



2009 Senior Survey: UCLA Student Interactions

The Student Affairs Information and Research Office (SAIRO) is the research and assessment office within UCLA’s Student Affairs organization. The mission of SAIRO is to support the learning and development of the whole student by providing reliable, timely, and useful information about students and their experiences; by developing the capacity of student affairs and other stakeholders to collect, interpret, and utilize data to enhance the quality of students’ educational experience and environment; and by helping Student Affairs units assess and document the effectiveness of their programs and practices.

CONTENTS:

Executive Summary	1
Student Interactions	2
Transfers Compared to Direct Entry	4
Comparisons by Race/Ethnicity	5

Executive Summary

The 2009 Senior Survey was administered in spring 2009 to UCLA seniors graduating in the 2008-09 academic year. Below are the main findings from items assessing UCLA student interactions.

- The majority of respondents (between 95% and 99%) perceived that UCLA provided them with opportunities for interaction with other UCLA students in a variety of areas.
- Respondents most frequently engaged in academically-related interactions, with the lowest percentage of interaction being found in UCLA-based extracurricular activities.
- More than 85% of respondents discussed topics with others who had different opinions than them and had discussions about their different backgrounds.
- Ratings of interactions with those who are different were high, with 76% or more reporting various interactions as “positive” or “very positive.”
- Compared to transfer students, a larger percentage of direct entry students perceived greater opportunities to interact with others outside of the academic context. The groups did not differ in their perceptions of opportunities to interact in class or to discuss course material outside of class.
- Few significant differences were found for analyses by race/ethnicity.

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About the Senior Survey

The UCLA Graduating Senior Survey is administered annually by the UCLA College of Letters and Sciences. During the spring quarter, UCLA undergraduates graduating in the current academic year are invited to participate in the online survey. The survey covers topics related to academic and student life experiences at the university including: student and campus life, academic majors and minors, quality of faculty and courses, research opportunities for undergraduates, post-graduation plans for employment and continued education, plans for alumni involvement, and overall UCLA experience. Data summaries regarding academic experiences and majors can be found at the College website at: <http://www.college.ucla.edu/seniorsurvey/> Data summaries on student life, diversity, campus climate, and student values can be found at SAIRO's website at: http://www.sairo.ucla.edu/data/efforts_grad.html

Introduction

This brief provides a summary of UCLA graduating seniors' interactions based on responses to the 2009 Senior Survey. Data are summarized for all survey respondents. In addition, analyses were conducted by undergraduate entry status and race/ethnicity. Significance of differences was tested at $p < .01$.

Survey Respondents

A total of 3,850 graduating seniors participated in the 2009 Senior Survey. Respondents consisted of 63% women and 37% men. Over half (56%) of respondents entered UCLA directly from high school while 44% transferred from another college/university. The ethnic/racial breakdown reflected that of the general undergraduate population (36% White, non-Hispanic; 34% Asian/Pacific Islander; 17% Hispanic; 5% Unknown/Other; 5% Foreign; 3% Black, non-Hispanic; less than 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native). The sample generally represents the UCLA campus population for the 2008-2009 academic year.

Student Interactions

Respondents' interactions with other UCLA students were examined in the context of dining/sharing a meal, interacting in class, discussing course material outside of class, interacting as part of a UCLA-based extracurricular activity or club, discussing topics about which students had different opinions, and discussing different backgrounds.

Opportunities to Participate

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent that their UCLA experience provided them with the opportunity to engage in various interactions with other UCLA students. Figure 1 provides a summary of responses. Nearly all respondents (ranging from 95% to 99%) perceived that UCLA provided them with various interaction opportunities.

Interactions with Others

Respondents indicated the extent that they engaged in various interactions with other UCLA students. The percentage of respondents who engaged in these interactions "sometimes," "often," or "very often" ranged from 76% to 91%. Interactions involving academics were the most common types of interactions engaged in.

