

RESULTS OF THE 2015 COLLEGE SENIOR SURVEY

How Seniors at MSMU and Similar Institutions Rated Their College Experience

BACKGROUND

Mount Saint Mary's University (MSMU) regularly participates in a national study of graduating college students. Developed by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, the College Senior Survey is designed to collect important information about seniors' experiences while at college and about their future plans. Conducting the survey on a regular basis helps us monitor students' satisfaction with college services and programs, their self-assessments of growth in academic skills, and gain insight into their future career or graduate school plans.¹

The MSMU Registrar's Office provided assistance by identifying seniors eligible to graduate at the end of Spring 2015. These 213 seniors were contacted via email in April 2015, with an invitation to complete the College Senior Survey online. A combination of reminders and incentives (e.g., tickets to graduation) yielded a 55% response rate (and 117 completed surveys).

In addition to reporting frequencies for the MSMU survey sample, we provide comparison information about how women at other 4-year Catholic colleges and universities responded (see Appendix A for a list of these institutions). There are over 50 questions on the survey; we present frequency tables for several major areas and provide summaries for other question sets. More detailed analyses and reports are available from Institutional Planning and Research.

PRIMARY ACADEMIC MAJOR (AGGREGATED)

The participants represented a range of majors at the Mount. Students in social science and nursing represented over 55% of the MSMU respondents. Table 1 shows the distribution by major of survey respondents, all Chalon seniors, and women at other 4-year Catholic Colleges. Respondents to the College Senior Survey are generally representative of the 2015 MSMU graduating senior population.

Table 1: Distribution of Majors

Top Majors at MSMU	MSMU Respondents	All Chalon Seniors	Women at 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	%	%	%
Health Professional	30.3	25.7	9.5
Social Sciences	24.8	35.1	18.5
Biological Science	9.2	7.0	11.1
Business	7.3	10.0	18.5
History/Political Science	5.5	6.0	6.5

¹ The College Senior Survey is intended for a traditional undergraduate population. Therefore, we distribute the survey only to seniors graduating from the Baccalaureate program at the Chalon campus.

OVERALL SATISFACTION

When asked to reflect on their overall satisfaction with college, MSMU seniors gave favorable reviews of their experience. However, compared to their peers at similar institutions, MSMU seniors were significantly less satisfied with the overall college experience and the overall sense of community among students (Table 2).

Table 2: Overall Satisfaction

	MSMU			Compared to Women at 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Combined	
	%	%	%	
Overall quality of instruction	46.1	34.3	80.4	=
Overall college experience	40.8	35.0	75.8	---
Overall sense of community among students	38.8	32.0	70.8	--

Note: -- indicates MSMU students gave significantly lower responses. --- indicates largest negative difference. = means the two samples did not differ.

STUDENT LEARNING

Learning Opportunities

Survey responses reveal that MSMU respondents reported engaging in active learning opportunities such as writing multiple short papers for a course (100%) and making a presentation in class (99%) at significantly higher rates than their peers. Conversely, missing class and having difficulty getting necessary courses was significantly less common for MSMU seniors than for those at similar institutions (Table 3).

Table 3: Active Learning Opportunities

Students were asked to indicate how often they: Since entering college:	MSMU			Compared to Women at 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Frequently	Occasionally	Combined	
	%	%	%	
Took a class that required multiple short papers	87.2	12.8	100.0	+
Made a presentation in class	87.0	12.0	99.0	+
Missed class for reasons other than employment	5.5	60.9	66.4	--
Had difficulty getting the courses needed	1.8	33.0	34.8	---

Note: + indicates MSMU students gave significantly higher responses. -- indicates MSMU students gave significantly lower responses. --- indicates largest negative difference. = means the two samples did not differ.

Gains in College

The survey asked students to reflect on their current academic abilities and indicate their level of agreement that the institution contributed to these areas. Nearly all of the MSMU seniors agreed that the institution contributed to their: knowledge of a particular field or discipline (100%), ability to work as part of a team (100%), critical thinking skills (97%), problem-solving skills (96%), interpersonal skills (94%); as well as, their preparedness for employment after college (87%) and advanced education (87%). Compared to their peers, more MSMU seniors felt that the institution had contributed to their ability to work as part of a team (Table 4).

