CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, BAKERSFIELD ALUMNI STUDY

2013

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PURPOSE, GOALS, AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of the 2013 CSUB Alumni Study was to provide decision makers with objective data which would enable them to make informed choices and decisions concerning fundraising and the future direction and growth of the CSUB Alumni Association. The goal of the online survey and the focus group sessions was to assess demographics, attitudes, experiences, and perceptions of CSUB alumni and to use the data to assist with future alumni activities and fundraising objectives and initiatives.

In an effort to establish an objective data set, data were collected through two primary sources. First, an online/e-mail methodology was utilized to administer a survey questionnaire. Second, three independent focus groups were completed with CSUB alumni.

To accomplish the alumni project, Price Research worked closely with the Office for University Advancement. Price Research was responsible for the survey questionnaire design, moderating the focus group sessions, and all data analysis and presentation. The Office of University Advancement was responsible for identifying the alumni e-mail addresses, administering the survey instrument (via Survey Monkey), recruiting the focus group participants, and providing all logistical assistance required to host the focus group sessions.

The e-mail questionnaire was sent to approximately 12,000 available CSUB Alumni e-mail addresses. Several follow-up e-mail participation reminders were sent to encourage maximum participation. From the 12,000 available e-mail addresses, 1,957 surveys were completed. This was a response rate of 16.3%. A response rate of 16.3% was higher than expected. An industry response rate for an alumni online/e-mail survey is approximately 10% - 12%. In addition, more than 200 of the participants indicated a desire/willingness to participate in follow-up focus group sessions.

Three distinct focus group sessions were conducted on September 30th, October 7th, and October 9th. A total of thirty-seven alumni participated in the focus group sessions. In each session, a few focus group members participated in the focus group via telephone from areas outside of Kern County.
SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS - ONLINE SURVEY

Conclusions presented in this section are based on the findings from the 1,957 survey respondents from the online survey. The complete data and results for each question are presented in tabular form in the Appendix 1, pages 2 thru 60.

… 67% of those responding indicated that the quality of education received at CSUB was above average (42% above average; 25% excellent).

… 37% of the respondents indicated that the overall academic reputation of CSUB has improved since they graduated (56% reputation stayed about the same).

… 65% of the participants indicated that currently CSUB is headed in the right direction (8% wrong direction; 27% little of both).

… 57% of those responding indicated that the overall quality of education provided by CSUB today is better than average (41% above average; 16% excellent).

… 66% of the respondents indicated that they made lifelong friends while attending CSUB (41% agreed; 25% strongly agreed).

… 60% of the participants noted that they disagreed with the statement, “I don’t feel a real connection to CSUB, therefore I am not inclined to give when asked,” (42% disagreed; 18% strongly disagreed).

… 22% of those responding indicated that they have an advanced degree from another university and have a stronger tie to that university (7% strongly agreed; 15% agreed).

… 67% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that the only time they’re contacted by CSUB is to ask for money (18% strongly disagreed; 49% disagreed).

… More than half of the respondents (58%) agreed with the statement, “I was connected to CSUB while I was a student, but that connection declined after graduation,” (47% agreed; 11% strongly agreed).

… 70% of the participants indicated that they would proudly display a license plate holder indicating that they were a CSUB alumnus/alumna (41% agreed; 29% strongly agreed).

… 69% of those responding indicated that they agreed with the statement, “Once a Runner always a Runner,” (45% agreed; 24% strongly agreed).
… Only 18% of those participating indicated that they would never consider making a financial contribution to CSUB (5% strongly agreed; 13% agreed).

… More than 85% of the participants noted that they are proud to tell others that their degree is from California State University, Bakersfield (57% agreed; 30% strongly agreed).

… More than 70% of those participating indicated that if they were asked to volunteer their time to CSUB they would (54% agreed; 17% strongly agreed).

… 86% of those responding indicated that they would proudly wear a CSUB sweatshirt, T-shirt, or hat (49% agreed; 37% strongly agreed).

… Nearly 90% of those responding noted that they look back fondly on the time spent at CSUB (53% agreed; 36% strongly agreed).

… Slightly more than one-third (38%) of those participating indicated that they were involved in campus clubs and organizations as a student.

