LOP Alumni Survey Literature Review Paper

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Feedback to Nathan on 4/30/23: Nathan, what a thoroughly researched paper!!! I appreciate your tenacity and rigor. Your recommendations are timely, evidence-based, and practical. Thank you for the important contribution you are making to the LOP/ MLO Program Evaluation.
See specific feedback and comments in the margins/body of your paper.

Introduction

Problem Statement

The Vanderbilt University Peabody Leadership & Organizational Performance (LOP) / Master's in Leading Organizations (MLO) Programs need to review and refresh their alumni satisfaction survey incorporating evidence-based questions and methodologies to measure program alumni satisfaction and the market competitiveness of the program accurately and efficiently.

Relevant Sources

Research for this paper consisted of reviewing the previous LOP Program Evaluation known as the MWork document, a literature review of academic papers and research on the topics of alumni and student satisfaction surveys, research on satisfaction factors of student and alumni of master's programs, and first-hand data and written submissions shared by the current LOP Program Director and Faculty.

Goal of Paper

The goal of this paper is to present research to inform the creation and distribution of an alumni satisfaction survey with ongoing utility for Vanderbilt University Peabody College. The most recent past LOP Program Director, Dr. Susan Douglas, confirmed a literature review was not conducted prior to the creation of the current alumni satisfaction survey being used by the LOP. The research outlined in this paper is intended to provide the initial research-based guidance, questions, and methodology for the LOP program's data collection process which will help the program assess and improve its curriculum and programming.

In addition to the stand alone value this paper will have for the LOP program, this research will also contribute to the LOP/MLO Program Evaluation project currently underway and being led by Vanderbilt Ph.D. candidates; Gregg DiNardo and Jeremy Speikes. This broader study is intended "to ascertain current and future market needs relative to leadership and organizational performance. It will include assessing both programs' relative success, strengths, and weaknesses and determine the programs' value and competitive advantage relative to comparable programs. The findings will be used to decipher synergies and develop a plan for future direction of each program" (LOP/MLO Project Plan, 2023, pg. 1).

Although the goals of these two studies are similar, this LOP Alumni Survey Literature Review paper will be considered supporting documentation but is not in any way dependent on the larger study for its findings or conclusions. Ensuring evidence-based methods are utilized to collect data for this current work and future projects will support the validity and academic integrity of the project, processes, finding, conclusions, and interventions. The result will be a more academically rigorous approach to measuring alumni satisfaction and market fit among other comparable programs. This paper will not focus on those other programs but will recommend evidence-based methods to collect data that will aid in that competitive analysis conducted by the current LOP/MLO Program Evaluation research project and on an ongoing basis by LOP program leadership, faculty, and staff. ==clear and well reasoned introduction==

Background

History and Status of LOP Program

The Leadership and Organization Performance (LOP) program located in the Leadership, Policy, and Organizations Department of Vanderbilt University Peabody College welcomed its first cohort in 2011. The LOP program was formed by merging the Organizational Leadership

and Human Resource Development programs at Peabody College. The thoughtfully considered decision to combine these programs was made in response to budgetary issues and a growing awareness that the two programs' content was not aligned with the skills and expertise needed by an evolving marketplace (Work, 2012). When the program was introduced, the students enrolled in this program had professional experience ranging from recent college graduates to enrollees with 10 plus years of post-grad work. As stated in the MWork document: "some [students] aspire to careers in human capital consulting, others to the nonprofit sector, others to government agencies, others to educational institutions, and so on. This "professional diversity" (as well as diversity related to ethnography, gender, national origin, and the like) is considered a crucial component for the admissions process" (Work, 2012). These factors will be relevant in later sections of this paper regarding the substantive value stakeholders of the program can provide to the assessment of the program's effectiveness. The structure of the program, with full-time students typically enrolling in three 3-credit hours courses per semester offered in the evenings and on weekends remains the same in the LOP program's current form. This structure continues to be effective for younger students with part-time jobs as well as more experienced professionals with full-time jobs and families.

The original curriculum of the LOP program was "built on and grounded in theory from the following disciplines: leadership, organization theory, behavior, and development, learning, analytics, and strategy" (Work, 2012). Vanderbilt Peabody College developed this curriculum to prepare students headed to multiple professional sectors "to understand the social context in which human learning, development, and performance take place" (Work, 2012). To achieve these goals, the original Program Director curated a list of core competencies each student would gain or master because of the LOP Curriculum. A full list of the core competencies and their

descriptions, which were taken from *FYI - For Your Improvement: A Guide for Development and Coaching for Learners, Managers, Mentors, and Feedback Givers* by Eichinger & Lombardo, can be found in the Appendix of this document. The heading of each competency is as follows:

Building Effective Teams	Innovation Management	Planning
Conflict Management	Interpersonal Savvy	Problem Solving
Creativity	Learning on the Fly	Process Management
Dealing with Ambiguity	Managing Vision & Purpose	Strategic Agility
Decision Quality	Motivating Others	Written Communication

Based on the Vanderbilt Peabody website and the materials currently provided to LOP students, these core competencies have not changed and are still used by the faculty to measure students' progress and inform curriculum decisions.

Having established the program's origins, its competencies, and relevant comparison between the original and current program, we are now able to review a previously compiled program assessment structure and subsequently provide research-based guidance for the structure of a new program assessment.

Previous Program Evaluation

Shortly after the LOP master's program was introduced, it participated in a program evaluation designed by a graduate assistant, Melissa Work. This document is known in the department as the MWork document and is referenced to as such in this document. According to the MWork document created in 2012: "The purpose of this evaluation plan is to develop a

process through which Peabody College's Department of Leadership, Policy, and Organizations may measure the success of the newly-created 'Leadership and Organizational Performance' (LOP) M.Ed. program. The evaluation plan aims to answer the following generalized key questions:

> - To what extent is the LOP program meeting the needs and expectations of its enrolled students, current/potential employers, and future program alumni?
> - To what extent is the LOP program recognized as an effective program of study to enrolled students, current/potential employers, and program alumni? In what ways should the LOP program be modified to achieve the goals of those groups? (Work, 2012, pg. 2)"

Beyond this primary usefulness, it was hoped the evaluation would accomplish certain secondary goals, such as: "to offer impressive measures for marketing/promotional materials, to provide continued justification of the development of the LOP program to alumni of the programs which were dissolved to make way for LOP, and to demonstrate to other programs/departments within Peabody College (and perhaps outside Peabody College as well) that this program is deserving of recognition" (Work, 2012, pg. 6).

The primary, secondary, and tertiary beneficiaries of the original program evaluation are as follows:

- **Primary Beneficiaries:** Dr. Dayle Savage, the requester of the evaluation
- **Secondary Beneficiaries:** the past, present, and future LOP students
- **Tertiary Beneficiaries:** future employers of LOP students, the family of students, and other programs and administrator at Vanderbilt and other schools (MWork, 2012, pg. 6)

The original evaluation was based on the Kirkpatrick Four-Level Approach. Each level is designed to capture data under the following headings:

- **Level 1 - Reaction:** "How did the Participants feel? Did they like it?"

- **Level 2 - Learning:** "What was acquired? Did they learn it?"

- **Level 3 - Behavior:** "What was applied? Are they using it?"

- **Level 4 - Results & Impact:** "What were the results? Did it make an impact? (MWork, 2012, pg. 7)

This approach was supplemented with aspects of Brinkenhoff's integrated Model to assess the "big picture" effectiveness of the program. The effectiveness of the original evaluation's data collection capability was highly dependent on this structure as well as the structure of the LOP program. The original plan was for the evaluation to run continuously, collecting and coding data at key points throughout the semesters. The data would be reviewed and utilized to assess, advise, and update the program's curriculum and structure, as needed.

