



2024 HEDS Alumni Survey Academic Assessment Committee Report February 2025

Executive Summary

In June 2024, St. Olaf administered the HEDS Alumni Survey to 2,223 graduates from the Classes of 2013, 2014, 2018, and 2019, and 420 alumni responded (19% response rate). This included 227 alumni from the “10-year cohort” (Classes of 2013 and 2014) and 193 alumni from the “5-year cohort” (Classes of 2018 and 2019), representing a 19% response rate from each cohort as well. This was the first time St. Olaf administered the HEDS Alumni Survey to alumni who had graduated ten years earlier; in the past we surveyed only the most recent 5-year cohort. Responses to several questions were quite similar (within a few percentage points) between the two cohorts in 2024; where there were differences, the 5-year cohort typically responded more positively than the 10-year cohort. The 10-year cohort also overlapped with the 2018 HEDS Alumni Survey respondents - the 2018 survey was sent to the Classes of 2012 and 2013; the 2024 survey was also sent to the Class of 2013, in addition to the other graduating classes.

Key findings from the survey:

- Overall, both cohorts in 2024 reported similar or stronger connections to St. Olaf and greater satisfaction with their undergraduate education than prior alumni respondents.
- There were several places where the 5-year cohort in 2024 stood out from respondents in prior survey years, while the 10-year cohort looked similar to the overlapping classes of alumni surveyed in 2018.
- Across the years, the majority of alumni respondents have consistently felt that faculty at St. Olaf showed genuine interest in them, cared about their holistic development, and were willing to engage with them outside of class.
 - Alumni from the 5-year cohort in 2024 were more likely than the 10-year cohort (91% v. 81%) or alumni from any other survey year to agree that non-classroom interactions had a positive impact on their intellectual growth.
 - 77% of the 5-year cohort said that they had developed a close relationship with at least one faculty member at St. Olaf, while 68% of the 10-year cohort said the same (comparable to the 71% of 2018 alumni respondents).

- Relatively smaller proportions (typically 50% or fewer) of alumni have reported frequent engagement across difference while in college.
 - However, the 2024 5-year cohort was more likely than cohorts from any other survey year to report frequently discussing other lifestyles or customs with fellow students (62%), engaging in discussions about intergroup relations (49%), and having discussions with faculty who differed from them in their political, social, or religious views (28%).
- When looking at the development of transferable skills, there were several areas where the 2024 5-year cohort stood out, with a higher percentage (compared to both the 10-year cohort and prior survey years) stating that St. Olaf had contributed to their civic engagement, intercultural knowledge and competence, ethical reasoning, and teamwork skills.
- Finally, alumni raised several suggestions for improving post-college preparation that align with the directions of St. Olaf's new Strategic Plan, particularly supporting students in vocational discernment and expanding experiential learning opportunities and access.

Full Report

Every three years, St. Olaf administers the HEDS Alumni Survey to graduates, typically those who have graduated approximately five years prior. This survey was created by and is administered in partnership with the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Consortium to which St. Olaf belongs. The HEDS Alumni Survey elicits information from graduates of colleges and universities around the country about their curricular and co-curricular learning during college, including satisfaction with their overall undergraduate experience, interactions with faculty, engagement across cultural and social differences, and development of a wide variety of transferable skills. St. Olaf administered this survey in June 2024 to 2,223 graduates from the Classes of 2013, 2014, 2018, and 2019, and 420 alumni responded (19% response rate). This included 227 alumni from the “10-year cohort” (Classes of 2013 and 2014) and 193 alumni from the “5-year cohort” (Classes of 2018 and 2019), representing a 19% response rate from each cohort as well.

This was the first time St. Olaf administered the HEDS Alumni Survey to alumni who had graduated ten years earlier; in the past we surveyed only the most recent 5-year cohort. Responses to several questions were quite similar (within a few percentage points) between the two cohorts; where there were differences, the 5-year cohort typically responded more positively than the 10-year cohort. Notable differences between the two groups are highlighted throughout the report. With the addition of the 10-year cohort, there is also the potential for some overlap with the 2018 HEDS Alumni Survey respondents - the 2018 survey was sent to the Classes of 2012 and 2013; the 2024 survey was also sent to the Class of 2013, in addition to the other graduating classes. This can provide some context for the differences between the two 2024 survey cohorts as discussed further in the sections below.

Overall, both cohorts of respondents in 2024 reported similar or stronger connections to St. Olaf (93% of the 5-year cohort and 90% of the 10-year cohort had “some” or a “very strong connection”) and greater satisfaction with their undergraduate education (94% of each cohort were “satisfied” or “very satisfied”) than prior years’ survey respondents. The following sections discuss St. Olaf alumni responses to more specific survey questions and comparison to prior years.¹ For all items discussed, more detailed visualizations of survey responses across the years can be found in [Appendix A](#)².

Interactions with faculty

While responses have fluctuated slightly over the years, in general the majority of alumni respondents felt that [faculty at St. Olaf](#) showed genuine interest in them (95%+ agreed/strongly agreed), cared about their holistic development (80%+ agreed/strongly agreed), and were

¹ Typically, we would also report comparison data from other institutions who administered the HEDS Alumni Survey in 2024 to comparable cohorts of graduates. However, due to an increased workload and understaffing at the HEDS Consortium, we will not receive the comparison reports until Spring 2025.

² Additionally, our public-facing [dashboards](#) (which also include data from the National Survey of Student Engagement) allow for deeper exploration of HEDS Alumni Survey responses.

willing to engage with them outside of class (85%+ agreed/strongly agreed). As in past years, 2024 respondents were less likely to say that interactions with faculty outside of class positively influenced their career goals (around three-quarters have agreed with this), as compared to their intellectual and personal growth (80-90% agreed).

