

# Freshmen Year at UC Davis FOR **DUMMIES**<sup>®</sup>



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Cognitive Science Major, B.S.

***A Reference for the Rest of Us!***



# Freshmen Year at UC Davis FOR DUMMIES®

1st edition

by Michelle Galat



**Freshmen Year at UC Davis For Dummies, 1st edition**

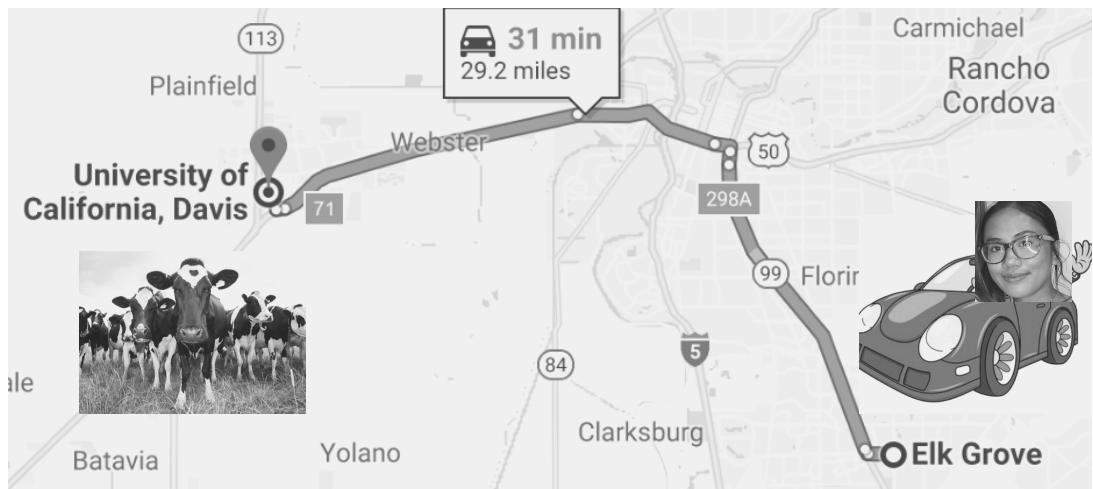
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# About the Author

Michelle Galat is an incoming fourth-year student at UC Davis. She is a family girl - ask them yourself, they only live 35 minutes away from campus! She was accepted under a Chemistry major but found a new interest in Cognitive Science. Her freshman year was both fun-filled and an emotional roller coaster with a lot of "firsts": first time away from home, first party, and first time failing a class. Three years later, Michelle is passionate about reflecting on her own experiences to offer advice to freshmen students at UC Davis.



# Introduction

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**W**elcome to the first edition of *Freshmen Year at UC Davis For Dummies*. If you're an incoming freshman counting down the summer days in anticipation or a current freshman stressed beyond belief, then this book is written especially for you.

Did you ever predict how that transition from high school to college would happen? For nearly 18 years, your parental guardians helped make every decision for you, and now you're gifted with an unfamiliar sense of independence in the palm of your hands. Have you ever been curious about what the party scene looks like at Davis? Or maybe wonder what this class curve that every student in your class won't stop talking about?

If you answered yes to any of those questions, then you'll find your answer in this text. You can also find helpful solutions about questions that never crossed your mind. This book talks about the rare pieces of advice that every student at UC Davis wished they knew as a first-year.

## *About This Book*

The goal of this book is not to add another piece of reading on top of your workload. It is not meant to be like the Chemistry textbook that you read from start to finish and take way too many notes on. Instead, it is a light-hearted and easy-to-read reference guide. There are five chapters that each address its own aspect of the first-year experience at UC Davis - such as living in the dorms, partying at Frat Row, and getting through midterms season. Whichever battle you're tackling at the moment, just turn to that respectable chapter and read about some helpful tips you may not have thought of before.

Part I:

# Welcome, Aggies!



# **Chapter 1**

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# **Move-in Day**

**A**fter high school graduation, summer always drags on forever. It's easy to find yourself counting down the days until the time comes to embark on a new journey away from home. Finally, after what seems like an eternity, September comes: Move-in day into the dorms.

