

**University Dining Service-Tainter:**  
How can UDS-Tainter Retain Student Employees?

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Quality Practicum  
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## **Introduction:**

University Dining Service-Tainter (UDS-Tainter) has a high turnover of student workers. This quality project is going to address this problem. By going over the problem, the method to solving the problem, and the results from both areas, I will find out why student workers are leaving and find a solution to this problem.

## **Goal:**

The primary goal of my project was to help UDS-Tainter retain employees. There has always been high turnover at the Tainter site, but there have always been students that come in looking for work mid-semester. This semester there were more student workers leaving than were coming to fill positions. This has led to a shortage of workers, student managers and line managers having to do more work, and more time spent on training.

The primary beneficiary of this project is the management of UDS-Tainter. They will benefit from not have to reschedule and reassign positions. It will also cut training costs for them as they won't have to constantly be training new staff. Student managers and line managers will be further benefit as they will be able to keep an eye on the dining area as whole instead of being constantly busy with tasks that would be assigned to a student worker. Student workers will benefit as UDS-Tainter will be a place that they will want to stay and work.

## **Previous Work:**

Before this point in time there was never any work done to solve the problem. It has always been accepted that student workers would come and go as they found jobs in the community or graduated from UW-Stout. There has up to this point, been very little worry about this problem as there always seemed to be enough students to fill positions recently left vacant by leaving student workers.

**Approach:**

The approach I decided to try was to gather information from the student worker files to create a survey. By going through the worker's files I would find out when and under what circumstances the student workers left. I will also gather information for the various charts and statistics that I need. This information would help me to construct meaningful questions to ask current student workers. I believe that a survey is the best way to find out how student workers feel about working for the UDS and why they keep quitting. I would then stick the survey in the time card slots of the student workers for them to fill out. It should work because all student workers have time card slots and they are use to getting and responding to information from the management and others who have done surveys.

**Methodology:**

First I need to go to the office and gather information about why student workers are quitting. There really is only one way to do this and that is to just show up and go through the necessary files. Also, while I'm in the office I can observe and note how day-to-day operations are handled and gather information from the files of student workers who quit on why they left.

Second I need to create the survey. There are three ways to create the survey: open answer, multiple-choice, and statement-agreement. Open answer would basically be questions where the student workers could fill in whatever answer they felt fit. The advantage is that the student worker could tell me exactly what they think is wrong. The disadvantage is that this isn't very quantitative as many different answers could be given and these answers can all not be related to the problem. Multiple-choice gives the student workers multiple answers and asks them to select the one that fits. The advantage is that there are several answers that I know are part of the problem from gathering information in the office. The disadvantage is that this still isn't a very specific way as it can't be determined the level of agreement or if multiple answers are right. Statement-agreement is similar to multiple-choice as it requires the student worker to select answer, but this time it is circling the level of

agreement to the answers. The advantage is that I can gauge how accurate the student workers agree with the statement. The disadvantage is that the student worker can't specifically tell me his or her opinion. I chose to implement statement-agreement as this would provide me both quantitative results and a way to measure specific answers. Open answer was not used because answers couldn't be measured and multiple-choice was not used because while I could get measurable results, I wouldn't be able to determine how much agreement there was with answer.

Third I need to get the survey to the student workers. I decided that it was best to do it as anonymously as possible; so that the student workers wouldn't feel that they had to answer a certain way to satisfy me and would give answers they wanted and not ones they thought I would like to see. This removed the option of handing out surveys personally. Not only would student workers have known I created the survey, but I would have had to be at Tainter for each shift and there would have been no guarantee that I would have gotten to everyone as some people have unusual shift times. There are two ways to pass the survey to student workers without them knowing that I'm behind it: in the time card slots and beside the time card slots. In the time card slots would basically mean folding the survey and placing it behind the student workers' time cards. The advantage is that student workers will be most likely to respond. The disadvantage is that there is a great likelihood that the surveys could get moved on me. Beside the time card slots would have me creating a holder of some kind and having the surveys in there. The advantage is that the surveys are unlikely to be moved. The disadvantage is that student workers are more likely to ignore them. I implemented the in the time card slot approach at first. I folded the surveys and placed them in the time card slots. When I went back a few days later to check to see how many surveys were filled out, I found some were filled out but most of the surveys had been moved. I then had to implement the beside the time card slot method by creating a pocket by stapling printer paper together with a sign on the pocket asking student workers to please take a survey.

Fourth is collecting of the surveys. To do this, I took a big clasp envelop and placed a sign saying that it was for completed surveys. I taped it to the wall next to the time card slots so that it was in easy view.

## **Results:**

I won't be able to measure success in terms this semester of experiments or results from these experiments. I have to first propose my findings to my boss. From there, experiments can be set up and observed. For best results I would have do these experiments during the fall semester since according to the data I gathered on student workers quitting shows and what I learned from the office staff is that fall semesters have a similar pattern and spring semesters have a similar pattern.

That said I was able to determine one experiment I could do and that is change the way orientation is handled. I base this off my survey results. I designed the survey so that questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 are positive questions and questions 5 and 8 are negative questions. With positive questions, a "High/Strong Agreement" means that things are going well. With negative questions, a "High/Strong Agreement" means that things are not going well and that there might be problems. On questions 1, 3, 4, and 7 there seems to be a general trend to the "High/Strong Agreement" so it can be observed that student workers generally like their jobs and questions 5 and 8 show a general trend to the "No/Low Agreement" so that it can be observed that student workers don't agree with the negative statements from those questions. Question 2 shows some interesting results as it is a positive question but shows only "Average Agreement" from student workers.

Question 2 and its statements focus on whether or not orientation provided enough information about how much workload there was and how much time would be taken up at work during the semester. This suggests a shortfall in how much information is really gained by incoming students. Also, while I was in the office gathering information to create the survey, I was able to observe orientation for myself. Based on this, I would set up an experiment or experiments around changing

orientation. First, instead of just a quick tour of the place pointing out where items and machinery are located, I would have prospective student workers stand around behind a few of the stations for a few minutes to observe some of the activity hopefully during a busy period. I would also have prospective student workers lift a pan of food or its equivalent to understand what they would be handling. This would create a more interactive tour. Second, I would limit students working there first semester to ten hours. This way first time student workers would be able to work but wouldn't drop shifts and/or quit because college studies would be taking up more and more of their time. Finally, I would look into some kind of 'training/mentoring program' for student workers much like there is for first time student managers.

