



**NSSE 2004 Summary Report:**

**An Overview of the National Survey of Student Engagement 2004  
Results for UW-Madison**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **What is NSSE?**

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is a survey of college freshmen and seniors designed to assess student involvement in practices associated with high levels of learning. This initiative, launched with support of the Pew Charitable Trusts, was piloted in 1999 and conducted as a full survey in 2000 and subsequent years. In 2004, a total of 473 colleges and universities participated. NSSE is based at the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research under the direction of Professor George Kuh.

The survey is intended to be useful for institutional improvement and for public accountability. Because it is a national survey it provides comparison information about other institutions. Questions fall into three broad categories: 1) Institutional actions and requirements: specific items about curriculum such as research projects, writing, and reading; 2) Student behavior: time spent in/out of class doing various things such as participating in student organizations, meeting with faculty, holding a job; 3) Student reactions to college: students' perceptions of the quality of their own experiences.

A detailed description of NSSE is available on-line (<http://www.indiana.edu/~nsse>).

### **Why did UW-Madison participate in NSSE 2004?**

All UW system institutions participated in NSSE in 2001 and 2004 as a way to gather information and data for the annual accountability report, *Achieving Excellence: UW System and Institutional Accountability Reports* (see <http://www.uwsa.edu/opar/account/>).

UW-Madison was also interested because NSSE provides data for making comparisons with other institutions. UW-Madison participated in a consortium of other universities who are also members of the American Association of Universities (the AAUDE consortium). One benefit of the consortium was that 20 additional questions on topics not well covered by the core NSSE survey instrument, such as course availability, were covered in the supplemental AAUDE consortium questionnaire.

### **How was the survey administered?**

Administration of the survey followed protocols specified by NSSE. UW chose to use the web-based format of the survey. In fall 2003 UW-Madison sent NSSE a data file that contained contact information for all first year students and seniors. NSSE drew a random sample of 5,200 (1,500 first-year students and 3,700 seniors) and sent them information about participating in the survey via email from the UW-Madison Provost's office. The e-mail assigned students a unique ID and directed students to the survey instrument found on the NSSE web site. Some institutions offered incentives or extra appeals to boost response rates – UW-Madison did not.

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 the over-sampling.

A random sample is a practical, less-expensive method of gathering data on a population (in this case, university undergraduates). However, since only a portion of the population is surveyed, results from a random sample will not necessarily reflect the attitudes or activities of all students. Thus it is important to be aware of a margin of error around the responses. When comparing groups (such as seniors and first-year 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.

The UW-Madison response rate was 33 percent – 441 first-year students and 1,160 seniors answered the survey. In comparison, the average response rate for all institutions participating in NSSE was 42 percent.

### **How do the demographics of our NSSE respondents compare with the demographics of our students?**

As noted above, UW-Madison over-sampled senior students of color and those from smaller schools and colleges. Female students were somewhat more likely to respond to the survey than male students. Students of color were somewhat less to complete the survey than were white students. For our analysis, survey responses are weighted to match the gender and minority status of enrolled students. The responses of senior students were also weighted by school or college.

