

Beyond the Numbers: Qualitative Analysis of Open-Ended Responses From Stanislaus State Students Who Completed the NSSE

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Introduction

- Applied learning model
 - Graduate student assistants-Faculty mentors
 - Apply research methods training and qualitative analytical techniques to an institutional data set.
 - Using both deductive and inductive analytical approaches
- Analyzing student success indicators
 - Using Stan State student responses from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).
 - Administered every three years
 - Data from 2011, 2014, 2017

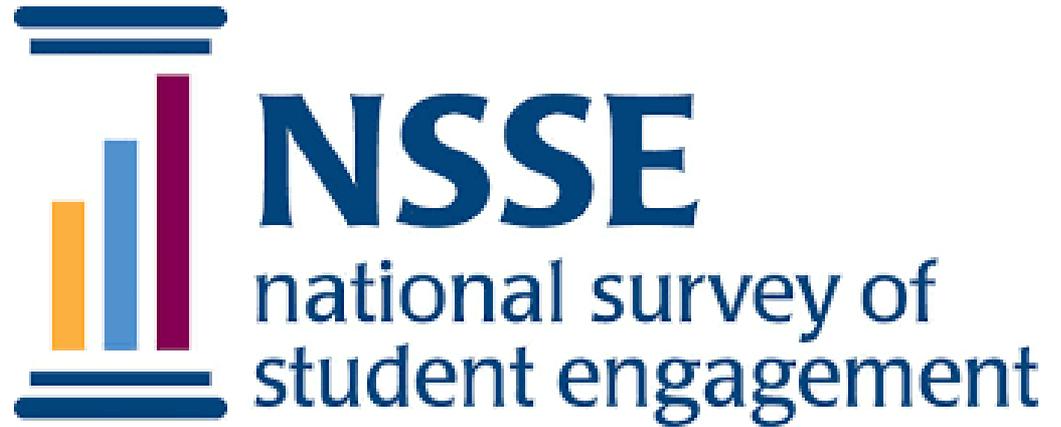
Purpose

1. To develop a standardized, qualitative coding framework for open-ended response data that can be applied to retrospective and prospective waves of the National Surveys of Student Engagement (NSSEs).
2. To systematically analyze student comments, using a longitudinal time dimension, to capture perceived changes in student perceptions of campus quality
3. To identify subjective factors that facilitate student persistence and improve graduation and retention rates

Methods

The National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) collects data from both freshman and seniors at Stanislaus State.

NSSE is a convenience sample of freshman and seniors among among three cohorts (2011, 2014, 2017).



Methods

Graduate students developed an initial coding framework for open-ended responses using free codes.

We re-coded the data using the following engagement indicators (Table 1) to develop a hierarchical coding framework.

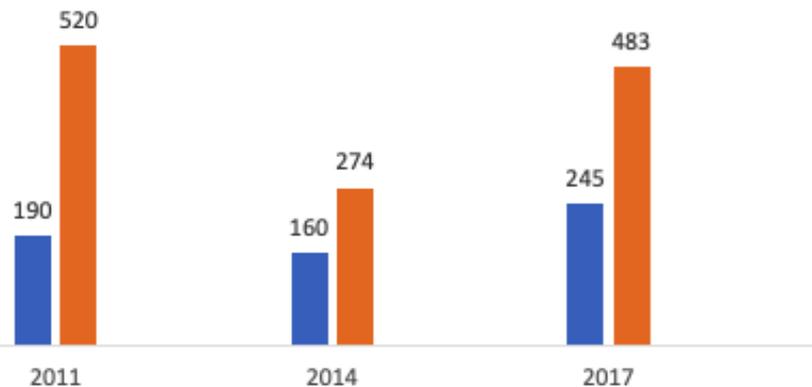
Some responses fit the NSSE indicators, but others did not. For the latter, we created new codes.

