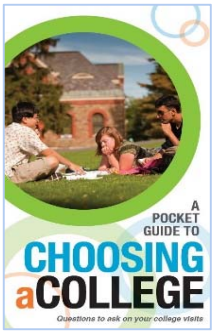
A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College: NSSE 2018 Answers from Students

University of Idaho

Each year the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) asks students at hundreds of colleges and universities to reflect on the time they devote to various learning activities. The topics explored are linked to previous research on student success in college.

Results from NSSE can provide prospective students with insights into how they might learn and develop at a given college. To help in the college exploration process, NSSE developed *A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College* to give students and their families key questions to ask during campus visits.



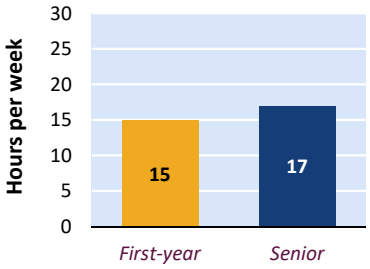
A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College is available at **nsse.indiana.edu/html/pocket_guide.cfm**

The following responses were provided by 754 Idaho students on the 2018 survey.

Academics

How much time do students spend studying each week?

First-year (FY) students spent an average of 15 hours per week preparing for class while seniors spent an average of 17 hours per week.



Do courses challenge students to do their best?[a]

39% of FY students reported that their courses "highly" challenged them to do their best work.

How much writing is expected?

In an academic year, FY students estimated they were assigned an average of 54 pages of writing and seniors estimated an average of 73 pages.

How much reading is expected?

FY students estimated they spent an average of 6 hours per week on assigned reading, and seniors read 7 hours per week.

How often do students make course presentations?[b]

34% of FY students and 50% of seniors "frequently" gave course presentations.

Do class discussions and assignments include the perspectives of diverse groups of people?[b]

47% of FY students "frequently" included diverse perspectives in course discussions or assignments.

Are students expected to use numbers or statistics throughout their coursework?[b]

32% of FY students "frequently" used numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue; 59% of seniors "frequently" reached conclusions based on their own analysis of numerical information.

Experiences with Faculty

How do students rate their interactions with faculty?[c]

42% of FY students rated the quality of their interactions with faculty as "high."

How often do students talk with faculty members or advisors about their career plans?[b]

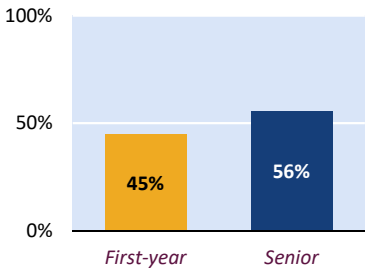
30% of FY and 43% of seniors "frequently" discussed career plans with faculty.

Do faculty members clearly explain course goals and requirements?

66% of FY students said instructors clearly explained course goals and requirements "quite a bit" or "very much."

Do students receive prompt and detailed feedback?[d]

45% of FY students and 56% of seniors said instructors "substantially" gave prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments.



How often do students talk with faculty members outside class about what they are learning?[b]

25% of FY students "frequently" discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class.

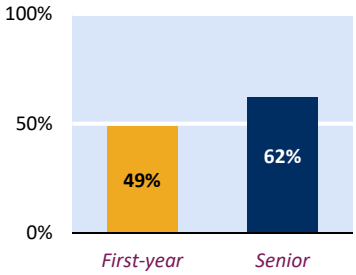
How many students work on research projects with faculty?

5% of FY students and 34% of seniors worked on a research project with a faculty member.

Learning with Peers

How often do students work together on class projects and assignments?[b]

49% of FY students and 62% of seniors "frequently" worked with their peers on course projects and assignments.



Do students help each other learn?[b]

61% of seniors "frequently" explained course material to one or more students.

How often do students work together to prepare for exams?[b]

46% of FY students "frequently" prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students.

How often do students interact with others who have different viewpoints or who come from different backgrounds?[b]

Among FY students, 66% "frequently" had discussions with people with different political views, 64% "frequently" had discussions with people from a different economic background, and 55% "frequently" had discussions with people from a different race or ethnicity.

Campus Environment

Are students encouraged to use learning support services (tutors, writing center)?[d]

79% of FY students said the institution "substantially" emphasized the use of learning support services.

How do students rate their interactions with academic advisors?[c]

50% of FY students and 54% of seniors gave the quality of their interactions with academic advisors a "high" rating.

How well do students get along with each other?[c]

45% of FY students gave the quality of their interactions with their peers a "high" rating.

How satisfied are students with their educational experience?

82% of FY and 82% of seniors rated their entire educational experience at this institution as "excellent" or "good."

Rich Educational Experiences

What types of honors courses, learning communities, and other distinctive programs are offered?

During their first year, 11% of students participated in a learning community. By spring of their senior year, 55% of students had done (or were doing) a culminating senior experience.

How many students study in other countries?

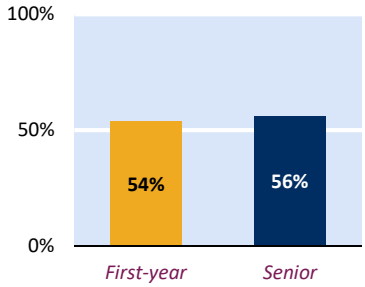
By their senior year, 14% of students had studied abroad.

How many students get practical, real-world experience through internships or field experiences?

By spring of their senior year, 51% of students had participated in some form of internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement.

How many courses include community-based service-learning projects?[e]

54% of FY students and 56% of seniors said "at least some" of their courses included a community-based service-learning project.



Notes

a. "Highly" is a 6 or 7 on a seven-point scale where 1 is "Not at all" and 7 is "Very much."
b. "Frequently" is "Often" or "Very often."
c. A "High" rating is a 6 or 7 on a seven-point scale where 1 is "Poor" and 7 is "Excellent."
d. "Substantially" is "Quite a bit" or "Very much."
e. "At least some" is defined by combining responses of "Some," "Most," and "All."

NSSE national survey of student engagement

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