

School Spirit in Commuter Students vs. On Campus Resident Students
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School Spirit in Commuter Students vs. On Campus Resident Students

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Executive Summary

In partnership with the SEEDS sustainability program, we were tasked with researching which campus user group is more likely to report more or less school spirit, and reporting findings to our client Shiloh Bouvette of the Community Development Department within the Campus and Community Planning Office at the University of British Columbia. We distributed a survey questionnaire pertaining to school spirit and campus involvement to 160 full-time students at UBC. We attempted to ascertain which factors might influence school spirit at UBC and how to ultimately boost it. We found that there was no significant correlation between whether a student was a commuter or resident, and their reported level of school spirit.

Research question and hypothesis

Based on what was requested of us by our client, we researched which campus user group is more likely to report more or less school spirit. We hypothesized that commuter students would have differing levels of school spirit than students who live on campus residences.

Methods

Participants

Our participants consisted of 160 UBC students. After filtering for full-time students, $n=140$. Our sample study consisted of 66 males, 72 females, 1 gender variant / non-conforming, and 1 participant who chose not to answer, with a mean age of 20.79. 77 of the participants were commuters, whereas 60 were campus residents.

Conditions

Our main conditions compared in the study are commuter vs. campus residents.

Measures

We operationally defined 'school spirit' as 'a feeling of emotional connection to and pride in the UBC community and culture as a whole', and 'involvement' as 'hours spent taking part in UBC-related (faculty, club, sorority/fraternity, etc.) extra-curricular activities or employment at UBC.'

Procedure

To carry out our research, we circulated an online survey questionnaire to the UBC community. We distributed the survey via the Office for Regional and International Community Engagement here at UBC, as well as social media platforms such as Facebook and Whatsapp. Five 10\$ gift cards were raffled as incentives to participate, courtesy of Ms. Bouvette and her office.

Results

When comparing the school spirit means of commuters ($M=2.92$, $S.D=.93$) and residents ($M=2.70$, $S.D=.86$), with a 95% confidence interval of the difference, we found that the p-value (.133) was much larger than our alpha of .05. Therefore, we were unable to conclude that there was any significant relationship between the emotional connection to the UBC community and whether or not one lived on campus or off campus.

In an attempt to find significant relationships between reported levels of school spirit and factors influencing student life on campus, we ran correlational analyses between School Spirit i.e. Q30 (emotional connection to UBC), and (Q15 strength of identification with one's faculty, Q22 motivation to succeed academically, Q33 and number of UBC sponsored events attended). We then compared the correlation scores between each group, Commuter or Resident, using a Fisher z test. All other correlations were negligible and statistically insignificant.

There is a positive moderate correlation between school spirit and identification with one's faculty that is statistically significant for both commuters and residents; commuters $r(72) = .36$, $p = .001$, residents $r(66) = .38$, $p = .002$. A Fisher z score of $-.09$ and $p = .92$ tells us there is no significant difference between the two groups.

Between school spirit and motivation to succeed academically, we found a positive moderate correlation that is statistically significant among commuters, but not residents. Commuters $r(72) = .45$, $p < .001$; residents $r(66) = -.04$, $p = .77$. A Fisher z score of 3.03 and $p = .002$ tells us there is a significant difference between the two groups.

There is a moderate negative correlation between School Spirit and number of events attended that is statistically significant for residents, but not commuters. Residents $r(62) = -.49$, $p < .001$, Commuters $r(71) = -.15$, $p = .19$. A Fisher z score of -3.98 and $p < .001$ tells us there is a significant difference between the two groups.

