

Overview

The New Student Survey has been administered since 2005, but dramatically changed focus in 2014. Initially, it was a survey measuring satisfaction of student services and experiences in the opening weeks of their UCM experience, administered just prior to the release of mid-semester grades. After years of solid positive feedback, the survey shifted to measure new student behaviors instead of opinions. Administered just following the release of mid-semester grades, the survey collects information on how often students engage in high impact academic practices. These initial results show First Year and Transfer student behaviors, and following Fall 2015 grades being calculated, we can conduct inferential analyses to explore behavioral differences among “successful” and “struggling” students. This Assessment Brief presents selected highlights of the data collected in this fall semester snapshot of our newest Bobcats.

Demographics of Survey Sample

The survey opened October 25 and closed November 23, 2015, inviting 1885 new First Year and Transfer students to participate. This year’s response rate was 48%, significantly higher than recent institutional surveys. The sample is relatively representative, being slightly over represented by female students and slightly underrepresented by students in the School of Engineering. Thank you to everyone who supported the efforts to increase our response rate to this survey!

Results: Frequencies

The first step of data analysis is to review the **frequencies**, or the number of students who selected each response. This often creates more questions than it answers, so we can do further analyses, called **cross-tabulations**, to determine which groups of students gave which responses. For example, we might cross-tab the question, “How connected to UCM do you feel?” by a student’s residential status to see if on-campus students give markedly different answers about feeling connected than off-campus students indicate. Ultimately, we can conduct more **inferential** and **predictive analyses**, which IRDS will produce in the coming semester, to see what other variables help explain how connected or disconnected students report feeling. Below is a sample of some interesting results from the 2015 New Student Survey data, which are available on the IRDS webpage. Their report (available at <http://irds.ucmerced.edu/docs/survey>) combines the first year and the transfer student responses, but they are presented as separate groups below, to be able to compare the responses of students at the beginning of their college career to those who are continuing their post-secondary careers with us at UCM. Please note the sample sizes are very different.

When you arrived at UC Merced, how welcoming did you find the campus?

	First Year Students (N = 851)	Transfer Students (N=43)
Very Welcoming	79%	84%
Somewhat Welcoming	19%	16%
Not Welcoming	2%	0%

Today, how connected or disconnected to UC Merced do you feel?

	First Year Students (N = 852)	Transfer Students (N=43)
Very Connected	15%	12%
Somewhat Connected	67%	70%
Somewhat Disconnected	16%	16%
Very Disconnected	3%	2%

When you applied to colleges, UC Merced was your...

	First Year Students (N = 851)	Transfer Students (N=43)
First Choice	10%	42%
Second Choice	25%	28%
Third Choice	25%	7%
Lower than Third Choice	40%	23%

If I had it to do over again, I would still choose UC Merced:

	First Year Students (N = 765)	Transfer Students (N=40)
Strongly Agree	24%	35%
Somewhat Agree	36%	25%
Somewhat Disagree	5%	3%
Strongly Disagree	6%	13%
Unsure	29%	25%

I would recommend UC Merced to someone who wants to attend college:

	First Year Students (N = 764)	Transfer Students (N=40)
Strongly Agree	32%	43%
Somewhat Agree	45%	33%
Somewhat Disagree	4%	0%
Strongly Disagree	3%	13%
Unsure	16%	13%

Comparisons to 2014:

For comparison purposes, we present 2014 and 2015 responses side by side. In these comparisons, both First Year and Transfer students' responses are combined:

When you arrived at UC Merced, how welcoming did you find the campus?

	2015 (N = 894)	2014 (N=601)
Very Welcoming	80%	71%
Somewhat Welcoming	19%	28%
Not Welcoming	1%	1%

Today, how connected or disconnected to UC Merced do you feel?

	2015 (N = 896)	2014 (N= 600)
Very Connected	15%	11%
Somewhat Connected	67%	68%
Somewhat Disconnected	16%	16%
Very Disconnected	3%	5%

When you applied to colleges, UC Merced was your...

	2015 (N = 894)	2014 (N= 599)
First Choice	12%	15%
Second Choice	25%	22%
Third Choice	25%	24%
Lower than Third Choice	39%	39%

Longitudinal Look*

CHOICE	2013 N = 316	2012 N = 408	2011 N = 618	2010 N = 438	2009 N = 509	2008 N = 351	2007 N = 288	2005 N = 420
First	20%	55%	21%	35%	39%	36%	28%	29%
Second	25%	15%	27%	21%	29%	31%	24%	18%
Third	23%	10%	20%	17%	12%	7%	20%	18%
Lower than Third	32%	20%	32%	27%	20%	26%	28%	35%

*Note: Remember, these results combine first year and transfer student responses, and our Transfer students are more likely than First Year students to report UCM as their first or second choice of institution.

Summary

Although we have been collecting data from our new students since 2005, due to the change in survey's focus starting in 2014, we cannot show longitudinal results except for a few questions that are continued from the initial survey design. It is our intention to explore the relationship between the reported academic behaviors to try to determine what "successful" students do in their first semester on our campus. Look for those results later this spring, to perhaps inform our future programming and services for incoming Bobcats.