UC Davis Students’ Perception of Credit Card Marketers On Campus

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In September of 2001, the State Legislature mandated that California’s state universities and community colleges adopt policies to regulate the marketing practices used by credit card companies on their campuses. Concurrently, the Regents of the University of California and the governing bodies of accredited private or independent colleges were requested to voluntarily adopt such policies. To this end, institutions were asked to consider limiting the number of credit card marketing sites on campuses; to provide credit card and debt education sessions to new students; and to prohibit credit card companies from offering gifts to students who apply for credit cards.

Implemented to assess student perception of the relationship that UCD has with credit card vendors on this campus, this QuickSurvey is the first in a series of three on the subject of credit cards and UC Davis students. Students were asked what they assume when they see a credit card vendor at a table outside the bookstore. Two choices were given: “UCD has screened the credit provider and considers this offer to be relatively good for students”, or: “UCD has little if any association with the credit provider other than permitting access to campus”.

Responses differed by the class level of the student making the response: 30% of freshman respondents assumed that credit providers with tables set up on campus are vetted by the university, while only 13% of seniors did so (Table 1).

To summarize the views of all respondents: 18% assumed that UCD evaluates credit providers on campus and considers the offers to be relatively good for students. A higher percentage of freshmen responded to this poll than exists in relation to the other class levels on campus: the data was weighted to remove this effect before overall results were calculated.

Of the two response choices, which most closely describes actual practice? The second does. Although UCD does impose a few rules upon marketers limiting the type of giveaways that may be given to credit applicants and specifying that a general flier on debt management be provided, the university does not evaluate the credit offers being made or check the rates being charged – something that 18% of respondents had mistakenly assumed was true.
A good number of students are viewing on-campus credit offers as “a good offer for students” under the assumption that the campus has evaluated the offers, something they would not assume for off-campus offers. Further, this false sense of security is held by a higher proportion of freshmen than by any other class level.

This report was compiled by Student Affairs Research & Information (SARI) based on a My.UCDavis QuickSurvey. The QuickSurvey ran from October 18 through October 25, 2002, was made available to all students, and generated 3231 responses. For more detailed information, contact us at (530) 754-7985.