

Perceptions of the Graduates

Summary Report of the Graduate
Follow-up Survey



2009 – 2013 Graduates

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Introduction

The Center for Institutional Effectiveness conducts an annual survey of Bergen Community College graduates one year after they have completed their course of study. The primary objective of this survey is to assess the extent to which students feel the College's programs, facilities, and services have enabled them to achieve their personal, educational, and professional goals. The information obtained from the Graduate Follow-up Survey may be employed in the following ways:

- A. To provide information on the effectiveness of academic programs.
- B. To evaluate the quality of instruction, services, and facilities.
- C. To provide useful feedback that can foster curriculum modifications and development.
- D. To provide data to fulfill the College's accountability requirement to the Federal Government, State, County, other external agencies, and most importantly the community and students it serves.

The report that follows is a summary of results from five administrations of the Graduate Follow-up Survey, based on the responses of students who received degrees and/or certificates between the 2009 and 2013 academic years. The purpose of this report is to provide a succinct assessment of the major findings between administrations.

In order to simplify the reading of this report, the graduates will be referred to by their year of program completion: as "2009 graduates," "2013 graduates," etc.

Method

The Survey Instrument

The Graduate Follow-up Survey is divided into four sections. The questions in Section A address the graduates' initial goals for attending Bergen Community College and their assessment of the College's services and facilities. In Section B, the questions are directed at the graduates' educational status after graduating from BCC. Questions about the graduates' employment status and related career opportunities are presented in Section C. The final section, Section D, instructs the graduates to assess the effect their experiences at BCC have had on their personal and academic development. Here they are asked to determine the extent to which they had expected to improve certain skills when they started at BCC and the extent to which these skills actually improved. The graduates were also given the opportunity to comment on their experiences while at BCC and to voice their opinions on what could be done to improve the College.

Mailings

Each administration year, during the spring semester, a list of names and addresses of the graduates¹ from the previous year is compiled and used to generate the mailing labels. A postage-paid return envelope and, when necessary, a survey insert developed for specific academic programs were included in the mailing of the survey.² The first mailing of the survey was accompanied by an introductory letter from the President. The 2013 graduates received one paper survey in the mail and, if they did not return the paper survey, another subsequent mailing to increase the response rate. Similarly, one initial email was sent to both the graduates' Bergen email addresses and to their personal email addresses, if this information was available. Those who did not complete the online survey received (up to four) subsequent emails containing a link to the survey.

Analysis

Data was collected and aggregated from all mail and online responses for quantitative analysis. Analyses were separated into seven sections: Respondents, Educational Objectives, Student Services, Transfer Enrollment, Employment, Expectations for Improvement, and Overall Impressions. In some cases, this data was paired with historical responses from the previous four years to show five-year trends.

Qualitative student feedback was requested in a comments section at the end of each survey. A small, but representative sample of these comments was selected and added to each of the seven sections, named above, in order to add depth and context to the quantitative data.

¹ Only students whose mailing information was available were contacted

² The results of the program inserts were made available to the specific department and will not be included in this report

Results

Respondents

Table 1 below shows the response rate of the 2009-2013 Graduate Follow-up Surveys, derived from the total number of surveys distributed and the number of graduates who responded. Overall, the response rate has declined over the past five administrations with the exception of 2013. The 2012 response rate was lower due to the mailing of only one wave of paper surveys, as opposed to two mailings.

Table 1. Response Rate

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
# Sent	1,536	1,909	2,022	2,034	2,279
# Responded	403	386	315	208	403
Response Rate	26%	20%	16%	10%	18%

As shown below in Table 2, looking at the breakdown of respondents by program type, 67 percent of 2013 graduates from transfer programs responded to the survey, whereas 32 percent of 2013 graduates from career programs responded. Respondents who completed Career Programs were slightly overrepresented in this sample. When looking at the total graduate population, 78 percent of the graduates completed Transfer Programs and 22 percent graduated from Career Programs.

