

**PROVOST'S TASK FORCE ON
GRADUATE STUDENT SUCCESS**

**FINAL REPORT
2014-15**

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February 15, 2015

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I. INTRODUCTION

Graduate studies at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) comprises 65 master's degree programs, along with four doctoral programs. CSULB hosts more than 4,900 master's students in various program configurations, including state- or self-support, part- or full-time study, and cohort or non-cohort models. Master's students are awarded a number of different degrees based on their programs, including Master of Arts, Master of Business Administration, Master of Fine Arts, Master of Music, Master of Public Administration, Master of Public Health, Master of Science, Master of Social Work, and Educational Specialist. One joint degree program is also offered: Master of Business Administration/Master of Fine Arts in Theater Management.

Graduate students are an integral component of the academic fabric of CSULB and their success is critically important to the university. Student success continues to be at the center of CSULB's work and is one of five key strategic priorities in the university's 2014-17 Strategic Plan. In recent years, focus on student success for undergraduates has resulted in improved graduation rates, along with the development of a full range of advising and academic support services. Graduate students' experiences and needs differ from those of undergraduate students; therefore, targeted student success initiatives are needed for the graduate student population. Through a CSULB President and Provost's Leadership Fellows Program project, the Provost's Task Force on Graduate Student Success was created to begin to address graduate student success¹ distinctly and separately from the university's generalized student success initiatives that mainly target undergraduates.

The Task Force included 15 members. Cecile Lindsay (Vice Provost for Academic Affairs) and Laura Portnoi (Leadership Fellow) served as co-chairs. Members included: Vonetta Augustine (School of Social Work, College of Health and Human Services, CHHS), Babette Benken (College of National Sciences and Mathematics, CNSM), Margaret Black (College of the Arts, COTA), Burkhard Englert (College of Engineering, COE), Elaine Frey (College of Liberal Arts, CLA), Zoraya Gudelman (College of Continuing and Professional Education, CCPE), Don Haviland (College of Education, CED), David Horne, (College of Business Administration, CBA), Leslie Jimenez (Graduate Student, CED), Peter Kreysa (CHHS), Susan Platt (Testing/Evaluation, Student Affairs), Mary Anne Rose (Graduate Studies Office, CED), and Elise Van Fossen (Graduate Student, CNSM).

¹ Due to the nature of doctoral, credential-only, and certificate programs, which are distinct from master's programs and represent a smaller proportion of the overall post-baccalaureate student population, the Task Force intentionally focused on master's degree programs in its research and reporting. The terms "master's" and "graduate" are used interchangeably throughout this document.

The Task Force had three main responsibilities:

1. To produce evidence regarding CSULB graduate students' experiences and support needs;
2. To conduct an environmental scan of graduate studies practices at CSUs in Southern California;
3. To provide evidence-based recommendations to the university and its academic units for fostering graduate student success at CSULB.

The data the Task Force generated indicate that CSULB graduate programs are strong overall and that graduate students are satisfied with their experiences and the value of their degrees to a large extent. The data also revealed obstacles to degree completion and areas where graduate programs may be strengthened and services for graduate students may be enhanced. The recommendations provided in the final section of the report stem directly from the Task Force's full set of findings from a variety of data sources. The next section provides an overview of the key findings, which are outlined in greater detail in the remainder of the report.

II. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The following list of key findings provides a brief summary of the overarching results of the Task Force's data collection and analysis. All reported data are based on Task Force surveys and group interviews; therefore, the data do not necessarily represent the full scope of graduate studies or graduate students at CSULB. Unless otherwise indicated, data combine results derived from multiple sources within the Task Force data.

Graduate Programs Snapshot

- Program Model:
 - 37% of programs offer a full cohort model
 - 35% of programs offer a non-cohort model
 - 28% of programs offer a mixed model
- Program Units and Graduate-level Courses:
 - 75% of programs have 40 units or less
 - 84% of students indicated they have mostly graduate students in their courses
- Culminating Activities:
 - 43% of programs offer a choice of comprehensive exams or thesis/project
 - 43% of programs prescribe a thesis or project only
- Program Funding:
 - 69% of programs are state-funded
- How Colleges Facilitate Graduate Student Success:
 - Monitor student progress
 - Admit only qualified students
 - Regularly advise students
 - Have graduate advisors meet with each other routinely
 - Hold college, department, and/or program orientations

- Have deadlines for key benchmarks
- Offer space for graduate students (46% of departments have space for some graduate students while 40% do not)

Graduate Student Snapshot

- Student Status:
 - 64% study full-time (3 or more classes per semester)
- Working Status:
 - Nearly 63% work off campus
 - 50% of those who work off campus work greater than 31 hours per week
 - 32% indicated they have worked on campus during their time at CSULB
- Program Completion:
 - 91% of graduate advisors report degree completion in 2-4 years; average time to completion was 2.7 years for alumni respondents
 - Students indicating “on track” status to graduate were less likely to work off campus
 - Thesis students were more likely to indicate an “off track” status for degree completion

Why Do Graduate Students Come to CSULB?

- Top Reasons to Study at Master’s Level:
 - To advance career and enhance income potential
 - To enhance knowledge and educational achievement
- Top Reasons to Study at CSULB:
 - Reputation of program
 - Strong faculty
- Other Reasons:
 - Low cost
 - Convenient location

Overall Graduate Student Satisfaction²

- 81% responded they “strongly agree” or “agree” that “My program has the level of academic rigor appropriate for a graduate program in my field”
- 86% indicated the degree would help them “a great deal” or “mostly” achieve their goals
- 76% suggested they “strongly agree” or “agree” that “My CSULB graduate degree is worth the time and money I am investing”
- 74% indicated they “strongly agree” or “agree” that “Based on my experience, I would encourage others to attend my CSULB graduate program”

² Satisfaction data stem directly from responses on the Current Master’s Student Survey.

Key Factors that Facilitate Graduate Student Success

- Cohort models and other program structures that provide a sense of community
- Proactive advising with considerable one-to-one time with graduate advisors
- Mentoring by faculty and peers
- Family support
- Peer support
- Employer support for educational goals
- Library services
- Space to work on campus
- Orientations
- Flexible culminating activity options for timely degree completion

Key Factors that Impede Graduate Student Success

- Top Factor Across All Data Sources is Lack of Financial Support for:
 - Scholarships and/or fee waivers for recruitment purposes
 - Scholarships and aid to support students while pursuing the degree
 - GA and TA positions
 - Research opportunities, particularly with faculty
 - Faculty support to work with graduate students, especially thesis advising
 - Graduate advising more generally
- Other Factors:
 - Working off campus
 - Lack of required course availability to complete degree in a timely fashion, particularly for international students
 - Challenges completing culminating activity, especially a thesis
 - Family issues and obligations
 - Faculty quality and knowledge for graduate-level study
 - Inaccurate website or program handbooks and other materials
 - Lack of solid communication between programs and students
 - Bureaucracy
 - Lack of practical applications of course and program material
 - Thesis submission deadline

III. GUIDING FRAMEWORK AND PROCESS

A. GUIDING FRAMEWORK

Based on the charge related to fostering graduate student success at CSULB (see the Appendix), the Task Force sought to (a) investigate graduate students' perceptions of their needs and experiences, (b) the perspectives of associate deans, department chairs, graduate advisors, and staff who work with graduate students, and (c) graduate studies practices at several CSU campuses in Southern California. The Task Force was guided by the fundamental premise of investigating what functions well within graduate studies at CSULB and where improvements may be needed. Additionally, given the limited data available on graduate students, the Task Force sought to generate evidence that the

university, colleges, and departments or programs may use to use to foster graduate student success in their respective domains. Importantly, the Task Force expressly did not focus on defining graduate student success, and, based on the data collected, would not advocate for uniform quantitative measures of success for this student population given the diversity and complexity of graduate programs at CSULB.

B. ORGANIZATIONAL PROCEDURES

Task Force members were appointed by the Provost in August 2014, based on recommendations from deans, associate deans, and other university administrators. The first Task Force meeting was held at the beginning of September 2014, and the full group met approximately twice monthly through Fall 2014 and the beginning of Spring 2015. At the first meeting, Task Force members were slated into three different working groups to focus on specific aspects of data collection and reporting: (a) Current Master's Student and Graduate Program Alumni Surveys (chaired by Elaine Frey), (b) Group Interviews and Associate Dean and Graduate Advisor Surveys (chaired by Babette Benken), and (c) Environmental Scan of Graduate Studies at Southern California CSUs (chaired by Mary Anne Rose). During regular Task Force meetings, approximately half of the time was devoted to working group sessions. Working groups also met regularly outside of the full Task Force meetings to develop protocols, analyze data, and generate reports. The Task Force thus utilized a combination of smaller working groups complemented by discussions within the full Task Force.

C. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

1. Current Master's Student and Graduate Programs Alumni Surveys

The online Current Master's Student Survey was sent to all active students enrolled in a master's program in Fall 2014. There were a total of 1,223 survey respondents, out of a population of 4,906 master's students currently enrolled for Fall 2014, for a robust response rate of approximately 25 percent.

The online Graduate Programs Alumni Survey was sent to 4,693 individuals who had graduated from a master's program during the past five years and had previously indicated that they would allow CSULB to contact them for purposes such as surveys. The initial email had an open rate of 18.3 percent with a click through rate of 2.66 percent. The final sample size was 190, yielding a response rate of 4.05 percent. This low response rate is typical for alumni surveys at CSULB.

Both surveys were pilot tested prior to being administered to the respective populations, and CSULB Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to carrying out the project.

2. Associate Dean and Graduate Advisor Surveys

The online Associate Dean Survey was sent to seven people who oversee graduate studies in their respective colleges. The response rate was near 100 percent with six responses received. The online Graduate Advisor Survey was sent to 114 individuals who advise

students regarding graduate programs (including both faculty and staff advisors). Forty-eight individuals responded, for a response rate of 42 percent.

3. Group Interviews

Group interviews were conducted with three groups: (a) associate deans and department chairs, (b) graduate advisors and staff who work with graduate students, and (c) current graduate students. A total of 14 associate deans and department chairs participated across three group interviews while 11 graduate advisors and staff participated in three group interviews. A total of 34 graduate students participated in six group interviews.

4. Environmental Scan of Graduate Studies at Southern California CSUs

The Task Force examined graduate studies practices at five Southern California CSU campuses, in addition to CSULB: CSU Dominguez Hills (CSUDH), CSU Fullerton (CSUF), CSU Los Angeles (CSULA), CSU Northridge (CSUN), and San Diego State (SDSU).

The Task Force identified eight graduate studies practices based on Task Force member experience, interest, perceived value of data, and ease of access to information: (a) graduate student orientations, (b) financial support, (c) graduate resource centers, (d) faculty compensation and support, (e) probation policies, (f) writing and thesis support, (g) graduate councils, and (h) technology infrastructure. Data were gathered from documents on the institutions' websites, and/or through interviews with personnel at the institutions.

IV. DATA PRESENTATION

A. CURRENT MASTER'S STUDENT AND GRADUATE PROGRAM ALUMNI SURVEYS

1. Current Master's Student and Graduate Program Alumni Survey Samples

Table 1 compares the respondent sample for the Current Master's Student Survey with the CSULB graduate student population, based on demographics and college enrollments.

