UCUES 2008
Campus Climate: Sexual Orientation

Prepared at the Request of
Fred Wood, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs

By

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Executive Summary

In May 2008, UC Davis participated in the University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES), a UC-wide census of all undergraduates at the nine general campuses. The survey included a number of items that addressed dimensions of campus climate. This report compares perceptions of campus climate at UC Davis with that at the other UCs, and examines differences in the perceptions of UC Davis students according to their sexual orientation. Respondents self-identified as Bisexual, Gay/Lesbian, Heterosexual, Queer, or Questioning/Unsure. About 8% of respondents at UC Davis declined to state their sexual orientation or skipped the question.

On multiple measures of general campus climate, our undergraduates’ ratings of UC Davis are near the highest ratings of campus climate among the UCs. Our campus received especially high ratings as friendly, caring, tolerant and safe. However, there are several areas in which our campus shows need for improvement.

Compared to the other UCs:

- Agreement at UC Davis that Students are respected here regardless of their sexual orientation is not significantly higher than the bottom of the range, but is significantly lower than at the highest rated campus.
- Gain over the undergraduate career in understanding of gender and sexual orientation differences and issues at UC Davis is near the lowest among the UCs, and significantly lower than at the campus with the highest gain.
- On a positive note, reported frequency of negative or stereotypical expressions related to sexual orientation at UC Davis are near the lowest among the UCs for faculty, staff and students, and are significantly lower than at the campus with the highest frequency for such expressions by staff and students.

Differences between sexual orientation groups in perception of campus climate are generally not significant at UC Davis. In those cases where the difference is statistically significant, Heterosexual students are more positive than others.

At UC Davis:

- Heterosexual students are most likely to agree I feel that I belong at this campus, Students are respected here regardless of their sexual orientation and Students of my sexual orientation are respected on this campus.
- Heterosexual students report the lowest gain in understanding of gender and sexual orientation differences and issues; students who are Questioning/Unsure report the highest.
- Heterosexual students report the lowest frequency of negative or stereotypical expressions related to sexual orientation by faculty, staff, and students, and the difference is statistically significant for faculty and students.
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Introduction

Campus climate is a multi-faceted concept. One definition of campus climate is:

Behaviors within a workplace or learning environment, ranging from subtle to cumulative to dramatic, that can influence whether an individual feels personally safe, listened to, valued, and treated fairly and with respect.*

In May 2008, UC Davis participated in the University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES), a UC-wide census of all undergraduates at the nine general campuses. The survey consisted of a “Core” of questions answered by all respondents and several “modules” to which respondents were randomly assigned, each of which focused on a particular facet of the undergraduate experience. Both the survey Core and the Student Development module contained items that addressed campus climate along several dimensions, and these are the focus of this report. In particular, this report examines campus climate as it relates to student sexual orientation.

A total of 7,040 UC Davis students responded to the survey, for a campus response rate of 31.4%. At UC Davis, 45% of respondents were asked to complete the Student Development module; 3,063 students (30.5% of this sub-group) did so. Demographics of the survey population and the respondents for UCUES 2008 are shown in Appendix Table A1. The survey items referenced in this report and the number of students responding to each are also included in the Appendix. Detailed response frequency distributions for all UCUES survey items are available at: http://www.sariweb.ucdavis.edu/UCUES/dp%202008%20UCUES%20Frequencies%20.xls.

* http://www.provost.wisc.edu/climate/what.html
Results

General Campus Climate

Respondents to UCUES 2008 were asked to rate their agreement with a series of general or global statements related to campus climate on a scale from 1 to 6 where 1 = *Strongly disagree* and 6 = *Strongly agree*. The items were oriented positively, so that a high rating is desirable.

One advantage of UCUES is that it allows for comparisons between undergraduates at UC Davis and those at our sister UC campuses†, and provides context for interpretation of results. Figures 1 - 3 display the mean level of agreement with statements relating to campus climate at UC Davis compared to the highest and lowest levels among the UC campuses.‡

For most of these items, the rating for UC Davis is near the maximum among the UCs, and significantly higher than the lowest rated campus.

