

Recommendations from the Task Force on the First-Year Undergraduate Academic Experience

December 10, 2021

Introduction

In September 2021, Interim Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Cathy Koshland charged a joint Senate-Administration Task Force on the First-year Undergraduate Academic Experience with developing a set of recommendations around the core question: *How can we ensure that every entering first-year student is able to enroll in a set of courses that will enable them to make timely and meaningful progress towards their degree?*

Chaired by Interim Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education Oliver O'Reilly, the task force aim was to identify short- and long-term solutions for improving the first-year undergraduate experience, and develop recommendations that could be implemented in time for next year's incoming class of Fall 2022. The heart of the task force work took place across four working groups:

1. Curriculum Management
2. Logistics of First-Year Enrollment
3. Advising and Preparation
4. Admissions and Enrollments

Each working group met independently during the months of October, November, and December. During this time, the larger task force also had monthly check-ins. The work of the task force was stewarded by an executive committee composed of Ron Cohen, Jenna Johnson-Hanks, Femi Ogundele, Cara Stanley, and Oliver O'Reilly.

Members of the Task Force consulted widely across campus. These efforts included, but were not limited to, surveys of, and a town hall meeting with, first year students; a town hall meeting with the Student Advisory Committee for Undergraduate Education; consultations with the ASUC leadership; and discussions with the Office of the Registrar and the Golden Bear Orientation leadership.

We are fortunate to be on a campus that has a rich curriculum and an abundance of opportunities for students to engage and learn. Managing this curriculum, helping students navigate the curriculum so they can experience the joys of learning, and enhancing support structures for instructors and students are dynamic issues that require continual evaluation and improvement. The task force is also cognizant of the fact that we are at a pivotal moment in the history of higher education. It is important for the campus to seize the current moment to

encourage and support pedagogical innovations to meet the urgent short- and long-term learning needs of our students.

We sincerely hope the recommendations listed below help to address the needs of our campus. The executive committee hopes that the exercise conducted this semester will be replicated each fall semester so we can continually improve the first-year experience for our incoming first-year and transfer students.

Recommendations

Curriculum Management

1. The campus should implement the pre-pandemic initiative to implement a comprehensive curriculum management system. This system will help to coordinate and integrate the undergraduate curriculum for over 200 undergraduate degree programs, ease the burden on advisors, enable students to explore and take advantage of Berkeley's comprehensive curriculum, and facilitate allocation of TAS funds.
2. Departments should use enrollment estimates and information about funding to mount as many sections as they are projected to need. Units should be encouraged to communicate constraints on capacity including GSI, laboratory space, and class room availability. Departments should be encouraged to use waitlists and to set waitlist limits to the number of students each course might feasibly admit.
3. Academic partners should be encouraged to seek creative solutions that use admission targets to address both impacted and under enrolled majors.

Advice for Students

4. Students should continue to be advised and encouraged to have a backup plan in the event they cannot get a place in the course(s) of their choice. Advisors are encouraged to continue asking students to report on their backup plans.
5. Students who anticipate requesting accommodations from the [Disabled Students' Program](#) (DSP) should be encouraged to schedule their intake with DSP as early as possible and preferably before the start of the semester. A companion message on DSP onboarding should be sent to all parents and caregivers.
6. The campus should coordinate a single message describing Summer Bridge and other preparatory programs that are available to first-year and transfer students. Although many preparatory programs are college specific, widely advertising them in a coordinated manner promotes our efforts to make the campus more welcoming and supportive.
7. Following consultation with the Student Learning Center and other campus partners, a strategic effort should be in place to advertise Summer Bridge and other preparatory programs to students prior to the SIR deadline. Currently, students only hear about these programs after they have submitted their SIR.

8. The campus should promote peer advising, peer mentoring and Berkeley Connect type-programs for students. In particular, opportunities for students to help other students during the enrollment process should be explored.
9. Students and parents should be informed and reassured that class sections are added during the summer in response to student demand. [Berkeleytime](#) can be an effective tool for students and parents to see enrollment patterns in prior years (e.g. CHEM 1A data from Fall 2020 and 2021 is displayed [here](#).)

Fall Program for Freshmen

10. The campus should ensure that students enrolled in the [Fall Program for Freshman](#) have access to on-campus advisors so they can plan their spring enrollments appropriately.

Ongoing Assessment of Pandemic-Related Learning Loss and Gains

11. For the next four academic years, faculty teaching common core courses should be surveyed each semester to collect real-time data on perceived loss of learning and study skills. Students should also be surveyed to collect data on perceived learning losses and gains. The first such surveys were completed by the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education (for faculty) and the Student Learning Center (for students) in Fall 2021. The data from these surveys and the systemwide [Faculty and Instructor Remote Instruction Survey](#) should be used for strategic planning and solving pandemic-induced learning challenges.

Admissions/Enrollment

12. Opportunities with [ApplyUC](#) to require an academic interest question in the application's *Personal Insight Questions* while leaving the other three questions optional/applicant choice from the panel of eight possible choices should be explored.
13. The pros and cons of the use and potential impacts of alternate majors across colleges and programs in the application process should be explored and evaluated.
14. Internal major-to-major and college-to-college transfer processes should be reviewed and analyzed in relation to any changes to enrollment targets.

Golden Bear Advising and Office of the Registrar

15. The content of Golden Bear Advising (GBA) should be reviewed to ensure that it meets the needs of students and informs them of anticipated issues with enrollment processes. Students should be informed and reassured during GBA about the functioning of waitlists.
16. The campus should determine if the Student Information Systems (SIS) can help students navigate prerequisites necessary to transfer to majors/programs and establish data sets for analysis.

Enrollment Coordination Group, Degree Planners, and Staffing

17. The campus is encouraged to establish an Enrollment Coordination Group that will meet over the summer to monitor enrollment, waitlists, and onboarding, and coordinate the campus' efforts to respond appropriately. Particular attention should be paid by this

group to the middle of July when several enrollment timelines coincide and evidence of impacted courses becomes apparent.

