

Office of Analysis, Assessment, and Accreditation

UNIVERSITY CONNECTIONS SURVEY 2006

November, 2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each Fall Semester USU offers two types of University Connections courses for incoming freshmen. One is an eight week course that starts when the semester begins. Students attend twice a week for eight weeks. The other Connections course starts on the Wednesday before the semester begins and students attend Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and half day on Saturday and then three times more in the semester, each session is one hour. Students attend the hourly sessions the first three weeks of the semester. The course is completed by the end of September. The objective of these courses is to “provide an environment of challenge and support to help new students make a successful transition to USU. Class curriculum and activities provide an environment wherein students become familiar with the broad academic, social, and cultural opportunities offered by USU and the surrounding community” (USU Catalog).

The Connections Survey was designed to assess how helpful the Connections course was, and evaluate satisfaction with various components of the course. Several demographic questions were also asked. This data is for both types of Connections. The majority of the students are enrolled in the course before the semester begins. A total of 1,454 students were enrolled and 1,142 students responded to the survey yielding a return rate of 78.5%.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

- 64% of the respondents were female.
- 78% of the respondents graduated from a high school in Utah.
- 97% of the respondents were between the ages of 17 and 19.
- When asked the difficulty of their Fall Semester courses approximately 46% of the respondents indicated that their courses were moderately difficult and 5% said they were very difficult.

THE CONNECTIONS COURSE WAS PERCEIVED AS BEING MOST USEFUL IN HELPING STUDENTS TO:

- Navigate the physical layout of the campus (74%).
- Get settled before school started (72%).

SELECTED FINDINGS

- 86% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that because of the Connections course they were more informed about campus events.
- 83% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they received useful information in the course.
- 80% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Connections course helped ease their transition to USU.
- 76% agreed or strongly agreed that it was important to sponsor evening activities for the Connections students.
- 74% agreed or strongly agreed that because of the library workshop they were more likely to ask for assistance from the library staff.
- 73% agreed or strongly agreed that the Connections Student Manual was user friendly.
- 75% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their Connections experience. In 2005, 63% were satisfied with their Connections experience.
- 69% would recommend the Connections course to other students. In 2005, 59% would recommend Connections to other students.

2006 UNIVERSITY CONNECTIONS SURVEY

Office of Analysis, Assessment, and Accreditation

November 2006

INTRODUCTION

Each Fall Semester USU offers two types of University Connections courses for incoming freshmen. One is an eight week course that starts when the semester begins. Students attend twice a week for eight weeks. The other Connections course starts on the Wednesday before the semester begins and students attend Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and half day on Saturday and then three times more in the semester, each session is one hour. The students meet once a week for the first three weeks. The course is designed to end by the end of September. The University Connections course was designed to give students an early introduction to the expectations and challenges of university life; to the academic, geographic, social/communal, and procedural maps of the University. Connections 2006 also emphasized some of the learning skills students would need to achieve their university goals successfully. The course explored problems common in the transition of students from high school to university life. The course provided an orientation to the breadth of University services and resources, to basic policies and procedures governing the conduct of staff and students, and to the physical layout of the USU campus and Cache County community.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the survey was to evaluate student opinion in the 57 sections of the Connections course taught the week prior to the beginning of the semester. The survey consisted of three parts: survey demographics, a section of questions evaluating students' experiences with the course, and a section requiring students to rank how useful Connections was in helping them with various goals. The Connections Survey was placed on the WebCT site and all students were asked to submit their responses by September 22, 2006.

A total of 1,454 students took the one week Connections course during Fall Semester of 2006 and a total of 1,142 students responded to the course survey. This is a response rate of 78.5%. A copy of the Connections Survey appears as Appendix A.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS (See Table 1)

Of the 1,142 respondents, 64% were female and 36% were male. A majority of respondents (78%) graduated from a Utah high school. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents were between the ages of 17 and 19.

When the students were asked to predict their Fall Semester grade point average, a majority of respondents (64%) anticipated getting between a 3.50 to a 4.0 GPA. When asked how difficult their Fall Semester courses had been, a plurality of respondents (46%) said that they were moderately difficult while 5% said they were very difficult.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Gender:	Male 36%	Female 64%	
Graduated from:	Utah High School 78%	Non-Utah High School 22%	
Age:	17-19 years 97%	20-22 years 3%	More than 22 years old 1%

Predicted GPA for Fall Semester:

4.00 - 3.50 64%	3.49 - 3.0 30%	2.99 - 2.5 6%	2.49 - 2.0 0%	Less than 2.00 0%
---------------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------------

How difficult have your Fall Semester courses been?

