

GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENT ASSOCIATION (GPSA) NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Arizona State
University

Results and Summary

Report Prepared for ASU GPSA by the
University Office of Evaluation and Educational Effectiveness

AUTHOR

Stefanie Leite, M.A., Management Research Analyst, University Office of Evaluation and Educational Effectiveness (UOEEE)

EDITORS

Sarah Polasky, Ph.D., Assistant Director, UOEEE

Shelly Potts, Ph.D., Senior Director, UOEEE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

GPSA and UOEEE wish to acknowledge the following individuals for their contributions to and support for the project and production of this report.

German Cadenas, President, GPSA, 2014-2015

Jordan Hughes, Director of Communications, GPSA, 2014-2015

Kimberly Roland, Director of Legislative Affairs, GPSA, 2014-2015

Megan Fisk, Past-President, GPSA, 2013-2014

Mark Generous, Needs Assessment Coordinator, GPSA, 2013-2014

Daniel Ashlock, Director, Associated Students of Arizona State University (ASASU)

METHODS

The Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA) invited the population of Arizona State University (ASU) graduate and professional students to participate in an online survey during the 2013-2014 academic year. The survey was administered anonymously online and requested information about the level of support graduate and professional students received while pursuing their degrees at ASU. Questions sought information about students' financial arrangements, health insurance and care, and use of and satisfaction with ASU services, programs, and facilities. Demographics (e.g., sex, age, citizenship, campus, enrollment status, degree program) were also requested to help identify underserved groups. In addition, the survey invited students to provide suggestions to improve existing programs or identify needs that were not being met by programs and services at ASU.

In November, 2014, GPSA sought consultation from the ASU Office of Evaluation and Educational Effectiveness for analysis and reporting, which would enable GPSA to share key findings from the survey with members of GPSA, the ASU community, and other stakeholders. This report addresses the following questions:

- How well are ASU graduate and professional students supported financially via University employment opportunities, tuition waivers, scholarships, financial aid, etc.?
- How well does ASU meet graduate and professional students' educational, health (i.e., physical, emotional), and childcare needs?
- What educational, health (i.e., physical, emotional), and childcare needs are underserved among graduate and professional students?

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Overall, 1,246 ASU graduate and professional students elected to participate in the survey, which represented 8% of the 14,682 graduate students enrolled at ASU in Fall 2013¹. Fifty five percent² of respondents were women, 45% were men, and less than 1% preferred not to specify their sex. As compared to the graduate student population in Fall 2013, women were slightly over-represented in the sample (i.e., the ASU graduate student population consisted of 50% women and 50% men). The average age of respondents was 30 years, with 19 as the youngest and 75 as the oldest age reported. Analysis by age bracket revealed that 35% of respondents were age 18-24, 44% were 25-34, 14% were 35-44, 6% were 45-54, and 2% were age 55 and older.

For tuition purposes, respondents were asked to specify their Arizona residency status; among those who indicated they were Arizona residents (42% of respondents), 35% reported "I was a resident before beginning my graduate education" and 7% noted "I successfully petitioned to become an Arizona resident for tuition purposes." Respondents who were not Arizona residents (59%) reported the following: "I have not applied to become an Arizona resident for tuition purposes" (35%), "I am unable to apply to become an Arizona resident for tuition purposes" (22%), and "I have petitioned to become a resident but was denied" (2%). The population of graduate students in Fall 2013 consisted of 65% Arizona residents and 35% non-Arizona residents; thus, non-residents were over-represented in the sample.

¹ Graduate population statistics were obtained from the following sources: Office of Institutional Analysis, Arizona State University (2013). *Quick Facts Fall 2013*. Retrieved from <http://uoia.asu.edu/quick-facts>. Office of Institutional Analysis, Arizona State University (2013). *Enrollment Summary Fall Semester 2013*. Retrieved from <http://uoia.asu.edu/enrollment-summary>.

² Please note that, due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%.

Sixty six percent of respondents were U.S. citizens, 32% were non-U.S. citizens or non-residents, 1% were U.S. permanent residents, and fewer than 1% chose not to specify or did not know their citizenship status. Thirty three percent of respondents identified themselves as international graduate and professional students. International students were slightly over-represented in the sample (i.e., the population of ASU graduate students consisted of 23% international students in Fall 2013).

