



NSSE 2020 Topical Module Report

First-Year Experiences and Senior Transitions

The University of Texas at Arlington

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About This Topical Module

This module includes a set of items only for first-year students and a set only for seniors, with questions adapted from the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement and the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project, respectively. The first-year items focus on academic perseverance, help-seeking behaviors, and institutional commitment, while the senior items explore post-graduation plans, links between the academic major and future plans, and confidence with skills developed during college.

Comparison Group

This section summarizes how this module's comparison group was identified, including selection criteria and whether the default option was taken. This is followed by the resulting list of institutions represented in the 'FY/Senior Experience' column of this report.

Group label	FY/Senior Experience
Date submitted	6/3/20
How was this comparison group constructed?	Your institution customized this comparison group by selecting institutions from all module participants.
Group description	All current year NSSE public institutions that have administered the module "First-Year Experiences and Senior Transitions", and share the same Carnegie basic classification (Doc/Very High) and sector (public).

FY/Senior Experience (N=9)

Florida International University (Miami, FL)
 Georgia State University (Atlanta, GA)
 Mississippi State University (Mississippi State, MS)
 University at Buffalo, State University of New York (Buffalo, NY)
 University of Georgia (Athens, GA)
 University of Kentucky (Lexington, KY)
 University of New Hampshire at Durham (Durham, NH)
 University of South Florida (Tampa, FL)
 University of Texas at El Paso, The (El Paso, TX)

First-Year Students

Item wording or description	Variable name	Values ^c	Response options	Frequency Distributions ^a				Statistical Comparisons ^b		
				UTA		FY/Senior Experience		UTA	FY/Senior Experience	Effect size ^d
				Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	
1. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?										
a. Studied when there were other interesting things to do	FYSfy01a	1	Never	32	5	199	4	2.7	2.8 **	-0.12 ▽
		2	Sometimes	294	41	1,887	36			
		3	Often	258	36	2,012	37			
		4	Very often	134	18	1,212	22			
		Total		718	100	5,310	100			
b. Found additional information for course assignments when you didn't understand the material	FYSfy01b	1	Never	18	3	112	2	2.9	2.9 *	-0.09 ▽
		2	Sometimes	209	30	1,362	26			
		3	Often	332	46	2,495	46			
		4	Very often	158	22	1,331	25			
		Total		717	100	5,300	100			
c. Participated in course discussions, even when you didn't feel like it	FYSfy01c	1	Never	77	11	417	9	2.5	2.6 ***	-0.16 ▽
		2	Sometimes	324	45	2,067	39			
		3	Often	226	32	1,982	36			
		4	Very often	88	12	836	16			
		Total		715	100	5,302	100			
d. Asked instructors for help when you struggled with course assignments	FYSfy01d	1	Never	116	16	652	13	2.4	2.5 *	-0.08 ▽
		2	Sometimes	310	43	2,269	43			
		3	Often	195	28	1,625	30			
		4	Very often	95	13	753	14			
		Total		716	100	5,299	100			
e. Finished something you have started when you encountered challenges	FYSfy01e	1	Never	14	2	47	1	2.9	3.1 ***	-0.27 ▽
		2	Sometimes	196	28	945	18			
		3	Often	332	47	2,622	49			
		4	Very often	172	24	1,673	32			
		Total		714	100	5,287	100			
f. Stayed positive, even when you did poorly on a test or assignment	FYSfy01f	1	Never	30	4	241	5	2.8	2.8	-0.05
		2	Sometimes	252	34	1,661	30			
		3	Often	278	39	2,163	41			
		4	Very often	157	23	1,230	24			
		Total		717	100	5,295	100			
2. During the current school year, how difficult have the following been for you?										
a. Learning course material	FYSfy02a	1	Not at all difficult	26	4	208	5	3.6	3.5 **	.12 △
		2	2	76	11	744	15			
		3	3	206	29	1,579	30			
		4	4	277	38	1,939	35			
		5	5	104	15	624	11			
		6	Very difficult	27	4	198	4			
		Total		716	100	5,292	100			
b. Managing your time	FYSfy02b	1	Not at all difficult	26	4	261	5	4.0	3.8 ***	.21 △
		2	2	55	8	676	13			
		3	3	153	22	1,286	24			
		4	4	209	29	1,523	28			
		5	5	164	23	961	18			
		6	Very difficult	107	15	584	12			
		Total		714	100	5,291	100			

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (2-tailed); Refer to the endnotes page for the key to triangle symbols.

