

RESULTS OF THE 2017 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 2017. These 333 seniors were contacted via email in March 2017, with an invitation to complete the College Senior Survey online. A combination of reminders and incentives (e.g., tickets to graduation) yielded a 43% response rate (and 144 completed surveys).

In addition to reporting frequencies for the MSMU survey sample, we provide comparison information about how students 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.

PRIMARY ACADEMIC MAJOR (AGGREGATED)

The participants represented a range of majors at the Mount. Students in social science and nursing represented over 70% of the MSMU respondents. Table 1 shows the distribution of the top majors of survey respondents, all Chalon seniors, and students at other 4-year Catholic colleges. Respondents to the College Senior Survey are generally representative of the 2017 MSMU graduating senior population.

Table 1: Distribution of Top Majors

Top Majors at MSMU	MSMU Respondents	Other 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	%	%
Health Professional	46.2	20.3
Social Sciences	25.2	14.1
Business	6.7	23.6
Biological Science	5.9	10.7
Fine Arts	5.0	3.0

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. Compared to their peers at similar institutions, MSMU seniors gave similar ratings on the overall college experience and the overall sense of community among students (Table 2).

Table 2: Overall Satisfaction

	MSMU			Compared to Other 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Combined	
	%	%	%	
Overall college experience	39.6	38.7	78.3	Equivalent
Overall sense of community among students	35.1	44.1	79.2	Equivalent
Overall quality of instruction	41.4	36.0	77.4	-

Note: - indicates MSMU students gave significantly lower responses. Equivalent 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 (100%) at 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 Other 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Frequently	Occasionally	Combined	
	%	%	%	
Took a class that required multiple short papers	83.1	16.9	100.0	+
Made a presentation in class	86.3	13.7	100.0	++
Missed class for reasons other than employment	4.8	52.4	57.2	---
Had difficulty getting the courses needed	4.8	26.6	31.4	--

Note: + indicates MSMU students gave significantly higher responses. ++ indicates higher difference. -- indicates MSMU students gave significantly lower responses. --- indicates largest negative difference. Equivalent 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 (99%), critical thinking skills (98%), problem-solving skills (98%), ability to work as part of a team (96%), interpersonal skills (92%); as well as, their employment after college (90%), and preparedness for advanced education (89%)(Table 4).

Table 4: Self-Rated Academic Abilities

Students were asked to rate their agreement with: This institution contributed to my:	MSMU			Compared to Other 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Agree	Strongly Agree	Combined	
	%	%	%	
Knowledge of a particular field or discipline	30.7	68.4	99.1	<i>Equivalent</i>
Critical thinking skills	39.5	58.8	98.3	+
Problem-solving skills	42.1	56.1	98.2	<i>Equivalent</i>
Ability to work as part of a team	35.1	63.2	96.3	<i>Equivalent</i>
Interpersonal skills	41.1	50.9	92.0	+
Preparedness for employment after college	53.5	36.0	89.5	<i>Equivalent</i>
Preparedness for graduate or advanced education	52.6	36.8	89.4	<i>Equivalent</i>
Foreign language ability	36.0	17.5	53.5	<i>Equivalent</i>

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

Diversity and Civic Engagement

Overall, MSMU seniors rated the university’s contributions to their knowledge of diversity and civic engagement at higher rates than their peers at similar institutions including 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 national and global 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 Other 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Agree	Strongly Agree	Combined	
	%	%	%	
Diversity/Civic Engagement				
Knowledge of people from different races/cultures	48.3	44.7	92.9	+
Understanding of the problems facing your community	54.4	36.8	91.2	++
Understanding of national issues	50.0	40.4	90.4	++
Understanding of global issues	50.9	36.8	87.7	+

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

STUDENT SATISFACTION

Satisfaction with Courses and Instruction

Over 79% of MSMU seniors were satisfied or very satisfied with their general education courses. MSMU respondents were equally satisfied relative to their peers with their class size (94%), contact with faculty (86%), the relevance of coursework to their future career plans (80%), courses in their major field (78%), overall quality of instruction (77%), and relevance of coursework to everyday life (76%) (Table 6).

