

# “The Road to [Cultural] Graduation”: A Qualitative Assessment of Obstacles and Successes for Cultural Graduation Participants

Jami Grosser, Irvin Harrison, Thavery Lay-Bounpraseuth, Lorena Marquez, Tashiana Bryant

Cultural Center Coordinators

Office of Student Life & Cultural Centers

## Introduction

- Each year Cal Poly Pomona Cultural Centers host 5 Cultural Graduation Celebrations to honor graduating students in a culturally-inclusive ceremony. In 2014, Cultural Centers hosted over 3000 families, friends, and university guests to celebrate 225 graduates.
- The assessment sought reflection from graduates on what it took for them to get to graduation and how their involvement in the Cultural Centers contributed to their success.

## Methodology

- Paper surveys were administered to graduates prior to the celebrations. Each survey asked two open-ended questions, and one Likert scale question.
- Participants were then asked two open-ended questions on camera and their responses were video recorded.
- 132 students (58.7% response rate) completed paper surveys, and 123 (54.7% response rate) completed the video interviews.

## Learning Outcomes

LO 1: To examine the obstacles students participating in Cultural Graduation Celebrations had to overcome in order to graduate.

LO 2: To explore the reasons why graduates felt they were able to graduate.

LO 3: To understand how the Cultural Centers contributed to the success of each graduate.



THANK YOU  
FOR SUPPORTING  
STUDENT SUCCESS

CAL POLY  
POMONA'S  
CULTURAL  
CENTERS

Lavender Graduation Celebration  
Native American Graduation Celebration  
Pan-African Graduation Celebration  
Pan-Asian Graduation Celebration  
Raza Graduation Celebration

2013-2014

## Implications for Practice

- Creating a community and familial-like setting for support is an asset to each Cultural Center and should be highlighted as a way to encourage participation from new students in center activities.
- Providing students within Cultural Centers greater access to scholarships and financial aid resources should be explored as a means to increase student success.

## Results

- 35.6% of the participants mentioned that there were **financial obstacles**, more than any other reason, to their success at Cal Poly Pomona. (LO 1)
- 26.5% of the respondents highlighted that their **academics** (e.g. trouble getting classes, advisors, selecting the right major) were an obstacle. (LO 1)
- 73.5% of students mentioned that **determination, hard work, and strong motivation** were reasons why they graduated. (LO 2)
- 33.3% responded that **family/community/friend support** as a major reason for their success. (LO 2)
- 70.2% of graduates listed that the Cultural Centers provided **community/friend building** that led to their success. (LO 3)
- 43.9% of respondents listed the Cultural Center **resources** (printing, books, advice, and leadership development) as contributors to their success. (LO 3)