
■ **Study Abroad Assessment
Spring 2007 Programs**

**Terra Schehr
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Study Abroad Assessment Spring 2007 Programs

Introduction

The Office of International Programs partnered with the Office of Institutional Research to develop an assessment tool for study abroad programs. A survey instrument was developed that included items aimed at assessing the nature of students' experiences and satisfaction with their study abroad experience; the types of pedagogy used by faculty and the rigor of the program from the students' perspective; and the extent to which the student learned about the culture of their location. In spring of 2007, six programs participated in the assessment. Those programs are: Alcalá, Auckland, Belgium, Cork, Newcastle, and Rome. This report describes the overall findings from the assessment. Codebooks (frequency tables for all items) for individual programs are under separate cover and are available from the Office of Institutional Research.

Methodology

Assessment instruments were provided to each site director and students were asked to complete the assessment at the end of their program but before returning to the United States. The completed assessment forms were delivered to the Office of Institutional Research for processing and analysis.

The students completing the assessment were nearly equally divided between semester (54%) and year long (46%) programs. Nearly three-quarters of the students who completed the assessment were women and the vast majority of them were white.

A complete set of frequency tables for the overall assessment can be found in the codebook at the end of this document.

Executive Summary

- Most students on study abroad live in residence halls, take their courses in English, and are taught by non-American professors.
- Students in year-long study abroad programs tend to have more interaction with diverse groups than do students who are abroad for just one semester.
- Although their courses abroad were different from what they were used to and professors expected more of them, over one-third of students indicated that they studied less while abroad than they would normally have studied at Loyola.
- The study abroad experience caused students to feel like more well-rounded individuals.
 - o Overall, the study abroad experience has the greatest impact on students' understanding of their American identity.
 - o Students feel better prepared to interact and work with people from different cultures and lifestyles and they feel that their abroad experience made them more adaptable and comfortable with different and unexpected situations.

Detailed Findings

The majority of students (79%) had traveled outside of the United States before their study abroad experience. When asked if they were apprehensive about living abroad before they started their program, nearly two-thirds of students (64%) indicated that they were. An equal number reported that at the end of their program they felt that living abroad was one of the best parts of the program and an additional 33% indicated that although it was difficult at times, they “really enjoyed” living abroad.

Character of the Programs

Most (68%) of students lived in student residences or dorms while abroad. Overall, 27% of students reported that they lived with a host family; all of these students were on semester-long programs. Just over two-thirds of students indicated that all of their courses abroad were taught in English and this was more common among those students who were on year-long programs (86%) as opposed to a single semester program (51%). Conversely, having non-American professors was more common in the year-long programs than in the semester experience (78% of students in year-long programs and 58% of students in semester programs indicated that none of their professors were American).

Diversity

As seen in Figure 1, students in year-long programs tend to have more interaction with diverse groups than do students who are abroad for just one semester. Moreover, 24% of students indicated that their classmates in their abroad courses were mostly American; all of these students were on semester-long programs.

