



Experiences Tied to STOGGoal Development

After respondents were asked to choose the STOGGoal outcome where they'd grown the most, they were prompted to describe the experiences that had led to this development. These responses can be categorized as follows, with examples of the most commonly cited experiences for each category listed below:

- **Co-curricular experiences:** student organizations, athletics, music, student work
- **College environment:** living independently, managing time and the increased rigor of classes
- **Coursework:** readings, assignments, group work, discussions
- **Faculty/staff interactions:** office hours; meeting with advisors; academic support, counseling, and Piper Center services
- **High-impact educational experiences¹:** field/clinical experiences, practicums, study abroad, internships, undergraduate research (e.g., CURI)
- **Personal reflection:** reflection on identity, values, skills, and interests; setting goals for the future; learning from mistakes; overcoming hardships
- **Social interactions:** building friendships, interacting with others from diverse backgrounds
- **Other:** managing mental health, seeking out other skill-building opportunities, non-St. Olaf experiences

The following table shows how students' responses were distributed across these categories for each STOGGoal.

STOGGoal	First-Years	Seniors
Broad Knowledge	21 Total Responses Coursework (18) Social interactions (4) Co-curricular experiences (2) Faculty/staff interactions (1) Other (4)	8 Total Responses Coursework (7) High-impact experiences (2)
Communication and Collaboration	22 Total Responses Coursework (13) Social interactions (9) Co-curricular experiences (6) Faculty/staff interactions (5) College environment (4)	31 Total Responses Coursework (21) Co-curricular experiences (13) Social interactions (6) Faculty/staff interactions (2) High-impact experiences (2) Other (1)

¹ For first-years, this category was included under "Other" as few respondents mentioned these types of experiences, likely because they had not had the opportunity to complete them at this stage of their college experience.

STOGoal	First-Years	Seniors
Critical Thinking	34 Total Responses Coursework (30) Co-curricular experiences (4) Personal reflection (2) Faculty/staff interactions (2) Social interactions (1) College environment (1) Other (1)	32 Total Responses Coursework (27) High-impact experiences (6) Co-curricular experiences (4) Faculty/staff interactions (4) Personal reflection (3) Social interactions (3) Other (1)
Integration and Application	32 Total Responses Coursework (28) Co-curricular experiences (3) Faculty/staff interactions (3) Personal reflection (1) Social interactions (1) College environment (1)	23 Total Responses Coursework (21) Personal reflection (5) Co-curricular experiences (4) Social interactions (1) Faculty/staff interactions (1) High-impact experiences (1)
Responsible Engagement	4 Total Responses (not analyzed further)	9 Total Responses Co-curricular experiences (4) Social interactions (4) Coursework (3) High-impact experiences (3) Faculty/staff interactions (2) Personal reflection (1)
Self-Development	81 Total Responses Personal reflection (27) Social interactions (24) Coursework (22) College environment (22) Co-curricular experiences (16) Faculty/staff interactions (10) Other (12)	38 Total Responses Personal reflection (16) Coursework (14) Social interactions (12) Faculty/staff interactions (12) Co-curricular experiences (11) College environment (6) High-impact experiences (3) Other (4)
Specialized Knowledge	17 Total Responses Coursework (15) Co-curricular experiences (4) Faculty/staff interactions (3)	24 Total Responses Coursework (18) High-impact experiences (8) Co-curricular experiences (6) Faculty/staff interactions (3) Personal reflection (1)
Vocational Discernment	28 Total Responses Coursework (16) Personal reflection (14) Faculty/staff interactions (6) Social interactions (5) Co-curricular experiences (3) College environment (2) Other (1)	12 Total Responses Coursework (8) Co-curricular experiences (4) Faculty/staff interactions (4) Personal reflection (3) Social interactions (3) High-impact experiences (3) Other (2)

Below is a sample of student responses² to the question about experiences that helped them grow in their chosen STOGal area.

Broad Knowledge

First-Years:

- “I have taken classes where I learn more about people in different situations than me, whether that be people from the past or people from different areas of the world, or even people today who live in the United States but are living in different circumstances as me. I have also interacted with so many people from around the country and around the world here at Olaf and I have learned a lot from them as well. Additionally, I have learned about the natural world in my science courses, especially chemistry, from the molecular level of life.”
- “The first thing would be that my social circle include mostly international students. Exchanging stories and learning about new cultures has been amazing. Another contributing factor would be some of my classes, which revolved around philosophy and religion in different parts of the world.”
- “My classes this year have been incredibly varied, as I've learned about everything from gender roles in Spain in the 1920s to sustainable farming to ancient Islamic poetry to Jewish mysticism to contemporary American politics. I have never been able to study so many aspects of humanity at one time, and as I've gone through this first year I've recognized more and more connection between the concepts taught in my classes. It's been very eye-opening and I believe that my knowledge of human cultures has expanded wonderfully because of this year.”

