

AN EVALUATION OF THE MASTER'S PROGRAM IN INDUSTRIAL/ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY:
THE ANALYSIS OF AN ALUMNI SURVEY

A Technical Report Prepared for the Psychology Department at
Southwest Missouri State University

by

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Acknowledgments

First, we want to express appreciation and gratitude to the Industrial/Organizational Psychology program's alumni. They are a very talented, energetic, and collegial group of people, and we are proud of their professional success, their continuing commitment to the program, their desire to see the program do well, and their willingness to contribute toward that end. We also want to express appreciation and gratitude to the program's faculty. They, too, are a very talented, energetic, and collegial group of people who are committed to the program and who have worked hard to make it successful. Finally, we want to express appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Martha Kirker, Director of the Center for Assessment and Instructional Support, for providing valuable advice and assistance in this evaluation effort.

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Executive Summary

Graduates of the Master's program in Industrial/Organizational Psychology were surveyed during the 1996-1997 school year with a questionnaire designed to collect information about their post-graduate work experiences and how they viewed various aspects of the program. The results indicate that:

- All respondents were either employed or pursuing advanced degrees.
- Median income of those employed was \$32,250; mean income was nearly \$35,000.
- Employed respondents were relatively satisfied with various aspects of their jobs.
- Employed respondents found their first jobs within six months of graduation.

When compared with a national survey of I/O Master's program graduates conducted by the American Psychological Association, SMS graduates were finding jobs in similar settings, were earning similar salaries, and were more satisfied with their jobs.

In terms of how graduates viewed the program and their program-related experiences, the areas of greatest satisfaction included:

- The overall quality of the program.
- Faculty support/concern and opportunities to interact with faculty.
- Opportunities for institutional support through graduate assistantships.

Areas of lowest satisfaction included:

- Library holdings/services.
- Opportunities to participate in field experience.
- Job placement assistance.

Some potential program development activities included:

- Changing the content/format of certain courses or advising students to take certain courses outside the program.
- Additional networking with alumni and human resource professionals.
- Fostering the development of student portfolios.

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The Program

The Psychology Department at Southwest Missouri State University (SMS) has offered a Master of Science degree in Industrial/Organizational (I/O) Psychology since the fall of 1992. The two year (47 credit-hour) program was originally designed for 16 full-time students (eight per year), taught by a core faculty composed of four I/O psychologists. Beginning in 1994 after a fourth I/O psychologist was hired, enrollment targets were increased to their current levels of approximately 10 students per year. A fifth I/O psychologist was hired in 1996, bringing the program to its current level of approximately 20 students and five core faculty.

Following a scientist-practitioner model, the program is designed to reflect standards promulgated by the Council for Applied Master's Programs in Psychology (CAMPP, 1990) and curricular guidelines developed by the Society for Industrial/Organizational Psychology (SIOP, 1994). The focus is upon applying psychological principles and research methods to solve problems in a variety of settings, including business, industry, government, and non-profit organizations. Students tend to select either an internship or thesis option depending upon whether their career goals involve seeking employment as a masters level I/O practitioner or continuing their graduate education in a doctoral program. Specific objectives of the program include the following:

1. Developing research and statistical skills for job analysis, performance assessment, the measurement of job-related individual differences, program development and evaluation.
2. Developing a knowledge base concerning important contextual influences on behavior, including social influence, work motivation, job design, training and organizational development.
3. Developing an understanding of the philosophical, ethical, and legal constraints on the practice of applied psychology.

4. Developing communication and interpersonal competence necessary for successful functioning in organizations.

Most students (over 90%) receive institutional support as graduate assistants. Graduate assistantships provide a fee waiver and monthly stipend in return for 20 hours of service. However, most of the institutional support that students receive comes from sources outside of the Psychology Department; over 70% of the students who are currently enrolled are supported through assistantships administered by other university units (e.g., Human Resources, Student Life, Center for Assessment and Instructional Support, Office of Athletic Academic Advisement, etc.). This has greatly enhanced the program's ability to attract and enroll a geographically and ethnically diverse group of students. Forty percent of the students in the last three classes have come from out-of-state and nearly 70% have come from outside southwest Missouri. These students are from as far north as Canada, Michigan, and Wisconsin, and as far south as Texas and Louisiana. Some of schools from which the program's students have graduated include the University of Wisconsin, the University of Nebraska, Louisiana State University, Illinois State University, St Mary's University (in San Antonio, TX), Otterbein College (in Westerville, OH), Evansville University and Valparaiso University (both in Indiana).

