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## Results of Economics Department Alumni Survey

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**RESULTS OF ECONOMICS  
DEPARTMENT ALUMNI  
SURVEY**

by

**Ziaohong Yu\***  
and  
**Ardelle A. Lundeen\*\***

**Economic Staff Paper Series No. 93-3\*\*\***

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## RESULTS OF ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT ALUMNI SURVEY

### Introduction

In 1989, the Economics Department conducted a survey of its alumni. Questionnaires were sent to a random sample of 750 alumni who graduated between the years of 1978 and 1988. The response rate was 44% (329 responses).

The objective of the survey was to provide the SDSU Economics Department with information on how well the curriculum had prepared graduates for their careers and subsequent employment experiences.

The survey information will be used to modify the curriculum, as needed, to improve the quality of education and career preparation for students graduating with majors from the Economics Department.

### Survey Results

#### Section I

The first section of the questionnaire sought to elicit information on the satisfaction of alumni with SDSU and their degrees.

The first question was "if you were starting your college education all over again, would you choose SDSU as the university or college to attend." Among 322 responses, 82.3% of them said they would choose SDSU again.

Most (73.5%) of the alumni stated that they would choose a major offered by SDSU's Economics Department if they were to begin their college education again.

Among the 329 responses, 16.4% believed that the overall quality of undergraduate education offered at SDSU relative to other universities has "improved" since their graduation from SDSU (see Table 1). Twenty-two percent felt that there was "no change". Only a few (2.4%) felt that the overall quality had "declined." In addition, more than half (58.4%) of the alumni answered that they "do not know."

Table 1. Quality of undergraduate education at SDSU since graduation of alumni.

	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
Greatly Improved	2	0.6%
Improved	54	16.4%
Not Changed	73	22.2%
Declined	8	2.4%
Greatly Declined	0	0.0%
Do not Know	192	58.4%
Total	329	100.0%

Twenty percent believed that the quality of undergraduate education offered by SDSU's Economics Department has "improved" since their graduation from SDSU. About another twenty percent believed that there is "no change." Very few (1.5%) alumni thought that the quality has "declined." Most (59%) alumni answered "do not know."

Table 2. Quality of undergraduate education in Economics Department since graduation of alumni.

	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
Greatly Improved	0	0.0%
Improved	66	20.1%
Not Changed	64	19.5%
Declined	5	1.5%
Greatly Declined	0	0.0%
Do not Know	194	59%
Total	329	100.0%

Alumni were asked if they would recommend SDSU to high school students for majors or minors offered by the Economics Department.

"Agribusiness" and "Agricultural Economics" are the two majors that most alumni would recommend to a high school student with capabilities in the top 25 percent of his/her class to study at SDSU (see Table 3). More than half of the alumni also would advise the high school student to study "Commercial Economics" or "Economics" at SDSU if he or she chooses these majors. (Note: The

Commercial Economics option has been renamed the Business Economics option.) However, most of the alumni would not recommend "Accounting" and "Business" as courses of study at SDSU.

Table 3. Alumni recommendation for major study by high school student in upper 25% of class.

Major Desired by Student	Recommend SDSU		Not Recommend SDSU	
	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
Accounting	65	20.7%	249	79.3%
Agribusiness	310	97.2%	9	2.8%
Agricultural Economics	307	96.8%	10	3.2%
Business	110	34.7%	207	65.3%
Commercial Economics	240	76.2%	75	23.8%
Economics	243	76.7%	74	23.3%

For a high school student with capabilities in the top 5 percent of his/her class, the recommendations from the alumni in our survey are slightly different from those in the previous question for most majors except "Commercial Economics" and "Economics" (see Table 4). Only about half of the alumni would advise the student to study these two majors in SDSU.

Table 4. Alumni recommendation for major study by high school student in upper 5% of class.

Major Desired by Student	Recommend SDSU		Not Recommend SDSU	
	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
Accounting	48	15.4%	263	84.6%
Agribusiness	291	92.1%	25	7.9%
Agricultural Economics	284	90.2%	31	9.8%
Business	65	20.8%	247	79.2%
Commercial Economics	176	55.7%	140	44.3%
Economics	174	55.1%	142	44.9%



**Section II**

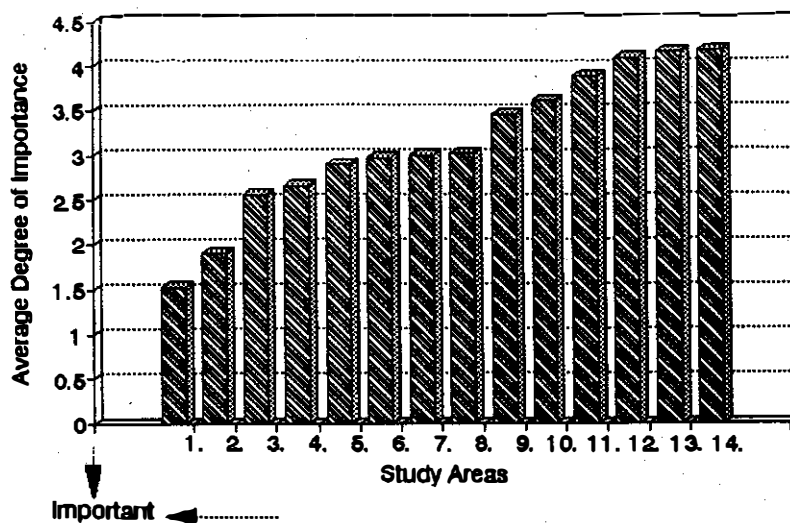
Alumni were asked to rate the importance of various areas of study in their entry level position and also the adequacy of their preparation in each area. Detailed information is shown in Table 5. The replies were classified into three categories, "very important", "important" and "not important." Most (88.2% and 76.8%) alumni believe that "oral communication" and "written communication" are very important for an entry level position in their current profession. More than half of the alumni also rank "computers" and "business applications" as very important areas. In order to rank the importance for all of the areas, we calculated the average degree of importance for each area. The order of importance for all the areas is shown in Figure 1.

