
AGS Internal Committee Report: Graduate Student Life Survey

2013 - 2014

Authors:

Nicole Winter
Vice President of Internal Affairs

Melissa Niiya
Internal Committee Member

Grace Lin
Internal Committee Member

Kelsey Collier
Internal Committee Member

Trevor Gamble
Campus Organizing Director

Coral Wheeler
Internal Committee Member

Justin Chung
AGS President

Joseph King
Data Analyst; Internal Committee Member

Erin Hughes
Internal Committee Member

Justin O'Neill
Internal Committee Member

Wind Woods
Internal Committee Member

Erica Heinrich
Vice President of Administrative Affairs

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Motivation for the Graduate Student Life Survey	4
Survey Methodology	4
Basic Respondent Demographics	4
Overview of Key Findings.....	5
Housing	6
Summary of Key Findings.....	6
Housing Satisfaction	6
A Primary Source of Financial Stress	7
Access to Housing	9
Parking as a Key Concern	10
Living Comfortably.....	11
Conclusions & Recommendations.....	11
Mental Health & Wellness	13
Summary of Key Findings.....	13
Sources of Stress	13
Finances	14
Research & Academics	14
Identity.....	14
Family & Relationships.....	14
Salient Concerns	15
Coping	15
Services & Resources.....	15
Graduate Student Space	16
Systematic Differences	16
Attitudes Toward Wellness	17
Access to Social Support & Other Resources	18
Conclusions & Recommendations.....	18

Campus Climate	19
Summary of Key Findings.....	19
Identity-Based Stress	19
Professional Environment.....	20
Campus Resources	21
Student Health Center	21
Dining Options.....	22
Conclusions & Recommendations.....	23
Income & Professional Development	24
Summary of Key Findings.....	24
Funding Adequacy	24
Concerns about Employment after Graduation	25
Conclusions & Recommendations.....	26
Discussion & Conclusions	28
Summary of Key Findings.....	28
Limitations	28
Recommendations & Future Directions.....	29
References	29
Acknowledgements.....	30
Appendix	i
Introduction.....	ii
Housing.....	iii
Mental Health & Wellness	viii
Campus Climate.....	xiii
Income & Professional Development.....	xvi

INTRODUCTION

MOTIVATION FOR THE GRADUATE STUDENT LIFE SURVEY

The Internal Committee of the Associated Graduate Students (AGS) launched the Graduate Student Life Survey with the primary goal of identifying strengths and weaknesses in the UCI graduate student experience. The motivation for the survey was to collect and present comprehensive, empirical data. These data not only aid AGS, particularly the Internal Committee, in its advocacy efforts on behalf of graduate students, but also provide information for campus partners regarding student needs. With advocacy in mind, our report focuses most heavily on areas we have identified as needing improvement or further attention. These areas include mental health, housing, parking, income, professional development, and awareness of AGS programming and services. Using these data, we divided this report into sections that focus their attention on each of these areas of interest. This report describes our key findings, with survey details and statistical modeling available in this document's appendix.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

We collected data for the Graduate Student Life Survey using Qualtrics Survey Software. Our sampling frame for the survey was based on a list of all currently-enrolled UCI graduate student emails. Graduate students were contacted via email once on October 8, 2013, and non-participants were contacted again on October 30, 2013. To bolster the response rate, we offered raffle prizes to students who completed the survey. We used a tiered prize system in which additional prizes would be “unlocked” with increasing rates of participation. The motivation behind the tiered prized structure was to increase participation rates without substantially decreasing the chances of winning a prize.

Of the 4,652 total student emails in our sampling frame, 1,137 or 24.4% of graduate students began the survey. Among these, 985 individuals completed the full survey. While we attempted to maximize the representativeness of our survey by capturing as many individuals across a wide array of graduate student subgroups, several questions pertained to only certain subsets of respondents and listwise deletion was used for item non-response. As a result, final analytic sample sizes may vary.

BASIC RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

We surveyed UCI graduate students across various postgraduate levels (e.g. PhD students, students in terminal master's programs, and professional students) and schools (e.g. engineering, business, humanities, etc.). Survey respondents were comprised of 59% PhD students, 28% master's students, and 9% professional students.¹ Unfortunately, due to relatively small sample sizes, we were forced to aggregate departments and schools together. We were therefore left with five aggregated groups of schools: 1.) biological sciences, physical sciences, and interdisciplinary

¹ Respondents were also given the option to click “other”. For this reason, these percentages do not sum to 100%.

programs; 2.) engineering and computer science; 3.) health sciences and medicine; 4.) business, education, social sciences, and social ecology; and 5.) arts and humanities.

Table 1: Proportion of Respondents in Each Academic Discipline

Academic Discipline	Proportion of Respondents
Biological and physical sciences	21%
Engineering and computer science	28%
Health sciences and medicine	6%
Social ecology, social sciences, business, and education	37%
Arts and humanities	8%

The average age of respondents was 27 years old (SD=4.9) and the average year in the program was 2.3 (SD=1.6). Approximately 53% identified as women and 42% as men; 5% reported another gender identity, such as agender, genderqueer, or transgender spectrum. Nearly one-quarter (22%) of respondents were international students. Respondents were aggregated into to five broad ethnoracial groups: white (43%), Hispanic/Latino, South and East Asian (33%), and black and Pacific Islander (16%). Some groups were combined due to small sample size.

OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

A large majority of graduate students who live on campus are generally satisfied with student housing, though satisfaction rates vary by community. However, rent prices are a major concern. On-campus housing options are often much less expensive than off-campus housing options; even so, relative to the average graduate student stipend, typical on-campus rent prices do not meet the federal guidelines for affordable housing.

Finances, research, and coursework are the most common sources of stress for graduate students. In spite of this, graduate students report an alarming reluctance to seek professional help for chronic stress. Those who have sought help from the Counseling Center have high rates of satisfaction with those services. However, additional barriers to counseling exist in the form of long waiting times for appointments and a limited number of appointments per year.

Graduate students with marginalized identities (e.g. women, people of color, and LGBTQ*-identified individuals) are more likely to suffer from identity-based stress and less likely to have a positive overall experience at UCI. There are also some systematic differences in satisfaction with on-campus resources along these lines, suggesting there is a pressing need for more diverse, inclusive, and culturally sensitive programming in order to truly serve graduate students of all backgrounds.

A significant number of graduate students have experienced at least one period of financial hardship during their graduate program. In particular, the availability of summer funding wields considerable financial impact. Most graduate students feel UCI is adequately preparing them for their future careers, although they feel less prepared for non-academic careers than academic ones.

