**A Ten-Year View: Spring 2014 Alumni Survey**

Institutional Planning and Analysis, in cooperation with the Career Center, Graduate Studies, Alumni Services and Student Affairs, revised the existing alumni survey and sent it to students who graduated from California State University San Marcos during the past ten years. The survey was sent to 18,096 alumni and 1,499 (8.3%) were returned. The survey asked about employment and educational activities, usefulness of their degree, and involvement with the campus since graduation. This report summarizes some of the key findings of this year’s alumni survey with full results presented in Appendix A.

As has been true in previous alumni surveys, recent graduates were over-represented among respondents with 33% graduating in Summer 2012 or later (see Table 1 in Appendix A). However, we also heard from earlier graduates with 20% of respondents graduating five or more years ago. We heard from alumni in all majors with the top five majors at CSUSM having the most responses: Business, Liberal Studies, Communication, Human Development and Psychology. Regardless of graduation year, the vast majority of respondents earned a Bachelor’s degree from CSUSM as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

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*STUDENT EXPERIENCES AT CSUSM*

At the end of the survey respondents were asked to comment about their time at CSUSM. One of the most frequent comments, especially among early graduates, was about the small size and personal nature of the campus—even among students who were not involved in co-curricular activities.

The percentage of bachelor degree recipients who reported participating in co-curricular activities has gone up in recent years (53% for early alumni vs. 59% of recent graduates) with most participants belonging to student organizations, including honor or academic discipline clubs. Many respondents commented about their positive experiences as part of clubs or Greek life. Graduate students were much less likely to report participating in any activities, although participation had increase by over 15% by 2011 (Table 4; Appendix A).

Approximately three-fourths of respondents reported that their coursework and co-curricular activities had enhanced their research, critical thinking, writing, and oral communication skills as well as their ability to work as part of a team. Respondents mentioned their time spent working in teams, in particular, as being valuable in the workplace. A majority of respondents also reported that their coursework and activities had enhanced other skills “quite a lot/a great deal” as shown in Table 5; Appendix A.

*ALUMNI ACTIVITIES*

More than 90% of respondents said they were “Proud to be a CSUSM graduate” and two-thirds thought of themselves as part of the CSUSM community. Many respondents commented that the “life-long friends” they made at CSUSM was one of the best parts of their college experience and increased their connection to the university. Several respondents said they were still in touch with some of their instructors even after many years. This sense of connection was even greater among graduates who were involved in campus activities as students, as shown below in Table 3.

**Table 3**



Just over one-quarter of respondents described themselves as being “occasionally or very involved” with CSUSM since they graduated and 80% are satisfied with their amount of involvement. (see Tables 6-8, Appendix A)

More than half of respondents say they have recommended CSUSM to a prospective student and approximately one in four have returned to campus for a visit or read articles about CSUSM. Earlier graduates are more likely to have attended an Alumni Association event (12% vs. 2%) but more recent graduates are more likely to report using the Career Center. Respondents were more likely to say they were *interested* in participating in various activities than to report actually doing them. For example 33% of recent graduates say they want to make a gift to CSUSM, but only 4% have done so. (see Tables 9-12, Appendix A) Respondents have positive memories of their time here. However, this has not translated into active alumni involvement, although as students become more engaged in campus activities, it seems likely that alumni involvement will also increase.

Respondents are most apt to get information about CSUM via email followed by the University website. Recent graduates are more likely to check the website (56% vs. 39%) and to rely on social media for news (30% vs. 17%) than earlier graduates. The vast majority of respondents say they rely on email to get information about alumni activities and 20% or fewer check the alumni website.

*EMPLOYMENT*

As shown in the table below, four of five of respondents report being employed, although recent respondents are more likely than earlier graduates to be working part-time.

**Table 4**



Although respondents with Master’s degrees are only slightly more likely to be employed, they are much more likely to be working full time than either Bachelor or credential respondents (Table 14, Appendix A). Employment status varies greatly by degree field with 79% of business majors reporting full-time work vs. 45% of Humanities majors and 41% of Liberal Studies majors doing so. The most popular employment sectors mentioned are: Education (25%), business (18%), health (13%), and science & technology (12%). One-quarter of respondents found their first job after graduation by conducting their own job search and 10% relied on help from family or friends. Less than 5% used the Career Center or alumni contacts to secure their first job. Two-thirds of respondents who graduated with a Bachelor’s degree at least five years ago, say their current job is in line with their career goals compared with 39% of recent graduates. Three-quarters of recent Master’s degree respondents and 90% of recent credential students report they are working in their chosen field. (see Tables 15-22; Appendix A)

As shown in Table 5, more than 80% of our alumni remain in California with a majority working in the region.

**Table 5**



Current salary also varies by undergraduate major with 24% of business majors earning $30,000 or less compared with 46% of graduates who majored in one of the social sciences. Respondents with science or nursing degrees are more likely than others to make over $50,000/year. As shown in Table 5, salary also varies by degree level and time since degree.

**Table 6**



Overall, the top four factors respondents cite for finding their current job are their oral communication skills, related work experience, interpersonal skills, and writing skills. The emphasis placed on respondents’ writing skills and the major/coursework varies by time since degree: more recent graduates tend to see their major as important and earlier graduates are more likely to say their writing skills were important.

*PLANS FOR ADDITIONAL EDUCATION*

Just over a quarter of respondent who graduated 2008 or earlier have earned additional degrees since graduating from CSUSM with 79% earning a Master’s degree and 26.5% earning a doctorate. Many more respondents say they plan to attend or are currently enrolled, as shown in Table 6, and most say they are planning to seek a Master’s degree.

**Table 7**



*FINAL COMMENTS*

Comments by recent graduates reflect the frustration with rising costs and lack of availability of classes:

*Good programs however, sometimes had limited classes making a lot of students to not have many options.*

However, the overall sentiment among alumni who responded to the survey is positive and is nicely summed up by the comment of an early graduate:

*I feel my education was top-notch. I don't think that any other college could compete with the high-quality education I obtained from attending Cal State San Marcos. I feel that I have benefited on a daily basis since graduating from Cal State San Marcos. I always recommend Cal State San Marcos to anyone who is thinking about attending college*.

APPENDIX A













































