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AUTHOR Fuller, Bruce  
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ABSTRACT

This study of the UCLA campus develops data which would provide an improved understanding of the differences in ways in which on- or near-campus students as opposed to commuting students tend to vote. Student voting information collected for this study pertained to the November 1972 general election. Data were collected by a questionnaire postcard. Results indicated that commuting students generally voted more liberally than those students living on or near campus. Data also revealed expected differences in voting patterns among those commuting students who live with their parents. This latter segment of the commuting student population apparently does not vote less liberally than the student population living on or near campus. (Author)

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# STUDENT VOTE 1972

## An Examination of Voting Patterns of Commuting Students

July, 1973

Prepared for the University of California Student Lobby by:  
Bruce Fuller

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I wanted to thank Bruce Compas, Larry Horwitz, and Tony Howell for their generous assistance in the arduous task of data collection. Thanks is also due to the housing officers and their staffs throughout the state who provided much helpful information. I also wanted to express my appreciation to Dr. John Bollens, professor of political science at UCLA, for sponsoring the author's time spent on this study. And finally, I want to thank Linda Bond, Co-director of the UC Student Lobby, for refining the narrative and Debby Mincks for providing much appreciated clerical assistance.

BF

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## Introduction

Our past work in examining student voting patterns has yielded much information concerning how students in California and nationwide chose to exercise their recently won right to vote. As an on-going process we are attempting to improve our understanding and to provide further insight into how students voted in the November, 1972 presidential election and how such voting patterns might be used to interpret recent elections at national, state, and local levels.

Previous studies have centered around analyzing student precincts which contain heavy concentrations of students who live on or near campus. This approach is more efficient in examining data from many campuses which when combined, total many thousands of student voters. This type of precinct analysis is very valuable in inter-campus comparisons and it provides a solid base from which broader estimates can be developed.

Nevertheless, in assessing student voting patterns by only looking at those students who reside on or near campus, one significant question remains: To what extent do commuting students (those students who do not live on or near campus) vote differently than resident or near-campus students? Some have argued that to base estimates of student voting patterns on a precinct analysis only tends to over account for liberal tendencies of the student vote. These analysts maintain that commuting students, especially those students who live at home with their parents, vote more conservatively (or less liberally) than do on- or near-campus students. Others have

presented a contrary argument, claiming that a precinct sample tends to disproportionately weight the voting patterns of dormitory students who are younger and vote more conservatively than older students. In estimating statewide trends in the California Student Vote 1972<sup>1</sup> it was maintained that factors which might tend to bias a precinct analysis in relation to the voting patterns of all the students of a particular campus appear to a great extent to be off-setting. However, in all of the mentioned arguments, supportive data has been lacking.

The prime objective of this study was to develop data which would provide an improved understanding of the differences in ways in which on- or near-campus students as opposed to commuting students tend to vote. The scope of this report is less comprehensive than previous work; however, the specific, more technical findings in this study are important in better understanding how students vote at the particular campus examined and within other college communities.

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1. Fuller, Gilson, Bond: California Student Vote 1972 -- A Brief Analysis of the Student Vote, UC Student Lobby, Sacramento, January, 1973.

### The Study Itself

The campus of the University of California at Los Angeles was chosen as the site of data collection due primarily to the fact that it was the campus most familiar to the author. There were, however, a few advantages in developing data from UCLA students: (1) a large amount of information was available from previous work describing the voting patterns of UCLA students who lived on or near campus to which the commuting student data could be compared, (2) a large percentage of UCLA students do commute to the campus, and (3) a relatively small number of UCLA students utilize public transportation to get to campus. For this study a "commuting student" was functionally defined as a student who uses a private automobile to travel to campus. The latter two points above tend to minimize the danger that this operational definition would exclude any segment of commuting students. That is, by viewing commuting students as only those who drive cars, a lower socio-economic group might be excluded. This possible sampling bias is not significant when analyzing the UCLA campus.

