



2009 LFCC Graduate Exit Survey

July 15, 2009
Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Office
Alicia C. Lloyd, Research Analyst

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Methodology	4
Response Rates	4
Results	6
Self-report of skills and knowledge before and after attending LFCC	6
Experience with Services and Facilities	7
Financial Aid	8
Reasons for Choosing LFCC	9
Primary Goal	9
Overall satisfaction and willingness to recommend LFCC to others	10
Future Plans	11
Transfer Information	12
Goals versus Next Steps	12
Conclusion	13
Appendices	14
Appendix A - Graduates' self-evaluation of skill and knowledge development through attending LFCC by degree	15
Appendix B - Graduates' ratings of LFCC services and facilities by degree	21
Appendix C - Important reasons for choosing to attend LFCC by degree	25
Appendix D - All Questions by Academic Program	27
Appendix E – LFCC's Survey of Applicants for Graduation 2009	65

2009 LFCC Graduate Exit Survey Executive Summary

The Lord Fairfax Community College (LFCC) Graduate Exit Survey collects information from soon-to-be graduates on their career and education plans for the coming year, satisfaction with LFCC's programs and services, and how well LFCC has helped them further their academic and/or professional goals. The survey was administered online to students completing their studies in the 2008-09 academic year. A total of 430 graduates completed the survey, with a response rate of 80.8%.

Approximately 97.9% of graduates plan to continue their education and/or enter the workforce in the coming year and 96.5% would recommend LFCC to others. More than half (59.8%) will enroll in a college or university in the coming year. Thirty percent plan to obtain a job in their field of study, while 7.7% plan to continue their current employment.

Satisfaction is highest with LFCC's library and admissions services, least with parking and the bookstore. Least utilized services include student learning and career counseling services.

Nearly all (96.1%) of graduates are "very" or "somewhat" satisfied that LFCC helped them achieve their goals. This finding is supported qualitatively with comments such as:

"I am very pleased with the education I received at LFCC. It was the glue that helped me take all the pieces of accounting that I knew and put them together to make a complete accounting profile. I am already working in accounting and use most of what I learned. Thank you."

"Thanks for an excellent education that you might find at any four-year college or university."

"Overall, LFCC is a great school and is a wonderful place to either get your degree or further your education. I love the ability to transfer into a four-year university, and being able to save a couple of bucks definitely doesn't hurt!"

2009 LFCC Graduate Exit Survey

Introduction

The LFCC Graduate Exit Survey collects information from soon-to-be graduates on their career and education plans for the coming year, satisfaction with LFCC's programs and services, and how well LFCC has helped them further their academic and/or professional goals. Response rates to the survey according to gender, race/ethnicity, and degree are discussed. The results include:

- a summary table displaying graduates' evaluation of their skill and knowledge development in 18 areas through attendance at LFCC
- ratings of services and facilities
- proportions of students receiving financial aid with degree breakout
- top reasons graduates chose to attend LFCC and factors influential in college choice
- graduates' primary goals in attending LFCC convey expected trends with degree breakout
- insight into graduates' satisfaction with their LFCC education and willingness to recommend LFCC to others
- graduates' future plans
- transfer information

The appendices provide more detailed results for several questions by degree (Appendices A-C) and all questions by academic program (Appendix D). A copy of the survey instrument is provided in Appendix E.

Methodology

LFCC had 532 students who completed an award of some kind in 2008-09. Four hundred and thirty (430) of these graduates completed the survey for a response rate of 80.8%. All graduates were required to take the Graduate Exit Survey, which was administered online. Initial contact was done by e-mail to inform graduates of the need to complete the survey. Those not responding by 4/16/2009 were again reminded by e-mail.

Response Rates

The response rate is documented in the following tables, broken out by demographics for each population. The Graduates population refers to all completers for the 2008-09 academic year. The E-mailed population is those to whom the prompt e-mail was sent, while Respondents is the group for which results were returned.

