

OSU Perspective

Understanding the 'Facts' & 'Figures'
about our students and their learning . . .

Published by
The Division of
Student Affairs

Volume 2, Issue 4
June, 2004

http://oregonstate.edu/admin/student_affairs/research/perspective.html

Student Affairs Use of Large Scale Surveys Gives a Snapshot of OSU Student Experiences

During this year Student Affairs sponsored OSU's participation in four national surveys. Each survey was designed to capture different aspects of the student experience at OSU.

Entering first year students participating in START during the summer were asked to complete the *Cooperative Institutional Research Program Freshman Survey* (CIRP). They responded to questions about their high school experiences, college hopes and expectations, future plans, and reasons for

choosing OSU.

At the end of the first year at OSU, students then responded to the *Your First College Year Survey* (YFCY), which was administered as a follow-up to the CIRP.

Faculty teaching at least one undergraduate course during Winter or Spring term were then asked to participate in the *Faculty Survey of Student Engagement* (FSSE). The FSSE was designed to parallel the *National Survey of Stu-*

dent Engagement (NSSE) in which OSU First year and Senior students were also participating. Both of these surveys examined the degree to which students were engaged in empirically derived good educational practices.

The following articles provide some of the results of these surveys, as well as information about accessing the full reports on the Student Affairs Research and Evaluation web site.

http://oregonstate.edu/admin/student_affairs/research/com_reports.html

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OSU Symposium Slated for Fall 2004

Dr. Peggy Macki and Dr. Marilee Bresciani, international experts and consultants on Student Learning and Assessment, will be on campus November 9-10 to lead a symposium sponsored by the Division of Student Affairs. The symposium is open to OSU faculty, staff, and students. Mark your calendars for this exciting opportunity. A call for programs will be issued in the next few weeks. For further information contact Dr. Rebecca Sanderson at 541-737-8738.

Entering OSU First Year Students

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program's Freshman Survey (CIRP) is administered annually to thousands of entering first year students at hundreds of institutions. It is the longest-standing research study on entering students in the country (> 30 years).

In 2003, over 700 OSU entering students participated in the CIRP which was a 30% return rate. This was somewhat lower than in past years, however, it was still a reasonable return on a one-time participation opportunity.

It is not surprising that

OSU's results have generally remained consistent over the last three years as few changes in admissions requirements, marketing regions, etc. have been made in recent years.

Most of the respondents (98%) were between 18-20 years old. About 50% reported that their parents had a college degree and/or a graduate degree. By contrast, 3-5% reported that their parents had not graduated from high school. In a recent study, Astin and Oseguera (2002) found that the educational level of a student's father was a contributing factor to the student's retention and eventual graduation from college.

Over the last three years, students tended to agree on the top six "very important" factors in their decision to attend college. These included: 1) To learn more about things that interest me; 2) To be able to get a better job; 3) To get training for a specific degree; 4) To be able to make more money; 5) To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas; and 6) To prepare for graduate or professional school.

Access to college, in terms of financial support, con-

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First Year Students Experiences

What experiences are first year students having at OSU? Are first year students developing in the manner in which faculty, staff, and students intend? What do we know about OSU first year students? The *Your First College Year Survey* project was designed to begin to provide specific information about the experiences of OSU first year students.

During May 2003, first year students in selected classes were asked to participate in the survey with 447 responding which was a 40% return rate. The following provides some information about what most students endorsed as being true of their first college year.

1. Adjustment to the University

Most . . . (75-100%)

- Understood what professors expected;
- Felt successful in adjusting to the academic demands of college;
- Utilized campus services, studied and managed time successfully;
- Frequently or occasionally felt overwhelmed by all they had to do.

Many . . . (50-74.9%)

- Had daily contact with close friends and felt successful in developing close friendships with other students;
- Were inspired in courses to think in new ways;
- Reported that their social life frequently or occasionally interfered with schoolwork.

2. Academic, Career, and Social Experiences

Most . . . (75-100%)

- Experienced formal lectures in class;
- Felt bored in class;
- Used the internet for research/

homework;

- Studied with other students and discussed course content outside of class;
- Socialized with someone of a different racial or ethnic group;
- Worked five hours or less per week either on or off campus.

3. Self-Assessed Academic and Personal Development

Most . . . (75-100%)

- Rated their general knowledge and knowledge of a particular field as much stronger or stronger than when they entered OSU.

Many . . . (50-74.9%)

- Rated their analytical and problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, knowledge of people from other cultures, ability to get along with others, library research skills, and understanding national and global issues as stronger or much stronger than when they entered OSU;
- Felt the same about their ability to write college-level papers.

4. Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs

- OSU students reported more frequent use of beer and wine/liquor than did comparators, all public universities;
- Since entering OSU, about 25% of first year students had used marijuana, 70% alcohol, and 2% club drugs.

5. Satisfaction

- Over 60% were satisfied or very satisfied with the library, computing facilities, academic advising, and recreational facilities.

The full report can be found at the following web address:

http://oregonstate.edu/admin/student_affairs/research/com_reports.html

Faculty and Students Respond to Surveys of Student Engagement

During the 2003 Spring Term, OSU participated in the *National Survey of Student Engagement* (NSSE) and the *Pilot Faculty Survey of Student Engagement* (FSSE). The project was administered by the Division of Student Affairs with the support and assistance of the Interim Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Dr. Leslie Burns.

The FSSE was designed as a pilot study to obtain information from college and university faculty across the nation about the ways in which they involve undergraduate students in good educational practices, both inside and outside the classroom. The FSSE was constructed to parallel the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in which OSU has participated since 2002. The NSSE surveyed first year (FY) and senior (SR) students regarding their participation in educationally purposeful activities.

Faculty teaching at least one undergraduate course during Winter or Spring term 2003 were asked to participate. A total of 205 faculty responded, which was approximately a 20% return rate. Of the faculty who responded to the survey, 76% held professorial rank with 53% of those being tenured. About 33% of the respondents were over the age of 54 and another 54% had over 15 years of teaching experience. In terms of gender, 63% were male and 37% were female.

Faculty were asked to respond to the survey based upon one course that they taught. The courses were classified as Lower Division (LD)-mostly enrolling first year or sophomore students – or Upper Division (UD)-mostly enrolling junior or

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Entering First Year Students (Continued)

tinues to be an issue for some OSU first year students. This year the percentage of parents listed as "unemployed" increased two-fold from 2002.

Two-thirds of the incoming students reported studying five hours or less per week in high school, regardless of their high school grade point average. It is interesting to note that nationally, in 1968, only 18% of students had an "A" average in high school compared to 47% in 2003 (Sax et al, 2003).

At OSU as well as nationally students are increasingly involved in community service activities. The last three years have shown a steady increase in the number of OSU students reporting that community service was included in high school graduation requirements (25% in 2001 to over 30% in 2003).

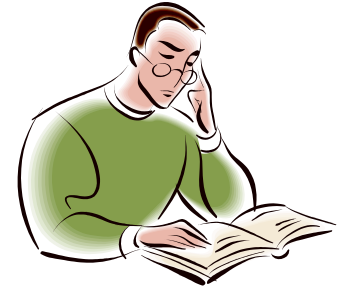
Student expectations for their post-

college future varied in terms of importance; however, the top four expectations have remained constant over the last three years. These included: 1) Raise a family; 2) Be very well off financially; 3) Help others in difficulty; and 4) Become an authority in my field.

Students' political views were characterized from far left to far right with most students choosing a middle-of-the-road stance. Interestingly, OSU's results tended to mirror the national "gender gap" in terms of opinions on politically/socially charged issues. Women and men tended to disagree on most of the issues presented (e.g., gay marriage, gun control, affirmative action, and military spending).

The complete report is available on the web and provides additional data and information about OSU first year stu-

dents, their thoughts, experiences and concerns.



For Further Reading

Keeling, R.P. ed. (2004). Learning reconsidered: A campus-wide focus on the student experience. Washington, D.C.: American College Personnel Association and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.

Faculty and Students Respond to Surveys of Student Engagement (Continued)

senior students. Most faculty (64% selected an UD courses upon which to base their responses. Approximately 42% of faculty who reported teaching LD courses and 66% of faculty who reported teaching UD courses selected courses with enrollments of less than 50 students.

A random sample of students were asked to respond to the NSSE according to their overall experiences at OSU. The return rate for the NSSE was 53%. Forty-four percent of respondents were First Year (FY) students and 56% were Senior (SR) students.

The following is a sampling of the results of the FSSE on items that paralleled those on the NSSE:

- Faculty teaching UD and LD courses reported less OSU emphasis on studying and academic preparation than did either FY or SR students.
- Only 21% of LD and 17% of UD classes reported emphasizing memorization "very much" or "quite a bit" in class. Yet 75% of FY students and

67% of SR students reported their courses emphasized memorization "quite a bit" or "very much."

