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ABSTRACT

In 1991, a survey was sent to a random sample of University of Oregon (UO) students who had attended Lane Community College (LCC) between winter 1988 and spring 1990. The purpose of the survey was to investigate the perceptions and opinions of former LCC students concerning their community college and transfer experiences. Major findings, based on a 20% response rate (N=305), included the following: (1) the most frequently cited primary reasons for choosing to attend LCC were cost (31%), location (17%), to gain confidence (11%), and desired courses and programs offered (10%); (2) secondary reasons for choosing to attend UO were the courses and programs offered (41%) and location (32%); (3) the respondents' mean high school grade point average (GPA) was 3.18, while their mean LCC GPA was 3.42; (4) 81% of the respondents reported that they had not earned a two-year degree before transferring to UO; (5) nearly 30% reported that some of the credits they had earned at LCC were not transferable to UO; (6) 77% were pleased with the academic preparation they had received at LCC and would recommend that a friend attend the college and then transfer to UO; and (7) 55% felt that classes at LCC had been moderately difficult. Common responses to open-ended questions are provided, and the 64-item survey is attached. (JMC)

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PREPARATION AND TRANSITION:  
THE TRANSFER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
LANE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

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February 1991

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## INTRODUCTION

Community colleges are unique among our nation's higher education institutions because of their open-door admission policies and their multifaceted mission. A key component in their mission has long been to provide students with the first two years of a four-year degree. Assessing how well community colleges fulfill this mission has been the subject of considerable research effort in recent years. Studies in this area often have focused on determining the number of community college students who transfer to four-year institutions and eventually achieve a bachelors degree (Tinto, 1975; Astin, 1975; Belcher, 1987) and comparing the performance of transfer students with students who initially enrolled in four-year institutions (Karabel, 1986; Voorhees, 1987).

The present study endeavors to investigate beyond the rate of transfer. We explored the perceptions and opinions of students who had attended Lane Community College (LCC) and eventually transferred to the University of Oregon (UO). Further, we sought information and insights that would yield a better understanding of the transfer relationship that presently exists between Lane Community College (LCC) and the University of Oregon (UO). Our purpose was to learn what contributed to and diminished from the community college educational experiences of students who had successfully transferred to the University. More specifically, our objectives were to:

- gain a better understanding of the students who actually transfer between these institutions.

- achieve a better understanding of why students chose to pursue the transfer path in their educational careers.
- determine how well LCC prepared these students for study at the UO.
- assess students' performance across their educational careers.
- gain insights into how LCC and the UO could better serve students who plan to transfer to the UO.

## METHODOLOGY

A survey questionnaire was developed by the research team after consulting with LCC researchers (see Appendix A). The questionnaire was mailed spring term 1990 to a random sample of nearly 1,000 UO students who had attended LCC between winter term 1988 and spring term 1990. A second mailing was conducted fall term 1990 in which approximately 500 instruments were mailed to a random sample of individuals who did not return the first instrument.<sup>1</sup> We gained a greater understanding of the transient nature of university students, especially late in spring term, during the course of this study as countless instruments were undeliverable because students had recently changed their addresses and the questionnaires could not be forwarded. Completed questionnaires were returned by a total of 305 University students after both mailings, yielding an overall response rate of approximately 20%.

## FINDINGS

### Demographics

A brief summary of demographic information reveals that of the 305 respondents, 58% reported they were female and 40% were

males (12 individuals did not indicate their sex).<sup>2</sup> Most respondents were white (81%); single, having never been married (50%); and with no dependents (45%). The mean age of all respondents was 28 years, with the mean age of females only slightly higher (28.7 years) than males (27.2 years).

#### Deciding to Attend LCC and the UO

A picture of students who seem to avoid making long range educational plans emerges after learning that most students (41%) indicated they made the decision to attend LCC "after completing high school" while 24% reported they decided to attend LCC "during or before high school." Similarly, most of the respondents decided to attend the University of Oregon "while attending LCC" (47%) and only 23% reported they made this decision "before attending LCC" or "during or before high school" (15%).

