

# Using Institutional Survey Data to Understand the First Year Undergraduate Experience

CAIR 2017

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# Outline

- Goal: Understand the 1<sup>st</sup> Year Experience Across a Number of Domains:
  - Transitioning as a New Undergraduate
  - Resources that Aided in the Transition
  - Affordability & Cost of Attendance
  - Campus Climate for Diversity & Inclusion

# Survey Samples

The Survey of New Students (SONS)  
Fall 2015

The UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES)  
Spring 2016

# Survey of New Students (SONS)

- Launches at the start of every fall semester
- All new fall freshmen and transfers invited
- Survey open for first six - eight weeks of the students' 1<sup>st</sup> semester
- Designed to capture students' academic, co-curricular, and social experiences during their transition.

# University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES)

- Historically administered every year at Berkeley; Administered every other year as of 2012
- All undergraduates invited to complete the survey
- Launches in April & typically closes between June & July
- Designed to capture students' academic, co-curricular, social, and extra-curricular experiences during their time at the university.

# Fall 2015 SONS and 2016 UCUES Samples

	Invited	Responded	Response Rate
SONS*	6,915	3,582	52%
UCUES	26,027	8,448	32%
SONS 2015 to UCUES 2016	3,582	1,735	48%

\*Note: The 746 Fall Program for Freshmen and 57 Global Edge Program students invited to SONS 2015 are excluded from the numbers above, as well as the analyses shared in this presentation.

# Fall 2015 SONS Sample

Gender	N	n	Response Rate
Female	3,483	1,972	57%
Male	3,410	1,599	47%
Other	22	11	50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,915</b>	<b>3,582</b>	<b>52%</b>

\*Note: The 746 Fall Program for Freshmen and 57 Global Edge Program students invited to SONS 2015 are excluded from the numbers above.

# Spring 2016 UCUES Sample

Gender	N	n	Response Rate
Female	13,617	5,412	40%
Male	12,405	3,686	30%
Other	5	2	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,027</b>	<b>9,100</b>	<b>35%</b>



# SONS 2015 to UCUES 2016 Sample

Gender	N	n	Response Rate
Female	1,972	1,049	53%
Male	1,599	682	43%
Other	11	4	36%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,582</b>	<b>1,735</b>	<b>48%</b>

\*Note: The 746 Fall Program for Freshmen and 57 Global Edge Program students invited to SONS 2015 are excluded from the numbers above, as well as the analyses shared in this presentation.

# Fall 2015 SONS Sample

Race/Ethnicity	N	n	Response Rate
African American	214	109	51%
Asian	2,539	1,358	53%
Chicano/Latino	886	444	50%
Decline to State	280	150	54%
International	1,112	561	50%
Native American/Alaska Native	44	22	50%
Pacific Islander	18	8	44%
White	1,822	930	51%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,915</b>	<b>3,582</b>	<b>52%</b>

\*Note: The 746 Fall Program for Freshmen and 57 Global Edge Program students invited to SONS 2015 are excluded from the numbers above.

# Spring 2016 UCUES Sample

Race/Ethnicity	N	n	Response Rate
African American	864	275	32%
Asian	10,139	3,677	36%
Chicano/Latino	3,598	1,323	37%
Decline to State	983	372	38%
International	3,440	952	28%
Native American/Alaska Native	177	64	36%
Pacific Islander	53	25	47%
White	6,773	2,412	36%
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,027</b>	<b>9,100</b>	<b>35%</b>

# SONS 2015 to UCUES 2016 Sample

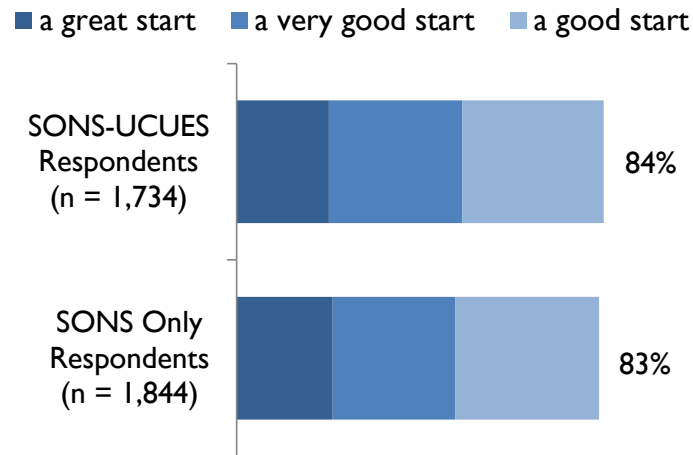
Race/Ethnicity	N	n	Response Rate
African American	109	57	53%
Asian	1,358	657	49%
Chicano/Latino	444	222	50%
Decline to State	150	76	51%
International	561	224	40%
Native American/Alaska Native	22	11	50%
Pacific Islander	8	7	88%
White	930	481	52%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,582</b>	<b>1,735</b>	<b>48%</b>

\*Note: The 746 Fall Program for Freshmen and 57 Global Edge Program students invited to SONS 2015 are excluded from the numbers above, as well as the analyses shared in this presentation.

# Transitioning as a New Undergraduate

What do students say about the start of their first semester at UC Berkeley?

