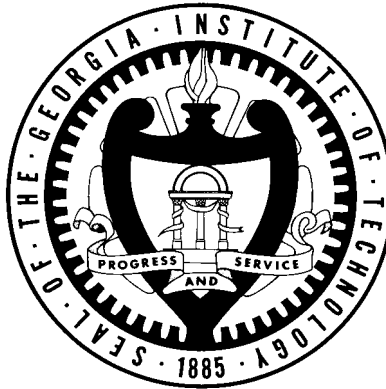




# Georgia Institute of Technology

## Just the Facts: Negative Publicity Perception at Georgia Tech



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## Just the Facts: Negative Publicity Perception at Georgia Tech

This report seeks to address recent negative impressions of Georgia Tech available in mass media—especially rankings in the recent 2003 Princeton Review. Where possible, we provide data from several surveys that shed further light on the issues raised. Among the findings:

- Negative impressions exist regarding several student services, including dining services, housing facilities and parking/transportation services.
- Negative impressions exist regarding the quality of instruction at Georgia Tech.
- Scientifically designed survey research regarding these issues demonstrates that while some deficiencies in these areas exist at Georgia Tech, there are also areas of strength, including:
  - Students were satisfied with course content in their major field and the preparation they receive for their future careers.
  - Students praise the way in which Georgia Tech helped them to learn various academic skills including critical thinking, analytical and quantitative skills, and job-related skills.

### Princeton Review

The Princeton Review, a corporation that sells test-preparation and college admissions services, recently published The Best 345 Colleges (herein referred to as The Guide), a guide for prospective college students. The student surveys conducted by Princeton Review differ from institutionally administered efforts in that no attempt is made to use scientific survey procedures to achieve a result representative of the institution. Despite this, results of the survey are used to rank and compare institutions. The Guide translates survey items into catchy sound bites for ranking purposes. For instance, the survey question, “are your instructors good teachers?” becomes “Professors suck all life from materials” in terms of college rankings.

The profile of Georgia Tech in the Guide is quite positive, and the full text is attached in the appendix. In terms of rankings, Tech is in the top twenty in several categories.

Among the perceived positive rankings:

- *Don't inhale*—low use of marijuana by students (#1)
- *Students from different backgrounds interact [frequently and easily]* (#9)
- *More to do on campus* (#9)
- *Students never stop studying*—i.e. amount of time spent studying each week (#18)

Among the perceived negative rankings:

- *Least happy students*—i.e. “Overall how happy are you with your school?” (#2)
- *Professors suck all life from materials*—i.e. “are your instructors good teachers?” (#4)
- *Dorms like dungeons*—based on ratings of comfort of accommodations (#6)
- *Campus is tiny, unsightly, or both*—based on ratings of campus beauty (#9)
- *Is it food?*—based on ratings of campus food (#14)

Additionally, students judged the campus parking and transportation situation in a less than positive light. It is impossible to disaggregate student rankings or obtain in-depth frequency counts from the student surveys. It is instructive to note that the institutions with the least happy students overall also tended to have students unhappy with campus beauty, food, and housing.<sup>1</sup>

## Survey Data on Student Services

While students responding to Princeton Review ad hoc surveys provide an unscientific snapshot of student opinion, several surveys that are more scientifically grounded have been recently conducted at Georgia Tech. Most relevant are the 1997 and 2001 ACT Student Opinion Surveys (SOS), the 2001 administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the 2002 Your First College Year Survey, and the 2001 and 2002 Customer Satisfaction Surveys conducted for Auxiliary Services. Detailed information on the various methodologies of these surveys is available from the Office of Assessment.

