

## Topic in Brief

### Transfer student first-term academic load and graduation

September, 2016

There was no difference in normative graduation rate between transfer students who attempted 13 to 14.5 units in their first term compared to students who attempted 15 units or greater

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Academic load in transfer students' first term at UC Berkeley is related to their normative graduation rate. The normative graduation rate was:

- 38% for students who attempted fewer than 13 units.
- 61% for students who attempted 13 to 14.5 units
- 63% for students who attempted 15 units or greater.

These findings largely held in multivariable models controlling for gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

Normative graduation rate is strongly related to School, College, and Division. There were measurable differences in normative graduation rates by first-term academic load in College of Engineering and Letters & Science Undergraduate Division.

#### Methodology

This analysis includes transfer students who entered during the Fall terms of 2008 (n = 2,017), 2009 (n = 2,205), 2010 (n = 2,199), and 2011 (n = 2,337). The number of units attempted was sourced from Cal Answers and measured at the time of census for each student's first term at UC Berkeley. Students were grouped into the School, College, and Division in which they first declared a major.

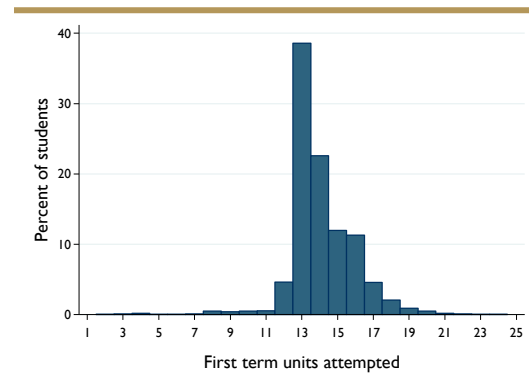
Normative graduation for transfer students is two years from the time of entry. One extra term is defined as one academic term (Fall or Spring) beyond the normative graduation time.

The logistic regression on normative graduation that controlled for demographic variables included the factor variables gender, ethnicity, first-generation college, and Pell Grant recipient. This data were sourced from Cal Answers. First-generation college is defined as a student who reported that neither of their parents graduated from a four-year college. Receiving a Pell Grant while a student at UC Berkeley and being a first-generation college student were used as measures for family or student socioeconomic status.

#### ACADEMIC LOAD

In their first term at UC Berkeley, transfer students attempted between 2 and 24 units. For the histogram below, depicting the number of units attempted in the first term, units were rounded down to the nearest whole number.

#### Units attempted by transfer students in their first term



Notes: N = 8,756. Units are rounded down to the next whole number. Source: Cal Answers.

Students who attempted 14.5 units are counted in the 14 unit group. This is for ease of depiction since very few students were in each 0.5 category (e.g. There were 76 students [0.9%] attempting 13.5 units). Seven percent of students attempted fewer than 13 units, while 61% attempted 13 to 14.5 units, and 32% attempted 15 units or greater their first term. Additionally, the mode for transfer student academic load in their first term was 13 units.

Academic load might be related to the number of units transfer units bring into UC Berkeley. Greater than 50% of students transfer 69 units or more to UC Berkeley upon transferring. This may affect the number of units transfer students attempt each term.

### Demographic Groups

Although there was not much variation in proportion of students attempting fewer than 13 units by demographic groups, attempting 15 units or greater in the first term was different for some groups.

### Academic load in the first term, by demographic groups

Demographic Group	n	<13	13-14.5	15+
<b>Gender</b>				
Women	4,153	7%	62%	31%
Men	4,603	8%	60%	32%
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
International	1,141	6%	58%	37%
Asian/Pac Isl	2,310	7%	60%	33%
White/Other	3,640	8%	61%	31%
URM	1,665	8%	65%	27%
<b>Parent educ</b>				
Not 1 <sup>st</sup> Gen	4,435	7%	60%	33%
1 <sup>st</sup> Gen	3,704	8%	62%	30%
<b>Income</b>				
Not Pell	4,092	6%	59%	35%
Pell Grant	4,664	8%	63%	29%

A smaller percentage of Underrepresented Minority (27%) students attempted 15 units or greater, compared to

White / Other (31%), Asian / Pacific Islander (API, 33%), and International (37%) students.