## **Discussion:**

Overall, the approach I took didn't work out as planned. I didn't get the level of response that I had hoped for. Next time I will use the beside the time card slot method at the beginning and just put a small reminder in each time card slot. Next time I would hope for a bigger sampling of student workers to respond to my survey.

I did learn much about the process of setting up quality studies. It is one thing to read about experiments in Quality Management or Quality Tools, it is quite another to setup and handle one by myself. It takes dedication, effort, focus, and interest to successfully handle one of these studies and I'm glad that I got the chance while I am still in college instead of trying to do one for the first time in the work world.

## **Conclusion:**

The goal of the quality project was to find out why student workers at UDS-Tainter are quitting. My approach was to use a survey to find out from current student workers what they thought about their jobs. While my approach didn't work out quite as I had planned, it did yield results. These results point to changing how orientation is handled. I set up an experiment or experiments to see if having

prospective student workers take more of an interactive tour of Tainter where they handled some of the heavy pans with food or its equivalent, limit student workers to ten hours their first semester, and setting up a training program of some kind. This would give prospective student workers a chance to understand what working for UDS-Tainter requires in both work and time and thus student workers who would apply would be the ones who would stay on.

environment

too much work

uneven distribution  
of work

management

confusing orders

management style

steps seem  
unnecessary

not enough training

methods

high turn over

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graph LR; A[high turn over] --- B[environment]; B --- C[too much work]; B --- D[uneven distribution of work]; A --- E[management]; E --- F[confusing orders]; E --- G[management style]; A --- H[methods]; H --- I[steps seem unnecessary]; H --- J[not enough training];
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Semesters	Total Workers	Total Workers Leaving	Mean	Percent
Fall 03	80	19	0.238	23.8%
Spring 04	75	7	0.093	9.3%
Fall 04	83	13	0.157	15.7%

First Day Work	Last Day Work	Total Days Employed
9/6/2003	11/23/2003	78.00
9/2/2003	10/11/2003	39.00
9/4/2003	9/5/2003	1.00
9/3/2003	9/3/2003	0.00
9/3/2003	9/3/2003	0.00
9/4/2003	10/2/2003	28.00
9/3/2003	9/3/2003	0.00
9/8/2003	9/9/2003	1.00
9/9/2003	9/9/2003	0.00
9/5/2003	9/24/2003	19.00
9/3/2003	9/11/2003	8.00
8/22/2003	10/11/2003	50.00
9/3/2003	9/3/2003	0.00
9/4/2003	9/11/2003	7.00
9/2/2003	9/3/2003	1.00
9/4/2003	9/30/2003	26.00
9/8/2003	9/8/2003	0.00
9/9/2003	9/24/2003	15.00
8/30/2003	9/28/2003	29.00
1/20/2004	2/18/2004	29.00
1/19/2004	2/3/2004	15.00
1/19/2004	5/3/2004	105.00
1/22/2004	5/13/2004	112.00
1/19/2004	1/19/2004	0.00
1/20/2004	5/13/2004	114.00
1/29/2004	4/11/2004	73.00
9/16/2004	10/6/2004	20.00
9/7/2004	9/20/2004	13.00
9/15/2004	9/15/2004	0.00
9/9/2004	9/20/2004	11.00
9/14/2004	9/14/2004	0.00
9/1/2004	9/15/2004	14.00
9/15/2004	9/22/2004	7.00
9/20/2004	11/1/2004	42.00
9/16/2004	10/6/2004	20.00
9/6/2004	10/4/2004	28.00
9/5/2004	9/12/2004	7.00
9/16/2004	10/8/2004	22.00
9/1/2004	9/13/2004	12.00

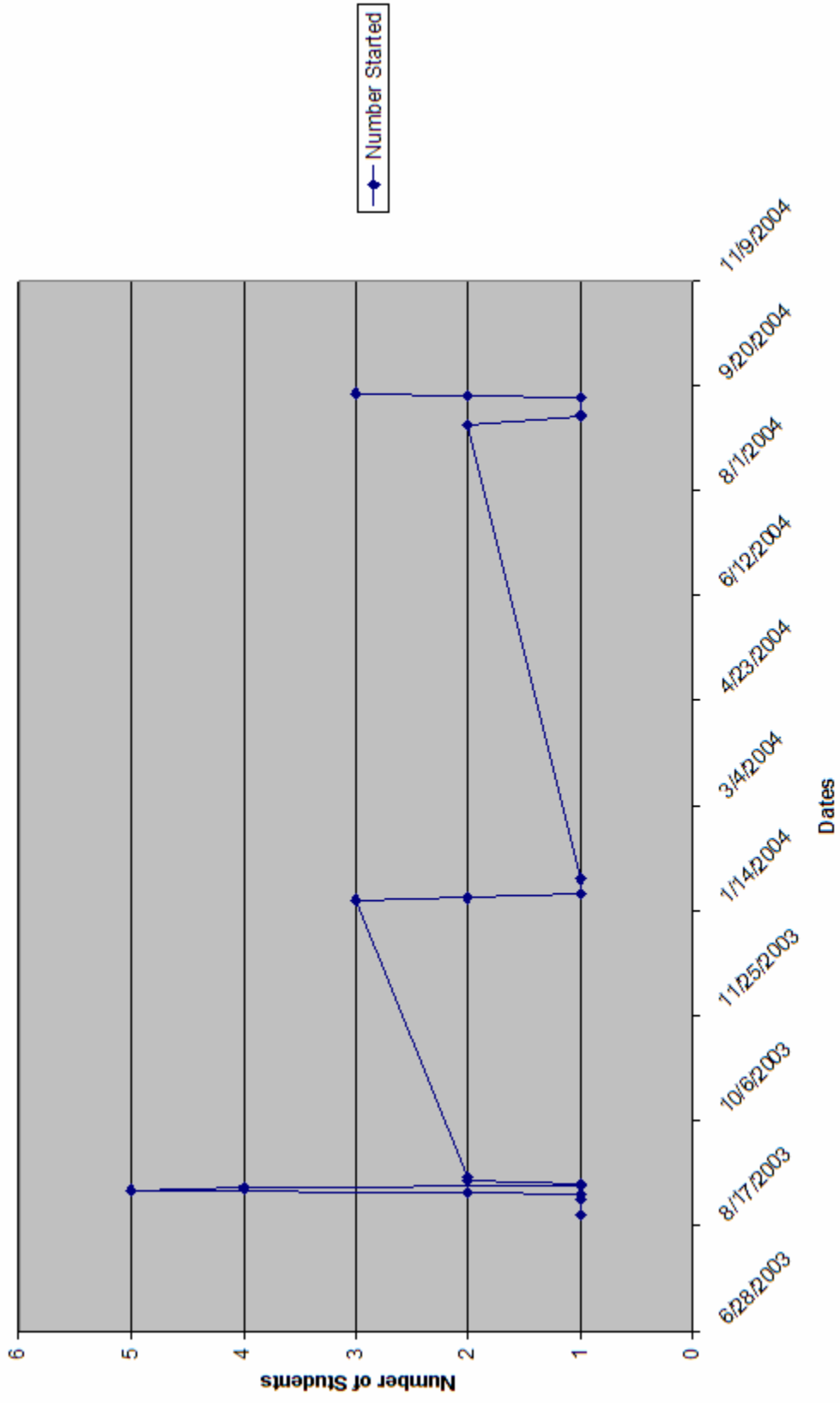
mode	9/3/2003	9/3/2003	0.00
median	1/19/2004	1/19/2004	14
average			25
standard deviation			31

