

# National Survey of Student Engagement: Traditional Student Results 2018

## Administration

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was administered in mid-spring semester of 2018 to 574 first-year and 468 senior students. Responses were received from 231 first-year (40%) and 137 senior (29%) students. As is typical the respondents were disproportionately female identifying but relatively representative of the College's academic divisions (+- 2%). Students of color responded at higher rates than we see in our traditional student population, representing about 22% of the respondents compared to spring census diversity of about 15%.

This year we included the topical module on Inclusiveness & Engagement with Diversity. In total the students responded to over 100 items on the main survey (excluding demographic questions) and 29 questions on the additional topical module.

## Analysis

The analysis of the NSSE survey results are complex and multi-faceted.

Prepared reports include separate analysis of the responses of first-year and senior students with comparisons to three groups participating in 2017 or 2018: 1) all participating schools, 2) small four-year residential colleges, and 3) a group of 24 of our overlap, peer, and aspirant schools. The topical module used this last comparison group as much as possible, but since the comparison group was a bit smaller the VP for Student Affairs and Diversity and Inclusion added a few schools to this list.

Since we have participated in the survey over multiple years, we also are provided with a multi-year report that focuses on the 10 "Engagement Indicators" that are comprised of groups of related questions.

We receive the raw data from each student response and so are able to further analyze the data by variables of interest to us, e.g. division, biological sex, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family educational background, etc. Because we administer the survey every three years we are able to compare the responses of students who took the survey as first-year students in 2015 and again as seniors in 2018.

These multi-faceted analyses help us to gain insight into the educational experiences of Champlain students at many levels.

## Overall Findings for 2018 – Main Survey

For a quick synopsis of the findings, please jump to the Summary on page 9.

Champlain’s first-year students overall are engaged equally to their peers in our comparison group. They report being more engaged on 22 items, less engaged on 22 items and equally engaged on the remaining items. Senior students overall reported lower levels of engagement than their peers with 28 items showing less engagement and more engagement on 11 items.

Strong engagement by both first-year and senior students is reported on five items: 1) working with other students on course projects or assignments, 2) giving course presentations, 3) having or planning to participate in internships, 4) spending time relaxing and socializing, and 5) reporting that Champlain has contributed to their growth in “acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills.”

Both first-year and senior students report lower levels of engagement in 14 individual items. A group of three items relate to academic activities associated with testing and since we are generally a “low test” school, these would be expected. The other items are a varied group that cross academic activities, student personal activities, and student perceptions of what the College emphasizes (see Appendix A for a list of these 14 questions).

We see noticeable differences between first and senior year in how much students report their classes require three different cognitive activities: 1) Analysis, 2) Evaluation, and 3) Formation of new ideas. Not surprisingly, seniors are less likely to report that they have studied abroad (60%) than are first-year students are to say that they plan to do so (71%). Senior students are less definitive in their positive answers to the question, “If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending,” with 27% saying “Definitely yes” compared to 45% of first-year students (overall positive responses are essentially the same, 82 and 86% respectively).

Champlain seniors report very strong engagement in three “High Impact Practices” when compared to their peers in the comparison groups. See Table 1.

**Table 1.** High Impact Practices: Percent of senior students reporting as done, in progress, or plan to do.

<i>Practice</i>	<i>CC Comparison</i>		<i>Small 4YR</i>	<i>All NSSE</i>
	<i>Champlain</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Residential</i>	
<i>Internship</i>	87%	83%	75%	76%
<i>Study Abroad</i>	60%	32%	17%	23%
<i>Culminating Senior Experience</i>	97%	74%	75%	71%

## Analysis of Various Sub-groups

The 2018 NSSE results have been analyzed for differences in the following sub-groups: student division, biological sex, racial/ethnic status, socioeconomic status, and family educational background.

### Divisions

The responses of first-year students varies more by division than do those of senior students. Eight of 11 indicators show divisional differences for first-year students, while we see differences in only four indicators for seniors (see Table 2). Across the divisions both first-year and senior students respond similarly to questions about the Effective Teaching, Quality of Interactions, and Supportive Environment Indicators.

