

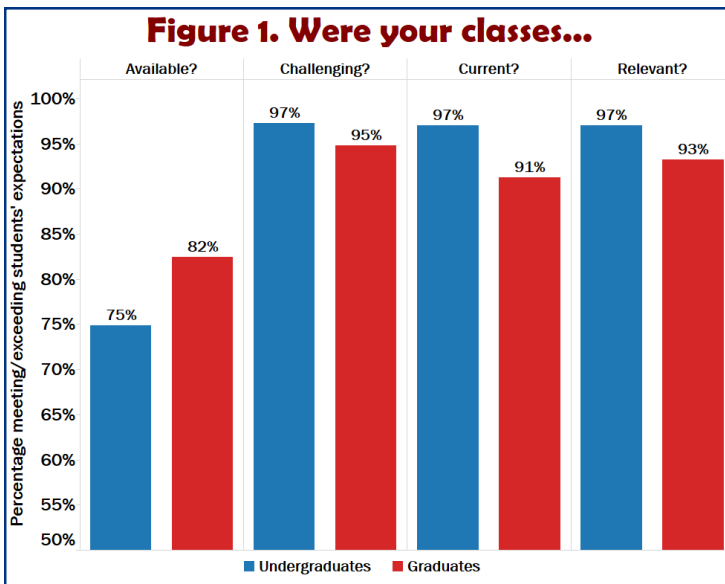


# WHAT OUR GRADUATING STUDENTS SAID

The graduating student survey is administered at the beginning of the semester to students who apply for graduation. This spring, both undergraduate and graduate students were asked about 1) their educational experiences at Fresno State, 2) the extent to which they worked for pay while taking classes, 3) their post-graduation plans, 4) when they decided to go to college, 5) what was the most notable aspect of their education, and 6) what Fresno State should do to help students succeed. Overall, 1,167 undergraduates and 67 graduates responded to the survey. The results from last year's survey can be found in "[What Our Graduating Students Said—Class of 2013.](#)"

## Educational Experience at Fresno State

As in the previous year's results, most undergraduates and graduates rated their classes as meeting or exceeding their expectations for relevance, currency and challenge (Figure 1). Availability continues to be a concern amongst undergraduates, with only 75% of them reporting that courses met their expectations of availability. This is a one percentage point increase from last year.



Most undergraduates rated their faculty and classroom facilities/lab equipment as meeting or exceeding their expectations (similar to the previous year's survey results). The majority of graduates also rated their faculty and classroom facilities/lab equipment as meeting or exceeding their expectations (Table 1).

The educational experience at Fresno State met or exceeded most students' expectations (Table 2). While the

**Table 1. Percentages of Meeting/Exceeding Students' Expectations**

Were your program faculty*...	Undergraduates	Graduates
knowledgeable about degree requirements/deadlines?	95%	93%
helpful in planning your coursework?	91%	82%
committed to your success?	94%	90%
timely in their feedback of your work?	93%	83%
available for thesis/project/exam advising? **		81%

\*Percentage meeting/exceeding students' expectations  
\*\*Graduate students only

Were the classroom facilities and/or lab equipment*...	Undergraduates	Graduates
Reliable?	91%	91%
Up-to-Date?	88%	90%

\*Percentage meeting/exceeding students' expectations

majority would recommend Fresno State to others, this percentage is considerably lower than ratings of quality and value, particularly for graduate students. However, there was some improvement compared to last year. Graduate students would recommend Fresno State at a five percentage point higher rate than last year (73% versus 68%) and undergraduates show a two percentage point increase (83% versus 81%).

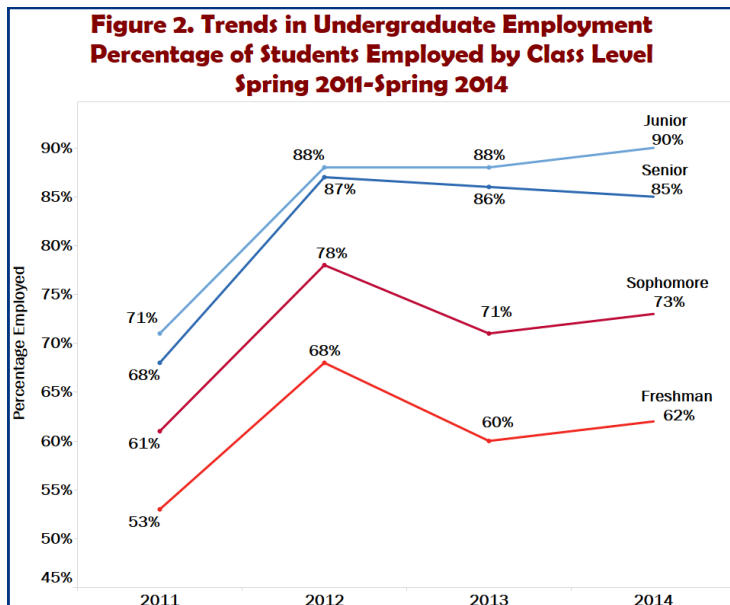
**Table 2. Overall Educational Experience**

	Undergraduates		Graduates	
	2013	2014	2013	2014
Overall, is Fresno State a good value in relation to cost of a degree?*	89%	91%	89%	93%
Overall, is Fresno State a high quality academic experience?*	92%	93%	86%	87%
Would you recommend Fresno State to others for education? **	81%	83%	68%	73%

\*Percentage meeting/exceeding respondents' expectations  
\*\*Percentage of respondents answering "YES"

## Off-Campus Employment While Enrolled (Undergraduate Only)

The majority of undergraduate students (75%) reported they were employed off-campus while also enrolled. Among this group, 20% worked 40 hours or more per week, which is identical to the percentage reported last year. Upper division students are more likely than lower division students to be employed (see Figure 2).



