
A Policy and Procedures Survey of Georgia's Statewide Videoconferencing System (GSAMS)

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Adapted from the Georgia Statewide Academic Medical Systems (GSAMS) Policies and Procedures Survey Project of June 1999. Survey report, available in its original & complete format at <http://www.westga.edu/~rmt/gsamsreport/index.html>.

Overview of the Project

The Georgia Statewide Academic and Medical System (GSAMS), a two-way videoconferencing program, is the largest distance learning and healthcare network in the world, with more than 370 sites as of December 1999. Included in the GSAMS network are K-12 public schools, colleges, universities, technical institutes, hospitals, prisons, Georgia Public Television, and Zoo Atlanta.

In 1998, the State University of West Georgia (UWG) and the Georgia Merit System (GMS) were awarded a grant to explore the distance learning policies of various types of organizational settings in the state during the 1998-1999 academic year. Prior to the awarding of this grant, no statewide studies had been conducted to examine existing policies at the GSAMS sites. In this study, two major areas of concern were explored: 1) the ways in which distance learning policies have been established, and 2) the types of policies that have been established. Five policy areas were examined: administration and management, technical issues, pedagogy, training, and evaluation.

During summer and fall of 1998, UWG and GMS worked cooperatively conducting focus group interviews, creating the survey instrument, and pilot testing the survey. In November, all GSAMS sites in Georgia, with the exception of the telemedicine sties, were surveyed. Each site received two surveys. The site coordinator was instructed to complete one survey and distribute the other survey to an experienced distance learning instructor at the site. The survey consisted of both closed (multiple choice items) and open-ended questions.

A total of 582 questionnaires were sent to GSAMS sites. Two hundred seventy-two were sent to K-12 institutions (64 were returned), 196 were sent to universities/colleges (38 were returned), 18 were sent to prisons (17 were returned), and 56 were sent to other sites, including state government agencies and nonprofit educational agencies (16 were returned). One hundred thirty-five completed surveys were returned. Some respondents indicated that GSAMS is no longer available at their sites, and these individuals returned blank surveys.

It should be noted that the results described in this report are not generalizable beyond the non-random sample of individuals who completed the questionnaire. Information in this report provides descriptive information for those individuals who completed the questionnaire. The first section of the results section describes overall findings in the areas of administration and

management, teaching, training, technical issues, and evaluation. The second section provides information comparing organizational settings in these areas.

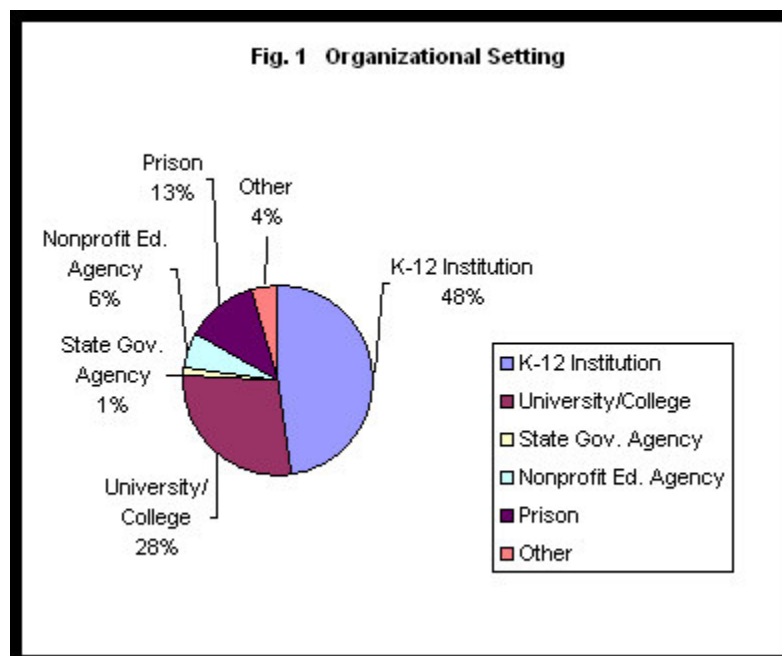
Some of the most alarming results that were gathered as a result of this project, include the following data:

- Forty-eight percent of respondents reported that no written GSAMS administration and/or management procedures were in place within their organizations.
- Only 47% of respondents indicated that distance instructors at their sites receive GSAMS training
- Sixty-seven percent of respondents said that there were no written technical policies in place within their organizational settings.
- Only about 18% of K-12 institutions said that evaluation procedures are in place within their organizational settings.
- When asked whether distance learning instructors at their sites are given incentives for teaching via GSAMS, 86% of respondents said that no incentives are given.

Comparisons of Survey Results by Organizational Setting

These survey results compare responses from individuals at different organizational settings. The following organizational settings are represented: K-12 institutions, universities/colleges, state government agencies, nonprofit educational agencies, prisons, and other settings.

Of the 135 individuals who responded to the question regarding organizational setting, 48% were at **K-12 institutions** (n = 64), 28% were from **universities or colleges** (n = 38), and 13% were from **prisons** (n = 17). The remaining respondents were from **state government agencies** (n = 2), **nonprofit educational institutions** (such as zoos; n = 8), and **other sites** (n = 6). Figure 1 displays these data.

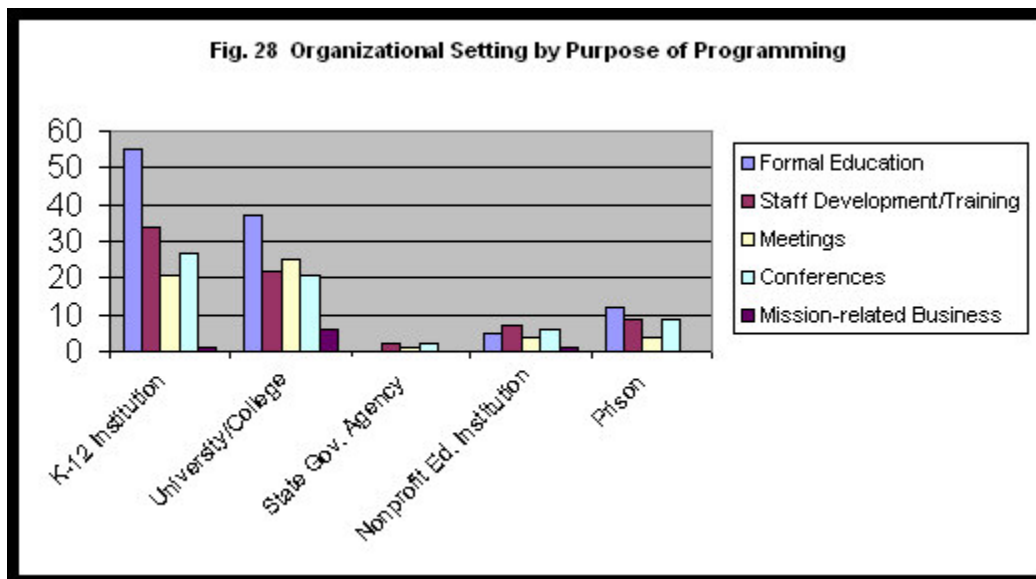


The following sections provide comparisons of responses from individuals at these settings in the areas of demographics, administration/management, teaching, training, technical issues, and evaluation.

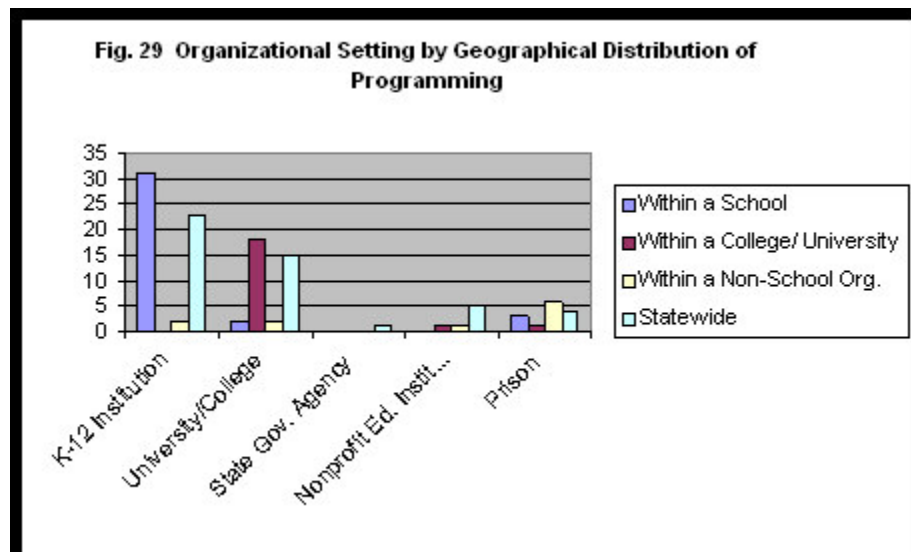
Demographics of Clients Served

Questionnaires were analyzed to determine how target audiences differed by organizational setting. In K-12 institutions, **children** accounted for 92% of the audience, **adults** accounted for 6% of the audience, and **citizens** accounted for 2% of the audience. At the university/college setting, **adults** were 86% of the target audience, **citizens** were 8% of the target audience, and **children** and **employees** each accounted for 3% of the target audience. At the prison setting, the target audience was **prisoners** only. Nonprofit educational institutions reported serving **adults** only.

