Using Institutional Survey Data to Understand the First Year Undergraduate Experience

Stay Day 2016

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Outline

• Goal: Understand the 1st Year Experience Across a Number of Domains:
  – Transitioning as a New Undergraduate
  – Resources that Aided in the Transition
  – Affordability & Cost of Attendance
  – Campus Climate for Diversity & Inclusion
Survey Samples

The Survey of New Students (SONS)
Fall 2013

The UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES)
Spring 2014
Survey of New Students (SONS)

- Launches at the start of every fall semester
- All new fall freshmen and transfers invited
- Survey open for first six - eight weeks of the students’ 1st semester
- Designed to capture students’ academic, co-curricular, and social experiences during their transition.
University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES)

• Historically administered every year at Berkeley; Administered every other year as of 2012

• All undergraduates invited to complete the survey

• Launches in April & typically closes between June & July

• Designed to capture students’ academic, co-curricular, social, and extra-curricular experiences during their time at the university.
# Fall 2013 SONS and 2014 UCUES Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Invited</th>
<th>Responded</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SONS*</td>
<td>6,943</td>
<td>3,066</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCUES</td>
<td>25,404</td>
<td>9,785</td>
<td>39%</td>
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| SONS 2013 to UCUES 2014 | 3,066 | 1,603 | 52% |

*Note: The 738 Fall Program for Freshmen students invited to SONS 2013 are excluded from the numbers above, as well as the analyses shared in this presentation.*
Transitioning as a New Undergraduate

What do students say about the start of their first semester at UC Berkeley?
“Overall, I am off to…”

The integration into college life has gone much better than expected. Everyone here is always willing to help out.”

“Classes don't seem as hard as I feared. While the coursework is challenging, it isn't something I can't handle yet.”

“The transition from studying in a community college to studying at a four-year university was much smoother than expected.”
The Transition:  
In Their Own Words  
(What has gone well?)

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In Their Own Words  
(What has gone well?)

“My professors are so much more accessible than I expected! I was terrified that they would be much harder to communicate with…”

“Thus far I have been able to sign up for all of the classes I wanted to with ease. I have also found all of my classes on campus with little trouble.”

“The academics at the University and getting to know a diverse population on campus have profoundly pleased me.”

“My professors are so much more accessible than I expected! I was terrified that they would be much harder to communicate with…”

Source: SONS 2013
The Transition: In Their Own Words
(What has not gone well?)

“Enrolling in classes and deciphering the many websites that go with them has not gone well. I am still wait listed in one lab and one lecture section for classes I need…”

“Classes have been hard to figure out, especially the first few days when we didn't know where to go or if we were supposed to go.”

“Adjusting to life on a college campus, i.e. time management, and the first week of homesickness.”
The Transition: 
In Their Own Words 
(What has not gone well?)

“As a new student, the campus is kind of big, and I lost my direction several time as I first time go to class. If there are some more campus directory around the campus that will be helpful for the newbies.”

“The only real thing that I have found to be disappointing is how decentralized the administration of the campus is.”

“Cal is incredibly huge and it has a bunch to offer, sometimes it's hard to hone in on what exactly is available to me”
Resources that Aided the Transition

What do students say about the start of their first semester as a Berkeley undergraduate?
Resources that Aided in the Transition: (New Freshmen)

Percent “Strongly agree” or “Agree”

- A family member: 57%
- CalSO: 58%
- Academic Services in Res Hall: 64%
- Welcome Week Activities: 64%
- MyBerkeleyApp: 67%
- Res Hall Staff: 68%
- EOP Office: 70%
- Student Learning Center: 73%
- Summer Bridge: 82%
- Another Berkeley Student: 83%

“My transition to UC Berkeley has gone well. I was a part of Summer Bridge which really helped me get a head start here at Cal”

“I am really confident about the classes I chose. This would not be possible without the help of the EOP and IAP counselors!”

Understanding the 1st Year Experience
Resources that Aided in the Transition: (New Transfers)

Percent “Strongly agree” or “Agree”

- Res Hall Staff: 62%
- EOP Office: 63%
- CalSO: 64%
- Student Learning Center: 66%
- Major/dept. advisor: 67%
- Transfer Edge: 68%
- A 98/198 course for new students: 70%
- TRSP Center: 72%
- MyBerkeleyApp: 75%
- Another Berkeley Student: 79%

“Overall, I've been surprised by how easily I can get answers to all of my questions. I learned very early on how welcoming the TRSP Center is…”

“My transition to Berkeley has been very smooth due to my participation in the Transfer Edge program.”
Resources that Aided in the Transition: In Their Own Words

“The International Office has been extremely helpful in providing ample information and resources which allow international students to adjust to new cultures and education systems very quickly and effectively.”

