



Some Things We Know About Our First-Year Students

by
Eric P. Soulsby




University of Connecticut


What Do We Know About UConn Freshmen? Some Survey Results




Survey of Entry Level Students
Mathematics Calculus Readiness Survey



National Survey
of Student Engagement



Faculty Survey of Student Engagement



= Your First College Year Survey

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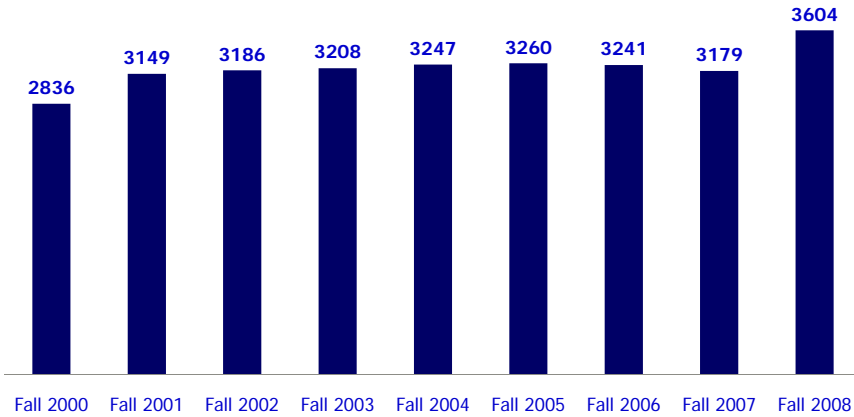
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How Many UConn Freshmen?

Source: UConn Office of Institutional Research Enrollment Report



Storrs First-time Freshmen Enrollment



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What Do UConn Freshmen Expect?

Source: UConn Division of Enrollment Management *Survey of Entry Level Students*



Number of Respondents
2003 2005 2007
 2,318 2,823 2,667

What Incoming Freshmen are Looking Forward to Most and Least								
Most	2003	2005	2007	Least	2003	2005	2007	
Meeting new people	28	27	21	Academics	30	37	33	
Academics	10	15	16	Dorm life	13	13	11	
Social Life / extracurricular activities	10	9	12	Campus size / spread out	6	11	11	
New experiences / college life	16	13	11	Distance from home / location	7	5	9	
Sports	7	12	11	Missing home / friends	9	8	8	
Independence	10	12	9	Transition / starting over	6	4	4	

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UConn Freshmen Adjustment Expectations

Source: UConn Division of Enrollment Management *Survey of Entry Level Students*



How easy or hard it will be to:	2003		2005		2007	
	Very or Somewhat:		Very or Somewhat:		Very or Somewhat:	
	Easy	Hard	Easy	Hard	Easy	Hard
get involved in extracurricular activities	90	10	91	10	93	7
make friends and fit in	87	13	87	14	87	14
get accurate info about degree requirements	84	16	85	15	86	14
get other counseling (not career) if needed	82	18	83	18	85	15
get to know faculty or staff person who will care about your success	71	29	72	28	76	24
register for the classes you'll need	75	24	78	23	72	28
get enough time with your academic advisor	64	36	66	34	72	28
be treated like a person, not a number	66	34	67	33	71	29
find your way around campus	55	45	56	44	59	41
adjust to having some classes taught by international assistants	53	48	51	48	59	41
get good grades	52	48	49	52	47	54

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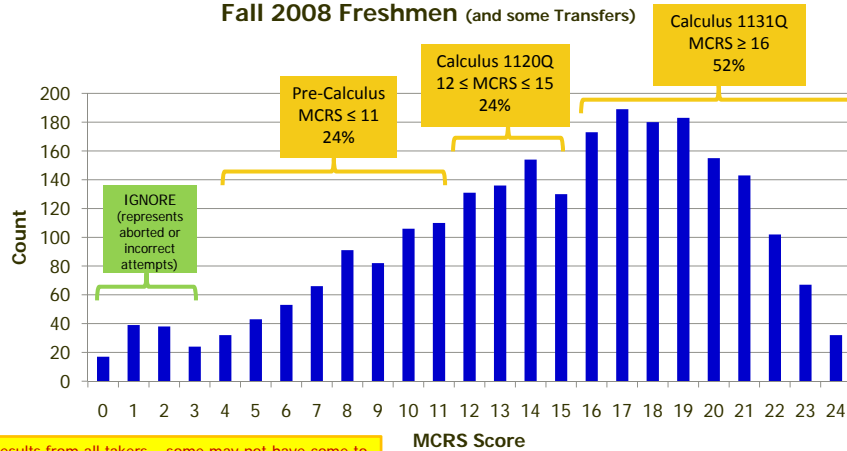
High School Preparation – UConn Placement

Are students as strong as we think?



