



# 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 Core Module: Common Core

*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 a series of questions on the 2006 UCUES about various aspects of their undergraduate experience, including how they spent their time, perceptions of skill proficiency and development, cross-cultural interactions, educational aspirations, and satisfaction. The purpose of this report is to compare UCLA findings to the average of student responses at the eight 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 Core module include:

- UCLA respondents reported spending significantly more time working for pay than students at other UCs.
- Students at UCLA reported greater gains in understanding of other perspectives through conversations with fellow students from a different personal background.
- UCLA respondents rated themselves higher than their UC peers on most skills when they reflect upon their abilities at college entry.
- A greater proportion of UCLA students were satisfied with the value of their education for the price and with their overall social experience.
- A greater percentage of UCLA respondents intend to pursue an advanced degree, particularly a law or medical degree, than their peers at the 8 other UC campuses.

These findings can help guide ongoing strategic planning and programming in UCLA Student Affairs to ensure a meaningful and valuable undergraduate experience as well as to facilitate students' progress toward long-term educational goals.

## Paid Employment

The 2006 UCUES Core module asked students to report their time allocation during a typical seven-day week during the academic term in activities such as attending classes, studying, and student employment.

The most significant difference in time allocation between UCLA students and those at the other eight UC campuses was in time spent working for pay (Figure 1). Sixty percent of UCLA UCUES respondents reported working for pay. Although the rate of employment for UCLA students is greater than the 55% of students at the other UCs who worked for pay, UCLA students are significantly more likely to report working on-campus than are their peers at other UCs (39% vs. 31%).

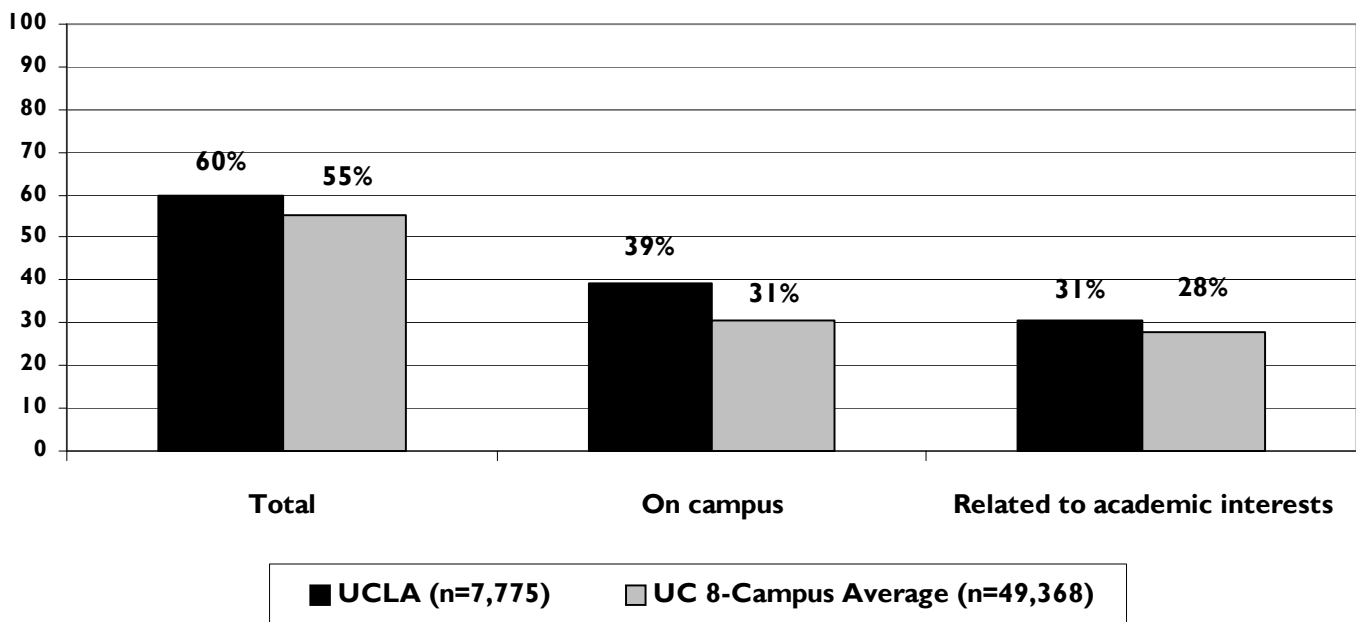
The majority of students at all UC campuses do not have a job that is related to their academic interests (72%), which may represent a critical disconnect between students' academic and employment experiences. However, UCLA students were more likely than students at other UC schools to report that their

paid employment experiences were related to their academic interests (31% vs. 28%).