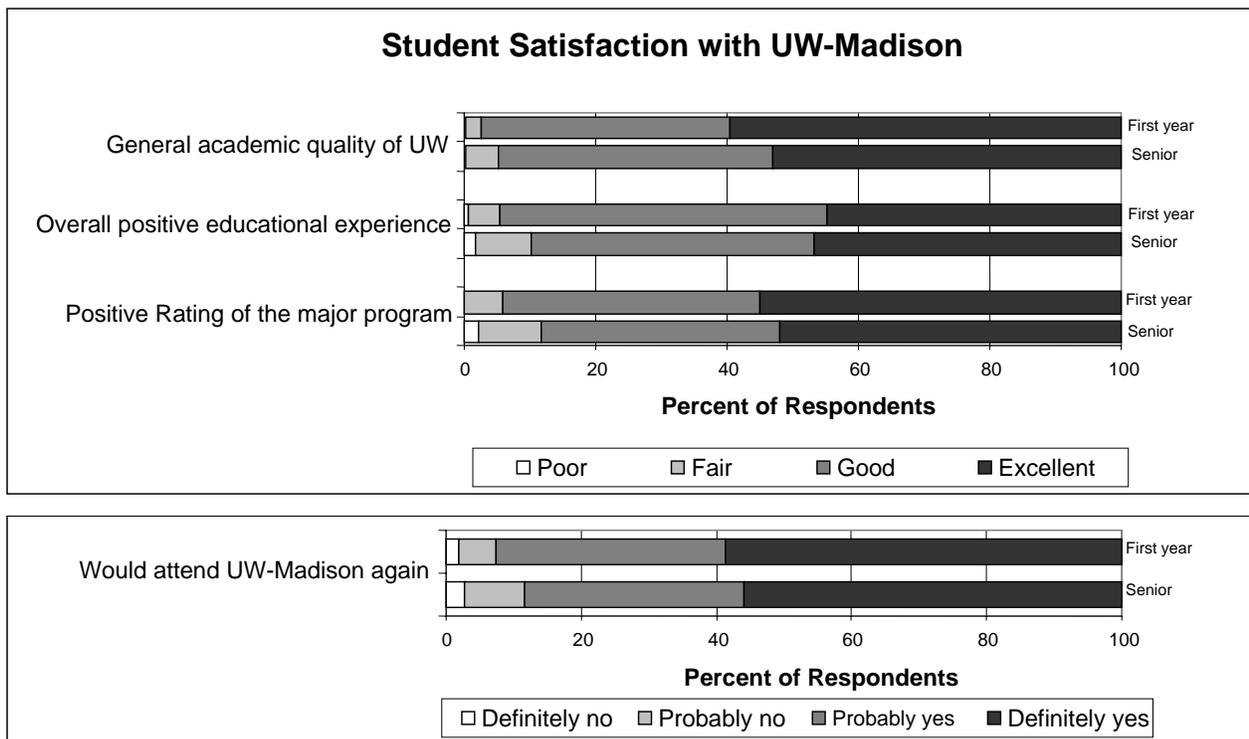
### **Comparison of UW-Madison Students and NSSE 2004 Respondents**

<b>Percent of Students:</b>	<b>UW-Madison Student Enrolled</b>		<b>Unweighted NSSE Respondents</b>		<b>Weighted NSSE Respondents</b>	
	<b>First Year</b>	<b>Seniors</b>	<b>First Year</b>	<b>Seniors</b>	<b>First Year</b>	<b>Seniors</b>
19 years old or younger	<b>98</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>0</b>
20-23 years old	<b>2</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>86</b>
Female	<b>54</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>52</b>
Student of Color	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>
International student	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
Began college at UW-Madison	<b>100</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>74</b>
Enrolled full-time	<b>99</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>88</b>

## OVERVIEW OF THE RESULTS

### Student Satisfaction

Overall, students are satisfied with their educational experience. Over 94 percent of first-year students and 90 percent of seniors rated their overall educational experience at UW-Madison as good or excellent. When asked whether they would choose the same institution if they could start over again, 93 percent of first-year students and 88 percent of seniors report that they probably or definitely would choose UW again.

