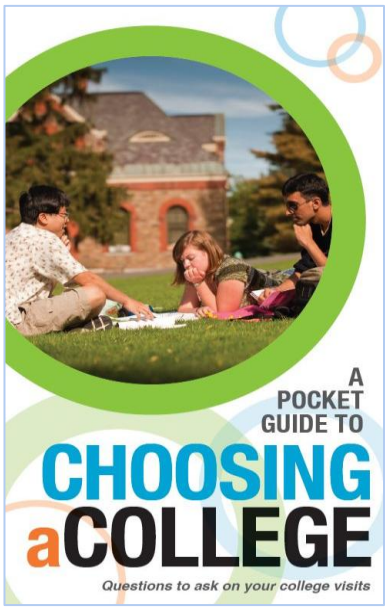
A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College: NSSE 2025 Answers from Students

Using the Report



To focus public awareness on what constitutes quality in the college experience, NSSE developed *A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College.* This helpful brochure gives prospective students and their families key questions to ask during their campus visits or virtual tours, allowing them to actively consider student engagement during the college choice process.

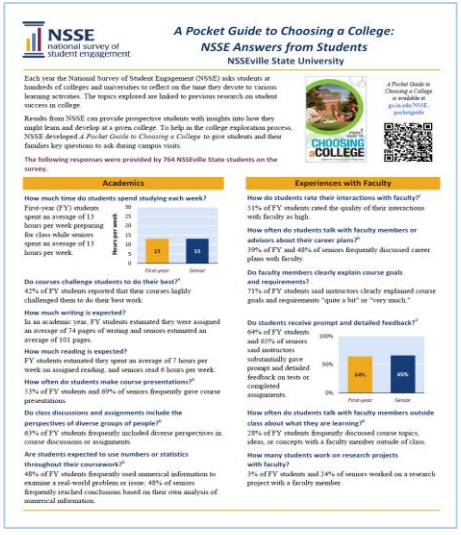
Student responses to selected questions from the NSSE Pocket Guide are presented in a report entitled *A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College: NSSE Answers from Students* , part of your NSSE Institutional Report.

Who can use this report?

A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College: NSSE Answers from Students is a summary of student engagement on your campus. It may be of special interest to admissions professionals, particularly those distributing the NSSE Pocket Guide to visiting students. The results can also be used as a resource for orientation staff, advisors, faculty, and others who work regularly with first-year students.

How can an institution customize and distribute results?

A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College: NSSE Answers from Students is designed for sharing NSSE results. The report is delivered in both PDF and Excel formats so that institutions can easily insert logos, campus photos, or additional information. Institutions are encouraged to post copies of the report and other results from their NSSE Institutional Report on their websites.


NSSE national survey of student engagement

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

NSSEville State University

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.

The following responses were provided by 764 NSSEville State students on the survey.

Academics

How much time do students spend studying each week?

First-year (FY) students spent an average of 13 hours per week preparing for class while seniors spent an average of 13 hours per week.

Hours per week

First-year Senior

Do courses challenge students to do their best?

42% 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 74 pages of writing and seniors estimated an average of 101 pages.

How much reading is expected?

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

How often do students make course presentations?

53% of FY students and 69% of seniors frequently gave course presentations.

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

63% of FY students frequently included diverse perspectives in course discussions or assignments.

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

48% of FY students frequently used numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue. 48% of seniors frequently reached conclusions based on their own analysis of numerical information.

Experiences with Faculty

How do students rate their interactions with faculty?

51% 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?

39% of FY and 48% of seniors frequently discussed career plans with faculty.

Do faculty members clearly explain course goals and requirements?

71% of FY students said instructors clearly explained course goals and requirements "quite a bit" or "very much."

Do students receive prompt and detailed feedback?

64% of FY students and 65% of seniors said instructors substantially gave prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments.

100% 50% 0%

64% 65%

First-year Senior

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

28% 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?

3% of FY students and 24% of seniors worked on a research project with a faculty member.

How can I get a copy of this report for my institution?

Each participating institution designates a staff member to serve as the primary liaison for NSSE correspondence and reports. Known as the Campus Project Manager (CPM), the primary liaison may assist you in obtaining a copy. Contact NSSE for help identifying your CPM.

