**A Profile of 2008-2009 Graduating Seniors at California State University San Marcos**

**Key Findings From the College Senior Survey**

Cal State San Marcos participated in the College Senior Survey for the first time this year in order to gather information about our senior students and as a follow-up to the Freshman Survey that our campus has been administering for many years.[[1]](#footnote--1) During the 2008-2009 academic year, the survey was sent by email to all graduating seniors; 374 students responded yielding a response rate of 19%.[[2]](#footnote-0)

This report summarizes key differences between the CSUSM responses and those from twelve public four-year colleges (including 2 other CSU campuses).[[3]](#footnote-1) In addition, responses by CSUSM seniors have been disaggregated by race/ethnicity and gender and when relevant, these differences are also presented. [[4]](#footnote-2)

The findings are grouped into 13 themes:

* Academic Outcomes
* Interaction with Faculty
* Academic Enhancement Experiences
* Active and Collaborative Learning
* Satisfaction with Academic Support and Courses
* Satisfaction with Services and Community
* Written and Oral Communication
* Leadership
* Civic Engagement
* Diversity
* Health and Wellness
* Religiosity/Spirituality
* Career Planning

Each theme represents a single idea with the responses to a number of survey questions grouped according to that theme. Occasionally questions will relate to more than one theme and will be presented more than once.**Respondent Characteristics**

Below is a profile of CSUSM students who responded to the College Senior Survey and those who attend other participating public four-year colleges. Areas where CSUSM respondents are distinctive are shown in bold.

Figure 1

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **CSUSM** | **Other public**  **4-year college** |
| **Started college 2004 or earlier** | **82%** | **58%** |
| **Entered current college 2006 or later** | **65%** | **36%** |
| Attend college full time | 83% | 89% |
| Female | 69% | 65% |
| *Race/ethnicity* |  |  |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | 1% | 2% |
| Asian American/Pacific Islander | 12% | 10% |
| African American | 1% | 8% |
| Latino/a | 20% | 14% |
| White | 56% | 61% |
| Other | 10% | 5% |
| *Top majors* |  |  |
| Social Science | 23% | 15% |
| Business | 20% | 20% |
| Humanities | 19% | 12% |
| Education | 12% | 8% |
| *Financing College* |  |  |
| **Work for pay more than 20 hrs. / week** | **46%** | **32%** |
| Relied on family resources | 64% | 71% |
| Relied on own resources | 86% | 79% |
| **Received aid that need not be repaid** | **48%** | **57%** |
| Received aid that must be repaid | 50% | 53% |
| Borrowed money to pay for college | 62% | 59% |
| Average amount borrowed | $17,298 | $22,436 |

**Summary of Findings and Key Differences**

*Academic Ability*

Nearly all CSUSM respondents, regardless of race or gender, indicate that college has strengthened their knowledge and academic skills. Differences emerge, however, in their self-ratings compared to their peers elsewhere. CSUSM respondents are more likely than respondents at other public colleges to rate their writing skills as above average and less likely to highly rate their mathematical skills (Figures 2 & 3). In addition, Latino/a respondents are less likely than White students to highly rate their academic ability (73% vs. 84%) or their Mathematical ability (27% vs. 39%).

Figure 2 Figure 3

*Interaction with Faculty*

Most CSUSM respondents are satisfied with the amount of contact they have with faculty. Although only one-quarter of respondents say they talked with faculty outside of class more than an hour per week, nearly all say they communicate with faculty at least occasionally and feel like they are treated with respect. However, 56% of female respondents say they occasionally feel intimidated by their professors, compared with 39% of male respondents. Similarly, White respondents are much more likely than Latino/a respondents to say they have felt intimidated (55% vs. 35%). White respondents are less likely then non-white respondents to say that faculty do the following: provide feedback about their academic work (outside of grades), help them improve their skills or provide an opportunity to publish.

*Academic Enhancement Experiences*

Items in this group gauge participation in programs and initiatives on campus that relate to student learning. Less than one-third of CSUSM respondents report participating in internships, honors or advanced courses, study abroad programs, undergraduate research programs or to have worked on a professor’s research project—a lower percentage than respondents at similar campuses.

*Active and Collaborative Leaning*

Most respondents describe multiple opportunities for active and collaborative learning such as out-of-class discussions and studying with other students. Women and Latino/a respondents at CSUSM are more likely than their counterparts to say they have often studied and had discussions with students from another racial/ethnic group (Figure 4).

