

*California State University, Stanislaus*  
**Graduating Senior Survey**  
**Class of 2004-2005**

**General Education information excerpted from the Executive Summary**

**Survey Purpose**

The Office of Institutional Research has been administering the Graduating Senior Survey since 2002-2003. The 2004-2005 survey contains 24 questions and 146 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 ten sections, including sections about seniors' general education experiences, experiences with the major department, library services, student support services, classroom and social climate, personal development, employment plans, additional plans for graduate or professional school, additional questions and comments, 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 completed their program of study and met their graduation requirements. The population is therefore all students classified as seniors who were graduated during the academic year. The survey was administered during the summer following commencement. Graduating seniors were contacted via a mailed letter inviting them to participate in the survey. A follow up letter was mailed as a necessary reminder to participate.

There were 1,454 students who were conferred a bachelor's degree in 2004-2005. The entire class was mailed a letter of invitation to participate by completing the onlineweb-based survey. The primary means of survey delivery for the class of 2004-2005 was through an online, web-based system. A second mailing was a follow-up letter to non-respondents that included a print survey. Non-respondents were given the option of completing the survey via theweb. A third mailing again targeted non-respondents. A fourth and final mailing was sent to non-respondents that included a letter and print survey, and an incentive \$40 book gift card to be used in a random drawfor two respondents.

Seniors completing the survey numbered 381 respondents for a response rate of 26 percent. There were 305 seniors that returned a completed print survey and 76 seniors submitted a completed web survey.

**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, 75 percent of seniors either agreed or

strongly agreed the General Education experience at CSU Stanislaus enhanced their “ability to find, understand, examine critically, and use information from various sources.”

Seventy-two percent felt General Education (GE) contributed to their critical thinking skills and lifelong learning; 73 percent indicated GE enhanced their understanding of the disciplines’ basic principles, methodologies and perspectives; and 64 percent indicated GE enhanced their ability to communicate. In addition, 64 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 (76%). They also felt 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 (65%); and that it enhanced their ability to see a discipline’s connection to global issues (62%). About half (49%) 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 indicate students feel they will “gain broad knowledge and education” (35%); that it provides for “exposure to different disciplines” (27%); that a general education is preparation for life after college (10%); and that it is “preparation for undergraduate classes (9%). Together these responses (many of the responses are overlapping) account for 81 percent of the viewpoints about what is a general education.

#### ***Part D. Student Support Services***

*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, 51 percent of seniors indicated they did not use or participate here. However, 31 percent of seniors did participate and indicated their satisfaction. With regard to the availability of volunteer and service opportunities in General Education courses, 67 percent said they did not use or participate in these, although 19 percent indicated they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied.”

*Global Affairs.* Very few seniors participated in Global Affairs student support activities: 87percent did not study abroad, 75 percent did not have a local cross-cultural experience, and 77 percent did not have any foreign language instruction.

Activities showing more participation were in course work: 42 percent were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with global issues in General Education courses, and 46 percent were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with global issues in their major.

#### ***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 a 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 lowest ratings were for communicating in a language other than English (18%), and understanding mathematical reasoning (39%).

The highest ratings of educational gains and personal development were writing effectively (82%), conducting research (85%), “learning on my own” (84%), “getting along with people whose attitudes and opinions differ from my own” (67%), speaking effectively (79%), and creating original ideas and products (73%).

Also important in seniors’ described gains and personal development are “organizing my time effectively” (79%), working cooperatively in groups (78%), and cooperating with diverse populations (72%).

Moreover, 69 percent of seniors indicated important gains in using technology effectively. Also, 65 percent said preparing for graduate or professional school and 61 percent said preparing for employment were moderate or high gains for them.

Still greater than half, but lower than for other indicators were 57 percent of seniors that indicated gains in understanding American and World social and political systems, and 55 percent that indicated gains in appreciating fine arts, music, and literature. Fifty-seven percent indicated moderate or high gain in “understanding scientific principles and methods.”

### ***Part J. 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 29 percent saying it is the campus size and appearance; 10 percent indicated the “faculty: diverse, friendly, knowledgeable, available to students”; 10 percent said the “campus atmosphere, climate and life”; 10 percent indicated the availability of classes, class size, and access to courses; and 7 percent said campus location and accessibility, as the primary reasons. Together these reasons account for 66 percent of the responses.

According to seniors, most helpful to them in achieving their education at CSU Stanislaus was the faculty who were perceived as supportive, knowledgeable, and available (31%). But also helpful was the availability of classes, class size, and access to courses (10%); academic support services, advising, tutoring, counseling, and mentoring (12%); campus location and its accessibility (7%); and the library as an important aspect (7%).

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 (14%); increase the availability of classes (13%); improve administrative services (9%); improve the quality of

advising and orientation (9%); improve the quality of instruction (7%); and keep fees, costs down, and other financial issues (7%).