Analysis of 2004 National Survey of Student Engagement for UW-Madison Seniors by Gender, Minority Status, and Transfer Status

Overview:

This analysis examines the responses of undergraduate seniors enrolled at UW-Madison in spring semester 2004 who completed the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Responses by minority and non-minority, male and female, and transfer and freshmen-start students are compared in the text and tables presented below. Additional analyses of NSSE for UW freshmen and seniors are located on the Academic Planning and Analysis website (http://wiscinfo.doit.wisc.edu/obpa/NSSE/).

NSSE is a national survey of college freshmen and seniors designed to assess student involvement in practices associated with high levels of learning. A random sampling methodology was employed to select 1500 freshmen and 3700 seniors at UW-Madison to receive the NSSE survey in spring 2004. In order to have enough sample cases to make reliable statistical estimates, some categories of senior students – those from smaller UW-Madison schools and colleges and students of color – were sampled at a higher rate. Responses are weighted in the analysis to account for over-sampling and differential response rates. The UW-Madison response rate was 33 percent: 441 first-year students and 1,160 seniors answered the survey. When comparing groups (such as minority and non-minority students), small differences in responses could be due to random error rather than a real difference in opinion or behavior. Generally, for this survey differences of 5 percent or less are not meaningful. In the attached tables (A.1 through A.12), statistically significant differences are indicated by shaded areas.

This analysis includes only seniors. Of the 1160 seniors who responded to the NSSE survey, 204 were minority students (including Asian, American Indian, Hispanic, and Black). Non-minority students include white students, foreign students, and students who chose not to report their race/ethnicity. Minority students comprise nine percent of the senior class at UW Madison, after adjusting for over-sampling and response rates. Female students accounted for 695 of the respondents, or 55% of the weighted sample. Students who transferred to UW Madison make up 251 of the survey responses and about one-fourth of all seniors in the weighted sample.

Summary of Results

Student Demographics (Table A.1)

NSSE collected information on age, sex, race/ethnicity, full-time status, transfer status, parental education, and other demographic variables. For most of these measures, minority and non-minority students were not significantly different from each other. However, minority students were more likely to come from a family where neither parent had attended college – 11% of

non-minority students and 18% of minority students report being first-generation college students.

Similarly, there were few differences between male and female students. Male students were more likely to be transfer students – 30 percent of male students and 22 percent of female students reported having started their college education elsewhere. Male students were also older than female students. About 89 percent of senior women and 83 percent of men were younger than 24 years of age.

Demographic differences were more evident between transfer students and those who started as freshmen. Transfer students were older, more likely to be male, less likely to be full-time, and less likely to live close to campus. In addition, transfer students were more likely to be the first-generation college students. Twenty-three percent of transfer students reported that neither parent had attended college. In contrast, only seven percent of students who started at UW as freshmen indicated that neither parent had attended college. Fifty percent of freshmen-start students reported that both parents had graduated from a four-year college. However, only 31 percent of transfer students stated that both parents held at least a bachelor's degree.

Student Satisfaction (Table A.2)

Minority and non-minority students were equally satisfied with their experience at UW. About 90% of students agreed that their entire educational experience at UW-Madison was good or excellent. Female students were more likely to report that their experience highly – 92 percent of women and 87 percent of men rated their experience excellent or good. Transfer students were less likely to agree "If you could start over again, would you go to the *same institution* you are now attending?" This question may be ambiguous for transfer students, however.

Class-Related Activities (Table A.3)

Students were asked about class-related activities such as making a presentation, working with other students on a class project inside or outside of class, having discussions with faculty members outside of class, and including diverse perspectives in discussions or assignments. In most cases, minority and non-minority students were similar. However, minority students were more likely to report that they often or very often came to class unprepared (41 percent vs. 33 percent of non-minority students). Non-minority students reported less tutoring of other students – 18 percent of non-minority and 27 percent of minority seniors reported often or very often tutoring fellow students. Minority students were more likely to often work with other students on projects during class; non-minority students were more likely to often discuss ideas from class with others outside of class. Serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity were more common for minority students than for non-minority students. About three-fourths of minority students and half of non-minority students reported often or very often having these conversations. Minority students were also more likely to often or very often have serious conversations with students who held very different religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values. Sixty-one percent of non-minority and 71 percent of minority seniors often had these conversations.