When asked to identify their primary campus affiliation: 67% of respondents identified Tempe; 12% of participants reported Downtown; 2% each indicated West and Polytechnic; and 17% were studying online. In addition, 84% of respondents were enrolled full-time and 16% were enrolled part-time in their degree programs. As compared to the population of ASU graduate students in Fall 2013, full-time students were over-represented in the sample (i.e., population of graduate students included 66% full-time students and 34% part-time students).

The sample of respondents consisted of 66% master's students, 28% doctoral students, 5% professional (i.e., AUD, EDD, DBH, DNP, JD) students, and 1% non-degree seeking students. Comparative figures provided by ASU Institutional Analysis describing the population of graduate students in Fall 2013 included 64% master's, 31% doctoral, and 5% non-degree seeking students; professional students were not separately identified. In addition, survey respondents represented 16 academic units at ASU, with the largest percentages of respondents pursuing degrees at the Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering (30%), Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (12%), College of Public Programs (now the College of Public Service and Community Solutions; 10%), and College of Liberal Arts and Sciences – Social and Behavioral Sciences (9%). There was slight over-representation of graduate and professional students from Engineering (i.e., 23% of the population in Fall 2013) and Liberal Arts and Sciences (i.e., aggregated sample 21% as compared to 17% of the population) and under-representation of students from the Teachers College (i.e., 16% of the population in Fall 2013). Otherwise, the percentages of sampled graduate and professional students were fairly representative of the population within each academic unit (i.e., less than 2% difference).

The full population of graduate and professional students received the survey link via the GPSA email distribution list; however, the sample of those who responded to the survey was not fully representative of the enrolled graduate student population in Fall 2013. Thus, the findings presented in this report should be considered with this in mind and interpreted with caution. That is, they may not be generalizable to the full ASU graduate student population.

RESULTS

How well are ASU graduate and professional students supported financially via University employment opportunities, tuition waivers, scholarships, financial aid, etc.?

Employment opportunities. Graduate and professional students who responded to the survey reported holding various types of employment positions while pursuing their degrees at ASU. Respondents most commonly reported employment positions that were full-time off-campus (22%), research assistantships (14%), teaching assistantships (14%), and part-time off-campus (11%). An additional 7% of respondents reported holding an internship; very few indicated holding staff (3%), management intern (<1%), and ASU faculty (<1%) positions. Six percent of respondents indicated “other,” many of whom specified that they worked part-time on-campus. Twenty-one percent of respondents indicated that they were not employed.

Women who responded to the survey were more likely to report holding internships and full- and part-time positions off-campus; men were more likely to indicate that they were not employed. International students were

similarly likely to report holding research and teaching assistantships as non-international students; yet, international students were more likely to report being not employed and were less likely to hold part- or full-time positions off-campus than non-international students. While participants enrolled at ASU full- and part-time were similarly likely to report holding part-time off-campus positions, full-time students were more likely than part-time students to hold research and teaching assistantships and less likely to report working full-time off-campus.

In addition, master's and professional students were more likely than doctoral students to hold applied positions, such as internships, and part- and full-time jobs off-campus. While greater percentages of doctoral students held research and teaching assistantships, compared to respondents who were pursuing master's and professional degrees, a sizable percentage (19%) of doctoral students did not hold an assistantship. Comments provided by respondents further documented the need for more assistantship opportunities at ASU to support graduate students.

Annual income. Sixty one percent of respondents reported an annual household income of \$40,000 or less; an additional 22% reported an income of \$40,001-\$80,000, and 17% reported an income of \$80,001 or higher. Younger students (aged 18-24) and international students reported the lowest incomes (\$20,000 or less). Respondents who indicated they held an assistantship frequently reported earning annual stipends of \$12,001-\$15,000 (26%) or \$15,001-\$18,000 (18%). In addition, 30% of respondents holding an assistantship earned \$12,000 or less.

"It would make life a little easier if the minimum graduate TA/RA salaries were increased. It is so hard to live on a salary that is below poverty level without having to take up a second job."

Living expenses. Across all respondent groups, common means for paying for living expenses included: out-of-pocket (49%); financial support from parents or family (24%); federal student loans (21%); and assistantships (21%). Women were more likely than men to pay for living expenses out-of-pocket or rely on federal student loans. International students were more likely than non-international students to pay for living expenses through support from parents or family and private student loans.