### 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-21<sup>st</sup> 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 1. Percent Spending At Least One Hour Per Week on the Following Types of Paid Employment**



## New Understanding

Students at UCLA were significantly more likely than students at the eight other UC campuses to report having gained a deeper understanding of other perspectives through regular conversations (“somewhat often,” “often,” or “very often”) with fellow students of a different:

- Race or ethnicity (62% at UCLA vs. 59% at 8 other UCs)
- Nationality (60% vs. 56%)
- Social class (45% vs. 40%)
- Political opinion (43% vs. 41%)
- Religious belief (38% vs. 34%)
- Sexual preference (29% vs. 26%)

These cross-cultural interactions among students provide valuable momentum upon which UCLA Student Affairs can further their strategic goal to “ensure an educationally productive and supportive campus climate for students of all backgrounds” (2006-2009 Student Affairs Strategic Plan).

## Skill Proficiency

The 2006 UCUES asked students to rate their current proficiency level across a variety of skills as well as to reflect upon their level of proficiency in these same areas when they first started college. They were asked to rate themselves on a six-point scale ranging from “very poor” to “excellent.” The skills with the greatest proportion of self-rated proficiency at college entry were the ability to speak clearly and effectively in English and Internet skills. Conversely, the skills with the lowest levels of reported proficiency at college entry (i.e., less than half of UCLA students indicated high self-ratings) were: foreign language, library and other research, understanding of a specific field of study, and understanding of international perspectives.

The results featured in Table 1 also highlight differences between UCLA students retrospective self-ratings and their peers at other UCs . A majority of respondents from all UC campuses rated themselves

*(Cont'd)*

**Table 1. Self-Rated Skill Proficiency At College Entry**

Percent of students who report “Good,” “Very Good,” or “Excellent Skill levels at:	UCLA (n=7,882)	UC System <sup>a</sup> (n=50,165)	Difference
Analytical and critical thinking skills	65.6	61.9	3.7**
Ability to write clearly and effectively	60.1	56.0	4.1**
Read and comprehend academic material	64.3	61.7	2.6**
Foreign language skills	47.4	41.7	5.7**
Quantitative (mathematical and statistical) skills	66.4	60.1	6.3**
Ability to speak clearly and effectively in English	83.7	83.6	0.1
Understanding international perspectives	46.7	43.4	3.3**
Understanding of a specific field of study	42.8	38.1	4.7**
Leadership skills	58.8	55.7	3.1**
Computer skills	65.7	63.0	2.7**
Internet skills	78.9	77.5	1.4*
Library research skills	42.9	39.3	3.6**
Other research skills	45.9	45.5	0.4
Ability to prepare and make a presentation	59.3	58.6	0.7
Interpersonal (social) skills	63.8	63.2	0.6

<sup>a</sup>The term system refers to an 8-campus average.

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

**Table 2. Current Self-Rated Skill Proficiency**

Percent of students who report “Good,” “Very Good,” or “Excellent Skill levels at:	UCLA (n=7,882)	UC System <sup>a</sup> (n=50,165)	Difference
Analytical and critical thinking skills	92.0	92.1	-0.1
Ability to write clearly and effectively	85.2	86.2	-1.0
Read and comprehend academic material	91.0	90.6	0.4
Foreign language skills	55.7	47.3	8.4 <sup>**</sup>
Quantitative (mathematical and statistical) skills	69.5	69.4	0.1
Ability to speak clearly and effectively in English	93.3	93.3	0.0
Understanding international perspectives	79.6	81.4	-1.8 <sup>**</sup>
Understanding of a specific field of study	90.8	90.4	0.4
Leadership skills	76.3	74.8	1.5 <sup>*</sup>
Computer skills	84.8	83.9	0.9
Internet skills	94.4	93.7	0.7
Library research skills	77.0	76.8	0.2
Other research skills	78.5	78.6	-0.1
Ability to prepare and make a presentation	79.7	80.0	-0.3
<b>Interpersonal (social) skills</b>	<b>86.1</b>	<b>85.1</b>	<b>1.0</b>

<sup>a</sup>The term system refers to an 8-campus average.

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

*(Continued from p. 3)*

highly on most of these skills. However, it is interesting to note that UCLA UCUES respondents rated themselves significantly higher than students at other UCs in 11 of 15 skills and abilities when they reflect upon their skills at the start of college. Since these statistics represent self-ratings it is important to note that they represent a better indication of students’ confidence than actual proficiency. However, UCLA responses to the 2006 UCUES suggest that our students enter with a higher perception of their skill set, if not a greater level of true ability, than do students at other UCs.

