

Why Do Students Choose UCLA?

Student Affairs Briefing

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Judith Richlin-Klonsky, Director

Ruan Hoe, Principal Administrative Analyst

sairo@saonet.ucla.edu

<http://sairo.ucla.edu>

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I. Purpose of this briefing

Understanding the paths that students have taken to UCLA can help us provide the best possible service to current students, as well as to continue to recruit and enroll outstanding students in the future. The purpose of this mini-report, “Why Do Students Choose UCLA?” presented by the Student Affairs Information and Research Office (SAIRO), is to disseminate information on what incoming first-year undergraduate students tell us about their decision to come to UCLA: What attracted them? Who influenced their decision? What factors did they consider in making their selection?

II. Data sources

The data on which this briefing is based come from the “Freshman Survey” conducted each summer by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), in conjunction with the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) and the American Council on Education (ACE). The survey addresses topics such as: parents’ background, intended major and degree aspirations, racial background, reported income and financial aid, disability, activities within the last year (academic, personal, and social), and attitudes.

Because the “Freshman Survey” is administered during the orientation students attend in the summer *prior* to beginning their first year, it does not inform us about their academic careers at UCLA, their use of student services, or their observations about campus life. However, it is a rich source of information about the backgrounds they bring to campus and their expectations of their college experiences.

The “Freshman Survey” is also valuable because UCLA has participated in the Freshman Survey for almost all the past 27 years, allowing us to identify trends in incoming student responses over time. Although not all questions have been asked each year, most key areas have been consistently addressed. Contact Judith Richlin-Klonsky, SAIRO director, to discuss exploration of additional areas.

The data used in this briefing include responses through Fall 2001, focusing on the 2001 incoming cohort. In the Fall of 2001, 61% of 4,081 incoming first year students took part in the survey.

III. Highlights

- UCLA’s **academic reputation** (83%) and the belief that its **graduates get good jobs** (76%) are the reasons most often ranked as “very important” in selecting UCLA.
- Other reasons often ranked as “very important” are the belief that UCLA **graduates go on to good graduate schools** (57%) and the school’s **good social reputation** (43%).

