

Laura Vogt:

Hi and thank you for joining me and the Not So Secret Guide to Being a Berkeley Engineer. I'm your host, Laura Vogt, the Associate Director of Marketing and Communications in the College of Engineering. And this week, we have three guests from Engineering Student Services. It's Olivia Chan, Catherine Bouvier Dang and Mayra Rivera. Welcome everyone. Please tell us about yourselves and your role in Berkeley Engineering. Olivia.

Olivia Chan:

Olivia Chan and I'm one of the Engineering Student Services, or ESS advisors. I advise energy engineering, environmental engineering, science, engineering, math, and statistics, as well as a portion of the electrical engineering and computer science, or EECS, majors. I've been an advisor for over 16 years and almost nine of them have been with Engineering Student Services.

Laura Vogt:

Thank you. Catherine.

Catherine Bouvier Dang:

Hi everyone. My name is Catherine and I'm one of the ESS College Advisors. I typically advise civil engineers and bioengineers. I was a Pell Grant recipient and graduated from Cal a little while back and got really good at navigating this university, so that's why I decided to come back and help my fellow Bears through their journeys. On a personal note, I have a goal of visiting all of our beautiful national parks. So if you have any favorites, let me know.

Laura Vogt:

Thank you. I'm so glad to have you here. And Mayra.

Mayra Rivera:

Hi everyone. My name is Mayra Rivera and I am also one of the ESS Advisors. I advise material science and engineering, as well as a portion of mechanical engineering majors. I graduated from UC Berkeley a few years ago and have been working for the College of Engineering for almost four years now.

Laura Vogt:

So thank you again everyone for coming in today. I'm excited to have you here. I know, Catherine and Mayra, it's your first time that you've been a guest on the podcast. I'm excited that you're getting to experience being part of this and talking to our new students and meeting them this forum. Our new students are learning right now through

the Golden Bear Advising that they are going to have the support of three different advisors during their time at Berkeley Engineering. It's going to be their ESS advisors, which is you, department advisors and faculty advisors. So today, we want to talk about the difference between those advisors and how each advisor's skills are used to support students in a different way. Let's start off with Olivia, why don't you tell us a little bit more about ESS advisors and why do you want students to work with you?

Olivia Chan:

Sure. Generally, I like to think of ESS advisors as the first stop for students who have academic questions. If you aren't sure who to ask, we just want to make sure you're not floundering, that you feel like you're alone out there, that you do have some point of reference, so please come in with any of your academic questions. In terms of why students come to visit ESS advisors, my students mainly come in because they just kind of want to monitor their academic progress. So, does this course count towards my degree? What other courses do I have to take in order to complete my degree? If students are running into academic difficulties, they should definitely come in and talk to us, just if anythings, so that we can direct them to resources. If they have questions about who can read my resume, things like that, please come in, speak with your ESS advisor.

Olivia Chan:

Yeah. Mayra, Catherine, do you have anything that you'd like to add?

Catherine Bouvier Dang:

Yeah. I like to tell my students that I'm the human Google at the university. So if there's something you're looking for or you don't really quite know where to go, you can always come to us and we will point you in the right direction. Other things that you can come to us for is if you're trying to plan a minor or a double major or anything else like that, we can help you plan for that as well. If you need a pep talk before an interview, I can totally do that as well.

Laura Vogt:

What if a student is having academic difficulty? Are you the first stop for dealing with any of those kinds of problems or do you know the resources if they're having problems with the academics?

Olivia Chan:

So yes, we do ask that if students are experiencing academic difficulty, that they do come in and they meet with us. Even if they're not sure if what's going on with them is that big of a deal, it's good for us to know, just in case again, we can point them to

resources. So for example, if they feel like they're struggling with a class, we can refer them to tutoring resources. If they feel like they're experiencing something that they need to talk to a counseling psychologist about, that we can refer them there. Yeah. So again, come to us first so that we can kind of see what your particular situation is and then refer you appropriately.

Laura Vogt:

How do students reach out to their advisors? What's the easiest way to get ahold of you?

Olivia Chan:

The easiest way to get in touch with me is to schedule an appointment online by going to our ESS website, which is [engineering.berkeley.edu/advising](http://engineering.berkeley.edu/advising). That will give you your ESS advisor's calendar availability.

Catherine Bouvier Dang:

This semester in the coming fall, you'll be able to either meet with your advisor in person or through Zoom or through phone. The way you can find out more about that is through our website, like Olivia mentioned. You can also see in Cal Central, who your advisor is on your My Academics page. And for my students, you can see my tiny URL drop-in link where I have my drop-ins and my FAQ so you always know what's happening, but every adviser is going to let you know how you can contact them.

