

**Results of the May 2004
Graduating Student Survey
University of San Francisco
(Executive Summary)**

Office of Institutional Research

July 2004

Executive Summary

“The multicultural and social justice emphasis at USF positively impacted my life and my whole outlook on the world,” wrote one anonymous student in response to an open-ended question on the May 2004 graduating student survey. The survey, conducted by the Office of Institutional Research, with the assistance of the Registrar’s Office, was completed by 613 graduating students at USF during cap and gown distribution on the main campus prior to graduation. Surveys were also distributed and collected at group meetings on the five regional campuses prior to graduation. This was the fifteenth consecutive survey, beginning in May 1997, which was conducted in conjunction with commencement exercises. A total of 1377 undergraduate and graduate students attended the May 2004 graduation ceremonies; the response rate was thus 44.5%. A total of 1532 students were eligible to attend the ceremonies. The four-page survey instrument 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 relatively high level of satisfaction with their learning experience while at USF. Among all the respondents, 92.2% “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with the following statement: “Overall, I was satisfied with my USF education.” Likewise, 94.6% of those surveyed “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that “my instructors took an active interest in my learning,” and 93.9% felt that instructors were “reasonably accessible outside of class.” Comparing the responses on these items in May 2004 to the responses on the same items in the previous fourteen 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 fifteen 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: “As a whole, the best thing about my time at USF was the accessibility of the professors and an environment (small classes, etc.) that was conducive to developing relationships with them. This stimulated my interest in subjects and my academic growth more than anything. I feel that the quality in teaching here is high. I also think that the broad liberal arts requirements are very valuable.” Similarly, another student wrote: “Being a private university, the obvious edge that USF has over other schools (even Berkeley) is that the professors are available to us personally most of the time. The best part of my USF experience is definitely the professors.” A different student simply stated: “The professors are fantastic and knowledgeable and have a high standard of learning.”

Overall, students were somewhat less satisfied with their general education and elective coursework than they were with their major courses. In the May 2004 survey, the overall satisfaction with major courses was 92.1%, the overall satisfaction with general education courses was 73.2%, and the overall satisfaction with elective courses was 79.8%. Over the prior fourteen surveys, the overall satisfaction with major courses

ranged from 86% to 91%, the overall satisfaction with general education courses ranged from 64% to 71%, and the overall satisfaction with elective courses ranged from 64% to 77%. It should be noted, therefore, that on the May 2004 survey students gave the highest approval ratings yet recorded on major courses, general education courses, and elective courses.

Among the respondents to the May 2004 survey, 85.1% felt that at USF individual, ethnic, religious, and other differences were valued “very much” or “somewhat,” and 70.3% 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 2004, the overall percentage of students who felt individual, ethnic, religious, and other differences were valued at USF ranged from 77.0% to 86.1%. During this same time period, the overall percentage that felt that their appreciation of differences *increased* while at USF ranged from 61% to 72%. 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: “I enjoyed meeting people with different ethnic backgrounds and learning more about different cultures. These experiences gave me a greater appreciation for the diversity at USF.” Another student who responded to the same question, wrote that “the diversity of the student body and the (in general) care and concern of faculty members were major positives. I feel lucky to have met so many different people with a wide range of interests.” In their responses to the survey questions, several students linked the university’s commitment to diversity to other institutional values, such as social justice. For example, one student said a positive aspect of USF was “the university’s commitment to educating students about diversity and social justice, as well as the university’s open-mindedness on global issues and participation in activities that promote or enhance student’s understanding on the issues.” Similarly, another student wrote: “Definitely the university’s mission to promote social justice and multicultural awareness impacted the person I have become. The lecture series they provide as well as community activities are excellent coordinates in promoting cultural awareness.” Other opportunities for participating in social justice activities were noted by a third student: “I loved being a part of the social justice community here. University Ministry and clubs like the Peace and Justice coalition were inspiring assets to the university. They were an all inclusive community that was always positive and friendly.” These findings are congruent with many of USF’s core values expressed in the *Vision, Mission, and Values Statement* of September 11, 2001, which declares that the university “welcomes persons of all faiths or no religious beliefs as fully contributing partners to the university;” that views “diversity of perspectives, experiences, and traditions as essential components of a quality education in our global context;” and that calls for “social responsibility in fulfilling the University’s mission to create, communicate and apply knowledge to a world shared by all people and held in trust for future generations.”

