

National Study of Student Engagement

Spring 2000

University of Southern Indiana Student Response Profile



Office of Institutional Research
Summer 2000

Introduction

This report summarizes information about the Spring 2000 administration of the National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE). The NSSE project surveys undergraduates at four-year colleges and universities to assess the extent to which they engage in a variety of good educational practices. It is cosponsored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Pew Forum for Undergraduate Learning.

The survey instrument *The College Student Report* was designed by a national panel of assessment experts. Most of the survey instrument items represent student behaviors that are highly correlated with many important learning and personal development outcomes of the postsecondary learning experience. It addresses student engagement in academic, intellectual, and social experiences; knowledge, skills, and personal development; and issues of emphasis, quality, and satisfaction with their respective college or university.

The national NSSE comparative sample was comprised of 151,910 first-year and senior students who were randomly selected from 276 participating four-year colleges and universities. Institutions were stratified by Carnegie classification and regional location. Students had the option of completing the survey via a traditional paper questionnaire or via the World Wide Web. Based on individual student and institutional response rates, it is posited that the data contained in the NSSE normative profile are reflective of true national norms.

For the 2000 administration of the NSSE, 675 University of Southern Indiana freshmen and seniors were sent surveys. Two hundred eighty two (282) useable surveys were completed for an effective response rate of 41%. The response rate for all NSSE 2000 participating institutions was 42%.

A complete frequency distribution and distribution of mean item scores comparing USI student responses with institutional Carnegie peers (Master's I and II) and all national NSSE respondents are included in the appendix to this report. Two tailed t-tests between USI vs. Carnegie peers and vs. national means were run. The results of these t-tests ($p < .001$) are included on the mean item score comparisons report.

Profile of USI NSSE 2000 Respondents

In Table 1, the first column represents USI survey respondents, the second column shows the characteristics of students at all four-year institutions that participated in the NSSE 2000 data collection.

Class

Of the 282 USI respondents, (40%) were in their first year of college and 60% were seniors. Freshmen response rates for USI students were slightly lower than their peers nationally.

	USI	All Respondents
Gender		
Male	26.9 %	33.4 %
Female	73.1 %	66.6 %
Ethnicity		
African-American	1.9 %	6.8 %
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1.1 %	1.5 %
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.0 %	5.6 %
Caucasian	95.0 %	77.5 %
Hispanic	1.0 %	7.2 %
Other	0 %	4.9 %
Multiple	0 %	3.8 %
Enrollment Status		
Full-time	82 %	86 %
Part-time	18 %	14 %
Class Level		
First-year	40 %	49 %
Senior	60 %	51 %
Residence Status		
On campus	22 %	44 %
Off campus	78 %	56 %

Gender

Women comprised nearly three-fourths (73.1%) of the survey respondents. The larger proportion of women respondents is consistent with the widely reported research phenomenon that women are more likely than men to return questionnaires. USI women were also significantly more likely than their male peers to complete the NSSE using the Web.

Age

Students aged 20-23 years of age made up the largest proportion (40.4%) of USI respondents, despite the fact that half of the students selected to receive the survey were in their first year of college (aged 19 or younger). Students aged 19 or younger comprised 35.8 % of all USI respondents. Students aged 24 years or older made up 23.8% of the USI sample.

Enrollment Status

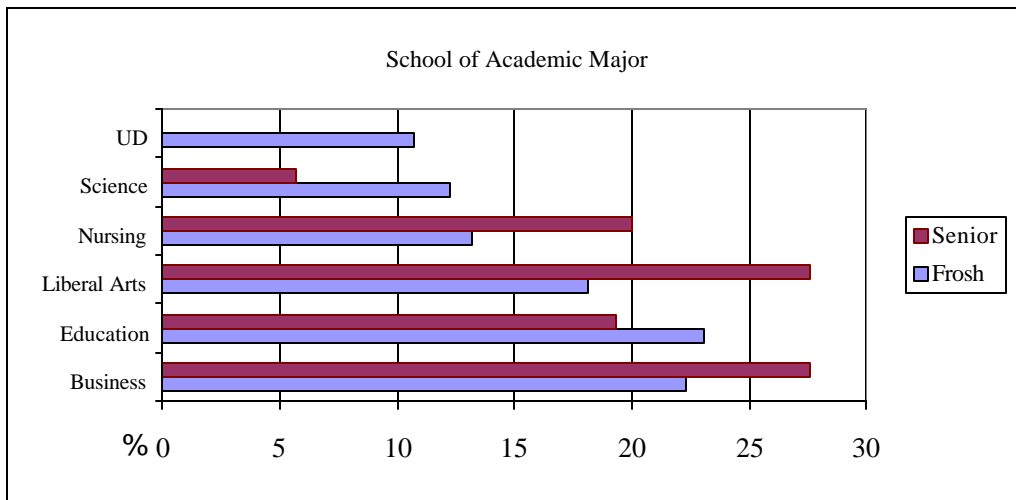
More than four-fifths (82%) of USI NSSE respondents were enrolled full-time. Nearly one-fourth (24.1%) of seniors indicated that they had attended one or more institutions in addition to the one in which they are currently enrolled. Of the 68 USI seniors that indicated that they had attended another institution, 40 (58.8%) had previously attended a community college, and 28 (41.2%) had attended a four-year college or university.