Table 5. Importance of areas of study for entry level.

Type of Areas	Importance					
	Very Important		Important		Not Important	
	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
Accounting	95	33.9%	140	50%	45	16.1%
Finance	128	45.9%	122	43.7%	29	10.4%
Introductory Economics	56	20%	169	60.4%	55	19.6%
Marketing	134	47.9%	116	41.4%	30	10.7%
Computers	153	54.6%	107	38.3%	20	7.1%
Oral Communication	247	88.2%	28	10%	5	1.8%
Written Communication	215	76.8%	60	21.4%	5	1.8%
Business Applications	151	53.9%	115	41.1%	14	5%
Case Studies	46	16.4%	206	73.6%	28	10%
Mathematics	121	43.2%	145	51.8%	14	5%
Statistics	57	20.3%	153	54.4%	71	25.3%
Problems and Applications	125	44.6%	127	45.4%	28	10%
Law	83	29.6%	147	52.5%	50	17.9%
Intermediate Economics	41	14.6%	174	62.2%	65	23.2%

Figure 1.

### Order of Importance All Study Areas



\*. Lower average degrees indicate greater importance.

1.	Oral Communication	1.53
2.	Written Communication	1.90
3.	Business Applications	2.55
4.	Computers	2.65
5.	Mathematics	2.89
6.	Marketing	2.96
7.	Finance	2.99
8.	Problems and Applications	3.02
9.	Accounting	3.45
10.	Law	3.61
11.	Introductory Economics	3.87
12.	Case Studies	4.08
13.	Statistics	4.14
14.	Intermediate Economics	4.15

For the same study areas, the alumni rated the adequacy of their preparation at SDSU which is shown in Table 6. Most alumni believe that their preparation in most of the areas is adequate or superior. However, 36.9% of the alumni think that their preparation for "computers" is "not adequate."

(Note: This survey was taken before the Economics Department Computer Lab was installed. Students now use computers in at least 3-4 of their required Economics courses).

We calculated the average degree of adequacy of preparation for all of the areas and ranked them (see Figure 2). "Introductory Economics" and "Intermediate Economics" are the areas that most alumni believe that they had adequate or superior preparation for. "Computers" is last in the adequacy order.

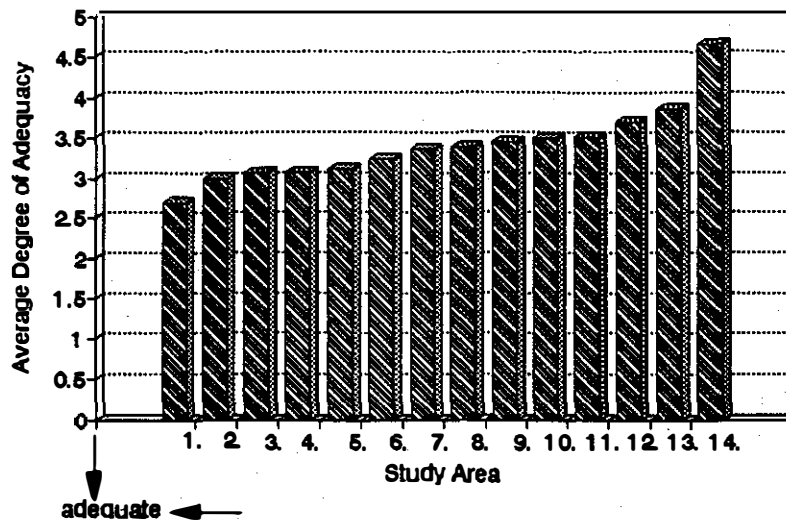
Figure 3 shows the comparison of importance and adequacy for each area. In the four areas considered most important by alumni, their level of preparation was not considered adequate. For example, the average importance of oral communications is 1.53 but the average for adequacy of preparation is 3.06. Introductory and intermediate economics were considered less important but they were better prepared in those areas. In most other areas of study, however, importance and adequacy of preparation were consistent.

Table 6. Adequacy of preparation in areas of study at SDSU.

Study Areas	Adequacy					
	Superior		Adequate		Not Adequate	
	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
Accounting	61	19.9%	212	69%	34	11.1%
Finance	71	23%	215	69.6%	23	7.4%
Introductory Economics	149	48.4%	151	49%	8	2.6%
Marketing	90	29.1%	194	62.8%	25	8.1%
Computers	41	13.3%	154	49.8%	114	36.9%
Oral Communication	112	36.1%	185	59.7%	13	4.2%
Written Communication	105	33.9%	188	60.6%	17	5.5%
Business Applications	71	22.9%	220	71%	19	6.1%
Case Studies	47	15.2%	253	75.1%	30	9.7%
Mathematics	100	32.3%	199	64.2%	11	3.5%
Statistics	81	26.3%	204	66.2%	23	7.5%
Problems and Applications	63	20.5%	232	75.6%	12	3.9%
Law	91	29.5%	198	64.3%	19	6.2%
Intermediate Economics	115	37%	186	59.8%	10	3.2%

