

University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point

National Survey of Student Engagement

2008 Consortium Report

UWSP vs. UW Peers

Policy Analysis and Planning
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NSSE 2008 Consortium Report

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point vs. UW Peer Institutions

The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in the spring semester of 2008. The web-based survey was distributed to a random sample of 1,662 first-year students and 2,059 seniors. A total of 898 first-year students returned surveys and seniors returned 1,060 surveys for an overall response rate of 53%.

Ten of the 11 UW-comprehensive universities (see Appendix A) comprised the UW-System peer group consortium. Students in the UW consortium were asked a series of common questions that were developed by institutional NSSE coordinators and the UW Office of Policy Analysis and Research. Twelve of the 18 questions were scale items and the remaining six were categorical. Mean scores of scale items are summarized in Table 1 and frequency distributions for categorical items (as percentages) are summarized in Table 2.

Mean Score Comparison

First year students. In all cases where statistical differences are noted, UWSP mean scores are significantly higher than the UW peers. See Table 1 for mean scores of the 12 items. UWSP was significantly higher in the following six areas:

- My institution fosters an environment where racial and ethnic diversity is respected.
- My institution fosters an environment where persons of all genders are respected.
- My institution fosters an environment where persons of all sexual orientations are respected.
- I feel safe at this institution, no matter where I am or what time of the day it is.
- How many weekends per month do you typically participate in events held on campus?
- Professors in my courses make it clear what they expect me to learn.

First year UWSP mean scores are not significantly lower than UW peers in any of the areas.

Seniors. UWSP mean scores are significantly higher in than UW consortium mean scores in four of the 12 areas as follows:

- My institution fosters an environment where persons of all genders are respected.
- My institution fosters an environment where persons of all sexual orientations are respected.
- I feel safe at this institution, no matter where I am or what time of the day it is.
- How many weekends per month do you typically participate in events held on campus?

These four areas also were statistically higher for first-year UWSP students, suggesting areas of strength for UWSP relative to the UW peer group. The mean score of UWSP seniors is significantly lower than UW peers in only one area, that is, their satisfaction with the availability of courses needed to fulfill general education requirements.

Table 1. UW-Stevens Point vs. UW Consortium Mean Scores

	First Year		Senior Year	
	UWSP	UWs	UWSP	UWs
My institution fosters an environment where racial and ethnic diversity is respected. (4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree)	3.36 ⁺⁺	3.29	3.24	3.21
My institution fosters an environment where persons of all genders are respected. (4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree)	3.43 ⁺	3.38	3.36 ⁺	3.30
My institution fosters an environment where persons of all sexual orientations are respected. (4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree)	3.31 ⁺	3.26	3.23 ⁺	3.19
I feel “connected” to this institution and to its faculty, staff, and students. (4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree)	3.02	2.97	3.09	3.04
I feel safe at this institution, no matter where I am or what time of the day it is. (4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree)	3.31 ⁺⁺⁺	3.23	3.42 ⁺⁺⁺	3.24
How many weekends per month do you typically participate in events held on campus? (Categories = 0, 1, 2, 3, 4/5)	2.36 ⁺⁺⁺	2.18	2.04 ⁺⁺⁺	1.78
Professors in my courses make it clear what they expect me to learn. (4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree)	3.19 ⁺⁺⁺	3.13	3.22	3.24
In general, the standards and expectations that are set by my instructors are: (1=too low, 2=about right, 3=too high)	2.07	2.09	2.03	2.01
During this academic year, my academic advisor has been available when I need to see him or her. (4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree)	3.21	3.20	3.2	3.20
During this academic year, the information I've received from my academic advisor has been accurate. (4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree)	3.19	3.21	3.21	3.15
How satisfied are you with the size of the classes you have had this year? (4=very satisfied, 3=somewhat satisfied, 2=somewhat dissatisfied, and 1=very dissatisfied)	3.45	3.48	3.57	3.59
How satisfied have you been with the availability of courses needed to fulfill general education requirements? (4=very satisfied, 3=somewhat satisfied, 2=somewhat dissatisfied, and 1=very dissatisfied)	2.92	2.96	2.86 ⁻⁻⁻	3.01

Mean results recorded weighted by gender, enrollment status and institutional size.

[~]p<.05, ⁻⁻p<.01, ⁻⁻⁻p<.001 Indicate UWSP is significantly lower.

⁺p<.05, ⁺⁺p<.01, ⁺⁺⁺p<.001 Indicate UWSP is significantly higher.