Figure 1. Global Measures of Campus Climate: UC Comparisons

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† UC Merced is excluded from all campus comparisons due to the very small number of students responding to the survey and the unique character of campus life at UC Merced.
‡ A committee of UC institutional researchers agreed upon two standards for real, substantive differences between campuses: for mean ratings a difference of 0.2 or more, and for percentage values a difference of 5% or more are considered noteworthy and of practical significance.
It should be noted that levels of agreement with the statement *I feel valued as an individual on this campus* are generally low across the UCs (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Sense of Personal Value: UC Comparisons**

Levels of agreement with the statement *Diversity is important to me* are generally high across the campuses. For this item, the mean level of agreement at UC Davis is near the midpoint among the UCs, neither significantly higher than the lowest nor lower than the highest (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Importance of Diversity: UC Comparisons**
An additional set of four UCUES items asked students to rank the general campus climate by various descriptors. These items were each presented as a 6-point semantic differential scale with only the endpoints defined. Campus comparisons are shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4. Perceptions of Campus Characteristics: UC Comparisons**

As with most other global ratings of campus climate at the campus level, ratings at UC Davis approach the maximum among the UCs as friendly, caring, tolerant and safe. In every case, the mean rating for UC Davis is significantly higher than that at the campus with the lowest rating, and approaches the rating of the highest-ranked campus.

Overall, on these general measures of campus climate, our undergraduate students rate UC Davis as meeting or exceeding the climate at other UC schools. While this is an admirable achievement, analysis of the campus climate as perceived by specific sub-populations allows us to identify areas where there may be room for improvement.

**Sexual Orientation**

Perceptions of campus climate may vary substantially between sub-populations on campus; for instance perceptions of campus climate may differ for students of different races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, etc. This report compares perceptions of our campus climate by students categorized by sexual orientation (self-identified by survey

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§ The scale for these items has been reversed from the orientation in the survey, so that a high rating is again desirable.
respondents) with particular emphasis on survey items that specifically refer to sexual orientation. All differences in the mean responses between sexual orientation groups specifically noted in the text are statistically significant at the p< .05 level or higher.

UCUES respondents were asked to characterize their sexual orientation**. Results for UC Davis students are shown in Table 1 below. About 86% of respondents describe themselves as Heterosexual, with the remaining categories constituting very small minorities. The relatively large number of students identifying as Other indicates the need for greater refinement in the response options for this item in future survey administrations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>Respondents CORE</th>
<th>Respondents Student Development Module</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay/Lesbian</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>6044</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning/Unsure</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline to state</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipped question</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This data allows student perceptions of campus climate to be analyzed in light of student sexual orientation. For this report, responses are first examined for the broad categories Heterosexual, Non-heterosexual (Bisexual, Gay/Lesbian, Queer, or Other), Questioning/Unsure and Decline to state. The Non-heterosexual Group is further analyzed, and statistically significant within-group differences are reported.

It should be noted that societal norms may have skewed responses to the sexual orientation question. For this reason, and also because of the number of students who chose not to respond to the question, this data can not be reliably used to estimate the size of those populations on campus. In particular, it does not necessarily reflect the number of students served by the LGBT Resource Center.

** UCUES 2008 included two new items that asked students to indicate their sexual orientation and gender/sexual identity. These questions were included specifically to allow analysis of the impact of these characteristics on student perceptions of campus climate. To insure that these very personal questions were phrased both correctly and respectfully, the UCUES Work Group sought guidance from UC experts in student sexual orientation and sexual identity (generally directors of individual campus LGBT centers). Although these consultants were not in perfect agreement, the survey items represent a general consensus or, when necessary, a majority opinion.
General Campus Climate by Sexual Orientation

Returning to the general measures of campus climate discussed earlier, differences in the level of agreement are generally not significant between student sexual orientation groups at UC Davis, with a few exceptions as noted below. Results are shown in Figures 5-7.

