Background

“What students do during college counts more in terms of desired outcomes than who they are or even where they go to college.

That is, the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities is the single best predictor of their learning and personal development.”


For that reason it is important to find out what students at the University report about activities related to academic engagement.

Among the issues addressed by the survey, several are of specific interest to faculty. Two broad questions about studying and student interactions are examined here using data from the 2016 survey:

How does the emphasis the University places on studying relate to the number of hours student spend preparing for class?

What is the relationship between student perceptions of prompt and detailed feedback and the quality of their interactions with faculty?

Preparation for Class

Sufficient study time is crucial for successful outcomes in class. How well do students get the message and respond by devoting enough time to preparing for class?

Two related NSSE items address this question:

1. How much does your institution emphasize spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work?

2. About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)?

Seniors heard the message better than first-year students, but on average devoted less time to studying (mean = 15.5 hrs FY and 14.2 hrs SR). Both student levels exceeded peers at other New England public institutions, although most educators consider this amount of study time to be insufficient.

First-year students (left) said the number of hours spent in preparation rose between successively higher levels of emphasis. Mean values were significantly different.

Seniors (right) who rated institutional emphasis as “very much” spent significantly more time studying than either of the other response groups.

Student-Faculty Interaction

Students need to know how they are doing as their courses progress. Informative and timely feedback contributes to perceptions of faculty interest in their success and ultimately to the quality of interactions with their instructors.

Two NSSE items address the relationship:

1. During the current school year, to what extent have your instructors provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments?

2. Indicate the quality of your interactions with faculty.

First-Year and Senior students differed significantly from each other in their ratings of feedback and the quality of interactions with faculty.

On average First-Year students perceived feedback and quality of interactions to be a bit lower than Seniors did.

At both student levels and for both items, peers at other New England public institutions said the feedback and quality of interactions at their schools was higher than URI students reported.

NSSE data and reports for URI can be found at https://web.uri.edu/~ir/reports-and-surveys/nsse/