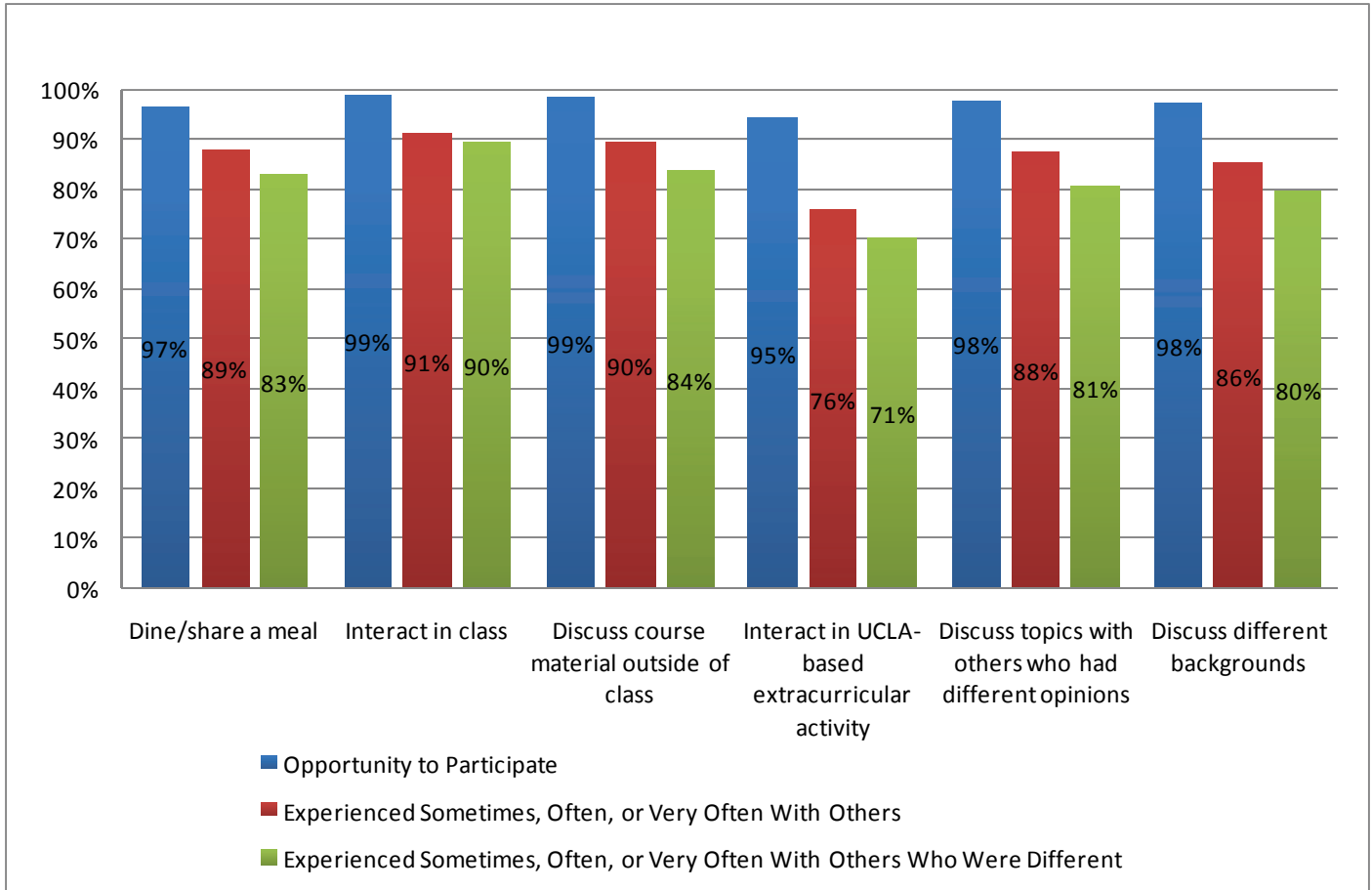
Interactions with Others Who Were Different

Respondents were asked to indicate how often they interacted with students different than them in terms of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion, and political opinions. The largest percentage of students interacting "sometimes," "often," or "very often" with those who were different than them occurred in class (90%), in discussions of course material outside of class (84%), and when dining/sharing a meal (83%).