Level 1 consisted of a survey and focus groups. The survey was intended to be distributed after LOP students completed 18 hours of coursework and their program required internship. The focus group consisted of 6-7 member groups of full-time students.

Level 2 relied on a "competency-based pre-test" administered at the beginning of the program and the comprehensive exams given at the end of the program. These bookend assessments were intended to compare the student's baseline competencies as they entered the program to their hopefully improved competencies as they exited the program.

Level 3 was characterized as an observation report compiled by the students upon completion of their required internships. Subsequent cohorts would encounter a version of this level through the

process of writing their required White Paper and during the associated symposium where they presented their experience, research, and findings of their Applied Experience internships. **Level 4** data was scheduled to be collected via phone interviews with LOP alumni. The first interviews were planned to be conducted with graduates of the Organizational Leadership and Human Resource Development programs until the students graduated from the LOP program.

Limitations of Previous Survey

The goal of reviewing the evaluation process from the MWork program evaluation is to assess the scope of its usefulness as a basis for the new evaluation being created in 2023. In the years since the initial program evaluation was compiled, the original methodology outlined for assessing the program was essentially abandoned and was therefore ineffective. Two reasons for this breakdown are: changes that occurred to the structure of the program which dismantled the original evaluation process and a failure to consistently implement the program evaluation process.

When asked recently via email, a longtime LOP program professor, Dr. Corbette Doyle, reported she does not remember the base-line competency test, the pulse check surveys, or the phone interviews ever occurring. Because this study was unable to determine the exact time these assessment processes broke down or if they were ever fully implemented, we will focus on the difference between the originally designed process and what is being done at the time of this paper in the Spring of 2023.

One of the main reasons the process outlined in the MWork doc was ineffective is because that evaluation process was dependent on the structure of the LOP program, so any changes to the program's structure caused material changes to the format of the evaluation process for the program. One example of this is in Level 2, competencies are measured with a

pre and post program test. Unfortunately, the pre-test process was not consistently administered and the post-program comprehensive exams required for graduation stopped in 2015. Additionally, the Level 3 "one-shot/pre-experimental design in the form of a competency-based observation report filled out upon students' completion of their for-credit internships" morphed into students creating a post-internship White Papers which are presented at an all-cohort symposium event (MWork, 2012). The observation report submitted by advisors was also abandoned at an undetermined point of time.

A second reason the original assessment process faltered was the lack of adherence to the process by administration and faculty. One example is the previously mentioned observation report which is no longer completed by internship supervisors, and there are other examples, for instance:

- pre-test establishing baseline competency levels administered to students starting the program
- pulse check survey administered to students after completion of 18 credit hours
- competency-based observation report completed by internship supervisors (faculty)
- focus group discussions
- alumni phone interviews

The application and usefulness of these steps are unique from each other. Some steps were never implemented. Some steps were disengaged when changes to the LOP programming occurred. And, other steps were not adhered to consistently because of other priorities, a perceived lack of value, or operational friction. Whatever the cause, the result was the same: the alumni satisfaction and competency assessment outlined in the MWork document was not effectively

implemented and therefore was not useful in collecting the data necessary to measure alumni satisfaction and competency achievement. Additionally, because so much of the LOP structure which the original assessment was dependent upon has changed since the MWork document was created, it cannot simply be reintroduced and implemented. It will be necessary to create a new survey utilizing the lessons learned from the gaps in the MWork assessment and research-based guidance on alumni satisfaction assessment best practices methodology. Peabody faculty who were on staff when the MWork document was created also report no recollection of any implementation of integral aspects of the MWork documents assessment recommendations.

To summarize, the structure of the MWork's recommended program assessment is problematic for several reason: 1) while it is templated on the research-based Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Approach because of "it's simplicity and an inherent flexibility", the assessment described in the model is cumbersome and weakened by its complexity, 2) the MWork evaluation design is dependent on aspects of the LOP programs internal structure which can and have changed rendering the data collection methodology associated with them ineffective, and 3) the steps, most likely because of their complexity and administrative burden, were never uniformly implemented. When aspects of the evaluation's levels were implemented, it was not done consistently, suggesting that sufficient contribution from administration was not achieved during the assessment creation process nor was *buy-in* from the faculty and administrators responsible for administering the assessments achieved regarding implementation. Furthermore, the assessment's focus and dependency on the program's framework and competencies suggest that it is biased toward the structure and goals of the program, marginalizing the input of students, alumni, and external stakeholders, such as employers.

Current survey

In the absence of a research-based alumni assessment, the immediate past Program

Director, Dr. Susan Douglas, created a simple google form survey informed by the rudimentary

start, stop, continue methodology to capture data from LOP students as they graduate. The

survey questions are listed in the table below.

Current LOP Survey Questions (as of March 2023)
From your time in LOP, what did you learn that you think you'll still be using in 5 or 10 years? Why?
What should LOP continue to do, or do even more of?
Please complete the following sentence. The LOP experience would be even better if...
Please complete the following sentence. The LOP experience would be even better if...
How would you like to be involved with LOP in the future?
Any electives you would recommend outside of LOP?
What resources have you found useful and how did you find them? (e.g., funding, housing, anything you may have discovered)
LOP one-liner (How would you describe LOP in an interview?)
General advice for the next generation of students. What will help them be successful and gain the most from their LOP experience?
Any suggestions or improvements for this survey or the information gathering process?

Dr. Douglas reported this survey was not research-based. The following quote from Dr. Douglas explains the methodology used to create this survey:

> "I did not do a literature review on student evaluations of educational programs, but that could certainly be helpful. Rather, the approach I took was to develop a survey specifically for the LOP program to gather desired data.
>
> The first few questions are based on the start-stop-continue paradigm. The other questions about the program and resources were grounded in student experience and directly related to issues I heard frequently e.g., about electives, seeking help in describing LOP, and the practical skills related to LOP (e.g., seeing how specific knowledge, tools, skills were utilized even in the internship). The last question is based on sound survey practices, which is to ask what haven't you asked."

This explanation of how the current survey was created and intended to work does not imply the information it collects is not somewhat useful. However, it does confirm no literature review was done prior to its creation and includes an endorsement from the former Program Director, who is still an LOP faculty member, to complete a literature review prior to creating a new survey.

Reason for new survey

As the Leadership & Organizational Performance program progresses into its second decade as an offering at Vanderbilt University Peabody College, the program must have a research-based method to assess the progress of it's students in the mastery of the program's core competencies, alumni satisfaction with the program, and external factors, such as employer satisfactions and competitiveness among programs at other institutes of higher education.

Goal of new Survey

The research outlined in the following sections has been compiled to inform the creation of a new survey and assessment process which will ultimately contribute to the larger scope LOP/MLO program evaluation underway at the time of this document's creation.

Literature Review

The topics of the papers included in this review focus mainly on graduate program alumni satisfaction and alumni giving, as well as assessment or program evaluations of graduate school programs similar to the LOP program. This research found several variables are consistently associated with alumni satisfaction with graduate school programs, it provides the context for the importance of these variables, and it suggests each variable could be a useful area of questioning to include in an alumni survey. An additional area of research found to have relevant content are studies on the topic of alumni giving due to the direct correlation between alumni satisfaction and alumni event participation and giving. The methodologies of these studies suggest research-based techniques to assess alumni satisfaction. These papers also contain recommendations of programs and steps academic institutions can utilize with students to promote satisfaction and promote ongoing alumni engagement and potentially donations.

