
COLLEGE STUDENTS' READINESS FOR WORK VARIES BY THEIR MAJOR AND THEIR USE OF CAREER RESOURCES, NATIONAL SURVEY FINDS

At a time when a college degree and employability are increasingly intertwined, 93% of seniors believe what they are learning in college is relevant to their career paths, according to new survey results released by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), based at the School of Education at Indiana University Bloomington. In addition, most seniors are highly confident in their career and post-college plans. Notably, confidence is positively related to conversations about career interests with professionals in the field, academic advisors, and family members. Yet while most colleges and universities seek to help their students prepare for success in the workplace, only about half of seniors avail themselves of these resources during their final year.

"Higher education does much more for its students than qualify them for a job," says NSSE Director Alexander C. McCormick. "Yet getting a job and other anticipated labor market returns figure prominently in the benefits sought from the college experience by students, families, and policy makers."

NSSE's latest volume in its *Annual Results* series, *Engagement Insights: Survey Findings on the Quality of Undergraduate Education*, presents key findings from the 2018 administration of NSSE and its companion survey, the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE). NSSE surveyed first-year and senior students attending nearly 500 bachelor's degree-granting institutions across the United States in spring 2018, while FSSE results came from 113 institutions, almost all of which administered NSSE as well. *Annual Results 2018* also provides findings from a subset of NSSE respondents who answered additional questions about their career goals, use of career planning resources, and related activities. Results from NSSE's Topical Module on First-Year Experiences and Senior Transitions provide further insights into seniors planning to take less-traveled paths after college. Noteworthy findings include:

- Three in five seniors interviewed or shadowed a professional in the field, while about half attended a talk or panel discussion about careers.
- Black first-year students attending historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) took greater advantage of career preparation resources than their peers at predominantly White institutions (PWIs), and they also expressed greater certainty about their career goals.
- Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) faculty who teach lower-division students at HBCUs discussed careers with students more often than their PWI counterparts did.
- About 9 in 10 seniors believed what they were learning in college was relevant to their career plans, with a modest difference favoring majors in professional fields compared to arts and sciences majors.

- Arts and sciences majors were notably less likely than others to say their career goals had remained the same since beginning college, and they also expressed somewhat lower confidence than other majors in their career plans.
- Seniors' beliefs about how much their college experience helped them develop career-related skills differed by major. Those in social service professions reported above-average growth in understanding people of other backgrounds, while seniors in communications, media, and public relations were above average on perceived gains in writing and speaking. Majors in engineering and physical sciences reported below-average growth in these areas. The strongest beliefs about growth were in thinking critically and analytically, with few meaningful differences by major.

Annual Results 2018 also summarizes students' participation in High-Impact Practices (HIPs). Service-learning had the highest participation rate, with about half of first-year students and three fifths of seniors. About half of seniors had an internship or other field experience.

According to Sally M. Johnstone, President of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, "NSSE results are a great starting point to understand what is, or is not, working well in your institution. It's like a flashlight shining a path toward improving your students' success." Demonstrating this idea in action, the report describes the use of NSSE results to inform improvement efforts at Middle Georgia State University, University of San Diego, University of Wisconsin–Madison, and Westmont College.

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](#). The site also includes an interactive data tool.

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Engagement Insights: Survey Findings on the Quality of Undergraduate Education—Annual Results 2018 can be downloaded from the NSSE website or ordered for \$20.

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