Not Difficult 5%	Somewhat Difficult 43%	Moderately Difficult 46%	Very Difficult 5%
----------------------------	----------------------------------	------------------------------------	-----------------------------

FINDINGS: THE USEFULNESS OF THE CONNECTIONS COURSE (See Table 2)

Students were asked to rate how important the Connections course was in helping them with various objectives. They were to rate the Connections objectives as Very Important, Somewhat Important, or Not Important.

Seventy-four percent of the respondents rated Connections as very important in helping them “To navigate the physical layout of campus”. Only 3% of the respondents thought this item was not important. Seventy-two percent of the respondents thought it was very important “To get settled before school starts”.

Learning about university policies was very important to 59% of the respondents. Learning about opportunities to be involved on campus was very important to 54% of the respondents. Making friends with other new students was very important to 49% of the respondents, while 42% thought this item was only somewhat important.

Only 38% of the respondents thought it was very important to understand what there is to do in Logan. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents said it was very important to meet faculty and staff, while 54% said this was only somewhat important. Only 35% thought Connections would help them learn more about a possible major, while 20% thought this was not very important.

Table 2. Connections was useful in helping me to:
 (Rate each of the following based on how useful the course was to you.)

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
1. To make friends with other new students.	49%	42%	9%
2. To learn about University policies.	59%	38%	2%
3. To navigate the physical layout of campus.	74%	23%	3%
4. To get settled before school starts.	72%	23%	4%
5. To learn more about a possible major.	35%	45%	20%
6. To learn about opportunities to be involved on campus.	54%	42%	4%
7. To understand what there is to do in Logan.	38%	47%	15%
8. To meet faculty and staff.	38%	54%	8%

FINDINGS: STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH THE CONNECTIONS COURSE (See Table 3)

The survey included questions requiring students to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements about Connections in general as it related to course content and assignments. Results are discussed in descending order of responses based on the percentage of respondents agreeing plus strongly agreeing with the statement.

A majority of the respondents (86%) agreed or strongly agreed that because of the course they were more informed about campus events. Only 3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In 2005 82% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this item, while 6% disagreed or strongly disagreed. When asked if the Convocations speaker enriched the "Warriors Don't Cry" literature assignment, 84% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while 4% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Eighty-three percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they received useful information in this course. Four percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. In 2005, 71% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while 11% disagreed or strongly disagreed. A majority of respondents (80%) agreed or strongly agreed that the Connections course helped ease their transition to USU, while 5% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In 2005, 72% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this item, while 10% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

When asked if it was important to sponsor evening activities for Connections students, 76% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while 5% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In 2005 51% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the evening activities were worthwhile. Nearly three quarters of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the SAAVI presentation provided useful information about rape/sexual assault/sexual harassment resources. Six percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. In 2005, just over half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the SAAVI presentation was useful.

The technology workshop provided useful information for 74% of the respondents, while 6% said it did not provide useful information. In 2005, 48% of the respondents indicated that the technology workshop was helpful, 13% said it was not. Seventy-four percent of the respondents said that because of the library workshop they were more likely to ask for assistance from the library staff. Nine percent said they were not more likely to ask for assistance. In 2005, 51% of the respondents said that because of the course they felt more comfortable getting help from library staff, while 16% said they were not.

The Connections Student Manual was reported as being user friendly by 73% of the respondents. Seven percent of the respondents said the manual was not user friendly. When asked if the course enabled students to feel more comfortable contacting professors, 71% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while 9% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In 2005, 63% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while 10% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

When asked if the Connections course assignments helped students learn more about what is expected of a college student, 64% agreed or strongly agreed. Sixteen percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. In 2005 students were asked if the common literature assignments helped them experience what would be required in a college course. Fifty-two percent agreed or strongly agreed, while 27% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Sixty-four percent of this year's respondents agreed or strongly agreed that peer mentor assistance was important to the course, while 12% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In 2005, respondents were asked if the weekly peer mentor e-mails were informative. Seventy-nine percent of those respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while 6% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The Kent Concert Hall Connections Opening helped 61% of the respondents feel welcome at USU.

Fifty-nine percent of the respondents said that the “Welcome to USU Fair” provided information that they needed to transition to USU and the local community, while 5% said it did not. Making friends at USU was easier because of Connections for 59% of the respondents. Thirteen percent said it was not easier. In 2005, 51% said it made making friends easier, while 18% said it did not. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents said the course helped them learn to manage their time more effectively, while 16% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In 2005, 49% said it help them with time management, while 22% said it did not help them with time management.

The “Warriors Don’t Cry” literature assignment helped 50% of the respondents understand what would be required in a college course, while 24% of the respondents said it did not help them in that way. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents said they chose to enroll in a “major section” to help them with their career decisions, while 25% said they did not enroll for this. In 2005, 35% of the respondents enrolled in this section for this reason, while 33% did not.

Three quarters of the respondents were satisfied with the Connections experience and 9% were not. In 2005, 63% were satisfied, while 17% were not. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the Connections course to other students. Twelve percent said they would not recommend the course to others. In 2005 only 59% said they would recommend Connections to others, while 20% said they would not recommend it.

More detailed data for all of this section of questions appear as Appendix B.

Table 3. Rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Agree + Agree	Neutral	Disagree + Strongly Disagree
Because of the course I was more informed about campus events.	86%	10%	3%
The Convocations speaker enriched the "Warriors Don't Cry literature assignment.	84%	12%	4%
I received useful information in this course.	83%	12%	4%
The Connections courses helped ease my transition to USU.	80%	14%	5%
It is important to sponsor evening activities for the Connections students.	76%	19%	5%
I am satisfied with my Connections experience.	75%	16%	9%
The SAAVI presentation provided useful information about rape/sexual assault/sexual harassment resources.	74%	20%	6%
The technology workshop provided useful information.	74%	20%	6%
Because of the library workshop, I am more likely to ask for assistance from the library staff.	74%	18%	9%
The Connections Student Manual was user friendly	73%	20%	7%
The course enabled me to feel more comfortable contacting my professors.	71%	19%	9%
I would recommend the Connections course to other students.	69%	19%	12%
The Connections course assignments helped me to learn more about what is expected of a college student.	64%	19%	16%
The peer mentor assistance was important to the course.	64%	24%	12%
The Kent Concert Hall Connections Opening helped me to feel welcome to USU.	61%	32%	6%
The "Welcome to USU Fair" provided information that I needed to transition to USU and the local community.	59%	36%	5%
Making friends at USU was easier because of Connections.	59%	28%	13%
The course helped me learn to manage my time more effectively.	57%	28%	16%
The "Warriors Don't Cry" literature assignment helped me to understand what would be required in a college course.	50%	26%	24%
I chose to enroll in a "major section" to help my career decisions.	38%	36%	25%

APPENDIX A
CONNECTION SURVEY

APPENDIX B

RAW DATA – STUDENT’S EXPERIENCES WITH CONNECTIONS

Rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The Connections courses helped ease my transition to USU.	27%	53%	14%	4%	1%
2. Making friends at USU was easier because of Connections.	22%	37%	28%	10%	3%
3. I chose to enroll in a “major section” to help my career decisions.	11%	27%	36%	18%	7%
4. The “Warriors Don’t Cry” literature assignment helped me to understand what would be required in a college course.	11%	39%	26%	20%	4%
5. I received useful information in this course.	27%	56%	12%	3%	1%
6. The course enabled me to feel more comfortable contacting my professors.	25%	46%	19%	8%	1%
7. Because of the course I was more informed about campus events.	40%	46%	10%	3%	0%
8. I am satisfied with my Connections experience.	30%	45%	16%	7%	2%
9. The course helped me learn to manage my time more effectively.	16%	41%	28%	12%	4%
10. The SAAVI presentation provided useful information about rape/sexual assault/sexual harassment resources.	22%	52%	20%	5%	1%
11. The technology workshop provided useful information.	20%	54%	20%	5%	1%
12. The peer mentor assistance was important to the course.	22%	42%	24%	9%	3%
13. It is important to sponsor evening activities for the Connections students.	35%	41%	19%	4%	1%
14. The Connections course assignments helped me to learn more about what is expected of a college student.	18%	46%	19%	12%	4%
15. I would recommend the Connections course to other students.	31%	38%	19%	8%	4%
16. Because of the library workshop, I am more likely to ask for assistance from the library staff.	28%	46%	18%	8%	1%
17. The Kent Concert Hall Connections Opening helped me to feel welcome to USU.	21%	40%	32%	5%	1%
18. The Convocations speaker enriched the “Warriors Don’t Cry literature assignment.	45%	39%	12%	3%	1%
19. The Connections Student Manual was user friendly.	22%	51%	20%	5%	2%
20. The “Welcome to USU Fair” provided information that I needed to transition to USU and the local community.	18%	41%	36%	4%	1%