Categorical Item Frequency Distributions

In the six categorical items asked of students in the UW consortium, UWSP students resembled those from the other comprehensive universities in most of the items (see Table 2). However, several notable differences include the following:

- A higher percentage of UWSP first-year students indicate their intent to transfer to another UW institution during the following year, 7% compared to 4% of students at UW peers institutions.
- Of seniors, more UWSP students cite “difficulty getting needed courses” as the biggest obstacle for them in completing their degree program compared to UW consortium students (19% compared to 16%).
- UWSP students are the same as their peers in the percentage who anticipate completing their degrees from another college or university (11%) or not completing a bachelor’s degree ($\leq 1\%$). However, of students who intend to complete a bachelor’s degree from their home institution, a higher percentage of UWSP students anticipate taking more than four years to graduate than students at UW consortium institutions. Among first year students, 60% of UWSP students anticipate more than four years to degree completion compared to 53% of students from UW peers. The same is true for seniors, with 66% of UWSP students anticipating more than four years to degree completion compared to 60% of students from UW consortium institutions.

The latter point can be further explicated through data from the UW Office of Policy Analysis and Research (OPAR). OPAR’s most recent data show that not only do UWSP students expect to take longer to degree completion, but the actual time to degree and credits to degree are among the highest among the UW comprehensive universities. For graduates in 2006-07, UWSP students averaged 140 credits and 9.7 semesters of enrollment to degree completion compared to the overall UW-System averages of 134 credits and 9.4 semesters.

Table 2. UWSP vs. UW-Consortium Categorical Items

		First-Year		Seniors	
		UWSP	UW	UWSP	UW
Have you expressed your opinion about a political or community issue in a public forum (e.g., sent a letter or e-mail to the media, contacted a government official, made a speech, signed a petition)?	No, I have never done it	69%	70%	56%	62%
	Yes, but not this school year	13%	14%	26%	20%
	Yes, during this school year	18%	16%	18%	18%
Which <u>one</u> of the following factors, if any, poses the <u>biggest obstacle</u> to completing your degree program?	Money, work obligations, finances	41%	38%	38%	35%
	Family obligations	3%	3%	5%	5%
	Difficulties getting needed courses	10%	10%	19%	16%
	Lack of good academic advising	3%	3%	5%	5%
	Lack of personal motivation	14%	14%	7%	8%
	Poor academic performance	4%	6%	1%	2%
	None of the above is the biggest obstacle to my academic progress	25%	25%	25%	28%
Select the <u>one</u> response that <u>most nearly</u> describes what you plan to do next fall semester:	Return to the university I am currently attending	83%	86%	45%	39%
	Transfer to another university within the UW-System	7%	4%	1%	1%
	Transfer to a university or 4-year college not within the UW-System	2%	3%	1%	1%
	Transfer to a 2-year technical college	1%	2%	0%	0%
	Take time off from college for family or personal reasons	1%	1%	1%	1%
	Take time off from college for financial reasons	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Have completed my bachelor's degree	0%	0%	49%	54%
	Don't know yet	6%	5%	3%	4%
I expect to complete a bachelor's degree:	From this institution within 4 years or less from when I started	35%	41%	33%	38%
	From this institution in more than 4 but within 5 years from when I started	49%	40%	45%	38%
	From this institution in more than 5 but within 6 years from when I started	3%	5%	14%	15%
	From this institution in more than 6 years from when I started	0%	1%	6%	8%
	From some other college or university	11%	11%	1%	1%
	I do not expect to complete a bachelor's degree	1%	1%	1%	0%
Select the <u>one</u> response that <u>most nearly</u> describes where you plan to live after completing your bachelor's degree:	Remain in Wisconsin	43%	39%	43%	46%
	Relocate to another state	16%	21%	22%	25%
	Don't know/unsure	41%	41%	35%	29%
Select the <u>one</u> response that <u>most nearly</u> describes what you plan to do after completing your bachelor's degree:	Enter the professional workforce for the first time	41%	42%	45%	43%
	Attend graduate/professional school	28%	28%	22%	24%
	Pursue a job with a different employer	9%	11%	15%	16%
	Remain with my current employer, but in a different job	0%	2%	2%	4%
	Remain in my current job	1%	1%	2%	3%
	Don't know/unsure	21%	18%	14%	10%

Summary

Overall, UWSP students are very similar to students at UW consortium institutions for both first-year and senior students. Although several statistical differences were noted in their mean scores on the 12 scaled consortium questions, the practical significance of the differences is limited as indicated by small effect sizes that range from $\eta^2=.08$ to $\eta^2=.27$.

Perhaps more notable are the frequency distributions of UWSP students' responses to the categorical consortium questions. On the whole, UWSP students expect to take longer to complete their bachelor's degrees compared to students at UW peer institutions. The rates of students who anticipate taking more than four years to degree completion are 6% to 7% higher among UWSP first year and senior students than students at UW peer institutions. Moreover, the average time to degree completion (in semesters) and credits to degree completion for UWSP graduates are among the highest of the UW institutions, thus illustrating congruence between students' expectations and their experiences.

Appendix A

UW Consortium Participants

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh

University of Wisconsin-Parkside

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

University of Wisconsin-River Falls

University of Wisconsin-Stout

University of Wisconsin-Whitewater