**California State University San Marcos**

**Fall 2011 Alumni Survey**

 Institutional Planning and Analysis, in cooperation with the Career Center and the Development Office, developed an electronic survey that was sent to alumni who graduated from California State University San Marcos prior to Fall 2006. The same survey has been sent annually to students who graduated three years earlier and to our most recent graduates. This fall we sent surveys to 3,649 2007-08 and 2010-11 graduates; 318 were returned yielding a responses rate of just 8.7%.[[1]](#footnote-1)

 As has been the case in previous years, most of the respondents are recent graduates; consequently, this report will focus primarily on the responses of 2010-11 graduates and look at differences by survey year, highest degree earned at CSUSM and level of involvement in campus activities while attending CSUSM. This report is a brief summary of the survey findings and focuses on three areas: involvement with the university since graduation, employment and educational activities since graduation, and views of the usefulness of the curriculum at CSUSM. [[2]](#footnote-2) Following this summary, in Appendix A, are more detailed findings showing responses of recent graduates since the survey began.

 Approximately 90% respondents earned their Bachelor’s degree from CSUSM and 8% earned more than one degree from our campus. The most common major among respondents was in a Social Sciences discipline followed by Business.

 As in previous surveys, nearly all respondents say they are proud to be a Cal State San Marcos graduate and nearly three-quarters say that their years at CSUSM were some of the best of their lives—although this percentage has been declining steadily over the years. Furthermore, fewer than half say they have strong ties to the university and 41% have had no involvement since graduation. One respondent put it this way:[[3]](#footnote-3)

*I really enjoyed my time at CSUSM. I would be more involved with the alumni association if I lived closer. I wish there was some way to better connect with my school from long distance! (2011 Sociology major)*

Students who were involved in the university as students are much more likely to report at least occasional involvement with the campus (58% vs. 46%) and to feel connected to the university. Much like last year, two-thirds of respondents say they have recommended the university to others but far fewer say they have connected with the university in other ways, such as visiting the campus or attending events.

 The percentage of recent graduates who are employed increased dramatically from previous years with 65% of respondents saying they are working full time and 27% working part-time. However, 41% of recent graduates said their first job after graduating was a position they held before graduation and 25% say their current job in not in line with their career goals. Many of respondents’ comments showed frustration with the job market and with the support they received from the university:

*Degrees are the new high school diploma. I have student loans to pay now and have the same job. (2011 VPA major)*

*I loved CSUSM & I would consider returning for graduate school, but with the current job market the way it is, I cannot find work in my field so my degree is nothing more that a giant debt to me. More information regarding minors or double majors might have changed my educational plans & I might be more hire-able now. (2008 Psychology major)*

Although most respondents stay in San Diego County, the percentage of respondents who are working in North San Diego County increased slightly this year and the percentage working in the city of San Diego and out of our local service area declined. Two-thirds of recent Bachelor degree recipients earn no more than $40,000/year and 29% say they earn $20,000/year or less—compared to last year when 35% said they earned $20,000 or less. Among respondents earning a credential, 62% earn no more than $20,000 per year; however, 40% say they are working part-time. One respondent expressed it this way:

*I believe that I received an excellent preparation to become a teacher in our public schools and am eagerly awaiting an opportunity to apply for an open position in one of the local public school districts. Meanwhile, I am continuing part time employment as a substitute in the district where I was similarly employed before earning my credential at CSUSM. (2011 Credential student)*

Nearly half (45%) of respondents who graduated recently plan to attend graduate school. In addition, this year’s respondents are more likely than last years’ to say they are planning to enroll in graduate school within the next two years.

 Respondents continue to be very positive about the utility of the skills they gained from their coursework at CSUSM. The majority said their writing, critical thinking and speaking skills, as well as their ability to work as part of a team, were enhanced by their education. As one respondent commented:

*The writing requirement and team projects were an integral part and have really made a difference in my life today. CSUSM was always on the cutting edge of technology and encouraged thinking differently.*

In many ways these survey results reflect the current economic times and the budget cuts that have been a reality in recent years. Many of the comments reflected respondents’ frustration with the cost of their education and their difficulty finding employment. Overall, recent graduates seem less happy with their college experience than in previous years and fewer than ever say they feel connected with the university~~.~~

**Appendix A. Longitudinal Results**





















1. A special thanks to Alumni Services for providing the email addresses of our alumni. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For additional results from the survey, including detailed comparisons of early and most recent graduates, contact Pat Morris in IPA at pmorris@csusm.edu. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The last question in the Fall 2011 Alumni Survey invited respondents to make additional comments about their “experience at CSUSM and the utility of the undergraduate education you received”; 100 respondents took advantage of this opportunity. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)