

# **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

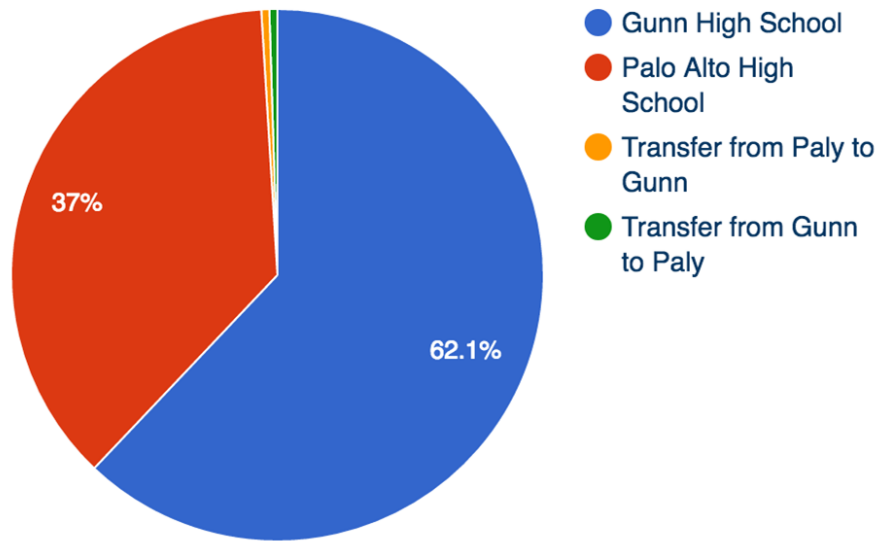
# Methodology

- 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

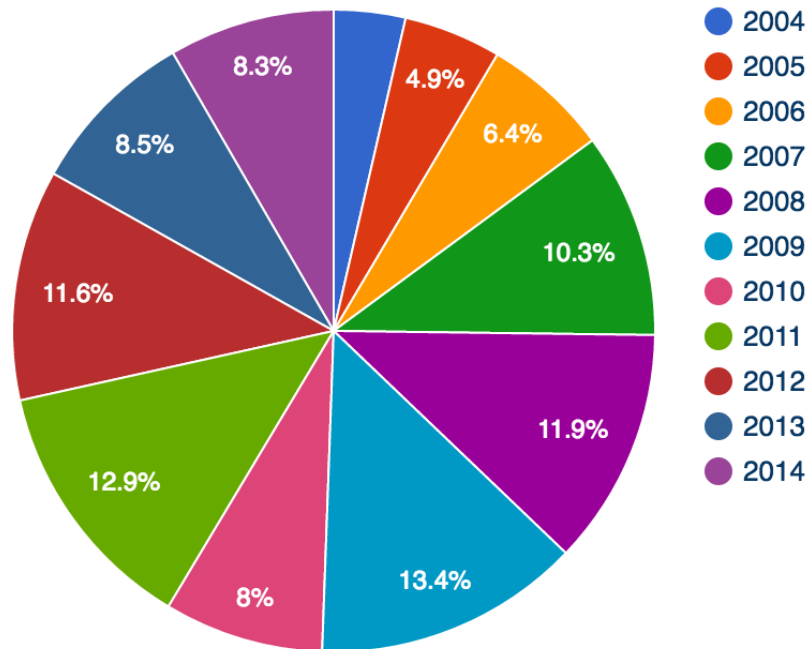
# Sample Size

- Total: 618 responses

Which high school did you attend in Palo Alto?



