COMMUNITY COLLEGE GRADUATES HAPPY

SURVEY FINDS GRADS SATISFIED WITH EXPERIENCE AT LOCAL CAMPUSES

By Gary Warth
5:44 p.m. Jan. 6, 2015

SAN DIEGO — The adage about college paying off appears to be true for community college as well, according to a recent survey about graduates of local two-year schools.

The survey of 1,400 graduates from community colleges in San Diego and Imperial counties last spring showed 52 percent had gone on to a four-year school while 60 percent who opted to go to work found jobs related to their studies and were out-earning graduates who weren’t working in their field.

People responding to the survey represent 20 percent of graduates approached.

The survey was conducted by San Diego State University students in professor David Dozier’s Applied Methods in Public Relations course and was the first of its kind to include all nine community colleges in the two counties.

Dozier said his students had been working on a smaller survey for Grossmont Community College when the San Diego Imperial County Community Colleges Association requested a study of all districts in its region. The association represents San Diego, Imperial, Palomar, MiraCosta, Grossmont-Cuyamaca and Southwestern community college districts. All the schools pitched in to pay for the $1,800 survey, he said.
Of graduates who transferred to universities, 77 percent went to a Cal State University school, with 52 percent of those going to SDSU and 8 percent going to CSU San Marcos.

Another 15 percent went to University of California schools. with 8 percent of those going to UC San Diego. The rest went to private schools, including 2 percent who went to the University of San Diego.

“One of the strong take-aways of the survey is that so many students stay in this community,” said Jack Beresford, communications and public relations director of San Diego Community College District. “We need to be sure there’s access (to universities) within this region.”

Beresford said the report was very positive for community colleges overall, and data from the survey could be used to advocate for the system during state budget hearings.

On Tuesday, Dozier said he was still finalizing a report from the study, and data soon would be shared with each college.

Of students transferring to universities, 54 percent said they were pursuing bachelor of arts degrees and 46 percent said they were pursuing bachelor of science degrees.

Twenty five percent of the alumni survey earned between $11,000 and $20,000 annually and 21 percent earned $21,000 to $30,000 and 17 percent earned $31,000 to $40,000, Eight percent earned $61,000 or higher.

On the low end, 14 percent earned $4,000 to $10,000.

More significant, graduates in jobs related to their field earned more than those working in jobs unrelated to what they studied. The average salary of students working in a job directly related to their studies was $35,620, and graduates in jobs somewhat related to their studies earned $31,324. Those in jobs unrelated to their studies earned an average of $23,249.

Thirty six percent of graduates said they were working at a job directly related to their studies and 24 percent said their jobs were somewhat related.

In other findings, 79 percent of graduates pursuing higher degrees said they were well prepared by their community college and 96 percent who pursued work after graduation found a job within six months.