

ORSP SURVEY RESULTS-EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FALL 1995

by Patricia A Gwartney,
with the assistance of Toshihiko Murata
Oregon Survey Research Laboratory

As one part of an internal and external review of the University of Oregon's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP), the Oregon Survey Research Laboratory (OSRL) was asked by the office of the Vice Provost for Research to conduct a survey of faculty members and grant administrators. This report summarizes the results of that survey.

Survey Methodology

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was developed and pretested by OSRL, in consultation with Associate Vice Provost for Research Ron Kellett and ORSP Director Paula Burkhart. The survey drew upon similar instruments developed previously at ORSP and at similar offices in other universities. The instrument underwent OSRL's standard three-pronged pretest procedure and was revised until it met the needs of the review and showed no bias. A facsimile of the instrument is presented elsewhere in the survey documentation.

The survey instrument comprised the following subject areas:

1. Ever applied for or received internal research support from ORSP or another UO office;
2. Use of ORSP's information resources (SPIN, Research Information Library, directly sent information on funding sources, personal contact with ORSP staff, the former monthly newsletter *Research Report*, ORSP's World Wide Web site, other); preferred source; satisfaction with ORSP's information resources; importance of these services to the campus and faculty generally; suggestions for improvement;
3. Funded research activity (ever developed a proposal, how long ago); use of ORSP's budget and other assistance on proposals; ever cleared a proposal at ORSP or elsewhere; problems in process; comparative evaluation of UO and elsewhere; satisfaction;
4. Currently or ever received external funding at UO or elsewhere; post-grant assistance from ORSP; satisfaction with and importance of such assistance;
5. For inactive faculty, barriers to obtaining external research funding;
6. Summative evaluation of ORSP staff's knowledge, accuracy, helpfulness, quality, importance to own and others' research, strengths; suggestions for improvement; ORSP services that could be added or eliminated;
7. Background information (title, tenure status, department, institutes affiliated with, years at UO, internal and external research committee service).

Sample

The survey sample (n=118) comprised five groups:

1. Active faculty researchers (having submitted three or more proposals in the previous 3 years) affiliated with one of the science institutes on campus (n=30);
2. Active faculty researchers (having submitted three or more proposals in the previous 3 years) who are not affiliated with a science institute (n=30);
3. Less active faculty researchers (having submitted less than three proposals in the previous 3 years) (n=21);
4. Other faculty, not in the preceding three groups (n=26);

5. Grant administrators, comprised mainly of classified staff who work directly with faculty in obtaining and administering grants and contracts (n=11).

A list of faculty members in each group was compiled by ORSP staff. OSRL randomly and blindly selected members of each group.

Data Collection

The survey instrument and sample were programmed into OSRL's computer-aided telephone interviewing (CATI) system and further pretested. A precontact letter from Vice Provost for Research Steadman Upham was sent through campus mail to the randomly selected sample subjects a few days prior to the survey, explaining its goal and purpose (a facsimile is included in the survey documentation).

Altogether, 621 telephone calls were required to conduct 118 interviews October 9-13, 1995. Respondents were called at their office, lab, and home telephone numbers at all times of the day until the target sample sizes were achieved for each sample group. In the banner-style tables, the sample "n" varies slightly due to occasional missing data and to structural skip logic in the survey instrument.

Sample Characteristics

The survey sample is broadly representative of UO faculty and grant administrators. However, the sample was purposely stratified by external funding activity and institute affiliation, and thus overall results are best interpreted by strata, not for the UO in general. Overall,

- 58% of the sample came from the College of Arts and Sciences (42.2% hard sciences, 10.3% humanities, 5.2% social sciences), 12% Education, 10% AAA, and the remaining were distributed across Business, Journalism and Communication, Music, and Law.
- 44% of the sample were affiliated with a research institute of some kind -- 64% in the hard sciences, 15% in the humanities and social sciences, 12% in education, and 4% in AAA.
- 90% of the sample had prepared a research proposal for funding at one time or another
- Among those, 69% were receiving external funding at the time of the survey, 6% were receiving both internal and external funding, 4% were receiving internal funding only, and 19% had no current funding for research activity.
- Among those who had ever prepared a proposal, 64% had worked on one in the 1995 calendar year, 18% in 1994, 9% in 1993, and 9% in 1992 or earlier.
- 56% of the sample were tenured, 25% untenured but on a tenure track, and the remaining were in positions which are not tenure related.
- 25% had worked at UO less than 5 years, 31% 5-9 years, 15% 10-14 years, 10% 15-19 years, and 20% 20 years or more.
- 36% had served at some time on a research review committee internal to UO, and 64% had served at some time on a research review committee external to UO.

