

**Educational Research and
Evaluation**

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**ALVERNO COLLEGE
ALUMNA PERSPECTIVES
INTERVIEW**

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Educational Research and Evaluation
ALVERNO COLLEGE
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Careering After College:
Establishing the Validity of
Abilities Learned in College for
Later Success
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The responses to the protocol used for the alumnae interviews conducted in 1980 provided the foundation for developing the questions proposed for the longitudinal follow-up. Alumnae responses from the 1980 study were analyzed by question. This analysis revealed six clusters of responses. After each cluster, the protocol question designed for the interview to elicit data is listed. The first interview question was included to provide descriptive, contextual information. The second interview question was included to invite opinions that would help to establish rapport.

- I. Abilities alumnae use to make the transition from college to life after college
2, 3, 4, 14, 18, 19, 20,
weak responses: 7, 17, 26

- II. Most important abilities in primary role today
4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 16, 20, 24, 26, 29, 30
weak responses: 10, 12, 31, 33, 34

- III. Learning
4, 5, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, 24, 25, 29
weak response 26, 27, 28

- IV. Growth: past, present, future
1, 4, 15, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36
weak responses: 2, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 21, 26, 29

- V. Alverno influence
 - a. abilities (outcomes) responses: 3, 5, 6, 7, 19, 24
weak responses: 4, 8, 13
 - b. evaluative responses: 3, 6, 14, 15, 18, 20, 23, 26
weak responses: 8, 14, 20
 - c. specific evaluation: 17, 19, 21
weak response: 6

- VI. Influences since college
9, 10, 16, 18, 19, 23, 29
weak responses: 11, 12, 20, 27, 28, 30

In 1988, one interviewer identified additional questions that elicited data per cluster, given her experience using the protocol. These questions are underlined above.

The 1985 Alumna Perspectives Interview replicates the 1980 alumna interview protocol with the following exceptions:

1. Items which elicited similar responses have been combined. For example, there are fewer “abilities” questions because abilities are also measured by the Behavioral Event Interview.

2. Items have been added to elicit more information regarding influences since college.
3. Sequencing of questions has been modified to capitalize on the fact that responses tend to get better as alumnae become more involved in the process (i.e., questions requiring more complex thought will be asked toward the end).
4. Tight structure of the questions may allow us to analyze responses in part by question, although the complete interview is considered the data base for the data analysis.

The interview questions are labeled to reflect type of question and anticipated response:

A = abilities	(d) = descriptive
	(c) = change (descriptive)
L = learning	(a) = Alverno influence
	(e) = evaluation of Alverno
G = growth	(p) = post-Alverno influences

Note: Replication is not a crucial issue in the interview since the first alumnae studied are not part of the longitudinal study follow-up

Question Index—1985 Alumnae Interview*			
	Abilities	Learning	Growth
d	4, 10, 24 <u>6, 7, 9, 11</u> <u>12, 29</u>	5, 13, 15, 16, 17, 24, <u>4, 14,</u> <u>25, 29, 30</u>	4, 10, 18, 22, 24, 7, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, <u>15,</u> <u>20, 28, 30</u>
c	7, 11, 12, 23, 30 <u>6, 9, 24, 29</u>	8, 14, 23, <u>5</u> <u>13, 15, 30</u>	20, 22, 23, 28 <u>4, 15, 18, 27, 30</u> <u>31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36</u>
a	4, 6, 26, <u>7</u>	5, 13, 15, 26	4, 19, 22, 26
e	26, <u>7</u>	26	<u>19, 26</u>
p	7, 9, 23, 24 <u>10, 29</u>	9, 10, 16, 23, 25, <u>14, 29, 30</u>	21, 23, 25, 29, <u>31, 22, 30</u>

Longitudinal analysis will involve comparing alumnae responses to substantively related responses to questions in the student interviews.

