



Quality of Instruction

February 1996

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Purpose

The goal of this survey was to focus on student impressions of teaching quality at Penn State. This phone survey of randomly selected undergraduates was done in coordination with the 1995 University Alumni Teaching Fellow investigation of the definition of quality instruction.

Highlights

Nearly seventy percent of students rated the overall quality of instruction for the courses they took last Fall semester as good or excellent.

A majority of students reported that their instructors demonstrated a thorough knowledge of their subject, were well prepared, were enthusiastic about teaching, seemed to enjoy the course, were genuinely interested in the subject, and were impartial in assigning grades.

There were significant differences in the evaluation of instruction based on:

- how much choice students had in scheduling
- class type (lecture vs. other)
- class size (fewer or more than 50 students)

- instructor type (faculty vs. assistant)
- how much students felt they had learned
- grades as reported by students

Participation Rate

■ N = 282 (72.3%) agreed to participate (20 were not eligible since they did not take courses last Fall)

■ N = 108 (27.7%) did not agree to participate



Findings

- A majority of students (57.1%) rated Penn State as a desirable place to get an education.
- Most students (91.8%) would come to Penn State if making the decision again.
- Students who had 'total' choice in deciding which courses to schedule differed significantly from students who had 'some' or 'no' choice.

Choice in Scheduling Course			
Instructors	Total	Some	None
Were enthusiastic about teaching<	80.6%	42.9%	40.5%
Stimulated curiosity	38.7%	24.3%	13.9%
Presented different points of view	35.5%	26.9%	12.3%
Made subject understandable	48.4%	37.1%	22.8%
Were rated excellent	58.1%	38.6%	27.2%

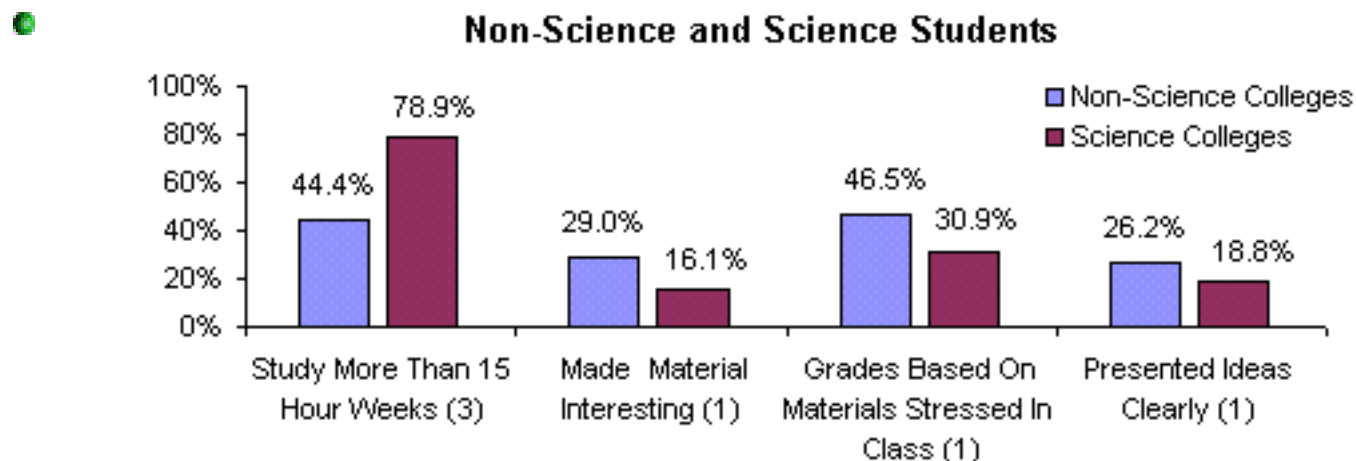
(Statistically significant at the .05, .01< level)

- Women were significantly more likely than men to:
 - be in classes of more than 100 students (55.2% vs. 39.4%)

- report that their instructors made the material interesting (29.1% vs. 18.3%)
- indicate that their instructors clearly defined student responsibilities (52.6% vs. 33.6%)

• Students who reported they had learned a lot in their classes evaluated their instructors more positively.

