

Sources and Notes

About the survey

The Freshman Academic Experience Survey was designed by stakeholders from the three large undergraduate colleges and the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, with the assistance of the staff of the UCR Survey Research Center (<http://survey.ucr.edu>). The survey was administered at the end of the Spring 2007 academic quarter via the campus on-line course evaluation system.

One-half of UCR first-year students were randomly selected to participate. Of the 1,607 students sampled, 40.5% (651) completed the survey. Among those who completed the survey, almost all responded to every question asked.

There were no statistically significant differences between respondents and non-respondents on most demographic variables. Female students, however, were significantly more likely (47%) than male students (33%) to respond to the survey.

There were no significant differences between survey respondents and non-respondents on SAT or ACT test scores. However, respondents had, on the average, higher High School GPA (3.5 versus 3.4), more advanced placement units (6.5 versus 5.4), and had earned significantly more transfer units (9.2 versus 7.1) than non-respondents.

There were no significant differences in the likelihood of responding to the survey across academic majors.

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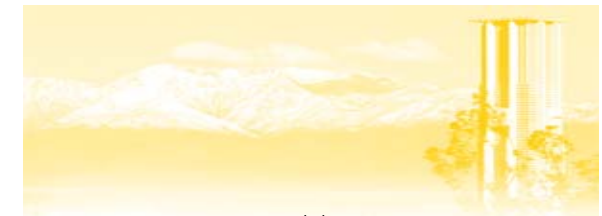
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"FIRST YEAR LEARNING COMMUNITIES & STUDENT ENGAGEMENT"

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
UC RIVERSIDE

STUDENT SURVEY BRIEF

SPRING 2008

This edition of the "Student Survey Brief" draws from the Freshman Academic Experience Survey administered in Spring 2007. This was a collaborative effort with Robert Hanneman and Martin Johnson from the UCR Survey Research Center. This survey focuses on entering freshmen and their participation and "engagement" in learning communities. For a full report on this study please visit <http://irue.ucr.edu/reports.html>

This report is meant to raise more questions than they answer. Contact us with follow-up questions at: junelyn.peeples@ucr.edu and guadalupe.anaya@ucr.edu or Martin Johnson at martin.johnson@ucr.edu.

THE IMPACT OF

FIRST YEAR LEARNING COMMUNITIES

UCR has created a number of educational programs intended to enrich the experience of first-year students through “learning communities.” About 46% of the respondents to the Freshman Academic Experience Survey reported that they had participated in one or more of these programs.

The survey asked whether there are notable differences in the levels of scholarly “engagement” enjoyed by students participating in learning communities as compared to those who did not. The findings reported here rely on analyses that control for demographic and academic performance differences among students.

SCHOLARLY ENGAGEMENT

STUDENT-FACULTY CONTACT

Respondents were asked how frequently they met with faculty in office hours, on a scale from 0, indicating “never,” to 7, indicating “several times a week.” First Year Learning Community (FYLC) participants reported more contact (2.4 versus 2.2, a difference that is statistically significant at the 10% level).

Respondents were also asked how many faculty they had met with in office hours. FYLC participants reported a larger number of contacts (3.1 versus 2.5, statistically significant at the 1% level).

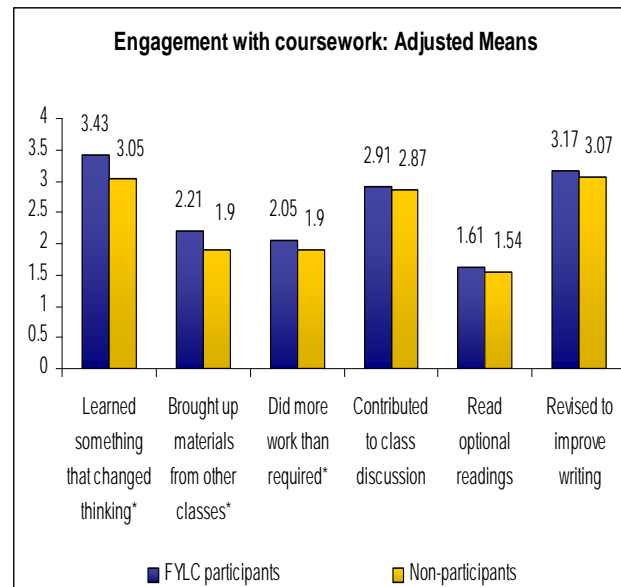
When asked whether FYLC classes were better, worse, or no different from non-FYLC classes in terms of helping students get to know faculty members, 36% reported better and only 9% reported worse.

ACADEMIC CHALLENGE

Respondents to the survey were also asked about their engagement with their classes. The survey asked whether students had a number of different experiences in the context of academic course work. These included experiences like “learned something that has changed the way you think about the world around you” and “found a course so interesting that you did more work than was required.” The response

scales for these items ranged from 0 (never did this) to 5 (did this very often).

Participants in FYLC programs and classes consistently reported higher levels of engagement with their coursework, controlling for gender, on-campus residence, high school GPA, transfer units, and enrolled units. The results appear in figure below.



*statistically significant

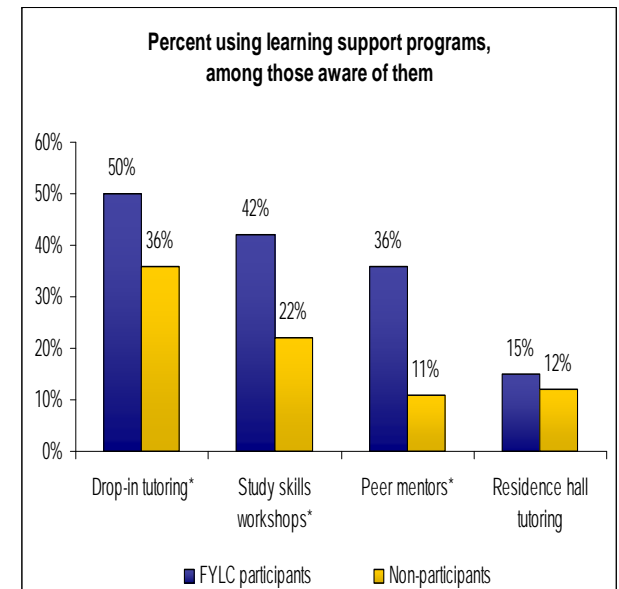
CAMPUS RESOURCES

FYLC programs also have a goal of making students more aware of supplemental learning and tutoring resources.

FYLC participants are more likely to know about these resources. Across the four supplemental resources on which we surveyed (drop-in tutoring, study skills workshops, peer mentor, and residence hall-based tutoring), on average 89 percent of FYLC students said they were aware of each, compared to 82.3 percent of non-FYLC participants.

Among respondents who were aware of these resources, FYLC participants were significantly more likely to report using them (with the exception of residence hall

tutoring). The results appear in figure below.



*statistically significant

PEER INTERACTION

ACTIVE/COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

And finally FYLC students reported that they were more likely to have worked on a group project (69% versus 61%, a difference that is statistically significant at the 5% level). However, program participants were significantly less likely to participate in spontaneous study groups (29% versus 39% for non-FYLC participants, statistically significant at the 5% level).

When asked whether FYLC classes were better, worse, or no different from non-FYLC classes in forming engagement with other students, 61% reported better and only 8% worse (statistically significant at the 10% level).

Among FYLC students, 59% reported that their classes were better for forming a sense of community in the class, and for making friends and finding study partners than other classes (all statistically significant).