

## REPORT OF 2009 GRADUATES – ALUMNI SURVEY

### **Introduction**

Montclair State University's primary goal is to provide our students a well-rounded education in order to prepare them for employment upon graduation. The U.S. Census Bureau reported a 9.5% unemployment rate for the state of New Jersey in their 2008-2012 American Community Survey, so this is particularly important with regard to our region. With more than one quarter of its citizens enrolled in college, there is a significant need to provide our alumni with employment opportunities.<sup>1</sup> This presents the University with a challenge to equip our students with the necessary skills to be successful in the working world. As our Mission Statement declares, "The University seeks to focus the professional activities of its faculty and the educational endeavors of its students on the enduring disciplines that will continue to constitute the knowledge base of an educated citizenry in the 21st century, as well as on the more specific and changing areas of study that have particular relevance to the region served by the University." (Montclair State University, 2014)

The main purpose of our survey is to inform the University of our strengths and weaknesses. It is the hope of the Office of Institutional Research that the administration uses this data to make decisions regarding our future alumni.

### **Data Collection**

We sent surveys to our undergraduate and graduate alumni in the fall of 2010. The total amount sent was 3,551. About 4% of these surveys were returned undeliverable as addressed. Therefore, the completion rate for our surveys was 9%, as 300 were completed and received by our office. Below, we will report the responses for our undergraduate and graduate alumni separately.

### **Undergraduate Alumni Responses**

The total of undergraduates who responded was 205. Sixty-eight percent of the total responses were from undergraduates. Of the respondents, 77% reported full-time employment. Only 6% were unemployed and seeking employment. As in past surveys, the majority of respondents are employed as teachers (15%). More than three-quarters of respondents work in New Jersey, contributing to our economy.

A promising 85% of our undergraduate respondents reported that their job was "directly related" or "somewhat related" to their degree. Sixty percent reported earning \$30,000 or more annually. One quarter of our undergraduate respondents report currently being enrolled in school, and of those 25%, ninety-three percent are enrolled in graduate school.

Nearly half of our undergraduate respondents believe they received a better education than their peers and the same responded in kind to our question of in-depth knowledge of their major. With respect to communication skills, half of our respondents believe they write effectively better and

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<sup>1</sup> Data obtained from the United States Census Bureau.

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much better than their peers. Another 45% responded in the same manner regarding speaking effectively.

When asked about their ability to think critically and solve problems, half of undergraduate respondents answered they believed they were “better” or “much better” than their counterparts. The rest of the majority believed it was the same as their counterparts.

A slightly lower amount believed their ability to use current technologies was “better” or “much better” than their counterparts (44%), while over half responded positively (“good” and “excellent”) to students services (56%).

When it comes to quality of instruction, 88% of our undergraduate respondents rated it as “good” and “excellent” (55% and 33%, respectively). The University must take note that a lower percentage of our undergraduate respondents replied positively to the question of career preparation (48%), academic advising (50%), and probability for upward mobility (40%).

### **Evaluating 2007-2009 Undergraduate Alumni Responses**

We evaluated the undergraduate responses with regard to these services going back to our 2007 undergraduate alumni. There are areas which are rated higher since we began to track the answers, such as General Education, Writing Effectively, and Using Current Technologies.

However, the trend shows a declining number of students who evaluated student services as “better” and “much better.” Academic advising, career preparation, and student services hit a sharper decline between the 2009 Alumni survey (for 2008 graduates) and this current survey for 2009 graduates. This is not a full representation of student attitudes, but it is worth noting. It would be a prudent measure to reexamine these areas in order to provide students with a more positive experience.

While the chart shows a trend of a declining assessment from our alumni respondents over the years (see Figures 1.0 and 2.0), it’s also important to note that our response rates have also declined over the years. Still, the results suggest a reevaluating of the services we offer to students.

### **Graduate Alumni Responses**

Because the expectations and needs of our graduates are markedly different from those of our undergraduates, we chose to keep their responses separate.

The total of graduates who responded to our survey was 95. Given the amount of graduate alumni in 2009 (810), 12% of our alumni responded. Of the respondents, 87% reported full-time employment. Only 4% were unemployed and seeking employment. As with undergraduates, the

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majority of respondents are employed as teachers (20%). This is no surprise. The U.S. Census<sup>2</sup> reported 23% of New Jerseyans are employed in “educational services, and health care and social assistance.” Eighty-three percent of respondents indicated they work in New Jersey, contributing to our economy.

A larger number of our graduate respondents reported that their job was “directly related” or “somewhat related” to their degree (96%). Seventy four percent reported earning \$40,000 or more annually. A smaller amount of respondents reported being enrolled in school (7%), indicating a master’s degree will be their terminal degree, as 75% reported not being enrolled in school and not planning to enroll.

