Learning About Experiences and Outcomes Through Alumni Surveys

Dawn Geronimo Terkla
Executive Director, Institutional Research
Tufts University
December 7, 2005
Alumni Research

- 1980’s & 1990’s
  - Fundraising
  - How alumni associations can serve their members
- Currently
  - Assessment of institution’s performance in preparing students for life after the educational experience
  - Assessment of the curriculum
  - Views about the institution

- What an institution has done for alumni
- What an institution can do for alumni
- How the alumni view the institution
- How the alumni can serve the institution more effectively

Office of Institutional Research, January 06
Alumni Research at Tufts

- Arts & Sciences
- Graduate School of Arts & Sciences
- Graduate School of Engineering
- Friedman School of Nutrition
- Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy
- School of Medicine
- Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine
- School of Dental Medicine
- School of Engineering
Alumni Survey

- Administered annually to 5-year anniversary classes
- In 2004, 154 respondents, with the following response rates:
  - Class of 1988 – 36%
  - Class of 1989 – 29%
  - Class of 1993 – 34%
  - Class of 1994 – 40%
  - Class of 1998 – 41%
  - Class of 1999 – 45%
Core Questions

- General Satisfaction Questions
  - With the school
  - With the faculty and administration
  - With the graduates

- Questions about skills & competencies
  - How important for schools to provide formal training?
  - Rate training received by Tufts DVMs
  - Rate performance of Tufts grads compared to other grads

- Questions about traits of a successful veterinarian & rating of TCSVM graduates
  - How important is each attribute to success
  - Rate Tufts DVMs
If you had to do it over again, how likely would you pursue a DVM?

If you had to do it over again, how likely would you be to enroll at Tufts?

Office of Institutional Research, January 06
With regard to the overall atmosphere at TCSVM:

- The TCSVM curriculum provided a broad educational base on which to build my professional skills.
- Overall, my training at TCSVM prepared me for the rigors of my profession.
- In general, the courses I took prepared me for the work I am now doing.
- TCSVM provided a friendly and supportive environment.
- The faculty were a good resource.
Alumni reported eight common themes when asked to detail the major strengths of TCSVM:

- Academics (N=77)
  - In particular the ‘well-rounded, broad-based, diverse curriculum’, along with the ‘small class size’
- Faculty/staff (N=67)
  - Especially the ‘quality of the faculty’
- Clinical experience (N=51)
- Programs (N=44)
- Overall atmosphere (N=29)
- Specific departments/professors (N=16)
- Student body characteristics (N=14)
- Facilities (N=6)
Skills & Competencies
Importance of Formal Training

Most important aspects of formal training:

- Problem solving & critical thinking
- Diagnosis & treatment of disease
- Ability to communicate effectively & empathetically
- Clinical skills
- Oral communication skills
- Patient rapport & handling skills
- Anesthesiology & pain management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>Exiting</th>
<th>Alumni</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving and critical thinking</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to communicate effectively and empathetically</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosis and treatment of disease</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical skills</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral communication skills</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient rapport and handling skills</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anesthesiology &amp; pain management</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dental

- Administered annually to 2-year & 5-year anniversary classes
- 44% response rate
- Core questions are curriculum related, focusing on skills and competencies and perceptions of changes of the school over time
- More than 30% of alumni report participating in community service
General Satisfaction Alumni

If you had to do it over again, how likely would you pursue a DMD?

If you had to do it over again, how likely would you be to enroll at Tufts?

Office of Institutional Research, January 06
Dental Alumni & Community Service

Office of Institutional Research, January 06
Engineering

- Administered annually to 2-year & 5-year anniversary classes
- 30% response rate
- Relatively short focuses on specific skills & competencies that are delineated by ABET
## Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability</th>
<th>Importance*</th>
<th>Enhancement**</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to communicate effectively</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of professional and ethical responsibility</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of techniques, skills, and modern engineering tools</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze and interpret data</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design a system, component, or process to meet desired needs</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide leadership to groups or individuals</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function on multi-disciplinary teams</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of contemporary issues</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to use computational tools and information technology</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the impact of engineering solutions in a global and societal context</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application of knowledge of mathematics, science and engineering</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design and conduct experiments</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to integrate information and synthesize findings</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify, formulate, and solve engineering problems</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the importance of lifelong learning</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherent experience in the arts, humanities, and social sciences</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*: Importance: 1=Not at all important, 2=Somewhat important, 3=Very important, 4=Essential

**: Enhancement: 1=Not at all, 2=A little, 3=Moderately, 4=Greatly
Summary

- Over the past ten years, alumni research has provided feedback from critical stakeholders
  - Utilized in accreditation
  - Informed strategic planning process
  - Provided information to help inform decisions
  - Utilized in curriculum reform
- Alumni research is viewed as valuable to the institution and resources will continue to be expended to foster these endeavors
Happy Holidays

Office of Institutional Research, January 06