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A NATIONWIDE COMPARSION OF AVIATION PROGRAMS

by

D. Jason McConnell

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree**

of

DEPARTMENTAL HONORS

in

**Aviation Technology
in the Department of Engineering and Technology Education**

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Logan, UT**

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Introduction

Students considering a college education have many different priorities in mind. When considering a career in aviation after graduation, it brings a whole new set of priorities into the picture. When I was searching for a university degree in aviation I had two major concerns: location and quality of the flight school. Cost was also on my list of concerns but more as a restriction than an option. In other words, I was willing to pay more for the schooling provided it did not get so excessive that I could no longer afford to go. Utah State was among three different Utah schools I considered in my search. I thought of going to Utah Valley State College (UVSC) and Westminster College as well as USU. Westminster quickly dropped out of the race when I saw what the cost of tuition would be in addition to flight fees. My choice was down to UVSC and USU. UVSC had the better quality airplanes and technology but I chose USU because of cost and reputation. A few years ago UVSC lost its part 141 status which does not speak well for its program.

I bring up my quest for the right aviation program only to illustrate that there are many factors to consider when choosing a college to go to, especially an aviation college. Students will be looking for a wide variety of characteristics in choosing the right college. In my research I attempted to categorize ways to make our

program be seen by more people in an attempt to make us part of others' consideration. While not attempting to make the school more appealing, I have tried to identify ways in which to make the program more visible to more people. To accomplish this goal I focused on three areas to help make us more visible to prospective students: website design, web searches, and national organizations and conferences. In order for someone to put USU on their list of schools to consider they must know about us. The wise student will include one or more of these sources in their college research.

Research Question

What steps should we take to increase the visibility of the USU aviation program to prospective students? Not only does this include the research of the three aforementioned areas, but includes recommendations to the program on how to accomplish these tasks.

The reason I have chosen these particular areas to focus on is because of the lack of depth our program is currently experiencing. Looking at our website compared to other prominent schools prompted me to evaluate the current site compared to those of other colleges. Finding the aviation website is not an easy task for those who are not sure exactly what to look for. That is why I also chose to include web searches in my research. The web has evolved to the point where it has become so large and complex that people rely on search engines

like Google or Yahoo! to find what they are looking for. It is evident that if we are too far down the list on a search that we could be looked over completely. Many people who are looking into a college for aviation are already aviation enthusiasts. It is not only likely that they are familiar with national aviation organizations, but possible that they are members of one or more of them. It is for this reason that I have looked into some of the most prominent aviation organizations to see if we have an affiliation with them or are at least acknowledged by them.

Without an answer to the question of how to better make ourselves part of that list of colleges that prospective students consider attending, I feel that the program will remain in the state it has for the last three years I have been attending. This complacency with the program the way it is shows contentment for under-potential performance. If this trend continues we will continue to see students pass us up to go to colleges where they will not receive the quality training that USU provides. This will not only cheat them out of great flight training at a great price, but the program forfeits the opportunity for expansion and depth that comes with increasing enrollment from students nationwide. As shown by the results of my survey (Appendix B), the internet is a crucial part of how people research colleges. Additionally, a program's credibility is enhanced by its affiliation with

reputable national organizations. Not only does this survey validate the need for this research question, but it also demands that the question be answered if USU is expected to sustain its enrollment numbers.

Method

To effectively answer the research question it was necessary to evaluate how USU does in comparison to some other schools in the nation. I chose some of the most prominent aviation programs in the nation to compare with because I believe that USU can become a nationally recognized aviation school. In addition to the national study, I also decided to perform a statewide study comparing USU to other aviation programs in the state of Utah. This is because I think there are probably many others like me who consider location an important part of their college choice. The national schools in the study are Embry-Riddle, Kansas State, Ohio State, and North Dakota. The Utah schools include Westminster College, Salt Lake Community College, and UVSC. UVSC could fit into both categories due its "Global Aviation Degree" program; however, I have placed them into the Utah category since I am only comparing the on-campus aviation programs of the respective colleges. I performed a study on all three of the areas I mentioned earlier. My first study was on the websites of all the colleges involved.

Website Study

The first area of research was the website test. For this test to be completely objective I could not simply say the websites were either good or bad in my opinion. So to study the sites objectively I created a list of criteria that are fundamental to website design and informative regarding an aviation program. The first category in the website study is the number of clicks it takes to get from the university homepage to the aviation home page. The second category is whether or not the aviation home page has a direct link from the university's site index. The third part consists of the number pages contained in the entire aviation specific site. Next I included whether or not the fleet information is listed on the site. After which I found out whether the cost for the program was displayed on the aviation site. The sixth category is a count of the number of aviation related photos (or graphics) included on the aviation site. I also included a section which I utilized the university's search tool by typing "aviation" into the search section of the university site. I noted the result of this by how far down the list the aviation homepage was. The last category is whether or not you can request information specifically from the aviation department on the site. This does not include an email contact, but the student must be able to fill out a request right on the site. My detailed results follow below. I have also included a

spreadsheet that summarizes my results which is located in Appendix A.

This set of criteria may not seem specifically to increase our visibility to those in search of the right aviation school, but if someone does come across our site and it is sub-standard or too hard to find they will not even consider looking into it further. It can be difficult to find what you are looking for on the web. Once you have found a way into the same server it should be easy to navigate to what you are looking for. For this test I went to the main homepage of the university and looked for either a link for academic programs or perspective students. If there was both links I tried them both and recorded the one which took less clicks to get to. After the first click some sites broke down the university into colleges and others right into the different majors. The two that went directly to majors were Westminster College and Kansas State University. This is the most effective method of navigation as it is sometimes difficult to know in which college aviation lies. Some universities have the aviation program in the College of Engineering and some have their own College of Technology that houses the aviation program. None of the schools had a link straight from the homepage except KSU who had their aviation program in their Flash animation for the main page. Since most web designers change the animation on their Flash main

pages, I did not include this link in my report. It is noteworthy that they were the only ones in this report that specifically referenced their aviation program on their main page. One might expect Embry-Riddle to have such a link; however, in order to get to any specific information you had to select which campus you wanted information about. No program was too far off the scale with the greatest number of clicks to reach their page being four. None were sufficiently difficult to find that it need be mentioned. However, some were a little easier than others. I never got pointed in the wrong direction where I had to use the "back" button because I went to the wrong place. This test is difficult to blame the aviation program for any fault because the main webpage is done by the university and not the department. The department does have the ability to talk to the web designer to try and ease the process for surfers to find their respective sites.

One item that each department easily has the ability to request from a web designer is that their programs be listed in the university index. A site index is a long alphabetized list of links to various places on a website. This is an easy way for web surfers to find exactly what page they are looking for on a large site. All of the large national schools including UVSC had the aviation page on their site index. Westminster, SLCC, and USU all lacked the ability to link directly to the aviation site from the main index page.

After finding the site either by the index or through navigation, I determined how many pages the site consists of. Unfortunately Utah State's aviation program has only one page to its site. The site is informational, but is so long that it might be hard to find what you are looking for. The advantage of having multiple pages to a website is that it allows the user to navigate to those portions he/she is interested in. On a one page website a user would have to scroll down through a large amount of text in order to find the information he/she wants to see. Then there are some sites that have so much information that it is difficult to take it all in. This is what I found in the case of Westminster, UND, and OSU. Both schools went into great detail about every aspect of the program. OSU has a completely different site that is dedicated to their airport and its procedures and facilities. UND had a section that explains how their section is broken up into specifically numbered practice areas. It would be hard on a site like this to filter out the needed information from the extraneous. The other four schools had a good amount of information placed nicely within different pages of their site.

I was surprised to find that USU was one of only two schools in the study that did not provide fleet information. Neither Ohio State nor Utah State allowed prospective students to see which planes they would be flying throughout the course of their training. All other

schools in the study listed what type of planes they fly in addition to photos of those planes.

One aspect of researching schools to attend I found particularly frustrating was that few schools had their cost of attendance on their website. I think it would be difficult to decide to go to a school without knowing beforehand what it would cost in addition to tuition. Although USU was one of only three in the study to have the flight costs listed, that information on the site was nearly a year old. The fees listed on the site are not even applicable anymore. The other two schools (KSU and UND) both had their flight fees listed. Since I do not attend those universities I have no way of knowing whether or not the financial information listed is accurate. No other schools in the study listed their flight costs.

One thing that specifically helps people get to know the school in which they plan to study is photos of their program. Not only do photos and graphics make a website more aesthetically pleasing, they also convey the same love of aviation for which they feel. Yet another disappointment of the USU aviation website is the fact that there are no photos or graphics of any kind to adorn the website. All of the other schools had at least some photos and graphics. A couple of sites that are particularly graphical are those of UVSC and UND. Not only does UVSC have standard graphics, it also has a 360 degree shot of

their flight line, a slideshow of over 47 photos telling the story of their program, and 5 videos that are like commercial advertisements build right into the site. UND has a site that has many 360 degree virtual tours which also allow you to zoom in on anything you want. Their virtual tours consist of the inside of each type of simulator they have, the flight line, dispatch, and building that houses all there aviation classes. Although I did not create any special category for these added nuances, they are additions that get people to stay on their website and perhaps forget about the less pleasing sites all together.

