

# Life Trajectories of PAUSD Alumni Based on College Tier Attended



**By: Meghna Singh**

# About Me!

- Junior at Gunn High School
- President of Reach Out Care Know (ROCK) club, Wellness Commissioner at Gunn, Peer Leader of Sources of Strength
- Advanced Authentic Research (AAR) project

# Rationale

- *Life Trajectories of PAUSD Alumni Based On College Tier Attended*
- Students and parents believe attending top tier level schools will correlate to a “successful future”
- Great pressure placed on students about which college they attend
  - Intense preparation (AP/honors classes, SAT/ACT, extracurricular activities, volunteering)
- Direct data from PAUSD graduates

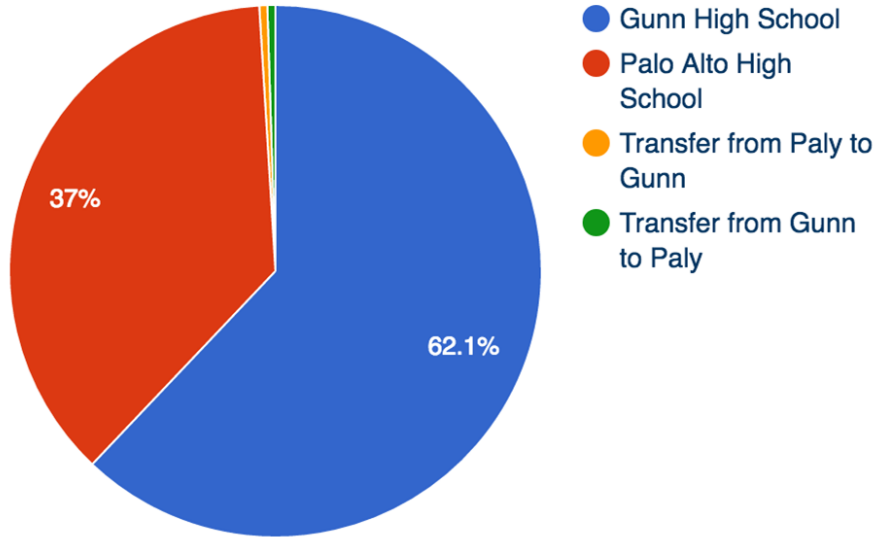
# Methodology

- Created Online survey
- 32 questions (single/multiple answer, open response)
- PAUSD Graduates: 2004-2014
- Distributed via public Facebook pages, Palo Alto community websites/newsletters (CHC & PSN), direct emails, word of mouth
- December 2016 - February 2017

