



Channel Islands
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Commuter Students at CSU Channel Islands: Transportation, Time, & Engagement

*A Campus-Based Research Project conducted by
Sociology Capstone & Research Methods Students*



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Credit & Acknowledgements:

This project is the collective product of many Sociology students working in a variety of capacities over two years under the supervision of Dr. Dennis J. Downey. The research encompassed two components focused on commuter students at CSUCI: a survey conducted in the spring of 2013, and a series of micro-interviews conducted in the spring of 2014.

The survey component was designed and conducted by three Sociology capstone students: Aylsworth Arrellano, Alyssa Esparza, and Angel Free-Mulaire. The micro-interviews was designed and conducted by a team of 24 students in a Sociology Research Methods course. Concurrently, Grace Sexton, who was enrolled in the Sociology capstone course, played a guiding role in designing and conducting interviews, and in drafting presentations of the previous survey data.

The research was designed in collaboration with Mr. Jay Derrico, CI Coordinator of Commuter Student Services and Faculty Advisor for the Commuter Club. Mr. Derrico and his students were particularly valuable partners in the interview series – hosting coffee and snack tables for commuter students during the two mornings when interviews were conducted. We hope that the final report provides them with useful information in their efforts to better serve and increase the engagement of commuter students at CSUCI.

Executive Summary:

Background & purpose: This research was conducted to better understand commuter students at CSUCI – focusing on patterns of transportation and time use, and actual and desired campus engagement. The purpose was to collect and report on systematic data that will assist in the development of programs to better serve the needs of commuter students. Most specifically, the research is designed to identify promising avenues for increasing commuter student engagement on campus, as previous research has indicated that engagement is important to promoting student retention and success, and commuters face particular obstacles to engagement.

Methods: The research project includes two components: a survey conducted in the spring of 2013 and a series of micro-interviews (designed to be 2-3 minutes each) conducted in the spring of 2014. The survey was conducted online, and includes data from 113 respondents. Interviews were designed to cross-check and expand on the survey findings with open-ended responses, and include data from 78 respondents.

Commuter Student Demographics: Demographic information was collected in part to see if the sample matched the demographics of the university as a whole; for the key gender variable, both components very closely matched the distribution of the student population. We also found that the most important factor in students' decision to live off campus is cost.

Patterns of Transportation: Commuter students spend an average of 30 minutes commuting to campus. Most drive themselves, and those drivers cite convenience as most important factor in their choice of transportation. A quarter of commuter students use alternative (either shared or public) transportation as their primary form, and another 16% use them as a secondary form. The most common alternative form is the bus, used predominantly by students from Oxnard; for bus riders, cost is the most important factor. Data on relative costs and awareness of alternatives identify possibilities increase use of alternatives.

Time Use on and Off Campus: Findings indicate that many commuter students spend substantial time on campus beyond their classes, and that they value using that time productively (generally, to promote their academic success). Students leave campus for a variety of reasons – to eat, to study, to socialize, to exercise, and to work (in that order).

Interests in Campus Engagement: Half of respondents reported that they would like to spend more time on campus. They face a variety of obstacles in doing so – some of which can be more easily addressed by campus programs than others (such as work). Some of the factors that might be most easily addressed are food options, activities and organizations, and providing more areas for relaxing. Responses also indicate that commuter students have the perception that on-campus students receive far more attention and resources from CI.

Part I: Background & Methods

1. *Commuter Students: Background & Research Purpose*

California State University, Channel Islands (CSUCI), is a new and growing university in Southern California – a region known for its extensive commuting patterns. Like many public comprehensive colleges and universities, CSUCI is predominantly a commuter campus. As of Fall 2013, enrollment at CSUCI was 5,144 students. Of those, only 1,149 students live on campus, which means close to 78% of the students attending CSUCI are commuting to campus.¹ Those numbers indicate the predominance of commuter students numerically – but commuter students demand our attention for more reasons than simply their size; they also face specific risks and needs.

Commuter students & the university:

A quarter-century ago, in a noted analysis of commuter students², Barbara Jacoby cited shared characteristics among commuters students that generate a need for focused attention: “Despite the differences in their backgrounds and educational goals, commuter students share a common core of needs and concerns: issues related to transportation that limit the time they spend on campus, multiple life roles, the importance of integrating their support systems into the collegiate world, and developing a sense of belonging on the campus.” Because of those characteristics, a body of research had developed which “identified commuter students as being at greater risk of attrition.” She also noted a lack of institutional responses to address their needs – a problem deepened by assumptions derived from the tradition of residential universities in the United States: “Although commuter students account for over 80 percent of today’s college students, the residential tradition of American higher education has impeded effective, comprehensive institutional response to their presence.”

Student engagement and success:

¹ CSUCI Fact Sheet, 2013; see: <http://www.csuci.edu/factsheet/documents/highlights31115.pdf>.

² Jacoby, Barbara. 1989. *The Student as Commuter: Developing a Comprehensive Institutional Response*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 7. Washington, DC: School of Education and Human Development, The George Washington University.

One area of particular concern for commuter students is campus engagement. Substantial research has indicated that one of the greatest predictors of student persistence and success is engagement. As cited by George Kuh and his colleagues in a seminal piece of research³: “Voluminous research on college student development shows that the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities is the single best predictor of their learning and personal development.” To better understand student engagement, and the role that universities can play in cultivating it, they explain:

[S]tudent engagement has two key components that contribute to student success. The first is the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other activities that lead to the experiences and outcomes that constitute student success. The second is the ways the institution allocates resources and organizes learning opportunities and services to induce students to participate in and benefit from such activities. What the institution does to foster student success is of particular interest, as those are the practices over which a college or university has some direct influence.

The university, then, has a particular interest – and responsibility – in trying to increase student engagement. Of course, that presents particular challenges in the case of commuter students who tend to be less integrated with and involved on campus. As Kuh and colleagues point out in another piece of research based on data from the National Survey of Student Engagement⁴, that should not be used as a reason for blaming commuter students themselves for the situation. As they note: “although many commuters students may have constraints on their time associated with work, family responsibilities and other matters that they put forth just as much effort as other students in areas that are primarily related to what goes on inside the classroom.” There remain, however, important differences between commuter and non-commuter students in the crucial area of engagement. In their research, they found two areas in particular where commuter students suffered from reduced levels of engagement: “student interactions with faculty members” and “enriching educational experiences.” As they conclude:

³ Kuh, George D., Jillian Kinzie, John H. Schuh, & Elizabeth J. Whitt. 2010. *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

⁴ Kuh, George D., Robert M. Gonyea, & Megan Palmer. 2001. The disengaged commuter student: Fact or fiction? *Commuter Perspectives*, 27 (1), 2-5.

“This means that driving commuters really do have less contact with their teachers (especially seniors) and do not take advantage of such opportunities as co-curricular activities, community service, study abroad, internships and so forth.” Given the impact of such aspects of student engagement on student retention and success, it is important for CSUCI to find ways to facilitate greater engagement in those areas of activity for commuter students. That, in turn, relies on an understanding of students’ time use, on campus and off, among other related issues. This research is designed to provide that foundation of understanding.

Research purpose and partnership:

This research was conducted to assist partners on the CSUCI campus by collecting data and presenting it in the form of a general and accessible report to better understand patterns of transportation and engagement of commuter students. That understanding, in turn, should serve to identify promising avenues for increasing commuter student engagement, and as a guide for creating programs that will help to integrate and serve the needs of commuter students. A secondary interest was to learn more about commuting patterns in order to design programs that may help to increase the use of alternative (shared and public) transportation, as part of the campus commitment to environmental sustainable practices.

This project was conducted in close collaboration with Mr. Jay Derrico, who serves as CSUCI’s Coordinator of Commuter Student Services and as Advisor to the CI Commuter Student Club. In his role working with commuter students, he is charged with helping to serve the needs of commuter students. Mr.

Derrico and the Commuter Student Club provided useful guidance and assistance in research design and data collection. We hope that this final report repays their assistance and helps them to serve the needs of commuter students more effectively.



2. Research Design, Data & Methods

This report is based on two separate but related components of research: A survey conducted in the spring of 2013, and a series of micro-interviews conducted in the spring of 2014. The basic methods of each component are described in this chapter. The research instruments for both components (questionnaire and micro-interview guide) are included in the appendices to this report.

Survey research:

The survey was conducted as a capstone project in the spring of 2013, drawing on previous research on campus. The purpose was to develop a basic understanding of commuter students' experiences at CSUCI, focusing on two areas. First, it focused on patterns of transportation and choices about transportation, including the use of alternative transportation (shared and public). Second, and more importantly, it focused on patterns of time use on and off campus relative to respondents' academic schedules, and patterns of actual and desired campus engagement.

The survey was conducted online. It was distributed electronically to students on the email list of commuters collected by the CI Commuter Club. An invitation to participate in the survey was sent to all members on the list, with a link to the survey. The list included 144 students; 113 students responded – representing a response rate of approximately 78%.

Data were downloaded and transferred into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science) for analyses. Analyses focused on general (univariate) distributions, with selective analysis of bivariate relationships.

Interview research:

In the spring of 2014, follow-up research was conducted by Sociology students in a Research Methods (SOC 310) class, along with one capstone student. Analyses of the survey data were completed, and a guide for interviews developed. The interviews were designed to cross-check responses from the survey, as well as to extend the findings. Interview questions were presented in an open-ended format, which allowed us to determine the accuracy of patterns in the survey's forced-choice response format. Topically, the primary focus of interviews was to identify obstacles and attractions to increased engagement – that is, what

prevented students from spending more time on campus, and what kinds of activities would entice them to spend more time on campus.

The series of interviews were designed to be micro-interviews – that is, interviews consisting of about ten brief questions that would last just 2 to 3 minutes. Respondents were asked to participate in the research as they were walking to campus from parking lots on the perimeter of campus. (Most interviews were conducted close to the main North lot, where a table with coffee and snacks was set up by the Commuter Student Club – a practice that they do occasionally.) Interviews were conducted on a Tuesday and a Wednesday morning, to access different groups of students (since class schedules generally run on Tuesday/Thursday or Monday/Wednesday). Also, interviews were conducted at a variety of different lots across campus. Given the time constraints, an extremely brief micro-interview was the only way to get students to participate – as it would be possible to conduct the interview while walking to class. Interviews were conducted by pairs of students – one who asked questions, and another who recorded the interview.

A total of 78 interviews were conducted; while there are no accurate records on the number of students who declined interviews, that was very rare. All interviews were transcribed for subsequent coding and analysis. Coding was based on categories induced from the responses themselves. All coding was cross-checked by two additional students; any discrepancies were discussed to determine if one coder made a simple mistake; if agreement could not be reached, the example was brought to the class to determine if some aspect of the codes needed to be reconfigured. Once coding was completed without disagreements, the process was completed. Analyses focus on quantitative data developed from coded responses, but open-ended responses are also used to illustrate particular points or issues.

Reporting:

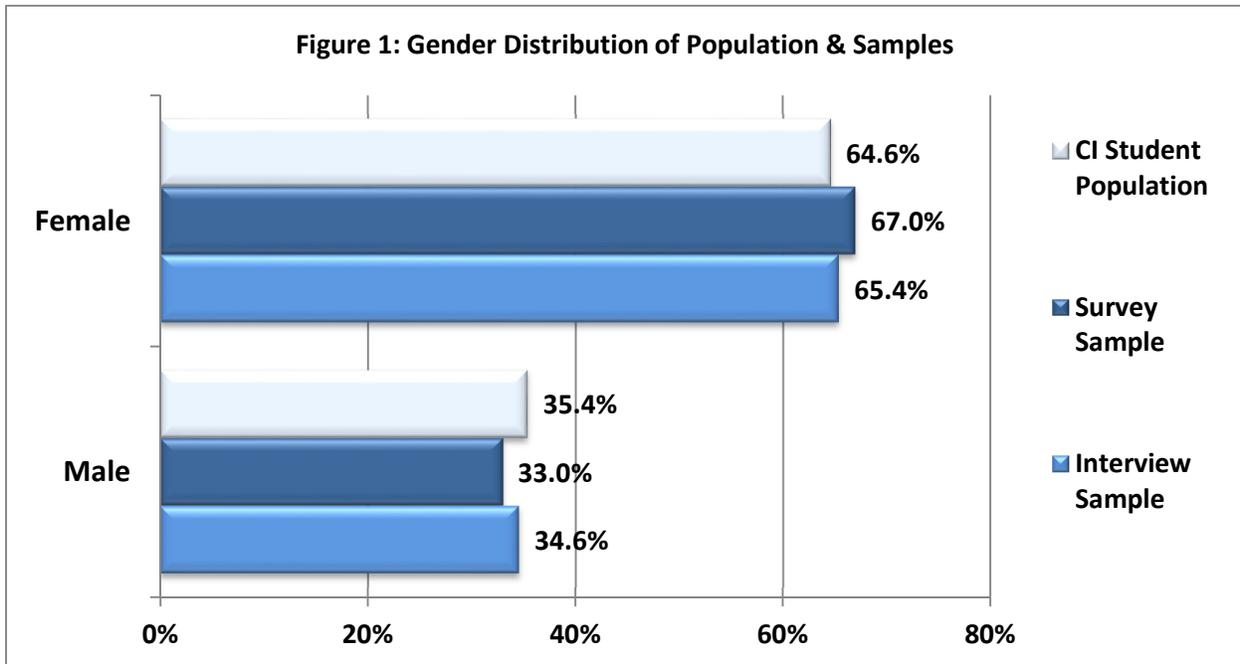
In the chapters that follow, findings will be organized topically – not by the research projects. Which component of research the data are taken from is indicated in all graphs and tables.

