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Spring 2002 Alumni Survey: Eight-month follow-up

The purpose of this report is to determine, eight months after graduation, the educational and employment status of Mt. San Antonio College (Mt. SAC) alumni.

How do we define these Alumni? During the spring semester at Mt. SAC, students who qualify can graduate from the College and receive degrees and/or certificates. There are two types of degrees they can receive: Associate in Science (AS) degree and an Associate in Arts (AA) degree.

The AS degree is designed for vocational majors while the AA degree is appropriate for those individuals seeking a baccalaureate degree after they transfer to a four-year institution (Mt. SAC Fall 2003 Schedule of Credit Classes). For both the AA and AS degrees, a certain number of course units must be taken. One unit is equivalent to one (1) hour in class recitation and two hours of outside preparation per week (Mt. SAC 2002-2003 Catalog).

For the AS degree group, students are required to have taken sixty (60) associate degree appropriate units with a letter grade of "C" or better in all courses required for graduation (Mt. SAC Fall 2003 Schedule of Credit Classes). The AA degree students are also required to have taken sixty (60) associate degree appropriate units, however, a minimum of 56 of the 60 are required to be at the baccalaureate level (i.e., transferable to four-year institutions). They are also required to have a letter grade of a "C" or better in each course required for graduation.

Graduates from Mt. SAC can also receive certificates. Certificates are designed to enhance vocational proficiency for Mt. SAC graduates (Mt. SAC 2002-2003 Catalog). To obtain a certificate in a program of study, at least 50% of the credits earned must be completed at Mt. SAC. A grad of a "C" or better must be earned in each course to be applied to the certificate.

Methodology

In January 2003, eight months after graduating from Mt. SAC, graduates were sent a survey via mail. The two groups were AS and CC graduates (known as AS/CC group) and the AA graduates. The return rate was 63.4% (526/829) for AS/CC and 26.9% (243/903) for AA. The AS/CC return rate is higher because the Career Placement Services Office telephoned non-respondents from this group to increase their response rate. The overall return rate was 44.4% (769/1732).

Survey

The Graduate Survey lists questions focusing on employment and education. The questions discussed in this report are listed below:

1. Are you a continuing college student enrolled in classes at a college or university?
2. Are you planning to use your Associate Degree or Certificate to find work while you continue your studies?
3. Are you currently employed?
4. If you are employed, is your job related to your Mt. SAC award (e.g., Associate Degree or Certificate)?
5. If you have a job, what was your starting hourly wage?
6. If you have a job related to your degree or certificate, how important was your education at Mt. SAC as it related to preparing you for your current position? (Note: If you do not have a job related to your degree or certificate, please choose "Not applicable to me" choice below.)
7. Do you want a job within the next 6 months related to your Associate Degree or Certificate?

Appendix A contains the full survey. The remainder of this report outlines the major findings from the survey.

Results

Continuing Student

How many of the graduates are in school eight months after graduation? Overall, 64.1% are still pursuing their education (table 1). As expected, far more AA graduates have continued in their education (91.4%) than the AS/CC graduates (51.5%). Although it might seem surprising that over half of the AS/CC group is continuing with their education, it is reasonable given that most certificate programs have more than one level of the certificate. A student could graduate one year and still be enrolled in the next level of the certificate program the following academic year. Although the assumption is that students attend Mt. SAC to get an AS/CC and then go to work, it seems that the students are more lifelong learners. These results allow Mt. SAC a new view of recent students who are AS/CC graduates. These findings are different from that obtained two years after graduation from the 1998 Alumni report (Silverman, 2001). Only 31% of the 1998 Alumni, two years after graduation were continuing their education.