When students were asked to rate their current proficiency, the vast majority of UCUES respondents at all UC campuses rated themselves highly for most skills and abilities. Further, current self-rated skill proficiency in each of the 15 areas is higher than self-ratings at college entry for students at UCLA and in the UC system at large. However, the large number of significant differences between UCLA and the other UC campuses disappear for most skills (Table 2). In other words, while UCLA students perceive that their skill set is enhanced during their time in college, the rate of chance is even greater for UCUES respondents

## General Satisfaction

Overall, students at UCLA and the other 8 UC campuses are very satisfied with their undergraduate experience. In particular, a significantly greater proportion of UCLA students were satisfied with the value of their education for the price and with their overall social experience than were UCUES respondents at the eight other UC campuses (Figure 2). A similar question regarding students' satisfaction with their overall academic experience yielded a high satisfaction level from UCLA survey respondents, which was nearly identical to satisfaction ratings for students at other UCs on this survey item (Figure 2).

Further, the vast majority of students at all UCs feel that they belong on their campus and would still choose to enroll knowing what they know now, although the proportion of students who agree with these statements is slightly larger at UCLA than at the other UC campuses: approximately 85% for UCLA vs. 82% at the eight other UCs for both measures of satisfaction.

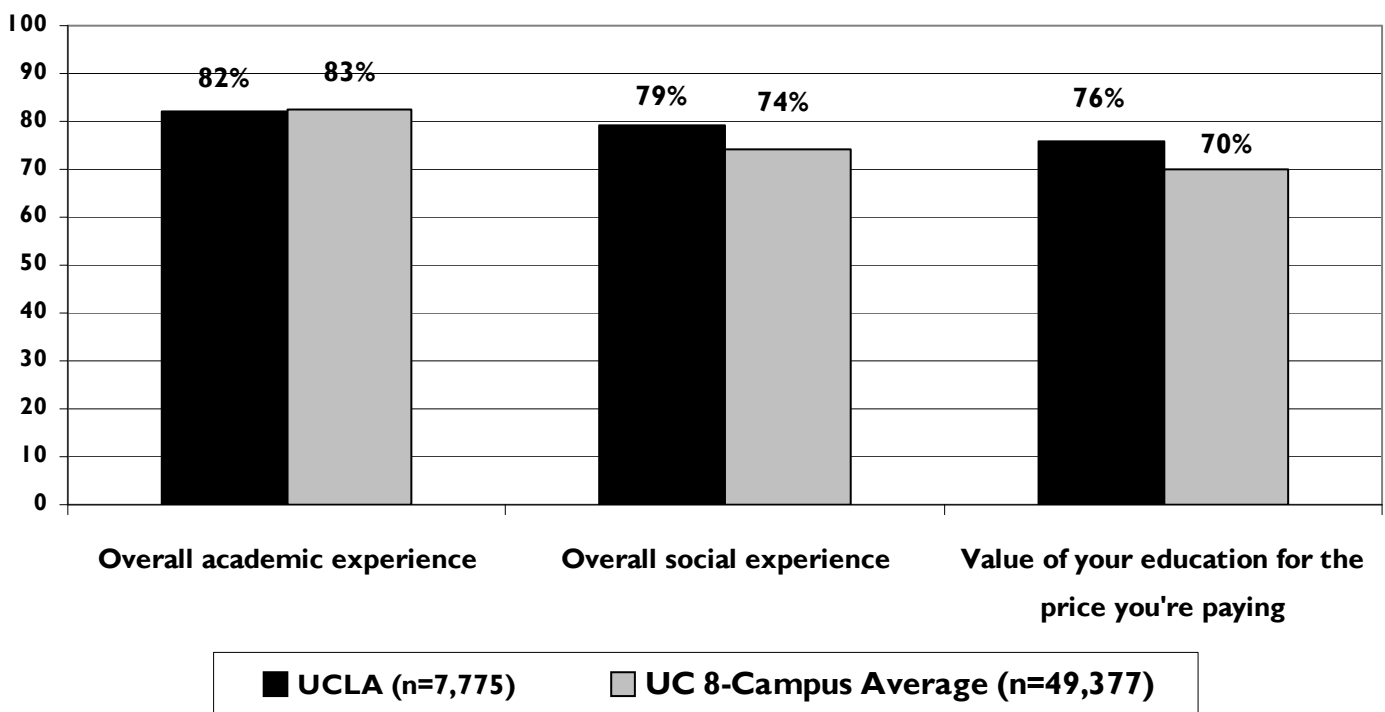
## Future Plans

An overwhelming majority of students across the UC system intend to pursue an advanced degree at some point in the future (Figure 3). The largest proportion of students at UCLA and at the other UC's is interested in pursuing a doctorate followed by interest in a professional master's degree.

