

# The Co-curricular Experience

National Survey of Student Engagement

Spring 2013

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## Introduction

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects information from first-year and senior students about the quality of their undergraduate experience. The NSSE 2013 survey included 335,702 first-year (41%) and senior (59%) students from 568 postsecondary institutions nationwide (National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE] Institutional Report, “Overview,” 2013, p. 1). This brief highlights results and implications from first-year and senior students' co-curricular experience at Oregon State University (OSU).

## Limitations

Participating institutions had an average response rate of 30% (27% for first-year students and 33% for seniors). However, OSU had a response rate of 17% for first-year students and 21% for seniors (NSSE Institutional Report, “Overview,” 2013, p. 2; NSSE Institutional Report, “Snapshot,” 2013, p. 1; See Appendix). Due to the low response rate and the overrepresentation of women and full-time students, OSU’s sample is not representative of OSU first year and senior student populations and should neither be generalized to all students nor compared to each other beyond descriptive statistics.

## Highlights

- 87% of first-year and 83% of senior students reported their overall experience at OSU as *excellent* or *good*.
- 81% of seniors reported that their experience at OSU contributed to their perceived gains of thinking critically and analytically.
- 80% of first-year and 70% of senior students said their institution emphasized providing support to help students succeed academically (*very much* or *quite a bit*) (NSSE Institutional Report, “Engagement Indicators,” 2013, p. 12)

## Methods

In January 2013, OSU used a standard census sampling approach to attract first-year and senior student participants. Of students recruited, 3,524 first-year and 4,851 senior students were sent an invitation email that included a URL to access the survey. Of the students invited, 567 first-year and 991 senior OSU students responded to the survey (NSSE Institutional Report, “Administration Summary,” 2013, p. 3-4; NSSE Institutional Report, “NSSE 2013 Overview,” 2013, p. 1).

## Findings



















The following sections include the NSSE 2013 results from first-year and senior students' experiences and perceptions at OSU.

### Experiences with Faculty

**Student-faculty interaction and effective teaching practices.** First-year and senior students responded similarly (*very often* or *often*) when asked about effective teaching practices; however when asked about faculty interaction, both populations responded low interaction.

Figure 1

#### *Descriptive Summary of Experiences with Faculty: First-Year & Senior Students*

<u>Student-Faculty Interaction</u>	<b>First Year</b>	<b>Senior</b>
<i>Percentage of students who responded that they "Very often" or "Often"...</i>	%	%
Talked about career plans with a faculty member	30 	33 
Worked w/faculty on activities other than coursework (committees, student groups, etc.)	17 	20 
Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class	21 	23 
Discussed your academic performance with a faculty member	22 	23 
<u>Effective Teaching Practices</u>		
<i>Percentage responding "Very much" or "Quite a bit" about how much instructors have...</i>		
Clearly explained course goals and requirements	77 	79 
Taught course sessions in an organized way	79 	81 
Used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points	76 	79 
Provided feedback on a draft or work in progress	44 	51 
Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments	52 	61 

*Note.* Figure adapted from the NSSE Institutional Report, “Engagement Indicators,” 2013, p. 10-11.

**Research: Importance of faculty behavior on student learning outcomes.** Pascarella and Terenzini's (2005) review found that faculty behavior is an important factor that influences a student's knowledge acquisition of course content. Factors such as faculty preparation, organization, clarity, availability and helpfulness, quality and frequency of faculty feedback, and concern for and rapport with students have a significant and positive effect on a student's learning outcomes (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Furthermore, after accounting for other influences, Pascarella and Terenzini's review found "faculty contact is positively related to increases in the importance students attach to influencing social values, contributing to their communities, changing political structures, voting, and promoting racial understanding" (p. 614). In addition, building an ethic of care between faculty and students which includes dialogue and an exchange of ideas and opinions (Noddings, 1984), as well as student perceptions of connectedness with their professors (Kaufman & Dodge, 2008) are correlated with positive behavioral engagement and academic outcomes.

















