

California State University, Stanislaus
2004 Undergraduate National Survey of Student Engagement
General Education information excerpted from the Executive Summary

Survey Purpose

The California State University (CSU) System participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The survey obtained data about student learning and educational participation across a wide-range of university programs and activities. Administered by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, the NSSE provides information that may be used in describing and understanding student learning outcomes, the undergraduate experience, and institutional effectiveness.

Survey Methodology

The survey was administered by NSSE to all first-year and senior students. First-year students were defined as undergraduates enrolled in fall 2003 with a freshmen status (i.e. fewer than 30 units) and who returned in spring 2004 as freshmen. Seniors were defined as undergraduates enrolled in fall 2003 with a senior status (i.e. 90 or more units) and were expected to graduate in spring or summer 2004. Students were randomly selected and mailed a survey form with an option to complete the survey via the web. A postcard reminder was subsequently mailed approximately 10 days later. Non-respondents were contacted a third time approximately two weeks after the postcard mailing.

Surveys were sent to 347 first-year students and 346 seniors in the spring 2004. The response rate for both groups was approximately 31 percent, which resulted in a student sample size of 100 first-year student and 117 seniors. The sampling error margin was 9.0 percent for first-year students and 8.8 percent for seniors.

NSSE calculated mean scores on the items. These results are displayed for CSU Stanislaus first-year students and seniors, and are compared to the Carnegie Selected Peer institutions. CSU Stanislaus and its Carnegie Selected Peers are classified as Master's Colleges and Universities I. These institutions typically offer a wide variety of baccalaureate degrees and award forty or more master's degrees per year across three or more academic disciplines.

Respondent Characteristics

Virtually all first-year students are enrolled full-time (99%), while 71 percent of seniors are full-time students and therefore 29 percent are enrolled part-time.

Most students live off campus, as are 74 percent of first-year students and 97 percent of seniors.

All first-year students are less than 24 years of age, whereas 36 percent of seniors are less than 24 years of age. Most seniors are non-traditional aged students as 64 percent of ages 24 years and older.

Among both first-year students and seniors, females are the majority enrollment. Females are 67 percent of the first-year student enrollment, and males 33 percent; among seniors females are 74 percent of enrollment, and males 26 percent.

By race and ethnicity of first-year students, 47 percent are white non-Hispanic, 28 percent Hispanic, and 13 percent Asian. African Americans comprise 2 percent, and International students are 5 percent.

Senior students are 57 percent white non-Hispanic, 14 percent Hispanic, and 14 percent Asian. African American students are 1 percent of senior students and International students make up 14 percent.

Summary of Results

This summary of survey results will focus primarily on five clusters of survey items identified by NSSE administrators as benchmarks of effective educational practice. The five NSSE Benchmarks are:

- I. Active and Collaborative Learning
- II. Student-Faculty Interactions
- III. Supportive Campus Environment
- IV. Enriching Educational Experience
- V. Level of Academic Challenge

The following tables display the item variable and description as well as the mean scores for first year students and seniors. Benchmark categories may include multiple tables if multiple scales were used.

I. Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL).

<i>Exhibit 1. Active and Collaborative Learning</i>		First-Year Students		Seniors	
Item	Description	Stanislaus	Selected Peers	Stanislaus	Selected Peers
1k	Participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course	1.38	1.54	1.74	1.75

Mean score based on the following scale:1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=very often

IV. Enriching Educational Experience (EEE).

And 12 percent indicate they have participated in a learning community with other groups of students (item 7c)

<i>Exhibit 5. Time spent on Enriching Educational Experience</i>		First-Year Students		Seniors	
Item	Description	Stanislaus	Selected Peers	Stanislaus	Selected Peers
7c	Participating in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of student take two or more classes together	0.12	0.12	0.16	0.23

Mean score based on recoded items as follows: 0=have not decided, do not plan to do, plan to do; 1=done. Thus, the mean is interpreted as the proportion responding "done" among all respondents.

V. Level of Academic Challenge (LAC).

Exhibit 7 reveals mean scores that show the tendency for “quite a bit” of student engagement in the mental activities of analyzing, synthesizing, making judgments, and applying theory in their coursework emphasis. The highest means scores (based on a 4-point scale) for first-year students are for coursework

emphasizing analytical thinking (mean=3.13, item 2b), coursework emphasizing making judgments about information or methods (mean=2.97, item 2c), and about applying theories or concepts (mean=2.82, item 2e).

Stanislaus seniors reveal higher scores for item 2b (mean=3.27), item 2e (mean=2.99), and item 2c (mean=2.98). Overall, the first-year student scores and senior scores compare well with selected peers.