This survey is for a Quality Practicum course project. The project involves how to retain workers at University Dining Service-Tainter. This survey is not tied to the University Dining Service. **Please DON'T put your name on it. Circle the number that best describes your feelings about the statement. Make sure to finish the back.**

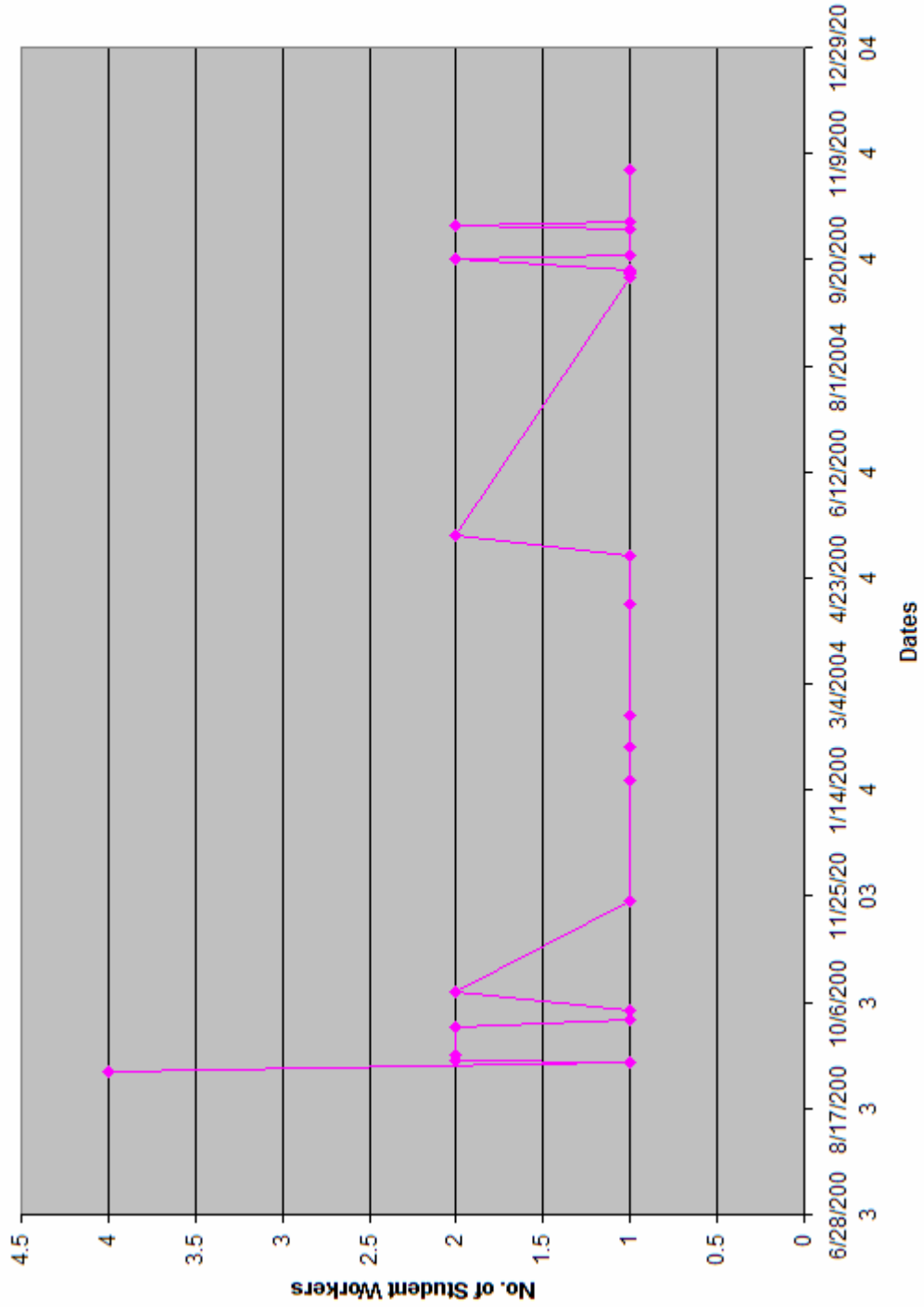
	No/Low Agreement	Average Agreement	Strong/High Agreement
<b>General Questions:</b>			
<b>1. Why did you come to UDS-Tainter to work?</b>			
a. Needed to earn money for college.	1	2	3
b. I am interested in food service or hotel management as a career.	1	2	3
c. I live on North Campus and wanted to be close to my dorm room.	1	2	3
d. I couldn't find a job anywhere's else.	1	2	3
<b>2. How do you feel about these statements about orientation?</b>			
a. Orientation gave me all I needed to know about working at UDS-Tainter.	1	2	3
b. During orientation I saw how hard I would have to work.	1	2	3
c. Orientation made me think about how work would affect my study time.	1	2	3
<b>3. Why have you stayed working for UDS-Tainter?</b>			
a. I like the team environment.	1	2	3
b. I enjoy the work I do.	1	2	3
c. I like the flexible schedules.	1	2	3
d. I like the pay.	1	2	3
e. I can't find a job anywhere's else at this time.	1	2	3
<b>4. What do you like about working for UDS-Tainter?</b>			
a. The team environment.	1	2	3
b. The closeness to North Campus dorms.	1	2	3
c. The flexible hours.	1	2	3
d. The free meal and drink program.	1	2	3
e. The hourly pay.	1	2	3
<b>TURN OVER TO CONTINUE.</b>			

