

Senior Exit Survey 2021-2022



SOUTH DAKOTA
STATE UNIVERSITY



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Executive Summary

One component of South Dakota State University's mission is focused on providing a rich academic experience and student-centered education. To help capture information related to this component, SDSU examines undergraduate students' perceptions and experiences by administering a senior exit survey. The primary purpose of the senior exit survey is to collect information on students' overall satisfaction with their academic experience, level of participation in selected learning opportunities, degree of attainment of general education goals and satisfaction with campus services. This information helps inform strategies and goals for improving undergraduate students' educational experiences at SDSU.

Key Findings

Overall Experience

- Graduating seniors were satisfied with their overall academic experience.
- Seniors felt that SDSU met their overall education expectations.
- Most graduating seniors would recommend SDSU to others.

General Education Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

- Students felt they improved their general education abilities by attending SDSU.

Graduate School Aspirations

- 30.3% of graduating seniors intended to pursue a graduate degree within five years.

Introduction

During the summer of 2018, a representative taskforce (including individuals from each College, the Office of Career Development, and the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment) designed a survey to collect information on graduating students' overall perceptions of their undergraduate experience, abilities and knowledge related to general education goals, participation in High Impact Practices (HIPs), satisfaction with student service offices, and their graduate education aspirations. This information helps inform strategies and goals for improving undergraduate students' educational experiences at SDSU. The 2018-2019 academic year was the pilot year for the survey. With the fourth year complete, the following results are for undergraduate students graduating in the fiscal year 2021-2022.

Methods and Analysis

A combined 1,877 of 2,011 graduating seniors participated in the 2021-2022 Senior Exit Survey (267 graduating in summer, 450 graduating in fall, and 1,160 graduating in spring). Students were given the exit survey as a part of their graduation application; however, students were not required to complete the survey to submit their application. The survey instrument consists of 50 questions in closed-ended response format and the overall response rate was 93.3%.

The survey had items related to

- Overall Experiences
- General Educational Learning Goals
- Graduate School Aspirations
- High-Impact Practices (HIPs)
- Student Services

Results

There was high overall satisfaction among graduating seniors at SDSU in terms of the university providing a high-quality education, helping students to achieve their educational goals, preparing them for the future, and providing a positive overall experience. Students reported similar levels of agreement or increased agreement in making progress toward general education goals, and the proportion of students with graduate school aspirations declined slightly for the second year in a row.

The detailed results are presented below.

Overall Experiences

Table 1 summarizes the results of graduating senior’s overall experiences at SDSU. Seniors graduating in summer 2021, fall 2021, or spring 2022 were largely satisfied with their educational experiences. Most students reported receiving a high-quality education (96.8% moderately agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed) and would recommend SDSU to others (94.6% moderately agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed). Students also reported SDSU helped them achieve their educational goals (97.7% moderately agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed) and prepared them to be successful (96.8% moderately agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed). Overall, students were satisfied with their experience at SDSU (95.2% moderately agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed) and their educational experience met their expectations (94.2% moderately agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed).