18. Each year, the Enrollment Coordination Group should also be charged with reviewing the start of the fall semester and providing recommendations in December to the campus to enable continuous improvement of the onboarding of first-year and transfer students.
19. The Office of Planning and Analysis should continue to send estimated enrollments for large lower-division courses to department staff for the upcoming academic year in February. Information on funding should be articulated, especially for Common Good Curriculum courses.
20. The campus should identify a point person (likely within Admissions and Enrollment or the Office of the Registrar) who would be responsible for developing a high-level strategic vision and coordination plan for enrollment. This role could be responsible for communicating with colleges and departments about anticipated course demand (both new students and continuing students) well in advance of enrollment; overseeing the development and distribution of course enrollment tutorials for all students; coordinating a centralized new student enrollment help desk for immediate response; engaging with departments during the enrollment periods to add course sections on-demand as needed/possible; and engaging with departments outside the enrollment period to change key policies (e.g. some departments don't allow waitlists, which hides important signals about demand).
21. The campus should work in close collaboration with advisors and departments to require new and continuing students enter their course plans into the Degree Planner for their next 3-4 semesters. The above mentioned point person could then review Degree Planner reports to determine anticipated course need/impact over the coming years. Note that the existing Degree Planner has some problems and needs to be evaluated and improved to serve this purpose.

Recommendations for L&S Students

22. The Advising and Preparation Working Group prioritized students in the College of Letters & Science (L&S) and developed a set of detailed recommendations for L&S students. These recommendations are presented in detail in Appendix E and are summarized here:
 - a. Develop a curated list of courses for first-year students to choose from.
 - b. Use [meta-major pathways](#) to help guide students into the right courses for the general area in which they wish to study (social sciences, arts & humanities, etc).
 - c. The campus could explore assigning students into courses and base schedules on anticipated majors or meta-major pathways for undeclared students.

The Working Groups

The Task Force's work was facilitated by the formation of four working groups:

1. Curriculum Management

This working group was charged with examining technological solutions to curriculum management, and making recommendations on potential solutions. Many of the recommendations from this group are based on work by Rebecca Sablo (in her prior role as Associate Registrar), et al., on curriculum management (see [presentation on comprehensive curriculum management system](#), presented in 2019 and updated for 2021), as well as work by Rebecca's predecessor, Johanna Metzgar, et al., on a proposal for [infrastructure support for better curriculum planning](#) that was introduced during Chancellor Dirks' tenure.

2. Logistics of First-Year Enrollment

This working group was charged with examining the logistics of enrollment for first year students—from enrollment targets and course scheduling, to TAS allocations and student recruitment and enrollment. The group's work started by establishing a [detailed timeline](#) of the academic year that is discussed in more detail in the appendix.

3. Advising and Preparation

This working group was charged with examining student advising for first-year students and existing preparatory programs. This group established recommendations on Meta-Major Pathways that are discussed in more detail in Appendix E.

4. Admissions and Targets

This working group was charged with examining how admissions and enrollment targets impact enrollment in first-year courses. The group explored the possibility of requiring students to provide an "alternative major" when applying for admission to UC Berkeley and consulted with other UC campuses on the efficacy of this approach.

Appendix A - Charge Letter

September 2, 2021

Oliver M. O'Reilly, Interim Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education* (chair)

Ron Cohen, Chair, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate*

Jennifer Johnson-Hanks, Executive Dean, College of Letters & Science*

Olufemi Ogundele, Associate Vice Chancellor of Enrollment Management and Dean of Undergraduate Admissions*

Cara Stanley, Executive Director of the Student Learning Center*

Sara McMains, Chair of Committee on Admissions, Enrollment and Preparatory Education (AEPE)

Richard Russo, Associate Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education and Dean of Extended Education

Rebecca Sablo, Assistant Dean, Undergraduate Division, College of Letters and Science

Walter Wong, Registrar

Laura Imai, Director of Advising, Data Science Education Program

Glynda Hull, Director, Berkeley Collegium

Susan Hagstrom, Manager of Advisor Strategy and Training, Office of the VPUE

Undergraduate Council appointed by COMS (TBD)

College Representatives (CED, COC, COE, L&S, RCNR) -- *e.g., Associate Dean, Director of advising, etc. (TBD)*

ASUC Representative (TBD)

GA Representative (TBD)

** denotes Executive Committee member*

Re: Joint Senate-Administration Task Force on the First-Year Undergraduate Academic Experience

Dear Colleagues,

I write to invite you to serve on a joint Senate-Administration task force on the first-year undergraduate academic experience. The core question that this group will address is:

How can we ensure that every entering first-year student is able to enroll in a set of courses that will enable them to make timely and meaningful progress towards their degree?

The task force will include five working groups to examine each of the following components of the first-year student experience:

1. How can we ensure that the courses that are offered match what the students should have? (e.g., major prep, some smaller courses, discovery, etc.)

2. How can we ensure that those courses are appropriately funded?
3. Can we rebalance our admissions targets to better match available instructional resources?
4. How can we organize and fund advising to ensure that students can effectively navigate their first year?
5. How can we ensure that students are placed in the appropriate course or program to get off to a good start? (e.g., Summer Bridge, math assessment, R&C exam)

The Executive Committee will be chaired by Oliver O'Reilly and each of the working groups will have administrative and senate co-chairs. The task force will be staffed by Anthony Yuen from the Division of Undergraduate Education. I kindly ask that the task force provide the Chancellor and me with your findings and recommendations by **December 1, 2021**.

Please send an email by **Thursday, September 9** to Anthony Yuen <ayuen@berkeley.edu> and evcp@berkeley.edu to confirm your willingness to participate in this important effort.

