

CU Boulder Senior Survey, Spring 2016: Highlights of the Results

RESPONSE RATE

7,452	seniors invited
2,757	responded
37%	response rate

SURVEY BACKGROUND

The University of Colorado Boulder regularly asks seniors about their satisfaction with their educational experiences and about their after-graduation plans and activities. We administer the Senior Survey in the spring and have conducted the survey, in various forms, 12 times since 1985. We administered the 2016 Senior Survey in April 2016. The next administration of the Senior Survey is scheduled for spring 2020. The survey is designed to provide systematic information for:

- academic and service units to use in planning and improvement
- the CU Boulder campus to use in meeting requirements for institutional accountability
- use by the state and by prospective and current students and their families

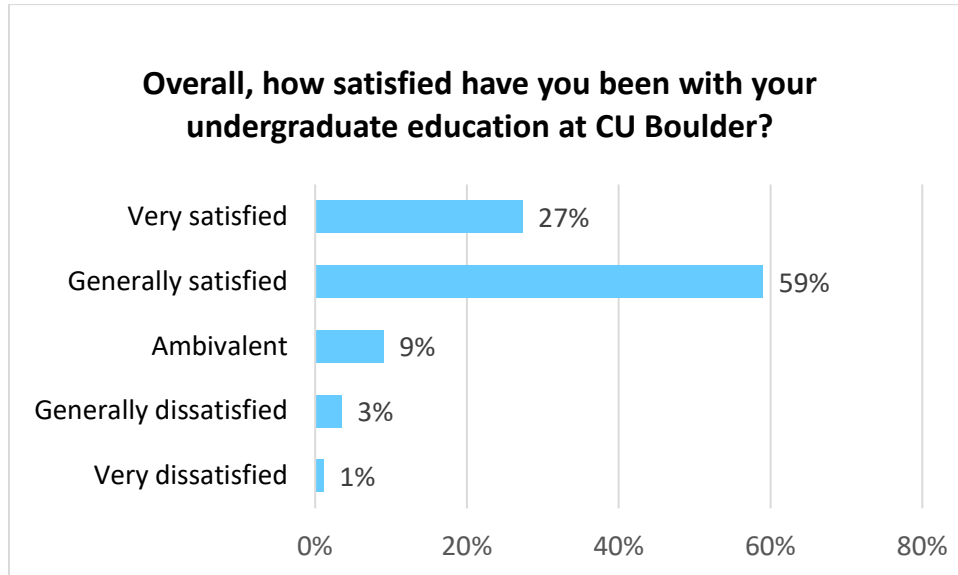
This "highlights" report presents campus-wide findings on selected items from the survey questionnaire. Following the 2020 data collection, the Office of Data Analytics will provide, on its website, more comprehensive results from the 2020 survey. We will provide the results in interactive Tableau visualizations that include options to filter the data to focus on findings by demographic subgroups (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity) and academic affiliations (e.g., academic major, school/college).

SATISFACTION WITH UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION AND CU BOULDER

Seniors are satisfied with CU Boulder and rate the overall quality of the institution high. As shown in Display A on the following page, the great majority (86%) of seniors reported that they were either "very satisfied" or "generally satisfied" with their CU Boulder education.

DISPLAY A:

Overall, how satisfied have you been with your undergraduate education at CU Boulder?



Additionally, nearly nine in ten of survey respondents (88%) would recommend CU Boulder to a friend considering college.

SATISFACTION WITH UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR

Most seniors provided positive assessments of their undergraduate major. As was the case in 2004, 2008, and 2012, nearly all (97%) survey respondents reported that their program of study met their educational goals.