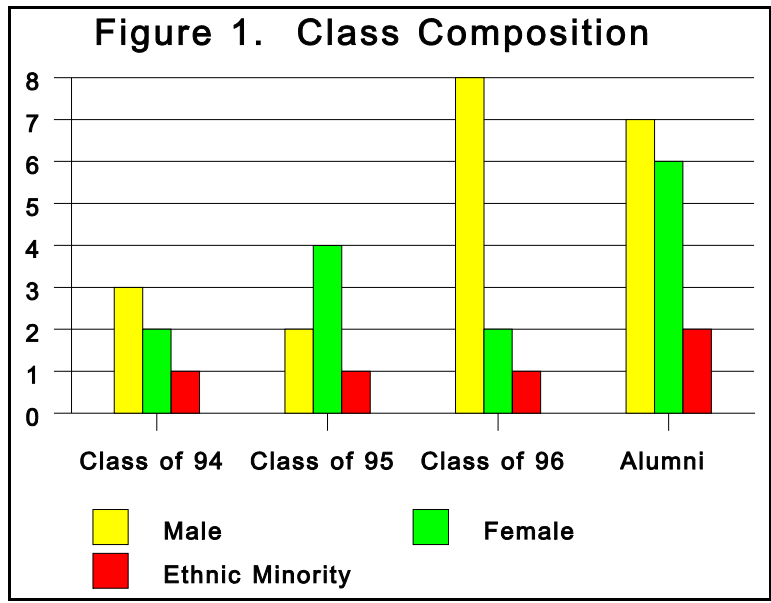
In the past, program students have competed very well for assistantships housed in administrative units, largely because they are bright, talented people with appropriate skills and abilities. However, a university-wide review of graduate assistant use is scheduled for next year (1998) and there is concern that this external source of funding may diminish if assistantships are reassigned from administrative units to academic units. If this were to happen it could severely affect the program's ability to attract diverse applicants from stronger academic institutions, especially those from out-of-state.

The Alumni

In 1992, the first year that courses were offered, there were 12 applicants to the program; six of the applicants were accepted and five of those accepted actually enrolled. Of those who enrolled in the fall of 1992 (the class of '94), three were male, two were female, one was an ethnic minority, and none were over the age of 40. The undergraduate GPA and composite GRE

means for those who enrolled in 1992 were 3.5 and 1160, respectively. In 1993 there were 17 applicants; nine of these were accepted and six enrolled. Of those who enrolled in 1993 (the class of '95), four were female, two were male, one was an ethnic minority, and none were over 40; the undergraduate GPA and composite GRE means for those who enrolled were 3.5 and 1004, respectively. In 1994 there were 19 applicants; 12 were accepted and 10 enrolled. Of those who enrolled in 1994 (the class of '96), eight were male, two were female, one was an ethnic minority, and none were over 40; the undergraduate GPA and composite GRE means were 3.3 and 1001, respectively. The statistics for the two classes still enrolled at the time the survey was conducted look very similar to those of the first three classes. In 1995 there were 17 applicants, 11 were accepted and 8 enrolled; four were male, four were female, one was an ethnic minority, and none were over 40; GPA and GRE means were 3.6 and 1043. In 1996 there were 30 applicants, 15 were accepted and 10 enrolled; eight were male, two were female, one was an ethnic minority and none were over 40; GPA and GRE means were 3.4 and 1077.

For the class of '94, three dropped out, one was asked to leave, and one graduated. For the class of '95, one dropped out, one was asked to leave, and four graduated. For the class of '96, one was asked to leave, eight graduated, and one was still enrolled (completing his thesis) at the time the survey was conducted. Of those who graduated, seven were male, six were female,



and two were ethnic minorities. Figure 1 displays some of these data.

Excluding the one non-surveyed alumnus of the class of '96 (i.e., the student who had not completed his thesis by the time the survey was conducted, but who has since graduated), the attrition rate for the program is 33% (7 out of 21). Although this rate may seem high, there are several mitigating factors that warrant consideration. The first of these is the fact that the overall attrition rate is inflated by a “start-up” factor. If one excludes the first class of students, attrition is less than 20%, and if one examines the last three classes of students to enroll (the classes of '96, '97, and '98), attrition has been approximately 10% (3 out of 27).

Another factor that warrants consideration is the fact that the program is rigorous, academically challenging, and stressful. Students who are not intrinsically interested in I/O psychology and students who do not have the requisite academic abilities and skills, find they can not survive and they either drop out or are asked to leave. While undergraduate GPA and composite GRE scores provide some indication of an applicant's academic abilities and skills, motivational and interpersonal prerequisites are more difficult to assess. It is interesting to note that the mean undergraduate GPA and composite GRE scores for the graduates and non-graduates are *not* significantly different (3.3 and 1025 for the graduates, and 3.5 and 1045 for the non-graduates). This comparison underscores the importance of motivational and interpersonal factors for successful completion of the program, and may indicate that the program needs to do a better job of screening applicants on these characteristics. However, as long as the attrition rate remains at approximately 10% it would appear that the program is not admitting an inappropriate number of “at risk” students.

The Questionnaire and Survey

The survey of program graduates began in the fall of 1996, during the fifth year of operations. This survey was part of a larger, ongoing evaluation effort that involves many components (e.g., semester course/instructor ratings, application rates, graduation/attrition rates, etc.). One purpose of the survey was to evaluate the program from the post-graduate perspective of its alumni. The administration and program faculty wanted to know how the graduates view their course work and experiences in the program. The focus of this concern was upon program

development -- i.e., identifying areas of strength and targeting areas of weakness for improvement. In addition, the administration and faculty wanted to know more about the post-graduate work experiences of the alumni, including some measure of their career success as I/O practitioners and human resource professionals. The focus of this concern was upon salary, job satisfaction and how SMS graduates compared with those from other programs. Finally, this was to be the first installment of a continuing follow-up evaluation effort designed to build an alumni data base capable of answering many formative and summative evaluation questions.

