A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College:
NSSE 2014 Answers from Students
University of Richmond

Each year the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) asks students at hundreds of colleges and universities to reflect on the time they devote to various learning activities. The topics explored are linked to previous research on student success in college.

Results from NSSE can provide prospective students with insights into how they might learn and develop at a given college. To help in the college exploration process, NSSE developed A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College to give students and their families key questions to ask during campus visits.

The following responses were provided by 728 UR students on the 2014 survey.

### Academics

**How much time do students spend studying each week?**
- First-year (FY) students spent an average of 19 hours per week preparing for class while seniors spent an average of 18 hours per week.

**Do courses challenge students to do their best?**
- 61% of FY students reported that their courses "highly" challenged them to do their best work.

**How much writing is expected?**
- In an academic year, FY students estimated they were assigned an average of 73 pages of writing and seniors estimated an average of 92 pages.

**How much reading is expected?**
- FY students estimated they spent an average of 12 hours per week on assigned reading, and seniors read 11 hours per week.

**How often do students make course presentations?**
- 43% of FY students and 75% of seniors "frequently" gave course presentations.

**Do class discussions and assignments include the perspectives of diverse groups of people?**
- 64% of FY students "frequently" included diverse perspectives in course discussions or assignments.

**Are students expected to use numbers or statistics throughout their coursework?**
- 47% of FY students "frequently" used numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue; 62% of seniors "frequently" reached conclusions based on their own analysis of numerical information.

### Experiences with Faculty

**Are faculty members accessible and supportive?**
- 62% of FY students rated the quality of their interactions with faculty as "high."

**How often do students talk with faculty members or advisors about their career plans?**
- 30% of FY and 65% of seniors "frequently" discussed career plans with faculty.

**Do faculty members clearly explain course goals and requirements?**
- 87% of FY students said instructors clearly explained course goals and requirements "quite a bit" or "very much."

**Do students receive prompt and detailed feedback?**
- 73% of FY students and 74% of seniors said instructors "substantially" gave prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments.

**How often do students talk with faculty members outside class about what they are learning?**
- 34% of FY students "frequently" discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class.

**How many students work on research projects with faculty?**
- 10% of FY students and 48% of seniors worked on a research project with a faculty member.
How many students study in other countries?
By their senior year, 55% of students had studied abroad.

How many students get practical, real-world experience through internships or field experiences?
By spring of their senior year, 84% of students had participated in some form of internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement.

What types of honors courses, learning communities, and other distinctive programs are offered?
During their first year, 16% of students participated in a learning community. By spring of their senior year, 64% of students had done (or were doing) a culminating senior experience.

Rich Educational Experiences

How many courses include community-based service-learning projects?
26% of FY students and 72% of seniors said "at least some" of their courses included a community-based service-learning project.

Notes
a. "Highly" is a 6 or 7 on a seven-point scale where 1 is "Not at all" and 7 is "Very much."
b. "Frequently" is "Often" or "Very often."
c. A "High" rating is a 6 or 7 on a seven-point scale where 1 is "Poor" and 7 is "Excellent."
d. "Substantially" is "Quite a bit" or "Very much."
e. "At least some" is defined by combining responses of "Some," "Most," and "All."

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