

The “Wisconsin Experience” for UW-Madison Bachelor’s Degree Recipients: Annual Update on Participation in High-Impact Learning Experiences

The Wisconsin Experience describes what students might expect, and then pursue, during their time at UW-Madison. From the beginning, the Wisconsin Experience has been tied to the Wisconsin Idea, and to co-curricular activities and a collection of inquiry-based high-impact learning experiences that pervade the undergraduate learning environment at UW-Madison. The term “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.

In this analysis, we focus on student participation in the inquiry-based high-impact learning experiences that are recorded on the student record. High-impact experiences included in this report have the following features: link experiences inside and outside the classroom; increase student exposure to diversity; apply classroom knowledge to real-life experiences; conduct research with faculty members; learn and work with faculty members and peers in small groups; explore individual areas of interest through independent study with faculty; or live 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 satisfaction.²

Ideally, every graduate will have participated in at least one of these inquiry-based, high-impact learning experiences (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.

Results measuring the experiences that are identifiable through official records show that 91 percent of 2015-16 bachelor’s degree recipients participated in at least one high-impact learning experience, up from 69 percent in 2002-03 when we first started these analyses. In 2015-16, 75 percent of graduates had two or more different experiences.

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.

Methodology – What Is Included in This Analysis

For the purposes of this study, inquiry-based, high impact learning experiences include:

- Studying abroad
- Living in a residential learning community
- Participating in a first-year interest group (FIG)
- 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 for pay on research activity
- 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
- Completing 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 Participating in High-Impact Experiences

In the 2015-16 academic year, 6,888 students completed bachelor’s degrees (Table 1) at UW-Madison. Of these graduates, 91 percent participated in at least one high-impact learning experience as defined for this analysis, and 75 percent participated in two or more such activities.

Table 1
Number of High-Impact Learning Experiences, Bachelor’s Degree Recipients* in 2015-16

	Percentage of Graduates by School/College								
	ALS	BUS	EDU	EGR	HEC	L&S	NUR	PHM	Total
Zero	0	17	4	2	5	14	0	0	9
One	7	28	6	16	16	19	0	0	16
Two	18	29	21	27	17	18	0	16	20
Three	20	15	20	23	15	17	30	30	19
Four	19	5	17	16	13	14	22	22	14
Five or more	36	5	32	15	33	18	49	33	21
<i>Percentage one or more</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>91</i>
Total Graduates	1,104	759	419	826	336	3,213	172	64	6,888

*Each graduate is counted once in each school/college where a degree was earned in 2015-16 (summer 2015, fall 2015, and spring 2016). 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 high-impact experience has increased from 82 percent (2006-07) to 91 percent for graduates in 2015-16. This increase is likely due to several factors. One, we highlighted and invested in the expansion of high-impact educational experiences. Students may be participating at higher rates because they are better informed about these opportunities and more are available. Two, the desire to quantify more of these experiences has resulted in improved data collection and recording. Three, a few new experiences have been added to this report that were not included in earlier versions.

The percentage of graduates not participating in any recorded high-impact learning experience decreased from 18 percent in 2006-07 to only 9 percent in 2015-16 (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 high-impact learning experience rose from 58 percent in 2006-07 to 75 percent in 2015-16.

Table 2
Trend in Number of High-Impact Learning Experiences, Bachelor's Degree Recipients

	Percent of Graduates by Academic Year									
	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
Zero	18	13	11	12	11	11	11	10	9	9
One	24	21	22	22	19	20	17	17	16	16
Two	26	24	24	25	25	26	24	22	21	20
Three	17	21	20	19	21	22	21	20	19	19
Four	10	12	12	12	14	13	13	16	16	14
Five or more	6	9	11	10	10	9	13	16	20	21
<i>Percentage one or more</i>	82	87	89	88	89	89	89	90	91	91
<i>Percentage two or more</i>	58	66	67	66	70	69	71	74	76	75
Total Graduates	6,017	6,175	6,565	6,475	6,567	6,445	6,487	6,650	6,891	6,888

Types of High-Impact Learning Experiences

The most frequent of these high-impact learning experiences (shown **bolded** in Table 3) is a seminar experience. Forty-two percent of graduates in 2015-16 had a seminar.

The second most frequent experience (41 percent) was a capstone experience. Forty percent had a research experience or engagement with the research mission. Thirty-one percent participated in independent/directed study and 30 percent participated in some type of workplace-based experience such as cooperative education, an internship, student teaching, or a practicum. Twenty-eight percent took at least one honors course.

Twenty-five percent studied abroad—24 percent through a UW-Madison program and 2 percent through a program at another institution. Fifteen percent of graduates lived in a residential learning community at some point as an undergraduate and 14 percent participated in a first-year interest group (FIG). Thirteen percent took a course that had a designated service learning component.

There are differences by school/college in participation rates for the various high-impact learning experiences. For example, 100 percent 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 service learning courses. 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 (37 percent) and the lowest participation rates in independent/directed study courses (7 percent). Graduates from the College of Letters and Science had the highest participation in honors courses (39 percent) and the lowest participation in workplace-based experiences (18 percent).

Table3
Types of High-Impact Learning Experiences, Bachelor’s Degree Recipients in 2015-16
By School/College

	Percentage of Graduates by School/College								Total
	ALS	BUS	EDU	EGR	HEC	L&S	NUR	PHM	
Study Abroad (Unduplicated)	20	37	20	20	23	28	19	9	25
UW-Madison Program	19	36	19	20	18	26	19	9	24
Other Program	0	2	1	1	5	2	0	0	2
Residential Learning Comm.	14	14	13	17	12	16	10	17	15
First-Year Interest Group (FIG)	13	9	25	4	15	16	24	2	14
Service Learning Course	11	3	42	3	43	10	12	75	13
Independent/Directed Study	48	7	34	33	26	30	30	64	31
Research Exp. (Unduplicated)	60	37	39	28	37	38	21	50	40
Research Course	33	31	33	7	28	24	12	38	25
Thesis Course	3	0	0	1	2	5	5	0	3
Research Work Experience	40	9	12	23	13	19	12	33	21
Workplace Experience (Undup.)	27	22	64	37	80	18	100	70	30
Co-op	9	0	1	34	14	0	0	2	6
Student Teaching	0	0	31	0	0	0	0	0	2
Practicum	12	0	60	0	4	5	100	69	11
Internship	20	22	4	1	79	14	87	5	18
Honors Course	29	8	9	24	6	39	11	23	28
Seminar Course	47	18	46	35	42	46	45	58	42
Capstone Experience	100	25	33	89	38	11	100	0	41
Total Graduates	1,104	759	419	826	336	3,213	172	64	6,888

We observe relatively large participation rate differences by disciplinary division* in several high-impact learning experiences (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: 15 percent of graduates in Physical Sciences, 37 percent in Arts and Humanities
- Workplace-based experiences: 24 percent of graduates in Arts and Humanities, 37 percent in Biological Sciences
- Independent/Directed Study: 20 percent in Social Studies, 50 percent in Biological Sciences
- Capstone experiences: 12 percent of graduates in Arts and Humanities, 65 percent in Biological Sciences

Table 4
Types of High-Impact Learning Experiences, Bachelor's Degree Recipients in 2015-16
By Disciplinary Division*

	Percent of Graduates by Disciplinary Division*				
	All Graduates	Biological Sciences	Arts and Humanities	Physical Sciences	Social Studies
Study Abroad (Unduplicated)	25	19	37	15	30
UW-Madison Program	24	19	34	15	28
Other Program	2	0	3	0	2
Residential Learning Comm.	15	15	17	16	14
First-Year Interest Group (FIG)	14	15	25	4	15
Service Learning Course	13	14	11	5	16
Independent/Directed Study	31	50	33	34	20
Research Exp. (Unduplicated)	40	61	29	33	35
Research Course	25	39	16	8	26
Thesis Course	3	4	4	3	2
Research Work Experience	21	36	14	26	13
Workplace Exper. (Undup.)	30	37	24	29	29
Co-op	6	3	1	23	3
Student Teaching	2	0	2	0	3
Practicum	11	31	9	1	6
Internship	18	22	16	2	24
Honors Course	28	31	24	28	27
Seminar Course	42	43	46	32	45
Capstone Experience	41	65	12	62	27
<i>Percentage one or more</i>	91	97	88	91	88
<i>Percentage two or more</i>	75	90	70	73	69
Total Graduates	6,888	1,588	737	1,314	3,251

*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 most of these high-impact learning experiences has generally increased or remained steady (Table 5). The overall increase in the proportion of graduates participating in at least one high-impact learning experiences 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 was observed.