Table 1: NSSE Engagement Indicators

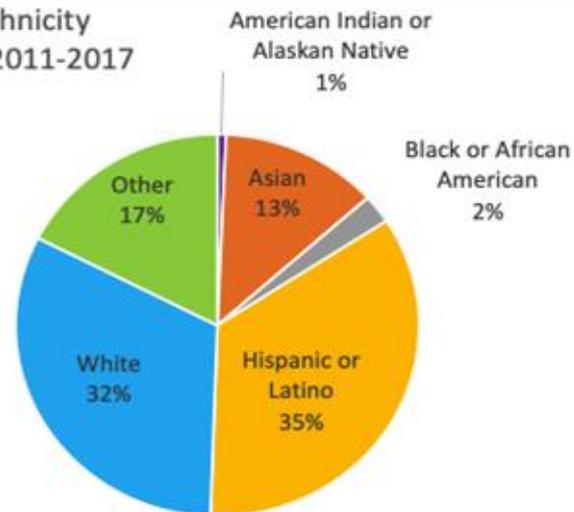
Theme	Engagement Indicators
<i>Academic Challenge</i>	Higher-Order Learning Reflective & Integrative Learning Learning Strategies Quantitative Reasoning
<i>Learning with Peers</i>	Collaborative Learning Discussions with Diverse Others
<i>Experiences with Faculty</i>	Student-Faculty Interaction Effective Teaching Practices
<i>Campus Environment</i>	Quality of Interactions Supportive Environment

Class Level of Overall Survey Sample

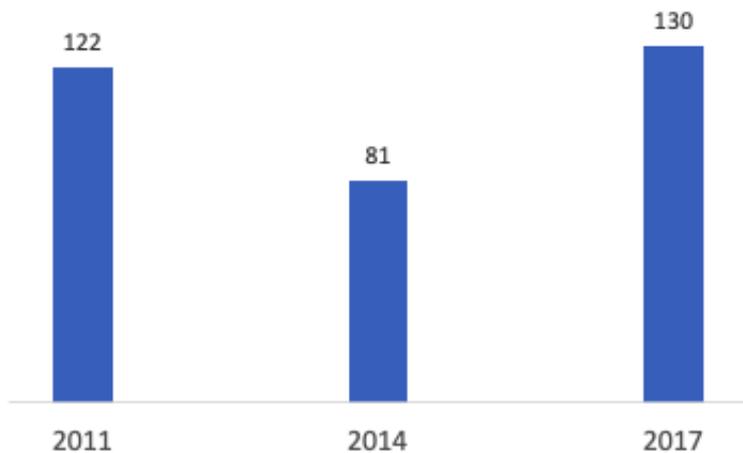
■ Freshman ■ Seniors



Race/Ethnicity All Waves 2011-2017

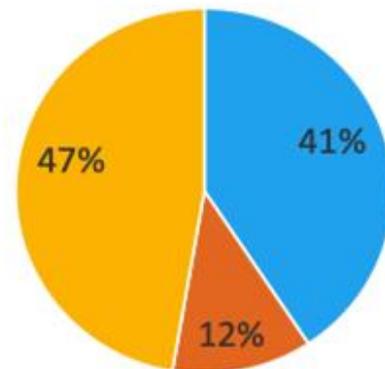


Open Ended Responses, Sample Size



Working for Pay Off Campus All Waves 2011-2017

■ Less than 30 Hours ■ More than 30 Hours ■ 0 Hours



Academic Challenge

Academic Experiences

What Helped Students Improve

Academic Rigor

Academic Stress

Graduate School Preparedness

Campus Environment

Infrastructure

Classrooms

Dining

Library Facilities

Athletic Facilities

Campus Aesthetics

Housing

I.T.

Parking

Quality of Campus Interactions

Staff Advising

Financial Aid interactions

Negative Student Staff Interactions

Positive Student Staff Interactions

Supportive Environment

Bureaucracy

Orientation

Lack of Information

Athletics

Missed Opportunities

Study Environments

Campus Safety

Class Size

Commuter Campus

Financial Cost

Inclusion and Diversity

Pathfinding

Program Suggestions

Program Statements

Regret coming to CSU Stanislaus

School Life Balance

Student Life

Experiences with Faculty

Student/Faculty Interaction

Career Statements

Research with Faculty

Faculty Advising

Teaching Practices

Learning with Peers

Collaborations with Peers

Discussions with Diverse Others

Reactionary Statements

- Codes that correspond to the NSSE Engagement Indicators are marked in **red**
- Our new codes marked in **blue**.
- Blue codes: we believe fit within the hierarchy for the existing NSSE indicators but add more detail that NSSE does not cover.

