

## **New UCSD survey research facility kicks off with poll of nearly 550 students**

**March 31, 1992**

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### **NEW UCSD SURVEY RESEARCH FACILITY RICKS OFF WITH POLL OF STUDENTS**

A new survey research facility at the University of California, San Diego has opened its doors with a pilot survey of nearly 550 UCSD students. The facility, established by UCSD's American Political Institutions Project (APIP), will conduct public opinion surveys for both on and off-campus clients, and provide ongoing survey classes for students, utilizing a state-of-the-art computer-assisted telephone interviewing software program called CASES.

"UCSD currently offers a number of courses that examine public opinion and it's measurement," said Political Science Professor Arthur Lupia, a co-director of the new facility along with UCSD sociologist Akos Rona-Tas. "But, now, with this new survey capability, we can provide students with hands-on experience in the myriad phases of administering a poll.

"Since survey research involves a variety of theoretical, methodological and operational problems, a survey is an ideal device for teaching students how to take on large questions, how to break these questions down into manageable parts, and how to work productively as members of a team," added Lupia. "For the courses involved, the ability to create a survey instrument transforms the classroom into a laboratory."

The survey of UCSD students, designed to gauge student opinions on a wide range of issues, was conducted by Lupia and Rona-Tas in conjunction with 70 students who were enrolled in two research survey classes in sociology and political science during the winter quarter. All telephone interviews for the 90-question survey were conducted by the students, utilizing the CASES software.

The survey, based on a randomly generated sample of 549 undergraduate students, tested student opinions on the proposed fee increase, career opportunities, contentment with the university, as well as work and study habits. (A detailed summary of the poll is attached). The following are some of the major findings:

**Proposed Fee Increase:** The majority of those students polled -- approximately 96 percent -- indicated that they were opposed or strongly opposed to the 22 percent fee increase in the proposed 1992-93 State budget. A smaller majority -- 66 percent -- said they would be personally impacted by the fee increase.

Students indicated that they would be willing to accept the higher fees (66 percent) if it meant preserving the quality and reputation of UCSD, but would also be willing to accept larger classes in lieu of the higher fees (67 percent). To absorb the impact of the fee increase, 83 percent said they would decrease their own expenditures, 74 percent said they would ask their parents for more money, 69 percent replied that they would work more, and 59 percent said they would borrow the needed amount.

**Career Opportunities/Optimism About the Future:** Only 25 percent of those polled said they would be looking for employment after college, compared to 66 percent, who reported that they would be attending graduate

school. Of those who responded that they would be seeking employment, 67 percent expressed optimism that they would find the job they wanted.

Contentment at UCSD: While 45 percent of respondents said that they felt better about their decision to attend UCSD than they did one year ago, 15 percent reported that they felt worse about their decision. Eighty-three percent of those polled felt that UCSD administrators were sensitive to student concerns on some issues, but 54 percent felt that the administration would be more responsive if student involvement in campus issues increased. Eighty-six percent of responding students felt that they did not have enough influence over decisions made by the administration.

Work/Study Habits: Half of the those who responded (50 percent) maintain a job during the academic year. Of those students, 39 percent reported that they could not afford to attend UCSD without the income provided by a job. The employed students responding work an average of 18.5 hours per week. According to the survey, the average student spends 3.6 hours each day studying (outside of class).

According to Professor Rona-Tas, the data from the UCSD students survey will be the subject of an in-depth analysis by Sociology students in a survey research class Spring quarter. Although ongoing survey classes are planned, the next major APIP poll is scheduled for the fall, focusing on the presidential election and related political issues, as well as any initiatives that qualify for the November ballot.

(Note: A summary of the UCSD students survey is attached.)

## SUMMARY OF UCSD STUDENTS SURVEY

Spring 1992

### BACKGROUND

Between February 22 and March 4, UCSD Political Science and Sociology students, under the direction of Political Science Professor Arthur Lupia, Sociology Professor Akos Rona-Tas and Political Science graduate student Michael McDonald, conducted a telephone survey of 549 UCSD undergraduates.

The survey was written by professors Lupia and Rona-Tas and contained questions that were designed to identify student opinions on subjects which included the proposed UC fee increases, the implications of budget cuts within the University of California, the perceived responsiveness of the UCSD administration to student concerns and the state of the economy. In addition, students were asked to describe their own work and study habits, backgrounds and career plans.

The survey was conducted on a stratified random sample of UCSD undergraduates. The response rate was 60% and the margin of error on the results reported is plus or minus 4%.

### FEE INCREASE

Most students expressed very strong feelings against a possible fee increase. Students were asked to rank the fee increase on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 indicates that a student is "strongly against the fee increase" and 10 indicates that a student is "strongly in favor of the fee increase." 53% of the respondents gave a response of 2 or less. In contrast, only 4% gave a response of greater than 6. Both figures point to strong disapproval of the fee increase.

