



SBCC Isla Vista Students

Focus Group Research

April 2015 [President's Council Presentation on July 20, 2015]

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Objectives

To understand the experiences and needs of SBCC students living in Isla Vista

1

Understand the SBCC student experience

2

Explore motivations behind choosing to live in Isla Vista

3

Define the key pros and cons of being an SBCC student living in Isla Vista and understand their relative importance

4

Identify ways SBCC could potentially help support its students living in Isla Vista, both on SBCC's campus and in IV

Methodology



Frank N. Magid Associates was retained by Santa Barbara City College to conduct four focus groups with current SBCC students living in Isla Vista. Groups were 90 minutes in length and composed of five to eight participants.

Participants were recruited from SBCC lists to meet the following criteria:

- Men and women, aged 18-25
- Current SBCC students enrolled in the Spring semester
- Registered for SBCC with an Isla Vista home address



The groups were conducted on SBCC's campus on April 29 & 30, 2015.
Moderator: Molly Ludwig

THE SBCC STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Students Are Genuinely Pleased With SBCC

The College is meeting or exceeding their expectations on nearly all measures

- Students feel they are receiving a very high quality education
 - Many cite with pride that SBCC is the “#1 CC in the nation”
 - Those who have attended other colleges/universities say their experience at SBCC is far better than their previous experiences

“I didn’t think I’d be able to make it here ... I thought I would be dropped out by now, but I’m learning and feeling very supported.”

- Students are impressed with the level of attention and encouragement they receive from their teachers

“The professors here are very engaging – they care about you.”

- The “gorgeous” Santa Barbara location also plays a role in their satisfaction



Complaints Are Focused On Three Key Issues

The negatives about SBCC are relatively few, but consistent from all students

1 A lack of quality counseling

Students are fed up with the counseling office at SBCC, citing inconvenient appointment-making procedures, rushed sessions, and a lack of personalized attention from a consistent advisor.

“Because of bad advice from a counselor, it’s going to take me an extra year to graduate and transfer.”

2 Frustrating parking situation

Most students are unaware of the fact that SBCC’s hands are tied by the Coastal Commission when it comes to the issue of parking on campus.

“It makes me not want to come to campus unless I have to be in class.”

3 Ineffective housing assistance

First-time students looking for housing feel as though they have no real guidance from SBCC on how to go about finding a place to live.

This is tough for all students, but particularly for International students who arrive expecting some assistance.

LIVING IN ISLA VISTA

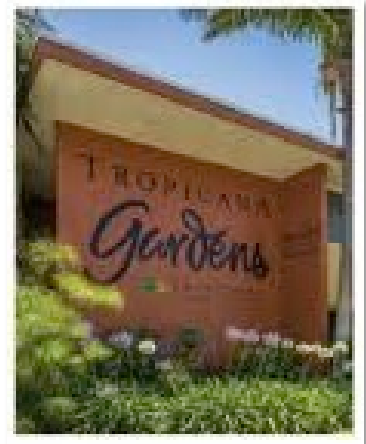
Most Students Have Lived In IV From The Start

Many have moved within Isla Vista, but few have ever left

- Nearly all students have lived in Isla Vista since becoming SBCC students
 - Many were motivated by IV's reputation as a fun college party town
 - Some were looking for a traditional “college dorm” experience and felt they could get that at the residence halls in IV
 - Some were “forced” to live in IV because they couldn't find affordable housing elsewhere in Santa Barbara
 - A few wanted to live next to UCSB because that is where they hope to transfer

“It seemed like it would be fun to live with all people your own age – all young people.”

- A handful have tried living in other areas, but have moved back because the conditions were not as conducive to their lifestyles
- A few are hoping to eventually move out of IV
 - They want to live closer to SBCC and/or experience the downtown lifestyle now that they are over 21
- Most currently live with a mix of SBCC and UCSB students



Students Like IV Living For Four Core Reasons

Most came for the party and cheaper housing ... but stayed for the community and resources

Excitement of a college town experience; a community of likeminded young people



Convenient access to food, activities, and friends at hours that fit a college student schedule

Less expensive housing than other areas of Santa Barbara



Access to UCSB resources not available at SBCC

IV's Active Social Scene Is A Big Draw

Most students are engaged in the party scene, but have learned to manage it over time

- The Isla Vista social life is fun and exciting for nearly all SBCC students living there
 - Many see this as something of a rite of passage for college students – and something they wanted to experience

“You can live in IV and get the college experience.”

- Many say they are “outgrowing” the party scene
 - One or two semesters is all the full-time partying many can handle
 - That said, students appreciate that living in IV gives them the opportunity to party should they want to – and many still want to on occasion

“There is literally always something going on.”

- These students appreciate that living in IV has forced them to “learn self-discipline” and they try to maintain balance between studying and partying

“It can be hard to prioritize school because there is so much to do.”

CONS

- Over-doing it: Can be hard to balance partying with school work
- Not into it: Some are less interested in partying, and the noise and “immature” behavior of others in IV can get tiresome

IV Housing Is Less Expensive, Easier-To-Obtain

Isla Vista housing is simply easier to get into for many students

- While most complain that IV housing is expensive, they say it is cheaper than other areas of Santa Barbara
 - Many landlords closer to SBCC do not want to rent to college students, especially males

“I lived in my car for two weeks, looking for a place I could afford.”

- Young students away from home for the first time are often not familiar with how to efficiently search for an apartment, roommates, etc.
 - Many students initially looked to SBCC for help, but found the housing resources very limited
 - This was particularly frustrating for international students who arrived without a place to live

CONS

- **Landlords:** Take advantage of students who have limited options; there is a general state of disrepair
- **Over-crowding:** Too many people living together to try to save money
- **Distance from SBCC:** Can be a hassle to get to campus

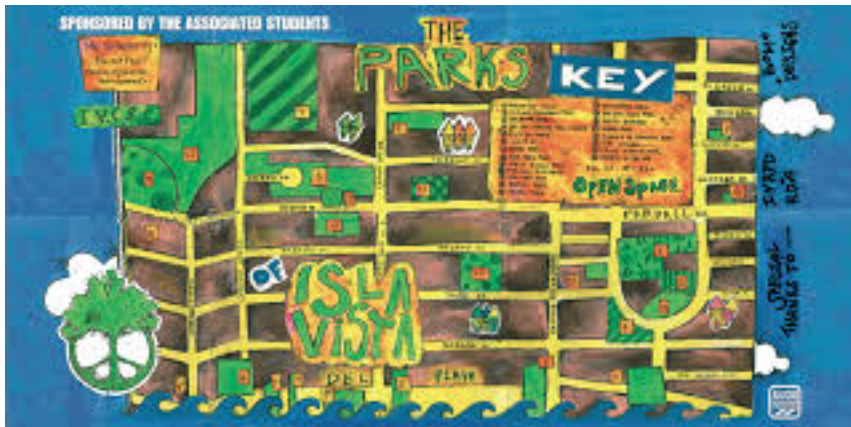
IV Offers Convenient Access To “Everything”

The nature of the town supports the unique needs of a student lifestyle

- Students place a lot of value on the convenience of IV
 - They are within walking distance of almost everything they need and want
 - Stores and restaurants are open late, which is essential for busy college students, many of whom are also working

“It’s like you’re in a bubble in IV, surrounded by college students. You can walk to everything – food, stores, parties. It’s just easy to be around.”

“Downtown IV is a central place, with food open late, you can meet up with people, see who you know, stumble upon whatever is happening that day. It’s really convenient.”



- Access to a variety of activities in IV is also appealing to many

“There are so many opportunities to join and do – beach, outdoor activities – I’m even in a church band now”

Many Students Stay In IV For The Community

Most feel a real sense of belonging in IV

- Students agree that IV has a very unique, “easy” feel that suits them

“There is this feel of community in IV – everyone there is in the same age group and has the same general purpose: to be active, to party, and to go to school.”

“It looks alive – there are always people out, even if you’re not partying.”



- Several students cite the Isla Vista Food Co-op as an example of the type of community that exists in IV

“It’s really perfect for poor college students.”

- Most students have had positive experiences with generally “friendly” people

“IV is like a giant family.”

- Students believe other parts of the city, next to people in different life stages (professionals, families), wouldn’t offer the same environment

Students Are Thankful For UCSB Resources

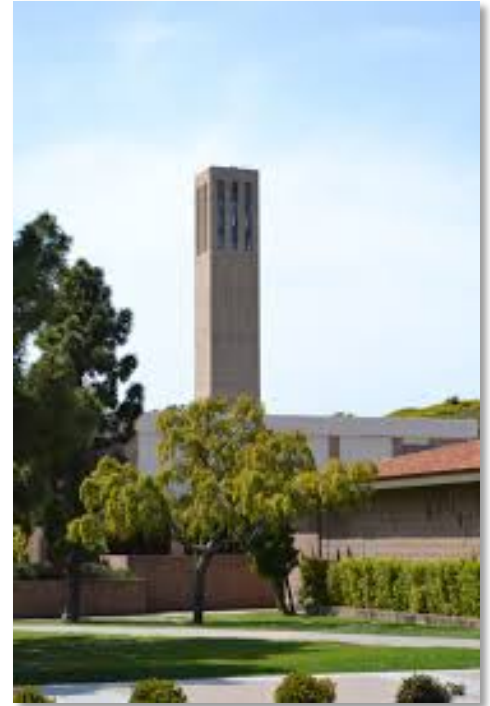
UCSB has many student-centered resources not available at SBCC

- Many SBCC students use the resources available to them at UCSB:
 - UCSB Library – open 24 hours, lots of study space, don't check incoming student IDs until late
 - Gym/Rec Center
 - Math Lab
 - Open classrooms for studying
 - Social events

“The UCSB library is open all the time – our library is only open until 11, and if I stay that late, I miss the last bus.”

- Proximity to UCSB is also a positive for those looking to transfer

“My intentions are to go to UCSB. It's cool to see it every day and be in the place I will transfer to – it's motivating.”



The 15X Bus Is A Lifeline Between IV & SBCC

Many students are taking the bus from IV to SBCC on a regular basis

- Students really appreciate the 15X for bringing them directly from IV to SBCC and back
- Many students take the bus because parking on campus is expensive and can be very difficult
 - Some students don't have cars and rely almost entirely on the bus

"Thank God for the 15X."



CONS

- **Crowded**: Even with the extra-long busses, they are jammed
- **Timing**: Can't always be counted on to be on-time
- **Schedule**: Last direct bus leaves before the last night classes get out and before the library closes, making for a long ride home for students on a later schedule

Being An SBCC Student In IV Has Challenges

While there are some issues, students don't see them as insurmountable

- Isla Vista's **distance from SBCC** can be an issue in some circumstances:
 - Planning ahead to catch the bus/drive is necessary
 - Keeping appointments with teachers or counselors can be more difficult/a pain when they aren't at times a student would typically be on campus
 - Taking a late class or staying late at the library is very difficult for those who take the bus because the last 15X leaves too early
 - "Out-of-sight" can become "out-of-mind" for some when they leave campus

"You leave school behind as you reenter IV – it's almost like the physical boundary is a bubble."

- SBCC students have experienced **varying degrees of harassment** from UCSB students in IV, who give them a hard time for being CC students
 - Most say the issue is not pervasive and don't let it bother them

"They act like they're better and smarter than you – they don't think about you trying to save money or figure out what you want to do before going to a 4-year."

- IV's stores and restaurants **are synced up with UCSB's schedule**, which can be challenging when SBCC finals/breaks are not aligned and stores are closed

Inconsiderate People & Overstepping Police

Along with the positives of living surrounded by other young people, come the negatives ...

- Students say the noise in IV can be annoying and distracting
 - They accept late-night partying on the weekends, but on week nights it can distract them from studying and/or sleeping
 - Many have moved over the years to get away from the rowdier areas of IV

“I can’t study at my house – I have to go to the library at UCSB.”

- There are many negative feelings about the IV police
 - All students have witnessed or experienced first-hand what they consider an over-reach by IV police
 - Some understand that it must be frustrating to police this particular population, but wish it were done more judiciously
- The general consensus is that IV is “dirty,” though some argue it could be worse given the circumstances

“It’s just slummy.”



Students Have Some Safety Concerns In IV

There are a range of different personal experiences as it relates to safety

- Female students have experienced harassment walking in IV – both at night and during the day
 - The degree of harassment ranges from verbal (majority) to physical (minority)
- Students agree that IV is dark at night, which can be a little scary
 - Most say it is fine as long as they are with other people
 - Some women who work or study late are frightened to walk home alone

“I get stressed out at night when I have a 30-minute walk home from work.”

- There is high awareness of a drug and alcohol culture in IV, but most students say it doesn't interfere with their day-to-day lives
 - A few have had negative experiences with roommates with drug/alcohol problems and have actively taken steps to remove themselves from the situation

“I have two roommates who are addicts now. I'm moving in with other friends next semester.”

Note

Students reference the 2014 IV killings but expressly state that they feel this was an isolated incident and it does not impact their general sense of safety in IV

SBCC SUPPORT FOR ISLA VISTA STUDENTS

Student Ideas: On-Campus

All requests are focused on making SBCC more of a community focused on a full student life



STUDY AREAS

Students want more places to study, especially on East Campus.

They suggest:

- Library open later
- Open up unused classrooms
- Tables with umbrellas outside
- Coffee shop environment
- Outlets everywhere so can work all day



DINING OPTIONS

The current on-campus dining options are few and have limited hours.

Students would like:

- JSB to be open more hours, including dinner
- Breakfast served later in the day
- Food bank on campus



TRANSPORTATION

The bus schedule doesn't meet everyone's needs. Students would like the 15X to run as late as the end time of the last evening class and as late as the the library is open.

Parking issues need addressing: promote ride sharing, communicate why parking is limited.



GYM ACCESS

Students would really like to have access to an on-campus gym. It would encourage them to stay on campus and give them something else to do if they have a long break between classes.

Locker access would help those with a lot to carry around all day – they aren't going back to IV to change out.

Student Ideas: Isla Vista-Centered

Students would appreciate some SBCC resources in IV



STUDY AREAS

Students would love to have a dedicated study space for SBCC students.

Ideally, this could also be a place for SBCC counselors and tutors to be available.



ASSISTANCE

It can be difficult for students to come to SBCC for appointments not during their class schedules.

They would appreciate Isla Vista-based:

- Counselors
- Tutors
- Financial aid reps
- Student health services



EVENTS

SBCC students sometimes feel excluded from UCSB events in IV.

They would like to see more help from SBCC to bridge the social gap with UCSB to have events where all are welcome.

They are not interested in SBCC-only events in IV.

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