ALBANY GRADUATES FROM FIVE FIELDS OF STUDY: A 1987 DESCRIPTION AND ASSESSMENT OF THE GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE ALUMNI IN BUSINESS, CHEMISTRY, ENGLISH, HISTORY & SOCIAL WELFARE

ASSESSMENT REPORT NO. 8

February 1989

Office of Institutional Research
Administration 241
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
Albany, New York 12222
518/442-5410

This study is part of an ongoing series of outcomes assessment efforts by the University. Those who wish additional information are invited to contact J. Fredericks Volkwein, Director of Institutional Research.

J. Fredericks Volkwein
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

As a part of the University's outcomes assessment research, we constructed a survey instrument in 1987 and sent it to 3300 Albany Alumni who had graduated with majors in three Arts and Sciences Departments (Chemistry, English, and History) and in two professional schools (Business and Social Welfare). Targeted for study were those who had received their degrees 5 years, 10 years, and 15 years earlier. The responses reached a level of about 40%, in each of the five fields of study.

Key Findings

- We find significant differences by major field of study in alumni outcomes, such as subsequent degrees earned, income levels, and career satisfaction.

- Over half of the Albany degree recipients had earned graduate degrees. Accounting majors are the least likely to possess graduate degrees and Chemistry majors are the most likely. The highest proportion of Alumni with doctorates is in Chemistry, and the highest proportion of those with terminal masters degrees is in Social Welfare.

- Most alumni start out living in New York State and only gradually leave the State with the passage of time. Social Welfare Alumni are the most New York State (and Capital District) oriented and Chemistry Alumni are the least.

- While Alumni report great diversity in their occupations, a significant number in every field report careers in business and management. A growing number of recent graduates are employed in computing and information systems.

- Those who earn degrees in Accounting, Business, Chemistry, and Social Welfare are generally more likely to be employed in fields directly connected to their training. Undergraduate English majors are the least likely to have careers related to their major.

- Graduates from the School of Business in general, and Accounting in particular, have the highest percentages of respondents earning over $50,000.

- Graduates from most departments report high levels of satisfaction with the extrinsic and intrinsic rewards of their careers. The most highly paid (Accounting and Business) are the most extrinsically satisfied, the lowest paid (Social Welfare) are the most intrinsically satisfied.

- Recent Alumni (1980s) and those in Chemistry are the most satisfied with their career choices. Those in English are the least satisfied.
ALBANY GRADUATES FROM FIVE FIELDS OF STUDY: A 1987 DESCRIPTION AND ASSESSMENT OF THE GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE ALUMNI IN BUSINESS, CHEMISTRY, ENGLISH, HISTORY & SOCIAL WELFARE

Introduction

In 1987, the Office of Institutional Research conducted a survey of Albany Alumni in five academic areas as a part of the University's outcomes assessment program. The survey instrument included a wide array of questions seeking information about post-Albany educational and occupational experiences and asking alumni to evaluate the adequacy of their Albany education, and the extent of its impact on their lives.

This report summarizes the responses we received from over 1300 (or 40%) of the group contacted. Appendix A describes the methodology for this study. The department specific responses constitute a second Appendix and are being shared directly with each Department and School.

Post-Albany Educational Experiences

In the survey, we asked Alumni to indicate the degrees they earned after graduating from Albany, and to tell us whether their subsequent educational experiences were more or less difficult than Albany, or about the same.

About half of our bachelors degree recipients in these fields had earned a masters, doctoral, or equivalent degree at the time of the survey. Another 5% had engaged in graduate study without yet completing a degree.

We were especially interested in the alumni who graduated in the 1970s since they had the best opportunity to complete formal graduate training. The pie chart in Figure 1 shows that Accounting majors are the least likely to possess a graduate degree, whereas Chemistry majors are the most likely. The highest proportion of doctoral degree holders is in Chemistry, while the highest proportion of alumni possessing a terminal masters degree is in Social Welfare.