The variables outlined above, in addition to the 5 sample groups, serve as stratifying variables in the banner tables in the survey documentation.

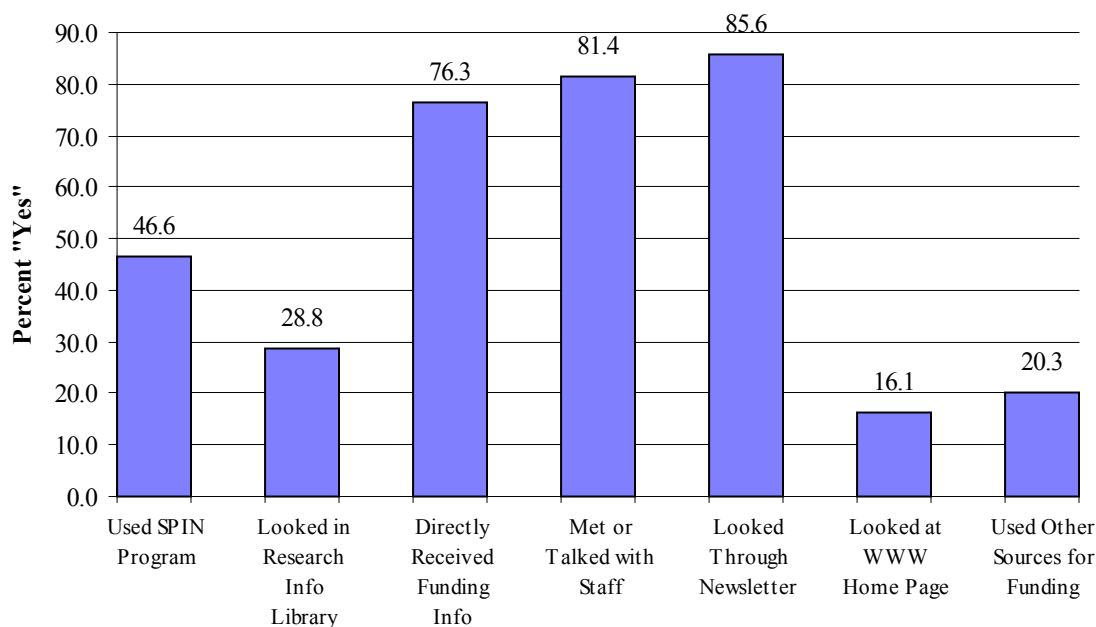
Survey Results

This presentation of the survey results is organized around ORSP's funding information services, proposal development and clearance activities, award administration, and summative evaluation of the quality and value of ORSP's staff and services. Overall, the survey results show broad and deep appreciation for the services ORSP provides and the manner in which ORSP provides them. There is little variation in the results across sample subgroups.

ORSP's Funding Information Services

ORSP provides funding information to faculty and staff on the UO campus via the computerized SPIN program, the Research Information Library, by directly sending relevant announcements to individuals, in personal conversations, through a monthly newsletter *Research Report* (discontinued in Spring 1995), and on a WWW site. Respondents were asked if they had ever used each of these sources, plus an "other" source at ORSP. Only 2 respondents had never used any of these sources of information, and only 6 had only used one source. Twenty-three percent had used two sources, 19% had used three, 25% had used four, 16% had used five, and 11% used six or more. Figure 1 summarizes sample members' use of ORSP's funding information services.

Figure 1: Use of information Services



SPIN: 47% of the entire sample had used SPIN at some time, including 57% of active institute-affiliated faculty, 57% of less active faculty, 45% of active non-institute faculty, 40% of other faculty, and 20% of grant administrators. Use of SPIN tends to increase with recency of grant proposal activity (67% of those who worked on proposals this year, 47% of those who last wrote a proposal in 1994, and 40% of those who last worked on one in 1993). Persons who were not receiving any research funding were most likely to have used SPIN (87%), followed by those who were receiving internal funding only (67%). A majority of persons in the humanities, social sciences, education and journalism had used SPIN, compared to only one-third of those in the hard sciences and business. Those who had worked at UO less than five years were less likely to have used this services (39%) than those who worked at UO longer. Similarly, tenured

faculty were more likely to have used it (53%) than untenured (33%) and those not on tenure tracks (45%). And persons who had served on internal and external research review committees were substantially more likely to have used SPIN than others (65% and 53%, respectively). SPIN usage varied little by institute affiliation.

