

AN EVALUATION OF THE MASTER'S PROGRAM IN INDUSTRIAL/ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY:  
ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND BIENNIAL ALUMNI SURVEY (1997-1998 GRADUATES)

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

by

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## **Acknowledgments**

I want to express appreciation and gratitude to the Industrial/Organizational Psychology program's graduates. They are a very talented, energetic, and collegial group of people; I and my colleagues are very proud of their professional successes, their continuing commitment to the program, their desire to see the program do well, and their willingness to contribute toward that end. I 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 work very hard to make it successful.

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## Executive Summary

Recent graduates of the Master's program in Industrial/Organizational (I/O) Psychology were surveyed during the spring semester of 1999 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 an advanced degree.
- Median income of those employed was \$30,000; mean income was \$30,500.
- Employed respondents were relatively satisfied with various aspects of their jobs.
- A majority of those employed found their present jobs within six months of graduation.

When compared to 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 somewhat less, but were more satisfied with their jobs. When compared with graduates surveyed two years ago the more recent graduates were earning slightly less, but were similarly satisfied with most aspects of their jobs.

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

- Opportunities for institutional support and financial aid.
- Faculty support/concern and opportunities to interact with faculty.
- Opportunities to develop communication and interpersonal skills.

Areas of least satisfaction included:

- Library holdings/services.
- Opportunities to participate in field experience.
- Relevance of internship/thesis for current job.

This pattern of satisfaction levels was very similar to that in the previous survey of graduates.

Some potential program development activities include:

- Improving new student orientation and advisement procedures.
- Increasing field experience opportunities.
- Increasing funding for guest speakers and presentations.

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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.

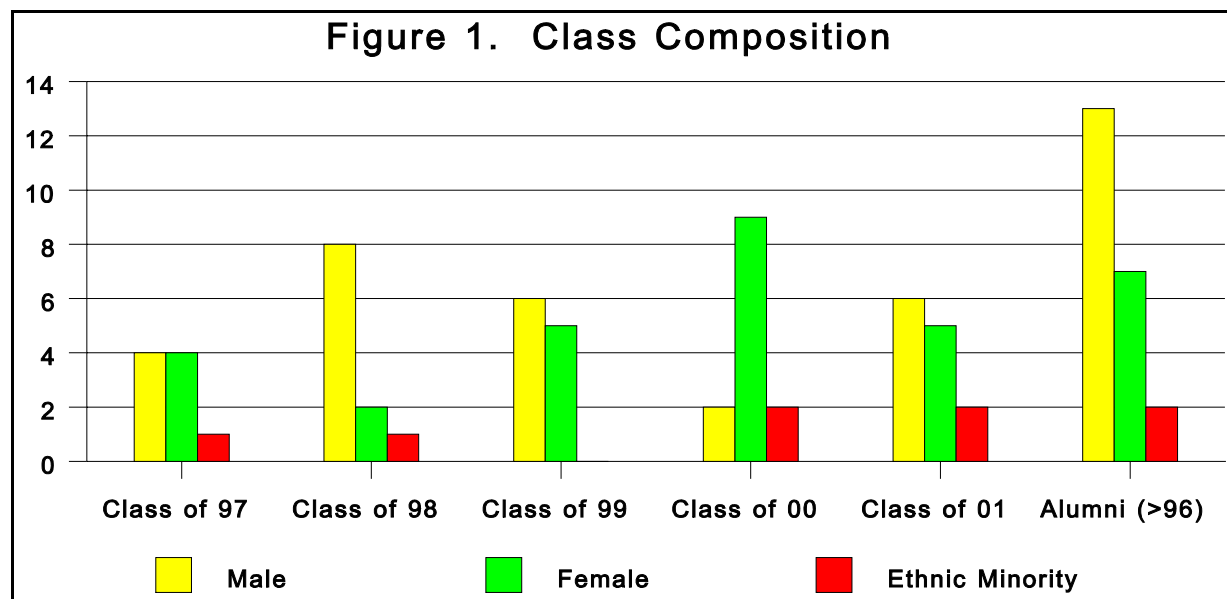
4. Developing communication and interpersonal competence necessary for successful functioning in organizations.

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., Center for Assessment and Instructional Support, Office of Career Services, Human Resources, Student Affairs, Office of Academic Achievement, TRIO Programs, etc.). As described below, this high level of institutional support has greatly enhanced the program's ability to attract and enroll a talented and diverse group of students.

#### The Students and Alumni

Over forty percent of the students in the last five classes have come from out-of-state and over 70% have come from outside southwest Missouri. These students have come from as far north as Canada and Wisconsin, as far south as Louisiana and Alabama, as far west as New Mexico, and as far east Virginia. Some of the schools from which the program's students have graduated include the University of Wisconsin, the University of Nebraska, Louisiana State University, Illinois State University, the University of New Mexico, Wittenberg College (in Ohio), Evansville University (in Indiana), Tuskegee University (in Alabama) and St Mary's (in Texas), to name but a few. Descriptions and statistics for the first three classes to graduate students (the classes of '94, '95, and '96) can be found in a previous report (Beatty & Fischer, 1997), with the exception of one student from the class of '96 who graduated after the earlier report was written and who is included in this report. What follows is a description of those who have subsequently enrolled and graduated (students in the classes of '97, '98, '99, '00, and '01).

Six of the eight who enrolled in the fall of 1995 (the class of '97) graduated and two withdrew from the program; of the eight who enrolled in 1995, four were male, four were female, one was an ethnic minority, and none were over the age of 40. All of the 10 who enrolled in 1996 (the class of '98) graduated; of these, two were female, eight were male, one



was an ethnic minority, and none were over 40. Three of the 11 who enrolled in 1997 (the class of '99) have graduated, but none in time to be included in this survey; another three members of this class are still enrolled and five have withdrawn from the program. The composition of this class ('99) was six males, five females, no ethnic minorities, and one over the age of 40. Of the 20 who have graduated since the last report, 13 are male, seven are female, two are ethnic minorities and none are over 40. Figure 1 displays some of these data.

Looking at the last two classes to enroll, in 1998 there were 31 applicants; 25 of these were accepted and 11 enrolled. Of those who enrolled in 1998 (the class of '00), two were male, nine were female, two were ethnic minorities and two were over 40. In 1999 (the class of '01) there were 27 applicants; 23 of these were accepted and 11 enrolled. Of those who enrolled, six were male, five were female, two were ethnic minorities, and one is over 40. Some of these data are also displayed in Figure 1. The undergraduate GPA and composite GRE means for these last two classes to enroll are 3.41 and 1004, respectively. While the mean GPA is approximately

equal to that reported two years ago (3.40), the mean GRE is somewhat lower (it was 1065 two years ago).