In Slameto and Wiranto's 2021 paper, *Alumni Satisfaction in terms of Classroom Infrastructure, Lecturer, and Curriculum*, the authors' goal was "to determine the satisfaction of the Educational Management Program alumni and to examine the variables, facilities and infrastructure, professionalism of lecturers, and curriculum relevance, which determine the alumni satisfaction" (Slamento & Wiranto, 2021, pg. 1). The paper explains how the changes in the needs of the global workforce have created alternatives for individuals seeking higher bingo education which has forced private universities to become more competitive for students and

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more concerned with the satisfaction of their alumni. This study was conducted at a private university in Java, Indonesia and surveyed 156 alumni of a competency-based master's program in Educational Management. The institution is concerned with the quality of the academic experience, the product market fit of the curriculum, as well as the satisfaction of the program graduates, their families, and their future employers. Therefore, understanding the key factors influencing alumni satisfaction is an integral part of their efforts to assess their programs and make necessary improvements. These characteristics suggest a high level of relevance to this paper's research.

This paper highlights findings in Gibson (2010) which concluded elements of the academic program were predominantly the determining factors of student and alumni satisfaction. These elements include:

- teaching quality
- curriculum
- achievements of student learning
- career aspirations
- services and facilities
- academic personnel

Additional research provided by Slamento & Wiranto (Table 1) offers a global perspective on research regarding items relevant to alumni satisfaction. The Cabrera study referenced on this table is also included in this literature review.

Table 1. Research on alumni satisfaction from various parts of the world.

No	Region/Country	Researcher (year)	Title	Relevant results	Implications
1	Asia: Malaysia	Thian (2014)	Institutional factors that contribute to educational quality at a private higher education institution in Malaysia.	A significance to the existing literature regarding the quality, quality assurance, and strategies to manage the quality of education in private tertiary institutions was created.	Malaysia and other developing countries gain the requirements for good application to meet the quality of education at the level of private tertiary institutions.
	Turki	Turan et al. (2015)	Explaining career satisfaction on the basis of alumni satisfaction, gap period, and gender.	In some fields of research, in particular the concept of career satisfaction has not been adequately evaluated.	The need for an educational model based on alumni literature that is able to explain the career satisfaction of their alumni.
2	Europe	García-Aracil (2009)	European graduates' level of satisfaction with higher education.	The social environment and curriculum of the study programs were aspects the graduates were satisfied with the most, but a lack of research involvement, and insufficient course materials caused dissatisfaction among the graduates.	Administrative aspects are required to boost students' satisfaction. In the same way, the improvement of undergraduate education quality should be carried out hand in hand with the improvement of the position as a research institution.
3	Africa/Kenya	Kara et al. (2016)	Educational service quality and student satisfaction in public universities in Kenya.	They discovered 10 dimensions of the quality of educational services in universities that can be relied upon. Lecturer: professionalism, quality of teaching methods, reliable examinations, and obtained learning advantages. Facilities and infrastructure: teaching media, Internet accessibility, learning modules accessibility, campus surrounding quality, and library services. Student services: quality of administrative services and quality of student welfare services.	The courses being offered by the university should guarantee the future demands of graduates. In accordance with the market needs, the curriculum must be reviewed periodically to meet the learning experiences of students.
4	Australia/Sydney	Martin et al. (2000)	Graduate satisfaction with the university and perceived employment preparation.	Preparing graduates to meet the workplace requirements is in fact difficult to actualize by the universities.	The need to identify what factors contribute to students' preparations for work and the need for graduate feedback (which is within the control of the university).
5	USA	Cabrera et al. (2003)	Alumni survey.	A study of more than 270 sources (books, articles, and institutional reports) about alumni research.	The discovery of three conceptual approaches to further alumni research based on: 1. outcomes, 2. alumni involvement and competence, and 3. alumni grants.

(Slamento & Wiranto, 2021, pg. 2)

Slamento & Wiranto continue to explain that if improving the academic experience and outcomes to increase alumni satisfaction is the goal, it is important to understand the determining factors of these results which the university can control. The authors separate these into influencing factors and determining factors and includes the following:

"The factors/variables influencing the alumni satisfaction are related to: (1) providing quality educational experiences to students (Sun et al., 2007), and clarity of design, interactions with instructors, and active discussions among course participants (Swan, 2001); (2) ensuring that instructional effectiveness comprises fourteen items which assess stu-dents' academic experiences, including the curriculum (Elliott and Healy, 2001); and (3) providing good constructive advice related to the curriculum and the availability of classroom facilities and infrastructure (Kardoyo et al., 2018). The factors/variables that function as determinants which influence the alumni satisfaction are: (1) the lecturer's

professionalism, (2) the relevance of the curriculum, and (3) the quality of classroom facilities and infrastructure" (Slamento & Wiranto, 2021, pg. 2).

This research suggests several factors to consider when assessing student and alumni satisfaction and support the inclusion of these topics in an alumni survey. Slamento and Wiranto also explain satisfaction is a feeling and is derived from the comparison between reality and expectations. Therefore, while the factors listed above are useful, they are not the only elements impacting student satisfaction. Other key factors influencing student / alumni satisfaction are include: "service quality, emotional factors, cost, performance, speed, convenience, comfort, friendliness, equipment completeness, reliability, conformity to specifications, endurance, service ability, aesthetics, product characteristics, service, location, facilities, image, atmosphere, and communication (Budiastuti, 2002)" (Slamento & Wiranto, 2021, pg. 2).

Ultimately, Slamento & Wiranto's research found that "36.10% of alumni satisfaction was determined by the level of lecturers' professionalism. Therefore, H1 which states the existence of a determinant/professionalism of lecturers (X2) can be accepted. On the other hand, the other variables, facilities and infrastructure services (X1) and curriculum quality (X3), were not determinants of the satisfaction of alumni of the Educational Management Program, because these were influenced by another variable that was not discussed in this research" (Slamento & Wiranto, 2021, pg. 5).

Based on these findings, an increased level of detail in the measurement of lecturer professionalism, may need to be included in a new LOP survey, however, the other elements [could leverage end of semester student feedback "Course Evaluations"] addressed in their paper and included in this literature review should not be overlooked for inclusion and study.

Further contribution to the research on graduate program alumni satisfaction assessments was compiled in Alberto Cabrera's paper, *Alumni Survey: Three conceptualizations to alumni research.* Cabrera also recognizes market demand and competitiveness as a cause for the increase in alumni satisfaction surveys and research on these studies. Cabrera's examination found three types of alumni surveys (table in Appendix): alumni outcomes, student engagement & competencies, and alumni giving, which is common to this paper's research because the willingness to give is so closely associated with alumni satisfaction.

Alumni outcomes

Surveys designed to collect data on alumni outcomes are based on an appraisal of the alumni's accomplishments the years after they graduate (e.g., Dellow & Romano, 2002; Melchiori, 1988). This approach is an effort to answer these three questions:

- How satisfied are graduates with their employment?
- How satisfied are the graduates with the degree granting institution?
- To what extent are graduates fully participating in civic activities?

Some studies found problems collecting information about satisfaction with their university experience and their career achievement in the same survey (Pascarella, 2002; Pike, 1994). Cabrera asked the question: "can we trust, then, alumni surveys to gauge collegiate experiences?" (Cabrera, 2003, pg. 5). Cabrera goes on to reference a series of studies by Pike which question the accuracy of alumni surveys citing the likelihood student's satisfaction in their last academic year would determine how they would answer a survey the first few years after graduating. However, this similarity did not always exist. "A significant number of individuals had more negative perceptions of their college experiences as alumni than they did as seniors" (Pike, 1994, pp. 107-108). Additional bias with this method can occur because alumni

at this stage of LOP&MLO, we need to focus on career achievement and be able to gather sound data that will help us predict (anticipate) what the markets needs are for graduation students relative to capabilities & competencies.