An investigation was made of existing surveys that had been designed for purposes similar to those described above. From the Office of Demographic Employment and Educational Research at APA, copies were obtained of the APA Salary Survey Questionnaire and corresponding report (APA 1993 Employment Survey: Psychology Graduates With Master's, Specialist's, and Related Degrees, 1994). Dr. Martha Kirker, the director of SMS's Center for Assessment and Instructional Support (CAIS) provided a sample of the Survey of Graduate Perceptions at Southwest Missouri State University (1995) which CAIS uses to survey all SMS Masters graduates. Dr. Kirker also described a testing and evaluation list server where a notice concerning this effort was posted. These questionnaires were reviewed for specific items that could be used in this survey.

The first draft of the present questionnaire included 32 multiple choice and open-ended questions organized into two sections: an Employment Section and an Attitudes Section. The Employment Section was modeled after the APA survey and the Attitudes Section was modeled after the CAIS survey. The I/O program director reviewed this draft and expressed a desire to see items in the Attitudes Section reflect the I/O program goals and curricular structure more closely. Consequently, some new items were created, some old items were modified, and the Attitudes Section was renamed the Education Section. These changes, together with the use of different response scales, limit comparisons of current results with those from CAIS surveys. However, responses to these items provide feedback regarding the extent to which graduates feel specific aspects of the program are achieving stated objectives and contributing to their personal/career successes. Questions from the APA Employment Survey addressing debt associated with graduate education were also included in the Education Section of the

questionnaire. In the Employment Section many questions were taken verbatim from the APA Employment Survey in order to facilitate comparisons with APA's national sample. These items dealt with occupational status, primary employment setting, duties, hours worked, tenure, duration of job search, salary and satisfaction with various aspects of the job. Finally, three open-ended questions were added to allow respondents to elaborate upon their program experiences. The purpose of these questions was to give respondents the opportunity to express feelings and thoughts that might not be captured by other items.

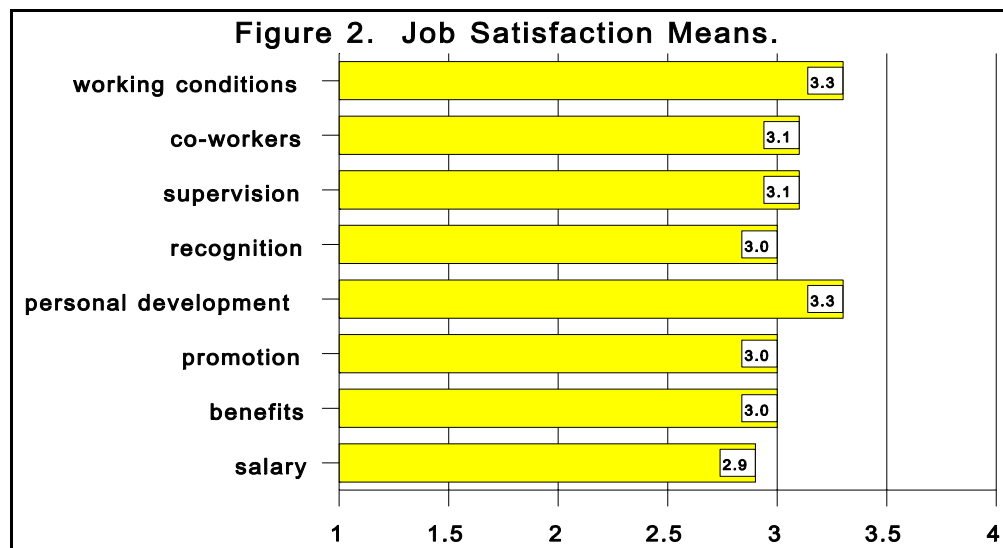
The revised draft was pilot tested with students and faculty in a program course that focuses upon survey design and analysis issues. After making some changes based upon the pilot test results, the final draft (see Appendix A) was mailed to all program graduates (n=13) in January, 1997. A cover letter from the program director was included which described the survey's purpose, limitations on anonymity, how raw data would be handled, and how results would be reported (see Appendix B). A self-addressed stamped envelope was provided for graduates to return the questionnaire to the Psychology Department. Eleven of the 13 questionnaires were returned, representing an 85% response rate -- an extremely high rate for survey research. Eight of the returned questionnaires were from the class of '96, two were from the class of '95, and one was from the class of '94. The two non-returned questionnaires were from the class of '95.

Results for Employment

In the Employment Section, 73% of respondents (n=8) indicated that they were currently employed and 27% (n=3) indicated they were pursuing an advanced degree. Of those who were employed, only one person (13%) indicated that he/she was currently employed in a position unrelated to his/her graduate education and seeking other employment. Sixty-three percent (n=5) indicated that their primary employment setting was a corporation and 38% (n=3) indicated it was a small business. Fifty percent (n=4) were working in Missouri, 25% (n=2) were employed in Kansas, 13% (n=1) was employed in Illinois, and 13% (n=1) was employed in Arkansas. One person (13%) indicated he/she had a secondary employment setting (as an adjunct faculty member at a community college).

When describing their primary employment, respondents indicated they worked between 40 and 50 hours per week, with a mean of 44 hours per week. Respondents indicated they had been employed from 3 to 10 months, with a mean tenure of 6.6 months. Salaries ranged from \$19,240 to \$60,000 per year, with a mean of \$34,718 and a median of \$32,250. Examining those positions related to I/O psychology (n=7), the mean salary increased to \$36,929 per year and the median salary increased to \$32,500 per year.

