

# Survey of New Students

## Transitional Support for UC Berkeley's Entering Class

October 2013

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 2013 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 2013 semester began, all new fall freshmen (N = 4,706) and transfers (N = 2,241) were invited to complete the SONS. Of invited freshmen, 42% responded to at least some portion of the survey and 30% made it through to the end and submitted it. For transfers, response rates were somewhat higher with 49% responding to at least the first block of questions and 38% submitting the survey.

Overall, submission and response rates alike represent a strong showing from new Berkeley students, with more than 1 of 3 (and sometimes up to 2 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	
39%	42%	Environmental Design
40%	48%	Letters & Science (L&S)
40%	52%	Chemistry
46%	50%	Engineering
49%	61%	Natural Resources
	65%	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?

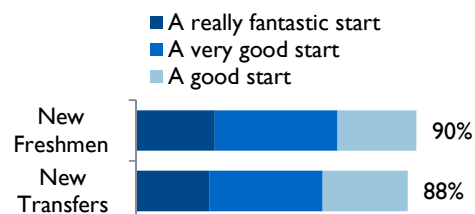
These questions will be looked at by entry type and College when the response counts are at least 30 students per grouping.

### 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 \_\_\_\_\_", 65% of new freshmen and 60% of new transfers said they were off to "a very good start" or "a really fantastic start." This increases to 90% and 88% when "a good start" is included.

### New Students' Start

"Overall, I am off to..."



Importantly, for freshmen there was no significant difference by entry College. However, new transfers in the College of Letters & Science (L&S) were less likely to report being off to a positive start (86%) than new transfer students in other Colleges, whereas new transfers in the Haas School of Business were more likely to report being off to a positive start (98%).

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

*“Courses are not as overwhelming as I had expected. My professors are accessible and personable as well.”*

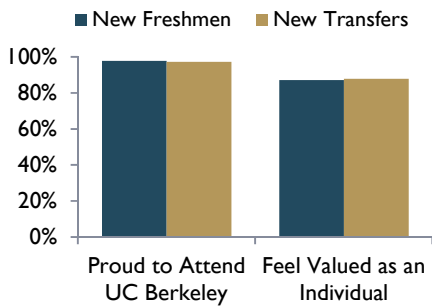
*“Welcome Week made me feel proud to be a Berkeley student, and I immediately connected with the vibrant culture on UC Berkeley and the surrounding city.”*

*“Berkeley has a reputation of not giving individual attention to students, but every time I asked for extra help, I always got it or I was directed to someone who could help me. So I feel that my voice and my success does matter to the school, not just me.”*

New undergraduates also reported that they are proud to attend UC Berkeley (98%) and that they feel valued as an individual on campus (87%). These feelings hold across entry as a freshman or transfer.

**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 4 of the same top 5 resources utilized, with “Residence Hall Staff” making the top 5 list for new freshmen (but not new transfers) and “Major/departmental advisor” making the list for new transfers (but not freshmen):

**Top 5 Resources Used During Transition**

Frosh	Tran	Resource
90%	92%	MyBerkeleyApplication site
90%	85%	Another Berkeley student
90%	72%	Welcome Week activities
77%	86%	CalSO
85%		Residence Hall Staff
	81%	Major/departmental advisor

**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

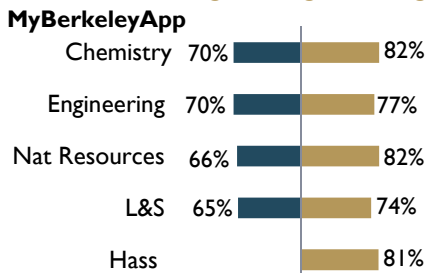
Agree	New Freshmen	Usage
83%	Another Berkeley student	90%
72%	Student Learning Center	49%
70%	Student Life Advising Services/EOP Office	20%
67%	MyBerkeleyApplication	90%
67%	Residence Hall Staff	85%
Agree	New Transfers	Usage
79%	Another Berkeley student	85%
75%	MyBerkeleyApplication	92%
69%	Transfer, Reentry, & Student Parent (TRSP) Center	56%
67%	Major/departmental advisor	81%
67%	A 98 or 198 course for new students	39%

As seen in the prior tables, though not the top resources used by freshmen across the board, for freshmen who did use the Student Learning Center or Student Life Advising Services they *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the resource helped with their transition. For transfers, the TRSP Center as well as a 98/198 course for new students made it on the top 5 list of resources that aided in the transition, although they did not make it to the top 5 list of 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. Note that responses for the College of Environmental Design did not reach the minimum threshold of at least 30 freshmen and 30 transfers to be shown.

