

Enriching Educational Experiences

2012 National Survey of Student Engagement

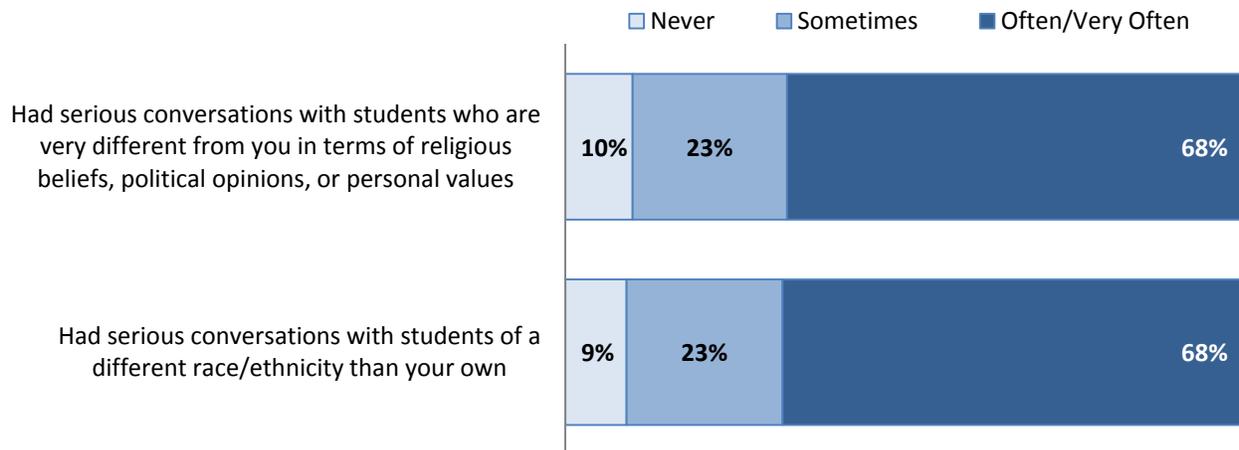
In spring 2012, we asked first-year and senior students at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) to participate in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).¹ The survey collects information about student engagement in educational practices which are known, through research, to enhance learning. This report examines participation in activities that complement formal learning and encourage personal development (e.g., experiential learning, experiences with diversity, and use of technology).



First-Year Students

The majority of students agreed that CWRU put quite a bit/very much emphasis on encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial/ethnic backgrounds (54%). That said, 91% of first-year students said they had serious conversations with students of a different race/ethnicity than their own, and 90% reported having serious conversations with students who were very different from them in terms of religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values (see figure 1).

Figure 1. First-Year Students: How often have you...



Other learning opportunities involve technology and co-curricular activities. Almost all first-year students used an electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment (92%) and the majority of students spent 6 or more hours per week participating in co-curricular activities (56%). Of the co-curricular activities listed on the survey, community service/volunteer work was the most popular, with 42% reporting participation and another 46% planning to participate before graduating from CWRU (table 1).

¹ Of the 1,824 students who received the survey, 33% (n=608) responded. The sample was made up of 45% of first-year students and 55% of seniors. No statistically significant differences existed in response rates by race/ethnicity, citizenship, or school, but seniors and women responded to the survey at a significantly higher rate.

Table 1. First-Year Participation in Co-curricular Activities

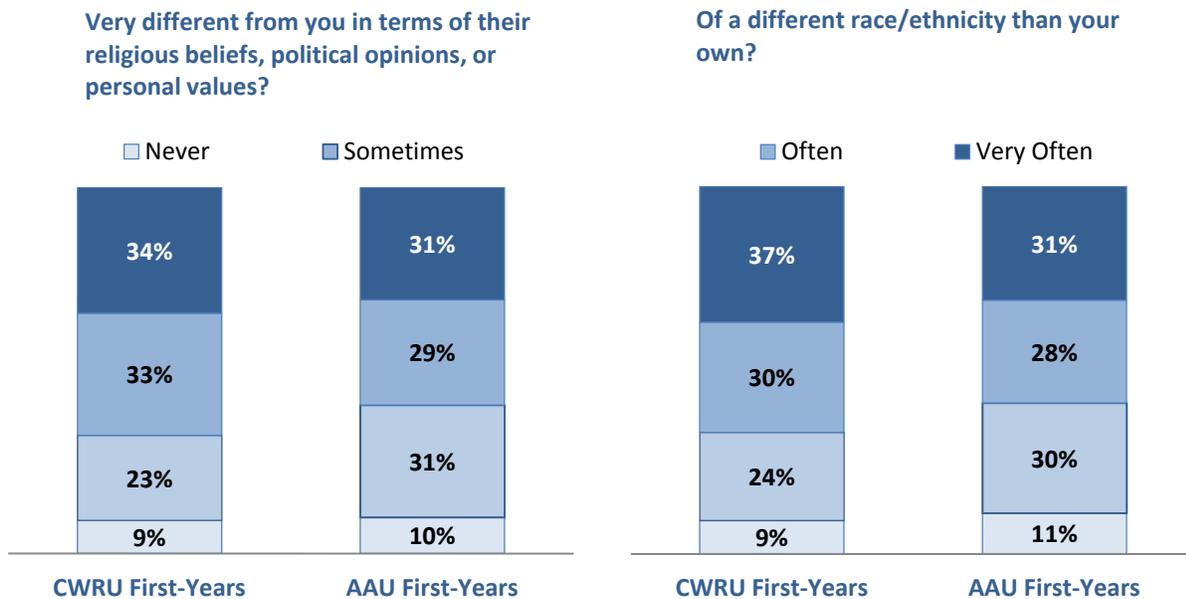
Done	Plan to Do	
	Before Graduation	Activity
42%	46%	Community service or volunteer work
21%	30%	Foreign (or additional) language coursework
10%	75%	Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op, or clinical assignment
9%	22%	Learning community/program where students take two or more classes together
5%	51%	Study abroad
3%	13%	Independent study or self-designed major