The UCLA campus is not assumed to be the "typical college campus". On the contrary, in terms of family income levels, UCLA students are probably somewhat atypical. Inter-campus differentials and differences between University of California and State University campuses (as systems) in regard to voting patterns should also be kept in mind in applying the results at UCLA to other college campuses. To fully understand the characteristics of student voting patterns of commuting students at a specific campus, data from the

campus would have to be developed. However, the data examined at UCLA provides information which can be applied to other campuses in varying degrees.

Student voting information collected for this study pertained to the November, 1972 general election. The comparison data base for on- or near-campus students from the student precincts at UCLA involved the 1972 general election as well, this election included three statewide ballot propositions which helped to reveal additional student voting information on specific issues.

The mechanism developed for the data gathering task was a questionnaire postcard. The questionnaire requested residency, registration, and voting information from each subject (Appendix I). Many other items could have been asked; however, it was decided that the questionnaire should be as brief as possible. One item which should have been included was "age". Once the card has been completed the subject merely had to place it in the mail.

Distribution of the questionnaire postcards was conducted in such a manner as to attempt to achieve maximum randomness in the sample. The UCLA campus is so arranged that social science and humanities students are generally in the northern half of the campus, physical science and health science students in the southern half of campus. Such geographical differences were noted and the questionnaires were distributed in various parking lots around the campus and in such a manner as to minimize the possibility of biasing the sampling.

The cards were distributed in two ways. The most efficient method utilized was to place the cards on the windshield of parked



cars in the on-campus student parking lots. It was felt that a more personal approach might yield a higher return rate. So a few hundred of the cards were handed individually to students as they entered/exited a particular parking lot. Neither method proved clearly more advantageous over the other. In all, three thousand cards were distributed and approximately twenty-percent were completed and returned (572).

One variable which enters at this point is whether or not this 20% return rate biases the sample to a significant degree.<sup>2</sup> In comparing the obtained sample with housing information it appears the sample contains a slight overproportionate amount of commuting students who reside with their parents in comparison with the total UCLA student population.<sup>3</sup> With this exception significant bias in the analyzed sample could not be detected with available means. The utilized methodology does not assure that a random sample was examined. Nevertheless, factors which could have biased the obtained sample were noted and attempts were made to minimize the effects of such factors.

### The Findings

From the obtained sampling of commuting students at UCLA (N=572) the following findings were developed.

The places of residence of the sample population were distributed widely throughout the Los Angeles area. In all, the sample population resided in over 130 zipcode postal districts throughout

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2. A historical note: The questionnaires were distributed in mid-April, 1973. The substantial drop in public support towards President Nixon in conjunction with the Watergate affair occurred after this period.

3. For additional information see Appendix II.

the Los Angeles basin. As shown in Figure 1, 19.2% lived less than three miles from campus, 40.1% lived between 4-10 miles, 26.5% between 11-20, and 14.2% resided further than 20 miles from UCLA.

FIGURE 1

Distance from Residence  
To Campus (Miles)

<u>less than 4</u>	<u>4-10</u>	<u>11-20</u>	<u>greater than 20</u>
19.2%	40.1	26.5	14.2

Do your parents reside at the same apartment or house where you currently reside?

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
11.7	88.3	39.6	60.4	66.7	33.3	65.8	34.2

TOTAL Yes=45.2  
No=54.8

Are you currently registered at the same address at which your parents are registered?  
(excluding those not registered)

43.6	56.4	55.6	44.4	72.7	27.3	70.1	29.9
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TOTAL Yes=59.6  
No=40.4

Of the acquired sampling of commuter students 45.2% stated they lived with their parents while 54.5% said they did not. These figures compare with an actual 37% figure of commuting students who live with their parents derived from a very large sampling of the total UCLA student population.<sup>4</sup> Figure 1 further illustrates student voter registration patterns relative to residency patterns;

4. Figures are from winter quarter, 1972. Source: Office of Housing Services, UCLA.

cumulative figures show that of those students who do not live with their parents 21.1% are registered at their parents' address. These sets of figures also reveal that 96.0% of those who responded were registered, indicating that those who were not registered or who did not vote responded to the survey in very low numbers.

