



UC Graduate Student Support Survey: Trends in the Comparability of Graduate Support Stipends

**OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND VICE PROVOST FOR GRADUATE,
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2023 Graduate Student Support Survey assesses the competitiveness of the financial support offered by the University of California to academic doctoral students. The survey includes students admitted to UC for the fall 2023 term. It provides insight into the financial aid offers made by UC campuses and their top competitor institutions, the degree to which students choose to attend UC over other institutions, and the factors that influence their decisions. UCOP has conducted the Graduate Student Support Survey every three to four years since 2001.

The average net stipend — the amount of funding from fellowships and assistantships after accounting for tuition and fees — offered by UC was lower than the average offered by students' top-choice non-UC institutions in 2023, but the competitive gap decreased.

- Systemwide, the gap in the average net stipend offered to students decreased by \$969. UC offers increased slightly (1 percent), but the average non-UC offer decreased (2 percent) in constant dollars, resulting in a closing of the competitive gap. See Tables 6 and 9.
- On average, the competitiveness of offers at all campuses except Berkeley, San Francisco and Santa Barbara improved since 2020. The small number of complete responses from Merced of the 2020 results was not reported. See Table 7.
- UC's competitiveness improved in Engineering/CS, Fine Arts, Humanities, Life Sciences and Physical Sciences. In contrast, UC offers in the Health Sciences, Professional Ph.D. and Social Sciences became less competitive overall. See Table 8.
- The survey suggests that UC has improved in competitiveness for resident students, domestic nonresident students and international students. However, the average net stipends offered by UC to domestic nonresident and international students continued to lag behind those of its competitors. See Table 9 and Figure 2.

The cost-of-living differential between UC campuses and non-UC institutions is significant and contributes to UC's competitive disadvantage.

- The cost of living for UC campus communities is nearly twice the national average. The average for UC's top competitors is 77 percent higher than the national average. See Table 11.
- The relatively higher cost of living near UC campuses means that a student offered the same net stipend from UC and a non-UC institution will find that the purchasing power of the UC net stipend is \$3,147 less, on average, than that of the competitive offer. See Table 12.

Survey respondents ranked UC highly in factors such as academic reputation and faculty quality, but rates lower than its competitors in areas related to financial support and cost of living.

- UC ranks higher than its competitors in academic reputation, quality of faculty, quality of labs and facilities, location of campuses, student diversity and providing a caring and welcoming environment. See Table 15.
- Competitor institutions rank higher than UC in the amount and type of financial support offered and the availability of affordable housing. See Table 15.

INTRODUCTION

The University of California's graduate student financial support strategy centers on increasing the university's competitiveness. Unlike UC's undergraduate financial aid strategy, which is focused on access to higher education for all academically eligible students, the goal of graduate student financial support is to attract and enroll a diverse pool of the most highly qualified students to serve the university's research and workforce development missions.

For UC to achieve this goal, it must offer to students levels of support that are both adequate relative to the cost of attending the university and competitive with those offered by institutions competing for the same pool of highly qualified candidates. Evaluating progress toward this goal requires regular assessments of the competitiveness of the university's graduate financial support offers, the enrollment decisions made by prospective UC graduate students and the reasons for those decisions.

The University of California launched its first Graduate Student Support Survey (GSSS) in 2001 and has conducted the survey every three to four years since then — in 2004, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2017, 2020 and 2023. The primary goal of the survey is to measure the competitiveness of UC's offers of student financial support relative to those provided by UC's primary competitor institutions. The survey also provides insight into additional factors that influence students' enrollment decisions.

SCOPE OF THE REPORT

The 2023 survey asked questions similar to those of prior surveys, in order to compare the results. This report examines the findings for the 2023 survey and evaluates any meaningful changes that have occurred since the 2017 and 2020 surveys were conducted. The report includes systemwide averages, along with averages by campus and broad academic discipline. Among the questions are:

- How competitive were UC financial aid offers with non-UC institution offers for that same student, and how has competitiveness changed over time?
- Which non-UC institutions are most frequently named as top competitors?
- How frequently do students choose to enroll in a non-UC institution, and how has that choice changed over time?
- What is the cost-of-living differential between UC and non-UC institutions, and to what degree does that impact UC's competitiveness?

The report also examines:

- The competitiveness of offers based on student residency status
- The composition of offers (e.g., fellowships, assistantships, portable support)
- UC's competitiveness in nonfinancial factors, including perceptions about academic reputation and faculty quality

METHODS

The 2023 GSSS was a comprehensive, 75-question survey conducted online. All academic doctoral admits to the university as of April 24, 2023, were invited to participate. Only students who had made their decision about what institution they planned to attend were allowed to complete the survey. The survey included questions asking students to provide the following information:

- Whether they would be attending a UC or a non-UC institution
- Their single top-choice UC and non-UC institution among the schools that had admitted them
- The total amount of financial support (fellowships and assistantships) offered by their top-choice UC and non-UC institution (by award type)
- The amount of tuition and/or fees, if any, to be paid to their top UC and non-UC institution
- The importance of a range of factors that may have played a role in their enrollment decision
- Their assessment of their top-choice UC and non-UC institutions on the factors that influenced their enrollment decision

Net stipend refers to the calculation of the reported aid amount minus the amount the student would have to pay in tuition and fees.

For the purposes of this report, the net stipend amount refers to the calculation of the reported aid amount minus the amount the student would have to pay in tuition and fees; simply put, how much money will the student have to cover living expenses?

RESPONSE RATE

Tables 1 and 2 show the response rate by campus and ethnicity. As Table 1 shows, over 7,800 admitted students were invited to participate in the 2023 survey. The overall response rate of 58 percent, which included all respondents who entered the online survey, is nine percentage points lower than the 2020 response rate (67 percent). The rate is nevertheless high for student surveys.

The “dual admit” response rate is the percent of respondents who were admitted to academic doctoral programs both at UC campuses and non-UC institutions; this systemwide dual-response rate is 43 percent, is also down nine points from the prior year (52 percent). The “full completion rate” of 21 percent represents the responses that are used in the data analysis of this report, unless otherwise noted. The systemwide full completion rate is also seven percentage points lower than that in 2020 (28 percent).

