Highlights of the UCLA Higher Education Diverse Learning Environments Survey

Background

The goal of the Diverse Learning Environments Survey was to assess student’s perception of the campus climate and to identify the factors and experiences that contribute to these perceptions. Invitations to participate were emailed (via i-mail) to 5154 students who had earned 24 or more units at CRC by the end of the fall 2009 semester. Four hundred sixty five students accessed the survey, 421 students started the survey, and 372 students completed and successfully submitted the online survey, a response rate of approximately 7%.

Overview of Responses

Demographics

- The socioeconomic and racial/ethnic distribution of the respondents was similar to college-wide demographics. Almost 36% of respondents indicated they were multi-ethnic.
- Only 29% of the respondents were male, which means that females were overrepresented in the sample.
- Over 50% of the respondents received some sort of financial aid; 82% of these students qualified for need-based federal or state grants (such as Pell Grants, Fee Waivers, etc.).
- Over 15% of the respondents indicated a sexual orientation other than heterosexual.
- Exactly 60% of respondents indicated they did not have children.
- The age distribution of respondents did not reflect the student population. In particular 18-20 year old students were underrepresented and students 40 years of age and older were over represented in the sample.
- Almost 28% of respondents were first-generation students, which means first generation students were under represented in the sample.
- Over 30% of the respondents indicated that English was not their first language.
- Almost 70% of the respondents had a high school GPA of 2.75 or more

Employment

- More than 13% of the respondents worked on campus; the median number of hours worked per week for these students was 16-20.
- Approximately 41% of the respondents worked off campus; the median number of hours worked per week for these students was 21-30.

Enrollment

- Approximately 60% of the respondents have attended CRC for 3 or 4 years.
- Almost 50% of the respondents were part-time students. Almost 8% of the respondents were not enrolled in any classes by the time they completed the survey.
- The median number of miles respondents traveled to school was 3 – 10 miles.
• Over 82% of respondents have completed 2 or more classes at another community college; almost 29% have taken 2 or more classes at a 4-year institution, and over 23% of respondents have taken 2 or more courses at a vocational or trade school.

• Almost 74% of respondents have considered taking a course at another institution while enrolled at CRC; 42% of the respondents have enrolled in course from another institution while attending CRC. Approximately 60% of these enrollments are during the summer or are in online courses offered at other institutions. The primary motivators (rated as essential or very important) for enrollment at other institutions were to:
  o fulfill course requirements (94%)
  o complete their degree quicker (80%)
  o have a more convenient class schedule or to enroll in a program not offered at the college (79%)
  o have a wider selection of courses (75%).
  The lowest ranked motivation for taking coursework elsewhere was finding easier classes (41%).

Cultural Competence-related Information

Background knowledge
• Respondents indicated that their previous knowledge about racial/ethnic groups was due, for the most part, to their family members, co-workers and friends (85%), self-teaching (79%), popular media (73%) and the classroom (68%).
• Respondents’ previous interactions across racial and ethnic backgrounds occurred most frequently at work (68%) and in the classroom (68%).

Learning opportunities while at CRC

Classroom learning opportunities
• Almost 80% of respondents have taken 2 or more classes at the college that provided opportunities for class discussions/interactions with other students. Almost 50% of respondents indicated that these discussions provided opportunities for intensive dialog between students with different backgrounds and beliefs.
• Almost 58% of respondents indicated they had taken an ethnic studies course, and over 15% had taken a women’s studies course at the college.
• A substantial percentage of respondents indicated they had take 2 or more classes at the college that included material/readings on a) race and ethnicity (50%), b) issues of oppression as a system of power and dominance (43%), c) gender issues (35%), and issues of privilege (26%).
Extra-curricular learning opportunities
- Over 46% of respondents indicated they had attended presentations, performances, and art exhibits on diversity.
- Over 20% of respondents have sometimes, often or very often attended debates or panels about diversity issues, 17% have participated in ongoing campus-organized discussions on racial/ethnic issues at this same level, 16% have had this level of participation in a student organization reflecting their ethnic background, almost 14% have participated in a group promoting gender awareness and equity, almost 13% have participated in a religious club or event, 12% have participated in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender activities, and almost 10% have participated in an ethnic/racial student organization reflecting a background other than theirs.
- Only 59% of respondents indicated they seldom or never attended events sponsored by other racial/ethnic groups.

Informal learning opportunities
- Almost 80% of respondents have studied or prepared for class with a student from a different racial/ethnic group.
- Almost 70% of respondents have had meaningful and honest discussions about race/ethnic relations outside of class.
- Close to 70% of respondents have dined or shared a meal, have shared personal feelings and problems, or have had intellectual discussion with someone from a different racial/ethnic group while at CRC.