On the item that asked how many May 2004 graduates had *not* worked while enrolled at USF, the responses were highly variable among the schools and colleges: from 9.4% for College of Arts and Sciences students up to 26.2% for School of Business and Management students. One possible explanation for this finding is that the School of

Business has the largest percentage of international students (23.8% claimed that status on the survey), who, because of their student visa status, cannot work except on campus. Over the past fifteen surveys, the percentage of students who did *not* work while enrolled at USF has ranged overall from 10.2% to 16.0%, with 13.9% reporting in the May 2004 survey that they did not work while they were students.

On the items that asked students to rate services and facilities, there has been considerable variability in students' ratings across services within a given year, as well as a good deal of consistency over time. In the past fourteen surveys, students ranked library services highest among USF services and facilities, with 59.0% to 75.1% of those surveyed rating the library as excellent or good, with the highest percentage reported on the May 2004

survey. Other services that have consistently ranked in the top ten services include the registrar's office, classroom facilities, and the bursar's office. In May 2004, academic advising received the highest percentage of poor ratings of any service at USF, just as it has for the past eight surveys. From May 1998 to December 2000, computer facilities/services was rated the first or second poorest among those services assessed on the graduating student survey. In the December 1998 survey, for example, 21.2% of our students rated this service as poor. In May 2002, by contrast, only 9.4% of the students surveyed rated computer facilities/services as poor, and in the May 2004 survey, the poor rating was 7.1%. Moreover, in the May 2004 survey, 58.5% of the respondents rated computer facilities/services as either excellent or good, an approval rating that ranks computer facilities/services as the second highest among all USF services, for the third year in a row. Significant improvements have clearly been made in this service.

The overall percentage of students who reported participating in volunteer services, internships, or community service learning reached an all time high in May 2004, reflecting an upward trend since 1997. The percentage of students who participated in volunteer, intern, or community service programs while at USF varied considerably, however, by school or college. In the May 2004 survey, 38.8% of the graduating students reported participating in volunteer services while at USF. School of Nursing students were at the top of the range (63.6%), CPS at the low end (14.6%), and Arts and Sciences, Business, and Education in the middle (50.8% to 17.9%). With respect to internships, the variability among students by college was also great: from 45.8% in the College of Arts and Sciences to 4.9% in CPS. Overall, 37.5% of USF's graduating students participated in community service learning, ranging from 47.3% in Arts and Sciences to 11.4% in CPS. What is perhaps most impressive about the overall percentage of USF students who participated in volunteer, intern, or community service programs is that students made the time for this kind of effort at all, given the reality that only 13.9% 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, 77.3% of our Nursing students indicated that they would be looking for a job after graduation, whereas only 14.0% of CPS graduates indicated the same. Responses from students in the other schools ranged from 52.8% to 20.7% on this item. Overall, 22.7% of our graduating students said they planned to attend graduate school. Arts and Sciences graduates were at one end of the range (35.9%), Nursing students were at the other end (0%), with CPS (21.5%), Business (9.8%), and Education (3.4%) in the middle. We have also included a listing, by school and college, of students' sponsoring organizations if they participated in internships while at USF; the graduate schools our students plan to attend; and a listing of employers who hired our graduating students, if known.

This summary has highlighted the macro level of analysis of students' responses to the graduating student survey. In the following pages of this report, 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 following report also includes students' written comments to those open-ended questions we posed regarding positive USF experiences, negative USF experiences, and reasons for staying at USF if a student had ever considered transferring, segmented by school and college. There were a total of 666 separate comments—a rich source of information.

In the final analysis, the results of the graduating student survey provide perhaps the best window we currently have into the minds of our students regarding their attitudes about USF. The 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.