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When Outside Consultants Are Hired to Survey "Your" Students: Lessons for Institutional Researchers

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CASE STUDY 1

- Campus administration hires major consulting firm to engage in extensive Operational Effectiveness campaign
- Student Services identified as one of five areas for analysis

Part 1

- Application of “MaxDiff” to determine student importance rankings of 28 student services
- My written analysis

LEAST IMPORTANT STUDENT SERVICES

| | |
|--|--|
| 1. Theme programs in Residence Halls | 6. Leadership development services |
| 2. Tutoring services for student athletes | 7. On-campus childcare and family programs |
| 3. Advising for student organizations | 8. Academic services in the Residence Halls |
| 4. Summer programs for new students | 9. Advocacy services for students |
| 5. International Office | 10. Services for disabled students |

Part 2

- Misinterpretation of student views of academic advising
- Can our campus survey results help by answering these two questions:
 - How dissatisfied do students really say they are with academic advising?
 - How important is “improving” academic advising for students?



“UC Berkeley bloated, wasteful, consultants say” Nanette Asimov, SF Chronicle, April 13, 2010

No faith in advising

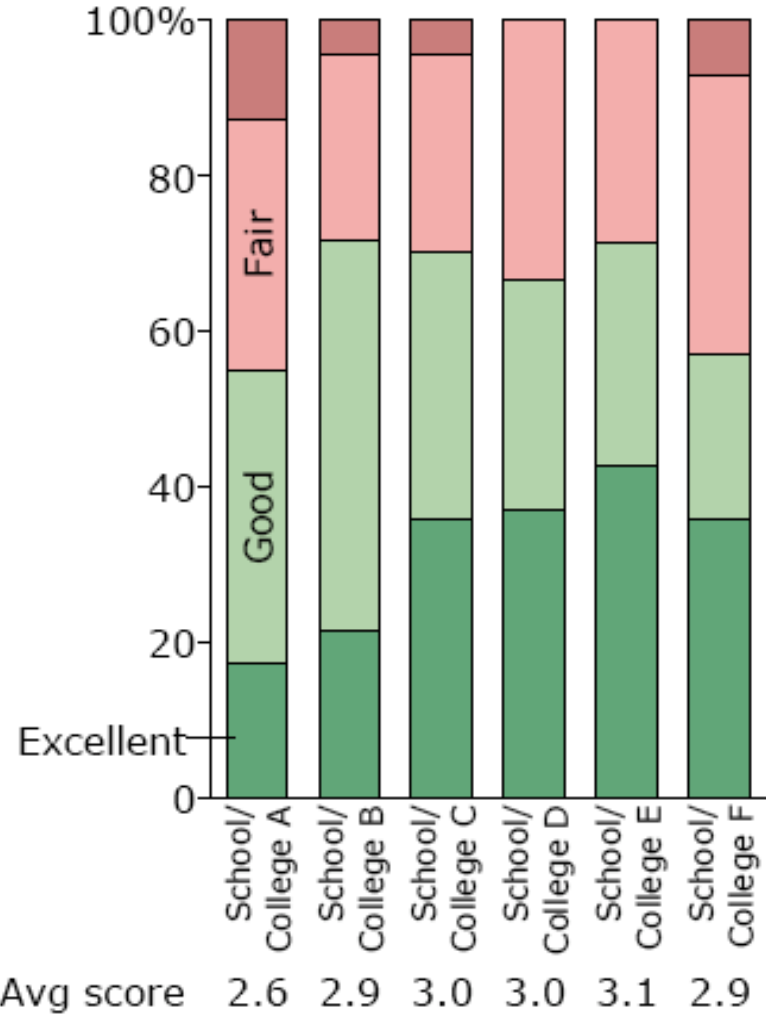
The school spends \$17 million on academic advising, but even students don't think the money is well spent. "School and department advising is terrible," wrote one undergrad responding to a survey from the consultants. "I never trust what I am being told."

The comment was typical of those made about that department.

Fewer than 1 in 5 undergraduates responded to the survey. Alumni and managers also had low response rates, but the consultants spent months meeting with hundreds of staff, students and faculty, and solicited comments on the Internet to diagnose the campus.

100% Stacked Column - Satisfaction with Advising by School or College: Bain OE Final Report

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Bain's Results and their Presentation

- Technical critique of the chart
- The omission of any message
- No connection made between the satisfaction results and the “need for improvement” quotes
- Resulting vulnerability to sensationalistic media report

How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your educational experience?