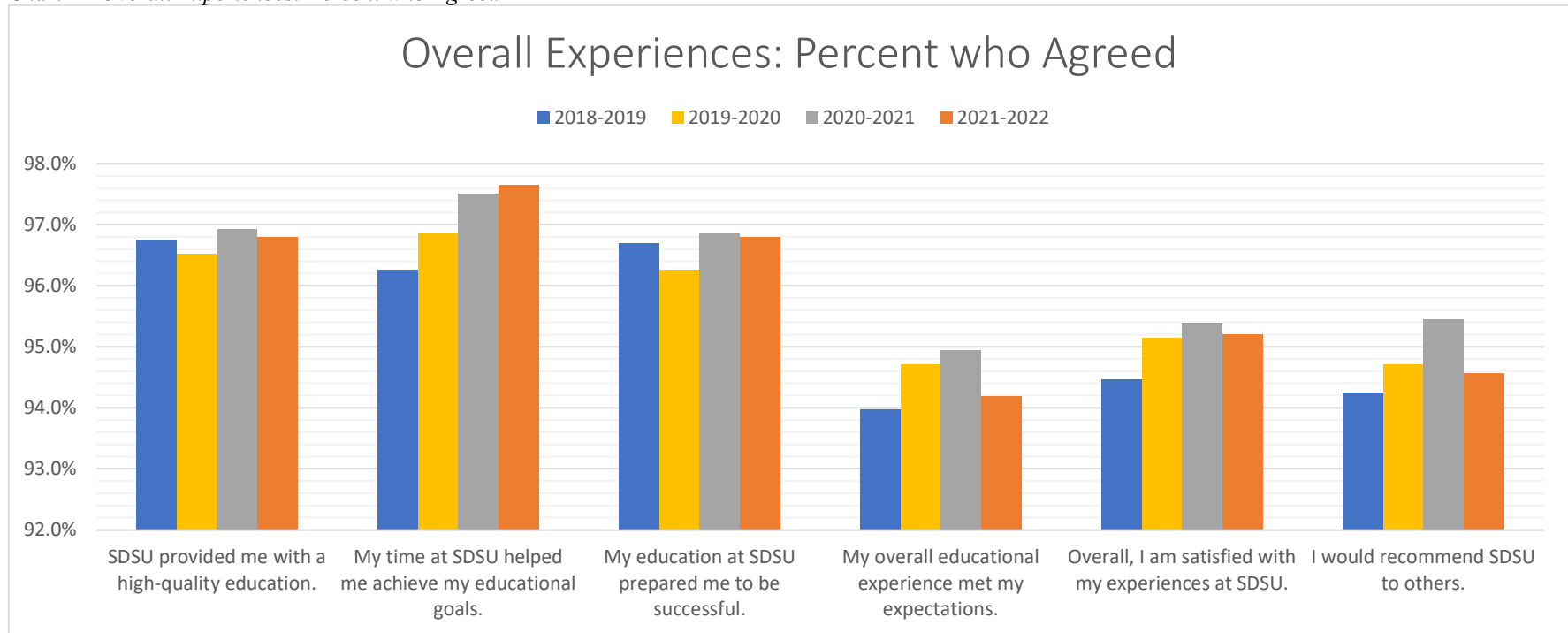
Table 1 – Overall Experiences

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Moderately Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev.	Total
SDSU Provided me with a high-quality education.	14 (0.7%)	13 (0.7%)	33 (1.8%)	200 (10.7%)	910 (48.5%)	707 (37.7%)	5.18	0.84	1,877 (100%)
My time at SDSU helped me achieve my educational goals.	12 (0.6%)	12 (0.6%)	20 (1.1%)	206 (11.0%)	860 (45.8%)	767 (40.9%)	5.23	0.82	1,877 100%
My education at SDSU prepared me to be successful.	17 (0.9%)	8 (0.4%)	35 (1.9%)	249 (13.3%)	849 (45.2%)	719 (38.3%)	5.16	0.86	1,877 (100%)
My overall educational experience met my expectations.	20 (1.1%)	27 (1.4%)	62 (3.3%)	264 (14.1%)	815 (43.4%)	689 (36.7%)	5.07	0.97	1,877 (100%)
Overall, I am satisfied with my experience at SDSU.	17 (0.9%)	17 (0.9%)	56 (3.0%)	222 (11.8%)	809 (43.1%)	756 (40.3%)	5.16	0.92	1,877 (100%)
I would recommend SDSU to others.	24 (1.3%)	20 (1.1%)	58 (3.1%)	215 (11.5%)	701 (37.4%)	858 (45.7%)	5.20	0.98	1,876 (100%)