Table 1: Response Rates by Campus of Admission, 2023

| Campus | Survey Invitees | Responded to Survey | Response | | Dual Admit | | Full Completion | |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------|-------------|---------------|-------|------------------|------|
| | | | Rate | Dual Admits | Response Rate | Rate | Full Completions | Rate |
| Berkeley | 1,731 | 752 | 43% | 824 | 48% | 434 | 25% | |
| Davis | 1,144 | 498 | 44% | 425 | 37% | 212 | 19% | |
| Irvine | 992 | 404 | 41% | 415 | 42% | 213 | 21% | |
| Los Angeles | 1,504 | 651 | 43% | 672 | 45% | 343 | 23% | |
| Merced | 240 | 90 | 38% | 93 | 39% | 30 | 13% | |
| Riverside | 592 | 238 | 40% | 223 | 38% | 94 | 16% | |
| San Diego | 1,324 | 568 | 43% | 616 | 47% | 312 | 24% | |
| San Francisco | 256 | 118 | 46% | 90 | 35% | 45 | 18% | |
| Santa Barbara | 880 | 379 | 43% | 400 | 45% | 201 | 23% | |
| Santa Cruz | 466 | 178 | 38% | 191 | 41% | 83 | 18% | |
| Systemwide | 7,824 | 4,521 | 58% | 3,343 | 43% | 1,652 | 21% | |

* Systemwide totals and response rates based on unduplicated number of admits.

Table 2: Response Rates by Ethnicity, 2023

| Ethnicity | Survey Invitees | Responded to Survey | Response | | Dual Admit | | Full Completion | |
|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------|-------------|---------------|-------|------------------|------|
| | | | Rate | Dual Admits | Response Rate | Rate | Full Completions | Rate |
| African American | 192 | 106 | 55% | 82 | 43% | 40 | 21% | |
| American Indian | 12 | 6 | 50% | 2 | 17% | 1 | 8% | |
| Latino/Chicano | 319 | 195 | 61% | 105 | 33% | 52 | 16% | |
| Asian | 1,126 | 630 | 56% | 460 | 41% | 213 | 19% | |
| White | 2,160 | 1,219 | 56% | 890 | 41% | 474 | 22% | |
| Other* | 1,148 | 665 | 58% | 452 | 39% | 213 | 19% | |
| International | 2,867 | 1,700 | 59% | 1,352 | 47% | 659 | 23% | |
| All Students | 7,824 | 4,521 | 58% | 3,343 | 43% | 1,652 | 21% | |

*Systemwide total and response rate includes unduplicated count. Other includes students of mixed, other and unknown ethnicities.

DATA LIMITATIONS

The 2023 GSSS study relies on self-reported fellowship and assistantship offers for both UC and non-UC competitors, which means that the data quality relies on the accuracy with which students report their award amounts after taking tuition and fees into account. The following factors should also be considered when interpreting the results of the survey:

- The lower number of admits and lower response rate may affect the results of the survey.

- The effects of the labor negotiations of December 2022 on the offers are unknown and may result in changes in outcomes.
- The survey population includes only students admitted to the university by April 24, 2023.
- Respondents who chose a non-U.S. or non-Canadian institution were excluded from the analysis due to concerns about whether figures reported by those students would accurately reflect currency exchange rates and because of limited cost-of-living data.
- The survey compares the average net stipends offered to students, not the actual cost to support a graduate student. It is costlier to support nonresident and international students due to the need to cover these students' Nonresident Supplemental Tuition (NRST).
- The survey does not provide useful information on changes in the number of students admitted to UC. Changes in funding availability may cause departments to admit more or fewer students, in a given year.
- Survey responses that indicated unusually high or low net stipend amounts (greater than \$72,500 or less than -\$72,500) were excluded from the data. Responses with missing stipend amounts for either the top UC or non-UC institution were also excluded, i.e., only responses with valid net stipend amounts reported for both UC and non-UC institutions were included.
- Campuses or subgroups with low response rates should be interpreted with caution. For example, American Indian responses were below 10 percent, and the net stipend difference reported in Table 9 should be interpreted with that in mind.

TRENDS IN ADMISSION TO NON-UC INSTITUTIONS

The survey asked respondents to identify the top-choice non-UC institution where they were admitted. The ten most frequently cited institutions accounted for about forty percent of all responses, and the institutions varied only slightly from those identified in the previous survey. Stanford University is consistently identified as the top UC competitor, followed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Washington, University of Southern California, Harvard University and University of Michigan. Of the list top ten competitors, three are public institutions. Table 3 shows the top ten schools most frequently cited as top non-UC institution in each of the past three surveys.

Table 3: Distribution of Top Non-UC Institutions

| 2023 | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Institution | Frequency | Percent |
| Stanford University | 112 | 6.8% |
| Massachusetts Institute of Technology | 78 | 4.7% |
| University of Washington - Seattle | 76 | 4.6% |
| University of Southern California | 64 | 3.9% |
| University of Michigan at Ann Arbor | 57 | 3.5% |
| Harvard University | 57 | 3.5% |
| Cornell University, All Campuses | 51 | 3.1% |
| Columbia University in the City of New York | 49 | 3.0% |
| University of Chicago | 46 | 2.8% |
| University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign | 43 | 2.6% |
| Total | 633 | 38.3% |

| 2020 | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Institution | Frequency | Percent |
| Stanford University | 164 | 6.5% |
| Massachusetts Institute of Technology | 121 | 4.8% |
| University of Chicago | 115 | 4.5% |
| University of Washington - Seattle | 108 | 4.3% |
| Harvard University | 105 | 4.1% |
| University of Michigan at Ann Arbor | 90 | 3.5% |
| University of Texas at Austin | 85 | 3.4% |
| Princeton University | 75 | 3.0% |
| Columbia University in the City of New York | 71 | 2.8% |
| Cornell University, All Campuses | 67 | 2.6% |
| Total | 1,001 | 39.5% |

| 2017 | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Institution | Frequency | Percent |
| Stanford University | 224 | 7.3% |
| Massachusetts Institute of Technology | 166 | 5.4% |
| Harvard University | 129 | 4.2% |
| University of Southern California | 126 | 4.1% |
| University of Michigan at Ann Arbor | 107 | 3.5% |
| University of Washington - Seattle | 104 | 3.4% |
| University of Chicago | 84 | 2.7% |
| Princeton University | 81 | 2.6% |
| Cornell University, All Campuses | 81 | 2.6% |
| Yale University | 73 | 2.4% |
| Total | 1,175 | 38.1% |

* Among respondents who are dual admits.

Shaded boxes indicate institutions in top list every survey cycle

The survey also asked respondents to identify each UC campus and non-UC institution that admitted them. As shown in Table 4, respondents were admitted to an average of 1.4 UC campuses and 3.5 non-UC institutions. The average number of offers of admission from UC campuses and non-UC institutions remained steady over the 2017, 2020 and 2023 surveys.