For ethnic/racial minority students, Rendón (1994) found that many minority students, who may be defined by an institution as academically unprepared, lack confidence within the classroom and confidence with regard to how to build relationships with faculty members and other students. Additionally, Rendón (1994) argued that minority students could strongly benefit when faculty members validate their knowledge, as this builds the student's confidence that they can learn and succeed. Therefore, by building a classroom of community, respect, and encouragement, faculty can help build confidence in minority and other historically marginalized student populations (Rendón, 1994).

## Learning with Peers

**Collaborative learning and discussions with diverse others.** First-year students, slightly more than senior students, selected *very often* or *often* with regard to questions about collaborative learning with peers. Additionally, both first-year and senior students selected at or above 62% that they had *very often* or *often* had discussions with students from diverse socio-, economic, religious, and political backgrounds.

Figure 2

### *Descriptive Summary of Learning with Peers: First-year & Senior Students*

<u>Collaborative Learning</u>	<b>First Year</b>	<b>Senior</b>
<i>Percentage of students who responded that they "Very often" or "Often" ...</i>	%	%
Asked another student to help you understand course material	57 	43 
Explained course material to one or more students	60 	57 
Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students	56 	44 
Worked with other students on course projects or assignments	54 	62 
<u>Discussions with Diverse Others</u>		
<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	67 	62 
People from an economic background other than your own	74 	71 
People with religious beliefs other than your own	70 	71 
People with political views other than your own	68 	72 

Note. Figure adapted from in the NSSE Institutional Report, "Engagement Indicators," 2013, p. 8-9.

**Research: Importance of collaboration and supporting diversity.** Pascarella and Terenzini's (2005) review found strong evidence that indicated that students who learned in cooperative groups had an average advantage in developing problem-solving skills over students who did not. Additionally, cooperative or group learning appeared to positively affect self-reported development in leadership abilities, public speaking skills, capabilities to influence others, and the ability to work effectively in groups (p. 610). Tinto's (1997) study found that the community that was created within the classroom served to support students and encouraged team work not only inside the classroom, but outside; as students blurred the academic and social

divide. Furthermore, Tinto (1997) found that participation in a collaborative or shared learning group enabled students to develop a network of support for peers which “helped bond students to the broader social communities of...college while also engaging [students] more fully in the academic life of the institution” (p. 613). Tinto (1997) theorized that “the more students are involved, academically and socially, in shared learning experiences that link them as learners with their peers, the more likely they are to become more involved in their own learning and invest the time and energy needed to learn,” (p. 615) which Tinto (1998) found can lead to institutional commitment and ultimately student persistence and retention.

A growing amount of research speaks to the importance of diversity and the positive effect diversity has on a student’s academic and personal experiences during college (Hurtado, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Rendón, 1994). Hurtado (2001) found that students who had the opportunity to study with someone from a racial/ethnic background different than their own during college, interact with diverse faculty, and who were exposed to curriculum that emphasized diversity consistently showed growth in educational outcomes—specifically civic outcomes (acceptance of people from different racial/ethnic/cultural backgrounds, cultural awareness, tolerance of people with different personal and religious beliefs, and leadership abilities) and growth in academic skills such as critical thinking (p. 198). Additionally, Pascarella and Terenzini’s (2005) review found diversity experiences were “positively related to both cognitive and affective learning outcomes...including critical thinking, analytical competencies, complexity of thought, and problem-solving abilities” (p. 638). In addition to collaborative learning in relation to diversity, Tinto’s study (1997) found courses that allowed students and faculty to share and recognize their diverse experiences and stories led many students to discover abilities they had not yet recognized or valued until that point (p. 613-614).

The growing amount of post-secondary research that supports increasing cooperative learning and growing and supporting diversity has led institutions across the nation to commit to preparing students for a “diverse democracy” (Hurtado, 2001, p. 187). OSU has committed to prepare all students for responsible citizenship, attain excellence in educational, research and outreach undertakings, prepare students to succeed in a globally connected world, and increase graduation rates of OSU’s historically marginalized student populations.