**Table 2.** Engagement Indicators (Scale Values) Summary Measures by Division

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>FY</i>					<i>SR</i>				
	CCM	EHS	ITS	SSB	Sig?	CCM	EHS	ITS	SSB	Sig?
<i>Higher Order Learning</i>	42	41	<b>36</b>	41	Y	33	<b>42</b>	34	37	Y
<i>Reflective &amp; Integrative Learning</i>	38	39	<b>33</b>	39	Y	36	<b>43</b>	31	35	Y
<i>Learning Strategies</i>	35	40	<b>30</b>	36	Y	27	34	29	34	N
<i>Quantitative Reasoning</i>	25	24	27	<b>34</b>	Y	<b>19</b>	24	26	32	Y
<i>Collaborative Learning</i>	34	33	30	36	Y	32	36	34	34	N
<i>Discussions with Diverse Others</i>	38	39	35	<b>44</b>	Y	34	38	30	33	N
<i>Student-Faculty Interaction</i>	21	<b>27</b>	19	24	Y	29	32	25	29	N
<i>Effective Teaching</i>	40	37	37	40	N	39	38	39	39	N
<i>Quality of Interactions</i>	43	43	45	44	N	40	42	41	39	N
<i>Supportive Environment</i>	43	43	45	44	N	40	42	41	39	N
<i>High Impact Practices</i>	.61	<b>1.24</b>	.54	<b>1.0</b>	Y	3.4	<b>4.4</b>	<b>2.6</b>	3.4	Y

Note: Significant differences in bold, orange for lower engagement and blue for higher engagement.

A more detailed analysis of divisional differences among the senior students' responses to the questions comprising the significant indicators is included in Appendix B.

### Differences among the sexes

Regardless of the student's class level or division, there are five items where we see different responses from male- and female-identifying students. Females are more likely to say that their coursework asked them to "connect learning to societal problems or issues" or to "include diverse perspectives in coursework." Males are more likely to say that their courses ask them to "reach conclusions based on quantitative information," that they spend more time relaxing and socializing, and that the college has helped them to progress in their critical and analytical thinking.

There are also a series of academic behaviors that females report being more engaged in:

- Creating multiple drafts of assignments
- Being prepared for class
- Reviewing notes and summarizing learning after class
- Feeling challenged to do their best work
- Reading more and studying more
- For senior females only: trying to understand an issue by looking at it from someone else’s perspective.

### Diverse Students (Students of Color)

This group includes students who report Hispanic/Latin(x) ethnicity or a non-white race (including multiple races) on either their Champlain student record or in their responses to questions on the survey. A total of 81 (22%) first-year and senior students met these criteria. Significant differences in engagement compared to their white, non-Hispanic peers are seen on the following six items. In all but one case—quality of interactions with faculty—students of color report more engagement.

**Table 3.** Mean scores for items showing significant differences between students of color and their white, non-Hispanic peers.

<i>Item</i>	<i>FY Diverse</i>	<i>FY not Diverse</i>	<i>SR Diverse</i>	<i>SR not Diverse</i>
<i>Discussions with students of a different racial/ethnic background</i>	<b>3.32</b>	2.84	<b>3.14</b>	2.62
<i>Hours spent reading</i>	<b>3.22</b>	2.76		
<i>Institution emphasizes using learning support services</i>	<b>3.33</b>	3.05		
<i>Reviewing notes after class</i>			<b>2.69</b>	2.23
<i>Quality of interactions with faculty</i>			<b>4.89</b>	5.48
<i>Time spent working on campus</i>			<b>3.04</b>	2.28

### Under-resourced Students

Under-resourced students are those who through our analysis of financial information have a low expected family contribution and who therefore qualify for Pell-grants. Respondents within this group numbered 96 (26%), approximately what we would expect based on our census.

For our senior students, there were no areas where the respondents in this group differed from their peers. For first-year students there were four items related to how students spend their time where we saw differences: Less time spent relaxing and socializing, more time spent working on campus, more time spent commuting, and

more time spent reading. On six additional items first-year, under-resourced students report higher engagement. See Table 4.

**Table 4.** Mean scores for items showing significant differences based on student resources

ITEM	FY Under-resourced	FY Resourced
1. Asked another student to help you understand course material	<b>2.83</b>	2.53
2. Talked about career plans with faculty member	<b>2.41</b>	2.12
3. Institutional Emphasis: Using learning support resources	<b>3.31</b>	3.03
4. Institutional Emphasis: Attending events	<b>2.76</b>	2.47
5. Asked questions or contributed to course discussion	<b>3.33</b>	3.03
6. Included diverse perspectives in course work	<b>2.97</b>	2.68

### First-Generation Students

The responses of first-generation and multi-generation students were very similar on this most recent NSSE survey. Only three questions on unrelated topics showed differences in either the first-year or senior student groups.