Gender	Graduates		E-mailed		Respondents	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Female	360	67.7%	344	68.4%	293	68.1%
Male	172	32.3%	157	31.2%	117	27.2%
Missing	0	0.0%	2	0.4%	20	4.7%
Total	532	100.0%	503	100.0%	430	100.0%

Race/Ethnicity	Graduates		E-mailed		Respondents	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
White	468	88.0%	437	86.9%	359	83.5%
African-American	23	4.3%	18	3.6%	13	3.0%
Hispanic	19	3.6%	19	3.8%	16	3.7%
Other/Missing	11	2.1%	12	2.4%	29	6.7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	8	1.5%	10	2.0%	9	2.1%
Native American	3	0.6%	7	1.4%	4	0.9%
Total	532	100.0%	503	100.0%	430	100.0%

Degree	Graduates		E-mailed		Respondents	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
AA&S	304	57.1%	326	64.8%	267	62.1%
AAS	119	22.4%	129	25.6%	112	26.0%
CSC	58	10.9%	17	3.4%	7	1.6%
CERT	51	9.6%	28	5.6%	22	5.1%
DE	0	0.0%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%
Missing	0	0.0%	2	0.4%	21	4.9%
Total	532	100.0%	503	100.0%	430	100.0%

Respondents were 68.1% female and 27.2% male, reflective of the 67.7% female and 32.3% male graduate population.

The majority (83.5%) of respondents were White; 3.7% Hispanic; 3.0% African-American; 2.1% Asian/Pacific Islanders or Native American; and 6.7% other/missing. These response rate breakouts by race/ethnicity are reflective of the graduate population.

Of those graduates responding, 267 (62.1%) earned an associate of arts and sciences degree, 112 (26.0%) an associate of applied science degree, 22 (5.1%) a certificate, and 7 (1.6%) a career studies certificate. Response rates by award type are reflective of the graduate population.

Results

Self-report of skills and knowledge before and after attending LFCC

Graduates were asked to compare their level of various skills and knowledge from when they started at LFCC to graduation using a five-point Likert scale with values of “Much Weaker,” “Weaker,” “No Change,” “Stronger,” and “Much Stronger.” Table 1 displays the percentage of graduates indicating the changes that occurred through attending LFCC.

Table 1: Compared to when you started LFCC, describe your skills and knowledge now in each of the following areas

Area	Mean	N	Std Dev	Much Weaker (1)	Weaker (2)	No Change (3)	Stronger (4)	Much Stronger (5)
Judging scientific merit	4.10	430	0.64	0.2%	0.0%	14.4%	60.0%	25.3%
Personal wellness	3.99	430	0.84	0.7%	3.0%	22.8%	43.5%	30.0%
Job skills	4.12	430	0.74	0.2%	0.2%	20.2%	46.0%	33.3%
Writing effectively	4.29	430	0.69	0.2%	0.0%	12.3%	45.3%	42.1%
Speaking effectively	4.36	430	0.72	0.7%	0.2%	9.8%	40.9%	48.4%
Problem solving skills	4.22	430	0.64	0.2%	0.0%	10.5%	55.8%	33.5%
Planning/carrying out projects	4.20	430	0.71	0.2%	0.2%	14.7%	48.6%	36.3%
Working cooperatively in groups	4.11	430	0.77	0.2%	0.7%	21.4%	42.8%	34.9%
Understanding social/pol issues	4.07	430	0.73	0.2%	0.5%	20.2%	50.0%	29.1%
Listening skills	4.10	430	0.73	0.2%	0.0%	20.7%	48.1%	30.9%
Relating skill & knowledge	4.14	430	0.70	0.2%	0.5%	15.3%	52.6%	31.4%
Leading others	4.09	430	0.73	0.2%	0.5%	20.0%	48.8%	30.5%
Art, music, literature appreciation	3.81	430	0.81	0.2%	0.7%	40.9%	34.4%	23.7%
Proficiency in comp technology	4.17	430	0.74	0.2%	0.2%	18.1%	45.1%	36.3%
Math skills	3.96	430	0.76	0.5%	1.4%	24.2%	50.0%	24.0%
Self confidence	4.24	430	0.75	0.5%	0.7%	16.5%	40.2%	42.1%
Appreciating different cultures	4.07	430	0.78	0.5%	0.5%	22.6%	44.4%	32.1%
Ability to judge the validity of info	4.27	430	0.67	0.2%	0.2%	10.5%	50.9%	38.1%

Areas with the highest percentage indicating “much stronger” or “stronger” are judging scientific merit, problem solving skills, and ability to judge the validity of information.

Areas with the highest percentage indicating “no change” or less are art, music, literature appreciation; math skills; and personal wellness.

Breakouts by degree are provided in Appendix A. These data suggest several interesting patterns. For example, self-evaluations of skill and knowledge development in computer technology show AA&S, AAS, and certificate students reporting significantly

stronger skills, while 85.7% of career studies certificate respondents report no change in these skills.

