



## How UC Davis Students Got to Know Faculty Members

By Yong Xiong

Of 1,705 juniors and seniors who responded to the survey, about one quarter knew a faculty member well enough to ask for a letter of recommendation.



Getting to know faculty members well enough to ask for letters of recommendation can be a daunting task for UC Davis undergraduates. Not only is UC Davis academically challenging, but the quarter system also imposes time constraints for students and faculty members to interact during class sessions. Therefore, students may need to find other ways to interact with faculty members if they wish to get to know faculty members and vice versa. In January 2005, the following survey was sent all UC Davis juniors and seniors via MyUCDavis:

*Scholarships and post-graduate programs require letters of recommendation from faculty members who can evaluate the student's academic and/or professional potential to succeed. Do you know a faculty member well enough to ask for a letter of recommendation?*

If the students answered "no" the survey was completed, but if the students answered "yes" they were presented with the next question:

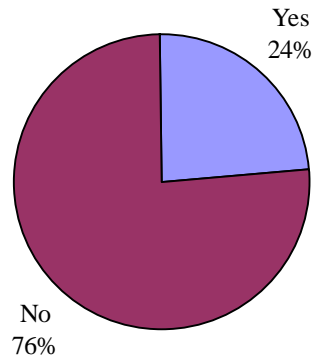
*How did you get to know the faculty member? Check all that apply.*

- Honors Program (Integrated Studies, Davis Honors Challenge, etc.)*
- Research Projects*
- Student Clubs (academic, Greek, cultural, etc.)*
- Sports Participation (UC Davis Athletics, Intramural, etc.)*
- Job/Internship (paid)*
- Job/Internship (volunteer)*
- Faculty Office Hours*
- Classroom Participation*
- Other*

### RESULTS

Of the 1,705 juniors and seniors who responded to the survey, about one quarter (24%) knew a faculty member well enough to ask for a letter of recommendation (Figure 1, p.2).

**Figure 1: Do you know a faculty member well enough to ask for a letter of recommendation?**

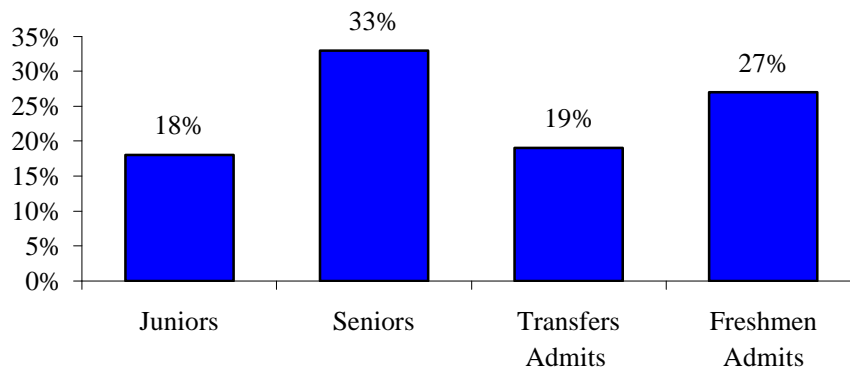


Source: SARI Report #346

Subgroup analysis revealed no statistically significant differences in this response by sex, ethnicity or college. Males and females, Caucasians and Asians, and students in the Colleges of Letters and Science, Engineering, and Agricultural and Environmental Sciences were equally likely to know faculty members whom they can ask for letters of recommendation.