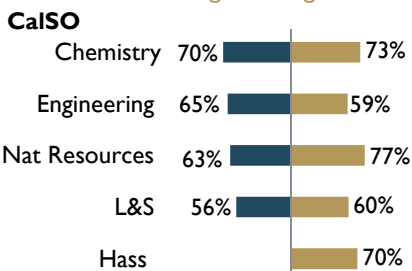
**MyBerkeleyApp rated as aiding in the transition more so for new transfers than new freshmen, irrespective of College**

*Agree = agree/strongly agree*



**Students in L&S less likely to agree CalSO helped with transition, than Students in other Colleges**

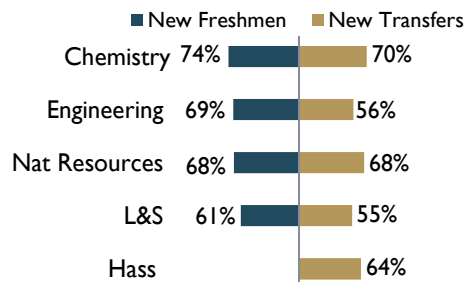
*Agree = agree/strongly agree*



**Freshmen in the Colleges of Engineering and L&S were more likely than transfers in these Colleges to agree that Welcome Week Activities aided in their transition**

*Agree = agree/strongly agree*

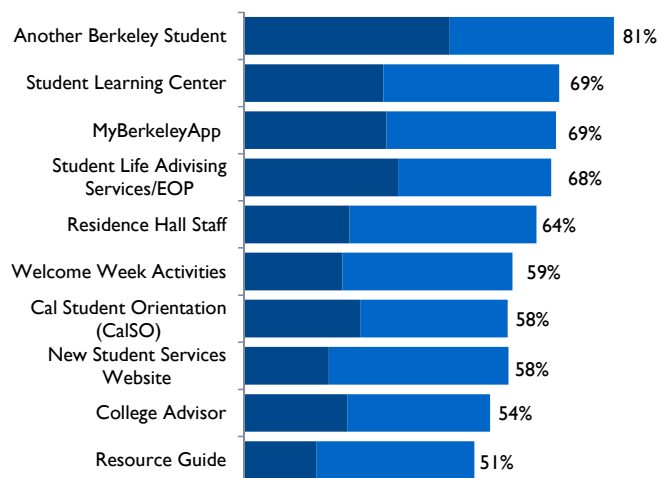
**Welcome Week Activities**



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

■ New Freshmen ■ New Transfers

## 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 being off to a positive start, irrespective of entry status as new a freshman or transfer. However, new transfers in L&S reported statistically significant lower ratings of their overall start to the semester, whereas transfer students in Haas reported significantly higher ratings. Comparatively, there were no statistically significant College differences for freshmen, 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 4 of the 5 top used resources. Those 4 most used resources included “Another Berkeley Student,” “Welcome Week Activities,” “CalSO,” and perhaps 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 also for new transfers. For example, CalSO and Welcome Week 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 Student Learning Center, Student Life Advising Services, 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>83%</b>	Another Berkeley student	<b>90%</b>
<b>75%</b>	MyBerkeleyApplication	<b>89%</b>
<b>75%</b>	Student Learning Center	<b>55%</b>
<b>73%</b>	Residence Hall Staff	<b>84%</b>
<b>72%</b>	Berkeley International Ofc.	<b>86%</b>

Not shown here, we also found that international students were more likely than domestic students to indicate that Welcome Week 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 2013 results for freshmen and transfers, please visit:

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

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