HOUSING

For many students, being a part of the UC Irvine community means living on campus; for others, commuting and parking for class and work is a part of their daily routines. While the majority of students living on-campus report overall satisfaction with their housing community, our survey results suggest that there are still a number of students who struggle with housing-related concerns including rent, parking, and access to on campus housing.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Slightly more than three-quarters of survey respondents who live on campus reported overall satisfaction with their housing communities. Although this was a heartening finding, our results also point to a few outstanding concerns. Chief among these is the cost of rent, as many students report financial strain. Nearly one-third of students reported that they could not afford to pay their rent or live comfortable after paying their rent. Other concerns include the accessibility of housing and availability of visitor parking.

HOUSING SATISFACTION

Despite some complaints, graduate students appear to be generally satisfied with the on-campus housing opportunities; indeed, **77% of respondents living on campus said that, overall, they were satisfied with their housing communities.** However, satisfaction depended in part on where respondents lived. Most notably, **a significantly lower percentage of Campus Village residents reported satisfaction compared to residents of other communities.** We suspect this has to do with the fact that Campus Village still primarily houses undergraduate students, and the graduate student residents would prefer more of a graduate community feel. The American Campus Communities² also primarily house undergraduates and have lower rates of satisfaction among residents, but the difference in satisfaction rates is not statistically significant.

Table 2: Satisfaction with Housing Communities

Housing Community	Reponses	Satisfied	Percent Satisfied
Palo Verde	216	171	79%
Verano Place	251	194	77%
America Campus Communities	45	32	71%
Campus Village	26	16	62%
Total	538	413	77%

Our findings also suggest some gender differences: compared to men, women are less likely to report satisfaction with their housing communities. In addition, rates of housing satisfaction

² The American Campus Communities include Puerta Del Sol, Vista Del Campo, and Vista Del Campo Norte.

decrease with respondents' age and year in their graduate programs.³ These results warrant further investigation in future surveys.

A PRIMARY SOURCE OF FINANCIAL STRESS

“Some of my classmates can barely afford their apartments because their TA/fellowships are not large enough to cover rent/food/car/etc. My situation is very tight, little margin for emergencies.”

By far, housing or rent costs are the primary source of financial stress for respondents. Although the majority of respondents (74%) chose to live in on-campus housing (which includes Palo Verde, Verano Place, Campus Village, and the American Campus Communities), **nearly one-third of our respondents (30%) reported that they did not earn enough money to pay their rent and/or could pay their rent but did not have enough money left to live comfortably.**

According to our survey, students who live on campus pay on average \$769.96 per month on rent while earning on average \$1781.47 per month, indicating that they **spend on average 43.22% of their wages on rent.** This percentage is well above the federally recognized rate for affordable housing, which is 30% of household annual income (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development).

Table 3: Graduate Student Housing Prices

Housing Community	Monthly Rent	
	Single (Cost / Bedroom)	Family (Cost / Unit)
<i>Palo Verde</i>		
▪ Studio & 1 Bedroom	\$782 - \$1,031	\$782 - \$1,031
▪ 2 Bedroom	\$614 - \$773	\$1,2288 - \$1,546
▪ 3 Bedroom	\$560 - \$629	\$1,680 - \$1,887
<i>Verano Place</i>		
▪ 1 Bedroom	N/A	\$918
▪ 2 Bedroom	\$495 - \$725	\$990 - \$1,450
▪ 3 Bedroom	\$358	\$1,074
<i>Campus Village</i>		
▪ 2 Bedroom	\$731	N/A
<i>Puerta Del Sol</i>		
▪ Studio	\$1,097 - \$1,197	\$1,097 - \$1,197
▪ 1 Bedroom	\$1,386	\$1,386
<i>Vista Del Campo & VDC Norte</i>		
▪ 1 Bedroom	\$1,246 - \$1,257	\$1,246 - \$1,257
▪ 2 Bedroom	\$969	\$1,938
▪ 3 Bedroom	\$838 - \$904	\$2,580

³ For more detailed descriptions and statistics, please see Appendix: Table I (p. v).

In our survey, we also included an optional free response question asking for comments on housing. While some respondents wrote in positive comments (e.g. “I like it here” and “Overall it’s great”), most of the respondents who took the time to answer did so in order to suggest a particular change or to express frustration. Acknowledging that negative comments were disproportionately represented in the responses to this question, we looked for recurring themes. Among these comments, the price of rent was a chief complaint (see Table 4). Disparities in housing community rent were also a concern, such as with one Palo Verde resident, who “was initially offered a room in VDC Norte, which was way too expensive” for them. Another student recalled: “I was lucky to get housing in old Verano Place—it is inexpensive. Everywhere else (including new Verano Place) is outrageously expensive.”

Table 4: Key Topics from Housing Free Response

	Total	Palo Verde	Verano Place	Campus Village	ACC	Other/ Off Campus
Visitor parking issues	164	99	52	7	6	1
Housing staff issues	73	25	36	3	1	7
Maintenance and quality issues	68	18	37	2	7	4
Unaffordable or poor value	58	11	23	1	6	17
Issues with amenities/utilities	46	17	19	1	2	9
Lack of access to housing	40	9	8	2	3	18
Neighbor and/or roommate issues	37	18	8	1	2	7

Note: Values refer to the number of times an issue was raised in a free response question about housing.

Quality of housing for the amount of rent paid was also a key issue emerging from this survey (see Table 4). In addition to discussing affordability concerns, students mentioned that the high cost of housing did not often match their expectations for maintenance and quality. These quality issues range from maintenance problems (e.g., “Laundry facilities need to be better maintained” and “Previous apartment was falling apart with a leaky roof”) to quality issues (e.g., “paper thin walls” and lack of space).

Financial and quality concerns factored into students choosing to live in off-campus housing and commute. Some students would have preferred to live on campus, but, as one student mentioned: “if I could afford student housing I would do it, I’d rather live closer to school.” Instead, many students live in lower-cost housing in other cities, often well outside Irvine, or with their parents or families. Other reasons for living on or off campus are described in more detail in the following section.

ACCESS TO HOUSING

In addition to affordability, a key concern that emerged from student comments was **limited housing access**, including applying for housing, renewing leases, and resolving administrative and maintenance issues with housing staff. Housing availability was the sixth most mentioned problem on housing free responses (Table 4). PhD, MFA, JD, and Prime LC MD students are offered guaranteed housing for their normative time to degree minus one year; however, this guarantee is forfeit if graduate students do not accept housing during their first year. Masters students are not currently guaranteed placement in UCI housing.

A number of students wrote that they were currently in UCI housing but attempting to move to a less expensive apartment, for example, one Verano resident mentioned, “I am still on the waiting list for moving in a [sic] affordable unit,” and another wrote: “I can't find housing with my domestic partner. I have been on the wait list for over 6 months.” Several students who were not living in on campus housing also wanted more housing options for masters students.