I originally had SUU in my study for the Utah comparison. I thought that they had a flight program at their school. When I was having trouble finding it I decided to type "aviation" into the search box on the homepage. Surely if they have a program it will have the word aviation in it somewhere. I found out that SUU does not have an aviation program and that this would be a great thing to add into the study. I went back to all the schools I had previously visited in the study and typed "aviation" in to their search box. I then recorded what "hit" they were. A hit with a value of one would mean that the aviation homepage was the first one to be listed on the search results. Likewise, a hit of ten would mean that the aviation homepage was tenth on the list of results. All of the schools studied had their aviation homepage show up in the top three results. If someone were having

trouble finding the aviation homepage it would be easy to locate if it popped up as number one, two, or three on the search results.

However, if the page you are looking for does not show up until result 12 as it did for SLCC or 19 in the case of USU, you might have a difficult time finding it still.

Throughout my research I noticed that each site had a way to easily enter your name and address on a form in order to quickly submit a request for an information packet. That is each site but one. It is true. USU has no such capability. There is an information packet available in .pdf format for the summer program. It also has a contact email to request more information. One problem about using email to perform this function is that the email link will try to send an email using the default mail client. Without getting too much off topic, many people either don't have a POP3 account or use a library or other public access in which using a mail client is not feasible.

Through each of these tests I believe I have shown how the USU aviation website compares against other prominent schools of aviation. It is clear that if USU is to attract people its program through the use of the internet it falls well short of where it need to be in relation to other schools studied.

Web Search Study

Originally I planned to use several different search engines to find out where USU would result in a web search. It turned out that nearly all the results were the same. I found an additional way to search for aviation schools through the use of databases and affiliates. Some of these include links from popular aviation related sites such as faa.gov or aopa.org. In an effort to show areas of improvement for our program I have omitted results in which our school was a part of. Additionally, with all of the junk that is on the internet today, I had to find a way to filter my results to only include the pertinent, legitimate schools out there. Most of my searches came up with schools that were the type where you pay an exorbitant amount of money and have all your ratings in a matter of weeks. To properly confine my results to those places where we would be most effective in spending advertising dollars, I only include in my study those databases that have at least two schools from my study group and not ours. For example, if a database had OSU and Embry-Riddle but not USU it would be included on my list. However, if one had UVSC and none of the other schools on my list it is presumed that UVSC will only be seen linked with those other (less legitimate) schools that appear on every site.

www.bestaviationschools.com

This site is an aviation school database. It has two levels in which a school can become part of it. To be a featured school the providers require \$35 per month to remain a featured school. They also have a free listing that will list you in their database as a flight school. The featured listings consist of the less-legitimate schools I mentioned earlier. There are three other schools from our list in the free database though. UND, Embry-Riddle, and Westminster are all listed in the database.

www.justflightschools.com

This database is fairly new but expanding rapidly. Not only does it contain both Embry-Riddle and UND, but it also contains hundreds of other flight schools nationwide. To get our program onto this database it is free of cost provided that we put a link somewhere on our site to their database. As with all the other databases, there are the ridiculously expensive schools that buy space on the main page as featured schools.

www.private2atp.com

This is the newest and fastest growing database in this study. This site is not just a database of over 2,000 flight schools. It is a pilot community. It consists of a forum on almost any topic in aviation. It has its own pilot shop. It also has articles written by its registered users. With nearly 15,000 registered users, it is a site we

cannot afford not to be recognized in. Their flight school database contains every school in the study except for Utah State. It is free to be listed in the database, and you can even write your own description of the program within it. With 15,000 registered users and countless guests, it is likely that we have missed the opportunity to have several perspective students attend our university.

www.pilotjourney.com

This will be a good site once they fix some of the programming problems with it. Currently, none of the schools listed have direct links to them. The only thing you can see is the name of the school and a description about it. If you try to click on the name of the school it will not take you to the school's site. In fact, it doesn't do anything. Three of the national schools in the study are in this database (KSU, UND, and Embry-Riddle). This site is also linked to the "Learn to Fly!" program which allows it to issue discovery flight coupons to interested individuals. That means that the only pre-requisite to being listed on their site is that you must be a part of the "Learn to Fly!" program. I was not able to obtain information as to whether or not USU is part of this program. If we are then our listing is free.

www.aviationschoolsonline.com

This site is an interesting case. Our school is already listed in the main section of this database. However, this site is the only one in which I think that featured status would be warranted. The only reason I make this supposition is because this site is directly linked from the FAA's website. The FAA used to keep the flight school database themselves, but with budget cuts they have sold this portion of their responsibility to the highest bidder. One restriction is that the company who upkeeps the database must include all certified flight programs. This makes the list of schools expansive but at a cost. The site's designer has made it difficult to find the complete list of schools, and the schools that are listed have no information about them (simply a name and address). This pretty much means that the average person who does not know that the FAA has sold this portion of their site will think that those sites listed are somehow endorsed by the FAA. Even if they were able to find the complete list of schools they would probably not want to write a letter to get more information. It is an unfortunate move by the FAA that puts schools like our in a tough position. The company has a featured and premier pay-per-lead program. These two types ensure that we are only charged for what leads come to our school. The company who runs the site is based in Salt Lake City. Part of their premier membership allows a school to have a mini-website in their website. This mini-website would also

have a "request info" button which is how we get our lead from the company. There was no information on the cost of the two programs on their website. More information can be obtained by contacting them using the contact information on their website.

www.aviationeducation.org

This is the only site I came across that had none of the schools in the study listed, but I still recommend becoming a member of. This organization (the National Coalition for Aviation Education) is a group that is linked with the FAA to help support schools who promote aviation and space education. It not only provides teaching resources for educators and students, but it also provides a networking opportunity with other members to help students find grants and scholarships. Here you will find none of the gimmick flight schools that are only interested in getting students' money. Instead you will find a group of organizations truly intent on helping aviators become educated and being better pilots. There are only a few small schools on their list of supporters. Most of their support comes from foundations, government, and trade associations.

In addition to all the databases listed I have also performed my original idea of seeing how a search for "Aviation College Degree" in a search engine would result. As I stated previously, most of the major search engines brought schools up in the same order with only a 2-3

hit difference. The search engine I used is one of the most popular on the web. When typing in "Aviation College Degree" into a www.google.com search, I came up with the following results. The first school in the study to come on the list was UVSC at number 2. Westminster was next at number 82. KSU was next at number 85. Embry -Riddle followed at 176. At 279 was UND. No other schools made the top 500. This is a hard area to measure because you never know what an individual will type into a search box when searching for something on the internet. If we were to pay to put our school on the top of the list for a given phrase typed into a search engine it would be a great investment if we knew what each person looking for an aviation college would type in. Since that is never the case, I think that we are better off spending more of an effort to become a part of respected databases and aviation organizations instead of search engine guess phrases.

National Aviation Organizations

It is interesting how universities get recognized as a school that is particularly good at or known for something. An affiliation of a school with a national organization is perhaps one of the great ways in which that school becomes known nationally. Take for example UVSC. UVSC has one of the largest online degree programs in the nation. It also just so happens to be their aviation program. Ever since their

creation of the "Global Aviation Program" being certified by the University Continuing Education Association (UCEA), UVSC's online degree enrollment have flourished. This is due to the amount of people who want to complete degrees via the internet now. The greatest resource for anyone who wants to earn this type of degree is the UCEA. UVSC has earned several awards from the UCEA for their program. This not only accredits them as a quality institution, but creates confidence in people who may be unsure if a program is legitimate.

Although USU does not have an online degree program, it can still apply this same lesson to being a credible member of a nationally recognized aviation organization. Even if not a member of a specific organization, we can still show support for that organization by placing exhibits at their conferences. I researched some national conferences in which at least two other schools in this study were a part of and we were not. I found several instances in which many of our competitor schools were exhibitors and we did not even have a posting of the conference for our students to attend. Not only do I feel that students attending the university should have the opportunity to attend these conferences, but I think that we should send students along with faculty members as exhibitors in the conferences. This gives potential applicants the ability to talk to someone who is paying to be in the

program for their opinion instead of the opinion of a paid administrator whose salary depends on the continuing enrollment of students.

Since the expense involved in send people to various places across the nation several times a year involves a great deal of time and money. I think that rather than pay airfare for some individuals to attend a conference that we fly ourselves there and charge those who want to attend a reduced rate for the plane. This would be a great opportunity for students to get the required flight time for their commercial rating as well as save some money on airfare. Most large conferences have shuttle service from the airport to nearby hotels which eliminates the need for rental cars. Although the university would lose some revenue created by the planes being gone for a weekend, experience has shown that our planes are rarely fully-utilized on weekends. Also, if there is ample notice to students they could sign up for the trip well in advance and pay for their own food. There are many ways in which to lighten the burden on the school financially without making the students have to pay an exurbanite amount for a university recruitment function. In fact, some conferences are rather close-by such as the Northwest Aviation Conference. Depending on the location, this conference can be driven to from Logan.

My research paid no attention to the location of the conference in relation to Logan. Therefore, it is assumed that some conferences will be so far away as to make them unfeasible. However, national conferences often change venue each year. It should not, therefore, be ruled out in the future even if not feasible the current year. The following are the conferences I found along with pertinent information including what other schools attended the last conference which are also in this study.

Northwest Aviation Conference

This conference and trade show is sponsored primarily by the Washington Aviation Association, but the conference is designed to include all interested in aviation in the Northwest United States. The dates for the 2006 conference are February 25 & 26 in Puyallup, WA. Some of the exhibitors at the 2005 conference were Embry-Riddle, UND, and Westminster. Although there has been no release of the 2006 exhibitors yet, the website says that nearly all of last years exhibitors are returning in addition to new ones. Last year over 12,000 people attended the conference over 80 percent of them being pilots. This is a great opportunity that we missed to get our name out to people who would not even need to move very far to attend USU. Booth cost is \$575 for a 10'x10' space. Information about how to become an exhibitor as well as general information about the

conference (including the statistics I have mentioned) can be found at the website for the conference (<http://www.washington-aviation.org/NAC&TS.html>).

