Student Satisfaction with Counseling Center Services: Comparing Response to Two Question Formats

The UC Davis Counseling Center resides on the second floor of North Hall where it provides short-term counseling at no cost to UC Davis students. Because its mission is student service and because much of its budget is derived from student fees, it is that important that students be asked about the service provided.

QuickSurvey asked undergraduate students about their level of satisfaction with Counseling Center services, and results indicated that for every 10 students about 4 were satisfied, 4 were neutral and 2 were dissatisfied (Chart 1). While the ratio of satisfied to dissatisfied students favored the Counseling Center, the relatively large percentage of students experiencing some level of dissatisfaction was somewhat troubling. The percentage dissatisfied or very dissatisfied was especially troubling because it was substantially larger than that observed in a spring 2001 undergraduate survey (<10%). The percentage with some level of satisfaction was very similar in 2001. Fortunately, a more comprehensive study of Counseling Center services is planned for this spring and should help to clarify these response patterns.

Item format can have a large effect on survey results. To control for this potential measurement error, two versions of the item were administered, each to a random sample of about 350 undergraduates. The first version asked, “How satisfied are you with UC Davis Counseling Center services?” and presented 6 options: very satisfied, satisfied, neutral, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied, and NA (not applicable). The second version posed the same question and nearly the same response options except that the NA option was removed and students with no Counseling Center experience were instructed to submit their entry without selecting an alternative. These item formats are two commonly used for ratings, and this QuickSurvey administration allowed us to determine level of satisfaction with more confidence than if only one item form had been used. Item type did not affect the distribution of ratings: the proportion selecting NA in the first item was similar to the proportion leaving all alternatives blank in the second item.

This report was compiled by Student Affairs Research & Information (SARI) based on two versions of a My.UCDavis QuickSurvey. One version ran on January 9, 2003, and the other on January 10. A total of 702 responses were gathered. One or the other version was available to all students. For more detailed information, contact us at (530) 754-7985.