***Strategic plan phase III: Enhancing diversity.*** In 2014, OSU launched the third phase of the institution-wide [Strategic Plan](#). As part of the third phase, increasing diversity is a signature area of distinction that OSU has committed to enhancing. According to “Signature Areas of Distinction,” within the Strategic Plan III 2014-2018, “Enhancing the diversity of the Oregon State community is essential to attaining excellence in our educational, research and outreach endeavors and to preparing our students to succeed in a globally connected world” (2014, “Enhancing Diversity,” para. 6). Through increasing the number of diverse faculty, staff, and students through new hires and retention efforts; developing more comprehensive work-life balance initiatives for all employees; and pursuing inclusive excellence through equity in student success and quality learning, Oregon State University is committed to enhancing diversity and creating an all-inclusive and equitable environment for all members of the OSU community” (2014, “Enhancing Diversity,” para. 6).

***University Innovation Alliance.*** Oregon State University understands the importance of preparing its’ students for a globally connected world, the significance and positive impacts of growing a diverse population on campus, and the positive impact of creating a more inclusive environment. Oregon State University President Edward J. Ray in the State of the University Address (2014) reported OSU was achieving excellence through diversity with an increase of

50% of minority students from 2004 and an increasingly diverse faculty and staff community (Ray, 2014). Oregon State University continues the commitment to making OSU a more inclusive institution. On June 30, 2014, OSU, along with 11 other large public research institutions, became a member of the University Innovation Alliance.

The University Innovation Alliance is a consortium of 11 large public research institutions committed to improving their respective institution's graduation rates of first-generation and lower-income students (Fain, 2014). Institutions will work together and share best practices and experiences, and test and innovate solutions to issues of access and retention for low-income and first-generation students—who have the lowest graduation rates compared to other student populations (Fain, 2014; University Innovation Alliance, 2014). As part of the University Innovation Alliance, OSU continues the commitment to not only increasing the number of the diverse student body, but also increase the retention and graduation rates of those students who enter OSU.

## **Campus Environment**

**Quality of interactions and supportive environment.** First-year students selected their top three quality interactions at OSU, on a scale of *poor* to *excellent*, with “students”, “academic advisors” and “student services staff” (career services, student activities, housing, etc.).

Interestingly, first-year students' lowest selection was the quality of their interactions with “faculty.” On the other hand, senior students selected their top three interactions with “students,” “academic advisors,” and “faculty,” with their lowest rating with “other administrative staff and offices.” Additionally, more first-year (42%) than senior students (25%) reported that OSU emphasized the importance of “helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities.”

Figure 3



*Descriptive Summary of Campus Environment: First-year & Senior Students*

	First Year	Senior
<b>Quality of Interactions</b>		
<i>Percentage rating a 6 or 7 on a scale from 1="Poor" to 7="Excellent" their interactions with...</i>		
Students	58%	56%
Academic advisors	50%	55%
Faculty	38%	51%
Student services staff (career services, student activities, housing, etc.)	43%	35%
Other administrative staff and offices (registrar, financial aid, etc.)	41%	39%
<b>Supportive Environment</b>		
<i>Percentage responding "Very much" or "Quite a bit" about how much the institution emphasized...</i>		
Providing support to help students succeed academically	80%	70%
Using learning support services (tutoring services, writing center, etc.)	81%	62%
Encouraging contact among students from diff. backgrounds (soc., racial/eth., relig., etc.)	54%	43%
Providing opportunities to be involved socially	72%	61%
Providing support for your overall well-being (recreation, health care, counseling, etc.)	78%	69%
Helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	42%	25%
Attending campus activities and events (performing arts, athletic events, etc.)	65%	56%
Attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues	44%	39%

Note. Figure adapted from in the NSSE Institutional Report, "Engagement Indicators," 2013, p. 12-13.

