

California State University, Stanislaus
Graduating Senior Survey
Class of 2005-2006
Executive Summary

Survey Purpose

The Office of Institutional Research has been administering the Graduating Senior Survey since 2002-2003. The 2005-2006 survey contains 30 questions and 138 items covering a broad range of seniors' educational experiences and satisfaction with their program of learning at CSU Stanislaus. The results provide an important source of information for institutional evaluation and planning.

The Graduating Senior Survey measures baccalaureate students' perception of different aspects of their overall education at CSU Stanislaus. The survey is organized into nine sections, including sections about general education experiences, experiences with the major department, library services, student support services, classroom and social climate, personal development, employment, additional plans for further study, and several open-ended questions about seniors' overall evaluation of CSU Stanislaus.

Survey Methods

The survey is administered each academic year (summer, fall, winter, spring) to all seniors who have met their graduation requirements. The population is, therefore, all students classified as seniors who are graduating (have completed their program of study) during the academic year. The survey is administered during the summer following commencement. Graduating seniors are contacted via a mailed letter inviting them to participate in the survey. A follow up letter is mailed as a necessary reminder to participate.

The total number of graduating seniors for 2005-2006 was 1,504. The entire class was mailed a letter of invitation to participate, which included a printed survey and the option to complete the survey online. Non-respondents were mailed one follow up postcard reminder. Most graduating seniors chose to respond via the printed survey. Using this format, 125 seniors responded. A smaller number of seniors chose to complete the survey via the online web format (n=47). Thus, the total number of seniors completing the survey was 172, for a response rate of 11 percent.

Summary of Results

Part A. General Education Experiences

A majority of seniors rated their general education experience favorably. Utilizing a 5-point scale of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree, 83 percent of seniors either agreed or strongly agreed their general education at CSU Stanislaus enhanced their "ability to find, understand, examine critically, and use information from various sources."

Eighty-two percent felt General Education contributed to their critical thinking skills and lifelong learning; 78 percent indicated General Education enhanced their understanding of the disciplines basic principles, methodologies and perspectives; and 76 percent indicated General Education enhanced their ability to communicate. In addition, 76 percent said they were able to enroll in the courses they needed to fulfill their GE requirements.

The majority of seniors believe General Education enhanced their ability to look at issues from multiple perspectives (75%). They also feel they have a better “understanding of social responsibility, ethical behavior, and the disciplines’ connection to social issues” (69%).

A majority of seniors agreed or strongly agreed that General Education enhanced their understanding of the interrelationship between disciplines (67%); that it enhanced their ability to see a discipline’s connection to global issues (63%); 60 percent also felt they were properly advised as to what courses they needed to fulfill their GE requirements.

An open-ended question asked seniors to briefly describe their understanding of the purpose of a general education. The responses clustered around a dozen or more themes. A combination of the responses seem to underlie sentiments or viewpoints that a General Education will in effect, “broaden or extend or expand one’s knowledge and perspective” (15%), that it provides for a “well-rounded education/person” (14%), that a general education is “preparation for after college/life, career” (15%), that it provides for a “exposure to and understanding of various disciplines” (14%), and that it is “foundational, introductory, education” (9%). Together these clusters of responses (that in many respects are overlapping and similar) account for 67 percent of the viewpoints about what is a general education.

Part B. Major Department

Graduating seniors were asked to respond to a battery of 14 items about their courses and experiences in their major department. Again a 5-point scale is used from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The overwhelming majority of seniors, 93 percent, agreed or strongly agreed they were prepared for upper division coursework in their major. In addition, 91 percent agreed or strongly agreed the grading practices and other academic policies were administered fairly, and 90 percent felt that their major courses were intellectually challenging.

Other items also received favorable ratings: 89 percent said that their major courses were appropriate; 87 percent said that faculty members were available for assistance outside of the classroom; 86 percent indicated the teaching by faculty in their major was effective; 85 percent felt the class sizes for upper division courses were acceptable; and 80 percent indicated they understood global and international issues as a result of study in their major.

