



Navigating to the University of California, Berkeley

A Case Study of De Anza High and UC Berkeley Campus Climate, High School College Readiness, and Yield to UC Berkeley

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Abstract

As an institution that strives for excellence and equity, the University of California, Berkeley aims to provide opportunity, hope, and a space for all students to succeed. Given this objective, the university has historically fallen short in its student racial/ethnic representation when compared to nearby counties, including West Contra Costa. To determine possible barriers that prevent underrepresented minority (URM) high school students from matriculating to UC Berkeley, we have surveyed De Anza High School in West Contra Costa Unified School District and examined our findings as a case study. Reviewing high school support from college advisors, perceptions of UC Berkeley campus climate, student college readiness, and yield to UC Berkeley, we found that URM De Anza High School students are more likely to be first-generation college students, to have poorer perceptions of campus climate,

to feel less prepared for college, and to have fewer conversations about and applications to UC Berkeley than Non-URM students. Furthermore, this first-generation college status seems to play a critical role as students pursue higher education. Because the majority of URM students have not met with an academic advisor given their access to one, a gap has been created regarding the groups who receive encouragement from college advisors and, perhaps, guide those groups to apply to and attend UC Berkeley upon graduating high school. To help mitigate this existing gap, UC Berkeley should improve campus climate and URM student matriculation by increasing contact through interactions between campus representatives and local high school students, strengthening existing relationships between university and county partners, and promoting and expanding existing preparatory programs to help prepare and demystify the rigor of UC Berkeley education.

This report was produced by the NavCal Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program (URAP) cohort at IRLE.

Key Findings

- Among De Anza High School Students, a racial gap exists in receiving support from high school college advisors: 37% of URM students and 51% of Non-URM met with their advisor more than once. 51% of URM and 33% of Non-URM students have never met with their college advisor.
- The majority of Non-URM students (53%) feel that their race/ethnicity is represented on the Berkeley campus, while the majority of URM students (61%) feel neutral about whether their race is represented. Previous research identifies that this neutral selection can be interpreted as these students having less interest in the campus climate or feeling uncertain of their attitude towards UC Berkeley.
- The majority of URM students (57%) have stated that they feel neutral regarding their comfort on the UC Berkeley's campus. Previous research explains this neutral, "middle" option can be recognized as having an absence of information or a lack of enthusiasm for the subject. When applied to UC Berkeley, we can understand this option as having an ambivalence for campus climate and an absence of excitement for the university despite the school being in close proximity to WCCUSD.
- Almost two thirds (64%) of Non-URM students felt prepared to attend college immediately after graduation, while just over half (51%) of URM students felt prepared to attend college. On the other hand, 34% of URM and 23% of Non-URM students are not enthusiastic about attending a university immediately upon graduation.
- About two-thirds (64%) of the URM students stated that they have not had a conversation about applying to UC Berkeley with their college advisor, and just over half (53%) of Non-URMs said that they have not discussed applying to UC Berkeley.
- For both the URM (64%) and Non-URM (56%) survey respondents, the majority did not apply to UC Berkeley.

- To improve campus climate as well as URM, low-income, first-generation enrollment, UC Berkeley should create an "off-campus community" by increasing interactions between local high school students and university campus representatives (staff, graduate students, and undergraduate students) who identify as URM.
- To prepare and engage these underrepresented students, UC Berkeley should also seek to strengthen existing relationships between university and school district partners to promote and expand existing preparatory programs that help students in the application process, increase social and cultural capital, and introduce students to campus resources before their senior year of high school.

Background

The University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley) is known as an institution that strives for excellence and equity, providing opportunity, hope, and a space where all students can succeed. However, UC Berkeley has historically under-recruited underrepresented minority (URM) students, which has continued through the 2020-2021 academic school year with an emphasis on Black and American Indian students. Analyzing admission data from UC Berkeley's Infocenter platform and residential data from Bay Area Census platform reveals the disproportionate racial makeup of UCB's student body in comparison to its surrounding counties. The average racial/ethnic demographics of UC Berkeley admissions from 2017-2019 include: Black students at 4%, Hispanic/Latino students at 24.4%, American Indian students at 0.5%, Asian students at 33.5%, and White students at 21%.¹ Data mapped from the US Census Bureau for Alameda County shows that the race composition for individuals between the ages of 18-25 in 2018 was: 25.9% White residents; 12.9% Hispanic or Latino residents; 26.95% Asian residents; 12.9% Black residents; and 21.5% Other or Mixed-race residents.² In Contra Costa County during 2018, the race composition for age groups between 18-25 years is less evenly distributed across racial age groups: 35.7% White residents; 17.8% Hispanic or Latino residents; 12.9% Asian residents; 10.5% Black residents; and 13.1% Other or Mixed-race residents.³ Although the White population is high in both counties, the percentage of minority residents is evidently higher

than that of the university's admitted rate, specifically in terms of the communities who identify as Other, Mixed-race, and Black. Despite UC Berkeley's improvement this past year, disparities in application and acceptance endure for underrepresented minorities.

This disparity in UC Berkeley's proportion of accepted applications who choose not to attend may result from the unequal support available prior to college attendance. Previous research identifies that disparities in the pursuit and achievement of higher education often exist between students who come from low-income and high-income backgrounds, who are first vs. second generation college students, and those who identify as white vs. ethnic/racial minorities.^{4,5,6,7} For underrepresented populations, an absence of academic resources, poorer cognitive performance related to home and school environments, and the absence of viable social capital inhibit the pursuit of post-secondary education. Furthermore, prior research specifies risk factors, such as demographics (i.e. socioeconomic status) and parental socialization (e.g. personal/family knowledge, education level, and social capital), school resources (i.e. test-taking, advanced placement, and counselors' assistance with college applications), and financial literacy, that act as key indicators for accessibility of higher education.^{8,9,10}

To identify systemic barriers that prevent URM high school students from attending UC Berkeley and to empower future URM students in their pursuit of higher education, we surveyed high school seniors in the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD). Although recent proportions of students from WCCUSD who accepted UC Berkeley's offer of admission decreased prior to 2020, the percentage of students who were accepted into UC Berkeley increased. In 2017, 61 students from WCCUSD were admitted to UCB and only 42 matriculated, while in 2018, 78 students from WCC were admitted to UCB and only 46 matriculated.¹¹ This information has motivated our research questions: What factors influence WCCUSD URM students to apply to and attend UC Berkeley, and how can we, as a university, improve our campus climate to increase URM yield rates from the district?

Methodology

Target Population

When it came to selecting a target population, we wanted to find a diverse population which captured a variety of students with multiple minority statuses, income levels, and college readiness levels. Unlike other campuses of WCCUSD, De Anza High School is a middle ground of academic resources. It has very few counselors available to its students, but at the same time offers students college readiness programs such as Early Academic Outreach Program and Richmond Promise. Therefore we elected to survey students from De Anza High School as a case study to isolate and mitigate possible barriers that prevent URM students from pursuing higher education. In addition to this, De Anza High School students, if accepted into UC Berkeley, offer a large population of low-income and URM students which would add to UC Berkeley's campus diversity.