Seniors:

- “Many of my classes have taught me a great deal about the world and the way cultures intersect and connect each other. Not only that, but the history underlying many current affairs in the world today.”
- “I have taken classes in a bunch of different disciplines, and although my attempts to study abroad were canceled by the school/covid, the short time I was abroad allowed me to learn about different cultures.”

Communication and Collaboration

First-Years:

- “Just learning how to effectively navigate this new found freedom and responsibility took a lot of help from other people. There were often times when I knew that to be true, but I still had to work on reaching and getting support from friends, faculty, and classmates.”
- “I have been able to work on my communication and collaboration skills in all of my classes. I frequently have group projects and assignments that require me to work with my peers. In addition to in-class experiences, I have practiced emailing professors and more informal discussions with my classmates.”

² Quotes are copied verbatim, with no corrections to spelling or grammatical errors. Some potentially identifying information has been redacted.

- “Working in coordination together, my role as communications manager for [student org] along with my writing-based or literature-based classes really helped me improve my effective communication exponentially. My training as a Writing Tutor has taken this to the next level. You see, it wasn't just one thing. It wasn't just the teachers and mentors in my FYS seminar class on meaning-making (and meaning-making involves quite a bit of writing) or the senior tutors in my Writing Desk training. It wasn't just my personal writing and reflections for my classes, or the independent poetry written for projects. It wasn't just the emails I became more and more thoughtful in crafting for my team. It was the combination of all. That has contributed not just to my growth, but to my relationship with communication and collaboration—what it means to serve the community, to be the community—overall.”

Seniors:

- “Group work has required the use of effective communication and collaboration, and I have been part of a lot of group work here at St. Olaf. I think this is an important thing for me to have gotten better at because I plan to go into the medical field, where I will be constantly working with others.”
- “Having roommates, podmates, and group work in classroom settings has allowed me to grow my communication and collaboration skills. I have lived with my same roommate since freshman year and the reason our relationship as roommates has been so successful is because of effective communication. Group projects in classroom settings taught me how it is necessary to balance a group with the strengths of its members. I've also learned that I work best within groups.”
- “My experiences outside the classroom within club leadership, as well as my experiences with creating relationships with professors, collaborating for group work, and developing friendships on campus.”
- “I used to struggle with writing papers, but the regular writing assignments and papers at St. Olaf have vastly improved my writing. Despite majoring in math, I've still had substantial written work in GEs and with this practice, I am now able to easily outline and write 5+ page papers.”

Critical Thinking

First-Years:

- “I took many classes specifically first semester that challenged the way I usually think about learning at school. I had to learn how to use way more critical thinking skills to solve the questions presented to me in my classes than I previously had in high school.”
- “My classes have been a source of having to think more critically about the world. Additionally, I think I have been thinking more critically about my own life, my values, and what I prioritize.”
- “Class discussions have helped me think more critically and expand my thinking. Hearing others share their perspectives has allowed me to reflect on my own perspectives and values.”
- “I think I grew the most in critical thinking inquiry because I was constantly challenged in my thinking inside and outside of class. I was always able to connect my course learnings with my day to day life.”

Seniors:

- “Almost all of my professors while I’ve been here effectively guide students through different ways of thinking and asking questions, rather than telling us what to think. We’re able to formulate and express our own thoughts in relation to what we’re being presented with in the classroom.”
- “Classwork that helped me develop the skill of reading a text and thinking critically about its author's intentions, argumentation style, and rhetorical goals. This has impacted how I view many aspects of life, as well as how I engage with everyday situations.”
- “I participated in CURI research which was an opportunity to apply critical thinking skills and knowledge that I have gained in other courses. I think that applying course material to research and facing problems that require a lot of thought have helped me learn to think critically.”
- “I think a lot has to do with intellectual range and diversity of other students (in majors primarily) and broad multi-faceted conversations in classes. I've learned from courses and peers that things are not nearly as one-dimensional or simple as they might seem. Talking about and being exposed to so many different ideologies and concepts has helped me make deeper connections, and recognize more in social dynamics/events than I'd realized.”

Integration and Application*First-Years:*

- “I have been really proud of the courses that I have been taking this academic year. I have learned a lot from my professors and classmates. I have grown much more as a person through this year at St. Olaf, and I am grateful for everything I have learned this year. Applying knowledge is really important, as everything we learn can be related to what is happening around us. Also, the connection with the professors in the class as well as through office hours helps a lot (it is always important to ask questions)!”
- “My classes so far have exposed me to a lot of new material and helped me develop various skills. In each class I have had the opportunity, whether in a project, paper, or exam, to apply my learning and test myself to see how much I have learned. I have especially liked the projects when the professor gave the class more freedom and creative liberty to use our imaginations or choose topics we were excited about or be able to make connections with information we learned in other classes.”
- “I took a religion class first semester and as a stem major, I never thought I’d be referencing the humanities as much as I am. That class, as well as other humanities classes have taught me to think in a way I’d never considered before.”
- “So often I will be in a class talking about a specific subject and the ideas in that class can be supported (or argued) based on information I’ve acquired from other classes. The constant cross over between the different field of study at St. Olaf is something I never experienced before. It might help talking about the political power of music in a FYS or learning about social justice in choir, or any other subject or involvement on campus, it all seems to connect in some way.”

Seniors:

- “I think I have been able to strengthen my skills and use my knowledge to be a student leader. I have gained a lot of skills and have helped my [student org] members gain these skills too. I have actively been involved in organizations and my knowledge from social work has helped me develop goals for these student organizations.”
- “I think the nature of the liberal arts invites and requires the application of different fields of study in analyzing and solving a problem. This is definitely true in the ways that St Olaf has presented problems for analysis and in my own personal life”
- “The cross-disciplinary approach of liberal arts nurtures creative thinking. The ability to make connections between material learned in different fields and departments is something I have developed over my time at St. Olaf. I have learned to think deeply about things and to use a variety of approaches and angles when it comes to problem solving.”
- “I think being a double in two contrasting fields has allowed me a unique experience at St. Olaf, where I'm able to learn in very different ways and about very different subject matter but have moments of really meaningful intersection both through research projects done on my own and discussions in class.”

Responsible Engagement*First-Years:*

- “Being conducted by Tesfa as a member of Viking Chorus has expanded my ethical understanding of the great conflicts that face our nation. Singing is only a part of what we do, and is influenced by what we find around us that transforms individuals into communities. My experiences from Viking alone are comparable to a significant amount of all the ethical teaching and training that I have received over my whole life prior to college, and I am grateful that I have been lucky enough to gain those experiences.”
- “I have connected with many cultural groups on campus like the community council in my dorm, attended and worked with different clubs (Celebrating South Asia and International Student Organization) to build a community.”

Seniors:

- “During my time at St. Olaf, I've learned a lot about what it means to be part of a community. Whether it was in the dorms or in a student organization, all of my interactions on the Hill have helped me grow in this area.”
- “I came to St. Olaf as a very self-focused individual. I wanted to succeed on my own, and I cared very little about how my community was doing. I believe that St. Olaf has enlightened me to the importance of looking out for others, and using your skills and resources to help wherever you can. I believe one of the most influential experiences was traveling to China, as it gave me a perspective on how every person is part of the global human community. Additionally, the Ancient Warfare course showed me how fragile society is when people don't value others as much as themselves. Lastly, I would say that studying Behavioral Economics and Law and Economics taught me a lot about human behavior and values that I had not understood before, simply in that people develop their own implicit customs apart from government that create the foundation of society.”

Self-Development

First-Years:

- “I have improved most in personal development because college forces you to create better habits and take responsibility. Routines in high school might not work in college so I am working on better time management and taking initiative. I have also received support in this area from various teachers and CAAS which has been very beneficial.”
- “In my opinion, the first year of college is all about exploration. Finding yourself and discovering new things about you as a person are core examples of this principle. Developing self purpose has been a large part of my experience especially because it was the first time I have lived alone in my life and this forces you to rely on yourself.”
- “My work with SSSD and my weekly advising meetings have definitely aided in my purposeful self-development. I feel like SOAR was also helpful as well!”
- “My first year seminar and first year writing classes have given me the opportunity to learn more about myself and identity. I have had to reflect on how my identity affects others and I have learned a lot about myself through these classes including my interests and what is important to me.”
- “Going through personal and academic struggles my first semester lead me to plan ahead and build a support system before entering my second semester. Resultantly, I am more productive and happier than I have ever been on campus. I am disciplining myself more effectively.”
- “I have grown a lot as an individual since I came to school here. Part of this has to do with interactions between myself and others that come from different backgrounds, as I grew up rather sheltered.”