Part II: Findings

3. Respondent Demographics

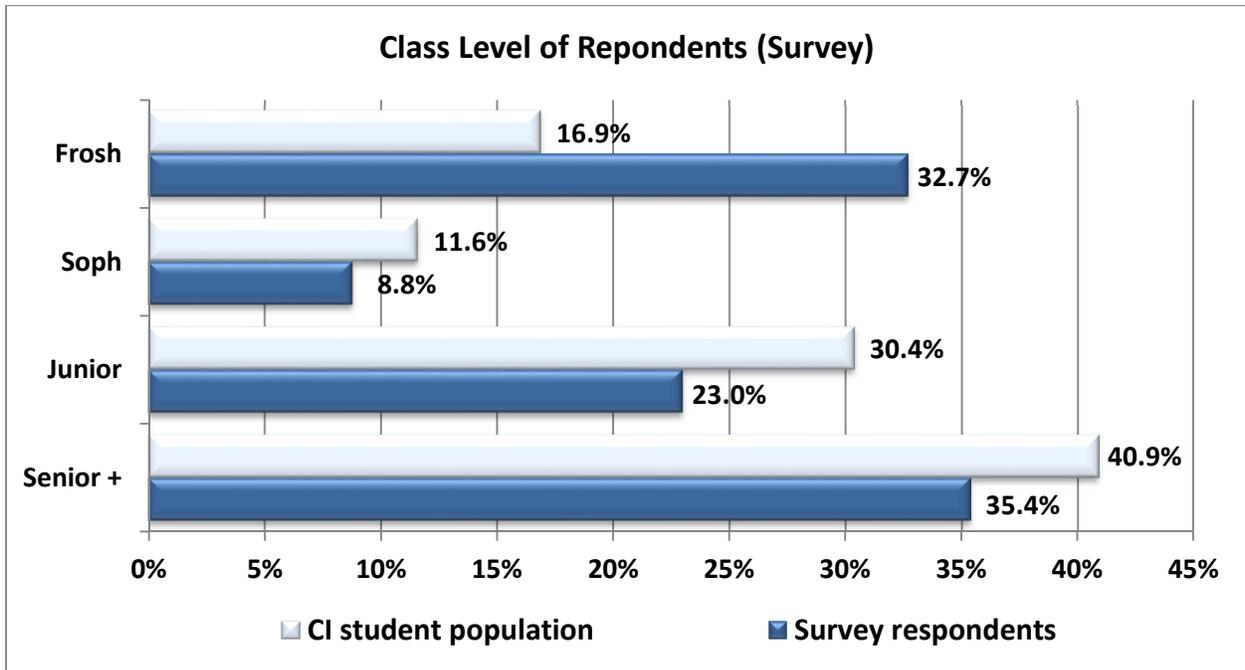
This section provides basic information describing respondent demographics associated with both research components. Mostly, these data are used to assess the validity of the sample vis-à-vis broader patterns at CI. We will also present some basic descriptive data that will be useful for subsequent analyses.

Gender: The student population at CSUCI is 64.6% female 35.4% male (Demographic & Academic Characteristics of CSUCI Students, Spring 2013). In the figure below, we can see that the samples for both components of research are extremely close to those population parameters. While we cannot formally infer from those statistics that the samples represent the diversity of the student population in other characteristics, it does increase our confidence that the samples are valid.

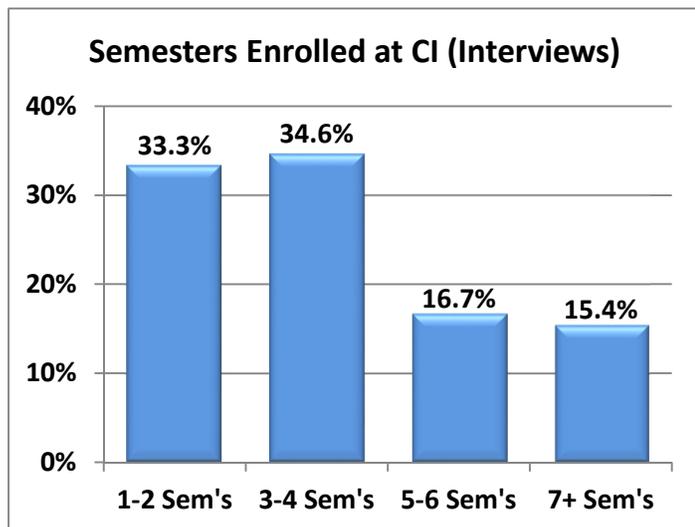


Class & transfer status: Both research components collected information related to class and/or transfer status – although different types of information. In the graph below, we present class level data from the survey relative to similar data from university as a whole (as reported in Demographic & Academic Characteristics of CSUCI Students, from Spring 2013). From those comparisons, we can see that the survey sample dramatically overrepresented first-

year students (by nearly a factor of two) and underrepresented each of the other categories in approximately equal measure (from about 13% to 24% underrepresentation). That might have been the result of respondents' interpretation of the "frosh/1st year" category as including transfer students in their first year at CSUCI; that would account for the overrepresentation in that category. In any event, that is important to keep in mind in interpreting the survey data.

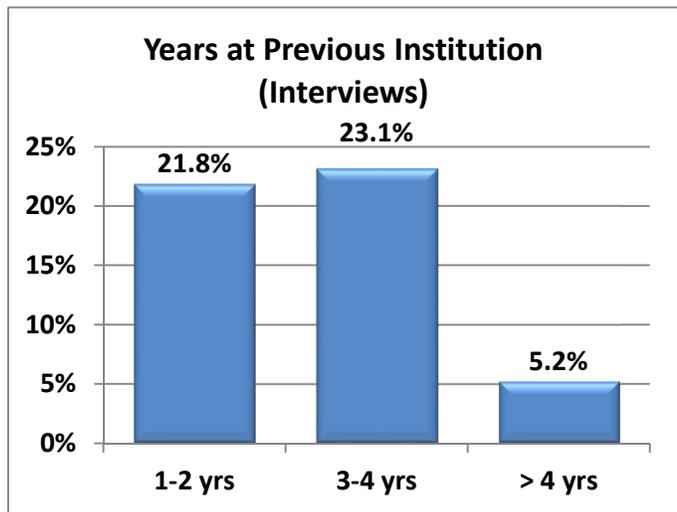


Now we turn to class and transfer status in the sample of interview respondents. Respondents were asked two questions: 1) how many semesters they have been enrolled at CI; and 2) how many years (if any) that they spent at another institution prior to CI. The graph below presents the number of semesters that respondents have been enrolled at CSUCI. We see that the sample is divided approximately into thirds: about one third of the sample is in their first year at CSUCI (i.e., one to two semesters); another third is in

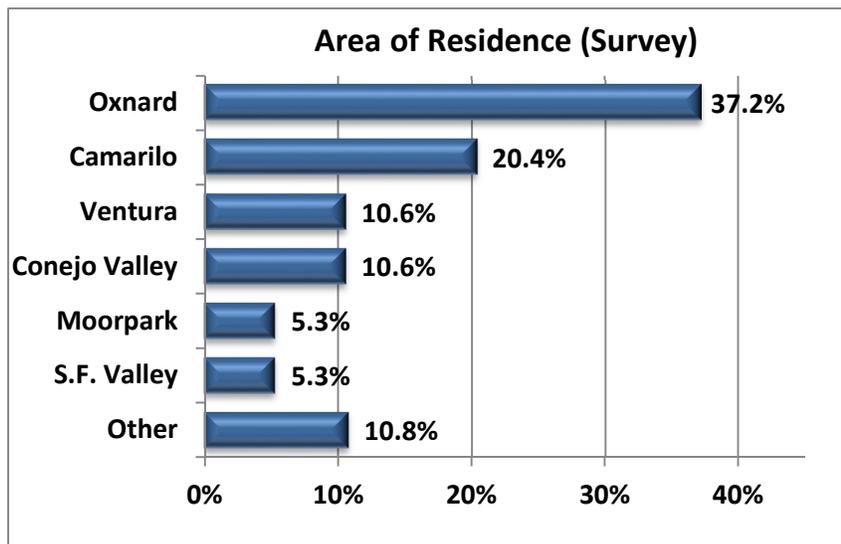


their second year; and the final third has been here three or more years. When examining these data, it is important to remember that a student who has spent one semester at CI might be a new university student or a transfer, so this is *not* the same as class status. Because CSUCI has a transfer-heavy student population, we would expect most students to be within their first to fourth semesters here as that would include native frosh/soph students as well as most upper division transfers.

Respondents were also asked if they were transfer students – and, if so, how many years they had spent at other colleges or universities. Exactly half of the respondents indicated that they were native (i.e., non-transfer) students. The data on transfer students is presented in the graph at the right; we see that approximately 22% have spent 1-2 years at another institution, and approximately 23% have spent 3-4 years at another institution. Just over 5% were enrolled more than four years before transferring to CSUCI.

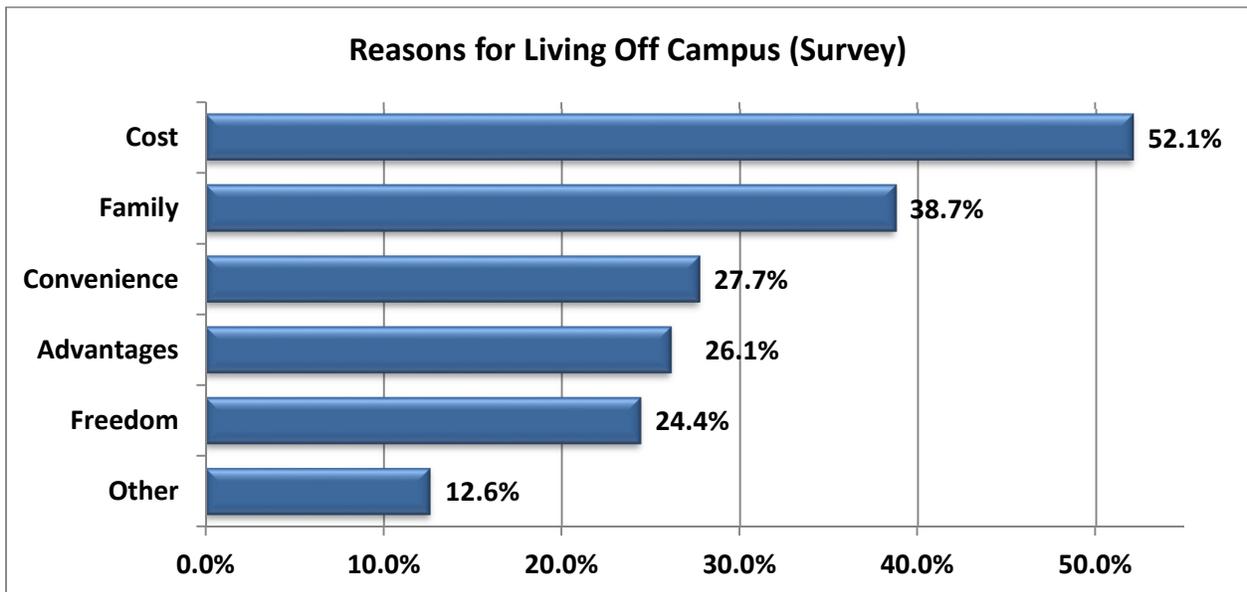


City of Residence: One important characteristic of commuters is where they are coming from, since that tells us a lot about commute distances – as well as where critical masses might be found and therefore where alternative transportation systems might be promoted. The graph to the right indicates the area of residence reported by survey respondents. (We use “area” rather than city to give a better sense of



sources. For example, Conejo Valley primarily represents Thousand Oaks, but includes bordering cities. Likewise, San Fernando Valley includes all of the cities in that general area, since they all face similar commuting patterns. We have also grouped Port Hueneme with Oxnard, due to the proximity.) The largest percentage (37.2%, or more than one in three) commutes from Oxnard (including Port Hueneme). Next is Camarillo at 20.4%, and Ventura and Conejo Valley at 10.6% each. We will refer back to these data at appropriate points throughout this report.

