

# Survey of New Students

## Transitional Support for UC Berkeley's Entering Class

May 2015

Each year, new freshmen and transfers are invited to complete the Survey of New Students (SONS)—sharing feedback about their early experiences at UC Berkeley. Using 2014 SONS data, this brief highlights the co-curricular and curricular resources new undergraduates reported using and their ratings of which resources aided in their transition.

### OVERVIEW

As the Fall 2014 semester began, all new fall freshmen (N = 4,744) and transfers (N = 2,187) were invited to complete the SONS. Of invited freshmen, 39% responded to at least some portion of the survey and 28% made it through to the end and submitted it. For transfers, response rates were somewhat higher with 44% responding to at least the first block of questions and 33% submitting the survey.

Overall, submission and response rates alike represent a strong showing from new Berkeley students, with roughly 1 of 3 new students in a given College/School responding to share their experiences as they transitioned.

### Response Rates by College & Entry Status

Frosh	Tran	
37%	33%	Environmental Design
37%	43%	Letters & Science (L&S)
45%	36%	Chemistry
44%	48%	Engineering
42%	63%	Natural Resources
	40%	Haas School of Business

### THE CURRENT PAPER

This brief aims to highlight and answer the following questions:

- 1) What do undergraduates report about their early experiences at Berkeley?

- 2) Which co-curricular and curricular resources are new students utilizing?

- 3) Of the resources used, which ones do students report aided their transition?

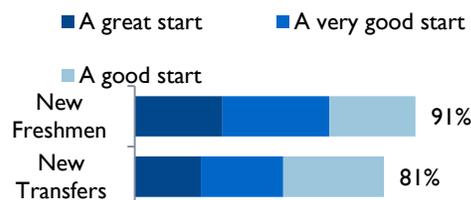
These questions will be looked at by entry type and College when the response counts are at least 30 students per grouping.

### EARLY CAMPUS IMPRESSIONS AND EXPERIENCES

Most students reported their Berkeley experience was off to a positive start. When asked to complete the sentence, “overall, I’m off to a \_\_\_\_\_”, 63% of new freshmen and 48% of new transfers said they were off to “a very good start” or “a great start.” This increases to 91% and 81%, for freshmen and transfers respectively, when “a good start” is included.

### New Students' Start

“Overall, I am off to...”



For freshmen, the only significant difference of the percentage of students responding “a

very good” or “great” start was for students whose entry college was College of Natural Resources; 71% of freshmen in CNR reported being off to a very good or great start (compared to 62% of non-CNR students). For transfers, there were no significant differences by entry college.

**What has gone surprisingly well, much better than expected?**

*“The classes have been smaller than I had expected, and the teachers so far have been great.”*

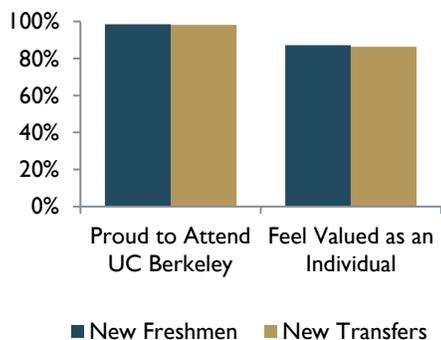
*“The summer transfer edge program was absolutely crucial to my preparation as a student here! I’m so glad I took it!”*

*“CalSO was awesome for me, I thought it would be boring but I had fun and made lots of friends!”*

New undergraduates also reported that they are proud to attend UC Berkeley (98%) and that they feel valued as an individual on campus (87% and 86% for freshmen and transfers, respectively).

**Early Impressions of the Campus**

*Agree = somewhat agree/agree/strongly agree*



**RESOURCES USED DURING THE TRANSITION**

New students were asked to indicate if they used certain resources and the extent to which they agreed that a given resource helped with their transition into UC Berkeley. The list of 30 resources

presented to respondents were co-curricular and curricular in nature, and also included family and fellow students.