54% of our alumni said that their graduate and professional work was either less difficult or about the same as their undergraduate study at Albany. 46% reported that graduate school was more demanding.
Where Alumni Live

We asked alumni to indicate their places of employment and residence. Figure 2 shows the percentages of our alumni respondents who live in the Capital District, in New York State, and outside New York. Graduate degree holders are much more likely to be living and working in the Albany area than bachelors degree recipients. This may be due to the greater numbers of graduate students who complete degrees here while holding down a full-time job. The percentages of alumni employed in the Capital District across three time periods, are reasonably similar for the Chemistry, Business, History, and English majors. Only 15% to 29% of these graduates start or continue their employment careers in the Albany area. For Social Welfare, 40% to 50% of the school's alumni are employed in the Capital District.

FIGURE 2

Geographic Mobility of Albany Alumni:
Percent of Undergraduate and Graduate Degree Holders
Employed in the Capital District, New York State, and Outside N.Y.S.
Alumni Occupations

As expected, our alumni report great diversity in their occupations and careers. In general, those who earn graduate degrees and those who, as undergraduates, majored in Business, Accounting, Chemistry, and Social Welfare are the most likely to be employed in an occupation which is related to their training. Table 1 shows a profile of the alumni respondents by type of employer and occupation. Most of our respondents are employed by private profit making companies except those in Social Welfare and graduate degree holders in English and History.

The middle and right hand columns in Table 1 list the percent of respondents in those occupational fields which were judged to be primary (directly related to the major field) and secondary (indirectly connected to their field of study). 62% of those with a BS in Accounting are employed in fields related to business and accounting, 6% are in Law, and 15% in Computing. Bachelors recipients in Business Administration are even more likely to be employed in Business occupations (83%), followed by computing (7%) and law (8%). Business and computing also are the most common fields for those with MBA and MS degrees (62% and 19%). In fact, one of every four recent graduates in all fields combined report employment in the field of computing or information systems.

Of those with Bachelors degrees in Chemistry, 69% report occupations in science and medicine and 12% in Business. Those with graduate degrees in Chemistry are employed in science and medicine (56%), business (12%), teaching (12%), or computing (12%). 20% of those who have been out of school for 10 years or more gravitate into the business world.

Looking at the alumni respondents in English, we see a more diverse pattern. Three in ten who majored in English as undergraduates are employed in occupations related to writing, communications, fine arts/drama, education, and librarianship. About the same number (31%) are in business and management occupations; 14% are in the legal profession. Those with graduate degrees in English are more likely to find employment in fields related to their training (49%). Among recent graduates in English, well over half report employment in the fields of writing, communications, education, and librarianship. The next most frequent occupations are business (16%) and law (3%).
For the historians, almost half are in the fields of government, law, education, and librarianship. Approximately one-third of those with undergraduate degrees and 40% of those with graduate degrees are employed in the business world.

The vast majority of Social Welfare alumni are employed in social services and mental health occupations. 93% of MSW recipients and 70% of undergraduate majors report occupations directly related to their educational training. About 18% of the undergraduate alumni are pursuing careers in the business world.

Alumni Income and Career Satisfaction

We ask alumni to indicate their current annual incomes in one of six ranges. The income graph (Figure 4) shows that graduates from the School of Business in general, and Accounting in particular, have the highest percentages earning over $35,000 and $50,000. In descending order of income, School of Business alumni are followed by those in Chemistry, History, English, and Social Welfare, respectively. The School of Social Welfare had no alumni respondents earning over $50,000 in 1987.

FIGURE 4

ALBANY ALUMNI STUDY 1987

Percent Earning Over $35,000 and $50,000

[Diagram showing percentage of alumni in each field earning over $35,000 and $50,000]
The majority of each alumni group except Social Welfare are at least moderately satisfied with the extrinsic rewards of their chosen careers, demonstrated by the scale score of 3.0 or above. Comparing all six majors, alumni in Accounting and Business have the highest mean score on extrinsic satisfaction, followed by alumni of Chemistry, English, History, and Social Welfare in that order. The contrasting results in Business and Social Welfare are not too surprising given the income findings in Figure 4 above. For Business and Accounting majors, their extrinsic satisfaction outweighs intrinsic. All the other alumni groups are more satisfied with their career in terms of its intrinsic rewards.

All alumni groups on average appear to be at least moderately satisfied also with the intrinsic rewards of their careers, (3.0 or above). Chemistry Alumni have the highest average intrinsic satisfaction score, closely followed by Social Welfare, History, English, and Business.

