

**California State University, Stanislaus**  
**The Undergraduate National Survey of Student Engagement, Spring 2003**  
**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 2002 with a freshmen status (i.e. fewer than 30 units) and who returned in spring 2003 as freshmen. Seniors were defined as undergraduates enrolled in fall 2002 with a senior status (i.e. 90 or more units) and were expected to graduate in spring or summer 2003. 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.<sup>1</sup>

Surveys were sent to 347 first-year students and 349 seniors in the spring 2003. The response rate for both groups was approximately 35 percent that resulted in a student sample size of 121 first-year student and 127 seniors. The sampling error margin was 8.0 percent for first-year students and 8.4 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.

**Respondent Characteristics**

Ninety-seven percent of first-years students are full-time students, compared to 72 percent of senior students and 28 percent are part-time students. A larger proportion of first-year students live on-campus, whereas 98 percent of seniors live off-campus. Seven of ten first-year students are 19 years of age or younger and 28 percent of ages 20-23 years. Twenty-six percent of seniors are 20-23 years of age; 33 percent are ages 24-29, 21 percent are ages 30-39, and 20 percent are 40 years of age or older. The overwhelming majority of first-year respondents and seniors are female, at 79 percent and 70 percent, respectively.

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<sup>1</sup> The majority of respondents completed the print version, 83% of first-year student respondents and 87% of senior respondents.

## Summary of Results

The summary focuses 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 is a summarization of results by cluster area for first-year students and seniors.

### ***I. Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL).***

Most first-year students indicate they are active and collaborative in their learning. Exhibit 1 shows the highest mean scores for first-year students are for, “working with other students on projects during class” (item 1a), “discussed ideas from readings or classes with others outside of class” (item 1t), and “asked questions in class or contributed to class discussion” (item 1a). Overall, the mean scores compared well with those of the selected peer institutions. The lowest mean score is for “participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course” (item k).

Senior student responses reveal higher ratings than first-year students, which suggests greater involvement in their learning activities. The mean scores show the highest ratings for, (item a) “asked questions in class or contributed to class discussion,” (item b) “made a class presentation,” and (item t) “discussed ideas from readings or classes with others.” In addition, senior responses are comparable to the selected peer responses. The lowest mean score is for, (item k) “participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course.”

Item	Description	First-Year Students		Seniors	
		Stanislaus	Selected Peers	Stanislaus	Selected Peers
1a	Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussion	2.53	2.81	2.93	3.13
1b	Made a class presentation	2.23	2.27	2.91	2.90
1g	Worked with other students on projects during class	2.69	2.39	2.42	2.55
1h	Worked with all classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	2.13	2.33	2.50	2.71
1j	Tutored or taught other students	1.85	1.63	1.72	1.81
1k	Participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course	1.43	1.47	1.64	1.64
1t	Discussed ideas from readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)	2.61	1.77	2.76	2.06

Mean score based on scale: 1-never, 2-sometimes, 3-often, 4-very often

## II. Student-Faculty Interactions (SFI)

Exhibit 2 displays items measuring a range of student-faculty interactions. CSU Stanislaus seniors show a higher level of student-faculty interactions than do Stanislaus first-year students. As displayed in Exhibit 2, the tendency is for seniors to interact more with faculty on matters related to receiving prompt written or oral feedback from faculty (item 1q), discussing grades or assignments (item 1n), and in talking about career plans with faculty (item 1o). The tendency is for seniors to do so “sometimes” or “often” and, according to the mean scores, to engage in these actions more so than first-year students. Both first-year students and seniors gave the lowest marks on working with a faculty member on activities other than coursework (item 1s). However, in all instances the mean scores show Stanislaus first-year students and seniors with lower ratings compared to those of selected peers.

