**Introduction and Background**

During summer 2004, the Office of Academic Programs, Planning, and Assessment conducted a survey of recent FSU graduates. The survey is one of the many outcomes measures Fayetteville State University uses to assess our educational processes. The ACT Alumni survey was used as the assessment instrument. The results were analyzed and compared to the national norms provided by ACT.

**Methodology:**

The alumni survey was mailed to 900 students who graduated during spring 2000 and spring 2001. Using a Focus routine of SIS data, the Office of Institutional Research provided a list of 450 randomly selected alumni from each class. The survey was mailed on July 26, 2004 to 900 FSU alumni, of which 450 were graduates of the class of 2000, and 450 were graduates of the class of 2001. One hundred seventy two (172) surveys were rejected because of invalid addresses. A follow-up mailing, excluding the rejected addresses, was sent four weeks later to 709 graduates who did not respond to the initial mailing. By September 10, 2004, 152 valid surveys were received for a return rate of 21.4%. Surveys returned after September 10, 2004, were not included in the analysis.

The return rate of 21.4% is low despite the follow-up mailing, but appears to be typical of the response rates at institutions similar in size and mission to FSU. According to Graham and Cockriel in their Factor Analysis of ACT Data (1989), the median response rate for institutions using the ACT Alumni survey is 30%.

**Instrument:**

The ACT Alumni Survey includes 5 sections: background information, continuing education, college experiences, employment history, and additional questions. The purpose of the survey is to assess the impact FSU has on its graduates. If used, additional questions are specific to each school. FSU did not use the additional questions option. The survey was accompanied by a cover letter from the vice chancellor for university advancement.

**Results Highlights:**

The results of the total group are provided by ACT. ACT also provides the national norms for the survey. The norms are based on 30,738 alumni records obtained from 71 public and private 4-year colleges that administered the ACT Survey between January 1, 1996, and December 31, 2003. The current findings are organized in the following
sections: (1) Background Information, (2) Continuing Education, (3) College Experiences, and (4) Employment History. The bulleted information below reflects highlights of major findings:

**Background Information (Demographics)**

- 89% have a bachelor’s degree and 10% are holders of a graduate degree.
- 75% are female
- 67% are Black, 22% White, 5% Hispanic/Latino, and 2% Asian
- 36% are over 40 years old.
- Over 96% were in-state students and 82% were enrolled full-time while attending FSU.
- 47% attended FSU for 3 to 4 years, and 19% attended FSU for 5 years or more.
- 82% of the respondents currently live in North Carolina.
- 32% of the respondents plan to attend FSU in the future. 33% do not plan to attend FSU.
- 31% had majors in the social sciences, while 20% report majors in business and management.

Compared to national user norms, FSU alumni are older and hold the bachelor’s degree at a higher rate (82% compared to 73%), but fewer (10% compared to 20%) hold the master’s degree.

**Continuing Education**

- 33% of the respondents indicate the major reason for continuing education is to increase earning power.
- 73% indicate that FSU prepared them adequately for continuing education.
- 49% plan to obtain a master’s degree and 38% intend to pursue the doctoral degree.
- 75% have earned between 3 and 40 semester hours of credit since graduating.

FSU alumni evaluated the institution’s role more highly than the national norm in preparing them for further education. Additionally, the main reasons for continuing their education were ranked in the following order: (1) to increase earning power (33%), (2) for general self improvement (19%), (3) to satisfy job/career requirements (16%), and (4) to obtain/maintain license/career certification (15%).

**College Experience**

- 58% of the respondents indicated that FSU was their first choice of a college to attend.
- 33% indicated that if they had it to do over again, they would definitely attend FSU.
- 30% said they would choose the same major.
• 52% said that location was the primary reason for attending FSU.
• 41% indicated that student loans were the primary source for funding their education.
• 29% of the respondents rated homecoming activities number “1” and publications number “2” in programs and services offered by alumni affairs.

About 86 percent of respondents report that FSU was their first (56%) or second (30%) choice of a college to attend. This is slightly lower than the first (72%) and second (20%) choice preferences reported by the national group (91%). FSU alumni were slightly less likely (33%) to definitely choose FSU again, compared to 37% of the national group who indicated they would definitely choose their institution again. Eighty five percent (85%) of FSU alumni feel that their college education has either definitely improved (57%) their quality of life, or probably improved (28%) their quality of life. As a group, when rating alumni affairs sponsored programs and services respondents gave the highest rating to homecoming activities (mean rating 2.40) and the lowest rating to chapter meetings (2.07). Understanding different philosophies and cultures was the highest rated contribution to personal growth cited by FSU graduates, followed by speaking effectively, and working independently.

**Employment History**

• About two thirds of alumni reported starting salaries of under $30,000 for their first full-time position after graduation while 6.6 percent reported starting salaries of $50,000 or higher. The most common starting salary range reported was between $20,000 and $29,999 (47.8%).
• More than half report current salary/income to be under $30,000, while 8.3% report incomes of $50,000 or more.
• 43.4 percent report that they were employed before leaving college and 37% obtained their first job within 6 months of leaving college. Thirteen percent took 12 months to find the first job.
• 65% have held just one job, while 25% have held two jobs.
• Only 19% responded to the questions related to unemployment. Of alumni in the sample who are currently unemployed (N = 29), only 10% indicate that they have been unable to find a full-time job since college.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of the Alumni Survey was to identify strengths and areas for improvement as indicated by graduates who are four years out of FSU. The results of the 2004 Alumni Survey should be useful in providing planning groups and other members of the FSU community with direct feedback from alumni on how well FSU is preparing them for the workplace and where improvements and enhancements may be needed. For the near term, it is suggested that the results of the survey be used as a benchmark assessment, forming the basis for comparing perceptions of future classes of students.
It should be noted that the results are not divided by subgroups due to the small sample size and low response rate, but instead are presented by total group. It is suggested that participant comments be read as they were offered (see attached) by those alumni who took the time to provide thoughtful comments about the FSU experience. A detailed analysis of the data, including a graphics report is available for inspection in the Office of Academic Programs, Planning, and Assessment.

**Recommendations**

1. Consider using an instrument that relates importance to satisfaction
2. Survey classes after one, five, and ten years out of the university.
3. In addition to paper surveys, consider use of telephone surveys to increase response rate.