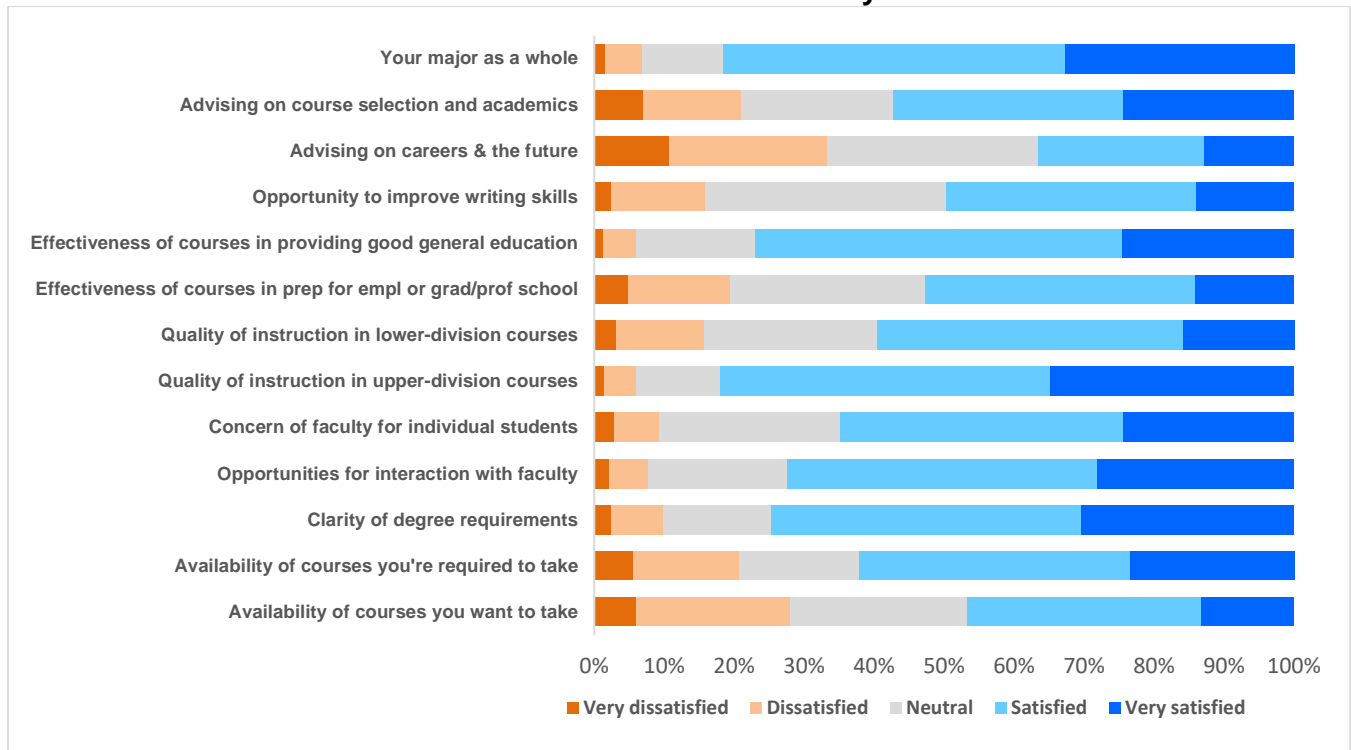
As shown in Display B on the following page, the great majority of seniors reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their major "as a whole" (82%), with the "overall quality of instruction" in their major (88%), and with the "out-of-class availability of faculty" in their major (92%).

Large percentages of seniors were also satisfied or very satisfied with the following aspects of their major program:

- "quality of instruction in upper-division courses" (82%)
- "effectiveness of courses in providing a good general education" (77%)
- "clarity of degree requirements" (75%)
- "opportunities for interaction with faculty" (72%)

Smaller percentages of seniors reported satisfaction with "effectiveness of courses in preparing you for employment or graduate/professional school" (53%), "opportunity to improve writing skills" (50%), "availability of courses you want to take" (47%), and "advising on careers and the future" (37%).

DISPLAY B:
IN YOUR MAJOR: How satisfied are you with ...



Seniors' ratings on several aspects of their undergraduate major programs were generally positive. As shown in Display C below, just over 70% of respondents indicated that amount of structure in the major (scale endpoints of "too flexible" and "too rigid") and the orientation of course work (scale endpoints of "too theoretical" and "too practical") were "about right." About two thirds of respondents reported that difficulty of courses, program emphasis (scale endpoints of "too broad" and "too specialized"), and opportunities for presentations in class were "about right." More than half of seniors reported that time spent in small group projects was "about right."

