

## **Graduating Student Survey Brief: Undergraduate Students**

October, 2015

### **Overview:**

The Graduating Student Survey is a collaborative institutionally-developed survey to understand graduation related outcomes related to time to degree, barriers to degree completion, demographics, involvement and satisfaction. The survey is administered by Student Affairs Assessment, Evaluation and Research with the collaborative input from Career Services, Enrollment Management, the Graduate School, Office of Budget and Institutional Analysis, Office of Equity and Diversity, and Undergraduate Studies. This brief report provides an overview of data for undergraduate students only.

### **Methodology:**

This survey is administered to all students who have applied for graduation during spring semester and includes undergraduate students, graduate students and first professional students. The survey contains skip logic to streamline the experience for students and length of the survey varies based upon response patterns. The survey is administered during the three-week window before commencement and two weeks following. Students receive up to three reminders to complete the survey and may choose to be entered into a drawing to win one of fifty \$50 Visa Gift Cards. During 2015, a new marketing campaign was launched to make students more aware of the survey and to encourage them to register with Career Services. Students who completed the survey and visited Career Services were given a “U-Grad” decal as a token of thanks. While this did not result in an increase in the response rate, in comparison to other surveys administered during spring semester that showed a marked decrease in response rates, the response rate for this survey remained similar to the previous year. Thus the impact of increased marketing and incentives are suspected as having an impact but cannot be confirmed. The response rate for undergraduates for 2015 was 33.1 percent.

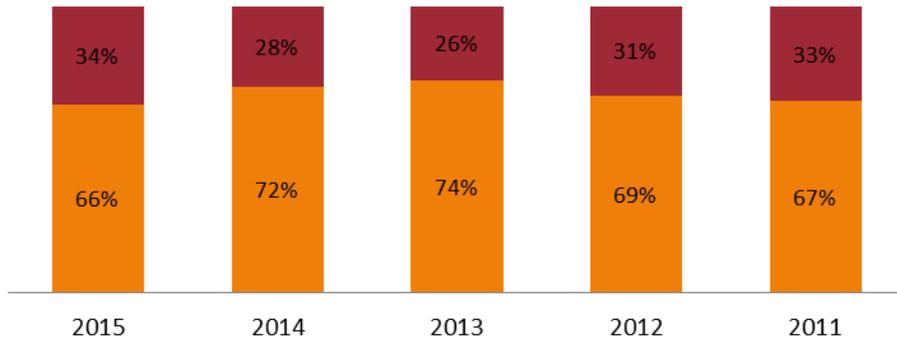
### **Key Findings:**

#### **Time to degree completion:**

Based on the responses to this survey, the majority of students report that they completed their degree as quickly as they planned. For those that indicated that completion of their degree was delayed, students received a follow-up question about the reasons they perceived for the delay. Students could indicate both personal and institutional factors. The five-year trend data suggests that personal factors have a greater impact on student’s graduation. However, developing a greater understanding of institutional factors that students perceive as delaying their degree completion warrant further exploration.

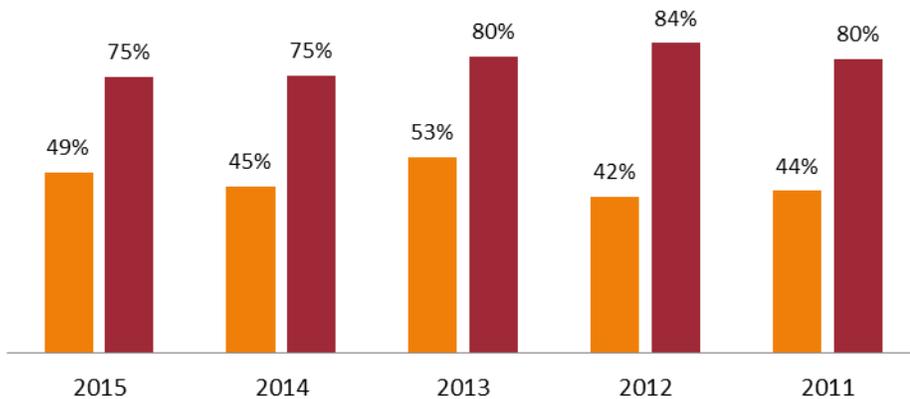
## Did you complete your degree as quickly as you planned?

