

2014 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

Summary Report

Institutional Planning and Assessment
September 2014

■ About NSSE

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, pronounced "Nessie") is a survey that measures students' levels of engagement with their institution. The NSSE obtains information from first-year and final-year undergraduate students in the United States and Canada about their participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. In 2014, 473,633 students from 640 institutions in the United States and 73 in Canada participated in the survey.

■ Survey Administration

NSSE was first administered at the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) in 2006 with follow-ups in 2008 and 2011. This year's survey was conducted online in February and March. All undergraduate students who were in the first year or final year of their program were invited to participate in the survey via email.

Overall, 2,138 of the 7,663 students responded to the survey, including 1,167 first-year students and 971 final-year students. Our response rate was 28%, lower than the 33% average for our U15 peers.

For more information, please visit usask.ca/ipa or contact Institutional Planning and Assessment at:
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■ **Did you know...** *Improving student ratings on the learning environment component of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) scores is one of the priority areas in **Promise and Potential: the Third Integrated Plan 2012-2016**.*

■ Understanding NSSE Results¹

Engagement Indicators (EIs) provide a useful summary of the detailed information contained in students' responses. By combining responses to related NSSE questions, each EI offers valuable information about distinct aspect of student engagement.

A total of 10 indicators, based on three to eight survey questions each, are organized into four broad themes: Academic Challenge, Learning with Peers, Experiences with Faculty, and Campus Environment.

High-Impact Practices (HIPs) are activities that demand considerable time and effort, facilitate learning outside of the classroom, require meaningful interactions with faculty and students, encourage collaboration with diverse others, and provide frequent and substantive feedback. As a result, participation in these practices can be life-changing.

Overall Educational Experience is measured by questions on students' perception of their cognitive and affective development and their overall satisfaction with the university. Students were asked to report how much their experience at the university contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in ten areas. They were also asked to rate their overall experience and whether they would choose it again.

¹ Between 2000 and 2012, NSSE results were organized into five benchmarks of effective educational practice: Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL), Level of Academic Challenge (LAC), Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI), Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE), and Supportive Campus Environment (SCE). In 2013, NSSE launched an updated survey instrument, and the five NSSE benchmarks were replaced with 10 Engagement Indicators and six measurements of High-Impact Practices.



PART 1. OVERVIEW

1.1 Engagement Indicators

The table below summarizes the level of engagement of our students as compared to their U15 peers. Overall, U of S first-year students performed below the U15 average in most of the engagement indicators. The results for our final-year students were mixed, with higher scores in three indicators, lower scores in three other indicators, and similar scores in four areas.

| Theme | Engagement Indicator | First-Year students compared with U15 | Final-year students compared with U15 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| <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 | ▼ | -- |

▲ Significantly higher (p < .05) -- No significant difference ▼ Significantly lower (p < .05)

1.2 High-Impact Practices

The table below shows the level of participation of U of S students in high-impact practices as compared to their U15 peers. U of S first-year students were significantly less likely to have participated in all three practices, while final-year students were less engaged in four of the six practices.

| High-Impact Practices | First-Year students compared with U15 | Final-year students compared with U15 |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Learning community</i> | ▼ | -- |
| <i>Service-learning</i> | ▼ | ▲ |
| <i>Research with faculty</i> | ▼ | ▼ |
| <i>Internship or field experience</i> | N.A. | ▼ |
| <i>Study abroad</i> | N.A. | ▼ |
| <i>Culminating senior experience</i> | N.A. | ▼ |

▲ Significantly higher (p < .05) -- No significant difference ▼ Significantly lower (p < .05)



1.3 Overall Educational Experience

On average, U of S students, both those in the first-year and in the final-year, were less satisfied than their counterparts in other U15 institutions. They were also less likely to attend the U of S if they could start over again.

| Overall Educational Experience | First-Year students compared with U15 | Final-year students compared with U15 |
|--|---|---|
| <i>Overall Satisfaction</i> | ▼ | ▼ |
| <i>Likelihood to choose the same institution again</i> | ▼ | ▼ |

▲ Significantly higher ($p < .05$) -- No significant difference ▼ Significantly lower ($p < .05$)

Compared to our U15 peers...

we did well in...

First year:

- Participated in a learning community or some other formal program
- Reviewed notes after class
- Quality of interactions with academic advisors
- Number of courses that have included a community-based project (service-learning)
- Extent to which courses challenged you to do your best work

Final year:

- Number of courses that have included a community-based project (service-learning)
- Instructors provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments
- Quality of interactions with faculty
- Included diverse perspectives in course discussions or assignments
- Quality of interaction with academic advisors

we needed improvement in...

