



## **Graduating Seniors, 2008-09: Perceptions of their Experiences at USA**

### **Executive Summary**

This report presents findings from the annual graduating senior survey for the 2008-09 academic year. The survey, conducted every semester with graduating seniors, is posted on the Office of the Registrar's Graduation website. A total of 572 respondents completed the survey in 2008-09 for a response rate of 25.7%.

The findings indicate respondents are generally satisfied with their experiences at USA. Highlights include:

- Over 80% of respondents stated their overall experiences at USA were either "excellent" or "good" and if they had to do it over again, they would either "definitely" or "probably" elect to attend USA.
- Approximately 75% believed the advising received in their major was "excellent" or "good."
- Most respondents felt their academic preparation had been either "excellent" or "good" and as a result, students feel prepared to meet the demands of their career and/or to further their education at some point in the future.
- In addition, most respondents carried a full course load of 12 hours and worked while they were a student at USA.

The results from this survey also suggest there are opportunities for improving academic advising for general studies. In addition, 50% of respondents felt food services were "only fair" or "poor." To improve the value of the graduating senior survey, future instruments will include questions to better understand potential problem areas and invoke procedures to increase the response rate.

## **Part 1. Introduction**

The graduating senior survey is conducted every semester using a web link generated by Zoomerang on the Office of the Registrar Graduation's website for the last 4 weeks of the semester. In the Fall 2008, 1,493 degrees were awarded (summer graduates are included in the fall counts). An estimated 731 degrees were awarded in Spring 2009, resulting in a total of 2,224 undergraduate degrees for the 2008-09 academic year.<sup>1</sup> There were 572 graduating seniors who participated in the survey for a response rate of 25.7%.

The tables which follow present data collected from the graduating seniors who participated in the survey for the Summer 2008, Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 semesters.

## **Part 2. Demographic Overview of Survey Participants**

The majority of participants graduated in the Fall semester, were female (71.3%), less than 24 years of age (46.6%) and White (72.9%). See Table 1 for demographic characteristics of survey respondents.

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<sup>1</sup> Degrees have to be verified. These results may be amended upon receipt of the final Spring numbers.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents, 2008-09

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	163	28.7
Female	404	71.3
Total	567	100.0
<b>Age Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Less than 24	263	46.6
24-29	170	30.1
30-39	90	16.0
40-49	26	4.6
50 and older	15	2.7
Total	564	100.0
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
American Indian/Alaskan Native	4	0.7
Asian	32	5.7
Black or African American	83	14.7
Hispanic or Latino	13	2.3
Multiracial	20	3.5
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	1	0.2
White	411	72.9
Total	564	100.0

Over half of survey participants typically worked part-time (53.5%) with about 20 percent of respondents reporting that they were usually not employed while attending USA (see Table 2).

Table 2. Usual Employment Status while a Student at USA, 2008-09

<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Usually employed full-time	150	26.3
Usually employed part-time	305	53.5
Usually not employed	115	20.2
Total	570	100.0

