

OVERWHELMED AND UNDERDEVELOPED?

THE SECOND YEAR ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE AT UC DAVIS

Presented as part of the Academic Advising Professional Development Project

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WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS:

Sophomores are **more likely to be dissatisfied** with their college experience than first-year, junior, and senior students.

- (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969)

Excluding the first year, **more students drop out** of higher education in the second year than in any other year of college.

- (Tobolowsky, 2008; Lipka, 2006)

Significant institutional attention given to first-year students may actually make the second year a more **difficult transition experience**.

- (Tobolowsky, 2008; Evenbeck, 2008)

Developing **purpose**, establishing **identity**, and defining life **direction** become critical pieces of sophomore year.

- (Sterling, 2015; Richmond & Lemons, 1985)

Reality: Despite a recent interest in sophomore attrition and programming, there are still **major gaps** in research, especially around student persistence beyond the first year.

Schaller's Stages of the Sophomore Year (2005)

View of Self

View on Relationships

Academic Experiences
& Decisions

Random Exploration

- Carried over from first year
- Avoid decision-making
- Lack of self-reflection

Focused Exploration

- Growing awareness of their choices, their options, and their world
- Frustration
- Pressure and concern about future or major

Tentative Choices

- Increased sense of responsibility
- Final major selection
- More self-awareness

Commitment

- Acceptance of decisions
- Planning for future and fully accepting of responsibility to achieve goals

Critical moment in advising!

WHAT ARE COMMON ACADEMIC OR
MAJOR-RELATED ISSUES THAT
SECOND YEAR (SOPHOMORE)
STUDENTS FACE AT UC DAVIS?

METHODS

UC DAVIS
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Instructions. In order to get your hold removed, you must provide FULL responses to the questions below. Please note, these do not have to be long answers, however there should be enough information present in your responses to indicate mastery of the information provided in the mandatory advising video/appointment.

Q1. Full Name: (Last, First)

Q2. UC Davis ID:

- **CONTEXT:** Spring 2018 Post-Mandatory Advising Appointment Survey Data

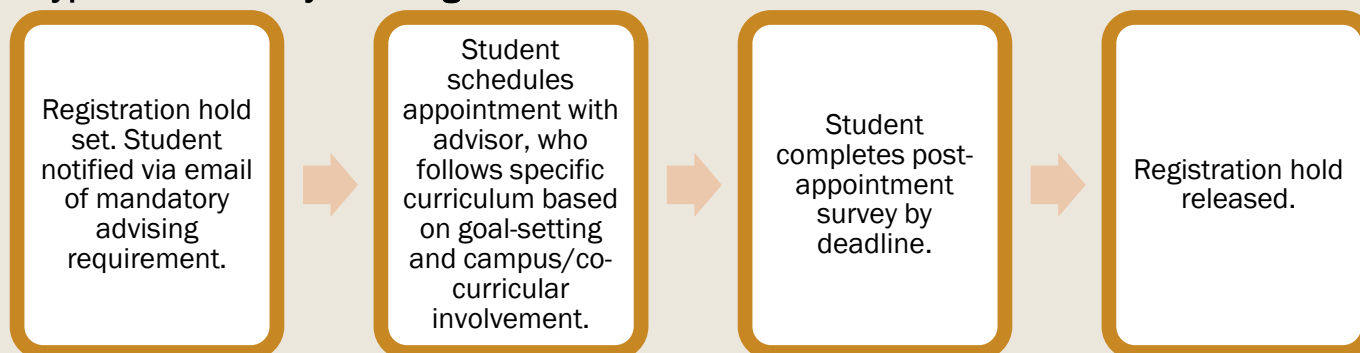
- **PARTICIPANTS**

- 73 responses
 - 65 Economics
 - 7 History
 - 1 Economics & History
 - 0 East Asian Studies

- **DATA COLLECTION**

- Qualtrics Survey already in use
 - 4 open-response items (1 added for project)
 - 1 closed-response item
- 100% response rate due to mandatory requirement for registration hold release

