

## Survey of Summer Session Participants and Nonparticipants: Fall 2017

### *Context and Methods*

This memo provides a summary of a recent campus-wide survey of undergraduate students at UC Riverside that asked how they heard about summer sessions, why and how they decided to take classes or not, and what role costs and financial aid played in their decisions.

The survey was conducted online, using email invitations to a Qualtrics survey, in late October and early November 2017. The survey received 1,545 complete responses, which is about 1% of fall undergraduate enrollments. These responses were divided fairly evenly between students who reported having participated in summer courses (52%) and those who reported not participating (48%). All survey participants (whether or not they completed it) were offered a free summer session-branded T-shirts as an incentive.

There was a longitudinal component to this research, and many of the survey items were the same as, or very similar to, items on a December 2014 survey. That survey was administered through UCR's iEval tool, typically used for course evaluations but which also has a general survey capability. This yielded a high overall response rate (about 20% of all students) and the ability to verify students' participation in summer sessions. Comparisons will be made to the previous survey, but it is important to bear in mind that there were differences in administration that may have affected the pattern of response. A report on this previous survey [can be found online here](#).

### *Demographics*

Students who had participated in summer sessions were overrepresented in the sample: more than half (52%) of respondents reported taking summer courses, while for all undergraduates in fall 2017 only about one in five (22%) had enrolled in summer courses. Respondents were also much less likely to be first-year students: just 2% of respondents reported being in their first year, while in fall 2017, this was true for about 29% of all undergraduates.

### *How Did Students Hear about Summer Sessions?*

Respondents were asked what kinds of advertising for summer sessions they had seen. Both for students who took summer sessions and those who did not, the most common answers were posters on campus and promotional e-mails (see Table 1). The relative frequency and ranking of advertising types by summer session participants and nonparticipants were similar. Although the percentage of students indicating that they saw these kinds of ads was lower in the 2017 survey than in 2014, the set of most common answers and their rankings were similar.

A critical limitation of this survey data is worth pointing out here: the set of responses offered to respondents in 2014 and 2017 was virtually identical, but the two years' marketing strategies differed, and most of the available choices in 2017 were not actually part of this year's marketing campaign. This was unknown to the survey designer at the time of survey implementation. The 2017 campaign featured no e-mail promotion, posts in R'web, or presence on the UCR homepage—yet these were three of the four most common responses. That so many students indicated hearing about summer sessions in these ways raises questions about student consciousness of summer session marketing (and how well anyone might recall events from six months before a survey).

### *Who Helped Students Decide to Take Summer Courses?*

For both those who took summer sessions and those who did not, a large majority reported that they decided for themselves whether or not they needed to take summer classes (see Table 2). The second most common answer was academic advisors, although this answer was more common among those who did take classes. Some students, both

participants and nonparticipants, also relied on parents and friends. The overall pattern of responses to this item was similar to the 2014 survey.

#### *Why Did Students Decide to Take Summer Courses?*

For students who took summer sessions, the most commonly reported reason for this choice was that they wanted to concentrate on one (or a few) classes (46%) (see Table 3). Other common reasons were that classes were full in fall/winter/spring (28%), that courses were offered at convenient times (27%), and that financial aid made taking summer courses affordable (25%). These were also the four most common reasons in 2014.

When asked about finances and financial aid, students who took summer sessions most commonly indicated that they took eight units to qualify for financial aid even though taking that many units would not have otherwise been their preference (41%). However, a relatively large share of respondents (33%) also indicated that money did not play a significant role in their decisions to enroll. When asked specifically about financial aid, about two-thirds (64%) of summer session participants indicated that they used financial aid (see Table 4). Among participants who did not use financial aid, the most common reason was that they did not need or qualify for financial aid (25%). Very few students reported problems with financial aid, such as missing deadlines or finding applications confusing (see Table 5).

#### *Why Did Students Decide Not to Take Summer Courses?*

Students who did not take summer sessions most commonly reported that the cost was too great (47%). Other common answers included that students were unsure of financial aid (38%), that they lived too far from campus (31%), and that they had no reason to take courses (27%) (see Table 6). These were the most common answers from 2014 as well, although confusion about financial aid was somewhat less commonly reported three years ago.

When asked about finances and financial aid, equal proportions of respondents (35%) reported that money did not affect their decisions and that even with financial aid they could not afford to take summer courses (see Table 7). When asked if they would have liked to use financial aid to pay for summer courses, students' most common answer was "no" (42%), although many respondents reported that they would have liked to use aid but found the application too confusing (27%) or that they missed the deadlines (20%) (see Table 8).