Cultural Identity
- Almost 55% of respondents thought often or very often about their age.
- Over 44% of respondents thought often or very often about their religious/spiritual beliefs.
- Approximately 35% of respondents thought often or very often about their race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic class, or political beliefs.
- Respondents may not understand or have not internalized the concepts of power and privilege as it relates to their own identity based on the fact that the responses to the power and privilege questions do not seem to reflect the demographics of the respondents. More analysis is needed in this area.

Campus Climate
- Respondents gave CRC a median ranking of 6 or 7 (on a 7 point scale) in the areas of being welcoming, anti-racist, non-sexist, diverse, respectful of diverse views, and accommodating of physical (dis)abilities. A median ranking of 5 was given in the areas of being socially inclusive, collaborative (versus competitive), caring (versus impersonal) and non-homophobic. Interestingly, the college was perceived as in the middle between being conservative and liberal.
- Almost 83% of respondents have seldom or never had tense, somewhat hostile interactions with students of a different racial/ethnic group or felt insulted or threatened because of their race/ethnicity. Close to 60% of respondents have
seldom or never had guarded or cautious interactions with students from a
different racial/ethnic background.

- A significant majority of students (88% and above) have seldom or never
bias/harassment/discrimination in the form of written comments, exclusion,
offensive visual images or items, threats or experiences of physical violence,
anonymous phone calls, or damage to personal property. However, 23% of
respondents indicated they had experience biased/harassing/discriminatory
verbal comments.

- Incidents of discrimination occurred most frequently off-campus (22%).

- Over 70% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the diversity of
the faculty and staff and students on campus.

- Almost 68% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the
interactions among different racial/ethnic groups on campus and with the
campus-wide respect for the expression of diverse beliefs and experiences.
Fewer than 5% of respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with these
areas. Respondents were a bit more ambivalent and/or dissatisfied with the
college’s atmosphere for political and religious differences.

- Over 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the college has a long
standing commitment to diversity, encourages students to have a public voice
and share their ideas openly, has approachable faculty and staff, accurately
reflects the diversity of its student population in publications, and promotes
the appreciation of cultural differences.

- Almost 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the college values
out-of-class learning and appreciates differences in sexual orientation.

- Almost 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the college rewards
staff and faculty for their participation in diversity efforts, that it has
administrators who regularly speak about the value of diversity, and that it
promotes the understanding of gender differences.

- Only 15% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the college has a lot
of racial tension.

**Self-Assessment**

- Over 64% of respondents indicated they were more tolerant of others with
different beliefs compared with the average person their age.

- A smaller percentage of respondents indicated they were more able to a) see
the world from another perspective (23%), b) have their views challenged
(30%), c) discuss and negotiate controversial issues (34%), and d) work
cooperatively with diverse people compared with the average person their age.

**Behavior**

- Almost 45% of respondents indicated that they frequently recognized their
biases and felt challenged to think more broadly about an issue while at CRC.

- Almost 40% of respondents indicated they frequently made an effort to get to
know people from diverse backgrounds and 35% frequently challenged their
own position on an issue.
• Over 21% of respondents frequently challenged others on issues of discrimination; an additional 50% of respondents indicated they occasionally engaged in this type of behavior.

• Approximately 35% of respondents indicated they frequently made an effort to educate others about social issues; an additional 48% of respondents indicated they occasionally engaged in this type of behavior.

• Approximately 30% of respondents indicated that they had frequently had in-depth interactions with people from other countries, other socioeconomic classes or with someone with a different religion, philosophy of life, or set of personal values. Another 50-60% of respondents indicated they had occasionally had these types of conversations.

• Approximately 20% of respondents indicated that they had had in-depth conversation outside of class about diversity issues related to race/ethnicity, sexism and gender. Approximately 50% of respondents indicated they had occasionally had these types of conversations.

Academics

Academic Self-Confidence and Support

• Only 2.4% of the responses rated themselves below average in general academic ability. Students were not as confident regarding their leadership, mathematical, and writing abilities, as indicated by below average ratings of approximately 11%, 18% and 8% respectively.

• Approximately 44% of respondents frequently felt family support to succeed, and 89% agreed or strongly agreed that their peers encourage their academic success.

Academic Behavior

Utilization of Services

• Over 70% of respondents indicated they had not used the disability resource center, student wellness services, or study skills workshops.

• More than 60% of students have occasionally or frequently participated in study groups.

• Between 50% and 60% of respondents indicated they had not used the writing center, tutoring, career services, or financial aid advising.