## *Saying Goodbye to Mom and Dad*

Depending on your relationship with your own parents, this may either be the easiest or hardest experience in your 18 years of living. These are the people who changed your diapers, watched you take your first steps, and, let's not forget, brought you into this world. They drove you to all of your first day of schools, from preschool to your senior year of high school, despite all your complaints of wanting to drive yourself. Regardless if you don't feel an ounce of sadness about this momentous day in your adolescent history, your parents sure are. In fact, why does it seem like any memory to ever exist in their head of you growing up suddenly come flooding back the very last few minutes of their goodbye? For instance, one of the last sentences my mom said to me during my move-in day was: *"I remember like it was just yesterday that you were getting ready for 6th-grade science camp, Michelle."*

The truth is, you're not just saying goodbye to Mom and Dad. You're also saying goodbye to their authority under the same household. For 18 years, chances are that you were raised with an enforced discipline of specific morals and beliefs. When you were in the wrong, a consequence was always enacted. This stops the moment your first-year of college begins. The important thing to remember, though, is:



- ✓ Don't lose sight of the important morals and beliefs that your parents worked hard to instill in you. The point is to not forget everything that came before college, but to be able to carry yourself with the same level of discipline.



You owe your earliest literacy development to your parents and their teachings. Despite the ways in which they may have disadvantaged your access to some discourse communities, they are literacy sponsors that are largely representative of your character. An individual with a poor character is not likely to receive admission to a prestigious research university. With that being said, when saying goodbye to your parents, the best thing you can do is thank them for playing a critical role in shaping who you are.

Joseph Harris defines discourse communities as a "network of individuals who share certain habits of mind" (Harris 14)

Deborah Brandt defines literacy sponsors as "agents" who can enable or regulate one's literacy (Brandt 2)

## *Roommates and the Dorm Life*

Lucky for you, over 32,000 students get accepted into UC Davis. Not-so-lucky for you, 32,000 of you are crammed into teeny-tiny dorm rooms that are most likely "triples." Yes, you heard right: three beds, three desks, and three dressers smushed into a rectangle box. The bright side is that you can let your imagination roam wild to decorate your dorm to your liking and make it feel like home.

Figure 1-1:	Admit rate — Overall	41.2%
UC Davis freshman admission profile (2018)	> Admits	32,179
	> Applicants	78,024

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**Figure 1-2:**  
Triple dorm  
room at Tercero  
Residence Hall

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Believe it or not, the first impression you create on your roommates is **VERY** important. Think about your upcoming year in the dorms as a never-ending sleepover. This is a big deal. Why? Because that first impression sets the tone for what your next seven months will look like.



Unfortunately, roommate conflicts really do exist. If you're really unlucky, it can even escalate into something much worse and toxic, like gossip or even room reassessments. To prevent this, remember: Communication is key!

- ✓ Lay down some rules, but deliver it in a respectful manner.
- ✓ Tell each other what you're comfortable **AND** uncomfortable with.
- ✓ Be kind and friendly! Living with a friend triumphs living with a stranger.



Part II:

# Common College Freshmen Mistakes



## Chapter 2

# Social Life Mistakes

**B**efore coming to Davis, you probably envisioned your first-year to be filled with nothing but fun-filled with raging parties and sleepless nights. With all this new sense of independence, nothing is stopping you from doing whatever you want now. While this may be true, following this mindset can lead you down a dangerous trail of regrets and mistakes.

## *Joining the Party Scene*

Your first night out in college will be one to remember. Speaking from my own experience, it will probably be initiated like this: You're in your dorm room at 9 p.m. and word is spreading around fast about some fraternity party happening tonight. Your friend from down the hall comes pounding on your door to tell you, "Hurry up and get dressed! We're going out."

Do you know those olden day movies where an angel and devil appear on a character's shoulders when they're in a conflict? Imagine this is you at that moment. The angel tells you to stay in the dorms and not fall into social pressure. Meanwhile, the devil tells you to not act like a Debbie Downer in front of all your new friends. Whether you choose to listen to the angel or devil, going to a party doesn't necessarily have to be a mistake. How you choose to behave at these social events is completely in your power.