Sincerely,

Catherine P. Koshland
Interim Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

Cc: Cindy Bumgarner, AVC and Chief of Staff to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
Andrea Lambert, Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost
Jocelyn Banaria, Executive Director, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate
Anthony Yuen, Project Policy Analyst, Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

Appendix B - Task Force Member List

Executive Committee

Oliver O'Reilly, Interim Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education (chair)
Cara Stanley, Executive Director, Student Learning Center
Jennifer Johnson-Hanks, Executive Dean, College of Letters & Science
Olufemi Ogundele, Associate Vice Chancellor of Enrollment Management and Dean of Undergraduate Admissions
Ronald Cohen, Chair, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate

Members

Abby Dernburg, Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator and Professor of Cell and Developmental Biology
Alexander Paulin, Assistant Teaching Professor, Mathematics
Audrey Thomas, Institutional Research Analyst, Undergraduate Education
Erika Walker, Senior Assistant Dean of Instruction, Haas School of Business
Evan Variano, Associate Dean for Students, College of Engineering
Glynda Hull, Director, Berkeley Collegium
John Arnold, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Affairs, College of Chemistry
Jonathan Wurtele, Vice Chair of Instruction, Physics
Kasra Sotudeh, Academic & Curriculum Development Coordinator, Athletic Study Center
Kate O'Neill, Associate Dean of Instruction and Student Affairs, Rausser College of Natural Resources
Khuyen Nguyen, Executive Associate Director, Student Learning Center
Kira Blaisdell-Sloan, Institutional Research Analyst, Office of Planning & Analysis
Kunxin Luo, Member, Admissions, Enrollment and Preparatory Education (AEPE)
Kyle Steinfeld, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies, College of Environmental Design
Laura Imai, Director of Advising, Data Science Education Program
Les Gorske, Strategic Initiatives Manager, Office of the Dean of Arts and Humanities, College of Letters & Science
Margaret Hunter, Senior Director, Centers for Educational Justice and Community Engagement
Mari Wong, ASUC Office of Academic Affairs
Maria DePalma, Assistant Director, Office of Undergraduate Advising, College of Letters & Science
Martha Olney, Teaching Professor of Economics
Patrick Turner, Associate Director, Office of Undergraduate Admissions
Rebecca Sablo, Assistant Dean of Administration & Finance, Undergraduate Division, College of Letters and Science
Rick Russo, Associate Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education and Dean of Extended Education
Robert Ashmore, Member, Undergraduate Council (UGC)
Rosalind Johnson, Director of Enrollment, Equity & Success, Office of Undergraduate Admissions
Sereeta Alexander, Director, Office of Planning & Analysis

Susan Cass, Manager, Central Evaluation Unit
Susan Hagstrom, Manager of Advisor Strategy and Training
Walter Wong, University Registrar

Staff

Anthony Yuen, Project Policy Analyst, Undergraduate Education
Cindy Bumgarner, Assistant Vice Chancellor and Chief of Staff, Undergraduate Education

Appendix C - Curriculum Management System

The Curriculum Management working group was charged with examining technological solutions to curriculum management and making recommendations on potential solutions. Many of the recommendations from this group are based most recently on work by Rebecca Sablo (in her prior role as Associate Registrar) and presented to the Council of Undergraduate Deans in 2019 (the [presentation](#) is now updated for 2021), as well as Rebecca's predecessor, Johanna Metzgar et al. on a proposal for [infrastructure support for better curriculum planning](#) that was introduced during Chancellor Dirks' tenure.

In summary, the depth, breadth and unparalleled excellence of our curriculum is one of Berkeley's most distinctive features. And yet we are unable to readily answer such fundamental questions as:

- What are the required prerequisites for declaring a major for all departments in L&S?
- How many undergraduate and graduate programs utilize Data Science courses in their curriculum?
- What do we anticipate to be the demand for MATH 1A for our incoming first year students to assess adequate funding for instruction?
- What is the best curricular pathway for students preparing for multiple majors of interest?
- What is the impact of pruning a course on undergraduate and graduate programs?
- How can we elevate exposure for under-enrolled courses and majors?

To improve the ongoing support of the administration of our curriculum, we need to procure a transparent, integrated system (a Comprehensive Curriculum Management System - CCMS) to effectively identify the function of courses across our curricula, manage the full suite of processes that guide our students from orientation to degree conferral, and improve our funding models for our academic enterprise.

As undergraduate students, advising staff, faculty and administrators navigate Berkeley's complex curriculum, up-to-date curricular and course data is critical to optimize limited resources and maximize student achievement and success. A CCMS will promote better decision making in three interlinked areas: (1) curriculum (re)design and development; (2) curriculum planning and resource allocation; and, (3) student advising, student navigation and wayfinding.

Function of a CCMS

While course management is coordinated centrally by the Senate, we have no systematic way of linking the use of a course within curricula across campus. We know that—particularly for undergraduates—a curricular pathway involves courses from multiple colleges and departments. Effective curriculum management requires acknowledgement of this interdependency and the ability for faculty and administrators to access and understand the undergraduate curriculum structure and requirements, demands, and course offering across campus as they plan for curricula within their department and help their students with enrollment in required courses outside of the department.

Here are a few key examples of course and curriculum information that are not in any of our current information systems.

- Degree requirements and curriculum structure
 - courses that satisfy degree requirements
 - prerequisite rules
 - intro, breadth, gateway, capstone course designations
- Course Level learning outcomes
- Course Content – Components of the syllabi for the specific offerings of the course
- Breadth curriculum learning outcomes
- Institutional undergraduate learning outcomes (competencies/dispositions)

A CCMS would serve in defining a set of course attributes/characteristics (such as writing emphasis, breadth requirement area, gateway or introductory course, major prerequisite, capstone course, area of concentration) and store these attributes in a centralized system providing a robust understanding of the curriculum within and across disciplines, and integrate with the existing systems that utilize course/curricular information (Berkeley Academic Guide, Schedule of Classes, Academic Progress Report, Degree Progress Report, etc.).

