

University of California, Berkeley

College of Letters & Science

Undergraduate Studies Division

Strategic Plan Highlights

Academic Year 2023-24



Dean's Message



Berkeley is a remarkable place, full of innovative and exciting research and opportunities. We are known for “comprehensive excellence” and world-transforming research. And yet, the same scale and scope which bring so much opportunity can also be bewildering, especially to some of our undergraduate students, and especially in Letters & Science, by far the largest and most intellectually capacious college on the campus. The L&S Undergraduate Studies Division supports students in feeling a sense of belonging in the college, in finding their way here, and in leaning into their own education through scholarly engagement. These aims align profoundly with Berkeley’s seven principles of community, promoting open and equitable access to opportunities for learning and affirming the dignity of all individuals in our learning community. I am very grateful to the talented team who have worked so hard on our strategic plan, and am eager to continue working with you to advance the College and our students.

Jennifer Johnson-Hanks
Executive Dean, College of Letters & Science
Professor of Demography and Sociology

The L&S Undergraduate Studies Division comprises the following units: College Writing Programs, Curricular Engagement Initiatives, L&S Office of Undergraduate Advising, L&S Undergraduate Studies Division Dean's Office, Military Affairs Program, Office of Undergraduate Research & Scholarships (OURS), and Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Studies (UGIS) Degree Programs.

UC Berkeley Letters & Science prepares students for lives of consequence

The L&S Undergraduate Studies Division supports the College’s undergraduate mission through its emphasis on three Strategic Priorities: Belonging, Wayfinding, and Scholarly Engagement. Belonging supports students in finding their place in the College and in thriving at Berkeley. Wayfinding engages students in navigating through the College and beyond. Scholarly Engagement empowers students in shaping their own intellectual futures as active learners.

Our Commitment

We, the members of the Berkeley College of Letters & Science Undergraduate Studies Division, are committed to forwarding efforts of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Justice (DEIBJ). We hope to begin realizing these ideals by building trust both within our division and with the greater Berkeley L&S community. Our commitment to DEIBJ and trust building must inform and direct our efforts to execute the Strategic Priorities that follow. We are further committed to supporting our staff and faculty colleagues to ensure their overall wellness and the sustainability of their work.

Belonging

Fostering a Sense of Community at All Levels

- Build a division that reflects and represents the diversity of its membership
- Work toward ensuring staff and faculty diversity is proportionate to student diversity
- Combat the culture of toxic competition that inhibits wellness and belonging
- Improve the morale and well-being of students, staff, and faculty
- Leverage technology to help with outreach and community building

Creating Connections

- Ensure every student has a touchpoint in the College
- Share learning and knowledge across campus units
- Find opportunities for mentorship for students, staff, and faculty
- Create more opportunities for collaboration across affiliations
- Find the most effective modes of communication for different groups

Building Trust

- Ensure that all community members feel safe and supported within the Division
- Partner with groups and organizations that are trusted by marginalized communities
- Focus outreach efforts on marginalized spaces and communities, including transfer and non-traditional students

Amplifying Diverse Voices

- Incorporate input and feedback of diverse students, staff, and faculty
- Encourage collaboration in decision making
- Increase valuation of non-tenure track work and input in curricular decision-making in the Undergraduate Studies Division

Wayfinding

Embracing Comprehensive Wayfinding

- Embrace a wayfinding approach that accounts for the whole student and many student identities
- Engage students in the development and scaling of the effort
- Enable early and sustained access to well-coordinated information and outreach about on- and off-campus opportunities that have been intentionally designed and selected with student aspirations and concerns in mind

Prioritizing Equitable Access

- Prioritize equitable access and identify and dismantle obstacles
- Meet students where they are

Teaching Wayfinding

- Frame/communicate the experience of wayfinding as a teachable life skill
- Engage students early and often
- Support staff and faculty as sustainable teachers and partners in wayfinding

Resourcing Wayfinding

- Harness the power of technology to increase access and effectively reach students, while also aiding those who support them
- Incentivize connective and collaborative technological systems across campus

Scholarly Engagement

Fostering Holistic Learning

- Foster an environment where each student recognizes the relevance of their academic work in their lives and communities
- Create opportunities for participation in applied work, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, and professional development opportunities that reflect students’ personal values and ethical commitments

