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Appendix B: Student Success Essay

UC Merced Retention and Graduation Rates:

Almost Four Years after Opening

April 2009

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"Successful retention is no more than, but certainly no less than, successful education."
(Tinto (1990), "The Principles of Effective Retention." *The Journal of the Freshman Year Experience, 2 (1):* 37)

Background

The characteristics of the student population at any campus result from its recruitment and admit processes and student application and campus choice processes. It is just as important for the *campus* to determine which students would be more likely to persist and succeed through graduation as it is for each *student* to determine the best fit for his or her college experience.[1] Why do students choose UC Merced; which students are most likely to succeed?

This report analyzes what we know about the students we have attracted to UC Merced during its first four years and how successful we have been in retaining them so far. From a student perspective, getting a degree, even if it is not from the first college in which they have matriculated, is evidence of success. Therefore, we also will examine what we know about students who left UC Merced before receiving a degree but enrolled elsewhere.

Most of the emphasis will be on undergraduates although, with a research mission and a mission to encourage undergraduates to pursue graduate careers, we also will examine the first few years of retention for our master's and doctoral students. In order to know how well we are doing, as a campus, in terms of such metrics as retention and graduation rates, we need to benchmark our progress against similar institutions. In one sense, UC Merced has no peers, no rapidly-growing campuses with only three to four years of history and a research university mission with an enrollment under 3,000 students. We are, however, part of the larger University of California system of 10 campuses, of which eight others have similar research university missions to educate undergraduates as well as graduate students. These are the campuses to which we will most often compare ourselves. We also, however, realize that we cannot expect in the near term to reach the same levels of success as the other UC campuses in many areas. More importantly, we are setting (hopefully realistic) short-term and long-term goals for improving the retention (and ultimately graduation) rates for our students. And we need to allow ample time for interventions to have an impact.

There are some important contextual items to note about UC Merced in the first four years. Each year there were significant changes, from new buildings to course offerings to student activities. Classes were held in the Library in the first year because the first classroom building was not available until Fall 2006. Housing increased from 600 beds in Fall 2005 to over 1000 by Fall 2008. The Recreation and Wellness Center opened in Fall 2006 and organized club sports began shortly after. Student clubs and activities increased from 54 in the first year to

[1] Pascarella, E.T. & Terenzini, P.T. (2005). *How College Affects Students* (Vol. 2). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

over 100 and still counting as of Spring 2009. The International Programs Office was formed in Fall 2008. ***These and other evolving aspects of campus life have important implications both for recruiting students and retaining them.***

Who are our students?

UC Merced opened in Fall 2005 with 706 new freshmen, 132 new transfers, 5 new master's and 19 new doctoral students.[2] These students met the same eligibility requirements as students at all the other UC campuses; however the freshmen tended, on average, to reflect the lower eligibility ranges for college preparation indicators (SATs, HS GPAs, writing test scores, number of A-G courses, and High School API ranks). Most of the transfer students came from California community colleges, completed 60 to 80 transferable units with a GPA of at least 2.4. The average GPA for transfers was 3.4 in Fall 2005. The preparation of subsequent cohorts of freshmen and transfers in Fall 2006 through Fall 2008 has been fairly stable.

These undergraduate students, both freshman and transfer cohorts, are ethnically diverse (no ethnic majority); many are first generation college students (47-50%) and low income (38-40% receiving Pell Grants). They come from throughout the State of California: about 30% from the San Joaquin Valley, another 30% from the San Francisco Bay area, and almost 30% from Southern California. About 2% come from other states or countries. Unlike most campuses nationwide, UC Merced's undergraduates have a higher percentage of males than females (starting in Fall 2006). Almost all (over 99%) are full-time students. Over 80% of new freshmen and, depending on the year and availability of housing, 13-34% of new transfers live on campus, in student housing. The ratio of lower division to upper division undergraduates is gradually evening out, as the earlier freshman cohorts (the bulk of the new students each fall) are flowing through the curriculum and reaching junior and senior class standing. In the first two years, lower division students had very few upperclassmen to help guide them. The number of new undergraduate degree programs, starting at nine in 2005, more than doubled to 20 in 2008. During all four years the most popular major remained the same: Biological Sciences.

Why admitted students do not enroll?

Starting with the Fall 2006 cohort of new freshmen, UC Merced has gathered information each year, through an online survey, about the reasons admitted students chose not to enroll here. Almost all UC applicants submit their application online. In addition to the admissions letter and materials about UC Merced, students also receive their admit notification electronically and can file their "Statement of Intent to Register" (SIR) online as well. At UC Merced, when admitted students indicate their intent *not* to register, that is, when they reject the offer of admission to this campus and check off "SIR-No" on the web site, they are given a link to a short survey. Analyzing the data from this survey for the three cohorts (Fall 2006 – Fall 2008) reveals that the predominant reasons for not choosing UC Merced were different for the Fall 2006 cohort and the subsequent two cohorts. In Fall 2006, the top reasons were that the "student body is too small, "campus facilities were not impressive," and thirdly "my major

[2] Two master's and 7 doctoral students enrolled in fall 2004, having come with their mentors who were among the campus' founding faculty.

wasn't offered at UC Merced." For the Fall 2007 and 2008 cohorts, the top reasons were that "the location of the campus was not appealing," and "the campus was too far from home." The small size of the student body and the absence of their major became the third and fourth reasons, respectively, for these later cohorts. Most of the students who *rejected* UC Merced's offer of admission indicated that they intended to enroll at another UC campus. For the Fall 2006 cohort, this meant most likely UC Davis or UC Riverside, whereas for the Fall 2007 and 2008 cohorts, it typically meant UC Davis or UC Irvine.

Reasons for Choosing UC Merced

A survey conducted about mid-way through the first semester, starting with the very first class in Fall 2005, asked all new undergraduates to reflect on *why they had chosen to enroll* at UC Merced.[3] Response rates for new freshmen were 51% in 2005, 38% in 2006, and 32% in 2008. Only about a sixth to a quarter of the new freshmen indicated that UC Merced had been their first choice college when they applied. Declining percentages over these years (39% in Fall 2005, 35% in Fall 2006 and 34% in Fall 2008) said UC Merced had been less than their third choice. For those who responded that UC Merced was not their first choice, the largest percentage (in Fall 2008) indicated that their first-choice college was UC Davis (27%), then UC Berkeley (15%), UCLA (10%), UC Irvine (9%), and another 16% split among UC San Diego, UC Santa Barbara, UC Santa Cruz, and UC Riverside. Clearly, the other UC campuses are formidable competitors for UC Merced.

As noted earlier, the campus has changed substantially each year for the first four years, and still the campus is changing and evolving much more rapidly than other campuses. This makes year-to-year comparisons very difficult to interpret and leads us to be very cautious in making projections or predictions. Only in the first year could the freshman cohort be the "first class" at UC Merced. This "first class" status was very important to them. In fact, 87% indicated that it was an important reason for their choosing to enroll here (53% said 'very important;' 34% said 'somewhat important'). The newness of the campus attracted many of the freshmen in Fall 2006 (79%) and 2008 (86%), as well. Also across all three years, the reputation of the campus and the UC system was a very or somewhat important reason for choosing UC Merced (83% in Fall 2005, 81% in Fall 2006, and 87% in Fall 2008).

The campus size as well as the potential for close interaction with faculty and the personal attention from faculty and staff were major reasons for the Fall 2006 and 2008 freshmen to choose UC Merced (these response items were not included in the Fall 2005 questionnaire). Almost 90% (89% in Fall 2008) said that the small size of the campus attracted them here). Over 90% indicated that the opportunity to work closely with faculty was a very or somewhat important reason for attending. From Fall 2006 and 2008, the quality of their intended major increasingly played an important role in their choosing to attend UC Merced (from 64% in Fall 2005 to 82% in Fall 2008 indicating it as at least somewhat important). Over three-quarters of the Fall 2006 and 2008 freshman respondents also said that the opportunity to be involved in research projects was an important college choice factor.[4]

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[3] Because of problems with a new online survey application in Fall 2007, this cohort's data are not included in these analyses. Only data for the Fall 2005, 2006, and 2008 freshman cohorts are reported.

[4] This item was not included on the Fall 2005 survey.

Of the top reasons undergraduates give for choosing UC Merced, two eventually will drop off the list (newness and small size of the campus) unless we find creative ways to maintain aspects of these features when enrollments reach over 10,000 and the physical campus ages. As the University grows, we also will need to find ways to maintain our culture of personal attention from faculty and staff that attracts this niche of prospective students. Establishing new schools, such as Management or Medicine colleges and Honors Programs, and living/learning communities in the Residence Halls that encourage students to identify with smaller groups of peers and faculty are some of the ways the campus can continue to attract students looking for frequent faculty-student interactions.

[Table 1]

Freshman Retention

Nationally, first-year freshman retention rates for four-year public colleges average about 77%.[5] It varies by state, with Oklahoma being the lowest (63%) and Virginia the highest (86%). California's average is 84%. UC Merced's rate for the Fall 2007 cohort was 79%. The two earlier cohorts had slightly higher rates (80% for 2006 and 82% for 2005). The average for all public high and very-high research universities (Carnegie Classification)[6] was 82%. This group includes all the other UC campuses, where the range was from 85% (UC-Riverside) to 97% (both UCLA and UC Berkeley). The average for the eight UCs was 92%. So, although UC Merced's first-year retention rates compare favorably with all four-year public colleges, and meet the average for all high-to-very-high public research universities, the sister UC campuses establish a much higher benchmark. Obviously, this first-year retention rate sets the stage for subsequent retention and graduation rates and therefore it is very important for us to understand why students leave or stay, whether there are patterns associated with certain student characteristics, and to identify institutional characteristics that contribute to attrition or persistence.

[Table 2]

Voluntary vs Involuntary Attrition

Of the 706 first-time freshmen in Fall 2005, 76% were in good standing after their first semester, 22% were on academic probation, and 2% were dismissed. The most recent comparative data for other UC campuses (Fall 2004) reveals a wide range (almost 14 percentage points difference) in freshman first-term rates for academic difficulty. On average, about 9% of the UC freshmen complete their first term with GPAs below 2.0.

Ninety-seven percent of Fall 2007 UC Merced freshmen in good academic standing and the majority on academic probation (92%) returned for the spring semester. Most of the 17

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[5] NCHEMS Information Center; Retention: First-Time College Freshmen Returning Their Second Year; Four-Year Public Colleges; Fall 2007 cohort.
http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/?level=nation&mode=data&state=0&submeasure=224

[6] 2009 U.S. News "America's Best Colleges," reflecting Fall 2007 data.

students who left in good standing enrolled elsewhere (7 at a 2-year, 2 at a CSU, 1 at a UC) and 7 either did not transfer or their transfer information was unknown.[7] Of those who left having been placed on probation or dismissed, most did not enroll elsewhere (or their enrollment status was unknown). Over a third of them, however, enrolled in a 2-year college (11) and one enrolled in a CSU. The Fall 2006 freshman cohort was much smaller, but the good academic standing rate was very similar (75%). This cohort had about twice the dismissal rate (5.5%) as the Fall 2007 and 2008 cohorts after the first semester, and a large percentage of those subsequently enrolled in a 2-year college.

