

Survey of New Students

First Impressions at Berkeley

November 2012

This is the first in a series of briefing notes that highlights findings from the 2012 Survey of New Students (SONS). In this brief you will learn what new students say about their first experiences at Berkeley including where they received useful guidance for choosing courses, obstacles to academic success, college goals, and awareness of the new Middle Class Access Plan.

OVERVIEW

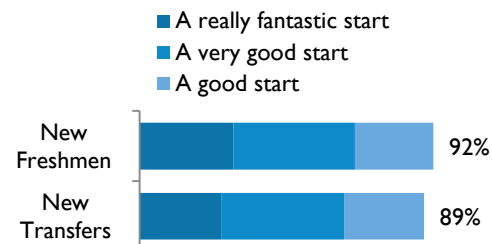
Each fall semester, newly entering freshmen and transfer students are invited to complete the Survey of New Students (SONS)—sharing their initial impressions, concerns, and experiences as they transition to UC Berkeley. SONS covers topics such as college aspirations and learning goals, perceived skill levels across a number of academic and social areas, anticipated obstacles and support systems, affordability and financial aid, and the campus climate for diversity. In addition, SONS gives us valuable baseline information that can later be mapped to the continuing students' experiences (via the UC Undergraduate Experience Survey—UCUES), and academic outcomes. Highlighted here are select findings from the survey of the Fall 2012 entering class.

EARLY EXPERIENCES AND THE CAMPUS CLIMATE FOR DIVERSITY

An overwhelming majority of students reported that their Berkeley experience was off to a good start. When asked to complete the sentence, “overall, I’m off to a _____”, nearly 70% of new freshmen and 65% of transfers said they were off to “a very good start” or “a really fantastic start”. That figure jumps to 92% for freshmen and 89% for transfers when “a good start” is included.

New Students' Start

“Overall, I am off to...”



What has gone surprisingly well, much better than expected?

“The campus environment is lively and welcoming, making the transition much more enjoyable.”

“Since I am from the other side of the country, I was worried that I was going to have a difficult time making new friends; however, everyone at Cal is very respectful and nice so it made me feel very comfortable.”

“The faculty, staff and my fellow students have all been exemplary in welcoming and informing me about everything I needed to know in order to make my start at Cal bearastic!”

“Getting personal attention from faculty and staff with questions and concerns that I have had.”

“I have been able to register for classes I both needed and wanted easily. I expected to struggle a bit more to find a good rhythm.”

Early Impressions of the Campus

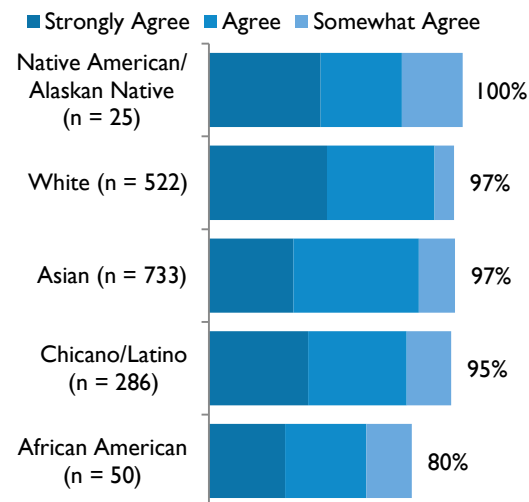
Agree = somewhat agree/agree/strongly agree

Frosh	Tran	
98%	98%	Are proud to attend UC Berkeley
96%	96%	Feel that students of their race/ethnicity are respected on campus
88%	89%	Feel valued as an individual at UC Berkeley

Respect rates are a key metric used to measure campus climate. In the chart below we see respect rates for new freshmen and transfers (combined) by their race/ethnicity. Although slightly lower for new African American students, the entering class agrees that students of their race/ethnicity are respected on campus.

