

Big Picture Learning: High School Alumni Report



Prepared under contract to
Big Picture Learning

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Berkeley, CA 94704

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Executive Summary

Big Picture Learning (BPL) was established in 1995 and now has served over 26,000 students nationwide. BPL offers an innovative model of education that is personal, relevant, and authentic. High school students work with their advisors and field-based mentors to design their personalized learning programs. Work-based learning through internships is a key aspect of the Big Picture Model. Learning reflects students' unique interests, is connected to the real world, and is assessed through authentic demonstrations of knowledge and skill.

BPL hired MPR Associates to conduct a study of graduates from three Big Picture High Schools—Met West (Oakland), Met Sacramento, and San Diego Met—to determine what life paths graduates pursued after high school and how well their high school experiences prepared them for college and career. Survey data were collected from January through May, 2012, from students who graduated between 2006 and 2010. Data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) was used to augment the survey data with additional information about college outcomes.

Highlights from the study include the following findings.

College-Going Findings from NSC

- Overall, 74% of Big Picture graduates from the three high schools enrolled in college within the first year after graduating from high school.
- College enrollment rates varied by graduating class, from a low of 69% for the class of 2008 to a high of 76% for the Classes of 2007 and 2010.
- Overall enrollment rates also varied by campus, from an average of 65% for Sacramento Met to 74% for MetWest and 82% for San Diego Met.
- 44% of graduates of the three Big Picture campuses enrolled in four-year colleges within one year of graduation, compared with a national average of 31% for schools with similar demographics (student populations that are more than 50% minority).
- Of students who enrolled in college within one-year of high school graduation, graduates of MetWest and San Diego Met were most likely to enroll in public, 4-year colleges in California. Graduates of Met Sacramento were most likely to enroll in public, 2-year colleges in California.
- Freshmen-to-sophomore persistence (the percentage of graduates enrolling within the first year after high school who returned for a second year) was high at all three campuses, ranging from an average of 83% for Met Sacramento to 88% for MetWest and 91% for San Diego Met.

- 50% of graduates of the Class of 2006 and 19% of graduates of the Class of 2007 completed a degree by the end of the 2010-2011 school year.

Survey Findings

- The majority (72%) of survey respondents reported that they are currently enrolled in a postsecondary institution and just over half (53%) of those enrollees reported that they are working while in school.
- Half of all respondents (50%) are living at home with their parents. One-fourth (26%) reported living alone or with a spouse/partner, and one-fifth (20%) are living on or near campus.
- Nearly three-fourths (74%) of respondents who are working and not in school reported securing a job through a high school internship contact.
- The most common job fields for respondents who are employed and not attending school are Sales/Customer Service (26%), Health Care (13%), and Administrative/Clerical (10%).
- Two-thirds (65%) of college-going respondents reported that they have always been enrolled full time throughout their postsecondary education; 20% reported a mix of full- and part-time enrollment and 11% reported that they have always attended school part time.
- The most commonly reported college majors are social sciences or social work (18%), health/medical technology, nursing, or pre-med (16%), and fine arts (13%).
- Two-thirds (66%) of respondents who are currently enrolled in school reported taking out a loan for their education. Of those students who have taken out a loan for school, 25% have borrowed more than \$20,000 to pay for their education.
- Two-thirds (65%) of respondents reported that they completed the “A-G” requirements needed for entry into a California State University (CSU) or University of California (UC) campus.
- 91% reported that they completed the FAFSA during high school.
- Two-thirds (66%) of all respondents indicated that they applied for other sources of financial aid, including grants and scholarships.
- Nearly half of respondents (47%) reported that they currently perform community service. The most common sectors for volunteering are fundraising (16%) and tutoring or other education activities with youth (16%).

Impact of Big Picture Experience after High School

- The opportunity to work with adults at internship sites and the opportunity to build self-confidence through work-based learning and other activities were cited as the most important aspects of the Big Picture model in terms of contributing to success in life after high school.

- More than half (54%) of respondents reported that they have followed a different life path from the one they planned when they graduated high school. Two-thirds (67%) of these respondents who changed their life path believe that their Big Picture experience prepared them for the life path they ended up pursuing.

Introduction

Big Picture Learning (BPL) was established in 1995 and now has served over 26,000 students nationwide. BPL offers an innovative model of education that is personal, relevant, and authentic. High school students work with their advisors and field-based mentors to design their personalized learning programs. Work-based learning through internships is a key aspect of the Big Picture Model. Learning reflects students' unique interests, is connected to the real world, and is assessed through authentic demonstrations of knowledge and skill.

Schools are small and focused on community, with students' advisors, mentors, and families working together to create a supportive environment. BPL is committed to continuous improvement and innovation and to serving under-represented groups, including minority and low-income students, many of whom will be the first in their families to attend college. Consistent with this vision and values, BPL seeks to understand better what happens to its students, how graduates fare in postsecondary education and other areas, what components of BPL contribute most to outcomes, and how this information can improve policy and practice.

To that end, BPL hired MPR Associates, Inc. to conduct a study of alumni from three Big Picture high schools in California to determine what life paths students pursue after graduation. While BPL conducts annual, short-term follow-ups of its graduates, this study surveyed graduates who have been out of high school for two to six years, providing information on longer-term outcomes and a more comprehensive picture of alumni experiences after high school.

The study incorporates data from two sources: a web-based survey designed by MPR and sent to all alumni who graduated between 2006 and 2010; and data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), which compiles information on postsecondary enrollments and completions from 3,300 colleges and universities enrolling over 96% of all students in public and private, 4-year and 2-year institutions in the U.S.

The three BPL schools that participated in the study include The Met Sacramento High School in Sacramento, MetWest High School in Oakland, and San Diego Met High School in San Diego. The study includes graduating classes from 2006–2010 for MetWest High, 2007–2010 for Met Sacramento, and 2008–2010 for San Diego Met. Graduating classes surveyed differ because the schools were established at different times; MetWest's first graduating class was in 2006; Met Sacramento's in 2007; and San Diego Met's in 2008. Demographic characteristics of these schools for the 2009–10 school year are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. School Demographics for Big Picture Learning Alumni Survey High Schools, 2009–10

	Met Sacramento		Met West		San Diego Met	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total Enrollment	235	100%	137	100%	198	100%
Race/ethnicity*						
African American	26	11%	47	34%	40	20%
Asian	2	1%	4	3%	7	4%
Latino	88	37%	73	53%	87	44%
White	87	37%	7	5%	43	22%
Other	32	14%	6	4%	21	11%
Eligible for FRPL	106	45%	99	72%	110	56%
English Learners	18	8%	22	16%	13	7%

*Race/ethnicity percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Source: California Department of Education.

All three schools are more than 50% minority. MetWest has the highest concentration of minority and low-income students, with 95% minority students and 72% of students eligible for free- or reduced-price school lunch (FRSL), a measure generally used to indicate school poverty levels. San Diego Met is 78% minority, with 56% of students eligible for FRSL. Met Sacramento is 63% minority, with 45% of students eligible for FRSL. These statistics are important to keep in mind as context for the study findings. On the whole, graduates of these three schools come from demographic groups that are under-represented in the college-going population.