[Tables 3A & 3B]

Concerned about the probation and dismissal rates for these early cohorts, the campus increased efforts to identify at-risk students sooner and to provide more support. Success Workshops for struggling students identified through mid-semester grades reporting were implemented in Fall 2005. The first Summer Bridge program was offered in Summer 2007 and, once there was a critical mass of upper division undergraduates, a Peer Mentoring Program was launched in Fall 2008. These and other retention efforts are described in greater detail later in this report.

In Spring 2008 a follow-up survey was conducted of students who had left UC Merced voluntarily (had not been dismissed) during the previous three years before graduating. Traditionally, it is very difficult to obtain responses from this category of former students. There is the problem of having good contact information for them as well as the lack of incentive for these students to respond. The students' email addresses (typically hotmail or gmail) from the latest UC Merced information were used to invite them to take this brief online survey. Only 18% of these 417 "drop-outs" responded. The respondents were statistically similar to the population in terms of gender, ethnicity, major, and entering level (freshman or transfer).

Over 95% of the respondents indicated that academic and campus life reasons were very important in their decision to leave. Personal and financial reasons were less likely to be very important to them (76% and 53%, respectively, said these categories were very important). The academic reasons most often reflected dissatisfaction with the variety of courses offered (50%), their preferred major not being offered (42%), or the fact that their career plans had changed (28%). Dissatisfaction with campus life was associated with the location of the campus (too rural or isolated - 43%), too little campus social life (32%), and not enough recreational facilities (30%). Many (if not all) of these reasons can be attributed to the newness of the campus.

Characteristics of Retained Students

In the first cohort, Fall 2005, the male freshman first-year retention was higher than the female rate (85% vs. 80%), but this did not hold up in subsequent years. For the Fall 2006 cohort, the retention rate for both males and females was 80%, and for the Fall 2007 cohort, the male rate was slightly lower than the female rate (78% vs. 80%).

[7] Status obtained from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC).

Pell recipients (low-income students) seem to be progressing at fairly similar rates compared to the cohorts as a whole.

Whereas Asian/Pacific Islander freshmen had the highest first-year retention rates compared to other ethnic groups in the Fall 2005 cohort, Hispanics had the highest first-year rates for the Fall 2006 cohort and all groups were within four percentage points of each other for the Fall 2007 cohort.

Comparing retention rates by major becomes complex because some students switch their majors and most undeclared students choose a major by their third year. Looking at retention by their major at time of matriculation (regardless of whether or not they switched), there is a lot of variability in first-year retention rates across the three cohorts by School and within Schools. We need to have more cohorts and more stability in the curriculum (the graduating class this spring represents the first students to go through a full four-year curriculum), to better discern patterns in retention related to programs. We will continue to monitor retention rates within programs and Schools annually.

[Table 4]

The University of California makes publicly available (on the Web) comparative statistics for freshman and transfer applicants and enrollees via a tool called StatFinder. These data allow us to compare trends in UC Merced's first few years to the much more mature UC campuses and system-wide[8] for information such as admissions rates, persistence and graduation rates, and college GPAs by entering class. As noted earlier, the average 1st-year retention rates for the UC System have been 9 to 12 points higher than UC Merced's for the first three cohorts (Fall 2005 through Fall 2007). The 2nd-year rates have averaged 17 points higher (for the Fall 2005 and Fall 2006 cohorts) at other UC campuses. The differences were generally smaller for Chicano/Latino freshmen, students who had passed the UC Analytic Writing Placement Exam (AWPE), students with HS GPAs below 3.00, and those in the lower SAT ranges.

StatFinder results indicate that UC Merced's African-American freshmen consistently have lower 1st -year retention rates (76-79%) than other ethnic groups, but that is not true of 2nd -year rates. In fact, the 2nd year rates for Whites are lowest. Similarly, although the first-year retention rates have been slightly higher for UC Merced students from families where at least one parent has a bachelor's degree than for those who are first generation (neither parent has a bachelor's degree), this is not necessarily true for the second-year rates. Even the academic performance of the students' high school (API) does not clearly show a relationship between rank and persistence at UC Merced, whereas, across all UCs, students from high schools with higher API ranks tend to persist at higher rates. Predictive modeling, such as the National SAT Validity study (described later) and those being developed by the Office of Planning & Analysis (IPA) will be more useful in understanding the importance of some of these

[8] UC System-wide data include UC Merced, however UC Merced has a very small impact on the System-wide averages. The selection criteria used by StatFinder for different populations (e.g., freshmen, transfers) are slightly different from the criteria used by UC Merced IPA for campus reporting. StatFinder, for the purposes of determining persistence, graduation, and UC GPA, excludes freshman and transfer enrollees from the cohorts if they did not complete their first term of enrollment at UC.

characteristics, especially how they may interact in explaining their impact on retention and academic success.

[Tables 5 & 6]

First-Year Freshman Cumulative UC GPA

On average, compared to the UC System as a whole, the average, first-year college grades of UC Merced freshmen tend to be about one-third to one-half letter grade below that of their counterparts. For the Fall 2007 cohort, for instance, the first-year college GPA for UC Merced freshmen averaged 2.57 compared to 2.96 System-wide. The gap tends to be higher for females than males, partly because females System-wide tend to have higher 1st-year GPAs than males, whereas at UC Merced the male freshmen tend to have higher GPAs than the female freshmen. The gap is substantially less for African-American, Hispanic, and first-generation college students.

The gap also is less when controlling for HS GPA and for those who passed the UC Analytic Writing Placement Exam (AWPE) and, on the other end, those who did not meet admissions writing requirement and therefore placed into WRI 001 (the campus' entry-level writing course). Comparisons between UC Merced and all UC campuses on a related indicator (SAT Writing) also shows the tendency for the gap in 1st-year GPAs to be lower for those with lower SAT Writing scores than for those with higher scores. For the Fall 2007 cohort, across the eight categories of 20-point HS GPA intervals, UC Merced's freshmen had, on average, .11 to .18 points lower for their first-year college GPAs. None of this is particularly surprising, since studies based on all types of institutions have repeatedly shown over the years that HS GPA and related academic preparation indicators are consistently the best predictors of 1st-year college GPA and retention.

[Tables 7 & 8]

National SAT Validity Study

UC Merced participated in the national SAT validity study conducted by the College Board in 2008. This study examined how well SAT scores, high school GPA (HS GPA), HS Academic Performance Index (API) Score, first language, first generation status, low income status, and intended major predicted the academic success of Fall 2007 first-time freshmen after their first year. Academic success was defined in terms of the grade point average earned at UC Merced during the freshman year. Consistent with decades of research nationwide, HS GPA was a much better predictor than SAT scores of college GPA during the first year at UC Merced. HS GPA alone explained 61% of the variance in college GPA for all Fall 2007 freshmen who remained enrolled in Fall 2008. HS GPA with the other non-SAT score variables explained 78% of the variance. Among those variables, the High School API score was the most important predictor.

Notable variations by discipline[9] include:

- For students with no declared major, the SAT critical reasoning score is the most important of the SAT predictors of first-year college GPA, while the writing score was of no value.
- For students intending to major in Social Sciences, Humanities, or Arts fields, the SAT writing score was the most important of the SAT predictors; critical reading scores were of no value.
- Finally, for students intending to major in the Natural Sciences, the SAT math score was the most important of the SAT predictors; the reading score was of little value.

These results were shared with the Admissions Office. In addition, the College Board identified 89 students as having a first year GPA substantially lower than that predicted by their preadmission characteristics. This report of potential at-risk students (at risk of dropping out or transferring) was shared with the UC Merced Student Advising & Learning Center.

Transfer Student Retention/Graduation

The first-year retention rates for UC Merced's transfer cohorts have been over 80% for each of the last three years (Fall 2005, 2006, and 2007). System-wide, the rates average 92% for each of the three years (StatFinder).[10] Second-year retention rates for UC Merced transfer students (2005 and 2006 cohorts) were 71% and 72%, respectively. The averages for the other UCs, again, were about 10 percentage points higher. Prior college GPA may explain some of the difference. Because of the small number of transfers in UC Merced's cohorts, we must be very cautious when trying to interpret further disaggregation (by GPA, gender, ethnicity, etc.). It may be at least another four to five years before we have enough cohorts to reveal underlying patterns affecting retention rates for transfer students. For instance, whereas the first-year retention rates for first-generation vs. non-first-generation college students System-wide are fairly stable, ranging from 91.1% to 92.0% on average for first-generation and from 92.2% to 92.7% for non-first-generation college students in the Fall 2005, 2006 and 2007 cohorts, the ranges for UC Merced transfer students were 79.1% to 82.4% and 77.8% to 91.3%, respectively.

At this point (Spring 2009), we have two-year graduation rates for two transfer cohorts. About 46% of the pioneering transfer class of Fall 2005 graduated within two years (compared to about 51% for the other UC campuses, on average). Only 31% of UC Merced's Fall 2006 class, however, graduated in two years (again, compared to the UC average of 51%).

[Table 9]

[9] There were too few Engineering majors to allow further analyses. The College Board required that each breakout category have at least 75 students.

[10] Again, as indicated earlier for the freshman comparisons, UC System-wide data include UC Merced, however UC Merced has a very small impact on the System-wide averages. The selection criteria used by StatFinder for different populations (e.g., freshmen, transfers) are slightly different from the criteria used by UC Merced IPA for campus reporting. StatFinder, for the purposes of determining persistence, graduation, and UC GPA, excludes freshman and transfer enrollees from the cohorts if they did not complete their first term of enrollment at UC.

First-Year Transfer Cumulative UC GPA

The average first-year cumulative GPA for transfer cohorts System-wide was 2.97 for each of the Fall 2005, 2006, and 2007 cohorts. The cumulative GPAs for UC Merced's cohorts were .14 to .18 points lower (2.82, 2.83, and 2.79, respectively) than the System-wide average but were actually on par or higher than two of the other campuses. Like new freshmen, the higher the GPA category for new transfers prior to transferring (prior college GPA), the more likely they attain higher 1st-year GPAs at their UC institution. In some cases, this also is true for UC Merced transfers, but not consistently so. As noted earlier when discussing retention, it may be at least another four to five years before we have enough cohorts, and more transfers in those cohorts, to reveal underlying patterns affecting the academic success of transfer students.

[Table 10]

UC Merced Retention Programs

Over the last four decades, a number of models or theories have been developed to try to explain college attrition patterns.[11] These theories evolved from sociological (Spady) and psychological (Bean) models to those that included student involvement (Astin) and organizational or institutional characteristics (Pascarella, Tinto, Berger, Kuh). Over time they have led to the development of interventions that foster retention.