The most frequently cited responses when students were asked the Most Important reason for choosing to attend LCC were:

- cost (31%)
- location (17%)
- to gain confidence (11%)
- desired courses and programs were offered (10%)
- wanted a chance to explore college and/or courses and programs (8%)

When asked about their Second and Third Most Important reasons for attending Lane, many respondents indicated the reasons previously listed as Most Important along with: financial aid was offered, and the convenience of transferring from LCC.

Reasons for choosing to attend the UO were dominated by "the courses and programs offered" (41%) and "location" (32%).

Significantly smaller percentages of students report that "convenience of transferring from LCC," "quality instructors," and "financial aid" also influenced their decision.

A picture of students who tend not to make long-term educational plans becomes more clear as we review who students said had been influential in their decision to attend LCC and the UO. What was most striking about responses was the lack of significant influence that individuals we identified in the questionnaire had in this decision for most of the students. A majority of respondents reported that the individuals listed (including parents, friends, counselors, instructors) had little influence in their decisions to attend either institution.<sup>3</sup> Some differences occurred, though, between responses made by males and those made by females. This difference in the influence of parents and friends in the decisions to attend LCC and the UO is highlighted in the response rates detailed in Table 1. A greater differential occurred between responses made by older students and by those given by younger students.<sup>4</sup> Responses presented in Table 2 show younger students reported being influenced more by some of the listed individuals than did older students. The question that remains after reviewing these responses is who or what had the most influence on transfer students as they make the decisions to attend Lane and eventually the University.

Table 1.

Who Influenced Decision  
to Attend LCC and UO

(by Gender)

	--Little Influence--		--More Influence--	
	<u>Females</u> freq (%)	<u>Males</u> freq (%)	<u>Females</u> freq (%)	<u>Males</u> freq (%)
Dad's Influence--Attend LCC	101 (66)	65 (59)	29 (19)	25 (23)
Dad's Influence--Attend UO	95 (55)	54 (49)	43 (28)	32 (29)
Mom's Influence--Attend LCC	92 (60)	53 (49)	37 (24)	37 (24)
Mom's Influence--Attend UO	86 (50)	47 (44)	48 (31)	41 (38)
Friends' Infl.--Attend LCC	101 (67)	61 (57)	23 (15)	25 (23)
Friend's Infl.--Attend UO	83 (55)	53 (51)	39 (26)	31 (30)

Table 2.

Who Influenced Decision  
to Attend LCC and UO

(by Age)

	--Little Influence--		--More Influence--	
	<u>Younger</u> freq (%)	<u>Older</u> freq (%)	<u>Younger</u> freq (%)	<u>Older</u> freq (%)
Dad's Influence--Attend LCC	77 (48)	86 (85)	46 (29)	7 ( 7)
Dad's Influence--Attend UO	65 (40)	83 (82)	65 (40)	8 ( 8)
Mom's Influence--Attend LCC	62 (39)	80 (79)	62 (39)	11 (11)
Mom's Influence--Attend UO	54 (34)	77 (76)	74 (46)	14 (14)
Friends' Infl.--Attend LCC	93 (60)	68 (69)	30 (19)	18 (18)
Friend's Infl.--Attend UO	75 (48)	60 (63)	51 (32)	19 (20)

### Academic Performance

Based on responses provided by students, the mean high school grade point average (gpa) for all respondents (3.18) suggests these students were academic achievers before they attended Lane. The mean LCC gpa of students (based on responses) was 3.42, which reveals these students continued to apply themselves in the classroom. Overall, the gpa that students achieved while attending the UO fell from the levels earned while attending Lane, with the mean UO gpa for all students equal to 3.19. Differences occurred between males and females, and between younger students and older students as explained by the grade point averages in Table 3.

Table 3.  
Academic Achievement  
(GPA)

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	mean HS gpa	mean LCC gpa	mean UO gpa
All respondents .....	3.18	3.42	3.19
Female respondents ..	3.30	3.52	3.35
Male respondents ...	3.05	3.25	2.97
Younger respondents .	3.25	3.31	3.07
Older respondents ...	3.06	3.56	3.36

From the figures presented in Table 3 it is clear that the female respondents achieved higher grades than males throughout their educational careers. Additionally, the older students who attended LCC and eventually transferred had lower high school grade point averages than their younger counterparts. This difference was reversed, however, as the older students achieved higher grades at LCC and at the UO.

The sort of difference between females and males and between younger students and older students that is exhibited in Table 3 also is maintained when we examine the number of credits students earned while at Lane. The average number of LCC credits earned for all students was 70.1. When differentiated by sex, we see that females, on average, earned slightly fewer credits at LCC (67.4) than did males (74.4). The differential in LCC credits earned is greater between younger and older students. Older students spend more time at Lane, earning on average 80.1 credits, compared to younger students who earn, on average, 63.6 credits.

Most of the respondents in this study reported they usually carried nine or more credits per term while attending Lane (80%) and only 10% reported that they carried nine or fewer credits per term.

Whether or not students earn a two-year degree before transferring to the University is related to the number of credits earned at Lane. Our findings reveal that a vast majority of respondents do not earn a degree at LCC before they

transferred to the UO (81% reported they had not earned a two-year degree compared with only 19% who reported they had earned the degree). This finding indicates that earning a two-year degree is not the goal for a majority of the students who transfer from LCC to the University.

### The Transfer Process

A concern often raised about attending a community college and later transferring to a four-year institution is that earned community college credits often are not accepted when transferring. Nearly 30% of the respondents in this study reported that some of the credits they had earned at Lane were not accepted at the University after transferring, compared with 67% of the respondents who indicated they had no problem with loss of credits. Of those who lost credits, nearly 70% lost twelve or fewer credits, 42% reported losing six or fewer credits, and 27% reported they lost between seven and twelve credits. Ten of the students who lost credits reported they lost more than 27 credits when transferring to the UO.

When asked why they lost credits, 31% indicated that it was because the "courses did not transfer"; 15% thought the requirements regarding credit transfer "were misrepresented"; 13% said it was because they "received inaccurate or misleading advice from counselors"; and 12% admitted they "had not been attentive to requirements for credit transfer."

### Opinions

Students were asked to respond to a series of questions

exploring their opinions about academic preparation and achievement at LCC and at the UO. Overall, students:

- were pleased with the academic preparation they received at Lane (77% of respondents "agreed")<sup>5</sup>.
- would recommend that a friend attend LCC and then transfer to the UO (77% of respondents agreed).
- had been serious about their LCC classes (80% of the respondents agreed).
- had good study skills and habits while attending Lane (71% of respondents agreed).

When assessing how well particular types of courses taken at LCC prepared them for subsequent courses that students took at the UO, a majority of students reported they thought they had been "Very Well Prepared" or "Well Prepared." Further details regarding perceived effectiveness of courses taken at Lane are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.  
Effectiveness of LCC Courses

Question	Response frequency		Total Freq.	Percent
	Very Well Prepared	Well Prepared		Valid Percent
LCC courses overall	86	113	199	68%
Math courses	43	41	84	60%
English courses	45	62	107	61%
Science courses	40	43	83	68%

Males and females share very similar views of how well their LCC courses prepared them for course work at the UO. This similarity in responses, however, is not as consistent between older students and younger students. For example, 84% of the older students thought their LCC courses had prepared them "well" for the courses they have taken at the UO, compared to 58% of the younger students.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, 77% of the older students thought their LCC science courses had prepared them well for their UO science courses, compared to 62% of the younger students. And 47% of the younger students thought their "study skills and habits developed while attending LCC served them well while studying at the UO," while 77% of older students shared similar perceptions.

When asked about the level of difficulty of LCC courses overall, student responses were normally distributed along the five-point scale of "Very Difficult" to "Very Easy" with 55% reporting they thought classes had been moderately difficult. Student responses also were approximately normally distributed on questions about the difficulty of:

- advanced composition courses
- english composition courses
- preparatory composition courses
- intermediate math courses

When asked about the difficulty of their introductory math courses, students reported these courses generally were easy. In contrast, assessment of the difficulty of advanced math courses reveals these were more difficult.

## Recommendations

A series of open-ended questions comprised this section of the questionnaire where students were asked to write short answers to each question. Responses to these questions provide more extensive insights into student experiences and opinions. A variety of suggestions for improving procedures to aid transfer were offered here, along with comments that demonstrated Lane is effectively preparing students for their studies at the UO.