Yes No

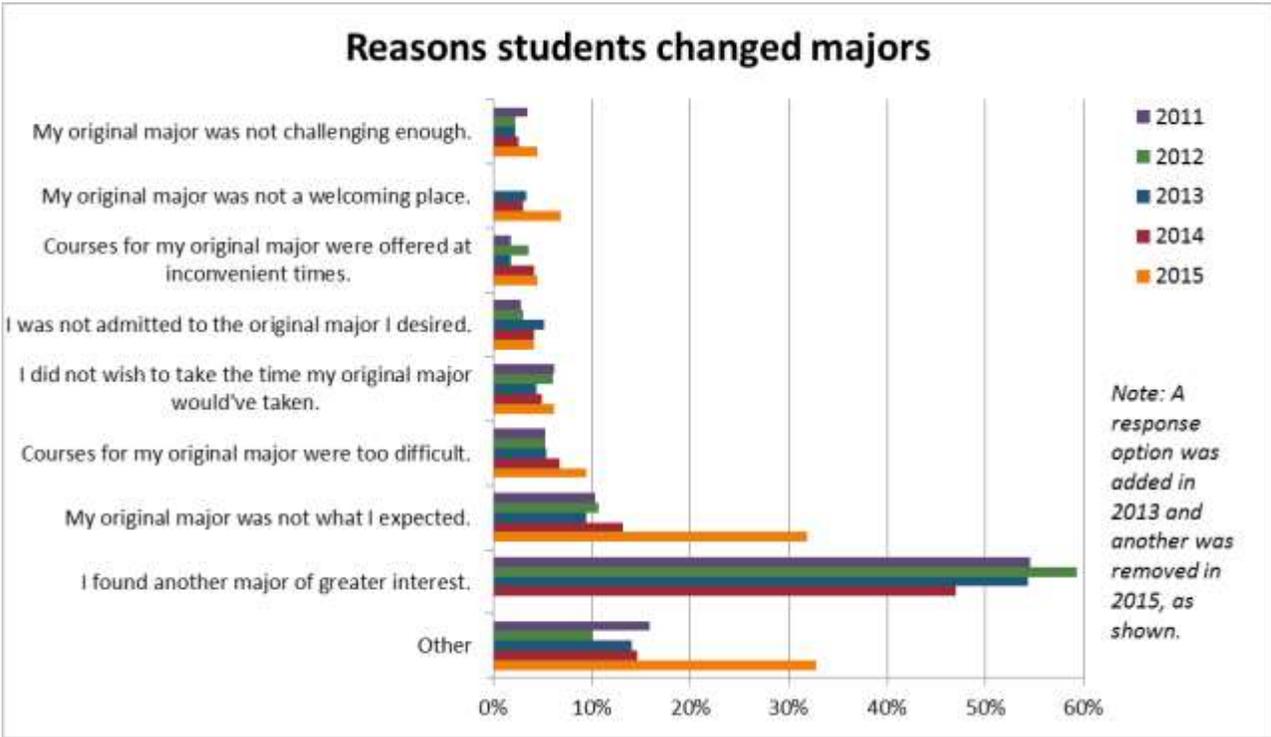
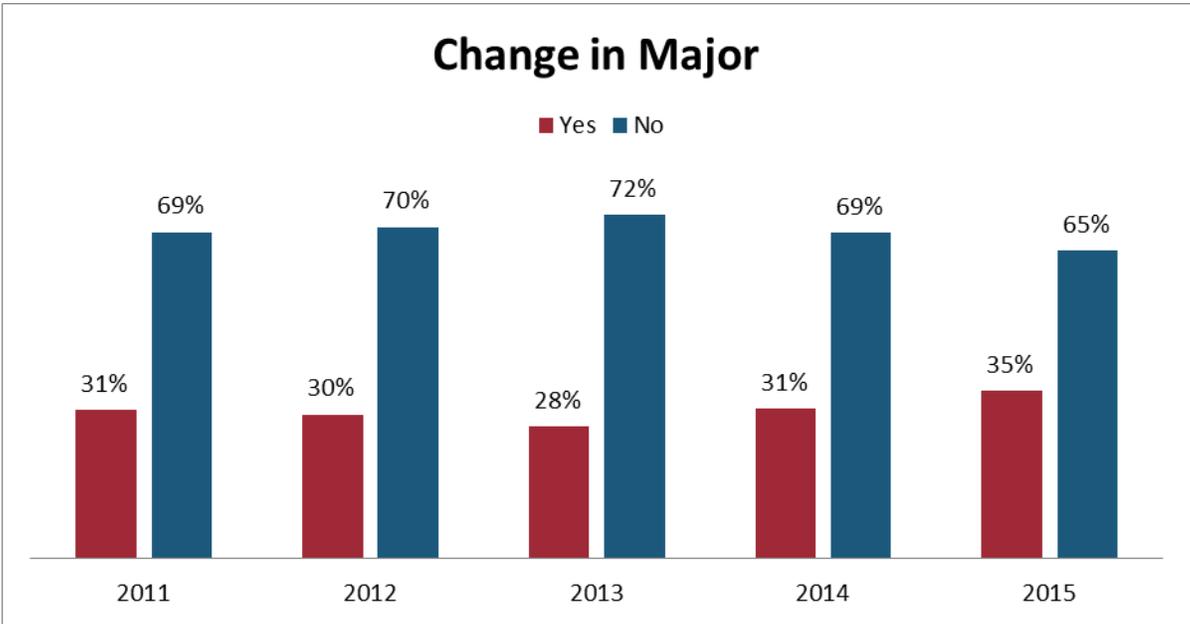


## Reasons for Delay to Degree Completion

University Factors Personal Factors

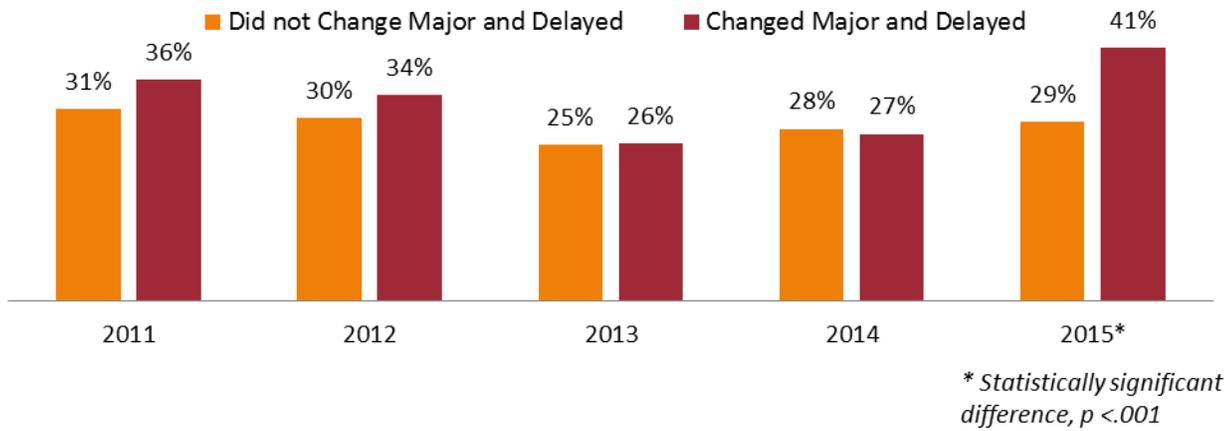


The majority of students who responded to this survey indicated they had **not** changed their majors. For the 35% who indicated that they had, many cited “other reasons” rather than selecting one of the options provided. These responses under “other reasons” have been analyzed for themes, which include the following: changing one’s mind, finding something more interesting and perception of job prospects related to major. “My original major is not what I expect” is also frequently endorsed response category.



