

Research Briefs

An Analysis of the Status and Opinions of South Texas College's LAS 2008-09 Graduates

KEY FINDINGS

- 25 program/degree combinations within LAS are represented in survey responses.
- 84% of LAS graduates are currently enrolled or have been enrolled in a college/university since graduating
- 97% of LAS graduates furthering their education state that their preparation at STC was as good or better than their peers'.
- 98% of LAS graduates say that they would attend STC again, if they had to start over.
- 56% are employed in a field directly or somewhat related to their major.
- 95% say that they have good or very good preparation for their jobs.

IMPLICATIONS

For Practice:

- Increase alignment of programs with four year degree requirements

For Policy / Procedure:

- Establish the Graduate Follow-Up Survey as an annual effort.

For Research:

- Consider additional skills/qualities and learning outcomes that can be used to measure the preparedness of the graduates for workplace and continued education.

In order to ensure that South Texas College (STC) is producing quality graduates that are able to find employment and/or successfully continue their educational endeavors after graduation, STC conducted a Graduate Follow-Up Survey of its 2008-09 graduates. Disaggregation of this data has allowed STC to take a closer look at how well STC graduates from specific divisions are being prepared to enter the workforce or continue their education. Findings suggest that, overall, graduates from STC's Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (LAS) division had positive feelings about the preparation they have been provided by STC, and had high rates of graduates who are continuing their education.

Background

The 2008-09 Graduate Follow-Up Survey was an attempt by STC to collect graduates' opinions of their college experience and its contribution to their successful employment or continued education. The survey research methodology included a telephone survey in attempts to increase the response rate and to gain a broader coverage of programs. Results from this study resulted in a total of 868 usable responses (40% of the total 2147 graduates for the 2008-09 school year). Responses were highly comprehensive across academic disciplines including 80 distinct program degree combinations (88% representation). These procedures have allowed researchers to disaggregate survey results in efforts to examine opinions of graduates from each division within STC. Of the 868 total Graduate Follow-up responses, 353 were from the LAS division. These responses were also highly comprehensive with 25 LAS program/degree combinations represented. This report looks

specifically at the responses of graduates within the LAS division. (See the research brief on the [2008-09 Graduate Follow-up](#) for more information regarding this study.)

Findings

Due to the categorical nature of the data, percent frequency distributions were used to organize the responses to the questions. The positive survey results indicate that STC and the LAS division are succeeding in providing LAS graduates with skills needed to enhance the quality of their lives.

Further Education

A total of 84% of the respondents claimed they were currently enrolled or had been enrolled in a college or university since graduating from STC; another 13% declared that they were not enrolled but were planning on doing so. It is important to note the high percentage of students con-

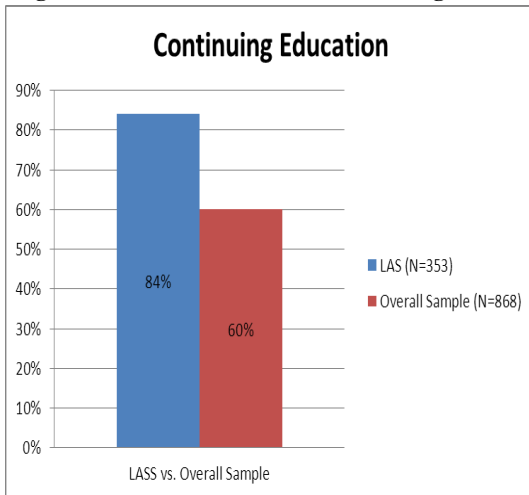
tinuing their education from the LAS division when compared to the total Graduate Follow-up sample, 84% vs. 60% respectively (See Figure 1). Furthermore, out of the 226 respondents who identified which institution they had enrolled in since graduating, 71% were enrolled at the University of Texas-Pan American. 19% of respondents indicated being enrolled at STC and 10% mentioned other institutions such as the University of Texas