Table 4: Self-Rated Academic Abilities

Students were asked to rate their agreement with: This institution contributed to my:	MSMU			Compared to Women at 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Agree	Strongly Agree	Combined	
	%	%	%	
Knowledge of a particular field or discipline	32.4	67.6	100.0	=
Ability to work as part of a team	33.3	65.7	99.9	++
Critical thinking skills	41.9	55.2	97.1	=
Problem-solving skills	45.7	50.5	96.2	=
Interpersonal skills	51.4	42.9	94.3	=
Preparedness for employment after college	41.9	46.7	88.6	=
Preparedness for graduate or advanced education	42.9	43.8	86.7	=
Foreign language ability	38.5	19.2	57.7	=

Note: ++ indicates MSMU students gave significantly higher responses. = means the two samples did not differ.

Diversity and Civic Engagement

Compared to women at other Catholic colleges, MSMU seniors gave similar ratings to the extent to which the institution had contributed to their knowledge of people from different races and cultures, understanding of the problems facing their community, and understanding of global and national issues (Table 5).

Table 5: Self-Rated Diversity and Civic Engagement

Students were asked to rate their agreement with: This institution contributed to my:	MSMU			Compared to Women at 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Agree	Strongly Agree	Combined	
Diversity/Civic Engagement	%	%	%	
Knowledge of people from different races/cultures	50.5	38.1	88.6	=
Understanding of the problems facing your community	45.7	38.1	83.8	=
Understanding of global issues	50.5	27.6	78.1	=
Understanding of national issues	49.5	27.6	77.1	=

Note: = means the two samples did not differ.

STUDENT SATISFACTION

Satisfaction with Courses and Instruction

Nearly 76% of MSMU seniors were satisfied or very satisfied with their general education courses. Approximately 94% were satisfied or very satisfied with their class size. Furthermore, MSMU respondents were equally satisfied relative to their peers with the relevance of coursework to their future career plans (83%) and everyday life (83%). In contrast, while seniors gave favorable reviews for the amount of contact with faculty (84%), MSMU seniors were significantly less satisfied relative to their peers. MSMU respondents favorably rated overall quality of instruction (80%), courses in their major field (79%) and their ability to find a faculty or staff mentor (75%) (Table 6).

Table 6: Satisfaction with Courses and Instruction

Disciplines	MSMU			Compared to Women at 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Combined	
	%	%	%	
General education or core curriculum courses	49.0	26.9	75.9	=
Other Aspects of Instruction				
Class size	32.0	62.1	94.1	=
Amount of contact with faculty	40.8	42.7	83.5	-
Relevance of coursework to future career plans	42.7	39.8	82.5	=
Relevance of coursework to everyday life	45.6	36.9	82.5	=
Overall quality of instruction	46.1	34.3	80.4	=
Courses in your major field	35.0	43.7	78.7	=
Ability to find a faculty or staff mentor	36.9	37.9	74.8	=

Note: - indicates MSMU students gave significantly lower responses. = means the two samples did not differ.

Satisfaction with Academic and Student Services

When asked about their satisfaction with MSMU services, students were most satisfied with tutoring or other academic assistance (76%), career-related resources and support (70%), and academic advising (70%). MSMU seniors were significantly more satisfied than their peers with tutoring or other academic assistance, student health services, student psychological services, and career-related resources and support (Table 7). MSMU seniors were significantly less satisfied with library resources (64%) and student housing facilities (40%) compared to their peers.

Table 7: Satisfaction with Academic and Student Services

	MSMU			Compared to Women at 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Combined	
	%	%	%	
Tutoring or other academic assistance	40.4	35.4	75.8	++
Career-related resources and support	37.1	33.0	70.1	+
Academic advising	35.6	33.7	69.3	=
Library Resources	37.3	26.5	63.8	-
Laboratory facilities and equipment	44.0	17.6	61.6	=
Student health services	39.6	21.9	61.5	++
Technology Resources	35.6	23.1	58.7	=
Student psychological services	25.3	33.3	58.6	++
Financial aid package	18.4	38.8	57.2	=
Student housing facilities (residence halls, etc.)	25.0	14.5	39.5	--

Note: + indicates MSMU students gave significantly higher responses. ++ indicates higher difference. - indicates MSMU students gave significantly lower responses. -- indicates largest negative difference. = means the two samples did not differ.

