This New Student Survey report profiles the Fall 2018 incoming class of UCSB freshmen entry students, the factors influencing their decision to attend UCSB, financial and mental health concerns, expectations for academic engagement, knowledge and skills they bring to UCSB, and political views.

Background and Methods
The New Student survey was administered in Summer and Fall 2018 in an effort to derive an increasingly clearer picture of the profile of undergraduate students entering UCSB, as well as the factors that influenced their decision to attend. An open link to the survey was generated and given to students as part of their Orientation checklist. In addition, students were mailed at the beginning of the school year with an invitation to participate. A total of 765 freshmen completed the survey out of an incoming freshman entry cohort of 5094 undergraduates, giving us a response rate of 15%.

Demographics of Survey Respondents vs. Population
- Women responded to the survey at a higher rate than men – while 43% of the population of incoming freshmen was male, men make up only 35% of the survey respondents.
- Caucasian students are also somewhat overrepresented in the survey sample – 37% compared to 27% of the population of entering students, while underrepresented minorities responded at a lower rate, 28% of the sample compared 31% of the population.

Other Demographics
Among all survey respondents, 46% said they attended a high school that was either completely or mostly non-white, while 26% attended a high school that was either completely or mostly white. In addition, almost a third (31%) of students said that English was not their native language. About 81% of freshmen identified as heterosexual, 4% as gay or lesbian, 10% bisexual, and 5% as some other sexual orientation; in addition, 1% reported being transgendered. Almost half (42%) are first generation college students.

Applying to College
- The majority (83%) of freshmen entering in Fall 2018 reported that they applied to more than 6 additional colleges besides UCSB; 26% applied to 11 or more.
- The approximate average number of colleges that incoming freshmen applied to beyond UCSB was 8.

Reasons for Attending UCSB
- Overwhelmingly, new freshmen said that the academic reputation was a very important or important reason they attended UCSB (93%).
- Other reasons that were endorsed as important by a majority of freshmen in their decision to attend UCSB were the employment prospects of UCSB graduates (78%), its good reputation for social and extracurricular activities (73%), the high admission rate of UCSB graduates to graduate and professional schools (71%), their visit to the campus (67%), UCSB graduates making a difference in the world (65%), and rankings in national magazines (60%).
Logistic regression was utilized to determine what reasons predicted whether a student claimed UCSB was their first choice college or not. Results showed that rankings in national magazines, UCSB’s graduates making a difference in the world, the graduation rate, and social reputation all were positively associated with UCSB being the student’s first choice. In addition, not being able to afford their first choice was significantly related to a student claiming UCSB was their second or lower choice.

Financial Considerations
- The majority of incoming freshmen have concerns about financing their college education: 56% said that they had some concern but thought they would probably be okay, and 20% said that had major concerns and were not sure they would have enough funds.
- Overall, 24% of students said they had to work 6 or more hours a week the previous year and 57% said there was a very good chance they would need to get a job to help pay for college expenses.
- Those who claimed that they would have major concerns financing college were significantly more likely to say that they would need to work a full-time job during school (51% versus 31% of those with some concerns and 17% of those with no concerns).
- Further examination revealed that financial worry was particularly acute for first generation college students. They were significantly more likely to say that financing their college education would be a major concern (36%) than students whose parents had went to college (8%), and there was a massive statistically significant median difference in parent income as well ($35,000 for first generation college students, $125,000 for students whose parents went to college).

High School Experiences
- Incoming undergraduates prioritized spending time studying their last year of high school over any other activity. The vast majority of students said they spent at least 6 hours or more studying every week (68%).
- In comparison, other activities which students reported prioritizing 6 or more hours per week were significantly less prevalent: socializing with friends (50%), using social media (46%), exercise or sports (41%), participating in student clubs/groups (30%), watching TV (21%), playing video games (16%), household/childcare duties (13%), reading for pleasure (10%), and partying (3%).
- Further analyses revealed first generation college students were less likely to have spent 6 or more hours studying each week the last year of school (62% versus 72% for multiple generation college students) as well as more likely to spend more than 6 hours on household/childcare duties (21% versus 7%).
- Approximately 47% of freshmen entry students reported having at least a A+/A average in high school, with 88% having at least an “A-“ average.

