

The “Wisconsin Experience” for UW-Madison Bachelor’s Degree Recipients: Annual Update

The expression “Wisconsin Experience”¹ is used to describe the educational experience of UW-Madison undergraduates (degree recipients in this analysis) as they apply in and out of classroom learning to significantly and positively impact the world. The term “Wisconsin Experience” is grounded in the *Wisconsin Idea* and the university’s progressive history, directed at producing UW-Madison graduates who are creative problem solvers; passionate, engaged and adaptable world citizens; critical thinkers able to create and evaluate new knowledge; and future leaders of their global communities. The Wisconsin Experience captures four inquiry-based high-impact practices and includes:

- Substantial research experiences that generate knowledge and analytical skills
- Global and cultural competencies and engagement
- Leadership and activism opportunities
- Application of knowledge in the “real world”

In this analysis, we evaluate the proportion of our undergraduate degree recipients (by school/college) who have engaged in certain Wisconsin Experience activities before graduation from UW-Madison. Ideally, every graduate will have at least one of these inquiry-based, high-impact experiences.

Results measuring the experiences that are identifiable through official records show that almost 9 in 10 (89%) bachelor’s degree recipients in 2011-12 participated in at least one Wisconsin Experience activity, up from 69% in 2002-03 when we first started these analyses. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of graduates had two or more different experiences.

Defining and Quantifying The Wisconsin Experience

Components of the Wisconsin Experience are: linked experiences inside and outside the classroom; increasing student exposure to diversity; applying classroom knowledge to real-life experiences; conducting research with faculty members; working with faculty members and peers in small groups; exploring individual areas of interest through independent study with faculty; and living in a residential learning community. These activities have been associated with persistence, degree attainment, interest in post-baccalaureate study, marketability after graduation, preparation for work, and educational satisfaction².

This study’s purpose is to measure the Wisconsin Experience activities that are objectively quantifiable through student academic records, course descriptions/titles, or other official records (see end of report for definitions and methodology). The number of graduates participating in Wisconsin Experience activities is likely higher than those countable in this study because not all such experiences are part of a student’s official UW-Madison record.

¹ See <http://www.learning.wisc.edu/>

² Astin, A. *What Matters in College*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993. Kuh, G.D. *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2008.

For the purposes of this study, the Wisconsin Experience is quantified as:

- Studying abroad
- Living in a residential learning community
- Participating in a FIG (first-year interest group)
- Taking a service-learning course
- Having an undergraduate research experience – measured by participation in organized research programs or by taking a research or thesis course
- Participating in an internship or other workplace-based experience for academic credit
- Working closely with a faculty member in a seminar course, honors course, or independent study (including Hilldale Fellowship and Holstrom Scholarship recipients).
- Having a capstone experience within the major program.

The technical note section at the end of this analysis is very important for understanding how each of these experiences is defined and quantified. In many cases, these experiences overlap in ways that make the experiences hard to count independently. For example, there are honors seminar courses, internships abroad, and independent study experiences that involve a research component. For this analysis, we do not prioritize these experiences in any way and count each activity in each of its relevant categories. For example, for honors seminars, we count the experience as an honors course and as a seminar.

Percent of Graduates Having a Wisconsin Experience

In the 2010-11 academic year, 6,445 students completed bachelor’s degrees (Table 1). Of these graduates, 89% participated in at least one Wisconsin Experience activity as defined for this analysis. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of graduates participated in two or more such activities.

