

# The Michigan Experience: Perspectives from the Class of 2008

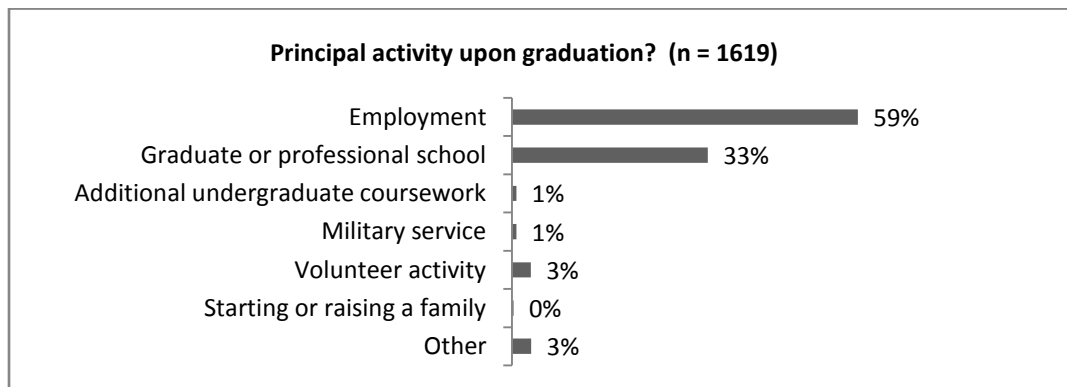
The University of Michigan  
2008 Graduating Senior Survey  
REPORT SUMMARY (v 1.1)



**Introduction.** In April of 2008, the University of Michigan conducted a survey of its undergraduate graduating class. Invitations to participate in the online survey were emailed to approximately 4,950 seniors who had registered for April 2008 graduation. 1,673 seniors consented to participate, resulting in a response rate of 34%. The respondents appear representative of the graduating class in their school or college of enrollment. Female students were slightly more likely to respond to the survey as were Michigan residents.

**Composition.** Survey respondents were receiving degrees primarily from LS&A (64%), Engineering (15%), and Business (8%). Respondents were 61% female; 66% of survey respondents were Michigan residents. Approximately 62% of the seniors who completed the survey reported their race as White or Caucasian.

**Career & Graduate School Plans.** Most seniors (60%) plan to work after graduation and almost half of those planning to work had a job secured at the time of the survey (several weeks before commencement). The largest number of students was headed to positions in business and finance areas. Also popular were engineering and physical sciences, education, and healthcare.

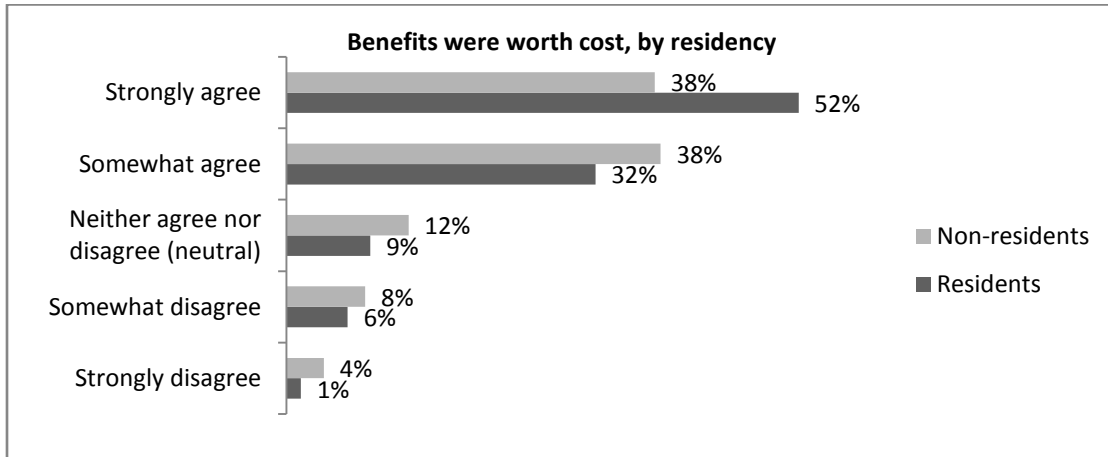


About a third (33%) were headed to graduate or professional school right away. Overall, 89% of the class had plans to get an additional degree at some point. Almost 30% of the class aims to get a future MBA; about 20% hope for a law degree and 20% aspire to get an academic doctorate.

