

University at Albany

Graduate Student Assessment Survey, 2011

Report on Trends and Key Findings



Assessment Report No. 29

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Key Findings of the University at Albany 2011 Graduate Student Assessment Survey

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University at Albany 2011 Graduate Student Assessment Survey

Executive Summary

Introduction.

Between March 15th and May 25th, 2011, 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. An identical survey had previously been administered in April and May of 2008. A total of 1,543 graduate students participated in the survey, representing 40% of the 3,904 matriculated graduate students at UAlbany in the Spring 2011 semester. This response rate was down slightly from 2008, when 1,652 graduate students participated in the survey, representing 44% of the 3,778 matriculated graduate students.

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 (up from 74% in 2008).
 - 79% of respondents said that their academic experiences at UAlbany had met or exceeded their expectations (up from 78%).
 - 67% of respondents said that they would definitely or probably choose UAlbany if they had to make the choice again (down from 72%).
 - 86% said that they would definitely or probably choose the same field of study (up from 84%).
 - Finally, 71% of UAlbany graduate students said that they would definitely or probably recommend UAlbany to a friend considering their program (down from 74%).
- 2) Faculty Characteristics. Both doctoral and master's students indicated high levels of 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, and satisfaction increased between 2008 and 2011, on 25 of 27 items among all graduate students and Ph.D. students, and on 23 items for master's students.
- 3) Academic Advisement and Faculty Mentoring. Results are more mixed for advisement and mentoring. Satisfaction with general advisement was lukewarm, with some important exceptions. In general, Ph.D. students were more satisfied than master's students with their programs' advisement and mentoring. Students writing a thesis or dissertation were very satisfied with their own thesis or dissertation advisors.
 - As with faculty characteristics, satisfaction increased on a large majority of items – 23 of 24 items overall and for Ph.D. students and 20 items for master's students.
- 4) Research Opportunities. UAlbany graduate students were generally satisfied with research opportunities, with Ph.D. students again showing higher levels of satisfaction than master's students. Satisfaction was lower for areas related to professional development, particularly regarding preparation to write proposals for funding.
 - Here the differences between Ph.D. students and master's students were more striking. On 18 items, 16 showed improvement overall since 2008, including 17 among Ph.D. students but only 8 items showed improvement among master's students.
- 5) Research & Teaching Appointments/Financial Aid. While most Ph.D. 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 Ph.D. students, while loans were 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 had been adequately trained or supervised. Both groups averaged 24-26 hours of paid work per week, although for Ph.D. 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, with assistantship hours increasing from 8 to 10 hours and outside work decreasing from 20 to 15 hours a week.
 - In this area, satisfaction among all graduate students and Ph.D. students increased in 12 of 13 items, while among master's students, satisfaction increased in four items and decreased in nine.
- 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 high 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.
- Overall, satisfaction with facilities, resources and services increased among all groups, with average satisfaction increasing in 22 of 26 items in these categories between 2008 and 2011.
- 7) Program/Campus Climate. This section of the survey shows some of the highest levels of satisfaction with UAlbany. Both master's and Ph.D. 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. Questions related to students' role in governance were more mixed, with Ph.D. students feeling more included than master's students.
- As in other areas, satisfaction here increased overall, in all 17 items among all graduate students, and in 15 and 14 items for Ph.D. and master's students respectively.
- 8) Campus Life/ Off-Campus Life. This section of the survey shows that Ph.D. 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. Both groups found a variety of areas to be major challenges to progressing toward their degrees – particularly work, finances, and family obligations.
- Both with regard to participation and challenges, scores improved on most survey items in this section, including 12 or 13 out of 16 items among all groups.
- 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 Ph.D. students planning on careers in academia. Among those with positions lined up, the median salary for Ph.D. 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.
- In this area, satisfaction improved in all 12 items for Ph.D. students and in 10 of 12 items for master's students. Median salaries were unchanged since 2008, but more students in both Ph.D. and master's programs were accepting jobs in the lower end of the salary scale (under \$30,000). At the upper end of the salary scale we found more master's students and fewer Ph.D. students than in 2008.

Key Findings of the University at Albany 2011 Graduate Student Assessment Survey

I. Survey Administration.

Between March 15th and May 25th, 2011, 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 Spring of 2008. In both 2008 and 2011 it was administered via e-mail invitations with links to a web survey.

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 1,543 graduate students participated in the survey, including 1,203 completed surveys and 340 partials. These numbers represent almost 40% of the 3,904 matriculated graduate students at UAlbany in the Spring 2011 semester. While this response rate is slightly lower than the response rate for the 2008 survey, it is substantially higher than those of other student surveys at UAlbany over the last few years and allows a high level of confidence in the reliability of survey estimates. As shown in Appendix B, student participant demographics are roughly similar to the population as a whole on a number of dimensions, including gender, ethnicity, degree sought, age, and number of credits.

Other groups with higher than average response rates include Asian or Pacific Islanders, non-residents, women, doctoral students, and students taking nine or more credits. Groups with lower than average response rates include Hispanics, students of unknown ethnicity, men, certificate students and students taking three or fewer credits. Response rates varied by college, from highs of 47% for the College of Arts and Science and the School of Criminal Justice to a low of 11% for the College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering.

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 have been made available to Deans, program directors and department chairs.

Survey Dates:	3/15 – 5/25 2011
Population of Matriculated Graduate Students:	3,904
Completed Surveys:	1,203
Partial Surveys:	340
Total Surveys:	1,543
Response Rate (completes):	30.8%
Response Rate (w/partial):	39.5%
Confidence Interval:	+/- 2.4% ¹

¹ Based on 95% confidence, and including completed surveys only. Questions answered by all respondents have a confidence interval as low as 1.9%. Figures for master's students only have a confidence interval as low as 2.6%; Figures for Ph.D. students only have a confidence interval as low as 2.9%

III. Survey Results. The following section summarizes results of the 2011 UAlbany Graduate Student Assessment Survey for all respondents, as well as separately for master’s and Ph.D. 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 Ph.D. students. For some items on post-graduation plans or activities, separate charts for master’s and Ph.D. students were created, as merited by especially large differences in response patterns.

For a few questions, results for both the 2008 and 2011 surveys are shown, but for most items, only 2011 results are shown, with any especially large differences highlighted in the discussion of the survey section they appear in. Results for all 2008 survey items are contained in the 2008 survey report, available on the [IRPE Assessment Report web page](#).²

The Graduate Student Assessment Survey was 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:

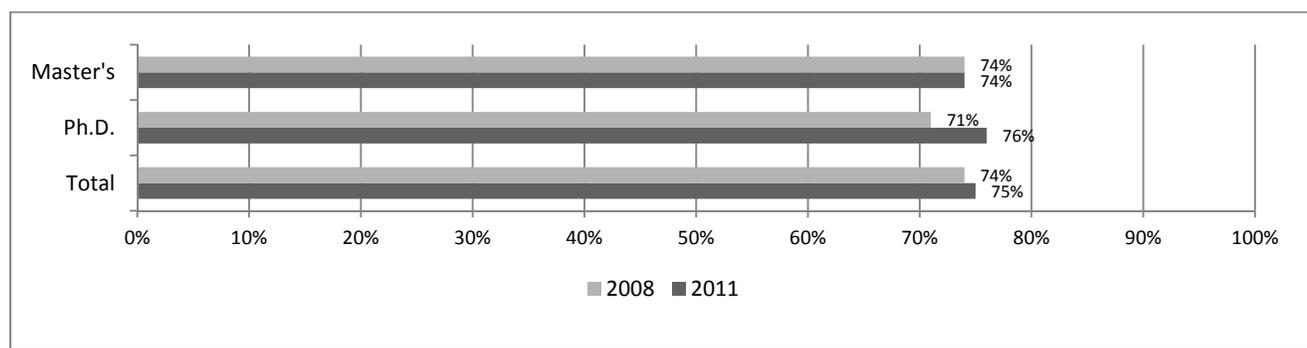
- 1) Overall satisfaction with UAlbany;
- 2) Graduate instruction and faculty characteristics;
- 3) Advisement and faculty mentoring;
- 4) Research opportunities;
- 5) Research and teaching appointments and financial aid;
- 6) Facilities, resources and services;
- 7) Program/campus climate;
- 8) Campus 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):** Around three quarters of respondents were somewhat or very satisfied with the overall quality of graduate education in their program, up slightly from 2008, especially among Ph.D. students.

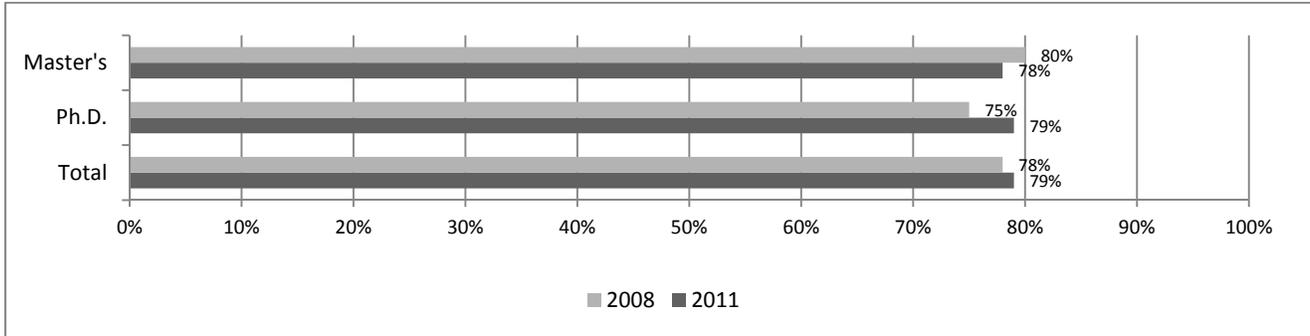
Q1: Percent satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of graduate education in their program.



² <http://www.albany.edu/ir/reports.htm>

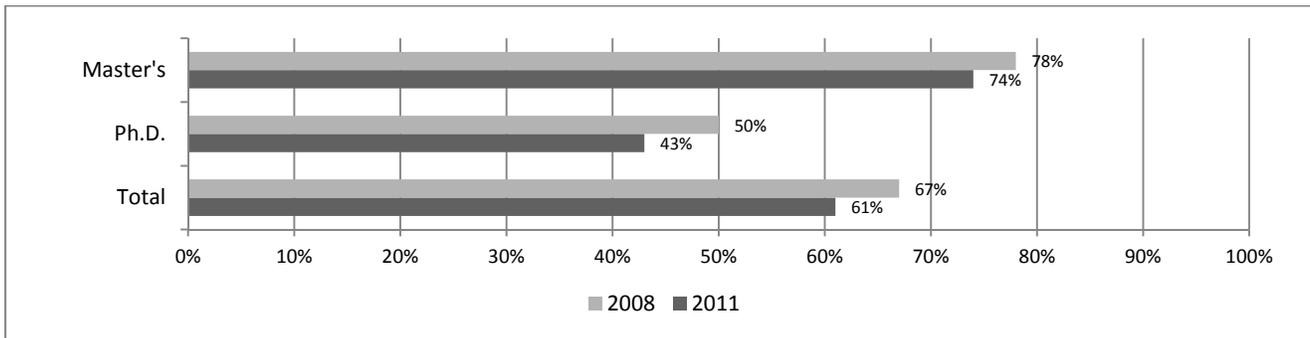
- UAlbany met or exceeded academic expectations (Q1a): A large majority of respondents – nearly 80% in both years – felt that their academic experience met or exceeded their expectations, with satisfaction slightly higher among master’s students in 2008, but essentially the same in 2011.

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

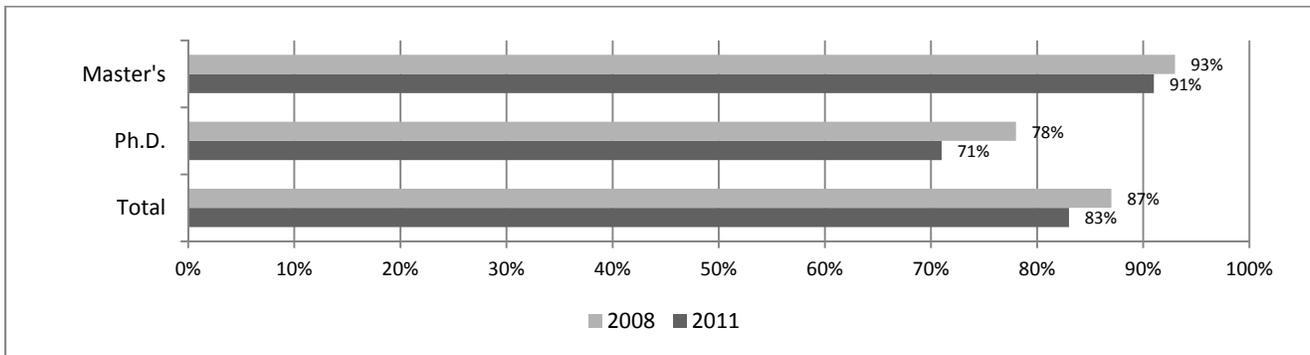


- UAlbany was first or second choice (Q1b): For large majorities of UAlbany’s graduate students, UAlbany was their first choice – two thirds in 2008, down to three fifths in 2011. For over 80%, UAlbany was either their first or second choice. Both of these figures are markedly higher for master’s students than for doctoral students.

Q1b: Percent stating that UAlbany was their first choice.

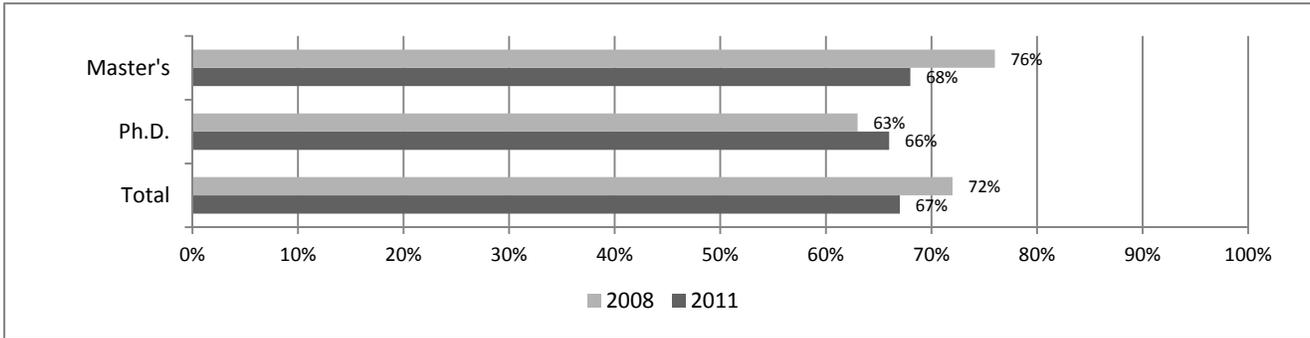


Q1b: Percent stating that UAlbany was their first or second choice.

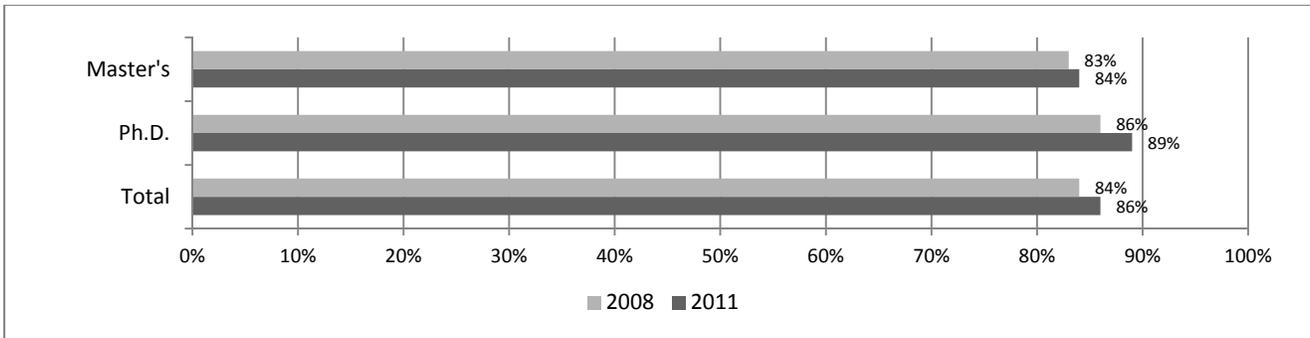


- Most students would choose UAlbany again (Q1c & Q1d): Around two thirds of both master’s students and doctoral students would choose UAlbany if they had it to do over again, with that figure declining somewhat from 2008 among the former, and increasing among the latter. Over 80% would choose the same field of study again, with that figure somewhat higher among Ph.D. students and increasing among both groups.

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

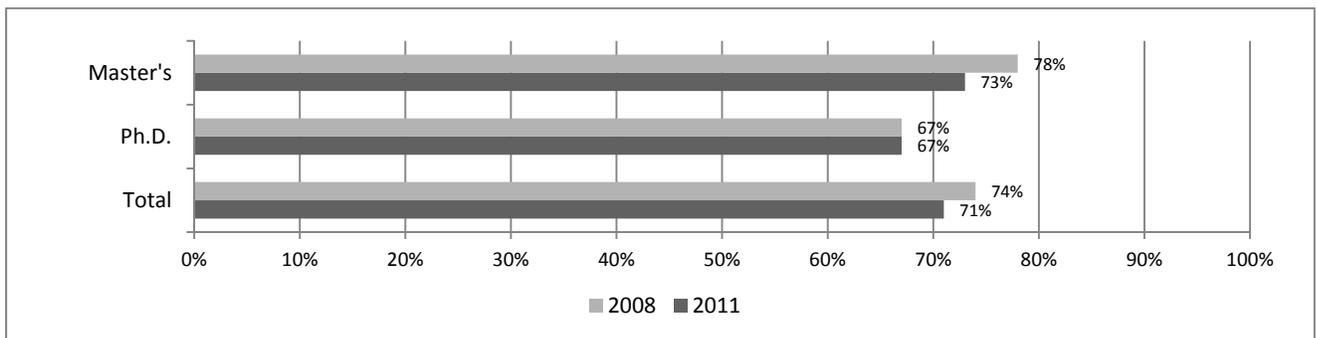


Q1d: Percent who would probably or definitely choose the same field of study again.

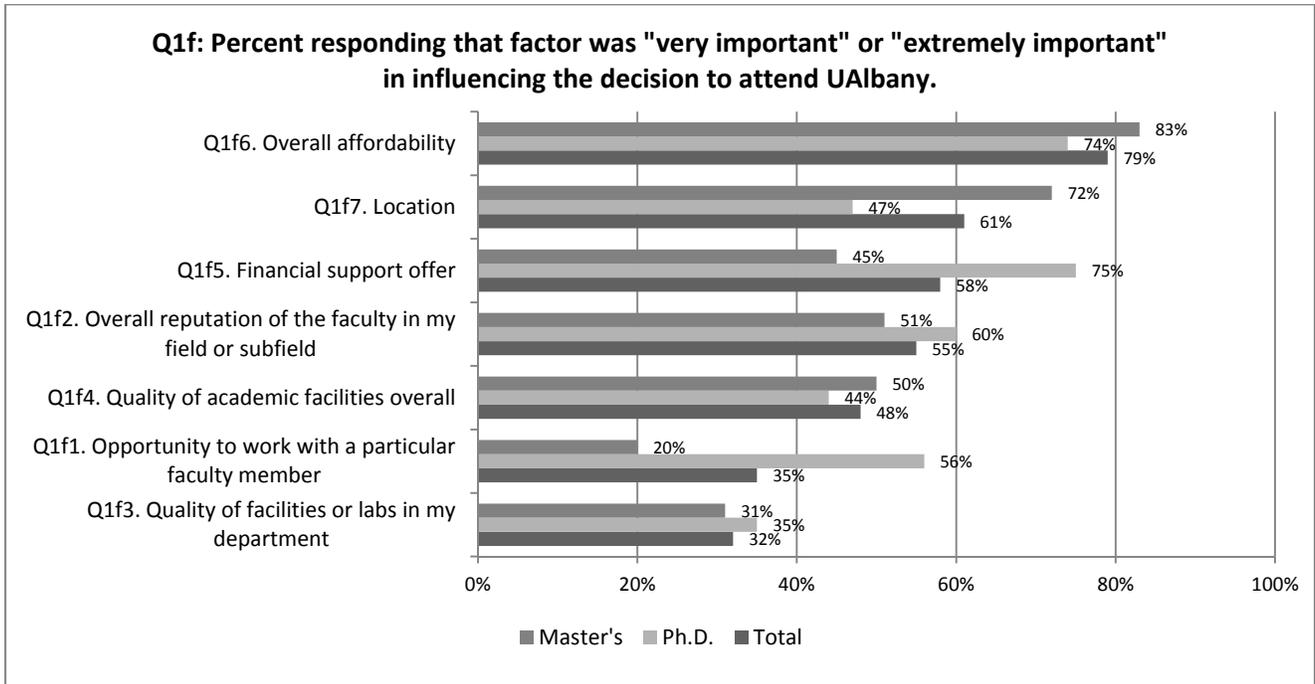


- Most would recommend UAlbany (Q1e): Over 70 percent of UAlbany graduate students would recommend UAlbany to someone considering their program, with master’s students again more positive than doctoral students.

