

2017 Undergraduate Alumni Journey Survey Brief: Associations Among Self-Reported Undergraduate Student Engagement and Alumni Outcomes

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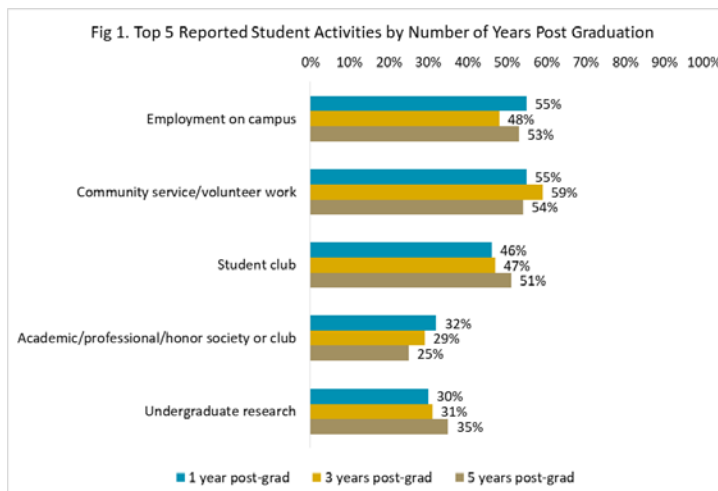
This report uses data from the 2017 Undergraduate Alumni Journey Survey to explore associations among the most commonly reported extra- and co-curricular activities reported by alumni during their time at UC Merced and self-reported alumni outcomes regarding satisfaction with UC Merced, reflections on the support and mentorship they received, and beliefs about how well UC Merced prepared them for situations that require specific types of skills. The analysis revealed that engagement in extra- and co-curricular activities was associated with some key outcomes, which can help members of the campus community consider potential impacts of these activities on alumni.

Overview

In the summer of 2017, UC Merced launched a newly revamped and collaboratively developed [Undergraduate Alumni Journey Survey](#). The survey, administered from May to August, 2017, invited responses from alumni who were 1 year, 3 years, and 5 years post-graduation. Overall, the survey had a 27% response rate, and alumni who responded to the survey were mostly representative of those invited to complete it. For this brief report we examined alumni responses to questions about (a) engagement in extra- and co-curricular activities while students at UC Merced (b) current satisfaction with UC Merced, (c) reflections on the support and mentorship they received at UC Merced, and (d) beliefs about how well UC Merced prepared them for situations that require specific types of skills.

Engagement in Extra- and Co-Curricular Activities While Students at UC Merced

From Fig 1, regardless of when alumni graduated from UC Merced, they reported participating in the same top five extra- and co-curricular activities while students at UC Merced.



The top 5 activities included: (a) Employment on campus, (b) Community service/volunteer work (e.g., club-related, course-related, one-time project, semester-long initiative), (c) a Student club (e.g., cultural, faith-based, dance/arts), (d), an Academic/professional/honor society or club (e.g., Psi Chi, Pharmacy Club, Pre Health, Student Alumni Association), and (e) Undergraduate research (e.g., ReCESS, with faculty, UROC).

Next we examined alumni outcomes regarding satisfaction, reflections on support and mentorship, and beliefs about how well UC Merced prepared them for situations that required specific types of skills. For each alumni outcome, we used chi-squared tests¹ to examine whether student engagement in these top 5 activities was associated with the outcome.

Current Satisfaction with UC Merced

From Fig 2, the majority of alumni somewhat or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their experience at UC Merced across several areas, including:

- overall satisfaction (85%);
- whether they would recommend UC Merced to a prospective undergraduate student, friend, or family member (90%);
- satisfaction with the benefits they received relative to the financial costs (78%); and
- satisfaction with the benefits they received relative to and time invested (85%).

Fig 2. Satisfaction with UC Merced: Percent Somewhat or Strongly Agree

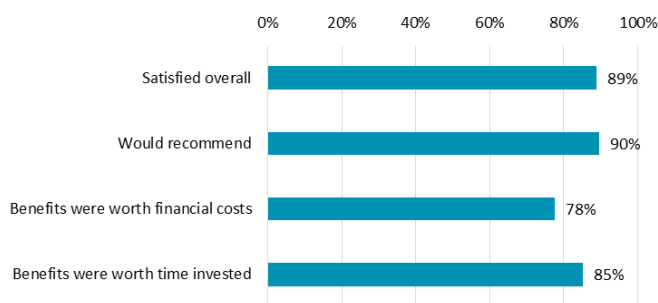
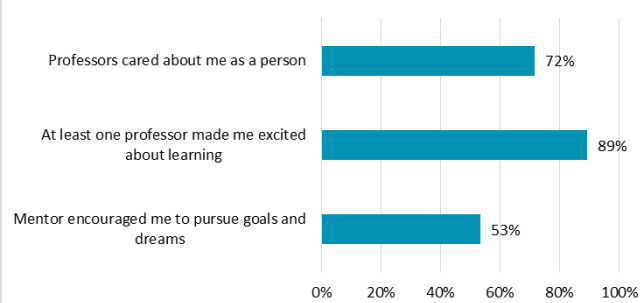


Fig 3. Reflections on Support/Mentorship Received: Percent Agree or Strongly Agree



Was engagement in extra- and co-curricular activities significantly related to satisfaction? We performed chi-squared tests to answer this question and found that the answer was yes, but only in a few areas:

- Students who were employed on campus were more likely to be **satisfied overall** (92%) compared to students who were not employed on campus (87%).
- Students who participated in community service/volunteer work were more likely to say they **would recommend** UC Merced (92%) than students who did not participate (88%).