Male and female students reported differences in several areas of class-related activities. Female students were more likely to make a class presentation, participate in a community-based project as part of a course, and include diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or assignments. Male seniors were more likely to discuss ideas from class with faculty outside of class (20 percent of male students vs. 13 percent of female students). Female students were more likely to discuss ideas from class with others outside of class (68 percent of females and 60 percent of males). Male students were somewhat more likely to often or very often come to class without completing readings or assignments.

Transfer students differed from freshmen-starts on only one of the class-related measures. Students who started as freshmen were more likely (59 percent) to often work with students outside of class to prepare class assignments. Only 49 percent of transfer students reported they often worked with classmates outside of class on homework.

Coursework Emphasis (Table A.4)

The survey included questions about how much the courses emphasized synthesizing ideas; making judgments about information, arguments, or methods; applying theories or concepts to practical problems or new situations; memorizing facts; and analyzing elements of a theory or examining a case in depth. Most seniors reported their coursework emphasized these approaches quite a bit or very much. No significant differences were reported in responses between minority and non-minority students or between transfer students and freshmen-starts. Female students were somewhat more likely than males to report that their coursework emphasized making judgments about information, arguments, or methods, e.g., examining how others gather or interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions.

Homework, Reading and Writing Assignments (Tables A.5 and A.6)

NSSE also asked questions about reading and writing assignments and homework problem sets. Required assignments are likely to differ by a student's choice of major. Female students are less likely than male students to report working on problem sets, more likely to write papers of fewer than five pages, and have more book-length reading assignments. Transfer students were more likely to report completing three or more problem sets per week.

Enriching Educational Experiences (Table A.7)

Educational experiences such as internships, study abroad, and senior thesis projects are important enriching experiences available to university students. At UW-Madison, women students are more likely to take part in practicum or internships (60 percent of women and 47 percent of men); engage in community service or volunteer work (73 percent of women and 48 percent of men); study a foreign language (70 percent of women and 58 percent of men); and study abroad (28 percent of women and 12 percent of men). In contrast, male students are

more likely to report a culminating senior experience such as capstone course or senior thesis or project (32 percent of men and 25 percent of women).

Minority students are more likely than non-minority students to report taking independent study courses or a self-designed major. Although minority and non-minority students are about equally likely to have completed a practicum, field experience, or internship (about half of all seniors), minority students are more likely to plan to complete a practicum or internship before graduation (16 percent of non-minority students and 27 percent of minorities). Study abroad is less common among minority students – 14 percent of minority students and 21 percent of non-minority students reported studying abroad. However, more minority students planned to study abroad (9 percent of minority seniors and 5 percent of non-minority seniors). Minority students were more likely to participate in a "learning community" where groups of students take two or more classes together (such as Freshmen Interest Groups). In addition, minority students were more likely to be involved in community service or volunteer work.

Compared to students who started as freshmen, transfer students were less likely to study abroad, to perform community service, to study a foreign language, or to participate in a learning community. Two-thirds of freshmen-starts compared to 47 percent of transfer students engaged in volunteer work during college. Fewer transfer students had completed a practicum or internship, although transfer students were more likely to report that they planned to do so.

Supportive Campus Environment (Table A.8)

Female students were more likely to rate their relationships with other students more highly than male students. Students who started as freshmen were also more likely to rate their relationships with other students more highly. There were no significant differences between minority and non-minority students in their rating of relationships.

Student Time Use (Tables A.9 and A.10)

About 62 percent of all seniors reported spending 11 or more hours a week studying and preparing for class. Nearly 80 percent of seniors reported working for pay. Transfer students were less likely to work on campus and more likely to work off campus. Minority students were more likely to work on campus (54 percent v. 46 percent of non-minority students). More female students work off campus (51 percent v. 34 percent of male seniors) and they are more likely to work any job (71 percent of males and 85 percent of females reported holding a job).

Transfer students are less likely to participate in student organizations or other co-curricular activities (53 percent of transfers and 67 percent of freshmen-starts reported such activities). Over 20 percent of minority students and transfer students report that they spend time taking care of dependents, compared to 12 percent of all seniors. Transfers are also more likely to spend more than five hours a week commuting to campus.

