

Listening to Students: Project Summary

The Survey

One of the best ways to learn about the different types of students that you teach or work with is to just ask. Accordingly, students were invited to take a survey during the past four semesters (Spring 2014 to Fall 2015). The survey asks students to first state whatever demographics they identified themselves with and then to write about what it is like to be a student with that particular background. The survey asks questions about what the students think and feel regarding their education here at California State University, Sacramento, and the students may share their thoughts freely because the survey is to be taken anonymously. Both the online and on-ground survey forms may be found at the end of this project summary.

The Response

Close to 1,500 student surveys were returned. Students answered the questions with one word, one sentence, one paragraph, or full pages. The students wrote about such things as their trials and tribulations in, hopes and aspirations for, and opinions and beliefs about getting their education at Sacramento State.

Many of the students write about how much they have learned and grown here, how welcome they feel, how involved they are in campus life, how much they like the staff, faculty, and other students. Some of the students write about how overwhelmed, isolated, or disconnected they feel on campus, how dissatisfied they were by some aspect of college life or dismayed at something unfortunate that happened in the classroom or in interaction with students, faculty, or staff.

This Project

Listening to Students shares these students' perspectives with you.

The students' responses are categorized into sections based on the demographic information they provided in the survey. These sections include:

- Students Who Are: New, Transfers, and Reentry Students
- Students at Different Class Levels: Freshmen, Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors
- Students of All Ages: Teens, Twenties, Thirties, Forties, and Fifties
- Students with Physical Disabilities: Vision, Hearing, Speech, and Mobility Limitations
- Students with Learning Challenges: Learning Disabilities and ADHD
- Students with Psychological Disabilities: Anxiety, Depression, Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia
- Minority Underrepresented Students: African American, Latino, American Indian, and Pacific Islander and Asian Students
- Students of Different Cultures: International Students, Multilingual Students, and Students of Different Cultural Backgrounds
- Students Who Are: Athletes, Parents, Veterans, LGBTIQ, First Generation College Students, and More!

Each of these sections is typically followed by further information regarding that type of student group, suggestions for faculty and staff to better work with or teach that type of student, and/or a list of applicable campus programs and services. The sections will be made available in a week-by-week unfolding of the project this year.

Listening to Students is intended as a resource to inform and inspire those in higher education, and a reminder to never stop listening to the people who can teach us best about what they want, need, and think regarding their college education, our students.

—Donna Knifong
Lecturer, Department of Communication Studies
donna.knifong@saclink.csus.edu

I would like to express my gratitude to:

Marcellene Watson-Derbigny,
Associate Vice President, Student Retention and Academic Success,
who gave her full, warm, and immediate support for this project,
and has provided valuable assistance and direction throughout these past few years.
She is a blessing to know and work with,
and, in all likelihood, this project would not have gone forward without her.

Mark Stoner,
Professor of Communication Studies,
who has always shown to me and a whole generation of instructors
his love for teaching and fascination with learning.
He offered such pivotal guidance at the earliest stage of this project,
and I knew I could turn to him and he would do just that.

Steve Buss,
Professor and Former Chair of Communication Studies,
who was so helpful every semester in efforts to get the survey out to students.
His sense of humor, inclusiveness, sincerity, and drive to serve students best
make the department a place where ideas such as this project may grow and bloom.

Gerri Smith,
Chair of Communication Studies,
who shows such strength in leadership, and warmth of heart,
and always has since I was once a student here.
Her support and assistance have been wonderful.

My colleagues in the Department of Communication Studies—
faculty, who stepped up every single semester they were asked
and helped with data collection with such tremendous support and energy,
and department staff, who offered great insight and ideas for this project.
It is a pleasure to work with and learn from all of you.

My colleagues elsewhere on campus,
who volunteered with generosity of spirit to participate in data collection efforts or
shared their knowledge and passion for their spheres of student service with me.
You help to transcend any boundaries between campus colleges, departments, and offices,
and show how we are all connected in our work for students.

President Nelsen and his Staff,
and Ed Mills, Vice President for Student Affairs,
who were all truly beneficial in helping to get this project out to the campus.

Listening to Students

Information about this Online Survey

Hi—

My name is Donna Knifong, and I teach here at California State University, Sacramento. You are being invited to participate in a study that I am conducting on what students think about, feel, need, and want from their college education.

The purpose of this study is to help faculty and staff learn more about the students they serve—you! Below you will find a link to a short survey asking for your perspective regarding your education here. The survey is to be taken anonymously; you will not be asked for your name so that you may feel free to share your thoughts. Survey responses will be shared with the educational community here. The better our understanding of students, the better our ability to teach and work with students on the campus. The survey responses may also be used at a later date.

Your participation is completely voluntary. All students are welcome to share their thoughts, but are never required to do so.

If you would like to take this survey, then please click on the link that follows and answer any of the questions that you would like:

webapps2.csus.edu/saseep/EOPEnrollVerification/listeningsurvey.asp

Completion of this survey implies your informed consent, meaning you were given information regarding the purpose and nature of this study (provided for you above). Any questions or comments about this study may be directed to me at the contact information provided below.

Thank you so much for any feedback that you may provide.

Sincerely,

Donna Knifong
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Department of Communication Studies
California State University, Sacramento
6000 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95819
donna.knifong@saclink.csus.edu.

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Your participation is completely voluntary. All students are welcome to share their thoughts, but are never required to do so.

Please answer any of the questions on the attached survey that you would like and then return this form by placing it in the manila envelope of the faculty or staff member who administered the survey. Completion and return of this survey implies your informed consent, meaning you were given information regarding the purpose and nature of this study (provided above for you).

Thank you so much for any feedback that you may provide. Any questions or comments about this study may be directed to me at the contact information provided below.

Sincerely,

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Listening to Students

Survey

We would like to know more about the many different types of students we have here on campus and what they think about, feel, need, and want from their college education.

Students can vary in so many ways, but here are just some of the key areas of difference:

Culture (race/ethnicity)
Gender (male/female)
Age (older/younger)
Sexual Orientation/Expression (LGBT)
Learning Challenges (dyslexia, AD/HD, etc.)
Psychological Challenges (depression, anxiety, etc.)
Physical Challenges (loss of hearing, sight, mobility,
medical conditions, etc.)

We also have students on this campus who are:

New to College
Returning to School
Veterans
Parents
International Students
Athletes
and SO MUCH MORE

We can learn so much from all of you.

Please look over the following questionnaire (front and back) and then complete any of the questions that you would like. You may answer with one word, one sentence, one paragraph, or more. Your personal perspective and honesty would be truly appreciated—and no names are ever required.

From the perspective of a student who is _____
(Please provide whatever demographic information about yourself you would like. It would be helpful to be as specific as you possibly can: if culture—what race or ethnicity, if age—give the years, if a challenge—what type, etc.)

1. What is it like to be a student with that perspective stated above (for example, from that culture, of that age, with that challenge, a vet, etc.) here at Sacramento State?

2. From that perspective, what experience(s) at Sacramento State would you like to share?

3. What do you like about/has worked for you at Sacramento State?

4. What don't you like about/has not worked for you at Sacramento State?

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts—your feedback is sincerely valued.