UCUES 2008
Campus Climate: Socio-Economic Status

Prepared at the Request of
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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 socio-economic status. Respondents self-identified as Low-income or poor, Working-class, Middle-class, Upper-middle or professional-middle class, or Wealthy.

- 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.
- Agreement at UC Davis that Students are respected here regardless of their economic or social class is also near the highest among the UCs.
- Students at UC Davis report the lowest frequency among the UCs of expression of negative or stereotypical statements related to socio-economic status by faculty, staff and students.

Among UC Davis students, however, there are significant differences in perception of campus climate between socio-economic groups. In general, perception of general campus climate is increasingly positive with increasing student socio-economic class.

- Students who describe themselves as Poor are least likely to agree that I feel that I belong at this campus or Knowing what I know now, I would still choose to enroll at this campus.
- Poor students are least likely to consider the campus friendly, caring, tolerant or safe.
- Poor students are also least likely to agree that Students are respected here regardless of their economic or social class or that Students of my socio-economic status are respected on this campus.
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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 socio-economic status.

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**

I feel that I belong at this campus

Knowing what I know now, I would still choose to enroll at this campus

---

† 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 (Fig 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 (Fig 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.

**Socio-Economic Status**

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 socio-economic status (self-identified by

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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.
survey respondents) with particular emphasis on survey items that specifically refer to socio-economic status. All differences in the mean responses between socio-economic groups specifically noted in the text are statistically significant at the $p< .05$ level or higher.

UCUES respondents were asked to characterize their social class when growing up. Results for UC Davis students are shown in Table 1 below. This distribution varies considerably between campuses (data not shown).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Class</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>Low-income or poor</td>
<td>841</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-class</td>
<td>1490</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-class</td>
<td>2665</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper-middle or professional</td>
<td>1734</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealthy</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students were also asked to estimate their parents’ combined income. The relationship between that figure and the social class identified by the student is shown in Table 1a**. Surprisingly, both the lowest and the highest family income response options (Less than $10,000 and $200,000 or more) were selected by some students in every social class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>Estimated Family Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income or poor</td>
<td>829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-class</td>
<td>1457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-class</td>
<td>2530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper-middle or professional</td>
<td>1629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealthy</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** The midpoint of each income response option was used for this calculation, with Pareto estimation used for the midpoint of the highest income category, which was open-ended.
General Campus Climate by Socio-Economic Status

Returning to the general measures of campus climate discussed earlier, there are some significant differences in responses between student socio-economic groups at UC Davis. In general, perception of campus climate is increasingly positive with increasing student social class. The exception to this trend is Wealthy students, who are typically similar to Working-class or Middle-class students in their responses. Results are shown in Figures 5-8.

Students who describe themselves as Poor or Working-class are significantly less likely than Upper-middle class students to agree that I feel that I belong at this campus or Knowing what I know now, I would still choose to enroll at this campus (Fig 5).

Figure 5. Global Measures of Campus Climate at UC Davis, by Student Socio-Economic Status
Differences are not significant for agreement that *I feel valued as an individual on this campus* or that *This institution values students’ opinions* (Fig 6).

**Figure 6. Sense of Personal Value at UC Davis, by Student Socio-Economic Status**

![Bar chart showing the mean responses for different socio-economic statuses on two statements: I feel valued as an individual on this campus and This institution values students' opinions. The mean responses range from 3.8 to 4.4.]
Differences in agreement that *Diversity is important on this campus* are not significant. However, *Upper-middle class* students are significantly less likely than *Poor* students to agree that *Diversity is important to me* (Fig 7).

**Figure 7. Importance of Diversity at UC Davis, by Student Socio-Economic Status**

![Bar chart showing the mean ratings of diversity importance by socio-economic status.](chart-image)
Finally, and importantly, *Poor* students are least likely to consider the campus friendly, caring, tolerant or safe (Fig 8).

**Figure 8. Perceptions of Campus Characteristics at UC Davis, by Student Socio-Economic Status**
Respect Regardless of Socio-Economic Status

Students were asked whether they agree that *Students are respected here regardless of their economic or social class* (Core) and, more specifically, that *Students of my socio-economic status are respected on this campus* (Student Development module). The mean level of agreement with the first statement is significantly higher at UC Davis than at the campus with the lowest level of agreement and not significantly different than at the campus with the highest. Differences for the second statement are not significant (Fig 9).

**Figure 9. Respect Regardless of Socio-Economic Status: UC Comparisons**

![Bar chart comparing respect levels among UCs for both statements](chart.png)
At UC Davis, Poor students are significantly less likely than Upper-middle class students to agree that Students are respected here regardless of their economic or social class or that Students of my socio-economic status are respected on this campus (Fig 10).

Figure 10. Respect Regardless of Socio-Economic Status at UC Davis

![Bar chart showing respect regardless of socio-economic status at UC Davis]

- **Mean**: 1=Strongly disagree, 6=Strongly agree
- **Legend**:
  - Low-income or poor
  - Working-class
  - Middle-class
  - Upper-middle/professional
  - Wealthy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low-income or poor</th>
<th>Working-class</th>
<th>Middle-class</th>
<th>Upper-middle/professional</th>
<th>Wealthy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students are respected here regardless of their economic or social class</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students of my socio-economic status are respected on this campus</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Negative or Stereotypical Views Related to Socio-Economic Status

Students were also asked how often they had heard negative or stereotypical views about socio-economic status 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. UC Davis is lowest among the UCs for reported frequency of such statements by faculty, staff, and students (Fig 11).

