

Results of the Fall 1998 ACE Freshman Survey

Introduction

Each year, the American Council on Education (ACE) administers the Freshman Survey to students at a wide variety of colleges and universities. UC Santa Cruz has participated in the survey annually from 1966 to 1992, and biannually since then. UC Santa Cruz is classified by ACE as a highly selective public university, (students in these institutions have an average combined SAT score of 1,100 or more). UCSC's national comparison group of other highly selective public institutions includes all other University of California campuses, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, the University of Michigan, the University of Colorado at Boulder, and the University of Illinois, Urbana. The results of the UC Santa Cruz survey are based on 1607 students, 68% of the fall 1998 entering class.

Demographics

Respondents who took the ACE were representative of UCSC new frosh in sex and ethnic composition. Fewer new UCSC respondents reported they were African-American, and a greater number reported Native American or Chicano heritage than their national peers. The percentage of frosh-of-color at UCSC has declined since 1996, but UCSC students remained as diverse as students nationally. One-third of UCSC frosh came from families where parents had divorced or separated compared to 20% nationally. Political views of UCSC students have moved slightly to the right since 1996. However, compared to their national peers, most UCSC frosh describe themselves as liberal or far left, while new frosh nationally are more likely to be 'middle-of-the-road'.

Student Finances

The number of students receiving scholarships both nationally and at UCSC increased substantially from 1996 to 1998. However, UC Santa Cruz students relied more heavily on income from work, scholarships and financial aid than their national peers.

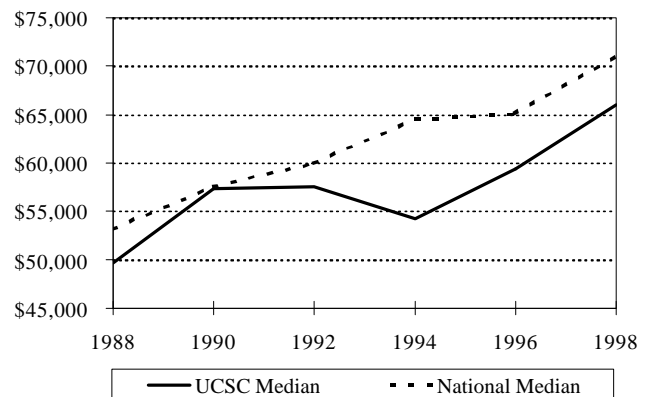
their college education was a major concern for only 15% of Fall '98 UCSC frosh (14% nationally), down from 24% of UCSC frosh in 1996.

Percentage of Freshmen Receiving \$1,500 + Financial Support by Source

	UCSC		National	
	1996	1998	1996	1998
Family	68%	69%	73%	75%
Scholarships	31%	37%	26%	35%
Loans	29%	31%	25%	26%
Work during school	13%	13%	5%	7%

Median income levels of UCSC students continued to rise and the gap between family incomes of Santa Cruz students their national peers narrowed slightly this year. Financing

Median Family Income of Frosh



College Preparation, College Choice and Academic Plans

Entering students at UCSC had similar academic preparation as their national peers, although fewer UCSC students had taken one-half year of computer science (47% vs. 53% nationally) and more had one year of art or music (86% vs. 74%) compared with their national peers. UCSC was the first choice for a four-year college for only 53% of entering students, down from 59% in 1996 and 70% in 1994. The most frequent reason for choosing UCSC was the school's good academic reputation, but it was cited by only 35% of Santa Cruz students compared with 69% of the national group. Other factors for choosing UCSC were college size, the financial aid offered and the prospect of getting a good job after graduation. While 82% of all new freshpersons expected to complete a bachelors degree, UCSC students thought it more likely that they would leave school for a while, need extra time to complete their degree, transfer to another college, change their major, and get a job than students nationally.

