



UCLA Graduating Senior Survey: A Briefing on Gender

Executive Summary

Female students represent 63% (3,715 individuals) of the total respondents to the 2005 Senior Survey while male students comprise 37% (2,156) of the sample. A comparison of the racial/ethnic breakdowns of men and women suggests greater racial/ethnic diversity among female Senior Survey respondents. Analyses of academic background characteristics indicate that men and women are very similar with respect to mode of access but there are gender differences in academic performance indicators: men tend to outperform women on the SAT while women report higher grade point averages than men do.

While there are many academic areas where men and women are similar, female survey respondents tend to report more frequent interaction with faculty and teaching assistants, higher levels of academic engagement and enthusiasm (e.g., completing a minor, writing papers longer than 5 pages, attending review sessions, using course websites), and feel more challenged by new ideas and ways of thinking than their male counterparts do.

Analyses of involvement in the co-curriculum and experiences with campus life also yield some important gender differences. The largest divergence in student service utilization indicated that women use a handful of services more regularly than men in the sample do, thereby suggesting areas for specialized outreach and service delivery for men and/or women. Gender comparisons of cross-cultural interaction and perceptions of campus climate show that women and men are essentially equal in their rate of interaction with students from a different race or religion; women report higher levels of interaction with students from a different sexual orientation; men report higher levels of interaction with students who have different political opinions; and women consistently have more favorable perceptions of UCLA as accepting and open to diversity.

Senior Survey respondents as a whole indicate very high levels of satisfaction with their academic, co-curricular, and overall experiences at UCLA, although women in the sample report slightly higher levels of satisfaction with UCLA student and campus life than men do. Given this high level of satisfaction, it is not surprising that both men and women anticipate being at least marginally involved as alumni, although in different ways. Specifically, men anticipate attending UCLA sporting events as alumni while women were more likely to predict attending lectures and cultural events, providing mentorship, and utilizing the Career Center.

Introduction

This briefing, one of a series developed by the Student Affairs Information and Research Office (SAIRO) is based upon the results of the UCLA 2005 Senior Survey. The purpose of these briefings is to provide special insight about certain sub-populations of UCLA students.

This report is focused upon a comparison by gender of UCLA students at the end of their undergraduate careers. Specifically, this report focuses on the co-curricular experiences, goals, and impressions of the UCLA campus culture of male and female students.

Data Source

In May 2005, all seniors in the UCLA College of Letters and Science were asked to complete a survey that explored the views of students about their lives on campus, their studies, and their plans after graduating. The result was the most comprehensive survey of seniors ever accomplished at UCLA, with over 5,800 seniors responding, a response rate of at least 80%. The responses explore views about the overall UCLA experience, student and campus life, academic majors and minors, the quality of faculty and courses, and research opportunities for undergraduates.

Background Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Female students represented 63% (3,715 individuals) of the total respondents to the 2005 Senior Survey while male students comprised 37% (2,156) of the sample. As the gender breakdown of the overall UCLA undergraduate population in Fall 2004 was 57% female and 43% male, the 2005 Senior Survey sample is slightly over-representative of women. A comparison of the ethnic breakdowns of male and female survey respondents appears in Table 1. The most obvious difference between the two groups is the higher representation of White students among male survey respondents (38% v. 31%). Slightly higher percentages of Hispanic/Latino students and Asian students among the pool of female survey respondents suggest greater racial/ethnic diversity among female undergraduates at UCLA.

Table 1 also includes measures of a students' academic background and mode of access. The two groups are very similar with respect to mode of access, with only a 3 percentage-point difference in the proportion of students who enter UCLA as transfers or directly from high school. More significant differences are noted in measures of students' previous academic performance. As shown in Table 1, men tend to outperform women on the SAT, particularly the Math portion of the entrance exam. Conversely, women in this sample earned