De Anza High School

De Anza High School is located in the upper and middle-class residential area of WCCUSD. According to the Education Data Partnership, in 2019-2020 the school had a total of 1,401 students enrolled, including 350 seniors.¹² At De Anza, 21.8% of students were English Learners who mostly spoke Spanish. However, in contrast to the WCCUSD, the majority of students at De Anza High School (62.3%), qualified for free or reduced lunch programs, and in the 2018-2019 school year 305 out of 350 graduating students took at least one AP course while enrolled during all four years.¹² In addition, in the 2019-2020 academic school year, 59.2% of graduates had completed UC/CSU requirements for freshman admissions.¹² Of those who completed their requirements, the distribution differed within racial/ethnic groups: 64.4% of White students, followed by 74.2% of Asian students, 54.9% of Hispanic students, and 54.9% of Black or African American students.¹³

Methods

Survey Development

From the 2020 Navigating to the University of Cali-

fornia, Berkeley (Nav2Cal) Summer Fellowship, we recruited a team of 9 rising seniors from El Cerrito High School, John F. Kennedy High School, Richmond High School, and De Anza High School, who participated in the summer research methods training cohort. In this program, we held focus groups where these students helped develop the Nav2Cal survey by discussing obstacles they believed prevented their communities from applying to and/or attending UC Berkeley. All topics discussed in these focus groups mirrored topics identified from previous research, including resource availability and accessibility, financial literacy, college readiness (i.e. AP courses), and first-generation college status as well as english as a second language which can pose a communication conflict between faculty and students.

Using these conversations along with previous research, the Nav2Cal research team developed a 16-question survey that was fielded using the UC Berkeley Qualtrics online survey platform. In partnership with the Nav2Cal students, we created a two-minute video that explained survey logistics, consent, and rights of survey participants. This video was provided to teachers and students to help with survey recruitment.

Survey Distribution

Before administering the survey, our faculty sponsor and UC Berkeley Sociology Professor Dr. Harding collaborated with Associate Director of Campus Partnerships and Engagement Mia Hayes as well as WCCUSD Superintendent Matthew Duffy. With this partnership, the survey and video links were sent via email to WCCUSD College and Career and Secondary Programs Lead, Allison Hue who released them to the principal of De Anza High School. Once received, the principal shared the materials with English and Homeroom senior teachers who administered the survey to students in class. To accommodate the large percentage of self-identified English Learners and Spanish speakers, we also created a Spanish version of the survey to mitigate potential language barriers.

Data

To capture potential explanations for the lower application and yield rates of URMs to UC Berkeley, we used previous research as well as the summer focus

groups to identify the types of support high school students receive and whether that is associated with overall college readiness, perceptions of UC Berkeley's campus climate, and potential university applications and yield.

The data include 227 individual responses, a large portion of the 2021 graduating class from De Anza High School. Observations from seniors were collected from December 18, 2020 to March 19, 2021. The study sample collected provides UC Berkeley with an ideal case study since it represents the population that UC Berkeley desires to attract to campus: 66% of students are URM; 59% of URM students and 62% of Non-URM students are low-incomeⁱ; and 81% of URM students and 66% of Non-URM students are first-generation college studentsⁱⁱ. This disparity expands even further when first-generation status is stratified by high school completion rates: among URM students, 64% have parents who completed high school or less, while 42% of Non-URM parents completed at most high school.

Our results include measures for high school college advisor support, perceptions of UC Berkeley campus climate, overall college readiness, and application to UC Berkeley. We measured the relationship of College Advisor Support through the variables of College Advisor Accessibility (whether students had access to a college advisor during the academic year) and Contact with a College Advisor (whether students met with their college advisor given they had access to one). To understand the impact of UC Berkeley campus climate, we collected students' perceptions with survey questions including feelings that "My Race and Ethnicity is Represented at UC Berkeley" and "I Feel Comfortable on UC Berkeley Campus." College Readiness was measured by whether the student's felt ready to attend a university immediately upon graduating high school. Finally, application to UC Berkeley was measured by the number of students who applied to UC Berkeley given they had contact with a college advisor and discussed applying to the university.

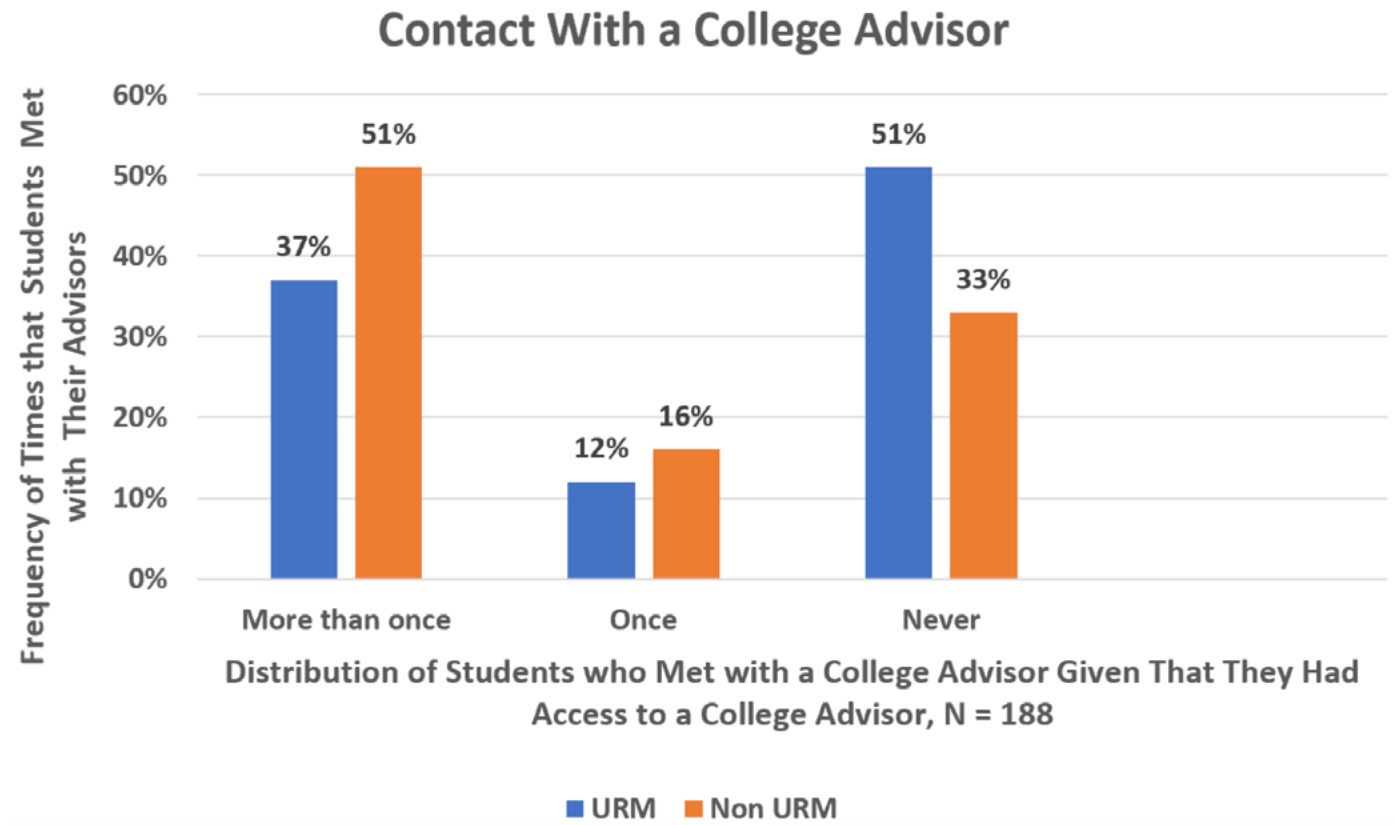
i On the survey, low-income students were identified by whether they qualified for free or reduced lunch at school the previous year.

ii Students who were "Not Sure" about their parent's highest level of education were also included in the "High School or Less" group, as it is more likely that they did not attend a university.