The attrition rate for the program has been 23% (9 out of 40) over the four year time span covered by the classes of '97 to '00. This appears to be a fairly stable rate, in that we tend to lose about two students per class. Although this rate may seem high, there are several mitigating factors that warrant consideration. In particular, 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. 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.

### The Questionnaire and Survey

The survey of program graduates began during the spring semester (February) of 1999, which was the eighth year of program operations. This survey is 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 is to evaluate the program from the post-graduate perspective of its alumni. The administration and program faculty want to know how the graduates view their course work and related program experiences. The focus of this concern is upon program development — i.e., identifying areas of perceived strength and weakness. In addition, the administration, faculty and prospective applicants want 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 is upon salary, job satisfaction and how SMS graduates compare with those from other programs, nationwide. This was the second survey in what is an ongoing follow-up

evaluation effort designed to build a data base capable of answering questions of interest to many people, including prospective applicants, who want to know where our graduates work, how much they make, how well they like various aspects of their jobs, what they think about various aspects of the education and training they received, etc.

The questionnaire developed by Beatty & Fischer (1997) was minimally modified (i.e., dates changed) for use in the present effort. This was done, in part, to facilitate comparisons with the earlier data and data from a national survey conducted by the American Psychological Association (APA). The development and pilot testing of this instrument is described in the report of the first survey (see Beatty & Fischer, 1997). A copy of the questionnaire used in this survey is contained in Appendix A.

The questionnaire was sent to all those who had graduated since the last survey (n=17) at the time of the first mailing (February, 1999). A cover letter was included from the Program Coordinator describing the survey's purpose and how results would be used (see Appendix B). A self-addressed stamped envelope was provided for the return of questionnaires to the Psychology Department. A follow-up letter and questionnaire was sent approximately eight weeks after the first mailing to all those in the original list (see Appendix B). Twelve of the 17 questionnaires were returned by the end of June, which is a high response rate (71%) for this type of survey research. Seven of the returned questionnaires were from the class of '98, four were from the class of '97, and one was from the class of '96. One questionnaire was returned unopened because the graduate (a member of the class of '97) no longer lived at the address and the forwarding address had expired. Efforts to locate a valid address were unsuccessful.

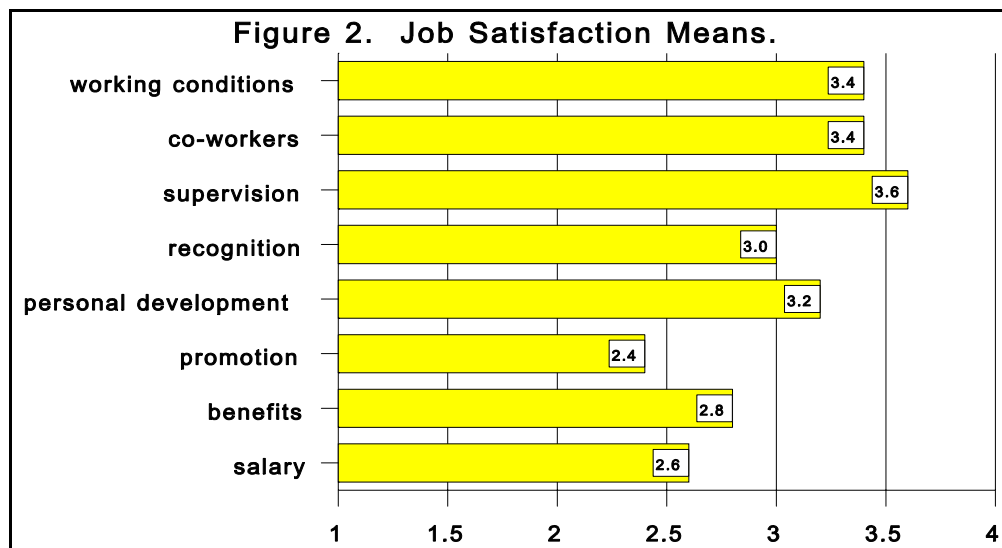
### Results for Employment

In the Employment Section, 92% (n=11) of respondents indicated that they were currently employed and 8% (n=1) indicated he/she was pursuing an advanced degree. Of those who were employed, all (100%) indicated they were employed in a position related to their graduate education. Fifty-five percent (n=6) indicated that their primary employment was in a corporate setting, 18% (n=2) indicated a small business setting, 18% (n=2) indicated a municipal government setting, and 9%(n=1) indicated a non-profit agency. Twenty-seven percent (n=3)

were employed in Missouri, 18% (n=2) in California, 18% (n=2) in Tennessee, and 9% (n=1) in each of Kansas, Illinois, Louisiana, and Ohio. None indicated he/she had a secondary employment setting. Although more graduates were employed outside Missouri than when last surveyed (75% v. 45%), the employment settings were similar to those surveyed two years ago.

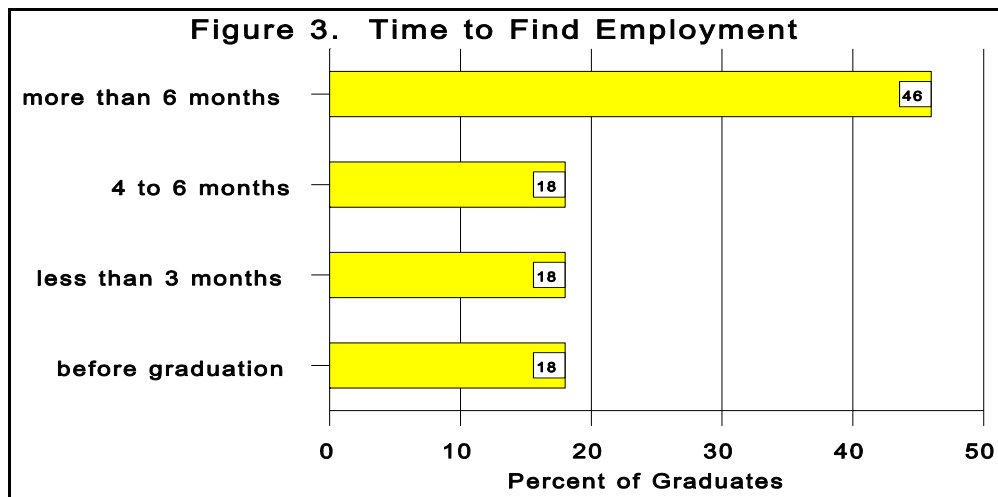
When describing their primary employment, respondents indicated they worked between 40 and 55 hours per week, with a mean of 44 hours per week. Respondents indicated they had been employed from 1 to 10 months in their current jobs, with a mean tenure of 6.5 months. Salaries ranged from \$20,000 to \$47,500 per year, with a mean of \$30,500 and a median of \$30,000. Although time at work and tenure were similar to those surveyed two years ago, salaries were somewhat lower (\$30k v. 32.3k for median income; \$30.5k v. \$34.7k for mean income). Looking at all employed graduates in both groups (n=19), median income within two years of graduation is \$31,000 and mean income is \$32,275.