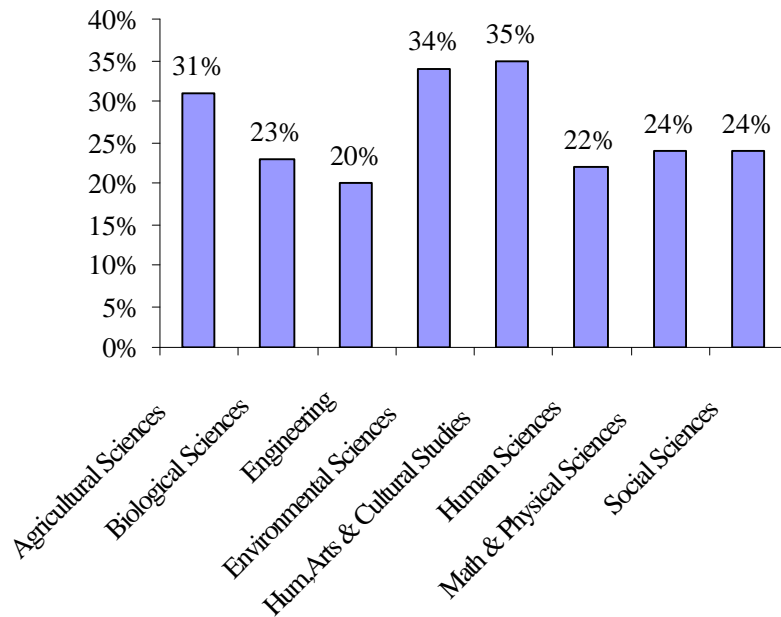
However, there were statistically significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) by class status, admission status and division of academic major (Figure 2 and Figure 3, p.3). Seniors were more likely to know faculty members than juniors and undergraduates admitted as freshmen were more likely to know faculty members than undergraduates admitted as transfer students. Students in the divisions of Agricultural Sciences, Environmental Sciences, and Humanities, Arts, and Cultural Studies were most likely to know faculty members whereas students in the College of Engineering were least likely.

**Figure 2: Percentage Who Know a Faculty Member by Class Status and Admission Type**



Source: SARI Report #346

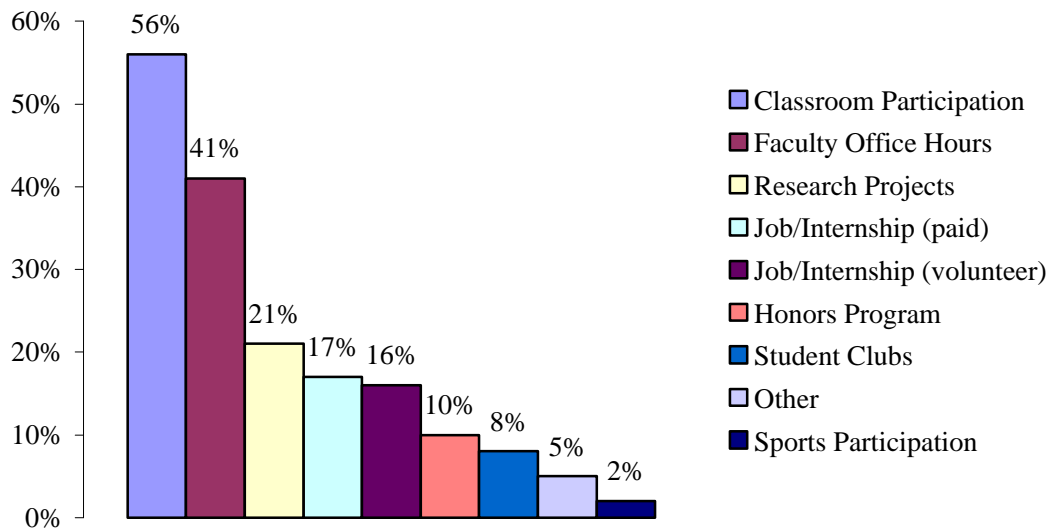
**Figure 3: Division of Academic Majors**



Source: SARI Report #346

How did juniors and seniors get to know faculty members well enough to ask for letters of recommendation? The three most frequently reported ways in which students interacted with faculty members were by classroom participation, faculty office hours, and research projects (Figure 4). Smaller percentages of students interacted with faculty members through student clubs, sports activity, and other methods such as walking with faculty members to and from class.