Civic Engagement
Incoming freshmen report relatively high rates of civic engagement, particularly around volunteering. Over a third (43%) said they volunteered frequently during the past year, while 48% said they volunteered at least occasionally. In addition, over half (51%) said was a “very good chance” they would participate in volunteer or community service work at UCSB.
• Political engagement differed, perhaps unsurprisingly, according to the extent of personal investment. There were more students overall that claimed to have discussed politics in their last year of high school (39%), compared to voting in a student election (32%), publicly communicating about a cause (18%), helping raise money for a campaign (15%), or demonstrating for a cause (10%). However, with the exception of demonstrating for a cause, at least half of all incoming freshmen said they did each of these at least occasionally the past year.

• In addition, 60% of new students said there was a “very good chance” they would vote in a local, state, or national election while at UCSB, while 23% said the same of participating in student protests or demonstrations.

Mental Health
• While mental health indicators generally showed only a minority of incoming freshmen who frequently struggled with depression and feeling overwhelmed, further analysis revealed results differed significantly by ethnicity. In particular, under-represented minorities reported higher incidence of frequently dealing with mental health issues and feeling it was likely they would need counseling compared to other students.

• Other indirect behavioral measures of mental health also were only frequently reported by a minority of students: 3% said they “frequently” drank alcohol their last year of high school, 9% said they frequently came to class late, 3% said they frequently skipped school altogether, and 4% frequently failed to complete homework on time.

• Further analyses revealed white students were more likely to report having drunk alcohol frequently, while first generation college students were more likely to report being frequently depressed, as were female students. Female students also reported feeling more frequently overwhelmed by all they had to do.

Expectations for College
• Overall, most incoming freshmen describe being optimistic about their future experiences and success at UCSB.

Perceived Likelihood of Outcomes at UCSB

Mental Health Indicators by Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
<th>URM</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Full Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% “Frequently” Depressed</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% “Frequently” Overwhelmed</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% “Very good” chance of seeking counseling</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% “Very good” chance of seeking counseling</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of incoming freshmen believe that there is a very good chance that they will experience a variety of positive outcomes at UCSB; particularly being satisfied with the university, making at least a “B” average and participating in student clubs/groups. In addition, over a third of incoming freshmen think there is “very little” or “no chance” that they will change major fields (38%), and the vast majority (77%) said the same of the likelihood that they would transfer to another college before graduating.

Further analyses revealed a variety of subgroup differences. First generation college students were less likely to say there was at least some chance they would participate in a study abroad program (69%) versus multi-generational students (80%), but more likely to say there was a chance that they would need to work full-time (39% versus 26%) and participate in student protests or demonstrations (67% versus 57%).

In addition, men were more likely than women to say that there was a “very good chance” that they would work on a professor’s research project (46% versus 39%), while they were less likely to say there was a very good chance that they will get tutoring help (44% versus 63%).

With regard to ethnicity, white students were more confident that there was a very good chance that they would make at least a “B” average (74%) compared to URM (61%) and Asian (63%) students. URM students were also significantly less likely to say they had a very good chance of working with a professor on a research project (32%) compared to white (46%) and Asian (43%) freshmen.

Knowledge, Skills, and Traits

Incoming freshmen generally rated themselves at least “above average” on most skills and traits. This is a common phenomenon in social science research known as illusory superiority, wherein individuals overestimate their abilities in relation to other persons. However, there were several dimensions for which this effect was not found.

In particular, incoming freshmen seemed less sure about their emotional health, public speaking ability, social self-confidence, artistic ability, spirituality, and computer programming skills, all of which had more than half rate themselves as average or worse.

These results seem to suggest that incoming freshmen feel very academically prepared for college, but much less emotionally and psychologically prepared.

Further analyses revealed that underrepresented minorities were less likely to rate themselves at least above average on mathematical ability (53%) compared to white and Asian students (61%). White students also rated themselves at least above average on academic ability (89%) more often than URM (74%) and Asian (73%) students. This was true as well for public speaking ability (54% for whites, compared to 34% for URM and 30% for Asians), and intellectual self-confidence (70% for whites, compared to 50% for URM and 50% for Asians).
There were also significant differences between first and multiple generation college students, such that first generation college students were significantly less likely to rate themselves at least above average on academic ability (71% versus 83%), public speaking ability (32% versus 44%), intellectual self-confidence (53% versus 62%), and writing ability (44% versus 58%). However they rated themselves significantly higher on spirituality than multi-generational college students (40% versus 23% reporting at least above average).

