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Opinion

# Universities of high-rate satisfaction

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English historian Lord Acton once observed that “to be able to look back upon one’s past life with satisfaction is to live twice.” For students of Central, Eastern, Southern and Western Connecticut State Universities, life after graduation begins, overwhelmingly, with satisfaction.

Together, the four universities make up the Connecticut State University System, with a total of 36,503 undergraduate and graduate students. This year, the number of full-time students is at an all-time high, and record-setting levels of applications and accepted students have been the rule of late, rather than the exception.

A robust 93 percent of CSUS students come from Connecticut, and the number of students transferring to the universities — from private institutions and Connecticut community colleges — continues to climb. The cost of education — among the most affordable universities across New England — is certainly a factor, but far from the only reason.

The breadth of academic programs, including many added in recent years in response to workforce demand areas, strikes a responsive chord with potential students. And there’s more. Results from the National Survey of Student Engagement, which focuses on student experiences and perceptions, provide additional insight:

- 94 percent of our seniors believe that their institution provides support for student success
- 95 percent of our seniors reported that faculty members provided prompt feedback on their academic performance
- 87 percent of our seniors reported their experience at their university contributed to their understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds

Perhaps most significantly, 94 percent of CSUS’ seniors also reported “working harder than they thought they could” to meet an instructor’s standards or expectations.

The combination of high expectations, strong support by faculty, and experiential learning, coupled with affordability and accessibility, is the CSUS recipe for success. In another survey, of last year's graduates, more than 8 in 10 students credit the university they attended for improving their ability to "think analytically," highlighting a skill in greater than ever demand in the workplace.

In addition, 29 percent have decided to pursue a master's degree, up from 22 percent a year ago. Interestingly, 60 percent of those pursuing further education are doing so at Central, Eastern, Southern or Western, which is an increase from 53 percent a year ago.

Thus, it seems that those who have experienced a CSUS education are increasingly electing to continue within the system. Overall, nearly nine in 10 CSUS graduates stay in Connecticut after graduation, contributing not only to our state's economy, but our cultural and civic life.

They are also spreading the word. Ninety-five percent of those surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied with their university experience, and 94 percent would recommend their university to a potential student.

Connecticut taxpayers should be more than satisfied that our continuing investment in these universities is making a difference, for our students and our state.

Robert J. Bourne, of Middletown, is the president of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut State University System Foundation.

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