Source: Graduation Senior Exit Survey, Summer 2021, Fall 2021, Spring 2022

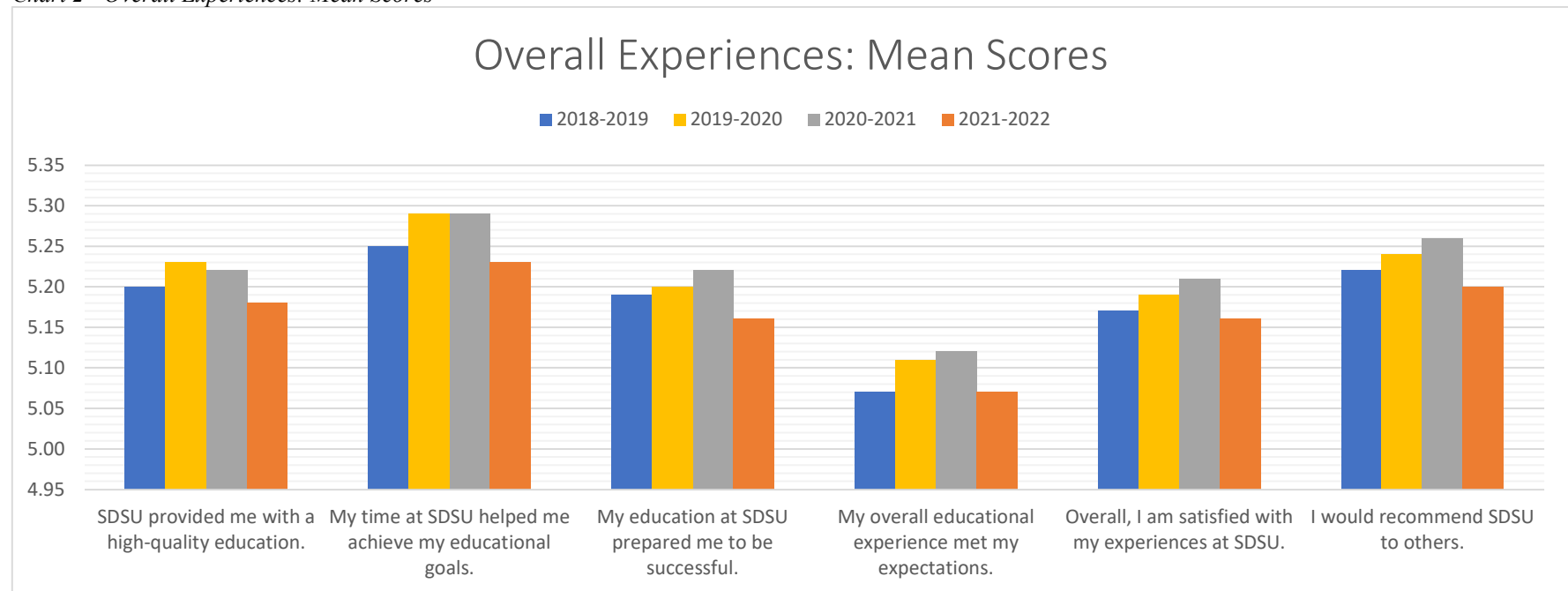
Chart 1 shows trends of the overall experiences the students have while attending South Dakota State University. The data show the percentage of students who responded (moderately agree, agree, or strongly agree) to each survey question.

Chart 1 - Overall Experiences: Percent who Agreed



Response options ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Overall, question means for this year were slightly lower than in previous years. However, the percentage of students who moderately agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed remained similar. This suggests more students this year may have opted for answer choices moderately agree or agree rather than strongly agree. And this is confirmed by looking at the slight drop in the relative percentage of students who responded strongly agree this year. There was good participation in this question block, with almost 100% of those who participated in the survey also completing these questions; the standard deviation in the scores was like previous years.

Chart 2 - Overall Experiences: Mean Scores



Perceptions of Attainment of General Education Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

Table 2 summarizes results of student perceptions of their attainment of the [general education goals](#) and student learning outcomes at South Dakota State University. These goals are:

1. **Written Communication:** Students will write effectively, responsibly, understand, and interpret the written expression of others.
2. **Oral Communication:** Students will communicate effectively and responsibly through listening and speaking.
3. **Social Sciences/Diversity:** Students will understand the organization, potential, and diversity of the human community through study of the social sciences.
4. **Arts and Humanities/Diversity:** Students will understand the diversity and complexity of the human experience through study of the arts and humanities.
5. **Mathematics:** Students will understand and apply fundamental mathematical processes and reasoning.
6. **Natural Sciences:** Students will understand the fundamental principles of the natural sciences and apply scientific methods of inquiry to investigate the natural world.

The goal of the general education curriculum is to prepare students with skills to communicate effectively, problem solve, analyze, locate, and gather information, and think critically and logically ([SDBOR Academic Affairs Guideline 8.1](#)).

Seniors graduating in summer 2021, fall 2021, or spring 2022 largely felt they improved in general education abilities while at the university. Most students reported improving the ability to write effectively and responsibly (96.6% moderately agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed), applying fundamental mathematical processes and reasoning (93.9% moderately agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed), and the scientific method to investigate the natural world (95.8% moderately agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed). They also reported improving the ability to communicate effectively and responsibly through listening and speaking (97.7% moderately agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed), better understanding the diversity and complexity of the human experience through the study of the arts and humanities (91.3% moderately agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed), and the organization, potential, and diversity of the human community through the social sciences (93.3% moderately agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed).