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dissatisfaction with their current work experience can negatively impact their perception of their college experience. Additionally, post-graduation outcomes could easily be the result of skills or relationships acquired outside of school so using them as indicators of alumni satisfaction may not be useful (Cabrera, 2003). important point

Student engagement and competencies

One method of assessing alumni satisfaction scholars are recommending is measuring the "student engagement in college and attainment of competencies" (Cabrera, 2003, pg 7). Cabrera encourages surveyors to: "align assessment efforts with what research shows matters in a student's development, learning, and attainment of competencies (see Pascarella, 2002; Kuh 2001; Roberson, Carnes & Vice, 2002)" (Cabrera, pg. 7-8, 2003).

Policy questions in this category deal with experiences while in school and the degree to which competencies acquired in school are useful in work or graduate settings. These questions include:

What are the competencies (i.e., outcomes, abilities & values) that college education should foster most?
To what extent were alumni engaged with faculty/staff/peers while attending college?
To what extent do colleges and universities engage students on those learning activities more prone to produce critical competencies?
To what extent do graduates apply those competencies in the job or in graduate school?
(Cabrera, 2003, pg. 8)

this is a key piece of what we are after for redesign of LOP & MLO porgrams.

There are methodology concerns regarding measuring engagement because, for example, some activities students engage in while in academic programs are not associated with skills development but do impact their satisfaction levels.

Assessing how alumni utilize the competencies they gained from academic experiences continues to gain scholarly support (Ewell, 1996). This is motivated by "by public policy, accreditation and the needs of the employers of graduate students" (Cabrera, 2003, pg. 10). The methodology for this category includes determining competencies relevant to academia and employers as well as defining "the relevant knowledge, values, and abilities (hereby defined as competencies) that enable a college graduate to succeed in the job while singling out those situations that call for their application. The methodology recommended by advocates of the content validation approach to competencies can be summarized as follows:

1. Define a universe of competencies. Do a comprehensive job analysis of those jobs graduates are most likely to hold. Single out those skills, knowledge, and abilities each task involves. Identify those competencies that can be taught in college from those that are learned on the job. Pay particular attention to those contexts where those competencies are most likely to be effective.
2. Develop and adopt assessment measures. Make certain that your assessment tool reflects the competencies that enable graduates to succeed on the job under a variety of relevant contexts.
3. Validate assessment measures with experts. Pilot test the instrument with graduates, jobholders, and experts."

  (Roberson, Carnes & Vice, 2002) (Cabrera, 2003, pg. 11).

While tracking the application of competencies can be a productive method for measuring satisfaction, this approach does have inherent challenges. One is that it is difficult to determine where the competencies were gained - in or out of school and using any outcome method could be biased by a *halo effect*. (Pascarella, 2001) For example, when the positive experience a student had at athletic events causes them to remember everything about an academic experience favorably (Cabrera, 2003).

Regarding approach and format, the highest answer rates (51%) were associated with surveys that included the "warm approach" of a handwritten style note from University leadership (Smith & Baers, 1987). "Web-based surveys promise to be a highly efficient mechanism in increasing response rates and reducing measurement biases." (Cabrera, 2003, pg. 19).

In reference to the design and format of a survey, Cabrera finds best practices in the design of alumni surveys suggest offices including admissions, public affairs, development, development research, career services, institutional research and academic deans should all play a role in the development of the alumni survey (Pollick, 1995; Pendel, 1985; Fisher, 1988). This collaboration among key audiences makes certain the questionnaire gathers information to support decisions ranging from academic advising, career counseling, admissions, public affairs, institutional research, and academic departments to forming development strategies (Melchiori, 1988). Additionally, surveys should use simple phrases and break up questions into groupings with similar topics. (Cabrera, 2003, pg. 20)

To gain a broader perspective on the perceptions of graduate students, further research was conducted to understand the aspects of a graduate program which influence student retention. Because retention is closely tied to satisfaction, understanding the relevant themes of retention could illuminate the characteristics of a graduate program which influence satisfaction. In *Retention Strategies of a Successful Graduate Program*, Morote, et al, analyzed a Doctor of Education program at Dowling College on Long Island, NY, to answer the following question: "What themes emerge from crucial insights of alumni and administrators regarding how the doctoral program challenges or influences their retention" (Morote, 2022, pg. 1)?

Dowling is a private institution, focusing on graduate education programs, and utilizes the cohort model. These similarities to Vanderbilt Peabody College suggest the findings by Morote et al will be applicable to this paper's research.

Multiple aspects of this paper on retention strategies have substantive value for the LOP program. First, Morote et al include several studies highlighting the importance and impact a healthy relationship with an engaged advisor can have on a graduate student's experience (Holley & Caldwell, 2012). This relationship is especially relevant to the success of students of color (Isik-Ercan, 2012). Additional research on adults in a cohort learning environment shows this influence extends beyond advisors to other faculty administrators and staff. "In 1985, Noel, Levitz, and Saluri explained the importance of college personnel's caring attitude as the most potent retention force on campus" (Morote et al, 2022, pg. 26). This would suggest assessing student satisfaction with Peabody College support staff could be important to gain a full picture of overall satisfaction.

Second, Morote et al mention Nash and Kallenbach's research on 18 adult learning programs which found six affective needs which are met by strong programs:

1. Sense of belonging   <mark>i like this---also use for designing the program</mark>
2. Clarity of purpose
3. Agency
4. Competence
5. Relevance
6. Stability

(Nash & Kallenbach, 2009)

These needs could also be relevant aspects for the LOP program to research in alumni satisfaction assessments and surveys.

And, lastly the findings of the Morote et al paper isolated three overarching themes relevant to doctoral student retention. These themes are: 1) sense of belonging & cooperative learning, 2) faculty administrative support, and 3) clear purpose & competence. Morote et al defines these as follows:

BINGO THIS IS IT

1. **Sense of belonging & cooperative learning:** Create cohorts as they have been proven to increase retention; create peer mentorship activities and support social networking activities.
2. **Faculty and administrative support:** Increase diversity in the study body and the faculty body; have an administrator or counselor on-site that provides individualized counseling and follow up with students; and create on-site research activities such as symposiums or conferences.
3. **Clear purpose & competence:** Provide engagement activities to support student's perseverance and review curricula to align with current market needs.

A theme-based literature review found in the Morote et al paper in included in the Appendix to provide context and research-based evidence that could be used to support including questions designed to track these themes in the new LOP program surveys and assessments.

Table 1

Themes	Topic / Literature aligned
Sense of Belonging & Cooperative Learning	• Group learning (Noel, Levitz & Saluri, 1985); cohorts (Drago-Severson et al., 2001). • Sense of belonging & community of learners (Nash & Kallenbach, 2009) • International students (Bollia, Agasistc & Johnes, 2015) • Research conference on campus (Bollia, Agasistc & Johnes, 2015) • Social systems (Tinto, 1975)
Faculty-Administration Support	• Financial advisement (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012) • College caring attitude (Noel, Levitz and Saluri, 1985) • Advisor (mentor) key element of retention (Holley & Caldwell, 2012; Mullen, 2007; Mullen et al., 1999). • Collegial relationship with faculty (Zeynep Isik-Ercan, 2012). • Stability (Nash & Kallenbach, 2009)
Clear Purpose & Competence	• Expected earnings (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012, p. 644). • Clarity of purpose (Nash & Kallenbach, 2009) • Competence (Nash & Kallenbach, 2009) • Relevance (Nash & Kallenbach, 2009) • Psychological – outcomes, goals (Bean and Metzner, 1985).

