Student Quotes

More than 3,080 seniors – approximately 50 percent of survey participants – responded to the following question: What was your most meaningful learning experience at UCLA? The majority of responses to this question fell into one or more of 12 themes, presented below and accompanied by select responses.

Curriculum
Personal Growth
Faculty
Extracurricular Involvement
Intellectual Gains
Diversity
Research Experience
Challenges
Friendships
Travel Study
Interactions with Classmates
Civic Engagement

Curriculum (27%, 843 responses)
Taking classes that challenged my way of thinking: these classes taught me how to form a well-developed, sound argument for any position, regardless of whether or not it aligned with my personal beliefs.

My first quarter at UCLA I took a diversity requirement class, Sociology 40, which challenged my views of institutional racism and set me on my path of activism and writing equitable policy.

The most meaningful learning experience was in a developmental psych lab I took where I had the chance to interact with children. It was meaningful because it solidified my interest in wanting to work with children in the future.

I think I learned the most "real-world" skills -- public speaking, pitching business ideas, writing resume, writing business plan -- from my minor classes. GEs have also taught me many things I didn't know before; they have definitely broadened my interests.

Getting to take graduate-level work with the Luskin School of Public Affairs. That coursework was a major catalyst for me choosing the internships I did, and the career path that I am [on].
I really enjoyed taking a bioethics course. It really brought attention to the real world issues that are present currently that need to be discussed. I learned a lot about the different views regarding each topic that we covered and felt connected to the world and the people around me while taking the course. Even though the course was quite challenging, I still had a great learning experience and enjoyed learning in the course.

My meaningful learning experience came from the political theory courses I took. They challenged me in ways other courses did not. These courses forced me to be an independent and creative thinker. I had to come up with my own original ideas in response to a difficult text, I think the skills I learned in these courses will be the skills that are most applicable to my career path.

My most meaningful learning experiences were ones that allowed me to learn about topics I had no previous knowledge about. While my major was something I was always passionate about, taking courses outside of my immediate realm of understanding was rewarding and challenging. I think my most meaningful learning experience would have to be my growth in being self-determined and taking the time to study on my own outside of class.

As a STEM major, I really enjoyed taking non-STEM classes with my science classes to balance out my workload and experience other subjects. These opportunities helped me develop a lot as an academic and helped me broaden my interests.

Learning to apply the course material to real life scenarios and professions. As a psychology major with marketing and digital branding pursuits, I have always used the lens of the marketing world to my individual studies. I learned how helpful this has become to get the most out of my degree.

I greatly enjoyed the debates and discussions we had in many of my psychology courses that challenged my views and the views of others and taught me about the different perspectives and experiences of others.

My most meaningful learning experiences would be all of the guest lectures and speakers that professors would bring in. They would share their experiences and how they got started but for them to tell their stories and how they started out just like me and succeed in life gave me hope that it is okay if I am in doubt.

My conservation EEB 116 class, it gave me the opportunity to discuss important global problems and be exposed to many different views, also I had the opportunity to be part of a restoration project.

Learning about the different opportunities available to me through the Music Business Fundamentals class, and being pushed to make connections with people already in the industry was very beneficial for me.
My entrepreneurship minor has given me my most applicable learning experiences, by allowing me to explore companies that interest me and allowing me to pursue internships I have enjoyed and learned very much from.

ADP minor fieldwork. I got to learn about child development and then go into the daycare and see my learning in action.

**Personal Growth (19%, 582 responses)**

My most meaningful learning experience at UCLA did not deal with learning in the classroom, but learning about myself and how to navigate life as an independent, young adult. I faced many obstacles during my time at UCLA and overcoming them taught me a lot about my ability to face adversity in life.

I learned about myself. I was challenged in various aspects and I found my strengths and my needs as a student and as a person. I learned to find or make my opportunities and to ask for help or advice efficiently.

Learning to be confident in my decision and intellect while also knowing how to be open to criticism and accepting my faults.

Learning about myself, how to interact with others effectively, challenging myself and learning to be confident.

My most meaningful learning experience at UCLA was learning how to manage my time efficiently and be organized. Oftentimes I was busy with many commitments outside of classes such as extra-curriculars, other clubs or volunteering, so I over time I learned to plan out my time efficiently so I could have enough time to complete the tasks that needed to be done.