Discussion

While commuters and campus residents did not differ very much in terms of our measure of school spirit, differences between the two groups in how many of them voted in the last AMS election could suggest one group's stronger attachment to UBC. With 82.81% of campus residents voting in the most recent AMS elections compared to the 52.63% of commuters who reported voting, the 30.18% difference could potentially be explained by a variety of different factors. However, it does not necessarily mean that students that live on campus feel more connected to UBC or have more school spirit. The higher percentage of campus residents that voted might imply that residents feel more of a connection to UBC, and therefore find it more important that they should vote, but this is only supposition. The difference in numbers could also be explained by residents having increased exposure to AMS-related and promoted events simply through living on campus. Intentionality leaves a lot of room for ambiguity in how we can choose to interpret large differences in voter turnout between campus residents and commuters. Without being able to link the results from this question to a specific determining factor the responses suggest it is more within the self-interest campus residents to vote on campus related matters than for commuters. Therefore, one improvement for future studies could be to find out *why* there is a connection between voting turnout and where students live. We could do this by asking for specific reasons why students vote. For example, what their

motivation is, what implications they hope to make, how much research they do regarding candidates, etc.

Another limitation that needs to be addressed is how we calculated school spirit. Our understanding of the participant's level of school spirit was mostly obtained from one survey question. In the future, we would need to gather more information from the students in relation to this variable. Regarding the wording of the questionnaire, it may also be beneficial for our client to conduct a future study in which the term "school spirit" is avoided, and another term with the same operational definition as outlined in our original survey is used instead. It is possible that the term "school spirit" could have a strong sports-related connotation. This could affect participants' responses by evoking more sports-related responses.

Recommendations for your UBC client

Based on the results we obtained from the study, as well as some of the comments submitted by our participants, we have a number of recommendations for our UBC SEEDS client, Shiloh Bouvette. As our comparison between commuters and campus residents did not yield any particularly useful or significant results, it may be of interest to turn to the correlations between our operational definition of school spirit and the other variables measured on the survey. Our client could conduct further studies comparing levels of school spirit within participant faculties, and examine the relationship between each faculty and school spirit. This could lead to a deeper understanding of whether or not there are certain faculties that tend to be more involved or identify more with a greater UBC identity or spirit, and why. This could be expanded to compare other specific groups of UBC students, such as domestic vs. international, first year vs. second year vs. third year, etc., and students in clubs or not in clubs. By focusing on specific groups, results may be more beneficial and applicable.

In addition, by reviewing the open-ended responses to Q34 on the survey, our client can gauge what students are looking for to help them feel more connected with the UBC community and culture. Many students reported that if there were a wider variety of more affordable events and activities, they might have higher school spirit. Other students pointed out that if there were better advertising for UBC sporting events (which would generate a greater turnout) school spirit may be higher. As mentioned previously in the discussion section, we also believe that using different wording when referring to "school spirit" may yield different results, as the responses may be less sports-oriented. Access to free merchandise, food, drinks, etc. was also repeatedly mentioned. With this in mind, it would be beneficial for UBC to reach out to students in order to understand what sort of events and activities they would find interesting.

Another interesting finding obtained through the open-ended responses was a call for better mental health services at UBC by at least two participants. The fact that some students do not feel supported by the UBC health service system and reported that this may influence their feeling of school spirit is notable. By improving mental health services for students at UBC, students may feel more protected, included, and supported within the UBC community, thus creating a sense of trust and belonging and, perhaps in doing so, a higher level of school spirit.

Appendix

Survey Questions:

Q11 Are you a full time student at UBC (minimum 9 credits per term)?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q12 Are you a Domestic or International student?

Domestic (1)

International (2)

Foreign Exchange (1 term) (3)

Q30 How much of an emotional connection to, and pride in the UBC community and culture as a whole do you have?

A great deal (1)

A lot (2)

A moderate amount (3)

A little (4)

None at all (5)

Q7 To which gender identity do you most identify?

Male (1)

Female (2)

Transgender Male (3)

Transgender Female (4)

Gender Variant/ non-conforming (5)

Not Listed (6) _____

Prefer Not to Answer (7)

Q8 How old are you?

Q13 What year of study are you currently in?

1 (1)

2 (2)

3 (3)

4 (4)

4+ (5)

Graduate Student (6)

Q1 Do you live on campus in a Residence hall / housing complex, or do you commute to campus?

SCHOOL SPIRIT IN COMMUTER STUDENTS VS. ON CAMPUS RESIDENT STUDENTS

Commuter (1)

Resident (2)

Q2 How long does it take you to commute (minutes)?