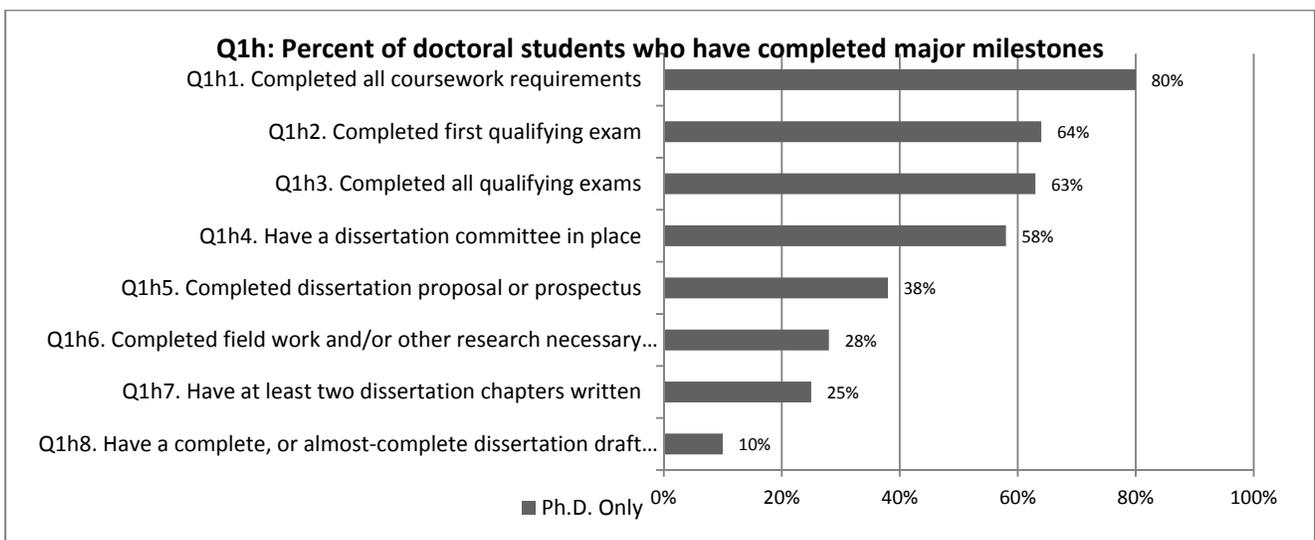
Q1e: Percent who would recommend UAlbany.



- Factors Influencing School Choice (Q1f):** The top three factors influencing the decision to attend UAlbany overall were affordability, location and the financial support offer.³ For doctoral students, the top three were the financial support offer, affordability and the reputation of their department's faculty, while for master's students they were affordability, location and reputation. These figures were largely unchanged from 2008.



- Progress in Doctoral Program (Q1h):** The chart below shows the progress of doctoral students toward their degree as measured by completion of important milestones. Responses range from a high of 80% who have completed all required coursework to a low of 10% who have written a complete or nearly-complete dissertation draft. The percentages for all these milestones are substantially higher than in 2008, indicating higher response rates among students who were further along in their graduate education. This difference should be considered when comparing results.

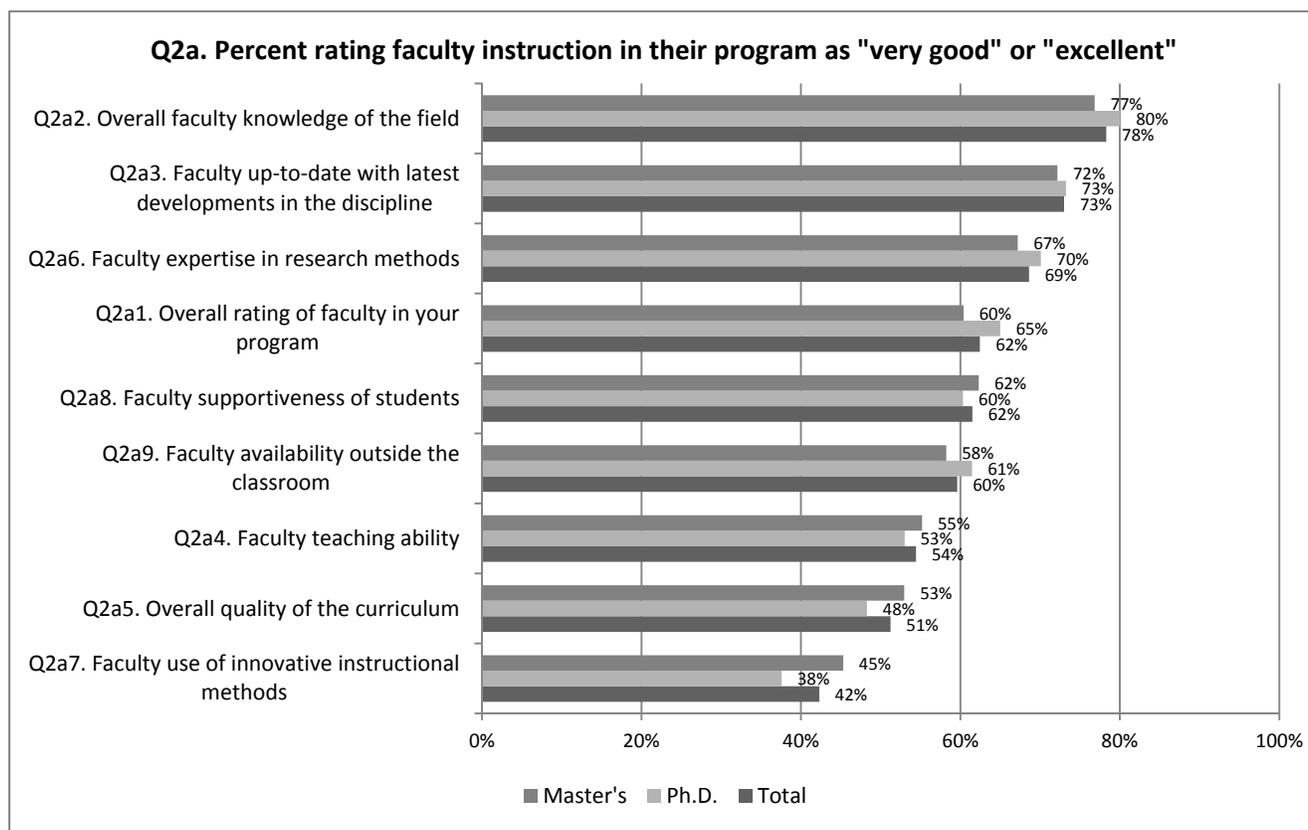


³ Response options for these items were: 1 (not at all important), 2 (slightly important), 3 (moderately important), 4 (very important) and 5 (extremely important).

Part 2: Graduate Instruction and Faculty Characteristics

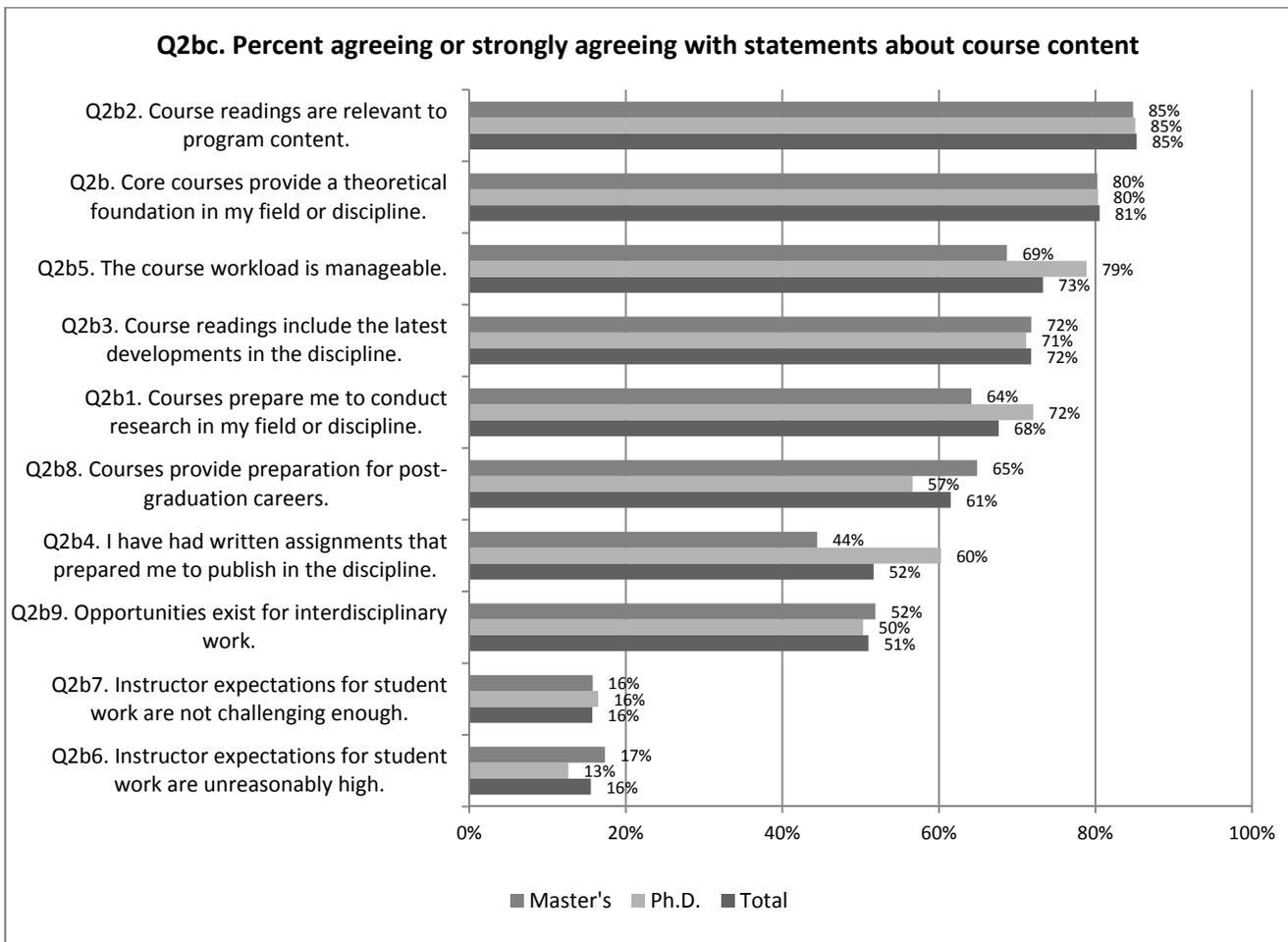
Both doctoral and master's students indicated considerable satisfaction with faculty instruction and prestige and with academic course content and requirements.

- Faculty Instruction (Q2a):** Both master's and doctoral respondents rated faculty instruction highest on aspects of "knowledge in the field," "up-to-date with the latest developments," "expertise in research methods" and overall ratings, with satisfaction over 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."⁴ In all of these areas, the percentages rating their faculty as "very good" or "excellent" were slightly but consistently higher than in 2008.



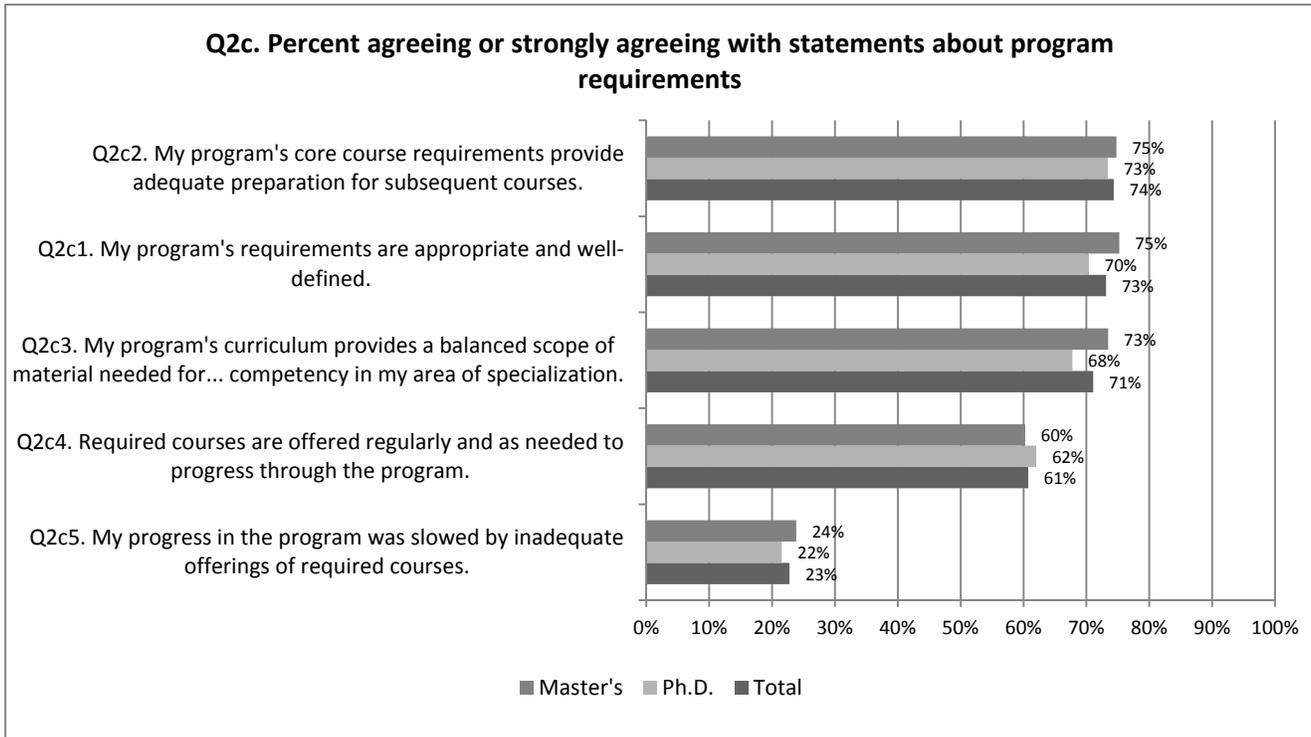
⁴ Response options for these items were: 1 (poor), 2 (fair), 3 (good), 4 (very good) and 5 (excellent). We should note that although the middle option in the five-point scale is often considered a neutral response, that is more the case for bi-polar scales, in which responses on one side of the midpoint are actually negative and those on the other side are positive (e.g., agree/disagree or satisfied/dissatisfied). This scale is uni-polar, 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, 6 received agreement or strong agreement from over 60% of UAlbany graduate students, with the statements “Course readings are relevant to program content” and “Core courses provide a theoretical foundation in my field or discipline” both receiving 80% agreement.⁵ 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).

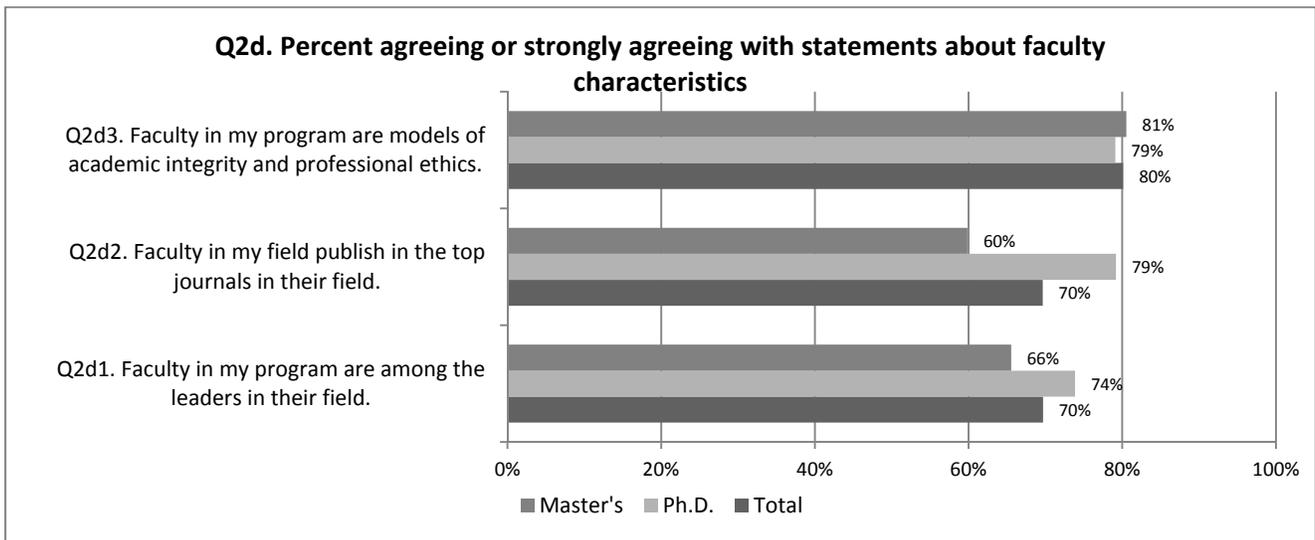


⁵ Response options for these items and all subsequent “agree/disagree” items were: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree) and 5 (strongly agree).

- Program Requirements (Q2c):** Around 70% or more of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “core course requirements prepare them for subsequent courses,” “program requirements are appropriate,” 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. Under a quarter of students felt their progress was slowed by inadequate course offerings. All these figures are slightly improved from 2008.



