

NSSE 2026 Summary Report

Administration Details

A link to the NSSE instrument was emailed to all first-year and final-year undergraduate students in February 2026. At the time the survey closed on May 11th, 1,477 students had responded from a possible 4,993; 731 first-year and 746 final-year. The 2026 response rate of 30% is notably lower than in the past two NSSE administrations (34% in 2023 and 52% in 2020). A key enhancement to the 2026 survey launch was the inclusion of individual survey links within the student LMS, an option that had not been available during the 2023 administration due to the recent implementation of Brightspace. It was anticipated that providing students with more direct and convenient access to the survey would contribute to higher participation. However, despite this improvement in survey accessibility, the expected increase in participation rates was not observed.

The response rate by year of study with margin of error (MoE) and by respondent faculty are shown in the following two tables.

Table 1: Response Rate by Survey Year

Survey Year	First-Year			Final-Year		
	#	Response rate	MoE	#	Response rate	MoE
2026	731	31%	+/- 3.0%	746	29%	+/- 3.0%
2023	876	36%	+/- 2.6%	877	33%	+/- 2.7%
2020	1,546	56%	+/- 1.6%	1,288	48%	+/- 2.0%

Table 2: Response Rate by Faculty, 2026

Faculty	First-Year		Final-Year	
	#	Response rate	#	Response rate
FAHSS	243	29%	277	31%
BUS	65	27%	54	20%
ENG	110	33%	69	30%
HK	48	22%	40	23%
NURS	84	37%	111	36%
SCIENC	181	34%	195	31%

As noted in previous survey administrations, females are somewhat over-represented among respondents. In 2026, females accounted for 60% of first-year respondents compared with 53% of the first-year population, and 63% of final-year respondents compared with 57% of the final-year population. Other demographic characteristics, including domestic/visa status, full-time/part-time status, and living on or off campus, were generally reflective of the student population.

Overall Satisfaction

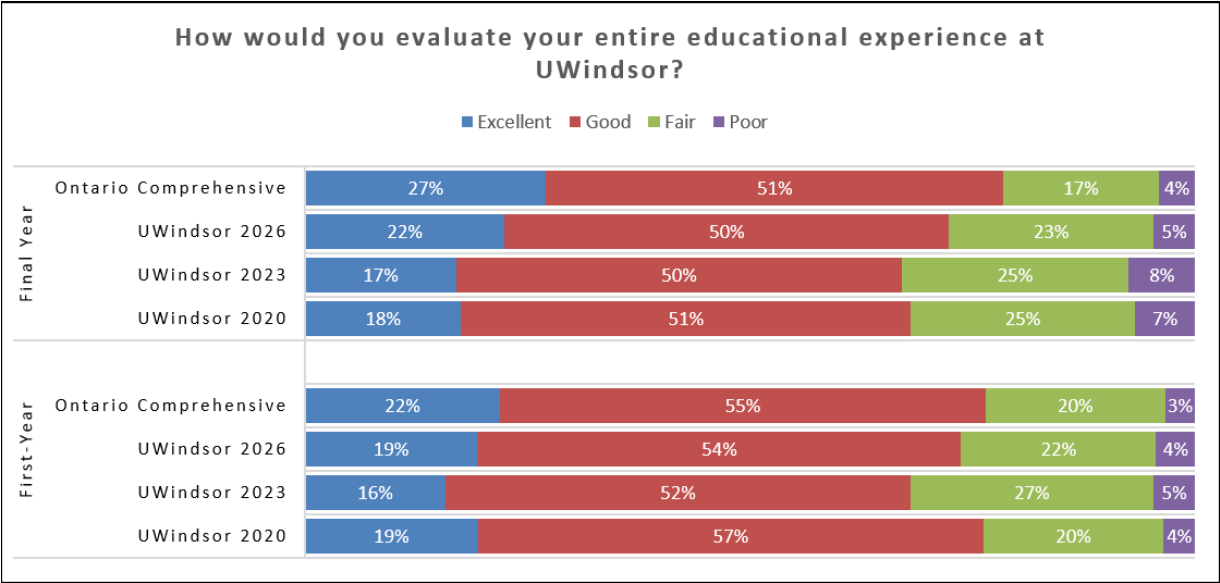
NSSE asks respondents two summative questions:

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

In 2026, nearly three-quarters of UWindsor respondents evaluated their overall educational experience positively. Among first-year students, 73% rated their experience as either excellent or good, compared with 77% at Ontario

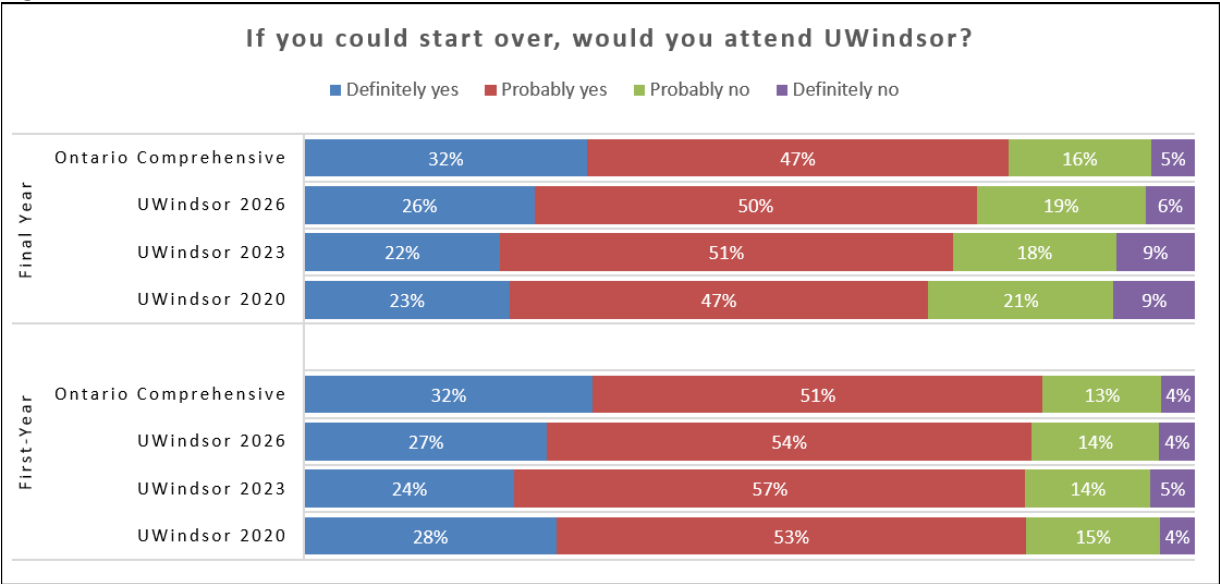
comprehensive universities. This represents an increase from 68% in 2023, although it remains slightly below the 76% reported in 2020. Among final-year students, 72% rated their experience as excellent or good, compared with 78% at Ontario comprehensive universities. This was an increase from 67% in 2023 and 69% in 2020 (Figure 1).

Figure 1:



When asked whether they would attend UWindsor again if they could start over, 81% of first-year respondents indicated definitely or probably yes, unchanged from both 2023 and 2020 and slightly below the 83% reported at Ontario comprehensive universities. Among final-year respondents, 76% indicated they would attend UWindsor again, an increase from 73% in 2023 and 70% in 2020, but below the Ontario comprehensive result of 79% (Figure 2).

Figure 2:



Despite 18% of first-year students indicating that they probably or definitely would not attend UWindsor if they were starting over, only 4% indicated in a separate question that they do not intend to return the following year. Nine in ten (90%) indicated that they intend to return, while 6% were unsure. Among the 40 first-year respondents who indicated

that they would not return or were unsure, 88% identified their academic performance as a minor or major obstacle to their academic progress. Financial pressures or work obligations and personal or family problems were also frequently identified as obstacles, each reported by 80% of this group.