- Within these sets of items, the 2024 respondent cohorts differed notably in their responses about faculty impact on their intellectual growth: 91% of the 5-year cohort agreed/strongly agreed that non-classroom interactions had a positive impact (the highest of any survey year) compared to 81% of the 10-year cohort (the lowest of any survey year, though similar to the 84% of their overlapping survey cohort in 2018).
 - The two cohorts also differed somewhat in their perceptions of faculty impact on their career goals: 75% of the 5-year cohort felt that faculty had a positive influence, similar to prior survey years, while 68% of the 10-year alumni cohort said the same (compared to 73% of 2018 alumni respondents).
- 81% of the 5-year cohort were satisfied with the opportunities to interact informally with faculty, compared to 73% of the 10-year cohort (75% of alumni respondents in 2018 said the same).
- Finally, 77% of the 5-year cohort said that they had developed a close relationship with at least one faculty member at St. Olaf, while 68% of the 10-year cohort said the same (again this is comparable to the 71% of 2018 alumni respondents).

Engagement across cultural/social differences

Relatively smaller proportions (typically 50% or fewer) of alumni respondents reported frequent [engagement across difference](#) while in college. Perhaps unsurprisingly, alumni have generally been more likely to engage in these ways with other students than with faculty, and more frequently reported discussing different lifestyles or customs with peers than specifically engaging with political, social, or religious differences.

- The 2024 5-year cohort was more likely than respondents from any other survey year to report frequently (“often” or “very often”) discussing other lifestyles or customs with fellow students (62%) and engaging in discussions about intergroup relations (49%), while the 10-year cohort looked more similar to prior survey respondents (46% and 38%, respectively, responded often/very often to these items).
- The 5-year cohort was also more likely than the 10-year cohort to report engaging in discussions with faculty who differed from them in their political, social, or religious views (28% did so often or very often compared to 17% of the 10-year cohort; percentages ranged from 16-20% in prior survey years).
- About a quarter to a third of alumni respondents across the survey years have reported attending a debate or lecture related to a current political/social issue or participating in a diversity workshop as an undergraduate.

Knowledge/skill development

In general, alumni responses about the [knowledge and skills](#) they gained at St. Olaf have held quite steady across the years, though a couple (quantitative literacy and information literacy) showed a slight “rebound” effect after a dip in 2021. The highest proportions of alumni respondents report gaining critical thinking and writing skills, followed by reading and information literacy skills, while those on the lower end tend to be civic engagement and intercultural knowledge/competence.

When looking at the 2024 results specifically, this part of the survey had some exceptions to the typical trend for the two alumni cohorts; respondents in the 10-year cohort were more likely to say that St. Olaf contributed to their development in critical thinking and quantitative literacy. Still, there were also several places where respondents in the 5-year cohort stood out:

- 62% (compared to 51% of the 10-year cohort) felt that St. Olaf contributed “quite a bit” or “very much” to their civic engagement³, the highest of any survey year.
- 78% (compared to 58% of the 10-year cohort) felt that St. Olaf contributed to their intercultural knowledge and competence,⁴ the highest of any survey year.
- 85% (compared to 78% of the 10-year cohort) felt that St. Olaf contributed to their ethical reasoning skills,⁵ the highest of any survey year.
- Teamwork⁶ also showed a similar trend, though with a smaller margin of difference; 81% of the 5-year cohort (the highest of any survey year) felt that St. Olaf contributed to their teamwork skills, compared to 76% of the 10-year cohort.
- In all but civic engagement, the 10-year respondent cohort in 2024 looked quite similar to their approximate counterparts in the 2018 survey.

Preparation for life after college

Another set of questions on the 2024 survey asked alumni how much their undergraduate experience prepared them for different aspects of post-college life. Quantitative results from the survey show that, similar to prior survey years:

³ Described in the survey as “promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and nonpolitical processes.”

⁴ Described in the survey as “information, skills, and commitments that support effective and appropriate interactions in a variety of cultural contexts.”

⁵ Described in the survey as “recognizing ethical issues, examining different ethical perspectives, and considering the ramifications of alternative actions.”

⁶ Described in the survey as “contributing to a team, facilitating the work of team members, and fostering a constructive team climate.”

- 69% of 2024 alumni overall (67% of the 5-year cohort, 71% of the 10-year cohort) felt prepared⁷ for their current career.
- 82% (78% of the 5-year cohort, 84% of the 10-year cohort) felt prepared for graduate or professional school.
- By contrast, only 24% (26% of the 5-year cohort, 22% of the 10-year cohort) felt prepared for responsibilities of post-college life, such as managing finances, maintaining health, and creating a home.

We can gain further insight into these findings by looking at alumni responses⁸ to two open-ended supplemental questions that St. Olaf added to the 2024 survey:

- “During your time at St. Olaf, which specific experience(s) best prepared you for your current role?” (134 total responses)
 - 46% mentioned specific courses and/or their major(s)
 - 40% discussed participation in high-impact practices such as undergraduate research, study abroad, or internships
 - 34% listed particular skills they had learned, whether in the classroom or through other experiences. This commonly included skills such as writing, critical thinking, oral communication, problem-solving, and working with others.
 - 25% talked about co-curricular experiences such as student organizations, music ensembles, or athletics
 - 19% credited on- and/or off-campus work/volunteer experiences
 - 11% pointed to mentorship from faculty, staff, or alumni
 - 7% mentioned interactions with peers or the residential nature of St. Olaf
- “What should St. Olaf prioritize to better prepare students for life after college?” (126 total responses)
 - 39% would have appreciated more support around navigating the job market (e.g., greater exposure to the variety of opportunities available, more assistance with specific job search tasks, additional mentoring from faculty and staff)
 - 36% suggested more support for students in developing financial literacy skills
 - 28% recommended expanding ways to practice applying their learning in

⁷ These percentages reflect those who responded that St. Olaf prepared them “quite a bit” or “very much” for each type of post-college experience.