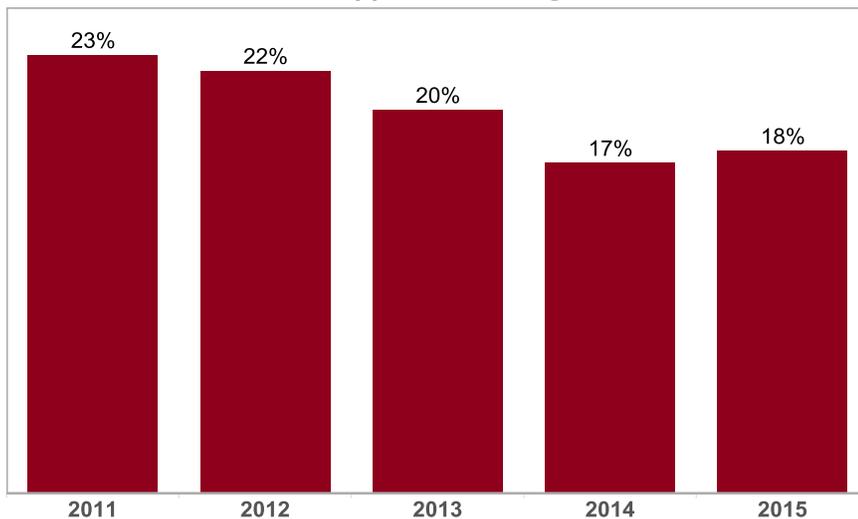
Although it is expected that students who change majors would take longer to graduate, interestingly enough students who changed their majors did not endorse delays to graduation more frequently than students who did not change their major. The exception was in 2015, when this difference was statistically significant. It may be useful for stakeholders to review any systemic changes that were implemented that may have impacted this graduating cohort or explore if this was just an anomaly for this particular year. Given the institutional focus on reducing degree completion time, it may be important to understand the amount of time that students plan for completing their degree and how the institution can encourage students to complete their degree more quickly.

## Changes in Major and Delays to Degree Completion

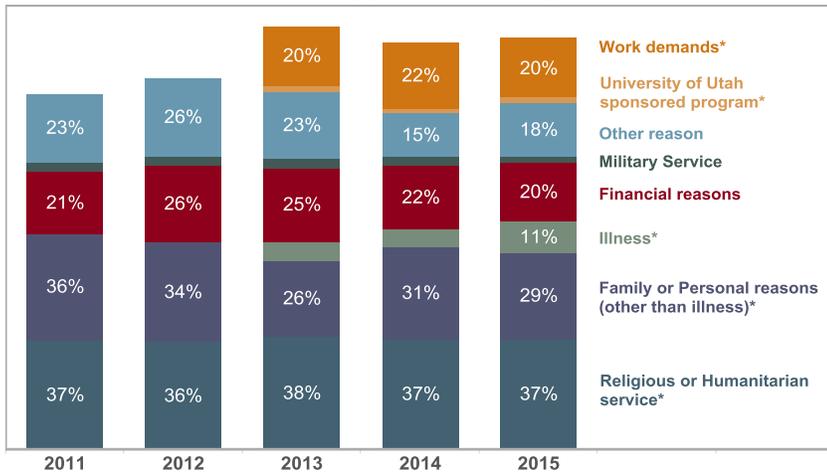


**Break from Studies:** Many University of Utah students, particularly males, take a two-year break from their studies to serve a religious mission for the LDS church. Of students who graduated in spring 2015, approximately 18% stopped attending the university for a period of six months or more. Of these students, religious service and family or personal reasons were most often selected, followed by work and financial reasons. It is possible that the decrease in this trend is related to the change in LDS missionary age, which has resulted in more individuals going on a mission prior to starting college, rather than starting college and then returning to college after their mission.

### Students who Stopped Attending for 6+ Months



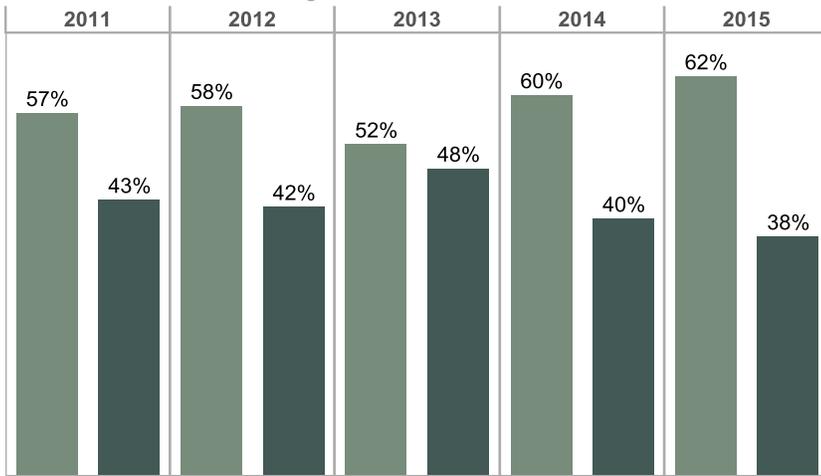
### Reasons Students Stopped Attending for a 6+ Months



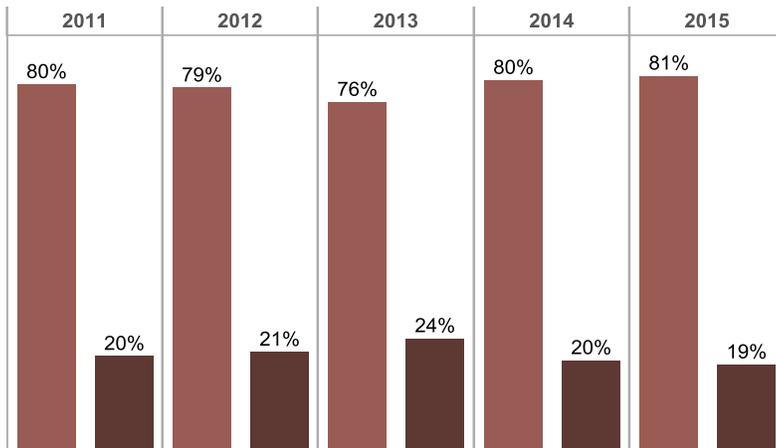
\* Note: Response options changed in 2013. "Ecclesiastical mission" changed to "Religious or Humanitarian service." Options "University of Utah sponsored program," "Illness" (apart from family or personal reasons), and "Work demands" were added.