Eighty-two percent (n=8) of the employed respondents indicated that their jobs were commensurate with their levels of experience, although only 36% (n=4) said their jobs were commensurate with their levels of training. Sixty-four percent (n=7) said that they would prefer a more challenging position. Although a higher percentage indicated their experience is commensurate with their jobs than those in the previous survey, a higher percentage also said



they would prefer a more challenging position than those in the previous survey.

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 five of the eight items. Overall, graduates expressed greatest satisfaction with supervision, coworkers, and working conditions; they were least satisfied with their opportunities for promotion, salaries and benefits. Compared with the last survey, these graduates are more satisfied with their supervisors, less satisfied with their opportunities for promotion, and very similar on all other aspects of their jobs.



With respect to the length of time since graduation it took graduates to find their current jobs, 55% (n=6) reported finding their current position within 6 months of completing their degree requirements, and 45% (n=5) in more than 6 months. It should be noted, however, that respondent’s “current position” was not always their first job (e.g., it was the second or third job for several from the class of ‘96); consequently these numbers should not be interpreted as representing the length of time it takes graduates to find their *first* jobs. Nevertheless, the graduates in this sample took longer to find their present jobs than those in the last survey. Some of 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. Opportunities for institutional support (graduate assistantships) (M = 4.00)
2. Opportunities for financial aid (M=3.67)
3. Faculty support and concern for my well-being (M = 3.50)
4. Opportunities to interact with faculty (M = 3.50)

Graduates were least satisfied with library resources facilities, opportunities for field experience, and the relevance of internship/thesis to their current jobs. Items receiving the lowest ratings include:

1. Quality of library holdings and services for the program (M = 1.92)
2. Opportunities to participate in field experience (M = 2.33)
3. Relevance of internship/thesis to current job (M=2.83)

It should be noted that the “relevance of internship/thesis” item had the largest variance of all the 25 items in this section of the questionnaire. An examination of the distribution of responses revealed that about two-thirds reported being “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the relevance of their internship/thesis, while about a third were “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied.” This result underscores the varied experiences students have in this aspect of the program. Table I displays means and standard deviations for items in this section.

Table I. Means and standard deviations for program experience items.

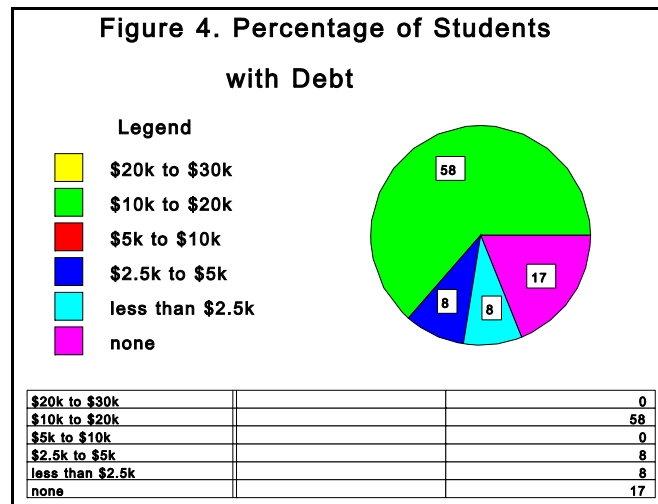
Items	M	SD
1. Quality of instruction in my classes	3.33	.49
2. Faculty support and concern for my well-being	3.50	.52
3. Student support and concern for my well-being	3.25	.62
4. Opportunities to interact with faculty	3.50	.52

Items	M	SD
5. Opportunities to participate in research	3.08	.67
6. Opportunities to participate in field experience	2.33	.89
7. Opportunities for institutional support (graduate assistantship)	4.00	.00
8. Opportunities for financial aid (loans)	3.67	.49
9. Rigor of academic standards fostered by the faculty	3.33	.49
10. Rigor of academic standards fostered by the students	2.92	.51
11. Quality of initial contacts with the program during the application process	3.09	.70
12. Quality of printed information about the program	3.00	.00
13. Quality of library holdings and services for the program	1.92	.79
14. Quality of computer support for my research and course work	3.17	.72
15. Quality of academic advisement I received	3.33	.65
16. Satisfaction with course offerings and times scheduled	3.25	.62
17. Satisfaction with comprehensive exams	3.25	.75
18. Relevance of core courses to my current job	3.08	.90
19. Relevance of I/O topics courses to my current job	3.00	.95
20. Relevance of internship/thesis experiences to my current job	2.83	1.19
21. Opportunities to develop research and statistical skills for job analysis, performance appraisal, the measurement of individual differences, program development and evaluation	3.08	.51
22. Opportunities to develop a knowledge base concerning contextual influences on behavior such as social influence, job design, training and development	3.25	.45
23. Opportunities to develop an understanding of the philosophical, ethical, and legal issues related to the practice of applied psychology	3.25	.62
24. Opportunities to develop the communication skills and interpersonal competence necessary for successful functioning in organizations	3.42	.51
25. Overall program quality	3.33	.65

Note: 1=Very Dissatisfied; 2=Dissatisfied; 3=Satisfied; 4=Very Satisfied.

Overall, the pattern of results for this section of the questionnaire is very similar to the results in the previous survey. Statistical tests revealed that none of the item means from the two samples were significantly different. However, there were some changes in item means that may warrant consideration. In the first survey only satisfaction with library holdings was lower than satisfaction with computer support. The opening of a Psychology Department computer lab in the spring of 1977, coupled with the placement of two state-of-the-art computers in the graduate student office that same year, resulted in this item dropping off the “least satisfied” list of items. In addition, the recent survey found that students were more satisfied with their opportunities for institutional support, even though this was one of the items on the “most satisfied” list in the first survey (this item was unanimously rated 4=“very satisfied” in the second survey). Finally, graduates in the second survey expressed less satisfaction with opportunities to participate in research than those in the first survey (although this difference was not statistically significant).

In response to questions involving debt, 83% (n=10) of the graduates indicated that they had accumulated some debt that was directly related to their graduate education. Of these, most



indicated the amount of accumulated debt was between ten and twenty thousand dollars. The percentage of respondents and their corresponding levels of debt are presented in Figure 4. This group of graduates accumulated substantially more debt than earlier graduates; there were none with more than \$10k of debt in the first survey, compared to over half with at least \$10k in the

second survey. Given that costs and the level of institutional support did not change appreciably in the interim these results are surprising and somewhat puzzling.

In response to the open-ended questions, graduates described some of the more satisfying, worthwhile aspects of the program. Access to faculty, small class sizes, faculty guidance and support for their educational and professional development, and opportunities to develop close, personal and professional relationships with both faculty and other students 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 involved increasing opportunities for field experience and applied projects. Several respondents thought there was too much emphasis upon theory in certain courses and not enough emphasis upon applications. Another theme involved differential treatment and the perception that certain students were favored or disliked by certain faculty.

