

2005 Alumni Survey

Class of 2000

Written Comments

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Executive Summary

The Alumni Survey was administered in the spring of 2005 to graduates from the class of 2000 with a response rate of 44%. Almost 1/3 of the surveys included written comments at the end. The most common topic discussed was the challenge of the transition from college to work or grad school. It was also common to see descriptions of the Macalester campus environment emphasizing the value of its liberal, diverse, and engaging nature.

Frequency of Comments

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
1. Transition to work or grad school	26
2. Campus environment	15
3. About the survey	15
4. Financial aid	9
5. Personal growth	8
6. Academic skills	7
7. Alumni relations	6
8. Regrets	5

Number of surveys with written comments: 55 of 186, 30%

Note: Comments by one graduate may cover multiple subjects.

1. Of the comments about the **transition to work or grad school**, 15 of the 26 discussed preparation for life after Macalester. Graduates often mentioned feeling unprepared to enter the "real" world of work, and that better advising would have really helped. Faculty could have been more focused on careers. Graduates also said Career Services should do a "better" job, but gave few suggestions as to how.

"... I really wasn't very prepared for the realities of getting a job – that the 'dream' job may not be attainable with only a bachelor's degree. The year following graduation was a tough year, because it was really disappointing. Career services, etc., may be able to better prepare students for life after Macalester.

"A liberal arts education, of course, does not predispose one to mastery of a field. Too bad it doesn't seem to predispose one to employability either. Of all the people I knew at Mac, well friends anyway, I think 2 have jobs related to their major."

"I know that being young and twenty is a confusing time, but I could have really used some guidance from people. Instead, the faculty kind of checked out when you became a senior. No one was really there to break down what a career life is like."

"The career services was swamped with stories of people going on to further school. ...there are (or at least were) some exciting opportunities in the business world that seemed to be ignored by the career department."

2. The **campus environment** was often described as diverse, liberal, and engaging. Criticisms of the environment mentioned inconsistency with academic rigor between departments and an "anti-establishment" focus.

"Macalester, please remain diverse and liberal. These two aspects of the student body, alone, contributed to the greatest personal growth."

"The things from my Macalester experience that I found most edifying were the people I came in contact with and the liberal, critical thinking environment. It's a delicate balance to hold where everyone's voice can be heard. I hope you're keeping it up."

"My sense is that the rigor of departments was not totally consistent and that professors were not very evenly allocated across departments."

"When I was there, people had this chip on their shoulder, myself included, that job development, learning about the mainstream... and career minded thinking was all frowned upon. We thought that was all "selling out to the man". We needed people to help us really think hard about that – to really show us why someone might want to do that kind of thing, before we decided it was bad."

3. Most of the comments **about the survey** tried to clarify answers or point out problems in the survey:

"Many of my friends work as wait staff, union organizers, and actors. You should've known that 'occupations frequently chosen by college graduates' would get you nowhere with Mac grads!"

"I note that there is no category for self-employment in your career options. This is a significant part of what I have been doing and continue to do with my life."

4. The timing of the Alumni Survey in the spring of 2005 happened to coincide with Macalester's decision to move away from need-blind admissions. This showed up in the **financial aid** comments in the survey.

"Need based scholarships are deeply important to maintain and cultivate socioeconomic class diversity. Being around working class students was a crucial and necessary part of my education. More need based financial aid!"

5. Eight of the graduates described their time at Macalester as a time of tremendous **personal growth**:

"I swear, life at Mac was 12 years worth of experience shoved into 4 years. I learned more about who I was in that time than in the 18 years before. Everything was permissible; everything was possible."

6. **Academic skills** were discussed in terms of how useful they were after graduation:

"I still operate the way I did in college. I don't fit in with my 9-5er colleagues. When we are in a crunch I think back to finals week. When things are slow I think about how I used fall break to get ahead... I allow myself to ask for challenging work when I get bored because I know I will be able to learn new things – I mean really new things. Thanks Macalester."

"I have found that the critical thinking I learned at Macalester has been most valuable to me. Secondly, I could not have accomplished so much without the writing skills I perfected at Macalester."

7. The six comments about **alumni relations** covered a variety of topics, including concerns that the Alumni Office only wanted money, difficulty in volunteering, and the need for alumni to promote Macalester more:

"I feel as though the only reason Macalester is interested in me as an alumnus is because they want money from me. My own class reunion invite was sent with a pledge card – how tacky. Networks for alumni are really weak and our reputation as a good undergraduate school does not exist in most places outside the Midwest. The reputation of my school has not done well for me and I strongly believe that a more involved alumni base could change this."

"I've consistently offered to volunteer (for the annual fund and CDC at Mac) since graduation but have never been contacted by Mac to participate. Do you not need alumni support? I realize you cannot contact every alum, but would be happy to volunteer. Please let me know."

8. A few of the graduates listed **regrets** about their time at Macalester, usually for classes not taken:

"My school offered many good classes – however I didn't take many of them due to time and my own choice. I probably would have learned more about science and tech. had I taken those classes. That's a regret I have from college."

"I was allowed to skip taking a language at Mac because I took Latin in high school. Big mistake. One of my biggest regrets is not learning a foreign language early on."