(Morote, et al, 2022, pg. 29)

An additional insight regarding alumni satisfaction with graduate school experiences can be found in Cullen's 2021 study of young alumni engagement and donor participation. These findings are relevant because willingness to donate is a measure of satisfaction and this study's surveys included questions associated with alumni satisfaction. The study referenced Van Horn's 2002 paper, *Satisfaction with the Undergraduate Experience as Motivation for Smaller Dollar Alumni Donations,* which associates alumni satisfaction and giving with educational experience of the alumni (Van Horn, 2002). Additionally, it is important to recognize that students graduating with large amounts of student loans are more likely to have a negative opinion of an institution than those leaving with no or less debt (Marshall, 2019). This suggests including

questions about student debt in a survey could be useful to separate sentiment about the academic experience from the lingering impact of student loan debt. Lastly, Cullen's paper highlights the concept of an alumni in training, preparing students to be alumni throughout their academic experience. This concept may not be relevant to the creation of a new survey, but it may be helpful as a philosophical approach to how the LOP program is designed. This could be achieved by mapping the determinants of the alumni satisfaction and engagement and then reverse engineering those into the academic experiences and curriculum which could increase the likelihood of positive student outcomes and perceptions. The academic and competency goals of the program would also be built into that structure allowing the institution and student to achieve their goals concurrently.

The final paper we reviewed for this analysis was Gaier's 2003 paper, *The Impact of Alumni Satisfaction with their Undergraduate Academic Experience on Alumni Giving and Alumni Participation*. Similar to Cullen's paper, this study set out to measure the correlation between the level of alumni satisfaction and Alumni donations. While this is not the intent of this paper, the method and characteristics of satisfaction highlighted by Gaier can have transferable utility for our purposes. This study contributes several useful elements.

First, it explains the undergraduate experience (for our purposes, the graduate school experience) consists of two elemental systems: the social and the academic (Gaier 2003). "The academic system contains the structured curricular activities and relationships with faculty and staff. The social system contains extracurricular activities and relationships with peers" (Gaier, 2003, pg. 3). Gaier studied these two elements to determine how satisfaction with each influenced alumni participation which the author equates with enthusiasm to be a financial donor. Although the reasons for Gaier's study differs from this paper's effort to inform a new

survey, Gaier's broad elemental systems influencing alumni satisfaction could be used in the creation of the LOP survey as headings for groups of questions and separate concepts to consider when reviewing data.

The second value Gaier's paper has for this research is the methodology used by the study to collect data from the alumni. The survey utilized by Gaier was a revised version of the Comprehensive Alumni Assessment Survey designed to collect: "data pertaining to gender, race, the undergraduate college experience, academic satisfaction, and alumni involvement" (Gaier, 2003, pg. 31). It was designed for four-year institutions and can be easily formatted for the LOP's purposes to include elements relevant to a competency-based cohort model graduate program. Gaier's methodology also included 4 email process which included messages to: 1) introduce the concept of the survey to the alumni, 2) share the link to the survey with the alumni, 3) remind the alumni to complete the survey, and 4) follow up with respondents after the research had completed (Gaier, 2003). Gaier's data analysis steps listed in the paper could also be useful. The author explains four types of analysis: 1) analyzing responses of the respondents' experience as a student, 2) analyzing the independent demographic and extracurricular variable (race, gender, and proximity to campus), 3) responses were segmented by year of graduation, and 4) responses should be qualitatively analyzed and categorized by themes for further review (Gaier, 2003). A similar framework could be utilized for assessing data collected by a new LOP survey. As mentioned in Cabrera, the specifics should be determined by the survey organizers with the input of the academic institution's internal stakeholders, i.e., faculty, administrators, development, departmental leadership, etc. A copy of the emails sent to alumni and the survey itself are included in the Appendix of this paper to serve as examples for the new LOP survey and process.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the goal of this paper is to present research to inform the creation and distribution of an alumni satisfaction survey with ongoing utility for Vanderbilt University Peabody College's LOP/MLO programs. The need for a more sophisticated assessment process is the result of an ineffectively implemented and eventually abandoned MWork assessment process and the insufficiencies of the current rudimentary alumni satisfaction survey which lacks a research-based methodology, thorough internal and external stakeholder consideration and engagement, or comprehensive program competency mastery measurement utility. To help inform the creation of a more effective assessment process, this paper has presented research and findings on a broad perspective of alumni and student satisfaction determinants as well as data on research-based best practices regarding survey creation, distribution, and analysis methodologies.

Findings

To distill the full research into a manageable tool useful in building the next survey, this paper's Appendix includes three tables: *1) Reasons why the MWork 4-level assessment was ineffective, 2) Limitations of the current survey, and 3) Relevant variables / themes associated with alumni satisfaction.* The *Reasons why* and the *Limitations* tables cite issues with the MWork document and the current survey which should be learned from, addressed, and improved on in future program surveys. The third table listing the *Relevant variables / themes* associated with alumni satisfaction highlights the major themes of the researched articles and translates each element into an actionable guidance designed to imbue the new survey with research-based elements and methodology.

Recommendations

Further research on this topic will continue to be necessary. This will include continual review of any new surveys, comparing them to the evolving research on these topics, to determine if the tool remains relevant and effective. Changes in financial and labor market conditions as well as potential legislation impacting student debt forgiveness are issues administrators will need to monitor and are examples of external issues capable of affecting the validity of their surveys for alumni, the institution, and internal and external stakeholders.

Additionally, as a current student and soon to be alumni of the LOP program, this author is hopeful the team responsible for creating the new survey will take care to address the deficiencies with the past and current assessment tools, creating a more effective and research-based process. In this regard, it is recommended special attention be paid to assessing the satisfaction of the Alumni regarding issues of importance to them and not just Alumni satisfaction with issues relevant to the LOP program. This paper has provided multiple determinant elements associated with student and Alumni satisfaction. The next survey will benefit from the inclusion of those elements along with those relevant to the LOP program in a document that serves the full Peabody community - past, present, and future.

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Appendix

1.

Reasons why the MWork 4 - level assessment was ineffective	Suggested correction

The assessment structure was dependent on the LOP program's structure.
 	
  Ex.: Pre- & post-program competency test: the pretests were never administered and the final exams that were intended to be the post-program test were discontinued
 	
  Result: Core competency baselines and competency acquisition were unassessed.
	Create an assessment independent of the LOP program's structure.

The program was complicated and never successfully implemented by the faculty and administration.
 	
  Ex.: Labor intensive pulse checks, observation Reports, focus groups, and alumni phone interviews were never implemented
 	
  Result: benefit of the iterative aspect of the assessment was lost
	Create a simple research-based assessment process that is not labor intensive.

Those responsible for administering the assessment process were not consulted during its creation and their buy in was not achieved to insure implementation	Consult with those who will be administering the assessment to make sure its structure is not overly complicated and laborious
The assessment's reliance on the program's structure suggests it was biased towards the program marginalizing the input of students, Alumni, external stakeholders, and alumni employers.	Create an alumni-centric survey that includes input from students, Alumni, external stakeholders, and alumni employers.

2.

Limitations of current assessment	Suggested correction
Not based on a literature review	Create a research informed assessment
Rudimentary	Create a sophisticated assessment
Design puts the burden on the alumni.	Ask questions about the alumni's intended goals and outcomes for the program

Not directly tied to core competencies	Integrate core competencies into the assessment

3.

