

The Summer Humanities Research Fellowship Experience

2006 Evaluation Report

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Introduction

The SRM Evaluation Group is pleased to continue our working relationship with the Summer Humanities Research Fellowship (SHRF) as external evaluators. Our hope is that this report can relate individual experiences to program components in order to present a comprehensive account of how the program components work to create the SHRF experience.

The data we gathered portrays a group of individuals deeply committed to furthering African American scholarship and developing the next generation of African American academicians. Traveling from all over the country to spend a summer in Los Angeles immersed in original research projects, these SHRF student participants appeared dedicated, brave, and ready to make their mark in the various humanities disciplines. The students reported experiencing a culture shock of sorts—humbling critiques of their work, rapid expansion of their knowledge regarding other relevant disciplines, and startlingly low numbers of African Americans around campus. But all reported completing SHRF intellectually more confident, socially less naïve, and with well-defined plans for future graduate study.

This report details our findings from an evaluation of the 2006 Summer Humanities Research Fellowship. Building on our work with SHRF last year, we utilized the same focus group and individual interview protocols with minor adjustments made to improve the quality of data collected. This year we also expanded the scope of the evaluation to include a pre-program survey of student participants and a mentor interview component. The table below describes our data sources.

Data Source	Type of Administration	Dates Collected
Pre Program Student Survey	In-Person Paper, 100% participation N=10	Orientation Day June 26 th , 2006
Student Focus Group	In-Person, group setting 100% participation N=10	End of program August 17 th , 2006
Student Interviews	In-Person, individual 100% participation N=10	End of program August 17 th , 2006
Post Program Student Survey	In-Person, Paper 100% participation N=10	End of program August 17 th , 2006
Faculty Mentor Interviews	Telephone*, individual 100% participation N=4 *1 interview conducted in person	Final weeks of program July and August, 2006

The interviews and focus group were conducted by SRM Evaluation Staff members. The length of the interviews ranged from 15 minutes to 45 minutes. Each protocol consisted of semi-structured questions that included a prompt for open-ended responses. The interviews concluded with an invitation for any final thoughts not covered during the interview. The focus group and interviews were digitally recorded and selectively transcribed. The pre program and post program surveys were administered on paper by SRM Evaluation Staff members and analyzed using SPSS computer software.

This report is organized into the following four sections:

Section 1: *Program Components* - The first section of the report provides a descriptive review of students' evaluation of six of the seven program components. This section integrates student focus group data, pre program survey data and post program survey data.

Section 2: *Mentoring at SHRF* - The second section incorporates the student interview, mentor interview, and student survey data to provide an integrated view of the seventh program component, mentoring. This section is organized by the major themes suggested by the individual voices from within the program. Where appropriate, post program student data is also integrated into the analysis.

Section 3: *General Comments and Suggestions* - The third section of the report details suggestions for program improvement offered by student participants and faculty mentors.

Section 4: *Itemized Survey Results* - The fourth, and final, section of the report provides an item-by-item exploration of the results from the pre and post program student surveys.

The mentoring component of SHRF forms the central focus of our report, because our findings indicate that it is these relationships between student and faculty member — whether challenging, inspiring, or disappointing — that form the essential SHRF experience. So while all program components will be reviewed in Section 1 of this report, the mentoring component is detailed separately in Section 2 of the report.

Section 1: Program Components

The SHRF consists of 7 key program components. These components are:

- A. Faculty Conducted Seminars
- B. Course Materials
- C. Workshops
- D. Extracurricular Activities
- E. Writing A Research Paper
- F. Presentation of Research Paper
- G. Mentoring Activities

The working theory of the SHRF program is that these components work together to expand the academic skill set and encourage personal growth within the student participants. It is the belief that this skill expansion and growth will lead to increased intellectual self-confidence, motivation to achieve, and a sense of institutional belonging. The presence of these outcomes is believed to be the precursor to the program's ultimate goal—underrepresented students earn fellowships and doctoral degrees in the Humanities. This section integrates student focus group data with post program survey data to provide an evaluation of components A – F.

When student participants were asked what they thought was the most memorable activity during SHRF, a majority of the responses referenced presenting individual research papers and the mentoring experience. The Students' comments about presenting their research paper were all positive (3 responses) and of the three that commented one lauded the,

“opportunity to share what we worked on and to improve our presentation skills.” Another student enjoyed the chance, “to be scholars adding to existing conversations [in their respective field].” It is interesting to note that in the baseline survey, before SHRF began, half of the students were looking most forward to working on their research project (5 responses) and developing academic skills (4 responses). Upon completion of SHRF, while most students (6/10) still found writing the research paper to be the most useful component of SHRF, an equal number of students (6/10) also valued most the relationships they had established with their mentors.

Table 1: Summary of students’ post program survey ratings regarding “Usefulness” of SHRF program components

	Most useful	Very useful	Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not useful	Totals
Faculty Conducted Seminars	20% n=2	70% n=7	0% n=0	10% n=1	0% n=0	100% N=10
Course materials	20% n=2	20% n=2	50% n=5	0% n=0	10% n=1	100% N=10
Workshops	0% n=0	11% n=1	67% n=6	22% n=2	0% n=0	100% N=9
Mentoring	60% n=6	20% n=2	10% n=1	10% n=1	0% n=0	100% N=10
Extracurricular Activities	0% n=0	10% n=1	60% n=6	20% n=2	10% n=1	100% N=10
Writing Research Paper	30% n=3	50% n=5	10% n=1	10% n=1	0% n=0	100% N=10
Presenting Research Paper	40% n=4	30% n=3	20% n=2	10% n=1	0% n=0	100% N=10

A. Faculty Conducted Seminars

In the post-survey conducted after the completion of the SHRF program, most students found the faculty conducted seminars to be “very useful.” One student enjoyed the fact that the, “seminars were more of a discussion [rather than] teachers talking at you and teaching the material.” Another student found the seminars to be, “more engaging” and similar to the structure of his/her upper division courses at the home institution. During the focus group, several students (7/10) commented that the faculty seminars were a uniquely different learning experience than what was offered at their home institutions. One student commented that the seminars were, “quite a different experience. It was conceptually different. We learned where different cultural norms came from.” Others reflected on being exposed to new ideas, different teaching styles, more analytical discussions, contextualization of materials and research techniques. In particular, one student shared, “At home you have a feeling of being the ‘special one’ because you really want to be at your undergraduate college, but here at SHRF everyone wants to be here.”

B. Course Materials

In the post-survey conducted after completion of the SHRF program, most students rated the course materials to be “useful.” However, during the focus group, student responses were more enthusiastic. A couple students (3) valued how the reading materials selected by various professors promoted different ways of thinking and provided background information and contextualization. Additionally, a couple students (3) planned to apply and use some of the readings for future graduate level research and work. Although not all readings applied directly to the specific research interests of each individual student, one student, in particular, appreciated the, “discussion that evolved outside of the text, how he’s [Prof.] adding to the research, and it helped me to structure how I wrote my paper and I will continue to use it.”

C. Workshops

In the post-survey conducted after completion of the SHRF program, most students rated the workshops to be “useful.” During the focus group, it became evident that majority of students had no graduate school preparation at their home institution. Therefore, the workshops provided new information to them. In particular, students gained knowledge of both internal and external sources of funding, practice on Graduate Record Exam questions, writing the Statement of Purpose, and directly contacting professors about research interests. Several students valued the “writing workshop” because as one student shared, “[Prof.] taught you how to write clear arguments that were focused...I think of myself as a ‘good’ writer but [Prof.] makes you think you can improve and change and look critically at your own paper.”

D. Extracurricular Activities

In the post-survey conducted after completion of the SHRF program, most students found the extracurricular activities to be “useful.” However, during the focus group which followed the end of SHRF, majority of students agreed that while the African American Art Tour was “more helpful” than the Black Los Angeles Tour, both extracurricular activities did not provide valuable or new information.

E. Writing Research Paper

In the baseline survey, before students began SHRF, most students rated themselves as having an above average level of experience (7 out of 10 or higher) in doing the following: understanding academic texts, developing logical arguments, using primary sources, linking ideas, and proofreading. In the post-survey conducted after commencement of the SHRF program, most students found writing their research paper to be “very useful.” Even with their high level of confidence as writers, most of the students expressed learning valuable skills during this writing process. During the focus group, students cited specific techniques and strategies they had gained: writing a detailed outline, using a topic sentence, learning about case studies, keeping the audience in mind and focusing on a concise and well defined argument. In particular, one student benefited from writing a research paper, “because it’s another level, like a completely different situation than undergrad, a different purpose than just in a classroom setting.”

F. Presentation of Research Paper

In the baseline survey, before the SHRF program began, four students had prior experience presenting research at a conference while six had “no experience” presenting research. In the post-survey conducted after completion of the SHRF program, most students found presenting their research paper to be “very useful.” Both groups of students with “some” to “no experience” presenting their research, valued the opportunity to get feedback, strengthen their arguments and further practice in front of an audience. One student, in particular, revealed, “We came full circle. I’m not comfortable with presenting...but especially to my mentor, I wanted to share with my mentor and what he’s taught me.”

Section 2: Mentoring at SHRF

The mentoring component of The Summer Humanities Research Fellowship is a critical aspect of the program, particularly in achieving the program’s major goal—preparing African American students from historically black colleges and universities for graduate level research. This section integrates mentor interview data and the student interview data.

During the individual interviews, students shared their personal journeys during SHRF. The relationship that each student had with their mentor was the foundational part of their experience at [GRADUATE UNIVERSITY]. Students’ reports of their mentoring experiences with faculty had mixed results. Most students (6/10) assessed their mentor/mentee relationship as, “enjoyable and challenging.” Two students professed great admiration for their mentor with comments such as, “I love my mentor. He is an academic celebrity.” Unfortunately, however, two students were left disappointed by the mentoring component of the program. Both of these students did not feel supported by their mentor in their research project and felt frustrated when they compared it to the close relationship they shared with their academic advisor at their home institution.

Those students that had consistent and intense interactions with their mentors reported that they developed new ideas for research and when asked, could detail very specific academic goals for a career in the Humanities. Those few students who did not see their mentor often and did not receive individualized, consistent feedback described vague research interests, did not report new research ideas, and reported no specific plans for graduate school.

Several students singled out one mentor who “was only here two weeks and then didn’t even make it to the presentations.” This same mentor did not “provide much feedback.” This mentoring experience contrasts with other student participants who felt their mentors were extraordinarily available. As one student recounted, “Throughout the process, I could honestly say that I could send him an email at twelve o’clock at night and at 12:01, I would have an email back from him. He is very dedicated.” The students made it very clear that the mentoring component “makes or breaks” the SHRF experience. For it is through these relationships, student participants were able to make sense of their academic training up until the SHRF experience, develop new analytic skills, improve writing abilities, and shape a research agenda for their future academic careers.

According to the mentors, the three main components of the program’s holistic approach to faculty mentoring are academic guidance, feedback, and personal connection. Even though all faculty mentors and the writing mentor felt that these three components broadly defined their approach to mentoring, many of them asserted that all three components were interrelated and in specific situations one component had more precedence than another.

For example, one mentor said, “Yes, well they are always connected and I think there are different times when different parts of that process are more important than other. At some point, let’s say you are teaching how to do a bibliography, the personal connection is not that important you know it comes down to ‘here do it like this’ ... and there are other times during class when a student shares their frustration with you, then the personal connection is important”.

The findings detailed in this section are organized by the mentor-defined activities of the mentoring component of SHRF. The three main sections are: I) academic guidance, II) feedback and III) personal connection. Within each of these sections, predominant themes from mentor and student interview data are detailed.

I. Academic Guidance

Mentors viewed academic guidance as a multi-faceted, but consistent thread to build personal connections with student participants throughout their summer residence at [GRADUATE UNIVERSITY]. Student participants also described this interplay between personal connection and academic guidance.

For the majority of students, the intensity of the intellectual challenge presented to them by their mentors was overwhelming and, at first, discouraging. Most of them reported feeling extraordinarily competent at their home institutions, only to discover their mentor expected a higher level of performance. All students expressed feeling a bit shaken and concerned at their perceived low level of academic competence during the first several weeks of the program. As one mentee expressed, “At first I felt behind, I judged that by the seminar, but after we were going and I got into something that related [more to my interests] I felt more confident.” As one other student described, “It was very, very personal. Even when I didn’t think I could do it. In the back of [my mentor’s] head, he always knew that, ‘You can do it, you’re going to get through it, you’re going to do fine. I just know it.’ And I needed that kind of inspiration.”