The ability to learn and grow past any ceilings I previously set for myself. I learned that I should never cap my growth and that if I challenge myself hard enough, beautiful things can arise.

I had so many meaningful experiences at UCLA. I think overall, going through the process of finding myself as a valued member of the UCLA community was the most valuable learning experience. It was the whole journey of coming in as a freshman, without people to call my friends yet and stepping outside my comfort zone to join student organizations, taking on leadership, and finding meaning in the communities I eventually helped cultivate.

My most meaningful learning experience was when I transitioned from being too afraid to speak in class to being able to participate in class discussions.

The most meaningful learning experience at UCLA was learning that I am not expected to be perfect in every single thing I do. It’s okay to make mistakes and learn from them.
My most meaningful learning experience here at UCLA is learning to become more open, self-aware and accepting of new challenges.

I learned what works and what doesn't work in regards to my study habits and that a grade doesn't define who you are.

The ability to self-educate myself after being inspired from what I learned in class.

Throughout my four years, I learned much more than just academics. I learned how to be independent, how to manage my time, how to take advantage of opportunities, how to stand up for myself and others, and how to be a better person each day.

My most meaningful learning experience was learning more about myself and truly realizing what I want to do with the rest of my life. Coming into UCLA, I wasn't sure and my experiences here have helped me figure it out.

Faculty (11%, 326 responses)

I think my most meaningful learning experience at UCLA involved talking to my professors on subjects I was interested in. In addition, the professors who were always passionate in class drew me in, and that's where I felt I learned the best. The excitement that they would have, would always transfer to me.

My most meaningful learning experiences occurred during my freshman year and I think that most professors in introductory classes do a good job of not only bringing the material, but easing students' life into university.

Being able to interact with my professors about my career plans and be challenged and supported by them simultaneously in my academic pursuits.

Most of my classes had meaningful learning experiences with professors not only teaching about the material but also about life.

My most meaningful learning experience at UCLA was when a professor took the time to clarify some important concepts outside of class. At the time I thought most professors were unapproachable. It showed me that professors were accessible, for the most part, and willing to help undergraduates do well.

Going to office hours and getting to know my professors on a one to one basis which made my confidence for asking questions grow and which gave me the opportunity to be offered an internship.

I loved being able to communicate with the professors on the fields they were teaching about. If I liked a topic, they would be able to direct me towards more resources on that topic or we would meet and discuss it more.
[My] most meaningful learning experience would be gaining confidence to participate in class. I was always doubting my thoughts but being encouraged by faculty to participate, I’ve become more confident.

My most meaningful experience was a graduate school lecture that my professor gave in order to prepare students who planned to continue school a feel for what the future holds.

My interactions with professors. Some of the TAs and the professors with whom I have had the opportunity to speak have with certainty influenced my beliefs, career trajectory, and have enriched my learning experiences here.

I think the most meaningful learning experience I had here was not in the classroom but rather what professors would say about remembering to take care of myself and that grades are not everything.

Sometimes I struggle with insecurity about my understanding of the world/abilities. For a time in high school, my teachers/peers made me think that I was somehow gifted with knowledge, and it's hard to escape from that cycle. I appreciated when my professors showed me that I had a lot to learn, but gave me the tools to get there. More specifically, my freshman classes (lower division chemistry/physics) instructors gave us more difficult questions that I struggled quite a bit with, but thanks to seeking them out in office hours, I was able to overcome those barriers and really push my learning to the limit.

The most meaningful experience was interacting with one of my psychology professors outside of class where he helped me with the class and my future plans after graduation.

**Extracurricular Involvement (8%, 245 responses)**
Getting to be a part of the UCLA Bruin Marching Band was by far my most meaningful learning experience because I was directly part of a community of people who were incredibly diverse but shared a common passion for music, performance, and love of UCLA. … It's made me more passionate about my work, made me more interested in those around me, and made me a more efficient and patient person.

Working for the Daily Bruin has taught me more than many of my classes, both in technical skills and in teamwork and professionalism.