Alumni Assessment of their Experiences

In the survey, we asked alumni, "If you had it to do over again, would you select the same major? Would you pursue the same career?" Figure 6 shows the responses for alumni in the five fields to these questions about their majors and their careers. Within each major, we found noticeable differences between alumni who graduated in more recent years and those who graduated in earlier years, so they are shown separately. The recent 1980s alumni generally responded more favorably to both questions than the 1970s groups, especially in English, History, and Social Welfare. When questioned about their major at Albany, less than half of the earlier English, History, and Social Welfare Alumni would be likely to select the same major again. However, recent alumni in these fields are considerably more favorable in their responses, and better than 2 out of 3 would pick English, History, or Social Welfare again. Chemistry has the most alumni who would again choose the same major and same career, followed by those from the School of Business.
**FIGURE 7**

**Alumni Ratings:**
**Twelve Most Important Abilities / Skills**

Percent indicating 4 or 5 on a scale where
1 = not important
3 = moderately important
5 = essential

- Speak Effectively: 86.99%
- Function Independently: 82.98%
- Listen Effectively: 74.97%
- Think Logically: 70.98%
- Acquire New Knowledge: 77.94%
- Choose Among Alternatives: 77.92%
- Cope with Conflict: 84.95%
- Formulate Ideas and Solutions: 57.95%
- Be Effective Team Member: 71.93%
- Self-understanding: 65.90%
- Write Effectively: 70.85%
- Lead and Supervise: 62.81%

---

Figure 7 shows that there are twelve abilities and skills which alumni overwhelmingly and almost unanimously rated as important to their "current endeavors." 85% or more of alumni consider speaking effectively, functioning independently, listening effectively, thinking logically, acquiring new knowledge, and choosing among alternatives to be highly important or essential in their current lives and careers.

Between 72% and 82% of the respondents circled 4 or 5 regarding the current importance of coping with conflict, formulating ideas and solutions, being an effective team member, possessing self-understanding, writing effectively, and leading and supervising others. The numbers on the bars show the ranges of the subgroup means. Each of these 12 skills had at least one subgroup exceed 80% in the proportion of 4s and 5s awarded for its importance, and ten of the 12 had several alumni groups over the 90% level. Eight of twelve had no subcategory of alumni with less than 70% rating it highly important. None of these skills had less than a 57% importance rating by any group of alumni. This finding should be considered in faculty discussions about the content of the curriculum and the nature of course requirements and structured learning experiences for students.
Turning to the pie charts in Figures 8 and 9, we see the extent to which the alumni believe that they enhanced these 12 abilities at Albany. Figure 8 suggests that the undergraduate program enhances these abilities at least moderately, with English, History, and Social Welfare majors experiencing the greatest impact. But the data from undergraduate alumni clearly suggest that the Albany experience enhanced their growth less than the importance given to these 12 abilities in subsequent years.

Figure 9 shows that alumni of graduate programs generally report greater skill enhancement at Albany than do alumni of the same undergraduate fields. This seems especially true in Chemistry, English and Social Welfare. More than half of the former graduate students in English and Social Welfare report that the Albany experience greatly enhanced these important skills, and none of the masters and doctoral Chemistry respondents rated their growth as little or none.

Comparing Figures 7, 8, and 9 suggests that there is more alumni congruence about the career importance of these skills than there is about the Albany contribution. Indeed, the perceived extent of Albany's contribution varies both by academic field and by the particular ability or skill. For example, 65% to 66% of respondents think that their abilities of logical thinking and independent functioning have been enhanced at Albany more than moderately, and over half of them think that the Albany experience greatly enhanced their self-understanding and ability to acquire new skill and knowledge on their own. But only four in ten respondents give a high rating to Albany's impact on their speaking effectiveness, and only 27% indicate that Albany greatly enhanced their ability to lead and supervise.

In addition, alumni from these diverse fields report widely different results about their Albany education. Table 2 is based on the data in Figures 7, 8, & 9, and shows the alumni groups which gave their Albany education the highest and the lowest ratings for each ability and skill. The greatest number of high ratings are given by Social Welfare alumni followed by History. This may result in part from the effectiveness of these particular programs, but also in part from the particular items we selected for the survey. The next alumni survey will include an even larger and more diverse set of abilities and skills for respondents.
At any rate, there is high alumni agreement about the importance of twelve abilities and skills. And different academic majors have widely different impacts on the skill attainment of their students. This is important information for both faculty and students.