Based on the telephone interviews with mentors, there were three specific areas of academic guidance that emerged: 1) Graduate Level Research, 2) Graduate School Culture and Expectations and 3) Graduate School Application Process.

1) Graduate Level Research

Many of the mentors reported that the main purpose of their academic guidance was to build the confidence and skill level of African American students from historically black colleges/universities in order to be able to successfully pursue graduate level education, teaching, and research as a career path. One mentor stated, “... it’s important because these are young men and women we are trying to get into the academic pipeline and the personal guidance is particularly important because beyond the intellectual level, we can, I hope, give them the sense of personal worth and self-esteem that would give them the confidence to go on and apply to various graduate programs”. A program participant’s statement in an open-ended response question in the SHRF Student Post-Survey, further supported the mentor’s belief when he/she stated, “The mentoring aspect of SHRF really molded my expectations of the graduate school experience because of the intimacy and direct attention given to me.”

The student interviews also presented a picture of how the mentor relationship introduced students to graduate level research. One student said, “[My mentor] made me realize that just because I had earned my Bachelor’s of Arts degree didn’t mean I had reached my point, my plateau, so to speak, and for him to tell me, and be brutally honest, that I could use some work as

far as scholarly writing to grow and giving me that opportunity to face criticism, and to do so, helped me reach the next level.”

One mentor described “... my role is to help facilitate and give them advice on how to formulate research questions and write a research paper to help prepare them for graduate level research.” Another mentor asserted that he devoted a large amount of time working on student papers. While another mentor mentioned that he helped prepare his students for graduate level research by “... keep[ing] in as close touch as possible with the students after the SHRF experience. So one of the things I do, usually through e-mail, but sometimes through telephone. I help them with their graduate school applications and many cases I have actually have written letters of recommendations for them to get into graduate programs because I work so closely with them during The Summer Humanities Research Fellowship, I feel I am in a good position to measure their intellectual quality.”

2) Graduate School Culture, Expectations, and Professorship

The entire SHRF experience provides student participants with insights into the graduate school experience. The mentors worked to provide insight into the graduate school culture and level of intellectual expectation needed in order to achieve the needed level of scholarship. Clearly, the SHRF program was successful in this arena. One student stated in the post-survey that he/she would recommend this program to a friend because, “ ... it is a graduate school simulation that provides students an in depth experience on what to expect and how real graduate school is like.”

During the student interviews many of the students stated the most important “take-away” of SHRF was to introduce them to the graduate school way of life. As one student described, “If the program was to simulate graduate life, even despite miscommunication and scheduling, it did parallel what graduate life would be like. I found myself learning how to better manage time. The experience helped me grow and confirmed the fact that graduate school is for me.” Another student echoed a similar experience, “I’ve always known that I could write papers. You can give me a topic and I could go with it, but it was really difficult at first to come into it thinking that I may not be ready for grad school. But [SHRF] let me know that I can still come here and do the work...Just seeing this, has let me know this is what I am going to do.” Another student reported, “I would have gone into grad school with a completely different perspective of what it really is like. I was probably a bit naïve. After being a student for, like what, sixteen years, you kind of have this mindset like, ‘I can handle it.’ But I wasn’t really expecting the workload or the intensity of the work.”

When asked if SHRF had prepared them for graduate school at a non-HBC, one student said, “Every new challenge I will face [in graduate school] I faced here. I’ve been snubbed. I’ve been the only black person I’ve seen all day. I’ve been exposed to racist remarks. I mean whatever, so it’s like, ‘O.K. I’ve been through it here, what’s the big difference when I get to graduate school.” Another student echoed these remarks. H/she explained, “When I first got here it was a big shock coming from an HBC ...The first couple of weeks [SHRF students] would walk together in groups and people would stare at us, a group of black people, like, ‘What are they doing here?’ It bothered me a little bit, but now I am just like, whatever.”

Not only did the one-on-one mentoring approach introduce students to graduate school culture, expectations, and professionalism, but the teaching seminars were also designed to accomplish this goal. One mentor stated, “... I teach one of the seminars and even though it’s not directly related to their individual research projects, I find the opportunity to talk about research,

and the kind of culture graduate school has and that relates to certain kinds of research expectations”.

Mentors introduced students to the academic community that the students would become members of and have to navigate through in order to build careers as researchers. One mentor stated, “ ... I would say 75 to 80% minimum in a given quarter of what I do has nothing to do with research, so if that’s the case then, and we’re preparing people for graduate school, I mean that’s one thing, so they can know what graduate school is like and can succeed, but we’re also long term preparing them to become faculty members, to talk as if research is the only thing they’re going to have to do is to mislead them”.

For the mentors, academic guidance also entails a form of career counseling, particularly when discussing that an academic career it is not only about what kind of research students are interested in, but also where do these students want to do it and limitations and affordances of doing it in different places. Another mentor went on to state, “I do think that one thing that I really keep in mind is that most of them have not had exposure to faculty at research institutions ... There’s a whole set of practices and expectations that may have nothing to do with your assigned work, may have nothing to do with learning how to write at the graduate level, or what to read, or what to study, and I think that is what I try to do ... is to really talk to the students about what the expectations are.”

In order to provide a perspective on graduate school culture and the professional lives of faculty members, one mentor invites all the SHRF students to his home to introduce scholars from different disciplines to the students. This was an opportunity to get other perspectives on the similarities and differences in graduate education. This mentor felt that this type of academic guidance was important because it is important that these students know that graduate level research is only a part of the larger graduate education experience. He felt that these types of discussions helped student think not only about their research interest, but also their career path. He asserted that they should reflect on “... what do you want to be teaching in ten years, some of these people know they want to go to grad school but have no clue about the difference between interdisciplinary graduate program and a disciplinary graduate program and aren’t sure if they want to get an M.A. or a Ph.D.” Answers to these questions play an important role in preparing students to successfully apply and enroll in graduate humanities programs.

Student interview data suggest that the mentors were absolutely successful in achieving a comfort level and understanding of graduate school culture among SHRF student participants. When asked to describe why they chose their undergraduate institution, many students reported factors of convenience. Location in a hometown was the most commonly cited reason for attendance. However, when asked about their graduate school plans, the students articulated well defined plans based upon research interests or career goals, not convenience, personal or economic factors. The students possessed a sense of the different programs nationally, as well as, faculty members who share similar academic interests.

When asked about confidence levels to attend graduate school, one student answered, “I really feel over-prepared. I mean if I could live through this summer with being torn down and seeing how it makes me stronger and better, than I can face anything.”

3) Graduate School Application

Another important aspect of academic guidance is preparing students for graduate school applications. This preparation takes place both through discussions about the different aspects of the graduate school application process from funding opportunities to research interests, and

helping students build a social network of scholars as well as those who are current graduate students in their field.

For example, one mentor stated that, "... finding access to a network of established scholars who are interested in your research projects is something you're going to have to do as graduates, [and] as a faculty member and we both [mentor and mentee(s)] talk about that particular process and if I can do it with any of the students, I try to facilitate that." He went on to add:

...I'm trying to give them a sense of what the process is like, demystify the application process to grad school, let them know how admissions committees work, let them know what a faculty member does, some of them need more of that than others. When I think of academic guidance for me [I think of] something we can give them in a very short period of time is that kind of exposure, to a body of information and experience that they A) have not gotten and B) may not be in touch with somebody who can give it to them right now ... I will give students names of people who are at other institutions that I know.

Based on the mentors perspectives, providing students with information on the graduate school application process in terms of what is required, but also assisting with building the networks and knowledge base for graduate school admittance and success, are important components of academic guidance.

II) Feedback

One of the unique features of the SHRF program is the opportunity for students to receive individualized, intensive feedback on their work from an expert scholar over the course of the summer. Many students described this experience as inspiring, and unlike anything they had experienced before. As one mentee explained, "I am very close to my home advisor. He will give me feedback, and say things like, 'You're not ready to turn in this paper.' But, with my [SHRF] mentor, it was different. I mean he is an expert. He was giving me the bigger ideas, making connections to things I had not even considered."

Providing feedback is an important part of skill development for graduate level research. In this section of the report, the mentors' and students' experiences with "feedback" will be discussed in terms of its role in developing 1) original research ideas, 2) confident and skilled writers, and 3) critical thinking. According to the mentors, these different skills are developed through critiquing papers, meeting at least once a week to discuss ideas and talking on a one-on-one basis about the feedback.

Original Research Ideas

The development of interesting and unique research ideas is a cornerstone product of graduate level research. In order to prepare students for this type of research, the mentors helped students through a developmental process by providing a lot of personal attention, constructive feedback, and writing and thinking techniques. Students were provided feedback on their research ideas, primarily through verbal discussions on both the structure and content of those ideas.

One mentor stated that he and his mentee(s), "... met pretty much once a week at least, sometimes a bit more, we'd sit and talk a great deal ... I feel like, if possible, with students,

especially graduate students, verbal feedback allows you to get a better sense of what they're tracking and what they aren't tracking ... we spend a lot of time going over outlines for the project because I don't think that happens very much, even at the graduate level."

Another mentor added that he helped his students develop research ideas by encouraging them to think about their research across disciplines and topics to make it more robust. He stated, "...okay if this is your topic, then you need to understand that there are things that surround this topic that made it vibrant. For example, all of the students I have right now for some reason ... are interested in hip-hop, and so if you are going to write about hip-hop, you need to know from what this evolved, you need to know about the broader issues that are going on in America that allowed this kind of genre to evolve. We do that through the course of conversation."

The student interviews reflected the influence of the mentor relationship on the construction of exciting research projects. As one student described, "Before the program, I would state my opinion and not really have facts to back it up or support it. But now I can say, look, I am adding to this because this part was left out." Another student reported adding to her original research ideas while being in SHRF. She described how her mentor had helped guide her to new secondary sources that enriched her thesis statements. As she explained, "[[GRADUATE UNIVERSITY]'s] library is way better. That is one disadvantage of going to an HBC. The library here, I found a lot more sources. I had a lot of primary, but not many secondary [sources]. So, I could include more theories that I could apply [to what was happening historically]."

In many cases, these newly developed research ideas formed not only the basis of student summer research projects, but also the students anticipated using them as a foundation for a research agenda to pursue during graduate education. Many of the students reported clear research agendas, articulated only after discussion and collaboration with their mentors, as the impetus for an internalized drive to continue on in their education and pursue a career as a humanities scholar.

Writing

The quality of graduate level research, success in graduate school, and professional achievement in academia, depends upon outstanding communication skills. SHRF expects that through an effective mentoring process students will become more confident and skilled writers. During the interviews with mentors, they discussed how they facilitate the developmental process for students to become confident and skilled writers.

One mentor started this process by providing his mentees with "very detailed feedback in writing about their writing on the paper. What I told [the students] was that I marked the drafts they gave me exactly the way I would mark graduate students." Another mentor believes that it is important to convey to students that writing expectations in graduate school are very different from those in undergraduate. This particular mentor emphasized that he does not expect students to absorb everything he puts down on their papers because you cannot change writing patterns in six weeks, but rather expects the students to begin to demonstrate evidence of progress. Therefore, he believes that:

Improving [students'] skills is going to depend on their, engaging that [writing] process ... I've known students [that] have had their confidence very, very much damaged and, in a way, it was inevitable because, in a way, you don't want to be

dishonest ... We warned them that they are going to get critiqued. That doesn't mean they haven't accomplished anything to this point [and we do not] think they are incompetent ... We're trying to push them, so that when they enter the next level they will not be shocked. And I think, that this year we have done a much better job of that. So that I think that if you can detach the confidence, maybe you want to undermine the confidence that this person has that he or she is a really great writer if they aren't, but you don't want to undermine the confidence that with work, they can become a better writer, and that's a distinction.