Sense of Community

Students continue to report feeling comfortable being themselves at UWindsor, with 89% of both first-year and final-year students agreeing or strongly agreeing. Among first-year students, 75% feel part of the university community and 72% feel valued by the university. Final-year students are somewhat less positive on these measures, with 69% feeling part of the community and 63% feeling valued by the university. Overall, results improved across all three measures for both first-year and final-year students compared with the 2023 NSSE administration (Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3:

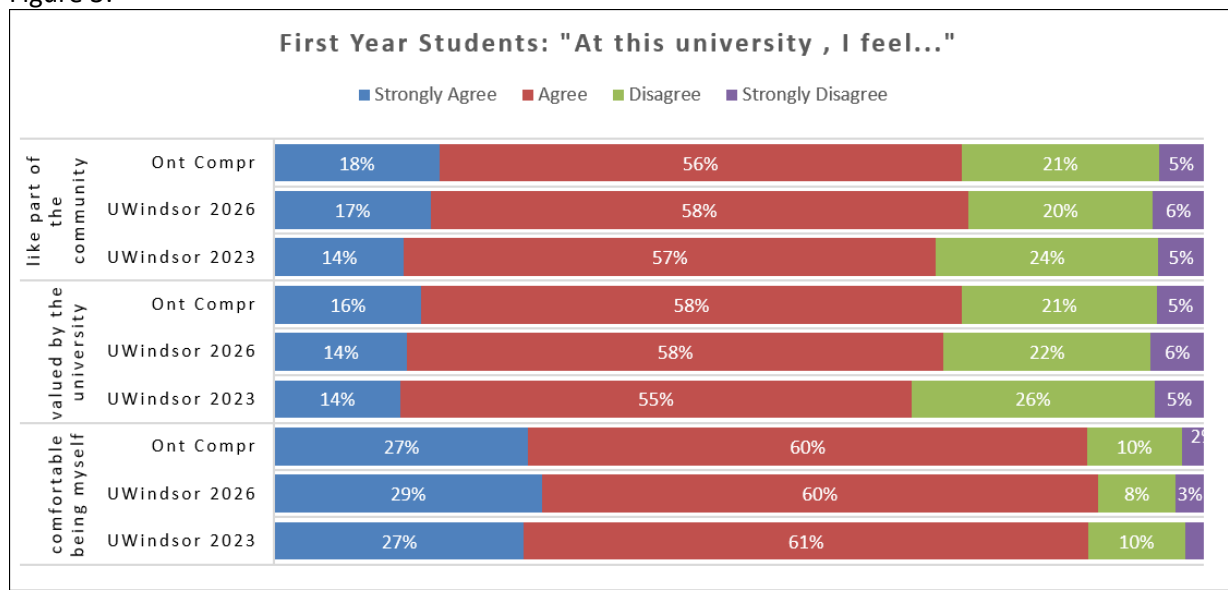
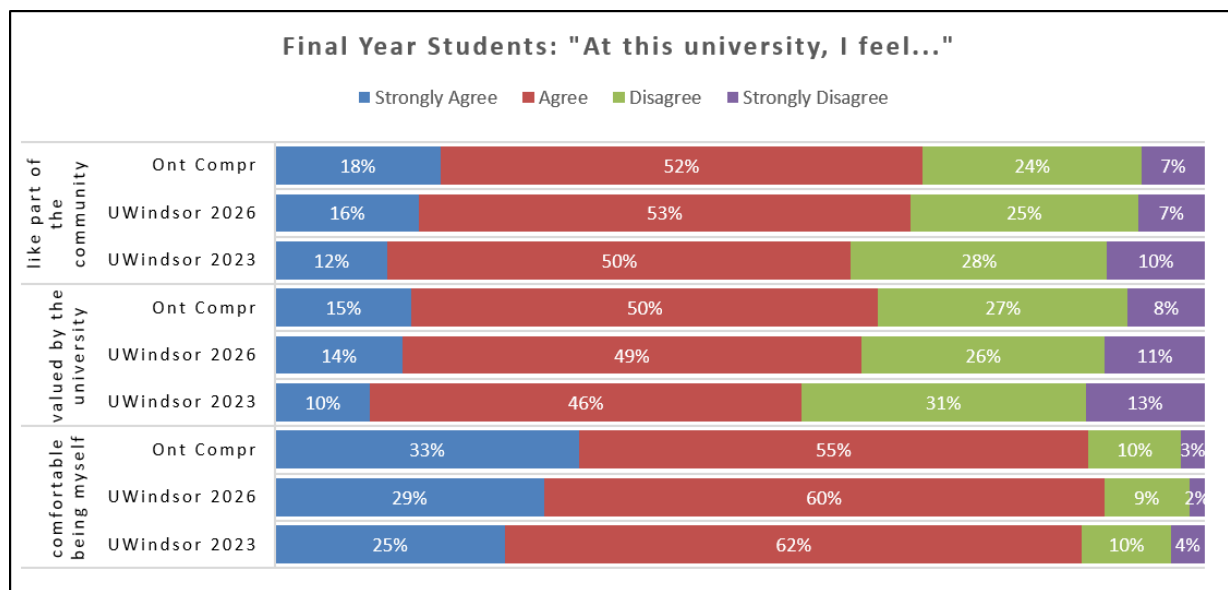