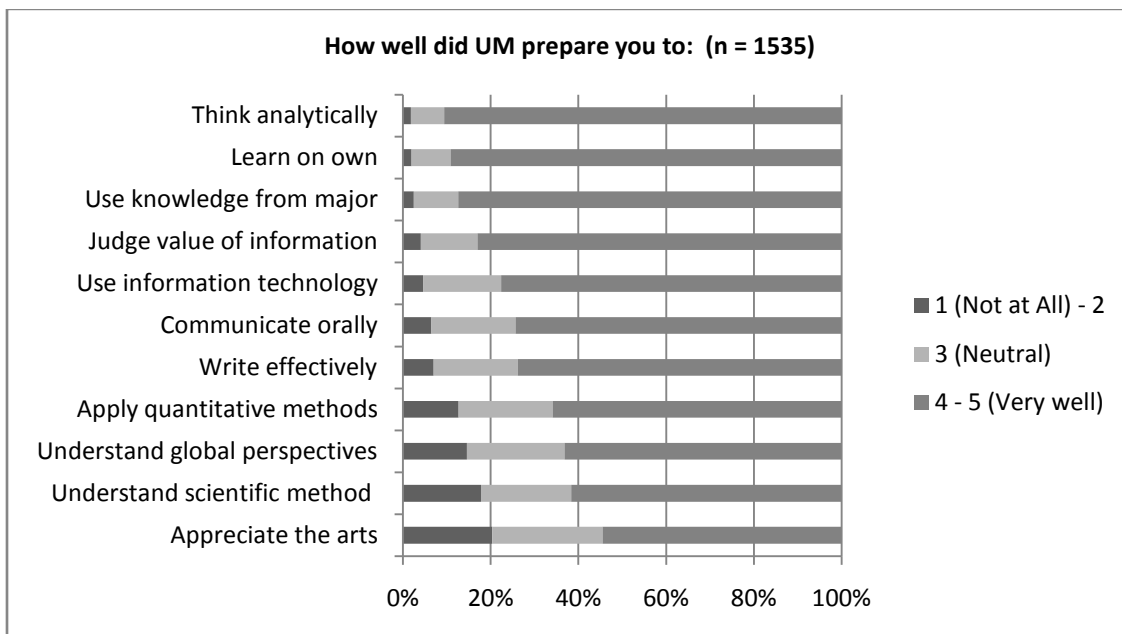
Three percent of the class planned on full-time service-related career such as Peace Corps or Teach for America after graduation. Another 10% of the class was giving this kind of position serious consideration for the near future (within five years).

Slightly over one quarter of graduating seniors plan to remain in Michigan upon graduation, with this percentage of graduates with jobs rising to 37% among Michigan residents.

**Debt & Costs.** Students in the Class of 2008 generally graduated with no debt (53%) or low debt (22% owed less than \$20,000). Most feel that the benefits of attending U-M were well worth the cost.

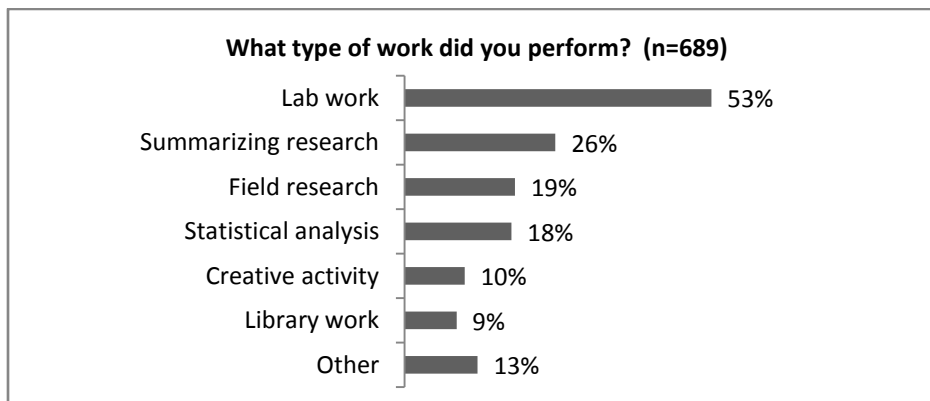


**Skills Gained.** Seniors are generally positive about their U-M experience. They feel U-M helped them improve intellectual skills, particularly critical thinking, applying knowledge from their major, acquiring new skills on their own, and ability to judge the value of information. While they were positive about their gains in all areas, they gave lower marks to their appreciation for arts, understanding of the scientific method, understanding international perspectives, and application of quantitative methods. Students were also very positive about the ability to work in teams, and their ability to get along with people from all backgrounds.