Providing constructive and effective feedback was a critical part of the writing process on behalf of the mentor. Another mentor further supported this mentor's statement about making sure solutions are provided for problems found in writing because, "... a lot of students came in with, to be blunt, very poor writing skills. And a limited vocabulary in certain ways ... I think one of the things I tried to do was give very specific feedback. You know sort of, 'Why does this sentence appear here in this paragraph?' or help them focus a thesis statement, for example, or try to be as specific as possible to their work and not talk about writing in general and work with them on their individual work, which is important."

Constructive feedback, according to the mentors, is also addressed in the "... research methodology and specific content of their project." Ultimately, the goal of constructive feedback is to help develop long-term confident and skilled writers who will pursue and succeed in graduate studies. According to one mentor, his style of feedback has helped develop such writers because, "the feedback I have gotten from [students] is that if they get through my critical assessment of their writing, they are in great shape. And evidently, they haven't had much difficulty with their writing after they left the program." The working beliefs of the mentors are that gaining confidence and learning to be a skilled writer is a long process that must be nurtured through a strategic and personally guided approach.

Students also acknowledged the some times painful, but always productive, process of intense instruction in writing as part of their intellectual growth over the summer. One student described her experience as such:

I enjoyed my experience with my mentor here. He really improved my writing skills as far as the things he looks for. He is very writing intensive as far as accuracy, efficiency in words, and grammatical correctness, so that helped me as far as my proofreading skills go. So now, when I reread my paper, or anything that I've written, I sort of look at it with the eye that he looks at it with.

Another student reflected, "As far as writing, I think I will have a great advantage as far as transitioning into a graduate program." This student described how his/her mentor had helped considerably with issues of redundancy and provided him/her with tools to avoid such writing problems.

3) Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a fundamental skill for successful graduate level research. Hence, part of providing feedback as a mentor is not only to help mentees with writing, but also developing critical thinking processes. These processes are developed through reviewing papers with students one-on-one as well as through the material presented and discussed during lectures.

One mentor stated, “I try to instill a sense of critical thinking, even when we look at the visual images.” Another mentor added to this statement that:

... I showed them through my lectures how you learn to think critically about information that is presented. And this is based on my field, History. But also I was able to use current political events concerning current administration, and how you read and interpret what is said, as opposed to what people do... We made it very clear that we do not have the final answer, but that rather ‘Look at the world like an ice berg, you know 1/10th of the it is above the water, and so 9/10th of it is below. You don’t see it. So you have to learn how to delve into that which is unseen and unknown.’

Students discussed critical thinking during the interviews. When asked if h/she felt more confident in his/her intellectual abilities since participating in SHRF, one student replied, “I would say, ‘Yes.’ There are a couple of professors, as well as, my mentor who really encouraged critical thinking and actively reading texts instead of just, like, taking in the words and accepting it [and] to always inquire about what you’re reading while you’re reading it. My analytical skills and critical skills have definitely improved.”

All students were asked to define critical thinking. They collectively defined critical thinking as not taking things for fact, but to continually question events, accounts and narratives. Additionally, many of the students included in that definition the act of synthesizing or summarizing various sources of information including personal experience to, as one student put it, “piece together the puzzle.” As one student described, “I do have to provide background information, but somewhere you have to provide your own analysis, so what does this mean to use it as evidence for what I am trying to argue.” The majority of the students reported that the SHRF seminars were their first introduction to this kind of thinking and that working individually with their mentors developed the analytical mindset that must accompany such endeavors.

III) Personal Connection

The personal connection developed between mentors and mentees forms the core of the SHRF mentoring component. The development and importance of the personal connection is intimately connected to the quality of academic guidance, feedback, and skill development accomplished within these relationships. The mentors and the students all described how the personal connection between mentors and mentee is an important aspect of the mentoring experience because it provides the basis for building confidence, providing constructive criticism, and maintaining social networks.

During the interviews, students alluded to the ways in which personal connections with mentors—sharing membership to a particular organization, a common academic interest, or similar life experiences—permitted the students to have the confidence to push themselves into graduate level work. This personal connection helped create a bridge between the new relationship with their SHRF mentor and the extremely close relationship they had with their home institution advisor. This bridge appeared to increase their comfort level when discussing sensitive academic issues.

One mentor stated, “...you know the academic guidance I can give my students, the kinds of questions they feel comfortable asking me changed as they felt personally more connected to me and in both cases if we hadn’t, if they hadn’t, felt personally comfortable, there were important issues that...we wouldn’t have gotten to, and I might not even know that we weren’t getting to [them].” This same mentor emphasized that his mentoring approach is rooted in providing as much face-to-face time to students as possible.

Another mentor believed that the personal connection was a key method for ultimately achieving SHRF’s main goal of encouraging African American students from historically black colleges and universities to apply to graduate school. This mentor stated, “The personal connection can be very important. These are kids coming from historically black colleges and universities. They come to a large, and obviously elite, public institution like [GRADUATE UNIVERSITY], there can be some sense of, ‘Boy, do I really belong here?’...What we try to do, at every level, is convince them that they absolutely belong here, and they are fully competent intellectually to pursue graduate level instruction.” Another mentor added, “...in order to navigate through the graduate program, the students have to trust you and the personal guidance [you provide]...is critical in terms of skill development.” Another mentor re-iterated the importance of this personal connection in providing academic guidance because “...students come in with various senses of strengths and weakness and I know a number of students during the summer program got overwhelmed at various times and so it was [the personal connection that] helped ease some of that stress.” From the mentors’ perspective, the personal connection is necessary for encouraging skill development in students, but also for developing their confidence and self-esteem to take the initial step of applying to graduate school.

How and when these personal connections began and were maintained varied across pairings. One faculty mentor stated that he started to build a personal connection with student participants during the selection process as well as reviewing applicant files to gain an understanding of academic and personal background and calling program participants days in advance before they arrive in Los Angeles. He stated, “[I do this] so I have a sense of who they are...I try to give them specific guidance in research techniques and work on getting bibliographic references and occasionally, for example, I put them in touch with people who are very knowledgeable about the specific research projects they are undertaking.” Some mentors maintain this personal connection between mentors and mentees after the students have left the program. One mentor stated, “That’s the most important thing. I have maintained contact with several of the people, many of them now are well into graduate work...I try to keep in touch with them, largely through e-mail.”

The structure and content of the teaching component of the mentoring experience was gratifying and useful for both the students and their mentors because it gave them an opportunity to interact, learn more about each other in order to build a personal relationship to provide academic and emotional support. The mentors believed that the seminars were critical for developing a personal connection with the students, particularly those that were not their own mentees. One mentor added, that “... it was a real pleasure to work with a smaller group and spend a lot of energy, and they appreciated the feedback and it was great that I did not have to give them a grade at the end, so I could just be supportive without giving a grade on a paper.”

Section 3: General Comments and Suggestions

Before beginning SHRF, most students thought the program would be very challenging. After the program, most students self-assessed their overall frustration level by the end of their

summer experience as being somewhere in the middle (5 out of 10) between the lowest and highest amount of frustration. Some of their aggravations included the following: problems with their living situation (no refrigerator or microwave), frequent miscommunications between program directors, food stipend disbursement, last minute deadlines and unclear expectations and deadlines.

As detailed earlier in the report, the mentoring experience varied across student participants. While most students rated mentoring as the most useful component in preparing them for graduate school, a few students were left disappointed. A student shared his/her disappointment, "I didn't have a mentor to throw ideas with. It's a different experience depending on who your mentor is."

Some students only interacted with their mentor during the first two weeks of SHRF and did not benefit from his/her presence during the remainder of the program or the presentations. Those students who experienced a lack of mentoring found it to be particularly stressful that their stipends depended upon producing research products when they had very little guidance to accomplish these tasks. One student noted that s/he had informed the program of a problem with his/her mentor and the administrators did not address these concerns early on. Therefore, near the end of the program when s/he had to turn in her paper and make a presentation on her research project, she was very anxious and distraught.

During the focus group, students were asked whether they were more likely to apply to graduate school after this summer experience. Seven students stated they were more likely to apply to graduate school, while three students were undecided. The students who were undecided stated specific reasons unrelated to SHRF, such as finding full-time employment and pursuing career goals.

Overall however, most students observed that their frustration level decreased throughout the program and believed SHRF to be very beneficial. As one student expressed, "I enjoyed the program because it's like an actual grad school experience. This [SHRF] is worth it."

Additionally, only one student would not recommend SHRF to a friend, while nine students would. The rejection came from a student who felt, "No, just because I think the experience depends too much on personal situation." This student had a very negative mentoring experience during SHRF.

Among the positive reviews were the following:

- "Overall, it was a really beneficial learning experience that allowed for a lot of personal growth."
- "[SHRF] is a graduate school simulation that provides students an in depth experience on what to expect and how real graduate school is like. This program is for serious students and SHRF offers what they know to us for free. They only ask for our time and give our full potential."
- "[SHRF] was beneficial as far as letting me understand what graduate coursework was like and also enabled [me] to improve academically and personally."

Key student suggestions include the following:

1. Review each mentor's performance closely. Do not use mentors who will not be physically present for the majority of SHRF and who are not willing to provide consistent and intense mentoring.
2. Have only one administrator in charge of SHRF. This way, the student participants do not receive varied or conflicting information regarding scheduling, expectations, and deadlines. This primary administrator could also communicate directly with the leaders of other SPUR programs.
3. Review the content of the seminars. Each student appreciated reading a wide variety of sources, but many thought that reading outside of one's research area cut into the time available to concentrate on one's own research. Several students suggested eliminating some of the seminars to provide more time for independent research. Others suggested that the students' interests and skill sets should determine at least some seminar content. In this sense, each year's seminars would be tailored to the particular interests of the student participants.

During the focus group, students were given the opportunity to provide suggestions for improving the SHRF program. Several students commented on one professor who had given one assignment but never provided any feedback on it. They collectively expressed this to be "a waste of time." They wanted feedback on every assignment because they viewed it as the unique SHRF experience—the opportunity to receive individualized comments from an expert researcher. Likewise, some students believed the Graduate Record Exam prep workshop was "a big waste of time and money" because it was essentially time management and test taking strategies and less time devoted to actual practice questions. Also, students did not understand the purpose for having to write a 'conference paper' and felt it did not fit with the oral presentation style of presenting their paper and most used separate notes during their final presentations.

In general, the mentors were very satisfied with their teaching experience in SHRF. As one mentor stated, "I must say that both the formal classes that I present and one-to-one mentoring is fully comparable to the gratification that I have had and I have taught [at] the University of California for 37 years, so I am a veteran of this process." For another mentor, gratification was based in his students' reactions to his lectures. He asserted, "The thing I was heartened by after I gave my lectures was, the fact the students said, 'We have never got this before ... we never knew these things happened ... we had no idea how one could provide interpretations on history to allow us to understand contemporary society.'" The faculty mentors felt that their lectures were stimulating, enlightening, and encouraging based on student responses. The survey data supports these conclusions.

The mentors reported being very satisfied with the program, its goals, and its active and productive pursuit in achieving these goals. They believed that all efforts should be made to, as one mentor stated, "keep it going." Program improvement suggestions related primarily to the structural aspects of the program. One mentor felt that it would be helpful if there could be enough funding to hire a part-time staff person to administer the program, rather than someone who is a African American Studies Center full-time employee, splitting their work time between many tasks. This mentor asserted that this part-time staff person could be responsible for:

... Everything from recruiting, maintaining contact with the schools that feed us the students, to publicizing the results of the program more broadly so that people know about this and also monitoring students down the road ... I mean some of us keep in touch with the students that have come through but more systematically following what happens to them ... this is our fifth year and I think it'd be nice if we had resources to do some tracking because we now have, probably 60 to 70 students out there who've gone through this [program].

This mentor felt a part-time staff member who could devote all of their work time to the program was necessary to begin building documentation of program success as well as enhancing the infrastructure of the program to maintain its stability and success as its duration and number of participants who have completed the program grow over time.

Another mentor felt that SHRF could be further enhanced if:

We could select a few students a little beyond the ambient of historically black colleges ... we have had that mix before, sometimes students coming from more traditional places like the University of Wisconsin and University of Pennsylvania ...actually add something and elevate the entire level of the intellectual experience.

This mentor felt that it was important to further diversify the student population in order to offer students a more in-depth exposure to the type of graduate student they would be competing and working with to get in and succeed in graduate school.