First-Year Students

Item wording or description	Variable name	Values ^c	Response options	Frequency Distributions ^a				Statistical Comparisons ^b		
				UTA		FY/Senior Experience		UTA	FY/Senior Experience	Effect size ^d
				Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	
c. Getting help with school work	FYSfy02c	1	Not at all difficult	81	11	695	14	3.1	3.0 *	.09 △
		2	2	147	21	1,317	25			
		3	3	211	30	1,514	28			
		4	4	189	26	1,130	21			
		5	5	66	9	428	8			
		6	Very difficult	20	3	202	4			
		Total		714	100	5,286	100			
d. Interacting with faculty	FYSfy02d	1	Not at all difficult	106	15	805	16	3.1	2.9 *	.10 △
		2	2	137	20	1,395	26			
		3	3	205	29	1,393	26			
		4	4	156	21	1,017	19			
		5	5	67	9	455	9			
		6	Very difficult	43	6	222	5			
		Total		714	100	5,287	100			
3. During the current school year, about how often have you sought help with coursework from the following sources?										
a. Faculty members	FYSfy03a_16	1	Never	174	24	1,074	22	2.0	2.1 *	-.09 ▽
		2	Sometimes	379	53	2,741	51			
		3	Often	130	19	1,142	21			
		4	Very often	32	4	314	6			
		Total		715	100	5,271	100			
b. Academic advisors	FYSfy03b_16	1	Never	323	45	2,154	43	1.7	1.8 *	-.08 ▽
		2	Sometimes	283	39	2,045	37			
		3	Often	78	11	830	15			
		4	Very often	27	4	241	4			
		Total		711	100	5,270	100			
c. Learning support services (tutoring, writing center, success coaching, etc.)	FYSfy03c_16	1	Never	288	40	2,034	42	1.9	1.9	.01
		2	Sometimes	247	35	1,840	34			
		3	Often	128	18	954	17			
		4	Very often	50	7	435	7			
		Total		713	100	5,263	100			
d. Friends or other students	FYSfy03d_16	1	Never	30	5	227	5	2.9	2.9	-.03
		2	Sometimes	200	28	1,288	26			
		3	Often	280	39	2,100	40			
		4	Very often	200	28	1,660	30			
		Total		710	100	5,275	100			
e. Family members	FYSfy03e_16	1	Never	307	43	2,194	42	1.9	1.9	-.01
		2	Sometimes	236	33	1,688	31			
		3	Often	101	14	965	18			
		4	Very often	66	10	424	8			
		Total		710	100	5,271	100			
f. Other persons or offices	FYSfy03f_16	1	Never	406	56	3,025	58	1.6	1.6	.01
		2	Sometimes	218	31	1,473	27			
		3	Often	59	9	554	10			
		4	Very often	29	4	209	4			
		Total		712	100	5,261	100			

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (2-tailed); Refer to the endnotes page for the key to triangle symbols.