Seniors:

- “Almost everything I have experienced at St. Olaf has led me to grow and develop as a person. Whether it be group projects, experiences with professors and mentors, chapel services, discussion-based classes, or just experiencing the culture at St. Olaf in general, I have grown in more ways than I can explain. At St. Olaf, I've learned how to manage my time, speak with confidence, advocate for myself, develop a moral compass, care for myself and others, and live a healthy balanced life.”
- “Classes that engage in different philosophies and ideas have helped my self-development because not only do I consider other perspectives but I've actively considered what ideas I want to add to my person and what ideas I want to leave behind. I've also found friends who have supported me and helped me learn to communicate better and trust myself and others and be more self-confident in who I am, and so in social contexts I've had lots of opportunities to grow personally.”
- “I have had many academic struggles related to my self and interpersonal relationships. My continued work to overcome these struggles aided by resources like the Boe House and Academic Support Center have been backdrop against which I have had to intentionally work on my on self-development.”
- “I think college has called me to learn about how I interact with the world. The opportunities I have been a part of thought the college have been intentional steps to grow either in professional skills, educational development, or emotional growth. I think the amount which I

am able to take a reflective view of my experiences and choose going forward experiences that will intentionally help me grow is something I have gained from my time at Olaf.”

- “St. Olaf is a place that constantly challenged me. It challenged me intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally. My professors were able to bring the most out of me through my courses and sharpened my fine thinking abilities into real world skills that ended up getting me hired. My friends and my community pushed me to explore who I am, what I enjoy, and what I want my legacy to be. My 4 years have allowed me to push myself to my limits while letting me explore inside a sandbox to figure out who I will be after I graduate. For this, I am eternally grateful and know that I made the right decision with which college I decided to attend.”

Specialized Knowledge

First-Years:

- “I feel as if I have grown the most in specialized knowledge of music because I have invested so much time into it during my first year on campus... Between a number of different ensembles playing different instruments, trumpet and drum lessons, and all my music classes, I feel as if I have grown tremendously throughout the year.”
- “Through the art history and studio art course I have taken this year, I have learned that I definitely want to pursue a degree in these fields. I have gained a lot of specialized information specific to the field, and I am excited to continue the journey.”

Seniors:

- “In majoring in psychology and biology with a neuroscience concentration, I feel that I have learned a lot in this specific area, as my majors have a specific overlap and many of my courses contribute to this and overlap together. I think that St. Olaf has helped my knowledge in this field grow the most, while other areas have undoubtedly grown as well.”
- “Since I am a music major, St. Olaf has provided me with multiple performance opportunities and rigorous training. I have seen my skills grow in this area especially throughout the 4 years I've been here, largely in part to the music faculty and their support.”
- “During my time at St. Olaf I completed my field practicum for my Social Work major. With this internship I was able to apply what I had learned in class and actually work with real people. I was able to have hands on experience and make connections with those in the Northfield community. I learned a lot through being able to work with a diverse set of people.”

Vocational Discernment

First-Years:

- “This year really gave me the opportunity to explore the fields of study that I have liked previously, but really aided me in deciding what I want to do with my future. It did not take me too long to find the subjects I am most passionate about to focus my academics on, while also giving me the opportunity to go beyond what is required from me and explore other options and fields just for fun.”
- “I feel like I learned a lot about myself and the way I learn and how I can apply that to what I want to do with my life. I have stuck to my gut when it comes to kicking classes and taking

leaps and it's all paid off because I feel like I have found a greater sense of what I want to do with my life to make a difference in the world. I am excited to expand on what I learned about myself this past year in hopes to become even more confident in my pursuits."

- "the classes and discussions we have had in them, talking one on one with professors, meeting with the piper center"

Seniors:

- "I had the freedom to change my major my junior year and this helped me realize what type of humanitarian work I actually want to pursue. With my friendships, I have been able to realize how much the people around me influence me and contribute to my well-being. I do not know exactly what I will be doing in the future, but St. Olaf helped shape an idea/direction that I will take. Even without a solid plan, I now know what I want to do and how to get there."
- "I was fortunate to have found my passion in my double major and the professors/advisors I have talked with throughout my four years at St. Olaf have made personal reflections and dreams into realistic goals that have shaped my current career path."