When asked to provide their own response to the question: **What do you think are the advantages of attending LCC and then transferring to the UO?** students most frequently responded:

--the ability to save money while earning credits toward a bachelors degree.

(Quote from respondent 0281: "The cost is quite an advantage. I believe you get personalized instruction in classes at LCC which you won't find at the UO.")

--smaller classes at Lane

(Quote from respondent 0586: "The smaller classes. Professors are more student oriented.")

--personal attention from instructors and staff and a caring atmosphere

(Quote from respondent 0173: "LCC helped me to build confidence and most everyone in the offices was most helpful, and gave a service and wanted you to succeed.")

--an opportunity to make the transition from high school or work to college

(Quote from respondent 0713: "To my mind, the greatest advantage of attending LCC and then transferring to the UO is, as was in my own experience, that of gradual immersion into the college student's lifestyle. It helped me to decide to continue my higher education by being able to see myself transition comfortably from the work force into part-time student status at LCC; had I not attended LCC first, the student lifestyle might

have been too radical a change for me (e.g., going from full-time pay to financial aid income, from thoughtless free time to thoughtful study time etc.)

--an opportunity to develop confidence in doing college work

(Quote from respondent 0681: "To gain confidence in myself as a student and the friendly and warm environment at LCC.")

--the high quality of instructors at LCC

(Quote from respondent 0853: "A big advantage of attending LCC was the quality of instructors. The instructors at LCC are on the whole much better than UO professors and GTFs.")

Responses students provided to the question: **How could LCC help students who want to transfer from LCC to the UO?** indicated that students would like to see the transfer process between the two schools simplified, with a "package deal" provided or at least a more standardized process for transferring. The students often mentioned the need for what we have termed an "articulation matrix," or a list of transferrable courses for each UO major if possible. Students also reported:

--LCC counseling could be improved, especially as it pertains to transferring

--more extensive UO orientation would be helpful

--increase the rigor of classes at LCC

--encourage students to fulfill as many of the course requirements for the bachelors degree at LCC as possible.

We must add, that a substantial number of students responded that the system for transfer between the two schools seems to work well and that there were few or no problems. Additionally, many students indicated that the LCC counseling was fine, but more contact with counselors was recommended. These students also

advised others to seek out and stay in contact with a counselor.

Several responses frequently appeared to the question: **How could the UO help students who want to transfer from LCC to the UO?**

- clarify UO degree requirements.
- present better UO orientations.
- utilize former LCC students who are attending the UO as peer advisors.

Students' responses to: **What advice would you give to future transfer students?** included:

- take as many classes at LCC for the bachelors as possible.
- take the initiative and stay in contact with counselors and review the requirements for course transfer early and often.
- take college seriously and begin planning early for transfer to the University.
- seek advise from a counselor at the UO while attending LCC.
- take advantage of Study Skills classes at LCC.

#### SUMMARY

Students generally approved of their experiences at LCC. A majority indicated they would encourage a friend to attend Lane and later transfer to the UO. Respondents appreciated the small class sizes and the quality of instruction at Lane. They also indicated that cost and location were important issues when they made the decision to attend LCC.

When asked how LCC could help transfer students, the most

frequent response was to improve the counseling available at Lane. We noted, however, that many respondents also reported they experienced no transfer problems. For those students who thought the transfer process needed improvement, a frequent response suggested creation of an articulation matrix to simplify what is perceived to be a complicated transfer process. Students wanted to be able to select LCC courses that conform to UO degree requirements as early as possible. Students also frequently mentioned that the UO could facilitate this process by providing a more extensive orientation. Respondents also recommended that students following them should take advantage of LCC by fulfilling as many of their bachelors requirements at Lane as possible.

Further investigation of the data set constructed during this study should provide educators with a more detailed understanding of the transfer relationship that presently exists between Lane Community College and the University of Oregon. With its combination of detailed quantitative material and narrative responses to open-ended questions, this data set offers a rich source of information that can be explored more extensively to better understand why students choose to transfer from community colleges as well as how the transfer process can be improved between these two particular institutions. This knowledge will benefit both students and educators, here in Eugene and across the nation.