First-year:

- Assigned more than 50 pages of writing
- Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students
- Discussion with people of a race or ethnicity other than your own
- Spent more than 15 hours per week preparing for class
- Explained course material to one or more students

Final-year:

- Participated in an internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement
- Discussions with people of a race or ethnicity other than your own
- Spent more than 15 hours per week preparing for class
- Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students
- Worked with a faculty member on a research project



PART 2. ENGAGEMENT INDICATORS

2.1 Academic Challenge

| Mean Comparison | First-year | | Final-year | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|-------|------------|-------|
| | U of S | U15 | U of S | U15 |
| Higher-Order Learning | 34.1 | 36.0* | 36.8 | 36.7 |
| Reflective & Integrative Learning | 31.4 | 33.0* | 35.8 | 35.2 |
| Learning Strategies | 36.3 | 36.0 | 33.4 | 35.3* |
| Quantitative Reasoning | 22.3 | 24.8* | 26.8 | 26.5 |

* Statistically significant (p<.05)



| Summary of Indicator Items | First-year | | Final-year | |
|---|------------|-----|------------|-----|
| | U of S | U15 | U of S | U15 |
| Higher-Order Learning | | | | |
| <i>Percentage responding "Very much" or "Quite a bit" about how much coursework emphasized...</i> | | | | |
| Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations | 69 | 74 | 75 | 73 |
| Analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts | 64 | 67 | 70 | 68 |
| Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source | 52 | 55 | 61 | 60 |
| Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information | 53 | 58 | 59 | 61 |
| Reflective & Integrative Learning | | | | |
| <i>Percentage of students who responded that they "Very often" or "Often"...</i> | | | | |
| Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments | 54 | 56 | 69 | 67 |
| Connected your learning to societal problems or issues | 41 | 48 | 57 | 55 |
| Included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments | 30 | 36 | 46 | 41 |
| Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue | 46 | 52 | 57 | 56 |
| Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective | 54 | 59 | 64 | 61 |
| Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept | 64 | 66 | 66 | 67 |
| Connected ideas from your courses to your prior experiences and knowledge | 75 | 76 | 77 | 78 |
| Learning Strategies | | | | |
| <i>Percentage of students who responded that they "Very often" or "Often"...</i> | | | | |
| Identified key information from reading assignments | 74 | 76 | 74 | 78 |
| Reviewed your notes after class | 56 | 50 | 41 | 45 |
| Summarized what you learned in class or from course materials | 58 | 57 | 50 | 55 |
| Quantitative Reasoning | | | | |
| <i>Percentage of students who responded that they "Very often" or "Often"...</i> | | | | |
| Reached conclusions based on your own analysis of numerical information (numbers, graphs, statistics, etc.) | 43 | 46 | 49 | 47 |
| Used numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue (unemployment, climate change, public health, etc.) | 26 | 32 | 37 | 35 |
| Evaluated what others have concluded from numerical information | 27 | 33 | 39 | 40 |

2.2 Learning with Peers

| Mean Comparison | First-year | | Final-year | |
|---------------------------------|------------|-------|------------|-------|
| | U of S | U15 | U of S | U15 |
| Collaborative Learning | 29.1 | 32.9* | 30.7 | 32.3* |
| Discussions with Diverse Others | 35.5 | 39.5 | 37.8 | 40.7* |

* Statistically significant (p<.05)


Summary of Indicator Items
Collaborative Learning
Percentage of students who responded that they "Very often" or "Often"...

Asked another student to help you understand course material

U of S

 46 
U15

 53 
Final-year
U of S

 41 
U15

 41 

Explained course material to one or more students

 49 

 58 

 55 

 55 

Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students

 40 

 52 

 40 

 47 

Worked with other students on course projects or assignments

 43 

 52 

 61 

 63 
Discussions with Diverse Others
Percentage of students who responded that they "Very often" or "Often" had discussions with ...

People from a race or ethnicity other than your own

 62 

 72 

 67 

 75 

People from an economic background other than your own

 59 

 67 

 64 

 70 

People with religious beliefs other than your own

 62 

 66 

 66 

 68 

People with political views other than your own

 57 

 63 

 67 

 66 



2.3 Experiences with Faculty

| Mean Comparison | First-year | | Final-year | |
|------------------------------|------------|-------|------------|-------|
| | U of S | U15 | U of S | U15 |
| Student-Faculty Interaction | 11.1 | 12.5* | 18.2 | 17.2* |
| Effective Teaching Practices | 34.0 | 34.8 | 35.9 | 34.9* |