Results

College Advisor Support

TABLE 1



Contact with a College Advisor

In Table A1 of the Appendix, we see the distribution of students who had access to a college advisor, and in Table 1 we see the distribution of those students who met with a college advisor given that they had access to them. Access to an advisor is a binary variable classified as having access and not having access. Meetings with college advisors are stratified as meeting “More than Once”, “Once”, or “Never”. Among Non-URM students, 82% said they had access to a college advisor, while 79% of URMs said they had access to a college advisor. Within this group of students, just over half (51%) of Non-URMs stated they met with their college advisor more than once, and 33% said they never met with their advisor. However, within the URM group, about one third (37%) said they met with their college advisor more than once, while just over half (51%) said they never met with their college.

Previous research shows that parental or guardian encouragement and support is an impactful factor for a child as they develop college aspirations.¹⁴ If parents or guardians have not attended college, they often lack critical information to help their children prepare for and become eligible to attend a university.¹⁵ Families in such predicaments rely strictly upon institutional agents like the school or college counselors/advisors to provide information and encouragement for their child to pursue a higher education. Research shows the positive impact of school counselors on students in this pursuit; however, lower ratios of college counselors to students often indicates lower rates of college attendees.⁸¹⁶ Even if counselors are accessible, the size and type of school, alongside its allocated funding, can impact the counselor-student relationship.¹⁷ Research shows that smaller high schools accommodate room to create intimate relationships between counselors and their students, increasing the opportunity for school

counselors to engage in college planning with students.¹⁸ Because larger schools have a larger student body, they often have a smaller student-counselor ratio.¹⁹ In these cases, a parent-counselor relationship becomes a vital aspect in their child’s college access as well as their application and yield to the a university.^{20,21}

In the case of De Anza High School, a new advisor is placed in the school every two years to help students with college applications and financial aid matters according to the Destination College Advising Corps (DCAC) End of Year Survey.²² However, the regular transition of academic advisors around the district actually hinders performance and acts as an obstacle to their university trajectory, for the DCAC survey indicates that the instability created from the counselor exchange prevents students from establishing the needed bond with their academic advisor that would improve their college-going rates.²³

Perceptions of UC Berkeley Campus Climate

My Race & Ethnicity is Represented at UC Berkeley

In Table 2a, we see the distribution of students’ feelings towards their racial and ethnic representation on the UC Berkeley campus. For the “Agree” section, we combined both “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” responses. Similarly, for the “Disagree” variable, we combined both the “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree” responses. The data illustrates the majority of Non-URM (53%) students agree that their race and ethnicity is represented on UC Berkeley campus, while the majority of URM students (61%) feel “Neutral” about their racial and ethnic representation on campus. Research indicates this middle “neutral” option can be understood as having a lack of information or opinion of the subject and is often selected because the observer has low feelings of

TABLE 2A

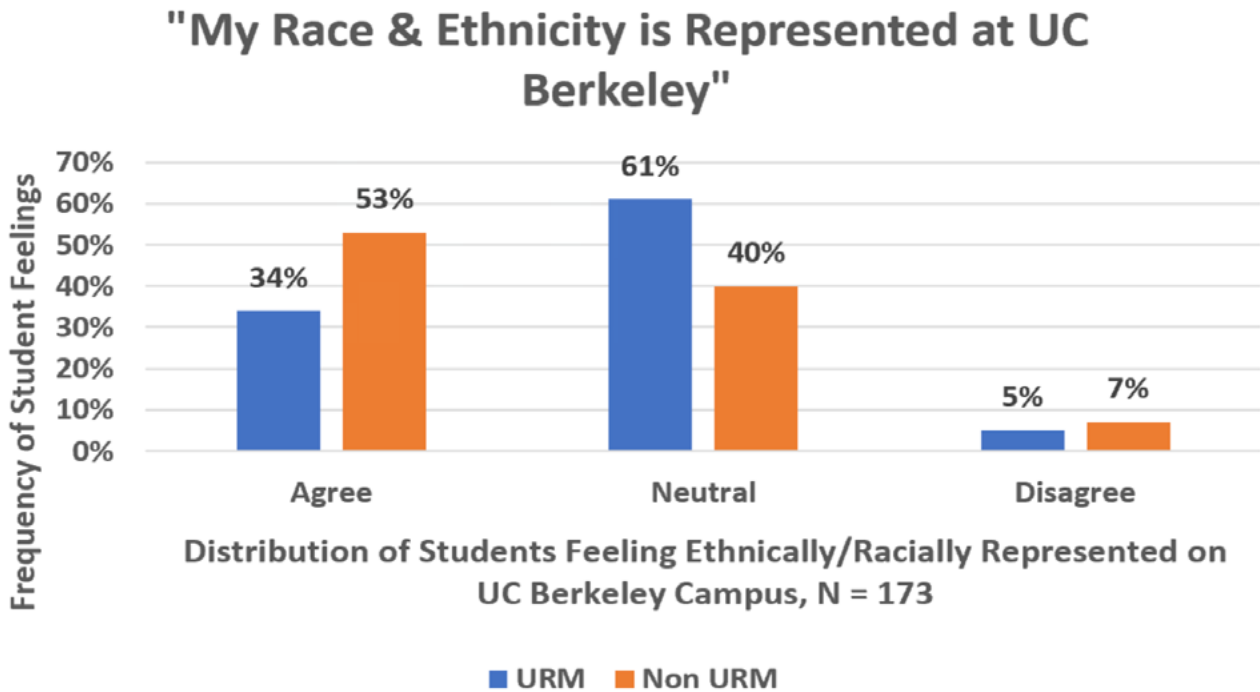
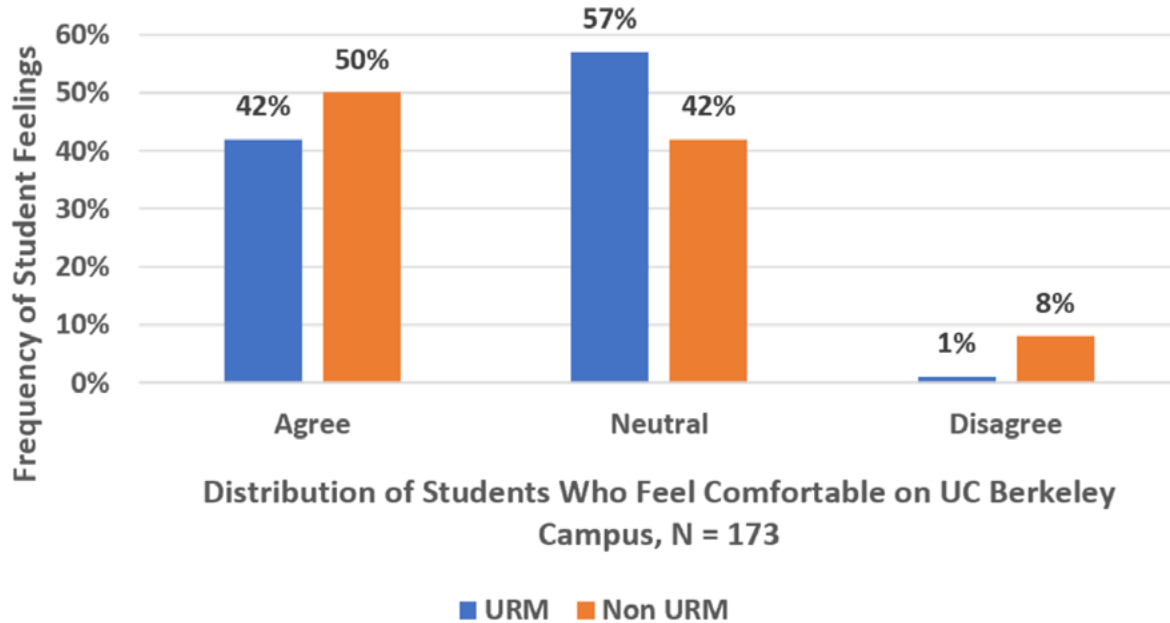