Joining FEM newsmagazine has helped me learn more about feminism and journalism all at the same time. It has broadened my range of thought and inclusion. I have learned to be a leader, a better writer and a better feminist because of this experience. I have also managed to meet some of my favorite people through this organization.

Participating in student organizations and learning how to work with others and navigate different social environments.
The most meaningful learning I had was outside the classroom, as an officer in a student organization. There is no specific incident but the overall experience taught me a lot about leadership and gave me plenty of material to talk about during job interviews.

Through Samahang Pilipino Advancing Community Empowerment, I grew so much in terms of my Pilipino identity through sharing narratives with others, coming together as a community and learning about Pilipinx history. I've gained so much perspective and appreciation for the privileges I've been allowed throughout my lifetime.

I think my most meaningful learning experience was creating my own club at UCLA. It taught me about all the work and patience it takes to develop an organization including financially, socially and structurally.

Joining UCLA Radio has shaped me as a person and provided me with opportunity to interact with a diverse group of people who are all equally passionate about what they do. I feel that the connections I made in radio will maintain themselves beyond graduation and I believe that they will serve me in my pursuit to find a job that is meaningful to me.

Being an executive leader for [name redacted]. Learned how to work with a team, resolve conflicts, public speak, communicate in different ways, and met sooo many new people.

Being a part of IDEAS at UCLA ... I had the opportunity to meet a lot of people that I could relate to which kept me from being isolated. IDEAS helped me foster and develop a sense of empowerment and leadership skills. ... When I first started at UCLA I was very shy, insecure, scared... Now I am more confident in my ability to succeed academically, personally, and professionally and it is all thanks to the wonderful people I got to meet.

Intellectual Gains (8%, 242 responses)
UCLA challenged me to think critically and learn beyond what I thought I could learn. From my math and stats courses to my computer science courses, each has challenged me in some way to grow my skills and knowledge in different but meaningful ways.

Every English class I took challenged my views and what I thought about the world, and I am so happy to have tackled on that second major.

I learned to critically think more. I also learned to be more independent in how I think and form decisions. I should not be so concerned in how I am perceived by others but do what I think is right for me.

My most meaningful learning experience at UCLA was taking classes in my major and minor which helped me to figure out how to combine the 2 fields of study.
Probably learning to code for my specialization in computing since I feel that once I learned how to code my full potential was unlocked.

My most meaningful learning experience was series of courses I took at UCLA within the Neuroscience major. These courses expanded my knowledge of neuroscience and taught me to think more critically not only of research but also the world around me. One course in particular challenged me to expand my understanding of gender in both humans and other organisms and the structures that generate inequality and inclusiveness.

I appreciated the philosophy major as a whole. It didn't teach me what to think, but how to think … it's crucial to be able to evaluate evidence, others' experiences, and my own biases.

**Diversity (6%, 170 responses)\)**
My most meaningful learning experience is my interactions with my friends from different parts of the world. They expanded my learning and views of the world.

I deem everything I have learned at UCLA to be extremely meaningful to me. I have never been exposed to such diversity and I feel like I learned more these 4 years than I have my whole life. Ranging from the people I have met, to the professors, to the discussions, everything has definitely helped me grow and put a worldly perspective on my shoulders.

Interacting with other students from diverse backgrounds, and learning the obstacles and adversity that many had to get through to get to this point in their education. As an older undergraduate, it was nice to know that I was not alone in my educational journey.

The most meaningful learning experience at UCLA is meeting different students/friends from a different background. I have met friends from all over the world and even some friends who were born in a different country like me had a different background from all over the world. It was an eye-opening experience.

I think the most meaningful learning experience that I had at UCLA was having the opportunity to learn and grow emotionally and academically within a community that is so immensely diverse and large. Being able to look around a classroom or a dorm hall and see people who come from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds allowed me to learn more about myself and the world at large. It was an experience that I do not think that I could have gotten anywhere else and I am forever blessed by the people that I have met and the opportunities that UCLA has provided for me.

Living with other UCLA students in the dorms. Being around intelligent students with so many different interests and viewpoints was one of the highlights of my experience here. I truly feel living in the dorms enriched my experience here in a way that a class could not.
Interacting with students of diverse backgrounds during discussion sections and outside of class. While I learned so many valuable lessons from professors and TAs, the most impactful moments in my UCLA experience came from hearing the perspectives of other students and being introduced to new viewpoints by my peers.

