

# Research in BRIEF

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CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

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## Chapman University's Graduate Education & Career Survey Graduating Class of 2000-2001 Executive Summary

Given the rising cost of higher education, alumni have increasingly been the focus of studies assessing institutional effectiveness. As colleges and universities have become more accountable, interest has shifted from investigations focused on determining alumni's satisfaction with their college to assessments exploring how successful an institution is in preparing its students to lead successful, productive, and rewarding lives. In other words, institutions have become more interested in assessing whether they are living up to their stated missions.

This study explores the following questions with the Chapman University graduating class of 2000-2001:

- What are graduates doing one year after they leave Chapman University?
- How well did Chapman University prepare graduates for a career and/or furthering their education?
- To what extent do graduates attribute their learning and growth in various areas to their Chapman University experience?
- How satisfied are graduates with their educational experience one year after leaving Chapman University?

Exactly 1,849 (1,190 women; 659 men) names and addresses were obtained for the administration of the survey, a home-grown survey created in 1993 and minimally revised in 2002. The 3-page paper-pencil survey was sent to alumni via U.S. mail in August 2002.

### Response Rate and Sample Representation

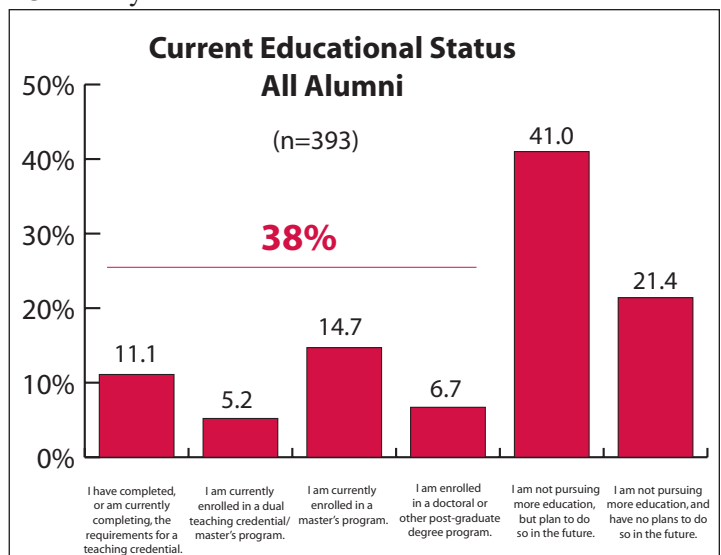
A total of 393 surveys were returned resulting in a 22% overall response rate after considering the non-deliverable surveys that were returned with no forwarding address and consequently did not reach the intended recipient. The survey sample consisted of 21.3% of the total population of the 2000-2001 graduating class of Chapman University. Data also show that 23.8% of the Orange Campus alumni and 19.3% of the University College alumni are represented in the sample.

Alumni	Total Number (% of total) of Alumni In		Percent of Population
	Population	Sample	
All	1849 (100%)	393 (100%)	21.3
Orange Campus	785 (42.5%)	187 (47.6%)	23.8
University College	1064 (57.5%)	206 (52.4%)	19.3
Orange Campus Undergraduates	526 (28.4%)	127 (32.3%)	24.1
Orange Campus Graduates	259 (14.0%)	60 (15.3%)	23.2
University College Undergraduates	523 (28.3%)	100 (25.4%)	19.1
University College Graduates	541 (29.3%)	106 (27.0%)	19.6
Graduate	800 (43.3%)	166 (42.2%)	20.8
Undergraduate	1049 (56.7%)	227 (57.7%)	21.6

## FINDINGS

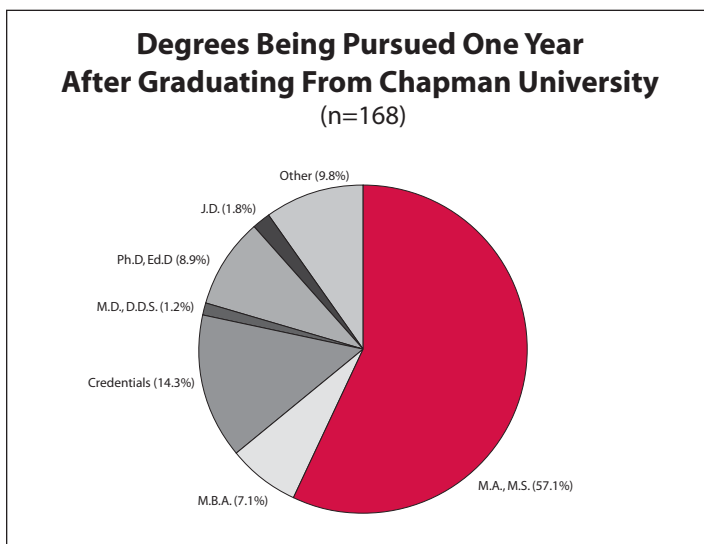
### Advanced Education

Alums were asked to describe their current educational status. While only a combined 38% of the total respondents reported that they were *currently* pursuing a post-baccalaureate degree, 41% of them did report that they planned on pursuing their education in the future. Data show that only 21% of the respondents had no interest in pursuing their education further. Additional analyses reveal that of the alums who indicated that they had no interest in pursuing their education further, 79% of them had already graduated with a post-baccalaureate degree in 2000-2001 from Chapman University.