TABLE 2B

"I Feel Comfortable on UC Berkeley Campus"



intensity or ambivalence towards the subject.²⁴ With this interpretation in mind, we can assume that the majority of URM students have considerably less interest in the climate of UC Berkeley, are uncertain of their attitude towards the campus, and perhaps, do not even see themselves occupying campus space. Just as research indicates, it is likely that these demographics affect the feelings of representation for URM students and impact their decisions as they consider potential schools to which they plan to apply and yield.^{25,26,27,28}

I Feel Comfortable on UC Berkeley Campus

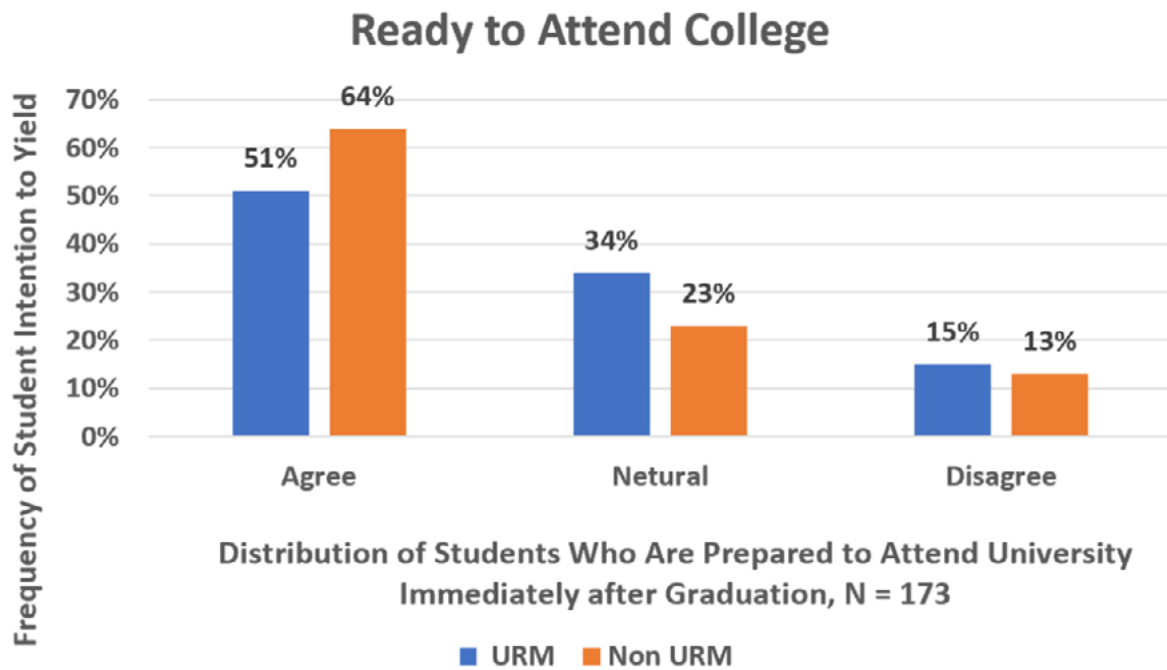
A challenge that students encountered financially during the pandemic is discussed in Table 2a. In Table 2b, we see the distribution of students who feel comfortable on UC Berkeley campus. We adjusted the responses similarly to Table 2a, aggregating both the agree and disagree statements. At De Anza, 50% of Non-URMs and 42% of URM students felt comfortable on campus; however, the majority of URM students (57%) responded neutrally regarding their feeling of comfort on UC Berkeley's campus despite the school being in close proximity to WCCUSD. From previous studies we can make the claim that neutral response indicates an absence of information regarding the campus climate or a lack of enthusiasm for the university itself.²⁹

The data appears to show that UC Berkeley has not historically been a campus at which URM students feel represented or comfortable, impacting current student perceptions of their place at the university. This could indirectly influence whether nearby high school students attend the university despite its location and prestige.

College Readiness

Ready to Attend College

Table 3 shows the distribution of students who are prepared to attend university immediately after graduation. The results were simplified by combining "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" into simply "Agree" and "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" to "Disagree." Almost two thirds (64%) of Non-URM students felt prepared to attend college immediately after graduation, while just over half (51%) of URM students felt prepared to attend college. Therefore, compared to non-URM students, URM individuals are less likely to feel ready to attend a university immediately upon graduating high school. When comparing those who are not ready to attend college after high school graduation, both URM (15%) and Non-URM (13%) results have only a 2% marginal difference, a narrower gap than those who are ready to

TABLE 3

attend college. However, it should be noted that 34% of URM and 23% of Non-URM students felt “Neutral” about attending college after graduation, 11% more URM students feeling neutral or unconfident than Non-URMs. This could be due to a lack of meetings with a college counselor and absence of support, which may lead to lack of enthusiasm for attending higher education immediately upon graduation. Since the majority of URM students (81%) would be first generation college students with 64% of their caregivers completing a high school degree or less, URM students at De Anza High School are disadvantaged in regards to the support they receive from their guardians. Therefore, the support provided by school college advisors is likely to be of more importance for encouraging URM students to pursue a college degree. A prior study shows that college advisors act as the mediator between current and future education, and without this support, URM students are not as likely to attend a university immediately.³⁰

Applying to UC Berkeley

Table A3 in the Appendix shows the distribution of students who attended counseling sessions and discussed applying to UC Berkeley with a college advisor. The stratification of responses includes “No” they did not discuss UC Berkeley, “Yes” they did discuss the