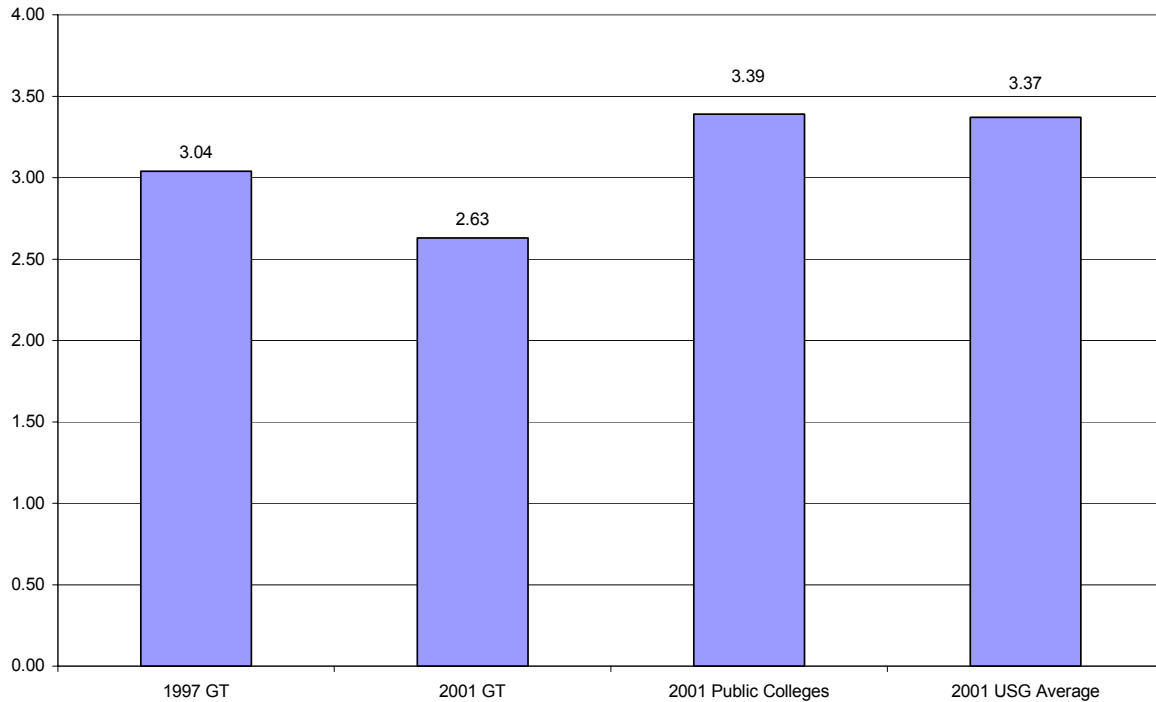
### Campus Food Services

Both the 1997 and 2001 Student Opinion Surveys showed a low level of satisfaction with campus dining services. Using a five-point Likert scale (with 5 being most satisfied), student satisfaction with food services declined significantly from an average of 3.04 in 1997 to 2.63 in 2001. The 2001 norm for all U.S. public colleges was 3.19, while the USG 4-Year institution average was 3.37.

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<sup>1</sup> The 10 “least happy colleges” were University of Missouri-Rolla, Georgia Tech, Loyola Marymount University, Brandeis University, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, George Washington University, Stevens Institute of Technology, Colorado School of Mines, SUNY-Albany, and University of Connecticut.

**Student Opinion Survey: Mean Ratings of Satisfaction with Food Services**



The more recent Customer Satisfaction Survey conducted for GT Auxiliary Services provides in depth information on student opinion concerning food services. While satisfaction with dining remains low relative to other student services, the survey noted improvement over the 2001 results in virtually all survey items. Detailed results are presented in the table below. Again, the survey utilizes a similar five-point Likert scale.