Expectations of New Frosh in 1998

	UCSC	Nat'l
Get job to pay expenses	49%	37%
Change major field	26%	20%
Transfer out	12%	5%
Need extra time for degree	10%	6%
Drop out temporarily	3%	1%

Any of these factors could affect retention and graduation rates, and in fact these rates are now lower than average for the UC campuses. Forty-five percent of this year's entering class planned to complete a masters degree, up from 40% in 1996, but fewer students intended to earn a doctorate or professional degree than in 1996 (41% vs. 50%). Nationally there was a similar shift in academic aspirations over the last several years. New frosh at UC Santa Cruz were much more interested in studying the arts, humanities, biological sciences or social sciences than their national peers, who favored business, engineering, and professional fields.

Abilities and Activities of Freshpersons

Three-quarters of UC Santa Cruz students rated themselves highly in academic ability, and most gave themselves high marks for understanding of others (72%), cooperation (69%), self-understanding (64%), creativity (66%), and drive-to-achieve (64%). Nationally, students rated themselves even more highly on academic ability, drive-to-achieve, leadership ability, physical and emotional health, mathematical ability, competitiveness and popularity, although UCSC students gave themselves higher marks on artistic ability and creativity than their national peers. Certain activities and behaviors were also very different among UCSC entering frosh and their national peers. For example, UCSC students were more likely to socialize with an ethnically diverse group of friends (82% vs. 73). Local frosh more often visited a gallery or museum (79% vs. 64%) or played

musical instruments (51% vs. 44%) than their national peers. They were less likely to play computer games (68% vs. 76%) or visit Internet chat rooms, and were more likely to ask teachers for advice (34% vs. 26%). UCSC students were more politically expressive in discussions and demonstrations compared with their national peers. They attended fewer religious services but more often discussed religion than their comparison group. More UCSC frosh smoked cigarettes (14% vs. 10%) and drank alcohol, and fewer exercised regularly than students nationally. UCSC students were more likely to be late, miss class or feel bored in class, and they were more often overwhelmed or depressed than their national peers. Overall, UCSC frosh are less traditional, more expressive, artistic and sensitive, and less physically fit than their national comparison group.

Career and Life Goals

UCSC students had altruistic and creative life aspirations compared to their national peers, who were more concerned with financial well-being and raising a family.

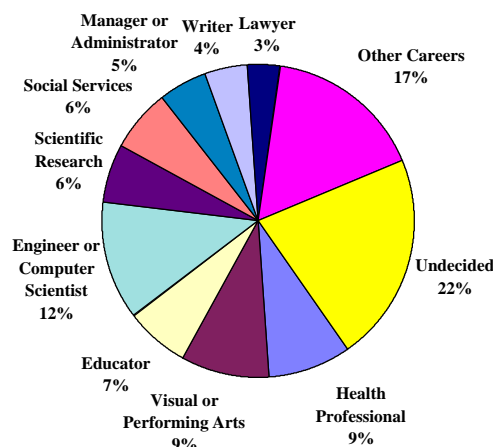
Life Goals of 1998 Frosh

	UCSC	National
Raise a family	64%	74%
Develop philosophy of life	59%	49%
Be well-off financially	57%	75%
Promote racial understanding	42%	35%
Help cleanup environment	37%	21%
Create artistic works	30%	14%
Write original works	27%	15%
Influence political structure	23%	19%
Achieve in a performing art	23%	14%

Nearly one-quarter of UCSC frosh were undecided on a career choice, compared with 15% of their national peer group. Santa Cruz students choose a wide variety of possible careers, but were less likely to choose health

professions, business or administration and law careers than students in the national comparison group. Instead, UCSC frosh more often cited the arts, teaching, scientific research, computer programming, and clinical psychology or social services as likely careers.