**Committed Relationships and Students as Parents:** In addition to the number of students who stop attending for religious service, the undergraduate population at the University of Utah has a number of other distinctive characteristics that appear to contribute to our atypical graduation rate patterns. Roughly 43 percent of our students marry or are in a committed partnership before completion of the undergraduate degree. Approximately 20 percent of students have one or more child upon graduation.

### Relationship Status at Graduation Single vs. Married/Partnered

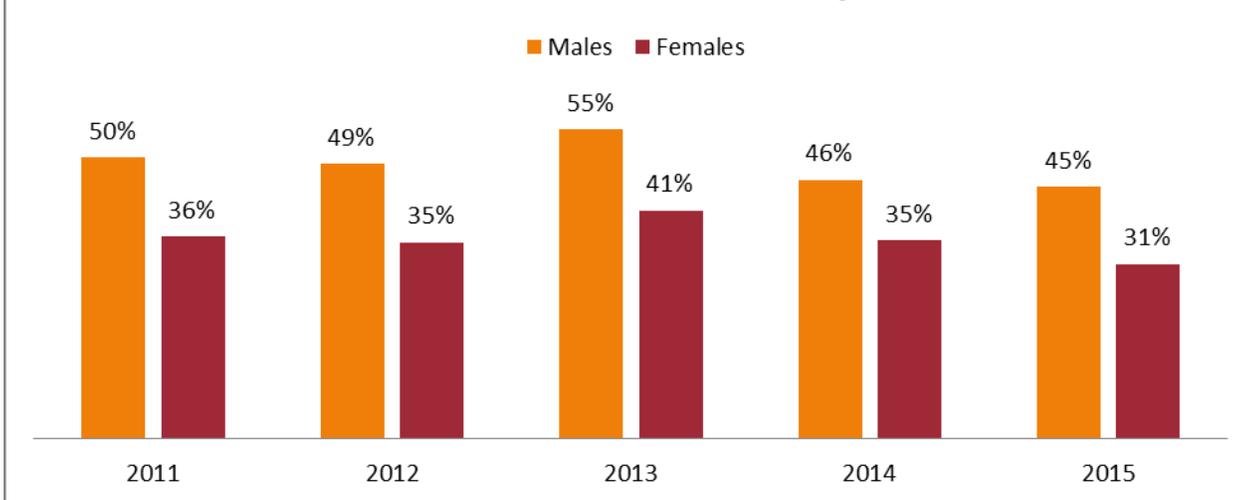


### Parental Status at Graduation No Children vs. With Children

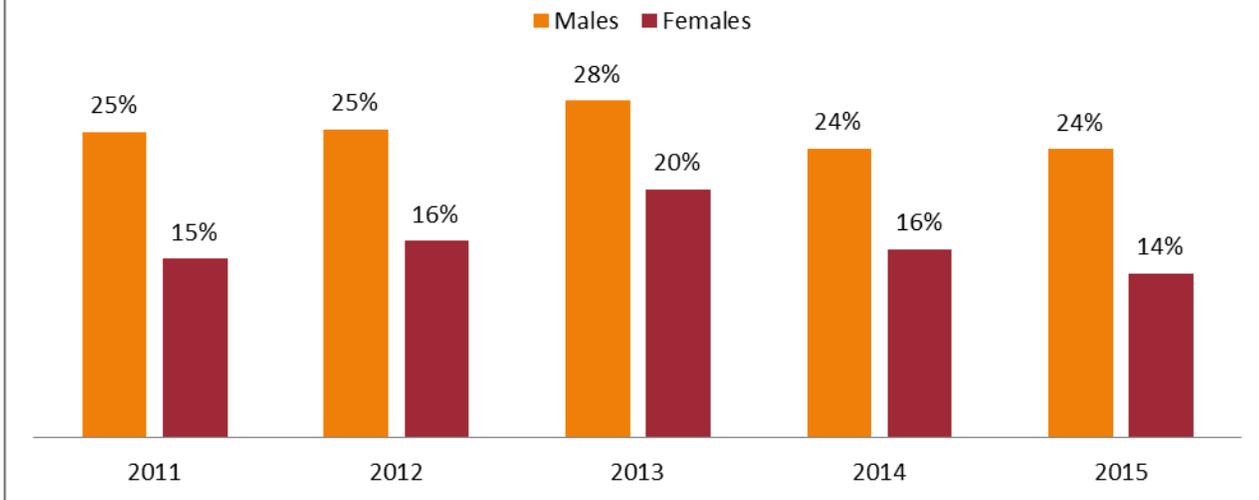


The proportion of female students who are married at the University of Utah, is lower than the proportion of male students upon graduation. It is not known if women may discontinue their education based on marriage or being partnered and if this may be related to the lower number of women who persist to graduation. Similarly, the number of male students who have children is higher than females. It is not known if female students who have children do not persist to graduation or take an extended absence to have children as these data only represent those who persist to graduation. A greater understanding of how these patterns impact graduation warrant further study, earlier in students' academic life at the University of Utah, especially for females.