Figure 28 shows the purposes of programming listed by respondents across organizational settings:

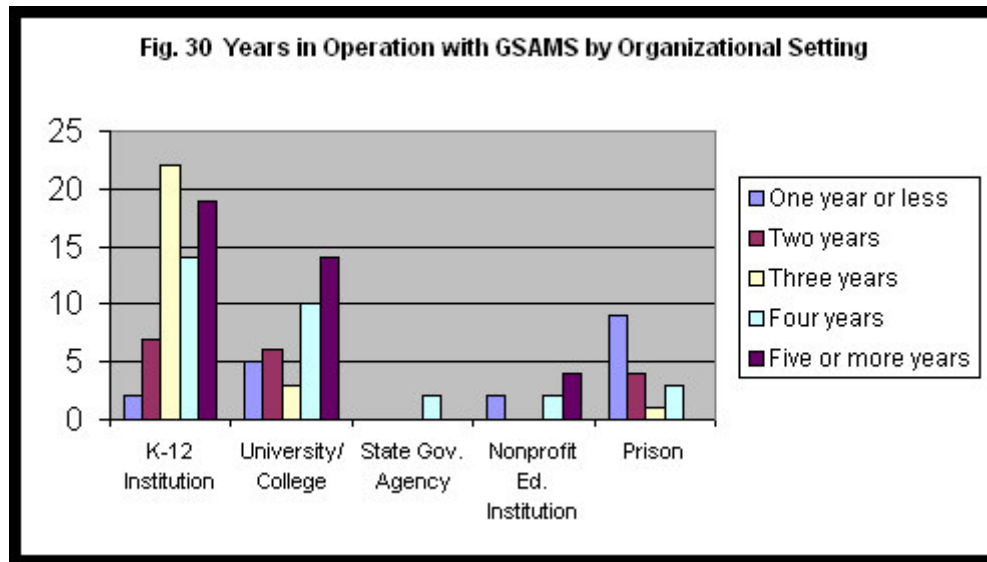


Geographical distribution of programming was also compared across organizational settings (Figure 29):



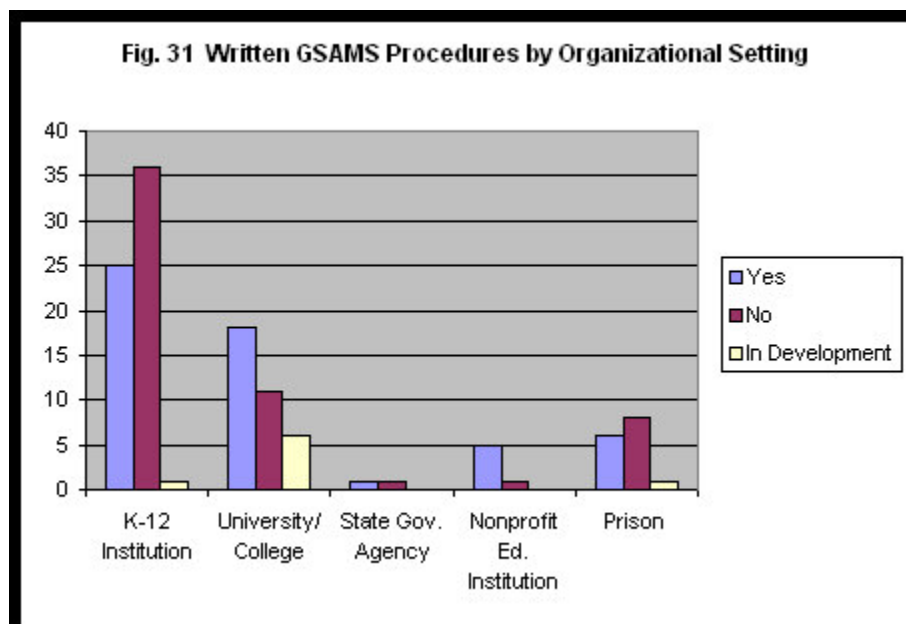
Years in operation were compared by organizational setting. Results indicated that 86% of

respondents at **K-12 institutions** and 71% from **universities and colleges** had been in operation for three or more years. Seventy-one percent of respondents from **prisons** indicated they had been in operation with GSAMS for two years or less (see Figure 30).



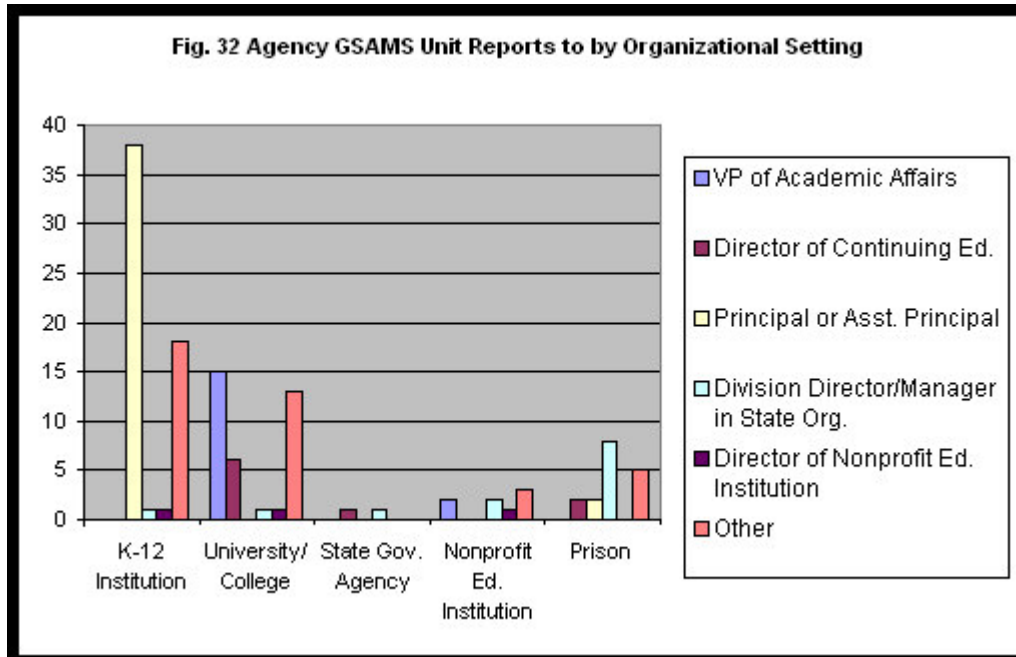
Administration/Management

Forty-eight percent of respondents reported **that no written GSAMS administration and/or management procedures are in place**, 44% said that **procedures were in place**, and 8% said **procedures were currently being developed**. Comparing across organizational settings, it was found that 69% of university and college settings and 42% of K-12 institutions either **have procedures in place** or are **currently developing GSAMS procedures**. The majority of universities/colleges and nonprofit educational institutions already **have or are developing GSAMS procedures** for their settings (see Figure 31).



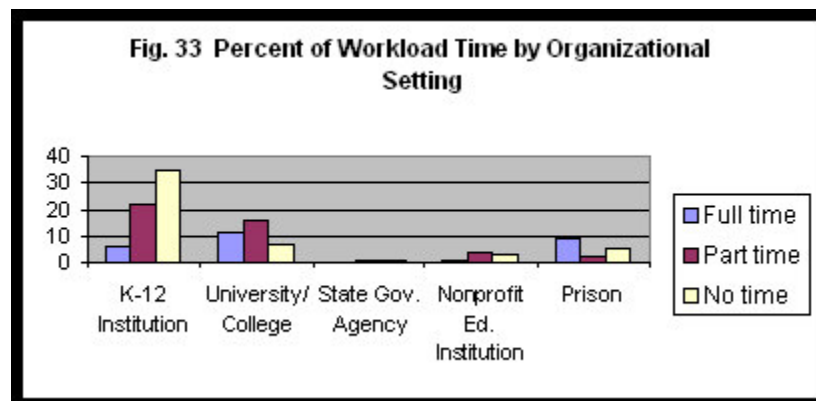
Reporting agency was also analyzed by organizational setting. Not surprisingly, 66% of GSAMS units at K-12 institutions report to the **principal or assistant principal** at their schools. At the

university/college level, 42% of GSAMS units report to the **VP for Academic Affairs** (see Figure 32).

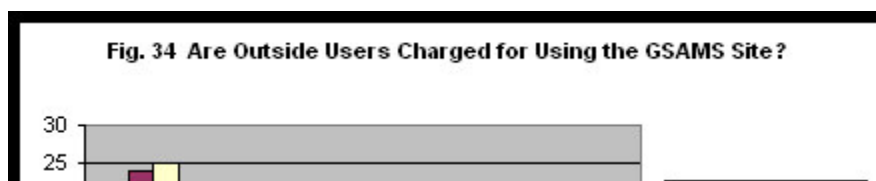


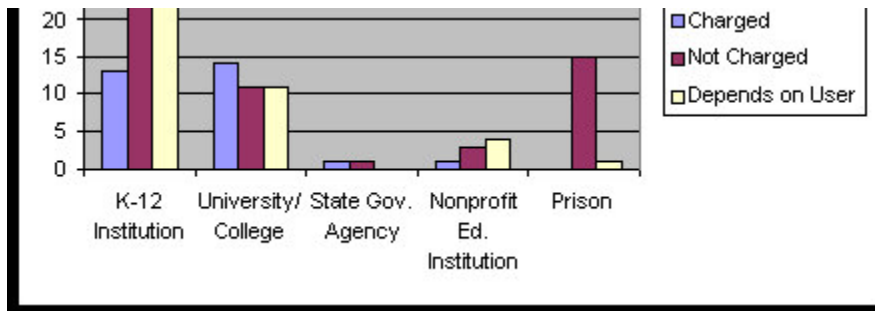
Analyzing individuals who make GSAMS budget decisions by organizational setting revealed that 73% of budget decisions at K-12 institutions are made by either the **principal, assistant principal, or central office**. Within universities and colleges, 60% of budget decisions are made by either the **VP of Academic Affairs** or **distance education coordinators**. At prisons, budget decisions are made largely by the **central office**.

Comparisons by organizational settings of the percentage of workload time the GSAMS director is credited for coordinating the site can be found in Figure 33.

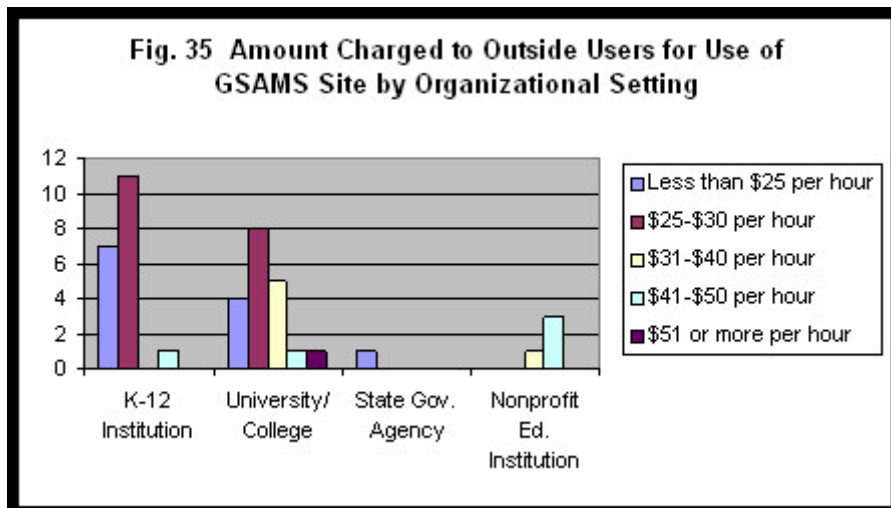


When asked whether outside users are charged for using the respondents' GSAMS facilities, 25% said that **outside users are charged**, 42% indicated that **outside users are not charged**, and 33% said that it **depends on the user**. Figure 34 shows this comparison by organizational setting.