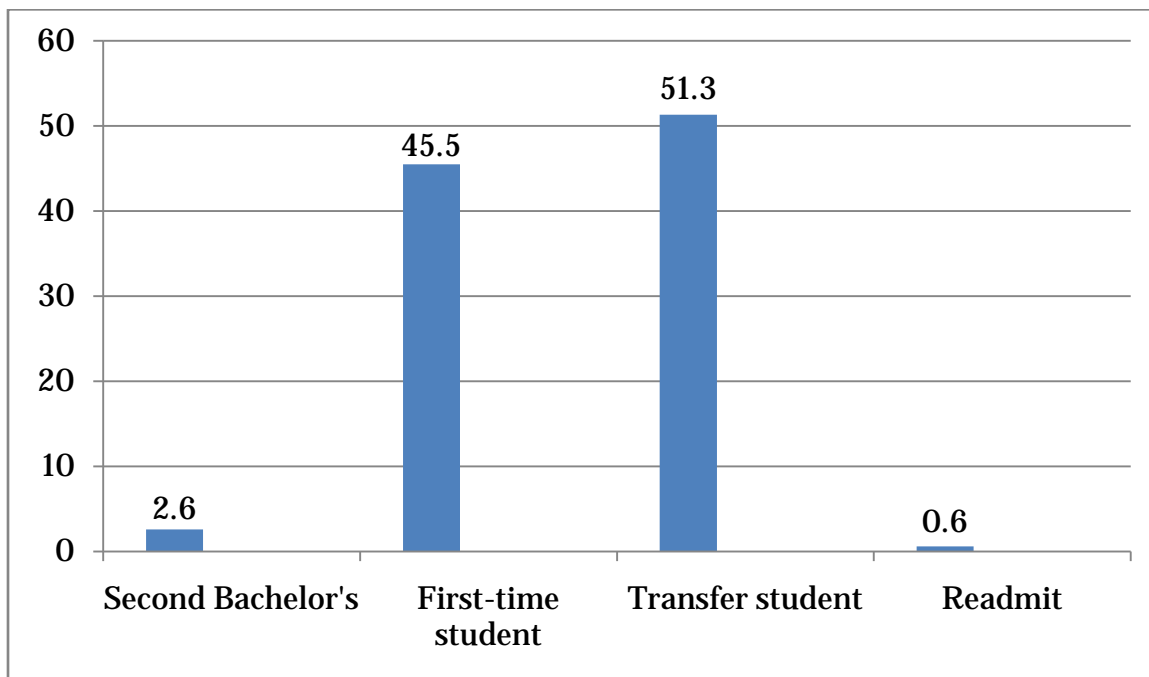
### Part 3. Academic Characteristics of Survey Participants

As detailed in Table 3, first time students accounted for 45.5% of respondents while over half of graduates entered USA as transfer students (51.3%).

Table 3. Admission Status, 2008-09

Admission Status	Frequency	Percent
Earning a second Bachelor's degree	15	2.6
First time in college	258	45.5
Transfer with an A.A. or A.S. degree	130	22.9
Transfer without an A.A. or A.S. degree	161	28.4
Readmission	3	0.6
Total	567	100.0

Figure 1. Admission Status, 2008-09



In Table 4, comparisons of the student status of Fall 2008 undergraduates with the usual student status of respondents are presented. The data reveal that a higher proportion of respondents (89.6%) were usually full-time students as compared to the full-time status for all undergraduates enrolled during Fall 2008 (73.0%). The majority of respondents were enrolled in the College of Education, followed by the College of Arts and Sciences and the Mitchell College of Business. All other colleges/schools had participation rates of less than 10 percent. When comparing to senior enrollment for Fall 2008, the College of Education participation rates exceed senior enrollment by 15%. Participation rates for the School of Computer Information Sciences, Mitchell College of Business, College of Nursing and College of Allied Health Professions fall below senior enrollment for the Fall.

Table 4. Comparisons of Fall 2008 Undergraduate Student Status with Usual Student Status of Respondents while Attending USA, 2008-09<sup>2</sup>

<b>Student Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	<i>University Overall, Fall 2008</i>		<i>Respondents, 2008-09</i>	
Full-time (12 hours or more)	8,070	73.0	508	89.6
Part-time (less than 12 hours)	2,978	27.0	59	10.4
Total	11,048	100.0	567	100.0

Table 5. Comparisons by College of Senior Enrollment, Fall 2008 and Respondents 2008-09<sup>3</sup>

<b>College</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	<i>University Overall, Fall 2008</i>		<i>Respondents, 2008-09</i>	
AHP	283	8.9	27	4.7
AS	907	28.5	169	29.6
CIS	89	2.8	6	1.1
CESP	123	3.9	22	3.9
ED	538	16.9	182	31.9
EG	220	6.9	39	6.8
MCOB	539	16.9	87	15.2
NU	484	15.2	39	6.8
Total	3,183	100.0	571	100.0

<sup>2</sup> Fall 2008 Enrollment figures.

<sup>3</sup> Enrollment figures for Seniors by College were obtained from the 2008-09 FactBook, <http://www.southalabama.edu/irpa/highpriority/factbook0809.pdf>.

#### Part 4. Evaluation of Student Experiences by Survey Participants

Respondents report overall satisfaction with their educational experiences with most students viewing it as an excellent or good experience (84.7%) as presented in Table 6. Similarly, 81.9% stated they would definitely or probably attend USA if they had it to do over again (Table 7).