Graduation Year Of PAUSD Alumni

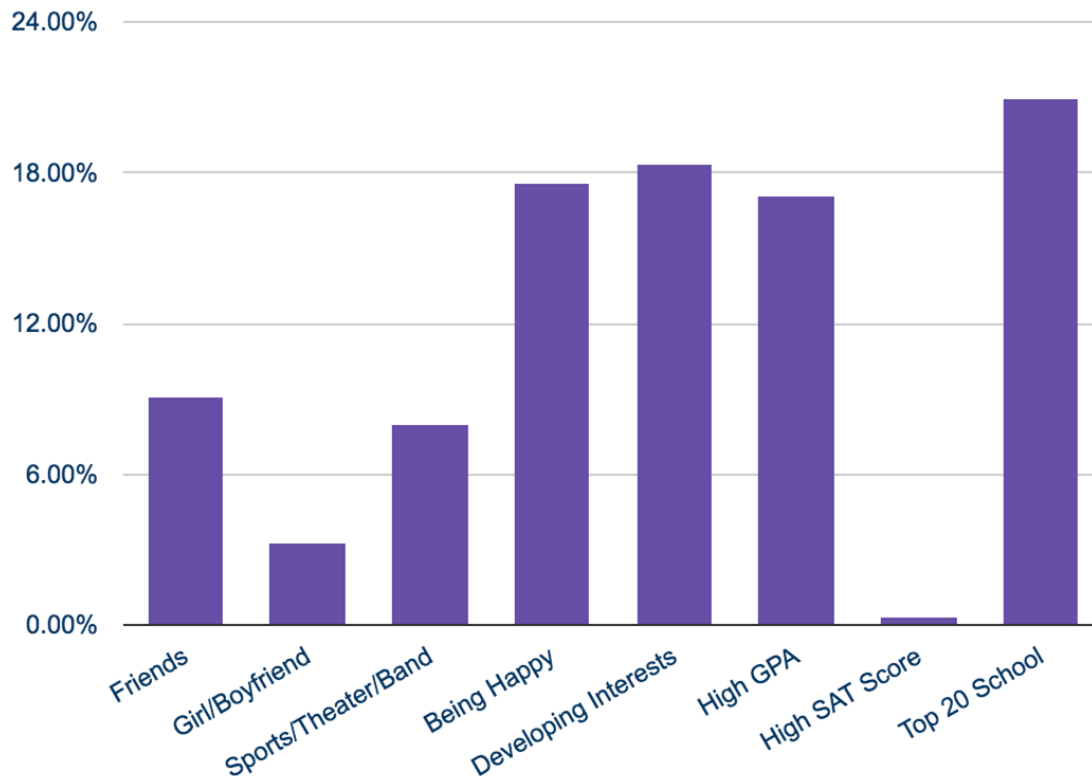


# High School Measure of Success

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

Followed by:

- Developing interests
- Being happy
- High GPA



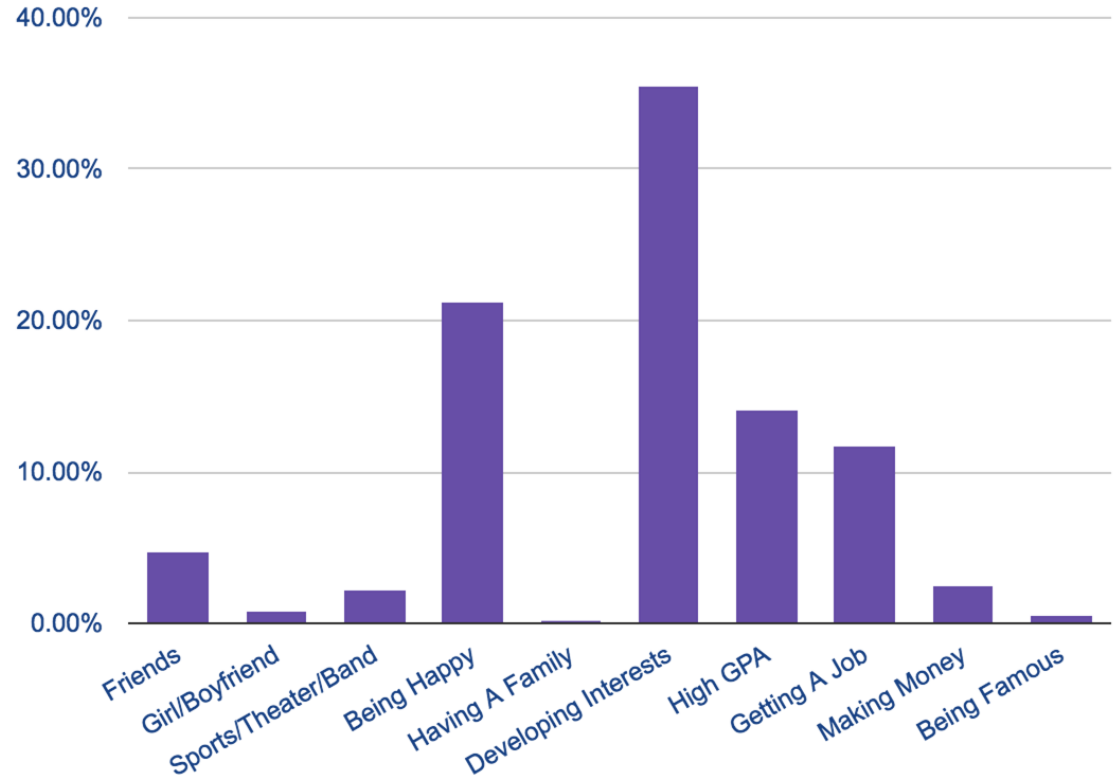
# College Measure of Success

#1: Developing interests

#2: Being happy

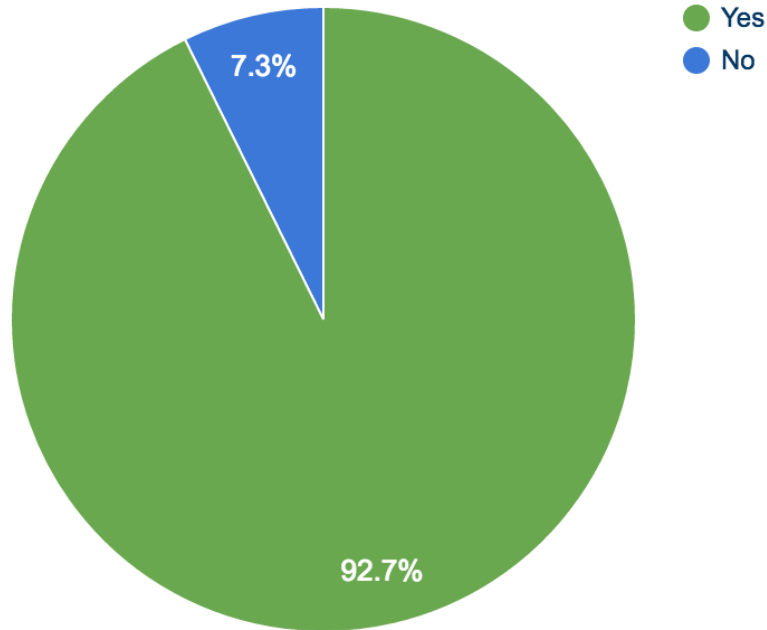
#3: High GPA

#4: Getting a job

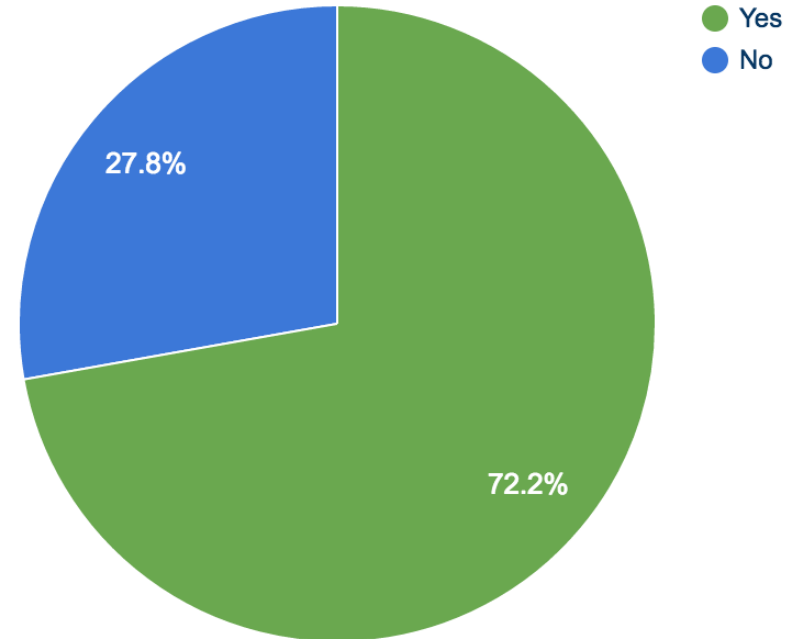


# How Well Prepared For College

**93% Prepared For