Reasons for living off campus: The defining characteristic of commuter students is that they live off campus. Given that, it is important for us to understand what factors influence students' choice to live off campus. The graph below presents the relative frequency of survey respondents' selection from a menu of possible reasons for choosing to live off campus. Items are not mutually exclusive, so students were able to mark all that apply (and, therefore, percentages do not add to 100).



The largest single factor – cited by over half of respondents – is cost. Given that CSUCI (and the California State University system) makes a special effort to serve students beyond traditional university populations (e.g., underrepresented and first-generation students), and they are likely to face relative economic disadvantages, it is particularly important that we keep this reason in focus as we try to serve commuter students. For many, their commuter status is a

choice that is shaped by fundamental economic constraints. Family issues are the second most important factor in choosing to live off campus. Family issues are not specified here; they may represent a student with caregiving responsibilities (children or elders) as well as a student who prefers to live with one's parents or one whose parents does not allow them to live away from home; this lack of specificity might be more focused in subsequent research.⁵ The subsequent several categories all suggest more open preferences – for convenience, unspecified advantages, and freedom.

Of the 15 students who opted to mark “other,” most reiterated items that were already noted. Three students reiterated cost-related issues, and six noted family issues – e.g., they were married (or cohabiting), and that they have children, etc., and cited the lack of family housing on campus. (It is possible that those students might have assumed that the “family” category referred primarily to young adults living in their parents’ homes.) In any event, it is clear that the first two factors – cost and family – are the most important in shaping commuter student choices about where to live.

Conclusions / Recommendations: While no specific recommendations emerge from the demographic data (as would be expected), they do suggest the importance of the cost factor in shaping commuter students’ choices – and that should be kept in mind while developing any programs to serve commuter students. Also, as we will see in subsequent sections, cost issues overlap with other key factors that should shape programmatic responses.

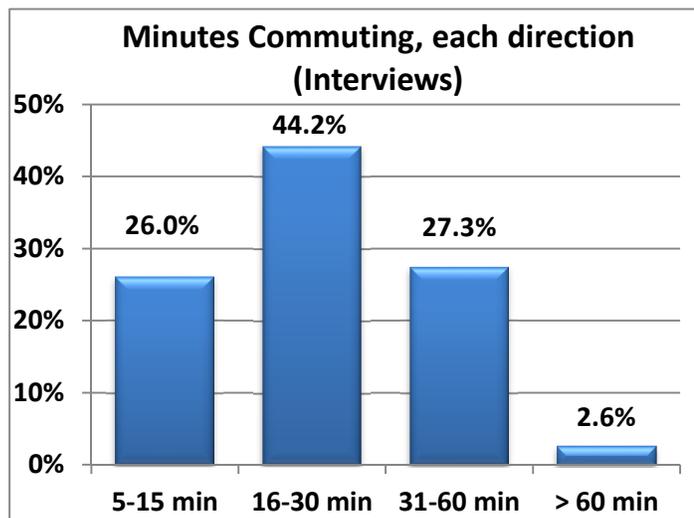
⁵ One relevant area of interest for CI, as a Hispanic Serving Institution, are any preferences that might be ethnically associated. For example, previous research has found that Latino students exhibit a relative preference for living with family while attending college when compared with other ethnic (or ethno-racial) groups. See: *President’s Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics: 2012 Report on Activities* (Washington, DC: White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics), esp. pps. 73-74.

4. *Patterns of Transportation*

Patterns of transportation are of interest for two reasons. First, since commuting patterns partially determine the time (and resources, etc.) available for engagement on campus, it is directly relevant to our overall concern. Second, in addition to our campus commitment to student success, CSUCI is also committed to being as environmentally sustainable as possible. As we'll see, driving alone is the dominant commuting option, but a significant number also opt to use alternative transportation – including public transportation and shared private transportation (i.e., carpooling). We are interested in understanding the choices that commuter students make about transportation, and in understanding the way that those decisions are made in the hope that it will help us to promote greater use of alternative transportation.

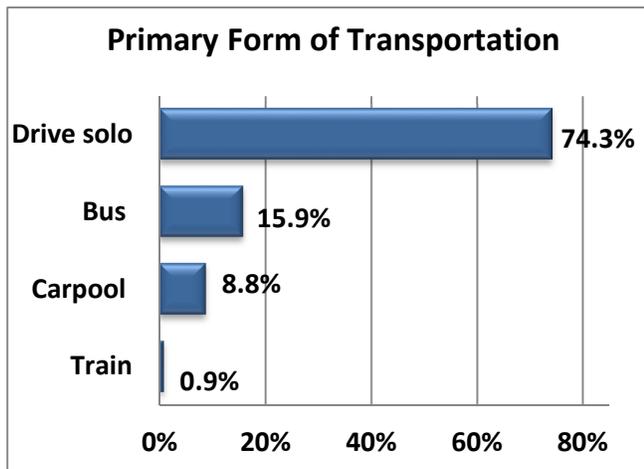
Time spent commuting: One of the most direct constraints to engagement confronted by commuter students is the time that they spend in transit, as it is largely unproductive time that takes away from opportunities to spend on campus or accomplish any other necessary goals (work, rest, socializing, etc.). In our interview component, we asked all participants how long they spent on their commute each way; the graph at right presents those data. It is

important to remember that that these data come from interviews conducted with students walking on campus from the parking lots – so we can assume that they are all drivers. We can see that over 70% of drivers have a commute of 30 minutes or less. However, since the distribution skews positive, the mean is 30 minutes. (The median is 25 minutes.)



Transportation: According to the survey data (which are broadly representative of commuter students), the primary form of transportation used by commuter students is driving alone. A total of 84 students responded that they commute alone in a personal vehicle,

representing approximately ¾ of the sample. That high percentage of solo drivers runs counter to our goal of maximizing environmental sustainability, so a general goal of transportation policies is to find ways to shift students toward alternative transportation. Notwithstanding the dominance of solo drivers, we see that the use of alternative forms of transportation is significant. Nearly 17% of students use public transportation, nearly all of which are bus riders. Of the 18 students who reported using the bus, 14 live in the Oxnard area, making that community the greatest contributor to public transportation to CSUCI. That pattern is facilitated by the fact that one regular bus line runs from the center of Oxnard directly to campus, making it extremely convenient for students who live there. The other form of public transportation, the train, is not well used by this sample; only one student reported using the train – notwithstanding the fact that there is a good train connection to Camarillo with a very convenient bus link between the station and campus. (The single respondent who reported commuting by train is also suspect since the respondent reported living in Camarillo.) It is important to point out, however, that the train is less useful for most students because the regional schedules for the commuter lines are oriented around the Los Angeles metropolitan area and tend to move in the opposite direction of most commuters. (It would be more convenient for students from Oxnard to take the train, but there is little need since the bus runs directly to campus.)



In addition to those using public transportation, another nearly 9% use shared transportation in the form of carpools. A follow up question for carpoolers asked respondents with whom they carpool. Of the nine who responded, five respondents indicated that they carpool with a friend that they met at CI; two students carpool with a friend that they know from home; and two commute with non-students. To the extent that this small group represents a larger pattern, respondents’ apparent openness to carpooling with fellow students

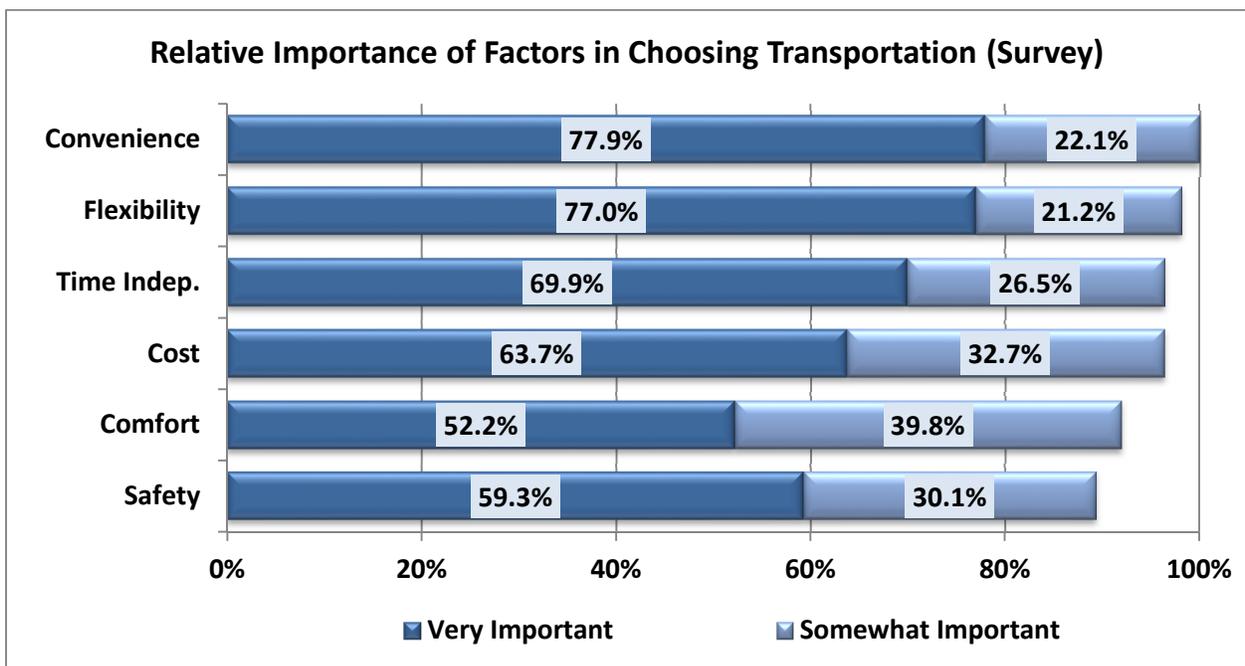
suggests that the potential exists for connecting students for carpooling – if an effective system can be developed for doing so. However, one less optimistic aspect of the data is that half of carpoolers indicated that they live in Camarillo. That suggests that students might be most amenable to carpooling when it is limited to short trips which allow the most flexibility and least dependence on the driver – and which also offer the least gains in terms of sustainability.

In future research, it would be useful to over-sample students using alternative transportation (whether shared or public) in order to have a better understanding of their patterns and preferences. Given that they represented about 25% of the survey sample, a focus on those students could substantially expand our understanding of their preferences and decisions.

Factors in transportation choices: It is important to deepen our understanding of the factors that shape commuters' choices regarding transportation, as that will help us to know how to more effectively promote alternative transportation. Those factors are also part of the broader context of commuter student priorities, which are of interest in our efforts to increase student engagement. In the graph below, we can see the relative importance of six reasons offered in the questionnaire: convenience, cost, comfort, flexibility, time independence, and safety. Respondents were given the opportunity to indicate whether each reason was “not important,” “somewhat important,” or “very important.” (In the graph below, only “somewhat” and “very” important are reported, hence the relative size of the bars indicates the overall assessment of importance.) A couple of cautions are in order before presenting the graph. First, because solo drivers are the overwhelming majority of respondents, it is their reasons that primarily drive the patterns. Second, one might rightfully suggest that there is substantial blurriness between some of the concepts (most notably, between convenience, flexibility, and time independence). But they do give us a general sense of commuter students' perceptions about the basis of their own choices.

