



## Using NSSE and the Senior Survey to Examine the Impact of the SAGES Program Case Western Reserve University

The present report utilizes a number of individual items from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and Case's Senior Survey (SS) to assess the impact of SAGES participation on the *two inaugural SAGES pilot classes*—the classes of 2006 and 2007. Rather than examine every item of each survey individually, we have chosen to group the survey items based on their similarity to SAGES' stated goals. Because of this conceptual grouping we have labeled findings as to which survey provided the results (i.e., NSSE or SS).

Students in these two SAGES pilot classes *chose* to participate in the program; therefore, the design of the study is not random. In an attempt to account for sampling bias we conducted analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) in which we statistically controlled for demographic characteristics before determining whether SAGES participation had an effect on the individual items<sup>1</sup>.

### SAGES stated goal:

SAGES students develop essential communications skills over several semesters by participating in seminar discussions, giving presentations, and writing intensively. In the SAGES program, writing is not an isolated activity. Instead, it partakes of the intellectual vitality of the seminar (and, ultimately, the capstone) experience.

### Related results:

Positive:

- As first-years and sophomores, those in SAGES

ES reported that they were significantly more likely than their non-SAGES classmates to ask questions in class; first-years and sophomores in SAGES were also more likely to give a class presentation (NSSE).

- First-years, sophomores and juniors in SAGES were significantly more likely than their non-SAGES classmates to say that Case contributed to their ability to speak clearly and effectively; first-years and sophomores in SAGES were more likely to say that Case contributed to their ability to write clearly and effectively (NSSE).

- First-years, sophomores, juniors and seniors in SAGES report having more assigned readings than non-SAGES classmates (NSSE).

- Sophomores in SAGES report writing more short papers (< 5 pages), and medium-length (5-19 pages) papers than their non-SAGES classmates. There were no group differences on the number of long (>20 page) papers assigned (NSSE).

- Those in SAGES were significantly more likely to report that they learned to write effectively while at Case (SS).

Neutral/Negative:

- SAGES and non-SAGES students reported equal gains in their ability to work effectively with others (NSSE).

- First-year SAGES students were significantly less likely than their non-SAGES peers to say that Case had contributed to their ability to learn on their own (NSSE).

- No group differences were found on items measuring the ability to acquire skills and knowl-

<sup>1</sup> For the NSSE items, we controlled for SAT math and verbal scores and gender. Because identifiers are not used in the Senior Survey, for those items we were only able to control for gender.

edge on one's own or on students' ability to communicate well orally (SS).

**SAGES stated goal:**

Under SAGES, every undergraduate has a faculty mentor from the moment he or she arrives on campus. The First Seminar leaders double as advisors to the students they teach, introducing them to the culture and resources of the research university and establishing close relationships with them from the very first semester.

**Related results:**

Positive:

- Students in SAGES are significantly more satisfied with their faculty advisor (SS).

Neutral:

- SAGES and non-SAGES students reported equal satisfaction with their freshman advisor and with the out-of-class availability of faculty (SS).

**SAGES stated goal:**

SAGES students explore the vast cultural and scientific resources of University Circle. They attend special lectures and presentations, and pursue research opportunities, arranged through SAGES' partnerships with major institutions such as the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Cleveland Botanical Garden, the Cleveland Institute of Music, and the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

**Related results:**

Positive:

- As first-years, those in SAGES were significantly more likely than their non-SAGES classmates to attend art exhibits and performances. Similarly, SAGES students are more likely to say that Case emphasizes the importance of attending campus events and activities (NSSE).

- Students in SAGES were significantly more likely to attend fine arts performances or exhibits.

They were also more likely to attend the Cleveland Museum of Art, the National History Museum, the Western Reserve Historical Society, and the Cleveland Botanical Garden (SS).

Neutral/Negative:

- SAGES students were significantly less likely to attend an event at the Cleveland Playhouse and there were no group differences in the frequency of attending the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the Great Lakes Science Center, the African American Museum, MOCA Cleveland, the Metroparks Zoo or sporting events at Jacobs Field, The Q or Browns Stadium (SS).

**SAGES stated goal:**

Case faculty members teach all First Seminars and most subsequent seminars. In addition, students have opportunities to learn from guest scholars, and from professionals in diverse fields, who have been drawn to Case by the Presidential Fellows and Dean's Seminar Leaders programs.

**Related results:**

Positive:

- As first-years, students in SAGES reported that they were significantly more likely to discuss ideas with faculty outside of the classroom. First-years in SAGES were also more likely to discuss grades with faculty members (NSSE).

- First-years and sophomores in SAGES were significantly more satisfied in their relationships with faculty and administrative personnel (NSSE).

Neutral:

- There were no group differences on the frequency with which students discussed career plans with a faculty member or worked with faculty on activities other than coursework (NSSE).

**SAGES stated goal:**

The ultimate goal is for all Case students to gain experience in defining a problem and then

developing a response to that problem, whether this involves research or artistic creation. SAGES accomplishes this goal by having all undergraduate students complete a capstone project- individually or in small groups- under the guidance of faculty mentors.

### Related results:

Positive:

- First-years in SAGES are significantly more likely to have coursework that requires them to make judgments about the value of information, arguments or methods.
- Sophomores are significantly more likely to write a paper that integrates ideas from various sources (NSSE).
- First-years, sophomores, and juniors are significantly more likely to participate in a learning community as part of their coursework (NSSE).
- Students in SAGES were significantly more likely than their non-SAGES classmates to take part in some sort of independent study, participate in faculty research, publish or present a paper off campus, take part in an arts performance or exhibition, and participate in some form of student media (i.e., newspaper, magazine, radio, etc) (SS).

Neutral/Negative:

- Students in SAGES say that their coursework is less likely to emphasize the memorization of facts, ideas, or methods. Similarly, SAGES students' coursework is less likely to focus on applying theories or concepts to practical problems in new situations (NSSE).

### Student satisfaction:

- Finally, results from the Senior Survey revealed that SAGES students were significantly more satisfied with the overall experience at Case and were more likely to say they would choose Case again, if given the choice.

### Conclusion:

Results indicate that, for the most part, the SAGES pilot program achieved its stated goals. With few exceptions, in those areas where the SAGES specifically focused its energies, students in the program tended to exhibit more positive outcomes than their peers in the general student population.

It should be reiterated, however, that the present analysis was based on students in the pilot program only. Unlike those in the full-implementation classes, students in the pilot *chose* to participate in SAGES. The first class to participate in the full-implementation of SAGES will graduate in 2008, at which point another analysis of the SAGES program will be conducted.