A majority of seniors also felt faculty were accessible during posted office hours (79%), that they were advised well by faculty in their major (72%), and that the class sizes for lower division courses were acceptable (71%).

The lowest rating by seniors was on whether or not they were able to get the courses they needed to fit their schedule. Here, 56 percent agreed or strongly agreed they were able to get the courses they needed.

Part C. Library Services

The graduating seniors were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the services provided by the university library and also indicate the extent of their knowledge and use of the various library

collections and services. Eighteen items provide the measures for this section. A 4-point scale of very dissatisfied to very satisfied is used.

The overwhelming majority of seniors indicate (83%) they are satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of library services overall. In fact, each of the following indicators received more than 80 percent “satisfied” or “very satisfied”: the courtesy of library staff (86%), the physical environment (90%), the circulation service desk (89%), the knowledge of library staff (85%), the hours of services (87%), the “books and journals in my major” (84%), and the reference desk (87%).

It was found that only 5 percent did not use the library’s services at all during the last 12 months. However, 24 percent used the services 1-5 times; 23 percent used the services 6-10 times; 22 percent used it from 11-20 times, and 27 percent used the services more than 20 times during the last 12 months.

Specifically, databases or other electronic sources were most in demand at 97 percent utilization, followed by books or journals at 93 percent usage. Also in high demand was use of the study areas (80%), and reference librarians (66%). Course reserves revealed the lowest usage during the last 12 months at 59 percent.

Seniors were also asked to indicate their preference for a particular type of library instruction: 75 percent indicated a preference for written guides or handouts; 68 percent indicated a preference for web-based tutorials; and 65 percent preferred workshops, orientations, or tours. About half of graduating seniors (54%) preferred credit classes.

Part D. Student Support Services

Student support services is assessed by a complex battery of 44 items covering topics such as enrollment services, career services, counseling, academic and student support, student activities, service learning, and global affairs. The following summarizes the most salient features.

Enrollment Services. Overall, graduating seniors rate very highly their satisfaction with enrollment services. A substantial majority of seniors, 86 percent, say they are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the admissions processing services, and 92 percent indicate the same about registration services.

Career Services. Most seniors report they did not use career services: 69 percent said they did not use career placement services; 77 percent said they did not use campus employment services; 69 percent did not use internships and co-ops while a student; and 56 percent did not use career planning and guidance services.

Counseling. An overwhelming majority of seniors did not use any counseling services. Eighty-five percent did not use couple counseling services (most students are not married); 79 percent did not use wellness and personal development workshops; and 74 percent did not use personal counseling services.

Academic and Student Support. Some services are used sparingly. Seventy-two percent do not use the tutoring center; 52 percent do not use the writing center; and 57 percent do not use the residence halls. However, 84 percent are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the computer laboratories; 56 percent are satisfied or very satisfied with the computer center hours; 66 percent are satisfied or very satisfied with the bookstore facilities; 83 percent are satisfied or very satisfied with the student center

and lounges; 81 percent are satisfied with the computer laboratory software, and 75 percent are satisfied with the computer lab hardware; 73 percent are satisfied with the cafeteria; and 68 percent are satisfied with the health center.

Student Activities. A significant proportion of seniors did not use or participate in programs, events, or campus organizations. Seventy-three percent did not participate in a fraternity or sorority, and 75 percent did not participate in campus intramural sports. Sixty-eight percent did not participate in cultural programs, and 69 percent did not participate in athletic events.

More than half of seniors indicate they did not use or participate in campus Associated Students (51%), music productions (59%), and drama productions (56%). Sixty-four percent did not use or participate in art/gallery exhibitions, 65 percent did not participate in campus organizations, and 58 percent did not participate in social activities overall.

Service Learning. As for whether or not students are satisfied with service learning activities, such as the availability of volunteer and service opportunities in their major, 54 percent of seniors indicated they did not use or participate here; however, 37 percent of seniors did and indicated satisfaction. With regard to the availability of volunteer and service opportunities in general education courses, 61 percent said they did not use or participate in these, although 27 percent indicated satisfaction.