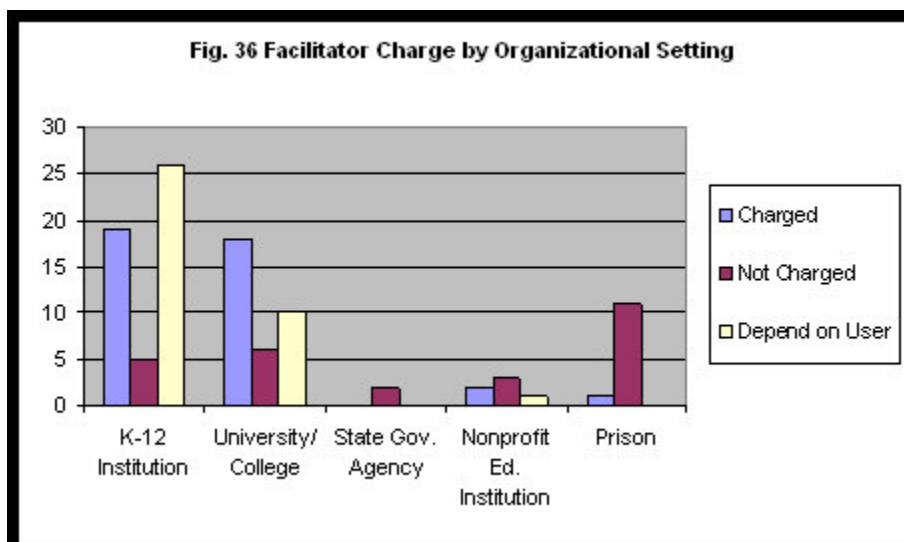




For those sites that do charge outside users for use of their GSAMS site, the majority (69%) charge **\$30 per hour or less**. Nonprofit educational institutions and universities and colleges **charge the most** to outside users. Figure 35 shows these differences.



Respondents were asked whether outside users were charged for the use of a distance learning facilitator. Figure 36 shows this comparison by organizational setting. Participants were also asked whether outside users were required to use facilitators from their sites. Thirty-one percent reported that outside users **are required to use site facilitators**, 25% **do not require the use of site facilitators**, and 44% reported that it is **dependent on the individual user**. Regardless of organizational setting, the majority of respondents indicated that outside users are required to use site facilitators or that the required use of site facilitators is dependent upon the individual user.



When respondents were asked when GSAMS programming was going out or being received from their sites, 78% responded **8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. on weekdays**, and 72% said from **12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. on weekdays**. Fifty-four percent send/ receive GSAMS programming **after 5:00 p.m. on weekdays**, and 15% send/receive programming on the **weekends**. Many respondents indicated that programming is sent/received at multiple times throughout the day and on weekends.

The most popular programming time for all sites is **8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.** At the university/college level, **all times during the week** are equally favorable, and **weekend programming is also used**. **Weekend programming is not used** at all in prisons and state government agencies, and it is **used very little** by nonprofit educational institutions and K-12 institutions. All sites reported sending and/or receiving GSAMS programming between **12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.** and **after 5:00 p.m. on weekdays**.

Teaching

Comparing the existence of teaching policies by site, it was found that universities and colleges were most likely to **have teaching polices in place**, followed by nonprofit educational institutions, prisons, and K-12 institutions. There was only one respondent from a state government agency that responded to this item, so although Figure 37 shows that 100% of the respondents from this setting indicated that **no policies** were in place, a larger sample from this setting might alter this finding.

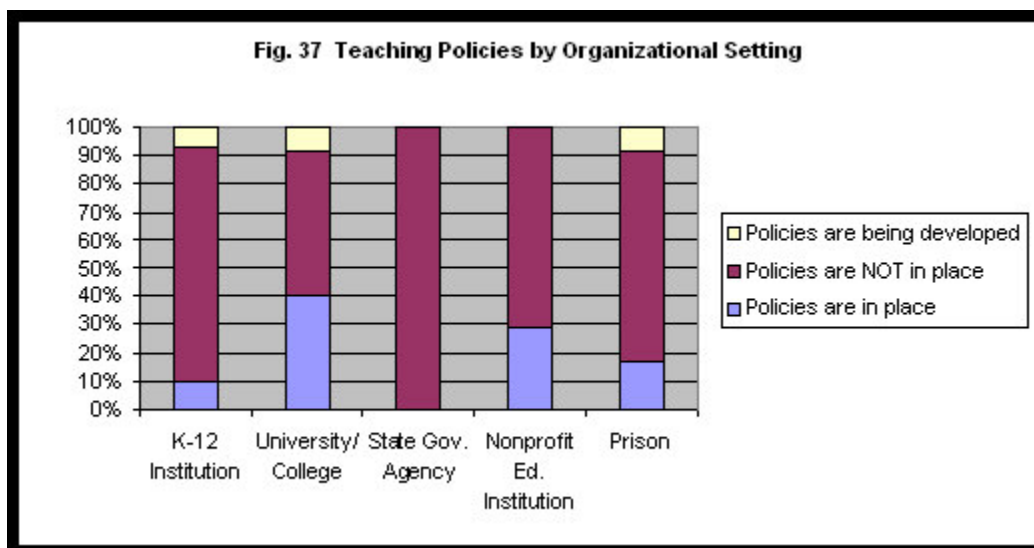
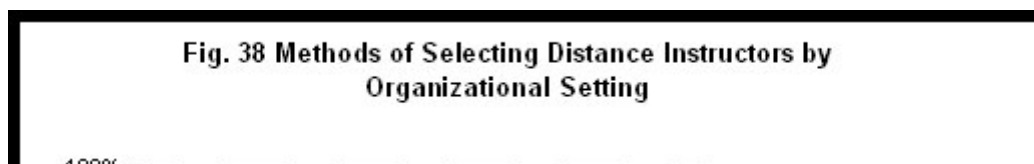


Figure 38 shows the ways in which different organizational setting choose distance learning instructors. At K-12 institutions, the majority of **instructors volunteer** to be distance learning instructors. Those from state government agencies who responded to the survey said that most **instructors are chosen based on recommendations** from supervisors. Universities and colleges, nonprofit educational institutions, and prisons are most likely to **require instructors** to teach via GSAMS.



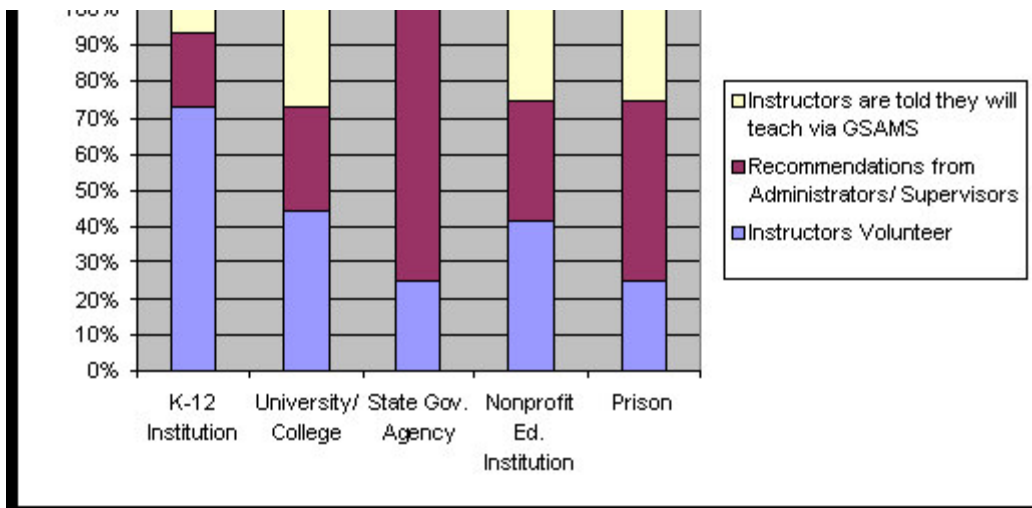
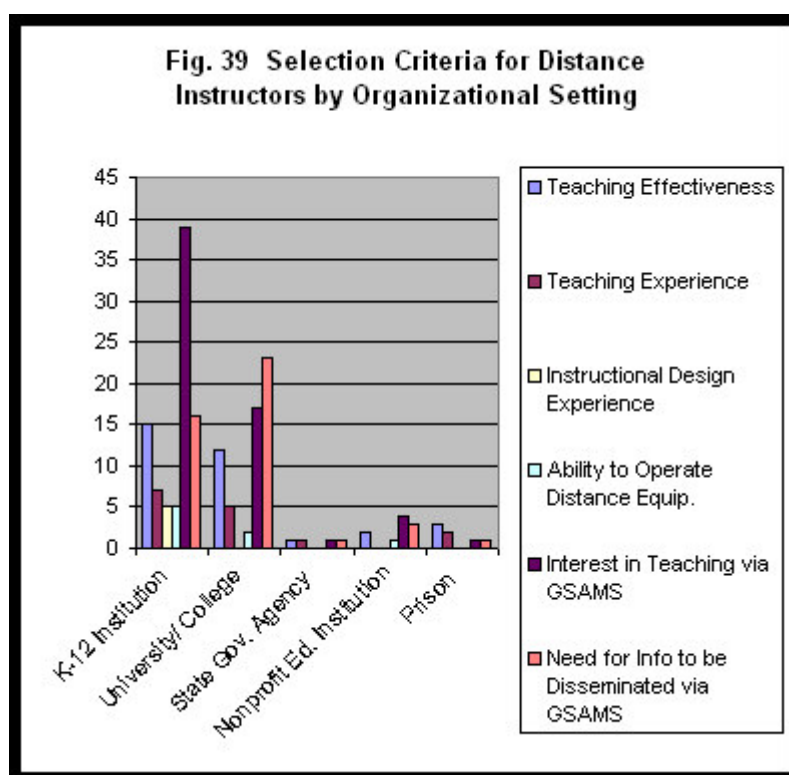
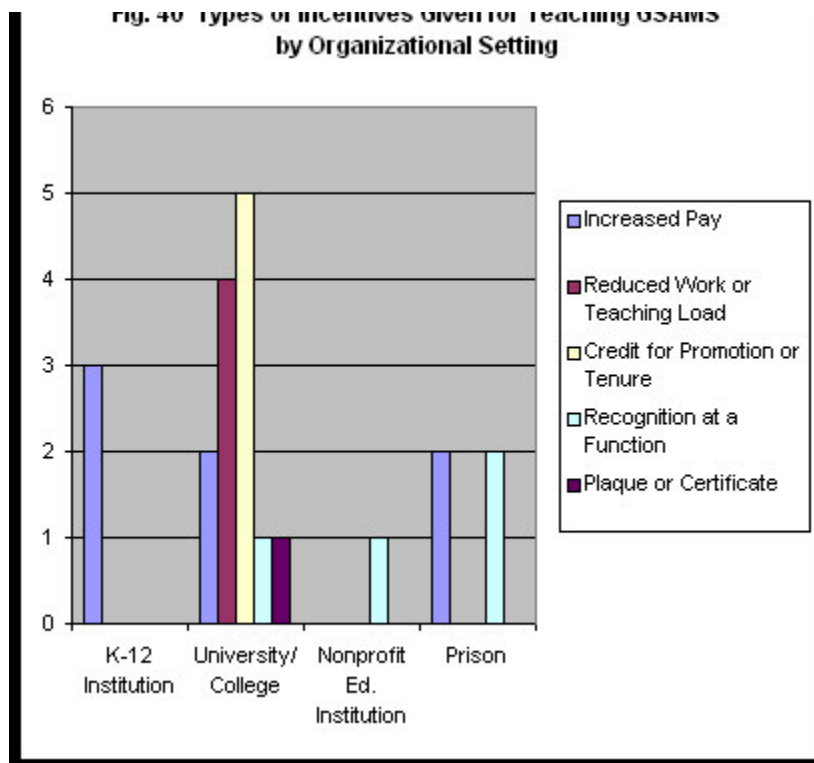


Figure 39 shows the various selection criteria for distance learning instructors in different organizational settings. At K-12 institutions, **interest in teaching via GSAMS** is the most important selection criterion. At the university/ college level, the **need to disseminate information via GSAMS** is the most important selection criterion, followed by **interest in teaching with GSAMS**.