Advising by school or college staff on academic matters

Advising by departmental staff on academic matters

% Distribution of Satisfaction with School/ College and Department Advising by Gender

| | School/College | | Department | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| | Women | Men | Women | Men |
| Very dissatisfied | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Dissatisfied | 6 | 7 | 5 | 5 |
| Somewhat dissatisfied | 15 | 14 | 12 | 13 |
| Somewhat satisfied | 37 | 37 | 34 | 35 |
| Satisfied | 31 | 30 | 32 | 32 |
| Very satisfied | 9 | 8 | 13 | 12 |
| Total Somewhat to Very Satisfied | 76 | 75 | 80 | 79 |

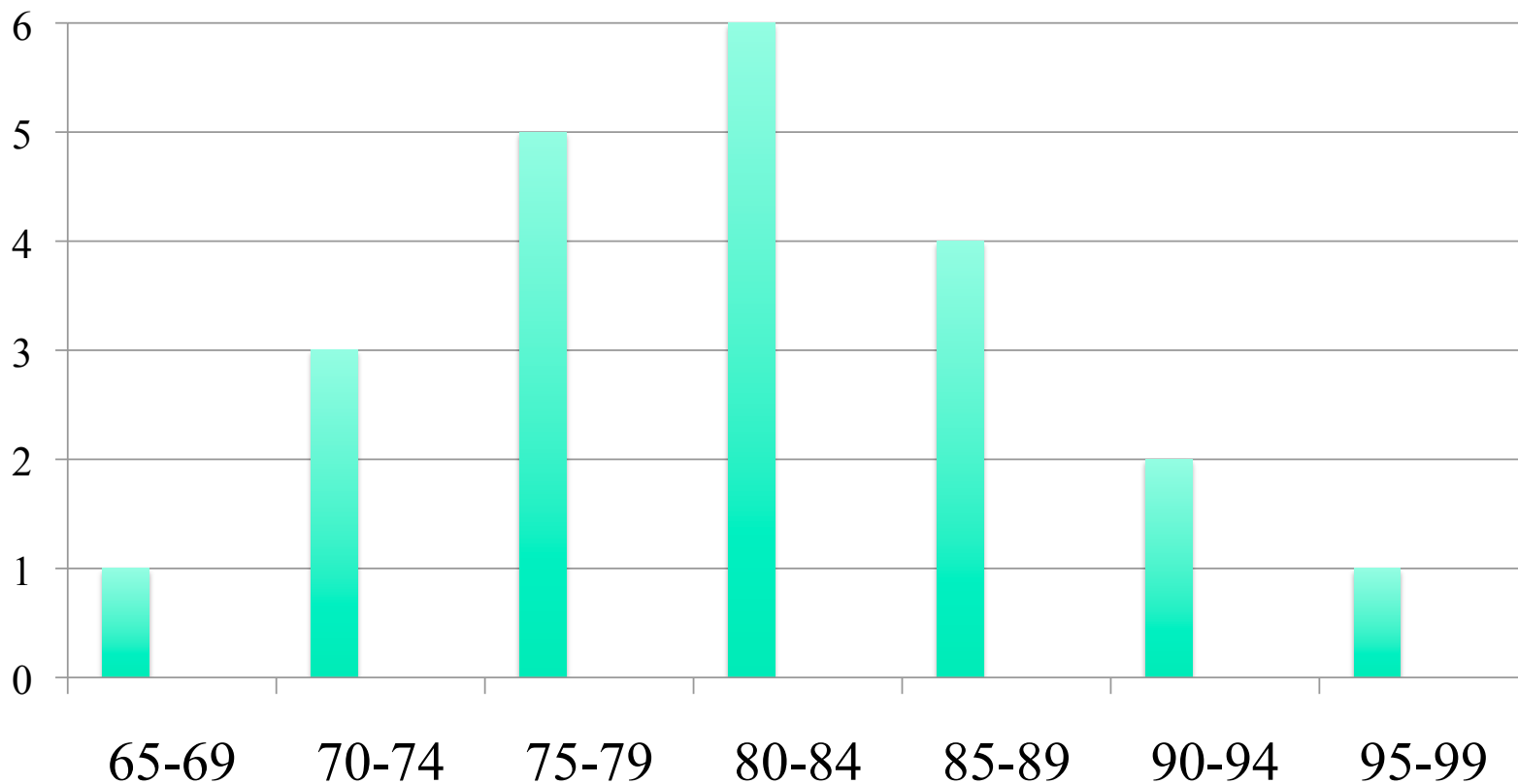
% Somewhat to Very Satisfied with College and Departmental Advising by School/College

| School/College | College | Department | At least 1 of the 2 |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------|---------------------|
| Business Administration | 82 | 83 | 87 |
| Natural Resources | 80 | 80 | 85 |
| Concurrent | 78 | 84 | 86 |
| Environmental Design | 76 | 76 | 80 |
| Letters & Science | 76 | 80 | 85 |
| Engineering | 74 | 77 | 82 |
| Chemistry | 74 | 75 | 79 |