Benefits of a CCMS

- Automation of update to our existing systems that publish courses/requirements and track degree progress
- Widespread notification of curriculum decisions in one department that impact others, i.e. common good courses, upper division core and elective courses
- Ability to more easily predict demand for common good courses
- Develop one easy search tool where students can search for courses and filter on multiple criteria
- One integrated environment that consistent and uniformly informs the sources students use to plan their enrollment throughout their career
- A source to more easily identify courses to fit a curricular need, expose under enrolled courses and surface planning pathways for students exploring multiple majors
- Elimination of shadow systems that track course use/options and require manual update

Next Steps

Short Term

+ Ensure strong leadership for this initiative in the Registrar's office → inform the new Registrar that CCMS is a high priority

+ Establish a coalition among Senior Leadership → (Senate Chair/Vice Chair, Graduate Division Dean, College/School deans, EVCP, VPUE, AVCEM/VCSA, AVCCIO, VPAP, VCF, ASUC) to address questions such as:

- What is essential to the sustainability of our academic operation? What are the opportunities and gaps in our curricular planning and instructional funding?
- What would it mean to move from a departmental based/informed curricular structure to a campus wide shared infrastructure and common terminology/use of course attributes and characteristics? How would this be governed?

+ Partner with new Registrar to arrange for some listening sessions with the coalition on CCMS

→ contact counterparts at other large universities that use CCMS to learn more about how it functions on their campus and address essential needs for their academic and budgetary planning.

+ Secure funding to purchase, implement, subscribe and staff to maintain a CCMS. Develop a timeline for vetting vendors and purchasing.

Long Term

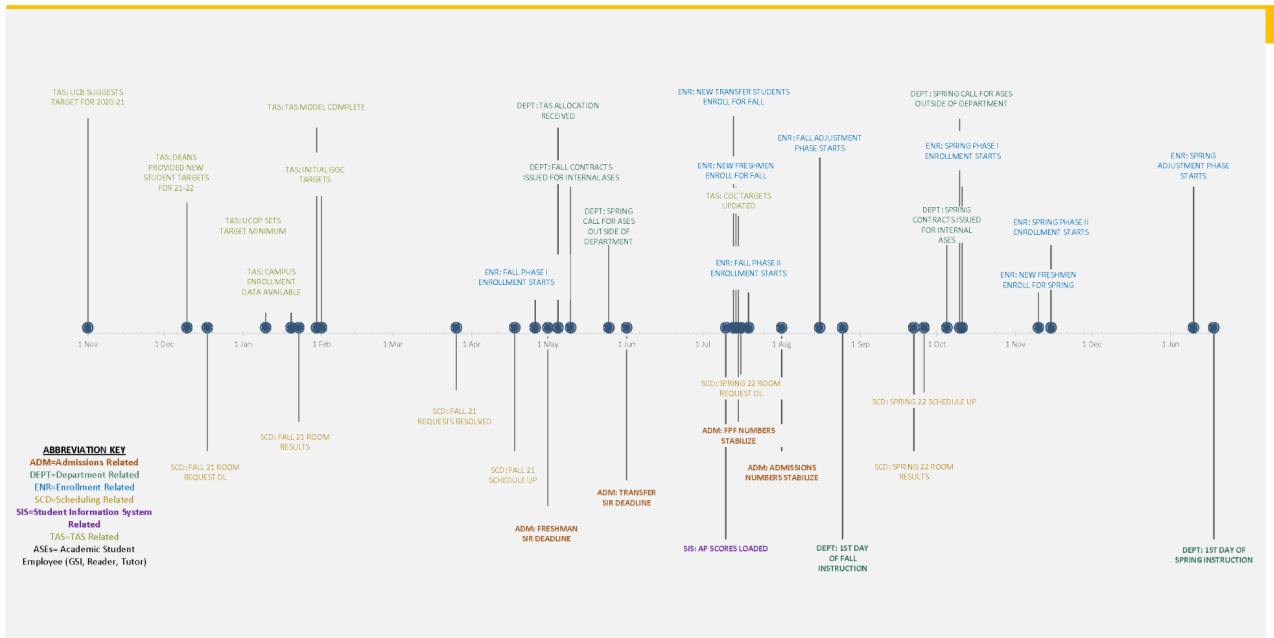
+ Identify and establish an Executive Oversight Committee for CCMS to include leadership from VPUE, Deans, Senate, Graduate Division, OR and SIS, and an Implementation Project Team with staff from OR, SIS, OPA, Senate, ITCS Project Management Services, Advising, Student leadership to...

- Conduct analysis of opportunities and gaps and determine existing systems and essential components of a CCMS to best integrate with these systems
- Research and identify vendor for CCMS project
- Outline an implementation timeline and plan

Appendix D - Class Planning Timeline

The Logistics of First-Year Enrollment working group was charged with examining the logistics of enrollment for first year students—from enrollment targets and course scheduling, to TAS allocations and student recruitment and enrollment. The group’s work started by establishing a [detailed timeline](#) of the academic year. The timeline included the Phase I and Phase II enrollment periods, departmental planning periods, and advising periods. The goals of constructing the timeline were two fold: first, to examine if there were any opportunities to change deadlines in order to facilitate enrollment and course planning; and second, to identify critical periods during the summer months for first-year enrollments. The timeline also served to guide several recommendations from the other working groups.

Academic Year 2021-22 Class Planning



Appendix E - Advising and Preparation

The Advising and Preparation working group was charged with examining student advising for first-year students and existing preparatory programs. This group established the following recommendations:

- We agree that incoming first year students in the College of Letters & Science are the priority for improving advising and course selection. Students in other colleges have a more prescriptive set of courses already.
- We can create a **curated list of courses** appropriate for first year students from which they would select courses. These would be introductory courses that would allow students to explore majors including but not limited to courses that allow students to satisfy prerequisites for majors requiring sequential courses (e.g. Math 1A, Data 8, Chem 1A, etc.), plus American Cultures, R&C, etc. This would allow us to better anticipate the number of seats we would need in courses and to be sure that less well-known majors are still on the selection list.
- We could also use [meta-major pathways](#) to help guide students into the right courses for the general area in which they wish to study (social sciences, arts & humanities, etc). For students who are undeclared, they would select a meta-major pathway and feel confident that they are in appropriate courses for first years and for their potential major. We can also incorporate L&S 1 “Exploring the Liberal Arts” (2 Units) into new students’ course pathways. L&S 1 is a course for entering students, particularly those who are undecided about the major they would like to pursue. It provides an introduction to the intellectual landscape of the College of Letters and Science, revealing the underlying assumptions, goals, and structure of a liberal arts education. The ultimate goal of the course is to transform the students into informed participants in their own educational experiences.
- The university could **assign incoming first year students into courses** and base schedules on anticipated majors or meta-major pathways for undeclared students. Students would have an opportunity to adjust their schedules online after they attend GBA and learn more about their requirements. We should not underestimate how complicated it is for first year students to select their own classes from the entire course catalog and to understand the requirements. For students participating in the Fall Program for Freshmen, they could be allowed to enroll in a curated list of L&S courses that have capacity for additional enrollments. This would allow approximately 750 students to explore courses and majors that they might not otherwise be exposed to without incurring additional instructional expense.
- Build a peer mentoring system. Consider using an organization like [Mentor Collective](#) where incoming students are paired with an advanced student (junior or senior level) who has progressed in that major pathway to help serve as a guide.

- Provide more information during GBA about how waitlists work, what factors students should consider in deciding whether it is worth adding to a waitlist, and what students should do if they find themselves on a waitlist. Having students identify a major or meta-major pathway would help departments communicate planned enrollment changes with new incoming students who might be interested in their courses but who were unable to get onto the waitlist.

Appendix F - Enrollment Constraints and Important Time Constraints for Large Lower-Division Courses

Enrollment Constraints and Important Time Constraints for Large Lower-Division Courses

December 2021

In Fall 2021, staff representing the departments of Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Math, Physics, and Statistics provided their projected enrollment limits for Common Good Curriculum courses, and an overview of the factors that constrain additional enrollment. A survey on these issues was completed by Environmental Science and Policy Management (ESPM), Spanish & Portuguese, Architecture, and Earth and Planetary Science.

The most common constraints on enrollment were the availability of

- Additional or larger spaces for lecture sections
- Appropriate spaces for lab sections or other specialized rooms
- Appropriately trained graduate student instructors (GSIs).

Additional pain points are: timely information about funding and the growing number of students requesting accommodations through the Disabled Students Program (DSP).

Space

Many large lower-division courses are constrained by physical space for lectures. In some cases, such as Physics, the lecture hall needs specialized equipment for demonstrations, but almost all departments mentioned the need for large or mid-sized lecture halls.

Departments such as Chemistry, Biology, Physics, Computer Science and Architecture are limited by space for lab or discussion sections.

Possible solutions:

- Night sections - However, highly-trained support staff would be needed, there are safety issues for students and GSIs leaving sections late at night, and it is difficult to schedule exams for these sections.
- Offering lab sections that meet both in-person and online (rather than offering one section that meets in-person, there could be two sections that alternate meeting in-person and online). There are concerns about learning loss with this model.
- Offering secondary sections in a completely online format. Staff in Math, Computer Science, and ESPM would like an easier and quicker Academic Senate process to approve online sections so they can quickly meet demand. However, there is some hesitation from departments and instructors, and some wariness on the part of students to accept a permanent transition to online delivery. The distinction between emergency remote instruction and online classes is important as we transition to all in-person classes.

GSIs

Most departments have had trouble finding enough qualified GSIs for their large lower-division courses. While departments such as Computer Science, Statistics, Biology, and Chemistry require their PhD students to teach for two semesters, Math and Physics have no teaching requirement. The number of available PhD students to serve as GSIs may be reduced as Berkeley adopts a five-year funding plan for PhD students.

Due to a lack of qualified GSIs within their departments and in other departments, Computer Science, Math, and Physics hire undergraduate student instructors (UGSIs). UGSIs typically have a smaller workload than GSIs but departments still pay fee remission, so hiring undergraduates is typically more costly.

Timeline

Most departments reported that estimated course enrollments for future terms are useful, but note that it must be tied to funding to mount the sections projected.

Departments shared their timelines for hiring GSIs for large lower-division courses, including the latest date at which they could successfully secure qualified GSIs. Department staff stress the importance of advanced planning to secure qualified GSIs and ensure that those GSIs will be paid in a timely manner.

For Fall terms

- Desired latest hiring for most departments is May of the previous Spring term
- Begin hiring in March or April
- The latest they hired for Fall 2021 was in the summer, with three departments reporting that they hired GSIs in August.

For Spring terms

- Desired latest hiring is October or November of the previous Fall term
- Biology hires in April for the following Fall and Spring terms

Students needing accommodations

All Common Good Curriculum department staff have mentioned the increase in students requesting Disabled Students Program (DSP) accommodations. There is a need for additional proctors and appropriate space for accommodations during exams.

Appendix G - Student Survey on the First-Year Experience

Student Survey on the First-Year Experience

October 2021

Overview

As part of the Task Force on the Undergraduate Academic Experience, the Interim Vice Provost for Undergraduate convened a town hall for first-year students on October 20, 2021. A qualitative survey was prepared for student participants to respond to during the town hall. After the town hall, the survey was modified to capture additional student responses. An invitation to participate in the survey was circulated with students in Freshman Seminars, Summer Bridge alumni, and students currently in Berkeley Connect. Students were asked to complete the survey by October 29. Those who completed the survey were given the opportunity to enter a drawing for \$40 Amazon gift cards.

