Periodically, Utah State University administers the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to 1st year and senior students. The basic purpose of NSSE is to determine what students actually do as part of their college experience and how they assess that experience in terms of their academic capabilities and progress.

The last use of NSSE at USU was during the 2007-2008 academic year. The survey was administered online to a sample of 2,611 1st year and 1,920 senior students. Completed surveys were received from 33.2% (n = 867) of the 1st year students and 42.4% (n = 815) of the senior students. Responses rates for all institutions using NSSE that year were 30% for 1st year students and 33% for seniors.

The purpose of this brief report is to use USU’s NSSE results to assess difference in academic engagement between 1st year and senior students. How do 1st year student academic activities differ from those of senior students? How seniors perceive that their USU experience has affected their skills, knowledge, and personal development compared to the perceptions of freshmen? NSSE results for these two issues are provided below.

### RESULTS: ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSSE Question</th>
<th>1st Year Students</th>
<th>Senior Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>During the current school year, how often did students?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Make a class presentation</td>
<td>Often or Very Often 13%</td>
<td>56%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in</td>
<td>Often or Very Often 54%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources</td>
<td>Often or Very Often 66%</td>
<td>73%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work with other students on projects during class</td>
<td>Often or Very Often 41%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments</td>
<td>Often or Very Often 41%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions</td>
<td>Often or Very Often 50%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss ideas from readings or classes with faculty members outside of class</td>
<td>Often or Very Often 18%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
During the current school year how much writing did students do?

- Written papers or reports of **20 pages or more**
  - Less Than Five: 97% 83%
- Written papers or reports **between 5 and 19 pages**
  - Less Than Five: 85% 72%
- Written papers or reports of **fewer than 5 pages**
  - Less Than Five: 31% 33%

In a typical week, how many:

- Problem sets did students complete that took **more** than an hour?
  - Less Than Five: 81% 76%
- Problem sets did students complete that took **less** than an hour?
  - Less Than Five: 77% 82%
- Hours did students spend preparing for class?
  - Ten or Less: 46% 38%

Percent of students who worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements

- 5% 25%

RESULTS: PERCEPTIONS

During the current school year, how much did coursework emphasize the following mental activities?

- **Memorizing** facts, ideas, or methods from courses and readings
  - Quite a Bit or Very Much: 64% 57%
- **Analyzing** the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory
  - Quite a Bit or Very Much: 75% 84%
- Coursework emphasizes: **Synthesizing** and organizing ideas, information, or experiences
  - Quite a Bit or Very Much: 59% 73%
- **Making judgments** about the value of information, arguments, or methods
  - Quite a Bit or Very Much: 63% 69%
- **Applying** theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
  - Quite a Bit or Very Much: 71% 74%
To what extent did students' experience at USU contribute to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?

- Acquiring a broad general education
  - Quite a Bit or Very Much: 76% 73%
- Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills
  - Quite a Bit or Very Much: 60% 79%
- Writing clearly and effectively
  - Quite a Bit or Very Much: 64% 75%
- Speaking clearly and effectively
  - Quite a Bit or Very Much: 53% 66%
- Thinking critically and analytically
  - Quite a Bit or Very Much: 80% 87%
- Analyzing quantitative problems
  - Quite a Bit or Very Much: 68% 77%
- Using computing and information technology
  - Quite a Bit or Very Much: 77% 84%
- Working effectively with others
  - Quite a Bit or Very Much: 66% 80%
- Learning effectively on your own
  - Quite a Bit or Very Much: 69% 76%

How did students evaluate their entire educational experience at USU?

- Good or Excellent: 90% 88%

If students could start over again, would they go to USU?

- Probably/Definitely Yes: 91% 90%

SUMMARY

Senior students write more long papers and spend more time studying than freshmen. They are more frequently involved in making class presentations, working with classmates outside of class on assignments, and participating with faculty in outside research.

Seniors perceive that their USU coursework involves less memorizing, but more analyzing and synthesizing than is perceived by freshmen regarding their coursework. Asked how their USU experience contributed to the knowledge, skills, and personal development in various areas, there was essentially no difference by level regarding acquiring a broad general education, but seniors saw more “value-added” in eight other areas covered by the NSSE questions.

Finally, when asked how they would evaluate their entire educational experience at USU and if they would come to USU again if they could start over, there was essentially no difference in the responses of 1st year and senior students.