

2017-18 Progress Report

Each semester, Berkeley Connect helps over 1000 undergraduates at UC Berkeley build confidence and community by pairing them with graduate student mentors and placing them in small groups with peers who share their interests.



Berkeley Connect student volunteers spread the word.

"Berkeley Connect provides you with resources that help you navigate through Cal. It also helps you connect with a community of people who have similar thoughts and struggles as you."

"I highly recommend Berkeley Connect to anyone who feels unsure about their place at UC Berkeley."

"Berkeley Connect gives you the most understated lesson—everyone here is just like you and that you belong."

--Undergraduate participants in Berkeley Connect, Fall 2018

Berkeley Connect identified as a strategic priority for UC Berkeley

2017-18 marked the fifth year that Berkeley Connect operated as a campus-wide program, and its first under the leadership of Chancellor Carol Christ, who made clear her commitment to both balancing the university's budget and identifying strategic priorities. In keeping with these efforts, in 2017-18 Berkeley Connect underwent a rigorous review to ensure that the funds used to support it are dollars well-spent.

In November 2017, after analyzing program outcomes and consulting with stakeholders across the campus, **the university renewed its commitment to Berkeley Connect for five years, pledging \$1M in annual support from the Cal/Parents Fund through 2023.** If the program continues its track record of success, this commitment may be extended through 2028. The funding letter states in part:

"How well an undergraduate student can successfully navigate their academic path plays a significant role in defining their Berkeley experience....Berkeley Connect clears that path by positively influencing undergraduate students' sense of community, confidence and belonging....providing an entrance into the scholarly life of the university. A growing body of data documents the program's impact on the academic success of all undergraduates, but particularly under-represented, first-generation, and transfer students."

Berkeley Connect is clearly aligned with the Chancellor's stated goals:

- building community
- helping students thrive
- enhancing diversity and inclusion

In 2018, the Chancellor charged campus leaders with developing a vision for the future of the university. **Berkeley Connect is honored to be one of the few programs mentioned by name in the university's draft Strategic Plan:**

"Berkeley Connect is a successful model for a program that helps students start strong by linking them in small groups with graduate student mentors....Programs such as Berkeley Connect can serve as a model of programs that should be available to more students."

We thank the deans, department chairs, faculty, graduate students, undergrads, alums, and advising professionals who attested to the value of Berkeley Connect during the budget review and strategic planning process. Berkeley Connect is now frequently cited as a campus success story and model.

Creating a diverse, inclusive, and successful community

Berkeley Connect creates a space in which all students feel welcome. Our motto is, "You belong here!"

"Having some students express to me that Berkeley Connect is the highlight of their week is surprising and heartwarming."

--Berkeley Connect graduate student mentor

In the 2017-18 academic year, 31 UC Berkeley graduate students received Berkeley Connect fellowships to serve as mentors to almost 2000 undergraduates. In Fall 2017, Berkeley Connect participants were:

- 52% transfer students
- 25% under-represented minorities

The participants new to UC Berkeley were:

- 39% first-generation college students
- 33% from low-income families

That same semester, Berkeley Connect participants reported:

- 92% met others who shared their academic interests
- 92% increased their confidence they could succeed at Berkeley
- 90% increased their sense of belonging at UC Berkeley

The benefits of participation are clear. Previously reported research shows that **participation in Berkeley Connect correlates with higher grade point averages and higher retention rates for transfer and underrepresented minority students** (see details at www.berkeleyconnect.berkeley.edu/impact-of-berkeley-connect/). URM students who've received the Berkeley Connect message "you belong here" are half as likely to drop out in their third year as those who did not.



A friendship formed through Berkeley Connect.

Helping students conquer pedagophobia

Many students at UC Berkeley feel anxious about approaching their professors. One Berkeley Connect alum wrote:



Exploring the riches of the Bancroft Library collection.

"I was so intimidated by the idea of asking for help from faculty that I completely avoided all opportunities for interactions with professors....Due in part to the confidence that Berkeley Connect inspired in me...I was able to seek out the help I needed and build relationships with faculty..."