UAA Education Conference

The UAA (University Aviation Association) Education Conference is an annual conference held at various locations each year. Although a sponsor list was not available for the most recent conference, I found sponsors of past conferences to be schools such as UND, Embry-Riddle, and Ohio State. Exhibitor fees vary. They also have an option to sponsor different events at the conference. An additional option is to buy advertising space in their program. This way we can be at the conference without actually going to it. Information on how to register, sponsor, or buy advertising space is located at their website (<http://uaa.auburn.edu/05conf.htm>).

NBAA Annual Convention

Of the 1,135 exhibitors at the 2005 annual convention in November were UND, KSU, and Embry-Riddle. This is an extremely large convention which brought 28,796 people and 1,142 different exhibitors this year. This would be an extremely long travel for our school to make since NBAA has its conventions in the southeastern United States. Booths are also more expensive at \$2,200 for a 10'x10' booth space. Although it would be great to make an appearance at

such a large convention of aviation enthusiasts, it would by far be the most expensive one to attend. I found all the facts about the conference on their website at <http://web.nbaa.org/public/cs/amc/2005/>. This information is only for the 2005 conference. To find information about the next conference check NBAA's main website (www.nbaa.org).

NATA Annual Convention

NATA's (National Air Transportation Association) annual convention is held each year in Las Vegas at the end of March. I was unable to find a list of exhibitors from last year's convention. However, I did find a membership directory to see if any of the schools listed in this study were in their directory. Indeed there were. UND, KSU, and Embry-Riddle are all members of NATA. The details about this convention were not very detailed. Perhaps it would be best to send someone to the convention to see if it would be worth investing in for the future. In a location like Las Vegas, it would be extremely inexpensive to attend the convention. The limited information regarding the convention can be found on NATA's website (<http://www.nata.aero/events/index.jsp>). This event is a part of the Aviation Industry Expo (AIE). The AIE is a conglomerate convention consisting of NATA, AS3, GSEXPo International, and PAMA (an aviation

maintenance group). NATA is the only one that specifically relates to aviation universities though.

AOPA Expo

AOPA is one of the most well known and respected names in aviation today. In fact, their 2005 expo was attended by over 8,500 people including 1,200 fly-ins. The universities in our study that were in attendance were UND and Embry Riddle. Previous expos have brought out more of the schools in our study, but this expo was in Tampa, Florida putting it far away from many of our schools. Next year will be a great chance for us to attend with the expo moving to Palm Springs, CA. The information about the next expo is on AOPA's website (<http://www.aopa.org/expo/2006/>). Additionally, the contact information to find out about becoming an exhibitor at the next expo is dee.giffin@aopa.org.

EAA AirVenture Annual Fly-In

More commonly known as the Oshkosh Fly-In, this is a celebration instead of a convention. Undoubtedly the most well-known aviation event of all time, this event brings schools (and other companies) together in the great name of aviation. With over 700,000 people in attendance this is the place to be noticed. All the schools in my study were in attendance except Westminster, SLCC, and USU. This not only says to the aviation community that we are not

interested in being noticed but that we also don't want to be part of the celebration. UVSC, in addition to setting up a booth, had 12 students who wanted to and did attend the celebration. The university assisted them with reduced aircraft cost in exchange for volunteering at their booth. It is great that their school not only supported the celebration, but supported their students who were excited to attend it. Although even the smallest booth price starts at just over \$2,000, it is a small price to pay to be a part of the biggest aviation celebration in the world. For information about Oshkosh and how to become an exhibitor visit their website (<http://www.airventure.org/>).

Unfortunately we have already missed our opportunity to set up a booth at the 2006 celebration as the deadline has already past.

Hopefully USU will follow the example of the other nationally-recognized schools in the future and make ourselves a part of Oshkosh.

NIFA

This organization does not have a yearly convention like the others listed. Instead, the National Intercollegiate Flying Association holds a yearly competition with other aviation schools. This competition places schools into geographical regions where colleges battle it out with one another for bragging rights. Most schools have a specially set-aside group of students who dedicate extra time to

studying for the competition. The competition has a flight portion and a ground portion. Teams pick people to specialize in certain areas in which they will compete. These individuals practice year-round for when they go up against individuals from other schools. Flight areas of competition include everything from power-off landings to in-flight CRM situations. Ground events include flight computer accuracy, preflight, aircraft recognition, simulator work, and preflight inspection. The event is very structured and has a long list of rules to abide by. I was quite surprised when I came to USU and realized that they didn't compete in the annual NIFA SAFECON competition. In fact, USU is the only school in this study that does not compete at SAFECON. The yearly dues required to take part in the event are \$300. After being in the competition a couple years we can even request that the regional competition be held here in Logan. This would be great advertising for the school as well as bring people from all over the region to the airport to support our local FBOs. Of all the databases, conventions, or organizations to be a part of, this one is the best in my opinion. The fact that we are the only school in the state not doing shows how behind the curve we are. Getting people to join the team would be easier if we could make it so that the flight costs are minimal. My suggestion would be to not sell one of our better 152's when we buy new airplanes and use that plane for the team to train in at a break-

even cost. This would help the students on the team get more flight hours for less cost. If students had problems with the extra cost we could add a one credit elective class with a couple thousand dollar fee so that those on the team would be able to get financial aid for it.

<http://www.nifa.us/> has all the information about joining and the SAFECON competition.

All of these events are ones that would help USU become more recognized nationally. Not only would this put USU into more prospective students' consideration lists, but it would also help us to be liked and respected by the aviation community as a whole. An AOPA article I recently read made mention of many other universities in their article. Utah State was not mentioned among them. However, many of the schools I have included in my study were in the article (Phillips, 1). This does not mean that we must become part of all of these programs at once. Doing so would almost certainly spell disaster since we would be pouring out funds that may take time to see the fruits of. I think starting out locally is a good start. Perhaps with NIFA and NATA, we could make a good start. The AOPA expo would be a good one to start off with as well since it will be close in 2006. Then we could progress to the Northwest Aviation Conference and Oshkosh the next year or two. Then hopefully a few years down the road we can buy large booths at all the national conferences. All

large changes take time; however, we have already wasted too much time and are now well behind our competition. It's time to step it up and show the aviation world that USU is the place to fly.

Recommendations

1. Create a well designed and functional website. It should have creativity through graphics and animation. Most importantly it should be able to have an information request contained on the page. Either hire a professional firm to design it or save money and have someone like me who can do it for a lot less money and still have it be quality. If you hire a professional firm you will specifically need to request from the webmaster of USU (ben.renard-wiart@usu.edu) that our site be placed on the university index.
2. In order for our school to be recognized by the maximum amount of people, we should make sure that our name is in the most possible locations on the internet. Therefore, I recommend that our school be placed in all of the aforementioned databases. I would also recommend that further research be done to obtain the most used phrases in search engines for aviation schools and that those phases be invested in to place our school at the top of the list.

3. Our school should at a minimum be a part of NIFA. This would entail putting together a flight team and coach for them. This is the one organization that all the other studied schools were a part of that we were not.
4. We should progressively try to attend more and more conferences as our circumstances permit. Our resources would be wisely used pursuing a presence in front of more of the aviation community. We should start as local as we can to reduce cost. We should then expand as we begin to see enrollment increase.

Conclusion

Toward the end of my project I had the idea to find out how people gain their information about prospective colleges. I created a survey which I had 30 USU students fill out. The survey results are contained in Appendix B along with the survey itself. The purpose of the survey was to find out how much people rely on websites and the internet to research an important decision they plan to make such as college. Where most of what I started out with was supposition, I learned that 73 percent of those I surveyed find the internet to be a valuable source of information in making such a decision. Included in the survey is whether or not being seen amid a pool of reputable other schools would influence the individual to think that the school in

question was reputable as well. Not surprisingly, most answered that they would think that the school in question was reputable. Nearly all respondents also felt that the school being part of reputable national organizations would help them to see that school in a better light.

Survey results can be seen in Appendix B. It is, therefore, not merely my opinion that to increase our visibility to perspective students that we improve our website, get our website posted in more places on the internet amongst other reputable schools, and that we join with those other schools in attending conferences and/or become a part of nation aviation organizations.

I have clearly shown that our program currently is doing poorly in all the above categories in comparison to the schools in which we compete. It is time for Utah State to be known for its aviation program in the aviation community. This reputation in the community will lead to more students becoming interested in our program. This will in turn lead to higher enrollment which will lead to our program growing and becoming part of standard which makes up the best of the best in aviation programs.

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APPENDIX A

		Number of clicks to find aviation page	Ability to find aviation page from index	Number of pages on aviation site	Fleet information on page	Cost of attendance listed on site	Number of aviation related graphics on site	"Aviation" typed into University search (hit #)	Information Request on site
	Utah State University	4	No	1	No	Yes (outdated)	0	19	No
S c h o o l s	Salt Lake Community College	3	No	3	Yes	No	9	12	Yes
	Utah Valley State College	4	Yes	7	Yes	No	52	1	Yes
	Westminster College	2	No	13	Yes	No	15	2	Yes
N a t i o n a l	Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University	3	Yes	3	Yes	No	5	3	Yes
	Kansas State University	2	Yes	9	Yes	Yes	3	1	Yes
	Ohio State University	4	Yes	19	No	No	11	1	Yes
	University of North Dakota	4	Yes	18	Yes	Yes	47	2	Yes

APPENDIX B

Making important life decisions requires a lot of thought and research. One of these decisions you have made is which college to attend. Please answer the following questions as though you were a student trying to find the right college.