How can I get copies of the NSSE pocket guide?

College and university admissions officers may request up to 300 free NSSE Pocket Guides per year. Additional quantities are available for a small fee. A Spanish version of the NSSE Pocket Guide, *Una Guía de Bolsillo Para Escoger una Universidad: Preguntas a Hacer en Tus Visitas Universitarias,* is also available.

The QR code at left can be used to access a mobile version of the NSSE Pocket Guide. It is available on the NSSE website for institutions to include in their recruitment, college fair, and campus tour materials.

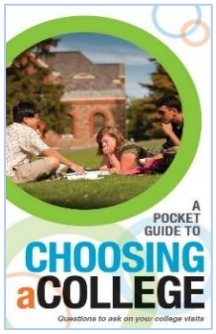
go.iu.edu/NSSE-pocketguide

A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College: NSSE 2025 Answers from Students

Northern Michigan University

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 or virtual tours.



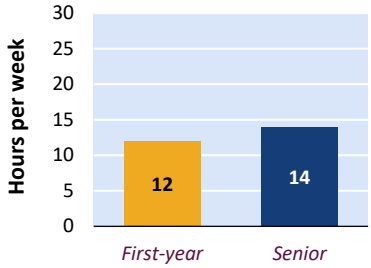
A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College is available at go.iu.edu/NSSE-pocketguide

The following responses were provided by 837 NMU students on the 2025 survey.

Academics

How much time do students spend studying each week?

First-year (FY) students spent an average of 12 hours per week preparing for class while seniors spent an average of 14 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 55 pages of writing and seniors estimated an average of 66 pages.

How much reading is expected?

FY students estimated they spent an average of 4 hours per week on assigned reading, and seniors read 6 hours per week.

How often do students make course presentations?[b]

38% of FY students and 64% of seniors frequently gave course presentations.

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

63% of FY students frequently included diverse perspectives in course discussions or assignments.

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

44% of FY students frequently used numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue; 60% 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]

59% 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]

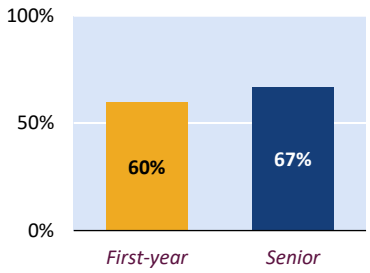
42% of FY and 52% of seniors frequently discussed career plans with faculty.

Do faculty members clearly explain course goals and requirements?

81% 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]

60% of FY students and 67% 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]

23% of FY students frequently discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class.

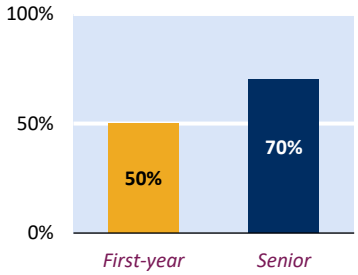
How many students work on research projects with faculty?

4% of FY students and 26% of seniors worked on a research project with a faculty member.

Learning with Peers

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

50% of FY students and 70% of seniorsfrequently worked with their peers on course projects and assignments.



Do students help each other learn?[b]

60% of seniors frequently explained course material to one or more students.

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

37% 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, 75% frequently had discussions with people from different economic backgrounds, and 59% frequently had discussions with people from different races or ethnicities.

Campus Environment

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

76% of FY students said the institution substantially emphasized the use of learning support services.

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

62% of FY students and 60% 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 88% 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, 5% of students participated in a learning community. By spring of their senior year, 44% of students had done (or were doing) a culminating senior experience.

How many students study in other countries?

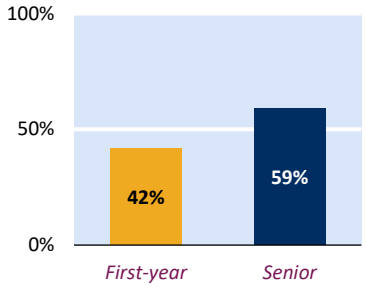
By their senior year, 7% of students had studied abroad.

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

By spring of their senior year, 53% 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]

42% of FY students and 59% 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

Center for Postsecondary Research
Indiana University School of Education