Table 1
Number of Wisconsin Experience Activities for Bachelor’s Degree Recipients* in 2011-12

	Percent of Graduates by School/College									Total
	ALS	BUS	EDU	EGR	HEC	L&S	MPH	NUR	PHM	
Zero	0	20	4	15	3	14	0	0	0	11
One	15	35	10	22	14	20	0	0	7	20
Two	29	19	28	29	31	26	45	21	29	26
Three	25	17	22	19	26	21	48	38	29	22
Four	19	7	18	10	15	12	3	17	36	13
Five or more	12	3	17	4	11	8	3	23	0	9
<i>Total one or more</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>89</i>
Total Graduates	731	732	394	660	286	3415	33	180	14	6,445

*Each graduate is counted once in each school/college where a degree was earned in 2011-12 (summer 2011, Fall 2011, Spring 2012). For example, a graduate who earned two different degrees in the College of Letters and Science is counted once. Graduates who earned a degree in the College of Engineering and in the College of Letters and Science is counted twice. Because this report is about degree recipients rather than degrees, these counts differ slightly from standard tabulations of degrees conferred.

The percentage of graduates participating in at least one Wisconsin Experience activity has increased from 69% (2002-03) to 89% for 2011-12 graduates. This increase is likely due to several factors. One, we have ramped up the Wisconsin Experience campaign and have coordinated publications that highlight these high-impact practices. Students may be participating at higher rates because they are better informed about these opportunities. Two, the desire to quantify more of these experiences has resulted in improved data collection and recording of them. Three, a few new experiences have been added to the report that were not in the earlier versions.

The percentage of graduates not participating in any recorded Wisconsin Experience activities decreased from 31% in 2002-03 to 11% in 2011-12 (Table 2). An increased percentage of graduates have participated in more than one of these activities. Over the last ten years, the percentage of graduates participating in more than one Wisconsin Experience activity rose from 34% to 69% in 2011-12.

Table 2
Trend in Number of Academic Enhancement Experiences for Bachelor’s Degree Recipients

	Percent of Graduates by Academic Year									
	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12
Zero	31	27	20	16	18	13	11	12	11	11
One	35	28	28	27	24	21	22	22	19	20
Two	22	22	24	26	26	24	24	25	25	26
Three	8	15	16	18	17	21	20	19	21	22
Four	3	6	8	9	10	12	12	12	14	13
Five or more	1	3	4	4	6	9	11	10	10	9
<i>Total 1 or more</i>	69	73	80	84	82	87	89	88	89	89
<i>Total 2 or more</i>	34	46	52	57	58	66	67	66	70	69
Total Graduates	6,102	6,144	6,289	6,256	6,017	6,175	6,565	6,475	6,567	6,445

Types of Wisconsin Experience Activities

The most frequent of these Wisconsin Experience activities (shown in **bold** in Table 3) is taking a seminar course. Forty-one percent (41%) of graduates in 2011-12 took at least one seminar course. Forty percent (40%) had a capstone experience within their major program. Thirty-nine percent (39%) participated in independent/directed study. Twenty-nine percent (29%) took at least one honors course. Twenty-five percent (25%) studied abroad – 21% through a UW-Madison program and 4% through a program at another institution. Twenty-two percent (22%) participated in some type of workplace-based experience such as cooperative education, internships, student teaching or practica.

Thirteen percent (15%) of graduates lived in a residential learning community at some point as an undergraduate, and 13% had at least one type of undergraduate research experience. Seven percent (7%) of these graduates participated in a first-year interest group (FIG). Three percent (3%) took a course that had a designated service-learning component.

There are differences by school/college in participation rates for the various Wisconsin Experience activities. For example, 100% of graduates from the School of Nursing had both a capstone experience and workplace-based experience. But graduates from the School of Nursing had relatively low rates of participation in study abroad and independent/directed study.

Graduates from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences all had a capstone experience but had lower participation in study abroad. Graduates from the School of Business had the highest study abroad participation rates (33%) and the lowest participation rates in credit-bearing workplace experiences (8%).