Data Sources

National Student Clearinghouse

This study presents data from NSC, which collects postsecondary enrollment and completion data from most colleges in the United States. Big Picture Learning requested data for college enrollment and degree completion for all graduates of the participating high schools. NSC returned aggregate data for each campus and graduating class, as well as a student-level file with the names of all institutions attended by each student and associated periods of enrollment. MPR used the aggregate data files for its analysis. Student-level files can provide more detailed information about outcomes, such as student transfer patterns, but require programming and analysis that were beyond the scope of this project. The aggregate data provides a good overview of college-going outcomes, including enrollment within one year of high school graduation, type of college attended, persistence into a second year, and degree completion. Generally, it is assumed that students who do not appear in the NSC database did not attend a post-secondary institution, although some under-matching does occur. Details of the NSC data and findings are presented in Part 1 of this report.

Big Picture Alumni Survey

MPR Associates designed a web-based survey that was sent to all alumni of the three participating high schools. Survey data were collected from January through May, 2012, from students who graduated between 2006 and 2010. The purpose of the survey was to understand the trajectories Big Picture Learning students

follow after leaving high school. Survey topics included employment, education, current living situation, and the relationship of the Big Picture experience to students' life after high school. Survey responses from students who did not attend a postsecondary institution are particularly important, because these students do not appear in the NSC data. The survey achieved a 46% response rate, though that varied by campus. Details of the survey administration and results are presented in Part 2 of this report.

Study Limitations

This study does not use a rigorous experimental design and does not provide causal evidence of the impact of the BPL model or its components on outcomes. Rather, the study is descriptive in nature, providing valuable information for understanding what has happened to BPL students, whether their outcomes are consistent with the BPL vision, and how alumni attribute their different outcomes to their BPL experiences. Descriptive information can also help identify strengths and weaknesses and suggest areas for improvement or further investigation.

The two primary limitations of this study are the use of aggregate-level rather than student-level NSC data and the relatively low survey response rate. Ideally, NSC student-level data would be merged with survey results to enable integrated presentation of the findings, with interpretation of each set of data informed by the other. As mentioned, this level of analysis was beyond the scope of this particular project. In terms of the survey, response rates of at least 70% are considered necessary for reliable results that can be generalized to a larger population. MetWest met this threshold, but the other two schools did not. Thus, all findings based on the survey data should be interpreted with caution. Low response rates can give rise to response bias, where respondents are different from non-respondents in important ways relevant to the topics being studied.

Findings from each of these data sources do provide valuable information, however, and provide a good starting point for understanding paths taken by Big Picture Alumni and for generating questions for further investigation. Findings from the survey, though compromised by the low response rate, are valuable in that they give the fullest picture to date of experiences of Big Picture alumni who do not attend college. Such analysis is not possible with NSC data, because it is limited to students who enroll in post-secondary institutions. Future studies can draw from the lessons learned in this study, particularly those related to improving response rates by using personal outreach techniques to contact alumni, as discussed in Part 2.

Part 1: Analysis of NSC Data

Data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) provides a comprehensive picture of college-going outcomes for alumni of the three campuses participating in this study. NSC compiles information on postsecondary enrollments and completions from 3,300 colleges and universities enrolling over 96% of all students in public and private, 4-year and 2-year institutions in the U.S. NSC data were analyzed to describe postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion for all graduates in the BPL study. The match rates between Big Picture Learning’s list of graduates and data found in the NSC files were high, as shown in Table 2. Non-matched students are assumed to be students who did not enroll in a postsecondary institution. Cross-checking by MPR Associates found a high degree of reliability between NSC data and survey responses. Students who did not appear in the NSC data reported in their surveys that they had not enrolled in any postsecondary institutions after high school. Students who did appear in the NSC data reported attending schools in their survey responses that matched those schools that the NSC data indicated those students had attended.

Table 2: Big Picture Learning and National Student Clearinghouse Match Rates

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total
MetWest						
Class Size	24	27	30	28	32	141
Found in NSC Data	19	22	25	20	25	111
Percentage	79%	81%	83%	71%	78%	79%
Met Sacramento						
Class Size		27	23	30	53	133
Respondents		20	14	24	33	91
Response Rate		74%	61%	80%	62%	68%
San Diego Met						
Class Size			50	31	47	128
Respondents			40	26	41	107
Response Rate			80%	84%	87%	84%
Total						
Class Size	24	54	103	89	132	402
Respondents	19	42	79	70	99	309
Response Rate	79%	78%	77%	79%	75%	77%

Based on the aggregate NSC data provided by BPL, MPR reports the following outcome measures, overall and for each Big Picture Campus:

- College enrollment within one year of graduation;

- Enrollment by institution type—2-year or 4-year, public or private, and in-state or out-of-state;
- Persistence into the second year of college; and
- Degree or certificate completion.

The report also estimates the percentage of students attending University of California and California State University Campuses, based on the aggregate report of the top 25 most attended colleges for each campus. An exact accounting of enrollment at CSUs and UCs would be possible in future studies if the student-level data file is programmed and analyzed. To provide context for the findings in this report, MPR Associates has included data from national sources on college going. Readers can use these national figures as context for understanding how Big Picture schools and alumni are faring compared with their peers nationwide. All national data cited in this section are from federal agencies, including the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Bureau for Labor Statistics (BLS).

College Going

College Enrollment

NSC data indicate that 74% of the graduates of the BPL schools in this study enrolled in college within one year of graduation.

Overall average rates for each campus varied, from 65% for Met Sacramento to 74% for MetWest and 82% for San Diego Met.

- 87% of San Diego Met’s 2010 graduates enrolled in college in the year following graduation, compared with 78% of MetWest graduates and 62% of Met Sacramento graduates.

Rates also fluctuated according to graduation year.

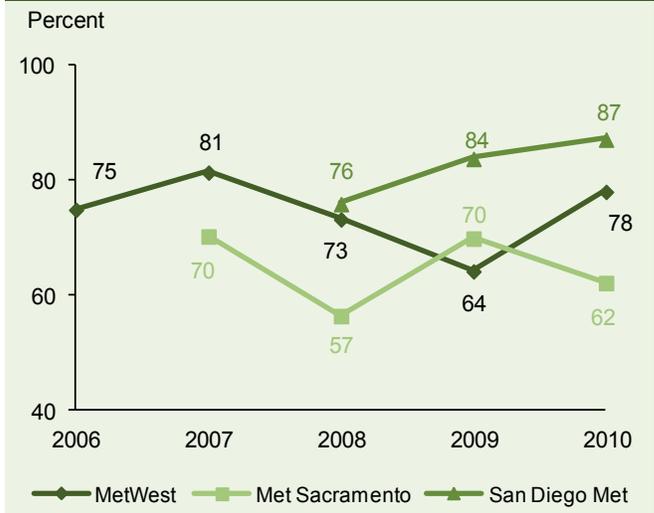
The overall average for college enrollment across the three campuses ranged from a low of 69% for the class of 2008 to a high of 76% for the Classes of 2007 and 2010.