A smaller proportion of first-generation college students (30%) attempted 15 units or greater, compared to students who did not identify as first-generation college (33%). There was a similar difference among Pell Grant recipients, 29% of whom attempted 15 units or greater, compared to 35% of students who did not receive Pell Grants.

There was no difference in the proportion of men (32%) and women (31%) students attempting 15 units or greater.

### School / College / Division

Transfer students' first-term academic load varied widely across Schools, Colleges, and Divisions. Overall, 7% of transfer students attempted fewer than 13 units in their first term, but this was the case for less than 4% of transfer students in:

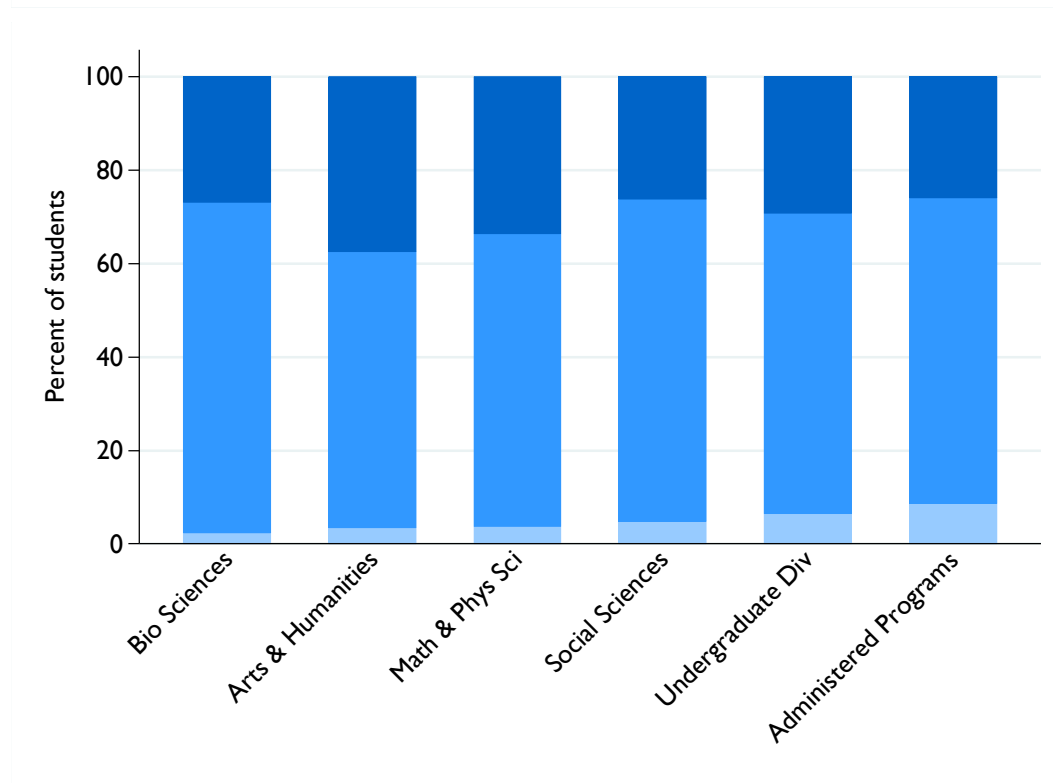
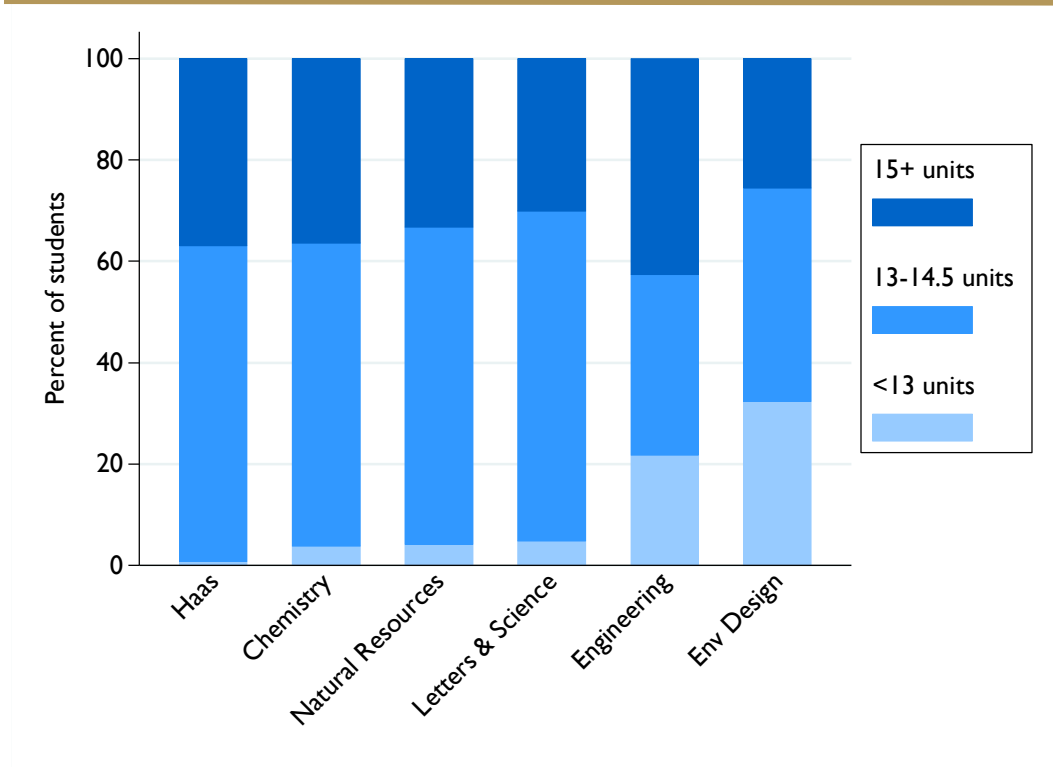
- Haas (n = 3)
- College of Chemistry (n = 10)
- L&S Biological Sciences Division (n = 9)
- L&S Arts & Humanities Division (n = 55)
- L&S Math & Physical Sciences (n = 20)