Table3
Types of Wisconsin Experience Activities for Bachelor’s Degree Recipients in 2011-12
By School/College

	Percent of Graduates by School/College									
	ALS	BUS	EDU	EGR	HEC	L&S	MPH	NUR	PHM	Total
Study Abroad (Unduplicated)	14	33	20	15	28	29	6	16	7	25
UW-Madison Program	12	28	16	15	16	24	6	14	7	21
Other Program	2	5	4	0	12	5	0	2	0	4
Residential Learning Comm.	15	13	13	14	14	16	3	6	21	15
First-Year Interest Group (FIG)	3	3	6	4	6	9	6	9	0	7
Service Learning Course	2	0	10	0	11	3	0	2	0	3
Independent/Directed Study	55	32	45	36	30	38	36	31	86	39
Research Exp. (Unduplicated)	10	28	21	3	15	10	3	23	36	13
Research “Programs”*	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	1	0	1
Research Course	6	28	20	2	11	5	3	12	36	9
Thesis Course	5	0	1	1	3	6	0	11	0	4
Workplace Experience (Undup.)	17	8	75	37	77	7	100	100	0	22
Co-op	0	0	0	32	6	0	0	0	0	4
Student Teaching	0	0	45	0	1	0	0	1	0	3
Practicum	3	0	64	7	1	2	100	100	0	9
Internship	15	8	14	1	76	5	33	4	0	10
Honors Course	29	8	13	28	8	38	6	18	43	29
Seminar Course	45	13	40	34	42	46	73	52	100	41
Capstone Experience	100	29	56	31	38	27	30	100	0	40
Total Graduates	731	732	394	660	286	3415	33	180	14	6,445

*Research programs include the Summer Research Opportunity Program, Research Scholar Program, and McNair and Medical Scholars.

We observe relatively large participation rate differences “by division”* in several Wisconsin Experience activities (Table 4). Activities where there are relatively large differences in participation rates include:

- Study abroad: 13% of graduates in Physical Sciences, 33% in Arts and Humanities
- Workplace-based experiences: 14% of graduates in Arts and Humanities, 29% in Biological Sciences
- Research experiences: 6% in Arts and Humanities, 18% in Biological Sciences
- Capstone experiences: 24% of graduates in Arts and Humanities, 79% in Biological Sciences

Table 4
Types of Wisconsin Experience Activities for Bachelor’s Degree Recipients in 2011-12
By Disciplinary Division*

	Percent of Graduates by Disciplinary Division*				
	All Graduates	Biological Sciences	Arts and Humanities	Physical Sciences	Social Studies
Study Abroad (Unduplicated)	25	14	33	13	31
UW-Madison Program	21	12	27	12	25
Other Program	4	2	6	1	6
Residential Learning Comm.	15	13	18	15	14
First-Year Interest Group (FIG)	7	5	9	4	8
Service Learning Course	3	1	1	0	5
Independent/Directed Study	39	52	39	41	33
Research Exp. (Unduplicated)	13	18	6	8	14
Research “Programs”*	1	0	0	0	1
Research Course	9	12	2	2	11
Thesis Course	4	6	4	6	4
Work-place Exp. (Unduplicated)	22	29	14	28	19
Co-op	4	0	0	22	1
Student Teaching	3	1	4	1	4
Practicum	9	23	8	6	5
Internship	10	8	7	1	14
Honors Course	29	29	26	35	28
Seminar Course	41	40	39	31	44
Capstone Experience	40	79	24	27	33
Total one or more experiences	89	98	85	84	87
Total two or more experiences	69	84	61	62	66
Total Degrees	6,445	1,306	866	981	3,288

*Each major degree program is assigned to a disciplinary division based on the department home of the major and the preponderance of faculty tenure home disciplinary divisions and course approval disciplinary divisions.

Over the past eight years, participation in each of these Wisconsin Experience activities has generally increased or remained steady (Table 5). The overall increase in the proportion of graduates participating in at least one Wisconsin Experience activity is not being driven by increases one particular activity. The capacity of some of these activities (FIGs and residential learning communities, for example) has increased to meet student demand and as a consequence of institutional emphasis on the importance of engaging in these high-impact practices. Some of these activities that were at capacity received funding through the Madison Initiative for Undergraduates (MIU) project. Increased participation rates in these activities should be evident as early as 2013. In 2010, the Morgridge Center for Public Service and the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning led an initiative to clarify the definition of and criteria for official designation of service learning courses. This has led to a decrease in the number of courses that meet the official criteria and has resulted in an apparent decrease in participation on the part of graduates.

