

**ABSTRACT**

***Immigrant University: The Dynamics of Race, Major and Socioeconomic Characteristics at the University of California***

**John Douglass, CSHE, UC Berkeley  
Heinke Roebken, Oldenburg, Germany  
Gregg Thomson, OSR, UC Berkeley**

The University of California has long been a major source of socioeconomic mobility in California. Recent UCUES data indicates that more than half the undergraduate students in the UC system have at least one parent who is an immigrant. The percentage is even higher at UC Berkeley. What do such a high percentage of students with recent immigrant backgrounds tell us about the University of California and socioeconomic mobility? How is it influencing the academy and the academic and civic experience of undergraduates who are largely first or second-generation immigrants?

This working paper tests the hypothesis that immigrant students tend to come from professional and well-educated families, are career oriented and strongly academically engaged, but are not civically engaged. Using the Berkeley campus as an example, this working paper explores the dynamics of race and ethnicity, academic major, and the differing socioeconomic backgrounds of immigrant students, in comparison to “native” students. This study indicates a complex set of differences between various “generations” of immigrant students that reflect historical patterns among earlier waves of immigration to the United States in their desire of higher education; that the startling number and range of students from different ethnic, racial, cultural, and economic backgrounds point to the need for an expanded notion of diversity beyond older racial and ethnic paradigms; and while there is growing numbers of immigrants from different parts of the world, and often from lower income families, most have relatively high levels of socioeconomic capital, described as a variety of factors, but most prominently the education level of their parents and family. Students at Berkeley who come from lower income families and have relatively low socioeconomic capital (in particular Chicano/Latinos) do well academically, only marginally less well than those with higher rates of educational capital. At the same time, they also spend more time in paid employment, spend approximately the same amount of time as Euro Americans studying and going to class, and have relatively high rates of overall satisfaction with their social and academic experience.