Table 1. Are you a continuing college student enrolled in classes at a college or university?	Associate in Science Degree and/or Certificate and/or Associate in Arts Degree (AS/CC)		Associate in Arts Degree ONLY (AA)		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	271	51.5%	222	91.4%	493	64.1%
No	254	48.3%	19	7.8%	273	35.5%
Total	526	100.0%	243	100.0%	769	100.0%
No reply	1		2		3	

Using degree/certificate to find employment

A large number of graduates (66.5%) want to use their degree or certificate to secure employment while they continue their education (table 2). Rather than seeing their degree/certificate as a stepping stone, they see it as a practical time of training – they are expecting to get financial benefits from it, even though they are continuing in their education.

Table 2. Are you planning on using your Associate Degree or Certificate to find work while you continue your studies?	Associate in Science Degree and/or Certificate and/or Associate in Arts Degree		Associate in Arts Degree ONLY		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	217	78.3%	98	49.7%	315	66.5%
No	60	21.7%	99	50.3%	159	33.5%
Total	277	100.0%	197	100.0%	474	100.0%
not applicable	242		43		285	

Employment

Over three quarters of the graduates, 78.1%, are currently employed (table 3). AS/CC graduates have a higher employment rate (83.1%) than AA graduates (66.9%). These findings are higher than those from the 1998 Alumni (Silverman, 2001). Two years after graduation, 57% of the 1998 Alumni were employed.

Table 3. Are you currently employed?	Associate in Science Degree and/or Certificate and/or Associate in Arts Degree		Associate in Arts Degree ONLY		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	434	83.1%	160	66.9%	594	78.1%
No	88	16.9%	79	33.1%	167	21.9%
Total	522	100.0%	239	100.0%	761	100.0%
No Reply	4		4		8	

Employed in related field

When employed graduates were asked if their current job is related to their degree/certificate from Mt. SAC, 58% said “yes” (table 4). Of those graduates who had jobs, the AS/CC group had a higher percentage (70.5%) who were employed in their field of study than the AA group (24.5%). These results are expected as the AS/CC group is typically targeting their studies toward their vocational goals, while the AA group is directing their studies toward transferring to a four-year institution.

Table 4. Is your job related to your Mt. SAC award (e.g., Associate Degree or Certificate)?	Associate in Science Degree and/or Certificate and/or Associate in Arts Degree		Associate in Arts Degree ONLY		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	308	70.5%	40	24.5%	348	58.0%
No	129	29.5%	123	75.5%	252	42.0%
Total	437	100.0%	163	100.0%	600	100.0%
No reply/Not applicable	89		80		169	

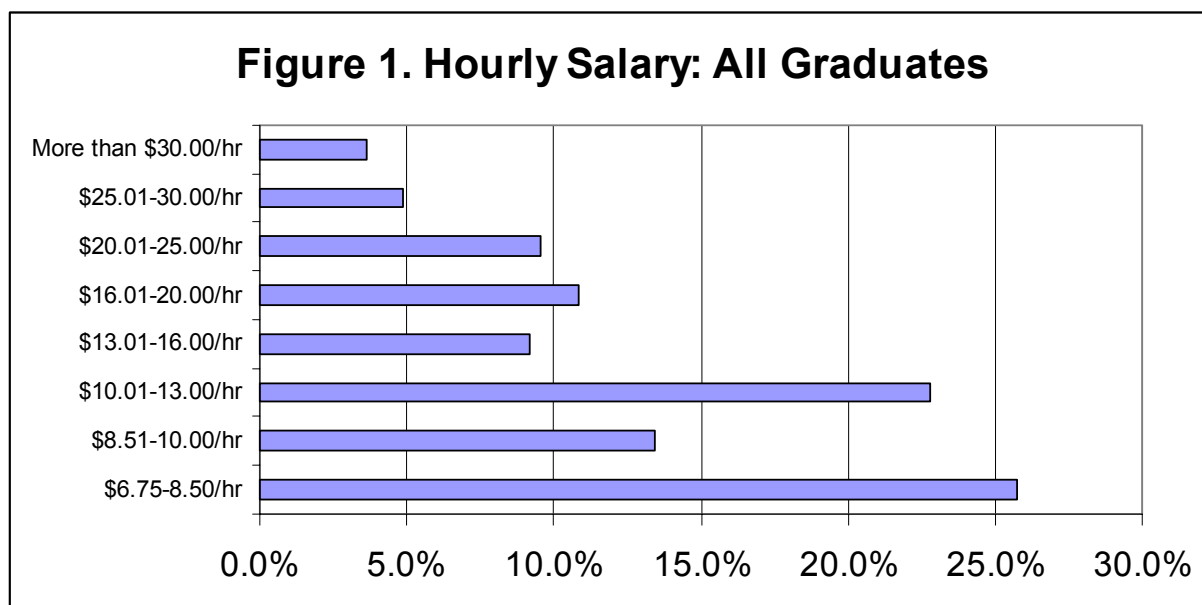
From the AA group, of those who were employed and who shared their job titles, the most frequent job area was education (table 5).