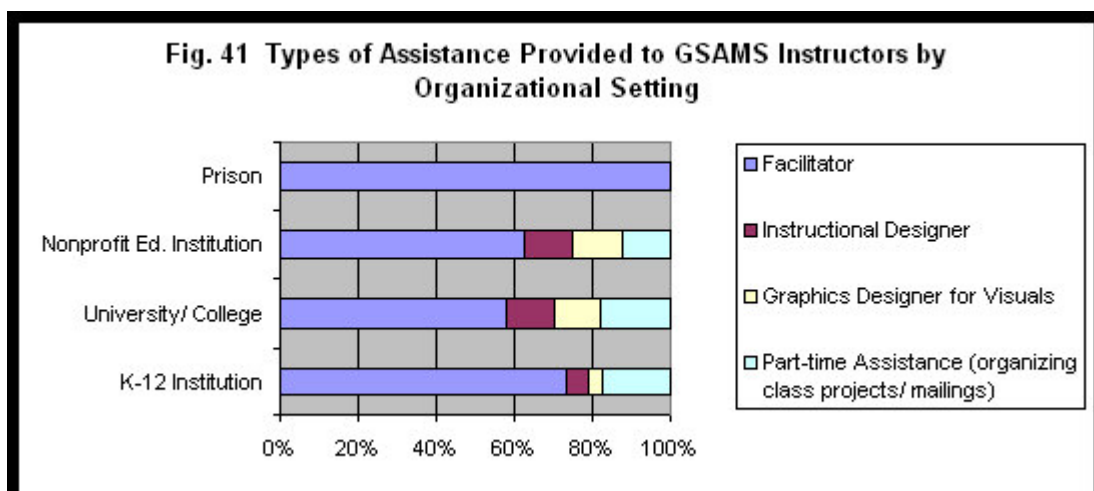
When asked whether distance learning instructors at their sites are given incentives for teaching via GSAMS, 86% of !! respondents said that **no incentives are given**. Instructors who teach prisoners are **most likely to be given incentives** (27%), followed by instructors at universities or colleges (22%). Instructors at K-12 institutions are **least likely to be given incentives** for teaching via GSAMS (7%). See Figure 40 to compare the types of incentives given by organizational setting. [It should be noted that it is unclear who is providing incentives to instructors who teach prisoners.]

Fig. 40. Types of Incentives Given for Teaching GSAMS



When asked whether GSAMS instructors are provided with assistance when delivering GSAMS classes, 78% of respondents said **instructors do receive assistance**. At the university/college level, 87% said that **instructors are given assistance**, within prisons, 80% **are given assistance**. At K-12 institutions and at nonprofit educational institutions, 71% of **instructors receive assistance** with GSAMS.

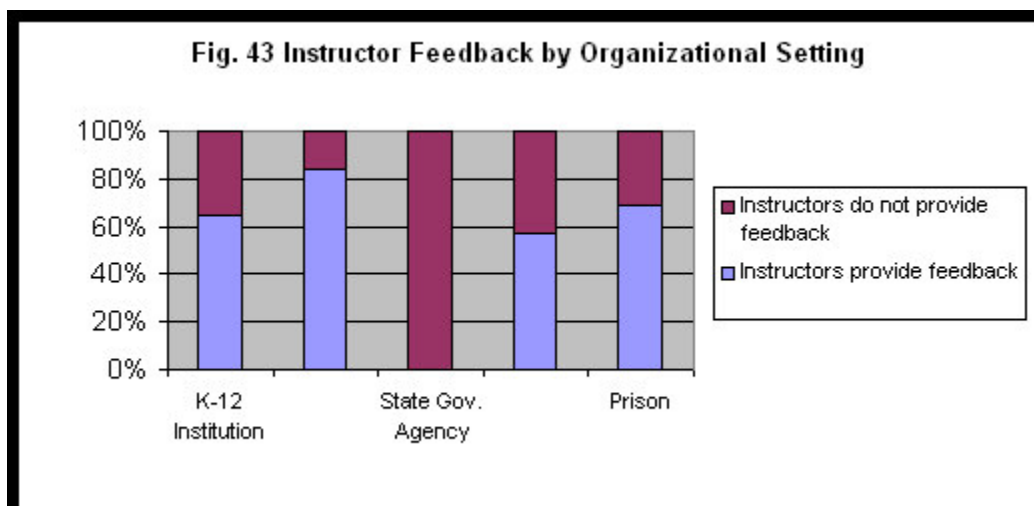
Figure 41 shows the differences in types of support given to GSAMS instructors within different organizational settings. **Facilitators** are the most common type of assistance provided to GSAMS instructors, regardless of organizational setting. At nonprofit educational institutions and universities/ colleges, **instructional** and **graphics designers**, as well as **part-time assistance**, are provided to instructors. **Graphics** and **instructional designers** are provided at K-12 institutions as well, but with less frequency than at the other settings.



Respondents were asked whether sites provided a student orientation to GSAMS. Sixty percent of participants said that students were given a GSAMS orientation session. Respondents from each organizational setting, except state government agencies, indicated that **student orientation**

is available at their sites: universities/colleges (68%), K-12 institutions (60%), prisons (53%), nonprofit educational institutions (50%).

Respondents said that, as instructors, they provided feedback and/or established communication with learners outside of the distance learning situation. Figure 43 below shows how this differs by organizational setting. State government agencies are the only setting that reported **providing no feedback**; however, because of the small sample of state government sites, this may not be a good representation of all state government agencies in the state.



Fifty-eight percent of respondents said that they communicate with learners in their GSAMS courses via **FAX**. Other communications methods used include **e-mail** and/or **listservs** (45%), **phone** (40%), **visiting remote sites** (39%), and **regular mail** (31%). Some respondents also use **couriers**, **keep office hours**, or **communicate via the web**. Figure 44 shows how methods of communication differ by organizational setting.

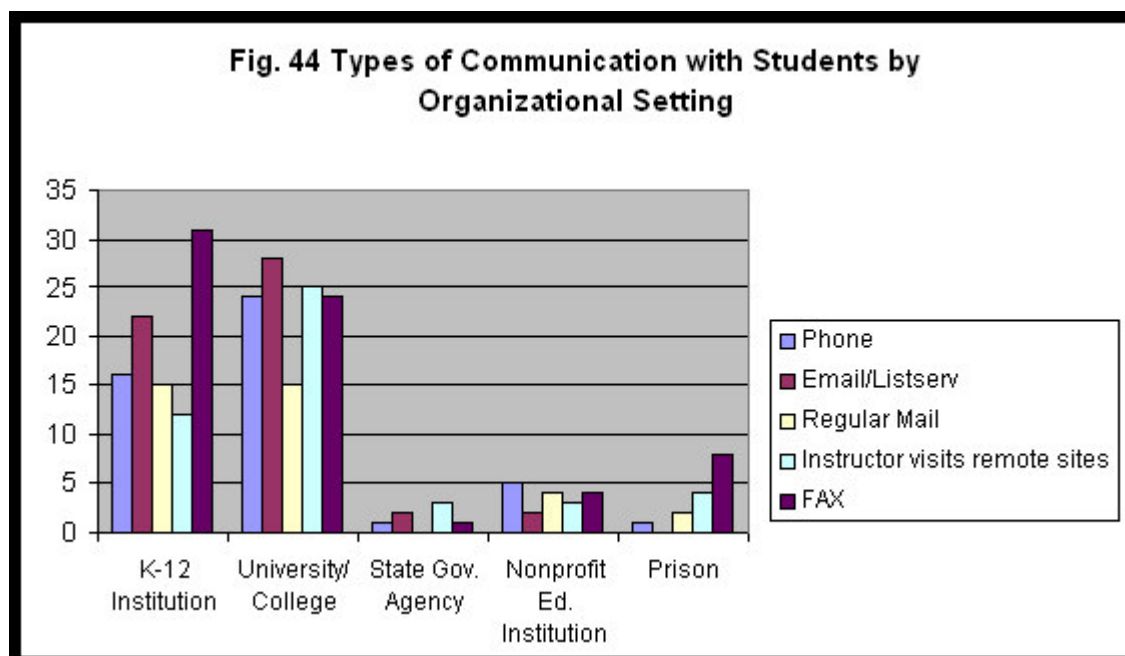
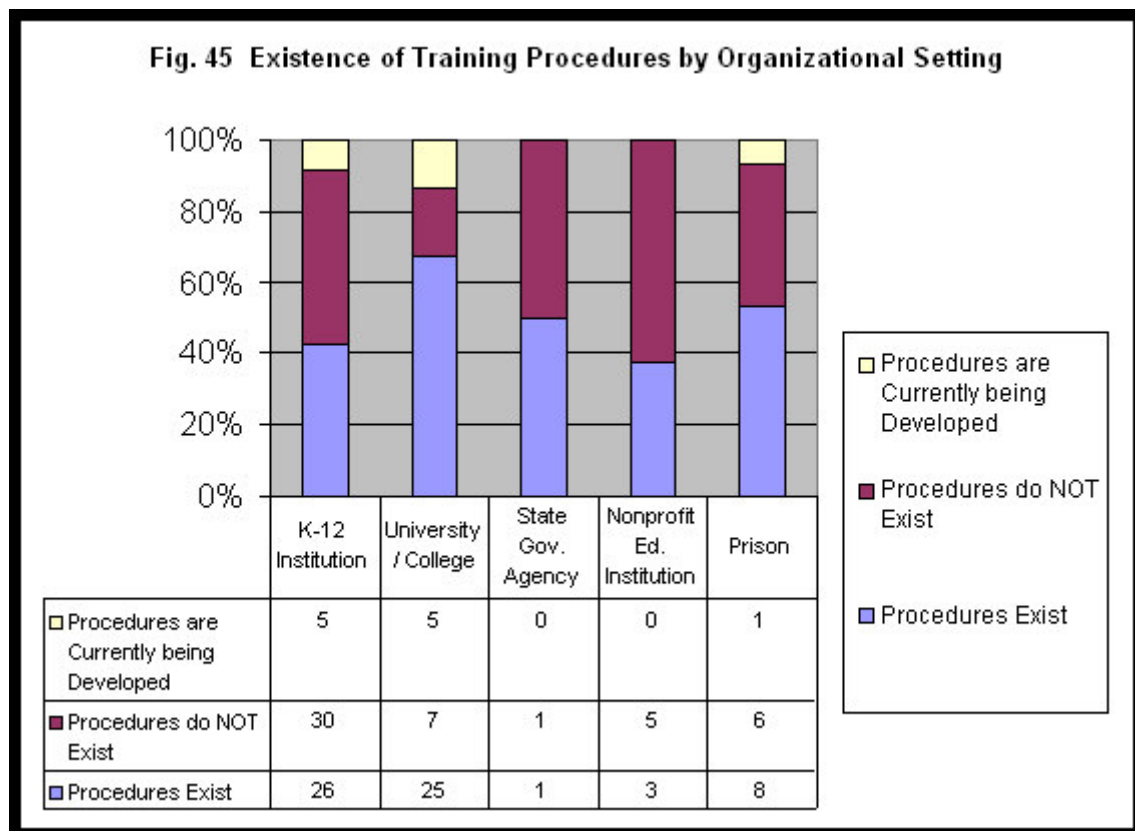
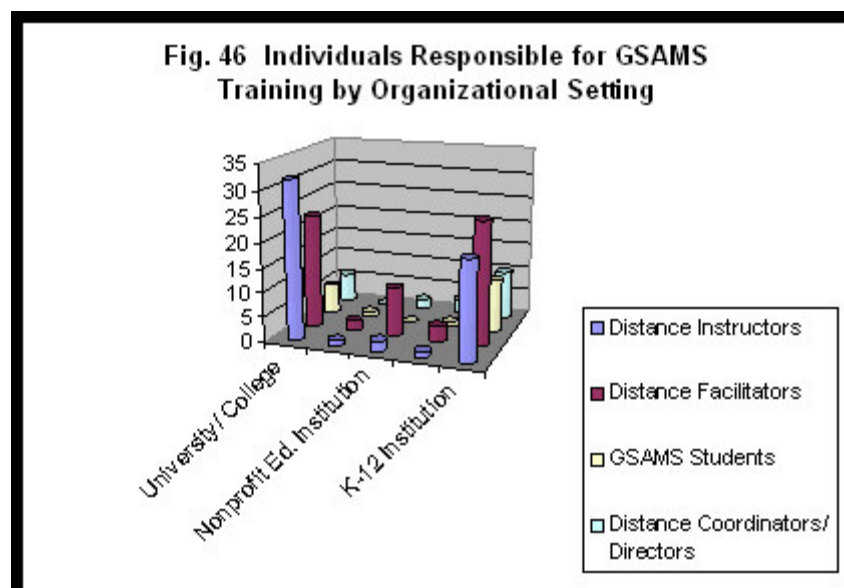