In the graph, we see that students find all of the reasons to be important; each of the factors was deemed very important by over half of respondents, while each was rated as

somewhat or very important by 90 to 100% of respondents.⁶ Those overall high levels indicate that students perceive their choices to be shaped by multiple influences, although they also make it more difficult to make meaningful distinctions regarding the relative salience of different reasons in making any specific choice. We do, however, see that convenience was the highest rated reason; all respondents indicated that it was an important reason, and 77.9% indicated that it was very important. Indeed the top highest rated responses were the three which are conceptually very similar: convenience, flexibility, and time independence. Of the remaining three, cost was deemed the most important overall, followed by comfort and safety.



Before moving to analyses of relationships between those reasons and other variables, we will point out that nine students wrote in a separate reason. (We might focus more intently on write-in responses, since it generally indicates a higher level of salience for the respondent.) Of those, the only repeated response was storage (indicated by two students). That highlights an important role that the private car plays on campus when students have to stay all day – and

⁶ Another way of illustrating the universally high importance attributed by respondents to all of the reasons is a simple additive measure in which for each of the six reasons, we assign: 0 for a “not important”; 1 for “somewhat important”; and 2 for “very important.” When we sum that for each respondent across the six items, we have a measure of the total attributed importance. The mode (single most numerous category) and the median (point at which half are higher and half are lower) are both 10 – which, for example, would mean that the respondent identified four reasons as very important and two as somewhat important.

reinforces the need (for at least some commuter students) to have a place on campus where they can store their belongings (e.g., lunch, jacket, additional books or computer, etc.). In addition, one other student wrote in: “lack of knowledge of other commuters in my area; I would have no problem carpooling if I knew people to carpool with.” Again, this is particularly useful for those seeking to promote the use of alternative transportation.

While the distribution of factors among all respondents is interesting, it is more useful to assess the relationships between reasons selected and other variables – or, to assess how the salience of various reasons varies from group to group. For example, comfort and safety are more important to women than to men. Perhaps the most useful patterns of relationships are those between the choice of primary transportation and the reasons for making that choice. (Again, it is important to remember that the overall patterns are dominated by the solo drivers, since that category constitutes three-quarters of the sample.) One first observation is that solo drivers are much more likely to find more of the reasons above to be important in shaping their choice.⁷ This suggests that solo drivers are more demanding of their transportation choices – or, stated differently, that they tend to place more limitations on their transportation. If we assess the relationship between each reason and the choice of transportation, we see that solo drivers are more likely (statistically significant, or nearly so) to rate each of the reasons more important – except cost. The pattern for cost is exactly the opposite: commuters using shared or public transportation are significantly more likely to suggest that cost is a very important reason in shaping their choice. Again, that pattern of preferences is crucial to be aware of for those seeking to change transportation choices.

Secondary transportation use: While it is important to focus our attention on commuters’ primary form of transportation, it is also essential to look at any secondary forms. Respondents indicated that over one third (35.4%) sometimes rely on a secondary form of transportation. When asked how often, responses indicate that 18.4% reported using secondary transportation at least weekly. We also followed up to ask respondents to identify that secondary form of transportation; of the 39 students who responded to the question, 19

⁷ We can see this clearly if we compare the score on the additive measure described in footnote 1 across solo drivers and those who use shared or public transportation. The mean for solo drivers was 10.1, while the mean for others was 8.6 – representing a statistically significant difference.

said that they carpool, 10 use the bus, and 8 drive alone. (Of the remaining two, one responded that they use a bicycle, and the other responded that they “get a ride.”) Those patterns are important because it means that in addition to the approximately quarter of students whose primary form of transportation is shared or public, another 16% have some experience with some form of alternative transportation.

Costs of commuting: It is not surprising that costs are an important consideration in commuters’ modes of transportation; that mirrors the importance of cost as a consideration in whether they live on or off campus. In order to understand the cost structures of commuting more fully, we asked several questions on that topic. Most relevant were questions which asked respondents to estimate their monthly expenditures in gas and parking. For solo drivers, the average monthly costs of gas were estimated to be \$131, and the average monthly amount spent on parking was estimated to be \$69. The comparable estimates for carpoolers was \$99 for gas, and \$79 for parking. Clearly, there are significant costs associated with driving to campus (and note that this does not include additional costs associated with auto maintenance, insurance, etc.). Those figures might be used comparatively to help commuter students to realize how much it costs to drive to campus, which might make shared or public transportation more attractive.

In order for commuters to make the best decisions about the relative costs and benefits of various transportation options, they need to have an accurate sense of those relative costs – both in terms of financial costs and convenience. Given that many students have little experience with public transportation, we sought to get an accurate sense of their perceptions. Respondents were asked several questions regarding their awareness of public transportation: whether respondents were familiar with bus routes to campus; an estimate of how far they live from a bus route to campus; and estimates of the cost of a bus pass. When asked if they were familiar with the three main bus routes that led to campus, 74% of respondents indicated that they were not familiar. That suggests that many students who may think that public transportation would be inconvenient may believe that because they are unaware of the routes. Regarding distance, the lack of familiarity becomes evident. Respondents were instructed that if they were unaware of how far they live from a bus route to campus, they

could simply leave it blank; 63.7% of respondents did so. Of the remainder, 26.6% indicated that they live five miles or less from a bus route to campus. The former response underscores the need for greater awareness of public transportation options, and latter suggests that public transportation may be a more convenient option than many assume (which is important as convenience was the most important factor among solo drivers in selecting their transportation option).

We also asked about respondents' perceptions of the costs of public transportation; that is important because the *perception* of cost may be a barrier even if it is inaccurate. Regarding student estimates of the cost per month of a bus pass, there are also mixed indications about student familiarity. The modal response (30 respondents, or 26.5%) gave a response of \$25. That is exactly the cost of a pass for students – but a pass for a *semester* (not a month), which is approximately four months long. That would make the monthly cost closer to \$6. Of the remaining three quarters, in fact ten respondents (8.8%) gave the response of \$5 which is approximately correct. It is interesting to note that 88.5% of respondents estimated that the monthly cost of a pass is more than it actually is – suggesting that awareness is an issue. Perhaps if students realized the cost of commuting by bus, and are able to compare that with the costs associated with driving, they might be prompted to reconsider their commuting choices.

Conclusions / Recommendations:

The findings are mixed in terms of what they suggest regarding the potential for increasing student use of alternative (shared and public) transportation. We know that commuting is an important draw on students' time and resources – especially for those who drive alone to and from campus. We have a somewhat better sense of why students choose their form of transportation, and we know that those choosing public transportation are driven by cost much more so than those who drive alone. We also know that the costs are substantial for drivers – and that they may be unaware of the cost savings and the potential convenience of public transportation. We also know that students are likely to overestimate the costs of public transportation, and to underestimate its convenience. That suggests that a general awareness campaign might prompt increased exploration and usage of alternative transportation.

Collectively, these findings should help to develop more effective (and perhaps more closely targeted) efforts to promote alternative transportation. There may be substantial openness to carpooling, but the logistical process of meeting students who live near and with whom they feel comfortable must be facilitated somehow. Perhaps the Commuter Club might gather that information and provide relevant “matches” back to students and facilitate introductions. There also might also be untapped willingness to use the bus system, but it will need to be promoted. The cost differentials that appear in this research might be useful to do that – along with an emphasis on the convenience of the bus routes, which will be crucial for attracting more riders, although that potential is limited by drivers who don’t focus so much on cost. Any effort to promote alternative transportation has to take into serious consideration the finding that commuters who drive alone are less likely to be concerned about the costs of their commute, and are more concerned about time independence, flexibility, and comfort. Any program to encourage them to use alternative transportation has to address convenience, if only to minimize that barrier.

Given the different preferences on the part of different commuters, the most successful programs to encourage alternative transportation use will have to be targeted. One suggestion might be to make available some “individual alternative transportation consultants” at the occasional Commuter Club tabling. One might let them know about their options based on where they live – bus schedules, relative costs, parking options near transportation hubs, as well as other students in their area who might be interested in commuting.

We also recommend that any future research on commuter students oversample those using alternative transportation to get a better sense of their perceptions of costs and benefits.

Part III:

Commuter Student Time Use & Campus Engagement: Realities & Ideal

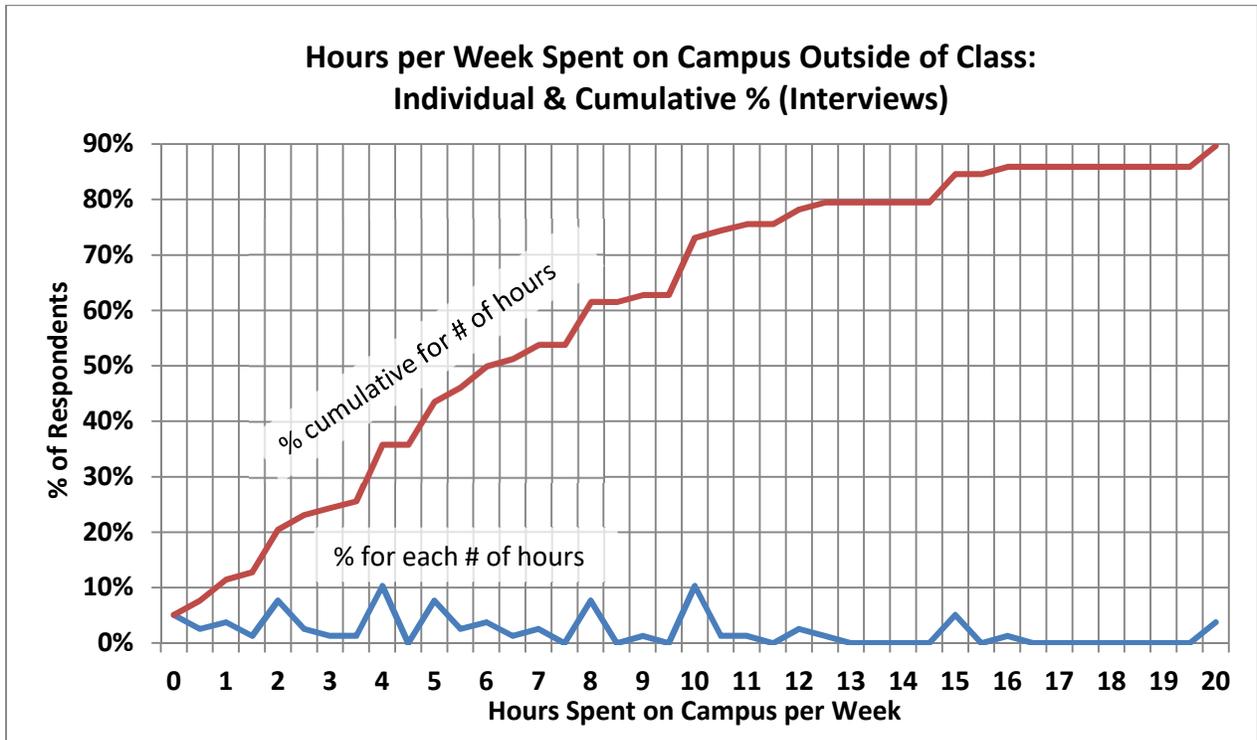
5. Commuter Student Time Use & Campus Engagement

The ways that commuter students use their time – both on and off campus – are crucial to developing programs that hope to increase engagement on campus. In this chapter, we present data on how much time commuter students spend on campus, what they do with that time, how valuable they perceive that time, and what draws them away from campus.

Time on campus: The time that commuter students spend on campus is shaped largely by their class schedules, not surprisingly. Commuters generally seek to group their classes temporally to minimize trips to campus and to minimize non-class time on campus. Given class scheduling, however, non-class time on campus is common for most students. Survey respondents were asked whether they have a break of an hour or more between classes in their current schedule; 76.8% said that they did. Of those students with a break of an hour or more on campus, 82.6% said that they generally stay on campus during that time – while another 13.9% indicated that they stay on campus and leave campus equally often. Only 3.5% of students with a break of an hour or more indicated that they leave campus between classes. A more telling question is whether students stay on campus after their last class, since their class schedule does not require them to stay. Under those circumstances, 53.6% responded that they generally leave campus right after their class. The remainder was evenly split between those who responded that they stay on campus up to an hour after their last class, and those who said that they stay on campus more than an hour (23.2% each). So, the data indicate that nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of commuter students stay on campus between classes, and nearly half stay on campus after classes. That leaves substantial opportunity for CSUCI to develop programs to serve commuter students – and to potentially make them want to spend more time on campus to increase engagement with campus activities and programs.