Table 5
Trend in Types of High-Impact Learning Experiences, Bachelor's Degree Recipients

	Percent of Graduates by Academic Year									
	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
Study Abroad (Unduplicated)	22	22	25	26	26	25	25	25	26	25
UW-Madison Program	17	17	19	21	21	21	22	23	24	24
Other Program	5	5	6	5	5	4	3	2	2	2
Residential Learning Community	13	13	13	13	13	15	14	14	14	15
First-Year Interest Group (FIG)	5	6	6	6	6	7	7	10	14	14
Service Learning Course	12	12	16	15	14	3	4	12	12	13
Independent/Directed Study	37	40	37	38	45	39	39	35	33	31
Research Experience (Unduplicated)	13	14	19	16	17	13	15	36	37	40
Research Course	6	8	14	11	13	9	12	20	18	25
Thesis Course	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	3
Research Work Experience	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	18	21	21
Workplace Experience (Undup.)	21	23	20	18	21	22	25	27	33	30
Co-op	5	4	4	4	3	4	6	6	7	6
Student Teaching	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	2
Practicum	9	9	9	8	8	9	9	11	12	11
Internship	7	10	8	6	10	10	14	12	20	18
Honors Course	26	27	27	28	29	29	29	27	27	28
Seminar Course	40	43	42	40	40	41	43	43	40	42
Capstone Experience	--	27	25	28	29	40	43	42	42	41
<i>Percentage one or more</i>	82	87	89	88	89	89	89	90	91	91
Total Graduates	6,017	6,175	6,565	6,474	6,567	6,445	6,487	6,650	6,891	6,888

* Participation in a FIG was first measured for the 2005-06 graduates. Capstone experiences were added in 2008-09. Research work experience was added in 2013-14, and at that time counted student workers paid with research grant funds. In 2014-15, we began counting students working for pay on research activity rather than counting based on the source of funds.

Graduates with One High-Impact Learning Experiences

The graduates with one and only one type of Wisconsin Experience activity are most likely to have had a capstone experience (20 percent) (Table 6). The next most common activities for graduates with one experience are studying abroad and research experience (15 percent each).

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 (100 percent) and Engineering (81 percent). Taking an honors course is the most common sole experience in the College of Letters and Science (20 percent). Research experience is the most common sole experience for graduates in the School of Business (31 percent). Workplace-based experiences are the most common sole experience for graduates in the Schools of Human Ecology (67 percent). Service Learning Courses are the most common sole experience in the School of Education (64 percent).

Table 6
Bachelor's Degree Recipients in 2015-16 with Only One High-Impact Learning Experiences

	Percentage of Graduates with 1 Experience, by School/College								Total
	ALS	BUS	EDU	EGR	HEC	L&S	NUR	PHM	
Study Abroad	0	30	4	4	2	16	--	--	15
Residential Learning Community	0	8	0	1	0	6	--	--	5
First-Year Interest Group (FIG)	0	3	20	0	0	3	--	--	3
Service Learning Course	0	1	64	1	7	3	--	--	4
Independent/Directed Study	0	2	8	3	13	13	--	--	9
Research Experience	0	31	0	6	0	15	--	--	15
Workplace Experience	0	5	0	3	67	4	--	--	7
Honors Course	0	4	4	2	0	20	--	--	12
Seminar Course	0	5	0	0	7	16	--	--	10
Capstone Experience	100	10	0	81	4	2	--	--	20
Total with Only One Experience	73	214	25	132	55	610	0	0	1,109

High-Impact Learning Experiences for Targeted Minority, First Generation, and Transfer Students

Ideally, targeted minority and first-generation graduates would participate 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.