Item	Description	First-Year Students		Seniors	
		Stanislaus	Selected Peers	Stanislaus	Selected Peers
1n	Discussed grades or assignments with instructor	2.26	2.59	2.48	2.82
1o	Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	2.01	2.14	2.09	2.44
1p	Discussed readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	1.60	1.77	1.86	2.06
1q	Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance	2.33	2.59	2.53	2.82
1s	Worked with a faculty member on activities other than coursework (committees, orientations, student-life activities)	1.40	1.53	1.32	1.79

Mean score based on scale: 1-never, 2-sometimes, 3-often, 4-very often

## III. Supportive Campus Environment (SCE).

In Exhibit 3, the NSSE also provides analysis about the Supportive Campus Environment as measured by indicators for the quality of relationships with other students (item 8a), with faculty members (item 8b), with administrative personnel (item 8c), as well as measures about the general supportive nature of the campus environment on academics, non-academics responsibilities, and social support (items 10b, 10d, 10e).

Items 8a thru 8c are based on a 1-7 point Likert Scale with 1 “unfriendly” to 7 “friendly.” (A positive score is 5 or above.) The ratings by both first-year students and seniors are positive, with means scores well above 5.0. The one exception is a slightly lower mean score of 4.76 regarding (item 8c) relationships with administrative personnel and offices. Overall, while somewhat lower, the ratings and patterns of Stanislaus student responses are comparable to the selected peer institutions.

Items 10b, 10d, 10 e are based on a 4-point scale of 1 “very little” to 4 “very much.” These items measure the extent to which students feel the campus environment is supportive to them when it comes to their academic pursuits, non-academic responsibilities (work, family), and to their social needs.

Here, senior students give lower ratings than do first-year students. However, both first-year and senior student ratings are lower compared to those of selected peers.

**Exhibit 3. Quality of Relationships**

Item	Description	First-Year Students		Seniors	
		Stanislaus	Selected Peers	Stanislaus	Selected Peers
8a	Quality of relationships with other students	5.53	5.70	5.71	5.81
Mean score based on scale: 1 - unfriendly, unsupportive, sense of alienation <b>TO</b> 7 - friendly, supportive, sense of belonging					
8b	Quality of relationships with faculty members	5.35	5.54	5.60	5.73
Mean score based on scale: 1 - unavailable, unhelpful, unsympathetic <b>TO</b> 7 - available, helpful, sympathetic					
8c	Quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices	5.29	5.09	4.76	4.84
Mean score based on scale: 1 - unhelpful, inconsiderate, rigid <b>TO</b> 7 - helpful, considerate, flexible					
10b	Campus environment that provides the support you need to help you succeed academically	2.83	3.05	2.71	2.93
10d	Campus environment that helps you cope with you non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	1.90	2.09	1.61	1.88
10e	Campus environment that provides the support you need to thrive socially	2.14	2.31	1.86	2.07

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

#### **IV. Enriching Educational Experience (EEE).**

Exhibits 4 and 5 display mean scores for a range of items that measure the students’ experiences on and off campus that are deemed “enriching educational experiences.” Item 1l in Exhibit 4 reveals the tendency for most students to say they experienced using an electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment. Both first-year students and seniors indicate this to be so “sometimes” to “often” (mean=2.50). Seniors, however, have this experience more often than do first-year students (mean=2.75). The Stanislaus first-year students’ and seniors’ means scores are anyway lower compared to selected peers.

The items in Exhibit 5 are to be read as the proportion saying “done” in response to the question item. Therefore, the higher proportion saying “done” among first-year students is for item 7b, where 73 percent of first-year students say they have “done” community service or volunteer work. Sixty-four percent of first-year students indicate they have “done” or experienced a practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience or clinical assignment. These are the highest followed by 53 percent that have “done” foreign language coursework (item 7e).

The lowest scores are for (item 7g) independent study at 10 percent, and (item 7d) worked with a faculty member on a research project outside of class, at 20 percent. In most instances, the mean scores are comparable to those of selected peers.

Sixty-four percent of Stanislaus seniors have experienced a (item 7a) practicum, internship, or field experience; 53 percent have “done” community service or volunteer work (item 7b); 40 percent have “done” a culminating senior project or thesis, or capstone (item 7h); and 30 percent have “done” foreign language coursework. Compared to selected peers, only in working with a faculty member on a research project outside of class (item 7d) was the mean score higher for Stanislaus seniors. Moreover, in 5 of the 8 items, first-year student mean scores were at a higher mean than for Stanislaus seniors.