Lastly, the writing mentor suggested that there be more than four sessions given to writing workshops because of the variation in student writing skills. Also, this mentor believed that the writing curriculum should be more integrated into the program because:

...The students came in expecting that they were going to be working only and solely on their research and did not think they were going to get other assignments from me that were not connected to the writing they were doing for the rest of the summer. I needed to see work that they did cold. I needed to see work that they did not receive help from previous professors, parents, or guides. I needed to assign brand new writing assignments and I am not sure it was really integrating well with the rest of program.

This same mentor also offered to provide a seminar on public speaking skills for students because "... when they presented their work to faculty, I think it was a fantastic experience for them, and powerful, and it was great to see all of them up there and I would be willing to teach them more about public speaking skills, if they would be interested in the future, maybe even an hour seminar maybe give them some tips."

Section 4: Itemized Survey Results

The following tables provide data for each item on the Pre and Post Student Surveys.

Table 2: Students' Primary Motivations for Attending the SHI Program

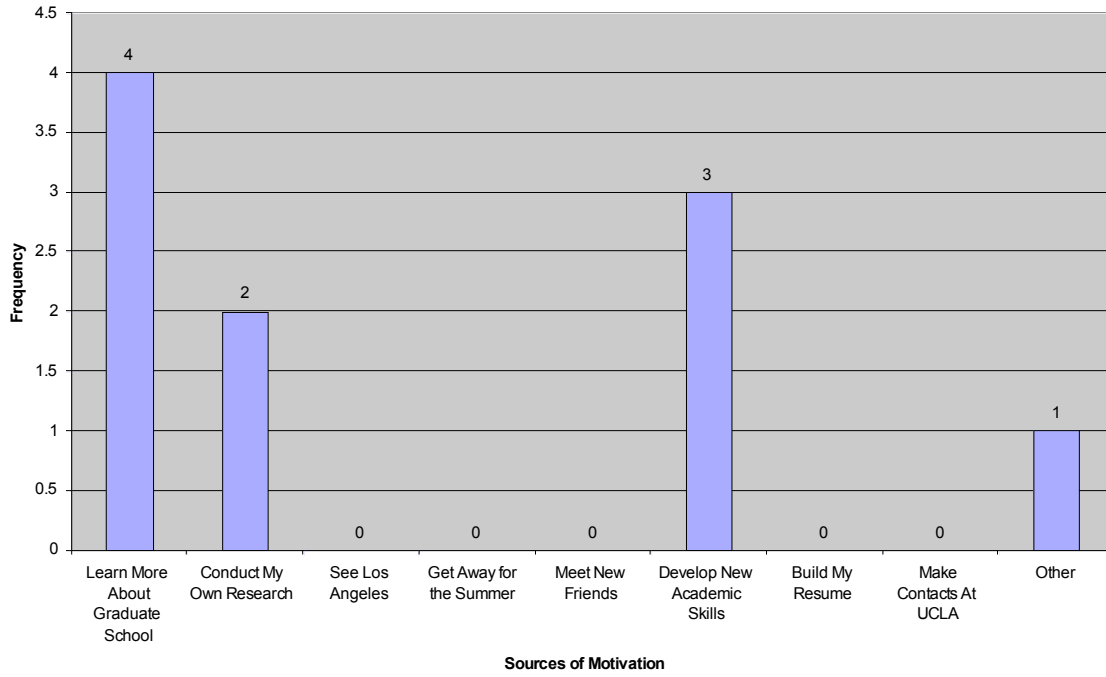


Table 3: Students' Perceptions of Their Exposure To Research At Their Home Institutions

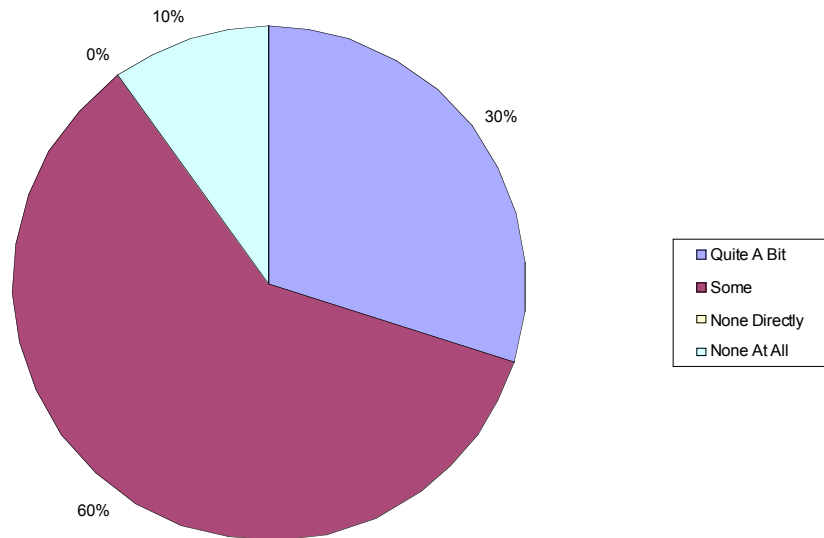


Table 4: Whether Students Presented at a Research Conference

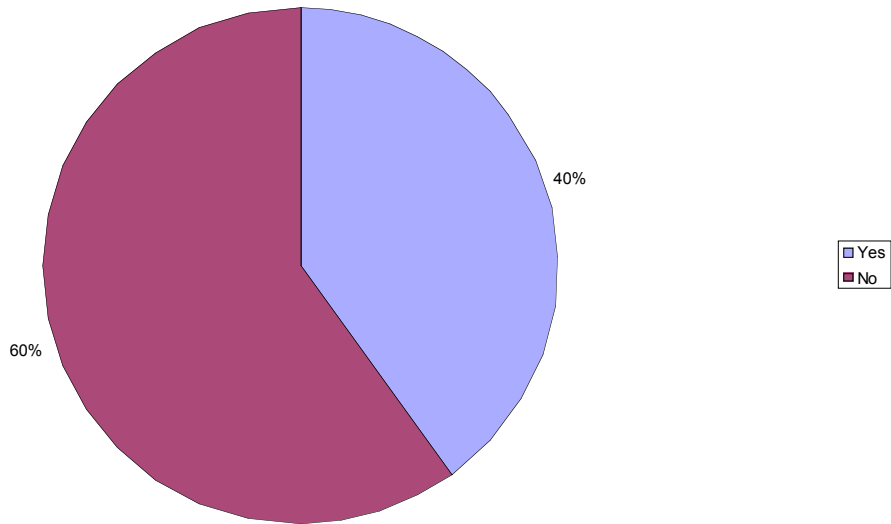


Table 5: Students' Perceptions of Their Relationship With Their Academic Advisor At Their Home Institution

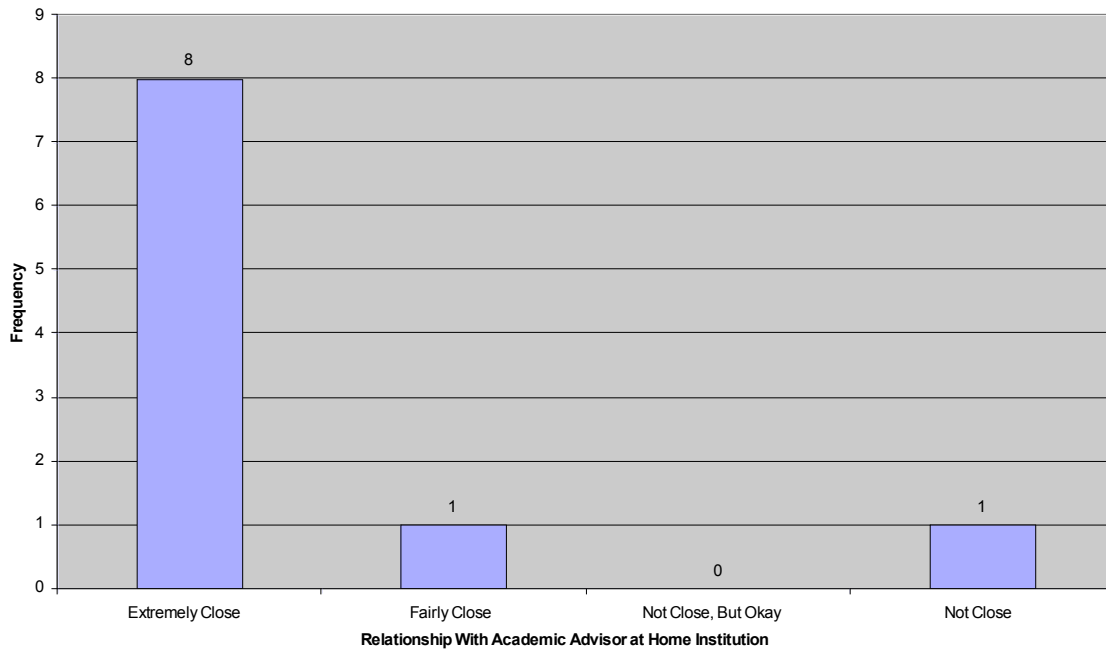


Table 6: Whether Students' Advisors Had Talked To Them About Applying To Graduate School

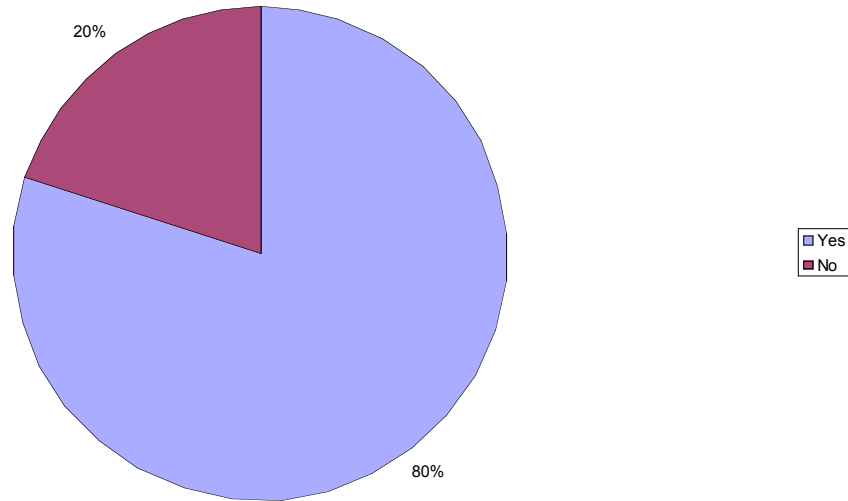


Table 7: Students' Perceptions of Which Source Has Provided The Most Information About Graduate School

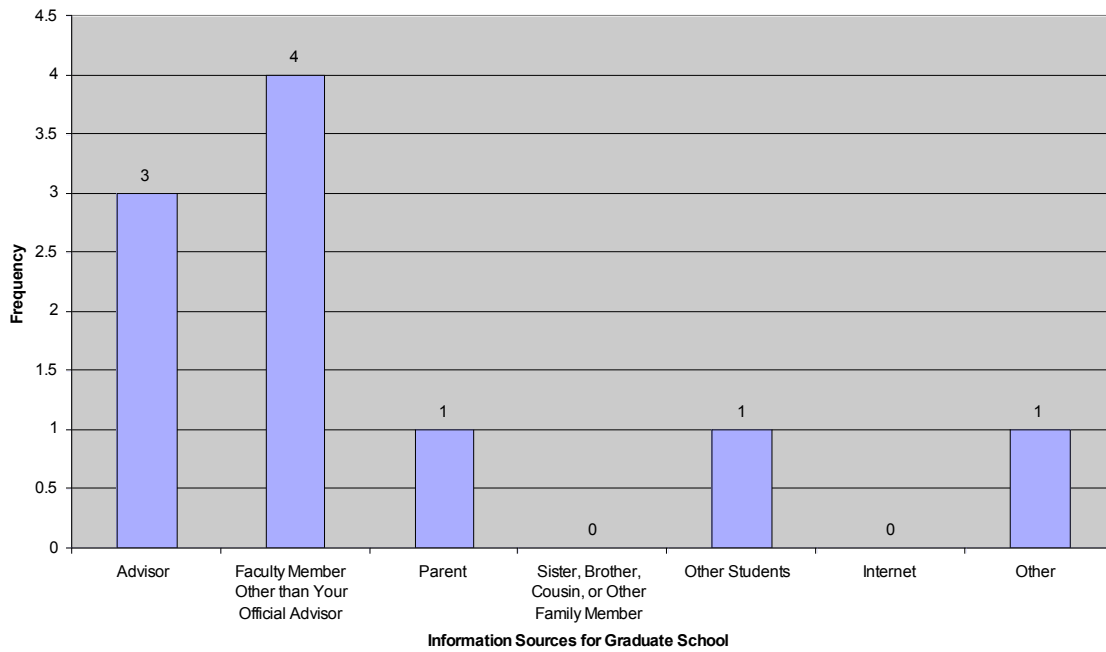


Table 8: To What Extent Are Students Participating in SHI More Motivated To Achieve Academic Goals Compared To Students At Their Home Institutions