Differences between the Orange Campus and University College graduates were minimal. Data show that graduates from the Orange Campus were slightly more likely to report that they planned on pursuing their education in the future. However, University College graduates were more likely to report that they were currently enrolled in a Master’s program.

Graduates who indicated that they were pursuing an advanced degree or had earned a credential were asked to identify which degree they had or were currently pursuing. Of those who reported they were currently pursuing an advanced degree or had earned a credential one year after having graduated from Chapman University, the majority were pursuing a Master’s degree. While a very small number of graduates reported that they were pursuing professional degrees in law or medicine, about 9% did report that they were currently pursuing a doctorate degree.



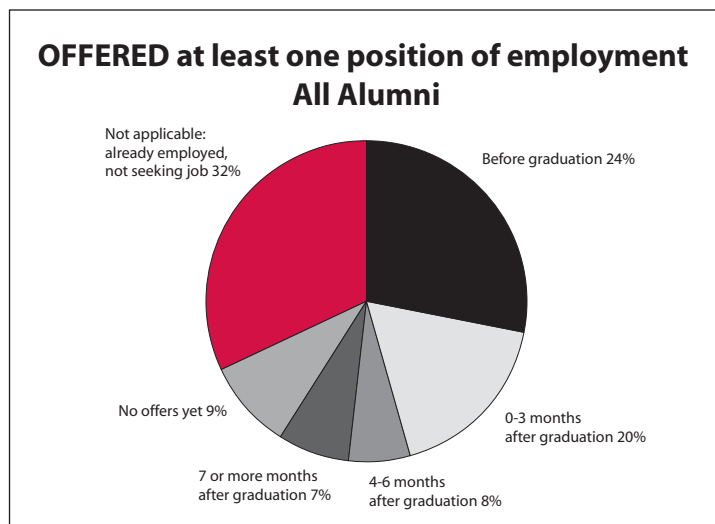
When data was analyzed by campus, findings show that University College graduates, when compared to Orange Campus graduates, are more likely to be pursuing a master’s or doctorate degree, or a credential. Orange Campus graduates were more likely to report that they were pursuing a M.B.A. degree. Alums were also asked to identify the college or university from which they were obtaining that degree or credential. Data show that 60% were continuing their education at Chapman University.

Chapman University graduates were asked to identify the highest degree they planned to pursue at any institution. Of the Chapman University graduates who responded to this question (n=288), data show that the majority of these students plan to pursue a doctorate degree (38%) or a master’s degree (37%) in the future.

### Employment

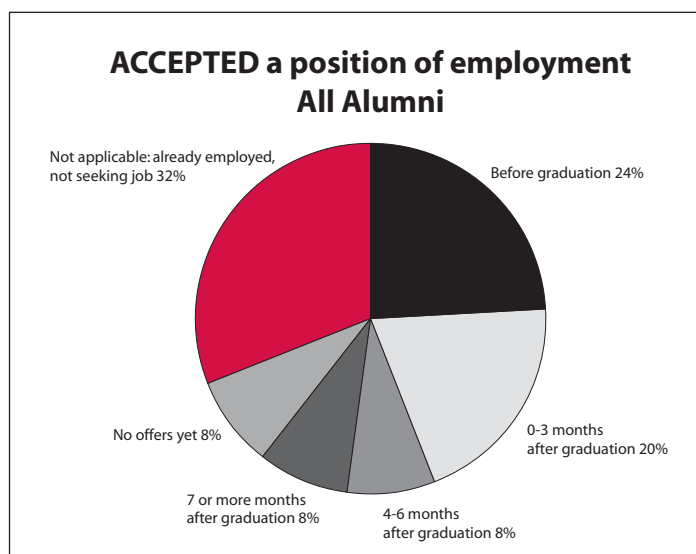
Graduates were asked to respond to several questions regarding their employment activities after leaving Chapman University. One year after graduating from Chapman University, respondents were asked to recall how long before (1) they were *offered* at least one position of employment and (2) they *accepted* a position of employment.