* 1985 plus 1988 categorization

Question Index—Student Interviews, 1976–1981

	Abilities	Learning	Growth
d	3a, 6b, 18, 19 20, 22, 24	3a, 6b, 18, 19 20, 24	3a, 6b, 16a, 18 19, 20, 21b, 23, 24
c	3a, 21a	3a, 10, 21a	3a, 17a, 17b, 21a
a	3a, 6c, 8, 9	3a, 6c, 8, 9	3a, 6c, 8, 9, 17a, 17b, 17c
e	11, 14, 15	11, 14, 15	11, 14, 15
p	18, 19	18, 19	18, 19

For instance, to address the question “How does an alumna’s perception of her abilities compare to perceptions of her abilities as a student?” an alumna’s response to alumnae interview questions 3, 23 and 24 relates to her responses, in *three* interviews as a student, to student interview questions 3a, 6b, 18, 19, 20, 22 and 24.

Interview Questions

1. What have you been doing since you left college?
2. What would you want to communicate to someone who is just leaving Alverno as a new graduate? (probes: What would be important for them to consider? What should they know? Why would that be important?)

Probe: What do you think it takes to make the transition to life after college?

Why that?

What do you think a college graduate should be like in order to get the most out of life? Why that?

3.
 - a. What stands out in your mind about Alverno?
 - b. What do you think the rationale for the Alverno learning process was? Did you benefit from that rationale?

Probe: Why did the faculty put the curriculum together the way they did?

4. What were you like when you graduated? A, L, G (d)
 - a. How were you alike or different from other students you knew? (ask the opposite: If more alike, how were you different?)
 - b. In what ways did you change while you were in college? What helped you develop? How did that happen?
 - c. What was important in helping you develop? G (a)

Was there anything about Alverno that contributed to that?

5.
 - a. What did you learn at Alverno?
 - b. What did you learn about learning at Alverno?
 - c. What experiences were important in learning how to learn? L(a)
6.
 - a. What abilities did you develop at Alverno?
 - b. How did Alverno help you develop your abilities as a student?
 - c. What was most important? A (a)

7. Q Right now you are Primary Activity (see questionnaire).*

* Q = information also elicited from the Questionnaire

- a. What are the most important abilities required by primary #1 activity? A (c) (Ask for other role if applicable.)
 - b. Why are these important? A (p)
 - c. What are the most important abilities required by secondary activity ?
 - d. Why are those important?
 - e. Can you think of any specific learning experiences you had at Alverno that helped you develop these abilities? Give examples. (If person cannot remember “specifically,” ask “what more general things”)
8. Did what you learn at Alverno affect the way you approach your work? How? In what ways?
- Probe: Could you give an example?
What about Alverno helped? L (p)
- How have you made your Alverno education work for you? L (c)
- What about Alverno has really helped you?
9. What in your current situation do you believe has helped you most (since Alverno) in developing and/or supporting these abilities? A, L (p)
- Probe: details of situation
10. What in your current situation do you believe has hindered you most in developing these abilities? How do you deal with those? L (p)
- To what extent has life presented you with opportunities to demonstrate your competence? A (p)
11. Q Are there any abilities you have now that you didn't have when you were a student? (or have more of?) A (c)
- How did you learn them? Could you give me an example? How did you continue to develop them?
12. Q Are there some abilities you had as a student that you feel you don't have today? (or have less of?) A (c)

Now I'd like to focus on learning.

13. What did you learn about learning at Alverno? What was important in helping you develop as a learner?
(repeat here if necessary)
14. You learned when you were a student; you've learned a lot since you graduated. Thinking about yourself and your current situation, how is learning now different from the learning you did as a student, if indeed it is different? L (c)
- What do you learn now?
 - What kinds of learning do you do in the work you do now?
 - What kinds of things do you have to learn? Why those?
 - Do you learn differently in different situations? Do you think different situations affect learning? How? How is learning different in different kinds of situations? Can you give me an example? (Compare and contrast learning in different situations.) L (p)

Probe: Anything else that makes learning happen for you?