Table 1. Background Characteristics by Gender

	Women (n=3,715)	Men (n=2,156)	Difference
Distribution of Race/Ethnicity (percent)			
Native American	0.4	0.6	-0.2
African American	3.8	2.8	1.0
Hispanic/Latino	17.1	14.3	2.8
Asian	35.7	32.9	2.8
White	30.9	38.3	-7.4
International	5.0	4.0	1.0
Other	3.1	2.8	0.3
Missing/Decline to State	4.1	4.5	-0.4
Distribution of Mode of Access (percent)			
Directly from high school	56.8	54.3	2.5
Transfer	43.2	45.7	-2.5
Student Performance Data			
Average SAT-Verbal Score ^a	611.0	628.0	-17.0
Average SAT-Math Score ^a	638.0	678.0	-40.0
Average High School GPA ^a	4.1	4.1	0.0
Average Transfer GPA ^b	3.5	3.5	0.0
Average GPA Spring 2005	3.2	3.2	0.0

Notes: ^adata on entrance examinations and high school grades were calculated for those students who entered UCLA directly from high school (N=3,281).

^bdata on transfer grades were calculated for those students who transferred to UCLA (N=2,591).

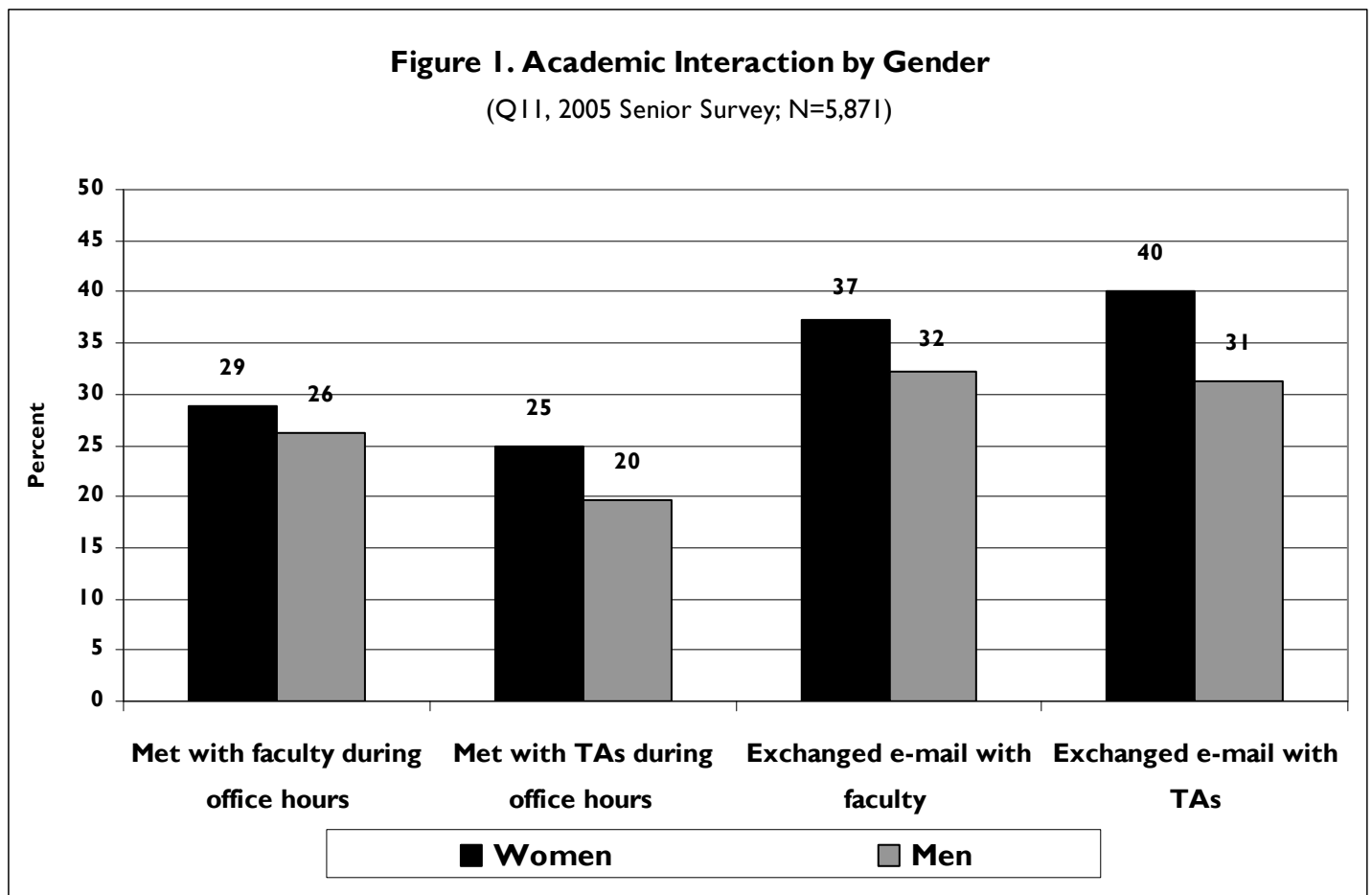
higher grades in their previous academic environments as measured by high school GPA and transfer GPA. This gender difference in academic performance as measured by grades appears to persist through college with women reporting a higher cumulative GPA in their last year of college than male survey respondents.