Some of the changes the graduates suggested were the inclusion of certain topics in established classes or the addition of new classes. The topics/classes cited include employment/labor law, compensation and benefits, computer skills related to research methods and statistics, and a greater emphasis upon applications/real-world projects (validation research and job analysis). Several graduates mentioned increasing opportunities to interact with practitioners (more invited speakers and guest professionals) and providing more/better opportunities for internship and practicum experiences. Increasing the diversity of both the students and faculty was also recommended. A compendium of all comments can be found in Appendix C.

### Comparisons with APA Data

Mean and median salary data were obtained for respondents to a national survey of masters level I/O practitioners conducted in 1997 by the American Psychological Association (APA; see Auguste, Wicherski, & Kohout, 1999). These data were compared with the salary data obtained from SMS alumni. The results indicate that APA respondents had salaries that were somewhat higher than SMS graduates (see Table II). This is a surprising result in that there were no salary differences between APA's national sample and SMS alumni two years ago (see

Beatty & Fischer, 1997). Perhaps the present difference is the result of differences in the employment settings of respondents in the two samples. In particular, the APA sample included more respondents in consulting and business settings than the SMS sample, where the majority was employed in corporate settings.

Table II. Salary comparisons between SMS graduates and APA respondents

<b>SMS</b>	<b>Statistics</b>	<b>APA</b>
\$30,000 \$30,500 11	Median Mean Sample Size	\$36,000 \$40,566 67

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, about the same percentage of SMS graduates as APA respondents indicated their jobs were "in field" (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 training, and a greater percentage of SMS graduates said they would prefer a more challenging position. A higher percentage of SMS graduates said they would prefer to remain in their current position for personal reasons.

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

<b>SMS</b>		<b>APA</b>
<b>% Agreement</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>% Agreement</b>
0	The job is not in my field.	4
0	The job is not commensurate w/ my experience.	9
45	The job is not commensurate w/ my training.	17
36	I would prefer a more challenging job.	14
18	I prefer to remain in this job for personal reasons.	8

[Note: The *n*'s for the APA data displayed in Tables III to V ranges from 464 to 475, 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 11 -- all those who are employed.]

SMS graduates indicated higher levels of satisfaction than did the APA survey participants in all facets of their jobs except for the opportunity for promotion. The higher levels

for SMS graduates were especially evident 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

<b>SMS</b>		<b>APA</b>
<b>Mean Rating</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean Rating</b>
2.64	Salary	2.44
2.82	Benefits	2.07
2.36	Opportunities for promotion	2.55
3.18	Opportunities for personal development	2.03
3.00	Opportunities for recognition	2.24
3.55	Supervisor	1.93
3.36	Co-Workers	1.73
3.36	Working Conditions	2.03

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 their current 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

<b>SMS</b>		<b>APA</b>
<b>% Agreement</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>% Agreement</b>
18	Before completing degree requirements	44
18	Within 3 months after completing requirements	28
18	4 - 6 months after completing requirements	11
46	> 6 months after completing requirements	17

More SMS graduates (83%) indicated having debt directly related to graduate education than APA respondents (58%). The specific amount of cumulated debt differed as well. The greatest percentage of SMS graduates (70%) indicated \$11,001 - \$20,000 of debt, while the corresponding percentage of APA respondents was substantially lower (39%). However, there

was a greater percentage of APA respondents who accumulated larger amounts of indebtedness (14% versus 0% with over \$30k). These data are presented in Table VI.

Table VI. Amount of debt for SMS graduates and APA respondents

<b>SMS</b>		<b>APA</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>Amount of Debt</b>	<b>%</b>
20	\$5k or less	9
0	\$6k to \$10k	26
70	\$11k to \$20k	39
10	\$21k to \$30k	13
0	over \$30k	14

### 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 a doctoral program. Of those employed, most were satisfied with their jobs, and few indicated they were seeking other employment. The graduates were employed by small businesses or corporations in jobs with various titles and descriptions; however, most 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 \$30,500 per year. When compared with APA’s national survey of Master’s level practitioners, SMS graduates made somewhat less but were more satisfied with their jobs.

Overall, SMS graduates indicated high levels of satisfaction with their experiences in the program. The faculty and institution were viewed as supportive. 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 and opportunities for field experience. 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.

The desire for a more applied focus and more/better field experience may be a more troublesome problem to address. It is interesting to note that although "relevance of internship/thesis for current job" was one of the items on the most dissatisfied list, the percentage of dissatisfied SMS graduates is substantially (and statistically significantly) lower than those in APA's national survey (42% v. 58%). It is also interesting to note that although there was an increase in the number of applied projects incorporated into the curriculum since the last survey (especially in certain advanced seminar courses), this increase is *not* reflected in respondent ratings (the mean for the "opportunities for field experience" item in the '97 survey was 2.73; in the '99 survey it was 2.33).

One response to these results might be to treat them the way attitudes toward salary are often viewed: a person always wants more, no matter how much one gets — especially if the next person happens to get a little more than you on occasion. Because of the graduates' occupational successes, one might conclude that the applied knowledge and field experience which students currently receive is sufficient, and that dissatisfaction is primarily due to the social comparisons students make, coupled with 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 (and the program may have to accept a level of dissatisfaction in this area).

On the other hand, one might respond to this survey result by asking why faculty do not continue to incorporate more field experience and be more applied in their focus 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 that 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. As suggested in the last evaluation report, 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 (and thereby reduce his/her semester load by a course). 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. The value of guest speakers was mentioned by several, along with the need to do more of this. While we continue to seek funding for these activities, this issue may ultimately be like the desire for more field experience; it is unlikely we will be able to afford more than one or two outside presenters per semester and it is unlikely this will satisfy the level of students' desire for these activities. Nevertheless, we plan to continue our efforts in this regard.

The calls for more emphasis on practical issues in some classes and the desire for new classes that address employment law, pay roll, and benefits may underscore a need to better orient new students. When the first survey revealed that many of our graduates who are employed in HR generalist positions felt deficient in these areas we identified courses in other graduate programs that address these topics. In particular, a compensation course in the Management Department (MGT 546) and a labor law course in the Finance and General Business Department (RIL 531) focus upon these topics. This information was incorporated into printed documents (recommended course schedules) that are a part of the materials given to new students prior to enrollment. It was assumed that students whose career goals lie in this direction would avail themselves of these opportunities and take these courses. However, it appears that some (if not many) students, and perhaps their advisors, are not aware that the topics covered in these courses — especially the compensation course — will be useful to those seeking employment as HR generalists. This suggests that we need to redesign our orientation procedures and insure that both students and advisors are aware of these opportunities.

