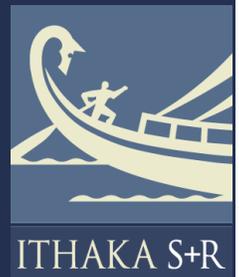


# University of Nevada, Las Vegas Undergraduate Student Survey: Executive Summary

*January 28, 2016*



# Overview

The following executive summary provides a high-level overview of findings from the Ithaka S+R Local Undergraduate Student Survey, which was administered at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The survey instrument was adapted from the Ithaka S+R US Faculty Survey<sup>1</sup>, which has tracked the evolution of faculty members' research and teaching practices on a triennial basis since 2000. The Ithaka S+R Local Undergraduate Student Survey provides institutions with a heightened awareness about their campus constituents and helps academic leaders manage and address environmental change.

During Fall 2015, 22,310 UNLV undergraduate students received an email invitation to participate in a survey about student expectations from higher education, perceptions of coursework, and engagement with and perceptions of the library. One Apple Watch Sport, five \$20 Rebel Cash transfers, and five UNLV Library swag bags were offered as incentives for participation. Three email reminders were sent before the close of the survey.

In total, 3,613 respondents clicked the survey link (about 16% of those who received the email invitation), with 3,463 of those starting the survey (about 16%) and 2,545 of those respondents completing the survey, for an overall response rate of about 11%. Due to the survey flow and skip patterns, not all UNLV undergraduate student respondents received every question in the survey.

The UNLV Undergraduate Student Survey was comprised of thematic modules with questions on students' objectives in obtaining an advanced degree (16 questions), their use of assigned course materials (16 questions), the role of the library in supporting students' needs (19 questions), their use of library space (27 questions), their extra- and co-curricular experiences (5 questions), and their research practices (5 questions).

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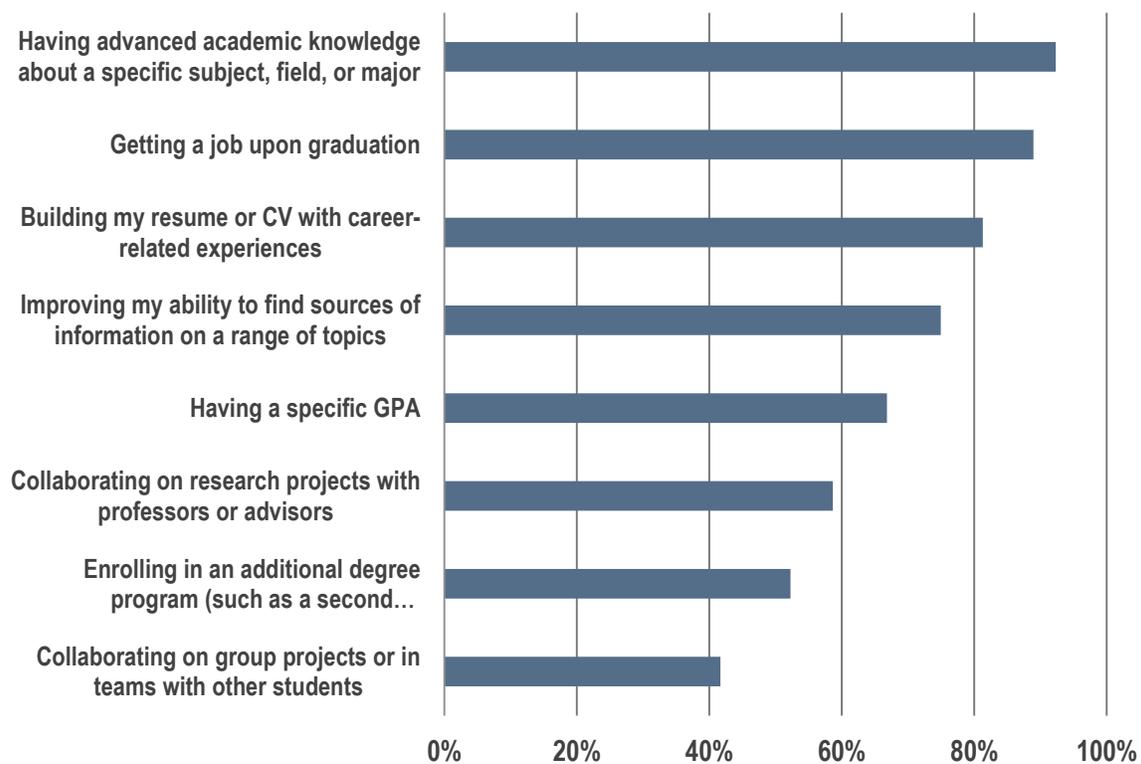
<sup>1</sup> Ross Housewright, Roger C. Schonfeld, and Kate Wulfson, Ithaka S+R U.S. Faculty Survey 2012, (New York: Ithaka S+R, 2013), available at <http://www.sr.ithaka.org/research-publications/us-faculty-survey-2012>

