

Introduction and Summary:

The development of this survey began in the fall of 2010. Wanting to gather feedback from recent graduates about the effectiveness of Greeley's program of study, we met with a technology director from a neighboring district, experienced in the use of social media to conduct such surveys. We studied a variety of surveys administered by high schools and colleges across the nation. At the same time, we initiated discussions with Greeley's Department Chairs, to think through the potential goals and benefits of such a survey, both to decide whether or not a survey could help us move forward, and then to decide what type of survey to conduct. Following those discussions, we decided to administer a first survey we knew would be broad in scope, trusting that our graduates would point us to the specific areas that would benefit from further investigation.

The process then shifted to the development of questions and the format of the survey. Again, we began with sample surveys from across the country. We presented samples to our Department Chairs, and then to the entire Greeley faculty for consideration and feedback. Our challenge was to keep the survey short enough that it would engender a large response, but long enough to be thorough. In addition, we wanted to strike the right balance between those questions whose responses could be easily tabulated (i.e. multiple choice), and those that would allow more detailed, narrative responses (without overwhelming our ability to make meaning of those responses).

In the spring of 2011, we used the database of graduate email addresses stored in the Naviance System through our Counseling Office to send the completed survey out to approximately 1800 graduates (from the six previous graduating classes). In a fairly short period, we received approximately 240 responses, with the majority of responses coming from the four most recent graduating classes (2007 to 2010).

The response to the overall Greeley experience is extremely positive. More than 90% of responders indicate being either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with Greeley's ability to provide "meaningful learning experiences." More than 85% indicate the same levels of satisfaction with our ability to provide a "welcoming, nurturing environment," to demonstrate "concern for [our students] as individuals," to foster "positive interactions between students and staff," and to give students "opportunities to develop interpersonal skills." 70% of graduates describe the level of academic challenge at Greeley as "just right," and more than 90% indicate that they put forth maximum effort at least some of the time. More than 75% of graduates rate their college preparation as either "good" or "outstanding" in all of the following areas: reading, writing, critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving, teamwork, and leadership skills. The narrative responses, while harder to quantify, are remarkable for the fact that of the many comments about specific, individual teachers, all were positive. (Note: Surveys were anonymous, and responders were free to write whatever they wanted in the comment sections).

Finally, we do think this initial survey, as we had hoped, gives us direction for further study. There is no single area that a majority of our graduates describe as being in need of immediate or dramatic attention. When asked to identify those areas, however, in which Greeley students might be given further or different experience, graduates indicate that we can and should look more closely at how we're exposing students to research (more than 50% of responders suggest that research be assigned more frequently to Greeley students), to public discussion (50%), to student presentations (48%), and to writing across the curriculum (33%). In the coming year, our department chairs and faculty will be considering how best to further study and refine those other areas. Finally, the topic of stress has been discussed at Greeley and within the community for some time. When asked in our survey, almost 50% of graduates indicated a "severe" level of stress in the junior year, and roughly 40% indicated at least a "moderate" level in the other three years. We will continue our study of this area, as well.

Following this introduction, we present the numerical data that we will continue to study. Included here is ALL the data we received, with the exception of some responses to Question Number 5 in which high percentages of “unable to rate” responses rendered the data unhelpful. We also present a sampling of the narrative responses in those areas that received significant attention and that provide us with focus for further study. As noted earlier, there were many favorable comments about individual teachers. While we are happy to receive such comments, we have chosen not to publish those comments that name individuals.

Greeley Graduate Survey Responses (242 responders)
October 2011

1. Thinking about your over-all experience at Greeley, which of these statements BEST describes the level of academic challenge you experienced?	
Answer Options	Response
Not challenging enough	6.2%
Just right	70.7%
Too challenging	7.9%
Over-all level of challenge too varied to rate	15.3%

2. Indicate your level of satisfaction with the following aspects of Greeley:					
Answer options	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Unable to Rate
Providing a welcoming, nurturing environment	35.1%	50.4%	11.2%	3.3%	0.0%
Demonstrating concern for you as an individual	34.0	52.3	10.4	3.3	0.0
Fostering positive interactions between students and staff	45.0	43.3	10.4	1.3	0.0
Providing meaningful learning experiences	42.6	47.7	7.6	1.7	0.4
Maintaining a respectful and fair environment for each student	40.0	43.8	12.5	3.8	0.0
Providing opportunities for you to speak up for yourself	31.3	47.9	15.0	5.0	0.8
Giving opportunities for you to develop interpersonal skills	35.8	50.8	11.3	1.7	0.4

