



**EMBARGOED**  
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## **SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS YIELDS POSITIVE COLLEGE OUTCOMES AND ENGAGING COLLEGES HAVE HIGHER RETENTION AND GRADUATION RATES, SURVEY FINDS**

One in five first-year students had difficulty learning course material *and* getting help with coursework according to a new report released today from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Their peers who found it easier to get help spent more time studying and made greater use of effective learning strategies, resulting in higher grades and greater commitment to staying in school.

The report indicates that getting help made a difference over and above study time and learning strategies. These results signal the imperative to provide accessible and effective learning support services and to ensure that students who encounter academic difficulty get the help they need.

“Students don’t necessarily enter college knowing what it takes to be successful learners” says NSSE Director Alexander C. McCormick. “These results demonstrate that if higher education is to ratchet up student learning and success, we need to help students crack the code so they can succeed in college and beyond.”

***Engagement Insights—Annual Results 2016*** details results from more than 300,000 first-year and senior students attending 512 U.S. bachelor’s-granting institutions in spring 2016.

Given the increasing national importance of postsecondary degree completion, the report also explored the relationship between first-year students’ engagement and institutional retention and graduation rates. While retention and graduation were positively related to student engagement, the strongest association was for the amount of time students spent preparing for class. McCormick noted that these findings “emphasize the importance of setting high expectations in an environment that promotes educationally purposeful activities.”

Other noteworthy findings from NSSE—and its companion surveys, the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE)—include:

- Seniors who were more inclined toward a growth mindset—meaning they embrace challenges and believe that rising to those challenges can enhance their

capabilities—were more likely to use effective learning strategies and to engage in reflective and integrative learning.

- About nine out of ten students felt safe and comfortable being themselves at their institution, and about eight in ten felt valued by the institution. However, students with a gender identity other than man or woman, as well as those who are African American, Native American, or multiracial, were less likely to feel safe and welcomed by their institutions.
- About one in four beginning college students took college-level courses during high school as part of a dual enrollment program. Students who took academically rigorous dual-credit courses were significantly more engaged in the first year of college.
- On average, African American faculty interacted with students most often, while White and Asian men faculty did so the least. Asian women and Latina faculty were most likely to implement effective teaching practices, while White men faculty were the least likely.

The report also features examples from Carlow University, Oregon Institute of Technology, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, and Winthrop University illustrating the use of NSSE results to guide improvement efforts.

“NSSE data inform planning and decision making, provide a comprehensive snapshot of the quality of the undergraduate experience, and encourage institutions to adopt best models and practices” according to James A. Anderson, Chancellor of Fayetteville State University.

NSSE’s annual survey provides colleges and universities with rich data about the undergraduate experience to help them improve student learning and success. Summary results for all survey questions, Engagement Indicators, and High-Impact Practices by sex, major field, and institution type are available on the NSSE website:

[nsse.indiana.edu/links/summary\\_tables](https://nsse.indiana.edu/links/summary_tables).

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*Engagement Insights: Survey Findings on the Quality of Undergraduate Education—Annual Results 2016* can be downloaded from the NSSE website or ordered for \$20.

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