

Student Employment at the CSUN University Student Union

Purpose

This report examines USU student employment and its association with student outcomes, including GPA, retention, and graduation rates.

The University Student Union

The **University Student Union (USU)** is a student-centered organization that seeks to enhance the university experience via different programs, services, initiatives, and student employment opportunities. At the core of the USU's mission is to help students feel empowered and connected to campus by providing leadership opportunities, fostering transferable skills, and advocating for student well-being.



Data

This brief draws upon employment data compiled by the USU, which was supplemented with student background and outcomes data by the Office of Institutional Research (IR). The data represent students enrolled between AY 2010/11 and 2018/19. During this period, 302,595 students were enrolled at CSUN.

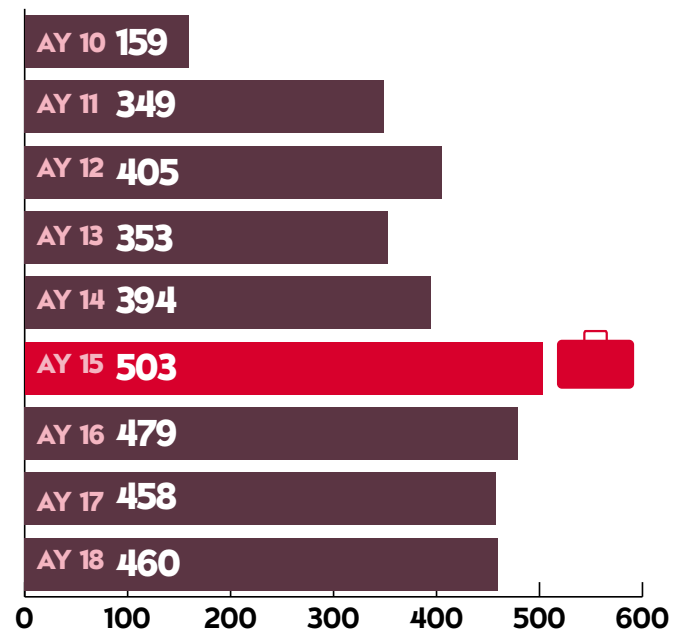
To examine first-year outcomes, including first-year GPA and third-term retention, the analysis relies on student cohort data, which includes all cohorts who first matriculated at CSUN in a Fall term between 2010 and 2018. Each cohort had roughly 10,000 students, for a total of 91,172 students. Finally, to examine four- and six-year graduation rates, we restricted the cohort data to first-time freshmen.

Who is employed by the University Student Union at CSUN?

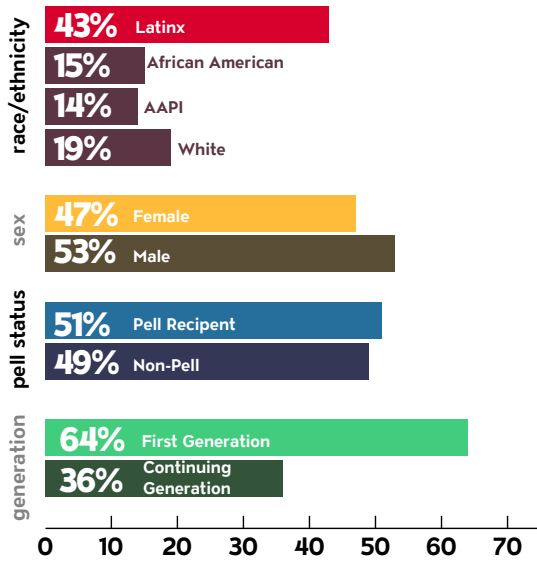
Slightly more than 3,500 students were employed at the USU between the 2010 and 2018 academic years, with a gradual upward trend in USU employment, peaking in AY 2015.

With regard to student employees' majors, students with majors in the College of Health and Human Development (21%), made up the largest percentage of USU employees, followed by the Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication (18%), the David Nazarian College of Business and Economics (14%), and the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences (12%).

ANNUAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS EMPLOYED AT USU, 2010-18



USU EMPLOYMENT BY KEY DEMOGRAPHICS



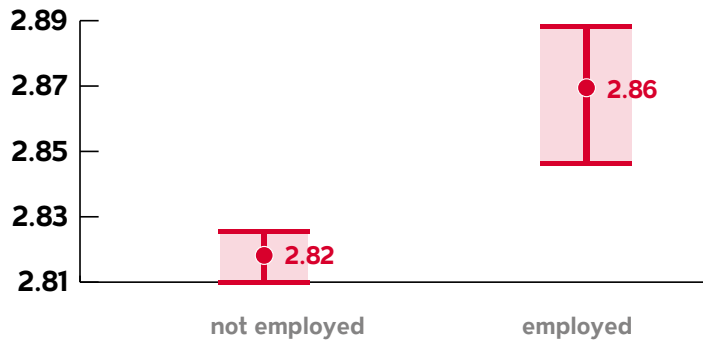
With regard to student demographics, USU student employees were more likely to identify as either Latinx or first-generation than their counterparts who were not employed at the USU. Approximately half of USU student employees were female and Pell grant recipients.