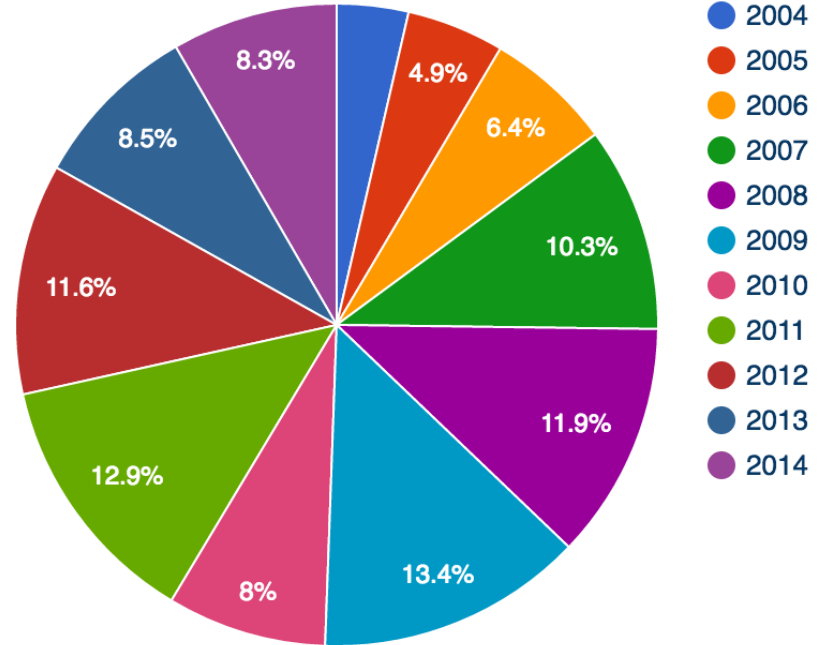
# Sample Size

- Total: 618 responses

## Which high school did you attend in Palo Alto?



## Graduation Year Of PAUSD Alumni

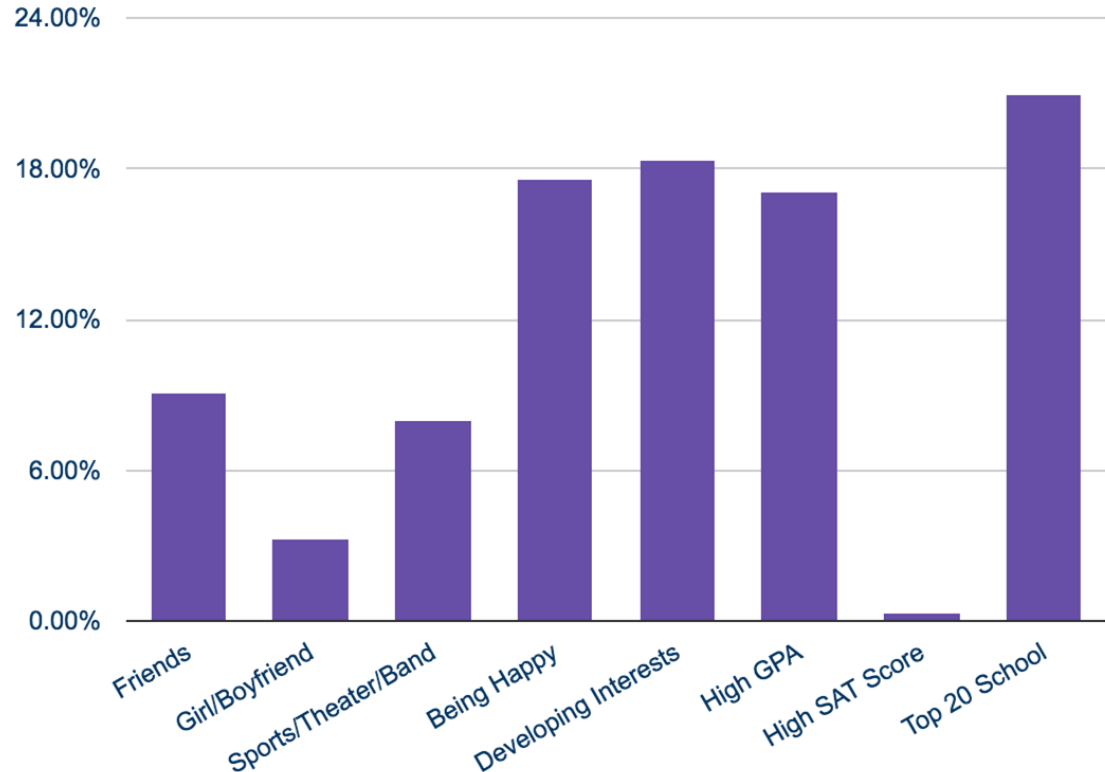


# High School Measure of Success

**#1: Getting into a top 20 school**

Followed by:

- Developing interests
- Being happy
- High GPA



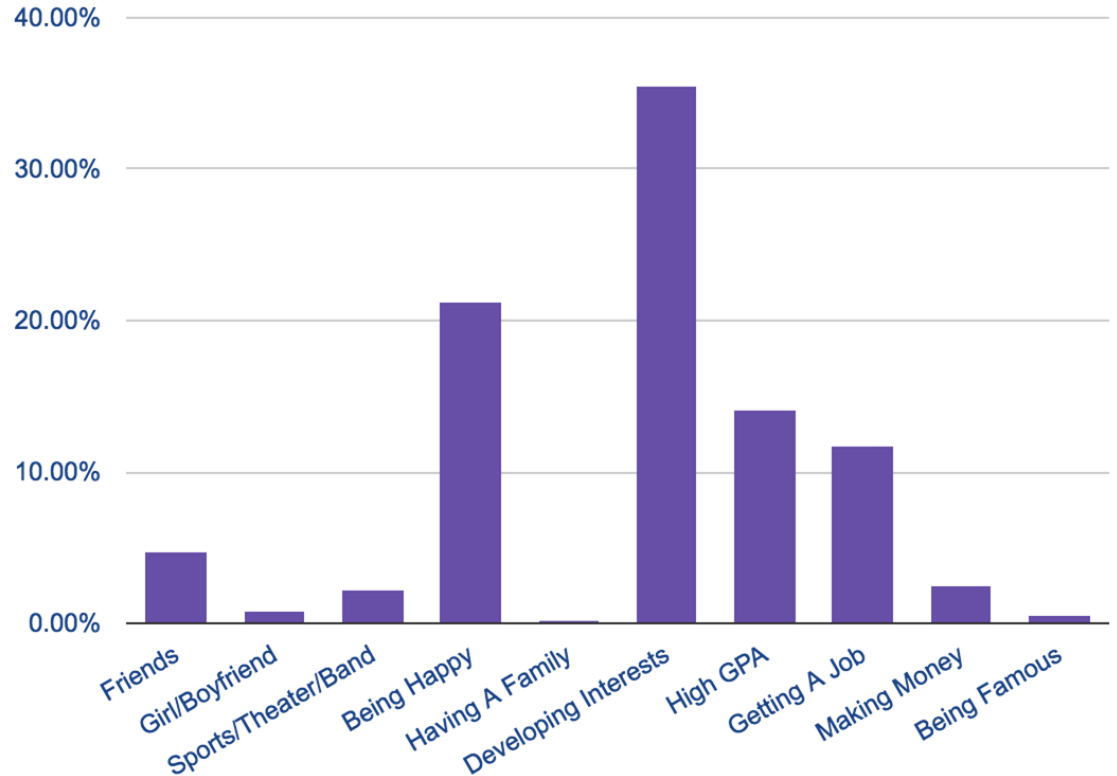
# College Measure of Success

**#1: Developing interests**

**#2: Being happy**

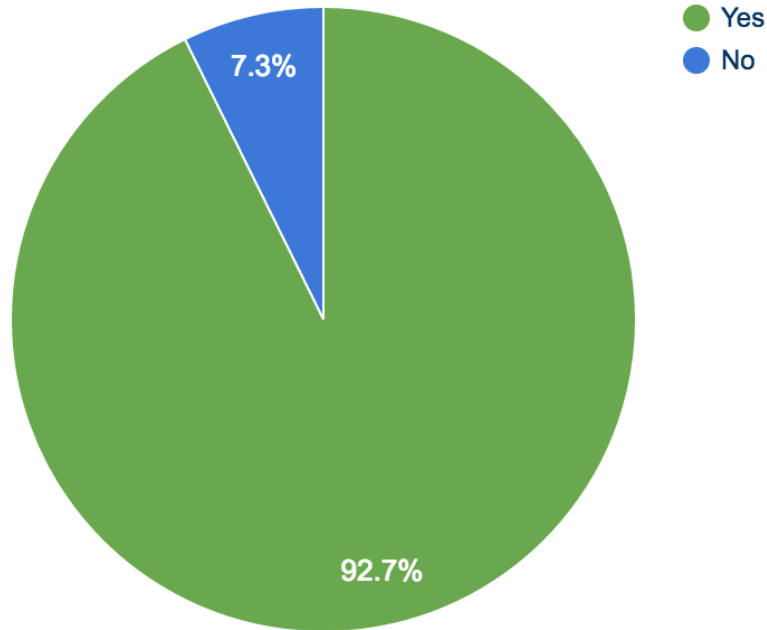
**#3: High GPA**

**#4: Getting a job**

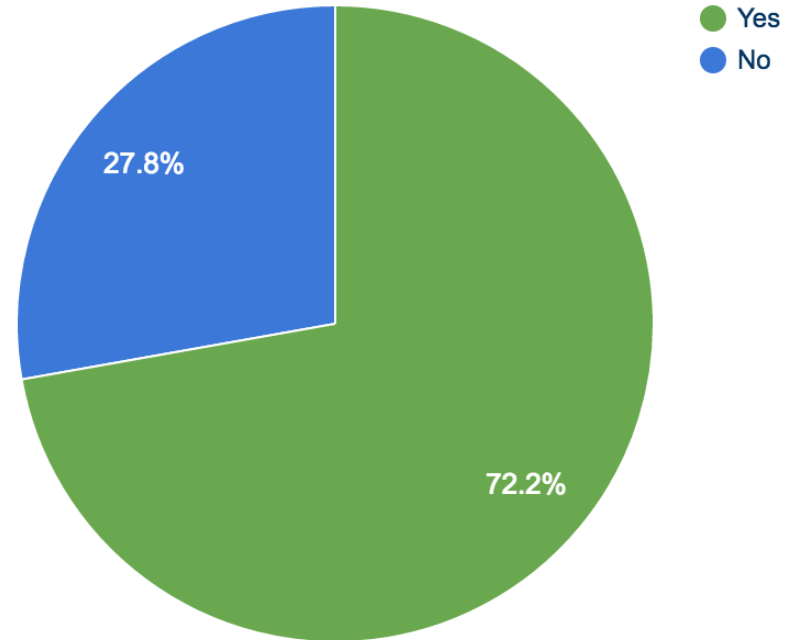


# How Well Prepared For College

**93% Prepared For College Level Courses**



**72% Socially/Emotionally Ready To Attend College**

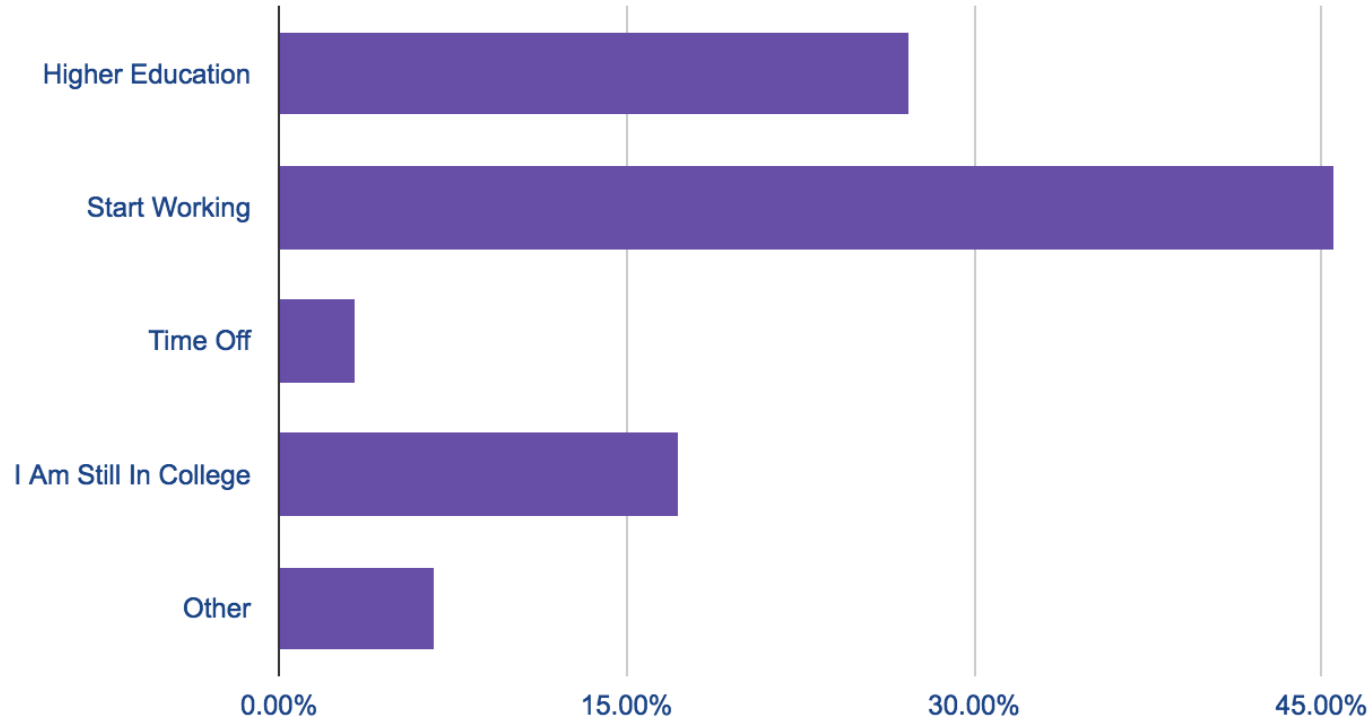




# College Years

- **89%** were satisfied with college choice
- **38%** changed their major
- **9.1%** took a gap year post high school
  - study abroad, develop personal interests, needed therapy, college was too expensive, parents were sick
- **18.8%** transferred out/took a break from college
  - closer to family, got expelled, flunked out, depression/eating disorders, not a good fit school, too expensive

