The class of 1992 was the subject of our office’s first longitudinal study of undergraduate education when they were enrolled as undergraduates.* This issue of UVAssessment, written by Jeff Gulati, Survey Methodologist in Institutional Assessment and Studies, summarizes some of our most recent information about them. In 1997, five years after their graduation, we conducted a detailed survey of the 1992 class to discover what they were doing as alumni. We wanted to know the extent to which they had benefited from their University education and what they thought of that education five years later.

Alumni surveys are an important component of our efforts to assess institutional quality because they provide reliable information about the longer-term impact of a U.Va. education. We conduct a number of such surveys annually for departments and programs participating in academic program review, and we conduct other alumni surveys for other purposes. Our continuing study of the undergraduate class of 1992 is the most extensive study we have underway at present. Future issues of Executive Summary will provide additional analysis of the data from this continuing study.

* A copy of the final report of the Longitudinal Study of the Class of 1992 is available upon request.

The University of Virginia’s Office of Institutional Assessment and Studies conducted a survey of 1,188 alumni of the class of 1992 during the summer of 1997 to assess the impact of undergraduate education on students’ lives five years after graduation. One of the more specific objectives of the survey was to learn about the careers U.Va. graduates choose, including how they obtained those careers and how well their undergraduate experience served them in their career goals.

At the time of the survey, 79% of the respondents said they were working in a full-time job and 14% were enrolled full-time in graduate or professional school. Of those working full-time, 11% also were in school full-time and almost half, 48%, already had earned an advanced degree. Another 6% said they had been accepted for a degree program in the fall.

The median individual employment income for those employed full-time at the time of the survey was approximately $38,350, with 23% earning $50,000 or more. For all 1992 graduates, the median household income was approximately $54,100; for all Americans, the median household income for 1997 was $37,005. Only 3% of alumni were unemployed at the time of the survey, compared to a national rate of 5%.
THE FIRST JOB

University of Virginia graduates tend to find their first jobs fairly quickly: 41% of the respondents obtained their first job before they graduated and three-fourths found their first jobs within three months of graduation. Only 8% took more than a year to find their first job. All the Nursing school graduates responding to the survey found their first job within three months of graduation. Commerce (84%), Engineering (84%), and Education (79%) school graduates also found their first jobs relatively quickly. Graduates from the College (71%) and Architecture school (68%) took slightly longer, but within six months 85% were working in a full-time position.

Alumni almost unanimously agreed that their own personal attributes were most important in their employer’s decision to hire them for their first full-time job after graduation. When respondents were presented with a list of factors that may have helped them obtain their first full-time positions, 94% said that they thought their personal qualities were either a “very important” or an “important” factor. Less than 1% said that their personal qualities were “not important at all.” A large majority of the respondents also attributed the overall reputation of U.Va. and their academic major as important factors in obtaining their first job while a near majority attributed internships and summer jobs and a graduate or professional degree as important. Thirty-nine percent said that their grade point average was important and about a quarter said that personal or family contacts and extracurricular activities were important. Only 9% attributed U.Va. faculty contacts as important. Each of the factors and the percentage of respondents who rated the item important and not important are presented in figure 1.

Nearly half of the members of the class of 1992 were employed in a professional occupation for their first full-time job (see Table 1). The most common groups of professions were in the science and technology area (22%) which includes fields such as architecture, engineering, health care, and computer science. The next most common professions were in the education (12%) and legal (7%) fields. About one in five of the 1992 graduates worked in executive, administrative, and managerial occupations (19%) for their first full-time positions.

About two-thirds of the 1992 graduates thought that their undergraduate experience prepared them well for the work they did in their first full-time position after graduation: 65% of the graduates said that their U.Va. experience prepared them well, while only 11% said that their experience did not prepare them well at all. Fewer graduates saw a relationship between their

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation Category</th>
<th>First Occupation After Graduation (% of Alumni)</th>
<th>Most Recent Occupation, 5 Years After Graduation (% of Alumni)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and Technology</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts, Entertainment, Media, &amp; Sports</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial, Business, and Financial</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Support</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office and Administrative Support</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service and “Blue-Collar”</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Forces and Protective Services</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
About two-thirds of the 1992 graduates changed jobs at least once during their first five years after graduation; half of those changing jobs held three or more full-time positions. The average number of full-time positions held by the class of 1992 was 2.3.

For their most recent job, a fairly large percentage of alumni who started out in office, administrative support, sales, service, and blue-collar jobs moved into managerial and professional jobs. The percentage of alumni working as managers and professionals increased from 66% to 78% while the percentage working in the entry-level positions declined to 15% from 27%. Moreover, 64% of those who first worked in an office or administrative support job, 51% of those who first worked in a service or blue-collar job, and 47% of those who were in sales, moved into a managerial or professional job within five years of graduation. A list of occupational categories and the percentage of alumni holding a position in that category for both their first full-time position and their current position are presented in table 1.

Among those who held more than one job during the five-year period, 82% said that they were satisfied with their current or most recent full-time position while about a third were dissatisfied. For their first position, 50% had said they were satisfied while 30% had said they were dissatisfied. Moreover, the increase in satisfaction rates occurred among graduates in each school with the largest increase occurring among graduates of the College (see figure 2).

For the class of 1992 as a whole, 68% of those who changed jobs at least once said that their undergraduate experience prepared them well for their major and their first jobs: 42% said that their first job was either “very closely related” or “closely related” to their undergraduate major or academic concentration at U.Va, while 34% said that their first job was “not at all related” to their major or concentration.