National Enrollment Rates for Similar Schools

MetWest and San Diego Met outpace the national average for enrollment in 4-year colleges within one year of high school graduation, based on schools with similar demographic characteristics.

- The national average for enrollment at a 4-year college within one year of high school graduation in 2008 was 31% for schools with 50% or more minority students. MetWest’s 2008 enrollment in 4-year colleges was 50% and San Diego Met’s was 59%.

College enrollment rates for the schools participating in this study vary by campus and graduation year.



- Met Sacramento is lower than the national average in terms of students from high-minority high schools enrolling in four-year colleges within one year of high school graduation.

Graduates of Met West and San Diego Met enroll in 4-year colleges at higher rates than the national average for high schools with minority populations greater than 50%



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Questionnaire," 2007-08.

Types of Colleges

4-year versus 2-year

Graduates of San Diego Met and Met West enroll in 4-year colleges at higher rates than 2-year colleges.

- Among San Diego Met’s 2010 graduates, 68% enrolled in a 4-year college and 19% enrolled in a 2-year college within one year of graduation.
- 53% of MetWest’s 2010 graduates enrolled in a 4-year college and 25% enrolled in a 2-year college.
- Enrollment rates were reversed for Met Sacramento’s 2010 graduates, with 21% enrolling in a 4-year college and 42% enrolling in a 2-year college.

National Comparison

MetWest and San Diego Met graduates enroll in 4-year colleges at higher rates than the national average and in 2-year colleges at rates close to the national average.

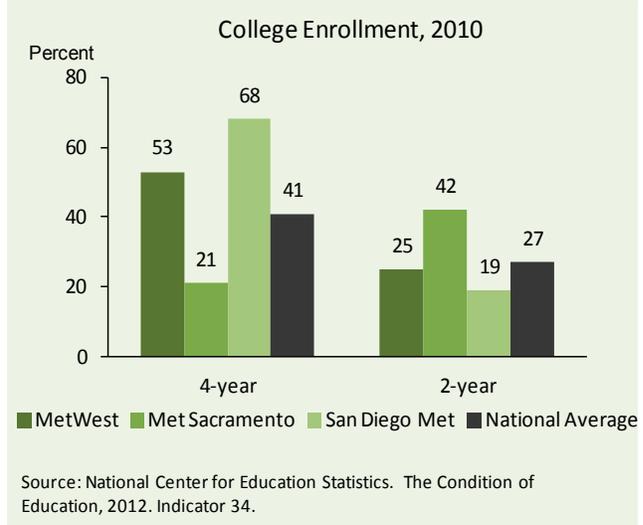
Public versus Private

The majority of graduates from all three high schools attend public in-state institutions.

In-State versus Out-of-State

MetWest had the highest percentage of students attending out-of-state institutions. The rate peaked in 2009 with 25% of students attending college out of state. San Diego Met had no graduates attending out-of-state institutions

MetWest and San Diego Met graduates are more likely to enroll in a four-year college in the year after high school. The opposite is true for Met Sacramento.

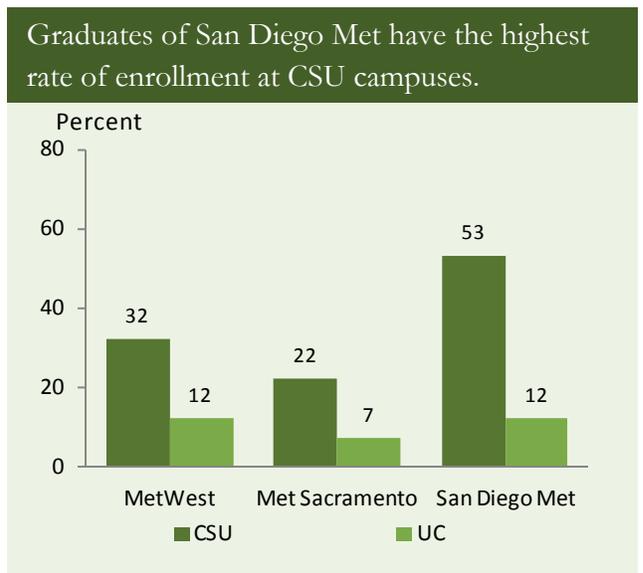


in either 2009 or 2010, while Met Sacramento had 7% in 2009 and 4% in 2010.

UC and CSU Enrollment

Graduates from all 3 high schools are more likely to enroll in a CSU campus than a UC campus.

- For example, 53% of San Diego Met’s graduates enroll in a CSU campus; 12% enroll in a UC.



Persistence and Completion

Persistence

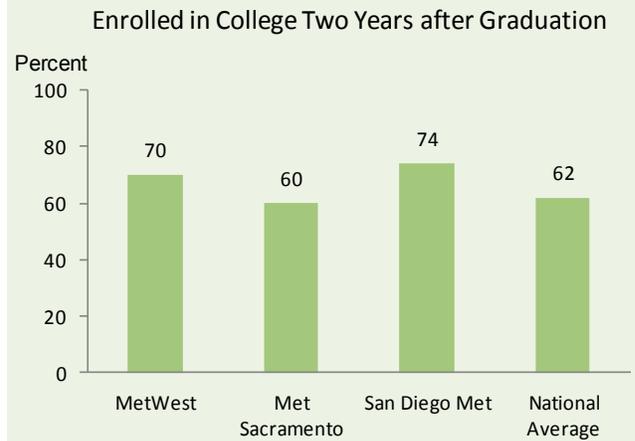
Freshmen-to sophomore persistence (the percentage of graduates enrolling in postsecondary education within the first year of graduation who returned for a second year) was high at all three campuses, ranging from an average of 83% for Met Sacramento to 88% for MetWest and 91% for San Diego Met.

National Comparison

The most recent federal longitudinal data study (ELS:2002-2006) found that 62% of 2004 high school graduates were enrolled in postsecondary education when surveyed two years after high school graduation.

- Based on NSC data, MPR calculated the percent of Big Picture students enrolled in college two years after high school graduation and then averaged those percents across all the graduating cohorts.
- So, for example, San Diego Met data includes students from the 2008 graduating class who were still enrolled in 2010 as well as students from the 2009 graduating class who were still enrolled in 2011.
- Based on these calculations, MetWest graduates (70%) and San Diego Met graduates (74%) are ahead of the national average of 62%, and Met Sacramento graduates (60%) are close to the national average. It is important to note that the national data is based on all students, while Big Picture schools

Big Picture schools, on average, have more students enrolled in college two years after graduation than the national average.



Source: Ingels, S.J., Glennie, E., Lauff, E., and Wirt, J.G. (2012). Trends Among Young Adults Over Three Decades, 1974–2006. National Center for Education Statistics.

served under-represented groups. To meet or exceed the national average is an accomplishment.