Research Information Library: The Library had been used by 29% of the sample. It was more likely to have been used by active, non-affiliated faculty (45%), persons who had not worked on a proposal since 1992 (44%), those not in business, the hard sciences or humanities, and those who had worked at UO more than 15 years. Library usage varied little by institute affiliation, and only slightly by research service activity.

Directly Sent Information: Fully 76% of the sample had been directly sent research funding information by an ORSP staff member at some point in time. Active researchers, whether affiliated with a science institute or not, were more likely to have received such information (83% and 83%) than less active faculty (71%) or other faculty (72%), although it's possible that active researchers simply remember this service better. With few exceptions, large majorities of all subgroups in the sample had received this service, and the exceptions (just 40% of those who last worked on a proposal in 1993 and 40% of those in Law) are likely to be due to small n's.

Direct, Personal Conversation: Fully 81% of the entire sample had met with or talked personally with ORSP staff at one time or another about research funding. Such contact varies little across sample subgroups, with three-quarters or more of most subgroups having enjoyed this personal attention. The exceptions are inactive faculty researchers and those affiliated with Music and Business, but small n's warn against over-generalizing these results.

Research Report Newsletter: Fully 86% of the sample had looked at ORSP's monthly newsletter, *Research Report*, at one time or another before it was discontinued in Spring 1995. Again, large majorities of most sample subgroups read the publication. Those least likely to have examined its contents were grant administrators (54%).

WWW Page: Only 16% of the survey sample had ever looked at ORSP's WWW site. Those most likely to have used it were grant administrators (27%), faculty with both internal and external research funding (60%), and faculty who have been at UO less than 5 years (23%).

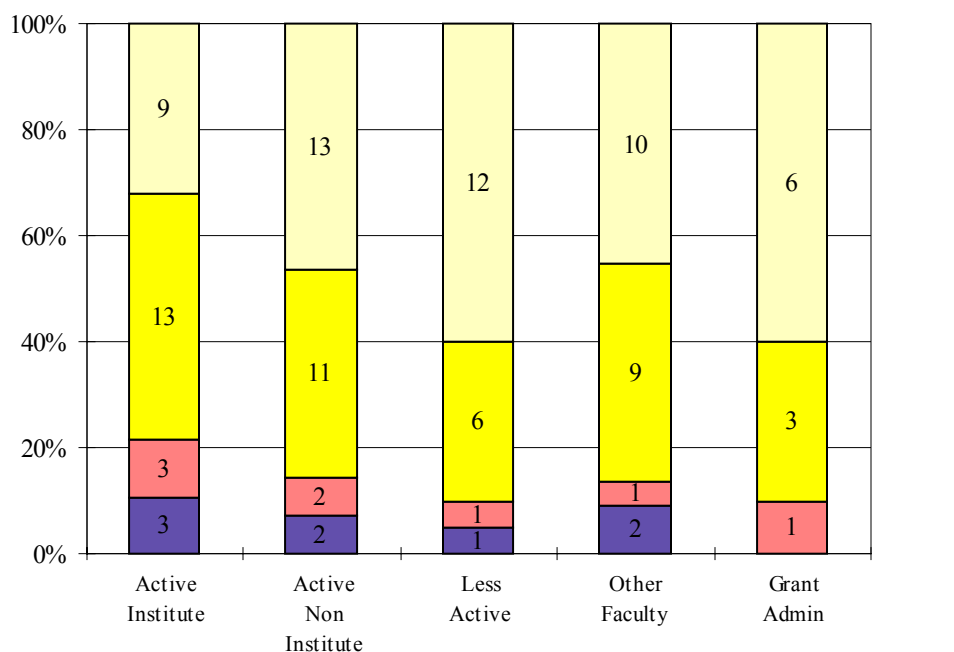
Other Sources of Information at ORSP: One-fifth of the respondents said that they had used other sources of information. When asked what type of information that was, about half were directly related to ORSP, one-third various sources of published material, and the remaining were related to respondents' departmental sources of information. (See narrative responses to open-ended questions for greater detail.) Those most likely to use other sources are less active faculty (38%), those whose last research proposal was in 1992 or before (33%), those not currently funded (33%), faculty in the humanities (33%) and social sciences (67%),

