Assessing the advising needs of UAA students has been an effort designed to provide faculty and staff with the tools necessary to improve the quality of academic advising services offered to the UAA student body. Through the administration of a comprehensive advising assessment, the perceptions, opinions, and experiences of students have been made known.

A random sample of 4,500 degree-seeking students enrolled in the spring 2010 term at the University of Alaska Anchorage campus were invited to participate in the study between February and March 2010. 1,351 students responded to the survey and 1,299 completed the assessment (96 percent completion rate, 30 percent response rate).

The summary that follows explores the academic advising needs and perceptions of participants through an examination of the survey data.

**RESPONDENT PROFILE**

- **Age**: 56 percent (n=375) between the ages of 19 to 21, 26 percent between 22 to 26, 15 percent between 26 to 29 and 14 percent between 30 to 39.
- **Race/Ethnic Origin**: 76 percent (n=984) White, non-Hispanic, followed by nine percent, six percent and six percent Asian, Pacific Islander; Hispanic; and Other respectfully.
- **Classification**: 32 percent (n=418) seniors, 28 percent juniors, 21 percent sophomores, and 19 percent freshmen.
- **Gender**: 68 percent female (n=886) and 3 percent male.
- **Current course load**: majority (50%, n=649) enrolled in 12-15 credits for spring 2010, while 29 percent between 6-11 credits, and 16 percent with 16 or more credits.
- **Residency**: 93 percent (n=1203) in-state students.
- **Cumulative GPA**: 35% (n=454) (3.50-4.00), 34% (3.00-3.49), and 21% (2.50-2.99).
- **Majors**: top five majors among respondents include: undeclared (n=95, 7%), pre-major nursing science, psychology, biological sciences, and accounting.
- 84% (n=1095) indicated that their primary reason for attending UAA was to attain a bachelor's degree.

**MAJOR FINDINGS**

**Advising Information**:

- Most students (71%, n=955) indicated that they know who their advisor is (Figure 1. outlines which students, per class standing); 29 percent revealed that they do not.

**Figure 1. Students who know who their advisor is**

- Of those who do not know who their advisor is, 60 percent (n=233) also noted that they do not know how to contact their advisor; conversely, 41 percent indicated that they do know how to do so.
- How students first learned who their advisor was varied. 60 percent (n=557) sought out the information on their own (23% made contact either in-person or via phone with their department), while 17 percent found out via other means, such as from a professor, during class, or departmental communication (e.g., a welcome/acceptance letter or email). 16 percent were informed during orientation.
Students described their advisors in three primary ways: faculty members (44%, n=407), staff members (full-time academic advisor) (23%), and professional academic advisors (13%). 16 percent (n=153) did not know how to describe their academic advisors role.

The three main ways participants have communicated with their advisors include: in-person (87%, n=814), email (62%), and phone (45%). The last time that respondents received advising information from their advisor was this semester for 46 percent (n=407), last semester for 39 percent, and two or more semesters ago for 15 percent.

In regards to frequency of appointments, majority of students indicated that they met with their advisors once (43%, n=345), twice (33%), and/or three times (13 %) within the last year. The duration of these meetings varied – 45 percent or 360 respondents indicated 5-15 minutes and 37 percent indicated 16-30 minutes.

Electronic and Self-Advising:
- 58 percent (n=474) of students have used DegreeWorks – 42 percent have not.
- A number of students self-advise – 39 percent do so always, 43 percent often, and 14 percent sometimes. When asked why they chose to do so, several key reasons emerged.
  - 27% (n=329) affirmed that they self-advise because of concerns with their advisor (or faculty advisor) (e.g., assistance from advisor was not provided or unhelpful; limited access or availability; lack of support and care)
  - 26% due to ease and convenience (e.g., time efficient, no need to travel to campus for an appointment)
  - 16% do so because that they have access to, were provided with, or prefer using the print or electronic advising resources available.

“...Because a lot of my questions can be found on the UAA site or in the catalog...”

“...It’s easier than finding time to go (sic) in to talk with someone.”

“...I don’t have to drive all the way to campus to meet with someone to guide me.”

- 16% do so because that they have access to, were provided with, or prefer using the print or electronic advising resources available.