Academic Challenge

Academic Experiences

What Helped Students Improve
Academic Rigor
Academic Stress
Graduate School Preparedness

Campus Environment

Infrastructure

Classrooms
Dining
Library Facilities
Athletic Facilities
Campus Aesthetics
Housing
I.T.
Parking

Quality of Campus Interactions

Staff Advising
Financial Aid interactions
Negative Student Staff Interactions
Positive Student Staff Interactions

Supportive Environment

Bureaucracy
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Lack of Information
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Research with Faculty
Faculty Advising

Teaching Practices

Learning with Peers

Collaborations with Peers
Discussions with Diverse Others
Reactionary Statements

Results

- Student open-ended responses tended to reflect codes/indicators such as **Student/Faculty Interaction**, **Supportive Environment**, and **Quality of Campus Interactions**.
- Codes/Indicators like **Academic Challenge**, and **Learning with Peers** were coded less often because students mentioned these topics less often.
- New codes that were mentioned most often were **Career Statements**, **Student Life**, **Financial Cost**, **Lack of Available Classes**, and **Academic Advising Statements**

Student Identities

- Hispanic Students
- Student Veterans
- Students with Disabilities
- Undocumented Students
- African American Students
- Freshmen Experiences
- International Students
- Non-Traditional Students
- Transfer Students
- First Generation College Students

Class Scheduling

- Available professors
- Conflicting outside job
- Academic Registration
- Lack of Available Classes

