



2017-2018 Institutional Assessment: BCSSE/NSSE/FSSE and HEDS Alumni Survey Results September 2018

Full Report

In accordance with St. Olaf's [data collection schedule](#)¹, the college administered four institution-level surveys in 2017-18: the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE), the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), and the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Alumni Survey.

The BCSSE, NSSE, and FSSE surveys are administered through the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, and are designed to complement one another. First-year students complete the BCSSE prior to Week One. The survey measures first-years' experiences in high school as well as their expectations for college. The NSSE is administered to first-years and seniors in the spring, and provides longitudinal data on students' engagement with a variety of educational experiences (many of which parallel the types of experiences referenced in the BCSSE), as well as their interactions with other students, faculty, and staff. The FSSE is administered to current teaching faculty in the spring and asks similar questions about student engagement, faculty perceptions of students' academic experiences, and approaches to teaching. Finally, the HEDS Alumni Survey is administered by the HEDS Consortium to which St. Olaf belongs. This survey asks alumni who graduated from St. Olaf five to six years earlier to reflect back on the impact of their experiences at the college. Alumni from the classes of 2012 and 2013 completed the 2018 HEDS Alumni Survey during January.

Of the incoming class of first-year students, 93% responded to the BCSSE survey. For the spring administration of the NSSE, all first-years and seniors were invited to complete the survey, and 48% of first-years and 39% of seniors responded. The FSSE was administered to all faculty who taught or were currently teaching a course in 2017-18, and 54% responded to the survey. For the HEDS Alumni Survey, 40% of the alumni surveyed from the classes of 2012 and 2013 responded.

Two of these surveys (the HEDS Alumni Survey and the NSSE) also provide comparison data from other institutions that administered these surveys in 2017-18. While this report includes discussion of NSSE comparison data, we have not yet received comparison data for the HEDS Alumni Survey. For the NSSE, institutions have the opportunity to select up to three custom comparison groups from the list of participating institutions. St. Olaf selected the following

¹ The current document does not include the 2017-18 academic year; however, the 2017-18 institution-level survey schedule corresponds to AY 2020-21 in the data collection schedule

three comparison groups for 2017-18: a strategic comparison group (referred to as “Strategic” in this report), composed of 9 institutions from the [strategic comparison group](#) identified by the President’s Leadership Team and Board of Regents; an ACM/GLCA comparison group (referred to as “ACM/GLCA” in this report), composed of 18 institutions belonging to the Associated Colleges of the Midwest or the Great Lakes Colleges Association; and a Carnegie classification comparison group (referred to as “Carnegie” in this report), composed of 128 private, not-for-profit institutions with the same Carnegie classification as St. Olaf (Baccalaureate Colleges – Arts & Sciences Focus). See Appendix A for more information as well as a list of institutions in these groups.

The NSSE data report provides both frequency distribution information and mean responses for St. Olaf students as well as students from the three comparison groups. Means are calculated by assigning a number to each response option (e.g., 1-Very little, 2-Some, 3-Quite a bit, 4-Very much) and finding the average. The NSSE data report also provides statistical comparisons between St. Olaf students and students at the comparison institutions. All differences identified as significant in this report are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. The full NSSE frequency reports for [first-years](#) and [seniors](#) contain more details about these calculations.

Insights from the 2017-18 Institution-Level Surveys

Engagement Indicators

Of the 372 first-years who completed the NSSE in the spring of 2018, 346 also completed the BCSSE prior to their first year. This allows for comparisons between students’ academic experiences during their last year of high school or expectations for college and what they actually experience during their first year. Five of the ten NSSE Engagement Indicators (EIs), constructed by summarizing students’ responses to a set of related survey items, correspond with items on the BCSSE: Learning Strategies, Quantitative Reasoning, Collaborative Learning, Discussions with Diverse Others, and Student-Faculty Interaction. The first two—Learning Strategies and Quantitative Reasoning—allow for comparisons between students’ experiences during their last year of high school and their first year of college. The other three indicate matches or mismatches between students’ expectations for their first year of college and their actual experiences. Appendix C contains more details about the Engagement Indicators and the NSSE items used to create each Indicator.

Table 1. Average Engagement Indicator scores for first-years: pre-college v. first year

Engagement Indicator	Average Score – BCSSE	Average Score – NSSE	Difference (NSSE - BCSSE)
Learning Strategies	37.6	38.2	+0.6
Quantitative Reasoning	30.5	27.3	-3.2
Collaborative Learning	37.9	35.6	-2.3
Discussions with Diverse Others	46.2	42.8	-3.4
Student-Faculty Interaction	33.1	21.6	-11.5

Table 1 shows the average scale scores (out of 60) for each of the Engagement Indicators for the students who took both the BCSSE and the NSSE. Only the Learning Strategies EI increased from the BCSSE to the NSSE. Looking at individual scale items illuminates the key discrepancies between students’ high school experiences or college expectations and their first-year experiences. The data discussed below also include comparisons with the sample of St. Olaf seniors who responded to the NSSE, the NSSE data from the three institutional comparison groups, and corresponding data from the FSSE. When relevant, HEDS Alumni data are also presented.²

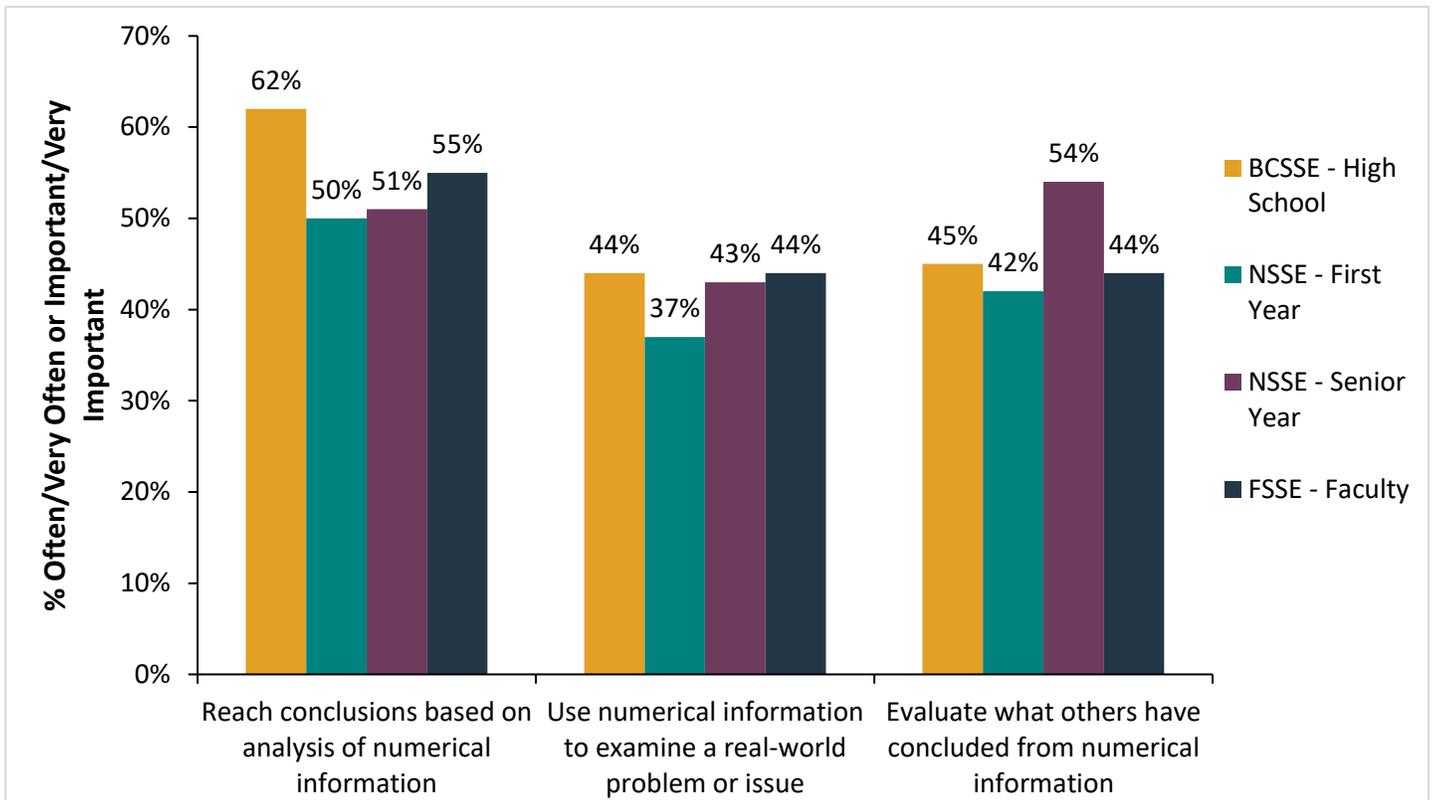


Figure 1. Quantitative Reasoning

For the Quantitative Reasoning EI (Figure 1³), the largest gap appears between students’ experiences in high school drawing conclusions by analyzing numerical information and engagement with this same activity during their first year at St. Olaf.

² Any reference to “first-years”, “seniors”, “students”, “faculty”, or “alumni” refer only to those who responded to the relevant survey. Appendix B contains more information about the respondents to each survey.

³ Response options for students are always identical. Response options for faculty may differ due to slightly different wording for some FSSE questions and are noted in the y-axis labels for the graphs. However, there are always the same number of response options for both faculty and students.

