

Overview of 2014 National Survey of Student Engagement for UW-Madison

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. Results of the survey tell us what students think of their undergraduate experience, the kinds of activities in which they engage, and how they are benefiting from their studies. In 2014, a total of 713 colleges and universities across the United States and Canada participated. NSSE is based at the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. A detailed description of NSSE is available on-line at <http://www.nsse.iub.edu>.

The University of Wisconsin-System Administration Office of Policy Analysis and Research uses findings from the NSSE survey to prepare its Accountability Report, *Knowledge Powers Wisconsin's Future*, sent annually to legislators, the Board of Regents, and other university stakeholders. (See <http://www.uwsa.edu/opar/accountability/> for copies of the reports.) All UW system institutions were required to participate in NSSE in 2001, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2011, and 2014 as a way to gather information for the annual accountability reports. The results are also used at this institution for self-assessment. Our participation has helped us identify areas where UW-Madison is doing well, and where we can improve. In past years, results from student surveys have led to increased resources for academic advising and other needed improvements.

In addition, the survey responses from UW-Madison students are used along with results at other colleges and universities nationwide to establish national benchmarks about student participation in programs and activities and what they gain from attending college.

Survey administration

All freshmen and senior students enrolled at UW-Madison during both fall and spring semesters of 2013-14 were sent information about participating in the survey via e-mail from the UW-Madison Provost's office. The e-mail directed students to the survey instrument found on the NSSE web site. In total, 6,213 first-year students and 8,494 seniors in UW-Madison were invited to take part in the survey. Of those, 23 percent responded to the survey.

Results shown are weighted to reflect the distribution of students by gender and by enrollment status (part-time or full-time) in the student population. The weights are designed to adjust for the fact that proportionately more students from some groups (such as female students and full-time students) are more likely to answer surveys than are other students.

Many of the measures included in this survey focus on experiences and perceptions. When interpreting this data, it is important to remember that differences across groups or across time could be the result of real differences in experiences, different aspects or different perceptions of the same experience, or differing expectations. For example, two students may each have visited a professor outside of class three times in the past year. When asked how often they talked with instructors outside of class, one of them might call that "very often" and the other "sometimes".

The Office of Academic Planning and Institutional Research (APIR) is the institutional repository for UW-Madison data from the NSSE survey. Further information about the survey, including methodology and breakdowns by categories such as gender, minority status, and transfer status, is available at the APIR website: http://APIR.wisc.edu/students_surveys.html. Individuals interested in conducting their own analyses of the survey data from 2014 or prior years may contact APIR for information on obtaining access to the data.

The UW-Madison response rate was 23 percent – 1,338 first-year students (22 percent) and 1,997 seniors (24 percent) answered the survey. To increase response rates, a random drawing for twenty \$50 Wiscard gift cards was offered as an incentive for the first time in 2014. As a result, the UW-Madison response rate in 2014 was increased from 21% in 2011 to 23% in 2014. In comparison, the average response rate for all institutions participating in NSSE in 2014 was 32 percent.

The table below shows the distribution of students enrolled in the fall and spring semesters of 2013-14 eligible to be included in the NSSE survey compared with the actual respondents to the survey. The demographic characteristics of total students enrolled appear very similar to NSSE respondents.

Table 1: Comparison of UW-Madison Students and NSSE 2014 Respondents

Percent of Students:	UW-Madison Student Enrolled 2013-14		Un-weighted NSSE Respondents		Weighted NSSE Respondents	
	First-year	Seniors	First-year	Seniors	First-year	Seniors
19 years old or younger	99	1	99	1	99	1
20-23 years old	1	90	1	91	1	91
Female	52	51	61	61	52	51
Minority (excluding international)	16	15	15	13	15	13
International student	6	6	5	3	6	4
Began college at UW-Madison	100	78	99	80	99	79
Enrolled full-time	98	91	98	92	98	91
First generation			21	23	21	23
Wisconsin Resident	61	65	67	70	67	70
Total Students	6214	8496	1338	1997	1338	1997

Note: UW-Madison students enrolled in 2013-14 in this table includes those students who were first-year or senior students in fall 2013 and enrolled in both fall and spring semesters.