Academics

The 2005 Senior Survey contains over 60 items that measure aspects of the student academic experience. For this report SAIRO analysts selected a subset of 15 key items to analyze.

As shown in Figure 1, gender comparisons on frequency of interaction with faculty and TAs yield some important differences. Both men and women appear to utilize e-mail for these academic interactions more often than face-to-face meetings. However, female survey respondents report engaging in interactions with faculty, both in person and electronically, more frequently than male survey respondents do. This gender gap widens even further with respect to interactions with teaching assistants, particularly those conducted via e-mail (40% v. 31%).

Table 2 indicates that men and women are comparable on several measures of academic engagement and enthusiasm. However, these comparisons also provided some insight into areas of significant gender difference in the undergraduate academic experience. As shown in Table 2, a significantly higher proportion of female than male survey respondents reported completing a minor; writing a paper that was longer than five pages; attending an exam review session; and using a course web site. Further, a larger percentage of women than men indicated that they were “challenged by new ideas and ways of thinking,” thereby suggesting that academic enthusiasm extends beyond behavioral measures and may be associated with true intellectual receptiv-



While gender differences in academic interactions and engagement are informative, it is important to bear in mind other elements of students' undergraduate experience when interpreting these statistics. One such consideration is a student's major or academic discipline. It is important to bear in mind the potential differences in the culture, opportunity structure, and pedagogical characteristics of various academic disciplines and the majors contained therein as well as the influence these factors may have on gender differences in students' academic interaction, involvement, and enthusiasm. For example, a male or female student may be in an academic major that requires more written work, facilitates student interactions with faculty/TAs via research apprenticeships, or relies upon research papers as a means of measuring students' performance rather than examinations.

Table 2. Academic Engagement and Enthusiasm

	Percent		Diff
	Women (n=3,715)	Men (n=2,156)	
Percentages larger for women			
Completed a minor (Q7)	29.3	22.2	7.1**
Written a paper longer than 5 pages (Q11b)	71.1	64.4	6.7**
Attended a review session for a midterm or final exam (Q11e)	63.1	57.2	5.9**
Was challenged by new ideas & ways of thinking ^a (Q10c)	82.7	77.1	5.6**
Used a course web site to access course materials (Q11i)	88.4	83.3	5.1**
Areas with similar percentages			
Participated in research opportunities (Q4)	36.3	32.9	3.4
Made a class presentation (Q11j)	19.9	16.7	3.2*
Took an exam requiring substantial written responses (Q11c)	70.3	67.8	2.0
Completed more than one major (Q2)	12.3	11.8	0.0
Enjoyed exploring topics & interests outside of my major areas of interest ^a (Q10b)	83.7	84.8	-1.1
Did more work than was required because a course was so interesting (Q11a)	15.5	17.0	-1.0

Notes: *Moderate statistical significance (p<.05); **High statistical significance (p<.01)

^aRespondents include only those students who completed their general education at UCLA (n=3,254; Women=2,067, Men=1,187).

Student Service Utilization

Differences in utilization of 16 student services between participants and non-participants are displayed in Table 3. Women and men report equal utilization of eight student services and diverged in their utilization of eight other services.