### Year-to-Year Comparisons

We receive prepared reports from NSSE that compare survey results on the ten Engagement Indicators that are comprised of groups of NSSE questions. Our results declined on nearly all of the indicators between 2015 and 2018, for both first-year and senior students. None of the declines for first-year students were significant; however, half of the declines for senior students were significant as indicated below, where significant differences are noted in bold text:

**Table 5.** Engagement Indicator results 2015 and 2018

Engagement Indicator	First-year 2015	First-year 2018	Senior 2015	Senior 2018
Higher Order Learning	41.3	39.4	52.0	<b>35.6</b>
Reflective & Integrative Learning	37.5	36.8	41.9	<b>36.6</b>
Learning Strategies	35.8	34.2	34.0	<b>29.9</b>
Quantitative Reasoning	27.3	27.0	28.4	23.9
Collaborative Learning	32.1	33.0	36.4	33.7
Discussions with Diverse Others	38.9	38.1	37.2	<b>33.8</b>
Student-Faculty Interaction	23.6	21.7	31.3	28.6
Effective Teaching Practices	39.3	38.3	39.6	38.6
Quality of Interactions	53.5	43.7	43.0	40.5
Supportive Environment	35.7	35.4	34.8	<b>30.3</b>

The declines for seniors in the academic areas of Higher Order Learning and Reflective & Integrative Learning are particularly concerning because of their close ties to our mission. As well, the decline in Supportive Environment is worrisome because it seems counter to our College Value of “human touch.”

Since students who took the survey as seniors in 2018 were first-year students at the prior administration of NSSE in 2015, we have the ability to compare results for the same group of students taken at two different points in time. While there were 75 students who took the NSSE survey as both first-year and senior students, when participants who exited the survey in its early stages in either year are removed, 63 students remain in the group for analysis. When interpreting these results it is important to consider that these particular respondents represent the students with the most sustained engagement with the College and commitment to providing it with potential information for improvement; therefore actual differences may be larger than seen here.

Paired sample t-tests were used to analyze differences on the engagement indicators as well as individual questions. Of the ten engagement indicators, four remained the same, four declined, and two increased between first-year and senior year as shown below (significant changes noted in bold text).

**Table 6.** Engagement Indicator results 2015 and 2018, same student participants

<i>Engagement Indicator</i>	<i>First-year 2015</i>	<i>Senior 2018</i>
<i>Higher Order Learning</i>	41.3	<b>36.7</b>
<i>Reflective &amp; Integrative Learning</i>	39.3	38.4
<i>Learning Strategies</i>	33.3	30.3
<i>Quantitative Reasoning</i>	22.9	24.0
<i>Collaborative Learning</i>	32.3	<b>36.3</b>
<i>Discussions with Diverse Others</i>	38.1	<b>34.6</b>
<i>Student-Faculty Interaction</i>	22.6	<b>29.2</b>
<i>Effective Teaching Practices</i>	37.8	39.7
<i>Quality of Interactions</i>	44.6	<b>40.1</b>
<i>Supportive Environment</i>	36.3	<b>30.6</b>

While we might expect some measures of engagement to decrease over the course of undergraduate study and others to increase, e.g. student-faculty interaction, we were surprised by the decline in reports of Higher Order Learning and dismayed by the decline in student perception of Champlain as a Supportive Environment. Yet, these are themes that we saw in our analysis of senior results when compared to other NSSE

participants and to our own 2015 results. We then undertook a question by question analysis of the components of these engagement indicators, as well as two others where there were significantly different results across the two survey periods. We see a decline in student discussions with others of different religious beliefs for our two different first-year student populations, and more substantially over time for the cohort that took the survey as both first-year and senior students.

Results follow in Table 7 with significant differences in each comparison of means in large, bold text.

**Table 7.** Individual item averages for engagement indicators comparing years 2015 and 2018

		<i>Different Cohorts</i>		<i>Different Cohorts</i>		<i>Same Students</i>	
		<b>First-year</b>		<b>Senior</b>		<b>FY</b>	<b>SR</b>
		<b>2015</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2018</b>
<b>HIGHER ORDER LEARNING</b>							
<i>During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following?</i>							
b	Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations	2.9	2.8	3.1	<b>2.8</b>	2.9	2.8
c	Analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts	3.1	3	3.1	<b>2.7</b>	3.1	<b>2.8</b>
d	Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source	3.2	<b>3</b>	3	<b>2.7</b>	3.2	<b>2.8</b>
e	Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information	3.1	3	3.1	<b>2.8</b>	3.1	2.9
<b>DISCUSSIONS WITH DIVERSE OTHERS</b>		<b>Different Cohorts</b>		<b>Different Cohorts</b>		<b>Same Students</b>	
<i>During the current school year, how often have you had discussions with the following groups?</i>		<b>First-year</b>		<b>Senior</b>		<b>FY</b>	<b>SR</b>
		<b>2015</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2018</b>
a	People of a race or ethnicity other than your own	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.8
b	People from an economic background other than your own	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
c	People with religious beliefs other than their own	3.0	<b>2.9</b>	2.9	2.8	3.0	<b>2.7</b>