Significant gender differences also existed, with men rating themselves at least above average with greater frequency than women on mathematical ability (71% versus 50%), academic ability (86% versus 73%), competitiveness (65% versus 52%), computer programming skills (25% versus 7%), emotional health (46% versus 35%), intellectual self-confidence (72% versus 51%), and social self-confidence (38% versus 30%).

Political Views
- The majority of incoming freshmen identify themselves on the liberal end of the political spectrum, with 49% identifying as liberal and 6% identifying as far Left. In contrast, 38% of incoming freshmen identify as moderate or “middle of the road”, 7% identify as conservative, and less than 1% as far right (not pictured below).

- Accordingly, most students also endorse a variety of politically liberal opinions and policies, across both economic and social issues.
- Further analyses revealed that some issues varied somewhat with regard to gender, with men being less likely to agree that colleges have the right to ban extreme speakers, prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus, offer public education to undocumented immigrants, or control the sale of guns. It should be noted, however, that the majority of men still supported these positions.
**Future Plans**

- The vast majority of respondents report that they intend to enroll in a major within the Division of Math, Life, and Physical Sciences, with Social Sciences coming as a distant second.

- At the disaggregated level, Biological Sciences (14%), Psychology (8%), Economics (7%), Communication (7%), Economics and Accounting (6%), Physics (6%), Communication (6%), and Mathematics (5%) were most commonly cited as the student’s intended major.

- Likely reflected in the large number of Biological Sciences and MLPS majors generally, 22% of all incoming freshmen consider themselves pre-med, while half said they were planning to pursue a STEM career. A much smaller proportion (8%) consider themselves pre-law.

- The vast majority of incoming freshmen ultimately intend to pursue post-graduate education, with approximately 81% reporting that they intend to receive at least a Master’s degree.

- While almost a fifth of students were undecided about their career (20%), the vast majority of incoming freshmen had some idea of what they would like to pursue after graduation. The most commonly cited careers incoming freshman chose were medical doctor or surgeon (12%), research scientist (10%), engineer (6%),

- lawyer or judge (4%), computer programmer or developer (4%), entrepreneur or business owner (3%), a career in the financial sector (3%).

### Intended Majors by Division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>% in Division (multiple responses allowed)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math, Life, and Physical Sciences</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities and Fine Arts</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Studies</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>&lt; 1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Highest intended degree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Type</th>
<th>% of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree (M.A., M.S., etc.)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D. or Ed.D.</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree (B.A., B.S., etc.)</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.D., D.O., D.D.S., D.V.M.</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.D. (Law)</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate (A.A. or equivalent)</td>
<td>&lt; 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational certificate</td>
<td>&lt; 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.D. or M.DIV. (Divinity)</td>
<td>&lt; 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Conclusions

- Overall, new students report coming to UCSB overwhelmingly for its academic reputation and the career and graduate school prospects as a result of attending. Most incoming freshmen also are optimistic about their future experiences at UCSB, and feel well-prepared to attend.

- However, a significant number of incoming freshmen expressed worry about the financial costs of attending UCSB, and this effect was particularly acute among first-generation college students.

- Major worry about the ability to finance a college education was also associated with lower high school GPA and higher negative mental health outcomes over the last year in high school.

- Students in general also rated their academic abilities much higher than factors related to emotional well-being and confidence.
Therefore, while incoming freshmen in general are well-prepared in a conventional sense for attending UCSB and are of an incredibly high caliber, further attention and resources towards student mental health, particularly those who are economically vulnerable, is recommended.
Appendix

Historical Trend Charts

Fall 2018 (UCSB First-Year Student Survey) and Fall 1972-Fall 2015 (CIRP Freshmen Survey)

Racial Composition of the High School Last Attended

"Very Important" Reasons for Choosing THIS College
How would you characterize your political views?

100%

75%

50%

25%

0%


- Far Left
- Liberal
- Middle of the Road
- Conservative
- Far Right

What is the highest degree you intend to receive?

100%

75%

50%

25%

0%


- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Ph.D. or Ed.D.
- M.D., D.O., D.D.S., D.V.M.
- LL.B. or J.D. (Law)