“Meeting with my academic adviser has been a lovely experience. She has helped me declare a major and has pointed me to classes that are good fit with my areas of interest.”

“Everything went really well, and I'm surprised of all the resources that as a student you can take advantage of it, like the Career Center or the numerous associations connected to the school.”

“The advisors in my program all seem very nice and helpful. The Career Center representatives seem there to help as well.”
New Students’ Perspectives Regarding Affordability & the Cost of Attendance

How manageable is the cost of attending Berkeley?

How, if at all, does this change by the end of the 1st year?
Do 1st Semester Students Feel that the Cost of Attendance is Manageable?

“Given the grants and scholarships, if any, that you receive, the total cost of attending UC Berkeley is manageable”

67% (SONS)

“Financial Aid covered all my tuition costs. I also moved here during the summer and found a part time job I could keep during the semester so I’m financially okay.”

“Although I receive financial aid, I've been finding it very stressful affording my 'back to school' shopping list combined with the outrageously high rent median.”
What Do New Student Feel About the Cost of Attendance at the End of their 1st Year?

“Given the grants and scholarships, if any, that you receive, the total cost of attending UC Berkeley is manageable”

![](chart)

“It is amazing that my tuition is paid for - I am thankful for that everyday - but I have still accumulated an amount of debt that is very concerning. It was difficult to decide whether to take summer courses, rather than look for paid work.”

“The cost of going to Cal tempts me to want to graduate a semester or two earlier to save money, which can cut short my ‘college experience’.”
Cost of Attendance is Manageable: Changing Perspectives in 1st Year

“Given the grants and scholarships, if any, that you receive, the total cost of attending UC Berkeley is manageable”

- Compared to higher and lower income students, middle-income students (i.e., $80,000 - $149,999) are less likely to feel that the total cost of attending UC Berkeley is manageable. Further, as the first year progresses these feelings worsen.

Understanding the 1st Year Experience
“Cost isn't that big of a problem for someone in my position; however, with that being said, it isn't easy to pay this much.”

“I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude towards the financial aid program for allowing me to afford such a great education. I am very grateful for programs such as Blue & Gold, and would not have been able to enroll without them.”

“The tuition that I'm paying I believed is totally worth the education that I am receiving at Cal. However, the housing and food is what really makes it expensive to live in Berkeley. I am consistently worried about my financial situation here in Berkeley. I can't wait to graduate and be over with it.”
Cost of Attendance Perspectives: In Their Own Words

“Scholarships were generous and most helpful. Cal was the most affordable out of my transfer options.”

“My family is rather well-off, so I don't experience any financial difficulties.”

“Housing is so expensive in Berkeley. When planning my finances once I decided to attend UCB, I had no idea how expensive housing would be! I work a lot and I don't even make rent every month. Attending school and paying for tuition and books could be more manageable if housing was less. BART is also so expensive! How much time I spend worrying about money and at work really detracts from my capacity to focus on school and do well. I have strongly considered dropping out. I don't know what to do…”
Cost of Attendance is Manageable: Changing Perspectives in 1st Year

“Given the grants and scholarships, if any, that you receive, the total cost of attending UC Berkeley is manageable”

Percent Agreement (“Strongly agree” / “Agree” / “Somewhat agree”)

“As an out of state student who needs a lot more financial aid than I'm getting, it's a big sacrifice for my family and my personal fiscal future for me to come to Cal. I love it here and feel I've made the right college decision, but it causes me a lot of stress.”
Cost of Attendance: In Their Own Words

“For an out of state student, tuition is really expensive and forming the first year costs a lot...”

“The cost to attend Cal raises my expectations of the quality of education here, which can sometimes be disappointing. However, most of the time, I feel like it is worth my money.”

“Like many International students, the cost of attending Cal is high, and our ineligibility when it comes to financial aid packages is tough as well. Despite this, I do think it's worth the money; Go bears!”

“It has made me completely re-think my major in terms of which one will yield a higher pay, even if it's something that I know will be more difficult for me and not something I necessarily enjoy. It has caused me a lot of stress and lose some faith in whether or not I belong at Cal.”

Source: UCUES 2014 (SONS-UCUES Respondents)
Campus Climate

What is the campus climate at the start of the 1\textsuperscript{st}-year?

How, if at all, does this change by the end of the 1\textsuperscript{st}-year?
What is Campus Climate?