Table 6. Evaluation of Overall Educational Experience at USA, 2008-09

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Excellent	141	24.7
Good	342	60.0
Only fair	70	12.3
Poor	17	3.0
Total	570	100.0

Table 7. Responses to “If you had it to do over again, would you attend USA?”, 2008-09

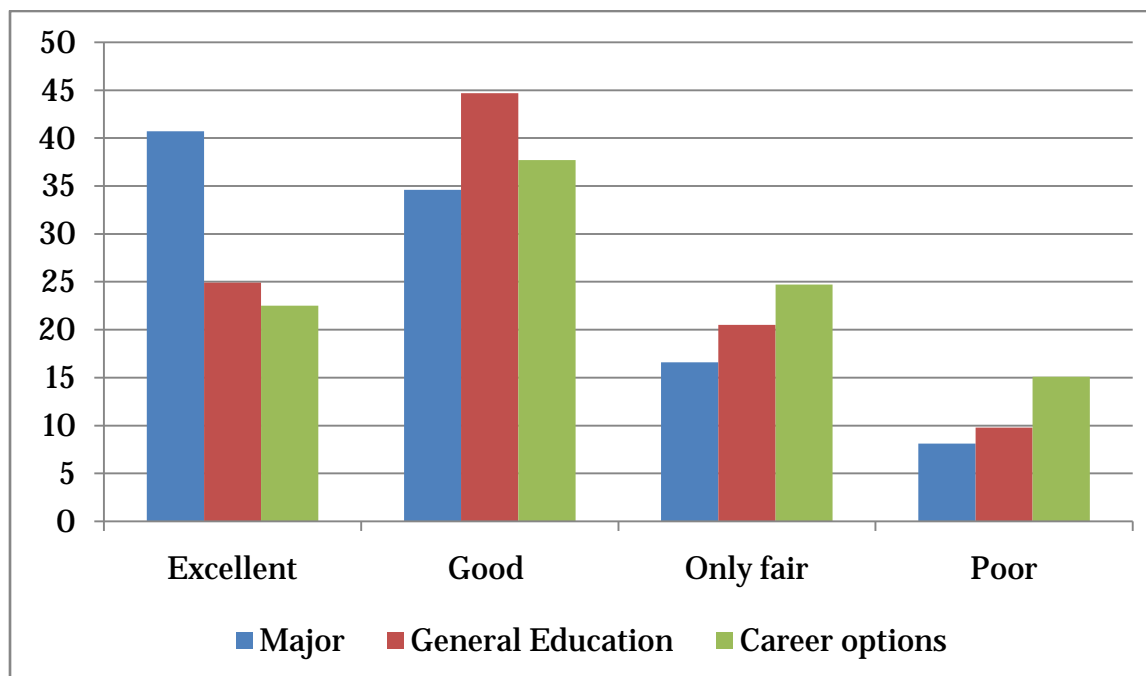
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Definitely yes	173	31.3
Probably yes	280	50.6
Probably no	68	12.3
Definitely no	32	5.8
Total	553	100.0

Survey participants’ perceptions of their advising experiences are presented in Table 8. Approximately 41% of survey participants reported they felt that the advising received for their major was “excellent.” The survey results indicate there are opportunities for improving advising relative to General Studies and career options.

Table 8. Evaluation of Advising Experiences, 2008-09

<b>Advising</b>	<b>Excellent</b>		<b>Good</b>		<b>Only fair</b>		<b>Poor</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>
Specific to Major	226	40.7	192	34.6	92	16.6	45	8.1	555	100.0
General Studies	137	24.9	246	44.7	113	20.5	54	9.8	550	100.0
Career options	125	22.5	209	37.7	137	24.7	84	15.1	555	100.0