Let's assume for now that you agree to go out. Here's your new biggest problem: How are you going to get to the party? Your only mode of transportation as a first-year (Unitrans) isn't running during late hours. Your best bet is to take a Lyft or Uber. It's never a safe decision to walk from the residence halls to a party located off-campus.

If someone asks you to go to a fraternity party, odds are that it is located on "Frat Row" or "Frat Circle." Frat Row is a strip of fraternity houses located on the strip of Russell Blvd. from A Street to Highway 113, while Frat Circle is across from the ARC. You'll come across houses like Pi Kappa Alpha, Chi Phi, Sigma Nu, and much more. After you get past a snobby bouncer who makes you show him your student ID, you'll walk inside to feel a wave of warm, musty air and bodies pressed against each other. If you didn't think you were claustrophobic, you will feel like it then. Flashing colorful lights will bounce off the walls and the latest music from Drake will probably be blaring from the speakers.

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**Figure 2-1:**  
Theta Chi  
Fraternity,  
located on Frat  
Row

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**Figure 2-2:**  
Sigma Nu  
Fraternity,  
located on Frat  
Circle

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Coming to these parties in search of alcohol will leave you with major disappointment. If you do manage to find it, you won't be pleased from the taste of bitter and rotten beer. This reference guide isn't here to instruct you to never consume alcohol in college. Instead, this guide is here to advise you that if you find yourself in this position, be mindful and responsible of the following:



- ✓ Stay close with a friend. Similarly, when you see a friend in a vulnerable state, don't leave their side.
- ✓ Never ever accept a drink from anyone and always be mindful of your surroundings.
- ✓ Don't "test your limits." Responsible drinkers are less maintenance on your friends. You'll also thank yourself in the morning.

# Chapter 3

# Academic Mistakes

The transition from high school to college can be a difficult one. Teachers aren't there every day to remind you of due dates, and parents aren't there to nag you about finishing your homework. All of the academic responsibility falls into your hands now, and unfortunately, this concept takes students a long time to understand.

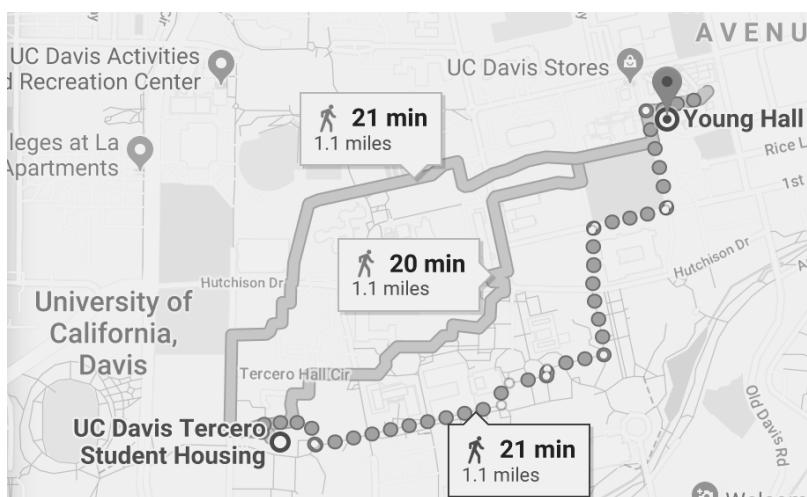
## *Too Cool for School*

The snooze feature on your phone will become your best friend in college. After a night of partying or lack of motivation, hitting that snooze button in the morning will progressively become easier for you. Maybe you don't want to make the dreadful walk from Tercero to Young Hall for your General Psychology class at 9 a.m. Who would want to put themselves through that?

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**Figure 3-1:**  
The dreadful  
journey to  
Young Hall  
from the  
Tercero dorms

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Unfortunately, habits like this can quickly develop into a new routine. During the hours you're supposed to do homework, you're spending it on your phone scrolling through Twitter. Instead of reviewing this week's material, you're going to Downtown Davis for Farmer's Market. And when you're supposed to be in class, you're laying down at the green grass of the Arboretum.

