

# NSSE 2015: FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCES & SENIOR TRANSITIONS

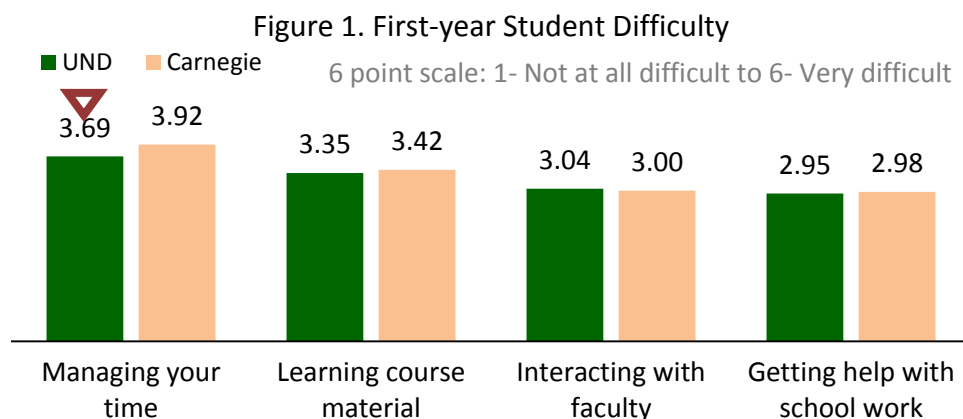
In 2015 UND, along with 126 other U.S. (11 Carnegie Sub-group) institutions, elected to personalize the NSSE survey by adding the First-Year Experiences & Senior Transitions Topical Modules to the core NSSE survey. 296 students responded to the First-year Experiences Module and 453 students responded to the Senior Transitions Module.

*Carnegie Sub-group included: Brigham Young University, Illinois Institute of Technology, Loyola University, Rutgers University – Newark, University of Akron, University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras, University of South Alabama, University of Texas at Arlington, University of Texas at El Paso, University of Vermont, and University of Wyoming.*

## FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCES

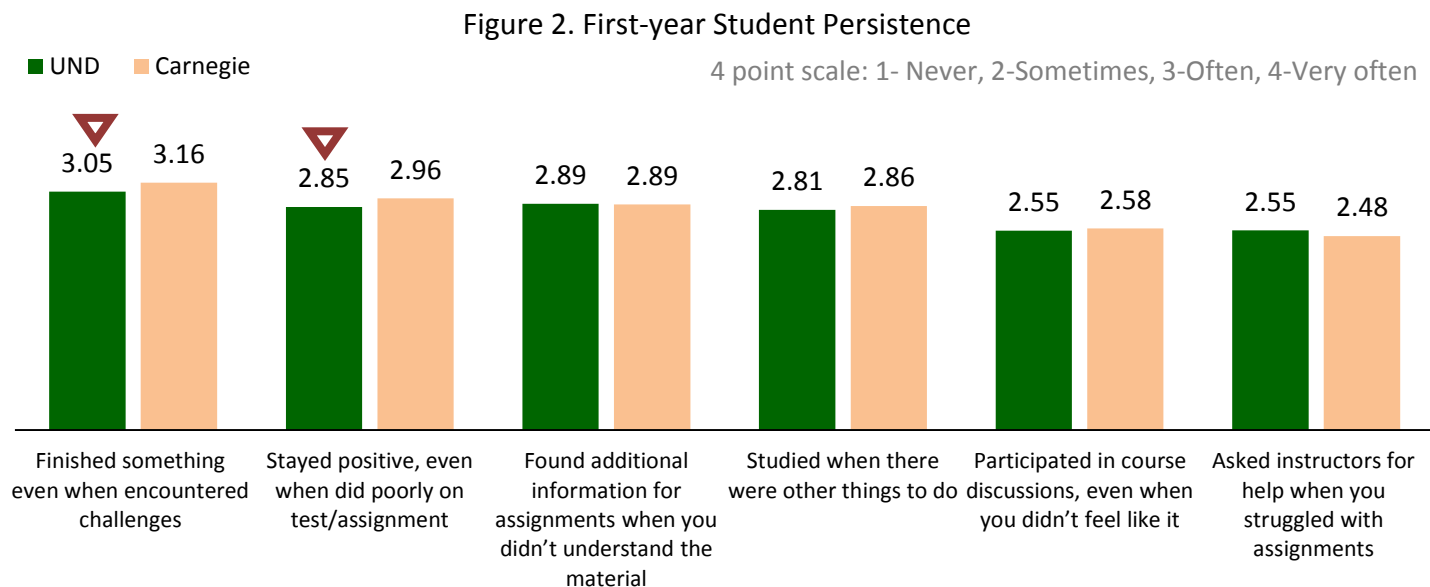
First-Year Experiences items focus on academic perseverance, help-seeking behaviors, and institutional commitment, with questions that were adapted from the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement.