While many students responded positively to having more in-depth knowledge of their major (63%), a more diplomatic response followed the question of whether they believed their education to be better or much better than their peers (49%).

Writing effectively (52%) and speaking effectively (49%) numbers were modest, but the question of thinking critically and solving problems had a much higher response rate in the “better” and “much better” rating (60%). Graduate respondents who rated using current technologies as “better” and “much better” stood at 45%.

When it comes to quality of instruction, 89% of our graduate respondents rated it as “good” and “excellent” (46% and 43%, respectively). Academic advising received a higher rating from graduate students (70%) and career preparation (69%), as well as student services (67%). Probability for upward mobility remained lower at 43%.

### **Quality of Overall Education**

These responses were higher than the individual questions. Undergraduates responded largely positively to this question, responding “good” and “excellent” (83%) and graduate students (86%).

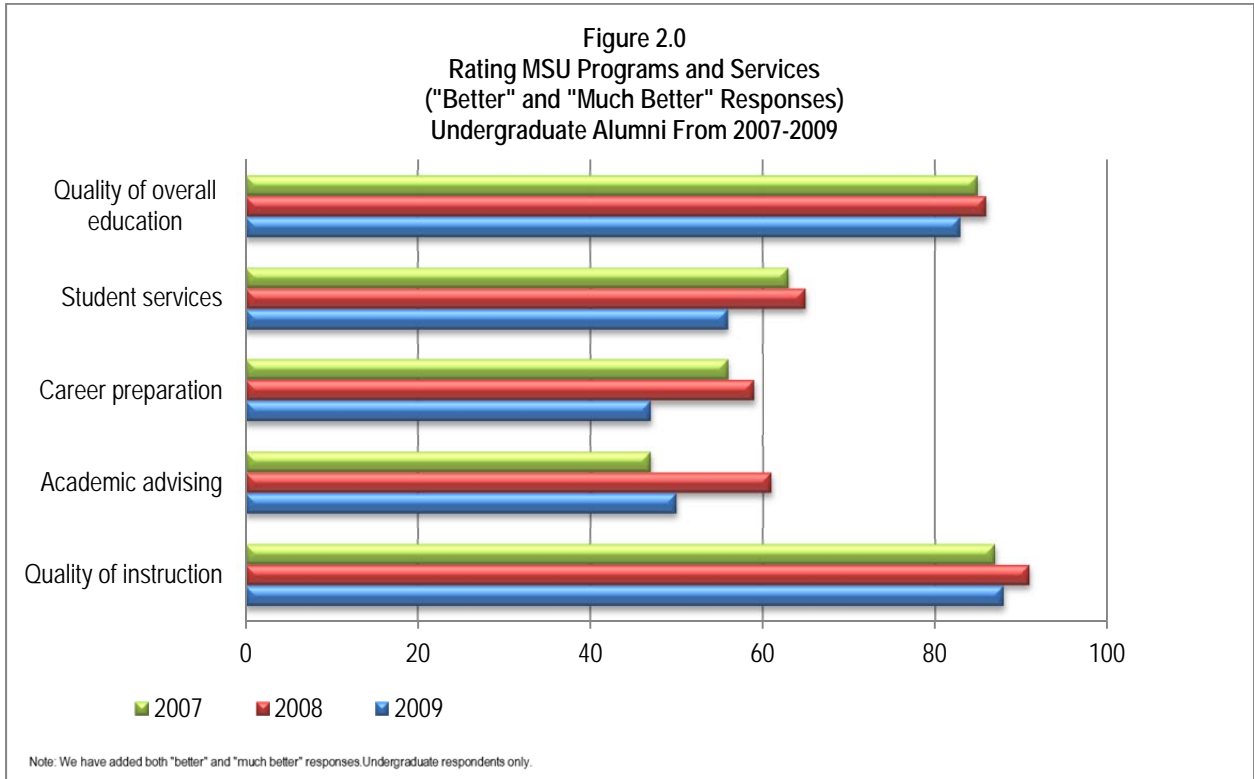
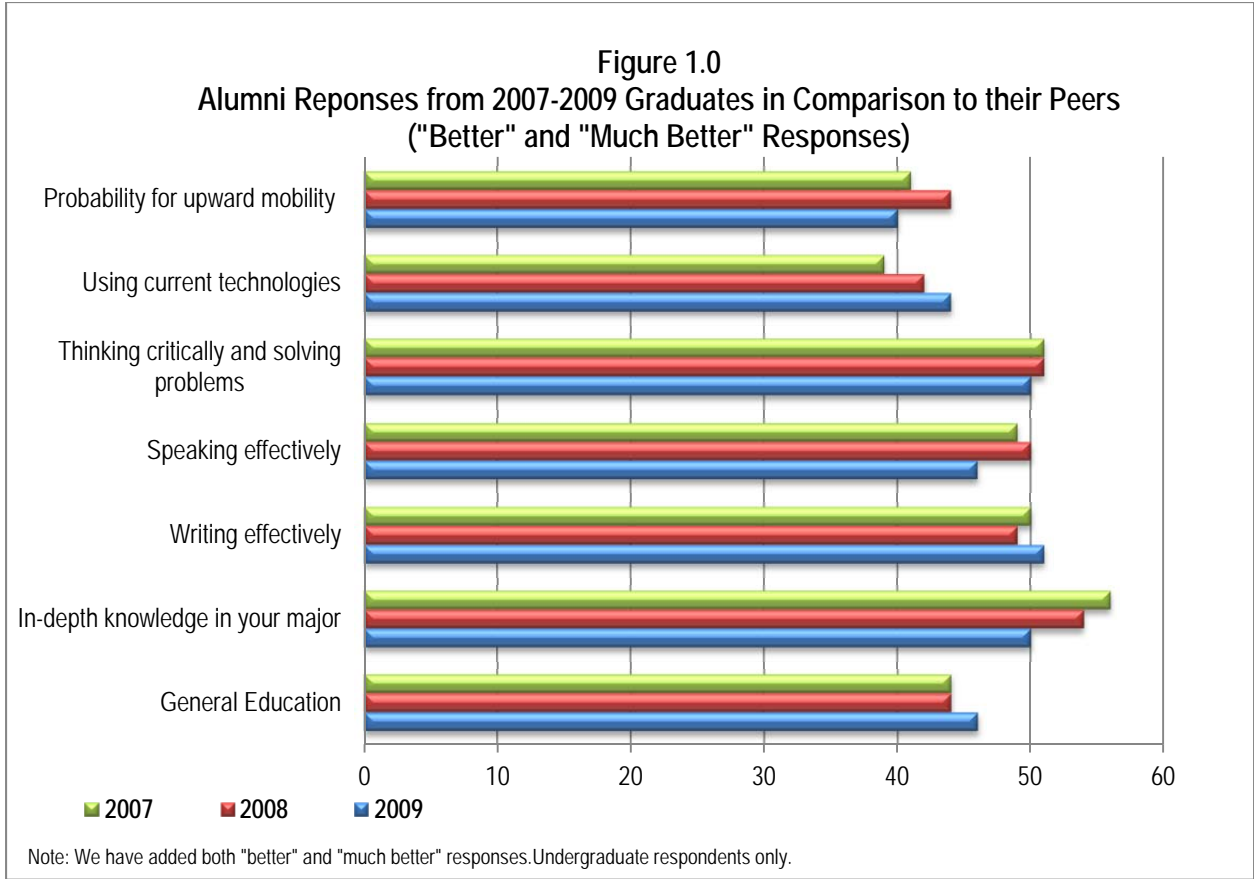
### **Conclusion**