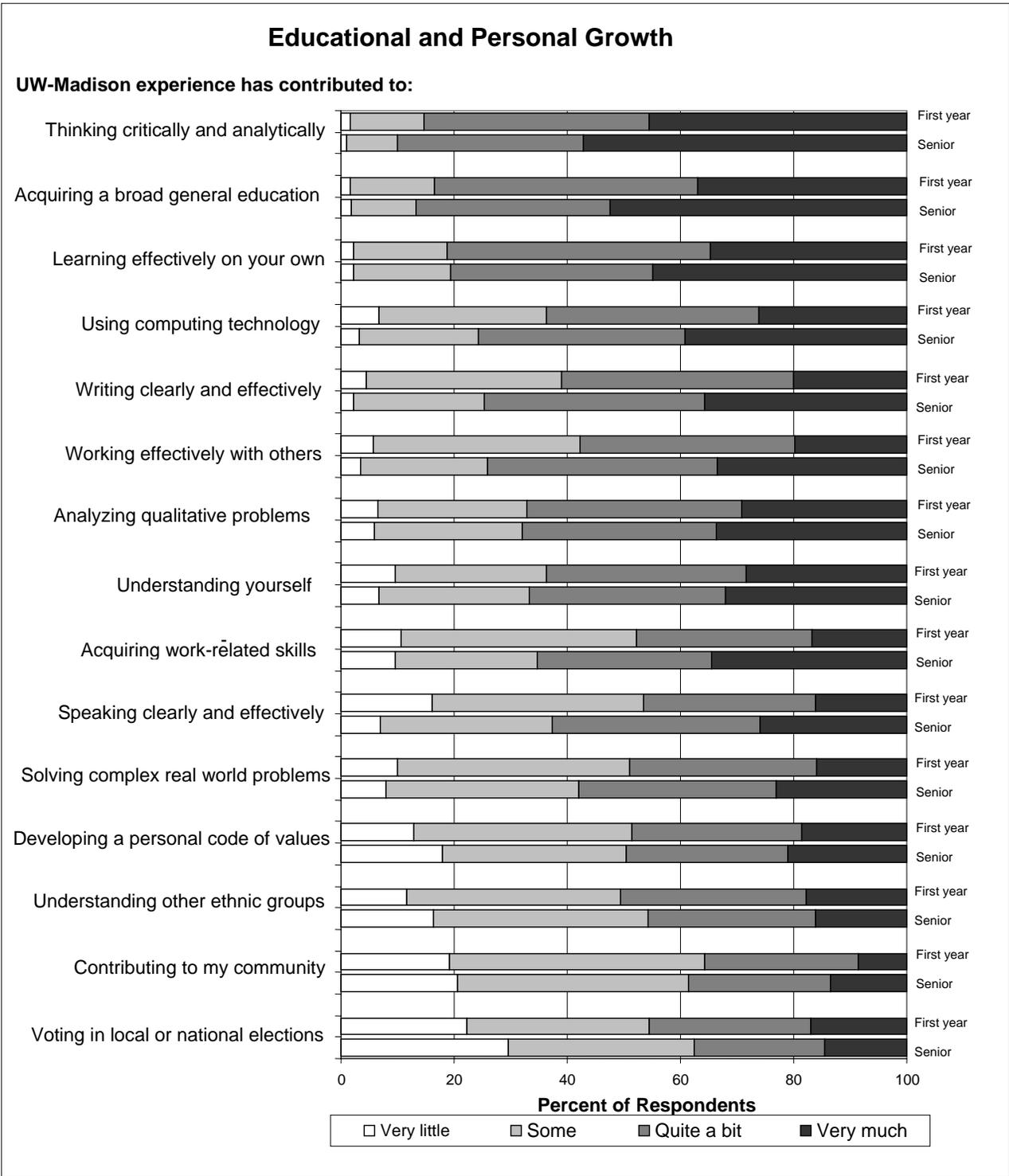


### Educational and Personal Growth

Students report that their experience at UW-Madison has contributed to their educational and personal growth. Over 80 percent of UW students state that their educational experience has added quite a bit or very much to their ability to learn effectively on their own and to think critically and analytically. About two-thirds of students indicated that skills used to analyze quantitative problems were increased by their studies at the university.

As expected, in many areas, seniors reported greater contributions to skills and knowledge from their educational experience than did first-year students. About three-fourths of seniors and 60 percent of first-years observed that their skills relating to writing clearly and effectively, using computing technology, and working effectively with others were influenced by their time at UW. Nearly 50 percent of freshmen and two-thirds of seniors asserted that their education contributed quite a bit or very much to their ability to speak clearly and effectively and acquire work-related

knowledge and skills. About half of seniors and first-years students report that UW has contributed quite a bit or very much to their understanding of other racial and ethnic backgrounds.