Conversely, large proportions of students in College of Engineering (n = 167, 22%) and College of Environmental Design (n = 85, 32%) attempted fewer than 13 units. This variation is depicted in the graph on the following page.



Photo Credit: Peg Skorpinski, Berkeley Gallery

**Units attempted in the first term, by School, College, and Division of first declared major**



Notes: N=8,545. Students who did not have a declared major were not included. Source: Cal Answers

## NORMATIVE GRADUATION

Overall, 60% of transfer students graduated in two years or fewer. As shown in the graph below, there was no difference in normative graduation for students who attempted 13 to 14.5 units (n = 5,358) and those who attempted 15 units or greater (n = 2,774).

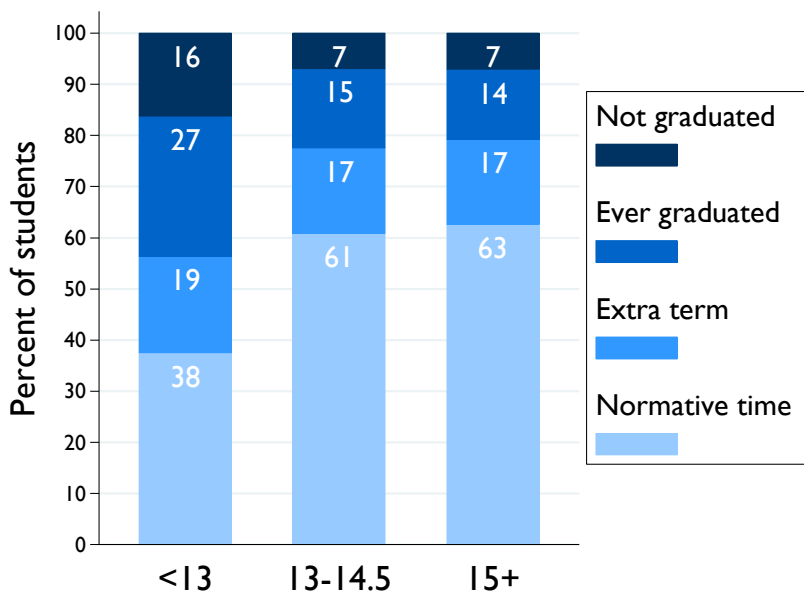
However, students who attempted fewer than 13 units their first term (n = 624) had a significantly lower normative graduation rate than students who attempted at least 13 units.