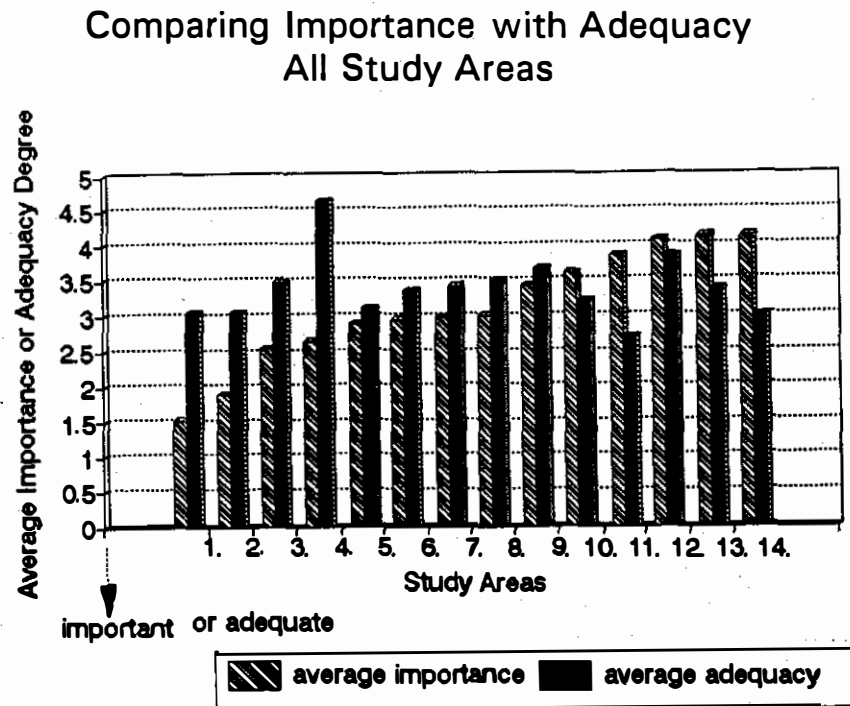
Figure 2.

### Order of Adequacy of Preparation All Study Areas



1.	Introductory Economics	2.69
2.	Intermediate Economics	3.00
3.	Oral Communication	3.06
4.	Written Communication	3.06
5.	Mathematics	3.11
6.	Law	3.23
7.	Marketing	3.36
8.	Statistics	3.39
9.	Finance	3.44
10.	Business Applications	3.49
11.	Problems and Applications	3.51
12.	Accounting	3.69
13.	Case Studies	3.86
14.	Computers	4.65

Figure 3.



\*. A lower average indicates higher importance or adequacy of preparation.

	importance	adequacy
1. Oral Communication	1.53	3.06
2. Written Communication	1.90	3.06
3. Business Applications	2.55	3.49
4. Computers	2.65	4.65
5. Mathematics	2.89	3.11
6. Marketing	2.96	3.36
7. Finance	2.99	3.44
8. Problems and Applications	3.02	3.51
9. Accounting	3.45	3.69
10. Law	3.61	3.23
11. Introductory Economics	3.87	2.69
12. Case Studies	4.08	3.86
13. Statistics	4.14	3.39
14. Intermediate Economics	4.15	3.00

### Section III

The third section of the questionnaire included questions on the alumni's background and experience at SDSU.

About half of the alumni in our survey lived on farms during their senior year in high school. Table 7 shows the distribution of the alumni who lived in towns. Approximately 45% of them lived in a small town with a population under 5,000. Another 43% lived in medium large towns with a population between 10,000 to 249,999. Very few (5%) lived in cities with a population over 250,000.

Table 7. Size of home town of alumni.

Population Size of Towns	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
Under 4,999	72	44.72%
5,000 - 9,999	12	7.45%
10,000 - 49,999	48	29.81%
50,000 - 249,999	21	13.04%
250,000 - 999,999	4	2.49%
Over 1,000,000	4	2.49%
Total	161	100%

The majority of the alumni (75%) were residents of South Dakota when they enrolled at SDSU (Table 8). Another 20% came from Minnesota and Iowa. The remaining 5% came from various states.

Table 8. Home states of alumni.

States	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
South Dakota	245	74.7%
Minnesota	50	15.2%
Iowa	17	5.2%
North Dakota	2	0.6%
Others	14	4.3%
Total	328	100.0%

Most (74%) alumni entered SDSU immediately after high school. About 7.6% of the alumni entered full- or part-time employment after high school. Thirteen percent of the alumni attended a college other than SDSU after high school. Only 2.8% joined the armed services.

Ninety-three percent of the alumni in our survey graduated from high school between 1975 and 1985 (see Table 9) which was expected given the sample surveyed. Approximately 6% of the alumni graduated from high school between 1970 and 1974. Only 1% of the alumni graduated from high school before 1970, which indicates few non-traditional students were included in our sample.

Table 9. Year of graduation from high school.

Year of Graduation from High School	Number of Alumni	Percentage of Alumni
Before 1970	4	1.2%
1970 - 1974	19	5.8%
1975 - 1979	152	46.4%
1980 - 1985	153	46.6%
Total	328	100.0%

Table 10 shows when the sample group commenced their studies at SDSU. Over half of them started between 1980 and 1985. Another 41% of them started between 1975 and 1979. Only 3% of the alumni in our survey began attending SDSU before 1974 or after 1985.