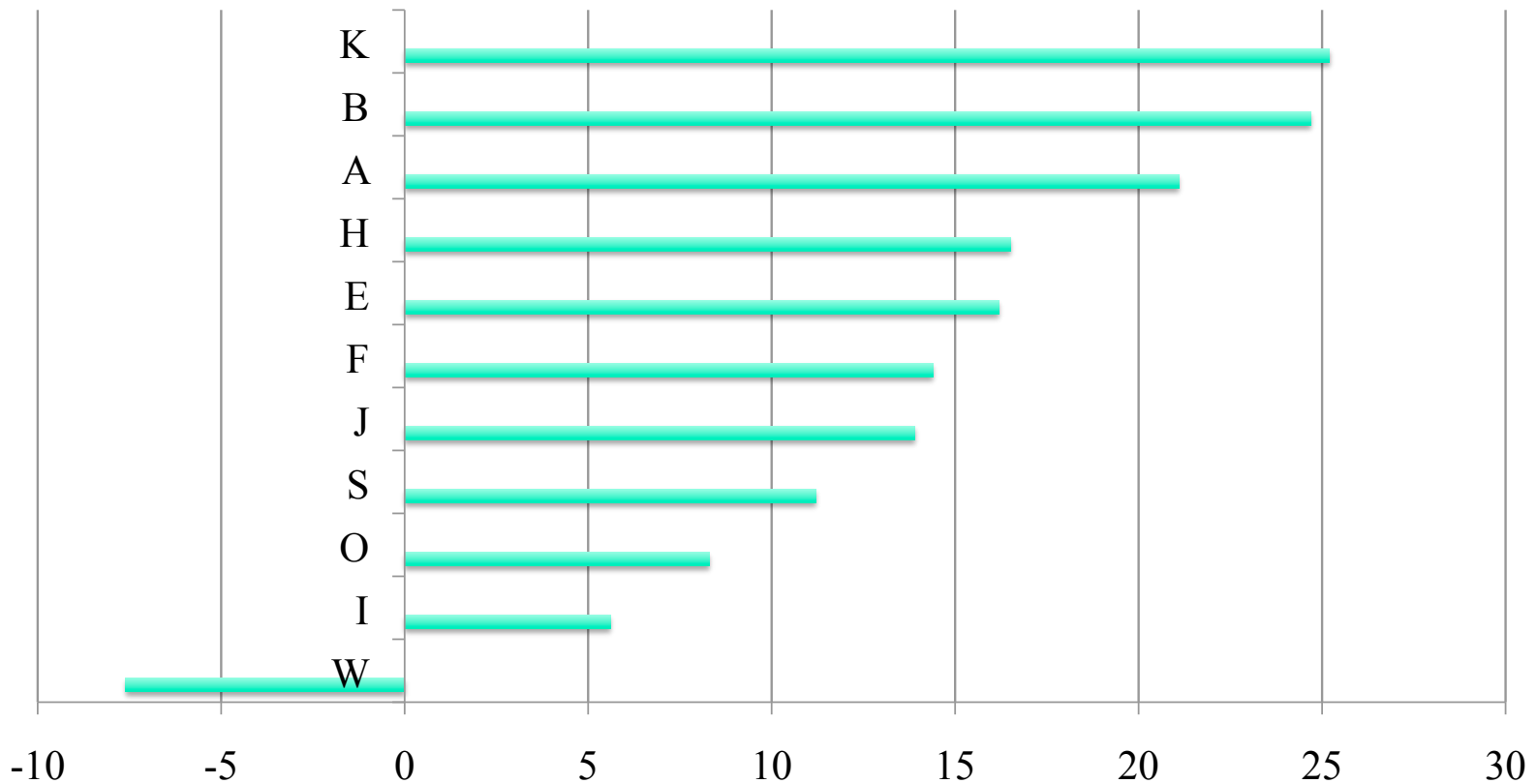
% Somewhat to Very Satisfied with Department and College Advising – 23 Large Majors

| Major | Dept | College | At least 1 of the 2 | Major | Dept | College | At least 1 of the 2 |
|-------|------|---------|------------------------|-------|------|---------|------------------------|
| A | 96 | 89 | 97 | M | 83 | 82 | 87 |
| B | 92 | 81 | 94 | N | 81 | 80 | 84 |
| C | 91 | 88 | 95 | O | 79 | 75 | 83 |
| D | 90 | 91 | 94 | P | 79 | 78 | 82 |
| E | 88 | 79 | 91 | Q | 77 | 74 | 82 |
| F | 87 | 82 | 91 | R | 75 | 73 | 79 |
| G | 85 | 77 | 87 | S | 75 | 72 | 81 |
| H | 85 | 79 | 88 | T | 74 | 74 | 78 |
| I | 84 | 79 | 89 | U | 72 | 73 | 76 |
| J | 84 | 77 | 88 | V | 70 | 72 | 77 |
| K | 83 | 72 | 85 | W | 68 | 77 | 82 |
| L | 83 | 78 | 90 | | | | |