3. Which of the following best captures your experience at Greeley?	Response
I consistently put forth maximum effort in most of my classes.	39.3%
I consistently put forth maximum effort in some of my classes.	19.8%
I put forth maximum effort at certain times in most of my classes.	21.5%
I put forth maximum effort at certain times in some of my classes.	11.6%
I seldom put forth maximum effort.	5.8%
None of these descriptors captures my experience.	2.1%

4. Given what you have been expected to do in college, how would you rate your preparation at Greeley in these skill areas?					
Answer Options	Outstanding	Good	Sufficient	Inadequate	Unable to Rate
Reading skills	34.3%	47.7%	14.6%	2.9%	0.4%
Writing skills	35.3	41.1	17	6.6	0
Speaking skills	20.8	47.5	22.9	7.5	1.3
Critical thinking	40.8	46.6	9.2	3.4	0
Problem solving	41.0	47.3	9.6	1.7	0.4
Research skills	31.7	33.3	22.1	11.3	1.7
Technology skills	31.7	40.0	23.3	3.8	1.3
Creative thinking	31.5	47.1	18.1	2.5	0.8
Teamwork	33.6	46.2	15.1	2.9	2.1
Leadership skills	33.5	44.4	17.2	3.3	1.7
Time management	38.9	32.6	18.4	9.6	0.4

5. Given what you have been expected to do in college, how would you rate your preparation at Greeley?					
Answer Options	Outstanding	Good	Sufficient	Inadequate	Unable to Rate
English	30.3%	42.9%	20.2%	4.6%	2.1%
Foreign Language	24.1	32.8	23.7	8.7	10.8
Mathematics	33.8	43.3	13.8	5.8	3.3
Science	40.2	40.2	10.9	2.9	5.9
Social Studies	35.8	38.3	16.3	2.1	7.5

6. Which of the following types of experiences should have been used more frequently in your classes? Choose all that apply:	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Teacher lecture	27.7%
Discussion	50.4%
Debate	31.8%
Reading	21.9%
Reading you chose	28.1%
Writing	33.5%
Research projects	52.5%
Group projects	27.3%
Student presentations	48.8%
Role plays / dramatizations	11.2%
Projects involving technology	33.5%

7. How often do you think your classes at Greeley emphasized the following?					
Answer Options	Frequently	Sometimes	Infrequently	Never	Unable to rate
Memorizing facts, figures, vocabulary	62.2%	32.8%	3.7%	0.0%	1.2%
Understanding information and ideas	60.4	34.6	4.2	0.0	0.8
Analyzing ideas, problems, solutions	54.8	36.0	7.9	0.4	0.8
Developing your own ideas	22.5	50.4	24.6	1.7	0.8
Applying learning to real situations	10.9	49.8	34.3	4.2	0.8
Understanding how you learn	13.9	46.2	31.9	7.1	0.8
Making choices about what you learned	12.2	45.4	32.8	6.7	2.9
Making choices about how you learned	12.9	39.2	34.6	10.0	3.3
Becoming a more independent learner	26.7	46.3	23.3	2.9	0.8
Thinking creatively	26.4	54.0	17.2	1.3	1.3

8. How would you describe your level of stress at Greeley?					
Answer Options	Severe	Moderate	Occasional	None	Unable to rate
In 9th grade	13.0%	37.2%	37.7%	11.3%	0.8%
In 10th grade	12.1	47.7	32.2	7.9	0.0
In 11th grade	47.3	38.5	11.3	2.9	0.0
In 12th grade	16.5	39.7	32.1	11.0	0.8

9. What year did you graduate from Greeley?	
2010	32.4%
2009	21.6
2008	16.6
2007	19.1
2006	5.8
2005	4.6

10.	
Female	50.6%
Male	49.4

REPRESENTATIVE SUMMARY OF NARRATIVE RESPONSES

242 completed surveys - 4 questions on the survey had room for narrative responses.

We include below those topics that received attention at least 10 times.

RESEARCH

37 comments in total made reference to “research”:

15 from “Which experiences should have been used more frequently?”

10 from “Name one or two programs that best prepared you.”

12 from “What one or two things would you recommend Greeley emphasize more and/ or do differently?”

Representative samples:

I feel as though Greeley left me unprepared for the types of research I had to do in college, and without much practice in giving presentations of any sort.

The _____ class final paper is the closest thing to a college-level paper I wrote in high school - but that was sophomore year!

We need more long term research papers to learn how to do it better. Long research papers have been a new experience.

Research is something that I did not come across in my time at Greeley very often. However, I think this type of assignment is beneficial and good for college preparation.