Typical Mandatory Advising Process



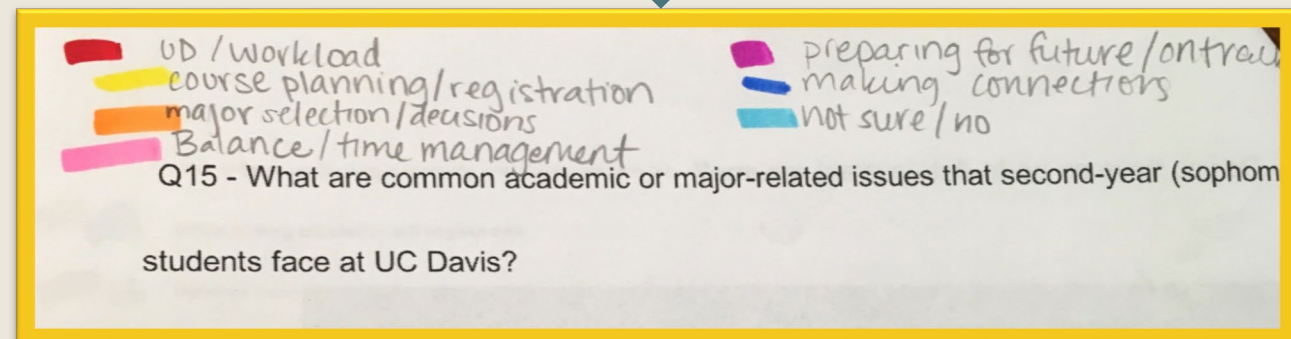
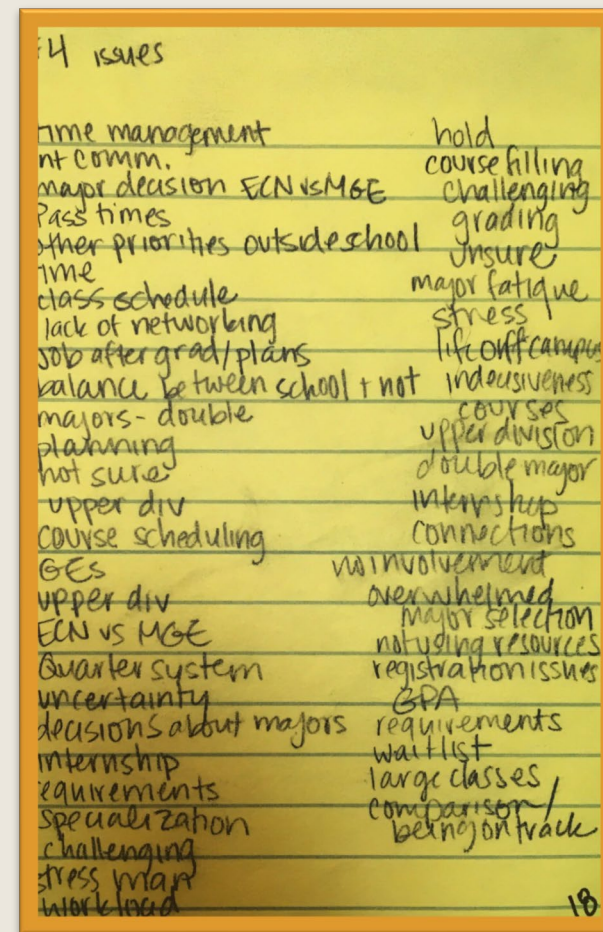
QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Open Coding

- Wrote down primary impressions and preliminary themes

Axial Coding

- Determined relationships of preliminary themes and condensed down to specific themes for each question



Focused Coding

- Used colors to mark connection to a specific theme

Data Processing

- Counted frequencies of each theme compared to overall responses

Data Compilation

- Used Excel to create visuals and calculate percentages

20 Looking for internship and plan for career after graduation.

21 feel uncertainty about the further HIS/ECN

22 This is the year where you really start have a feel and better understanding if the field you have been taking courses for is the correct fit for you. It is still early enough where you could decide to switch majors and chose a different route but still graduate on time or otherwise, start planning and thinking about internships or programs like studying abroad. This is the year one realizes he or she is half-way done with college and serves as a pivotal point in undergraduate life. ✖

23 Plans for post graduation HIS

24 Where to find internships?

25 No

26 UC academic credits system is hard to figure out. As a double major, I hope that is an easier way of checking my degree myself. ✖

27 The courses in the second year is much more challenging so it is often necessary to handle stress and heavy workload at the same time. Also, at this stage, the choice of specialization of a major can sometimes be confusing, which requires me to dig into more in order to figure out my interest. ✖

28 Sophomores face a harder workload than freshman year and often begin taking upper division courses which are more difficult and time consuming.