Distribution of Largest Majors by % Satisfaction with Departmental Advising Intervals



% Majors Rating Dept Advising Higher Minus % Rating College Advising Higher – L & S Majors



BAIN and UCUES Open-ended “Improvement” Questions

[BAIN] What are the 2-3 areas where the student experience can be most improved?

[UCUES]

What is the SINGLE, MOST IMPORTANT thing that your campus could realistically do to create a better undergraduate experience for students like you?

Please describe only one:

% Indicating Improved Advising is Most Important for Improving Student Experience by Gender and Level of Dissatisfaction with Advising

| | | DEPARTMENT | | |
|-------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| | | COLLEGE | | |
| | | Dissatisfied | Somewhat Sat | Satisfied |
| WOMEN | Dissatisfied | 12 | 12 | 7 |
| | Somewhat Sat | 9 | 4 | 3 |
| | Satisfied | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| | | | | |
| MEN | Dissatisfied | 6 | 3 | 5 |
| | Somewhat Sat | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| | Satisfied | 2 | 2 | 2 |

Number Indicating Improved Advising is Most Important for Improving Student Experience by School/College and Gender

| School/College | Major | Women | Men | Total |
|-------------------|------------|-------|-----|-------|
| Business Adm | Declared | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Chemistry | Declared | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Concurrent | Declared | 4 | 4 | 8 |
| Engineering | Declared | 8 | 23 | 31 |
| Environ Design | Declared | 11 | 2 | 13 |
| Letters & Science | Undeclared | 157 | 61 | 218 |
| | Declared | 129 | 28 | 157 |
| Natural Resources | Undeclared | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| | Declared | 16 | 7 | 23 |
| TOTAL | | 336 | 131 | 467 |

Advising Word Cloud

mandatory
personal
better
peer
financial aid career
access
college advisor
freshman major
major advisor
faculty

LESSONS LEARNED

- “When the train has left the station”
 - Too trusting of consultant expertise
 - Campus environment
- On the other hand, validation of the power of the data and analysis that we have
- Maximum Difference Scaling in the right hands could work!

CASE STUDY 2

- Housing demand marketing survey
- Came to us for random sample for survey
- Immediately entered into discussion about our involvement

Compensation for our time

- Proposed that we be compensated for our time and expertise
- Provided an estimate of hours and fee
- Proposal accepted and paid directly by Housing

Requesting the data

- Asked about possibility of receiving the full data set from the consultants
- With SIDS (which only we have) data can be integrated with other student data
- Independent verification of results (especially response bias) and possible longitudinal analysis

Revising the Survey

- Overall design & flow of the survey
- Specific features related to our local situation

Demographics?

- “Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior” not adequate
- Replaced ethnic categories with our more extensive set
- Aligned income categories
- Added immigrant generation

Example of Changed Item

- DRAFT: Please rate how important each of the following factors was in your decision on where to live this year
- FINAL: Please rate how important each of the following factors was in your decision on where to live
 - THIS YEAR
 - YOUR FIRST YEAR
 - NEXT YEAR

Housing Choice Factors: DRAFT

| | 2007-08 | 2008-09 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| FROSH | | | | X | |
| SOPH | | | | X | |
| JUNIOR | | | | X | |
| SENIOR | | | | X | |

Housing Choice Factors: FINAL

| | 2007-08 | 2008-09 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| FROSH | | | | X | X |
| SOPH | | | X | X | X |
| JUNIOR | | X | | X | X |
| SENIOR | X | | | X | |

Satisfaction with housing?

- Based on our existing survey work (UCUES), suggested two factors here: Value for price & Overall quality
- Anchored the items to global UCUES value and overall satisfaction items

Response rate?

- Surprised to hear that consultants thought 10% response rate was adequate and that single reminder was fine
- Proposed higher standard and more reminders
- Final response rate was 29%

LESSONS LEARNED

- It is possible to collaborate effectively with outside consultants
- Win-Win-Win
- Validation of IR expertise and value thereof