Tuition, fees, and supplies. Overall, 30% of respondents planned to pay for their tuition out-of-pocket, 28% planned to pay using federal loans, and 21% planned to pay using research and teaching assistantships. Only 13% reported having scholarships and 5% indicated having grants to help pay for tuition. Women were more likely to report plans for paying their tuition using federal student loans, while men were more likely to report utilizing private loans and the support from their parents or family to pay for their tuition. Similar to the

"Finding lower interest rate private loans is difficult [for international students]."

resources they reported utilizing to pay for their living expenses, international students commonly reported plans to pay for their tuition using private loans and the financial support from their parents or family.

Roughly similar percentages of non-residents and Arizona residents reported plans to use federal student loans to pay their tuition (69% vs. 77%, respectively). However, twice as many non-residents planned to pay for tuition using private loans as compared to residents (29% vs. 13%, respectively). In addition, professional students were more likely than doctoral, master's and non-degree seeking students to be paying tuition with scholarships, federal loans, and private loans. Just over half of doctoral students (55%) reported paying tuition through

research and teaching assistantships. With the exception of assistantships and fellowships, doctoral students were less likely than professional and master’s students to rely on other sources (i.e., grants, federal and private loans, parents and family, out-of-pocket) to pay their tuition.

University fees were reportedly paid by respondents via similar sources as their tuition; most commonly, overall, 42% paid fees out-of-pocket, 28% using federal loans, and 15% using financial support from parents or family. Among participants who indicated they held an assistantship, 88% reported that their mandatory fees were paid through the income earned in their assistantship. Many respondents (33%) did not know the average cost per semester they incurred for fees specific to their degree program. Nineteen percent of respondents overall reported that their program fees per semester cost them over \$1000; the majority of those who reported the highest fees were professional (31%) and master’s (23%) students. Most respondents (95%) were still taking classes at the time of the survey; about half (49%) paid \$101-\$300 for books on average per semester. Professional students reported paying the most for books and supplies on average per semester; 32% of professional students reported paying \$501 to over \$1000, while only 12% of master’s and 6% of doctoral students reported paying this much.

“Not being able to become a resident for tuition purposes for two years is an undue burden on graduate students... Because of the financially independent clause, I can’t qualify for resident tuition until my last semester of graduate school, 2.5 years after I started. I’d like to see advocacy to change this rule or create more exceptions.”

Student loan debt. Respondents were also asked to report the approximate amount that they currently owed on their student loans. Overall, participants most commonly reported \$0-\$10,000 in existing student loan debt (38%). Students aged 35-44 were more likely than respondents of other age ranges to report higher student loan debt (\$80,000 or more). In addition, professional students reported having the highest student loan debt; 26% of professional students who responded to the survey reported having greater than \$100,000 in student loan debt, as compared to 4% of master’s students and 8% of doctoral students (Table 1).

Table 1. Self-reported existing student loan debt held by ASU graduate and professional students by degree program

	Professional (i.e., AUD, EDD, DBH, DNP, JD) (n=45)	Master's (n=536)	Doctorate (n=256)	Non-degree seeking (n=9)
\$200,001 or more	9%	1%	1%	0%
\$150,001 - \$200,000	4%	0%	3%	0%
\$100,001 - \$150,000	13%	3%	4%	0%
\$90,001 - \$100,000	2%	1%	1%	0%
\$80,001 - \$90,000	0%	3%	2%	0%
\$70,001 - \$80,000	16%	4%	4%	0%
\$60,001 - \$70,000	2%	4%	4%	0%
\$50,001 - \$60,000	7%	4%	5%	0%
\$40,001 - \$50,000	4%	9%	5%	11%
\$30,001 - \$40,000	11%	11%	5%	11%
\$20,001 - \$30,000	9%	12%	6%	0%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	16%	14%	10%	11%
\$0 - \$10,000	7%	34%	51%	67%

Furthermore, a sizeable percentage (16%) of professional students reported having \$70,001 to \$80,000 in student loan debt, as compared to only 4% of master's students and 4% of doctoral students. Those who reported carrying \$40,000 or less in student loan debt included: 89% of non-degree seeking students; 72% of doctoral students; 71% of master's students; and 43% of professional students. Finally, international students reported having less student loan debt than non-international students (e.g., 52% of international students vs. 33% of non-international students reported having \$0-\$10,000).