DISPLAY C:

Please give your opinion of the following aspects of your undergraduate major program:

The amount of structure is	Too flexible	...	About right	...	Too rigid
	3%	7%	74%	10%	6%
The orientation of the course work is	Too theoretical	...	About right	...	Too practical
	9%	11%	72%	6%	1%
The program emphasis is	Too broad	...	About right	...	Too specialized
	13%	12%	64%	8%	4%
The difficulty of courses is	Too easy	...	About right	...	Too difficult
	4%	6%	65%	20%	5%
Opportunities for oral presentations in class are	Too few	...	About right	...	Too many
	14%	13%	62%	6%	5%
The time spent in small group projects is	Too little	...	About right	...	Too much
	10%	10%	56%	12%	12%

GENERAL SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE GAINED WHILE AT CU BOULDER

Seniors’ assessment of the University’s contribution to their “knowledge, skills, and personal development” varied across 17 general skill and knowledge areas. As shown in Display D, proportions of respondents who reported that CU Boulder contributed “much” or “very much” to the various areas ranged from lows of 25% (reading or speaking a foreign language) and 38% (critical appreciation of art, music, literature, and drama) to highs of 72% (understanding and using quantitative methods and reasoning) and 83% (thinking critically).

DISPLAY D:

Extent to which CU-Boulder contributed to skills/knowledge/personal development:

General Skill, Knowledge, or Personal Development Areas	University's contribution is <i>Much</i> or <i>very Much</i>
Thinking critically	83%
Understanding and using quantitative methods and reasoning	72%
In-depth knowledge of a field or discipline	69%
Functioning effectively as a member of a team	67%
Creating original ideas and solutions	67%
Synthesizing knowledge from multiple fields	67%
Judging merits of arguments based their sources, methods, and reasoning	66%
Understanding the process of science and experimentation	62%
Understanding people of other backgrounds (racial, etc.)	60%
Writing clearly and effectively	57%
Communicating well orally	56%
Career- or work-related knowledge and skills	52%
Placing current problems in historical/cultural/philosophical perspective	52%
Leadership skills	52%
Information technology and computer skills	49%
Critical appreciation of art, music, literature, and drama	38%
Reading or speaking a foreign language	25%

THINGS STUDENTS REPORT THEY WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY

If seniors were starting over at CU Boulder, the things that they say they would do differently included taking on more academic responsibilities or challenges. As shown in Display E on the following page, about a quarter of survey respondents indicated that, if they had it to do over again, they would earn a double major (25%), choose a minor (25%), complete a certificate program (27%), or do a honors thesis or capstone project (24%). Only 16% of respondents reported that they would choose a different major, and nearly half (46%) would have taken part in a study abroad program.

DISPLAY E:

If you were starting over at CU Boulder, what thing(s) would you do differently?

	Percent
Choose a different major	16%
Double major	25%
Choose a minor	25%
Complete a certificate program	27%
Do an honors thesis or capstone project	24%
Go on Study Abroad	46%

OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS

Student Comments. The 2016 Senior Survey included two open-ended questions that solicited students' comments about their major program and one question that asked "What was the MOST IMPORTANT THING that helped you be successful at CU-Boulder?"

A great many students wrote thoughtful and extensive answers to these questions. An impressive total of 2,667 students (97% of survey respondents) answered at least one of these questions. Selected examples of the students' comments are listed below:

- What is the ONE BEST THING about your major program?
 - It has given me a strong basis for analyzing and thinking critically which will help me in Law School. (Philosophy)
 - The one best thing about ENV5 was how interdisciplinary it is. (Environmental Studies)
 - The snow hydrology internship. Hands down. And the faculty rocks! (Geology)
 - The labs for physiology, anatomy, and a couple other courses allow us to have incredible experiences! (Integrative Physiology)
 - Advanced critical and analytical thinking skills. I like challenges (Chemical/Biological Engineering)
- If you could CHANGE ONE THING about your major program, what would it be?
 - Include more integration between how accounting and finance relate (Accounting)
 - Develop the hands on technical aspect of the program more to balance it with the critical studies side. (Film Studies)
 - Create a "space" and "aircraft" track so students can focus on courses that are actually relevant to their interests starting in the Junior year. (Aerospace Engineering)
 - An advisor that stuck with my undergraduate career from start to finish. (International Affairs)
 - It would be the allocation of resources. Our program is important and should be properly funded and respected as such. We are not like regular students. We spend 40-60 hour weeks on computer design or tasks that require large amounts of space. (Environmental Design)
- What was the MOST IMPORTANT THING that helped you be successful at CU-Boulder?
 - Taking advantage of all the resources provided including professor office hours, writing centers, etc. (Business)

- Access to computers with various programs necessary for classwork. Also the BOLD center. I love that place. (Mechanical Engineering)
- The positive attitude, and friendliness that is contagious. Students and faculty are a very tight knit community (Music)
- Inclusion (Art & Art History)
- Teachers who actually cared (College of Media, Communication and Information)