- ❖ How important a role would the internet play in finding the right school?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
 Not Important Very Important

- ❖ How important would the school's website be to your overall perception of the school?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
 Not Important Very Important

- ❖ Would you use the school's website as your primary source of information?

☐ Yes ☐ No

- ❖ Does too much information on a website overload you, or do you like having the information available to you?

☐ Overloads Me ☐ Like having the information available

- ❖ How important is it that a school's website has graphics and videos about itself?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
 Not Important Very Important

- ❖ How likely would you be to consider another school based on a school's poor website?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
 Not Likely Very Likely

- ❖ How much does a school's reputation as a whole (not in a particular major) affect your view of the school?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
 Not at all A great deal

- ❖ How would your view of a school that did not have a website at all be affected?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
 Very Negative Very Positive

- ❖ How many schools did you personally research on the internet before deciding on one?

☐ 5 or more
☐ 2-4
☐ 1
☐ Did not use the internet

Please answer the following questions under the same conditions but with respect to a specific program in the college you might be interested in.

- ❖ How important would the program's website be to your perception of the program?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
 Not Important Very Important

- ❖ How important is it that there are graphics and videos about the program on their website?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
 Not Important Very Important

- ❖ Would you use the internet as your primary resource to compare different programs in making your decision?

☐ Yes ☐ No

- ❖ Would you want the program to have all its information on its website or only essential information?

☐ All information ☐ Only essential information

- ❖ How important is it to you that the program be recognized by reputable national organizations?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
 Not Important Very Important

- ❖ How important is it to see your program of choice along side other nationally recognized programs in a web search?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
 Not Important Very Important

- ❖ How important is it that a program attends and supports national conferences and conventions in their field?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
 Not Important Very Important

- ❖ How willing would you be to pay more to attend a nationally recognized program?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
 Not at all willing Very Willing

- ❖ How do you feel that the program you are currently in rates nationally?

☐ Top third
☐ Middle third
☐ Bottom third

Frequencies

Statistics

		Question_1	Question_2	Question_3	Question_4	Question_5	Question_6
N	Valid	30	30	30	30	30	30
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		4.03	3.93	.70	.80	4.00	3.83

Statistics

		Question_7	Question_8	Question_9	Question_10	Question_11	Question_12
N	Valid	30	30	30	30	30	30
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.97	1.97	2.70	4.13	4.00	.73

Statistics

		Question_13	Question_14	Question_15	Question_16	Question_17	Question_18
N	Valid	30	30	30	30	30	30
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		.77	4.10	4.07	4.03	3.40	2.23

Frequency Table

Question_1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all important	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Neither	7	23.3	23.3	26.7
	Important	11	36.7	36.7	63.3
	Very Important	11	36.7	36.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Question_2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Slightly not important	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Neither	9	30.0	30.0	33.3
	Important	11	36.7	36.7	70.0
	Very Important	9	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Question_3

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	9	30.0	30.0	30.0
	Yes	21	70.0	70.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Question_4

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Overloads Me	6	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Like Having Available	24	80.0	80.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Question_5

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Slightly not important	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Neither	6	20.0	20.0	23.3
	Important	15	50.0	50.0	73.3
	Very Important	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Question_6

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all likely	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Not likely	3	10.0	10.0	13.3
	Indifferent	3	10.0	10.0	23.3
	Likely	16	53.3	53.3	76.7
	Very Likely	7	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Question_7

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not much	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	A little	3	10.0	10.0	23.3
	Moderately	13	43.3	43.3	66.7
	A great deal	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Question_8

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Negative	10	33.3	33.3	33.3
	Negative	12	40.0	40.0	73.3
	Neither	7	23.3	23.3	96.7
	Positive	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Question_9

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	1	5	16.7	16.7	23.3
	2 - 4	21	70.0	70.0	93.3
	5 or More	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Question_10

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all important	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Neither	4	13.3	13.3	16.7
	Important	14	46.7	46.7	63.3
	Very Important	11	36.7	36.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Question_11

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all important	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Slightly not important	1	3.3	3.3	6.7
	neither	7	23.3	23.3	30.0
	Important	9	30.0	30.0	60.0
	Very Important	12	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Question_12

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	8	26.7	26.7	26.7
	Yes	22	73.3	73.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Question_13

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Only Essential info	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
	All info	23	76.7	76.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Question_14

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Slightly not important	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	neither	3	10.0	10.0	16.7
	Important	15	50.0	50.0	66.7
	Very important	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Question_15

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Slightly not important	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	Neither	4	13.3	13.3	20.0
	Important	14	46.7	46.7	66.7
	Very Important	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Question_16

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Slightly not important	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Neither	4	13.3	13.3	23.3
	Important	12	40.0	40.0	63.3
	Very Important	11	36.7	36.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Question_17

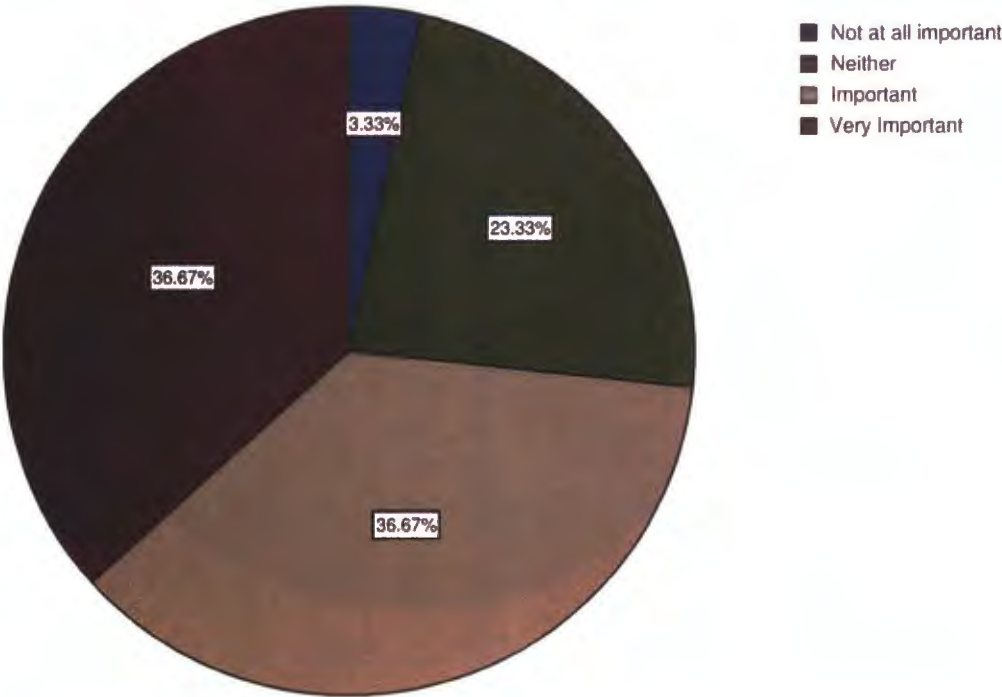
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all Willing	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	Not willing	4	13.3	13.3	20.0
	Indifferent	8	26.7	26.7	46.7
	Willing	12	40.0	40.0	86.7
	Very willing	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Question_18

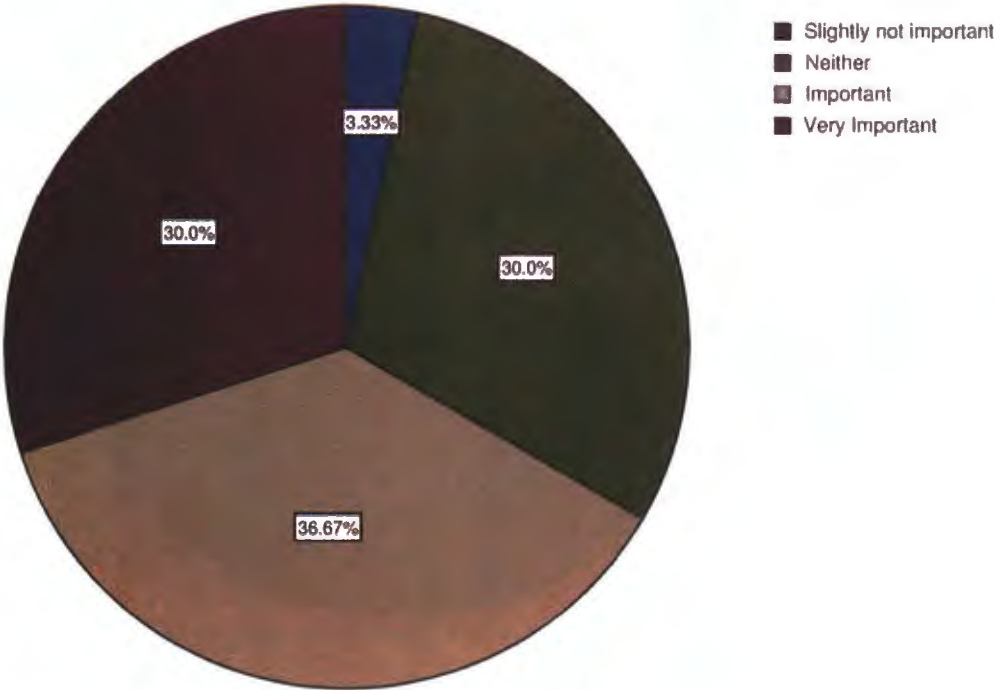
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bottom Third	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	Middle Third	15	50.0	50.0	63.3
	Top Third	11	36.7	36.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Pie Charts