# “Overall, I am off to...”



*“Before coming to Cal I was terrified for what was coming. I felt unprepared and lonely being so far from home. I thought my classes were going to be extremely hard but that was wrong. I enjoy all my classes and my professors are great.”*

*“My acclimation to Berkeley and living on my own has gone much better than I expected.”*

*“I'm surprised by how quickly I've been able to adapt to a large university. As a transfer student coming from a community college, I thought that the transition to a major research university would be difficult. However, I feel such a strong sense of belonging and direction here that those fears have melted away.”*

# The Transition: In Their Own Words

(What has gone well?)

*“The process of figuring out which classes I need and then being able to register for them was so smooth and easy it was kind of unbelievable.”*

*“My classes have been going very well, I don't actually mind the large class sizes. Having small discussion sections/labs makes the class seem accessible. In addition, the professors do not seem stand offish as everyone would describe them. They seem to genuinely care how their students do and want to work with you and help.”*

*“Since I am an international student, I would say that I fit into the community better than expected.”*

# The Transition: In Their Own Words

(What has *not* gone well?)

*“The transition from high school to college was a bit difficult for me because I had trouble with time management. I was a bit overwhelmed with the vast variety of options and opportunities provided for me that it was hard to pinpoint what was significant to me.”*

*“I am unsure how the classes work. A professor required 200 pages to be read before the first class meeting and did not send a message or post the syllabus until after the first meeting resulting in being behind already.”*

*“My transition from home to a new environment has not gone well. My stomach has had problems due to the difference in food. Also, I have had anxiety from leaving my parents alone back home. I am disappointed in myself because sometimes I cannot understand the materials in my courses.”*



# The Transition: In Their Own Words

(What has *not* gone well?)

*“The classes are a lot harder than I anticipated and I wish I would have eased into the transition here by taking easier classes my first semester rather than taking hard classes right away.”*

*“I find that the campus is largely decentralized and it sometimes seems that one has to explain one's dilemma repeatedly to get things resolved. I love that most of us are here to learn and grow, however it fosters a somewhat overly competitive environment that underscores the value of collaboration and at times makes one miss a stronger sense of community.”*

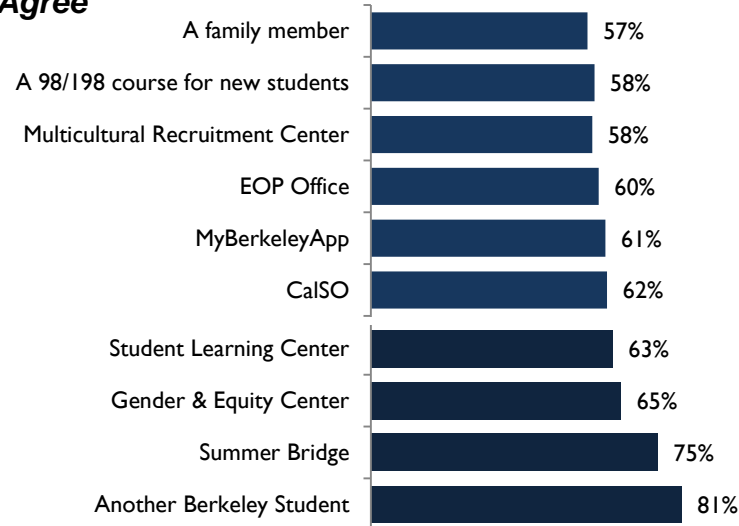
*“I find bCourses overwhelming, the lack of diversity disappointing, and the events put on by UCB's student government shocking...”*

# Resources that Aided the Transition

What do students say about the start of their first semester as a Berkeley undergraduate?

# Resources that Aided in the Transition: (New Freshmen)

Percent “Strongly agree” or “Agree”

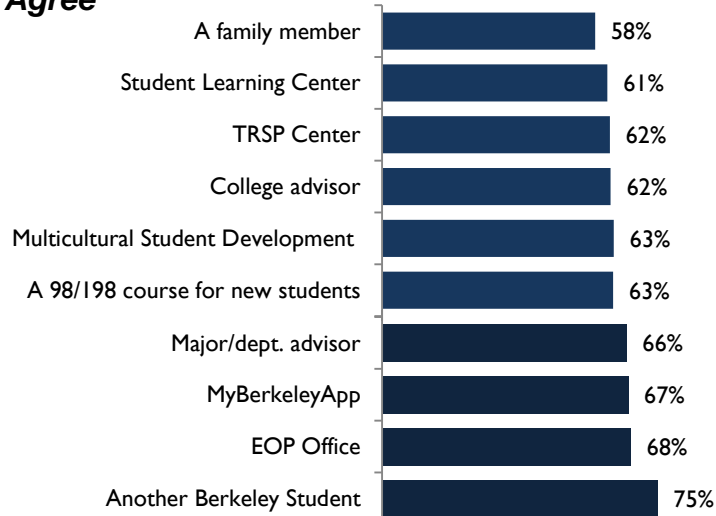


*“My transition at Cal went surprising well, and I owe it to the summer bridge program.”*

*“The resources mentioned above have been the most helpful especially Berkeley students. Also I have family members and friends of my parents living in the Bay Area who have been very helpful in my transition.”*