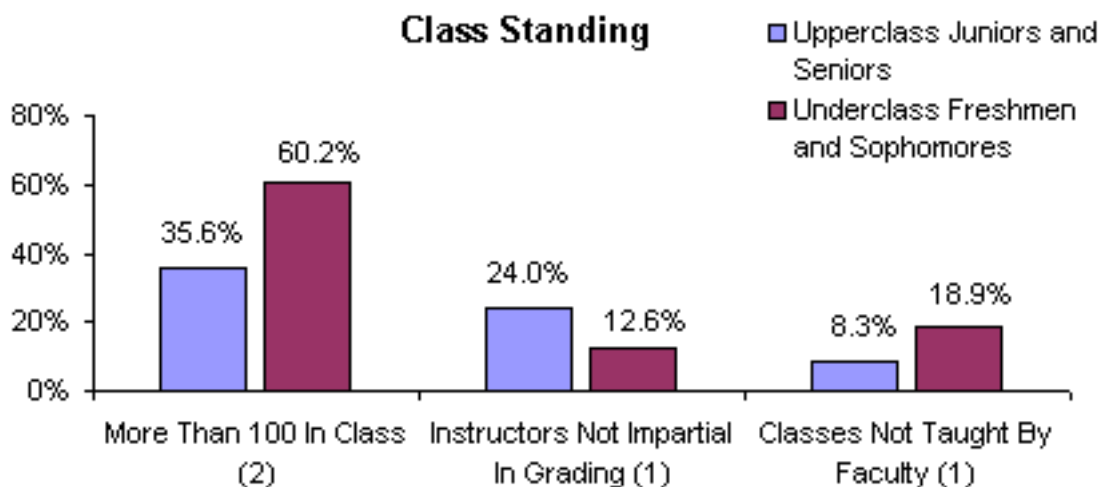
- This pattern held for almost all of the survey items.
- Students earning As and Bs were significantly more likely than students earning C/D/Fs to evaluate their instructors positively.



Students enrolled in the Non-Science Colleges differed from students enrolled in the Science Colleges.

(Statistically significant at the .05, .001 > level)

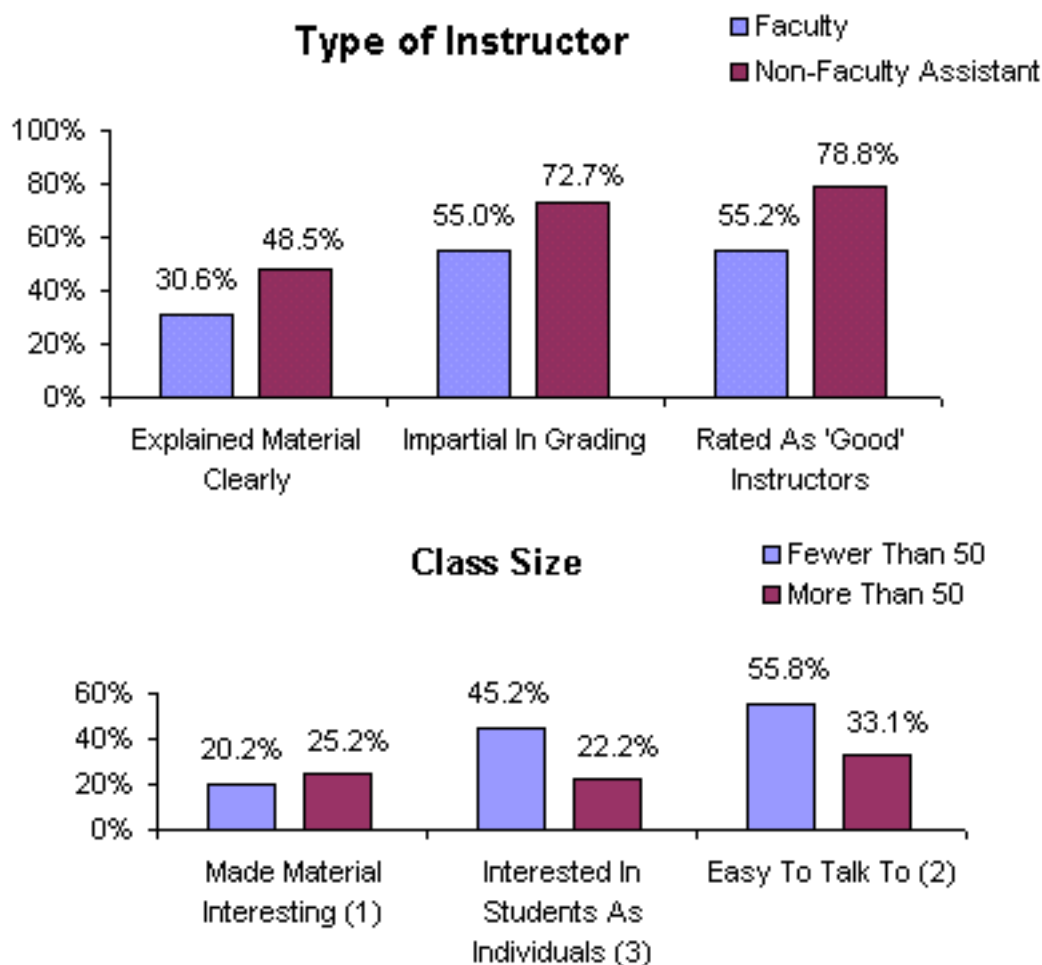
• Significant differences were found between upperclass juniors and seniors when compared to underclass freshmen and sophomores.