Figure 2 outlines the registration patterns revealed in the sample population. Total registration of the sample was 73.4% Democrat to 16.9% Republican -- 4.3/1 Democratic. Registration figures developed from the student precincts surrounding the UCLA campus showed those students registered 64.8% Democratic, 20.2% Republican -- Democratic 3.2/1. Looking at the registration breakdown of students who live with their parents versus those who do not, there is a significant differential as shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2

	Voter Registration (excluding those not registered)					
	<u>Dem</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Amer Ind</u>	<u>P&amp;F</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Decline to State</u>
Sample						
Population	73.4%	16.9	0.2	1.6	2.5	5.3
Living with Parents	71.4	20.4	--	0.4	2.0	5.7
Not Living with Parents	75.1	14.1	0.3	2.6	3.0	4.9
Student Precincts	64.8	20.2	0.1	1.7	0.8	12.4

Student voting patterns of those commuting students surveyed are shown in Figure 3. The sample yielded a 78.3% -- 20.8% McGovern-Nixon vote; this compares with a 70.2% for McGovern and 28.8% for

Nixon among students in the campus precincts. Overall, commuting students appear to have voted in significantly greater numbers for McGovern. Further breakdown of the figures, examining voting patterns of commuters who live with their parents and those who do not, reveal further rather surprising findings. The voting differentials between these two groups of commuting students are substantial. Among those who do not live with their parents but commute the sample indicates a McGovern vote of 84.2%. Among those commuters who do live with their parents the McGovern vote was 70.9%. It is most important to note that while this latter group gave the Democratic presidential candidate substantially less support than those who do not live with their parents, the 70.9% figure is close to identical to the 70.2% McGovern vote among students in the on- and near-campus student precincts.

FIGURE 3

	Presidential Voting			
	<u>McGovern</u>	<u>Nixon</u>	<u>Schmitz</u>	<u>Spock</u>
Sample				
Population	78.3%	20.8	0.2	0.7
Living with Parents	70.9	28.2	0.4	0.4
Not Living With Parents	84.2	14.8	--	1.0
Student Precincts	70.2	28.8	0.4	0.5

Differing voting patterns among commuters who live with their parents versus commuters who do not are also reflected in the balloting for State Proposition 19 (Figure 4). The Marijuana Initiative was supported by 89.8% of those who did not live with their parents compared to 74.0% who do live with their parents. These figures compare to an 81.6% Yes vote among students in the campus precincts.

FIGURE 4

Voting on State Ballot Propositions

	Proposition 19		Proposition 20		Proposition 22	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Sample Population	82.8%	17.2	94.4	5.6	8.9	91.1
Living with Parents	74.0	26.0	94.2	5.8	11.5	88.5
Not Living with Parents	89.8	10.2	94.5	5.5	6.8	93.2
Student Precincts	81.6	18.4	88.5	11.5	16.1	83.9

## Conclusions

In order to better interpret the many aspects of the student vote it is imperative that a clear understanding of voting patterns of commuting students be developed. This study provides some initial data to assist in understanding this segment of the student vote and reveals several differing patterns between commuters and students who live on or near campus. In summary, it is somewhat surprising that the sample revealed that commuting students generally voted more liberally than those students living on or near campus. The overriding factor to explain this occurrence is most likely age. Those students who live further from campus tend to be older and apparently generally more liberal in their political attitudes. The data also revealed expected differences in voting patterns among those commuting students who live with their parents. Nevertheless, this latter segment of the commuting student population apparently does not vote less liberally than the student population living on or near campus.

Once again, the results of this study are accurate for the UCLA campus only. However, these findings can be applied to other campuses in better understanding the student vote in this and other states. While the effects of large student communities on student voting behavior have been evident it also appears student political attitudes may be less varied among commuting students than has been predicted in the past. Commuting students, by far, outnumber stu-

dents who live on campus or very close to the campuses of four-year colleges and universities both in California and nationwide. While variations do exist from campus to campus, it appears that this segment of the student vote tends to align itself with the prevalent voting pattern of student-populated precincts surrounding the campus. If the commuting student population is generally older than on- or near-campus students, the commuters may vote more liberally than their younger colleagues.