17 students responded to the survey. Out of those 17 students, sixteen identified themselves as belonging to the College of Letters & Science, with the breakdown by major as follows:

- Data Science (5)
- Double or triple major (3)
 - Astrophysics, Nuclear Engineering, & Psych Forensics (likely Psychology)
 - English & Linguistics
 - Political Science and Business Administration
- Molecular Cell Biology (2)
- Business Administration (1)
- Rhetoric (1)
- Social Welfare (1)
- Statistics (1)
- Interpretive Human Biology (likely Integrative Biology with an emphasis in Human Biology) (1)
- Undecided (1)

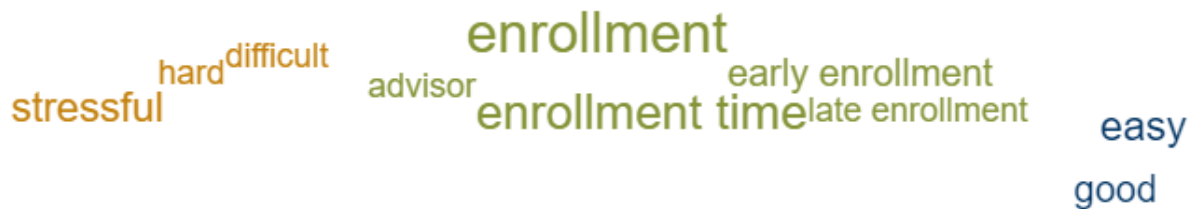
Survey Questions and Responses

Students were asked a total of seven questions. Questions ranged from students' experience with enrollment, choosing courses, and waitlists, to soliciting suggestions for future first-year students, instructors, and advisors. The following are the survey questions, word clouds summarizing the themes of the student responses, a narrative summary of responses, and the raw student responses to each question. The word clouds are color-categorized by themes that emerged from the responses, and the word size corresponds to the frequency of that word across all responses.

Question #1: Tell us about your experience choosing and enrolling in classes for your first semester.

Three themes emerged from the responses:

- **The experience was not smooth**
- **The experience was smooth**
- **There were factors that impacted the enrollment experience**



Students expressed two major reactions to this question: students either felt enrollment was very stressful and confusing, or that it was relatively straightforward. Out of the seventeen responses to this question, eight students noted that the process was confusing and stressful, with many students attributing this to a late enrollment time that disrupted their original schedule plans. On the other hand, students who had positive enrollment experiences attributed their success to having an earlier enrollment time, help from advisors, and Golden Bear Advising.

Question #2: What information did you wish you had when choosing and enrolling in classes?

Three themes emerged from the responses:

- **Information about enrollment process**
- **Course information**
- **Additional resources**



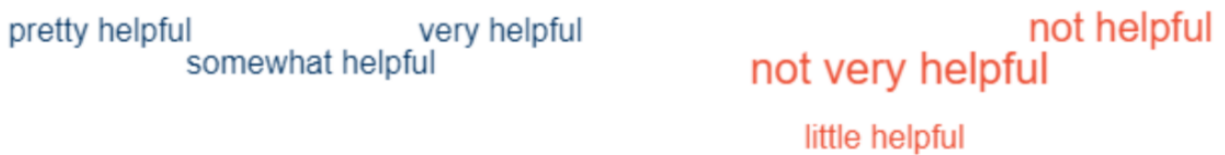
This survey question resulted in a range of responses. Many students wish they had known more about the enrollment process, specifically the likelihood of courses filling up and the chances of getting off of the waitlist. Other students wished for additional details such as an explanation of Berkeley time (classes beginning 10 minutes after the scheduled start), time/distance between classrooms, and the schedule finals for the courses they were considering. Students also desired information about course workload, the instructors, and sample schedules.

Question #3: Who provided the most useful guidance in the selection of your courses for your first semester? How helpful was Golden Bear Advising in selection of your courses?



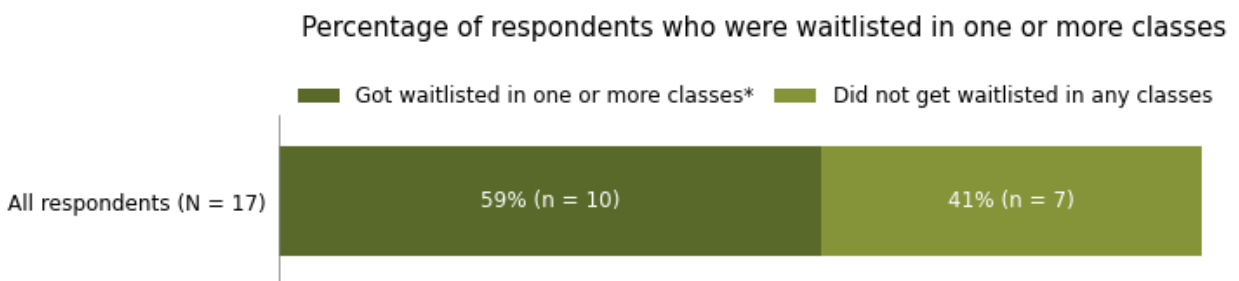
Two themes emerged regarding the helpfulness of Golden Bear Advising:

- **GBA was not helpful, in varying degrees**
- **GBA was helpful, in varying degrees**



The majority of respondents perceived Golden Bear Advising as being not very helpful or only somewhat helpful. Some students mentioned receiving help from their L&S advisor, while a few had trouble getting help or responses from their advisors. Some students mentioned friends and upperclassmen were helpful in selecting courses for their first semester.

Question #4: Did you get waitlisted for courses? If so, what number were you on the waitlist initially? Did you eventually get into those courses?



*Of the 10 respondents who were waitlisted in one or more classes, seven of them eventually got into all of the classes they were waitlisted for.

Ten out of the 16 students answering this question were waitlisted for at least one class. Many students successfully got into their desired course eventually, but a handful of students either never got into their desired course or decided to drop the course. As expected, students who were higher on the waitlist typically got into their desired course.

Question #5: What recommendations would you have for first-year students who are about to pick classes?

pick interesting classes seminar
 back-up classes balance major and breadth
 fun classes
 easier first semester

The biggest takeaway or note of advice from students was to make back up plans, so if you cannot get into your desired classes, you have other options available. The second trending point was to ensure the classes taken count towards a degree requirement, whether it be major, minor, or breadth requirements (and don't double up on credit). The final takeaway was to take courses that are going to be enjoyable, whether it be a small seminar or a class in another discipline.

