

Institutional Planning & Research

EMORY UNIVERSITY

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The 1999 HEDS Graduate Student Survey:  
A Synopsis of Findings

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## Highlights of Survey Findings

- More than half of the survey respondents applied to at least four other graduate schools in addition to Emory; approximately 80 percent gained admission to other graduate schools, and one fourth were admitted to four or more schools.
- More than three-quarters of the respondents rate their academic experience at Emory as ‘very good’ or ‘excellent.’ However, only 38 percent gave the same rating to student life.
- When asked whether they would pursue graduate studies at Emory if offered the chance to start again, 37 percent said they ‘definitely would’ and another 46 percent said they ‘probably would.’ These data along with responses from surveys of undergraduate seniors suggest a relatively higher institutional affiliation among graduate students than among undergraduates.
- Overall, more than two-thirds of the respondents rate the quality of classroom instruction in their department as ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’; the humanities students were more likely to give higher ratings than students in other fields.
- Eighty-eight percent believe their department has high caliber faculty. Students also see faculty as accessible (83 percent) and supportive (71 percent). However, only 36 percent believe that faculty are helpful in their job search.
- Although half of the respondents are considering a career outside academia, only 23 percent have been encouraged or assisted by faculty in their departments to explore career opportunities outside academia. Such students tend to be concentrated in the physical and health sciences.
- Overall, students seem to be satisfied with their advisors; they are least satisfied with advising regarding personal matters, adjustment, and career options or plans.
- Health services, housing assistance, career services, and parking are university resources with which students are least satisfied.
- Approximately two thirds of the respondents rate the preparation for teaching at Emory as good, very good, or excellent.
- Four out of ten respondents estimate that they will have no graduate debt upon the completion of their programs. Two-thirds estimate no undergraduate debt. The expected debt varies with the student’s field, with students in the humanities and social sciences reporting higher levels of debt than students in the physical and health sciences.
- Fifteen percent do not feel safe walking at night on campus.

## **Introduction**

This report summarizes data collected in a 1999 survey of the degree-seeking graduate students registered at Emory's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. IPR initiated the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS) Graduate Survey with the cooperation of Dr. Eleanor Main, Associate Provost for Graduate Studies. The survey was designed by MIT and Georgetown University to help universities learn more about the experiences of their graduate students and to evaluate the services and educational opportunities afforded their students. A combination of web and mail methods was used to administer the survey during the Fall 1999 semester. Of the 1396 degree-seeking students enrolled in Fall 1999, a total of 415, or 30 percent completed the questionnaire. To stimulate participation, the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences offered 300 respondents a \$10 coupon to be used towards the purchase of any book at Druid Hills Books.

The report provides an overview and general analysis of the survey results. While quantitative data constitute the core of the report, comments from graduate students are included as well (see Appendix C). Throughout the report, we discuss differences in findings by gender, minority status and general disciplinary group (social sciences, physical sciences, humanities, and health sciences). Only those differences that were statistically significant at the .01 level are reported. The report is followed by a comparative analysis where responses from Emory are compared with those from other selective private universities.

This report is structured around the following areas: general background of respondents, overall educational experience, program evaluation, academic advising, career goals, university resources, quality of life, information technology, teaching-related aspects, and funding and student debt.

### **General background of respondents**

Table A.1 in Appendix A shows the distribution of respondents by gender, program, minority status, citizenship status, type of degree, and other demographic characteristics. The distribution by gender (40 percent males) closely approximates the composition of the 1999 graduate student population (43 percent).

The respondent population is relatively young with more than 60 percent being 25 or younger. Thirty-one percent come directly from undergraduate studies; 30 percent had been enrolled in other graduate schools prior to starting their program at Emory; and 22 percent were employed in a related field before starting the graduate program at Emory. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents are Ph.D students; the corresponding proportion in the graduate student population is 90 percent.

With regard to the stage reached by respondents in their graduate programs, 42 percent reported having completed their coursework and 28 percent have spent more than four years in their graduate programs. Eighteen percent are in their first year of study. This distribution approximates well the enrolled student population where 16 percent are first-year students.

Forty-six percent of the respondents are married or live with a domestic partner and 10 percent of the respondents have children. Notably, almost 30 percent of these students do not live in the same residence with their spouses or partners. Although data are not available to explain this finding, one can assume that in most of these cases respondents' spouses do not live in the same city.

The data suggest a relatively high level of academic preparation and competitiveness of Emory's graduate students. More than half of the respondents applied to four or more graduate schools besides Emory. Approximately 80 percent of these students gained admission at other graduate schools and one quarter of them were admitted to four or more schools (see Table A.2).

### Overall educational experience

More than three-quarters of respondents rate their academic experience at Emory as 'very good' or 'excellent' (see Table 1).

Table 1. Overall quality of academic experience

	Academic Life		Student Life	
	N	%	N	%
Excellent	144	35.1%	28	6.8%
Very Good	169	41.2%	128	31.1%
Good	68	16.6%	145	25.3%
Fair	24	5.9%	85	20.7%
Poor	5	1.2%	25	6.1%
Total	410	100.0%	411	100.0%

When ratings are analyzed by disciplinary group, gender, and minority status, there is only one statistically significant difference: students in the humanities tend to give slightly higher ratings to their academic experiences than their colleagues in other fields (see Chart B.1).

However, as Table 1 shows, only 38 percent gave the same rating to student life and more than a quarter rated it as 'fair' or 'poor.' A female student in Anthropology summarized well what many graduate students experience:

*“The only negative aspect of my graduate career thus far has been isolation. I can count the social friends I have made outside of my department on one hand. Mixers don't help, as discipline cliques form anyway. Some kind of organized activity specifically for graduate students (an interdisciplinary softball league?) would be more helpful.”*

One should note that Emory undergraduates report higher levels of satisfaction with campus social life. Fifty-three percent of the 1999 seniors were either satisfied or very satisfied with this aspect. (See *The 1999 HEDS Senior Survey: A Summary of Findings* at [www.emory.edu/PROVOST/IPR/seniors99-report.htm](http://www.emory.edu/PROVOST/IPR/seniors99-report.htm).)