Academic Advising Needs:
- 42 percent (n=371) of students affirmed that their needs have been met completely by their academic advisors. 32 percent and 16 percent indicated considerably and somewhat, respectively.

Content Discussed:
- When asked what topics students most commonly talk with their advisors about, four areas were among the highest: scheduling (65%, n=529) meeting graduation requirements, registration, and academic performance.
Advisor Satisfaction:

- Students were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction, ranging from very satisfied to very dissatisfied, with their current advisor in several areas. The areas that students indicated the highest degree of satisfaction include:
  - availability for advising appointments (45%, n=391)
  - ability to help with personal concerns (38%, n=331)
  - ability to help identify and address academic difficulties (42%, n=368)
  - knowledge of General Education Requirements (GER) and certificate or degree program requirements (58%, n=506)
  - ability to motivate you to be successful and persist in college (n=350, 40%)
  - knowledge of academic deadlines (52%, n=452)
  - knowledge of admissions requirements and process (n=465, 54%)
  - knowledge of registration processes and course selection (56%, n=488)
  - ability to use and explain electronic advising and enrollment tools (e.g., UAOnline, e-mail, Blackboard, Degree Works) (n=367, 42%)
  - knowledge of academic placement tests and score requirements (e.g., Accuplacer, CLEP, ACT, SAT, Challenge Exams) (n=350, 40%)

- Participants’ top three responses (indicated as degree of satisfaction) are noted in Table 1. per question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
<th>Moderately satisfied</th>
<th>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>availability for advising appointments</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ability to help with personal concerns</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ability to help identify and address academic difficulties</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge of General Education Requirements (GER) and certificate</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or degree program requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ability to motivate you to be successful and persist in college</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge of academic deadlines</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge of admissions requirements and process</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>knowledge of registration processes and course selection</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge of financial aid processes and resources</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ability to use and explain electronic and Enrollment tools (e.g.,</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAOnline, e-mail, Blackboard, Degree Works)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge of academic placement tests and score requirements (e.g.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuplacer, CLEP, ACT, SAT, Challenge Exams)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Impressions of Advisor:

- Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, with several statements pertaining to their academic advisor. The areas that students indicated the highest level of agreement include:
  - knows who I am (n=350, 40%)
  - listens carefully to what I have to say (n=456, 53%)
  - provides accurate information (n=494, 57%)
  - communicates effectively with me (n=476, 55%)
  - refers me to other campus resources appropriately (n=395, 46%)
  - makes me feel comfortable and at ease (n=476, 55%)
  - is knowledgeable about courses and programs (n=513, 59%)
  - encourages me to be responsible for planning my pathway through college (n=430, 50%)
  - takes the initiative in arranging appointments with me (n=237, 27%)
  - clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the advisor and advisee (n=279, 32%)
  - assists me in the discovery of my needs, interests, and values (n=268, 31%)
  - knows my academic background and capabilities (n=271, 31%)
• encourages my involvement in campus activities outside of class (n=291, 34%)
• helps me explore career options and opportunities (n=292, 34%)
• appears to enjoy advising (n=382, 44%)
• is approachable and easy to communicate with (n=457, 53%)
• is someone that I would recommend to others looking for a good academic advisor (n=428, 49%)

○ Participants’ top three responses (indicated as degree of agreement) are noted in Table 2. per question.

Table 2. Primary impressions of academic advisors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Moderately agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>knows who I am</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listens carefully to what I say</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provides accurate information</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communicates effectively with me</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>refers me to other campus resources appropriately</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makes me feel comfortable and at ease</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is knowledgeable about courses and programs</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encourages me to be responsible for planning my pathway through college</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*takes the initiative in arranging appointments with me</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the advisor and advisee</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assists me in the discovery of me needs, interests, and values</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knows my academic background and capabilities</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encourages my involvement in campus activities outside of class</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helps me explore career options and opportunities</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appears to enjoy advising</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is approachable and easy to communicate with</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is someone I would recommend to others looking for a good academic advisor</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Third highest response was strongly disagree (21%)

Additional Advising Comments and Suggestions:

○ More than one fourth of respondents (n=460) offered comments and suggestions based on their academic advising experiences at UAA. Responses varied, although a few common themes emerged.