Figure 4

*Satisfaction with Academic Support and Courses*

Respondents were asked to gauge their use of and satisfaction with campus academic support structures and types of coursework required in general education. More than two-thirds of San Marcos respondents are satisfied in most areas and 58% say they are satisfied or very satisfied with their academic advising. Furthermore, San Marcos respondents are more likely than those at other campuses to be satisfied with four support and course areas:

* computer facilities and services (91% vs. 80%),
* laboratory facilities and equipment (89% vs. 71%)
* quality of computer training and assistance (73% vs. 62%)
* Humanities courses (81% vs. 71%)

*Satisfaction with Services and the General Campus Community*

Much like respondents elsewhere, most San Marcos respondents are satisfied with their interaction with other students and with the size of the campus. Three-quarters of San Marcos respondents are satisfied with their overall college experience; however, this is a lower percentage than that at other participating campuses (75% vs. 85%). Furthermore, White respondents are less likely than Latino/a respondents to be satisfied with the campus community as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Latino/a respondents are also more likely than White students to be satisfied with two campus services: the financial aid office (77% vs. 64%) and job placement services (60% vs. 42%).

*Written and Oral Communication*

Nearly three-quarters of San Marcos respondents rate their writing ability as above average or in the highest 10% but only 46% rate their public speaking skill this highly. Latino/a respondents are less likely than others to rate their writing ability as above average (63% vs. over 70%) and just 40% of women give their public speaking skills high ratings compared to 59% of men.

*Leadership*

Items in this category address issues related to leadership, such as leadership opportunities during college, and how students compare to their peers on leadership-related skills and abilities. San Marcos respondents are similar to those at other participating universities in all areas. Although female respondents at San Marcos are just as likely as males to say they have the drive to achieve, they are less likely to highly rate three of their own leadership qualities: leadership ability (64% vs. 73%), intellectual self confidence (60% vs. 80%), and social self confidence (51% vs. 64%).

*Civic Engagement*

The College Senior Survey asked several questions about respondent involvement in, and satisfaction with, community service and social change. At CSUSM, 60% of respondents say they have been involved in some sort of community service either as part of a class or as a volunteer. More than half consider it very important or essential to work for social change and 81% say they have a stronger understanding of community problems than before they came to college. Female respondents are more likely than males to say it is important to work for social change and plan to do volunteer work after graduation. Furthermore, men are more likely to agree that “an individual can do little to bring about changes in our society.” Latino/a respondents are more likely than others to say they have demonstrated for/against a war, that it is very important or essential to work for social change, and to be satisfied with the opportunities they have for community service.

*Diversity*

Items in this category relate to social attitudes and experiences with diversity. Much like respondents at other public universities, most San Marcos respondents, regardless of race/ethnicity, say they have socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group. CSUSM respondents are more likely than those at other participating campuses to consider it essential or very important to help promote racial understanding (51% vs. 41%).

Latino/a respondents at CSUSM are less likely than any other racial/ethnic group to agree with two statements: “Affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished” and “Undocumented immigrants should be denied access to public education”. Non-White respondents are more likely than others to say they have participated in an ethnic/racial student organization and women are more likely than men to have attended a racial/cultural awareness workshop. As shown in Figure 6, female and male respondents also differ in their agreement with various statements about contemporary issues.

Figure 6

*Health and Wellness*

These items gauge student behaviors, attitudes, and experiences related to health and wellness issues, and their use of and satisfaction with related campus services. More than nine of ten Senior Survey respondents say they have at least occasionally felt overwhelmed by all they had to do. Perhaps due to the commuter nature of our campus, just over one-third of CSUSM respondents report feeling lonely or homesick, a lower percentage than respondents at other public universities. Female respondents at CSUSM are more likely than male respondents to report feeling depressed (56% vs. 43%) or lonely or homesick (39% vs. 29%). Female respondents are also more likely than male respondents to be satisfied with student health services on campus (80% vs. 69%).

Respondents were also asked about how often they consume alcohol or smoked cigarettes. Although only 33% of San Marcos respondents say they have had five or more drinks in a row during the past two weeks, more than two-thirds report frequently or occasionally drinking beer, wine or liquor-- percentages that are slightly lower than those at other 4-year public universities. As shown in Figure 7, Latino/a and White respondents’ differ somewhat in the extent of their use of alcohol and tobacco.

Figure 7

*Religiosity and Spirituality*

San Marcos respondents are more likely than respondents at similar campuses to state they have “no religious preference” (37% vs. 27%) and less likely to have attended religious services during the past year. However, Latino/a respondents at CSUSM are much more likely than White respondents to say they attend religious services at least occasionally (59% vs. 40%).