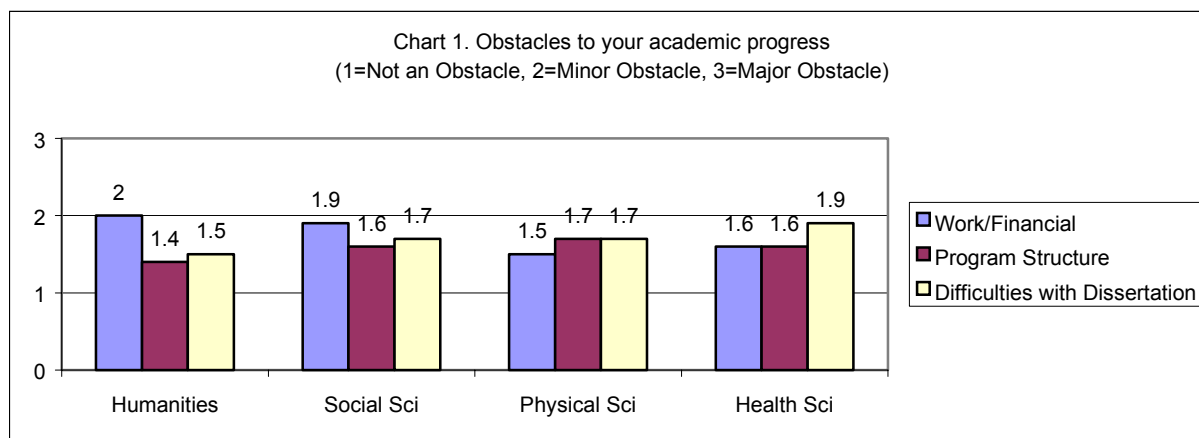
When asked about potential obstacles to their academic progress at Emory, 'work/financial' and 'other' emerge as the most frequently cited barriers (see Table 2). One should note, however, that overall none of the obstacles listed in the survey are viewed as 'major' obstacles to academic progress.

**Table 2. Rate the extent to which these factors, if any, are an obstacle to your academic progress**

	Major Obstacle		Minor Obstacle		Not an Obstacle		N/A		N
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Work/financial	76	18.9%	135	33.6%	141	35.1%	50	12.4%	402
Family obligations	35	8.7%	112	27.8%	215	53.3%	41	10.2%	403
Unavailability of faculty	19	4.7%	89	22.1%	264	65.7%	30	7.5%	402
Program structure or requirements	36	8.9%	135	33.5%	223	55.3%	9	2.2%	403
Difficulties with dissertation topic/research	51	12.8%	119	29.8%	152	38.1%	77	19.3%	399
Difficulties with course scheduling	12	3.0%	117	29.3%	242	60.5%	29	7.3%	400
Other	24	33.8%	10	14.1%	6	8.5%	31	43.7%	71

When data are examined for various subgroups, only differences by disciplinary groups are statistically significant (see Chart 1). Students in the humanities are more likely than their colleagues in other fields to experience obstacles associated with work or financial commitments and related issues; at the other extreme, students in the physical sciences are the least likely to experience such difficulties. One possible explanation for this difference is that, at Emory as well as nationally, more scholarship money is available in the physical sciences than in other fields and fewer students have to rely on outside work to support their graduate education.

At the same time, students in the humanities are more likely to report obstacles such as ‘difficulties with dissertation topic /research’ or ‘program structure or requirements’ than are other students. Notably, students in the physical sciences are the least likely to perceive difficulties with dissertation as an obstacle to their progress.



Approximately 94 percent of the respondents indicated that they are likely to stay in their current program until they receive their degree (Table A.3).

When asked whether they would pursue graduate studies at Emory if offered the chance to start again, 37 percent said they 'definitely would' and 46 percent 'probably would' (Table A.4). Compared with responses from undergraduate seniors, these numbers indicate a relatively higher

institutional attachment among graduate students. (When asked if they would choose to attend Emory again if they had the chance to relive their college experience, only 27 percent of the 1999 seniors said they 'definitely would' and 33 percent said they 'probably would'.)

One should also note that, among graduate students, discipline affiliation seems to be stronger than institutional affiliation. The majority of respondents (51 percent) answered with 'definitely yes' when asked if they would choose the same field again.

When responses are analyzed by disciplinary group, gender, and minority status, three statistically significant differences are noteworthy (see Charts B.2 and B.3). First, minority students are less likely than white students to choose Emory again as their graduate school. Second, differences by disciplinary group show that students in the physical and health sciences are less attached to Emory than are students in the humanities or social sciences. Finally, students in the health and physical sciences are also less likely than students in the humanities and social sciences to pursue graduate studies in the same field if given a second chance. Therefore, humanists and social scientists tend to identify more strongly with both their disciplines and Emory than the rest of the students do.

Seventy-seven percent would recommend their program to prospective candidates and 17 percent felt uncertain about making such a recommendation (see Table A.5).

### **Program Evaluation**

Overall, more than two-thirds of the respondents rate that the quality of classroom instruction in their department as 'very good' or 'excellent' (see Table A.6). Across fields, humanities students tend to give slightly higher ratings to the instruction in their departments than students in other fields (see Chart B.4). Differences by gender or minority status are not statistically significant.

Fewer students (57 percent), however, give the same high ratings to the quality of instruction outside their departments (Table A.6). What causes such discrepancy merits further investigation since the majority of students take a considerable number of courses outside their departments. As Table A.7 shows, 30 percent of the respondents have taken more than 20 percent of their courses outside their department.