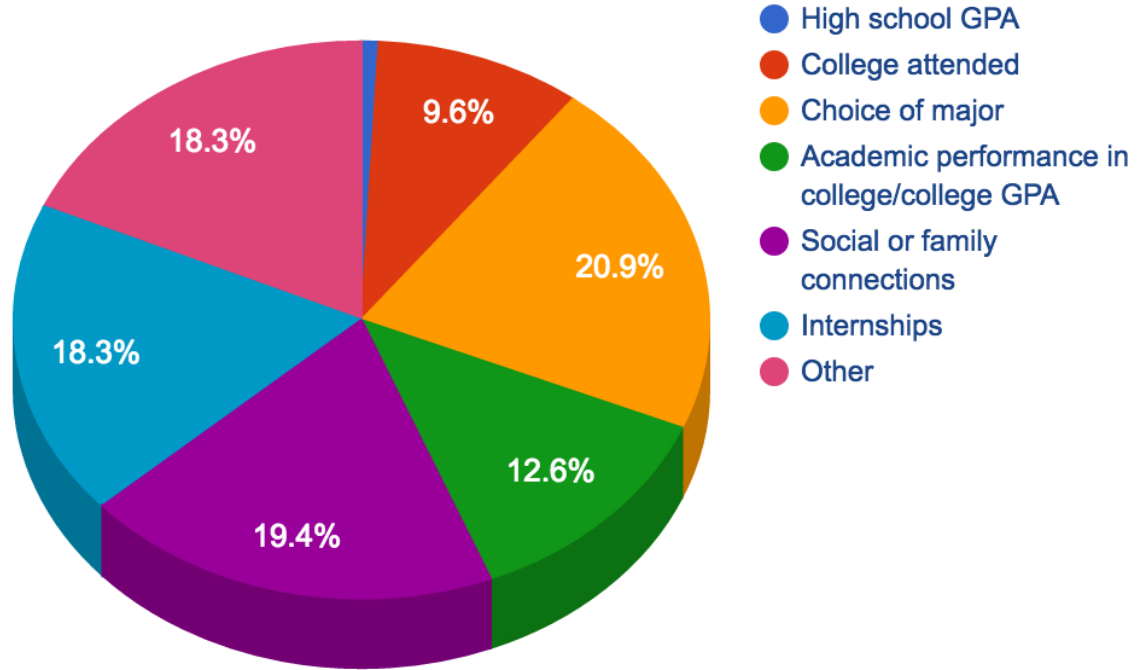
# Post College Graduation



# Biggest Impact on Current Career

- #1: Major**
- #2: Connections**
- #3: Internships**

- ★ **Bottom two:**
  - **College Attended**
  - **HS GPA**



# Breaking It Down By Tier Levels!

- **618** responses total
- Attended **183** different colleges/universities
- Assigned each school a tier level based on United States News & World Report (USNWR) college rankings 2017

\*Please note that I created the following set of tier levels.

# Tier Levels

<b>Tier</b>	<b>USNWR Ranking</b>	<b>Examples of Schools</b>
1	University, Liberal Arts College 1-20	Harvard, Stanford
2	University, Liberal Arts College 21-50	USC, University of Michigan
3	University, Liberal Arts College 51-100	Pepperdine, Purdue
4	University, Liberal Arts College 100+	University of Oregon, University of SF
5	Regional University/College, Arts, Business	Santa Clara University, High Point University
6	Community College, City College, International, Unranked	Foothill College, Santa Barbara City College
7	Unclear, No Response	X

