



Spending More Than Four Years as an Undergraduate: Contributing Factors *By Mary Lehman*

About 36% of each UC Davis freshman class will graduate within the standard 12 quarters, many fitting those 12 quarters neatly into four years. However, an additional 42% will graduate from UC Davis taking more than 12 quarters to earn their undergraduate degrees. What are some of the common reasons for increased time-to-degree? This QuickPoll gathered feedback from undergraduate students who believe that they will take more than 12 quarters to graduate.

To better understand the causes, it is important to realize that multiple factors are often involved in the length of time needed to graduate. Respondents were asked to mark all factors that applied to their situation, and many marked several. The reasons, as listed in Table 1, ranged from those purely the student's choice (i.e., changed major) to those out of the student's control (courses not offered when needed).

The most frequently chosen response was "I decided to add a minor or a second major", marked by 37% of respondents; simple preference for lighter course loads was the second-most frequently chosen response with 35% of respondents. Following these top-chosen reasons were: "Required courses were not available in the terms I needed," a factor largely out of the student's control (31%); "I changed my major," a factor within the student's control (30%), and "Required courses were not offered in the terms I needed," a factor outside the student's control (29%). Responses to the two "required courses" choices overlapped significantly.

A significant number of respondents marked "other" as one of their reasons. To investigate further into what the other causes might be, we ran a second QuickPoll asking students who had marked "other" to tell us more, in their own words. Several wrote about a personal interest in creating a more rounded educational experience, others had experienced tragic personal events, and many listed unique individual reasons. The most commonly offered new reason for increased time-to-degree was study abroad.

This report was compiled by Student Affairs Research & Information (SARI), May 3, 2002, based on two My.UCDavis QuickPolls. The QuickPolls ran from March 6 to March 22, 2002 on students' My.UCDavis portals, generating 1,986 responses to the initial poll and 156 responses to the "what other reasons" poll. For more detailed information, contact us at (530) 754-7985.

**Table 1: Responses From Undergraduates to the Question:
“If you will take more than 12 quarters to graduate, what are the reasons for doing so?”**

Respondents were asked to mark all that apply

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| I decided to add a minor or a second major | 37% |
| I preferred to take fewer than 15 units per quarter | 35% |
| Required courses were not available in the terms I needed | 31% |
| I changed my major | 30% |
| Required courses were not offered in the terms I needed | 29% |
| A four-year degree is not realistic in my major due to unit requirements | 25% |
| I had to work and could not take 15 unit loads | 25% |
| I have other reasons for taking more than 12 quarters to graduate | 23% |
| I delayed selecting a major | 17% |
| I took fewer units to maintain a higher GPA | 17% |
| I received bad advice from my advisor | 14% |
| I transferred from another school and lost units | 13% |