• Several students (n=102, 22%) expressed the need for easier access and increased advertisement of advising resources available (e.g., easier methods to find out who their advisor is and how to contact them as well as greater availability –more frequent office hours, evening appointments, or online advising).

“...if there are classes offered a bit later in the day, then why not appointments for advisors? It is super hard for me to get in when they are there. Even if it was just a couple days a week or month they had later appointments, it would make a big difference.”

“...It is difficult finding out who your academic advisor is. If it ws (sic) easier for the student to learn who they are, the whole process of college would go by more smoothly...”

• 14 percent of participants affirmed that advisors should take the initiative to outreach to students and maintain communication.

“There needs to be a clear communication to students about who there (sic) advisor is. Particularly with new students, advisors must take the initiative to contact the student and help guide them along their educational path. Many students feel as though they are uncertain about where they are going or what they have to do. Without a strong advisor, a student will take longer to finish their education. If you want to learn how to ride a bike, you will always do so more
quickly and with less "bruises" when there is someone behind you instructing you and pushing you in the right direction. Many need that good "push" and encouragement before they can ride well on their own.

- 11 percent expressed a desire for a greater degree of care and student centeredness from their advisors.

“I feel that it’s really important that students have strong support and feel cared about during their university experience. All advisors should be able to give this to their students.”

“It needs to be more student oriented. It’s hard to make the transition from high school to college or even from major to major without guidance…”

Future Recommendations:
- Taken as a whole, the assessment results highlight a few key themes that require further examination in order to enhance and improve UAA academic advising services. These include:
  - **Easily accessible advisor contact information**
    As the survey indicates, majority of students know who their advisor is, but nearly 30 percent do not. Of those 30 percent, 60 percent affirm that they do not know how to contact them either. All students, especially first-year students, which were among the highest of those that do not know, need to be provided with information that clearly identifies who their advisor is as well as how they should be contacted.
  - **Outreach from academic advisors**
    60 percent of the students who said they know who their advisor is indicated that they sought out this information on their own. However, in terms of preference, several affirmed that this responsibility should lie on the advisors. A few respondents even outlined means by which advisors could outreach, such as introductions via email, letter, or phone; follow-up conversations after appointments; or by initiating regular meetings.
  - **Increased education and support for self-advisement**
    A large number of students self-advise either in addition to or in place of their academic advisor. The importance of students making meaningful connections with an advisor is great and should be an encouraged, consistent part of a student’s academic experience. With that said, it is also critical that students receive the education needed to learn how to effectively use print (e.g., UAA catalog, class listings, curriculum planning sheets) and electronics tools for self-advisement (e.g., DegreeWorks, UAOnline).
  - **Changing the perception of advisors/advising**
    Associated with the reason why many students choose to self-advise is the need to change the perception of advisors and academic advising at UAA. Not all, but many, students expressed (through their responses and comments) that the quality of advising services provided is poor. It seems that these negative experiences have lead to the perception that advising is unnecessary and a bad investment for students. To remedy this belief, efforts should be made to ensure that advisors are knowledgeable, well-prepared, and most importantly committed to the success of our students. If students recognize advising as a valuable means of support they will not hesitate or find ways to avoid using such services.
APPENDIX A: UAA ACADEMIC ADVISING UNDERGRADUATE SURVEY

Q1. Do you know who your academic advisor is?
   o Yes
   o No

Q2. Do you know how to contact your advisor?
   o Yes
   o No

Q3. How did you come to learn who your academic advisor was?
   o Was informed during orientation
   o Advisor e-mailed me
   o I sought out the information (please specify)
   o Other (please specify)

Q4. Which of the following most accurately describes your current academic advisor?
   o Faculty member
   o Staff member (full-time academic advisor)
   o Professional academic advisor
   o Student success coordinator
   o Other (please specify)
   o I do not know.