- Similar to first-years, only 51% of seniors report analyzing numerical information in the previous year.
- The full NSSE results with all first-years (including the 26 additional students who did not complete the BCSSE) indicate that St. Olaf students are similar on average to first-years at peer institutions from all three comparison groups (Strategic, ACM/GLCA, Carnegie) in their quantitative reasoning experiences. The same is true for seniors.
- Fifty-five percent of faculty report that it is “important” or “very important” for students to reach conclusions based on the analysis of numerical information.⁴
- Among alumni, 78% feel that their time at St. Olaf contributed “quite a bit” or “very much” to their development of quantitative literacy skills.

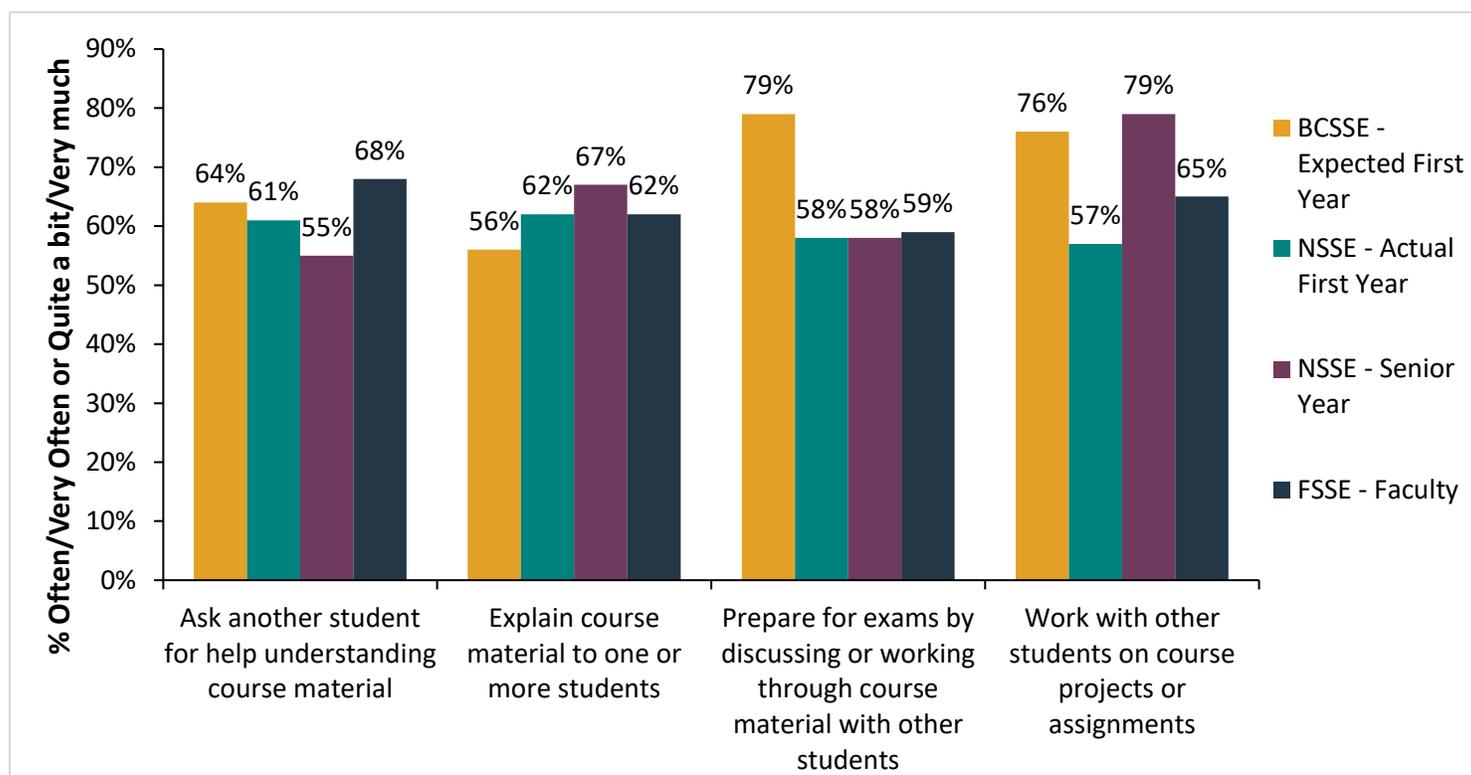


Figure 2. Collaborative Learning

For the Collaborative Learning EI (Figure 2), a greater proportion of incoming first-years expect to work with other students to prepare for exams and on projects or assignments than actually report doing so during their first year.

- Again, the full NSSE results show that actual first-year student experiences in these areas are similar at St. Olaf compared to other institutions.

⁴ For many questions on the FSSE, faculty are asked to answer based on a particular course section they are currently teaching or taught during the current academic year.

- Compared to first-years, a similar proportion of seniors report working with other students to prepare for exams “often” or “very often”, but many more report working with other students on projects or assignments.
 - The mean response for seniors who report working with other students on projects or assignments is significantly higher compared to other institutions (St. Olaf, $M = 3.1$ on a 4-point scale; Strategic, $M = 2.9$; ACM/GLCA, $M = 2.9$; Carnegie, $M = 2.9$).
- Fifty-nine percent of faculty indicate that they encourage students “quite a bit” or “very much” to work with other students to prepare for exams in their course, and 65% encourage collaborative student work on projects or assignments.
- Seventy-five percent of alumni report that their time at St. Olaf contributed “quite a bit” or “very much” to their development of teamwork skills.

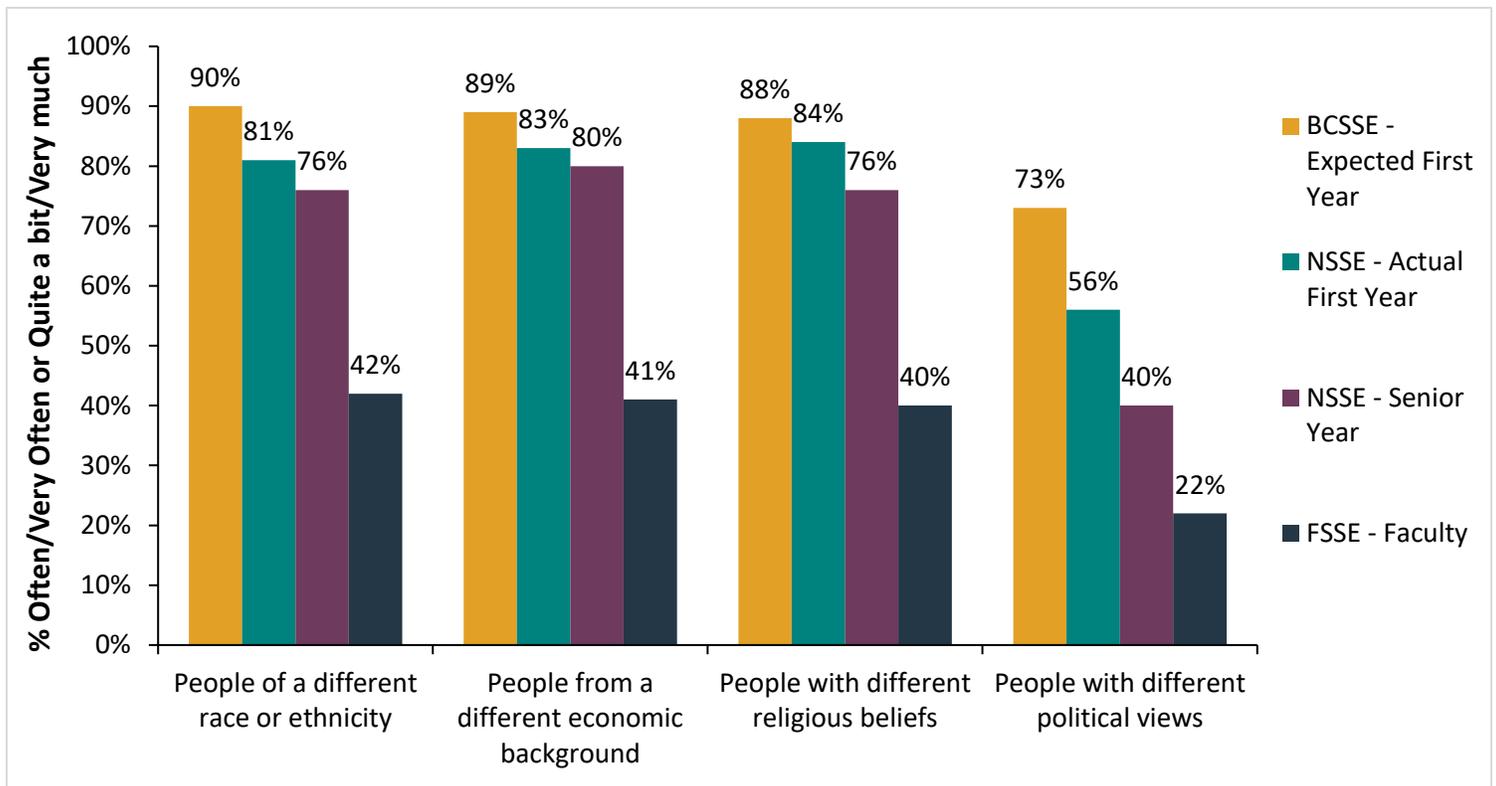


Figure 3. Discussions with Diverse Others

Students’ expectations for interactions with people from different economic backgrounds or with religious beliefs other than their own generally match the reality of their first-year experiences. There is a slightly larger gap between first-years’ expectations for interactions with

individuals of another race/ethnicity and their actual interactions and a much larger gap for interactions with people holding differing political views (Figure 3).⁵

