from the SOS analysis include:

- Between 2003 and 2006, UAlbany's median comparative rank among SUNY University Centers improved from 4<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup>.
  - UAlbany ranked 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> on 56% of survey items, up from only 29% in 2003.
- Of the 73 survey items that appeared in both years, UAlbany's comparative rank improved in 26 and declined in only 6.

Table 1: Changes in UAlbany SOS Ratings, 1994-2006

**The SUNY Student Opinion Survey, The University at Albany: A 12-Year Retrospective**

Scales: 1 = very dissatisfied, high disagreement, very infrequently to 5 = very satisfied, high agreement, very frequently

<b>(From largest changes to smallest)</b>	<b>UAlbany Mean Rating</b>					<b>2006 Change from 2003</b>	<b>2006 Change from 2000</b>
	<b>1994</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2006</b>		
Recreational & intramural programs	3.41	3.40	3.30	3.16	3.68	<b>0.52</b>	<b>0.38</b>
Parking facilities	2.02	2.36	2.05	1.91	2.35	<b>0.44</b>	<b>0.30</b>
Classroom facilities	3.02	3.27	3.05	3.31	3.73	<b>0.42</b>	<b>0.68</b>
Residence hall services and programs	2.63	2.62	2.54	2.76	3.14	<b>0.38</b>	<b>0.60</b>
Campus bookstore	3.01	3.54	3.25	3.14	3.48	<b>0.34</b>	<b>0.23</b>
Would you choose this college again	3.24	3.51	3.40	3.46	3.75	<b>0.29</b>	<b>0.35</b>
Freedom from harassment on campus	3.20	3.62	3.75	3.62	3.91	<b>0.29</b>	<b>0.16</b>
Purposes for which student activity fees are used	2.26	2.50	2.36	2.51	2.78	<b>0.27</b>	<b>0.42</b>
Campus help finding part-time jobs	2.40	2.64	2.59	2.34	2.59	<b>0.25</b>	<b>0.00</b>
College social activities	2.87	3.19	3.05	3.13	3.37	<b>0.24</b>	<b>0.32</b>
Satisfaction with this college in general	3.37	3.61	3.51	3.59	3.82	<b>0.23</b>	<b>0.31</b>
Clarity of residence hall rules & policies	3.23	3.29	3.32	3.25	3.48	<b>0.23</b>	<b>0.16</b>
General condition of buildings/grounds	2.87	3.12	2.99	3.10	3.32	<b>0.22</b>	<b>0.33</b>
Class size relative to type of course	3.06	3.19	3.22	3.30	3.51	<b>0.21</b>	<b>0.29</b>
Faculty respect for students	3.33	3.48	3.57	3.48	3.69	<b>0.21</b>	<b>0.12</b>
Racial harmony at this college	2.27	3.05	3.26	3.38	3.57	<b>0.19</b>	<b>0.31</b>
Opportunities for community service	3.47	3.63	3.36	3.44	3.63	<b>0.19</b>	<b>0.27</b>
Student union/campus center	3.22	3.59	3.43	3.48	3.64	<b>0.16</b>	<b>0.21</b>
Student voice in college policies	2.64	3.02	2.76	2.78	2.94	<b>0.16</b>	<b>0.18</b>
Campus tutoring services	3.16	3.32	3.25	3.21	3.37	<b>0.16</b>	<b>0.12</b>
Campus food services	1.78	2.05	1.87	2.31	2.46	<b>0.15</b>	<b>0.59</b>
Student government	2.69	3.12	2.84	2.81	2.96	<b>0.15</b>	<b>0.12</b>
Cultural arts programs (art/music/theater)	3.25	3.28	3.29	3.32	3.46	<b>0.14</b>	<b>0.17</b>
New student orientation services	3.12	3.47	3.28	3.41	3.48	<b>0.07</b>	<b>0.20</b>
Your sense of belonging on this campus	2.97	3.25	3.12	3.20	3.26	<b>0.06</b>	<b>0.14</b>
Personal security/safety on this campus	2.83		3.25	3.46	3.44	<b>-0.02</b>	<b>0.19</b>
Billing and payment procedures	3.27	3.39	3.41	3.28	3.26	<b>-0.02</b>	<b>-0.15</b>
Quality of instruction	3.62	3.51	3.48	3.65	3.60	<b>-0.05</b>	<b>0.12</b>
Study areas	3.24	3.46	3.59	3.93	3.80	<b>-0.13</b>	<b>0.21</b>
It's been difficult to finance my college education (inverse scale)	2.90	3.13	2.91	3.11	2.94	<b>-0.17</b>	<b>0.03</b>
Library facilities	3.77	3.77	3.97	4.30	4.01	<b>-0.29</b>	<b>0.04</b>
<b>Average change:</b>						<b>0.16</b>	<b>0.23</b>
<b>Median change:</b>						<b>0.19</b>	<b>0.21</b>