

WHAT OUR GRADUATING STUDENTS SAID

In spring 2011, we surveyed students who applied for graduation and asked a brief set of questions. We asked about their 1) post-graduation plans, 2) the extent to which they worked for pay while taking classes, 3) when they decided to go to college and why, 4) whether anyone at Fresno State was a positive influence on their success, and 5) what Fresno State should do to help students succeed. The results of the positive influence question were published in a brief earlier this semester. Here are the answers to the other questions. All but five responses were from undergraduates. A total of 728 students responded out of 2,461 that applied (30% response rate).

Principal Activity After Graduation

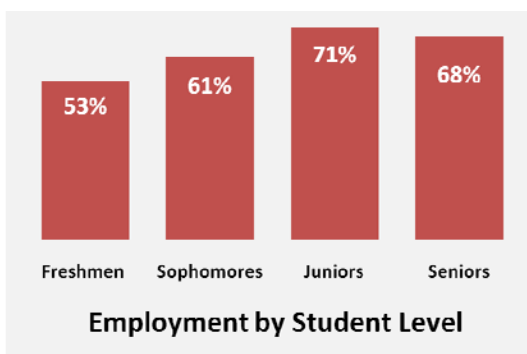
- ▶ 55% plan to work full- or part-time; primarily full-time
- ▶ 35% will attend graduate or professional school full- or part-time; most full-time
- ▶ Nine (9) will join the military, 4 will primarily volunteer such as through the Peace Corps, 8 will start or raise their family, 15 will pursue additional undergraduate education.

Off-Campus Employment While Enrolled

The majority of students (77%) were employed off-campus while they were enrolled. Among this group, 15% worked 40 hours or more per week.

Upper division students are

more likely than lower division students to be employed. We cannot determine from these data whether more students are working as they move through their academic career or whether the higher percentage of upper division students is due to an influx of transfer students who are working. This is an important issue to understand because if it is the former it may indicate insufficient academic challenge, an issue that was suggested by previous survey data.



When and Why Go to College

The majority (69%) of the respondents said they always knew they would attend college, while 15% decided during high school; 9% decided as an adult; and 5% decided during grade school or middle school.

The reasons they decided to attend college include: career aspirations that require a college degree, to expand their knowledge of the world, to have more opportunities in life, to be better off financially, to provide for themselves and their family and to pursue their dreams.

In addition, they also mentioned wanting to be a role model for their children, siblings, or racial/ethnic group, to get out of the environment in which they were raised and because their parents expected it.

- ▶ *"My parents didn't have the education to go to college, so I went to college for them."*
- ▶ *"Both of my parents have undergraduate and master's degrees. It was never really an option NOT to get my undergraduate degree."*
- ▶ *"Being Native American, I wanted to become a role model for others who are Native American."*

What Fresno State Can Do to Help Students Succeed

Advising issues topped the list of responses. Students (N=90) cited the need for better advising on classes, graduation, and careers. Reducing tuition, fees, and the cost of books was the second most common suggestion (N=80). Forty-three (43) students recommended more flexibility in times classes are offered in order to accommodate work and family responsibilities. Twenty-four (24) students complained about faculty who do not care and do not do their job. Lack of parking received 20 complaints. Fourteen (14) said more opportunities for students to get involved and reaching out to all students would be helpful.

- ▶ *"ADVISE EARLY. And then ADVISE some more! And advise often! There are more student than you think who do not know what they want to do."*
- ▶ *"Lower costs. Education is an important investment, but one that many (even if they are dedicated to their studies) cannot afford to make. Find a way to make college more affordable."*
- ▶ *"More undergrad core classes should be available, so students can get them done and not make college last longer. Have programs like sending emails out to remind students of deadlines, and writing exams, so students don't miss due dates."*