(Statistically significant at the .05, .01 < level)

● 'Type' of instructor and class size made a significant difference in course evaluations.

- Faculty were more likely than assistants to teach lecture courses, to have 100 or more students in their classes, to assign a relatively lower amount of work for the class, and to be rated as fair or poor instructors by their students.



(Statistically significant at the .05, .01<, .001> level)

● Students were asked to define the type of course as 'lecture' vs. 'other.' The class type had significant impact on the responses to many of the survey questions about the quality of instruction.

- Students in 'other' (49.2%) rather than 'lecture' (29.4%) were more likely to rate their instructor as excellent.
- Fewer students in lecture courses (18.3%) than in 'other' courses (35.0%) reported low level of difficulty.
- Students in lecture classes (28.4%) were more likely than students in 'other' types of

classes (11.9%) to indicate less work was required.

- More students in lecture courses (25.9%) than in 'other' courses (10.0%) reported grades of C or lower.

• Students were asked for feedback on whether their instructors demonstrated eight component behaviors used to define quality instruction by Kenneth Feldman, *Research in Higher Education*, 1976.

Components of Quality Instruction	
<p>Component 1: Clarity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 32.8% explained material clearly - 30.3% made subject understandable - 23.1% presented difficult ideas clearly 	<p>Component 2: Classroom Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 44.7% used class time wisely - 42.4% clearly identified student responsibilities - 42.0% class atmosphere conducive to learning - 34.1% valuable feedback through graded materials
<p>Component 3: Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 64.0% thorough knowledge of subject - 28.7% demonstrated importance of subject - 19.0% provided various points of view 	<p>Component 4: Intellectually Stimulating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 23.0% made material interesting - 22.5% stimulated students to think - 19.6% stimulated intellectual curiosity
<p>Component 5: Organized</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 54.6% well prepared - 41.5% presentations well organized - 23.2% course content well developed 	<p>Component 6: Enthusiasm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 59.5% genuinely interested in subject - 50.2% enjoyed teaching - 45.8% enthusiastic about course
<p>Component 7: Fairness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 57.4% impartial in assigning grades - 39.7% grades based on materials stressed in class - 37.3% evaluated work fairly 	<p>Component 8: Approachability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 43.0% accessible outside of class - 42.5% easy to talk to - 31.4% genuinely interested in students as individuals

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