	No/Low Agreement	Average Agreement	Strong/High Agreement
<b>5. What don't you like about working for UDS-Tainter?</b>			
a. The amount of work.	1	2	4
b. The hourly pay.	1	2	4
c. The free meal and drink program.	1	2	4
d. The management style of the Student Manager.	1	2	4
e. The low level of on the job training.	1	2	4
<b>Position Questions:</b>			
<b>6. What position do you work?</b>			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 20px;"></div>			
<b>7. What do you like about your position?</b>			
a. The easy of doing my job.	1	2	4
b. Being teamed with someone else.	1	2	4
c. How easy it is to understand what I need to do.	1	2	4
d. The variety of work involved.	1	2	4
e. The consistency of the directions I am given.	1	2	4
<b>8. What don't you like about your position?</b>			
a. Too many responsibilities.	1	2	4
b. I don't know what I need to do.	1	2	4
c. Some steps seem unnecessary.	1	2	4
d. Co-workers in other positions seem to have less work than me.	1	2	4
e. Too many co-workers/managers with too many different sets of directions.	1	2	4

Number Started

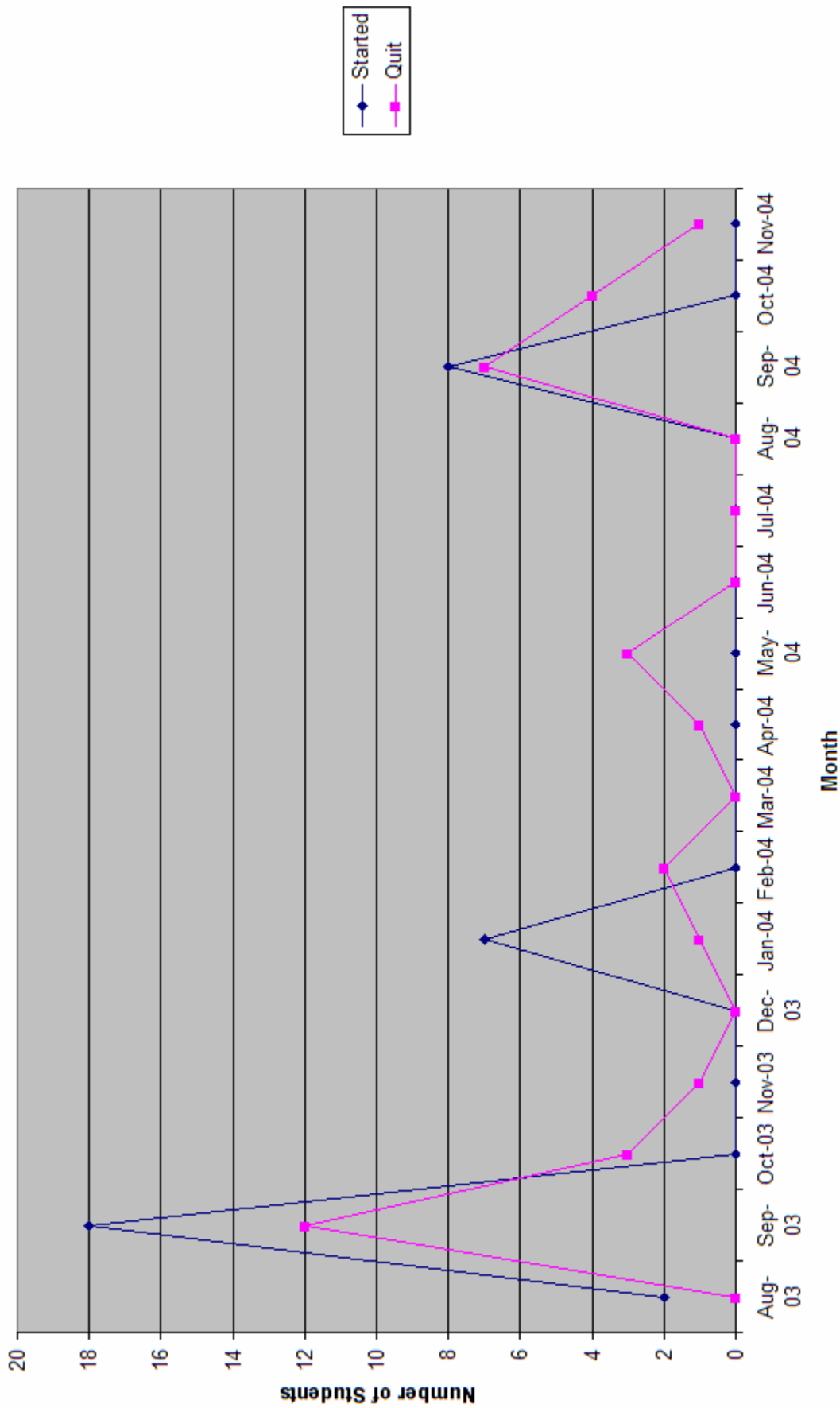


Number quit