15. Has what you learned about your own learning, when you were a student, had any influence on how you approach learning today? L (a)

Probe: How do you approach situations where you don't have all the answers, when you have to figure something out? L (d)

16. Have you ever actively sought or initiated an opportunity to learn in your _____ (situation) _____? L (d)

Probe: Could you give an example?

In what ways?

What accounted for your learning? L (p)

- How do you think about learning? (value learning, talk about it)
17. Since you graduated, have you attempted to improve your life in any way? Discuss achievements. L (d)
18. Q At the time you were graduating from Alverno, what direction did you see your life taking? What goals did you have, and which of these have been achieved? G (d)

Have your goals changed since you graduated? How?

19. Q How do you think Alverno influenced your goal setting? How did your college education help you in your life planning? What other factors influenced your planning when you were graduating? G (a)
20. To what extent are you doing what you expected you would be doing? To what extent are you leading the kind of life you thought you would be leading? G (c)
21. Why are you doing what you are doing? How satisfied are you with what you are doing? To what extent have you been able to do what you want to do? If everything were perfect, what would you be doing in your life today? G (p)

How satisfied do you feel about where you are in terms of a career or position now? Is this where you want to be?

If you had it to do all over again, would you do what you have done or would you want to prepare for something else? If so, what?

If no, do you expect to?

22. In what ways did you change personally while you were in college? What was important in helping you develop as a person?

Probe: First think about how you see yourself now. Then think of how you were then. How have you changed?

23. How have *you* changed since you left Alverno? What kind of experiences do you think have influenced you the most, have caused this change? A, L, G (c) (p)

24. How do you see yourself at this point in time compared to when you were a student? A, L, G (d)

specifically: How would you define “a competent person?”

To what extent do you see yourself as a competent person? How do you come to know that?

How would you define “lifelong learning?”

To what extent do you see yourself as a lifelong learner? How do you know that?

How would you define “individual potential?”

To what extent do you see yourself as someone who is achieving her potential as a person and an educated woman? How do you know that?

To what extent have you achieved what you are capable of? How do you know that? A, G (d)

25. What do you believe has helped you (or hindered you) from taking advantage of all that life has to offer? What kind of relationship do you see between getting the most out of life and knowing how to learn? G (p)

26. Looking back, what do you think are the best things a college can do to prepare people for life after college? To what extent did Alverno prepare you in those ways for life after college? (What stands out in your mind as really contributing?) In what ways did Alverno not quite match up? Do you think about Alverno any differently than you did when you graduated? How would you change Alverno? A, L, G (a) (e)
27. What has given shape to your life? What themes, values, and commitments have given coherence or focus to your life since you left college? G (d)
28. How does your participation in life compare to when you were a student? For instance, have you expanded or narrowed the scope of things that you are interested in, concerned with or value? Have you deepened or lessened your commitment to any special interest or value? G (c)
29. What kinds of challenges has life presented you? What kinds of demands has life made of you? G (p)

Probe: Have there been any times that have been particularly problematic, difficult or stressful?

What kind of abilities did you need to deal with that or resolve that?

Is there anything you learned in college that helped you deal with that? If so, what? How?

30. What kind of relationship do you see between your work and your personal life?
- Do you see _____ and _____ as affecting each other, or do you see them as more or less separate and distinct? How do they affect each other?
 - What abilities do you think it takes to integrate your family life and your _____ (other activity) _____? Why?
 - What is it like raising children and managing a home (if applicable) A (c)
 - What kinds of decisions have you had to make? How do you prioritize?
31. What decisions have you made in the past five years that have had an impact on your life? G (d)

Probe: Could you give me an example?

How did you decide that? (What was considered?) G (p)

Follow-up: if you could go back in time five years, would you do anything differently?

32. How do you see your life five years from now? G (d)
33. What decisions do you think you will have to make in the next five years? What issues will you face? What choices will you have to make? G (d)

34. At this time, how are you going about planning your life? G (d)

Probe: What goals are you setting? Why those?

35. What questions are you asking yourself at this time? G (d)

Why those?

What uncertainties are you experiencing?

36. What challenges do you see in the future? G (d)