- The full NSSE results show that St. Olaf first-years report similar levels of interaction with individuals from different racial/ethnic, economic, and political backgrounds to first-years at other institutions, and significantly more interactions with people from different religious backgrounds (St. Olaf, $M = 3.3$ on a 4-point scale; Strategic, $M = 3.0$; ACM/GLCA, $M = 3.1$; Carnegie, $M = 3.0$).
- Fewer seniors report frequent interactions with individuals from these groups compared to first-years.
 - Seniors' mean response for interactions with individuals with other religious beliefs is significantly higher ($M = 3.2$ on a 4-point scale) compared to both the Strategic ($M = 2.9$) and Carnegie ($M = 3.0$) comparison groups. The mean for seniors is significantly lower when it comes to interactions with individuals holding different political views (St. Olaf, $M = 2.5$; Strategic, $M = 2.8$; ACM/GLCA, $M = 2.8$; Carnegie, $M = 2.9$).
- One of St. Olaf's strategic plan goals is for the Discussions with Diverse Others Engagement Indicator (EI) to exceed the mean EI for other baccalaureate colleges (the Carnegie comparison group). This goal was met for first-years in 2018, with a score of 42.6 overall (including all first-years who completed the NSSE, not just those who also completed the BCSSE), compared to 40.6 for Carnegie first-years. The average for seniors was 40.1, very close to that of seniors at other Carnegie institutions (40.3).
- Among faculty, around 40% indicate that students in their course have regular opportunities to engage in discussions with people of a race/ethnicity other than their own, from an economic background other than their own, or with religious beliefs other than their own. A much smaller proportion (22%) indicate the same opportunities exist for students to engage with people with political views other than their own. This suggests that students' interactions with individuals who differ from themselves in these ways are frequently happening outside of the classroom.

The largest discrepancies between students' expectations and their first-year experiences occur within the Student-Faculty Interaction EI (see Figure 4). The differences between first-years' expectations and actual experiences range from 20-34 percentage points on all four scale items.

- The mean responses for first-years' interactions with faculty reported in the full NSSE report are significantly lower than both the ACM/GLCA and Carnegie comparison groups for three out of the four scale items, though the actual mean differences are all 0.1.

⁵ Alumni data not discussed here. Though it does prompt alumni to consider their interactions with diverse others, the HEDS Alumni Survey does not ask separate questions about students' interactions with individuals of a different race/ethnicity, religious background, or political affiliation, and does not ask about interactions with students from a different economic background.

- Seniors interact with faculty more frequently than first-years in every area except in discussing their academic performance.
 - In nearly all cases, the mean responses for seniors’ interactions with faculty are significantly lower than the three comparison groups, with mean differences ranging from 0.2 to 0.3.
- Faculty are much more likely to report that they interact with students regularly in each of the four areas, compared to students’ own self-reports.
- Nevertheless, alumni generally report positive perceptions of St. Olaf faculty members. Eighty-seven percent “agree” or “strongly agree” that most faculty were interested in helping students grow in more than just academic areas, and 91% “agree” or “strongly agree” that most faculty were willing to spend time outside of class meeting with students.
 - Most alumni (84%) feel that their non-classroom interactions with faculty had a positive influence on their intellectual growth and interest in ideas. Somewhat fewer, but still a majority (73%), feel that their non-classroom interactions with faculty had a positive influence on their career goals and aspirations.

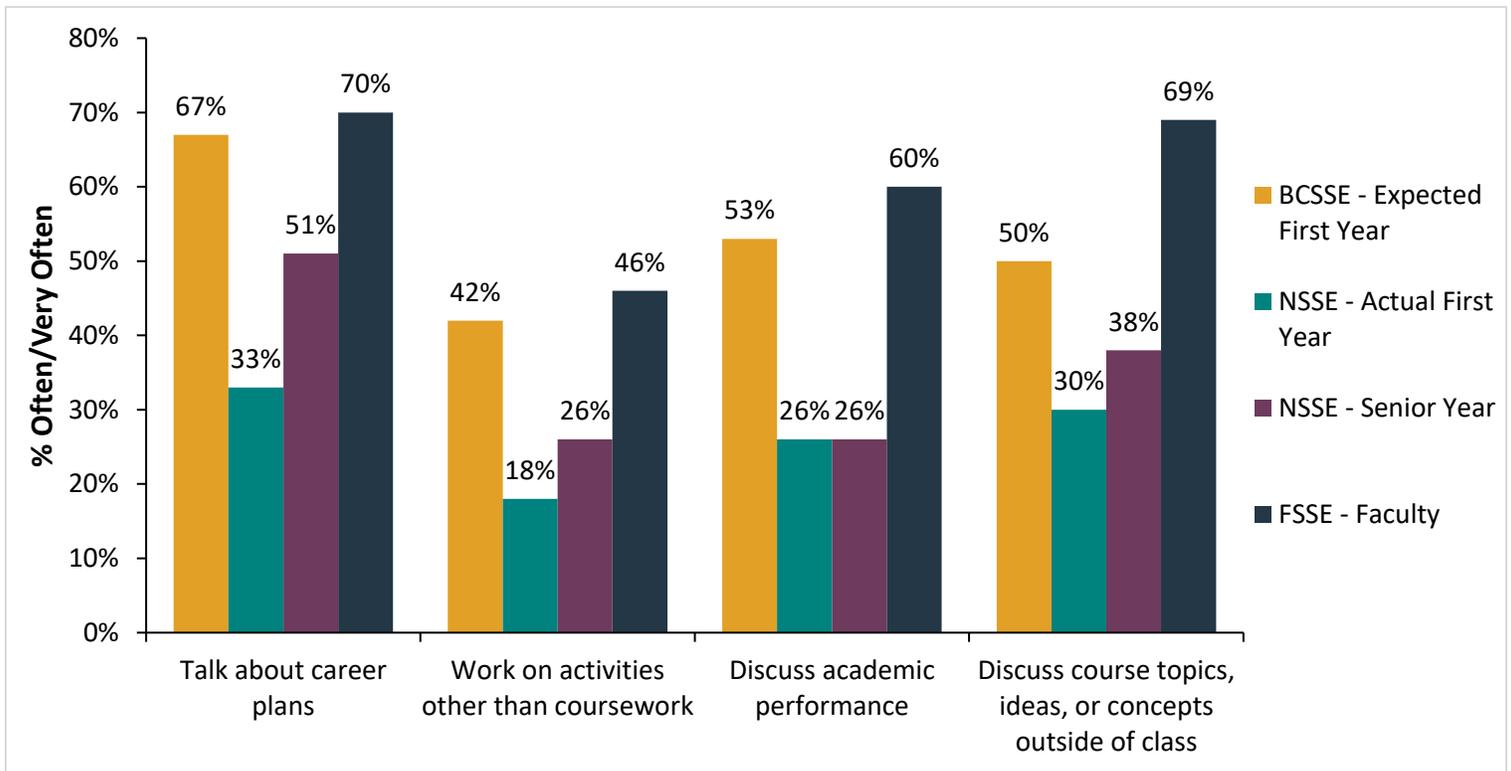


Figure 4. Student-Faculty Interaction

An additional set of questions from the BCSSE parallel questions asked in the NSSE (Figure 5). These questions focus on consideration of diverse perspectives and critically examining one’s

own views, and are some of the items included in the Reflective & Integrative Learning NSSE Engagement Indicator. First-years show an increase from high school to college in their reported engagement in these activities.

- First-years and seniors vary somewhat in how often they report engaging in these activities, but the means for both groups are similar to peers at institutions in the three comparison groups.
- Faculty ratings of the importance of these activities also generally match students’ actual reported experiences.
- Somewhat fewer alumni report that they “often” or “very often” pointed out the strengths and weaknesses of a particular argument or point of view (67%) or defended their argument for or against a particular point of view (68%).

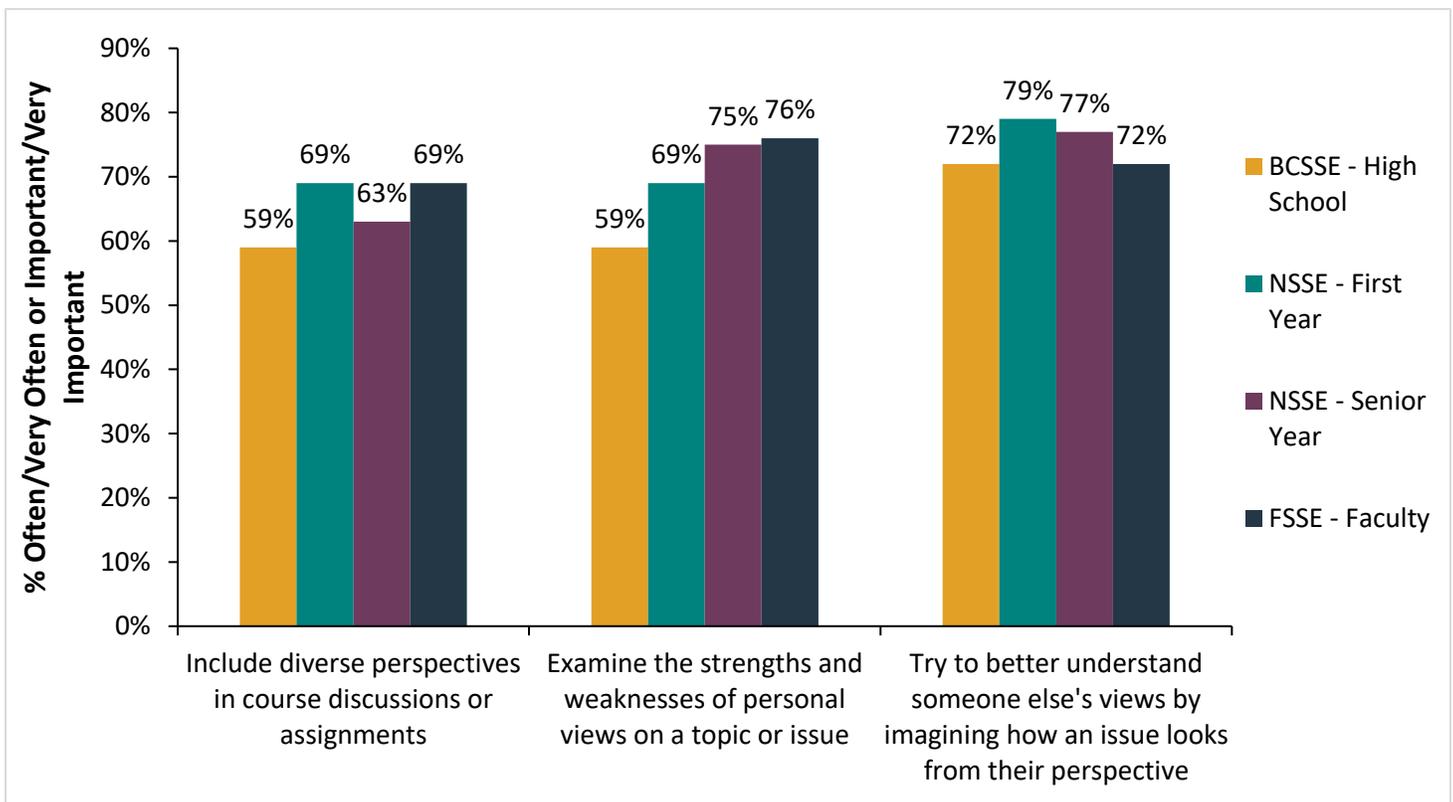


Figure 5. Reflective & Integrative Learning

The NSSE contains five additional Engagement Indicators that are not found in the BCSSE: Higher-Order Learning, Reflective & Integrative Learning, Effective Teaching Practices, Quality of Interactions, and Supportive Environment (again, Appendix C has more information about the EIs). Table 2 shows how St. Olaf first-years and seniors score on these items and notes any significant differences with the three comparison groups. Though there are some small yet significant differences, the data generally indicate that St. Olaf students’ experiences in each of

these areas are similar to peers at other institutions. Seniors generally have engagement scores that are similar to or slightly higher than first-years, with the exception of the Supportive Environment EI.

Table 2. Additional NSSE Engagement Indicator results				
Engagement Indicator⁶	St. Olaf Students	Strategic Comparison Group	ACM/GLCA Comparison Group	Carnegie Comparison Group
First-Years				
Higher-Order Learning	40.7	40.8	40.2	39.7
Reflective & Integrative Learning	38.8	37.2*	37.3*	36.8*
Effective Teaching Practices	40.1	40.7	41.1	40.4
Quality of Interactions	44.2	43.8	44.6	43.8
Supportive Environment	38.5	37.7	39.0	38.0
Seniors				
Higher-Order Learning	41.0	42.3	42.5*	41.6
Reflective & Integrative Learning	40.0	40.8	41.4	40.3
Effective Teaching Practices	40.6	41.5	42.1*	41.8
Quality of Interactions	43.5	42.5	43.5	43.2
Supportive Environment	34.5	34.0	34.9	34.7

* Indicates significant difference

The NSSE report provides trend data on the Engagement Indicators from previous administrations of the survey. For St. Olaf, these administrations occurred in the spring of 2013, 2015, and 2018. For many of the EIs, there was a slight drop from 2015 to 2018, and some EI scores have decreased across all three administrations (see Appendix D for more details). None of these changes seem large enough to be problematic. Nevertheless, it will be important to continue to monitor these trends in the future to address any concerns that emerge.

Differences by Race/Ethnicity and First-Generation Status

The NSSE asks students to self-report whether they are a first-generation student, and St. Olaf provides race and ethnicity information for all respondents, allowing us to disaggregate Engagement Indicator data by these demographic groups. Tables 3 and 4 show average Engagement Indicator scores for domestic students of color and international students compared to domestic White, non-Hispanic students.

- Among first-years, domestic multicultural students tend to report lower engagement than domestic White, non-Hispanic students. These differences are even more

⁶ Engagement Indicator scores are on a 60-point scale

pronounced among seniors, particularly in the Learning Strategies, Quantitative Reasoning, Effective Teaching Practices, and Supportive Environment EIs.

- Among first-years, 93% evaluate their experience at St. Olaf so far as “good” or “excellent”, while 79% of domestic multicultural students do the same.
- A greater proportion of domestic White, non-Hispanic seniors rate their overall experience at St. Olaf as “good” or “excellent” and indicate that they would “probably” or “definitely” choose St. Olaf again compared to domestic multicultural seniors.
- First-year international students report more frequent engagement in Higher-Order Learning and Reflective and Integrative Learning, as well as more frequent Discussions with Diverse Others and Student-Faculty Interaction.
 - Seventy-six percent of first-year international students evaluate their experience at St. Olaf so far as “good” or “excellent.”
 - The low number of senior international respondents (11-12 students responded to the EI survey questions) makes it difficult to draw conclusions about this group.

Table 3. NSSE Engagement Indicators – disaggregation by race/ethnicity (first-year students)

Engagement Indicator	Domestic White, Non-Hispanic	Domestic Multicultural	International
Higher-Order Learning	40.2	39.2	46.8*
Reflective & Integrative Learning	38.6	36.9	43.3*
Learning Strategies	39.0	35.2	39.8
Quantitative Reasoning	27.9	25.2	29.6
Collaborative Learning	36.9	35.9	32.4
Discussions with Diverse Others	42.1	42.0	47.8*
Student-Faculty Interaction	21.6	20.4	28.5*
Effective Teaching Practices	40.6	37.8	42.6
Quality of Interactions	45.3	43.0	42.2
Supportive Environment	39.3	37.6	37.1
<i>How would you evaluate your experience at this institution?</i> ⁷	3.5	3.1*	2.9*

* Indicates significant difference

⁷ Response options: 1=Poor, 2=Fair, 3=Good, 4=Excellent

Table 4. NSSE Engagement Indicators – disaggregation by race/ethnicity (seniors)

Engagement Indicator	Domestic White, Non-Hispanic	Domestic Multicultural	International
Higher-Order Learning	41.7	38.7	42.5
Reflective & Integrative Learning	41.3	38.9	34.8
Learning Strategies	37.5	32.0*	35.6
Quantitative Reasoning	31.5	24.8*	30.9
Collaborative Learning	37.0	34.8	32.1
Discussions with Diverse Others	39.8	40.3	37.9
Student-Faculty Interaction	25.8	25.0	29.2
Effective Teaching Practices	41.3	36.5*	44.7
Quality of Interactions	44.1	41.2	44.3
Supportive Environment	35.4	29.3*	31.7
<i>How would you evaluate your experience at this institution?⁷</i>	3.5	3.0*	3.2
<i>If you could start over, would you choose this institution again?⁸</i>	3.1	2.8*	3.3

* Indicates significant difference

Tables 5 and 6 show comparisons for first-generation and non-first-generation students.

- First-year first-generation students report more frequent interactions with diverse others compared to non-first-generation first-years.
 - Eighty-nine percent of non-first-generation first-year students indicate that their experience so far at St. Olaf has been “good” or “excellent”, compared to 81% of first-generation first-years.
- Senior first-generation students report significantly lower engagement than non-first-generation students on all EIs except Collaborative Learning, Discussions with Diverse Others, and Student-Faculty Interaction.
 - Ninety-three percent of non-first-generation seniors rate their overall experience at St. Olaf as “good” or “excellent”, compared to 73% of first-generation seniors.
 - Eighty-three percent of non-first-generation seniors indicate that they would “probably” or “definitely” choose St. Olaf again, compared to 76% of first-generation seniors.