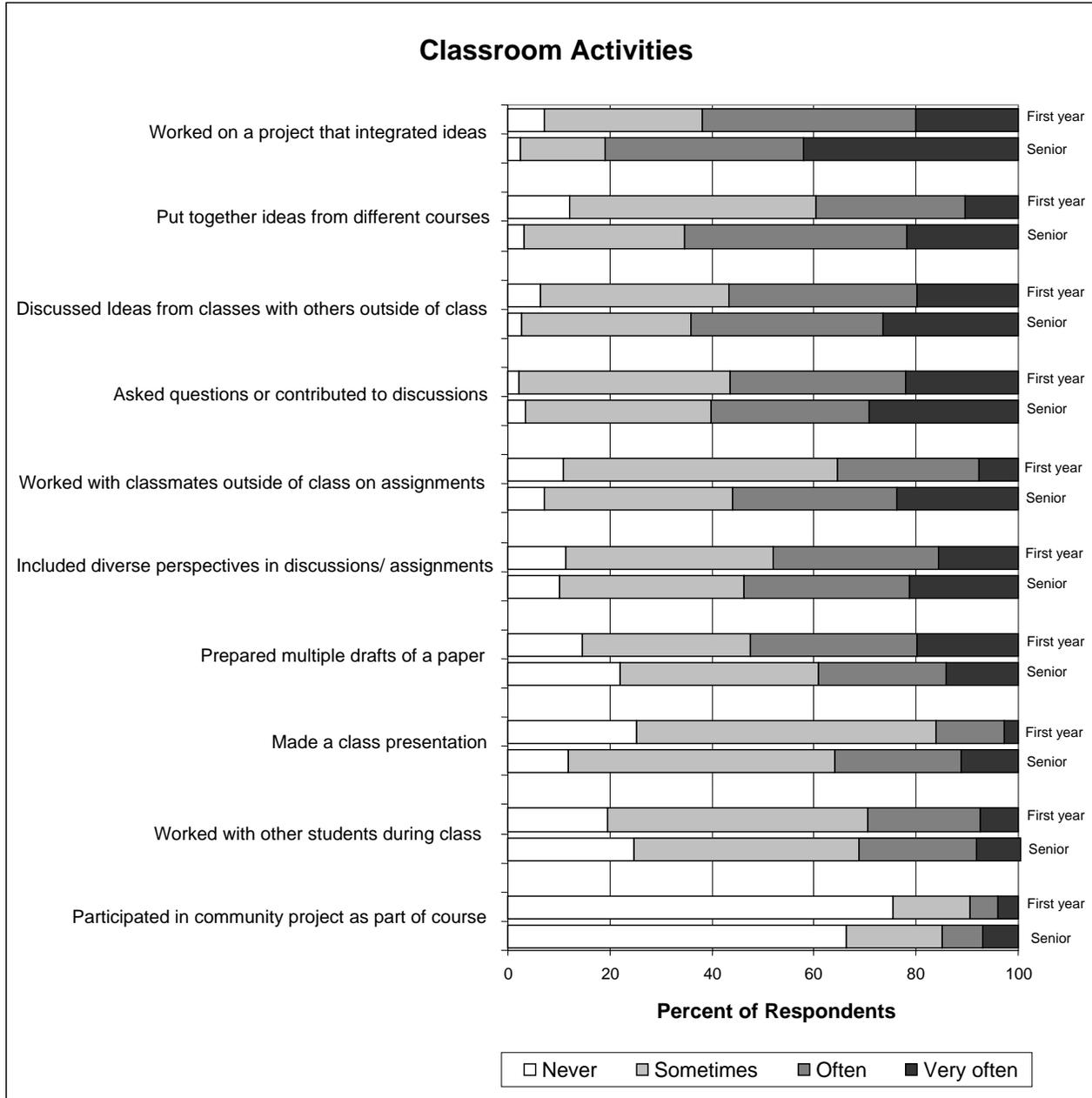


## **Classroom Experiences and Activities**

Students report a variety of learning experiences and activities in their classroom work. During the 2003-04 academic year, for at least some classes, over 90 percent of students recounted that they worked on a project that integrated ideas from various sources, asked questions or contributed to discussion, put together ideas from different courses when working on assignments or in class discussion, discussed ideas from class with others outside of class, and worked on assignments outside of class with their classmates. Similarly, 90 percent of students reported that they sometimes or often included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments.