# Resources that Aided in the Transition: (New Transfers)

Percent “Strongly agree” or “Agree”



*“I found the EOP Student Advisors particularly helpful in transitioning to Berkeley and figuring out what I should do to get the schedule I wanted.”*

*“The best resource is any kind of human contact. Continuing students and fellow transfers provide different perspectives that really helped me settle down. Also just talking to friends and family back home helped TREMENDOUSLY when I started to feel overwhelmed.”*

# Resources that Aided in the Transition: In Their Own Words

*“I thought a campus map was one of the most useful resources that helped me transition into Berkeley. The campus is huge, and having the map helped me get a feel of the campus, distance between buildings, and cool areas/trails. Talking to older students also helped a lot. A personal interaction usually provides more information than any website will, and I was able to learn a lot about classes, exams, clubs, DeCals, and more about Berkeley by talking to older students.”*

*“Advisors here, in general, have been extremely helpful to me and other 4 year transfer students who come in having no idea what classes are going to transfer. Some of the most kind, caring and helpful advisors I've ever met.”*

# Resources that Aided in the Transition: In Their Own Words

*“I think the transitioning classes (such as 198/98) are extremely helpful. I also loved the different campus clubs and ministries to help you feel more plugged in.”*

*“Within the first two weeks I've visited ESS (Engineering Student Services), gone to office hours, and signed up for an SLC (Student Learning Center) study group. It's surprisingly easy to find somebody or somewhere to get help, which helps my academic success and overall boosts my confidence in knowing that I can succeed at difficult classes.”*

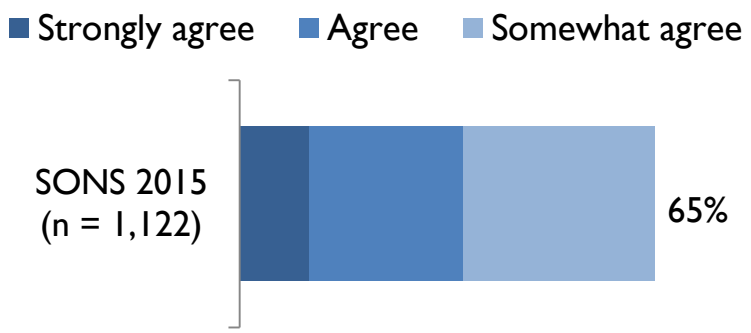
# New Students' Perspectives Regarding Affordability & the Cost of Attendance

How manageable is the cost of attending  
Berkeley?

How, if at all, does this change by the end of  
the 1<sup>st</sup> year?

# Do 1<sup>st</sup> Semester Students Feel that the Cost of Attendance is Manageable?

***“Given the grants and scholarships, if any, that you receive, the total cost of attending UC Berkeley is manageable”***



*“I am extremely grateful for the Blue & Gold opportunity scholarship that I received with helping tuition and costs. It is awe-inspiring. My focus will be greatly improved while attending UC Berkeley.”*

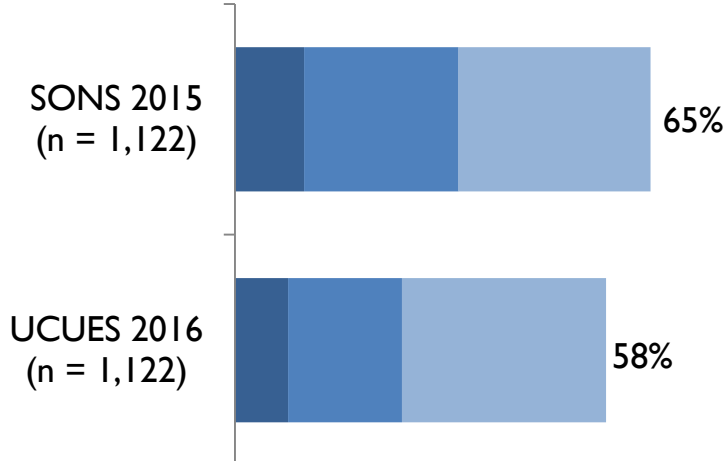
*“Coming from a low socioeconomic background, I have been fortunate to receive scholarships to cover Cal tuition and fees. However, there have been times where I believe living costs have been underestimated and have gone without buying shampoos, books, out to eat with friends, etc. due to needing to save money.”*



# What Do New Student Feel About the Cost of Attendance at the End of their 1<sup>st</sup> Year?

***“Given the grants and scholarships, if any, that you receive, the total cost of attending UC Berkeley is manageable”***

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Somewhat agree



*“This first year at Cal has been very hard financially due to the high cost of living in the student dormitories. Given such a need for money, I have found myself working non-stop, not sleeping, feeling stressed/depressed. I have not even had the opportunity to join any clubs because I always feel like I should be making money instead of doing extra-curricular activities in order to pay the bills. Overall I love this school but it is sometimes hard to enjoy everything when you have to work so much in order to survive.”*

# Cost of Attendance Perspectives: In Their Own Words

*“If it were not for my financial aid, I would not stand a chance of attending UC Berkeley. For that reasons alone, I am truly thankful for this life time opportunity.”*