Preferred Sources of Information: One-fifth of respondents prefer being sent information directly, particularly active, non-affiliated faculty, inactive faculty and grant administrators, faculty in the humanities, social sciences and journalism, persons not on a tenure track, and those who have not served on internal or external research review committees. The now-discontinued *Research Report* was also the preferred source for nearly one-fifth (19%), particularly active, institute-affiliated faculty, those with internal funding, faculty in AAA, and faculty who have been at UO less than 5 years. Twelve percent of the sample preferred other off-campus sources of information, particularly active, institute-affiliated faculty, those with external funding, in the hard sciences, who have worked at UO 10-14 or 20 or more years, and who are tenured. Ten percent of the sample prefers personal contact, particularly faculty members without institute affiliation, those with current internal funding, in the humanities, social sciences, music and law, who have joined UO in the last 5 years, who are untenured, and who have not served on internal or external research review committees. Just 5% of the overall sample preferred the ORSP's WWW site, however this is one-fifth of the small group of persons who have visited the Web site. Six- to-

seven percent of respondents each preferred SPIN, no one source, other on-campus sources (usually within their department or college), or no sources at all.

Satisfaction and Value: Fully 97% of those interviewed had used ORSP's funding information services at some point in time, and they were consistently satisfied with those services and believe these services are important to the campus and faculty generally.

Figure 2: Satisfaction with information by group strata



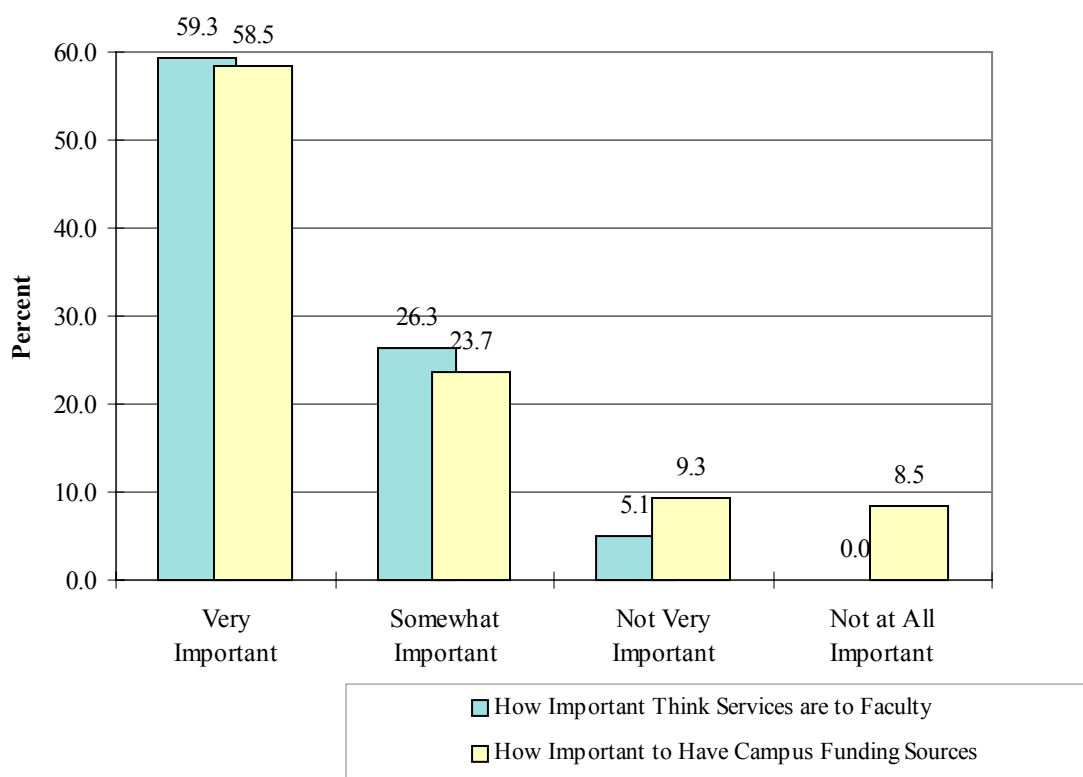
Among those who have used ORSP's information services, 44% reported being very satisfied and 37% said somewhat satisfied. Seven percent each were somewhat or very dissatisfied. Figure 2 demonstrates that satisfaction with ORSP's information services is consistent across sample groups.¹

¹ Very few respondents expressed general dissatisfaction with ORSP information services. Although two or three seem to be dissatisfied with every aspect of ORSP, the others who expressed general dissatisfaction with ORSP also expressed satisfaction with some other aspects of ORSP. In response to the question regarding satisfaction with clearance processes, two-thirds of respondents who expressed general dissatisfaction responded either "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied." Likewise, over 90% of respondents who expressed dissatisfaction rated accuracy of information and assistance either "very accurate" or "somewhat accurate." The results show little difference between the responses given by those who expressed general satisfaction with ORSP and those who expressed general dissatisfaction. In addition, across the survey, there is little variation in the pattern of responses for those who answered either "not very satisfied" or "not at all satisfied," and those who responded either "very satisfied" and "somewhat satisfied." Together these findings suggest no clear pattern for the cause of dissatisfaction.