Table 2. Respondents by Program

	2009		2010		2011		2012		2013	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<i>Associate of Arts (AA)</i>	106	26%	88	23%	74	23%	30	14%	39	10%
<i>Associate of Science (AS)</i>	151	37%	184	48%	160	51%	107	51%	231	57%
All Transfer Programs	257	64%	272	70%	234	74%	137	66%	270	67%
<i>Associate of Applied Science (AAS)</i>	135	33%	101	26%	73	23%	56	27%	117	29%
<i>Certificates (CERT)</i>	10	2%	9	2%	8	3%	9	4%	9	2%
<i>Certificates of Achievement (COA)</i>	1	0%	2	1%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%
All Career Programs	146	36%	112	29%	81	26%	65	31%	127	32%
Unknown	0	0%	2	1%	0	0%	6	3%	6	1%
ALL RESPONDENTS	403	100%	386	100%	315	100%	208	100%	403	100%

Educational Objectives

According to Table 3, the percentage of respondents citing an educational reason as their primary objective for first attending BCC has remained fairly constant ($m=75%$)³. The most frequently cited objective (by 42 percent of respondents) was “To earn a degree from BCC,” which has remained the most common primary objective throughout the past five administrations.

Table 3. Which statement best describes your PRIMARY objective for first attending BCC?

	2009		2010		2011		2012		2013	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
To improve job skills	12	3%	16	4%	10	3%	0	0%	8	2%
To prepare for first career	26	7%	39	11%	27	9%	20	10%	40	11%
To prepare for career change	52	14%	32	9%	35	12%	32	16%	54	14%
To earn a degree from BCC	160	44%	155	43%	126	43%	81	42%	159	42%
To complete courses for transfer	112	31%	116	32%	91	31%	57	29%	107	28%
To take courses for personal interest	2	1%	3	1%	1	0%	5	3%	12	3%

According to Table 4, ninety-two percent of students stated that they had achieved their primary objective by the time they had left the college. This percentage has decreased slightly since 2011 with a 4 percent decline in primary objective attainment.

Table 4. Did you achieve your primary objective by the time you left the college?

	2009		2010		2011		2012		2013	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	356	96%	333	94%	282	96%	178	92%	352	92%
No	15	4%	21	6%	11	4%	15	8%	31	8%

Regarding their objectives, our graduates said:

“I returned to college as a midlife change of career due to the economy. I went to BCC and received an Associate Degree with Honors. I was very proud of this accomplishment, finally achieving a lifelong goal.”

“Through the nursing program, I was able to change my 2nd career as an immigrant.”

“Bergen was really great to me and set me up to go to a four year college even 7 years later. I would definitely recommend Bergen to any friend to get them started and help them transfer to a 4 year school. Bergen is a great starting off point and can help you correct the grades [if] you didn't do well in High School.”

³ In this instance, m is equal to the mean frequency or mean percentage of responses over the past five years

Student Services

Table 5 shows the composite scores of students who responded to the question of how well student services met their needs as a student. Composite scores were calculated as the average value using the scale shown, from among the respondents who indicated that they had used the service.

(Excellent = 5, Good = 4, Average = 3, Fair = 2, Poor = 1)

The most highly rated service, with a composite score of 4.31, was that of the Library/LRC. These services have continued to be the most highly rated over the past five administrations ($m=4.3$)⁴. Satisfaction with this service was followed by Services for students with disabilities ($m=4.07$), Tutoring services ($m=4.02$), Quality of major course instruction ($m=3.97$), and the Quality of developmental English ($m=3.94$).

Table 5. How well did the following services at our college meet your needs as a student?