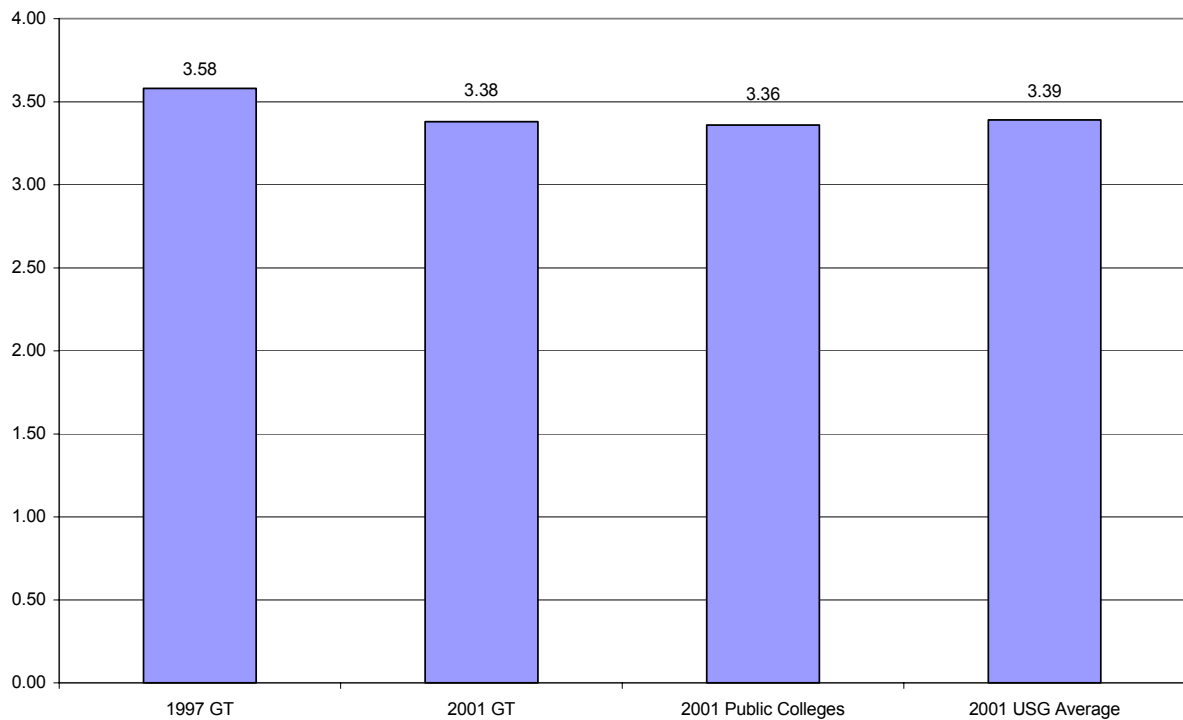
<b>Customer Satisfaction Survey</b>			
	<b>2002 Average</b>	<b>2001 Average</b>	<b>Change</b>
Ability of staff to answer your questions	3.58	3.94	-0.36
Availability of "healthy" or special diet choices	2.91	2.89	0.02
Price of menu items	2.67	2.62	0.05
Operating hours	3.09	2.98	0.11
Speed of service	3.51	3.35	0.16
Level of customer service you received	3.67	3.46	0.21
Ambience	3.52	3.31	0.21
Professionalism of staff	3.72	3.50	0.22
Food quality	3.08	2.83	0.25
Variety of items offered	3.06	2.80	0.26
Maintenance and upkeep of facilities	3.71	3.41	0.30
<b>Overall Satisfaction with Dining Services</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>3.01</b>	<b>0.27</b>

## Campus Housing Services

The SOS asks students to rate their satisfaction with “Residence hall services and programs”. Student satisfaction declined significantly from 3.58 in 1997 to 3.39 in 2001. The national average for public institutions on this item was 3.39 in 2001 and the USG average was 3.36. Thus, while satisfaction at Georgia Tech declined since 1997, it remains on par with both USG and national averages.

The Customer Service Survey revealed declines in all aspects of student satisfaction with housing services. While students remained pleased with the high-tech connectivity (cable and Ethernet) in their dorm rooms, they were less satisfied with the room selection and billing processes. The complete results of the 2001 and 2002 surveys are presented below.