## Demographic Groups

The graphs on the following page show no difference in the normative graduation rates within demographic groups for students who attempted 13 to 14.5 units compared to 15 units or greater in their first term.

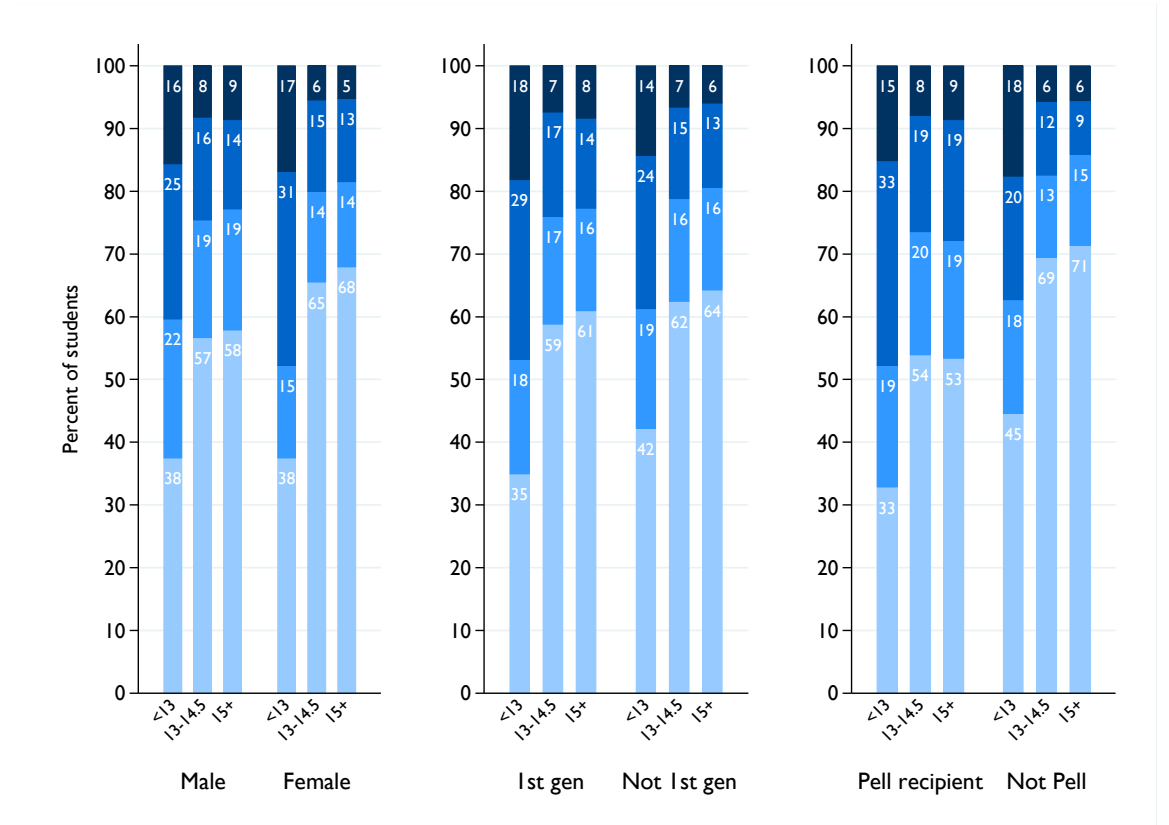
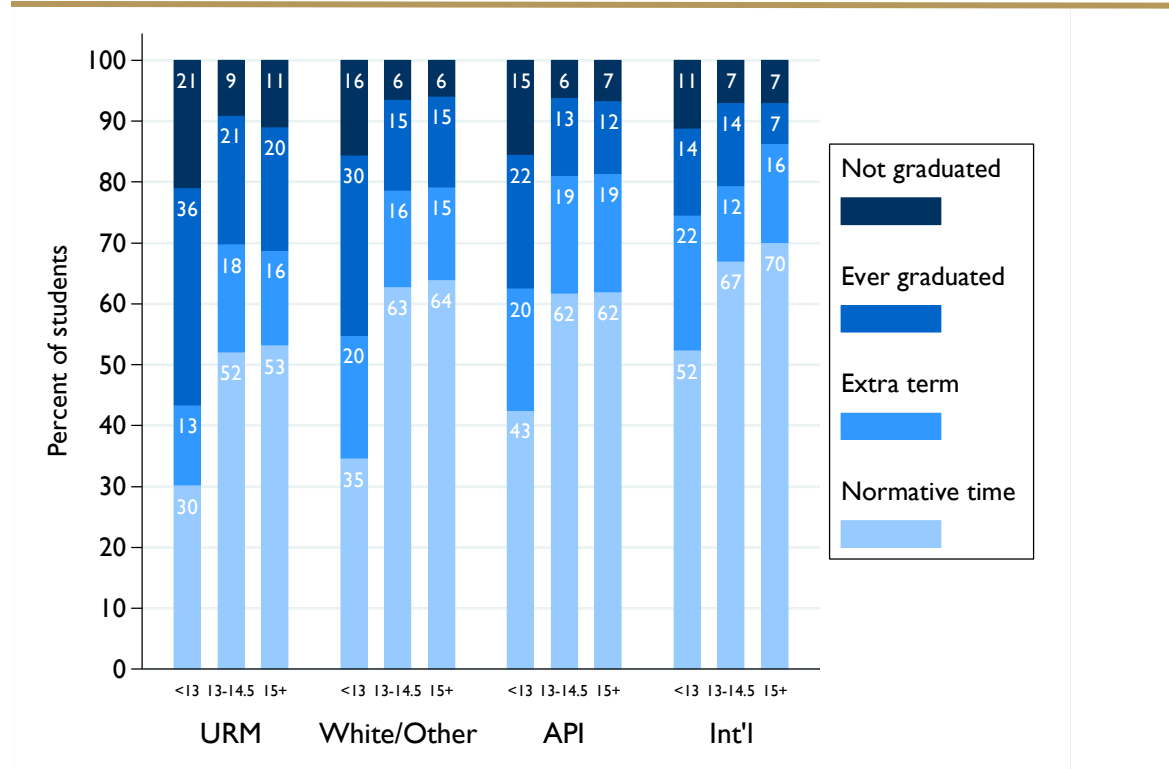
It also shows the large and statistically significant difference in normative graduation rates for students who attempted fewer than 13 units and students who attempted 13 units or greater, across all demographic groups.

**Graduation rate by units attempted in the first term**



Notes: N = 8,756. Normative graduation is two years from entry. Extra term is one additional academic term. Source: Cal Answers.

**Graduation rates by units attempted by transfer students in their first term, by demographic groups**



Notes: N = 8,756, except first-generation college N = 8,139. Source: Cal Answers.

**School / College / Division**

Normative graduation rates differed greatly across Schools, Colleges, and Divisions, from 39% for College of Engineering to 89% for Haas School of Business. As shown previously in this report, student academic load was highly related to School, College, or Division.

The graph below shows no difference in graduation rates within School, College, or Division for students who attempted 13 to 14.5 units compared to students who attempted 15 units or greater. No data on students who attempted fewer than 13 units is shown in this graph because, for each School, College, or Division, the number of students was 20 or fewer. There is no statistically significant difference in Chemistry graduation rates by first-term academic load.