* Statistically significant ($p < .05$)

| Summary of Indicator Items | First-year | | Final-year | |
|--|------------|-----|------------|-----|
| | U of S | U15 | U of S | U15 |
| Student-Faculty Interaction | | | | |
| <i>Percentage of students who responded that they "Very often" or "Often"...</i> | | | | |
| Talked about career plans with a faculty member | 16 | 16 | 29 | 25 |
| Worked w/faculty on activities other than coursework (committees, student groups, etc.) | 7 | 10 | 17 | 17 |
| Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class | 12 | 17 | 25 | 24 |
| Discussed your academic performance with a faculty member | 11 | 13 | 19 | 18 |
| Effective Teaching Practices | | | | |
| <i>Percentage responding "Very much" or "Quite a bit" about how much instructors have...</i> | | | | |
| Clearly explained course goals and requirements | 74 | 77 | 78 | 77 |
| Taught course sessions in an organized way | 73 | 77 | 77 | 76 |
| Used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points | 70 | 76 | 76 | 75 |
| Provided feedback on a draft or work in progress | 39 | 38 | 43 | 39 |
| Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments | 43 | 42 | 54 | 47 |



2.4 Campus Environment

| Mean Comparison | First-year | | Final-year | |
|-------------------------|------------|-------|------------|-------|
| | U of S | U15 | U of S | U15 |
| Quality of Interactions | 37.4 | 38.5* | 39.8 | 38.7* |
| Supportive Environment | 29.4 | 31.7* | 27.2 | 27.6 |

* Statistically significant (p<.05)

| Summary of Indicator Items | First-year | | Final-year | |
|---|------------|-----|------------|-----|
| | U of S | U15 | U of S | U15 |
| Quality of Interactions | | | | |
| <i>Percentage rating a 6 or 7 on a scale from 1="Poor" to 7="Excellent" their interactions with ...</i> | | | | |
| Students | 55 | 59 | 62 | 61 |
| Academic advisors | 41 | 36 | 39 | 34 |
| Faculty | 34 | 38 | 51 | 44 |
| Student services staff (career services, student activities, housing, etc.) | 35 | 38 | 33 | 33 |
| Other administrative staff and offices (registrar, financial aid, etc.) | 34 | 36 | 33 | 33 |
| Supportive Environment | | | | |
| <i>Percentage responding "Very much" or "Quite a bit" about how much the institution emphasized...</i> | | | | |
| Providing support to help students succeed academically | 64 | 69 | 53 | 56 |
| Using learning support services (tutoring services, writing center, etc.) | 64 | 64 | 50 | 49 |
| Encouraging contact among students from diff. backgrounds (soc., racial/eth., relig., etc.) | 41 | 45 | 38 | 37 |
| Providing opportunities to be involved socially | 54 | 61 | 53 | 55 |
| Providing support for your overall well-being (recreation, health care, counseling, etc.) | 57 | 63 | 55 | 55 |
| Helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) | 26 | 34 | 19 | 23 |
| Attending campus activities and events (performing arts, athletic events, etc.) | 48 | 54 | 41 | 45 |
| Attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues | 35 | 43 | 31 | 37 |



PART 3. HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES

The following practices are considered High-Impact Practices:

- Learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together
- Courses that included a community-based project (service-learning)
- Work with a faculty member on a research project
- Internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement
- Study abroad
- Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, portfolio, etc.)

The table below shows the percentages of U of S students who participate in each of these practices, as compared to their peers in other U15 institutions:

| | First-year | | Final-year | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|----------|-------------|----------|
| | U of S % | U15 % | U of S % | U15 % |
| Learning Community | 19 | 11 * | 18 | 19 |
| Service-Learning | 41 | 37 * | 56 | 40 * |
| Research with Faculty | 2 | 4 * | 19 | 26 * |
| Internship or Field Exp. | N.A. | | 39 | 50 * |
| Study Abroad | | | 6 | 13 * |
| Culminating Senior Exp. | N.A. | | 27 | 32 * |
| Participated in at least one | | | 51 | 43 * |
| Participated in two or more | 10 | 6 * | 48 | 53 * |