**Research: Importance of removing barriers to persistence.** Many first-generation, low-income, and ethnic/racial minority students enter post-secondary institutions with several work and family responsibilities and obligations (Rose, 2012; Tinto, 1997). The substantial responsibilities that many historically marginalized students attempt to balance additionally limit a student's time spent on campus, which restricts their time to only the classroom (Rose, 2012; Tinto 1997). Furthermore, early intervention with students who may struggle to balance school, work, and family responsibilities is critical to ensure students are aware of the various resources available to them. Smith (2007) discovered that students considered to be at risk for stopping out experienced challenges with trying to balance their responsibilities at home, work, and school. However, Smith found that many students who experienced early interventions from faculty or staff on the various resources available to help students balance their many responsibilities were satisfied with early intervention. Therefore, the faculty-student relationship is especially crucial

for ethnic/racial and minority student persistence and retention (Davis, Hunter, Johnson, May, & Schoenherr, 2013).

Post-secondary institutions can offer supports and services that help remove the barriers that cause many students with non-academic responsibilities to stop out of institutions. Oregon State University continues to provide services for students to help remove barriers that can affect a student's academic work and retention. The free and subsidized child-care, the OSU Emergency Food Pantry, the Mealbux program, help and support with obtaining and paying for housing, and the Student Health Insurance Subsidy, among many other departments and staff at OSU, are some examples of how OSU provides services to help all students persist and succeed.

### **Implications**

According to NSSE founding director George Kuh, participation in at least two High Impact Practices (HIPs)—one during the first year and one during a student's major undergraduate experience—has the ability to change lives (2008). The following is a list of HIPs in which students should participate: learning community, service learning, research with faculty, internship or field experience, study abroad, and a culminating senior experience (NSSE Institutional Report, "High-Impact Practices," 2013, p. 2). Based on first-year and senior year student's selected responses in the NSSE 2013 and recommended HIPs, the following is a list of recommendations to increase first-year and senior student's student engagement at Oregon State University:

- increase the quality and genuine faculty-student interactions, including:
  - more feedback/immediate feedback from faculty to first-year students (drafts, works in progress, tests, and/or completed assignments);
  - increase opportunities to work with faculty on research;

- increase collaborative learning opportunities:
  - opportunities for peers to teach and learn from one another
    - asking another student to help understand course material,
    - preparing for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students,
    - explained course material to one or more students, and
    - working with students on class projects or assignments;
- continue to grow a diverse student, faculty, and staff populations;
- increase first-year and senior participation in learning communities;
- increase opportunities for students to participate in study abroad; and
- increase the number of seniors who complete a culminating senior experience (for instance a capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, or portfolio);

## Conclusion

Oregon State University continues to grow and support all students and cultivates a campus community that is mindful of the accountability and obligation that goes with preparing students to live positively in an ever-changing and growing complex world (*Phase III 2014-2018*, “Introduction” para. 3). Oregon State University continues to be a leader within post-secondary education through working together to increase opportunities for all students to succeed.

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## Appendix

*NSSE 2013 Respondent Populations*

	<i>First-year</i>		<i>Senior</i>	
	Respondent %	Population %	Respondent %	Population %
Female	56	45	61	48
Full-time	96	94	86	87
First-time, first-year	93	92	N/A	N/A
Race/ethnicity <sup>a</sup>				
Am. Indian or Alaska Native	1	1	1	1
Asian	10	11	5	8
Black or African American	1	2	1	1
Hispanic or Latino	11	8	5	5
Native Hawaiian/Other Pac. Isl.	0	0	0	1
White	64	67	75	73
Other	1	1	1	1
Foreign or nonresident alien	8	6	3	3
Two or more races/ethnicities	1	2	1	1
Unknown	3	2	8	7

*Note.* Figure taken from NSSE Institutional Report, “Administration Summary,” 2013, p. 3.

a. Based on the IPEDS categories (not available for Canadian institutions) submitted in the population file. Results not reported for institutions without full (at least 90%) race/ethnicity information in the population file.