

# INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

## ABOUT THE SORAYA

THE YOUNES AND SORAYA Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts ("the Soraya"; previously the Valley Performing Arts Center) is a premiere event venue at CSUN that offers diverse performance programming in the areas of music, dance, theater, family, and international events.

Since its opening in 2010, the Soraya has employed hundreds of students from every college at CSUN. Here we report on the findings of a collaboration

between the Soraya and Institutional Research (IR) to examine the impact of working at the Soraya on student success.

## DATA

SORAYA STAFF SHARED with IR staff a list of 370 student employees, which was combined with other student data from IR. This original list was then limited to those who entered CSUN as first-time freshmen.

We focused on the 122 student employees who entered CSUN as first-time freshmen and who worked at the Soraya between the fall 2007 and fall 2012 semesters to examine four-year graduation rates and the 79 student employees who

worked between fall 2007 to fall 2010 to examine six year graduation rates.

Soraya employees were compared to otherwise similar students who worked at different areas on campus, and to students who have never worked at CSUN.

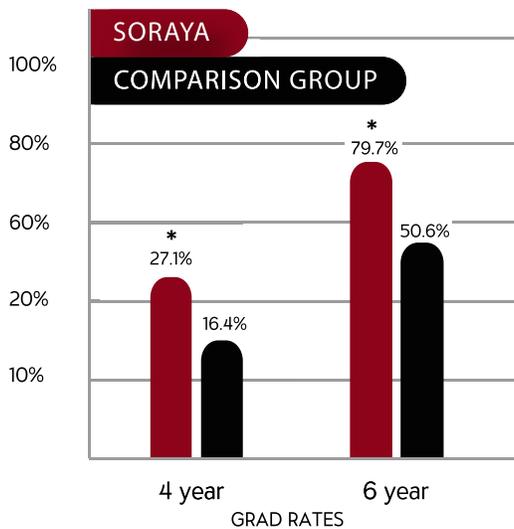
Since a student would have to choose to apply and then be chosen to work at the Soraya, it is possible that student employees are different in meaningful ways from those who are not employed there.

For this reason, we used a statistical technique, propensity score matching, to match the Soraya employees to a similar group of non-employees.

Groups were matched on: race/ethnic group, cohort year, gender, high school GPA, parent education, Pell Grant status, residence or non-residence in local area, and having a declared major in the College of Arts, Media, and Communication.

# FINDINGS

RESULTS SHOWED that 27.1% of Soraya employees who entered CSUN as first-time freshmen graduated in 4 years, compared to 16.4% of students in the comparison group. Additionally, 79.7% of Soraya employees graduated from CSUN in 6 years, compared to 50.6% of students in the comparison group.

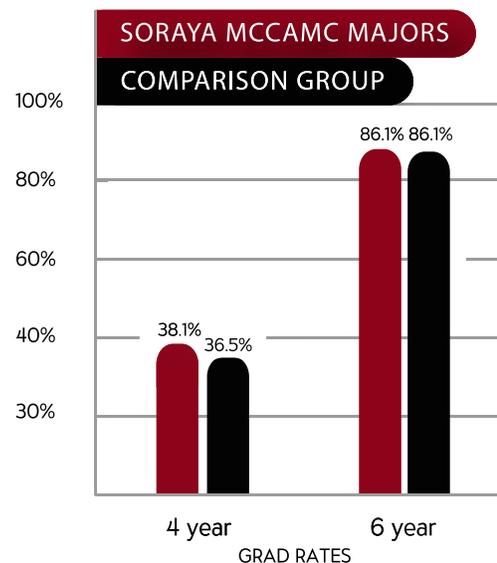


\*: These differences were statistically reliable ( $p < 0.05$ ); in other words, greater than 95% confidence in a true group difference.

About half of students who worked at the Soraya had a major in the Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication (MCCAMC). These majors closely relate to the work of the Soraya, so we examined whether Soraya student employees may have higher graduation rates because they are working in their field of interest.

We compared the graduation rates of Soraya student employees with MCCAMC majors with other CSUN student employees who were working in the department they were majoring in.

These analyses reveal that the two groups of student employees had similar graduation rates. Soraya student employees with MCCAMC majors had a 38.1% 4-year graduation rate, compared with a 36.5% rate among other CSUN student employees working in their major department and both groups had a 86.1% 6-year graduation rate (differences not statistically reliable;  $p > 0.05$ ).



# PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

THE FINAL SAMPLE SIZES of these comparisons were relatively small, so these findings should be considered preliminary.

Employment at the Soraya seems to be associated with positive student success outcomes, in terms of 4- and 6-year graduation rates.

This benefit may be attributed to students working

in their area of interest, as graduation rates were statistically similar when comparing Soraya employees with a major in MCCAMC to other students working in their major department.

The trends we have reported here are promising and IR staff will continue to examine student success outcomes associated with this and other types of student engagement on campus.