College Level Courses**



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

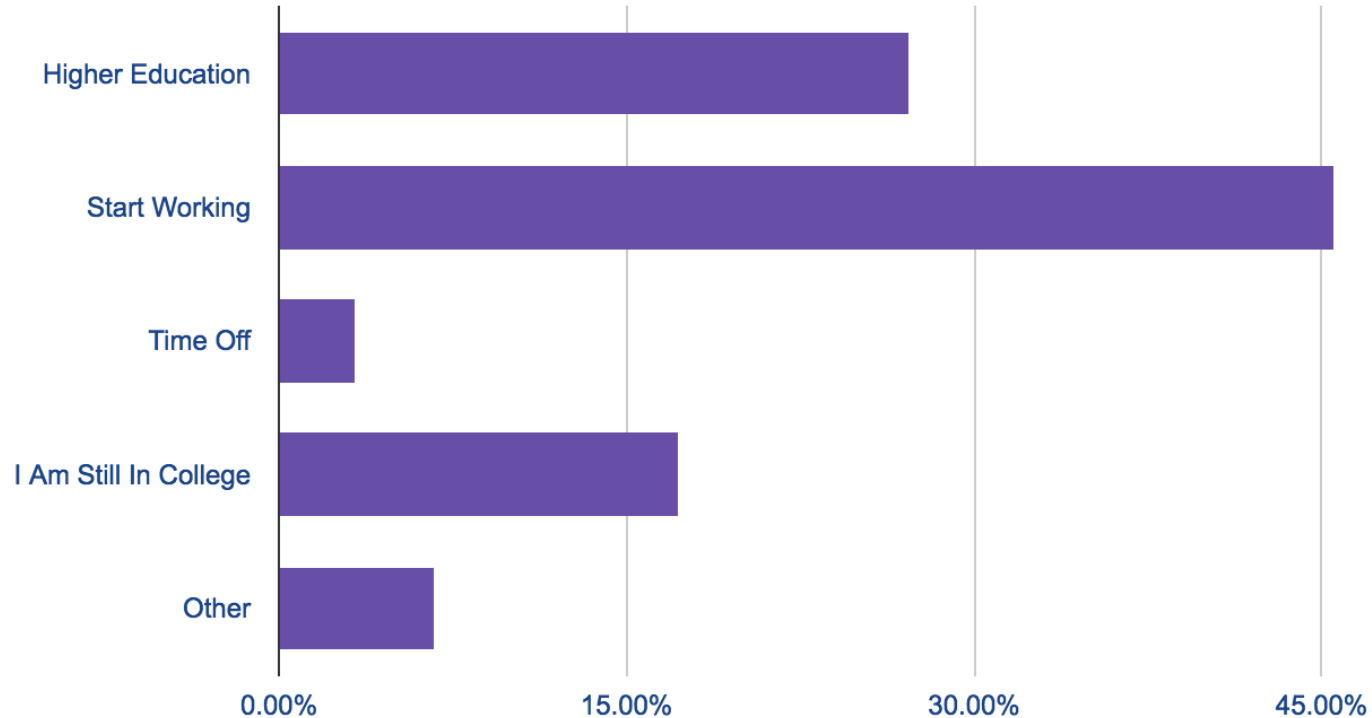




# College Years

- **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

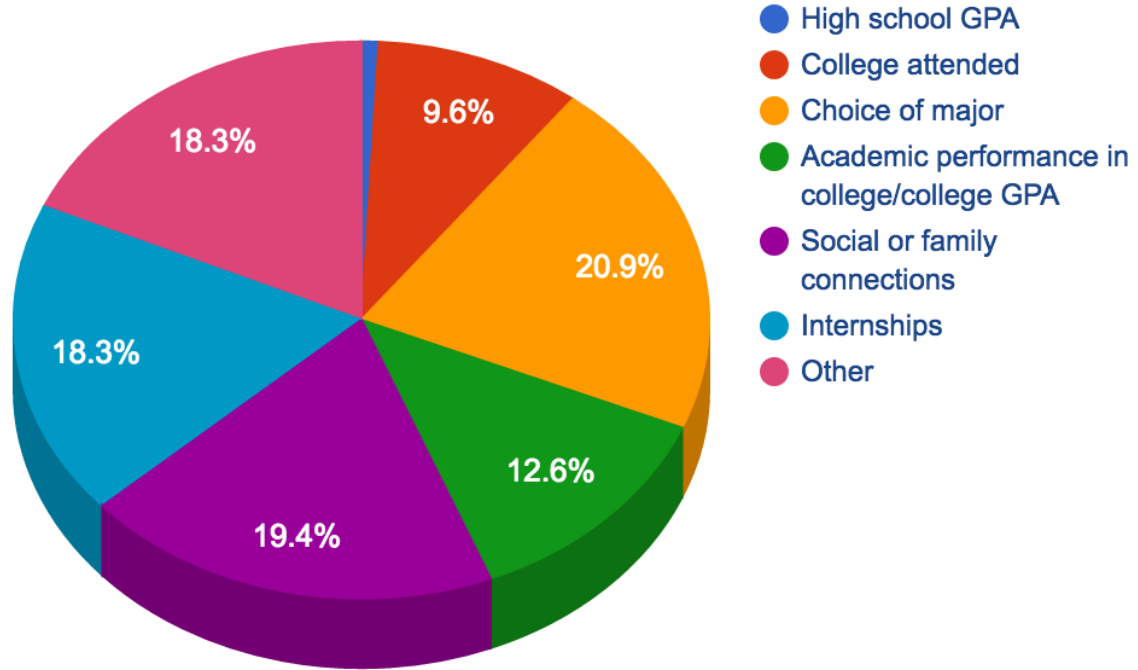
# Post College Graduation



# 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

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