Table 5. Top Job titles	Number	Percent
Education	17	10.4%
Administrative Assistant	5	3.0%
Computer Areas	6	3.7%
	out of 164	

Hourly Salary

Most graduate's starting salary is \$13.00 or less per hour (table 6, figure 1). When examining the AS/CC group versus the AA group, the AS/CC group was making more per hour than the AA group. These results should be expected because the AS/CC group is typically employed in the area of their academic studies, while the AA graduate may be employed in a position, related or not to their studies, more to suit their income needs while continuing with their education than to get ahead in their field of study.

Table 6. What was your starting hourly wage?	Associate in Science Degree and/or Certificate and/or Associate in Arts Degree		Associate in Arts Degree ONLY		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
\$6.75-8.50/hr	63	20.1%	58	36.9%	121	25.7%
\$8.51-10.00/hr	35	11.2%	28	17.8%	63	13.4%
\$10.01-13.00/hr	66	21.1%	41	26.1%	107	22.8%
\$13.01-16.00/hr	33	10.5%	10	6.4%	43	9.1%
\$16.01-20.00/hr	45	14.4%	6	3.8%	51	10.9%
\$20.01-25.00/hr	41	13.1%	4	2.5%	45	9.6%
\$25.01-30.00/hr	20	6.4%	3	1.9%	23	4.9%
More than \$30.00/hr	10	3.2%	7	4.5%	17	3.6%
Total	313	100.0%	157	100.0%	470	100.0%
No reply/Not applicable	213		86		299	



Importance of Mt. SAC education

When those graduates who had jobs related to their certificate or degree were asked how important their education at Mt. SAC was in preparing them for their current position, 54.9% said it was “very important” with a further 14.9% saying it was ‘important’ (table 7). Once again, the AS/CC group felt more strongly about their education preparing them for their current position than did the AA group.

In a previous report, the 1998 Alumni were asked how well Mt. SAC prepared them for their current occupation (Silverman, 2001). Two years after graduating, 59% of the Alumni indicated that Mt. SAC had done ‘adequate’ or ‘very well’ in preparing them for their occupation.

Table 7. How important was your education at Mt. SAC as it related to preparing you for your current position?	Associate in Science Degree and/or Certificate and/or Associate in Arts Degree		Associate in Arts Degree ONLY		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
very important	228	72.2%	30	41.7%	258	54.9%
important	54	17.1%	16	22.2%	70	14.9%
somewhat important	21	6.6%	17	23.6%	38	8.1%
somewhat unimportant	4	1.3%	2	2.8%	6	1.3%
unimportant	2	0.6%	1	1.4%	3	0.6%
not at all important	7	2.2%	6	8.3%	13	2.8%
Total	316	100.0%	72	100.0%	388	82.6%
No reply/Not applicable	210		171		381	

Future Employment

Do graduates want a job in the next six (6) months related to their degree or certificate? Of those who answered this question, 59.7% said yes (table 8). The AS/CC group had a higher number of graduates (69.7%) who wanted a job related to their degree/certificate when compared with the AA graduates (49.4%).

