

Undergraduate Student Experiences



Introduction

Every three years, first- and final-year undergraduate students participate in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to share their perceptions on factors and practices associated with learning and campus experience¹. The most recent [survey](#) was administered in 2020². It is important to note that NSSE data is an aggregate representation of student perceptions of their experiences. It is not a comprehensive representation of individual students' varied experiences across the institution.

Facts and Figures

- Shown in Table 1, most respondents evaluated their entire educational experience as good or excellent and would choose the same university again if starting over. Despite positive ratings, UWindsor respondents indicated less overall satisfaction compared to students at peer institutions.

Table 1. Evaluation of Educational Experience in 2020 – UWindsor and Comparators

	First Year			Final Year		
	UWindsor	Ontario	Canada	UWindsor	Ontario	Canada
Entire Educational Experience (% Good or Excellent)	75%	77%*	77%*	67%	76%*	76%*
Choose Same University (% Probably Yes or Definitely)	81%	82%*	82%*	70%	77%*	78%*

* Indicates significantly higher scores than UWindsor.

- Shown in Table 2, almost half (48%) of first-year and 82% of final-year respondents participated in at least one High Impact Practice (HIP) over the course of their studies. The percentage of seniors who participated in an internship or field experience increased to 48% from 43% in 2017. HIPs enrich educational experiences and are related to positive outcomes such as work-engagement post-graduation³.

¹ The data points provided by NSSE indicate statistical significance between UWindsor and selected Ontario and Canadian comparator groups.

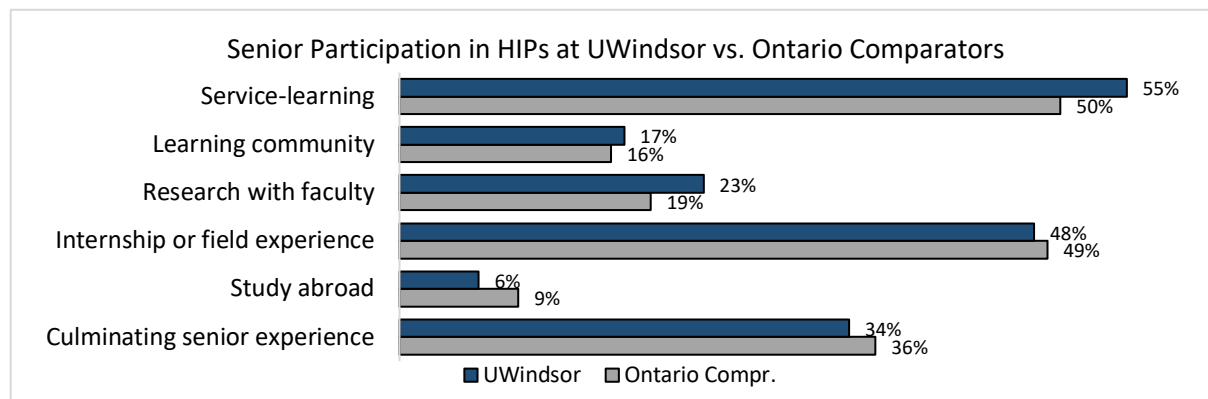
² The response rate was 52%. Females are slightly over-represented but other demographic variables including Domestic/Visa, Full/Part-time, Living on/off campus are reflective of the student body. Almost all responses (98%) were collected before Covid-19 disruptions.

³ Busteded, B., & Seymour, S. (2015). Many college graduates not equipped for workplace success. Retrieved from Gallup.com October 19, 2015.

Table 2. Percentage of HIPs at UWindsor (Completed or in Progress)

	First Year			Final Year		
	2020	2017	2014	2020	2017	2014
Service-learning	44%	47%	39%	55%	58%	52%
Learning community	7%	9%	10%	17%	19%	17%
Research with faculty	4%	4%	5%	23%	22%	22%
Internship or field experience	-	-	-	48%	43%	43%
Study abroad	-	-	-	6%	6%	6%
Culminating senior experience	-	-	-	33%	30%	30%
Participated in at least one	48%	50%	44%	82%	80%	78%
Participate in two or more	6%	7%	8%	54%	51%	50%

- A significantly greater proportion of UWindsor seniors compared to seniors at Ontario peer institutions have taken a course that involved service-learning (55% and 50%, respectively) and have conducted research with a faculty member (23% and 19%, respectively; Figure 1).



- Compared to 2017, first-year respondents reported improved quality of interactions with faculty, staff, and students but fewer discussions with diverse others (e.g., races/ethnicities, religion, political views) while final-year respondents reported less effective teaching practices (Table 3).

Table 3. UWindsor (Mean) Engagement Indicator Changes over Time

	First Year		Final Year	
	2020	2017	2020	2017
Discussion with Diverse Others	37.9*	39.5	39.5	38.9
Effective Teaching Practices	34.0	34.9	32.4*	34.5
Quality of Interactions	38.5*	36.5	36.4	36.3

* Indicates mean score significantly differs from 2017 NSSE.