## Higher education objectives

Undergraduate students were first asked a series of questions on their goals for pursuing their current program, field of study, or major. The following findings represent some of the most interesting results on this topic.

When queried on the importance of achieving various goals at the university, undergraduate students expressed substantial differences across these goals, as displayed in Figure 1.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 1:** How important or unimportant is it to you to achieve each of the following goals as a result of your experience at this college or university?\*



\*Percent of respondents selecting “very important” or “important”

Students assessed having advanced academic knowledge about a specific subject, field, or major as most important (92%, n=2,539), closely followed by getting a job upon graduation (89%, n=2,538). Collaborating on group projects or in teams with other students (42%, n=2,532) and enrolling in an additional degree program (52%, n=2,535) were rated as the least important goals.

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<sup>2</sup> The goals in Figure 1 represent a selected subset of those included in the higher education objectives module.

Students were also asked to evaluate the usefulness of various factors in helping them get the type of job or career they hope to have. Students indicated that their major, field, or program of study (89% rated as “extremely” or “very” useful, n=2,531), their work experience or internship(s) (85%, n=2,529), and their professional network (80%, n=2,530) were the most useful. Conversely, their collaborative research experience with professors or advisors (59%, n=2,533) and their faculty mentor(s) or advisor(s) (66%, n=2,531) were rated as the least useful.

## Coursework and academics

Students were then asked about their discovery practices and use of materials for academics, research, and coursework. These findings highlight many of the most noteworthy results in this module.

Students reported that in the courses they were currently taking, they were most frequently assigned responses to assigned readings (53%, n=2,533), research papers (37%, n=2,533), and problem sets (35%, n=2,533) as compared to other types of work.

To complete their coursework or research projects, students most frequently use textbooks or textbook chapters (63%, n=2,525), study resources such as notes, flash cards, study guides, or handouts (46%, n=2,527), journal articles or other academic articles (40%, n=2,526), and online educational resources that are not videos, such as Wikipedia or study guides (39%, n=2,523). A smaller share of students indicated that they use electronic or e-book versions of textbooks or textbook chapters (36%, n=2,526) and e-books, e-book chapters, or electronic versions of novels (22%, n=2,525) as compared to print versions of these resources.

In completing their most recent research project, the largest share of undergraduate students reported starting the project with a general search engine (such as Google, Yahoo!, or Bing) (38%, n=2,539), followed by the library’s website (35%, n=880), and an academic search engine or database (such as Google Scholar or JSTOR) (19%, n=491). A majority of students described their ease of access to information and resources used for coursework or research projects as “somewhat easy” or “easy” (28% and 31% respectively, n=2,536).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> On a labelled seven point scale, from “very difficult” to “very easy.”

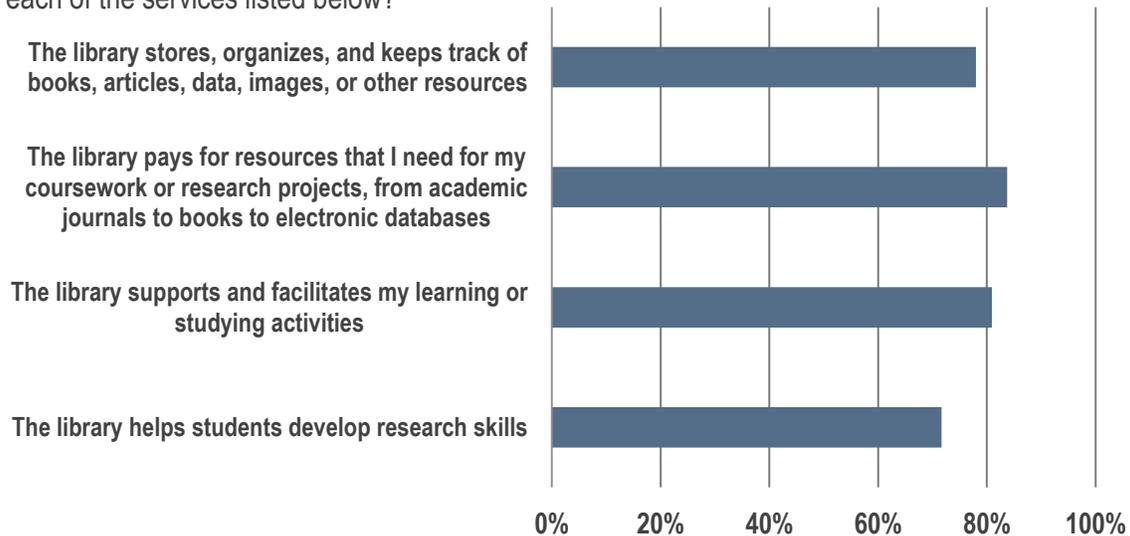
Students mildly agreed that instructors help them to develop research skills to find and use academic sources of information for their coursework or research projects, with 34% agreeing and 29% somewhat agreeing (n=2,521).