⁸ [Appendix B](#) contains a more detailed report on these questions, including examples of quotes from both alumni cohorts.

real-world settings or building in more applied learning opportunities in classes

- 22% suggested that St. Olaf help students develop other practical skills for living independently, such as finding housing and maintaining work-life balance
- 13% discussed the need for exposing students to different perspectives and teaching them how to engage with those who hold different views

Summary

The 2024 HEDS Alumni Survey provided us with a different perspective on St. Olaf alumni compared to prior years by including two cohorts of graduates. The overall pattern of their responses initially suggests that recent alumni have a more positive impression of their undergraduate experience than those further removed from their time at the college. It will be interesting to see if this is a consistent trend by continuing to include these two cohorts in future iterations of the survey. It is also worth noting again that the 10-year cohort who responded in 2024 has some overlap with the graduating classes surveyed in 2018, and that the survey responses in these two years showed general consistency. Therefore, this supports an interpretation of improvement in the St. Olaf experience for recent graduating classes more than a scenario where alumni grow “cynical” over time about their college experiences.

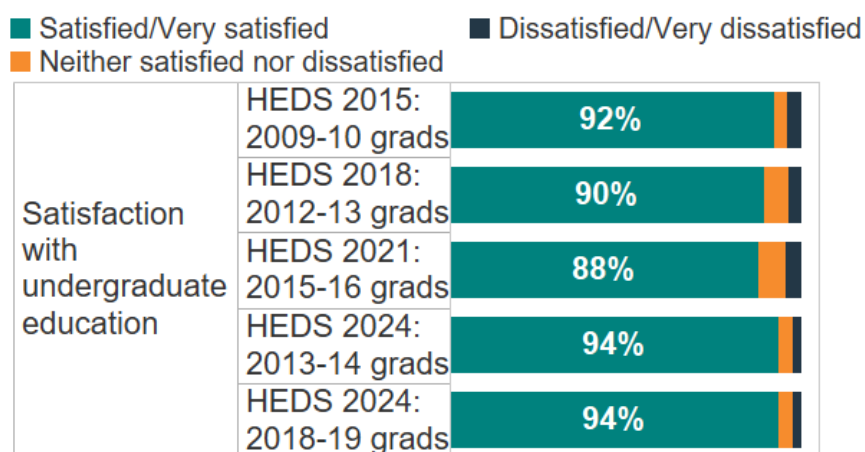
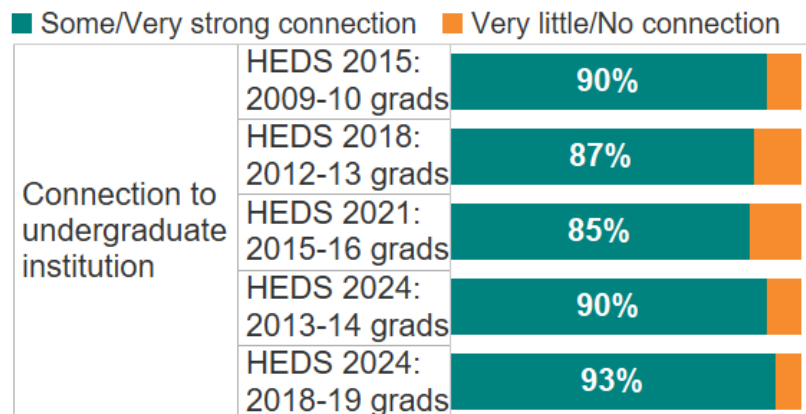
There were also several areas where the 5-year alumni cohort in 2024 stood out even among past surveys of similar cohorts. In particular, they were more likely to report engaging in conversations across difference, growing in their civic engagement, and developing intercultural knowledge, ethical reasoning, and teamwork skills. Several of these patterns align with the time that these 2018-2019 graduates attended St. Olaf, when the college was refocusing and recommitting to its work on equity and belonging, beginning with the *To Include is To Excel* initiative in 2017. As these commitments continue through our Strategic Plan and efforts such as the Strengthening Community - Engaging Across Difference values, we will continue to look for further growth reported in these areas by our alumni.

Additionally, asking alumni to share in more detail about how St. Olaf prepared them for post-college life and how the college could better support this transition for future students yielded several thoughtful and constructive comments. Much of what alumni suggested align with initiatives named in our new Strategic Plan, particularly supporting students in vocational discernment and expanding experiential learning opportunities and access. They also expressed additional areas for support, especially around practical skills such as financial literacy; perhaps a model similar to the SOAR program for first-years could also assist seniors in developing these more general life skills as they prepare to launch into their adult lives. While the perspectives of alumni who graduated 5-10 years ago likely reflect a different experience of St. Olaf than the programs, initiatives, and structures that exist today, it is still useful to learn from their reflections and see a reinforcement of the plans the college will pursue in the coming years.

Appendix A: Additional Data Details

Overall Experience

Key comparisons throughout this report include the two HEDS 2024 cohorts, as well as the HEDS 2024: 2013-14 grads and the HEDS 2018: 2012-13 grads.

