



University of California Undergraduate Experiences Survey (UCUES)
Summary of 2008 UCUES Campus Climate and Diversity Items

About SAIRO

The Student Affairs Information and Research Office (SAIRO) is the research and assessment office within UCLA's Student Affairs organization. SAIRO's mission is to support the learning and development of the whole student by providing reliable, timely, and useful information about students and their experiences; developing the capacity of student affairs and other stakeholders to collect, interpret, and utilize data to enhance the quality of students' educational experience and environment; and helping Student Affairs units assess and document the effectiveness of their programs and practices.

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Executive Summary

The 2008 UCUES included a set of questions designed to provide an in-depth understanding of students' perceptions of campus climate and diversity. The main purpose of this report is to summarize findings specific to the UCLA campus. In addition, comparisons are made with the eight other UC campuses in order to identify aspects of the undergraduate experience that are unique to UCLA students versus those that represent a larger system-wide trend. Further, comparisons of UCLA's 2008 UCUES data were made with data collected in 2006 to identify any notable changes over time. Key findings related to campus climate and diversity include:

- UCLA UCUES respondents overwhelmingly perceived the campus as tolerant of diversity and friendly. Further, they were more likely than their UC peers to rate campus as academically challenging, safe, intellectual, and affordable.
UCLA respondents expressed high levels of agreement that "students at UCLA are respected regardless of personal demographic characteristics." The higher percentage of agreement in the 2008 UCLA UCUES compared to 2006 suggests continued progress toward increasing acceptance for diverse identities.
A large percentage of UCLA respondents, as well as their UC peers, reported gaining a new understanding of other perspectives through conversations with students who differed from them, particularly in the areas of race/ethnicity and nationality.

Data from this set of questions inform several of the goals outlined in the strategic plan for UCLA's Student Affairs, including ensuring an educationally productive and supportive campus climate.

## Perceptions of Campus Climate

Over 69% of UCLA students reported feeling valued as an individual on campus, and 78% felt that UCLA values students' opinions. This is similar to what students reported at the eight other UC campuses. Nearly all UCLA students (90%) agreed that diversity is important to them. Further, 86% perceived that that diversity is important to the campus, which is slightly higher than the UC average (83%).

Respondents were asked to reflect on their experiences and observations when reporting whether the general climate for students was: friendly vs. hostile, caring vs. impersonal, intellectual vs. not intellectual, tolerant of diversity vs. intolerant, safe vs. dangerous, too easy academically vs. too hard academically, and not affordable vs. affordable (each of these pairs represented opposite end points of a six-point scale). The majority of students at all UC campuses rated their campus climates as being generally friendly, caring, intellectual, tolerant of diversity, safe, and too hard academically. UCLA respondents were more likely than their peers at the other eight UC campuses to rate their campus as academically

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## Climate and Diversity Items in UCUES

The 2008 UCUES included an expanded set of questions designed to address campus climate and perceptions of diversity. All items, with the exception of one set of questions, were located in the Student Life and Development module. Climate and diversity items included questions designed to address general perceptions of campus climate, perceptions of acceptance of specific types of diversity, sources of negative views and stereotypes, and outcomes from diverse interactions. While the main focus of this report is to summarize responses of UCLA students for UCUES 2008, comparisons are also made to responses from students at the eight other UC campuses as well as to UCLA's 2006 UCUES data. Differences in the percentage of respondents who endorsed or agreed with an item were tested at the  $p < .01$  level.

## 2008 UCUES Survey Administration and Sample Representativeness

### Survey Administration

Undergraduate students at nine UC campuses were invited to participate in the 2008 UCUES. This report predominantly focuses on UCLA's 2008 results, but also provides comparisons to the other eight UC campuses, as well as to UCLA's 2006 UCUES data. E-mails were sent to all UCLA undergraduates during the spring quarter 2008 inviting them to complete the survey. The on-line instrument was divided into five modules, with all respondents assigned to complete the Core and one of the following modules: 1) Academic Experience, 2) Civic Engagement, 3) Student Life and Development, and 4) Wild Card (included student service utilization and satisfaction items). All of the campus climate and diversity items, with the exception of one set of questions, were located in the Student Life and Development module.