Based on studies at more mature colleges and universities, three strategies have been cited as making the greatest contributions to undergraduate retention at four-year colleges.[12] These high impact strategies include:

1. First-year programs (freshman seminars, "university 101 courses," learning communities, integration of advising with first-year curricula)
2. Academic advising throughout the curricula (increased advising staff, advising interventions with selected student populations)
3. Learning support (supplemental instruction, comprehensive learning assistance center/lab, reading center/lab, summer bridge programs, tutoring programs).

The most recent ACT survey about retention practices and successes in four-year public colleges (228 institutional respondents) identified three top campus retention practices that had the greatest impact on student retention: 1) freshman seminar/university 101 courses for credit, 2) learning communities, and 3) advising interventions for selected student populations. UC Merced has implemented all three types of practices, some institution-wide and some within Schools or particular programs. Examples include:

Freshman seminars. Freshman seminars help new freshmen make the transition to university life by giving them a chance to get to know a faculty member personally and to work with a small group of peers to study a topic in depth. The courses are one-credit and non-

[11] McClanahan, R. (2004). "Review of Retention Literature." In Habley & McClanahan, ACT Report: "What Works in Student Retention? Four-Year Public Colleges." (Appendix I).

[12] Habley, W.R. & McClanahan, R. (2004). ACT Report: "What Works in Student Retention? Four-Year Public Colleges." (p. 23).

letter-graded (pass/no pass only). They introduce students to undergraduate research opportunities and, in some cases, help students decide on a major. At the onset, Fall 2005, freshman seminars were required by each of the three Schools. Over 200 students enrolled in the first semester and another 245 students enrolled in Spring 2006. Enrollments in subsequent semesters fell as fewer seminars could be offered because of increasing upper-division course demands on faculty. Two of the Schools (Natural Sciences and Social Sciences, Humanities & Arts) no longer require the seminars and the School of Engineering changed the requirement to include a choice: freshman seminar or service learning. The Faculty Senate is reviewing the sustainability of offering freshman seminars along with the two-course general education requirement.

USTU 010 (Introduction to Undergraduate Education). This course was offered for the first time in Fall 2008. So far, 37 freshmen have completed the course (either in Fall 2008 or Spring 2009). Participation in the course is not voluntary, but some students who met the criteria for participation could not take the course due to other course conflicts or because the one section of USTU 010 was full. The target population for the course in Fall 2008 consisted of undeclared freshmen who were placed into WRI 001, the campus' entry-level writing requirement. In Spring 2009, the target population consisted of freshmen who were eligible for dismissal at the end of their first fall semester, appealed the dismissal action, and were allowed to continue in Spring 2009. USTU combines weekly large-group, interactive lectures with small-group discussion sections, focusing on topics related to navigating campus life and using effective strategies for learning. A preliminary assessment of the impact of the Fall 2008 USTU course was conducted in early spring, comparing grades and retention of the freshmen who took the USTU course with a comparison group of freshmen who were undeclared and who enrolled in WRI 001 in the fall. A requirement of the USTU class is that students cannot miss more than one class. Results of the preliminary assessment revealed that those who met this attendance requirement did substantially better (first-semester GPA of 3.14 vs. 2.33) than those who enrolled but did not meet the attendance requirement. They also did better than those who met the criteria for placement into USTU 010 but did not enroll in the course. [There was no difference between those who enrolled in the course but did not meet the attendance requirement and those who did not enroll in the course at all.] At this time, it is too early to determine the longer-term impact of this course on the retention of these at-risk students.

Learning Communities. Three Living Learning Communities were offered starting in Fall 2007 for Academic Excellence and Green Hall (sustainable and environmental awareness), and in Fall 2008 for RPM (the Residential Management Program for first-year and continuing Management and Economics majors and minors). Students in the Academic Excellence Hall must have a GPA minimum of 3.0. Members participate in programs and activities that support and encourage academic success, research, service, and leadership. They act as mentors, assisting other students with tutoring, study skill workshops, academic goal setting, etc. Green Hall members apply their efforts to issues of global environmental change, policy and management of natural resources, sustainable rural and urban environments and environmental leadership. They also work closely with representatives from the Sierra Nevada Institute and Yosemite National Park. RPM activities include formal presentations by faculty,

alumni, or industry representatives, covering topics such as graduate school preparation, career exploration, professional development, faculty research, etc. Continuing RPM members serve as mentors to incoming freshman members. So far, 175 students have participated in these housing-based learning communities.

Mid-Semester Grades. In Spring of 2005, the Undergraduate Council (UGC) approved a 3-year trial of mid-semester grade reporting for all lower-division courses. UC Merced is the only UC campus that issues mid-semester grades. The goals for the program were twofold: to provide positive feedback to new students who were doing well academically and to assist the University in identifying and helping students who were struggling academically. In addition to grade reporting, freshman students with a grade of D+ or lower were required to participate in a "Success Workshop" to help them assess why they are failing and to direct them to other resources that may help them improve their academic performance. In February 2008, the UGC approved a request to extend this program another five years. Follow-up analyses conducted by the Student Advising and Learning Center found that "struggling students who attend Success Workshops actually have a higher retention rate year to year (84%) than that of the Fall 2005 or Fall 2006 cohort in general."[13]

Peer Mentoring Programs. The Peer Mentoring Program helps new freshmen adjust to the academic and social demands of university life by pairing them with more experienced upper-division students who have demonstrated academic and personal success. Mentors provide information about professors, courses, resources, and events on campus. They serve as friendly role models and guides, at the same time fostering independence. Of the 925 first-time freshmen in Fall 2008, almost 19% participated in the mentoring program. Their fall-to-spring retention rate was over 97%, compared to the overall rate of 82% for the cohort. Participants and non-participants had comparable average HS GPAs (3.4) and 1st-semester UC GPAs (2.5), hence participation in the program does not seem to be influenced by level of academic preparation for college or academic performance during their first semester at UC Merced.

In Fall 2008, the Student Advising and Learning Center and the Department of Housing and Residence Life teamed up to create a live-in **Peer Academic Advisor program** (PAA). Student peer academic advisors are selected, trained and supervised by the Student Advising and Learning Center and School Advising staff, but live in the freshman residence halls at a reduced rate. Reflection on the first year of this program generated changes planned for subsequent years, including greater partnerships with other peer groups (Peer Mentoring Program, Career Center Educator, Peer Tutors, and UC Merced Police Department Mentor Program). Other aspects of the program are being modified, such as hours and locations as well as the tracking system to monitor student participation in the program. In Fall 2008, 40 students were seen during office hours (8am-8pm); 18 used the services in Spring 2009 (10am-6pm).

[13] Letter from E. Boretz, Director of SALC, to UGC, January 9, 2008.

Summer Bridge. UC Merced's Summer Bridge program started in Summer 2007 with nine students from Merced County high schools who had writing deficiencies, but otherwise would be eligible to attend UC Merced as freshmen. Two-thirds were retained after one year. These students were all second language learners and still developing their academic English; for most of the students, intensive reading and writing instruction during an 8-week course enabled them to "bridge" their writing and reading skills gap and be academically successful in their first year at college. For instance, in Summer 2008, only 33% of the 23 students in the program demonstrated the mastery required of university writing at the initial writing diagnostic evaluation. By the final diagnostic, 54% evidenced proficiency in their academic writing. Many of the students developing their academic English also benefit from a focus on their academic math skills. For this reason, the program was expanded to include an intensive introduction to college math in Summer 2008. This additional work resulted in an increased pass rate at the end of the summer for the *Gateway Exam, a math assessment required of all freshmen during their first semester.* For Summer 2009, separate tracks in Math and in Writing will be offered, allowing students to choose the subject on which they focus, while offering intensive coursework in the alternate subject. Additionally, all students are introduced to strategies for improving a broad range of academic skills.

Orientation, Mandatory Freshmen Assembly and Learning Support. The data on retention and academic probation/dismissal has lead Student Affairs staff, working with colleagues in the Schools and the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, to refine and strengthen our messages about academic expectations. Tinto has found that high academic expectations are correlated positively with retention. In 2006, we modified the Parent Orientation schedule so that the first presentation the parents heard was about UC Merced's academic standards. Parents were informed about mid-semester grades, about the work load in a four credit class and the amount of studying students would need to do in a week in order to be successful. Given that almost half of our students are the first in their family to attend college, we have found these sessions (that have continued in 2007, 2008 and 2009) to be well received and have generated many questions from parent participants. Also in 2006, Student Affairs created a mandatory Freshmen Assembly that occurs the day before classes start. At the assembly current students, faculty, staff and the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education talk with the students about academic expectations and the support (free tutoring, workshops, etc) that are available to them. We also provide the students with materials about UC Merced's Academic Honesty Policy.

Given that this generation of students is extremely comfortable with technology we have created web-based materials on learning that will be helpful to them. On learning.ucmerced.edu, students can find Pod-Casts with helpful information, tutoring schedules and information about the range of workshops that we offer, including: study skills, time management, academic writing, preparing for mid-terms and so forth.

School of Natural Science's EXCEL! Program. The EXCEL! Program, which started in Fall 2005, works with Natural Sciences faculty, advisors, and the Student Advising and Learning Center to help Natural Science's students successfully complete lower division math and science courses. The goal is to help students return to good academic standing. This program

uses elements derived from existing successful math and science student retention programs at various colleges. Most of the participants have been from the freshman cohorts, with 89, 32, and 60 participating from Fall 2005, Fall 2006, and Fall 2007, respectively. Preliminary analysis of the first two cohorts of participants shows that 30-44% (varying by cohort) of the freshman participants (who had not been in good standing at the end of their first semester) were still enrolled and in good standing by the end of their third semester (one year later) and 26-34% were still enrolled and in good standing by the end of their fifth semester (two years later). More detailed tracking of these students and assessment of program outcomes will continue.

School of Engineering's EPICS Program. The Foster Family Center for Engineering Service Learning program is a key component of an engineering education at UC Merced and the cornerstone of the school's learn-by-doing philosophy. This program, which is affiliated with the national Engineering Projects in Community Service (EPICS) program at Purdue University, supports the San Joaquin Valley's leading non-profit organizations and contributes to student success, professional preparedness and retention.

As a result of this program:

- Students gain long-term define-design-build-test-deploy-support experience, communication skills, experience on multidisciplinary teams, and leadership and project management skills. They also gain an awareness of the importance of community service and the understanding that the field of engineering is devoted to helping mankind.

- Community organizations gain access to technology and expertise that would normally be prohibitively expensive, giving them the opportunity to improve their quality of service and provide new services.

Ordinarily, students, particularly freshmen and sophomores, have little contact with "engineering" issues as their academic program is consumed with establishing a math and science foundation in their first two years of study. EPICS provides a connection to what a career in engineering is about—helping people by solving problems.