The largest difference in utilization between female and male survey respondents was for the Ashe Student Health and Wellness Center (78% v. 70%). Women in the survey sample also reported greater utilization than men of the services and programs offered by the Career Center, Financial Aid Office, Center for Women and Men, and Psychological Services. Men showed much smaller but still statistically significant differences with respect to their higher rates of utilization of the Dean of Students Office, John Wooden Center Fitness & Instructional classes, and Fraternity and Sorority Relations. While these gender differences suggest particular areas of specialized need for male or female undergraduates, it is not possible from these data to determine if female/male students actually required these services more than their counterparts or were just more comfortable taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by these particular campus offices.

In any event, these data provide valuable feedback for the marketing and delivery of student support services to male and female undergraduates.

Cross-Cultural Interaction and Campus Climate

As indicated in Figure 2, the majority of all Senior Survey respondents report engaging in in-depth conversations with students from different personal backgrounds regardless of their gender. Further, women and men were essentially equal in their rate of interaction with students from a different race or those who had different religious beliefs than their own. However, women reported higher levels of interaction with students from a different sexual orientation than men. Conversely, men reported higher levels of interaction with students who have different political opinions.

The 2005 Senior Survey contained several items that rated the openness, equality, and diversity of the campus climate at UCLA, which were analyzed to identify any statistically significant differences between male and female survey respondents on these measures.

Table 3. Utilization of Student Services & Resources by Gender (Q18)

	Percent		Diff
	Women (n=3,715)	Men (n=2,156)	
Percentages larger for women			
Ashe Student Health and Wellness Center	78	70	8 *
Career Center	59	53	6 *
Financial Aid Office	64	59	5 *
Center for Women and Men (CWM)	11	6	5 *
Student Psychological Services	16	12	4 *
Services with similar percentages			
Student Loan Services	32	29	3
Community Programs Office (CPO)	12	10	2
Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD)	13	11	2
Office of International Students and Scholars	6	6	0
Office of Residential Life	34	34	0
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center (LGBT)	3	4	-1
Center for Student Programming (CSP)	13	14	-1
Student Legal Services	5	7	-2
Percentages larger for men			
Dean of Students Office	6	9	-3 *
John Wooden Center Fitness & Instructional classes	76	80	-3 *
Fraternity & Sorority Relations (FSR)	11	15	-4 *

Notes: *Moderate statistical significance (p<.05); **High statistical significance (p<.01)