Table 5: Reasons for Living On Campus

Reason / Feature	Percentage
Location – proximity to campus	92%
Affordability	74%
Amenities	9%
Spouse / partner	6%
Other	5%
Location – night life, local shops, culture, etc.	4%
Pet policy	4%
<i>Note: n=544. Because respondents could select multiple reasons, cumulative total >100%.</i>	

Table 6: Reasons for Living Off Campus

Reason / Feature	Percentage
Affordability	36%
Location	30%
Spouse/Partner	28%
Other	27%
Living with parents or other family member(s)	19%
Pet policy	15%
Amenities	14%
Not eligible for on-campus housing	9%
<i>Note: n=430. Because respondents could select multiple reasons, cumulative total >100%.</i>	

While some of these issues are related to availability of housing and the housing guarantee, other barriers to accessing on-campus housing include difficulties with housing management and staff, which was the second most mentioned housing concern (Table 4). These housing concerns included **incorrect and inconsistent instructions** (“Housing office is very unorganized, their

communications are severely lacking. Confused my moving date with that of my roommate and had to move in with the repairs not done.”), **slow or no responses from staff** (“They are very underresponsive”; “I had some trouble getting responses from housing staff prior to move in”), and **difficulties with maintenance** (“Maintenance staff just come into my apartment only seconds after knocking and will even enter our rooms when we are sleeping. I think they need to give time frames for when they will be coming.”). As one student mentioned, a recurring theme among reported interactions with housing is one of opposition or ambivalence rather than as a student service: “Students are not the focus of their activity, nor is fairness/accuracy/good service their way of conducting business.”

As shown in Table 5, **proximity to campus and affordability were the two biggest factors in students’ decisions to live on campus.** Proximity to campus can be crucial to students’ success in graduate programs, as many resources necessary to their work and research (software, equipment, materials, etc.) are only available on campus. Furthermore, most graduate students’ work hours extend well beyond the typical 9-5 business day, and many graduate students need to be able to access their labs and office space at all hours of the day and night. This is made much more feasible by living close to lab and office spaces. Affordability is also important because, as noted earlier, respondents who live on campus, on average, made less than \$1800/month and spent over 43% of their income on rent. Although this exceeds the federal guidelines for affordable housing, on-campus housing is still considerably less expensive than most off-campus housing options in Orange County. In the last quarter of 2012, the average apartment rent in Orange County was \$1637—more than the double the \$769.96 average on-campus rent and just over 90% of the average income (Collins, 2013). This disparity in housing prices is also reflected in our survey results: affordability was a factor in 74% of students’ decisions to live on campus versus only 36% of students’ decisions to live off campus (see Tables 5 and 6). **The proximity to campus and relative affordability of student housing are often indispensable features, making on-campus housing the only real option for many graduate students.** As such, the accessibility of on-campus housing is absolutely crucial for graduate student success.

PARKING AS A KEY CONCERN

For those students in campus housing, resident and visitor parking was a significant and prevalent concern (see Table 4). Currently, on-campus students must register their visitors’ license plates online; students receive a finite number of visitor parking hours per year; and visitors may only park in designated visitor spots.

Just over half (58%) of respondents said they were satisfied with the visitor parking opportunities in their housing communities (see Table 7).⁴ For Palo Verde residents, that number drops to 41%. Comments indicated that a lack of visitor parking spots was the biggest source of frustration. Even among students who were generally satisfied with visitor parking, a number of their comments included qualifications, such as “but only because I don’t have many visitors” and “it’s an annoying system.”

Campus Village, which does not offer any free visitor parking opportunities, had the next lowest rate (50%) of resident satisfaction with visitor parking. Campus Village’s parking policies, however, are fundamentally different than those of the other student housing communities as

⁴ For more detailed descriptions and statistics, please see Appendix: Table III (p. vii).

Campus Village is the only graduate community located on main campus. Although it would be difficult to implement, introducing free visitor parking in Campus Village could potentially improve residents’ overall satisfaction by making it feel more like more of a graduate community. However, given the obstacles to implementation, this suggestion may be more feasible as a long term goal.

Table 7: Satisfaction with Visitor Parking

Housing Community	Reponses	Satisfied	Percent Satisfied
America Campus Communities	44	33	75%
Verano Place	248	177	71%
Campus Village	14	7	50%
Palo Verde	214	87	41%
Total	520	304	58%

Although our survey did not directly ask about it, a few free response comments mentioned lack of resident parking in Palo Verde and Verano Place. With a limited number of parking spots, both resident and visitor spots are in high demand. However, lack of visitor parking was mentioned far more often than resident parking, and the resident parking complaints mostly involved having to park farther away from their homes than desired. A survey conducted by the Palo Verde Residents’ Council demonstrated both the need for and feasibility of supplementing visitor parking. At the time of this writing, Palo Verde is in the process of adding additional “flex” visitor parking spots, which would be accessible to residents at all times and to visitors only on weekends. We expect these new flex spots will help improve satisfaction with visitor parking, which can be measured in future surveys.

LIVING COMFORTABLY

As noted earlier, **nearly one-third of our respondents (30%) reported that they did not earn enough money to pay their rent and/or could pay their rent but did not have enough money left to live comfortably.**⁵ Residents of American Campus Communities were significantly more likely to report having difficulty paying their rent. This makes sense given that American Campus Communities are the most expensive on-campus housing option. Importantly, student housing has recently been able to place all graduate student applicants with a housing guarantee in their first choice housing communities. We strongly encourage Student Housing to continue this practice, since involuntary placement in a more expensive housing community (such as the American Campus Communities) could be financially devastating to students requesting more affordable communities.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

While more than three-quarters (77%) of respondents were generally satisfied with their housing communities, students’ feelings about on-campus housing run the gamut from the glowingly positive to the severely disappointed. In this report, we focused primarily on areas identified by survey participants as needing improvement. While the complaints raised are not

⁵ For more detailed descriptions and statistics, please see Appendix: Table II (p. vi).

necessarily representative of all student experiences with housing, they are nonetheless very serious concerns for the students affected. In other words, there are some problems with housing that only a small number of students face, but can impact those students profoundly. Lack of access to housing and incorrect or confusing information are prime examples of such issues. Certain groups are particularly vulnerable to problems with accessing housing. For example, with UCI's ever-increasing enrollment targets for international masters' students, the campus is growing a population for whom on-campus housing is most desired and least accessible.

One issue that affects virtually all graduate students, however, is the urgent need for affordable housing options. This need is clearly demonstrated by our findings: graduates students spend upwards of 40% of their income on rent, which is well over the federally recommended guideline for affordable housing, and identify rent as a primary source of financial stress. In light of this, every effort should be made to increase graduate students' access to affordable housing. Furthermore, to address rent prices and other housing issues, we stress the importance of AGS representatives playing an advisory role in decisions and policies regarding graduate student housing through involvement on committees such as the Coordinated Governance Group (CGG).