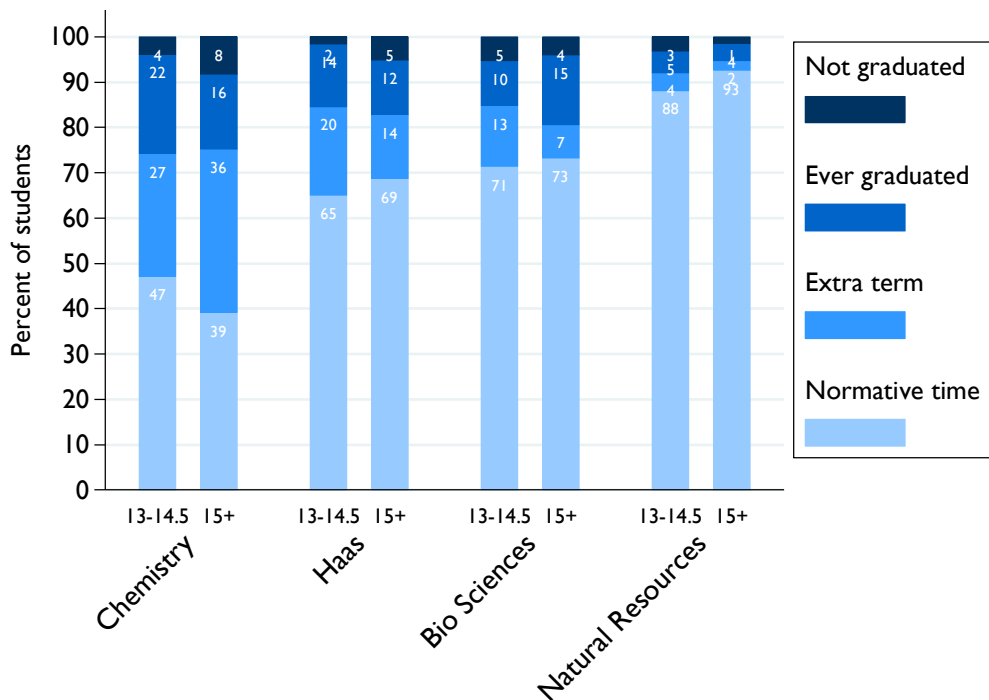
The graphs on the following page include students who attempted fewer than 13 units because there were at least 20 such students in each College or Division.

Within the College of Engineering, students who attempted 15 units or greater in their first term had a normative graduation rate of 46%, compared to 34% for students attempting fewer than 15 units. Students in the Letters & Science Undergraduate Division who attempted 15 units or greater in their first term had a normative graduation rate of 69%, compared to 58% for students who attempted 13 to 14.5 units and 32% for students who attempted fewer than 15 units.