Whether they had used the services or not, 59% of the overall sample believe it is very important for the campus to have these services, and an additional 24% said it was they are somewhat important. About 9 percent each said the information services are not very important or not at all important (Figure 3). When asked how important these services are to faculty, 59% said very important, 26% said somewhat important, 6% said not very important, no one said not at all important, and 2% did not know.

Forty-five percent of the sample had suggestions on how ORSP could improve its information services. The narrative answers are provided in another part of the survey documentation. Overall, 36% of the comments suggested that ORSP target its services more specifically at the unit level, including face-to-face meetings with faculty members and departments. These comments came mainly from faculty researchers less active and inactive with regard to funding, those in the humanities and social sciences, and those who have been at UO less than 5 years.

Figure 3: Importance of information services



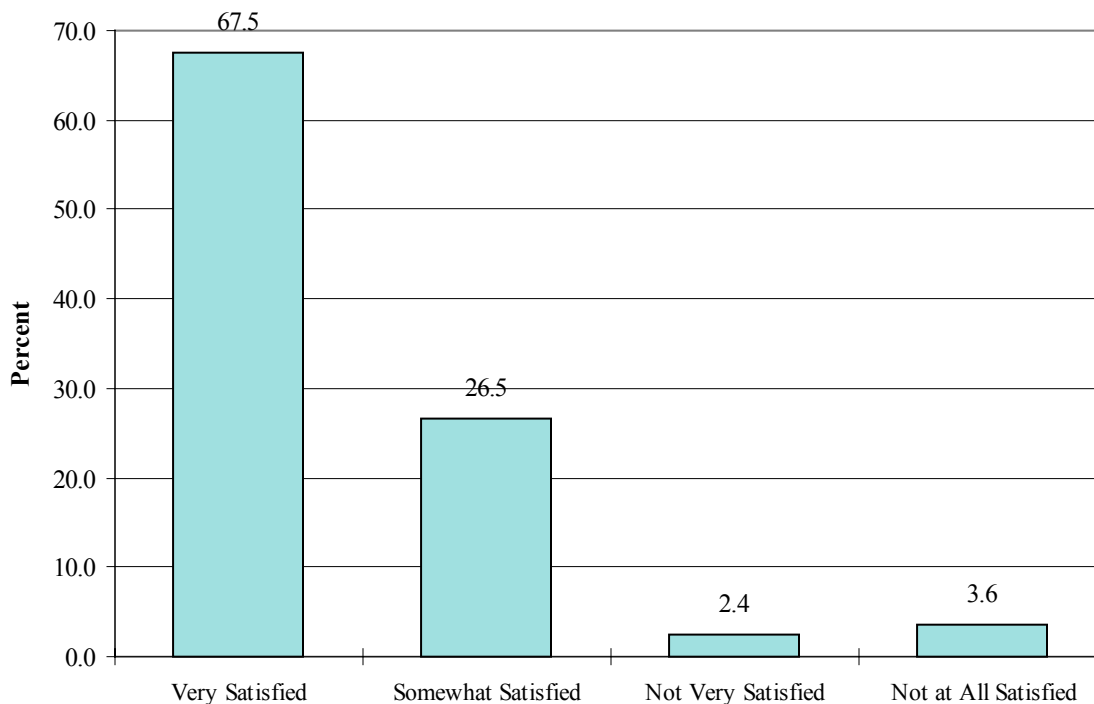
Proposal Development and Clearance Activities

Fully 90% of the sample reported having developed a research proposal for external funding at some point in their careers. Nearly two-thirds had worked on a proposal in the current calendar year, while 18% last worked on a proposal in 1994, 9% in 1993, and 8% in 1992 or earlier. Forty-three percent of respondents had received budget assistance from ORSP in developing their proposals, and 46% reported other types of assistance and advice.

Seventy-nine percent had cleared a proposal through ORSP, and 86% of those reported encountering no problems in the clearance process. Satisfaction with the clearance process was high (Figure 4): Two-thirds said they were very satisfied and 27% said they were somewhat satisfied; just 2% were somewhat

dissatisfied and 4% were very dissatisfied. Among those persons who had cleared proposals both at UO and other places, half thought UO's processes were better and one-third thought they were about the same.