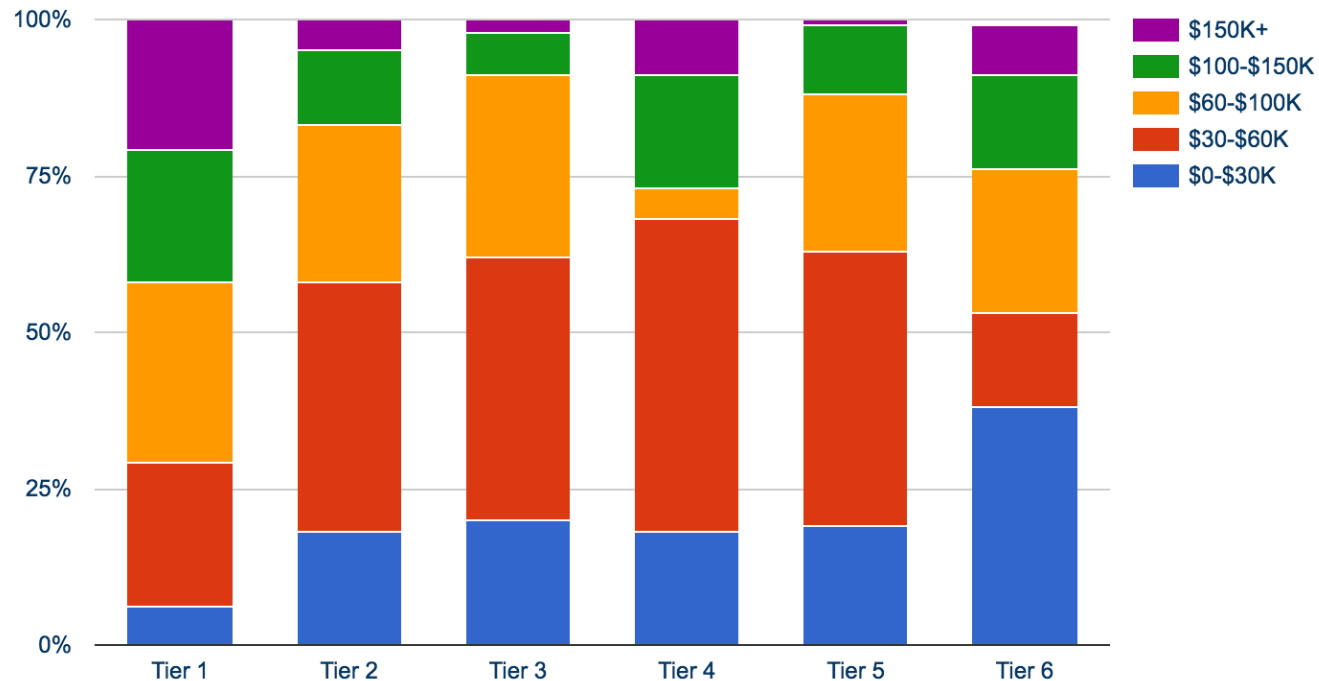
# Number of Responses per Tier Level

| 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             |

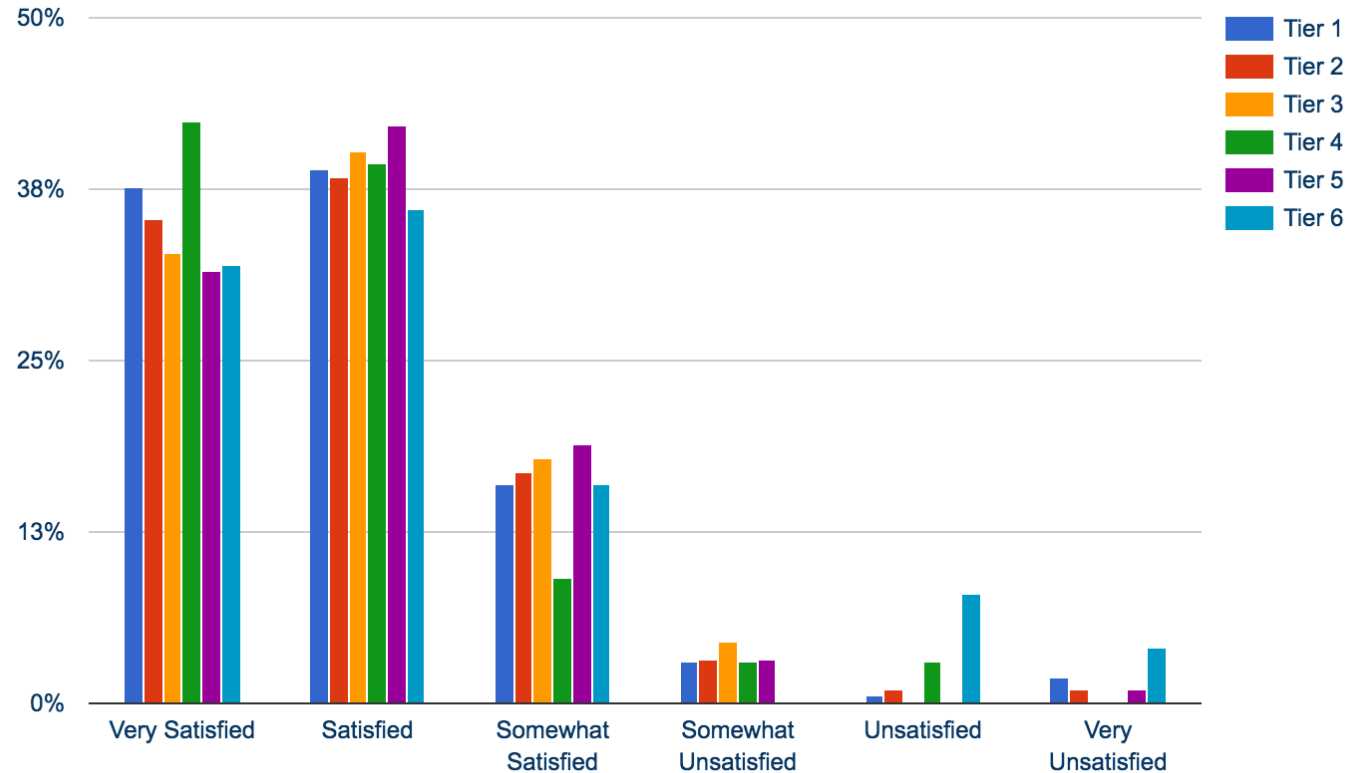
# Income Results by Tier Level



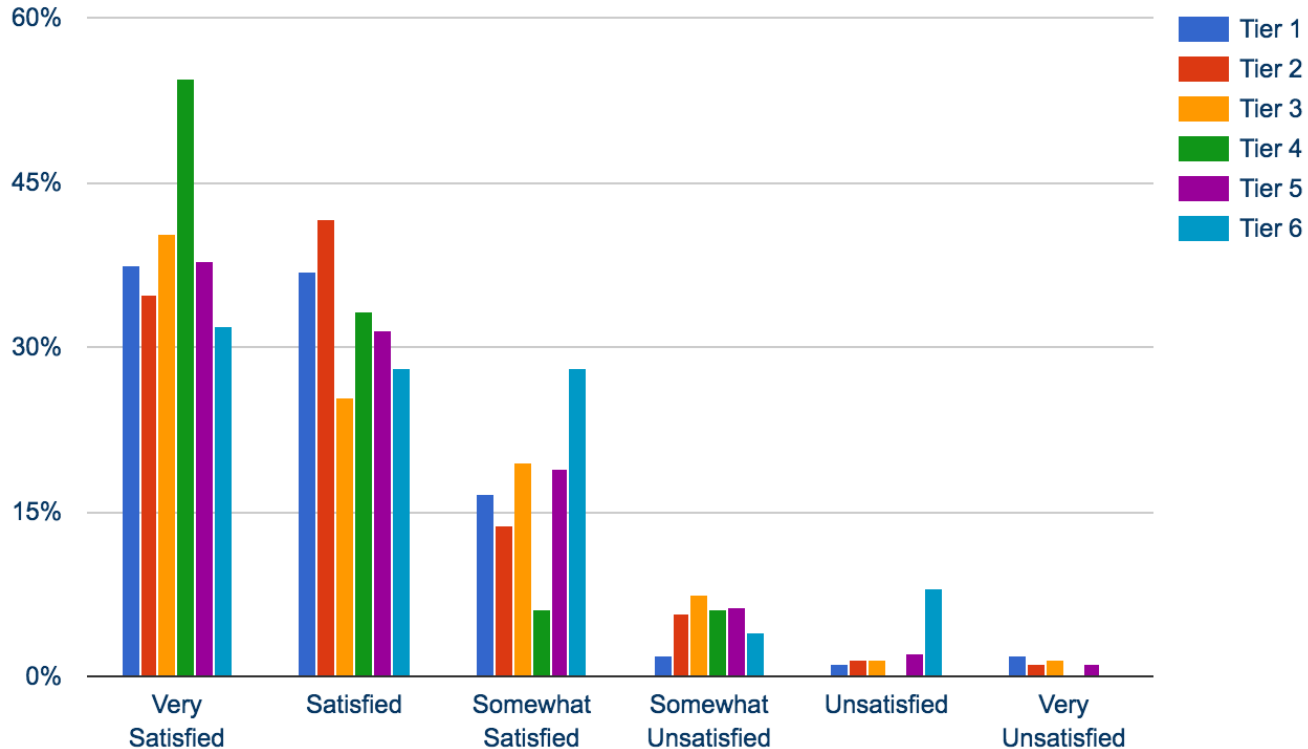
| Tier | In College/Pursuing Higher Education |
|------|--------------------------------------|
| 1    | 36%                                  |
| 2    | 33%                                  |
| 3    | 33%                                  |
| 4    | 21%                                  |
| 5    | 17%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