Figure 4:



Twenty-four percent of respondents identify as having a disability or condition that affects their learning, working, or living activities. Students identifying as having a disability continue to report a lower sense of belonging than those who do not identify as having a disability. In 2026, 59% of respondents with a disability indicated that they feel valued by the university and 62% feel like part of the university community, compared with 71% and 74%, respectively, among respondents without a disability. These results represent an improvement from 2023, when 50% of respondents with a disability felt valued by the university and 55% felt part of the community. The gap between students with and without a disability also narrowed on both measures.

A strong association is evident between feeling part of the university community and overall satisfaction. In 2026, 85% of first-year and 87% of final-year students who feel part of the community rated their educational experience as excellent or good, compared with 41% of first-year and 43% of final-year students who do not feel a sense of community. A similar pattern is evident when students are asked whether they would attend UWindsor again if they could start over. Among students who feel part of the community, 89% of first-year and 86% of final-year students indicated that they definitely or probably would attend UWindsor again, compared with 61% and 52%, respectively, among those who do not feel part of the community (Table 3).

Table 3: Overall Satisfaction by Sense of Community, 2026

First-Year: I feel like part of the community	Educational Experience % <i>Excellent/Good</i>	Start over at UWindsor % <i>Definitely/Probably</i>
Strongly agree/agree	85%	89%
Disagree/Strongly disagree	41%	61%

Final-Year: I feel like part of the community	Educational Experience % <i>Excellent/Good</i>	Start over at UWindsor % <i>Definitely/Probably</i>
Strongly agree/agree	87%	86%
Disagree/Strongly disagree	43%	52%

Most commonly students experience a sense of community on campus (described as part of a group that shares common interests, goals, values, and experiences) in a class (51%), an academic program (36%) and in a study group (24%). Reported sense of community was similar among students living in residence and commuters.

Apart from students living in residence, 41% of first-year and 52% of final-year students spend five hours or less on campus in a typical week outside of time spent in class and labs.

High-Impact Practices (HIPs)

NSSE asks students about their participation in six HIPs. These practices are opportunities provided by universities which are positively associated with student learning and retention. The NSSE Institute recommends that students participate in at least two HIPs during their undergraduate studies - one in their first year and one that is connected to their major (NSSE, 2007). The six practices are participation in:

- Formal learning community where students take 2 or more courses together
- Courses that included a community-based project or 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, thesis, portfolio etc.)

Note that NSSE's 2026 questionnaire asks students about all six activities, but NSSE reports first-year HIP participation for only service-learning, learning communities, and research with faculty; all six are reported for final-year students.

In 2026, 47% of first-year and 77% of final-year students said they participated in at least one HIP during their undergraduate program of study. For comparison, 52% of first-year and 84% of final-year respondents in the Ontario Comprehensive group participated in at least one HIP. The rate of final-year respondents participating in two or more HIPs has remained relatively stable since the 2020 NSSE administration.