*“It is straining to my parents. Although I am beyond relieved that my tuition is paid for this semester, there are still monthly expenses (housing, utilities, food, basic supplies) that are piling on top of one another. I can only imagine how stressful it must be to have to put 2 children through college and be able to support them even though they are not living under the same roof”*

*“Housing cost in Berkeley is skyrocketing, so it was very hard for me to find the place where I could afford.”*

# Cost of Attendance Perspectives: In Their Own Words

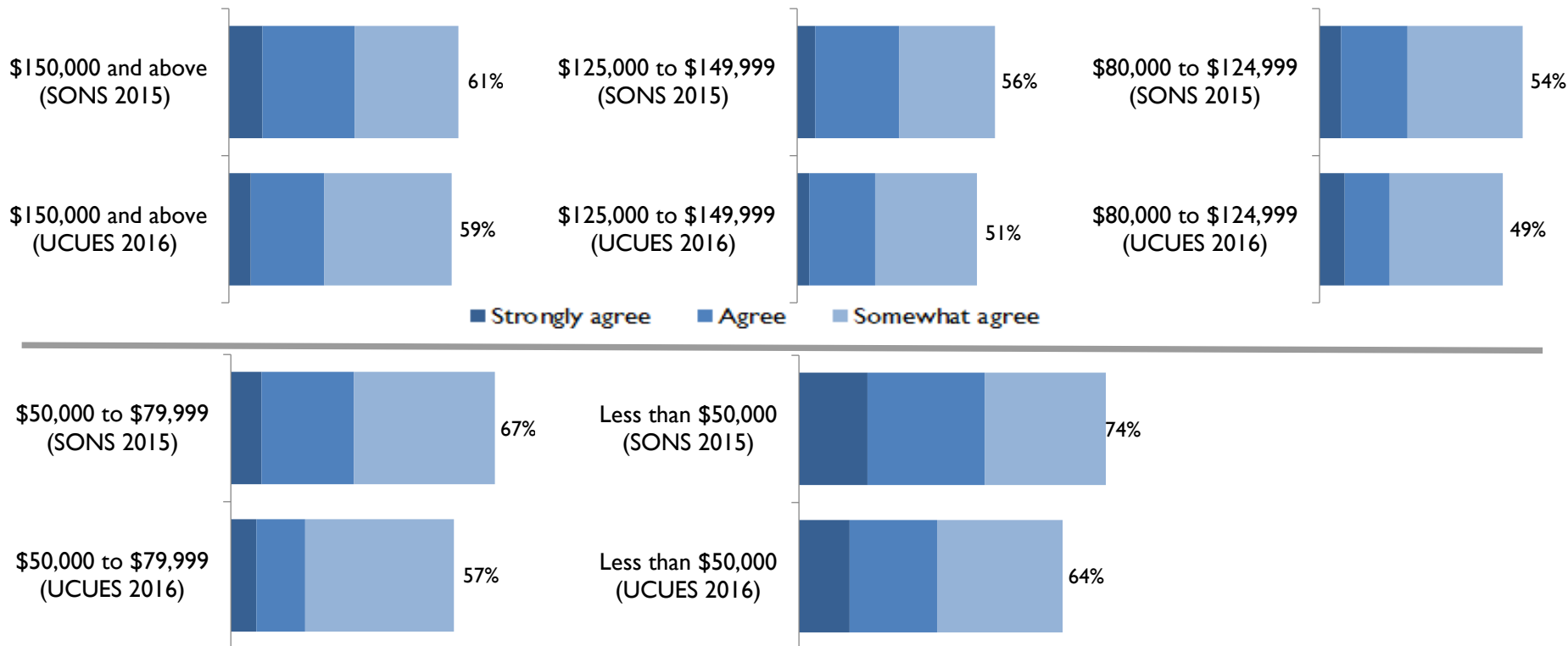
*“So far it has been decent, but I just wished that I had more financial aid so I don't have to always calculate what I can and cannot afford when purchasing food.”*

*“It makes me want to work harder otherwise all this money I put into this school wouldn't be worth it. It is somewhat ridiculous how housing costs more than tuition for in-state students.”*

*“I am extremely fortunate to have parents who can afford to pay out-of-state tuition because I come from an upper-middle class family, whose pretax household income is about 300K...”*

# Cost of Attendance is Manageable: Changing Perspectives in 1<sup>st</sup> Year

*“Given the grants and scholarships, if any, that you receive, the total cost of attending UC Berkeley is manageable”*



- Lower income students are most likely to feel that the total cost of attending UC Berkeley is manageable (74% at the start of their first year and 64% at the end of their first year). However, middle - income students (i.e., \$80,000 - \$124,999 and \$125,000 - \$149,999) are less likely than both high-income and low-income students to feel that the total cost of attending UC Berkeley is manageable.