### Respondent Sample

A total of 2,595 undergraduates responded to the Student Life and Development module of the UCLA administration of the 2008 UCUES. While this only represents a 36% response rate, the sample generated by the 2008 UCUES was generally representative of the population of UCLA undergraduates. However, it is important to note that the UCLA UCUES Core sample slightly over represents females and Asian/Pacific Islander undergraduates and slightly under represents Black, Non-Hispanic students. There is a slight overrepresentation among direct entry student and an underrepresentation of students who had declared majors than those who were undeclared. Other characteristics of UCLA UCUES respondents, such as academic standing and geographic location are fairly representative of the UCLA population. Thus, this sample has a great deal of utility for campus-based assessment and research efforts.

challenging (69% vs. 58% for the 8-campus UC average), safe (96% vs. 89%), intellectual (94% vs. 91%), and affordable (44% vs. 34%). Table 1 summarizes these figures.

Compared to the 2006 UCUES data, UCLA students in 2008 perceived the UCLA campus to be more intellectual (94% in 2008 vs. 90% in 2006), more tolerant of diversity (92% vs. 89%), friendlier (92% vs. 89%), and more caring (72% vs. 66%). A comparison of perceptions of affordability could not be made as the item was not included in the 2006 UCUES survey.

### Respect for Diverse Student Groups

Respondents were presented with two sets of questions to assess perceptions of respect for specific student groups on the UCLA campus. The reference group for the first set of questions was students in general (e.g., “Students are respected here regardless of their gender.”). The second set of questions asked about perceptions of respect for the respondent’s specific group (e.g., “Students of my gender/sexual identity are respected on this campus.”) Figure 1 (see Page 4) displays the findings for UCLA respondents.

In the Core module of the survey, students responded to a set of six questions addressing whether they felt that students were respected at UCLA

regardless of their personal demographic characteristics (e.g., economic or social class, gender, race or ethnicity, religious beliefs, political beliefs, sexual orientation). The percentage of students who indicated “somewhat agree,” “agree,” or “strongly agree” for each of the characteristics ranged from 83% to 89%. Compared to students at the other UCs, UCLA students reported slightly higher agreement that students are respected regardless of their political beliefs (86% vs. 83%), but they did not differ significantly among the other items.

Compared to UCLA UCUES respondents in 2006, a greater percentage of UCLA students in 2008 reported respect for students regardless of economic/social class (84% in 2008 vs. 80% in 2006), political beliefs/affiliations (86% vs. 82%), and sexual orientation (89% vs. 84%). This suggests an improvement toward a more accepting campus climate for diverse identities.

In the Student Life and Development module, students were asked a set of eight questions about the extent that they agreed with statements related to whether students of *their own* specific groups or categorizations (e.g., race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender/sexual identity, religious beliefs, political beliefs, sexual orientation, immigration background, disability status) were respected at UCLA. Endorsement of the statements ranged from 87% to

**Table I. Campus Climate**

	<b>UCLA</b> <b>(n=2,493)</b>	<b>UC System</b> <b>(n=18,821)</b>	<b>Difference</b>	
<b>Percent rating their campus as (on 6-point scale):</b>				
Safe	95.8	89.1	6.7	**
Intellectual	93.7	91.0	2.7	**
Tolerant of Diversity	92.0	91.1	0.9	
Friendly	91.8	90.7	1.1	
Caring	71.8	74.4	-2.6	
Too Hard Academically	68.6	57.8	10.8	**
Not Affordable	56.2	65.5	-9.3	**

\*\*p<.01

96%. Agreement for items related to the respondents' specific group was significantly higher than agreement expressed for the similar item without reference to the respondents' own group, with the exception of political beliefs and the two items without a parallel question (i.e., immigration status and disability). Comparisons could not be made to the 2006 UCUES data as this question was not included in the previous survey administration.