Just under half of final-year respondents (49%) reported participating in a work-integrated learning experience, down from 52% in 2023 and unchanged from 2020.

Overall HIP participation was relatively stable among first-year students, with 47% participating in at least one HIP and 7% in two or more. Among final-year students, 77% participated in at least one HIP and 53% in two or more, both lower than in 2023.

Service-learning remained the most common HIP, reported by 43% of first-year and 53% of final-year students. Among final-year students, study abroad participation increased to 8%, while final-year participation in a culminating senior experience declined to 27% (Table 4).

Table 4: HIP Participation (% Done or In Progress)

HIP Categories	First-Year			Final-Year		
	2026	2023	2020	2026	2023	2020
Service-learning	43%	42%	44%	53%	50%	56%
Learning community	7%	7%	7%	16%	16%	17%
Research with faculty	5%	7%	4%	22%	22%	23%
Internship or field experience	-	-	-	49%	52%	49%
Study abroad	-	-	-	8%	5%	6%
Culminating senior experience	-	-	-	27%	38%	33%
<i>Participated in at least one</i>	<i>47%</i>	<i>48%</i>	<i>48%</i>	<i>77%</i>	<i>80%</i>	<i>82%</i>
<i>Participated in two or more</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>53%</i>	<i>58%</i>	<i>54%</i>

First-year students were asked whether they *planned* to participate in the three upper-division HIPs before they graduated. Sixty-five percent plan to participate in an internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching or clinical placement, 26% plan to take part in a study abroad program and 43% hope to complete a culminating senior experience such as a senior project, capstone course or thesis. It is notable that 38% of first-year respondents plan to work with a faculty member on a research project, compared with 22% of final-year respondents who had done so or were doing so.

Engagement Indicators (EIs)

NSSE uses ten EIs to summarize different aspects of student engagement with each EI based on three to eight related survey items. Each component item is converted to a 60-point scale, and the rescaled component items are then averaged to produce the EI score. Thus, higher EI scores indicate greater levels of student engagement.

Detailed descriptions of the ten EIs are included at the end of the report.

Table 5 shows UWindsor mean EI scores relative to the Ontario Comprehensive group. Among first-year students, UWindsor scored significantly lower on Reflective & Integrative Learning, Quantitative Reasoning, and Effective Teaching Practices; no statistically significant differences were found on the remaining seven EIs. Among final-year students, UWindsor scored significantly lower on Quantitative Reasoning and significantly higher on Student-Faculty Interaction; no statistically significant differences were found on the remaining eight EIs. (Table 5).

Looking descriptively at mean scores across the 2020, 2023 and 2026 NSSE administrations, most EI scores have remained relatively stable or increased. Quality of Interactions and Higher-Order Learning increased for both first-year and final-year respondents over the three administrations. Among final-year students, additional increases were also evident in Reflective & Integrative Learning, Learning Strategies, Effective Teaching Practices, and Supportive Environment.

Collaborative Learning is the clearest area of decline. Final-year scores decreased steadily from 34.2 in 2020 to 32.5 in 2023 and 31.1 in 2026. Among first-year students, the score declined from 34.7 in 2020 to 31.5 in 2023 before increasing slightly to 32.3 in 2026. Other EIs, including Quantitative Reasoning, Discussions with Diverse Others, and Student-Faculty Interaction, showed relatively little overall change across the three survey administrations.

Table 5: NSSE 2026 EI Mean Scores for UWindsor & Ontario Comprehensive Universities Group

Theme	EI Component	First-Year			Final-Year		
		UWindsor	Ont. Compr.	Sig	UWindsor	Ont. Compr.	Sig
Academic Challenge	Higher-Order Learning	37.3	38.4		38.5	39.1	
	Reflective & Integrative Learning	34.1	35.2	↓	37.4	37.3	
	Learning Strategies	37.8	37.6		37.7	36.9	
	Quantitative Reasoning	24.9	28.6	↓	27.0	29.2	↓
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning	32.3	31.4		31.1	31.9	
	Discussions with Diverse Others	38.8	38.8		39.8	40.2	
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction	16.1	15.7		20.7	18.9	↑
	Effective Teaching Practices	33.3	34.8	↓	35.5	35.7	
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions	41.1	40.8		40.1	40.2	
	Supportive Environment	31.4	31.8		28.4	28.8	

↑↓: UWindsor EI mean is significantly higher or lower than Ontario Comprehensive Universities ($p < .05$, 2-tailed).

