

Student - Faculty Interaction

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 provides information about the level of interaction between students and faculty at CWRU both inside and outside of the classroom.

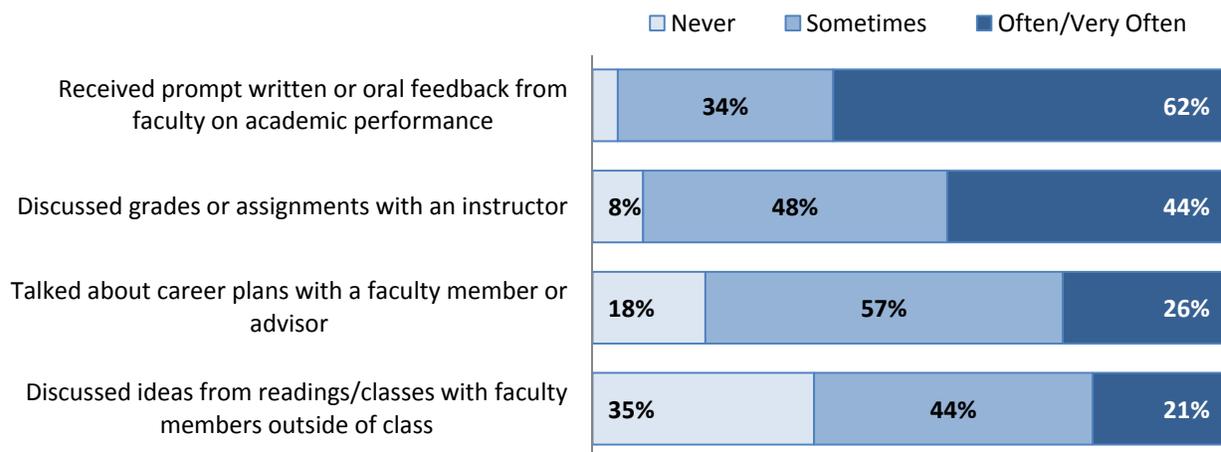


First-Year Students

To what extent do students and faculty interact with each other? The majority of first-year students said that during their first year of college they:

- ❖ Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor (92%)
- ❖ Received prompt written/oral feedback from faculty about their academic performance (86%)
- ❖ Discussed ideas from their readings/classes with faculty members outside of class (65%)
- ❖ Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor (83%) (see figure 1)

Figure 1. First-Year Student Interactions with Faculty



Exactly half of first-year students reported working with faculty members on activities other than coursework (e.g., committees, orientation, student life activities, etc). In terms of working with faculty on research projects (not required for their courses or programs), 8% of students had done so during their first-year at CWRU; 60% planned to do so before graduating; and 22% had yet to make a decision. Only 11% said they had no plans to pursue research opportunities with faculty that were not required for their program or courses.

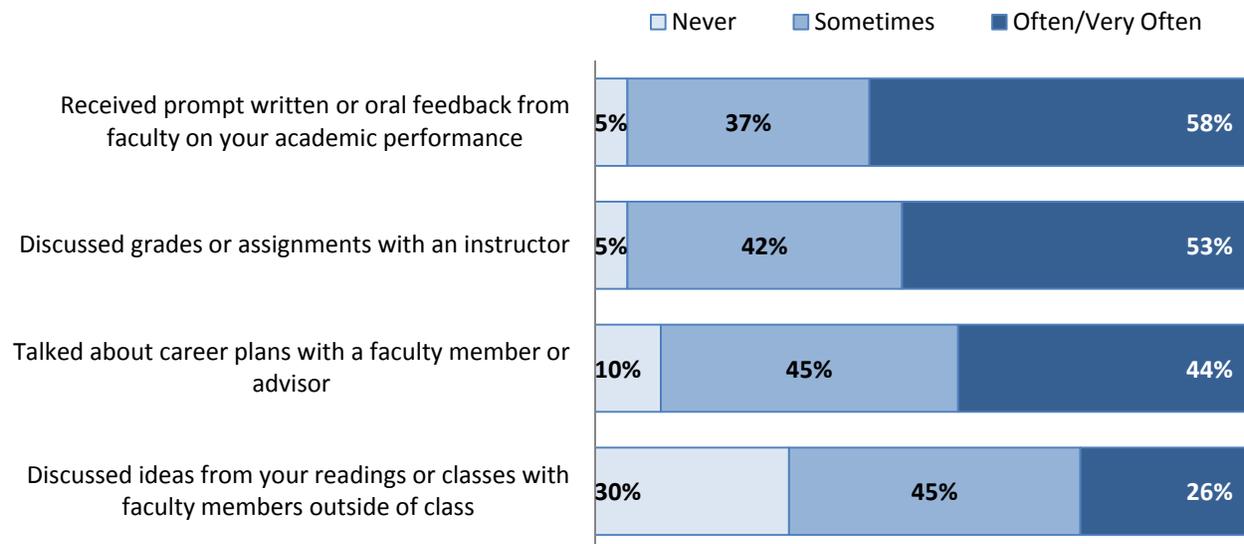
¹ Of the 1,824 students who received the survey, 33% (n=608) responded. The sample was made up of 45% of first-year students and 55% of seniors. No statistically significant differences existed in response rates by race/ethnicity, citizenship, or school, but seniors and women responded to the survey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