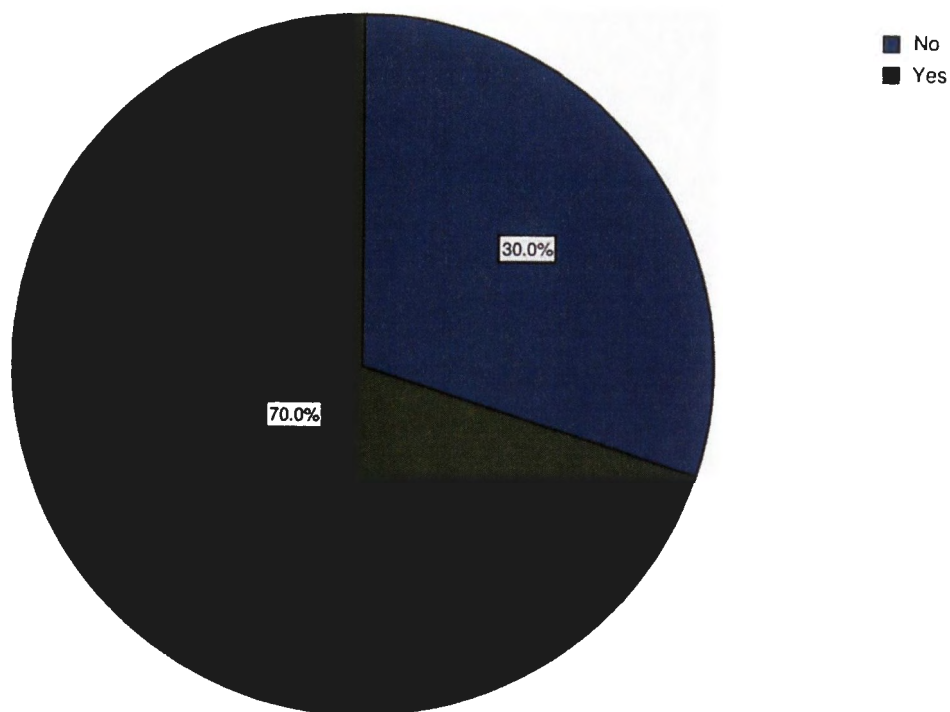
Question_1: How important a role would the internet play in finding the right school?



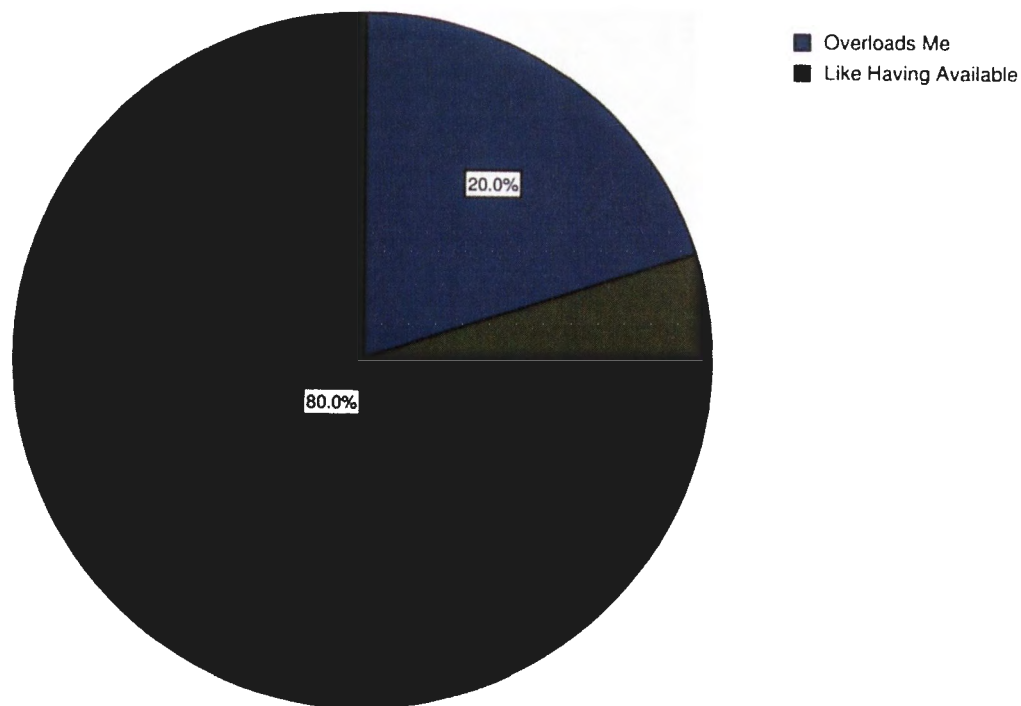
Question_2: How would the school's website be to your overall perception of the school?



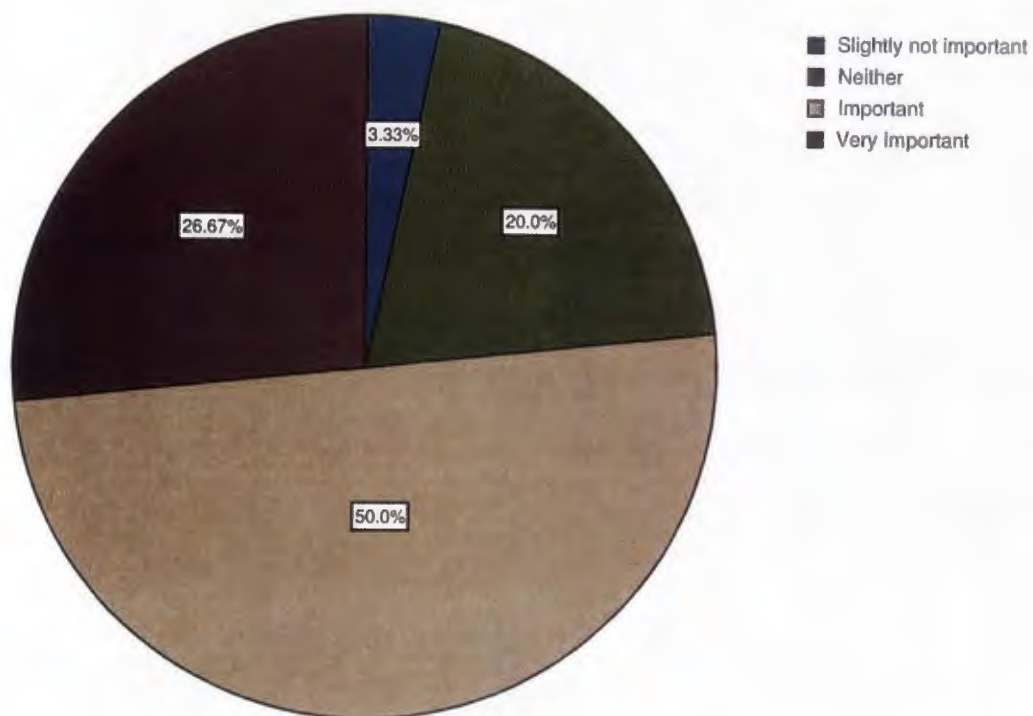
Question_3: Would you use the school's website as your primary source of information?



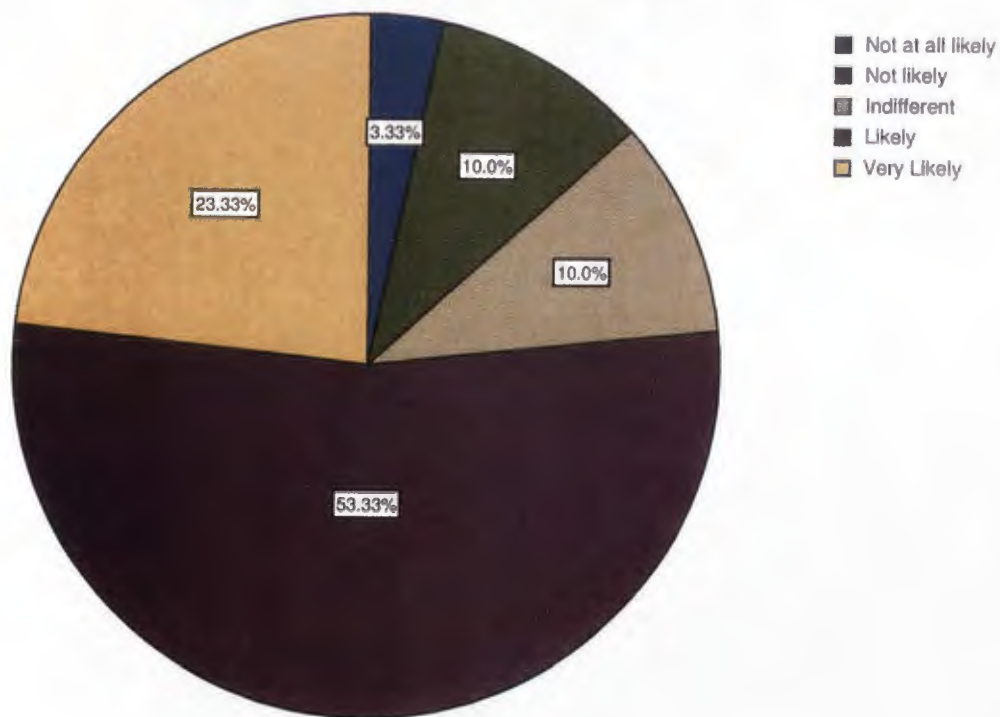
Question_4: Does too much information on a website overload you, or do you like having the information available to you?