## Role of the library

A section of the survey was devoted to questions on perceptions of the changing role and value of the campus library. The findings below highlight some of the meaningful findings on the usefulness of various library services.

Figure 2 below illustrates that undergraduate students most value that the library pays for resources that they need for their coursework or research projects (84%, n=625) and highly value the other services that the campus library provides.

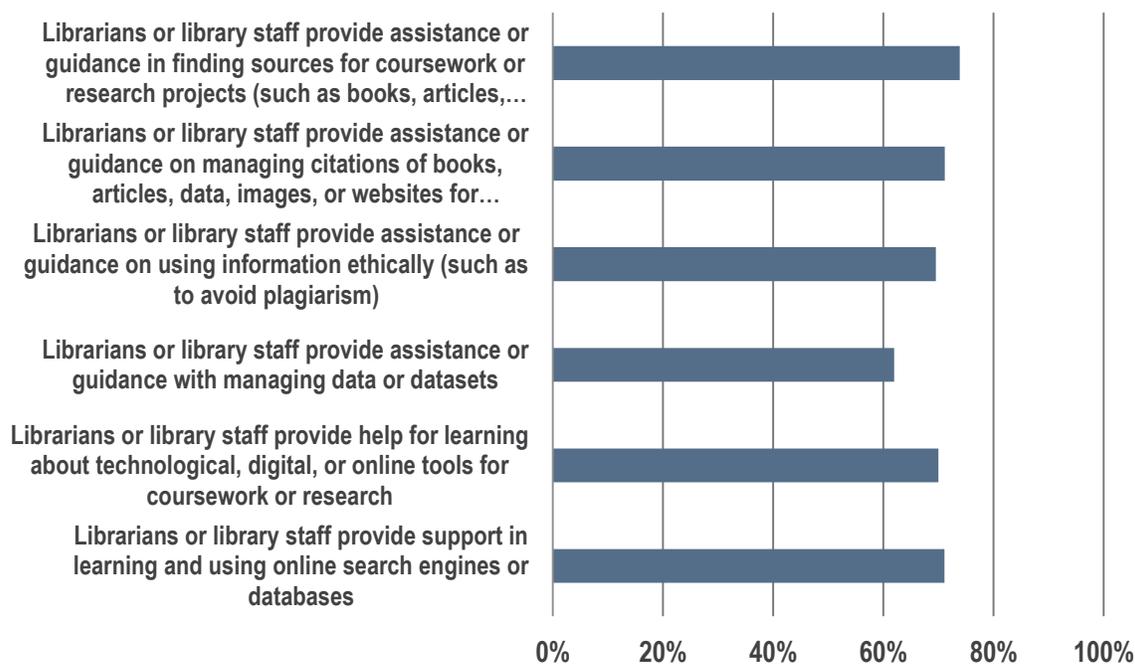
**Figure 2:** How useful is it to you personally that your campus library provides each of the services listed below?\*



\*Percent of respondents selecting “extremely useful” or “very useful”

When asked about the usefulness of services provided by campus librarians or library staff, students indicated a similar level of perceived usefulness across services as displayed in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3:** How useful is it to you personally that your campus librarians or library staff provide each of the services listed below?\*