Table 8. Do you want a job within the next 6 months related to your Associate Degree or Certificate?	Associate in Science Degree and/or Certificate and/or Associate in Arts Degree		Associate in Arts Degree ONLY		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	170	69.7%	116	49.4%	286	59.7%
No	74	30.3%	119	50.6%	193	40.3%
Total	244	100.0%	235	100.0%	479	100.0%
No reply/Not applicable	282		8		290	

Conclusion

Responses from the Mt. SAC graduates indicated whether they are pursuing their education and/or employed. A summary of the findings includes the following:

- ✓ Overall, 64.1% are still pursuing their education.
- ✓ A large number of graduates (66.5%) want to use their degree or certificate to secure employment while they continue their education.
- ✓ Over three quarters of the graduates, 78.1%, are currently employed.
- ✓ When students were asked if their current job is related to their degree/certificate from Mt. SAC, 58% said “yes”.
- ✓ Most graduate’s starting salary is \$13.00 or less per hour.
- ✓ When asked how important their education at Mt. SAC was in preparing them for their current position, 54.9% said it was “very important” with a further 14.9% saying it was “important”.
- ✓ More than half of the graduates (59.7%) want a job in the next six (6) months related to their degree or certificate.

Reference

Silverman, B. (2001). 1998 Alumni: Two-year post-graduation. *INSIGHTS*, 12(3), 1-6.

Appendix A

Career Placement Services Graduate Outcomes Survey

The **CAREER PLACEMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT** asks for your assistance in completing this survey. Your answers will be very useful to Mt. San Antonio College and students graduating after you. *HOW?* Your answers will tell us how we have done in providing training programs that enabled you to begin a career after graduation.

Your responses are **IMPORTANT** and will be kept **CONFIDENTIAL**. Please take a few minutes to respond to these questions and once completed, please return it to us in the self-addressed, postage-paid envelope provided.

1. If you have used Mt. SAC's Career Placement Services Office to assist you in finding a job, how satisfied were you with the help that you received?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Did not use service

4. Are you currently employed?

- Yes
- No

5. Are you using Mt. SAC's Career Placement Services available to you as a graduate to help you find employment? (Note: If you already have a full-time job, please choose the "Not applicable to me" choice below.)

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable to me

2. Are you a continuing college student enrolled in classes at a college or university?

- Yes
- No

6. Would you like more information on our Career Placement Services?

- Yes
- No

3. Are you planning on using your Associate Degree or Certificate to find work while you continue your studies? (Note: If you are not, a continuing student please choose the "Not applicable to me" choice below.)

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable to me

7. If you are employed, is your job related to your Mt. SAC award (e.g., Associate Degree or Certificate)? If you are not employed, please choose the "Not applicable to me" choice below.)

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable to me

8. If you have a job, what is your job title?

9. If you have a job, what is the name of the business/company where you are employed?

10. If you have a job, what was your starting hourly wage?

- \$6.75 to \$8.50 per hour
- \$8.51 to \$10.00 per hour
- \$10.01 to \$13.00 per hour
- \$13.01 to \$16.00 per hour
- \$16.01 to \$20.00 per hour
- \$20.01 to \$25.00 per hour
- \$25.01 to \$30.00 per hour
- More than \$30.00 per hour
- Not applicable to me

11. If you have a job related to your degree or certificate, how important was your education at Mt. SAC as it related to preparing you for your current position? (Note: If you do not have a job related to your degree or certificate, please choose "Not applicable to me" choice below.)

- Very important
- Important
- Somewhat important
- Somewhat unimportant
- Unimportant
- Not important at all
- Not applicable to me

12. Do you want a job within the next 6 months related to your Associate Degree or Certificate?

- Yes
- No

Thank you for taking the time to give us your feedback.

As previously mentioned, this survey and your answers to these questions is strictly confidential and will only be used by the College to measure institutional effectiveness and to offer you placement assistance if you want it.

Please mail this survey back to us in the self-addressed, postage-paid envelope provided.

If you have additional comments or recommendations that can help improve the services offered by the Career Placement Services Department, please provide them below.