How well does ASU meet graduate and professional students' educational, health (i.e., physical, emotional), and childcare needs?

Use of educational and career services. With the exception of library virtual or online services and Library One search, overall, respondents frequently reported utilizing services and programs such as subject librarians, interlibrary loan, ASU Help Center, and the Financial Aid Office "sometimes" or "rarely." Services and programs such as Sun Devils Count, GPSA, tutoring services, Writing Center, and Career Services were reportedly "never" utilized by more than half (56%-82%) of the graduate and professional students who responded to the survey.

Women reported utilizing Library One search with higher frequency than men. In contrast, men reported more frequently utilizing services such as the Writing Center, tutoring services, Career Services, and Sun Devils Count. Respondents aged 18 to 24 reportedly utilized tutoring services, Career Services, and Sun Devils Count more frequently than all other age groups. In addition, many of the educational services and programs such as subject librarians, ASU Help Center, the Writing Center, GPSA, tutoring services, Career Services, and Sun Devils Count were utilized by international students more frequently than non-international students.

Use of educational and career services and programs differed by campus. For instance, Library One search was utilized more frequently by students located Downtown and less frequently by online students, subject librarians were utilized more frequently by students located in Tempe, Polytechnic, and West and less frequently by Downtown and online students, and inter-library loan was utilized less frequently by online students compared to students at all other campuses. GPSA was utilized more frequently by students located in Tempe and West and less frequently by online students. Career Services was utilized by students located at Polytechnic and Tempe more frequently than students located at the Downtown and West campuses, and those completing their programs online.

Analysis by degree program suggested that doctoral students utilized library services, except for subject librarians, more frequently than students pursuing professional and master's degrees. The Writing Center was reportedly utilized more frequently by professional and master's students and less frequently by doctoral and non-degree seeking students. Master's and non-degree seeking students were also more likely than other groups to report utilizing tutoring services; and professional students and master's students reported utilizing career services more frequently than doctoral and non-degree seeking students.

Health insurance. Health insurance was reportedly obtained through ASU by 46% of participants. Younger students (i.e., 61% of students age 18-24) and international students (92%) were more likely to be insured through ASU. Supplemental health insurance was infrequently held by respondents overall; comparatively fewer international students than non-international students held supplemental health insurance plans.

Use of health and athletic services. Respondents to the GPSA survey were additionally asked to indicate the frequency with which they utilized various health and athletic services and programs at ASU. Findings indicated a low rate of utilization among graduate and professional students, such that greater than half (53%-80%) reported "never" using the Sun Devil Fitness Center Services (e.g., classes, trainers), intramural sports, Health Services, ASU health insurance (Aetna), and Counseling Services. In comparison, respondents were slightly more

likely to report utilizing the Sun Devil Fitness Center facilities, with approximately 38% reporting that they used the facilities at least “sometimes.”

Men and younger respondents (i.e., in the 18-24 and 25-34 age groups) reported more frequent use of the fitness and health services and facilities than women and respondents in all other age groups. In addition, international students reported more frequent use of the health and fitness services and facilities than non-international students.

Analysis by campus suggested that respondents from the Tempe campus reported utilizing each of the health and fitness services with the greatest frequency; use of Health Services and ASU health insurance (Aetna) were reportedly utilized much more frequently by students at Tempe campus than other campuses and by online students. In general, utilization of health and fitness services were the lowest among online students and those studying at the West campus. Doctoral students generally reported utilizing the fitness facilities, Health Services, and the ASU health insurance (Aetna) with greater frequency than students enrolled in professional, master’s, and non-degree seeking programs. Professional and non-degree seeking students reported the lowest frequency of use of most fitness and health services.

Satisfaction with services. Respondents to the GPSA Needs Assessment Survey were asked to rate their satisfaction with various ASU programs and services. Given response options, “I did not know about this” and “I have not used this,” findings suggested that the majority of respondents (53%-72%) had not utilized the services despite being aware of them. GPSA, the Sun Devil Fitness Center (SDFC) Services (11% each) and the Sun Devils Count (28%) were the services for which respondents, overall, were most likely to indicate lack of awareness.

