



Student Affairs Information and Research Office

A department of Student Affairs

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University of California Undergraduate Experiences Survey (UCUES) Summary of 2006 UCUES Academic Engagement Module

The Student Affairs Information and Research Office (SAIRO) is the research and assessment office within UCLA's Student Affairs organization. Our purpose is to use data-driven approaches to help the many Student Affairs offices that serve students by: keeping Student Affairs staff up to date about the backgrounds, experiences, and needs of UCLA students, assisting Student Affairs offices in assessing their services, and contributing to campus-wide and UC system-wide research and assessment efforts.

In all our activities, we support Student Affairs' continual efforts to promote the academic and personal success of UCLA students, to contribute to their development and learning, and to enhance the quality of campus life.

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Executive Summary

This report summarizes UCLA students' responses to the Academic Engagement module on the 2006 UCUES, which inquired about their experiences within a research community, participation in academic enhancement activities, interaction with faculty, course involvement, obstacles to academic success, and enrollment in UC Summer Sessions. The primary purpose of this report is to compare UCLA findings to the average of student responses at the other UC campuses. As such, these data help identify aspects of the undergraduate experience that are unique to UCLA students versus those that represent a larger system-wide trend. Significant findings from the UCUES Academic Engagement module include:

- A greater proportion of UCLA respondents reported that they appreciate the prestige of their undergraduate experience at a research university as well as the fact that it provided them with opportunities they wouldn't have elsewhere.
- A greater proportion of UCLA students reported taking an honors course, contributing to a class discussion, bringing up ideas or concepts from different courses in class discussions, and taking small research-oriented seminars.
- More UCLA respondents had attended UC Summer Sessions than their peers at other UCs and a greater proportion planned to attend UC Summer Sessions in the future.

These findings help inform the activities of Student Affairs to meet its essential purpose to "enhance the quality of the academic enterprise and educational experience of students."

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Undergraduate Experience at a Research University

The 2006 UCUES Academic Engagement module asked students to reflect upon their undergraduate experience at a research university via two sets of survey items. Answers to these questions are summarized in Table 1 and are organized in order of those aspects of a research university that UCLA students most strongly agree with or rate as most important. While responses to these survey questions indicate that students across the UC system recognize many advantages to being at a research university, there are several areas for which UCLA students are even more aware of the unique educational experience provided by a research university. Most notably, a greater proportion of UCLA students appreciate the prestige that their undergraduate experience provides than their peers at other UC campuses

(i.e., it matters at which type of university you earn a degree, the importance of the prestige of the university when applying for graduate school or a job). UCLA students also are more likely than students at other UCs to agree that the research conducted at research universities is essential to society, as well as that a research university provides them with opportunities they would not have at other types of colleges and universities, including campus-based cultural events. However, responses to the survey also indicate that UCLA students are more aware that these benefits may require a trade-off in other areas of their undergraduate experience; a slightly larger proportion of UCLA survey respondents reported that an emphasis on research detracts from the quality of teaching.

Table 1. Aspects of a Research University

	UCLA (n=1,513)	UC System^a (n=9,503)	Difference
Percent of students who "agree" or "strongly agree" that:			
It matters at which type of university you earn your degree ^b	66.2	60.3	5.9**
Research conducted at research universities is essential for society	63.9	55.7	8.2**
Being at a research university provides students with unique opportunities	57.6	53.3	4.3*
My UC campus has a strong commitment to undergraduate education	55.6	54.3	1.3
Attending a university with world-class researchers is important to me	53.0	52.5	0.5
The emphasis on research detracts from the quality of teaching	28.0	24.4	3.6*
Percent of students who rate the following as "very important" or "essential":			
The prestige of the university when applying for a job	62.8	53.8	9.0**
The prestige of the university when applying to graduate school	58.2	49.8	8.4**
Having access to a world-class library collection	48.0	45.4	2.6
Being able to attend cultural events on campus	45.7	41.2	4.5*
Learning research methods	32.7	31.5	1.2
Pursuing one's own research	30.4	27.4	3.0
Assisting faculty in their research	28.8	27.5	1.3
Having courses with faculty who refer to their own research	20.0	20.0	0.0
Learning about faculty research	19.6	18.8	0.8

^aThe term system refers to a 7-campus average. ^bItem is reverse coded.