This low-income transfer student went on to conduct summer research, write an honors thesis, and get accepted into six prestigious graduate programs, including Harvard, Stanford, Chicago, and Cornell.

Building productive relationships with faculty is crucial to a positive undergraduate experience. Berkeley Connect mentors stress the importance of visiting professors during office hours, and coach students on how to make those interactions successful. On end-of-semester exit surveys, **89% of students report that they feel better prepared to meet with professors as a result of participating in Berkeley Connect.**

Based on an analysis of institutional data, we now know that, **comparing new students who have participated in Berkeley Connect with new students who have not, the percentage of Berkeley Connect students who know at least one professor well enough to ask for a letter of recommendation is 12.7% higher.** The percentages are also higher for all Berkeley Connect transfer students (5.5%) and for all Berkeley Connect students across the board (4.3%). *(Source: 2016 UC Student Experience Survey)*

Welcoming Erica Bree Rosenblum

In July 2018, Vice Chancellor Cathy Koshland appointed Erica Bree Rosenblum as the new faculty director of Berkeley Connect. An Associate Professor of Global Change Biology in the Department of Environmental Science, Policy and Management (ESPM) in the College of Natural Resources, Dr. Rosenblum received her PhD from Berkeley. Her research focuses on understanding the biological diversity of our planet, and is conducted in locations ranging from the White Sands desert in New Mexico to the rain forests of Africa and South America. Her work has been recognized by numerous awards and



Bree Rosenblum and one of her research subjects.

featured in the *New York Times*, the Discovery Channel, and many textbooks. Involved with Berkeley Connect since 2013, she says, "I am excited to continue deepening the commitment to mentoring and community building at UC Berkeley!"

Thanking Maura Nolan

Associate Professor of English Maura Nolan was the founding faculty Director of Berkeley Connect (and the pilot project that preceded it, the Chernin Mentoring Program). Stepping down from the role after eight years, she wrote:



Maura Nolan honored for her service.

"While I am eager to return to my research, it's not easy for me to step away from Berkeley Connect. I'm tremendously proud of what we've accomplished...thousands of students and alums have benefited from the mentoring that Berkeley Connect provides, and hundreds of graduate students have received Berkeley Connect fellowships. I am confident that a bright future lies ahead."

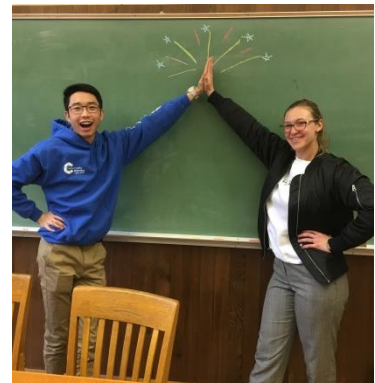
At a reception in August to recognize her service, Nolan's contributions to undergraduate education at Berkeley were lauded by Vice Chancellor Cathy Koshland, former Berkeley Connect English director Eric Falci, Associate Director Michele Rabkin, and Berkeley Connect History student Bria Tennyson.

Planning for the future

Berkeley Connect is honored and grateful to be receiving financial support from the Cal/Parents Fund, as well as the Division of Undergraduate Education. In 2017-18, Berkeley Connect received gifts from individual student and alumni donors ranging in size from \$25 to \$20,000, and continued to benefit from endowment gifts received in previous years.

Now that the reputation of Berkeley Connect is firmly established, students arrive on campus eager to participate, and we want to reach as many as possible. Our long-term goal, as articulated in our 10-year plan, is to serve all new students (both freshmen and junior transfers) in their first year on campus. We are excited to work with Brooke Hendrickson, Director of Development for the new Student Experience & Diversity team, and with all our partners in university and college relations, to create an expansive future for Berkeley Connect.

To learn more about long-range plans for Berkeley Connect, or discuss giving opportunities, please contact Associate Director Michele Rabkin at micheler@berkeley.edu or (510)664-4182. We're always happy to hear from you!



berkeleyconnect.berkeley.edu