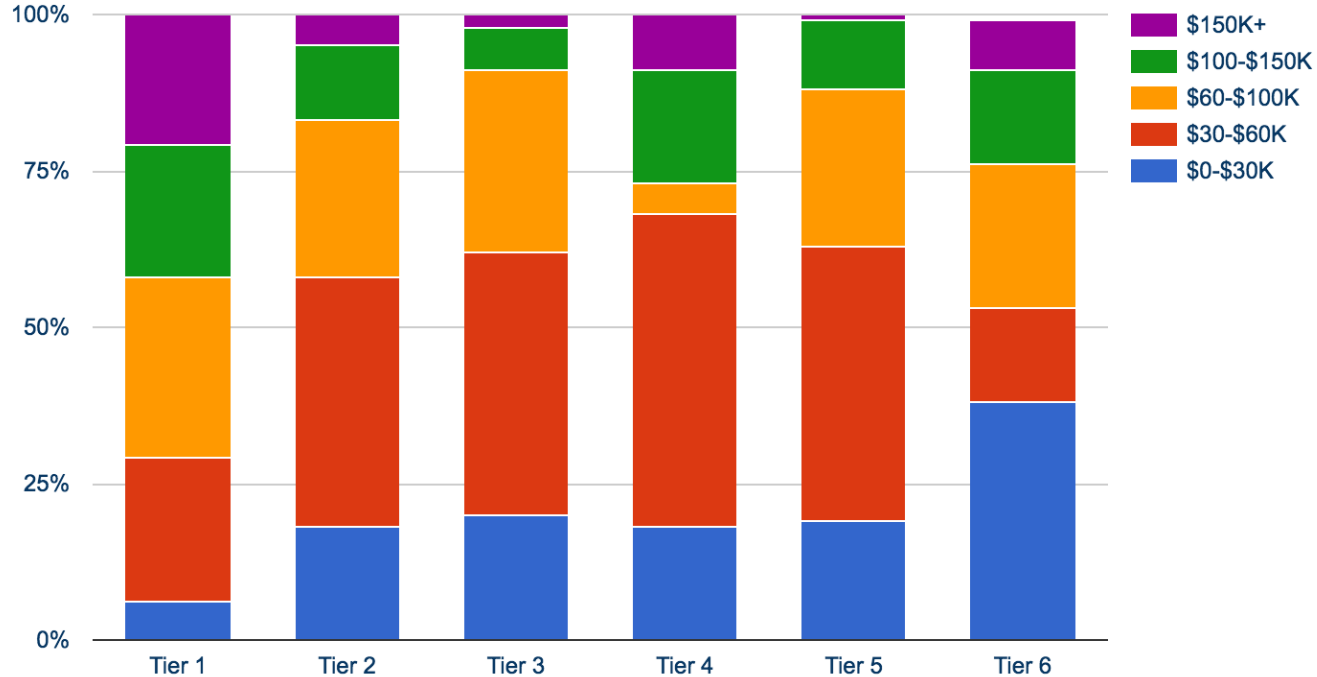
# Number of Responses per Tier Level

Tier Level	Number of Responses	Percentage
Tier 1	165	26.7%
Tier 2	190	30.7%
Tier 3	67	10.8%
Tier 4	33	5.4%
Tier 5	95	15.4%
Tier 6	25	4.0%
Tier 7	43	7.0%

# Career Paths and Professions By Tier Level

Tier	Medical, Life Sciences, Public Health	Business, Econ, Banking, Finance	Engineering, Tech	Lib Arts, Social Sciences, Politics, Policy	Visual Performing Arts	Law	Education	Hospitality	Other
1	23%	25%	26%	6%	2%	4%	2%	0.6%	Military
2	18%	16%	26%	7%	8%	3%	6%	0%	Real Estate, Prop Mngt, Journ/Media, Apparel Industry
3	18%	9%	21%	16%	7%	1%	12%	3%	Environmental Policy, Journalism/Media
4	30%	9%	6%	15%	3%	0%	18%	3%	Pilot, Homemaker
5	15%	16%	21%	10%	14%	2%	6%	5%	Cosmetology, Firefighter, Gunsmith, Military, Prof Football
6	14%	14%	14%	5%	10%	0%	0%	0%	Firefighter, Real Estate, Prop Mngt, Urban Plan