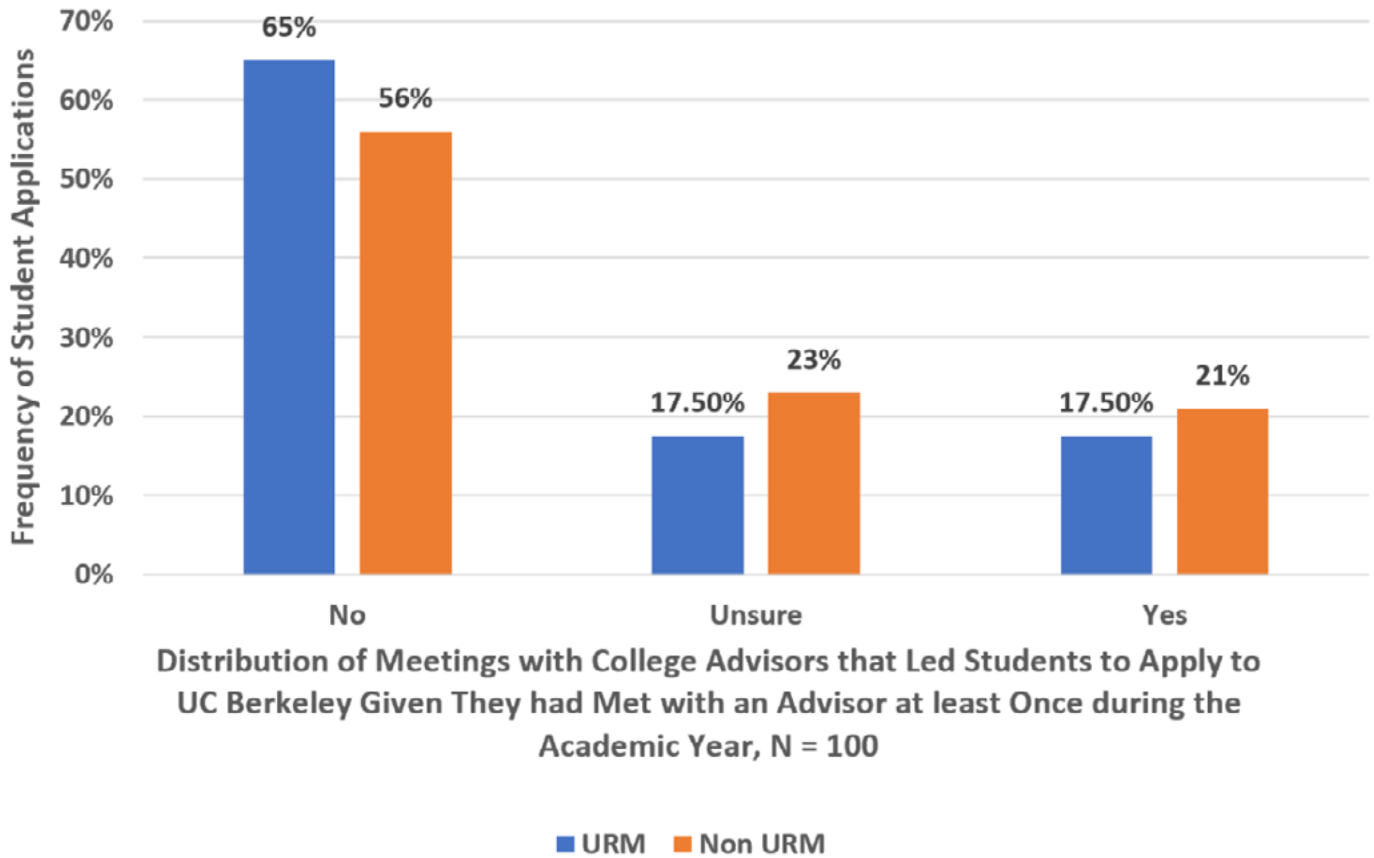
school, or that they “Don’t Remember” whether they discussed the university as a potential option. In Table A3, about two-thirds (64%) of the URM students stated that they have not had a conversation about applying to UC Berkeley with their college advisor, and just over half (53%) of Non-URMs said that they have not discussed applying to UC Berkeley. Overall, one third of Non-URM (33%) and about a quarter (26%) of URM students have discussed applying to UC Berkeley.

In Table 4, we see the distribution of students whose conversations led to applications to UC Berkeley. These proportions strongly correlate with the proportions of Table A3. This could explain why students choose not to apply to the university: the university is simply not perceived as a viable option for them and is not in their regular conversations with college advisors. Overall, we can see that for both the URM (64%) and Non-URM (56%) groups, the majority are neither applying to the university nor are they discussing it.

This lack of exposure from college advisors may actually be driving students away from potentially applying to UC Berkeley. Prior research has shown that through college counselors, students receive information regarding standardized tests and Advanced Placement classes, which play a significant role in transitions to university

TABLE 4

Applying to UC Berkeley



instruction.^{31,32} Furthermore, the methods counselors use to engage with students also impacts their college attendance, and perhaps their attendance to UC Berkeley. When counselors work through a racialized lens, and connect with students in a way that reinforces stereotypes, students — especially minorities — are less likely to gain the necessary support within education, thus harming academic performance.³³

Discussion

At De Anza High School, we sought to isolate factors that affect URM application and yield to UC Berkeley as well as to identify areas that we, as a university, can improve our campus climate and increase URM application rates from WCCUSD. In our results, we found that the disparities between URM and Non-URMs in college advisor support and the status of first-generation college student plays a significant role in the preparation of, readiness for, feelings towards, and application to UC Berkeley. Because prior research shows that students

interpret a potential college experience and university education through their family's education experience and through the support and engagement received from college advisors, the absence of these factors for URM students are critical in their pursuits of higher education.

We found associations between first-generation college status and (1) perceptions of UC Berkeley's campus climate, (2) feelings of college readiness, and (3) the number of conversations regarding UC Berkeley applications. This illustrates the importance of being a first-generation student in relation to UC Berkeley application and yield rates. Moreover, we can see how this relationship directly affects URM students, as almost two-thirds of URM caregivers did not have more than a high school diploma, and 81% of URM students would be first-generation college students. This is consistent with conclusions from previous research that highly-educated networks can provide positive social capital and facilitate the preparation for college and the application process.

At De Anza, another obstacle URM students face in their pursuit of higher education is their inability or lack of motivation to meet with their academic college advisors. Although most students, regardless of racial/ethnic affiliation, have access to college counselors, the majority of URMs have never met with their advisor. Due to the fact that many of De Anza's URM students are first generation, low-income college students with limited or no academic network ties, deadlines on college admissions, the process of applications, and requirements of admission are not likely transferred from parent to student. Therefore, if they are not receiving this information from the school, it is likely that they may not be receiving it at all. On the other hand, the majority of Non-URM students have met with their college advisor more than once during the academic year, indicating that they have a stronger knowledge base to support their academic career. We can see this confidence reflected in their feelings of college readiness, especially while in the midst of the pandemic that has made academic performance increasingly difficult.



UC Berkeley should seek to develop an 'off-campus community' by increasing interactions between local high school students and university campus representatives (staff, graduate students, and undergraduate students) who identify as URM.