Figure 2. Evaluation of Advising Experiences, 2008-09

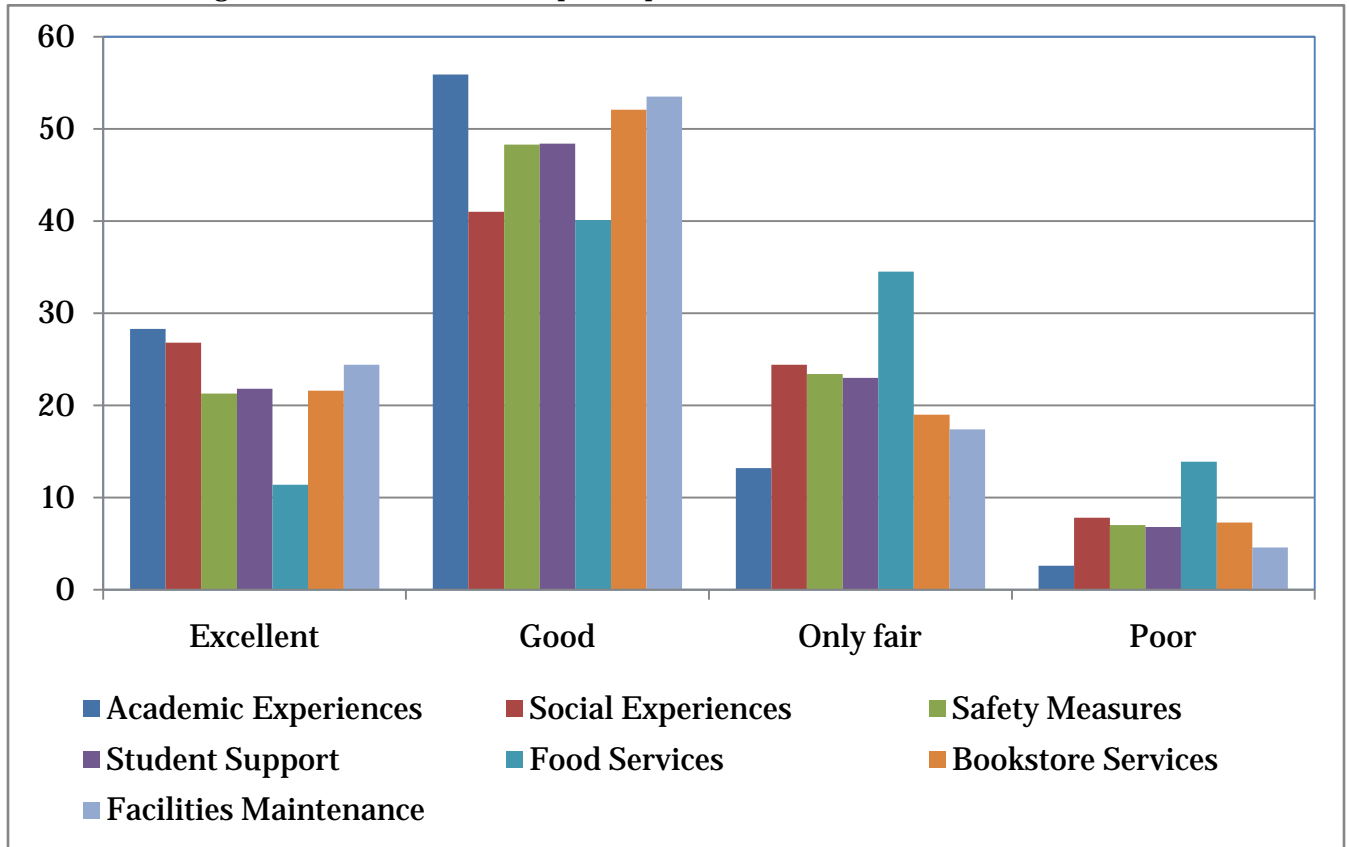


The majority of participants rated their academic and social experiences as either “excellent” or “good”. Having safety measures in place and the evaluation of student support services, bookstore services and maintenance were all viewed by the majority as being “excellent” or “good.” Food services received the lowest scores when compared to the other areas (52% “excellent/good” versus 48% “only fair/poor”).

Table 9. Evaluation of Campus Experiences and Services, 2008-09

	Excellent		Good		Only fair		Poor		Total	
	<i>Freq</i>	%	<i>Freq</i>	%	<i>Freq</i>	%	<i>Freq</i>	%	<i>Freq</i>	%
Academic Experience	161	28.3	318	55.9	75	13.2	15	2.6	569	100.0
Social Experience	145	26.8	222	41.0	132	24.4	42	7.8	541	100.0
Safety Measures	112	21.3	254	48.3	123	23.4	37	7.0	526	100.0
Student Support Services	109	21.8	242	48.4	115	23.0	34	6.8	500	100.0
Food Services	47	11.4	165	40.1	142	34.5	57	13.9	411	100.0
Bookstore Services	122	21.6	294	52.1	107	19.0	41	7.3	564	100.0
Maintenance of Facilities	132	24.4	289	53.5	94	17.4	25	4.6	540	100.0

