

BCSSE 2018

(The Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement, a supplemental survey to The National Survey of Student Engagement)

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Observations

Office of Institutional Research and Assessment
January 2020

The Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement is given to incoming freshmen during the summer before they begin their academic career at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The survey asks academic and co-curricular experiences in high school, as well as what they expect from their first year of college.

The survey was administered during the summer of 2018, with the link to the survey included in a “To-Do” checklist for incoming students who registered for orientation. Approximately 25% of incoming freshmen responded.¹ This provides some highlights from that survey, full results are available from OIRA.

What incoming freshmen did in high school:

AP/IB/Dual Enrollment

- 43% had fewer than 2 Advanced Placement classes
- 39% have not taken any college or university courses for credit
- 6% have International Baccalaureate Credits

Study Habits

- 83% spent 15 or fewer hours preparing for class
- 44% say they never went to class without completing an assignment
- 68% said they often or very often reached conclusions on their own analysis of numerical data
- 84% said they often or very often identified key information from reading assignments

Perspective

- 94% say they included diverse perspectives in their high school work, 60% say they did so often or very often
- 96% say they examined the strengths and weaknesses of their own views, 73% said they did so often or very often
- 98% say they tried to understand someone else’s views by picturing the issue from a different perspective, 73% say they did so often or very often

The Institution

- 89% say they are using grants and scholarships to pay for educational expenses, only 40% say they are using loans. Other sources are parents/relatives (79%), personal savings (57%) and jobs (42%).
- UT Knoxville was the first choice for 71% of incoming freshmen
- 97% expect to graduate and 80% say they know what their major will be

¹ A precise response rate cannot be calculated because the survey is available to any student who registers for orientation, and not all of those students show up for fall semester.

Expectations for their experience at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Academic Preparation

- When asked about being ready for class, 15% say they plan to spend fewer than 10 hours per week preparing while 31% say they plan to spend more than 20 hours per week, and 77% say that most of that time will involve assigned reading
- Three out of four say they will never come to class without completing readings or assignments
- 78% are certain to very certain that they will be able to focus on studying when there are other interesting things to do
- An overwhelming majority (93%) expect to find additional information for course assignments when they do not understand the material
- While 95% say they are certain to very certain they will be able to finish something they have started when they encounter challenges, only 77% say they will stay positive, even when doing poorly on a test or assignment
- 70% say that learning course material will be difficult to very difficult and 75% have concerns about managing their time
- When asked about how prepared they are for various types of academic work, students report that they are prepared to very prepared to do the following: work effectively with others (96%), think critically and analytically (91%), write clearly and effectively (89%), learn effectively on their own (88%), speak clearly and effectively, analyze numerical and statistical information and use computing and information technology (82% for each of these)

Seeking Help

- 70% of incoming students say that they expect they will often or very often ask another student to help them understand course material while 62% expect that they will reciprocate by explaining material to fellow students
- Three out of four students expect to work with other students on course projects of assignments and almost nine out of ten students expect to prepare for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students
- There is an expectation that getting help with school work should not be difficult, only 30% expect it to be
- When asked how often they expect to seek help with coursework from a variety of sources, students report that they expect to seek help often to very often from friends or other students (85%), learning support services such as the student success center (61%), faculty members (60%), academic advisors (57%), and family members or other persons/offices (25% each)

Interacting With Faculty

- Only one in three incoming freshmen expected that interacting with faculty would be difficult
- 99% expect to discuss their academic performance with a faculty member, and 96% expect to work with faculty outside of class on committees, student groups, etc.

- 97% of respondents expect to discuss course topics, ideas or concepts outside of class, over half of those think this will happen often or very often
- When they struggle with course assignments, 88% are certain to very certain they will ask instructors for help
- 63% of incoming freshmen aid that they expect to talk about career plans with a faculty member often to very often

Outside of Class

- 93% of incoming freshmen say they plan on working fewer than 20 hours per week, 94% plan to spend fewer than 20 hours on co-curricular activities and relaxing and socializing
- New students expect to interact with people who have had different experiences than them, and anticipate having discussions with those from a different economic background (91%), people of a race or ethnicity other than theirs (89%), those with political views other than theirs (87%) and people with religious beliefs other than theirs (85%)
- Only 30% expect that making new friends will be difficult to very difficult

Expectations of The Institution

- 98% of incoming freshmen say that it is important that the University of Tennessee, Knoxville help students succeed academically (61% say it is very important)
- Providing learning support services is considered important to very important by 91% of respondents, 86% say that they expect a challenging academic experience
- Opportunities to attend campus activities and events is a priority for 90% of those who answered the survey, 88% expect opportunities to be involved socially, and 86% are looking for opportunities to interact with students from different backgrounds
- Three out of four students say that it is important to very important for UTK to help them manage their non-academic responsibilities such as work and family