- The number of papers assigned, of fewer than five pages, seemed to be related to the size of the LD class. Yet, for papers assigned, of more than five pages in length, class size seemed to have little impact since generally no papers were assigned.
- The cognitive area that both faculty and students agreed was emphasized the least in their classes was "making judgments about the value of information, arguments or methods such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions."
- The degree of student involvement in activities that increased a student's out-of-class involvement with academic material seemed to parallel the degree of importance that faculty placed on the activity. It was interesting to note that frequently faculty

placed little emphasis on out-of-class academic activities that have been shown to increase student learning (e.g., students tutoring other students).

- The use of community-based projects as part of a course was not rated very highly by either students or faculty. This type of experience, though occurring in a small portion of the groups sampled, seemed not to be a common experience for either faculty or students. Yet, over 2/3 of FY and SR students planned to participate in community service or volunteer work before graduation.
- Generally faculty placed a higher emphasis on study abroad than did either FY or SR students.
- Participation in a learning community was somewhat less important to faculty teaching LD courses than it was to FY students. This may have had to do with the level of learning

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Faculty and Students Respond to Surveys of Student Engagement (Continued)

OSU Perspective: What is it?

The **OSU Perspective** was developed to provide assessment and other information about our students and programs. We hope that by making this information available to OSU faculty and staff, we can stimulate conversation that helps keep students and student learning at our core.

The **Perspective** is published quarterly both in print and on the web: http://oregonstate.edu/student_affairs/research/perspective.html

Ideas and suggestions for subsequent **OSU Perspective** publications are welcomed.

Please contact Rebecca Sanderson, Ph.D., Student Affairs Research and Evaluation Office, 102 Buxton Hall, 541-737-8738, or email: rebecca.sanderson@oregonstate.edu.

Student Affairs Team Invited to Assessment Symposium

The Student Affairs Assessment Council was invited to send a team to the North Carolina Assessment Symposium in April, 2004. Twelve members of the Council went to North Carolina to be a part of the symposium and to participate in a special pre-symposium conversation about assessment and integrating assessment into the culture of student affairs. The team was one of about 8 universities nationwide to be invited to participate.

The NC State Symposium is an annual event sponsored by the Division of Undergraduate Academic Programs at North Carolina State University. Experts on pedagogy, curriculum, student learning, and assessment provided workshops, keynote and plenary sessions during the three-day symposium. Symposium proceedings are available on the North Carolina State University Assessment website, http://www.ncsu.edu/undergrad_affairs/assessment/files/resources/conf2004/symposium.htm

community recruitment that happened with FY students versus the level of education and support faculty received regarding the value of learning communities for entering students.

- Very few faculty (LD = 20%; UD = 29%) reported structuring their course to influence a student's ability to speak clearly and effectively. About 40% of LD faculty structured their course "very much" or "quite a bit" to foster writing clearly and effectively.
- Most faculty (> 50%) teaching LD classes reported structuring their courses "very much" or "quite a bit" to foster students' acquisition of a broad general education and critical and analytical thinking. Faculty teaching UD classes (>50%) tended to structure their classes to foster acquisition of a broad general education, job-related knowledge and skills, writing clearly and effectively, and critical and analytical thinking.



- The use of lecture as a teaching strategy predominated at both the LD and the UD levels. The second most frequent activity was teacher-led discussions. Small group and experiential activities ranked third and fourth in terms of mean percent of class time. Very little difference between LD and UD percent of time devoted to each of the in-class activities was reported even though more of the UD classes had fewer students than LD classes.
- About two-thirds of FY students indicated that OSU emphasized providing academic support "very much" or "quite

a bit" while a little over one-half of SR's responded likewise. Faculty responses were similar with about 58% indicating that academic support for students was emphasized at OSU. Both faculty and students agreed that helping students with their non-academic responsibilities or social needs was emphasized much less than academic support. Yet, student academic success was likely impacted by their non-academic and social success as well.

- Student-reported relationships with other students, faculty, and administrative offices generally were in the positive direction. Interestingly, faculty estimates of student relationships with these same groups tended to be somewhat lower than the student ratings.
- Overall findings from these surveys suggested that student activities tended to align with those activities that faculty believed to be important for students. The tremendous influence of faculty on students' academic skills, beliefs, and academic performance was evident throughout the surveys.
- Generally, faculty appeared to be more interested in student outcomes than in the process for getting to the outcome. This was particularly evident in terms of faculty emphasis on those activities that pressed students to engage with academic material in specific ways outside of class.
- The results of these two surveys suggest that to challenge students and to engage them more fully in the academic endeavor, OSU must reinvest in faculty.

The full report of the 2003 Pilot Faculty Survey of Student Engagement can be found on the Student Affairs Research and Assessment web page. For information regarding the National Survey of Student Engagement and comparisons with other Doctoral Research Extensive universities, please contact Dr. Rebecca Sanderson, 541-737-8738.