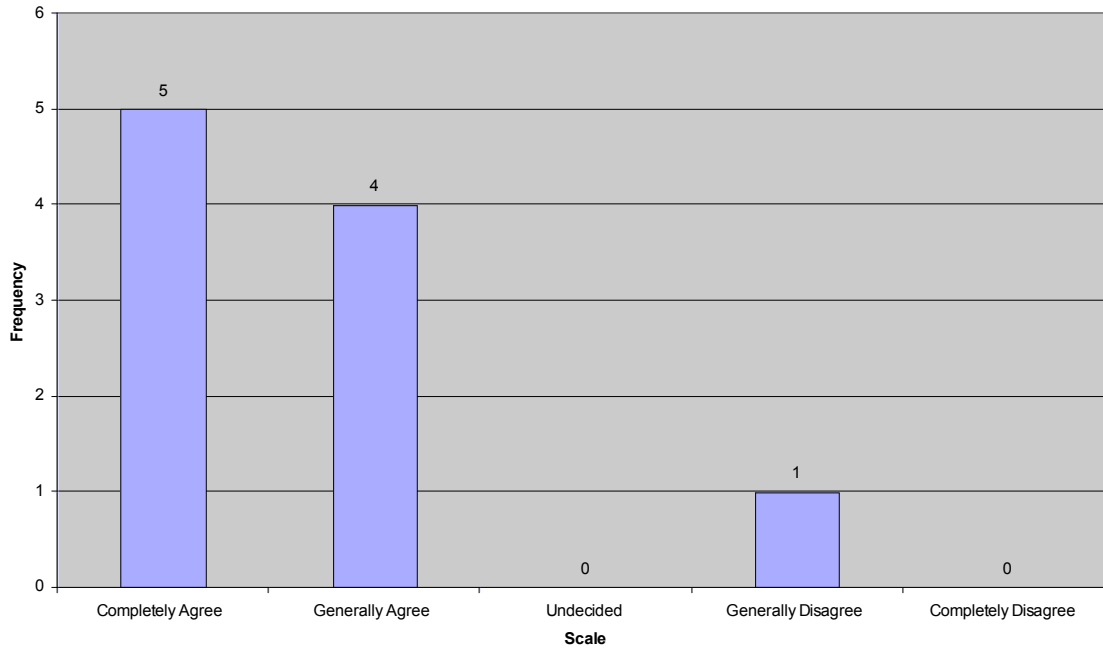


Table 9: Students' Levels of Agreement/Disagreement With The Statement That Their Home Institution Is/Has Preparing/Prepared Them To Be Successful In A Top-Ranked Graduate School

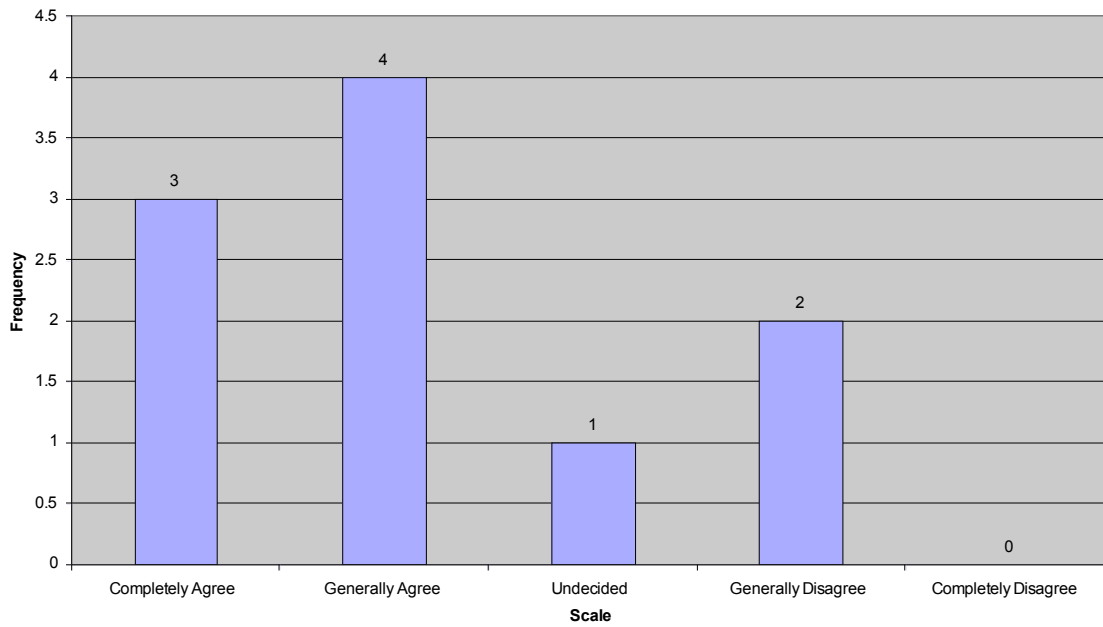


Table 10: Students' Perceptions Of Their Skill-Level With Understanding Academic Texts

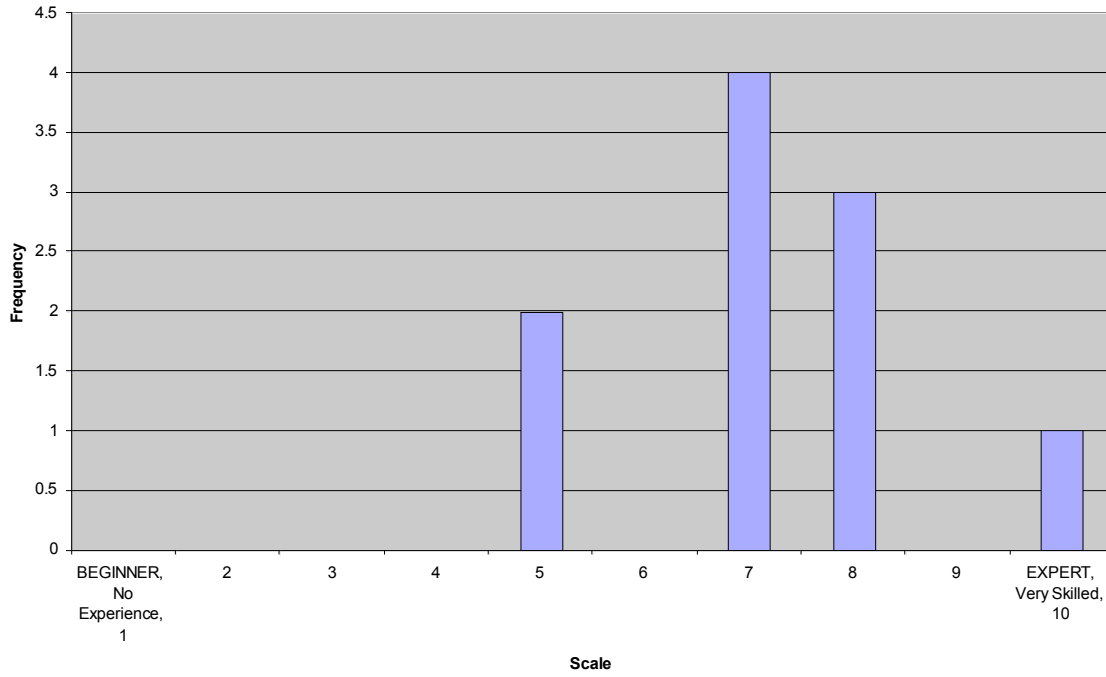


Table 11: Students' Perceptions Of Their Skill-Level With Developing A Logical Argument In Their Writing

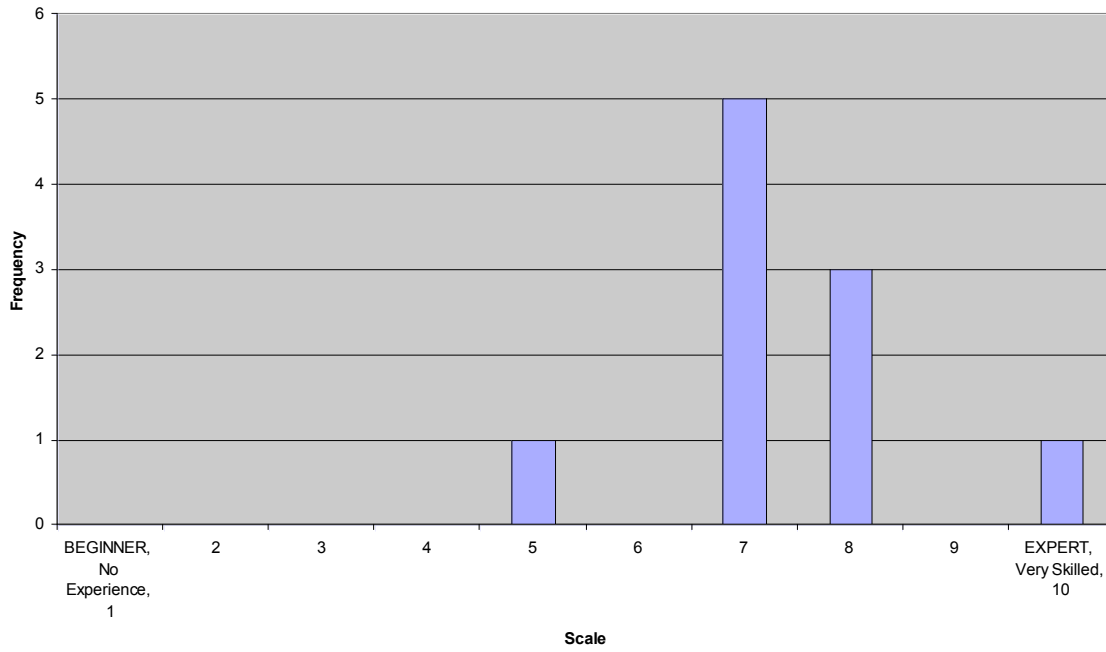


Table 12: Students' Perceptions Of Their Skill-Level With Building Upon Primary Sources To Develop Their Own Ideas

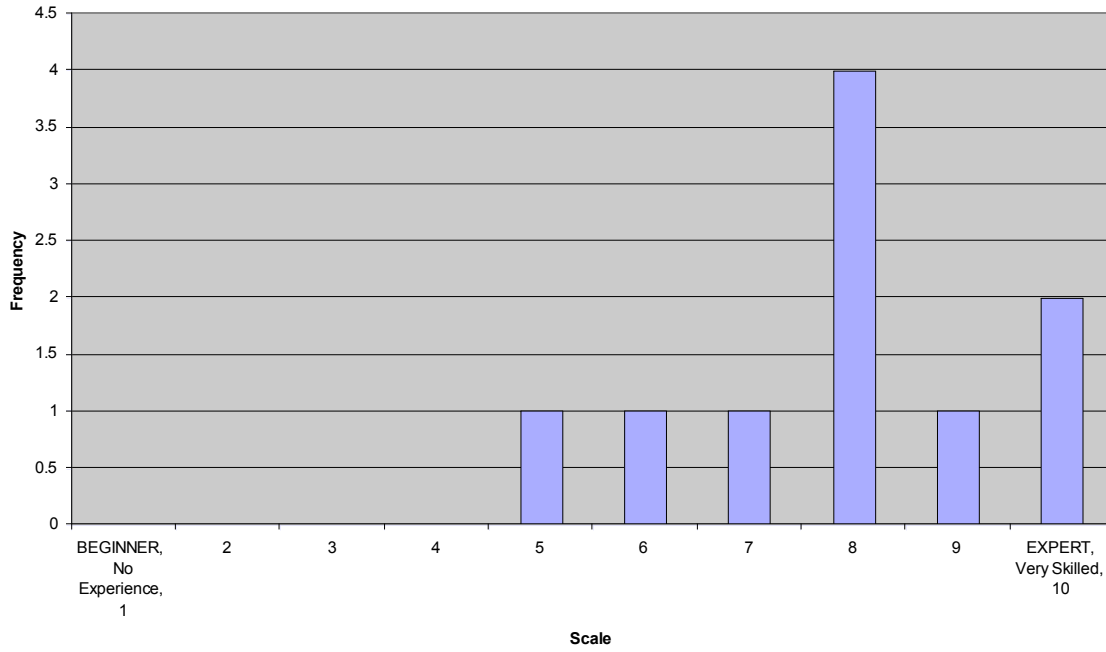


Table 13: Students' Perceptions Of Their Skill-Level With Relating Ideas To Each Other