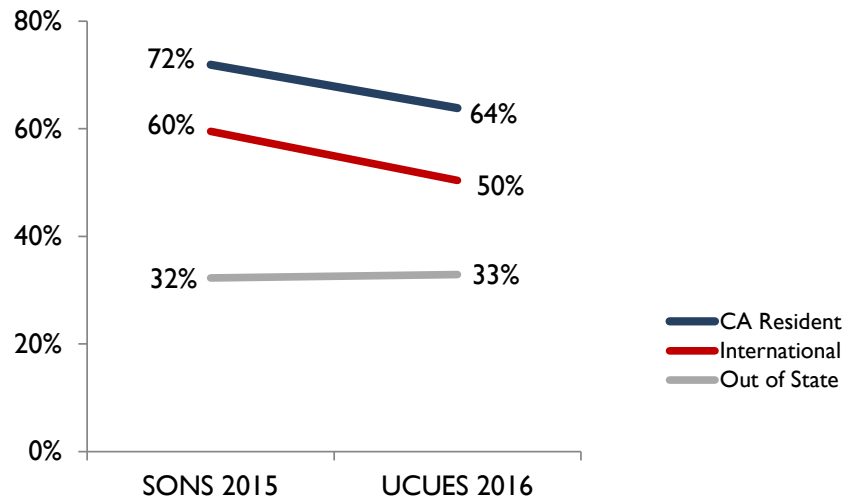
# Cost of Attendance Perspectives: In Their Own Words

*“Stress for middle class families who are above the 80k line for scholarships but not incredibly wealthy. Hard to make ends meet when I am just out of the range of all financial aid but not rich enough to easily afford education. Very stressful on me and my parents. Adds a lot of pressure to classes. Recently, am constantly worried and applying for high-paying internships to be able to pay instead of pursuing jobs more in my field of interest.”*

*“For out of state students, the help/aid available is nearly negligible. I pay over \$50,000 per year and my family has a middle class income. This is hardly addressed by FAFSA, because while on paper I appear to have the ability to pay, my family situation is unique (I self-employed parent and one parent in school) which results in an inability to cover the excessive amount of out of state tuition. Due to cost, I am not able to participate in most of the things my friends do such as go to SF, eat out, join more clubs, etc.”*

# Cost of Attendance is Manageable: Changing Perspectives in 1<sup>st</sup> Year

*“Given the grants and scholarships, if any, that you receive, the total cost of attending UC Berkeley is manageable.”*  
Percent Agreement (“Strongly agree” / “Agree” / “Somewhat agree”)



*“Out of state tuition and housing, especially since I will likely have to live off campus next year, has vastly increased my cost and financial worry. With housing in particular there needs to be better options. Dorms are already very expensive and not very high quality (and there are hardly enough of them to even house freshmen), and it is difficult and expensive to find off campus housing.”*

# Cost of Attendance : In Their Own Words

*“No financial aid for international students kind of sucks although somewhat understandable. However it is being an international student that cost is important, at least for me, because I have to pay for the full tuition and for housing and many other things like phone bills and what not. We have to start anew and it's also harder to find jobs without social security or experience or guidance. The lack of attention to try to help out international students makes it harder for me to enjoy the educational experience here at Berkeley”*

*“I'm going to take 3 semesters off so I can be considered as an independent in-state student when I turn 24 in 2018. That means I won't finish my B.A. degree until I'm almost 25.”*

# Campus Climate

What is the campus climate at the start of the 1<sup>st</sup>- year?

How, if at all, does this change by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup>-year?



# What is Campus Climate?

Campus climate is not the weather:

- “Campus climate is a measure — real or perceived — of the personal, academic and professional interactions that occur.” (UC Office of the President)
- “[T]he events, messages, symbols, core beliefs, feelings, and so, so much more - which make this a welcoming environment — or not - for all.” (Virginia Tech)

# Climate Metrics in SONS & UCUES

- Respect Rates

- Student respond to the prompt “students of my [affinity group] are respected on this campus”

