

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to determine alumni satisfaction with preparation received from the School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA) at Indiana University South Bend. The results of this survey will be used to assess and improve the quality of SPEA students' educational experience.

Methodology

Surveys were mailed to the 297 students who graduated with a degree from SPEA during the years 2000 through 2004. Graduates were asked to identify which degree they received and their date of graduation. They were also asked to provide information about their current employment, including whether or not they are employed in the field of their degree. The graduates were then asked to answer 26 questions in a Likert-scale format that pertained to all aspects of their educational experience within the SPEA curriculum, as well as questions regarding utilization of their education in professional settings. Finally, respondents were asked for written suggestions to improve the SPEA program.

Approximately two weeks after the initial mailing, reminder postcards were sent to those alumni who had not yet returned the survey. Information on the postcard provided an email address where graduates could contact a research assistant and receive an electronic version of the survey, which could then be returned via email.

Results of the survey were coded in an Excel spreadsheet. Nominal data were tallied; interval data were summed, then divided by the number of responses. Answers of “No opinion” were not included in the number of responses. Written suggestions were compiled in lists.

Data Analysis

A total of 51 graduates responded to the survey, yielding a return rate of 17.17%. Not all respondents provided answers to every question.

Analysis indicated some areas of note. Of the 51 SPEA graduates who responded to the survey, 25 are employed in the field of their degree, while 24 are not (two respondents are unemployed). Responses to ranked questions indicated a high mean score of 3.70 for preference for a SPEA-related job fair at Indiana University South Bend. The experience of involvement in a student organization as a means of career preparation received the lowest mean score of 2.21.