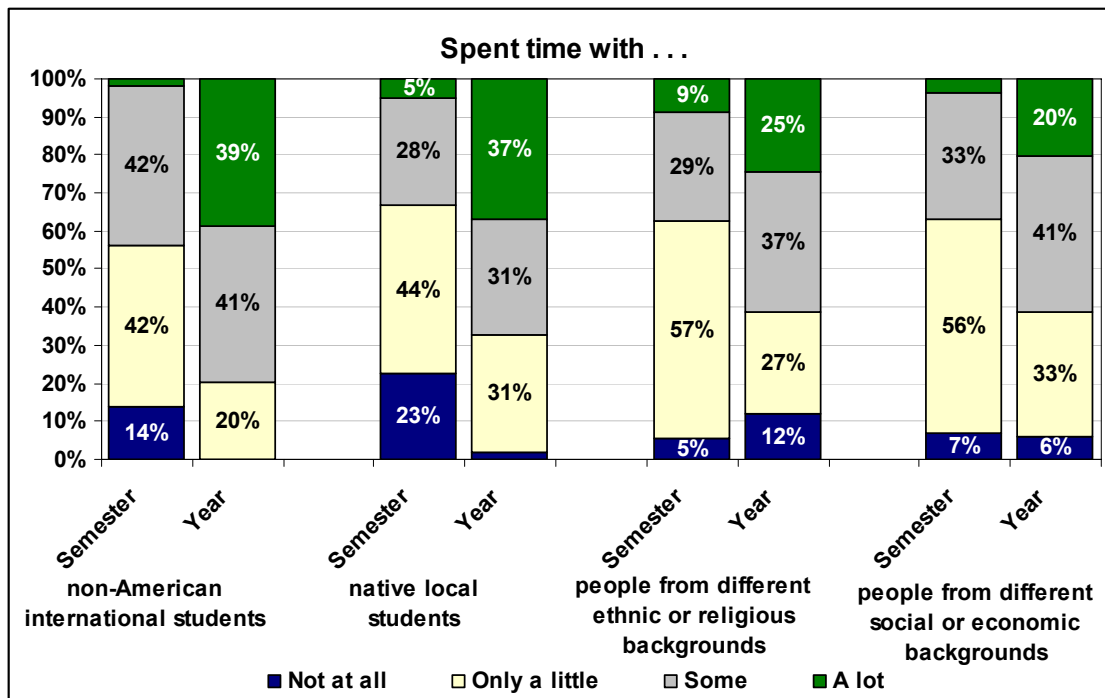


Figure 1. Extent to which students spent time with different groups while abroad

Academic Traditions

Only 2% of students reported that the courses they took abroad were *very similar* to courses they had taken at Loyola and just 9% said the material that they studied abroad was *very similar* to material they would “usually study at Loyola.” Although the courses and materials were different from what they were used to, over one-third of students (36%) indicated that they studied *less* while abroad than they would normally have studied at Loyola.

Faculty Expectations

Over two-thirds of students indicated that the professors in the study abroad program “expected [them] to be more independent and did not give [them] as many instructions on what or how [they] should study as professors at Loyola do.” Thirty percent of students stated that their “professors abroad expected [them] to have a stronger background in their field than [their] professors at Loyola.”

When asked to compare their study abroad experience to Loyola, almost half of all students said that their abroad courses had more demanding reading assignments. Student opinion was almost evenly split when asked about demanding writing assignments and the majority of students felt that the overall level of critical thinking and the intellectual demand abroad was comparable to Loyola. See Figure 2.