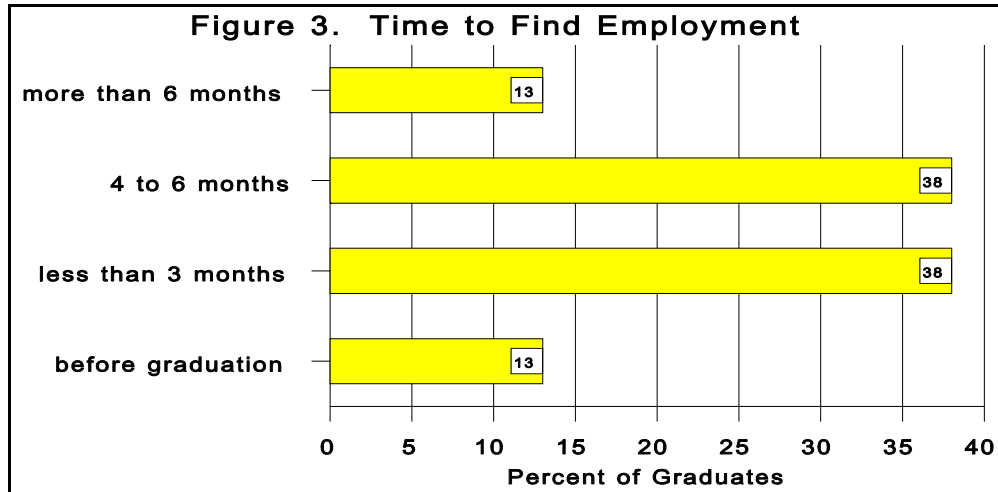
Fifty percent (n=4) of the employed respondents indicated that their jobs were commensurate with their levels of experience, while 50% (n=4) said their jobs were not. Fifty percent (n=4) of the respondents indicated that their jobs were commensurate with their levels of training and 50% (n=4) said their jobs were not. However, since only twenty-five percent (n=2) of the graduates said that they would prefer a more challenging position and 13% (n=1) said that he/she would prefer to remain in his/her current job for personal reasons, it is likely that at least one respondent felt overemployed (rather than underemployed) in terms of his/her training and



experience.

Mean responses to items involving job satisfaction are displayed in Figure 2. Overall, respondents were fairly satisfied with their positions, with mean responses equal to or exceeding the scale value for “satisfied” on all but one item (salary). Overall, graduates expressed greatest

satisfaction with their opportunities for personal development and working conditions, and least satisfaction with their salaries.



With respect to the length of time it took graduates to find their first jobs, 38% (n=3) reported finding their position within 3 months of completing their degree requirements, and 38% (n=3) within 4-6 months. These data are presented in Figure 3.

Results for Education

The responses to the first 25 questions of the Education Section are displayed in Table I. Overall, SMS graduates indicated high levels of satisfaction with the program and their program-related experiences. Courses were seen as relevant to their current work (see items 18 to 20), they were satisfied with their opportunities to obtain the knowledge and develop the skills described by the program's stated objectives (see items 21 to 24), and the climate was generally viewed as supportive (see items 2 to 10). The items receiving the highest satisfaction ratings include:

1. Faculty support and concern for my well-being (M = 3.73)
2. Opportunities for institutional support (graduate assistantships) (M = 3.73)
3. Overall quality of this program (M = 3.64)
4. Opportunities to interact with faculty (M = 3.64)

Graduates were less satisfied with library and computer facilities, with the academic standards of their peers, and with opportunities for field experience. It should be noted that the

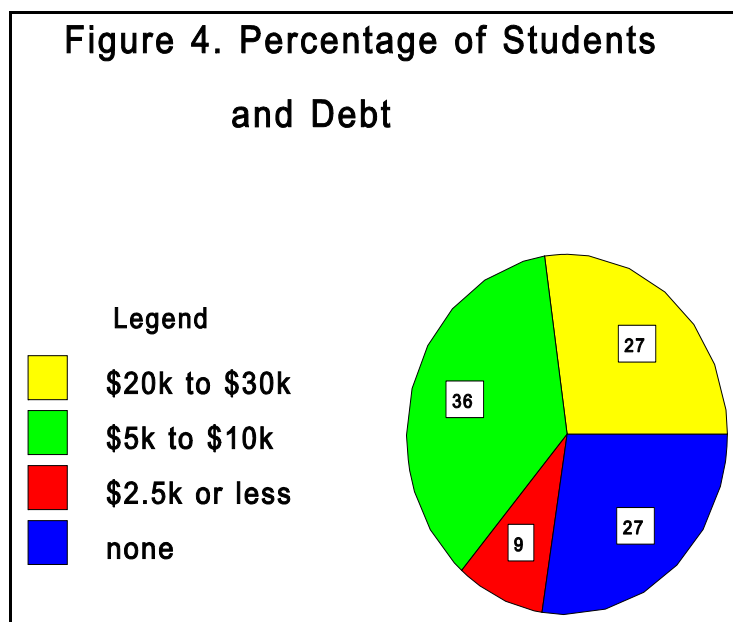
Psychology Department opened a new computer lab with 20 state-of-the-art work stations in the spring of 1996, the year the last class in this survey graduated. In addition, two state-of-the-art computers with internet access and a laser printer were recently placed in the graduate students' group office in Hill Hall. Consequently, dissatisfaction with computer facilities and support may not be as substantial a problem with future classes. Items receiving the lowest ratings include:

1. Quality of library holdings and services for the program (M = 2.18)
2. Rigor of academic standards fostered by the students (M = 2.70)
3. Quality of computer support for my research and course work (M = 2.73)
4. Opportunities to participate in field experience (M = 2.73)

Table I. Mean responses to educational experience items (1=very dissatisfied; 4=very satisfied)

| Items | M | SD |
|---|------|-----|
| 1. Quality of instruction in my classes | 3.18 | .40 |
| 2. Faculty support and concern for my well-being | 3.73 | .47 |
| 3. Student support and concern for my well-being | 3.20 | .42 |
| 4. Opportunities to interact with faculty | 3.64 | .50 |
| 5. Opportunities to participate in research | 3.60 | .70 |
| 6. Opportunities to participate in field experience | 2.73 | .65 |
| 7. Opportunities for institutional support (graduate assistantship) | 3.73 | .47 |
| 8. Opportunities for financial aid (loans) | 3.60 | .52 |
| 9. Rigor of academic standards fostered by the faculty | 3.27 | .47 |
| 10. Rigor of academic standards fostered by the students | 2.70 | .67 |
| 11. Quality of initial contacts with the program during the application process | 3.36 | .50 |
| 12. Quality of printed information about the program | 3.09 | .70 |
| 13. Quality of library holdings and services for the program | 2.18 | .87 |
| 14. Quality of computer support for my research and course work | 2.73 | .90 |
| 15. Quality of academic advisement I received | 3.27 | .65 |
| 16. Satisfaction with course offerings and times scheduled | 3.09 | .54 |
| 17. Satisfaction with comprehensive exams | 3.09 | .70 |
| 18. Relevance of core courses to my current job | 3.00 | .50 |
| 19. Relevance of I/O topics courses to my current job | 3.40 | .70 |
| | | |

| Items | M | SD |
|---|------|-----|
| 20. Relevance of internship/thesis experiences to my current job | 3.27 | .47 |
| 21. Opportunities to develop research and statistical skills for job analysis, performance appraisal, the measurement of individual differences, program development and evaluation | 3.09 | .54 |
| 22. Opportunities to develop a knowledge base concerning contextual influences on behavior such as social influence, job design, training and development | 3.18 | .40 |
| 23. Opportunities to develop an understanding of the philosophical, ethical, and legal issues related to the practice of applied psychology | 3.45 | .52 |
| 24. Opportunities to develop the communication skills and interpersonal competence necessary for successful functioning in organizations | 3.55 | .52 |
| 25. Overall program quality | 3.64 | .50 |



In response to questions involving debt, 73% (n=8) of the graduates indicated that they had accumulated some debt that was directly related to their graduate education. Of these, half indicated the amount of accumulated debt was between five and ten thousand dollars. The percentage of respondents and their corresponding levels of debt are presented in Figure 4.

In response to the open-ended questions, graduates described some of the more satisfying, worthwhile aspects of the program. Access to faculty, faculty guidance and support for their educational and professional development, and opportunities to develop close, personal relationships with faculty were foremost among these statements (see Appendix C). The

opportunity to apply knowledge and skill in real world problems through practicum and internship experiences was also valued.

When asked to describe the least satisfying or frustrating aspects of their experiences in the program, one theme was differential/preferential treatment and the perception that certain students were favored by certain faculty. Another concern involved help with job placement, career guidance, and making the transition from school to work. Several graduates thought the program needed to provide more assistance in this area.

Some of the changes the graduates suggested were the incorporation of certain topics in established classes or the addition of new classes. The topics/classes cited include employment/labor law, employee benefits, I/O research methods and statistics, further exploration of current trends in organizational development, and practice in small *n* settings. Treating students as individuals and dampening competition among students was also recommended. Encouraging greater involvement with organizations other than The Society of Industrial/Organizational Psychologists, such as The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), was suggested.

Comparisons with APA Data

When the mean and median salaries of APA respondents were compared with those of SMS alumni, the APA respondents had salaries that are slightly higher than SMS graduates (see Table II). It is interesting to note that the ratio of positions in corporate settings versus small business settings is approximately 2:1 for both the SMS and APA samples. These data suggests that SMS graduates are seeking and finding the same kinds of jobs as the national APA sample of graduates.

Table II. Salary Comparisons between SMS graduates and APA respondents

| SMS | Statistics | APA |
|----------|------------|----------|
| \$32,500 | Median | \$33,000 |
| \$36,929 | Mean | \$37,144 |

| | | |
|---|-------------|----|
| 7 | Sample Size | 27 |
|---|-------------|----|

[Note: the *n*'s for both the SMS and APA samples include those employed in I/O-related applied settings and excludes those employed in settings related to the delivery of mental health care services (i.e., clinical or counseling settings).]