- *Heterosexual* students are most likely to agree *I feel that I belong at this campus*, and *Questioning/Unsure* students are least likely (Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Global Measures of Campus Climate at UC Davis, by Student Sexual Orientation**

![Chart showing the comparison of different groups on the measures of campus climate](chart.png)
• Differences are not significant for agreement that *I feel valued as an individual on this campus* or *This institution values students’ opinions* (Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Sense of Personal Value at UC Davis, by Student Sexual Orientation**

- **I feel valued as an individual on this campus**
  - Heterosexual: 4.0
  - Non-heterosexual: 3.6
  - Questioning/Unsure: 4.1
  - Decline to state: 4.0

- **This institution values students' opinions**
  - Heterosexual: 4.3
  - Non-heterosexual: 4.2
  - Questioning/Unsure: 4.3
  - Decline to state: 4.2

Mean (1=Strongly disagree, 6=Strongly agree)
• Differences between the broad sexual orientation groups are not significant for agreement that Diversity is important on this campus or Diversity is important to me (Figure 7).
• Differences are significant, however, among non-heterosexuals, with Queer students most likely to agree that Diversity is important to me (Figure 7a).

Figure 7. Importance of Diversity at UC Davis, by Student Sexual Orientation

![Figure 7](image_url)

Figure 7a. Importance of Diversity among Non-Heterosexual Students at UC Davis

![Figure 7a](image_url)
- **Questioning/Unsure** students are less likely than others to perceive UC Davis as caring (Figure 8).
- Among non-heterosexuals, **Gay/Lesbian** students are most likely to describe UC Davis as friendly and safe (Figure 8a).

Figure 8. Perceptions of Campus Characteristics at UC Davis, by Student Sexual Orientation

![Figure 8: Perceptions of Campus Characteristics at UC Davis, by Student Sexual Orientation](image)

Figure 8a. Perceptions of Campus Characteristics among Non-Heterosexual Students at UC Davis

![Figure 8a: Perceptions of Campus Characteristics among Non-Heterosexual Students at UC Davis](image)
Respect Regardless of Sexual Orientation

Students were asked whether they agree that Students are respected here regardless of their sexual orientation (Core) and, more specifically, that Students of my sexual orientation are respected on this campus (Student Development module). For the first item, agreement at UC Davis is not significantly higher than the bottom of the range but is significantly lower than at the highest rated campus. For the second item, however, UC Davis is not significantly different from either the highest or lowest rated campus.

Figure 9. Respect Regardless of Sexual Orientation: UC Comparisons
- At UC Davis, *Heterosexual* students are significantly more likely than all other students to agree that *Students are respected here regardless of their sexual orientation* and *Students of my sexual orientation are respected on this campus* (Figure 10).
- Differences are also significant within the non-heterosexual group, with *Gay/Lesbian* and *Queer* students least likely to agree with both statements (Figure 10a).

**Figure 10. Respect Regardless of Sexual Orientation at UC Davis**

**Figure 10a. Respect Regardless of Sexual Orientation among Non-Heterosexual Students at UC Davis**
Negative or Stereotypical Views Related to Sexual Orientation

Students were also asked how often they had heard negative or stereotypical views about sexual orientation expressed by faculty or instructors, non-teaching staff or administrators, and by students. Responses were presented on a 6 point scale where 1 = Never and 6 = Very often. Note that, unlike most other items presented in this report, a LOW score is desirable for these three.

Students at UC Davis and the other UCs report a higher frequency of negative or stereotypical views expressed by other students than by faculty or staff. This may reflect the fact that most students spend more time interacting with other students than with faculty or staff, or perhaps faculty and staff are more aware of the fallacy and the potentially damaging impact of stereotyping.

Reported frequencies of negative expressions related to sexual orientation at UC Davis are near the lowest among the UCs for faculty, staff and students, and are significantly lower than at the campus with the highest frequency for such expressions by staff and students.

**Figure 11. Frequency of Negative or Stereotypical Views: UC Comparisons**
• Reported frequency by faculty and by students differs significantly between different sexual orientation groups, with *Heterosexual* students least likely to report these expressions (Figure 12).
• Among non-heterosexuals, *Queer* students are significantly more likely than others to report expressions of this type by students (Figure 12a).