Degree Completion

According to NSC data, 50% of 2006 and 15% of 2007 MetWest graduates completed a degree by the end of the 2010-11 school year.

22% of 2007 Met Sacramento graduates earned a degree during the same time period. San Diego Met did not have a graduating class in 2007.

Part 2: Survey Findings

Survey Data

The survey created by MPR Associates was designed to provide a comprehensive picture of Big Picture alumni's current life situations and explore the connections between the Big Picture experience and students' later lives. (The complete survey is available in Appendix Table B.) Data were collected on the following topics:

- Current Employment—industry, wage, work hours, working conditions, job satisfaction, , and relatedness to postsecondary studies;
- Postsecondary Education—if enrolled, where, when, persistence, completion, major, remedial coursetaking, and student loan debt;
- Community Service—where, when, and intensity;
- High School Preparation for College—completed FAFSA, completed “A-G” requirements, number of colleges applied to, and number accepted to; and
- Impact of BPL Experience—internship, advisor, and other aspects that contributed to current life situation.

The overall response rate for the survey was 46%, with rates varying by campus: MetWest achieved a 68% response rate, followed by San Diego Met at 40% and Met Sacramento at 29%. Generally, a response rate of 70% or higher is desirable to ensure validity of results. Achieving this level of response, however, is a challenge. The research design for the study suggested that personal outreach by the campuses to former students would be necessary to achieve adequate response rates. MPR Associates created the web-based survey and sent email notifications to all alumni using contact information provided by BPL. BPL then worked with the high schools to reach out to alumni personally through student representatives of each graduating class, advisors, mentors, and school staff. MetWest devoted considerable effort to implementing this personal outreach strategy and it proved quite effective, enabling the school to reach a response rate just shy of the 70% rate considered necessary for reliable results. Table 3 shows the response rates by campus and graduation year.

Table 3. Response Rates for the Big Picture Learning High School Alumni Survey

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	NA*	Total
MetWest							
Class Size	24	27	30	28	32		141
Respondents	17	19	18	16	26	0	96
Response Rate	71%	70%	60%	57%	81%		68%
Met Sacramento							
Class Size		27	23	30	53		133
Respondents		9	8	4	9	9	39
Response Rate		33%	35%	13%	17%		29%
San Diego Met							
Class Size			50	31	47		128
Respondents			16	11	19	5	51
Response Rate			32%	35%	40%		40%
Total							
Class Size	24	54	103	89	132		402
Respondents	17	28	42	31	54	14	186
Response Rate	71%	52%	41%	35%	41%		46%

*NA: Survey respondents did not provide graduation year.

This report provides survey results for the entire population of respondents, rather than by individual school site. Response frequencies by campus for each survey item are provided in Appendix Table B for comparison purposes. Table 3 provides response rates by graduation year and high school. The 2006 class included MetWest graduates only and exhibits the highest class response rate, suggesting that results for that graduation year can be considered fairly reliable.

The survey results provided an extensive amount of information about BPL Alumni. To aid in interpreting this large amount of data, MPR divided the findings for this report into topic areas, with one page per topic area highlighting findings of interest. The topic areas include:

- Current Work and School Status
- Living Situation
- Differences by High School Graduation Year
- Differences by Employment Status
- Employment
- College Experiences
- Preparing for College
- Paying for College
- Community Service
- High School and Later Experiences

Current Status

School and Work

The majority of respondents (72%) reported that they are currently enrolled in a postsecondary institution and just over half of all respondents (55%) reported that they are currently working.

- Of those respondents who are currently enrolled in school, 53% reported that they are also working while in school.
- One-third (34%) of respondents reported that they are attending school only and not working.

Working Only

About 17% of respondents reported that they are currently working and not enrolled in school. Of these respondents:

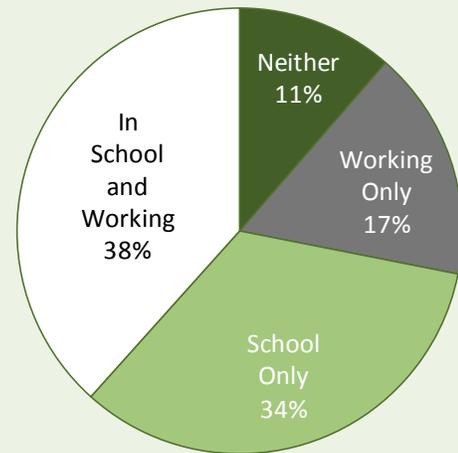
- 64% work full-time;
- 32% reported earning \$20,000 or more per year; and
- 42% reported that their job is related to what they studied in high school.

Not in School or Working

Of the 11% of respondents who are currently not in school or working, the majority (65%) reported that they are not working because they are unable to find a job.

- 80% have attended some type of school since graduating from high school; and
- 65% have held at least one job since graduating from high school.

Nearly three-fourths of survey respondents reported that they are currently enrolled in a postsecondary institution.



School Types

The majority of respondents reported that they are currently attending a 4-year (47%) or 2-year (40%) college.

- 6% are attending a trade school and 8% are enrolled in graduate school.
- 92% of all survey respondents report attending some type of postsecondary institution since leaving high school.

Job Types

Respondents reported a variety of job types and the types of jobs students hold vary by whether they are in school.

- The most common fields for respondents who are employed and not attending school are Sales/Customer Service (26%), Health Care (13%), and Administrative/Clerical (10%).
- The most common fields for respondents who are in school are Restaurant/Food Service (15%), Education (15%), Customer Service (11%), and Health Care (10%).

Living Situation

With Parents

Half of respondents (50%) reported that they currently live at home with their parents or guardians.

- Respondents who are working only are most likely to be living at home (65%), followed by respondents who are working and going to school (57%).
- Respondents who are in school only are least likely to be living at home (33%).

On or Near Campus

Respondents who are in school only are more likely to be living on campus or off campus with other students, compared with their peers who are both working and going to school.

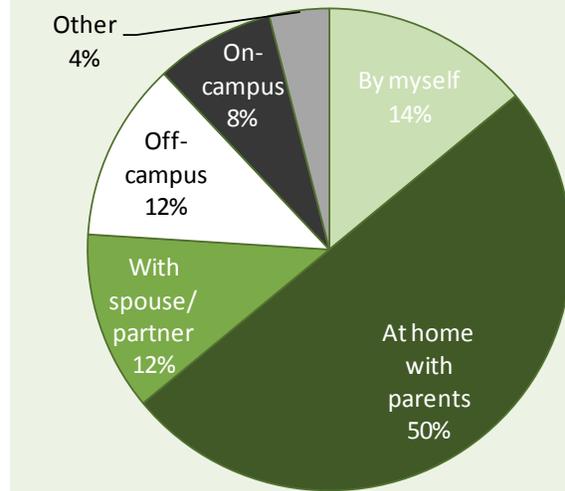
- 37% of “school-only” respondents reported living either on campus or off campus with other students, compared with 22% of students who are working while in school.