Q5. Through which of the following ways have you communicated with your academic advisor? (Check all that apply)
   o In person
   o E-mail
   o Phone
   o Other (please specify)
   o None of the above

Q6. When was the last time you received advising information from your academic advisor?
   o This semester
   o Last semester
   o Two or more semesters ago

Q7. UAA offers degree planning and advising through UAOnline using a software program called DegreeWorks. Have you ever used DegreeWorks?
   o Yes
   o No

Q8. How often do you self-advice (i.e., figure out prerequisites, what courses to take, and when to take them on your own)?
   o Always
   o Often
   o Sometimes
   o Rarely
   o Never

Q9. Why do you choose to self-advice?
Q10. During the past school year, how frequently did you meet with your advisor?
   - Once
   - Twice
   - 3 times
   - 4 or more times

Q11. When you meet with your academic advisor, how long does a meeting usually last?
   - Less than 5 minutes
   - 5 - 15 minutes
   - 16 - 30 minutes
   - More than 30 minutes

Q12. To what extent does your academic advisor meet your needs and answer your questions?
   - Completely
   - Considerably
   - Somewhat
   - Slightly
   - Not at all

Q13. Please explain your above rating:

Q14. When you met with your academic advisor in the past, which of the following topics did you talk about? (Check all that apply)
   - Academic performance
   - Scheduling
   - Registration
   - Dropping/adding courses
   - Selecting my major
   - Changing my major
   - Meeting graduation requirements
   - Clarifying life or career goals
   - Financial or academic appeals
   - Available academic support resources (e.g., tutoring)
   - Personal concerns
   - Withdrawing or transferring from UAA
   - Finding a job after college
   - Continuing my education after graduation
   - Other (please specify)
   - None of the above

Q15. Was there anything not discussed during your meetings that you would have liked to talk about?
   - Yes (please explain)
   - No

Please indicate your level of satisfaction regarding your current academic advisor in the following areas:

Q16. Availability for advising appointments
   - Very satisfied
   - Moderately satisfied
   - Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
   - Moderately dissatisfied
   - Very dissatisfied
Q17. Ability to help with personal concerns
   o Very satisfied
   o Moderately satisfied
   o Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
   o Moderately dissatisfied
   o Very dissatisfied

Q18. Ability to help identify and address academic difficulties
   o Very satisfied
   o Moderately satisfied
   o Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
   o Moderately dissatisfied
   o Very dissatisfied

Q19. Knowledge of General Education Requirements (GER) and certificate or degree program requirements
   o Very satisfied
   o Moderately satisfied
   o Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
   o Moderately dissatisfied
   o Very dissatisfied

Q20. Ability to motivate you to be successful and persist in college
   o Very satisfied
   o Moderately satisfied
   o Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
   o Moderately dissatisfied
   o Very dissatisfied

Q21. Knowledge of academic deadlines
   o Very satisfied
   o Moderately satisfied
   o Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
   o Moderately dissatisfied

Q22. Knowledge of admissions requirements and process
   o Very satisfied
   o Moderately satisfied
   o Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
   o Moderately dissatisfied
   o Very dissatisfied

Q23. Knowledge of registration processes and course selection
   o Very satisfied
   o Moderately satisfied
   o Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
   o Moderately dissatisfied
   o Very dissatisfied

Q24. Knowledge of financial aid processes and resources
   o Very satisfied
   o Moderately satisfied
   o Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
Q25. Ability to use and explain electronic advising and enrollment tools (e.g., UAOnline, e-mail, Blackboard, Degree Works)
   - Very satisfied
   - Moderately satisfied
   - Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
   - Moderately dissatisfied
   - Very dissatisfied

Q26. Knowledge of academic placement tests and score requirements (e.g., Accuplacer, CLEP, ACT, SAT, Challenge Exams)
   - Very satisfied
   - Moderately satisfied
   - Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
   - Moderately dissatisfied
   - Very dissatisfied

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following:

My academic advisor . . .