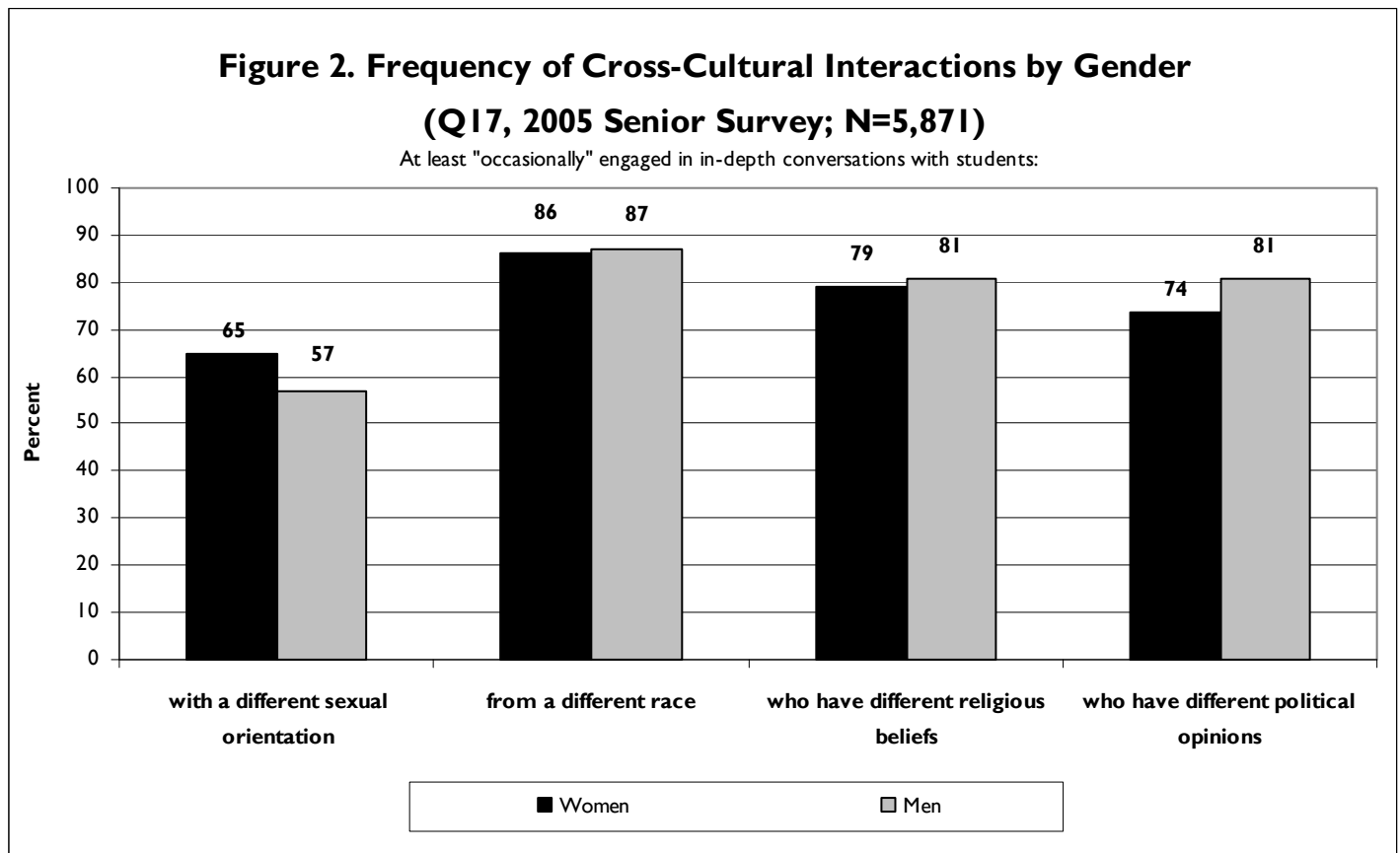
Again, Figure 3 indicates that students rate the UCLA campus climate as very accepting regardless of the student's gender.

However, despite the mix in gender differences in students' interactions with peers from backgrounds different than their own, female survey respondents consistently rate the campus climate even more favorably than male survey respondents on these measures.

These gender differences are nearly imperceptible with respect to institutional respect for racial diversity and small for campus climate with regard to differences in religious beliefs or sexual orientation. However, women in the sample indicate that “students of different political beliefs are equally respected” at UCLA at a significantly higher rate than men do (78% v. 70%). As such, it is possible that the discussions in which men are more often engaging with students who have different political opinions than their own (Figure 2) may have negative implications for their image of the campus climate at large.

Student Satisfaction

Senior Survey respondents as a whole indicate very high levels of satisfaction with their academic, co-curricular, and overall experiences at UCLA (Figure 4). There are no statistically significant differences in satisfaction levels between male and female survey respondents with respect to their UCLA academic experience. However, women in the sample rated their satisfaction with UCLA student and campus life slightly more favorably than men in the sample (91% v. 87%). Despite this small gender difference, students’ satisfaction with the overall UCLA experience was extremely high and showed no gender difference.



Expected Alumni Involvement

Table 4 shows the degree to which women and men in the sample expect to become involved as UCLA alumni. The largest difference between the two groups emerges with respect to attendance at UCLA sporting events: over half of men in the sample predict engaging in this activity at least occasionally, while only one-third of women in the sample anticipate alumni involvement of this nature. Conversely, women have higher expectations than men in the sample for postgraduate involvement in other areas such as utilization of UCLA Career Services, attending lectures or cultural events, and mentoring UCLA undergraduates.