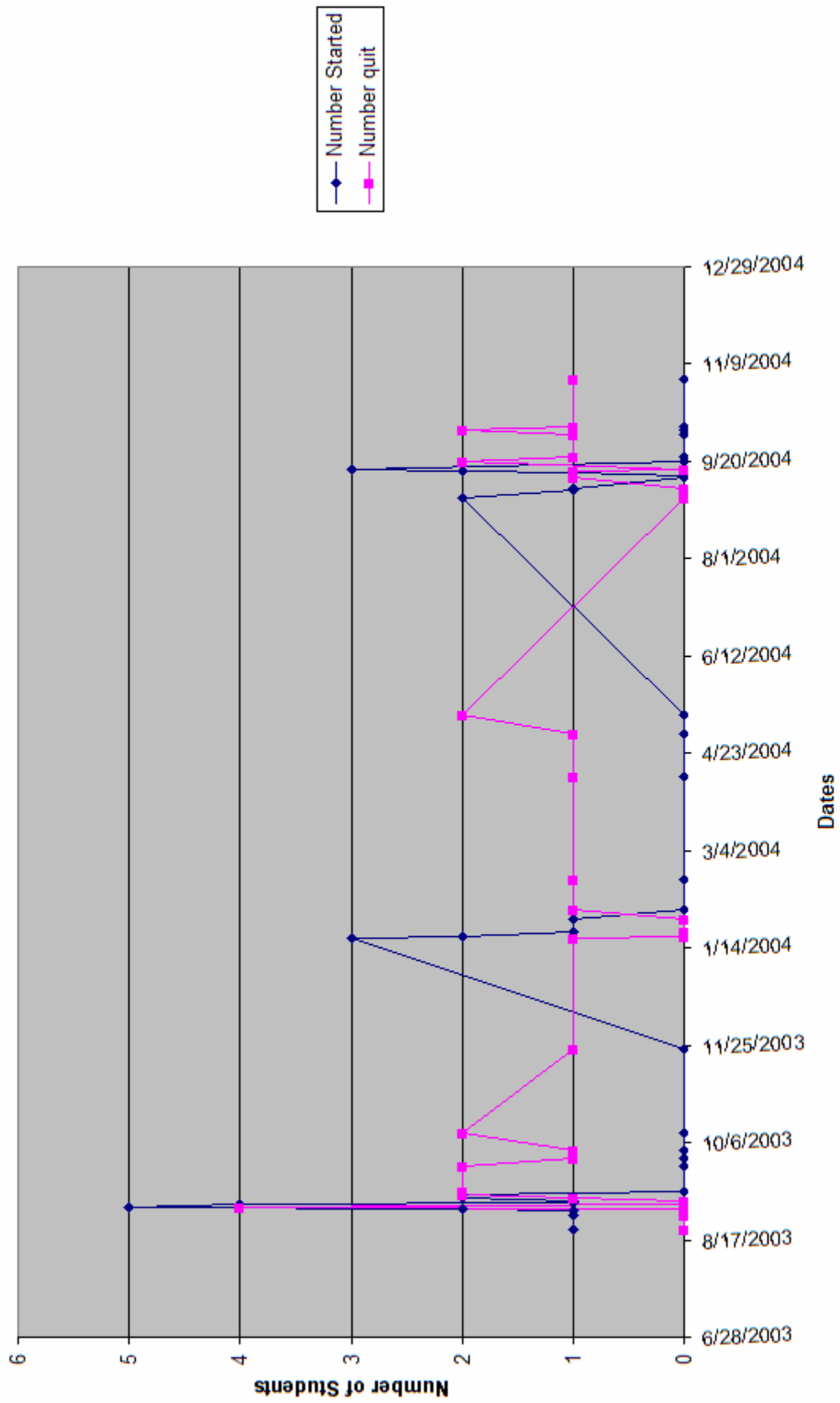


Number quit

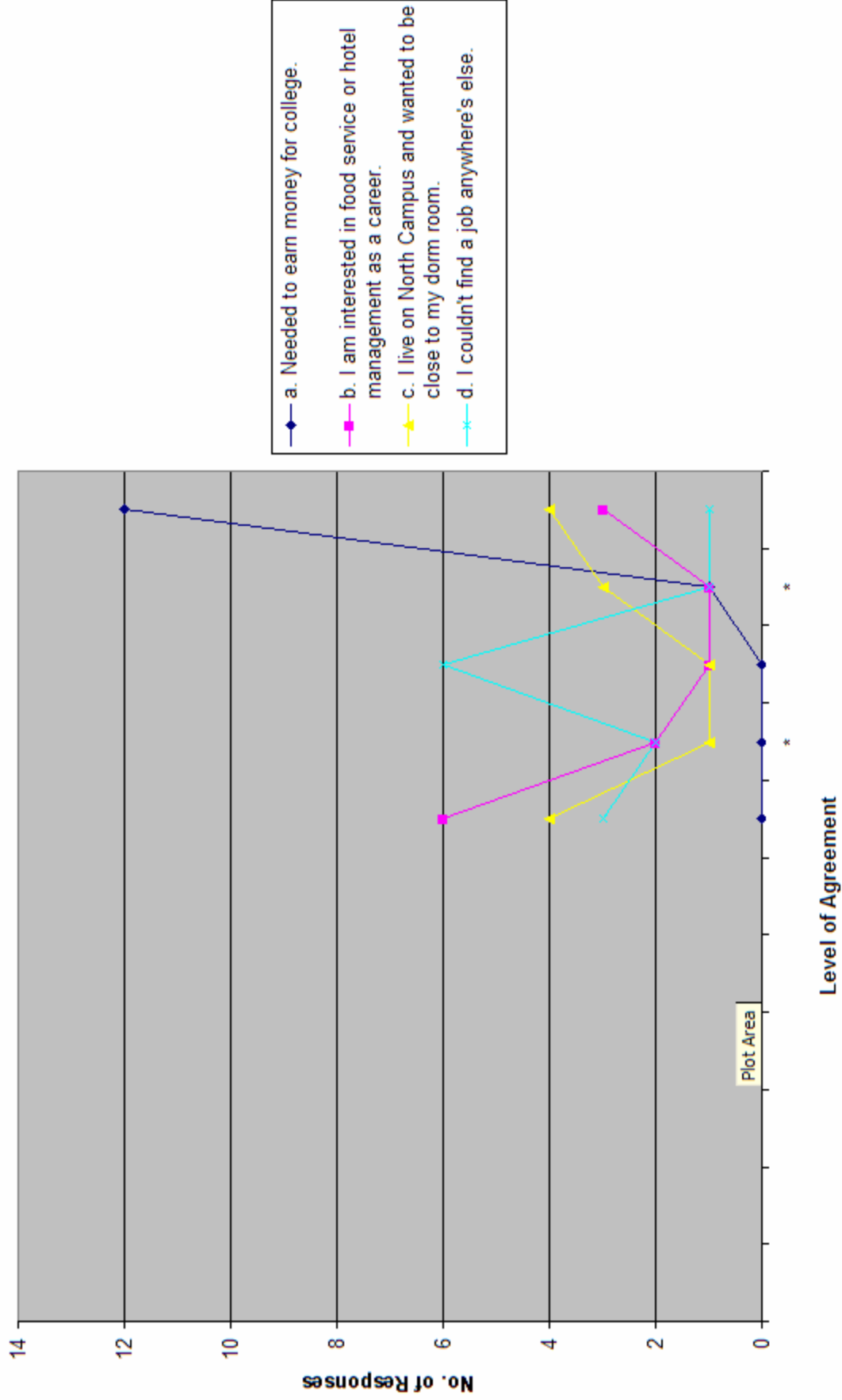
# Starting and Quitting by Month



# Number Started and Quit

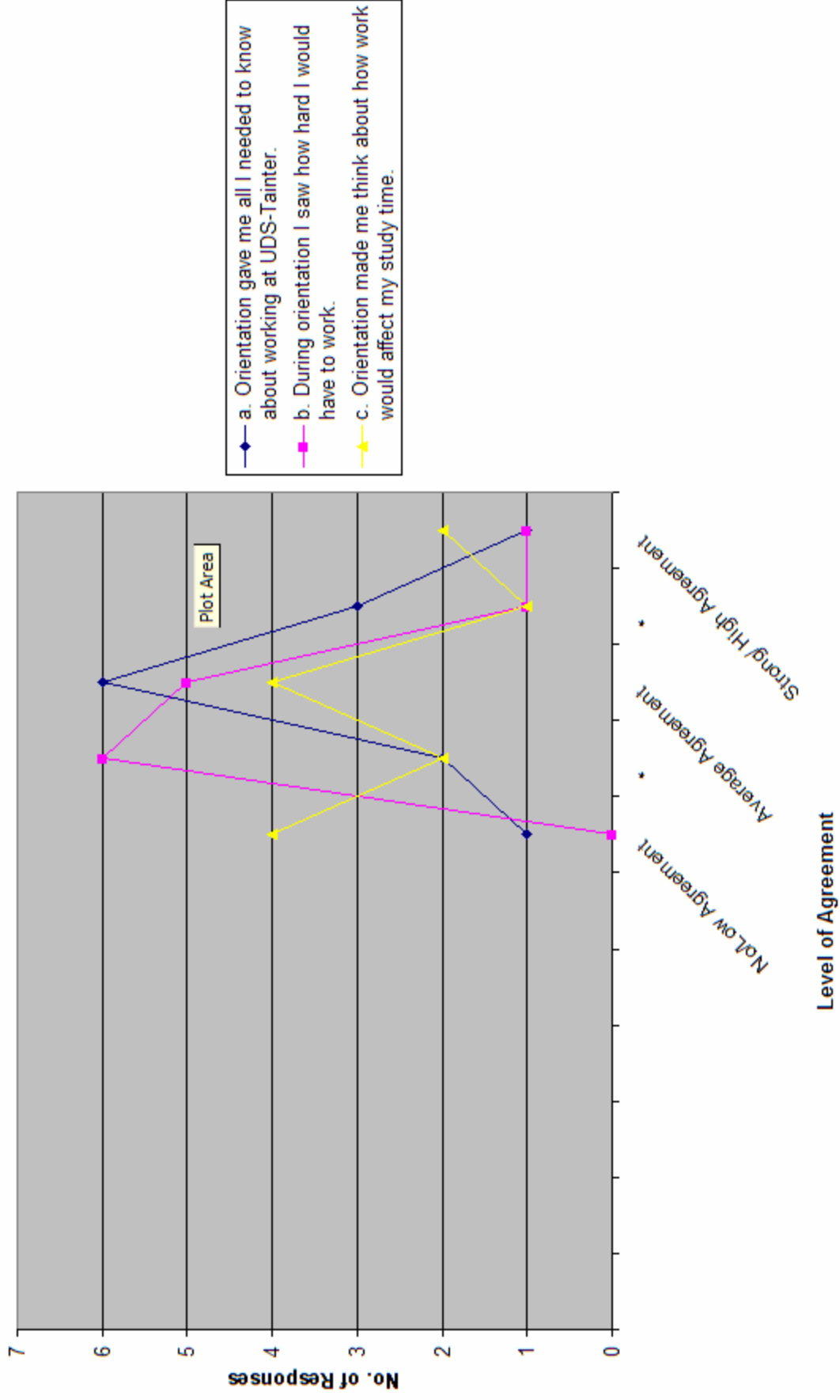


# Why did you come to UDS-Tainter to work?

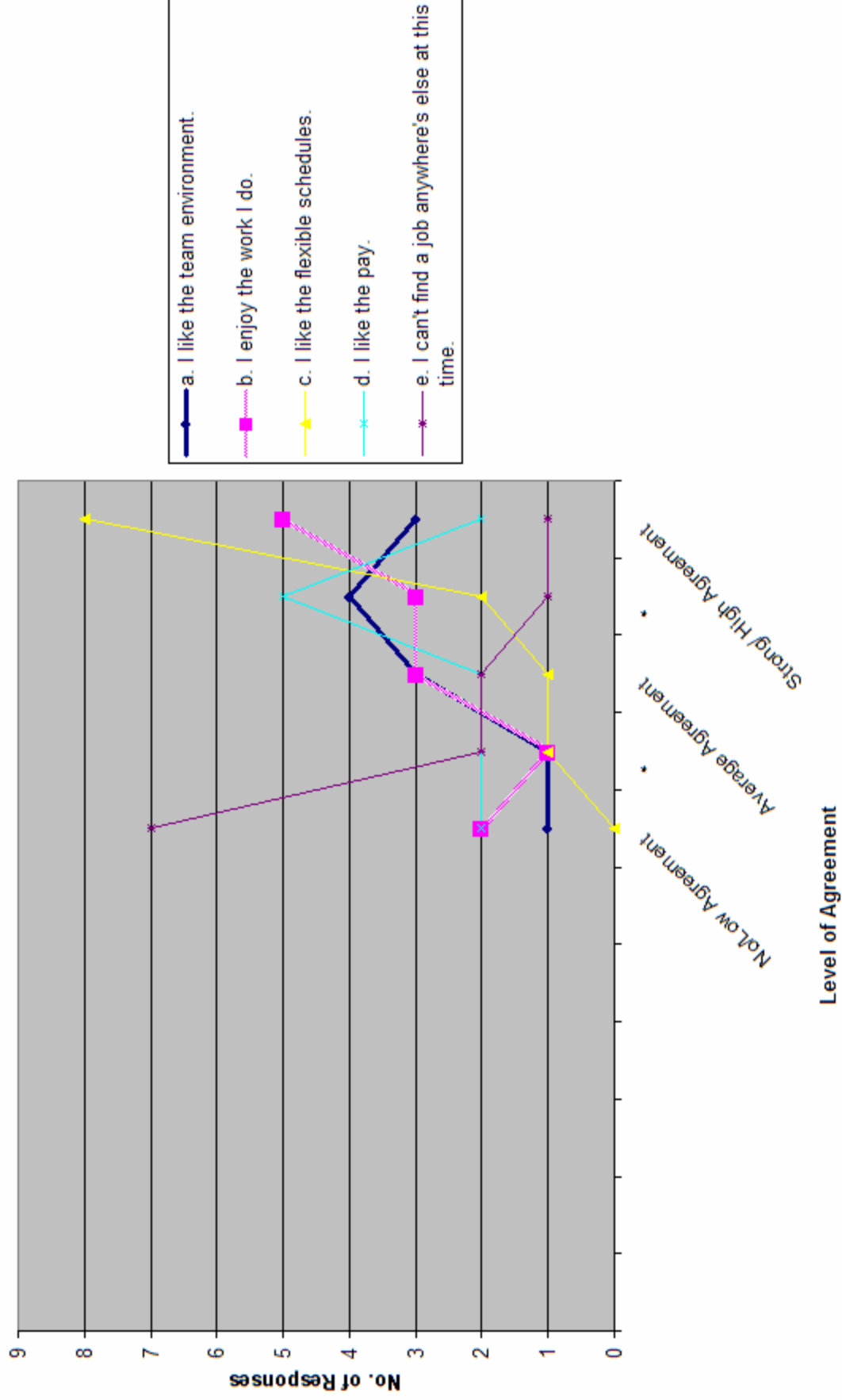




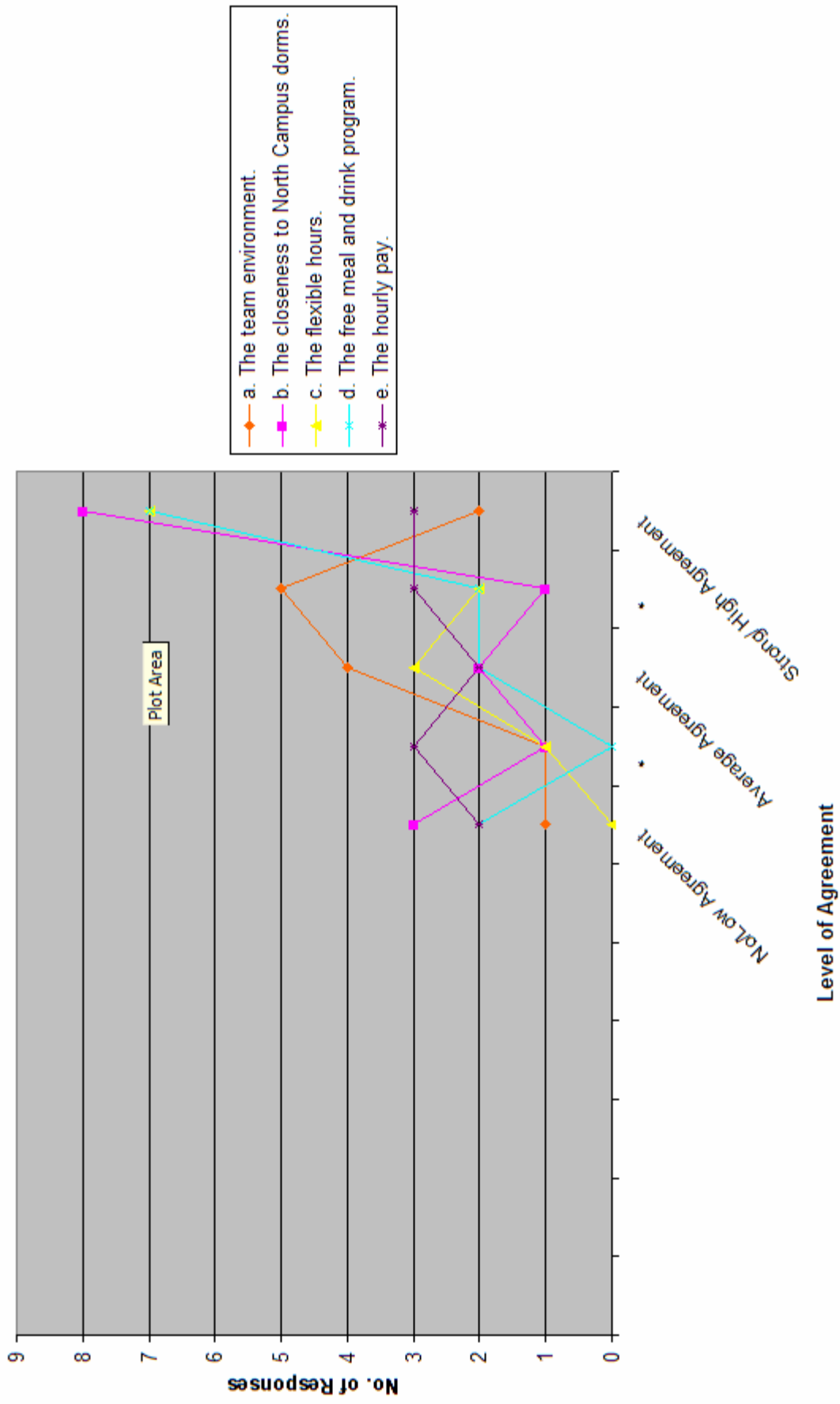
### How do you feel about these statements about orientation