… 6% of the participants indicated that they were members of a sorority/fraternity while a CSUB student.

… 6% of the participants indicated that they were members of an athletic team while a CSUB student.

… 63% of those participating maintain contact with people that they took classes with while a student at CSUB.

… 52% of those participating indicated that they have NOT been back to campus for events/activities since graduation (48% have been back to campus).

… 62% of the participants indicated that they have NOT been back to campus to visit with a professor or staff member since graduation (38% have been back to visit).

… 55% of those responding indicated that they work with people who are also CSUB graduates.

… Respondents appeared to be evenly split with regard to the question of legacy: “I have a strong emotional connection to CSUB, and it is very important to me to encourage my children, family members, and friends to attend CSUB,” (49.78% agreed; 50.23% disagreed).

… 13% of those responding named Kevin McCarthy as the most prominent/recognizable CSUB graduate.

… 7% of those participating mentioned Stephen Neal as the most prominent/recognizable CSUB graduate.
… 2% of the study participants named Wendy Wayne as the most prominent/recognizable CSUB graduate.

… 26% of those responding indicated that they are current members of the CSUB Alumni Association.

… 12% of those responding indicated that they are former alumni association members.

… 62% of the participants indicated that they have never been a CSUB Alumni Association member.

… Of the respondents who indicated that they are current alumni association members, 83% noted that they are inactive members (30% somewhat inactive; 53% very inactive).

… Of the respondents who indicated that they have never been an alumni member, one third (33%) noted that they have never been a member because they have never been asked to join the association.

… Another third (35%) of the participants who indicated that they have never been a member of the alumni association indicated that they have never been a member because they simply have no interest.

… Only 6% of the study participants indicated that they have a great deal of information regarding CSUB Alumni activities (36% adequate amount of information).

… 42% of those responding indicated that they have access to very little information regarding CSUB Alumni activities, while 16% indicated that they have access to no information at all (for a combined total of 58% of those responding).

… Only a third of the participants (35%) noted that CSUB does a good job of keeping in touch with graduates.

… Another third of the respondents noted that CSUB does not do a good job of keeping in touch with graduates (32%), and 33% of those responding were not sure if CSBU does a good job of keeping in touch with graduates.

… Regarding Your CSUB magazine, 49% of the survey participants either read it carefully (18%) or read it quickly (31%).

… Approximately half of the participants indicated that they don’t recall receiving Your CSUB magazine (49%).

… Only 2% of the participants noted that when they receive Your CSUB magazine they toss it without reading the magazine.
… Regarding the invitation to Party in the Park, 44% of the participants noted that they either read it carefully (13%) or read it quickly (31%).

… 48% of the study participants indicated that they don’t recall receiving their invitation to Party in the Park.

… 8% of the participants toss the invitation to Party in the Park without reading it.

… Regarding alumni expectations, 29% of the study participants expect the association to provide professional and networking opportunities; 22% indicated that they expect social events from their association; 14% expect the association to provide faculty and student events; and 10% expect to be involved in athletic events.

… 20% of the study participants indicated that they did not know what they expect from the CSUB Alumni Association.

… Half of the participants indicated that they would be likely to apply for an alumni association sponsored credit card that contributed a percentage to the CSUB Alumni Association (35% somewhat likely; 15% very likely).

… Two-thirds of the participants indicated interest in participating in an alumni association sponsored travel program (49% somewhat likely; 18% very likely).

… Only 13% of the study participants noted that they are a member of another college alumni association.

… Of the 13% who indicated that they are a member of another college alumni association, 60% of them indicated that they give money to that university.

… Only 30% of the study participants noted that they have made a financial contribution to a CSUB program(s).

… 71% of those responding indicated that they have not made a financial contribution to any CSUB program.

… The vast majority of study participants indicated a willingness to contribute something to CSUB (82%).

… 42% of the study participants indicated a willingness to contribute less than $100 annually.

… 26% of those participating indicated a willingness to contribute $100 - $199 annually to CSUB.

… 7% of the study participants would be willing to contribute $200 - $499 annually.
… 4% of the study participants noted a willingness to contribute $500 - $999 a year to CSUB.

… 3% of the study participants noted a willingness to contribute more than $1,000 a year to CSUB.

