Supporting Sophomore Student Success: Student- and Institution-Level Results from Two National Surveys

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KEEP CALM AND SURVIVE SOPHOMORE YEAR
First Year
- Orientation
- Common Reading Programs
- First-Year Seminars
- Student Engagement

Junior Year
- Internships
- Study Abroad
- Peer Leadership

Senior Year
- Capstone Experiences
- Job Fairs
- Professional Licensing
- Graduate and Professional School Applications
Sophomore Student (*Unmotivationus Middlechildibus*)
Existential Questioning

What is the purpose of my life?

Why am I taking all these classes?

Practical Questioning

What should I major in?

What career should I choose?
Sophomore Year Matters

• Engagement
• Focus
• Sense of Direction
• Sense of Belonging
• Interactions with Faculty

• Lead to increases in motivation, academic success, self-authorship and thriving
How are Sophomores Doing?

What are Institutions (We) Doing About/For Them?

- Sophomore Experiences Survey
- National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives
Sophomore Experience Survey 2014

Since 2007

> 25,000 sophomores

> 90 institutions
The Thriving Quotient (TQ)

Based on existing malleable constructs predictive of student persistence and GPA

25-item instrument with responses ranging on a 6-point Likert-type scale of 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree

Coefficient alpha = .89

Confirmatory factor analysis: five-factor model with a higher-order construct of thriving
Engaged Learning
Academic Determination
Positive Perspective
Social Connectedness
Diverse Citizenship

THRIVING
Institutional Integrity: Delivering On Your Promises
A Psychological Sense of Community

Sense of Belonging
Ownership
Emotional Connections
Interdependence
Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>🔅</td>
<td>🔅</td>
<td>🔅</td>
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<tr>
<td>□</td>
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Would Choose Again

Intent to Graduate

Tuition as a Worthwhile Investment

Overall Satisfaction

Institutional Fit

GPA

Intent to Reenroll

Intent to Graduate
Sophomore Experience Survey 2014

(N = 4,472 complete records)

• 71.4% female, 63.1% Anglo, 22.5% first generation, 9.5% over 21
• 12.7% transfers
• 63.3% are at their first choice institution, 55.5% live on campus, 33.5% work off campus, and 22.8% work on campus
• 68.1% intend to go to graduate school at some point
• Average of 15 credits this term, 61 credits total
Campus Experiences

Student Organizations

Leadership

Work

Campus Activities

Greek Organizations

Transfer

Athlete

Ethnic Organizations

Community Service

Residence

Student Organizations

Leadership

Work

Campus Activities

Greek Organizations

Transfer

Athlete

Ethnic Organizations

Community Service

Residence
Academic Experiences

Advising:
Frequency and Satisfaction

Learning Community

Courses Dropped

Major Certainty

Faculty Interaction:
Quantity, Quality, and Type

Service Learning Courses

GPA
Sophomore-Specific Questions

Comparison of Sophomore Courses to First-Year Courses

Participation in Sophomore Programs

Comparison of Sophomore Year to First Year

Number of Credits
Sophomores Slumping?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore year is worse or much worse than first year</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses are worse/much worse than first year</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting grades below a B average</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still unsure of my major</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surviving...barely</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sophomores Slumping?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dissatisfied with….</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My grades</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My living situation</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My health</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My interactions with faculty</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My peer relationships</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The whole college experience</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The amount I’m learning</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2014: About 1 in 5 sophomores are experiencing a “slump” in motivation, grades, or satisfaction with the college experience.
The Sophomore Slump …
In Students’ Words

- I’ve lost all my excitement
- Don’t see the purpose anymore
- I’m paying for all the stupid mistakes I made as a freshman
- Sophomore year is when you finish all the crappy stuff, so I expected this
- Kind of invisible on campus
- It’s a lot lonelier—there’s no effort on the part of the institution to involve us
- I think a lot of people are hitting an “oh crap moment”—there are a lot of forks in the road.
“We aren’t new anymore, but we aren’t getting out anytime soon, either!”
Results
Significant Gender Differences in the Sophomore Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thriving</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged Learning</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Determination</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse Citizenship</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSC</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Contributes to Sophomores’ Thriving?

- Sense of community
- Spirituality
- Interaction with faculty
- Institutional integrity
- Sophomore year being better than the first year
- Being sure of their major
- GPA
- Working
- Not dropping courses
- Campus involvement
- Aspirations for graduate school
- Advising frequency

$R^2 = .53$
Four Major Pathways to Thriving

• Campus Involvement
• Student-Faculty Interaction
• Spirituality
• Sense of Community
Different Pathways to Thriving

Ethnic minority students had fewer “pathways” to thriving than majority students—and those pathways differed across ethnic groups.
How Involved are Sophomores?