Trends in Interaction Patterns

The data suggest that students are making conscious choices about the interactions they engage in and that their interactions are not limited by insufficient opportunities to participate. The differences between the percentage of those who perceived an opportunity to participate and the percentage of those who participated in the interaction was statistically significant.

Figure I. Student Interactions at UCLA



However, for the most part, the differences between perceived opportunities and actual participation were 12% or less. The only exception was for interactions involving UCLA-based extracurricular activities where there was a difference of 19% between the percentage of respondents who perceived the interaction opportunity as available and the percentage of respondents who participated in the interaction. Thus respondents' perceptions indicate that UCLA appears to be providing adequate opportunities for various types of student interactions.

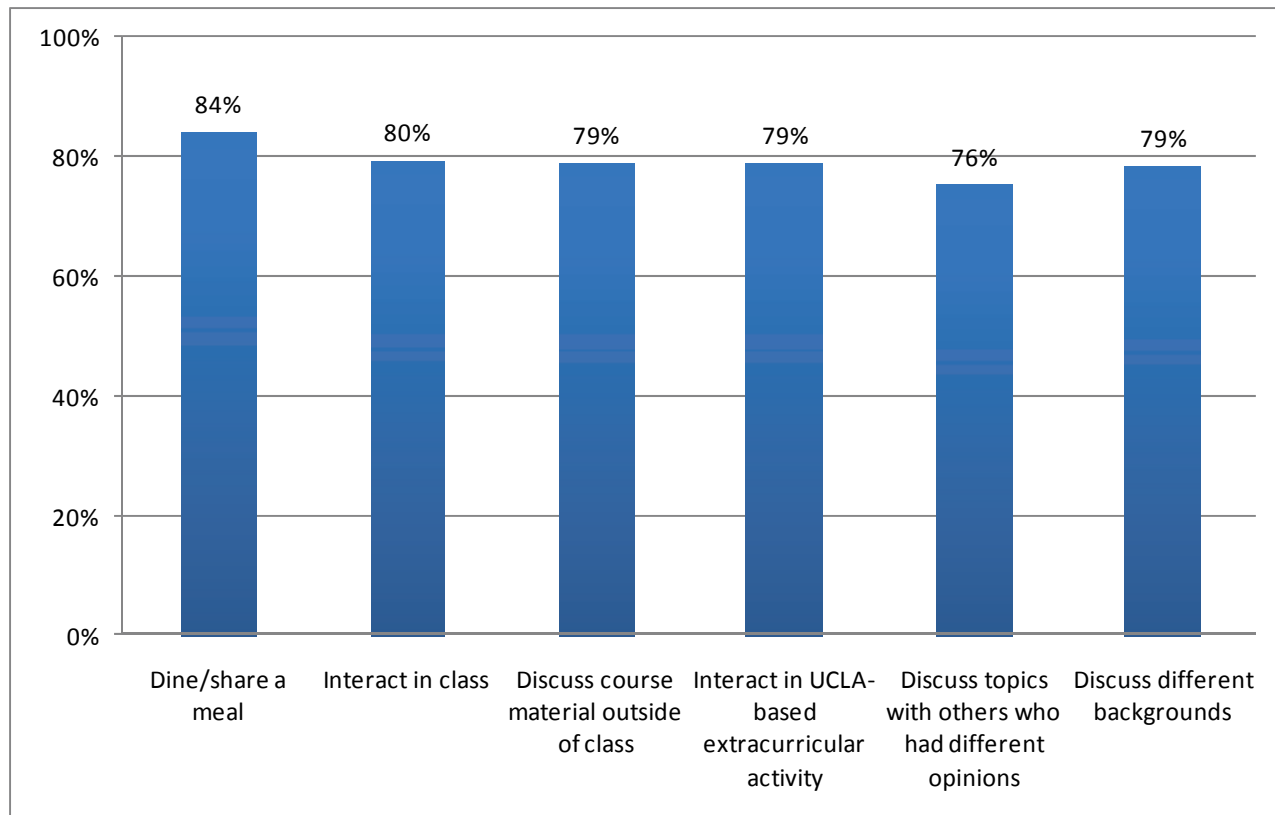
Consequently, a large percentage of students take advantage of these interaction opportunities. Fewer students engage in interactions with students who are different from them compared to interaction with others in general ($p < .01$), with the exception of interaction in class where the difference was not statistically significant. However, for the most part, 80% or more report engagement in some type of

activity with different others. Interaction rates are slightly lower for UCLA-based extracurricular activities.