Developing Scholarly Community

- Develop trustworthy and affirmative advising circles (staff, instructors, advisors) that intentionally engage with students in meta-thinking about their scholarship
- Foster an intellectual community that models a commitment to lifelong learning and mentoring

Encouraging Scholarly Self-Actualization

- Provide students with the space, time, resources, and support required to explore their interests and follow their curiosity
- Encourage students to take risks through participation in research and other types of creative, project-based learning opportunities

Belonging

Building Trust and Making Connections to Foster Professional Community
Promoting OUA Staff Retention and Well-Being



The L&S Office of Undergraduate Advising, supported by a NAC-ADA/Stupski Foundation grant, hosted a full-day retreat in early Summer 2024 on staff wellness. This retreat, which featured a wellness talk on “The Science of Compassion” by Dr. Emiliana Simon-Thomas from the Greater Good Science Center, gave OUA staff an opportunity to reconnect and recharge after a successful close to the UC Berkeley academic year. It included fun activities and professional headshots to support professional development.

Recognizing College Staff Through AAC

L&S Undergraduate Studies Division staff representatives to the L&S Administrative Advisory Committee (AAC) launched three brand new staff recognition and award programs designed to honor the hard work and meaningful contributions of L&S College staff. These programs support staff professional development through \$1,000 grants, allow members of the Berkeley community to recognize staff through a High Five program, and establish the annual College of Letters & Science Staff Achievement Award given once per year to our most accomplished staff. The L&S AAC also re-established the College’s Managers Meeting tradition, ensuring that managers of administrative, academic, and programmatic units are included.

Connecting Staff at All-Division Meetings

In 2023-24, Undergraduate Studies All-Division Meetings were expanded to include an in-person meeting where division members could meet, network and socialize. Additional meetings were held throughout the year with the goals of learning more about work across the division and campus units, and creating connections. These meetings highlighted work that is rooted in DEIBJ, as reflected by the Spring 2024 topic of “Moving Toward Inclusive Excellence: Serving Students with Disabilities at Cal” with Disabled Students Program Executive Director Carmen Varela.

Welcoming Students and Promoting Belonging in the College

Inspiring and Celebrating Future Military Leaders



Military Affairs hosted a distinguished alum, Rex Walheim (class of ‘84), who is an astronaut with three space flights. He provided three guest lectures and was the speaker at the Tri-Service formal ball which celebrated the accomplishment of our seniors and newly commissioned Lieutenants and Ensigns.

Investing in Yield Outreach & Engagement



The inaugural L&S Assistant Director of Yield Outreach & Engagement developed a yearlong plan to support and uplift an energized yield and admission season for L&S. Staff members covered nine campus events, managed five legs of outreach travel across California, organized volunteers, and produced shipments of brochures, banners, and swag to support incoming students. Despite external logistical challenges, L&S staff supported an uptick in this year’s yield rates: 78% yield rate from admission receptions overall, higher yield rates from parts of the California Central Valley, and an increase in campus event attendance, check-ins, and accepted offers of admission. The L&S Yield Outreach & Engagement team extends deep appreciation to faculty supporters and their partnerships with L&S Advising, Undergraduate Admissions, and the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) for their collaboration.

Wayfinding

Helping Students Find Their Way in L&S and Undergraduate Studies Division
Guiding Admitted Students with “Finding Your Academic Path at Berkeley” Panel



The top-attended academic event at Cal Day for the second year in a row, the 2024 “Finding Your Academic Path at Berkeley” panel, featured eight current L&S students and highlighted a range of programs designed to help students explore and discover their academic path at UC Berkeley, including L&S First-Year Pathways, MPS Scholars, URAP, and Freshman/Sophomore Seminars. The event was organized and moderated by Aileen Liu, Director of Curricular Engagement Initiatives.

Setting Students Up for Post-Grad Success with Pre-Professional Graduate Program Advising

The L&S Office of Undergraduate Advising developed and presented L&S Pre-Professional Graduate Program Advising sessions during both the fall and spring semesters. These sessions addressed topics including preparation and planning for students considering pre-health, pre-law, and pre-masters and PhD pathways. OUA collaborated with Berkeley Career Engagement and GiGS Mentors representatives to coordinate and facilitate these sessions.