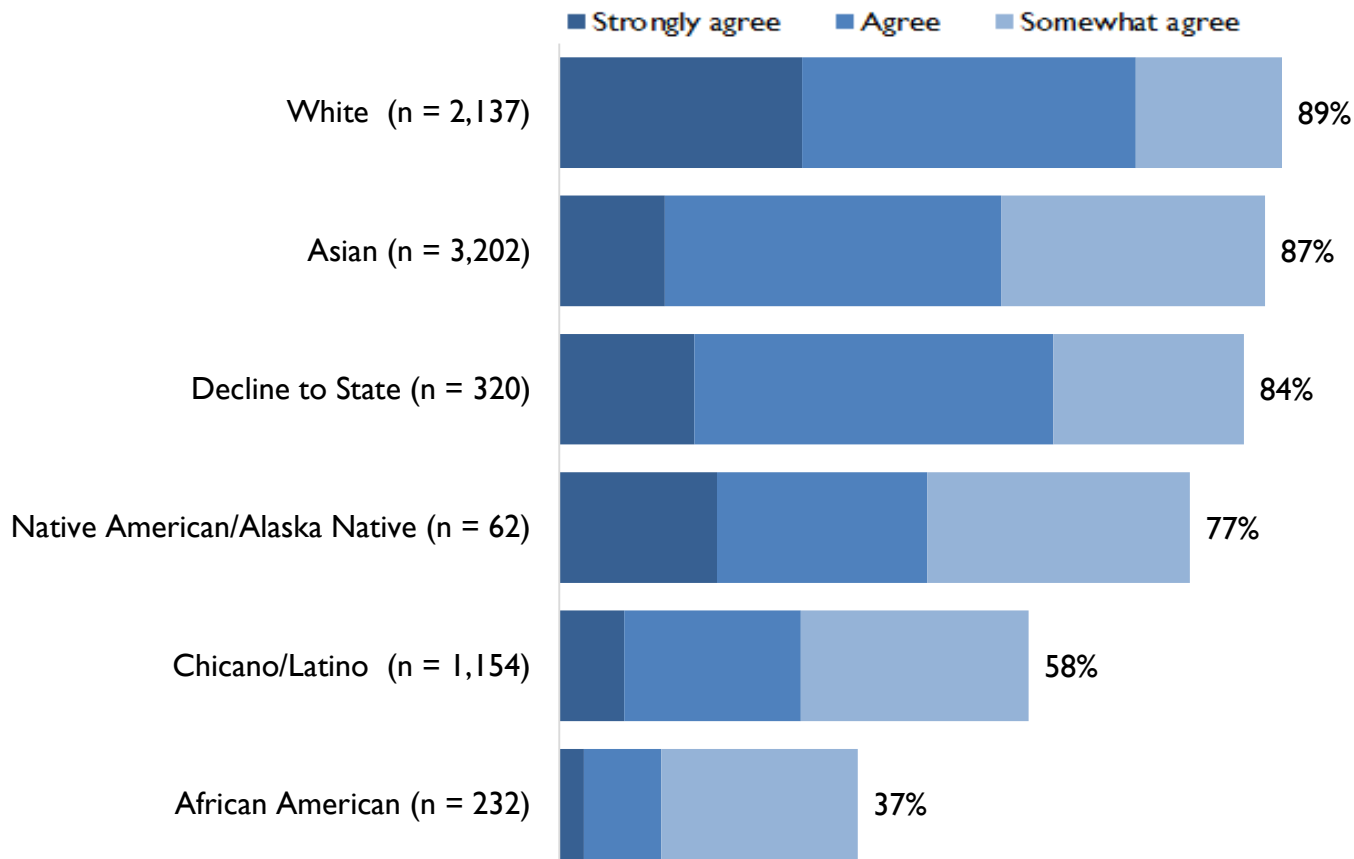
- The respect rate for a group is the percentage of respondents in a given group who “strongly agree”, “agree”, or “somewhat agree” that their group is respected on campus

- Feeling Valued as an Individual
- Sense of Belonging
- Diversity Importance on Campus

# UCUES 2016 Respect Rates by Race/Ethnicity

(new & continuing students)

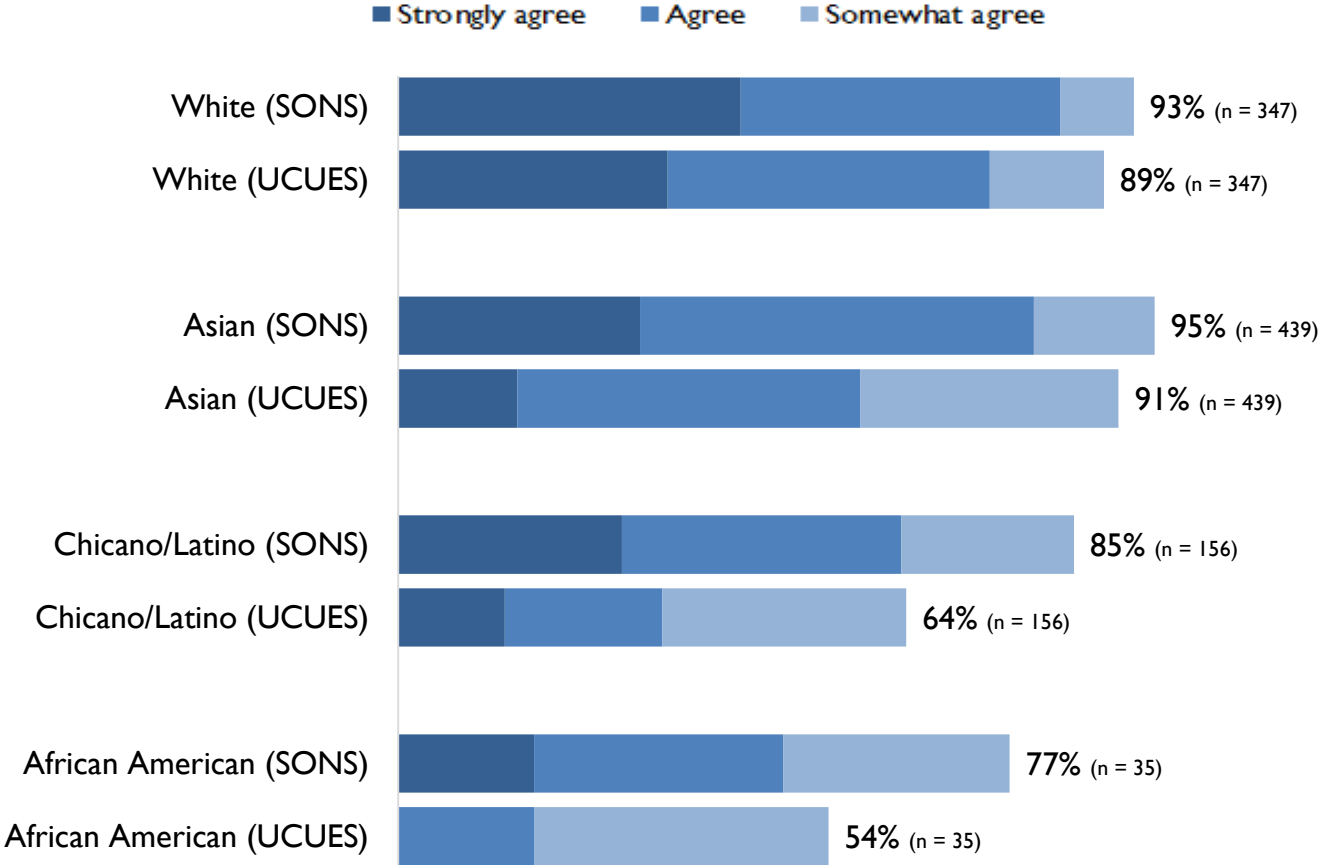
Percent agreement with “Students of my race/ethnicity are respected on this campus” by race/ethnicity