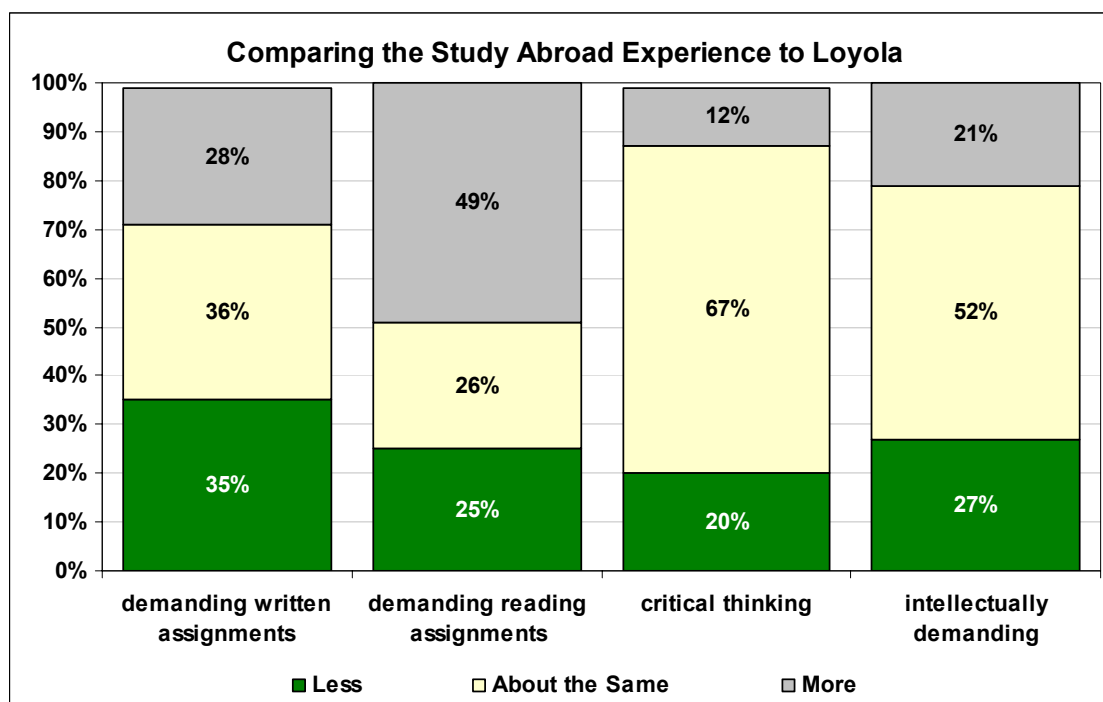
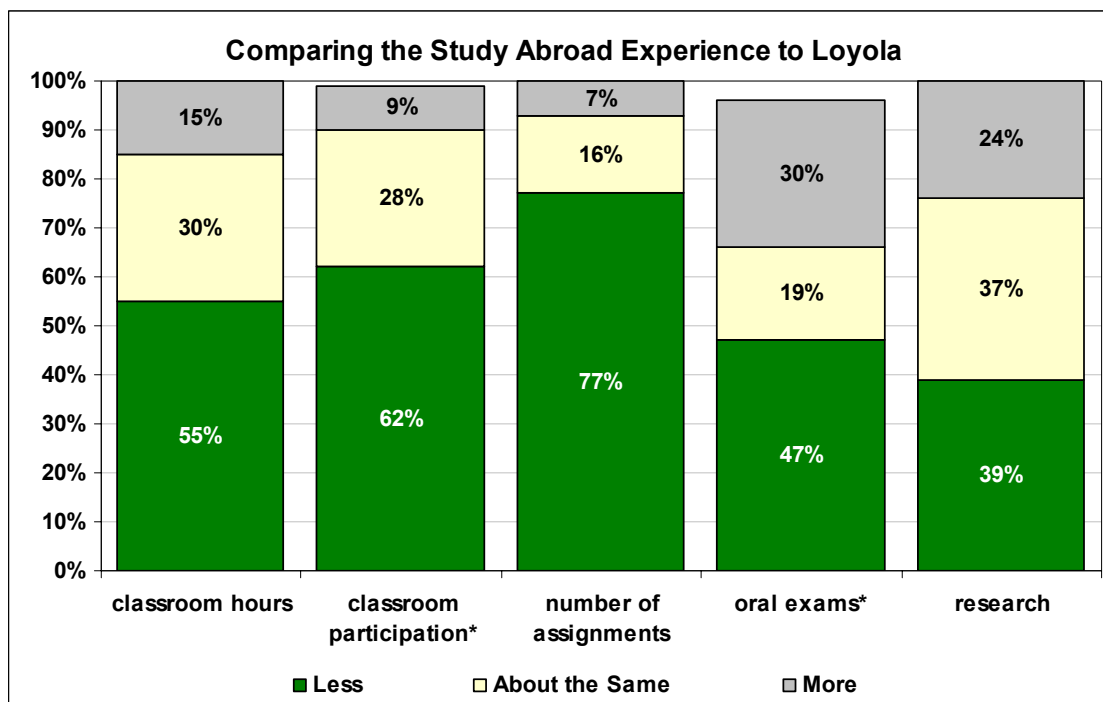


Figure 2. Comparing the level of academic challenge abroad to Loyola

Course Structure

When asked about the structure of courses and assignments, students felt that their study abroad courses were different from courses at Loyola. As seen in Figure 3, on the next page, abroad courses meet less frequently; are characterized by lower levels of class participation; have fewer assignments and oral exams; and, to some extent, have lower levels of research. Nearly one-third (31%) of respondents indicated that

there were many opportunities for learning “outside of the formal classroom setting;” 18% said there were few or no opportunities for learning outside of the classroom.



* The difference between the sum of responses and 100% represents students who did not answer the question