**Student Opinion Survey: Mean Satisfaction Ratings of Residence Hall Services and Programs**



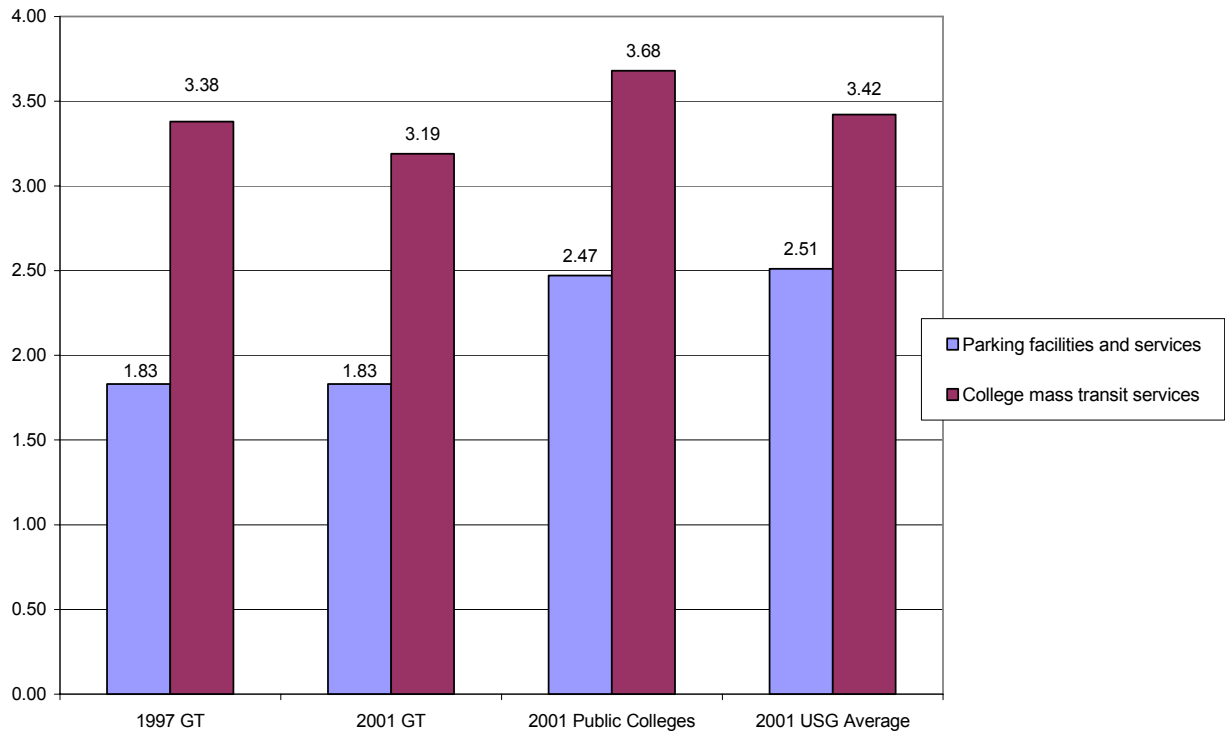
## Customer Satisfaction Survey

	2002 Average	2001 Average	Change
RESNET (Ethernet connection) services	4.15	4.43	-0.28
Professionalism of student staff (resident advisors, peer leaders, etc.)	3.79	4.03	-0.24
Billing process	3.31	3.53	-0.22
Ability of staff to answer your questions	3.58	3.79	-0.21
Programs and events sponsored by Residence Hall Association	3.37	3.58	-0.21
Level of customer service you received	3.51	3.69	-0.18
Maintenance and upkeep of your room	3.48	3.65	-0.17
Maintenance and upkeep of common areas	3.58	3.74	-0.16
Comfort of your accommodations	3.27	3.42	-0.15
Security of your accommodations	3.68	3.79	-0.11
Professionalism of Residence Life staff	3.79	3.88	-0.09
Condition of room at move-in	3.47	3.56	-0.09
Ease of use of the room selection process	2.98	3.04	-0.06
Professionalism of custodial and maintenance staff	4.01	4.04	-0.03
Tutoring services	3.59	3.61	-0.02
GTCN (cable network) services	3.94	3.94	0.00
<b>Overall Satisfaction with Housing</b>	<b>3.49</b>	<b>3.66</b>	<b>-0.17</b>

### Parking and Transportation

The Student Opinion Survey contains two items regarding parking and transportation. Students are asked their opinions of *parking facilities and services* and *college mass transit services*. Student satisfaction with these items is low relative to USG and national averages and has declined or remained stable since 1997. Results are presented below.