### Students who are Married/Partnered upon Graduation

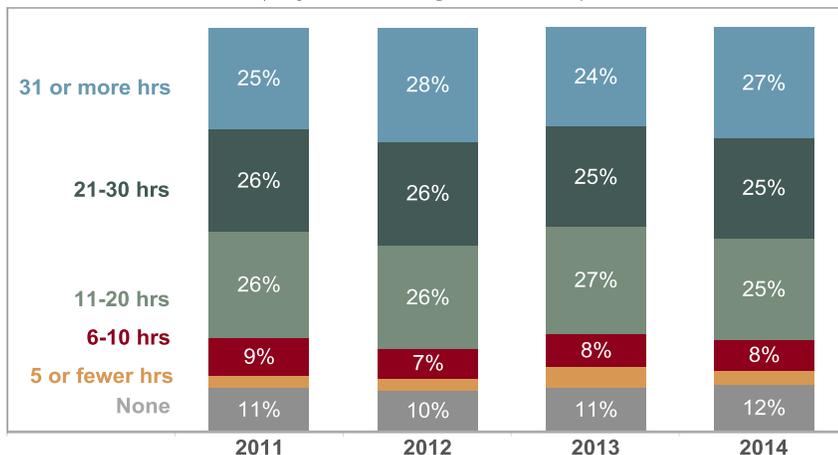


## Students who Have Children upon Graduation



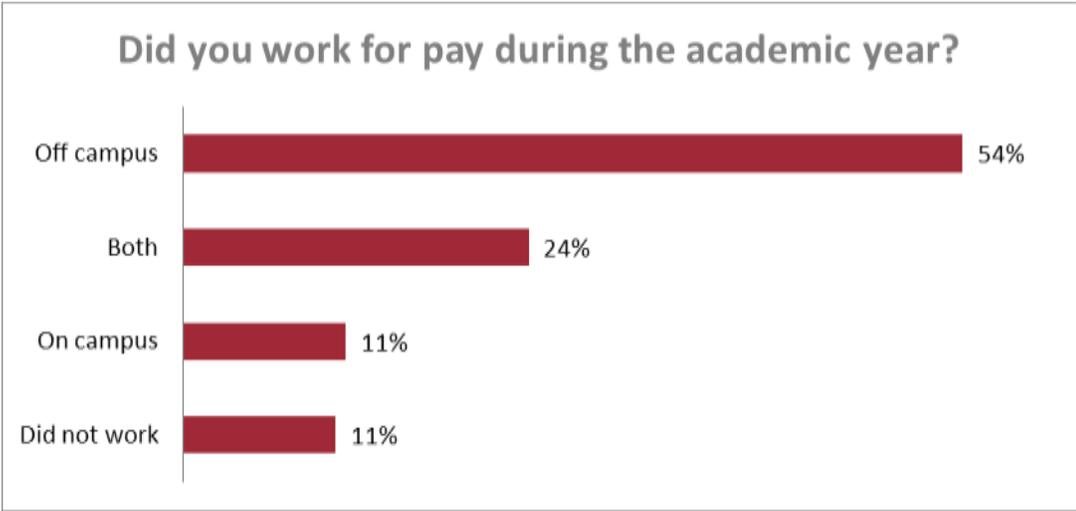
**Students and Work:** Nearly all of our students work for pay while attending the University of Utah. Over the past five years, an average of only 11.0% of undergraduate students say that they have not worked for pay based on data from this survey. Students of color were more likely to work than white students ( $\chi^2 = 14.827$ ,  $p < .005$ ). Gender differences in work were not found. About half of students (51.5percent on average) had worked more than 20 hours a week. More data about how work relates to engagement can be found in other data such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Further analysis between hours worked and time to graduation should be explored further.

## Hours Worked for Pay per Week While at the U (reported at graduation)\*

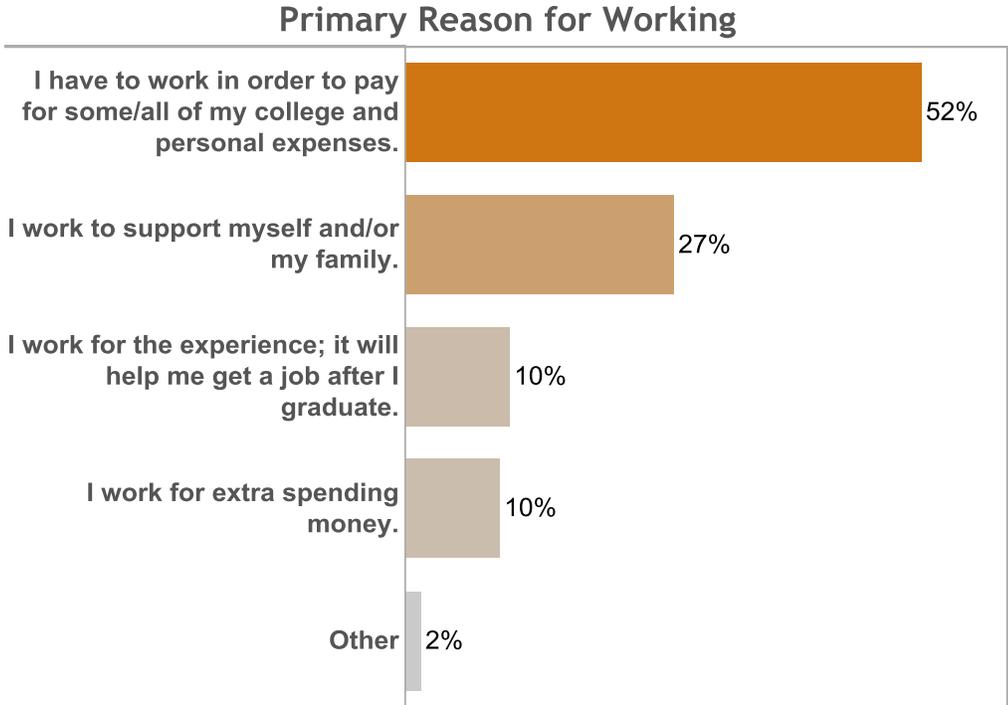


\*Note: Question format changed in 2015 and is not comparable with previous years.

In 2015, a change was made to the Graduating Student Survey to understand where students are working. The majority of undergraduate students (54%) work for pay off campus, with 24% reporting both. Only 11.3% of students work on campus.



An additional question was added in 2015 to understand the reasons why students work while they attend the University of Utah. The majority of students who responded (52%) reported that they have to work to pay for college and their expenses, which is also reflected in that students report paying for college with personal earnings, below.