More REAL research, requiring academic databases and library sources.

I felt unprepared for the research papers that I am required to write in college. More work on essays such as these that involve research and thesis forming would've helped.

We need more chances to do research where we start with a lot of different but related resources and end up with a thesis.

Research projects should be given because they are very helpful in preparation for college. However, teacher's should consider giving students less work in other areas to give students sufficient time to work on their papers.

I think Greeley needs to focus more closely on bigger things in classes rather than just little details. things like research projects and presentations are very present in college so it's important to focus on that.

In all of high school, only _____'s research paper from class came close to the kinds of work I am doing and papers I am writing now.

PRESENTATIONS

25 comments in total made reference to “presentations”:

18 from “Which experiences should have been used more frequently?”

7 from question “What one or two things would you recommend Greeley emphasize more of and/ or do differently?”

Representative sample:

More student presentations in classes.

More group and individual presentations. They are tough and are focused on much more in college.

Preparing for public speaking, as well as being able to articulate academic information, are both very important skills to have. Presentations also allow for students to learn from other students, and gain a level of understanding necessary to present the information effectively. In the world outside of school, these are all very important skills that are not fostered enough in the academic environment.

I can only recall doing one or two presentation my entire time at Greeley. I do up to 3 a month at college and did not initially feel prepared.

Had to teach myself how to conduct presentations effectively, I feel we could have done more of that in HS

I think strong public speaking skills are needed. In many college courses, especially business (on the most popular majors), presentation skills are imperative. I think HGHS can do a better job with public speaking/working without note cards. A workshop before these presentations would be helpful.

A huge part of my college experience has been based upon group discussions and in-class presentations. At first, I was really nervous to stand in front of my classmates and present a research topic because of my lack of confidence in public speaking. It is VERY important for students to feel comfortable with public speaking to succeed in upper level classes in college. I think a public speaking course should be mandatory for all students. Debating should also be incorporated into more classes at Greeley. Many professors enjoy using debate as a means of testing one's knowledge on a given topic. Learning how to construct an argument, provide evidence, and counter an opposing argument are extremely important skills.

DISCUSSION

15 comments in total made reference to “discussion”:

12 from “Which experiences should have been used more frequently?”

3 from “What one or two things would you recommend Greeley emphasize more of and/ or do differently?”

Representative sample:

I might also suggest that teachers attempt to engage the students more through presentations throughout the year on topics being covered, and/or through more frequent class discussions or discussion groups, so that students are engaging with the material rather than just passively absorbing it.

More critical thinking. Discussions in class would be nice too but that would require all of the students to have actually done and understand the reading, which I do not think is usually the case at Greeley.

I found that most of our classes were lecture based, and didn't prepare us for college classes where discussions based on readings are emphasized.

Discussion was semi-frequent in classes, but I recommend breaking these discussions into smaller groups, with set discussion leaders. I remember too many times being broken up into discussion groups without much discussion getting started.

For my school, only the intro level courses were lecture. Every other class I took was discussion based, which I love, because I love hearing what other people think (as well as convey my own opinions). It also helps solidify my own thoughts and opinions, by hearing how other people explain themselves.

Most of my classes at Greeley were lecture-based, rather than discussion-based. I had to learn a lot of my skills for class discussion while at college.

WRITING

71 comments in total made reference to “writing”:

12 from “Which experiences should have been used more frequently?”

40 from “Name one or two programs that best prepared you.”

19 from “What one or two things would you recommend Greeley emphasize more of differently?”

Representative samples:

Not enough writing or criticism on writing, understandable with big classes but writing in college is literally your entire grade for some classes. Needs to be stressed more.

If high school prepares you for college in which you write for an academic audience, then high school needs to fully prepare you to write academically in all disciplines

The opportunity to write more would be useful

I have had much difficulty writing open-ended essays in college. It may help students to have some practice in choosing their own research topics.

...while grading often seemed a little hard (very hard to get above an A- if you were not a natural writer), I feel among the best and most prepared in college for the writing I do in many courses.

Additionally, writing essays for my English courses really helped me develop my written communication skills I felt that Greeley enhanced my writing skills.

My writing abilities exceed most of my classmates at Michigan.

At Greeley we learned how write pretty much any kind of paper and how to read critically which are both very helpful in college.

I needed more coaching in reading/writing skills.

My writing and researching skills are the only things that I sometimes feel were not up to par when I came to college.

Greeley should emphasize a greater quantity of more varied writing assignments to prepare students for assignments they will come across in college.

Writing skills - Different techniques and approaches and styles. It was THE thing I struggled with in college and to this day.