Question #6: What recommendations do you have for instructors to make the transition to Berkeley easier?

provide examples understand
 high school transition
 make easier less reading

Students voiced that educators should consider that students are making a large transition from high school to college and will take time to get used to the rigor and workload of several classes. Faculty can thus better serve students by clearly outlining assignments and lessons or making themselves accessible through Office Hours.

Question #7 What recommendations do you have for student advisors to make the transition to Berkeley easier?

Two themes emerged from the responses:

- **Advisor availability**
- **Resources from advisors**

more help more advisors
 online advisor access
 extracurricular info sample schedule
 common scheduling mistakes
 academic info

Many of the students desire more readily available access to advising, as meeting an advisor can be extremely useful. Additionally, students wanted more resources available to them such as instructions on how to meet, information on transfer credit, sample major schedules, and extracurricular opportunities.

Raw Responses to Survey Questions

Question #1: Tell us about your experience choosing and enrolling in classes for your first semester.

- Very stressful. Many of the classes I wanted were already full when it was my turn to sign up.
- The process was very chaotic.
- I spent hours and hours looking for classes, reading reviews, looking at past syllabi, etc! It was super stressful and I felt like it was up to me to choose the classes I would enjoy and benefit from.
- I had late enrollment times both semesters, so I couldn't get some of the classes I wanted.
- choosing classes was very difficult because we weren't allowed to meet with any counselors
- This experience was stressful. I was forced to use backup classes and even backup to the backup classes because 3 of the 4 classes I wanted were filled by the time my enrollment slot came up in the afternoon.
- It was interesting to find new courses.
- Good! I met with my advisor who showed me the recommended track for my major.
- I chose classes based on my intended major and classes that fulfilled breadths/college requirements. My experience was pretty easy since I had an early enrollment time.
- It was tough, as I had pretty bad enrollment times.
- I had an early enrollment time so it was easy.
- I had an early enrollment time and therefore was able to easily get all the classes I wanted.
- I had good experiences choosing and enrolling in classes my first semester. I was able to enroll quickly because I had my classes in the shopping cart, and I found the academic course guide easy to look through.
- Pretty difficult; I wasn't able to get the classes I wanted so I was stuck on waitlists and had to change my classes. For Spring 2022 enrollment, I don't know anyone with a later enrollment time so it's a bit stressful.
- frustrating and irritating. It's so hard getting the classes you want/need and so many classes that are interesting are completely unavailable and hard to enroll
- Golden Bear Advising process made the process of choosing and enrolling in classes very easy. The advisors were helpful too
- Very surreal; not guided at all, I understand that there is a lot of freedom given to new students, however, the freedom given is not so much of a good transition to us new freshman choosing classes.

Question #2: What information did you wish you had when choosing and enrolling in classes?

- What proportion of waitlisted students have gotten in specific classes from previous years.
- I wish someone had told me that I had so much time left. I didn't need to fulfill every requirement my first semester, and it's okay if you don't have the perfect schedule. Professors and material are so important, so look for classes that will make you excited to attend them.
- I wish I had more access to my adviser to talk over my schedule.
- Which classes were recommended for my intended major for freshman
- I wish I knew that the courses would fill up very soon so that I could have thought about my alternative choice.
- I wish u had known the finals schedule for my classes, as well as the instructors teaching them before enrolling
- I wish I knew that units don't exactly correlate to workload. One of my classes is only 3 units but it is an immense amount of work through readings. I wish I also knew how inflexible it is to find a major here. It feels as though in order to graduate in 4 years you need to know your major going into it and commit to it. Between breadths, college requirements and major requirements you would need to average so many units a semester in order to even explore.
- I wish I knew that classes would expand so that I would not have to stress about completing pre-requisites.
- I wish I knew more about the coursework in the class
- I wish I knew how far each classroom was.
- When I signed up for fall classes, I wasn't aware of "Berkeley time" so that caused a few inconveniences with scheduling. I also wish I had known how many units we should take when new to the school.
- Freshmen enrolled last and people with Regents and/or Chancellor's Scholarships had priority enrollment.
- How you won't get any of the classes you want.
- An actual schedule (or typical schedule) from past first year students by intended major
- Upper division versus lower division; Personal Information About Professors!!!

Question #3: Who provided the most useful guidance in the selection of your courses for your first semester? How helpful was Golden Bear Advising in selection of your courses?

- Berkeley time was helpful in selecting courses. Golden bear advising did not provide much aid.
- Honestly, not very helpful. I mostly used online resources and the major map/ requirements to guide me!
- Golden Bear Advising was not very helpful. I mostly relied on berkeleytime.com and friends.
- My friend who was a sophomore helped me pick my classes. Golden Bear Advising was not helpful.

- Golden Bear Advising was somewhat helpful in learning how to select courses, but it was nevertheless insufficient.
- Golden Bear Advising was very helpful and it gave me a deep insight on how to select the right courses for me.
- GBA was pretty helpful to get a feel for it. I think talking to my advisor is the most helpful.
- Honestly, major websites and myself provided the most useful guidance. GBA was really not useful at all because it did not prepare me to create many alternate schedules and when I asked my counselor for help when trying to choose what to do about AP credit and scores, she said to just guess which really wasn't helpful - especially because I guessed wrong.
- Upperclassmen; GBA was only a little helpful.
- It was not too helpful as the advisor would not respond
- Golden Bear Advising and other students helped me the most. Golden Bear Advising mainly helped in understanding how to use Enrollment Center and Schedule Planner.
- My L&S adviser was the most helpful when I submitted the course/major form, which also helped me organize what graduation requirements I have to complete.
- Golden Bear Advising wasn't very helpful in my opinion. Just researching online and looking at Berkeleytime was the most useful guidance in the selection of my courses.
- none. my advisor passes me on to other advisors and doesn't answer questions I have. they tell me I am capable of doing my own research and obtaining answers to my questions.
- Golden bear advising advisor and major advisor I talked to
- Not sure, & not very helpful.