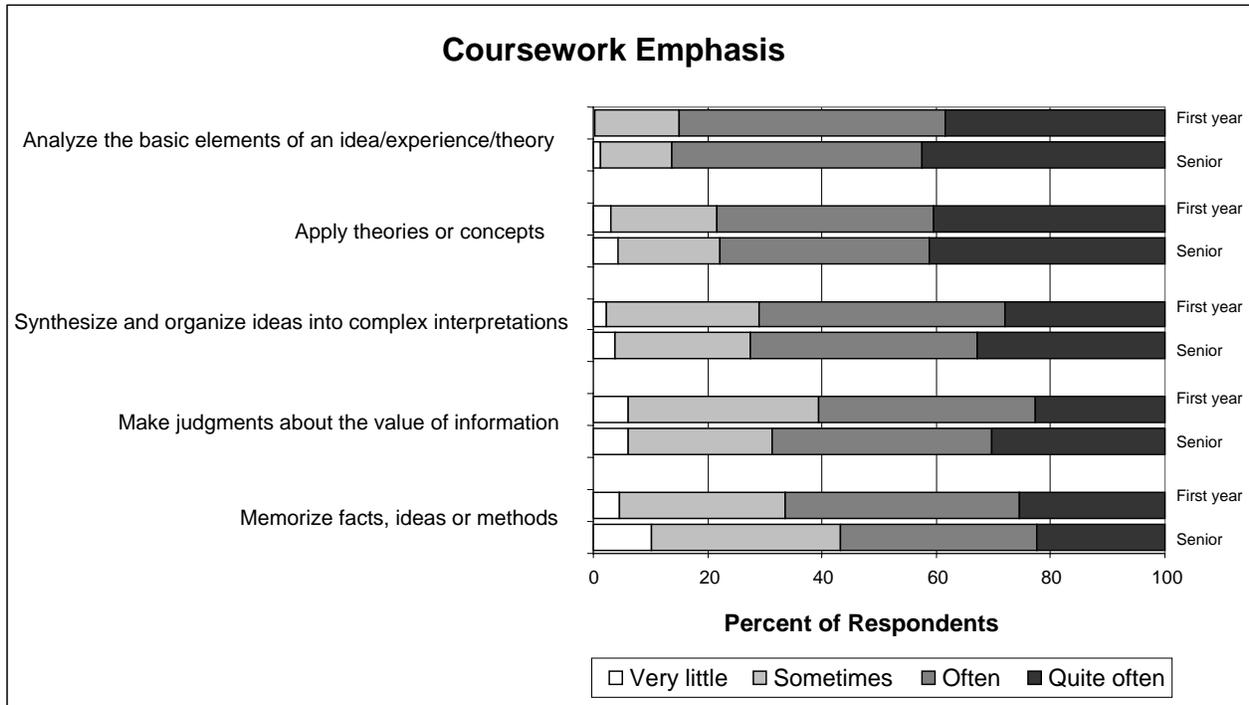
In many writing-intensive courses, including those that fulfill the General Education Communication A and B requirements at UW-Madison, students are required to submit multiple drafts of a paper. Communication A courses are typically taken in the freshman year; Communication B courses may be taken in the first year or in a later year. First-year students were more likely to write multiple drafts of papers – 53 percent stated that they often or very often wrote multiple drafts.

Seniors were more likely than freshmen to work on projects that integrate ideas – over 80 percent of seniors and 62 percent of first-years reported often or very often working on a project which required integrating ideas from various sources. Nearly 90 percent of seniors and three-fourths of first-year students sometimes or often made a presentation in class. Seniors were also more likely to put together ideas or concepts from different courses in their class discussions or assignments – two-thirds of seniors and 40 percent of first-year students report often or very often integrating ideas from different courses. About one-third of seniors and one-fourth of first-year students participated in community-based projects as part of a regular course during 2003-04.



### Coursework Emphasis

Over 90 percent of students reported that their coursework emphasized synthesizing ideas, memorizing facts and ideas, analyzing an idea or theory, making judgments about the value of information, and applying theories and concepts to practical problems or new situations.

