

**The Academic and Co-Curricular Experiences of Transfer Students:  
Evidence from the Your First College Year and  
UC Undergraduate Experiences Surveys**

The academic, cognitive, and psychosocial adjustment of new students was measured using both “single-shot” and longitudinal survey data. A sample of incoming freshmen and community college transfer students were given the CIRP Freshman survey at entry and Your First College Year (YFCY) survey during spring quarter. Although the analysis suggested several similarities in adjustment factors, some differences in self-perception, academic engagement, and behavioral variables were found. Transfer students tended to indicate lower levels of self-rated cognitive development, writing ability, and use and satisfaction with student services while indicating higher levels of isolation from campus life and interaction with faculty.

The attached tables provide survey data gathered from transfer students and students entering directly from high school on two separate instruments. The use of these two surveys is intended to provide comparison data for these two groupings at different points in college. The Your First College Year (YFCY) survey is a national survey given to all first year UCSD students in the spring quarter. As part of a national study on the first year experience, the YFCY enables comparisons of the first year college experiences of UCSD students with national norms from selective public universities, and all other public and private colleges and universities in the study. The attached tables are from the 2003 administration of the YFCY with responses from approximately 1,600 first year

students; this grouping included 316 new UCSD transfer students. The second set of attached tables provides a comparison of student satisfaction, behaviors, and experiences using data from the University of California Undergraduate Experiences Survey (UCUES). This analysis compared the results for fourth-year students (Seniors) who entered as freshmen directly from high school (N=1,241) with those for students entering as transfers (N=784). For this brief discussion of the findings, differences approaching 10% between freshmen and transfer student respondents are noted and the page numbers for the respective survey tables are noted.

## **The Your First College Year Survey (YFCY)**

### **Interaction with the Campus Community**

Although first-year transfer students report a somewhat higher frequency of interaction with faculty and staff compared with first-time freshmen, transfer students report significantly lower frequency of daily or weekly interaction with “close friends at this campus.” (Transfers: 64%, Freshmen 83%). (p. 1: YFCY).

### **Satisfaction Indicators**

There do not appear to be significant differences in the ratings of various campus services between new freshmen and transfer students. With respect to satisfaction with Recreational Facilities, transfer students appear to be less familiar or less inclined to use

them based on the relatively high number of “Neutral/No Experience: responses. A similar pattern can be found with respect to “New Student Orientation” where transfer students appear significantly less likely to have participated. (page 2: YFCY).

### **College Experiences and Climate**

Transfer students indicate somewhat lower levels of satisfaction with the “sense of community among students,” and “overall college experience.” (page2: YFCY)

Approximately 59% of transfer respondents and 48% of new freshmen indicated frequently or occasionally feeling isolated from campus life. Transfer students are more likely to contribute to class discussions than are new freshmen, although this may be due to enrollment in more upper division courses. Transfer students were somewhat less likely to discuss courses with other students, and were less likely to skip class. Transfer students were three times less likely to participate in intramural sports compared with new freshmen students (YFCY: page 3). Transfer students were also much less likely to report developing close friendships with students (YFCY: page 4). When asked if they would choose to enroll at UCSD again given the choice, a similar proportion (77-79%) of both new transfer and freshmen students indicated “probably or definitely yes.” (YFCY: page 4).

### **Academic and Social Adjustment Scales**

The YFCY survey contains several internal scales that measure certain factors or themes of experiences, behaviors, and cognitive and affective development. These are shown on

page 5 of the YFCY tables. Significant factor score differences ( $p < .05$ ) between freshmen and transfer responses are noted in the table. Transfer students report lower levels of writing development and somewhat lower levels of “academic disengagement,” (transfers report being less likely to skip class, arriving late to class, turning in course assignments late or sub par, and feeling bored in class) than new freshmen respondents. Transfer students were somewhat less likely to experience “student focused classroom practices,” (group discussions, presentations, group projects or discussions about class with other students). Transfer students reported higher levels of “non-academic commitments” (hours spent commuting, performing household duties, and working off campus). These outside commitments may be associated with the lower levels of participation and engagement by new transfer students with campus services and other students.

### **UC Undergraduate Experiences Survey (UCUES) Findings**

The second part of this analysis used responses to the UCUES for two groups of seniors- those who entered UCSD as freshmen, and those entering UCSD as transfer students.

#### **Use of Campus Services**

In general, fourth year transfer students tended to use campus services at a somewhat lower rate than seniors entering as freshmen (with the exception of Financial Aid and Transfer Student Services). For example transfer students used services such as the

Career Center, Student Health, Psychology and Counseling, Tutoring, Personal Safety, Shuttles, and Housing at lower levels than students entering UCSD directly from high school (UCUES: pp. 1-2).

### **Ratings of Campus Services**

For most indicators, transfer and direct from high school entrants tended to rate campus services similarly. As noted in the usage tables, transfer students tended to be less aware and use services at lower rates than students entering as freshmen. There were some services where transfer students tended to give lower ratings. These lower ratings were found with respect to Tutoring programs, New Student Orientation, Personal Safety program (UCUES: p. 3), Recreational Facilities (RIMAC, Canyonview, Main Gym), Recreational Programs, Opportunities Abroad, LGBT services (although N's are low) (UCUES: p. 4), Multi-Cultural (Cross Cultural) Services, Religious Affairs (low N's), and the Student Life or Programming Office (UCUES pp. 4-5). It should be cautioned that the number that report using some of these services is low and this may affect the distribution of ratings.

### **Satisfaction with Campus Experience**

Transfer students and non-transfers tended to rate certain aspects of the campus climate similarly. When asked if they would again choose UCSD if given the chance to make the choice over again, approximately 75% of both these groupings indicated that they would

again choose UCSD. Also, transfers and non-transfers tended to rate their overall UC experience similarly. However, transfer students did indicate a somewhat lower sense of belonging with respect to the UCSD campus and their reported “social experience” is lower than non-transfer students. (UCUES: p. 6).

### **Time Commitments**

Transfer students spent less time involved in student groups, clubs, and organizations (UCUES: P. 7). Transfers report spending somewhat more time on studying and other academic activities outside of class and a lower proportion report working for pay on campus. However both groups of seniors report about the same number hours spent working for pay off-campus.

### **Academic Self-Ratings (UCUES: p. 10)**

Transfers and non-transfers tended to rate similarly across a range of skills such as writing, quantitative, research, and leadership. A similar pattern was found with respect to academic aspiration. (UCUES: p. 11).