*p<.05, **p<.01

Academic Engagement

The Academic Engagement Module also included numerous measures of academic enrichment, engagement with faculty, and obstacles to academic success. Survey responses across the system helped identify educational experiences that were frequent (e.g., contributing to a class discussion, communicating with faculty, asking an insightful question in class) as well as those that are less common for UC undergraduates (e.g., study abroad, interacting with faculty in extra-curricular activities, turning in course assignments late). Further, these data show that approximately one-third of students across the UC system find it challenging to ask for help when they need it and struggle with procrastination. In addition, approximately 40% of UC undergraduates report that they are easily distracted from their academic work. Overall, findings from this module of the 2006 UCUES show an overwhelming similarity across the UC campuses on most measures of academic engagement and obstacles to academic success.

The single largest difference between UCLA and the

system-wide average was that UCLA students were much more likely that their peers at other UC campuses to have participated in an honors program (21% vs. 9%). An additional 13% of UCLA students planned to participate in an honors program in the future. When students were asked to chronicle their academic experiences in the past year, the responses of UCLA students were significantly different than their peers in only four areas (Figure 1). A greater proportion of UCLA students reported contributing to a class discussion, bringing up ideas or concepts from different courses in class discussions, and taking small research-oriented seminars. Conversely, a slightly smaller percentage of UCLA students had a class in which the professor knew or learned their name.

Figure 2 illustrates another area of academic engagement for which UCLA students differed from the average responses from students at the other UCs: UCLA students reported having completed a greater proportion of their reading for class.