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS

The health and happiness of graduate students is of great concern to AGS, and our findings suggest that a significant proportion of UCI graduate students are unhappy and/or stressed. Furthermore, many of these students are either not seeking help, unable to find help, or using maladaptive means of coping with their stress.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

While the majority of graduate students view their student experience at UCI as at least somewhat positive, there are still a number of mental health needs that are not currently being met. Stress, in particular, poses a threat to student wellness. Finances, research, coursework, advisor relationships, and family/partner relationships are primary sources of stress, and 38% of respondents report that they do not have a good work-life balance.

SOURCES OF STRESS

Graduate students face many responsibilities and potential stressors, including academic work, teaching, research, family duties, and relationships with peers and advisors. On average, students reported moderate levels of stress (mean rating = 6.07 out of 10). To better understand the cause, we asked respondents to select their major sources of stress from a list (see Table 8).

In this section, we discuss primary sources of stress for graduate students: finances, research, identity, family relationships, and other salient concerns such as future career plans and transportation.

Table 8: Major Sources of Stress for Graduate Students

Sources of Stress	Percentage
Finances	58%
Research	53%
Course work	50%
Advisor relationship	25%
Family/spouse/partner relationship	24%
TA responsibilities	23%
Other non-UCI-related source	12%
Other UCI-related source	10%
Roommate relationship	9%
Identity-based stress	6%

Note: n=1,010. Because respondents could select multiple sources, cumulative total >100%.

Finances

The majority of respondents reported that **finances** (58%) **were major sources of stress**. These findings are not surprising given that a majority (75%) of students receiving a stipend for an on-campus job such as TAing or researching noted that it was barely (43%), not quite (21%), or not even close (11%) to covering their living expenses; most students cited **housing costs** as the primary source of their financial stress (66%).

Research & Academics

The majority of graduate students named **research** as a major source of stress. For those students doing research, 35% did not feel they were making progress on their projects. Nearly one-third (27%) of respondents felt overburdened by their employment responsibilities.

Among other stressors, students also reported that **coursework** (50%), **teaching assistant responsibilities** (23%), and **advisor relationship** (18%) were significant sources of stress. TAs and graders face increasing class sizes and thus heavier grading loads (Martindale, 2012).

A small but substantial proportion of students (11%) stated that they did not have a good relationship with their advisor. Of all respondents, 8% reported that their advisor had behaved in a way they felt was inappropriate. Inappropriate advisor behavior included unwanted sexual advances, prejudiced remarks based on gender and/or race, personal insults and threats, lack of respect for work-life balance, and dishonesty.

Identity

Six percent of students who answered our survey also reported identity-based stress. These students mentioned many sources for this stress: difficulties with campus-wide and/or departmental **discrimination based on race, gender identity, sexual orientation, and cultural and socioeconomic background**; “imposter syndrome” and questioning their identity as a graduate student; and general loneliness or feeling unaccepted. These findings echo those in the recent Campus Climate report (Rankin & Associates, 2014), which found that across the UC Irvine community, underrepresented minority, genderqueer, and trans students reported a significantly higher amount of exclusionary conduct than their peers.

Family & Relationships

Graduate students must balance their work with their interpersonal relationships and responsibilities outside of school and research. **More than one-third (38%) of students feel that they do not have a good work-life balance.** Nearly one-quarter of respondents reported stress related to family (24%). Of respondents in relationships, 45% answered that since starting grad school, their partner complained of feeling socially isolated.

For graduate students with children, **30% were unable to find adequate childcare services.** An additional 33% were forced to seek off-campus providers. Only 21% found adequate on-campus childcare. Childcare costs were also reported as financially burdensome, with 36% spending more than 25% of their income on childcare.

Salient Concerns

In a free response question about salient concerns (see Table 9), the most frequently mentioned stressors included **concerns over finding a job or career** (40), **identity issues** (26), **parking and transportation related issues** (22), managing being a grad student and holding an outside job (18), housing (17), and department culture (17). Identity issues included race/ethnicity, cultural background, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Among these issues, students mentioned problems such as lack of sensitivity, overt discrimination, and lack of resources for handling identity-related issues.

Table 9: Free Response Concerns

Concern	Number of Respondents
Finding a job/career	40
Identity issues	26
Parking and transportation	22
Holding an outside job	18
Housing	17
Department culture	17

COPING

Graduate students mentioned many strategies for coping with their stress. **Nearly half (46%) of students reported that they were unlikely to seek professional help** if experiencing chronic stress. While the majority of students (64%) reported that they did not use maladaptive coping strategies, **a large proportion turned to maladaptive means of coping (36%), including alcohol and other drugs, disordered eating, and self-harm.**

Many students reported more adaptive ways that they cope with stress, including the **18% of students who sought counseling for UCI-related problems and the 27% who sought counseling for non-UCI-related problems.** Of those who sought help at the UCI Counseling Center, 15% found it too difficult to make an appointment, citing reasons such as too few free sessions, no appointments available, and ill-trained staff.

SERVICES & RESOURCES

While some purchase insurance on their own or qualify for insurance via a family member, spouse, or partner, the majority of graduate students are enrolled in the Graduate Student Health Insurance Program (GSHIP). This health plan provides primary care via the Student Health Center (SHC).

The majority of students go to the SHC once a month (45%) or never (45%). **Of those who have gone to the SHC, 25% were dissatisfied with their experiences** for reasons including financial and insurance issues (“They would not see me due to insurance complications.”), difficulty in making appointments due to logistical issues and lack of availability (“I wish the online appointment system worked!”; “It takes forever to get an appointment”; “The wait was about 2 months [for a specialist].”), and staff insensitivity or rudeness.

Of the respondents who were able to access Counseling Center services, 81% were satisfied with their experiences. Students mentioned that counselors had helped them “find new ways to cope.” However, even the positive comments often mentioned **limited access**: “I wish I had more appointments at the Counseling Center”; “They could use more resources so they don’t have to limit the number of sessions”; “The counselor was great, even though it was difficult to get an appointment...I’ve been turned away in the past.” **These responses suggest that Counseling Center services are, in general, extremely helpful to graduate students (indeed, sometimes crucial to their success), but that the Counseling Center does not currently have the resources to meet the demand for its services.**

Students also turned to other means of support with their UCI-related problems, including family members, significant others, friends, faculty and/or advisors, and off-campus counseling. **The primary reason for seeking off-campus counseling was lack of availability of on-campus counseling**, including inability to make appointments and the eight-session limit. The Counseling Center has “moved away from indicating an 8 session ‘cap.’ Our policy emphasizes time limited short term treatment and the average length of treatment is 4-11 sessions” (personal communication).