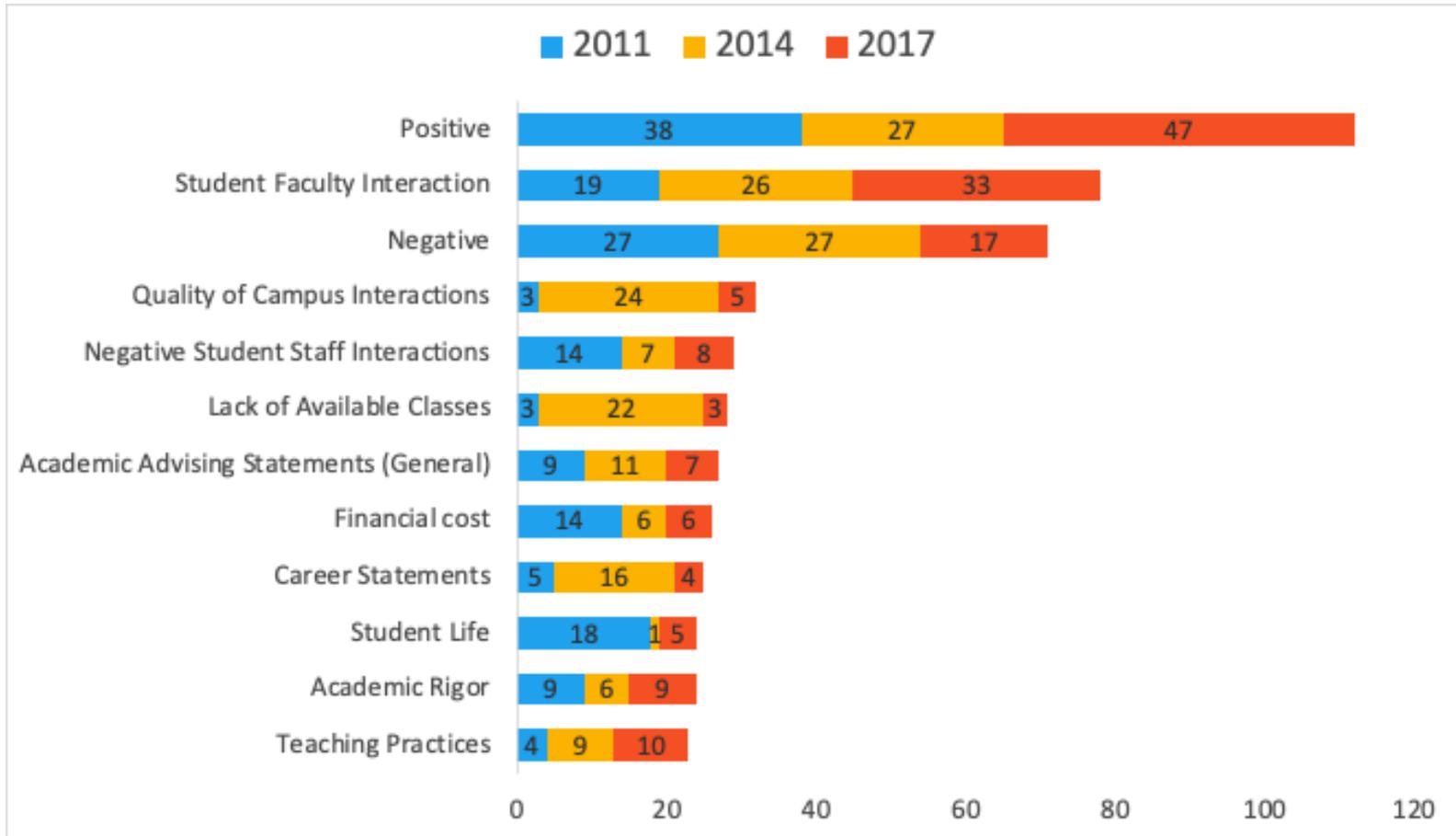
General Attitudes

- Faculty Compensation
- Geographic Proximity
- Campus Comparisons
- Comments on Other Students
- Neutral
- Gratitude
- Academic Advising Statements (General)
- Negative
- Positive

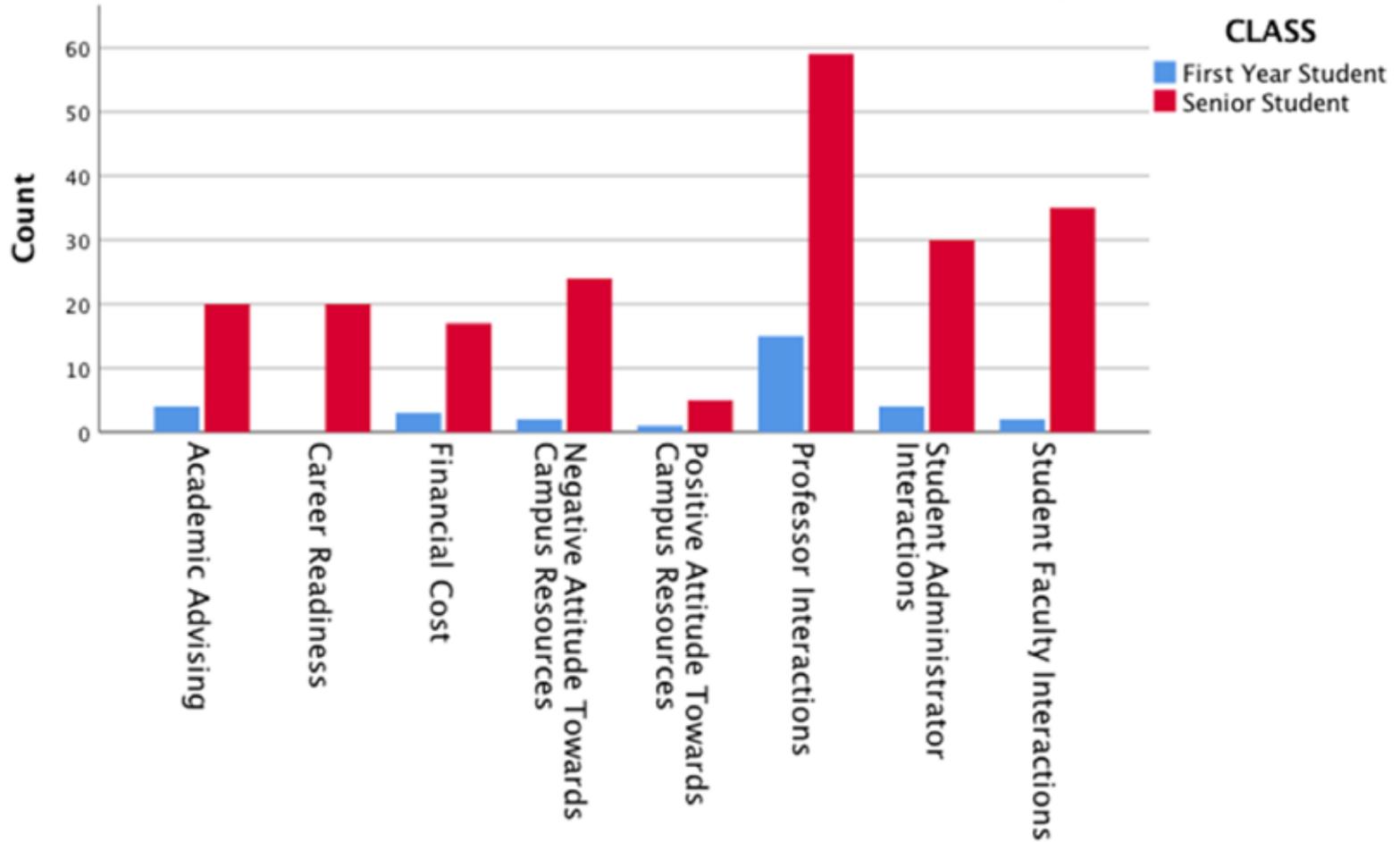
Additional codes were discovered that may relate to engagement and student success, but did not fit with the existing NSSE indicators.