Ratings of Interactions

Respondents were asked to indicate the quality of their interactions with students different from them. Figure 2 displays the percentage of respondents who rated their interaction as "positive" or "very positive." Ratings were most positive for interactions related to dining/sharing a meal (84%) and interacting in class (80%), although the percentage of respondents indicating a positive rating did not dip below 76% for the other types of interactions.

Figure 2. Interactions with Different Others at UCLA Rated as “Positive” or “Very Positive”



Transfers Compared to Direct Entry Students

Perceived opportunities as well as actual engagement in various interactions with other UCLA students differed significantly for respondents who entered UCLA as transfer students compared to direct entry students.

Figure 3 displays the percentage of transfer and direct entry students who indicated that UCLA provided them with various opportunities to interact with other students. Interactions with a notation of “**” indicate that transfer and direct entry students differed significantly ($p < .01$). Compared to transfer students, a larger percentage of direct entry students perceived greater opportunities to interact with others outside of the academic context. The groups did not differ in their perceptions of opportunities to interact in class or to discuss course material outside of class.

Similar trends were found when examining the rates of participation in various interactions (see Figure 4). The two groups did not differ in their interactions in class or discussions of course material outside of

class or discussions of course material outside of class. However, for the other interaction items direct entry students reported greater frequency of interactions compared to transfer students. This was further exemplified for interactions involving UCLA-based extracurricular activity and dining/sharing a meal where the differences between the two groups were the greatest (20% and 16%, respectively).

Compared to direct entry students, a smaller percentage of transfer students interacted “sometimes,” “often,” or “very often” *with different others* in both academic and non academic type of interactions (see Figure 5). However the patterns of differences did not differ from those displayed for interactions in general.

Figure 6 displays the ratings of interactions by direct entry and transfer students. A greater percentage of direct entry students rated all types of interactions as “positive” or “very positive” compared to transfer students. However the difference between the two groups did not exceed 9%.

In general, the data suggest that respondents who entered UCLA as transfer students perceive fewer opportunities for interacting with other UCLA students compared to direct entry students. In turn, transfer students engage in fewer interactions and consequently interact less with others who are different from them. This pattern is especially evident for non-academically related interactions.

Comparisons by Race/Ethnicity

Analyses were conducted to examine if interaction patterns differed by race/ethnicity. Very few differences emerged, and the magnitude of the differences are small and arguably may not be practically significant. Among perceived opportunities to interact with others, Black respondents reported higher perceived opportunities to discuss course material outside of class than Asian and White respondents. A greater percentage of Black respondents reported more opportunities for interaction in class compared to White respondents. Asian respondents reported dining/sharing a meal with others and participating in UCLA-based extracurricular activities more often than White and Hispanic respondents. Asians also reported participating in UCLA-based extracurricular activities with different others more often than Hispanics. There were no significant differences in ratings of the interactions as “positive” or “very positive.”