Skipping one class every now and then can easily accumulate and before you know it, you're walking into an exam without having learned a large chunk of material. While those fun activities may appear completely harmless at the moment, it all changes when you aren't happy about the grades you received. Taking too much comfort in the idea of a dramatic class curve or thinking you still have a lot of time in the quarter to redeem yourself can be a dangerous attitude to have. These distractions will only cause you to suffer in the long run.

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**Figure 3-2:**  
An accurate representation of the quarter system (UC Davis Memes for Egghead Teens Facebook page)

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When ur worried about saving the quarter but u don't study at all or turn in anything, but still remain worried



Before you finish this section, it's worthy to note that everyone makes mistakes. However, these failures do not define you or follow you for the rest of your life. I am a firm believer in trial and error. How you choose to learn and grow from these errors is the biggest takeaway.

Part III:

# Learning From Failures

# **Chapter 4**

## **Trial and (a Whole Lot of) Errors**

**R**eceiving admission into UC Davis isn't entirely easy. It requires a lot of outstanding work from your high school background. Maybe you share the same traits as me of receiving straight A's and graduating with a GPA well above your peers. But what happens when you arrive at Davis and find yourself failing a class? Maybe you did everything right - study every day, attend office hours, create study sessions - but still don't land the grade you want. How do you go about this?

### ***Failing a Class***

Surprisingly, there is a wide range of reasons that first-year students may fail a course. Maybe you get too caught up in the party scene on the weekdays and lose track of time in the quarter. I am guilty of this. Or you get stuck with the professor with the worst reviews on RateMyProfessors for the General Chemistry series. What if the material is simply difficult for you to comprehend no matter how hard you try? All of these reasons are plausible and common answers among first-year students who do fail a class.

So you've failed a class in college. What do you do now? It's completely normal to cry, freak out, and feel defeated. Pointing the blame at someone is a typical thing to do. Maybe you blame your instructor for crafting its class in a way that challenges students at an unrealistic level that disregards the underrepresented population of students who didn't come from high-quality high school education. Or maybe you leave a nasty course evaluation or online review for the entire public to see. But what good will this ever do to you in the long run? What's more important, though, is what comes after this "reaction period."

Ask yourself these questions:

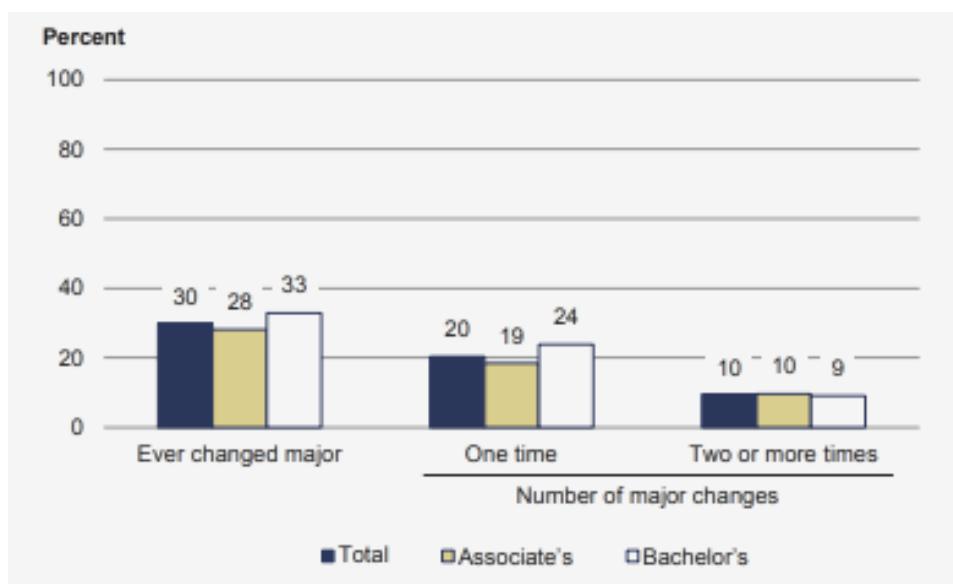


- ✓ If I act out viciously on my feelings of anger and sadness, will this do anything to my grade? (*Spoiler: it doesn't!*)
- ✓ Will this single grade ruin any of my chances into getting into any kind of graduate program? (*Spoiler, again: it doesn't*)
- ✓ Did I try hard enough this quarter?
- ✓ Did I use all resources offered to me to succeed in this course?
- ✓ What could I improve on for next time?

