

Research Briefs

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

KEY FINDINGS

- 71% of MS graduates are currently enrolled or have been enrolled in a college/university since graduating
- 89% of MS graduates furthering their education state that their preparation at STC was as good or better than their peers'.
- 100% of MS graduates say that they would attend STC again, if they had to start over.
- 57% 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 Math and Science (MS) 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, 42 were

from the MS division. This report looks specifically at the responses of graduates within the MS 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 MS division are succeeding in providing MS graduates with skills needed to enhance the quality of their lives.

Further Education

A total of 71% of the respondents claimed they were currently

Table 1—Further Education of STC MS Graduates

Have you enrolled at a college/university since graduating from STC?		
	Count	%
Yes, I am currently enrolled in one or more colleges/univ.	24	57
Yes, but I am not currently enrolled in any college/univ.	6	14
No, but plan to.	9	21
No, and don't plan to.	3	7
TOTAL	42	
Names of colleges/univ. STC graduates attended:		
University of Texas - Pan American	15	65
STC	1	4
Texas A&M University	5	22
Other	2	9
TOTAL	23	100
At the first school I attended after graduating from STC, I felt		
better prepared than most of my classmates.	12	41
as prepared as most of my classmates.	14	48
not as prepared as most of my classmates.	2	7
Much less prepared	1	3
Unknown	1	N/A
TOTAL	30	100
If you could start college over again, would you choose to attend STC?		
Yes	42	100
No	0	0
Unknown	0	N/A
TOTAL	42	100

enrolled or had been enrolled in a college or university since graduating from STC; another 21% declared that they were not enrolled but were planning on doing so. Out of the 23 respondents who identified which institution they had enrolled in since graduating, 65% were enrolled at the University of Texas-Pan American, 4% at STC and 22% at Texas A&M



University. Concerning their preparation in furthering their education, 41% of these graduates felt that they were better prepared than most of their classmates at the schools they were attending and 48% felt as prepared. Lastly, 100% of respondents said they would choose to attend STC again if they could start college over (See Table 1).

Employment

A large proportion (60%) of the respondents stated they were currently employed. Twelve percent 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 19% reported holding a job somewhat related to their major. Also worth mentioning is that 65% were employed before finishing their studies at STC; another 23% acquired jobs within three months after graduating (See Table 2).

Table 2—Employment of STC MS Graduates

Are you currently employed/self-employed?			
	Count	%	
Yes	25	60	
No	17	40	
TOTAL	42	100	
Have you been employed since graduating from STC?			
Yes	2	12	
No	15	88	
TOTAL	17	100	
How is your most recent job related to your major at STC			
It is/was directly related to my major	10	38	
It is/was somewhat related to my major	5	19	
It is/was not related to my major	11	42	
Unknown	1	N/A	
TOTAL	27	100	
How long did it take you to find a job after graduating from STC?			
I was hired before graduating	17	65	
I was hired within three months after graduating	6	23	
I was hired 4 to 6 months after graduating	3	12	
Unknown	1	N/A	
TOTAL	27	100	

The salaries of STC MS graduates are presented in Figure 1 (adjusted to annual if they reported otherwise). More than half (56%) of respondents reported earning between \$15001 and \$30000 annually. It 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

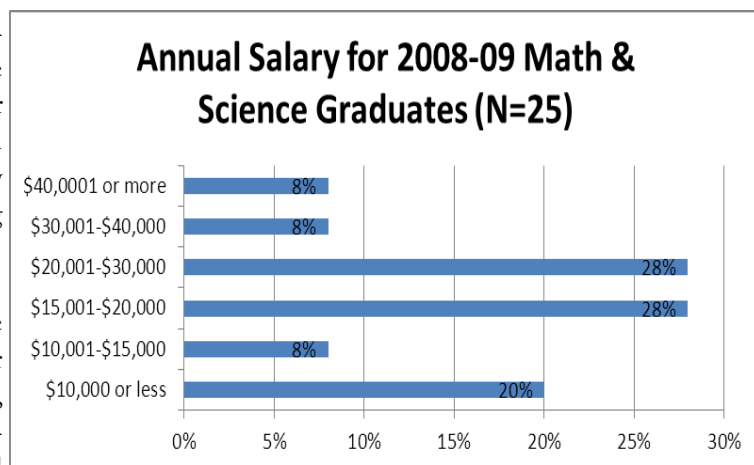
The Graduate Follow-Up Surveys contribute to continuous quality improvement efforts at STC. By means of the analyses of the data collected through these surveys, STC is able to answer, to a certain degree, the question “How well

our graduates are prepared for employment and further education?”

Table 3—Training and Skills of STC MS 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%

Figure 1—Most Recent Salaries of STC MS Graduates



Disaggregation of this data further allows researchers to assess how well STC is preparing graduates from specific divisions. Results suggest that STC’s MS graduates feel well prepared to enter the workforce and continue their education. However, considering that less than half (41%) of those continuing their education felt better prepared than their peers, STC and the MS division should continue to seek out methods for increasing levels of excellence at providing students with the best preparation for being successful. The Graduate Follow-Up Survey will be administered annually in order to continually assess the impact STC is having on its students.