**Figure 12. Frequency of Negative or Stereotypical Views at UC Davis**

**Figure 12a. Frequency of Negative or Stereotypical Views among Non-Heterosexual Students at UC Davis**
Understanding of Gender and Sexual Orientation Differences and Issues

Students were asked to rate their level of understanding of gender and sexual orientation differences and issues, both when they started at this campus and currently, on a 6-point scale where 1 = Very poor and 6 = Excellent. Note that gender cannot be separated from sexual orientation for this item. Responses by UC Davis students indicate gain in understanding near the lowest among the UCs, and significantly lower than at the campus with the highest gain.

Figure 13. Understanding of Gender and Sexual Orientation Differences and Issues: UC Comparisons
• Among UC Davis students, *Heterosexuals* report the lowest gain in understanding and students who are *Questioning/Unsure* report the highest (Figure 14).
• Differences are also significant among non-heterosexuals, with *Queer* students reporting the highest gain in understanding (Figure 14a).

**Figure 14. Understanding of Gender and Sexual Orientation Differences and Issues at UC Davis**

**Figure 14a. Understanding of Gender and Sexual Orientation Differences and Issues among Non-Heterosexual Students at UC Davis**
Appendix

Methodology

Data Collection

In the spring of 2008, the University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) was administered electronically with an internet-based questionnaire to all 162,259 undergraduates at the nine general campuses of the University, including 22,451 undergraduate students at UC Davis††. The response rate across the University of California was 39.2% but varied widely by campus. A total of 7,040 UC Davis students participated in the survey, for a campus response rate of 31.4%.‡‡ Actual response rates varied by item. As in previous administrations of UCUES, and typical of survey research in general, female students responded to 2008 UCUES at a higher rate than males. Otherwise, UCUES respondents in 2008 were remarkably representative of the UC Davis population. Demographics of the survey population and the respondents for 2008 are shown in Table A1.

The questionnaire was modular where all respondents received a common set of “Core” questions. Respondents were randomly assigned to receive one of three “modules” each focused on a specific aspect of the student experience§§. The distribution of respondents among the modules was determined by each campus. The percentage of UC Davis students directed to each module was selected according to anticipated analytical and reporting requirements, and in keeping with campus priorities. The 2008 UCUES modules were: academic engagement (45% of population, n=3247) student development (45% of population, n=3063) and civic engagement (10% of population, n=730).

Interpretation of Results

The committee of UC institutional researchers responsible for the design of UCUES anticipated that virtually all differences between campuses would be statistically significant due to the very large number of respondents. They agreed upon two standards for real, substantive differences: for mean ratings a difference of 0.2 or more, and for percentage values a difference of 5% or more are considered noteworthy and of practical significance. Note that these do not correspond to p-values for statistical significance. This convention is observed in UCUES reports prepared by SARI at UC Davis when reporting differences between campuses. Conventional statistical methods are used when reporting differences between means and percentage values for sub-populations within our own campus undergraduate population.