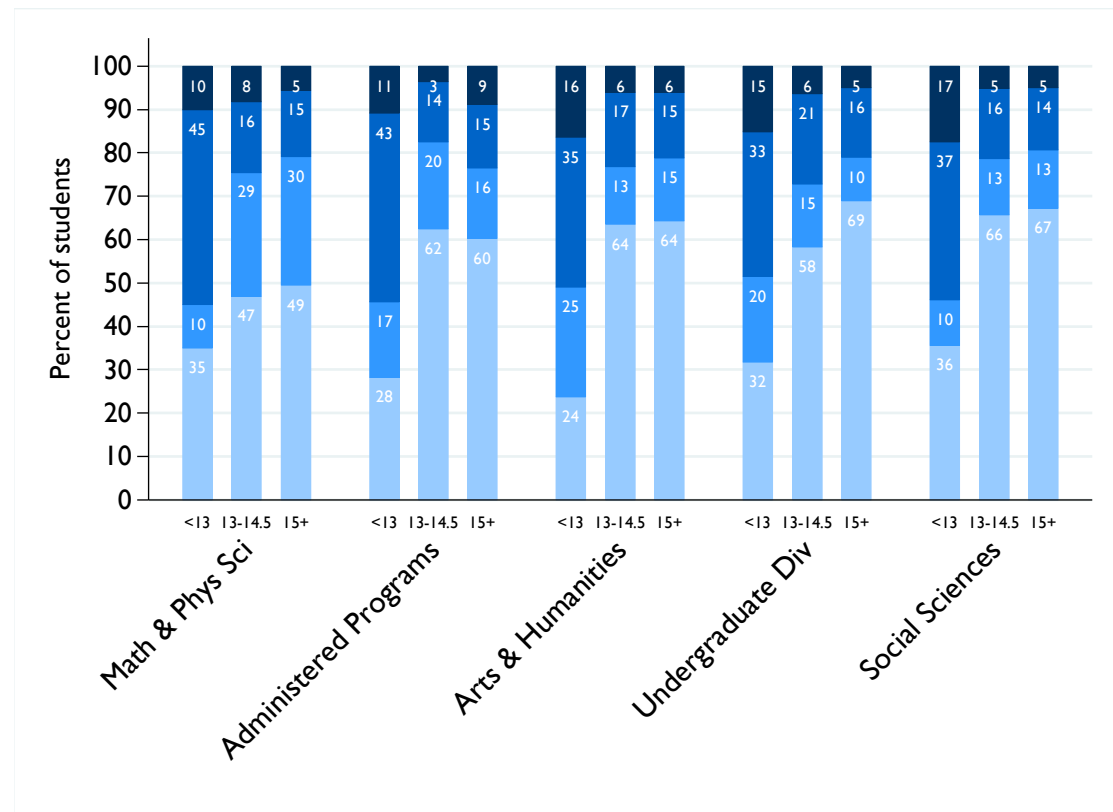
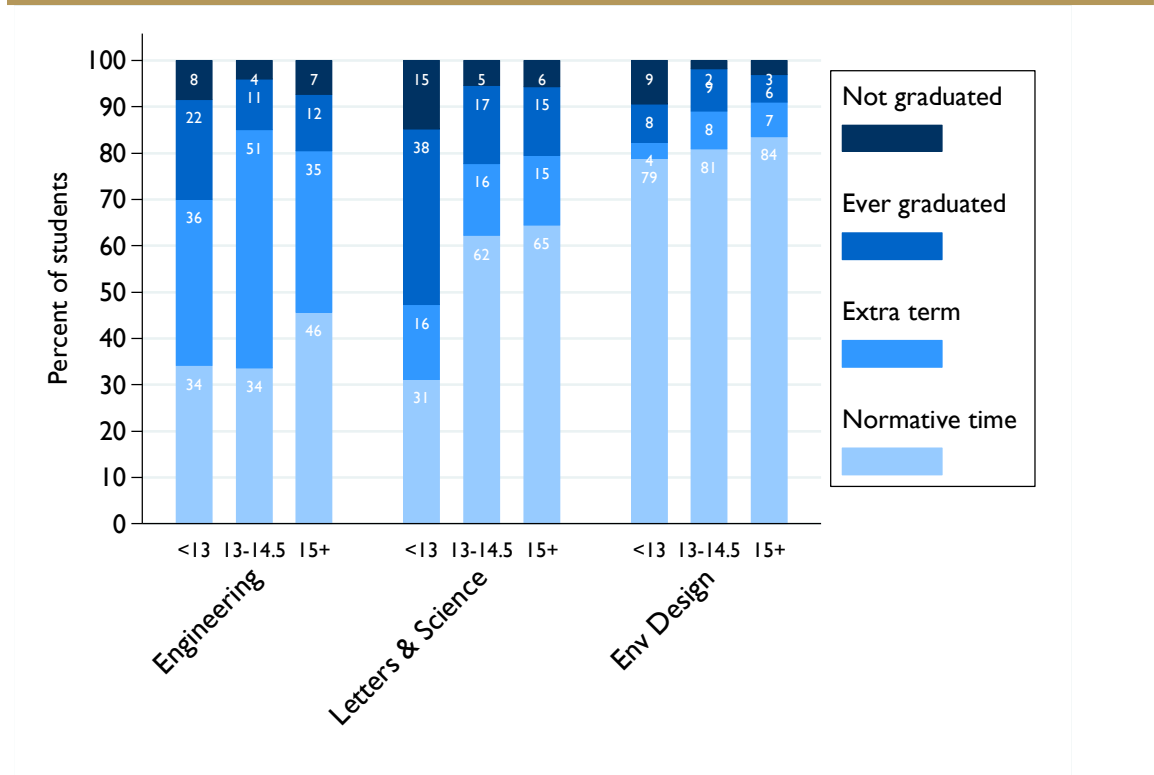
.....  
**Taking 15 or greater units was related to higher normative graduation rates in College of Engineering and L&S Undergraduate Division.**  
 .....