Male students spend more time socializing, on average, than female students do. Fifty-seven percent of male seniors and 48 percent of female seniors reported spending 11 or more hours

per week relaxing and socializing. Students who started as freshmen are also more likely to spend time socializing. Minority students and transfer students are less likely to often or very often exercise or participate in fitness activities.

Areas of Institutional Emphasis (Table A.11)

Students were asked whether the university placed much emphasis on areas such as spending significant time on academics, providing the support you need to succeed academically, providing support for non-academic needs, and encouraging contact among students of different backgrounds. About a third of all students indicated that UW places quite a bit or very much emphasis on encouraging contact among students from different social, economic, and racial or ethnic backgrounds. Eighty-three percent of students report there is a strong focus on spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work. Minority students are somewhat more likely to state that the university emphasizes helping with non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) – 17 percent of minority students and 12 percent of non-minority students report quite a bit of emphasis. Transfer students are less likely to believe that the university places a lot of emphasis on providing the support needed to thrive socially.

Educational and Personal Growth (Table A.12)

A majority of UW-Madison seniors report that their experience here has contributed a great deal to their educational and personal growth, especially in the areas of thinking critically and analytically, acquiring a broad general education and learning effectively on your own. However, transfer students were somewhat less likely to report that their experience at UW contributed quite a bit to acquiring a broad general education (87 percent of freshmen-starts compared with 81 percent of transfer students). In addition, students who started as freshmen reported more growth in the areas of developing a personal code of ethics, using computers, working effectively with others, and understanding themselves. Transfer students were also less likely to report their education contributed to knowledge and skills in solving complex, real-world problems (61 percent of freshmen-starts compared with 47 percent of transfers).

Minority students reported more gains in writing clearly and effectively (80 percent of minority students compared with 74 percent of non-minority students stated that their experience at UW contributed to knowledge and skills in this area). In addition, minority students were more likely to report their education contributed more to “understanding yourself”. Female students reported their education contributed quite a bit or very much to their knowledge, skills and personal development in contributing to the welfare of their community. Male students were more likely to report growth in analyzing quantitative problems (77 percent of male seniors and 60 percent of females reported their education contributed quite a bit or very much to these skills).

National Survey of Student Engagement 2004 Results for UW-Madison Seniors by Gender, Minority Status, and Transfer Status

Table A.1 Demographics of Respondents

Percent of Students:	All Seniors	Male	Female	Non-minority	Minority	Started at UW	Transfer Student
Maximum number of respondents	*1160*	*465*	*695*	*956*	*204*	*843*	*251*
Age 23 or younger	86	83	89	87	81	94	63
Female	52	n/a	n/a	53	50	56	45
White	85	83	86	n/a	n/a	85	84
International student or foreign national	7	8	5	6	8	6	8
Transfer student	26	30	22	26	22	n/a	n/a
Also attended vocational-technical school	7	8	7	7	9	3	20
Also attended community or junior college	11	12	10	10	18	4	32
Also attended four-year college	23	25	21	23	18	5	74
Enrolled full-time	88	88	88	88	89	90	83
Member of a social fraternity or sorority	7	8	6	7	8	7	5
Student-athlete on a team sponsored by UW	3	3	2	3	3	3	2
Live in a dormitory or campus housing	4	2	5	3	5	4	2
Live in a fraternity or sorority house	2	2	1	2	1	2	1
Live within walking distance (not resid. hall, frat, sorority)	76	77	74	76	70	81	61
Mother did not attend college	21	18	23	21	23	18	31
Neither mother nor father attended college	11	13	10	11	18	7	23
Both mother and father graduated from 4-year college	45	48	43	46	41	50	31

Table A.2 Student Satisfaction

Percent of Students agreeing:	All Seniors	Male	Female	Non-minority	Minority	Started at UW	Transfer Student
Entire educational experience at this institution is good or excellent	90	87	92	90	85	91	86
Probably or definitely would attend this institution if you could start over again	88	87	90	89	84	91	81
Quality of academic advising you have received at your institution is good or excellent	58	55	60	57	62	57	60
Academic quality of this university in general is good or excellent	95	93	96	95	93	96	92
Academic quality of your major program is good or excellent	88	88	89	88	91	90	85