Mathematics Calculus Readiness Survey

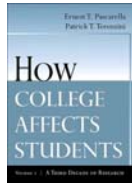
Fall 2008 Freshmen (and some Transfers)



Results from all takers – some may not have come to UConn or may not be in majors that require calculus

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What Really Matters in College: Student Engagement

Because individual effort and involvement are the critical determinants of impact, institutions should focus on the ways they can shape their academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings to encourage *student engagement*.

Pascarella & Terenzini, *How College Affects Students*, 2005, p. 602

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

Annual snapshot of student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development



NESSIE

Assessing Student Engagement



NSSE questions fall into three broad categories.

Institutional actions and requirements

- Items about the curriculum
How much reading and writing have you done?
- Items about faculty behavior
Have you worked with a faculty member on a significant scholarly task such as a research project?

Student behavior

- Items about how students spend their time inside and outside of the classroom
Have you worked with other students outside of class to prepare class assignments?

Student reactions to college

- Items that seek students' perceptions about the quality of their own experiences
How would you rate the overall quality of your experience here?
- Questions about self-reported gains in skills that students feel they have developed as a result of attending college
Has college helped you to develop your ability to think critically and analytically?






NSSE 2007 First-Year Respondent Characteristics			
	UConn	Carnegie Peers	NSSE 2007
NSSE sample size	3,495	81,996	501,207
Number of respondents	762	21,190	146,464
Response Rate	22%	26%	29%
Sampling Error	3.2%	0.6%	0.2%

A relatively low response rate for UConn and for NSSE overall → a sign of the times?

Carnegie Peers




Arizona State	Montana State
California - Berkeley	Nebraska
Carnegie Mellon	New Mexico
Case Western Reserve	North Carolina
Cincinnati	Ohio State
Colorado State	Oregon State
Georgia	Pittsburgh
Georgia Tech	Purdue
Hawaii	Rice
Indiana	South Carolina
Iowa State	South Florida
Kansas	Tennessee
Kansas State	Texas
Kentucky	Texas A&M
Louisiana State	Utah
Maryland	Washington
Michigan State	



National Survey of Student Engagement		UConn	Carnegie Peers		FIRST YEAR STUDENTS Peer Comparison Summary			
		Mean	Mean	Sig	Effect Size	Leading Peers	Similar	Lagging Peers
								
Academic and Intellectual Experiences		<i>In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=very often</i>						
a.	Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	2.62	2.57		0.06		✓	
b.	Made a class presentation	1.81	2.05	***	-0.31			✓
c.	Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	2.42	2.47		-0.05		✓	
d.	Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	2.84	2.92	*	-0.09		✓	

UConn NSSE 2007 Mean Comparison Summary



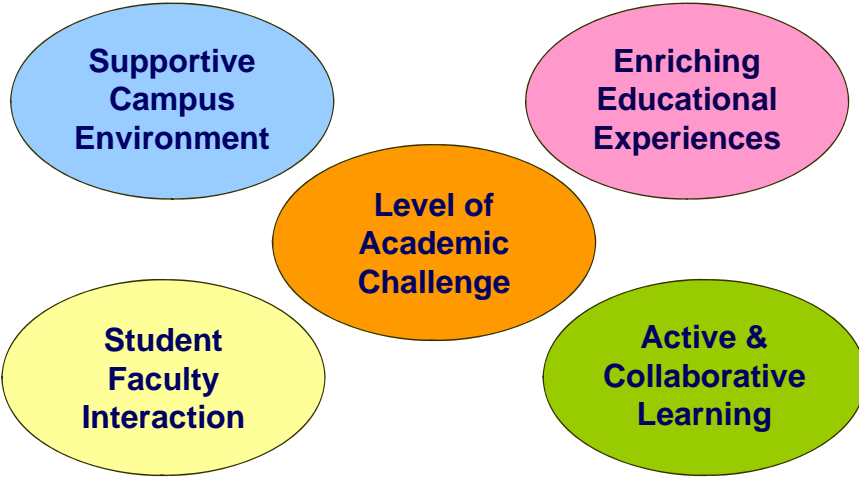
NSSE ITEM RESPONSE COUNTS			
	Leading Peers	Similar	Lagging Peers
Overall Summary and Leading / Lagging Items	2 (2%)	77 (91%)	6 (7%)