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 high-impact learning experiences by school/college for targeted minority graduates compared to non-targeted graduates. Ninety-one percent of non-targeted bachelor’s degree recipients participated in at least one of the experiences measured in this report. A higher proportion of targeted minority degree recipients (94 percent) participated in at least one of these experiences.

Table 7
Bachelor’s Degree Recipients in 2015-16 by Targeted Minority Status

	Number of Graduates		Percent of Graduates with at Least One High-Impact Learning Experiences	
	Non-Targeted	Targeted*	Non-Targeted	Targeted*
ALS	1,011	93	100	100
BUS	717	42	83	86
EDU	367	52	96	96
EGR	775	51	98	98
HEC	292	44	94	98
L&S	2,905	308	85	92
NUR	158	14	100	100
PHM	60	4	100	100
Total	6,280	608	91	94

*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 high-impact learning experiences 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 most activities. The participation of targeted minority graduates is particularly high for independent/directed study (46 percent compared to 31 percent overall), seminar courses (55 percent compared to 42 percent overall), and first year interest groups (26 percent compared to 14 percent overall).

There were three experiences, capstone experience, workplace-based experience, and honors courses, where the differences in participation rates for targeted minority graduates were more than one percentage point lower. Thirty-eight percent of targeted minority graduates had a capstone experience compared to 41 percent overall, 27 percent had a workplace-based experience compared to 30 percent overall, and 23 percent took an honors course compared to 28 percent overall.

The term first generation is used to describe students for whom neither parent has a four-year college degree. Table 8 shows participation rates in high-impact learning experiences for graduates who are first generation students compared to other graduates. Overall, first generation students and non-first generation students participated in at least one high-impact learning experiences at the same rate (91 percent).

Table 8
Bachelor's Degree Recipients in 2015-16 by First Generation* Status

	Number of Graduates		Percent of Graduates with at Least One High-Impact Learning Experiences	
	Non-First Generation Student	First Generation Student*	Non-First Generation Student	First Generation Student
ALS	867	237	100	100
BUS	663	96	84	78
EDU	331	88	95	99
EGR	701	125	98	97
HEC	245	91	94	96
L&S	2,623	590	86	85
NUR	115	57	100	100
PHM	55	9	100	100
Total	5,595	1,293	91	91

*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 high-impact learning experiences 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 similar participation rate 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 percent compared to 41 percent overall), seminar courses (45 percent compared to 42 percent overall), workplace experiences (32 percent compared to 30 percent overall), independent study (32 percent compared to 31 percent overall), service learning courses (15 percent compared to 13 percent overall), and first year interest groups (16 percent compared to 14 percent overall). First generation graduates participate at lower rates in study abroad (17 percent compared to 25 percent overall), research experience (38 percent compared to 40 percent overall), residential learning communities (13 percent compared to 15 percent overall), and honors courses (24 percent compared to 27 percent overall).

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 high-impact learning experiences are offered primarily to freshmen, we do not necessarily expect graduates who started as transfer students to participate at the same rate. Measuring participation rates for transfer students is one benchmark

against which to measure the overall experience of transfer students compared to students who start as freshmen.

Table 9 shows participation rates in high-impact learning experiences for graduates who started as new freshmen at UW-Madison compared to those who started as transfer students. Overall, 92 percent of freshman-starts participated in at least one high-impact learning experiences. Overall, graduates who started at UW-Madison as transfer students participated at lower rates (84 percent). 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 2015-16 by Type of Entrance to UW-Madison (Freshman or Transfer)

	Number of Graduates		Percent of Graduates with at Least One High-Impact Learning Experiences	
	Freshman-Start	Transfer-Start	Freshman-Start	Transfer-Start
ALS	883	220	100	100
BUS	648	110	87	64
EDU	336	82	97	93
EGR	731	95	98	98
HEC	263	72	94	96
L&S	2,580	628	88	76
NUR	110	61	100	100
PHM	60	4	100	100
Total	5,606	1,272	92	84

Appendix A details participation rates in specific high-impact learning experiences 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 high-impact learning experiences 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 high-impact learning experiences. Transfer student participation is within one percentage point of the overall rate for capstone experiences and service learning courses. Activities where the difference in participation rates is at least 10 percentage points include: study abroad (14 percent compared to 25 percent overall), living in a residential learning community (3 percent compared to 15 percent overall), and participating in FIGs (2 percent compared to 14 percent overall).

