



Students Experience in the Research University (SERU) Project and Consortium

<http://cshe.berkeley.edu/research/seru/>

Center for Studies in Higher Education
University of California – Berkeley

THE SERU ADVANTAGE

Based at the Center for Studies in Higher Education, the SERU Survey is an instrument specifically designed to provide data on the student experience in research universities. The SERU Research Consortium includes all nine of the University of California undergraduate campuses and six other AAU institutions.

The SERU Survey Advantage includes:

■ **Broad Integration Resulting Data into Reports and Policy in Participating Campuses**

Hundreds of studies have been conducted using the SERU Survey, including reports to the UC Regents' Long-range Guidance Team, Mental Health Committee, Study Group on Diversity, and Accountability Task Force. Campus uses include accreditation reports and studies on such topics as transfer students, veterans, women in science, "the sophomore slump," and students on Pell grants.

■ **A Proven Census Approach Tailored to Each Campus and Every Student**

The SERU Survey has been operating as a census, with high response rates, since 2003. The census covers students in all four years of attendance. Mailings and data systems have a proven track record of success. Although centrally administered, the SERU Survey looks like a local administration because it uses campus-specific email messages and login pages. Upper-division surveys display each student's major(s) and to require verification of the student's major(s) of record. Every inquiry and concern expressed about the survey is answered personally and promptly. Data collection continues into the summer to improve response rates.

■ **Superior Content for the Research University Context**

The SERU Survey asks multiple questions on campus climate, student research experiences, other study enhancement activities (such as Study Abroad), civic and social engagement activities, academic and non-academic time use, post-graduate plans, and expanded student demographic characteristics. The SERU Survey is true to the "DNA" of the research university experience.

■ **A Better Approach to Assessing Students' Educational Experiences**

The SERU Survey provides both beginning college and current assessments in 15 skills areas. It includes separate assessments of majors, course variety, class size, teaching, advising, and student services. It also includes open-ended questions asking students about how best to improve undergraduate education and the sources of important personal changes during college.

■ **Support for Campus Efforts to Improve Undergraduate Education**

The Survey is based on a collegial model oriented to improvement of undergraduate education on each campus, not external rankings. This model includes support for research through provision of SERU Survey data to researchers, an annual research symposium, and regular consultation with campus offices of institutional research and undergraduate education.

■ **Comparisons between Majors and Subgroups Using the "Academic Profile" Tool**

The "Profile" allows for instantaneous comparisons of student learning experiences between majors on the same and comparison campuses. It also allows for subgroup comparisons. UCB, UCSC, and UCSD use the "Profile" in undergraduate program review. Other campuses will likely follow.

■ **In-Depth Examination of Issues through Campus Modules**

One-fifth of respondents complete campus-specific modules that provide information on issues of high local interest. Past campus modules have examined issues ranging from campus policing to educational interactions on global issues.

■ **Easy-to-Develop Links to Entry, Exit and Alumni Surveys**

SERU Survey data can be readily appended to entry, exit and alumni surveys, allowing campuses to discover how the educational experiences of their students are connected to outcomes at graduation, in graduate education, and in the labor market.

■ **Comparisons between UC Campuses and AAU Institutions**

Current non-UC members of the SERU Consortium include: Rutgers University, the University of Florida, the University of Michigan, the University of Minnesota, the University of Oregon, and the University of Pittsburgh. Other AAU institutions are becoming aware of the SERU Advantage.

UCUES is approved as a measure of student educational outcomes in the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA)