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The 2009 UNLV Campus Sustainability Survey Report

Mark J. Salvaggio

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, salvagg5@unlv.nevada.edu

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The 2009 UNLV Campus Sustainability Survey Report

In an effort to understand environmental awareness, concerns, practices, and values at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), the Urban Sustainability Initiative (USI) conducted its first campus environmental sustainability survey during the months of March, April, and May 2009. This pilot study was developed to collect baseline data from students, faculty, and staff members at the UNLV campus to be used in a longitudinal study that assesses attitudes and preferences towards environmental sustainability issues. This research project is guided by one of the major goals of USI, which involves reaching out to the academic community to help find workable solutions to the challenges facing the Las Vegas metro area, specifically in regards to environmental issues. This long-term study focuses on achieving campus environmental sustainability at UNLV.

Importance of the Survey

There is a need for a UNLV campus environmental sustainability survey, which provides the voice of the academic community. Over the last few years, other universities have also developed campus sustainability surveys. Many of these surveys and reports can be found on the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education website (www.aashe.org). These include surveys developed and administered at Harvard University, Michigan State University, University of Colorado at Boulder, University of Connecticut, University of Hawaii at Manoa, and Wichita State University. These surveys have focused on understanding environmental attitudes, environmental habits, evaluating campus awareness of global climate change, and opinions about campus environmental initiatives.

UNLV Survey Themes

The major themes of the 2009 UNLV Campus Sustainability Survey include the following:

- Background Information on UNLV Respondents
- General Concerns, Practices, and Knowledge, about Environmental Issues
- Achieving Environmental Sustainability: Ranking Priority of Responsibility
- UNLV Campus and Environmental Sustainability: Campus Curriculum and Operations
- Environmental Values (NEP Scale)

Survey Methods & Data

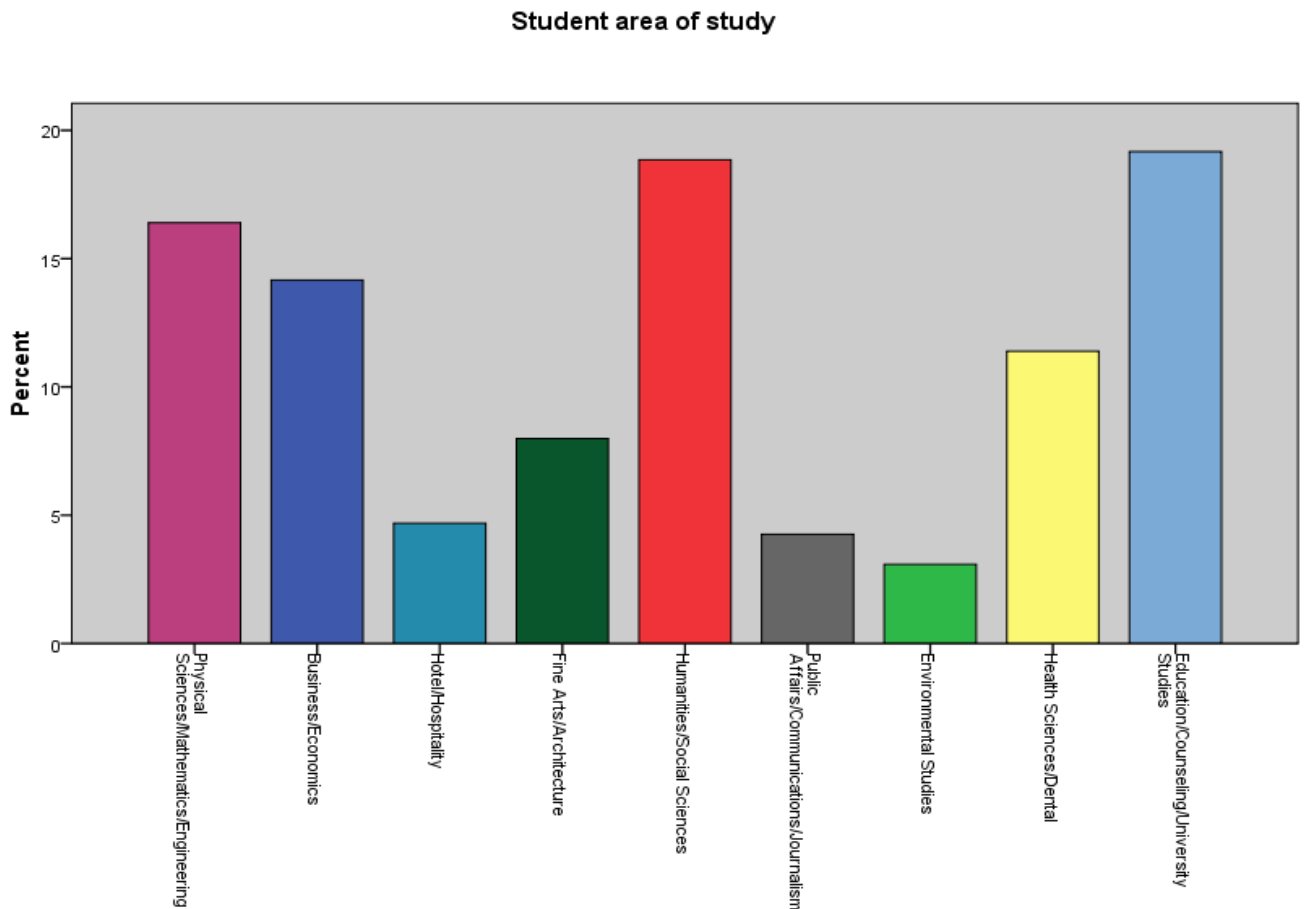
A web-based survey was created using SurveyMonkey, which was then administered to UNLV students, faculty, and staff members. Respondents were obtained by posting information about taking the survey and the survey link on "UNLV Today," which delivers information daily via e-mail to students, faculty, and staff members about upcoming events, training, benefit changes, and organizational changes. The same method was used on the "UNLV RAVE network," which delivers Rebel Announcements via a weekly e-newsletter to UNLV students. Finally, in order to reach students who might not otherwise have viewed the RAVE announcement, the survey was e-mailed directly to all current students with a UNLV e-mail account, using a list generated by the Admissions and Records Department.