Also affiliated with EPICS, the **Service Learning Program** at UC Merced is a required programmatic resource (for engineering majors), the goal of which is to retain engineering students by providing a supportive academic environment that shows first hand how the field of engineering impacts others at the community level. Much of the focus of this program instills the value of teamwork, organization, goal setting, creating project timelines and developing good learning skills in an engineering environment. Service Learning projects are focused in four broad areas: human services, access and abilities, education and outreach, and the environment. Current clients include the Merced SPCA, Mountain Crisis Services, the California State Mining and Mineral Museum, the Castle Science and Technology Center, the Merced County Office of Education, the Merced County Probation Department, the Grassland Water District, and Bobcat Radio. This year's new clients are the Boys and Girls Club of Merced and Kiva.

In the 2008-2009 academic year, approximately 170 UC Merced students (almost one-third of all engineering students) participated on 10 multidisciplinary project teams. Each team of 10 to 15 students includes freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors, and each team has a multi-year partnership with a community service or education organization.

Graduate Student Retention

Most of UC Merced's graduate students have entered as doctoral students. Because of the relatively small numbers of both master's and doctoral students, it is difficult to identify, with any confidence, emerging patterns that help to explain retention or attrition. Also complicating these analyses are the potential variations in pathways to degree completion, pathways that are not unique to UC Merced. Master's students, for instance, sometimes change their degree objective[14] to the Ph.D. after, or sometimes without, completing the master's degree. Similarly, doctoral students sometimes receive a master's degree along the way to their doctoral degree or voluntarily or involuntarily receive a "terminal" master's.

The latest UC studies of graduate completion and attrition rates were conducted in 2003 (for master's students entering in Fall 1996-98) and 2007 (for doctoral students entering in Fall 1992-94). Four-year completion rates were used for the master's cohorts, while ten-year completion rates were used for doctoral cohorts (as well as two-, four-, and ten-year attrition rates). Obviously, UC Merced cannot benchmark graduate student completion rates with these data yet, as we have had only one master's degree cohort that reached a four-year rate (Fall 2004 cohort) and no doctoral cohort that has reached a ten-year rate. Unlike bachelor's degree retention and graduation rates, graduate degree rates are not closely monitored nationally nor shared widely among institutions. There are no commonly accepted standards for measuring graduate student success as there are with bachelor's degree-seeking students. Furthermore, most studies of graduate student retention and time-to-degree emphasize the variability by academic discipline.[15] The UC studies also emphasize the large differences in completion rates by discipline area and even greater differences across campuses within a given discipline area.

The average 4-year completion rate across all UC campuses and discipline areas was 85%. In 9 of the 15 discipline areas completion rates differed by 31 to 52 percentage points! According to the UC report, "only in business and law, where students move through as cohorts in relatively set curricula, were completion rates uniformly high and campus differences small." UC Merced's first cohort of master's students was in Fall 2004, one year before the campus officially opened to undergraduates. Only two students were in that master's cohort. Four years later, as of Fall 2008, one had graduated and the other was still enrolled. Subsequent cohorts have grown in size, from 5 in Fall 2005 to 12 in Fall 2008. First-year retention rates have ranged from 60% to 75% and a total of four additional master's degrees have been granted; two from the Fall 2005 cohort and one each from the Fall 2006 and 2007 cohorts.

Beginning in 2004, the national Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), with funding from Pfizer and the Ford Foundation, organized a seven-year "Ph.D. Completion Project" to produce

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[14] With the approval, of course, of the Graduate Division and the appropriate graduate faculty.

[15] E.g.: Ott, M.D., Markewich, T.S., and Ochsner, N.L. (1984). Logit Analysis of Graduate Student Retention. *Research in Higher Education,* 21 (4): 439-460. Ferrer de Valero, Y. (2001). Departmental Factors Affecting Time-to-Degree and Completion Rates of Doctoral Students at One Land-Grant Research Institution. *The Journal of Higher Education, 72 (3): 341-367.*

"comprehensive and useful data on attrition from doctoral study and completion of Ph. D. programs." They started with baseline data from cohorts of students entering doctoral programs at 30 participating institutions from 1992-03 to 2003-04. Based on these data, 23% on average completed their programs within 5 years, 35% within 6 years, 46% within 7 years, and 57% within 10 years. The 10-year rate varied from 49% to 64%, depending on discipline area. The rates also varied by gender and discipline area (males had higher rates in Engineering, Life Sciences, and Math/Physical Sciences, but females had higher 10-year completion rates in Social Sciences and Humanities). International students had higher rates than domestic students across all discipline areas. Completion rates varied greatly by ethnicity across disciplines. African-American students had the lowest rates within Engineering and Math/Physical Sciences; Asians had the lowest rates in the Life Sciences and Social Sciences; and Hispanics had the lowest rates in the Humanities.

The UC-wide 10-year completion rate for doctoral cohorts was 57%. The rate by broad discipline areas ranged from 51% for Engineering/Computer Science to 71% for Life Sciences. Rates varied by ethnicity and also by citizenship. The average UC retention rate at the end of the second year was 87% and at the end of the fourth year the average doctoral retention rate was 71%.

Similar to UC Merced's master's degree cohorts, the first doctoral cohort of seven students arrived in Fall 2004, one year before the official campus opening. Four years later, the first doctoral candidate (representing 14.3% of the cohort) had graduated (in Summer 2008) and 57% were still in the pipeline. Subsequent doctoral cohorts increased in number from 19 in Fall 2005 to 57 in Fall 2008. First-year retention for these students ranged from 83% to 95%. After year three, for instance, almost 90% of the Fall 2005 cohort was still pursuing the degree.

Over time we hope to obtain better benchmarking data for master's and doctoral degree retention and graduation rates. In the meantime, UC Merced has set up a system to track these rates, starting from the very first cohorts. We will provide breakdowns by program, gender, ethnicity, and citizenship as the graduate cohorts increase in size. The CGS research has shown that key factors influencing student retention and completion at the doctoral level include: selection, mentoring, financial support, program environment, research mode of the field, and processes and procedures. These certainly will be some of the early factors that the campus will focus on when developing interventions to increase graduate success metrics. Already the Graduate Division has instituted an annual survey of graduate students to obtain feedback on various characteristics of the programs and to monitor satisfaction levels. [See Appendix A.]

[Table 11]

Next Steps

Besides tracking the retention and graduation rates, as well as GPAs by semester, the Office of Institutional Planning & Analysis (IPA) is developing predictive models for new freshmen and new transfers to help identify "at risk" students. These models will include demographic and academic preparation variables, as well as pre-college-choice interests (from the SAT survey), UCUES and NSSE survey responses, and co-curricular experiences (involvement in student life activities such as learning communities, student government, academic and non-

academic clubs, etc.). IPA and Student Affairs are working with the Registrar to set up a way to track these experiences within the Banner Student Information System. Students will also benefit by being able to maintain a co-curricular "transcript" which will document their leadership experiences as well as their participation in various campus-sponsored activities.

UC Merced participated, for the first time, in the BCSSE (Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement) survey, a companion survey to the NSSE. The 2008 new freshmen were surveyed just before fall classes started. Student advising reports produced from the results were shared with advisors to help them relate the students' self-reported high school experiences and college expectations to their college success, especially during the first semester. UC Merced administers the NSSE every other year. Once we get the results from this year's survey (Spring 2009) in early Fall 2009, we will be able to relate responses from the BCSSE (pre-college expectations) to the NSSE (first-year experience) for those students who completed both surveys.

Continuing efforts to assess the existing retention programs, survey admitted and enrolled students, and track UC Merced students who drop out and subsequently enroll elsewhere, will also be used to inform programmatic decisions and resources. These efforts will be coordinated by a newly-formed Enrollment Management Council, in partnership with IPA, the Center for Research on Teaching Excellence (CRTE), and School as well as Student Affairs program directors.

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Table 1: UC Merced New Student Survey: Fall 2005 through Fall 2008
New Freshman Respondents
How important to you was each of the following reasons for attending UC Merced?

Reported as Percentage of Non-Missing Responses

	Fall 2008			Fall 2006			Fall 2005		
	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very & Somewhat Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very & Somewhat Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very & Somewhat Important
Influence of People									
My parents/relatives wanted me to come here	30	37	67	19	32	**51**	25	30	**55**
My teacher advised me	NA	NA	NA	11	19	**30**	6	29	**35**
High school counselor advised me	NA	NA	NA	6	23	**29**	7	26	**33**
Advice from high school teachers/counselors	23	37	60	NA	NA	**NA**	NA	NA	**NA**
Friendliness/helpfulness of staff I've met	38	42	80	44	35	**79**	29	37	**66**
Friendliness/helpfulness of faculty I've met	41	43	84	44	37	**81**	30	34	**64**
Educational Options									
Unable to get into first college choice	42	25	67	NA	NA	**NA**	NA	NA	**NA**
Campus Characteristics									
UC Merced's newness	NA	NA	NA	42	37	**79**	51	36	**87**
I wanted to be in one of the first classes*	NA	NA	NA	33	30	**63**	53	34	**87**
Opportunity to be part of a new campus	58	28	86	NA	NA	**NA**	NA	NA	**NA**
Ability to live at or near home	28	29	57	26	19	**45**	21	21	**42**
A visit to the campus	32	39	71	29	32	**61**	13	28	**41**
Small size of the campus	58	31	89	52	30	**82**	NA	NA	**NA**
Opportunity to work closely with faculty	66	26	92	70	25	**95**	NA	NA	**NA**
Personal attention from faculty and staff	66	27	93	72	23	**95**	NA	NA	**NA**
Academics									
Reputation of campus and UC system	52	35	87	46	35	**81**	54	29	**83**
Quality of my intended major	46	36	82	36	36	**72**	27	37	**64**
Opportunity to be involved in research projects	38	38	76	44	32	**76**	NA	NA	**NA**
Financial Aid									
Financial aid offer	50	26	76	38	19	**57**	23	28	**51**
Not offered financial aid by prefered campus	17	19	36	7	18	**25**	5	13	**18**

*In Fall 2005, this response read: "I wanted to be in the first class.'
NA= response item not available in Survey.