When comparing perceptions of how one's training and experience are related to one's job, more SMS graduates indicated their jobs were "in field" than APA respondents (see Table III; note that these APA data include graduates from all specialty areas, not just I/O). However, fewer APA respondents indicated that their jobs were not commensurate with their level of experience and training, and a greater percentage of SMS graduates would prefer a more challenging position. About the same percentage prefer to remain in their current position for personal reasons. Some of these findings are curious in light of the levels of job satisfaction that SMS graduates reported (see Table IV).

Table III. Job characteristic ratings for SMS graduates and APA respondents

| SMS | | APA |
|-------------|--|-------------|
| % Agreement | Item | % Agreement |
| 75 | The job is in my field. | 65 |
| 13 | The job is not in my field. | 4 |
| 50 | The job is commensurate w/ my experience. | 45 |
| 25 | The job is not commensurate w/ my experience. | 6 |
| 50 | The job is commensurate with my training. | 50 |
| 38 | The job is not commensurate w/ my training. | 10 |
| 25 | I would prefer a more challenging job. | 15 |
| 13 | I prefer to remain in this job for personal reasons. | 12 |

[Note: The *n*'s for the APA data displayed in Tables III to V ranges from 240 to 252, depending upon the item, and includes Master's level practitioners from all specialty areas (not just I/O); the *n*'s for the SMS data displayed in Tables III to V are 8 -- all those who are employed.]

Job satisfaction was rated on a four point scale, with 1 corresponding to very dissatisfied and 4 to very satisfied. Across all job characteristics, SMS graduates

indicated higher levels of satisfaction than did the APA survey participants. This was especially true for satisfaction with supervisors/co-workers, opportunities for personal development, and working conditions (see Table IV).

Table IV. Mean job satisfaction ratings for SMS graduates and APA respondents

| SMS | | APA |
|--------------------|--|--------------------|
| Mean Rating | Item | Mean Rating |
| 2.88 | Salary | 2.48 |
| 3.00 | Benefits | 2.16 |
| 3.00 | Opportunities for promotion | 2.56 |
| 3.25 | Opportunities for personal development | 1.94 |
| 3.00 | Opportunities for recognition | 2.18 |
| 3.13 | Supervisor | 1.85 |
| 3.13 | Co-Workers | 1.65 |
| 3.25 | Working Conditions | 1.84 |

On average, SMS graduates took longer to find their current positions than did APA respondents. The majority of APA respondents found jobs before completing their degree requirements or within 3 months, while SMS graduates typically found jobs within six months after completing their degree requirements (see Table V).

Table V. Time to find current position for SMS graduates and APA respondents

| SMS | | APA |
|--------------------|---|--------------------|
| % Agreement | Item | % Agreement |
| 13 | Before completing degree requirements | 44 |
| 38 | Within 3 months after completing requirements | 28 |
| 38 | 4 - 6 months after completing requirements | 11 |
| 13 | > 6 months after completing requirements | 17 |

More SMS graduates (73%) indicated having debt directly related to graduate education than APA respondents (55%). The specific amount of cumulated debt differed as well. The greatest percentage of indebted SMS graduates (50%) indicated

\$5,001 - \$10,000 of debt, while the greatest percentage of APA respondents (45%) was substantially higher (\$10,000 - \$20,000).

Discussion of Results

The Master's program in I/O psychology at SMS is doing well in terms of the post-graduate work experiences of its alumni. All of the graduates were either employed or continuing their graduate education in doctoral programs. Of those employed, most were satisfied with their jobs, and only one respondent indicated that he/she was seeking other employment. The graduates were employed by small businesses or corporations in jobs with various titles and descriptions; however, the majority of respondents were working in an area involving human resources. On average, respondents worked 44 hours per week, had been in their current positions for about six months, and made about \$35,000 per year. When compared with APA's national survey of Master's level practitioners employed in applied (non-mental health care) settings, SMS graduates made about the same amount of money from their primary employment settings, but were more satisfied with their jobs and took longer to find their first positions.

Overall, SMS graduates indicated high levels of satisfaction with their experiences in the program. The faculty and institution were viewed as supportive. Students were satisfied with their initial contacts and felt recruited. The program itself was seen as rigorous and students were satisfied with their opportunities to achieve program objectives. One particularly strong point of the I/O program is its faculty-student relations. SMS graduates described the faculty as being very accessible and they valued the personal relationships fostered by the high level of interaction. Faculty were described as mentors and role models, and graduates valued their opportunities to work with faculty on projects.

Respondents were less satisfied with library holdings/services, computer support, the academic standards fostered by other students, and opportunities for field experience. Dissatisfaction with computer facilities and support may no longer be a problem because of the facilities recently placed in the computer lab and graduate

students' group office in Hill Hall. These new resources should have a positive influence upon the satisfaction that future alumni experience with regard to computer support. With respect to the library holdings and services, the department continues to lobby for increased funding for materials and services. Perhaps the planned addition to the Meyer facility will have a positive effect upon this aspect of future students' experiences in the program. Dissatisfaction with the academic standards fostered by fellow students may be best understood in terms of cohort effects peculiar to a single class, and may not need to be addressed in a systematic manner at this time (see the discussion below regarding the competitiveness of the class of '95).