The Alumni "Report Card"

We asked alumni to grade various aspects of their Albany experience on an A through F scale. We then converted the results of this "Report Card" into a Grade Point Average. Figure 10 shows the grades which each group of alumni give these undergraduate experiences, with the arrows representing the direction of change, if any, from the graduates of the 1970s to those of the 1980s.

Our academic programs earn GPAs generally between 2.9 and 3.3 for quality of instruction, preparation for graduate school, and the overall quality of student life. On these three measures, there are few significant differences by academic major. The most improved grades occur in Social Welfare which had a new program in the 1970s.

Albany receives mixed reviews in the other areas. The lowest grades are given in academic advising, although large improvements occurred in the Schools of Business and Social Welfare during the 1980s. Faculty availability and interest in student development receive better grades than advisement, especially from English, Chemistry, and recent Social Welfare Alumni. As one might expect, the professional programs in the Schools of Business and Social Welfare receive higher career preparation grades than do English, and History.

We also want to know if alumni views about Albany change over time, so we ask them to indicate if their levels of satisfaction with their education remained about the same, or increased, or decreased since graduation. Two out of three alumni indicate that their assessments of Albany over the years have remained about the same; and among the other respondents, those who became more satisfied slightly outweigh those who became less. There are no dramatic differences among the various alumni populations in their answer to this question.
FIGURE 10 (Continued)

Grades Which Albany Alumni Give Their Undergraduate Experiences
GPAs Given by Six Groups of Majors

Faculty Availability

1.0  2.0  3.0  4.0
   |   |   |   |
   ACCT  ENG
   BUS ADM
   SSW
   HIS
   CHEM

Faculty Interest in Student Development

1.0  2.0  3.0  4.0
   |   |   |   |
   ACCT  ENG
   BUS ADM
   SSW
   HIS
   CHEM

Preparation For Graduate School

1.0  2.0  3.0  4.0
   |   |   |   |
   ACCT
   BUS ADM
   SSW
   ENG
   CHEM
   HIS

Preparation For Career

1.0  2.0  3.0  4.0
   |   |   |   |
   BUS ADM
   ACCT
   ENG
   SSW
   HIS
   CHEM

[The arrows indicate the direction of change from the 1970s to the 1980s respondents.]
APPENDIX A

METHODOLOGY FOR THIS STUDY

This is the fourth time in the decade of the 1980s that we have sent an outcomes questionnaire to selected Albany graduates. The current study duplicates some of the methodology and information from the earlier Albany efforts, but is different in several major respects. First, this study borrows a number of questions from a survey instrument used by a national consortia of alumni researchers. Second, the previous studies sought responses from recent graduates who had received the bachelors degree within a year or two. This time we include both graduate and undergraduate degree recipients who have been away from Albany long enough to complete their formal education and enter a career (5 to 15 years). Third, the previous efforts did not have a large enough number of respondents to carry out meaningful analysis at the department level. This time we wanted to compare the differential responses of those from widely different academic fields, and to provide more helpful information to the faculty about their former students.

The population consisted of those who received a graduate or undergraduate degree from the University at Albany in three arts and sciences departments and two professional schools:

- Chemistry Department
- English Department
- History Department
- School of Business
- School of Social Welfare

We sent a questionnaire in 1987 to each of those who received degrees in these fields five years earlier, ten years earlier, and fifteen years earlier. In addition, we sampled the graduates in the intervening years in chemistry and social welfare in order to strengthen the analysis in those fields and help them prepare for upcoming external reviews. Approximately 3,800 names were obtained from the Alumni Database, yielding a total of 3,300 good addresses.

The survey questionnaire asks graduates to supply us with a variety of data about themselves, ranging from academic and educational topics to demographic and occupational information. We also ask alumni to evaluate the impact of the Albany experience on their education and careers. In addition, each of the academic departments and schools designed one page of questions which were unique to its alumni.

The questionnaire and a second mailing to nonrespondents were mailed during summer 1987. We received a response rate of about 40% in each of the five academic areas. Data analysis took place during 1987-88.