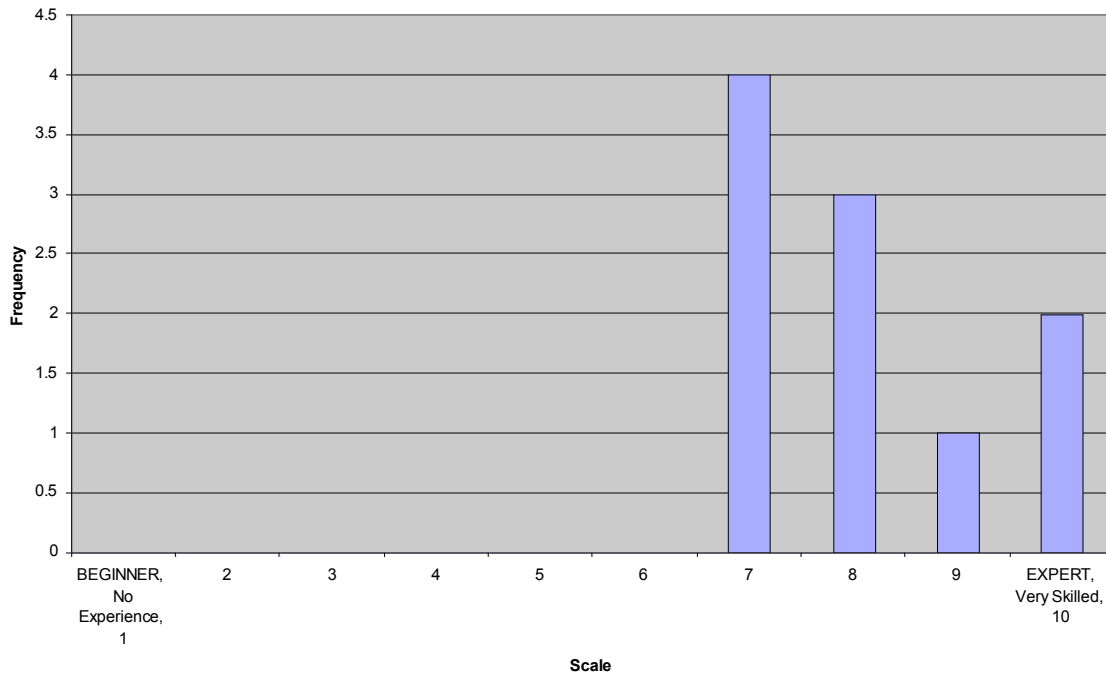


Table 14: Students' Perceptions Of Their Skill-Level With Discussing Readings In A Group Setting

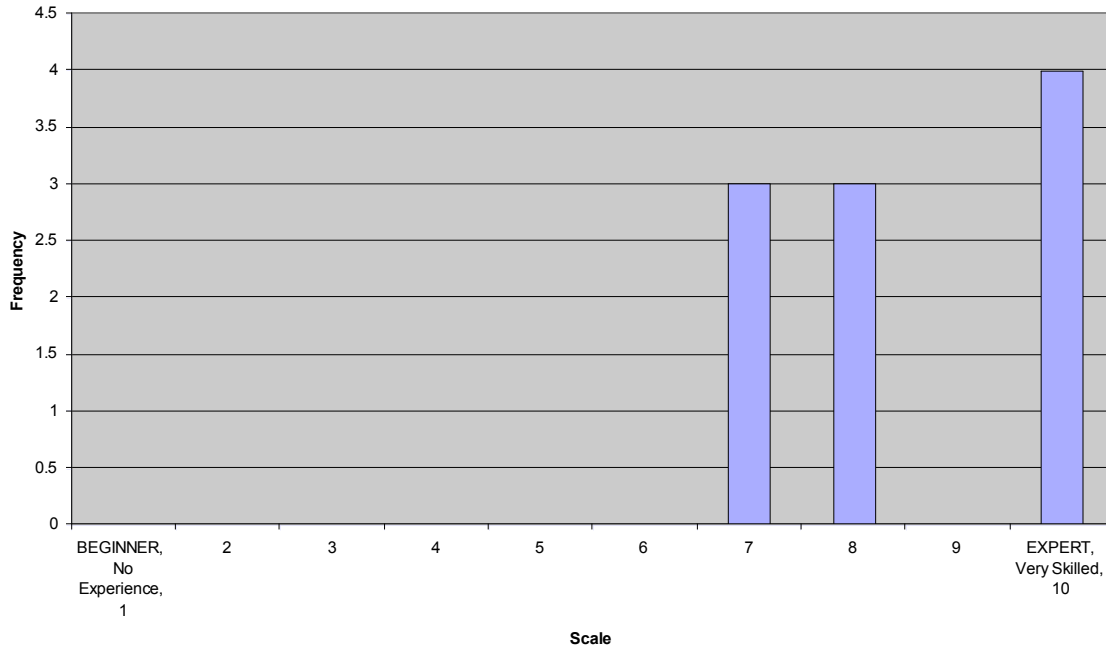


Table 15: Students' Perceptions Of Their Skill-Level With Proofreading Their Writing

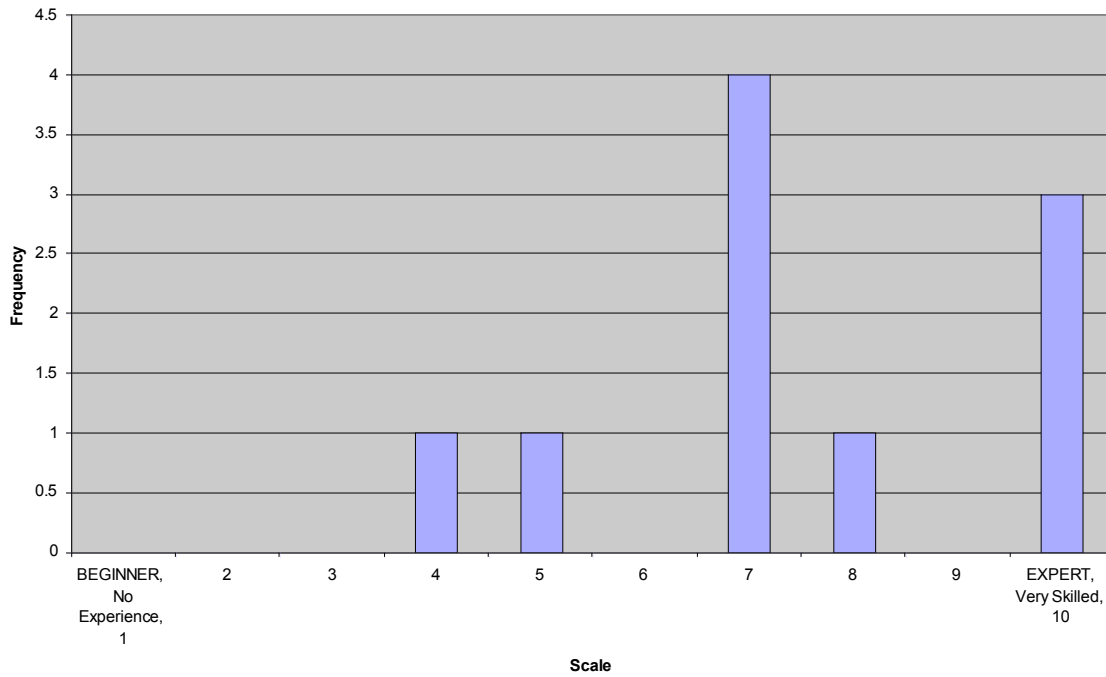


Table 16: Students' Perceptions Of Their Skill-Level With Using Citations

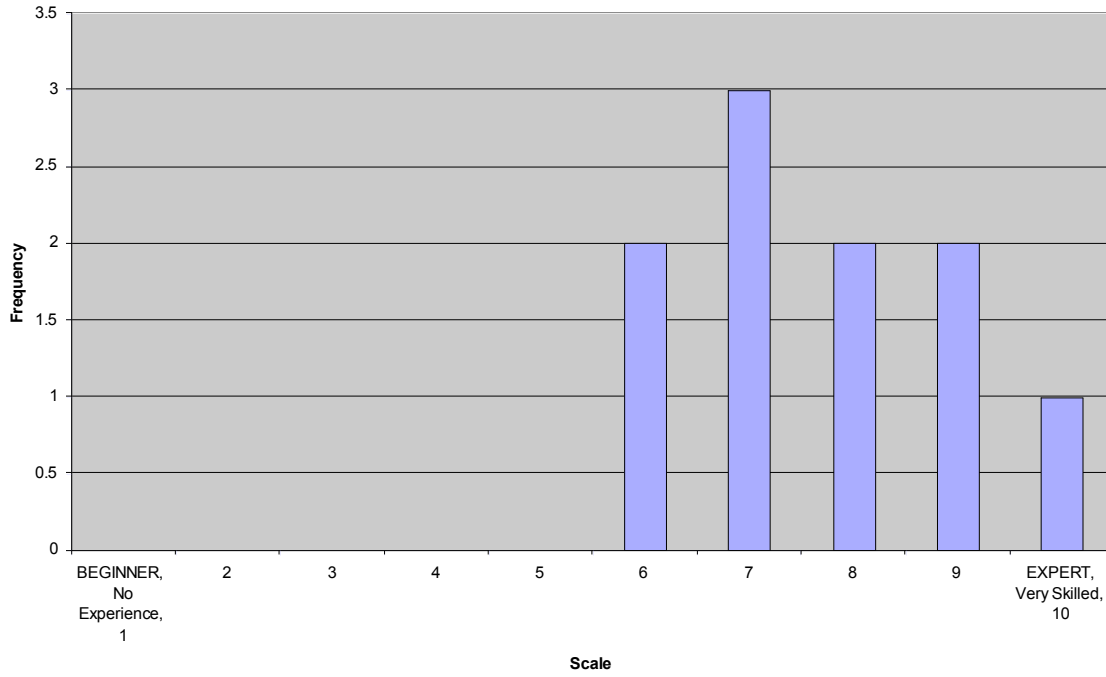


Table 17: Students' Perceptions Of Their Skill-Level With Finding Primary Resources