Figure 3. Perceptions of Campus Climate by Gender

(Q16, 2005 Senior Survey; N=5,871)

All students are equally respected here regardless of:

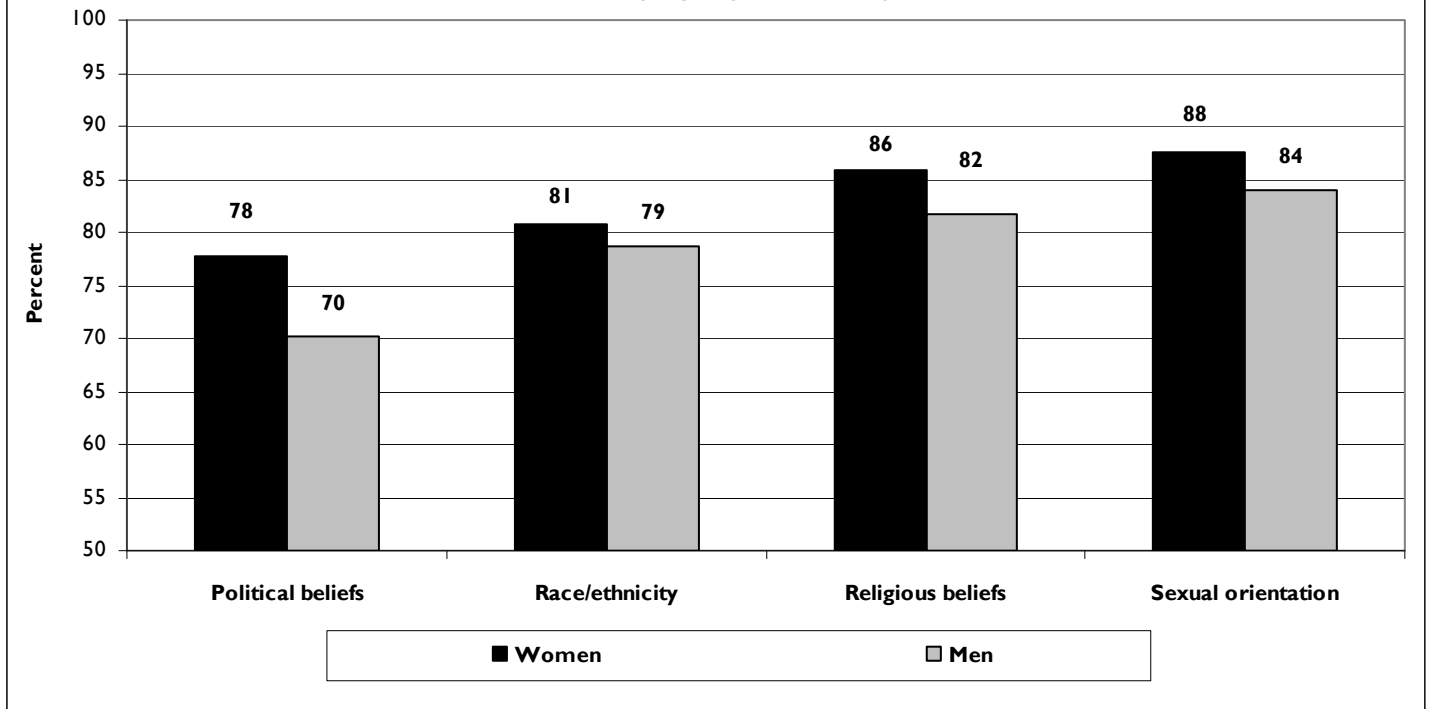


Table 4. Expected Alumni Involvement by Gender (Q22)

Percent who at least
“occasionally” plan
to

	Women (n=3,715)	Men (n=2,156)	Difference
Percentages larger for women			
Use UCLA career services	59	51	8 **
Attend UCLA lectures or cultural events	52	45	7 **
Volunteer to mentor undergraduate students	39	32	7 **
Areas with similar percentages			
Attend a class reunion	50	47	3
Participate in departmental alumni activities	28	25	2
Use your UCLA email address	75	73	2
Donate money to support UCLA	40	39	1
Participate in UCLA alumni activities	35	35	0
Percentages larger for men			
Attend UCLA sporting events	34	52	-18 **

Notes: *Moderate statistical significance ($p < .05$); **High statistical significance ($p < .01$)