Appendix A
Comparison of Participation Rates in Types of High-Impact Learning Experiences, Bachelor's Degree Recipients in 2015-16

	Percent of Graduates			
	All Graduates	Targeted Minority Grads	First Generation Graduates	Transfer-Start Graduates
Study Abroad (Unduplicated)	25	25	17	14
UW-Madison Program	24	25	17	13
Other Program	2	1	0	0
Residential Learning Comm.	15	20	13	3
First-Year Interest Group (FIG)	14	26	16	2
Service Learning Course	13	17	15	12
Independent/Directed Study	31	46	32	23
Research Exp. (Unduplicated)	40	44	38	32
Research Course	25	29	22	19
Thesis Course	3	1	2	3
Research Work Experience	21	22	21	15
Workplace Exp. (Unduplicated)	30	27	32	26
Co-op	6	5	7	4
Student Teaching	2	2	2	3
Practicum	11	11	13	12
Internship	18	18	21	18
Honors Course	28	23	23	21
Seminar Course	42	55	45	34
Capstone Experience	41	38	45	40
Total Graduates	6,888	608	1,293	1,272

Appendix B
Comparison of Participation Rates in Types of High-Impact Learning Experiences, Bachelor's Degree Recipients in 2015-16

	Percent of Graduates			
	All Graduates	WI Resident	MN Resident	Non-Resident
Study Abroad (Unduplicated)	25	22	33	30
UW-Madison Program	24	22	32	26
Other Program	2	0	2	4
Residential Learning Comm.	15	13	14	19
First-Year Interest Group (FIG)	14	14	16	12
Service Learning Course	13	14	11	11
Independent/Directed Study	31	32	30	29
Research Exp. (Unduplicated)	40	40	45	37
Research Course	25	24	29	25
Thesis Course	3	3	4	4
Research Work Experience	21	22	24	16
Workplace Exp. (Unduplicated)	30	31	28	23
Co-op	6	7	9	5
Student Teaching	2	3	2	1
Practicum	11	14	9	6
Internship	18	19	17	17
Honors Course	28	26	31	30
Seminar Course	42	42	41	41
Capstone Experience	41	44	43	33
<i>Percentage one or more</i>	91	91	92	88
Total Graduates	6,888	4,257	752	1,879

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 high-impact learning experiences, 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 percent whereas this high-impact learning experiences report is a census of graduating seniors. It is 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 report only captures activities that are recorded on the UW-Madison student record.
3. This 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, BioHouse, and Open House: Gender 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

Research Work Experience

Definition: Graduates who have employment records indicating they were paid on research activity 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. A similar metric was introduced in the 2014 Wisconsin Experience Report, but in that report we counted students paid with research funds. Beginning in 2015, we count students paid on research activity, regardless of the source of funding.

Source: HRS: UW_PY_NS_ERD_VW

Comments: In this analysis, 3 percent of graduates took an undergraduate thesis course, 25 percent of bachelor's degree recipients can be identified as having taken a research course and 21 percent of graduates were paid on a research activity. Overall, 40 percent of UW-Madison graduates had at least one of these research experiences. This percentage is similar to the 38 percent 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: SIS: CLASS_NOTES, SIS: 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 2015-16 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 2015-16 graduates, we identify 13 percent of graduates who have taken a class with a service learning component. This is much lower than the 44 percent 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, 41 percent of bachelor's degree recipients can be identified as having taken such a class. This is about 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.)" (42 percent).

Workplace 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, 30 percent 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 percent 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, 14 percent of bachelor's degree recipients can be identified as having had such an experience. This is much lower than the 26 percent 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 a study abroad experience in at least one semester, 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 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 percent).

Source: InfoAccess: UW.RETENTION_SEMESTER_HISTORY (UW-Madison programs).

ISIS: U_SR_TSCRPT_TXT (non UW-Madison programs).