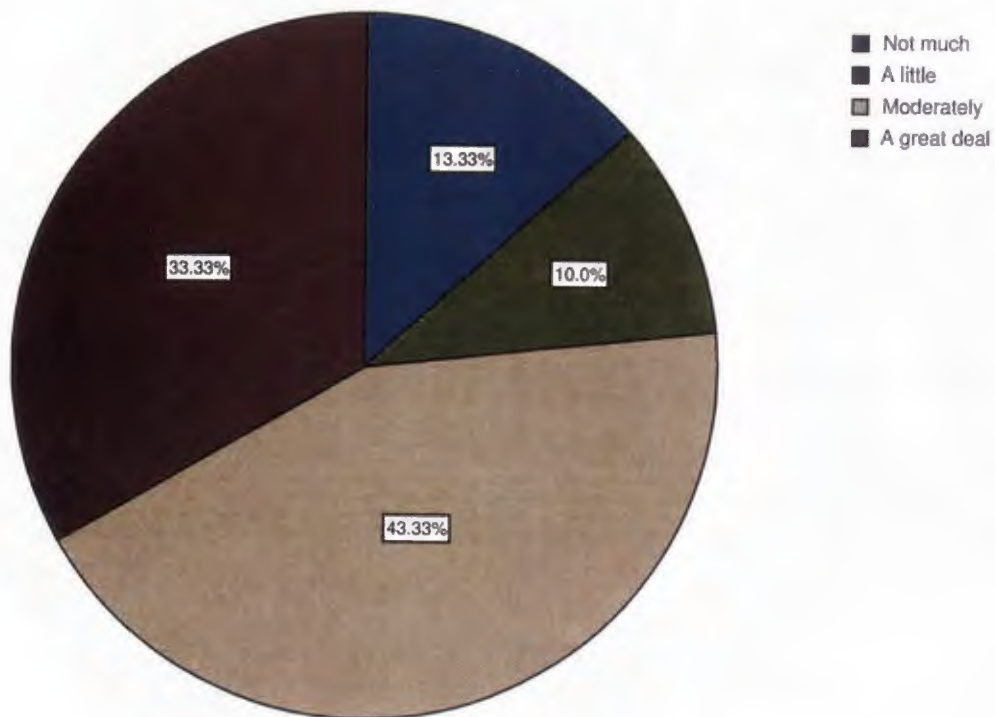
Question_5: How important is it that a school's website has graphics and videos about itself?



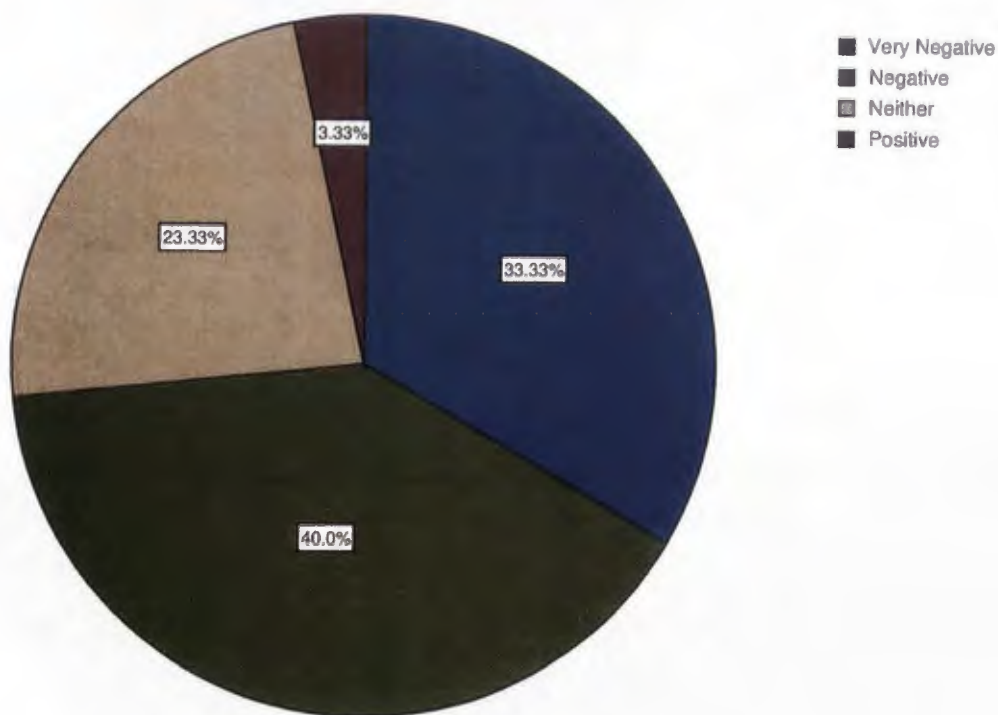
Question_6: How likely would you be to consider another school based on a school's poor website?



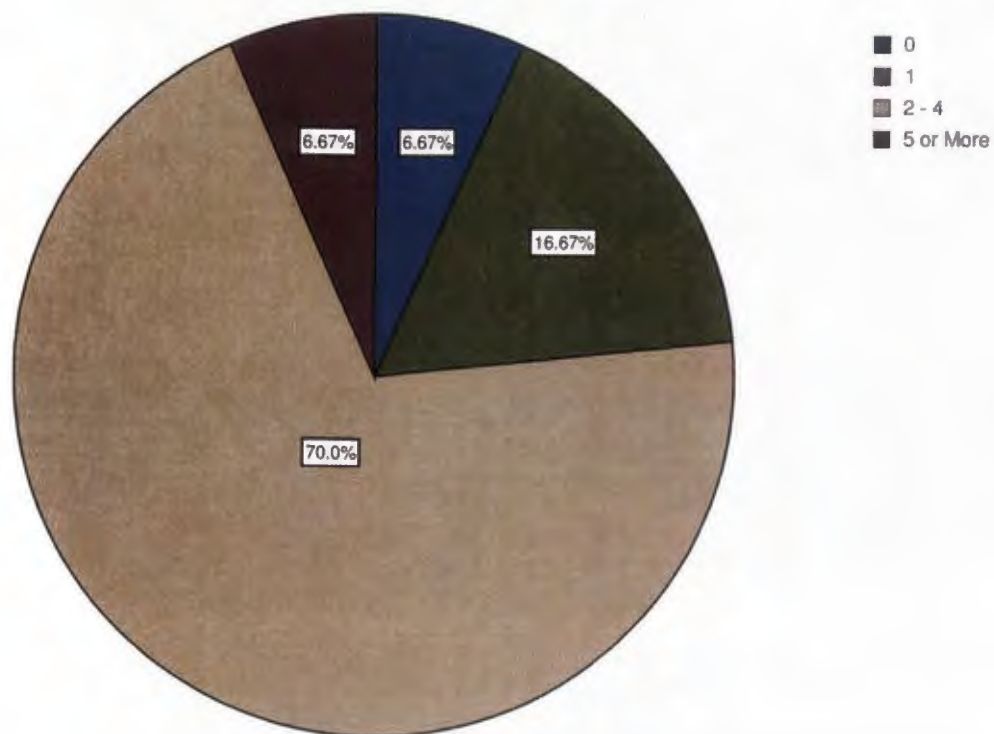
Question_7: How much does a school's reputation as a whole (not in a particular major) affect your view of the school?



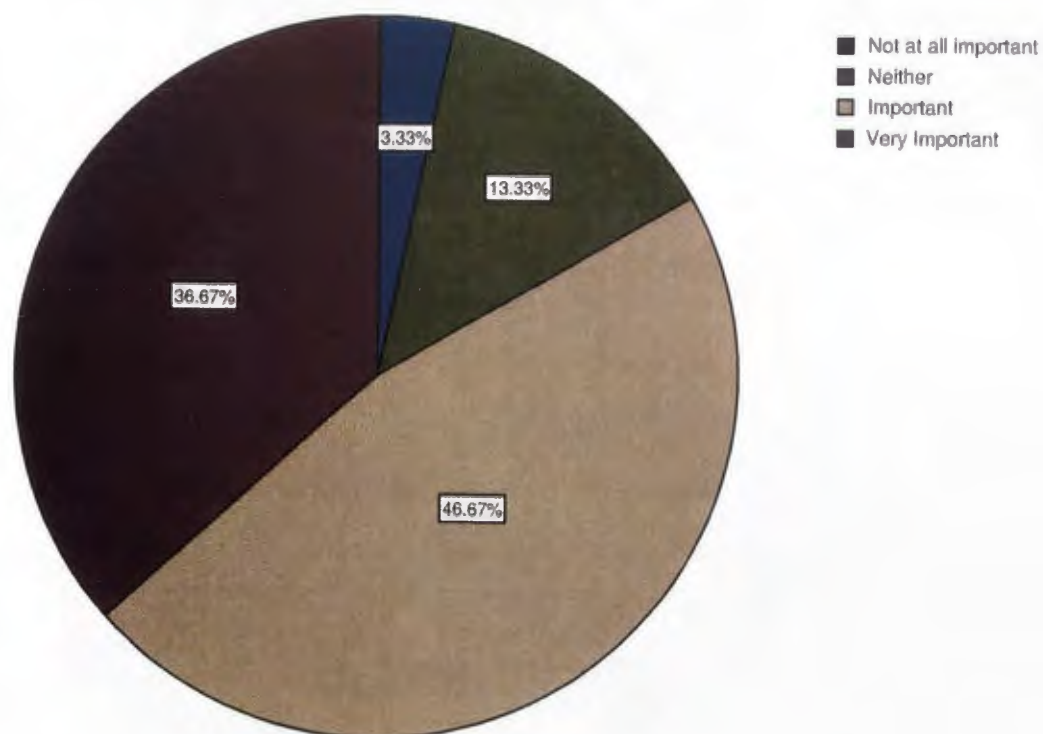
Question_8: How would your view of a school that did not have a website at all be affected?