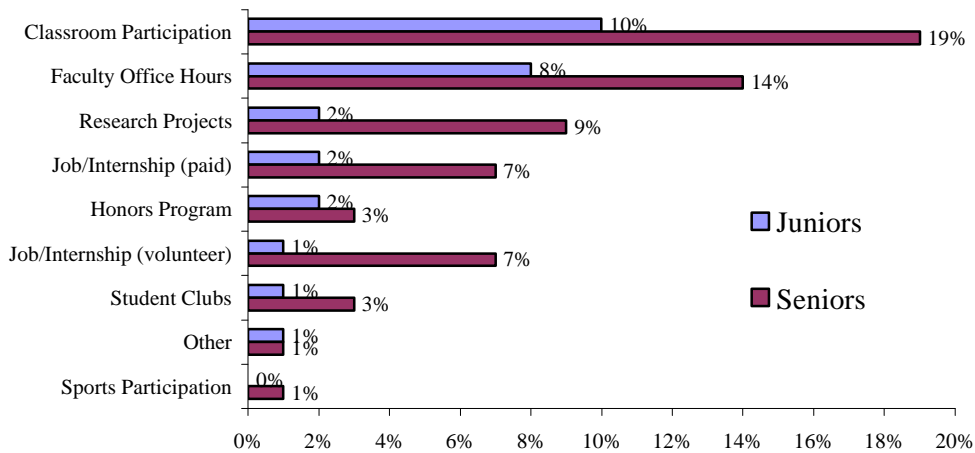
**Figure 4: How Students Got to Know Faculty Members (Multiple Responses)**



Source: SARI Report #346

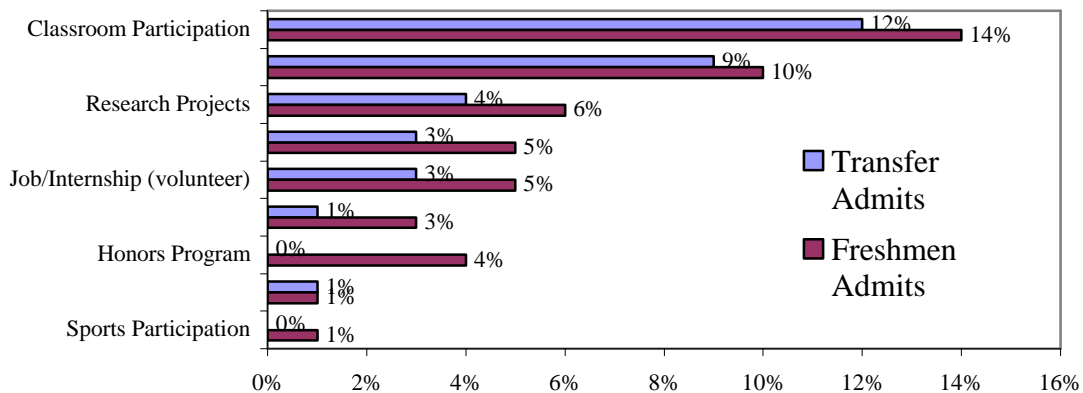
Figure 5 illustrates that seniors were more likely than juniors to know faculty members through each means ranging from classroom participation to sports. The same was true for admitted freshmen versus transfer students in Figure 6; however, it is important to understand that admitted transfer students had less time to establish a relationship with faculty and fewer opportunities to be involved in programs such as the Davis Honors Challenge. Analysis by division (Table 1, p.5) revealed that students in the Agricultural Sciences division were more likely than those with majors in other divisions to have established a relationship with a faculty member via research projects or internships. Likewise, students with majors in the division of Humanities, Arts & Cultural Studies most often reported getting to know faculty through classroom participation.

**Figure 5: How Juniors and Seniors Know Faculty Members**



Source: SARI Report #346

**Figure 6: How Freshmen Admits and Transfer Students Got to Know Faculty Members**



Source: SARI Report #346

**Table 1: How Students Got to Know Faculty Members by Division**

	Job Internship (paid)	Classroom Participation	Research Projects	Job Internship (volunteer)	Faculty Office Hours	Honors Program	Student Clubs	Sports
Agricultural Sciences	16%	15%	13%	13%	12%	4%	2%	0%
Biological Sciences	4%	9%	5%	5%	7%	3%	2%	0%
Engineering	5%	12%	6%	2%	10%	2%	4%	0%
Environmental Sciences	6%	17%	6%	9%	4%	4%	6%	2%
Humanities, Arts & Cultural Studies	5%	27%	7%	6%	12%	3%	2%	1%
Human Sciences	1%	13%	3%	2%	12%	1%	0%	0%
Math & Physical Sciences	0%	16%	5%	0%	13%	3%	3%	0%
Social Sciences	3%	15%	4%	3%	12%	2%	2%	1%

Source: SARI Report #346