Table 5
Trend in Types of Wisconsin Experience Activities for Bachelor's Degree Recipients

	Percent of Graduates by Academic Year									
	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12
Study Abroad (Unduplicated)	14	14	18	21	22	22	25	26	26	25
UW-Madison Program	14	14	14	16	17	17	19	21	21	21
Other Program	*	*	4	5	5	5	6	5	5	4
Residential Learning Community	11	11	12	13	13	13	13	13	13	15
First-Year Interest Group (FIG)	*	*	*	3	5	6	6	6	6	7
Service Learning Course	4	6	8	12	12	12	16	15	14	3
Independent/Directed Study	41	35	46	43	37	40	37	38	45	39
Research Experience (Unduplicated)	8	10	11	13	13	14	19	16	17	13
Research "Programs"	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1
Research Course	3	5	7	7	6	8	14	11	13	9
Thesis Course	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4
Workplace Experience (Undup.)	20	19	20	22	21	23	20	18	21	22
Co-op	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	3	4
Student Teaching	3	4	2	4	4	4	3	3	3	3
Practicum	7	9	8	10	9	9	9	8	8	9
Internship	8	7	8	8	7	10	8	6	10	10
Honors Course	18	19	22	25	26	27	27	28	29	29
Seminar Course	32	34	35	38	40	43	42	40	40	41
Capstone Experience	*	*	*	*	*	27	25	28	29	40
Total one or more experiences	69	73	80	84	82	87	89	88	89	89
Total Graduates	6,102	6,144	6,289	6,256	6,017	6,175	6,565	6,474	6,567	6,445

* Notation of study abroad experiences at other institutions was first documented for graduates in 2004-05. The extent to which students participated in study abroad at other institutions prior to 2004-05 is not known. Participation in a FIG was first measured for the 2005-06 graduates. This year's report is the fifth year that capstone experiences (culminating course or experience) have been tabulated.

Graduates with One Wisconsin Experience Activity

The graduates with one and only one type of Wisconsin Experience activity are most likely to have taken a course for honors credit (19%) (Table 6). The next most common activity for graduates with one experience is participation in independent/directed study (17%).

The most common sole experiences by school/college are highlighted in **bold** and show differences by school/college. Even though taking an honors course is the most common sole experience overall, it is the most common sole experience only in the College of Letters and Science. The School of Education is the only school where independent/directed study is the most common sole experience. The College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and the School of Business are the only school/college where capstone experiences are the most common activity. The School of Human Ecology and College of Engineering are the only school/college where workplace-based experience is the most common sole experience.

Table 6
Bachelor's Degree Recipients in 2011-12 with Only One Wisconsin Experience Activity

	Percent of Graduates by School/College									
	ALS	BUS	EDU	EGR	HEC	L&S	MPH	NUR	PHM	Total
Study Abroad	0	7	10	3	5	16	0	0	0	12
Residential Learning Community	0	6	3	5	3	7	0	0	0	6
First-Year Interest Group (FIG)	0	1	3	2	0	2	0	0	0	1
Service Learning Course	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1
Independent/Directed Study	0	8	68	18	3	18	0	0	0	17
Research Experience	0	26	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	6
Work-place Experience	1	6	0	33	63	2	0	0	0	5
Honors Course	0	3	5	28	0	24	0	0	0	19
Seminar Course	0	5	8	7	24	18	0	0	100	14
Capstone Experience	99	38	3	2	0	11	0	0	0	15
Total with One Experience	110	257	38	147	41	687	0	0	1	1,281

Wisconsin Experience Activities for Targeted Minority, First Generation, and Transfer Students

This is the seventh year we have looked specifically at the Wisconsin Experience activity participation rates for targeted minority graduates and graduates who started at UW-Madison as transfer students. It is the second year that we have sufficient data to be able to determine the degree of participation in these activities for first-generation students. Ideally, targeted minority and first-generation graduates would participate in these activities in at least the same proportion as other graduates. A report based on the 2006 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) results shows that participation in these types of activities is particularly beneficial in terms of retention and degree completion³.