Average responses are highest for all respondents in speaking effectively and writing effectively, with means of 4.36 and 4.29 respectively. In both, AA&S students are the degree type reporting the most significant improvements in speaking (mean 4.46) and writing (mean 4.40). Career studies certificate graduates report the least improvement in each category, with a mean of 3.29 in speaking effectively and 3.86 in writing effectively. Conversely, math skills and art, music, and literature appreciation returned the lowest means regarding self-reported improvement in these areas.

Respondents' average response was 3.96 for math skills and 3.81 for art, music, and literature appreciation, both less than the 4.0 response of "stronger." Within these categories, AA&S students indicate they have improved the most with means of 4.04 for math skills and 3.97 for art appreciation. Career studies certificate students indicate the least improvement with means of 3.57 for math skills and 3.29 for art appreciation.

Experience with Services and Facilities

Graduates were asked to rate their experience with LFCC services and facilities using a five-point Likert scale of "excellent," "very good," "good," "fair," or "poor." A "don't know or never used" category is also provided. Means and standard deviations were calculated without this choice. Table 2 displays the percentage of graduates by level of satisfaction.

Table 2: Please rate your experience with the following LFCC services and facilities

Service or Facility	Mean	N	Std Dev	Never Used	Poor (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Very Good (4)	Excellent (5)
Academic Counseling	3.58	371	1.12	14.0%	4.9%	7.9%	26.0%	26.9%	20.4%
Admissions	3.83	427	0.98	9.3%	1.6%	5.6%	30.2%	32.0%	29.7%
Career Counseling	3.45	256	1.16	40.6%	3.5%	8.4%	19.3%	14.4%	13.9%
Financial Aid	3.71	281	1.25	34.8%	4.9%	6.3%	15.1%	15.6%	23.4%
Student Learning	3.78	239	1.04	44.6%	1.6%	3.7%	16.2%	17.4%	16.5%
Library	4.02	416	0.93	3.5%	1.4%	2.6%	24.6%	32.5%	35.5%
Student Activities	3.80	276	1.01	36.0%	0.9%	5.1%	19.0%	19.7%	19.3%
Classrooms	3.78	429	0.95	0.2%	2.3%	4.2%	31.8%	36.0%	25.5%
Labs	3.87	378	0.98	12.3%	2.1%	3.7%	25.1%	29.7%	27.2%
Parking	3.22	427	1.22	0.9%	10.9%	14.4%	33.4%	22.3%	18.1%
Security	3.76	360	1.01	16.5%	1.9%	5.3%	27.6%	24.8%	23.9%
Bookstore	3.48	426	1.13	1.2%	7.2%	8.8%	32.5%	29.9%	20.4%

Students were most satisfied with LFCC’s library and admissions services, with mean responses of 4.02 and 3.83 respectively, and least satisfied with parking and bookstore services, with means of 3.22 and 3.48. Some services, such as student learning, career counseling, and student activities may be underutilized, based on the high percentages of graduates who responded “never used.”

Responses among degree types vary. See Appendix A for summary tables by degree. Reflective of the more academic nature of the degree, AA&S students’ average rating for libraries was 4.19 with over 75% of respondents reporting “very good” or “excellent,” while the average AAS response was 3.65. Parking was rated poorly across degree programs with the highest mean response (3.59) among certificate graduates and the lowest (2.43) for career studies.

These findings are supported by responses to the following open-ended survey question: “If you marked ‘fair’ or ‘poor’ on any item, please provide additional comments to help us improve LFCC for future students.” The parking situation around the science building and construction areas is frequently noted. Examples of these responses include:

“Parking is very inadequate; there is simply not enough parking for the amount of students taking classes, the faculty, administration, guest speakers and other visitor to our beautiful campus.”

“There is never enough parking in the nursing/science building and it is dangerous to park in the main parking lot and have to walk to and from the nursing building to the main parking lot at night and the library employees always seem aggravated and not very thrilled with helping students.”

Financial Aid

Table 3: While attending LFCC, did you receive financial aid (federal Pell Grant, state grant, or LFCC scholarship)?