GRADUATE STUDENT SPACE

Comments on the survey also indicated interest in a space for graduate students to interact. Graduate school can be a stressful and isolating experience, and most campus clubs and centers are aimed towards undergraduate students. Creating more spaces for graduate students to interact with their peers outside of their department would help ease some of the stress.

SYSTEMATIC DIFFERENCES

Not all students were satisfied with the health services that they received at UCI. **Students identifying as LGB* (i.e. queer, gay, lesbian, non-monosexual, or asexual) were much less likely to be happy with the services they received from the SHC** when compared to heterosexual students.⁶ Several students mentioned “encountering homophobia” at the SHC. Notably, however, SHC staff underwent Safe Zone Training from the LGBT Resource Center since the time of the survey. Purely anecdotal evidence coming from AGS’s constituents suggests this training has helped reduce instances of homophobia. With the release of additional surveys in the future, we can collect longitudinal data to empirically track such changes—not just for the satisfaction with the SHC but with other campus providers as well. In the meantime, we stress the importance of education and sensitivity training to improve student experiences.

LGB*-identified students were also less likely to report that the overall impact of their experiences at UCI had a positive effect on their mental health and well-being.⁷ These findings suggest that the overall UCI experience, including health care services, might work to better address the wellness and mental health needs of *all* graduate students.

⁶ For more detailed descriptions and statistics, please see Appendix: Table IV (p. x). Note that this comparison involves different experiences on the basis of sexual orientation, rather than gender identity. Since trans* is a gender identity, not a sexual orientation, we use the LGB* acronym instead of LGBT.

⁷ For more detailed descriptions and statistics, please see Appendix: Table V (p. xi).

ATTITUDES TOWARD WELLNESS

Of those who responded, the **majority of students viewed their student experience at UCI as very (40%) or somewhat (44%) positive.**

In general, respondents described the overall impact of their experiences at UCI on their mental health and well-being as “neutral” (39%). Slightly more than one-third (34%) of students reported that their experiences at UCI had a “good” effect on their well-being, and an additional 9% described the effect as “very good.” A remaining 18% answered that UCI had a “bad” or “very bad” effect on their mental health and wellbeing (see Table 10).

Overall, these results are heartening, as they reveal that graduate students have generally positive feelings about UCI. All the same, there is certainly room for improvement when nearly one in five graduate students reports that UCI has negatively impacted their mental health. Once again, this presents an opportunity for future surveys to track changes in student experiences in response to the implementation of new policies or resources.

Table 10: Self-Reported Impact of UCI on Mental Health

Answer	Responses	Percent
Very Good	86	9%
Good	336	34%
Neutral	380	39%
Bad	148	15%
Very Bad	25	3%
Total	975	100%

Note: Graduate students were asked: “How would you describe the overall impact of your experiences at UCI on your mental health and wellbeing?”

Table 11: Awareness of AGS Services

Service	Percent Aware
Social events	89%
Travel grants	52%
Complimentary parking opportunities	42%
Housing, healthcare, and parking advocacy	37%
Coffee Cart (free coffee for graduate students)	36%
Meetings with University Administration to resolve graduate student issues	27%
AGS Symposium	26%
State and national lobbying	16%
Happy Grad Project (for grad mental wellness)	15%

Note: n=804. Percentages reflect the proportion of respondents aware of each AGS service indicated.

ACCESS TO SOCIAL SUPPORT & OTHER RESOURCES

Although graduate students face many stressors, a large proportion of students were aware of potential resources for coping with stress, including AGS social events, complimentary parking, grant opportunities for conference travel, and resources for working with administrators to resolve student issues (see Table 11).

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

While many graduate students view their experience at UCI positively, they still face a number of challenges. Some of these challenges, such as learning to balance education, work, and personal life, are those that all graduate students must face—and are positive challenges that contribute to our growth as scholars and members of society. However, many students grapple with problems such as financial burdens, difficulty meeting research or coursework obligations, and identity-based stress, either in the form of imposter syndrome or prejudice/discrimination. Furthermore, while graduate students are satisfied overall with the counseling services on campus, those services can be difficult to access. These issues hinder graduate students and the UCI community as we work to learn, to teach, and to develop quality research. Faculty, staff, administrators, and students can work to create a healthier, more respectful environment at UCI. We therefore recommend that campus stakeholders work with AGS to:

- **Increase mental health services access:** work to provide additional counselors and increase appointment availability.
- **Increase outreach:** make graduate students, faculty, and staff more aware of available health services.
- **Address stressors:** increase financial stability for graduate students; educate graduate students, faculty, and staff about equity, sensitivity, and graduate student researcher and teaching assistant rights; provide and promote safe avenues for graduate students to seek support.
- **Work to address needs of diverse students:** ensure that students of *all* backgrounds are comfortable utilizing campus resources.
- **Increase opportunities for graduate students to develop social support:** for example, dedicate physical space on campus that provides opportunities for graduate student interaction; create and sustain additional social events, and provide additional resources for clubs and groups.

CAMPUS CLIMATE

Campus climate plays an integral role in shaping the graduate and professional student experience. Campus climate is defined as “the current attitudes, behaviors and standards of faculty, staff, administrators and students concerning the level of respect for individual needs, abilities and potential” (Rankin & Associates, 2014).

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Graduate and professional students have reported the **ongoing existence of a systematic hostile environment**, including staff, faculty, colleagues, students, and other members of the campus community participating in homophobic, racist, misogynistic, ableist, and otherwise hostile language and actions. (For instance, “The campus climate is terrible. Some adjectives: bureaucratic, apathetic, retaliatory, soul-crushing, sexist...”; “...everyone says they want to increase diversity but the attitudes and comments do not support that.”)

Identity-Based Stress

- Students who identify as LGB* (i.e. queer, gay, lesbian, non-monosexual, or asexual) are **about six times more likely** than those who identify as heterosexual to report identity-based stress stemming from discrimination, “impostor syndrome,” and loneliness.
- Transgender, intersex, genderqueer, and agender individuals are **about three times more likely** than cisgender men to report identity-based stress.
- Women are approximately **twice as likely** as men to report identity-based stress.

Student Experience

- Ethnoracial minorities such as African Americans, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, likewise were **30% less likely** than white students to report a positive overall experience.

Campus Resources

- A small but significant number of students have reported homophobic and/or judgmental attitudes at the Student Health Center.
- Students decry the price as well as lack of healthy food, vegetarian options, and variety at the campus eateries.

IDENTITY-BASED STRESS

Identity-based stress comes in many forms. Survey respondents reported difficulties with **campus-wide and/or departmental discrimination** based on race, gender identity, sexual orientation, and cultural and socioeconomic background; “imposter syndrome” and questioning their identity as graduate students; and general loneliness or feeling unaccepted.