Relevant variables / themes associated with alumni satisfaction	Assessment guidance	Citation
Influencing factors Ex.: teaching quality, curriculum, personnel, sound guidance career aspirations, emotional factors, facilities, image, et al	Consider including questions that determine alumni satisfaction with the influencing factors in the new survey	Slamento & Wiranto, 2021
Determining factors Ex.: lecturer's professionalism (found to have the greatest impact), relevance of the curriculum, quality of classroom facilities	Consider including questions that determine alumni satisfaction with the determining factors in the new survey	Slamento & Wiranto, 2021
Alumni outcomes surveys track accomplishment in first years after graduation.	Consider including career outcomes-based question in the new survey (3-5yrs post-grad)	Cabrera, 2003
Perceived satisfaction as alumni can carry over from last year of school but often decreases after graduation (halo effect)	Track graduation year in surveys and consider it an analysis variable	Cabrera, 2003
Student development, learning, and attainment of competencies Ex.: determine which skill are relevant To students and employers, and Distinguish competencies developed in the program from ones developed outside the Program, validate with experts (steps outlined in paper)	Include questions assessing how relevant acquired competencies are in a work setting. Ex. Ques.: ● Most fostered competencies? ● Level of engagement with faculty/staff/peers? ● Extent to which activities offered promoted mastery of competencies? ● Extent to which competencies apply in their job or further education?	Cabrera, 2003
Highest answer rates (51%) were associate with surveys sent with a warm note from	Consider sending a personalized note to alumni asked to complete the survey	Cabrera, 2003

University leadership		
Simply worded web-based surveys organized by topic groupings are recommended	Utilize a sophisticated survey platform such as Qualtrics or Survey Monkey - not a Google Form	Cabrera, 2003
Best practice recommends including admissions, public affairs, development, career services, institutional research as well as program faculty, leadership and staff should participate in designing an Alumni satisfaction survey Reason: data gathered will inform decisions made by these stakeholders	great idea Consider establishing a survey design working group made up of representatives of the internal stakeholder groups and potentially an external representative from a business type commonly employing LOP graduates to ensure competency / market alignment	Cabrera, 2003
Aspects of a graduate program tied to retention are synonymous with alumni satisfaction	Incorporate retention determinants into surveys	recommendation
Overarching themes relevant to graduate student retention: • sense of belonging & cooperative learning • faculty & administrative support • clear purpose & competence (literature review provided)	Consider including questions that assess the degree to which Peabody successfully addressed these themes	Morote et al, 2022
Strong graduate programs meet the following needs: • agency • competence • relevance • stability	Consider including questions that assess the degree to which Peabody successful addressed these student needs	Morote et al, 2022
Motivation to donate to your alma mater is an indication of alumni satisfaction with their academic experience	Consider tracking propensity to donate	Cullen 2021
Students graduating with large amounts of debt are more likely to have negative perception of their alma mater	Consider including a question regarding student debt to measure correlation between debt and levels of satisfaction	Cullen 2021

The "alumni in training" concept could be a useful concept to include in the thought process of designing the student experience	Consider utilizing the "alumni in training" concept for LOP program design and incorporate the concept in the survey design working group discussions	Cullen 2021
Student experience consists of academic and social experience	Consider using these concepts as question block section headings for the new LOP survey	Gaier, 2003
An appropriate and unbiased method for data analysis is necessary	Follow a research-based qualitative data analysis method to mitigate bias and account for demographic variables, such as race, gender, and years since graduation	Gaier, 2003

Leadership & Organizational Performance Core Competencies
From: FYI - For Your Improvement: A Guide for Development and Coaching for Learners, Managers, Mentors, and Feedback Givers by Eichinger & Lombardo

Building Effective Teams (p. 367) – An individual skilled in this competency does the following: blends people into teams when needed; creates strong morale and spirit in his/her team; shares wins and successes; fosters open dialogue; lets people finish and be responsible for their work; defines success in terms of the whole team; creates a feeling of belonging in the team.

- Conflict Management (p. 67) – An individual skilled in this competency does the following: steps up to conflicts, seeing them as opportunities; reads situations quickly; good at focused listening; can hammer out tough agreements and settle disputes equitably; can find common ground and get cooperation with minimum noise.

- Creativity (p. 81) – An individual skilled in this competency does the following: comes up with a lot of new and unique ideas; easily makes connections among previously unrelated notions; tends to be seen as original and value-added in brainstorming sessions.

- Dealing with Ambiguity (p. 7) – An individual skilled in this competency does the following: can cope effectively with change; can shift gears comfortably; can decide and act without having the total picture; isn't upset when things are up in the air; doesn't have to finish things before moving on; can comfortably handle risk and uncertainty.

- Decision Quality (p. 103) – An individual skilled in this competency does the following: makes good decisions (without considering how much time it takes) based on a mixture of analysis, wisdom, experience, and judgment; most of his/her solutions and suggestions turn out to be correct and accurate when judged over time; sought out by others for advice and solutions.

- Innovation Management (p. 171) – An individual skilled in this competency does the following: is good at bringing the creative ideas of others to market; has good judgment about which creative ideas and suggestions will work; has a sense about managing the creative process of others; can facilitate effective brainstorming; can project how potential ideas may play out in the marketplace.

- Interpersonal Savvy (p. 193) – An individual skilled in this competency does the following: relates well to all kinds of people – up, down, and sideways, inside and outside the organization; builds appropriate rapport; builds constructive and effective relationships; uses diplomacy and tact; can defuse even high-tension situations comfortably.

- Learning on the Fly (p. 199) – An individual skilled in this competency does the following: learns quickly when facing new problems; a relentless and versatile learner; open to change; analyzes both successes and failures for clues to improvement; experiments and will try anything to find solutions; enjoys the challenge of unfamiliar tasks; quickly grasps the essence and the underlying structure of anything.

- Managing Vision & Purpose (p. 397) – An individual skilled in this competency does the following: communicates a compelling and inspired vision or sense of core purpose; talks beyond today; talks about possibilities; is optimistic; creates mileposts and symbols to rally support behind the vision; makes the vision shareable by everyone; can inspire and motivate entire units or organizations.

- Motivating Others (p. 223) – An individual skilled in this competency does the following: creates a climate in which people want to do their best; can motivate many kinds of direct reports and team or project members; can assess each person's hot button and use it to get the best out of him/her; pushes tasks and decisions down; empowers others; invites input from each person and shares ownership and visibility; makes each individual feel like his/her work is important; is someone people like working for and with.

- Planning (p. 287) – An individual skilled in this competency does the following: accurately scopes out length and difficulty of tasks and projects; sets objectives and goals; breaks down work into the process steps; develops schedules and task/people assignments; anticipates and adjusts for problems and roadblocks; measures performance against goals; evaluates results.

- Problem Solving (p. 309) – An individual skilled in this competency does the following: uses rigorous logic and methods to solve difficult problems with effective solutions; probes all fruitful sources for answers; can see hidden problems; is excellent at honest analysis; looks beyond the obvious and doesn't stop at the first answers.

- Process Management (p. 315) – An individual skilled in this competency does the following: good at figuring out the processes necessary to get things done; knows how to organize people and activities; understands how to separate and combine tasks into efficient work flow; knows what to measure and how to measure it; can see opportunities for synergy and integration where others can't; can simplify complex processes; gets more out of fewer resources.

- Strategic Agility (p. 351) – An individual skilled in this competency does the following: sees ahead clearly; can anticipate future consequences and trends accurately; has broad knowledge and perspective; is future oriented; can articulately paint credible pictures and visions of possibilities and likelihoods; can create competitive and breakthrough strategies and plans.

- Written Communications (p. 409) – An individual skilled in this competency does the following: is able to write clearly and succinctly in a variety of communication settings and styles; can get messages across that have the desired effect.