Financial Aid Recipients							
		Yes		No		Not Sure	
Degree	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%
AA&S	267	127	47.6%	134	50.2%	6	2.3%
AAS	112	59	52.7%	51	45.5%	2	1.8%
CERT	22	11	50.0%	11	50.0%	0	0.0%
CSC	7	1	14.3%	6	85.7%	0	0.0%
OTHER	22	7	31.8%	14	63.6%	1	4.6%
Total	430	205	47.7%	216	50.2%	9	2.1%

Of LFCC’s 430 graduate respondents, less than half (205 or 47.7%) received financial aid. This varies by degree, with 52.7% of AAS students and 47.6% of AA&S students

having received aid. The decreased proportions of career studies graduates receiving aid are to be expected.

Reasons for Choosing LFCC

Table 4: Indicate the reasons that were most important to you in choosing to attend LFCC (check all that apply)

Reasons	Total	%
Affordability	393	91.4%
Close to Home	374	87.0%
Small Classes/Individual Attention	219	50.9%
Convenient course schedule	214	49.8%
Availability of Courses/Curriculum of Interest	187	43.5%
Open Admission Policy	145	33.7%
Availability of Financial Aid	106	24.7%
Academic Reputation	85	19.8%
Other	32	7.4%
Employer Requirement/Suggestion	6	1.4%

Graduates were asked to indicate the reasons that were most important to them in choosing LFCC. Table 4 data suggests that the top reasons are affordability, the campus being very close to home, and small classes/individual attention.

Among graduates, affordability was reported most often (over 90%) for all degrees, except career studies students (42.9%). Among those reporting small class size to be a factor in choosing LFCC, certificate graduates note this reason the most (68.2%).

See Appendix C for summary tables of this item by degree.

Primary Goal

Graduates were asked to choose their primary goal for enrolling at LFCC. Table 5 indicates that more than half (273 or 63.5%) had the goal of taking courses or earning a degree to transfer to a four-year college/university. The goals vary as predicted, based on the type of program.

Table 5: What was your primary goal in enrolling at LFCC?

Degree	Total	Transfer to a 4-year institution		Developing skills for a new job		Terminal certificate or diploma		Upgrading current job skills		Personal interest		Exploring career options	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
AA&S	267	230	86.1%	5	1.9%	16	6.0%	5	1.9%	2	0.8%	9	3.4%
AAS	112	24	21.4%	19	17.0%	54	48.2%	10	8.9%	4	3.6%	1	0.9%
CERT	22	5	22.7%	5	22.7%	11	50.0%	1	4.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
CSC	7	0	0.0%	3	42.9%	2	28.6%	2	28.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
OTHER	22	14	63.6%	2	9.1%	2	9.1%	1	4.6%	2	9.1%	1	4.6%
Total	430	273	63.5%	34	7.9%	85	19.8%	19	4.4%	8	1.9%	11	2.6%

Overall satisfaction and willingness to recommend LFCC to others

Graduates were asked about their overall satisfaction in their LFCC experience and its contribution to their goal attainment as well as whether they would recommend LFCC to others.

Table 6: Overall, how satisfied are you that attending LFCC helped you achieve your goal?

Degree	Mean	Std Dev	Very dissatisfied (1)		Somewhat dissatisfied (2)		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (3)		Somewhat satisfied (4)		Very satisfied (5)	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
AA&S	4.69	0.63	1	0.4%	5	1.9%	3	1.1%	59	22.1%	199	74.5%
AAS	4.65	0.69	0	0.0%	4	3.6%	2	1.8%	23	20.5%	83	74.1%
CERT	4.82	0.39	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	18.2%	18	81.8%
CSC	4.57	0.53	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	42.9%	4	57.1%
OTHER	4.45	0.96	1	4.6%	0	0.0%	1	4.6%	6	27.3%	14	63.6%
Total	4.67	0.66	2	0.5%	9	2.1%	6	1.4%	95	22.1%	318	74.0%

Table 7: Would you recommend LFCC to others?

		Would you recommend LFCC to others?			
		Yes		No	
Degree	Total	N	%	N	%
AA&S	267	258	96.6%	9	3.4%
AAS	112	108	96.4%	4	3.6%
CERT	22	22	100.0%	0	0.0%
CSC	7	7	100.0%	0	0.0%
OTHER	22	20	90.9%	2	9.1%
Total	430	415	96.5%	15	3.5%

Overall, graduates' reported very high satisfaction levels. Nearly all respondents reported leaving LFCC "somewhat" or "very" satisfied, with a mean response of 4.67. Certificate graduates report the highest average satisfaction level (4.82). Of the 430 respondents, 415 (96.5 %) would recommend LFCC, with little variation among curriculum types.