# Race Respect Rates Decline in 1<sup>st</sup>-Year

(new students only)

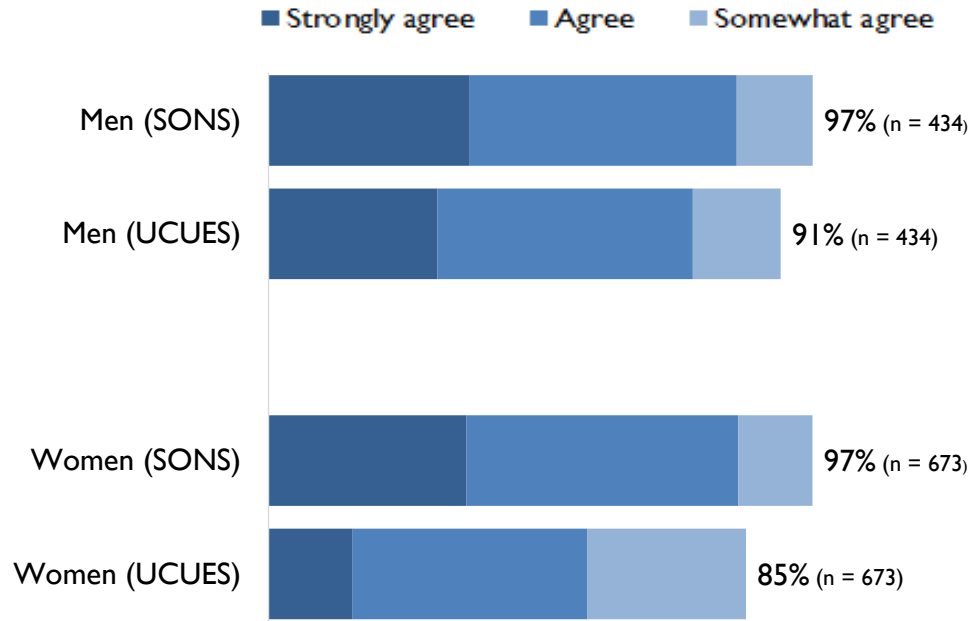
Percent agreement with “Students of my race/ethnicity are respected on this campus” by race/ethnicity



# Gender Respect Rates Decline in 1<sup>st</sup>-Year

(new students only)

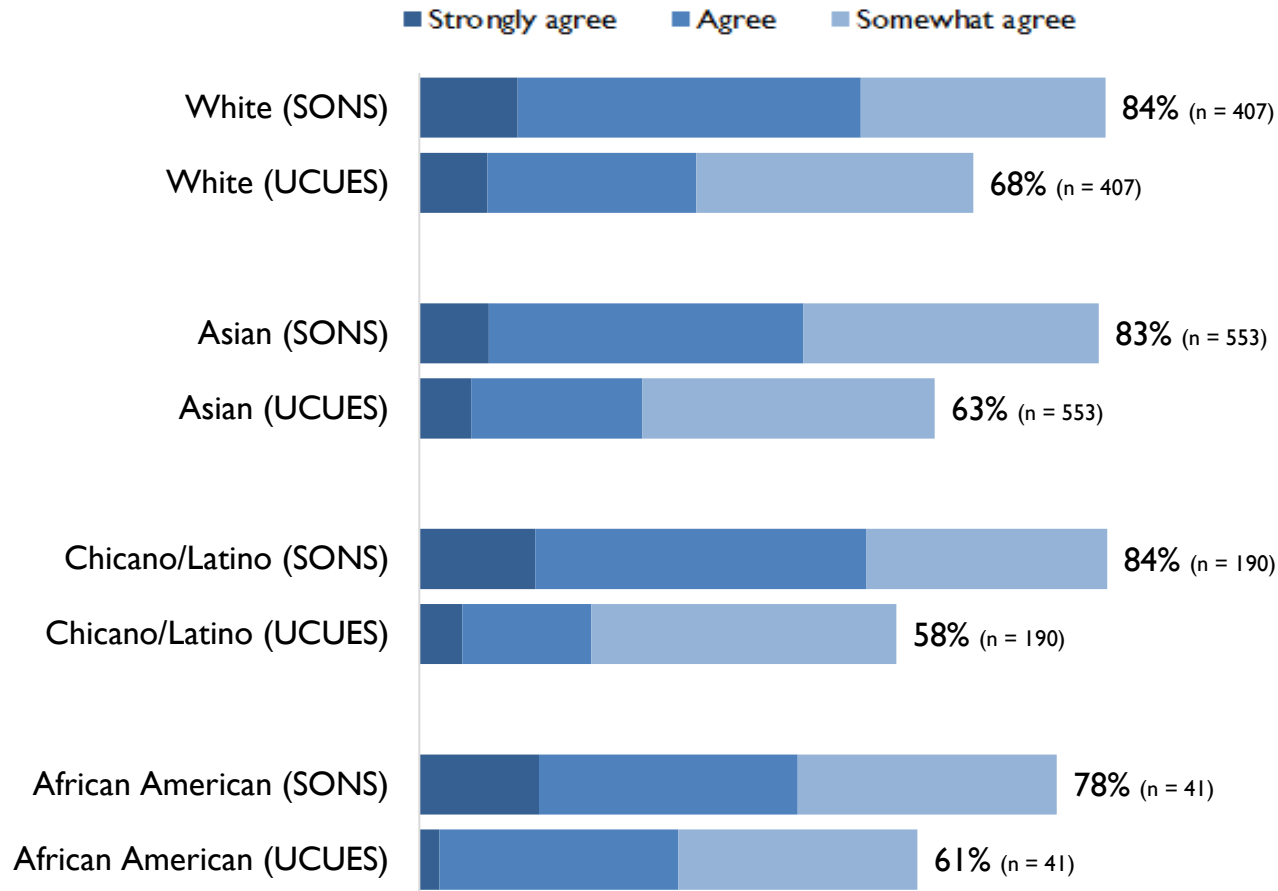
Percent agreement with “Students of my gender are respected on this campus” by gender identity