Examining Table 3, one notes that 88 percent of the respondents believe their department has high caliber faculty. Overall, students see faculty as accessible (83 percent) and supportive (71 percent). The comments of a female student in Comparative Literature support these findings:

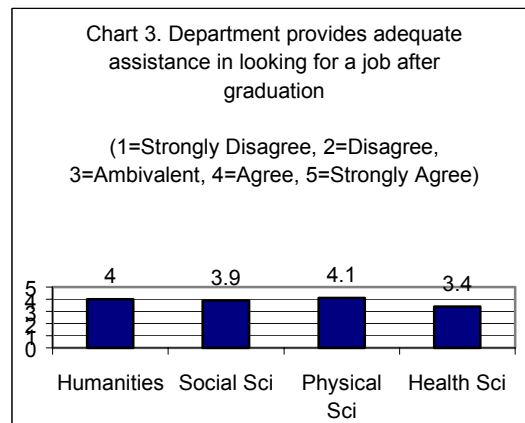
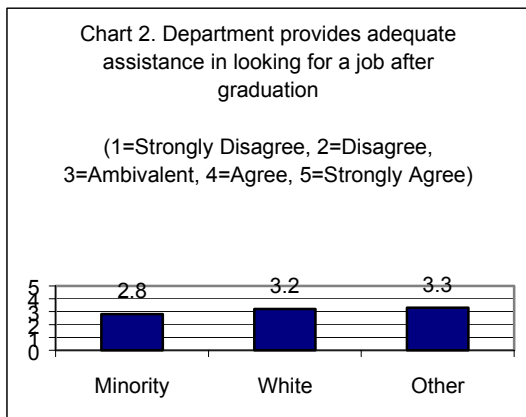
*"I think Emory is an excellent school with many wonderful resources and I recognize that I am very privileged to be here. I'd like to reiterate that the faculty with whom I have worked have been for the most part some of the best and most dedicated teachers I have encountered in my entire education."*

**Table 3. Program Evaluation**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Ambivalent		Agree/Strongly Agree		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Program requirements are clearly communicated	9	2.2%	58	14.1%	48	11.7%	295	72.0%	410
Program requirements are reasonable	5	1.2%	30	7.3%	40	9.8%	335	81.7%	410
Course offerings have sufficient breadth	28	6.8%	62	15.1%	95	23.1%	226	55.0%	411
Course offerings have sufficient depth	11	2.7%	38	9.3%	67	16.4%	293	71.6%	409
Department usually keeps me informed of deadlines and administrative procedures	14	3.4%	46	11.2%	63	15.3%	288	70.1%	411
I feel included in the intellectual community	10	2.4%	38	9.2%	81	19.7%	283	68.7%	412
Faculty actively support student success	13	3.2%	42	10.2%	64	15.5%	293	71.1%	412
Department is responsive to student input	11	2.7%	53	12.9%	107	26.1%	239	58.3%	410
Intellectual caliber of the faculty is excellent			10	2.4%	41	10.0%	361	87.6%	412
Faculty are accessible	6	1.5%	13	3.2%	49	12.0%	342	83.4%	410
Graduate students in my department are collegial	7	1.7%	22	5.4%	44	10.8%	336	82.2%	409
Program encourages student collaboration	19	4.6%	59	14.4%	110	26.8%	222	54.1%	410
Instructors give timely feedback on my work	13	3.2%	41	10.0%	74	18.0%	283	68.9%	411
I get sufficient feedback on academic progress	14	3.4%	46	11.3%	89	21.8%	259	63.5%	408
Department provides adequate assistance in looking for a job after graduation	27	7.2%	38	10.2%	191	51.1%	118	31.6%	374

Students in the humanities are more likely than the rest of the students to agree that the caliber of their faculty is excellent (see Chart B.5).

There are several aspects, however, that raise concerns. Only half of the respondents are satisfied with the collaboration among students in their department and only 31 percent agree that their department provides adequate job assistance. Minority students and students in the health sciences report relatively lower levels of support in this area than white students and students in other fields, respectively (see Charts 2 and 3).



Further, approximately one third of the students report that they receive insufficient feedback from faculty, or that feedback is untimely, and 45 percent are not satisfied with the breadth of the courses offered.

Students in the department generally are seen as collegial (82 percent); respondents in the humanities report higher levels of collegiality than students in other fields (see Chart B.6).

Across departments, there appears to be relatively strong formal support for graduate student research. Further, as Table 4 shows, approximately three-quarters of the respondents reported having benefited from mentoring relationships with faculty in the program. As one respondent in Political Science noted,

*“The graduate program is very strong and the resources (quality of faculty, accessibility of faculty, computing, research support, etc.) are excellent. To the extent that students have complaints they usually reflect the variability in personal experiences not the availability of resources.”*

What seems to be lacking is a sense of a strong intellectual community<sup>1</sup>. For example, only 42 percent of the respondents report that graduate students talk informally about ideas across programs.

In terms of perceived student effort, it is important to note that 40 percent of the respondents do not believe that students in their program do a lot of unassigned reading in the field. However, the majority of students agree that their colleagues handle course assignments with care and responsibility (76 percent) and demonstrate enthusiastic involvement with the field during informal discussions (69 percent).

Seventy-one percent of the respondents agree that they are acquiring the necessary skills for academic publication. Sixty-three percent claim that their department encourages and assists them to deliver papers at academic meetings. Nonetheless, several comments suggest that

<sup>1</sup> The focus groups conducted with undergraduate students by the Center for Teaching and Curriculum and the series of faculty lunches organized by IPR over the last few years point to a similar conclusion.

students feel that they need to learn more from the experiences of seasoned scholars with established publication records. Recounting her own experience, one student from Art History offered this suggestion:

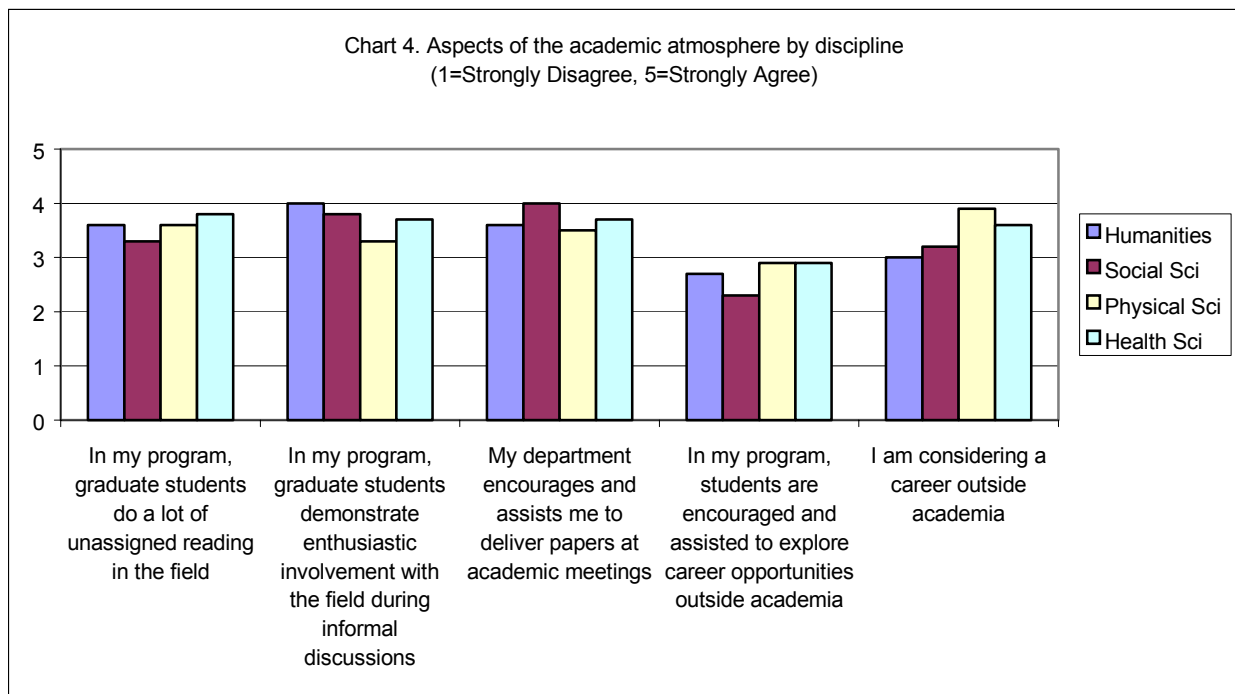
*"Recently I reviewed the first set of page proofs for my first publication and the preparation for academic publishing concerns me. I realize that this is best handled within departments because of the different ways that the disciplines publish. My advisor has been very helpful, not to mention encouraging when I became lost in the process. However, a meeting (or separate meetings for humanities and sciences) open to grad students that features faculty from different departments recounting their varied experiences as authors (practical issues as well as research and writing) would be a useful addition to the discussions within departments and between advisors and students. It might resemble the lecture on lecturing given by faculty during the summer TATTO program."*

**Table 4. Aspects of the academic atmosphere in the department**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Ambivalent		Agree/ Strongly Agree		Total N
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
I benefit from mentoring relationships with faculty in my program	12	3.0%	25	6.2%	66	16.4%	300	74.4%	403
In my program, graduate students tend to help each other meet academic demands	12	3.0%	33	8.1%	72	17.7%	289	71.2%	406
In my program, graduate students do a lot of unassigned reading in the field	6	1.5%	55	13.5%	107	26.3%	239	58.7%	407
In my program, graduate students demonstrate enthusiastic involvement with the field during informal discussions	7	1.7%	29	7.1%	90	22.1%	281	69.0%	407
In my program, graduate students handle course assignments with care and responsibility	4	1.0%	18	4.4%	78	19.1%	308	75.5%	408
My department encourages and assists me to deliver papers at academic meetings	14	3.5%	34	8.5%	100	25.0%	252	63.0%	400
I am acquiring the necessary skills for academic publication	9	2.2%	30	7.4%	78	19.4%	286	71.0%	403
In my program, faculty members are helpful in my job search	21	5.8%	37	10.2%	176	48.5%	129	35.5%	363
In my program, students are encouraged and assisted to explore career opportunities outside academia	59	15.0%	112	28.5%	132	33.6%	90	22.9%	393
Across programs, graduate students talk informally about ideas	29	7.3%	91	23.0%	110	27.8%	166	41.9%	396
I am considering a career outside academia	58	14.4%	71	17.6%	66	16.3%	209	51.7%	404

Several disciplinary differences need to be discussed (see Chart 4). First, students in the physical and health sciences are more likely than the rest of the students to consider a career outside academia. They are also more likely to feel that their program encourages and assists them to explore career opportunities outside academia. As one might expect, students in the humanities are less inclined to follow such career paths.

In terms of research support, respondents from the social sciences are more likely than the rest of the students to agree that their departments encourage them to deliver papers at academic meetings.



Students in the health sciences are more likely than students in other fields to believe that colleagues in their program do a lot of unassigned reading and put forth more effort. In terms of student involvement, more students in humanities agree that colleagues in their programs demonstrate enthusiastic involvement with the field during informal discussions. The respondents in physical sciences are the least likely to hold this view about their colleagues.

In addition to differences by disciplinary group, there are two statistically significant differences in opinions by gender (see Chart B.7). Overall, female students are slightly more likely than males to see that colleagues in their program help each other meet academic demands or handle course assignments with care and responsibility.

### Career Goals

Approximately half of the graduate students are considering a career outside the academy. However, the data also show that Emory’s graduate programs are not yet prepared to help students with such goals. Only 23 percent have been encouraged or assisted by faculty in their departments to explore career opportunities outside academia. The comments of a GDBSS female student illustrate such concerns:

*“Since many of us may not get a job in the academy, it would be extremely helpful for students to take courses outside of their area of concentration to acquire skills that will make them more marketable. For example, allow biology students to take computer or business classes which will eventually help them to get a job in industry or companies.”*

## Academic advising

Students were asked to rate the quality of different types of advising they received at Emory. As Table 5 indicates, students are least satisfied with advising regarding career options and personal matters; 18 percent of the respondents rate advising related to personal matters as 'poor.'