Within all other Schools, Colleges, and Divisions, the difference in first-term academic load beyond 13 units was not significantly related to normative graduation.

**Graduation rates by units attempted by transfer students in their first term, for Schools, Colleges, and Divisions excluding students who attempted <13 units because fewer than 20**



**Graduation rates by units attempted by transfer students in their first term, for Schools, Colleges, and Divisions**



Notes: Normative graduation is two years from entry. Extra term is one additional academic term. Source: Cal Answers.

### Multivariable Model

When controlling for gender, ethnicity, first-generation college status, and Pell Grant recipient status, students who attempted fewer than 13 units had a 40% normative graduation rate; this was 61% for students who attempted 13 to 14.5 units and 62% for students who attempted 15 units or greater.

Within the College of Engineering, there was a significant advantage in terms of normative graduation for those freshman entrants who attempted 15 units or greater in their first term. This finding held when controlling for demographic variables.

Undergraduates who entered the College of Letters & Science and attempted fewer than 13 units in their first term had a significantly lower normative graduation rate than those who attempted at least 13 units. This finding held even when controlling for demographic factors. Accounting for demographic factors bridged the difference in normative graduation rates between L&S students who attempted 13 to 14.5 units and those who attempted 15 units or greater.

### Count and normative graduation rates by units attempted in the first term for entry College

	Count	Unadjusted	Adjusted for demographic variables
<b>Overall</b>	<b>8,758</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>60%</b>
<13 units	624	38% *	40% *
13-14.5 units	5,358	61%	61%
15+ units	2,774	63%	62%
<b>Engineering</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>40%</b>
<13 units	167	34%	32%
13-14.5 units	274	33%	33%
15+ units	328	46% *	44% *
<b>Environmental Design</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>82%</b>
<13 units	85	80%	81%
13-14.5 units	110	82%	82%
15+ units	67	86%	85%
<b>Letters &amp; Science</b>	<b>6,465</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>60%</b>
<13 units	313	29% *	31% *
13-14.5 units	4,200	61% *	61%
15+ units	1,952	63% *	63%
<b>Chemistry</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>43%</b>
<13 units	10	--	--
13-14.5 units	159	48%	49%
15+ units	97	40%	40%
<b>Haas</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>90%</b>
<13 units	3	--	--
13-14.5 units	228	89%	90%
15+ units	135	93%	94%
<b>Natural Resources</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>68%</b>
<13 units	19	--	--
13-14.5 units	283	71%	72%
15+ units	150	72%	68%

\*Difference in unit category statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Source: Cal Answers.



## CONCLUSION

A small minority of transfer students attempted fewer than 13 units in their first term at UC Berkeley. Presumably, these students underwent an approval process to be allowed a lighter academic load. These students had a significantly lower normative graduation rate than students who attempted greater than 13 units.

For students attempting at least 13 units, there was no difference in normative rates within demographic groups.

Students in College of Engineering and Letters & Science Undergraduate Division who attempted heavier loads in their first term had higher normative graduation rates (see graphs on page 7).

Normative graduation is highly related to School, College, or Division. Keeping this in mind, the evidence suggests that, beyond 13 units, normative graduation is not greatly affected by first-term academic load.

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