

*California State University, Stanislaus*  
**Graduating Senior Survey**  
**Class of 2004-2005**  
**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 online web-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 the web. 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 draw for 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 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, 89 percent, agreed or strongly agreed they were prepared for upper division coursework in their major. In addition, 83 percent agreed or strongly agreed the grading practices and other academic policies were administered fairly, and 87 percent felt their major courses were intellectually challenging.

Other items also received very favorable ratings: 81 percent said their major courses were appropriate; 81 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 84 percent indicated faculty were accessible during posted office hours.

A majority of seniors also felt they were advised well by faculty in their major (65%); that the courses needed to meet the major requirements were not difficult to get into (70%); that as a result of study in the major they have an understanding of global and international issues (69%); and that the class sizes for lower division courses were acceptable (70%). Sixty-four percent of seniors also felt faculty members were interested in their progress.

The lowest rating by seniors was on whether or not they were able to get the courses they needed to fit their schedule. Here, 58 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. Seniors were also to 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 (86%) 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 (82%); the physical environment (89%); the circulation service desk (81%); the knowledge of library staff (83%); the hours of service (84%); and the reference desk (83%). Seventy-two percent of seniors were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the “books and journals in my major.”

Overall only 6 percent did not use the library’s services at all during the last 12 months. However, 24 percent used the services 1-5 times; 26 percent used the services 6-10 times; 18 percent used it from 11-20 times; and 26 percent used the services more than 20 times during the last 12 months.

Specifically, databases or other electronic sources were most in demand at 86 percent utilization by seniors in the last 12 months, followed by books or journals at 83 percent usage. Also in high demand was use of the study areas (70%). More than half responded they used the reference librarians (54%) in the last 12 months, and 53 percent indicated they made use of the course reserves.

Seniors were also asked to indicate their preference for a particular type of library instruction: 70 percent indicated a preference for written guides or handouts; 61 percent indicated a preference for web-based tutorials; and 60 percent preferred workshops, orientations, or tours. Less than half of graduating seniors (45%) 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, 85 percent, say they are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the admissions processing services; 85 percent are satisfied or very satisfied with student academic records and transcripts services; and 82 percent indicate the same level of satisfaction about registration services. The lowest rating is for financial aid, where 58 percent indicated satisfaction. However, a large proportion, 28 percent, did not use financial aid services.

*Career Services.* Most seniors report they did not use career services: 68 percent said they did not use career placement services; 69 percent said they did not use campus employment services; 70 percent did not use internships and co-ops while a student; and 57 percent did not use career planning and guidance services.

*Counseling.* An overwhelming majority of seniors did not use any counseling services. Ninety percent did not use couple counseling services (of course most students are not married); 84 percent did not use wellness and personal development workshops; and 73 percent did not use personal counseling services.

*Academic and Student Support.* Some services are used sparingly. Seventy-two percent did not use the tutoring center; 79 percent did not use the writing center; and 81 percent did not use the residence halls. In addition, 58 percent did not use the first year programs & advising services, and 58 percent did not use recreation services.

However, 80 percent are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the computer laboratory overall; 71 percent are satisfied or very satisfied with the computer center hours; 78 percent are satisfied or very satisfied with the bookstore facilities; 71 percent are satisfied or very satisfied with the student center and lounges; 74 percent are satisfied with the computer lab software; and 74 percent are satisfied with the computer laboratory hardware. Seniors indicated by 65 percent they are satisfied with the cafeteria, and 75 percent are satisfied with the health center.

*Student Activities.* A significant proportion of graduating seniors did not use or participate in programs, events, or campus organizations. Eighty-six percent did not participate in a fraternity or sorority, and 82 percent did not participate in campus intramural sports. In addition, 70 percent did not use or participate in each of the following: art/gallery exhibitions, music events, and campus Associated Students. As for athletic events, 72 percent did not use or participate in these as well. Lastly, sixty-six percent did not use or participate in drama productions, and 68 percent did not participate in cultural programs,

*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: 87 percent 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 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 student groups, believe the classroom and campus social climate of the university is supportive of all student groups.

There appears to be high agreement that classroom social climate is supportive and not discriminatory to students overall: 70 percent of women indicate the classroom is supportive, and 62 percent indicate the campus social climate is also supportive to women.

Men also agree: 66 percent indicate the classroom climate is supportive to males as is 65 percent who say the campus social climate is also supportive to men.

By race and ethnicity, the rates vary from a high of 68 percent of Hispanics that say the classroom is supportive and 66 percent that say the campus is also supportive to Hispanics. White non-Hispanic (Caucasian) seniors also report 68 percent who say the classroom is supportive, as well as 65 percent who say the campus social climate is supportive to them.