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 Compared to first-year students at other AAU schools, CWRU first-years were more likely to report receiving prompt written or oral feedback from faculty regarding their academic performance.

Seniors

During their senior year, almost all seniors said they received prompt written/oral feedback from faculty members regarding their academic performance (95%). Ninety-five percent (95%) had also discussed their grades or assignments with an instructor during the year (95%) and over half discussed ideas from their readings or classes with a faculty member outside of class. Approximately 9 out of 10 seniors also reported discussing their career plans with a faculty member or advisor.

Figure 2. Senior Interactions with Faculty



Over half of seniors worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework throughout their senior year (68%). Since starting college, just under half had worked with a faculty member on a research project that was not required for their courses or program (47%); 11% planned to do so before graduating from college; and 6% had not yet made a decision. A little more than one-third said they had no plans to pursue research opportunities with faculty that were not required for their program or courses (36%).

Compared to seniors at other AAU schools, CWRU seniors were more likely to:

- ❖ Talk with a faculty member or advisor about their career plans
- ❖ Work with faculty members on activities other than coursework
- ❖ Work with faculty on a research project that wasn’t required for their courses or program

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

Student-Faculty Interaction Benchmark Scores

Using a combination of the items listed above, the researchers at NSSE developed benchmark scores for student-faculty interaction. 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., academic challenge vs. student-faculty interaction); however, benchmark scores may be used to compare first-year students and seniors.

CWRU’s 2012 student-faculty interaction benchmark score for first-year students was 35. There were no significant differences between CWRU’s score and CWRU’s three comparison groups: other AAU schools, schools in CWRU’s Carnegie Class, and all schools that participated in the NSSE during 2012. Schools that scored in the top 10% on first-year student-faculty interaction had an average score of 44 for 2012. Since 2001, CWRU’s student-faculty interaction benchmark score has remained relatively constant for first-year students (see figure 3).

CWRU’s 2012 student-faculty interaction score for seniors was 47. CWRU’s score was significantly higher than the scores of other AAU, Carnegie Class, and NSSE 2012 schools³. Schools that scored in the top 10% on student-faculty interaction for seniors had an average score of 56 for 2012. Similar to first-year students, CWRU’s senior student-faculty interaction score has also remained relatively constant (see figure 4).