Table 1: Demographics/Enrollment of CSULB Graduate Population Versus Current Master's Student Survey Sample

Characteristic	CSULB Graduate Student Population	Current Student Survey Sample
Gender:	(Full Population, n=5,112)	
Male	39.1%	36.8%
Female:	60.9%	62.8%
Race/Ethnicity:	(Full Population, n=5,112)	
Native American	1.5%	0.2%
African-American/Black	6.2%	4.8%
Latino/Latina/Hispanic	30.0%	24.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander	21.2%	27.0%
Caucasian/White	35.9%	35.4%
Two or more/none of the above	4.3%	8.1%

Citizenship:	(Full Population, n=5,112)	
U.S.	81.2%	78.8%
Other/Unknown/Visa	18.8%	21.2%
Enrollment by College:	(Masters level only, n=4992)	
COTA	3.9%	3.6%
CBA	4.4%	6.9%
CED	12.3%	12.0%
CHHS	41.2%	36.6%
CLA	13.4%	14.5%
CNSM	8.5%	8.2%
COE	16.3%	17.5%

These statistics demonstrate that the Current Master’s Student Survey sample aligns very closely with the overall CSULB graduate student population across a majority of the variables, providing a representative sample that reflects the diversity and complexity of CSULB’s graduate student population.

Table 2 describes the fuller set of basic sample demographics for both the Current Master’s Student and the Graduate Program Alumni Surveys. From the Current Master’s Student Survey, the majority of students were younger than 35 and the majority of the respondents (around 75 percent) were in the 20 to 29 year-old category. About 63 percent of respondents were female, with the remaining being mostly male; five respondents identified as neither male nor female. The majority of respondents identified as Caucasian/White (35 percent), Asian/Pacific Islander (27 percent) or Latino/Latina/Hispanic (25 percent), with only about 5 percent of respondents identifying as African American/Black and 0.2 percent as Native American. Of those who chose “none of the above” (8 percent), many identified as being bi- or multi-racial. Almost 20 percent of respondents were international students (either with a permanent resident card or a student visa) and 79 percent were U.S. citizens. Undocumented students are included in the “other” citizenship category, with only five students identifying as having that status.

Table 2: Survey Respondent Demographics³

Variable	Current Master’s Students		Graduate Program Alumni	
	Percentage (Frequency)	Observations	Percentage (Frequency)	Observations
Age (20-24)	42.19% (432)	1024	32.34% (54)	167
Age (25-29)	32.71% (335)	1024	29.34% (49)	167
Age (30-34)	11.62% (119)	1024	13.77% (23)	167
Age (35+)	13.48% (138)	1024	25.6% (41)	167
Gender (Male)	36.75% (376)	1023	44.64% (75)	168
Gender (Female)	62.76% (642)	1023	54.76% (92)	168
Gender (Neither)	0.49% (5)	1023	0.60% (1)	168

³ Categories within the Table 2 are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For example, students may have worked both on and off campus while pursuing their degrees.

Variable	Current Master's Students		Graduate Program Alumni	
	Percentage (Frequency)	Observations	Percentage (Frequency)	Observations
Race/ethnicity (African American/Black)	4.75% (48)	1011	6.06% (10)	165
Race/ethnicity (Asian/Pacific Islander)	27.00% (273)	1011	20.61% (34)	165
Race/ethnicity (Caucasian/White)	35.41% (358)	1011	39.39% (65)	165
Race/ethnicity (Latino/a/Hispanic)	24.53% (248)	1011	25.45% (42)	165
Race/ethnicity (Native American)	0.20% (2)	1011	1.21% (2)	165
Race (None of the above)	8.11% (82)	1011	7.27% (12)	165
Citizenship (U.S. citizen)	78.79% (806)	1023	86.31% (145)	168
Citizenship (Non-U.S. Permanent Resident)	3.13 % (32)	1023	2.98% (5)	168
Citizenship (Non-U.S. Student Visa)	16.81% (172)	1023	8.33% (14)	168
Citizenship (Other)	1.27% (13)	1023	2.38% (4)	168
Work (off campus)	63.75% (686)	1076	73.56% (128)	174
Work (<31 hours off campus)	50.15% (344)	686	43.75% (56)	128
Work (≥31 hours off campus)	49.85% (342)	686	56.25% (72)	128
Work (on campus)	32.34% (348)	1076	30.46% (53)	174
Not working	20.63% (222)	1076	12.64 (22)	174
Status (part-time)	36.25% (427)	1178	37.99% (68)	179
Status (full-time)	63.75% (751)	1178	62.01% (111)	179
Class (first-year)	44.66% (519)	1162	n/a	
Class (second-year)	32.70% (380)	1162	n/a	
Class (third-year)	15.58% (181)	1162	n/a	
Class (fourth-year and higher)	7.06% (82)	1162	n/a	
Family (first-generation student)	17.16% (173)	1008	20.93% (35)	167
Family (primary care-giver)	19.98% (204)	1021	20.24% (34)	168
Personal (leave of absence)	5.13% (60)	1170	11.17% (20)	179

Approximately 64 percent of student respondents indicated that they work or have worked off campus while attending graduate school and 32 percent indicated that they work or have worked on campus during graduate school. Of those who have worked off campus, about half worked part-time (less than 31 hours per week) and half worked full-time (31 hours or greater per week). More than half of the respondents were attending school full-time (64 percent), defined as taking an average of three or more classes per semester. About 77 percent of respondents were in their first or second year of graduate study, with a small number of students in their 8th year or higher (8 respondents). Around 17 percent of respondents were first-generation college students, defined as both mother and father having completed education levels lower than “some college.” About 20 percent of respondents reported that they are the primary caregiver for a child, family member, or other individual. Only 5 percent of respondents reported that they have taken a leave of absence while in graduate school. The reported reasons for leaves of absence were varied and included factors such as financial hardships, maternity leave, family issues, personal or health issues, work-related issues, and challenges with thesis completion.

The demographics for the alumni survey sample are similar to those of the student survey in terms of race/ethnicity, percentage of full-time students, percentage of first generation students, and percentage of students who were primary caregivers while attending graduate school. The alumni sample has more respondents who were 35 or older while attending school (26 percent for alumni versus 13 percent for current students). The alumni survey also has fewer respondents who were international students, specifically fewer who were on a student visa while enrolled (8 percent for alumni versus 17 percent for current students). Alumni respondents worked off campus more than current students (74 percent for alumni versus 64 percent for current students). However, because current students have not completed their degrees, some may take off campus positions before they graduate.

2. Current Master’s Student Survey

The purpose of the current master’s student survey was to identify factors that contribute to timely progress toward the degree and to determine whether graduate students have an appropriately graduate experience in their programs. The first section of the survey covered the student’s background, which included the degree the respondent is earning, the type of financial aid (if any) the student receives, and the number of classes the student takes. The second section captured information about time to degree, such as whether the student was on-track to graduate, what main factors helped the student earn the degree, and what factors posed an obstacle to earning a degree. The next section included information about the graduate experience, including questions about working, the composition of graduate classes, the types of activities in which the student engaged, and satisfaction with various aspects of the program and university. The final section captured demographic information such as age, gender, race, citizenship status, and family education levels.

The Graduate Experience at CSULB

This section focused on factors that comprise respondents’ experiences as graduate students. Queries included such factors as the degree of academic rigor in their programs, availability of classes, composition of class population between graduate and undergraduate students, availability of faculty, research opportunities, services, information, and quality of advising. Respondents were also asked to rate their overall experiences at CSULB.

Graduate classes. Students were asked to estimate what percentage of their classes includes graduate students. Most students (84.1 percent) stated that their classes are comprised mainly of graduate students, while 4.1 percent stated that their classes contained more undergraduate than graduate students. In open-ended responses, 15 respondents expressed concern that the university is more oriented toward undergraduates than graduates, which adversely affects their experiences and graduate education. Graduate courses combined with undergraduate courses, class size, facilities, limited hours during which services are provided, and the limited amount of information of primary interest to graduate students were all cited as problems in open-ended responses.

Academic rigor. Respondents were asked to rate factors corresponding to perceived academic rigor and quality of professional preparation received in their programs. Of the approximately 1025 responses, 80.98 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “My program has the level of academic rigor appropriate for a graduate program in my field,” 79.02 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “My program is providing me with the knowledge and skills I need to succeed in my field,” and 82.45 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “My program challenges me to think in new and more complex ways about my field” (Table 3).

Table 3: Responses Regarding Academic Programs

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Responses
My program has the level of academic rigor appropriate for a graduate program in my field.	41.37%	39.61%	11.32%	5.85%	1.85%	1,025
My program is providing me with the knowledge and skills I need to succeed in my field.	38.63%	40.39%	12.98%	6.73%	1.27%	1,025
My program challenges me to think in new and more complex ways about my field.	45.22%	37.23%	10.33%	5.95%	1.27%	1,026

However, when students responded to an open-ended question reflecting on their experiences at CSULB, they were split with about half indicating that their programs provided appropriate rigor and the other half indicating that their programs lacked rigor. Of a total of 495 total open-ended responses to this question, 59 directly referenced the perceived rigor of programs. Within those 59, 29 respondents expressed concerns regarding a perceived lack of rigor in coursework, coursework that was deemed inadequate for professional training, or coursework more oriented toward undergraduates than graduate students. These responses included comments such as “I think it is too easy to achieve straight As here and there could be a greater level of academic rigor” and “I feel that my program is not as comprehensive as it should be. I am a little disappointed with the information being taught...” On the other hand, 21 respondents expressed satisfaction with the degree of required rigor, providing statements such as “It is an intense graduate program but I feel that I will be much more prepared out in the field because of it.” Nine respondents expressed concerns in open-ended responses that the degree of rigor in their programs is too great.

Activities and student engagement. Respondents were asked about their engagement in fourteen different activities during their graduate programs. The mean response in terms of numbers of these activities was 5.84 with a range of 0 to 14. Most students appear to have numerous activities that capture their attention. The fourteen questions and the open-ended inquiry fall into three broad categories: (a) study, (b) academic engagement, and (c) fun. Studying alone or in groups was indicated by nearly 80 percent of the sample. Academic engagement related activities had a wide range of responses from utilizing office hours of faculty (76 percent) or advisors (68 percent) to 18 percent for both faculty research participation and department research events. Fun includes departmental and peer social events (42 percent and 45 percent), other department or peer events (29 percent and 28 percent), and some CSULB sports interaction (15 percent). Table 4 displays each activity category with the percentage of respondents who reported engaging in that activity.

Table 4: Activity Categories and Engagement

Category	Question	Percentage of Respondents Engaged in the Activity
Study	Study Alone	79%
	Study Together	78%
Academic Engagement	Faculty Office Hours	76%
	Advisor Office Hours	68%
	Conference Participation	33%
	Research with Peers	26%
	Independent Research	22%
	Department Research Events	18%
	Research with Faculty	18%

Fun	Graduate Student Social Events	45%
	Department Social Events	42%
	Other Department Events	29%
	Student Organization Events	28%
	Attend or Participate in CSULB Sports	15%

Additionally, 73 percent of respondents indicated that they have a round-trip commute to campus of less than an hour, with almost half of these taking 30 minutes or less.

Internships, research opportunities, practical skills. Although 79.02 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “My program is providing me with the knowledge and skills I need to succeed in my field,” only 69.66 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “Faculty provide adequate support for research or creative activities with students in my program.” In open-ended responses, 29 students requested more internships and more research opportunities; they also expressed a desire for more comprehensive practical skills. Eight of these respondents commented on the need for increased internships and research opportunities for graduate students. Four respondents requested more interaction between students and practitioners, such as “...I wish there was more facilitation of interaction between local companies and the students in the [name omitted] program...” One respondent commented on how his or her internship was one of the most beneficial experiences in the graduate program. Although respondents expressed a desire for research opportunities with faculty, 30.34 percent of respondents did not agree with the statement “Faculty provide adequate support for research or creative activities with students in my program.”

University services. Students were asked to rate their satisfaction with a number of components of their graduate experience, including orientations offered by the college, program, or Center for International Education (CIE); program advisor’s responsiveness; accessibility of faculty, university staff, or program/department staff for questions; financial aid; access to relevant technology; and availability of timely information for program and university requirements. Of these items, graduate students indicated the greatest satisfaction with program/department staff as well as program and faculty advisors, as indicated by means and satisfaction percentages displayed in Table 5.