- Campus organizations
- Campus events
- Leadership
- Fraternities/sororities
- Ethnic organizations
- Sophomore programs

Very Involved vs. Never Involved
Ethnic Differences in Campus Involvement

• Latino students benefit most; White students as well

• African American students are involved, but their involvement is often limited to ethnic organizations — and does not contribute significantly to their thriving or sense of community unless they are in a leadership role.

• Asian students are least involved — and their involvement does not predict their thriving or sense of community
How much do sophomores interact with faculty?

- Discussed academic issues outside of class or office hours
- Discussed career plans
- Informally or socially
- Office Hours

![Bar chart showing interaction with faculty](chart.png)

- Frequently
- Never
Connection to Faculty

Sophomores’ level of interaction and satisfaction with faculty was the only campus experience variable in our study that significantly predicted every positive student outcome.

But there were racial differences in the degree to which faculty interaction helped students thrive.
Spirituality → Thriving

Doubly important to students of color
Sense of Community: #1 Predictor of Thriving
Institutional Integrity: Delivering On Your Promises

A key contributor to sense of community for all students – but especially underrepresented students!
Institutional Integrity: Delivering On Your Promises

-- faculty and staff “walk the talk”

--expectations are met

--campus is accurately portrayed during admissions
What Predicts Sophomore Grades?

- High school GPA ($\beta = .30$)
- Number of courses dropped ($\beta = -.16$)
- Thriving ($\beta = .09$)
- Living off campus ($\beta = .08$)
- Participating in learning communities ($\beta = .07$)
- First-generation status ($\beta = -.06$)
- Interaction with faculty ($\beta = .06$)
- Graduate school aspirations ($\beta = .05$)
- Institutional integrity ($\beta = .04$)
- Service-learning courses ($\beta = .03$)

$R^2 = .20$
What Predicts Sophomore Intent to Graduate from this Institution?

After controlling for demographic variables:

• Sense of community on campus ($\beta = .40$)
• Thriving ($\beta = .32$)
• Participating in sophomore programs ($\beta = .13$)
• Institutional integrity ($\beta = .10$)
• Being sure of their major ($\beta = .06$)
• Living off campus ($\beta = .05$)
• Being an athlete ($\beta = .05$)
• Frequency of advising ($\beta = .04$)

$R^2 = .27$
What Contributes to Sophomores’ Perception that Tuition is a Worthwhile Investment?

After controlling for demographic variables:

• Institutional Integrity ($\beta = .23$)
• Financial difficulty ($\beta = -.22$)
• Sense of community on campus ($\beta = .16$)
• Thriving ($\beta = .10$)
• Interaction with faculty ($\beta = .08$)
• Participating in sophomore programs ($\beta = .08$)
• Not having to work ($\beta = .04$)
• Living on campus ($\beta = .03$)

$R^2 = .34$
Sophomore Initiatives: Advising

**HOW OFTEN DID YOU MEET WITH YOUR ACADEMIC ADVISOR THIS YEAR?**

- **Never** 5%
- **Rarely** 12%
- **Occasionally** 17%
- **Somewhat often** 23%
- **Regularly** 21%
- **Frequently** 22%
How Satisfied are Sophomores with Advising?

- Satisfied or Very Satisfied: 55.7%
- Somewhat Dissatisfied or Somewhat Satisfied: 32.4%
- Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied: 11%
Sophomores’ satisfaction with advising significantly predicts:

✓ Their overall satisfaction with their college experience
✓ Their satisfaction with faculty
✓ Their perception of tuition as a worthwhile investment

N = 778
Under-represented by:
Private, For-Profit
Institutions with fewer than 1,000 students

Over-represented by:
Four-year institutions
Public institutions
Institutional Efforts Specifically Focused on Sophomores

- Retention Study < Four Year
- Institutional Assessment
- Strategic Planning
- Program Self-Study
- National Survey < Four Year
- Accreditation < Two Year
- Grant-Funded Project

• 42% Reported “None of These”
Nearly 80% of institutional efforts that include an intentional focus on the Sophomore Year are less than 5 years old.
### 10 Most Frequent Campus-wide Objectives for Sophomores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>% of Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Exploration</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Preparation</td>
<td>&lt; Two Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Assistance</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of a major</td>
<td>&lt; Four Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Opportunities</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Engagement</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection with institution</td>
<td>&lt; Four Year &lt; Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Skills</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Rates</td>
<td>&lt; Two Year &lt; Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt; Two Year &lt; Public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
46% of Institutions report offering at least one initiative specifically geared toward sophomores.
What Sophomore-Specific Initiatives are Most Frequent?