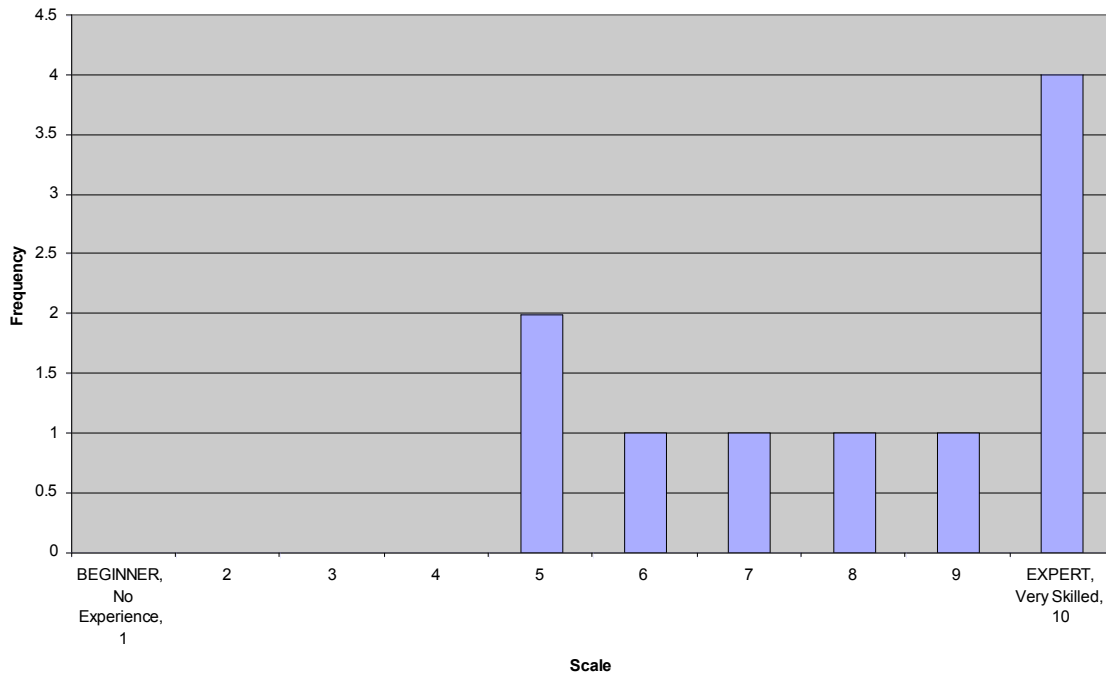


Table 18: Students' Perceptions Of Their Skill-Level With Developing Research Questions

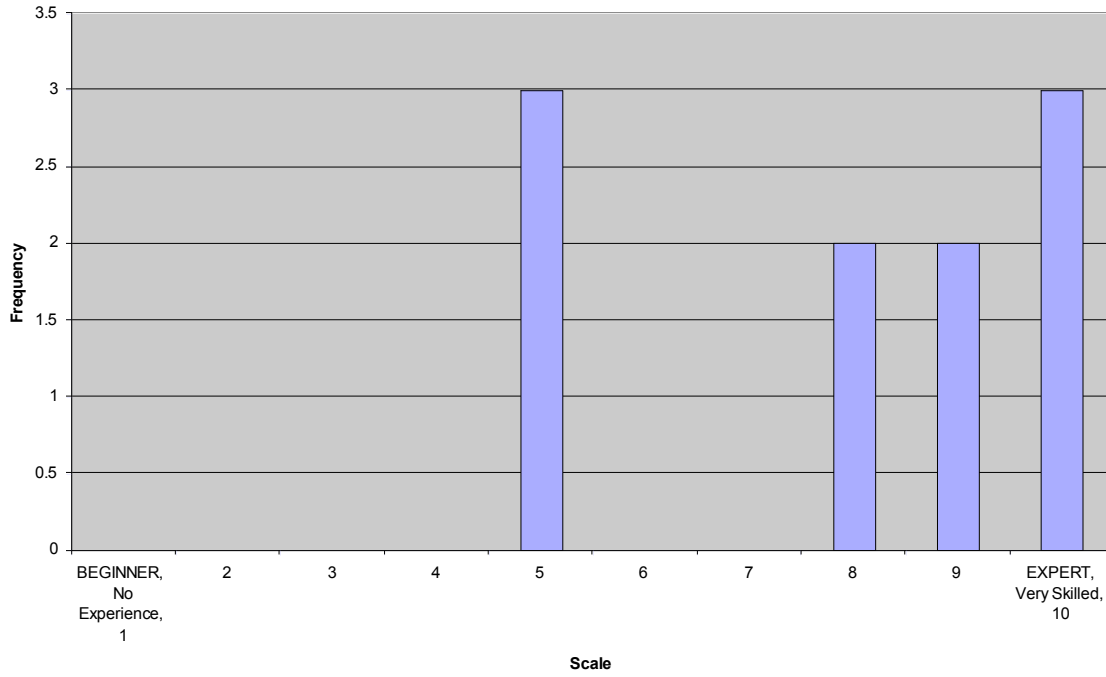


Table 19: Students' Perceptions Of Their Skill-Level With Understanding The Theoretical Approaches Of Different Disciplines"

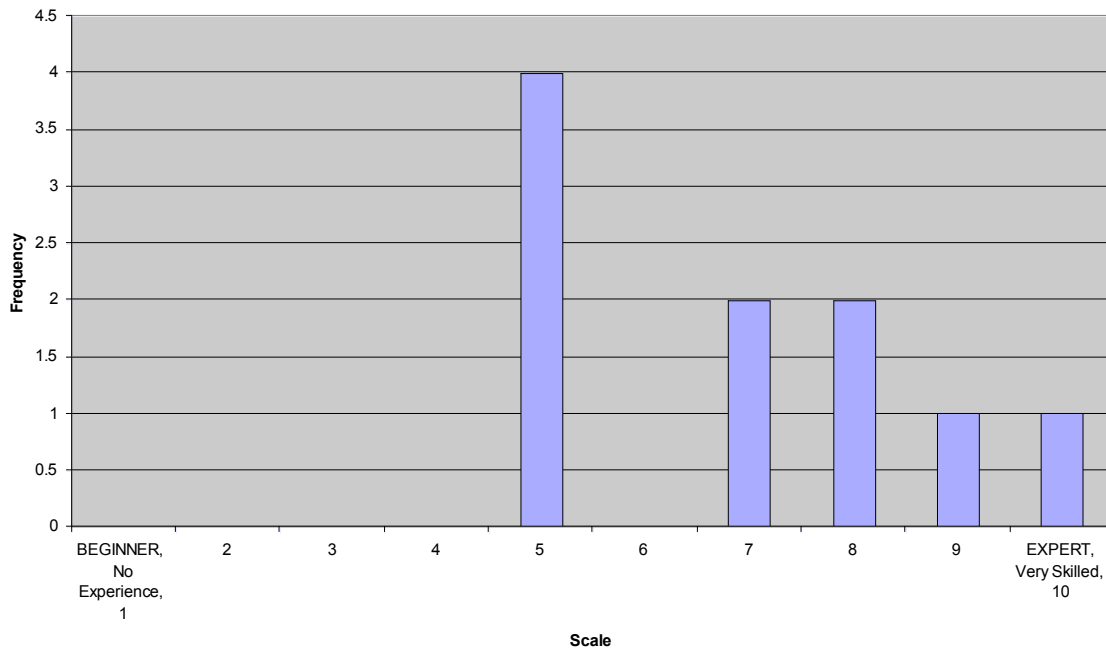


Table 20: Students' Perceptions Of Their Skill-Level With Presenting Research In A Public Setting