Due to the pandemic, students have limited access to after school tutoring services, study halls, and peer support, leaving many to rely on their own self-learning or to access parents for support for which the education system was not designed. However, this experience becomes more difficult for URM students, as only two thirds of their parents have completed at most a high school diploma. This effect can be viewed in their feelings of readiness to attend college immediately after completing high school. Although the majority feel prepared, still 48 out of 100 URMs have feelings of ambivalence or uncertainty towards attending a university upon graduation or do not feel prepared at all. These same feelings are reflected in their perceptions of the UC Berkeley campus climate. Removed from their own campus and academic setting, many students have been distanced from any future academic setting, especially one so prestigious as UC Berkeley. With the shift to remote learning, there is simply less of a climate with no current in-person campus. Feelings of loss and isolation may have shaped their perceptions of any

school, especially a university that they may feel out of reach, beyond their academic performance, family background, and ethnic representation.

Regarding the challenges facing students due to the ill-equipped college process, we are seeing an association of the effect of disparities in support from college advisors. It is possible that the preparedness to attend a university immediately upon graduation stems from an aggregation of the support they have received over the current and previous academic years. This reality begs a question regarding the type of students who are empowered to succeed in high school and the type of students who are allowed to fail. Even still, a greater proportion of URM students are prepared

to attend college than are applying to UC Berkeley. This affiliation is associated with those who feel racially and ethnically represented at UC Berkeley, who are encouraged to apply to UC Berkeley, and who are guided in another direction. Because student's perceptions of higher education are built

from their experiences, it is imperative that we change the narratives of URM students. No longer should a lack of support be associated with racial and ethnic minorities. Due to the fact that educated caregivers, positive social networks with affiliated universities, and regular meetings with college advisors are associated with positive perceptions of campus climate and potential applications to UC Berkeley, we should look to address this disparity as it is related to the groups who are likely to apply to and enroll in UC Berkeley.

UC Berkeley has a role to play in the shaping of its future campus community. To improve campus climate as well as URM, low-income, first-generation matriculation, UC Berkeley should seek to develop an "off-campus community" by increasing interactions between local high school students and university campus representatives (staff, graduate students, and undergraduate students) who identify as URM. Such interactions could improve URM, low-income, first-generation college students' social capital and perceptions of racial/ethnic campus representation as well as the level of comfort at UC Berkeley. In addition,

to prepare and engage these students, UC Berkeley should seek to strengthen existing relationships between university and county partners to promote and expand existing preparatory programs that help students in the application process, increase social and cultural capital, and introduce students to campus resources before attending the university. Such actions could prove to shape our campus community as we strive for excellence and equity, providing opportunity, hope, and a space where all students can succeed and belong.

Limitations

The findings of this study have to be seen in light of some limitations. Due to COVID-19, we were unable to deliver questionnaires in person as we had initially intended, thus causing a delay in data collection and prolonging the time individuals had to respond. Consequently, it made operations difficult as all of WCCUSD was adapting to a new online learning environment.

Our challenges expanded to include the assessment of our population. Our intention to investigate graduating seniors attending WCCUSD was not fully measured, as we did not include a year in high school variable in the questionnaire. As a result, we were unable to confirm whether graduating seniors were the respondents. However, we do not feel this detracts from our findings as we were able to measure perceptions of as well as possible application and yield to UC Berkeley. Furthermore, our surveys were distributed to senior English and/or Homeroom instructors; therefore, the method of survey distribution has provided us with a measure of assuredness regarding our study population. Future research should provide a class variable indicating high school year and should investigate the impacts of COVID-19 as well as the availability and use of electronic-resources on high school campuses.

Other limitations include the different variable sample sizes, which made establishing relationships between variables difficult, and could be due to our method of online survey distribution. Because WCCUSD College and Career and Secondary Programs Lead Allison Hue shared the survey with high school principals during a transition to a new learning system, there is a possibility that students and staff were not willing or able to participate due to lack of interest or lack of compatible

technology to take the survey. Nevertheless, we received results from one of our four high schools, De Anza High School. Because our survey only reached De Anza High School seniors, we are not able to generalize our results beyond our study population to the greater West Contra Costa Unified School District. Although our team connected with different stakeholders within the district to survey other schools, only De Anza submitted a sufficient number of responses. With these limitations in mind, our findings are still well-supported by and align with previous research.

Furthermore, our survey relies on self-reported data, so potential sources of bias that could occur should be noted: response bias, recall bias, and surrogate-reporting bias (parent education completion). A concern for privacy, feelings of embarrassment for family or income status, or a lack of representation in the topic of higher education may have resulted in a non-response bias. However, because our survey was administered and collected anonymously via an online format, this method provided a greater amount of privacy and, thus, is likely to have mitigated these biases. In regards to recall bias, students did not have to remember information beyond this academic year; therefore, their responses are likely accurate and the results valid. Lastly, as a surrogate reporter, students' suppositions were likely accurate in reporting parents' education levels according to the aggregated levels in our report. Those who were unsure of their parent/caregiver's highest level of education completion likely did not have access to the parent's network or college information that could have assisted them through the application process. Therefore, the analysis of the possible effect from an absence of resources and support would not have differed.

Lastly, instead of asking students if they discussed UC Berkeley with their counselors, the survey should have also asked whether students wanted to apply to Berkeley, intended to apply, or had already applied. Including this other question would have provided a clearer understanding of all student behavior/intentions rather than of only those who met with counselors. However, in lieu of the demographics of the school and limited application experience of first-generation college students, it is likely that students who did not meet with a college advisor during the academic year did not apply to UC Berkeley.

Further Research

Future research should examine whether college preparatory programs affect URM and first-generation college students: (1) application and yield rates to UC Berkeley, (2) feelings of college readiness, and (3) perceptions of UC Berkeley campus climate. Some programs oriented to URMs that can be strengthened with the help of UC Berkeley include, but are not limited to: having multiple points of connection through outreach programs and providing resources to college advisors in order to expand the already-existent college support base. In addition, intense outreach should be done at every target school within WCCUSD, to gather more survey respondents, and a prize drawing should be offered to increase student participation. Lastly, focus groups should be implemented at each school to discuss the other possible challenges faced by students that are unique to each high school population. These focus groups should also explore reasons for the “Neutral” variable regarding their perspectives of UC Berkeley campus climate.

Conclusion

Our study identified two major factors that may impact a De Anza student’s decision to apply to attend UC Berkeley. First, we found that URM students were more likely to be first-generation students, to have poorer perceptions of campus climate, feel less prepared for college and to have fewer conversations regarding applications to UC Berkeley. These observations are likely impacted most by the first-generation identity since research shows that guardians who have a bachelor’s degree or higher are able to assist their child in attaining social capital, have personal experiences that provide resources to prepare for college, to apply to various universities, and to navigate the cultural climate of the institution. At De Anza High school, most URM parents do not hold a bachelors or higher; therefore, these students likely do not have their caregiver’s assistance in pursuing higher education. This requires De Anza URMs to seek other support; however, there appears to be a disconnect for URM students in pursuing support from college advisors. As a result, the major variable of support from college counselors is vital, especially for first-generation college students, and

the absence of this support creates a gap in the groups who receive encouragement from college counselors regarding higher education, especially prestigious higher education like UC Berkeley. This may, in fact, guide who chooses to attend college immediately upon graduation and determine whether UC Berkeley is an option. As students make these decisions, campus climate, including a student’s racial and ethnic representation and feelings of comfort, will impact university selection. Consequently, feelings of ambivalence and full disagreement should not satisfy us as a campus community, and we should strive to connect with all students, including racial minorities at De Anza who are disproportionately first-generation college students.