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## ENDNOTES

1. Special thanks is extended to the Director of Admissions at the UO and to the helpful personnel in the Office of Research, Planning & Evaluation at LCC. Without their assistance this study would have been more arduous.

2. Percentages reported throughout the executive summary represent valid percent. That is, they do not include Missing responses. NOTE: Most percentages reported in Appendix C., Review of Quantitative Data, are simple percents (i.e., considers Missing and Unspecified responses in totals).

3. The category "little" influence reported here was obtained by combining responses 1 and 2 that were reported by respondents on the questionnaire which employed the scale:

Very Influential = 5      Not At All Influential = 1.

The category "more" influence was obtained by combining responses 4 and 5 on the scale used in the questionnaire.

4. The category "Younger students" was derived by combining all respondents aged 27 and younger together (N=175), and the "Older students" category was derived by combining all students older than 27 years (N=114). The age break was based on the overall mean age of 28 years.

5. Responses for this group of questions were reported on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree." The category "Agreed" used in this summary of findings was derived by combining the 5 and 4 responses reported on the questionnaire.

6. The response category "Well Prepared" was derived by combining the 5 and 4 responses on these questions. The scale for responses ranged from 1 to 5, with 1 being "Very Poorly" prepared for courses taken at the UO and 5 being "Very Well" prepared for UO course work.

APPENDIX A.

**LCC/UO TRANSFER STUDY**

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MAKING DECISIONS TO ATTEND LCC & THE UO:

1. When did you make the decision to attend LCC?

- A) Before senior year HS
- B) Fall of senior year HS
- C) Winter of senior year
- D) Spring of senior year
- E) Summer after HS graduation
- F) Fall after HS graduation
- G) Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. When did you decide to attend the UO?

- A) Before senior year HS
- B) Fall of senior year HS
- C) Winter of senior year
- D) Spring of senior year
- E) Summer after HS graduation
- F) Fall after HS graduation
- G) While attending LCC
- H) Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. Why did you choose to attend LCC and the UO? (Select from the list below or write in your reasons if they are not shown below.)

---

Reasons for Attending LCC:

- Most Important Reason \_\_\_\_\_
- 2nd Most Important Reason \_\_\_\_\_
- 3rd Most Important Reason \_\_\_\_\_

Reasons for attending UO:

- Most Important Reason \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2nd Most Important Reason \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3rd Most Important Reason \_\_\_\_\_
- 

- A) Offered courses and programs I wanted
- B) Cost
- C) Location
- D) Quality of instructors
- E) Financial aid was offered
- F) Was not admitted to the college or university that was my first choice
- G) Support programs (i.e., counseling, child care, etc.)
- H) My family wanted me to attend
- I) Wanted to build confidence before attending a college or university
- J) Convenience of transferring from LCC
- K) Wanted chance to explore college and/or courses and programs I thought I wanted to study
- L) Wanted to be with my friends
- M) Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. What did you want to accomplish at LCC? (Check appropriate responses.)

- A) Earn credits to apply to transfer and a bachelor's degree
- B) Gain experience doing college work
- C) Gain confidence
- D) Save money
- E) Other \_\_\_\_\_



16. How many LCC math credits did you earn before transferring to the UO? \_\_\_\_\_
17. What was the highest level math course you completed at LCC? \_\_\_\_\_
18. How many LCC science credits did you earn before transferring to the UO? \_\_\_\_\_
19. What majors have you declared at LCC and at the UO? (If you changed majors, please list any preliminary majors you chose along with your final LCC major and your current UO major.)

LCC	UO
1st _____	1st _____
2nd _____	2nd _____
final _____	current _____

20. Please check the activities in which you have been involved.

	High School	LCC	UO
A) athletics/intramural sports	_____	_____	_____
B) rally squad/drill team	_____	_____	_____
C) student government	_____	_____	_____
D) campus club/organization	_____	_____	_____
E) school paper or year book	_____	_____	_____
F) band, orchestra, or choir	_____	_____	_____
G) Other _____	_____	_____	_____

21. Please check the category that indicates your usual course load each term.

<u>LCC</u>	<u>UO</u>
A) ___ Fewer than 9-credits	A) ___ Fewer than 9-credits
B) ___ 9 or more credits	B) ___ 9 or more credits

22. Did some of the credits you expected to apply when you transferred from LCC to the UO not apply?

\_\_\_ yes      \_\_\_ no

23. If you answered "Yes" to Question 22, please indicate how many credits you lost when you transferred from LCC to the UO \_\_\_\_\_.