- Number of written papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages
- Relaxing and socializing (watching TV, partying, etc.) [oops!]
- Made a class presentation
- Worked with other students on projects during class
- Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments
- Participated in activities to enhance your spirituality (worship, meditation, prayer, etc.)
- Working for pay off campus
- Speaking clearly and effectively

UConn NSSE 2007 Frequency Comparison Highlights



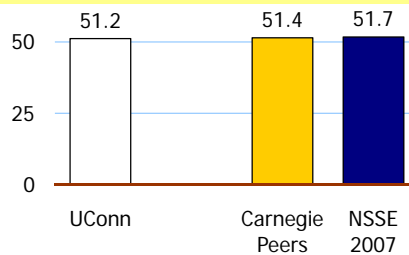
Looking at the two ends of the spectrum reveals results which are very similar to the peer group but with a few differences as shown here	NEVER ...		VERY OFTEN ...	
	UConn	Carnegie Peers	UConn	Carnegie Peers
Made a class presentation	32%	22%	3%	5%
Come to class without completing readings or assignments	24%	18%	6%	6%
Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	18%	12%	8%	13%
Participated in a community-based project (e.g. service learning) as part of a regular course	74%	67%	3%	3%
Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue	16%	9%	14%	16%
Coursework emphasizes: Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods	8%	6%	17%	22%
Using computers in academic work	2%	2%	45%	53%
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	13%	10%	19%	24%
Speaking clearly and effectively	17%	12%	13%	19%
Using computing and information technology	8%	5%	30%	36%
Working effectively with others	8%	6%	22%	28%



Activities and conditions:

- Time spent preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, and other activities related to your academic program)
- Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations
- Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings
- Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more
- Number of written papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages
- Number of written papers or reports fewer than 5 pages
- Coursework emphasizes: Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory
- Coursework emphasizes: Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences
- Coursework emphasizes: Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods
- Coursework emphasizes: Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
- Campus environment emphasizes spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work

Level of Academic Challenge (LAC)						
First-Year Benchmark Comparisons						
UConn compared with:						
	Carnegie Peers			NSSE 2007		
	Mean	Sig	Effect Size	Mean	Sig	Effect Size
UConn	51.2			51.4		
			-.02	51.7		-.04



Effect Size → Essentially Similar

UConn NSSE 2007 Benchmark Active and Collaborative Learning

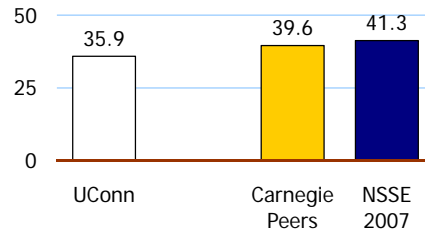


Activities:

- Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
- Made a class presentation
- Worked with other students on projects during class
- Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments
- Tutored or taught other students
- Participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)

Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL)						
First-Year Benchmark Comparisons						
UConn compared with:						
UConn	Carnegie Peers			NSSE 2007		
Mean	Mean	Sig	Effect Size	Mean	Sig	Effect Size
35.9	39.6	***	-.24	41.3	***	-.33

