2017 Graduate Cost of Attendance Survey Administration Report

The 2017 Graduate Cost of Attendance Survey (GCOAS) survey was administered to over 21,000 graduate students at all ten UC campuses during the spring 2017 term (between April 16th and June 5th). This report provides information on completion rates, sample representativeness and survey incentives. This survey was developed by Academic Affairs and administered by Institutional Research & Academic Planning.

SAMPLING METHOD

A sample of 35% of all graduate students was drawn. To ensure that the sample for all sub-groups was representative, and large enough for statistical analysis, we set a minimum cell size of 70 for each campus by academic discipline and race/ethnicity. Small sub-groups by discipline and race/ethnicity were oversampled. Meaning, for a sub-group with 70 or fewer students, all were sampled.

RESPONSE RATE

Response rate refers to the percentage of students in the survey population who responded to the survey. This includes students who completed all questions and submitted the survey (completes), those who completed all questions but did not submit the survey and those who completed part of the survey (partials). As Qualtrics cannot make a distinction between items in the consent form and the actual survey items, the response rates reported in Qualtrics included all students who "started" the survey by at least endorsing the consent form.

Respondents: 9,808. The final cleaned data file contains 9,808 respondents, excluding duplicated cases, students below 18 years of age, testing cases, and respondents who did not answer any survey questions. This contributes to an overall response rate of 46%. Table 2 summarizes the response rate for the system and by campus.

Completes: 9,330. The final cleaned data file contains 9,330 completed respondents, who responded to at least one survey item and clicked the "submit" button at the conclusion of the survey. This translates into a completion rate of 44%.

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Partial completes: 478. Partial complete means that at least one item was answered, but the "submit" button was not clicked. These participants may also be considered dropouts. Only one duplicate was found in the sample. These surveys were closed out at the end of the administration period, capturing all information provided by the respondent up to the day of survey closure.

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Table 1. Response and Completion Rate Table

Campus	Total Invites	Total Respondents	Response Rate	Total Completes	Completion Rate
Berkeley	3,682	1,689	46%	1597	43%
Davis	2,684	1,037	39%	993	37%
Irvine	1,642	795	48%	758	46%
Los Angeles	5,375	2,426	45%	2284	42%
Riverside	1,290	595	46%	568	44%
Merced	505	293	58%	287	57%
San Diego	2,586	1,138	44%	1085	42%
San Francisco	1,281	672	52%	642	46%
Santa Barbara	1,390	673	48%	650	47%
Santa Cruz	963	483	50%	466	*48%*
Systemwide	*21,389*	*9,808*	*46%*	*9,330*	*44%*

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SAMPLE REPRESENTATIVENESS

Sample representativeness, defined as the degree to which the sample resembles the study population, often indicates whether systematic differences exist in the responses between survey respondents and non-respondents. A representative sample is one in which the characteristics or key variables in the sample parallel those of the target population. Examples of key variables include gender, race/ethnicity, student level, and so on. A representative sample ensures that the sample estimate of a mean or proportion is unbiased so that results or conclusions drawn from the sample can be generalized to the entire population.

Comparing individual characteristics or key variables between the sample and the population is a method commonly used to check whether a sample is representative of the study population. For categorical variables, a multivariate frequency table (or crosstab) is often used to examine the distribution of the sample and compare it to the population. We compare the proportions of individuals across different categories of the variable in the sample versus the population. A significant difference in the proportions implies that the sample is not representative of the population.

Table 2 examines sample representativeness of the 2017 Graduate Cost of Attendance Survey by discipline and race/ethnicity. Overall, respondents are representative of the graduate student population with the exception of White students in the social sciences and the humanities. For both disciplines, White students are underrepresented.

SURVEY INCENTIVES

Originally, respondents were offered a chance to win one of twenty $75 Amazon.com gift cards. However, on May 10th respondents at Davis and San Diego were offered an additional five Amazon.com gift cards to incentivize participation at those campuses. UCLA also had a low response rate, but the response rate was not low enough to warrant five additional cards for UCLA students, so emails sent to UCLA students did not specify how many additional gift cards they would receive. UCLA students received two additional Amazon.com gift cards.

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Due to California lottery law, all UC students whether or not complete the survey are eligible for the survey prizes. This message should be provided in places where the incentive information is given.

Table 2. 2017 Graduate Cost of Attendance Survey Sample Representativeness

Characteristics	Respondent		Population	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
STEM				
Asian	523	14%	3,346	16%
International	1,373	37%	8,114	39%
URM	421	11%	1,820	9%
White/Other	1,365	37%	7,613	36%
Social Sciences				
Asian	240	16%	668	13%
International	357	23%	1,164	22%
URM	350	23%	1,118	21%
White/Other	601	39%	2,369	45%
Humanities				
Asian	165	16%	276	10%
International	209	20%	462	16%
URM	235	23%	488	17%
White/Other	429	41%	1,601	57%
Professional				
Asian	707	23%	7,239	27%
International	556	18%	4,193	16%
URM	590	19%	4,580	17%
White/Other	1,209	39%	11,017	41%