First-Year Students

Item wording or description	Variable name	Values ^c	Response options	Frequency Distributions ^a				Statistical Comparisons ^b		
				UTA		FY/Senior Experience		UTA	FY/Senior Experience	Effect size ^d
				Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	Mean
4a. During the current school year, have you seriously considered leaving this institution?^j										
	FYSfy04a	No		512	72	3,990	76	28%	24% *	.08 △
		Yes		201	28	1,284	24			
		Total		713	100	5,274	100			
4b. [If answered "yes"] Why did you consider leaving? (Select all that apply.)										
	FYSfy04b_1_16	—	Academics are too difficult	29	15	238	18			
	FYSfy04b_2_16	—	Academics are too easy	12	7	58	6			
	FYSfy04b_3_16	—	Other academic issues (major not offered, course availability, advising, credit transfer, etc.)	30	15	182	15			
	FYSfy04b_4_16	—	Financial concerns (costs or financial aid)	86	43	521	39			
	FYSfy04b_5_16	—	To change your career options (transfer to another school or program, military service, etc.)	21	11	232	20			
	FYSfy04b_6_16	—	Difficulty managing demands of school and work	31	16	192	14			
	FYSfy04b_7_16	—	Too much emphasis on partying	3	2	78	6			
	FYSfy04b_8_16	—	Not enough opportunities to socialize and have fun	52	26	178	15			
	FYSfy04b_9_16	—	Relations with faculty and staff	19	10	111	9			
	FYSfy04b_10_16	—	Relations with other students	31	15	272	19			
	FYSfy04b_11_16	—	Campus climate, location, or culture	43	23	375	30			
	FYSfy04b_12_16	—	Unsafe or hostile environment	10	4	92	8			
	FYSfy04b_13_16	—	Personal reasons (family issues, physical or mental health, homesickness, stress, etc.)	78	39	533	39			
	FYSfy04b_14_16	—	A reason not listed above, please specify:	21	11	137	12			
5. How important is it to you that you graduate from <i>this institution</i>?										
	FYSfy05	1	Not important	56	8	190	4	4.7	5.1 ***	-.25 ▽
		2		24	4	158	3			
		3		60	9	293	6			
		4		105	15	606	12			
		5		108	15	809	15			
		6	Very important	353	49	3,183	59			
		Total		706	100	5,239	100			

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First-Year Students

Variable name	N	Mean		Standard error ^f		Standard deviation ^g		DF ^h	Sig. ⁱ	Effect size ^d
	UTA	UTA	FY/Senior Experience	UTA	FY/Senior Experience	UTA	FY/Senior Experience	Comparisons with: FY/Senior Experience		
FYSfy01a	717	2.68	2.78	.031	.010	0.82	0.84	7,368	.002	-.12
FYSfy01b	716	2.87	2.94	.029	.010	0.78	0.78	7,357	.020	-.09
FYSfy01c	713	2.46	2.59	.032	.010	0.84	0.85	7,357	.000	-.16
FYSfy01d	714	2.38	2.45	.034	.011	0.91	0.89	7,351	.049	-.08
FYSfy01e	712	2.92	3.12	.029	.009	0.76	0.72	7,322	.000	-.27
FYSfy01f	716	2.80	2.85	.031	.010	0.83	0.84	7,347	.163	-.05
FYSfy02a	715	3.59	3.46	.041	.014	1.10	1.14	7,339	.003	.12
FYSfy02b	713	4.04	3.76	.049	.017	1.30	1.35	887	.000	.21
FYSfy02c	713	3.09	2.98	.046	.016	1.23	1.31	7,331	.027	.09
FYSfy02d	712	3.06	2.92	.051	.017	1.37	1.36	7,331	.011	.10
FYSfy03a_16	713	2.04	2.11	.029	.010	0.78	0.81	888	.014	-.09
FYSfy03b_16	709	1.74	1.81	.030	.010	0.81	0.85	7,310	.040	-.08
FYSfy03c_16	711	1.91	1.90	.034	.012	0.92	0.94	7,298	.740	.01
FYSfy03d_16	708	2.91	2.94	.032	.011	0.86	0.87	7,312	.407	-.03
FYSfy03e_16	708	1.91	1.92	.037	.012	0.97	0.96	7,305	.804	-.01
FYSfy03f_16	711	1.61	1.60	.031	.010	0.82	0.83	7,295	.891	.01
FYSfy04a ^k	711	.278	.242	.0168	.0053	--	--	--	.035	.08
FYSfy05	705	4.72	5.08	.061	.017	1.61	1.38	819	.000	-.25

