UC SANTA BARBARA
THE Current

October 14, 2014
Patricia Marroquin

Success and Satisfaction

University of California Ph.D. alums report career success and strong satisfaction with the graduate school education that contributed to that success, according to results of a comprehensive survey of alumni from throughout the 10-campus UC system. Survey results from UC Santa Barbara's doctoral alums mirror those findings. Overall, 87-91 percent of UCSB alumni respondents felt they were "well-prepared" or "prepared" for their careers after graduation.

The first-ever systemwide survey was conducted by the UC Office of the President in collaboration with alumni associations and UC campus graduate divisions, including the UCSB Graduate Division. About 7,200 alums responded out of 26,000 Ph.D. alums who earned their degrees over the past 40 years. There were 771 respondents to the UCSB survey.

Alumni across all employment sectors and disciplines of study reported stable careers in fields for which their degrees prepared them, UC results show. The unemployment rate among the responding Ph.D. alums is extremely low, with 99 percent of the alums employed at the time of the survey. Alums who recently earned their degrees reported similarly high levels of employment to those with many years in their careers.

UCSB alumni respondents indicated that they would or probably would choose the same degree field again, ranging from 83 percent in Arts and Humanities to 89 percent in Social Sciences. UC-wide results show that 93 percent of respondents would pursue a doctoral degree again.

“The UC Alumni Survey is a very strong endorsement of the significant value of doctoral education for the individuals receiving doctorates,” said Carol Genetti, dean of the UCSB Graduate Division. “The UCSB data closely mirrored the UC-wide results in almost all respects: The great majority of students were well employed and stated that their UCSB programs prepared them for their chosen careers, that they were highly satisfied with their doctoral programs, and that they were likely to choose the same career again.”

UC alumni identified the top three most valuable elements of their UC doctoral education as: academic writing skills; the practice of research methods; and presentation of work at conferences. These findings held true whether the alum worked in academia or not. About 75 percent of respondents said the reputation of their campus and the major had helped them to land a career job.

Genetti noted that one of the most striking differences in findings between UCSB and the UC system as a whole was that “UCSB alums report significantly greater levels of employment in tenure-track positions at four-year universities (58 percent at UCSB compared with 42 percent UC-wide), a fact that underlines the academic leadership of our campus.”

UC Provost Aimée Dorr said that “even as careers in academia have become more competitive, it’s satisfying to see that our doctoral students do well in the academic job market. They become the faculty who will shape the next generation of innovators and critical thinkers. It’s also clear that many who earn a Ph.D. from UC are bringing the knowledge and abilities they honed in graduate school to other sectors.”

On the issue of student debt, Genetti said, “The data show that our students report more debt than students at other UCs, which is likely to be related to UCSB having lower levels of funding than other campuses historically.”

Among other results of the UC-wide survey, more than half of engineering and computer science graduates have gone into the private, for-profit sector. UC alums working in private industry are concentrated in highly skilled fields. More than half are in the professional, scientific, or career services sectors, which includes the legal, financial, architectural, and engineering fields. An additional 11 percent are in manufacturing, and 9 percent are in health care.

Said Genetti: “While the data show that the doctorate is a productive route to a professional career, it is also important to remember that research doctorates are more than career paths: Doctoral programs give students the opportunity for deep exploration of their chosen field. All doctoral students make a lasting contribution to human knowledge through the production of an original dissertation. It is breathtaking to think of the tremendous wealth of information embodied in UC doctoral dissertations in all fields of study, and the significant impact their combined discoveries have had on our state, nation, and world.”

For more information, read the UC Office of the President news release.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.