

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 or disciplinary division) 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 9 in 10 (90%) bachelor’s degree recipients in 2013-14 participated in at least one Wisconsin Experience activity, up from 69% in 2002-03 when we first started these analyses. Seventy-four percent (74%) 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, by taking a research or thesis course, or by working on grant-funded research
- 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 to the extent that it is evident. 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 2013-14 academic year, 6,650 students completed bachelor’s degrees (Table 1) at UW-Madison. Of these graduates, 90% participated in at least one Wisconsin Experience activity as defined for this analysis. Seventy-four percent (74%) of graduates participated in two or more such activities.

Table 1
Number of Wisconsin Experience Activities for Bachelor’s Degree Recipients* in 2013-14

	Percentage of Graduates by School/College								Total
	ALS	BUS	EDU	EGR	HEC	L&S	NUR	PHM	
Zero	0	17	3	0	3	14	0	0	10
One	8	31	5	14	16	19	0	0	17
Two	20	28	17	26	15	21	24	11	22
Three	27	15	25	27	22	17	35	26	20
Four	21	7	23	19	22	15	13	42	16
Five or more	24	2	27	14	21	14	27	21	16
<i>Total one or more</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>90</i>
Total Graduates	899	651	510	691	273	3,443	164	19	6,650

*Each graduate is counted once in each school/college where a degree was earned in 2013-14 (summer 2013, fall 2013, and spring 2014). 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 are counted twice. Because this report is about degree recipients rather than degrees, these counts differ slightly from standard tabulations of degrees conferred.

Over the last ten years, the percentage of graduates participating in at least one Wisconsin Experience activity has increased from 80% (2004-05) to 90% for graduates in 2013-14. 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 this report that were not in the earlier versions.

The percentage of graduates not participating in any recorded Wisconsin Experience activity decreased from 20% in 2004-05 to 10% in 2013-14 (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 52% in 2004-05 to 74% in 2013-14.

Table 2
Trend in Number of Wisconsin Experience Activities for Bachelor's Degree Recipients

	Percent of Graduates by Academic Year									
	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14
Zero	20	16	18	13	11	12	11	11	11	10
One	28	27	24	21	22	22	19	20	17	17
Two	24	26	26	24	24	25	25	26	24	22
Three	16	18	17	21	20	19	21	22	21	20
Four	8	9	10	12	12	12	14	13	13	16
Five or more	4	4	6	9	11	10	10	9	13	16
<i>Total 1 or more</i>	80	84	82	87	89	88	89	89	89	90
<i>Total 2 or more</i>	52	57	58	66	67	66	70	69	71	74
Total Graduates	6,289	6,256	6,017	6,175	6,565	6,475	6,567	6,445	6,487	6,650

Types of Wisconsin Experience Activities

The most frequent of these Wisconsin Experience activities (shown **bolded** in Table 3) is taking a seminar course. Forty-three percent (43%) of graduates in 2013-14 took at least one seminar course.

Forty-two percent (42%) had a capstone experience within their major program. Thirty-six percent (36%) had a research experience or engagement with the research mission. Thirty-five percent (35%) participated in independent/directed study. Twenty-seven percent (27%) took at least one honors course and the same percentage of graduates participated in some type of workplace-based experience such as cooperative education, internships, student teaching or practica.

Twenty-five percent (25%) studied abroad – 23% through a UW-Madison program and 2% through a program at another institution. Fourteen percent (14%) of graduates lived in a residential learning community at some point as an undergraduate. Twelve percent (12%) took a course that had a designated service-learning component. Ten percent (10%) of these graduates participated in a first-year interest group (FIG).

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 living in residential learning communities.

Graduates from the College of Agricultural 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 (39%) and the lowest participation rates in independent/directed study courses (10%). Graduates from the College of Letters and Science had the highest participation in honors courses (37%) and the lowest participation in workplace-based experiences (11%).

