

OSU Perspective

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

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Health Impediments to Academic Performance



The OSU Student Health Services Health Promotion Department administered the National College Health Assessment (NCHA). This instrument measured the self-reported health concerns and practices of students nationwide. In April 2002, a random sample of OSU classes was selected to take the NCHA. Researchers received permission from faculty members to administer the instrument the first week of Spring Term 2002. A total of 45 classes were surveyed, 911 students completed the survey, providing a 97% participation rate. The demographic data collected was representative of the campus.

Did You Know?

- 82% of OSU students reported using a designated driver when going out partying.
- 41% of OSU students reported that as a result of their drinking they did something they later regretted.
- Of the 12% of OSU students reporting having been diagnosed with depression at some time, 28% were currently taking medication.

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In addition to providing data about health concerns and practices, the NCHA also provided information about the impact of health issues on students' academic performance. The following data provided information on the factors affecting the academic performance (i.e., received an incomplete, dropped a course, received a lower grade in class, on an exam or on an important project) of OSU students.

Top 10 Health Impediments to the Academic Performance of OSU Students

N = 911 students (55% male, 45% female)

(Note: a student could endorse more than one item)

| Health Factor | % Female | % Male | Total % |
|---|----------|--------|---------|
| Stress | 32 | 23 | 26 |
| Cold/Flu/Sore Throat | 29 | 22 | 25 |
| Sleep Difficulties | 22 | 16 | 18 |
| Concern for a Troubled Friend or Family Member | 18 | 13 | 15 |
| Relationship Difficulties | 15 | 13 | 14 |
| Depression/Anxiety Disorder/Seasonal Affective Disorder | 17 | 8 | 11 |
| Alcohol Use | 7 | 14 | 10 |
| Death of a Friend or Family Member | 11 | 6 | 8 |
| Internet Use/Computer Games | 3 | 13 | 8 |
| Sinus Infection/Ear Infection/Bronchitis/Strep Throat | 11 | 5 | 7 |

(Data taken from OSU results on the 2002 National College Health Assessment)

For more information on the NCHA results contact: Dr. Pat Ketcham, Associate Director, OSU Student Health Services.

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Personal Challenges for Students During the First Year

Nationally, first year students reported on the 2002 Your First College Year Survey the following challenges they faced during their first year of college.

- 38% frequently felt overwhelmed by all they had to do
- 11% frequently felt depressed
- 42% frequently or occasionally felt lonely or homesick
- 37% frequently or occasionally worried about meeting new people
- 31% frequently or occasionally felt intimidated by professors
- 30% frequently or occasionally felt isolated from campus life

Did You Know? (continued from page 1)

- In the last 12 months 37.5% of OSU students reported feeling so depressed that it was difficult to function (2002 NCHA).
- 23% of OSU first year students and 30% of OSU senior students reported that they often or very often came to class without completing assignments.
- 43% of OSU first year students and 49% of OSU senior students reported that they often or very often had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity from their own.
- 66% of the first year students and 61% of senior students reported that the academic advising they received was good or excellent (2002 NSSE).
- 81% of entering OSU first time, first year students anticipated studying several times a week, 15% a few times a week, 3% once a week, and < 1% less than once a week.
- 93% of entering OSU first time, first year students reported feeling prepared to cope with the change that college will bring (2002 CIRP).

What Do Students Say About Study Abroad?

Opportunities for learning abound. Many languages and all major subjects available, hands-on language partnerships, various difficulty levels, enough entry level courses and topics to fill a busy schedule, but still more advanced topics, multiple areas to engage the self-propelled student especially (personal communication to Jack VandeWater, January 28, 2003, from a student studying abroad)."

Each year OSU helps students travel abroad to study and learn about life and academia in other countries.

During the 2001-2002 year, 247 OSU students were involved in various programs through departments, the OSU Study Abroad program, OUS, and through international internships. As the following chart illustrated, OSU students are literally studying all across the globe.

2001-2002 Students Participating in Study Abroad Programs from OSU

| Locations | Number of Students |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Australia/New Zealand | 19 |
| Asia | 13 |
| Europe | 196 |
| North America | 2 |
| South America | 17 |

In Spring Term, 2002, over 32% of OSU first year students reported wanting to participate in a study abroad program before they graduated (2002 NSSE report). Of entering OSU first year students in Fall, 2002, 42% indicated that it was very important or essential to them that they improve their understanding of other countries and cul-

tures, and over 20% thought there was a very good chance that they would participate in a study abroad program (2002 CIRP report). Clearly there is interest in these programs from both our entering first year students and current first year students. Approximately 16% of OSU seniors reported that they would complete a study abroad experience prior to their graduation (2002 NSSE report).

The educational value of such experiences for students has been well-documented in the literature (e.g., the value of a global perspective on issues) (Douglas & Jones-Ridders, 2001). The stories of students who participated in these programs might not be as well documented however. The following was excerpted from a personal communication to Jack VandeWater by an OSU student studying in Germany. His story provided a snapshot of one student's experience with study abroad.

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"Everyday life Dorm life, not so different from U.S. a bit more private as all rooms are singles, and only between 6 and 10 "neighbors" sharing kitchen and bathroom facilities, most of the buildings have been newly remodeled, there is still connection to other students, especially international. . . . It's very clear that the program is well established and that the director and professors involved (in the international student courses) are very understanding, flexible, and have the students' best interests in mind. . . ."