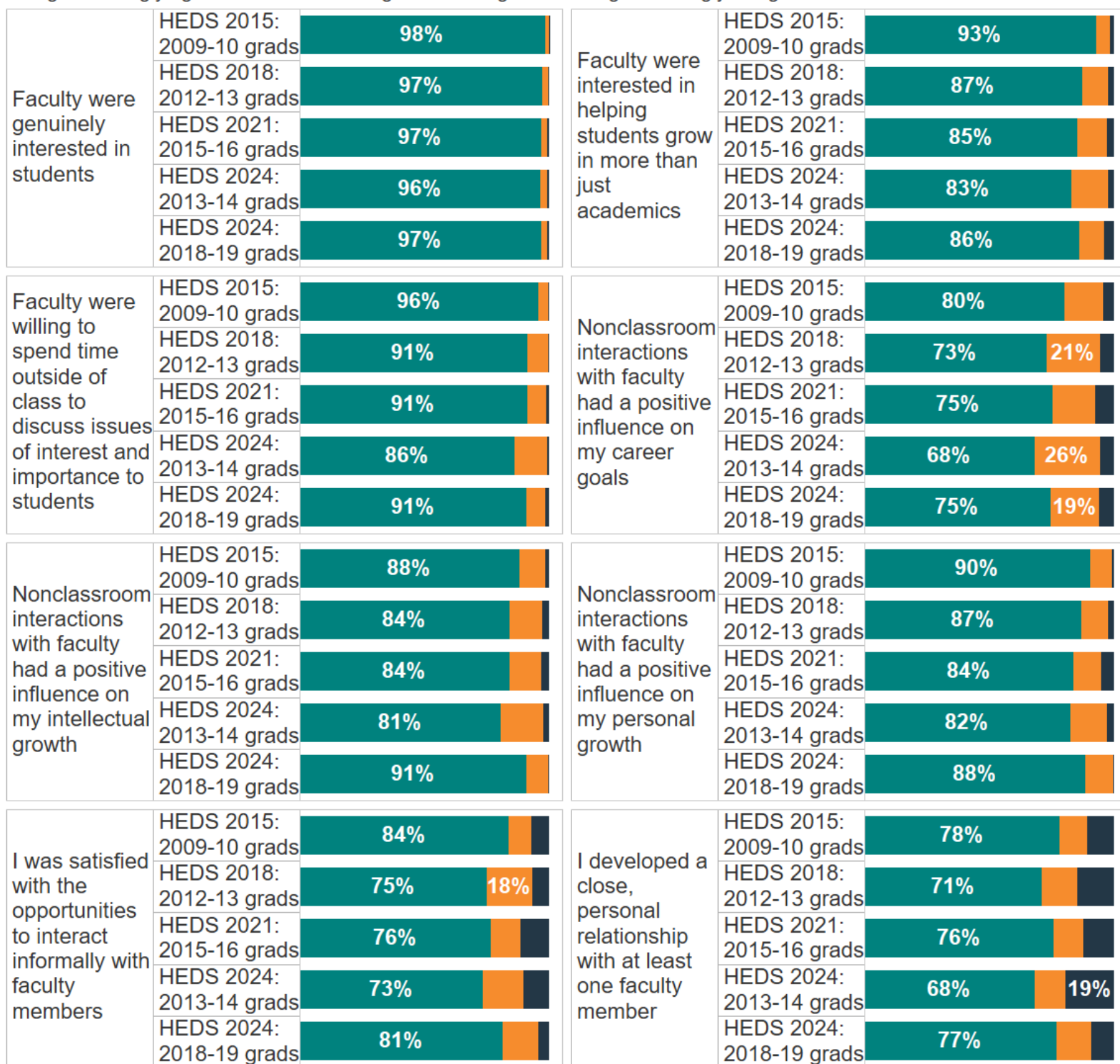


Interactions with Faculty

■ Agree/Strongly agree

■ Neither agree nor disagree

■ Disagree/Strongly disagree



Engagement with Cultural/Social Differences

“How often did you have the following experiences as an undergraduate at this institution?”