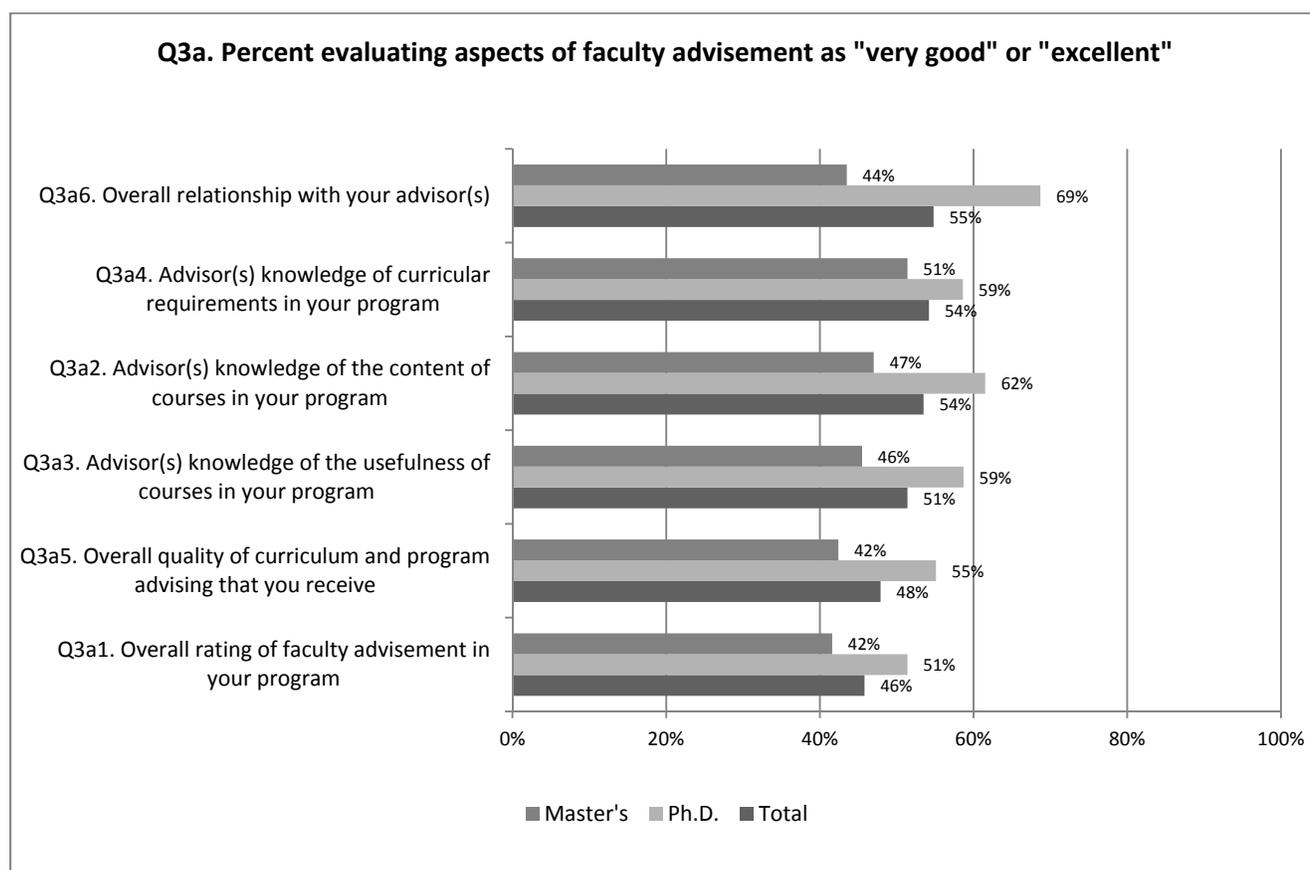
- Faculty Characteristics (Q2d):** More than three quarters of respondents agreed that faculty in their program are “models of integrity and professional ethics” while over two thirds agreed that they are “leaders in the field,” and “publish in top journals,” with doctoral students indicating more positive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



Part 3: Academic Advisement and Faculty Mentoring

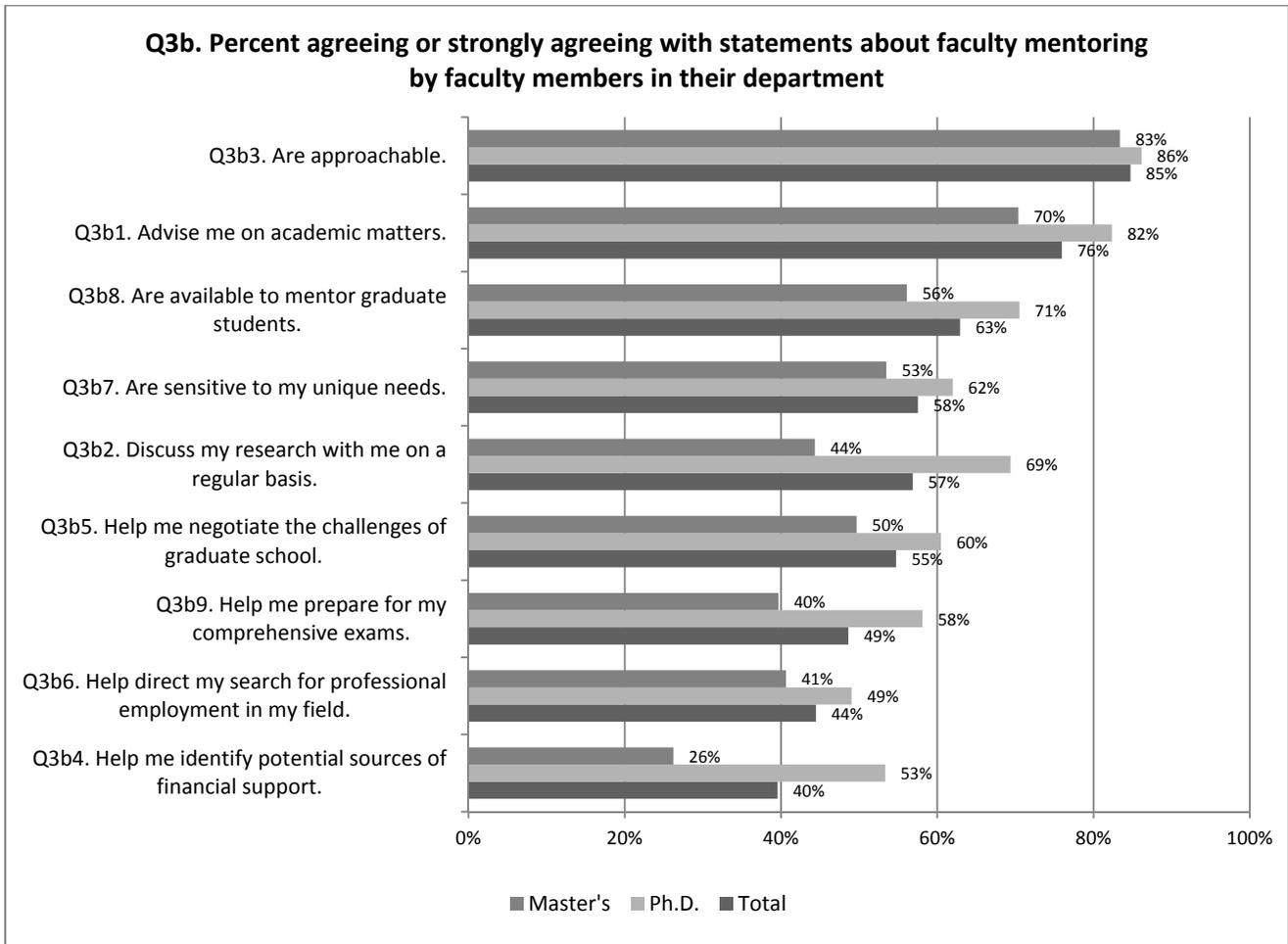
Results were more mixed for advisement and mentoring. Satisfaction with general advisement was only lukewarm, with some important exceptions. In general, Ph.D. students were more positive than master's students about their program's advisement and mentoring. Students writing a thesis or dissertation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

- Academic Advisement (Q3a):** In academic advisement, we see markedly lower ratings 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 course content and their overall relationship. On the core question evaluating faculty advisement in their program overall, only 51% of doctoral students and 42% of master's students rated their program as "good" or "excellent."⁶ For every item in both groups, responses were more positive in 2011 than they were in 2008.



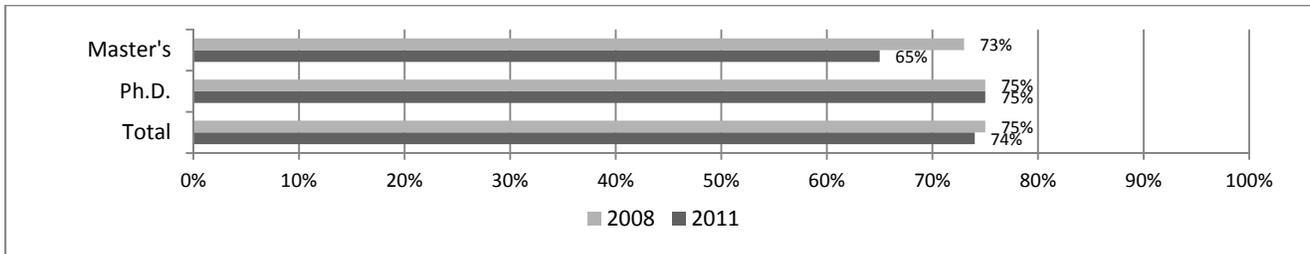
⁶ See the previous note regarding uni-polar scales with "good" as the middle option. Even so, if we look at the mean score on the 1-5 scale, all are above the middle point of "3," ranging from a low of 3.16 for Q3a1 to a high of 3.49 for Q3a4. Even for master's students, the lowest rating (for Q3a1) is 3.05, just slightly past the mid-point, meaning that the average rating is still "good" or better.

- General Faculty Mentoring (Q3b):** Responses on faculty mentoring in general 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. Overall, respondents agreed or strongly agreed that faculty members are approachable (85%), although there are some gaps between master’s and doctoral respondents in the more specific questions. 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, all items show systematically higher levels of agreement among doctoral students than master’s students. Again, agreement levels in 2011 were higher than in 2008.

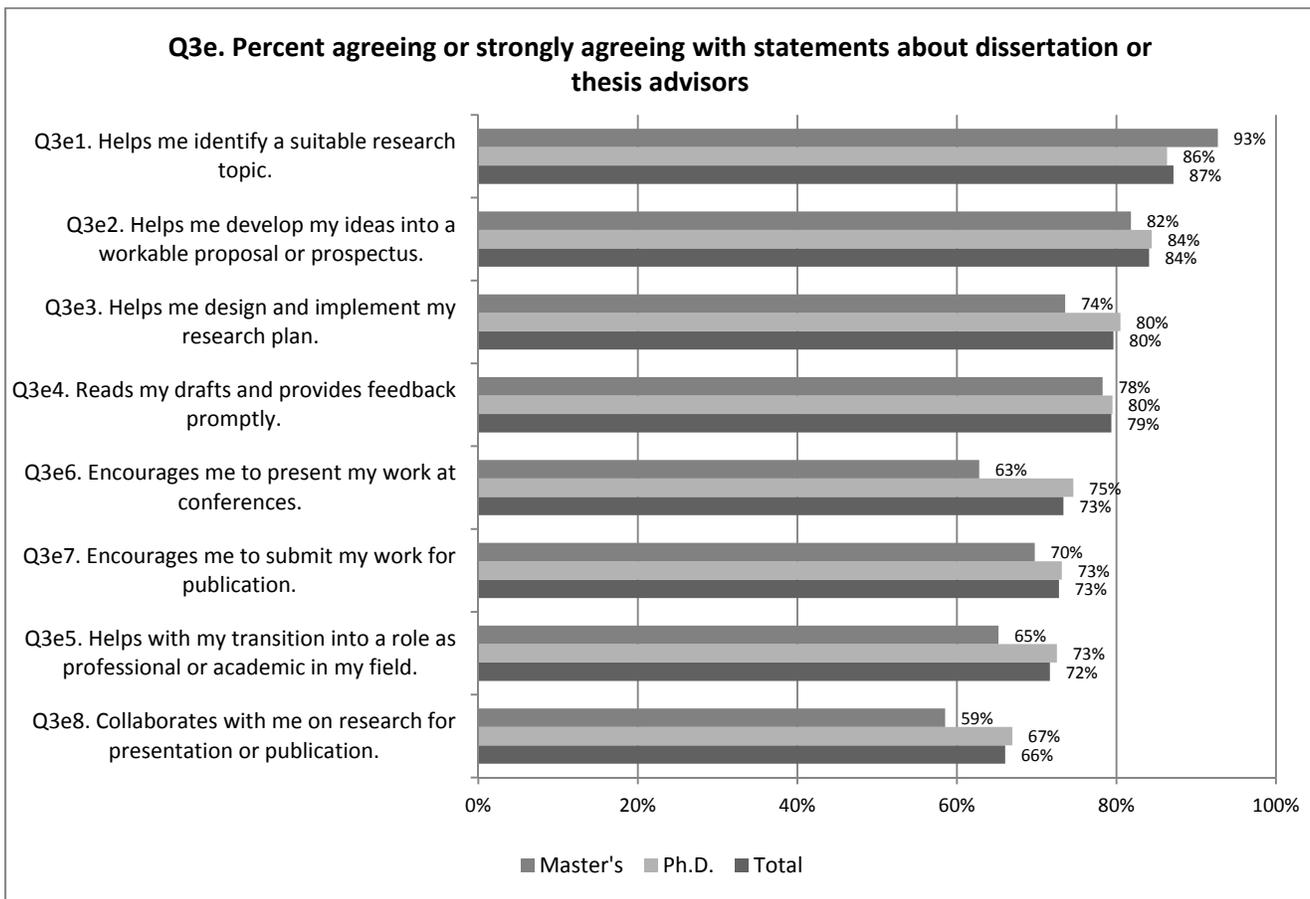


- Thesis/Dissertation Advisor (Q3c & Q3d):** While ratings of faculty advisement in general were not high, students with thesis or dissertation advisors were much more positive about their advisors. Sixty one percent of doctoral and seven percent of master’s students reported having a thesis or dissertation advisor. Three quarters of Ph.D. students and two thirds of master’s students rated their advisor overall as very good or excellent, with the former group down somewhat from 2008.

Q3c: Percent who rated their dissertation or thesis advisor as “good” or “excellent.”



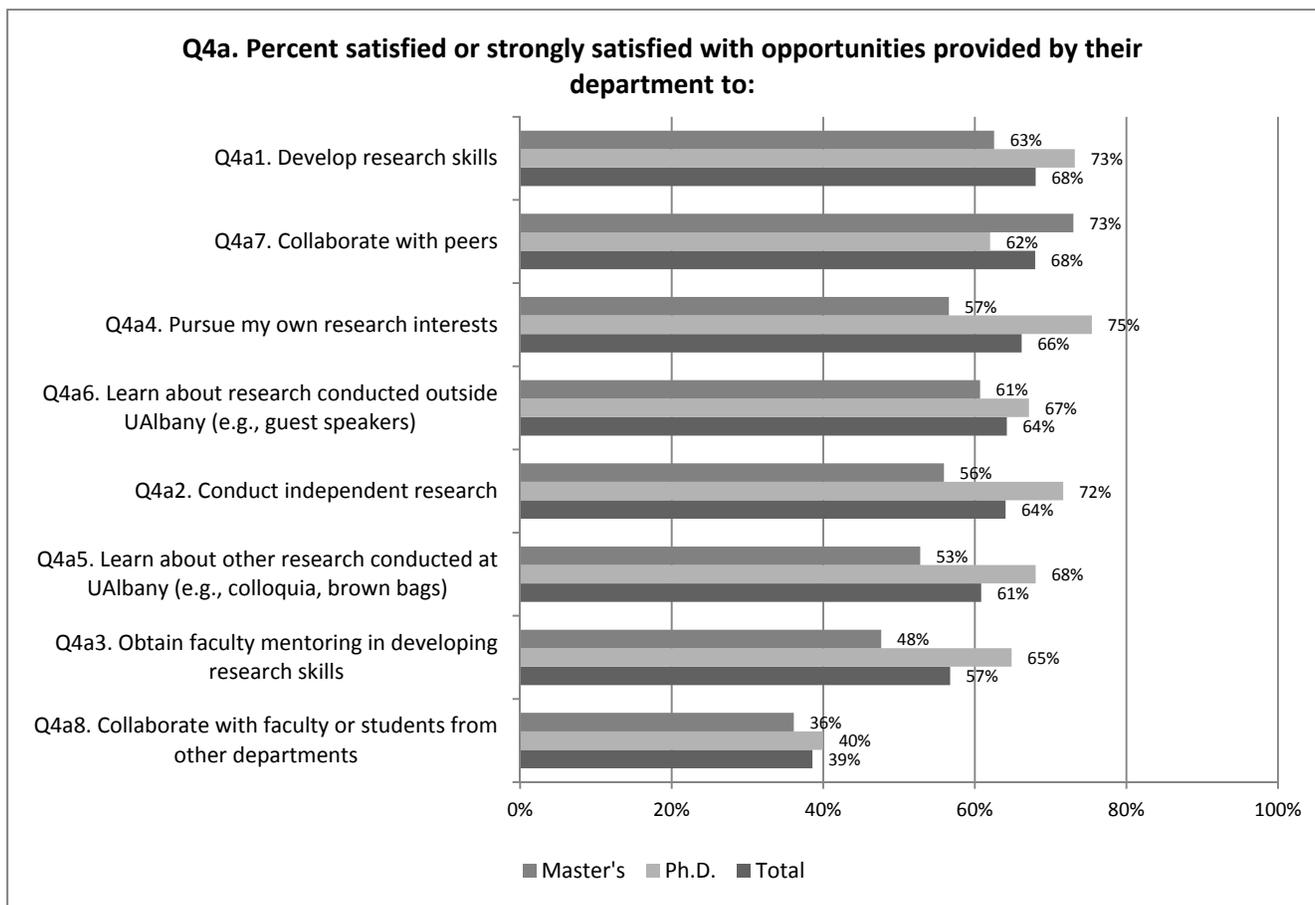
- Thesis/Dissertation Support and Guidance (Q3e):** (asked only of students with a dissertation or thesis advisor) As with the overall rating, large majorities of UAlbany graduate students also agreed or strongly agreed with a variety of more specific statements about their thesis or dissertation advisors. 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 Ph.D. 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 other those areas, master’s students had lower agreement than Ph.D. students. Once again, in all these areas, levels of agreement increased between 2008 and 2011.



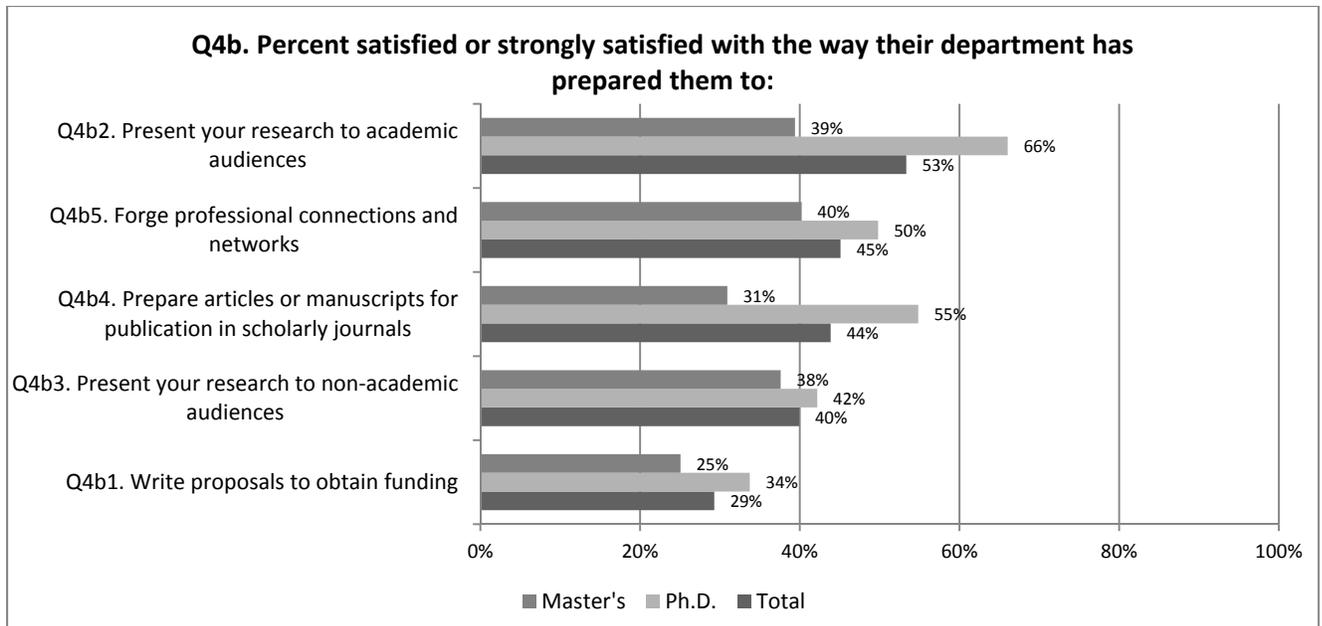
Part 4: Research Opportunities

UAlbany graduate students were generally satisfied with research opportunities, with Ph.D. 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.