Table 4: Respondents' Average Number of Offers of Admission

| | 2017 | | | | | 2020 | | | | | 2023 | | | | |
|-----------------|--------|---------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------|---------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------|---------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| | Non-UC | | Avg. # UC Offers | Avg. # UC Offers | Avg. # All Offers | Non-UC | | Avg. # UC Offers | Avg. # UC Offers | Avg. # All Offers | Non-UC | | Avg. # UC Offers | Avg. # UC Offers | Avg. # All Offers |
| | n | Percent | | | | n | Percent | | | | n | Percent | | | |
| All Respondents | 6,499 | 100% | 3.5 | 1.4 | 4.9 | 5,855 | 100% | 3.5 | 1.4 | 4.9 | 4,320 | 100% | 3.5 | 1.4 | 4.9 |
| Admitted to: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Multiple UCs | 1,732 | 27% | 3.8 | 1.4 | 6.2 | 1,651 | 28% | 3.8 | 2.4 | 6.2 | 1,074 | 25% | 4.0 | 2.4 | 6.5 |
| >=1 non-UC | 5,281 | 81% | 4.1 | 2.5 | 5.5 | 4,672 | 80% | 4.1 | 1.4 | 5.5 | 3,343 | 77% | 4.2 | 1.4 | 5.6 |

ENROLLMENT PATTERNS

As shown in Table 5, 57 percent of survey respondents chose to attend a UC campus over a non-UC competitor institution, higher than the proportion in 2017 and 2020, although the rate varied by campus.

Table 5: Enrollment Choice by Top-Choice UC Campus

| Top-Choice UC | 2017 | | 2020 | | 2023 | |
|---------------|------------|--------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|--------------------|
| | Completers | Chose to Attend UC | Completers | Chose to Attend UC | Completers | Chose to Attend UC |
| Berkeley | 754 | 51% | 678 | 48% | 453 | 53% |
| Davis | 341 | 47% | 327 | 49% | 166 | 58% |
| Irvine | 324 | 55% | 264 | 48% | 154 | 62% |
| Los Angeles | 433 | 55% | 430 | 53% | 278 | 59% |
| Merced | 36 | 50% | 39 | 59% | 23 | 78% |
| Riverside | 167 | 54% | 47 | 83% | 75 | 65% |
| San Diego | 459 | 47% | 373 | 47% | 239 | 56% |
| San Francisco | 142 | 51% | 76 | 62% | 45 | 73% |
| Santa Barbara | 308 | 48% | 225 | 41% | 157 | 44% |
| Santa Cruz | 124 | 50% | 78 | 44% | 62 | 65% |
| Systemwide | 3,088 | 51% | 2,537 | 50% | 1,652 | 57% |

COMPETITIVENESS OF STUDENT SUPPORT OFFERS

Survey respondents reported the amount and composition of the offers they received from their top-choice UC and non-UC institutions. A net stipend was then calculated for each offer, based on the amount of tuition and/or fees, if any, respondents expected to pay from their offer.

The result is a net stipend that shows the amount of the award available for students' other expenses, e.g., books and supplies, living and personal expenses. A negative net stipend represents the amount of tuition and/or fees a student will have to cover from their personal resources. This metric permits a direct comparison of UC's financial support offers with those at other public and private institutions, independent of differences in tuition and fee levels.

Table 6 shows the average net stipend among all full-completion respondents, along with the average net stipend among those respondents who were offered positive net stipends from both their top-choice UC and non-UC institutions.

Table 6: Per Capita UC and Non-UC Net Stipend

| Full Completions with Positive Net Stipends | 2017 | | 2020 | | 2023 | 2020 to 2023 | | |
|--|-------------|---------|-------------|---------|-------------|---------------------|----|---------|
| Number of Responses | 2,570 | | 2,204 | | 1,520 | (684) | | |
| Per Capita UC Net Stipend | \$ | 34,968 | \$ | 35,281 | \$ | 34,154 | \$ | (1,127) |
| Per Capita Non-UC Net Stipend | \$ | 36,578 | \$ | 37,350 | \$ | 35,795 | \$ | (1,555) |
| Difference | \$ | (1,610) | \$ | (2,069) | \$ | (1,641) | \$ | 428 |

*2017 and 2020 figures adjusted to 2023 dollars based on CPI.

Among all respondents, the average UC net stipend (\$31,776) was \$143 less than the average reported for non-UC institutions. This competitive gap is the lowest in past three cycles (\$860 in 2017 and \$1,112 in 2020, adjusted for inflation). The decline in the competitive gap in 2023 is attributable both to an increase in UC's average net stipend as well as a decline in offers from its competitors.

As in previous years, the survey showed variance in the competitiveness of UC's offers by campus; see Table 7. The campuses with the greatest improvement in either closing the deficit between itself and its competitors or increasing its existing advantage were Irvine, Riverside, San Diego and Santa Cruz. Only Berkeley, San Francisco and Santa Barbara were flat or lost ground since 2020.

Table 7: Trends in Per Capita Net Stipend by Top-Choice UC Campus*

| Trends in Per Capita Net Stipend by Top-Choice UC Campus * | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Campus | 2017 | | | 2020 | | | 2023 | | | 2020 to 2023 |
| | Per Capita UC Net Stipend | Per Capita Non-UC Net Stipend | Difference | Per Capita UC Net Stipend | Per Capita Non-UC Net Stipend | Difference | Per Capita UC Net Stipend | Per Capita Non-UC Net Stipend | Difference | |
| Berkeley | \$32,428 | \$35,872 | -\$3,443 | \$35,195 | \$37,324 | -\$2,129 | \$36,068 | \$38,298 | -\$2,230 | -\$101 |
| Davis | \$27,373 | \$28,674 | -\$1,301 | \$27,795 | \$27,441 | \$354 | \$26,542 | \$25,737 | \$804 | \$450 |
| Irvine | \$30,850 | \$29,198 | \$1,652 | \$27,550 | \$28,476 | -\$926 | \$29,764 | \$26,810 | \$2,954 | \$3,881 |
| Los Angeles | \$25,949 | \$27,752 | -\$1,803 | \$29,784 | \$31,612 | -\$1,829 | \$30,041 | \$31,649 | -\$1,608 | \$220 |
| Merced** | \$26,075 | \$27,557 | -\$1,482 | | | | \$24,034 | \$23,035 | \$999 | |
| Riverside | \$27,276 | \$23,107 | \$4,169 | \$28,648 | \$24,552 | \$4,096 | \$28,307 | \$20,386 | \$7,921 | \$3,825 |
| San Diego | \$30,404 | \$32,224 | -\$1,820 | \$32,210 | \$34,811 | -\$2,602 | \$33,203 | \$33,315 | -\$113 | \$2,489 |
| San Francisco | \$41,462 | \$39,296 | \$2,166 | \$45,679 | \$42,242 | \$3,437 | \$34,340 | \$32,769 | \$1,571 | -\$1,866 |
| Santa Barbara | \$29,890 | \$28,070 | \$1,820 | \$30,652 | \$31,870 | -\$1,219 | \$31,517 | \$32,730 | -\$1,214 | \$5 |
| Santa Cruz | \$25,180 | \$25,547 | -\$367 | \$29,444 | \$29,219 | \$225 | \$26,256 | \$23,838 | \$2,418 | \$2,193 |
| Systemwide | \$30,013 | \$30,873 | -\$860 | \$31,443 | \$32,555 | -\$1,112 | \$31,776 | \$31,919 | -\$143 | \$969 |