Furthermore, the occurrence of identity-based stress is disproportionately prevalent amongst certain groups of students.⁸ Individuals who identify as **LGB* are 5.7 to 6.8 times more likely to report identity-related stress than those who identify as heterosexual.**

Transgender, intersex, genderqueer, and agender individuals also report significantly higher incidences of identity-based stress at UCI, with a **2.9 to 5.3 times higher probability of reporting identity-related stress** relative to cisgender men. Additionally, **women are 1.8 to 2 times as likely as men to report identity-based stress.**

Students of color also reported being less satisfied with their overall experience at UCI.⁹ Relative to whites, Asian graduate students have 38.8% lower odds of a positive experience at UCI. **Ethnoracial minorities such as African Americans, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, likewise were 30.6% less likely to report a positive overall experience.**

Our findings echo those in the recent Campus Climate report (Rankin & Associates, 2014), which found that across the UC Irvine community, a higher percentage of underrepresented minority and multi-minority respondents experienced exclusionary conduct and felt less comfortable with overall campus climate than white respondents. A higher percentage of genderqueer and trans* respondents also reported exclusionary conduct and felt less comfortable with the campus climate than cisgender respondents.

PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The relationship between graduate students and their advisors strongly affects the climate students experience on campus. Graduate students rely on advisors for professional mentoring, the facilities to conduct research, and in some cases financial support. Unfortunately a number of students reported experiencing stress due to a hostile relationship with their advisor. Over half of the inappropriate behaviors reported cited advisors' unprofessional conduct and unreasonable work demands. Students reported verbal abuse, such as:

- “[blaming] me for things that weren’t my fault”
- “often puts down graduate students when in a bad mood and shames any mistakes”
- “[making] threats, personal and financial” and “[calling] us ‘dumbf****.’”
- “Suggesting I'm not intellectually capable or smart enough for the task.”
- “would often burst into anger when stuff didn't go his way ... would send nasty emails at his whim which was hard to endure while essentially putting your career in his hands”

In addition, survey respondents reported racist or sexist behavior from their advisor, and in one case inappropriate sexual advances. Comments include:

- “sexual advances... sometimes not very subtle”

⁸ For more detailed descriptions and statistics, please see Appendix: Table VII (p. xiv). For a description of our use of the LGB* acronym, see the footnote on p. 16.

⁹ For more detailed descriptions and statistics, please see Appendix: Table VIII (p. xv).

- “Sexism is a HUGE problem in physical sciences... we also need more support for students who have s***** advisors.”
- “Says inappropriate things (sexist/racist/things that could be taken as sexual harassment in other workplaces). Is moody/lashes out. Shames me in front of colleagues. Does similar things to other students.”
- “mildly racist comments”

Table 12: Breakdown of Comments Reporting Hostile Behavior from Advisors

Type of Hostile Behavior	Percentage of Comments
Unprofessional conduct	31.1%
▪ Condescending behavior / shames students	15.6%
▪ Emotional outbursts / mood issues	15.6%
Other (ethics, honesty, etc.)	31.1%
Unreasonable work demands	22.2%
Sexist / racist comments	11.1%
Unresponsive / inattentive	11.1%
<i>Note: n = 45. Percentages do not add up to 100% because many students included responses belonging to different categories.</i>	

Students reported feelings of inadequacy and incompetence after being subject to this type of inappropriate advisor behavior. Given the extent to which graduate students are dependent on their advisors this kind of behavior is inexcusable.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

Campus climate affects not only academic and research environments, but also the accessibility of campus resources.

Student Health Center

Another main source of identity-related stress appears to be some members of the Student Health Center staff. As reported in the Mental Health & Wellness report, respondents identifying as LGB* were less likely to report satisfaction with SHC compared to heterosexual students. Several students mentioned “encountering homophobia” at SHC:

- “Encountered homophobia from two different clinicians at the Student Health Center when I told them I was gay”
- “felt criticized when I visited for precautionary STI testing”
- “Front desk assistant's blatant disregard for patient privacy and confidentiality”

However, these experiences are not universal, as others had positive experiences. For instance one student reported: “They are very supportive of my medical needs as a polyamorous person.” Although there were only a few reports of negative treatment at the SHC, due to the vital and personal services this department provides, we believe that ongoing examination of the

campus climate impacts of policies, procedures, and staff training practices is merited. Furthermore, as described in the Mental Health & Wellness section, the SHC has since taken the important step of Safe Zone training its staff.

Dining Options

A majority of graduate students (53%) are dissatisfied with the dining options on campus. Of particular concern to campus climate was the systematic lack of variety among campus food options.

Table 13: Breakdown of Open-Ended Responses about UCI Food

Categories	Percentage
Too pricey or expensive	20.0%
More healthy options needed	22.3%
More vegetarian/vegan options needed	9.7%
Ethnic variety of food needed	9.4%
General variety of options needed	10.6%
Low food quality	10.6%
Food location issues	7.1%
Food chain issues	6.3%
Regarding coffee	2.6%
Closing time / summer time	1.4%
Positive comments	
▪ Anthill Pub	2.3%
▪ Other dining locations	5.7%
N/A: do not eat on campus	7.7%
Other comments	2.3%

Note: n = 350. Percentages do not add up to 100% because many students included responses belonging to different categories.

Of the 350 students who provided explanations to their thoughts regarding food on campus, 22% are concerned about **healthy** food choices, 10% reported not having enough **vegetarian / vegan** options, and another 9% expressed how the variety of campus food does not reflect the **cultural diversity** of the student population. Some representative comments are:

- “Choices should reflect California's lead in healthy living choices”
- “I wish there were healthier options besides salads.”
- “Not very good vegan options...only salads.”
- “No enough vegetarian or vegan options.”
- “There is no Halal Food. Cost of food is high in Student center”
- “UCI has most diverse culture in terms of students and mainly there are middle east & asian students. So I think it will be a good idea to have more asian /middle east/ european style food on the campus also.”

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

It is the campus's responsibility to provide adequate funding and resources to on-campus units that help students cope with identity-based stress and continue in recruitment and retention efforts for underrepresented student populations. The campus should target the provision of crucial information and training to raise awareness of diversity and decrease microaggressions. For instance, the campus could offer presentations, trainings and pamphlets where appropriate, including to incoming graduate students during their orientation as well as to university employees.

Additionally, increasing the variety of healthy, vegetarian/vegan, and ethnic food options on campus would do well to assuage the diverse taste of the students on campus. As described in the Mental Health Wellness section, students also need more spaces in which they can interact with peers outside of their department. The positive responses by students regarding the Anthill Pub perhaps further demonstrate the need for such an environment for graduate students.