Table 5: Satisfaction with Advisement

Survey Item	Mean on 1-5 pt. scale, where 1=very dissatisfied and 5=very satisfied	% Reporting Satisfied or Very Satisfied
Availability of program staff for questions	4.1	78.7%
Availability of faculty for questions	4.1	77.6%
Availability of program advisor for questions	4.0	76.2%

On the other hand, students indicated the least satisfaction with financial aid, availability of relevant technology, and orientations provided by the college. Means and satisfaction percentages for these items are indicated in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Satisfaction with College and University Services

Survey Item	Mean on 1-5 pt. scale, where 1=very dissatisfied and 5=very satisfied	% Reporting Satisfied or Very Satisfied
Availability of financial assistance	3.3	48.0%
Availability of relevant technology	3.7	60.2%
Orientation provided by college	3.7	61.9%

Each of the above satisfaction items was cross-tabulated with gender and race/ethnicity. Three significant differences based on gender emerged. First, females were much less satisfied than males regarding the orientation provided by CIE (Table 7).

Table 7: Comparison of Males and Females Regarding Satisfaction with the Orientation Provided by the Center for International Education⁴

Gender	Very Dissatisfied or Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied or Very Satisfied	Total
Male	15	40	115	170
% Within Male	8.8%	23.5%	67.6%	100.0%
Female	19	42	70	131
% Within Female	14.5%	32.1%	53.4%	100.0
Total	35	83	185	303
	11.6%	27.4%	61.1%	100.0%

Pearson Chi-Square = 10.7, p = .038

While 8.8 percent of males were dissatisfied with the CIE orientation, the percentage for female dissatisfaction was larger at 14.5 percent. Likewise, while 67.5 percent of males were satisfied, the percentage was lower for females at 53.4 percent.

Second, a greater proportion of males was dissatisfied with the availability of financial assistance, at 35.3 percent, compared to 26.6 percent for females. Females tended to be either “neutral” or “satisfied” (73.4 percent) for this item compared to males (64.7 percent). Third, females were more satisfied than males regarding the availability of technology, with a dissatisfaction rate of 12.4 percent, compared to males at 18.0 percent.

⁴ The number of respondents in Table 7 varies from the data in Table 2 because respondents were not required to answer all questions per IRB regulations. Approximately 200 respondents did not answer the question about citizenship status.

Additionally, a number of differences were evidenced based on race/ethnicity. Significantly different cross tabulation results are summarized in Table 8. The percentages reported include respondents who stated “very satisfied” or “satisfied.”

Table 8: Comparison of Satisfaction Items by Race/Ethnicity

Satisfaction Item	Greatest Satisfaction	Least Satisfaction	Pearson Chi-Square
Orientation provided by college	Asian/Pacific Islander 69.9%	Caucasian/White 55.0%	22.9, p = .001
Orientation provided by program	African American/Black 84.4%	Caucasian/White 68.8%	14.0, p = .029
Program advisor	African American/Black 84.2%	Asian/Pacific Islander 71.6%	12.6, p = .05
Faculty	African American 88.9%	Asian/Pacific Islander 72.7%	13.9, p = .03
Financial assistance	African American/Black 64.3%	Asian/Pacific Islander 37.7%	28.3, p = .000
Timely information regarding requirements	African American/Black 81.3%	Asian/Pacific Islander 63.6%	16.8, p = .010

Apart from the orientation provided by the college, African American/Black students reported the greatest satisfaction with most of the above significant items, while the Asian/Pacific Islander group reported the least satisfaction with four of the significant items. Financial assistance appears to be the lowest satisfaction item for all racial/ethnic groups. Satisfaction items should be further investigated based on underrepresented minority or non-underrepresented minority status, as well as variations within these groups.

Support from faculty, staff, the university, and other students. Students were asked to rate the degree of support they perceived from fellow students, faculty, staff, and the university (Table 9). Out of the total responses, 84.79 percent agreed or strongly agreed that “Students in my program are friendly and supportive,” 81.95 percent agreed or strongly agreed that “Staff in my department are helpful and supportive,” and 68.16 percent agreed or strongly agreed that “I felt well supported by the university as a student at CSULB.” This latter item received the lowest mean of all items in this question. Finally, 83.61 percent agreed or strongly agreed that “Faculty are generally supportive of students in my program.”

Table 9: Support from Students, Faculty, and the University

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Responses
Students in my program are friendly and supportive.	48.34%	36.45%	11.70%	2.92%	0.58%	1,026
Staff in my department are helpful and supportive.	45.56%	36.39%	12.98%	2.83%	2.24%	1,025
I felt well supported by the university as a student at CSULB.	31.64%	36.52%	22.95%	6.25%	2.64%	1,024
Faculty are generally supportive of students in my program.	46.34%	37.27%	12.00%	2.93%	1.46%	1,025

Seventy-three open-ended responses regarding support included commentary on the professionalism, training, and/or availability of instructors. Of these comments, 42 students expressed disappointment with the quality of their instructors. Comments ranged from “Some of the faculty were very unhelpful” to “The school needs to focus more on selecting professors that are good teachers, rather than good researchers. It is unfair that students are subjected to professors that do not know how to communicate with students or how to grasp the classroom's level of understanding or how to be interesting and actually teach.” Of the 42 who relayed disappointment, four expressed a further concern about how few faculty are at their disposal, resulting in students conducting the majority of their studies with a small number of professors, often just one or two throughout their programs. Respondents indicated that this limited faculty size impacted the range of discussion and research topics.

On the other hand, 31 respondents expressed appreciation for faculty expertise and availability in open-ended responses, and indicated that they were supported by their faculty. These responses included comments such as “Professors are great since they have so much experience within the field and subject they are teaching” and “The dedicated staff and professors were always and continue to be available to support graduate students.”

Factors that Influence Time to Degree

This section focuses on factors that influence a respondent's time to degree. To provide insight into each respondent's progress in his or her respective program, students were asked whether they considered themselves to be on track to graduate in the time they had anticipated. About 81 percent indicated that they believed they were on-track, 12 percent were uncertain if they were on-track, 6 percent indicated they were not on-track, and 2 percent were not sure if they would actually graduate.

Of those respondents who indicated they were on track to graduate, a larger percentage were those who did not work either on or off campus. Of those who indicated that they were not on track or may not graduate, a larger percentage was respondents who work. This finding indicates that working (either on or off campus) may hinder degree progress and completion. The relationship between working and being on track is statistically significant at the 99 percent level. A higher percentage of international students indicated that they were “on track” to graduate, compared to U.S. citizens and non-U.S. citizens with a permanent resident card. Of those who were uncertain if they would graduate, a higher percentage are U.S. citizens, relative to all other groups. However, the relationship between citizenship status and being on track is not statistically significant.

Approximately 43 percent of respondents expected to complete a thesis as part of their degree requirements. Of those respondents “on-track,” a larger percentage do not have to complete a thesis (83 percent) compared to those who do have to complete a thesis (78 percent). There is also a significant relationship between being on track and thesis requirements. This finding suggests that students who complete a thesis are less likely to be on track to graduate, and may face more uncertainty with regard to degree completion. Additionally, the findings reveal that there is no significant relationship between being on track and a respondent’s race/ethnicity.

Factors that facilitate earning a degree. Respondents were asked to rate the helpfulness of the following items in earning their degrees: advisor’s knowledge of program requirements, advisor’s availability, quality of teaching, career counseling services, counseling services, disabled student services, library services, writing support services, availability of space to work or study on campus, peer support, family support, working on campus, employer support for educational goals, and working off campus. Respondents were asked to rate each of these items as “very helpful,” “helpful,” “not at all helpful,” and “not applicable.” Table 10 provides the number and percentage of respondents by item for each rating, with the top five “very helpful” and “not at all helpful” items indicated.

Table 10: Factors that Contribute to Facilitating the Degree by Respondent Ranking

Question	Very Helpful	Helpful	Not at all Helpful	Total Responses
Employer support for my educational goals	417 (51.4%) 3	283 (34.9%)	112 (13.8%)	812 (100%)
Advisor's knowledge of program requirements	582 (55.6%) 2	381 (36.4%)	84 (8.0%)	1,047 (100%)
Advisor's availability	504 (48.7%)	401 (38.8%)	129 (12.5%)	1,034 (100%)
Family support	638 (62.2%) 1	328 (32.0%)	60 (5.8%)	1,026 (100%)
Writing support services	197 (33.6%)	276 (47.0%)	114 (19.4%)	587 (100%)
Library services	512 (49.6%) 5	468 (45.3%)	53 (5.1%)	1,033 (100%)
Availability of space to work or study on campus	356 (35.1%)	449 (44.3%)	208 (20.5%) 5	1,013 (100%)
Quality of teaching	538 (47.8%)	487 (43.3%)	101 (9.0%)	1,126 (100%)
Peer support	531 (50.9%) 4	430 (41.2%)	83 (8.0%)	1,044 (100%)
Working on campus	246 (45.2%)	170 (31.3%)	128 (23.5%) 2	544 (100%)
Working off campus	230 (33.6%)	276 (40.3%)	179 (26.1%) 3	685 (100%)
Counseling services	181 (29.7%)	288 (47.2%)	141 (23.1%) 4	610 (100%)
Disabled student services	106 (41.7%)	110 (43.3%)	38 (15.0%)	254 (100%)
Career counseling services	173 (26.3%)	310 (47.0%)	176 (26.7%) 1	659 (100%)

The following items represent the top five areas respondents indicated as very helpful: family support (62 percent), advisor's knowledge of program requirements (56 percent), peer support (51 percent), employer support for educational goals (51 percent), and library services (50 percent). The following items were the top five areas respondents indicated were not at all helpful: career counseling services (27 percent), working off campus (26 percent), working on campus (24 percent), counseling services (23 percent), and availability of space on campus (21 percent). Again, working either on or off campus was indicated as not helpful to degree progress.

Respondents were also asked to indicate any other factors that were helpful in earning their degrees in open-ended responses. A total of 243 respondents (approximately 20 percent of the sample) provided responses for this question. Many respondents further emphasized items from the previous survey question as being helpful. For example, 68

respondents again pointed to faculty support or availability as being helpful to earning their degrees. Ten respondents indicated library resources or library hours as being helpful. Similarly, 25 respondents indicated that peer support was critical and nine noted that their families are helpful to earning their degrees.

Besides the factors explicitly identified in the survey question, financial assistance, either in the form of student loans, in-state tuition credit, scholarships, or employer reimbursement, was the top factor noted in open-ended responses as helpful to students in earning their degrees. Class schedules that accommodate working students (or flexible class schedules) also presented as an important factor in allowing students to take the classes they need to complete their degrees. Finally, respondents pointed to technologies such as BeachBoard, available software, internet access, and other technical tools as being helpful.

Obstacles to earning a graduate degree. Table 11 provides an overview of current master’s students’ perceptions of the main obstacles to their graduate success. Four items in particular emerged as major obstacles: lack of financial assistance, working off campus, lack of research funding, and unavailability of required courses. When the categories “major” and “somewhat of an obstacle” were combined, working off campus became the most frequent obstacle, followed by lack of financial assistance, family obligations, and availability of required courses. The emergence of family obligations in this latter category suggests that, while not a major issue, family obligations clearly play an important role in graduate students’ experiences and completion of degree programs.