*2017 and 2020 figures adjusted to 2023 dollars based on CPI.

**Merced figures not reported in 2020 due to swing in number of respondents for disciplines and Master's students being included.

Table 8 shows the average net stipends offered by student’s top-choice UC and non-UC institutions by broad academic discipline. UC’s competitiveness improved in Engineering/CS, Fine Arts, Humanities, Life Sciences and Physical Sciences. However, other disciplines saw decreases: Professional Ph.D. and Social Sciences. Though the Health Sciences discipline is still more competitive at UC, the positive competitive gap decreased since the last cycle.

Table 8: Trends in Per Capita Net Stipend by Discipline*

| Broad Discipline | 2017 | | | 2020 | | | 2023 | | | 2020 to 2023 |
|-------------------|------------|----------------|------------|------------|----------------|------------|------------|----------------|------------|--------------|
| | Average UC | Average Non-UC | Difference | Average UC | Average Non-UC | Difference | Average UC | Average Non-UC | Difference | |
| Engineering/CS | \$27,078 | \$28,557 | -\$1,480 | \$28,746 | \$29,746 | -\$1,001 | \$32,167 | \$31,094 | \$1,073 | \$2,073 |
| Fine Arts | \$28,411 | \$22,711 | \$5,699 | \$22,573 | \$30,488 | -\$7,916 | \$22,036 | \$23,020 | -\$983 | \$6,932 |
| Health Sciences | \$28,221 | \$26,984 | \$1,237 | \$26,667 | \$20,880 | \$5,787 | \$31,605 | \$31,019 | \$586 | -\$5,201 |
| Humanities | \$29,398 | \$29,626 | -\$228 | \$30,730 | \$30,493 | \$237 | \$30,749 | \$30,362 | \$386 | \$149 |
| Life Sciences | \$35,958 | \$36,037 | -\$79 | \$36,018 | \$37,518 | -\$1,500 | \$34,951 | \$35,719 | -\$768 | \$732 |
| Physical Sciences | \$32,420 | \$32,705 | -\$284 | \$34,311 | \$35,217 | -\$906 | \$34,335 | \$33,574 | \$762 | \$1,668 |
| Professional PhD | \$22,517 | \$27,349 | -\$4,832 | \$26,322 | \$28,331 | -\$2,009 | \$24,536 | \$28,142 | -\$3,606 | -\$1,597 |
| Social Sciences | \$28,093 | \$27,626 | \$466 | \$29,251 | \$30,276 | -\$1,025 | \$29,107 | \$31,129 | -\$2,022 | -\$997 |
| Systemwide | \$30,013 | \$30,873 | -\$860 | \$31,443 | \$32,555 | -\$1,112 | \$31,776 | \$31,919 | -\$143 | \$969 |

* 2017 and 2020 dollars adjusted to 2023 dollars based on CPI.

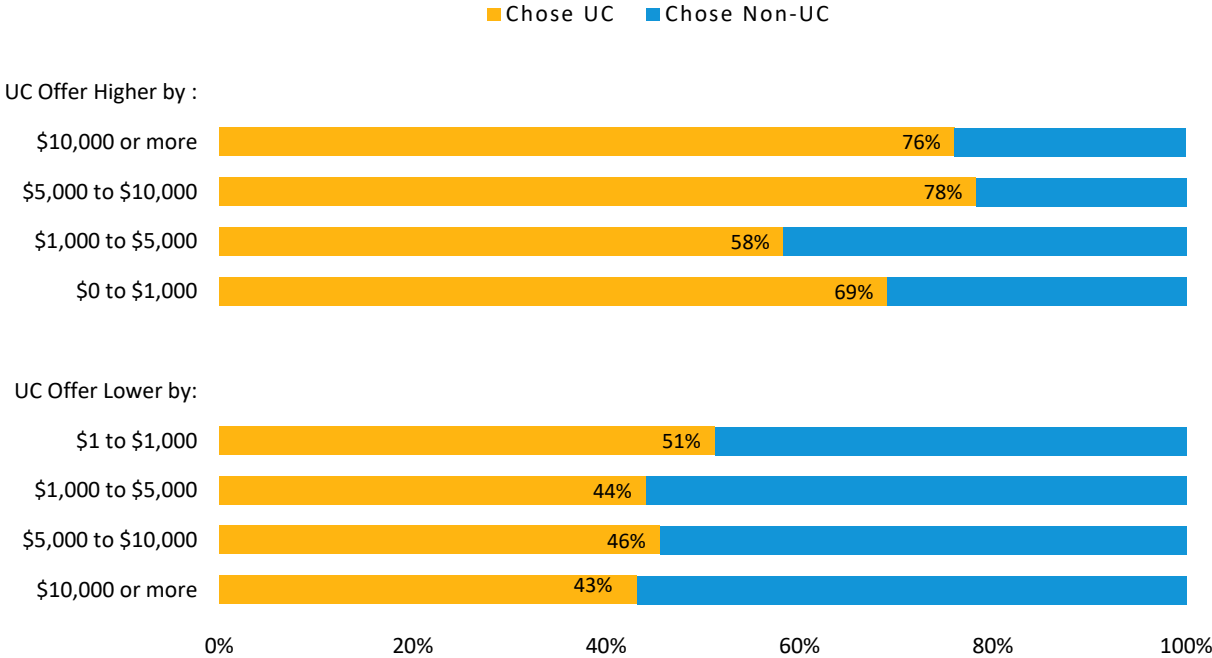
NET STIPEND COMPETITIVENESS AND YIELD

As in past iterations of the survey, results from the 2023 survey suggest that the competitiveness of students’ offers from their top-choice institutions influence their enrollment decisions. The relationship between the size of this impact and the competitiveness of students’ awards is shown in Figure 1, below. When UC’s net stipend was greater than the non-UC net stipend by at least \$10,000, seventy-six percent of respondents chose to attend UC. In contrast, among respondents whose UC

net stipends were lower than non-UCs' by at least \$10,000, only 43 percent chose UC. The relationship between award competitiveness and students' enrollment decisions was like that observed in earlier surveys.