Table3
Types of Wisconsin Experience Activities for Bachelor's Degree Recipients in 2013-14
By School/College

	Percentage of Graduates by School/College								
	ALS	BUS	EDU	EGR	HEC	L&S	NUR	PHM	Total
Study Abroad (Unduplicated)	15	39	17	18	25	28	13	11	25
UW-Madison Program	15	36	15	18	19	25	13	11	23
Other Program	1	3	2	0	6	3	1	0	2
Residential Learning Comm.	14	13	9	16	9	15	8	16	14
First-Year Interest Group (FIG)	7	6	15	3	11	13	11	5	10
Service Learning Course	10	4	53	1	34	9	12	5	12
Independent/Directed Study	52	10	33	38	27	35	35	79	35
Research Exp. (Unduplicated)	47	34	34	23	33	36	33	89	36
Research Course	22	30	25	2	19	19	15	89	20
Thesis Course	3	0	0	0	3	6	10	0	4
Research Grant Work Exper.	32	6	14	21	13	18	9	42	18
Workplace Experience (Undup.)	23	20	84	40	83	11	100	16	27
Co-op	12	0	0	36	16	0	1	0	6
Student Teaching	0	0	45	0	0	0	0	0	4
Practicum	5	12	65	6	1	3	100	5	11
Internship	18	8	15	0	82	8	3	11	12
Honors Course	27	7	8	25	8	37	13	47	27
Seminar Course	51	14	50	37	47	47	38	100	43
Capstone Experience	100	24	48	100	40	15	100	5	42
Total Graduates	899	651	510	691	273	3,443	164	19	6,650

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

- Study abroad: 14% of graduates in Physical Sciences, 33% in Arts and Humanities
- Workplace-based experiences: 18% of graduates in Arts and Humanities, 32% in Biological and Physical Sciences (each)
- Independent/Directed Study: 26% in Social Studies, 51% in Biological Sciences
- Capstone experiences: 20% of graduates in Arts and Humanities, 71% in Physical Sciences

Table 4
Types of Wisconsin Experience Activities for Bachelor’s Degree Recipients in 2013-14
By Disciplinary Division*

	Percent of Graduates by Disciplinary Division*				
	All Graduates	Biological Sciences	Arts and Humanities	Physical Sciences	Social Studies
Study Abroad (Unduplicated)	25	16	33	14	30
UW-Madison Program	23	14	31	14	27
Other Program	2	1	2	0	4
Residential Learning Comm.	14	13	17	18	12
First-Year Interest Group (FIG)	10	9	17	4	11
Service Learning Course	12	13	9	4	15
Independent/Directed Study	35	51	36	40	26
Research Exp. (Unduplicated)	36	53	25	28	34
Research Course	20	29	9	4	23
Thesis Course	4	6	4	4	3
Research Grant Work Exper.	18	30	16	24	12
Workplace Exper. (Unduplicated)	27	32	18	32	26
Co-op	6	4	1	24	3
Student Teaching	4	1	5	1	5
Practicum	11	22	9	9	9
Internship	12	10	9	1	17
Honors Course	27	30	20	28	28
Seminar Course	43	44	40	34	47
Capstone Experience	42	63	20	71	29
Total one or more experiences	90	96	87	94	88
Total two or more experiences	74	86	66	78	69
Total Degrees	6,650	1,386	793	1,102	3,369

*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 ten 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 solely by increases in a single activity. The capacity of some of these activities 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. The increase in participation in internships may be evidence of the impact of projects that developed and supported for-credit internship opportunities. 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 led to a decrease in the number of courses that met the official criteria and resulted in an apparent decrease in participation. In 2013-14 evidence of greater participation in the newly-designated service learning courses is observed.