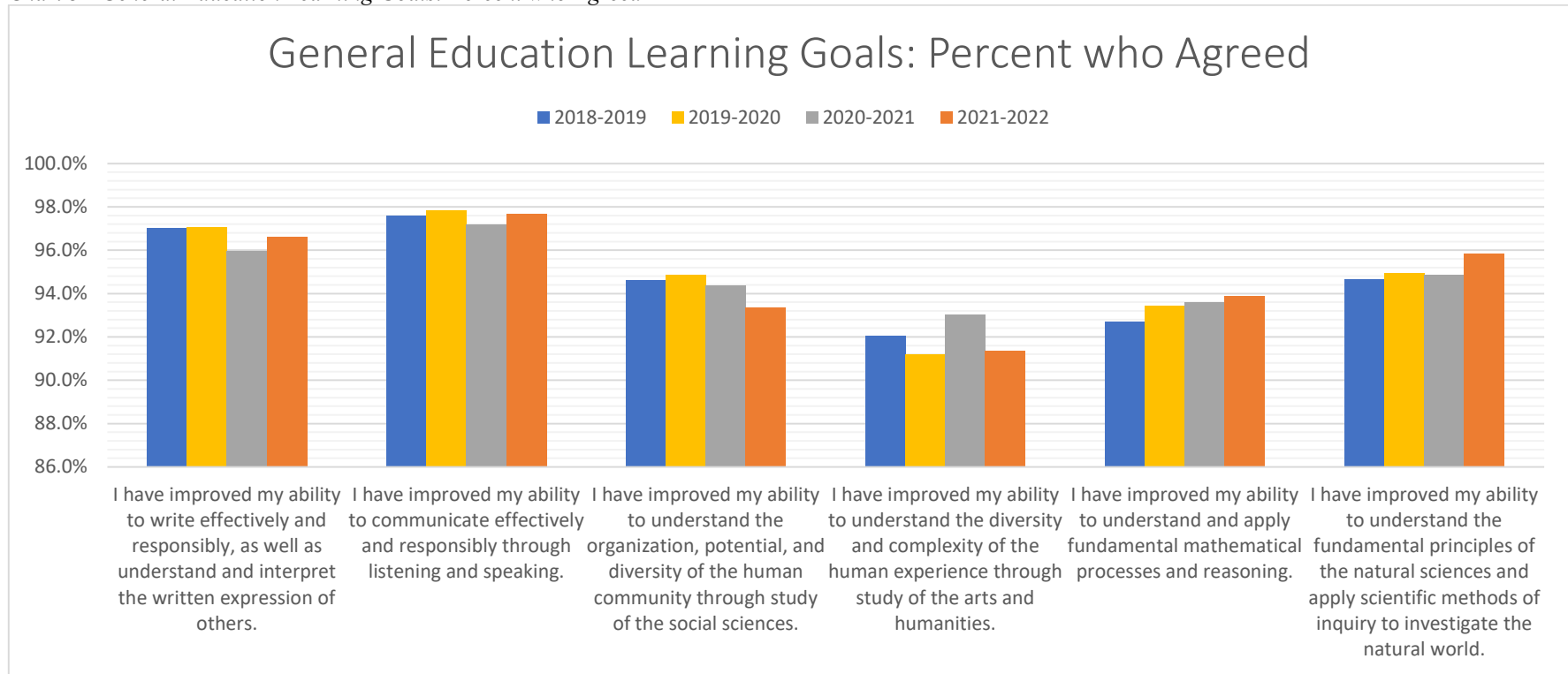
Table 2 - General Education Learning Goals

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Moderately Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev.	Total
I have improved my ability to write effectively and responsibly, as well as understand and interpret the written expression of others.	13 (0.7%)	12 (0.7%)	36 (2.0%)	285 (15.8%)	867 (48.1%)	590 (32.7%)	5.08	0.86	1,803 (100%)
I have improved my ability to communicate effectively and responsibly through listening and speaking.	9 (0.5%)	5 (0.3%)	28 (1.6%)	227 (12.6%)	857 (47.6%)	676 (37.5%)	5.19	0.80	1,802 (100%)
I have improved my ability to understand the organization, potential, and diversity of the human community through study of the social sciences.	22 (1.2%)	27 (1.5%)	71 (3.9%)	319 (17.7%)	792 (44.0%)	571 (31.7%)	4.97	0.99	1,802 (100%)
I have improved my ability to understand the diversity and complexity of the human experience through study of the arts and humanities.	25 (1.4%)	38 (2.1%)	93 (5.2%)	359 (19.9%)	761 (42.2%)	526 (29.2%)	4.87	1.05	1,802 (100%)
I have improved my ability to understand and apply fundamental mathematical processes and reasoning.	20 (1.1%)	28 (1.6%)	62 (3.4%)	340 (18.9%)	751 (41.7%)	600 (33.3%)	4.98	0.99	1,801 (100%)
I have improved my ability to understand the fundamental principles of the natural sciences and apply scientific methods of inquiry to investigate the natural world.	14 (0.8%)	9 (0.5%)	52 (2.9%)	301 (16.7%)	789 (43.8%)	635 (35.3%)	5.08	0.89	1,800 (100%)