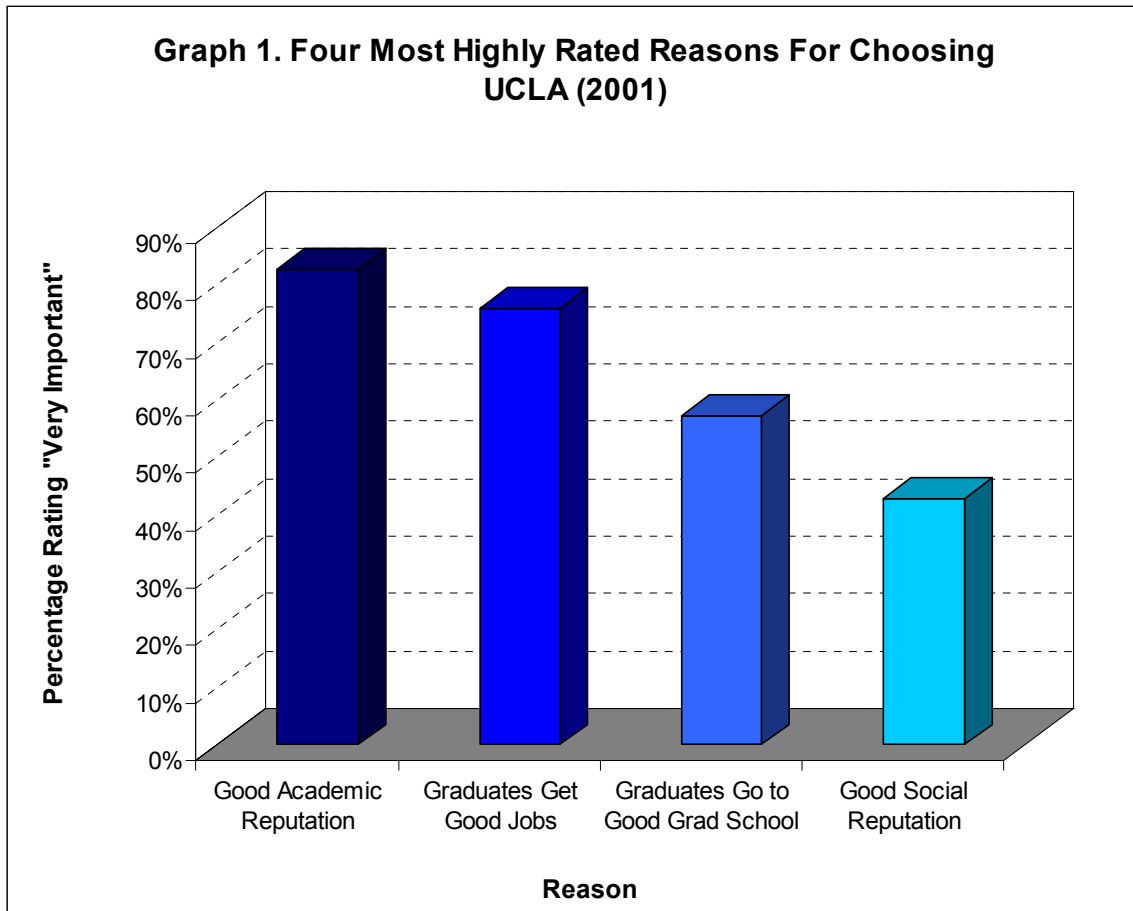
- Between 17 and 28% of respondents indicated that **low tuition, being offered financial assistance, the proximity of the campus to their homes, and the size of the campus** were “very important” factors in their decisions.
- Ten-year trends (1991-2001) show five factors increasingly ranked as “very important” in students’ selection of UCLA. Belief that UCLA **graduates get good jobs** was ranked by as “very important” by over 50% of respondents throughout the time period (53% to 67%). Factors ranked as “very important” by a relatively smaller proportion of students nonetheless showed upward trends: **teacher’s advice** (28% to 35%); **counselor’s advice** (28% to 34%); UCLA’s **ranking in a national magazine** (20% to 28%).
- Students rarely ranked the **wishes of relatives** (9%), **recommendations of high school counselors** (5%), or **advice of teachers** (4%) as “very important” in their decision to attend UCLA. These rankings have remained quite stable over the last five years.

About SAIRO

SAIRO’s activities support Student Affairs ongoing efforts to “promote the academic success of UCLA students and to enhance the quality of campus life.” Toward these ends, SAIRO designs, conducts, and presents reports based on surveys, individual and group interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic observation of UCLA students. The office provides technical consultation and support to Student Affairs divisions and units regarding the design and implementation of research and evaluation projects, and the interpretation of research results. It makes the information it gathers or analyzes accessible to Student Affairs staff, as well as serving as a link to other sources of information. As an institutional research office, SAIRO seeks to be a “voice of student needs” in Student Affairs, campus, and UC system wide program planning and policy development.