Career Choices of UCSC Frosh



Student Satisfaction with Services

Questions specific to UC Santa Cruz were included at the end of the ACE survey. For fall of 1998 students were asked about a variety of aspects of their new environment. Almost all new frosh agreed that faculty and staff were friendly and approachable, and most were satisfied with their college assignment. As in 1996, the largest problem for new frosh occurred for respondents who tried to contact a financial aid counselor. Forty-five percent felt that counselors were not easily accessible, however, this was an improvement from ratings in 1996. The helpfulness of faculty advisors with course selection was the second highest area of concern for new frosh. Inadequate financial aid, lack of help with job searches, guidance about majors, and the quality of dining hall food were some of the other problems experienced by frosh in their first days at UCSC.

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Percent Satisfied with UCSC Services

	1996	1998
Faculty friendly and approachable	95%	94%
Staff friendly and approachable	NA	94%
College assignment satisfactory	86%	86%
Satisfied with housing assignment	NA	82%
Informal social college atmosphere	88%	82%
College sponsored social activities	81%	79%
Chance to meet others w/ same interests	82%	78%
Doing fairly well finding way around	NA	78%
Fall Orientation information helpful	77%	77%
No difficulty with Teleslug	74%	76%
No problems with shuttles and buses	82%	73%
Financial Aid offer timely	NA	70%
Enough telephone jacks in room	NA	70%
Know how to find non-work/study job	61%	64%
I would like help choosing major	NA	63%
Understand how to find work/study job	56%	61%
Amount of financial aid is adequate	NA	60%
Web page helped to acquaint w/ campus	54%	59%
Satisfied with quality of dining hall food	NA	58%
Faculty advisor help in selecting courses	51%	56%
Financial Aid counselors accessible	47%	55%

Higher Education Research Institute's Summary of the Fall 1998 ACE Freshman Survey

The following is a press release from the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA. A copy of this summary may be found on the World Wide Web at <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/press98.html>.

The ACE Freshman Survey

Conducted in continued association with the American Council on Education, the UCLA survey is the nation's longest-standing and most comprehensive assessment of student attitudes and plans. UCLA's HERI has conducted the nationwide freshman survey since 1973. Since the survey's inception in 1966, more than 9 million students at more than 1,500 institutions have participated. The fall '98 survey included 383,815 students at 668 of the nation's two- and four-year colleges and universities. Data culled from 275, 811 students at 469 institutions have been adjusted statistically to be representative of the 1.6 million students entering college as first-time, full-time freshmen last fall. The survey included questions about Internet use for the first time in its 33-year history in recognition of the increasing importance of technology in higher education.

Most of the Nation's College Freshmen Embrace the Internet as an Educational Tool

Use of the Internet as an educational and research tool is widespread among the nation's college freshmen. A whopping 82.9 percent of new freshmen -- more than four out of five students -- are using the Internet for research or homework. Nearly two-thirds (65.9 percent) say they communicate via e-mail. The fall 1998 survey also shows that more than half (54.2 percent) of all freshmen say they participate in Internet chat rooms. And nearly three-quarters (72.9) percent engage in "other Internet use." A full 80.4 percent of students say they play computer games at least occasionally. "Our findings show that the Internet has become a way of life for the majority of students," said survey director Linda J. Sax. "What remains to be seen, however, is whether proficiency on the Internet enhances student learning during college."

When broken down by type of institution, however, the numbers appear to raise technology accessibility issues. A full 80.1 percent of freshmen attending private universities say they communicated via e-mail during their last year in high school. This compares with only 41.4 percent of students at public black colleges. And although the majority of freshmen at all types of institutions have used the Internet for research or homework, this figure ranges from a high of 90.2 percent among students entering private universities to a relative low of 77.6 percent among freshmen attending public black colleges. "These findings suggest strongly that access to educational technology still is not equal for certain segments of the incoming student population" said UCLA education Professor Alexander W. Astin, founding director of the nationwide freshman survey. "As they incorporate technology into instruction and campus life, colleges and universities should be aware of the differing levels of computing experience among incoming freshmen." In a related question, 43.2 percent of freshmen agree that "material on the Internet should be regulated by the government." Female students were more likely to endorse this idea, with 52.6 percent supporting government regulation, compared with 32 percent of male students.