Table 1—Further Education of STC LAS Gradu-

Have you enrolled at a college/university since graduating from STC?		
	Count	%
Yes, I am currently enrolled in one or more colleges/univ.	252	71
Yes, but I am not currently enrolled in any college/univ.	44	13
No, but plan to.	47	13
No, and don't plan to.	10	3
TOTAL	353	100
Names of colleges/univ. STC graduates attended:		
University of Texas - Pan American	161	71
STC	42	19
Other	23	10
TOTAL	226	100
At the first school I attended after graduating from STC, I felt		
better prepared than most of my classmates.	151	57
as prepared as most of my classmates.	106	40
not as prepared as most of my classmates.	7	3
much less prepared	1	0
Unknown	31	N/A
TOTAL	296	100
If you could start college over again, would you choose to attend STC?		
Yes	341	98
No	7	2
Unknown	5	N/A
TOTAL	353	100



Figure 1—STC LAS Graduates Continuing Their Education



at Brownsville, Texas A&M Kingsville and University of Phoenix (online). This is not surprising considering that many disciplines within the LAS division are designed to be “transfer-track” degrees that should ultimately lead to a four year degree. Concerning their preparation to pursue such degrees, 57% of these graduates felt that they were better prepared than most of their classmates at the schools they were attending and 40% felt as prepared. Lastly, an overwhelming majority (98%) of respondents said they would choose to attend STC again if they could start college over (See Table 1). It is clear that STC and the LAS division are motivat-

ing and enabling graduates to continue with their educational goals beyond an associate or certificate level award.

Employment

A large proportion (65%) of the respondents stated they were currently employed. 14% of the respondents who stated they were currently unemployed reported to have been employed at some point since graduating from STC. Of the respondents who either had been or were

currently employed, 38% reported holding jobs directly related to their majors and 18% reported holding job somewhat related to their major. Also worth mentioning is that 77% were employed before finishing their studies at STC; another 16% acquired jobs within three months after graduating (See Table 2). The salaries of STC LAS graduates are presented in Figure 2 (adjusted to annual if they reported otherwise). More than half (59%) of respondents reported earning between \$15001 and \$30000 annually. It

Table 2—Employment of STC LAS Graduates

Are you currently employed/self-employed?			
	Count	%	
Yes	229	65	
No	122	35	
Unknown	2	N/A	
TOTAL	353	100	
Have you been employed since graduating from STC?			
Yes	16	14	
No	102	86	
Unknown	4	N/A	
TOTAL	122	100	
How is your most recent job related to your major at STC			
It is/was directly related to my major	92	38	
It is/was somewhat related to my major	44	18	
It is/was not related to my major	103	43	
Unknown	6	N/A	
TOTAL	245	100	
How long did it take you to find a job after graduating from STC?			
I was hired before graduating	179	77	
I was hired within three months after	36	16	
I was hired 4 to 6 months after graduating	16	7	
Unknown	14	N/A	
TOTAL	245	100	

is important to note that respondents include those students who are continuing their education and therefore, likely to be working part-time.

Regarding the preparation for their careers, 95% of graduates who had been, or were currently, employed indicated having “Good” or

“Very Good” preparation. The responses were also highly positive when asked about their specific skill levels (See Table 3).

Implications for Research and Practice

The Graduate Follow-Up Surveys contribute to continuous quality improvement efforts at STC. By means of the analyses of the data collected through these surveys, STC is able to answer, to a certain degree, the question “How well our graduates are prepared for employment and further education?” Disaggregation of this data further al-

Table 3—Training and Skills of STC LAS Graduates

	Very Good	Good	Poor	Very Poor
How well did STC train you for your most recent job?	51%	44%	4%	1%
Managerial skills	37%	60%	3%	0%
Critical thinking skills	55%	45%	0%	0%
Leadership skills	47%	53%	0%	0%
Communication skills	59%	39%	2%	0%
Technological skills	42%	54%	3%	0%
Problem solving skills	51%	48%	1%	0%

lows researchers to assess how well STC is preparing graduates from specific divisions. Results suggest that STC LAS graduates feel well prepared to enter the workforce and continue their education. The Graduate Follow-Up Survey will be administered annually in order to continually assess the impact STC is having on its students.

Figure 2—Most Recent Salaries of STC-LAS Graduates