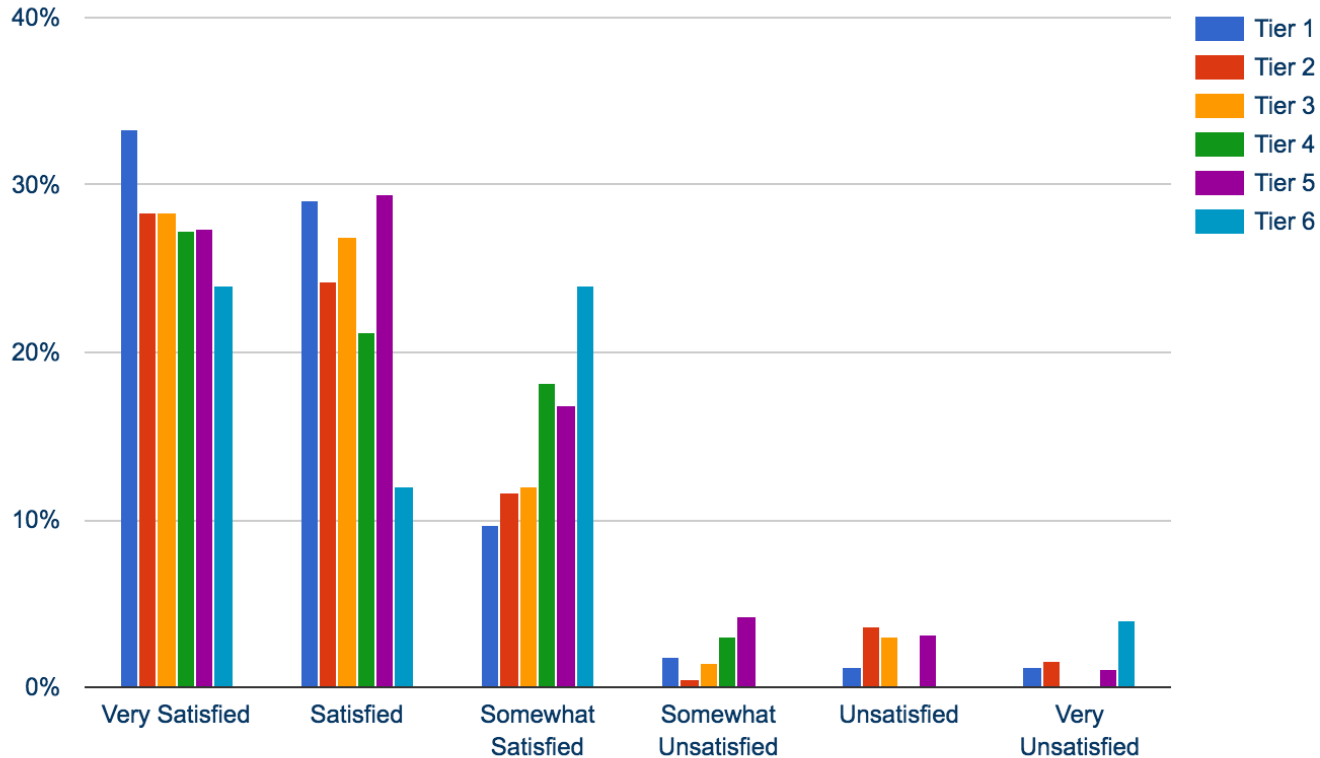
# Quality of Life Satisfaction Levels



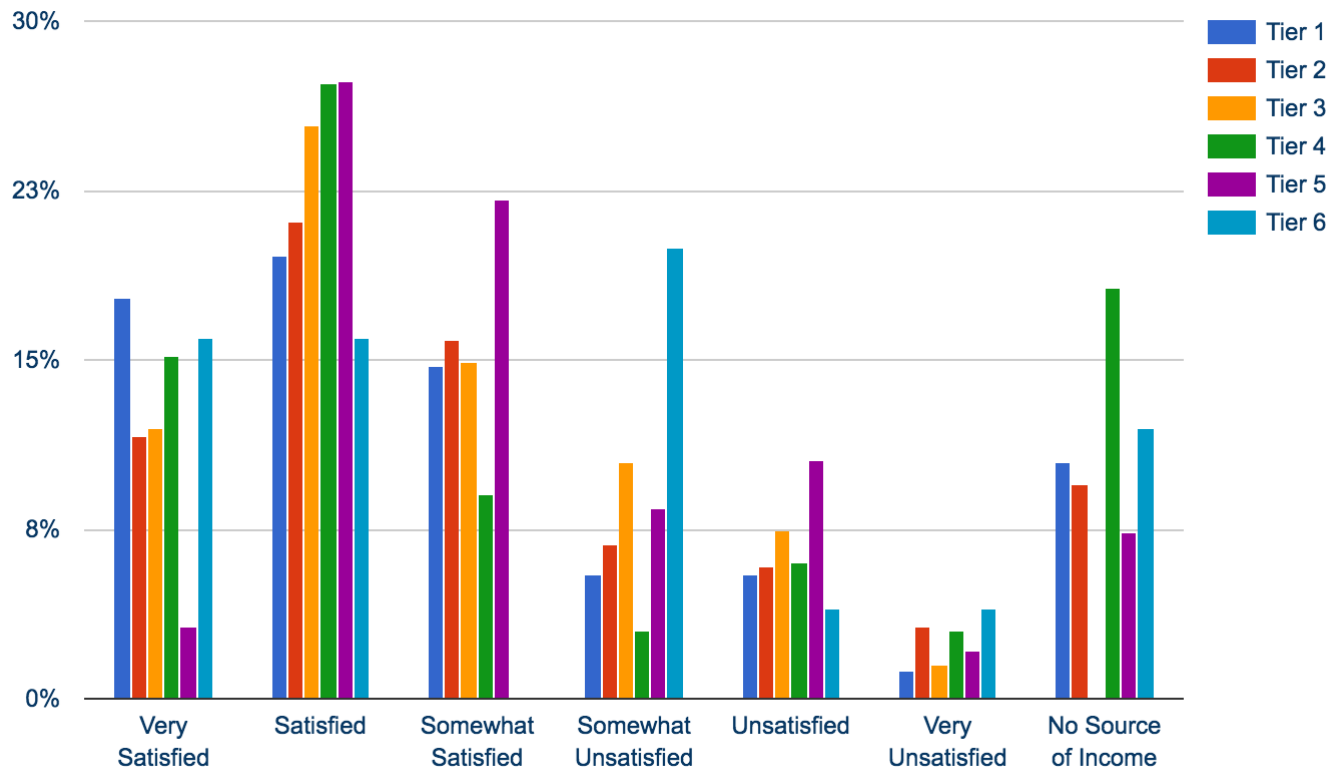
# Relationship Satisfaction Levels



# Job Satisfaction Levels



# Income Satisfaction Levels

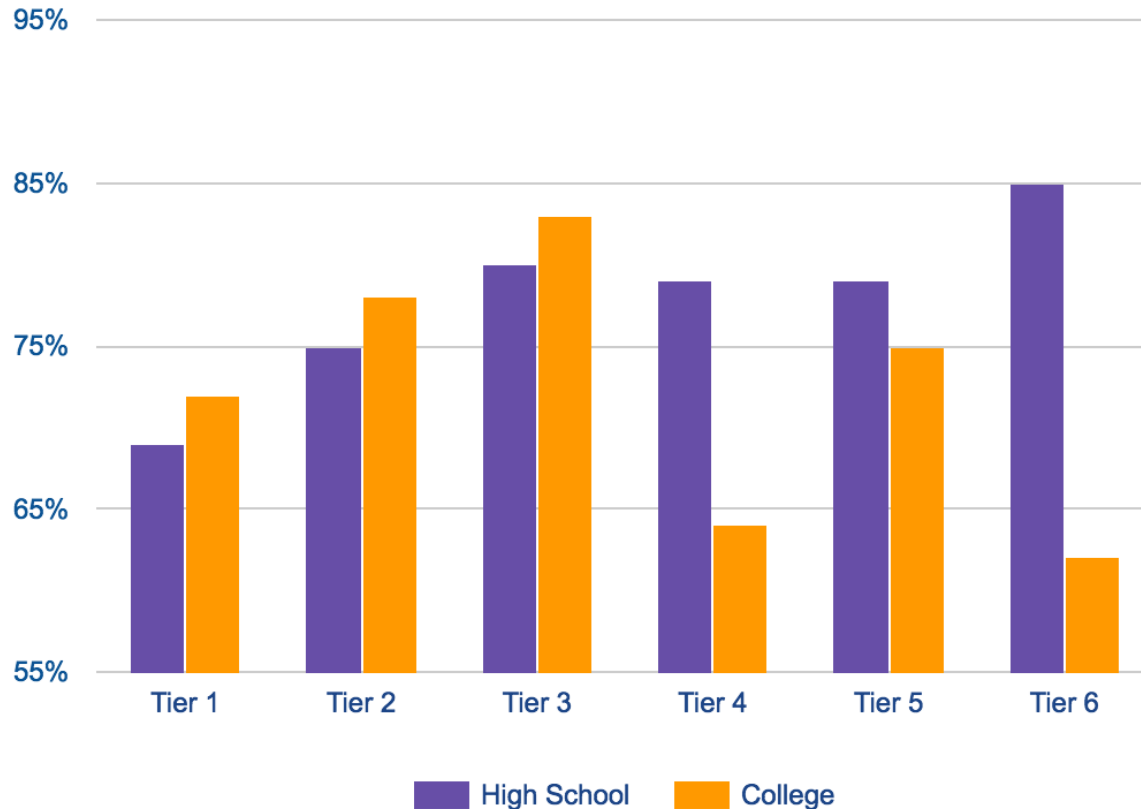


# Mental Health Conditions

- 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 |
|------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Developed  | +3%    | +3%    | +3%    | -15%   | -4%    | -23%   |
| Anxiety    | +1%    | -2%    | -10%   | -13%   | +1%    | -5%    |
| Depression | -2%    | -4%    | -7%    | -21%   | -5%    | -8%    |
| Burnt Out  | +28%   | -5%    | -15%   | -6%    | +1%    | -6%    |
| Counseling | +9%    | +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.”**

2004, Palo Alto High School Graduate

**“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!**