Table 10. Year of initial enrollment at SDSU.

Years of the Alumni Attending SDSU	Number of Alumni	Percentage of Alumni
Before 1970	1	0.3%
1970 - 1974	6	1.8%
1975 - 1979	135	41.1%
1980 - 1985	184	55.9%
After 1985	3	0.9%
Total	329	100.0%



Comparing Table 9 and Table 10 (see Figure 4), it is shown that almost all of the alumni who graduated from high school between 1980 and 1985 entered SDSU immediately. Most of those who graduated from high school before 1975 delayed their entrance to SDSU.

Figure 4.

### Comparing the Number of Alumni Who Graduated from High School and the Number of Alumni Who Entered SDSU

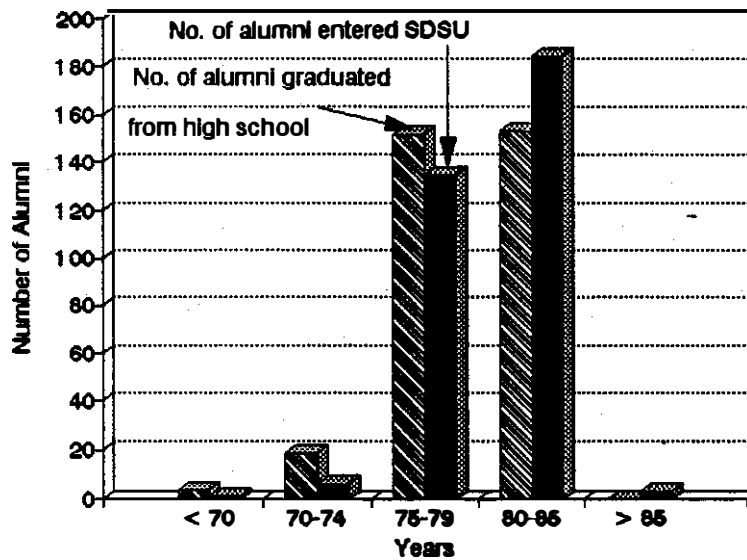


Table 11 shows the distribution of majors among the alumni when they enrolled at SDSU. "Agricultural Business" and "General Registration" were the most common majors followed by "Engineering" and "Commercial Economics".

Table 11. Declared major upon enrollment at SDSU.

Majors the Alumni First Started at SDSU	Number of Alumni	Percentage of Alumni
Agricultural Business	74	22.5%
General Registration	72	21.9%
Engineering	36	10.9%
Commercial Economics	30	9.1%
General Education	14	4.3%
Economics	10	3%
Pharmacy	10	3%
Animal Science	9	2.7%
Others	74	22.5%
Total	329	100.0%

All of the alumni in our survey graduated between 1979 and 1989 (see Table 12).

Table 12. Year of graduation from SDSU.

Years of Graduation	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
1979 - 1982	99	30.1%
1983 - 1986	148	45%
1987 - 1989	82	24.9%
Total	329	100.0%

In addition, most of the alumni graduated in May (68%) and December (27%).

One hundred and fourteen (34.7%) of the alumni surveyed graduated with a double major. Table 13 shows the distribution of the first and second majors of the graduates. Eight percent of the alumni surveyed had first majors outside of the department. As shown in the table, the most popular major was "Commercial Economics" with 46% of the respondents choosing it as a first or second major. The second most popular choice for a first or second major was "Agricultural Business." Of the total number of graduates with second majors (114), only 27 chose second majors outside of the department which indicates many alumni chose to double major within the department. Anecdotal evidence indicates that students often choose "Commercial Economics" and "Agricultural Business" as double majors.

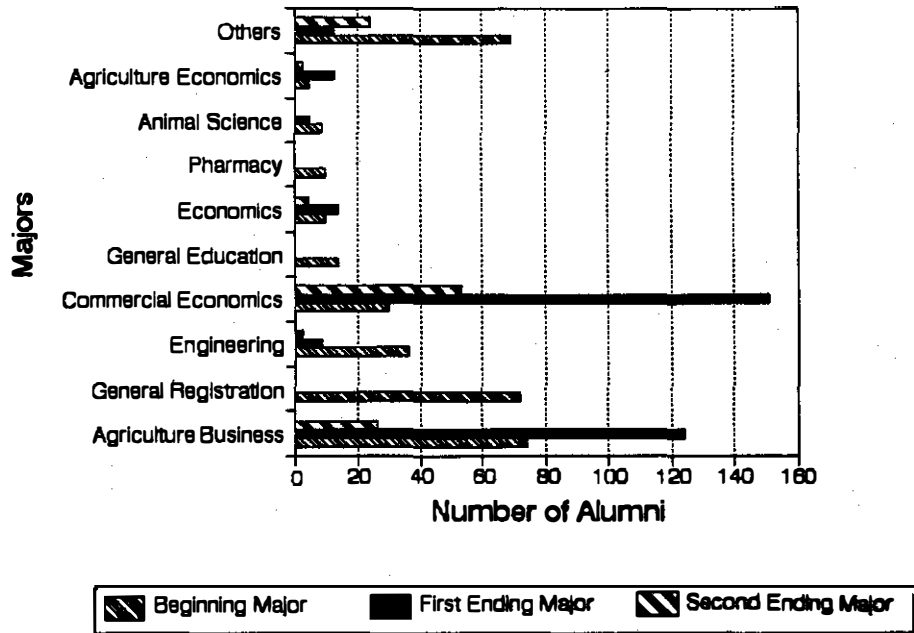
Table 13. Distribution of first and second majors in the Economics Department.