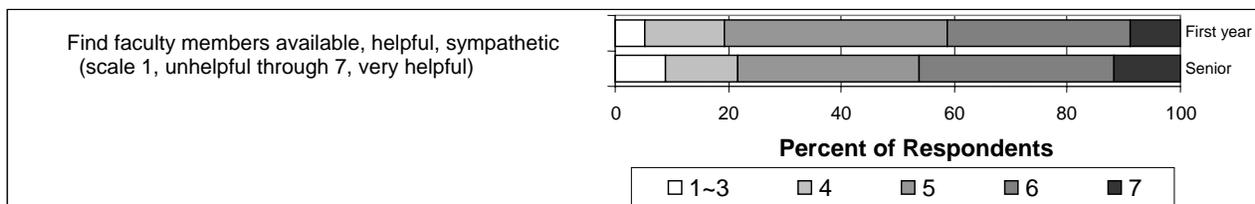
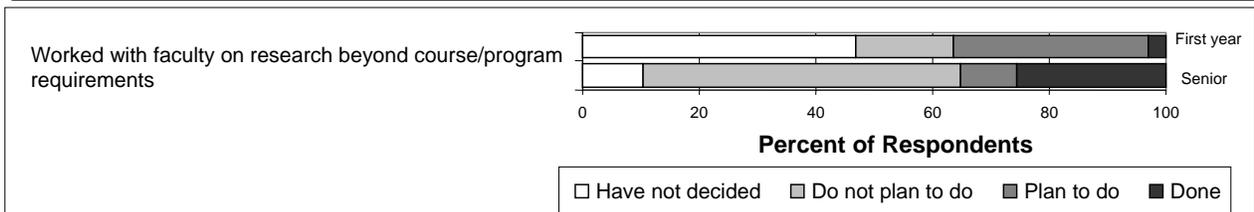
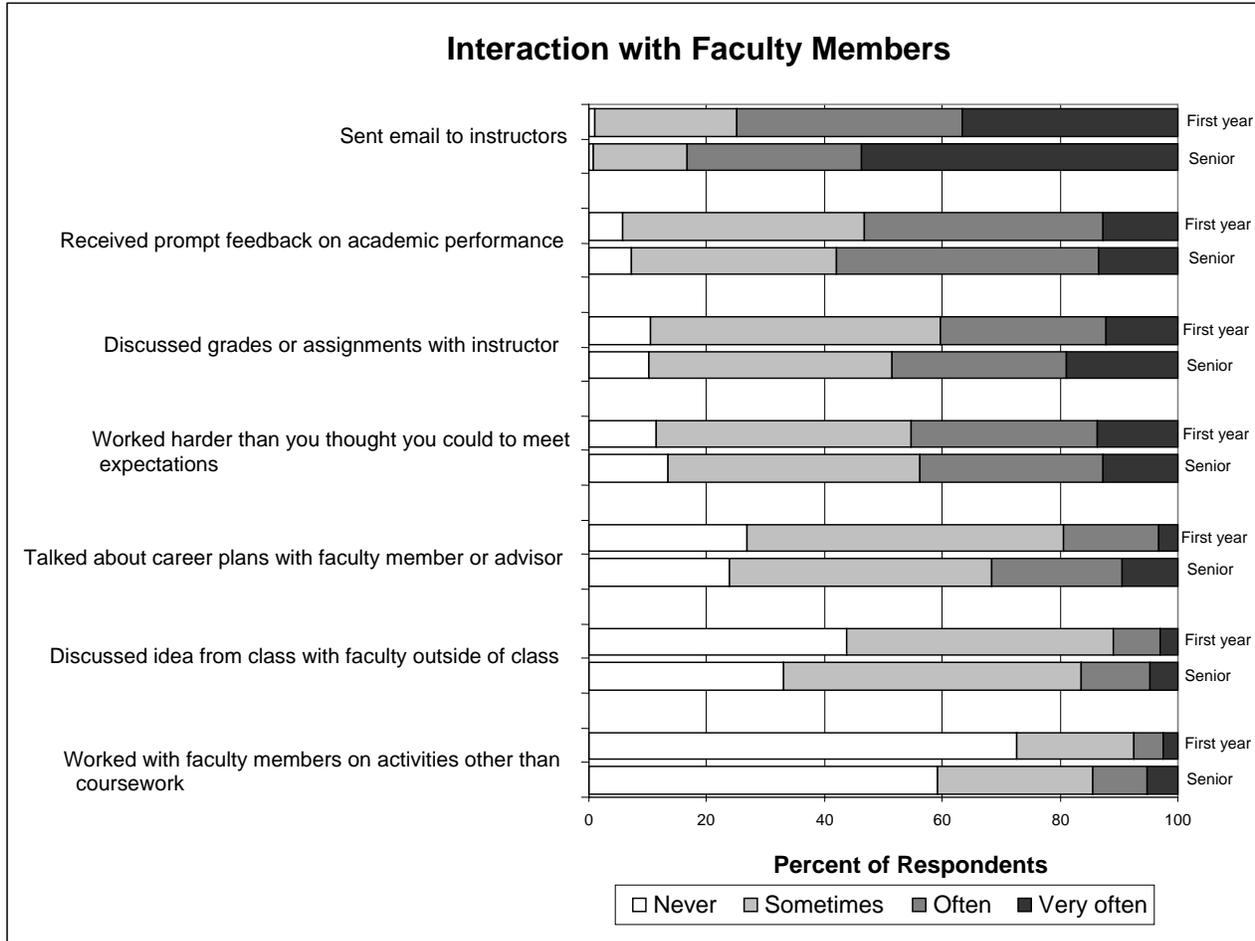


