**General Advice**

Prof. Alex Thornton - One good way to prepare is to recognize why you're really studying at a university in the first place. This seems like an important thing to remind oneself, in troubled times even more so than usual. Knowledge and skills are still important. Empowering oneself is still important. Giving yourself the credibility that knowledge and skills bring is a great first step to all kinds of things, besides just "I want to get a job" or "I want a nice salary." Want to change the world? Understanding as much as you can about it so that you can speak intelligently and reason critically about it, is a great starting point for that.

Prof. Alex Thornton - A successful student is present, not just in the sense of attending, but in the sense of being *present*: aware of what's going on, having already engaged with relevant course material. A successful student starts things early, reads and digests assignments before diving into working on them (starting early gives you the time to do that), asks questions when they come up (starting early gives you the time to wait for an answer -- even more important when you can't just ask the person sitting next to you), and endeavors to understand *why* we've assigned a task (as opposed to just blindly doing it) and where it fits in the bigger picture of the coursework.

Prof. Jennifer Wong-Ma - UCI has an amazing number of campus resources available to students. Attend involvement fairs and check out the different campus departments. There is a resource for just about everything a student can need. Start with [https://eee.uci.edu/resources/students/](https://eee.uci.edu/resources/students/) and [https://www.ics.uci.edu/ugrad/resources/Campus_Resources.php](https://www.ics.uci.edu/ugrad/resources/Campus_Resources.php)

Dhruv Upadhyay (ICS 2020 CS Graduate) - A successful student knows that their success (usually) does not come without sacrifice or extra effort. If you are comfortable then the chances are, you aren't learning. Learn to embrace being uncomfortable and learning new things and success will come naturally.

Prof. Emeritus of Teaching David G. Kay - Expect diversity and embrace it. Most often, we talk about diversity of people: your classmates, your instructors, your friends. You will meet people with different backgrounds from yours, different life experiences, different beliefs. Getting to know them has social benefits and also professional ones. Industry recruiters regularly tell us that besides technical ability, the qualities they look for are good communications skills and the ability to work productively as part of a team (with different backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs).

You should also expect diversity in your classes. Some use a textbook, some rely on recordings or notes provided by the instructor, some may meet online and some (eventually) may meet in person. Some instructors want you to read or prepare something before coming to class; others may want to introduce topics in their own way first. Some may require that you solve assignments individually, talking only to the instructor or TA; others encourage you to talk with anyone, so long as you say whom you talked to and what part of the solution they supplied. Some welcome questions during lecture; others prefer to save them to the end or have them posted online. Some may assign points to every aspect of the class and use a formula that lets everyone know at any moment what their course grade is at that point; others may give feedback on exams and assignments but not translate the scores to letter grades before the end of the quarter. The point is that courses have "student learning outcomes," a list of things that students should be able to do after completing the course, and an instructor has "creative control" over how to design the class so students achieve those outcomes. Don't just assume that this class will be run the same way as the previous class or the next one. The course syllabus should lay out the specifics; if something isn't clear, ask the instructor.


- You can try to do it all, but don't do it all at once: You have a lot of options and a lot of freedom, but don't dive right into the deep end. Don't start skipping class just because you can. Don't stuff yourself just because your favorite foods are available 24/7. Don't stay up all night just because nobody says lights-out. A certain amount of experimentation is good; you don't want to be exactly the same person you were in high school. But try one thing at a time, more or less. A certain amount of testing your limits is also good: How many classes can you take in one term? How good a grade can you get if you write the paper in one all-nighter? But don't expect any significant short-cuts.
- When the going gets tough, the tough get help: If it's class-related, start with your instructor, TA, or tutor. They're there for you. Tutoring, academic advising, personal counseling, health care; the college will provide services in all these areas. The college typically provides many free or near-free services: Tutoring, academic advising, personal counseling, health care. Don't wait until a situation becomes critical. A stitch in time saves nine.
The occasional bad day or rough patch is inevitable. The question is how you deal with it: No matter how independent and adventurous you are, there will come a time when the whole experience seems overwhelming. Partly it may be that everything is new—new place, new people, new activities, new expectations. Two or three things may hit you at once: You have a cold, you get an unexpectedly low grade; someone says something thoughtless or mean. Recognize that this will happen and expect it; it's inevitable and it's normal. Just scale back a little, maybe call home, recenter yourself. Also, don't let your reverses define or defeat you. If you get a B on a paper or in a class, don't just say, "I'm only a B student" or "This isn't the field for me." Find out what merits an A and try to achieve it. If a classmate or instructor says something that hurts your feelings, examine it carefully before taking it too much to heart; everyone occasionally has bad days, misunderstands, chooses the wrong words.

Edited excerpt from CS Professor Frank Vahid at UCR (source: http://www.cs.ucr.edu/~vahid/college_time.html)

- Allocate the time: Today, allocate 40-60 hours per week to your studies (e.g., from 9 a.m. until 10 p.m. M-F, plus time on the weekends as necessary). If you complete your assigned work early, use that time to further your training (see below).
- Prepare for lectures/labs: Make the best use of your time. Read the material before the lecture so you can digest the lectures -- you'll be amazed at how much more interesting and useful lectures will be. Prepare before labs so you learn the most you can during that time. Take your time on your assignments so you can absorb things deeply.
- Get enough sleep. You can't learn if half-awake -- it's like trying to pour water into an upside-down cup. If you are drowsy in class, you aren't getting enough sleep.
- Read books and articles related to your field in areas that spark your interest
- Build stuff on your own. Design your own alarm clock, or program your own calculator, video game or helpful tool.
- Read/take tutorials online.