A research unit of the UC Student Lobby is currently working on the third segment of an analysis of student voting patterns within California and nationwide (you might have seen the results of our two previous studies in the Bruin and the LA Times). We are currently examining voting trends of students attending UCLA, and your help is essential (we're not trying to sell anything -- just asking for about five minutes of your time). If you could fill out the brief questionnaire below it would be much appreciated. A few additional points:

- If you are not a student currently enrolled at UCLA please do not return the card.
- This survey will only be valuable if you help us out and all provided information is accurate.
- Once the card is completed just stick-it in the mail.
- If you happen to have any questions concerning this or our California and national studies drop us a note or call our Los Angeles office at 825-7306.

1. Concerning the location and commuting distance of your apartment or home where you currently reside during the school year fill in the following information.

- a. Distance to campus in miles: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Zip code of residence: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Do your parents reside at the same apartment or house where you currently reside?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your party affiliation? If you are not currently registered answer "no".

- No \_\_\_\_\_ Democrat \_\_\_\_\_ Republican \_\_\_\_\_ Amer. Ind. \_\_\_\_\_
- P&F \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_ Declined to State \_\_\_\_\_

3. In the November, 1972 presidential election I voted for the following. If you are not a registered voter and/or did not vote answer "no".

- a. No \_\_\_\_\_
- b. McGovern \_\_\_\_\_ Nixon \_\_\_\_\_ Schmitz \_\_\_\_\_ Spock \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Bell (Rep) \_\_\_\_\_ Shapiro (Dem) \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Priolo (Rep) \_\_\_\_\_ Diamond (Dem) \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Stevens (Rep) \_\_\_\_\_ O'Neil (Dem) \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Legalization of Marijuana Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
- g. Coastline Protection Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
- h. Farm Labor Initiative Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

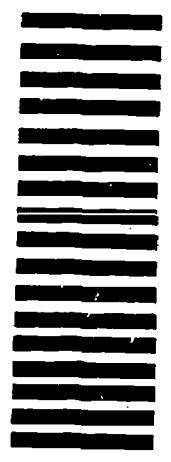
4. Are you currently registered at the same address at which your parents are registered? If you are not a registered voter answer "not registered".

- Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Not Registered \_\_\_\_\_

Thanks again for your help.

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## Appendix II

Student Housing Summary

## University of California

Percentage of Students Residing in  
Various Modes of Housing by Campus

	<u>UCB</u>	<u>UCD</u>	<u>UCI</u>	<u>UCLA</u>	<u>UCR</u>	<u>UCSD</u>	<u>UCSF</u>	<u>UCSE</u>	<u>UCSC</u>
University Dormitories	16%	30	27	17	22	40	21	23	51
Fraternities- Sororities	4	2	0	3	00	0	4	3	0
Private Dormitories	12	6	4	6	8	2	4	13	5
With Parents	13	3	26	27	18	17	7	3	4
Private Apartment	54	58	43	46	51	40	63	56	39
Other	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	1

## Distances between Student Residence and Campus

2 miles or less	74%	86	31	40	58	46	71	80	61
3 - 10	15	6	36	33	23	32	15	12	30
11 - 20	6	4	22	16	11	16	8	6	5
over 20	5	4	11	11	8	6	6	2	4

SOURCE: Student Housing Statistics Summary; Office of the President,  
University of California.

Student Housing Summary

State Universities and Colleges

Percentage of Students Residing in  
Various Modes of Housing by Campus<sup>5</sup>

	<u>Long Beach</u>	<u>Hayward</u>	<u>Chico</u>	<u>Fresno</u>	<u>Los Angeles</u>
University Dormitories	4.4%	2.7	8.3	7.5	NA
Fraternities Sororities	0.5	NA	1.4	2.8	NA
Private Dormitories	NA	NA	7.8	NA	NA
With Parents	37.4	39.2	6.1	23.9	21
Private Apartment	57.6	58.1	76.4	65.8	79
Other					

Distances between Student Residence and Campus

2 miles or less	"non- commuters" 14.3%	13.3	NA	NA	2
3 - 10		26.1	NA	NA	40
11 - 20	"commuters"	26.6	NA	NA	40
	-15mi - 49.1				
over 20	+15mi - 36.6	29.5	NA	NA	18

SOURCES: Housing offices at the specific campuses  
5. Reporting methods at the five campuses where studies are available vary significantly.