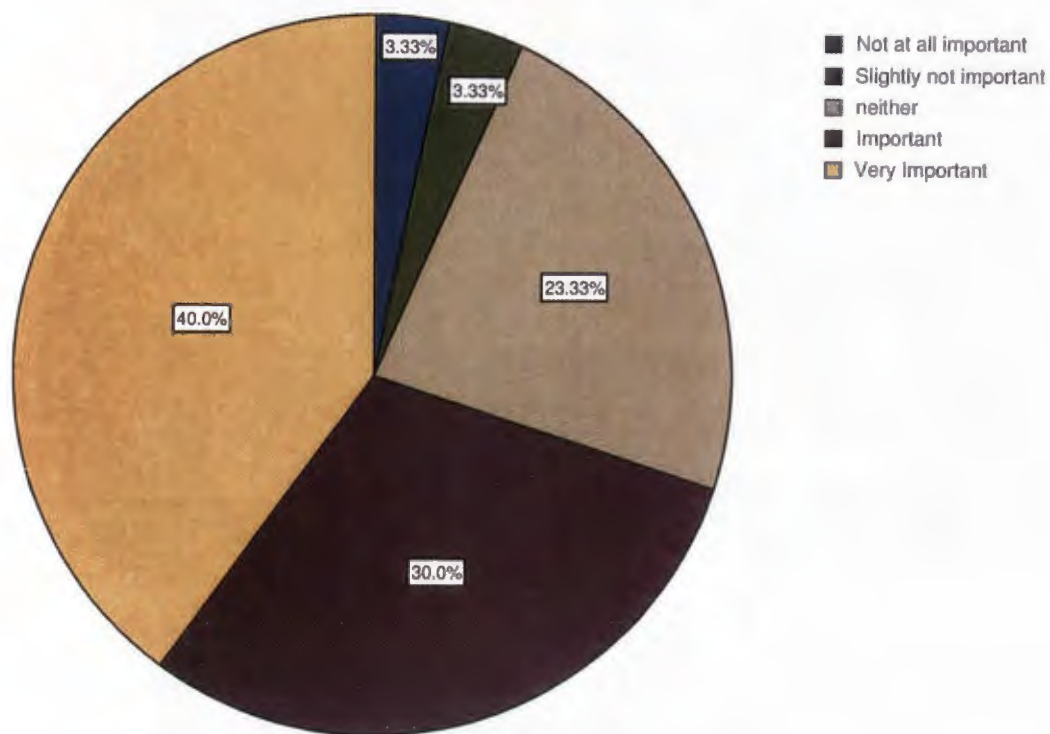
Question_9: How many schools did you personally research on the internet before deciding on one?



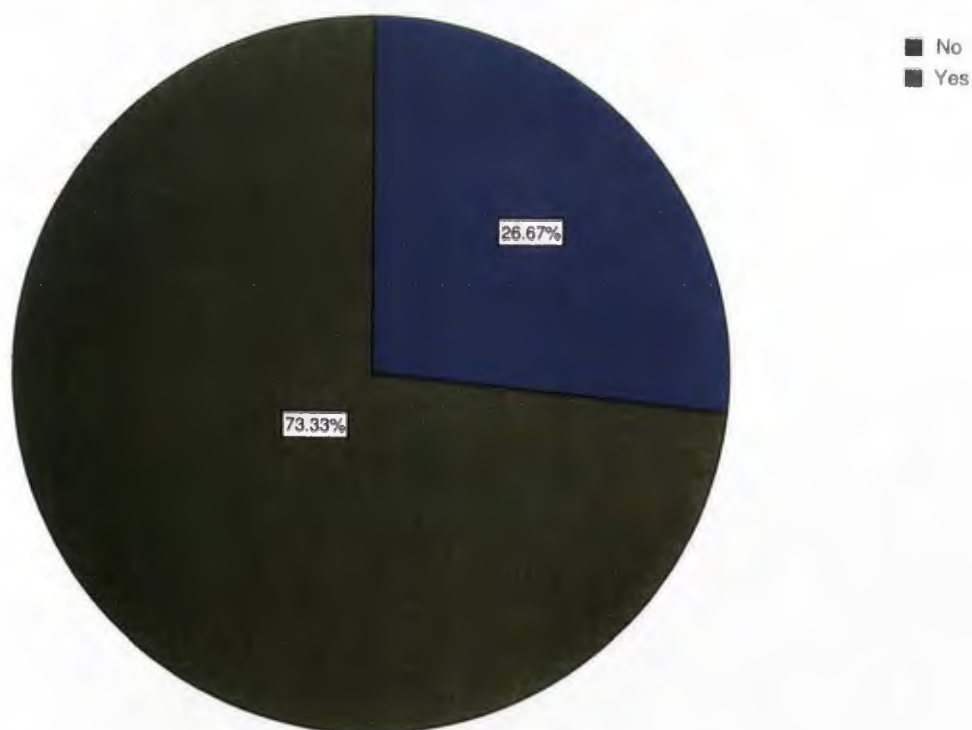
Question_10: How important would the program's website be to your perception of the program?



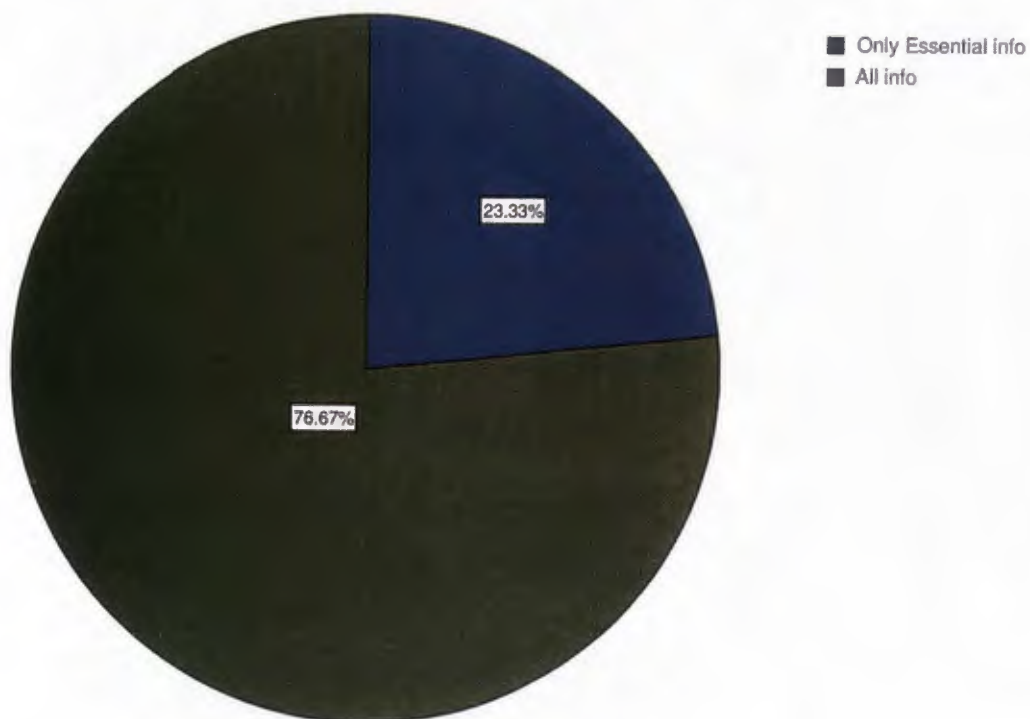
Question_11: How important is it that there are graphics and videos about the program on their website?