#### *Other Issues*

The survey also explored a few general issues that might be of interest in planning for future summers.

- Students most commonly reported beginning to think about taking summer classes late in the winter or (especially) early in the spring quarter. The distribution of responses may suggest that those who do not take classes make their decision a little earlier than those who do take classes (see Table 9).
- Students were fairly enthusiastic about online summer courses, and support was a bit higher among those who did not take summer classes (see Table 10).
- Students were decidedly more mixed about evening classes, with responses evenly distributed among "yes," "no," and "it doesn't matter" for those who took summer courses; those who did not were somewhat more likely to indicate to indicate interest (see Table 11).

Table 1: Response from all respondents to “If you have seen advertising for Summer Sessions, where was it? Please check all that apply.”

	Students who took summer classes		Students who did not take summer classes	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
On a poster somewhere on campus	60.5%	487	65.7%	486
On an email from Summer Sessions	48.2%	388	53.9%	399
On my R’Web page	25.6%	206	29.6%	219
On UCR’s website homepage	25.6%	206	29.6%	219
An ad in the Highlander	22.6%	182	27.6%	204
On Instagram	10.9%	88	15.3%	113
At an on-campus event (i.e.: Discover Day)	8.8%	71	15.3%	113
On video screen on campus	8.0%	64	10.4%	77
In literature at the service counter at the HOSS	8.0%	64	5.3%	39
On Facebook	6.3%	51	7.4%	55
On a postcard	4.7%	38	7.6%	56
On the UCR Housing Website	4.5%	36	6.4%	47
On a pen	4.0%	32	5.3%	39
On a sunflower (magnet or pin) in an office	4.0%	32	6.9%	51
On a blue tote bag with a sunflower on it	2.9%	23	4.3%	32
On a bookmark	2.2%	18	3.1%	23
In an online video	2.1%	17	3.6%	27
On Twitter	1.4%	11	3.2%	24
On a post-it note block in someone’s office	1.2%	10	0.7%	5
On a car sunshade	0.6%	5	1.1%	8
On KVCR	0.5%	4	0.5%	4
I have seen Summer Sessions advertising, but I don’t remember where	7.6%	61	8.5%	63
I have not seen any Summer Sessions advertising	5.8%	47	3.6%	27
I do not remember whether or not I’ve seen Summer Sessions advertising	2.1%	17	2.0%	15
<b>Total number of students</b>	<sup>-1</sup>	805	<sup>-1</sup>	740

<sup>1</sup> Percentage will exceed 100% because multiple answers were allowed

Table 2: Response from all respondents to “Who helped you decide whether or not to enroll in Summer Sessions for the summer of 2017? Please Check all that apply.”

	Students who took summer classes		Students who did not take summer classes	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
I decided for myself	86.1%	637	73.8%	594
An academic advisor	31.6%	234	18.8%	151
My friend(s)	18.4%	136	11.8%	95
My parent(s)/guardian(s)	17.6%	130	15.5%	125
A financial advisor	2.6%	19	3.4%	27
A staff person on campus	2.6%	19	2.0%	16
A professor	2.4%	18	1.5%	12
A teaching assistant	1.2%	9	0.5%	4
<b>Total number of students</b>	- <sup>1</sup>	805	- <sup>1</sup>	740

<sup>1</sup> Percentage will exceed 100% because multiple answers were allowed

Table 3: Among students who indicated they took summer classes, responses to “Which of the following influenced your decision to take summer classes at UCR in 2017? Please check all that apply.”

	Percent	Number
I wanted to be able to concentrate on one, or just a few, course(s)	45.5%	366
I was able to take classes that were FULL during fall, winter, or spring	27.6%	222
The time of day/days of the week worked with my schedule	26.7%	215
The financial aid I received made taking summer classes affordable	24.6%	198
I was planning on graduating early	20.5%	165
I wanted to make up for low grades or failed classes	19.4%	156
I live near campus year round	17.4%	140
The class sizes are smaller	16.4%	132
Summer classes provide greater access to instructors/faculty	15.5%	125
I was able to take classes that were NOT OFFERED during fall, winter, or spring	14.5%	117
I actually did not take classes at UCR in the summer of 2017	0.9%	7
<b>Total number of students</b>	- <sup>1</sup>	805

<sup>1</sup> Percentage will exceed 100% because multiple answers were allowed

Table 4: Among students who indicated they took summer classes, responses to “How did financial aid affect your decision to take summer classes at UCR in 2017?”