d	People with political views other than your own	2.9	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.8	<b>2.5</b>
<b>LEARNING STRATEGIES</b>		<b>Different Cohorts</b>		<b>Different Cohorts</b>		<b>Same Students</b>	
<i>During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?</i>		<b>First-year</b>		<b>Senior</b>		<b>FY</b>	<b>SR</b>
		<b>2015</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2018</b>
a	Identified key information from reading assignments	3.1	3.2	3.1	3.0	3.1	<b>2.9</b>
b	Reviewed your notes after class	2.6	2.7	2.4	<b>2.6</b>	2.4	2.3
c	Summarized what you learned in class or from course materials	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.4
<b>SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT</b>		<b>Different Cohorts</b>		<b>Different Cohorts</b>		<b>Same Students</b>	
<i>How much does your institution emphasize the following?</i>		<b>First-year</b>		<b>Senior</b>		<b>FY</b>	<b>SR</b>
		<b>2015</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2015</b>
b	Providing support to help students succeed academically	3	3.1	3	2.9	3.1	2.9
c	Using learning support services (tutoring services, writing center, etc.)	2.9	<b>3.1</b>	2.9	2.7	3.1	<b>2.7</b>
d	Encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (social, racial/ethnic, religious, etc.)	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.5	2.6	2.6
e	Providing opportunities to be involved socially	3	2.9	3	2.8	3.1	<b>2.8</b>
f	Providing support for your overall well-being (recreation, health care, counseling, etc.)	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.6	2.9	2.7
g	Helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	2.3	2.2	2.3	<b>1.9</b>	2.2	<b>1.9</b>
h	Attending campus activities and events (performing arts, athletic events, etc.)	2.8	<b>2.6</b>	2.8	<b>2.4</b>	2.8	<b>2.4</b>
i	Attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues	2.8	<b>2.6</b>	2.6	<b>2.3</b>	2.9	<b>2.4</b>



## Summary of Findings

- First-year students are more engaged than senior students. This is atypical for most engagement indicators (For all NSSE schools, Supportive Environment tends to be lower for seniors and Learning Strategies and Collaborative Learning are equal).
- Champlain College data shows declines from 2015 to 2018 for both first-year and senior students, with more significant declines for seniors.
- Champlain College seniors report less demand by their coursework for them to engage in the higher-order cognitive areas of analysis, evaluation and formation of new ideas.
- Champlain seniors show strong engagement in three High Impact Practices: internships, study abroad and culminating senior experiences.
- Overall, few differences are seen across divisions. However, some mission-relevant differences are seen in the reported engagement of senior students.
- Some differences are seen between male- and female-identifying students, most related to academic behaviors.
- Where there are significant differences, students of color typically report higher engagement, but senior students of color rate the quality of interactions with faculty lower than their white, non-Hispanic/Latin-x peers.
- Under-resourced students report higher engagement than their more highly resource peers. First-generation students show no differences from their peers with multiple generations of college experience.

The following table has been used to drive more detailed analysis and to form this author's suggestions for a "call to action."

Indicator	First-year			Senior			FY in '15 / SR in '18	Action?
	'18 vs Comp	'18 vs '15	Division Diffs?	'18 vs Comp	'18 vs '15	Division Diffs?		
Higher Order	Eq	Eq	Yes	Lo	Lo	Yes	Lo	Yes - SR
Reflect & Integ.	Eq	Eq	Yes	Eq	Lo	Yes	Eq	
Learning Strategies	Lo	Eq	Yes	Lo	Lo	No	Eq	Yes
Quant. Reason.	Eq	Eq	Yes	Lo	Eq	Yes	Eq	
Collaborative Learn.	Eq	Eq	Yes	Eq	Eq	No	Hi	
Discussions Diversity	Eq	Eq	Yes	Lo	Lo	No	Lo	Yes - SR
Stu-Fac Interaction	Eq	Eq	Yes	Eq	Eq	No	Hi	
Effective Teaching	Eq	Eq	No	Eq	Eq	No	Eq	
Qual. of Interaction	Hi	Eq	No	Eq	Eq	No	Lo	
Support. Envrnmnt	Eq	Eq	No	Lo	Lo	No	Lo	Yes-SR

## Call to Action:

The ability to analyze the NSSE data from a variety of perspectives allows us to gain great insights—but also to become a bit confused by all the data and analyses. At the end of the day, Champlain College needs to determine what the survey results tell us about how our students are perceiving their engagement with the College and what, if anything, it would like to alter about their experiences. The timing of this particular survey comes at a critical point for the College—as it heads into the development of its next strategic plan.