**Table 5. Perceived quality of advising**

	Excellent		Very Good		Good		Fair		Poor		N/A		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Advising received during 1st year in your department	65	15.9%	93	22.8%	116	28.4%	85	20.8%	35	8.6%	14	3.4%	408
Advising about department/discipline qualifying exams or papers	41	10.1%	85	20.9%	107	26.3%	63	15.5%	45	11.1%	66	16.2%	407
Advising about departmental oral exams	33	8.3%	60	15.0%	76	19.0%	60	15.0%	30	7.5%	140	35.1%	399
Advising in developing dissertation/thesis topic/proposal	68	17.0%	72	18.0%	80	20.0%	58	14.5%	27	6.8%	95	23.8%	400
Advising/supervision of dissertation thesis	66	16.7%	51	12.9%	61	15.4%	38	9.6%	13	3.3%	166	42.0%	395
Advising regarding career options or plans	41	10.3%	45	11.3%	54	13.5%	63	15.8%	55	13.8%	142	35.5%	400
Advising on personal matters and adjustment	50	12.3%	57	14.0%	68	16.7%	59	14.5%	73	17.9%	101	24.8%	408

Such findings echo results from the 1999 Emory College senior survey where 30 percent of respondents indicated that they have never received emotional support from faculty (see *The 1999 HEDS Senior Survey: A Summary of Findings* at [www.emory.edu/PROVOST/IPR/seniors99-report.htm](http://www.emory.edu/PROVOST/IPR/seniors99-report.htm).) An examination of the comments offered by graduate students might explain the relatively low satisfaction with advising on personal matters. Many respondents, for example, noted a certain distance maintained between senior faculty and graduate students. As one student noted,

*“The department has a little too much distance between the faculty and the students. We’re a bit infantilized, treated more as undergraduates than as junior colleagues. I think this distance is a barrier to departmental cohesion.”*

Relatively low levels of satisfaction characterize other types of advising as well. For example, if one excludes those who responded with ‘Not Applicable’, only 37 percent consider that advising related to qualifying exams is very good or excellent. And only half of the respondents use such ratings to describe advising/supervision of the dissertation thesis.

Two statistically significant differences emerge when data are analyzed by different subgroups. Students in the humanities and social sciences tend to give a higher rating to both their 1<sup>st</sup> year advising and the advising about departmental oral exams (see Chart B.8). Also, minority students give a lower rating to the quality of advising for the oral exams (see Chart B.9).

Seventy percent of the doctoral respondents who are at the dissertation level chose a male faculty member as their dissertation chair (see Table A.8). The majority of students tend to choose dissertation advisors at senior ranks. Sixty percent of the dissertation advisors are professors and 24 percent are associate professors.

Most Emory students settle the choice of their dissertation chair/advisor early in the program: 46 percent in the first year, 67 percent by the end of second year, and 87 percent by the end of the third year.

Thirty-two percent of the doctoral students who reached the dissertation stage meet weekly with their dissertation advisor; the other 34 percent meet their advisors monthly. Only 18 percent meet their advisors more than two times a week.

Eighty-nine percent were able to have their choice of a dissertation advisor and more than two-thirds of respondents agree that the procedure to select a dissertation advisor is clear (Table A.9).

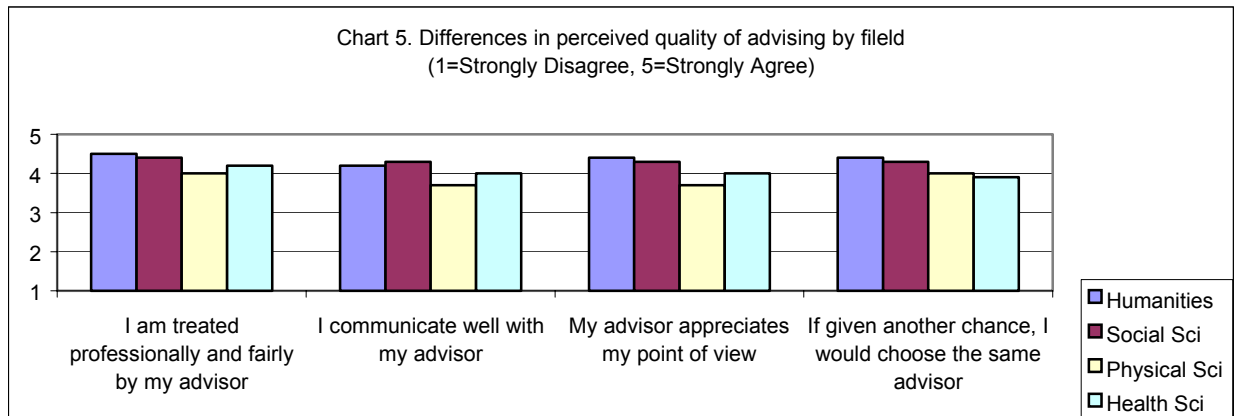
Overall, respondents seem to be satisfied with their advisors (Table 6). Eighty percent reported that they would choose the same advisor if they were given another chance. A comparable proportion of students agree that their advisor treats them fairly and professionally and appreciates their point of view. Most students also perceive that they communicate well with their advisors (81 percent agree or strongly agree with this statement). Half of the respondents report having established a research agenda that is part of their advisor's.

**Table 6. Satisfaction with advising**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Ambivalent		Agree/ Strongly Agree		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
I am treated professionally and fairly by my advisor	5	1.4%	15	4.2%	28	7.9%	305	86.4%	353
I communicate well with my advisor	11	3.1%	24	6.8%	31	8.8%	287	81.3%	353
My advisor appreciates my point of view	6	1.7%	17	4.9%	39	11.2%	287	82.2%	349
I have established a research agenda that is part of my advisor's	19	5.5%	60	17.4%	75	21.8%	190	55.2%	344
My advisor and other faculty in the department help me realize my full potential	8	2.3%	30	8.7%	82	23.8%	225	65.2%	345
If given another chance, I would choose the same advisor	8	2.3%	21	6.1%	43	12.5%	272	79.1%	344

While all these findings are encouraging, Table 6 also reveals one area of concern: approximately one third of the students do not think that their advisor or the faculty in the department help them realize their full potential. Minorities are more likely than white students to hold this view (see Chart B.10).

Chart 5 shows several disciplinary differences regarding satisfaction with advising. As previously noted, students in the humanities and social sciences generally tend to have a slightly better opinion about advising than their counterparts in other fields. Overall, a larger proportion



of students in the humanities and social sciences agree that they are treated professionally and fairly, communicate well with their advisors, and believe their point of view is appreciated. As a consequence, more students in these fields than in the fields of physical and health sciences would choose the same advisor if given another chance.

