

**UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF GEOLOGY**

Annual Exit Interviews with Seniors - "Feed and Feedback"

The Department of Geology carries out an annual exit interview with graduating seniors under the "Feed and Feedback" title. This interview exercise takes place toward the end of spring quarter and all those students who have applied to graduate through the end of the following fall quarter are invited to participate. Students are initially informed of this interview early in their academic careers via the department's undergraduate handbook, but then are given a formal written invitation a few weeks prior to the actual event.

The format consists of a "social" with faculty to break the ice and set an informal atmosphere, with snacks and beverages provided. After this period of socialization, a faculty member reviews the purpose of the interview and the need for curriculum assessment. The following points are stressed: 1) this is to be a candid and frank discussion of the geology program; 2) there are no right or wrong answers, only opinions; and 3) the exercise has no bearing on passing, failing, or graduating.

The students and faculty are subdivided, usually five or six students and one or two faculty assigned to each discussion group. These smaller working groups move to other rooms here in the Geology Building to allow them some measure of privacy.

As had been indicated to the students earlier, the discussion starts with the following type of question: "What are/were the major concepts that you derived from X course?" From there, there is little need of structure to the questioning, as one student comment quickly leads to another. Faculty are asked to direct the questioning in such a way as to evaluate the following:

1) Do students realize the connectivity between the hierarchy of courses required by the major? For example, Geol 410 is a prerequisite for Geol 370, which in turn is a prereq for Geol 470. Do they see the inter-relationships? Do the courses complement each other or are they redundant? How do students feel about prerequisite courses outside of the department?

2) What courses (major or other) do they see as being most beneficial? least beneficial? If they could redesign the curriculum, what should be added? deleted?

3) Other topics discussed included the following: department lecture series, dept computer facilities, other dept facilities (scopes, lab equipment, specimens, etc.)

In summary, this exit interview is an attempt to determine student perceptions, values, and attitudes; it is not a measure of content knowledge. It overlaps to some extent with the College of Science questionnaire but it gives us the opportunity to probe more deeply into many areas.

The student reaction has been overwhelmingly positive. They appreciate being asked these kind of questions and they feel that their opinions are valued. The faculty in turn, obtain a different perspective or view of their own courses and the program as a whole.