³ Indiana University, Center for Postsecondary Research. 2006. *Engaged Learning: Fostering Success for All Students*. School of Education. Indiana University Bloomington.

Table 7 shows the participation rate in Wisconsin Experience activities by school/college for targeted minority graduates compared to non-targeted graduates. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of non-targeted bachelor's degree recipients participated in at least one of the academic enhancement experiences measured in this report. A higher proportion of targeted minority degree recipients (91%) participated in at least one of these experiences.

Appendix A, at the end of this report, details participation rates in specific Wisconsin Experience activities for targeted minority graduates to overall participation rates. This examination shows whether differences in participation rates for targeted minority graduates are driven primarily by one Wisconsin Experience activity or exist across-the-board.

For targeted minority graduates, their higher participation rates are the result of higher participation in six activities: residential learning communities, FIGs, service learning courses, research experience, workplace-based experience, and seminar courses.

Table 7
Bachelor's Degree Recipients in 2010-11 by Targeted Minority Status

	Number of Graduates		Percent of Graduates with at Least One Wisconsin Experience Activity	
	Non-Targeted	Targeted*	Non-Targeted	Targeted*
ALS	696	35	100	100
BUS	699	33	80	85
EDU	358	36	96	97
EGR	629	31	85	84
HEC	250	36	97	97
L&S	3119	296	86	89
MPH	29	4	100	100
NUR	161	19	100	100
PHM	14	---	100	---
Total	5,955	490	88	91

*Targeted minorities include African American, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian, and Southeast Asian domestic students (citizens, permanent residents, and refugees). Non-targeted students include all other groups – White, International, non-targeted Asian students, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students as well as those who chose not to report a race/ethnicity at the time of application.

UW-Madison first began collection of first-generation status in 2005. Because most of the graduates in 2011-12 entered UW-Madison after the question about first generation status was asked we are now able to tabulate the participation in Wisconsin Experience activities for first generation students.

Table 8 shows participation rates in Wisconsin Experience activities for graduates who are first generation students compared to other graduates. Overall, 88% of non first generation graduates participated in at least one academic enhancement experience. Overall, graduates who were first generation students participated at similar rates – 89%.

Table 8
Bachelor’s Degree Recipients in 2011-12 by First Generation Status

	Number of Graduates		Percent of Graduates with at Least One Wisconsin Experience Activity	
	Non First Generation Student	First Generation Student*	Non First Generation Student	First Generation Student
ALS	557	174	100	100
BUS	628	104	73	82
EDU	284	110	95	96
EGR	528	132	83	86
HEC	203	83	96	97
L&S	2723	692	84	87
MPH	19	14	100	100
NUR	112	68	100	100
PHM	12	2	100	100
Total	5,066	1,379	88	89

*The term first generation means that neither of the student’s parents earned a four-year college degree.

Appendix A details participation rates in specific Wisconsin Experience activities for first-generation graduates compared to overall participation rates. This examination shows whether differences in participation rates for first generation graduates are driven primarily by one Wisconsin Experience activity or exist across-the-board.

For graduates who were first generation students, their “average” participation compared to non-first generation students is due to above average participation in workplace-based and capstone experiences balanced by lower-than-average participation in study abroad, residential learning communities, independent/directed study, and honors courses.

Graduates who started as transfer students have generally been at UW-Madison for less time than graduates who started as freshmen. Because some of Wisconsin Experience activities are offered primarily to freshmen, we do not necessarily expect graduates who started as transfer students to participate at the same rate. Several recent initiatives have focused on improving and streamlining the transfer experience. Measuring participation rates for transfer students is one benchmark against which to measure the effects of these initiatives.