Figure 45 shows how the existence of training procedures varies by organizational setting. University/college settings have the most sites with training procedures in place (68%), followed by prisons (53%), state government agencies (50%), and K-12 institutions (43%).



Forty-seven percent of respondents indicated that **distance instructors** at their sites receive GSAMS training. Other individuals who receive GSAMS training include **distance facilitators** (45%), **GSAMS students** (15%), and **distance coordinators/directors** (16%). Some sites also provide training to **teachers, media specialists, and any staff member interested in the training**. Figure 46 on the following page shows how individuals receiving GSAMS instruction varies by organizational setting.



Of the 116 individuals who responded to the question regarding whether GSAMS training was required for instructors, 54% indicated that **training is not required**. Figure 47 shows how this varies by organizational setting.

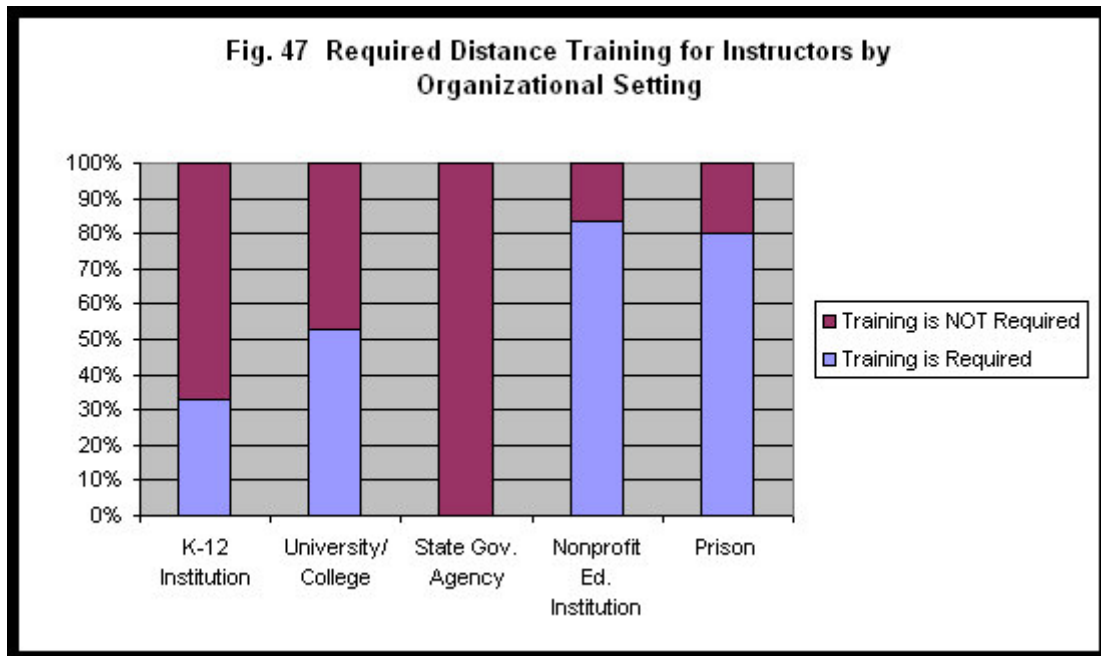


Figure 48 provides information regarding how required training for GSAMS facilitators varies by organizational setting. While most sites require GSAMS training for facilitators, and many require training for instructors, only 7% require training for students. Only K-12 institutions and universities and colleges **require student training** for distance learning courses. About 7% of K-12 institutions and 6% of universities and colleges have this student requirement.

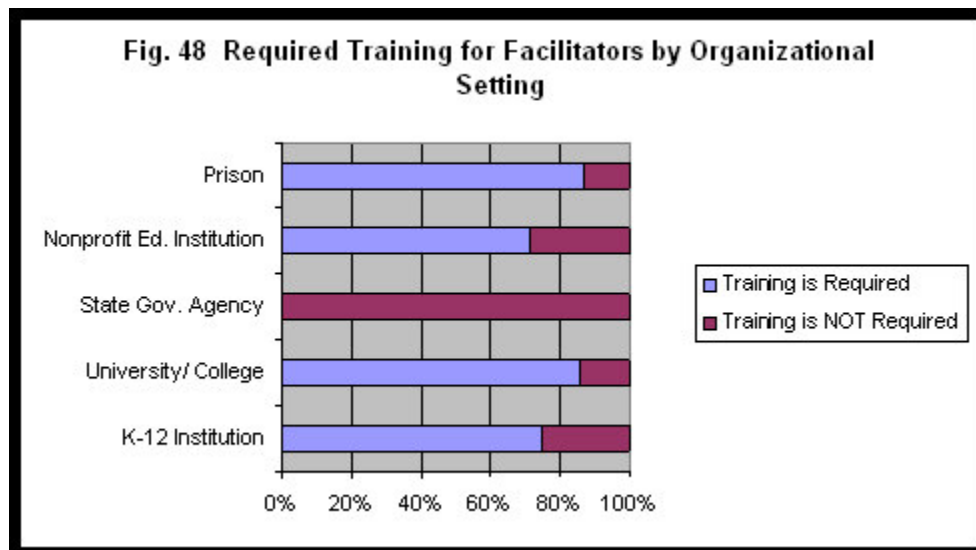
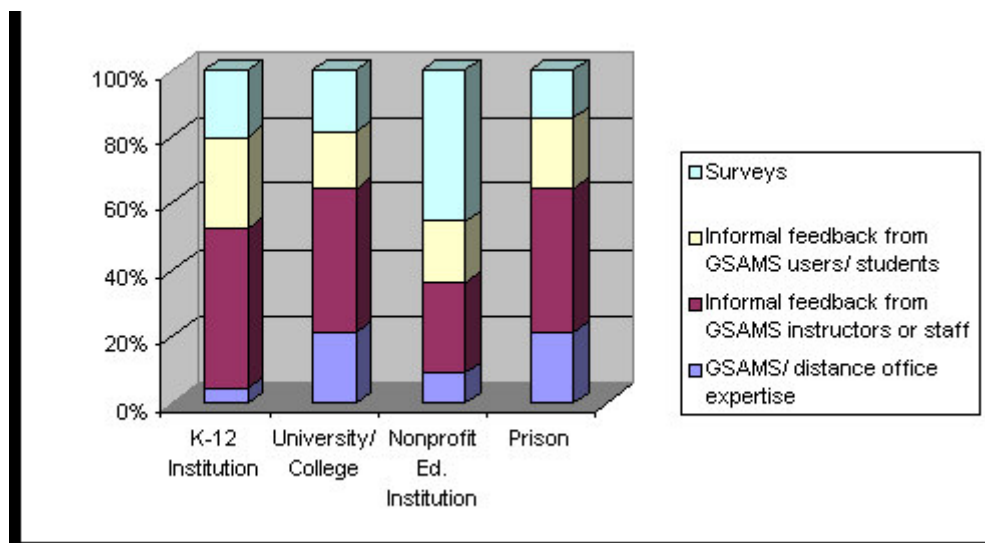
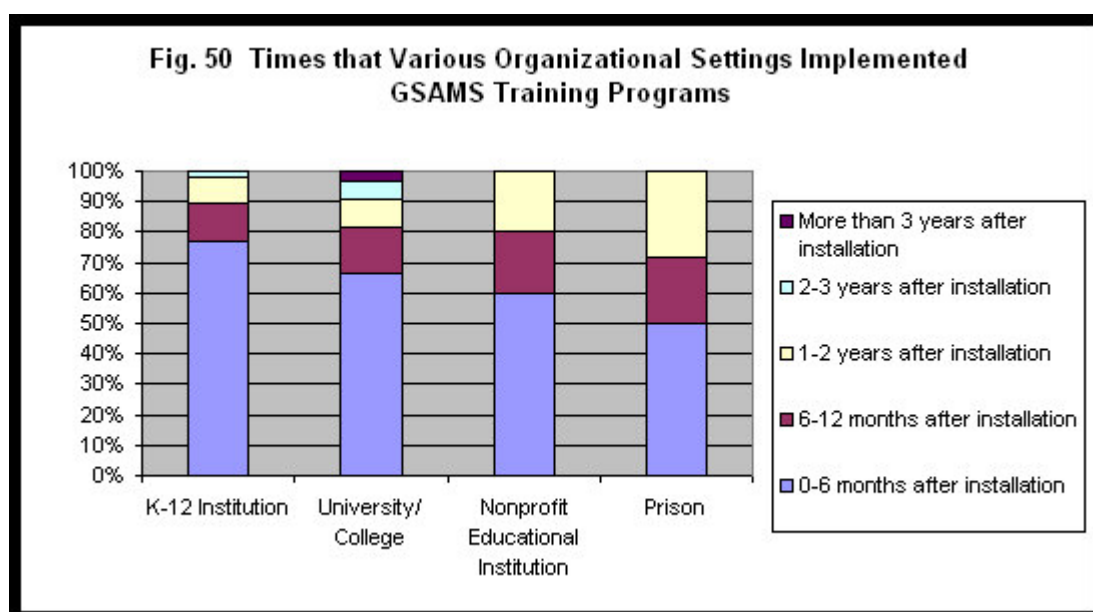


Figure 49 shows the various ways GSAMS training needs are identified at different organizational settings. At K-12 institutions, universities and colleges, and prisons, **informal feedback from GSAMS instructors and staff** is used most often. Nonprofit educational institutions use **surveys** most frequently to identify training needs.