**Student Opinion Survey: Mean Satisfaction Ratings of Parking and Mass Transit Services**



The Customer Satisfaction Survey indicated relatively low levels of satisfaction with campus parking and transportation services, but also noted improvement in some areas since 2001. The most notable improvement was seen in the *ease of registering for a permit* and the *parking appeals process*. Several indicators of customer service among the parking services staff also demonstrated improvement. Students noted higher satisfaction with the *courtesy and friendliness of bus drivers* as well as *bus routes*. However, they indicated lower satisfaction with *wait times* and *hours of operation* for buses.

**Survey Respondents Were Students Who Currently Held a Parking Permit**

	<b>2002 Average</b>	<b>2001 Average</b>	<b>Change</b>
Consistency of enforcement	2.79	2.98	-0.19
Ability to find a parking space when needed	3.11	3.24	-0.13
Ease of obtaining a permit for the lot you desire	2.65	2.77	-0.12
Maintenance and upkeep of facilities	3.06	3.11	-0.05
Payment process for parking and citations	2.90	2.87	0.03
Ease of registering for a permit	3.58	3.40	0.18
Parking appeals process	2.75	2.28	0.47
<b>Overall Satisfaction with Parking</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>2.70</b>	<b>-0.06</b>

**Survey Respondents Were Those Who Interacted With Parking Office in Last Twelve Months**

	<b>2002 Average</b>	<b>2001 Average</b>	<b>Change</b>
Professionalism of staff	2.96	2.76	0.20
Level of customer service you received	2.82	2.61	0.21
Ability of staff to answer your questions	2.93	2.66	0.27

**Survey Respondents Were Those Who Used Stinger Transportation in the Last Academic Year**

	<b>2002 Average</b>	<b>2001 Average</b>	<b>Change</b>
Time you wait before a bus appears	2.32	2.87	-0.55
Hours of operation	3.46	3.65	-0.19
Courtesy and friendliness of bus drivers	3.69	3.77	-0.08
Maintenance and upkeep of buses	3.73	3.76	-0.03
Stops made by the buses	3.50	3.52	-0.02
Bus routes	3.56	3.43	0.13
<b>Overall Satisfaction with Stinger Transportation Services</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>3.44</b>	<b>-0.15</b>

**Survey Data on Academics**

Food, housing and parking are perennial complaints among virtually all students in college. Complaints about academics are more serious and deserve to be addressed in detail. Unfortunately, the negative publicity from Princeton Review does not provide much in the way of detail. The most negative charge made in The Guide is that Georgia Tech ranks second in the category “Professors suck all life from materials”. However, as pointed out earlier, this ranking is based on student responses to the question, “Are your instructors good teachers?” Just as it is as impossible to unpack this statement, it is inadvisable to equate unexciting subject matter with bad teaching. The results of several surveys conducted by Georgia Tech demonstrate that while there are some areas of concern regarding academics, Tech also has many areas of excellence.