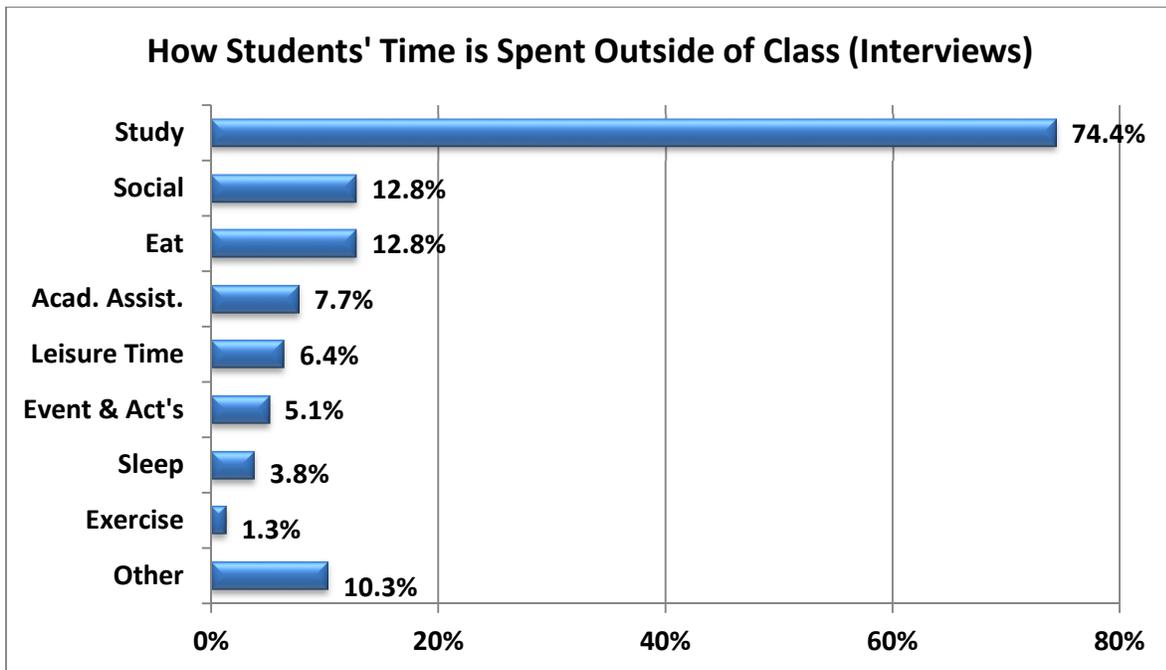
In the interview research, we asked respondents to estimate how many hours per week they are on campus, aside from class time. The graph below presents those data by cumulative percentages (up to 90% of respondents). We can see that half of the respondents report

spending six hours or less on campus per week (outside of classes), and half spend more than six hours per week. Another way of thinking about those data: half of the respondents spend between 2.5 and 10 hours per week. We can also see that a small number of students spend a significant number of hours on campus; the highest 10% being over 20 hours. Overall, whether these numbers represent “a lot” or “a little” is a relative issue; but it suggests again that there are ample opportunities to get commuter students more engaged on campus.

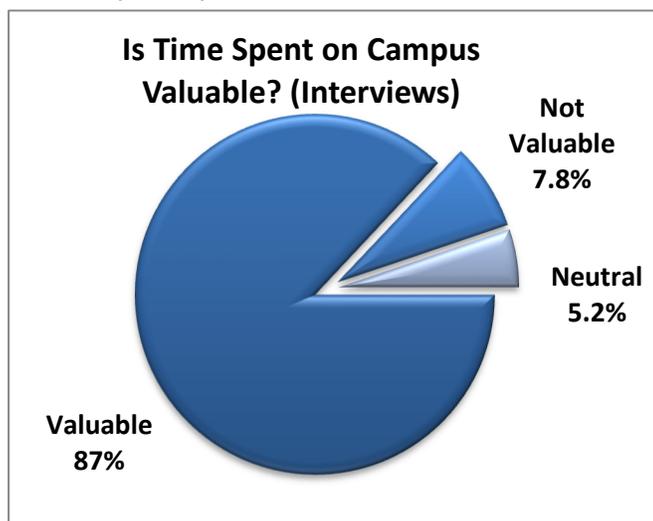


How students spend time on campus: In addition to the *amount* of time on campus, we are also interested in *how* students spend that time. The graph below presents response data regarding the percentage of students who devote some time to each of a variety of activities. These data come from the interviews, so they represent coded categories from open-ended responses. As we can see, among the activities, a much larger percentage of students indicated that they spend time studying (74.4%) relative to any other activity area. That is, of course, the area which makes the greatest contribution to student success – so that is a positive sign. It is important to note that “studying” was defined as activities that did not involve any official university programs – such as tutoring centers or office hours. Any such institutionally-

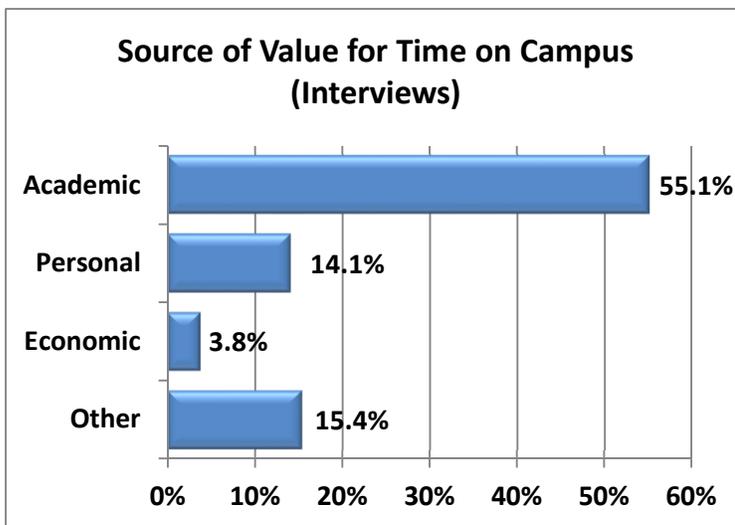
facilitated activities were categorized as “academic assistance”; 7.7% of students indicated that they participate in such activities. Beyond studying, we see that the two most common activities on campus are socializing and eating, at 12.8% each. Beyond that, we see smaller percentages who responded that they participate in leisure activities, attend events and activities, sleep or exercise. Again, the primary message here is that the overwhelming percentage of students spend at least some time studying on campus – and that is by far the most common campus activity.



Value of time on campus: Students who participated in the interviews were also asked whether they thought that the time that they spent on campus was valuable. The majority (87%) of respondents stated their time on campus is valuable; in contrast, only 7.8% thought that it was not. (An additional 5.2% responded in a neutral or ambivalent fashion.)

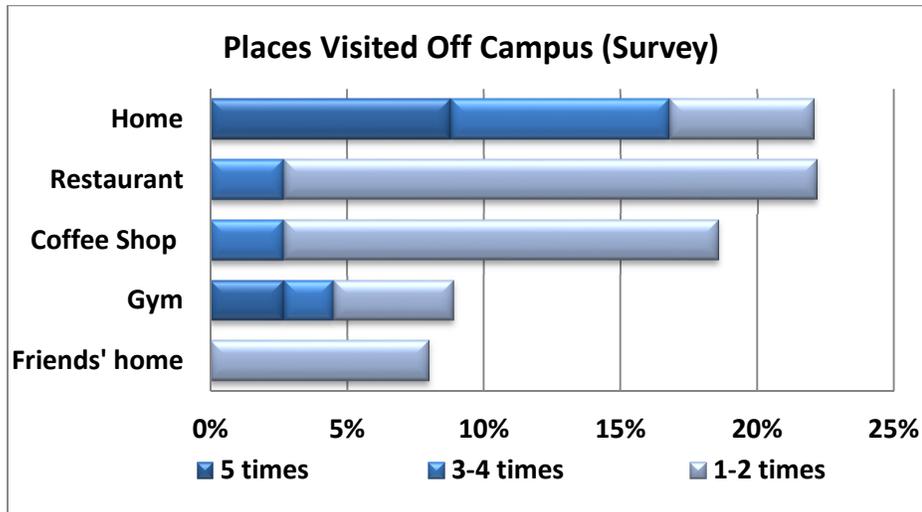


Furthermore, of those who value their time on campus, respondents were asked *why* they find their time on campus to be valuable. As anticipated (and consistent with the response about what students do on campus), the largest percentage of respondents (51.3%) stated academics is the reason why their time on campus is valuable. In this framework, we define academics as any type of formal or informal studying – such as individual studying, study groups, seeking academic assistance, etc. The relative percentages again indicate a substantial difference between academic activities and all others. The next largest percentage of students indicated that the source of value for their time on campus is personal – for example, socializing or meeting personal needs like eating. Only 3.8% of respondents listed economic reasons, most of whom indicated that they work on campus. Beyond that, 15.4% indicated some other source of value – and there was not any particular group of responses. Some respondents stated they don’t consistently find their time on campus valuable because they are just “waiting for other classes.” Taking into consideration that a large percentage of students spend their time on campus studying to help them succeed academically, it is not a surprise that the majority of respondents find their time on campus valuable.

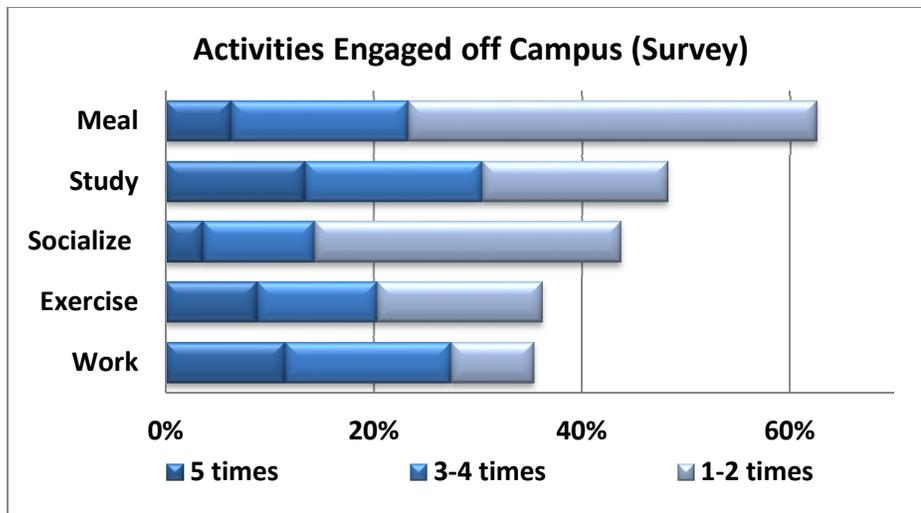


Leaving Campus: Given our goal of keeping students on campus, it is also of substantial interest why students leave campus between classes. In the survey research, we inquired of students both what they do and where they go when they leave campus. There is substantial overlap in these questions, but they can lead to distinct insights about patterns. In the first graph below, we see how often commuter students are leaving campus to visit specific places. The single place that accounts for the most visits is students’ homes. (As one might imagine, that is much more common for those who live close to campus.) Next, we also see that

approximately the same percentage of students visit a restaurant – although, on average, they do so much less often (19.5% visit once or twice a week, and only 2.7% visit three or four times per week). We also see that a substantial percentage of students visit a coffee shop off campus (18.6%) – although, as with visits to restaurants, the overwhelming majority of those only visit once or twice per week.



The next graph gives us a much better sense of what activities students are engaging in off campus. (It is important to note the different scale for this graph compared to the one just presented previously; the percentages are all much higher.) We can see that the single most common activity off campus is getting a meal, at 62.6%. That means that nearly two of three commuter students leaves campus at least once per week to get a meal. (That might be at home, at a restaurant, or elsewhere.) We also see that nearly half of commuter students (48.3%) leave campus to study. This is perhaps curious, since we have a library that is well-used on campus; it would be worth conducting follow-up research to see why students leave campus to study. We also see that students leave campus to socialize (43.8%), which is not surprising for a commuter campus in which students' primary social ties exist outside of the university (in contrast to patterns at primarily residential campuses). Exercise (36.2%) and work (35.4%) represent the remaining categories.