Fig. 49 Ways GSAMS Training Needs are Identified by Organizational Setting



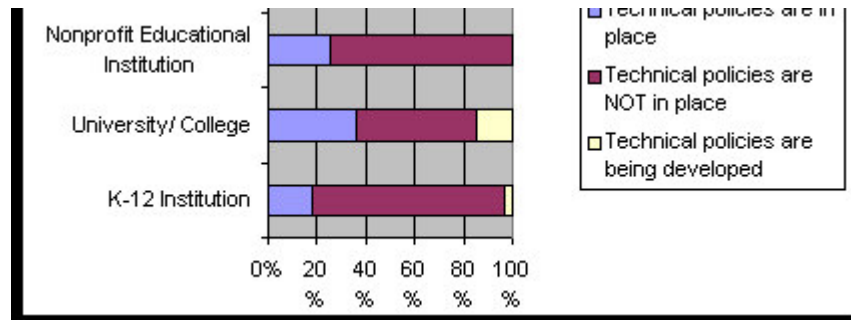
Sixty-nine percent of respondents said that GSAMS training programs began at their sites **within 6 months after GSAMS installation**, and 15% said programs began **between 6 and 12 months after GSAMS installation**. Other responses included **1-2 years after installation** (12%), **2-3 years after installation** (3%) and **more than 3 years after installation** (1%). Figure 50 shows this comparison by organizational setting.



Technical

Sixty-seven percent of respondents said that there were no written technical policies in place within their organizational settings. Figure 51 shows how this varies by organizational setting. Universities/colleges and prisons are the sites that have the most technical policies in place. Most settings, however, do not currently have technical policies in place.





Of the 123 individuals that responded, 65% said that they currently have a **full- or part-time person who takes care of technical problems with equipment**. Figure 52 shows how this varies by organizational setting.

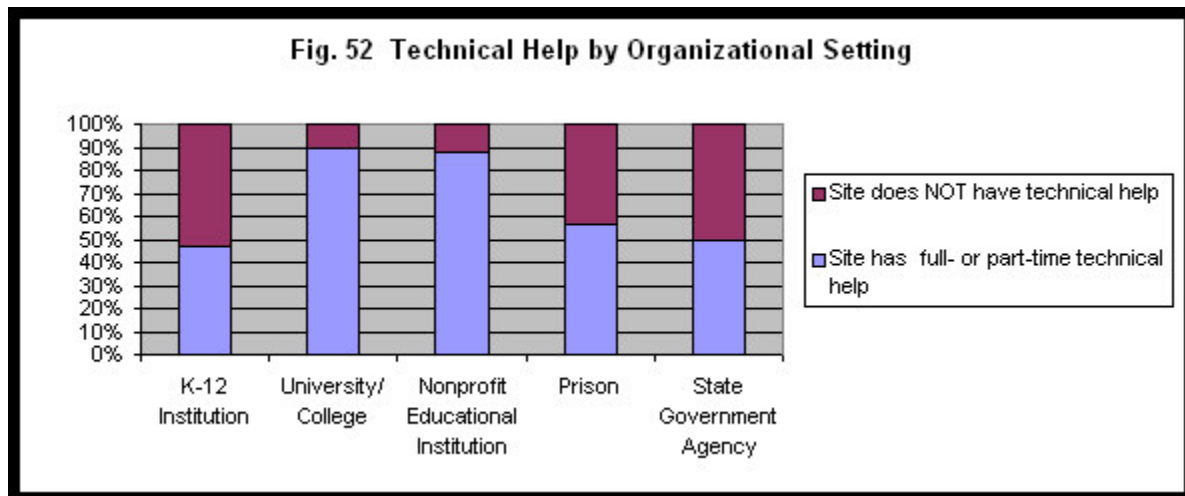
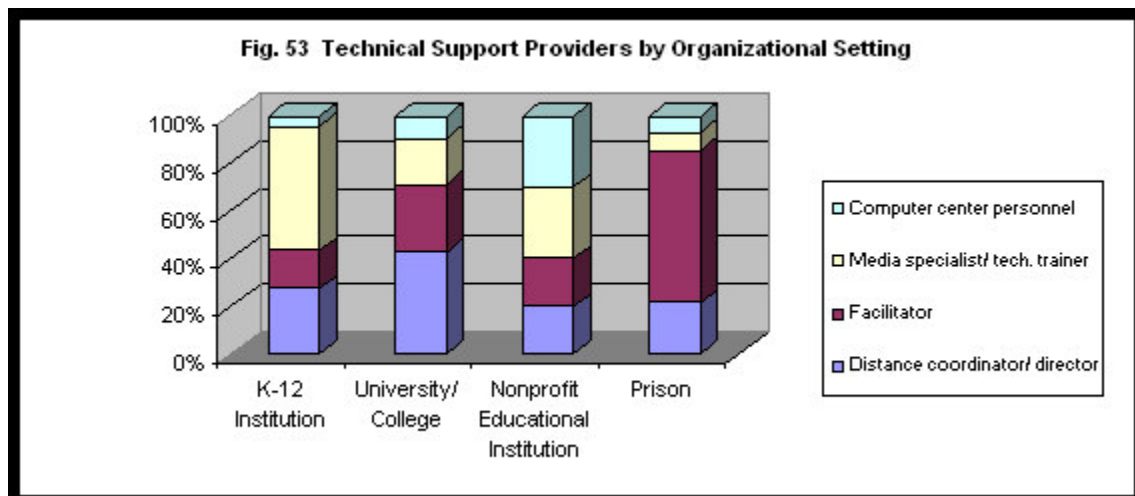
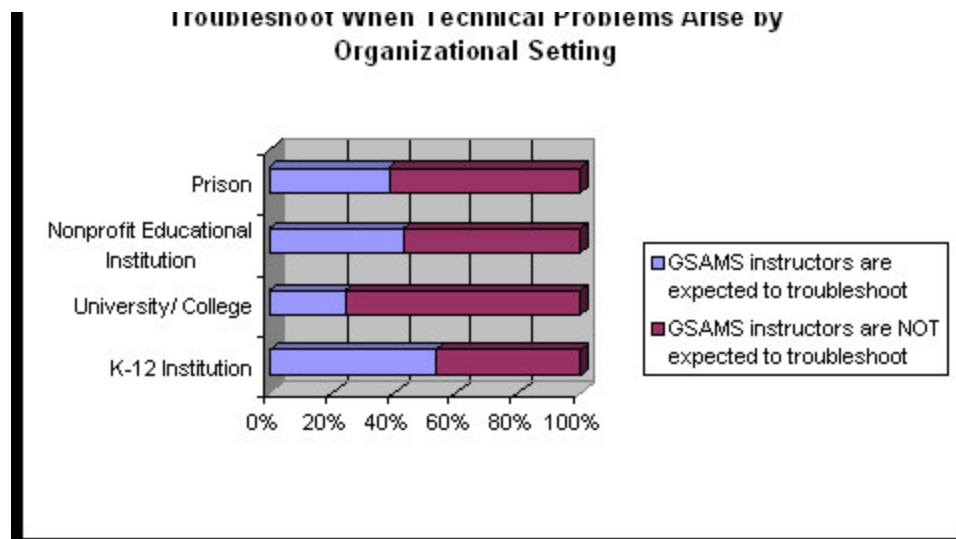


Figure 53 provides information about how technical support varies by organizational setting. At K-12 institutions, **media specialist or tech trainers** provide most of the technical support to GSAMS sites. At universities and colleges, **distance coordinators** handle technical problems.



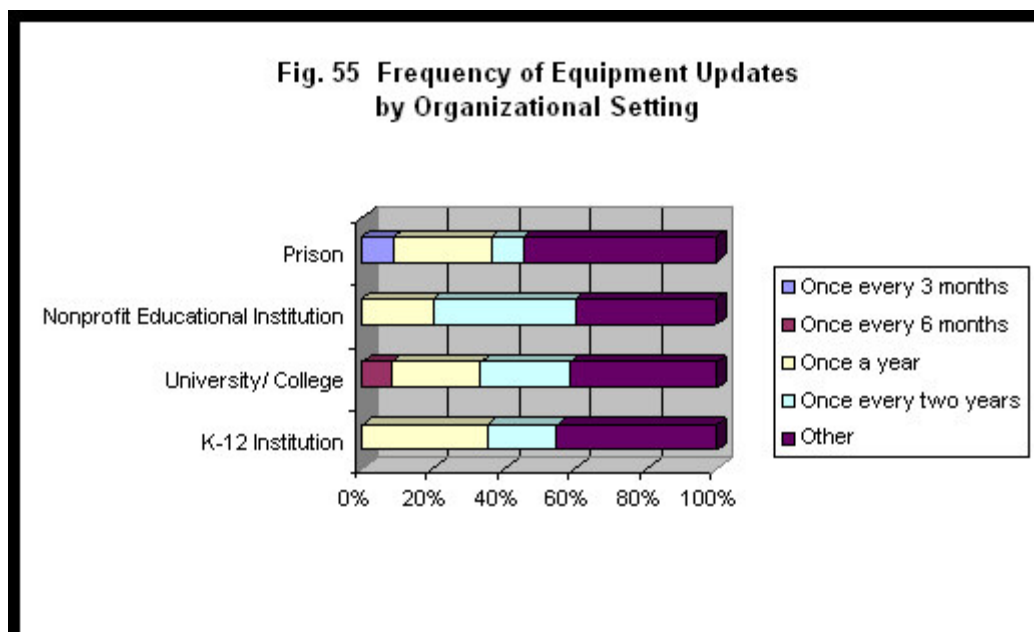
Forty-two percent of participants said that **distance delivery instructors at their sites are expected to troubleshoot** when equipment problems arise. This requirement varies by organizational setting, however (see Figure 54).