Future Plans

Respondents were asked what their next step will be after graduating from LFCC. Approximately 59.8% indicated that they are transferring to a four-year college or university. Thirty percent are obtaining a job in their field of study.

Table 8: After graduating from LFCC, what will be your next step?

		Next Step									
		Continue current employment		Obtain a job NOT in my field of study		Obtain a job in my field of study		Transfer to a four-year institution		Use gained skills for personal enjoyment	
Degree	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
AA&S	267	15	5.6%	2	0.8%	23	8.6%	225	84.3%	2	0.8%
AAS	112	11	9.8%	0	0.0%	78	69.6%	19	17.0%	4	3.6%
CERT	22	2	9.1%	0	0.0%	18	81.8%	1	4.6%	1	4.6%
CSC	7	2	28.6%	0	0.0%	4	57.1%	0	0.0%	1	14.3%
OTHER	22	3	13.6%	0	0.0%	6	27.3%	12	54.6%	1	4.6%
Total	430	33	7.7%	2	0.5%	129	30.0%	257	59.8%	9	2.1%

The results by degree are predictable. Associate of arts and sciences graduates predominantly report plans to go on to four-year institutions, while associate of applied science, certificate, and career studies certificate graduates will obtain jobs in their fields.

Transfer Information

When asked to which four-year institution they will transfer, James Madison University was reported by 66 students or 25.7% of transferring graduates (15.3% of all respondents). George Mason University and Old Dominion University are also popular choices with approximately 11.7% to 12.2% of transferring graduates attending (6.7% and 7.2% of all respondents).

Table 9: Lord Fairfax graduates' transfer institutions

	Transfer Institution	N	% of all resp	% of transferring graduates
1	James Madison University	66	15.3%	25.7%
2	George Mason University	31	7.2%	12.1%
3	Old Dominion University	30	6.7%	11.7%
4	Shenandoah University	12	2.8%	4.7%
5	Virginia Tech	9	2.1%	3.5%
6	Virginia Commonwealth University	8	1.9%	3.1%
7	University of Mary Washington	7	1.6%	2.7%
8	Shepherd University	6	1.4%	2.3%
9	Radford University	6	1.4%	2.3%
10	University of Virginia	5	1.2%	1.9%

Table 10: Goals versus Next Steps

Primary goal at enrollment		Next step at graduation				
		N	Transfer to 4-yr inst		Employment in field	
			N	%	N	%
Female	Transfer to 4-yr institution	179	149	83.2%	24	13.4%
	Terminal degree/job skills	95	8	8.4%	71	74.7%
	Female Total	274	157	57.3%	95	34.7%
Male	Transfer to 4-yr institution	93	87	93.5%	3	3.2%
	Terminal degree/job skills	24	3	12.5%	16	66.7%
	Male Total	117	90	76.9%	19	16.2%
Total	Transfer to 4-yr institution	273	236	86.4%	27	9.9%
	Terminal degree/job skills	119	11	9.2%	87	73.1%

Transfer rates and job placement are important reflections of community college success. When enrolled, 273 respondents (63.5%) had a primary goal of transferring to four-year colleges or universities and 86.4% of this population report that they will transfer, while 9.9% report, instead, that they will obtain a job in their field of study. One hundred and nineteen students' (27.7%) primary goal in attending LFCC was to obtain a terminal award or develop job skills and 73.1% of these students report that they will obtain a job in their field of study; another 9.2% report that they will transfer to a four-

year institution. Men more frequently report initial goals of transferring to four-year institutions as well as higher transfer rates at graduation.

Conclusion

LFCC's 2009 Graduate Exit Survey provides insight into ways that LFCC might improve current and future students' experience at the college and better meet their academic and career goals. Graduates' self-evaluation of skill and knowledge development and reported satisfaction with LFCC services and facilities inform the institutional effectiveness and planning process. Graduates report the highest improvement in their speaking and writing skills. Students report the least improvements in math skills and art, music, and literature appreciation and a more focused effort on students' development in these areas may be needed. While graduates report the highest satisfaction with the admissions office and library services, the bookstore and parking were rated the lowest and may be areas for improvement.

The 2009 Graduate Exit Survey findings are useful to the LFCC planning and effectiveness process. A pilot survey was conducted in 2008 and implemented in spring 2009. Future exit surveys could be expanded to explore other questions, such as how LFCC could better serve student needs.