As for time spent in participating in co-curricular activities, such as campus organizations or intercollegiate or intramural sports, again first-year students show more activity per week than Stanislaus

seniors—and the mean score is higher. In addition, here both Stanislaus first-year students’ and seniors’ scores show lower engagement compared to selected peers.

**Exhibit 4. Using an Electronic Medium**

Item	Description	First-Year Students		Seniors	
		Stanislaus	Selected Peers	Stanislaus	Selected Peers
1l	Using an electronic medium (listserv, chat group, internet, instant messaging, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment	2.50	2.61	2.75	2.82

Mean score based on scale: 1- never, 2 -sometimes, 3 -often, 4 -very often

**Exhibit 5. Time spent on Enriching Educational Experience**

Item	Description	First-Year Students		Seniors	
		Stanislaus	Selected Peers	Stanislaus	Selected Peers
7a	Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment	0.64	0.80	0.64	0.72
7b	Community service or volunteer work	0.73	0.74	0.53	0.64
7c	Participating in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of student take two or more classes together	0.36	0.35	0.21	0.27
7d	Worked with a faculty member on a research project outside of class	0.20	0.26	0.26	0.23
7e	Foreign language coursework	0.53	0.43	0.30	0.35
7f	Study abroad	0.24	0.33	0.07	0.14
7g	Independent study or self-designed major	0.10	0.17	0.23	0.26
7h	Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.)	0.30	0.39	0.40	0.55
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.					
9d	Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, student publications, student government, fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports)	1.57	2.13	1.45	2.02

Mean score based on scale: 1 = 0 hrs/wk, 2= 1-5 hrs/wk, 3 = 6-10 hrs/wk, 4 = 11-15 hrs/wk, 5 = 16-20 hrs/wk, 6 = 21-25 hrs/wk, 7 = 26-30 hrs/wk, 8 = more than 30 hrs/wk

### V. Level of Academic Challenge (LAC).

Exhibits 6 thru 9 focus on items measuring the level of academic challenge among the undergraduate students. The results are organized into student effort, coursework emphasis, textbooks and papers assigned, and time spent on problems and class preparation.

Both first-year students and seniors show comparable means scores (Exhibit 6), that they “sometimes” or “never” come to class without completing readings or assignments (item 1f); and that they are working harder than they expected to meet an instructor’s standards (item 1r). The mean scores are fairly comparable to selected peers, although slightly lower (except for first-year students in item 1f).

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=2.97, item 2b), coursework emphasizing making judgments about

information or methods (mean=2.78, item 2c), and about applying theories or concepts (mean=2.82, item 2e).

Seniors reveal slightly higher scores for item2b (mean=3.23), item 2e (mean=2.95), and item 2c (mean=2.91). Overall, the first-year student scores and senior scores compare well with selected peers.

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). The tendency is for first-year students to have been assigned between 5-10 textbooks in their courses. There is a greater activity in writing course papers of fewer than 5 pages. There is less experience in writing papers of between 5-19 pages. And fewer first-year students yet that experienced writing papers of 20 pages or more. The scores of first-year students is slightly less than that of selected peers.

Stanislaus seniors reveal slightly more activity in the number of textbooks assigned, and in writing papers of 20 pages or more than first-year students, and including more experience with coursework papers of 5-19 pages. However, most senior students, as did first-year students, experienced more coursework papers of fewer than 5 pages. In all, Stanislaus seniors’ scores track closely to those reported for the selected peers institutions.

In Exhibit 9, first-year Stanislaus students report more hands on with problems that take less than one hour to complete, than spending time on problems sets of more than an hour to complete. The opposite is true for Stanislaus seniors: more time is spent on problems sets larger than an hour to complete than on those taking less than an hour. These patterns are the same compared to the selected peers.