Alone or with Spouse/Partner

One-quarter of respondents (26%) reported that they live alone or with a spouse/partner.

- 11% of respondents reported that they live with a dependent child or family member.
- Most respondents (91%) reported that they are single.

Half of all respondents currently live at home with their parents or guardians, while one-fifth live on or near campus.



Location

Virtually all respondents (92%) reported that they still live in California.

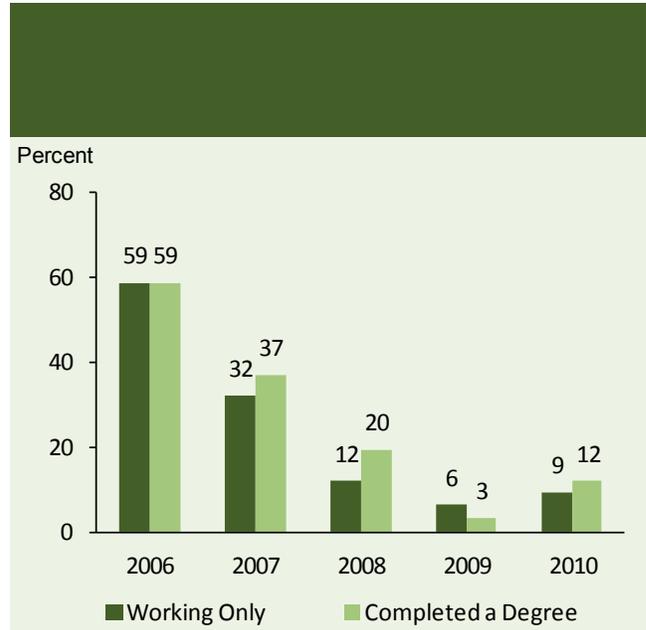
- 1% live in the Midwest; 2% live elsewhere in the West; 2% live in the North East, and 3% live in the South.

Differences by Grad Year

Degree Completion

The class of 2006 reports the highest incidence of postsecondary degree completion.

- Nearly 60% of respondents from the class of 2006 reported that they have completed a degree, compared with 37% of 2007 graduates, 20% of 2008 graduates and fewer than 15% of more recent graduates.



Employment and Income

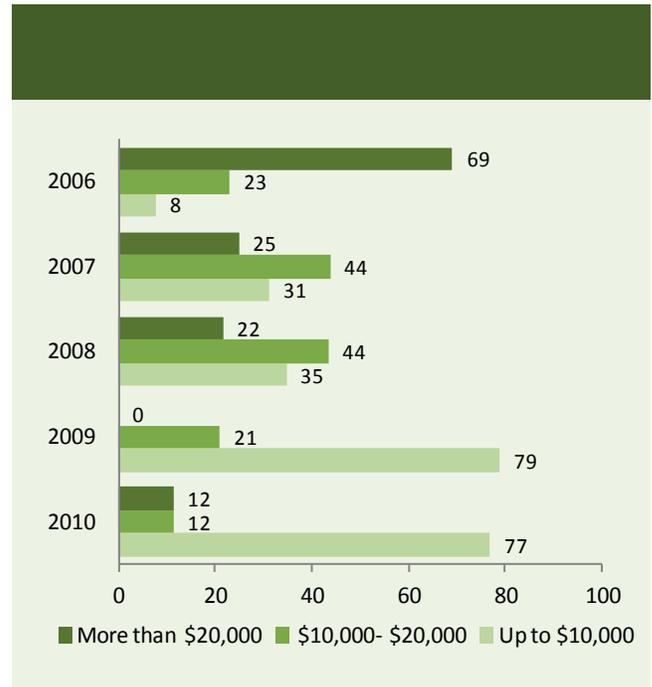
Graduates of the class of 2006 also report the highest incidence of working and not attending school (59%).

- They are most likely to have completed a degree and entered the workforce, compared with their peers in later graduating classes.
- Graduates of the class of 2006 also report the highest annual incomes, with 69% reporting that they make more than \$20,000 per year, compared with 25% of 2007 graduates, and just 12% of 2010 graduates.
- Graduates of the classes of 2009 and 2010 report the lowest earnings, with the majority earning less than \$10,000 per year.

- 41% of 2006 graduates and 56% of 2007 graduates report that they are currently enrolled in school, compared with more than three-fourths of respondents who graduated in 2008 or later. 7% of all students currently enrolled in school reported that they are in graduate school.

College Enrollment

Conversely, respondents of later graduating classes are more likely to be in school compared with graduates of 2006 and 2007.



Differences by Work Status

Degree Completion

Degree completion varies by work status, with “work-only” respondents reporting higher rates of degree completion than respondents who are working while in school or doing neither activity.

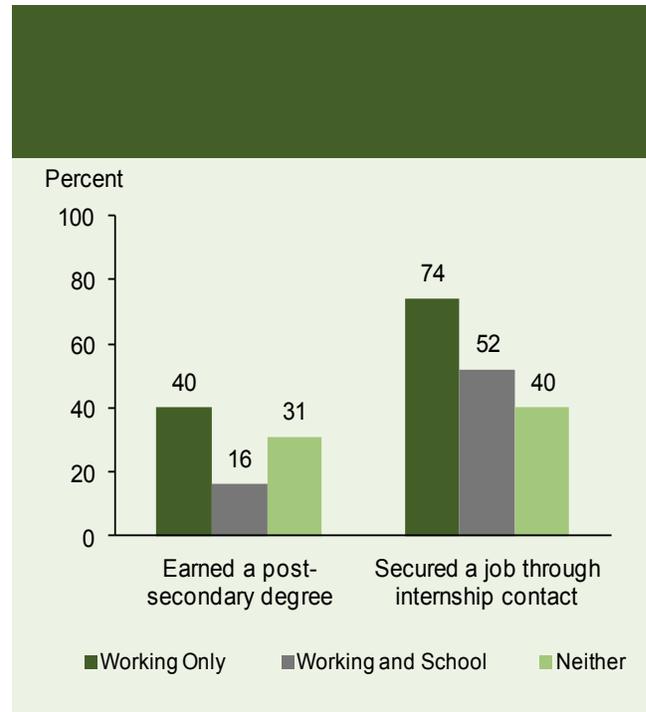
- 40% of “work-only” respondents report completing a degree, compared with 16% of “work and school” respondents and 31% of respondents who are doing neither.
- Among those who have completed a degree, 83% of “work-only” respondents reported earning a Bachelor’s degree, compared with 54% of “work and school” respondents and 40% of “neither” respondents.

“Work and school” respondents were more than twice as likely to report earning a certificate from a trade school compared with their “work-only” peers (46% vs. 17%). These certificate earners appear to be continuing their education while working.

Job via Internship Contacts

Nearly three-fourths of “work-only” respondents (74%) reported securing a job through a high school internship contact.

- About half of “work and school” respondents (52%) reported securing a job either through a contact from their high school internship or at their internship site.



Attitudes toward Work

Respondents’ attitudes toward work vary by work status, with “work-only” respondents more likely to see their jobs as a career position compared with their peers who are working while in school.

