

How Far Do Our Students Travel to CSU Fullerton?

Results from Campus Climate Survey December 1998

Research Report, May 1999

Figure 1

"On a Typical Day, How Many Miles Do You Travel One-Way to Get to Campus?"

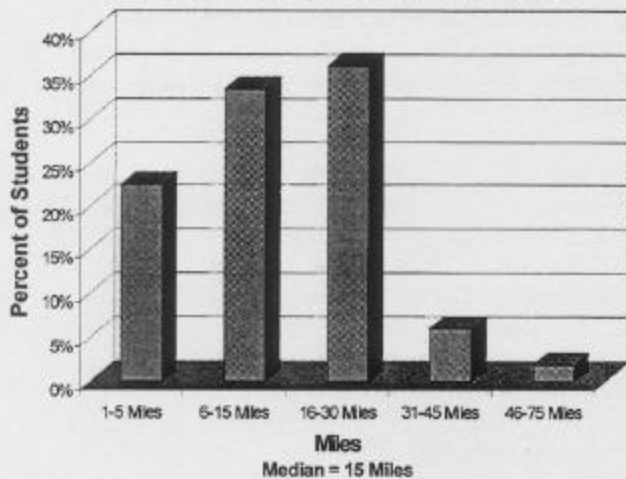
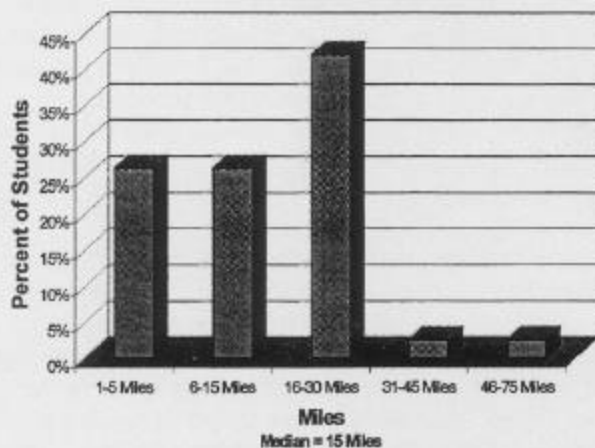


Figure 2

"On a Typical Day, How Many Miles Do You Travel One-Way to Get to Campus?"
First-Time Freshmen



In Brief

Cal State Fullerton students travel an average of 16.1 miles one-way to campus or the approximate distance between CSU Fullerton and Huntington Beach, Chino, Downey, or Covina. Students who have declared a major travel an average of 4.7 fewer miles in their commute than students who have not declared a major. Commuting distance is predictive of student response to the item on Involvement in Student Activities: Students who travel farther are less involved in Student Activities than students who do not travel as far.

Purpose

To learn about the commuting demands on Cal State Fullerton students.

History

The Campus Climate Survey is administered once a year. Items regarding commuting have not been asked previously on the Climate Survey.

Method

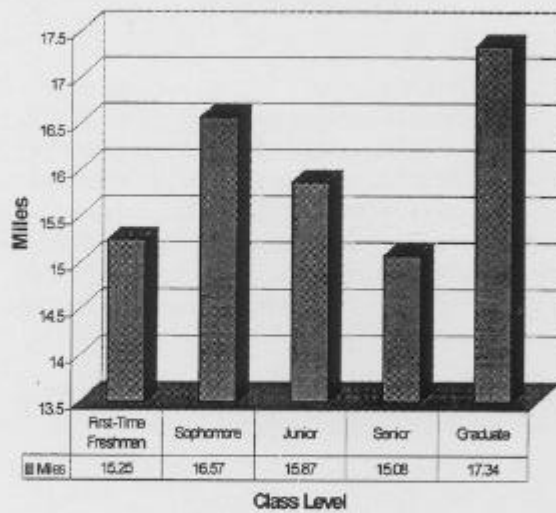
Based on an extraction performed by Admissions and Records, the Social Science Research Center contacted randomly selected students at all class levels, 538 of whom completed telephone interviews. The survey was conducted using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) software over a period of 6 weeks in late Fall 1998. At least 10 "callbacks" were made before dropping a student from the sample. Response rate was 86 percent. Underrepresented ethnic groups were oversampled, resulting in a non-proportional stratified random sample which supported accurate comparisons between ethnic categories. Post-stratification population weights were calculated and applied to correct deviations between the distribution of characteristics in our sample and the total student population for only those comparisons involving ethnic groups. Because these findings were obtained from a random sample of students, they may be generalized to all students at Cal State Fullerton, with a margin of error of +/- 2%.