Figure 3. Evaluation of Campus Experiences and Services, 2008-09

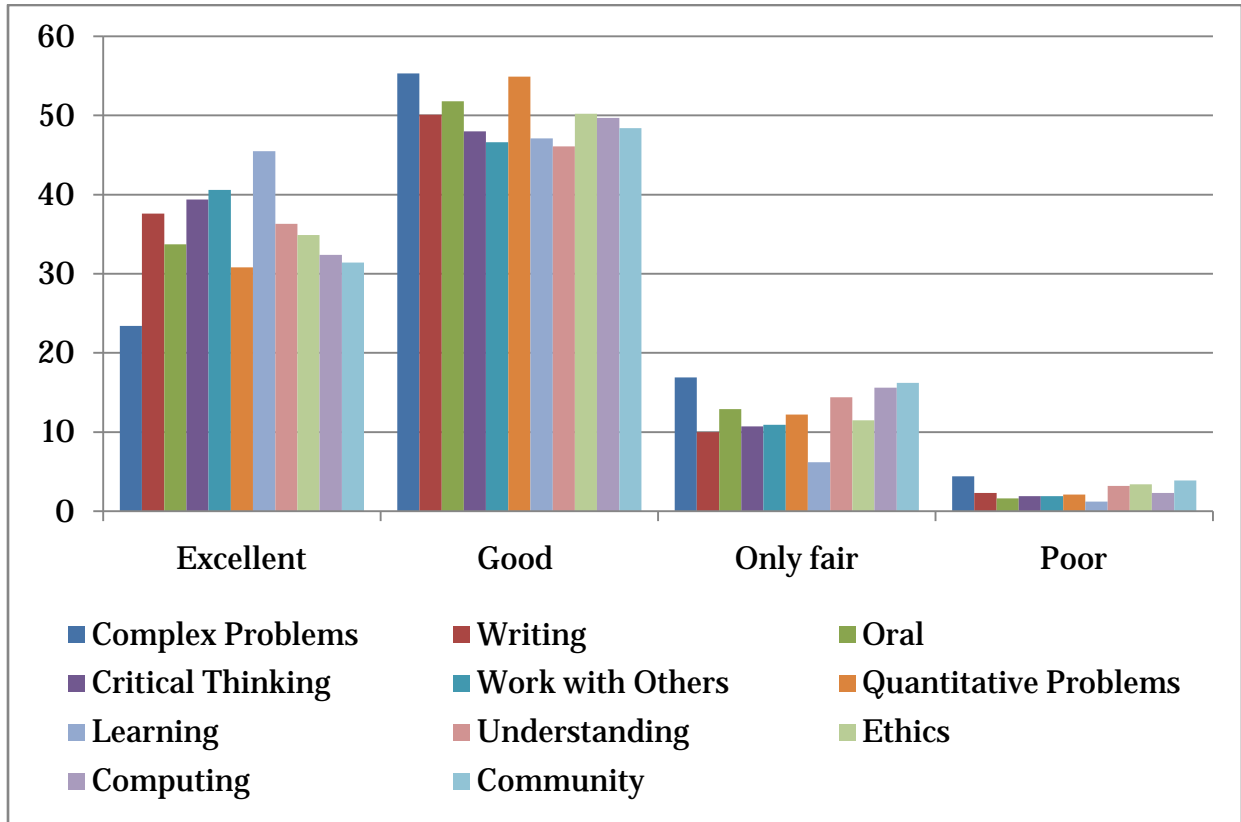


Students were asked to evaluate their academic preparation for ten areas (see Table 10) with the majority rating their academic preparation as either “excellent” or “good.” Nearly all respondents indicated their academic preparation at USA will enable them to “learn on their own” (92.6% “excellent” or “good”).