Coding Counts For Waves 2011-2017

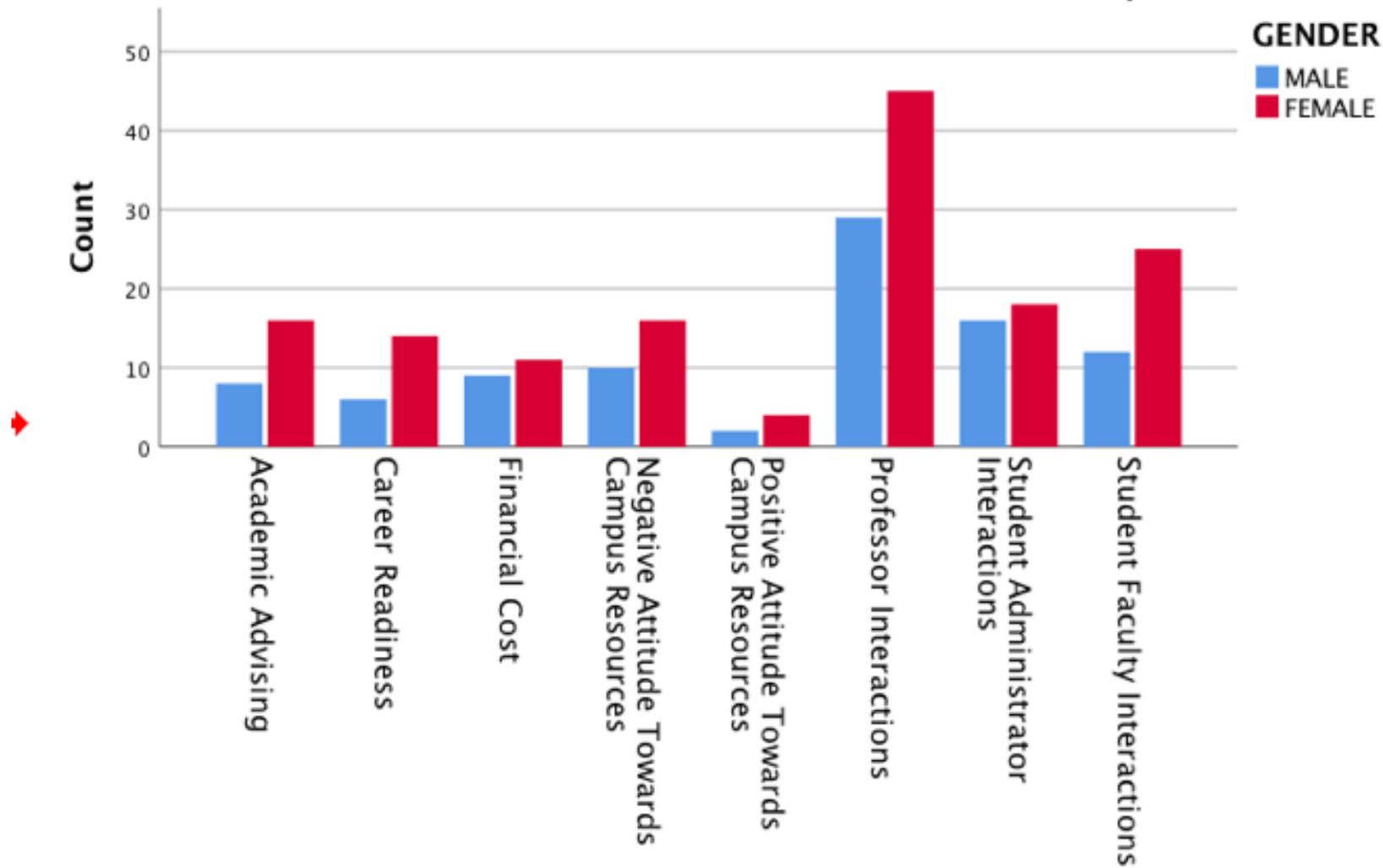
(Top 12 most mentioned codes)