NSSE provides comparison data for each participating school. CWRU’s closest comparison group consists of the other members of the Association of American Universities (AAU) who participated in the NSSE during 2012.² Although they were no more or less likely than their peers to say that their institution emphasized encouraging contact among students of different economic, social, and racial/ethnic backgrounds, CWRU first-years were more likely to have serious discussions with students:

- ❖ Of a different race or ethnicity than their own
- ❖ Who were very different from them in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values

Compared to first-year students at other AAU schools, CWRU first-year students spent significantly more time participating in co-curricular activities; however, they were less likely than their AAU peers to participate in foreign language coursework and learning communities or other formal programs where students take two or more classes together.

Figure 2. First-Year Students: How often have you had serious conversations with students who are:

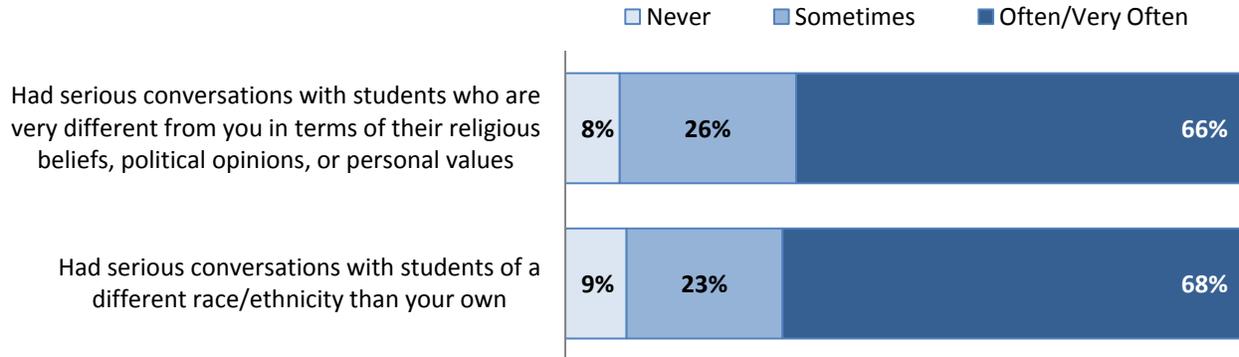


²2012 AAU NSSE participants - Rutgers University (New Brunswick/Piscataway), Syracuse University, and the universities of Arizona, Illinois (Urbana-Champaign), Michigan (Ann Arbor), Missouri (Columbia), and Oregon.

Seniors

The vast majority of seniors reported having serious conversations with students of a different race/ethnicity than their own (91%) or who were very different from them in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values (92%) (see figure 1). Half of seniors said that CWRU placed quite a bit/very much emphasis on encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial/ethnic backgrounds (50%).

Figure 3. Seniors: How often have you...



Like first-year students, almost all seniors used an electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment (94%). The majority of seniors spent 6 or more hours per week participating in co-curricular activities (59%). At the time they took the survey, the majority of seniors had already participated in:

- ❖ Community service/volunteer work
- ❖ A culminating senior experience
- ❖ A practicum, internship, field experience, co-op, or clinical assignment (table 2)

Table 2. Senior Participation in Co-curricular Activities

Done	Plan to Do Before Graduation	Activity
75%	8%	Community service or volunteer work
69%	29%	Culminating senior experience
69%	11%	Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op, or clinical assignment
50%	6%	Foreign (or additional) language coursework
25%	6%	Independent study or self-designed major
22%	5%	Study abroad
16%	4%	Learning community/program where students take two or more classes together

Compared to seniors at other AAU schools, CWRU seniors spent significantly more time participating in co-curricular activities. They were also more likely to participate in: a practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment; community service or volunteer work; and a culminating senior experience. CWRU seniors were significantly less likely than their AAU peers to participate in a learning community or other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together.