Q9 As a commuter, on average how many hours per day do you spend on campus ?

Q10 As a campus resident, which housing complex do you live in?

Q14 What faculty are you currently in?

Q15 How closely do you identify with your faculty?

A great deal (1)

A lot (2)

A moderate amount (3)

A little (4)

None at all (5)

Q18 In an average week, how many hours do you think you spend working or volunteering ON campus?

0-5 (1)

6-10 (2)

11-15 (3)

16-20 (4)

21-25 (5)

26-30 (6)

31+ (7)

Q19 In an average week, how many hours do you think you spend working or volunteering OFF campus?

0-5 (1)

6-10 (2)

11-15 (3)

16-20 (4)

21-25 (5)

26-30 (6)

31+ (7)

Q20 In an average week, how many hours do you think you spend studying ON campus?

0-5 (1)

6-10 (2)

11-15 (3)

16-20 (4)

21-25 (5)

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26-30 (6)

31+ (7)

Q21 In an average week, how many hours do you think you spend studying OFF campus?

0-5 (1)

6-10 (2)

11-15 (3)

16-20 (4)

21-25 (5)

26-30 (6)

31+ (7)

Q22 Currently, how motivated are you to succeed academically?

A great deal (1)

A lot (2)

A moderate amount (3)

A little (4)

None at all (5)

Q24 How much do you agree with this statement - My academic success is a reflection of the pride I have in UBC?

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q27 How much of UBC is reflected in me?

A great deal (1)

A lot (2)

A moderate amount (3)

A little (4)

None at all (5)

Q28 How much am I reflected in UBC?

A great deal (1)

A lot (2)

A moderate amount (3)

A little (4)

None at all (5)

Q26 How much do you agree with the following statement? - UBC is an important reflection of who I am.

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

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Somewhat disagree (4)
Strongly disagree (5)

Q29 Which do you feel to be more important?

I am a part of UBC (1)
UBC is a part of me (2)

Q25 Do you own any UBC merchandise (clothing, stickers, accessories, etc.)?

Yes (1)
No (2)

Q31 Did you vote in the most recent AMS election (March 2017)?

Yes (1)
No (2)

Q32 How many UBC events have you attended this term (eg. Sporting events, UBC/AMS/Club sponsored Parties and Food Gatherings)?

Q33 How many UBC events did you attended in the last term (eg. Sporting events, UBC/AMS/Club sponsored Parties and Food Gatherings)?

Q34 What do you think would make you more involved and increase your UBC school spirit?

Q35 Please enter your email for a chance to win one of five \$10 Starbucks gift cards!

Q30 - How much of an emotional connection to, and pride in the UBC... Page Options

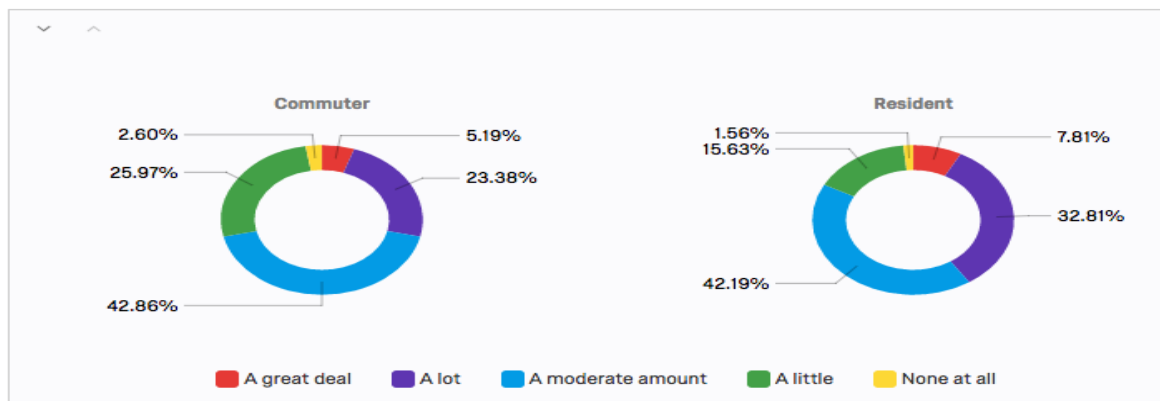


Figure 1: Q30 - How much of an emotional connection to, and pride in the UBC community and culture as a whole do you have?