Student Experiences

Financial pressures or work obligations continue to be the most frequently cited obstacle to academic progress, reported by 80% of first-year and 86% of final-year respondents. Academic performance was identified as an obstacle by 74% and 69%, respectively, while course availability or scheduling was cited by 71% of first-year and 82% of final-year students. Lack of good academic advising was reported by 50% of first-year and 62% of final-year respondents. First-year respondents reported spending an average of 16 hours per week preparing for class, compared with 14 hours among final-year respondents.

UWindsor did not participate in NSSE's Career & Workforce Preparation Topical Module in 2026; therefore, direct measures of students' career-plan clarity and the factors influencing their career decisions are not available for comparison with 2023. Related measures from the core NSSE indicate that 24% of first-year and 31% of final-year students often or very often discussed their career plans with a faculty member. In addition, 49% of first-year and 60% of final-year students reported that their UWindsor experience contributed quite a bit or very much to acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills. Ten percent of first-year students had completed or were participating in an internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching or clinical placement, while a further 65% planned to do so; among final-year students, 49% had completed or were participating in such an experience.

Overall, 52% of first-year and 75% of final-year students were employed either on or off campus. In a typical week, employed first-year students worked an average of 18 hours, compared with 20 hours among employed final-year

students. In 2026, 50% of first-year and 67% of final-year respondents worked for pay off campus, compared with 39% and 54% in the Ontario Comprehensive group. Community service or volunteer work was reported by 43% of first-year and 46% of final-year students, compared with 36% and 42% in the Ontario Comprehensive group.

Forty-two percent of first-year and 52% of final-year students worked with faculty on activities outside coursework. Among final-year students, 22% had worked or were working with a faculty member on a research project, while another 16% planned to do so. Nearly all final-year respondents indicated that their UWindsor experience contributed at least some to thinking critically and analytically (98%), working effectively with others (92%), and understanding people from diverse backgrounds (91%).

Students also reported generally positive teaching practices. A majority reported that instructors did the following quite a bit or very much: clearly explained course goals and requirements, taught course sessions in an organized way, used relevant examples or illustrations, explained assignment criteria in advance, and enabled students to demonstrate their learning through quizzes, assignments, and other activities. However, 44% of first-year and 32% of final-year students had never discussed their academic performance with a faculty member. Approximately 95% of first-year and 92% of final-year respondents rated the extent to which their courses challenged them to do their best work at 4 or higher on NSSE's seven-point scale.

Ontario Comprehensive Universities (N=7)

Brock University
Carleton University
Toronto Metropolitan University
University of Guelph
University of Waterloo
Wilfrid Laurier University
York University

Engagement Indicator Descriptions and Component Items

Theme: Academic Challenge

Higher-Order Learning

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Colleges and universities promote high levels of student achievement by calling on students to engage in complex cognitive tasks requiring more than mere memorization of facts. This Engagement Indicator captures how much students' coursework emphasizes challenging cognitive tasks such as application, analysis, judgment, and synthesis. Items include:

During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following:

- Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations
- Analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts
- Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source
- Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information

Reflective & Integrative Learning

Personally connecting with course material requires students to relate their understandings and experiences to the content at hand. Instructors emphasizing reflective and integrative learning motivate students to make connections between their learning and the world around them, re-examining their own beliefs and considering issues and ideas from others' perspectives. Items include:

During the current school year, how often have you:

- Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments
- Connected your learning to societal problems or issues
- Included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments
- Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue
- Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from their perspective
- Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept
- Connected ideas from your courses to your prior experiences and knowledge