Majors that the Alumni Graduated with	First Major		Second Major		Total	
	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
Commercial Economics	151	45.9%	53	46.5%	204	62%
Agricultural Business	124	37.7%	26	22.8%	150	45.6%
Economics	14	4.3%	5	4.4%	19	5.8%
Agricultural Economics	13	4%	3	2.6%	16	4.9%
Engineering	9	2.7%	3	2.6%	12	3.7%
Others	18	5.5%	24	21.1%	42	12.8%
Total	329	100%	114	100%	329*	-

Figure 5 shows that the number of alumni who chose the "Agricultural Business" major had doubled between enrollment and graduation. The number of alumni in "Commercial Economics" increased about 500% over that period. Also, the number of alumni had doubled in "Economics" and tripled in "Agricultural Economics".

Figure 5.

### Changes in Majors of Alumni



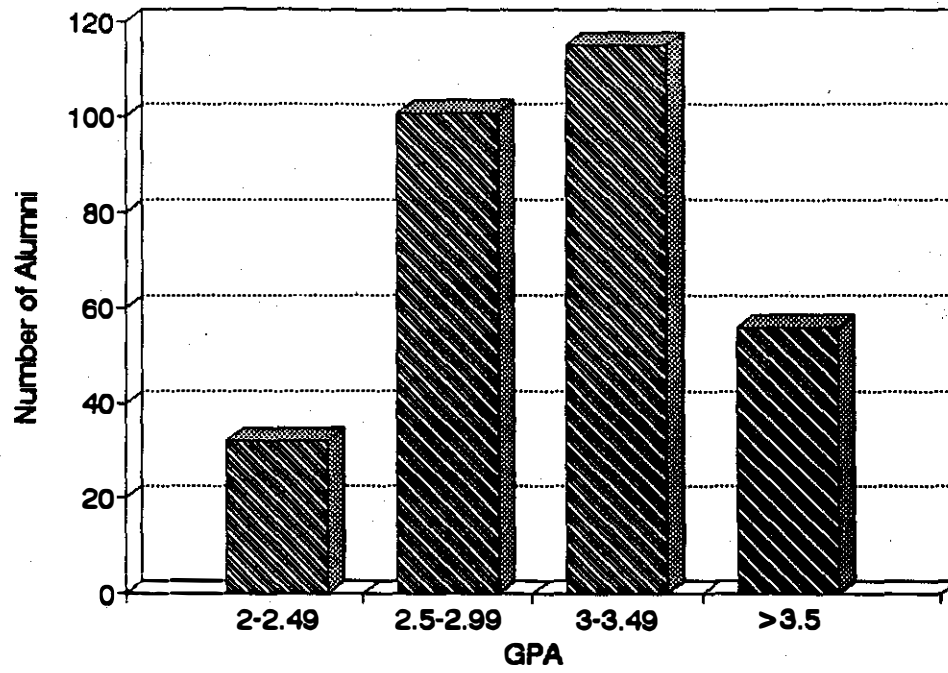
Among the 304 alumni who answered the question on their graduating GPA, the lowest GPA was 2 and the highest GPA 3.98. The average GPA was 3.03. Table 14 shows the distribution of GPAs. The graph of GPA suggests that our study sample has a standard distribution (see Figure 6). Most alumni had a GPA between 2.5 - 3.49.

Table 14. Distribution of GPA of alumni.

Average GPA	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
2 - 2.49	32	10.5%
2.5 - 2.99	101	33.2%
3 - 3.49	115	37.9%
over 3.5	56	18.4%
Total	304	100.0%

Figure 6.

### Distribution of Alumni by GPA



**Section IV**

The fourth section of the questionnaire covered the employment history and background of the alumni surveyed.

Eighty-nine percent of the alumni in our survey are currently employed full-time at a position outside the home. Table 15 shows the distribution of current employers of alumni. One fourth of the alumni are working in financial services. "Retail, motel/restaurant", "sales and marketing" and "government" are other common occupations for alumni.

Table 15. Current employment of alumni.

Type of Business	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
Banking, Credit, Financial Institution, Agriculture Finance, Security Bonds, etc.	73	25%
Retail, Motel/Restaurant	53	18.2%
Sales & Marketing	46	15.8%
Government	31	10.6%
Manufacturing/Building/Utility	28	9.6%
Farming / Logging	15	5.1%
Military	8	2.7%
Wholesale	7	2.4%
Small Business	6	2.1%
Others	25	8.5%
Total	292	100.0%

\*Others includes consulting, university, computer, law firm, transportation, church, home health care, etc.

The most common title of the positions held by the alumni (approximately 30%) is manager (or supervisor or coordinator or administrator or director) (see Table 16). In addition, "sales representative", "financier, loan or credit officer, accountant and collection" are common titles of alumni.

Table 16. Title of current positions.

Position Title	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
Manager, supervisor, coordinator, director, or administrator	85	29.2%
Sales representative	41	14.1%
Financier, loan or credit officer, accountant, collection	31	10.7%
Researcher/instructor/analyst/computer programmer/under writer	29	10%
Owner/manager or operator	20	6.9%
Assistant county supervisor/county executive director	10	3.4%
Assistant manager	9	3.1%
Bank officer (vice president)	9	3.1%
Military	8	2.7%
Merchandiser	7	2.4%
Attorney	7	2.4%
Secretary, clerk, teller, customer service	6	2.1%
Others*	29	9.9%
Total	291	100.0%

\*Others include scientist/engineer, consultant, appraiser, agent, bank examiner, personnel officer, financial planner, labor, government officer, claim representative, professional golf and professional basketball.