- 23% of “work-only” respondents consider their jobs to be a “career position,” compared with 9% of “work and school” respondents.
- On the other hand, 20% of “work and school” respondents consider their jobs to be an opportunity to “explore a career option” compared with 13% of their “work-only” peers.
- About 30% of both groups reported that they see their job as a way to “pay the bills,” although “work-only” respondents are more likely to see their job as a way to “save money for school” (36%) compared with their “work and school” peers (25%)

Employment

Annual Income

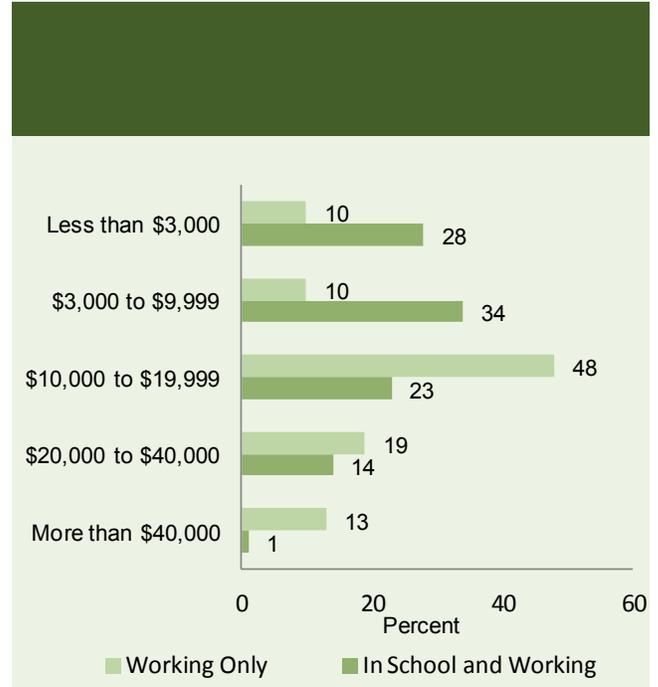
Respondents who are working only reported the highest annual incomes, with 13% making more than \$40,000 per year and nearly 20% earning between \$20,000 and \$40,000. As mentioned above, “working-only” respondents had higher levels of degree attainment than other respondents, which may contribute to their higher earnings.

- Graduates of the class of 2006 reported the highest earnings, with nearly 70% reporting that they earn \$20,000 or more per year, compared with 25% of 2007 graduates and 12% of 2010 graduates.
- More than 60% of respondents who are working while in school reported making less than \$10,000 per year.

Job Satisfaction

“Work-only” respondents reported high levels of job satisfaction in terms of working conditions and job security, but are less satisfied with their salaries and health insurance coverage.

- 90% reported that they are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their job security and 81% reported that they are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their working conditions.
- Satisfaction with health insurance coverage (61%) and salary (58%) are somewhat lower. Satisfaction with the opportunity for promotion (70%) lies in the middle.



“Work and school” respondents reported lower overall levels of satisfaction with their jobs.

- Their satisfaction with working conditions (73%) and job security (69%) are highest, while satisfaction with health insurance is much lower at just 28%.

Unemployment

Among respondents who report that they are unable to find a job, 26% have completed a post-secondary degree and 74% have not.

College Experiences

Enrollment Patterns

The majority of respondents (65%) are currently enrolled in school full time and more than three-fourths (83%) believe it is highly likely that they will finish their current degree.

- 65% of respondents reported that they have always been enrolled full time throughout their postsecondary education; 20% reported a mix of full- and part-time status and 11% reported that they have always attended school part time.

Why They Might Leave School

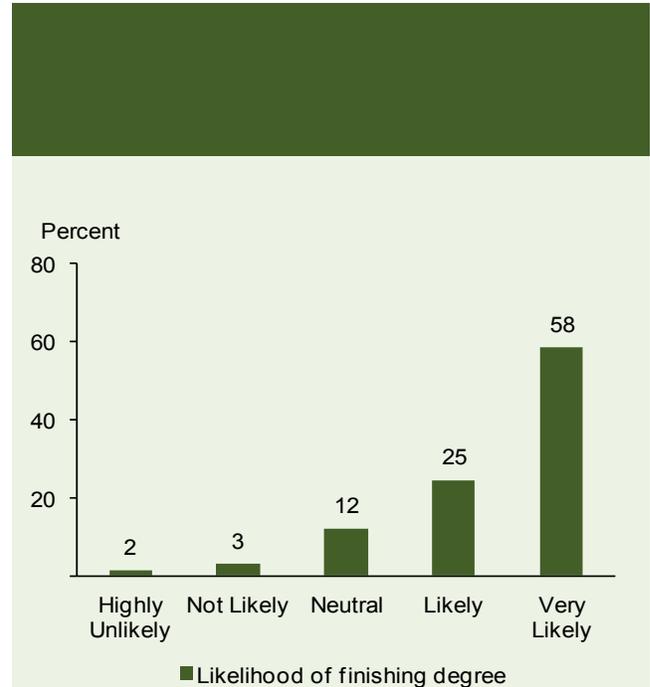
Respondents reported that if they were to leave college without finishing, it would most likely be a result of financial circumstances.

- The top reasons current students selected for why they might not finish school were: could not afford it (34%); to accept a good job (32%); and family responsibilities (24%).
- 38% of current students indicated that this question was not applicable because they were certain they would finish their degree.
- The least cited reasons include: not studying enough (3%); to enter the military (5%); and poor grades (8%).

Choice of Major

The most commonly reported college majors were social sciences or social work (18%); health/pre-med (16%); and fine arts (13%).

- The least common majors were architecture (1%); engineering (2%); and humanities (2%).



More than half of respondents (52%), however, reported that they have changed their major since enrolling in a postsecondary program.

Remedial Coursework

About one-third (36%) of respondents reported that they had to take at least one remedial course when they began their postsecondary education.

- Remedial coursetaking was more common among students attending public colleges (40%) versus those attending private colleges (19%).
- It was also more common among students who reported attending a four-year college (45%) versus those who reported attending a two-year college (28%).
- Of those who reported taking remedial courses, 77% took a remedial math course, 52% took a remedial writing course, and 25% took a remedial reading course.

Preparing for College

Applying to Multiple Colleges

Big Picture graduates responding to this survey reported a high rate of applying to multiple colleges, with 41% indicating that they applied to more than five colleges while in high school.

- Just 3% of respondents reported not applying to any colleges or universities.
- The percentage of respondents applying to more than 5 colleges has grown steadily since 2007, when 30% of respondents reported applying to more than 5 colleges. The figure rose to 36% in 2008, 42% in 2009, and 54% in 2010.
- The biggest jump occurred at San Diego Met between 2009 and 2010. 27% of respondents applied to more than 5 colleges in 2009 compared with 58% in 2010.