On the other hand, as disappointing as this prospect may be to the faculty, some of the dissatisfaction expressed in response to the open ended questions (too much focus on theory, too little on applications and practical issues; the need to cover more topics like compensation and employment law; the need for more field experience) may stem from the failure of some graduates to appreciate and accept the fundamental differences between an I/O Psychology program and MBA or HRM programs. It may be that we need to do a better job of underscoring the fundamental differences between the scientist-practitioner training model and KSA objectives that distinguish a classically designed masters program in I/O Psychology from the training models and KSA objectives of typical MBA and HRM programs. It may also be that this dissatisfaction means we need to do a better job of selecting applicants and insuring that the personal/career goals of those offered admission are congruent with the basic design of our program and its objectives. One will be dissatisfied with an automobile, even if it is a very good automobile, if one wanted a boat to begin with.

A few students expressed perceptions of inequity 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 treated them unfairly. Consequently, faculty may need to be more sensitive to differential or preferential treatment issues in the future. However, as was stated in an earlier evaluation report (Beatty & Fischer, 1997), 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 that student's mentor.

Finally, a few graduates expressed the need for more assistance with job placement and help in making the transition from school to work. As suggested in the previous report, this is an issue that may fade as the program produces more graduates and a more extensive alumni network develops. The data clearly support this proposition; considerably fewer respondents in this survey mentioned the need for more job placement help.

## References

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Appendix A

The Graduate Alumni Survey Questionnaire

## Graduate Alumni Survey

The purpose of this survey is to help us evaluate the Master's Program in Industrial/Organizational Psychology. We are particularly interested in learning about your post-graduate work experiences and what you think about your graduate education now that you have finished the program. The two parts of this survey should take 25-30 minutes to complete. Your responses are essential to our evaluation effort.

**I. Employment.** Please read each question and mark the best response.

1. What is your CURRENT status?

- 1. Currently employed
- 2. Currently employed, but seeking other employment
- 3. Not currently employed, but seeking employment
- 4. Not currently employed and not seeking employment
- 5. Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

2. If you are currently enrolled in school, please indicate the following:

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Program: \_\_\_\_\_

If not full-time, how many credit-hours do you take: \_\_\_\_\_ per \_\_\_\_\_ (semester or quarter)

3. If not currently employed, how long have you been seeking employment?

- 1. 0-3 months
- 2. 4-6 months
- 3. More than 6 months.

If you are *not* employed, skip to Part II; if you are employed, please answer the following questions. If you have more than one employer, answer the following questions for your *primary* employer (the job at which you spend the most time).

4. Employment Setting (**Mark one response**)

- 1. University: Four-Year College
- 2. University: Two-Year College
- 3. Self-employed
- 4. Private research organization or lab
- 5. Government research organization or lab
- 6. Corporation
- 7. Small Business
- 8. Criminal Justice System
- 9. Military Service
- 10. Federal Government Agency
- 11. State Government Agency
- 12. Local Government Agency
- 13. Other (**Please specify**): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Organization (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Description/Duties: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Hours per week you work (Ave.): \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been here? \_\_\_\_\_

If this is a full-time position, please indicate in thousands of dollars the current amount of salary you receive (*e.g., your salary for the 1999 fiscal year*). If you are self-employed, indicate in thousands of dollars your net income (*i.e., your total income after deducting business expenses*) for the previous 12 months.

\$\_\_\_\_\_,000.00

If this is not a full-time position (*less than 35 hours per week*) please indicate the amount you currently receive and the rate at which you are paid: \$\_\_\_\_\_.00 per \_\_\_\_\_ **OR** \_\_\_\_\_

5. To what extent do you believe your current primary position makes use of your training and experience?

**(Mark all that apply)**

The job is in my field.

The job is not in my field.

The job is commensurate with my level of experience.

The job is not commensurate with my level of experience.

The job is commensurate with my level of training.

The job is not commensurate with my level of training.

I would prefer a more challenging position.

I prefer to remain in this position for personal reasons.

6. Please indicate how satisfied you are with each of the following aspects of your current primary position.

**(Mark one response for each aspect.)**

**1 = Very Dissatisfied**

**2 = Dissatisfied**

**3 = Satisfied**

**4= Very Satisfied**

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Salary

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Opportunities for recognition

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Benefits

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Opportunities for promotion

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. Co-workers

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Opportunities for personal development

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. Working conditions

7. When did you find your present employment (*i.e., accepted the job offer*)?

1. Already employed in this position when I started my graduate program.
2. Before completing requirements for graduate degree.
3. Within 3 months after completing requirements.
4. 4-6 months after completing requirements
5. More than 6 months after completing requirements.

8. If you currently have more than one job, please answer the following:

Name of Organization (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Description/Duties: \_\_\_\_\_

Hours per week you work (Ave.): \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been here? \_\_\_\_\_

Current Salary/Rate of Pay: \_\_\_\_\_

9. If you have had other jobs since you graduated, please answer the following questions about each of these jobs, starting with the most recent. Attach additional pages if necessary.

Name of Organization (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Description/Duties: \_\_\_\_\_

Starting Salary: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Began: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Left: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for leaving (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

**II. Education.** These questions are designed to assess different aspects of your experience in graduate school. Please select the response that **BEST** reflects your feelings about each of the following:

1 = Very Dissatisfied	2 = Dissatisfied	3 = Satisfied	4 = Very Satisfied
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Quality of instruction in my classes		<input type="checkbox"/> 12. Quality of printed information about the program	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Faculty support and concern for my well-being		<input type="checkbox"/> 13. Quality of library holdings and services for the program	
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Student support and concern for my well-being		<input type="checkbox"/> 14. Quality of computer support for my research and course work	
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Opportunities to interact with the faculty		<input type="checkbox"/> 15. Quality of academic advisement I received	
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Opportunities to participate in research		<input type="checkbox"/> 16. Satisfaction with prescribed course schedule (course offerings and times scheduled)	
<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Opportunities to participate in field experience		<input type="checkbox"/> 17. Satisfaction with comprehensive exams	
<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Opportunities for institutional support (graduate assistantships)		<input type="checkbox"/> 18. Relevance of core courses to my current job	
<input type="checkbox"/> 8. Opportunities for financial aid (loans)		<input type="checkbox"/> 19. Relevance of I/O topics to my current job	
<input type="checkbox"/> 9. Rigor of academic standards fostered by the faculty		<input type="checkbox"/> 20. Relevance of internship/thesis opportunities to my current job	
<input type="checkbox"/> 10. Rigor of academic standards fostered by the students			
<input type="checkbox"/> 11. Quality of initial contacts with the program during the information seeking and application process			

<b>1 = Very Dissatisfied</b>	<b>2 = Dissatisfied</b>	<b>3 = Satisfied</b>	<b>4 = Very Satisfied</b>
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- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>_____ 21. Opportunities to develop research and statistical skills for job analysis, performance appraisal, the measurement of job-related individual differences, program development, and evaluation</p> <p>_____ 22. Opportunities to develop a knowledge base concerning important contextual influence on behavior, such as social influences, job design, training and development</p> | <p>_____ 23. Opportunities to develop an understanding of the philosophical, ethical, and legal issues related to the practice of applied psychology</p> <p>_____ 24. Opportunities to develop the communication skills and interpersonal competence necessary for successful functioning in organizations</p> <p>_____ 25. Overall quality of this program</p> |
|---|---|

26. Month/Year Graduated: \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

27. Upon receipt of your graduate degree, did you have any debt directly related to your graduate education?

- YES
  NO

28. If YES, what was the level of your cumulative graduate debt at the time of graduation?

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$2,500 or less   | <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,001 - \$10,000  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$20,001 - \$30,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$2,501 - \$5,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$10,001 - \$20,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$30,001 or more    |

Please use the space below each question to make comments, observations, suggestions, etc. about the I/O program. Attach additional pages if necessary.