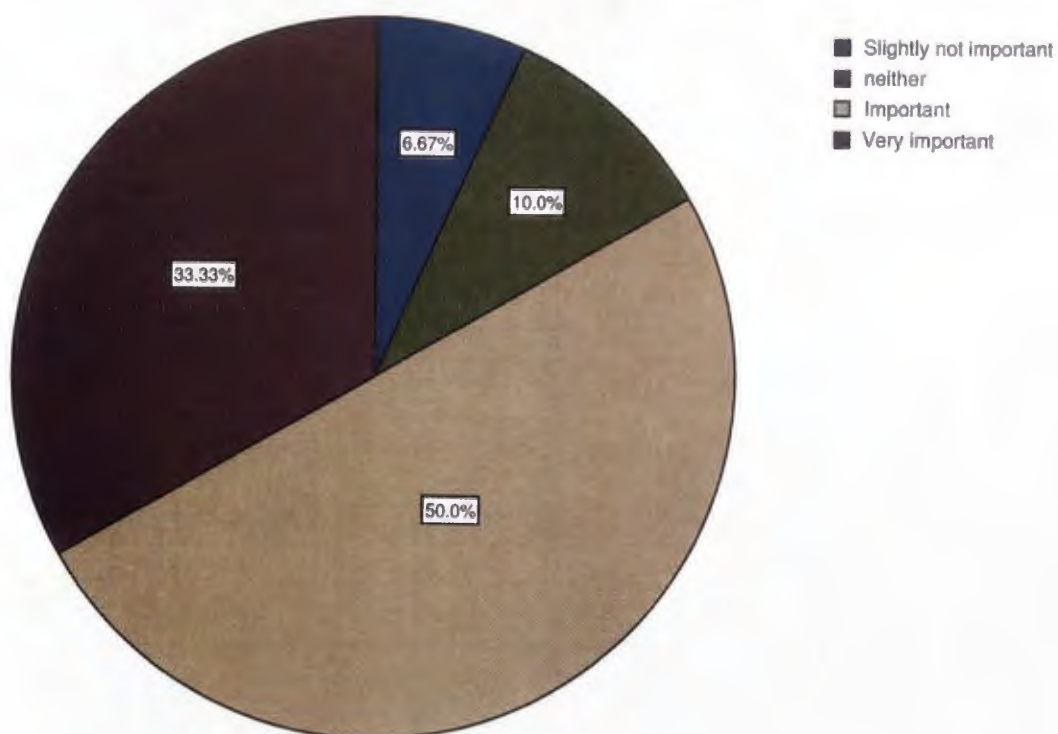
Question_12: Would you use the internet as your primary resource to compare different programs in making your decision?



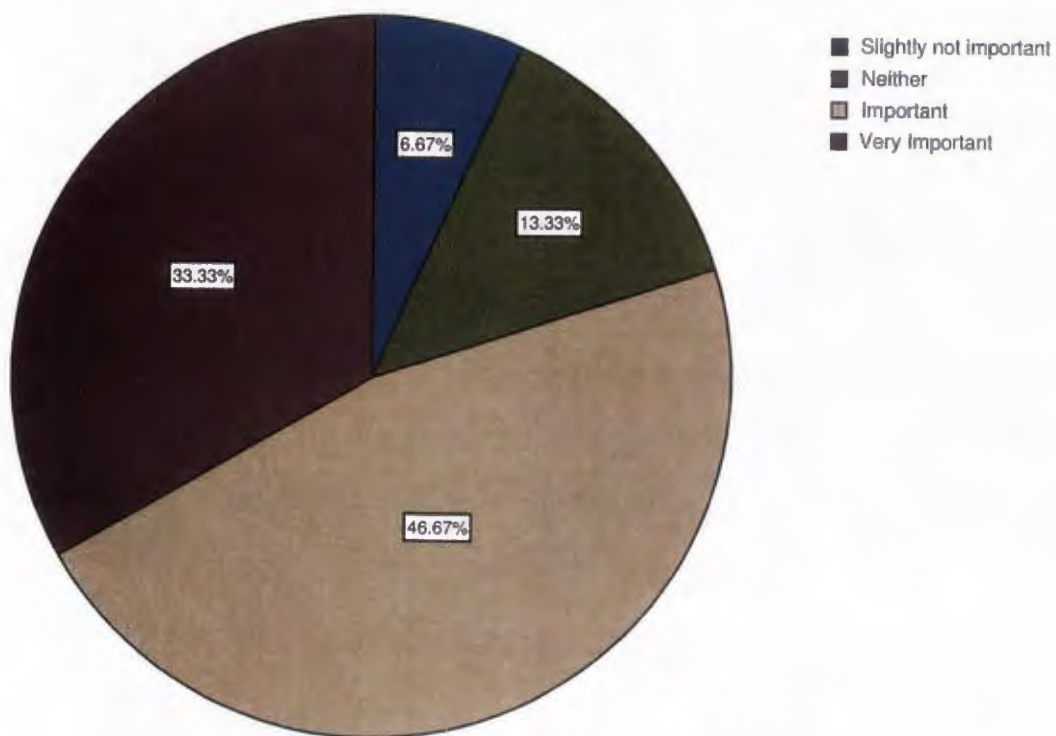
Question_13: Would you want the program to have all its information on its website or only essential information?



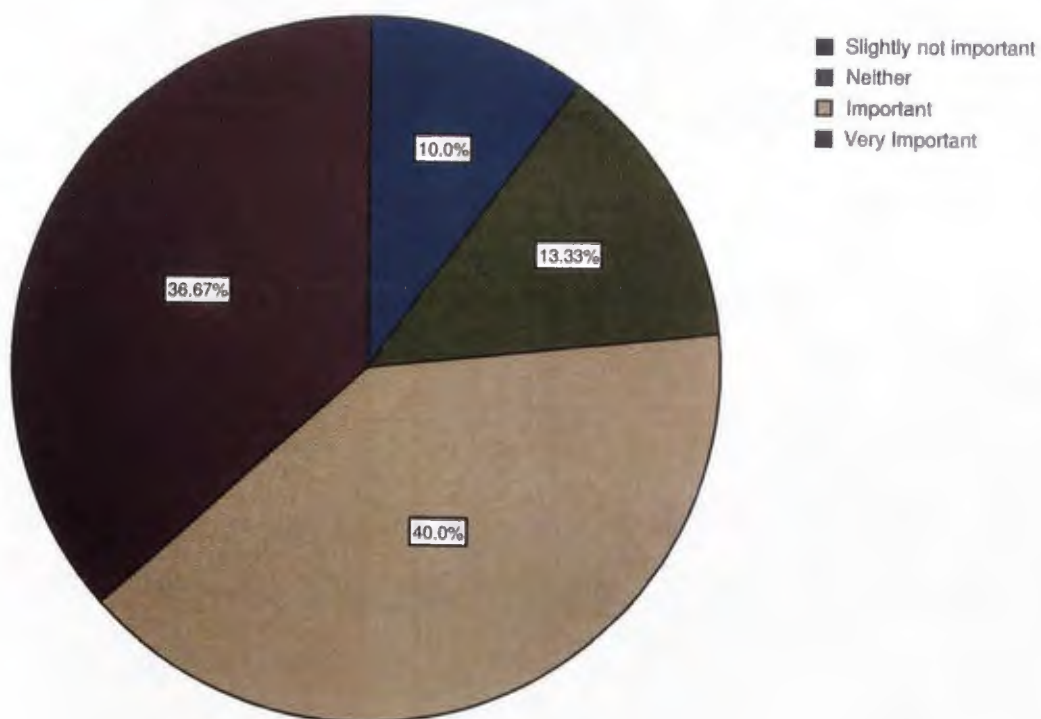
Question_14: How important is it to you that the program be recognized by reputable national organizations?



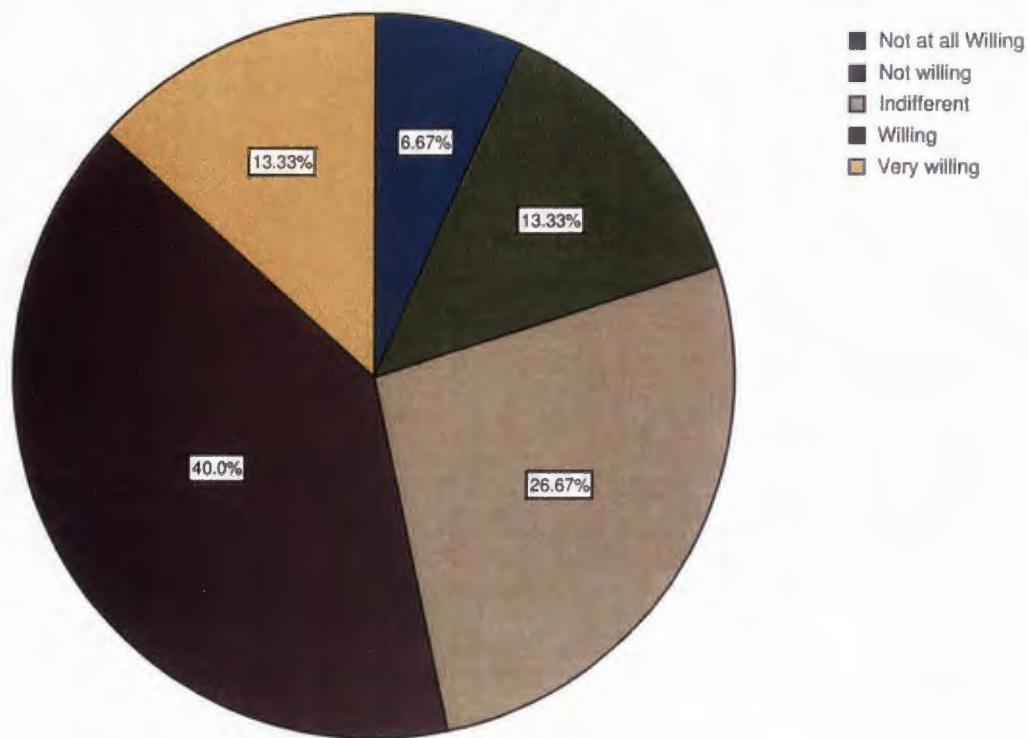
Question_15: How important is it to see your program along side other nationally recognized programs in a web search?



Question_16: How important is it that a program attends and supports national conferences and conventions in their field?



Question_17: How willing would you be to pay more to attend a nationally recognized program?



Question_18: How do you feel that the program you are currently in rates nationally?