As for time spent studying and class preparation (item 9a), on average most first-year students spend between 6-10 hours and 11-15 hours per week in class study and preparation time. Seniors show a bit more intensity here with a mean score of 4.01 (mostly 11-15 hours per week).

Both first year students and seniors agree “quite a bit” that the campus environment emphasizes spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work (item 10a). Their scores are comparable to those of the selected peer institutions.

**Exhibit 6. Student Effort**

Item	Description	First-Year Students		Seniors	
		Stanislaus	Selected Peers	Stanislaus	Selected Peers
1f	Come to class without completing readings or assignments	2.03	1.98	1.99	2.03
1r	Working harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor’s standards or expectations	2.54	2.61	2.57	2.72

Mean score based on scale: 1-never, 2-sometimes, 3-often, 4-very often

**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	2.97	3.09	3.23	3.25
2c	Coursework emphasizing synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships	2.78	2.82	2.91	3.04
2d	Coursework emphasizing making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods	2.83	2.80	2.76	2.95
2e	Coursework emphasizing applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	2.82	2.96	2.95	3.19

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

**Exhibit 8. Number of Textbooks and Papers Assigned**

Item	Description	First-Year Students		Seniors	
		Stanislaus	Selected Peers	Stanislaus	Selected Peers
4a	Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course reading	3.24	3.42	3.27	3.26
4c	Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more	1.24	1.26	1.65	1.65
4d	Number of written papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages	2.32	2.41	2.61	2.63
4e	Number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages	3.07	3.31	2.97	3.09

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 2

**Exhibit 9. Time Spent on Problem Sets, Preparing for Class, and Academic Work**

Item	Description	First-Year Students		Seniors	
		Stanislaus	Selected Peers	Stanislaus	Selected Peers
5a	During a typical week, how many problem sets do you complete that take you more than an hour to complete	2.65	2.50	2.65	2.38
5b	During a typical week, how many problem sets do you complete that take you less than an hour to complete	2.97	2.68	2.40	2.27
Mean score based on scale: 1 = none, 2 =1-2, 3 = 3-4, 4 = 5-6, 5 = more than 6					
9a	Hours students spends in a typical 7-day week preparing for class	3.79	3.91	4.01	3.94
Mean score based on scale: 1 = 0 hrs/wk, 2= 1-5 hrs/wk, 3 = 6-10 hrs/wk, 4 = 11-15 hrs/wk, 5 = 16-20 hrs/wk, 6 = 21-25 hrs/wk, 7 = 26-30 hrs/wk, 8 = more than 30 hrs/wk					
10a	Campus environment emphasizing spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work	3.02	3.12	3.08	3.11
Mean score based on scale: 1 = very little, 2 =some, 3 =quite a bit, 4 =very much					

**Overall Student Perceptions of Educational Experiences**

The NSSE gathers additional information of significance to the university. A number of items are put forth to measure the overall experience and satisfaction levels of students in areas of: student appreciation for diversity, student perceptions of achievement on General Education goals, and on student's overall impression of the university institution. These items are taken to measure student's perceived educational gains.

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 15 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 stated the university has contributed to their development in "thinking critically and analytically" (item 11e), 79 percent say the university contributed to "acquiring a broad general education" (item 11a), 72 percent affirmed that CSU Stanislaus has contributed to their development in "writing clearly and effectively" (item 11c), and 71 percent reported the university contributed to students' "working effectively with others" (item 11h).

In addition, several more items achieved ratings of 60 percent or more: 67 percent of first-year students acknowledged the contribution to his or her development in "using computers and information technology" (item 11g), in "analyzing quantitative problems" (item 11f, 63%), and in "learning effectively on his or her own" (item 11j, 62%).

The lowest responses were for, "voting in local, state, or national elections" (item 11i, 23%), and in "contributing to the welfare of his or her community" (item 11o, 25%).

CSU Stanislaus seniors gave higher ratings than did first-year students. In order of importance to seniors, 87 percent said, "thinking critically and analytically" (item 11e), 82 percent said "acquiring a broad general education" (item 11a), and 80 percent gave the university high marks for its contribution to students' development in "writing clearly and effectively" (item 11c).