International students were more likely to be aware of, and use, ASU resources than non-international students. In other words, non-international students were more likely to indicate that they did not know about the services inquired about in the survey. With few exceptions, students enrolled in online degree programs, as compared to students studying at the Tempe, Downtown, West, and Polytechnic campuses, were more likely to indicate they were unaware of the services. However, lack of use was more prevalent among students at the Downtown, West, and Polytechnic campuses, compared to those at the Tempe campus.

“It would be helpful for graduate students who do their coursework off campus to have access to some of the same services that would otherwise be available... I do not have the ability to take advantage of the SDFC facilities yet I am still responsible for paying the fees... ASU could build a partnership with other fitness centers around the Phoenix area where I could utilize their facilities.”

Of the graduate and professional students who had utilized the services, the majority reported that they were satisfied with the services. For instance, 85%-95% were “very satisfied,” “satisfied,” or “somewhat satisfied” with the Sun Devil Fitness Center facilities and services, Career Services, the Writing Center, tutoring services, GPSA, ASU library, ASU Help Center, Financial Aid Office, and Sun Devils Count.

International students were more likely to indicate that they felt satisfied with each of the services than non-international students, with the exception of the Financial Aid Office. Satisfaction with the Sun Devil Fitness Center facilities, Career Services, and ASU library was particularly high among international students. Satisfaction did not appear to significantly differ by campus. Analysis by degree program suggested that doctoral and master’s students were more likely to be satisfied with Career Services and GPSA than were professional and non-degree seeking students.

Similar to the satisfaction ratings provided by respondents in relation to various services and programs at ASU, graduate and professional students who had utilized customer service and other services at the Sun Devil Fitness

Center, Career Services, Writing Center, tutoring services, GPSA, Health Services, ASU library, ASU Help Center, Financial Aid Office, Counseling Services, and Sun Devils Count found them to be helpful (85%-95% “very helpful,” “helpful,” or “somewhat helpful”).

International students were more likely to report that the assistance they received at Career Services was helpful as compared to non-international students. Differences in helpfulness ratings of respondents by campus were not statistically significant.

Helpfulness of orientation programs. Respondents were also asked to rate the helpfulness of several orientation programs designed for graduate students. Overall, 18% of respondents “did not know about” and 15%-20% “did not attend” the Graduate College and Departmental Orientations. Approximately 29% of respondents “did not know about” and 30% “did not attend” the University TA/RA and Departmental TA/RA Orientations. Of those who indicated having attended, 71%-82% found the Graduate College, Departmental, and Departmental TA/RA Orientations to be “very helpful,” “helpful,” or “somewhat helpful.” University TA/RA Orientations were reportedly less helpful to respondent attendees; 41% provided ratings of “somewhat unhelpful,” “unhelpful,” or “very unhelpful.”

Consistent with the findings presented thus far, international students generally rated the helpfulness of orientation programs higher than non-international students. The helpfulness of orientations by campus appeared to differ significantly in response to the Departmental TA/RA Orientations, such that graduate students from Polytechnic, West, and Tempe campuses rated them as more helpful than students from the Downtown campus or those studying online. In addition, differences were observed in helpfulness of orientation programs by degree program with regard to Graduate College and Departmental TA/RA Orientations. Master’s students rated the Graduate College Orientations higher than students enrolled in other degree programs; doctoral students rated the Departmental TA/RA Orientations as more helpful than did the master’s, professional, and non-degree seeking students.

Satisfaction with health services and insurance. Graduate and professional students were asked to rate their satisfaction with several health services, including the “service from physicians at Health Services,” “ease of making appointments,” “cost of services offered through Health Services,” “Counseling Services,” “primary care services,” and “overall service from Health Services.” More than half (54%-75%) of survey respondents reported that they had not utilized the health services listed. Sixty percent of graduate and professional students had not utilized the Aetna Student Health Insurance Plan and 76% had not utilized the Aetna Vital Savings Dental Discount Program. Of those who had utilized each service, the majority indicated that they were satisfied overall (i.e., 59%-88% “extremely satisfied,” “satisfied,” or “somewhat satisfied”). The services provided by Health Services received higher satisfaction ratings by respondents (79%-88%) as compared to items related to the Aetna health and dental insurance programs (59%-67%).

“I would love to use the Health Center, but my [work] schedule does not allow for it and as a result, I simply do not go to the doctor.”