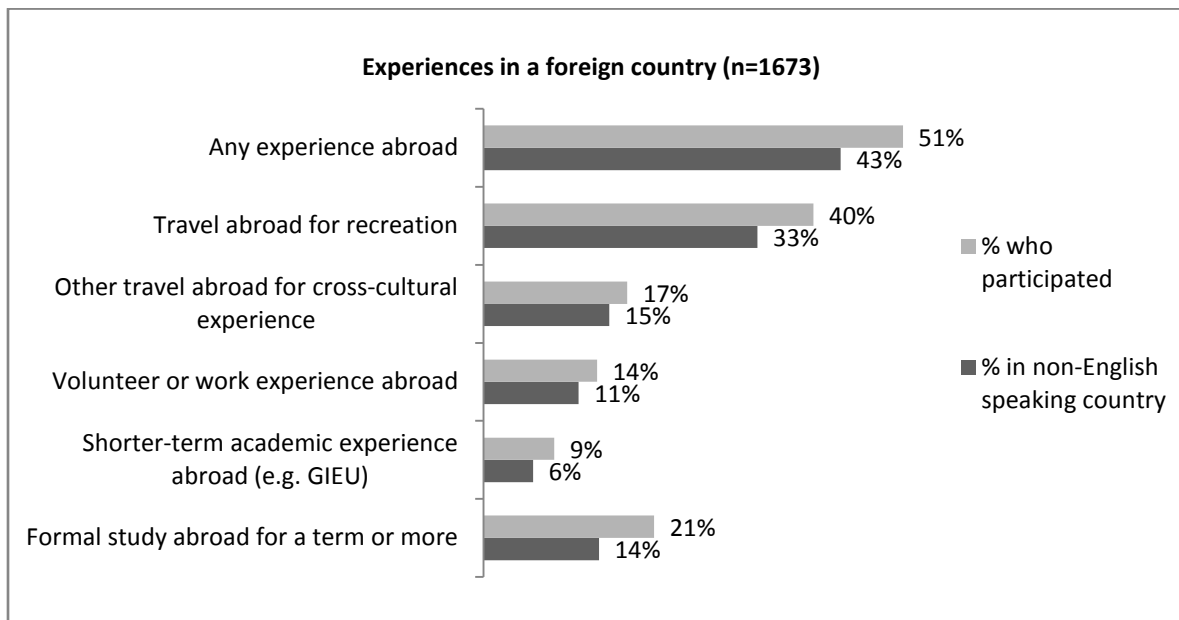


**Research.** A little less than half the class (45%) reported having a collaborative research experience with faculty. While a third of this group participated in UROP, the biggest opportunity for undergraduate research experience came through students' coursework (87% of students with research experience). Independent study was also an important source of research experience (47% of students who did research).

The research tasks students performed varied, although by far the most common work was done in the lab (53% of respondents).