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

	Percent of Graduates by Academic Year									
	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14
Study Abroad (Unduplicated)	18	21	22	22	25	26	26	25	25	25
UW-Madison Program	14	16	17	17	19	21	21	21	22	23
Other Program	4	5	5	5	6	5	5	4	3	2
Residential Learning Community	12	13	13	13	13	13	13	15	14	14
First-Year Interest Group (FIG)	--	3	5	6	6	6	6	7	7	10
Service Learning Course	8	12	12	12	16	15	14	3	4	12
Independent/Directed Study	46	43	37	40	37	38	45	39	39	35
Research Experience (Unduplicated)	11	13	13	14	19	16	17	13	15	36
Research Course	7	7	6	8	14	11	13	9	12	20
Thesis Course	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	4
Research Grant Work Exper.	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	18
Workplace Experience (Undup.)	20	22	21	23	20	18	21	22	25	27
Co-op	4	4	5	4	4	4	3	4	6	6
Student Teaching	2	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	4
Practicum	8	10	9	9	9	8	8	9	9	11
Internship	8	8	7	10	8	6	10	10	14	12
Honors Course	22	25	26	27	27	28	29	29	29	27
Seminar Course	35	38	40	43	42	40	40	41	43	43
Capstone Experience	--	--	--	27	25	28	29	40	43	42
Total one or more experiences	80	84	82	87	89	88	89	89	89	90
Total Graduates	6,289	6,256	6,017	6,175	6,565	6,474	6,567	6,445	6,487	6,650

* Participation in a FIG was first measured for the 2005-06 graduates. Capstone experiences were added in 2008-09. Experience working on grant funded research projects was added for the first time in 2013-14

Graduates with One Wisconsin Experience Activity

The graduates with one and only one type of Wisconsin Experience activity are most likely to have had a capstone experience (19%) (Table 6). The next most common activity for graduates with one experience is studying abroad (15%).

The most common sole experiences by school/college are **bolded** and show differences by school/college. Even though having a capstone experience is the most common sole experience overall, it is the most common sole experience in only two colleges (Agricultural and Life Sciences and Engineering). Taking a seminar course is the most common sole experience in the College of Letters and Science. Research experience is the most common sole experience for graduates in the School of Business. Workplace-based experiences are the most common sole experience for graduates in the Schools of Education and Human Ecology.

Table 6
Bachelor's Degree Recipients in 2013-14 with Only One Wisconsin Experience Activity

	Percentage of Graduates with 1 Experience, by School/College								
	ALS	BUS	EDU	EGR	HEC	L&S	NUR	PHM	Total
Study Abroad	0	28	4	0	2	16	0	--	15
Residential Learning Community	0	5	0	0	2	5	0	--	4
First-Year Interest Group (FIG)	0	2	28	0	0	3	0	--	3
Service Learning Course	0	0	12	0	2	3	0	--	2
Independent/Directed Study	0	4	27	0	2	16	0	--	11
Research Experience	0	30	0	0	5	14	0	--	14
Work-place Experience	0	6	29	0	57	4	0	--	7
Honors Course	0	4	0	0	2	17	0	--	11
Seminar Course	0	5	0	0	25	20	0	--	14
Capstone Experience	100	15	0	100	2	2	---	--	19
Total with One Experience	71	203	25	97	44	662	0	0	1,105

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

Ideally, targeted minority and first-generation graduates would participate in these Wisconsin Experience activities in at least the same proportion as other graduates. A report based on the 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.

Table 7 shows the participation rate in Wisconsin Experience activities by school/college for targeted minority graduates compared to non-targeted graduates. Ninety percent (90%) of non-targeted

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

bachelor’s degree recipients participated in at least one of the experiences measured in this report. A higher proportion of targeted minority degree recipients (92%) participated in at least one of these experiences.

Table 7
Bachelor’s Degree Recipients in 2013-14 by Targeted Minority Status

	Number of Graduates		Percent of Graduates with at Least One Wisconsin Experience Activity	
	Non-Targeted	Targeted*	Non-Targeted	Targeted*
ALS	823	76	100	100
BUS	617	34	82	97
EDU	459	51	97	94
EGR	657	34	100	100
HEC	231	42	97	98
L&S	3,085	358	85	88
NUR	152	12	100	100
PHM	18	1	100	100
Total	6,042	608	90	92

*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.

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 or equal participation in almost all activities. The participation of targeted minority graduates is particularly high for independent/directed study (50% compared to 35% overall) and first year interest groups (21% compared to 10% overall).