Question #4: Did you get waitlisted for courses? If so, what number were you on the waitlist initially? Did you eventually get into those courses?

- No
- No I did not eventually get into my waitlisted courses
- I was last on a waitlist of 5 people in a class with 25 seats. I got in
- I was waitlisted for most of my classes. I eventually got into Polecon 24 after asking the professor to take me off the waitlist. I was 81st on the waitlist for ugba 10, and ultimately never got in.
- I got waitlisted for all of my courses but got into all of them at the end. I was 406 for Data 8. 1st in English R1A, 11th in Math 1B, and 27th in CS61A
- Yes, and I was in number 3 or 4 on the waitlist. Later I was also accepted in them.
- Ya I got waitlisted for 2 courses. One in 7th place and the other in 56. I got into both.
- No, I was not waitlisted for any courses because I was lucky and had a very early enrollment time.
- Yes, waitlist 3/54. I eventually got in.
- Yes and no i did not
- I did not get waitlisted for courses.
- I didn't get waitlisted for any courses. I got into my chosen classes this fall and spring of my freshman year.

- I got waitlisted for courses and initially, I was like around 200 for CS61A and I got in because this course always expands. I was also waitlisted pretty early for Nut 10 and I got in. I was waitlisted for ESPM 50AC but I decided to drop that waitlist.
- I was on a waitlist for this semester. I was 3 and ended up getting into the course. This isn't a common experience though.
- no
- Did not get waitlisted.

Question #5: What recommendations would you have for first-year students who are about to pick classes?

- Have at least 5 or 6 back up classes
- 1) Pray 2) more practically, make the most out of your GBA and your one guaranteed appointment with an advisor
- Pick some seminars!! Choose a couple 3-4 credit courses that will get you interested in majors, and then do some seminars to have fun with super interesting ideas and professors.
- To use berkeleytime.com
- Make sure you know what classes you are opted out of with AP exams and test scores so you don't take a class that is unnecessary.
- Make sure that you plan everything out on paper. Have backup plans and backup to the backup plans.
- My recommendation is that be ready to think about alternate choices because these courses fill up very fast.
- Have many backups. Add courses to shopping cart with discussions to make sure they fit the schedule. This was a big issue for me.
- Try take your major classes and a breadth/college requirement class. If you don't have a major, do all breadths in majors that seem interesting.
- Make numerous backups
- To balance pre reqs and breadths in order to not overwhelm yourself the first semester
- Look at the times you have classes; if you're not a morning person, maybe don't take an 8 a.m. class! And if you have back-to-back classes, check out a campus map and see if you can make the walk in 10 minutes or less.
- I recommend to have multiple back up schedules since you're most likely not going to get half the classes you want.
- Don't expect to get the classes you want. The best chance is to be ready to sign up for your classes at exactly your allotted time
- Pick classes of your interest and overall lighter load since it's the first semester at Cal
- Look through the course information and research to get good professors; choose fun classes, makes college life much more enjoyable.

Question #6: What recommendations do you have for instructors to make the transition to Berkeley easier?

- Focus on teaching more than hazing, for the sake of the mental health of your students. Please realize that, while you have been immersed in what you're instructing since before we were even born, in some cases, we are just beginning our understanding of it. The methods you think are working perfectly when you teach are most certainly not, if the class average on an exam is 46%.
- I think I and others often find instructions unclear, especially because we've never done college assignments so we don't know what a typical analysis, for example, looks like. Examples of the assignment are always incredibly useful. I also think that readings in intro classes are often too expansive and would be much more useful if they were more selective! It's discouraging to get 100 pages of reading, but I'm sure that most students would read if it was 1/4 of that length. Sometimes material is really interesting but the amount of reading is inefficient.
- Reach out to students by email detailing how we can meet and talk
- N/A. My transition to Berkeley was great academically. I was very well prepared and the instructors gave very good amount of time to get adjusted to class work in college.
- Social science classes should assign less reading.
- My recommendation to instructors are to understand that everyone has gone through different experiences and are unique and acknowledge that. This may help the newcomers feel more welcome and have a sense of belonging.
- Have intro classes formatted similar to high school (homework for points, lectures, provide study practice sets)
- Understand that students cannot handle an immense workload their first semester and that college teaching is far less personal than high school.
- Grade easier
- I think instructors should update grades and allow for students to communicate more in class.
- I'd like instructors to be clearer about expectations in college vs. high school and how they plan to grade our assignments (ex: providing us with example essays, etc.)
- Opening up the class sizes more and to make adjusting into the class easier for those on the waitlist.
- The teachers are great. The advisors don't know how to support students - especially freshman.
- n/a
- Be lenient first semester please. Most of us freshman still have Junior year of high school mindsets. And please be organized & empathetic. Provide more information on your course descriptions; it makes it a lot easier for student enrollment and getting better, not-confused, more involved students.

Question #7 What recommendations do you have for student advisors to make the transition to Berkeley easier?

- Please pressure your department into hiring more advisors
- Recommendations for getting involved outside of class, or maybe better ways to get help with homework! I've found that sometimes office hours isn't enough and I have no idea what I would do if I couldn't get enough help in office hours.
- Reach out to students by email detailing how we can meet and talk
- Help the freshman pick the classes they should take. Give them an outlines suggestion for each major and let them adjust it from there.
- My recommendation to student advisors is to do the best they can to make the freshmen feel included and to acknowledge their races, background, ethnicity, etc.
- Make it known that most classes have discussions because I did not realize this.
- Understand students' confusion over AP/IB credit and scores as well as actually helping students try to create schedules that will work.
- Please help the students more
- To offer a website where someone can ask simple questions and the advisors reply
- I would've liked to know some common scheduling/Berkeley "mistakes" that first year students make and how we can avoid them.
- More advocacy on the stress of course enrollment
- Actually help your students and don't pass them off to other people or just say "I don't know." Some of us are paying close to 80k a year and should receive the support we're told we'll receive.
- n/a
- Be more active in general please.