Conclusions / Recommendations:

The main findings presented in this chapter suggest important focused opportunities for increasing time on campus and campus engagement on the part of commuter students. First, it is clear that many commuter students would like to spend more time on campus; the challenge is to find ways to cultivate the kinds of programs and activities that might activate those interests. In doing so, it is important to keep in mind that students primarily value *productive* time on campus, and secondarily value time for *socializing*. To the extent that those two categories might be blurred, that might be particularly successful – for example, study sessions that include social breaks; or evening events linked to classes that focus on documentary screenings.

It is also clear that one of the main reasons that students leave campus is for food. Anecdotally, many students find the food options on campus to be expensive, not particularly inviting in terms of flavor and healthfulness. To the extent that we can cultivate more affordable and healthy eating options, we are likely to be able to attract more commuter students to spend more time on campus. Students also leave campus for coffee; again, perhaps higher quality coffee might keep more commuter students on campus.

One of the curious findings is that many students leave campus to study. Given our beautiful library facilities, one wonders what specifically is attracting those students. That would be a useful topic for future research.

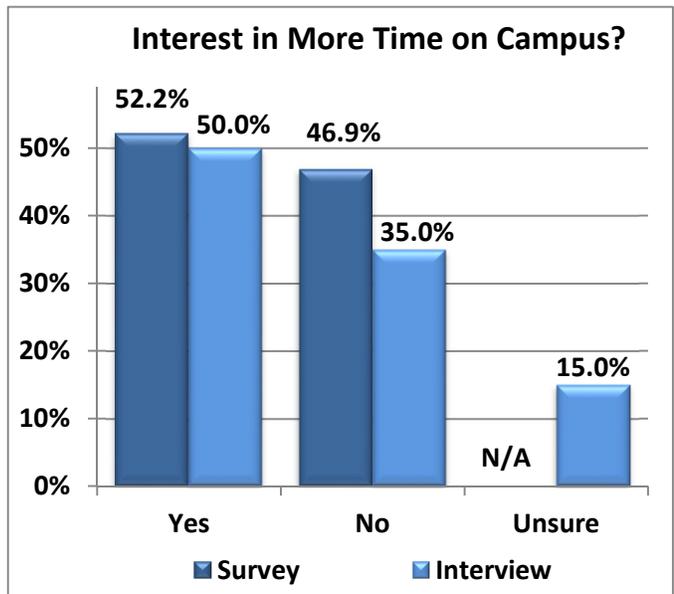
6. Understanding Campus Engagement: Interests & Obstacles

Now that we have a better sense of the time spent on (and off) campus, we can move to the underlying factors which shape that time on campus. We began our research with the assumption that time on campus is generally a benefit for commuter students, as it increases their engagement with and connections to the university – which, in turn, increases the likelihood of persistence and success. Consequently, engagement should be encouraged – and in order to do so, we need to better understand student interests and obstacles, and how to most effectively promote it. This chapter provides that background by reporting the following findings: student interests in spending more time on campus; factors which prevent spending more time on campus; and ways to inform students of on-campus events and activities that may interest them.

Before presenting those data, it is important to underscore that we should not expect that *all* students would want to increase the time that they spend on campus. This is particularly true with contemporary commuter students who have many responsibilities (work, families, etc.) outside of campus. So, any effort to get *all* students to spend more time on campus is doomed to failure. We need to get a better sense of the extent of interest in spending more time on campus – and, hopefully, find a way to target those who are interested. We should add that expressed interest in spending time on campus is elastic; that is, interest is clearly a function of what is available. To the extent that time on campus is seen as more productive and/or enjoyable, more students will be interested in spending more time there.

Interest in more time on campus: Understanding the existing level of student interest in spending more time on campus is a crucial first step to designing and developing effective programs to increase commuter student engagement on campus. The graph below presents those initial data. Both the survey and interview research asked respondents about whether they would be interested in spending more time on campus. Because the nature of the questions was somewhat different, it provides an important cross-check on our data. The survey question offered binary response categories: “yes” or “no.” The interview question was open-ended, so respondents could offer a more developed or nuanced response; interview responses were coded not only for positive and negative responses, but also for a third

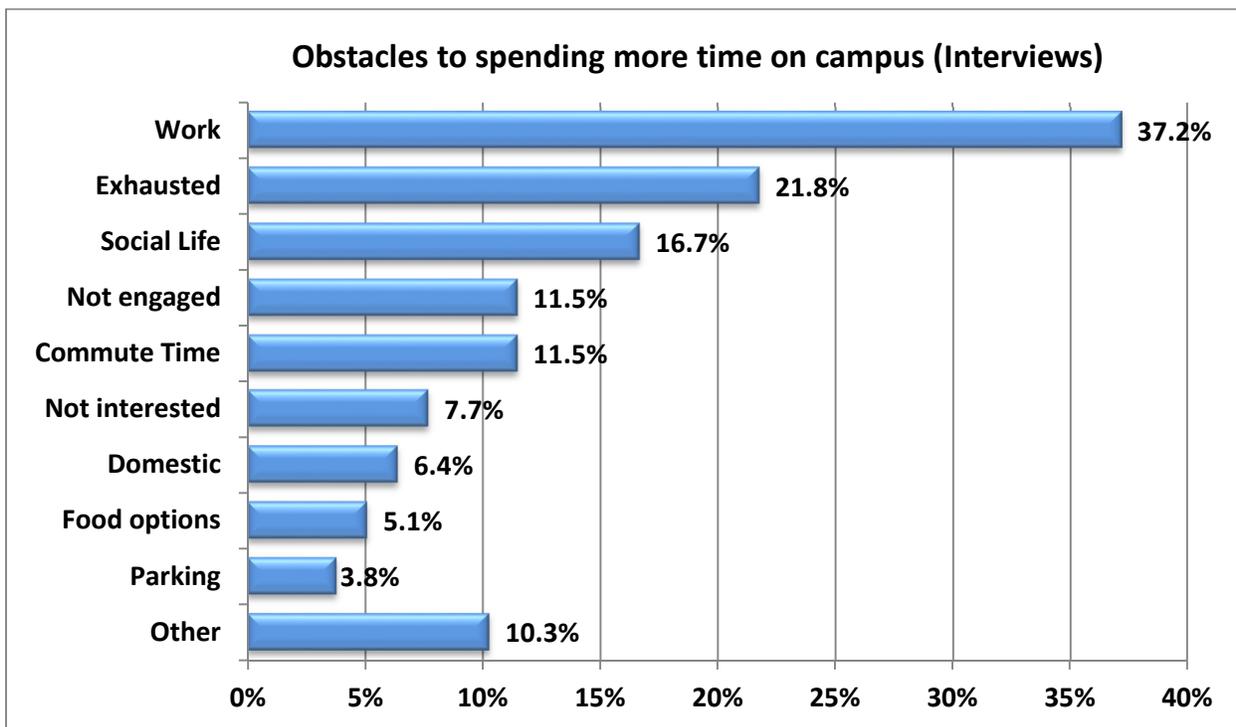
category for responses indicating that the respondent “didn’t know” or was “unsure.” Both data sources confirm that roughly half of commuter students are interested in spending more time on campus. In addition, the interview data suggested that nearly a third of the remaining students are not firm in their resistance to more time on campus. Those data suggest that there is ample interest among commuter students to spend more time on campus – and that effective programs, targeted appropriately, might be successful in promoting more campus engagement among commuter students.



We are not only interested in the percentage of students interested in spending more time on campus, but in understanding more about who might be more or less interested in greater campus engagement. In the survey data, women indicated that they are more likely than men to want to spend more time on campus: 59.2% of women indicated an interest, while only 37.8% of men did so. In the interview data, no such relationship emerged – so any relationship between gender and wanting to spend more time on campus is inconclusive. In neither research component was there a relationship between interest in time on campus and any measure of class status (including transfer status, etc.).

Factors preventing more time on campus: If half of our commuter students want to spend more time on campus as they have indicated, what prevents them from doing so? In the interview component, students were asked an open-ended question about what obstacles they face in spending more time on campus. The results from the interviews show that work is the primary obstacle to spending more time on campus (37%). That is not surprising; we know that many of our students work, and the overwhelming majority work off campus. Looking further down the graph, we see other obligations that present obstacles to student engagement on campus: commute time was cited by 11.5% of respondents, and domestic responsibilities were

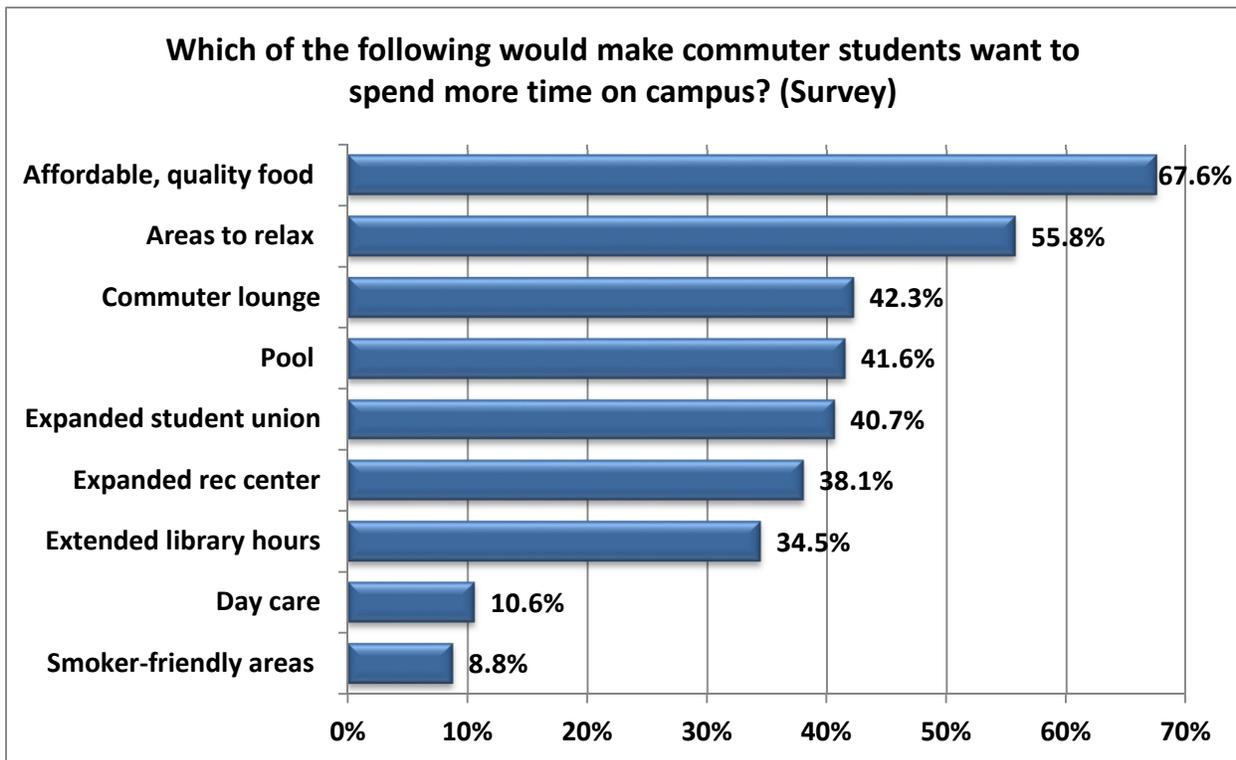
cited by 6.4%. Beyond that, the responses indicate a potpourri of various reasons that do not point to any particular obvious areas of discontent. Over a fifth (21.8%) of respondents cited that they were just too tired to spend more time on campus; this is another sign of our students being overstretched. Next we see that slightly less than one in five students (16.7%) leave campus to cultivate their social life. That image of the social student is not necessarily contrary to the image of the exhausted student; perhaps it puts that exhaustion in context. Lack of engagement is an interesting response because it points to a sense of inertia in disengagement; that is, students find their own lack of involvement on campus as a reason not to spend time on campus. We might group that with lack of interest (7.7%) as a baseline of students who might present particularly challenges to efforts to increase engagement. It is also interesting to note that here only 5% of students indicated that food options drove them off campus, which is far smaller than what we might anticipate since so many students responded that they are leaving campus for food. (We will see more evidence of its importance briefly.) We suspect that students are likely to perceive food options as more of a “pull” factor than a “push” factor; regardless, this is another issue that merits additional research. Finally, the ‘other’ category comprised 10 percent of responses – which indicated no significant groupings.