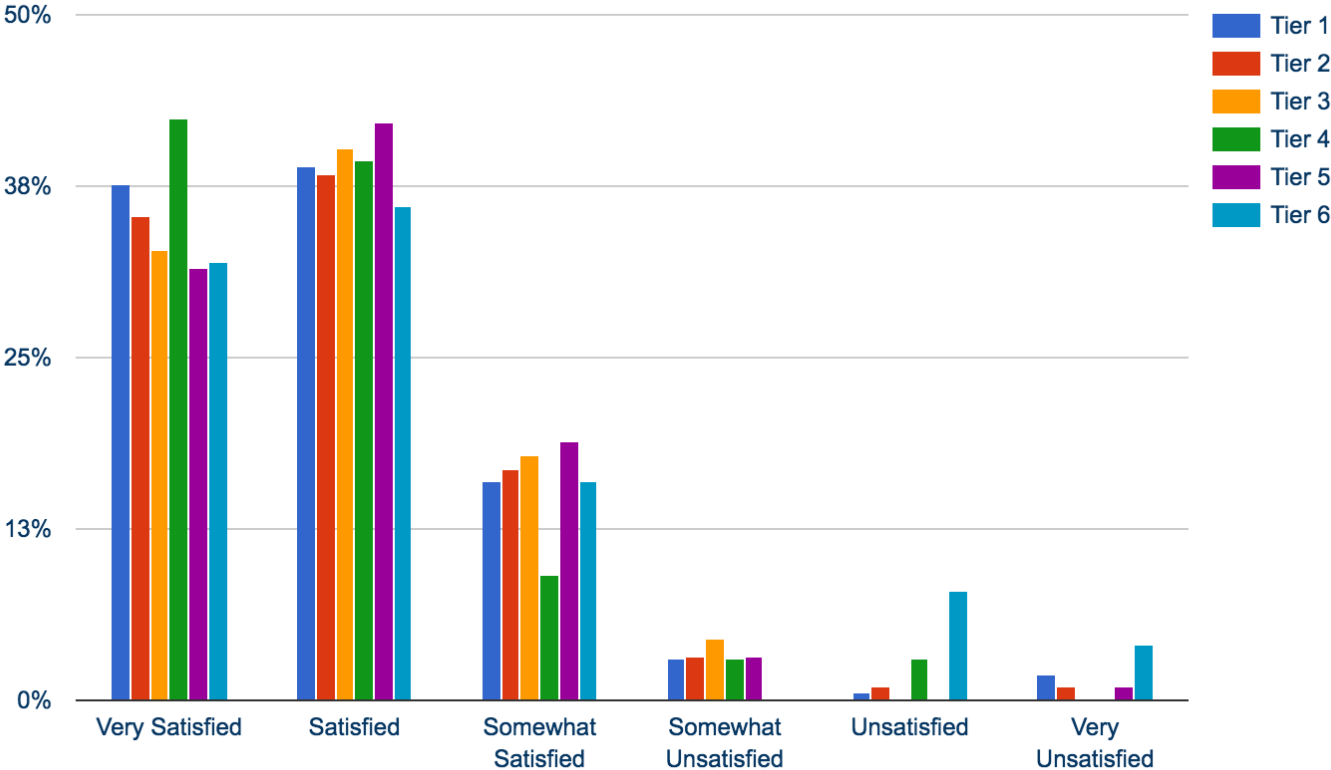
# Income Results by Tier Level



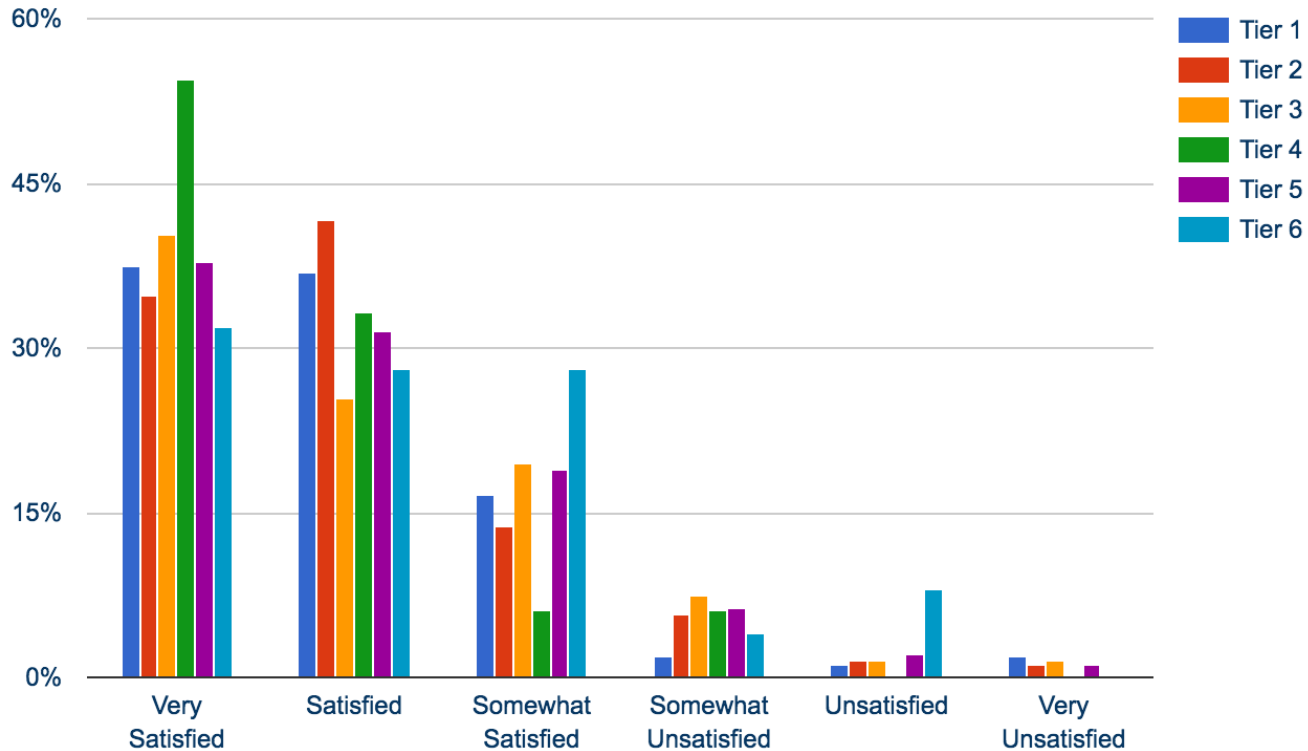
Tier	In College/Pursuing Higher Education
1	36%
2	33%
3	33%
4	21%
5	17%
6	40%