	Percent	Number
I took 8 units this summer to qualify for financial aid even though I didn't want or need to take 8 units.	41.0%	330
Money played no role one way or another in my decision to enroll in summer session.	33.0%	266
There was just one class I really “needed” to take and financial aid didn't affect that.	11.2%	90
Even with financial aid, I could not afford to take 8 units. So, I took fewer units.	4.6%	37
I actually did not take classes at UCR in the summer of 2017.	1.5%	12
<b>Total number of students</b>	- <sup>1</sup>	805

<sup>1</sup> Percentage will exceed 100% because multiple answers were allowed

Table 5: Among students who indicated they took summer classes, responses to “Did you use UCR Financial Aid this summer? (Please check all that apply)”

	Percent	Number
Yes	63.6%	512
No, I didn't need/didn't qualify for Financial Aid	25.1%	202
No, I missed the summer aid application deadline	7.2%	58
No, I wanted to but could not contact my Financial Aid counselor	1.6%	13
No, I was advised by my Financial Aid counselor to not use aid in summer	1.4%	11
No, the wait to get help was too long	1.0%	8
No, the summer aid application was too confusing	0.7%	6
<b>Total number of students</b>	- <sup>1</sup>	805

<sup>1</sup> Percentage will exceed 100% because multiple answers were allowed

Table 6: Among students who indicated they did not take summer classes, responses to “Which of the following influenced your decision NOT to take summer courses at UCR? Please check all that apply.”

	Percent	Number
The cost of summer courses was too great	46.9%	347
I was unsure of financial aid	38.1%	282
I live too far from campus	30.7%	227
I had no reason to take courses	27.6%	204
I had to work	20.9%	155
I had responsibilities to my family or others	18.5%	137
I found financial aid confusing	13.0%	96
I was unsure how to sign up	12.8%	95
The course(s) I wanted were not offered	12.0%	89
The pace seemed too fast	8.8%	65
The time of day was inconvenient	5.3%	39
The course(s) I wanted were full	3.9%	29
I did not know about summer sessions at UCR	1.9%	14
<b>Total number of students</b>	- <sup>1</sup>	740

<sup>1</sup> Percentage will exceed 100% because multiple answers were allowed

Table 7: Among students who indicated they did not take summer classes, responses to “How did financial aid affect your decision NOT to take summer classes at UCR in 2017?”

	Percent	Number
Money did not affect my decision	34.5%	259
Even with financial aid, I could not afford to take summer courses	34.5%	259
The need to take 8 units prevented me from taking summer sessions	22.9%	172
<b>Total number of students</b>	- <sup>1</sup>	740

<sup>1</sup> Percentage will exceed 100% because multiple answers were allowed

Table 8: Among students who indicated they did not take summer classes, responses to “Did you want to use UCR Financial Aid this summer? (Please check all that apply.)”

	Percent	Number
No	42.2%	312
Yes, but the summer aid application was too confusing	27.2%	201
Yes, but I missed the summer aid application deadline	19.9%	147
Yes, but I did not qualify for Financial Aid	14.1%	104
Yes, but the wait to get help was too long	11.1%	82
Yes, but I was advised by my Financial Aid counselor to not use aid in the summer	4.5%	33
Yes, but I could not contact my Financial Aid counselor	4.3%	32
<b>Total number of students</b>	- <sup>1</sup>	805

<sup>1</sup> Percentage will exceed 100% because multiple answers were allowed

Table 9: Response from all respondents to “Thinking about the year to come, what time of the year do you think you might make a decision about whether or not to take classes at UCR in summer 2018?”

	Students who took summer classes		Students who did not take summer classes	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Early in the fall quarter	14.9%	113	11.6%	82
Late in the fall quarter	5.3%	40	7.5%	53
Early in the winter quarter	9.5%	72	13.1%	93
Late in the winter quarter	18.3%	139	25.6%	181
Early in the spring quarter	37.8%	287	32.1%	227
Late in the spring quarter	12.4%	94	8.5%	60
Early in the summer	1.8%	14	1.7%	12
<b>Totals</b>	100%	759	100%	708

Table 10: Response from all respondents to “Would you like to see more summer classes offered online?”

	Students who took summer classes		Students who did not take summer classes	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Yes	65.3%	502	75.4%	532
It doesn't really matter to me	29.3%	225	20.5%	145
No	5.5%	42	4.1%	29
<b>Totals</b>	100%	769	100%	708

Table 11: Response from all respondents to “Would you like to see more classes offered in the evening or at night?”

	Students who took summer classes		Students who did not take summer classes	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Yes	33.4%	257	37.5%	264
It doesn't really matter to me	32.6%	251	38.7%	273
No	33.9%	261	23.8%	168
<b>Totals</b>	100%	769	100%	705