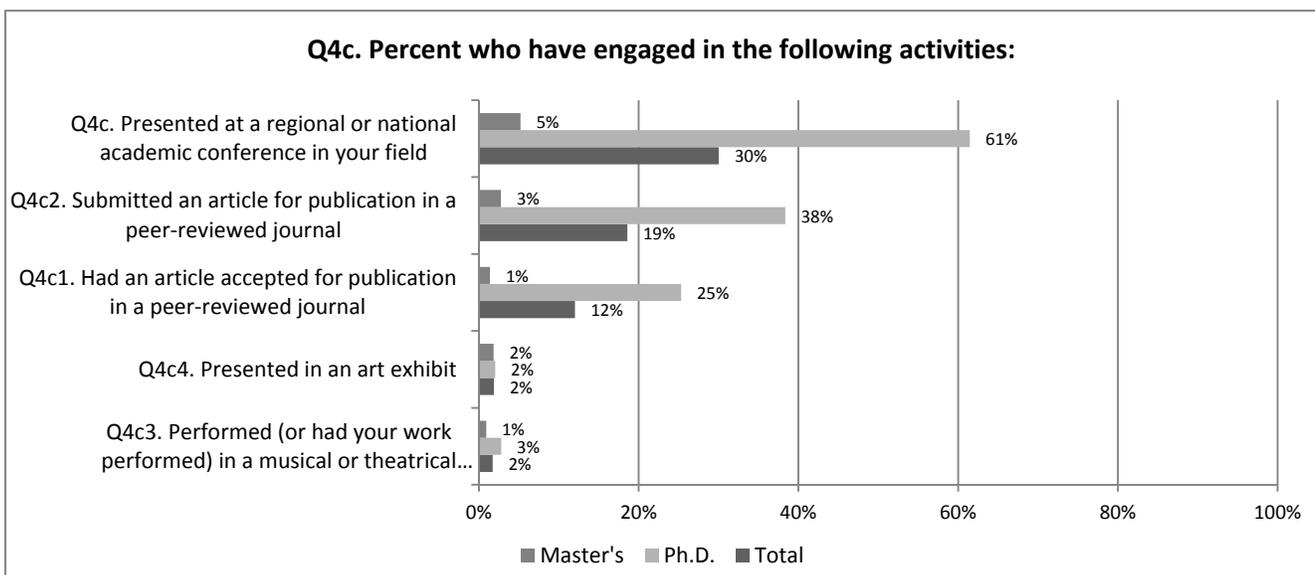
- Departmental/Programmatic Opportunities for Developing Research Interests and Skills (Q4a):**
 Overall, around two thirds of both master's and doctoral students were satisfied or very satisfied with department/program opportunities provided to develop their research skills. In most other areas, doctoral 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 both groups were far less satisfied when it came to opportunities to collaborate with faculty or students from other departments. Again, satisfaction was higher across-the-board in 2011 compared to 2008.



- Departmental/Programmatic Preparations for Professional Activities (Q4b):** In these areas, master's and doctoral students once again showed markedly different patterns. For Ph.D. 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.



- 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 5% of master's students. Over a third of Ph.D. students submitted an article for publication, and a quarter had an article actually accepted. (Looking only at third-year or higher Ph.D. students, 46% reported submitting an article for publication, and 35% have been published.) As expected, far smaller numbers have performed or presented artistic work. Since 2008, percentages have generally increased for Ph.D. students and remained around the same for master's students.

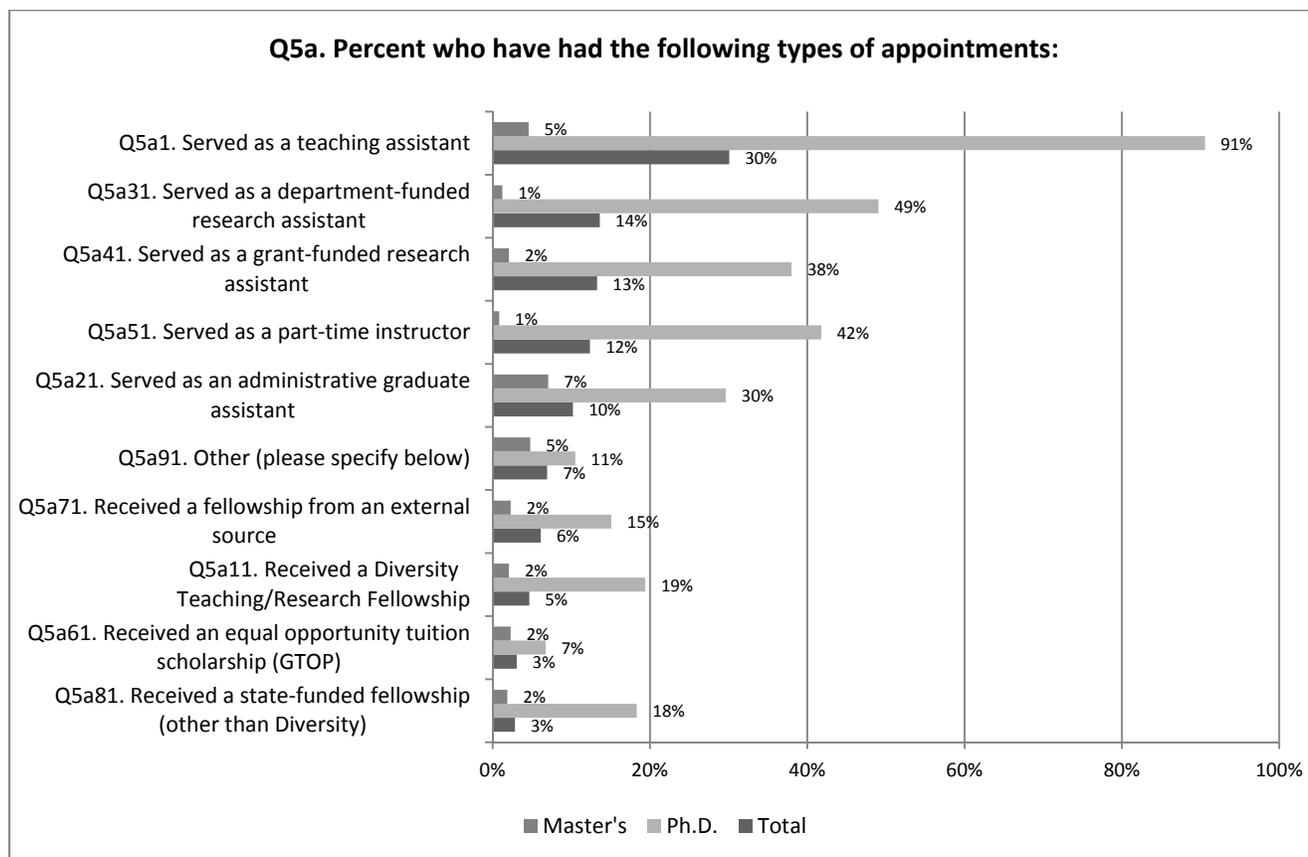


Part 5: Research & Teaching Appointments/Financial Aid

This section of the survey is consistent with institutional data showing that most Ph.D. 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 Ph.D. 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 24-26 hours of paid work per week, down from 28-29 hours in 2008;⁷ for Ph.D. 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, grant-funded research assistantships, part-time instructorships, and administrative graduate assistantships. These numbers were all up substantially since 2008, particularly teaching assistantships, up from 62% to 91%.

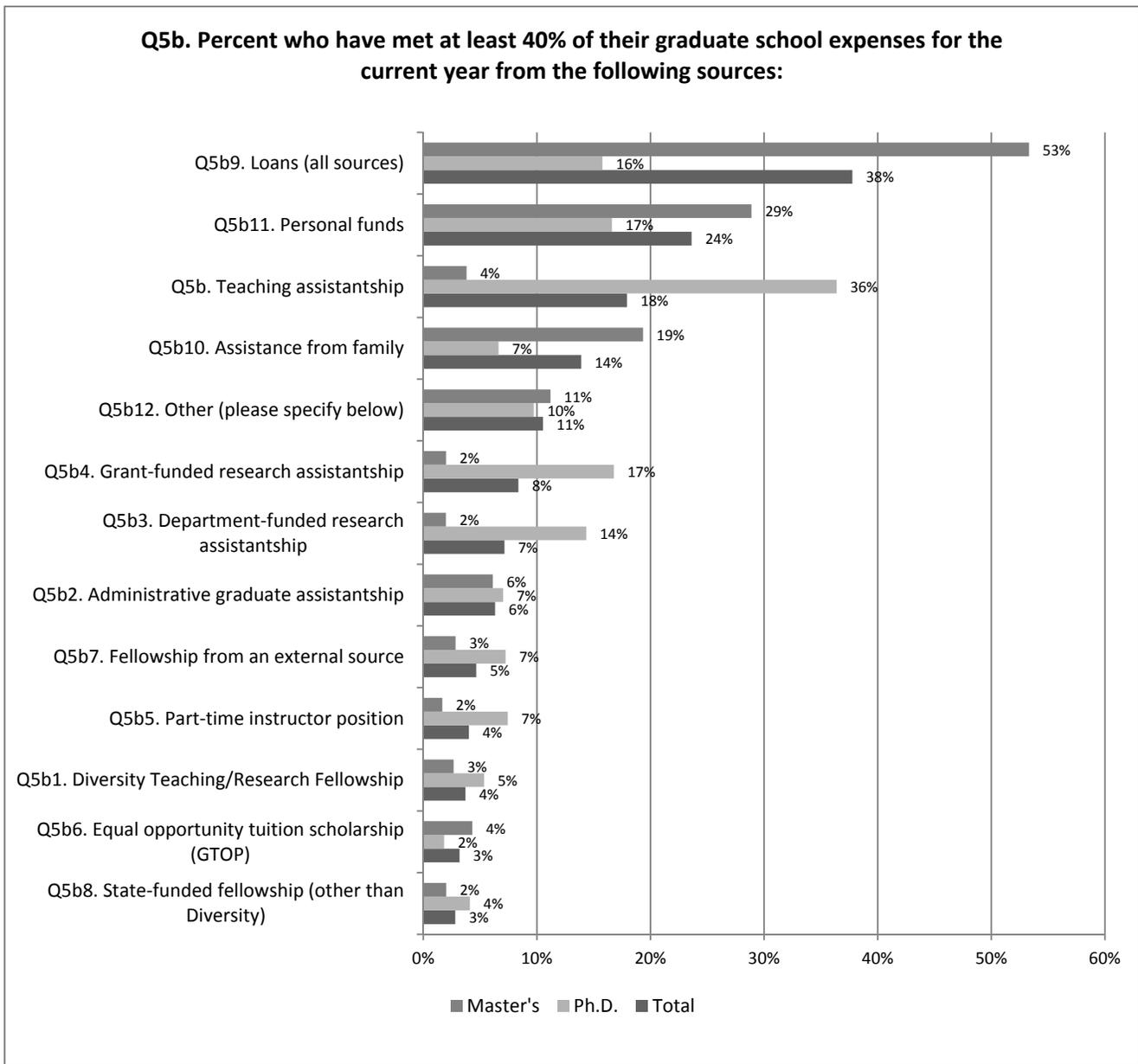
The numbers for master's students reflect the lower levels of funding opportunities compared to Ph.D. students. For master's students, the highest percentages were the 7% who served as administrative graduate assistants (down from 14%) and the 5% who have served as teaching assistants (down from 9%). All these funding sources were down since 2008, reflecting a greater allocation of existing resources toward Ph.D. students.



⁷ These figures are averages; they are not evidence of 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 combined categories of 41-60%, 61-80% and 81-100%.

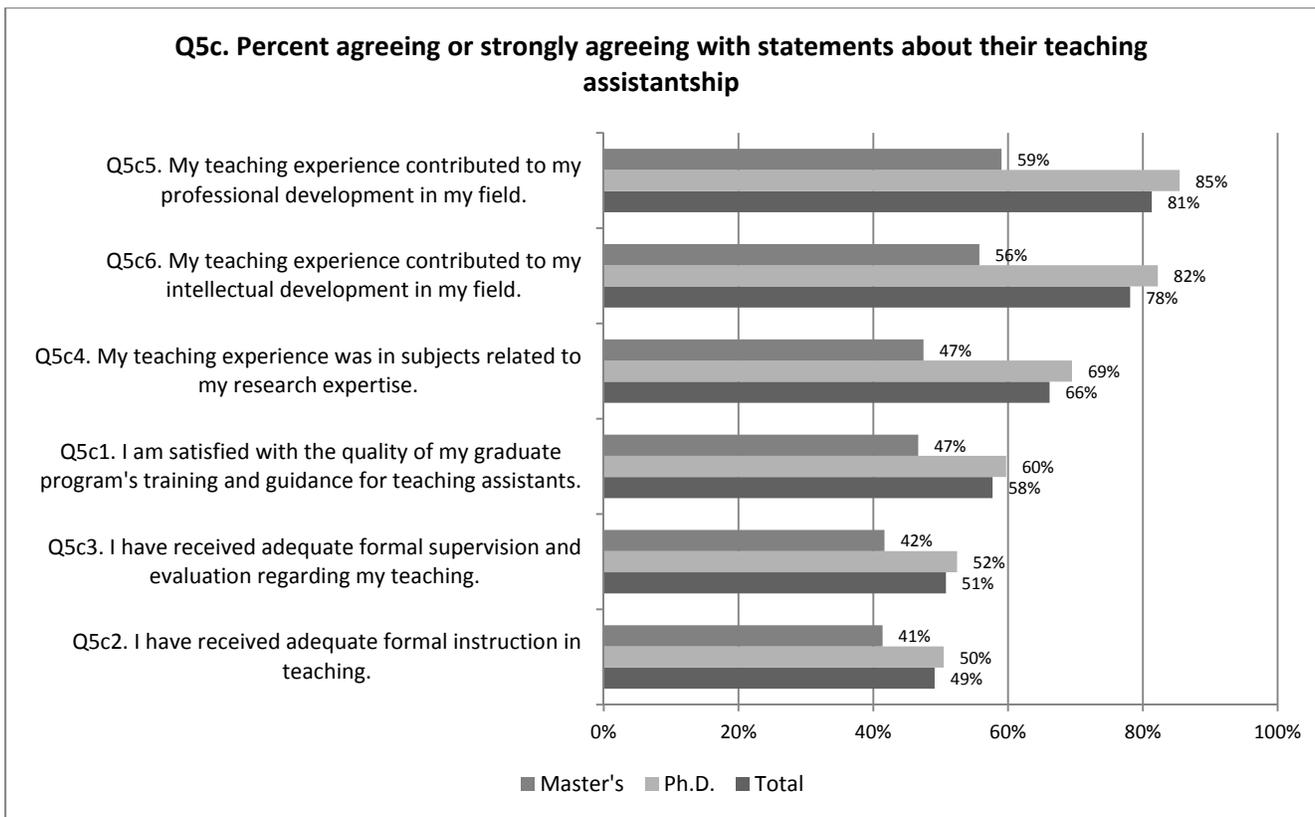
Again, the survey results show markedly different results for master’s students and Ph.D. students. For Ph.D. students, the top sources were teaching assistantships, personal funds and research assistantships, while for master’s students the top three categories were loans, personal funds and family assistance. The most striking figure on the chart is the 53% of master’s students who relied so heavily on loans, up from, 49% in 2008. In fact, 34% of master’s students relied 81-100% on loans to cover their graduate school expenses. The biggest changes overall are that Ph.D. students were 5% less reliant on loans while master’s students were 5% more reliant on them. Interestingly, both groups are relying less on personal funds.



- 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 Ph.D. students than master’s students. Over two thirds of Ph.D. students but under 50% of master’s students reported that their teaching experience was in subjects related to their research expertise.

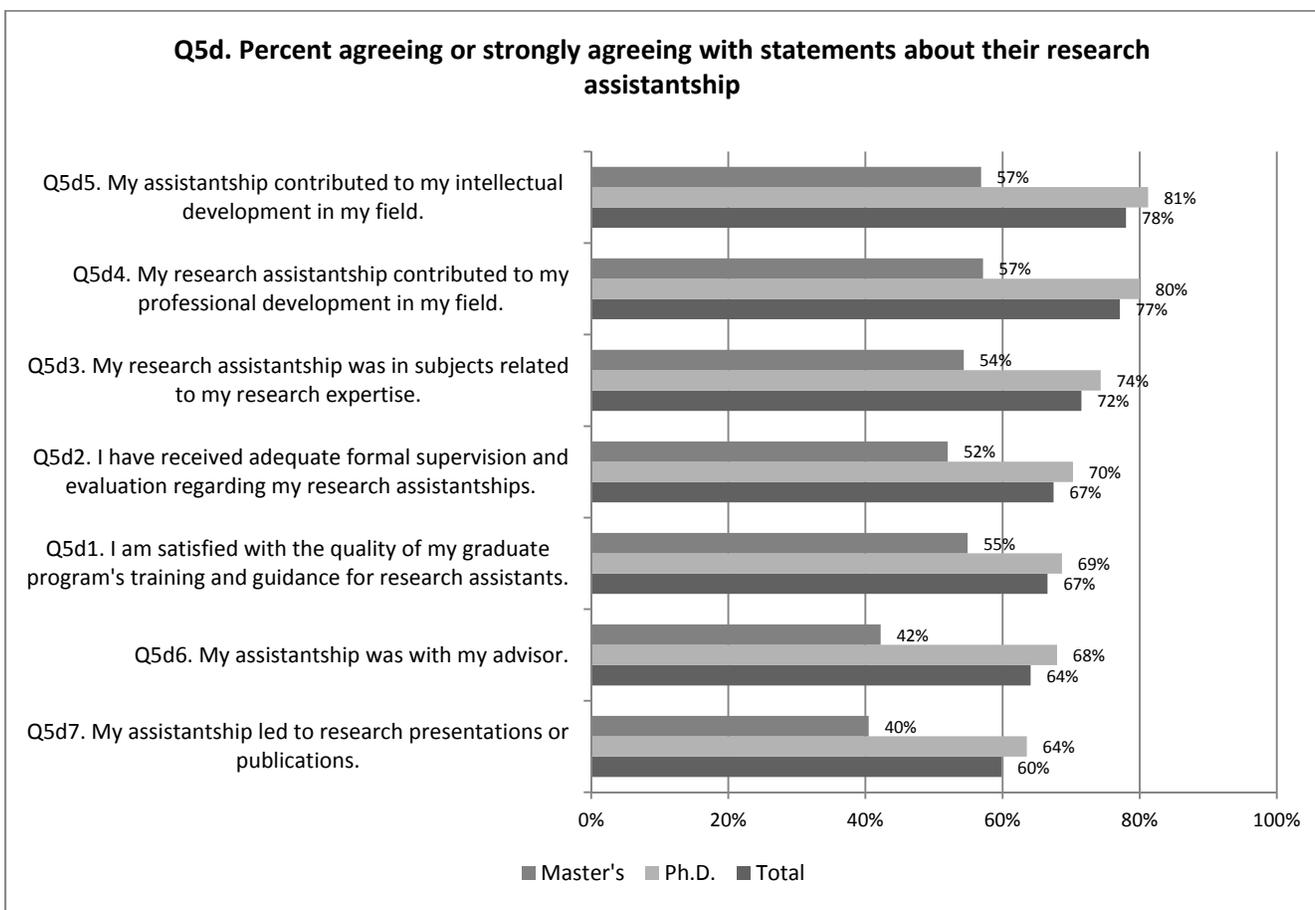
However, while survey respondents appreciated the value of their teaching experiences, they were far less sanguine about their training and supervision. Sixty percent of Ph.D. students but only 47% of master’s students were satisfied with their program’s training of teaching assistants. Similarly, 52% of Ph.D. students but only 42% of master’s students agreed that they had adequate supervision and evaluation; 51% of Ph.D. students and 41% of master’s students agreed that they had received adequate formal instruction in teaching.

Among Ph.D. students, agreement on all items was up since 2008, with the exception of teaching being in areas related to their expertise; among master’s students, agreement was down on all items except those related to training and instruction in teaching.