## Top Sources of Paying for College

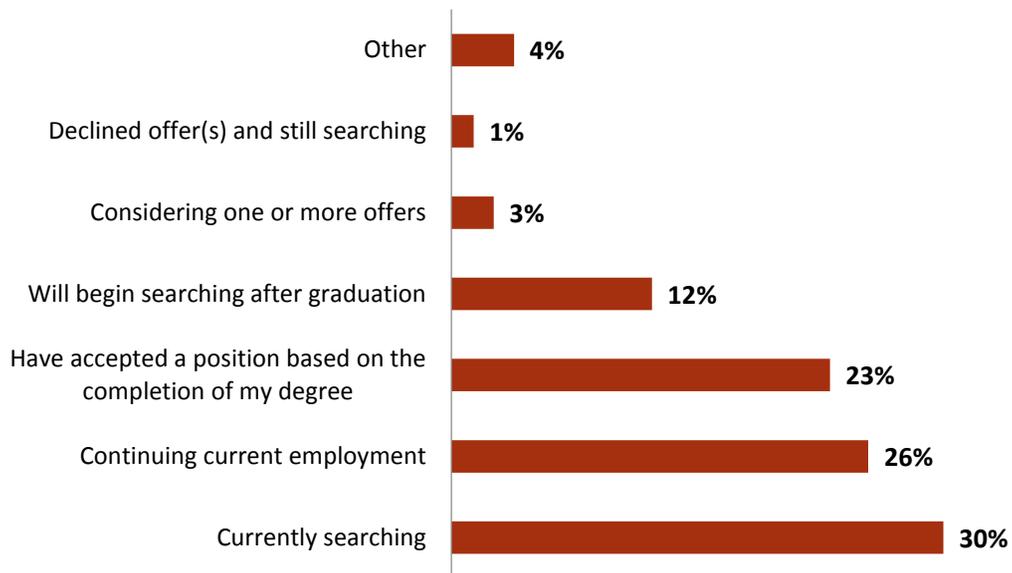
Response	Year	
Assistance from parents or other family	2013	35%
	2014	37%
	2015	50%
Grants	2013	36%
	2014	36%
	2015	47%
Personal earnings	2013	42%
	2014	39%
	2015	53%
Personal savings	2013	29%
	2014	26%
	2015	44%
Student loans	2013	43%
	2014	47%
	2015	50%
Student scholarships	2013	32%
	2014	34%
	2015	46%

### First Destination

Students are asked to indicate their primary plan following graduation. Students are only able to select one option as this question has been used for the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA). Not surprisingly full time employment is the most frequently endorsed, followed by further education. In 2015, the wording of follow-up questions regarding employment were modified so only data from the most recent administration are included below. Approximately 30% of undergraduate students report that they are job searching with 25% indicating that they are continuing in their current position. This raises some interesting questions about the relationship between working while attending the U and career-related outcomes related to degree completion. Twenty-three percent (23%) report that they have accepted a position based on their degree completion.

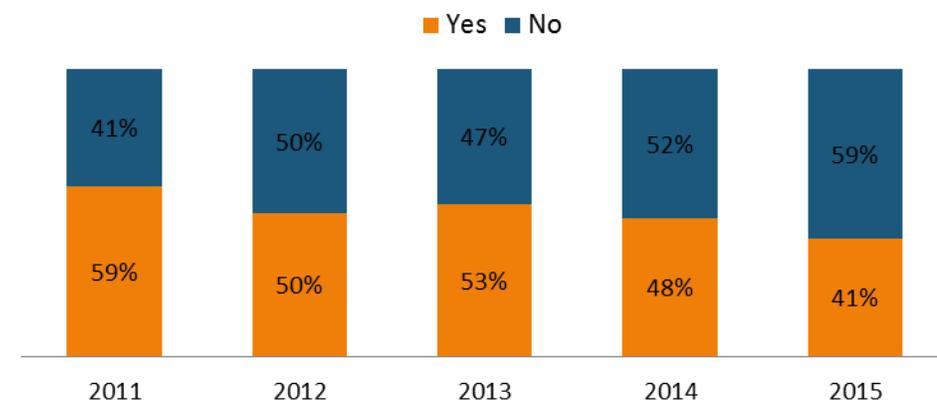
Expected Main Activity upon Graduation	2013	2014	2015
Employment, full-time paid	66.5%	67.8%	67.0%
Graduate or professional school, full-time	37.1%	30.9%	34.3%
Employment, part-time paid	17.1%	17.7%	21.3%
Starting or raising a family	17.8%	16.3%	16.3%
Graduate or professional school, part-time	11.7%	9.4%	9.1%
Volunteer activity (e.g., Peace Corps)	7.6%	8.8%	7.4%
Other	4.9%	5.7%	5.9%
Additional undergraduate coursework	3.4%	4.6%	4.0%
Military service	2.0%	2.0%	1.7%
Residency or post-doctoral (temporary) position	0.3%	0.1%	0.4%

## Employment Plans upon Graduation



Variability in plans for graduate school exists over the past five-year period and may be related to the economy. In 2011, nearly 60% of students indicated that they had been admitted to graduate school or a professional program with the trend moving down to just over 40% in 2015. For students who plan to attend graduate school, slightly less than half report that they have completed a graduate entrance exam, with roughly 30% indicating that they need to do so. The percent of students who report that they are not required to complete an exam for graduate programs has decreased during the three year period since this question was added to the survey.

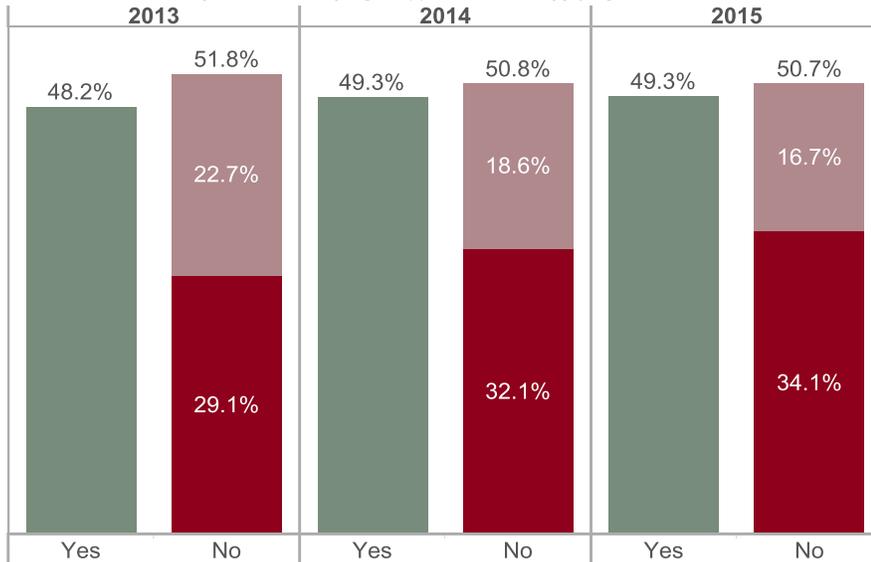
## Students Admitted to Graduate or Professional Program