Figure 3. Comparing the structure of courses abroad to Loyola

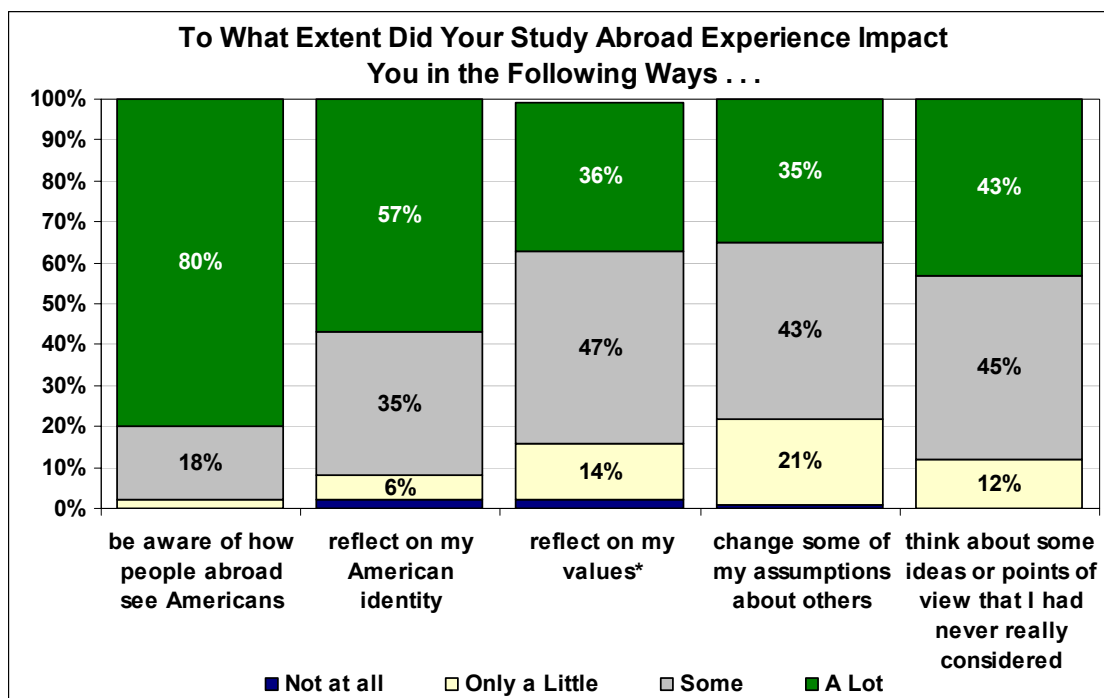
Outcomes

Seventy-one percent of students indicated that their experience abroad contributed to a *great extent* in making them a “better rounded person” and 27% indicated that their study abroad experience contributed *to some extent* in this area of development.

Justice and Openness

Nearly half of respondents (49%) indicated that they had a *lot* of “interesting discussions about cultural, social, or political differences” while abroad, an additional 39% stated that they had *some* conversations about these issues. As a result of their study abroad experience, 58% of students feel that they are “better prepared to interact with different people and lifestyles,” 55% are a *lot* “more comfortable working and living with people from other cultures or countries,” and 40% feel that they are a *lot* more comfortable when dealing with “very different people.”

Students were asked a series of questions about the extent to which their study abroad experience impacted their sense of self, their values, and how they view others and other points of view. Overall, the study abroad experience has the greatest impact on students’ understanding of their American identity. See Figure 4, next page.



* The difference between the sum of responses and 100% represents students who did not answer the question

Figure 4. Impact of study abroad on students' self and other awareness

Wellness and Adaptability

As seen in Figure 5, on the next page, students indicated that their abroad experience made them more adaptable and comfortable with different and unexpected situations. At the end of their study abroad just 22% of students stated that when they travel they "like to plan and know what will happen every day" and 68% of students stated that their travel style depends on the situation.