Getting involved with the transfer community and learning about diverse student groups. Diverse as in first generation, non-traditional, veterans, etc. I loved learning about the experiences of other students and their journey to UCLA.

**Research Experience (5%, 158 responses)**

Research taught me what science was actually like.

The research I conducted outside of my curriculum was the best learning experience I have had at UCLA. The fact that I worked to help a professor publish a textbook is an achievement I will remember forever.

I really enjoyed my time in my research lab where I was able to apply knowledge learned from my classes towards a new topic where I would be actually discovering something new.

The most meaningful learning experience has definitely been my wet lab research with my faculty instructor. My PI was gone for the majority of the time so it was primarily an undergrad run experiments that ended up failing the majority of the time or led to nowhere. Although this has negatively affected me due to the lack of paper and presentations I was able to pursue, it doesn't matter much because personally, I was able to learn a lot. From critically thinking to testing out possible solutions, I thought it was 100% worth it.

Doing research on aerodynamics and talk about our work in a national-level conference.

My research experience has taught me significantly about the world of biological science, as related to my career goal as a physician. I have also gained meaningful connections and learned a lot about my own abilities (e.g., critical thinking, time management, desire to learn). My research taught me how to use all of the facts and bits of information I had learned in my classes and apply them to realistic scenarios in research that will affect my community. I learned a new way to give back to my community through research.

The most meaningful learning experience for me was doing my work in my research lab. I learned a lot about how scientists communicate information to the public and [other] researchers, and how the scientific process works to advance our understanding of our world.

Researching in a lab is the most meaningful learning experience I've had at UCLA. Having my own project and something that I'm responsible for really made me mature intellectually. In addition, I learned all about how labs work and most importantly, I was
able to put all my prior knowledge to work. I felt like I was really doing something important and all the information I had learned in classes was really put to good use; concepts mixed together and everything made sense.

My research experience has been my most meaningful experience at UCLA. I appreciate the extensive research network we have on campus, and I've learned so much from my own lab and interacting with other labs.

**Challenges (4%, 129 responses)**

My most meaningful experience was challenging myself through pursing many subjects and activities that were outside of my comfort zone such as writing. Through my failures at UCLA, I have learned to continue to push myself and overcome these fears because failure is a part of the process and growth in an inevitable outcome.

Learning how to deal with mental health issues during my Junior year. Learning that it's okay to go my own way and have my own opinion, and that it's okay to fail. It isn't any one particular class or lecture that I sat in on that I can attribute to being the most meaningful learning experience, but rather the learning from overcoming the challenges of time management and decision paralysis throughout my college career.

Finally finishing my calculus series and getting an A in the last class in the series- I had to hire a tutor twice a week and legitimately believed I would never understand calculus and I ended up doing well!

Academic failure in my previous major, Biochemistry, in my first year and taking a serious initiative to better my passion for my future by pursuing the Design | Media Arts degree.

My most meaningful learning experience at UCLA was realizing that it was okay to struggle with coursework and that my grades were not indicative of the quality of person I am. I learned that from Dr. [name redacted]. UCLA taught me that it was okay to ask for help, and that not everything will come easily, and that the most important thing was to enjoy what I was learning and not what was the easiest.

Most meaningful experience would be being able to challenge myself and truly believing that I was capable of accomplishing my major in biology even when I felt I was not. I still remember freshman year when I got my first F in an exam and I thought I would fail the class but I passed with a B all because I studied so much and looked for help.

Fall quarter … I was put on academic probation and it forced me to rethink my priorities and focus on the bigger picture. As a result, I have done immensely better in school and have seen a shift in my grades since.

Learning how to not give up when something is difficult and seek out additional resources so that I can be successful. Learning how to accept failure and try again and
how to accept an unpleasant situation. Learning how to teach myself something and be disciplined enough to follow through on commitments I have made to myself.

**Friendships (4%, 128 responses)**

While I learned a lot in my classes, I feel that I was able to learn the most from having a bright, diverse group of friends with whom I could share ideas and experiences.

I feel that being a friend was one of the most valuable learning experiences because I learned to listen with the heart.