Figure 3. Opportunities Provided by UCLA to Participate in Various Interactions

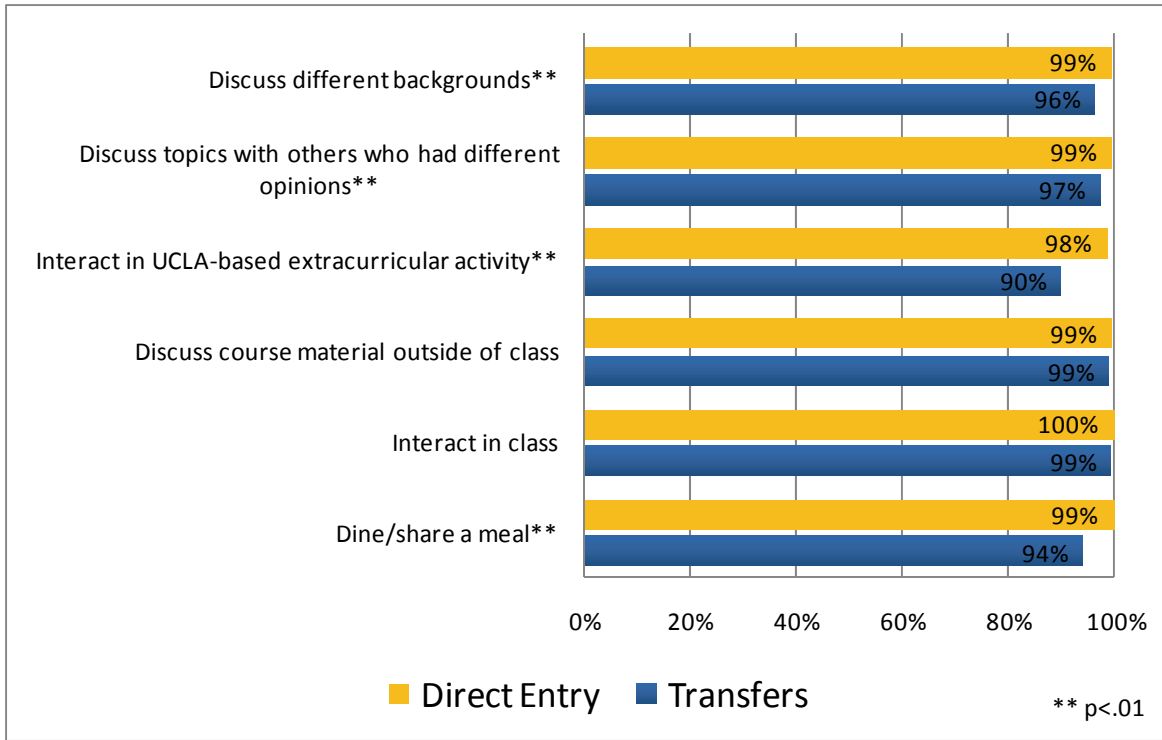


Figure 4. Experienced “Sometimes,” “Often,” or “Very Often”