Living Arrangements

Twenty-two percent (22.3%) of USI survey respondents lived in campus housing (39.3% first-year students, 11.2% seniors). The remainder lived within driving distance (70.6%), or within walking distance (9.1%). No USI respondents indicated living in Fraternity or Sorority housing.

School of Academic Major Field

The chart below shows the percentages of USI students majoring in academic disciplines by academic school. The total exceed 100% as students could indicate more than one major, if applicable. In fact, 16.3 % of students reported that they had two or more academic majors. The largest number of USI students indicated academic majors in the Schools of Business and Liberal Arts. Of particular note, the proportion of freshmen to senior majors in academic schools appears to indicate that as freshmen continue their collegiate experience, they are more likely to change majors (subsequently to those in other academic schools) in the Schools of Science and Engineering Technology, and Education and Human Services.



Selected Results

This section of the report is divided into two parts. The first part presents a birds-eye view of the nature and frequency of undergraduate student engagement in good educational practices. The second part briefly summarizes the results from a series of regression analyses examining the levels of engagement of different groups of students, controlling for various student characteristics and such institutional factors such as selectivity, sector, and size.

Descriptive Highlights

One way to estimate collegiate quality is to look at the frequency with which students engage in good educational practice.

College Activities

For these questions, a “substantial amount” of engagement is defined to be at least 50% of all students responding “often” or “very often”.

Activity	Percent Responding “Often” / “Very Often”		
	All Students	Frosh	Seniors
Discussed ideas from your reading or classes with others outside of class	60.2	56.6	65.4
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	58.7	44.3	70.0
Made a class presentation	57.9	40.6	69.8
Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance	57.8	48.6	66.3
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor’s standards or expectations	55.9	54.7	58.1

These findings are consistent with the responses of the national NSSE cohort, with the exception that nationally, students indicated greater activity in “using email to communicate with instructors or other students” (58%), and less activity in making class presentations. T-tests between USI senior responses and those of seniors nationally, indicated a statistically significant difference in the academic activity of using an electronic medium (email, listserv, chat group, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment. USI senior mean scores were higher on this particular item than their peers nationally.

The less frequent activities were also determined by combining the “often” or “very often” responses and using a cut-off point of less than 20%, meaning that fewer than one-fifth of the students indicated that they did these things frequently (Table 3).

Activity	Percent Responding “Often” / “Very Often”		
	All Students	Frosh	Seniors
Came to class unprepared	7.5	5.7	8.8
Worked with a faculty member on a research project	8.2	23.8	12.5
Participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course	10.7	1.9*	17.6
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework	13.8	3.7	21.9
Tutored or taught other students	16.4	10.3	20.1

* Significant differences exist between group means for USI first-year students and students at peer Carnegie institutions and all first-year students nationally. USI freshmen were less likely to be engaged in community-based projects as part of their regular coursework than their peers nationally.

These findings are consistent with the responses of the national NSSE cohort, with the exception that USI students were less likely to come to class unprepared, and more likely to discuss ideas from readings or classes with a faculty member outside of class.

Course Emphasis and Educational Programs

Another way to gain insight into student experience is to examine the kinds of intellectual and mental activities that institutions emphasize and the types of educational programs in which students take part that complement and enrich the collegiate experience.

- More than four-fifths (81.8%) of USI seniors said their classes emphasized analyzing ideas or situations to a substantial degree (combination of “quite a bit” and “very much responses”). The USI senior response was higher than the national average of 78%.
- About 78% of USI seniors said that their classes emphasized applying concepts or theories to practical problems or new situations. USI Senior response was higher than the national average of 71%.
- More than 75% of first-year USI students and half (50.0%) of seniors said that their classes emphasized memorization to a substantial degree. Freshman response was much higher than the national average of 64%.

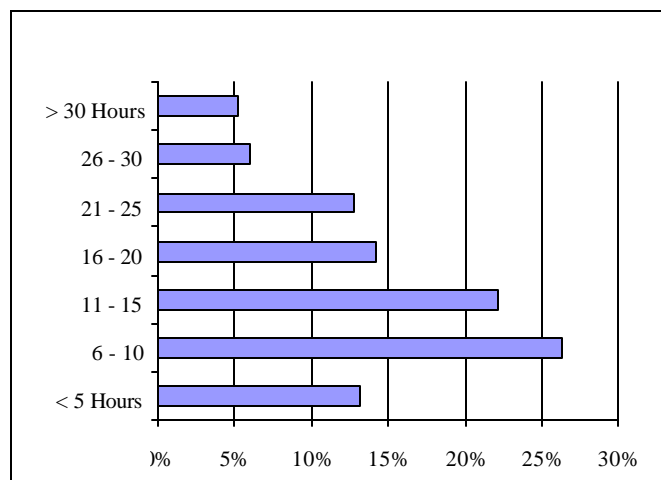
- More than seventy percent (71.5%) of University seniors did or planned to do an internship or co-op experience prior to graduating from the University. Senior response was less than the national average of 74%.
- Almost two-thirds (63.3%) of the USI students responding did or planned to do community service or volunteer work. Student response was identical to the national normative data.
- More than half (58.9%) of all seniors did or planned to do a culminating senior experience such as a capstone course or senior thesis. USI student response was slightly higher than the national norm of 55%.