Effect Size → **Lag Peers Slightly**



UConn NSSE 2007 Benchmark Student – Faculty Interaction

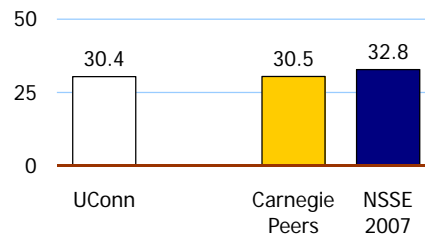


Activities:

- Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor
- Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class
- Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)
- Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance
- Worked with a faculty member on a research project

Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)						
First-Year Benchmark Comparisons						
UConn compared with:						
UConn	Carnegie Peers			NSSE 2007		
Mean	Mean	Sig	Effect Size	Mean	Sig	Effect Size
30.4	30.5		.00	32.8	***	-.14

Effect Size → **Essentially Similar**



UConn NSSE 2007 Benchmark Enriching Educational Experiences

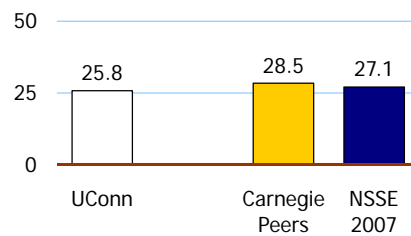


Activities and conditions:

- Talking with students with different religious beliefs, political opinions, or values
- Talking with students of a different race or ethnicity
- An institutional climate that encourages contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds
- Using electronic technology to discuss or complete assignments
- Participating in: Internships or field experiences; Community service or volunteer work; Foreign language coursework; Study abroad; Independent study or self-assigned major; Culminating senior experience; Co-curricular activities; Learning communities

Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE)						
First-Year Benchmark Comparisons						
UConn compared with:						
UConn	Carnegie Peers			NSSE 2007		
Mean	Mean	Sig	Effect Size	Mean	Sig	Effect Size
25.8	28.5	***	-.20	27.1	**	-.10

Effect Size → Lag Peers Slightly



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UConn NSSE 2007 Benchmark Supportive Campus Environment

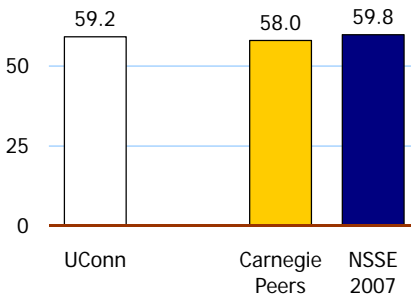


Conditions:

- Campus environment provides support you need to help you succeed academically
- Campus environment helps you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
- Campus environment provides the support you need to thrive socially
- Quality of relationships with other students
- Quality of relationships with faculty members
- Quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices

Supportive Campus Environment (SCE)						
First-Year Benchmark Comparisons						
UConn compared with:						
UConn	Carnegie Peers			NSSE 2007		
Mean	Mean	Sig	Effect Size	Mean	Sig	Effect Size
59.2	58.0		.07	59.8		-.04

Effect Size → Essentially Similar



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First-Year Students	Leading Peers	Essentially Similar to Peers	Lagging Peers
Level of Academic Challenge		✓	
Active and Collaborative Learning			✓
Student – Faculty Interaction		✓	
Enriching Educational Experiences			✓
Supportive Campus Environment		✓	

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- Designed to parallel NSSE undergraduate survey
 - Faculty perceptions of student engagement
 - Importance faculty place on various areas of learning and development
 - Nature and frequency of faculty-student interactions
 - How faculty members organize class time
- Each faculty member responds to questions about student engagement based on a course taught during the current academic year



NSSE/FSSE Report

- Student/faculty frequency comparisons for *similarly worded* items
- Some items are not easily compared



Faculty Survey of Student Engagement

No institutional comparisons

FSSE 2007 and NSSE 2007 Frequencies
University of Connecticut

Faculty classroom practices and student responses:

Faculty Responses				Student Responses					
Percentage of faculty who reported that more than half of students from their courses do the following				Distribution of student responses to how often they did the following at their institution during the current school year					
FSSE Item	Variable	Class	Higher	FSSE Item	Variable	Class Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Never
Frequently ask questions in class or contribute to class discussions	FCLQUEST	LD	33%	Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	CLQUEST	FY 17%	33%	44%	6%
Frequently come to class without completing readings or assignments	FCLUNPRE	LD	21%	Come to class without completing assignments	CLUNPREP	FY 6%	13%	57%	24%
Frequently work harder than they usually do to meet your standards	FVORKHFD	LD	22%	Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations	WORKHARD	FY 12%	34%	42%	13%
		UD	32%			SR 29%	32%	34%	9%
						SR 10%	20%	54%	15%
						SR 16%	32%	41%	11%

UConn FSSE 2007 Respondent Characteristics



Number of invited faculty members 1367
 Response rate 37%
 Total number of respondents 504 → 176 Lower Division
 253 Upper Division
 14 Other
 61 Missing course level

	Lower Division	Upper Division	Other	Total
Discipline of appointment				
Arts and humanities	35%	20%	15%	26%
Biological science	6%	5%	8%	6%
Business	4%	6%	0%	5%
Education	5%	5%	0%	5%
Engineering	1%	6%	0%	4%
Physical science	18%	9%	38%	13%
Professional	5%	10%	23%	9%
Social science	14%	22%	8%	19%
Other	12%	17%	8%	15%
Rank				
Professor	15%	22%	14%	19%
Associate Professor	11%	22%	7%	17%
Assistant Professor	9%	19%	7%	15%
Instructor	10%	11%	21%	11%
Lecturer	3%	6%	0%	4%
Graduate Teaching Assistant	32%	15%	21%	22%
Other	19%	6%	29%	12%

Results may reflect views of those doing instruction perhaps more so than that of the faculty

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UConn NSSE/FSSE 2007 Some Differences



Faculty Responses		Student Responses	
Percentage of faculty who reported that students from their courses do the following		Distribution of student responses to how often they did the following at their institution during the current school year	
<i>FSSE Item</i>	<i>Very Often or Often</i>	<i>NSSE Item</i>	<i>Very Often or Often</i>
Work with other students on projects during class	47%	Worked with other students on projects during class	29%
Receive prompt written or oral feedback from you on their academic performance	85%	Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance	46%
Have serious conversations in your course with students of a different race or ethnicity than their own	34%	Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own	50%
Have serious conversations in your course with students who are very different from them in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	39%	Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	55%

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Faculty Responses		Student Responses	
Percentage of faculty who reported that they place quite a bit or very much emphasis on the following in their courses		Distribution of student responses to how much their coursework during the current school year emphasized the following	
<i>FSSE Item</i>	<i>Very Much or Quite a Bit</i>	<i>NSSE Item</i>	<i>Very Much or Quite a Bit</i>
Memorizing facts, ideas, or methods from your course and readings	23%	Memorizing facts, ideas or methods from your course and readings	69%
Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences	78%	Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences	62%
Percentage of faculty who structured their courses quite a bit or very much so that students learn and develop in the following areas		Distribution of student responses to the extent that their college experience contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas	
<i>FSSE Item</i>	<i>Very Much or Quite a Bit</i>	<i>NSSE Item</i>	<i>Very Much or Quite a Bit</i>
Writing clearly and effectively	51%	Writing clearly and effectively	67%
Analyzing quantitative problems	28%	Analyzing quantitative problems	75%
Using computing and information technology	32%	Using computing and information technology	71%
Acquiring a broad general education	62%	Acquiring a broad general education	84%
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	44%	Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	58%

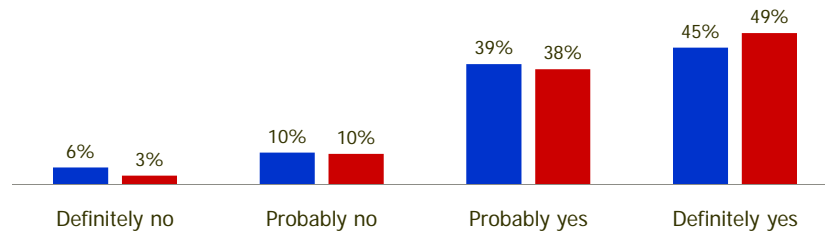
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If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?

■ UConn ■ Carnegie Peers



Overall, we are very similar to our peers on the most of the NSSE/FSSE items

But ...