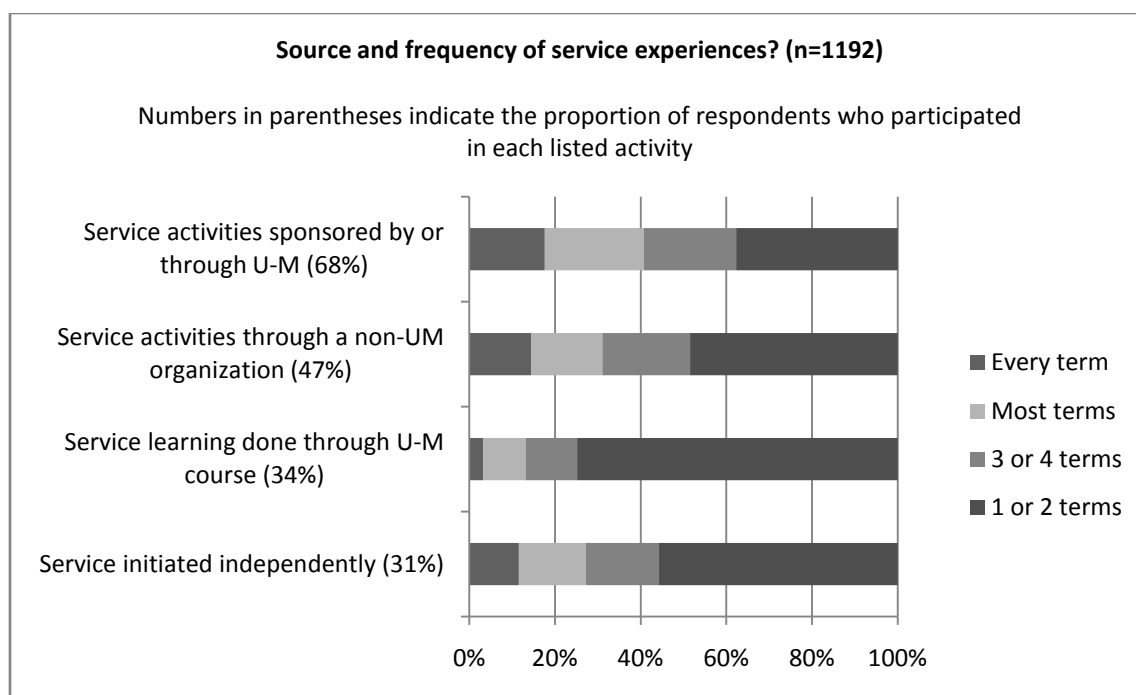
**International Experience.** 70% of the class studied a foreign language while at U-M, most for more than a full academic year. Students gained some global perspectives through contacts with U-M's international student population, and the numerous international cultural events on campus. Three-quarters of the class had enrolled in at least one class with an intentional global focus.



Just over half the class reported that they had traveled abroad while an undergraduate. One in five reported a formal study abroad experience that lasted for a term or more. Their travel and study spanned the globe. Whereas Western Europe drew the most students

(62% of the traveling students visited there), together the class reported travel to every continent.

**Community Service.** The vast majority (83%) of the class reported that they had participated in some kind of community service or outreach activity while an undergraduate. A third of them participated in service learning through a U-M course and twice as many reported conducting community service through a U-M club or affiliated organization. Although not all students described specific activities, the most commonly reported type of outreach was tutoring and teaching. Populations most likely to be served by U-M students were children and teens, and those who were sick, elderly or disabled.



**Open-Ended Responses.** Seniors were invited to write about several topics, including highlights of their undergraduate career, and things they wish they had done differently. These comments were coded into themes and are described in an appendix to the summary report. The majority of respondents chose to share at least one response, and together their comments speak to the wide breadth of academic and extracurricular opportunities on campus.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Themes among the majority of comments:

- Students value both the social and the academic opportunities available at the University. The variety of social/athletic/cultural organizations, and opportunities for research or similar “outside the classroom” learning experiences, are perceived as strengths of the University.
- The opportunity to meet people from diverse backgrounds and cultures is important to students. They feel gain from this experience.

- Students take tremendous pride in their academic achievements, be it passing a difficult course, completing a challenging assignment or project, gaining entrance to graduate/professional school, or simply graduating.
- Students find the U-M environment to be stimulating and engaging.
- Friendships are a cornerstone of the undergraduate experience.

DONE DIFFERENTLY: Themes among the majority of comments:

- Students struggle to find a balance. This is particularly an issue as they establish priorities between the social and the academic aspects of U-M. It is also a factor as students seek to specialize in their major field as well as pursue a broad variety of intellectual interests.
- The wealth of U-M's offerings makes it challenging for some students to find out about and make decisions regarding their academic and extracurricular options.
- The first year or two can be challenging as students adjust to college, find their niche, and discover their true academic interests. Some report a rocky start that improved once they settled on a major, improved study skills, formed connections with peers and faculty, or got involved in extracurricular experiences.

*"This place socked me in the gut, opened my eyes to the world around me, and eventually helped me find my own voice. I am so thankful for this experience."*

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Contacts:

Karen Zaruba, Senior Institutional Research Analyst, Office of Budget & Planning;  
[kzaruba@umich.edu](mailto:kzaruba@umich.edu), 998-7654.

Ben van der Pluijm, Professor and Senior Counselor to the Provost; [vdpluijm@umich.edu](mailto:vdpluijm@umich.edu),  
647-8788.