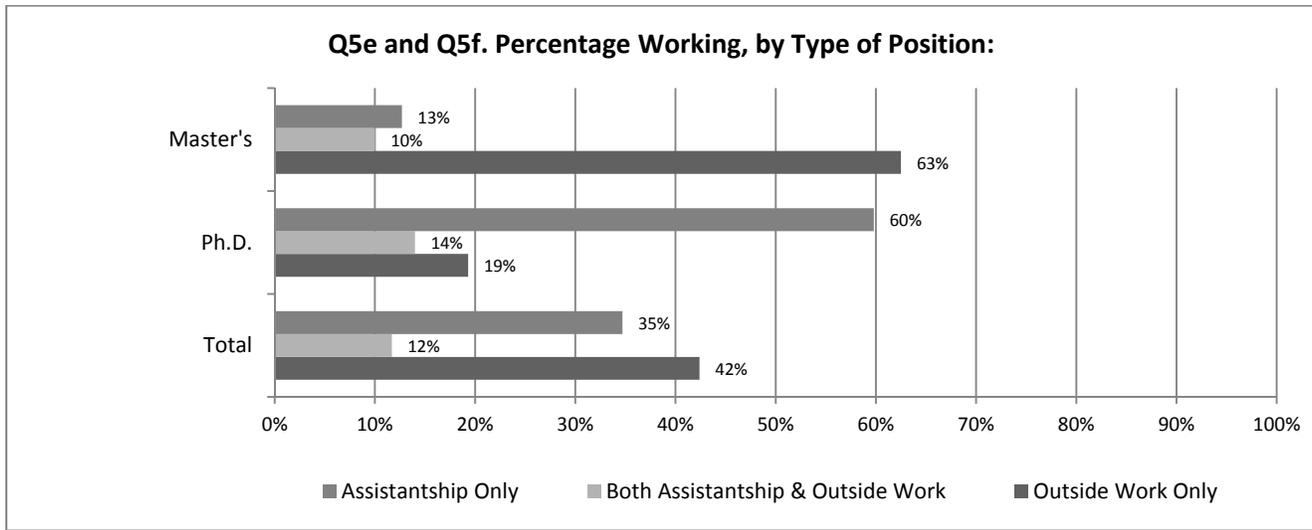


- Research Assistant Training and Experiences (Q5d):** In this area, we again see a large difference between the responses of Ph.D. and master's students who have held research assistantships. Large majorities of Ph.D. students agreed or strongly agreed with all statements, ranging from a low of 64%, indicating that their assistantship led to presentations or publications, to a high of 81%, indicating that their assistantship contributed to their intellectual development. Agreement among master's students was much lower, although still a majority on most items. The range here was from a low of 40% on presentations and publications to a high of 57% on intellectual and professional development.

Contributing to the large differences observed between the responses of the two groups in 2011 was the fact that among Ph.D. students, agreement was higher than in 2008 on every item in this section, while among master's students agreement was down on all items except training and guidance.



- 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 63% reporting only outside work (down from 75% in 2008), along with 13% with assistantships only and 10% with both assistantships and outside work. In contrast, 60% of Ph.D. students reported working only at assistantships (up from 53% in 2008), along with 19% who did only outside work (down from 31%) and 14% who worked both. Overall, 42% of respondents reported working only outside the University (down from 58% in 2008), followed by 35% working only at assistantships, and 12% working some hours at both types of position.



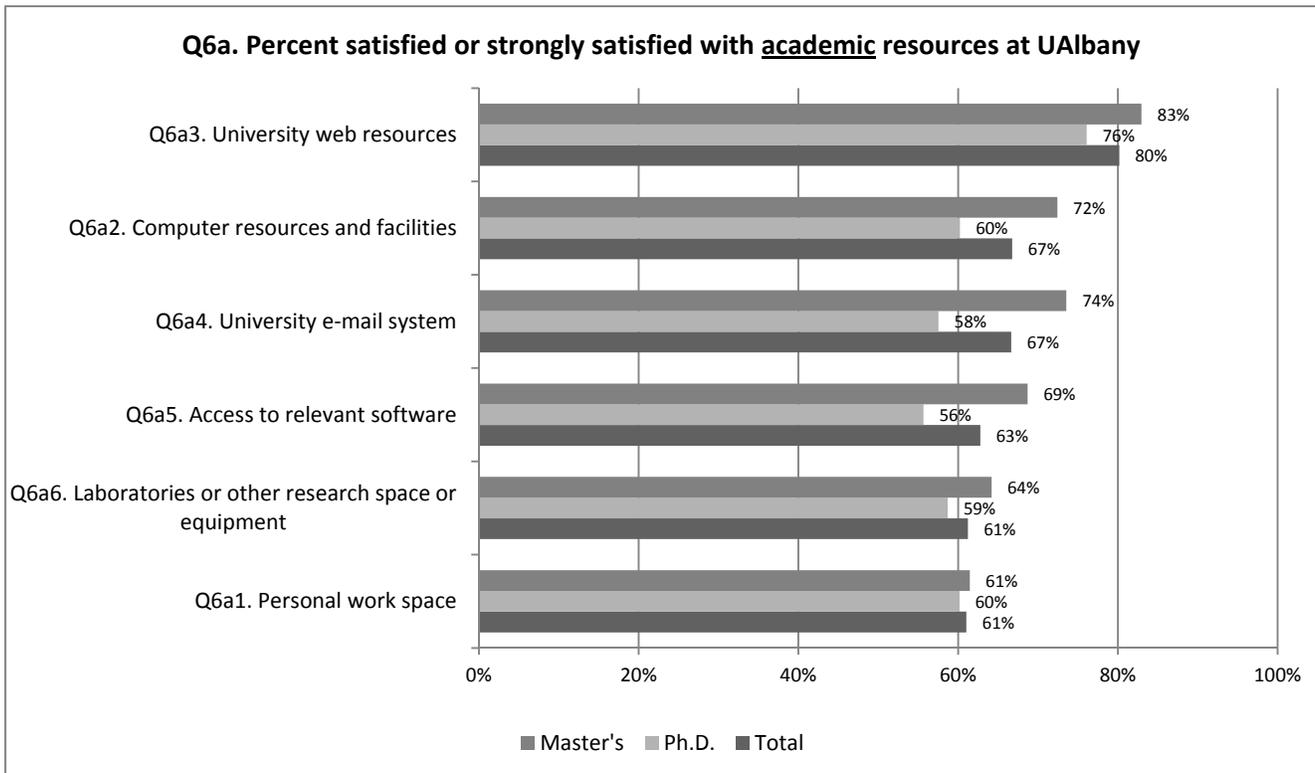
- Number of hours worked (Q5e-f):** Ph.D. students working only at an assistantship reported working 23 hours per week on average; Ph.D. students who only had “another” type of job reported working on average 35 hours per week. A small but important minority of 14% of Ph.D. students reported working at both an assistantship and another job, and they reported working on average 38 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 19 hours per week on average. Those with only “another” type of job reported working 28 hours per week. About 10% of master’s students reported working at both an assistantship and another job, and they reported working on average 37 hours per week. As with Ph.D. 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

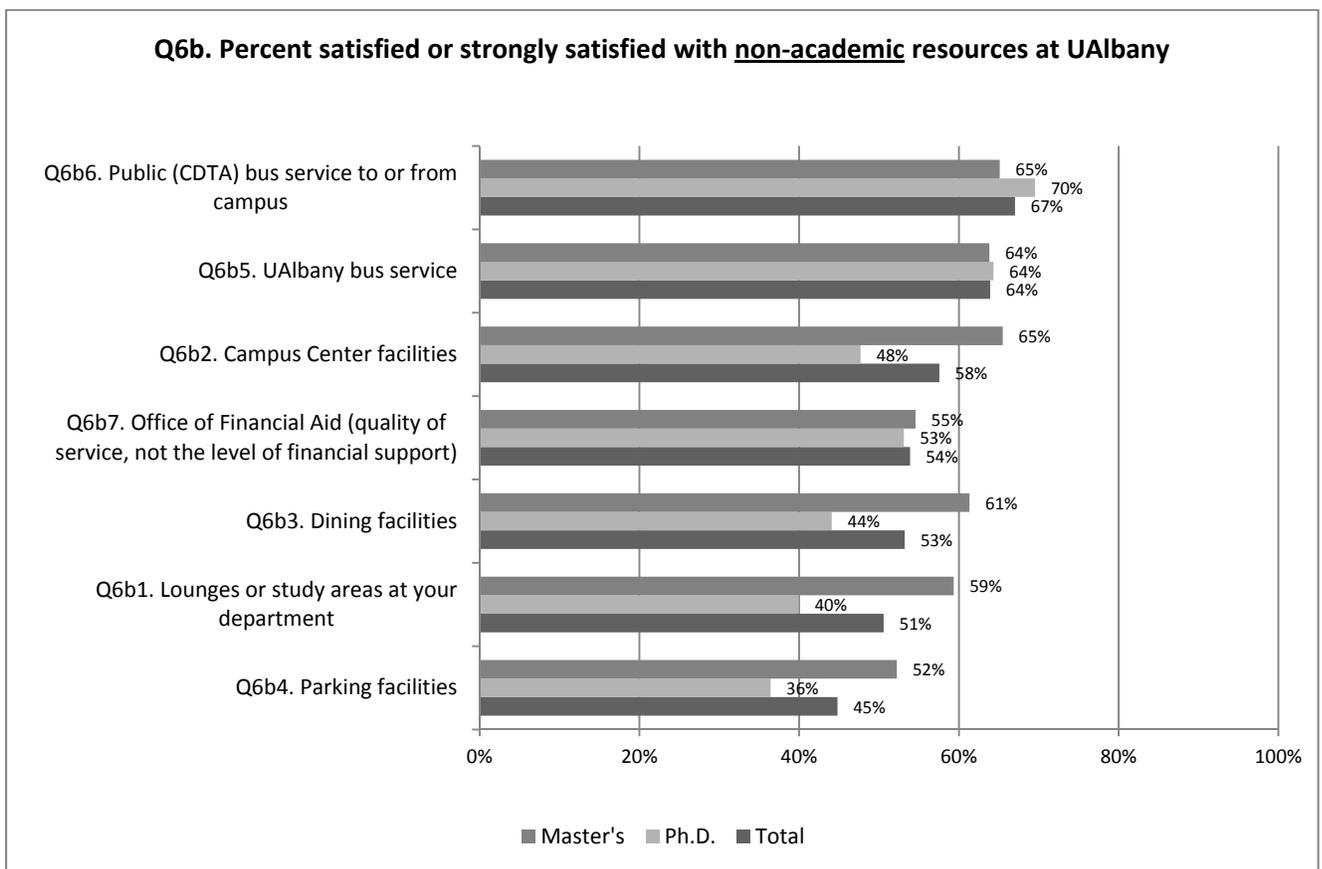
UAlbany graduate students were generally satisfied with academic services and facilities, particularly information technology and libraries. Satisfaction with non-academic services was more mixed, with high satisfaction with bus services and the campus center and lower satisfaction with dining, parking, 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 university web resources, computer resources and facilities, and the university email system. Respondents were least satisfied with personal work space and laboratories or other research space or equipment. Responses for master's and doctoral students were similar for these items, with satisfaction consistently higher among master's students. This was the case in 2008 as well, but due to a more positive trend among master's than Ph.D. students in these areas, the differences are greater in 2011.

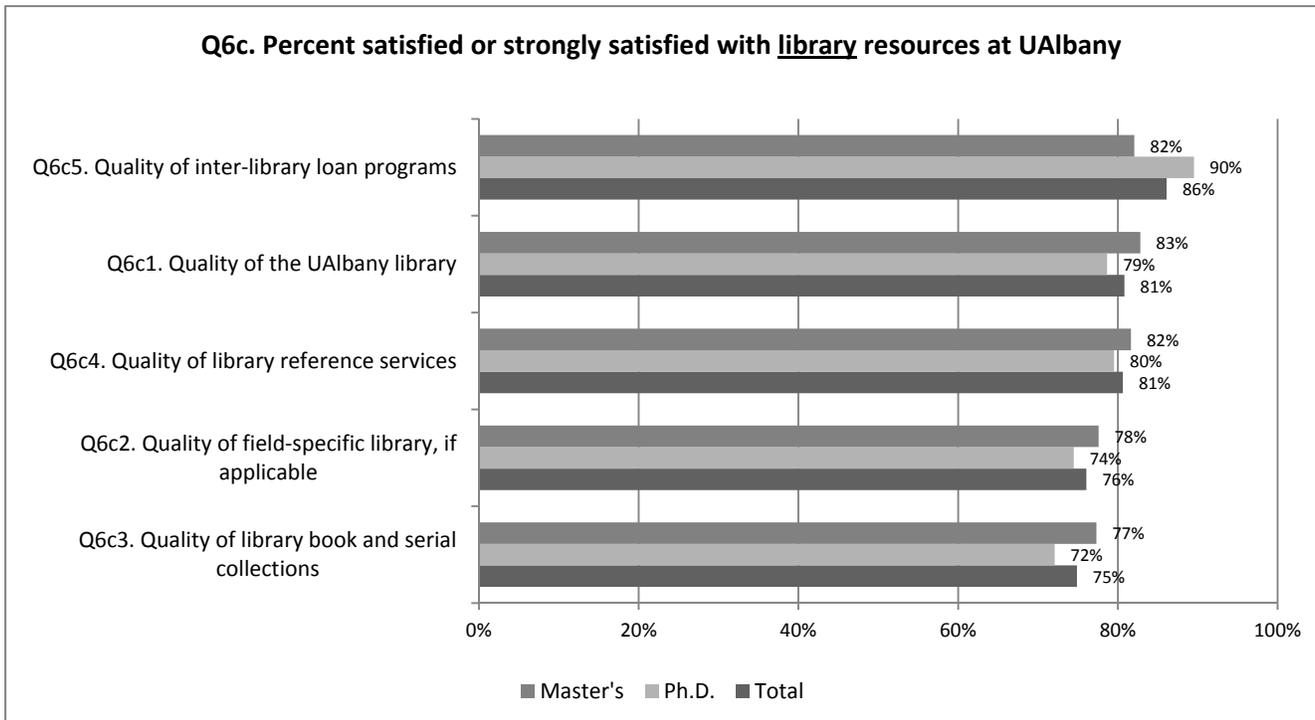


- Non-academic Facilities and Resources (Q6b):** UAlbany graduate students were most satisfied with both CDTA and UAlbany bus services, followed by the Campus Center and the Financial Aid Office. Consistent with recent undergraduate surveys, two of the three areas of lowest satisfaction were dining and parking facilities. The other low satisfaction item, however, was with “lounges or study areas at your department.” Satisfaction in all three of these areas was higher than in 2008. Doctoral students had slightly higher satisfaction than master’s students regarding bus service, while master’s students had substantially higher satisfaction with the Campus Center, dining, parking, and study lounges.

Among master’s students, satisfaction increased for all items; the largest increases in these areas were 16% for study lounges, 14% for dining and 11% for UAlbany’s bus service. For Ph.D. students, all items increased except for the Campus Center (which declined by less than 1%); the only increase over 5% was for public bus service at 6%.

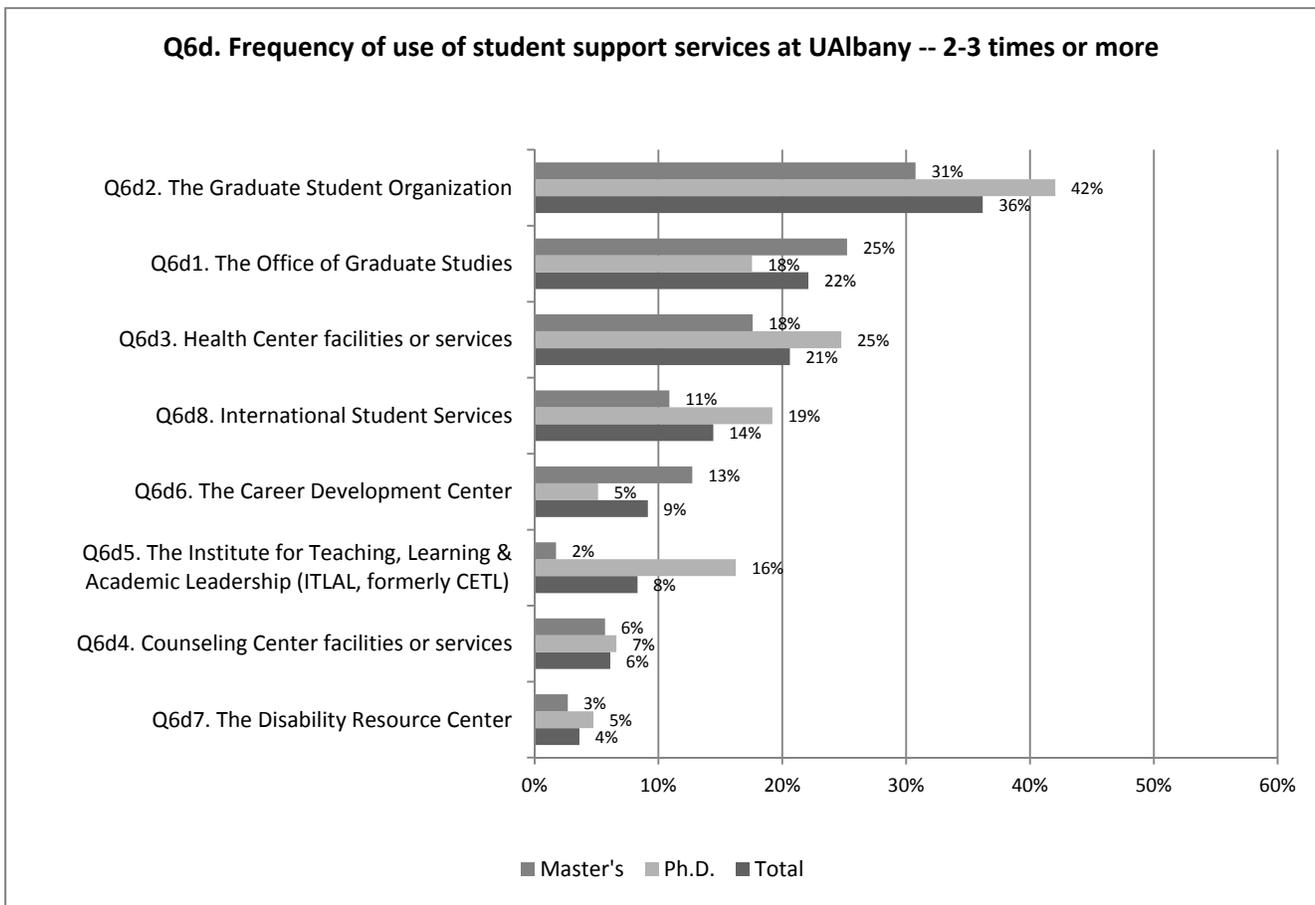


- Library Facilities and Services (Q6c):** Overall, survey respondents expressed very high satisfaction with various library services. Both master’s and Ph.D. students had satisfaction levels over 70% – and often into the 80% range for all items related to UAlbany Libraries. These satisfaction levels are also consistent with recent undergraduate surveys. Satisfaction with libraries was essentially unchanged between the 2008 and 2011 surveys.