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Academic Advising	3.66	3.69	3.45	3.57	3.71
Admissions	3.83	3.89	3.50	3.64	3.77
Counseling	3.59	3.60	3.54	3.51	3.61
Financial Aid	3.63	3.40	3.40	3.06	3.39
Job placement assistance	2.83	2.66	3.41	2.52	2.69
Transfer advisement	3.55	3.58	3.40	3.41	3.61
Library/LRC	4.39	4.38	4.18	4.25	4.31
Registration procedures	3.87	3.93	3.67	3.65	3.85
Student Life activities	3.78	3.80	3.68	3.67	3.73
Career counseling	3.30	3.27	3.50	3.06	3.20
Tutoring services	3.95	4.13	3.98	4.01	4.05
Services for students with disabilities	4.16	4.15	3.94	3.98	4.14
Cooperative Education	3.92	3.91	3.88	3.67	3.82
Quality of world language instruction	3.92	3.96	3.80	3.57	4.00
Quality of major course instruction	4.06	4.05	3.78	3.92	4.04
Quality of developmental English	3.98	4.03	3.75	3.93	4.03
Quality of developmental math	3.78	3.91	3.72	3.81	3.89

Regarding services, our graduates said:

“--- was my advisor and she was incredible. She was informative and knowledgeable. I have sent other students to see her and they couldn't thank me enough..”

“The college can be improved by helping students with more counselors available when need[ed] instead of waiting for 2 weeks for an appointment...”

⁴ In these instances, m is equal to the mean frequency or mean percentage of responses over the past five years

Regarding transfer enrollment, our graduates said:

"It has been a fantastic school to start off small before transferring into a Senior College. It helped me to build up my independence, confidence, and learning skills throughout my courses. I could not stress my recommendation more to anyone especially those who just graduated from high school."

"I loved Bergen when I was there. It is a great starting off college. I did my time and transferred with my Associates degree. I did not like the placement tests that made me stay a little longer than 2 years, but it was well worth it."

"BCC should work with other colleges with transferring courses. The courses at The College of NJ did not match up with the courses that I had to take at BCC."

"The courses were well taught and challenging! I am so thankful I was able to complete my associates at BCC to transfer to Montclair. I saved so much money!"

Overall Impressions

Participants were asked whether they would recommend Bergen Community College to prospective students. As shown in Table 17, the vast majority of students respond “yes” ($m=96\%$)⁵ with each administration of the survey.

Table 17. Would you recommend Bergen Community College to prospective students?

	2009		2010		2011		2012		2013	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	381	97%	338	95%	288	98%	178	96%	345	96%
No	13	3%	18	5%	6	2%	8	4%	13	4%

Regarding overall impressions, our graduates said:

“I had a great experience at BCC because, as someone who did not know what she was going to do after high school, BCC was a great place for me to get my priorities in order. The professors are warm, intelligent, and are role models.”

“Maybe one day BCC should become a 4 year college institution! Thank you very much once again for guiding me and showing me that I can do it!

“I had a pretty decent experience but they could do more to prepare the students for a four year college.”

“I loved bcc so much. I miss it! It was hard but so worthwhile.”

“Overall I would attend Bergen again in a heartbeat.”

⁵ In this instance, m is equal to the mean frequency or mean percentage of responses over the past five years

Appendix III: The Graduate Follow-up Survey

Attached is the current (post-2007) version of the survey form. The survey form has been edited for space; items have been moved and resized to fit the current page format.

BERGEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE **Graduate Follow-up Questionnaire**

SECTION A

1. Which statement best describes your PRIMARY objective for first attending BCC?

<input type="radio"/> To improve job skills	<input type="radio"/> To earn a degree from BCC
<input type="radio"/> To prepare for first career	<input type="radio"/> To complete courses for transfer
<input type="radio"/> To prepare for career change	<input type="radio"/> To take courses for personal interest

2. Did you achieve your primary objective by the time you left the college?

Yes No

3. How well did the following services at our college meet your needs as a student?

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	AVERAGE	FAIR	POOR	DIDN'T KNOW EXISTED	KNEW ABOUT BUT DIDN'T USE
Academic advisement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Admissions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Counseling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Financial Aid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Job Placement Assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transfer Advisement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Library/Learning Resource Center	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Registration Procedures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student Life Activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Career Counseling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tutoring Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Services for Students with Disabilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cooperative Education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of World Language Instruction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of Major Course Instruction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of Developmental English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of Developmental Math	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (specify)_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