International students were more likely to indicate that they had utilized the health services listed; they were also more satisfied with “cost of prescription drugs through Aetna” and the Aetna Vital Savings Dental Discount Program, yet less satisfied with the “cost of services offered through Health Services” as compared to non-international students. Satisfaction with the health services and insurance offered through ASU did not differ significantly by campus.

Satisfaction with dining services. Overall, most participants were satisfied with the food options offered on campus. For instance, 70% of graduate and professional students indicated ratings of four (4) to seven (7) on a seven-point agreement scale (with 1=“strongly disagree” and 7=“strongly agree”) in response to the item, “I am

satisfied with the food choices available on campus.” However, respondent ratings suggested that the following improvements would be supported by graduate and professional students (agreement ratings of 4-7): “ASU food services should offer healthier food options” (83%) and “ASU food services should be mandated to provide nutritional information on their products” (81%). Although analysis by campus did not reveal a statistically significant difference in satisfaction with the food choices on campus, respondents at the West campus were the most likely to agree with the statement, “ASU food services should offer healthier food options” and respondents at the Downtown campus were the most likely to agree with the statement, “ASU food services should be mandated to provide nutritional information on their products” as compared to respondents from all other campuses and online.

Use of child care services. Of respondents with children (8% of the sample, or 96/1246), 93% indicated they had 1 to 3 children. Many of the graduate and professional students with children who responded to the survey indicated that child care was provided by themselves (47%), their spouse/partner (30%), or family (26%). Fewer respondents indicated utilizing off-campus (13%), private (11%), or on-campus child care (1%). Eighteen percent of respondents with children indicated that they had “other” child care arrangements not listed. Utilization of various child care services was inconclusive when analyzed by campus due to the small sample size; however, more respondents who were studying at the Tempe and Downtown campuses and online reported utilizing off-campus child care than on-campus child care.

Communication effectiveness. On average, most respondents (59%) thought the University was mildly to moderately effective (indicated by ratings of 4-6 on a 7 point scale, with 1=“very ineffective” and 7=“very effective”) in communicating with them about programs, services, events, and issues. Differences in communication

“I’d like graduate and professional organizations to contact me in a way that is more direct and less subject to the high signal-to-noise ratio of the list-serves. Social media, text messaging, and direct email are acceptable.”

effectiveness ratings were not observed by demographics, such as age and international status. Overall, doctoral and master’s students rated University communications as more effective than professional and non-degree seeking students. The survey additionally inquired about respondents’ perceived effectiveness of several communication modes; overall, “email from academic department,” “email from the Graduate College,” “MyASU page,” “email from GradStu/GradAd,” and “text message” were considered to be most effective by respondents. Communication modes that were less effective included the “GPSA website,” “video monitors around campus,” and “State Press.” Unsurprisingly, communication via “video monitors around campus,” “posters/flyers around campus,” and “word-of-mouth” were rated as less effective by online students than by those studying at any of the four campuses.

What educational, health (i.e., physical, emotional), and childcare needs are underserved among graduate and professional students?

Financial support. Financial support was the most pressing need among the sampled graduate and professional students. According to respondents, pursuing a graduate degree presented an immense financial burden, in terms of the costs of attendance and potential impacts on their income, while working toward their degrees. Accumulating student loan debt was a significant concern among respondents. Additional opportunities to secure grants to offset the costs associated with travel to conferences and theses, dissertations, and applied projects were frequently requested.

Research and teaching assistantship opportunities were also desired by many respondents; survey findings suggested that the supply of assistantships may not meet the demand among graduate and professional students seeking support for their education and employment to cover their living expenses. In addition, respondents who

had an assistantship noted that their stipends were just barely enough to meet their needs. Measures to reduce the cost of tuition and fees were welcomed by respondents; for instance, several respondents noted that they would prefer a reduction in fees over an expansion of service offerings or the ability to select and pay for services individually.

Reasons for lack of service utilization. Overall, the graduate and professional students who responded to the survey were aware of, and interested in, the services offered at ASU, yet had not utilized many of them. In their comments, respondents provided several explanations for why this was so. The business hours of many of the services were not accommodating of their schedules; activities during the day, including work, assistantships, classes, and family engagements pushed the available time for graduate students to study, research, and write to later evenings, weekends, and holidays—times when many on-campus services are closed. In addition, many respondents explained that they were not on campus often enough to take advantage of services and programs. Online access to more services, programs, and platforms to engage with the campus community was a prevalent request among respondents—particularly those enrolled in online programs and those working remotely (e.g., students at the Tucson Component).