Table 9 shows participation rates in Wisconsin Experience activities for graduates who started as new freshmen at UW-Madison compared to those who started as transfer students. Overall, 91% of freshman-starts participated in at least one academic enhancement experience. Overall, graduates who started at UW-Madison as transfer students participated at lower rates – 80%. Some of these transfer-start graduates may have participated in similar experiences at their previous institutions, and these would not be captured in their UW-Madison records.

Table 9
Bachelor’s Degree Recipients in 2011-12 by Type of Entrance to UW-Madison (Freshman or Transfer)

	Number of Graduates		Percent of Graduates with at Least One Wisconsin Experience Activity	
	Freshman-Start	Transfer-Start	Freshman-Start	Transfer-Start
ALS	566	165	100	100
BUS	594	138	84	63
EDU	302	92	96	95
EGR	556	104	87	79
HEC	219	67	98	94
L&S	2,686	729	90	73
MPH	25	8	100	100
NUR	106	74	100	100
PHM	12	2	100	100
Total	5,066	1,379	91	80

Appendix A details participation rates in specific Wisconsin Experience activities for graduates who started as transfer students compared to overall participation rates. This examination shows whether differences in participation rates for transfer-start graduates are driven primarily by one Wisconsin Experience activity or exist across-the-board.

For graduates who entered UW-Madison as transfer students, their lower participation rates are the result of lower participation rates in almost every Wisconsin Experience activity (and particularly low for FIGs and Residential Learning Communities; activities typically accessed by new freshmen). The three activities where transfer-start participation is not lower is in activities more typically accessed by juniors and seniors including: capstone experiences (participation rates are similar to freshman starts), service learning courses (participation rates are similar to freshman starts) and workplace-based experiences (participation rates are higher than freshman starts).

Appendix A
Comparison of Participation Rates in Types of Wisconsin Experience Activities
for Bachelor's Degree Recipients in 2011-12

	Percent of Graduates			
	All Graduates	Targeted Minority Grads	First Generation Graduates	Transfer-Start Graduates
Study Abroad (Unduplicated)	25	23	15	13
UW-Madison Program	21	20	14	11
Other Program	4	3	1	2
Residential Learning Comm.	15	21	12	3
First-Year Interest Group (FIG)	7	18	8	0
Service Learning Course	3	7	4	3
Independent/Directed Study	39	36	36	26
Research Exp. (Unduplicated)	13	16	12	10
Research "Programs"*	1	3	1	0
Research Course	9	12	9	7
Thesis Course	4	3	4	3
Work-place Exp. (Unduplicated)	22	25	28	23
Co-op	4	3	4	2
Student Teaching	3	3	4	4
Practicum	9	11	14	13
Internship	10	13	12	9
Honors Course	29	23	26	20
Seminar Course	41	50	42	32
Capstone Experience	40	37	43	40
Total Degrees	6,445	490	1,379	1,379

*Research programs include the Summer Research Opportunity Program, Research Scholar Program, and McNair and Medical Scholars.

Definition Of Terms and Technical Notes

Graduates with multiple occurrences of the same experience are counted once in all of these tables. For example, a graduate who did two internships would be in the “one experience” category. A graduate who did two internships and also studied abroad would be in the “2 experiences” category.

For many of the Wisconsin Experience activities, we are comparing the experiences in our student record system to student responses about similar activities during the most recent administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in spring 2011. Differences between what is recorded in the student record system and what students themselves report can exist for several reasons, including:

1. The NSSE survey was sent to all seniors but the response rate was only 21% whereas this Wisconsin Experience report is a census of graduating seniors. It's possible that the NSSE respondents are not representative of all graduating seniors and/or that there are differences in NSSE response rates by school/college.
2. The NSSE questions are sometimes not specific enough to ensure comparability. For example, if a NSSE question asks if students “ever” participated in an activity a NSSE respondent might answer about an experience in high school or during the summer between years of college. This Wisconsin Experience report only captures activities that are recorded on the UW-Madison student record.
3. This Wisconsin Experience report captures activities that are recorded in the student record system – for-credit experiences and participation in university-sponsored activities. Students responding to the NSSE survey may be reporting on non-credit activities (work, volunteering, leadership in organizations) that are not part of the student record system.