Campus Community

The tables on the following pages reflect student experiences with aspects of the campus community beyond academics. A large majority of students favorably agreed that they would recommend this university to others (90%), felt they were members of the university (86%), felt valued (86%) and see themselves as part of the campus community (84%) (Table 8). However, compared to women at other Catholic colleges, significantly fewer students felt they were members of the university and felt a sense of belonging on campus (77%).

Table 8: Experiences with Campus Community

	MSMU			Compared to Women at 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Agree	Strongly Agree	Combined	
	%	%	%	
If asked, I would recommend this college to others	56.4	33.7	90.1	=
I feel I am a member of this college	53.5	32.7	86.2	-
I feel valued at this institution	51.5	34.7	86.2	=
I see myself as part of the campus community	59.4	24.8	84.2	=
I feel a sense of belonging to this campus	48.5	28.7	77.2	-
I have felt discriminated against at this institution because of my race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation	7.0	1.0	8.0	=
There is a lot of racial tension on this campus	8.9	1.0	9.9	---

Note: - indicates MSMU students gave significantly lower responses. --- indicates largest negative difference. = means the two samples did not differ.

The last two items in Table 8 above reveal that 8% of respondents felt discriminated against and nearly 10% perceive a lot of racial tension at MSMU, which is significantly less relative to their peers. Mount Saint Mary’s University is committed to carefully monitoring and improving the campus climate for all members of our campus community, as delineated in the [Strategic Plan 2015-2018](#). Based upon the responses of MSMU seniors in prior years, we see that experiences with discrimination and racial tension appear to have peaked for the Class of 2013 and have declined for the most recent class (Table 9).

Table 9: Experiences with Discrimination and Racial Tension, 2012-2015

	MSMU		
	2012	2013	2015
	%	%	%
I have felt discriminated against at this institution because of my race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation	11.7	21.5	8.0
There is a lot of racial tension on this campus	10.8	16.0	9.9

Contrasting aspects of the campus climate experience are reflected in divergent levels of satisfaction within the items in Table 10 (below). More than two-thirds of students were satisfied with the overall sense of community among students (71%) and respect for the expression of diverse beliefs (69%). However, compared to their peers at other institutions, MSMU respondents were significantly less satisfied with the overall sense of community among students (71%) and the availability of campus social activities (52%).

Table 10: Satisfaction with Campus Community

	MSMU			Compared to Women at 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Combined	
	%	%	%	
Overall sense of community among students	38.8	32.0	70.8	--
Respect for the expression of diverse beliefs	31.1	37.9	69.0	=
Racial/ethnic diversity of the student body	28.2	26.2	54.4	=
Availability of campus social activities	30.1	22.3	52.4	---

Note: -- indicates MSMU students gave significantly lower responses. --- indicates largest negative difference. = means the two samples did not differ.

Off-Campus Responsibilities

Survey responses indicate that MSMU seniors spend significantly more time than their peers fulfilling off-campus responsibilities including working for pay off campus, commuting, contributing money to help support their families, and helping with housework and childcare (Tables 11a, 11b).

Table 11a: Off-Campus Responsibilities

Students were asked to indicate how much time they spent during a typical week doing the following activities: During the past year:	MSMU			Compared to Women at 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Over 20 hours	16 – 20 hours	6 – 15 hours	
	%	%	%	
Working for pay off campus	15.1	16.0	24.6	+
Commuting	5.6	3.7	35.5	+++
Housework/childcare	2.8	0.0	14.1	+++

Note: + indicates MSMU students gave significantly higher responses. +++ indicates highest difference.

Table 11b: Off-Campus Responsibilities

Students were asked to indicate how often they engaged in the following activity: During the past year:	MSMU			Compared to Women at 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Frequently	Occasionally	Combined	
	%	%	%	
Contributed money to help support my family	22.3	39.8	62.1	+++

Note: + indicates MSMU students gave significantly higher responses. +++ indicates highest difference.