Table 17 shows the distribution of titles held by alumni six months after graduation from SDSU. The first three common titles are the same as those in Table 16. The number of alumni who held positions like "secretary, clerk, teller, customer service" and "labor" has decreased over time however. The number of alumni with position titles like "bank officer," "merchandiser," and "attorney" increased in the current positions.

Table 17. Title of first position.

Position Title	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
Manager, supervisor, coordinator, director, administrator, etc.	66	26%
Sales representative	42	16.5%
Financier, loan or credit officer, accountant, collection	35	13.8%
Assistant manager	23	9.1%
Researcher, instructor, analyst, computer programmer, under writer	20	7.9%
Secretary, clerk, teller, customer service	17	6.7%
Labor	13	5.1%
Owner/manager or operator	10	3.9%
Assistant county supervisor/county executive director	7	2.8%
Others*	21	8.3%
Total	254	100%

\*Others include scientist/engineer, merchandiser, bank officer (vice president), consultant, appraiser, agent, bank examiner, attorney, personnel officer, financial planner, government officer claim representative, military, professional golf and professional basketball.

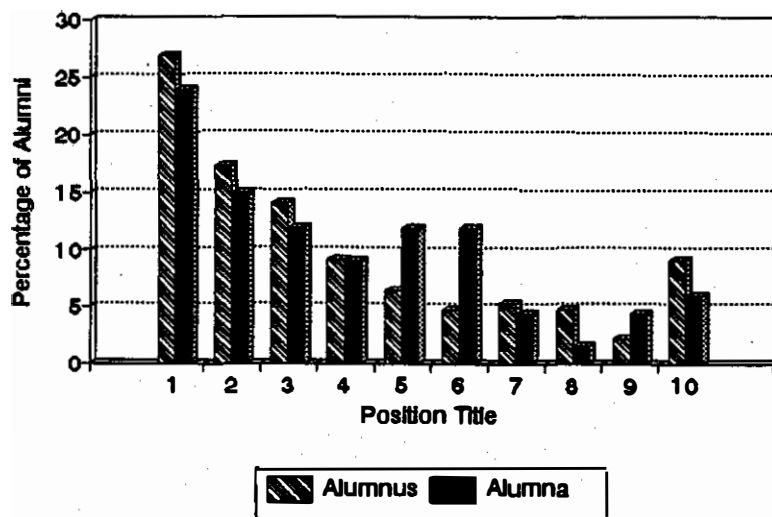
Survey data were further analyzed to determine whether there is a relationship between sex and job opportunity. Table 18 and Figure 8 show detailed information. For the first three positions, the percentages of male alumni are slightly higher than the percentages of the female alumni. For "assistant manager," both have almost the same percentage. But the percentages of female alumni are much higher than the percentages of male alumni in "research, instructor, analyst, computer programmer, underwriter" and "secretary, clerk, teller, customer service." In addition, male graduates have more "owner/manager or operator" positions than female graduates.

Table 18. Distribution of first position by gender.

Position Title	No. of Alumni		% of Alumni	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1. Manager, supervisor, coordinator, director, administrator, etc.	50	16	26.9%	23.9%
2. Sales representative	32	10	17.2%	14.9%
3. Financier, loan or credit officer, accountant, collection	26	8	14%	11.9%
4. Assistant manager	17	6	9.1%	9%
5. Researcher, instructor, analyst, computer programmer, underwriter	12	8	6.5%	11.9%
6. Secretary, clerk, teller, customer service	9	8	4.8%	11.9%
7. Labor	10	3	5.4%	4.5%
8. Owner/manager or operator	9	1	4.8%	1.5%
9. Assistant county supervisor/county executive director	4	3	2.2%	4.5%
10. Other	17	4	9.1%	6%
Total	186	67	100%	100%

Figure 7.

### Comparing Position Distributions between male and female alumni



1. Manager, supervisor, coordinator, director, administrator, etc.
2. Sales representative.
3. Financier, loan or credit officer, accountant, and collection.
4. Assistant manager.
5. Researcher, instructor, analyst, computer, programmer under writer.
6. Secretary, clerk, teller, customer service.
7. Labor.
8. Owner/manager or operator.
9. Assistant county supervisor or county executive director.
10. Other.

Based on the employed alumni's estimate, the lowest pre-tax annual income for the calendar year 1989 was \$3,000 and the highest was \$300,000. The median pre-tax annual income for 1989 was approximately \$24,000.

Table 19 shows the distribution of income for the alumni. More than half (55%) of the alumni in our survey had a pre-tax annual income for 1989 between \$20,000 and \$35,000. About 17.2% alumni had income equal to or more than \$40,000. Only a few of them (1%) had income below \$10,000.

Table 19. Annual (1989) income of alumni.

Classification of Pre-tax Annual Income for 1989	Number of Alumni	Percentage of Alumni
Under \$10,000	3	1%
\$10,000 - \$14,999	23	7.9%
\$15,000 - \$19,999	43	14.8%
\$20,000 - \$24,999	78	26.8%
\$25,000 - \$29,999	35	12%
\$30,000 - \$34,999	47	16.2%
\$35,000 - \$39,999	12	4.1%
\$40,000 - \$45,000	30	10.3%
Over 45,000	20	6.9%
Total	291	100.0%

Only 19% alumni in our survey own or partially own their own business.