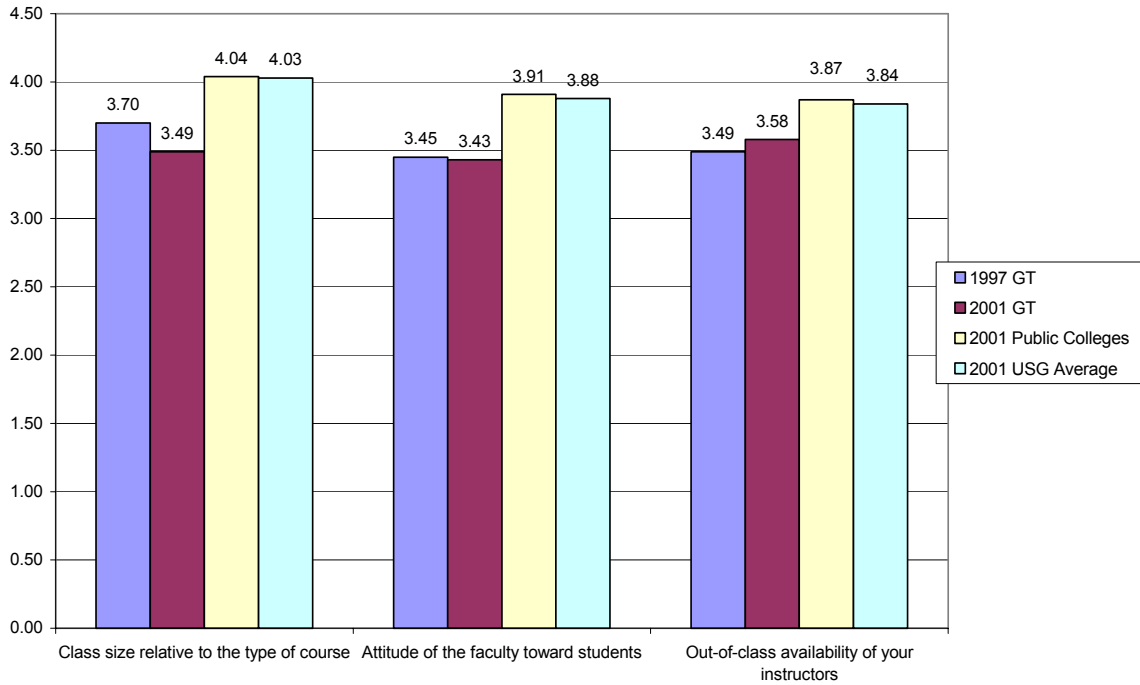
The Student Opinion Survey contains several general questions about campus academic environment and student satisfaction with faculty interaction. Students at Tech are less



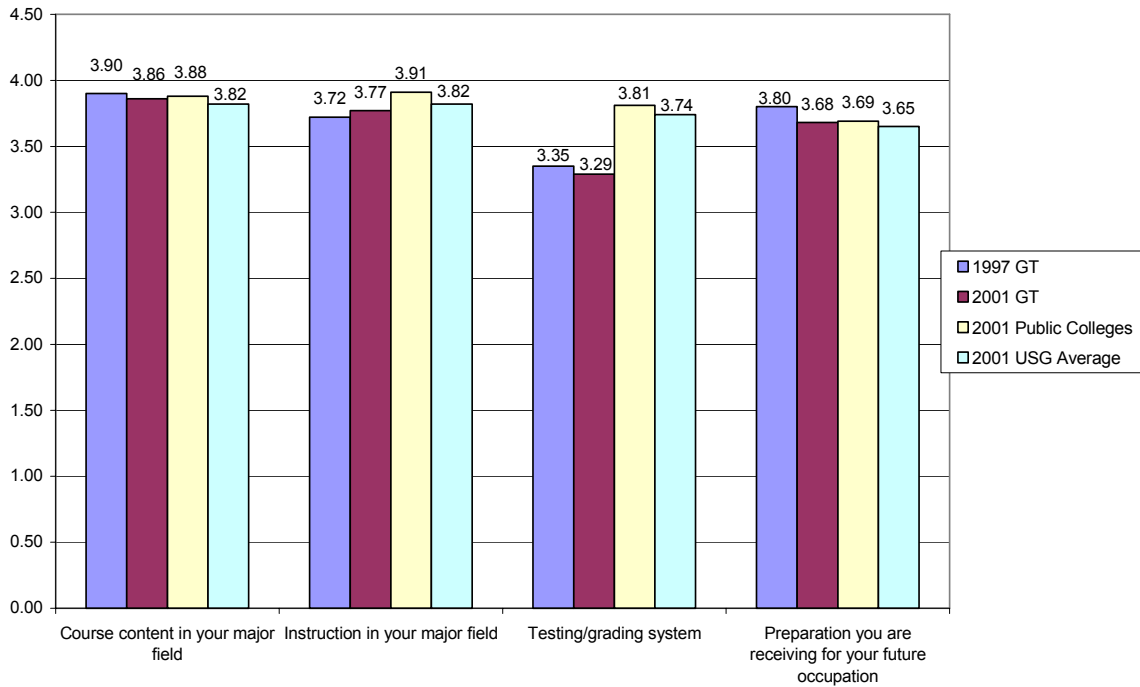
satisfied with class sizes than their peers at other public colleges, and they are also less satisfied with faculty interaction—measured in *attitude of faculty toward students* and *out-of-class availability of your instructors*. However, ACT does not provide normative data for research intensive and extensive institutions, so comparisons between GT and public college norms should be viewed with caution. Within Georgia Tech, student satisfaction has generally remained stable from 1997 to 2001. While satisfaction with class sizes declined between survey administrations, satisfaction with instructor availability increased.