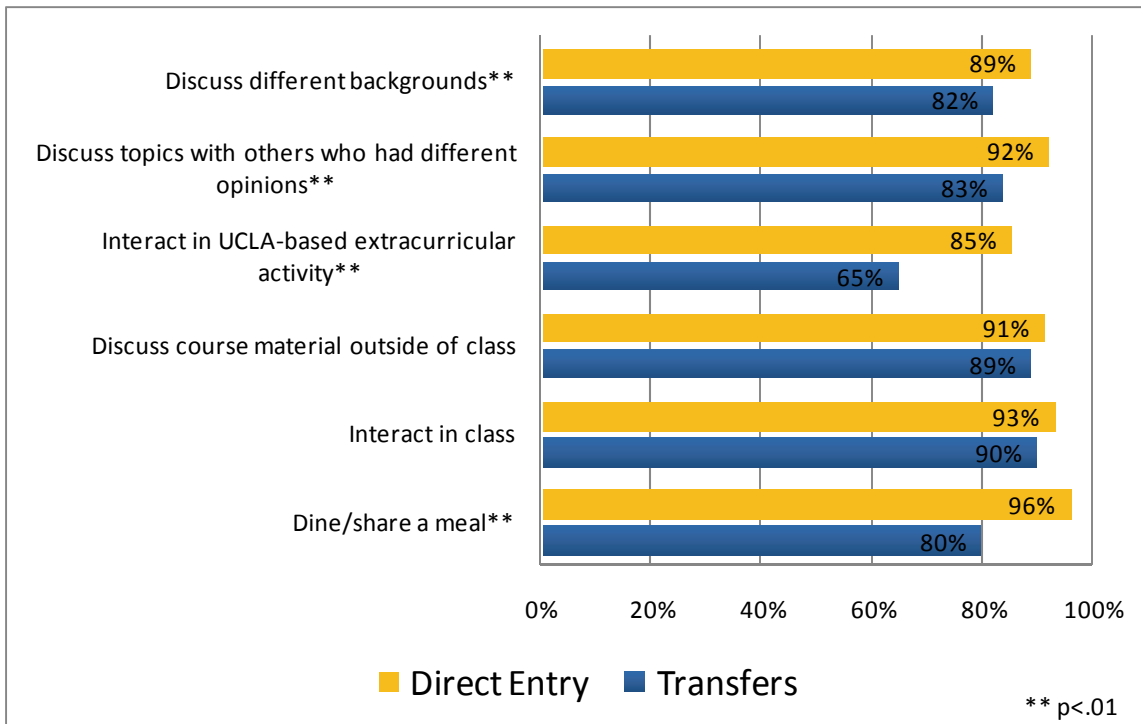


Figure 5. Experienced “Sometimes,” “Often,” or “Very Often” With Different Others

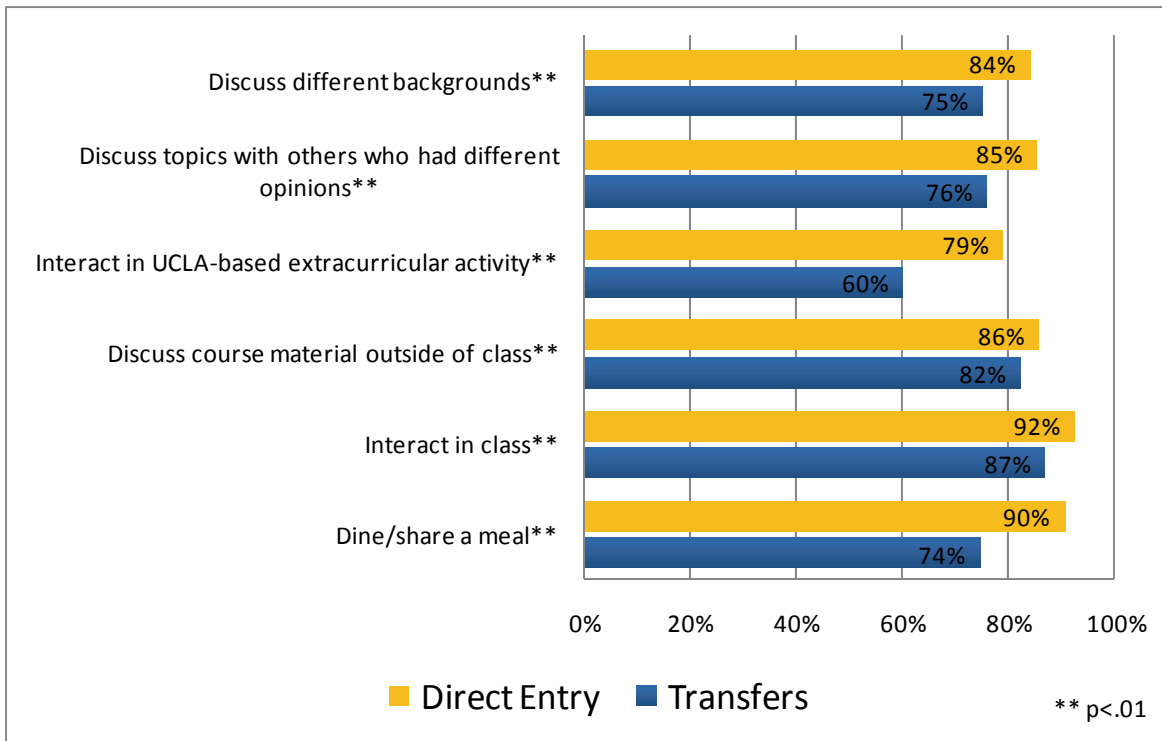


Figure 6. Interactions With Different Others Rated as “Positive” or “Very Positive”