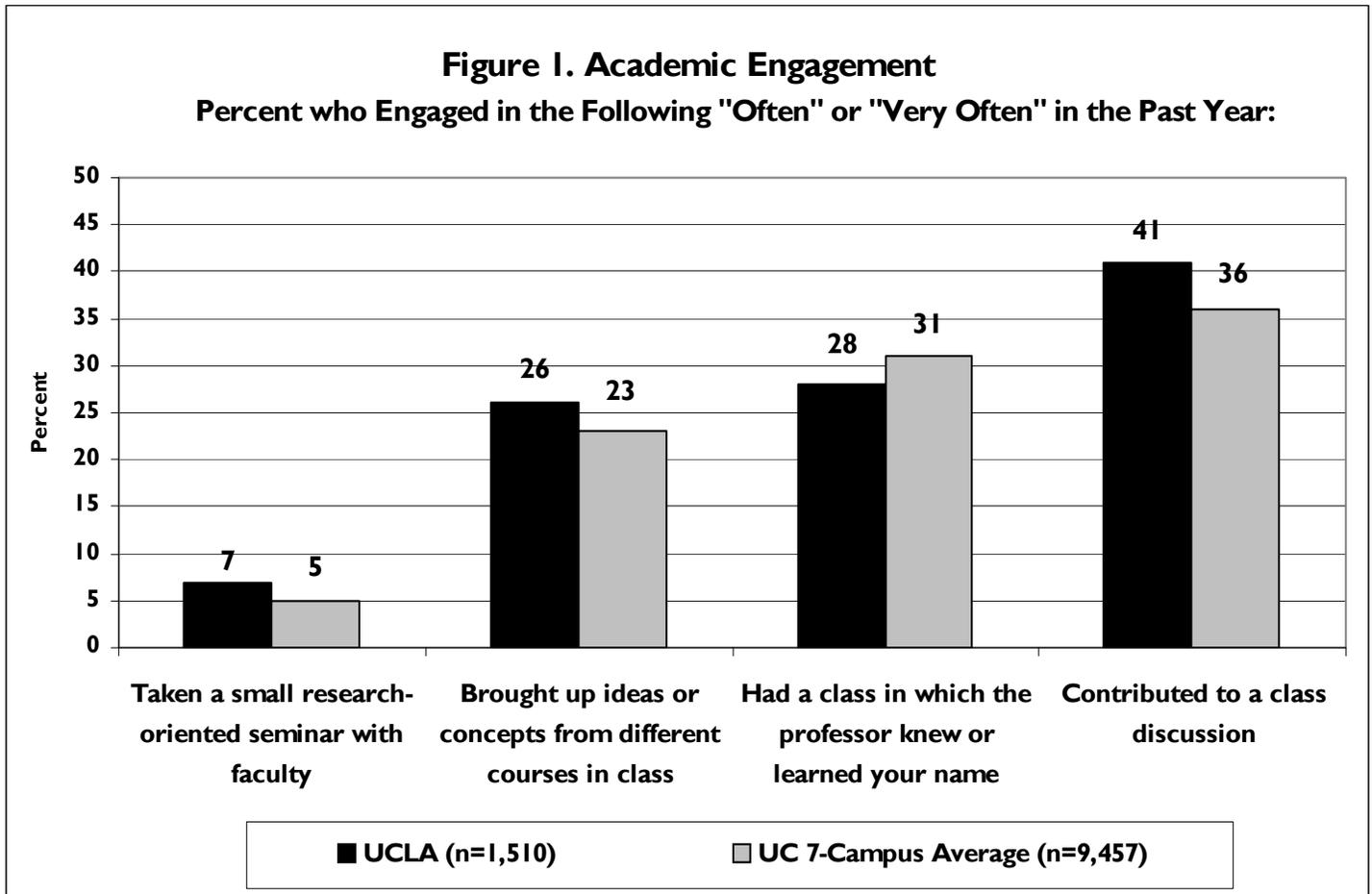
