

UC Undergraduate Advising Needs: A Comparison between Transfer and Freshman Entrants

The 2024 University of California Undergraduate Student Experience Survey (UCUES) introduced new questions to better understand the advising needs of UC undergraduate students. The survey asked students whether they had sought advice on various academic and personal topics throughout the academic year. The results offer valuable insights into the areas where students most require support and guidance. Additionally, the survey included questions to evaluate students' satisfaction with the advisors they interacted with. This topic brief compares responses to these questions among transfer and lower-division and upper-division freshman entrants to better understand transfer students' advising needs.

Topics students sought advice on

Undergraduate students at the University of California (UC) were asked if they had sought advice on any academic or personal topics from an advisor, faculty member, or student success staff/coach during the current academic year. Over 80 percent of students reported seeking advice on at least one topic, with transfer students (88 percent) being more likely to seek advice than freshman entrants regardless of their division status (81 percent among lower division freshman and 82 percent among upper division freshman).

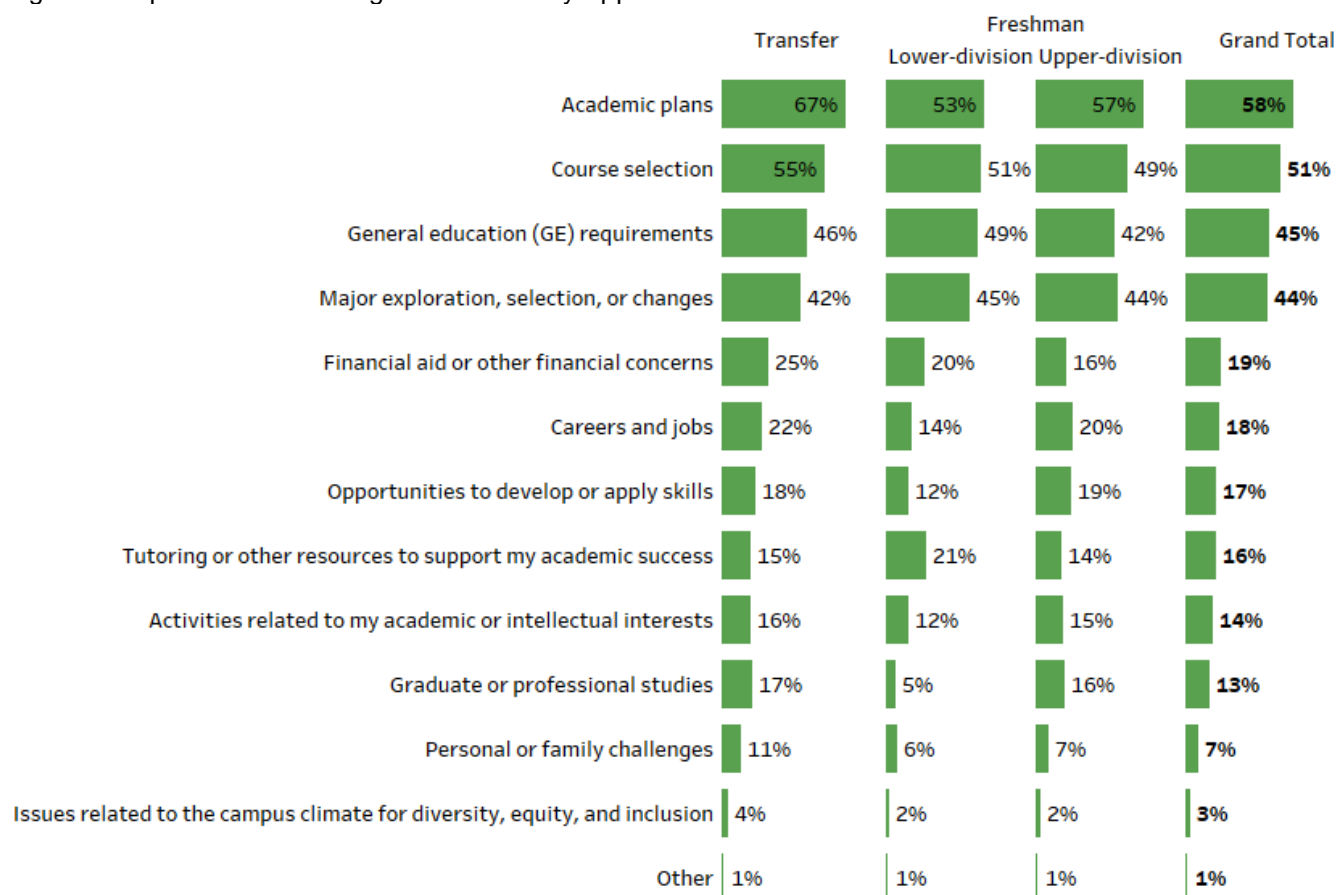
Figure 1 indicates that most students reported they had sought guidance on academic plans (58 percent) and course selection (51 percent). Additionally, over 40 percent of students sought advice on general education (GE) requirements (45 percent) and exploring, selecting, or changing their major (44 percent). Fewer students sought advice on topics related to financial aid or financial concerns (19 percent), careers and jobs (18 percent), and opportunities to develop or apply skills (17 percent) (see Figure 1). These patterns were consistent across campuses and sub-populations by demographic and academic background. The UCUES advising dashboard¹ provides more detailed information by demographics.

KEY FACTS

- About 88 percent of transfer students indicated ever seeking advice on a topic, compared to 82 percent of freshman students.
- About 50-60 percent of students reported they have ever sought advice on academic plans and course selection, with transfer students at higher rates than freshman students.
- About 83 percent of students reported to have sought advice on at least one topic, among which about 68 percent sought advice on three or more topics. The distribution varies slightly by demographics. A higher proportion of transfer students sought advice on 5 or more topics than freshman students.
- Overall, students are satisfied with the core functions of advising (about 90 percent), such as providing accurate and timely information and helping them understand academic policies.
- Transfer students and upper-division freshmen have very similar satisfaction rates across most categories, with minor differences (1-2 percentage points).

¹ UC Undergraduate Advising Dashboard on the UC Information Center, <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/about-us/information-center/ug-advising-ucues-results>.

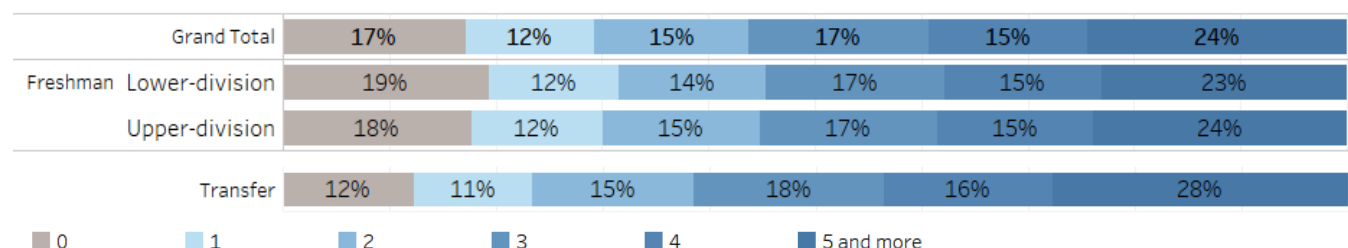
Figure 1 Topics students sought advice on by applicant and division status



The survey results reveal similar trends in the advising needs of both transfer and freshman students. Transfer students tend to focus more on academic planning and course selection than on other topics, likely due to the need to align their previous coursework with their new institution's requirements. Financial aid is also a significant concern for many transfer students, reflecting the financial challenges faced by them. Freshmen are similarly focused on academic planning and course selection. This suggests that freshmen are still in the process of defining their academic and career paths. Across all students, academic planning, course selection, and GE requirements remain the most common advising topics, underscoring the universal need for guidance in navigating academic requirements and planning for success.

Additionally, transfer students are slightly more likely to seek advice on five or more topics (28 percent) compared to upper-division freshmen (24 percent) and lower-division freshmen (23 percent) (Figure 2). This can indicate that transfer students may face more challenges in their academic experience and tried to seek multiple types of advice to overcome them.

Figure 2 Student response by number of topics students sought advice on



Satisfaction with advisor(s)

Students who sought advice rated their satisfaction with their advisor(s) across several key aspects, which helped assess the effectiveness of advising services, highlighted areas for improvement, and measured how well advisors are supporting students in achieving their academic, career, and personal goals.

Figure 3 displays student satisfaction levels across these perspectives. Overall, students report satisfaction with the core functions of advising, such as providing accurate and timely information and helping them understand academic policies. Approximately 90 percent of students indicated they at least somewhat agreed that their advisor(s) provided accurate, clear, and consistent information, responded in a timely manner, and helped them understand UC major-specific policies. This suggests that advisors are effectively meeting students' basic advising needs. While advisors are also doing well in supporting students' academic and career goals, satisfaction with career-related support is slightly lower than satisfaction with academic support.

Most students are satisfied with advisor support for better understanding people from other cultures (78 percent), though there is still room for improvement in this area. While most students also report satisfaction with the support they receive in overcoming challenges (78 percent) and building communication skills (77 percent), these areas show slightly lower satisfaction rates compared to other advising functions.

Transfer students and upper-division freshmen show very similar satisfaction levels across most categories, with only minor differences (1-2 percentage points). However, transfer students are slightly more satisfied with advisors helping them understand other cultures and backgrounds (80 percent vs. 76 percent) and helping them develop strategies for overcoming challenges and barriers (78 percent vs. 75 percent). Lower-division freshmen show slightly higher satisfaction levels across all categories than transfer students by 1 to 4 percentage points.

Figure 3 Satisfaction with advising advice (percent of those at least somewhat satisfied)

	Transfer	Freshman		Grand Total
		Lower-division	Upper-division	
Provided accurate information.	89%	93%	90%	91%
Helped me understand UC major-specific policies (e.g., academic milestones and degree requirements).	90%	92%	89%	90%
Responded in a timely manner (within five business days).	90%	91%	89%	90%
Provided clear information.	89%	91%	88%	89%
Provided consistent information.	88%	91%	88%	89%
Helped me develop strategies for achieving my academic goals.	83%	87%	82%	84%
Offered sufficient in-person meeting times.	84%	87%	82%	83%
Helped me find opportunities to explore my academic goals.	82%	87%	81%	83%
Helped me find opportunities to explore my career goals.	79%	84%	77%	79%
Helped me better understand people from other cultures and backgrounds.	80%	81%	76%	78%
Helped me develop strategies for overcoming challenges and barriers.	78%	82%	75%	78%
Helped me build communication skills.	77%	81%	75%	77%

In summary, the survey results revealed that transfer students are more likely to seek advice, especially on academic planning and financial aid, compared to freshmen. Transfer and freshman students had very similar satisfaction levels, with minor differences, such as transfer students being slightly more satisfied with advisors' assistance in developing cultural understanding and in-person meeting availability. The findings indicate that we are likely serving transfer students equitably in terms of advising support. However, for both transfer and freshman students, there is room for continued improvement in certain areas, such as career-related support.