Although more than half, the lowest rating is by Native American seniors at 57 percent who indicate the classroom is supportive, as well as 53 percent again saying the campus is supportive of Native American students.

Sixty-one percent of African American seniors indicate the classroom climate is supportive, and 57 percent say the same about the campus social climate. And 62 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander seniors say the classroom climate is supportive of Asians, and 55 percent concur regarding the campus social climate.

International students, disabled students, and gay/lesbian students correspond with the majority of 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 (46%) indicate the campus social climate is supportive; whereas 64 percent of international students say the classroom is supportive, and 59 percent indicate the campus social climate is supportive. Disabled students report by 65 percent that the classroom climate is supportive, and 58 indicate the campus social climate is supportive of disabled students.

### ***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 G. Employment Plans***

Most seniors worked while enrolled in classes. Eleven percent did not work. However, 33 percent worked 30 hours or more per week while enrolled in classes; 24 percent worked 20-29 hours per week while enrolled in classes; 20 percent worked 10-19 hours per week while enrolled; and 12 percent worked less than 10 hours per week.

Graduating seniors were asked about their immediate employment plans: 34 percent stated they will work at a new job recently obtained; 20 percent will continue in the job they had before graduation; 22 percent are currently seeking employment; and 20 percent plan to continue their education before seeking employment.

Graduating seniors currently employed were asked to describe the general type of employment: most are in areas of education (31%), healthcare system (13%), government or non-profit organizations (12%), and in the service work area (9%).

For those employed, seniors were asked about any salary increase upon their graduation: 46 percent indicated an anticipated salary increase of \$5,000 or more; 10 percent indicated a \$3,000 to \$4,999 increase; and 18 percent anticipated a salary increase of \$1,000 to \$2,999 upon graduation.

The current annual salary of graduating seniors reveals 50 percent are earning less than \$30,000 annually; 23 percent are earning between \$30,000 to \$39,000; 11 percent are earning between \$40,000 to \$49,000; and 7 percent indicate they are earning between \$50,000 to \$59,000 annually. Four percent indicate an annual salary between \$60,000 to \$69,000, while 6 percent earn an annual salary of \$70,000 or more.

### ***Part H. Additional Education Plans***

Graduating seniors were asked about their educational plans such as graduate or professional school. Thirty-three percent indicate a Master’s degree as their highest goal, while 16 percent indicate a Master of Arts in Education, specifically. Another 15 percent indicate their highest degree goal is a Ph.D. A teaching credential was cited by 18 percent of seniors as their highest goal, while 4 percent indicated a J.D.

Seventy-four percent of graduating seniors plan to further their education at CSU Stanislaus, while 27 percent plan on attending graduate school at some other college or university campus.

Of those planning on attending a campus other than CSU Stanislaus, 18 percent indicated some other CSU campus; 12 percent plan on attending the University of California; 31 percent plan some

other California college or university, and 16 percent plan on going out of state to further their education. About one quarter of seniors, however, were undecided (24%).

Of graduating seniors that intend to further their education, 36 percent intend to pursue the field of education, followed next by 14 percent that intend to follow a business path. Seniors also acknowledged social work (7%), nursing (8%), psychology (8%), and criminal justice (7%) as areas intended to pursue.

### ***Part I. Additional Questions and Comments***

A few questions attempted to gather information about changing their major, about family educational attainment, and about sources of financial support for their education.

Thirty-five percent of graduating seniors said they changed their major at least one time; 13 percent indicated twice; and 10 percent said they changed majors three times. However, 39 percent did not at all change their major. Only 4 percent changed their major 4 or 5 times.

Father's educational attainment shows 27 percent of fathers of graduating seniors have a high school diploma or GED; 20 percent have some college; 8 percent have an associate of arts degree; 12 percent have a bachelor's; and 7 percent have a master's degree or higher. Twenty-six percent of the fathers of graduating seniors, however, have less than a high school education.

Mother's educational attainment shows similar patterns: 29 percent have a high school education; 24 percent have some college; 9 percent have an associate of arts degree; 10 percent have a bachelor's; and 4 percent have a master's degree or higher. Twenty-five percent of mothers of graduating seniors have less than a high school education.

Seniors were presented with a list of items regarding sources of financial support for education. From highest to lowest, seniors indicated: loans or grants (57%); personal earnings or savings (43%); other family member support (33%); and scholarship/fellowship (23%) as the primary or top sources. (Twenty-three percent indicated spousal support. However, most students are not married.) The sources providing the least levels of support include employer reimbursement (7%) and teaching/research assistantships (2%).

### ***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%).