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**Results of the May 2009 Graduating Student Survey**

**University of San Francisco**

**Office of Institutional Research**

**July 10, 2009**

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## **Executive Summary**

The May 2009 USF graduating student survey, coordinated by the Office of Institutional Research, with the Registrar's Office assistance, was completed online by 1,748 students prior to graduation. This was the 21st consecutive survey, beginning in May 1997, which was conducted in conjunction with graduation. 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. The response rate was 98 percent.

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, 93.3 percent "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with the following statement: "Overall, I was satisfied with my USF education." Likewise, 96.3 percent of those surveyed "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that "my instructors took an active interest in my learning," and 95.5 percent felt that instructors were "reasonably accessible outside of class." Comparing the responses on these items in May 2009 to the responses on the same items in the previous 20 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 21 surveys. The overall satisfaction expressed by students was fairly consistent across schools and colleges as well. The following statement by a business student, responding to an open-ended question on the survey, is representative of many: "Choosing USF as my University of choice was one of the best decisions I have ever made. I have had only the greatest experiences here and have had the opportunity to work with some of the brightest most interesting professors I have ever known. The USF environment is amazing and being centrally located in the Heart of San Francisco was also a huge positive. At this University I have met some of my best friends and some of the most knowledgeable and inspiring people!" Another student, in the College of Arts and Sciences, wrote, "I found that my professors cared a great deal about my learning and wanted to see me excel." A third student, in the School of Education, stated: "I had never attended a school that exhibited such a comprehensive interest and investment in its students. The professors, administrators, and support staff all demonstrated that they cared about my success and the success of others."

Overall, students were very satisfied with their major courses, core curriculum/general education courses, and elective coursework. In the May 2009 survey, the overall satisfaction with major courses was 92.3 percent, the overall satisfaction with the core curriculum/general education courses was 83.0 percent, and the overall satisfaction with elective courses was 79.8 percent. Over the prior 20 surveys, the overall satisfaction with major courses ranged from 86.0 to 92.6 percent, the overall satisfaction with core curriculum/general education courses ranged from 64.0 to 83.0 percent, and the overall satisfaction with elective courses ranged from 64.0 to 84.2 percent.

Among the respondents to the May 2009 survey, 85.9 percent felt that at USF individual, ethnic, religious, and other differences were valued “very much” or “somewhat,” and 71.4 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 2008, 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 72.5 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 business student wrote: “The campus is so diverse that it never felt like there were such things as minorities. Culturally and in nationality, my experience at USF was extremely diverse and thus much more enjoyable and experientially beneficial and culturally educational. I Love it! My time at USF has given me the opportunity to interact and develop strong relationships with a vast array of people with very diverse backgrounds. This continuously brought new things to my table in daily interactions and in meeting new people at USF! I also appreciate the wide variety and culturally diverse on-campus events and activities that were held at USF. Such as musical events, student showcases, and cultural demonstrations!” Similarly, another student, in the College of Arts and Sciences, wrote: “A very diverse environment helped me to have a better understanding of myself and others.” Another business student simply said, “Living in the dorms and experiencing so many different types of people was incredible. The diversity on campus really makes the USF experience, and I can honestly say that I will be leaving here a more passionate and open-minded individual because of the people I have met.”

In their responses to the survey questions, several students also commented on the university’s commitment to social justice. For example, one student in Arts and Sciences wrote: “Community service and USF's commitment to social justice have had the most impact on me. The activities that I have participated in like the Arrupe Immersion to New Orleans have helped me gain perspective on my life and lives of people in my community. That volunteer experience truly changed my life. Also many of the classes I have taken at USF have been life altering like Catholic Social Thought.” A School of Education student wrote, “The entire orientation of Jesuit education, specifically service to others and the sense of community and social justice has completely changed my approach to my work as a leader and as an educator.”

On the item that asked how many May 2009 graduates had *not* held a paying job while enrolled at USF, the responses were highly variable among the schools and colleges: from 20.7 percent in the School of Business and Management to 9.5 percent in the School of Education. Over the prior 20 surveys, the percentage of students who did *not* hold a paying job while enrolled at USF has ranged overall from 10.2 percent to 18.7 percent, with 15.4 percent reporting in the May 2009 survey that they did not hold a paying job 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 20 surveys, library services received the highest percentage of positive responses among all USF services and facilities, with 59.0 percent to 80.2 percent of those surveyed responding that library services were either excellent or good. In May 2009, 79.5 percent of the students surveyed responded that library services were either excellent or good. Other services that have consistently been in the top ten services with respect to the percentage of excellent or good responses include computer services, classroom facilities, the registrar's office, and orientation programs. Five 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 2009, the subdivided item on academic advising generated the three highest percentages of poor responses of any items on the survey, with 13.5 percent of the respondents evaluating academic advising-career advising as poor, 12.1 percent indicating that long-term academic advising within the major as poor, and 10.7 percent evaluating academic advising by semester as poor. It is important to note, however, that 50.9 percent of the students surveyed *did* evaluate long-term academic advising within the major as excellent or good, 49.2 percent of those surveyed described short-term academic advising by semester as excellent or good, and 34.1 percent said that academic advising-career advising was excellent or good (2.6 percentage points higher than in May 2008). This is the highest positive rating yet recorded for this item and suggests that improvements are being made in academic-career advising at USF. Moreover, short-term academic advising was among the top 10 services rated either excellent or good for the second-straight year in the four-year history of that item.

In the May 2009 survey, 35.2 percent of the graduating students reported participating in volunteer services while at USF. Arts and Sciences students were at the top of the range (42.6 percent), School of Education students were at the low end (15.5 percent), and Business, Nursing, and CPS students were in the middle (39.7 percent to 18.7 percent). With respect to internships, the variability among students by college was also great: from 42.5 percent in the College of Arts and Sciences to 2.8 percent in CPS. Overall, 33.5 percent of USF's graduating students participated in community service learning, ranging from 46.7 percent in business to 5.9 percent in education. 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 15.4 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, 74.3 percent of our Nursing students indicated that they would be looking for a job after graduation, whereas only 17.4 percent of CPS graduates indicated the same. Responses from students in the other schools ranged from 51.7 percent to 34.4 percent on this item. Overall, 19.1 percent of our graduating students said they planned to attend graduate school, with Arts and Sciences graduates at the top end of the range (29.2 percent).

This summary has highlighted the macro level of analysis of students' responses to the May 2009 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, in the School of Nursing, 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. Finally, we have provided two tables that portray the wide range of intern positions held by USF students, and that lists many of our students' future employers.

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 2009 graduating student survey can inform USF 2028 and 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.