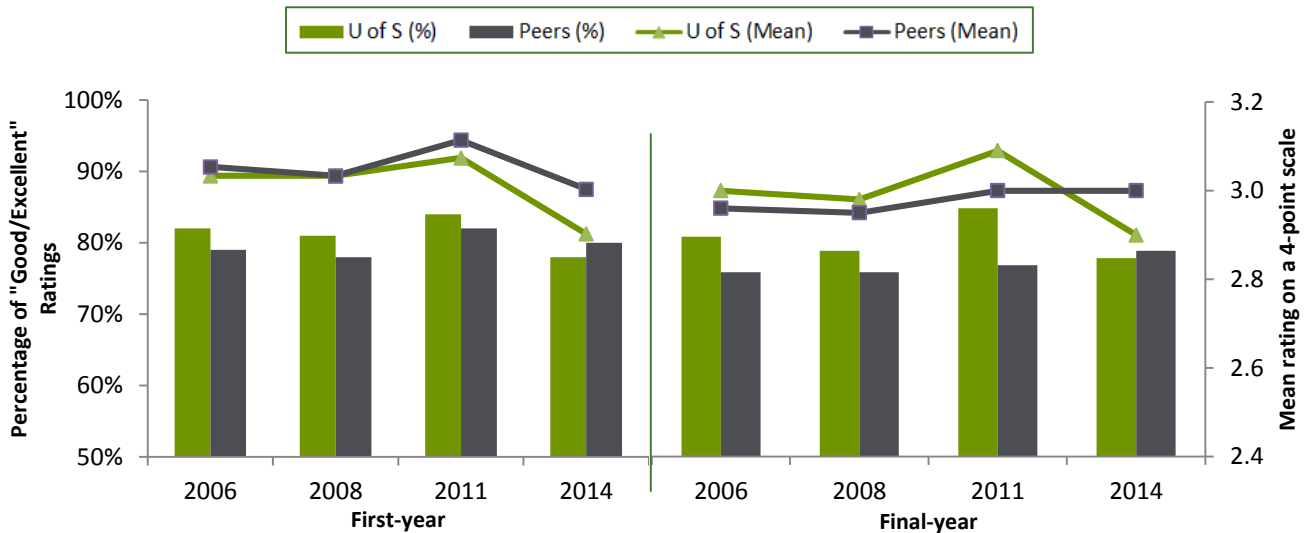
* Statistically significant (p<.05)



PART 4. OVERALL EXPERIENCE

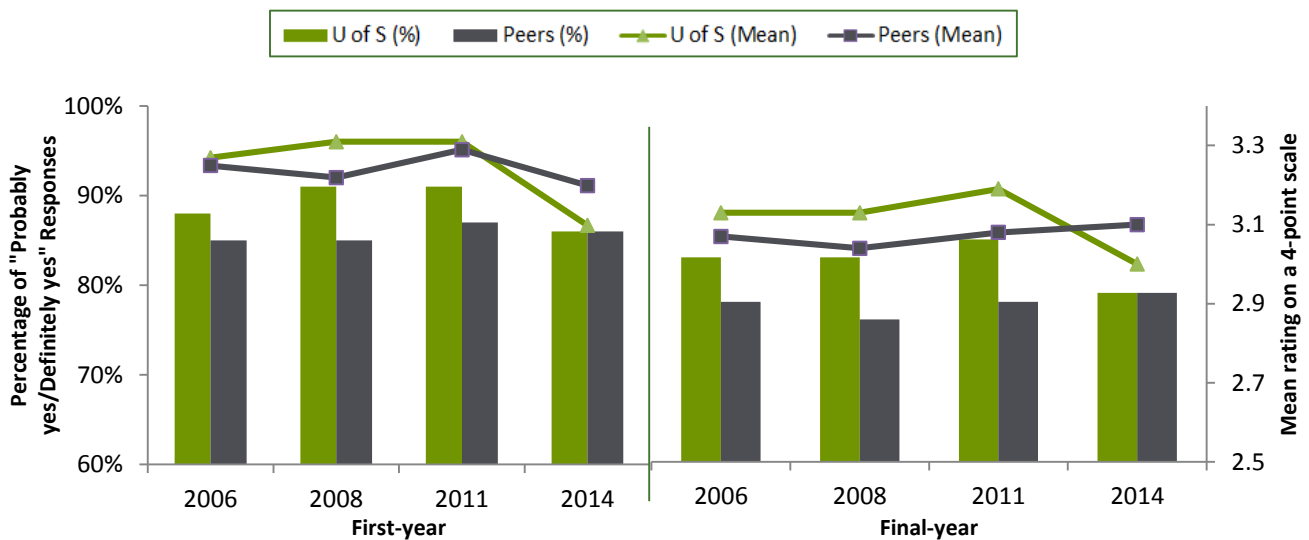
The majority of U of S first-years students were positive about their educational experience at the university. However, there was a significant decline in terms of the proportion of positive responses and the mean rating for both our first-year and final-year students in 2014, which have led to lower than average ratings compared to our U15 peers¹ (See chart below).

How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?



Most U of S students would choose the U of S if they could start over again. Over the past years, the U of S outperformed our U15 peers in this area. However, this trend was reversed in 2014, as our ratings declined significantly while other U15 institutions had improved, on average (See chart below).

If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?



¹ From 2006 to 2011, our peers were the fifteen medical-doctoral universities in Canada. In 2014, our peers had been changed to the U15 institutions, with the University of Waterloo replacing the University of Sherbrooke.