Table 11: Main Perceived Obstacles to Graduate Student Success

Major Obstacles	Major or Somewhat of an Obstacle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of financial assistance (25%) • Working off campus (24%) • Lack of research funding (23%) • Availability of required courses (22%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working off campus (65%) • Lack of financial assistance (59%) • Family obligations (57%) • Availability of required courses (53%) • Personal health/wellness (51%) • Thesis submission deadline (48%) • Lack of research funding (47%) • Difficulty of program (45%)

Qualitative comments in open-ended responses provide added depth to the above quantitative data. Lack of accurate and timely information was frequently identified as an obstacle in these comments. Other comments pointed to faculty advisors who either did not know current information about the program or did not respond to questions, as well as out-of-date program information posted in handbooks or online.

Respondents also highlighted limited or poorly coordinated course offerings as an issue; for example, one respondent wrote “I’m doing random courses in order to graduate. I feel like I’m being pushed backwards.” Another noted that competition for course slots with students in other programs meant that “We are basing decisions not on what will enhance

our education but what is left open to scrap together the units needed.” Additional comments pointed to poor course and program planning.

When data on obstacles to degree completion were broken out by subgroups, important differences emerged with regard to anticipated time to degree, race/ethnicity, and gender, caregiving, and first generation status.

Anticipated time to degree. Respondents who indicated they were uncertain if they would graduate in the time frame they expected, were not on track to do so, or were not certain that they would graduate were statistically more likely than those on track to graduate in their expected timeframe to rate the following as obstacles: difficulty of the program, personal health and wellness, availability of required courses, thesis submission deadline, prerequisite courses required for enrollment, lack of or delayed program information, and lack of research funding. Notably, working off campus did not emerge as a statistically significant obstacle to time to degree.

Race/ethnicity. Descriptive analysis suggests differences in perceived obstacles across racial/ethnic groups on the following items: the GVAR/writing requirement, family obligations, personal health and wellness, caregiving, working off campus, availability of required courses, prerequisites necessary for enrollment, lack of or delayed program information, availability of study space, lack of financial aid, and lack of research funding. The findings showed a great deal of variation regarding which racial/ethnic group perceived the items as obstacles, though the differences primarily related to students from underrepresented minority groups. In some cases, however, non-underrepresented students may have perceived an item as more of an obstacle compared to other groups. More sophisticated analysis is essential to explore these differences.

Gender, caregiving, and first generation status. Women were statistically more likely than men to identify the following as obstacles: family obligations, caregiving, working off campus, and personal health and wellness. Men were statistically more likely than women to identify the following as obstacles: the GVAR/writing requirement, availability of required courses, and lack of research funding. Respondents who identified themselves as a primary caregiver (for children, parents, family members) were statistically more likely to identify family obligations, caregiving, and lack of or delayed program information as obstacles to their success. Finally, first generation students were statistically more likely to identify family obligations, personal health and wellness, and caregiving of others as obstacles to their success.

Student Goals and Overall Assessment

The respondents mainly have two overall goals for pursuing a graduate degree, neither of which is surprising. First, they seek to advance their careers and thus achieve greater financial well-being. Second, they want to enhance their knowledge and educational achievement. Respondents indicated that their anticipated graduate degree would move them far along the road to achieving their goals. Only one percent indicated that the degree would not help at all; therefore, the overt dissatisfaction level is very low.

As shown in Table 12, a total of 86 percent of respondents indicated that the degree would help them “a great deal” or “mostly” to achieve their goals with another 13 percent indicating that it would “somewhat” help them.

Table 12: Extent to Which Degree Will Help Students Achieve Goals

A great deal	55%
Mostly	31%
Somewhat	13%
Not at all	1%

Respondents were also asked to rate overall satisfaction (Table 13) with two questions: “My CSULB graduate degree is worth the time and money I am investing” with 76.49 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing and “Based on my experience, I would encourage others to attend my CSULB graduate program” with 72.61 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing.

Table 13: Overall Satisfaction with Graduate Studies at CSULB

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Responses
My CSULB graduate degree is worth the time and money I am investing.	41.37%	35.12%	14.93%	6.05%	2.54%	1,025
Based on my experience, I would encourage others to attend my CSULB graduate program.	42.30%	30.31%	15.69%	7.12%	4.58%	1,026

Responses regarding the value of the degree and the level to which students would recommend CSULB to others were mixed. While 76.5 percent of respondents indicated that the degree is worth the resources expended, 8.5 percent were negative about the cost/benefit with another 15 percent neutral on the question. Thus, nearly 24 percent of the respondents were not expressly enthusiastic about their degree’s value. A similar pattern of responses was seen in the question about recommending CSULB to others. Approximately 72.6 percent of respondents would make such a recommendation, while nearly 12 percent would actively not recommend their program to others and another nearly 16 percent gave a neutral response to this question.

Further research would be beneficial to better understand the reasons why a subset of graduate students would not recommend their programs or do not feel that their degrees have a high value based on the resources expended.

3. Graduate Programs Alumni Survey

The purpose and structure of the Graduate Programs Alumni Survey was nearly identical to that of the Current Master's Student Survey, with the main purpose being to identify factors that contribute to timely degree progress and to determine whether graduate students have an appropriately graduate experience in their programs. Given the relatively low response rate, the results presented from the alumni survey are brief and focus on comparisons with the Current Master's Student Survey data.

Time to Degree

The estimated average time it took respondents to complete their degrees was 2.7 years. Approximately 44 percent of respondents (79 alumni) completed their degrees in 2 years or less and about 80 percent of respondents (143 alumni) completed their degrees in three years or less. About 76 percent of respondents reported that they completed their degrees in about the time they expected and 19 percent reported that they completed their degrees more slowly than they expected.

The Graduate Experience at CSULB

Regarding participation in activities, the alumni survey results are very close to the results for the current students. Of the 14 categories of activities examined in Table 4, most items are within three percentage points of each other. The largest difference is the percentage of alumni respondents who reported that they utilized their advisor's office hours. About 85 percent of the alumni participated in this activity versus 68 percent of current students. This may be an artifact of alumni having completed their degrees and therefore being more likely to have had greater amounts of contact.

Student Goals and Overall Assessment

Both alumni and current students provided nearly identical responses regarding their goals for pursuing a graduate degree. Fewer of the alumni indicated that their degrees helped them achieve their goals (78 percent versus 86 percent). Alumni also expressed a slightly more positive feeling about the time and resources incurred to earn the degree as compared to current students. Approximately 82 percent of alumni respondents indicated the degree was worth the effort versus 76.5 percent of current students. Likewise, 80 percent of alumni would recommend their program versus 72.6 percent of current students. This pattern may reflect variations in graduate studies at CSULB over the years or may show that graduates' views are more favorable after they complete the degree. Regardless, the data demonstrate that there is work to be done across the campus to increase overall satisfaction levels related to the graduate experience.

Factors that Influence Time to Degree

Alumni responses indicated that the following factors were the most helpful in earning their degrees, beginning with the most helpful: family support, advisor's knowledge of program requirements, quality of teaching, peer support, and advisor's availability.

Responses indicated that the following factors were not at all helpful in earning the degree, beginning with the least helpful factor: career counseling services, counseling services, availability of space to work or study on campus, advisor’s availability, and writing support services. Similar to current students, alumni reported that family support, advisor’s knowledge of program requirements, and peer support are among the top factors that were very helpful to earning their degrees. As in the current student survey, alumni also reported that career counseling services, counseling services, and availability of space on campus were not at all helpful to earning their degree. Alumni comments in open-ended responses largely echoed those of respondents in the current student survey.

Findings from the alumni survey largely mirror those from the student survey regarding obstacles. While no item was identified with great frequency as a major obstacle, working off campus (14 percent) and lack of financial support (10 percent) were most frequently cited. When examined as a “major obstacle” or “somewhat of an obstacle,” the following items emerged as areas of concern: working off campus (46 percent), lack of financial support (44 percent), availability of required courses (44 percent), and family obligations (42 percent). These four items mirror precisely the top four concerns of current students. Open-ended responses generally reflected the obstacles identified above, including the challenge of balancing work, family, and school. In addition, respondents noted concerns about the thesis process, including non-responsive advisors and the difficulty of finding a thesis chair. Course availability and commuting were also identified as obstacles.

B. ASSOCIATE DEAN AND GRADUATE ADVISOR SURVEYS

1. Associate Dean Survey

Of those who responded (n=6), the majority (60 percent) have held their positions for five or fewer years, while 20 percent have served in this role for more than eight years. All respondents noted many areas of strength for graduate programs in their respective colleges. Table 14 includes those items identified as strengths by at least 40 percent of respondents. It is noteworthy that the only item selected by all respondents was “opportunities for students to engage in research,” while no respondents selected “expeditious time to degree” as a greatest strength.

Table 14: Items Identified as Greatest Strengths of Graduate Programs

Item	%
Opportunities for students to engage in research	100%
Prepare students for continued education (doctoral study or professional school)	80%
Strong faculty	80%
Excellent reputation of program outside of CSULB	80%
Expand students’ career options/income	60%
Opportunities for financial support for students (e.g., TA/GA, department/program level scholarships)	40%

The survey also asked respondents to identify what their colleges (and/or departments and programs) offer to support graduate students. About half of colleges offer space to work for at least some graduate students. Nearly half provide Teaching Assistant/Graduate Assistant (TA/GA) support for some students, yet few have scholarships available at the college or department level. Only some colleges have a club or organization available specifically for graduate students, while most have a club or organization available for all students (undergraduate and graduate). Most offer colloquia appropriate for graduate students and over half have additional planned social events for graduate students only; some have social events that are also open to undergraduates.

Relative to graduate student success, the survey asked about actions the colleges take to support it, as well as factors that seem to impede success; items identified by at least 40 percent of respondents are included in Table 15. Responses suggest that monitoring of student data, regular advising, and only admitting students who are ready for program coursework were most often identified as actions that support graduate student success. Most commonly noted factors that impede students' success were issues occurring off campus (work, family) and students' struggles to complete their culminating activity (project, thesis, and/or comprehensive exam).

Table 15: Items Impacting Graduate Student Success and % Identified

College Actions that Support Graduate Student Success	Factors that Impede Graduate Student Success
Monitor progress regularly, including student success data (80%)	Work off campus (80%)
Only allow students to enter programs who have completed all/most prerequisite courses (80%)	Family obligations (80%)
Advise students on regular basis (80%)	Struggles to complete culminating activity (80%)
Meet with graduate advisors in college regularly (80%)	Difficulty of program (60%)
Offer a new student orientation (60%)	Lack of financial support (60%)
Have deadlines for benchmarks (e.g., candidacy) (60%)	Thesis submission deadline (60%)
Thesis support (e.g., work w/thesis office, writing support, work w/thesis advisors to minimize time to degree) (40%)	GWAR/writing requirement (40%)

When asked what resources their colleges need in order to enhance graduate student success, 100 percent of respondents indicated funding to support student scholarships. Other resources noted as needed by at least 40 percent of respondents included funding to support academic advising and more tools to help with monitoring student data. Most respondents indicated that they currently use tools already available (e.g., CS Link) to determine whether students are meeting benchmarks and to track GS 700 registrations. Some also indicated that they try to monitor progress on thesis completion. They indicated that monitoring student data helps improve their ability to effectively support graduate student success (e.g., identifying students who need additional support, helping advisors to

determine program plans, identifying obstacles like course sequencing), and most indicated an interest in having greater university support for monitoring student data.

Finally, the survey asked about goals associate deans have for graduate studies at CSULB. Goals noted are summarized below:

- Extension of scholarly contributions of graduate student population;
- Recognition of complexity and diversity of graduate programs across CSULB by higher administration;
- Improved and more Institutional Research data;
- Improved program quality;
- Enhanced technology support (e.g., online application and tracking);
- Additional funding for graduate studies (e.g., student travel, scholarships);
- Differentiation between graduate and undergraduate studies and understanding of specific needs of graduate students (e.g., lower class size, need to extend campus hours, working professionals need evening classes);
- Additional funding to support faculty to work with graduate students (difficult with current 4-4 teaching load).