Table 10. Evaluation of Academic Preparation, 2008-09

<b>Preparation</b>	<b>Excellent</b>		<b>Good</b>		<b>Only fair</b>		<b>Poor</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>
Solving Complex Real World Problems	133	23.4	314	55.3	96	16.9	25	4.4	568	100.0
Developing Written Skills	214	37.6	285	50.1	57	10.0	13	2.3	569	100.0
Developing Oral Skills	191	33.7	293	51.8	73	12.9	9	1.6	566	100.0
Developing Critical Thinking Skills	224	39.4	273	48.0	61	10.7	11	1.9	569	100.0
Working Effectively with Others	230	40.6	264	46.6	62	10.9	11	1.9	567	100.0
Analyzing Quantitative Problems	174	30.8	310	54.9	69	12.2	12	2.1	565	100.0
Learning on your own	257	45.5	266	47.1	35	6.2	7	1.2	565	100.0
Understanding People of Other Races and Ethnicities	204	36.3	259	46.1	81	14.4	18	3.2	562	100.0
Developing a Code of Ethics	197	34.9	283	50.2	65	11.5	19	3.4	564	100.0
Using Computing and Information Technology	183	32.4	281	49.7	88	15.6	13	2.3	565	100.0
Contributing to Community	176	31.4	271	48.4	91	16.2	22	3.9	560	100.0

Figure 4. Evaluation of Academic Preparation, 2008-09



Regarding quality of instruction and faculty relations (see Table 11), survey participants rated their experiences with faculty in regard to instruction and faculty concern highly with 90.6% agreeing that instruction in their major field was excellent and faculty were concerned about them (82.5%).

Table 11. Evaluation of Faculty, 2008-09

Instruction	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total	
	<i>Freq</i>	%	<i>Freq</i>	%	<i>Freq</i>	%	<i>Freq</i>	%	<i>Freq</i>	%
Instruction in major field was excellent.	203	39.7	260	50.9	38	7.4	10	2.0	511	100.0
Faculty were concerned about me.	196	38.6	223	43.9	74	14.6	15	3.0	508	100.0

### Part 5. Future Plans of Survey Participants, 2008-09

When inquiring about future plans, most students (89.3%) responded it was either likely or very likely they would engage in further formal study with over half (58%) stating they would pursue a Master's degree (see Table 13). Table 14 indicates nearly 60% had accepted a full-time position and of those who had not, over three-fourths felt they would be employed within the next 6 months (see Table 15). As noted in Table 16, the majority of respondents felt they were prepared for their chosen careers (89.9%), to meet the demands of their employers (94.2%) and for furthering their education (93.0%).

Table 12. Likelihood of Engaging in Further Formal Study, 2008-09

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Unlikely	61	10.7
Likely	214	37.6
Very Likely	294	51.7
Total	569	100.0

Table 13. Highest Degree Eventually Expect to Obtain, 2008-09

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Certificate or professional license	19	3.4
Doctorate	98	17.3
Master's degree	329	58.0
Medical degree	21	3.7
Second Bachelor's degree	10	1.8
Specialist degree	30	5.3
Not sure	1	.2
No further study intended	59	10.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>567</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 14. Accepted a Full-time Position, 2008-09

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Yes	250	54.9
No	172	37.8
Already employed	33	7.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 15. Expect to be Employed in Six Months, 2008-09

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Yes	129	78.7
No	35	21.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 16. Perceived Preparedness for Future Employment or Academic Endeavors, 2008-09.

<b>Future expectations</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>		<b>Agree</b>		<b>Disagree</b>		<b>Strongly disagree</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>
Well-prepared for chosen career	177	35.2	275	54.7	37	7.4	14	2.8	503	100.0
Meet expectations of my future employer	235	46.7	239	47.5	19	3.8	10	2.0	503	100.0
Well-prepared to further my education	235	46.3	237	46.7	28	5.5	8	1.6	508	100.0

## **Part 6. Implications**

The results of the survey indicate survey participants were generally satisfied with their experiences while attending USA. They also felt they have been academically prepared and have developed the skills necessary for a successful career and/or furthering their education. Improving the quality of advising is an opportunity that can help students and also benefit retention and graduation rates.

A limitation of this study is the response rate . Plans to improve the response rate in the future include (1) more direct communication between the Office of Assessment and students regarding the opening and closing dates of the survey and (2) distributing announcements of the survey in 300 and 400 level classes to encourage student participation. Future surveys also will include questions to probe for specifics about problematic areas.