



**Graduate Student Survey
Executive Summary
Fall 2020**

Report by Drew Whittington
Office of Institutional Effectiveness

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

The Graduate Student Survey was designed to gather opinions of currently enrolled graduate students related to various components of their educational experiences as graduate students at the University of South Alabama. Objectives of the survey are to indicate current strengths of the graduate school/university experience, and areas of potential improvement. The Graduate Student Survey was administered electronically using the Qualtrics survey system. The survey included Likert scale, multiple choice, and open-ended items. The survey launched on October 16, 2010, and closed on November 13, 2020. Participation was voluntary and reminder emails were sent out once a week on Fridays before the close of the survey.

What is in the summary?

The following summary outlines strengths, areas of improvement, items with significant sex or minority status mean differences, and an overview of both on-campus and off-campus obstacles students reported facing.

Scoring, Interpretation, and Rationale

- ◇ Items with 80% or more positive responses (agree or strongly agree) are considered strengths. This is because 80% indicates scoring at least a “B” on these items.
- ◇ Items with more than 20% negative responses (disagree or strongly disagree - somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied) are considered areas of potential improvement. This is because these items have lower than 80% positive responses, indicating a “C” or lower.

Highlights

- ◇ Overall score on thesis/dissertation advising was 3.32 (out of 4)
- ◇ Overall program climate score was 3.07 (out of 4)
- ◇ Overall score on items regarding USA libraries’ resources was 3.35 (out of 4)
- ◇ Most students reported on-campus work commitments as either not presenting any challenges (44.8%) or only being a minor challenge (32%).
- ◇ Most students reported problems with faculty advising or mentoring as either not presenting a challenge (58%) or only being a minor challenge (26%).
- ◇ **When indicating what they like about their academic advising, many students report their advisor as being knowledgeable/informative, straightforward, and giving prompt responses.**
- ◇ **When reporting on what they do not like about their academic advising, many students report a lack of communication, and many others report either receiving no advising or being unsure of the identity of their advisor.**

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Important Sample Characteristics

The sample consisted of graduate students who were enrolled in the Fall 2020 semester. In total, there were 5,175 graduate students; 1,091 students responded to the survey for a response rate of 21%. n = number of respondents.

Table 1.1: Gender

Sex	N (Sample)	Proportion of Sample	Proportion of Student Body
Male	194	17.8	19.6
Female	897	82.2	80.4
Total	1,091	100	100

Table 1.2: Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	N (Sample)	Proportion of Sample	Proportion of Student Body
African American	202	18.5	18.3
Asian American	40	3.7	4
Hispanic American	28	2.6	3.7
Multiracial	29	2.7	2.5
Native American	8	.7	.9
Non-Resident Alien	30	2.7	1.6
Pacific Islander	3	.3	.1
Unknown	22	2	2
White	729	66.8	66.9
Total	1091	100	100

Table 1.3: Student Level

Level	N (Sample)	Proportion of Sample	Proportion of Student Body
Master's	806	73.9	72.7
Doctorate	235	21.5	23.4
Certificate	38	3.5	3.2
Specialist	7	.6	.3
No-Degree	1	.1	.1
Certification	4	.4	.4
Total	1091	100	100

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Strengths

Item	Section	Total % for Positive Responses
Helps me identify a suitable research topic.	Thesis/Dissertation Advisor	89
Helps me develop my ideas into a workable proposal or prospectus.	Thesis/Dissertation Advisor	87
Helps me design and implement my research plan.	Thesis/Dissertation Advisor	85
Provides feedback promptly on drafts of my thesis/dissertation.	Thesis/Dissertation Advisor	81
Helps with my transition into a role as a professional or academic in my field.	Thesis/Dissertation Advisor	86
Encourages me to submit my work for publication.	Thesis/Dissertation Advisor	83
Encourages me to present my work at conferences.	Thesis/Dissertation Advisor	83
Collaborates with me on research for presentation or publication.	Thesis/Dissertation Advisor	80
Gives the appropriate level of credit to me for my research contributions	Primary Advisor	81
Encourages me to attain my goals	Primary Advisor	81
Models good professional relationships	Primary Advisor	80
My advisor creates an environment where all group members are treated fairly	Primary Advisor	82
I find the electronic library full-text databases useful during my studies	Library	93
I find the library reference and interlibrary loan services useful during my studies	Library	85
Faculty in my program treat graduate students with respect and collegiality.	Program Climate	88
Faculty in my program manage their methodological or ideological disagreements in a professional manner.	Program Climate	89

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Areas of Potential Improvement

Item	Section	Total % for Negative Responses
The academic advising I received helped me progress in my program.	Academic Advising	21
I am satisfied with the academic advising I received.	Academic Advising	22
Encourages me to take on challenging opportunities	Primary Advisor	22
Asks me to co-author scientific publications	Primary Advisor	53
Advocates for me	Primary Advisor	24
Helps me to develop professional relationships	Primary Advisor	27
Provides information about academic career paths	Primary Advisor	30
Provides information about nonacademic career paths	Primary Advisor	38
Faculty in my program sometimes allow their methodological or ideological disagreements to impact negatively on their relationships with students (<i>Reverse-coded</i>)	Program Climate	39

Major On-Campus/Off-Campus Obstacles

Item	Total who selected as a major challenge (%)
Work commitments, off-campus job	51
Family and parenting obligations	47
Financial stresses	44