The Survey Item profiled in this report was: "On a typical day, how many miles do you travel ONE-WAY to get to campus?"

Results

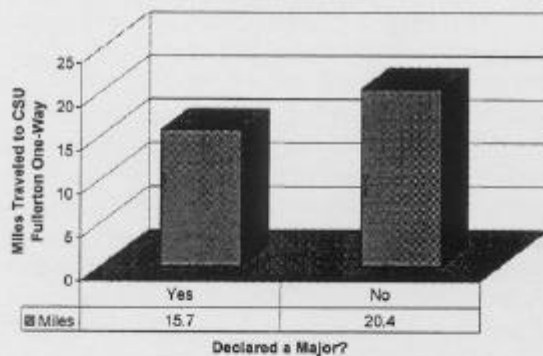
Overall, students travel an average 16.1 miles, $sd = 11.91$. The shortest distance traveled was 0 miles and the largest was 75 miles. The median distance traveled, across all students surveyed, was 15 miles. Figure 1 shows the number of miles driven on a one-way commute by all students in the sample. Figure 2 shows the same, but for First-Time Freshmen only. Miles are shown in ranges.

Figure 3
Miles Traveled One-Way to Get to Campus
by Class Level



Note: Reported commuting distances do not differ statistically.

Figure 4
Declared a Major and Miles Traveled to
CSU Fullerton



By Class Level: First Time Freshmen travel an average of 15.3 miles per one-way trip, $sd = 11.2$, range = 0 to 50 miles. The one-way commute for Seniors is 15.1 miles on the average, $sd = 12.1$, range = 0 to 75. Graduates travel 17.3 miles on the average. These commuting distances do not differ statistically. See Figure 3.

By Gender and Age: Males travel, on the average, 15.8 miles to campus and females travel 16.2 miles. These distances are not different statistically. There is no relation between number of miles traveled and age of student (r not different from zero).

By Ethnicity: The one-way commute ranges from a low of 14.7 miles per trip for "Other" ethnic students to a high of 18.0 miles for African-American students. These commuting distances do not differ statistically between groups, due to the large variance in miles traveled.

Declared a Major?: Students who have declared a major traveled fewer miles, $M = 15.7$, than those who have not declared a major, $M = 20.4$ miles, $F(1, 520) = 5.61, p = .018$. See Figure 4.

Non-Travellers: Ten students in our sample of 538 did not travel at all. This number is near the expected frequency, given that 396 students live in the Residence Halls.

Discussion: What does Commuting Distance Predict?

We studied the relationship between the number of miles traveled to Cal State Fullerton, on the one hand, and a number of Campus Climate variables. Correlational analysis revealed an inverse relationship between number of miles in the students' commute and their involvement in student activities, $r(517) = -.16, p < .001$: The farther students drive, the less they are involved in student activities (although the effect is weak).

Commuting Distance was not predictive of other measures, such as Hours Spent Studying, or Hours Worked for Wages, Age of student, or "What Choice Was Cal State Fullerton?" These Pearson correlations were not significantly different from zero. Presumably, commuting distance was not a factor in choosing Cal State Fullerton, at least for the students we surveyed. We cannot speculate on the role of commuting distance in the attractiveness of CSUF for those students who chose not to attend CSUF (they were not in our sample).

Correlations between Miles Traveled to CSUF and "I Get the Runaround," "I am Proud To Attend CSUF," and "I am Happy with the Food Service" were also not different from zero. Therefore the commuting nature of our commuter campus does not seem to lessen the quality of the time students spend on the campus. That is, students who drive farther do not find the staff less helpful, etc. One might expect students who travel farther to be less satisfied with their schedule, with the food service, and with other aspects of campus life, but the data do not bear this out.

CAL STATE FULLERTON
STUDENT AFFAIRS

We thank Dr. Greg Robinson, The Social Science Research Center, and The Office of Admissions and Records.