My most meaningful experience was meeting my friends that made UCLA feel like home during my second year through our sorority. Had I not met them, my experience would be very different and probably not as enjoyable. I appreciate UCLA for bringing us together because I genuinely cannot imagine my life without them or how different my college experience would have been had they not entered the picture.

I think finding the group of people who I can call my family was the biggest thing for me. I really value meaningful relationships, which I feel like I made during my time at UCLA.

The friendship bonds I have formed inside and outside the academic setting at UCLA have allowed me to build a supportive and motivating network around myself.

I learned a lot about myself personally through my relationships with friends at UCLA. The cycle of making friends, losing friends. I enjoyed learning who I was and what I cared about the most and how to find similar values in other people. My friends have really helped to shape me into who I am now.

Finding my roommates and my people, and coming home to them when I had a terrible day and they all supported me.

**Travel Study (3%, 98 responses)**

I had many meaningful experiences during my time at UCLA, but I would have to say traveling to Uganda and learning about their culture was the most meaningful during my time at UCLA.

I think the most meaningful learning experience was during study abroad. I was able to connect my experience with pneumonia on the island to globalization and the health epidemics through critical thinking and research.

Studying abroad was one of the single best experiences I've had at UCLA. I appreciated the University's dedication to encouraging students to go and making it as accessible as possible. It forced me outside of my comfort zone in ways I could have never imagined and allowed me to understand other cultures, recognize my own and forced me to deeply examine my identity. Though it was challenging, it was powerful.
My most meaningful learning experience would have to be during my study abroad in Hong Kong. I had the opportunity to travel and learn about business. Never thought I would be able to do this.

My study abroad experience because I got to apply what I had learned, really get to know peers and professors, and get out of my comfort zone.

Having the opportunity to study in the Middle East gave me perspective on international relations the experiences of those living in a developing country in a conflict heavy region of the world. Studying language and culture in Jordan has motivated me to further pursue work relating to the Middle East and conflict resolution.

I would say my most meaningful learning experience was studying abroad in Italy over the Summer. Being able to connect with the country, its culture, architecture, and history, all alongside my fellow students and a wonderful instructor and TA was truly an amazing experience I won't forget.

**Interactions with Classmates (2%, 65 responses)**

One of my most meaningful experiences while at UCLA was being able to find a community within my major. This was very important to me because I knew I could rely on my peers for help and could count on them.

Most meaningful learning experiences were in small classes where I got really connected with classmates and the instructor bring readings or class themes into context of the real current world we live in.

Late night studying or doing homework with fellow peers were always fun and meaningful. It is nice to struggle and complete work alongside of your peers -- it feels like we’re working together even though we may be working on individual projects.

Working with classmates for exams. It really connected us together.

Having study groups really influenced my education at UCLA. It made me realize the power of sharing groups and how teaching each other was more helpful rather than going over notes.

I took classes with someone who taught me about research and helped guide me toward it. This was another student who could explain what the professors didn’t seemed to. He helped me enjoy physics more and understand what interests me. As a second, by taking many classes with transfer students, I became much more understanding of those who attend community college and just how important it is in helping people discover their passions.

I am a non-traditional student. Interacting and helping younger students and realizing this in turn also helped me prepare for my courses was invaluable. It also led to some friendships I think will last a very long time.
Civic Engagement (2%, 57 responses)
The most meaningful learning experience was my participation in the Pediatric AIDS Coalition at UCLA.

Volunteering with UCLA Red Cross in underprivileged communities.

Being involved in a student organization called Hunger Project at UCLA, through which we serve and advocate for the homeless.

Helping the homeless community out in West Hollywood.

Being able to be a part of the Mobile Clinic Project at UCLA has allowed me to interact with individuals that I would never have imagined I would meet. Speaking with people on the streets of Hollywood and providing for their social and medical needs taught me that every individual is going through something in life, and that we all need to be there for each other. I have found a passion for working with communities like this, and I hope to pursue a career in which I can develop community medicine projects such as this to create sustainable healthcare for all.

My most meaningful experience was provided outside of the classroom space, working and giving back to my community through Center for Community Partnership.

I learned most from the USAC Community Service Commission, my internship at People Assisting the Homeless.