In addition to the MyBerkeleyApp website, new freshmen tended to rely heavily on another UC Berkeley student and Welcome Week activities, whereas new transfers relied on MyBerkeleyApp and another UC Berkeley student—in addition to CalSO. Overall, new transfers and freshmen shared 3 of the same top 5 resources utilized, with “Residence Hall Staff” and “Getting Your Bearings” making the top 5 list for new freshmen (but not new transfers) and “Major/departmental advisor” and “Cal Student Central” making the list for new transfers (but not freshmen):

**Top 5 Most Used During Transition**

Frosh	Tran	Resource
90%	90%	MyBerkeleyApplication site
88%	84%	Another Berkeley student
86%	58%	Getting Your Bearings
83%	88%	CalSO
83%		Residence Hall Staff
	81%	Major/departmental advisor
62%	73%	Cal Student Central

**AGREEMENT THAT A GIVEN RESOURCE HELPED WITH THE TRANSITION INTO UC BERKELEY**

In addition to identifying which resources were used, respondents also indicated if they agreed that a respective resource helped with their transition as a new student. Importantly, the most used resources were not one in the same as the top resources rated as aiding in the transition. Below is a list of the latter.

**Top 5 Resources Students Agreed Helped with their Transition, by Entry Status**

Agree = agree/strongly agree

Agree	New Freshmen	Usage
82%	Summer Bridge	12%
80%	Another Berkeley Student	88%
71%	Multicultural Student Dev.	12%
68%	Student Learning Center	43%
67%	MyBerkeleyApplication	90%

Agree	New Transfers	Usage
77%	Another Berkeley student	84%
72%	MyBerkeleyApplication	90%
68%	Transfer, Reentry, & Student Parent (TRSP) Center	20%
66%	A 98 or 198 course for new students	42%
65%	Student Learning Center	32%

■ New Freshmen ■ New Transfers

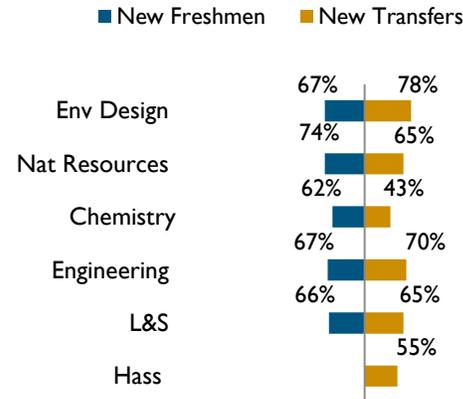
As seen in the prior tables, though not the top resources used by freshmen across the board, for freshmen who did attend Summer Bridge, or use the Multicultural Student Development Center or Student Learning Center, a high proportion *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the resource helped with their transition. For transfers, the TRSP Center, Student Learning Center and a 98/198 course for new students made it onto the top 5 list of resources that aided in the transition but were not among the most utilized resources. Finally, another UC Berkeley student and the MyBerkeleyApplication website were deemed by freshmen and transfers alike as both top utilized resources and most helpful resources.

When revisiting the matter of usage, below are students' ratings of 3 of the top 5 utilized resources, by entry status and College/School affiliation. As with the table on page 2, if a student did not use a given resource s/he is not factored into these ratings in any way.

**MyBerkeleyApp rated high in usage and helpfulness among both transfers and freshmen**

Agree = agree/strongly agree

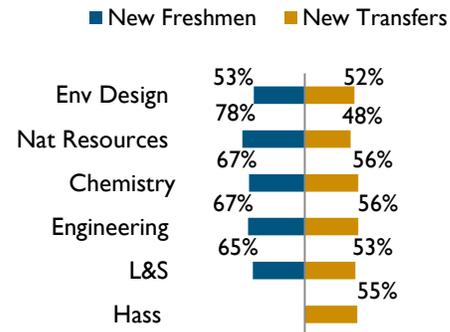
**MyBerkeleyApp**



More Students in the College of Natural Resources found CalSO helpful than did other colleges' students.