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.

Figure 11. Frequency of Negative or Stereotypical Views: UC Comparisons
At UC Davis, reported frequency of these statements by faculty and by staff is significantly lower for *Upper-middle class* students than for *Poor* students. However, *Wealthy* students report the highest frequency of such expressions by other students, while *Middle-class* students report the lowest frequency (Fig 12).

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

![Bar chart showing frequency of negative or stereotypical views by socio-economic status for faculty, staff, and students.](chart.png)
Understanding of Social Class and Economic Differences

Students were asked to rate their level of understanding of social class and economic differences and issues both when they started at this campus and currently, on a 6-point scale where 1 = Very poor and 6 = Excellent. Responses at UC Davis are not significantly different from those at the campus with the highest or the lowest levels of current or starting understanding (data not shown), nor are differences significant for the gain in understanding (Fig 13).

Figure 13. Understanding of Social Class and Economic Differences/Issues: UC Comparisons

[Bar chart showing the gain in awareness/understanding of social class/economic differences/issues between starting and current understanding at UC Davis (0.55), compared to the maximum (0.73) and minimum (0.55) among UCs.]

Mean Difference between Understanding When Started UC (scale: 1-6) and Current Understanding (scale: 1-6)
Poor students report significantly lower levels of understanding than Wealthy students, both currently and when starting at UC Davis (data not shown), but differences in the gain in understanding are not significant (Fig 14).

**Figure 14. Understanding of Social Class and Economic Differences/Issues at UC Davis**
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 7040 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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>UC Davis UCUES Population</th>
<th>% UC Davis UCUES Population</th>
<th>% UC Davis UCUES Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12640</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9811</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>9582</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicano/Mexican-American</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Other Spanish American</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>7875</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Decline to State</td>
<td>1497</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (Asian)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese/Chinese American</td>
<td>4406</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Indian/Pakistani</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese/Japanese American</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilipino/Filipino</td>
<td>922</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>1334</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Asian</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>4365</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>4771</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>5858</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>7457</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrance Status*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman entrant</td>
<td>17853</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>4355</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* From UCOP records, some missing data (about 1%).
Table A2. Percentage of UC Davis Students Responding Favorably to Campus Climate Items, by Socio-Economic Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree or Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Low-income or poor</th>
<th>Working-class</th>
<th>Middle-class</th>
<th>Upper-middle or prof.-middle class</th>
<th>Wealthy</th>
<th>All UC Davis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I belong at this campus</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing what I know now, I would still choose to enroll at this campus</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel valued as an individual on this campus</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This institution values students’ opinions</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity is important on this campus</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity is important to me</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree or Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Students are respected here regardless of their economic or social class</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students of my socio-economic status are respected on this campus</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely or Never</td>
<td>Faculty have expressed negative or stereotypical views about socio-economic status</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff have expressed negative or stereotypical views about socio-economic status</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students have expressed negative or stereotypical views about socio-economic status</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good or Excellent</td>
<td>Current understanding of social class and economic differences/issues</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UCUES Items Referenced in this Report

CORE
6 pt Scale  \(1=\text{Strongly disagree to 6=Strongly Agree}\)
Do you agree or disagree with these statements?
I feel that I belong at this campus (n=6899)
Knowing what I know now, I would still choose to enroll at this campus (n=6930)

6 pt Scale  \(1=\text{Strongly disagree to 6=Strongly Agree}\)
Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.
Students are respected here regardless of their gender (n=6954)

5pt Scale  \(1=\text{Wealthy to 5=Low-income or poor}\)
Which of the following best describes your social class when growing up?  (n=6857)
To the best of your knowledge, which category includes the total annual combined income of your parent(s) before taxes in 2007?  (n=6568)
Income categories:
- Less than $10,000
- $10,000 to $19,999
- $20,000 to $34,999
- $35,000 to $49,999
- $50,000 to $64,999
- $65,000 to $79,999
- $80,000 to $99,999
- $100,000 to $124,999
- $125,000 to $149,999
- $150,000 to $199,999
- $200,000 or more

Student Life and Development
6 pt Scale  \(1=\text{Strongly disagree to 6=Strongly Agree}\)
What is your level of agreement with the following:
I feel valued as an individual on this campus (n=2959)
This institution values students’ opinions (n=2952)
Diversity is important on this campus (n=2947)
Diversity is important to me (n=2957)

6pt Scale  \(1=\text{Friendly to 6=Hostile, 1=Caring to 6=Impersonal, etc.}\)
Based on your experience and observation, rate the general climate for students of your UC campus along the following dimensions:
Campus climate is:
Friendly to Hostile (n=2985)
Caring to Impersonal (n=2983)
Tolerant of diversity to Intolerant of diversity (n=2981)
Safe to Dangerous (n=2971)

7 pt Scale  0=Not applicable, 1=Strongly disagree to 6=Strongly Agree
Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.
Students of my socio-economic status are respected on this campus (n=2895)

6 pt Scale  1=Never to 6=Very often
In this academic year, I have heard teaching faculty or instructors express negative or stereotypical views about:
Socio-economic status  (n=2962)

In this academic year I have heard nonteaching staff or administrators express negative or stereotypical views about:
Socio-economic status  (n=2946)

In this academic year, I have heard students express negative or stereotypical views about:
Socio-economic status  (n=2959)

5 pt Scale  1=Very poor to 5=Excellent
Please rate your awareness and understanding of the following issues when you started at this campus and now.
Social class and economic differences/issues  (n=2933)