- NSSE → Our students may not be as “engaged” as we would like in some areas
- FSSE → Disconnects exist between faculty and student perceptions on “engagement”

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YFCY Survey

- Has been around since 2000
- Is designed to assess the academic and personal development of students over the first year of college
- Enables institutions to identify features of the first year that encourage student learning, involvement, satisfaction, retention and success

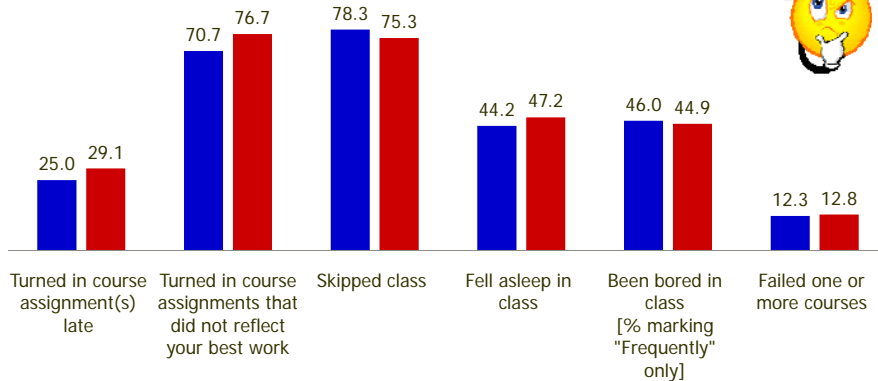
Administered at UConn in Spring 2008

- Poor response rate → 276 responses
- But ... Some interesting results which seem to mirror the NSSE results



Since entering this college have you:
Percentage marking "Frequently" or "Occasionally"

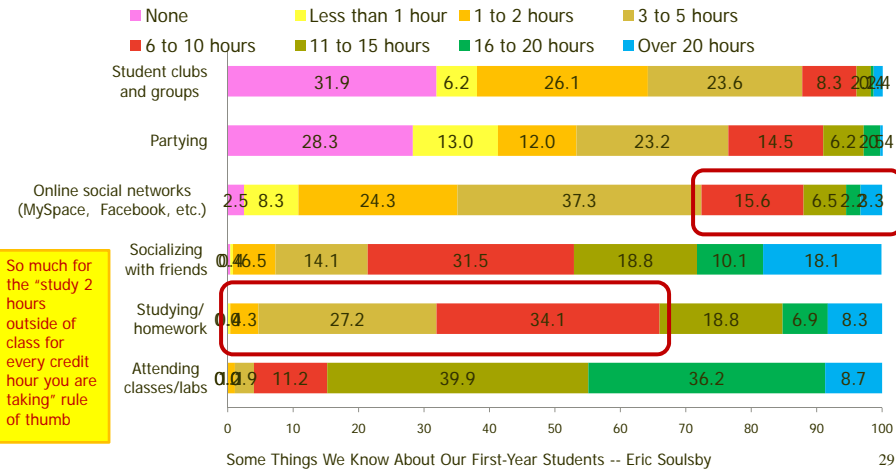
■ UConn ■ Public Univs



How UConn Students Spend Their Time Your First College Year (YFCY) 2008



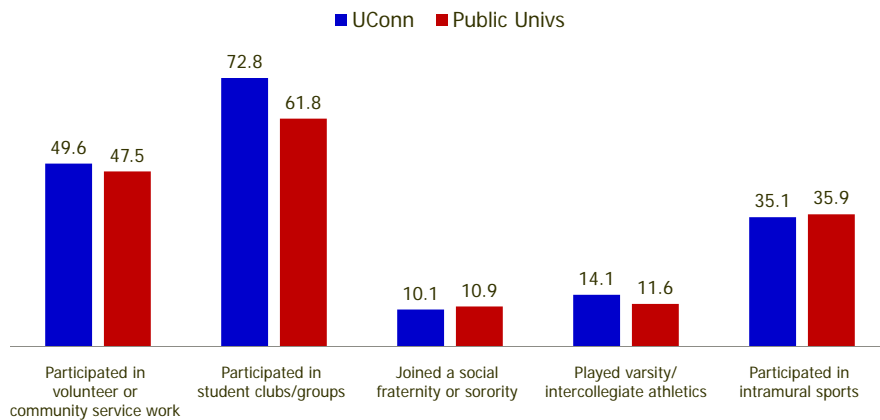
HOW MUCH TIME HAVE YOU SPENT DURING A TYPICAL WEEK DOING THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES?