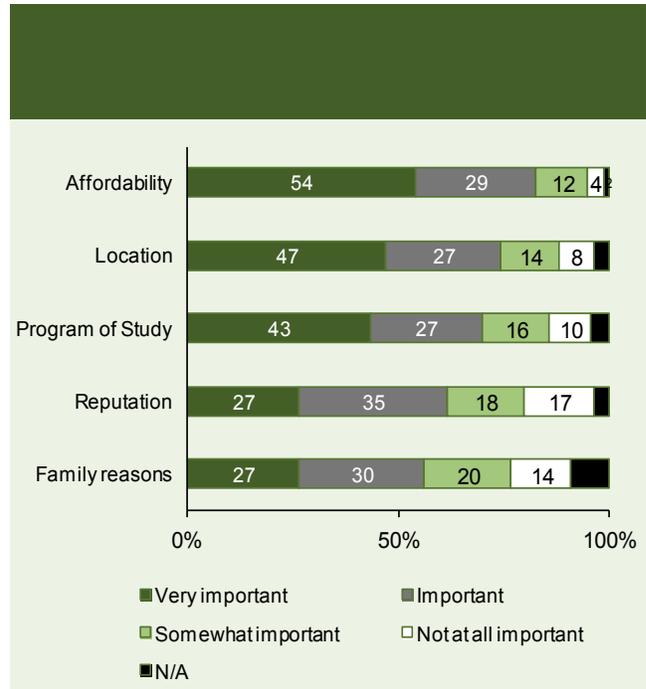
Acceptance Rates

Rates of acceptance from more than five colleges or universities were also high, with 21% of respondents reporting that they were accepted to more than five colleges or universities.

- Just 7% of respondents who applied to college reported that they were not accepted to any college or university; 20% were accepted at one institution; 17% were accepted at two; and 15% each were accepted at three and four colleges.

Choice of College

In addition to affordability, respondents cited location and program of study as the most im-



portant factors in their choice of which college to attend.

- 73% of respondents reported being accepted to more than one college or university, so nearly three-fourths of Big Picture respondents who applied to college had a choice of which college to attend.

College Preparation

“A-G” Requirements

Two-thirds (65%) of respondents reported that they completed the “A-G” requirements needed to qualify for entry into a California State University (CSU) or University of California (UC) institution, although these rates varied by Big Picture campus and by graduation year.

- Overall, 88% of San Diego Met respondents reported that they completed the “A-G” requirements, compared with 65% of MetWest graduates and 34% of Met Sacramento graduates.
- The percentages of students responding “I don’t know,” however, were high at Met Sacramento (31%) and MetWest (28%), which could affect the reported “A-G” completion rates.

Comparison with District and State

Based on survey responses, it appears that MetWest and San Diego Met are outpacing their districts and the state in terms of A-G completion.

- The average A-G completion rate statewide was 35% from 2006 to 2010, with little variation each year.
- Conclusions are difficult to draw, however, because of the low response rates for two of the schools and the unreliability of state-reported data.

School	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
MetWest					
Survey Response	53	58	50	69	77
State Report/School	46	26	3	89	75
State Report/District	37	32	42	45	47
State Report/County	47	48	38	47	48
State	36	36	34	35	36
Met Sacramento					
Survey Response		78	13	50	11
State Report/School*		-	-	-	-
State Report/District		41	42	45	29
State Report/County		31	32	29	32
State		36	34	35	36
San Diego Met					
Survey Response			75	91	95
State Report/School*			80	55	-
State Report/District			43	33	44
State Report/County			43	42	42

- The table on this page shows the reported rates for each school, district, county, and the state for the years covered by the survey study.

Paying for College

FAFSA Completion

Most respondents (91%) reported that they completed the FAFSA during high school.

Other Financial Aid

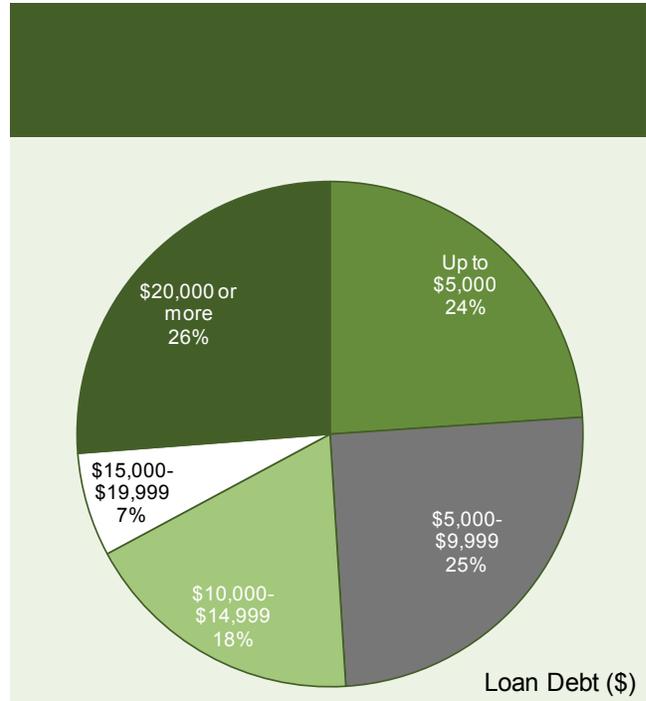
Two-thirds (66%) of all respondents indicated that they applied for other sources of financial aid, including grants and scholarships.

- Of those students who filed additional aid applications, 60% reported filing one or two applications; 23% filed three to five applications; and 17% filed more than five.
- Students who did not fill out additional financial aid applications reported that they did not do so because they thought they would not qualify for aid (46%) or they were worried that they could not afford to pay back a loan (40%).
- 25% reported that they did not do so because the aid application process was too difficult.

College Debt

Half of all survey respondents (50%) indicated that they or their families have taken out a loan to pay for their education.

Of those students who have taken out a loan for school, 26% have borrowed \$20,000 or more to pay for their education.



- 24% have taken out loans up to \$5,000; and 50% have secured loans between \$5,000 and \$20,000.

40% of respondents who reported completing a degree indicated that they have borrowed \$20,000 or more to finance their education.

Respondents attending private four-year colleges reported the highest levels of college loan debt, with 83% indicating that they have borrowed \$10,000 or more to finance their education.

- 46% of respondents attending public 4-yr colleges report borrowing \$10,000 or more for college, compared with 36% of those attending public 2-yr colleges.

Community Service

Hours per Month

Nearly half of respondents (47%) reported that they currently perform community service.

- Among respondents reporting that they participated in community service, the number of hours spent volunteering each month ranged from 1–4 hours (28%) up to more than 12 hours per month (28%), with 44% in the middle.