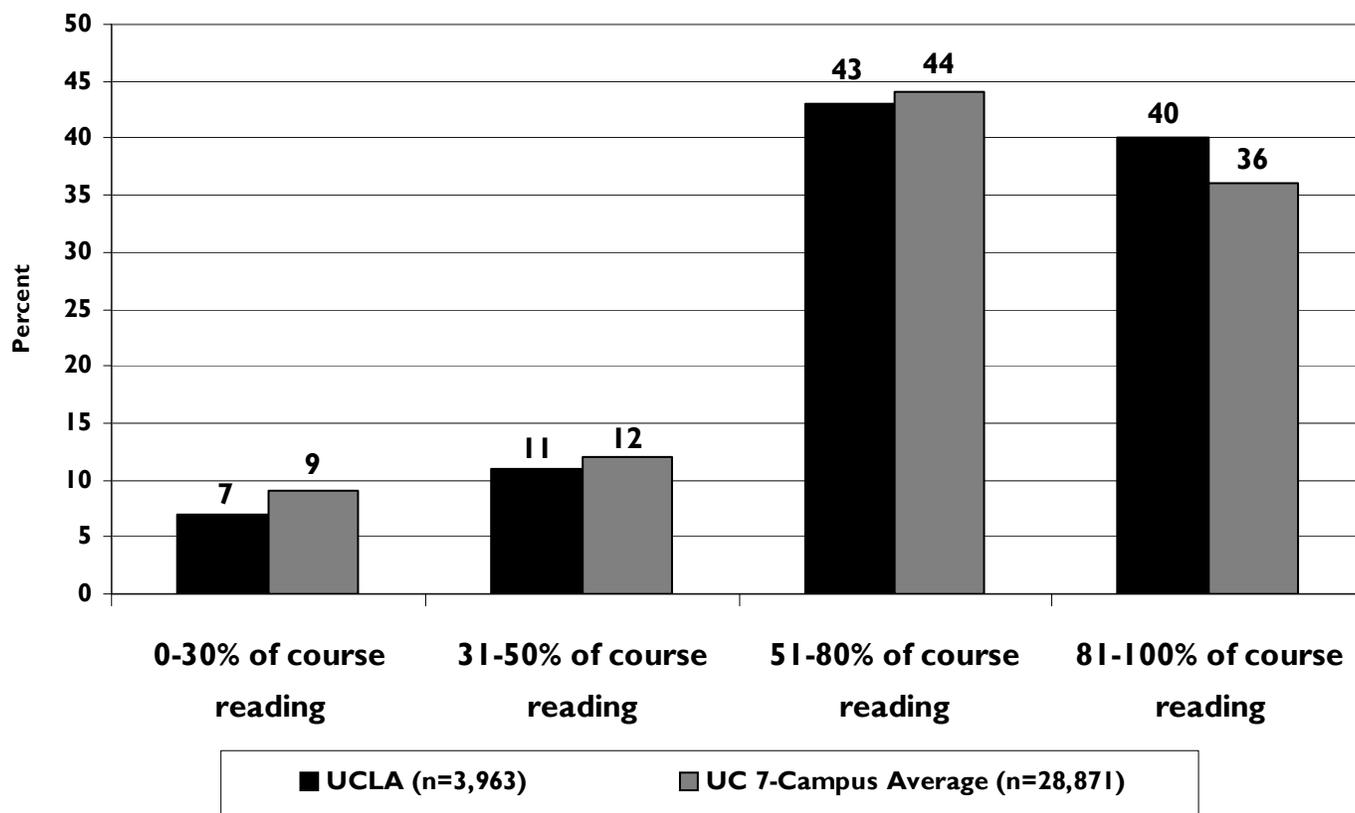