### University resources

Health services, housing assistance, career services, and parking are resources with which graduate students are least satisfied (Table 7). Many comments also point to wide-spread dissatisfaction with health insurance. One student from the Graduate Institute of Liberal Arts noted:

*“My only real complaints are these: Both parking costs and health care should be subsidized by the university for graduate students!!! (especially in the case of health insurance which the graduate school requires us to have). As we teach and hold research assistantships for the university, it is deplorable we are given no assistance in paying for what is very costly.”*

**Table 7. How satisfied are you with the following programs and services?**

	Satisfied or Very Satisfied		Ambivalent		Dissatisfied		Very Dissatisfied		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Library Services	356	87.7%	35	8.6%	14	3.4%	1	0.2%	406
Athletic Facilities	293	87.5%	26	7.8%	12	3.6%	4	1.2%	335
Library Facilities	341	83.6%	38	9.3%	25	6.1%	4	1.0%	408
Library Hours	322	80.7%	35	8.8%	33	8.3%	9	2.3%	399
Registrar	287	75.9%	71	18.8%	12	3.2%	8	2.1%	378
Library Resources	307	75.8%	48	11.9%	45	11.1%	5	1.2%	405
Police/Security	115	71.0%	35	21.6%	8	4.9%	4	2.5%	162
GSAS Administration	185	69.8%	60	22.6%	14	5.3%	6	2.3%	265
International Office	61	69.3%	20	22.7%	4	4.5%	3	3.4%	88
Computing Facilities	261	68.5%	58	15.2%	49	12.9%	13	3.4%	381
Financial Aid Office	171	66.5%	59	23.0%	15	5.8%	12	4.7%	257
Bursars Office	246	64.7%	83	21.8%	38	10.0%	13	3.4%	380
Student Counseling	74	62.7%	31	26.3%	4	3.4%	9	7.6%	118
Computing Assistance	232	61.9%	72	19.2%	48	12.8%	23	6.1%	375
Student Activities Office	50	56.2%	33	37.1%	2	2.2%	4	4.5%	89
Health Services	157	48.6%	54	16.7%	51	15.8%	61	18.9%	323
Career Services	36	38.3%	38	40.4%	12	12.8%	8	8.5%	94
Housing Assistance	41	27.5%	44	29.5%	26	17.4%	38	25.5%	149
Dissertation Office	12	25.0%	34	70.8%			2	4.2%	48
Parking	89	24.7%	63	17.5%	86	23.8%	123	34.1%	361

More than 87 percent of the respondents are ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with Emory’s library services and athletic facilities.

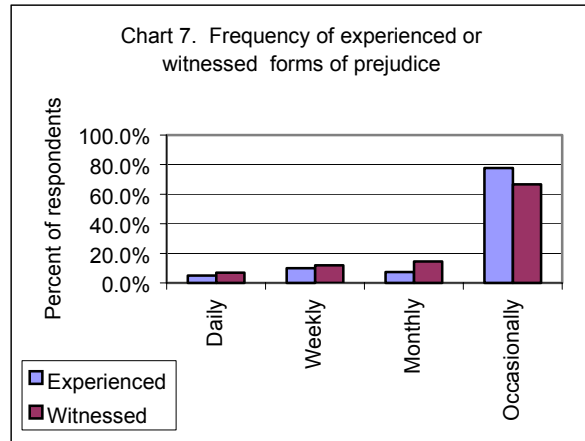
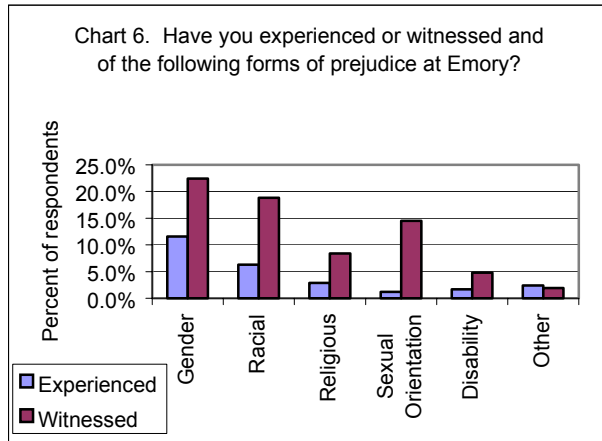
### Quality of Life

Almost two-thirds of the respondents are satisfied with their social life at Emory (Table A.10). Most students (80 percent) also rate the overall morale of the graduate student population as good, very good, or excellent. Overall, minority students and students in the physical sciences tend to be less satisfied with their social life than white students, and students in other fields, respectively (see Chart B.11).

More than 90 percent of the students report living off campus (Table A.11). The majority of students appear to be satisfied with their current housing arrangements. However, almost two-thirds find the housing costs to be expensive. One doctoral student in the Chemistry department notes:

*"The lack of graduate student housing is unbelievable. This area is not an inexpensive area and graduate housing only seems to be an option for the international students. Some drastic changes need to be made at this university to attract a better quality graduate student. Emory seems to cater to their undergraduate students and ignore the graduate students. If it were not for the long underpaid and underappreciated hours that grad students put in, the university would not have all of the research funding that it currently has."*

When asked if they have ever been a target of a prejudice, 12 percent of the respondents reported having personally experienced 'gender' prejudice and 6 percent encountered 'racial' prejudice (Chart 6). Chart 7 indicates the frequency with which respondents have encountered these forms of prejudice.



More students, however, have witnessed some form a prejudice experienced by their colleagues. The respondents reported prejudice in the categories of: gender (22 percent), racial (19 percent), sexual orientation (14 percent), religion (8 percent), and disability (5 percent). Most forms of prejudice witnessed by respondents occurred occasionally.

When asked how safe they feel both on campus and off campus, a large majority of respondents described the campus as being highly safe during day. However, during the night, 38 percent of the students reported not feeling safe off campus, and 15 percent reported not feeling safe on campus (Table 8).

