

The **ECU** Tiger Charges

ECU Physics Dept. Scores High in Report by American Institute of Physics

Report Source: American Institute of Physics Report “Does it Matter Where I Go to College: Effects of Physics Departments on Student Outcomes” by Rachel Ivie and Kim Nies (June 2004) AIP Publication #R-433.03.

The American Institute of Physics Statistical Division periodically conducts surveys of physics departments and physics graduates. The ECU Physics department was specifically named in one such survey.

The AIP collected collected data from a random selection of 150 physics departments (20% of all departments in the U.S.) and their graduates. ECU was listed as one of eleven universities whose physics department was found to have “high student satisfaction” and “high bachelor’s degree production”. ECU was the only university in Oklahoma given this designation. Student satisfaction was calculated by scores on six measures: how effectively the faculty taught, how well the faculty served as mentors and/or role models, how well the students felt they were advised by faculty, how supportive the faculty were, and how the students related to both faculty and students. The six measures became the score for what Ivie and Nies called the ‘departmental climate’. Only 36% of the universities received a rating of ‘highly satisfied’ from their graduates. ECU’s physics department received this rating. Ivie and Nies found those departments with high climate satisfaction scores were more successful in graduating higher numbers of physics majors (per faculty member) during the next eight years than those departments having lower climate satisfaction scores. What is even more promising in these findings is that this increase in graduates occurred during a period in which physics BS graduation rates across the nation declined.

Dr. Carl Rutledge, professor of physics said “ECU was lucky to have been in the initial random selection of departments chosen by AIP . The ECU physics department looks great since we have a large number of graduates compared to the small number of faculty in the physics department. The larger PhD granting departments not only scored lower in terms of student satisfaction but do not have nearly as many BS graduates per faculty member.”

ECU has a small physics department that offers a BS-only in physics, no PhD. Ivie and Nies found it didn’t matter whether a student graduated from a smaller BS-only granting physics department or a large PhD granting department. For example, Ivie and Nies found the salary the graduates made five years past the BS was essentially the same. The number of interviews it took to obtain a job was about the same; the number of jobs offered to the graduate was also about the same. The length of time it took to get a job was also not statistically different . Whether or not the graduates ended up working in science or physics also did not depend upon what type of university they attended.

Dr. Williams, associate professor of physics said “I think it this study backs up what former Governor Nigh always says “you can do it from ECU”. Many of our graduates have gone on to fine careers. It’s nice to be recognized for creating a good atmosphere for students to learn physics. It’s fairly easy to provide an atmosphere at ECU where students can succeed in physics or even related fields such as engineering. The rest is up to the students.”

***If you completed this survey for AIP, thanks!

Next Issue of The Tiger Charges?

I hope to include those graduates I missed in this issue and those that graduated before I came to ECU 18 years ago and those physics minors, we do not want to forget you either!

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