### Interaction with Faculty Members

UW-Madison students interact with faculty in a variety of ways. Almost all students use e-mail to communicate with instructors. About 90 percent of students discussed grades or assignments with their instructors and reported receiving prompt feedback from faculty on their academic performance. Three-fourths of students talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor. . Most students found faculty members to be available, helpful, and sympathetic. On a scale of 1 to 7, where 7 is most helpful and available, 79 percent rated faculty members 5 or higher.

Freshmen and seniors were equally likely to report that they worked harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor’s expectations – almost 50 percent of students often or very often did so and nearly 90 percent maintained that at least sometimes they did so. One-fourth of seniors indicated that they worked on a research project with faculty outside of a course. An additional ten percent planned to do so before graduation. Similarly, over one-third of freshmen plan to or have already worked on research project with a faculty member.

UW students do not report much interaction with faculty outside of class. Less than 20 percent said they often or very often worked with faculty on activities outside of class or discussed ideas from class with faculty members outside of the classroom.

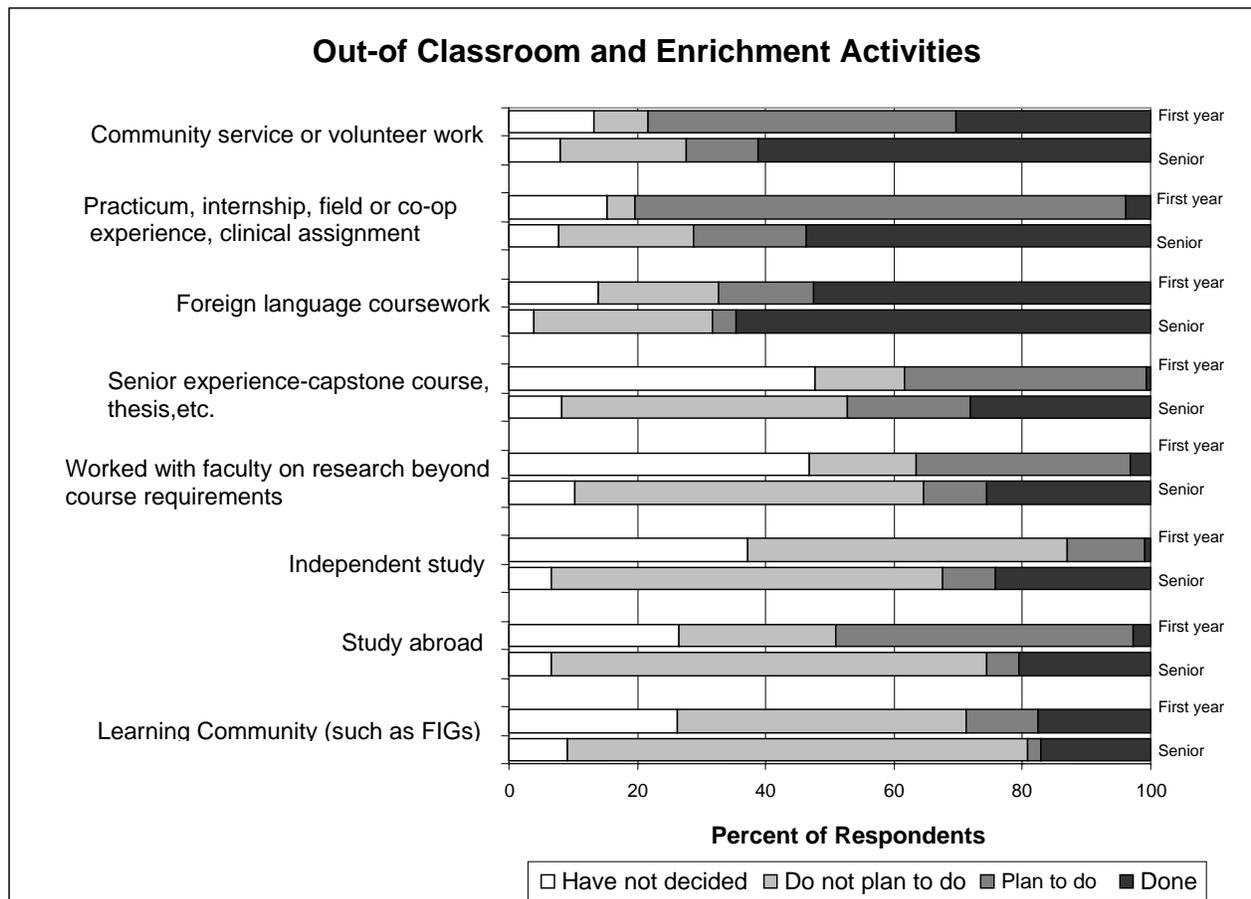


### Out-of-Classroom and Enrichment Activities

A variety of out-of-classroom and enrichment activities are available to UW-Madison students. Over two-thirds of students have completed or plan to complete foreign language coursework. Nearly half of first-year students plan to study abroad. Of seniors, 21 percent have already studied