Note that in cases where the net stipends offered by a student's top-choice UC and non-UC institution differed by less than \$1,000, respondents choose UC at a rate of 51 percent. This is noteworthy considering the substantially higher cost of living in UC campus communities (as discussed in the "Relative Value of Net Stipends" section of this report).

Figure 1: Percent of Respondents Choosing to Attend UC, By Net Stipend Difference



RESIDENT, NONRESIDENT AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Providing competitive awards to domestic nonresident and international students can be particularly challenging, due to the need to cover these students' Nonresident Supplemental Tuition (NRST) in addition to the standard student tuition and fees. Domestic nonresident graduate students are typically subject to NRST for only one year, at which point they can establish California residency. International students cannot establish California residency and are hence subject to NRST every year until they advance to candidacy, when they are exempt from NRST for up to three years.

The 2023 data shows that UC's competitive gap narrowed among domestic nonresident and international students, and UC's net stipend was better than its competitors among domestic residents as shown in Table 9 and Figure 2, below. Figure 2 depicts that UC has been closing the competitive gap for domestic nonresident and international students since 2017.

Table 9: Trends in Per Capita Net Stipend by Residency Status

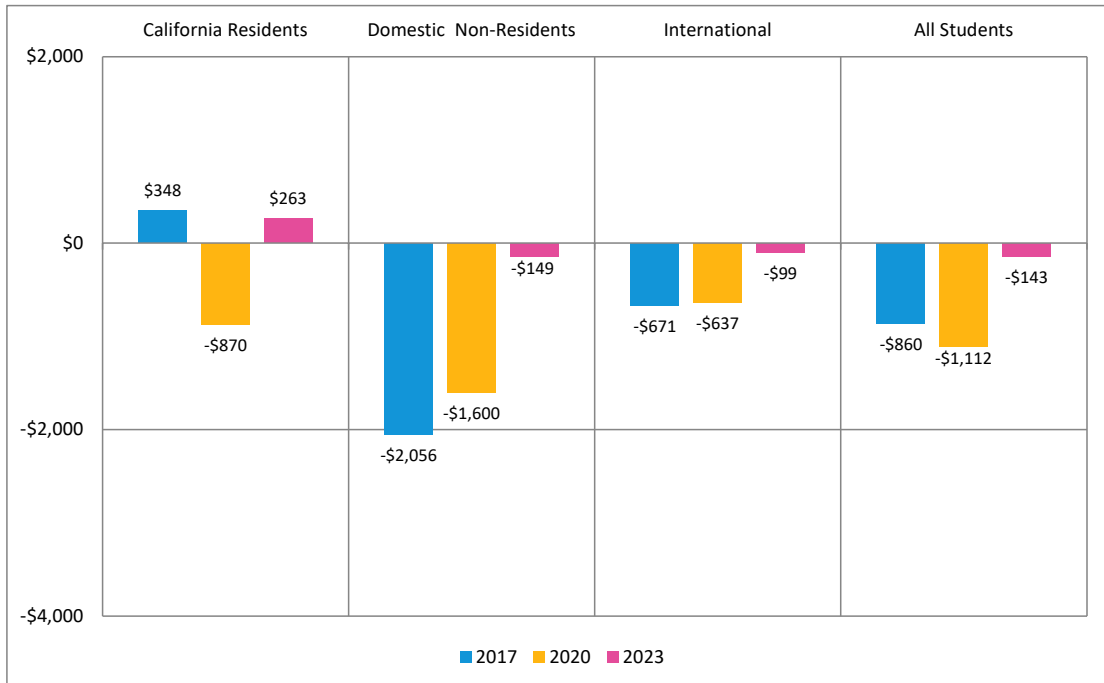
| UC Net Stipend | 2017 | 2020 | 2023 | 2020 to 2023 | |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|----------|--------------|-----|
| Domestic Resident | \$31,180 | \$32,353 | \$32,000 | (\$354) | -1% |
| Domestic Non-resident | \$31,617 | \$32,969 | \$34,112 | \$1,143 | 3% |
| International | \$25,233 | \$28,165 | \$30,315 | \$2,150 | 8% |
| All Students | \$30,013 | \$31,443 | \$31,776 | \$333 | 1% |

| Non UC Net Stipend | 2017 | 2020 | 2023 | 2020 to 2023 | |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|----------|--------------|-----|
| Domestic Resident | \$30,832 | \$33,222 | \$31,737 | (\$1,485) | -4% |
| Domestic Non-resident | \$33,673 | \$34,570 | \$34,261 | (\$309) | -1% |
| International | \$25,904 | \$28,804 | \$30,414 | \$1,610 | 6% |
| All Students | \$30,874 | \$32,555 | \$31,919 | (\$636) | -2% |

| Difference | 2017 | 2020 | 2023 | 2020 to 2023 |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|--------------|
| Domestic Resident | \$348 | (\$870) | \$263 | \$1,132 |
| Domestic Non-resident | (\$2,056) | (\$1,600) | (\$149) | \$1,452 |
| International | (\$671) | (\$637) | (\$99) | \$538 |
| All Students | (\$860) | (\$1,112) | (\$143) | \$969 |

*2017 and 2020 adjusted to 2023 dollars based on changes in the CPI.

Figure 2: Difference Between UC and Non-UC Stipends by Residency for 2017, 2020 and 2023



NET STIPEND BY ETHNICITY

The net stipend analysis by ethnicity, which was reported for the first time in 2020, reveals that for African American and Asian students, UC’s net stipend offer is lower than non-UC’s offer and lower than the overall competitiveness gap. Latino/Chicano and white students received a slightly better net stipend offer from a top UC than a top non-UC. See Table 10.