2. Graduate Advisor Survey

Of those who responded (n=48), more than half of the graduate advisors (55 percent) have held their positions between 3 and 8 years, with almost one-third (29 percent) having served in their role for more than eight years (most of these “senior” advisors are housed in either CED or CLA). Thus, the overwhelming majority of responding advisors had at least three years of experience. Figure 1 displays the participant sample for the Graduate Advisor Survey by college. Almost all of the graduate advisors who participated (91 percent) are housed in four of CSULB’s largest colleges—CED, CHHS, CLA, and CNSM. It is worth noting that all of these larger colleges have numerous faculty and/or staff who advise graduate students, while some colleges (e.g., CBA) have very few graduate advisors.

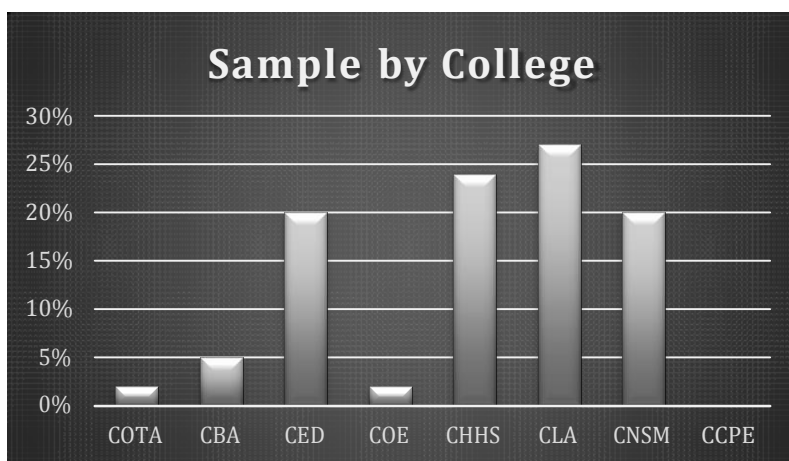


Figure 1: Graduate Advisor Sample by College

The survey also asked participants about characteristics of the programs they advise.⁵ Figure 2 illustrates the types of culminating activities these programs offer. Almost half (43 percent) of the programs offer a choice of culminating activity (thesis, project, or comprehensive exam), over half (53 percent) prescribe one option, and a small amount (4 percent) of programs have students complete a combination of either thesis or project and an exam. It is worth noting that almost half (43 percent) of the programs for which the respondents advise require students to complete either a thesis or project; the majority of these programs are in CHHS and CNSM.

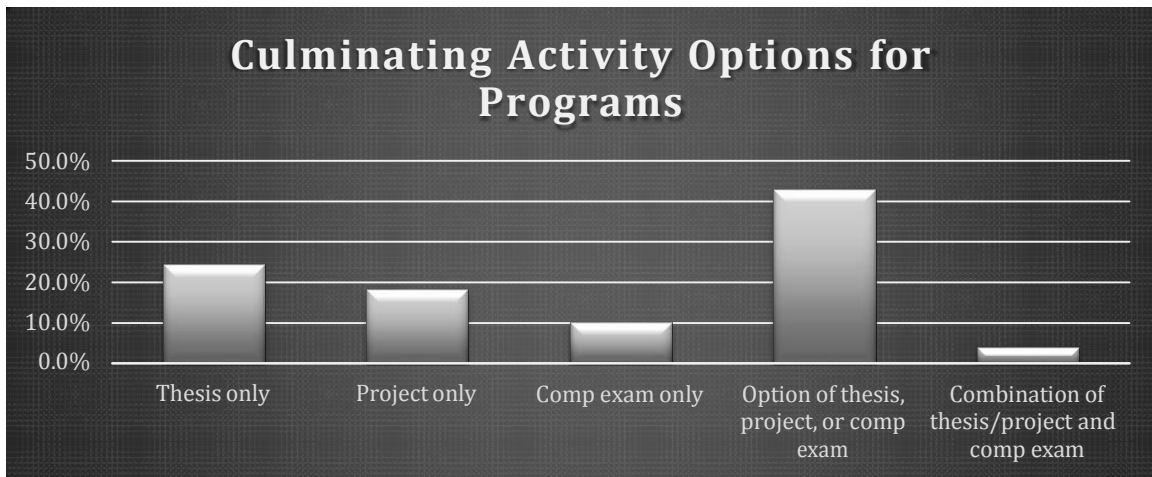


Figure 2: Program Culminating Activities

The survey also asked whether or not programs follow a cohort model. There was a fairly even split among programs that follow a full cohort model (37 percent), mixed model with some courses taken as a cohort (28 percent), and non-cohort model (35 percent); the majority of programs that follow a cohort model reside in CED and CHHS, with CLA having the largest number of programs that have a mixed model. Regarding how programs are funded, the responses show that the majority are state-support (69 percent), with the majority of the self-support programs being housed in CHHS.

Regarding the number of units students have on their approved curriculum for the programs that respondents advise, the majority have fewer than 40 units (30-33 units–59 percent; 34-39 units–16 percent), while 11 percent of the programs require 60 or more units (housed in CHHS, CED, COTA) and the remainder fell between 40 and 59 units. Respondents indicated that the majority of students in the programs they advise complete their master’s degrees in 4 years or less (91 percent indicated between 2 and 4 years).

Participants noted various reasons why they believe students enter the programs they advise. Table 16 outlines the percentage of respondents for each item. It is noteworthy that there were no items selected by all respondents; in addition, all items were selected by at least 10 respondents (except for “other”). The potential of the degree to advance students’

⁵ As some participants advise students in more than one program, the number of programs identified was greater than the number of participants.

careers, income potential, and/or knowledge and skills were indicated by the majority of participants. The majority of responding advisors also noted reputation of program, cost, and convenient location as reasons why students enter their programs. Interestingly, the overwhelming majority (81 percent) of those selecting “To prepare for continued education” were advisors in either CNSM or CLA and all but one of those selecting “Opportunities to engage in research” were housed in CNSM, CLA or CHHS. Additionally, the majority of advisors selecting “Opportunity for financial support” were advisors in either CLA or CNSM.

Table 16: Reasons Why Students Enter CSULB Graduate Programs

Item	%
Degree needed to advance in career	83%
Reputation of program	76%
Strong faculty	67%
To enhance knowledge and skills in chosen field	67%
To increase income potential	67%
Convenient location to home	64%
Low cost	60%
To facilitate a career or field change	48%
To prepare for continued education (doctoral study or professional school)	38%
Opportunities to engage in research	36%
Opportunities for financial support (TA/GA, department scholarship)	26%
Uniqueness of program	24%
Other:	7%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding first job • National accreditation • Recruitment 	

Almost all of the graduate advisors (90 percent) indicated that the majority of the graduate students in their programs work either part- or full-time during their studies. Although these two options were selected approximately the same number of times (40 percent–full-time; 50 percent–part-time), it is worth noting that 7 of the 8 respondents from CED indicated that the majority of their graduate students work full-time.

The survey asked graduate advisors to indicate what services their departments have available for graduate students. Table 17 illustrates both what respondents’ departments offer and for how many students (based on provided items). The most common offerings for all or the majority of graduate students in a given department included clubs or organizations that are available to all students (undergraduate and graduate), colloquia that are appropriate for graduate students, and additional planned social events that include either graduate students only or all students. Almost half of the departments (about 46 percent) provide space for at least some graduate students to work/study, yet over 40 percent do not provide any space. Additionally, almost half (about 43 percent) provide clubs or organizations that are for graduate students only, though most only have clubs or

organizations that are open to both graduate and undergraduate students. The least selected offerings involved funding for students; over half (about 57 percent) of responding graduate advisors indicated that their departments provide TA/GA appointments for either a few or no students, and nearly 90 percent have either no department/program scholarships available or funds for only a few students. In response to a separate, yet related question, 88 percent of respondents indicated that their program or department offers an orientation for new graduate students, with the majority (67 percent) stating that it is mandatory.

Table 17: Department Offerings for Graduate Students

Item	For all students	For the majority of students	For some students	For only a few students	For no students
TA/GA appointments	9.5%	14.3%	19.0%	31.0%	26.2%
Department or program scholarships/funding not requiring work	2.4%	0%	9.8%	36.6%	51.2%
Space to work/study	34.1%	4.9%	7.3%	12.2%	41.5%
Clubs/organizations that are for graduate students only	33.3%	2.4%	7.1%	0%	57.1%
Clubs/organizations that are for all students in the department	67.5%	2.5%	7.5%	2.5%	20.0%
Colloquia that are appropriate for graduate students	61.9%	9.5%	2.4%	7.1%	19.0%
Planned social events for graduate students only (not related to clubs or colloquia)	61.9%	0%	0%	2.4%	35.7%
Planned social events for all students in department (not related to clubs or colloquia)	60%	0%	7.5%	0%	32.5%

In terms of support provided to graduate students, 100 percent of responding advisors indicated that they meet with their advisees at least 1-2 times per year, with the overwhelming majority (76 percent) meeting at least 1-2 times per semester. Over 90 percent of respondents further indicated that they advise students on a regular basis to support graduate student success. Other actions to support success include monitoring

student progress regularly (79 percent), having deadlines for benchmarks (55 percent), and only allowing students to enter programs who have completed all or most prerequisites courses (43 percent). Additional areas mentioned in open-ended responses under “other” (24 percent) included discouraging students from taking courses outside of their programs, offering special programs for underrepresented minority students, helping students locate monetary support, and providing students support for theses (e.g., encouraging them to attend writing workshops, having program-specific guidelines).

Table 18 includes the most common reasons why responding graduate advisors believe graduate students do not complete their programs. The most commonly selected choices include family or work obligations and personal health. It is worth noting that only respondents from CLA selected “availability of required courses,” and no advisors identified the following as reasons why students do not finish: “lack of or delayed program information,” “insufficient or poor academic advising,” “prerequisite courses necessary for enrollment,” and “GWAR/writing requirement.”

Table 18: Most Common Reasons Why Students Do Not Complete Programs

Reason	%
Family obligations	60%
Working obligations off campus	57%
Personal health/wellness	43%
Difficulty of program	38%
Lack of financial support	38%
Unable to complete exit option	36%
Other:	19%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GPA less than 3.0 • Get job before finishing • Enter PhD program • Difficulty with thesis research/writing • Job moves out of state • Pass necessary exams/clearance (e.g., CBEST) 	
Change of career goals	17%
Lost interest in attending graduate school	12%
Lost interest in discipline/program	7%
Availability of required courses	5%

The survey also asked graduate advisors to identify the most common factors that impede graduate student success for enrolled students who remain in their programs; those factors indicated by at least 10 percent of respondents are outlined in Table 19. Similar to why students leave their programs, “family obligations” and “working off campus” were selected by the most respondents (66 percent for each). “Lack of financial support” and “struggles to complete exit option” (e.g., thesis) were the next most-often selected factors that impede graduate student success, with nearly half of respondents selecting them. Contrastingly, only one respondent selected “advising” and “the writing requirement;” “needing prerequisite courses prior to enrolling” was not selected by anyone.

Table 19: Most Common Factors that Impede Student Success

Factor	%
Family obligations/care giving	66%
Working off campus	66%
Lack of financial support	49%
Struggles to complete exit option	46%
Personal health/wellness	41%
Difficulty of program	37%
Thesis submission deadline	34%
Availability of required courses	20%
Availability of space to work or study on campus	12%

Finally, the survey asked graduate advisors what resources and/or support they believe would help their programs enhance graduate student success. Results are illustrated in Table 20. Clearly, funding for student scholarships and advising were seen as most needed.