■ Often/Very often

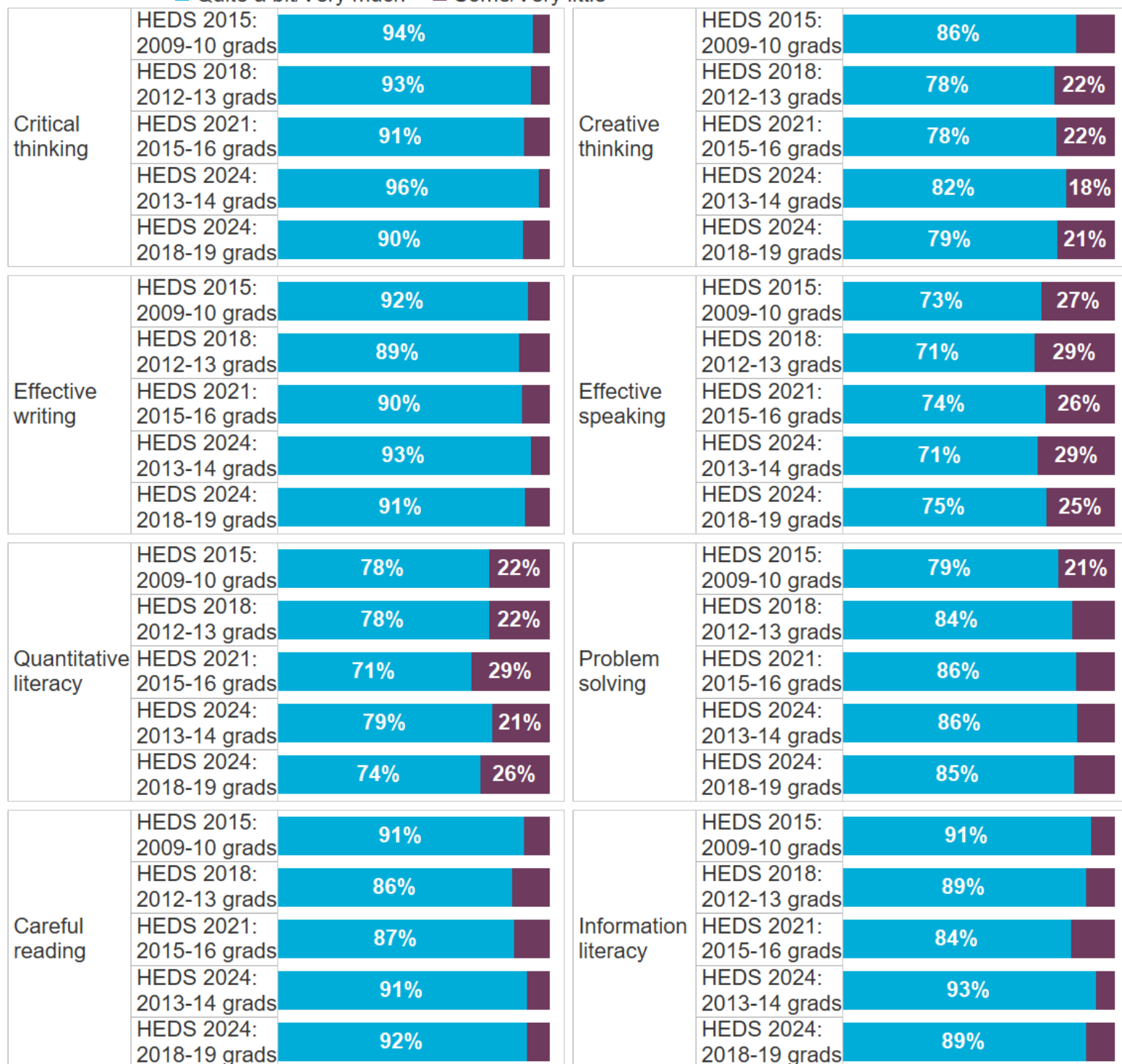
■ Sometimes/Rarely/Never

Had serious discussions with other students about different lifestyles or customs	HEDS 2015: 2009-10 grads	56%	44%
	HEDS 2018: 2012-13 grads	50%	50%
	HEDS 2021: 2015-16 grads	52%	48%
	HEDS 2024: 2013-14 grads	46%	54%
	HEDS 2024: 2018-19 grads	62%	38%
Had discussions about intergroup relations with students differing from you	HEDS 2015: 2009-10 grads	38%	62%
	HEDS 2018: 2012-13 grads	37%	63%
	HEDS 2021: 2015-16 grads	42%	58%
	HEDS 2024: 2013-14 grads	38%	62%
	HEDS 2024: 2018-19 grads	49%	51%
Had serious discussions with students whose political, social, or religious opinions were different from your own	HEDS 2015: 2009-10 grads	46%	54%
	HEDS 2018: 2012-13 grads	38%	62%
	HEDS 2021: 2015-16 grads	39%	61%
	HEDS 2024: 2013-14 grads	37%	63%
	HEDS 2024: 2018-19 grads	39%	61%
Had serious discussions with faculty or staff whose political, social, or religious opinions were different from your own	HEDS 2015: 2009-10 grads	20%	80%
	HEDS 2018: 2012-13 grads		84%
	HEDS 2021: 2015-16 grads	19%	81%
	HEDS 2024: 2013-14 grads		83%
	HEDS 2024: 2018-19 grads	28%	72%
Attended a debate or lecture on a current political/social issue	HEDS 2015: 2009-10 grads	32%	68%
	HEDS 2018: 2012-13 grads	30%	70%
	HEDS 2021: 2015-16 grads	29%	71%
	HEDS 2024: 2013-14 grads	27%	73%
	HEDS 2024: 2018-19 grads	35%	65%
Participated in a diversity or cultural awareness workshop	HEDS 2015: 2009-10 grads		83%
	HEDS 2018: 2012-13 grads	23%	77%
	HEDS 2021: 2015-16 grads	19%	81%
	HEDS 2024: 2013-14 grads	23%	77%
	HEDS 2024: 2018-19 grads	28%	72%