Table 10: Trends in Per Capita Net Stipend by Ethnicity*

| Campus | 2020 | | | 2023 | | |
|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|
| | Per Capita UC Net Stipend | Per Capita Non-UC Net Stipend | Difference | Per Capita UC Net Stipend | Per Capita Non-UC Net Stipend | Difference |
| African American | \$31,878 | \$33,009 | -\$1,131 | \$30,062 | \$33,640 | -\$3,578 |
| American Indian | \$32,946 | \$12,636 | \$20,310 | \$46,776 | \$46,776 | \$0 |
| Latino/Chicano | \$32,577 | \$35,131 | -\$2,554 | \$30,914 | \$28,891 | \$2,023 |
| Asian | \$32,209 | \$31,803 | \$406 | \$33,501 | \$33,919 | -\$417 |
| White | \$32,242 | \$34,549 | -\$2,306 | \$33,484 | \$33,327 | \$157 |
| Other* | \$33,958 | \$34,185 | -\$227 | \$33,424 | \$33,244 | \$179 |
| International | \$28,165 | \$28,804 | -\$637 | \$30,315 | \$30,414 | -\$99 |
| Systemwide | \$31,443 | \$32,555 | -\$1,112 | \$31,776 | \$31,919 | -\$143 |

*Includes students who reported ethnicity as 'Other' or multi-ethnic. 2020 figures adjusted to 2023 dollars based on CPI.

COMPOSITION OF OFFERS

The survey asks students to report the composition of their financial support offers by indicating the portion of their awards derived from institutional fellowships, research assistantships, teaching assistantships and portable extramural fellowships. The composition of award offers is shown in Table 11.

Historically, UC has trailed competitors in the percent of students offered institutional fellowships and research assistantships but has offered a higher percentage of teaching assistantships than other institutions. In 2020 and 2023, however, the percent of students offered UC institutional fellowships was similar; it was 65 percent compared with 61 percent among UC’s competitors in 2020, and about 68 percent compared with 68 percent among its competitors in 2023. Fellowships remained the most common type of support offered by UC to first-year students and were cited far more frequently than either teaching assistantships (25 percent) or research assistantships (25 percent).

Respondents indicated that 82 percent of UC offers were multiyear offers compared with 83 percent of offers from UC’s competitors. This suggests that this potential competitive disadvantage for UC has been declining since 2017 and 2020.

Table 11: Composition of Award Offers*

| Award Type | 2017 | | | 2020 | | | 2023 | | |
|--------------------------|------|--------|-------|------|--------|-------|------|--------|-------|
| | UC | Non-UC | Diff. | UC | Non-UC | Diff. | UC | Non-UC | Diff. |
| Extramural Fellowship | 10% | 10% | 0% | 6% | 6% | 0% | 6% | 6% | 0% |
| Institutional Support | 88% | 85% | 3% | 89% | 89% | -1% | 95% | 94% | 1% |
| Institutional Fellowship | 65% | 61% | 3% | 67% | 68% | -1% | 68% | 68% | 0% |
| Research Assistantship | 18% | 20% | -2% | 27% | 28% | -1% | 25% | 23% | 3% |
| Teaching Assistantship | 34% | 26% | 8% | 29% | 22% | 7% | 26% | 20% | 6% |
| Multi-year Offer | 66% | 71% | -4% | 74% | 76% | -2% | 82% | 83% | 0% |

*Institutional Support based on its share among total support awarded. All other figures based on percent receiving award.

RELATIVE VALUE OF NET STIPENDS

The dollar amount of the net stipends shown in the tables above do not reflect differences in the cost of living in areas where UC campuses and other institutions are located. Two similar net stipends can provide markedly different lifestyles depending on the local cost of living (such as housing and transportation) which may, in turn, influence students’ enrollment decisions.

Consistent with past surveys, a local cost-of-living (COL) index obtained from a proprietary database was assigned to each U.S. and Canadian institution identified in the survey. The index captures each institution’s local cost of living relative to a national average, assuming a common student lifestyle.

Once a COL index was established for each institution, the indexes were applied to a standard graduate student budget to calculate a COL “adjustor.” The adjustor is a dollar amount that represents the estimated difference in purchasing power between the net stipends offered by UC and its competitor institutions.

Table 12 shows the average COL for UC campuses and their competitor institutions. An index of 100 reflects the average cost of living in the United States. UC campuses are based in locations with an average COL that is 93 percent higher than the national average; for UC competitor institutions, the comparable figure is 77 percent. The relatively higher cost of UC communities results in an average COL adjustor of $-\$3,137$. In other words, at the systemwide level, UC’s nominal competitive gap of $-\$143$ is equivalent to a competitive gap of $-\$3,280$ in terms of students’ actual purchasing power.

Table 12: Trends in Systemwide Cost of Living and Net Stipend Value*

| | 2017 | 2020 | 2023 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Cost of Living Index | | | |
| UC | 180.8 | 187.2 | 193.3 |
| Non-UC | 164.7 | 172.1 | 177.4 |
| Difference | 16.1 | 15.1 | 15.9 |
| COL Adjustor | -\$3,259 | -\$3,176 | -\$3,137 |
| Net Stipend (2023 Dollars) | | | |
| UC | \$30,013 | \$31,443 | \$31,776 |
| Non-UC | \$30,873 | \$32,555 | \$32,578 |
| Difference | -\$860 | -\$1,112 | -\$143 |
| COL-adjusted Difference | -\$4,119 | -\$4,287 | -\$3,280 |

*2017 and 2020 figures have been adjusted to 2023 dollars based on CPI.

California historically has a higher cost of living than the U.S. average. Yet the average COL for UC competitor institutions is also well above the national average and has changed at about the same rate since 2020. Among UC’s most frequent competitors shown in Table 3 earlier in this report, three (Stanford, University of Washington and USC) are in high-cost areas of San Francisco Bay Area, Seattle and Los Angeles, and three (MIT, Harvard and Columbia) are in high-priced East Coast regions. Therefore, the COL adjustor between 2020 and 2023 is generally the same (only \$40 different), resulting in the COL-adjusted net stipend difference between 2020 and 2023 (about \$1,000) being like the net stipend difference between these years (about \$1,000).

Individual UC campus indexes vary greatly, as shown in Table 13. San Francisco, for example, has a COL index of 245, far higher than the national average (one hundred) and considerably higher than the average among its competitors (192.1). This results in a cost-of-living adjustor of \$10,426 for UC San Francisco.

Table 13 shows the COL indexes and the adjustor amounts for each campus and its competitors for 2017, 2020 and 2023. COL indexes have increased since 2020 in most cities where UC campuses and non-UC institutions are located. The increase since 2017 likely reflects the rising costs due to the pandemic and the economic impact of the ongoing war in Ukraine. As Table 13 shows, the COL indexes in certain UC locations have increased significantly since 2020, but only modestly systemwide.