Laura Vogt:

Excellent. Let's move on from ESS advising to department advising. So how do department advisors support students and is it different for each department? Mayra.

Mayra Rivera:

Yes. Think of your department advisors as your go-to people for questions that are very department specific. Every department has a different department advisor. Some departments have one, others have maybe three department advisors that specialized in different things. They would know your professors the best. So if you're trying to find out more information about which professor would be the best professor for research under a specific area, they can kind of give you a list of faculty you may want to reach out to. They can also help you with your course enrollment. So if you're trying to enroll in a graduate course, if you have a time conflict, if you need to find out how to enroll in research units, they can also help you with that. They usually know what classes will be offered in future semesters as well. They can help you do a ton of things. They can help you connect with student groups, groups that are specifically affiliated with the

department. They might also have events or scholarships. They really help with a bunch of different items.

Laura Vogt:

I know a couple of departments even have their own career fair activities that the department advisors organized.

Mayra Rivera:

Yes, they do. Some departments might send out weekly newsletters that have specific industry affiliated events. Let's say, for example, if they are going to have an event with Apple, an event with a different industry partner, they'll email students and let them know. It's really important that you do reach out to your department advisors, that you know who they are, that you are on their newsletters, just so that you've got that information that you need.

Laura Vogt:

Do you know if department advisors, do they have appointment times or is it better to reach them by email?

Mayra Rivera:

It really varies based on every department advisor. I recommend going to the department page and looking up what the best way to contact them is. Email is always a good way to go, but some department advisors will actually have an appointment system where you can just go in and book an appointment with them directly.

Laura Vogt:

I know that a lot of departments have minors and that the department advisors are actually pretty involved in doing the minors. How would a student learn more about the minors and who do they need to discuss getting those with?

Mayra Rivera:

Yeah. When you actually go into the department page, you can see who the point of contact is for the minor, if there's a minor affiliated with that specific department. It's best that you email whatever department advisor is listed on there as the main program contact. They can give you more information about the minor. Every minor is a little bit different, so it's just better to check in with them.

Olivia Chan:

Yeah. And just to define what a minor is, it's usually three to seven courses, in addition to your major, in a discipline outside of your major.

Laura Vogt:

And Catherine, can you take... do you have to be in a specific department already to do like a minor in that department or can you do them across colleges and majors?

Olivia Chan:

Yes. Usually, you can do them across colleges and majors. Typically, you can't do a minor within your own department. So for example, if you're a civil engineer, you can't do a minor in structural engineering, but you can go ahead and do a minor in music or in city planning, any other department on campus that offers minors. If you're interested in learning about all of the different minors all in one place, if you go to [guide.berkeley.edu/undergraduates/degree-programs](https://guide.berkeley.edu/undergraduates/degree-programs), there's a list of all of the different minors and all of the different requirements for those minors.

Laura Vogt:

Those department advisors are not just something that's in College of Engineering, the department advisors are across campus in all of the departments.

Olivia Chan:

That's right.

Laura Vogt:

Now, let's talk a little bit more about the faculty advisors. How do students get partnered with a faculty advisor and how often do they have contact with them?

Olivia Chan:

Faculty advisors are assigned differently based off departments. Some will immediately assign students when they first enroll and some departments will have students actually choose their faculty advisors from a list. You will be notified of who your faculty advisor is. I generally send my students, I encourage my students to go and talk to their faculty advisors, especially if they aren't sure what direction they want to go with their degree, what area they may be interested in. I always tell students, don't box yourself in when you're talking to a professor, in terms of what you're interested in. Just say for example, "Oh, I took such and such class and I was really interested in this area of the class, but not as interested in this. What upper division courses would you recommend maybe that I try out?" This will help students really direct them towards maybe the area that they may want to focus on.

Olivia Chan:

Faculty advisors, how you outreach to them is you can email them. If they have available office hours, you should definitely attend that. Again, I really encourage my students to outreach to faculty advisors. I think lot of times students feel like they're unapproachable or that they don't need to talk to a faculty advisor, but it really is important, especially if you're considering graduate school to really get in touch. I generally actually ask my students to go on to their department website and look up faculty who are in the area that they're interested in, maybe like three faculty, and just contact them and ask them for, again, course suggestions. That way they're putting their foot in the door and getting to know these faculties. So down the road, if they need letters of recommendation, if they are looking for research opportunities, that they really can reach out to professors that way and professors will actually know who they are.