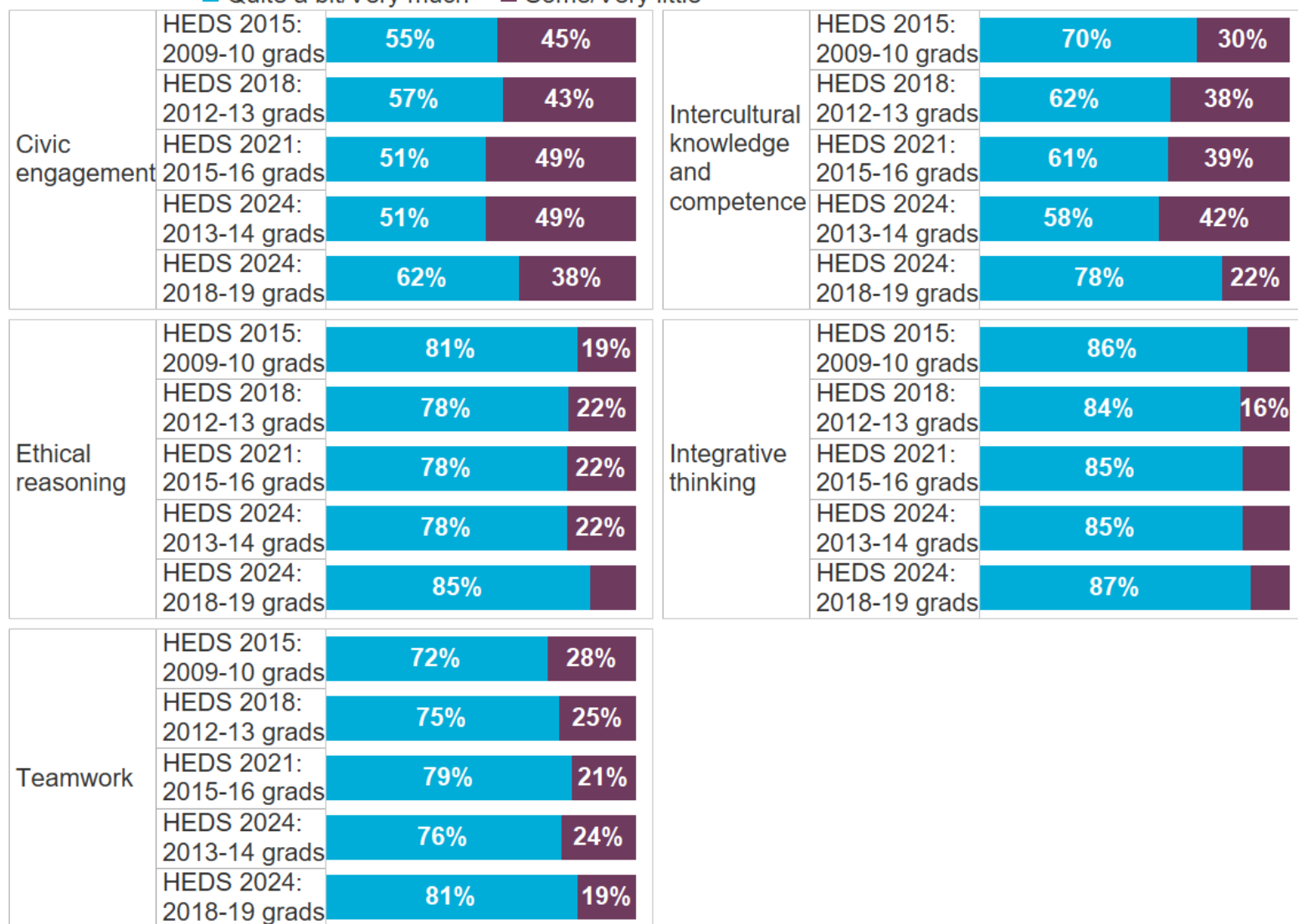
Knowledge/Skill Development

“To what extent did your experience as an undergraduate at this institution contribute to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?”

■ Quite a bit/Very much ■ Some/Very little



■ Quite a bit/Very much ■ Some/Very little



Appendix B: Supplemental Survey Questions

This report summarizes alumni responses to the two open-ended supplemental questions near the end of the 2024 survey about post-college preparation, along with example quotes from each theme (note that responses are copied verbatim, with no corrections to spelling or grammatical errors, and that many responses reflected more than one theme).

There were 134 total responses to the question, “During your time at St. Olaf, which specific experience(s) best prepared you for your current role?” Of these:

- 62 (46%) mentioned specific courses and/or their major(s).
 - “Various discrete math courses (Number Theory, Combinatorics) . . . Two CS courses in particular: Software Development; Algorithms & Data Structures . . . Various electives that turned out to be surprisingly useful or expand into lifelong interests: French 1, Inline Skating, Human Geography” (Respondent 5,⁹ 2013-14 grad)
 - “My American Studies and History majors were the most important academic experiences I had at St. Olaf. The coursework in those majors developed how I think about the world and connect ideas.” (Respondent 60, 2013-14 grad)
 - “As a stay-at-home mom, my social work studies, education studies, and family studies all come in handy on a regular basis.” (Respondent 6, 2013-14 grad)
 - “Critical reading and discussion of complex and varied materials through the Great Conversation Program.” (Respondent 21, 2013-14 grad)
 - “Math and biology classes: Genetics, Linear algebra, Probability theory, Statistics, Intro to Computer science” (Respondent 55, 2018-19 grad)
 - “My academic experiences best prepared me for my current role. The psych major and family studies concentration were really good at preparing me for the basics of my current work and for going into grad school.” (Respondent 58, 2018-19 grad)
- 54 (40%) discussed participation in high-impact practices such as undergraduate research, study abroad, or internships.
 - “Working on a project my senior year in the Center for Interdisciplinary Research. What an incredible experience! I'd like to honor Paul Roback for that specifically, but every participant was great to work with. The experience of working on a long-term, complicated project is STILL something I can be proud of on my resume. It was super helpful to learn to communicate with people of vary levels of technical background.” (Respondent 129, 2018-19 grad)
 - “I'm currently finishing my PhD in chemistry, so my undergraduate research experiences with CURI were the best preparation, in addition to my coursework.” (Respondent 38, 2018-19 grad)

⁹ Respondent numbers are based on all respondents to both open-ended questions; there were 160 unique respondents.

- “Undergraduate research experience through SOAN department, summer research (McNair/GSEF)” (Respondent 4, 2018-19 grad)
- “Studying abroad (I currently live in a foreign country and work on a very diverse team)” (Respondent 5, 2013-14 grad)
- “I am an immigration advisor . . . My study abroad experiences and interactions with international students were key to me finding my field and role.” (Respondent 33, 2018-19 grad)
- “My internships and student work roles within the Music Department prepared me best” (Respondent 63, 2013-14 grad)
- “Summer research internships at other institutions (but St. Olaf faculty were instrumental in helping me find these programs and put in competitive applications)” (Respondent 109, 2013-14 grad)
- 45 (34%) listed particular skills they had learned, whether in the classroom (which often overlapped with the mention of particular courses/majors noted above) or through other experiences. This commonly included skills such as writing, critical thinking, oral communication, problem-solving, and working with others.
 - “Double major in English and Biology taught me to be creative and analytical—the perfect combo for a marketer!” (Respondent 26, 2013-14 grad)
 - “My time on the football team helped develop the strength, endurance, and focus for my current job, as well as the skill of teamwork to get seemingly overwhelming workload done in a timely manner.” (Respondent 71, 2018-19 grad)
 - “Great Con helped me learn how to write, which has benefited me in every role I have had. Some of my upper-level courses had a large research/writing component, which has been helpful in law.” (Respondent 30, 2018-19 grad)
 - “Lab groups working through instruction and problem solving, working in a role in the group and coming together when needed to come to conclusions and fix issues.” (Respondent 44, 2013-14 grad)
 - “the hours I spent presenting my ideas and research both inside and outside of class prepared me to be a teacher; by the time it came for me to stand it front of a classroom I felt ready, and I wasn't all that nervous either.” (Respondent 10, 2018-19 grad)
 - “Independent projects for courses where the assignment involved having to go out and find what you would research/write about. Everything in my job revolves around coming up with new ideas and directions and you need to be adept at getting out there and finding the next thing to work on, not just following directions.” (Respondent 39, 2013-14 grad)
- 34 (25%) talked about co-curricular experiences such as participation or leadership in student organizations, music ensembles, or athletics.
 - “The social-emotional and spiritual learning/growth from singing in choir, particularly under the direction of Dr. Armstrong. I wasn't involved in campus ministry at all at the time and was intending to go into English education, and I credit Dr. A for creating an environment of meaning-seeking and discernment that