Seniors

Item wording or description	Variable name	Values ^c	Response options	Frequency Distributions ^a				Statistical Comparisons ^b		
				UTA		FY/Senior Experience		UTA	FY/Senior Experience	Effect size ^d
				Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	
1. Do you expect to graduate this spring or summer?										
	FYSsr01_16	No		1,091	54	2,894	38			
		Yes		931	46	5,062	62			
		Total		2,022	100	7,956	100			
1a. [Excludes those who answered "No," not expecting spring/summer graduation] After graduation, what best describes your immediate plans?										
	FYSsr01a	—	Full-time employment	695	72	2,758	54			
		—	Part-time employment	29	3	224	4			
		—	Graduate or professional school	141	15	1,396	27			
		—	Military service	7	1	44	1			
		—	Service or volunteer activity (AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, Teach for America, etc.)	3	0	36	1			
		—	Internship (paid or unpaid)	25	3	248	5			
		—	Travel or gap year	9	1	207	4			
		—	No plans at this time	32	3	138	3			
		—	Other, please specify:	19	2	91	2			
		Total		960	100	5,142	100			
1b. [If immediate plans included full- or part-time employment] Do you already have a job for after graduation?^j										
	FYSsr01b	No		273	40	1,615	54	60%	46% ***	.29
		Yes, I will start a new job		101	14	729	24			
		Yes, I will continue in my current job		344	46	621	22			
		Total		718	100	2,965	100			
									▲	
2. [Excludes those who answered "No," not expecting spring/summer graduation] To what extent have courses in your major(s) prepared you for your post-graduation plans?										
	FYSsr02	1	Very little	75	8	382	8	3.1	2.9 ***	.15
		2	Some	177	19	1,236	24			
		3	Quite a bit	307	32	1,879	36			
		4	Very much	397	41	1,628	31			
		Total		956	100	5,125	100			
									▲	
3. Do you intend to work eventually in a field related to your major(s)?^j										
	FYSsr03	Yes		1,915	94	6,818	85	94%	85% ***	.30
		No		38	2	415	5			
		Unsure		84	4	770	10			
		Total		2,037	100	8,003	100			
									▲	
4. Do you plan to be self-employed, an independent contractor, or a freelance worker someday?^j										
	FYSsr04	Yes		418	21	1,891	26	21%	26% ***	-.11
		No		1,213	58	3,995	47			
		Unsure		407	20	2,111	27			
		Total		2,038	100	7,997	100			
									▼	

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (2-tailed); Refer to the endnotes page for the key to triangle symbols.

Seniors

Item wording or description	Variable name	Values ^c	Response options	Frequency Distributions ^a				Statistical Comparisons ^b			
				UTA		FY/Senior Experience		UTA	FY/Senior Experience	Effect size ^d	
				Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean		
5. Do you plan to start your own business (nonprofit or for-profit) someday?^j											
	FYSsr05		Yes	481	24	2,284	31	24%	31% ***	-.15	
			No	1,114	54	3,389	39				
			Unsure	445	22	2,335	30				
			Total	2,040	100	8,008	100				
6. How much confidence do you have in your ability to complete tasks requiring the following skills and abilities?^j											
a. Critical thinking and analysis of arguments and information	FYSsr06a		1	Very little	13	1	58	1	3.5	3.5	.01
			2	Some	160	8	627	8			
			3	Quite a bit	734	36	2,982	36			
			4	Very much	1,132	56	4,326	55			
				Total	2,039	100	7,993	100			
b. Creative thinking and problem solving	FYSsr06b		1	Very little	13	1	48	1	3.5	3.5	.02
			2	Some	146	7	626	8			
			3	Quite a bit	722	35	2,915	36			
			4	Very much	1,151	57	4,386	56			
				Total	2,032	100	7,975	100			
c. Research skills	FYSsr06c		1	Very little	40	2	170	2	3.2	3.2	-.03
			2	Some	351	17	1,336	17			
			3	Quite a bit	816	40	3,119	38			
			4	Very much	829	41	3,352	43			
				Total	2,036	100	7,977	100			
d. Clear writing	FYSsr06d		1	Very little	21	1	123	2	3.3	3.3	.00
			2	Some	260	13	1,039	13			
			3	Quite a bit	829	41	3,184	39			
			4	Very much	921	45	3,632	46			
				Total	2,031	100	7,978	100			
e. Persuasive speaking	FYSsr06e		1	Very little	84	4	329	4	3.1	3.1	-.01
			2	Some	445	22	1,805	22			
			3	Quite a bit	774	38	3,000	37			
			4	Very much	733	36	2,842	37			
				Total	2,036	100	7,976	100			
f. Technological skills	FYSsr06f		1	Very little	43	2	255	3	3.2	3.1 ***	.10
			2	Some	350	17	1,694	20			
			3	Quite a bit	821	40	3,136	39			
			4	Very much	821	41	2,890	38			
				Total	2,035	100	7,975	100			
g. Financial and business management skills	FYSsr06g		1	Very little	207	10	1,235	15	2.7	2.6 ***	.10
			2	Some	667	33	2,718	33			
			3	Quite a bit	685	34	2,320	29			
			4	Very much	477	24	1,703	23			
				Total	2,036	100	7,976	100			