Residential Learning Community

Definition: Bachelor’s degree recipients who had a University Housing record indicating they had ever lived in one of the following residential learning communities -- Bradley Learning Community, Chadbourne Residential College, Entrepreneurial Learning Community, International Learning Community, Multicultural Learning Community, Women in Science and Engineering (WISE), GreenHouse.

Source: Division of University Housing records.

Undergraduate Research Course (non-thesis)

Definition: Bachelor’s degree recipients who ever took a course with the term “research” in the title/description where research/lab opportunities with faculty members are highlighted. We intentionally exclude research methods courses where students may be learning about research methods but not having a “substantial research experience that generates new knowledge.”

Source: UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY data view

Undergraduate Thesis Course

Definition: Bachelor’s degree recipients who ever took a course identified by a course type of “independent” with “thesis” in the course name. These are generally, but not always, courses numbered 681, 682, 691 and 692.

Source: UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY data view

Undergraduate Research Experience (non course-based)

Definition: Bachelor's degree recipients who have a student group record showing participation in one of the many undergraduate opportunities for research with faculty members outside of class. The groups included in this analysis were participants in the following programs: Summer Research Opportunity Program, Undergraduate Research Scholars, McNair, or Medical Scholars.

Source: <http://www.provost.wisc.edu/undergradresearch/>, UW.RETENTION_STDNT_GROUP_HIST data view

Comments: In this analysis, 1% of bachelor's degree recipients can be identified as having such an experience. This is much lower than the 36% of seniors that reported on the 2011 NSSE that they had worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of class. Many of the experiences that students may have identified on the survey are the types of experiences that are not part of their official student records, such as student hourly employment in research labs. Or, students may have had a research experience as part of an independent/directed study experience.

Service Learning Course

Definition: Bachelor's degree recipients who ever took a course (or course section) that was indicated to have some kind of service learning, volunteer, community service, or other such experience.

Source: ISIS CLASS_NOTES Table, UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY data view.

Comments: This only encompasses *courses* identified as having a service learning component – there are numerous non-course-based opportunities for students to engage in service learning and/or community service. In this analysis, 3% of Bachelor's degree recipients can be identified as having taken such a class.

Until Fall 2010 (during much of the time the 2011-12 graduates were enrolled), there was no searchable field in the official course listing for service learning courses. Students are notified of a service-learning component in the class footnote section of the course listing, and it is this field that was used to develop the list of service learning courses for this analysis. There are several examples of courses that are believed to have a service learning component that are not identified as such in this manner. For this reason, we supplemented the list of courses identified in the official course listing with additional courses identified by the Morgridge Center for Public Service. The Provost's Office and Morgridge Center for Public Service have worked with the Registrar's Office to identify a better way of identifying service learning courses for students. The technical functionality for this new method was implemented in Fall 2010. There is still more work that needs to be done in order to ensure that departments are noting all service learning activity. Because service learning courses often have a significant time commitment outside of class, it is important that students understand this commitment when registering.

For the 2011-12 graduates, we identify 3% of graduates who have taken a class with a service learning component. This is much lower than the 37% of seniors who responded to the 2011 NSSE that they had taken such a course. Some of the differences in responses might be due to differing understandings of what constitutes a service learning course (i.e. a direct tie to the curricular content of the course) but another likely reason is that the course the NSSE respondent responded about was not identified as a service-learning course in the official course listing or did not meet institutional criteria for official designation as a service learning course.