Clustered Bar Count of NVIVO CODED THEME by CLASS



Clustered Bar Count of NVIVO CODED THEME by GENDER



Code: Positive

Don't get me wrong, the faculty are amazing, this campus is a godsend of education for the Central Valley. - Senior, Male, 2017

Attending CSU Stanislaus has really opened my eyes to what the reality is out there in the world. I had always thought school is about coming to class and getting grades, but I soon realized that this is not all. Going to school means being active, not only in classes, but also outside of class: doing research with faculty, discussing different topics of related interest with faculty/students, volunteering on a monthly or even weekly basis. After attending CSU Stanislaus I was able to set myself free and go out there to help my community. This school opened the doors of opportunities for me. Volunteered and interned at a high school, volunteered on Science Day and other science-related activities, and attended club meetings regularly. - Senior, Female, 2017

Code: Negative

The school doesn't make an effort to show students the multiple opportunities that are available. For any extra help it seems like you have to pay (ex. Resume, help with a job, etc). Only seem to promote fraternities and sororities, but some people don't fit in with those group. If you are introverted the school doesn't do anything for you. - Senior, Female, 2017

The commuter feel and the distance from my hometown just makes everything about the college seem impersonal to me. - Freshman, Female, 2017

Code: School/Life Balance

The expectations that some professors put on you is almost like they think they are the only class you are taking and you have no job or life at home. - Senior, Male, 2011

Class availability for those who have jobs and families. I would have enjoyed my experiences more if I could take the classes I actually needed. - Senior, Male, 2011

I wish that I could have experienced more of what the campus had to offer, but was always rushing from school to work. - Senior, Male, 2011

I have other life responsibilities and it is sometimes impossible to accomplish all the homework I need to accomplish. I am happy with this university but I wish teachers were more understanding of how hard it is being a college student. - Freshman, Female, 2017

I do not think it is fair that people who work M-F 8-5PM jobs are not able to take advantage of all of the services that CSU Stanislaus [sic] offers. - Senior, Female, 2011

Code: Programming Suggestions

I feel that the school is huge on plagiarism yet they don't have us take mandatory lessons/ classes to teach us what plagiarism is exactly. We should be taught all the different types of formats. . . Lastly I think that there should be more on campus announcements in what is available to students. And maybe a parents club on campus for students who want to be involved but can't due to their children. - Senior, Female, 2017

Discussion

- How can this data inform decision-making on our campus?
- What codes interest you? Which codes should we pursue in student focus groups?
- How can this data serve college counselors, academic advisors, institutional research officers, faculty, and administrative staff to learn more about how students perceive their Stanislaus State experience?

Future Applications

- Findings will continue to be reviewed, as more cohorts are surveyed, to understand which practices, programming, and opportunities may be essential elements contributing to student success over time.
- We plan to submit our research approach and model to Indiana University and the National Survey of Student Engagement - *Lessons from the Field*.
- The Faculty Scholar/student research model may be adopted by other campuses or divisions to directly engage both students and faculty in institutional research and assessment processes.