Respect Rates

“Students of my race/ethnicity are respected on this campus”



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

SONS captures demographic information about students that is not captured in standard institutional data, such as perceived social status while growing up, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, and current living environment. In addition, the background section of SONS asks students

about college financial concerns, awareness of certain financial aid programs, and their strategies in the recent past when trying to meet anticipated college expenses. Below are a few highlights from this section of the survey:

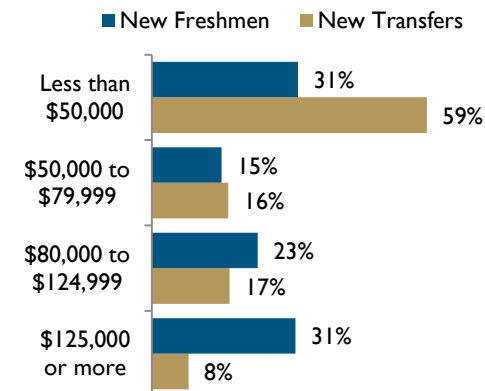
First Generation College

45% of new transfer students reported that neither of their parents has a 4-year college degree (earned either in or outside of the United States), compared to 27% of new freshmen students.

Household Income

Of the new transfer students, 59% reported that their annual household income was less than \$50,000, compared to 31% of new freshmen. At the upper end of the income spectrum, 1 out of 3 freshmen, compared to 1 out of 10 transfers, reported an annual household income of \$125,000 or more.

Household Income by Admit Type



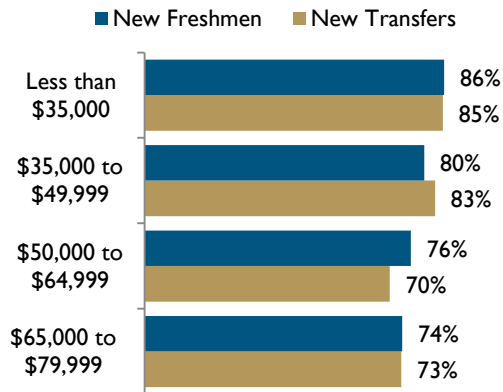
Awareness of Financial Aid Programs

Based on household incomes, many UC Berkeley students are eligible for two major financial aid programs. One, the Blue and Gold Opportunity Program, is systemwide, while the other, the Middle Class Access Plan, is currently unique to UC Berkeley.

Most students who are eligible for the Blue and Gold Opportunity Program, which ensures scholarships and grants will cover

fees for in-state students from families making \$80,000 or less, are aware of it.

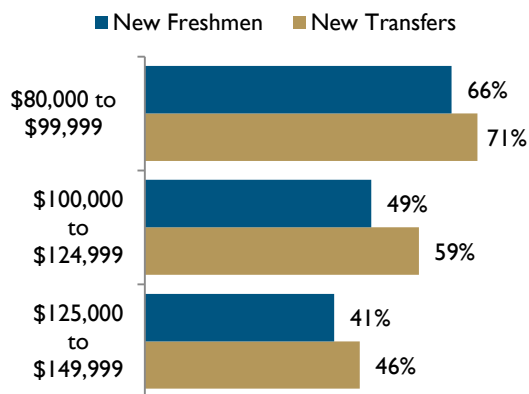
Awareness of the Blue and Gold Opportunity Program



Awareness is lower for the new Middle Class Access Plan (MCAP), which is available to families in the \$80,000 - \$140,000 annual income range, and caps parental contributions at 15% of their annual income.

As shown in the chart below, about two-thirds of new domestic freshmen and transfer students whose parents earn between \$80,000 and \$99,999 are aware of the plan.

Awareness of the Middle Class Access Plan (MCAP)



SONS also captures information about students' living environments—both for those on and off campus. As shown in the table below, only about one third of new transfers live in campus-owned housing as compared to nearly all (95%) new freshmen.