Sample

The final sample included 939 students, 51 faculty members, 69 professional staff members, and 33 classified staff members. The student sample included 110 freshmen and sophomores, 185 juniors, 325 seniors, and 324 graduate students. Within the student sample there were 550 females and 386 males. The mean age was 28 years old among students. The primary student ethnicity included 599 Caucasians, 92 Hispanics, 14 African-Americans, 108 Asians, 34 Pacific Islanders, and 31 other races.

Survey Results

The following results are based on descriptive information about the student sample. Students' areas of study were grouped accordingly and the following bar chart displays the breakdown in percent. This bar chart shows variation in distribution among the grouped areas of study. However, the groups "Education/Counseling/University Studies," "Humanities/Social Sciences," "Physical Sciences/Mathematics/Engineering," and "Business/Economics," provide the majority of student respondents.



Concerns and Knowledge about Environmental Issues

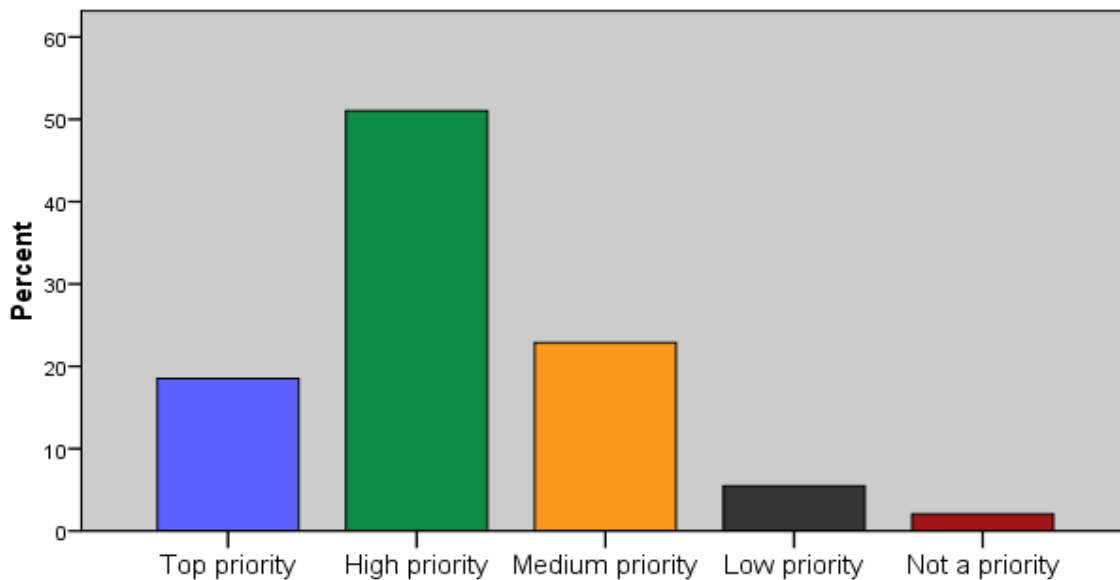
The majority of respondents have concerns and knowledge about environmental issues.