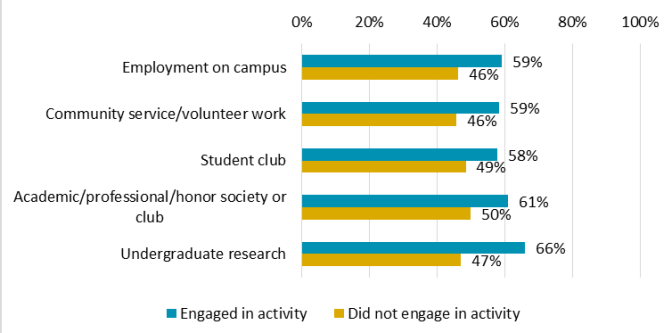
Was engagement in extra- and co-curricular activities significantly related to reflections on support and mentorship? Chi-squared tests indicated that the answer was yes in one area. From Fig 4, engagement in any of these activities was associated with agreement that a mentor encouraged the student to pursue their goals and dreams.

Reflections on Support and Mentorship Received While at UC Merced

From Fig 3, the majority of alumni agreed or strongly agreed that they received mentorship and support while at UC Merced. Specifically,

- 72% (almost 3 in 4) said their professors cared about them as a person;
- 89% (9 in 10) said at least one professor made them excited about learning; and
- 53% (1 in 2) said that they had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams.

Fig 4. Students Who Engaged in Activities Were More Likely to Agree They Had a Mentor Who Encouraged Them to Pursue Goals & Dreams



Beliefs about How Well UC Merced Prepared Alumni for Situations that Require Particular Skills

From Fig 5, the majority (80% or more) of alumni said they believe the education they received at UC Merced prepared them for situations that require 15 skills ranging from self-awareness and understanding to the ability to be clear and effective when writing. Agreement for two skills was below 80%

(ability to appreciate the fine arts and understand international perspectives), indicating possible improvement areas.



Was engagement in extra- and co-curricular activities significantly related to alumni perceptions that UC Merced prepared them? Again, we used chi-squared tests to answer this question and found that the answer was yes, but only in some areas.

- Students who were employed on campus were more likely to say UC Merced prepared them to **understand international perspectives** (83%) compared to students not employed on campus (76%).
- Students who participated in community service/volunteer work were more likely to say UC Merced prepared them to use **analytical and critical thinking skills** (95%) compared to those who did not participate (90%).
- Students who participated in community service/volunteer work (95%) or who participated in undergraduate research (96%) were more likely to say UC Merced prepared them to **acquire new skills/knowledge on their own** compared to those who did not participate (91% and 91%, respectively).
- Students who participated in community service/volunteer work (95%) or who participated in an academic/professional/honor society or club (96%) were more likely to say UC Merced prepared them to **work as**

a member of a team compared to those who did not participate (91% and 91%, respectively).

- Students who participated in an academic/professional/honor society or club (95%) or who participated in undergraduate research (94%) were more likely to say UC Merced prepared them to **prepare and make a presentation** compared to those who did not participate (89% and 88%, respectively).
- Students who participated in undergraduate research were more likely to say UC Merced prepared them to use **other research skills** (93%) compared to those who did not participate (87%).

Conclusions

In sum, though students can engage in a variety of activities while at UC Merced, the top 5 activities students participated in included employment on campus, engagement in community service/volunteer work, engagement in student clubs, engagement in an academic/professional/honor society or club, or engagement in undergraduate research.

In terms of alumni outcomes, the majority of alumni said they were satisfied with their experience at UC Merced, received support and mentorship while at UC Merced, and believed that UC Merced prepared them for situations that require specific types of skills.

However, engagement in activities while a student at UC Merced was associated with some alumni outcomes suggesting that student engagement may have a positive impact on some outcomes. The most consistent finding was that students who participated in any activity were more likely to say they had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams.

This analysis can be used to consider the potential impacts that student engagement in extra- and co-curricular activities may have on alumni outcomes in these areas. However, caution must be exercised in making direct links between engagement

in activities and outcomes because the characteristics of students who chose to engage in activities could underlie the findings. Future analyses will examine whether these trends hold true over time and with future groups of alumni.

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ⁱ For each chi-squared test, $p < .05$ was considered a statistically significant finding. Please contact IRDS for more information about significance testing.