As Shown in Figure 1, UND First-year students had significantly less difficulty in managing their time, compared to Carnegie peers.



UND First-year students reported doing the following activities significantly less often than their Carnegie peers (Figure 2):

- Finished something they had started when they encountered challenges
- stayed positive, even when they performed poorly on a test or assignment



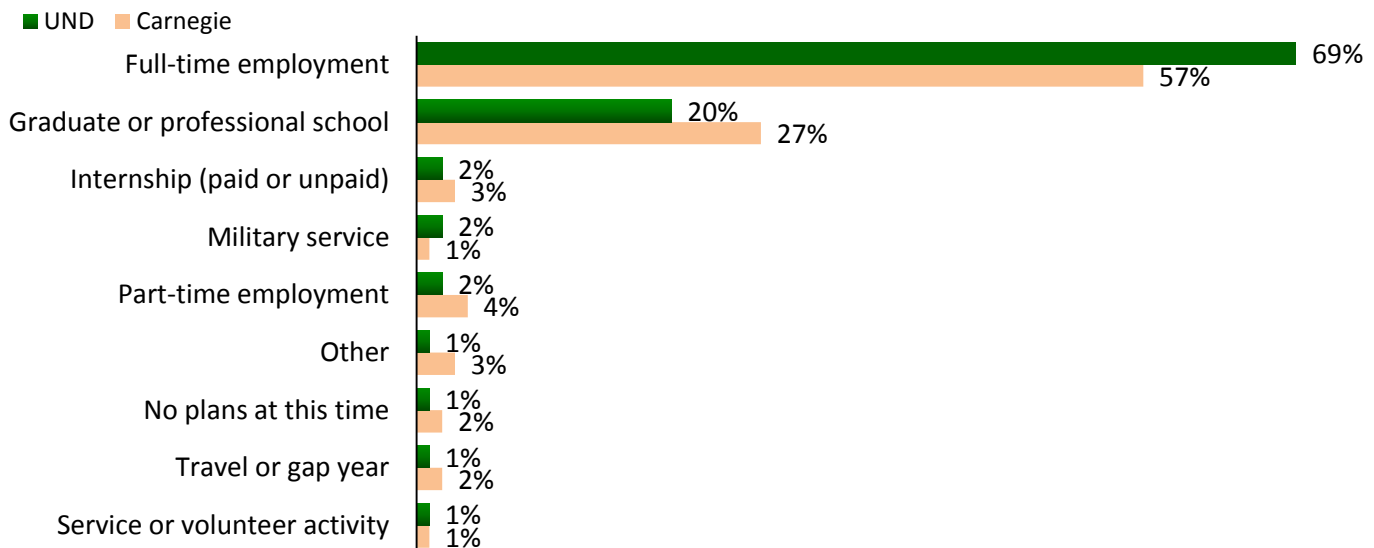
▽ Significantly lower ( $p < .05$ ) with an effect size less than .3 in magnitude

## SENIOR TRANSITIONS

Senior Transitions items focus on post-graduation plans, links between the academic major and future plans, and confidence in skill development; with questions that were adapted from the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP).