We checked to see if there was any relationship between the various obstacles and students' preferences for staying on campus more. There were only two significant relationships. First (and by definition), students who indicated that a lack of interest prevented them from spending more time on campus were much more likely to indicate that they would prefer to spend less time on campus. More importantly, students who indicated that domestic responsibilities prevented them from spending more time on campus were more likely to indicate that they wanted to spend more time on campus. In fact, *all* of the students who noted domestic obstacles indicated an interest in spending more time on campus. Regarding domestic obligations, it is also worth noting some additional data from the survey research. (The full data on this series of questions is not reported because there were some technical problems with the questionnaire that make the series less useful – although the specific question reported here is valid.) The question asked students to indicate how important various factors were in preventing them from spending more time in campus. Among students who reported wanting to spend more time on campus, 31% indicated that “family obligations” were a very important obstacle, 16.8% indicated that they were a somewhat important obstacle, and only 3.5% indicated that they were not important. This may represent a strategic target. It is also important to note that family issues can represent a variety of specific issues – from child care, to elder care, to giving younger siblings rides, etc. It would be worth investigating more deeply in future research.

Factors encouraging more time on campus: Now that we have a sense of what is preventing commuter students from spending more time on campus, we turn to response patterns to questions about what factors encourage them to spend more time on campus. . . . The following graph presents data from a question on the survey which elicited responses about which of a list of items would be most likely to encourage students to spend more time on campus. Among all categories, the availability of affordable and quality food was the most common response by a substantial margin. Over two thirds of respondents noted that affordable, quality food would encourage them to spend more time on campus. This mirrors the response patterns (presented above) concerning why students leave campus.

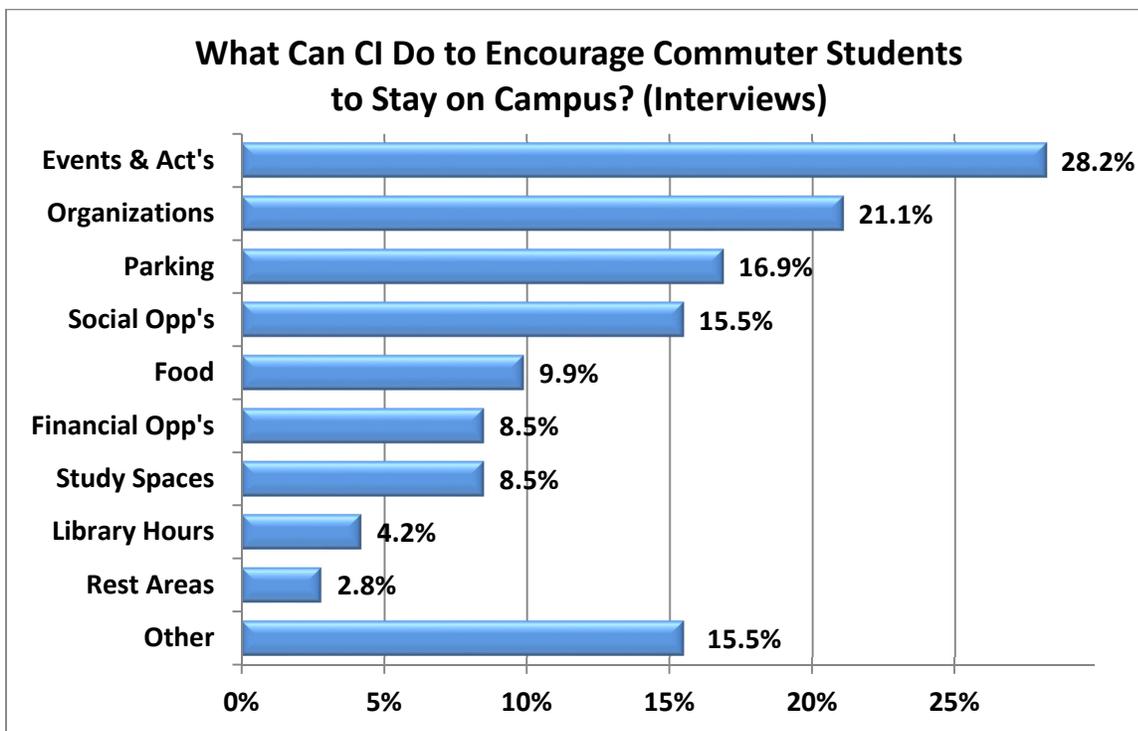
The other dominant response was areas to relax, with 56% of students indicating that would encourage them to stay on campus. The type of areas is not specified; perhaps future research might look into what students find inviting. One might imagine more inviting group seating in open areas spread around campus. Regarding areas to relax, one might argue that many of the subsequent response categories represent such areas. For example, a commuter lounge, a pool, and an expanded student union all represent places that students might want to spend their down time. Even an expanded recreation center represents an opportunity to relax in a different sort of way. The predominance of those responses suggests that the architecture of campus is something important to consider in trying to encourage commuter students to remain on campus beyond their classes.⁸



The interview research asked a parallel question in an open-ended format. Specifically, the question asked what CI might do to encourage commuter students to remain on campus.

⁸ It is also important to recognize that the forced-choice response categories channeled responses in that direction, and might not offer broad enough comparisons with other potentially important factors. The response categories were developed by students working on the survey project – all of whom were commuter students themselves. In any event, the data let us know that many commuter students want this type of facility – even if there may be other equally important incentives to remaining on campus.

Here we see a broader range of possible incentives. (In this case, all responses were coded and grouped into a finite number of response categories.) The most common response from over a quarter of the students focused on additional events and activities to attend. That is probably not a surprise, as large events represent the most visible type of programming for student engagement on campus. (There is some suspicion that this might partially be the result of interviewer prompting, but that cannot be determined definitively.) Events and activities comprise a very broad category, so it is difficult to know exactly which types of events students were imagining – for example, to take an extreme contrast, academic lectures or block parties. This should be pursued further in subsequent research.



The next most common response category was campus organizations that students might join and become involved in. This, again, is a common strategy for increasing student engagement. Given that we already have a broad range of campus organizations, these findings might suggest either that the existing organizations are not addressing the interests of many commuter students, or that commuter students are unaware of the existing organizations. This might be addressed in future research.

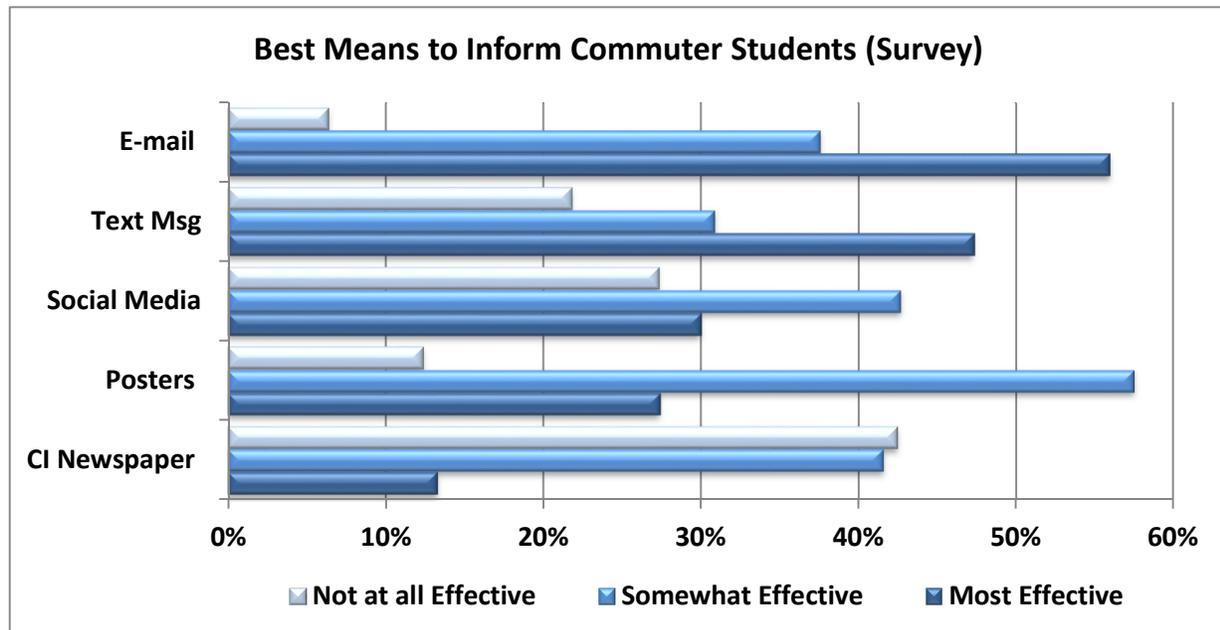
The next most common response is parking. That is a somewhat odd response, since we might assume that student trips to campus are determined by their schedule – and, once here, the “fixed cost” of finding parking is paid and would have no effect on whether students spend more or less time here. Discussion with students who conducted the interviews suggested that this is largely an issue of whether students might make optional trips to campus and whether, once they leave campus, they might return.

Social opportunities were mentioned by 15% of respondents, which might be tapping into the same interests identified in the top two responses – events, and organizations. All of that gives us a sense that students want to expand their activities on campus beyond the narrowly academic pursuits, even if we have to also consider the findings reported above that students most value the productive time on campus and often measure that in terms of academic contributions. The remaining response categories all represent fewer than 10% of respondents. Food again comes up. We also see the core academic interests: study spaces and library hours. And we see that rest areas was noted by less than 3% of the students.

Looking over and comparing findings from the survey and the interviews offer both helpful directions for serving commuter students, and raises some questions about interpreting those responses. We see that the relative frequency of items varies considerably in a forced-choice format relative to an open-ended format. For example, when prompted, food options is a singular dominant dissatisfaction for students; without that prompt, it comes up relatively infrequently. In contrast, events, activities, and organizations dominate the responses when asked in an open format. Perhaps this means that students tend to think in specific terms when asked the question in an open format, naturally pointing toward items that they perceive to be issues that are designed specifically to keep commuter students on campus rather than more general aspects of campus life and services. Future research drawing from the existing data might clarify preferences.

Informing commuter students: Once we have a better sense of what might encourage students to spend more time on campus, and a sense of which to target, we still need to find a way to get relevant information to them. At that point, it is essential to understand the most effective forms of communication to reach commuter students to inform them of opportunities

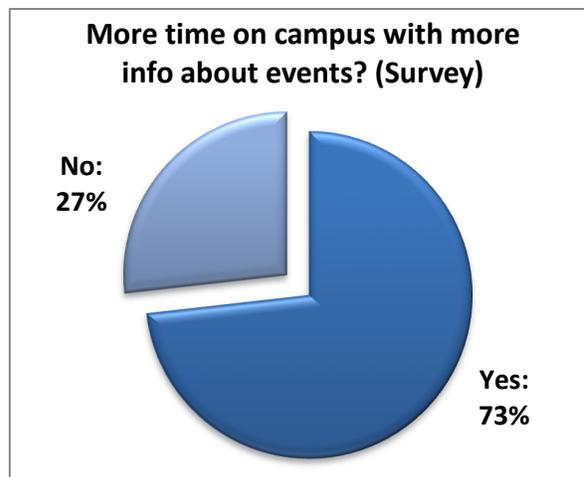
and activities on campus. The graph below indicates response patterns across a range of possible forms of communication, identifying those which commuter students find most (and least) effective.