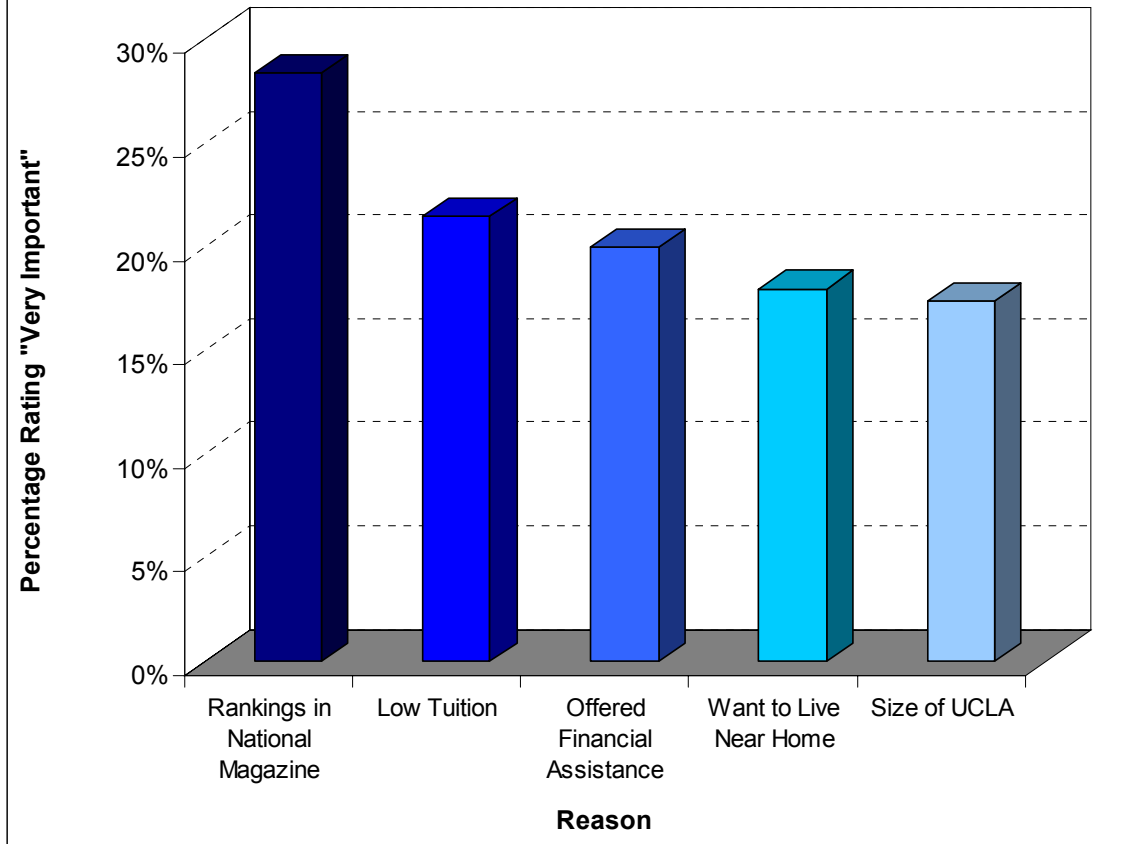
For more information about the UCLA Student Affairs organization and about SAIRO, visit <http://www.sairo.ucla.edu> or contact Judith Richlin-Klonsky, SAIRO Director, jrichlin@saonet.ucla.edu.

IV. Graphs



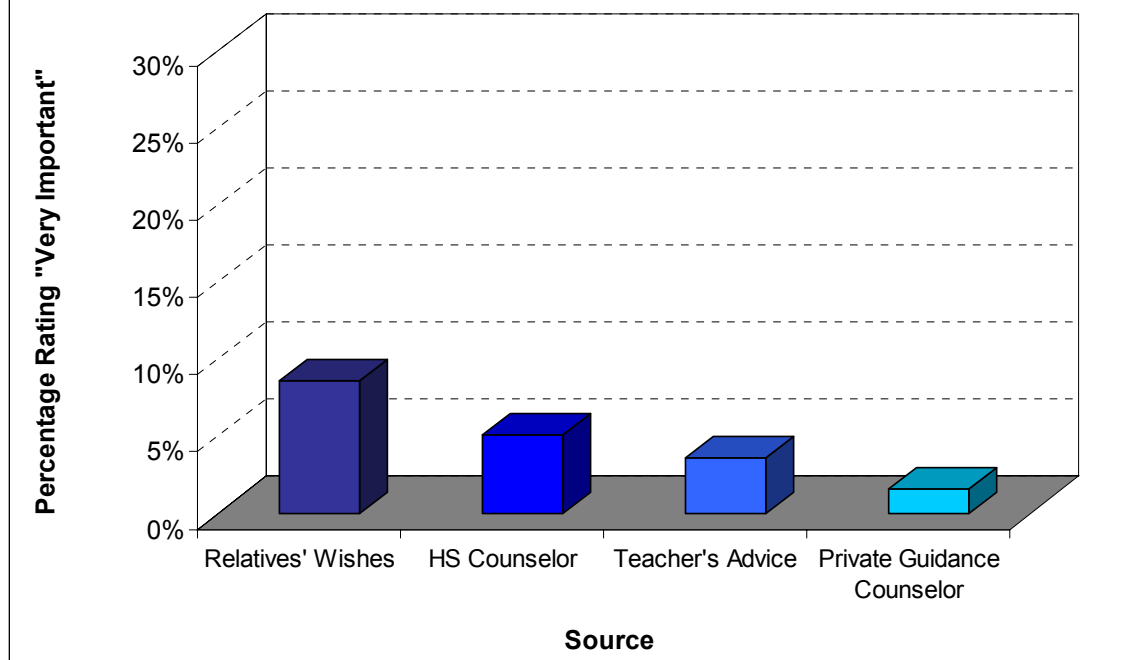
The four most highly ranked reasons for which students in the 2001 cohort chose UCLA are its good academic reputation, graduates getting good jobs, graduates going to good graduate schools, and good social reputation.