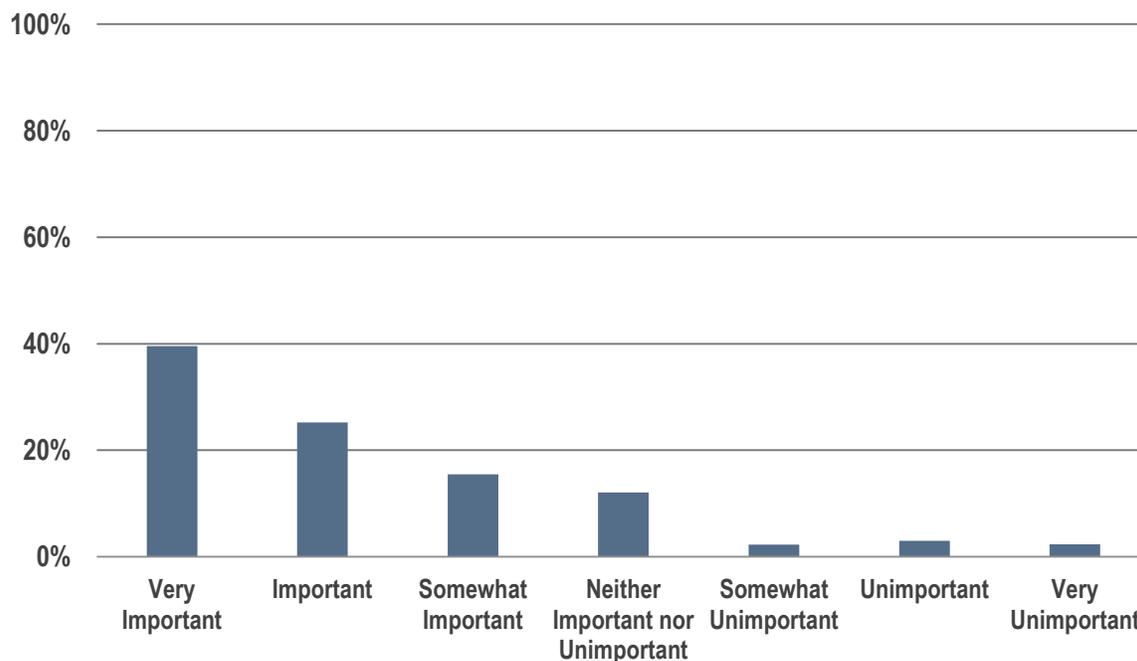
\*Percent of respondents selecting “extremely useful” or “very useful”

## Extra- and co-curricular experiences

This module on extra- and co-curricular experiences covered work and internship experience and expectations related to career goals. The findings outlined below represent some of the most interesting results on these topics.

While only 15% of undergraduate students currently have or have had a paid or unpaid internship that is related to their career goals (n=2,503), students recognize the importance of these kinds of internships. As displayed in Figure 4 below, a large share of students rated having an internship related to their career goals as “very important” (40%, n=2,488).

**Figure 4:** How important or unimportant is it to you to have or complete a paid or unpaid internship related to your career goals before you graduate?



## Research practices

Finally, undergraduate students were queried on their understanding of, interest in, and opportunities for conducting or contributing to original research.

Very few undergraduate students have collaborated with other undergraduate students (20%, n=2,442), faculty advisors, instructors, or professors (12%, n=2,440), or graduate students (11%, n=2,436) in conducting or contributing to original academic research for course credit and/or for publication. Even fewer have been employed or received university credit as a research assistant (8%, n=2,434) or received acknowledgement for contributions to a book or article published by a faculty advisor, instructor, or professor (7%, n=2,431). Similarly, only a small share of students rated these collaborations as being of high importance, with the largest share of students rating these as “neither important nor unimportant” (25%-28%) or “somewhat important” (20%-22%).

Students rated their current skill level for research-related tasks highest for using information ethically (58% selecting “good” or “very good”, n=2,458), locating academic sources of information (51%, n=2,454), forming evidence-based conclusions (51%, n=2,454), writing according to academic or discipline-specific

standards (50%, n=2,454), and evaluating academic sources of information (49%, n=2,457). Students were less likely to rate their skill level highly for writing and submitting grant applications or other funding proposals (22%, n=2,457), framing or developing original research questions (35%, n=2,457), and preserving data, media, images, or other primary source materials for the long-term (36%, n=2,460). Of these research skills, students rated using information ethically (69% selecting “important” or “very important”, n=2,439) and forming evidence-based conclusions (68%, n=2,437) as most important, and writing and submitting grant applications or other funding proposals (52%, n=2,437) and preserving data, media, images, or other primary source materials for the long term (52%, n=2,436) as least important.