Fig. 54 Expectations for Distance Instructors to Troubleshoot Technical Problems



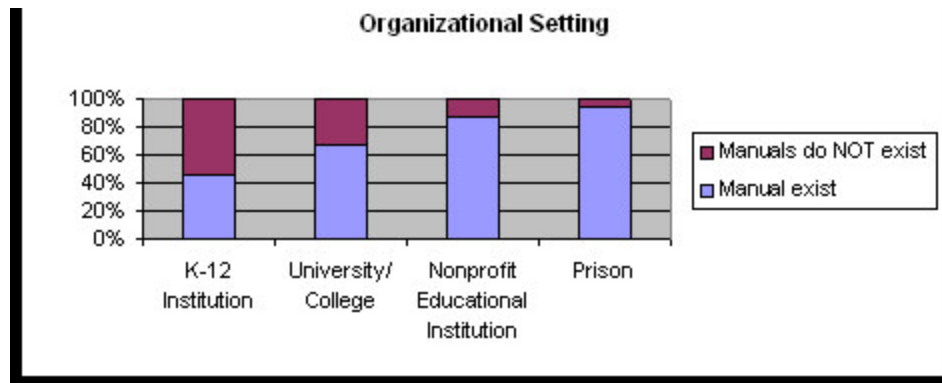
When asked whether GSAMS equipment is periodically updated, 67% of respondents said that there are **regular updates** at their sites. Approximately 70% of respondents from universities/colleges, nonprofit educational institutions, and prisons reported **periodic equipment updates**. Fifty-nine percent of K-12 institutions **update equipment on a regular basis**.

Prisons are the only setting that **report updating equipment every three months**. About 30% of K-12 institutions have equipment updates **once a year**. Roughly the same percentage of nonprofit educational institutions update their equipment **once every two years**. Many respondents said that equipment is updated on an **as needed basis** (see Figure 55).



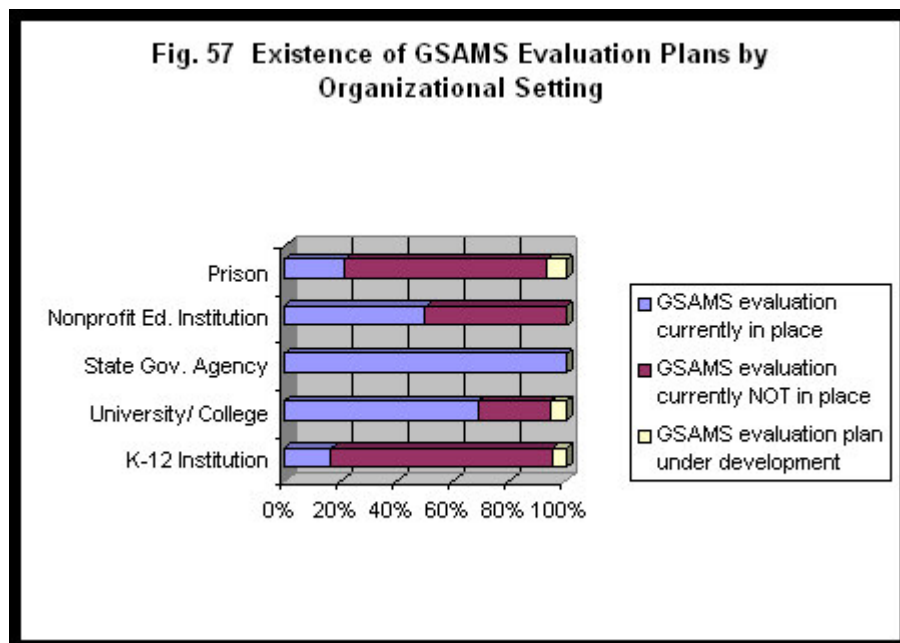
Sixty percent of participants indicated that **equipment operation procedure manuals are available** at their sites for distance delivery instructors or facilitators. Figure 56 displays how this differs at the various organizational settings. Prisons and nonprofit educational institutions are the sites with the **greatest percentage of equipment manuals**. K-12 institutions are the settings reporting the **fewest number of sites with manuals**.

Fig. 56 Existence of Equipment Operation Procedure Manuals by

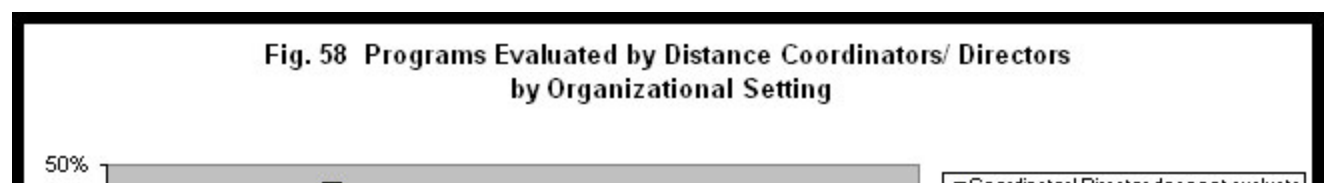


Evaluation

Fifty-seven percent of respondents said that there is an **evaluation plan in place** within their organizational settings and 6% said **evaluations plans are currently being developed**. This differed widely by organizational setting, as can be seen in Figure 57.



Although there were only two state government agencies that responded to the survey, both said that they **currently have a GSAMS evaluation in place**. The majority of universities and colleges also currently **have an evaluation plan in place**. Only about 18% of K-12 institutions said that **evaluation procedures are in place within their organizational settings**. Universities and colleges reported **evaluating the most often**. In this setting, **distance coordinators, distance instructors, and distance facilitators** are evaluated. Also evaluated at higher education institutions is **course effectiveness, costs-benefits, distance needs of students, instructor and facilitator training programs, and student satisfaction**. Figure 58 shows comparisons of evaluation of programs across organizational settings.



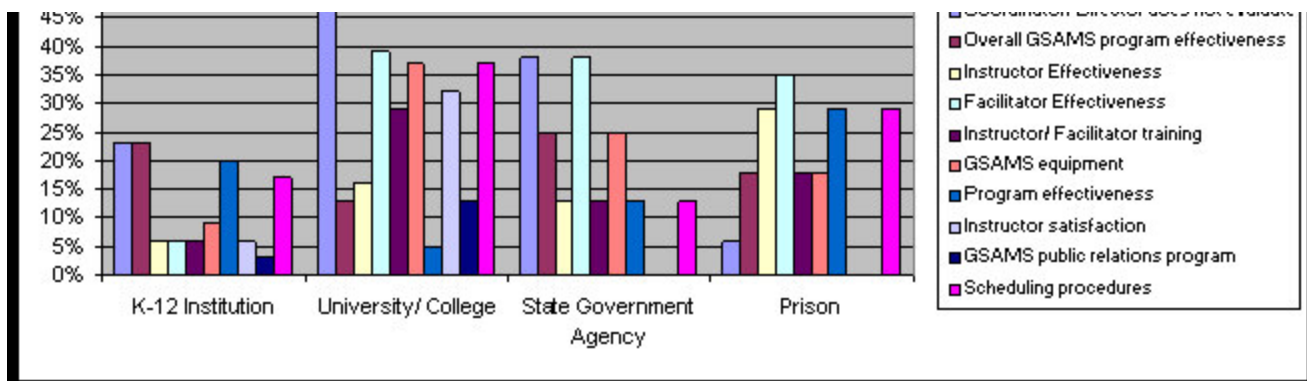
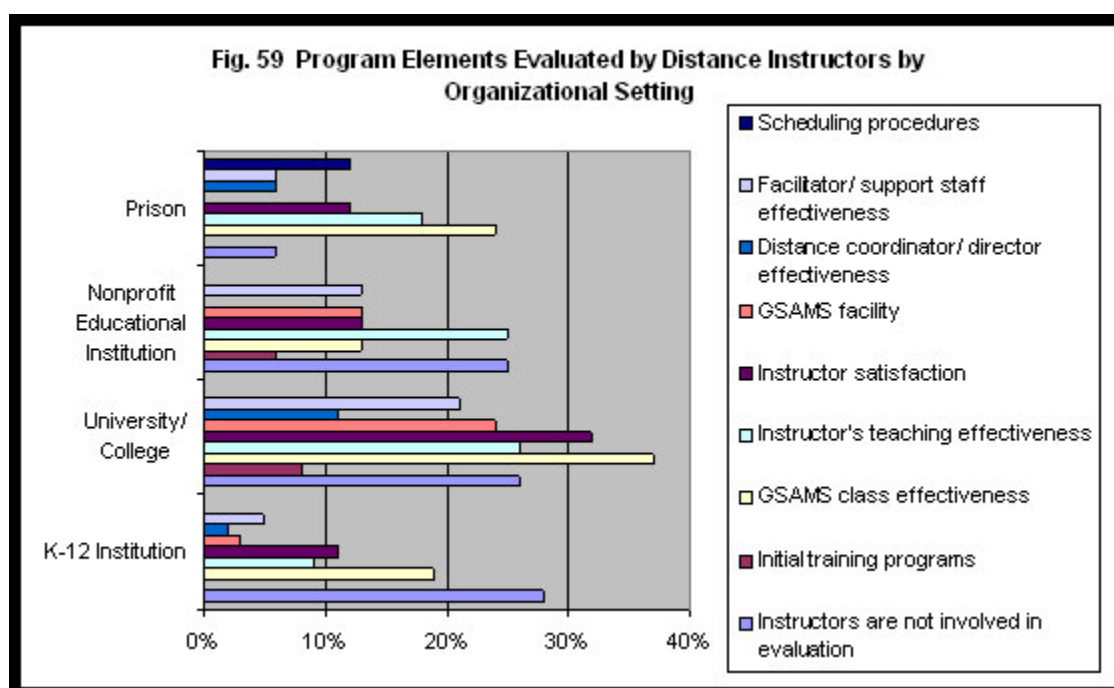
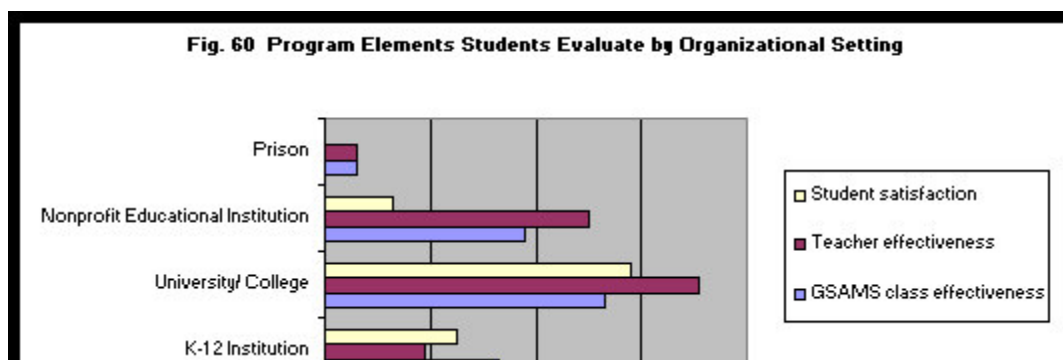
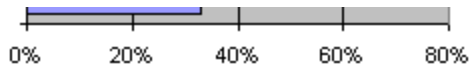


Figure 59 shows comparisons of evaluation of program elements across organizational settings. **GSAMS class effectiveness, instructor satisfaction, and teaching effectiveness** are evaluated by instructors at over 25% of university/college settings. Approximately 28% of K-12 institutions, 26% of university/college settings, and 25% of nonprofit educational settings reported that **distance instructors are not involved in evaluation** procedures. Prisons were the only setting to report evaluating **scheduling procedures**.