Data show that 28% of the respondents were offered at least one position of employment before graduation and another 18% were offered a position within 3 months of graduating from Chapman University. Data also show that almost a third of the respondents were not looking for employment because they were already employed at the time of graduation.

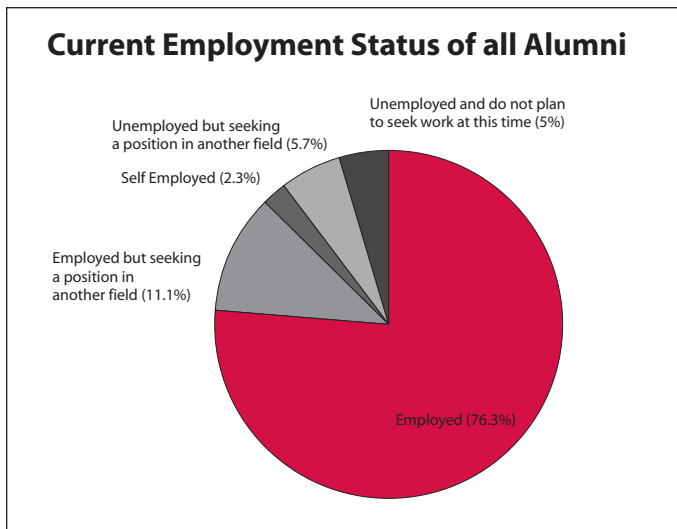


Campus comparisons show that more than twice as many University College graduates than Orange Campus graduates were already employed before they graduated from Chapman University. Specifically, 43% of the University College respondents, compared to 20% of the Orange Campus respondents, already were employed and were not seeking employment at the time of graduation.

Findings show that close to one-quarter of the respondents accepted a position of employment before graduation and another 20% accepted a position within 3 months of graduating from Chapman University. Other data show that of those graduates seeking employment, Orange Campus graduates were more likely to report that they accepted a position of employment before graduation or within 3 months after graduating from Chapman University.

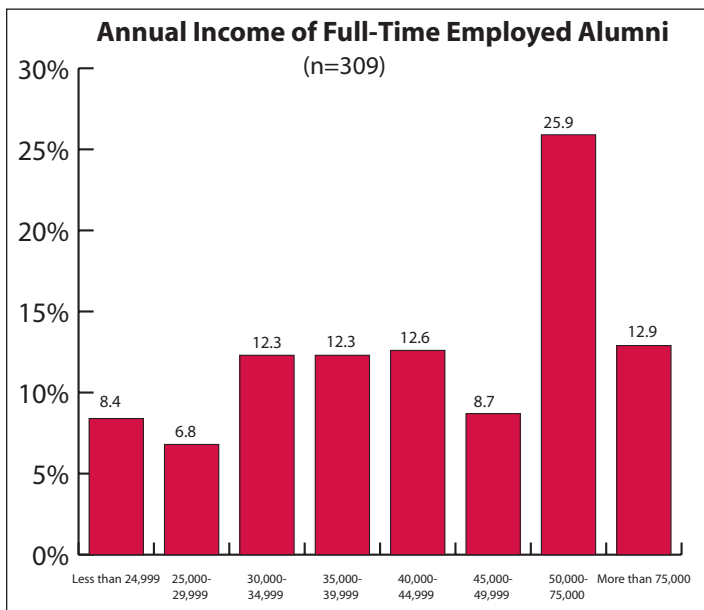


Graduates were also asked to describe their current employment status. Data show that the majority of the respondents were employed when the survey was administered—i.e., one year after graduating from Chapman University—and were employed full-time. Only about 10% of respondents reported that they were unemployed. However, additional analyses show that the majority of these unemployed Chapman University graduates were continuing their education. Findings also show that 73% of all Chapman University graduates reported that their position was in the same field as their degree.



When analyzed by campus, data show that University College graduates were more likely to report that they were currently employed.

With respect to their current employment, graduates were also asked to disclose their annual income. Data reveal that about one-quarter of the graduates earn anywhere from \$50,000 to \$75,000 annually. These data also show that 48% of the full-time employed Chapman University graduates earn at least \$45,000 or more annually. A small percentage reported earning less than \$25,000 annually.



The annual income of Chapman University graduates employed full-time was also analyzed by campus. Data show that while 55.7% of the full-time employed University College graduates earn \$45,000 or more annually, only 36.9% of the Orange Campus graduates could report the same. In addition, while only 6.2% of the full-time employed University College graduates indicated that they earn \$24,999 or less a year, over 11% of the Orange Campus graduates reported being in the same annual income bracket.

### Preparedness

Using a 5-point scale from 1-“not prepared” to 5-“very prepared,” graduates were asked to indicate how well they believed Chapman University prepared them for their careers and furthering their education. While all mean scores were above average, data suggest that, as a group, alumni are more likely to believe that Chapman University prepared them better for furthering their education than preparing them for their careers.