Table 20: Resources/Support Needed for Graduate Student Success

Item Needed	%
Additional funding for student scholarships	97%
Additional funding for advising/advisors	55%
Other:	39%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for more faculty to be involved with graduate students • Writing support (e.g., thesis) • Dedicated space for graduate students to work with computers • Funding for student-faculty research over summer • Support for online program presence (e.g., recruitment, forms) • Extended thesis deadlines • Additional funding for student research assistantships • Funding for smaller classes (eliminate or lower minimums) • Support for sense of community in evening 	
New/revised university policy:	29%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to advance and graduate in same semester (some programs are short) • Ability to code simultaneous credential and masters programs separately • Need university graduate orientation 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need rolling thesis submission; extend deadline • Ability to work on thesis in summer/need faculty incentive • Allow students to take more units and still receive financial aid 	
<p>Enhanced student progress monitoring capability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to align program and university deadlines • Dashboard like the one for undergraduates; data similar to that available for undergraduates • Students' grades for specific courses for all students across sections • Mechanisms to track number of students, time to graduation, etc. 	21%

The survey also asked graduate advisors to comment on the ways their departments/programs track student data pertaining to graduation and reducing time to degree. Open-ended responses are summarized in the following seven categories:

- Examine available Institutional Research (IR) data (e.g., graduation rates, program completion);
- Utilize available student monitoring tools (e.g., advancement to candidacy status, GS700 registrations, number of years in program, academic probation, enrollment status each semester);
- Disseminate surveys to students (e.g., student success surveys, exit surveys, alumni surveys) and hold focus groups;
- Keep active records on completion status for culminating experiences;
- Use cohort structure, which requires less monitoring;
- Implement mandatory advising appointments and gather updates via email and in person;
- Remain in on-going contact with instructors and thesis advisors.

Additionally, open-ended responses indicated how data tracked and/or collected are used to assess the needs, or improve the experiences, of graduate students. The following actions provide a thematic overview of these responses:

- Implement measures to enhance student progress and success (e.g., seek progress mid-way through GS700 when enrollments become high and/or repetitious, provide additional advising for students if GPA falls below 3.0);
- Identify program strengths/weaknesses in order to make improvements (e.g., providing better support for comps if students are not passing);
- Learn about students' needs, particularly early in the program, in order to provide targeted advising/support.

Finally, the survey asked graduate advisors if they had anything further to share about advising graduate students in their programs or more generally about graduate studies at CSULB. Although much of what was communicated in this open-ended format reflected data for other survey items, the following comments capture new sentiments:

- We need a center that can offer services specifically for graduate students (e.g., writing support for theses, how to navigate IRB process);
- The university needs a central list-serv that includes all active graduate students;

- Graduate studies at CSULB needs to receive more attention and greater prominence on campus (e.g., greater web presence, more attention to accolades, more concern over issues specific to graduate students);
- University should support creation of a graduate culture on campus (e.g., offices could stay open after 5 pm, departments could be provided with guidelines for how to improve their own graduate culture);
- Have more supports for new graduate students (e.g., university-wide orientation, centralized services).

C. GROUP INTERVIEWS

Nearly all group interview participants (14 associate deans and department chairs, 11 graduate advisors and staff who work with graduate students, and 34 current graduate students) expressed that they were pleased this project was taking place; they were appreciative and excited to have an opportunity to share and be heard. Most participants also expressed their strong connection to the campus. Overall, participants indicated that they were enjoying their experiences at CSULB and believe graduate programs are strong. Numerous graduate advisors and associate deans acknowledged the hard work done by their colleagues. It is evident there are many individuals in these roles who are sincerely invested in supporting graduate students and providing quality graduate programs at CSULB. It is also apparent that academic units have established creative ways to support graduate student success.

The main themes, including common statements for each theme, are presented for each interview group (associate deans/department chairs, graduate advisors/staff, graduate students) in Table 21.

Table 21: Matrix of Response Themes by Interview Group

Topics	Assoc. Deans/Dept. Chairs	Graduate Advisors/Staff	Graduate Students
Financial support needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support needed for students for recruitment and once admitted (e.g., fee or tuition waivers, conference travels support, TA/GA positions, scholarships) • Funding for advising • Funding faculty time for thesis work (e.g., had .5 units per student; many have to get grants to support students) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support for students (e.g., recruitment scholarships, fellowships) • More support for research across university (e.g., AT for faculty who do research with graduate students) • More financial support for graduate advising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More faculty • Greater class availability (can impact financial aid and payment plan) • International students have trouble finding work/greater financial support is needed • Lack of availability of resources needed to succeed in the field
University level support needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For expanding graduate enrollment • Utilize new grants/initiatives (e.g., RISE) to help pay students • Seek help to garner new grants (e.g., advisory council) • Be cognizant of issues specific to international students (e.g., have to keep full-time status) • Writing/thesis support for students • Opportunities for student interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure students know of resources on campus (e.g., BeachBoard to keep students on track) • Help students stay connected to job opportunities and reasons for finishing degree • More reports from Enrollment Services to support student monitoring • Not enough focus/support of graduate studies at university level (e.g., funding for recruitment and advertising) • Policy changes to make bureaucracy easier to navigate • Thesis submission deadlines too strict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduate student support and information on culminating activity options (e.g., comps, thesis, project) • Graduate student resources (e.g., website, center) • Orientation or resources for new graduate students, information about resources currently on campus • Writing resource center for graduate students • A confidential place or graduate counselor to discuss concerns and/or suggestions; some way to provide feedback/evaluation of graduate program • Some literature is not available to students in a complete and up-to-date form • Problems with bureaucracy on campus

Table 21: Matrix of Response Themes by Interview Group (continued)

Topics	Assoc. Deans/Dept. Chairs	Graduate Advisors/Staff	Graduate Students
<p>College/ department level infra- structure improve- ment needed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options other than thesis • Flexibility to offer courses with low enrollment • S factor (e.g., .5/student for advising research; to support faculty time to grade comp exams); faculty don't have enough time to work with graduate students • Space/scheduling (e.g., room availability can be an issue at times when courses must be offered to accommodate graduate students) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More support for students electing thesis, particularly if thesis is only program option • Support for faculty to work with thesis students • Students lose track of program or policy (e.g., they are administratively dropped for gap in continuous enrollment) • Advisors not always informed, and sometimes unintentionally misadvise • Students can't always remain with cohort • Academic rigor (e.g., difficulty finishing thesis) • Writing skills • More flexibility to offer more graduate classes (e.g., allow electives to run with low numbers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More faculty • Greater communication/coordination between different departments • The ability to evaluate the program and professors • Greater communication between students and departments about concerns/a place to discuss concerns • More interaction with industry professionals/career counselors • More flexibility for students with careers • Not enough thesis support • Students feel they are pushed to comprehensive exam • Job fairs are not geared towards graduate students/need more practical training and working experience • Lack of communication between the program and student

Table 21: Matrix of Response Themes by Interview Group (continued)

Topics	Assoc. Deans/Dept. Chairs	Graduate Advisors/Staff	Graduate Students
Obstacles encountered to degree completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health issues • Family matters (e.g., pregnancy or caregiving) • Work off campus/get job • Lack of financial support (e.g., TA/GA positions) • Part-time status • Completing culminating activity (e.g., thesis, re-take comp exams) • Taking extra courses • Programs w/large number of required units (e.g., programs with high units per accreditation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International status–difficult to navigate • Challenge to get courses (e.g., with cohort model, must wait to get a course if students fall out of sequence) • Having prerequisite knowledge (e.g., missing some pre-requisite courses, writing/research skills) • Working full-time off campus; getting new jobs • Family/life issues • Demands of thesis–requires more time; need more support and faculty to help them; need help with writing skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of course availability • Lack of practical applications of coursework • International students have trouble finding work, creates hardship in finances that impacts learning • Administrative delays cause problems for students • Policies and not having enough time to process administrative tasks within the timeframe • Advisor personality mismatch
Advising support needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for faculty to engage in research w/students (e.g., AT for thesis chairs) • AT for graduate advising • Mechanisms to support programs (e.g., way to handle comp exams, as Beachboard is not sufficient; support for tracking students and better/more accurate IR data) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve advising (e.g., more time to connect with students; shared advising team for broader access; keep advisor consistent over several years) • Enhanced AT for both thesis and graduate advisors • More college and university support for graduate studies, such as progress monitoring, financial support, etc. • More support workshops to support students (e.g., on thesis submission throughout the term) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required hours of advising/more advising support to complete their degrees • Students do feel some support from their academic advisors

Table 21: Matrix of Response Themes by Interview Group (continued)

Topics	Assoc. Deans/Dept. Chairs	Graduate Advisors/Staff	Graduate Students
<p>Main contributors to success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohort model—allows for peer support and ease of scheduling • Advising—following up and being proactive • Orientation/making sure students know policy and requirements • Program planning (e.g., thesis/project students need to begin early in program) • Size of program (smaller better) • Collaboration between faculty and students (e.g., faculty need time to work with students on thesis); AT for faculty and advisors • Class schedule (e.g., offer courses at times that accommodate working students) • Admitting appropriate students • Program/department has graduate focus (e.g., provides space for students, research symposium) • Workshops/support for students (e.g., writing) • Connections to profession (e.g., bring in speakers) • Dedication/commitment of students • Financial support for students (e.g., TA/GA) • Have options for culminating activity (i.e., thesis OR comps) • Program structure (e.g., cohort model helps students get done on time and feel connected) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moral support; sense of community (from advisors, faculty, cohort of peers, program events) • Monitoring student progress; reaching out if students aren't meeting benchmarks and/or need an educational leave • Mentoring within program (e.g., research, comps, program planning and when to take what) • Proactive advising—making sure they have all of the information and that all is clear (e.g., updated website, emails) • Orientation valuable • Cohort: helps for time to degree, to disseminate information, retention, sense of community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peers in the program and sense of graduate culture • Faculty and staff involvement and availability • Cohort model • Advisor readily available • Individual motivation and initiative • Availability of classes • Doing the work (e.g. reading, writing, study habits) • Diversity on campus and in program • Faculty who work as professionals in the field in which they are teaching • Prompt responses from faculty, support • Useful services-writing workshops/WPE workshops; university student union for studying; the Library/library research database; mandatory 2 unit orientation class; resume building workshop, BeachLINK support for job searches; loan assistance center

Table 21: Matrix of Response Themes by Interview Group (continued)

Topics	Assoc. Deans/Dept. Chairs	Graduate Advisors/Staff	Graduate Students
<p>Active contributors to and comments on graduate culture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction between faculty and students • Sufficient number of advisors • Faculty credit for working on research with students • Small class size for clinical/research courses • Awards/scholarships for students (e.g., best thesis) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional experiences for students (e.g., student presentations, professional speakers, helping students polish professional skills) • Space for students to work collaborate • Student run community-building (e.g., cohort Facebook page, on campus events or organizations) • Academic workshops • Orientations (e.g., before program, in 2nd year) • Team-based approach (e.g., cohort internship) • Close monitoring of students • Annual graduate research poster session • College-level support (e.g., regular meetings with graduate advisors) • Support for TAs/GAs • Workshops for students (e.g., how to present at conferences, how to prepare a CV) • Need more attention on graduate culture • Need spaces to share graduate experience • There needs to be a better relationship between local businesses and the graduate programs for networking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be a better relationship between local businesses and graduate programs for networking • Many graduate students are forming independent cohorts for support/studying • Lack of understanding regarding how to support students and what students needs are • Lack of sense of belonging

The most prominent finding across all three interview groups was that funding is critically important to improving graduate studies at CSULB; added funding would contribute to attracting high quality graduate students, supporting their studies while they are at CSULB and completing their degrees in a timely fashion. Furthermore, across all focus groups, the limited availability of funding for graduate studies was cited as a chief need and an obstacle to graduate student success. Advising and monitoring is another critical area that emerged for both the associate deans/department chairs, and the graduate advisors/staff. Participants from both groups indicated that they have internal tracking mechanisms for monitoring student progress, and that a university-wide data infrastructure similar to the data available for undergraduate students would be highly beneficial.