29 They have a advising hold.

30 Courses tend to be quite challenging. Major classes get filled up very fast so it is always a competition to register for class. Grades are usually depended upon the professor and not the student's actual ability. ✖

31 NO

32 Not knowing what there doing HIS

33 I can't name any particular issues unique to second-years beyond the usual major-fatigue or stress experienced by most students.

34 Some the of the major-related or common academic issues that sophomore students can encounter are the indecisiveness of whether or not to take courses that might help with stress or to have "fun" because it might interfere with ones academic plans. Also, since most sophomores do not live on campus, they might have difficulty with the transition from living on campus to an apartment. Thus, this can affect their academic performance. ✖

35 I will start to take upper class in this year. It is hard for me to adapt at first.

36 Confusion about double major/minor?

37 Still trying to find a internship or club that goes along with your major HIS

38 It's hard to finish all the homework, and the midterms are burdensome.

39

*WHAT ARE COMMON ACADEMIC OR MAJOR-RELATED ISSUES THAT SECOND YEAR
(SOPHOMORE) STUDENTS FACE AT UC DAVIS?*

BALANCE / TIME MANAGEMENT

UPPER DIVISION CLASSES / WORKLOAD

COURSE PLANNING / REGISTRATION

DECISIONS ABOUT MAJOR SELECTION

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE / FEARS ABOUT BEING ON TRACK

MAKING CONNECTIONS

RESULTS:

- “I’ve seen a lot of second-year students not know what **classes** to take after their first year and may take classes they **don’t really require.**”

Course Planning /
Registration
(21 students)

28.8%

- “Second-years at UC Davis often feel **overwhelmed**. We are **unsure** if it’s too early to start focusing on internships or if it’s time.”

Preparing for the
Future / Fears about
Being On Track
(18 Students)

24.7%

- “A lot of courses and **tons of work** to finish.”

Upper Division
Classes / Increased
Workload
(13 students)

17.8%

RESULTS:

+ None / Not sure
(7 students, 9.6%)

- “I’m **stuck** between staying an economics major or becoming a managerial economics major. I feel like many students my age have trouble deciding whether to switch or stay with what they have already **committed** to.”

Decisions about
Major Selection
(10 students)

13.7%

- “Being able to **manage your time** efficiently. While this may seem easy to people, **staying disciplined** is the challenging part.”

Balance / Time
Management
(9 students)

12.3%

- “They do not know **how to get involved** on campus.”

Making
Connections
(6 students)

8.2%

- “**Apathy.**”

Other
(6 students)

8.2%

IMPLICATIONS

Many students do not understand their degree requirements and how to plan their schedules.

How can advisors support students in their understanding of degree requirements?

Sophomore students are already thinking (and worrying) about their post-graduation futures and relying on advisors for assistance.

How can advisors help create an advising environment that supports meaningful Focused Exploration?

“I’ve had trouble figuring out if I am behind other sophomores, ahead, or on the same page. When I went to the Pre-Law advising center, I felt pretty overwhelmed by everything I felt I needed to get done, but the advisor assured me I was fine and had time.”

However, I don’t feel like that’s necessarily the case because I have plenty of other friends from other universities that have had legal internships already. This might be a personal issue, but I thought it was something worth sharing.”



DEFINING THE SECOND YEAR

~~*“Realizing You’re the University’s Middle Child”*~~

~~*“Getting through the Forgotten Year”*~~

~~*“Surviving the Sophomore Slump”*~~

“The Year You Make It Your Own”

(Schaller, 2005)

Recommended Practices & Application

Second Year
Experience Website

Sophomore-specific
programming &
mentorship
opportunities

Structured reflection
about academic plan

Foster meaningful
connections with
faculty

Second Year
Orientation

Institutional
traditions for
sophomores

Collaborate with
campus partners to
promote co-
curricular exploration

Normalize/Support
students as they
tackle important life
questions

Provide career
and/or major
exploration
opportunities

CLOSING THOUGHTS



References

Gahagan, J. & Stuart Hunter, M. (2006). The second-year experience: turning attention to the academy's middle children. *About Campus*, 11(3), 17-22. <https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.168>

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Sterling, A.J. (2018). Student experiences in the second year: advancing strategies for success beyond the first year of college. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly*, 5(4), 136-149. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sem3.20113>

Tobolowsky, B.F. (2008). Sophomores in transition: the forgotten year. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 144, 59-67. <https://doi.org/10.1002/he.326>

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