⁸ Response options: 1=Definitely no, 2=Probably no, 3=Probably yes, 4=Definitely yes

Table 5. NSSE Engagement Indicators – disaggregation by first-generation status (first-year students)

Engagement Indicator	Non-First-Generation	First-Generation
Higher-Order Learning	40.6	41.0
Reflective & Integrative Learning	38.8	38.7
Learning Strategies	38.5	36.7
Quantitative Reasoning	27.6	27.5
Collaborative Learning	36.2	36.1
Discussions with Diverse Others	41.8	47.3*
Student-Faculty Interaction	21.8	23.3
Effective Teaching Practices	40.7	38.2
Quality of Interactions	44.6	43.9
Supportive Environment	38.9	37.4
<i>How would you evaluate your experience at this institution?⁷</i>	3.4	3.1*

* Indicates significant difference

Table 6. NSSE Engagement Indicators – disaggregation by first-generation status (seniors)

Engagement Indicator	Non-First-Generation	First-Generation
Higher-Order Learning	42.0	36.3*
Reflective & Integrative Learning	41.2	37.2*
Learning Strategies	37.1	31.9*
Quantitative Reasoning	31.2	25.1*
Collaborative Learning	36.7	35.0
Discussions with Diverse Others	39.8	40.2
Student-Faculty Interaction	26.5	22.3
Effective Teaching Practices	41.5	35.3*
Quality of Interactions	44.3	39.0*
Supportive Environment	34.9	29.9*
<i>How would you evaluate your experience at this institution?⁷</i>	3.4	2.9*
<i>If you could start over, would you choose this institution again?⁸</i>	3.1	2.9

* Indicates significant difference

High-Impact Practices⁹

The NSSE asks students to report on their participation in several high-impact practices (HIPs): internships, holding a leadership role in a student organization, learning communities, study abroad, undergraduate research, culminating senior experiences, and service-learning (Tables 7 and 8). Key findings are discussed below:

- St. Olaf stands out in first-year participation in learning communities: 24% report doing so during their first year, compared to only 7-9% of first-years at the three groups of comparison institutions.
 - St. Olaf first-year participation rates are lower compared to other institutions for many of the other HIPs, though the differences are small.
- St. Olaf's prominence in sending students abroad is also evident in the NSSE data. The majority (79%) of senior respondents to the NSSE indicate that they studied abroad during their time at St. Olaf. By comparison, only 55% of seniors in the Strategic group, 46% in the ACM/GLCA group, and 43% in the Carnegie group studied abroad.
 - Seniors fall behind these institutions, however, in the percentage of students who complete a culminating senior experience, such as a capstone course or senior thesis.

High-Impact Practice	St. Olaf Students ¹⁰	Strategic Comparison Group	ACM/GLCA Comparison Group	Carnegie Comparison Group
Internship, field experience, student teaching, etc.	6%	10%*	10%*	9%*
Leadership role in a student organization	11%	17%*	18%*	16%*
Learning community	24%	8%*	7%*	9%*
Study abroad	7%	2%*	2%*	3%*
Undergraduate research	3%	6%*	6%*	6%*
Service-learning ¹¹	33%	42%*	46%*	49%*
<i>Participated in at least 1 HIP</i>	<i>48%</i>	<i>48%</i>	<i>52%</i>	<i>55%*</i>
<i>Participated in 2 or more HIPs</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>7%*</i>	<i>7%*</i>	<i>9%</i>

* Indicates significant difference

⁹ Disaggregated data by race/ethnicity and first-generation status are not shown here for High-Impact Practices, as this is tracked separately for all students (not only those who responded to the NSSE) as part of St. Olaf's strategic plan goals. Thus, the NSSE data on student participation in high-impact practices in this report are discussed only in the context of the institutional comparison data. The disaggregated HIP data can be found in the strategic plan update report in the Board book.

¹⁰ % who report the activity is "Done or in progress"

¹¹ % who stated at least "some" of their classes included this experience

High-Impact Practice	St. Olaf Students ¹⁰	Strategic Comparison Group	ACM/GLCA Comparison Group	Carnegie Comparison Group
Internship, field experience, student teaching, etc.	74%	78%	72%	71%
Leadership role in a student organization	73%	74%	72%	66%*
Learning community	40%	30%*	25%*	30%*
Study abroad	79%	55%*	46%*	43%*
Undergraduate research	51%	48%	53%	47%
Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior thesis, portfolio, etc.)	53%	79%*	80%*	77%*
Service-learning ¹¹	55%	58%	62%*	64%*
<i>Participated in at least 1 HIP</i>	<i>96%</i>	<i>98%*</i>	<i>97%</i>	<i>98%</i>
<i>Participated in 2 or more HIPs</i>	<i>93%</i>	<i>91%</i>	<i>89%</i>	<i>88%*</i>

* Indicates significant difference

Experiences with Advising

The NSSE offers the option of adding additional short modules to the standard survey. In 2018, one of the modules St. Olaf administered was the Academic Advising module. The questions in this module ask students to report on the availability of their academic advisor and the types of information or support they received from their advisor. St. Olaf also administered this module in 2013. Tables 9 and 10 show the comparisons between the two years, as well as with the Carnegie comparison group¹².

- For almost all questions, the mean responses for both first-years and seniors have remained steady or decreased since 2013. St. Olaf students' mean responses are also frequently lower than students from the Carnegie comparison group, though the differences in means are typically small.
- St. Olaf students provide the highest ratings for their advisor's availability and receptivity to their questions and concerns.
 - For 2018, first-years are least likely to say their advisors informed them of academic support options and opportunities like study abroad or internships.
 - Seniors in 2018 also have the lowest mean response to the question about academic support, but have slightly higher mean responses than first-years in all other areas.

¹² Institutions may only select one of the three comparison groups for the module reports.

- One of St. Olaf’s strategic plan goals specifically addresses advising in relation to the NSSE: “Ensure high-quality academic advising of all students, resulting in student ratings of their advising interactions in the National Survey of Student Engagement that exceed the mean results for other participating baccalaureate colleges and show improvement over previous administrations of the survey.” Evidence from the 2018 survey does not yet indicate progress towards this goal. As St. Olaf fully implements its new advising model in the coming years, the NSSE module on academic advising will continue to be an important measure of progress.

Table 9. Experiences with advising – first-year students				
	2013 St. Olaf Students	2013 Carnegie Comparison Group	2018 St. Olaf Students	2018 Carnegie Comparison Group
Quality of interactions ¹³	5.4	5.1*	5.1	5.4*
# Discussions with advisor ¹⁴	3.2	2.8*	2.7	2.9*
<i>During the current school year, to what extent have your academic advisors done the following?¹⁵</i>				
Been available when needed	3.2	3.1	3.0	3.1*
Listened closely to your concerns and questions	3.2	3.1	3.0	3.1
Informed you of important deadlines	2.8	2.9	2.6	2.8*
Helped you understand academic rules and policies	2.7	2.9*	2.5	2.8*
Informed you of academic support options (tutoring, etc.)	2.5	2.8*	2.4	2.8*
Provided useful information about courses	2.8	2.9*	2.7	2.9*
Helped you when you had academic difficulties	2.5	2.8*	2.5	2.7*
Helped you get information on special opportunities (study abroad, internships, etc.)	2.5	2.6*	2.4	2.6*
Discussed your career interests and post-graduation plans	2.5	2.7	2.5	2.5

* Indicates significant difference

¹³ From standard NSSE survey; response options range from 1 (Poor) to 7 (Excellent)

¹⁴ Response options range from “0” to “6 or more”

¹⁵ Response options: 1=Very little, 2=Some, 3=Quite a bit, 4=Very much

Table 10. Experiences with advising – seniors				
	2013 St. Olaf Students	2013 Carnegie Comparison Group	2018 St. Olaf Students	2018 Carnegie Comparison Group
Quality of interactions ¹³	5.6	5.2*	5.6	5.6
# Discussions with advisor ¹⁴	3.1	3.1	2.7	3.0*
<i>During the current school year, to what extent have your academic advisors done the following? ¹⁵</i>				
Been available when needed	3.3	3.2*	3.2	3.2
Listened closely to your concerns and questions	3.3	3.2*	3.2	3.2
Informed you of important deadlines	2.7	2.8*	2.7	2.9*
Helped you understand academic rules and policies	2.6	2.7*	2.6	2.8*
Informed you of academic support options (tutoring, etc.)	2.3	2.5*	2.4	2.5*
Provided useful information about courses	2.8	2.9*	2.8	2.9*
Helped you when you had academic difficulties	2.6	2.9*	2.7	2.9*
Helped you get information on special opportunities (study abroad, internships, etc.)	2.7	2.8	2.6	2.7
Discussed your career interests and post-graduation plans	3.1	2.8*	2.8	2.9

* Indicates significant difference

Summary and Recommendations

A few challenges arise when interpreting the institutional-level survey data. First, aside from the BCSSE, the results represent only a cross-section of the target student, faculty, and alumni populations (though as the demographic information in Appendix B shows, the survey samples for the BCSSE, NSSE, and FSSE were generally representative of the target populations). This limits the certainty of any conclusions drawn from participants' responses, as well as comparisons across groups.¹⁶

Additionally, the group of participating institutions in each of the three comparison groups used for the NSSE vary from year to year, making comparisons across administrations (such as in the

¹⁶ The NSSE report estimates the sampling error is +/- 3.7% for first-years and +/- 4.8% for seniors. The FSSE report estimates the sampling error for faculty is +/- 5.6%.

Academic Advising module) more difficult. Finally, retrospective self-reports are always subject to inconsistency in individuals' interpretation of questions and response options, as well as memory errors introduced with the passage of time. Nevertheless, the BCSSE, NSSE, FSSE, and HEDS Alumni Survey instruments provide data on a wide range of student, faculty, and alumni behaviors and perceptions that are currently difficult to acquire through any other method. Thus, the following are important observations about the educational experience offered to students at St. Olaf:

In many areas, St. Olaf students' engagement in academics and college life is on par with students from similar institutions. While longitudinal data from prior administrations of the NSSE reveal no or slightly negative change for 2018 across most of the NSSE Engagement Indicators¹⁷, it is difficult to draw conclusions about trends from three administrations. Additionally, the rapidly changing demographics of the student body have likely impacted the "average" student experience. Nonetheless, it will be important to continue to monitor these trends and address any concerns if or when they emerge.

St. Olaf students (both first-years and seniors) interact more frequently with individuals from different religious backgrounds compared to students at similar institutions. St. Olaf seniors have significantly fewer interactions with individuals with different political views than themselves compared to seniors at other institutions. Among students' reported interactions with individuals from different racial/ethnic, religious, economic, or political backgrounds, both first-years and seniors have the fewest interactions with individuals with different political views.

