Maximizing Student Response to a
Comprehensive Undergraduate Student Experience Survey

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The goal of this project is to identify the factors that will increase response rate for the 2004 QE2Q census that SARI (Student Affairs and Research Information) distributes once every three years. These factors include using prize incentives appealing to the undergraduate population and survey strategies that would increase survey exposure to everyone. After analyzing responses from a moderate size sample of undergraduate students, we recommend SARI should provide early survey responders to have higher probability of winning a prize, increase odds of winning by adding more prizes of a smaller denominations (versus a few large prizes that by probability are harder to win), use appealing denominations for cash prizes, and employ a more aggressive advertising scheme by advertising in strategic areas in The Aggie and by using chalkboards.

Every three years, SARI conducts a QE2Q (Davis Quality of Educational Experiences Questionnaire) of the undergraduate population regarding their educational experiences, academic and social interests. This critical census is the most widely used student information source for UCD program evaluations. In 2001, the QE2Q was converted into electronic format, and the use of e-mail invitations guided students to the survey website. This form of publicity and persistence was very effective which led to an impressive census response rate of 54% of the total student population. However, e-mail invitations are no longer effective due to e-mail desensitivity and loss of reliability. Spam filters often set up by students and e-mail service providers commonly misjudge email invitations as spam and automatically delete them.

Our main objectives are to increase survey response rate by:

1) Searching for the most effective method to distribute $3000 worth of cash prizes
2) Understanding why a portion of students are not willing to respond
3) Understanding how we can increase survey awareness and importance through a more effective advertising campaign
In order to accomplish our objectives, we surveyed 3239 students regarding their prize preferences (cash vs. physical prizes), the types of student apathy that exists against the QE2Q, and how census advertising and awareness can be distributed more effectively via specific locations such as in The Aggie or in the Silo/Memorial Union student areas.

To gather student opinion:

1. We posted a QuickSurvey through the MyUCDavis portal:

   **Quick Survey**
   Do you pay attention to the advertisements on/from campus, i.e. in the Cal Aggie newspaper or on bulletin boards?
   - Yes
   - No

   Which of the following sources of advertisements on/from campus do you pay attention to? (Check all that apply)
   - The California Aggie newspaper
   - Unframed bulletin posters
   - MUGb posters
   - Chalkboards in the classrooms
   - Bulletin Boards
   - Emails sent out from UC Davis organizations

2. We also sent out a survey to randomly selected undergraduates. Some of the questions included:

   Do you prefer cash or physical prizes?
   - a. Yes
   - b. No

   Do you think the prizes are targeted to you? (in reference to physical prizes)
   - a. Yes
   - b. No

   Should earlier responders have a greater chance at winning prizes?
   - a. Yes
   - b. No
What is a good way to reward early responders?

a. Rollover
b. Bonus Chances
c. 2\textsuperscript{nd} chance

QuickSurvey results

We found that 61\% of students, in a sample size of 3239 students, do notice ads on campus, and that most students notice ads in The Aggie (27\%), followed closely by notices on chalkboards (20\%). Therefore, ads in the Aggie seem most effective at informing students regarding information about the QE2Q census.

Focus survey results

Results from the focus group survey have shown that 91\% of respondents prefer cash prizes and that 58\% of respondents feel that current prizes are not targeted towards them. We tried asking about group specific prizes, but then cash still appeals the most to the responders. 50\% of respondents think that early QE2Q census responders should have a better chance of winning prizes, and that 42\% of focus group respondents think that some form of bonus opportunity should be given to those students that respond early to the census. These percentages represent the majority of respondents during the focus group survey that also contains respondents’ respective opinions.

Based on the results of the QuickSurvey and the focus group survey, we conclude with these recommendations for SARI:

1. Allow early responders to win more prizes
2. Increase winning probabilities by adding more cash prizes of smaller denominations
3. Allocate cash prizes in appealing denominations
4. Advertise the census more aggressively in noticeable places such as in the Aggie and on the chalkboards of major lecture halls