Students were then asked to choose between the fee increase and other suggested remedies to the budget cutbacks that the University is facing. In a choice between "a 20 percent increase in class size and no fee increase" and "20 percent fee increase and no increase in class size" 67% of the respondents opted for larger classes and no fee increase. In a choice between "a decline in the quality of the university and no fee increase"

and "20 percent fee increase and no decline in the quality of the University" only 18% chose a decline in quality and no fee increase. 66% were willing to absorb the fee increase to protect "the quality of the University." These findings suggest that while students are very much against the fee increases, their opposition weakens when they consider alternative methods of resolving UC's budget dilemma. In addition, 24% of the respondents claimed that they would consider transferring to a Cal State University in the event of a 50% increase in fees at UC and no increase in fees at Cal State. Not surprisingly, we have found that African-American and Latino students are the most sensitive to this issue, as they come from less affluent backgrounds.

When asked if the proposed 22% fee increase would affect them, 66% said that it would. Of those who said that they would be affected by the fee increase, 83% said they would spend less, 74% said that they would ask their parents for money, 69% would work more and 59% would borrow more.

## FINANCIAL STATUS

Most respondents reported coming from financially stable households. 61% of the respondents reported that the primary source of money to pay for their education was their parents. (15% reported scholarships, 7% reported loans and 13% reported that a job was the primary source of the funds that are used for their education). Further evidence that the parents of most UC students are stable financially includes the following: 81% reported that their parents owned the homes they lived in; 67% reported that their father had earned at least a bachelor's degree; 49% reported that their mother had earned at least a bachelor's degree; 63% reported that there was a computer in their home during their high school years.

## EMPLOYMENT STATUS

50% of the respondents held jobs while school is in session. 39% of those students reported that without working they could afford to attend UCSD. Those who work average 18.5 hours a week at the job. The percentage of students who work and the number of hours worked are similar to the numbers reported by these respondents about 1991. African-American and Latino students were more likely to be among those students who needed to hold a job in order to attend UCSD.

## FUTURE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

The respondents were uncertain about the future. Only 25% of the respondents (43% of seniors) reported that they would be looking for a job after college. Of those who would be looking for a job, respondents assessed the probability of finding the job they wanted at 67% (69% for seniors). 89% reported that they would look for employment within California, although 39% believed that they would find better jobs outside of California. Most respondents (66%) reported that they planned to attend graduate school.

## OPINIONS ABOUT UCSD

We asked respondents to provide us with their reasons for attending UCSD. 80% reported that "getting a good job" was a "very important" reason, while 72% reported that "intellectual enrichment" was a very important reason. In contrast, fewer respondents reported that "learning about the world" (36%) "meeting family expectations" (26%) and "making new friends" (32%) were "very important" reasons. One series of questions attempted to gauge how students felt about UCSD. Forty-five percent reported that they felt better about UCSD this year than they did one year ago while 15% felt worse about their decision.

One set of questions asked about the amount of influence that students feel they have influence over university policies. Eighty-six percent felt that they, personally, did not have enough influence over decisions made by the administration, although 83% thought that the administration considered student preferences on some issues. 54% responded that greater levels of student involvement in campus issues would lead to a more responsive University administration, while 37% believed that greater student involvement would have no effect.

## STUDY HABITS

The average student spent 3.6 hours studying outside of class every day. Cognitive science majors reported spending the least time studying (2.4 hours/day), while Physics and Chemistry majors reported spending the most time studying (5 hours/day). (Responses for some of the other majors: Sociology (2.43); Economics (2.67); Anthropology (2.71); Psychology (2.79); Communication (2.80); Political Science (2.88); Engineering (4.36); Biology (4.43); Mathematics (4.44) and Computer science (4.72).

## POLITICAL AFFILIATION

In terms of political preferences, 32% of the respondents identified themselves Democrats, 29% as Republicans and 21% as "Independent."

## ABOUT THE SURVEY

There were three primary reasons for running the survey. First, the project was designed to give students hands-on experience doing survey research, and thus it complemented material presented in the students' course work. Second, the survey has gathered information about undergraduate opinions and attitudes that future classes will be able to use for analysis. A Spring quarter Sociology course will be the first to conduct in depth analyses of the data. Third, the survey was a pilot project for a future survey center at UCSD. The American Political Institutions Project (APIP) is leading a multidisciplinary effort to provide survey capabilities for the UCSD campus in a way that would allow an integration of teaching and research interests in periodic surveys of San Diego County, Southern California and possibly the entire nation.

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