… More than half of the study participants indicated that they either are currently or have been a member of community clubs or service organizations (58%).

… A similar number of respondents noted that they regularly donate either their time or money to a particular cause, non-profit, or foundation (59%).

… 59% of those responding indicated that they are employed in a field directly related their CSUB degree (49% full-time; 10% part-time).

… 64% of the participants indicated that they found work related to their degree immediately after graduation.

… Another 17% indicated that they found work related to their degree within a year of graduation.

… 82% of the study participants attended CSUB as a full-time student.

… 51% of the study participants indicated that they graduated in four years.

… 72% of the study participants were fairly recent graduates (2000-2009: 32%; 2010-2012: 40%).

… 14% of the participants graduated in the 1990’s; 8% of the participants graduated in the 1980’s; and 7% of the participants graduated in the 1970’s.

… 18% of those participating indicated that they had earned a teaching credential from CSUB.

… More than half of those participating noted that while they were students at CSUB they were single (56%).

… 40% of the participants noted that they were married while they attended CSUB.

… Regarding student resident status, 60% of the participants lived off campus, 31% lived at home with parents/family members, and 4% lived on campus.

… 71% of the study participants indicated a preference for e-mail as the way in which they would like to receive information or announcements from CSUB.
21% of the participants would prefer to receive information and announcements via snail mail.

8% indicated a preference for social media as a method to receive information and announcements from CSUB.

12% of the participants were age 18-24; 32% of the participants were age 25-34; 20% of the participants were age 35-44; 16% of participants were age 45-54; 15% of participants were age 55-64; and 5% of the participants were age 65 or older.

57% of the survey participants were Caucasian/White, and 27% of the participants were Hispanic/Latino.

African American/Black participants comprised 7% of the respondent population; 4% of those responding indicated that they were Asian.

67% of those participating indicated that they live in Kern County.

89% of the participants who indicated that they live in Kern County live in Bakersfield.

Study participants indicated that they live in numerous locations throughout California as well as numerous states throughout the United States.

Twenty study participants indicated that they live in countries throughout the world from Canada and Mexico to as far away as Russia, the Philippines, Turkey, South Africa, and Bahrain just to name a few.

21% of the participants described their total yearly household income as less than $35,000.

18% of the survey participants indicated that their total yearly household income was more than $135,000.

16% of the participants noted that their total yearly household income was from $35,001 to $55,000, and 15% of the participants indicated that their yearly household income was $55,001 to $75,000.

13% of the participants are members of households with total yearly incomes of $75,001 to $95,000, and 10% of survey respondents represent households with yearly incomes of $95,001 to $115,000.

8% of the survey participants indicated that their total household income was $115,001 to $135,000 per year.

63% of the survey participants were female, and 37% of those responding were male.
SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS - FOCUS GROUPS

The major findings reported in this section were extrapolated from all three focus group transcripts and reviewed by the focus group moderator. Direct quotes from the transcripts are presented in quotations; the other statements have also been pulled from the transcripts, but they have more than one source. In some cases, when appropriate, comments from several individuals have been combined.

PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATION

… Praise for CSUB faculty: “I think the faculty here are amazing.” The faculty reputation is still intact. Professors are outstanding.

… CSUB graduates are not substandard. The overall academic decline (reading, math, writing) is a national problem. Our grads are no different.

… “Rigor has been at least commensurate with other (universities).”

… “You sacrifice nothing in rigor going to CSUB.”

… The perception of CSUB has changed for the better over the last decade. It is better than it used to be. The academic reputation is consistently strong.

… Students at CSUB continue to receive a quality education.

… CSUB offers affordable higher education.

… As of late, the CSUB reputation has been a little stagnant.

… We need to promote the accomplishments of our professors and students.

ALUMNI ALIENATION

… The university fails to treat alumni with respect. Alumni are not welcomed nor embraced. Alumni are treated with contempt. “How you treat alumni matters.” Unprofessionalism exhibited by CSUB staff alienates alumni.

… “We’ve let fly-by-night schools in to steal our thunder.”

… Alumni should be encouraged to come back to CSUB.