\*Note: The number of respondents to SONS & UCUES who indicated a gender other than “man” or “woman” was less than 10 and therefore not included in the above chart.

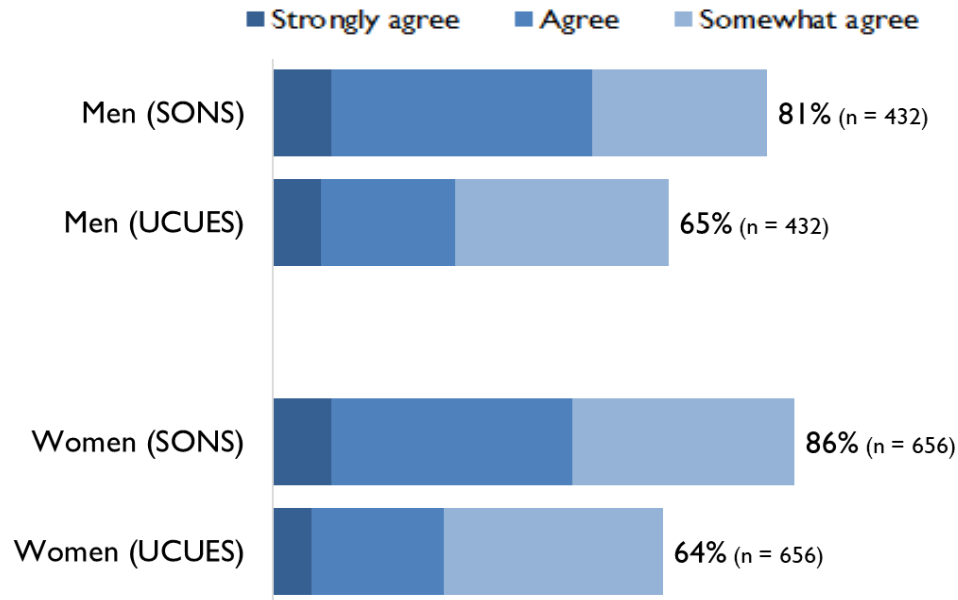
# Additional Climate Declines in 1<sup>st</sup>-Year: Feeling Valued (by Race)

Percent agreement with “I feel valued as an individual on this campus” by race/ethnicity



# Additional Climate Declines in 1<sup>st</sup>-Year: Feeling Valued (by Gender Identity)

Percent agreement with “I feel valued as an individual on this campus” by gender identity



# So What?



# Understanding the Student Experience

- Survey data obtained as students transition into the institution may not be representative of the 1<sup>st</sup>-year experience.
- Campus climate appears to be impacted as part of the students' 1<sup>st</sup>-year experience.
- Having flexibility in the survey content is key to tracking changes across identically worded survey items that share the same response scale.

# Limitations & Next Steps

- Possible non-response bias
- Results are correlational
- Given that only a sub-set of new students responded to both the SONS & UCUES during their first year, some analysis represents data from as few as 1 in 6 new students.
- Additional analyses linking survey data with student outcomes (e.g., retention, graduation) are desired to determine if there are any long-term association.

# Data Resources & Contact Info

- ☐ SONS & UCUES Results on the web:  
<http://opa.berkeley.edu/campus-surveys>
- ☐ Cal Answers:  
<http://calanswers.berkeley.edu>
- ☐ Office of Planning and Analysis:  
<http://opa.berkeley.edu>

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