The vast majority of alumni report positive interactions with faculty members. However, there are sizeable gaps between first-year students' expectations for the frequency with which they will interact with faculty and the interactions that they actually report during their first year. Both first-year and senior students' mean responses to questions about faculty interactions are significantly lower than students at other institutions. By contrast, faculty report much more frequent interactions with students compared to students' self-reports on their interactions with faculty. This may be due to the fact that faculty meet with many students, but perhaps not regularly with all of them. Additionally, students may not take advantage of the opportunities that exist to meet with faculty. Advising remains an additional area of focus, with little change in student responses from 2013. As St. Olaf fully implements its new advising model in the coming years, the NSSE module on academic advising will continue to be an important measure of progress.

Students of color and first-generation students have lower scores on many of the indicators of student engagement. However, the differences between domestic White students and students

¹⁷ The 10 Engagement Indicators include: Higher-Order Learning, Reflective & Integrative Learning, Learning Strategies, Quantitative Reasoning, Collaborative Learning, Discussions with Diverse Others, Student-Faculty Interaction, Effective Teaching Practices, Quality of Interactions, and Supportive Environment. More information about the Engagement Indicators can be found in Appendix C of the full report.

of color, as well as between non-first-generation and first-generation students, are less pronounced in many cases for first-years compared to seniors. This may suggest that St. Olaf is improving in serving students from diverse backgrounds. Through the college's [diversity and inclusion initiative](#) and the work of *To Include is To Excel*, St. Olaf will continue to strive for a more inclusive and equitable community. Ideally, student responses on future administrations of the NSSE will be one area that reflects positive change.

Significantly fewer seniors complete a culminating senior experience, such as a capstone course or senior thesis, compared to seniors at other institutions similar to St. Olaf. St. Olaf does not currently require a capstone experience for all seniors; whether this practice is altered will depend in part on the outcome of the General Education curriculum revision. First-years at St. Olaf are much more likely to participate in learning communities, and seniors are much more likely to report studying abroad, compared to students at other institutions.

The BCSSE, NSSE, FSSE, and HEDS Alumni surveys will continue to provide key insights into students' academic experiences at St. Olaf and a useful means for monitoring changes in these experiences over time. The newly formed faculty Assessment Committee, with the additional convening time that was not available to its predecessor, the Assessment Subcommittee, looks forward to the opportunity to consider these findings more deeply in the coming year.

Appendix A: NSSE Comparison Groups

St. Olaf selected the following comparison groups for the NSSE:

Group 1: Strategic Comparison Group

The institutions in this group were selected from St. Olaf's [strategic comparison group](#), a group of institutions selected by the President's Leadership Team and Board of Regents using the following criteria:

1. Private, not-for-profit
2. Baccalaureate – Arts & Sciences
3. More selective
4. Highly residential
5. 2,000 – 4,000 students enrolled
6. 50% or more of first-years are in the top 10% of their high school class

The nine institutions from this group that also administered the NSSE in 2017-18 were:

- Bucknell University (Lewisburg, PA)
- Colgate University (Hamilton, NY)
- College of the Holy Cross (Worcester, MA)
- Franklin and Marshall College (Lancaster, PA)
- Gettysburg College (Gettysburg, PA)
- Macalester College (St. Paul, MN)
- Occidental College (Los Angeles, CA)
- Rhodes College (Memphis, TN)
- Wheaton College (Wheaton, IL)

Group 2: ACM/GLCA Membership Group

The institutions in this group belong to the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (of which St. Olaf is also a member) or the Great Lakes Colleges Association (often combined with the ACM to create a larger comparison group). Eighteen institutions from this group administered the NSSE in 2017-18:

- Albion College (Albion, MI)
- Allegheny College (Meadville, PA)
- Beloit College (Beloit, WI)
- Cornell College (Mount Vernon, IA)
- Denison University (Granville, OH)
- DePauw University (Greencastle, IN)

- Earlham College (Richmond, IN)
- Grinnell College (Grinnell, IA)
- Hope College (Holland, MI)
- Kenyon College (Gambier, OH)
- Knox College (Galesburg, IL)
- Lake Forest College (Lake Forest, IL)
- Luther College (Decorah, IA)
- Macalester College (St. Paul, MN)
- Monmouth College (Monmouth, IL)
- Ripon College (Ripon, WI)
- The College of Wooster (Wooster, OH)
- Wabash College (Crawfordsville, IN)

Group 3: Carnegie Classification Group

This group contains the 128 institutions that administered the NSSE in 2017-18, are identified as private, not-for-profit, and match St. Olaf's Carnegie classification (Baccalaureate Colleges – Arts & Sciences Focus):

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Albion College (Albion, MI) | • Lycoming College (Williamsport, PA) |
| • Allegheny College (Meadville, PA) | • Lyon College (Batesville, AR) |
| • Alma College (Alma, MI) | • Macalester College (Saint Paul, MN) |
| • Austin College (Sherman, TX) | • Marlboro College (Marlboro, VT) |
| • Bard College (Annandale-On-Hudson, NY) | • Marymount Manhattan College (New York, NY) |
| • Beloit College (Beloit, WI) | • Meredith College (Raleigh, NC) |
| • Bethany College (Bethany, WV) | • Millsaps College (Jackson, MS) |
| • Bethany Lutheran College (Mankato, MN) | • Monmouth College (Monmouth, IL) |
| • Bethune-Cookman University (Daytona Beach, FL) | • Moravian College (Bethlehem, PA) |
| • Bloomfield College (Bloomfield, NJ) | • Muhlenberg College (Allentown, PA) |
| • Bridgewater College (Bridgewater, VA) | • Northland College (Ashland, WI) |
| • Bryn Athyn College of the New Church (Bryn Athyn, PA) | • Occidental College (Los Angeles, CA) |
| • Bucknell University (Lewisburg, PA) | • Oglethorpe University (Atlanta, GA) |
| • Carthage College (Kenosha, WI) | • Paine College (Augusta, GA) |
| • Centenary College of Louisiana (Shreveport, LA) | • Pitzer College (Claremont, CA) |
| • Centre College (Danville, KY) | • Presbyterian College (Clinton, SC) |
| | • Randolph College (Lynchburg, VA) |
| | • Randolph-Macon College (Ashland, VA) |
| | • Rhodes College (Memphis, TN) |

- Claremont McKenna College (Claremont, CA)
- Colby College (Waterville, ME)
- Colgate University (Hamilton, NY)
- College of the Atlantic (Bar Harbor, ME)
- College of the Holy Cross (Worcester, MA)
- Concordia College at Moorhead (Moorhead, MN)
- Connecticut College (New London, CT)
- Cornell College (Mount Vernon, IA)
- Covenant College (Lookout Mountain, GA)
- Davis & Elkins College (Elkins, WV)
- Denison University (Granville, OH)
- DePauw University (Greencastle, IN)
- Dillard University (New Orleans, LA)
- Doane University (Crete, NE)
- Drew University (Madison, NJ)
- Earlham College (Richmond, IN)
- Eckerd College (Saint Petersburg, FL)
- Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown, PA)
- Emmanuel College (Boston, MA)
- Emory and Henry College (Emory, VA)
- Fisk University (Nashville, TN)
- Franklin and Marshall College (Lancaster, PA)
- Franklin College (Franklin, IN)
- Furman University (Greenville, SC)
- Gettysburg College (Gettysburg, PA)
- Goucher College (Baltimore, MD)
- Grinnell College (Grinnell, IA)
- Grove City College (Grove City, PA)
- Hamilton College (Clinton, NY)
- Hampden-Sydney College (Hampden-Sydney, VA)
- Hanover College (Hanover, IN)
- Ripon College (Ripon, WI)
- Roanoke College (Salem, VA)
- Saint Anselm College (Manchester, NH)
- Saint Michael's College (Colchester, VT)
- Saint Vincent College (Latrobe, PA)
- Schreiner University (Kerrville, TX)
- Scripps College (Claremont, CA)
- Sewanee: The University of the South (Sewanee, TN)
- Siena College (Loudonville, NY)
- Simpson College (Indianola, IA)
- Southern Virginia University (Buena Vista, VA)
- Southwestern University (Georgetown, TX)
- Spring Hill College (Mobile, AL)
- St. Lawrence University (Canton, NY)
- Stillman College (Tuscaloosa, AL)
- Stonehill College (Easton, MA)
- Susquehanna University (Selinsgrove, PA)
- Sweet Briar College (Sweet Briar, VA)
- The College of Idaho (Caldwell, ID)
- The College of Wooster (Wooster, OH)
- Thiel College (Greenville, PA)
- Union College (Schenectady, NY)
- University of Pikeville (Pikeville, KY)
- University of Puget Sound (Tacoma, WA)
- University of Richmond (Richmond, VA)
- Ursinus College (Collegeville, PA)
- Vassar College (Poughkeepsie, NY)
- Virginia Wesleyan University (Norfolk, VA)
- Wabash College (Crawfordsville, IN)

- Harvey Mudd College (Claremont, CA)
- Hendrix College (Conway, AR)
- Hiram College (Hiram, OH)
- Hobart and William Smith Colleges (Geneva, NY)
- Hollins University (Roanoke, VA)
- Holy Cross College (Notre Dame, IN)
- Hope College (Holland, MI)
- Houghton College (Houghton, NY)
- Illinois College (Jacksonville, IL)
- Judson College (Marion, AL)
- Juniata College (Huntingdon, PA)
- Kenyon College (Gambier, OH)
- Knox College (Galesburg, IL)
- Lafayette College (Easton, PA)
- LaGrange College (Lagrange, GA)
- Lake Forest College (Lake Forest, IL)
- Lewis & Clark College (Portland, OR)
- Linfield College - McMinnville Campus (McMinnville, OR)
- Luther College (Decorah, IA)
- Warren Wilson College (Swannanoa, NC)
- Washington and Lee University (Lexington, VA)
- Wesleyan College, Macon, Georgia (Macon, GA)
- Westminster College (Fulton, MO)
- Westminster College (New Wilmington, PA)
- Westmont College (Santa Barbara, CA)
- Wheaton College (Wheaton, IL)
- Wheaton College (Norton, MA)
- Whitman College (Walla Walla, WA)
- Whittier College (Whittier, CA)
- Willamette University (Salem, OR)
- William Jewell College (Liberty, MO)
- William Peace University (Raleigh, NC)
- Wofford College (Spartanburg, SC)

Appendix B: St. Olaf Survey Respondent Demographics

Table A1 compares select demographic characteristics of the St. Olaf respondents to the BCSSE, NSSE, and FSSE surveys to that of the entire population invited to complete the surveys.

