

BCSSE 2018-NSSE 2019 Comparison
(The Beginning College Survey of Student
Engagement administered along with The
National Survey of Student Engagement)

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Observations

Office of Institutional Research and Assessment
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The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is a survey of first year and senior students, focusing on what institutions and their students do to foster engagement on campus. The survey has been administered for twenty years and over 1500 institutions have participated over that time, including 531 in 2019. The Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) is given to incoming freshmen during the summer before they begin their academic career at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The survey asks about academic and co-curricular experiences in high school, as well as what they expect from their first year of college. When the BCSSE is administered to incoming first-year students the summer before the NSSE is conducted, NSSE provides participating institutions with a combined report that provides something akin to a pretest/posttest for first-year students for selected NSSE items.¹

This document focuses on some highlights from that report, while the full results are available from OIRA.

What Students Expect To Do vs. What Students Say They Do In A Typical Week

During the summer prior to their freshman year, incoming students said they know they will need to spend more time preparing for class than they did in high school. They were fairly accurate in their predictions, although a few respondents either overestimated the time they would need or did not spend enough time preparing for class.

| Hours spent preparing for class | BCSSE | | NSSE |
|---------------------------------|-------------|---------------------|------------|
| | High School | Expected First-Year | First Year |
| None | 1% | 0% | 0% |
| 1-10 | 66% | 15% | 23% |
| 11-20 | 24% | 54% | 45% |
| More than 20 | 8% | 31% | 32% |

Some overestimated how much time they will spend in extra-curricular activities

| Hours spent in co-curricular activities | BCSSE | | NSSE |
|---|-------------|---------------------|------------|
| | High School | Expected First-Year | First Year |
| None | 6% | 3% | 28% |
| 1-10 | 40% | 52% | 53% |
| 11-20 | 37% | 38% | 17% |
| More than 20 | 17% | 5% | 2% |

¹ This comparison consists of all respondents for both BCSSE and NSSE, not just students who responded to both. Approximately 25% of incoming students completed the BCSSE in the summer of 2018, 10% of first-year students completed the NSSE during the spring semester of 2019.

A few incoming first-year students reported that they relaxed and socialized a little bit more than they anticipated they would.

| Hours spent relaxing and socializing | BCSSE | | NSSE |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------|------------|
| | High School | Expected First-Year | First Year |
| None | 0% | 0% | 1% |
| 1-10 | 54% | 55% | 47% |
| 11-20 | 35% | 39% | 35% |
| More than 20 | 11% | 5% | 17% |

Many more expect to work for pay than actually do.

| Hours spent working for pay | BCSSE | | NSSE |
|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------------|------------|
| | High School | Expected First-Year | First Year |
| None | 33% | 27% | 61% |
| 1 or more | 67% | 73% | 39% |

Academic Expectations

Most incoming first-year students say they did not come to class unprepared in high school and do not expect to do so once they arrive at UT. Most also expect to prepare at least two drafts of a paper before turning it in. But there is a noticeable difference in their level of preparation once they are in the middle of their first year.

| Completing Assignments | BCSSE | | NSSE |
|------------------------|-------------|---------------------|------------|
| | High School | Expected First-Year | First Year |
| Never/Sometimes | 93% | 96% | 78% |
| Often/Very Often | 7% | 4% | 22% |

| 2 or more drafts of a paper | BCSSE | | NSSE |
|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------------|------------|
| | High School | Expected First-Year | First Year |
| Never/Sometimes | 56% | 31% | 63% |
| Often/Very Often | 44% | 69% | 37% |

When it comes to writing papers, students say that high school has prepared them for the writing load at UTK.

| Papers, reports, or other writing tasks | Up to 5 pages | | Between 6 and 10 pages | | 11 pages or more | |
|---|---------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| | High School (BCSSE) | First Year (NSSE) | High School (BCSSE) | First Year (NSSE) | High School (BCSSE) | First Year (NSSE) |
| None | 4% | 4% | 33% | 29% | 73% | 79% |
| 1-2 | 20% | 16% | 44% | 43% | 23% | 16% |
| 3-5 | 30% | 39% | 17% | 18% | 2% | 4% |
| More than 5 | 46% | 41% | 6% | 10% | 1% | 2% |