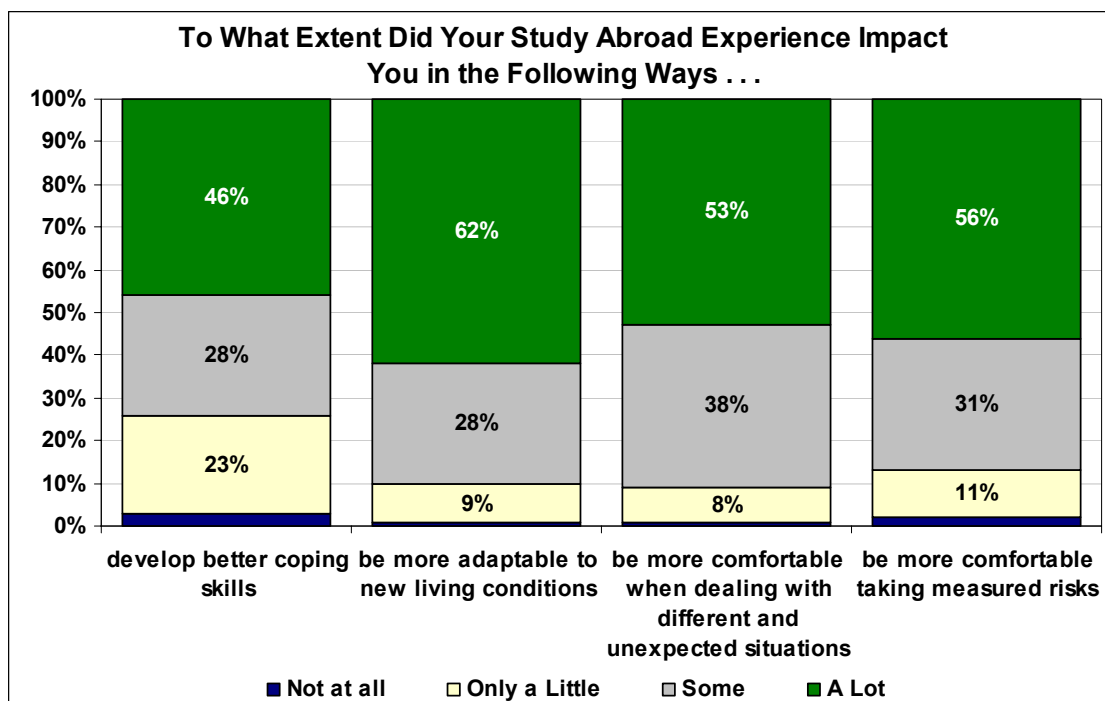


Figure 5. Impact of study abroad on students' level of comfort with new and different situations

Summary

These survey data demonstrate that students studying abroad achieve a number of the learning aims associated with Loyola's international programs. It is clear from these data that study abroad is not simply "Loyola overseas;" students are exposed to different academic traditions in terms of the structure of their courses and the expectations of their professors. As a result of their experience abroad students reflect on their own identity and assumptions that they have about others. In addition, students have more tolerance or higher levels of comfort and adaptability with risk and new situations as a result of their experience abroad. Overall, students feel that they are more well-rounded people as a result of their study abroad experience.

Codebook (Frequency Tables for all Items)

Q1. How long were you on study abroad?

54%	1 semester
0%	1 summer
46%	1 year
0%	Study Tour

Q2. Where did you live?

68%	In student residences/dorms
23%	With a host family
9%	Independently, in a city apartment

Q3. To what extent would you say your experience abroad has made you a better rounded person?

71%	To a great extent
27%	To some extent
2%	Only a little
0%	Not at all

Q4. In thinking about the courses you took abroad, would you say that . . .

67%	All of my courses were taught in English
24%	More than half of my courses were taught in English
8%	About half of my courses were taught in English
1%	Less than half of my courses were taught in English
0%	None of my courses were taught in English

Q5. Were your professors mostly American or not American?

0%	All of my professors were American
7%	More than half of my professors were American
7%	About half of my professors were American
19%	Less than half of my professors were American
67%	None of my professors were American

Q6. Would say that you took courses mostly with . . .

43%	Native, local students
33%	International students
24%	American students

Q7. How similar were the courses you took abroad to those you have taken at Loyola?

- 2%** Very similar
39% Somewhat different
58% Very different
1% Didn't answer

Q8. How similar was the material that you studied abroad to the material you would usually study at Loyola?

- 9%** Very similar
70% Somewhat different
21% Very different

Q9. Did you study harder, about the same, or less in your courses abroad than you normally would at Loyola?

- 21%** Harder
43% About the same
36% Less

Q10. To what extent did your program offer opportunities to learn outside of the formal classroom setting?

- 31%** To a great extent
51% Somewhat
18% There were few or no opportunities to learn outside the formal classroom setting

Q11. In thinking about your experience abroad, how would you compare it to your experience at Loyola? Would you say that you experienced each of the following items more, about the same, or less than you did in classes at Loyola?

	Less	About the Same	More
A. classroom hours	55%	30%	15%
B. number of assignments	77%	16%	7%
C. intellectually demanding	27%	52%	21%
D. demanding written assignments	35%	36%	28%
E. demanding reading assignment	25%	26%	49%
F. oral exams	47%	19%	30%
G. research.....	39%	37%	24%
H. critical thinking.....	20%	67%	12%
I. classroom participation	62%	28%	9%
J. enjoyable classes	37%	45%	17%
K. level of learning	29%	61%	9%

*1% did not answer Question 11d.