Campus climate is not the weather:

– “Campus climate is a measure — real or perceived — of the personal, academic and professional interactions that occur.” (UC Office of the President)

– “[T]he events, messages, symbols, core beliefs, feelings, and so, so much more - which make this a welcoming environment – or not - for all.” (Virginia Tech)
Climate Metrics in SONS & UCUES

• Respect Rates
  – Student respond to the prompt “students of my [affinity group] are respected on this campus”
  – The respect rate for a group is the percentage of respondents in a given group who “strongly agree”, “agree”, or “somewhat agree” that their group is respected on campus

• Sense of Belonging
• Diversity Importance on Campus
• Feeling Valued as an Individual
Percent agreement with “Students of my race/ethnicity are respected on this campus” by race/ethnicity

- **White** (n = 2,425): 91% (Strongly agree) + 76% (Agree) + 52% (Somewhat agree)
- **Asian** (n = 3,568): 91% (Strongly agree) + 71% (Agree) + 52% (Somewhat agree)
- **Decline to State** (n = 345): 89% (Strongly agree) + 76% (Agree) + 52% (Somewhat agree)
- **Native American/Alaska Native** (n = 66): 76% (Strongly agree) + 71% (Agree) + 52% (Somewhat agree)
- **Chicano/Latino** (n = 1,257): 71% (Strongly agree) + 71% (Agree) + 52% (Somewhat agree)
- **African American** (n = 267): 52% (Strongly agree) + 71% (Agree) + 52% (Somewhat agree)
Respect Rates Decline in 1st-Year (new students only)

Percent agreement with “Students of my race/ethnicity are respected on this campus” by race/ethnicity

- **White (SONS)**: 98% (Strongly agree) - 92% (Agree) - 90% (Somewhat agree)
- **African American (UCUES)**: 92% (Strongly agree) - 71% (Agree) - 54% (Somewhat agree)
- **Chicano/Latino (SONS)**: 92% (Strongly agree) - 78% (Agree) - 90% (Somewhat agree)
- **Asian (SONS)**: 95% (Strongly agree) - 80% (Agree) - 90% (Somewhat agree)
- **Chicano/Latino (UCUES)**: 92% (Strongly agree) - 78% (Agree) - 90% (Somewhat agree)
- **Asian (UCUES)**: 90% (Strongly agree) - 80% (Agree) - 90% (Somewhat agree)
Other Campus Climate Metrics also Show Declines in the 1st Year

"Diversity is important on this campus" (SONS) 96%
"Diversity is important on this campus" (UCUES) 88%
"I feel that I belong at this campus" (SONS) 91%
"I feel that I belong at this campus" (UCUES) 84%
"I feel valued as an individual on this campus" (SONS) 89%
"I feel valued as an individual on this campus" (UCUES) 71%

Understanding the 1st Year Experience
So What?
Preliminary Persistence Analysis

Is there a connection between campus climate and persistence?

Is there a connection between changes in cost of attendance perceptions and persistence?
Almost all respondents who felt a sense of belonging on campus by the end of their 1\textsuperscript{st} year were retained 1-year after starting at Berkeley (i.e., into their 2\textsuperscript{nd}-year). This compares to a retention rate of 93\% for those with a lower sense of belonging.

This difference continues to hold for 2-year retention, although the gap narrows.

- **Almost all respondents who felt a sense of belonging on campus by the end of their 1\textsuperscript{st} year were retained 1-year after starting at Berkeley (i.e., into their 2\textsuperscript{nd}-year). This compares to a retention rate of 93\% for those with a lower sense of belonging.**

- **This difference continues to hold for 2-year retention, although the gap narrows.**

Population: Fall 2013 entering freshmen who completed both SONS 2013 & UCUES 2014, and responded to the Sense of Belonging question in UCUES (n = 899)
99% of freshmen respondents who reported improved perceptions regarding the cost of attendance by the end of their 1st year were retained 2 years after starting at Berkeley (i.e., into the start of their 3rd year). This compares to a 2-year retention of 94% for those whose perceptions about the cost of attendance worsened in their 1st year.

“How much time I spend worrying about money and at work really detracts from my capacity to focus on school and do well. I have strongly considered dropping out. I don't know what to do…”
Limitations & Next Steps

• Possible non-response bias

• Results are correlational

• Given that only a sub-set of new students responded to both the SONS & UCUES during their first year, some analysis represents data from as few as 1 in 10 new students.

• Once UCUES 2016 data becomes available, analysis on Fall 2015 SONS & Spring 2016 UCUES data can be explored for further insight.

• Additional analyses linking survey data with student outcomes (e.g., retention, graduation) are needed to better determine how robust these associations are.
Data Resources & Contact Info

- SONS & UCUES Results on the web: [http://opa.berkeley.edu/campus-surveys](http://opa.berkeley.edu/campus-surveys)

- Cal Answers: [http://calanswers.berkeley.edu](http://calanswers.berkeley.edu)

- Office of Planning and Analysis: [http://opa.berkeley.edu](http://opa.berkeley.edu)

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