National Comparison

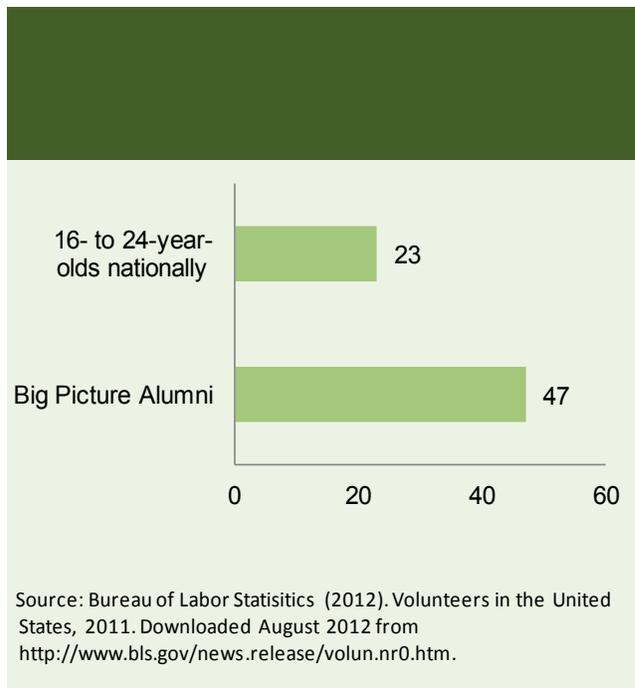
Big Picture respondents are more than twice as likely to perform community service compared with their peers nationwide.

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 22.5% of 16- to 24-year-olds performed community service at least once between September 2010 and September 2011.

Sectors Served

The most common sectors for volunteering are fundraising (16%) and tutoring or other education activities with youth (16%).

- Other volunteer areas cited by more than 10% of respondents include neighborhood improvement (13%). Work at a health services agency, homeless shelter, and church or other religious organization were each cited by about 7% of respondents.



High School and Later Experiences

Value of Big Picture Model

Big Picture alumni respondents reported that experiences central to the Big Picture model were important or very important in their success after high school.

- Respondents were asked to rate how important various aspects of their high school experience had been to their current success.

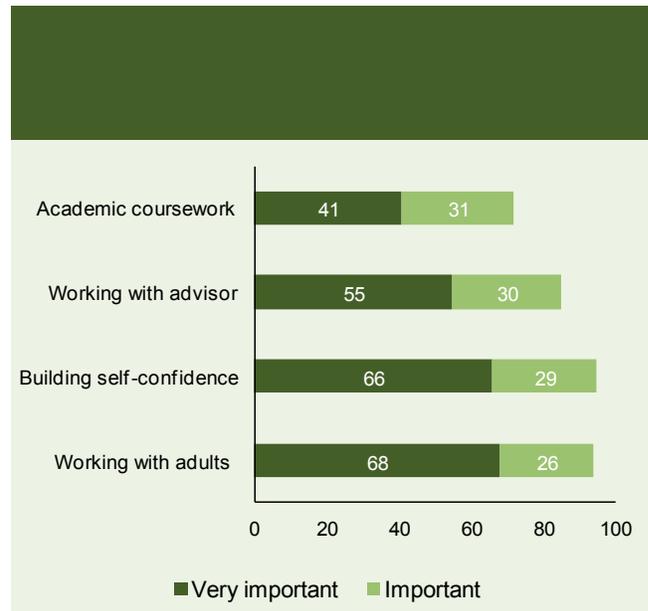
The opportunity to work with adults at internship sites and the opportunity to build self-confidence through work-based learning and other activities were cited as the most important contributors to success in life after high school.

- Nearly all respondents reported that working with adults at their internships (94%) and building self-confidence through work-based learning (95%) were important or very important.
- 85% reported that working with their advisor was important or very important.
- 72% reported that academic coursework was important or very important.

Life Changes after High School

More than half of respondents (54%) reported that they have followed a different life path from the one they planned when they graduated high school.

- Of those respondents who reported that their life path has changed, 40% indicated that they



chose to attend a different college than originally intended; 22% indicated that they chose to work instead of attending school; and 15% indicated that they chose to attend school part time instead of full time.

- Nearly one-third (30%) of these respondents chose “Other” in response to this question and wrote in what had changed for them. The most common write-in responses were change of career choice, change of major, and change in family situation, such as having a child.

Of those who followed a different path, 67% indicated that their Big Picture experience adequately prepared them for the alternative path they have pursued.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Findings from the NSC analysis and student survey provide wide-ranging insight into the paths followed by Big Picture graduates after high school. The NSC data reveal that the majority of graduates from the schools included in this study enroll in college within one year of graduating high school. These students are most likely to enroll in public colleges in California. They are also more likely to enroll in a four-year college within one year of graduation, compared with graduates of other schools with similar demographics.

The survey results reveal that the majority of graduates highly value the Big Picture learning experience and believe that Big Picture prepared them well for life after high school. Internship contacts were a key job source for students who chose to work rather than attend college after high school and the opportunity to work with adults at internships was cited as one of the most valuable aspects of the Big Picture model by almost all survey respondents. Virtually all graduates completed the FAFSA while in high school and two-thirds of the students completed the A-G requirements needed for entry into a UC or CSU campus.

This study also offered lessons on how to conduct similar studies in the future and raised questions for further investigation.

For future alumni studies, MPR suggests the following measures:

1. Begin with an in-depth analysis of NSC data to find out what paths students have taken for their post-secondary education. Student-level data should be programmed and analyzed for this purpose, to ensure that questions of interest can be answered. Questions to investigate include:
 - a. How many institutions did each student attend?
 - b. How many students attended CSUs or UCs? Of those students, how many stayed at their first institution? How long did it take for students to complete a degree?
 - c. Did students stay at the school where they originally enrolled?
 - d. If students changed institutions, what type of change was it? From two-year to four-year? Four-year to two-year? Public to private?
 - e. Are students who transferred still at the institution they transferred to?
 - f. What are the most common enrollment and attendance patterns?

2. Once the NSC data is analyzed, the next step would be to design a survey to answer other questions of interest, beyond information about postsecondary paths. It would not be necessary to use valuable survey time asking students about their education post high school. Instead, the survey could include more focused questions about student loan debt and applications for grants and scholarships. For students not in the NSC data, it may be worthwhile to create a separate survey focused on work and why students chose not to attend post-secondary school. Students not in the NSC data could be a priority for follow-up to make sure that all graduates are covered, not just those who attended postsecondary institutions. The survey could also be customized for students who are enrolled in college to find out how students' high school experiences are related to their choice of major and other aspects of their college experience.
3. Once survey results have been collected, the survey results could be merged with the NSC analysis files to provide an integrated source of data about students' lives. Merged data would allow for inquiry into the relationships between students' survey responses and post-secondary outcomes.
4. Finally, include intensive follow-up to non-respondents in the research design and budget for the project to ensure adequate response rates for the survey. If the approach used is to have alumni and advisors personally contact non-respondents, be sure that the participating schools are on board and committed to the project. MetWest showed that this is a viable strategy for increasing the response rate.

On a final note, the responses to open-ended questions in the survey data collected for this study are a rich source of data that were not analyzed as part of this study. MPR suggests that Big Picture Learning or administrators at each school site examine these responses carefully. They provide valuable insight into what students valued about their Big Picture experience and what they think can be improved to help future students.