- UWindsor respondents generally perceived lower academic challenge than students at Ontario peer institutions. They also noted more frequent student-faculty interactions but lower quality interactions with those in the campus environment such as faculty, advisors, and staff (Table 4).

Table 4. Mean Engagement Indicator comparisons for UWindsor and Ontario Comparators

	First Year		Final Year	
	UWindsor	Ontario	UWindsor	Ontario
Academic Challenge				
Higher-Order Learning	35.3*	36.8	36.5*	37.6
Reflective & Integrative Learning	33.0*	34.3	34.4*	36.3
Learning Strategies	36.8*	35.4	34.8	34.0
Quantitative Reasoning	24.4*	26.4	26.6*	27.9
Learning with Peers				
Collaborative Learning	34.7*	33.8	34.2	34.0
Discussions with Diverse Others	37.9*	39.7	39.5*	40.8
Experiences with Faculty				
Student-Faculty Interactions	16.0*	14.9	20.8*	18.2
Effective Teaching Practices	34.0	34.3	32.4*	34.8
Campus Environment				
Quality of Interactions	38.5*	39.6	36.4*	39.5
Supportive Environment	31.0	31.5	26.2*	27.1

* Indicates UWindsor mean score significantly differs from Ontario Comparators.

- Most undergraduate students report financial pressures and academic performance as obstacles to academic progress. Almost 60% of first-year and 76% of final-year UWindsor students are employed, working an average of 17 hours per week. More UWindsor students volunteer than students from Ontario peer institutions (45% and 37%, respectively).
- A greater proportion of first-year respondents indicated difficulty with learning course material and time management than students at Ontario peer institutions. They also sought help more often from advisors, learning support services, peers, and family (Table 5).
- About 9 in 10 senior students (87%) said their courses prepared them for post-graduation. Many are confident in their ability to analyze information, problem solve, write clearly, and manage technology, but are less confident in their entrepreneurial and financial abilities. Experiences of UWindsor students are comparable to students from Ontario peer institutions (Table 6).

Table 5. Experiences of First-year Respondents at UWindsor and Ontario Comparators

	First Year	
	UWindsor	Ontario
Difficulties in the past year (% Difficult or Very difficult)		
Learning course material	20%*	16%
Managing time	40%*	37%
Help sought for coursework (% Often or Very often)		
Faculty members	23%	22%
Academic advisors	18%*	15%
Learning support services	18%*	15%
Friends or other students	72%*	68%
Family members	29%*	28%

* Indicates UWindsor score significantly differs from Ontario Comparators.

Table 6. Skills and Abilities for Senior Respondents at UWindsor and Ontario Comparators

	Final Year	
	UWindsor	Ontario
Confidence in ability to complete tasks requiring the following skills and abilities (% Quite a bit or Very much)		
Critical thinking and analysis	87%	90%
Creative thinking and problem solving	88%*	90%
Research skills	77%	78%
Clear writing	80%	82%
Technological skills	70%	70%
Financial and business management skills	41%	40%
Entrepreneurial skills	37%	34%
Leadership skills	72%	75%

* Indicates UWindsor score significantly differs from Ontario Comparators.

- While overall classroom experiences are positive, first-year and final-year respondents reported course instruction by professors (34% and 38%, respectively) and quality of classrooms (26% and 25%, respectively) are areas for improvement.

NSSE Data

Over 5 million students from 1600+ post-secondary institutions have participated in NSSE, which was developed according to theory and research on student involvement⁴, school and academic integration⁵, student outcomes⁶ and engagement⁷. NSSE emphasizes good practices in

⁴ Astin, A. W. (1999). Student involvement. A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40(5), 518-529.

⁵ Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*, (2nd ed.,). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

⁶ Pascarella, E. T. (1985). Students' affective development within the college environment. *Journal of Higher Education*, 56(6), 640-663.

⁷ Kuh, G.D., Schuh, J.S., Whitt, E.J., & Associates. (1991). *Involving colleges: Successful approaches to fostering student learning and personal development outside the classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

undergraduate education including student-faculty contact, cooperation among students, active learning, prompt feedback, high expectations and respect for diverse talents and ways of learning⁸.

Importantly, NSSE assesses HIPs and engagement indicators. HIPs give students interactive experiences with opportunities for feedback, reflection, and demonstration of competence. Engagement as identified in NSSE has positive, modest effects on grades and persistence into second year for historically underserved students⁹. Institutions use NSSE data for accountability and transparency, benchmarking, faculty and staff development, and institutional advancement. NSSE is limited since it relies on students' self-report data and retrospection of experiences. Further, variations within and across institutions may result from non-traditional university student experiences.

Best Practices

The University of Windsor's [Office of Student Experience](#) offers programs and services to help students transition through university life, support mental health, encourage leadership development, and enhance student support and engagement. The [Aboriginal Education Centre](#); [Belonging, Inclusivity, Diversity and Equity \(BIDE\) Institute](#); [Wellness Outreach Office](#); [International Student Centre](#); [Student Accessibility Services](#); and [Student Success and Leadership Centre](#) are some examples of centres on campus that aim to improve student experience and student success.