abroad and another 5 percent plan to do so. Thirty percent of first-year students and over 60 percent of seniors have participated in community service or volunteer work while attending UW. An additional 48 percent of freshmen and 11 percent of seniors plan to do so before graduation. A majority of seniors reported practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience or clinical assignment as part of their educational experience. Fifty-four percent of seniors had already completed a practicum or similar experience and 17 percent planned to do so before graduation. About half of all seniors have completed or expect to complete a capstone course, thesis, or other culminating senior experience. Over 17 percent of students participated in a learning community or other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together (such as UW’s Freshmen Interest Groups).

Most UW Madison seniors engage in these out-of-classroom enrichment experiences--over 75 percent of seniors had participated in either studying abroad, internship or practicum, research project with a faculty member, or a service learning course.



**Student Time Use**

Students are also involved in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Almost two-thirds of students are active in co-curricular activities such as campus publications, student government, sports, fraternities or sororities, organizations, etc. Just over 10 percent are involved in such activities more than 10 hours per week. About one-fourth of students spend on average over 20 hours per week preparing for class. Sixty-two percent of seniors and 77 percent of freshmen spent more than 10 hours per week preparing for class.

Almost 80 percent of seniors and 40 percent of first-year students engage in work for pay. Nearly half of seniors and one-fourth of freshmen work on campus. Eleven percent of seniors and four percent of freshmen work both on and off campus. Working more than 20 hours per week is reported by over 20 percent of seniors and three percent of freshmen.