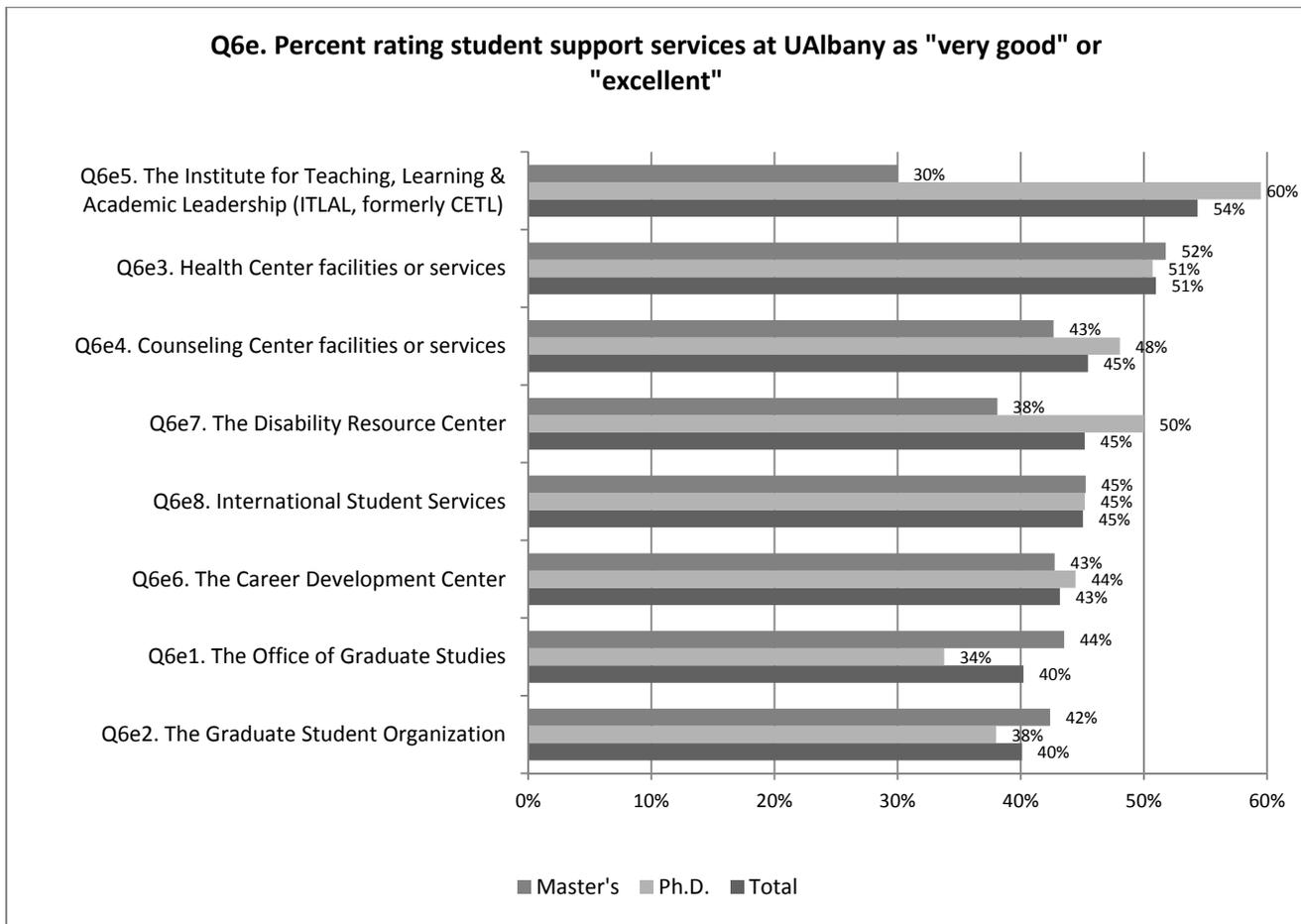
- **Use of General Student Support Services (Q6d):** The chart below shows percentages of UAlbany graduate students who reported having used each of several facilities at least 2-3 times during their time as a graduate student at UAlbany. The highest reported usage was for the Graduate Student Organization (GSO), 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 Institute for Teaching, Learning and Academic Leadership (ITLAL). Ph.D. students were more likely than master's students to have used the GSO, the Health Center, International Student Services and ITLAL, while master's students were more likely to have used the Office of Graduate Studies and Career Services.

The only substantial changes were an increase among Ph.D. students using ITLAL from 10% to 16%, and a decrease in International Student Services from 25% to 19%.



- 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.⁸ The top three ratings regarding service quality were ITLAL, the Health Center and the Counseling Center. The lowest three were for the GSO, the Office of Graduate Studies and the Career Development 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 Ph.D. students. The biggest differences in 2011 were for ITLAL (60% for Ph.D. students but only 30% for master’s students) and the Disability Resource Center (50% and 38% respectively).

Among Ph.D. students, ratings were up in six out of eight areas, with the largest changes being increases from 24% to 50% for Disability Resources and 25% to 44% for Career Development. Among master’s students, it was much more mixed, with ratings down in five areas and up in three. The biggest changes were an increase from 45% to 52% for the Health Center and a decrease from 35% to 30% for ITLAL.

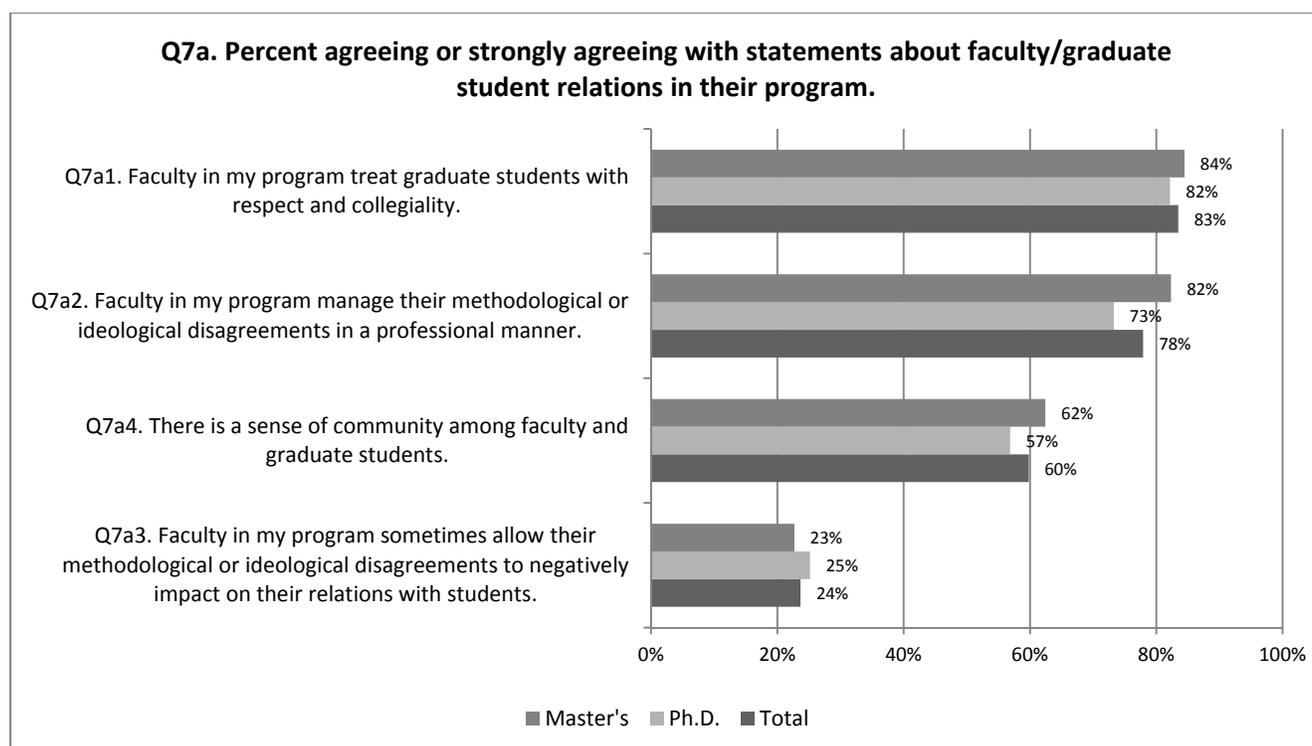


⁸ Only those who did not select “NA/Have Not Used” are included in these percentages. Nonetheless, it is clear from the raw numbers that many people who did not use the services evaluated them anyway; most of these respondents chose the middle option, “good,” which had a tendency to reduce the percentages of those choosing the top two categories, as shown in the chart for Q6e. Also, please see previous notes on uni-polar scales with “good” as the middle option.

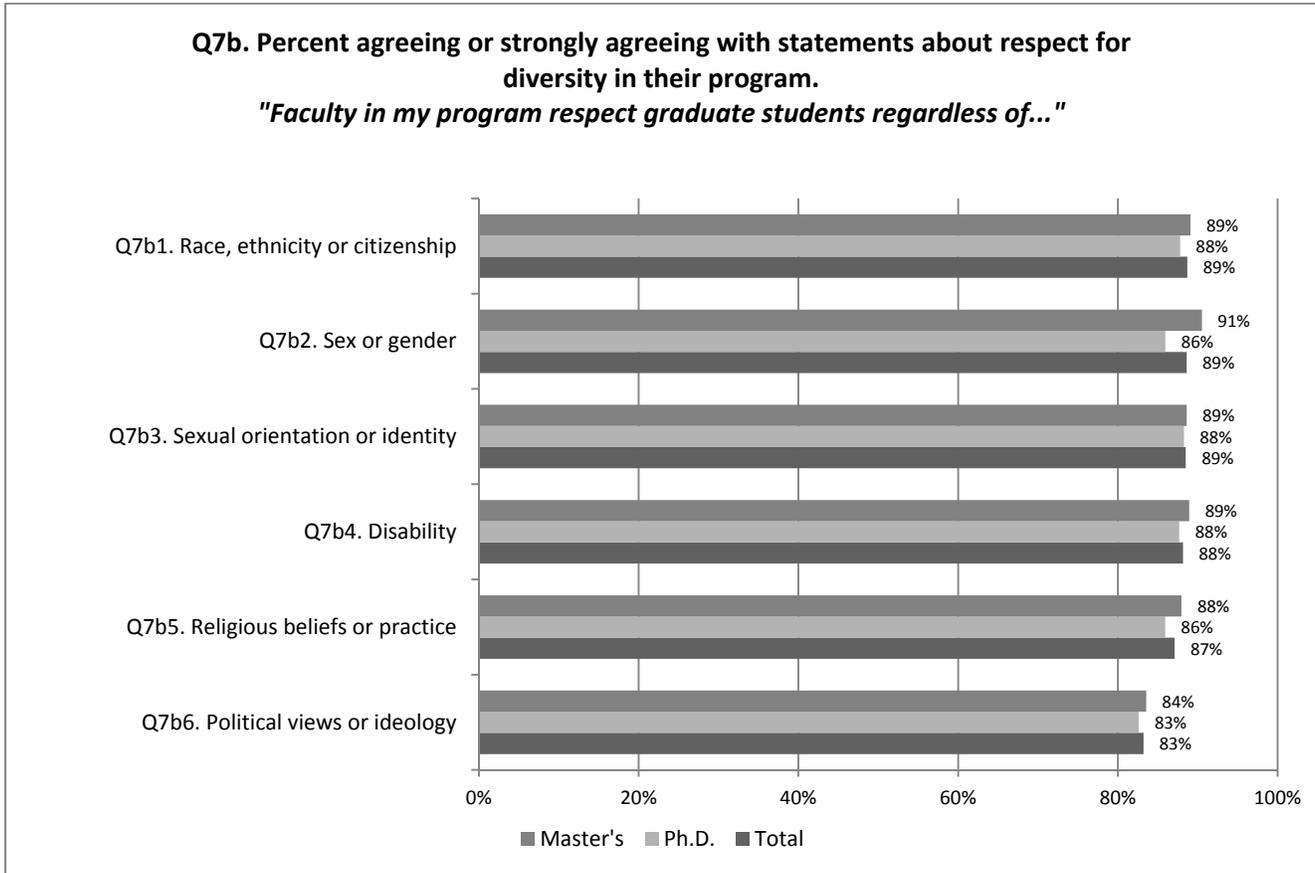
Part 7: Program/Campus Climate

This section of the survey shows some of the highest levels of satisfaction with UAlbany. Both master's and Ph.D. students felt faculty in their program treat 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. Questions related to students' role in governance were more mixed, with Ph.D. 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 – and only around one in four felt that these types of disagreements negatively impact graduate students. However, respondents reported less agreement with the existence of a sense of community among faculty and students. Changes in these areas between 2008 and 2011 were small but largely positive.

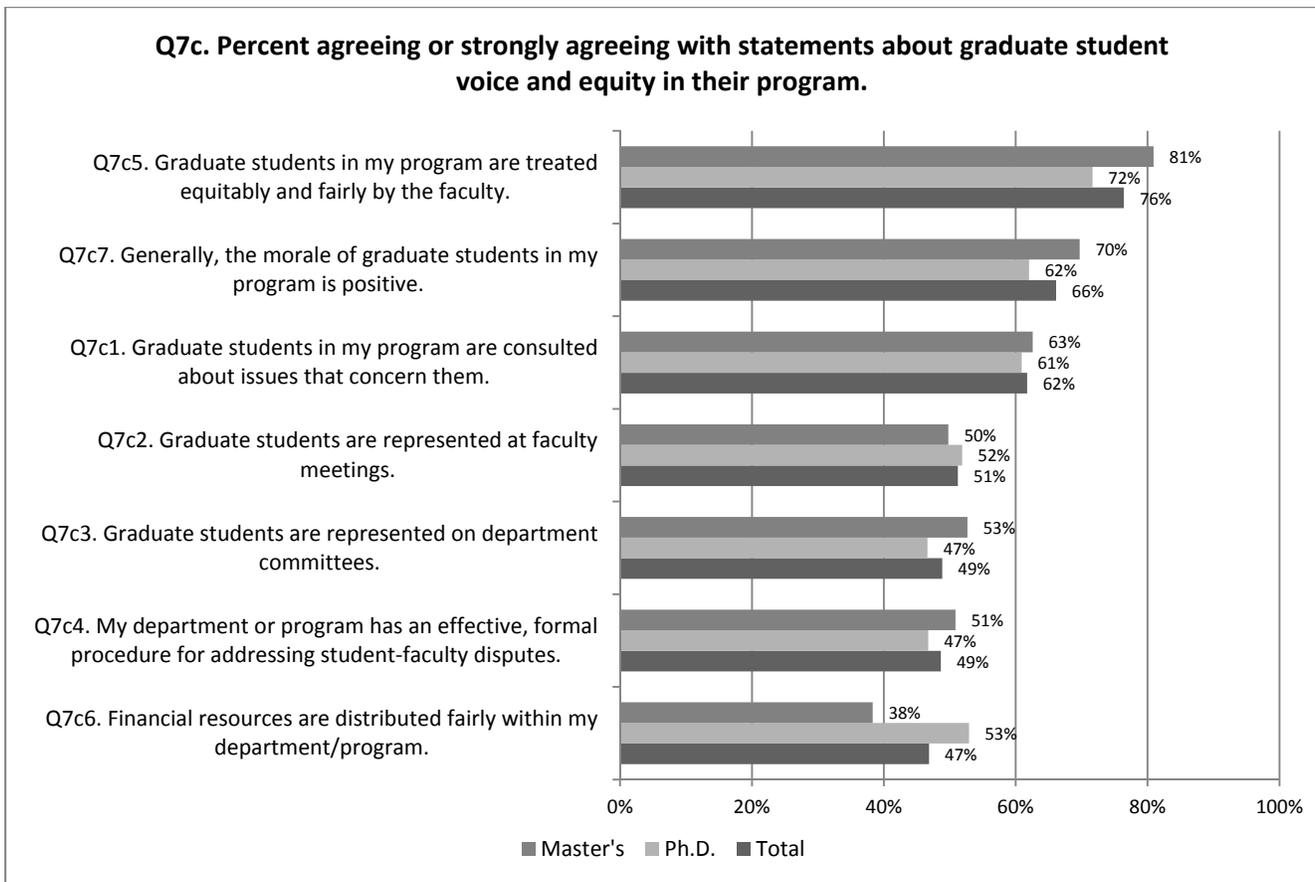


- Faculty Respect for Diverse Students (Q7b):** By very large majorities (83%-91%), UAlbany graduate students agreed that faculty respect students regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religious beliefs, or political views. Overall, agreement was up very slightly but consistently between 2008 and 2011.



- Student Voice and Equity (Q7c):** Nearly three quarters of UAlbany graduate students agreed that students in their program are treated fairly by their faculty; around two thirds agreed that student morale in their program is positive. In both of these areas, agreement was stronger among master's students than among Ph.D. students. 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; interestingly on both these questions, agreement was about the same among Ph.D. students and master's students; previously (in 2008), Ph.D. students had substantially higher levels of agreement with these items. The lowest levels of agreement, under 50%, were for items on procedures for addressing student-faculty disputes and fair distribution of financial resources.

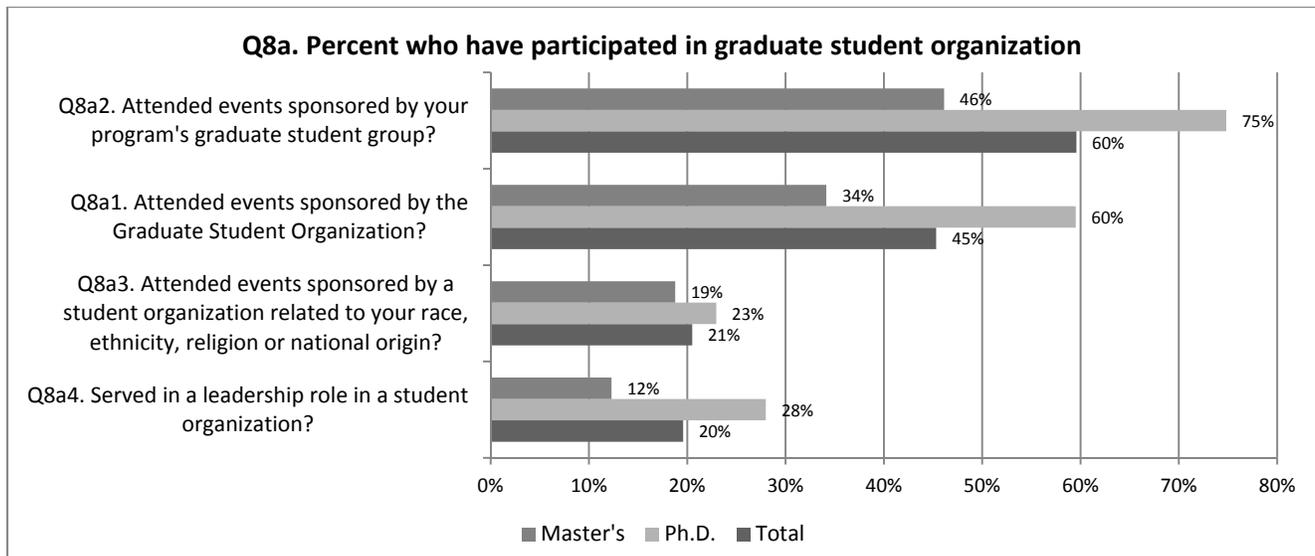
Between the 2008 and 2011 surveys, agreement on these items consistently increased overall, with improved ratings for five out of seven items among Ph.D. students and all seven items for master's students. For Ph.D. students, the largest increase was from 45% to 53% regarding fairness of resource distribution, while the biggest decrease was from 56% to 47% regarding representation on departmental committees. Conversely, for master's students the latter was where the largest increase occurred – from 38% to 53%.



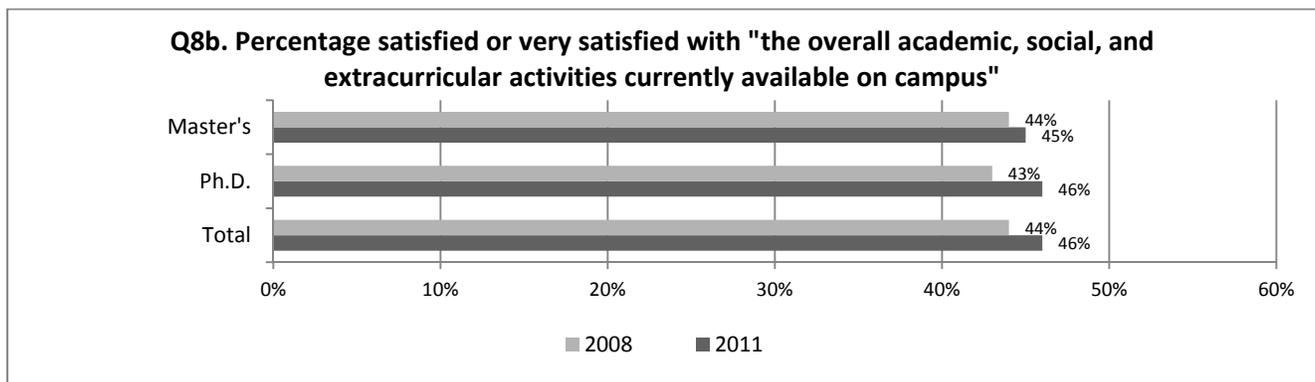
Part 8: Campus Life/ Off-Campus Life

This section of the survey shows that Ph.D. 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. 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 Ph.D. students compared to master's students. Three quarters of Ph.D. students, but under 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. Sixty percent of Ph.D. students, but only around a third of master's students attended events sponsored by the University's Graduate Student Organization. Finally, lower percentages of both groups reported participating in events sponsored by identity groups, or having served in a leadership role. Overall, participation was up slightly between 2008 and 2011.



