

Student Engagement and the Oregon State University Undergraduate Experience



Introduction and Overview

The following summary provides an overview of selected findings from the 2016 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) completed at Oregon State University (OSU). The NSSE asks first-year and senior-level students “to reflect on the time they devote to various learning activities” (NSSE, 2017) both through their academic curriculum as well as through engagement in co-curricular programming. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending their college or university. For additional information of the history and impact of the survey, please visit the NSSE [website](#). Past OSU NSSE results and reports can be found on the Student Affairs Research, Evaluation, and Planning [website](#).

Table 1
Sample & Response Rate

	Count	Response Rate
First-year	452	17%
Senior	662	26%

The NSSE 2016 survey results detailed in the report that follows are the culmination of responses from 1,114 students of the 5,150 who received an opportunity to participate. 2,645 first-year students and 2,505 seniors were invited. In total, 452 first-year students and 662 seniors completed the survey. The results highlighted in this report focus on a specific subset of the survey results, the findings connected with student campus engagement and participation in High Impact Practices. Though NSSE provides data from comparator institutions, this report will focus solely on the OSU data.

Overall Highlights

Key findings from the 2016 NSSE responses include:

- Both first-year and senior students were most satisfied with the quality of their interactions with other students.
- 51% of first-year respondents and 93% of senior respondents had participated in at least one High Impact Practice
- 81% of first-year respondents and 89% of senior respondents rated their OSU experience as “Excellent” or “good”

Engagement Indicators

Engagement Indicators are summary measures based on sets of NSSE questions examining “key dimensions of student engagement” (NSSE Institutional Report, Engagement Indicators, 2016) at OSU. These indicators have been grouped within four broad themes: academic challenge, learning with peers, experience with faculty, and campus environment. The engagement indicators, when combined with the results of student participation in HIPs, provide a detailed overview about the dimensions of student learning and engagement. The indicators reflect the ways in which first-year and senior students use (or have used) OSU resources as well as engage in their academic courses and learning opportunities to enhance their education.

Academic Challenge

The data pertaining to the academic challenge indicators suggest that the respondents, both first-year and senior student groups, perceive the OSU learning environment as rigorous with an emphasis on preparation. When asked to rate to what extent their institution (OSU) emphasizes spending significant time studying and on academic work (on a scale of “Very little” to “Very much”), 81% of both first-year and senior respondents responded either “Very much” or “Quite a bit”. In practice, first-year students reported spending, on average, around 15.1 hours per week preparing for their courses. Similarly, seniors reported dedicating an average of 16.4 hours of studying each week.

Learning with Peers

First-year students were more apt to receive help from another student when compared to seniors; 61% reported very often or often asking another student to help understand course material in contrast to 53% of seniors. However, students are engaging collaboratively through other methods; 70% of seniors indicated that “Very often” or “often” they worked with their peers on course projects or assignments and 65% of respondents explained course material to one or more students.

Experience with Faculty

45% of first-year students 52% of seniors rated their interactions with faculty members as a 6 or a 7 (on a scale from 1="Poor" to 7="Excellent"). In regards to one aspect of student-faculty interactions, 19% of first-year students and 33% of seniors indicated that they "frequently" discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts outside of the class with faculty. When asked about the structure and teaching practices used by faculty, 82% of senior respondents indicated that their faculty clearly articulated course goals and requirements either "very much" or "quite a bit". Course organization was similarly regarded as a strength by the senior respondents, 80% of whom indicated that their instructors taught courses in an organized way "Very much" or "quite a bit".