Agree = agree/strongly agree

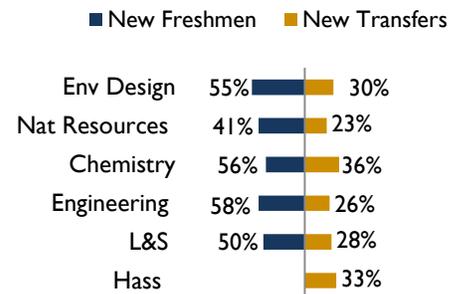
**CalSO**



Getting Your Bearings activities rated as less helpful for both transfers and freshmen than CalSO or MyBerkeleyApp

Agree = agree/strongly agree

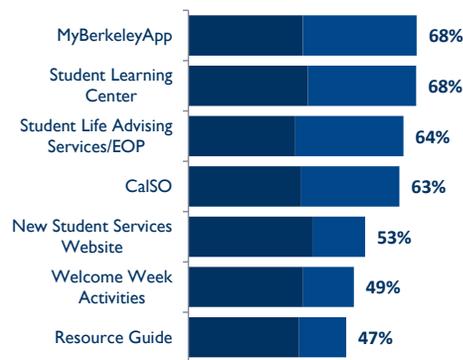
**Welcome Week Activities**



Given that both new freshmen and transfers in L&S were sometimes less likely to report that a given resource aided in their transition, compared to students in other Colleges, the chart below exclusively highlights L&S students' responses regarding *selected* resources that helped with their transition. New fall freshmen, spring starts and transfer responses are combined.

**New L&S students rate co-curricular resources, other students, tutoring, and websites most useful to their transition**

Agree = agree/strongly agree



Overall, new students are leveraging and finding value in resources that range from other Berkeley students, to co-curricular and academic support services, to campus websites. Students in L&S represent well the breadth of resources used and rated as aiding in the new student transition.

**SUMMARY**

The results presented throughout highlight data from approximately 3,000 new Berkeley undergraduates—adding to our anecdotal knowledge of the resources new students are taking advantage of and also finding useful to their transition. New undergraduates reported that they are proud to be Berkeley students and, perhaps more importantly, that they feel valued as an individual. Most students also reported having a positive start, irrespective of entry status as new a freshman or transfer. However, new freshmen in College of

Natural Resources reported statistically higher ratings of their overall start to the semester. Comparatively, there were no statistically significant College differences for transfers, as they overall tended to be off to a positive start.

When given a list of 30 resources to choose from, new freshmen and transfers had a lot of overlap in regards to usage—sharing 3 of the 5 top used resources. Those 3 most used resources included “Another Berkeley Student,” “CalSo,” and not surprisingly, the “MyBerkeleyApplication” website that acts as a portal for admissions decisions, while also providing a checklist and links to other campus resources applicable to a given new student.

When comparing the top 5 resources used with the top 5 resources rated as aiding in the transition, we found that the lists varied somewhat. This was true for new freshmen and new transfers. For example, CalSO and Getting Your Bearings Activities were heavily used by new undergraduates but neither had particularly high ratings for aiding in the transition. By contrast, there were some less utilized resources that were rated as being helpful by most of the students who used them. This included the Summer Bridge program, Multicultural Student Development Center, and the Transfer, Reentry, and Student Parent Center.

Taken together this last set of findings comparing usage with the value students report the resources had for them, is one that we can expand further to other populations of new students. For example, new international freshmen make use of and find value in similar resources as their domestic peers, but at the same time find value in an additional campus resource designed to meet their unique needs (i.e., the Berkeley International Office).

## **Top 5 resources that international new freshmen agreed helped with transition**

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*Agree = agree/strongly agree*

<b>Agree</b>	<b>International Frosh</b>	<b>Usage</b>
<b>80%</b>	Another Berkeley student	<b>87%</b>
<b>77%</b>	Summer Bridge	<b>20%</b>
<b>71%</b>	Undocumented Students Program	<b>24%</b>
<b>71%</b>	MyBerkeleyApplication	<b>93%</b>
<b>68%</b>	Student Learning Center	<b>51%</b>

Not shown here, we also found that international students were more likely than domestic students to indicate that Getting Your Bearings Activities, the New Student Convocation, the New Student Services Website, and the Resource Guide proved useful to their transitions. This may suggest that web-based materials that are accessible without needing to be in the U.S., as well as social resources (i.e., Welcome Week and the New Student Convocation) that are available closer to the start of the academic term are particularly valuable for international students.

### **SONS SURVEY RESULTS**

For the full set of SONS 2014 results for freshmen and transfers, please visit:

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

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

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