• Approximately 37% of respondents had participated in freshman orientation and 20% of respondents were in programs to support low-income/first generation students.

• A relatively small percentage of respondents indicated they had never attended office hours (19%), participated in programs for students who are parents (15%), accessed counseling services (12.6%), read the institution’s catalog (paper or online) (15%), or used the institutional website to learn about campus resources (12%).
Learning Skills
- Over 85% of respondents indicated they frequently took notes during class.
- Approximately 60% of respondents indicated they frequently asked questions in class, accepted mistakes as part of the learning process, sought feedback on their work, revised their papers, evaluated the quality or reliability of information they received, looked up articles or resources based on research, and evaluated information and its sources critically.
- Approximately 50% of respondents frequently supported their opinions with logical argument, sought alternative solutions to a problem, and explored topics on their own, even though it was not required for a class.
- Respondents were less likely to frequently read different types of literature (43%) or take a risk because they felt they had more to gain (35%).

General Academic Experience
- Over 94% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that if asked, they would recommend CRC to others.
- Almost 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that faculty believed in their potential and empowered them to learn.
- 83% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that a staff member had taken an interest in their development. Fewer respondents (72%) indicated that a faculty member had taken an interest in their development.
- Approximately 70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were members and a part of the campus community and felt a sense of belonging at the college. Fewer respondents (61%) agreed or strongly agreed that they felt a sense of community among students of their own race/ethnicity.
- Almost 14% of respondents had participated in the Honors Program. Fewer than 5% of respondents have benefitted from faculty mentoring, undergraduate research opportunities, learning communities, or study abroad.

Classroom Experience
- Over 70% of respondents indicated that instructors often or very often encouraged them to ask questions and participate in discussions, that they often or very often provided feedback that helped them assess their progress, and that they were often or very often able to determine their level of understanding of course materials.
- Approximately 66% of respondents often or very often felt that their contributions were valued, and 63% indicated that instructors often or very often encouraged them to meet with them outside of class.
- Almost 58% of respondents indicated they often or very often received recognition for their academic work, and approximately 54% of respondents indicated that instructors often or very often showed concern about their progress.
- Only 38% of respondents felt that instructors took an interest in their personal backgrounds and 33% of respondents indicated this seldom or never happened during their time at CRC.
Learning Outcomes

- Over 67% of respondents indicated they voted in a national, state or local election and approximately 60% of respondents indicated they had discussed politics. However, only 36% of respondents had participated in fund-raising for a charity or campaign, 26% had contacted public officials, print or broadcast media and 18% had participated in a political demonstration.
- Approximately 66% of respondents stated they frequently made connections between ideas they had learned in different courses.
- Over 55% of respondents indicated they frequently applied concepts from courses to real life situations.
- Almost 50% of respondents indicated they frequently integrated skills and knowledge from different sources and experiences.
- Almost 50% of respondents had engaged in community service.

Possible Barriers to Success

- Approximately 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it would take them longer to graduate than expected and that they are facing more financial difficulty this year compared with previous years. In fact, approximately 40% of respondents frequently contributed money to help support their family and frequently felt concerned about their ability to finance their college education.
- Approximately 75% of respondents reported missing class occasionally or frequently due to personal/family responsibilities, and almost 66% of respondents felt that their family responsibilities interfered with their schoolwork.
- Approximately 75% of respondents indicated they had occasionally or frequently been unable to get into a class because they were full.
- Approximately 67% of respondents indicated they had occasionally or frequently not been able to take the classes they needed because they were not offered or were cancelled.
- Only 34% of respondents reported missing class occasionally or frequently due to employment, although 50% of respondents felt that their job responsibilities occasionally or frequently interfered with their schoolwork.
- Approximately 31% of respondents reported occasionally or frequently having difficulty commuting/getting to campus.
- Respondents took a leave of absence, withdrew from the college or transferred from CRC during their academic careers rated the following reasons as very important or essential: family responsibilities (60%), reconsidering goals and interests (54%), attending a school with a wider selection of courses and more majors (52%), experiencing money problems (46%), receiving a good job offer (43%), wanting to be closer to home (42%), wanting practical experience (39%) and not doing as well academically as they had expected (36%).
Other Campus Involvement

- Fewer than 5% of respondents had participated in student government, played intercollegiate athletics, or participated in a student-run political club while attending CRC.
- Over 12% of respondents had participated in leadership training, almost 27% had joined a club or organization related to their major, and almost 14% participated in non-political student-run organizations.
- Over 92% of respondents indicated they had occasionally or frequently discussed career goals while at the college – although the context for these dialogs was not clear.