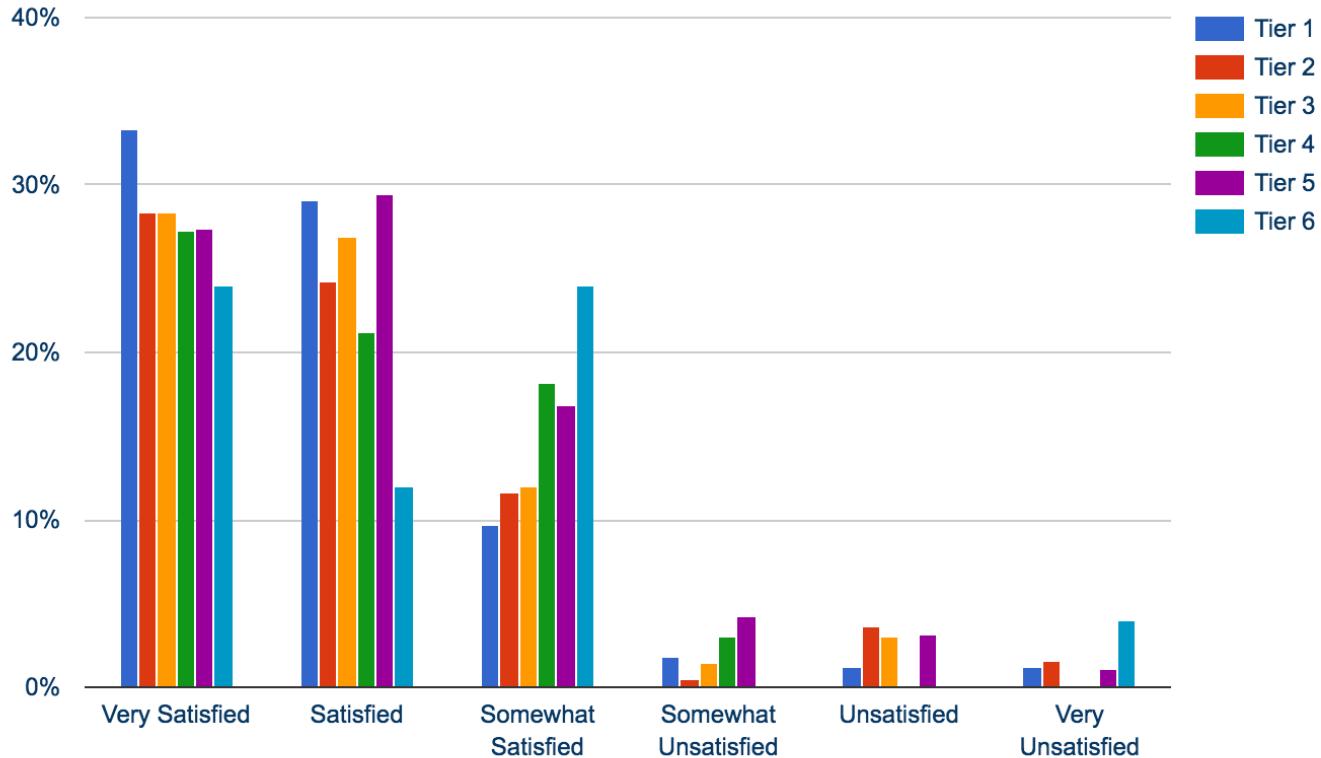
# Quality of Life Satisfaction Levels



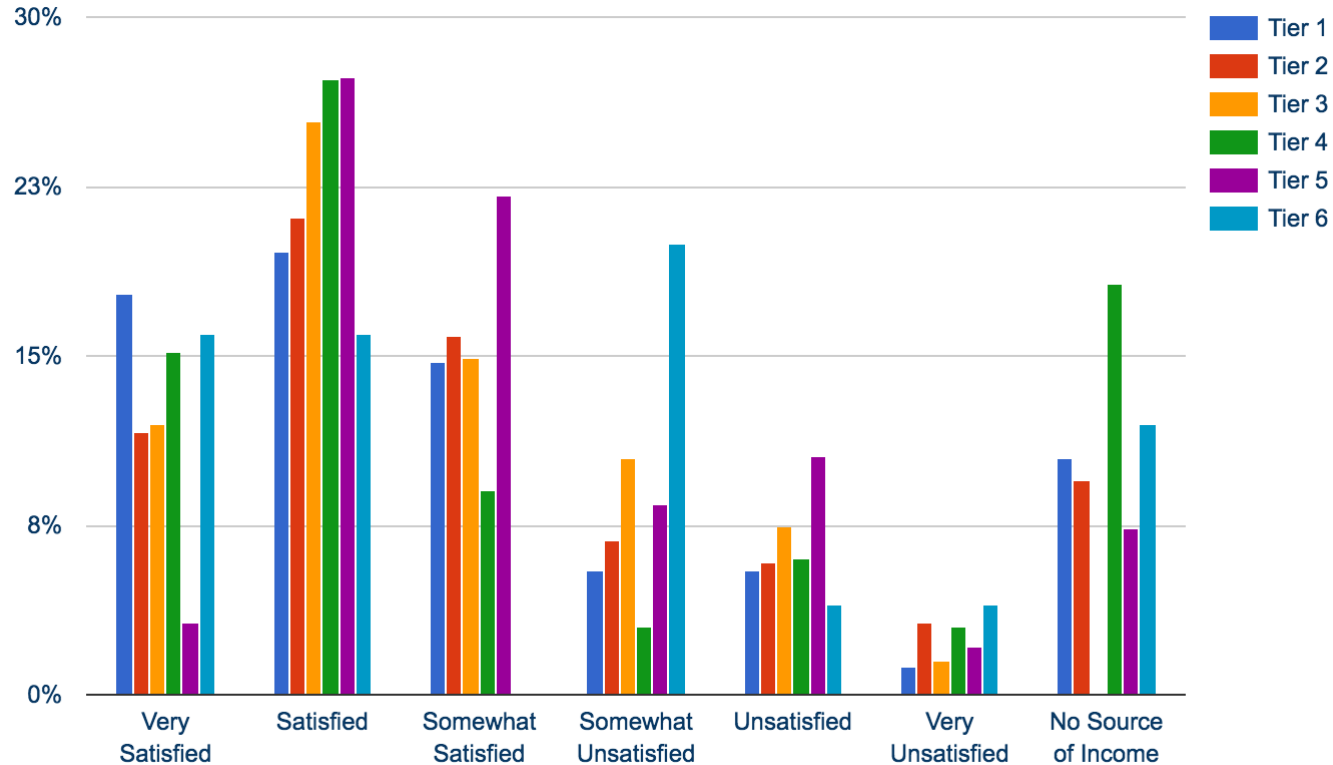
# Relationship Satisfaction Levels



# Job Satisfaction Levels



# Income Satisfaction Levels

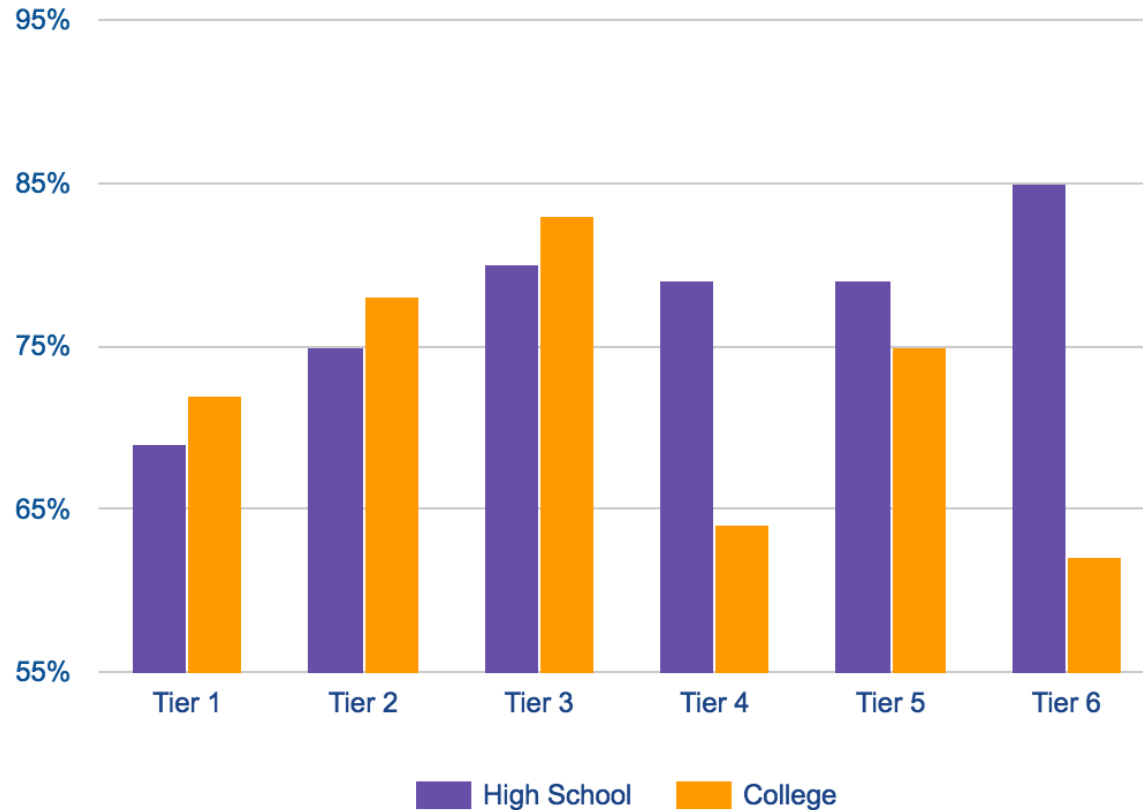


# Mental Health Conditions

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Feeling Burnt Out
- Needing/Seeking out counseling
- I did not develop

\*Alumni were able to select all conditions that apply

# Mental Health Conditions HS vs. College



# Percentage Change of MH Conditions

## HS to College by Condition

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Tier 5	Tier 6
<b>Developed</b>	+3%	+3%	+3%	-15%	-4%	-23%
<b>Anxiety</b>	+1%	-2%	-10%	-13%	+1%	-5%
<b>Depression</b>	-2%	-4%	-7%	-21%	-5%	-8%
<b>Burnt Out</b>	<b>+28%</b>	-5%	-15%	-6%	+1%	-6%
<b>Counseling</b>	<b>+9%</b>	+2%	-1%	-26%	+1%	-40%

## **Question 31:**

**What advice would you give to current high school students and their families in Palo Alto, given the recent tragedies, media coverage and the academic environment?**



# Underlying Themes

- Do what you love & what makes you happy
- Don't hesitate to ask for help/seek help
- Don't be scared of failure
- Define success for yourself
- Learn because you want to, not for a grade
- Find trustworthy friends
- Know your limits
- Self care/take time for yourself

**“Going to a top 20  
college doesn’t  
matter. Going to the  
college that you love  
does.”**