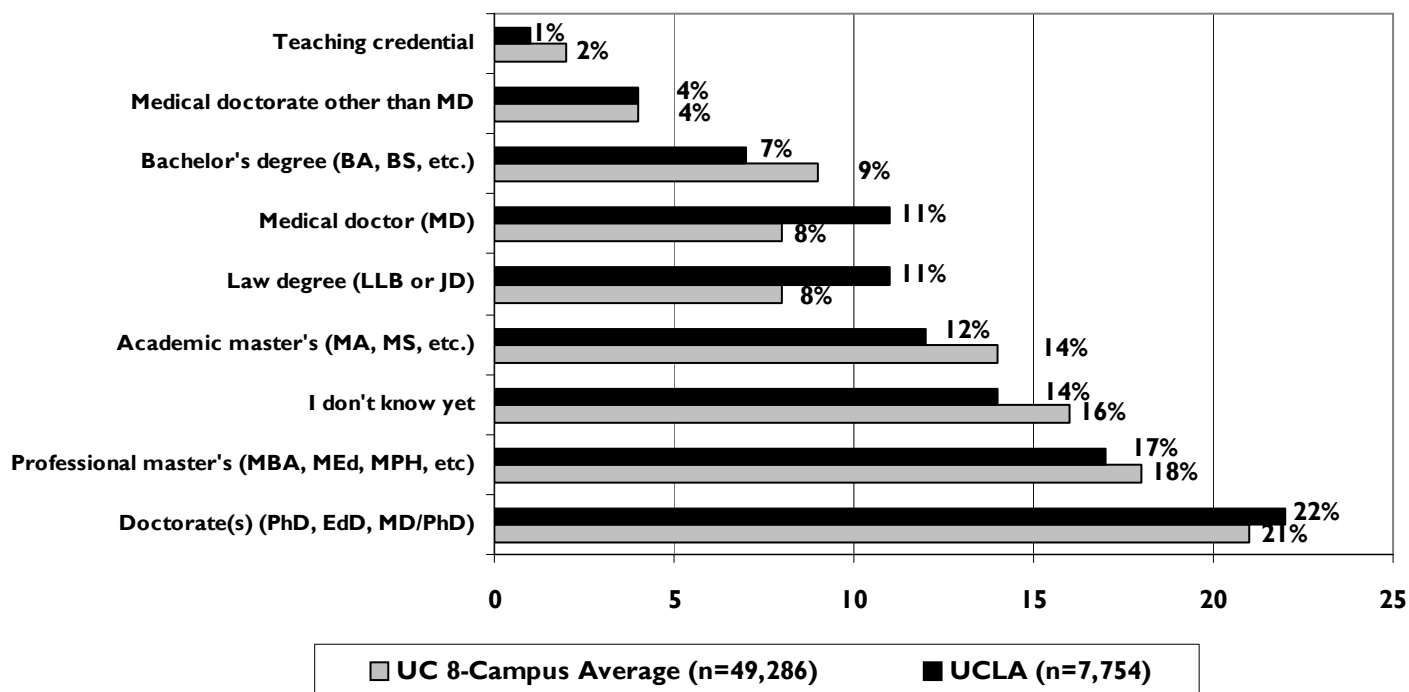
On an institutional level, a greater percentage of UCLA respondents intend to pursue an advanced degree, particularly law or medical degrees, than their peers at the 8 other UC campuses. Conversely, a smaller proportion of UCLA students identify an academic master's degree as their degree aspiration.

Although 55% at UCLA and 52% at other UCs plan to enroll in graduate or professional school immediately after graduation, it is important to recognize that a significant percentage of students will spend some time in the work force or engaged in other activities (e.g., traveling or studying abroad) before applying to and attending graduate school.

**Figure 2. Satisfaction: Percent of students reporting "somewhat satisfied," "satisfied," or "very satisfied" with the following:**



**Figure 3. Highest Planned Academic Degree or Credential**



## 2006 UCUES Survey Administration and Sample Representativeness

All UCLA undergraduate students were invited to participate in the 2006 UCUES. An e-mail was sent to all UCLA undergraduates in spring quarter 2006 inviting them to complete the survey. The on-line instrument was divided into five modules. The UCUES Core Module was administered to all respondents and included items about academic experiences, co-curricular involvement, and time management as well as background characteristics and demographics. Further, the UCUES Core asked upper-division undergraduates questions specific to their majors and asked lower-division students to rate their academic experiences overall. In an effort to capture as much information about all aspects of students' college experiences as possible, respondents also received one of four other survey modules that addressed an additional area of the UC undergraduate experience: 1) academic engagement, 2) civic engagement, 3) student development, or 4) student service utilization and satisfaction. Survey administration remained open through summer 2006. A total of 7,882 undergraduates responded to the UCUES Core module of the UCLA administration of the 2006 UCUES. While this only represents a 33% 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 UCLA UCUES Core sample slightly over-represents female and Asian or Pacific Islander undergraduates and slightly under-represents freshmen. Other characteristics of the UCLA UCUES Core sample, such as entry status (i.e., direct entry or transfers), academic standing, geographic location, and the distribution across other 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.