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

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

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

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## Appendix B

### The Cover Letters

2 February 1999

Dear Alumni:

The Masters program in Industrial/Organizational Psychology is in its seventh year and the number of our graduates continues to grow. As some of you may know, we try to survey alumni within two years of graduation. The purpose of this effort is to collect information about your post-graduate work experiences and to give you a chance to tell us what you think about the program itself.

Although we collect program evaluation information while you are here (remember the course/instructor ratings you made at the end of each semester?), that information reflects a student perspective. The questionnaire included with this letter asks you to make summary judgments that span courses and experiences. The questionnaire also contains items that address aspects of your program-related experiences that are not included in the semester appraisals. Some of the items have been taken verbatim from a questionnaire the American Psychological Association uses to survey graduates nationwide. We use the APA items so that we can compare your experiences and achievements with those from other programs.

Given the number of graduates being surveyed it is difficult to assure your anonymity. Although you are not asked to identify yourself by name, we do ask you to tell us when you graduated, what you do, and where you work (city/state). We want to know when you graduated so that we can examine cohort effects and assess changes made during the time you were here. We want to know what you do and where you live so we can construct a demographic profile of our graduates and answer questions applicants often ask (like: Where do your graduates work? What do they do? How much do they make?). All that I can assure you is that I will be the only person handling the raw data and that I will only include summary data or appropriately disguised responses in any results that are reported to others. Each of you will receive a copy of the report that I write.

Your participation in this effort is extremely important. Please take time to give us your considered thoughts on all of the items in the questionnaire and then return it promptly using the pre-paid envelope. If you would like any additional information regarding this survey, please contact me at (417) 836-4164 or by email at the address below.

Sincerely,

Donald L Fischer, Coordinator  
Masters Program in I/O Psychology  
donaldfischer@mail.smsu.edu

enclosure

24 May 1999

Dear Alumni:

In early March, well over two months ago, I sent those of you who graduated from the I/O Masters program within the last two years a questionnaire with a cover letter that began something like this: “As some of you may know, we try to survey alumni within two years of graduation. The purpose of this effort is to collect information about your post-graduate work experiences and give you a chance to tell us what you think about the program itself.” To my angst and dismay *only seven* of the sixteen questionnaires I sent out have been returned and, since it’s been over a month since I’ve received any, I think it’s unlikely any of the nine recalcitrant folks intend to send any in without further coercion or appeal.

Okay; for you nine who are too busy to respond, here’s the appeal: *Puhleeze, puhleeze, puhleeze* help with this program evaluation effort. Last time we got 11 out of 13 alumni to respond — can I prick your competitive natures by challenging your group to beat the response rate of the first group? How about if we promise you a t-shirt along with a copy of the completed report? A coffee mug? Eternal gratitude??? If this appeal seems desperate, it’s because it is. Your opinions and experiences are important — they will help us identify areas of strength and target weaknesses that need improvement. Your information will help us recruit future students. Here’s another quote from the first cover letter: “Although we collect program evaluation information while you are here (remember the course/instructor ratings you made at the end of each semester?) . . . [t]he questionnaire included with this letter asks you to make summary judgments that span many courses and program experiences. . . . We want to know what you do and where you live so we can construct a profile of our graduates and answer questions that applicants often ask (like: Where do your graduates work? What do they do? How much do they make? What do they think about the program?).” To the extent fewer of you respond, our results will be skewed and biased — less useful.

If you are one of the nine who is holding out, please try to find the time it takes to fill out the questionnaire and return it. No kidding, this is very important and I want to do anything I can to encourage you to participate. If you are one of the seven who *did* return your questionnaire, pat yourself on the back and think about ways you might put some peer pressure on your colleagues who haven’t done so (just kidding). As always, call or email me if you want any additional information (or just want to complain about this second request).

Sincerely,

Donald L Fischer, Coordinator  
Masters Program in I/O Psychology  
donaldfischer@mail.smsu.edu  
enclosure

## Appendix C

### Responses to the Open-Ended Questions

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

Looking back over the time that I spent at Southwest Missouri State University, I would have to say that the most satisfying aspect of my experience was getting through. The environment in Springfield was definitely not the most conducive for my learning. Honestly though, I would have to say that I really enjoyed the size of the classes that I had. With small numbers in each, I was able to get direct student-teacher contact whenever I needed it. That was definitely a benefit for me! On a personal note, I would also have to say that the relationship I had with my advisor was the most beneficial aspect of my entire graduate career. Without the continuing guidance, coercing, tutoring, etc., from my advisor, I don't know if I would have chosen to continue the program. Again, the small number of students directly affected this, allowing for more individual contact between advisor and student.

The amount of information I was able to gain, through the wide-range of courses given, allowed for some understanding in almost all areas of the field of I/O Psychology. Which has been an advantage for me, in that I now have a broad foundation of knowledge to begin my career. As where others may only be fluent in one particular aspect of the field, I now have some knowledge in most.

The most satisfying aspects of my experience were the interactions with the faculty. These experiences were a major part of my professional development and preparation for \_\_\_\_\_. Do not lose this aspect of the I/O program.

The one on one contact I had with my advisor. He showed me a great deal of passion for advancing the field of psychology. It made me want to work that much harder. He pushed me to do many things I wouldn't have otherwise done. I liked having the option to do both an internship/thesis. Mostly, being able to relate to and learn from the faculty's life experiences.

The ability of the faculty to challenge the students. The faculty's genuine concern for students and their desire to see students succeed.

This is probably the most difficult item to address in that most of my experience as a graduate student was positive and worthwhile. I would like to address each aspect, as I view them, individually.

Social Interaction: One of the most satisfying aspects of the program was the chance to be part of a group of individuals that, for the most part, I came to like and respect. I learned a great deal about working as a team and about I/O Psychology by interacting with the individuals in that group. We supported each other, learned from each other, and continue to share information and our lives with each other even now. I believe that my experiences as a graduate student would have been much less than it was had that group cohesiveness not existed.