Global Affairs. Very few seniors participated in Global Affairs student support activities: 81 percent did not study abroad, 68 percent did not have a local cross-cultural experience, and 79 percent did not have any foreign language instruction. Activities showing more participation were in course work: 33 percent were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with global issues in general education courses, and 50 percent were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with global issues in their major.

Part E. Classroom and Social Climate

This section reports on whether or not seniors, by gender, by race/ethnic group, for international, disabled, and gay/lesbian group, believe the classroom and campus social climate of the university is supportive of all student groups.

There appears to be high agreement that the classroom social climate is supportive and not discriminatory to students overall. Seventy-eight percent of females indicate the classroom is supportive, and 72 percent indicate the campus social climate is also supportive to females.

Males also agree: 68 percent indicate the classroom climate is supportive to males as is 62 percent who say the campus social climate is also supportive.

By race and ethnicity, the rates vary from a high of 64 percent of Hispanics that say the classroom is supportive and 66 that say the campus is also supportive. White non-Hispanic (Caucasian) seniors also report 64 percent who say the classroom is supportive as well as 61 percent who say the campus social climate is supportive.

Although slightly more than half, the lowest rating is by Native American seniors at 53 percent that indicate the classroom is supportive, as well as 51 percent again saying the campus is supportive of Native American students.

International students, disabled students, and gay/lesbian students correspond with the majority favorable ratings by other groups. However, with respect to gay/lesbian seniors, the ratings are lowest of all groups: 49 percent of gay/lesbian seniors report the classroom climate is supportive, but less than half (45%) indicate the campus social climate is supportive.

Part F. Personal Development

A battery of 17 items is used to assess seniors' perceptions of their educational gains and personal development. Seniors responded to the 5-point scale: a loss, no gain, slight gain, moderate gain, and high gain. A positive result combines moderate gain and high gain and is summarized in the following.

All but two items were above 50 percent. The highest ratings of educational gains and personal development were writing effectively (83%), conducting research (85%), "learning on my own" (84%), "getting along with people whose attitudes and opinions differ from my own" (80%), speaking effectively (82%), and creating original ideas and products (79%).

The lowest ratings were for, communicating in a language other than English (17%), and understanding mathematical reasoning (47%).

Also important in their described gains and personal development are, "organizing my time effectively" (74%), working cooperatively with groups (77%), and cooperating with diverse populations (72%).

Moreover, 60 percent or more of seniors indicated important gains in using technology effectively (66%), preparing for graduate or professional school (69%), preparing for employment (67%), and in understanding American and World social and political systems (65%).

Part G. Employment

Most seniors are working students. Seventeen percent did not work. However, 16 percent worked 30-24 hours per week while enrolled in classes; 16 percent worked 35-40 hours per week while enrolled in classes; and 15 percent worked 20-24 hours per week while enrolled.

As for their current employment status, 48 percent of seniors indicate they work full-time (35 hours or more per week), and 26 percent are currently employed part-time (less than 35 hours per week). Fourteen percent are attending graduate or professional school. Thirty-eight percent of seniors indicate they received a promotion due to obtaining the bachelor's degree.

Forty-three percent of currently employed seniors are employed in either a public sector organization such as a government agency or school, college, or university; 42 percent indicate a private business sector employer such as a local or regional business, or a national or multi-national corporation.

The type of business seniors currently work in is education/school (26%), medical or hospital or laboratory work (13%), and sales/customer service/retail work (14%). Together these account for 53 percent of the seniors who are currently employed. Seven percent are in social work/adult and children services, 7 percent are in manufacturing/development/production, and 7 percent in accounting/financial services.

Seniors indicate by 50 percent that their job is highly related to their bachelor's degree. Another 17 percent indicated it is "fairly related." And 24 percent said it is "not at all related" to their bachelor's degree.