Campus Environment

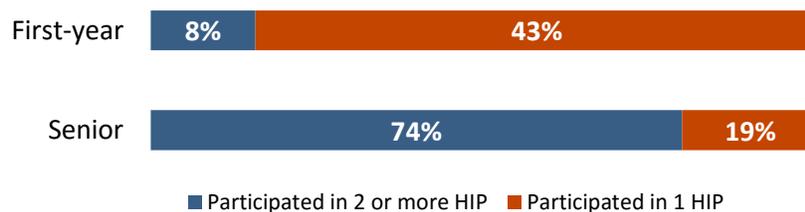
The fourth theme, focused on the campus environment, measures two engagement indicators: the quality of interactions among students, faculty, and administrative staff and students' perception of support. On a scale of "poor" to "excellent", both first-year students and seniors identified their highest quality of interactions (selecting either a 6 or 7) with other students. When asked about the institutional emphasis on support measures and resources, both groups agreed that OSU "provid[ed] support to help students succeed academically" (NSSE Institutional Report, Engagement Indicators, 2016). 75% of first-year students said that OSU "substantially" emphasized the use of learning support services through resources such as tutors, writing centers, and more.

High Impact Practices

High Impact Practices (HIPs) are teaching and learning practices identified by George Kuh (2008) that facilitate deep, meaningful learning opportunities for students. Research also indicates that student participation in HIPs increases rates of student engagement and retention (Kuh, 2008). HIPs share several traits: they demand considerable time and effort, facilitate learning outside of the classroom, require meaningful interactions with faculty and students, encourage collaboration with diverse others, and provide frequent and substantive feedback. NSSE asks students about their participation in six HIPs: learning community (or a program in which students take two or more courses together), a course that

includes a community-based project or service-learning, research with faculty, an internship or field experience, study abroad, and/or a culminating senior experience. Unlike most questions on the NSSE survey, the HIP questions are not limited to the current school year. Thus, the responses from students identified as a senior reflect their engagement from prior years.

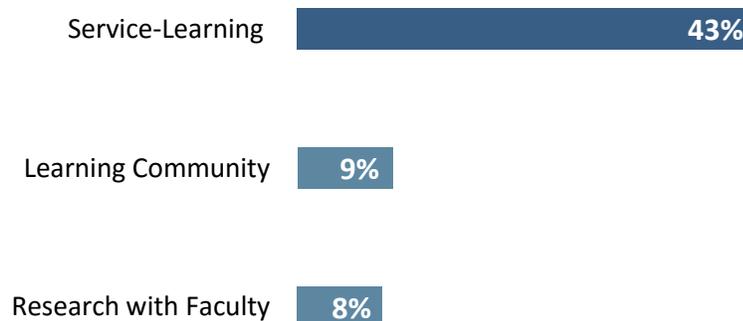
Figure 1
Overall HIP participation by student standing



First Year Respondents

Of the three HIPs measured, service-learning (where respondents marked that at least “some” courses included a community-based project) saw the highest level of participation with 43% of the first-year students engaging in at least one service-learning opportunity over that of student involvement in a learning community (9%) or conducting research with a faculty member (8%). Although first-year engagement in research or a learning community was lower than 10% for both opportunities at the time of their participation in the NSSE, students reflected an intent to pursue these HIPs; 26% of respondents indicated plans to participate in a learning community and 43% intended to work on a research project.

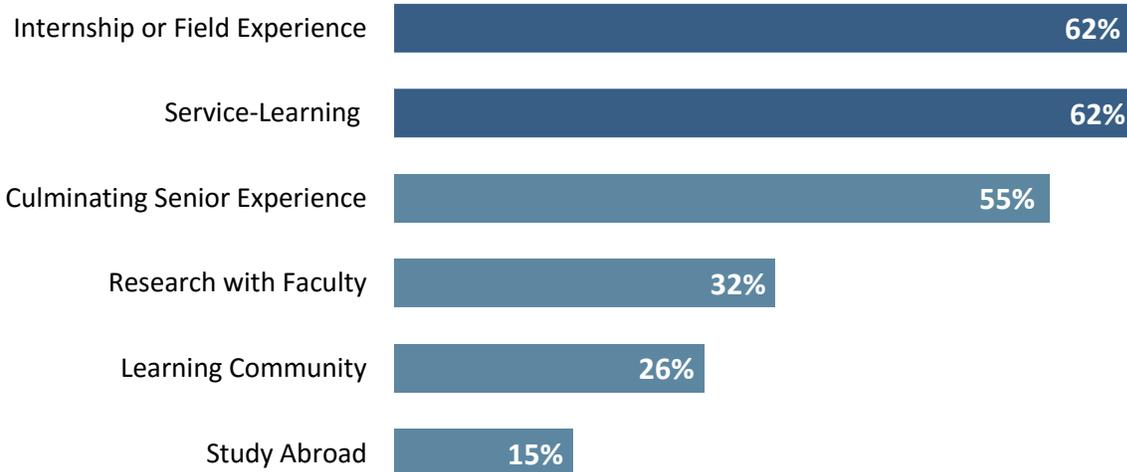
Figure 2
First-year participation in High Impact Practices