Living Arrangements and Roommate Diversity

Frosh	Tran	
95%	31%	Live in the residence halls or in other university-owned housing
64%	47%	Have roommates who differ in race or ethnicity
46%	27%	Have roommates who differ in religious preferences
38%	37%	Have roommates who differ in social/economic class

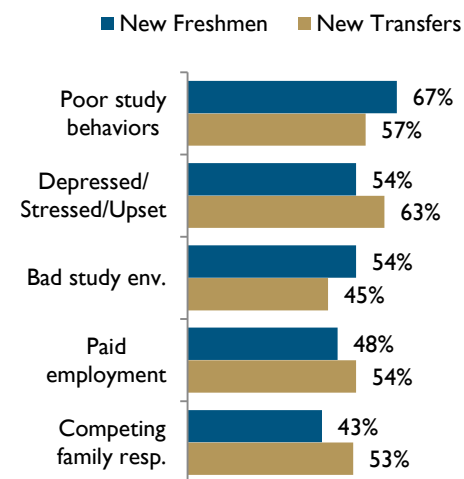
ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

The Academic Experience module taps into students' values regarding what they hope to get out of their Berkeley experience, their concerns about potential obstacles during their first year at UCB, and advice received about deciding on a major.

When asked about what they perceived as their obstacles to success during the first year, freshmen were more concerned about poor study behaviors; feeling depressed, stressed, or upset; and bad study environments. Transfer students share concerns about feeling depressed, stressed, or upset, in addition to concerns over poor study behaviors and the impact of paid employment and competing family responsibilities.

Perceived Obstacles to Success

Often = occasionally/frequently/all the time



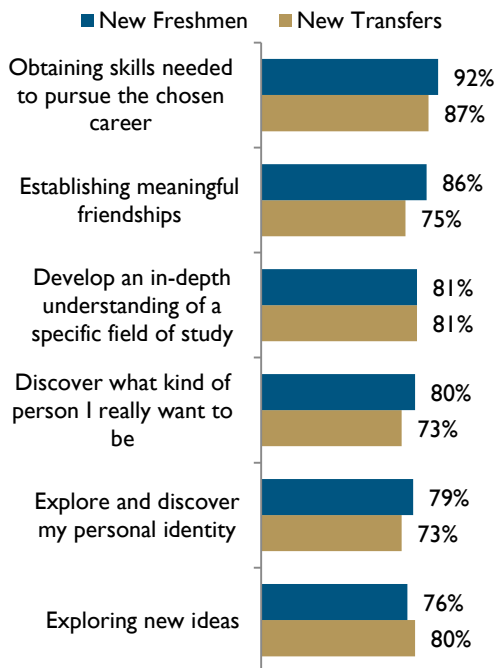
STUDENT LIFE & DEVELOPMENT

Within the Student Development module students are able to identify how important certain college goals are to them, such as acquiring a well-rounded general education, obtaining the skills needed to pursue their choice career, developing a personal code of values and ethics, and so forth. This module also asks students to identify how concerned they might be about such things as accessing certain resources, finding affordable housing while being a student, balancing academic and social life, and getting into their first choice of major. Finally, the Student Development module taps into students' perceived cross-cultural competencies.

When asked to rank their most important college goals, both freshmen and transfers ranked "obtaining skills needed to pursue a chosen career" as their most important goal.

Most Important College Goals

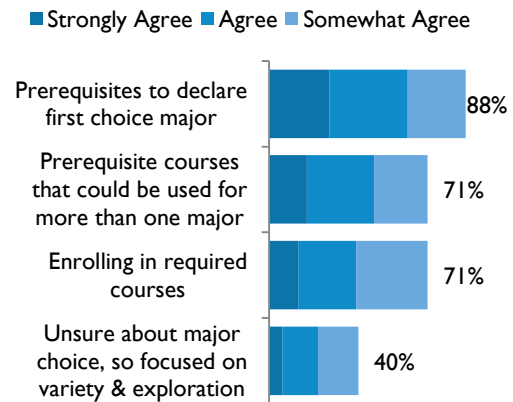
College goals ranked "very important"



ADVISING & COURSE SELECTION EXPERIENCES

The Advising and Course Selection module is a new module designed to gain a better understanding of how students selected their first-semester courses, who provided useful guidance to them in that process, and how satisfied they were with the guidance received in this regard. Students are also asked to identify certain factors and strategies that further impacted their decisions regarding which classes to enroll in. Finally, freshmen students assigned to this module were asked to share their Advance Placement experience as it relates to Common-Good course requirements, to transfer students were asked to share information about pre-UC Berkeley course articulation and their awareness of which courses transferred vis-à-vis their remaining course requirements.