†† The UCUES population was limited to undergraduate students included in the 3rd week snapshot for winter quarter 2008 and who were 18 or older by April 1, 2008. Thus the size and specific characteristics of the population may differ slightly from official enrollment statistics reported elsewhere.
‡‡ The lower than average response rate is attributable to the decision to actively promote the survey at UC Davis for one month only. Some other campuses continued to email reminders for two or even three months.
§§ UC Merced administered only the core and the academic engagement module. Some campuses chose to include a fourth, campus-specific module, referred to as a campus “wild card” module, but UC Davis did not, preferring to concentrate responses among the common modules.
| Table A1: Demographics of UC Davis 2008 UCUES Population & Respondents |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                                 | UC Davis UCUES Population | % UC Davis UCUES Population | % UC Davis UCUES Respondents |
| **Gender**                      |                              |                              |                              |
| Female                          | 12640                        | 56%                          | 62%                          |
| Male                            | 9811                         | 44%                          | 38%                          |
| **Ethnicity**                   |                              |                              |                              |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native  | 144                          | 1%                           | 1%                           |
| Asian                           | 9582                         | 43%                          | 40%                          |
| Black/African American          | 655                          | 3%                           | 2%                           |
| Chicano/Mexican-American        | 2015                         | 9%                           | 8%                           |
| Latino/Other Spanish American   | 683                          | 3%                           | 3%                           |
| White/Caucasian                 | 7875                         | 35%                          | 39%                          |
| Other/Decline to State          | 1497                         | 7%                           | 7%                           |
| **Ethnicity (Asian)**           |                              |                              |                              |
| Chinese/Chinese American        | 4406                         | 20%                          | 20%                          |
| East Indian/Pakistani           | 883                          | 4%                           | 3%                           |
| Japanese/Japanese American      | 408                          | 2%                           | 2%                           |
| Korean                          | 706                          | 3%                           | 2%                           |
| Pacific Islander                | 111                          | <1%                          | <1%                          |
| Pilipino/Filipino               | 922                          | 4%                           | 4%                           |
| Vietnamese                      | 1334                         | 6%                           | 6%                           |
| Other Asian                     | 812                          | 4%                           | 3%                           |
| **Class Level**                 |                              |                              |                              |
| Freshman                        | 4365                         | 19%                          | 20%                          |
| Sophomore                       | 4771                         | 21%                          | 21%                          |
| Junior                          | 5858                         | 26%                          | 26%                          |
| Senior                          | 7457                         | 33%                          | 33%                          |
| **Entrance Status***            |                              |                              |                              |
| Freshman entrant                | 17853                        | 80%                          | 79%                          |
| Transfer                        | 4355                         | 20%                          | 21%                          |

* From UCOP records, some missing data (about 1%).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Heterosexual</th>
<th>Non-heterosexual</th>
<th>Questioning/Unsure</th>
<th>Decline to state</th>
<th>All UC Davis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I belong at this campus</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing what I know now, I would still choose to enroll at this campus</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel valued as an individual on this campus</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This institution values students opinions</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity is important on this campus</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity is important to me</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are respected here regardless of their sexual orientation</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students of my sexual orientation are respected on this campus</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty express negative views about sexual orientation</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff express negative views about sexual orientation</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students express negative views about sexual orientation</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current understanding of gender/sexual orientation differences &amp; issues</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UCUES Items Referenced in this Report

CORE

Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

I feel that I belong at this campus. (n=6899)  
(Strongly disagree to strongly agree)

Knowing what I know now, I would still choose to enroll at this campus. (n=6930)  
(Strongly disagree to strongly agree)

Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement:

Students are respected here regardless of their sexual orientation. (n=6941)  
(Strongly disagree to strongly agree)

Student Development Module

Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following:

I feel valued as an individual on this campus. (Strongly disagree to strongly agree) (n=2959)

This institution values students’ opinions. (Strongly disagree to strongly agree) (n=2952)

Diversity is important on this campus. (Strongly disagree to strongly agree) (n=2947)

Diversity is important to me. (Strongly disagree to strongly agree) (n=2957)

Based on your experience and observation, rate the general climate for students of your UC campus along the following dimensions:

Campus climate is

Hostile (1) to Friendly (6) (n=2985)

Impersonal (1) to Caring (6) (n=2983)

Intolerant (1) to Tolerant (6) (n=2981)

Dangerous (1) to Safe (6) (n=2971)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement:

Students of my sexual orientation are respected on this campus. (n=2834)  
(Strongly disagree to strongly agree)

In this academic year, I have heard teaching faculty or instructors express negative or stereotypical views about sexual orientation.  (n=2957) (Never to very often)

In this academic year, I have heard nonteaching staff or administrators express negative or stereotypical views about sexual orientation. (n=2983) (Never to very often)

In this academic year, I have heard students express negative or stereotypical views about sexual orientation. (n=2953) (Never to very often)

Please rate your awareness and understanding of the following when you started at this campus and now:

Gender and sexual orientation differences/issues (started n=2920; current n=2916)  
(Very poor to excellent)