We next examine whether USU student employment is associated with students' annual GPA, including first-year GPA, and third-term retention, and freshman cohorts' four- and six-year graduation rates, while accounting for a host of student demographic (race/ethnicity, Pell-eligibility, first-generation status, and sex) and academic characteristics (incoming GPA, college of major, first-time freshman vs. transfer status). We also statistically controlled for whether students were otherwise employed on campus, using CSUN HR data, in order to isolate the impact of USU employment in particular. The graphs below depict each group's estimated GPA or their probability of retention or graduation with 90 percent confidence intervals. Confidence intervals without overlap indicate statistically reliable differences between groups. Confidence intervals with overlap indicate no statistically reliable difference.

Is USU Employment Associated with Annual CSUN GPA?

USU student employment is reliably associated with an annual GPA that is 0.04 grade points higher than for non-employees.

Predicted 1 Year GPA

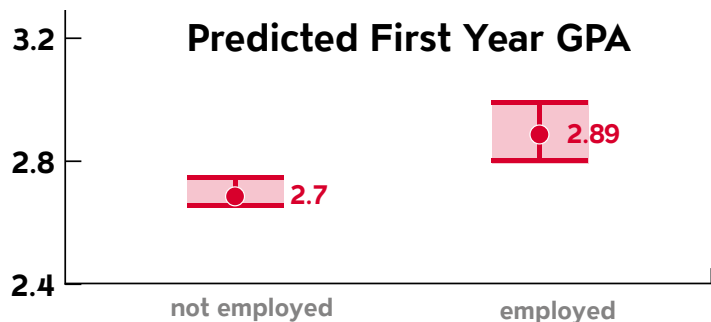


Is USU Employment Associated with First-Year GPA?

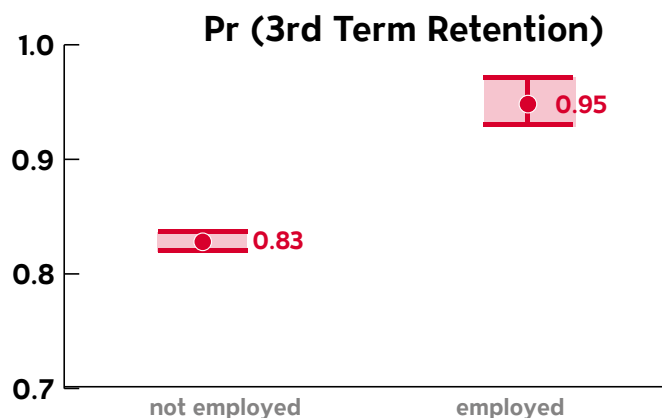
In this and the following sections, we examine data by incoming student cohorts. In this section, we focus on first-year GPA data.

USU employment is associated with an increase in 1st-year GPA of 0.12 grade points.

Predicted First Year GPA

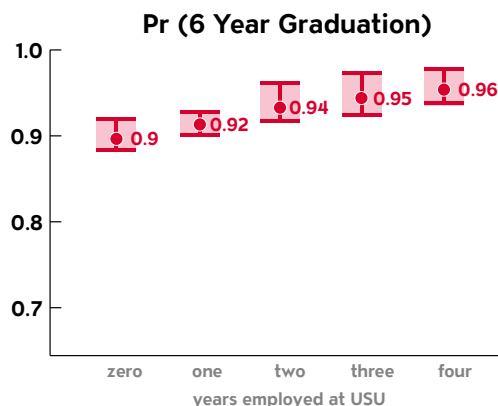
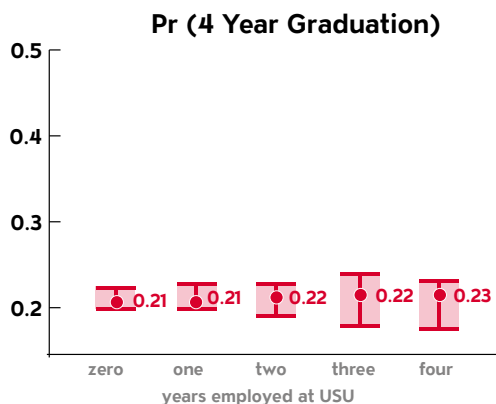


Is USU Employment Associated with Third-Term Retention?



Working at the USU is associated with an improved probability of enrolling for a third term by 12 percentage points.

Is the Number of Years of Employment at the USU Associated with 4-Year and 6-Year Graduation Rates?



Number of years of employment at the USU is associated with an increase in the probability of graduating in 6 years. There is no statistically reliable difference after 2 years of employment, however. No relationship was found between the number of years employed at the USU and 4-year graduation rates.

TAKEAWAYS

The results of this study indicate that USU employment promotes academic success among students from different racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. More specifically, USU employment was associated with statistically significant increases in annual CSUN GPA, first-year GPA, third-term retention, and 6-year graduation rates. For additional, disaggregated findings, please refer to the [Addendum](#).

One important limitation of this study is the lack of data on whether non-USU student employees were working off campus. The comparison group may therefore represent a mixed bag in terms of non-campus employment, which may have some potentially interesting effects on student related outcomes. The effect of off-campus employment on student academic outcomes therefore remains to be examined.