Two main reasons are given by seniors who are not employed in a field related to their bachelor's degree: one is that they are working in another field while they are looking for employment in a related field (22%); another reason is they are pursuing or seeking admission to a credential, graduate, or professional program (34%).

The current annual salary of graduating seniors reveals 48 percent are earning less than \$30,000 annually, 23 percent are earning between \$30,000 to \$39,000; 9 percent are earning between \$40,000 to \$49,000; and 11 percent indicate they are earning between \$50,000 to \$59,000 annually. Six percent indicate an annual salary of \$70,000 or more.

Part H. Additional Education Plans

About 44 percent of seniors indicate they took additional college courses since obtaining their bachelor's degree at CSU Stanislaus. And 81 percent say they plan to continue their education.

Those saying they plan to continue their education (19% say they have no such plans) indicate some of the "most important" reasons for continuing their education are: to earn a graduate or professional degree (67%); to meet certification or continuing education requirements (38%); for general education and self-improvement (26%); and to prepare for a career change (26%). The reason of least importance to seniors for continuing their education was also "to prepare for a career change" at 31 percent.

Of graduating seniors that intend to further their education, 39 percent intend to pursue the field of education or teaching, followed next by 15 percent that intend to follow a business path. Seniors also acknowledge human sciences or nursing and law or political science at 7 percent each. Social work was cited by 6 percent of seniors.

The top three post-graduate degree goals that seniors indicate they are next pursuing include Master of Social Work degree (28%), a Master of Arts or Master of Science degree (20%), and Master of Business Administration (19%). A Master of Arts in Education (10%) was next, followed by those intending to pursue a teaching credential (9%). Only 5 percent indicated a Ph.D. as their goal.

Forty-seven percent plan on attending graduate school at CSU Stanislaus, while 12 percent plan on attending graduate school at some other CSU campus. Only 1 percent plan on next attending the University of California. More than a quarter of seniors, however, are undecided (25%).

Twenty-five percent of graduating seniors plan to finish their post-graduate work by the year 2007. About 19 percent plan to finish by 2008, and 27 percent will finish by the year 2009. Another 16 percent plan to finish by 2010.

As for the highest degree seniors wish to obtain, 45 percent indicate a Master's degree, 15 percent indicate a Master of Arts in Education, and 21 percent indicate their highest degree goal is a Ph.D. A teaching credential was cited by 7 percent of seniors as their highest goal, while 6 percent indicated a J.D.

Part I. Overall Evaluation of CSU Stanislaus

Lastly, the survey queried graduating seniors with several open-ended questions about CSU Stanislaus' attraction to prospective students, about aspects of the university that were of most help to seniors, and about any improvement CSU Stanislaus could make.

Seniors were asked, "What aspects of CSU Stanislaus do you feel would be most attractive to prospective students?" The responses include 27 percent saying it is the campus size and appearance; 12 percent indicated the "faculty: diverse, friendly, knowledgeable, available to students"; 11 percent said the "campus atmosphere, climate and life"; 10 percent indicated the availability of classes, class size, and access to courses; 7 percent said campus location and accessibility; and 7 percent indicated the department and program effectiveness as the primary reasons. Together these reasons account for 74 percent of all responses.

According to seniors, most helpful to them in achieving their education at CSU Stanislaus was the faculty who are perceived as supportive, knowledgeable, and available (33%). But also helpful was the availability of classes, class size, and access to courses (11%); academic support services, advising, tutoring, counseling, and mentoring received acknowledgment by 9 percent of seniors; friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable staff and administration was a primary aspect according to 8 percent of seniors; 7 percent acknowledged the campus location and accessibility; and 7 percent indicated the department program and course effectiveness as an important aspect.

Finally, graduating seniors were asked if they could make one improvement to CSU Stanislaus, what would it be? The top reasons include: improve parking and transportation (15%); increase the availability of classes (13%); improve the quality of advising and orientation (10%); improve administrative services (8%); improve the quality of instruction (8%); keep fees, costs down, and other financial issues (7%); and improve classroom facilities and technology (6%).