### Quality

Using a 5-point scale from 1-“low quality” to 5-“high quality,” graduates were asked to rate the overall quality of their educational experience and social experiences. Data show that respondents were more likely to indicate that the quality of their educational experiences was higher than that of their social experiences, regardless of whether they graduated from the Orange Campus or one of the Academic Centers.

### Growth and Development

Using a 5-point scale from 1-“none” to 5-“quite a bit,” graduates were asked to indicate the overall amount of growth that could be credited to their Chapman University experience in certain areas (i.e., personal attributes, knowledge, skills, and abilities). Findings suggest that graduates feel that their Chapman University experience contributed minimally to growth in the area of spiritual development and their motivation to participate in community service. On the other hand, findings suggest that their Chapman University experience did contribute to their ability to critically examine ideas and issues, ability to relate knowledge with practice, ability to integrate knowledge from several different fields of study, speaking ability in a group setting, and ability to express ideas, opinions, beliefs, and facts to others in writing.

### Perceptions and Overall Satisfaction

Graduates were asked to disagree or agree, using a 5-point scale from 1-“agree strongly” to 5-“disagree strongly,” with a variety of statements focused on the Chapman University experience. Data show that overall satisfaction with

Chapman University is high among graduates. Given this high overall satisfaction, it is no surprise that data also show that alumni would recommend Chapman University to their family and friends—particularly graduates from University College. Interestingly, while graduates’ identification with Chapman is evident, it is not as strong given their overall satisfaction with the university and their readiness to recommend Chapman University to family and friends. Campus comparisons show that as a group Orange Campus graduates appear to have a stronger identification with Chapman University than University College graduates.

### **Areas for Improvement: Open-Ended Responses**

Graduates were asked to respond to one open-ended question focused on what changes they would suggest for improving academic programs and services. Since the Orange Campus and University College serve distinct student populations, the qualitative data was analyzed separately.

*University College.* University College graduate and undergraduate alums both repeatedly identified the same three areas needing improvement: (1) the connection with the Orange Campus; (2) the quality of instructors; and (3) the level of difficulty of their coursework/program. University College graduates expressed that they did not feel that the Academic Centers were well connected with the Orange Campus. A few University College graduates also felt that they were not academically challenged enough. Some University College graduates were also concerned with the quality of some of the instructors they encountered in the Academic Centers.

*Orange Campus.* Some Orange Campus graduate and undergraduate alums also felt that the difficulty level of their coursework/program could have been more challenging and that some of the instructors they encountered were not of exceptional quality. While Orange Campus graduates did not suggest the relationship with the Academic Centers needed improvement, some students in the Physical Therapy program did feel that Physical Therapy program needed to be fully integrated in the Orange Campus community. Many Orange Campus undergraduate and graduate alums also suggested that Chapman could improve job placement services, career development, and networking opportunities for students.

Given the somewhat critical tone of the suggestions, it is important to note that graduates were only asked to suggest areas which needed improvement, not to identify strengths of the university or their positive experiences while attending Chapman University. Nevertheless, while respondents were only asked to identify areas for improvement, many graduates did use the space provided to express their satisfaction with their Chapman education.

### **SUMMARY & CONCLUSION**

Findings from this study show that many of our graduates continue their education. In addition, data suggest that

Chapman University graduates have high degree aspirations. One year after leaving Chapman University, almost all of the respondents reported being employed full-time and many employed in a position in the field of their degree. While respondents indicated that they felt that Chapman University prepared them slightly better for furthering their education than preparing them for their careers, the fact that many of our graduates reported that they were offered a position of employment before or shortly after they graduated also indicates that Chapman University is preparing its graduates for their careers. The qualitative data, along with the high overall satisfaction mean rating, suggest that students, in general, are leaving the university—both the Orange Campus and University College—satisfied with their education.

This investigation produced valuable information that can be used to improve programs and services at Chapman University. Moreover, it provides a starting point from which we can identify our strengths and areas for improvement. Findings from this study suggest that the following issues/concerns may warrant further investigation:

- *Graduates’ identification with Chapman University*
- *University College’s connection/relationship with the Orange Campus*
- *Integration of the Physical Therapy program/students on the Orange Campus*
- *The difficulty level of students’ coursework/ program*
- *Job placement services, career development, and networking opportunities for students*
- *Spiritual development of students*
- *Motivation of our students to participate in community service*

This investigation certainly provides a basis from which Chapman University can explore whether we are actually preparing our students to lead successful, productive, and rewarding lives. However, it is clear that further research is necessary to better understand Chapman University and its alumni. Continuing the process of self-assessment is critical in order to monitor our progress and our students’ success.

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