Figure 4: How Satisfied with Clearance Process



Three-quarters of those interviewed have received some form of external research funding, and about half of those persons have received external funding both at the UO and elsewhere. An additional 13% of the sample had received external funding at another institution but not UO, but over half of these respondents (57%) had worked on proposals in 1995. Just 10% had never received external research funding, and these persons had the characteristics of new faculty members (46% had been at UO less than 5 years, 46% 5-9 years, 55% untenured, and large majorities had never served on a research review committee; 55% are in Law and AAA).

Inactive faculty researchers were asked what keeps them from seeking funds for their research activities. 28% made comments having to do with a lack of time and energy, 28% reported a lack of information, and 22% said nothing. Among the 5 persons who lacked information, 4 had worked on proposals in 1994 and 1995. They tended to be early career, unaffiliated with institutes, and less likely to serve on internal research committees.

Award Administration

Among those who had received external funding for research at UO, 36% had sought grant management advice from ORSP, and 97% of those were satisfied with the advice they received (62% very satisfied, 35% somewhat satisfied) and 90% thought it was important to receive that help (69% very important, 21% somewhat important).

Grant administrators were the most likely to have sought advice (75%), although nearly half of active, unaffiliated faculty had also sought such advice (48%). All of the grant administrators and faculty, except one, who sought advice were satisfied with the advice they received and said it was important to have received the help.

Quality and Value of ORSP Staff and Services

The preceding sections have shown that survey respondents are satisfied with the specific funding information, proposal development and award administration activities provided by ORSP. Moreover, they regard these services as important to the campus and faculty as a whole. This section examines summary survey questions about how knowledgeable (Figure 5), helpful (Figure 6) and accurate (Figure 7) ORSP staff are, as well as questions about the overall quality and value of ORSP.