- eventually placed me on this path to becoming a pastor.” (Respondent 117, 2013-14 grad)
- “Performing both in theater and choir makes me a much more unique employee than my peers. I have a very STEM based role but unlike a lot of people my age, I find it easy to communicate with non-STEM people what I've done and what it means to them. Too often I hear my peers not aware that what they're saying is being lost on the audience. I largely don't have that problem because of my experiences outside of coursework at St. Olaf.” (Respondent 75, 2013-14 grad)
 - “Leadership within the St. Olaf Student Congregation, Leadership within the Women's Rugby Club” (Respondent 46, 2018-19 grad)
 - “Residence life, president of St. Olaf choir, leadership roles in the Education Minnesota Student Program and American Choral Director's Association” (Respondent 89, 2018-19 grad)
 - “Oddly, accordion club taught me a lot about being flexible and going with the flow. Professor Nichols always told us to focus on taking joy in making music rather than trying to be perfect. It's a sentiment that is very useful to remember in work and in life.” (Respondent 72, 2013-14 grad)
- 26 (19%) credited on- and/or off-campus work or volunteer experiences.
 - “tutoring an elementary student (off campus), summer employment as a theatre educator (at St. Olaf and elsewhere)” (Respondent 92, 2013-14 grad)
 - “I also appreciated my on-campus employment in admissions that supported me in building my professional confidence.” (Respondent 58, 2018-19 grad)
 - “Opportunity to do my work-study job in the Art Department.” (Respondent 90, 2018-19 grad)
 - “Working with on-campus employment in ways that were directly applicable to my area of study.” (Respondent 130, 2018-19 grad)
 - “Volunteering through VN and Thursdays Table.” (Respondent 91, 2013-14 grad)
 - 15 (11%) pointed to mentorship from faculty, staff, or alumni.
 - “the Piper Center services, alumni connections” (Respondent 134, 2013-14 grad)
 - “mentorship through SOAN department, piper center, and TRIO SSS, McNair/GSEF” (Respondent 4, 2018-19 grad)
 - “My art and art history professors and the Flaten Art Museum” (Respondent 61, 2018-19 grad)
 - “Building relationships with my faculty and mentors helped build confidence in my ability to communicate with others the things that are important to me and also showed me firsthand what being a good teacher ought to look like.” (Respondent 10, 2018-19 grad)
 - 9 (7%) mentioned interactions with peers or the residential nature of St. Olaf.
 - “living in residential community with my peers” (Respondent 46, 2018-19 grad)
 - “having difficult conversations with peers and faculty (mental health, outlook on life, vocation, etc.)” (Respondent 74, 2018-19 grad)

- “my group of friends was so formative and enriching!” (Respondent 7, 2018-19 grad)
- A few additional comments didn’t fit into the themes above and mentioned things like activism/political involvement, access to the Natural Lands, and general personal development throughout college.

There were 126 responses to the question, “What should St. Olaf prioritize to better prepare students for life after college?” Of these:

- 49 (39%) would have appreciated more support around navigating the job market, including:
 - Understanding the broader spectrum of career or graduate education opportunities available, both generally and for specific majors.
 - “For Art, there are many jobs, but steep competition - I would have liked to have someone who worked in the arts (not just in development) to be able to help with those professional elements - and also prepared me for a lot of rejection or lack of response from employers.” (Respondent 61, 2018-19 grad)
 - “It’s hard to know what the working world is like before you get there. In retrospect, I wish I had heard from more people with different kinds of jobs in my classes. Until I joined the workforce, virtually everything I knew about work came from either my parents (who were not in my field) and my professors, many of whom spent their entire careers as academics.” (Respondent 82, 2013-14 grad)
 - “More focus on non-corporate jobs for social science graduates - give entire range of grad school options available, talk about different government jobs, non-profit, etc. The career center was pretty corporate focused or traditional grad degrees (Med school, business school etc)” (Respondent 150, 2013-14 grad)
 - “Emphasize the importance of college degrees; what each studies entail (return of investment, employability, saturation of market, etc).” (Respondent 137, 2018-19 grad)
 - Key job search advice such as how to market their skills more effectively, network with other professionals, and negotiate salary/benefits.
 - “Offer workshops on how to find apartments, how to negotiate salary, the benefits of working remotely vs finding an office job, how to build a personal brand, how to start a business even if you have zero experience.” (Respondent 152, 2018-19 grad)
 - “Job preparation beyond resume and cover letter building - i.e. negotiating salary, meaningful networking, navigating career changes, etc.” (Respondent 107, 2013-14 grad)
 - “Ever since graduation, I feel like it has been a nonstop struggle to succeed and that no one considers as valuable the skills that I have or

sees them, whether in applying to PhD programs (which was massively difficult and led mostly to rejection) or in my teaching jobs, where I've so far been laid off and nonrenewed before I could really grow into the roles.” (Respondent 10, 2018-19 grad)