<b>ACT Student Opinion Survey</b>				
	<b>1997 GT</b>	<b>2001 GT</b>	<b>2001 Public Colleges</b>	<b>2001 USG Average</b>
Testing/grading system	3.35	3.29	3.81	3.74
Attitude of the faculty toward students	3.45	3.43	3.91	3.88
Class size relative to the type of course	3.70	3.49	4.04	4.03
Out-of-class availability of your instructors	3.49	3.58	3.87	3.84
Preparation you are receiving for your future occupation	3.80	3.68	3.69	3.65
Instruction in your major field	3.72	3.77	3.91	3.82
Course content in your major field	3.90	3.86	3.88	3.82

**Student Opinion Survey: Academic Environment**



**Student Opinion Survey: Academic Environment**



Another source of information regarding student satisfaction with Georgia Tech's academic environment is the Your First College Year survey (YFCY). The survey was administered in Spring 2002 to first-time full-time freshmen, and documents their educational experiences after a year in college. The report compares Georgia Tech students to a consortium of five institutions similar in mission.<sup>2</sup> YFCY results show that Georgia Tech lags students at consortium institutions in several categories. Overall satisfaction with the college experience is particularly lower for responding GT students.

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**YFCY Survey**

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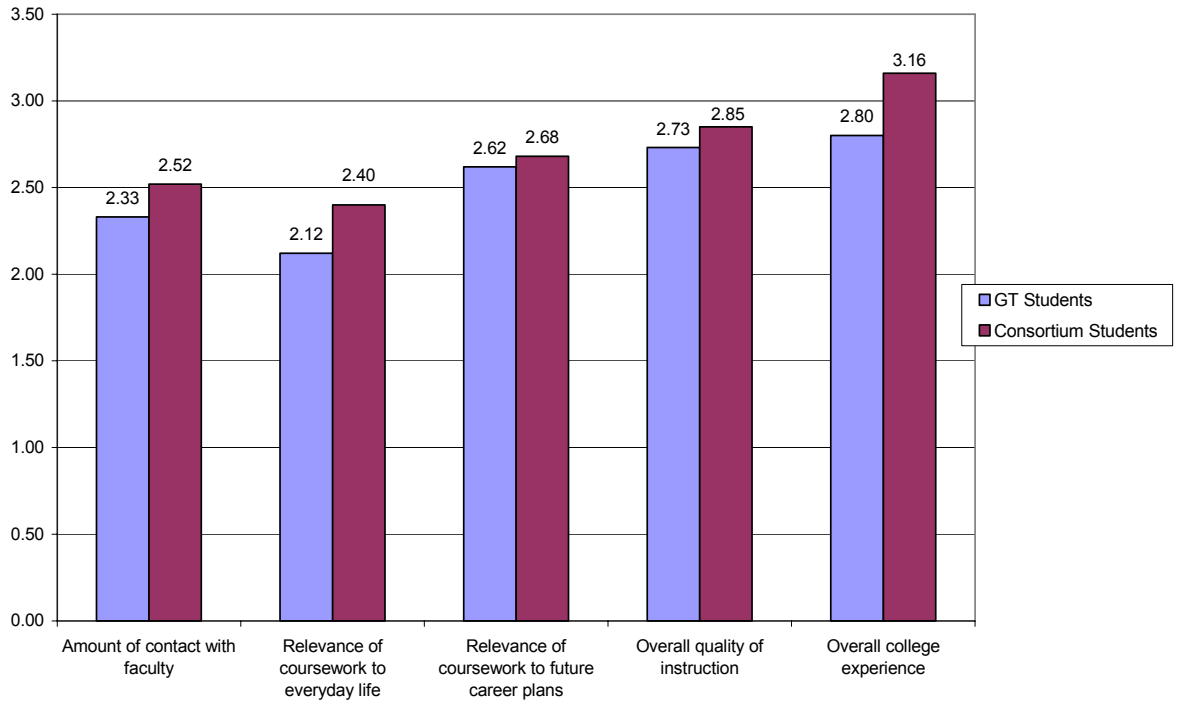
	<b>Responding GT Students</b>	<b>Responding Consortium Students</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Relevance of coursework to everyday life	2.12	2.40	-0.28
Amount of contact with faculty	2.33	2.52	-0.19
Overall quality of instruction	2.73	2.85	-0.12
Relevance of coursework to future career plans	2.62	2.68	-0.06
<b>Overall College Experience</b>	<b>2.80</b>	<b>3.16</b>	<b>-0.36</b>