Independent/Directed Study Course

Definition: Bachelor's degree recipients who ever took a course identified by the section/component type as independent study (except those with "thesis" in the name and those that are actually field work). These are generally courses that end in 89, 98 and 99 including 100 and 200-level courses. Some internships and co-op sections are coded as independent study rather than field work. Regardless of how coded, all internships and other field work have been included in those categories and not in independent/directed study.

Source: UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY data view.

Capstone Experience

Definition: Bachelor's degree recipients who graduated from a degree program requiring a capstone experience – either a single culminating course or a combination of course(s) and activities. Many of these capstone experiences are also experiences that are already counted in other areas of this report. For example, in the School of Education, student teaching IS the capstone experience. Therefore, in this analysis, degree recipients will be counted in two places – once in the field work category and once in the capstone category. In other cases, particularly in CALS, the capstone experiences do not duplicate other experiences counted in this analysis.

Source: UW-Madison Undergraduate Catalog. Identification of academic programs requiring a capstone experience was determined based on program descriptions in the Undergraduate Catalog.

Comments: In this analysis, 40% of bachelor's degree recipients can be identified as having taken such a class. This is similar to the 39% of seniors who reported on the 2011 NSSE that they had had "participated in a culminating senior experience (comprehensive exam, capstone course, thesis, project, etc.)".

Workplace-based Experience

Definition: Bachelor's degree recipients who ever took a course with the term internship, co-op, practicum, preceptorship, or clerkship in the title/description and courses of this nature identified by a course type of "field work" in the official course listing.

Source: UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY data view.

Comments: In this analysis, 22% of bachelor's degree recipients can be identified as having taken such a class. This is much lower than the 59% of seniors who reported on the 2011 NSSE that they had had "done a practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment". Some of these students may be reporting experiences for which they did not receive academic credit, such as a summer internship.

Seminar Course

Definition: Bachelor's degree recipients who ever took a course identified by the section/component type as a seminar, a type of academic instruction that brings instructors and students together in small groups and focuses in depth on specific issues related to a particular field of study.

Source: UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY data view.

Honors Course

Definition: Bachelor's degree recipients who ever took a course section for honors credit. These sections are identified by either the presence of an 8 as the middle digit of the course or section number or other Honors designations.

Source: UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY data view

First-year Interest Group

Definition: Bachelor's degree recipients who have a student-group record indicating participation in a FIG. The student groups that indicate FIG participation for these graduates include "FIG 2004 Students," "FIG 2004 Students," "FIG 2005 students," "FIG 2006 students," "FIG 2007 students" "FIG 2008 students", "FIG 2009 Students", and "FIG 2010 Students".

Source: UW.RETENTION_STDNT_GROUP_HIST data view

Comments: In this analysis, 7% of bachelor's degree recipients can be identified as having had such an experience. This is much lower than the 23% of UW-Madison seniors who reported on the 2011 NSSE that they had "participated in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together." There are several possible reasons for these differences. One may be that the FIG participation is very specific and students may be thinking of other programs where courses are linked. Another possible reason for the difference is in the use of the term "learning community" in the NSSE question. On the NSSE, learning community is defined as linked academic courses. However, at UW-Madison we often use the term learning community to refer to other experiences that do not involve linked courses, such as residence hall-based learning communities. Some students may have found this distinction confusing or may not have read the rest of the question, answering only based on their own conceptualization of a learning community (which may not have been the same as the one used by NSSE).

Study Abroad

Definition: Bachelor's degree recipients who had a record indicating at least one semester abroad. Until the 2004-05 academic year, only students who studied abroad through UW-Madison-sponsored programs were included. Starting in 2004-05, we were able to identify students who studied abroad through programs at other institutions.

In the 2011 NSSE, students were asked if they had ever studied abroad. Twenty-six percent (26%) of seniors replied "yes." This percentage is the similar to the percentage of students who can be identified as studying abroad through our own records (25%).

Source: UW.RETENTION_SEMESTER_HISTORY data view (UW-Madison programs). ISIS table U_SR_TSCRPT_TXT (non UW-Madison programs).