Olivia Chan:

It is really important that you go and talk to your faculty advisors. I would say the sooner, the better. Some departments actually offer opportunities for students to go in and meet with their faculty right before scheduling for the next semester, so definitely take advantage of those. Also, really the goal of faculty versus ESS advisors... The reason why I send students also to faculty is ESS advisors, we, again, monitor your progress towards your degree. We're making sure that you are taking the courses needed to finish your degree requirements, but we don't know what the courses are necessarily about, so it's best that you actually go and talk to faculty who know what these courses are and who can make these suggestions to you.

Laura Vogt:

Excellent. One more set of advisors that we haven't really talked about much or that we haven't even introduced yet is our ESS peer advisors, which I think a lot of students tend to like to talk to their peers about things more than maybe the adults in the room. Mayra, can you tell us a little bit more about the ESS peer advisors and when they'll be back?

Mayra Rivera:

Yes, of course. The ESS peer advisors will be back the last week of August. They are trained undergraduate engineering students who offer you a student perspective on pretty much anything really. It's a group of eight ESS peer advisors and they can advise you on your major, on courses, on student life in general in the College of Engineering or even across campus. They will be located in 230 Bechtel, so you are always welcome to stop by and meet with them. I really recommend that students do meet with an ESS peer advisor because a lot of these students are juniors and seniors, they are taking or have taken the courses that you plan on taking, and you'll able to directly hear

from them what their experience was like, especially for all of you who will be coming in. They've already taken the classes that you will be taking in the fall semester.

Mayra Rivera:

It'll be really helpful for you to connect with them. They'll be able to provide you with just an additional level of support. I went to Cal, but I did not take engineering courses, so I can only give you a very limited view on what you can expect in your class. But really, they've taken the class so they can give you more specific information about it, so definitely stop by and talk to a peer advisor. There is a peer advisor in pretty much every major. So if you wanted it to talk to someone specifically related to your major, you're more than welcome to visit our page, which is-

Olivia Chan:

Yeah. It's [engineering.berkeley.edu/peer](https://engineering.berkeley.edu/peer).

Catherine Bouvier Dang:

I also want to give a special shout out to Eileen, who is the civil engineering peer advisor who's coming back. I already told her I'd do this. She can answer all of your civil engineering questions.

Laura Vogt:

And then we also have other types of counseling and advising that are specific to the College of Engineering that are, what, satellites of other things on campus. We've got the Career Center and folks from the Tang Center to focus on your wellness. When we are not in the hybrid level, they'll actually be in 230 Bechtel and in our engineering area. Right now, everything is being done online. I believe that is continuing for the start of this semester with the counseling appointments. All of that information is on our website under advising, so [engineering.berkeley.edu/advising](https://engineering.berkeley.edu/advising). Is there anything that the three of you would like to add about advising? Maybe something that you really hope for students... like what you really want students to remember from this podcast?

Olivia Chan:

Please come in and meet with us. We want to meet you. We want to get to know you. We want you to get to know us. So please, if you have any questions or you just want to chat, schedule an appointment, meet with us, we want to get to know you.

Catherine Bouvier Dang:

Yes, we chose this profession because we wanted to help students and we wanted to help support you. We're human beings, we're approachable, so come and ask us anything. We're here for you.

Mayra Rivera:

Yeah. Similarly, I just want to echo what Olivia and Catherine already said. We really just want to get to know you, get to meet, be able to help you throughout your journey here at Cal. You are no bother at all, so please stop by as many times as you need to. Email us if you have questions. We'll be pretty much your main point of contact for anything.

Olivia Chan:

There's one more thing I wanted to add.

Laura Vogt:

Sure.

Catherine Bouvier Dang:

That it can feel really into me to come and meet us in person or through Zoom, but I guarantee you that if you meet us in person or through Zoom and Zoom and email, you'll get a lot more out of that interaction.

Laura Vogt:

Oh, that totally makes sense. Well, thank you all so much for coming here today. All of the links that we talked about throughout the podcast, I'll have a link on our website. If you go to [engineering.berkeley.edu/esspodcast](https://engineering.berkeley.edu/esspodcast), each of our websites has an entire section for helpful links. You can also catch up on past podcasts or you can even take a look at what we did last year. This year, we're doing some new topics that we haven't done before. We're excited that we'll have a conversation with our Associate Dean for students. We're going to have someone come in from our CE3 Center, which we'll talk about a lot of the resources that are available for students and what you can use. We're going to have the ever fun podcast on financial aid because that is always a popular topic. Thank you all for tuning into the Not So Secret Guide to Being a Berkeley Engineer. And I'm looking forward to podcasting with you next time. Thank you.