The desire for more field experience may be a more troublesome problem to address. One response to this survey result might be to treat it the way attitudes toward salary are often viewed: a person always wants more, no matter how much one gets, especially if the next person is getting a little more. Because of the graduates' occupational successes, one might conclude that the field experience which students currently receive through the internship and practicum components of the curriculum is sufficient, and that dissatisfaction is primarily due to the social comparisons students make and the fact that some internships offer more or different experiences than others. Since it is impossible to make all internships equal in all respects or to stop students from comparing their respective opportunities, this line of reasoning suggests that students may have to accept the fact that some will have opportunities that other do not (or the program may have to accept a certain level of dissatisfaction in this area).

On the other hand, one might respond to this survey result by asking why faculty do not currently incorporate more field experience in the courses they teach. One answer to this question involves the contingencies which university's administration attaches to these activities and the costs to faculty members in terms of tenure and promotion. It takes substantial time and effort to increase opportunities for field experience -- one must build linkages with area employers and establish a presence in the business community by attending Chamber of Commerce/Rotary Club/etc. meetings, by cold-calling people, by writing letters, by spending time nurturing contacts and helping them solve problems. In addition, the level of individual attention and

supervision required by students in field settings often increases the faculty member's work load for the course by geometric proportions. Since faculty are not released from other graduate and undergraduate course work or from other supervision and advisement responsibilities to pursue these activities, there is little incentive for faculty to invest their time developing more field experience opportunities. In fact, faculty are *punished* for spending their time in this manner because this is time that is taken away from that which they can spend in activities that *are* recognized and rewarded (e.g., producing publications). As long as the tenure and promotion system requires published research for advancement, faculty can be expected to give these activities higher priority than those which increase their students' opportunities for field experience.

This line of reasoning suggests that the faculty roles and reward system needs to be changed before substantial change in this aspect of the program can be expected. One possibility might be to reduce the annual teaching load for faculty who develop and incorporate field experience opportunities in a course. For example, a faculty member might receive six or eight credit-hours, instead of the usual four, for teaching a course with a field experience component. Another possibility might be to recognize and credit toward the research requirements for tenure and promotion the types of documents that are often produced by projects in applied settings (e.g., technical reports to management).

Alumni responses to the open-ended questions suggested several additional areas that may warrant attention and development. There were calls for more emphasis on "real world" issues in some classes and calls for some new classes or new topics. However, there was no clear consensus on the particular issues, classes, or topics that need to be developed and, as one would expect, the requests reflected the particular position/organization where the respondent worked. One possible solution might be to encourage students to seek classes in some of these areas through other programs (e.g., in the MBA, MPA, or Organizational Communications programs at SMS). However, the student and his/her advisor would need to know where the student will be employed after graduation in order to know which particular class(es) to take.

For some students this may be a viable option, but for others it may not. Some respondents suggested that the statistics/research methods courses (which are currently taught to combined classes of I/O and clinical students) be more I/O specific. While the addition of an I/O psychometrics class could provide the specificity in the areas of reliability, validity, and test construction that some wanted, an alternative may be to strengthen the psychometric units in existing courses.

Perceptions of inequity were expressed by several students and some of these sentiments were strongly felt. While all students felt nurtured and supported by some faculty, there were some students who felt that some faculty were more nurturing and supportive of certain students. Consequently, faculty may need to be more sensitive to differential or preferential treatment issues in the future. Unfortunately, differential/preferential treatment perceptions may be an unavoidable consequence of the close-knit, high level of faculty-student interaction that characterizes the mentoring relationships that faculty develop with students. Each faculty member cannot be each student's exclusive mentor, and the relationship between mentor and student will likely be perceived by others as closer and more nurturing than the relationship between a student and a faculty member who is not his/her mentor. In addition, perceptions of differential/preferential treatment may have been fueled by the competitive dynamics that characterized the class to which most of the respondents belonged. Seventy-three percent (n=8) of the respondents came from a single class and perceptions of differential/preferential treatment and competitiveness vary across classes. As a result, the present data make it difficult (impossible) to separate the cohort effects of this class from those of the program.

Finally, several graduates expressed the need for more assistance with job placement and help in making the transition from school to work. This is an issue that may fade as the program produces more graduates and an alumni network develops. The I/O Psychology Club may have a role to play in making this happen by involving former students in various activities (colloquium presentations, panel discussions, etc.). This issue may also fade as the program moves toward the development of student portfolios that display the variety of quality work they are capable of producing. Several

graduates mentioned the value of supplementing their resumes and application letters with examples of relevant work when applying for jobs and talking with prospective employers. A related concern was the need for increasing student involvement in professional organizations such as the Society for Human Resource Management. Networking opportunities might expand through this involvement as students interact with local and national human resource professionals. Through heightened visibility and interaction with the local business community, additional internship sites might also be developed, which in turn could enhance job placement opportunities and provide additional “real world experience.”

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Appendix A

The Graduate Alumni Survey Questionnaire

Appendix B
The Cover Letter

Appendix C

Responses to the Open-Ended Questions

Item: Please describe the most satisfying, worthwhile aspects of your graduate experience in this program.