Learning Strategies

College students enhance their learning and retention by actively engaging with and analyzing course material rather than approaching learning as absorption. Examples of effective learning strategies include identifying key information in readings, reviewing notes after class, and summarizing course material. Knowledge about the prevalence of effective learning strategies helps colleges and universities target interventions to promote student learning and success. Items include:

During the current school year, how often have you:

- Identified key information from reading assignments
- Reviewed your notes after class
- Summarized what you learned in class or from course materials

Quantitative Reasoning

Quantitative literacy—the ability to use and understand numerical and statistical information in everyday life—is an increasingly important outcome of higher education. All students, regardless of major, should have ample opportunities to develop their ability to reason quantitatively—to evaluate, support, and critique arguments using numerical and statistical information. Items include:

During the current school year, how often have you:

- Reached conclusions based on your own analysis of numerical information (numbers, graphs, statistics, etc.)
- Used numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue (unemployment, climate change, public health, etc.)
- Evaluated what others have concluded from numerical information

Theme: Learning with Peers

Collaborative Learning

Collaborating with peers in solving problems or mastering difficult material deepens understanding and prepares students to deal with the messy, unscripted problems they encounter during and after college. Working on group projects, asking others for help with difficult material or explaining it to others, and working through course material in preparation for exams all represent collaborative learning activities. Items include:

During the current school year, how often have you:

- Asked another student to help you understand course material
- Explained course material to one or more students
- Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students
- Worked with other students on course projects or assignments

Discussions with Diverse Others

Colleges and universities afford students new opportunities to interact with and learn from others with different backgrounds and life experiences. Interactions across difference, both inside and outside the classroom, confer educational benefits and prepare students for personal and civic participation in a diverse and interdependent world. Items include:

During the current school year, how often have you had discussions with people from the following groups:

- People of races or ethnicities other than your own
- People from economic backgrounds other than your own
- People with religious beliefs other than your own
- People with political views other than your own

Theme: Experiences with Faculty

Student-Faculty Interaction

Interactions with faculty can positively influence the cognitive growth, development, and persistence of college students. Through their formal and informal roles as teachers, advisors, and mentors, faculty members model intellectual work, promote mastery of knowledge and skills, and help students make connections between their studies and their future plans. Items include:

During the current school year, how often have you:

- Talked about career plans with a faculty member
- Worked with a faculty member on activities other than coursework (committees, student groups, etc.)
- Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class
- Discussed your academic performance with a faculty member

Effective Teaching Practices

Student learning is heavily dependent on effective teaching. Organized instruction, clear explanations, illustrative examples, and effective feedback on student work all represent aspects of teaching effectiveness that promote student comprehension and learning. Items include:

During the current school year, to what extent have your instructors done the following:

- Clearly explained course goals and requirements
- Taught course sessions in an organized way
- Used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points
- Provided feedback on a draft or work in progress
- Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments

Theme: Campus Environment

Quality of Interactions

College environments characterized by positive interpersonal relations promote student learning and success. Students who enjoy supportive relationships with peers, advisors, faculty, and staff are better able to find assistance when needed, and to learn from and with those around them. Items include:

Indicate the quality of your interactions with the following people at your institution:

- Students
- Academic advisors
- Faculty
- Student services staff (career services, student activities, housing, etc.)
- Other administrative staff and offices (registrar, financial aid, etc.)

Supportive Environment

Institutions that are committed to student success provide support and involvement across a variety of domains, including the cognitive, social, and physical. These commitments foster higher levels of student performance and satisfaction. This Engagement Indicator summarizes students' perceptions of how much an institution emphasizes services and activities that support their learning and development. Items include:

How much does your institution emphasize the following:

- Providing support to help students succeed academically
- Using learning support services (tutoring services, writing center, etc.)
- Encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (social, racial/ethnic, religious, etc.)
- Providing opportunities to be involved socially
- Providing support for your overall well-being (recreation, health care, counseling, etc.)
- Helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
- Attending campus activities and events (performing arts, athletic events, etc.)
- Attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues