

The Student Sustainability Literacy Preliminary Survey Report

The USI Student Sustainability Literacy Survey is a modest step to grasp UNLV students' knowledge about sustainability. Our original goal was to assess the impact of the 'Focus the Nation' event. Due to lack of responses, this report will focus on what the students within the sample know about sustainability and how it influences their behaviors. This sample is not a comprehensive representation of the UNLV student body. Thus the results cannot be generalized beyond the sample. Nonetheless, the survey offers some insight into what UNLV students know and do about sustainability. The results and process of the survey will be used for Earth Day and future survey project.

Survey Methods & Data

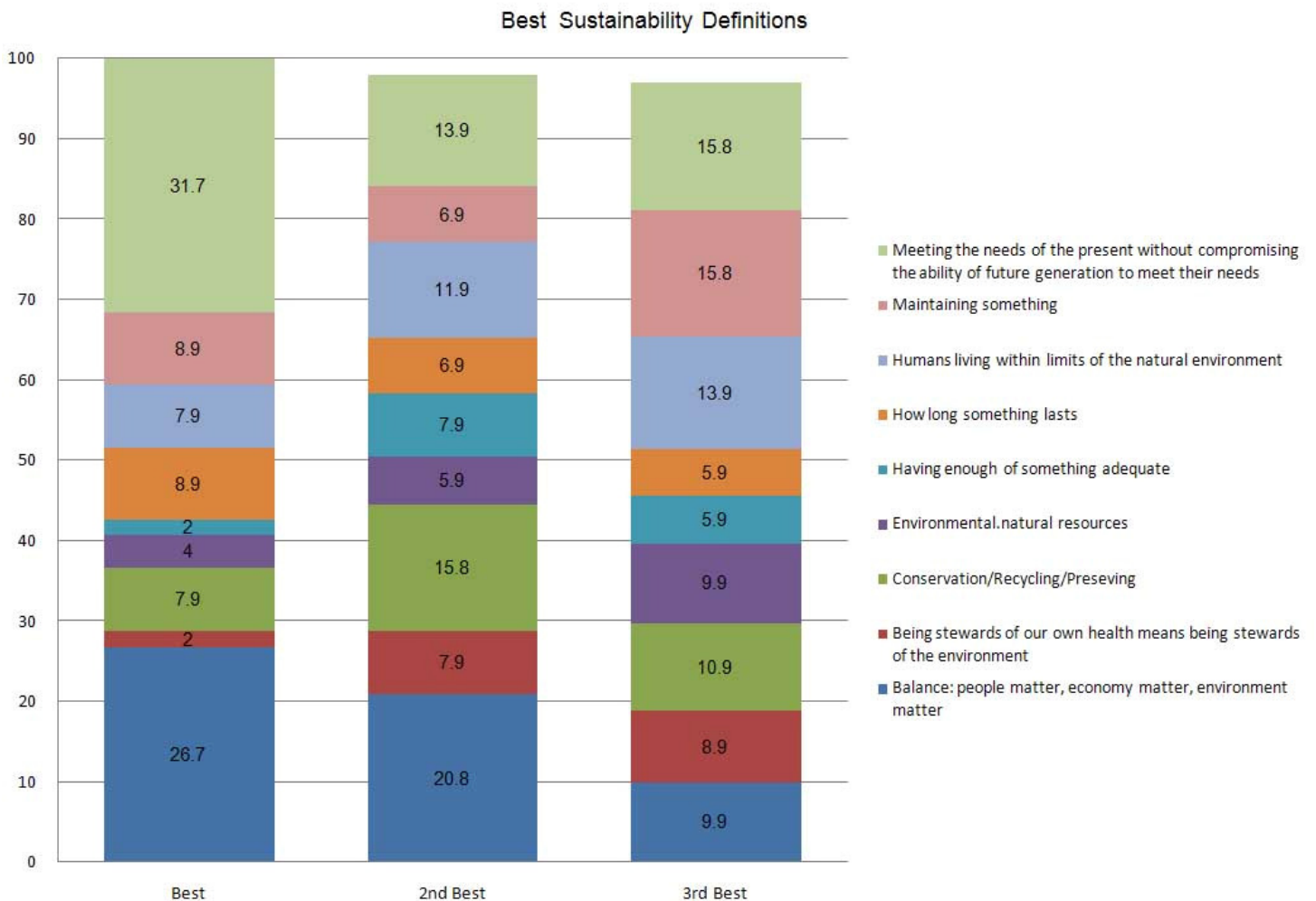
The survey was conducted in mid-February of 2011. It was a web-based survey created on SurveyMonkey. Professors & instructors asked their students to take the survey from the following general education courses: ENG 101, HIST 101, MATH 124, SOC 101, and GEO 101. Students from the Solar & Renewable Energy Minor and ENV 101 were also asked to participate in the survey. An invitation to the survey was also sent through RAVE mail. A total of 103 students completed the survey.

Results

Thoughts on Sustainability

Students were asked about their familiarity with the term “sustainability.” The majority (49%) of students from our sample were “somewhat familiar” with sustainability and 35% of the students were “very familiar” with sustainability.

Students were given a set of sustainability definitions and asked to rate the best, 2nd best, and 3rd best descriptions in their

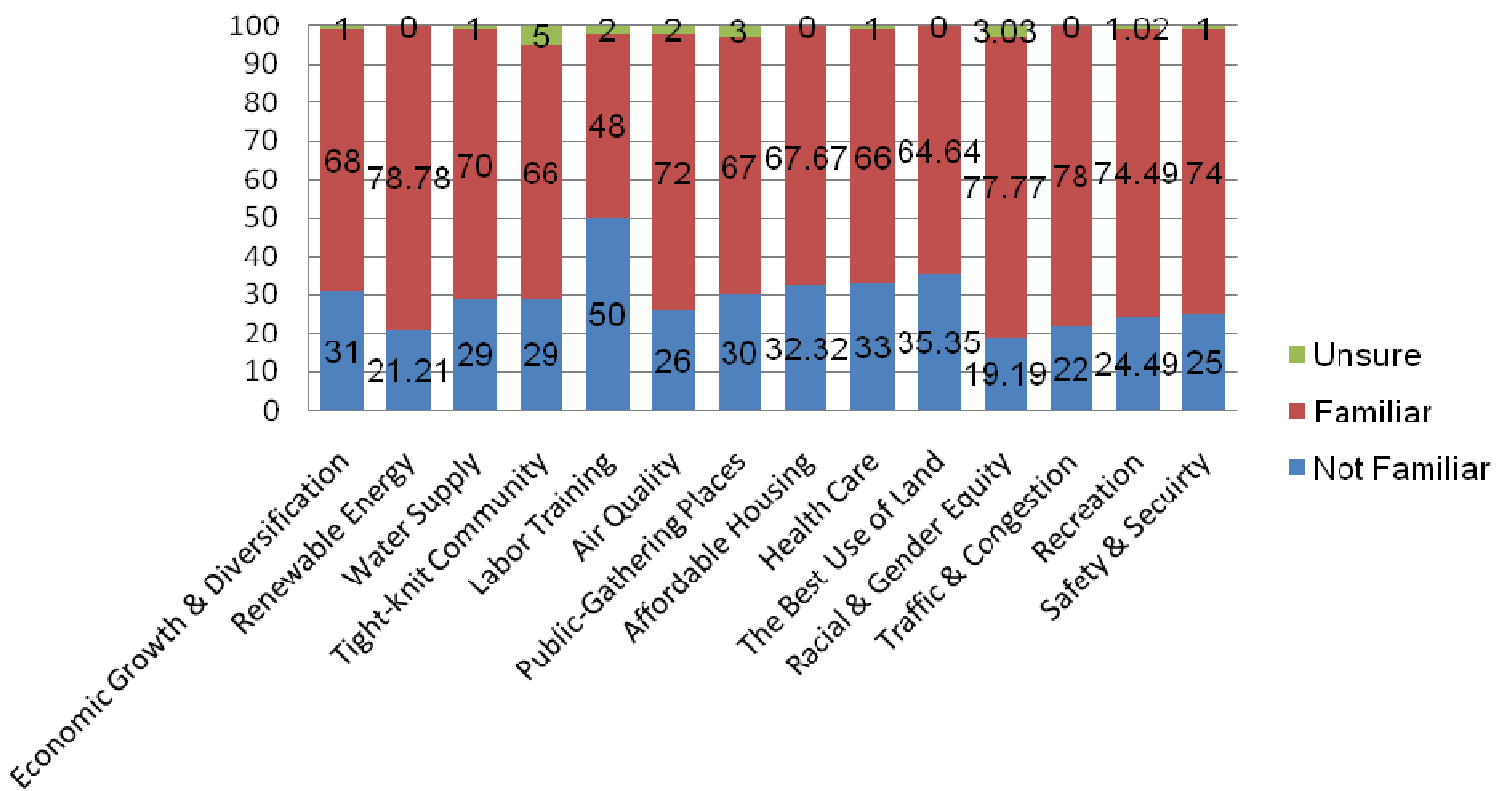


opinion. The highest rated definition was: “Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their needs” (31.7%). The next highest percentage (26.7%) for “the best” was “Balance: people matter, economy matter, environment matter.” The next highest percentage for “the best” was a tied between “maintaining something” (8.9%) and “how long something lasts” (8.9%).

Sustainability Topics

Students were asked to rate their familiarity with sustainability topics. The topics were chosen from the Urban Sustainability Initiative website (<http://urbn21.unlv.edu>). Students were most familiar with the following topics: renewable energy (78.78%), traffic and congestion (78%), racial and gender equity (77.77%), and recreation (74%). Students were not familiar with the following topics: labor training (50%), health care (33%), the best land-use (35.35%), and affordable housing (32.32%). Overall, students have are familiar with the topics. Ideally, further work would be done to assess the depth of students' knowledge in these areas. For example, students may be familiar with traffic and congestion through their experiences, but may not know how it relates to sustainability.

Familiarity with Sustainability Topics



Sustainability Statements

62.63% of students from the sample agreed sustainability includes social, economic, and environmental factors.

57.51% of students from the sample agreed their knowledge of sustainability has increased since their enrollment to UNLV.

78.05% of students from the sample agreed their knowledge of sustainability affects the way they live their life.

76.77% of students from the sample agreed their knowledge of sustainability affects their purchasing choices.

67.21% of students from the sample agreed their knowledge of sustainability affects how much energy they used.

56.13% of students from the sample disagreed their knowledge of sustainability affected their choice of academic major.

49.48% of students from the sample agreed their knowledge of sustainability affects their career and professional goals.

63.27% of student from the sample were agreed they knew about UNLV's commitment to to water and energy conservation, green buildings, turf reduction, retrofitting, and recycling.

78.57% of students from the sample agreed they wanted to learn more about sustainability.

Energy Reduction Activities

Students were asked about their on campus behaviors to reduce energy within the last 30 days. The majority of students took the stairs instead of the elevator (76.24%) followed by recycling efforts (71.29%), and reusing a bottle or mug (47.52%). Behaviors with the lowest percentages were: turned off unused lights in a classroom (24.74%), taken alternative transportation (27.72%), printed paper double sided (28.71%), and declined a bag (39.6%). These behaviors are not equal in energy and effort. For example, it takes more effort to ride the bus than to recycle a soda can.

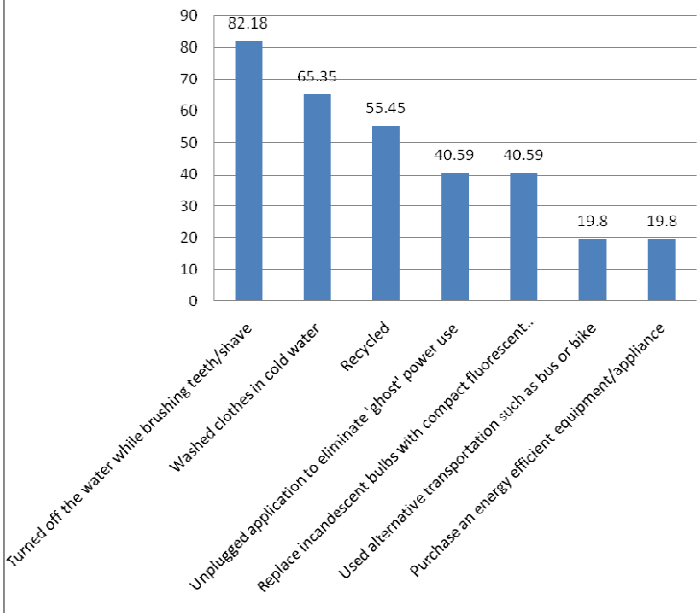
Students were also asked about their off-campus behaviors to reduce energy within the last 30 days. The most frequent response was “turned off the water while brushing or shaving” (82.18%). The next most common response was “washed their clothes in cold water” (65.35%), followed by “recycled” (55.45%). These behaviors are not equal in energy and effort.

Students were asked why they participate in these behaviors. They were allowed to choose more than one reason. More than seventy three percent (73.27%) of students said because “its the right thing to do.” While 69.31% of students said to “save money.” More than sixty-one percent (61.39%) of students said “to protect the environment” The lowest response categories include “to protect human health” and “friend influence.”

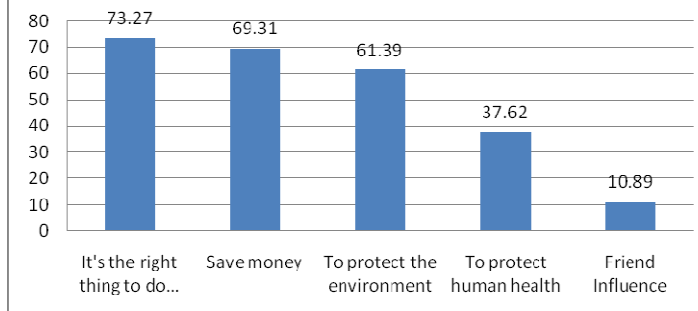
Students were asked how they find out about events. The highest percentage was “Rebel Mail” (72.28%), followed by “flyers” (50.5%), then “others student” (46.53%). Sources with lower percentages were “professors” (31.68%), “social networks” (33.66%), and the “UNLV website” (32.67%). This survey was web-based, thus it likely reflects a web-related sources bias.



Off-Campus Energy Reduction Behaviors



Motivations for Energy Reduction Behaviors



Conclusion

Overall, the students from our sample were familiar with the term sustainability, its popular definition by the United Nations, and its related topics. They also want to learn more about sustainability. All of these are good signs as UNLV moves forward towards its sustainability efforts.

As mention in the introduction, our sample does represent the UNLV student body and these results should not be used for generalizations. Still, our sample gives some insight into students' knowledge about sustainability. One key and crucial element this survey lacked was where sustainability knowledge is acquired. We hope this report helps shape the content and administration of future student sustainability surveys.