New Freshmen Primary Strategies for Selecting First Semester Courses

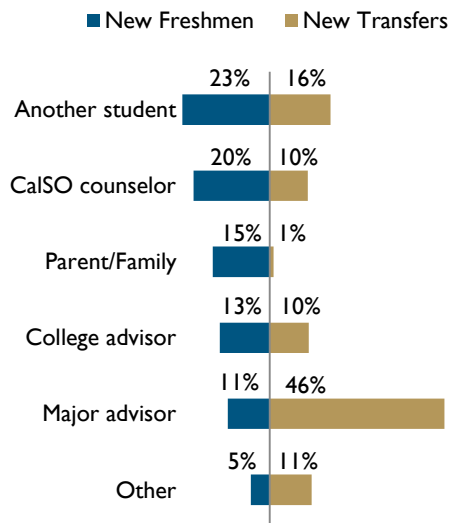


Just over 80% of new freshmen and transfers reported that they were satisfied (somewhat satisfied - very satisfied) with the amount of individualized guidance they received from the people they consulted with in selecting their courses for the fall 2012 semester. When asked to rank what type of individual or resource provided the most useful guidance in the selection of courses, nearly 1 out of 4 freshmen indicated that it was another student and

about 1 in 5 indicated that it was a CalSO counselor. In contrast, nearly half of transfer students reported that a major advisor provided the most useful guidance in the selection of classes, followed by another UC Berkeley student.

Course Selection Guidance

“Who provided the most useful guidance in the selection of your courses for the current term?”



AFFORDABILITY

The Affordability section of the survey asks students about how they are financing their UC Berkeley education, their anticipated loan debt for both themselves and their families at time of graduation, and their plans for employment while in school. Below are some highlights from this section of the survey.

Working During the First Semester

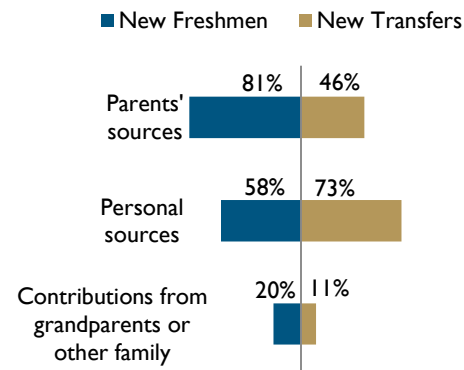
45% of new transfer students and 37% of new freshmen reported that they plan to work during their first semester at UC Berkeley. Although most of these students will be working fewer than 11 hours per week, nearly 1 in 4 new transfers indicated that they planned to work more than 10 hours per week (compared to 12% of new freshmen).

Financing Their First Year at UC Berkeley

When asked to indicate the various ways they were paying for their first academic year expenses at UC Berkeley, the top response from new transfer students was from their own personal sources of funding (e.g., loans, wages, income, savings, grants and scholarships), while most new freshmen indicated that it was from their parents' sources of funding (e.g., loans, wages, income, and savings). Some students also indicated that they were meeting housing, tuition, and other school-related expenses through contributions from grandparents or other family members.

Sources of First-Year Funding

Includes financial aid in the “parents’ sources” and “personal sources” categories.



For the full set of SONS 2012 results for freshmen and transfers, please visit:

<http://opa.berkeley.edu/surveys/freshmen>
<http://opa.berkeley.edu/surveys/transfers>

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