“All graduate resources should be available after 5 pm, because we are working students. They should also be available online as much as possible, because many of us live off campus, sometimes far away.”

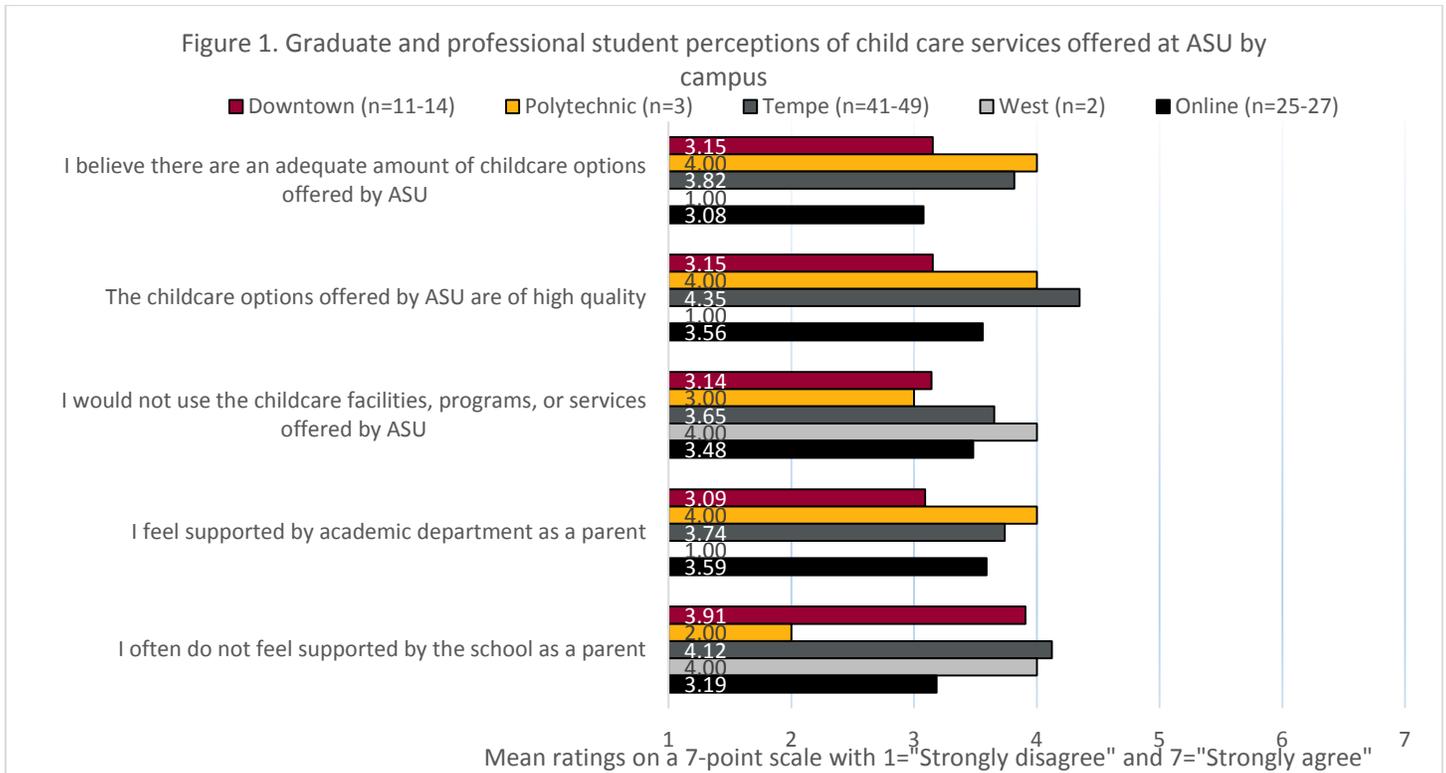
Communications. Although graduate and professional student respondents were generally aware of services and resources available to them, they noted that messaging and outreach could be improved. Fewer email messages that are clear, targeted, and functional (e.g., active links to websites) seemed to be preferred by respondents. Improved navigability of the ASU website in general and a list of resources available to them with links for more information were also suggested.