Table 6: Satisfaction with Courses and Instruction

Disciplines	MSMU			Compared to Other 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Combined	
	%	%	%	
General education or core curriculum courses	42.3	36.9	79.2	+++
Other Aspects of Instruction				
Class size	34.5	59.1	93.6	<i>Equivalent</i>
Amount of contact with faculty	42.3	43.2	85.5	<i>Equivalent</i>
Relevance of coursework to future career plans	38.2	40.9	79.1	<i>Equivalent</i>
Courses in your major field	35.1	43.2	78.3	<i>Equivalent</i>
Overall quality of instruction	41.4	36.0	77.4	<i>Equivalent</i>
Relevance of coursework to everyday life	36.9	38.7	75.6	<i>Equivalent</i>

Note: ++ indicates MSMU students gave significantly higher responses. Equivalent 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 library resources (73%), tutoring or other academic assistance (72%), laboratory facilities and equipment (70%), and academic advising (69%). MSMU seniors were equally satisfied to their peers with psychological services (62%), career-related resources and support (59%), technology resources, student health services (54%), financial aid packages (53%), and student housing (53%) (Table 7).

Table 7: Satisfaction with Academic and Student Services

	MSMU			Compared to Other 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Combined	
	%	%	%	
Library Resources	32.4	40.5	72.9	+
Tutoring or other academic assistance	39.2	33.0	72.2	<i>Equivalent</i>
Laboratory facilities and equipment	41.1	28.9	70.0	++
Academic advising	36.4	32.7	69.1	<i>Equivalent</i>
Student psychological services	37.8	24.4	62.2	<i>Equivalent</i>
Career-related resources and support	38.6	20.8	59.4	<i>Equivalent</i>
Technology Resources	31.5	23.4	54.9	<i>Equivalent</i>
Student health services	33.7	20.7	54.4	<i>Equivalent</i>
Financial aid package	34.9	18.3	53.2	<i>Equivalent</i>
Student housing facilities (residence halls, etc.)	23.9	11.3	35.2	<i>Equivalent</i>

Note: + indicates MSMU students gave significantly higher responses. ++ indicates higher difference. Equivalent 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. The majority of students see themselves as part of the campus community (89%), felt valued (86%), would recommend the college to others, and feel a sense of belonging (Table 8).

Table 8: Experiences with Campus Community

	MSMU			Compared to Other 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Agree	Strongly Agree	Combined	
	%	%	%	
I feel I am a member of this college	50.0	38.5	88.5	<i>Equivalent</i>
I feel valued at this institution	49.5	36.9	86.4	<i>Equivalent</i>
If asked, I would recommend this college to others	47.6	33.0	80.6	<i>Equivalent</i>
I feel a sense of belonging to this campus	44.1	37.3	81.4	<i>Equivalent</i>
There is a lot of racial tension on this campus	11.8	2.0	13.8	<i>Equivalent</i>
I have felt discriminated against at this institution because of my race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation	4.9	2.9	7.5	<i>Equivalent</i>

Note: *Equivalent means the two samples did not differ.*

The last two items in Table 8 above reveal that 8% of respondents felt discriminated against and 14% perceive a lot of racial tension at MSMU, which is equal 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 racial tension appear to have risen slightly since 2015, but remained lower than 2013, and that experiences of discrimination has continued to decline (Table 9).

Table 9: Experiences with Discrimination and Racial Tension, 2013-2017

	MSMU		
	2013	2015	2017
	%	%	%
I have felt discriminated against at this institution because of my race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation	21.5	8.0	7.8
There is a lot of racial tension on this campus	16.0	9.9	13.8

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 respect for the expression of diverse beliefs (82%), and overall sense of community among students (79%). However, compared to their peers at other institutions, MSMU respondents were less satisfied with the availability of campus social activities (55%).