Extra-curricular Activities Your First College Year (YFCY) 2008



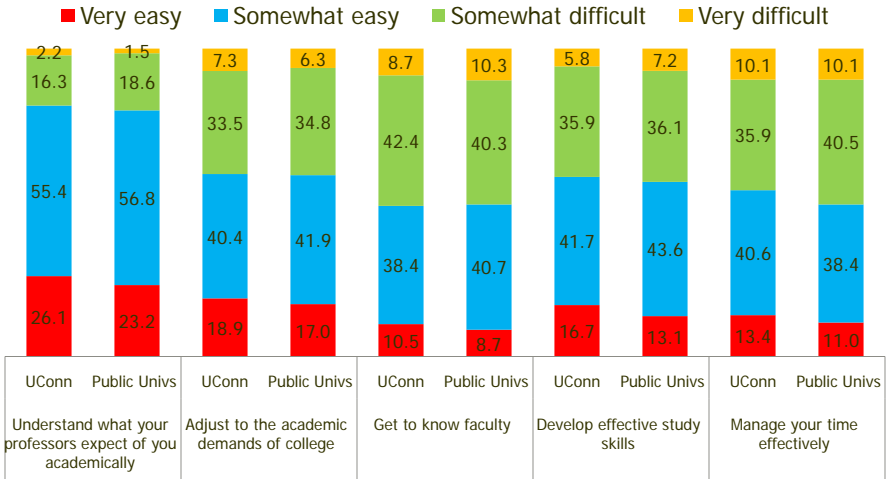
Since entering this college have you: Percentage marking "Frequently" or "Occasionally"



Academic Success Habits Your First College Year (YFCY) 2008



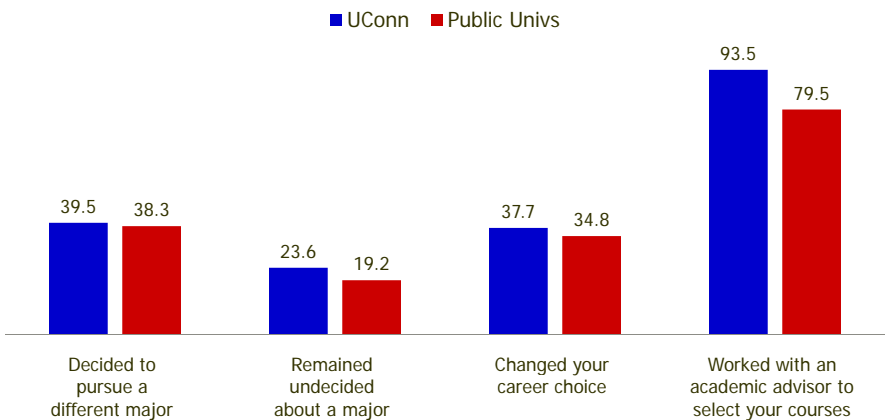
SINCE ENTERING THIS COLLEGE, HOW HAS IT BEEN TO:



Major Decisions Your First College Year (YFCY) 2008



Since entering this college have you:
Percentage marking "Frequently" or "Occasionally"



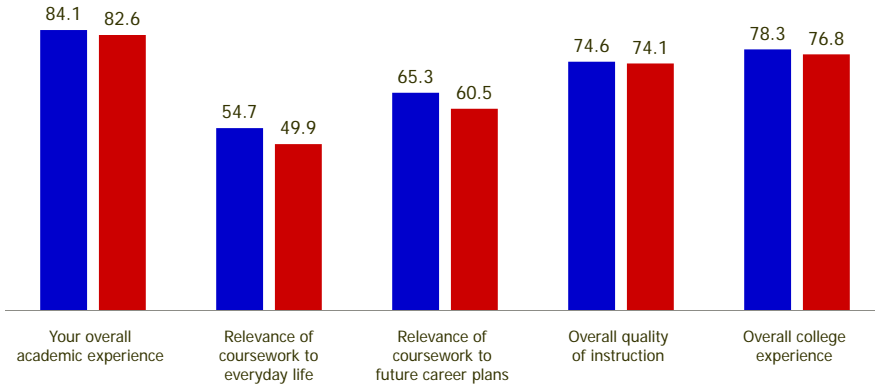
Satisfaction with Coursework

Your First College Year (YFCY) 2008



Students reporting they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with with each of the following aspects of college life:

■ UConn ■ Public Univs



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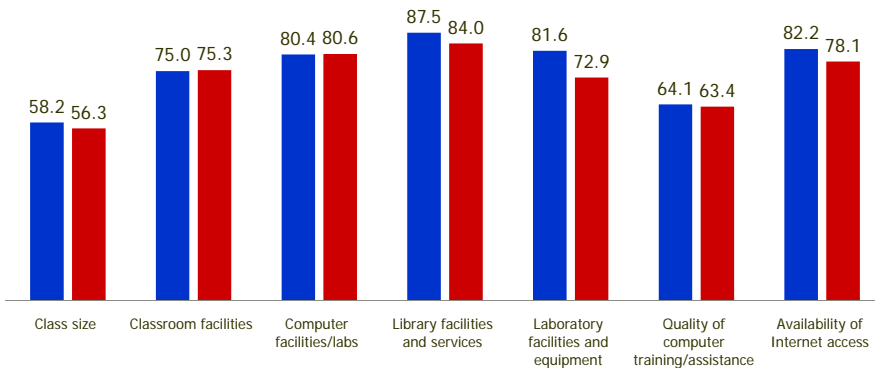
Satisfaction with Facilities

Your First College Year (YFCY) 2008



Students reporting they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with with each of the following aspects of college life:

■ UConn ■ Public Univs

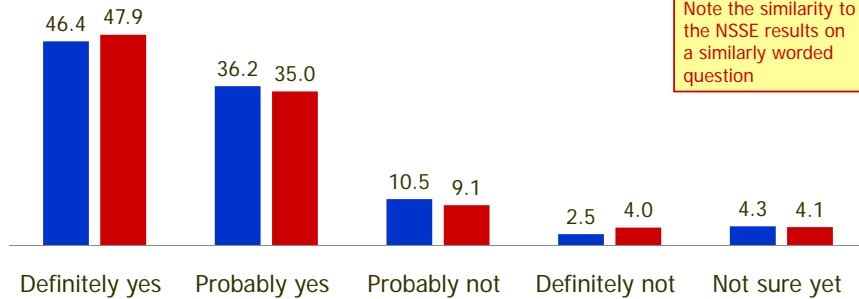


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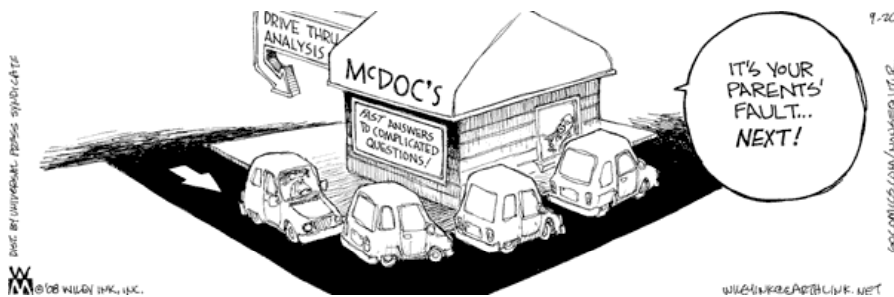
If you could make your college choice over, would you still choose to enroll at your current (or most recent) college?

■ UConn ■ Public Univs



Note the similarity to the NSSE results on a similarly worded question

It may be easy to blame others ...



But ... UConn students are very similar to others at peer institutions
→ We need to keep working at “engaging” our students to be a “leading” institution

Whew! ... Questions?



"Mr. Osborne, may I be excused? My brain is full."



Where to find me ...

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