2018 PhD Career Pathways Student Survey

The 2018 PhD Career Pathways Student Survey was administered to over 29,000 currently enrolled academic and professional doctoral students between April 16th, 2018 and May 21th, 2018. This report provides information on completion rates and sample representativeness. This survey was developed by the Council of Graduate Schools and administered by Institutional Research & Academic Planning.

STUDY POPULATION

This was a census survey, as such; all academic and professional doctoral students enrolled during the 2018 winter/spring term were invited to participate in the survey. While UC opened this survey to all doctoral students, the CGS Qualtrics instrument was designed only for academic doctoral students, and contained an item which ended the survey for respondents that were not currently enrolled in a PhD program. As a result, 1,404 respondents did not complete the survey. After the first week of administration, UC changed this item so that non-academic doctoral students could participate in the survey. Still, as the survey was titled "PhD Career Pathways Survey", the response rate from non-academic doctoral students (42 percent) was much lower than that of academic doctoral students (51 percent). Furthermore, while 86 percent of academic doctoral students finished the survey, only 43 percent of non-academic doctoral students, not weeded out during the first week of administration, finished the survey. However, this did not have a large impact on the overall response and completion rate as 80 percent of UC doctoral students are enrolled in academic programs.   This document will present results as it relates to the total UC doctoral student population, both academic and non-academic.

RESPONSE RATE

Response rate refers to the percentage of students in the survey population who responded to the survey. This includes students who completed all questions and submitted the survey (completes), those who completed all questions but did not submit the survey and those who completed part of the survey (partials). As Qualtrics cannot make a distinction between items in the consent form and the actual survey items, the response rates reported in Qualtrics included all students who "started" the survey by at least endorsing the consent form.

2018 PhD Career Pathways Student Survey

Respondents: 14,553. The final cleaned data file contains 14,553 respondents, excluding duplicated cases, students below 18 years of age, testing cases. This translates to a response rate of 50 percent. Table 1 summarizes the response rate for the system and by campus.

Completes: 10,903. The final cleaned data file contains 10,903 completed respondents, who responded to at least one survey item and clicked the "submit" button at the conclusion of the survey, and were not weeded out during the first week of administration. This translates into a completion rate of 37 percent.

Partial completes: 2,246. For these participants, one item was answered, but the "submit" button was not clicked. These participants may also be considered dropouts. These surveys were closed out at the end of the administration period, capturing all information provided by the respondent up to the day of survey closure. Partial completes do not include respondents that were weeded out during the first week of administration.

Table 1. Response and Completion Rate Table

Campus	Total Invites	Total Respondents	Response Rate	Total Completes	Completion Rate
Berkeley	5,696	2,504	44%	1,933	34%
Davis	4,578	2,353	51%	1660	36%
Irvine	3,347	1,778	53%	1,289	39%
Los Angeles	4,256	2,189	51%	1,861	44%
Merced	494	274	55%	244	49%
Riverside	1,570	896	57%	782	50%
San Diego	3,534	1,712	48%	1,285	36%
San Francisco	2,490	1,353	54%	552	22%
Santa Barbara	2,001	866	43%	765	38%
Santa Cruz	1,254	628	51%	532	42%
Systemwide	*29,200*	*14,533*	*50%*	*10,903*	*37%*

2018 PhD Career Pathways Student Survey

SAMPLE REPRESENTATIVENESS

Sample representativeness, defined as the degree to which the sample resembles the study population, often indicates whether systematic differences exist in the responses between survey respondents and non-respondents. A representative sample is one in which the characteristics or key variables in the sample parallel those of the target population. Examples of key variables include gender, race/ethnicity, student level, and so on. A representative sample ensures that the sample estimate of a mean or proportion is unbiased so that results or conclusions drawn from the sample can be generalized to the entire population.

Comparing individual characteristics or key variables between the sample and the population is a method commonly used to check whether a sample is representative of the study population. For categorical variables, a multivariate frequency table (or crosstab) is often used to examine the distribution of the sample and compare it to the population. We compare the proportions of individuals across different categories of the variable in the sample versus the population. A significant difference in the proportions implies that the sample is not representative of the population.

Overall, respondents were fairly representative by race/ethnicity. However, differences between the population and respondents were found by campus, gender and broad discipline area. Survey weights were constructed using a logistic regression model to correct for this bias. The model was used to determine the predicted probability that a respondent would have responded to the survey. Independent variables included campus, gender and broad discipline area. The population total was then divided by the sum of the predicted probabilities and multiplied by the predicted probability for each individual to create the final weight.

2018 PhD Career Pathways Student Survey