Q27. Knows who I am
   - Strongly agree
   - Moderately agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Moderately disagree
   - Strongly disagree

Q28. Listens carefully to what I have to say
   - Strongly agree
   - Moderately agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Moderately disagree
   - Strongly disagree

Q29. Provides accurate information
   - Strongly agree
   - Moderately agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Moderately disagree
   - Strongly disagree

Q30. Communicates effectively with me
   - Strongly agree
   - Moderately agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Moderately disagree
   - Strongly disagree

Q31. Refers me to other campus resources appropriately
   - Strongly agree
   - Moderately agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Moderately disagree
Q32. Makes me feel comfortable and at ease
   - Strongly agree
   - Moderately agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Moderately disagree
   - Strongly disagree

Q33. Is knowledgeable about courses and programs
   - Strongly agree
   - Moderately agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Moderately disagree
   - Strongly disagree

Q34. Encourages me to be responsible for planning my pathway through college
   - Strongly agree
   - Moderately agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Moderately disagree
   - Strongly disagree

Q35. Takes the initiative in arranging appointments with me
   - Strongly agree
   - Moderately agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Moderately disagree
   - Strongly disagree

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

My academic advisor . . .

Q36. Clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the advisor and advisee
   - Strongly agree
   - Moderately agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Moderately disagree
   - Strongly disagree

Q37. Assists me in the discovery of my needs, interests, and values
   - Strongly agree
   - Moderately agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Moderately disagree
   - Strongly disagree

Q38. Knows my academic background and capabilities
   - Strongly agree
   - Moderately agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Moderately disagree
   - Strongly disagree
Q39. Encourages my involvement in campus activities outside of class
   - Strongly agree
   - Moderately agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Moderately disagree
   - Strongly disagree

Q40. Helps me explore career options and opportunities
   - Strongly agree
   - Moderately agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Moderately disagree
   - Strongly disagree

Q41. Appears to enjoy advising
   - Strongly agree
   - Moderately agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Moderately disagree
   - Strongly disagree

Q42. Is approachable and easy to communicate with
   - Strongly agree
   - Moderately agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Moderately disagree
   - Strongly disagree

Q43. Is someone I would recommend to others looking for a good academic advisor
   - Strongly agree
   - Moderately agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Moderately disagree
   - Strongly disagree

Q44. Do you have any additional comments regarding your academic advisor?
   - Yes (please explain)
   - No

Q45. Do you have any comments or suggestions regarding academic advising at UAA?
   - Yes (please explain)
   - No

Q46. In what range is your age?
   - 18 or under
   - 19 - 21
   - 22 - 25
   - 26 - 29
   - 30 - 39
   - 40 - 61
   - 62 or over
Q47. What is your racial/ethnic origin? (Check all that apply)
   - American Indian
   - Alaskan Aleut
   - Alaskan Indian, Southeast
   - Alaskan Indian, Haida
   - Black, non-Hispanic
   - Alaskan Eskimo, Inupiat
   - Alaskan Indian, Athabaskan
   - Alaskan Indian, Other
   - Hispanic
   - Alaskan Eskimo, Yupik
   - Alaskan Indian, Tsimshian
   - Alaskan Native, Other
   - Asian, Pacific Islander
   - Alaskan Eskimo, Other
   - Alaskan Indian, Tlingit
   - White, non-Hispanic
   - Other (please specify)

Q48. What is your academic classification?
   - Freshman (0 - 29 credits)
   - Sophomore (30 - 59 credits)
   - Junior (60 - 89 credits)
   - Senior (90 or more credits)

Q49. For which of the following reasons are you attending the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA)? (Check all that apply)
   - Take courses for personal satisfaction
   - Take courses related to or required for my job
   - Take courses needed to transfer to another college or university
   - Obtain or maintain a certification
   - Complete a vocational/technical program
   - Attain an associate's degree
   - Attain a bachelor's degree
   - Attain a master's degree
   - Other (please specify)

Q50. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female

Q51. What is your current credit-enrollment status?
   - 1 - 5 credits
   - 6 - 11 credits
   - 12 - 15 credits
   - 16 or more credits

Q52. What is your residency status at UAA?
   - In-state student
   - Out-of-state student
   - International student (not a U.S. citizen)
Q53. What is your current college cumulative grade point average (GPA)?
   o 3.50 - 4.00
   o 3.00 - 3.49
   o 2.50 - 2.99
   o 2.00 - 2.40
   o 1.50 - 1.99
   o 1.00- 1.49
   o Below 1.00

Q54. What is your major?