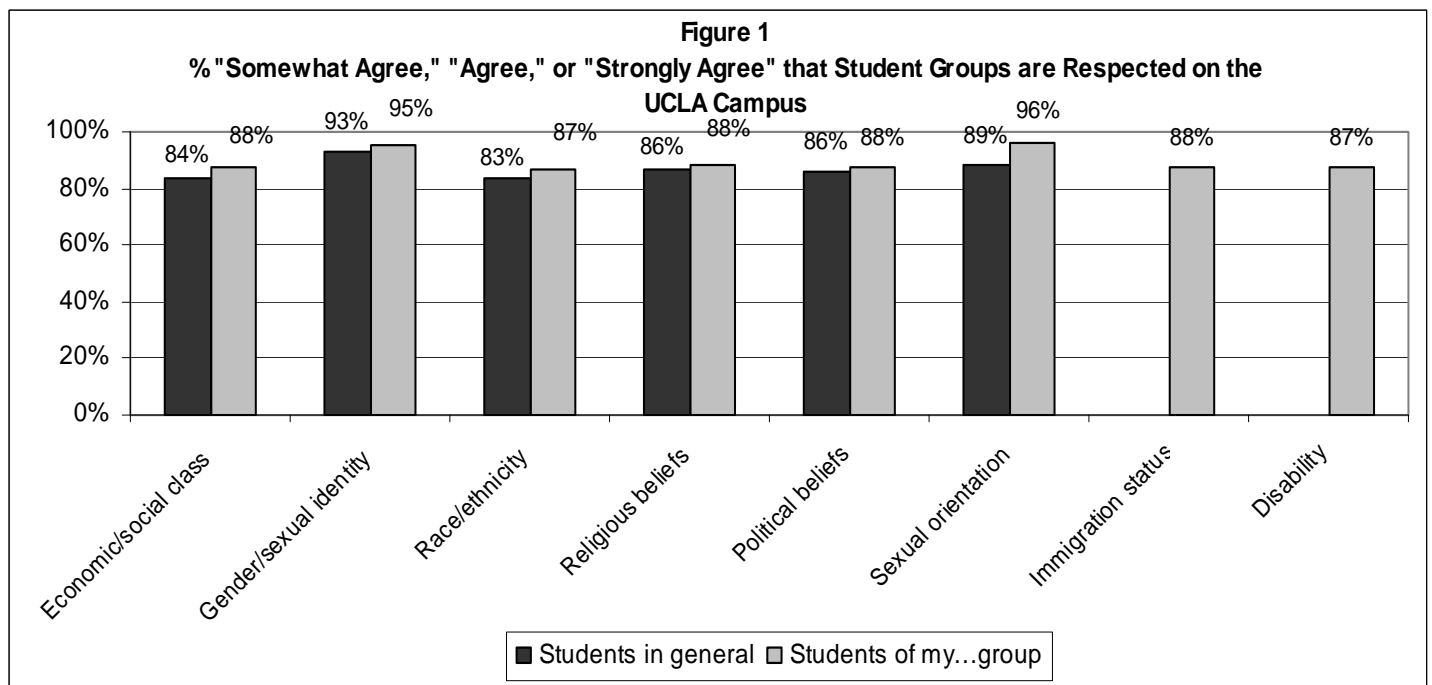
When compared to students at the other UCs, UCLA students did not differ significantly on any of the items; the vast majority of respondents agreed that students of various backgrounds are respected.

Other factors that contribute to the general campus climate are perceptions of appropriate student behaviors. Compared to students at the eight other UC campuses, a greater percentage of UCLA students agreed that there is a clear sense of appropriate and inappropriate behavior on campus (81% UCLA vs. 78% other UCs). And while a slightly greater percentage of UCLA students perceived cheating to be a problem on campus (38% vs. 34%), a smaller percentage of UCLA students felt that drug use is a problem on the campus (38% vs. 43%). There was no significant difference in the perception of alcohol use as a problem on campus between UCLA students and students at the other UC campuses (48% vs. 46%).

## Affiliation and Expression of Opinions

Given the strong endorsement by the majority of UCLA students of a positive campus climate on the 2008 UCUES, it is not surprising that UCLA students showed strong affiliation to the UCLA campus. Over 94% indicate that they are proud to attend UCLA, and 97% perceive that most students are also proud to attend the campus. Both measures of affiliation are significantly higher than the percentages reported for the UC 8-campus average (90% and 85%, respectively).

Another indicator of an accepting campus climate is the freedom that students feel they have in expressing their opinions. Over 90% of respondents indicated that they feel free to express their political beliefs as well as religious beliefs on campus. In addition, this differed significantly from the UC average (88% for political beliefs as well as religious beliefs), suggesting perceptions of greater acceptance for diverse views on the UCLA campus. Further, comparisons with UCLA's 2006 data indicate an improvement in perceived freedom to express opinions in 2008 (political opinions—90% in 2008 vs. 84% in 2006, religious beliefs—90% in 2008 vs. 86% in 2006).