Seniors

Item wording or description	Variable name	Values ^c	Response options	Frequency Distributions ^a				Statistical Comparisons ^b		
				UTA		FY/Senior Experience		UTA	FY/Senior Experience	
				Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	Effect size ^d
h. Entrepreneurial skills	FYSsr06h	1	Very little	370	18	1,794	22	2.5	2.4 *	.06 △
		2	Some	730	36	2,848	35			
		3	Quite a bit	541	27	1,896	24			
		4	Very much	388	19	1,445	19			
		Total		2,029	100	7,983	100			
i. Leadership skills	FYSsr06i	1	Very little	56	3	275	4	3.2	3.2	-.03
		2	Some	362	18	1,238	16			
		3	Quite a bit	742	37	2,898	36			
		4	Very much	870	43	3,568	45			
		Total		2,030	100	7,979	100			
j. Networking and relationship building	FYSsr06j	1	Very little	104	5	440	6	3.0	3.0	-.03
		2	Some	483	24	1,779	22			
		3	Quite a bit	761	37	2,882	36			
		4	Very much	689	34	2,882	36			
		Total		2,037	100	7,983	100			
7. To what extent has your coursework in your major(s) emphasized the following?										
a. Generating new ideas or brainstorming	FYSsr07a	1	Very little	74	4	291	4	3.1	3.1	-.03
		2	Some	389	19	1,503	19			
		3	Quite a bit	828	41	3,137	39			
		4	Very much	738	36	3,041	38			
		Total		2,029	100	7,972	100			
b. Taking risks in your coursework without fear of penalty	FYSsr07b	1	Very little	452	23	1,813	22	2.5	2.5	.03
		2	Some	526	26	2,296	29			
		3	Quite a bit	566	28	2,114	27			
		4	Very much	479	24	1,743	22			
		Total		2,023	100	7,966	100			
c. Evaluating multiple approaches to a problem	FYSsr07c	1	Very little	106	6	334	4	3.1	3.1	-.03
		2	Some	392	19	1,592	20			
		3	Quite a bit	785	39	3,047	38			
		4	Very much	742	37	2,984	38			
		Total		2,025	100	7,957	100			
d. Inventing new methods to arrive at unconventional solutions	FYSsr07d	1	Very little	254	13	900	11	2.7	2.8	-.04
		2	Some	566	28	2,217	28			
		3	Quite a bit	657	33	2,629	33			
		4	Very much	539	27	2,189	28			
		Total		2,016	100	7,935	100			

8. Is there anything your institution could have done better to prepare you for your career or further education? Please describe.

This final question asked students to respond in an open text box. Comments were recorded for 631 seniors. Responses are provided in your "NSSE20 Student Comments" report and in a separate SPSS data file.

These open-ended responses appear exactly as respondents entered them and may not be suitable for distribution without prior review.

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (2-tailed); Refer to the endnotes page for the key to triangle symbols.