POST-GRADUATION PLANS

When asked about their plans for Fall 2015, nearly 75% of MSMU students indicated that they planned to work on a full-time basis and 72% planned to travel. Over 65% planned to do volunteer work and less than half (40%) planned to work part-time (Table 12).

Table 12: Plans for Fall 2015

	MSMU	Women at 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	%	%
Work full-time	74.7	73.1
Traveling	72.0	61.5
Doing volunteer work	65.2	58.1
Working part-time	39.8	33.9
Attending graduate/professional school full-time	31.2	28.3
Staying at home to be with or start a family	23.7	15.1
Participating in a program like the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps/VISTA, or Teach for America	14.0	7.7

Note: Percentages reflect % of all respondents who marked this option. The question was “check all that apply” – so percentages do not sum to 100%.

Employment Plans

At the time of the survey, more than 56% of MSMU graduating seniors were looking for employment but had not received any offers, over 8% were considering an offer, and nearly 14% had already accepted an offer of employment. MSMU students and women at other Catholic colleges have a slightly different profile regarding employment plans (Table 13).

Table 13: Employment Plans

Employment Plans	MSMU	Women at 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	%	%
Looking, but no offers yet	56.3	43.3
Not actively looking for a position	15.6	12.1
Accepted an offer of employment	13.5	21.5
Currently considering an offer	8.3	9.2
Not planning on employment this fall	6.3	11.7
Received an offer for a position, but declined	0.0	2.1

Goals

The survey also asked students about general life goals (Table 14). Exactly 92% of MSMU respondents felt it was very important or essential to help others who were in difficulty – a goal that fits particularly well with a “spirit to serve others,” which is central to the MSMU mission. Nearly 89% of students felt it was very important or essential to improve their understanding of other countries and cultures, while 88% felt it was very important or essential to be well off financially. At least 40% felt the following goals were essential: helping others who are in difficulty, being well off financially, integrating spirituality into my life, raising a family, helping to promote racial understanding, and developing a meaningful philosophy of life. MSMU respondents assigned higher ratings than their peers on 15 of these 17 items.

Table 14: General Goals

	MSMU			Compared to Women at 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Very Important	Essential	Combined	
	%	%	%	
Helping others who are in difficulty	24.0	68.0	92.0	+++
Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures	51.5	37.4	88.9	+++
Being very well off financially	24.0	64.0	88.0	+++
Integrating spirituality into my life	28.0	51.0	79.0	+++
Raising a family	29.0	46.0	75.0	=
Helping to promote racial understanding	28.0	47.0	75.0	+++
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	35.0	40.0	75.0	+++
Becoming a community leader	33.0	35.0	68.0	+++
Influencing social values	29.6	37.8	67.4	++
Obtaining recognition from my colleagues for contributions to my special field	29.3	37.4	66.7	++
Participating in a community action program	33.0	33.0	66.0	+++
Keeping up to date with political affairs	38.0	24.0	62.0	+++
Making a theoretical contribution to science	28.0	22.0	50.0	+++
Influencing the political structure	24.0	21.0	45.0	+++
Writing original works (poems, novels, etc.)	19.0	20.0	39.0	+++
Creating artistic work (painting, sculpture, etc.)	14.0	18.0	32.0	+++
Becoming accomplished in one of the performing arts	7.0	12.0	19.0	=

Note: + indicates MSMU students gave significantly higher responses. ++ indicates higher difference. +++ indicates highest difference. = means the two samples did not differ.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the results reveal that when they graduated in spring 2015, our seniors felt that they'd had a positive experience at Mount Saint Mary's University. In many areas, over 80% of the respondents favorably rated instruction, learning opportunities, and the campus environment and community. In many areas, our seniors were significantly more pleased with their experiences here than were their peers at similar institutions throughout the nation.

Appendix A

Catholic 4-year Colleges Participating in 2014-2015

Institution	State
Mount Saint Mary's University	CA
Santa Clara University	CA
Albertus Magnus College	CT
Fairfield University	CT
University of Saint Joseph	CT
Saint Mary's College	IN
Notre Dame of Maryland University	MD
Mount St Mary's University	MD
Creighton University	NE
Siena College	NY
John Carroll University	OH
Marywood University	PA
Christian Brothers University	TN
Gonzaga University	WA