Summer Session At UC Davis:
One 10-Week Session Instead of Two 6-Week Sessions?
Students Speak Up

By Steve Chatman

This QuickSurvey was conducted at the request of the Council of Associate Deans to gauge student interest in a 10-week summer session term instead of two 6-week terms. Student participation on this topic was high among undergraduates with nearly 3,400 responding within the week the survey was posted.

The QuickSurvey consisted of two items that oversimplified the issue by representing it as a choice between either two 6-week terms or one 10-week term. In practice, summer will most likely be a combination of both. The first of the two items asked students about their summer plans and, if they indicated that they planned to attend summer session at Davis, they received a follow-up question asking whether they would still attend if summer were one 10-week term instead of two 6-week terms. Here are the results.

There were several points worth noting. The first four pertain to responses to the initial routing question about summer plans.

- 38% planned to attend summer session. That is a substantial number
- One half of that 38% planned to attend both summer terms
- Of those planning to attend one 6-week term, most planned to attend the first one
- Another 18% had no plans at this time and might be persuaded to attend summer session

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you plan to attend summer session at UC Davis this year?</th>
<th>If UC Davis were to change summer session to one 10-week term instead of two 6-week terms, would you still attend?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I plan to attend BOTH 6-week terms</td>
<td>19% Yes, 62% No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I plan to attend the first 6-week term</td>
<td>13% Yes, 38% No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I plan to attend the second 6-week term</td>
<td>5% Yes, 23% No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, I do not plan to attend summer session</td>
<td>44% No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have no current plans</td>
<td>18% No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were several points worth noting. The first four pertain to responses to the initial routing question about summer plans.
The next three points are about the choice between 10- and 6-week terms.

- Overall, nearly 50% of those planning to attend summer session were willing to attend one 10-week term (48%)
- The majority (62%) of those planning to attend two 6-week terms would attend one 10-week term but …
- The majority of those planning to attend one 6-week term would rather not attend one 10-week term. Oddly, resistance was substantially higher among those planning to attend the second 6-week term than those planning to attend the first 6-week term (77% and 62% respectively)

Student Comments

When students responded that they planned to attend summer session but would NOT attend if it were a single 10-week term, they were asked “Why not?” and presented with space for open-ended answers. The following comments summarize these remarks and are ordered by frequency with the most often mentioned listed first.

Stated preferences for two 6-week terms among those now planning to attend both 6-week terms

- Able to take more courses, more units
- Can take two classes, the first being a prerequisite for the second
- Like faster pace for a variety of reasons
- Would have more time to work for pay each day
- Enjoy focusing on one class but being able to take two over summer
- Feels more like summer with shorter courses
- Less likely to have scheduling conflicts among classes with the two 6-week terms

Stated preference for one 6-week term instead of a 10-week term

- Need a vacation, want time with family
- Need to work during the other half
- Have vacation plans, plan to travel, to do an internship
- Summer is meant to be shorter, like shorter courses
- And one suggested that we would be better off if we offered 6-week terms year-round instead

Very little explanation or comment is required as the reasons offered were clearly stated, but it should be noted that there was a mix of objective and subjective reasons. Objectively, students explained that they would not be able to complete a two-course sequence and would probably not be able to complete as many units over a 10-week summer, especially if they had other significant obligations on their time. Subjectively, there was a desire to keep summer different from the regular academic year and to preserve time for vacation, travel, time with family, and other activities.