Table 13: UC Campus COL versus National Average

| Top-Choice UC | 2017 | | | 2020 | | | 2023 | | |
|---------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|
| | UC COL Index | Non-UC COL Index | COL Adjustor | UC COL Index | Non-UC COL Index | COL Adjustor | UC COL Index | Non-UC COL Index | COL Adjustor |
| Berkeley | 212.3 | 181.1 | -\$7,518 | 215.4 | 193.5 | -\$6,149 | 213.8 | 194.4 | -\$3,824 |
| Davis | 124.3 | 128.6 | \$1,335 | 130.0 | 133.6 | \$847 | 131.6 | 133.2 | \$315 |
| Irvine | 167.3 | 149.8 | -\$4,509 | 171.7 | 149.8 | -\$3,449 | 196.4 | 152.4 | -\$8,672 |
| Los Angeles | 196.6 | 182.5 | -\$4,652 | 202.0 | 179.9 | -\$2,779 | 200.5 | 189.3 | -\$2,207 |
| Merced | 103.1 | 122.5 | \$2,786 | 105.1 | 111.2 | \$3,823 | 92.6 | 117.4 | \$4,888 |
| Riverside | 127.1 | 130.3 | \$129 | 127.6 | 135.1 | \$631 | 135.2 | 146.0 | \$2,129 |
| San Diego | 184.1 | 172.9 | \$1,068 | 190.1 | 185.4 | -\$2,207 | 198.6 | 187.7 | -\$2,148 |
| San Francisco | 271.8 | 207.8 | -\$8,906 | 271.0 | 208.6 | -\$12,613 | 245.0 | 192.1 | -\$10,426 |
| Santa Barbara | 162.5 | 150.8 | \$853 | 172.4 | 161.4 | -\$2,306 | 195.9 | 182.5 | -\$2,641 |
| Santa Cruz | 174.3 | 171.5 | -\$4,936 | 176.0 | 163.2 | -\$552 | 212.0 | 176.9 | -\$6,918 |
| Systemwide | 180.8 | 164.7 | -\$3,259 | 187.2 | 172.1 | -\$3,176 | 193.4 | 177.4 | -\$3,147 |

Cost-of-living adjustments lowered the relative value of UC’s net stipend offers at seven UC campuses and increased the relative value at three others. Table 14 shows the effect of COL adjustments on net stipend offers at each campus.

Table 14: Trends in Net Stipend and Cost of Living Differences, by Campus

| Top-Choice UC Campus | UC Per Capita Net Stipend | | | Non-UC Per Capita Net Stipend | | | COL Adjustor | | | Total Advantage (Disadvantage) of UC over Non-UC Net Stipend | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|----------|----------|-------------------------------|----------|----------|--------------|-----------|-----------|--|----------|----------|
| | 2017 | 2020 | 2023 | 2017 | 2020 | 2023 | 2017 | 2020 | 2023 | 2017 | 2020 | 2023 |
| Berkeley | \$32,428 | \$35,195 | \$36,068 | \$35,872 | \$37,324 | \$38,298 | -\$6,960 | -\$6,149 | -\$3,824 | -\$10,403 | -\$8,277 | -\$6,053 |
| Davis | \$27,373 | \$27,795 | \$26,542 | \$28,674 | \$27,441 | \$25,737 | \$1,236 | \$847 | \$315 | -\$66 | \$1,202 | \$1,120 |
| Irvine | \$30,850 | \$27,550 | \$29,764 | \$29,198 | \$28,476 | \$26,810 | -\$4,175 | -\$3,449 | -\$8,672 | -\$2,523 | -\$4,375 | -\$5,718 |
| Los Angeles | \$25,949 | \$29,784 | \$30,041 | \$27,752 | \$31,612 | \$31,649 | -\$4,307 | -\$2,779 | -\$2,207 | -\$6,110 | -\$4,607 | -\$3,816 |
| Merced** | \$26,075 | | \$24,034 | \$27,557 | | \$23,035 | \$2,579 | | \$4,888 | \$1,097 | | \$5,887 |
| Riverside | \$27,276 | \$28,648 | \$28,307 | \$23,107 | \$24,552 | \$20,386 | \$120 | \$631 | \$2,129 | \$4,288 | \$4,727 | \$10,050 |
| San Diego | \$30,404 | \$32,210 | \$33,203 | \$32,224 | \$34,811 | \$33,315 | \$989 | -\$2,207 | -\$2,148 | -\$832 | -\$4,809 | -\$2,261 |
| San Francisco | \$41,462 | \$45,679 | \$34,340 | \$39,296 | \$42,242 | \$32,769 | -\$8,246 | -\$12,613 | -\$10,426 | -\$6,079 | -\$9,176 | -\$8,855 |
| Santa Barbara | \$29,890 | \$30,652 | \$31,517 | \$28,070 | \$31,870 | \$32,730 | \$790 | -\$2,306 | -\$2,641 | \$2,610 | -\$3,524 | -\$3,855 |
| Santa Cruz | \$25,180 | \$29,444 | \$26,256 | \$25,547 | \$29,219 | \$23,838 | -\$4,570 | -\$552 | -\$6,918 | -\$4,937 | -\$327 | -\$4,500 |
| Systemwide | \$30,013 | \$31,443 | \$31,776 | \$30,873 | \$32,555 | \$31,919 | -\$3,259 | -\$3,176 | -\$3,137 | -\$4,119 | -\$4,287 | -\$3,280 |

* 2017 and 2020 figures have been adjusted to 2023 dollars based on changes in CPI. Merced's 2020 data not included owing to data issues that year and was not reported.

Table 15 shows the relative value of net stipend offers after making COL adjustments within each broad discipline. In 2023, the COL adjustment reduced the value of UC net stipend offers in all eight disciplines, placing UC at an overall disadvantage in every field of study.