L&S Advisors worked to stay well-versed in pre-professional advising throughout the year, sending representatives to both the national PLANC Pre-Law Advising Conference in June 2024 and the California Consortium of Post-Baccalaureate Programs Summit in Fall 2023.

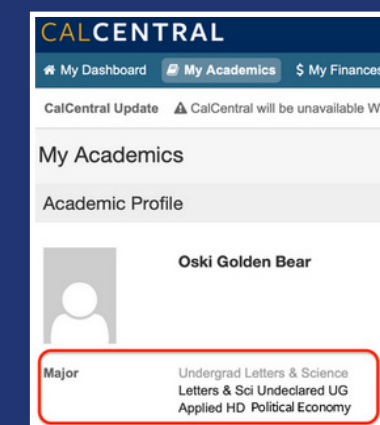
This work supports students by providing useful information about Pathways’ prerequisite course requirements, tips for planning course schedules, and campus resources and opportunities to explore graduate program areas and prepare well for gaining the experiences useful for applying to graduate school in the future.

Strengthening Peer Advisor Mentorship Program



In AY 23-24, the L&S Office of Undergraduate Advising hired a new cohort of 16 talented peer advisers who reflect Advising’s 7 Core Values and represent the diversity of Berkeley students. OUA introduced a more equity-minded and streamlined hiring process for this program and leveraged campus social media platforms through satellite liaisons to improve outreach to students affiliated with Centers for Educational Justice & Community Engagement. This program gives students an opportunity to help their peers find their way at Berkeley while developing transferable skills and exploring careers in advising, mentoring and higher education.

Supporting Student Access to High Demand Majors



L&S Undergraduate Studies Division staff established a comprehensive review framework to support the High Demand Major policy that went into effect in Fall 2023. The same team supported departments interested in dropping from the high demand major by sharing resources, timelines, and additional consultation. Working with the Office of the Registrar, the team developed new codes in SIS to help students and advisors identify students who were admitted to Berkeley in high demand majors. The work of this team and departments across campus has made it easier for students to navigate the remaining high demand majors and has made some of Berkeley’s most popular majors more accessible to students overall. Within the L&S Undergraduate Studies Division, Media Studies came off the high demand major list by simplifying their declaration process.

Wayfinding

Resourcing a Simplified Future and Preparing for Change

Navigating a New Space: The Undergraduate Academic Building



In preparation for L&S Advising, the UGIS majors and minors, and the Undergraduate Studies Dean's Office's move to the new Undergraduate Academic Building in Spring 2026, the division's space committee worked with Capital Projects to present a comprehensive introduction of the building to the new building's future occupants. The new building will be a hub for L&S undergraduate students with general assignment classrooms that replace Evans Hall classrooms, access to L&S advisors and support staff on the building's 4th and 5th floors, and space for informal gatherings and study groups. Valuable feedback from future occupants will inform the division's plans to populate the space and build out our in-person offerings.

Supporting Student-Initiated "Planned Major" Field in Student Information System

There are efforts underway to create a Planned Major field in our Student Information System. Students will update this field periodically to indicate their intended major(s), which can change a few times while L&S undergraduates are undeclared. Departments and advisers will use the data to plan for enrollment, outreach to students who have expressed interest in their major(s), and share important updates about courses, requirements, and major declaration.

Updating Advising Language to be More Inclusive and Equity-Minded

At the urging of the UC Undergraduate Academic Advising Council, in which the L&S Office of Undergraduate Advising leadership plays a prominent role, the Systemwide Academic Senate has approved replacing the words "Academic Probation" with "Academic Notice" in academic standing regulations. The Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate will vote to adopt the new language during the Fall 2024 Division Meeting.

Piloting Direct Admission to Major for Transfer Students

This year, L&S finished the first year of a pilot program to admit transfer students directly to their majors. Instead of going through a sometimes lengthy declaration process after arriving at UC Berkeley, transfer students in this pilot were automatically declared in the major they indicated on their application. Feedback from students and staff shows that this reduced confusion, aided in enrollment, and increased students' sense of belonging. The College will conduct 1-2 more years of the pilot program, collecting feedback and making improvements to see whether it can be extended to all students.