## Principal Activity After Graduation

For both graduate and undergraduate students, most students reported they are planning to seek full-time employment after graduation.

- ▶ 83% of graduate students and 48% of undergraduate students plan to work full-time
- ▶ 39% of undergraduates are planning on attending graduate school, either full-time or part-time
- ▶ For all graduating students, 12 will join the military, 9 will primarily engage in volunteer activities (such as through the Peace Corps), 13 will start or raise their family, and 14 plan on attending a credential program.

## Graduate Student Satisfaction

Graduate students were asked to respond to questions specific to the Division of Graduate Studies (DGS). DGS staff members meet or exceed student expectations at a very high rate (Table 3). The DGS Graduate Writing Studio consultants were also ranked very high, with 94% of graduate students reporting their needs were met for helpfulness and accessibility. However, when asked about financial opportunities through DGS, only 78% of students reported their expectations were met for either helpfulness or accessibility.

## Table 3. Graduate Student Satisfaction

### Were the DGS staff\*...

helpful?	95%
accessible?	95%
timely with follow-up on questions and concerns?	97%
thorough in communication of deadlines and information?	92%

### Were the DGS financial opportunities (grants, awards, waivers)\*...

helpful?	78%
accessible?	78%

### Were the DGS Graduate Writing Studio consultants\*...

accessible?	94%
helpful?	94%

\*Percentage meeting/exceeding students' expectations

## When Students Decided to go to College (Undergraduates only)

The majority (66%) of the respondents said they always knew they would attend college, while 18% decided during high school; 10% decided as an adult; and 6% decided during grade school or middle school.

## Why Students Decided to go to Graduate School (Graduates only)

Graduate students responded to an open-ended question regarding their decision to pursue a graduate degree. The most common response—cited by 33 of 44 respondents—is to have better career opportunities. Other reasons included various personal and professional development goals. Some responses given include:

- ▶ *"Graduate school was an opportunity to apply what I had learned as an undergraduate, discover myself in my field of interest, connect with students that have similar life goals as myself, and to view the bigger picture."*
- ▶ *"I believe education is the key to success, therefore, I decided to go to graduate school because I wanted to better myself educationally and professionally.."*
- ▶ *"I wanted my education to match my work experience."*

## The Most Notable Aspect of Undergraduate/Graduate Education

Students responded to another open-ended question about the most notable aspect of their education. For undergraduate and graduate students combined, 44% indicated faculty and staff as the most notable aspect (292 out of 661 undergraduates and 19 out of 42 graduates). Students cited their faculty/teachers as knowledgeable, experienced and passionate about the subject they were teaching and dedicated to helping students:

- ▶ *"I liked that all my professors were very knowledgeable about the subject matter and articulated the material in ways students could understand and retain."*
- ▶ *"My interactions with my professors was [sic] pleasing, I was shocked at how easily accessible they were as well as how helpful."*
- ▶ *"They love their subjects and love sharing their vast knowledge with us, in turn sending us into the world informed and passionate."*

Eighteen percent of students (120 undergraduates and 7 graduates) rated the academic classes and programs offered as the most notable aspect of their education at Fresno State.

The third most cited category of notable experiences was working with fellow students in a supportive atmosphere (12% of students; 75 undergraduates and 9 graduates).

- ▶ *"I enjoyed networking with individuals from different backgrounds and industries and combining our experiences to apply to class concepts."*
- ▶ *"I love the community feel that you gain while attending classes at Fresno State."*
- ▶ *"I was amazed to meet new people with such diverse backgrounds."*



Students also cited joining student organizations, course projects, research, internships, study abroad, service learning and other extracurricular activities as being notable. These enriched educational experiences (EEEs), which have been shown in the research literature to be influential on students' success (Bergen-Cico & Viscomi, 2013), were indicated by 10% of the student population (55 undergraduates and 14 graduates).

## What Fresno State Can Do to Help Students Succeed

Undergraduates and graduates were asked to respond to an open-ended question about what Fresno State can do to help students succeed.

**Undergraduates.** Students cited three top issues that would help student success: classes, academic advising, and equipment/facilities. Class availability was, by far, the top concern of undergraduate students. Thirty percent (30%) suggested increasing number of classes (194 out of 642 responses).

- ▶ *"Course availability has always been and continues to be the main problem I faced during my time at Fresno State. The limits placed on how many sections are offered of a course or how many times it is offered does not seem to meet the demands for how many students are enrolled and needing those courses in order to graduate in a timely manner."*
- ▶ *"Fresno State needs more upper division courses offered and improve the ability for juniors and seniors to apply to classes."*
- ▶ *"[We need] better availability of classes at night or weekends for those who work full time to put themselves through school."*

The second most frequently suggested category for improvement was improved equipment and/or facilities (8% of undergraduates, 54 responses). Students mentioned items like better maintenance, thermostat control, and updated lab equipment.

Advising was also a frequently suggested category for improvement. Eight percent of students (49 responses) cited the need for better advising on classes, graduation, and careers.

Other frequently suggested categories include:

- ▶ 35 students (5%) suggest more hands-on experiences
- ▶ 34 responses (5%) would like to see improved level of education in the classrooms
- ▶ 23 (4%) suggest better assessment methods of faculty

**Graduates.** Graduate students had different suggestions than undergraduates. Twenty-six percent (26%, 11 of 42 responses) suggested that improving quality of education was the most important thing Fresno State could do for graduate students.

Graduate students also recommended better advising (24%, 10 of 42 responses). Student comments included providing a more thorough orientation, meeting with advisors more frequently, and providing a better outline of expectations.