… Once you graduate, there is no longer a connection.
COMMUNICATION AND THE ROLE OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

… The role of the Alumni Association: community service; raise money for the university; promote accomplishments of professors and students; communication with alumni; networking for alumni; publicize the good CSUB grads do in our community; engage the alumni; promote alumni as “experts” in our community.

… Alumni seek out information about the association and the university; they’re not bombarded with information. “I had to call the university for alumni information.”

… “I’m pretty typical of students here. I’m an immigrant and the first college student in my family. I don’t even know what an alumni association should do.”

… CSUB never taught students how to be alumni. There has never been an alumni culture surrounding CSUB.

… CSUB and the Alumni Association do not do a good job of communicating with alumni. Individual departments do a much better job of staying connected. “I’d give them a (letter grade of) D.”

… Recruit alumni before they graduate.

… The alumni mission has never been clearly identified nor communicated. “It’s (the mission) never been clear to me.” The role of the association is unclear.

… Alumni communication has never been institutionalized, even early on.

… Communication is an issue. Communication is extremely poor.

… You have to change the culture.

… “I need to be asked. I’ve never been asked for anything.”

… “I’ve been an alumnus for 30 years. Last week athletics asked for money for the first time. Just ask!”

… “I’ve never been asked to put my name on a brick or a building.”

… The association must ask. I’ve never been ask to help or give.
PERCEPTIONS OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION & CSUB

… Alums don’t know the benefits of being a member.

… Why do we struggle to find nominations for the alumni of the year? We have decades of alumni.

… Does the association or the university have the contact information for the 40,000 alumni?

… The association has gone through a parade of directors with very little direction.

… The association suffers from inertia.

… There is no clear message.

… The association has a huge marketing problem.

… CSUB lacks prestige within the community. BC has a better reputation and a better draw. Why is this still the case?

… CSUB lacks visibility within the community. How can this be when 60% of our graduates remain in the community?

… CSUB graduates are no longer embarrassed to claim that they graduated from CSUB, but we still lack the prestige that should accompany our accomplishment.

… The University should provide alumni with opportunities to support the university. We need opportunities to give back. “I got a lot from CSUB. It would be nice to give back.”

… There is a perception that CSUB runs off the community – AYSO, Relay for Life, little league baseball. How do you combat this perception?

… “What does the Alumni Association want to be? It’s never been clear to me.”
ALUMNI ACTIVITY IDEAS/SUGGESTIONS

… Alumni Family Night – return to campus and bring our children to show them where we went to college.

… Push Forward – each one connect one type of an event.

… Alumni Newsletter – quarterly – seek submissions from members and keep us informed.

… Find ways to expose young children to CSUB and connect them to the campus – “I don’t see many kids wanting to come to CSUB.”

… Pack the Stadium events – alumni enter fee to fill the seats that don’t sell out.

… Alumni nights – special events to engage alumni.

… “We do what’s familiar – Party in the Park, athletic BBQ’s, Your CSUB magazine.” These have become institutionalized, and they receive support.

… General sentiment is that if you ask, I’ll give, but I’ve never been asked to give.

… We need to tell the stories. The story of the university is not being shared.

… Intellectual capital is out there. Tap into it! CSUB fails to tap into the intellectual capital and expertise of its graduates.

… “A cut rate on parking”.

… Provide a discount on CSUB gear.

… Getting younger alumni to connect with the older alumni should be a priority.

… Younger alumni don’t have the money to give. Need something else to feel connected.
MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The data from the online surveys and the focus groups suggest several discernible findings and conclusions. All statements with a percentage are results from the online survey. Statements without a percentage are from the focus group sessions.

1. CSUB ALUMNI HAVE HIGH REGARD FOR THEIR ALMA MATER.

… 67% of those responding indicated that the quality of education received at CSUB was above average (42% above average; 25% excellent).

… 37% of the respondents indicated that the overall academic reputation of CSUB has improved since they graduated (56% reputation stayed about the same).

… 65% of the participants indicated that currently CSUB is headed in the right direction (8% wrong direction; 27% little of both).

… 57% of those responding indicated that the overall quality of education provided by CSUB today was better than average (41% above average; 16% excellent).

… “I think the faculty here are amazing.” The faculty reputation is still intact. Professors are outstanding.