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Table A.3 Class-Related Activities

In current year, percent of students who often or very often:	All Seniors	Male	Female	Non-minority	Minority	Started at UW	Transfer Student
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	60	57	63	60	59	60	60
Made a class presentation	36	31	40	35	39	37	33
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	39	41	37	39	36	39	41
Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	81	78	84	81	80	82	79
Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or assignments	54	45	62	54	51	54	55
Come to class without completing readings or assignments	34	38	31	33	41	34	33
Worked with other students on projects during class	32	30	33	31	38	33	28
Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	56	55	56	56	56	59	49
Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions	65	64	66	66	64	65	67
Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)	19	21	17	18	27	20	17
Participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course	15	10	19	15	17	15	14
Used an electronic medium (listserv, chat group, Internet, instant messaging, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment	53	52	53	53	51	52	53
Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor	83	80	86	84	81	85	79
Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	49	48	49	48	50	49	48
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	32	29	34	31	34	33	28
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	16	20	13	16	21	15	18
Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance (written or oral)	58	55	61	58	54	59	54
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations	44	41	46	44	44	43	46
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)	14	12	16	14	18	15	12
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers)	64	60	68	65	57	65	63
Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own	51	53	50	49	75	50	52
Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	62	67	58	61	71	62	63

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Table A.4 Coursework Emphasis

Percent who reported item was emphasized "quite a bit" or "very much" in current courses:	All Seniors	Male	Female	Non-minority	Minority	Started at UW	Transfer Student
Making judgments about information, arguments, or methods, e.g., examining how others gathered/ interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions	69	65	72	68	72	69	66
Memorizing facts, ideas, or methods from your courses and readings so you can repeat them in the same form	57	56	58	56	62	56	60
Analyzing basic elements of a theory, examining a particular case in depth & considering its components	86	87	86	87	83	88	83
Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships	72	70	75	72	74	72	71
Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	78	77	79	78	73	79	73
On a scale of 1 to 7, rate the extent to which exams during the current school year challenged you to do your best work.	81	79	84	81	82	80	85

Note: "Exams challenged you to do your best" is defined here as a score of 5 or more on a scale of 1 to 7, where 7 is greatest challenge.

Table A.5 Reading and Writing

During the current year, percent of students:	All Seniors	Male	Female	Non-minority	Minority	Started at UW	Transfer Student
Five or more assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings	81	76	86	81	85	81	83
Five or more books read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment	26	28	24	26	24	26	27
Wrote any papers or reports of 20 pages or more	49	51	47	49	49	49	47
Wrote 5 or more papers between 5 and 19 pages	49	47	52	49	54	49	49
Wrote 5 or more papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages	62	58	66	63	56	61	64

Table A.6 Homework Problem Sets Completed per Week

Percent of students completing problem sets:	All Seniors	Male	Female	Non-minority	Minority	Started at UW	Transfer Student
Problem sets taking more than 1 hour to complete:							
None	31	24	37	31	26	31	30
1-2 per week	33	32	35	33	32	36	26
3 or more per week	36	45	29	36	42	33	44
Problem sets taking less than 1 hour to complete:							
None	45	40	49	45	40	44	47
1-2 per week	32	34	31	32	34	36	24
3 or more per week	23	26	21	23	26	21	29

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Table A.7 Enriching Educational Experiences

Percent of students:	All Seniors	Male	Female	Non-minority	Minority	Started at UW	Transfer Student
Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment							
Planned to do	17	17	18	16	27	15	24
Done	54	47	60	54	50	57	43
Community service or volunteer work							
Planned to do	11	11	11	11	14	10	13
Done	61	48	73	61	68	66	47
Participate in learning community or other formal program where groups of students take 2 or more classes together							
Planned to do	2	1	3	2	5	2	3
Done	17	15	19	16	25	18	12
Work on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements							
Planned to do	10	10	10	10	9	10	10
Done	25	26	25	25	32	26	22
Foreign language coursework							
Planned to do	4	4	3	3	6	3	6
Done	65	58	70	64	66	67	57
Study abroad							
Planned to do	5	6	4	5	9	5	5
Done	21	12	28	21	14	23	14
Independent study or self-designed major							
Planned to do	8	9	8	8	9	7	12
Done	24	23	25	23	30	24	23
Culminating senior experience (comprehensive exam, capstone course, thesis, project, etc.)							
Planned to do	19	19	19	19	18	18	29
Done	28	32	25	28	25	21	24