Prioritization of services. Of the services offered to them, graduate and professional students conveyed that priority should be placed on improving those that helped further their academic and professional goals. For instance, respondents frequently stated that the breadth of the ASU library collection often did not meet their needs. Although contingent upon the services provided by individual departments, some graduate and professional students reported that they were in need of stronger academic advising and support from faculty mentors. In addition, many respondents noted that they were in need of career development opportunities tailored to their field of study and desired career path. For example, graduate and professional students who were pursuing non-academic careers felt that their career development needs were underserved; such students desired improved assistance with seeking internship opportunities as well as events and activities that encouraged networking with alumni, practitioners, and industry representatives in their fields.

“I don't think that the services are geared to me at all. I am not an undergrad. I am a full time worker...There do not seem to be higher end professional activities.”

Health insurance. Health insurance purchased through ASU was reportedly not comprehensively meeting the needs of many of the graduate and professional students who relied on it as their sole source of health coverage. Respondents repeatedly commented that they needed dental, vision, and prescription medication insurance coverage; the discount programs provided insufficient savings and were frequently not accepted by health care providers. In addition, some respondents noted that the co-payments and lab fees were too expensive, as well as that the number of sessions covered for behavioral health and physical therapy were too few to get the care they needed. Respondents also desired the option to obtain coverage for spouses or domestic partners and dependent children under the ASU health insurance plan.

Child care. Findings also suggested that expanded offerings for child care at ASU would benefit those graduate and professional students who are parents. Child care offered during evening hours for parents who attend night classes and subsidy programs to help reduce the cost of child care for graduate and professional students were common requests. Further, child care options for student parents were reportedly fewer at the West and Downtown campuses, as compared to Tempe. Elevated percentages of respondents disagreed with the item (providing responses of 1-3 on a 7 point scale where 1="strongly disagree" and 7="strongly agree"), "I believe there are an adequate amount of childcare options offered by ASU," at the West (100%), Downtown (46%), and Tempe (31%) campuses and online (42%). However, interpretation was limited by the low numbers of responses, particularly at the Polytechnic and West campuses. Respondent perceptions of the child care services offered at ASU by campus are summarized in Figure 1.



Graduate student community. Finally, a stronger sense of community among graduate and professional students was a need particularly expressed by international students, part-time and online students, as well as those completing their programs remotely. Numerous suggestions for events and activities to encourage the development of the community were reflective of the diverse needs among the graduate and professional students surveyed. Recommendations for academic and career development events and activities included workshops on topics such as IRB proposal writing, grant writing, publishing, software programming, CV and resume development, and time management. In light of accessibility concerns, such workshops should be made available online to the greatest extent possible. In addition, field-specific career fairs, alumni events, and other networking opportunities designed for graduate and professional students, as well as interdisciplinary ‘mixers’ were requested. Social events suggested by respondents encompassed a wide range of interests, which appeared to reflect the various life stages of respondents (i.e., family-friendly and ‘singles’ events).

“I would like to see more vibrant and active webinar and web chat opportunities at times when working professionals with families can attend.”

SUMMARY

Financial support was a clear need for most of the graduate and professional students surveyed. Additional assistantship and internship opportunities, in particular, were requested by respondents. Yet, even those who held assistantships frequently needed to supplement their incomes via part-time jobs, student loans, and assistance from family. Very few respondents had scholarships or grants. While the costs of tuition, fees, books, and supplies were concerning to all, the costs varied greatly by group membership (e.g., Arizona residency, degree program). Most respondents appeared to carry at least some student loan debt at the time of the survey; higher debt appeared to be carried by professional and master's students.

The range and quality of services offered at ASU have generally met the needs of respondents. However, accessibility to services by graduate and professional students who have daytime obligations, visit campus infrequently (or not at all), or both, appeared to be an issue. Many respondents were aware of the services, yet had not utilized them. Services and programs tailored to the professional development of graduate and professional students were among the most requested.

Moreover, accessibility of resources, services, and engagement activities online was an underserved need identified by respondents. Comprehensive health insurance coverage and expanded child care options, both of which need to be cost-conscious, were also underserved needs reported by respondents. Graduate and professional students who responded to the survey stated that they would like to see motions made by ASU to better meet the needs they have that are distinct from those of undergraduate students.