Graduating Senior Survey

Summary of Open-Ended Responses

2009-2011 Graduating Seniors

Compiled by:
Office of Academic Assessment

Summer 2011
Additional Comments Made by Students: Graduating Senior Survey

What would have improved your experience IN YOUR MAJOR?

- More faculty involvement in classes and our progression.
- More classes need to be offered so that majors are not on the five year plan, maybe more professors need to be available for extra class sections.
- More classes on the computer or online for convenience.
- Essential classes don’t have enough sections.
- Some programs here at USM are very out of date and most research and book materials are located in Orono.
- Probably more available times for classes. More classes offered after 4pm for those of us who have to work during the day.
- Better communication about choices available in the major, better advising.
- Nicer facilities on campus. Appearance of some of the labs could use some updating.
- More hands-on approach, or some practical experiences related to the courses.
- More academic discipline – greater writing requirements to get ready for grad school.
- Advising!!! Help with post graduate decisions and advice about jobs.
- The classes needed to graduate are not offered frequently enough.
- Greater stability / constancy of adjunct faculty. There was too much turnover.
- I would have appreciated less bias among some teachers. As USM is a public institution I would expect teachers to be neutral in their political/philosophical stances they articulate in the classroom. I sometimes felt that they promoted their own positions.
- A stronger focus within my major.
- To have a lot more hands on studies. A lot of classes were strictly textbook-based.
- Better advising about majors, better advice on what classes to take, and what sequence.
- Closer monitoring of academic progress, letting students know ahead of time if they are missing a course.
- Preparing students better for real jobs related to our field; actually discuss career opportunities and options for after graduation.
- Implement research projects that extend beyond semester.
- Accessibility of department chair.
- More communication with faculty; often they are difficult to have a conversation with.
- Clarity of post graduation expectations! (how to move on towards graduation degrees)
- Better advising, more accessibility of course, less ridiculous hassle in the registration process
- More professors needed in the majors for course offerings, and assistance.
- Majors are out-dated; they should be more related to what is happening outside of school. There needs to be a regular program offered to educate students about what kinds of jobs are related to what majors.
- More opportunity to experience field work incorporated in courses…instead of trying to find field work about we graduate.
The 100-level courses are a waste of time; some much of the course time is spent rehashing the basics of historical inquiry (how to write an essay, use the library, etc). Most of these classes are not worth taking, and I was required to take four of these similar courses!

All majors should have an internship program.

Some of the required courses in my major did not really seem beneficial to 'real-world' application. Having worked full-time while attending school, I found it very frustrating that my time was being wasted doing things that I know for a fact are not productive to a normal work environment. I also found that the expectations for group projects in most of my classes were unrealistic given the busy schedules of most of USM's students. Many of us work f/t & take classes p/t so to have to meet outside of class is not really reasonable, especially for semester long projects. I know the theory is that in the workplace you need to work with others, but that is usually done during work hours.

When working in my field, everything is hands-on. So learning in the classroom should be hands-on, writing papers are a useful tool for many majors, but other things are useful as well.

Classes offered at more times. Most of the professors chose to teach on Tues 7 Thurs afternoons. This then makes it difficult to take some desired classes because they overlap etc. Also, some classes are only taught at specific times each semester, for example Thursday 7-9pm. This is not a convenient time for a full time student witnessing to survive!

My major complaint is that a lot of the resources you need for classes are not available on campus.

More professors teaching the same subjects. It’s difficult to take a class when you don't get along with your professor and he/she is the only one who teaches it.

Material should be spread over a more relaxed time frame. Too concentrated courses and taught in too short time to allow for the new material settle into ones long term memory...

Stronger role models within the department. More communication between the professor and student. More passion from the professors... it seems like that some professors and the department chairs were 'watered down' and non-excited about what they were teaching. Also, to have the media lab on campus would have been much easier to commute instead of going in town. Sometimes I would have to take the bus from Gorham--to Portland--Portland to Portland hall--then walk many blocks to class. It was difficult and made me wonder if going to class was that important.

Offer more major core classes in the late afternoon. Reduce fees for people taking less than 9 credits or exempt some fees for older students who do not live on campus who work and do not need health or fitness services!!!

More classes offered in all semesters, instead of having to wait for the following semester.

There needs to be a little more assistance to students who are having problems registering for classes, be it financial or personal situations.

The university needs to be made more available to its student. It also needs to be more understanding. It should focus more on the needs of its students and not on the money. As being a transfer student, this school wasn't as helpful as my previous college. Students need to be listened to more!

Everything was fine overall in my USM experience.... Nice to see all the things being built without money instead of them doing nothing.... one thing that needs to be done for the future is classroom desks need to be more spacious so students sit comfortably and have room for
more than their notebook on the desk!! Some people don’t even fit in those desks attached to the chair..... Other than that it was fine!!