*Career Planning*

This final theme has the largest number of questions and contains items that relate to career plans, preparation for future careers, and students’ use of and satisfaction with career services on campus. Among CSUSM respondents, 64% are planning to work full time in Fall 2009, 29% are planning to attend graduate school and 22% are planning to work part time. Female respondents are more likely than males to say they do not plan on working in the fall (16% vs. 6%) and that they plan to do volunteer work (25% vs. 9%).

The occupations respondents plan to pursue correspond to the top majors: business and education. As shown in Figure 8, female respondents are much more likely than males to plan to seek a career in education.

Figure 8

Nearly three-quarters of San Marcos respondents say that professors helped them achieve their professional goals and 85% say professors encouraged them to pursue a graduate education. More than 80% say that they feel better prepared for employment or graduate school than before they started college and 71% say they are satisfied with the relevance of their coursework. Latino/a respondents are more likely than White respondents to be satisfied with campus job placement services (60% vs. 42%) and to spend more than 6 hours per week on career planning (18% vs. 7%).

When choosing a career path three factors are considered essential or very important by more than 85% of respondents: a stable, secure future; availability of jobs; and the opportunity for the discovery/advancement of knowledge. Latino/a respondents are more likely than White respondents to consider the career’s earning potential and social recognition or status. As shown in Figure 9, male and female respondent show distinct differences in several of their career considerations.

Figure 9

**Longitudinal Findings**

The CSS was designed, in part, as a follow-up survey to the Freshman Survey (TFS) to assist in the “evaluation of academic and personal development of students over their college experience and to assess the impact of institutional programs, policies, and practices on the students' experiences and outcomes.” Longitudinal Reports are based on matched pairs for each survey item, using only students who responded to the survey item on both the Freshman Survey and the CSS. CIRP was able to give our campus results for 62 of the 97 respondents (64%) who started CSUSM as first time freshmen.[[5]](#footnote-3)

As shown in Figure 10, respondents’ self-ratings of their leadership, writing and Mathematical skills changed markedly while in college.

Figure 10

How respondents spend their time in college differs in several ways from how they spent it in high school. As college seniors, respondents spent more time studying but less time on exercise or sports, talking with faculty outside of class or socializing with friends than as high school seniors. They are also more likely now than as freshmen, to say that they consumed alcohol during the last 12 months--wine or liquor (72% vs. 39%) or beer (58% vs. 29).

Senior respondents appear to be more politically engaged than they were as freshmen. Fewer respondents characterized their political views as “middle-of-the-road” and they are more likely to consider it important to keep up with political affairs, to participate in a community action program and to become involved in programs to clean up the environment.

Finally, both surveys ask respondents to indicate their agreement with a variety of statements about contemporary issues. Senior respondents are more likely than freshmen respondents to:

* *Strongly agree* that:
* Same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status.
* Abortions should be legal
* Marijuana should be legalized
* *Strongly agree/agree somewhat* that:
* The federal government is not doing enough to control environmental pollution
* A national health care plan is needed to cover everybody’s medical costs
* *Strongly Disagree* that:
* It is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships
* Racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America
* Realistically, an individual can do little to bring about changes in our society [[6]](#footnote-4)
* Federal military spending should increase

**Summary**

The College Senior Survey shows that, as seniors, our students:

* are more likely than other college students seniors to work more than 20 hours/week
* are likely to have been in college for more than four years
* are confident about their writing and leadership skills but less so about their Math or public speaking skills
* are pleased with the size of the campus with many of the support systems, and with the amount of contact they have with faculty; however, White respondents are less likely than non-white respondents to feel like faculty are supportive and helpful
* have had many opportunities to collaborate with other students, especially those from another racial/ethnic group
* have been involved in community service
* have developed more awareness of community and political issues
* have not generally participated in enhancement experiences such as internships, study abroad programs, or undergraduate research programs
* say they are prepared for employment or graduate school and that their coursework was relevant to their career goals

1. The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) at the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA developed the College Senior Survey (CSS) and the Freshman Survey (TFS) and includes many of the same items in both surveys. [↑](#footnote-ref--1)
2. There were two separate survey administrations: one for students who were scheduled to graduate in December 2008 and another for Spring 2009 graduates. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
3. A complete list of participating campuses can be found in Appendix A. Contact Pat Morris in IPA if you would like copies of the Appendicies. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
4. Complete results can be found in the attached appendices with comparisons between CSUSM and other participating campuses in Appendix B, results broken down by race/ethnicity in Appendix C, and differences by gender in Appendix D. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
5. Complete results of the longitudinal responses to the two surveys can be found in Appendix E. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
6. Conversely, respondents were less likely as seniors, than they were as freshmen, to agree with this statement: Through hard work, everybody can succeed in American society (50% vs. 78%). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)