Other items receiving more than 70 percent ratings were for: "using computing and information technology" at 74 percent (item 11g), 75 percent feel the university contributed to their development in "speaking clearly and effectively" (item 11d), and 72 percent rate "quite a bit" or "very much" on "learning effectively on his or her own" (item 11j).

The lowest and therefore least significant ratings given by seniors were for items 11i and 11o: only 17 percent said "quite a bit" or "very much" about "voting in local, state, or national elections," and 31 percent indicated "quite a bit" or "very much" on "contributing to the welfare of his or her community."

On the whole, the ratings of Stanislaus first-year students and seniors compares fairly well with the ratings and patterns of ratings of the selected peer institutions.



**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
		<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>
Item	Description				
11a	Acquiring a broad general education	79%	81%	82%	85%
11b	Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	43%	57%	63%	72%
11c	Writing clearly and effectively	72%	74%	80%	77%
11d	Speaking clearly and effectively	56%	63%	75%	72%
11e	Thinking critically and analytically	81%	80%	87%	85%
11f	Analyzing quantitative problems	63%	57%	69%	67%
11g	Using computing and information technology	67%	68%	76%	77%
11h	Working effectively with others	71%	69%	67%	78%
11i	Voting in local, state, or national elections	23%	24%	17%	23%
11j	Learning effectively on his or her own	62%	68%	72%	74%
11k	Understanding himself or herself	56%	59%	54%	62%
11l	Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	52%	51%	55%	51%
11m	Solving complex real-world problems	46%	48%	48%	56%
11n	Developing a personal code of values and ethics	37%	54%	40%	57%
11o	Contributing to the welfare of his or her community	25%	40%	31%	43%

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

### Overall Student Satisfaction: A Final Appraisal

Three questions approaching overall student satisfaction are posed by NSSE:

- “How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?”
- “If you could start over again, would you choose the same institution?”
- “If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?”

Exhibit 11 summarizes the three items according to those responding “good” or “excellent.” Overall, CSU Stanislaus first-year students and seniors give fairly high marks to the university. The ratings are also in line with the pattern of responses of the selected peer institutions. Only in the rating of satisfaction with academic advising do Stanislaus students differ from peer institutions, and give lower marks.

Seventy-eight percent of first-year students give ratings of “good” or “excellent” when it comes to academic advising. However, 88 percent say “good” or “excellent” when reflecting upon their entire educational experience at CSU Stanislaus. Moreover, if students had to do it all over again, 86 percent of first year students say they “probably” or “definitely” would attend the same institution.

While the ratings of satisfaction of Stanislaus seniors are overwhelmingly positive, the one difference from the ratings of first-year students is with respect to academic advising: about half of seniors (51%) say “good” or “excellent” to academic advising, compared to 68 percent of first-year students. Nonetheless, 85 percent of seniors anyway report that their entire experience was “good” or “excellent” at CSU Stanislaus. And if seniors had to do it all over again, 82 percent say “probably yes” or “definitely yes” they would go to the same institution.

**Exhibit 11. Overall Student Satisfaction with Educational Experiences at CSU Stanislaus**

		First-Year Students		Seniors	
		Stanislaus	Selected Peers	Stanislaus	Selected Peers
Item	Description	<i>Good, Excellent</i>	<i>Good, Excellent</i>	<i>Good, Excellent</i>	<i>Good, Excellent</i>
12	Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your institution?	68%	75%	51%	71%
13	How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?	88%	87%	85%	86%
Item	Description	<i>Probably yes, Definitely yes</i>	<i>Probably yes, Definitely yes</i>	<i>Probably yes, Definitely yes</i>	<i>Probably yes, Definitely yes</i>
14	If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?	86%	83%	82%	81%

Item 12 and 13 are based on the 4-point scale: 1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=excellent. Item 14 is based on the 4-point scale: 1=definitely no, 2=probably no, 3=probably yes, 4=definitely yes.