Two key areas emerged regarding obstacles to graduate student success, one that is external and one that is internal to CSULB. The external obstacle is working outside of the program, which contributes to retention and time-to-degree issues. The internal obstacle is limited support for graduate culture or a graduate experience in departments, colleges, and on campus. Although many programs offer workshops, orientations, and other events or provide study space for some students, the kind of experience graduate students have at CSULB varies a great deal and many are not experiencing a robust graduate culture. Another internal factor that impacts graduate studies is the type of program. Overall, participants indicated that a cohort model assists with retention, timely degree progress, and a sense of community, although students who fall out of the cohort sequence have difficulty getting back into it, as courses are only offered every 1-2 years. Finally, program requirements such as unit load and thesis requirements play a key role. These were a key area of discussion for all groups, ranging from topics such as compensation (or lack thereof) for faculty support of thesis students to students who find it challenging to complete a thesis as a required component of the program (due to rigor or to work obligations). Taken together, the findings suggest that students, graduate advisors, staff who work with graduate students, department chairs, and associate deans all value graduate studies at CSULB, and that additional supports could be provided to improve graduate student success.

D. ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES AT SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CSUs

The data in this section represent a summary of information gleaned from five CSU campuses in Southern California for each of the eight areas investigated in the environmental scan. Table 22 provides a concise overview of the findings, followed by details for each of the eight areas researched.

Table 22: Graduate Studies Environmental Scan of CSU Campuses in Southern California

	Long Beach	Dominguez Hills	Fullerton	Los Angeles	Northridge	San Diego
Graduate Student Orientations	Program and/or College-level	Department-level	University-wide and Department-level	University-wide and Department-level	University-wide and Online	Online
Student Financial Support	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Graduate Student Resource Centers	Graduate Studies Resource Center (expected 2015)	Office of Graduate Studies	Office of Graduate Studies	Graduate Resource Center	Office of Graduate Studies	None
Faculty Support & Compensation for Work with Grad Students	Varies by college and department	No data	Varies by college and department	Varies by college and department	No data	R1 Institution, 18 unit teaching load
Academic Probation	3.00 minimum; Students have 2 terms to raise GPA before disqualification	3.00 minimum; Students have 1 term to raise GPA before disqualification	3.00 minimum; Students have 2 terms to raise GPA before disqualification	3.00 minimum; Students have 2 terms to raise GPA before disqualification	3.00 minimum; Students have 1 term to raise GPA before disqualification	2.85 minimum; Students must raise GPA to 2.85 within 1 term before disqualification
Writing and Thesis Support	Yes, Thesis Office and Writer's Resource Lab	Yes, Promoting Excellence in Graduate Studies (PEGS) program	Yes, Graduate Learning Specialists	Yes, Graduate Resource Center and University Writing Center	Yes, Thesis office	Non-profit provides support for a small fee
Governing and Advisory Groups	Yes, PARC/CEPC through Academic Senate	No, formerly through Academic Senate	Yes, Graduate Education Committee through Academic Senate	Yes, Associate Deans	Yes, Graduate Council through Academic Senate	Yes, Graduate Council
Technology Infrastructure	Yes, CS Link reports and Enrollment Services staff	No data	Online application for graduation	Yes, degree progress check through PeopleSoft, reports, electronic thesis submission	Yes, degree progress check through PeopleSoft and electronic thesis submission	Yes, electronic thesis submission

1. Graduate Student Orientations

Most campuses engage in discipline-specific new student orientations, though this varies by department and program. Additionally, those with a campus-wide Graduate Resource Center usually offer a campus-wide orientation for new graduate students.

Many CSU Long Beach departments and colleges offer discipline-specific new graduate student orientations. For example, the College of Education offers a college-wide orientation and many of the program options require their own orientation as well; the School of Social Work requires orientations based on cohort.

CSU Dominguez Hills also offers new graduate student orientations through departments. For example, new nursing students have an orientation in June, the Master's in Social Work program has their orientation in August and the Master's in Public Administration program orients 80 percent of their students online with an in-person orientation for the on-campus cohort in late August. The university has a Graduate Student Policy Handbook, which may serve as a substitute for a campus-wide new graduate student orientation.

CSU Fullerton offers new graduate student orientations through departments as well as a campus-wide orientation hosted by the Office of Graduate Studies. A Spanish language family orientation is also offered to familiarize families with the campus.

CSU Los Angeles offered their first campus-wide new graduate student orientation in Fall 2014. Many colleges, departments, and programs host their own discipline-specific orientations for new graduate students as well.

CSU Northridge offers a campus-wide New Graduate Student Orientation each fall semester. In Fall 2012 the Office of Graduate Studies launched a Moodle online course to provide students with an orientation. All incoming graduate students are automatically added to this course that becomes part of their Moodle profile during their academic careers. CSUN also offers a pre-graduate school conference titled Advancement to Graduate Education (AGE) through the Office of Graduate Studies each year. This is an all-day event where students gain valuable information on how to successfully apply to and navigate graduate school (GRE prep, application processes, etc.).

San Diego State University provides an online orientation: <http://gra.sdsu.edu/grad/orientation/>. Students may also call offices any time they need assistance during business hours and connect via [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

2. Student Financial Support

Student financial support typically takes the form of graduate assistantships, scholarships for research and/or travel, teaching assistantships, and tuition waivers for exceptional international and domestic out-of state students. In addition, state and federal programs are made available to students in specific disciplines, such as the Graduate Assumption Program for Loans for Education (APLE) Award. The CSU Chancellor's Doctoral Incentive/Forgivable Loan and the Sally Casanova Pre-Doctoral programs are well advertised at most campuses as well.

CSU Long Beach offers competitive tuition remission options in the form of a pilot graduate tuition scholarship and a tuition waiver for non-residents with exemplary academic records. CSULB supports graduate student research through the Graduate Research Fellowship (GRF) and a mini-grant program for student travel to conferences at which they are presenters. Several departments also offer TA/GA positions as well as discipline-specific scholarships.

CSU Dominguez Hills offers competitive graduate fellowships for which eligible recipients must have a faculty sponsor and conduct a research project. The Student Travel Mini-Grant program provides funding to graduate students for presenting their research at professional conferences. Some graduate assistantships are also offered, which provide a stipend for graduate students who have responsibilities for teaching, research, and administration.

CSU Fullerton provides several different types of financial support for graduate students. The Elevar Scholars Program competitively awards small stipends and is federally funded by the Promoting Post-baccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Americans (PPOHA) program (awarded to the Office of Graduate Studies by the U.S. Department of Education). In order to promote research and scholarly activity, CSUF awards grant money to fund research activities through Enhancing Post-baccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Students (EPOCHS). Additionally, the Giles T. Brown Outstanding Thesis Award Competition presents a cash prize, recognition, and forwards the thesis to the Western Alliance of Graduate Schools Distinguished Master's Thesis Award competition.

CSU Los Angeles students may apply for individual grants and scholarships offered by their disciplines. For example, the Minority Opportunity in Research (MORE) program provides financial support to graduate students in the sciences. The Graduate Studies Office also facilitates in-state tuition waiver requests.

CSU Northridge offers financial support from a variety of sources. For example, \$1000 grants to support theses, projects, and performances increased by 45 percent over five years, from 55 students in 2007-08 (\$42,700) to 80 students in 2011-12 (\$52,600). CSUN also provides graduate student conference travel awards, a teaching associate fee waiver program, and Association of Retired Faculty (ARF) Memorial scholarships.

San Diego State University provides financial support for out-of-state and international students, such as the possibility of out-of-state tuition waivers. SDSU also provides support for travel, grants, graduate scholarships, national fellowships, a graduate fellowship for underrepresented students, and GA/TA positions.

3. Graduate Student Resource Centers

The responsibilities of graduate student resource centers at CSU campuses appear to range widely. In general, these offices tend to implement university-wide policies and initiatives as well as provide new student orientations and offer support workshops.

CSU Long Beach recently received a five-year, \$2.8 million U.S. Department of Education grant for project “Hispanic Opportunities for Graduate Access and Retention” (HOGAR), which will provide, among other things, a Graduate Studies Resource Center. This center is expected to offer workshops and provide information on graduate programs and scholarships.

The CSU Dominguez Hills Office of Graduate Studies and Research has a coordinator and walk-in appointments to act as a resource center for students. The office is going through some reorganization at this time and limited information is available.

CSU Fullerton has an Office of Graduate Studies and the EPOCHS program, funded by a U.S. Department of Education grant. Some of the services provided include a new student orientation, graduate learning specialists who meet with students one-on-one or in workshops, an online guide to graduate school, a student/faculty mentoring program, funding opportunities, a quarterly newsletter, and information on navigating the campus infrastructure.

The CSU Los Angeles campus opened a dedicated space called the Graduate Resource Center (GRC) in Spring 2013 with Student Success Fee funds. The GRC provides academic support, professional networking, and community building opportunities in a space dedicated to graduate students. The GRC coordinator is a full-time staff member supervised by the Dean of Graduate Studies and is responsible for ensuring graduate thesis completion by reviewing manuscripts for standard formatting. The GRC coordinator plans and hosts a variety of workshops on topics such as thesis/dissertation support, funding graduate research, the IRB process, health and wellness, and career searches using social media. Graduate Student Ambassadors are trained and made available to assist international students with their transition to CSULA. Academic writing support is also provided through funding from the University Writing Center to provide graduate-level assistance with writing (and create jobs for other graduate students).

CSU Northridge’s Office of Graduate Studies is responsible for implementing university policies on graduate student classification, formal programs, culminating experiences, diplomas, advisement for incoming students, probationary and disqualified students, and interdisciplinary majors.

Multiple offices provide support to graduate students at San Diego State; however, there is not a specific Graduate Resource Center.

4. Faculty Compensation and Support for Work with Graduate Students

Support for faculty work with graduate students varied by academic college and department at each CSU campus examined. Most prominently, support related to advising and thesis support had no consistent compensation format. At CSU Long Beach, compensation varies and is administered by the academic colleges.

Faculty at CSU Fullerton who oversee a project or thesis but do not teach a related class do not receive compensation, while those teaching the related course do receive compensation.

Support for advising students varies by college and department at CSU Los Angeles, and anecdotal evidence suggests that programs and colleges that financially support their graduate faculty for thesis work see their students receiving more support and submitting high quality theses and research.

San Diego State is an R1 institution with an annual teaching load of 18 units, including supervision activities (thesis work, independent study, etc.).

5. Academic Probation Policies

The campuses examined adhered to allowing either one or two semesters for students to bring their GPAs to a minimum level before being disqualified.

CSU Long Beach graduate students are required to maintain a cumulative 3.00 GPA in (a) all post-baccalaureate work attempted and (b) in their program coursework. Students whose GPAs fall below the 3.00 minimum are placed on academic probation and are allowed two semesters to raise their GPAs. Failure to improve GPAs results in disqualification from the program and university.

Similarly, conditionally classified and classified graduate students at CSU Dominguez Hills are placed on scholastic probation if they fail to maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.00 in all post-baccalaureate units attempted. If students do not bring their grade point averages up to 3.00 in the following semester in residence, they are subject to disqualification from the program in which they are enrolled.