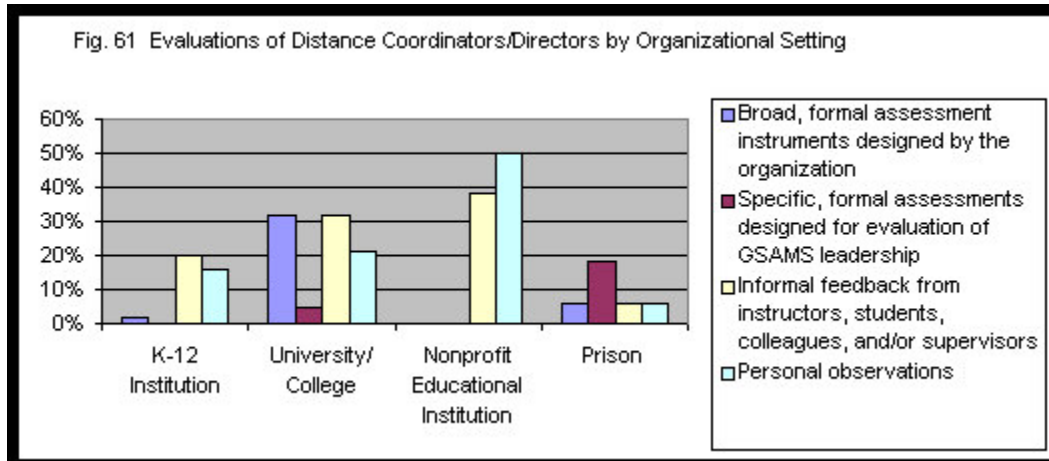


Comparing program elements evaluated by students at various organizational settings it was determined that students do not evaluate programs in 53% of prisons, 20% of K-12 institutions, and 5% of colleges/ universities. Figure 60 displays other ways student evaluation varies by organizational setting.

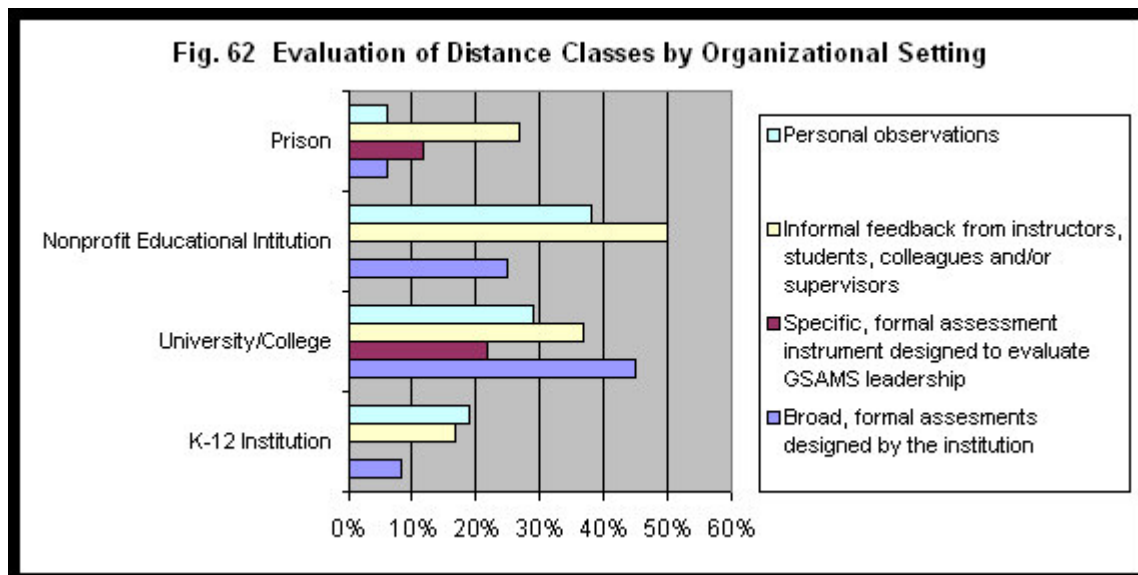




Comparisons by organizational setting revealed that 45% of K-12 institutions, 25% of nonprofit educational institutions, 21% of universities/colleges, and 18% of prisons reported that distance **coordinators/directors at their sites are not evaluated**. Figure 61 shows how the settings vary in other areas.

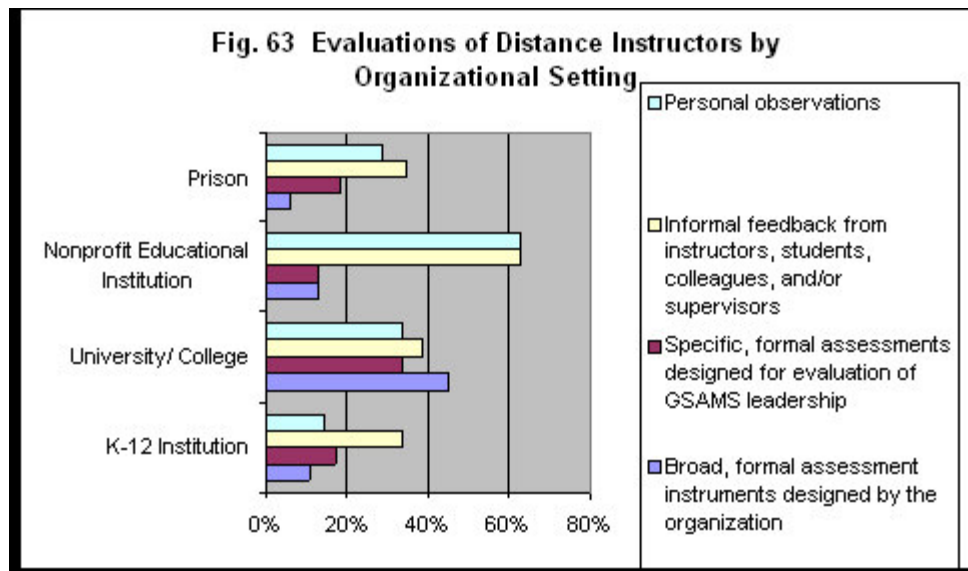


Thirty-eight percent of respondents from K-12 institutions reported that distance learning instructors at their sites are **not evaluated**, compared to 13% from nonprofit educational institutions, 6% from prisons, and 5% from universities and colleges. Figure 62 shows other ways evaluations of distance learning instructors differed among the organizational settings.



Nonprofit educational institutions and K-12 institutions rely on **personal observations** and **informal feedback** most frequently for evaluating distance learning instructors. Universities and colleges rely more heavily on **broad, formal assessment instruments designed by their institutions**.

Only 3% of universities and colleges, 19% of K-12 institutions, and 12% of prisons reported that distance **classes at their settings are not evaluated**. Figure 63 displays other ways in which evaluations of distance learning classes vary at the different organizational settings.

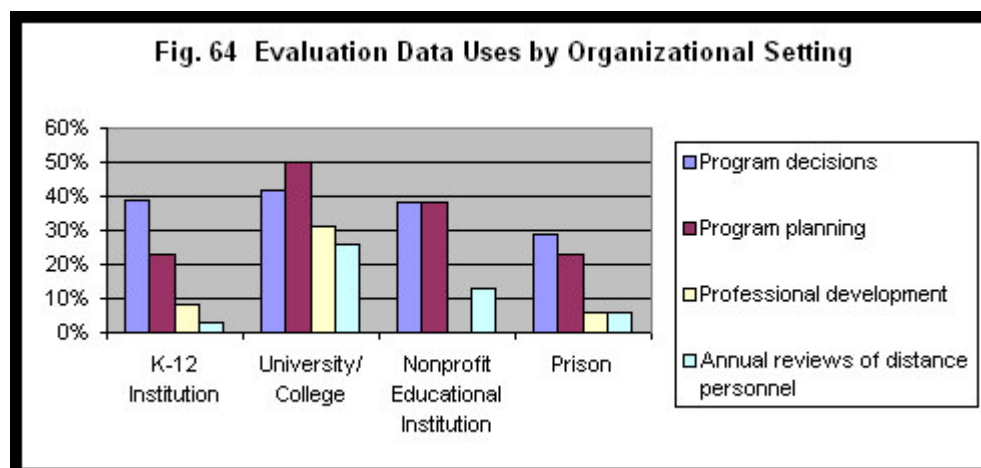


Personal observations and **informal feedback** are used most frequently at prisons and nonprofit educational institutions to evaluate distance learning class effectiveness. Universities and colleges also utilize these methods, but rely more heavily on **broad, formal assessment instruments designed by the school**. K-12 institutions use **informal feedback** most often for evaluating distance learning classes, but rely on the other three methods as well.

Comparisons across organizational settings also revealed that 45% of K-12 institutions, 39% of universities and colleges, 25% of nonprofit educational institutions, and 24% of prisons **do not evaluate instructor training programs**. Those sites that do evaluate instructor training programs rely most frequently on **personal observations** and **informal feedback from instructors, students, and/ or facilitators**.

Evaluations of **classes, instructor and facilitator training sessions, and program effectiveness** were all reported to be evaluated more often on a **regular basis at the end of training** rather than randomly. Fifty-five percent of universities and colleges, 50% of nonprofit educational institutions, 35% of prisons, and 30% of K-12 institutions reported **evaluating classes on a regular basis at the end of the instructional unit**. Twenty-five percent of nonprofit educational institutions, 22% of K-12 institutions, and 16% of colleges and universities reported evaluating program effectiveness **regularly at the end of the year**.

Figure 64 displays how evaluative data are used at the different organizational settings.



All settings use evaluation data for making program decisions with about equal frequency. Over 20% of individuals from each type of organizational setting also said that evaluation data are used for program planning. Universities and colleges use evaluation data for professional development and for annual reviews of distance learning personnel more often than the other types of settings.

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