Source: Graduation Senior Exit Survey, Summer 2021, Fall 2021, Spring 2022

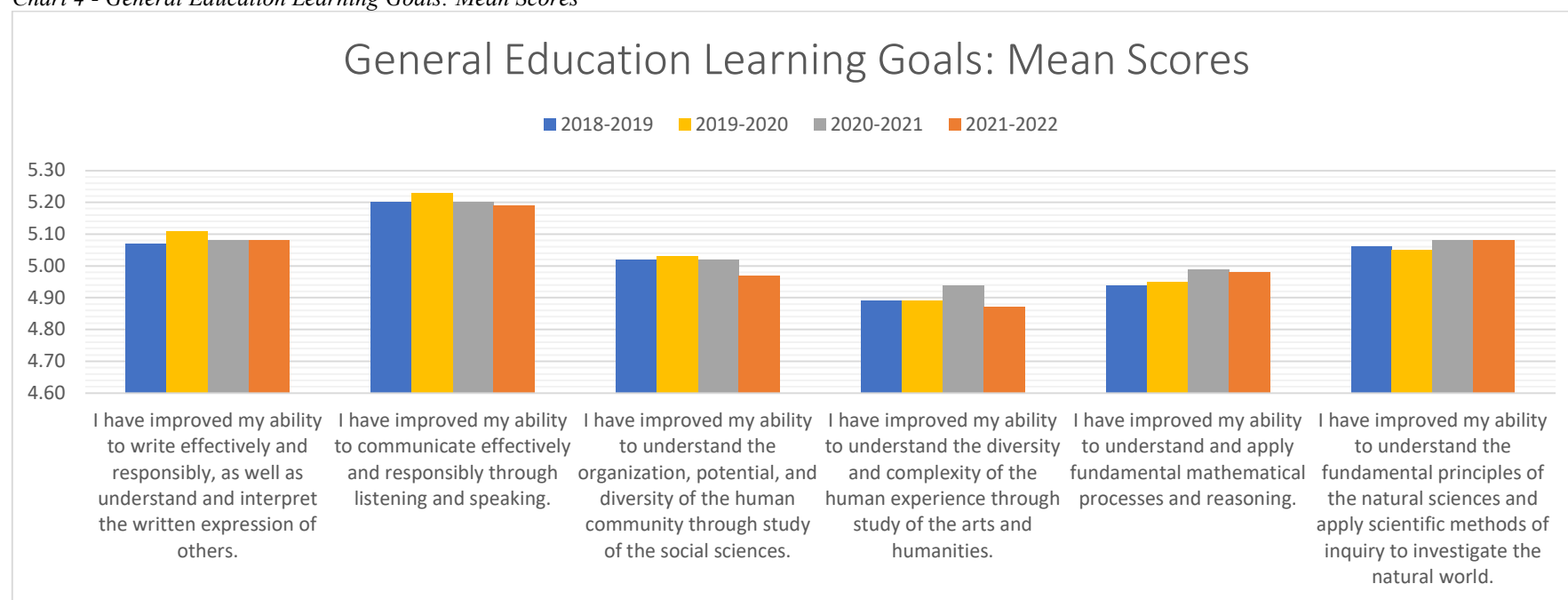
Chart 3 shows trends of the general education learning goals while attending South Dakota State University. The data show the percentage of students who responded (moderately agree, agree, or strongly agree) to each survey question.