CSU Fullerton graduate students must maintain a 3.00 GPA. If students' GPAs fall below 3.00, they have two consecutive semesters to bring up their GPAs and clear probation. Students who do not raise their GPAs to the minimum are dismissed; however, they may file an appeal and potentially reapply to the university.

CSU Los Angeles classified and conditionally classified graduate students who are on academic probation are subject to disqualification if, after being placed on scholastic probation, they do not raise their average to B (3.00) after completion of 16 units or two quarters in residence, whichever comes later. Classified and conditionally classified graduate students whose grade point average falls more than nine grade points below B (3.00) will be disqualified from pursuing the master's degree program in which they were classified. Students who are disqualified from a master's degree program may not reenter that program. They may be admitted to another program only on the recommendation of the new major department/division concerned and with the approval of the appropriate college graduate dean.

CSU Northridge requires that students pursuing a graduate degree maintain a minimum 3.00 GPA in the formal program and in the cumulative GPA. No grade below a "C" can be

counted in the formal program. Any grade of “C-” or below in the formal program must be repeated after an approved course repeat form has been filed. If the student does not receive a “C” or better on the second attempt, the student will be disqualified from the program. Students will be placed on academic probation at the end of the semester when their cumulative GPA falls below 3.00. To be removed from probation, students must earn sufficient grade points in the following semester of enrollment to raise their cumulative GPAs to 3.00 or above. Failure to do so will result in disqualification in the following semester.

At San Diego State, once on probation, students must maintain a 2.85 term grade point average or they will be subject to disqualification. Provided students earn a 2.85 grade point average or better in courses during the first semester while on academic probation, students will be continued on academic probation for a second semester. Academic probation will be removed when students attain a 2.85 grade point average or better in all graduate level work attempted, and in all work attempted at SDSU.

6. Writing and Thesis Support

Academic writing and thesis support was a common graduate student service available at all of the CSUs investigated. The support is commonly centralized on the campus, and is primarily focusing on the completion and submission of theses. Some campuses provided additional academic support services.

CSU Long Beach has a Thesis and Dissertation Office that provides formatting and submission support to students both one-on-one and in workshops, which are often offered in the departments. The Writer’s Resource Lab also provides basic support on style guides, revisions, and editing. Additionally, some colleges and departments offer discipline-specific writing supports or tools.

CSU Dominguez Hills was awarded a Title V grant in 2010 and created the Promoting Excellence in Graduate Studies (PEGS) program. The mission is to promote graduate-level scholarship and facilitate intellectual development to enhance critical thinking, as well as improve research and writing skills. PEGS offers a variety of workshops taught by graduate writing consultants, many of whom are alumni. The PEGS Scholar’s Program offers supplemental support to students working on a capstone project or thesis. The seminar sessions give students the opportunity to work in small groups (3-5) facilitated by Graduate Research Writing Consultants.

At CSU Fullerton programming from the EPOCHS grant serves to support all graduate students, including Graduate Learning Specialists who coach students in graduate-level academic skills such as studying, presenting, writing, citation styles, and conference preparation. The Learning Specialists also offer workshops on topics such as Making and Giving Effective Presentations, Overcoming Writer's Block, Citation vs. Plagiarism, Editing for Coherence and Cohesion in Writing, Building a CV, and Effective Communication in Collaboration.

At CSU Los Angeles the coordinator of the Graduate Resource Center is responsible for ensuring thesis completion and hosts a variety of workshops on topics such as thesis/dissertation support, funding research, and the IRB process. In addition, academic writing support has been provided through funding from the University Writing Center to provide graduate-level assistance with writing.

CSU Northridge sought to increase the number of students completing theses and began a Saturday writing “Boot Camp” in addition to the thesis workshops offered. In Spring 2012 CSUN launched an online portal for students to electronically submit their theses.

San Diego State has a relationship with Montezuma Publishing, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to serving the undergraduate and graduate students of San Diego State University. This organization provides writing assistance to students for a small fee. Montezuma Publishing can also connect students with freelancers to help them with thesis/dissertation writing and publishing. The organization is also contracted with the university to review all theses and dissertations prior to publication by the university.

7. Governing and Advisory Groups

The five campuses investigated each had some kind of advisory body to the Dean of Graduate Studies, composed of faculty and staff from across campus. The responsibilities of these groups varied, with the most active establishing campus policies for graduate study.

In 2005, the CSU Long Beach Academic Senate reorganized to move the duties of the former Graduate Council to two governing bodies: Program Assessment and Review Council (PARC) and Curriculum and Educational Policies Council (CEPC). PARC and CEPC review both undergraduate and graduate policy, program assessment, and curriculum. The Dean of Graduate Studies Office maintains a BeachBoard group for graduate advisors to share information and hosts an information exchange each semester.

CSU Dominguez Hills had a Graduate Council; however the most recent notes available online for the Graduate Council were dated August 21, 2007. The Council served in an advisory capacity to the Academic Senate and the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research.

The Graduate Education Committee at CSU Fullerton is an Academic Senate committee that approves changes to graduate education programs and policies.

The Graduate Council at CSU Los Angeles is comprised of associate deans from each of the colleges and is led by the Dean of Graduate Studies. The charge of the council is to make policy and review curriculum related to graduate students.

CSU Northridge’s Academic Senate has a Graduate Council comprised of representatives from each college plus presidential appointments. The Council has the same type of responsibilities as the Undergraduate Council and all other university-wide Academic Senate committees.

The Graduate Council of San Diego State consists of 22 members that include 15 full-time faculty; Dean of the Graduate Division or designee; Provost; Associate and Assistant Deans of the Graduate Division; Dean of the Library and Information Access or designee; and two classified graduate students in good standing. The Council is responsible for the development of policy on (a) graduate programs, (b) graduate student affairs, (c) graduate research and scholarship, and (d) faculty participation in graduate programs.

8. Technology Infrastructure

In recent years the CSU system has made technology a priority in its pursuit of improving undergraduate retention and time to degree. Some of these tools are also available to support graduate students. CSU Long Beach Enrollment Services has developed a suite of CS Link reports to assist graduate advisors in tracking and monitoring student progress, and recently hired a Graduate Student Success Evaluator. CSU Los Angeles and CSU Northridge have successfully implemented online degree audit support for their graduate student populations through PeopleSoft. CSU Northridge appears to be leading the way in this regard, having launched a system (called DARS) for graduate students to track their own progress toward degree completion as well as calculating the student's program GPA to determine eligibility for distinction. CSU Los Angeles began working on technology infrastructure two years ago and is moving toward all departments submitting advancement to candidacy paperwork online, as well as allowing advisors to make changes online rather than with hard copy forms.

Students at some of the campuses benefit from additional enhanced technology support such as online thesis submission. CSU Long Beach, CSU Northridge, CSU Los Angeles, and San Diego State use an online thesis submission system; CSU Dominguez Hills and CSU Fullerton do not. However CSU Fullerton does allow students to apply for graduation online through the student portal of the PeopleSoft system.

Each of the campuses appear to use some kind of reporting systems such as CS Link to provide colleges, departments, and programs with information on retention and graduation; however, the onus of tracking students to graduation resides with departments and programs.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings presented above that stem from multiple Task Force data sources, the Provost's Task Force on Graduate Student Success recommends that the following university-level, college-level, and department/program-level actions be undertaken to foster graduate student success at CSULB. Recommendations are not presented in ranked order.

University-Level

- Expand and enhance Institutional Research data on graduate students
- Develop a degree audit for graduate students in PeopleSoft

- Develop uniform electronic tools for key functions (e.g., supplementary program applications, advancement to candidacy, request to graduate)
- Prioritize graduate program needs in tenure-track hiring
- Increase internal funding for graduate students, including Graduate Research Fellowships, fee waivers, and scholarships
- Increase funding to expand faculty research with graduate students
- Increase campus-based work opportunities that enhance degree completion (e.g., research positions)
- Leverage the work of existing and future advisory or advocacy groups to foster graduate student success
- Assess and address the specific support needs of international graduate students
- Develop a graduate student guidebook or handbook that includes academic and practical information
- Enhance support services through a graduate studies center that would provide:
 - Online resources geared toward graduate students
 - SOAR-style orientation for graduate students with multiple day/time offerings
 - Regularly-offered workshops (e.g., work-life-school balance, thesis completion)
 - Services related to graduate-level writing support
 - Pre-application resources, such as a graduate program fair, workshops on applying to graduate school or writing a statement of purpose
- Continue to assess graduate student experiences and support needs

College-Level

- Collect and analyze data to address areas for improvement at college, department, and program levels
- Develop and/or enhance a college-wide plan for fostering graduate culture and success
- Improve graduate program advising through increasing funding and assuring assigned time support for faculty advisors
- Examine workload practices for faculty working with thesis/project students
- Prioritize graduate program needs in determining tenure-track line requests
- Offer thesis support services for students (e.g., developing topics, completion tactics)
- Offer additional discipline-specific support workshops on theses, writing, adjusting to graduate school, etc.
- Hold regular meetings with graduate advisors across college to enhance graduate advisor knowledge of program, department, and university policies and resources
- Prioritize securing external funding for graduate studies, scholarships for students, and research opportunities

Department/Program-Level

- Regularly monitor student success data (e.g., IR and CS Link reports, degree completion)
- Conduct ongoing review of graduate students' support needs
- Review required course offerings, availability, and sequencing to allow timely degree completion

- Develop clear program planning/mapping tools
- Develop and maintain up-to-date orientation and advising materials for graduate students
- Request additional tenure-track faculty lines when needed to allow for greater graduate course availability and student exposure to a wider number of faculty and research areas
- Consider cohort or mixed models to enhance degree completion
- Consider offering a variety of culminating activities to improve time-to-degree and degree completion
- Establish support procedures to enhance thesis completion
- Increase opportunities for research collaborations between graduate students and faculty
- Develop strong communication structures between programs and students
- Develop mechanisms for graduate students to confidentially provide program and department-level feedback on a regular basis
- Improve career advisement and industry connections; facilitate internship opportunities
- Offer increased opportunities for professional development of graduate students (e.g., practicing conference presentations, enhanced professional skills)
- Facilitate opportunities for peer interaction and collaboration with other graduate students

VI. APPENDIX: TASK FORCE CHARGE AND MEMBERSHIP

Charge

Graduate student success is an integral component of the university's "Student Success" strategic priority in the 2014-17 Strategic Plan. CSULB graduate students' experiences pursuing their degrees in a well-supported environment are crucial to their success, both at the institution and beyond. However, our campus has limited information about graduate students' support needs and experiences across programs, departments and colleges as well as differences based on demographic variables such as gender, race/ethnicity and first generation status. The purpose of this Task Force is to provide data and recommendations to the university and its academic units for creating evidence-based plans and initiatives aimed at improving graduate student success at CSULB. The Task Force is charged with the following responsibilities:

4. Producing evidence regarding CSULB graduate students' experiences and support needs;
5. Investigating best practices for graduate student success at CSULB and beyond;
6. Providing evidence-based recommendations to the university and its academic units for fostering graduate student success at CSULB.

Membership

Co-Chairs:

Cecile Lindsay, Vice Provost, Academic Affairs
Laura Portnoi, Leadership Fellow

Members:

Vonetta Augustine, School of Social Work, College of Health and Human Services
Babette Benken, College of National Sciences and Mathematics
Margaret Black, College of the Arts
Burkhard Englert, College of Engineering
Elaine Frey, College of Liberal Arts
Zoraya Gudelman, College of Continuing and Professional Education
Don Haviland, College of Education
David Horne, College of Business Administration
Leslie Jimenez, Graduate Student, College of Education
Peter Kreysa, College of Health and Human Services
Susan Platt, Testing/Evaluation, Student Services
Mary Anne Rose, Office of Graduate Studies, College of Education
Elise Van Fossen, Graduate Student, College of National Sciences and Mathematics