Exactly half of the graduates were satisfied with their first full-time position while about a third were dissatisfied. Satisfaction was much higher for those who said there was a relationship between their undergraduate major and their first job. Among those who saw a relationship between their first job and their major, 64% also said that they were satisfied with that job and only 13% said they were dissatisfied. But for those who did not see a relationship, only 38% said they were satisfied while 43% said they were dissatisfied.

Satisfaction also was much higher for those who said that their U.Va. experience prepared them well for their first job. Among those who felt well prepared by their undergraduate experience, 60% also were satisfied with their first job and only 13% were dissatisfied. Among those who did not feel prepared at all, only 20% were satisfied with their first job while 73% were dissatisfied.

CURRENT
EMPLOYMENT
About two-thirds of the 1992 graduates changed jobs at least once during their first five years after graduation; half of those changing jobs held three or more full-time positions. The average number of full-time positions held by the class of 1992 was 2.3.

For their most recent job, a fairly large percentage of alumni who started out in office, administrative support, sales, service, and blue-collar jobs moved into managerial and professional jobs. The percentage of alumni working as managers and professionals increased from 66% to 78% while the percentage working in the entry-level positions declined to 15% from 27%. Moreover, 64% of those who first worked in an office or administrative support job, 51% of those who first worked in a service or blue-collar job, and 47% of those who were in sales, moved into a managerial or professional job within five years of graduation. A list of occupational categories and the percentage of alumni holding a position in that category for both their first full-time position and their current position are presented in table 1.

Among those who held more than one job during the five-year period, 82% said that they were satisfied with their current or most recent full-time position and only 8% said they were dissatisfied. For their first position, 50% had said they were satisfied while 30% had said they were dissatisfied. Moreover, the increase in satisfaction rates occurred among graduates in each school with the largest increase occurring among graduates of the College (see figure 2).

For the class of 1992 as a whole, 68% of those who changed jobs at least once said that their undergraduate experience prepared them well for their major and their first jobs: 42% said that their first job was either “very closely related” or “closely related” to their undergraduate major or academic concentration at U.Va, while 34% said that their first job was “not at all related” to their major or concentration.

Exactly half of the graduates were satisfied with their first full-time position while about a third were dissatisfied. Satisfaction was much higher for those who said there was a relationship between their undergraduate major and their first job. Among those who saw a relationship between their first job and their major, 64% also said that they were satisfied with that job and only 13% said they were dissatisfied. But for those who did not see a relationship, only 38% said they were satisfied while 43% said they were dissatisfied.

Satisfaction also was much higher for those who said that their U.Va. experience prepared them well for their first job. Among those who felt well prepared by their undergraduate experience, 60% also were satisfied with their first job and only 13% were dissatisfied. Among those who did not feel prepared at all, only 20% were satisfied with their first job while 73% were dissatisfied.

Figure 2
Satisfaction with First and Current Job by School

Figure 3
Preparation by U.Va. for First and Current Job by School
current job. As can be seen in figure 3, graduates of the College and of the Architecture school said that U.Va. prepared them better for their current jobs than for their first jobs while graduates of the Education, Engineering, and Nursing schools said that U.Va. did not prepare them as well for their current jobs as for their first jobs. Among graduates of the Commerce school, there was no change in their assessment of how well they were prepared by U.Va. and, with respect to both their first and current jobs, they were the most positive about their U.Va. experience.

As with their first job, a minority of the 1992 class did not see a relationship between their undergraduate major and their current job: 42% said that their first job was either “very closely related” or “closely related” to their undergraduate major or academic concentration at U.Va. Fewer saw no relationship at all, however: 26% said that their first job was “not at all related” to their major or concentration. Within each of the individual schools, the changes were much more dramatic (see figure 4). Graduates of the College and schools of Architecture and Commerce saw more of a relationship with their current job than their first jobs, with Architecture graduates noting the largest increase. Graduates of the Engineering, Education, and Nursing schools saw less of a relationship with their current job. Even though almost 90% were satisfied with their job, Engineering and Education school graduates posted the most significant declines.

Taken together, these results are particularly interesting for graduates of the College of Arts and Sciences. Even though only a minority of College graduates said that they saw a relationship between their undergraduate major and their current job, two-thirds said that their U.Va. experience, overall, prepared them well for their jobs and over three-fourths said they were satisfied with their jobs. These results should not be surprising, however, since many consider the objective of a liberal arts education to be one of providing students the intellectual tools (e.g., analytical, critical thinking, and general problem solving skills) that they can apply to any subject matter. Thus, while most graduates of the College see little connection, substantively, between the undergraduate major and their job, this does not prevent them from pursuing a career of their choice. Rather, these results indicate that they have been quite successful in applying the skills that they acquired from their undergraduate coursework to the challenges they encounter on the job.

SURVEY DESIGN AND METHODS

The findings presented in this newsletter are from the Undergraduate Experience and Beyond, a survey of 1,188 alumni of the class of 1992 conducted by the University of Virginia’s Office of Institutional Assessment and Studies. The survey was conducted by mail between June 1 and September 15, 1997.

The survey results have a margin of error of ±2.6% for questions that were answered by every respondent. The margin of error is higher for questions that were answered by fewer respondents or results that have been presented by school. The data were adjusted to reflect the proper proportion of alumni from each academic area.

Additional information about the study design and other methodological details are available by request from the Office of Institutional Assessment and Studies.