To make a comparison, the respondents were asked to estimate the pre-tax salary for their first year of employment. The estimated median annual pre-tax salary for their first year of employment was approximately \$15,625, the highest was \$64,000 and the lowest was \$5,000. The distribution of alumni in different income levels is shown in Table 20. Most (73.3%) alumni had a pre-tax annual income between \$10,000 and \$20,000 for their first year employment. A few alumni (5.1%) had income of more than \$25,000.

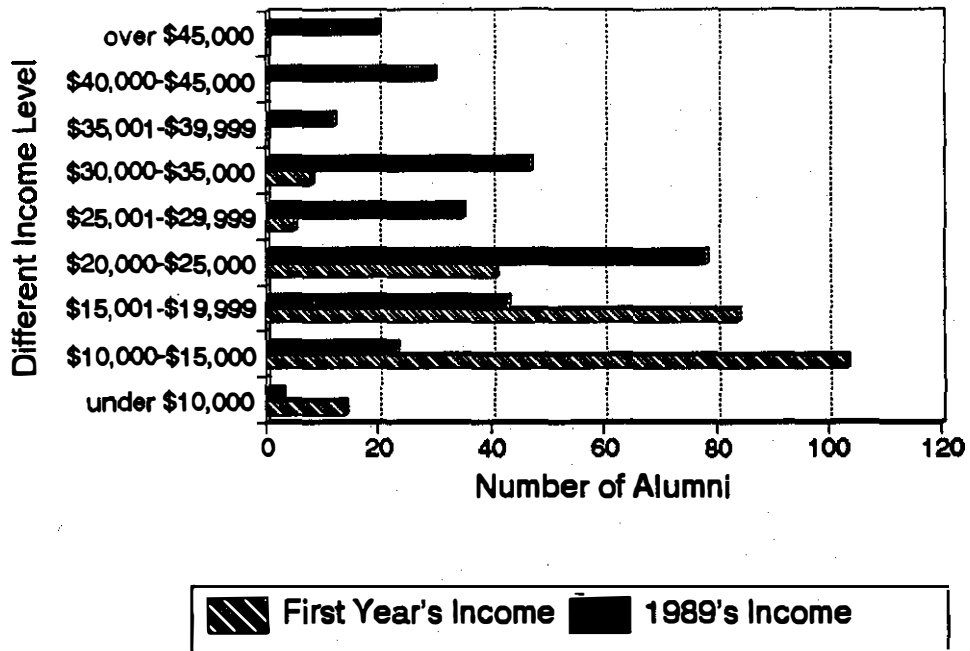
Table 20. Annual income for first employment.

Classification of Pre-tax Annual Income for First Year Employment	Number of Alumni	Percentage of Alumni
Under \$10,000	14	5.5%
\$10,000 - \$15,000	103	40.4%
\$15,001 - \$19,999	84	32.9%
\$20,000 - \$25,000	41	16.1%
\$25,001 - \$29,999	5	2%
> or = \$30,000	8	3.1%
Total	255	100.0%

Figure 8 compares the first year and current income of the respondents. The average annual income has increased from \$16,916 to \$29,380. As can be noted from the graph, the entire distribution has made a significant shift upward.

Figure 8.

### Comparing Alumni's First Year Income with 1989 Income



Approximately half of the alumni said that they had held a full-time job in South Dakota for more than a one year period since they had graduated from SDSU.

Six months after graduating from SDSU, 75.6% alumni were working full-time, 5.9% were working part-time, 8.4% had entered an advanced degree program and only 3.1% were unemployed. (see Table 21)

Table 21. Employment status six months after graduation.

Employment Status	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
Advanced degree	27	8.4%
Armed services	7	2.2%
Houseperson	4	1.3%
Unemployed	10	3.1%
Part-time work	19	5.9%
Full-time work	242	75.6%
Other	11	3.4%
Total	320	100%

Among the 253 alumni who had a full-time job other than in the armed services or as a houseperson six months after graduating from SDSU, 84.6% (215) had obtained a position related to their major.

Six months after graduation, most alumni (57.5%) were located in South Dakota. (see Table 22). Minnesota was the next most frequent location.

Only 23 alumni were employed on a farm or ranch. More than half of the alumni jobs (55.8%) were in small towns which had a population less than 50,000. (see Table 23).

Table 22. Geographic location of first position.

Location of Jobs	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
South Dakota	146	57.5%
Minnesota	36	14.2%
Iowa	17	6.7%
Colorado	7	2.8%
Kansas	7	2.8%
Nebraska	6	2.4%
North Dakota	4	1.6%
Other	31	12.2%
Total	254	100%

Table 23. Population of location of respondents' first position.

Population of the Town	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
Under 4,900	37	15.9%
5,000 - 9,999	18	7.7%
10,000 - 49,999	75	32.2%
50,000 - 249,999	56	24%
250,000 - 999,999	24	10.3%
Over 1,000,000	23	9.9%
Total	233	100%



## Section V

Demographic Data were obtained for the respondents.

Our study sample included 242 males and 87 females.

The youngest respondent in our study was 21 years old, the oldest was 43 years old. Twenty-eight was the average age. The distribution of alumni in different age groups is shown in Table 24. Approximately 51% of the alumni in our survey were between 26 to 30 years of age. Only 2.4% were 36 years old or older.

Table 24. Age distribution of alumni.