Advice from UCI ICS students on reddit (of course!) - The post/comments here are not endorsed by ICS. This is included to provide an ICS student's perspective. https://www.reddit.com/r/cscareerquestions/comments/iucp54/a_rcscareerquestions_college_survival_guide/

**What to expect with online instruction**

Prof. Jennifer Wong-Ma - *Remote learning can be HARD!!!* It isn't a learning model that works for all students and that is A-okay. For many of you, online learning will be a continued challenge. Acknowledge this and proactively put effort to find ways to make it easier. One way is to go about your regular routine as if you were in-person. Get out of bed in the morning! Get dressed! "Go to class" or watching the asynchronous videos during the scheduled course time. Keep a schedule and remove as many distractions as possible.

Prof. Katie Salen - Be prepared for your courses to vary significantly in how they are being run online. Some of your courses might be held synchronously, meaning the class meets at its regularly scheduled time and students interact with the instructor in a live setting. Other courses might be run asynchronously, where you aren't expected to meet in a live setting but can access course info as your schedule allows. Some courses might offer a hybrid. Ask lots of questions early in the quarter to make sure you understand the class format.

Prof. Jennifer Wong-Ma - Online learning can only occur if you are *online and able to access digital content*. Check your coursework regularly. *Digital communication (Canvas announcements, emails, etc) is the only way your courses can communicate with you, so you have to be "listening"* This means: check your email daily, set your Canvas notifications appropriately, install apps to get mobile notifications, etc. Make sure you are in the know!

Prof. Alex Thornton - In programming-heavy courses, the biggest differences between online instruction and in-person instruction might be (the lack of) social pressure (e.g., the pressure to attend the class) and (the lack of) an ability to get quick help from other students on little stuff (like noticing some detail of an assignment's requirements), if you're not interacting with other students socially. Most of the learning is done outside of the classroom, anyway, so the courses are otherwise not as different as you might think.

**How to contact faculty for research**
Prof. Katie Salen - If you are interested in getting involved in research start by doing some research of your own—explore faculty profiles and lab websites and get a sense of which professors might be doing research that interests you. Once you have identified some labs or professors, email them directly. Tell them you are interested in research opportunities, share a little bit about your interests, your major, your background, your experience with research and ask if you might set up a time to speak with them. Faculty get a lot of these requests and the more information you can provide in an initial email, the better.

From Prof. Padhraic Smyth - Feel free to contact graduate students in the professor's research group directly: they are usually quite approachable and happy to talk about their research projects - and their information about projects may be more up-to-date than what's on the Prof's Web page. And in many cases, an undergraduate may end up working with a graduate student (more so than with the professor directly), so making initial contact with graduate students can work well (and grad students are "human" - they often were an undergrad themselves just a year or two ago).

If possible, take a class or two in the professor's research area. This will vary by student and by research area, but for example, in my own area (machine learning) its difficult for me (usually) to find a project for a student unless they have at least taken our undergrad machine learning class. This also means that you should try to take these classes before the senior year if possible so that you then have the opportunity to fit in some research in junior/senior year. And if you take a class with a particular professor and do very well, towards the end of the quarter is a great time to let the prof know that you would be interested in doing research.

When contacting a Prof. include your CV, your transcripts (unofficial is fine), any relevant project information, etc. This is very helpful to have, and it's very helpful to get it with the first inquiry rather than having to contact the student to ask for it. If you have worked already on a project with another professor, say something about that, and say why you are now looking for a different project (e.g., would like to get experience in multiple research labs).

Feel free to approach multiple professors in your area of interest. And don't be discouraged if you don't get a reply: professors often get 50 to 100 emails a day so it's pretty hard to keep up and answer all of them. But be persistent - it's perfectly fine to send a followup email after a week if you have not heard anything (and followup emails indicate that you are serious).

Finally: don't be shy! Be direct when you contact a professor about what types of opportunity you are looking for (e.g., programming experience, more theoretical work, just getting a sense of what research is like, etc), how much time and when you would be available (during the quarter, summer, etc), what your motivation is (e.g., thinking of going to graduate school).

**What transfer students should focus on during their first year at UC Irvine**

Prof. Alex Thornton - Transfer students have a lot on their plate right from the beginning, because they have less time to get acquainted before they need to get moving on some things: Deciding about the possibility of graduate school (and beginning to assemble one's CV, research, letters of recommendation, etc., sooner), finding out about the job market that they'll be joining sooner, and so on. So they should focus on finding mentorship -- not just from their instructors (though that's part of it), but also from students who are nearer to the end of the road than they are.

Prof. Jennifer Wong-Ma - Give yourself time to adjust to the style and course load of UCI. Often transfer students are caught off guard by the course expectations in the first quarter and by the different policies on campus. Meet with an academic advisor to know what your options are with regards to adding/dropping courses, financial aid constraints, etc.