

Results of the May 2006 Graduating Student Survey
University of San Francisco
Office of Institutional Research
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Executive Summary

The May 2006 USF graduating student survey, coordinated by the Office of Institutional Research, with the Registrar's Office assistance, was completed online by 1,379 students prior to graduation. This was the 18th consecutive survey, beginning in May 1997, which was conducted in conjunction with graduation. The survey results included those students who were eligible to graduate by May 2006. A total of 1,422 undergraduate and graduate students were eligible; the response rate was thus 97 percent. The survey instrument, connected to the online application to graduate, assessed students' education, work, and living experiences while at USF; attitudes about individual, ethnic, and religious differences; satisfaction with various USF facilities and services; attitudes about education at USF; volunteer services, internships, and community service learning at USF; and plans after graduation.

Although the results varied somewhat by students' school or college, students overall indicated a high level of satisfaction with their learning experience while at USF. Among all the respondents, 92 percent "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with the following statement: "Overall, I was satisfied with my USF education." Likewise, 94.6 percent of those surveyed "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that "my instructors took an active interest in my learning," and 92.9 percent felt that instructors were "reasonably accessible outside of class." Comparing the responses on these items in May 2006 to the responses on the same items in the previous seventeen surveys reveals considerable consistency over time. The overall responses on the items addressing satisfaction with the USF education, instructor interest in student learning, and instructor accessibility were all within seven percentage points over all 18 surveys. The overall satisfaction expressed by students was fairly consistent across schools and colleges as well. The following statement by a student, responding to an open-ended question on the survey, is representative of many: "I always felt my needs were taken care of; that I was treated friendly and personally; and that the most important concern was my receiving a high-quality education." Another student wrote about an aspect of USF that had a particularly positive impact: "The caliber of the professors! No doubt: each was obviously personally involved in their emphases; always willing to answer questions and go the extra distance to ensure the students were clear on any subject."

Overall, students were very satisfied with their major courses, core curriculum/general education courses, and elective coursework. In the May 2006 survey, the overall satisfaction with major courses was 90.5 percent, the overall satisfaction with the core curriculum/general education courses was 81.2 percent, and the overall satisfaction with elective courses was 80.2 percent. Over the prior seventeen surveys, the overall satisfaction with major courses ranged from 86.0 to 92.1 percent, the overall satisfaction

with core curriculum/general education courses ranged from 64.0 to 82.4 percent, and the overall satisfaction with elective courses ranged from 64.0 to 84.2 percent.

Among the respondents to the May 2006 survey, 84.2 percent felt that at USF individual, ethnic, religious, and other differences were valued “very much” or “somewhat,” and 71.5 percent of the graduating students agreed “very much” or “somewhat” with the following question: “Did your appreciation of individual, ethnic, and religious differences *increase* at USF?” From May 1997 to May 2005, the overall percentage of students who felt individual, ethnic, religious, and other differences were valued at USF ranged from 77.0 percent to 86.1 percent. During this same time period, the overall percentage that felt that their appreciation of differences *increased* while at USF ranged from 61.0 percent to 72.0 percent. On the open-ended question regarding “any specific aspects of your USF experience, or specific USF services, that had a particularly positive impact on you,” one student wrote: “The University of San Francisco prepared me to live life to the fullest. The diversity of the students and different activities allowed me to realize there are more things to appreciate and strive to learn.” Similarly, another student wrote: “The university offered me an environment more diverse than schools I have attended in previous years. It allowed me to become more open minded; while at the same time; gain more respect and knowledge of my own family culture and heritage.” Another student simply said, “I am grateful I went to a university as diverse as USF; there is no university like it.”

In their responses to the survey questions, several students also commented on the university’s commitment to social justice. For example, one student wrote: “The emphasis on social justice has also attracted many liberal-minded folks here; which has been beneficial for my educational needs.” Similarly, another student wrote: “The aspect of social justice was the biggest impact of my career at USF. I really feel like I have responsibility to go out and create positive change in the world. ”

On the item that asked how many May 2006 graduates had *not* worked while enrolled at USF, the responses were highly variable among the schools and colleges: from 0 percent in the School of Nursing up to 25.6 percent for School of Business and Management students. The likely explanation for the high percentage in the School of Business is the large percentage of international students in that school (23.6 percent claimed that status on the survey), who, because of their student visa status, cannot work except on campus. Over the past 17 surveys, the percentage of students who did *not* work while enrolled at USF has ranged overall from 10.2 percent to 16.0 percent, with 13.9 percent reporting in the May 2006 survey that they did not work while they were students.