SCHOOL SPIRIT IN COMMUTER STUDENTS VS. ON CAMPUS RESIDENT STUDENTS

Q15 - How closely do you identify with your faculty?

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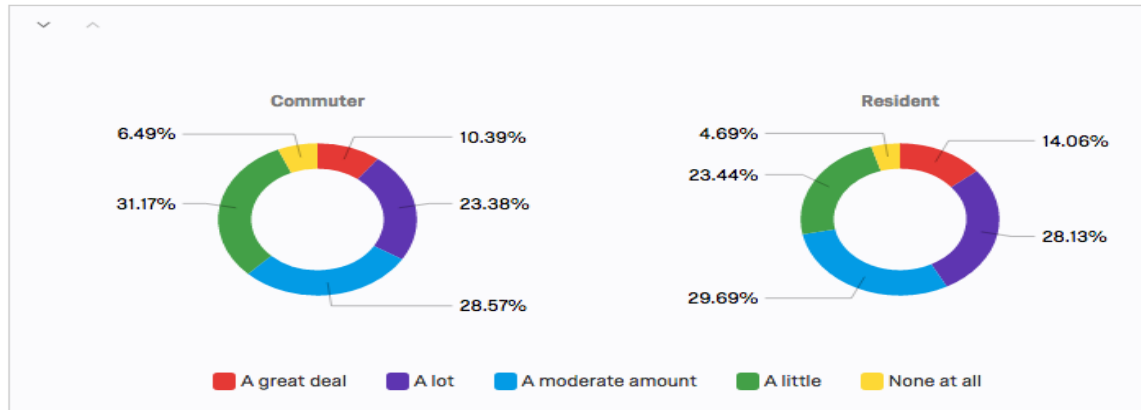


Figure 2: Q15 - How closely do you identify with your faculty?

Q18 - In an average week, how many hours do you think you spend wo...

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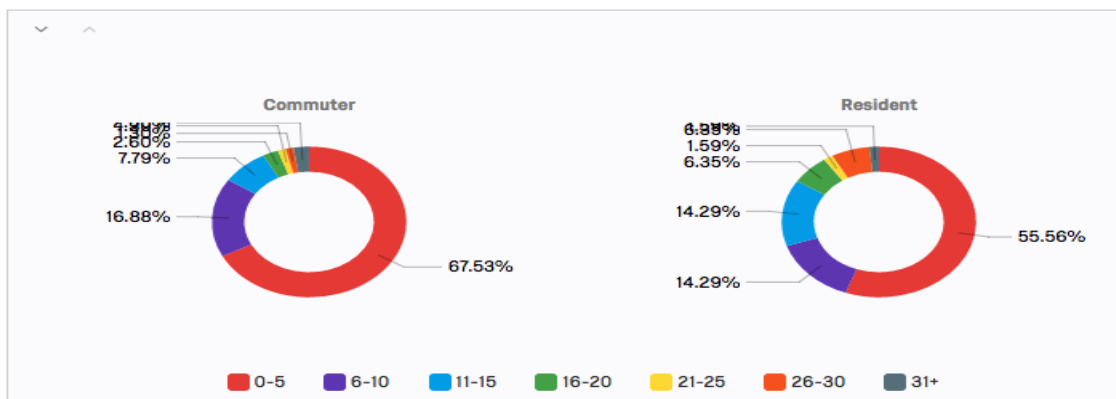


Figure 3: Q18 - In an average week, how many hours do you think you spend working or volunteering ON campus?

SCHOOL SPIRIT IN COMMUTER STUDENTS VS. ON CAMPUS RESIDENT STUDENTS

Q22 - Currently, how motivated are you to succeed academically?

