

THE UNIVERSITY PARKING PREDICAMENT: LOOKING INTO THE IMPACT OF PARKING EXPERIENCE ON STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

Ashley Gutierrez, Samantha Chan, Anthony Lopez, Leslie Calderon
Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health, University of California - San Diego



OBJECTIVE

To assess the relationship between students' parking experiences and their levels of academic and recreational involvement.

INTRODUCTION

- Parking challenges (limited spaces, high costs, long search times) can **increase student stress and reduce campus engagement**^{1,3}.
- At commuter-heavy campuses like UC San Diego, transportation barriers may limit student involvement, but this **link remains underexplored**².

METHODOLOGY

Sample:

- Cross-sectional study using a Qualtrics survey distributed to current UC San Diego students over a 3-week period in April 2025.
- Participants were recruited via Instagram and outreach to other Capstone classes.
- Data analyzed with descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and t-tests.

Exposure:

- Parking experience, including factors such as time spent finding parking, satisfaction with parking options, and cost of permits.

Outcome:

- Student involvement, measured through participation in academic and extracurricular activities.

RESULTS

N = 126 students

Figure 1: Average Time Spent Finding Parking on Campus

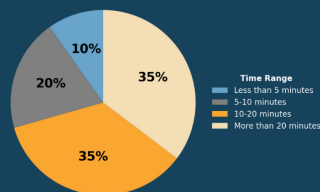


Figure 3: Academic Event Attendance by Time Spent Finding Parking

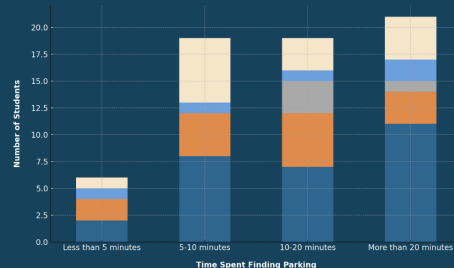


Figure 2: Extracurricular Event Attendance

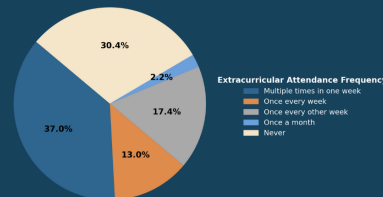


Figure 4: Student Satisfaction with UCSD Parking



More than 9 out of 10 students reported being unsatisfied or only slightly unsatisfied with parking on the UCSD campus.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Findings from this study suggest that **parking challenges significantly hinder student involvement**, particularly for off-campus commuters.

To support student engagement, UC San Diego should consider:

- Expanding affordable parking options**, including increasing the number of student and commuter-designated spaces.
- Offer **tiered or discounted parking permits** to reduce cost burdens for low-income or long-distance students.
- Increase shuttle services** from remote lots or public transit stops to reduce reliance on high-demand central parking areas.

KEY FINDINGS

Poor Parking Experience

Students reported low satisfaction with parking (M = 0.798, SD = 1.269, on a 0–6 scale, with higher numbers indicating higher satisfaction).

Parking Experience & Extracurricular Involvement

A significant association was found between parking experience and extracurricular attendance, $\chi^2(25, N = 124) = 43.055, p < 0.05$.

Parking Experience & Academic Involvement

A significant link also existed between parking experience and academic engagement, $\chi^2(25, N = 124) = 115.689, p < .001$.

Parking-Related Costs

The average cost of parking was \$100-150 per quarter.

"College students aren't able to pull hundreds of dollars for parking tickets, nor are many able to even afford parking passes" - Student Testimonial

CONCLUSION

These findings highlight the **statistically significant link between transportation barriers and student engagement**, suggesting the need for UCSD to consider improved parking policies.

- Students with **better parking experiences** were more likely to attend events.
- Parking difficulty** may limit access to extracurricular and academic activities.

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