Undergraduate Interest in Pursuing a Neuroscience Major

By Mary Lehman

Over 40% of those UC Davis undergraduates currently majoring in Psychology, Neurobiology Physiology and Behavior, or Human Development would change their majors to study Neuroscience if it became available as an undergraduate major, according to QuickSurvey results. A science of the brain, spinal cord and peripheral nervous system, Neuroscience can be described as a study of brain development, sensation and perception, learning, sleep, stress, aging and neurological and psychiatric disorders.

The QuickSurvey from which these data were derived posed the question “If UC Davis offered an undergraduate Neuroscience major, would you be interested in changing your major to this one?” and was made available to undergraduates in Psychology, Neurobiology Physiology and Behavior, or Human Development on the My.UCDavis Web portal during fall quarter, 2003.

Interest in pursuing this major was lower for sophomores and juniors than for freshmen, yet seniors expressed nearly as much interest in the idea as did freshmen (figure 1).

Responses varied widely by the current major of the respondent. Interest in a Neuroscience major was expressed by 72% of Neurobiology Physiology and Behavior majors but only by 18% of Human Development majors; Psychology majors fell in between at 36%.

Figure 1

Would You Change Your Major to Neuroscience?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Responding</th>
<th>Fresh</th>
<th>Soph</th>
<th>Junior</th>
<th>Senior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class Level