There were only two experiences, capstone experience and participation in a workplace-based experience, where the differences in participation rates for targeted minority graduates was more than one percentage point lower. Thirty-six percent (36%) of targeted minority graduates had a capstone experience compared to 42% overall and 24% had a workplace-based experience compared to 27% overall.

The term first generation is used to describe students whose parents do not have four-year college degrees. Table 8 shows participation rates in Wisconsin Experience activities for graduates who are first generation students compared to other graduates. Overall, 91% of non-first generation students participated in at least one Wisconsin Experience activity. Overall, graduates who were first generation students participated at similar rates (90%).

Table 8
Bachelor's Degree Recipients in 2013-14 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	671	228	100	100
BUS	569	82	83	79
EDU	392	118	97	97
EGR	563	128	100	100
HEC	193	80	96	98
L&S	2,728	715	86	83
NUR	109	55	100	100
PHM	15	4	100	100
Total	5,240	1,410	91	90

*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 a few activities where their participation rates are similar to non-first generation students, a few activities where their participation rates are lower, and a few activities where their participation rates are higher.

First generation graduates participate at slightly higher rates in capstone experiences (45% compared to 42% overall) and research experiences (40% compared to 36% overall). First generation graduates participate at lower rates in study abroad (17% compared to 25% overall), living in residential learning communities (11% compared to 14% overall), independent study (33% compared to 35% overall), and honors courses (23% compared to 27% overall).

Participation rates for first generation students in first-year interest groups (FIGs), service learning courses, workplace-based experiences, and seminar courses are all similar (within one percentage point) of the overall campus average.

Graduates who started at UW-Madison 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, 93% of freshman-starts participated in at least one Wisconsin Experience activity. Overall, graduates who started at UW-Madison as transfer students participated at lower rates (82%). 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 2013-14 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	690	209	100	100
BUS	550	101	86	67
EDU	399	111	97	95
EGR	572	119	100	100
HEC	212	61	97	97
L&S	2,642	801	89	73
NUR	106	58	100	100
PHM	18	1	100	100
Total	5,189	1,461	93	82

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 all Wisconsin Experience activities, except for capstone experiences where participation is within one percentage point of the overall average. Activities where the difference in participation rates is at least 10 percentage points include: study abroad (13% participation compared to 25% overall), living in a residential learning community (3% compared to 14% overall), and taking an independent/directed study course (25% compared to 35% overall).

Appendix A
Comparison of Participation Rates in Types of Wisconsin Experience Activities
for Bachelor's Degree Recipients in 2013-14

	Percent of Graduates			
	All Graduates	Targeted Minority Grads	First Generation Graduates	Transfer-Start Graduates
Study Abroad (Unduplicated)	25	27	17	13
UW-Madison Program	23	26	16	12
Other Program	2	1	1	3
Residential Learning Comm.	14	16	11	3
First-Year Interest Group (FIG)	10	21	11	1
Service Learning Course	12	14	13	10
Independent/Directed Study	35	50	33	25
Research Exp. (Unduplicated)	36	44	40	28
Research Course	20	22	20	16
Thesis Course	4	2	2	3
Research Grant Work Exper.	18	26	24	13
Workplace Exp. (Unduplicated)	27	24	28	22
Co-op	6	4	7	5
Student Teaching	4	4	4	4
Practicum	11	10	12	10
Internship	12	12	13	10
Honors Course	27	26	23	19
Seminar Course	43	51	43	35
Capstone Experience	42	36	45	41
Total Degrees	6,650	608	1,410	1,461

Appendix B
Comparison of Participation Rates in Types of Wisconsin Experience Activities
for Bachelor's Degree Recipients in 2013-14