Chart 3 - General Education Learning Goals: Percent who Agreed



Response options ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Overall, question means remained similar in 2021-2022 to the previous year. The largest decreases in means from the previous year were for questions, “I have improved the ability to understand the organization, potential, and diversity of the human community through study of the social sciences” (5.02 in 2020-2021 vs. 4.97 in 2021-2022) and “I have improved the ability to understand the diversity and complexity of the human experience through the study of the arts and humanities” (4.94 in 2020-2021 vs. 4.87 in 2021-2022). However, over the past four years of the survey, most question means have generally increased or remained the same. There was good participation in the question block, with approximately 96.0% of those who participated in the survey also completing these questions; the standard deviation in the scores was like previous years.

Chart 4 - General Education Learning Goals: Mean Scores



Graduate School Aspirations

Table 3 summarizes the results of senior’s aspirations to attend graduate school in the next five years after graduating, which can be a consideration in career development and advising. Just over thirty percent of graduating seniors in summer 2021, fall 2021, or spring 2022 intend to pursue a graduate degree in the next five years, nearly thirty percent do not plan to pursue a graduate degree in the next five years, and nearly forty percent are unsure.

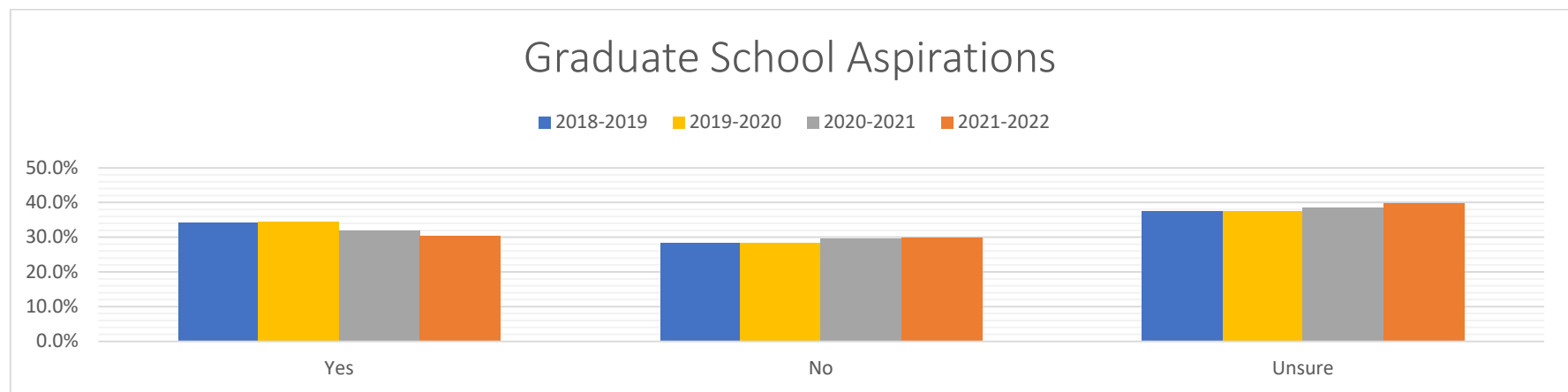
Table 3 - Graduate School Aspirations

	Yes	No	Unsure	N
Do you intend to pursue a graduate degree in the next five years?	522 (30.3%)	516 (29.9%)	685 (39.8%)	1,723 (100%)

Source: Graduation Senior Exit Survey, Summer 2021, Fall 2021, Spring 2022

Overall, the proportion of students who responded “Yes” to graduate school aspirations has been decreasing over time, while the proportion of students who responded “No” has been slightly increasing. However, the rate of change for those who responded “Unsure” has also been increasing, suggesting at least some of the decline in those who responded “Yes” can be attributed to an increase in those who are currently unsure. There was good participation for the question, with approximately 91.8% of those who participated in the survey also completing the question.

Chart 5 - Graduate School Aspirations



Conclusions

Overall, SDSU provides graduating seniors with a high-quality education and numerous positive experiences. Responses indicated that most graduating seniors had a positive undergraduate experience at SDSU. Students also thought they improved their general educational knowledge and skills. According to the survey just around a third of graduating seniors had graduate degree aspirations. The university should consider ways to support the aspirations of these students. Programming could include graduate school applications, resume building workshops, and financial aid information. The institution could host alumni and graduate student panels, so undergraduates can learn about preparing for graduate education. Faculty and academic advisers can give advice on academic projects, letters of recommendation, and graduate programs that match students' specific interests.

Note: The 2021-2022 Senior Exit Survey does not include a summary of High Impact Practices or Satisfaction with Student Services due to a temporary issue with the survey instrument. It should continue to be included in future reports.