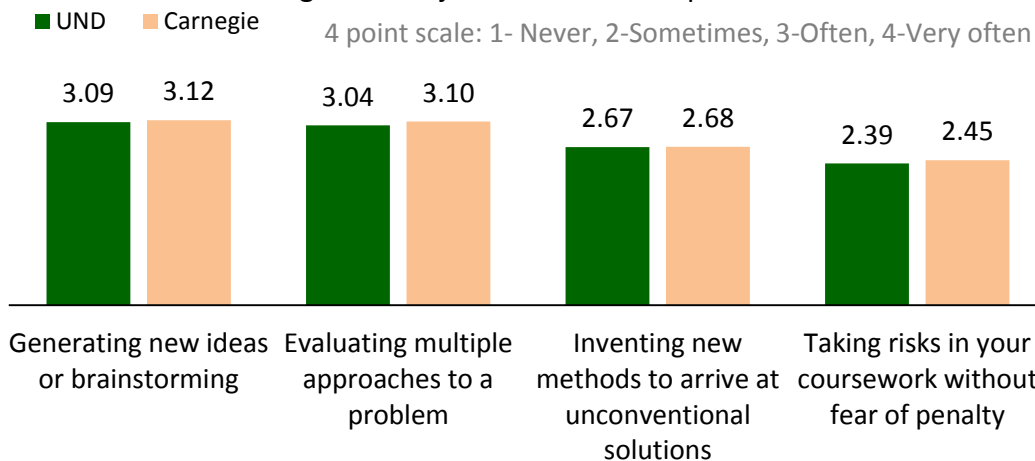
As shown in Figure 3, most seniors' post-graduation plans involve full-time employment (69%) or Graduate/professional school (20%).

Figure 3. Senior Plans Immediately Following Graduation



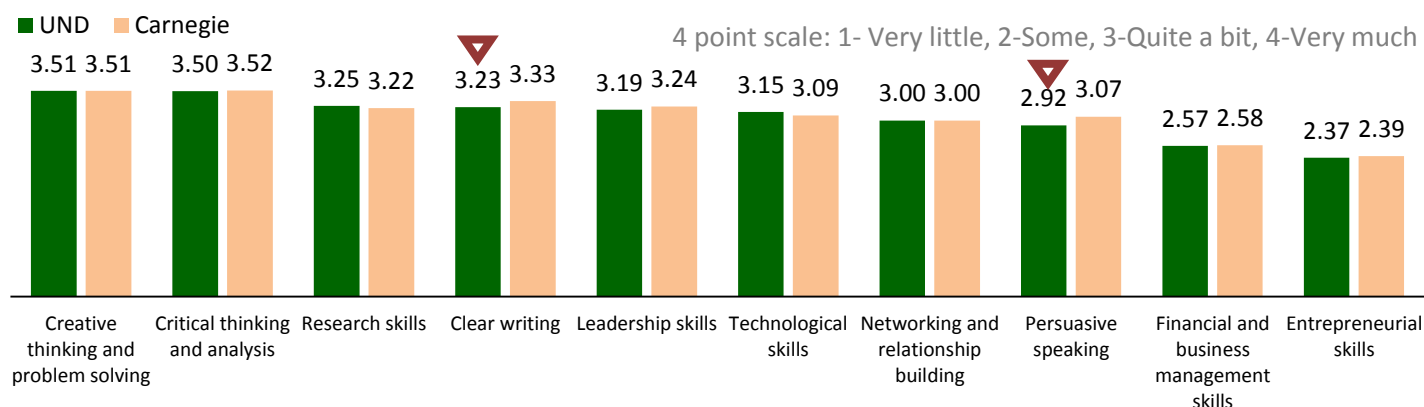
In looking at how seniors felt about the impact of the courses within their majors; there was no significant difference between UND (mean = 3.1) and Carnegie Peers (mean = 3.0) in the extent to which students felt that the courses in their major prepared them for their post-graduation plans (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Major Coursework Emphasis



An area where there was significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) between UND students and that of those in the Carnegie-subgroup was in response to their confidence in their abilities to complete tasks requiring clear writing and persuasive speaking skills and abilities, although they still noted their confidence to be "Quite a bit" (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Confidence in Ability to Complete Tasks Requiring Skill



▽ Significantly lower ( $p < .05$ ) with an effect size less than .3 in magnitude

## SENIOR COMMENTS

This section of the module also provided an open-ended response question, where UND seniors could comment if, “there is anything your institution could have done better to prepare you for your career or further education”. Common themes include: diversity, offering courses that focus on real-world topics (as opposed to essential studies), helping students identify majors that fit them, offering a greater selection of online courses, and providing accurate information on credit transfer to incoming (and prospective) students. Some notable responses included:

- *Just be more culturally diverse and more culturally aware and use these sensitivities as precursors to further educate.* (Clinical Psychology)
- *I would like to see my school open it's door to underrepresented communities in medical school as long as the student have completed their underground field or provide financial needs such as scholarship.* (Medical Laboratory Science)
- *They could have had more informed academic advisors who knew what the graduation requirements were and weren't busy with teaching or research. Some teachers are definitely difficult to work with in the class room and need to be better evaluated. It's clear from classwork in the past that there are problems but no one does anything about it.* (Forensic Science)
- *Better advisement and advice as a Freshmen/Sophomore ... I was given no direction when I asked/searched for help and because of this am behind the rest of my graduation class and have not had the time to look into research and internship opportunities yet because I have not had enough experience until now.* (Biology)
- *Help students better understand what they want to pursue and provide better ways of advising them on their courses.* (Forensic Science)
- *More emphasis on the importance of grammar, spelling, and punctuation in everyday life. Networking and career preparation advice Internship opportunities announced more prominently.* (Managerial Finance & Accounting)
- *I feel like my professors could apply more of their own knowledge to what they are teaching the students in my class. The professors that I have right now ask their students multiple questions without knowing the answer themselves, making it feel like their teaching abilities are not credential. I would also like to see the material that we are learning in each course applied to real-life situations more efficiently.* (Communication Sciences & Disorders)

- *Focus on courses and subjects related to the job, rather than a bunch of superfluous, not relevant information. Focus coursework on real world topics, not memorizing equations. (Mechanical Engineering)*
- *I am an online student. I find it very difficult to get the right type of support to help me with my classes. I have trouble with getting answers to some of my questions. Some instructors are better than others, but getting answers to emails are always days away. By the time they answer I forget the question. On line students need more resources. (Electrical Engineering)*
- *It has been challenging being an on-line learner. There are resources available, but so many of them are on campus only, and I live about 100 miles from campus. I was enticed by the all on-line availability of classes, I thought it would suit my needs with a busy family life. I didn't research this well, and ended up having to take 20+ credits for a graduation requirement that I didn't need for my actual degree. (Nursing, RN to BSN)*
- *I would say that helping students find a major that fits them would have been very beneficial. I changed my major 5 times. It was very stressful, and even affected the grades that I received. I have also seen friend struggle with what major they were planning on graduating with and some decided college was not for them. When you are not sure what major you are planning on graduating with you worry about your future, and it is even hard thinking about what the future could be. You lose motivation and second guess your reasoning for going to college. If there are resources available I would suggest finding a way to advertise them more. Maybe find a way that on-campus housing could help or a small event to find what personality traits fit different careers. Something that is FREE and EASY to access for students. Also something that is not a huge time commitment. I was very busy with RAing, committees, clubs, volunteer work, work, and sorority life so I understand how important time is for college students. I also know how hard it is for groups to plan events that work for a large majority. Here are some of my opinions. I hope they were helpful! (Social Work)*
- *Some of the classes required to obtain my degree were not of value to preparing me for my career. Many of the unrelated generals added some value such as research, test-taking, communication and team-building skills. However, I do feel that more time could have been devoted to my own major. I have taken 3-5 classes that are directly related to my major along with some that can be applied. I wish that there were more levels within my major (Human Resource Management) such as a course on benefits and a course on employee relations. These are two categories briefly covered in my Intro to HR course, but will be a very big part of my future career. With my major being so small I could see how it might be hard to staff for these types of courses, but these would be very beneficial to all management and entrepreneurial majors as well to be offered as management electives. (Human Resource Management)*
- *Institutions need to stop requiring that students take electives and arts/humanities in order to be "well-rounded". These courses are a waste of time and simply add to the burden of student debt which is at epidemic levels and rising. The time for exposure for these types of courses is high school and earlier, and should also fall on the parents, not a university. The premise that all students fall under one category, such as "engineering", and requiring them all to take the same courses is absurd. Of the courses that I took for my degree maybe 5 will be relevant in my career. The rest I had already learned in on the job experience, could have been taught in an industry course, or had no relevancy to my career field whatsoever. It's truly sad that our educational institutions insist on maintaining this 4 year degree requirement that is outdated, inefficient, and does not take into mind the best interest of the student. Sadly it will never change because the system is driven by the demand for more money. (Petroleum Engineering)*
- *No, I have been lucky to be part of this community and this institution. I have learned a lot. The faculty and staff of this university have been approachable and helpful and contributed to my academic endeavors tremendously; I would be grateful for all the help and advice I am receiving while here. (Medical Laboratory Science)*