Graduate Student Exit Survey

Prepared by
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July 2013
Summary of Results

Simon Fraser University's Office of Graduate Studies conducted a survey to investigate how alumni felt about their SFU graduate student experience. Participants were asked about their satisfaction at SFU, their experiences, the value of their SFU degree, their employment, and their involvement with SFU since graduating.

The survey was administered to all 763 SFU graduate student alumni whose convocation was held in June 2012 and all 500 SFU graduate student alumni whose convocation was held in October 2012. The survey was administered to each group six months after graduation. In all, 460 students participated in the surveys, yielding an overall response rate of 36.4%. Statistics provided below are estimates based on survey respondents, assuming that the sample is representative proportions calculated on all respondents are accurate within ±3.7%, 19 times out of 20.

Highlights

Overall Graduate Experience

- 91% of respondents are satisfied with the knowledge they acquired in their graduate program.
- 88% of respondents are satisfied with the skills and abilities they acquired in their program.
- 67% of respondents are satisfied with their graduate student life experience at SFU.
- 85% of respondents are satisfied with their overall SFU graduate experience.

![Satisfaction with Overall Graduate Experience at SFU](chart.png)
• Over 70% of respondents would recommend SFU and/or their program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of Respondents Who Would Do The Following:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Select SFU if they were to start their graduate career again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select the same academic unit/program if they were to start their graduate career again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommend SFU to someone considering their program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommend SFU to someone in another field</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• 93% of respondents are satisfied that SFU faculty members are knowledgeable; and 86% are satisfied with the quality of instruction they received.
• 82% of respondents are satisfied with their Faculty supervisor.
• 79% of respondents are satisfied with how relevant the content of their program is to their professional goals; while 55% are satisfied with SFU support for professional career development.
• 84-85% of respondents are satisfied with their academic experience and their overall program.

**Satisfaction with Professional Skills Development**

• 60-68% of respondents are satisfied with various aspects of professional skills development at SFU.
Familiarity with University Regulations and Expectations

- 76-84% of respondents knew and understood SFU’s graduate regulations relating to their credential, and their department’s and supervisor’s expectations for graduate students.
Participants were asked to rate (on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is “Not at All” and 7 is “To a Great Extent”) the extent to which they valued various aspects of their SFU graduate experience. The results are as follows:

- 71% of respondents felt their graduate experience was worth the financial investment required (gave a score above the midpoint), while about 17% felt it was not worth it (gave a score below the midpoint).
- 75% of respondents felt their graduate experience was worth the time they invested, while 15% felt it was not worth it.
- 53% of respondents felt the training they received at SFU resulted in them obtaining their current job, while 40% did not feel this way (27% felt that their training did not at all result in them obtaining their current job).
- 65% of respondents felt an SFU graduate degree prepared them well for their future career aspirations, while 22% did not feel this way.
- About 52% of respondents felt they have developed a personal attachment to SFU, while 33% felt they have not.
### Aspects of Graduate Student Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>7 - To a Great Extent</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1 - Not At All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was your graduate experience worth the financial investment required?</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was your graduate experience worth the time you invested?</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the training you received at SFU resulted in you obtaining your current job?</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has an SFU graduate degree prepared you well for your future career aspirations?</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent have you developed a personal attachment to SFU?</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 31% of respondents felt that their SFU graduate experience increased their level of engagement in civic events; 62% felt it had no effect on their level of engagement.
- 36% of respondents felt their experience increased their level of engagement in environmental sustainability.
- 48% of respondents felt it increased their level of engagement in social diversity.
- 68% of respondents felt their SFU graduate experience increased their level of engagement in lifelong learning (27% felt it increased it greatly and 41% felt it increased it somewhat).
• Over 70% of respondents felt that Co-op, practicum, or internships, field research, and research with a faculty member were valuable in preparing them for employment.
• 55% of respondents felt that service learning or community based research was valuable in preparing them for employment.
• Among respondents, 21-30% used career services (30%), the Teaching and Learning Centre (21%), and the Dean of Graduate Studies Workshops (21%).
• 88% of respondents said they used library services. Of these respondents, 95% said they were satisfied with the services.

Employment and Finances

• More than twice as many respondents indicated that they worked off-campus than on-campus.
• 41% of respondents were not regularly employed (at least 20 hours per week) while they were doing their degree.
- 20% of respondents are currently pursuing a further academic degree or post-doctorate fellowship. Of these respondents:
  - About 45% are pursuing a doctoral degree,
  - 35% are doing post-doctorate research,
  - 10% are pursuing a master’s degree,
  - 5% are pursuing a professional degree, and
  - 6% indicated “Other” including applying for PhD programs and looking for post-doctorate work
- Of the 80% of respondents who are not currently pursuing a further degree or post-doctorate fellowship:
  - 78% are not pursuing a designation, certificate, or qualification,
  - 13% are pursuing a professional designation (e.g. CGA, CFA, P.Eng., etc.),
  - 6% are pursuing a professional certification,
  - 1% are currently pursuing a trades qualification, and
  - 6% indicated “Other” including ESL certification, tutoring credential, and considering or planning for further academic studies.
- In addition:
  - 74% of respondents indicated that they are currently employed full-time,
  - 8% are currently employed part-time,
  - 10% are currently unemployed and looking for work,
  - 2% are unemployed and not looking for work, and
  - 6% indicated their current employment status as “Other” including contract work, volunteer work, and maternal leave.
- Among respondents that are currently employed, 8% are self-employed.
54% of respondents indicated that they changed jobs since completing their SFU graduate degree.

There is a definite shift in the percentage of respondents who earn more after graduating from SFU; 42% of respondents earned over $50,000 before attending SFU and 68% of respondents currently earn that much.

Similarly, the percentage of respondents earning over $75,000 per year almost doubles from 12% to 22%.
Among those who are currently employed:
- 51% are in occupations in education, law and social, community and government services
- 13% are in business, finance and administration occupations
- 12% are in natural and applied sciences and related occupations
- 9% are in health occupations
- 23% of employed respondents are currently in management roles.
- 17% are in academic positions, and of these, 46% have teaching appointments and 20% are sessional instructors.
- 14% are in administrative positions (clerk, typist, etc.), executive positions, and post-doctorate research positions.
- The remaining 46% responded that they are in “Other” types of positions. Among these respondents, of those who specified, 59% are in teaching positions.
- 81% of respondents indicated that their main job is related to their SFU graduate program (43% indicating it is “Very Related”); while 19% felt it was not related.
- 82% of respondents indicated that their SFU graduate experience is useful in their current work (40% indicating it is “Very Useful”); while 18% felt it was not useful.
Participants were asked what their top three sources of financial support were during their SFU graduate program. The results are as follows:
  o Top source: 19% of respondents chose “Employment (other than research assistant, teaching assistant, etc.)”, 15% chose “Personal savings”, and 13% chose “Canadian research grant”.
  o Second source: 18% of respondents chose “Personal savings”, 16% chose “Teaching assistantship”, and 13% chose “Employment (other than research assistant, teaching assistant, etc.)”.
  o Third source: 17% of respondents chose “University funded award”, 14% chose “Personal savings”, and 14% chose “Teaching assistantship”.

Alumni Engagement

- 90% of respondents have received SFU newsletters and other information (i.e. SFU has their current contact information.)
- 21% of respondents have attended SFU events, such as SFU Open House or Diwali.
- 18% of respondents indicated that they are a registered user of the online Alumni Directory.