On the items that asked students to evaluate services and facilities, there has been considerable variability in students’ responses across services within a given year, as well as a good deal of consistency over time. In the previous 17 surveys, library services received the highest percentage of positive responses among all USF services and facilities, with 59.0 percent to 75.1 percent of those surveyed responding that library services were either excellent or good. In May 2006, 78.6 percent of the students surveyed responded that library services were either excellent or good, the highest approval rating yet recorded. Other services that have consistently been in the top ten

services with respect to the percentage of excellent or good responses include the registrar's office, bursar's office, and orientation programs. For the sixth year in a row, computer facilities/services received the second highest percentage of excellent or good responses among all USF services. By contrast, from May 1998 to December 2000, computer facilities/services received the highest or second highest percentage of "poor" responses among those services assessed on the graduating student survey. In the December 1998 survey, for example, 21.2 percent of our students evaluated this service as poor. By May 2002, however, only 9.4 percent of the students surveyed designated computer facilities/services as poor, and in the May 2006 survey, only 2.2 percent of the students evaluated computer facilities/services as poor. In the May 2006 survey, by comparison, 66.5 percent of the respondents evaluated computer facilities/services as either excellent or good, the highest approval rating this service has ever received. Significant improvements have clearly been made in this service during the past four years.

Two years ago, upon the recommendation of an advising subcommittee composed largely of the associate deans from the USF schools and colleges, we subdivided the long standing item on academic advising on the graduating student survey into three components: academic advising-career advising, long-term academic advising within the major, and short-term academic advising by semester. The sole item on academic advising had received the highest percentage of "poor" responses on the previous eight surveys. In May 2006, the new subdivided item on academic advising generated the three highest percentages of poor responses of any items on the survey, with 19.8 percent of the respondents evaluating academic advising-career advising as poor, 13.9 percent indicating that long-term academic advising within the major as poor, and 11.6 percent evaluating academic advising by semester as poor. It is important to note, however, that 46.2 percent of the students surveyed *did* evaluate long-term academic advising within the major as excellent or good, and that 47.1 percent of those surveyed described short-term academic advising by semester as excellent or good. These evaluations placed long-term advising and short-term advising as numbers nine and ten as the services receiving the highest percentage of excellent or good responses. It should also be noted that 33.5 percent of the graduating students said that academic advising-career advising "did not apply."

In the May 2006 survey, 33.3 percent of the graduating students reported participating in volunteer services while at USF. School of Nursing students were at the top of the range (51.9 percent), education students were at the low end (12.3 percent), and Arts and Sciences, Business, and CPS students were in the middle (39.1 percent to 23.5 percent). With respect to internships, the variability among students by college was also great: from 41.4 percent in the College of Arts and Sciences to 9.5 percent in CPS. Overall, 30.3 percent of USF's graduating students participated in community service learning, ranging from 36.5 percent in Arts and Sciences to 9.7 percent in education. There has been a sizable increase in the percentage of students who participated in community service learning over the past eight years, reflective in part of the implementation of the new undergraduate core curriculum in 2001–2002, which requires undergraduate students to complete a course that integrates a form of community/public service into their

academic undergraduate learning experience. In the College of Arts and Sciences, for example, 25 percent of the undergraduate students reported participating in community service learning in May 1998, prior to the implementation of the new core curriculum, whereas by May 2006, the percentage of undergraduates in Arts and Sciences who participated in community service learning had increased to 47.7 percent. What is perhaps most impressive about the overall percentage of USF students who participated in non-required volunteer programs is that students made the time for this kind of effort at all, given the reality that only 13.9 percent of USF students did *not* hold a paying job while enrolled at USF. Notwithstanding the demands of schoolwork and jobs, a sizeable percentage of our students did find the time to live out one of USF's core values, articulated in the *Vision, Mission, and Values Statement*, and which calls for a "culture of service."

The future plans of our students after graduation also varied by school or college. Not surprisingly, 57.7 percent of our Nursing students indicated that they would be looking for a job after graduation, whereas only 15.5 percent of CPS graduates indicated the same. Responses from students in the other schools ranged from 44.9 percent to 30.5 percent on this item. Overall, 20.3 percent of our graduating students said they planned to attend graduate school, with Arts and Sciences graduates at the top end of the range (31.0 percent).

This summary has highlighted the macro level of analysis of students' responses to the graduating student survey. In the full report, available on request, more detailed information can be found by focusing on a specific item or set of items within a school or college, or by looking at the responses of either graduate or undergraduate students within a college. In the College of Arts and Sciences, in the School of Business and Management, and in the College of Professional Studies, we have segmented the data by undergraduate or graduate status. We have also segmented the results among the regional campuses, and between on-campus and off-campus students. The full report also includes students' written comments to those open-ended questions we posed regarding positive USF experiences and negative USF experiences, segmented by school and college. We also include a list of graduate schools students plan to attend after graduation; internships, volunteer work, or other post-graduation plans; and volunteer organizations students participated in while at USF.

In the final analysis, the results of the graduating student survey provide one of the best windows we currently have into the minds of our students regarding their attitudes about USF. The large number of students who complete the long survey, as well as the time students spend writing often extensive and insightful comments, indicates that many students take our survey very seriously. The importance of our survey is also suggested by the increasing number of USF administrators who are using our survey results in applying for grants to external organizations, preparing for accreditation visits, and seeking to enhance the overall learning experience of our students. The results of the graduating student survey also provide evidence that many of the core values of the *Vision, Mission, and Values Statement* of the University of San Francisco are being incorporated into the worldview of our students.