1. I am very impressed with the faculty of this program
2. I feel that I benefitted from the faculty's knowledge and experience in Industrial/Organizational Psychology.
3. The relationships developed with faculty and students
4. Graduating from such and intense program
5. The hands-on training and consulting projects in which I was able to apply new knowledge and skill
6. My internship was of great value.
7. I feel the faculty were tremendous professionals and excellent role models.
8. Mentoring relationship with Dr. _____. He/She was a tremendous positive impact in my graduate school experience.
9. Support and guidance from all of the faculty
10. Dr. _____'s Multivariate Statistics class is very helpful in my current position.
11. My internship gave me hands-on experience which was valuable in obtaining a position in the work-force.
12. Close, personal attention from my mentor and other faculty.
13. I learned alot from one-on-one relationships with faculty.
14. The wide range of extra project and activities available for those who seek them out
15. The personalized attention from faculty
16. Ability of faculty to accurately assess student skills
17. The "problem-solving" skills I developed while in this program - I feel my problem solving skills far surpass many of my age-mates
18. The most useful courses that relate to my current position were: Personnel Psychology, Organizational Theory, Training & Development, and Selection.
19. The practicum and internship were invaluable in finding a job.
20. The strongest aspect of the program is the faculty.
21. The amount of support and the ease of access to the professors was impressive.
22. The faculty was always willing to meet with me, even when they were busy.
23. The faculty respected my opinions and believed in my ability.
24. The applied opportunities provided by projects, papers, and my internship allowed me to interact with business people in the "real world".
25. I felt that the interaction and debate among my fellow students helped me learn more.
26. When you defend your opinion in a heated argument, you have to have your facts and arguments organized.
27. I felt my fellow students were motivated and intelligent, which motivated me to over-achieve.
28. My assistantship at _____ was very worthwhile. The skills were directly applicable.
29. Faculty support and reinforcement is extraordinary. Without that support I would not have succeeded.
30. Opportunities for graduate assistantships (financial aid) were excellent. In fact this is one of the main reasons I decided to attend SMS.

31. SMS was the only school that I felt recruited to attend.
32. Courses, projects, and interaction with faculty and colleagues were strong in developing communication and interpersonal skills.

Please describe the least satisfying or most frustrating aspects of your graduate experience in this program:

1. The consistency in how students were treated.
2. N/A - I had a great experience!
3. The performance assessment course was probably the least useful, although I feel it should be one of the most useful. While I feel theory is essential in a scientific field such as I/O psychology, we had no "practical" or hands-on type of experience.
4. Ambiguity about job opportunities for MS level I/O graduates
5. Lack of computer training
6. Frustration probably came most from the quantity of reading and work and the feeling that we were playing catch-up much of the time.
7. I personally felt that I had much to learn because my undergraduate program did not prepare me adequately.
8. All of the students had the same complaint... The issue was when a student was working with a professor on class materials... from copying test material to getting hints on projects and test answers...
9. I can't think of any - although I'm sure there were some frustrating aspects.
10. I do not feel the faculty was very supportive of me my first semester. Dr. _____ did intervene and his/her concern kept me in the program.
11. I didn't like all the gossip and perceptions of favorites (real or not). I think it hindered some student's fulfillment of their full potential.
12. One class I was disappointed with was Organizational Psychology. We spent 3 to 4 weeks on the history of I/O. We also spent a great deal of time on motivation, good stuff but it was overkill. That class was my only opportunity to learn about the Organization Development and it didn't happen.
13. Frustration with career related information and advice.
14. There was a tendency to criticize current trends (TQM, etc.) without giving students some sort of background. I realize the trends may be ineffective but since companies are using the techniques, I would have liked a basic understanding.
15. There were several occurrences in which I believe students were not treated fair and equal to other students. I believe that if certain other students were placed in the same situation different action would have been taken.
16. Recruiting and small N's should be beaten more into the heads of grad students.
17. I became very frustrated after I graduated with the lack of help in getting a job. I am aware that other grad students feel strongly that this is a definite (if not the biggest) weakness of the program.
18. Competition is natural and even beneficial, but faculty members should avoid taking sides.

From your perspective, what might be done to improve the nature of the program. What would you like to see changed?

1. Continued emphasis on application of I/O principles to organizational problems. Students pursuing a career in either industry or academics would benefit from this emphasis.
2. The addition of courses on Employment Law, Labor Law, Employee Benefits, etc.
3. Continue to encourage membership in different organizations even outside Psychology - such as SHRM. I found this organization very helpful in gaining information and contacts.
4. There should be better interaction between Organizational Psychology and Organizational Practicum.
5. There should be a push for activities related to career searches and networking.
6. More statistics!!
7. More opportunity for real world experience
8. A recognition by the faculty that students develop at different rates. The program should not be a race.
9. A measurement class that focuses more on reliability, validity, and test construction.
10. More emphasis on "Campbellian" research methods. This subject was covered in the research methods class, but just briefly. We spent more time on single subjects/case study methods. _____'s training class provided better coverage than the research methods class.
11. More emphasis on statistical conclusion validity and the factors that affect statistical significance testing. Perhaps a separate research methods class for I/O students.
12. More information and application of courses to practice in the workforce.
13. More emphasis on individual development rather than competition.
14. More technology and specific computer training (networks, industry related software)
15. More detailed options for careers
16. More contact with area organizations and companies.
17. More focus on writing - all kinds - including APA, business letters, outlines. Make it so students turn in outlines of papers for points. Good outlines.
18. For someone who wants a job in the area of HR or consulting, a compensation & benefits course would be extremely useful, as well as marketable to the student.
19. Way more emphasis should be placed on job placement.