Prepared by: UC Merced Office of Institutional Planning & Analysis, June 2009

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Table 2: Comparison of First-Time Freshman Retention Rates		
	First-Year Retention Rates	
	All	Full-Time Only
UC Merced		
Fall 2005	82%	
Fall 2006	80%	
Fall 2007	79%	
National (Fall 2007)		
All 4-yr public colleges*	77%	78%
Public High/Very High Research Universities**		82%
California (Fall 2007)		
All 4-yr public colleges*	84%	85%
University of California (avg. for the 8 undergraduate campuses)**	92%	92%

*NCHEMS Information Center; Retention: First-Time College Freshmen Returning Their Second Year; Four-Year Public Colleges; Fall 2007 Cohort

** 2009 U.S. News "America's Best Colleges," reflecting Fall 2007 data.

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Table 3A: Voluntary/Involuntary Attrition: Fall 2005 First-Time Freshman Cohort					
	Fall 2005	Spring 2006	Fall 2006	Spring 2007	Fall 2007
Academic Standing	**706**	**689**	**659**	**586**	**547**
Good Standing		*535*	*503*	*474*	*457*
Returned		518	472	463	412
Not Retained					
Transferred to 2-year		7	12	5	1
Transferred to CSU		2	2	0	0
Transferred to UC		1	4	1	23
Transferred elsewhere		0	3	0	3
Unknown/did not transfer		7	10	5	18
Probation		*154*	*128*	*92*	*73*
Returned		141	107	89	64
Not Retained					
Transferred to 2-year		4	11	0	2
Transferred to CSU		1	1	0	2
Transferred to UC		0	0	0	0
Transferred elsewhere		0	0	0	0
Unknown/did not transfer		8	9	3	5
Dismissed		*17*	*28*	*20*	*17*
Not Retained					
Tranferred to 2-year		7	19	8	8
Transferred to CSU		0	1	0	0
Transferred to UC		0	0	0	0
Transferred elsewhere		0	0	0	0
Unknown/did not transfer		10	8	12	9

Table 3B: Voluntary/Involuntary Attrition: Fall 2006 First-Time Freshman Cohort					
	Fall 2006	Spring 2007	Fall 2007	Spring 2008	Fall 2009
Academic Standing	**398**	**397**	**388**		
Good Standing		*297*	*254*		
Returned		286	236		
Not Retained					
Transferred to 2-year		3	5		
Transferred to CSU		0	4		
Transferred to UC		0	1		
Transferred elsewhere		1	2		
Unknown/did not transfer		7	6		
Probation		*78*	*113*		
Returned		73	107		
Not Retained					
Transferred to 2-year		1	2		
Transferred to CSU		1	0		
Transferred to UC		0	0		
Transferred elsewhere		0	1		
Unknown/did not transfer		3	3		
Dismissed		*22*	*21*		
Not Retained					
Transferred to 2-year		15	11		
Transferred to CSU		0	0		
Transferred to UC		0	0		
Transferred elsewhere		0	0		
Unknown/did not transfer		7	10		

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Table 4: 1st-Year Freshman Retention Rates			
	Cohort		
	Fall 2005	**Fall 2006**	**Fall2007**
Overall	82%	80%	79%
Gender			
Female	80%	80%	80%
Male	85%	80%	78%
Pell Grant Recipients	83%	80%	80%
Ethnicity			
African-American	80%	73%	76%
Asian/Pacific Islander	86%	77%	80%
Hispanic	81%	83%	80%
White	78%	79%	78%
Other/Unknown	83%	90%	80%

Source: IPA Enrollment Table

Prepared by Institutional Planning & Analysis

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Table 5: First-Time Freshman Retention Rates, by Demographic Categories

Category	Cohort	1st Year Retention		2nd Year Retention	
		UCM*	All UCs	UCM*	All UCs
Overall					
	2005	83	92	68	85
	2006	80	92	68	85
	2007	80	92		
Gender					
Female	2005	83	92	68	85
	2006	80	93	68	85
	2007	80	92		
Male	2005	85	92	71	84
	2006	80	92	65	84
	2007	79	92		
Ethnicity					
African-American	2005	79	89	69	81
	2006	76	89	72	81
	2007	76	90		
Chicano/Latino	2005	81	88	66	80
	2006	82	88	71	79
	2007	80	87		
Asian/Filipino/Pacific Islander	2005	86	94	71	88
	2006	77	95	66	89
	2007	80	94		
White	2005	80	92	65	83
	2006	81	93	60	83
	2007	79	92		
Other/Unknown	2005	80	91	69	84
	2006	90	91	80	86
	2007	81	91		
First Generation Status					
Not 1st Generation: Parent has bachelor's degree or higher	2005	84	93	68	86
	2006	82	94	69	86
	2007	83	93		
1st Generation: Parent does not have bachelor's degree or higher	2005	81	90	69	83
	2006	79	90	66	83
	2007	79	90		

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Table 5: First-Time Freshman Retention Rates, by Demographic Categories

Category	Cohort	1st Year Retention		2nd Year Retention	
		UCM*	All UCs	UCM*	All UCs
High School API Rank					
State Rank 1-2	2005	73	85	63	77
	2006	69	87	59	78
	2007	65	85		
State Rank 3-4	2005	82	90	68	83
	2006	77	89	58	81
	2007	83	89		
State Rank 5-6	2005	86	91	66	84
	2006	79	91	67	83
	2007	83	92		
State Rank 7-8	2005	83	93	66	86
	2006	86	93	74	86
	2007	79	93		
State Rank 9-10	2005	81	94	67	87
	2006	82	95	67	88
	2007	85	94		
CA Public HS - No API	2005	80	91	67	79
	2006	63	88	63	77
	2007	82	87		
CA Private HS - No API	2005	90	92	83	84
	2006	89	93	84	84
	2007	73	92		
Out-of State/Foreign/Unknov	2005	77	89	77	78
	2006	60	89	60	80
	2007	71	89		

Source: UC StatFinder, restricted site: https://reststatfinder.ucop.edu/login.aspx
Prepared by: UC Merced Office of Institutional Planning & Analysis, 4-03-09

*These rates for UC Merced vary slightly from the campus' rates because of differences in the way UCOP defines the cohorts of new freshmen and new transfers. For purposes of determining persistence, graduation, and UC GPA, the UC StatFinder excludes freshmen and transfer enrollees who did not complete their first term of enrollment at UC and also excludes freshmen enrollees who enter UC in their high school senior year through the accelerated high school or high school honors programs.

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Table 6: First-Time Freshman Retention Rates, by Academic Preparation

Category	Cohort	1st Year Retention		2nd Year Retention	
		UCM*	All UCs	UCM*	All UCs
Overall					
	2005	83	92	68	85
	2006	80	92	68	85
	2007	80	92		
Entry Level Writing (ELWR)					
Passed UC Analytic Writing Placement Exam (AWPE)	2005	87	93	70	86
	2006	90	94	81	87
	2007	90	93		
Met by Other Means	2005	84	94	66	88
	2006	87	95	73	88
	2007	74	94		
Did not Meet ELWR at Time of Matriculation - Take UC Approved Course	2005	82	88	68	79
	2006	75	88	61	79
	2007	77	87		
HS GPA-Weighted,Capped					
2.99 and Below	2005	79	84	58	68
	2006	79	82	68	62
	2007	79	80		
3.00-3.19	2005	77	85	64	72
	2006	77	84	65	72
	2007	66	84		
3.20-3.39	2005	83	87	72	76
	2006	76	87	66	77
	2007	79	87		
3.40-3.59	2005	90	90	68	81
	2006	80	90	68	81
	2007	83	90		
3.60-3.79	2005	79	92	64	84
	2006	85	93	67	84
	2007	80	91		
3.80-3.99	2005	86	93	73	86
	2006	89	94	74	87
	2007	92	93		
4.00-4.19	2005	88	95	81	90
	2006	86	95	76	89
	2007	86	95		
4.20 and Above	2005	80	96	67	92
	2006	71	97	71	93
	2007	88	97		

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Table 6: First-Time Freshman Retention Rates, by Academic Preparation

Category	Cohort	1st Year Retention		2nd Year Retention	
		UCM*	All UCs	UCM*	All UCs
Average SAT Math & Verbal/Critical Reasoning					
400-999	2005	81	84	66	75
	2006	80	84	66	74
	2007	77	84		
1000-1199	2005	84	91	70	83
	2006	78	91	66	84
	2007	83	91		
1200-1299	2005	88	94	72	87
	2006	86	94	75	87
	2007	79	94		
1400-1600	2005	66	96	44	90
(includes Unknown for UC Merced)	2006	60	96	60	91
	2007	76	96		
SAT Writing**					
200-499	2005	83	87	69	78
	2006	82	86	68	76
	2007	76	86		
500-599	2005	84	92	66	84
	2006	81	92	69	85
	2007	86	92		
600-699	2005	79	94	66	87
	2006	81	95	71	88
	2007	78	94		
700-800	2005	92	96	69	90
(includes Unknown for UC Merced)	2006	33	96	33	89
	2007	77	96		

Source: UC StatFinder, restricted site: https://reststatfinder.ucop.edu/login.aspx
Prepared by: UC Merced Office of Institutional Planning & Analysis, 4-03-09

*These rates for UC Merced vary slightly from the campus' rates because of differences in the way UCOP defines the cohorts of new freshmen and new transfers. For purposes of determining persistence, graduation, and UC GPA, the UC StatFinder excludes freshmen and transfer enrollees who did not complete their first term of enrollment at UC and also excludes freshmen enrollees who enter UC in their high school senior year through the accelerated high school or high school honors programs.

**For 2005, SAT II Writing scores were used; for 2006 forward, SAT Writing scores were used.

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Table 7: First-Time Freshman Cumulative UC GPA After 1st Year, by Demographic Categories

Category	Cohort	Average Cumulative UC GPA After 1st Year: UCM*	Average Cumulative UC GPA After 1st Year: All UCs	UC-UCM Difference
Overall				
	2005	2.59	2.96	0.37
	2006	2.49	2.95	0.46
	2007	2.57	2.96	0.39
Gender				
Female	2005	2.59	3.00	0.41
	2006	2.49	2.98	0.49
	2007	2.57	2.99	0.42
Male	2005	2.62	2.90	0.28
	2006	2.55	2.90	0.35
	2007	2.61	2.92	0.31
Ethnicity				
African-American	2005	2.61	2.70	0.09
	2006	2.46	2.65	0.19
	2007	2.46	2.69	0.23
Chicano/Latino	2005	2.41	2.68	0.27
	2006	2.40	2.67	0.27
	2007	2.44	2.68	0.24
Asian/Filipino/Pacific Islander	2005	2.52	2.93	0.41
	2006	2.41	2.91	0.50
	2007	2.64	2.95	0.31
White	2005	2.86	3.11	0.25
	2006	2.68	3.13	0.45
	2007	2.72	3.13	0.41
Other/Unknown	2005	2.58	3.03	0.45
	2006	2.66	3.02	0.36
	2007	2.55	3.06	0.51
First Generation Status				
Not 1st Generation: Parent has bachelor's degree or higher	2005	2.66	3.07	0.41
	2006	2.55	3.06	0.51
	2007	2.64	3.09	0.45
1st Generation: Parent does not have bachelor's degree or higher	2005	2.51	2.76	0.25
	2006	2.41	2.75	0.34
	2007	2.52	2.75	0.23

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Table 7: First-Time Freshman Cumulative UC GPA After 1st Year, by Demographic Categories

Category	Cohort	Average Cumulative UC GPA After 1st Year: UCM*	Average Cumulative UC GPA After 1st Year: All UCs	UC-UCM Difference
High School API Rank				
State Rank 1-2	2005	2.22	2.50	0.28
	2006	2.29	2.54	0.25
	2007	2.44	2.55	0.11
State Rank 3-4	2005	2.41	2.75	0.34
	2006	2.49	2.70	0.21
	2007	2.48	2.70	0.22
State Rank 5-6	2005	2.61	2.88	0.27
	2006	2.36	2.86	0.50
	2007	2.61	2.88	0.27
State Rank 7-8	2005	2.66	2.96	0.30
	2006	2.53	2.95	0.42
	2007	2.49	2.98	0.49
State Rank 9-10	2005	2.69	3.07	0.38
	2006	2.57	3.06	0.49
	2007	2.85	3.11	0.26
CA Public HS - No API	2005	2.64	2.78	0.14
	2006	2.31	2.75	0.44
	2007	2.76	2.73	-0.03
CA Private HS - No API	2005	2.70	3.00	0.30
	2006	2.72	2.97	0.25
	2007	2.38	2.98	0.60
Out-of State/Foreign/Unknown	2005	2.60	3.18	0.58
	2006	2.43	3.15	0.72
	2007	2.91	3.14	0.23

Source: UC StatFinder, restricted site: https://reststatfinder.ucop.edu/login.aspx

Prepared by: UC Merced Office of Institutional Planning & Analysis, 4-03-09

*These GPAs for UC Merced vary slightly from the campus' GPAs because of differences in the way UCOP defines the cohorts of new freshmen and new transfers. For purposes of determining persistence, graduation, and UC GPA, the UC StatFinder excludes freshmen and transfer enrollees who did not complete their first term of enrollment at UC and also excludes freshmen enrollees who enter UC in their high school senior year through the accelerated high school or high school honors programs.