- **78.4%** of respondents are concerned about global climate change
- **89.4%** of respondents are concerned about future water shortages in Southern Nevada
- **78%** of respondents are familiar with the term “environmental sustainability” (NOTE: respondents were able to provide their definition of environmental sustainability in an open-ended question)

UNLV Campus and Environmental Sustainability

The majority of respondents feel that environmental sustainability should be a high priority as a campus-wide goal.

Environmental sustainability as a campus-wide goal



Campus Curriculum

There is strong support among respondents favoring environmental sustainability as a theme discussed in new student orientation. However, there is almost an even split among respondents favoring and not favoring environmental sustainability as an educational theme in departments and as a required undergraduate course.

- **76.5%** of respondents favor including environmental sustainability as a theme for new student orientation
- **59.5%** of respondents favor departments identifying environmental sustainability as an educational theme
- **53.1%** of respondents favor a required undergraduate course for credit on environmental sustainability (NOTE: the higher a respondent’s education level, the more support)

Campus Operations

Most respondents feel that UNLV is currently meeting its responsibility in recycling and desert landscaping, whereas there is about an even split among respondents who feel that UNLV is currently meeting and not meeting its responsibility in green building design and water conservation. However, the majority of respondents feel that UNLV is not currently meeting its responsibility in greater use of renewable energy.

- **77.1%** of respondents agree that UNLV is currently meeting its responsibility in “recycling”
- **74.8%** of respondents agree that UNLV is currently meeting its responsibility in “desert landscaping”
- **50.4%** of respondents agree that UNLV is currently meeting its responsibility in “green building design”
- **49.9%** of respondents agree that UNLV is currently meeting its responsibility in “water conservation”
- **36.8%** of respondents agree that UNLV is currently meeting its responsibility in “greater use of renewable energy”

Rebel Recycling

Overall, the majority of respondents are familiar with the UNLV recycling program and show support for recycling on campus, which also suggests that recycling has a meaningful impact on Southern Nevada’s environment.

- **79%** of respondents are familiar with the UNLV recycling program
- **75.1%** of respondents agree that it is easy to find the appropriate recycling containers on campus
- **95.1%** of respondents agree that people on campus would recycle more if every trash can had recycling bins next to them
- **85.5%** of respondents agree that the money and effort UNLV puts into recycling has a meaningful impact on Southern Nevada’s environment

Environmental Values (NEP scale)

The final results are based on inferential statistical analyses showing statistically significant relationships ($p < .05$) among respondents’ characteristics and their environmental values. The 15-item NEP scale determines level of pro-environmental attitude. By using a step-wise model, ordinary least squares regression was used to determine significant relationships. The following information was found:

- Graduate students are more likely to have pro-environmental values than undergraduate students
- Female respondents are more likely to have pro-environmental values than male respondents
- Non-Caucasian respondents are more likely to have pro-environmental values than Caucasian respondents

Discussion/Long-Term Goal

Although this study may not be used to generalize about the student, faculty, and staff member populations at UNLV, it does provide a diverse sample large enough to show trends about attitudes toward environmental issues on the UNLV campus. This study serves as a pilot study so that future studies can make comparisons to the base-line data collected. The survey will be revised slightly, since some questions were not as clear as originally expected. However, the majority of the survey will remain the same so that future survey results can be compared. The long-term goal of this study is to administer the survey on an on-going basis (1 or 2-year waves). Finally, further sample strategies will be used to increase the sample size and improve validity and generalization (note: the results of the survey were not weighted to represent the true ratio of students, faculty, and staff members at UNLV).

For questions regarding the survey, findings, and report, please contact:

Mark J. Salvaggio
Ph.D. Student/ USI GA
Department of Sociology
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
salvagg5@unlv.nevada.edu
(702) 895-0373