Senior Respondents

Because the HIP questions accounted for the breadth of students' engagement and time at OSU, a higher rate of seniors indicated have participated in at least one HIP. Specifically, 93% of the respondents had engaged in at least one HIP; 74% of the students within that group had participated in two or more. Of the senior respondents, service-learning (62%) and an internship or field experience (62%) had the highest reported participation. The comparatively low rate of students who indicated participating in a study abroad opportunity (15%) presents an opportunity for continued examination and opportunity for OSU as to how it might expand opportunities for students. Figure 3 shows the complete list of HIPs measured by the NSSE and the percentages of student participation in each educational opportunity.

Figure 3
Senior participation in High Impact Practices



Individuals who have additional questions or would like more information about the results contained in this report may contact Student Affairs Research, Evaluation, and Planning.

References

Kuh, G.D. (2008). High impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U).

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). (2017). About NSSE. Retrieved from <http://nsse.indiana.edu/html/about.cfm>

Appendix

Descriptive summary of engagement indicators by theme: First-year and senior students

Learning with Peers		
Collaborative Learning	First-year	Senior
<i>Percentage of students who responded that they "Very often" or "Often"...</i>	%	%
Asked another student to help you understand course material	61	53
Explained course material to one or more students	60	65
Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students	52	50
Worked with other students on course projects or assignments	55	70
Discussions with Diverse Others		
<i>Percentage of students who responded that they "Very often" or "Often" had discussions with...</i>	%	%
People from a race or ethnicity other than your own	69	68
People from an economic background other than your own	74	75
People with religious beliefs other than your own	72	73
People with political views other than your own	69	71
Experiences with Faculty		
Student-Faculty Interaction		
<i>Percentage of students who responded that they "Very often" or "Often"...</i>	%	%
Talked about career plans with a faculty member	32	45
Worked w/faculty on activities other than coursework (committees, student groups, etc.)	18	33
Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class	19	33
Discussed your academic performance with a faculty member	24	29
Effective Teaching Practices		
<i>Percentage responding "Very much" or "Quite a bit" about how much instructors have...</i>	%	%
Clearly explained course goals and requirements	73	82
Taught course sessions in an organized way	69	80
Used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points	68	79
Provided feedback on a draft or work in progress	51	60
Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments	47	64
Campus Environment		
Quality of Interactions		
<i>Percentage rating their interactions a 6 or 7 (on a scale from 1="Poor" to 7="Excellent") with...</i>	%	%
Students	54	59
Academic advisors	53	51
Faculty	45	52
Student services staff (career services, student activities, housing, etc.)	39	37
Other administrative staff and offices (registrar, financial aid, etc.)	38	31
Supportive Environment		
<i>Percentage responding "Very much" or "Quite a bit" about how much the institution emphasized...</i>	%	%
Providing support to help students succeed academically	78	69
Using learning support services (tutoring services, writing center, etc.)	79	63

Encouraging contact among students from diff. backgrounds (soc., racial/eth., relig., etc.)	55	53
Providing opportunities to be involved socially	71	64
Providing support for your overall well-being (recreation, health care, counseling, etc.)	75	69
Helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	40	26
Attending campus activities and events (performing arts, athletic events, etc.)	65	58
Attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues	48	42