Time on Task

How students spend their time in college is a key indicator of what they put into their education and also predicts what they get out of it. Of the six time usage items included on the NSSE survey instrument, three are positively correlated with other engagement items and self-reported educational and personal growth. They are (1) time devoted to preparing for class, (2) extracurricular activities, and (3) off-campus work. Of the three remaining items, two are either uncorrelated or negatively associated with engagement in good educational practices, though the amount of time devoted to one of these, caring for dependents, may not be fully under the control of the student.

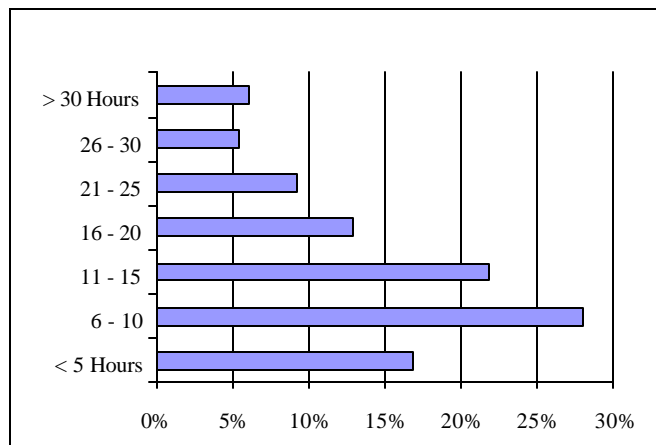
- Only about 12% of students at the University of Southern Indiana spent more than 25 hours a week preparing for class; nearly 40% spent 10 or fewer hours per week. Seniors spent much more time studying per week than did freshmen. Nationally, 14% spent more than 25 hours per week prepping for classes.

Hours Per Week Preparing for Class



- One tenth (10.8%) of all USI students were involved in co-curricular activities more than 10 hours per week. This is half of the national norm (20%). Two-tailed T-tests using USI senior scores indicated significantly lower participation of co-curricular activities than that of their peers nationally.
- Nearly half (42.1%) of USI students worked more than 20 hours per week. This is nearly two times the rate of students nationally (23%). Two-tailed T-tests using USI student scores for both first-year students and seniors indicated significantly higher engagement in working off-campus for pay that of their peers nationally.
- Almost one-in-four USI seniors (23.7%) spend 11 or more hours per week caring for dependents. This is roughly equivalent to national data (22%).
- Two thirds (66.4%) of all students spend 15 or fewer hours a week relaxing and socializing, however one-tenth (11.4%) spent more than 25 hours a week relaxing or socializing.

Hours Per Week Relaxing and Socializing



Student Opinions About the University of Southern Indiana

Students are generally satisfied with their USI college experience. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of all students rated their experience “good” or “excellent”. Seniors rated their experiences higher than did freshmen. Only one percent (1.1%) said that their experience was “poor”. Four-fifths (80.4%) of students would “probably” or “definitely” attend USI if they were starting college again. A greater proportion of freshmen indicated an intent to enroll in USI if given the chance again, that did seniors. First-year students were more positive about the campus environment than seniors.

Patterns of Student Engagement

A series of multivariate regression analyses were run to examine the levels of engagement of different groups of students using the seven clusters of items from NSSE *College Student Report* as dependent variables. These item clusters are (1) College Activities; (2) Reading, Writing, and Nature of Exams; (3) Course Emphasis Items; (4)

Time usage items that were positively correlated with educational engagement [mentioned earlier in this report]; (5) Educational Programs; (6) Educational and Personal Growth; and (7) Opinions About Your School - including the two satisfaction items included at the bottom of page 3 on the instrument (attached). The findings that follow are tentative as additional analyses are planned to examine these relationships further.

Class: Overall, seniors were more engaged in good educational practices than first-year students, net of other student and institutional characteristics, even though they worked more and spent more time helping dependents. First-year students scored higher in only one area, Opinions About Your School. As expected, seniors reported greater gains than did first-year students on all Educational and Personal Growth items except for “being honest and truthful” where the two groups were similar.

Gender: Women engaged more frequently in good educational practices than men. However, women and men were comparable in two areas: time usage and degree to which their classes emphasized higher order mental activities such as analysis and application.

Race and Ethnicity: Insufficient cell size prohibited meaningful regression analysis on this variable.

Age: As with race and ethnicity, the relationships between age and engagement in good educational practices are also somewhat mixed. Younger, traditional-age students (18-24 years of age) had higher College Achievement scores and were more likely to be involved in internships, community service, and study abroad. However, older students reported more educational and personal growth. Older students also perceived the campus climate to be more supportive and encouraging compared to their younger, traditional-age counterparts, a finding that emerges only after enrollment status (full-time, part-time) are taken into account. This may be due to the fact that part-time students generally reported less positive views of the institutional environment.