Table 10: Satisfaction with Campus Community

	MSMU			Compared to Other 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Combined	
	%	%	%	
Respect for the expression of diverse beliefs	44.5	37.3	81.8	<i>Equivalent</i>
Overall sense of community among students	35.1	44.1	79.2	<i>Equivalent</i>
Racial/ethnic diversity of the student body	39.6	29.7	69.3	<i>Equivalent</i>
Availability of campus social activities	35.1	19.8	54.9	-

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

Off-Campus Responsibilities

Survey responses indicate that MSMU seniors spent significantly more time than their peers fulfilling off-campus responsibilities including commuting, helping with housework and childcare and contributing money to help support their families. However, the amount of time they spent working for pay off campus was equal to their peers (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 Other 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Over 20 hours	16 – 20 hours	6 – 15 hours	
	%	%	%	
Commuting	9.2	8.4	45.4	+++
Working for pay off campus	17.2	12.1	25.0	Equivalent
Housework/childcare	8.5	2.5	12.7	++

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

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 Other 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Frequently	Occasionally	Combined	
	%	%	%	
Contributed money to help support my family	23.6	40.0	63.6	++

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

POST-GRADUATION PLANS

When asked about their plans for Fall 2017, 81% of MSMU students indicated that they planned to work on a full-time basis and over 80% planned to travel. Over 71% planned to do volunteer work and less than half (40%) planned to work part-time (Table 12).

Table 12: Plans for Fall 2017

	MSMU	Other 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	%	%
Work full-time	80.9	73.1
Traveling	80.4	63.5
Doing volunteer work	71.4	59.2
Working part-time	38.9	36.9
Attending graduate/professional school full-time	27.2	33.6
Staying at home to be with or start a family	27.8	22.2
Participating in a program like the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps/VISTA, or Teach for America	6.5	6.4

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, 67% of MSMU graduating seniors were looking for employment but had not received any offers, over 7% were considering an offer, and over 4% 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	Other 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	%	%
Looking, but no offers yet	66.7	45.6
Not actively looking for a position	19.4	14.8
Accepted an offer of employment	3.2	17.2
Currently considering an offer	7.5	10.9
Not planning on employment this fall	2.2	9.3
Received an offer for a position, but declined	1.1	2.3

Goals

The survey also asked students about general life goals (Table 14). A large majority of MSMU respondents felt it was very important or essential to help others who were in difficulty (94%) – a goal that fits particularly well with a “spirit to serve others,” which is central to the MSMU mission. Almost 90% of students felt it was very important or essential to be well off financially, and over 80% felt it was very important or essential to improve their understanding of other countries and cultures. At least 50% 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 and becoming a community leader. MSMU respondents assigned higher ratings than their peers on 11 of these 17 items.

Table 14: General Goals

	MSMU			Compared to Other 4-Yr Catholic Colleges
	Very Important	Essential	Combined	
	%	%	%	
Helping others who are in difficulty	45.8	47.9	93.7	+
Being very well off financially	44.3	45.4	89.7	Equivalent
Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures	42.3	38.1	80.4	+
Integrating spirituality into my life	39.2	33.0	72.2	++
Raising a family	35.4	34.4	69.8	+
Helping to promote racial understanding	45.8	22.9	68.7	+++
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	33.3	32.3	65.6	+
Becoming a community leader	37.6	18.8	56.3	Equivalent
Influencing social values	52.6	18.6	71.2	Equivalent
Obtaining recognition from my colleagues for contributions to my special field	49.0	15.6	64.6	Equivalent
Participating in a community action program	37.1	18.6	55.7	++
Keeping up to date with political affairs	29.9	23.7	53.6	+

Making a theoretical contribution to science	32.0	13.4	45.4	++
Influencing the political structure	25.8	11.3	37.1	+
Writing original works (poems, novels, etc.)	17.5	8.2	25.7	+
Creating artistic work (painting, sculpture, etc.)	14.6	8.3	22.9	<i>Equivalent</i>
Becoming accomplished in one of the performing arts	8.3	6.3	14.6	<i>Equivalent</i>

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

CONCLUSION

Overall, the results reveal that when they graduated in spring 2017, our seniors felt that they 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 at the Mount than were their peers at similar institutions throughout the nation.

Appendix A

Catholic 4-year Colleges Participating in 2017

Institution	State
Mount St Mary's University	MD
Marywood University	PA
Albertus Magnus College	CT
Xavier University of Louisiana	LA
College of Our Lady of the Elms	MA
Regis College	MA
Marygrove College	MI
Saint Peter's College	NJ
Sacred Heart University	CT
Neumann University	PA