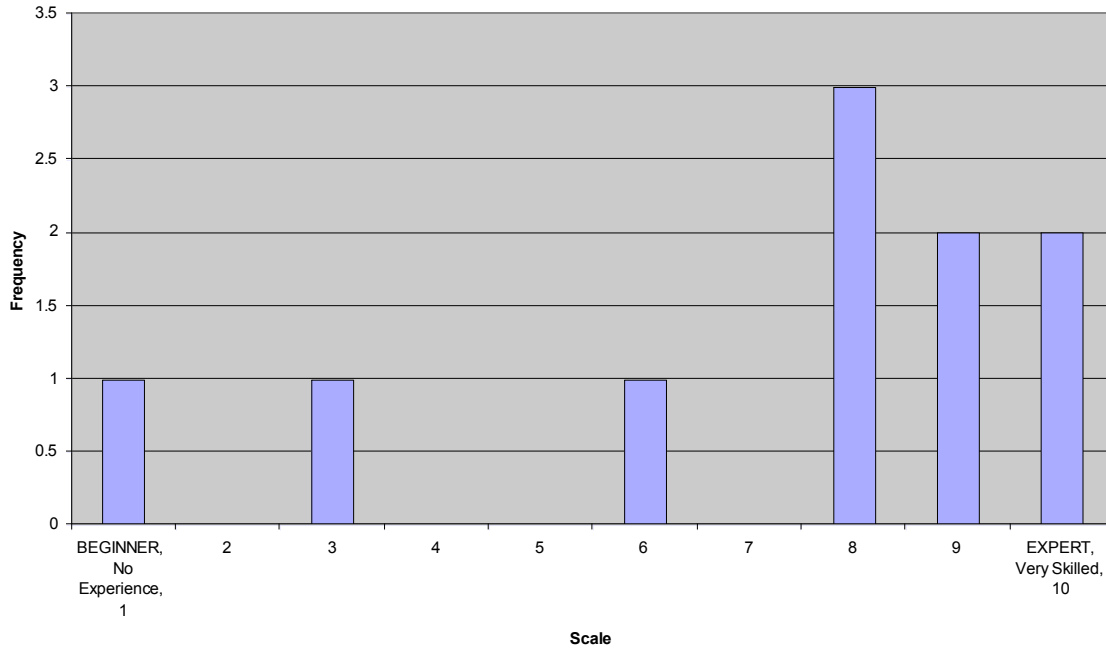


Table 21: Students' Perceptions of How Challenging The Summer Will Be For Them

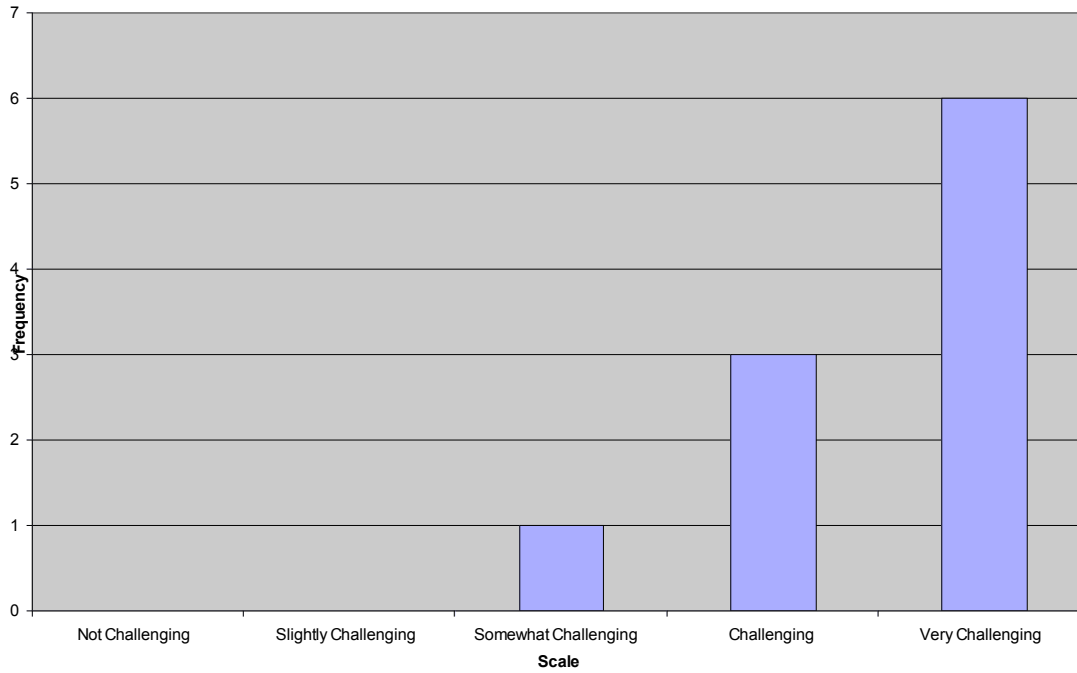


Table 22: Whether Students Intend to Pursue Graduate Studies After SHI

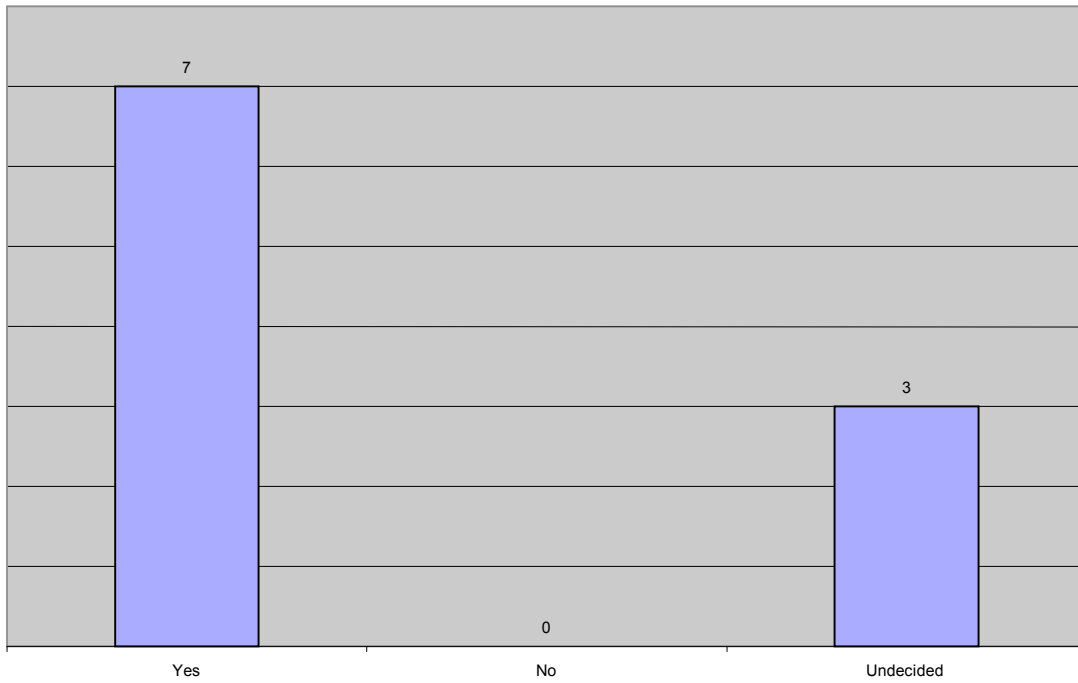


Table 23: Which Program Component Contributed Most to Understanding What Graduate School is Like

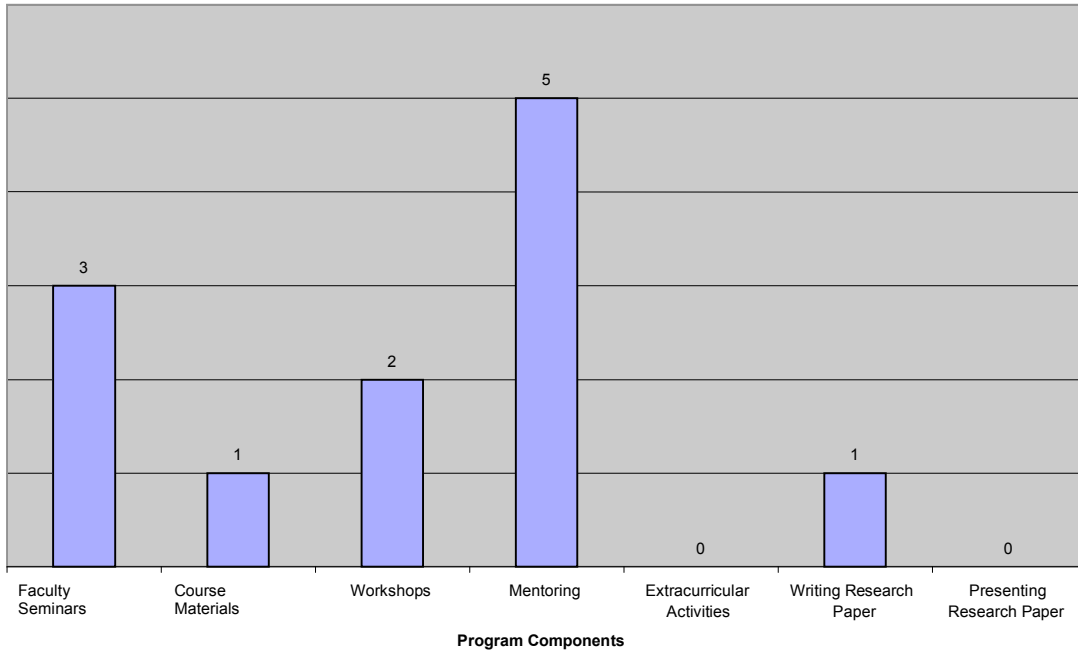


Table 24: Which Program Component Contributed Least to Understanding What Graduate School is Like

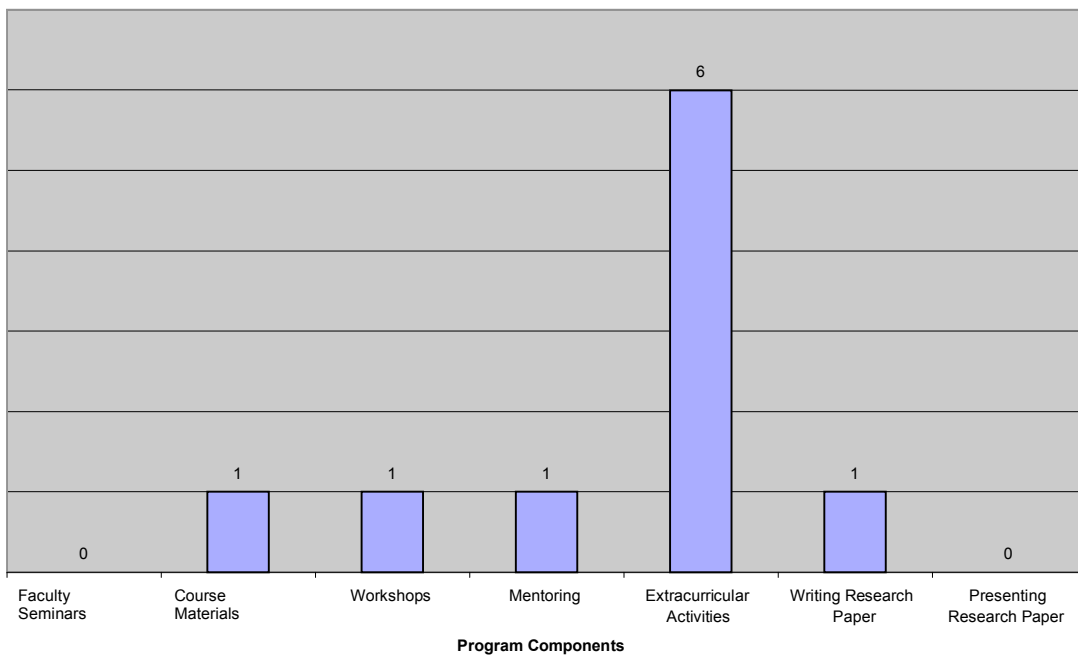
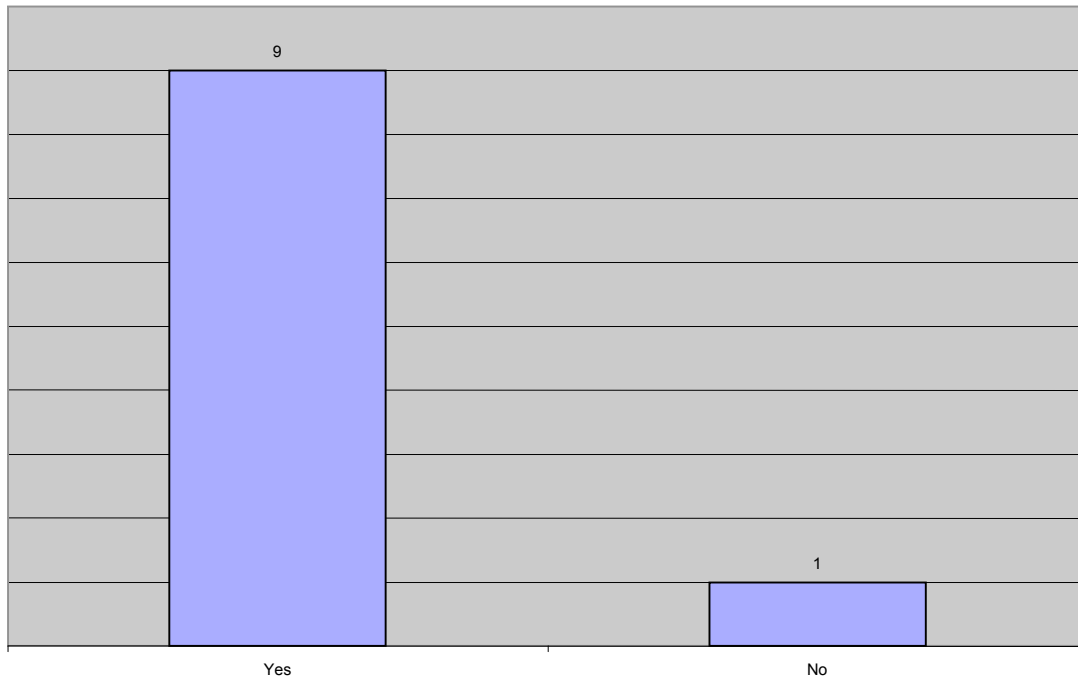


Table 25: Whether Student Would Recommend SHI to Friend



Post Survey Open Ended Question Responses

	PQ2 Which program component contributed MOST	PQ3 Which program component contributed LEAST	PQ5 Would you recommend SHRF to friend?
1	Faculty conducted seminars contributed the most. At my undergraduate institution once I started taking upper level courses my professors said that in graduate school the professor wasn't going to lecture the entire class. It was more engaging. Most of my professors structured their upper level courses this way.	It would most likely be the mentoring component. Although my mentor didn't help at all, I expected him to be little more engaged in my research. I know in graduate school no one is going to hold my hand, but [my] experience with my mentor was ridiculous.	Yes, I would. I think that once the program becomes more organized, it has a lot to offer students.

	PQ2 Which program component contributed MOST	PQ3 Which program component contributed LEAST	PQ5 Would you recommend SHRF to friend?
2	Course Materials: because they were challenging and mandatory.	Writing Research Paper was helpful in some ways, but ultimately I didn't try very hard...So really it's my own fault.	No, just because I think the experience depends too much on personal situation.
3	The faculty conducted seminars because I received a chance to observe different teaching methods and also understand different professors expectations.	The workshops didn't help me much because I knew or had some prior understanding to the materials presented.	Yes, because it is a graduate school simulation that provides students an in depth experience on what to expect and how real graduate school is like. This program is for serious students and SHRF offers what they know to us for free. They only ask for our time and give our full potential.
4	The mentoring aspect of SHRF really molded my expectations of the graduate school experience because of the intimacy and direct attention given to me.	The extracurricular activities were horrible (Black Los Angeles) because it was a waste of time and I learned nothing.	I would recommend SHRF to anyone willing to push themselves almost to the breaking point and determined to stay.
5	Mentoring, because [my mentor] incorporated all of these components in our discussions and meetings.	The extracurricular activities were not helpful. I learned more in my own exploration of the city and its culture.	Yes. The program like graduate school is—what you make it.
6	Workshops dealt directly with the application and funding aspects.	Course material was nothing really geared towards my discipline with the exception of Prof. Nelson.	Yes. It's a good overall experience.
7	The workshops and my mentor because they allowed me to prove to myself I can survive grad school.	The extracurricular activities because they did not really job my intellect.	Yes. It will prepare you for grad school.

	PQ2 Which program component contributed MOST	PQ3 Which program component contributed LEAST	PQ5 Would you recommend SHRF to friend?
8	Mentoring and writing research paper because it showed me both my limitations and capabilities.	Extracurricular activities. I thought I could've been study/sleeping or site-seeing.	Yes. It was beneficial as far as letting me understand what graduate coursework was like and also enabled to [me] improve academically and personally.
9	The seminars – I was used to teachers talking at you and teaching the material; the seminars were more of a discussion in which you already knew (read) the material.	The extracurricular activities. Though nice, I'm not sure how often you take field trips in grad school.	Yes. I think it's an excellent opportunity to get a taste of graduate school.
10	Mentoring; Being able to work with [my mentor] and the other faculty whom already have degrees allowed for tremendous insight into the graduate experience.	Extracurricular activities: They were beneficial and contributed to seminar experience by had nothing to do with grad schools.	Yes. Overall, it was a really beneficial learning experience that allowed for a lot of personal growth.