Figure 3. Student-Faculty Interaction First-Year CWRU Students

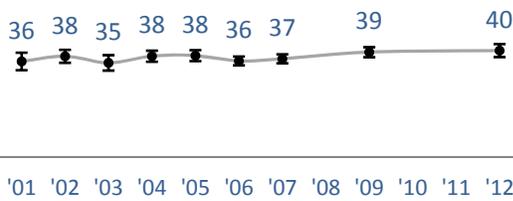


Figure 4. Student-Faculty Interaction CWRU Seniors

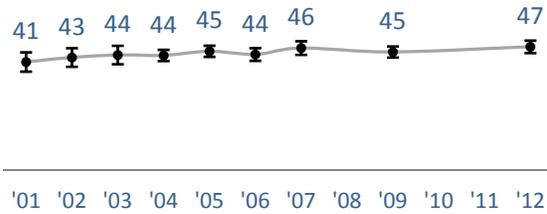
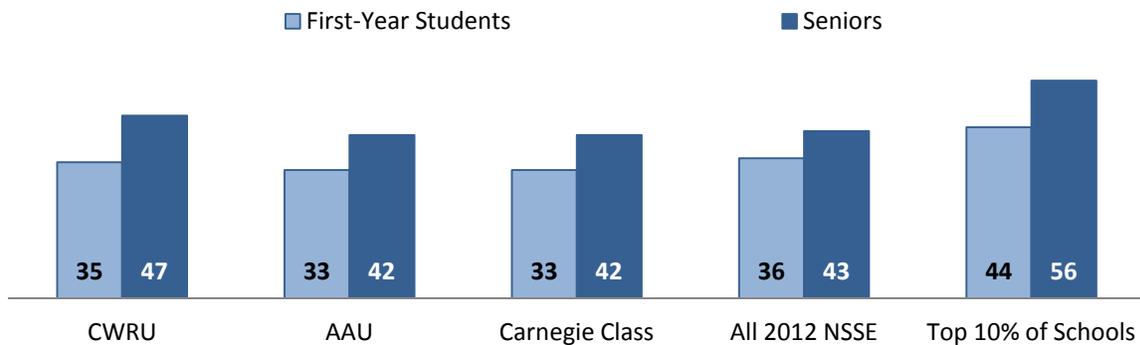


Figure 5. 2012 Student-Faculty Interaction Benchmark Scores Across Groups



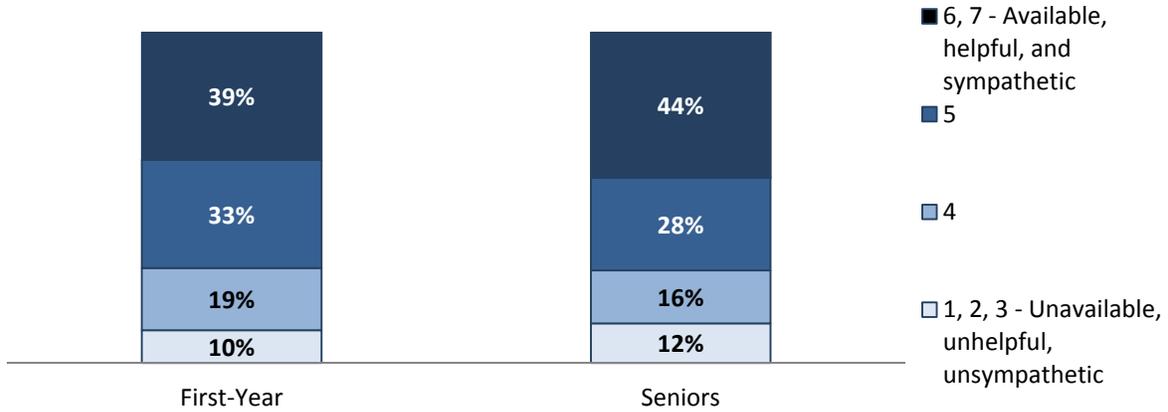
³ The effect sizes for seniors were also small: AAU (.24); Carnegie Class (.25); 2012 NSSE (.18)

What Else Do We Know about Student and Faculty Interactions at CWRU?

Up to this point, we have discussed only the items that were included in the student-faculty interaction benchmark. There are other items on the survey that relate to student-faculty interactions which were not included in the benchmark. For instance, almost all students said they worked harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor’s standards or expectations (93%) and 54% frequently did so. The vast majority of students agreed with the statement “Most of the time, professors in my courses make it clear what they expect me to learn” (88%).

Students were also asked to rate the quality of their relationships with faculty in terms of availability, helpfulness, and support. The lowest rating was one, defined as unavailable, unhelpful, and unsympathetic. The highest rating was seven, defined as available, helpful, and sympathetic. Figure 6 displays the ratings by first-year and senior students.

Figure 6. Quality of Relationships with Faculty



Additional Information

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