Efforts to improve campus climate are already underway, as evidenced by programs such as DECADE, UCI ADVANCE, New Narratives, and the High Impact Hiring Plan. While these programs are important, there is more work to be done. The university should continue to provide more support for existing programs, raising more awareness and promoting the important work of these campus initiatives. Increased visibility of underrepresented groups and continuing conversations about campus climate and diversity fostered by initiatives such as *Diversitopia* are important in determining the course we take in the future. Notably, Student Housing updated the gender identity options on graduate student leases to be more inclusive of trans* and gender-conforming students. Following suit, Graduate Division similarly updated the gender identity options on the graduate school application, even including a write-in option where applicants can self-identify however they please. We commend the leadership of Student Housing and Graduate Division for making these hugely important changes. At the same time, we urge the campus administration to continue and extend these efforts, making the commitment to increasing diversity and improving campus climate a primary goal for *all* campus departments and divisions.

In summary, in order to address issues of campus climate, we recommend that university administration:

- Provide funding and resources to help students cope with identity-based stress.
- Accelerate efforts for underrepresented minority student recruitment and retention.
- Provide training not only to incoming students, but also university employees to raise diversity awareness and decrease microaggressions.
- Increase the variety of food options.

INCOME & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Adequate funding is crucial to the research and academic success of graduate students. Additionally, funding can play a role in attracting top-tier graduate student applicants. However, in order to be successful in the long run, it is not enough for graduate students to do well in their research and academics; rather, they must also be trained and prepared for the intensely competitive job market they will face after graduation. While some aspects of career training are often field-specific, graduate students should not have to rely solely on their departments for professional development opportunities. Furthermore, graduate students should be prepared for non-academic as well as academic career paths.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Funding, especially during the summer months, is a key concern for many graduate students. Over one-third (36%) of our respondents reported that they experienced financial hardship during their graduate studies. A graduate student's school is the most important factor in determining their ability to stay afloat financially: STEM school students report higher financial stability than the social sciences, business, education, arts, and humanities.

A large proportion of graduate students are seeking academic careers and, in general, graduate students tend to report feeling generally prepared for their post-UCI careers. However, women are less likely than men to report feeling prepared. In addition, compared to those seeking academic jobs, graduate students seeking non-academic jobs tend to feel less prepared for their future careers.

FUNDING ADEQUACY

To succeed in their graduate programs, students must receive adequate funding not only in order to support their personal financial needs but also for peace of mind, allowing them to concentrate on their research. Among graduate students, financial stress was reported to be the most common source of stress (see the Mental Health & Wellness section) above research, coursework, and other personal responsibilities. In particular, the cost of housing was reported by PhD and non-PhD students alike and the largest source of financial stress (see the Housing Section).

Among UCI graduate students **36% reported having experienced financial hardship** during their graduate studies. According to our survey, 68% of PhD students felt that their stipend was sufficient for their living needs, while 32% felt it was insufficient.

One of the largest influences determining whether PhD students perceived their stipend as sufficient was whether their school has a summer funding guarantee.¹⁰ Nearly 56% of respondents reported that their school does not guarantee summer funding. A lack of guaranteed summer funding is one of the main reasons why PhD students in social sciences, social

¹⁰ For more detailed descriptions and statistics, please see Appendix: Table IX (p. xix).

ecology, business, and education as well as well as arts and humanities perceived their stipend was insufficient.

By contrast, the type of funding (i.e. TA, GSR, etc.) had less of an impact on the adequacy of students' stipend. Similarly, having a dependent in the household had little impact. Consequently, **a lack of guaranteed summer funding appears to be the primary factor responsible for greater financial hardship among PhD students in the social sciences cluster and the arts/humanities.**

CONCERNS ABOUT EMPLOYMENT AFTER GRADUATION

Many graduate students undertake post-baccalaureate studies in order to enhance their employment prospects or to enter a specific occupation after graduation. Overall, **62% of graduate students desire an academic career.** To understand how graduate students feel about their employment prospects, we asked them to rate, on a scale from 0 to 10, how concerned they were about finding a job after graduation; the average rating was 6.17, with 0 indicating no concern and 10 indicating the highest level of concern. Although graduate students shared similar levels of concern across nearly all schools, students in the arts and humanities and the social sciences expressed significantly higher rates of concern. Women are likewise significantly more concerned about their employment prospects compared to men. Relative to Whites, Hispanic or Latino and Asian students are also significantly more concerned. **These differences across student populations suggest that current professional development initiatives could better target and address the needs of women and minorities.**¹¹

Table 14: Average Levels of Perceived Preparation by School

School	Avg. Score	Std. Dev.	Responses
Biological & physical sciences	3.12	.80	212
Engineering & computer science	3.03	.72	264
Health sciences & medicine	3.24	.61	63
Social sciences, social ecology, business, & education	3.18	.78	362
Arts & humanities	3.19	.81	78
Grand Average	3.13	.77	

Note: Responses to the question: “Do you feel that UCI and your department are adequately preparing you to attain your desired career?” Ratings on 1-4 Likert Scale, 1=No, not at all; 2=No, not quite; 3=Yes, somewhat; 4=Yes, absolutely.

We also asked students to rate how well they feel UCI and their department is preparing them for their desired career (see Table 14). In general, graduate students report moderate satisfaction with the preparation they are receiving at UCI.

While the majority of graduate students reported that they were pursuing academic careers, many students will also seek non-academic careers after earning their degree. Although students in general appear to feel positive about their preparation for academic careers, **students**

¹¹ For more detailed descriptions and statistics, please see Appendix: Table X (p. xx).

report feeling less prepared for non-academic careers, especially for students in fields such as the biological sciences, physical sciences, and health sciences and medicine (see Table 15).

In addition, we examined differences in career preparation across schools with regard to gender. We found that women in the biological and physical sciences feel especially underprepared for careers in comparison to their male peers. Our findings (see Table 16) suggest that UCI and academic departments can work with other campus partners, including AGS, to **provide additional resources to prepare female graduate students in the arts and humanities, engineering and computer science, health sciences and medicine, and especially in the biological and physical sciences.**

Table 15: Perceived Level of Preparedness by Career Track and School

School	Academic	Non-Academic	Difference
Biological & physical sciences	3.28	2.78	.50**
Engineering & computer science	3.10	2.97	.13
Health sciences & medicine	3.34	3.05	.30 [†]
Social sciences, social ecology, business, & education	3.19	3.16	.03
Arts & humanities	3.15	3.45	-.31
Grand Average	3.19	3.01	.18**

Note: Two sample difference of means test. Higher values denote greater preparedness; [†]p<.10; *p<.05; **p<.01, two tailed tests.