One statistic of concern is that incoming first-year students report that they were more likely to have included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions and assignments in *high school* as opposed to their first year at UTK. (BCSSE does not ask students about their expectations for this item.)

| | BCSSE | NSSE |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Include diverse perspectives | High School | First Year |
| Never/Sometimes | 40% | 53% |
| Often/Very Often | 60% | 47% |

Once students arrive at UTK, they tend to work more collaboratively with other students than they did in high school for both regular course assignments as well as for exams and projects.

| | BCSSE | NSSE |
|---|---------------------|------------|
| Prepare for exams by working with other students | Expected First-Year | First Year |
| Never/Sometimes | 15% | 42% |
| Often/Very Often | 85% | 58% |

| | BCSSE | NSSE |
|--|---------------------|------------|
| Work with other students on assignments | Expected First-Year | First Year |
| Never/Sometimes | 22% | 35% |
| Often/Very Often | 78% | 65% |

Interactions with Faculty

Before they start their academic career, incoming students have an expectation that they will interact with faculty much more than they actually do. Since First-Year students have only had a semester and a half to interact with faculty, Senior responses from the NSSE 2019 survey have been included as well to see if more time equals more interaction. It appears that while additional time allows more interaction, it does not meet the expectations of incoming students.

| | BCSSE | NSSE | |
|--|---------------------|------------|--------|
| Talk about career plans with a faculty member | Expected First-Year | First-Year | Senior |
| Never/Sometimes | 37% | 64% | 56% |
| Often/Very Often | 63% | 36% | 43% |

| | BCSSE | NSSE | |
|---|---------------------|------------|--------|
| Work with faculty member on activities other than coursework | Expected First-Year | First-Year | Senior |
| Never/Sometimes | 55% | 80% | 67% |
| Often/Very Often | 45% | 20% | 33% |

| Discuss academic performance with faculty member | BCSSE | NSSE | |
|--|---------------------|------------|--------|
| | Expected First-Year | First-Year | Senior |
| Never/Sometimes | 39% | 73% | 64% |
| Often/Very Often | 61% | 27% | 36% |

| Discuss course topics with faculty member outside of class | BCSSE | NSSE | |
|--|---------------------|------------|--------|
| | Expected First-Year | First-Year | Senior |
| Never/Sometimes | 48% | 78% | 67% |
| Often/Very Often | 52% | 22% | 33% |

Interactions with Others

As with faculty, incoming students have high expectations that they will interact with people of different ethnicities, economic backgrounds, religious beliefs and political views. But when asked about their freshman experience, they report those discussions are not happening as much as they anticipated. And as with faculty, Senior responses from NSSE 2019 have been included as well. It is interesting to note that First-Year students report more incidences of discussion with groups different than their own compared to Seniors in the same NSSE administration, which may be a positive sign.

| Had discussions with people of a race or ethnicity other than your own | BCSSE | NSSE | |
|--|---------------------|------------|--------|
| | Expected First-Year | First-Year | Senior |
| Never/Sometimes | 11% | 27% | 22% |
| Often/Very Often | 89% | 73% | 78% |

| Had discussions with people of an economic background other than your own | BCSSE | NSSE | |
|---|---------------------|------------|--------|
| | Expected First-Year | First-Year | Senior |
| Never/Sometimes | 10% | 21% | 19% |
| Often/Very Often | 90% | 79% | 81% |

| Had discussions with people with religious beliefs other than your own | BCSSE | NSSE | |
|--|---------------------|------------|--------|
| | Expected First-Year | First-Year | Senior |
| Never/Sometimes | 15% | 27% | 23% |
| Often/Very Often | 85% | 73% | 77% |

| Had discussions with people with political views other than your own | BCSSE | NSSE | |
|--|---------------------|------------|--------|
| | Expected First-Year | First-Year | Senior |
| Never/Sometimes | 13% | 23% | 21% |
| Often/Very Often | 87% | 77% | 79% |

It should be noted that this study is by no means diagnostic of issues on campus for First-Year students, it merely highlights areas where more study may be warranted.