

2014 Pre-Arrival Assessment Results Findings

Demographic Information of Respondents

- Gender: Male 52.9% Female 47.1%
- Age: 70% were in the 17-24 age range, 22% in the 25-30 age range, and 9% were in the 31 and higher age range
- Home Country: the majority of the respondents reported China as their home country (29%), followed by India (9%), and South Korea (8%). A total of 96 home countries were reported.
- Level of Study: 38% reported being undergraduate students, 37% being Master's students, followed by Doctoral students (14%) and EAP students (11%). Among undergraduates 67% reported being freshmen and 33% being transfer students.
- UC Berkeley College or School: Among the undergraduate respondents, 72% were enrolled in the College of Letters and Science and 27% of the graduate respondents were from the College of Engineering followed by Berkeley Law School (25%).
- High School Education: 81% reported having studied in a high school in their home country. 8% reported having gone to a high school in a country other than their home country. 11% reported having gone to an international high school. 37% indicated English as the primary language of instruction in their high schools.
- Family Income Level: 61% reported being middle income level, and 19% reported being higher income level.
- 22% of the respondents reported having a family member who have studied at a university or college in the US, while 77% did not.
- 80% of the respondents indicated that they will attend Berkeley International Office's International Student Orientation, and 47% indicated that they will attend their academic department-hosted orientation.

Primary tools used to access information from abroad

68% of the respondents indicated that they primarily use computers to access information, followed by mobile phones (28%) and tablets (4%).

Restricted websites in home countries

Respondents indicated that they are restricted from accessing the following websites:

1. Facebook (27%)
2. YouTube (27%)
3. Google search engine (21%)
4. Google mail (20%)
5. Google drive (18%)
6. Berkeley International Office webinars (3%)

70% of the respondents reported not having any restrictions on accessing the above websites.

Additionally, respondents from China indicated they are restricted from accessing the following:

1. Facebook (89%)
2. YouTube (88%)
3. Google products (65%)

Most important information once admitted to UC Berkeley

When asked to rank what information was most important to them once admitted to UC Berkeley, the respondents ranked the following as most important:

1. 68% - Obtaining an I-20 or DS-2019
2. 44% - Applying for a visa
3. 35% - Financial issues
4. 10% - Cultural adjustment

Resources used while preparing for UC Berkeley

Undergraduates reported the following as the most relied upon sources in preparing for UC Berkeley:

1. Respondent's UC Berkeley College (66%)
2. MyBerkeleyApp (63%)
3. Berkeley International Office (62%)
4. UC Berkeley website (56%)
5. Respondent's academic department (46%)

Graduates reported the following as the most relied upon sources in preparing for UC Berkeley:

1. Berkeley International Office (79%)
2. UC Berkeley website (78%)
3. Respondent's academic department (63%)
4. Graduate Division (59%)
5. Other UC Berkeley students or alumni (58%)

EAPs reported the following as the most relied upon sources in preparing for UC Berkeley:

1. UCEAP and Berkeley Study Abroad (86%)
2. Berkeley International Office (64%)
3. UC Berkeley website (62%)
4. Respondent's UC Berkeley College (48%)
5. Search engines (48%)

Quality of information sent by BIO

When asked about how helpful the information coming from Berkeley International Office had been, most students answered that Obtaining an I-20/DS-2019 (80.8%), Applying for a visa stamp in your passport (67.2%), and Academic issues (61.6%) were 'Helpful' to 'Very Helpful.'

Of those that were considered 'Not Helpful' to 'Somewhat Helpful,' Connecting with Others (43.4%), Finding Housing (40.3%), and Cultural Adjustment (36.7%) were ranked the highest.

While students in general seem to want more help Finding Housing, more undergraduates (55.5%) than graduates (45.6%) indicated that the information about Finding Housing was 'Helpful' to 'Very Helpful.'

Similarly, more undergraduates (65.8%) than graduates (57.6%) indicated that information about Academic Issues was 'Helpful' to 'Very Helpful.'

Tools used to access information sent by BIO

The most used means of accessing information from Berkeley International Office were:

- Email (81.5%)
- Website (57.5%)
- PDF email attachments (56%)

The least used means of accessing information from Berkeley International Office was:

- Skype (1.9%)

Most students prefer to receive information from BIO via:

- Email (93.7%)
- Website (67.7%)
- Online tutorials (61.8%)
- Social Media (44.6%)
- In-person (43.6%)

The least preferred methods of receiving information were:

- Skype (7.5%)
- Phone advice (13.6%)
- Paper/Mailings (19.7%)

Social media were more popular among undergraduates (50.3%) than graduates (39.3%)

Google Docs were more popular among graduates (33.4%) than undergraduates (20.8%). Note: Google products blocked in China.

Quantity of information sent by BIO

When asked if information received from BIO had been 'too much,' sufficient,' or 'not enough,' most students (80.3%) chose 'sufficient.'

Additionally, there were four comments around Housing and that there needs to be more and earlier (right after official admission) information. One student suggested a student panel.

There were nine comments around e-mails being ill-organized, not concise, and cluttered. Although information was sufficient, the lack of organization seems to have made it difficult for some to differentiate between "crucial, relevant, and less relevant information."

Intended Visa Status

Most students (81.97%) will be F-1 visa holders while studying at UC Berkeley. Only 14.1% will be J-1 visa holders sponsored by UC Berkeley. And only 1.5% will be J-1 visa holders from a third party.

Visa Application Processing Stage

When asked what stage students were in the NIF and Visa application process, 80% of the respondents had completed the visa application procedures and had either obtained or were waiting to obtain their visa stamp in their passport.

Source of Information about accessing the NIF

When asked how they found out about the NIF Requirement:

- Majority of the students indicated that they found out about the process through BIO (45% through BIO emails, 40% through BIO website, 6% by contacting the Office)
- 34% of respondents found out about the NIF through MyBerkeleyApp.

Helpful resources about the NIF

When asked about the resources they found helpful while completing the NIF:

- 76% of the students found instructions within the online NIF helpful to very helpful.
- 53% of the students found email communication with BIO helpful to very helpful.
- 36% of the student indicated that they did not use the NIF Tutorial
- 80% of the students did not use Skype to obtain information

Resources for visa application

When asked how helpful they found BIO resources while applying for their visas:

- 58% of the students found NIF email receipt with “Steps to Obtain your Visa” PDF attachment helpful to very helpful. 55% of the students found visa information on the BIO website helpful to very helpful
- 52% of the students found the Arrival Checklist BIO mails with their I-20/DS-2019s helpful to very helpful
- 56% of the students did not use “Applying for Your Student Visa” BIO webinar or video.

When asked about other resources (non-BIO) they found helpful while applying for a visa:

- 63% of the students found internet search for information helpful to very helpful.
- 51% of the respondents getting information from the US Embassy or Consulate helpful to very helpful.
- Significant amount of students (47%) found information they received from friends and family helpful to very helpful.

Difficulty of searching for information

Overall, students (87%) did not find searching for information about visa applications challenging.

However, comments left by 12 students indicated that the information about the visa application process was conflicting and confusing at times. 21 respondents complained about the information being scattered across many websites as well as the lack of a comprehensive checklist with all the steps necessary for them to obtain their visas. Four students asked for instructions on how to fill up the DS-160 visa application form. Two LLM students said they were not clear whether they should pay the SEVIS fee again for their second term at UC Berkeley.

Importance of getting additional information

When asked to rate the importance of getting additional information on certain topics:

- 54% of the respondents emphasized the importance of getting more information on what to bring to the visa application process.
- 49% of the respondents thought it would be important to get more information from BIO about the visa waiting times.
- 48% thought it would be important to get more information about how to complete the DS-160.

Preparing for the UC Berkeley Experience

Regarding the pre-arrival information BIO provides students on adjusting to, navigating, and preparing for the UC Berkeley Experience:

- Over 80% of those who accessed the information agreed that it provided them practical tips on how to be academically successful at Berkeley, introducing them to resources and encouraging them to reach out to BIO advisors and services for help.
 - Junior transfers answered the same way, but at even higher percents.
- When asked why they would reach out to BIO advisor, about 50% of the respondents indicated their top 5 topics would be: where to go to get what I need, career advice, academic difficulty, immigration questions and financial issues.
- The top three challenges new students expect to encounter most are all related to academics: understanding and meeting professor expectations (63%), amount of academic work (59%), and succeeding academically (55%) (followed closely by time management (51%) and cultural adjustment (48%)).
 - The top two challenges for every student group (filtered by education level, income level, and gender) were related to academics.

When answering what additional information would be helpful to receive prior to beginning studies at UCB, 25% of students who provided a comment indicated the information provided was sufficient while 481 respondents indicated they would like more information in the following 10 categories:

- Cultural or personal adjustment (16%)
 - Stress, health and time management, understanding and navigating US culture, roommate issue/making friends, more information for students with families, food and restaurants
- Academic requirements/culture (15%)
 - Academic advice:
 - Degree requirements, number of units to take, where to go to get advice, how to build a schedule, waitlist issues, how to set and achieve goals
 - How to be academically successful
 - Managing workload, what and how to access resources, videos from students on how to succeed academically and a sample class, how to handle the rigor
 - Understanding how the US academic system works
- Other (15%)
 - Giant checklist/calendar of everything you need to do pre-arrival and what to do once you get here (one To Do list)
 - “All the procedures for becoming a UCB student”
 - How to use or waive SHIP

- What to pack
- How to get from the airports to campus
- More student testimonials
- Adjustment to the local area (12%)
 - Where to shop, how to use transportation, cell phone and bank accounts, climate, financial advising, where to get textbooks
- Choosing classes (10%)
 - Navigating course selection
 - 137A vs. 137B, how to choose and register for courses, which courses to pick, first semester schedule building, course recommendations, electives
 - How to use Telebears
- Housing (8%)
 - How and when to apply for housing, housing options near campus and how to find it, area crime reports
- Financial questions or concerns (7%)
 - How and when to make tuition payments (and how to wire/transfer money), CARS, financial aid opportunities,
- Working/career questions (7%)
 - Career planning, job and internship opportunities, on campus work
- Immigration (6%)
 - Visa application instructions, timeline for obtaining I-20/DS 2019 and Visa, employment
- Clubs or leadership activities (3%)
 - What clubs, sports, and other leadership opportunities are available