Seniors

Variable name	N	Mean		Standard error ^f		Standard deviation ^g		DF ^h	Sig. ⁱ	Effect size ^d
	UTA	UTA	FY/Senior Experience	UTA	FY/Senior Experience	UTA	FY/Senior Experience			
FYSsr01b ^k	724	.604	.462	.0182	.0080	--	--	--	.000	.29
FYSsr02	966	3.06	2.91	.031	.011	0.96	0.93	7,559	.000	.15
FYSsr03 ^k	2041	.939	.849	.0053	.0035	--	--	--	.000	.30
FYSsr04 ^k	2041	.212	.259	.0090	.0043	--	--	--	.000	-.11
FYSsr05 ^k	2043	.243	.310	.0095	.0045	--	--	--	.000	-.15
FYSsr06a	2,043	3.47	3.46	.015	.007	0.67	0.67	12,557	.713	.01
FYSsr06b	2,036	3.48	3.47	.015	.006	0.66	0.67	12,524	.398	.02
FYSsr06c	2,040	3.20	3.22	.017	.008	0.79	0.79	12,530	.217	-.03
FYSsr06d	2,035	3.29	3.29	.016	.007	0.73	0.76	12,522	.933	.00
FYSsr06e	2,040	3.06	3.06	.019	.008	0.86	0.87	12,526	.685	-.01
FYSsr06f	2,039	3.19	3.11	.018	.008	0.79	0.83	12,529	.000	.10
FYSsr06g	2,040	2.71	2.60	.021	.010	0.94	1.00	3,002	.000	.10
FYSsr06h	2,033	2.47	2.41	.022	.010	1.00	1.03	2,934	.011	.06
FYSsr06i	2,034	3.19	3.22	.018	.008	0.83	0.84	12,522	.194	-.03
FYSsr06j	2,041	2.99	3.02	.020	.009	0.89	0.91	12,536	.205	-.03
FYSsr07a	2,033	3.09	3.12	.019	.008	0.84	0.84	12,512	.235	-.03
FYSsr07b	2,026	2.52	2.49	.024	.010	1.09	1.07	12,492	.230	.03
FYSsr07c	2,028	3.06	3.09	.020	.008	0.88	0.86	12,486	.166	-.03
FYSsr07d	2,020	2.73	2.77	.022	.010	0.99	0.98	12,456	.067	-.04

Endnotes

- a. Column percentages are weighted by institution-reported sex and enrollment status (and institution size for comparison groups). Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding. Counts are unweighted; column percentages cannot be replicated from counts.
- b. All statistics are weighted by institution-reported sex and enrollment status (and institution size for comparison groups). Unless otherwise noted, statistical comparisons are two-tailed independent t -tests. Items with categorical response sets are left blank.
- c. These are the values used to calculate means. For the majority of items, these values match the codes in the data file and codebook.
- d. Effect size for independent t -tests uses Cohen's d ; z -tests use Cohen's h .
- e. Statistics are weighted by institution-reported sex and enrollment status (and institution size for comparison groups). Categorical items are not listed.
- f. The 95% confidence interval for the population mean is equal to the sample mean plus or minus 1.96 times the standard error of the mean.
- g. A measure of the amount individual scores deviate from the mean of all the scores in the distribution.
- h. Degrees of freedom used to compute the t -tests. Values differ from N s due to weighting and whether equal variances were assumed.
- i. Statistical comparisons are two-tailed independent t -tests or z -tests. Statistical significance represents the probability that the difference between your students' mean and that of the students in the comparison group is due to chance.
- j. Statistical comparison uses z -test to compare the proportion who responded (depending on the item) "Done or in progress" or "Yes" with all who responded otherwise.
- k. Mean represents the proportion who responded (depending on the item) "Done or in progress" or "Yes."

Key to symbols:

- ▲ **Your students' average** was significantly higher ($p < .05$) with an effect size at least .3 in magnitude.
- △ **Your students' average** was significantly higher ($p < .05$) with an effect size less than .3 in magnitude.
- ▽ **Your students' average** was significantly lower ($p < .05$) with an effect size less than .3 in magnitude.
- ▼ **Your students' average** was significantly lower ($p < .05$) with an effect size at least .3 in magnitude.

Note: It is important to interpret the direction of differences relative to item wording and your institutional context.