Student Preferences for Survey Incentives

Prepared at the Request of

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Survey Background and Methods

In winter 2006, the office of Student Affairs Research and Information (SARI) was preparing for a spring administration of the 2006 University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES). In hopes of maximizing response to this census of undergraduates, SARI undertook a Quick Survey to explore student preferences for survey incentives.

From February 25th 2006 to March 4th 2006, SARI delivered a Quick Survey to all enrolled undergraduates via the MyUCDavis portal (http://my.ucdavis.edu). Students were asked to choose their preference among the mix of odds and prize values displayed below, ranging from a guaranteed token gift to 1 in 100 odds of winning a prize valued at $350 (the expected value of each incentive is approximately constant by design). A total of 3315 current undergraduates responded to the Quick Survey (15% of the enrolled undergraduate population).
Results

Results are shown in Figure 1. The most preferred incentive option was a chance of 1 in 30 of winning a $10 prize, chosen by 20% of respondents, followed closely by a 1 in 15 chance of winning a $5 prize, chosen by 19% of respondents. About one-half of all respondents indicated a preference for a prize valued at $10 or less with favorable odds.

![Preference for Odds of Winning and Value of Prize](image)

Incentive preferences did not vary significantly by class level (data not shown). However, incentive preferences did vary significantly by gender (p< 0.001). Males were more likely to indicate a preference for larger prizes and longer odds, with the differences greatest for the largest prizes.
Preferences for prize odds and values also varied significantly by ethnic group. However, $5 and $10 prizes were popular among African American, Asians, and Mexican Americans – all groups who were underrepresented among respondents to the 2004 UCUES.
For their preferred prize value, respondents were asked to select the type of prize they preferred. Rewards were distinguished mainly as “Cash or Check”, “Gift Card” or “Merchandise”. Cash was the most popular choice regardless of the value of the prize and the percentage of students who preferred cash increased with the value of the prize.
Figure 4.

Percentage of Respondents Who Prefer Cash, by Preferred Value of Prize

- $<1
- $5
- $10
- $35
- $100
- $350