Student/Professor Interaction: Another aspect of the program that I consider to be very positive was the interaction between the professors and the students in, and out of, the classroom. The students were treated with the respect accorded to professional colleagues, something I

greatly appreciated. The professors made every effort possible to be available to the students, both in the role of advisor and in the role of professional resource. I still feel comfortable contacting my professors for their knowledge, experience, and support. Knowing that I can call or otherwise contact these I/O experts is a great source of comfort to me as I attempt to navigate the still-murky waters of the corporate world.

The quality of the psychology staff also made a tremendous difference in the experience I had as a graduate student. I have to admit that I was pleasantly surprised to discover that the SMSU psychology staff was composed of professors that covered an extraordinary range of experience, interests, and educational backgrounds. The quality of instruction and variety of views to which the students were exposed truly made my experience as a graduate student a valuable one. For the most part, I considered the content of the information presented to us in class to be fairly comprehensive and of overall high quality. As part of a professional I/O group that is composed of people with both master's and doctoral degrees, I feel that I sometimes lack complete knowledge of certain areas in the field. This lack is due in part to the nature of the programs (2 v. 4 years) and in part to my own personal inability to sometimes recall the information that has been presented to me. I feel that, given the opportunity to repeat my tenure as a student, I would actively search out other classes which I could take to expand my academic knowledge base, even though doing so would extend my tenure.

The structure of the program was also somewhat dynamic as staff changes were made and professors fine-tuned their courses and agendas. I believe that, at times, the program lacked continuity. Overall, however, I was satisfied that the information being presented to me was important and relevant to the practical application of I/O psychology. I would like to particularly congratulate Dr. \_\_\_ on his \_\_\_ class. His class was one of the most challenging, both for his students and for himself, but also interesting and informational.

Professional Development/Practical Experience (Research and Applied): The opportunities to become involved in research were plentiful and varied within the program. Dr. \_\_\_ and Dr. \_\_\_, in particular, were always looking for assistance with their different research projects. Although not all of us were able to participate due to one type of constraint or another, the opportunities to do so were available. As students, we were also exposed to other professionals in the I/O field. We were encouraged to attend the annual SIOP meeting, which presents a forum where students can make contacts, find jobs, and interact with each other and the leaders of the I/O world. Although there were some instances where students failed to appreciate the importance and usefulness of such a forum, for the most part and for most of us it was a valuable experience. From time to time, other professionals would visit and speak of their experiences in practice and in their job search. Often entertaining, usually informative, these professionals offered quality insight into the world of applied I/O psychology. If possible, I think it would be a terrific idea to provide more of these type of opportunities for students in the program.

Available internships also provided opportunities for professional development, to lesser or greater degrees. My internship was especially valuable as a learning experience, in many different ways. As time passes and the list of contacts expands, more students will be able to experience high-quality internships in the field of I/O psychology. As a student in an I/O master's program, it is especially important to gain practical, applied experience in the field. I now have a much fuller understanding of this fact having conducted a fairly extended and comprehensive job search, and I feel confident that I also speak for my former classmates in this

matter.

The thesis option, which I did not personally explore, is another valuable developmental tool available to the students in the I/O program. It would be especially valuable to those students planning to continue their education in a doctoral program. Although I did not take the thesis option, I understand from those who did that it was particularly challenging and, therefore, a quality learning experience.

Other Available Resources: The first resource I would like to address is the content of Southwest Missouri State University's library. You will see more about this in the answer to the next question. However, despite all of the library's shortcomings, it was part of an adequate interlibrary loan system. I also appreciated the extended check-out times for graduate students.

Another research available specifically to I/O students was the I/O library on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor in Hill Hall. Although I rarely had occasion to visit this repository of knowledge, I know that it contained a great deal of information regarding specific tests and other material related to the I/O field. Overall, though, I think the professors had more up-to-date information in their own files and publications.

A third available resource was the Psychology Computer Lab on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor in Hall, in addition to the computers in the Graduate Office on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of Hill. The Internet access provided for the students opened a gateway to many different sources of information. As time passes, the Internet should grow to be an even more valuable tool for learning and information gathering, and should be utilized as such. Other computer support, such as SPSS for statistical analysis, also provided invaluable assistance for our academic efforts as I/O graduate students.

Financial Assistance (Graduate Assistantships): One of the really nice things about the I/O program and SMSU in general (I assume) is that graduate assistantships were generally readily available for those who applied. I especially appreciate the effort that the I/O staff made to ensure the first-year students an assistantship, a service not provided by most, if not virtually all, other programs or universities.

The internship that I completed was highly valuable to my personal and professional development. It not only taught me about human resources in an applied sense, but also provided interaction with an Human Resources professional who performed the sorts of tasks I expected to perform in my future job.

I gained, by my best count, 16 colleagues and friends who I intend to use as sources of information and enjoyment for as long as I can stay in contact.

Good faculty to student ratio. Developed personal and professional relationships that will last. Learned valuable information and techniques for my job.

Quality of relationships with faculty and students. Emphasis on applied/practical aspects of I/O in some classes. The things that I gained from my experience are those personal changes of growing up and growing into yourself.

1. Professors who are dedicated and available to assist with student development in and out of class. Even today, two of my mentors are dedicated to my development and assist me with current projects as well as assisting me in choosing a proper career path. I thank Dr. \_\_\_ and Dr.

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2. Variety of classes.
  3. Practicums that added to the relevance and application of I/O theories, principles, and practices. I think there still needs to be more.
  4. Availability of GAs and TAs.
  5. Small classes that facilitate individual attention.

Interpersonal contacts with faculty and students; internship opportunities; development of analytical skills; development of communication (both written and verbal) skills.

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

I can honestly say that the most frustrating thing about the program was the fact that the students began to feel as though it was a competition, as to who was going to succeed. The cliques that formed within our group began to make it difficult to learn as a group. Even though, I was not the most outgoing of the group, I feel that the smaller groups within our group began to lose focus of the idea of graduate school (or at least what I thought the idea was supposed to be), which was to succeed.

Furthermore, I feel that some of the faculty shouldn't have let their personal feelings about an individual get in the way of their performance opinions of an individual. Although I might have handled things a little different than what some of the instructors were used to, I feel that they were in no position to tell me that I was wrong, if in fact my way might have been just as effective (i.e., just because it may have been different than their opinions at the time). I feel that I am a fairly open-minded individual, however, I feel that some of the instructors were too quick to label me as close-minded since I tended not to follow the "norm". I am definitely finding out that it is not always the "norm" that gets things done, new ideas are always been looked for in the real world.

