

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AT USU: FRESHMEN VS. SENIORS

Periodically, Utah State University administers the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to 1st year and senior students. The basic purpose of NSSE is to determine what students actually do as part of their college experience and how they assess that experience in terms of their academic capabilities and progress.

The last use of NSSE at USU was during the 2007-2008 academic year. The survey was administered online to a sample of 2,611 1st year and 1,920 senior students. Completed surveys were received from 33.2% (n = 867) of the 1st year students and 42.4% (n = 815) of the senior students. Responses rates for all institutions using NSSE that year were 30% for 1st year students and 33% for seniors.

The purpose of this brief report is to use USU's NSSE results to assess difference in academic engagement between 1st year and senior students. How do 1st year student academic activities differ from those of senior students? How seniors perceive that their USU experience has affected their skills, knowledge, and personal development compared to the perceptions of freshmen? NSSE results for these two issues are provided below.

RESULTS: ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

NSSE Question		1st Year Students	Senior Students
During the current school year, how often did students?			
Make a class presentation	Often or Very Often	13%	56%
Prepare two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	Often or Very Often	54%	50%
Work on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	Often or Very Often	66%	73%
Work with other students on projects during class	Often or Very Often	41%	45%
Work with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	Often or Very Often	41%	71%
Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions	Often or Very Often	50%	71%
Discuss ideas from readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	Often or Very Often	18%	25%

During the current school year how much writing did students do?

Written papers or reports of <u>20 pages or more</u>	Less Than Five	97%	83%
Written papers or reports <u>between 5 and 19 pages</u>	Less Than Five	85%	72%
Written papers or reports of <u>fewer than 5 pages</u>	Less Than Five	31%	33%

In a typical week, how many:

Problem sets did students complete that took more than an hour?	Less Than Five	81%	76%
Problem sets did students complete that took less than an hour?	Less Than Five	77%	82%
Hours did students spend preparing for class?	Ten or Less	46%	38%

Percent of students who worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements

5% 25%

RESULTS: PERCEPTIONS

During the current school year, how much did coursework emphasize the following mental activities?

Memorizing facts, ideas, or methods from courses and readings	Quite a Bit or Very Much	64%	57%
Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory	Quite a Bit or Very Much	75%	84%
Coursework emphasizes: Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences	Quite a Bit or Very Much	59%	73%
Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods	Quite a Bit or Very Much	63%	69%
Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	Quite a Bit or Very Much	71%	74%

To what extent did students' experience at USU contribute to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?

· Acquiring a broad general education	Quite a Bit or Very Much	76%	73%
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	Quite a Bit or Very Much	60%	79%
Writing clearly and effectively	Quite a Bit or Very Much	64%	75%
Speaking clearly and effectively	Quite a Bit or Very Much	53%	66%
Thinking critically and analytically	Quite a Bit or Very Much	80%	87%
Analyzing quantitative problems	Quite a Bit or Very Much	68%	77%
Using computing and information technology	Quite a Bit or Very Much	77%	84%
· Working effectively with others	Quite a Bit or Very Much	66%	80%
· Learning effectively on your own	Quite a Bit or Very Much	69%	76%

How did students evaluate their entire educational experience at USU?

Good or Excellent 90% 88%

If students could start over again, would they go to USU?

Probably/Definitely Yes 91% 90%

SUMMARY

Senior students write more long papers and spend more time studying than freshmen. They are more frequently involved in making class presentations, working with classmates outside of class on assignments, and participating with faculty in outside research.

Seniors perceive that their USU coursework involves less memorizing, but more analyzing and synthesizing than is perceived by freshmen regarding their coursework. Asked how their USU experience contributed to the knowledge, skills, and personal development in various areas, there was essentially no difference by level regarding acquiring a broad general education, but seniors saw more “value-added” in eight other areas covered by the NSSE questions,

Finally, when asked how they would evaluate their entire educational experience at USU and if they would come to USU again if they could start over, there was essentially no difference in the responses of 1st year and senior students.