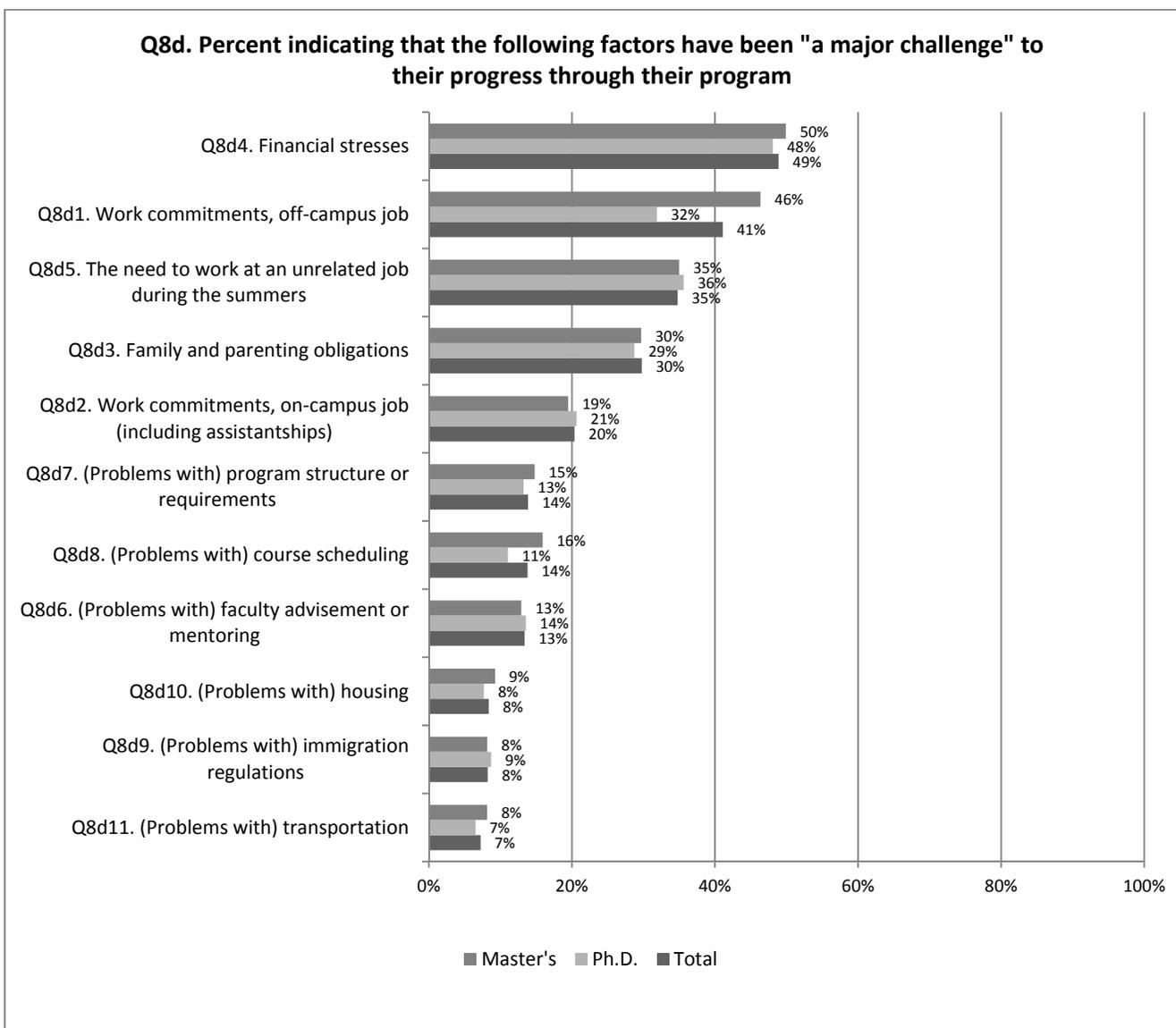
- Overall Satisfaction with Campus Events (Q8b):** Despite the large gap in participation between Ph.D. and master's students, the two groups were equally satisfied with those activities, with just over half of all graduate students expressing satisfaction in this area, up slightly from 2008.



- **Challenges Surrounding Graduate Work (Q8d):** As in 2008, the top three major challenges for respondents in 2011 were financial stresses, work commitment for an off-campus job, and the need to work at an unrelated job during the summers. Family and parenting obligations were major challenges for over a third of UAlbany graduate students.

The items cited least frequently as major challenges were related to transportation, housing, and advisement. Immigration regulations were only cited by 10% overall, but this number would obviously be higher among international students.

Overall, fewer students reported major challenges in 2011 than in 2008, with percentages for nine of eleven items for Ph.D. students and eight of eleven items for master’s students seeing lower numbers. For Ph.D. students, the largest reduction was from 45% to 36% regarding the need to work an unrelated job during the summers. For master’s students, the largest reduction was from work on on-campus jobs from 24% to 20%.

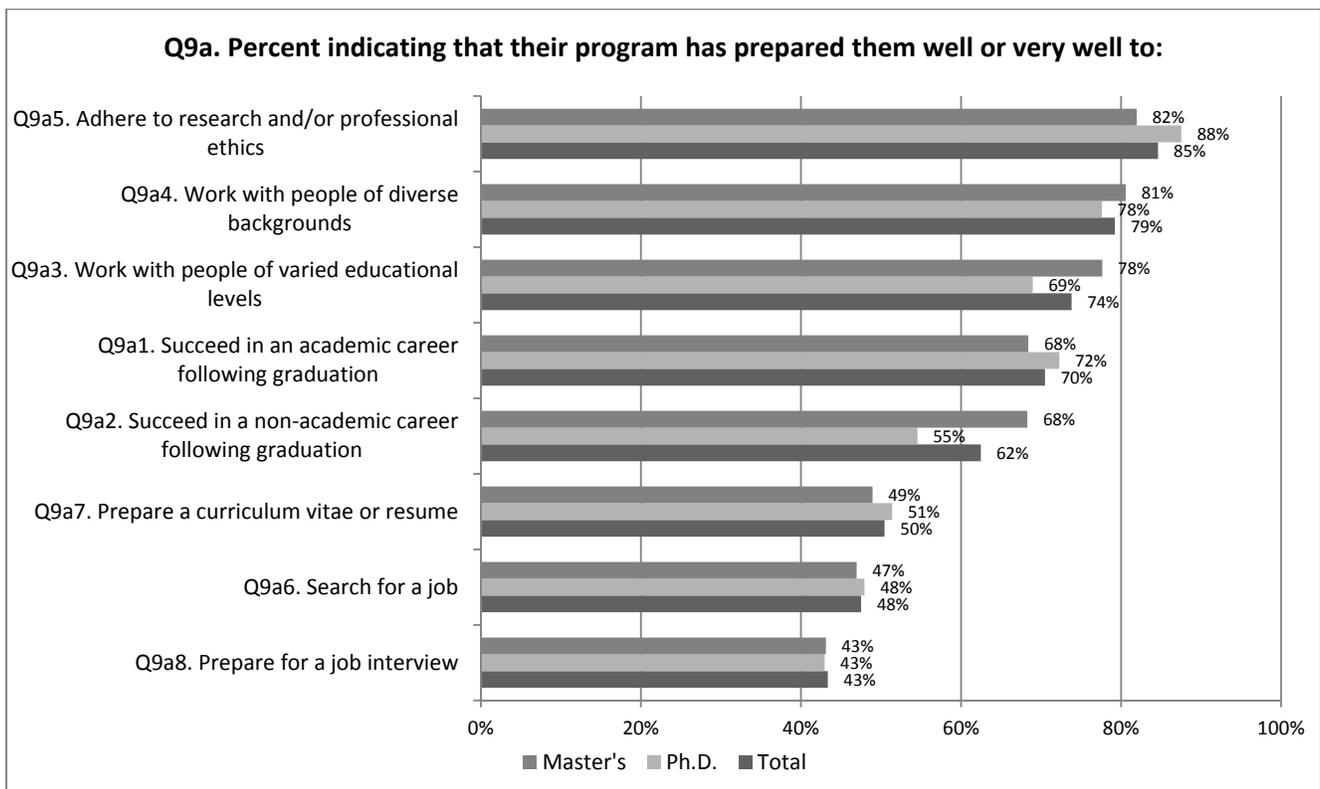


Part 9: Professional Development and Placement

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 heading toward a wide variety of fields, with a large majority of Ph.D. students planning on careers in academia. Among those who had positions lined up at the time of the survey, the median salary for Ph.D. 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; both figures were unchanged from the 2008 survey.

- Program Preparation for Professional Development (Q9a):** More than two thirds of respondents rated their program's preparation highly regarding adhering to research and/or professional ethics, working with people of diverse backgrounds, working with people of varied educational levels, and succeeding in an academic career. Similar percentages of master's students gave equally high ratings to preparation for non-academic careers, with lower numbers for Ph.D. students. UAlbany graduate students were less positive regarding items directly related to preparation for job searches. Fifty percent or fewer felt they were prepared well or very well to prepare for a job interview, search for a job or prepare a c.v. or résumé.

The changes between 2008 and 2011 have been largely positive – among Ph.D. students, the percentage indicating that their program had prepared them well or very well increased on all eight items, with the largest increase being from 70% to 78% on working with people from diverse backgrounds. Among master's students, ratings went up on five of eight items with no items increasing or decreasing by more than 2%.

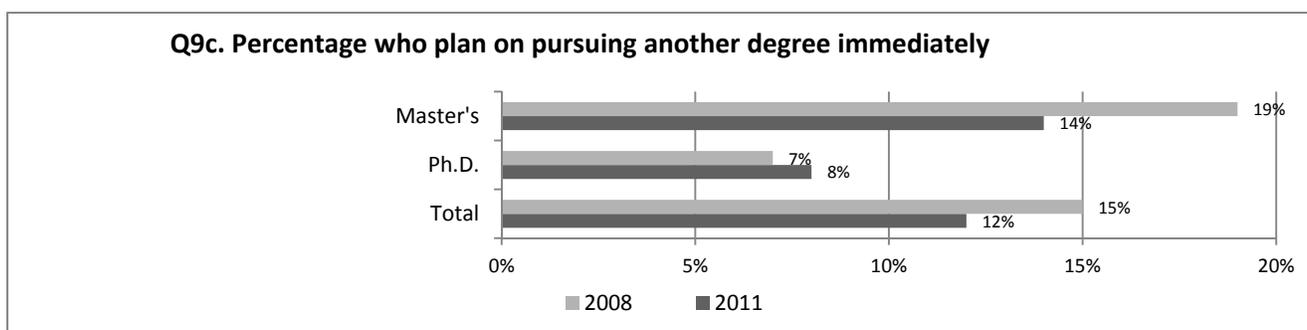


- **Internships and Career Advice (Q9b):** Just over half of all students were satisfied with availability and quality of internships and applied training in their field, with satisfaction slightly higher among master’s students. Fewer than half overall were satisfied with career advice, with Ph.D. students happier about advice regarding academic jobs and master’s students happier with advice regarding non-academic jobs.⁹

Satisfaction was substantially higher in 2011 than in 2008 – on all four items for Ph.D. students and three of four items for master’s students. For Ph.D. students, the largest increase was on quality of internships or applied training, which increased from 38% to 53%. For master’s students, the largest increase was on career options in academia, which increased from 40% to 46%.



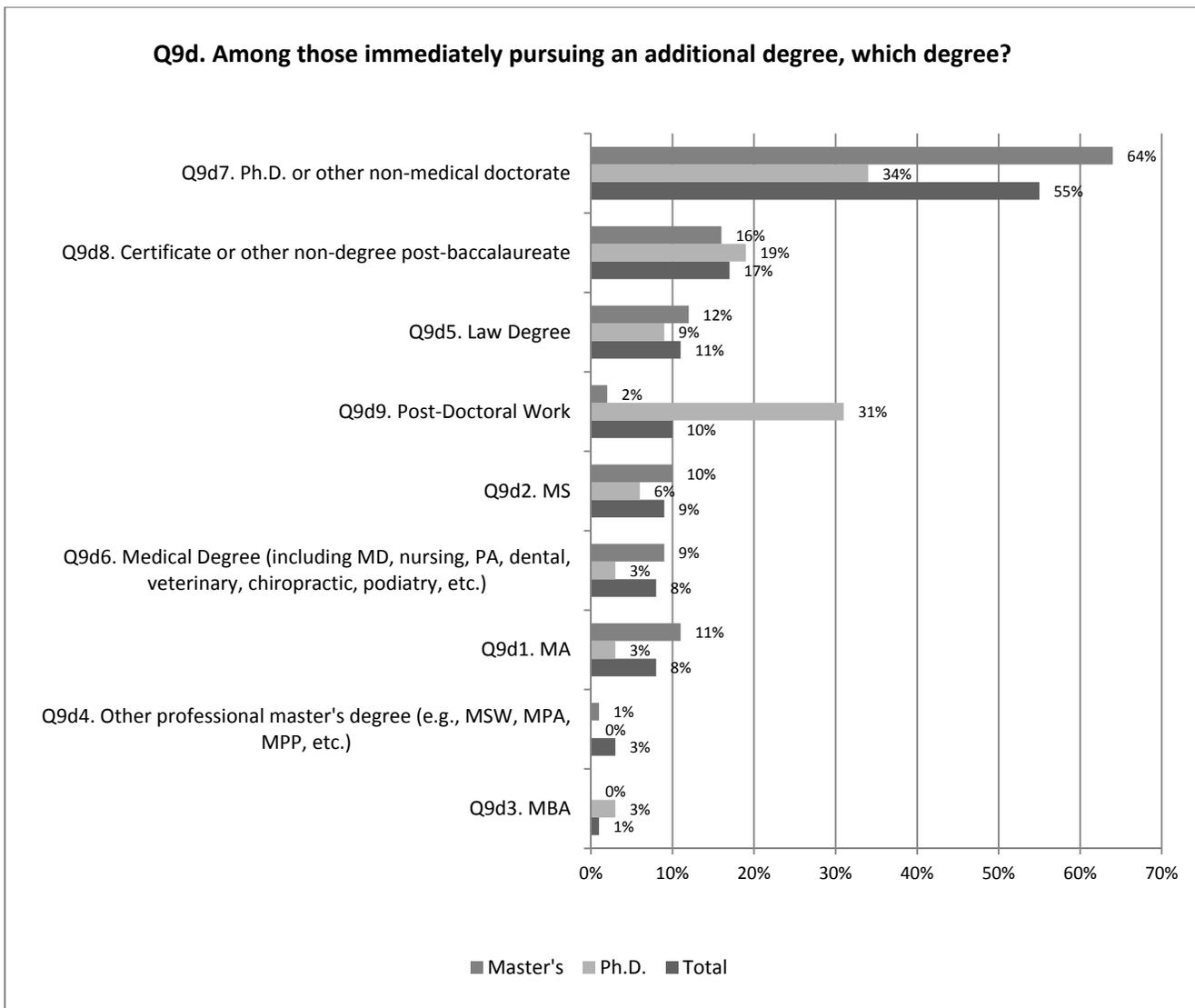
- **Further Education (Q9c):** Only a small minority of UAlbany graduate students planned to pursue another degree immediately after completing their work here. That number was higher for master’s students than Ph.D. students, although the numbers converged somewhat between 2008 and 2011 with a large drop among master’s students and a slight increase among Ph.D. students.



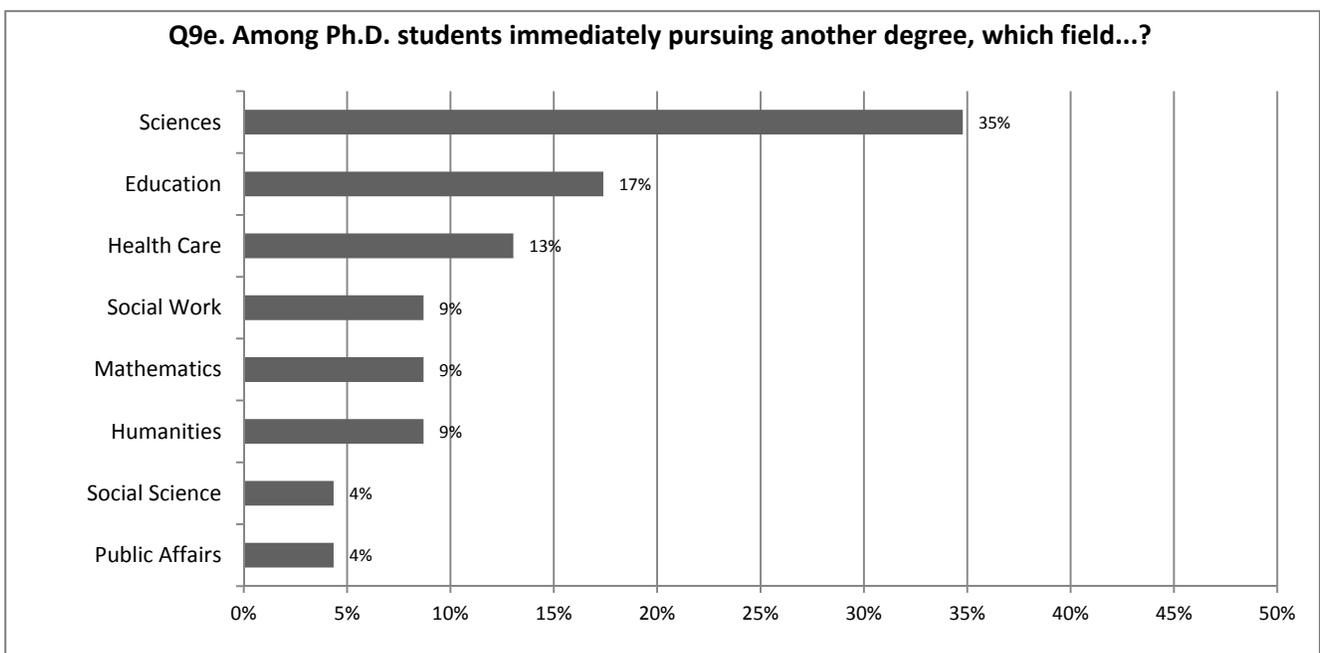
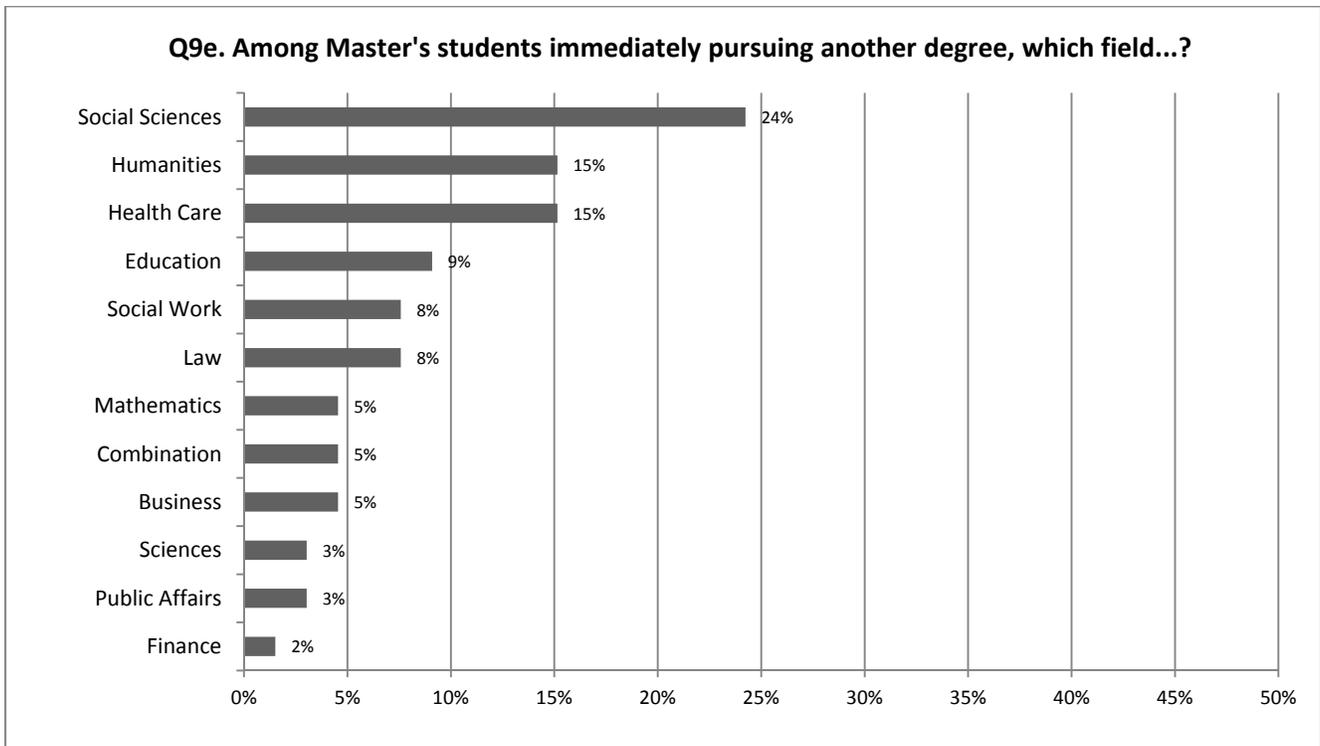
⁹ The finding regarding internships is likely another example of respondents using the middle option of “neutral” as the equivalent of “not applicable.” Only a small minority of Ph.D. students were actually dissatisfied with internships. This may also be the case with master’s students’ responses related to academic jobs and Ph.D. students’ related to non-academic jobs.