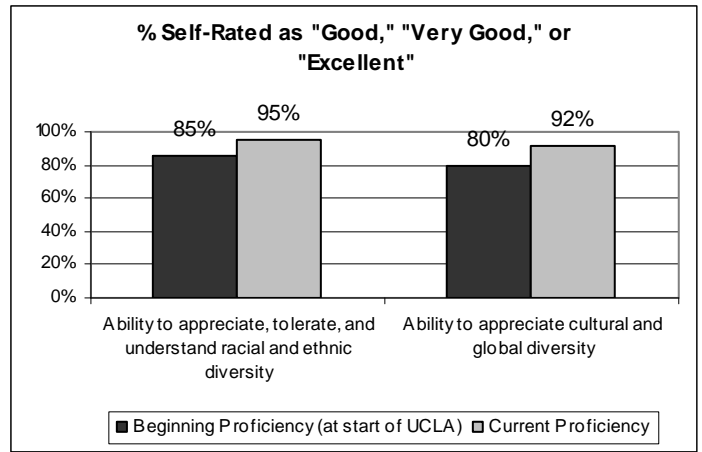


## Sources of Negative Stereotypes

Students were asked to indicate in the current academic year, how often they had heard other students, faculty, and staff express negative or stereotypical views about race or ethnicity, gender or sexual identity, political beliefs or affiliation, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, immigration background, and physical, psychological, or learning disabilities. Table 2 displays the frequency of negative views heard from various sources. The majority of negative or stereotypical comments were heard from other students. Frequency of hearing negative views expressed by students did not significantly differ between students at UCLA and at the eight other UC campuses, except for disabilities (UCLA 10% vs. UC 13%). The most common types of negative views heard from other students were related to political beliefs or affiliations, race or ethnicity, and religion. Similar trends were evident for negative views heard from faculty and staff.

## Outcomes from Diverse Interactions

UCLA students were asked to rate their ability to appreciate diversity when they started UCLA and currently. UCLA respondents did not differ from students at other UCs in terms of their beginning or current proficiency or their gains. Figure 2 summarizes findings for UCLA students.



Over 92% of UCLA respondents felt that their current ability to appreciate, tolerate, and understand racial and ethnic diversity and appreciate cultural and global diversity was “good,” “very good,” or “excellent.”

Respondents were also asked to assess their awareness and understanding of specific areas of diversity, such as racial/ethnic identity, social class and economic differences/issues, racial/ethnic differences/issues, gender/sexual orientation, physical disability, emotional disability. Figure 3 (see Page 6) summarizes the percentage of UCLA respondents who rated themselves as “good,” “very good,” or “excellent” in each of the domains. UCLA students

**Table 2. Sources of Negative or Stereotypical Views**

	From Students	From Faculty	From Staff
<b>In this academic year, % heard “somewhat often” or more frequently negative or stereotypical views about...</b>			
Race or ethnicity	29	4	4
Gender or sexual identity	22	3	4
Political beliefs or affiliation	35	13	7
Religion	28	8	5
Sexual orientation	25	3	4
Socio-economic status	17	4	4
Immigration background	19	4	4
Physical, psychological, or learning disabilities	10	2	3

reported highest proficiency in awareness/ understanding of their own racial/ethnic identity and issues/differences related to social class and race/ ethnicity, with 86% reporting “good” or higher. The largest increase from starting to current proficiency was in understanding of gender/sexual orientation issues (27%), emotional disability issues (24%), and social class/economic differences (24%). UCLA respondents did not significantly differ from students at the other UC campuses in terms of their self-assessed proficiency or the calculated changes in proficiency.

Other potential outcomes resulting from diverse interactions include developing an enhanced understanding of others’ viewpoints. Respondents were asked to indicate how often they gained a deeper understanding of other perspectives through conversations with fellow students because they differed from them in various ways (e.g., religious beliefs, political opinions, nationality, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class). Figure 4 (on Page 7) displays the results for UCLA respondents.