*4% did not answer Question 11f.

*1% did not answer Question 11h.

*1% did not answer Question 11i.

*1% did not answer Question 11j.

*1% did not answer Question 11k.

Q12. How about your professors in your study abroad courses; in what ways were they different, if at all, from your professors at Loyola? (please check all that apply)

- 69%** My professors abroad expected me to be more independent and did not give me as many instructions on what or how I should study as professors do at Loyola.
- 30%** My professors abroad expected me to have a stronger background in their field than my professors at Loyola.
- 10%** My professors abroad treated me differently, in a positive way, compared to the way my professors treat me at Loyola.
- 7%** My professors abroad treated me differently, in a negative way, compared to the way my professors treat me at Loyola.
- N/A** It was easier to interact with my professors abroad than with my professors at Loyola.

Q13. To what extent, if any, did your study abroad experience impact you in the following ways? My experience abroad caused me to . . .

	Not at all	Only a Little	Some	A lot
A. spent time with non-American international students	8%	32%	41%	19%
B. spent time with native/local students	13%	38%	29%	20%
C. spent time with people from different ethnic or religious backgrounds.....	9%	43%	32%	16%
D. spent time with people from different social or economic backgrounds	7%	45%	37%	11%
E. reflect on my American identity.....	2%	6%	35%	57%
F. reflect on my values	2%	14%	47%	36%
G. change some of my assumptions about others	1%	21%	43%	35%
H. be aware of how people abroad see Americans	0%	2%	18%	80%
I. think about some ideas or points of view that I had never really considered	0%	12%	45%	43%
J. feel better prepared to interact with different people and lifestyles.....	0%	8%	34%	58%
K. have interesting discussions about cultural, social or political differences....	0%	11%	39%	49%
L. develop better coping skills	3%	23%	28%	46%
M. be more comfortable when dealing with very different people	1%	9%	49%	40%
N. be more comfortable when dealing with different and unexpected situations.....	1%	8%	38%	53%
O. be more comfortable working and living with people from other cultures or countries	0%	7%	38%	55%
P. be more adaptable to new living conditions	1%	9%	28%	62%
Q. be more comfortable taking measured risks.....	2%	11%	31%	56%

*1% did not answer Question 13f.

*1% did not answer Question 13k.

*1% did not answer Question 13m.

Next we would like to know how well you know your study abroad country. For each of the next items please provide answers specific to the country where you are studying. If you do not know an answer, leave that space blank.

Q14. – Q22. *These open-ended data are reported in the individual program reports but are not included here.*

Next we would like to know how you feel about travel in general.

Q23. How often had you traveled outside of the U.S. before studying abroad?

- 17%** I've traveled outside the U.S. five or more times
- 25%** I've traveled outside the U.S. three or four times
- 37%** I've traveled outside the U.S. one or two times
- 18%** I have never been outside the U.S. before study abroad
- 3%** Didn't answer

Q24. When you travel, do you like to plan and know exactly what will happen on every day or do you prefer traveling without specific plans?

- 22%** I like to plan and know what will happen every day
- 68%** It depends on the situation
- 7%** I like traveling with no specific plans
- 3%** Didn't answer

Q25. Before you started your program, were you apprehensive about living abroad?

- 19%** Yes, very
- 45%** Yes, a little
- 34%** No, not at all
- 2%** Didn't answer

Q26. How would you characterize your experience living abroad?

- 64%** Living abroad was truly one of the very best parts of my program
- 33%** Living abroad was hard at times but I really enjoyed it
- 1%** Living abroad was fine but not really enjoyable
- 0%** I did not like living abroad
- 2%** Didn't answer

So we can know how your responses compare with those of other students please answer the following questions. Remember, this survey is completely anonymous and your answers will not be connected to you as an individual.

D1. What is your gender?

- 74%** Female
- 24%** Male
- 2%** Didn't answer

D2. With which racial/ethnic group do you most closely identify?

- 1%** African-American
- 1%** Asian/Pacific Islander
- 0%** Hispanic/Latino
- 0%** Native American
- 93%** White
- 2%** Other
- 3%** Didn't answer

D3. What is your major?

These data, along with the other open-ended data, are reported in the individual program reports but are not included here.