Our findings show promising employment rates for our alumni respondents, both undergraduate and graduate. The results indicate a \$10,000 increase in average starting salary for graduate student respondents. In addition, many of our graduate students who responded are not returning to school after obtaining a master’s degree. Academic advising is an area in which they didn’t have many positive responses for, as well as probability for upward mobility. It would be interesting to examine whether the students took advantage of these student services and also why those who responded neutrally to the question about upward mobility within their place of employment.

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<sup>2</sup> Data obtained from the United States Census Bureau.

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TABLES FROM ALUMNI SURVEY

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**Table 1.0**

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<b>General Education</b>		
	Undergraduates	Graduates
Much Better	13.6	14.4
Better	31.8	34.4
Same	51	48.9
Worse	2.5	1.1
Much Worse	1	1.1
Total	100	100

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**Table 2.0**

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<b>In-depth knowledge in your major</b>		
	Undergraduates	Graduates
Much Better	20.4	22.2
Better	30.1	41.1
Same	43.4	34.4
Worse	5.1	1.1
Much Worse	1	1.1
Total	100	100

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**Table 3.0**

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<b>Writing effectively</b>		
	Undergraduates	Graduates
Much Better	17.3	23.3
Better	33	28.9
Same	46.7	45.6
Worse	2	1.1
Much Worse	1	1.1
Total	100	100

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Table 4.0

Speaking effectively		
	Undergraduates	Graduates
Much Better	14.2	16.7
Better	31.5	32.2
Same	50.3	48.9
Worse	3.6	1.1
Much Worse	0.5	1.1
Total	100	100

Table 5.0

Thinking critically and solving problems		
	Undergraduates	Graduates
Much Better	16.4	22.2
Better	33.8	37.8
Same	44.6	37.8
Worse	4.6	2.2
Much Worse	0.5	100
Total	100	

Table 6.0

Using current technologies		
	Undergraduates	Graduates
Much Better	14.6	15.6
Better	29.3	28.9
Same	47	51.1
Worse	6.6	3.3
Much Worse	2.5	1.1
Total	100	100