SECTION B

1. Have you enrolled at another college in a degree granting program since your graduation from BCC?
 Yes
 No (skip to section C)

2. Please indicate your current status.
 Full-time student
 Part-time student
 No longer enrolled

3. What is the name of your current (most recently attended) college?
Name: _____ State: ___ Major: ___

4. How many credits earned at BCC were accepted at the college you indicated?
 Less than 32 credits Between 33 and 63 credits 64 credits or more

5. How did the courses you completed at BCC prepare you for further education?

Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Did you have any of the following problems while transferring to the college that you indicated? (Mark all that apply)

<input type="radio"/> Transferring credits from BCC	<input type="radio"/> Receiving transcript at other college
<input type="radio"/> Receiving transfer credits earned at BCC	<input type="radio"/> Problems being admitted for transfer
<input type="radio"/> Sending transcript from BCC	<input type="radio"/> Other: _____

SECTION C

1. What is your current employment status?
- Employed full-time Not employed, but seeking employment
 Employed part-time Not available for employment
2. Is your current job related to the program of study you completed at BCC?
- Yes, directly related
 Yes, somewhat related
 No, not related
3. If your job is **not** related, why not?
- Transferred to a four year college Could not find a job in my field
 Found a better paying job in another field Not sufficiently qualified for job in my field
 Preferred to work in another field Worked in field, but changed jobs

4. Please provide the following information.

Job Title: _____

Employer: _____

State: _____ County: _____

5. In an effort to evaluate Career Programs, may we contact your Supervisor?

- Yes
 No

If Yes, who is your Supervisor? Name: _____

6. When did you get your job?

- Before entering BCC
 While attending BCC
 Within 3 months after graduation
 More than 3 months after graduation

1.7. Did your program of study at BCC help you in any of the following ways? (MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- Helped to obtain job Helped to get a raise or promotion
 Helped performance on the job Other: _____

2.8. How well did the training you received at BCC prepare you for your current job?

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Excellent | Good | Average | Fair | Poor |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

3.9. Please indicate your approximate annual salary.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Below \$15,000 | <input type="radio"/> \$20,000 – \$29,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$40,000 – \$49,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$15,000 – \$19,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$30,000 – \$39,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$50,000 – Up |

4.10. Through what source did you first hear about your current position?

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> College Placement Office | <input type="radio"/> Newspaper/Internet classified ad | <input type="radio"/> Friend or relative |
| <input type="radio"/> Employment agency/headhunter | <input type="radio"/> Co-op/Internship Program | <input type="radio"/> BCC faculty or staff member |

SECTION D

1. Please review the skills listed below and try to assess what your expectations were when you started at BCC and if you met those expectations through your experiences while attending the college. (For example: How much did you **expect to improve** your communication skills in college **and** how much did you **actually improve** those skills?)

Expected to Improve					Actually Improved			
Very much	Somewhat	Very Little	Not at All		Very much	Somewhat	Very Little	Not at All
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	1. Communication Skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2. Ability to apply bodies of knowledge within and across disciplines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3. Mathematical and Computational Ability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	4. Computer Fluency-retrieve, organize and analyze information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	5. Personal Responsibility-manage yourself and your commitments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	6. Ability to think and express ideas creatively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	7. Tolerance and understanding of other people in our diverse society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	8. Ability to cope with new situations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	9. Ability to think critically	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	10. Interpersonal Skills-maintain professional relationships and engage in meaningful team work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Would you recommend Bergen Community College to prospective students?
 Yes No

COMMENTS

We would appreciate any comments regarding your experiences while at BCC and how you feel we can improve the programs, courses, and services available to BCC students. Please make your comments in this space provided or use an additional sheet if necessary.