

General Education Outcomes Assessment

NSSE Survey: Freshmen Responses

Selected Items related to General Education Outcomes

Data Compiled by:

Office of Academic Assessment

University of Southern Maine

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Introduction

The NSSE Survey (National Survey of Student Engagement) is annually administered by the Indiana University-Center for Postsecondary Research, to over 700 participating colleges and universities. The survey measures the student engagement in various important activities (in and out of the classroom) that are positively related to high levels of learning and personal development. Students are asked to report their engagement activities at the end of the academic year. This report shows the most recent survey results from the USM freshmen students who responded to the NSSE 2007, 2009, and 2011 surveys (i.e. Fall '06 admits, Fall '08 admits, and Fall '10 admits). More specifically, the purpose of this report is to examine the items on the NSSE Survey which may be related to USM's General Education Outcomes. The outcomes are stated below, and the freshmen responses to the selected NSSE items are displayed in the following charts.

Vision, Goals, and Outcomes for General Education at USM

General education at USM is a coherent, integrative and rigorous liberal education that will enable our graduates to be world-minded, intentional, life-long learners. General education engages the academic community in substantive learning experiences that both illuminate and transcend the perspectives of various disciplines, and systematically foster the values, and dispositions knowledge, and skills essential for students to demonstrate:

Goal 1: Informed understandings of interrelationships between human cultures and the natural world

Goal 2: Analytical, contextual, and integrative thinking about complex issues

Goal 3: Effective communication using multiple forms of expression

Goal 4: Critical reflection upon, and informed action in, their roles as participants in multiple communities

Goal 5: Ethical action to contribute to the social and environmental welfare of local and global communities.

Profile of Freshmen Respondents

<u>Demographic Information</u>		<u>NSSE 2007</u>	<u>NSSE 2009</u>	<u>NSSE 2011</u>
		(Fall 06 Admits)	(Fall 08 Admits)	(Fall 10 Admits)
Total Number of Respondents		288	228	152
Gender	Males	34%	34%	39%
	Females	66%	66%	61%
Age	19-23 years old	74%	90%	80%
	24+ years old	26%	10%	20%
Enrollment	Full-time	85%	93%	89%
	Part-time	15%	7%	11%
Resident	On-campus	40%	49%	48%
	Off-campus	60%	51%	52%
Admission Status:	Began at USM	54%	76%	80%
	Began elsewhere	46%	24%	20%

Diverse and Active Learning Experiences

<u>Questionnaire Items</u>		<i>% who answered with "often" or "very often"</i>		
<i>How often have you done the following in the past year:</i>		<u>NSSE-07</u>	<u>NSSE-09</u>	<u>NSSE-11</u>
*Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments. (Goal 1)		56%	58%	54%
*Participated in a community-based project (i.e. service learning) as part of a regular course. (Goals 4 + 5)		7%	7%	7%

Mental Activities in Course Work

<u>Questionnaire Items</u>	<i>% who answered with "quite-a-bit" or "very much"</i>		
<i>How much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities in the past year:</i>	<u>NSSE-07</u>	<u>NSSE-09</u>	<u>NSSE-11</u>
* <u>Analyzing</u> the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components. (Goal 2)	72%	75%	82%
* <u>Synthesizing</u> and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships. (Goals 2 + 3)	57%	59%	64%
* <u>Making Judgments</u> about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions. (Goals 2 + 4)	58%	64%	64%
* <u>Applying</u> theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations. (Goals 4 + 5)	64%	70%	73%

Enriching Educational Activities

<u>Questionnaire Items</u>	<i>% who reported that they "had done in past year"</i>		
<i>Which of the following did you do in the past year:</i>	<u>NSSE-07</u>	<u>NSSE-09</u>	<u>NSSE-11</u>
*Practicum, internship, field experience or co-op or clinical experience. (Goals 4 + 5)	7%	11%	6%
*Community Service or volunteer work. (Goals 4 + 5)	31%	32%	21%

Educational and Personal Growth

<u>Questionnaire Items</u> <i>To what extent has your experience at USM contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas:</i>	<i>% who answered "quite-a-bit" or "very much"</i>		
	<u>NSSE -07</u>	<u>NSSE-09</u>	<u>NSSE-11</u>
*Writing and speaking clearly. (Goals 2 + 3)	65%	69%	79%
*Speaking clearly and effectively. (Goals 2 + 3)	52%	55%	61%
*Thinking critically and analytically. (Goals 2 + 3)	72%	79%	74%
*Learning effectively on your own. (Vision)	57%	68%	62%
*Solving complex and real-world problems. (Goal 2)	40%	49%	51%
*Developing a personal code of values and ethics. (Goal 4)	30%	42%	45%
*Contributing to the welfare of your community. (Goals 4 + 5)	28%	38%	40%

Brief Summary of Survey Data

According to the NSSE freshmen data, there were gradual increases in the percentages of students who reported engaging in high-level mental activities. That is, a higher percentage of the fall '10 freshmen said that their coursework emphasized analyzing ideas and applying theories than reported by the fall '06 freshmen. In addition, the recent freshmen reported higher gains in their educational and personal growth development. On the downside, there appears to be very little change regarding freshmen engagement in a field experience or a community project as part of their coursework; and there were decreases found in percentages of students doing volunteer work.

The student feedback from these selected survey items can be a useful beginning point for further examination of the general education outcomes, and can give faculty some information about first year students and their academic engagement at USM.