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Table 8: First-Time Freshman Cumulative UC GPA After 1st Year, by Academic Preparation

Category	Cohort	Average Cumulative UC GPA After 1st Year: UCM*	Average Cumulative UC GPA After 1st Year: All UCs	UC-UCM Difference
Overall				
	2005	2.59	2.96	0.37
	2006	2.49	2.95	0.46
	2007	2.57	2.96	0.39
Entry Level Writing (ELWR)				
Passed UC Analytic Writing Placement Exam (AWPE)	2005	2.72	2.96	0.24
	2006	2.75	2.94	0.19
	2007	2.81	2.96	0.15
Met by Other Means	2005	2.74	3.16	0.42
	2006	2.71	3.16	0.45
	2007	2.63	3.18	0.55
Did not Meet ELWR at Time of Matriculation - Take UC Approved Course	2005	2.54	2.67	0.13
	2006	2.35	2.64	0.29
	2007	2.49	2.63	0.14
HS GPA-Weighted,Capped				
2.99 and Below	2005	2.34	2.39	0.05
	2006	2.15	2.32	0.17
	2007	2.21	2.33	0.12
3.00-3.19	2005	2.47	2.48	0.01
	2006	2.33	2.46	0.13
	2007	2.27	2.45	0.18
3.20-3.39	2005	2.52	2.58	0.06
	2006	2.26	2.57	0.31
	2007	2.46	2.60	0.14
3.40-3.59	2005	2.64	2.72	0.08
	2006	2.58	2.71	0.13
	2007	2.58	2.74	0.16
3.60-3.79	2005	2.54	2.85	0.31
	2006	2.64	2.86	0.22
	2007	2.71	2.86	0.15
3.80-3.99	2005	2.82	2.98	0.16
	2006	2.91	3.00	0.09
	2007	2.83	2.99	0.16
4.00-4.19	2005	2.99	3.16	0.17
	2006	2.89	3.17	0.28
	2007	3.05	3.17	0.12
4.20 and Above	2005	3.32	3.40	0.08
	2006	2.69	3.38	0.69
	2007	3.30	3.41	0.11

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Table 8: First-Time Freshman Cumulative UC GPA After 1st Year, by Academic Preparation

Category	Cohort	Average Cumulative UC GPA After 1st Year: UCM*	Average Cumulative UC GPA After 1st Year: All UCs	UC-UCM Difference
Average SAT Math & Verbal/Critical Reasoning				
400-999	2005	2.38	2.43	0.05
	2006	2.37	2.44	0.07
	2007	2.36	2.45	0.09
1000-1199	2005	2.68	2.78	0.10
	2006	2.49	2.81	0.32
	2007	2.64	2.82	0.18
1200-1299	2005	2.75	3.09	0.34
	2006	2.73	3.09	0.36
	2007	2.90	3.12	0.22
1400-1600	2005	2.42	3.31	0.89
(includes Unknown for UC Merced)	2006	2.41	3.32	0.91
	2007	2.51	3.36	0.85
SAT Writing**				
200-499	2005	2.46	2.54	0.08
	2006	2.38	2.49	0.11
	2007	2.40	2.52	0.12
500-599	2005	2.66	2.84	0.18
	2006	2.58	2.85	0.27
	2007	2.72	2.87	0.15
600-699	2005	2.88	3.11	0.23
	2006	2.66	3.11	0.45
	2007	2.81	3.15	0.34
700-800	2005	2.60	3.35	0.75
(includes Unknown for UC Merced)	2006	2.21	3.35	1.14
	2007	2.44	3.38	0.94
Admission by Exception				
UC Eligible	2005	2.61	2.97	0.36
	2006	2.51	2.95	0.44
	2007	2.61	2.98	0.37
Admission by Exception	2005	2.02	2.52	0.50
	2006	2.08	2.49	0.41
	2007	2.15	2.40	0.25

Source: UC StatFinder, restricted site: https://reststatfinder.ucop.edu/login.aspx
Prepared by: UC Merced Office of Institutional Planning & Analysis, 4-03-09

*These GPAs for UC Merced vary slightly from the campus' GPAs because of differences in the way UCOP defines the cohorts of new freshmen and new transfers. For purposes of determining persistence, graduation, and UC GPA, the UC StatFinder excludes freshmen and transfer enrollees who did not complete their first term of enrollment at UC and also excludes freshmen enrollees who enter UC in their high school senior year through the accelerated high school or high school honors programs.

**For 2005, SAT II Writing scores were used; From 2006 onward, the SAT Writing scores were used.

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Table 9: Transfer Retention and Graduation Rates

Category	Cohort	1st Year Retention		2nd Year Retention		2-Year Graduation		3-Year Graduation	
		UCM*	All UCs	UCM*	All UCs	UCM*	All UCs	UCM*	All UCs
Overall									
	2005	84	92	71	83	46	51	65	80
	2006	84	92	72	83	31	51		
	2007	83	92						
Prior College GPA									
2.59 and Below	2005	81	85	67	73	38	41	57	66
	2006	91	84	77	71	27	37		
	2007	74	84						
2.60-2.79	2005	91	89	75	75	56	42	69	70
	2006	71	88	59	74	18	42		
	2007	84	86						
2.80-2.99	2005	79	90	74	78	47	45	68	73
	2006	90	90	80	77	10	45		
	2007	87	88						
3.00-3.19	2005	77	90	71	79	47	45	65	76
	2006	93	92	71	81	36	47		
	2007	91	90						
3.20-3.39	2005	82	92	73	83	36	50	82	79
	2006	78	92	67	81	33	48		
	2007	79	92						
3.40-3.59	2005	92	93	75	85	42	53	58	82
	2006	88	94	88	85	50	54		
	2007	91	93						
3.60-3.79	2005	73	94	55	86	36	55	46	86
	2006	67	94	50	87	50	58		
	2007	80	93						
3.80 and Above/Unknown	2005	100	95	80	91	60	60	80	89
	2006	83	94	83	88	42	58		
	2007	83	94						

Source: UC StatFinder, restricted site: https://reststatfinder.ucop.edu/login.aspx
Prepared by: UC Merced Office of Institutional Planning & Analysis, 4-03-09

*These rates for UC Merced vary slightly from the campus' rates because of differences in the way UCOP defines the cohorts of new freshmen and new transfers. For purposes of determining persistence, graduation, and UC GPA, the UC StatFinder excludes freshmen and transfer enrollee who did not complete their first term of enrollment at UC and also excludes freshmen enrollees who enter UC in their high school senior year through the accelerated high school or high school honors programs.

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Table 10: Transfer Cumulative UC GPA After 1st Year and After 2nd Year

		After 1st Year		UC-UCM	After 2nd Year		UC-UCM
Category	**Cohort**	**UCM***	**All UCs**	**Difference**	**UCM***	**All UCs**	**Difference**
Overall							
	2005	2.82	2.97	0.15	3.09	3.06	-0.03
	2006	2.83	2.97	0.14	2.99	3.07	0.08
	2007	2.79	2.97	0.18			
Prior College GPA							
2.59 and Below	2005	2.46	2.45	-0.01	2.93	2.60	-0.33
	2006	2.49	2.43	-0.06	2.81	2.67	-0.14
	2007	2.36	2.46	0.10			
2.60-2.79	2005	2.58	2.52	-0.06	2.80	2.66	-0.14
	2006	2.48	2.52	0.04	2.85	2.66	-0.19
	2007	2.48	2.51	0.03			
2.80-2.99	2005	2.45	2.62	0.17	3.03	2.73	-0.30
	2006	2.42	2.60	0.18	2.53	2.73	0.20
	2007	3.03	2.58	-0.45			
3.00-3.19	2005	2.97	2.72	-0.25	3.12	2.84	-0.28
	2006	3.10	2.75	-0.35	2.93	2.86	-0.07
	2007	2.89	2.72	-0.17			
3.20-3.39	2005	2.99	2.89	-0.10	3.53	2.98	-0.55
	2006	2.94	2.86	-0.08	3.52	2.97	-0.55
	2007	2.92	2.87	-0.05			
3.40-3.59	2005	3.28	3.02	-0.26	3.18	3.10	-0.08
	2006	3.38	3.04	-0.34	3.23	3.12	-0.11
	2007	3.03	3.04	0.01			
3.60-3.79	2005	3.53	3.19	-0.34	3.63	3.27	-0.36
	2006	3.43	3.23	-0.20	3.70	3.29	-0.41
	2007	3.11	3.18	0.07			
3.80 and Above/Unknown	2005	3.88	3.40	-0.48	3.62	3.44	-0.18
	2006	3.18	3.37	0.19	3.14	3.42	0.28
	2007	3.43	3.37	-0.06			

Source: UC StatFinder, restricted site: https://reststatfinder.ucop.edu/login.aspx
Prepared by: UC Merced Office of Institutional Planning & Analysis, 4-03-09

*These rates for UC Merced vary slightly from the campus' rates because of differences in the way UCOP defines the cohorts of new freshmen and new transfers. For purposes of determining persistence, graduation, and UC GPA, the UC StatFinder excludes freshmen and transfer enrollees who did not complete their first term of enrollment at UC and also excludes freshmen enrollees who enter UC in their high school senior year through the accelerated high school or high school honors programs.

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Table 11: Graduate Retention & Graduation Rates										
		Retention Rates				Graduation Rates				
	N	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 10
UCM Master's Degree Cohorts										
Fall 2004	2	100.0%	100.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%				
Fall 2005	5	60.0%	40.0%	20.0%						
Fall 2006	8	75.0%	62.5%							
Fall 2007	8	62.5%								
Fall 2008	12									
UC Campuses (1996-98 cohorts)						85.0%				
UCM Doctoral Degree Cohorts										
Fall 2004	7	100.0%	85.7%	85.7%	57.1%	14.3%				
Fall 2005	19	94.7%	94.7%	89.5%						
Fall 2006	36	83.3%	83.3%							
Fall 2007	47	87.2%								
Fall 2008	57									
UC Campuses (1992-94 cohorts)			87.0%		71.0%					57.0%
Ph.D. Completion Project (1992-2003 cohorts)						10.5%	22.5%	36.1%	45.5%	56.6%

Sub-Appendix B1

2008 Graduate Student Survey Analysis

In summer 2008, the UC Merced's Graduate Studies Division conducted an online survey of continuing graduate students. The purpose of the study was to measure student satisfaction levels with various experiences as a graduate student at UC Merced. The target population included 112 continuing graduate-level students who were expected to return for the Fall 2008 term. Seventy-two students participated in the survey for a 64% response rate.

Respondents were fairly representative of the sample population, especially in terms of ethnicity and degree level (Table 1). Males and students in four of the programs (Biological Engineering, Quantitative & Systems Biology, Social & Cognitive Sciences, and World Cultures) had substantially lower response rates (52-58% vs. 67-75%) than females and students in other programs.

Over 45% of respondents expect to graduate within the next 2 years and another 45% within 2-4 years. 36% of respondents were already graduate students before enrolling at UC Merced (many having come with faculty members when they left other campuses to work at UC Merced) and 31% were employed in a field related to their major.

Satisfaction with Aspects of Program

Table 2 highlights questions related to the respondents' programs, course work, and quality of interactions with faculty, advisors, and other staff. Overall, 86% of the respondents said that they were satisfied (somewhat or very) with their program at UC Merced.

The highest levels of satisfaction with aspects of the graduate students' programs were associated with the **intellectual caliber** of the faculty (94% were at least somewhat satisfied; 63% were very satisfied) and the programs' ability to **keep pace** with recent developments (86% were at least somewhat satisfied; 47% very satisfied). Areas needing the most improvement, according to most graduate students tended to revolve around **facilities** and **training/preparation** in teaching, research methods and TA-ing (for those for whom these were applicable). Only about a third of the graduate students were very satisfied with these aspects of their program.

Over three-quarters of the graduate students who had **teaching assistantships** felt that the amount of time they were expected to spend on TA duties was about right for them (Table 3). About two-thirds said agreed that the teaching experience provided through their program was adequate preparation for an academic/teaching career (although they should be surveyed

once they are actually in those careers to see if this holds up). Two-thirds or more also agreed that they were appropriately prepared and trained before entering the classroom and 62% felt they were appropriately supervised to help them improve their teaching skills.

The graduate student respondents almost unanimously agreed that their own **research interests are incorporated** into their thesis work (97%) and over 80% agreed that the **amount of coursework seemed appropriate** to the degree (although only 17% strongly agree to this) and that they get **ongoing and constructive feedback** from their program advisor.

Satisfaction with Quality of Interactions

Several items reinforced the overall positive response given to the graduate students' **relationships with faculty**: professional relationship with faculty advisor (90% at least somewhat satisfied), students in program are treated with respect by faculty (96% agreed), good rapport between faculty and students (93% agreed), good relationships and interactions with faculty personally (99% agreed), own advisor has student's interests in mind (96% agreed) and keeps track of student's research progress (94% agreed). Most students (59%) did not think that there were **tensions among faculty** that affected students, but two out of five did. The range, by School, for students who agreed or strongly agreed that faculty tensions affected them was 26% to 56%.

The generally good **relationships among graduate students** contributed to the overall favorable climate, as perceived by them (90% agreed that the overall climate of their program is positive). They tended to agree that the students in their program are collegial (90% agreed) and that relationships and interaction with other students in their program are good (90% agreed). Very few (8%) thought that the degree of competition among students is excessive.

Rating Quality of Course Work

Although respondents tended to think the **quality of instruction** in their courses was excellent (41%) or good (39%), the **availability of courses** needed to complete their program seemed to be a big concern. A little less than half (47%) said the availability was excellent or good (only 14% saying "excellent"). Given the competing demands of the faculty for conducting their own research, teaching undergraduates as well as graduate students, and trying to keep up with designing and offering courses as the first cohorts of both undergraduate and graduate students move through their programs, it is not surprising that the need for more course options has been identified as a problem. Seven of the open-ended comments for this set of questions stressed the need for more courses.

The graduate programs at UC Merced are highly interdisciplinary, by design. Even so, many of these graduate students responded favorably to the **encouragement to take courses outside their programs**. Over 60% rated this excellent or good. It is unclear, however, whether or how this might be related to the general feeling that not enough courses are offered. At least one student commented that he/she had to take courses outside the program in order to fill all the requirements.

Program Support and University Resources

Table 4 shows the relative satisfaction rates with types of support for the graduate students' programs as well as the usage and ratings of various types of university resources. Although most respondents were generally at least somewhat satisfied with **support directly related to their programs** (feedback on their research, advice on degree requirements, preparing for exams, preparing for their thesis, selecting a thesis advisor, and standards for writing in their field as well as for academic integrity), they were less satisfied with **support for the professional or career aspects** of their program. This is true even after adjusting for those students who said these aspects were not applicable to them (presumably at their stage in the program). The majority of students planned to work in academia (28% expected to have tenure-track faculty positions, 26% expected to become postdoctoral fellows), but 22% expected to become non-faculty researchers and 9% anticipated going into engineering or manufacturing positions (Table 5). Support items that need to be addressed or re-evaluated include: advising for career options especially outside academia, assistance in developing professional contacts outside one's program, and grant-writing advice.

Some university resources are much more geared to undergraduates than to graduate students. There is no graduate student housing on campus, for example. Some of these resources perhaps should be reviewed by the campus to determine whether or when such services should be offered to graduate students. For the purposes of this report, however, services that were not used by at least 50% of the respondents will not be evaluated. This list of infrequently-used services includes: Disability Services, Learning Assistance Center, Housing, Child Care Referral Services, Student Counseling Services, Career Services Center, University Police, and Financial Aid Office.

For those remaining resources, the highest rated were Library facilities (80% responding they were excellent or good), the Graduate Division (74%), on-campus computer facilities (71%), and pretty much a tie among Web-based campus computer services, Student Health Center, health insurance offered (GSHIP), Office of the Registrar, Bobcat Bookstore, and Billing & Payment Services (all around 58-66%). Parking provoked the most negative response (only 22% responding excellent or good). The campus shuttle service and dining services had the highest "poor" ratings.

Obstacles to Academic Progress

Not surprisingly, the most frequently cited obstacle to academic progress is "**work/financial commitments**" (Table 6). Three out of every five graduate students said this was at least a minor obstacle; almost 30% said it was a major one. Next on the list were "course scheduling" (50%), "program structure or requirements" (49%), and "family obligations" (48%). There is not much the campus can do about the students' family obligations, but one recommendation from this study is to conduct a few focus groups to find ways the campus can help improve the financial/work support, as well as course availability/scheduling and program structure/requirements.

Student Life

Graduate students tend to be much more focused on their studies and less interested in organized social activities than most undergraduates. UC Merced still is very small, however, so one would expect that it would be easier to engage graduate students in campus social activities geared toward them, especially those activities sponsored by their own School or program. Table 7 shows that UC Merced graduate students tend to be **aware of activities** and three-quarters or more seem to **attend these activities** at least occasionally regardless of sponsor (campus, School, or program). Open-ended responses ranged from "I'm here to work/finish my PhD, not to socialize," to "the socializing opportunities are improving but, in a town like Merced where there are very few options, the graduate school could step in and fill this void," or "social activities in the School are generally poorly organized and advertised at the last minute, making it difficult to attend."

General Assessment

Overall, the graduate student respondents rated their academic experience at UC Merced higher than other aspects (Table 8). About four out of five rated their academic experience and their graduate program as excellent or good. A little more than half, in contrast, rated their student life experience as highly. At most, only a third gave their experiences an excellent rating. Only a third would definitely select this campus again (although almost 60 % definitely would select their same field of study) or definitely recommend this campus to someone considering their own graduate program (Table 9A). Seven percent indicated that it was at least somewhat likely or they were uncertain whether they actually would stay in their programs to degree completion (Table 9B). These would be good questions to follow up on through focus groups or targeted surveys. What would be characteristic of an excellent academic experience or an excellent graduate program? Knowing what they know now, what would make them select this same campus or their UC Merced graduate program again? Or make them highly recommend the campus and program to someone considering their field?

Post-Script

Comparative data to help put these responses in perspective are relatively difficult to find. Some institutions conduct graduate student surveys and post the results on their Web sites. However, even these are not necessarily suitable comparisons. Sometimes the questions are identical or at least very similar, but the population of students might be too different from UC Merced's to provide a good benchmark. Other times the questions are too different, or the analyses use mean response instead of percentages, or they use ratings of quality (excellent, good, etc.) instead of satisfaction or agreement/disagreement.

Following is a short listing of graduate student survey analyses at other campuses:

U. of Colorado, Boulder
http://www.colorado.edu/pba/surveys/grad/05/index.htm

Michigan State U., East Lansing
http://grad.msu.edu/survey2k.htm

U. of Central Florida
http://www.irweb2.ucf.edu/oeas_survey/gss/gd_index.htm

State U. of West Georgia
http://www.westga.edu/~cogs/printable/GraduateSurveySpring2002.pdf

Kent State U.
http://www.kent.edu/aqip/Surveys/graduatesurvey.cfm

U. of Minnesota
http://www.cogs.umn.edu/survres.pdf

Stanford U.
http://news-service.stanford.edu/news/2005/february23/report-022305.html

Northeastern U.
http://www.northeastern.edu/oir/pdfs/01gss.pdf

Georgia State U.
http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwire/pdf/2003-2005%20APR%20GRADUATE%20STUDENT.pdf

Table 1. Survey Population and Respondent Demographic Information					
	Population		Respondents		Response Rate
	N	%	N	%	%
Total	**112**	**100.0%**	**72**	**100.0%**	**64.3%**
Gender					
Female	43	38.4%	32	44.4%	74.4%
Male	69	61.6%	40	55.6%	58.0%
Ethnicity					
African-American	1	0.9%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	7	6.3%	5	6.9%	71.4%
Hispanic	12	10.7%	9	12.5%	75.0%
White	38	33.9%	28	38.9%	73.7%
International	34	30.4%	21	29.2%	61.8%
Unknown	20	18%	9	12.5%	45.0%
Degree Sought					
Master's of Arts	3	2.7%	3	4.2%	100.0%
Master's of Science	14	12.5%	10	13.9%	71.4%
Doctorate	95	84.8%	59	81.9%	62.1%
Program					
Applied Mathematics	7	6.3%	5	6.9%	71.4%
Biological Engineering	7	6.3%	4	5.6%	57.1%
Electrical Engineering	14	12.5%	11	15.3%	78.6%
Environmental Systems	20	17.9%	15	20.8%	75.0%
Mechanical Engineering	3	2.7%	2	2.8%	66.7%
Physics & Chemistry	10	8.9%	7	9.7%	70.0%
Quantitative & Systems Biology	23	20.5%	12	16.7%	52.2%
Social & Cognitive Sciences	16	14.3%	9	12.5%	56.3%
World Cultures	12	10.7%	7	9.7%	58.3%

Table 2. Program, Quality of Interactions, and Course Work

Satisfaction with	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Very/Somewhat Satisfied	Not Applicable
Overall satisfaction with program	**43%**	**43%**	**13%**	**1%**	**86%**	0%
Program						
Intellectual caliber of faculty	63%	32%	4%	1%	94%	0%
Program's ability to keep pace with recent developments in field	47%	39%	13%	1%	86%	1%
Adequacy of facilities	30%	41%	20%	10%	70%	0%
Quality of graduate-level teaching by faculty	44%	31%	20%	4%	76%	3%
Training in research methods	36%	38%	16%	10%	74%	3%
Amount of financial support	50%	31%	9%	10%	81%	1%
Teaching and TA preparation	35%	40%	15%	9%	75%	10%

Agreement with	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Not Applicable
Program						
Financial support for graduate students is distributed fairly	25%	48%	21%	6%	73%	0%
Staff in program are knowledgeable about rules and regulations that affect graduate students	31%	35%	21%	14%	65%	0%
There is a sense of intellectual community in program	24%	54%	16%	7%	77%	0%
Program structure encourages student collaboration or teamwork	13%	51%	26%	10%	64%	0%
Amount of coursework seems appropriate to the degree	17%	65%	14%	4%	82%	0%
Feedback on progress toward degree from advisor is ongoing and constructive	51%	31%	17%	1%	82%	0%
Own research interests are incorporated into my thesis work	53%	44%	3%	0%	97%	0%

Satisfaction with	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Very/Somewhat Satisfied	Not Applicable
Quality of Interactions						
Advising & guidance	49%	32%	13%	7%	81%	0%
Professional relationship with faculty advisor	71%	19%	8%	1%	90%	0%
Helpfulness of staff in School or program	46%	38%	11%	6%	83%	0%

Faculty effort in helping to find employment	40%	29%	14%	17%	69%	51%
Opportunity to interact with across disciplines	31%	42%	16%	10%	73%	7%

Agreement with	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Not Applicable
Overall, the climate of my program is positive	**44%**	**46%**	**8%**	**1%**	**90%**	**0%**
Quality of Interactions						
Students in program are treated with respect by faculty	56%	40%	3%	1%	96%	0%
Rapport between faculty and graduate students in program is good	56%	38%	7%	0%	93%	0%
Own relationships and interactions with faculty are good	68%	31%	1%	0%	99%	0%
There are tensions among faculty that affect students	23%	18%	42%	17%	41%	0%
Students in program are collegial	42%	48%	7%	3%	90%	0%
Relationships and interaction with other students in program are good	55%	35%	7%	3%	90%	0%
Degree of competition among students is excessive	0%	8%	61%	31%	8%	0%
Am satisfied with amoung of time spent with advisor	53%	33%	14%	0%	86%	0%
My advisor has my interests in mind	60%	36%	4%	0%	96%	0%
There is a person or office I trust to report perceived abuse or misconduct in my program by my advisor or committee member	31%	40%	19%	10%	71%	0%
My advisor keeps track of my research progress and will help determine when I have accomplished enough work for my degree	57%	38%	6%	0%	94%	0%

Rating	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Exellent/ Good	Not Applicable
Course Work						
Overall quality of course work in program	**26%**	**47%**	**22%**	**4%**	74%	**0%**
Availability of courses needed to complete program	14%	33%	35%	18%	47%	0%
Quality of instruction in courses	41%	39%	20%	0%	80%	0%
Encouragement to take courses outside program	16%	45%	17%	23%	61%	0%

Table 3. TA Experience						
Agreement with	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Strongly Agree/ Agree**	**Not Applicable**
As a teaching assistant, I was appropriately prepared and trained before entering the classroom.	36%	33%	16%	15%	69%	15%
As a teaching assistant, I was appropriately supervised to help improve my teaching skills.	25%	37%	22%	17%	62%	17%
The teaching experience available through my program is adequate preparation for an academic/teaching career.	24%	42%	18%	16%	66%	13%
The amount of time expected of me as a TA was about right.	25%	53%	14%	8%	78%	10%

Table 4. Program Support and University Resources

Satisfaction with:	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Very/Somewhat Satisfied	Not Applicable
Program Support						
Courses, workshops or orientations on teaching	15%	48%	25%	13%	62%	14%
Assistance in developing professional contacts outside program	24%	29%	27%	20%	53%	18%
Feedback on your research	51%	36%	11%	1%	87%	1%
Advice on:						
Writing grant proposals	21%	30%	27%	21%	52%	20%
Publishing your work	38%	30%	18%	15%	67%	14%
Career options within academia	24%	36%	24%	17%	59%	17%
Career options outside academia	11%	33%	35%	21%	44%	20%
Research positions	18%	38%	34%	11%	55%	21%
Degree requirements	28%	42%	21%	9%	71%	0%
Preparing for examinations	32%	40%	22%	6%	72%	10%
Developing your thesis or dissertation proposal	34%	42%	20%	5%	75%	9%
Process required to select a thesis advisor	34%	36%	17%	13%	70%	24%
Standards for academic writing in your field	30%	41%	21%	8%	71%	7%
How to avoid plagiarism and other violations of the standards of academic integrity	37%	43%	11%	10%	79%	11%

How Frequently	Frequently	Occasionally	Never	Frequently/Occasionally
University Resources				
Library facilities	54%	44%	1%	99%
On-campus computer facilities	25%	49%	25%	75%
Web-based campus computer services (e.g., registration)	67%	32%	1%	99%
Graduate Division	22%	60%	18%	82%
Student Health Center	17%	51%	32%	68%
Health insurance (GSHIP)	27%	51%	21%	79%
Financial Aid Office	8%	36%	56%	44%
Career Services Center	1%	22%	76%	24%
Student Counseling Services	3%	11%	86%	14%
Child Care Referral Services	3%	4%	93%	7%
Disability Services	0%	3%	97%	3%

Learning Assistance Center	1%	4%	94%	6%
Billing and Payment Services	11%	69%	19%	81%
University Police	1%	29%	69%	31%
Housing	0%	6%	94%	6%
Office of the Registrar	14%	79%	7%	93%
Parking for students	35%	39%	26%	74%
Campus shuttle bus service (Cat Track)	32%	25%	43%	57%
Dining Services	31%	54%	15%	85%
Bookstore	19%	74%	7%	93%

Quality of experience with	**Excellent**	**Good**	**Fair**	**Poor**	**Exellent/ Good**	**Not Applicable**
University Resources						
Library facilities	31%	49%	13%	7%	80%	1%
On-campus computer facilities	28%	43%	22%	7%	71%	18%
Web-based campus computer services (e.g., registration)	28%	38%	28%	6%	66%	1%
Graduate Division	29%	45%	24%	2%	74%	10%
Student Health Center	21%	43%	23%	13%	64%	33%
Health insurance (GSHIP)	16%	43%	35%	7%	59%	18%
Financial Aid Office	11%	58%	8%	22%	69%	48%
Career Services Center	10%	30%	30%	30%	40%	71%
Student Counseling Services	8%	46%	15%	31%	54%	81%
Child Care Referral Services	0%	25%	0%	75%	25%	88%
Disability Services	0%	50%	0%	50%	50%	94%
Learning Assistance Center	0%	50%	17%	33%	50%	91%
Billing and Payment Services	9%	49%	29%	14%	58%	16%
University Police	10%	48%	32%	10%	58%	55%
Housing	9%	27%	18%	46%	36%	84%
Office of the Registrar	21%	43%	28%	8%	64%	6%
Parking for students	5%	17%	34%	44%	22%	10%
Campus shuttle bus service (Cat Track)	14%	26%	23%	37%	40%	39%
Dining Services	6%	41%	27%	25%	48%	10%
Bookstore	10%	53%	34%	3%	63%	3%

Table 5. Post Graduate School Plans

Professional Plans	Percentage
Engineering, Manufacturing	9%
Non-tenure-track faculty	4%
Tenure-track faculty	28%
Researcher (non faculty)	22%
Teacher	4%
Analyst	1%
Postdoctoral fellow	26%
Pursue another graduate degree (not at UC Merced)	6%
	100%
Type of Employer	
4-year college or university	54%
Community or junior college	4%
Elementary, secondary or special focus school	1%
Industry or business	21%
Hospital or clinic	0%
Non-profit organization or foundation	1%
U.S. (federal) government or your home country if not the U.S.	6%
State or local government	0%
National Laboratory	0%
Self-employed	0%
Unknown	13%
	100%

Table 6. Obstacles to Academic Progress

Rate extent of obstacle	Major	Minor	Not	Major/Minor
Work/financial commitments	29%	31%	40%	60%
Family obligations	16%	32%	52%	48%
Availability of faculty	7%	31%	63%	38%
Program structure or requirements	8%	40%	51%	49%
Dissertation topic/research	8%	32%	60%	40%
Course scheduling	8%	42%	50%	50%
Immigration laws or regulations	3%	10%	87%	13%
Other	5%	7%	88%	12%

Table 7. Student Life

How Frequently	Frequently	Occasionally	Never	Frequently/Occasionally
Social activites occur on campus?				
Organized university-wide social activities	18%	68%	14%	86%
Organized social activities within your school	23%	61%	17%	83%
Organized social activities within your advisor/research group	10%	62%	28%	72%
Do you attend social activities on campus?				0%
Organized university-wide social activities	11%	63%	26%	74%
Organized social activities within your school	24%	56%	20%	80%
Organized social activities within your advisor/research group	27%	46%	27%	73%

Table 8. General Assessment					
Rating	**Excellent**	**Good**	**Fair**	**Poor**	**Exellent/ Good**
Your academic experience at UC Merced	33%	50%	14%	3%	83%
Your student life experience at UC Merced	11%	45%	27%	17%	56%
Your graduate program at UC Merced	31%	49%	17%	4%	79%
Your overall experience at UC Merced	25%	53%	21%	1%	78%

Table 9A. Overall Evaluation of Campus and Program					
Likelihood of doing it again:	**Definitely**	**Probably**	**Probably Not**	**Definitely Not**	**Definitely/ Probably**
Select this same university?	32%	39%	18%	11%	71%
Select the same field of study?	59%	34%	7%	0%	93%
Recommend this university to someone considering your graduate program?	33%	38%	25%	4%	71%

Table 9B. Likelihood of Staying in Program						
Likelihood	**Very Likely**	**Somewhat Likely**	**Somewhat Unlikely**	**Highly Unlikely**	**Definitely/ Probably**	**Uncertain**
Stay in program until receive ultimate degree objective?	79%	14%	3%	1%	93%	3%