4=Very satisfied; 3=Satisfied; 2=Neutral; 1=Dissatisfied

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<sup>2</sup> The institutions included in the consortium report were North Carolina State University, Texas A&M University-College Station, University of California-Los Angeles, University of Maryland-College Park and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

**YFCY: Student Satisfaction with Academic Environment**



The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) provides the ability for colleges and universities to measure the extent to which their students actively engage with their institution academically, socially and personally. NSSE also provides normative results that allow Georgia Tech to compare itself with other research extensive and intensive institutions. NSSE results from the 2001 administration show that GT students lagged their research intensive/extensive peers in their rating of their relationship with faculty members. Using a scale of 1-7 on the attributes of availability, helpfulness and sympathy of faculty (with higher values corresponding to higher levels of these traits), both first-year and senior GT students lagged their peers. The results are presented below.

<b>NSSE Rating of Quality 1-7 Likert Scale</b>						
	<b>First Year</b>			<b>Seniors</b>		
	<b>GT</b>	<b>Res. Ext.</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>GT</b>	<b>Res. Ext.</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Quality of your relationship with faculty members	4.61	5.14	-0.53	4.53	5.19	-0.66

On the other hand, GT students gave responses similar to their peers regarding their overall evaluation of their educational experience.

<b>NSSE: Rating of Quality</b>						
	<b>First Year</b>			<b>Seniors</b>		
	<b>GT</b>	<b>Res. Ext.</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>GT</b>	<b>Res. Ext.</b>	<b>Difference</b>
How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?	3.21	3.16	0.05	3.08	3.15	-0.07

4=Excellent; 3=Good; 2=Fair; 1=Poor

When asked to what extent their institution contributed to their knowledge, skills and personal development, students at Tech rated their experience more favorably on a number of factors, including *acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills, thinking critically and analytically, analyzing quantitative problems, using computing and information technology and learning effectively on your own.*

<b>NSSE: To What Extent Has Your Experience at this Institution Contributed to Your Knowledge, Skills, and Personal Development in the Following Areas?</b>						
	<b>First Year</b>			<b>Seniors</b>		
	<b>GT</b>	<b>Res. Ext.</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>GT</b>	<b>Res. Ext.</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Thinking critically and analytically	3.38	3.05	0.33	3.50	3.24	0.26
Learning effectively on your own	3.24	2.98	0.26	3.35	3.06	0.29
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	2.77	2.44	0.33	3.14	2.92	0.22
Using computing and information technology	3.65	2.74	0.91	3.62	3.02	0.60
Analyzing quantitative problems	3.32	2.65	0.67	3.45	2.87	0.58

4=Very much; 3=Quite a bit; 2=Some; 1=Very little