(Cabrera 2003)

Table 1. Three conceptual approaches to alumni survey

Approach	Assumption	Policy Question(s)	Measures	Audience	Measurement Issues

1. Outcomes	Institutional quality and effectiveness can be appraised on what alumni have accomplished	• How satisfied are graduates with their employment?
		• How satisfied are the graduates with the degree granting institution?
		• To what extent are graduates fully participating in civic activities?
			• Job satisfaction.
			• Satisfaction with the institution.
			• Income.
			• Occupational status.
			• Participation in civic activities.
			• Demographics
				• Accreditation agencies
				• Employer organizations
				• Institutions (planning and improvement)
				• Faculty
				• Office of career counseling & placement services
				• State economic development agencies
				• Legislators
				• Parents
				• Perspective students
				• State regulatory agencies
				• Foundation boards
				• Institutional advancement staff
				• Chancellor
				• Deans and department chairs
					Scope:
					• Alumni survey
					• Students' records
					• Employers surveys
					• Salary & employment statistics
					
					Period of Assessment:
					• 1-3 years after graduation
					
					Sampling methods:
					• Cohort
					• Cross-sectional
					• Census approach
					    I.
					    II. Survey methods
					• Telephone
					• Mail
					• Web
					
					Methodological considerations
					• Response rate

2. Student engagement & competencies	Institutional quality can be appraised based on what the student did at the institution, learned and applies.	• What are the competencies that college education should foster most? • To what extent are students engaged in effective practices? • To what extent do graduates apply those competencies in the job or in graduate school?	• Measures of engagement inside & outside the classroom • Measures of student growth & development • Measures of enriching educational experiences • Measures of quantity & quality of effort		
3. Alumni giving	Giving is a function of positive experiences with the institution & ability to contribute	• What is the ability and inclination of alumni to support their alma mater through philanthropy, service, and advocacy?	• Perceptions of the quality of college experience. • History of involvement with the institution & nonprofit organizations. • Demographics & measures of wealth		• Measurement errors • Collaboration with campus units • Content valid strategies (focus groups, job analyses) • Relying on alumni & students for interviews • Confidentiality

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Literature Review

Author(s)/ Year	Research Focus	Key Finding(s)	Contributions	Major Limitations
Gaier, 2003	The paper focused on the impact of alumni satisfaction with their undergraduate academic experience on alumni giving and alumni participation.	Findings demonstrated a significant positive relationship between alumni satisfaction with the academic system as undergraduates and current alumni involvement with their alma mater.	The similarity of the subjects surveyed in this study to the Peabody Alumni in our study suggests the methodology for collecting data could be relevant. The Comprehensive Alumni Assessment Survey (CAAS). The paper explains the CAAS was used because it collects data re: education experience, demographics, and satisfaction with undergraduate experience at a four-year institution. It could be modified for our purposes. See Appendix C.	This study focused on undergraduate experiences and alumni giving, not graduates of a Master's program. Also, the studies focus on the measurement of alumni philanthropic engagement may have influenced the survey style and the questions. This study recommended further research on the whether the source of alumni satisfaction is linked to the academic or social system.

Cullen, 2021	This study examined characteristics, structure, communication, and donor behavior of young alumni from top-tier research institutions with or without dedicated young alumni programs.	Strategic programming for Alumni is important but it doesn't statistically impact donation or participation rates; academic institutions should have student engagement and philanthropy programs as well as strategic initiatives intended to increase donor participation rather than one or the other; strategies should complement and add to the 'alumni-in-training idea – meaning that institutions implement these strategies with student (pre-alumni) and current alumni to enhance positive experiences among students and impact alumni giving.	This study's findings introduce the concept of an alumni-in-training, "meaning that institutions dedicate engagement and philanthropic strategy during the student years as well as the young alumni years to enhance positive experiences and work to impact alumni giving in the future." I thought this concept would be interesting to consider as we review Peabody's current efforts as we assess their results. What are the ultimate goals beyond facilitate individual degrees. People will be alumni much longer than students. How do we leverage that for the benefit of the students, program, and university?	Although this study does introduce interesting and potentially relevant topics for our LOP/MLO research, it also includes the philanthropy, and this could impact the methodology of the examination.

Mororte, 2022	This study analyzed a doctoral program in Education to determine the retention strategies of successful graduate programs.	This study found three main aspects contribute to retention and the success of a graduate program: 1) a sense of belonging and cooperative learning, 2) clear purpose and competence, and 3) faculty administration and support.	Because this study offers recommendations re the aspects of a post grad programs that increase retention and graduations, this information can be utilized to inform survey questions. It also provides literature references to the topics under the major aspect heading.	The alumni that participated in this study spanned two decades, which could impact the relevance of the findings to our research.

Slamento & Wiranto, 2021	This research was designed to determine the satisfaction of alumni of an Educational Management Master's degree program by measuring: facilities and infrastructure, professionalism of lecturers, and curriculum relevance.	This analysis focused on key indicators of educational improvement: classroom infrastructure, lecturer professionalism, and curriculum. It found that lecturer professionalism had the highest level of determinant magnitude on alumni satisfaction. This suggests that institutions need to support lecturers, so they are able to share and utilize their experience, insight, knowledge, and wisdom.	This paper provides guidance on the factors and variables influencing alumni satisfaction, which include: (1) providing quality educational experiences, clarity of design, interactions with instructors, and active student discussion. (2) ensuring that instructional effectiveness comprises fourteen items which assess students' academic experiences, including the curriculum, and constructive advice re: curriculum, classrooms, and infrastructure. Additionally it offers factors/variables that function as determinants for alumni satisfaction: lecturer's professionalism, curriculum relevance, the quality of	

			classroom facilities and infrastructure. This study also found that the college personnel's caring attitude as the most potent retention force on campus. This could be an area of focus for our survey. See Table 1.	

Cabrera, 2003	Considering the growth of alumni studies in the United States, which can be attributed to internal and external demands for assessment, accountability, and market-driven research in higher education, this paper was organized to answer this question: what progress has been made in the development of alumni surveys in the USA?	Surveying alumni should be part of a comprehensive enrollment management approach. This paper examined three approaches to alumni survey: a) alumni outcomes, 2) student engagement & competencies, and 3) alumni giving. Research shows that the roots of college degree completion take place as early as the 7th grade when parents and their children start making plans for college. This research also shows that on the path to college, the individuals experiences a series of personal growth and developmental stages, which cumulatively prepare them for success in college and beyond. We propose that data collection strategies should follow these stages of student development from early college decision to alumni accomplishments. This approach would allow universities to form strong conclusions about the links between college experiences and outcomes at critical stages.	This study offers insight and guidance on multiple aspects of the data collection / survey creation process. It explains how the timing of the survey could impact the validity of the results and how the value of institutional stakeholder engagement in the survey creation process is relevant, Key insight: "align assessment efforts with what research shows matters in a student's development, learning, and attainment of competencies." Methodological concerns. In developing questionnaires for alumni giving, the literature suggests considering several issues. Dessoff (1993) proposes using alumni focus groups to pilot test the questionnaire	The subjects of this research were alumni of Master's program at a private institution in Central Java, Indonesia. Differences in cultural norms of Indonesian and US graduate school alumni could impact the applicability of this study's findings. Also, the "ex-post facto" research

			and clarify ambiguous questions. Focus groups can also provide a forum for a free-flowing expression of ideas, bringing attention to those areas that administrators may not have considered in framing the final questionnaire.	

Appendix A

E-mail Correspondence to Alumni

Dear [State University] Graduate,

Greetings from [State University] and your [State University] Alumni Association! In a few days you will receive an e-mail message requesting your participation in an online research project investigating your [State] undergraduate experience and alumni involvement. All that will be asked of you is to complete an online survey. The survey will take less than 10 minutes to complete and your answers will be entirely anonymous.

We need your help and feedback. Whether you are greatly satisfied or disappointed with your experience at [State] we need to hear from you in order to make [State] a better place for you, other alumni, current students, and future students. By completing the survey, you will provide [State] with valuable information for generating excellent services, programs, and opportunities.

If you have any questions regarding participating in this research, please contact [researcher's name], [phone number], or e-mail [e-mail address].

