

From the Editor

In the Fall of 1997, the NACADA Executive Board requested that the *Journal* Editor survey the NACADA membership to determine member opinions about the *NACADA Journal*. The survey was designed to determine readership patterns for the various sections of the *Journal*, areas of topical interest, and reader preferences for conceptual/theoretical or data-based articles.

A survey was developed and distributed to NACADA members along with the Spring 1998 issue of the *Journal*. A total of 4,770 surveys were distributed. Two follow-up E-mails were sent over the ACADV listserve to encourage members to respond. By the end of January 1999, a total of 1,049 (22%) surveys had been returned.

Survey respondents were relatively new to NACADA with 61% reporting membership of five or fewer years. Twenty-four percent had been members for 6–10 years. Eleven percent had been members for 11 or more years and 4% failed to indicate years of membership. Academic advisors and advising administrators constituted the majority of respondents, 44% and 39%, respectively. Only 3% indicated they were faculty advisors and 4% indicated they worked in student services other than advising. Ten percent indicated professional roles other than these and presented a total of 93 different titles. These professional titles clustered evenly between academic administration

and student affairs administration.

A continuing concern for the *Journal* has been and remains the dearth of manuscripts submitted for review and publication. Only 10% of the respondents reported they had ever submitted an item to the *Journal* for publication. While 79% of those submitting were successful and ultimately published, nearly two thirds of these successes were book reviews and not subject to the *Journal's* blind review process. If one combines successful and unsuccessful submissions and allows for the fact that some authors have published multiple manuscripts, one can reasonably conclude that fewer than 5% of the respondents had ever submitted a manuscript for review. Of those who did, at least two thirds were eventually published.

To assess readership patterns, those surveyed were asked "how" they read the *Journal*. Not surprisingly, 82% of the respondents indicated they read the *Journal* selectively, reading mainly those items that apply to them. The remaining respondents were near equally divided among those who read the entire *Journal*, those who read only certain sections—the most popular of which are the articles—and those who seldom read any of it.

To gain insight into content and format preferences of *Journal* subscribers, readers were presented with 11 topical areas and asked to indicate

Table 1 Topical Preferences of Respondents

Topic	Interest Level (%)		Preferred Format (%)		% Topic in top 5	Overall ranking
	high	some	concept/ theory	data based		
Advising themes, models, approaches	52	38	80	47	54	1
Administrative/organizational structures and delivery of services	49	39	71	50	52	2
Advising special populations	42	34	62	41	35	8
Applications of technology to advising	44	43	70	43	43	4
Outcomes assessment/evaluation of programs, advisors, etc.	40	43	51	67	41	5
Advising multicultural students	21	55	71	32	19	11
Professional development	30	49	71	34	30	9
Advising by academic/student support offices/programs	24	49	68	46	24	10
Specific advising practices/techniques/materials	36	41	81	49	47	3
Career advising within context of academic advising	41	42	74	39	40	6.5
Current issues in advising and higher education	43	45	69	34	40	6.5

their level of interest in each area (none, some, high) and the types of articles they prefer to read (conceptual/theoretical, data based, or both). In addition, readers were requested to identify their top five topical areas of interest and rank these from their area of highest interest to their area of fifth highest interest. These responses are summarized in Table 1.

Based upon the survey results, a number of observations appear warranted. First, while a stronger preference for conceptual/theoretical articles was expressed for 10 of the 11 topical areas, substantial percentages of the respondents also expressed a desire for data-based, research-oriented articles. For most of the areas, respondents indicated they would like to see both conceptual/theoretical and research articles published. Overall, the weighting of the preferences closely parallels the actual publication history of the *Journal* as reported by Gordon and Grites (1998). In their review of the 284 articles published in the *Journal* since its inception in 1981, the authors found that 65% of the articles were nondata based and 35% were data based.

A second theme suggested by the survey results is that members have a strong desire to read about "how to" and "what works" in academic advising. Over 50% of the respondents included advising models and the administration/organization/delivery of advising services among their five topics of highest interest. In fact, these two topics received overall rankings of 1 and 2 respectively and were closely followed by articles reporting on specific advising practices, techniques, and materials. These rankings reflect the *Journal's* readership which, as noted earlier, is heavily composed of practicing advisors and advising administrators.

The fourth and fifth most frequently ranked topics continue the "how to" and "what works" themes. The application of technology to advising and the assessment and evaluation of advising were ranked as the fourth and fifth most important topics, respectively.

While only 35% included "advising special populations" among their top five areas of highest importance, 76% indicated some or high levels of interest in this content area. When asked to indicate up to three special populations they would like to see addressed, the population most frequently cited was undecided/undeclared students with 414 respondents indicating an interest. Six other special populations were cited by more than 100 of the respondents: at-risk students (298), transfer students (288), learning or physically disabled students (115), nontraditional students (112), athletes (111), and readmitted students (105).

Respondents' relatively low interest in articles pertaining to the advising of multicultural students (including international students) was unexpected. Only 21% indicated a high level of interest in this topic area and only 19% had it among their top five areas of interest. This comparatively low level of interest is somewhat inconsistent with demographic projections that suggest that most of the future growth in higher education enrollments are likely to result from increased numbers of multicultural students.

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Reference

- Gordon, V. N. & Grites, T. J. (1998). The *NACADA Journal* 1981–1997: Fulfilling Its Purpose? *NACADA Journal*, 18(1), 6–14.

The National Academic Advising Association Welcomes

Dr. Joel S. Freund as the new editor-in-chief of the NACADA Journal.

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