Table A.8 Supportive Campus Environment

Percent of students rating relationships as high quality:	All Seniors	Male	Female	Non-minority	Minority	Started at UW	Transfer Student
Other Students	82	79	85	82	78	86	70
Faculty Members	78	77	79	78	76	79	76
Administrative Personnel and Offices	58	56	58	57	63	58	59

Note: "High quality" is defined here as a score of 5 or more on a scale of 1 to 7, where 7 is highest quality.

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Table A.9 Student Time Use

Percent of students spending time:	All Seniors	Male	Female	Non-minority	Minority	Started at UW	Transfer Student
Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities) (11or more hrs per week)	62	62	63	63	61	62	64
Working for pay on campus	47	46	47	46	54	50	35
Working for pay off campus	43	34	51	43	42	41	51
Employed either on or off campus	79	71	85	79	81	80	78
Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.)	64	66	62	63	69	67	53
Relaxing and socializing (watching TV, partying, exercising, etc.) 11 or more hours per week	52	57	48	52	49	56	41
Providing care for dependents living with you	12	12	12	11	21	8	24
Commuting to class (more than 5 hours per week)	25	25	26	25	28	23	33

Table A.10 Arts, Wellness, and Spirituality

In current year, percent of Students who often or very often:	All Seniors	Male	Female	Non-minority	Minority	Started at UW	Transfer Student
Attended art exhibit, gallery, play, dance, or other performance	19	18	19	18	23	20	15
Exercised or participated in physical fitness activities	61	63	59	62	51	64	50
Participated in activities to enhance your spirituality (worship, meditation, prayer, etc.)	19	16	21	19	15	20	15

Table A.11 Areas of Institutional Emphasis

Percent of students who report quite a bit or very much:	All Seniors	Male	Female	Non-minority	Minority	Started at UW	Transfer Student
Spending significant time studying and on academic work	83	83	83	83	84	83	84
Providing support you need to help you succeed academically	61	63	59	61	62	62	59
Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	33	36	30	32	36	34	30
Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	12	13	12	12	17	13	11
Providing the support you need to thrive socially	31	33	30	31	33	34	25
Attending campus events and activities (special speakers, cultural performances, athletic events, etc.)	62	63	61	62	59	63	60
Using computers in academic work	93	92	95	94	91	94	91

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Table A.12 Educational and Personal Growth

Percent of students whose education has contributed quite a bit or very much to:	All Seniors	Male	Female	Non-minority	Minority	Started at UW	Transfer Student
Acquiring a broad general education	87	84	89	87	87	89	81
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	65	66	65	66	62	66	62
Writing clearly and effectively	75	71	78	74	80	76	71
Speaking clearly and effectively	63	63	62	62	65	64	58
Thinking critically and analytically	90	88	92	90	88	91	87
Analyzing quantitative problems	68	77	60	68	71	70	64
Using computing and information technology	76	78	74	76	73	78	68
Working effectively with others	74	72	76	74	72	77	65
Learning effectively on your own	81	80	81	80	82	81	79
Understanding yourself	67	64	69	66	75	70	58
Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	46	43	48	45	49	47	42
Solving complex real-world problems	58	58	57	58	54	61	47
Developing a personal code of values and ethics	50	48	51	49	51	53	39
Contributing to the welfare of your community	38	34	43	38	43	40	35
Developing a deepened sense of spirituality	13	14	13	13	20	13	14
Voting in local, state, or national elections	37	34	41	37	41	38	36

NOTES:

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is a national survey of college freshmen and seniors administered by Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. A detailed description of NSSE is available on-line at http://www.indiana.edu/~nsse.
This analysis includes 1160 seniors who were enrolled at UW-Madison in Fall 2003 and completed a web survey in spring 2004. Minority students and students from smaller schools and colleges were sampled at a higher rate to permit separate analyses of these groups. UW-Madison survey responses are weighted to reflect the distribution of senior students enrolled in fall 2003.
Shaded areas indicate that the difference between responses between the groups (e.g., between men and women or between minority and non-minority repsondents) is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level (two-tailed test).