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

[Name]
Executive Director
[State University] Alumni Association

[Name]
Major Advisor and Professor
[State University]

[Name], Doctoral Candidate
[State University]

If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in research, please contact, the Committee on the Use of Human Research Subjects at [State University], [phone number] or on the web [URL].

<u>Figure A1.</u> The first e-mail received by the participants for the purpose of

notifying the participant of the upcoming research project.

Dear [State University] Graduate,

[State University], in conjunction with the [State University] Alumni Association, is conducting a survey of randomly selected [State] graduates. The purpose of the survey is to collect information regarding your satisfaction with your academic experience at [State] and your alumni involvement.

Your participation is important to [State], and your input is valuable to us. Without this input, it is extremely difficult to develop programs, events, and services that meet the needs and desires of alumni. The results of the survey will help [State] and the [State University] Alumni Association better serve current students and alumni.

The survey will be conducted by Scott Gaier, a [State University] doctoral candidate. In addition to serving the [State University] Alumni Association, Scott will utilize the data from this research for his dissertation.

Please participate by going to [URL for survey] on the World Wide Web. The online questionnaire will take less than 10 minutes to complete. The survey will then be submitted electronically to [State University]. Your submission is completely anonymous. No one at [State University] will be able to identify specific participants.

The deadline for completing the online survey is Friday, June 6th, 2003. However, we urge you to take a few minutes and do it right now! The research report will be completed by fall of 2003. As a participant, you will receive an e-mail informing you of the results.

If you have any questions regarding participating in this research, please contact [researcher's name], [phone number], or e-mail [e-mail address].

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

[Name]
Executive Director
[State University] Alumni Association

[Name]
Major Advisor and Professor
[State University]

[Name], Doctoral Candidate
[State University]

If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in research, please contact, the Committee on the Use of Human Research Subjects at [State University], [phone number] or on the web [URL].

Figure A2. The second e-mail received by the participants provided directions for participating in the research project. The second e-mail was sent three days after the first e-mail.

Dear [State University] Graduate,

Recently, you received an e-mail requesting your participation in a research project sponsored by [State University] and the [State University] Alumni Association. If you have not completed the online questionnaire, please take 10 minutes and complete the questionnaire at [URL for survey]. Friday, June 6th is the last day the survey will be available online. Please remember, your input is vital for developing [State University] programs, events, and services that meet your needs.

If you have any questions regarding the research, please contact [researcher's name], [phone number], or e-mail [e-mail address].

If you have completed the questionnaire, we thank you for your participation and apologize for the inconvenience of this e-mail.

Sincerely,

[State University] and [State University] Alumni Association

Figure A3. The third e-mail received by the participants served to remind the participants to complete the survey. The third e-mail was sent one week after the second e-mail.

Appendix C

Comprehensive Alumni Assessment Survey

Directions

As Purdue University graduates, your feedback is very vital to the development of programs, services, and opportunities for Purdue University alumni, friends, and students. Outstanding alumni are one of the major reasons that Purdue University is a world renowned and highly respected academic and research institution. Thank you for your participation.

Please read carefully the following questions. Give answers that most accurately represent your experience at Purdue University. At any point in the questionnaire, you may select the **"Clear"** button at the end of the form to reset the questionnaire. Once you have completed the questionnaire, select the **"Submit"** button.

Background Information

1. **What year did you complete your degree?**

    | 1929 ▼ |

2. **How do you describe yourself?** *Select only one.*

    ☐ Native American/Alaskan Native

    ☐ Hispanic American

    ☐ Asian-American/Pacific Islander

    ☐ African American, Non-Hispanic

☐ Caucasian American, Non-Hispanic

☐ Other (specify)

[   ]

3. What is your gender?

☐ Female

☐ Male

4. Where do you currently live?

[Outside the United States ▼]

5. What area/program did you receive your degree? *Select only one.*

☐ Agriculture

☐ Consumer and Family Sciences (Home Economics)

☐ Education

☐ Engineering (All Engineering Schools)

☐ Liberal Arts (Humanities, Social Science)

☐ Management

☐ Nursing

☐ Pharmacy (Health Sciences)

☐ Science

☐ Technology

☐ Veterinary Medicine

6. What activities did you participate in as a student at [State]? *Check all that apply.*

☐ Student organizations

☐ Student government

☐ Musical organizations

☐ Theatre

☐ Publications/yearbook

☐ Greek life/Pan Hellenic/Fraternities/Sororities

☐ Varsity athletics

☐ Club sports

☐ Intramurals

☐ Other (specify)

[   ]

Satisfaction with Academic System

7. Evaluation of your undergraduate academic experience at [State].

Question	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Does Not Apply
Core/general education requirements	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Course work in major(s)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Freshman advising	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Advising in the major	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quality of faculty	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Career counseling/placement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Amount of contact with faculty	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Commitment of faculty to teaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quality of instruction in non-major courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quality of instruction in major courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Availability of required courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Variety of course offerings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Access to academic support system (tutoring/study skills)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Integration of general education and major	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Library collection	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Access to computing resources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Someone on faculty or staff with whom you feel comfortable sharing your concerns	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Level of satisfaction with your undergraduate academic experience	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Alumni Involvement

8. Within the last three years, check the following [State] related activities in which you have participated. *Check all that apply.*

☐ Attended a non-alumni activity at [State's main] campus (e.g. lecture, etc.)

☐ Attended an alumni event at [State's main] campus (e.g. alumni reunion dinner, etc.)

☐ Attended an off-campus [State] non-alumni activity (e.g. sports event, etc.)

☐ Attended an off-campus alumni activity (e.g. alumni club meeting, etc.)

☐ Traveled on a [State] Alumni Association or University sponsored tour

☐ Served as an alumni volunteer with the [State] Alumni Association (e.g. Club officer, etc.)

☐ Served as an alumni volunteer with [State] (e.g. Admissions representative, etc.)

☐ Contributed financially to any [State] fund (e.g. specific school, scholarship programs, etc.)

☐ Encouraged someone to financially contribute to [State]

9. How many [State] related events have you attended in the last three years?

☐ 0

☐ 1-3

☐ 4-7

☐ 8 or Greater

10. What range most accurately represents your financial contribution to [State] in the last three years?

☐ $0

☐ $1-$250

☐ $251-$999

☐ $1000 or Greater

11. How would you describe your overall experience while attending [State]? *Select only one.*

☐ Very satisfied

☐ Satisfied

☐ Undecided

☐ Dissatisfied

☐ Very dissatisfied

12. How has your out-of-class (nonacademic) experience as an undergraduate at [State] impacted your current level of involvement with the University?

☐ Very positive

☐ Positive

☐ No impact

☐ Negative

☐ Very negative

13. Are you a member of the [State] Alumni Association? *Select only one.*

☐ No, I am not a member of the [State] Alumni Association

☐ Yes, I am a member of the [State] Alumni Association

Propensity to be Involved

14. Within the next five years, check which of the following you would be interested in doing. *Check all that apply.*

☐ Attend a non-alumni activity at [State's main] campus (e.g. lecture, etc.)

☐ Attend an alumni event at [State's main] campus (e.g. alumni reunion dinner, etc.)

☐ Attend an off-campus [State] non-alumni activity (e.g. sports event, etc.)

☐ Attend an off-campus alumni activity (e.g. alumni club meeting, etc.)

☐ Travel on a [State] Alumni Association or University sponsored tour

☐ Serve as an alumni volunteer with the [State] Alumni Association (e.g. Club officer, etc.)

☐ Serve as an alumni volunteer with [State] (e.g. Admissions representative, etc.)

☐ Help rejuvenate an existing alumni club

☐ Contribute financially to any [State] fund (e.g. specific school, scholarship programs, etc.)

☐ Encourage someone to financially contribute to [State]

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15. Please make any additional comments.

Submit Clear

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