Mobilizing Advising Units to Address Student Needs in the College and Beyond



The L&S Office of Undergraduate Advising (OUA) supported the development and planning of the inaugural Academic Difficulty Summit, an interorganizational effort centering dialogue around students experiencing academic difficulties, co-led by APT and the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP). The summit had representation from across campus, including the following:

- College of Engineering
- College of Environmental Design
- College of Chemistry
- Rausser College of Natural Resources
- L&S Division of Math & Physical Sciences
- Center for Support & Intervention
- Basic Needs Center
- Berkeley Division of Undergraduate Education

Additionally, OUA reflected internally on how it provides support and guides students toward academic progress. OUA retreats related to these efforts led to a greater focus on OUA's strengths-based advising framework, increased outreach and communications for students on academic notice (AP/COP), and proposals for more student-centered academic language.

These summits, in addition to OUA's regular Deans' Conference, all support identifying short-term and long-term efforts to make L&S OUA policies and processes more streamlined, equitable, and transparent for students.

Scholarly Engagement

Cultivating Scholarship Through the Support and Development of Common Good Curricula and Opportunities

Expanding Opportunities with the L&S First-Year Pathways Program



Fall 2023 saw the inauguration of L&S First-Year Pathways, a new program designed to help incoming first year students find their stride academically, build community with fellow students and faculty, and discover the interdisciplinary breadth and vitality of the College. Five cohorts of up to 25 students apiece enrolled in three-course "clusters" organized around a theme such as "Neuroscience, Philosophy and Society" and "Art, Environment, and Economic Policy." Students praised the cohort experience, the contact with faculty in the clusters' "hub" seminars, and the field trips, group projects and research opportunities provided through the program, as featured in the Berkeley News. Partnership with UDAR has led to successful external support for Pathways, with the L&S Advisory Board raising \$16,000 for the program and the October 2023 crowdfunding goal being surpassed by 55%. Six Pathways clusters—including two new offerings—are slated for Fall 2024.

Designing the L&S Degree of Tomorrow with L&S Futures



L&S Futures, a once-in-a-generation rethinking of the components of the L&S BA degree, is completing its second year. Over the course of the 2023-24 academic year, a committee composed of faculty from all divisions of the College worked to design a proposed set of requirements that reinforce the skills and dispositions the steering committee found to be essential for L&S undergraduates during the discovery phase in 2022-23. The committee plans to submit a final report detailing their findings for consideration early in Fall 2024.

Supporting Inclusion Through Scholarship: 20 Years of Disability Studies



This academic year was a significant one for disability studies on campus. The Disability Studies Minor celebrated a 20 year anniversary and was featured in the Berkeley News in the article "At 20, Berkeley's Disability Studies shines with renewed energy" The On the Same Page program in 2023-24 featured Crip Camp, a documentary film that chronicles a turning point in the disability rights movement and the fight for accessibility. Students, staff, faculty, and the community deepened their understanding about the story told in Crip Camp through events and programs created in partnership with the Berkeley Library, the Disability Cultural Community Center, the Othering & Belonging Institute, and the Paul K. Longmore Institute on Disability.

Bringing together the "Brilliance of Berkeley"



In Spring 2024, with funding from the Chancellor's Office, L&S and the VPUE launched a new course: L&S 110: Brilliance of Berkeley. This 1-unit course, taught by Chancellor Christ, featured weekly guest lectures from luminary Berkeley faculty and exposed nearly 1,000 students to the diverse and cutting-edge research taking place on campus in such fields as robotics, AI, Greek poetry, and the science of awe. This course was designed to create an improved sense of belonging for all undergraduate students, and based on overwhelmingly positive feedback from students, it achieved its goal and will have its second iteration in Spring 2025.