Figure 5: Knowledge of staff by Strata

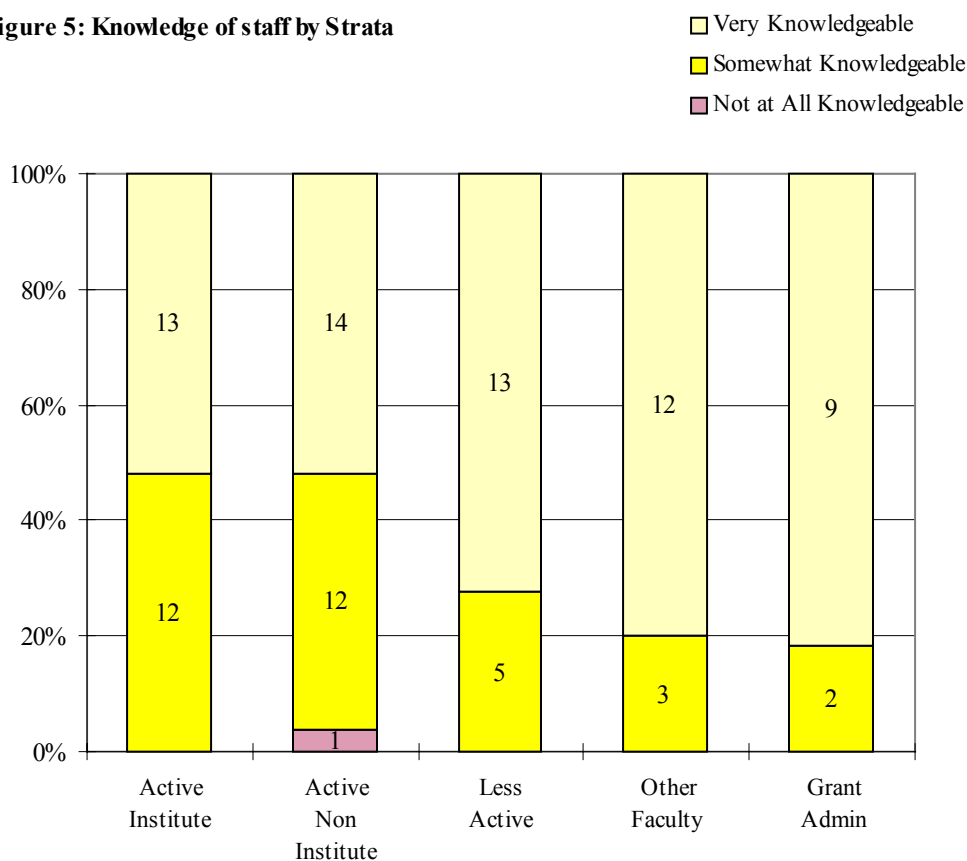


Figure 6: Accuracy of information by strata

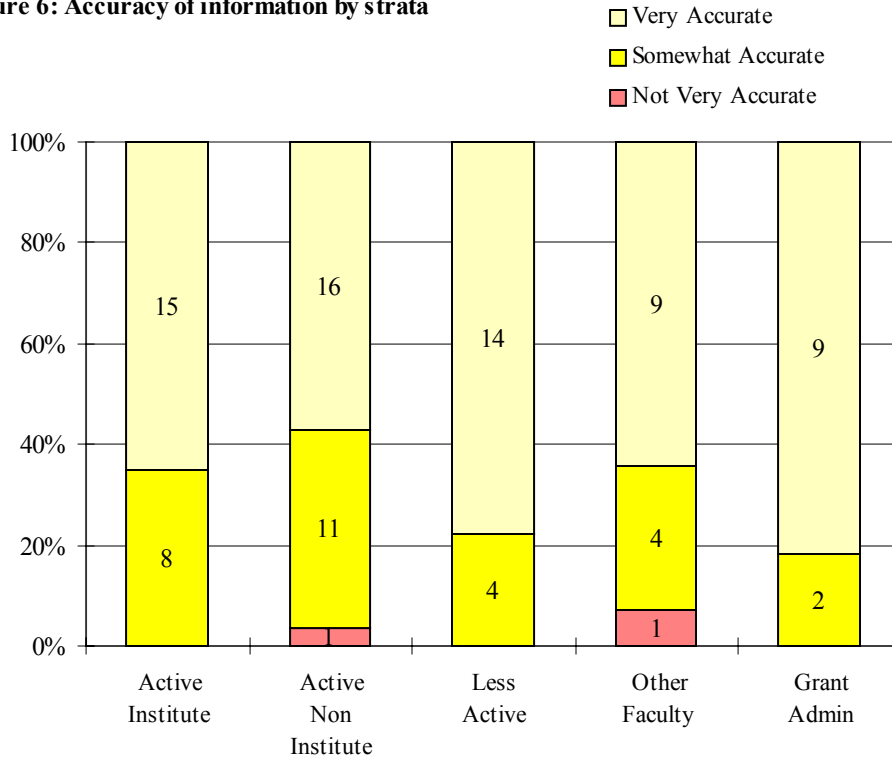


Figure 7: Helpfull by strata

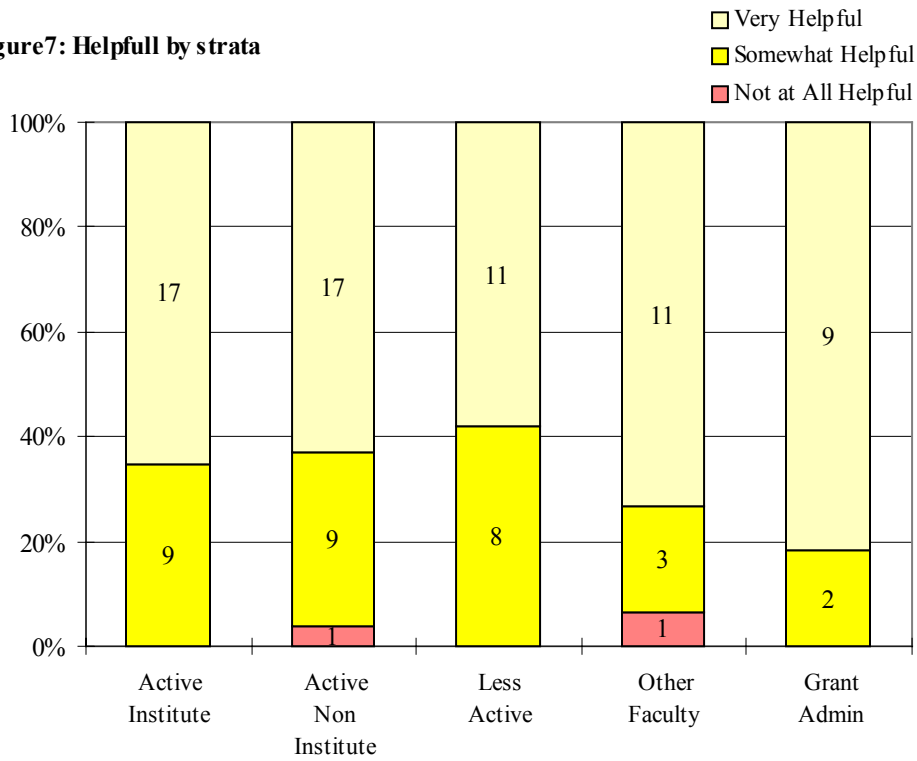
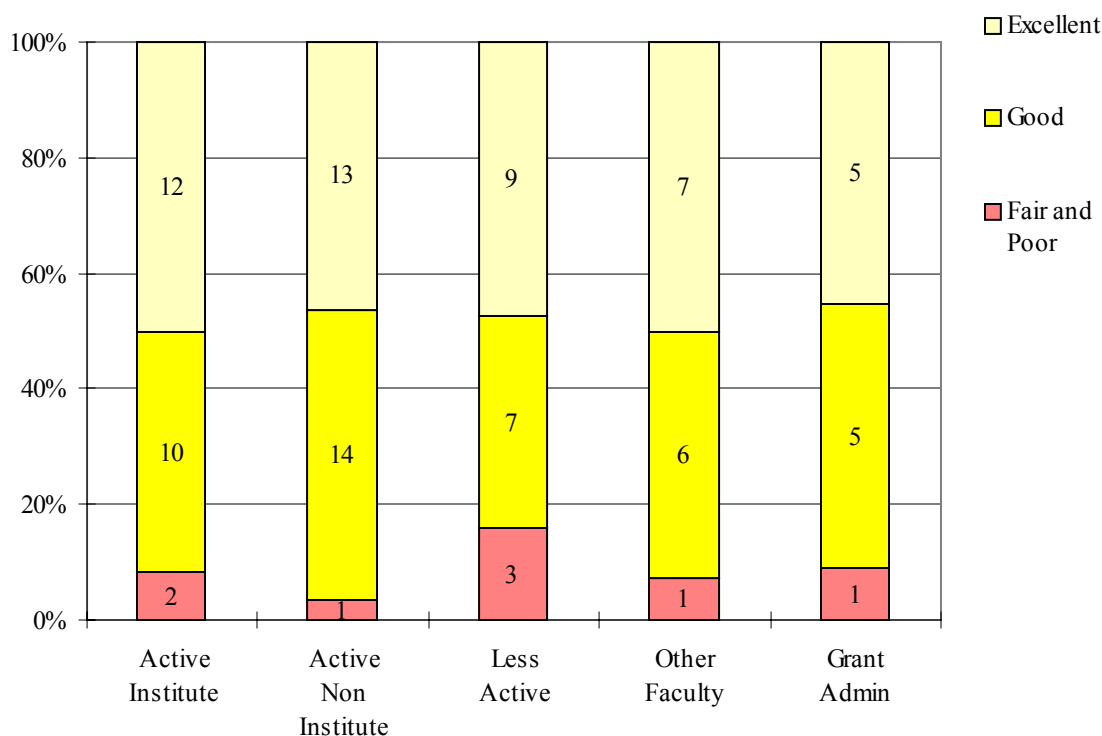


Figure 8: Overall quality of services by strata



Nearly three-quarters of the survey respondents have met or spoken with ORSP staff members 5 or more times. Those least likely to have had this contact are in the hard sciences, mid-career, tenured, and inactive on internal research review committees but active externally.

All but one survey respondent found ORSP staff to be knowledgeable (61% very knowledgeable and 34% somewhat knowledgeable). Fully 92% found the information and assistance of ORSP staff to be accurate (63% very accurate, 29% somewhat). In addition, 96% found the staff to be helpful (65% very helpful, 31% somewhat). Figure 5, 6, and 7 show little variation in these sentiments across sample strata.

When asked to rate the overall quality of ORSP's services, 46% said excellent, 42% said good, 6% fair, 2% poor, and 4% did not know. Figure 8 shows little variation in these opinions across sample strata. Nearly four-fifths think ORSP is important to their own research (56% very important, 20% somewhat), and over 87% think it is important to the UO faculty to have ORSP on campus (70% very important, 17% somewhat).

Every respondent was asked what they think ORSP's particular strengths are. Their exact narrative answers are provided elsewhere in the survey documentation. In general, however, 29% cited ORSP's funding information services, 20% cited ORSP's assistance in developing grant proposals, and 18% made favorable comments about the people who work there.

Half of the survey respondents has suggestions on how ORSP could improve, and again narrative responses are provided elsewhere. Overall, 27% of the responses had to do with access and availability of services, 20% had to do with access and availability of information, and one-quarter of the responses recommended greater department-level contacts. Equal numbers said that ORSP's staff should be increased as said it should be reduced (3%).