Table A1. Respondent demographics for the 2018 St. Olaf BCSSE, NSSE, FSSE, and HEDS Alumni Surveys		
Survey	Survey Respondents¹⁸	Survey Population¹⁹
BCSSE		
Total (BCSSE-NSSE common questions)	346	786
Domestic White, non-Hispanic ²⁰	236 (68%)	527 (67%)
Domestic Multicultural	69 (20%)	158 (20%)
International	37 (11%)	92 (12%)
Non-First-Generation	264 (76%)	645 (82%)
First-Generation	75 (22%)	141 (18%)
NSSE		
First-Years		
Total	372	778
Domestic White, non-Hispanic	250 (67%)	517 (66%)
Domestic multicultural	72 (19%)	155 (20%)
International	42 (11%)	89 (11%)
Non-First-Generation	303 (81%)	628 (81%)
First-Generation	65 (17%)	141 (18%)
Seniors		
Total	258	669
Domestic White, non-Hispanic	194 (75%)	486 (73%)
Domestic multicultural	42 (16%)	113 (17%)
International	17 (7%)	51 (8%)
Non-First-Generation	218 (84%)	548 (82%)
First-Generation	35 (14%)	102 (15%)
FSSE		
Total	143	266
Tenured/Tenure Track ²¹	100 (70%)	171 (64%)
Term/Special/Other	31 (22%)	95 (36%)
HEDS Alumni Survey	530	1322

¹⁸ Numbers represent those who responded to at least one question; response counts varied somewhat for each question.

¹⁹ Individuals invited to complete the survey

²⁰ Race/ethnicity and first-generation status is not known for all students

²¹ Not all faculty disclosed their current tenure status

Appendix C: NSSE Engagement Indicators

The NSSE Engagement Indicators (EIs) group sets of similar items together to provide a summary of ten distinct aspects of student engagement. Each Engagement Indicator is based on three to eight survey questions. The response sets for each question item included in the EI are converted to a 60-point scale (e.g., Never = 0, Sometimes = 20, Often = 40, Very often = 60). A student score of 0 on an EI means that the student responded at the bottom end of the scale on every item in the EI, while a score of 60 means the student responded at the top of the scale on every item. Individual student scores are averaged to produce the mean score for all students on each EI. The NSSE report contains mean scores for all comparison groups as well, along with statistical comparisons between St. Olaf and the comparison groups.

The table below shows the NSSE question items included in each Engagement Indicator.

Engagement Indicator	NSSE Question Items²²
Higher-Order Learning	4. During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following? ²³ <ol style="list-style-type: none"> b. Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations c. Analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts d. Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source e. Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information
Reflective & Integrative Learning	2. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following? ²⁴ <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments b. Connected your learning to societal problems or issues c. Included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments d. Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue

²² EIs do not always include all question items (e.g., Higher-Order Learning only includes items 4b through 4e)

²³ Response options: Very little, Some, Quite a bit, Very much

²⁴ Response options: Never, Sometimes, Often, Very often

Table A2. NSSE Engagement Indicator items	
Engagement Indicator	NSSE Question Items²²
Reflective & Integrative Learning (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective f. Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept g. Connected ideas from your courses to your prior experiences and knowledge
Learning Strategies	<p>9. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?²⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identified key information from reading assignments b. Reviewed your notes after class c. Summarized what you learned in class or from course materials
Quantitative Reasoning	<p>6. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?²⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reached conclusions based on your own analysis of numerical information (numbers, graphs, statistics, etc.) b. Used numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue (unemployment, climate change, public health, etc.) c. Evaluated what others have concluded from numerical information
Collaborative Learning	<p>1. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?²⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. Asked another student to help you understand course material f. Explained course material to one or more students g. Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students h. Worked with other students on course projects or assignments
Discussions with Diverse Others	<p>8. During the current school year, about how often have you had discussions with people from the following groups?²⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. People from a race or ethnicity other than your own

Table A2. NSSE Engagement Indicator items	
Engagement Indicator	NSSE Question Items²²
Discussions with Diverse Others (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. People from an economic background other than your own c. People with religious beliefs other than your own d. People with political views other than your own
Student Faculty Interaction	<p>3. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?²⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Talked about career plans with a faculty member b. Worked with a faculty member on activities other than coursework (committees, student groups, etc.) c. Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class d. Discussed your academic performance with a faculty member
Effective Teaching Practices	<p>5. During the current school year, to what extent have your instructors done the following?²⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Clearly explained course goals and requirements b. Taught course sessions in an organized way c. Used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points d. Provided feedback on a draft or work in progress e. Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments
Quality of Interactions	<p>13. Indicate the quality of your interactions with the following people at your institution.²⁶</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Students b. Academic advisors c. Faculty

²⁵ Response options: Very little, Some, Quite a bit, Very much

²⁶ Response options: 1 (Poor) to 7 (Excellent) as well as Not applicable ("Not applicable" responses are not included in the mean score calculation)

Table A2. NSSE Engagement Indicator items	
Engagement Indicator	NSSE Question Items²²
Quality of Interactions (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d. Student services staff (career services, student activities, housing, etc.) e. Other administrative staff and offices (registrar, financial aid, etc.)
Supportive Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14. How much does your institution emphasize the following?²⁷ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Providing support to help students succeed academically c. Using learning support services (tutoring services, writing center, etc.) d. Encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (social, racial/ethnic, religious, etc.) e. Providing opportunities to be involved socially f. Providing support for your overall well-being (recreation, health care, counseling, etc.) g. Helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) h. Attending campus activities and events (performing arts, athletic events, etc.) i. Attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues

²⁷ Response options: Very little, Some, Quite a bit, Very much

Appendix D: NSSE Year-to-Year Comparisons

The following figures show changes in Engagement Indicator scores for St. Olaf first-years and seniors across the 2013, 2015, and 2018 administrations of the NSSE.