**Table 8. How safe do you feel in the following locations**

	Very Safe		Reasonably Safe		Neutral		Somewhat Unsafe		Unsafe		Total N
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Walking by day on campus	384	92.8%	29	7.0%	1	0.2%					414
Walking by night on campus	109	26.7%	178	43.5%	59	14.4%	54	13.2%	9	2.2%	409
Walking by day off campus	187	45.2%	181	43.7%	32	7.7%	10	2.4%	4	1.0%	414
Walking by night off campus	40	9.7%	119	28.8%	94	22.8%	116	28.1%	44	10.7%	413
In your home/residence	216	52.7%	162	39.5%	25	6.1%	7	1.7%			410

Thirty-five percent of the respondents would be interested in more organized social activities within their department, and more than half would like to have a graduate research center on campus (Chart B.12).

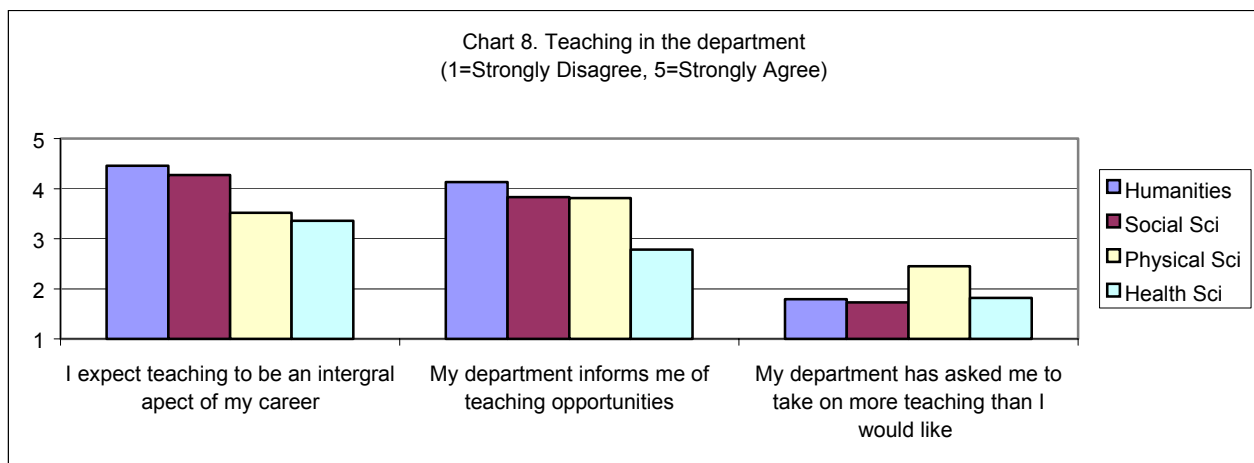
## Information Technology

Among graduate students, the availability of basic computing resources is relatively high. Eighty-six percent of the respondents have a computer at home. Approximately two-thirds of the respondents who were teaching assistants last term used email for course-related purposes (see Table A.13). To support their academic pursuits, students use various computer connections: in a campus laboratory or office (59 percent), from campus computing facilities (54 percent), from off-campus using a modem (73 percent), and from connections in campus housing (7 percent). See Chart B.13.

Approximately one in four respondents are not satisfied with the off-campus connection. (Chart B.14).

## Teaching-related aspects

More than 71 percent of the respondents expect teaching to be an integral part of their career and more than 61 percent believe their department informs them of teaching opportunities (see Table 9).



**Table 9. Teaching expectations in the department**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Ambivalent		Agree/ Strongly Agree		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
I expect teaching to be an integral aspect of my career	17	4.1%	34	8.2%	68	16.5%	294	71.2%	413
Teaching is a requirement of my program	3	0.7%	8	1.9%	15	3.6%	385	93.7%	411
My department informs me of teaching opportunities	27	6.6%	46	11.2%	85	20.8%	251	61.4%	409
My department has asked me to take on more teaching than I would like	158	39.0%	175	43.2%	54	13.3%	18	4.4%	405

As Chart 8 shows, the opinions about teaching vary among different fields. Overall, students in the humanities and social sciences are more likely than the rest of the students to see teaching as an integral aspect of their career.

Compared to the rest of students, they also agree in larger proportions that their departments inform them of teaching opportunities.

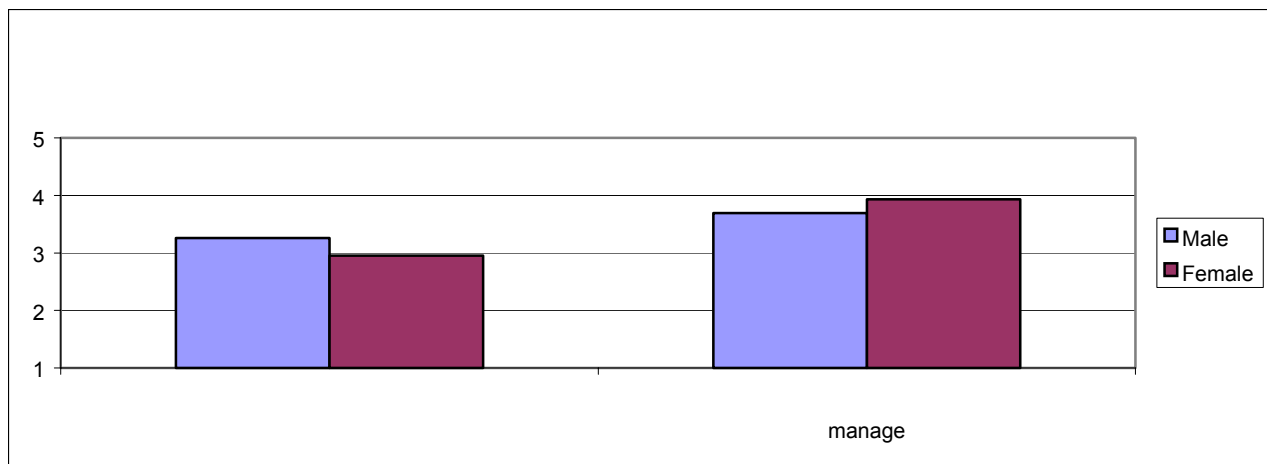
On average, respondents are satisfied with their teaching loads; most students disagree with the statement “my department has asked me to take on more teaching than I would like.”