	Percent of Graduates			
	All Graduates	WI Resident	MN Resident	Non-Resident
Study Abroad (Unduplicated)	25	21	35	30
UW-Madison Program	23	20	32	26
Other Program	2	1	3	5
Residential Learning Comm.	14	13	11	17
First-Year Interest Group (FIG)	10	10	11	10
Service Learning Course	12	13	11	10
Independent/Directed Study	35	35	34	35
Research Exp. (Unduplicated)	36	38	36	31
Research Course	20	20	22	18
Thesis Course	4	4	3	4
Research Grant Work Exper.	18	20	17	14
Workplace Exp. (Unduplicated)	27	29	30	21
Co-op	6	7	8	4
Student Teaching	4	5	2	2
Practicum	11	14	10	5
Internship	12	11	14	13
Honors Course	27	27	26	29
Seminar Course	43	44	45	42
Capstone Experience	42	46	44	31
Total Degrees	6,550	4,185	679	1,786

Overall, 90% of 2013-14 bachelors degree recipients participated in one or more of these Wisconsin Experience activities. This includes 92% of graduates who were Wisconsin or Minnesota residents, and 87% of non-residents.

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 2014. 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 23% 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, and 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, Creative Arts & Design Learning Community.

Source: Division of University Housing records.

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 title. These are generally, but not always, courses numbered 681, 682, 691 and 692.

Source: InfoAccess: UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY

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: InfoAccess: UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY, UW.COURSE, UW.COURSE_ATTRIBUTE

Undergraduate Student Hourly Employment on Research Grants

Definition: Graduates who have employment records indicating they were paid with research grant funds while they were enrolled as an undergraduate at UW-Madison. This metric is an indication that the student was engaged with the research mission of the university and is new to the 2014 Wisconsin Experience Report. The data was made available in conjunction with UW-Madison's participation in the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) STARMetrics project.

Source: UW-Madison's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (RSP). RSP provided a data file of all student hourly employment on research grant funds since 2010 (the year UW-Madison implemented its current human resources system). We matched this data file to the 2013-14 graduates and limited the file to paid employment that occurred while the graduate was an enrolled undergraduate.

Comments: In this analysis, 4% of graduates took an undergraduate thesis course, 20% of bachelor's degree recipients can be identified as having taken a research course and 18% of graduates were paid on a research grant. Overall, 36% of UW-Madison graduates had at least one of these research experiences. This percentage is similar to the 38% of seniors who reported on the 2014 NSSE that they had worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of class.

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, ISIS: CLASS_ATTRIBUTES, InfoAccess: UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY

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.

Until fall 2010 (during some of the time the 2013-14 graduates were enrolled), there was no searchable field in the official course listing for service learning courses. Students were notified of a service-learning component in the class footnote section of the course listing, and, prior to then, 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 2013-14 graduates, we identify 12% of graduates who have taken a class with a service learning component. This is much lower than the 44% of seniors who responded to the 2014 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 here and not in independent/directed study.

Source: InfoAccess: UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY

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 and Engineering, 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, 42% of bachelor's degree recipients can be identified as having taken such a class. This is the same percentage of seniors who reported on the 2014 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: InfoAccess: UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY

Comments: In this analysis, 27% of bachelor's degree recipients can be identified as having taken received academic credit for a workplace-based experience. This is much lower than the 63% of seniors who reported on the 2014 NSSE that they had had "participated in an internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement". Some of these students may be reporting experiences for which they did not receive academic credit.

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: InfoAccess: UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY

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: InfoAccess: UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY

First-year Interest Group

Definition: Bachelor's degree recipients who have a student-group record indicating participation in a FIG.

Source: InfoAccess: UW.RETENTION_STDNT_GROUP_HIST

Comments: In this analysis, 10% of bachelor's degree recipients can be identified as having had such an experience. This is much lower than the 26% of UW-Madison seniors who reported on the 2014 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, either through a UW-Madison program or evidenced by the posting of transfer credit from an abroad program at another university.

In the 2014 NSSE, students were asked if they had ever studied abroad. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of seniors replied "yes." This percentage is similar to the percentage of students who can be identified as studying abroad through our own records (25%).

Source: InfoAccess: UW.RETENTION_SEMESTER_HISTORY (UW-Madison programs).
ISIS: U_SR_TSCRPT_TXT (non UW-Madison programs).