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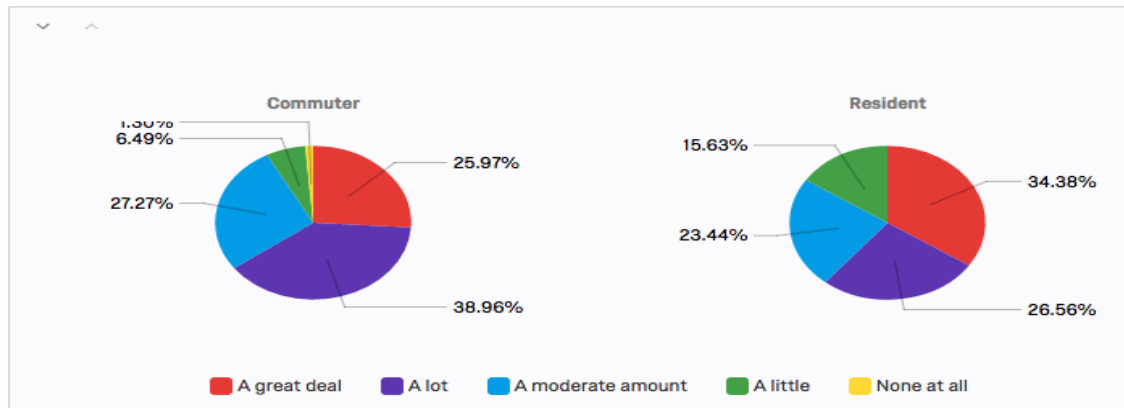


Figure 4: Q22 - Currently, how motivated are you to succeed academically?

Q27 - How much of UBC is reflected in me?

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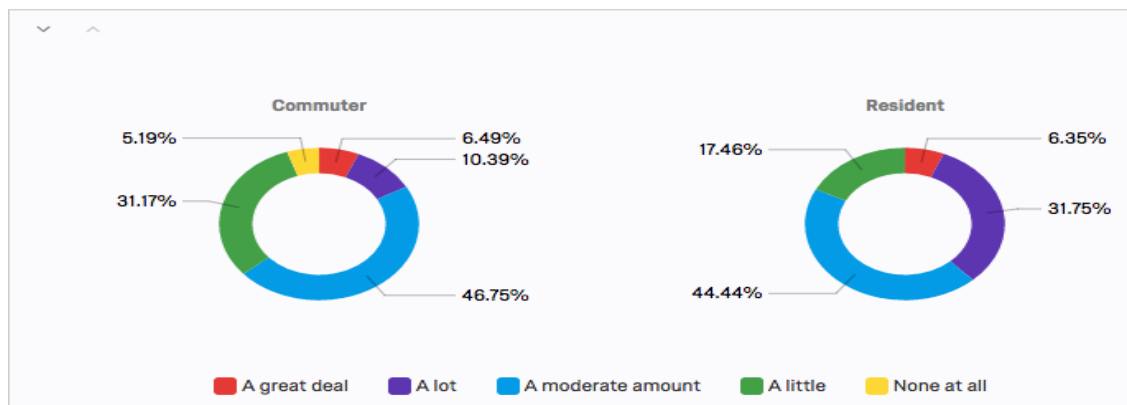


Figure 5: Q27 - How much of UBC is reflected in me?

SCHOOL SPIRIT IN COMMUTER STUDENTS VS. ON CAMPUS RESIDENT STUDENTS

Q26 - How much do you agree with the following statement? - UBC is...