*Note: These percentages are based on students who plan to go to graduate school.*

## Status of Completing Graduate Entrance Exam

Yes, No - none is requested for the program(s) to which I'm applying, and No - I still need to do so

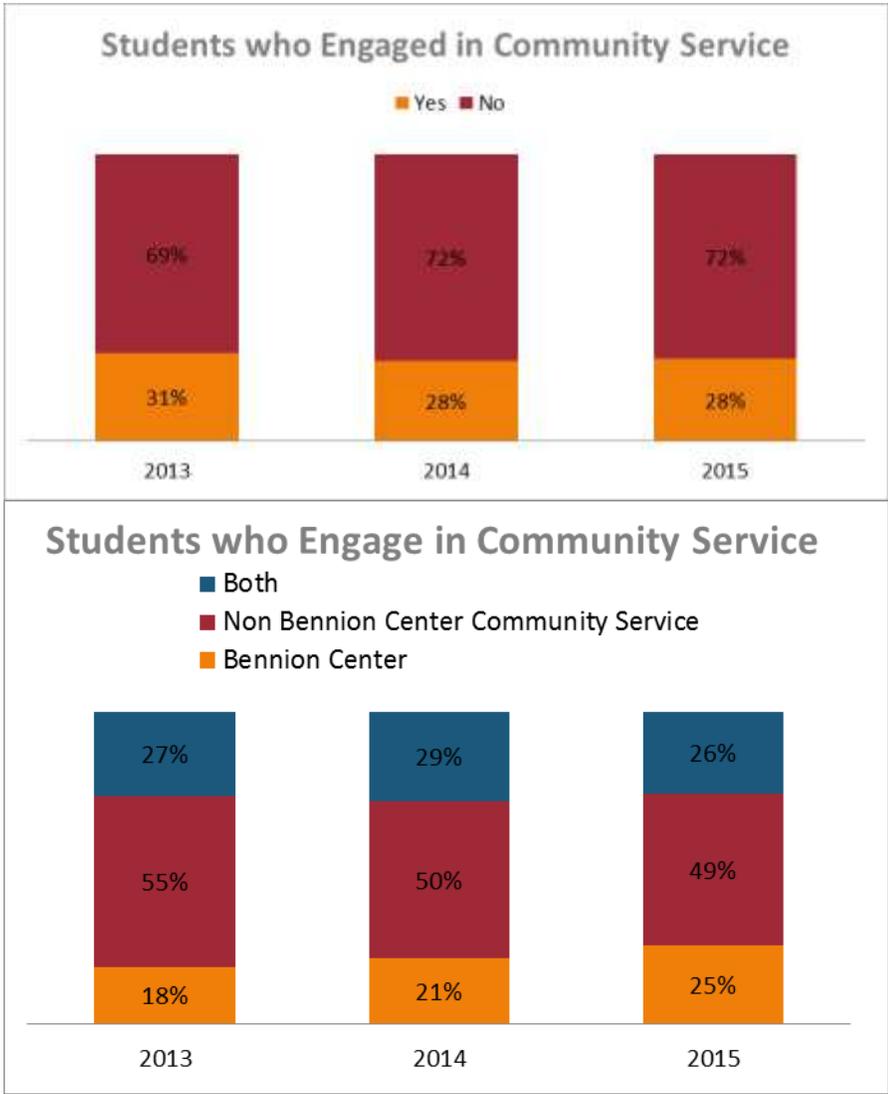


## Student Engagement and Co-Curricular Learning

In 2013 and again in 2015, this section of the Graduating Student Survey was expanded to be more inclusive of engagement opportunities and students are allowed to select multiple options. Students endorsed participating in student clubs or organizations at the highest rate, followed by internships. This was followed by living on campus, working on campus and research with a professor. Across the three-year period reported, roughly 20% of students report that they did not participate in engagement opportunities. This finding warrants further analysis to understand what other factors may be related to this outcome.

Student Engagement	2013			2014			2015		
	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015
Student club or organization	34.9%	34.4%	34.6%						
Internship	31.8%	33.1%	33.4%						
Community Service	30.8%	27.9%	28.5%						
Living on Campus	21.7%	25.5%	26.3%						
On-campus job	24.5%	24.7%	N/A						
Research with a professor	22.7%	22.6%	23.2%						
Leadership role	22.6%	20.3%	20.7%						
I did not participate in any of the above.	21.4%	19.5%	20.0%						
Honors	19.5%	17.1%	17.5%						
Intramural group, club sport, or organized fitness activity	13.5%	11.9%	17.7%						
Learning Abroad (Study Abroad, previously)	9.5%	9.2%	11.0%						
Fraternity or Sorority life	8.3%	8.7%	8.4%						
LEAP	10.6%	8.1%	N/A						
Learning Community	4.4%	5.2%	4.8%						
Continuing Education	3.9%	5.1%	3.4%						
Bachelor of University Studies (BUS)	0.9%	1.2%	2.0%						
National Student Exchange	0.4%	0.7%	1.1%						