"Money matters Even my own personal monthly funds are evenly and timely dispersed, assuring that I don't ever end up starving myself by wasting too much money at once on any trip or television or guitar. . . . The notion of increased financial aid for increased need should also be addressed. If the minor difference in costs between a year at OSU and a year in Tübingen cannot be covered by family, by simply reporting the additional need to the financial aid department, students are approved for more aid to meet the need. The program truly provides quite adequate financial stability. In addition to the 600 Euros that students receive for living expenses, generous stipends from the Baden-Württemberg government supplement this amount. The amount that students receive is based on their financial need (derived from U.S. financial aid reporting), however even the students who are not "in need" receive something. Between these two sources of income, students here have more than enough and actually live quite well. . . ."

"Academics The general lectures are all open to any interested student without penalty or cost for attendance, leaving the door wide open for expanding knowledge and listening comprehension skills. . . . The more in-depth seminars and proseminars are also open, giving a great opportunity for students to really challenge themselves with the increased amount of required feedback and participation. These seminars are different from those in Corvallis in that they require more initiative on the part of the student, more work outside of class to cover the relevant material. These courses often require students to not only complete a paper or presentation but much more of a "project" oriented assignment. . . ."

"This program is a great way to meet people from all over the world who are experiencing the same joys and frustrations of exchange student life. The fact that the course content is geared towards common difficulties with German language or common misconceptions of German society and so forth also really accelerates integration here. . . ."

"Travel within Tübingen and beyond The mass transit in Tübingen and the surrounding region is astounding. For about \$33 per *semester*, students can ride any of the city busses throughout Tübingen. More importantly students can also use the same pass to take trains to and from the other towns in the region, which opens up all kinds of sight-seeing and especially shopping (bigger stores, warehouse shopping, outlet centers, local secrets like monasteries and castles). It's essentially the equivalent of giving students free travel to and from Salem, Eugene, and Newport. . . . Stuttgart is less than an hour away (and only 4 dollars) by train and as the "hip-hop capital of Germany" has much to offer as far as entertainment and shopping, as well as museums and art galleries. A little bit farther and students can easily reach Freiburg (the sunniest city in Germany), Heidelberg, or Lake Constanze. Perhaps the most appealing fact about Baden-Württemberg's location is the proximity to France, Switzerland, and Austria (give or take 2 hours).

For more information about study abroad opportunities, contact the OSU Office of International Education, 541-737-3006.

For Further Reading

American College Health Association. National College Health Assessment Web Summary. Updated October 17, 2002. Available at:

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Astin, A. W. (1993). What matters in college? Four critical years revisited. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kuh, G. D. (2001). Assessing what really matters to student learning: Inside the national survey of student engagement. Change, 33(3), 10-17, 66.



Speaking Skills: Fundamental for College Graduates?

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 to keep students and student learning at our core.

The **Perspective** is published quarterly both in print and on the web.

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.

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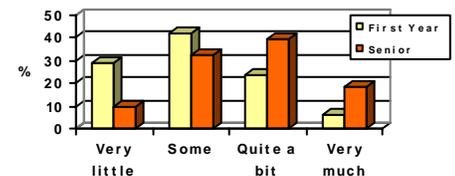
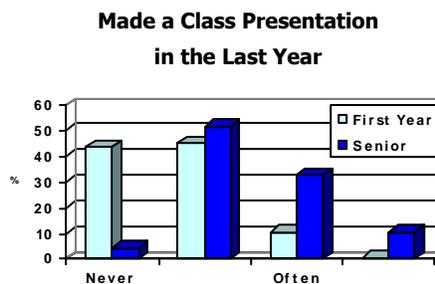
Most faculty and students would agree that excellent communication skills (oral and written) should be expected of a college graduate. In fact, the OSU 2007 Curricular Issues planning group listed this as one of their key indicators for the ideal 2007 OSU graduate (OSU CIPT report). Employers surveyed by the National Association of Colleges and Employers also believed these to be of significant importance for college undergraduates seeking employment (NACE Job Outlook, 2003). What did OSU first year and senior students tell us about their experiences learning to communicate orally?

OSU first year students and senior students reported that they made significantly fewer class presentations than comparators at other Doctoral Research-Extensive universities.

The following chart showed the responses of OSU first year and senior students to the question:

What was the extent to which your experiences at OSU contributed to your knowledge, skills and development in speaking clearly and effectively.

(Data taken from 2002 National Survey of Student Engagement)



Is it important for students to have more opportunities for oral presentations? If so how could OSU accomplish this?

Assessment Highlights from Student Affairs Departments

The **Perspective** will, from time to time, feature examples of various sorts of assessments being conducted in OSU Student Affairs Departments.

Media Use and Spending Habits

The use of an external marketing and research firm to conduct surveys of students was used in 2000 by OSU's Student Media Department to assess readership of the OSU Barometer as well as student spending habits. A random sample of OSU students were telephoned and asked to respond to specific questions. Here is what they told us:

- 90% of students polled read The Daily Barometer.
- 46.7% of students read all five daily issues of the Barometer — no preference to a particular day of the week.

erence to a particular day of the week.

- Students spent an average of \$20.84 per week to eat out.
- 83.3% of students own or operate an automobile.
- Students' average monthly disposable income is \$246.86.
- Students fly on non-business trips about 2.5 times per year.

For more information, contact Frank Ragulsky, Director of Student Media at 541-737-3374.

Opinions of Employers Who Interview Students at OSU Career Services

OSU Career Services routinely surveyed employers who interviewed OSU

students as to how well-prepared the student was for the interview process. 73 employers rated 969 student interviewers during 2001-02. Employers rated:

- 70% of students as excellent or above average in appearance for the interview.
- 62% of students as above average or excellently prepared for the interview.
- 64% of students as having above average or excellent communication skills.

For further information about employer feedback about students, contact Tom Munnerylyn, Director of Career Services, at 541-737-0521.