Graph 2. Other Reasons For Choosing UCLA (2001)

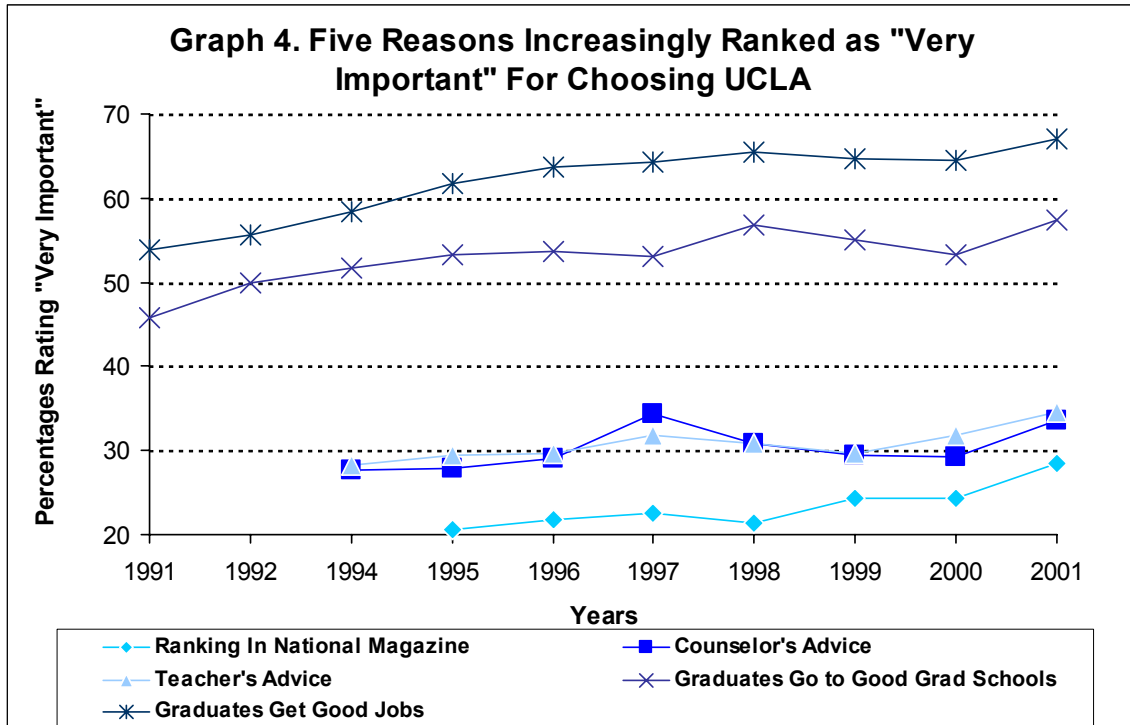


Between 17 and 28% of respondents indicated that low tuition, being offered financial assistance, the proximity of the campus to their homes, and the size of the campus were "very important" factors in their decisions.

Graph 3. Sources of Advice in College Selection (2001)



Students rarely ranked the wishes of relatives, recommendations of high school counselors, or advice of teachers as “very important” in their decision to attend UCLA. These rankings have remained quite stable over the last five years.



Over the last 6-10 years, the percentages of students ranking these 5 factors as “very important” in their decision to choose UCLA have increased. (Note that trends in rankings are shown for the years in which they were included as response options.)