The fact that some members of the faculty did not back me or agree with me in some of my decisions, really concerned me at times. It is one thing to express concern for the welfare of one of the students, but it is another to specifically state that you disagree with a student's actions ("if they have nothing to do with the actual course material"). In other words, there were times when certain members of the faculty attempted to get a little involved with student affairs. I feel that no names need to be given at this point.

Not having more applicable/hands-on experiences. Payroll, benefits, job analysis, are core Human Resource functions that are asked for in nearly every job description I see. Why couldn't we do these things? We read and listened way too much instead of **doing**.

Lack of written/concrete guidelines, i.e., for comps, thesis.

Course Content: First of all, I would like to address the content of some classes. I feel that, as a terminal master's student, I would have appreciated the opportunity to apply more of my theoretical knowledge to real-world situations. Some of the courses have this experiential component built into the curriculum; however, even in those classes, I felt that we still lacked a certain degree of applied experience. I recognize and appreciate the need to pass on as much knowledge as possible in the admittedly short period of time allotted for our academic development, but I also feel there is a need for qualitatively equal time in which to address the practical application of our theoretical knowledge. Obviously, internships supply a tremendous opportunity to practice our skills, but I feel I would have benefitted even more had the opportunities to practice application in an academic setting been more readily available. I also feel that this is something that will develop through the growth and institutionalization of the I/O program and the practices therein.

Student Attendance at I/O Club Meetings: The second area I would like to address is

student attendance at meetings arranged by the I/O Club, of which all I/O Psychology students are actually members. Generally, the club meets for one of two reasons: either a fellow student is presenting material related to research or an internships, or a professional from another university or organization is presenting material of relevance to us. I realize and understand the incredibly, busy, hectic, schedules that graduate students keep; however, I also realize that these are fellow (I/O psychologists (and/or classmates!)) and deserve recognition and respect. Not only that, the people presenting probably have something to say that could be of interest and value to a graduate student. I know that some of you are saying to yourselves, “Hey, who does he think he is? He didn’t even attend all the sessions!” You are entirely correct and, in retrospect, I was entirely wrong not to make every effort to attend those meetings.

That \*\*\*\*\* Library: I was also frustrated with the library on a daily basis, but that’s not something directly related to the I/O program

I remember wishing that I could do more projects in outside companies (like we did in Organizational Psychology) rather than dealing with fabricated companies or cases in textbooks. I think that more real world experience and a little less study of theory would have been beneficial.

If reflection serves, comps coupled with the course load at that time of the spring was pretty frustrating.

Each professor had favorites. Some students had internships before others knew the opportunities existed. Fairness is definitely an issue, in and out of class.

I left a little disillusioned with the science and practicality of I/O. The “it’s not perfect, but what else do you have” response left me lacking.

1. Limited library holdings and resources.
2. One faculty member who was particularly petty.
3. Lack of contacts for positions after graduation (this is due to the relative newness of the program).
4. The end of semester faculty evaluations. I do not think that I really developed from these evaluations. If you are going to provide constructive developmental criticism, you need to work with the student in developing an action plan to remedy the deficiencies. I know we are professional students and we should take the initiative to correct any deficiencies, but we are also new to the field and may need some direction.

At many times I felt the focus leaned too much toward the theoretical. From my experience with SMS I/O students (past and present) most will enter the business world. Maybe more applications?

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

Actual changes that need to be made within the program need to start with a more diverse student population, then possibly a more diverse instructor population. I realize that these things are going to be hard to come by in Springfield, MO., but I definitely feel that it is necessary if you wish to have a successful program. I feel that if some of the concerns that I have mentioned prior to this are addressed, then the program will already be improving. I would have once said, that the program needs to provide a more specific path for students to follow if they wish, however, I feel that the broad informational path of the courses is very beneficial in the long run.

More library holdings related to the I/O field. More opportunities for applied experiences.

You need to somehow stimulate businesses to provide internships/applied experience to your students. This would be a powerful recruitment tool. This experience is the most applicable and realistic tool in a graduate getting their foot in the door. Immediately stress that students need to find and do an internship off campus!!

The program needs to offer more internship possibilities, as well as more professional networking contacts. Also a class on benefits and compensation may make other graduates more marketable in the HR area.

Build more flexibility into the program to make it more accessible to the “non-traditional” student.

I would like to see a greater focus on the practical application of theoretical or academic knowledge. This may also be a personal preference. My style of learning is generally hands-on. In particular, I think it would be of great value for the students to complete a validation study for Personnel Selection, including a job analysis, following the *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures*. I recently completed my first validation study for \_\_\_\_, and it was truly a learning experience. I would also like to see greater student attendance at the I/O Club informational meetings. Of course, the students need to see strong support on the part of the “upper management” if they’re going to buy into the concept of I/O Club meetings (leading by example?).

Professional Visitors: I think it would be beneficial to invite more outside professionals to speak with and work with the students, both in classroom settings (e.g., \_\_\_\_’s friend from \_\_\_\_) and in the I/O meetings. It was of great value to us as students to interact with these people and try to learn from their experiences (especially the masseuse \_\_\_\_ invited to our class!). Okay, now I’m getting a little silly. Seriously, though I truly believe that working with these people adds a valuable dimension to the graduate student experience.

Study Areas: Something that has always bothered me about SMSU was the lack of adequate room or areas in which to study, aside from one’s own quarters. Personally, I often find it more difficult to study at home than I would in a “neutral” area—too many potential distractions. It would be of inestimable added value to have a larger, quiet, possibly even

marginally comfortable area where graduate students might gather and study, either in a group or individually. The study lounge should also be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. I remember many occasions when I lamented the lack of such facilities during my studies at SMSU. I realize that this is something which may not fall under the auspices of the I/O Psychology Department, but I wanted to make known my thoughts on the subject.

Professionals from outside SMSU.

I think that there should be more practicum courses and a required internship (rather than a choice between internship and thesis). In addition, I think that courses should focus on more applied topics. The theories could be dealt with through more real-world activities/examples. I also feel that the program should be more supportive of/helpful with the very stressful job search process.

I would have liked to have more guest presentations. The faculty has some pretty lofty contacts in the I/O field. Pull those strings, man!

More opportunities to network. Better up front explanations of thesis, internship, seminar paper, comps.

It's hard to say. I think the program is a good one. The faculty was supportive and knowledgeable. Maybe you could give a more realistic picture of the world after school. It's hard being an adult, doing your job from 8-5, being responsible for everything.

1. Separate class dealing with Employment Law. Perhaps the ethics class could encompass more of the legal issues. Cal State San Bernardino has a class that resembles this if you would like an example.
2. More statistics - possibly one class covering ANOVA and one covering Regression. More training on using SPSS and/or SAS would be nice.
3. Class or discussion on social issues in the work place and the influence that I/O Psychology has on bringing about change.

At many times I felt the focus leaned too much toward the theoretical. From my experience with SMS, I/O students (past and present) most will enter the business world. Maybe more applications?