In the context of teaching, three-quarters of the graduate students have found it easy to manage individual interaction with the students they teach. Seventy percent of the respondents reported no problem related to teaching students of diverse backgrounds. Most difficult to manage, however, appears to be the balance between teaching and research: only 43 percent of the respondents considered it easy to manage staying focused on their research while fulfilling their teaching requirements (see Table 10).

**Table 10. I found the following easy to manage in the context of teaching:**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Ambivalent		Agree Strongly Agree		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Keeping focused on my research	27	7.7%	87	24.9%	85	24.4%	150	43.0%	349
Class preparation	4	1.2%	33	9.5%	75	21.6%	235	67.7%	347
Actual classroom teaching	4	1.2%	20	5.8%	84	24.3%	238	68.8%	346
Individual interaction with students	2	0.6%	11	3.2%	72	20.8%	261	75.4%	346
Teaching students of diverse backgrounds	3	0.9%	18	5.3%	83	24.3%	238	69.6%	342
Interacting w/ professors	8	2.3%	17	4.9%	80	23.1%	242	69.7%	347
Administrative matters	8	2.3%	28	8.1%	110	31.9%	199	57.7%	345

The T-test comparisons for various subgroups yield several statistically significant differences. Fewer female students than male students find it easy to keep focusing on their research (see Chart 9). More female students, however, find that teaching students of diverse backgrounds is



easy to manage. The chart suggests that male students are more attentive to areas that lead to success in traditional academic careers.

When differences by disciplinary group are considered (see Chart B.15), students in the humanities and social sciences tend to be more comfortable with their teaching than students in the physical or health sciences. For example, they find it easier to manage actual classroom teaching, individual interaction with students, teaching students of diverse backgrounds, and administrative matters. On the other hand, students in the physical and health sciences are more likely to keep focused on their research.

Approximately two-thirds of the respondents consider the preparation for teaching at Emory to be good, very good, or excellent (Table A.13). One student in Sociology remarked:

*“I especially appreciated the teaching program here. It is one of the reasons I chose Emory and I have not been disappointed. The Dean’s teaching fellowship also relieves the financial problems that would have prevented me from progressing quickly.”*

In terms of overall teaching load, the majority of respondents (48 percent) have assisted with teaching for one or two sections (see Chart B.16).

### Funding and student debt

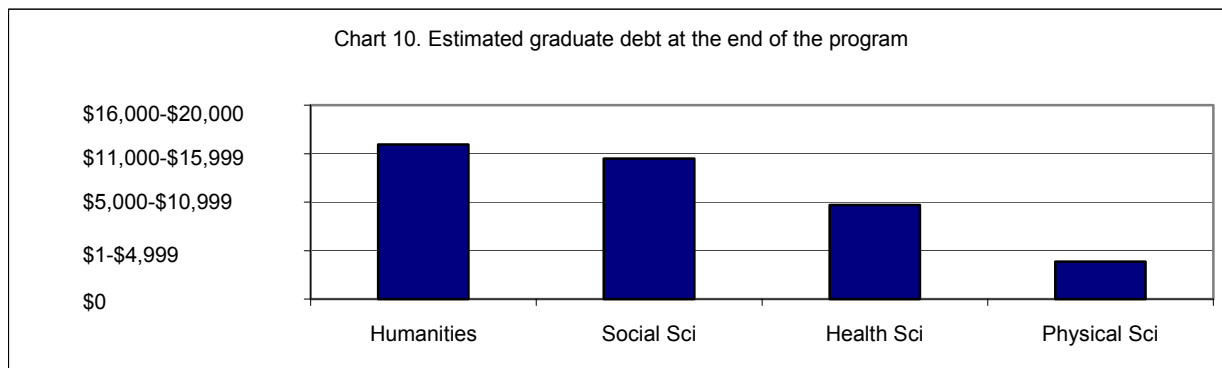
For the majority of respondents (60 percent), the largest source used to finance the cost of their graduate studies is the tuition waiver. This is followed in order of importance by university grants (47 percent), research assistantships (25 percent) and government support (25 percent). Only 10 percent of students reported ‘savings/spouse/parent’ as being the largest source (see Table A.14).

Almost two thirds of the respondents anticipate no undergraduate debt upon the completion of their graduate degree. Of those who carry undergraduate debt, 72 percent will have a debt of less than \$15,000 (Table 11). Only 9 percent of the respondents estimate a debt of more than \$21,000.

**Table 11. Estimated amount of educational debt when graduate degree is completed**

	Undergraduate Debt		Graduate Debt	
	N	%	N	%
\$0	258	67.2%	168	41.3%
\$1 to 4,999	34	8.9%	42	10.3%
\$5,000-10,999	28	7.3%	36	8.8%
\$11,000-15,999	29	7.6%	26	6.4%
\$16,000-20,999	2	0.5%	38	9.3%
\$21,000-25,999	8	2.1%	21	5.2%
\$26,000-30,999	14	3.6%	20	4.9%
\$31,000-40,999	6	1.6%	20	4.9%
\$41,000-49,999	1	0.3%	14	3.4%
\$50,000 or more	4	1.0%	22	5.4%
Total	384	100.0%	407	100.0%

Four out of ten respondents will have no graduate debt upon the completion of their graduate degree. One third of those who do expect to incur some debt estimate that it will be less than \$11,000. However, another third of these students expect a debt of more than \$26,000.



As Chart 10 reveals, the expected graduate debt varies with each field, with students in the humanities and social sciences reporting higher levels of debt than students in physical or health sciences.

### **Related IPR research**

While this survey represents a first effort to learn about Emory's graduate students, we plan to administer the HEDS survey every two or three years. We believe that a periodic assessment of graduate programs as viewed by students is essential to improving graduate education. We have instituted a similar assessment program at the undergraduate level where students in Emory College are surveyed during their freshman and senior years. Findings from this research can be viewed on IPR's web site at [www.emory.edu/PROVOST/IPR](http://www.emory.edu/PROVOST/IPR).

Once HEDS completes its data collection, IPR will produce another report that compares Emory students' responses with those at other private universities. Institutions that have participated in this survey include Brown, Dartmouth, Duke, Georgetown, George Washington, Northwestern, and Tufts.

This report as well as all other future analyses of the HEDS Graduate Student Survey will be available on IPR's web site.