Scholarly Engagement

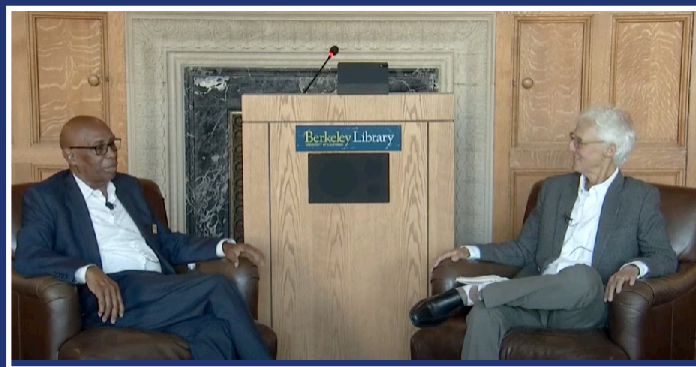
Fostering Scholarly Community within the College of Letters & Science and the Undergraduate Studies Division

Supporting College Writing Programs Students with Pizza, Portfolios, and Projects



College Writing Programs hosted two evening events per semester, inviting students to bring current writing projects to give and receive feedback from peers and faculty. Forty or more students attended each session, spread out in our meeting room as well as lobbies and other offices throughout the Wheeler Mezzanine.

Celebrating 30 Years of College Writing Programs with "Writers at Work"



As part of the ongoing celebration of College Writing Programs' 30th anniversary, several of our faculty participated in a podcast series of interviews to discuss their recent publications and writing processes. These will be included in College Writing Programs' YouTube channel – www.youtube.com/@BerkeleyWriting. You can see our trailer for the series on YouTube.

The annual Berkeley Writers at Work interview, held in the Morrison Room, was held in Fall 2023 and featured Professor of Education Jabari Mahiri, interviewed by lecturer John Levine. You can watch the interview, along with others going back to the 1990s, on our YouTube channel.

Presenting UGIS Programs Student Research



The American Studies Senior Thesis Showcase is the American Studies program's spring celebration of the fantastic research and writing conducted by our graduating seniors. The Showcase on May 2, 2024, featured short presentations by American Studies students who wrote their theses this year, as well as a Q&A roundtable with presenters, who shared more about their senior thesis experience and the advice they would share with freshmen, sophomores, and juniors. The day concluded with an afternoon reception in Ishi Court.

In front of an audience of students, faculty, staff and family, our inaugural Media Studies Student Showcase took place on Tuesday, April 30, 2024 in Banatao Auditorium, Sutardja Dai Hall. The event was hosted by Media Studies Director Daniel Fisher, and each Media Studies professor invited students to present their research and class projects in panel presentation, music video, and computer game demonstration formats. Senior honors thesis students presented their thesis research and took questions from the audience.

Fostering Holistic Learning in Military Affairs



The annual Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz Memorial Lecture-ship in National Security Affairs brings to the University of California, Berkeley, a distinguished scholar, military professional, or government official for a series of lectures on national security subjects. In much the same fashion as a Regents Professor, the Nimitz Lecturer participates with students and faculty of the many departments and programs at Berkeley that study national security. This year, our guest speaker was Admiral James A. Winnefeld, Jr.

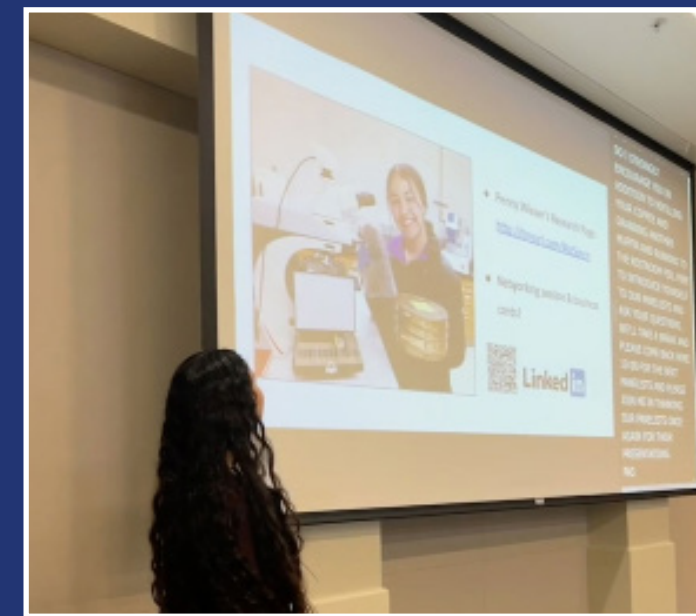
Fostering Connectings with the Conference on Teaching Writing