Other programs and services that specifically target the undergraduate student experience include the [Advising Centre](#) which helps students navigate their academic journey; the [Outstanding Scholars Program](#) which creates mentoring relationships between high-achieving students and faculty through paid research opportunities; and mental health initiatives for students living in residence including anti-stress kits, wellness walks, and positive messages hung up around the residence buildings.

Thinking Questions

1. What are some ways that the University can help make the undergraduate student experience the best it can be?
2. How can the University better support a transformational undergraduate student experience?

⁸ Chickering, A.W., & Gamson, Z.F. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *American Association for Higher Education Bulletin*, 39(7), 3-7.

⁹ Kuh, G., Cruce, T. M., Shoup, R., Kinzie, J., & Gonyea, R. (2008). Unmasking the effects of student engagement on first-year college grades and persistence. *Journal of Higher Education*, 79(5), 540-563.

Appendix A

2021 Initiatives and Activities for Students

Student Success and Leadership Centre

- **Bounce Back** – A four-week program that offers a holistic approach to increase academic performance through effective learning strategies such as time management, essay and exam prep as well as social adjustment, stress, mental health.
- **Bounce Back 2.0** – A program designed to continue to provide support and community for graduates of the Bounce Back program. This program provide opportunities for academic and personal growth, but also peer support and community for its participants.
- **Campus Compass** – A weekly virtual drop-in designed to support students on a variety of issues through live system navigation. Supports include mental health, academic, financial and more.
- **Outstanding Scholars Peer Mentors** – An eight-week Peer Mentor program to incoming first-year Candidates. It offers Scholars the opportunity to help new students transition into the scholarly life of the university.
- **Lancer Gaming** – Opportunities for an academic break to cheer on the Lancers!
- **Head Start** - Aimed at helping incoming first year undergrad students feel prepared to start their academic journey – creating connections, establishing familiarity with campus supports and people.
- **Welcome Week** – Aimed at forming connections between incoming first year undergrads and other students, including upper year create connections throughout orientation and transition programs as well as host socials and events supporting charitable causes throughout the year.
- **Turtle Island** – Student conversation on Discord - Catch up with peers, find out about socials (such as game and movie nights), weekly engagement questions, and more!

International Student Centre

- Guest speakers and virtual presentations that focus on mental health and wellness.
- Weekly “Chat with a Nursing Student” session.

Residence

- Monthly health and wellness programming. Initiatives include handing out anti-stress kits, going on wellness walks, positive messages hung up around the residence buildings, and making stress-balls.
- Residence also participates in programming such as **Bell Let's Talk** and **Love Yourself**.

Student Health, Counselling, and Wellness Office

Direct Mental Health Support

- A variety of group therapy options for students for example, “Good Vibes Only” (experiencing stress, worry and difficulty coping), “Surf the Urge” (emotional and relational distress).

- Student Health Services – Physicians providing mental health appointments and also have psychiatrist one day per week.
- 24/7 mental health support also being offered by MySSP through phone/text.

Mental Health Training

- Student Health, Counselling, and Wellness Staff have provided trainings on variety of mental health topics to faculty, staff, and students over the past year and will continue to do so (e.g., managing Covid stress; suicide prevention, developing a growth mindset, Mental Health 101, talks on mental health resources both on and off campus, etc.). Also, specific faculties and depts, SoCA, Law, Business.

Wellness

- **Coping Toolkits.** A 9-part [Coping with Stress Toolkit](#) on Student Health, Counselling, and Wellness website and launched for December final exam period. Sent out via Daily News and emails to Associate Deans/Student Success Coordinators. Currently developing a Return to Campus toolkit that will feature content collaborations with LEAD and the Peer Support Centre.
- **Suicide Prevention.** Continuing to work on the development of our *It Matters that You're Here* campaign. This is a year-round campaign geared towards enhancing suicide awareness and prevention efforts on campus, fostering hope, and providing practical education that builds self-advocacy skills for students who are struggling.
- **Wellness Livestream.** The Livestream will feature team and campus-developed content focused on supporting wellness (e.g., healthy recipes, coping tips, etc.). Instagram: @uwinwellnesslive

Bide Institute

2SLGBTQ+ Drop-in Centre

- Drop-in centre Creates safer space for students of the community, with students who have been trained to specialize in issues relevant to 2SLGBTQ+ students. Currently operating in CAW Room 240 but hope to transfer to Wellness lounge once renovations are completed.

Wellness Lounge

- The Wellness Lounge will be a space for all students to use without having to worry about the noisy atmosphere associated with the CAW, Leddy Library West, and the anxieties of sitting alone in a tiny cubicle in a large area. Students will be able to come to the lounge to unwind, relax, or study in a quiet space. The location for this lounge is in Dillon Hall, in the former location of Campus Pride.