- Some advisors are great but have too many students to keep track of. Several advisors should be available in the major, and all should be telling us the same thing.
- More Professors! There are not enough classes offered to account for the amount of student enrolled in this major. Graduating on time has been a major issue and complaint for all most all students I know, regardless of the major. Someone should seriously consider this issue!
- Make international studies a major of its own.
- More group work, more hands on involvement...less multiple choice exams. Working in a team is more like the real world.
- There needs to be more of a variety of courses offered within the major..
- Better, more individualized advising!!!!!! Greater exposure to research possibilities. Greater awareness of the library & its offerings. Greater career guidance, counseling, education.
- more variety in the classes offered
- Having an advisor that did his job...advising me what to do in what order...I basically guessed my way through in advising myself. I also would have liked more professors to be more passionate about their subject...some were very good, animated, and student friendly...some were polar opposite.
- I would have liked to have a somewhat structured curriculum. It was always a struggle getting the classes I needed. This major is IMPOSSIBLE to graduate in 4 years. Other than that most classes and most teachers were excellent.
- The Library needs more extensive hours and services at the reference desk need improvement. The library needs longer hours on Friday and Saturday when students that work full-time can have a chance to use the library. Reference services are not available the entire time the library is open making it difficult to do research.
- If faculty were more concerned with individual’s progress. And there are a few professors who should be put under some kind of review.
- More class openings, classes close after 20 students are enrolled.
- Faculty that truly cared about your progress. There were only a few faculty members that made me feel like they cared about the progress of students.
- I had to go into a different major than my original choice because I could not join the major that I wanted to join.
- I think there needs to be more variety of course selection, times and days etc. There should be a point where you focus your study into one aspect of the broad major. The major is very understaffed with professors. It is frustrating to pay for an education and feel like your major is being overlooked by people at the top. We are the largest major and this should be a cause for improvement.
- I wish the professors had given better feedback on my papers…this is the only way we can really learn.
- Teachers who actually knew what the hell they were talking about would be nice.
- More concern for students progress. Some of the professors were excellent while there were a couple that could have seems to care less about the students.
- Structured Learning - Stick to Syllabus, so students know what to expect and can plan for the semester.
• Library/Campus resources are the key -- up to date monographs, subscriptions to more comprehensive journal services (JSTOR!!!). More day classes would be nice as well
• Every semester we purchase textbooks which we do not fully use. These textbooks always have material at the end of each chapter which we almost never consider in class. I would like to see the chapter end used more. Some texts are just not worth buying, they are so expensive and often not used in class.
• Like with most life experiences, there was a combination of good experiences and not so good experiences.
• Less lecturing and reading - more on-the-job training - real life examples
• There should have been a separate graduation celebration in your own major. I felt that this was a big part that was missing to my senior year. I, along with the other seniors, was never recognized by our department for our hard work. Especially after spending all that money. Having a gathering of the professors and seniors before graduation would have been nice.
• I would eliminate the foreign language requirement, or shorten it to one year rather than the current two years. I feel it is a deterrent to students. The frequency of course offerings could improve as well.
• Some of the classes that are required for us mean nothing to me and I took nothing away from it expect less money. I would recommend courses that focused more on what I would need in to obtain a job.
• Greater dedication on my part to utilize the resources at USM for learning skills such as study habits, note taking etc. I never really knew how to connect with people for small group study which may have helped facilitate a better learning environment for me. My current advisor is great but my prior advisor was not very helpful at all, always seemed either overworked, burned out or just tired.
• I was very disappointed in the STAFF and even when I spoke up to other professors or advising, nothing was done....there needs to be a focus more on the STUDENTS!!!
• Provide a way to get help, when needed. Where do you go for questions?
• If the courses were established ahead of time. There is always an upper division shuffle of courses and times leading to rescheduling and closings. My advisor took 8 days once to get my schedule back you me and everything I wanted to get into was closed.
• If I didn't have to be bothered with general electives, this would have helped immensely. Mostly, they were a complete waste of time and money. I'll admit a few of them were pretty interesting, but they won't have a chance of rounding out my life experience.
• Possible more clear guidelines for the required curriculum
• I found signing up for new classes to be a problem most semesters.
• If the required courses were offered every semester it would be very helpful.
• Having more than one class to choose from for my last 300/400 level accounting elective in the evening.
• Easier registration, the registration process at this school is ridiculous! Also classes that I felt I got a lot out of, verses classes that seemed worthless
• Offer high demand or required courses more often, not just once every two or three years.
• Communication between student and advisor should be more open.
• To have continuity with professors who are concerned w/ the student’s progress and who like to share their field experiences in the major would have been really nice. I think students need to feel a better connection with faculty.
• Some faculty need to have a better grading system.
• There are faculty who are more concerned about research than actually teaching…which makes them horrible teachers and students have a hard time learning from them.
• Faculty need to stop giving busy work for homework and actually teach us how to apply learning to the world.
• The transfer experience here was terrible. The departments make you retake courses that you had previously, even though your transcript shows you’ve had a similar course. It is all a nightmare because it takes so long to graduate, and professors just want you to take all of their courses even if you had them before.
• I had three different advisors, and all of them were bad. They don’t all give consistent information and then you find out in your last semester, you didn’t have a particular course that you were supposed to have ahead of time.
• Curriculums need to be updated. Some professors are teaching some very old models, instead of newer information.
• Faculty need to learn to teach students who have different learning styles. Not just lecturing and give exams.
• I have had courses in almost every major, and technology needs to be updated in every department.
• Advising needs to provide avenues for students to get connected to the school and other peers. Not much opportunities are available to even connect with others in your own major or other similar majors.
• Having one advisor would have been helpful, so that you can have a good relationship with someone who knows your particular situation…instead of several advisors that you have to keep explaining what happened previously.
• There is a major disconnect with USM policies and procedures that happen in the departments. There are so many flaws and no way to get answers to issues that arise.
• Provide more opportunities for service learning…not just one learning experience in your senior year. Other colleges start offering service learning early in the major, I think it would be so helpful if I have an earlier experience, it would have made my learning experiences must more relevant.