College Writing Programs has worked to co-sponsor a conference on writing pedagogy at the UC Berkeley School of Education. Other sponsors include the Bay Area Writing Project and the UC Berkeley Center for Teaching and Learning. This conference, scheduled for Fall 2024, aims to foster a community of writing instructors and educators from different educational levels, from junior high through college, and disciplines to discuss, learn about, and improve teaching writing practices.

Preparing for Success in the 2024-25 AY with College Writing Fall Launch

Every fall, College Writing holds a one-day retreat to bring our faculty together to discuss mutual concerns and to prepare for the academic year ahead. In August 2024, these daylong meetings focused on AI and its impact on writers and writing instruction. The day featured panels, hands-on workshops, and sharing of materials to help instructors and students continue to consider both the potential and the ethics of AI use in academic writing.

Showcasing Undergraduate Researchers at Inaugural Symposium



The inaugural UC Berkeley Undergraduate Research Symposium took place on February 24, 2024, at the David Brower Center in downtown Berkeley. The symposium, funded by the Berkeley Collegium, showcased the work of undergraduate researchers representing every division in L&S; and included a panel about how to get started in research at Berkeley, featuring Alessandra Lanzara, the Charles Kittel Professor of Physics at UC Berkeley and Director of the Berkeley Discovery Hub; Jessica Stevenson Stewart, Director of the Office of Undergraduate Research and Scholarships; and Joni Landeros-Cisneros, a first-generation scholar in the Ph.D. program in the Education department.

Integrating Undergraduates into L&S Research Through OURS



The College of Letters and Science's Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship Program (SURF L&S) granted 82 students \$5,000 awards to complete research related to a proposed senior thesis or capstone project. The four cohorts of SURF

L&S were organized into near-discipline, divisionally based cohorts and have been mentored throughout the summer by Berkeley graduate students in small research clusters. In their small group meetings, students learned important skills, honing their elevator pitches and project abstracts; they also benefited from a wide range of workshops on time management, journal publishing, collaboration, grant writing, graduate school applications, and many other topics, all of which were developed to build community and help students make the most of their summer research experiences.

Thanks to a recurring gift from the Rose Hills Foundation, OURS was able to award research scholarships to 43 undergraduates from Southern California, all of whom are majoring in STEM disciplines. These research experiences included undergraduates working as assistants on faculty projects, rising juniors and seniors working on research projects of their own design, and graduating students who are working on publications related to their undergraduate research experiences.

In Summer 2024, 55 URAP summer fellows received awards to continue their work on mentor-initiated research projects for five weeks, making it possible for them to deepen their research skills and contribute to ongoing research. And in April, URAP was invited to the Berkeley Collegium Symposium to acknowledge last year's recipients of the Berkeley Collegium Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Education. OURS peer advisor Emma Lalor joined Dr. Jessica Stewart and two URAP alumni to deliver the presentation, which showcased 33 years of the URAP program and gave insight into the experience from both the mentor and student perspective.

In May, the new 2024-25 Haas Scholars Cohort participated in a week-long orientation retreat hosted at Stiles Hall. Throughout the week, the 20 new scholars prioritized building the foundation for their supportive intellectual community and ended the week with a group outing to Little Farm in Tilden Park. The scholars continued their research over the summer.

Every summer the OURS Summer Social invites undergraduate researchers from across campus for a lunch to network with their peers. This year, we invited 15+ programs, collecting 90 registered attendees. It was a lovely day in Ishi Court with sandwiches and conversations. Students thoroughly enjoy engaging with each other and program managers in person for a change, and we look forward to holding the next one in Summer 2025!



Strategic Plan adopted August 2022 by L&S Executive Dean Jennifer Johnson-Hanks
Academic Year 2023-24 Strategic Plan Highlights Published September 2024
Edited and Designed by Lauren Miller, L&S Assistant Director of Strategic Communications