Age Group	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
21 - 25 years old	90	27.4%
26 - 30 years old	166	50.6%
31 - 35 years old	64	19.6%
36 years old or over	8	2.4%
Total	328	100%

Forty-four alumni currently live or work on farms or ranches. The distribution of alumni who currently reside in different population size towns is shown in Table 25.

Table 25. Size of town of residence of alumni.

Population Size of Town	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
Under 4,999	52	18.3%
5,000 - 9,999	12	4.2%
10,000 - 49,999	78	27.5%
50,000 - 249,999	79	27.8%
250,000 - 999,999	33	11.6%
Over 1,000,000	30	10.6%
Total	284	100%

Approximately 51% of the alumni currently reside in South Dakota (see Table 26). Another 26.8% reside in the neighboring states of Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska and North Dakota.

Table 26. State of residence of alumni.

Location of Residence	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
South Dakota	167	50.9%
Minnesota	50	15.2%
Iowa	18	5.5%
Nebraska	13	4%
Colorado	10	3%
North Dakota	7	2.1%
Illinois	6	1.8%
Other	57	17.4%
Total	328	100%

Alumni were asked to estimate the total pre-tax income of their household from all sources for 1989. The median total pre-tax income was \$37,150. Three thousand was the minimum and \$500,000 was the maximum. Table 27 shows the distribution of pre-tax household income. Most (45.4%) alumni were in the "\$30,000-\$50,000" level. Approximately 21% of the alumni had a pre-tax household income of over \$50,000.

Table 27. Pre-tax household income of respondents

Household Pre-tax Income	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
< \$30,000	107	33.8%
\$30,000 - \$50,000	144	45.4%
\$50,001 - \$99,999	57	18%
>= \$100,000	9	2.8%
Total	317	100%

Table 28 shows the distribution of the size of the household of alumni. More than half (57%) of the alumni had one or two person households. More than one-third (37.6%) had three or four person households.

Table 28. Size of household of respondents.

Number of People in Household	Number of Alumni	Percentage of Alumni
1	87	26.6%
2	99	30.3%
3	70	21.4%
4	53	16.2%
5	16	4.9%
6	2	0.6%
Total	327	100%

#### Section VI

The last section of the questionnaire covered **advanced degrees** the respondents had received or were pursuing.

Only 71 (21.5%) of the alumni have completed or are currently seeking additional graduate or professional course work.

Thirty-three of the 71 alumni stated they were currently seeking to complete a degree. Table 29 shows the type of degree they are seeking. One-third were in an MBA program and another 21.2% were pursuing other Master's Degrees.

Table 29. Degree goals of alumni pursuing advanced degrees.

Type of Degree	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
MBA	10	30.3%
Other Master's Degree	7	21.2%
Law Degree	0	0%
Medical Doctor	1	3%
Other PhD	3	9.1%
Other	12	36.4%
Total	33	100%

Table 30 shows the distribution of universities in which respondents were enrolled.

Table 30. Location of universities in which alumni are enrolled.

University Name	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
SDSU	7	22.6%
University of S.D	4	12.9%
University of Wisconsin	2	6.5%
University of Minnesota	2	6.5%
Other	16	51.6%
Total	31	100%

Twenty-two alumni said they have received an advanced or professional degree as shown in Table 31. Approximately 60% received a master's degree.

Table 31. Advanced degrees of alumni.

Advanced Degree	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
MBA	5	22.7%
Other Master's Degree	8	36.4%
Law Degree	2	9.1%
Medical Doctor	1	4.5%
Other PhD	1	4.5%
Other	5	22.7%
Total	22	100%

Half of them received their advanced degree between 1981 to 1985 and the other half received their advanced degree between 1986 to 1989.

Table 32 shows the institutions from which they received their advanced degrees. Most alumni (66.6%) got their advanced degrees from SDSU, Iowa State University, and University of S.D.

Table 32. Universities conferring advanced degrees on alumni.

Institutions	No. of Alumni	% of Alumni
SDSU	6	28.6%
Iowa State University	4	19%
University of S.D	4	19%
University of Nebraska	2	9.5%
Arizona State University	2	9.5%
Other	3	14.3%
Total	21	100%

The alumni were asked to "rate the adequacy of SDSU's academic programs in preparing them to successfully complete the coursework required in their advanced or professional degree studies." Sixty-four (90.1%) of the alumni said that they had "good preparation" or "adequate preparation." Six (8.5%) said that they had "superior preparation." Only one answered that he had "inadequate preparation."

## CONCLUSIONS

The reason for conducting the survey was to assess the adequacy of the Economics Department curricula in preparing students for their future positions and to indicate areas of strength and weakness in that curricula. With the sample selected, students reviewed their academic experiences from a perspective of one to eleven years after graduation.

Generally, alumni stated they were satisfied with their education and would choose SDSU and their major if they were starting over. Most alumni would recommend SDSU to high school seniors interested in majoring in agricultural business or agricultural economics. More than half of the alumni would recommend SDSU for majors in economics or commercial economics.

When asked to evaluate the adequacy of their preparation in various areas, alumni rank introductory economics, intermediate economics, oral and written communications and mathematics as adequate. The only area that ranked low was computers. Since the survey was taken, a computer laboratory has been made available and students use computers in several classes.

Almost 85% of the alumni sample had secured a position in their major with more than half located in South Dakota. Only about 7% of the alumni were located on a farm or ranch.

This was an extensive survey covering a wide range of items of information and interest which can serve as a basis for comparison for future surveys. It was not designed to be repeated often. However, a smaller scale survey should be undertaken at least every five years.