- Future Educational Plans: Type of Degree (Q9d):** Of those respondents who planned to attend further degree or certificate programs, plans of Ph.D. students and master's students were very different. For Ph.D. students, the two most popular options were another Ph.D. or post-doctoral work, while 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 Ph.D. students 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.

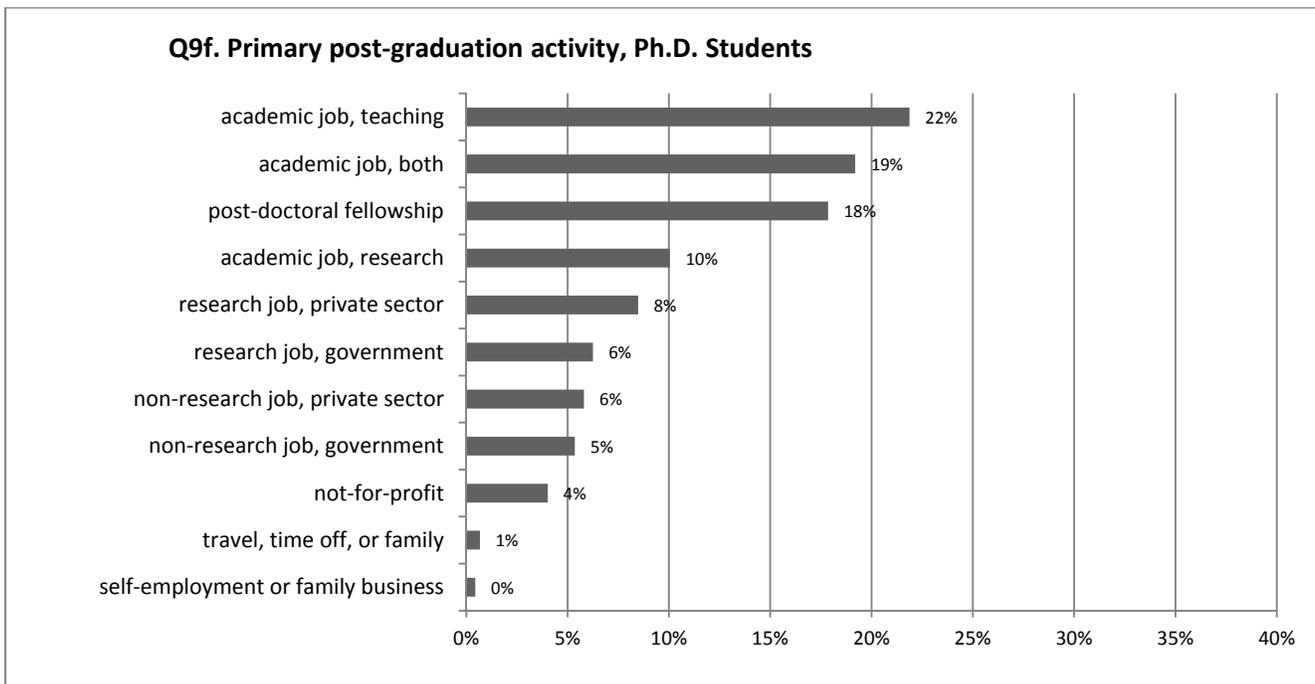
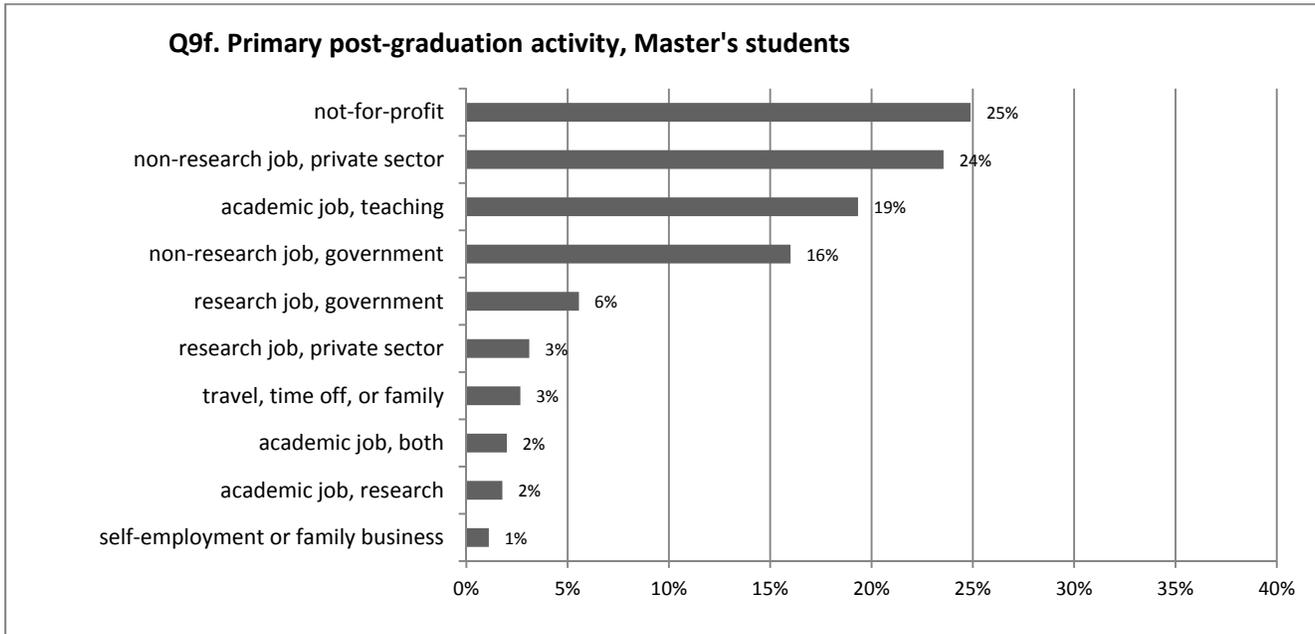


- **Future Educational Plans: Field of Study (Q9e):** For master’s students, the top three fields for future study were social sciences, humanities and health care (compared to 2008 when the top three were public affairs, humanities, and education). For Ph.D. students, the top three were sciences, education and health care (compared to 2008 when the top three were sciences, social sciences and education).

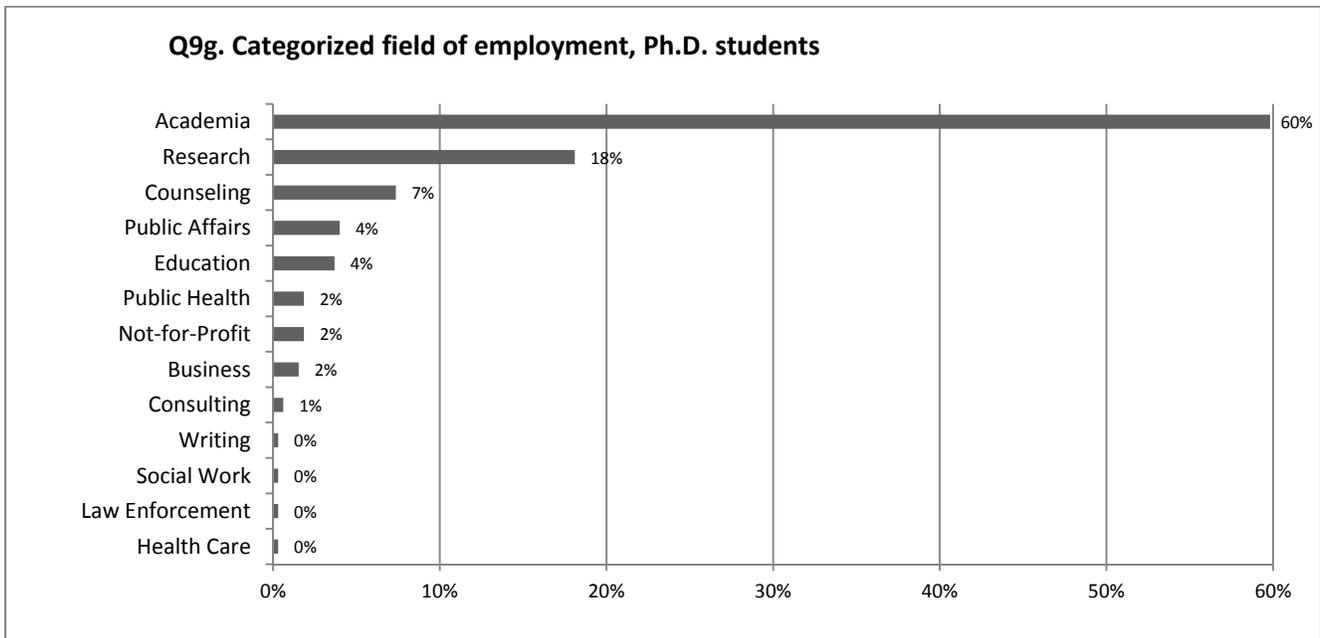
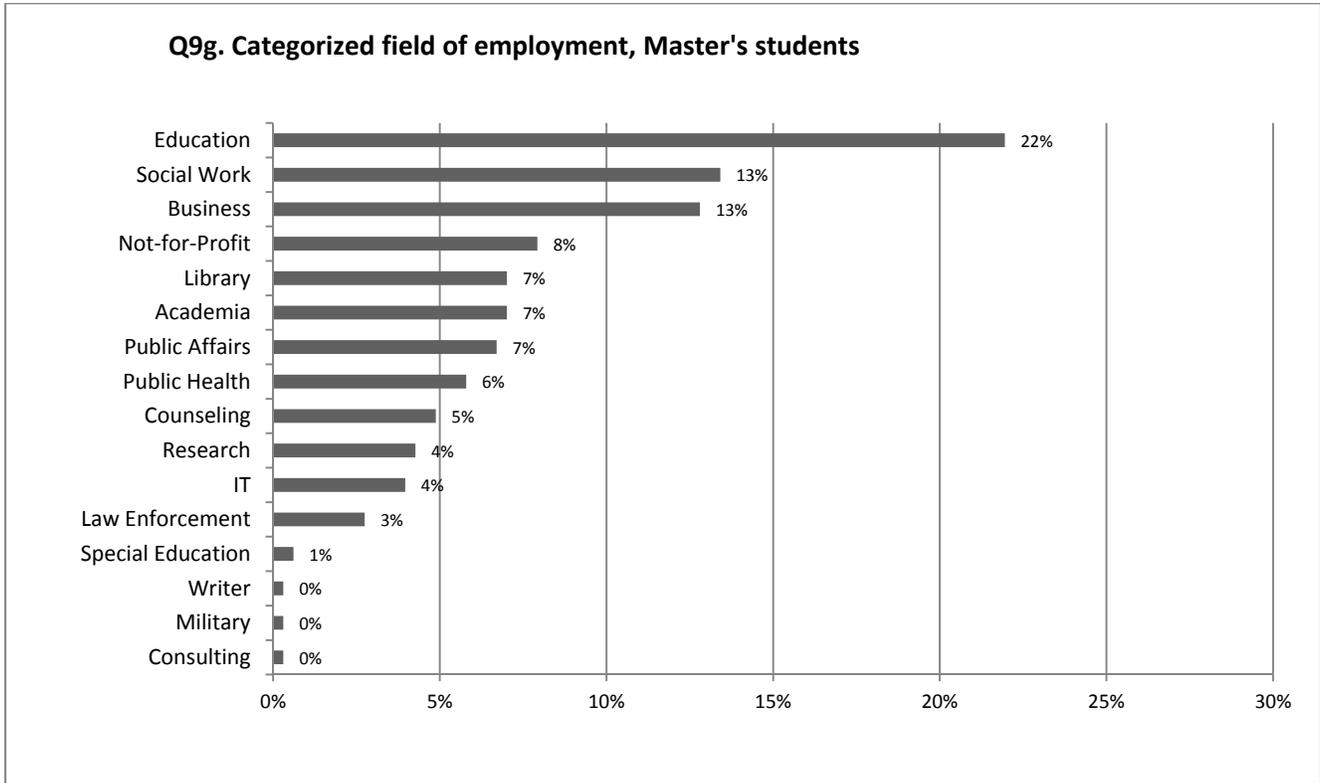


- **Primary Post-graduation Plan or Activity (Q9f):** For master's students not continuing their education, the top post-graduation plans were the not-for-profit sector, non-research jobs in the private sector, teaching, and non-research jobs in the government, nearly identical to the 2008 numbers.

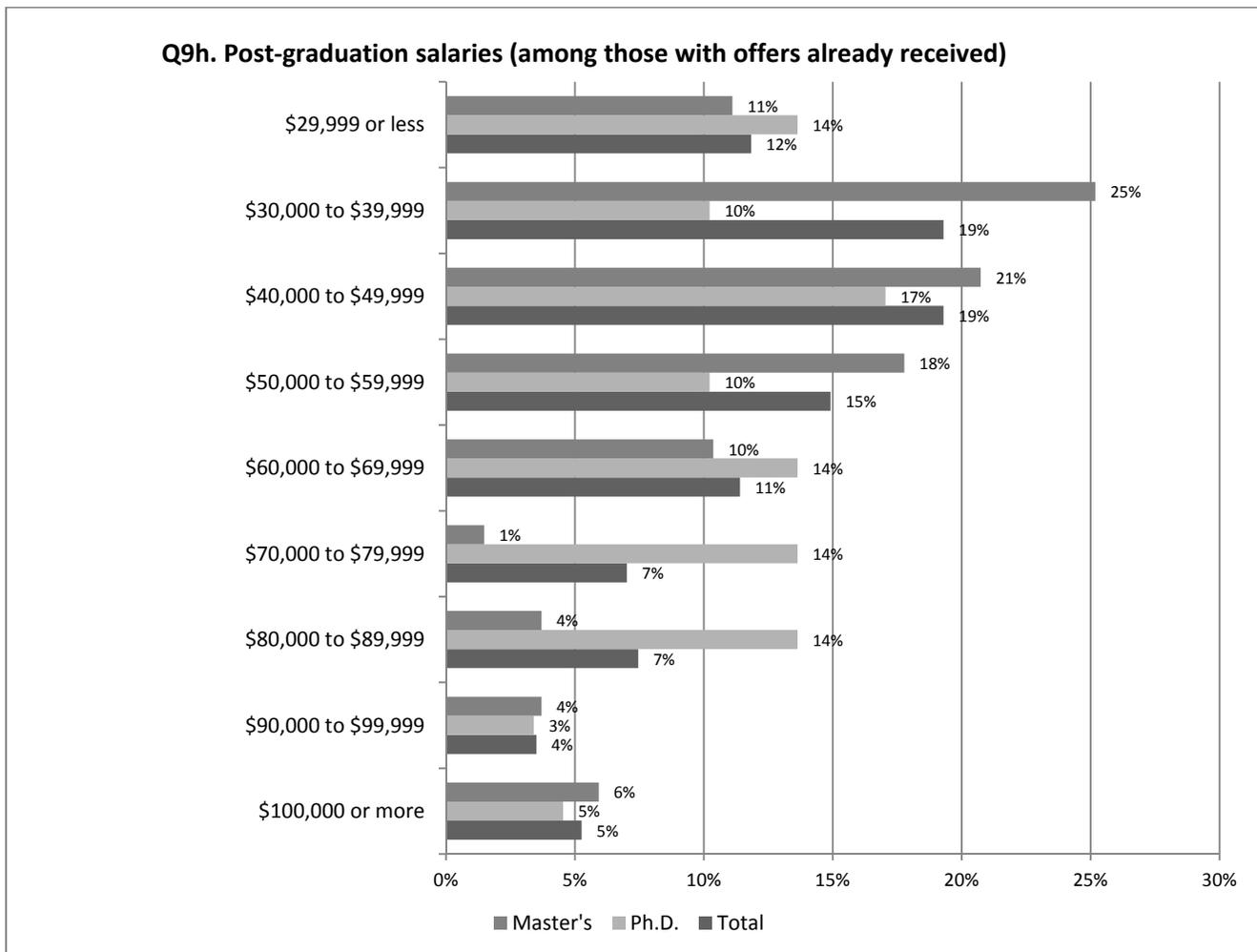
For doctoral respondents, the top plans were academic jobs with teaching as the primary focus, academic jobs with equal focus on teaching and research, postdoctoral fellowships, and academic jobs with research as the primary focus, again, nearly identical to the responses from 2008.



- **Fields of Employment (Q9g):** The top three fields of post-graduation employment for master's students were education, social work and business (compared to education, business and counseling in 2008). For Ph.D. students, academia dwarfed all other fields at 60%; research followed at 18%, nearly identical to the 2008 numbers.



- 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 median overall and for master's students was between \$40,000 and \$50,000 a year; for Ph.D. students, the median was between \$50,000 and \$60,000 a year. Looking at the low and high ends of the scale, 11% of master's students and 14% of Ph.D. students were going to be earning below \$30,000 a year (compared to only 4% of master's graduates and 3% of Ph.D. graduates in 2008), while 15% of master's graduates and 22% of Ph.D. graduates were going to be earning over \$70,000 a year (compared to 9% of master's graduates and nearly 30% of Ph.D. graduates in 2008).



IV. Looking Ahead.

This survey was conducted in Spring, 2011, as the second iteration of a pilot survey conducted in 2008 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 years has enabled us to share program-level survey results with most of UAlbany's department chairs and program directors. The success of this assessment project makes it very likely that it will become a regular part of UAlbany's Assessment Program, with likely re-administration every third year or so, with the next planned administration in Spring of 2014.

Appendix A: Sample and Demographic Report

	Sample Demographics		Population Demographics		Response Rate
Race/Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Percent
White	967	62.7	2511	64.0	39%
Black	76	4.9	193	4.9	39%
Hispanic	54	3.5	156	4.0	35%
Asian or Pacific Islander	79	5.1	161	4.1	49%
American Indian or Native Alaskan	8	0.5	20	0.5	40%
Non-Resident	280	18.1	586	14.9	48%
Unknown	79	5.2	296	7.6	27%
Total	1543	100.0	3923	100.0	39%
Gender	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Percent
Female	998	64.7	2332	59.4	43%
Male	534	34.6	1543	39.3	35%
Blank	11	0.7	48	1.2	23%
Total	1543	100.0	3923	100.0	39%
Student Type	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Percent
Masters	846	54.8	2197	56.0	39%
Doctorate	655	42.4	1532	39.1	43%
Certificates/Other	42	2.7	194	5.0	22%
Total	1543	100.0	3923	100.0	39%
College	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Percent
Arts & Sciences	530	34.3	1134	28.9	47%
Public Health	138	8.9	347	8.8	40%
Education	298	19.3	900	22.9	33%
Business	109	7.1	353	9.0	31%
Criminal Justice	41	2.7	87	2.2	47%
Rockefeller	116	7.5	250	6.4	46%
Social Welfare	166	10.8	371	9.5	45%
Nanoscience	12	0.8	108	2.8	11%
Computing & Information	117	7.6	286	7.3	41%
Other/Missing Data	16	1.0	87	2.2	18%
Total	1543	100.0	3923	100.0	39%
Additional Demographics	Average or Percent		Average or Percent		
Age	31		32		
3 or fewer credits	22.6%		30.2%		
9 or more credits	58.1%		48.3%		
12 or more credits	33.6%		28.2%		