Strides to Pursue

UC Berkeley is making strides in increased student diversity, specifically with the most recent student admissions for the 2020-2021 admissions cycle. However, UC Berkeley action should not end with admissions. Rather, endorsing and financially supporting local preparatory programs that target neighboring high schools may play a crucial role in introducing local URM and first-generation students to agents of socialization within the professional and academic realm. As a top tier public university, UC Berkeley can provide marginalized, Bay Area students with resources to attend prestigious schools located within their community and a diverse number of staff and students to feel represented on campus.

Appendix

Figures and Tables

FIGURE 1

<i>De Anza High School: Student Variables</i>	% URM Respondents (N)	% Non-URM Respondents (N)
Descriptive Statistics		
<i>Parent/Caregiver College Completion</i>	(143)	(72)
<i>High School or Less</i>	64%	42%
<i>Some College</i>	17%	24%
<i>Bachelor’s Degree or More</i>	19%	34%
<i>Type of Household</i>	(143)	(71)
<i>Two-Parent</i>	64%	76%
<i>Single-Parent</i>	24%	14%
<i>Other</i>	12%	10%
<i>Low Income Status</i>	(144)	(71)
<i>Yes</i>	59%	62%
<i>No</i>	41%	38%
<i>Primary Language Spoken at Home</i>	(144)	(83)
<i>English</i>	75%	73%
<i>Non-English</i>	25%	27%
College Advisor Support		
<i>College Advisor Accessibility</i>	(137)	(68)
<i>Access to a College Advisor</i>	79%	82%
<i>No Access to a College Advisor</i>	21%	18%
<i>Contact with a College Advisor</i>	(124)	(64)
<i>More Than Once</i>	37%	51%
<i>Once</i>	12%	16%
<i>Never</i>	51%	33%

FIGURE 2

<i>De Anza High School: UC Berkeley Variables</i>	% URM Respondents (N)	% Non-URM Respondents (N)
Perceptions of UC Berkeley Campus Climate		
<i>Feel that Their Race/Ethnicity is Represented at UC Berkeley</i>	(111)	(62)
<i>Agree</i>	34%	53%
<i>Neutral</i>	61%	40%
<i>Disagree</i>	5%	7%
<i>Feel Comfortable on UC Berkeley Campus</i>	(111)	(62)
<i>Agree</i>	42%	50%
<i>Neutral</i>	57%	42%
<i>Disagree</i>	1%	8%
College Readiness		
<i>Ready to Attend College</i>	(111)	(62)
<i>Agree</i>	51%	64%
<i>Neutral</i>	34%	23%
<i>Disagree</i>	15%	13%
<i>Number of AP Courses Taken</i>	(132)	(67)
0	54%	45%
1-3	37%	33%
4-6	8%	21%
7+	1%	1%
Applying to UC Berkeley		
<i>Discussed Applying to UCB with College Advisor Given Advisor Access</i>	(58)	(43)
<i>No</i>	64%	53%
<i>Yes</i>	25%	33%
<i>Don't Remember</i>	10%	14%
<i>Meetings with College Advisors that Led to Applications to UCB Given UCB Conversations</i>	(57)	(43)
<i>No</i>	65%	56%
<i>Yes</i>	17.5%	23%
<i>Unsure</i>	17.5%	21%