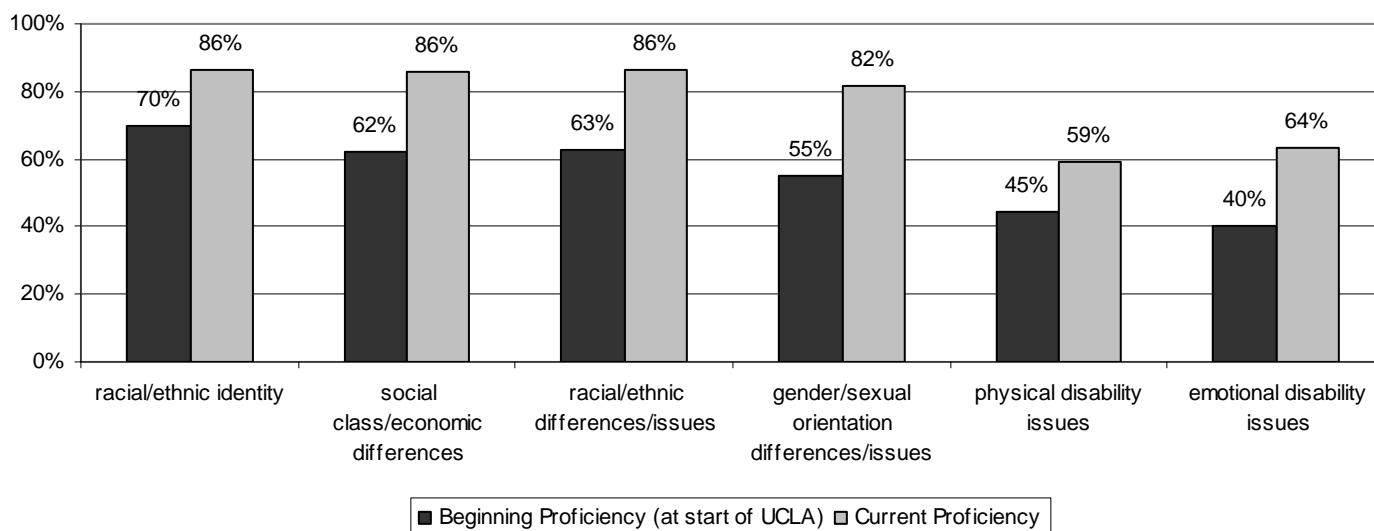
The largest percentage of respondents indicated that they had “somewhat often,” “often,” or “very often” gained a deeper understanding of other perspectives through interactions with students who were different from them in terms of race/ethnicity (61%) and nationality (59%). Respondents indicated less frequently that they gained a deeper understanding as a result of interactions with others who differed from

them in religious beliefs, political opinions, sexual orientation, and social class. This may be due to the fact that these characteristics may be less salient in everyday interactions.

### Background of UCUES

The 2008 University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) is the fifth in a series of undergraduates surveys conducted at the University of California undergraduate campuses. As part of a larger collaborative project entitled ‘The Student Experience in the Research University-21<sup>st</sup> Century’ (SERU21), UCUES offers an in-depth examination of the undergraduate experience at the University of California. As such, it offers UCLA administrators, faculty, and students an opportunity to closely examine campus life at UCLA and to compare it to the UC system as a whole. Results can be viewed through many lenses, such as by major, by college or school, by class standing, by entry status (direct/transfer), and by student characteristics, gender, race/ethnicity, first language).

**Figure 3**  
**% Self-Rated as "Good," "Very Good," or "Excellent" for Beginning and Current Proficiency**



Students at UCLA and the other UC campuses did not differ in how often they gained a new understanding of other perspectives in all areas except for race/ethnicity. A greater percentage of UCLA respondents indicated gaining a new understanding through interactions with students of a different race compared to respondents from other UCs (61% vs. 57%).

Responses from UCLA's 2008 UCUES data did not differ significantly from the 2006 data except in the domain for interactions with students of a different sexual preference. A greater percentage of respondents in 2008 indicated that they gained a new understanding of other perspectives "somewhat often," "often," or "very often" (33% in 2008 vs. 29% in 2006). Generally, students reported enhanced understanding as a result of interactions with others who are different from them along many dimensions.

## Conclusions

Overall, responses from UCUES 2008 indicate positive perceptions of UCLA's campus climate, both generally as well as in reference to specific areas of diversity (e.g., race/ethnicity, social class, religious beliefs, etc.). For the most part, UCLA's findings are consistent with responses from students at the other eight UC campuses and in some cases are slightly higher or more positive. Further, statistically significant differences between 2008 and 2006 UCUES data suggest continued improvement and progress in acceptance of diverse identities and groups.