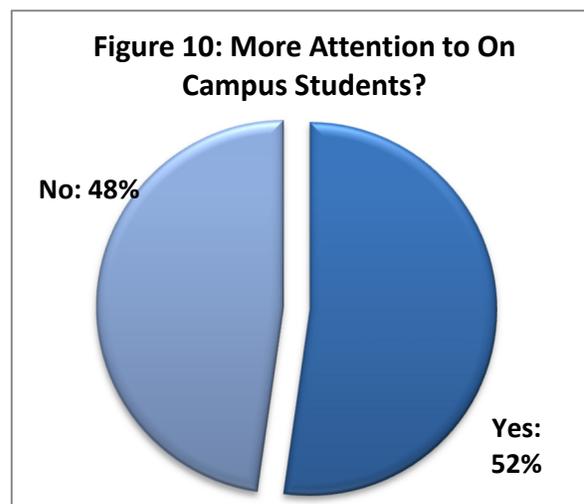
Well over half of respondents indicated that the most effective means of communication for them was via email, and nearly 95% indicated that it was most or somewhat effective. That is extremely convenient given that it is the focus of the campus information infrastructure. Beyond that, text messages were the clear secondary alternative. Social media and posters were identified as the next most effective (although it is interesting to see that relatively speaking, social media were rated by more as both “most effective” and “not at all effective”). Finally, we see that for commuter students, the campus newspaper is clearly not an effective means of informing them about campus.

An interesting related question was whether students would be interested in spending more time on campus if they had more information about events on campus; responses to that question appear in the following graph. Nearly three quarters of students said that they would be interested. Note that those interested in spending time on campus rose from 53% (in the general question about whether students are interested in spending more time on campus) to 73% when the issue of information is included. This suggests that better communications with commuter students has the potential to significantly increase campus engagement. However,

there is reason to believe that this number is “soft.” First, there is a logical problem to the question in that students cannot reliably say that they would want to participate in activities about which they are unaware; they will have no sense of whether the activity is of particular interest. Second, indicating an interest in attending more events does not necessarily translate into actual attendance. Having said that, the numbers clearly indicate that there is substantial interest in additional events and activities on the part of commuter students – and that students perceive lack of information about events to be an obstacle to their participation.



That sense of being poorly informed – and perhaps poorly integrated – on campus is also indicated by a separate question focusing specifically on commuter students’ perception of the amount of attention that CI devotes to on-campus versus commuter students. Just over half of respondents indicated that they believe that on-campus students receive more attention. This perception – and the extent to which it reflects a reality for commuter students – is crucial to increasing engagement among our commuter students.



It is also worth noting how responses to the question regarding the relative treatment of on-campus and commuter students is related to other responses addressed in the research. For example, students who believe that on campus students get more attention from the university are less likely to want to spend more time on campus. Of course, that can be interpreted in various ways; one might suggest that commuter students who feel ignored by campus are less likely to want to spend more time here; or one might suggest that students

uninterested in being on campus might simply be blaming the campus for their own lack of interest.

Conclusions / Recommendations:

There is much good news here for those who would like to increase engagement of commuter students; there are also some clear challenges. First, we see that a solid half of commuter students indicate that they would like to spend more time on campus. That is a crucial foundation for any programs to build on. We also see that many students are kept away by issues that we have little ability to address, such as working off campus. Issues such as that certainly impose limits to programs, but there are many students with both interest in increased engagement and who do not face such constraints. It might also be possible to address those constraints; for example, to the extent that students' domestic responsibilities involve child care, campus programs offering assistance can make it possible for commuter students to spend more time on campus.

In terms of tangible steps that the campus can take to increase commuter student engagement, the findings point toward several promising possibilities. The lack of healthy and affordable food on campus pushes many commuters to leave campus – and that presents a challenge for increasing their participation in any programs designed to keep them on campus. We do see that students would like to see more opportunities for participating in events and activities, and being involved in campus organizations. Finding the specific types that will best attract commuter students will require additional investigation – and are likely to be well worth the effort. Finally, respondents indicated that aspects of campus architecture and facilities can be addressed to make the campus more attractive to spending non-class time. This is crucial for commuter students, because they have no “private” spaces on campus to retreat to.

A final issue worth addressing is the perception among commuter students that on-campus students receive far more attention and resources from CI. This is certainly true to the extent that Campus Housing has the resources to sponsor many programs for students, and there is nothing comparable for commuter students. It is crucial to do all that we can to ensure that commuter students do not feel like “second class citizens” on campus.

PART III: APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1:

CI COMMUTER QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SURVEY RESEARCH (SPRING 2013)

Dear Commuter Student, we are Sociology Capstone students whose goal is to figure out what kinds of alternative transportation programs should be implemented, and benefits for students to carpool or use the bus or train, rather than drive their own vehicle, to Cal State Channel Islands. If you could please take a few minutes to fill out our survey, we would greatly appreciate it. Your answers are anonymous and will remain confidential.

If you complete the survey you will have a chance to enter into a raffle to win one of two \$25 gift cards to the Cove Bookstore.

Demographics:

First we'd like to ask you some basic questions to get some demographic information

1. How do you identify yourself in terms of gender?
2. What year of college are you currently in?
 - Freshman (1st year)
 - Sophomore (2nd year)
 - Junior (3rd year)
 - Senior (4th year)
 - Super senior (5th year or beyond)
3. In what city do you currently reside?
 - Oxnard
 - Ventura
 - Camarillo
 - Thousand Oaks
 - Simi Valley
 - Other _____
4. Why do you choose to live off campus? Mark all that apply.
 - I cannot afford to live on campus
 - I prefer to live with my family
 - I find it more convenient
 - I want the greater freedom
 - I prefer the advantages of the off-campus community
 - Other: _____

Transportation Choices and Awareness:

Now we would like to ask you some questions on your transportation choices and your awareness of alternatives.

5. Please indicate your primary form of transportation below:

- Commute alone (personal vehicle)
- Carpool (personal vehicle)
- Train (with bus links)
- Bus (without train)
- Other: _____

➔ If CARPOOL: Who are the people with whom you currently carpool?

- Commute with a friend (or friends) that I know from home
- Commute with a friend (or friends) that I met while at CI
- Commute with a non-student who works in the surrounding area

6. There are a variety of reasons that students choose their particular form of transportation. For each item in the list below, please identify how important it is in your decision to use your primary form of transportation.

	Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Convenience			
Cost			
Comfort			
Flexibility			
Time independence			
Safety			

If there are any other important reasons, that aren't listed above, that influence your primary choice of transportation, please describe them here:

7. How often do you use other forms of transportation?

- Never(Move on to question 8)
- Less than once per week
- About once per week
- More than once per week
- More than twice a week

➔ If YES: What is your secondary form of transportation?

- Personal vehicle: Alone
- Personal vehicle: Carpool
- Bus

Train (with bus connection)
 Other: _____

8. Below, we have listed some of the main costs associated with commuting. For each item, please estimate the amount that you spend monthly, focusing on transportation to and from campus using your primary mode of transportation.

Gas	\$
Parking	\$
Maintenance	\$
Train/Bus	\$
Other	\$

9. How familiar are you with the bus routes linking CSUCI campus to the surrounding area?

I am familiar with the three main bus routes and where they lead.
 I am familiar with one or more of the routes, but not all of them.
 I am not familiar with the bus routes to and from campus.

10. Approximately how close are you, in miles, to a bus stop that leads to campus?

Miles
 Not sure where the closest bus stop is

11. Approximately how close are you, in miles, to a train stop that leads to campus?

Miles
 Not sure where the closest train stop is

12. What would you estimate to be the cost of a monthly bus pass for students?

\$ _____

13. What would you estimate to be the cost of a monthly train pass for students?

\$ _____

On and Off Campus Activities:

This next section focuses on patterns of on-campus and off-campus activities.

14. Do you have any days on campus with a schedule that includes a break of an hour or more between your classes?

Yes
 No (if no, skip to question 15.)

➔ If YES: Do you generally stay on campus or leave campus between classes?

I generally leave campus
 I generally stay on campus
 I stay on campus and leave campus about equally often.

15. Now consider the time after the end of your daily classes. About how much time do you spend on campus after the end of your classes on most days?

- None; I leave campus right after the end of my classes
- About an hour
- More than an hour

16. Leave campus: Considering the times that you leave campus between classes, please indicate how often you go to each of the following places to spend time?

	Never	1-2 times per week	3-4 times per week	5+ times per week
Home				
Friends' places				
Restaurant				
Coffee shop				
Gym				

➔ If there are other places you spend your time between classes, that are not listed above, please write them here:

17. Leave campus: Considering the times that you leave campus between classes, please indicate how often you leave campus for the following activities.

	Never	1-2 times per week	3-4 times per week	5+ times per week
Socialize w/ friends				
Get a meal				
Study				
Work				
Exercise				

➔ If there are other activities you do between classes, that are not listed above, please write them here:

18. Stay on campus: Considering the time you spend on campus between or after your classes, please indicate the number of hours, in a week, you spend engaging in each of the following activities.

	# hours
Hours spent studying	
Hours spent in academic assistance (office hours, tutoring, etc.)	
Hours spent on other formal university activities (clubs, events, etc.)	
Hours spent eating or snacking	
Hours spent getting coffee	

Hours spent meeting with friends or socializing	
Hours spent exercising	
Hours spent working	

19. Generally speaking, if you had no off-campus commitments, would you like to spend more time on campus?

- Yes, ideally I would like to spend more time on campus
 No, I am not interested in spending more time on campus (Move on to question 20)

→ IF YES: For each of the following items, please indicate how important of a factor it is in preventing you from spending more time on campus.

	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Work			
Family responsibilities			
Transportation schedules			
Personal activities off campus			
Have class at another school			

→ If you have other reasons that prevent you from spending more time on campus, that aren't listed above, please describe here:

20. Which of the following do you feel would make you want to spend more time on campus? Mark all that apply.

- Commuter lounge
 Availability of affordable and quality food options
 Day care, Kinder care
 A pool accessible to all students (not just dorm residence)
 More comfortable or larger student Union
 More places to relax on campus
 Additional library hours
 More smoker-friendly areas around campus
 Larger and better-equipped recreational center
 Other on-campus services or facilities you would like to suggest

→ If other, please describe:

21. Would you be more interested in spending more time on campus if you were more informed about campus activities?

- Yes
 No

22. We would like to know how to best inform commuter students about campus activities and events. For each of the following forms of communication, please indicate how effective it would be in alerting you of such opportunities.

	Most Effective	Somewhat effective	Not at all effective
Text message notifications			
E-mail notifications			
Facebook/social media			
On campus advertising (posters)			
Campus newspapers & publications			

College experience of off campus students:

You are almost done! We have a few more important questions to ask you that we would really appreciate your opinion on.

23. The following is a list of categories students often see as part of the “college experience.” Please indicate the extent to which you believe these opportunities are less available to you because of your off-campus living situation (from not missing out at all → missing out a lot).

	Not missing out at all	Somewhat missing out	Missing out a lot
Campus events & opportunities			
Volunteer opportunities on campus			
Block parties, spirit events, & opportunities to socialize			
Dorm life (parties, pool access, etc.)			
Creating bonds & friendships with fellow students			

➔ If there are any other opportunities, not listed above, that you feel you are missing out on, please describe here:

24. Do you believe that CI offers more attention and services to on-campus students than to commuter students?

___ Yes

___ No

➔ If YES: Can you describe one or two of the most important areas in which you are getting less attention?

25. As a final question, we would like to ask you if you can think of any particular initiatives that CI could promote to better serve commuter students or enrich their college experience. If you can think of any such initiatives, please describe them below.

Thank you for taking the time to complete our survey. The findings will help CI to develop and implement programs and services for commuter students designed to make the campus as enriching and rewarding as possible.

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MICRO-INTERVIEWS (SPRING 2014)

Introductory script:

1. *Introduction:* Good morning, my name is _____.
2. *Purpose:* We are conducting research to learn how CI can better serve commuter students.
3. *Consent:* Can we ask you a few questions about the time that you spend on campus?

Primary questions:

On average, how many hours per week would you say that you spend on campus – aside from classes, and the time that it takes to get to and from classes?

IF TIME ON CAMPUS:

- What do you do on campus when you're not in class?
- Do you think that the time that you spend on campus is valuable for you?
Why / Why not?

Ideally, would you like to spend *more* time on campus – or *less* time on campus?

- What are the things that keep you from spending more time on campus?

What could CI do to make you want to spend more time on campus?

Prompt: What would make it more convenient for you – or what kind of things would make you want to be here more?

Background:

I'd just like to get a few more pieces of information – it will just take a minute:

How many semesters have you been enrolled at CI?

If you are a transfer student, how many years were you enrolled at other colleges?

How long does it take you on average to drive to campus?

Gender presentation or identification:

Close:

Thank you for your time. We appreciate your willingness to be a part of the research – and we'll do all that we can to make sure that it helps commuter students like you.