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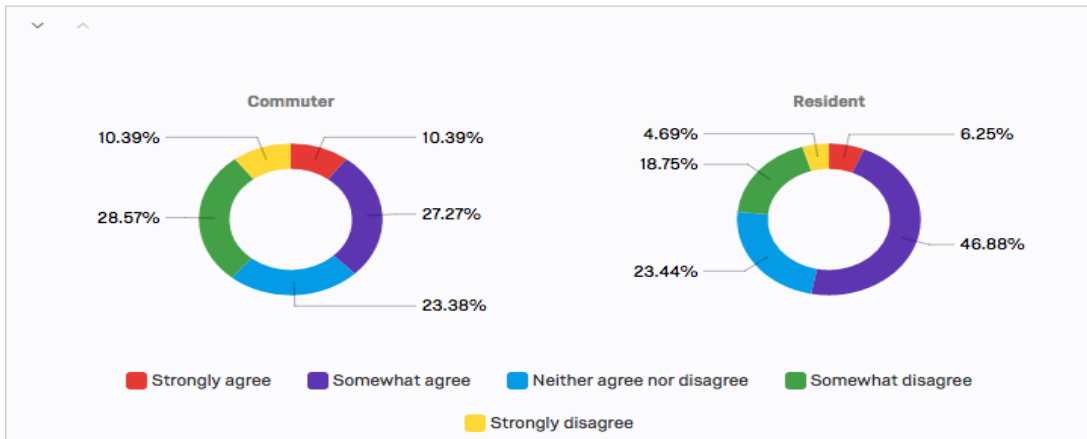


Figure 6: Q26 - How much do you agree with the following statement? - UBC is an important reflection of who I am.

Q25 - Do you own any UBC merchandise (clothing, stickers, accessori...

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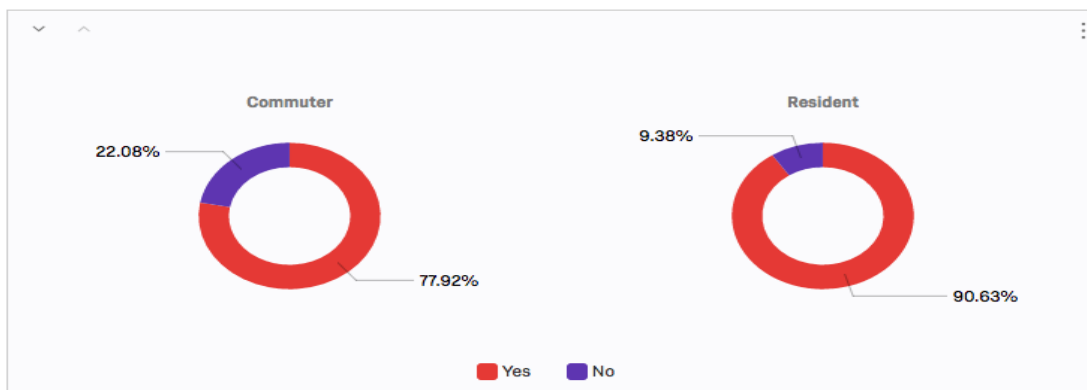


Figure 7: Q25 - Do you own any UBC merchandise (clothing, stickers, accessories, etc.)?

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Did you vote in the most recent AMS Election (March 2017)?

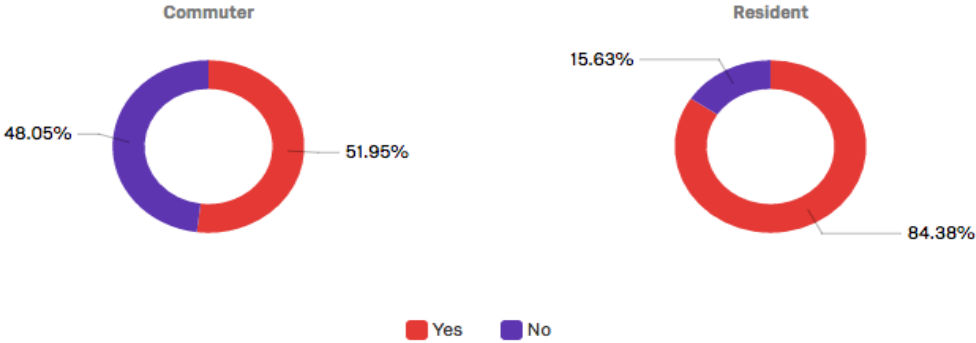


Figure 8: Q25 - Did you vote in the most recent AMS Election (March 2017)?