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Table 7.0

Probability for upward mobility		
	Undergraduates	Graduates
Much Better	11.6	13.2
Better	27.8	29.7
Same	49.5	53.8
Worse	6.1	1.1
Much Worse	5.1	2.2
Total	100	100

Table 8.0

Quality of instruction		
	Undergraduates	Graduates
Excellent	32.7	43.2
Good	54.5	46.3
Fair	10.9	8.4
Poor	2	2.1
Total	100	100

Table 9.0

Academic advising		
	Undergraduates	Graduates
Excellent	18.7	20.4
Good	31	49.5
Fair	33	19.4
Poor	17.2	10.8
Total	100	100

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**Table 10.0**

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<b>Career preparation</b>		
	Undergraduates	Graduates
<b>Excellent</b>	18.2	28
<b>Good</b>	29.1	40.9
<b>Fair</b>	30.5	24.7
<b>Poor</b>	22.2	6.5
<b>Total</b>	100	100

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**Table 11.0**

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<b>Student services</b>		
	Undergraduates	Graduates
<b>Excellent</b>	14.9	13.2
<b>Good</b>	41.3	53.8
<b>Fair</b>	31.8	28.6
<b>Poor</b>	11.9	4.4
<b>Total</b>	100	100

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**Table 12.0**

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<b>Quality of overall education</b>		
	Undergraduates	Graduates
<b>Excellent</b>	21.8	27.4
<b>Good</b>	60.9	58.9
<b>Fair</b>	14.9	12.6
<b>Poor</b>	2.5	1.1
<b>Total</b>	100	100

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1. Which of the following best describes your current employment status?
- Employed Full-time
  - Employed Part-time
  - Unemployed, but seeking employment *[skip to question #5]*
  - Unemployed, not seeking employment (e.g. retired, disabled or not in workforce) *[skip to question #5]*

2. Please provide the following information about your current position:

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

In what State do you currently work? \_\_\_\_\_

3. To what extent is your current job related to your major field of study at MSU?

- Directly related
- Somewhat related
- Not related

4. Please indicate your current annual salary:

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000 to \$19,999
- \$20,000 to \$29,999
- \$30,000 to \$39,999
- \$40,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 and above

5. Which of the following best describes your current educational status?

- Enrolled full-time
- Enrolled part-time
- Not enrolled, but planning to enroll *[skip to question #7]*
- Not enrolled, and not planning to enroll *[skip to question #7]*

6. What degree are you pursuing? \_\_\_\_\_

What major/discipline are you studying? \_\_\_\_\_

What College or University do you attend? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Compared to graduates from other colleges with whom you now associate, how would you rate your MSU education?

	Much Better	Better	Same	Worse	Much Worse
General Education	<input type="radio"/> (A)	<input type="radio"/> (B)	<input type="radio"/> (C)	<input type="radio"/> (D)	<input type="radio"/> (E)
In-depth knowledge in your major	<input type="radio"/> (A)	<input type="radio"/> (B)	<input type="radio"/> (C)	<input type="radio"/> (D)	<input type="radio"/> (E)
Writing effectively	<input type="radio"/> (A)	<input type="radio"/> (B)	<input type="radio"/> (C)	<input type="radio"/> (D)	<input type="radio"/> (E)
Speaking effectively	<input type="radio"/> (A)	<input type="radio"/> (B)	<input type="radio"/> (C)	<input type="radio"/> (D)	<input type="radio"/> (E)
Thinking critically and solving problems	<input type="radio"/> (A)	<input type="radio"/> (B)	<input type="radio"/> (C)	<input type="radio"/> (D)	<input type="radio"/> (E)
Using current technologies	<input type="radio"/> (A)	<input type="radio"/> (B)	<input type="radio"/> (C)	<input type="radio"/> (D)	<input type="radio"/> (E)
Probability for upward mobility	<input type="radio"/> (A)	<input type="radio"/> (B)	<input type="radio"/> (C)	<input type="radio"/> (D)	<input type="radio"/> (E)

8. Please rate the following aspects of your education while attending MSU.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Quality of instruction	<input type="radio"/> (A)	<input type="radio"/> (B)	<input type="radio"/> (C)	<input type="radio"/> (D)
Academic advising	<input type="radio"/> (A)	<input type="radio"/> (B)	<input type="radio"/> (C)	<input type="radio"/> (D)
Career preparation	<input type="radio"/> (A)	<input type="radio"/> (B)	<input type="radio"/> (C)	<input type="radio"/> (D)
Student Services	<input type="radio"/> (A)	<input type="radio"/> (B)	<input type="radio"/> (C)	<input type="radio"/> (D)
Quality of overall education	<input type="radio"/> (A)	<input type="radio"/> (B)	<input type="radio"/> (C)	<input type="radio"/> (D)