# Changing Your Major

In 2017, the U.S. Department of Education's Data Point newsletter released an article called, "Beginning College Students Who Change their Majors within 3 Years of Enrollment."

**Figure 4-1:**  
Percentage of  
2011–12  
beginning  
postsecondary  
students who  
changed majors  
(NCES 2017)



The main idea is that the majority of college students change their major and it is nothing to be ashamed of. At UC Davis alone, 50% of undergraduates will change their major to another college! Don't be afraid to be a part of the statistic.

The four colleges:  
1) Agriculture and Environmental Sciences  
2) Biological Sciences  
3) Letters and Science  
4) Engineering

If you're on the fence about your major, consider this:



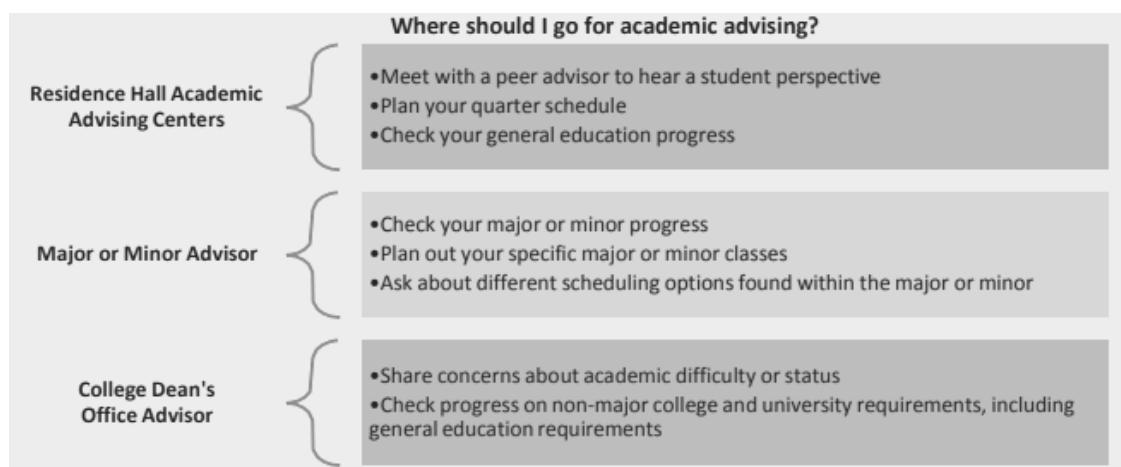
- ✓ Be honest with yourself. What are your interests? Do you see yourself studying courses pertaining to this subject for the remainder of your undergraduate career? Do you feel passionate about learning?
- ✓ Align your major with career interests. Are the courses you're taking under your major related to what field you want to enter?

If you've already decided that you want to change your major, don't forget these crucial steps before committing yourself to something new:



- ✓ Do your own research. Researching prospective academic disciplines and majors require weeks of gathering information - this isn't a decision made overnight! Create a document of your academic interests and search what UC Davis offers that is similar to this. From there you can read more about a potential career in that field would look like.
- ✓ Schedule appointments with Academic Advisors. Depending on what your new desired major is, take the time to meet with these academic advisors to learn more. They will be the ones to teach you more about major requirements, coursework, and more! They are professionally trained to give you the information you need, so use them to your advantage.
- ✓ Attend Counseling. The UC Davis Counseling Services on campus provides students with consultations to promote academic success. If you're still feeling a little uncertain about changing your major, they can provide the comfort and advising you need.

**Figure 4-2:**  
Reference guide  
for academic  
advising  
(Student Health  
and Counseling  
Services)



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