24. If you answered "Yes" to Question 22, please indicate what you think was responsible for your loss of credits and how it happened.

25. Did you enroll in any STUDY SKILLS courses while attending LCC?

\_\_\_ yes      \_\_\_ no

26. If your answer for Question 25 was "Yes," which STUDY SKILLS courses did you take?



**WORK:**

41. Were you usually employed for pay while attending LCC?

yes  no

42. If your answer to question 41 was "Yes," how many hours per week, on average, did you work?

A)  fewer than 5 hrs/wk      C)  11 to 20 hrs/wk  
 B)  5 to 10 hrs/wk      D)  more than 20 hrs/wk

43. Are you presently employed for pay while attending the UO?

yes  no

44. If your answer to Question 43 was "Yes," how many hours per week, on average, do you work?

A)  fewer than 5 hrs/wk      C)  11 to 20 hrs/wk  
 B)  5 to 10 hrs/wk      D)  more than 20 hrs/wk

**TRANSFER:**

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On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being "Very Well", and 1 being "Very Poorly", answer questions 45 through 49 by circling the appropriate number. (Circle NA if the question does not apply to you.)

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	<u>Very Well</u>					<u>Very Poorly</u>
45. Overall, how well did your courses at LCC prepare you for the courses you have taken at the UO. . . . .	5	4	3	2	1	NA
46. How well did your math courses at LCC prepare you for the math courses you have taken at the U of O? . . . . .	5	4	3	2	1	
47. How well did your English courses at LCC prepare you for English courses you have taken at the UO? . . . . .	5	4	3	2	1	NA
48. How well did your science courses at LCC prepare you for science courses you have taken at the UO? . . . . .	5	4	3	2	1	NA
49. How well have the study skills and habits you developed while attending LCC served you while studying at the UO? . . . . .	5	4	3	2	1	NA
50. While attending <u>LCC</u> , on average, I studied about <input type="checkbox"/> hours for every hour I spent in class.						
51. While attending the <u>UO</u> , on average, I study about <input type="checkbox"/> hours for every hour I spend in class.						

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

52. What do you think are the advantages of attending LCC and then transferring to the UO?

53. How could LCC help students who want to transfer from LCC to the UO?

54. How could the UO help students who want to transfer from LCC to the UO?
55. Was there a particular individual, class, activity, or event at LCC that you found especially helpful as you were thinking or preparing to transfer to the UO? (Please describe.)
56. Was there a particular individual, class, activity, or event at the UO that you found especially helpful when you were transferring or shortly after you transferred to the UO? (Please describe.)
57. As a student and knowing what you now know, what would you say or how would you advise students who wanted to attend LCC and then transfer to the UO? (Please indicate what they should do and what they should not do.)

**ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

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(The following questions are optional, but will contribute to the outcome of this study.)

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58. What is your race or ethnic group?

- A) North American Indian/Alaskan Native
- B) White/Caucasian
- C) Black/Afro-American
- D) Asian/Pacific Islander
- E) Hispanic

59. What is your gender?

female  male

60. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

61. Marital status:

- A) Single, never Married
- B) Married
- C) Widowed
- D) Divorced
- E) Separated
- F) Single with Partner

62. How many dependents do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

63. Check the highest level of education that each of your parents achieved.

- A) Less than high school
- B) High school graduation
- C) Some college
- D) Vocational/technical school
- E) Associate degree
- F) Bachelor degree
- G) Advanced degree

Mother	Father
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

64. Please identify the longest-held occupation of your parents.

Mother \_\_\_\_\_

Father \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND ASSISTANCE!**

DEPM/UO  
Research, Planning, & Evaluation/LCC  
May 1990