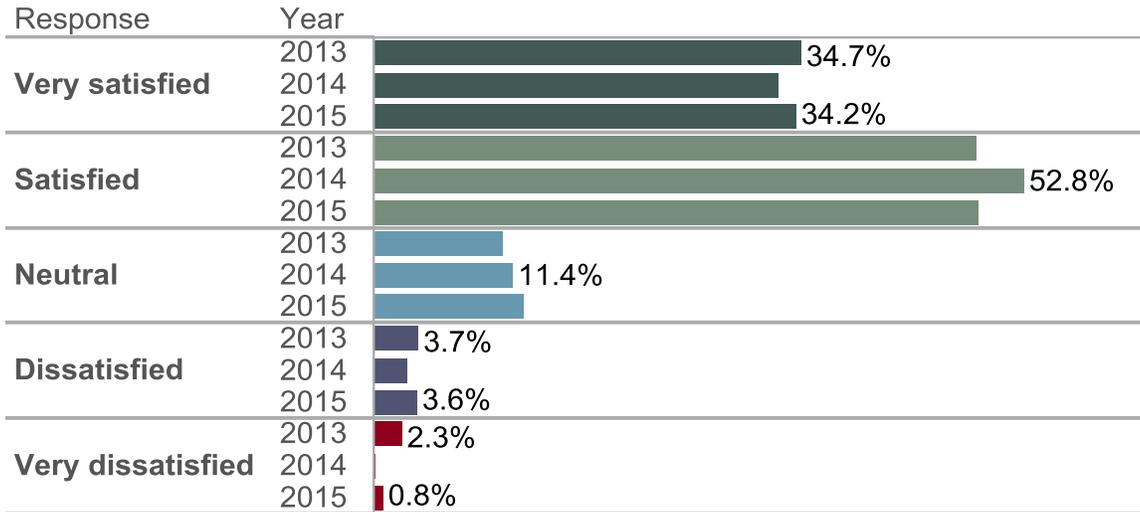
**Community Service:** Between 20 and 25 percent of students across the three-year period reported that they engage in community service. Approximately 20% of these students do so through the Lowell Bennion Community Center, 50% through non-Bennion Center opportunities and roughly 25% participate in both.



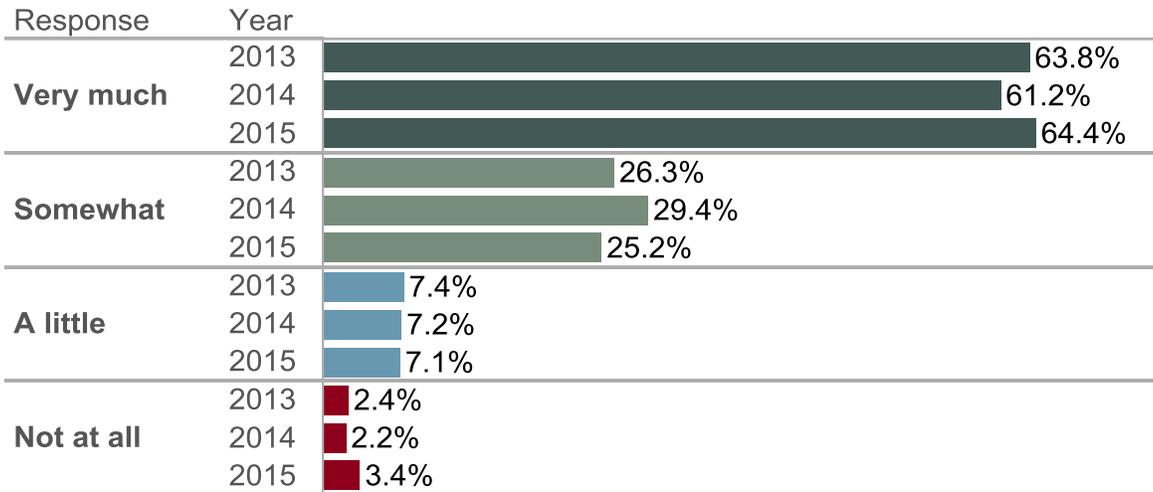
**Rating of Student Experience**

Over 80 percent of students reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience at the University of Utah. A similar percentage indicated that they felt proud to attend the U. A lower percentage (roughly 60 percent) of students reported a sense of belonging. These items were analyzed for both gender differences and differences by race/ethnicity. Females reported a higher level of feeling proud to have attended the U and a sense of belonging than males ( $p < .001$  and  $p < .01$ ). No differences were found by race/ethnicity.

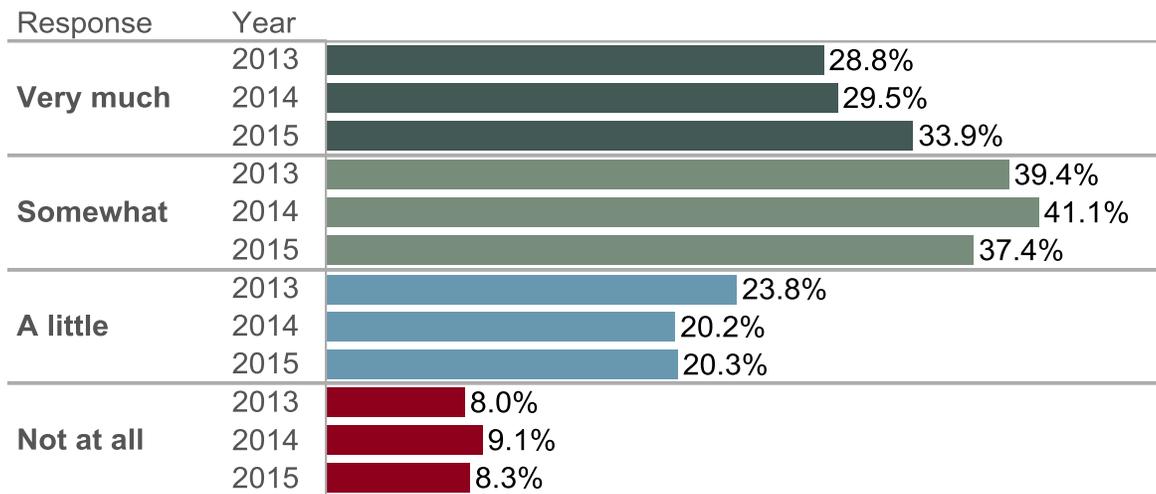
## Satisfaction with Experience at the U



## Feeling Proud of Attending the U



## Sense of Belonging among the U Campus Community



### Recommendations:

- Undergraduate students may benefit from more information about optimal time for degree completion.
- More exploration of both personal and institutional barriers are needed to understand how these factors impact students' time to completion
- Continued exploration of the change in LDS missionary age and how it impacts enrollment patterns will support institutional planning.
- More in-depth analysis of gender differences earlier in students' academic career would provide greater insight about the differences seen at graduation and assist the institution with planning.
- Further study should be completed to understand the role of work, engagement and time to completion.

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