Interest in Politics Continues Downward Trend

Despite a high-profile scandal in the White House, freshman interest in politics continues to drop. A record low 25.9 percent of freshmen believe that "keeping up to date with political affairs" is a very important or essential life goal. This compares with 26.7 percent just a year ago and a high of 57.8 percent in 1966. Only 14 percent of freshmen say they frequently discuss politics, compared with the high of 29.9 percent in 1968. There also is a parallel declining interest in legal careers among this year's freshmen. A record low 3 percent of students aspire to be lawyers, compared with 3.3 percent a year ago and a high of 5.4 percent in 1989. "Students' disinterest in politics and the law may well have been exacerbated by the current political climate of turmoil, extreme partisanship and gridlock," Professor Astin said.

Volunteerism Continues to Climb

Even as interest in civic affairs descends, the volunteerism trend continues its rise. A record number of freshmen -- 74.2 percent, compared with 73.1 percent in 1997 and a low of 62 percent in 1989 -- report giving of their time during their last year of high school. Volunteerism on a regular basis also is up, with 42.1 percent of freshmen donating their time for at least one hour a week, compared with 39.9 percent a year ago and 26.6 percent when this question was asked in 1987. A record high one in five students (20.6 percent) volunteers at least three hours a week. The survey shows that more and more students are volunteering, even though only 21.3 percent of them attended high schools that require community service for graduation. "Despite speculation that students' high level of volunteerism may be due to service requirements in the high schools, these findings suggest that the majority of students who engage in volunteer work do so of their own volition," Sax said. However, the survey also found that while three-quarters of freshmen have experience as volunteers, only 18.9 percent expect to continue their community service work while in college. "This news is particularly discouraging given the evidence from our research showing that participating in community service benefits students both personally and academically," Astin said.

Academic Disengagement Continues

A record high 37.7 percent of new freshmen say they frequently felt "bored in class" during their last year in high school, compared with 36 percent a year ago and a low of 26.4 percent in 1985. Furthermore, an all-time high 60.3 percent of students "came late to class" frequently or occasionally compared with a low of 49.2 percent in 1966. And a record low 32.9 percent say they studied or did homework six or more hours a week during their high-school senior year, compared with 33.9 percent in 1997 and 43.7 percent when this question first was asked in 1987. This apparent disengagement from academics may help to explain the top reasons freshmen give for attending college. The UCLA survey found that more students are going to college "to be able to get a better job" (76.9 percent) and "to be able to make more money" (74.6 percent) than "to gain a general education and appreciation of ideas" (62 percent). "These findings suggest that students increasingly view college as a means to an end rather than as an opportunity for intrinsic learning," said Sax.

Beer Drinking is at Record Low

Freshmen starting college this past fall report the lowest levels of beer drinking in the survey's 33-year history. Slightly more than half -- 51.6 percent -- say they drink beer frequently or occasionally, compared with 52.7 percent the previous year and a high of 75.2 percent in 1981. While the degree of decline was similar for men and women, men continue to drink beer at higher rates than women do (57.8 percent compared with 46.3 percent). Consumption of wine or liquor has remained steady over the past few years, with the current rate, 54.9 percent, far below the 66.7 percent rate reported when this question first was asked in 1987. "Although it's good news that increasing numbers of students are abstaining from alcohol, there's no question that binge drinking remains a serious problem on some college campuses," Sax acknowledged.

Support For Abortion, Casual Sex at All-time Low

Freshman support for keeping abortion legal declined for the sixth straight year to a record low of 50.9 percent. This compares with 53.5 percent in 1997 and a high of 64.9 percent in 1990. Acceptance of casual sex also is down, with a record low 39.6 percent of freshmen agreeing that "if two people really like each other, it's all right for them to have sex even if they've known each other for a very short time." This compares with 42.2 percent in 1997 and a high of 51.9 percent in 1987. "The changing attitude toward casual sex quite possibly is a reflection of students' concern about AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases," Sax said.