**“The student can not reach their full academic potential without strong emotional support. Seeking it should be as prioritized as seeking a tutor.”**

**“Just keep going. There are people who love you so, so much. Suicide doesn’t cure depression, it just transfers that sadness to the people who love you the most.”**

**“Your GPA matters  
less than having  
dinner with your  
family.”**

**“Hold on.”**

2007, Gunn High School Graduate

**“Control what you can  
for now and  
understand that your  
path does not have to  
be perfect to arrive at  
your destination.”**

**“I know it is difficult not to be influenced by society, especially growing up in the Silicon Valley, but do not let society, your peers, or even family members decide what ‘success’ means for you. You define your own success and happiness.”**



**“While some people’s path will be straight, as the years go on you will find that everyone takes a detour. If you do so earlier in life, you will have much more life experience and maturity than your colleagues.”**

**“Giving a kid time to explore the world, develop interests on their own, and maybe once in a while get in trouble, allows that person to understand the world in a way that a classroom, or a private lesson, will never teach.”**

**“Don’t believe that  
sacrificing happiness  
now will make you  
happier later. And don’t  
believe that making a ton  
of money will make you  
happy, either.”**

**“Do what’s best for  
you, not what’s best  
for others’  
perception of you.”**

**“The name and prestige of a school is not what makes one successful, it is the work one puts in, the love one has for what one is studying, and the opportunities one seeks out that leads to success.”**

**Thank you!**