… CSUB graduates are not substandard. The overall academic decline (reading, math, writing) is a national problem. Our grads are no different.

… “Rigor has been at least commensurate with other (universities).”

… “You sacrifice nothing in rigor going to CSUB.”

… The perception of CSUB has changed for the better over the last decade. It is better than it used to be. The academic reputation is consistently strong.

… Students at CSUB continue to receive a quality education.

… CSUB offers affordable higher education.
2. A MAJORITY OF ALUMNI HAVE AN EMOTIONAL CONNECTION TO CSUB.

… 69% of those responding indicated that they agreed with the statement, “Once a Runner always a Runner.” (45% agreed; 24% strongly agreed)

… 60% of the participants noted that they disagreed with the statement, “I don’t feel a real connection to CSUB, therefore I am not inclined to give when asked.” (42% disagreed; 18% strongly disagreed)

… 66% of the respondents indicated that they made lifelong friends while attending CSUB (41% agreed; 25% strongly agreed).

… 69% of the participants indicated that they would proudly display a license plate holder indicating that they were a CSUB alumnus/alumna (41% agreed; 29% strongly agreed).

… More than 85% of the participants noted that they are proud to tell others that their degree is from California State University, Bakersfield (57% agreed; 30% strongly agreed).

… 63% of those participating maintain contact with people they took classes with while a student at CSUB.

… 85% of those responding indicated that they would proudly wear a CSUB sweatshirt, T-shirt, or hat (49% agreed; 37% strongly agreed).

… Nearly 90% of those responding noted that they look back fondly on the time spent at CSUB (53% agreed; 36% strongly agreed).

… 55% of those responding indicated that they work with people who are also CSUB graduates.
3. A SIZEABLE NUMBER OF ALUMNI DO NOT FEEL CONNECTED TO THE UNIVERSITY AFTER GRADUATION.

… More than half of the respondents (57%) agreed with the statement, “I was connected to CSUB while I was a student, but that connection declined after graduation.” (47% agreed; 11% strongly agreed)

… 62% of the participants indicated that they have NOT been back to campus to visit with a professor or staff member since graduation (38% have been back to visit).

… 52% of those participating have NOT been back to campus for events/activities since graduation (48% have been back to campus).

… Alumni should be encouraged to come back to CSUB.

… Once you graduate, there is no longer a connection.

… The university fails to treat alumni with respect. Alumni are not welcomed nor embraced. Alumni are treated with contempt. “How you treat alumni matters.” Unprofessionalism exhibited by CSUB staff alienates alumni.
4. MANY ALUMNI REPORT THAT CSUB AND THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION DO A POOR JOB OF COMMUNICATING WITH ALUMNI AND THE PUBLIC.

… Only 6% of the study participants indicated that they have a great deal of information regarding CSUB Alumni activities (36% adequate amount of information).

… 42% of those responding indicated that they have access to very little information regarding CSUB Alumni activities, while 16% indicated that they have access to no information at all (for a combined total of 58% of those responding).

… Only a third of the participants (35%) noted that CSUB does a good job of keeping in touch with graduates.

… Another third of the respondents noted that CSUB does not do a good job of keeping in touch with graduates (32%), and 33% of those responding were not sure if CSBU does a good job of keeping in touch with graduates.

… Approximately half of the participants indicated that they don’t recall receiving Your CSUB magazine (49%).

… 48% of the study participants indicated that they don’t recall receiving their invitation to Party in the Park.

… Alumni seek out information about the association and the university; they’re not bombarded with information. “I had to call the University for alumni information.”

… Communication is an issue. Communication is extremely poor.

… CSUB and the Alumni Association do not do a good job of communicating with alumni. Individual departments do a much better job of staying connected. “I’d give them a (letter grade of) D.”

… Alumni communication has never been institutionalized, even early on.

… We need to tell the stories. The story of the university is not being shared.

… We need to promote the accomplishments of our professors and students.

… CSUB lacks prestige within the community. BC has a better reputation and a better draw. Why is this still the case?

… CSUB lacks visibility within the community. How can this be when 60% of our graduates remain in the community?

… The association has a huge marketing problem.
5. ALUMNI LACK A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE AND MISSION OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION.