TABLE A1

Parent or Caregiver Education Completion

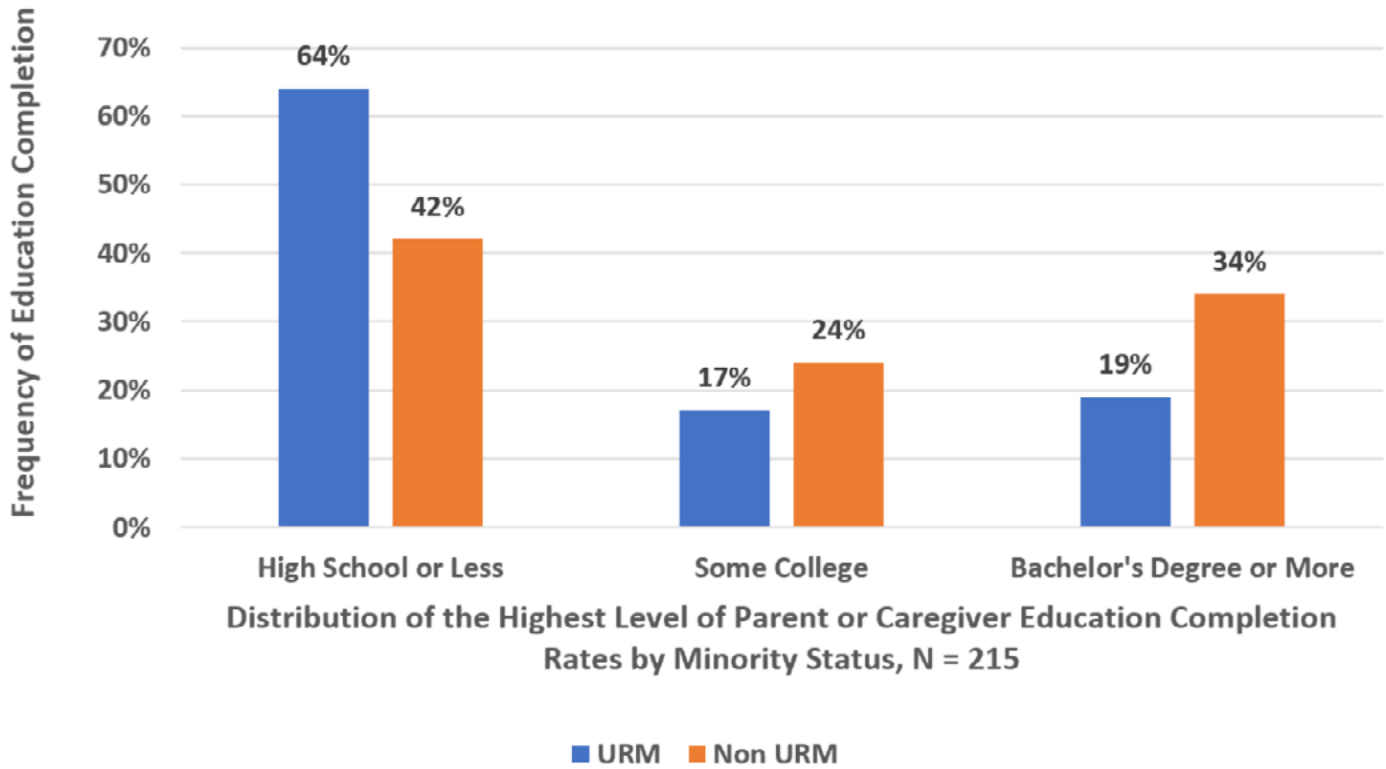


TABLE A2

College Advisor Accessibility

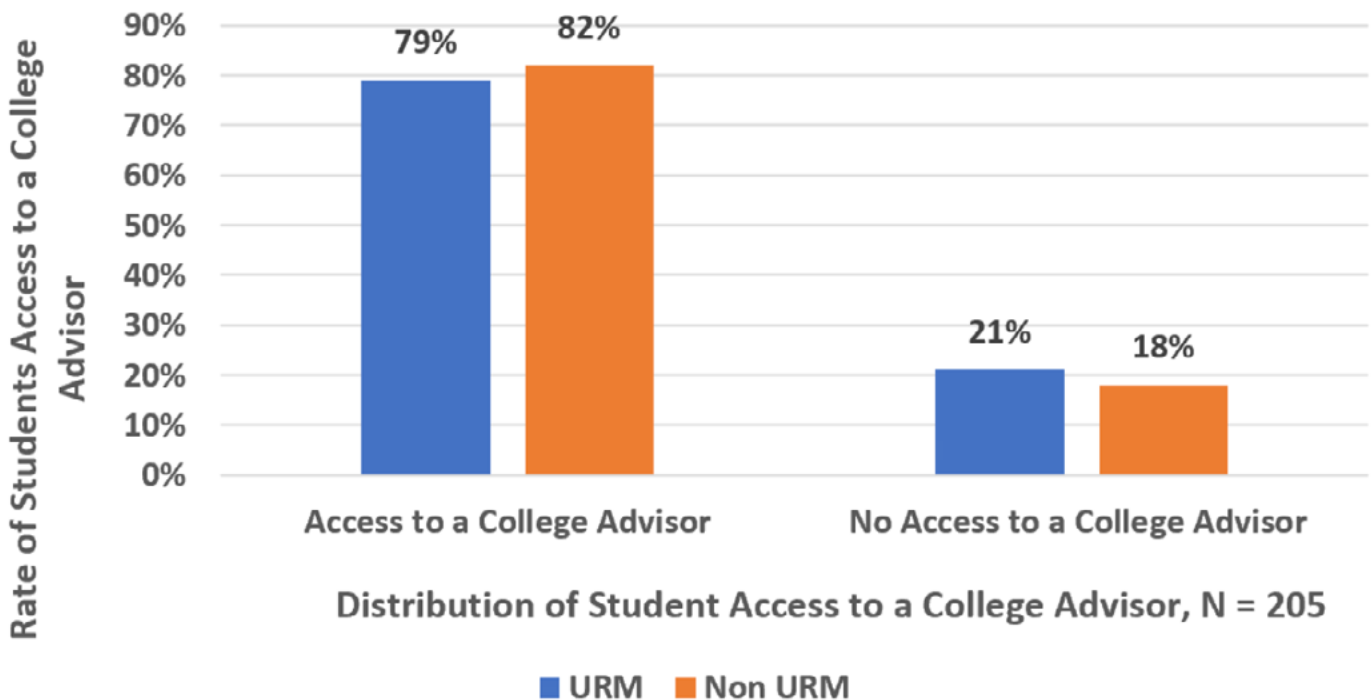
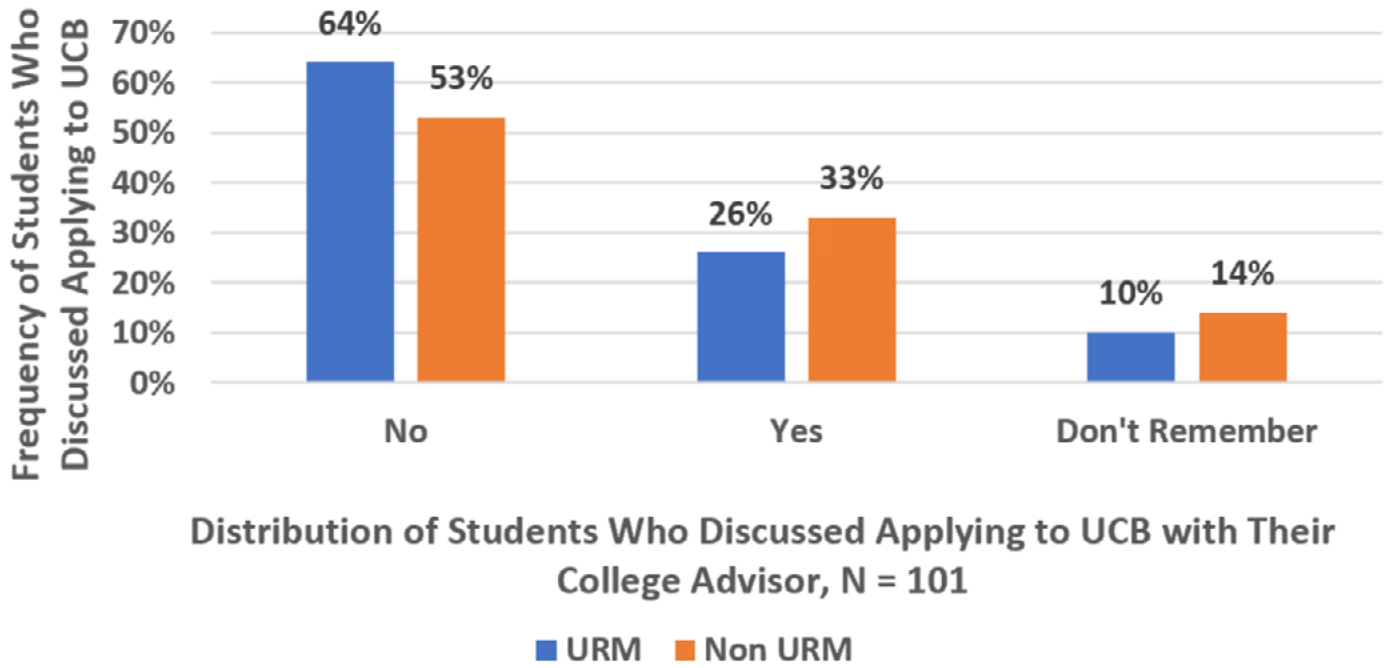


TABLE A3

Discussing UC Berkeley



Acknowledgments

We want to acknowledge that during these difficult times due to COVID-19 and hate crimes against our community members, we as a campus community are constantly striving to help our student population thrive in the face of adversity. Continuously and regularly, UC Berkeley needs to keep conducting extensive research on diversity and belonging on campus as well as take action and responsibility for the reported results. We are aware that although UC Berkeley may be a top public university and research institution, we still have strides to make in regards to accepting and welcoming people from all walks of life.

These strides are made in lieu of UC Berkeley's position on the land of the Ohlone people. As members of the campus community, we acknowledge their connection to this region and our opportunity to live, work, and learn in their traditional homeland. We also acknowledge the persistence of Ohlone people and their rights to recognition and self-determination.

This project was made possible from the support of our faculty sponsor, Dr. David Harding who met with the Nav2Cal research team throughout the conception of the research question, creation of the literature review, the development and distribution of the survey, and the formation of the report. Guiding our work, he directed the project, provided feedback, and reviewed our drafts.

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About IRLE

The Institute for Research on Labor and Employment is an interdisciplinary institute at the University of California, Berkeley that connects world-class research with policy to improve workers' lives, communities, and society. IRLE promotes better understanding of the conditions, policies, and institutions that affect the well-being of workers and their families and communities by informing public debate with hard evidence about inequality, the economy, and the nature of work.

Endnotes

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