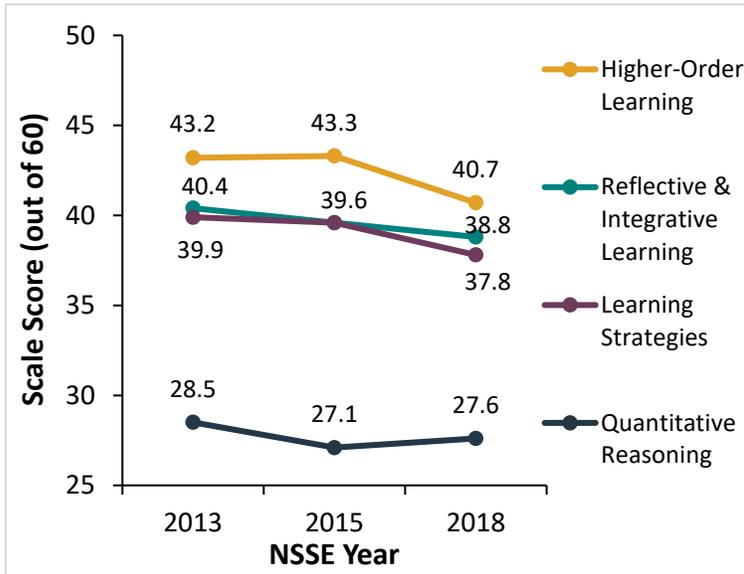


Figure A1. Academic Challenge: First-Year Students

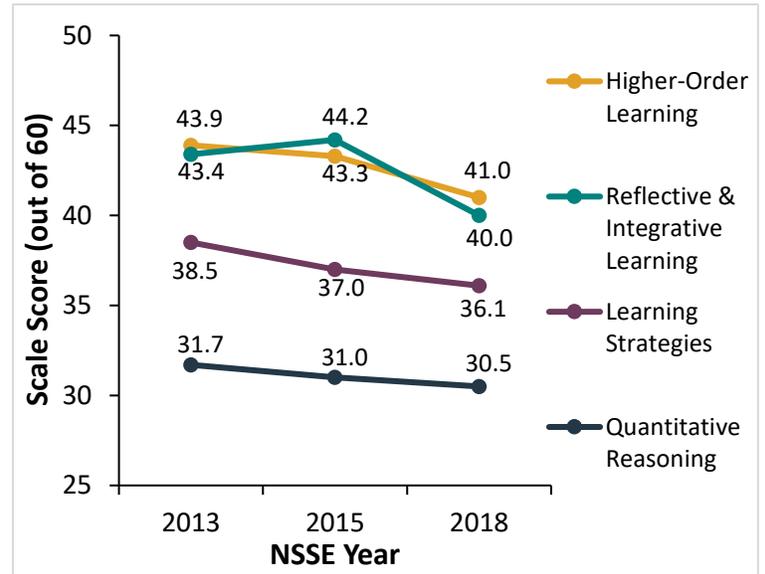


Figure A2. Academic Challenge: Seniors

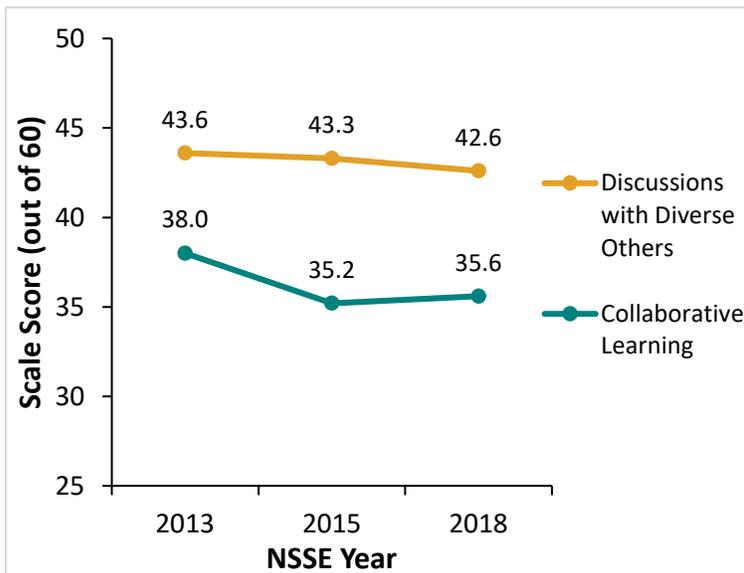


Figure A3. Learning with Peers: First-Year Students

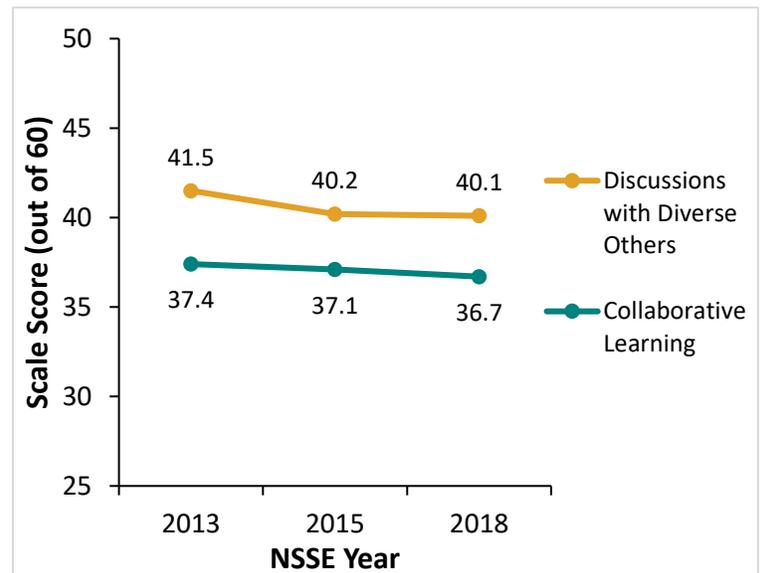


Figure A4. Learning with Peers: Seniors

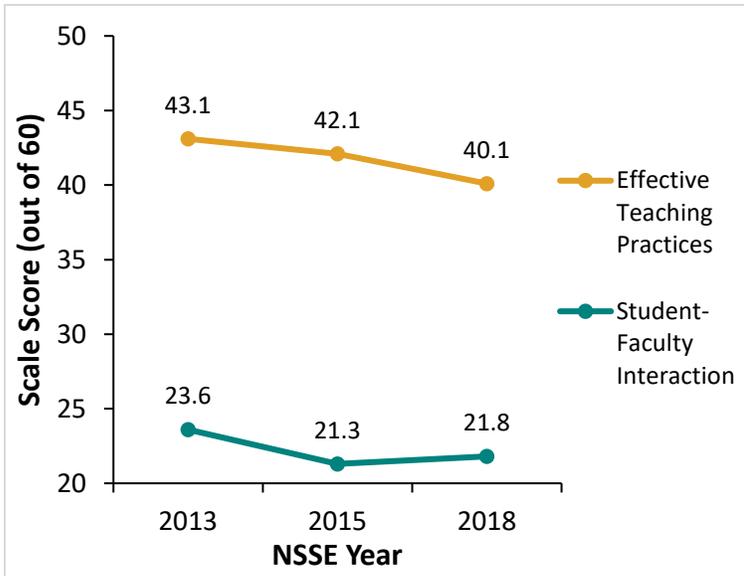


Figure A5. Experiences with Faculty: First-Year Students

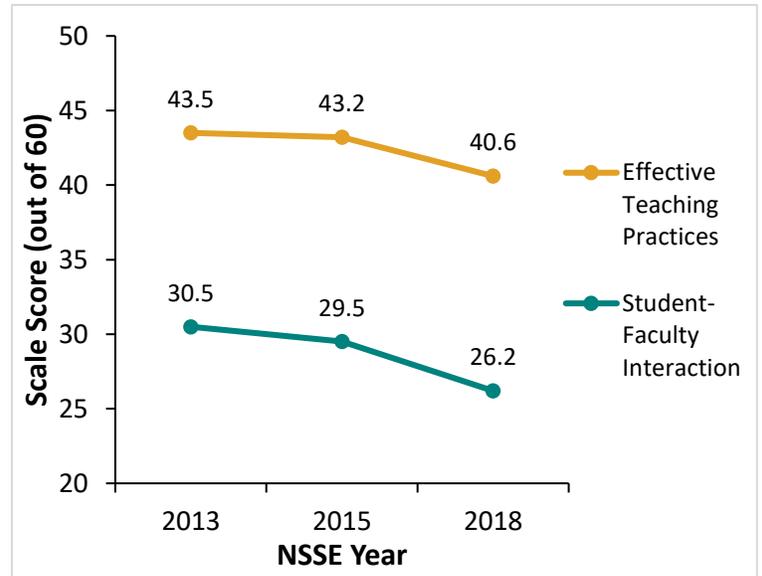


Figure A6. Experiences with Faculty: Seniors

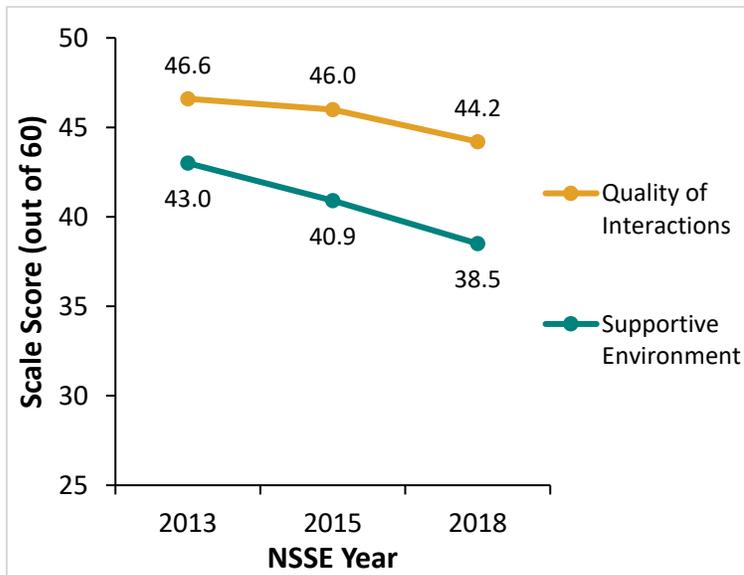


Figure A7. Campus Environment: First-Year Students

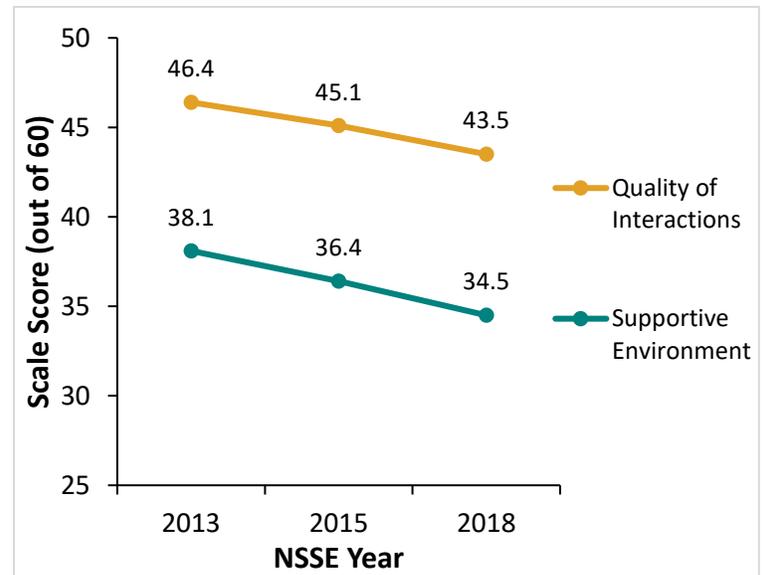


Figure A8. Campus Environment: Seniors