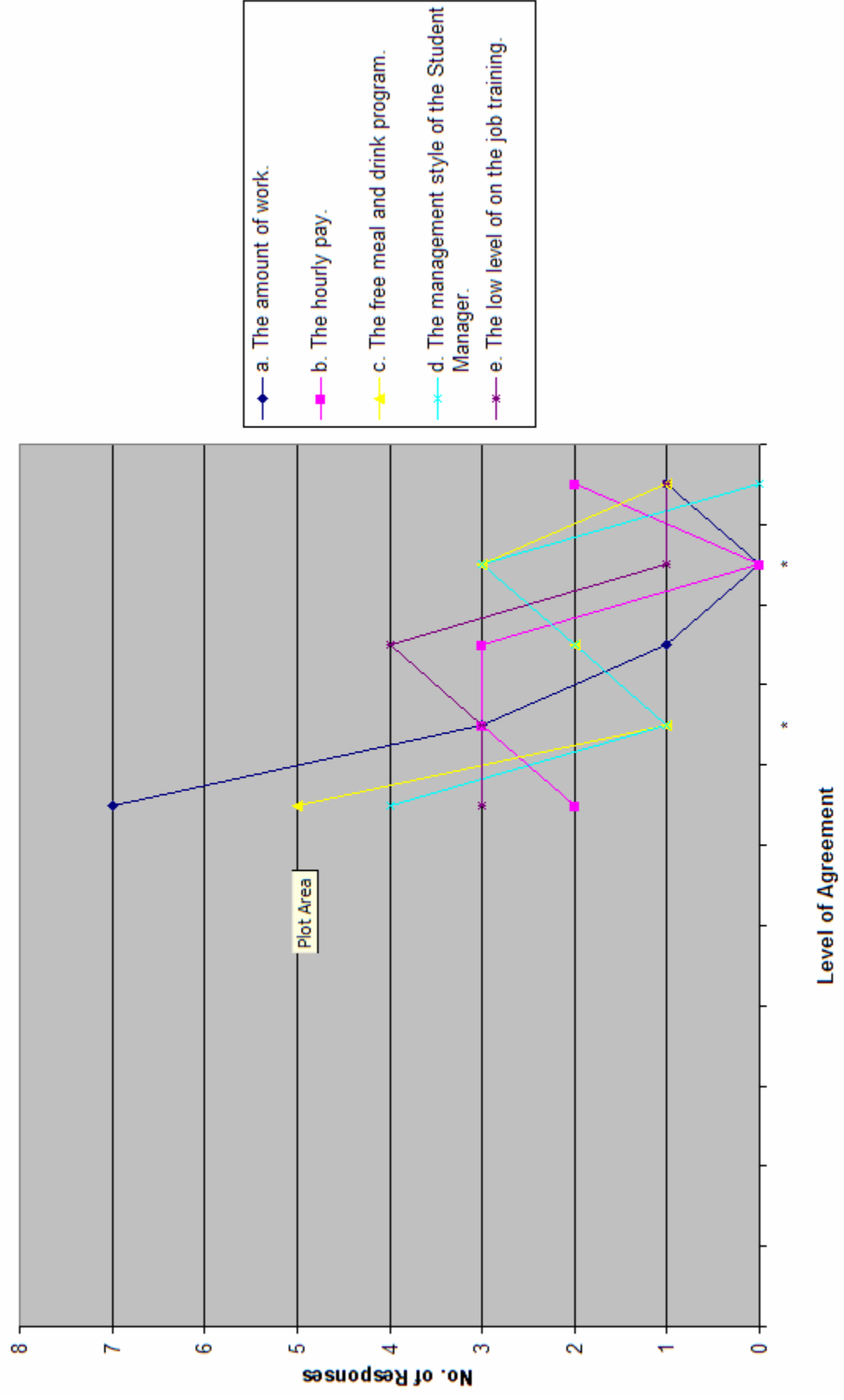
## Why have you stayed working for UDS-Tainter



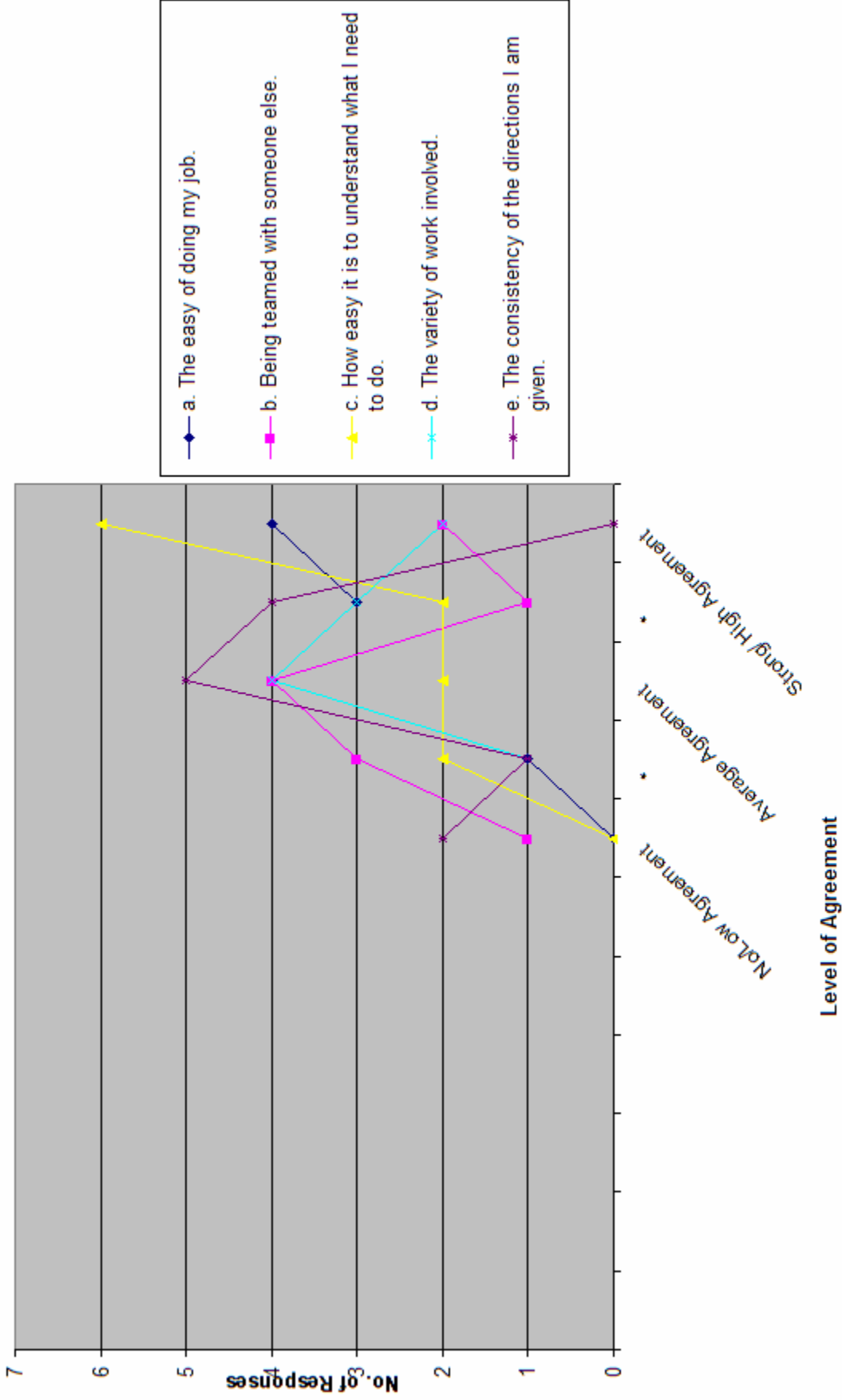
### What do you like about working for UDS-Tainter?



### What don't you like working for UDS-Tainter?



## What do you like about your position?



### What don't you like about your position?