Exhibit 7. Coursework Emphasis

Item	Description	First-Year Students		Seniors	
		Stanislaus	Selected Peers	Stanislaus	Selected Peers
2b	Coursework emphasizing analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience or theory	3.13	3.09	3.27	3.28
2c	Coursework emphasizing synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships	2.97	2.84	2.98	3.07
2d	Coursework emphasizing making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods	2.78	2.82	2.87	2.99
2e	Coursework emphasizing applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	2.82	3.00	2.99	3.23

Mean score based on scale: 1 -very little, 2 - some, 3 -quite a bit, 4 -very much

In Exhibit 8, the number of reading materials and writing projects are summarized based on a 5-point scale of none (1) to more than 20 (5). There is greater activity in writing course papers of fewer than 5 pages (item 4e, mean=3.21) than in writing papers of between 5-19 pages (item 4d, mean=2.27), and fewer yet that experienced writing papers of 20 pages or more (item 4c, mean=1.35). The scores of first-year students are virtually the same as that of selected peers.

Stanislaus seniors reveal a tendency to be assigned slightly more activity than first-year students in writing papers of 20 pages or more (item 4c, mean=1.75), and including more experience than first-year students with coursework papers of 5-19 pages (item 4d, mean=2.77). However, most senior students, as did first-year students, experienced more coursework papers of fewer than 5 pages (item 4e, mean=3.04). In all, Stanislaus seniors' scores track closely to those reported for the selected peer institutions.

Exhibit 8. Number of Textbooks and Papers Assigned

Item	Description	First-Year Students		Seniors	
		Stanislaus	Selected Peers	Stanislaus	Selected Peers
4c	Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more	1.35	1.25	1.75	1.64
4d	Number of written papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages	2.27	2.35	2.77	2.63
4e	Number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages	3.21	3.22	3.04	3.10

Mean score based on scale: 1 = none, 2 = between 1 and 4, 3 = between 5 and 10, 4 = between 11 and 20, 5 = more than 20

Overall Student Perceptions of Educational Experiences

Exhibit 10 summarizes the results. Utilizing a 4-point rating scale, students were asked, “To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?” Following the main question was a battery of 16 items with a response set of “very little,” “some,” “quite a bit,” and “very much.” The exhibit displays the results of first-year students and seniors that responded “quite a bit” or “very much.”

Several items are rated highly by first-year students. In order of importance, 81 percent say the university contributed to “acquiring a broad general education” (item 11a), 76 percent stated the university has contributed to their development in “thinking critically and analytically” (item 11e), and 72 percent affirmed that CSU Stanislaus has contributed to their development in “writing clearly and effectively” (item 11c).

In addition, several more items achieved ratings of 60 percent or more: 64 percent of first-year students acknowledged the contribution to his or her development in “using computers and information technology” (item 11g), and, in “speaking clearly and effectively” (item 11d, 63%).

The lowest percentages of “quite a bit” or “very much” included “contributing to the welfare of his or her community” (item 11o, 18%).

CSU Stanislaus seniors gave higher ratings than did first-year students. In order of importance to seniors, 81 percent give the university high marks for its contribution to students’ development in “thinking critically and analytically” (item 11e), as well as 81 percent on “acquiring a broad general education” (item 11a).

Other items receiving more than 70 percent ratings were for, writing clearly and effectively at 79 percent (item 11c), and 74 percent think highly of the university’s contribution to their knowledge and development in “using computing and information technology” (item 11g).

While the ratings of selected peer institutions are slightly higher, on the whole, Stanislaus first-year students and seniors compare fairly well with selected peers.

Exhibit 10. Student Ratings of General Learning and Experiences

To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?		First-Year Students		Seniors	
		Stanislaus	Selected Peers	Stanislaus	Selected Peers
Item	Description	<i>Quite a bit, Very much</i>	<i>Quite a bit, Very much</i>	<i>Quite a bit, Very much</i>	<i>Quite a bit, Very much</i>
11a	Acquiring a broad general education	81%	81%	81%	85%
11c	Writing clearly and effectively	72%	72%	79%	77%
11d	Speaking clearly and effectively	63%	62%	65%	73%
11e	Thinking critically and analytically	76%	79%	81%	87%
11f	Analyzing quantitative problems	54%	54%	62%	65%

11g	Using computing and information technology	64%	65%	74%	77%
11j	Learning effectively on his or her own	62%	67%	66%	75%
11k	Understanding himself or herself	48%	59%	52%	65%
11l	Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	47%	49%	60%	52%
11m	Solving complex real-world problems	46%	47%	52%	57%
11n	Developing a personal code of values and ethics	42%	52%	43%	59%
11o	Contributing to the welfare of his or her community	24%	39%	33%	45%

Items are based on a 4-point scale: 1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much

Other GE Related Questions

Item	Description	First-Year Students		Seniors	
		Stanislaus	Selected Peers	Stanislaus	Selected Peers
1d	Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	2.93	3.04	3.30	3.35
1e	Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments	2.85	2.73	2.84	2.81
6a	Attended an art exhibit, gallery, play, dance, or other theater performance	1.97	2.07	1.68	1.96
Mean score based on the following scale: 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=very often					
2a	Memorizing facts, ideas, or methods from your courses and readings so you can repeat them in pretty much the same form	2.99	2.93	2.86	2.79
Mean score based on the following scale: 1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much					