Table 15: Trends in Net Stipend and Cost of Living Differences, by Broad Discipline

| Broad Discipline | UC Per Capita Net Stipend | | | Non-UC Per Capita Net Stipend | | | COL Adjustor | | | Total Advantage (Disadvantage) of UC over Non-UC Net Stipend Offer | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|----------|----------|-------------------------------|----------|----------|--------------|----------|----------|--|----------|----------|
| | 2017 | 2020 | 2023 | 2017 | 2020 | 2023 | 2017 | 2020 | 2023 | 2017 | 2020 | 2023 |
| Engineering/Computer Science | \$27,078 | \$28,746 | \$32,167 | \$28,557 | \$29,746 | \$31,094 | -\$5,001 | -\$3,895 | -\$3,697 | -\$6,480 | -\$4,894 | -\$2,624 |
| Fine Arts | \$28,411 | \$22,573 | \$22,036 | \$22,711 | \$30,488 | \$23,020 | -\$856 | -\$770 | -\$2,520 | \$4,843 | -\$8,684 | -\$3,503 |
| Health Sciences | \$28,221 | \$26,667 | \$31,605 | \$26,984 | \$20,880 | \$31,019 | -\$7,430 | -\$6,168 | -\$6,386 | -\$6,192 | -\$381 | -\$5,799 |
| Humanities | \$29,398 | \$30,730 | \$30,749 | \$29,626 | \$30,493 | \$30,362 | -\$3,870 | -\$2,258 | -\$3,578 | -\$4,098 | -\$2,021 | -\$3,192 |
| Life Sciences | \$35,958 | \$36,018 | \$34,951 | \$36,037 | \$37,518 | \$35,719 | -\$533 | -\$697 | -\$1,992 | -\$612 | -\$2,196 | -\$2,760 |
| Physical Sciences | \$32,420 | \$34,311 | \$34,335 | \$32,705 | \$35,217 | \$33,574 | -\$2,619 | \$80 | -\$2,407 | -\$2,903 | -\$826 | -\$1,646 |
| Professional PhD | \$22,517 | \$26,322 | \$24,536 | \$27,349 | \$28,331 | \$28,142 | -\$1,202 | -\$674 | -\$2,656 | -\$6,034 | -\$2,683 | -\$6,262 |
| Social Sciences | \$28,093 | \$29,251 | \$29,107 | \$27,626 | \$30,276 | \$31,129 | \$432 | -\$23 | -\$2,947 | \$898 | -\$1,048 | -\$4,969 |
| Systemwide | \$30,013 | \$31,443 | \$31,776 | \$30,873 | \$32,555 | \$31,919 | -\$3,259 | -\$3,176 | -\$3,137 | -\$4,119 | -\$4,287 | -\$3,280 |

*2017 and 2020 figures adjusted to 2023 dollars based on changes in the Consumer Price Index.

QUALITATIVE FACTORS

The survey also asked respondents to rate the importance of qualitative factors that influenced their enrollment decisions. Respondents then evaluated both their top-choice UC and non-UC institution on each factor, using a rating of Above Average, Average or Below Average.

Table 16 shows the percentage of respondents who rated influential factors as Above Average or Average. UC campuses received ratings that were notably lower than those of their competitors on four factors related to financial support: the amount of support, the type of support, the duration of support and the availability of affordable housing. UC campuses received slightly higher ratings than their competitors for factors related to educational quality (such as academic reputation and quality of faculty), for high-quality labs and facilities, for providing a caring and welcoming environment and for the diversity of its students. UC campuses received significantly higher ratings than their competitors for the desirability of campus location.

Table 16: Respondents' Ratings of Top-Choice UC versus Top-Choice Non-UC Schools

| Factor | 2017* | | | 2020* | | | 2023* | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------|---------------|--------|-----------|---------------|--------|-----------|---------------|--------|
| | UC Rating | Non-UC Rating | Diff. | UC Rating | Non-UC Rating | Diff. | UC Rating | Non-UC Rating | Diff. |
| Academic Reputation | 96.7% | 94.9% | 1.8% | 97.1% | 95.4% | 1.7% | 96.4% | 95.0% | 1.5% |
| Aligns with Research Interest | 95.2% | 92.9% | 2.3% | 95.5% | 94.3% | 1.2% | 94.8% | 92.3% | 2.5% |
| Quality of Faculty | 98.5% | 96.3% | 2.1% | 98.7% | 97.0% | 1.7% | 98.1% | 96.1% | 2.0% |
| Amount of Financial Support | 79.1% | 88.3% | -9.2% | 79.1% | 88.3% | -9.2% | 71.2% | 86.5% | -15.3% |
| Type of Financial Support | 80.7% | 86.4% | -5.7% | 79.6% | 87.1% | -7.5% | 80.7% | 90.4% | -9.7% |
| Multi-Year Support | 84.6% | 86.7% | -2.0% | 85.6% | 87.9% | -2.4% | 88.5% | 91.1% | -2.6% |
| Location of Campus | 87.2% | 74.3% | 12.9% | 87.0% | 74.9% | 12.1% | 86.0% | 72.3% | 13.7% |
| Diversity of Students | 85.0% | 77.3% | 7.7% | 85.6% | 83.8% | 1.7% | 92.1% | 84.4% | 7.6% |
| Availability of Affordable Housing | 50.1% | 75.7% | -25.6% | 43.8% | 76.8% | -33.0% | 39.0% | 78.2% | -39.3% |
| Caring Environment | 90.8% | 87.9% | 2.9% | 90.8% | 87.9% | 2.9% | 94.8% | 93.0% | 1.8% |
| High Quality Labs and Facilities | 93.7% | 92.9% | 0.7% | 93.7% | 93.6% | 0.1% | 96.4% | 96.0% | 0.4% |

Ratings limited to students who indicated each factor as being important in their general enrollment decision-making process.

* Indicates a rating of Average or Above Average.

CONCLUSION

The 2023 survey results suggest that the competitiveness of UC's offers of graduate student financial support has improved since 2020. The decrease in the competitiveness gaps reflects that, in constant dollars, there has been both a slight increase in the average net stipend offered by UC campuses (1 percent), and a decrease in the average net stipend offered by non-UC institutions (2 percent).

While the average net stipend offered by most UC campuses remains below that offered by its competitors, there are signs of improvement at certain campuses and in some disciplines. In particular, the competitiveness of UC's offers has improved in Engineering/CS, Health Sciences, Humanities and Physical Sciences. There is ongoing concern about UC's ability to attract the best graduate students — particularly nonresident domestic and international students.

The stipend gap between UC and non-UC institutions is magnified by the higher cost of living in some UC campus communities. The economic growth (prior and after the pandemic), and the rising costs following the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, and increased housing costs in California may have widened the gap between the cost of living near UC campuses and the average cost of living nationwide (as well as the cost of living near competing institutions).

Students continue to give UC high marks on factors that are important to their enrollment decisions, including the academic reputation of the university, the quality of the faculty, the quality of labs and facilities, the diversity of the student body and the location of UC campuses. UC received lower ratings in areas related to student financial support.

Moreover, survey results indicate that the competitiveness of graduate student support matters: a student is more likely to enroll at UC when UC's offer exceeds that of its competitors, and less likely to enroll at UC when it does not. The university continues to face significant challenges in this area although UC has closed the competitive gap in net stipend offered to students since 2013, 2017 and 2020.