From the author’s perspective, the College needs to listen carefully to what its senior students are saying about their experiences and decide where the results align with mission critical learning and living experiences. When compared externally, over time with different student groups, and longitudinally with students taking the survey as first-year and senior students, there are four areas that consistently suggest areas of further investigation: Higher Order Learning, Learning Strategies, Discussions with Diverse Others, and Supportive Environment.

I would suggest that the College’s first priority would be reflection on the lower ratings for the higher order thinking indicator. Further analysis of the course taking patterns of senior students may illuminate senior students’ reporting lower engagement in higher order learning coursework, particularly evaluation and forming new ideas. This is work that we expect our students to be undertaking, particularly in capstone, senior project, and upper level courses in the major. It is important to understand why they report less demand for these types of activities. Institutional Research will dispatch a work study student in Spring 2019 to do the manual work of matching student respondents to their senior year courses and classifying them so that further analysis may be undertaken as a prelude to strategic planning by the academic leadership team.

While it is understandable that our results for “Discussions with Diverse Others” might be low given our relatively low levels of racial & ethnic diversity, we actually see equal or bigger differences in engagement compared to peers around political and religious differences. These differences are bigger for our senior students, where students at other institutions tend to report more discussions with diverse others as seniors and Champlain results are equal or lower. Here the College should decide if this is an area that it can address through programming and curriculum for our student population or whether it would like to consider recruiting for more diversity in these areas.

All of our comparison groups show a decline in student ratings of the Supportive Environment indicator. Even the top 10% of schools have senior students rating this indicator 3% lower than first-year students, but Champlain’s decline is a bit larger at 5%. What might be more important for us to investigate however, is the decline in

Champlain senior student ratings between 2015 and 2018 as well as a lower rating by our 2018 seniors who took the survey as first-year students in 2015. Unfortunately, these investigations are difficult to do since the students who responded have left the College. If we have reason to believe that our current senior student ratings would be similar, then we could explore the individual items within this indicator with our current senior class.

Learning strategies differences may be one area where the College decides that lower results compared to other schools is not an issue given our particular approach to learning and teaching.

## Appendix A:

### Items on which first-year and senior students report less engagement than comparison groups

1. Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in
2. Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students
3. Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept
4. Memorizing course material
5. Have discussions with: People with political views other than your own
6. Reviewed your notes after class
7. Summarized what you learned in class or from course materials
8. Say that your courses challenged you to do your best work

Say that Champlain emphasizes:

9. Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work
10. Helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
11. Attending campus activities and events (performing arts, athletic events, etc.)
12. Work for pay off campus
13. Spend time providing care for dependents (children, parents, etc.)
14. Say that Champlain has contributed to their growth in: Analyzing numerical and statistical information

## Appendix B: Select Questions, Senior Student Responses

Mean scores for individual questions that comprise the Engagement Indicators and High Impact Practices where divisional differences were seen for senior students. Only questions that showed divisional differences are included.

EHS division seniors report greater engagement on all questions. ITS students report greater demand for application and less participation in study abroad. SSB seniors report greater engagement with evaluation and forming new ideas, whereas CCM students are more engaged in discussions with racial/ethnic diversity.

Question	CCM	EHS	ITS	SSB
<i>Connected your learning to societal problems or issues</i>	2.74	<b>3.43</b>	2.13	2.70
<i>Included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments</i>	2.70	<b>3.11</b>	2.13	2.57
<i>Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept</i>	2.67	<b>3.18</b>	2.73	2.64
<i>Coursework emphasized: Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations</i>	2.57	<b>3.04</b>	<b>3.27</b>	2.68
<i>Coursework emphasized: Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source</i>	2.63	<b>3.14</b>	2.27	<b>3.00</b>
<i>Coursework emphasized: Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information</i>	2.69	<b>3.18</b>	2.53	<b>3.00</b>
<i>Had discussions with: People of a race or ethnicity other than your own</i>	<b>2.77</b>	<b>3.15</b>	2.34	2.67
<i>Had discussions with: People from an economic background other than your own</i>	3.00	<b>3.22</b>	2.71	2.71
<i>Participate in an internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement</i>	3.56	<b>3.96</b>	3.32	3.67
<i>Participate in a study abroad program</i>	3.31	3.33	<b>2.54</b>	3.38
<i>Complete a culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, portfolio, etc.)</i>	3.81	<b>4.00</b>	3.71	3.57