Enriching Educational Experiences Benchmark Scores

Using a combination of the items listed above, the researchers at NSSE developed benchmark scores for enriching educational experiences³. Benchmark scores consist of a weighted average of student responses calculated on a scale of 0 to 100. Please note, the score should not be converted into a percentage or be compared across different benchmarks (e.g., enriching educational experiences vs. student-faculty interaction); however, benchmark scores may be used to compare first-year students and seniors.

CWRU’s 2012 enriching educational experiences score for first-year students was 30. CWRU’s score was significantly higher than other NSSE 2012 schools; however, it was no different from AAU and Carnegie schools.⁴ Schools that scored in the top 10% on first-year enriching educational experiences had an average score of 35 for 2012. Since 2004, CWRU’s score for first-year students has remained relatively constant (figure 4).

CWRU’s enriching educational experiences score for 2012 seniors was 50. CWRU’s score was significantly higher than other AAU, Carnegie, and NSSE 2012 schools⁵. Schools that scored in the top 10% had an average score of 56 for 2012. CWRU’s 2012 enriching educational experiences benchmark score for seniors was significantly higher than the CWRU scores for 2004, 2005, and 2006; however, there were no significant differences in the 2007 and 2009 scores (figure 5).

Figure 4. Enriching Educational Experiences - CWRU First-Year Students

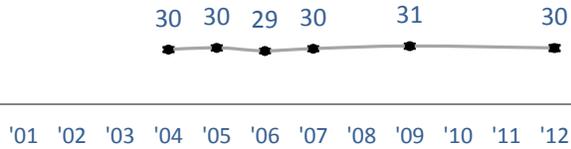


Figure 5. Enriching Educational Experiences CWRU Seniors

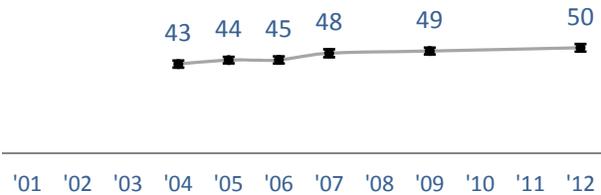
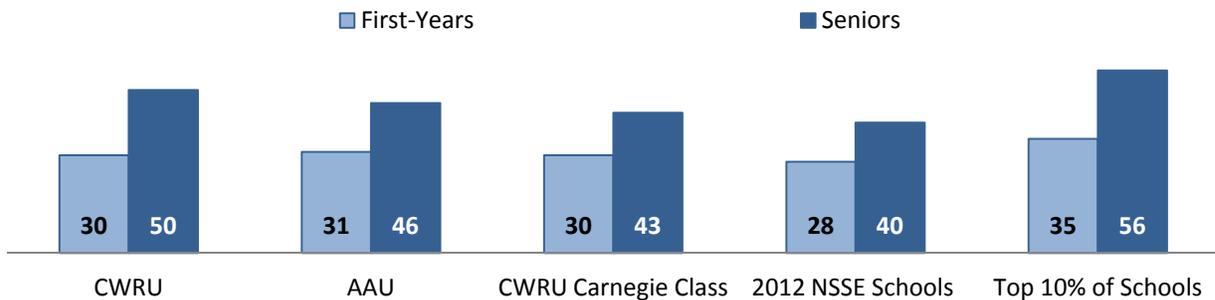


Figure 5. 2012 Enriching Educational Experiences Benchmark Scores



³ Benchmark scores before 2003 are not recorded because several of the benchmark items were changed in 2004.

⁴ The effect size for first-year students was small: NSSE 2012 (.14).

⁵ The effect size for AAU seniors was somewhat small (.26) while the effect size for the Carnegie (.42) and NSSE 2012 (.54) schools was fairly moderate.

What Else Do We Know About Enriching Educational Experiences?

Up to this point, we have discussed only the items that were included in the enriching educational experiences benchmark. There are other items on the survey that relate to such experiences which were not included in the benchmark. For instance, 30% of students had worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements and another 32% planned to do so before graduating from CWRU. More than half of students said CWRU contributed quite a bit or very much to their understanding of people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds (54%). Finally, the majority of students:

- ❖ Included diverse perspectives in class discussions or writing assignments (90%)
- ❖ Read a book on their own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment (78%)
- ❖ Attended an art exhibit, play, dance, music, theater, or other performance (87%)

Additional Information

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