- Additional opportunities for mentoring from faculty, staff, or alumni.
 - “I think students would benefit from more networking connection programs, internship opportunities, Piper Center connections trips, and Oles on the Road alumni events in cities around the world.” (Respondent 158, 2013-14 grad)
 - “Given my experience with my faculty advisor, I would recommend more specific career advice from inside of student's area of study. The Piper center does a great job, but an additional perspective from the faculty who have gone through series this course of class work and then experienced their version of professional life, could be beneficial.” (Respondent 23, 2013-14 grad)
 - “It was really the opportunities I took advantage of that I felt prepared me to succeed after graduation so it may be helping students connect with others who have that experience to encourage them to seek out experiences or helping students find their people on campus or their interests.” (Respondent 58, 2018-19 grad)
- Suggestions around requiring students to visit the Piper Center or complete various career preparation tasks throughout their time at St. Olaf.
 - “The career center needs to be more robust. I think there should be a required course on writing resumes, cover letters, and interview skills. Or at a minimum, a requirement that each student produce a resume and cover letter and meet with the career center five times a year. I had a steep learning curve in figuring out how to get a job after I graduated.” (Respondent 30, 2018-19 grad)
 - “When I was at school, there were course requirements to ensure you were exposed to a wide range of subjects. I think including some career-preparedness activities among those requirements would be helpful . . . Another idea would be to require a certain number of “career” activities per semester (similar to how music students must attend a few performances per semester.) These activities could include things like having a resume review at the Piper Center, attending a networking event, etc.” (Respondent 59, 2013-14 grad)
- 45 (36%) brought up financial support, both in terms of making St. Olaf more affordable for students but especially teaching students financial literacy skills (e.g., filing taxes, budgeting, saving/investing, taking out/paying off loans, etc.).
 - “Honestly, give students more financial aid, grants, and scholarships. I would have been much better prepared for life and living on my own if I didn't have to spend so much time and money worrying, stressing, and paying off student loans

- . . . Advocate for better policies both at St. Olaf College and in the broader community of secondary education. It is my wish that no student should graduate with nearly \$30,000 of debt simply because they wanted an education.” (Respondent 36, 2018-19 grad)
- “A senior seminar focused on some of the practical things about being an adult would be really cool. Such a class could focus on budgeting, evaluating benefits, investing, etc. These are things that I had access to through my parents, but that's not true of everyone. This is one way to specifically address gaps that exist due to class differences.” (Respondent 60, 2013-14 grad)
 - “LIFE SKILLS, specifically financial education. I made a lot of financial mistakes in the decade after graduating because I just didn't know . . . Financial literacy is a privilege not everyone has, but Olaf could level that playing field for current students.” (Respondent 93, 2013-14 grad)
 - “Personal finance education, education on how health insurance works, what benefits to look for with retirement, etc.” (Respondent 81, 2018-19 grad)
 - “Personal finance education! I work in human resources and no one understands how their 401k works, what are good retirement goals, how to save and grow your money effectively, etc. This should be a mandatory course for all students!” (Respondent 155, 2013-14 grad)
- 35 (28%) recommended expanding ways to practice applying their learning in real-world settings such as access to internships (perhaps even requiring them), research, or on-campus work opportunities; building in more applied learning within classes and/or through expanded course offerings; or potentially partnering with companies to provide short-term project opportunities for students.
 - “building out a more robust paid internship relationships with companies and requiring internship or related job experience to graduate (I believe many other schools do something like this.)” (Respondent 59, 2013-14 grad)
 - “Making more positions available for student work! Getting to practice sticking to a schedule, writing regular reports, and showing up on time in a slightly more forgiving environment was great experience for coping with life after college.” (Respondent 129, 2018-19 grad)
 - “More practical, skill-based courses to prepare you for today's jobs, like graphic design, UX design, content marketing . . . We don't have to abandon St. Olaf's classic academic programs, just expand them so people feel equipped to pursue jobs that actually pay enough for us to pay our loans.” (Respondent 152, 2018-19 grad)
 - “Prioritize hireable skills in courses. I would have been less marketable on graduation had I not done student research and student work which both aligned to my field of choice.” (Respondent 25, 2013-14 grad)
 - “Courses with an internship/project components to them where students work with outside companies on a project.” (Respondent 11, 2018-19 grad)
 - 28 (22%) suggested help with other practical skills for living independently (e.g., finding housing, cooking, wellness, work-life balance).

- “More exercise or wellness/mental health related classes! When I think about my every day, that’s what I wished I had more info about.” (Respondent 100, 2018-19 grad)
- “More opportunities to learn about and experience the realities of finding housing, buying a home, managing personal finances, and living a healthy, balanced life-style.” (Respondent 119, 2018-19 grad)
- “Sharing information about the benefits of living off campus and skills learned via that housing arrangement--paying rent, cooking, commuting, etc. I probably would have still lived on campus, but I felt really behind on some of those things when after graduation compared to other peers and could have benefitted from awareness of those things.” (Respondent 157, 2013-14 grad)
- 16 (13%) discussed the need for exposure to different perspectives, increasing the diversity of the student body (across different facets of identities and beliefs), or teaching students how to engage with others who hold different views.
 - “Ensuring exposure to differing viewpoints (whether political, economic, religious, etc) and consideration and ability to interact with others of different views.” (Respondent 50, 2018-19 grad)
 - “I think having more exposure to diversity and different viewpoints would have better prepared me for life after college. In my time at St. Olaf, a lot of us had grown up in sheltered households with one set of viewpoints. College is a great place to question those assumptions and viewpoints and get exposed to new diverse perspectives and experiences.” (Respondent 47, 2013-14 grad)
 - “increase diversity- the world is diverse in thought, economic status, background, etc. St.Olaf is very homogenous in terms of being predominantly rich white students with high means. This is fine, but it is not the reality of the world for most people and perhaps the people students will encounter after graduation.” (Respondent 15, 2013-14 grad)
- 12 (10%) shared other feedback that didn’t fit into any of the above themes, such as continuing to emphasize community on campus and the value of the liberal arts, providing mental health support for students, opinions that St. Olaf shouldn’t engage in political matters, and critical comments about particular programs or the way the college invests its money.

It’s important to note that some alumni used their response to reinforce things that they had experienced at St. Olaf (e.g., high-quality liberal arts education, mentoring from faculty and staff), while some others made suggestions related to things the college already does or has implemented (e.g., fine arts-specific career support in the Piper Center). Since the survey respondents were alumni who graduated 5-10 years ago, their perspectives likely reflect a different experience of St. Olaf than the programs, initiatives, and structures that exist today, while still offering ideas for how these can continue to improve.