… “… I’m pretty typical of students here. I’m an immigrant and the first college student in my family. I don’t even know what an alumni association should do.”

… CSUB never taught students how to be alumni. There has never been an alumni culture surrounding CSUB.

… The alumni mission has never been clearly identified nor communicated. “It’s (the mission) never been clear to me.” The role of the association is unclear.

… 20% of the study participants indicated that they did not know what they expected from the CSUB Alumni Association.

… More than 25% of the study participants who have never been members of the alumni association did not know what they expected from the CSUB Alumni Association.

… Regarding alumni expectations, 29% of the study participants expect the association to provide professional and networking opportunities; 22% indicated that they expect social events from their association; 14% expect the association to provide faculty and student events; and 10% expect to be involved in athletic events.
6. ALUMNI ARE BEING NEGLECTED AND UNDERUTILIZED BY THE ASSOCIATION AS IT RELATES TO MEMBERSHIP AND VOLUNTEER EFFORTS.

… More than 70% of those participating indicated that if they were asked to volunteer their time to CSUB they would (54% agreed; 17% strongly agreed).

… Only 26% of those responding indicated that they are current members of the CSUB Alumni Association; 12% indicated that they are former members; and 62% of the participants indicated that they have never been an alumni association member.

… Of the respondents who indicated that they are current alumni association members, 82% noted that they are inactive members (30% somewhat inactive; 53% very inactive).

… Of the respondents who indicated that they have never been an alumni member, one third (33%) noted that they have never been a member because they have never been asked to join the association. Another third (35%) indicated that they have never been a member because they simply have no interest.

… The university should provide alumni with opportunities to support the university. We need opportunities to give back. “I got a lot from CSUB. It would be nice to give back.”

… The role of the Alumni Association: community service; raise money for the university; promote accomplishments of professors and students; communication with alumni; networking for alumni; publicize the good CSUB grads do in our community; engage the alumni; promote alumni as “experts” in our community.

… Intellectual capital is out there. Tap into it! CSUB fails to tap into the intellectual capital and expertise of its graduates.

… Nearly 68% of the respondents reported that Kern County was their primary residence.

… General sentiment is that if you ask, I’ll give, but I’ve never been asked to give.
7. THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITIES AS IT RELATES TO FUNDRAISING AND ALUMNI.

… Only 30% of the study participants noted that they have ever made a financial contribution to any CSUB program(s) (71% have not made a financial contribution).

… The vast majority of CSUB graduates indicated a willingness to contribute something to CSUB (82%).

… 42% of the study participants indicated a willingness to contribute less than $100 annually.

… 26% of those participating indicated a willingness to contribute $100 - $199 annually to CSUB.

… 7% of the study participants would be willing to contribute $200 - $499 annually.

… 4% of the study participants noted a willingness to contribute $500 - $999 a year to CSUB.

… 3% of the study participants noted a willingness to contribute more than $1,000 a year to CSUB.

… Only 18% of those participating indicated that they would never consider making a financial contribution to CSUB (5% strongly agreed; 13% agreed).

… Half of the participants indicated that they would be interested in an alumni sponsored credit card that contributed a percentage to the CSUB Alumni Association.

… Two-thirds of the participants indicated interest in an alumni association travel program.

… More than half of the study participants indicated that they have been a member of community clubs or service organizations (58%).

… Similar numbers of respondents noted that they regularly donate either their time or money to a particular cause, non-profit, or foundation (59%).

… 13% of the participants are members of households with total yearly incomes of $75,001 to $95,000.

… 10% of survey respondents represent households with yearly incomes of $95,001 to $115,000.

… 8% of the survey participants indicated that their total household income was $115,001 to $135,000 per year.
… 18% of the survey participants indicated that their total yearly household income was more than $135,000.

… “I need to be asked. I’ve never been asked for anything.”

… “I’ve been an alumnus for 30 years. Last week athletics asked for money for the first time. Just ask!”

… “I’ve never been asked to put my name on a brick or a building.”
Appendix 1

Frequency Distribution for Alumni Survey Pages 2-60
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Frequency Distribution by Alumni Status Pages 2-106
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Frequency Distribution by School Pages 2-98
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Frequency Distribution by Year Graduated Pages 2-108