Figure 2. Proportion of Course Reading Completed



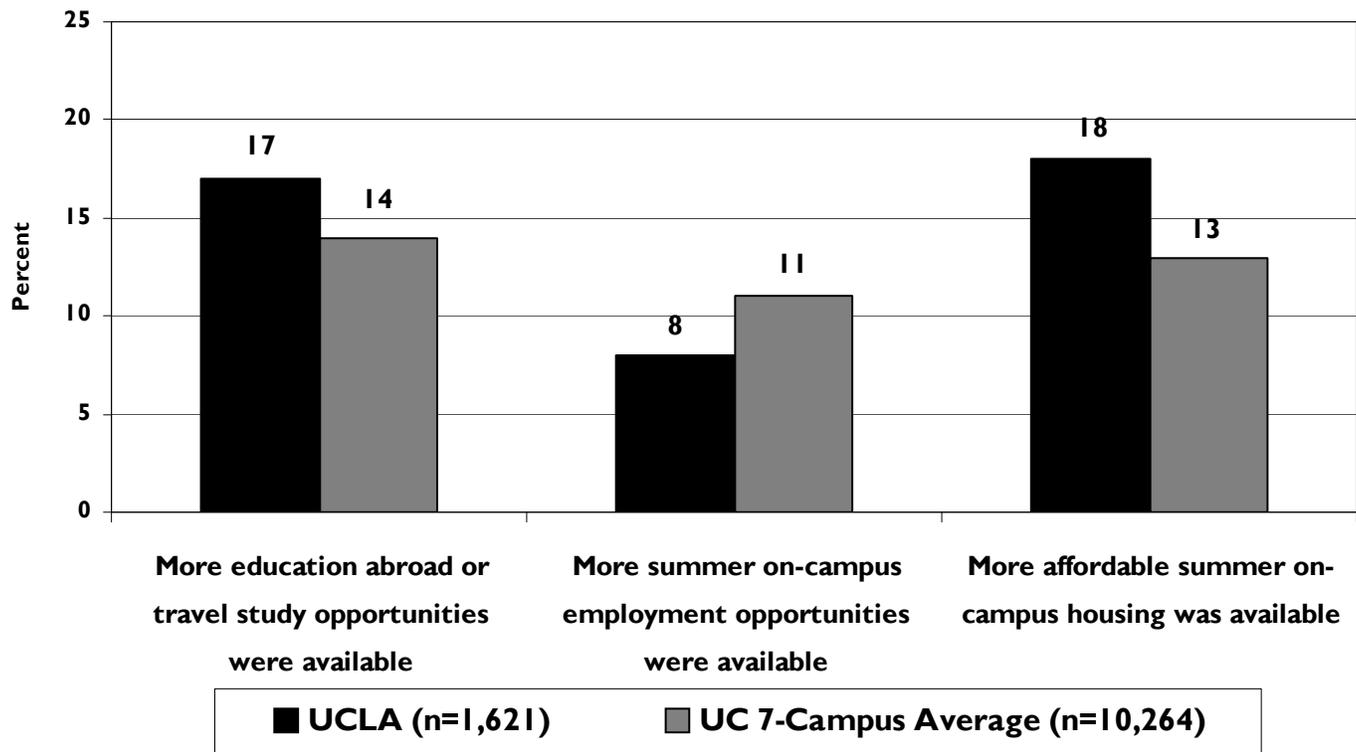
Summer Sessions

Overall, more UCLA students had attended UC Summer Sessions than their peers at other UCs (48% vs. 41%) and planned to attend UC Summer Sessions in the future (39% vs. 34%). The most frequently-reported reason for attending Summer Sessions was “to stay on track to graduate ‘on time,’” (20% at UCLA vs. 16% at other UCs). The survey further inquired what would increase the likelihood that students would attend Summer Sessions. Three of the twelve options garnered a significantly different response from UCLA students than from students at other UCs (Figure 3). A greater proportion of UCLA respondents indicated that more education abroad opportunities and more affordable summer on-campus housing would increase the likelihood of attending summer sessions and a smaller percentage of UCLA students reported that more on-campus summer employment would increase their Summer Session attendance.

Background of UCUES

The 2006 University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) is the fourth in a series of surveys of undergraduates at the University of California undergraduate campuses. As part of a larger collaborative project entitled ‘The Student Experience in the Research University-21st Century’ (SERU21), UCUES offers a rare in-depth examination of the undergraduate experience at the University of California. As such, it offers UCLA administrators, faculty, and students an opportunity both to closely examine campus life at UCLA and to compare it to the UC system as a whole. Results can be viewed through many lenses, such as by major, by college or school, by class standing, by entry status (direct/transfer), and by student characteristics (gender, race/ethnicity, first language).

Figure 3. Changes that Would Increase the Likelihood of Attending Summer Sessions



2006 UCUES Survey Administration and Sample Representativeness:

Academic Engagement Module

In spring and summer 2006, all UC undergraduate campuses participated in UCUES. Each student at the eight UC campuses was invited to complete the Core module. Seven of the UCs (all but UC Merced) also elected to administer four survey modules to a randomly-selected sub-sample of their undergraduate population, such that each respondent completed the Core and one module that addressed: 1) academic engagement, 2) civic engagement, 3) student development, or 4) student service utilization and satisfaction. The UCUES Academic Engagement module included items about academic experiences, obstacles to academic success, and enrollment in a University of California Summer Session. A total of 1,621 undergraduates responded to the UCUES Academic Engagement module of the UCLA administration of the 2006 UCUES. While this only represents a 34% response rate, the sample generated by the 2006 UCUES was generally representative of the population of UCLA undergraduates. However, it is important to note that the sample of the UCLA UCUES Academic module slightly over-represents females, direct entry and Asian or Pacific Islander undergraduates and slightly under-represents freshmen. Other characteristics of the UCLA UCUES Core sample, such as entry academic standing, geographic location, and the distribution across racial/ethnic groups are representative of the UCLA population. Thus, this sample has a great deal of utility for campus-based assessment and research efforts.