



RESEARCH NOTES

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JMU Employer Survey

The Office of Institutional Research collects information from alumni to understand how well they have adjusted to the workforce and graduate school. This information is invaluable to academic departments as they monitor the success of their graduates. Periodically the Office of Institutional Research conducts an employer survey to provide the University community with feedback from the employers of JMU graduates. The first survey was conducted in 2000. In January 2005 OIR received from Academic Advising and Career Development the names and email addresses of organizational contacts that normally visit JMU to recruit students. Most of the organizations have sent representatives to campus for years. The recruiters vary in the number of years in which they have visited JMU and the number of graduates with whom they have worked.

In January 2005, 255 of these recruiters were emailed the employer survey. They were asked to either complete it online or forward it to the person in their company that would be the best one to complete it. One hundred two usable responses were received; a return rate of 40 percent. These responses came from 92 for-profit and 10 not-for-profit organizations. The respondents were put into five groupings: Business, N=81; Government, N=7; Education, N=2; Health Care, N=2; and Other, N=9. Forty-one percent of the employers have worked with six or more JMU graduates.

The employers rated for their organization the importance of 26 attributes needed by employees. The table below displays the attributes sorted by ratings receiving the highest percentages. The final column displays the percentage of employers that are very satisfied or satisfied with the performance of the JMU graduates in each attribute. In none of the attributes was the satisfaction level less than 93 percent. The results were very comparable to the 2000 survey.

Percent indicating attribute is <u>Very Important</u> to success in their organization. (2000 survey)	Attribute	Percent <u>Very Satisfied</u> or <u>Satisfied</u> with JMU graduates (2000 survey)
82% (78%)	Defining and solving problems	100% (98%)
80% (78%)	Listening effectively	100% (97%)
78% (74%)	Possessing good interpersonal skills	98% (99%)
75% (74%)	Speaking effectively	98% (95%)
73% (72%)	Communication with others within the organization effectively	100% (97%)
71% (71%)	Exercising initiative	93% (97%)

Percent indicating attribute is <u>Very Important</u> to success in their organization. (2000 survey)	Attribute	Percent <u>Very Satisfied</u> or <u>Satisfied</u> with JMU graduates (2000 survey)
64% (47%)	Making logical inferences based on observations	98% (97%)
63% (61%)	Demonstrating persistence towards reaching organizational goals	99% (97%)
61% (69%)	Practicing collaboration within a team environment	100% (99%)
59% (55%)	Leadership skills	95% (94%)
58% (67%)	Using computers to access or manipulate information	99% (99%)
55% (60%)	Using computers for written communication	99% (100%)
55% (57%)	Taking responsibility for professional development	96% (92%)
53% (50%)	Practicing self-reliance	94% (97%)
52% (37%)	Quantitative skills	100% (98%)
52% (49%)	Writing effectively	100% (94%)
48% (51%)	Valuing different perspectives	99% (95%)
47% (44%)	Developing personal goals within the organization	96% (97%)
44% (40%)	Working well in the organizational hierarchy	98% (95%)
41% (48%)	Ability to learn new computing programs and applications	98% (100%)
40% (44%)	Lifelong learning	99% (94%)
39% (44%)	Creative thinking	98% (98%)
35% (44%)	Awareness of different cultures and ideas	99% (97%)
27% (23%)	Understanding the organization's role in the community	98% (91%)
15% (14%)	Applying scientific methods and principles	96% (94%)
14% (11%)	Awareness of historical and cultural traditions	99% (93%)

The employers were also asked to select the most important attributes. Two attributes, “Possessing good interpersonal skills,” and “Defining and solving problems,” were selected as the most important by more than 20 percent of the respondents.

Attribute	<u>Most Important</u> of all attributes. (2000 survey)
Possessing good interpersonal skills	23% (10%)
Defining and solving problems	22% (19%)
Leadership skills	7% (9%)
Demonstrating persistence towards reaching organizational goals	5% (4%)

Attribute	Most Important of all attributes. (2000 survey)
Creative thinking	5% (0%)
Communication with others within the organization effectively	4% (6%)
Exercising initiative	4% (3%)
Making logical inferences based on observations	4% (4%)
Practicing collaboration within a team environment	4% (8%)

Finally, the employers rated the performance of JMU's graduates compared with the graduates of other institutions. Sixty-three percent believe that JMU's graduates are "Superior," or "Above Average."

Rating	Percent	2000 Survey
Superior	10%	(12%)
Above average	53%	(61%)
No significant difference	32%	(27%)
Below average	2%	(2%)
Poor	0%	(0%)

The results of this survey indicate that for these employers there is an extremely high level of satisfaction with JMU's graduates. Of the five most important attributes (defining and solving problems; listening effectively; possessing good interpersonal skills; speaking effectively; and communication with others within the organization effectively) the level of satisfaction is 98 percent or higher.

This survey will be conducted periodically to monitor the perceptions of employers of JMU's graduates. Questions about this survey can be directed to the Office of Institutional Research at ask-OIR@jmu.edu.