Table 16: Perceived Level of Preparation by Gender and School

School	Men	Women	Difference
Biological & physical sciences	3.23	2.99	.24*
Engineering & computer science	3.07	2.96	.11
Health sciences & medicine	3.44	3.21	.23
Social sciences, social ecology, business, & education	3.18	3.22	-.04
Arts & humanities	3.39	3.18	.21
Grand Average	3.16	3.12	.05

Note: Two sample difference of means test. Higher values denote greater preparedness; [†]p<.10; *p<.05; **p<.01, two tailed tests.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Compared to those in other schools, graduate students in the social sciences (i.e. the School Social Sciences, School of Social Ecology, Paul Merage School of Business, and School of Education) and in arts and humanities receive the most insufficient stipends at UCI. Although it is likely that this effect is due in part to historical funding structures that differ by discipline, it appears that the primary factor responsible for inadequate funding among these schools is a lack of guaranteed

summer funding. Graduate students in these departments may especially benefit from additional summer resources across schools.

In general, graduate students feel that UCI and their departments are providing them at least somewhat adequate career preparation. However, graduate students—especially those in biological, physical, and health sciences and medicine—feel they receive *inadequate training* for non-academic jobs. Breaking responses down further by gender and school, we find that women across most schools, but particularly in the biological and physical sciences, feel UCI and their departments are not preparing them adequately for future careers.

In light of these findings, we recommend that campus stakeholders address issues of income and professional development by working with AGS to:

- Consider ways to provide all students with summer funding.
- Develop additional field-specific non-academic professional development resources for graduate students across schools.
- Better evaluate the differing professional development needs of students across schools, especially for underrepresented students.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Overall, results from our survey suggest that the majority of graduate students at UCI report moderate satisfaction with resources such as housing, health and mental wellness services, and professional development. Our results also illuminate areas where graduate student needs are perhaps not being met.

Most graduate students live in on-campus housing and report that they are satisfied with their living situation. However, many students struggle to obtain housing—especially more affordable housing in the on-campus graduate communities. Additionally, rent costs are a key concern, with 30% of students reporting that they do not earn enough money to pay their rent and live comfortably—or to pay their rent at all. Furthermore, lack of visitor and resident parking is a major issue for students living on campus.

We find that many students also struggle to maintain a sustainable work-life balance. Many students face stress regarding coursework and research. Finances are also a prevalent stressor, which is unsurprising given that many students report difficulties in paying for rent. However, the majority of students viewed their experiences at UCI as at least somewhat positive. Despite this finding, our results also suggest that the campus climate at UCI contributes heavily to stress; students reported identity-related discrimination, difficulties and mistreatment in their work as researchers and TAs, and a dearth of resources on campus for coping with these stresses. Of particular note is the long waiting time for appointments at the Counseling Center.

In terms of income, graduate students in STEM fields tend to report higher financial stability than students in other schools. Summer funding for PhD students was found to be a critical factor in whether they felt their stipend was sufficient. Given that 56% of grad students reported that their school did not guarantee them summer funding, this factor could contribute to recruitment and retention.

Professional development is also a major concern for graduate students. In general, most graduate students reported feeling that UCI and their departments were preparing them for their post-graduate careers. However, female students and graduate students seeking non-academic careers tended to report feeling less prepared.

LIMITATIONS

While we feel that our survey results provide insight into graduate student needs at UCI, we caution that our findings must be viewed in light of several limitations. Our survey captured approximately 24.4% of the 2013-14 UCI graduate student population. Certain populations, including masters and professional students and students with families, were underrepresented in our sample. Additionally, our survey was distributed in the Fall 2013 Quarter. Because the largest group in our sample was first year students, some information may have been biased; a number of students reported that they did not have enough experience at UCI to answer some of the survey

questions. Future surveys could address these concerns by increasing outreach efforts and by distributing the survey in Winter Quarter.

RECOMMENDATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Issues such as financial security, workplace environment, and healthcare access play roles in the recruitment and retention of graduate students. Our survey results suggest several areas in which graduate student needs could be better met. In order to address the issues identified in this report, we propose that campus stakeholders continue to work with AGS and the graduate student body.

Specifically, we suggest that parties including AGS, the Coordinated Governance Group, and residents' councils might continue to improve communication to graduate students regarding housing options. Additionally, visitor and resident parking systems might be better designed to accommodate graduate students and their families. Providing more affordable housing options—as defined by federal guidelines—is also a major priority.

Campus climate concerns might be better addressed; for example, students might work with stakeholders to address the academic, professional, and social needs of underrepresented students. For healthcare, additional outreach and access to on-campus health services—including counseling—might help improve the well-being of graduate students. Initiatives should also be developed to address issues of equity among graduate students, faculty, and staff. Through our programs and services, AGS will also continue to work to increase opportunities for graduate students and their families to develop and access social supports.

Although the majority of survey respondents felt that their professional development resources were at least adequate, we found that resources for women and for students seeking non-academic careers are lacking. Future professional development initiatives could work to address the career training needs of these students.

Lastly, we recommend that there be continued evaluation of graduate student needs via means including the AGS Graduate Student Survey. Such efforts will enable UCI stakeholders to recognize the most successful initiatives and services—and to identify areas which might benefit from additional development and resources.

REFERENCES

- Collins, J. (2013, January 17). "Rising apartment rents in O.C. set another record." *Orange County Register*. Retrieved from <http://www.ocregister.com/articles/rents-383821-apartment-county.html>
- Martindale, S. (2012, January 27). "UCI faculty: Quality eroding as class sizes swell." *Orange County Register*. Retrieved from <http://www.ocregister.com/articles/students-337671-irvine-cuts.html>
- Rankin & Associates. (2014). *University of California Irvine: Campus climate project final report March 2014*. Retrieved from http://campusclimate.ucop.edu/_common/files/pdf-climate/uci-full-report.pdf

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We express our deepest gratitude to the UCI Paul Merage School of Business for providing us with a Qualtrics Survey Software account. Without their generosity and assistance, we would not have been able to conduct this survey.

We thank Alexandra Race, Himanshu Sharma, Shea Garrison-Kimmel, Aaron Briley, Amruta Dixit, Thomas Worger, Roger Lloret-Battle, Davidian Bishop, and DeeJay Brown for their insightful comments and assistance in developing the survey. We also thank the AGS Council, in particular Nicole Pierski and John Cuffe, for their helpful suggestions and feedback on earlier versions of this report.

Finally, we thank the Graduate Division, Graduate Resource Center, LGBT Resource Center, Counseling Center, and Student Health Center for their time and assistance with data. In particular, we thank Dean Frances Leslie and Leigh Poirier-Ball for their instrumental support throughout the year, as well as their dedication to serving the graduate student body.