• Academic Advising
• Career Exploration
• Career Planning
• Early Alert
• Leadership Development
• Major Exploration

• Offered by at least one third of respondents
Initiatives More Frequently Offered by Institution Type:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Two-Year</th>
<th>Four-Year</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Internships</td>
<td>• Major Exploration</td>
<td>• Academic Advising</td>
<td>• Leadership Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Financial Aid</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Internships</td>
<td>• Class Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Live-on Requirement</td>
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</tbody>
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Primary Sophomore-Year Initiative (Initiative That Reaches Highest % of Sophomores)

10 Most Frequent Primary Sophomore-Year Initiative

- Academic Advising: 45.7%
- Live-on Requirement: 8.2%
- Early Alert: 4.7%
- Other: 4.1%
- Credit-Bearing Course: 3.8%
- Academic Coaching: 3.2%
- Class Events: 2.9%
- Sophomore LLC: 2.9%
- Career Exploration: 2.3%
- Major Exploration: 2.1%
Primary Initiatives More Frequently Offered by Type:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Early Alert</td>
<td>• Live-on Requirement</td>
<td>• Service-Learning</td>
<td>• Live-on Requirement</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Internships</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Early Alert</td>
<td></td>
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Primary Sophomore-Year Initiative: Categories

- Academic Advising
- Residential Initiatives
- Major and Career-Focused Initiatives
- High-Impact Practices
- Academic Support
- Curriculum or Course-Based
- Communication to Sophomores

- Campus-Based Events
- Away-from-Campus Events
- Transition-Focused Initiatives
- Financial Aid & Scholarships
- Leadership Development
- Comprehensive Sophomore-Year
- Early Alert
Primary Sophomore-Year Initiative: Categories

- Academic Advising
- Residential Initiatives
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- Curriculum or Course-Based
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- Campus-Based Events
- Away-from-Campus Events
- Transition-Focused Initiatives
- Financial Aid & Scholarships
- Leadership Development
- Comprehensive Sophomore-Year
- Early Alert
Required to Participate in Primary Sophomore-Year Initiative?

100% of sophomores required to participate:

- Academic Advising - 60%
- High-Impact Practices - 26%

No sophomores required to participate:

- Major and Career-focused - 73%
- High-Impact Practices - 30%
Most Important Objectives for Primary Initiative:
Academic Advising

- Academic Assistance
- Retention
- Selection of a Major
- Graduation
- Student-Faculty Interaction
Most Important Objectives for Primary Initiative: Residential Initiatives

- Connection with Institution
- Student Engagement
- Retention
- Support Network
- Self-Exploration
Most Important Objectives for Primary Initiative: High-Impact Practices

- Student Engagement
- Intercultural Competence
- Civic Responsibility
- Leadership Opportunities
- Career Preparation and Exploration
- Critical-thinking Skills
Most Important Objectives for Primary Initiative: Major and Career-Focused

- Career Exploration
- Career Preparation
- Selection of a Major
- Retention
- Graduation
Educationally Effective Practices in Primary Initiative: **Performance Expectations at Appropriately High Levels**

- **High-Impact Practices**: 4
- **Academic Advising**: 3
- **Residential Initiatives**: 3
- **Major and Career-Focused**: 3
Educationally Effective Practices in Primary Initiative: *Significant Investment of Time and Effort by Students*

- High-Impact Practices
- Residential Initiatives
- Academic Advising
- Major and Career-Focused
Educationally Effective Practices in Primary Initiative: **Interactions with Faculty and Peers about Substantive Matters**

- High-Impact Practices
- Academic Advising
- Major and Career-Focused
- Residential Initiatives
Educationally Effective Practices in Primary Initiative: Frequent, Timely, & Constructive Feedback

High-Impact Practices

Academic Advising

Major and Career-Focused

Residential Initiatives
Educationally Effective Practices in Primary Initiative: Experiences with Diversity

- Residential Initiatives
- High-Impact Practices
- Academic Advising
- Major and Career-Focused
Think, Pair, Share

• Based on the information shared today:

• What are you going to START doing when you return to your campus?
• What are you going to CHANGE with respect to things you already do focusing on sophomores?
• What are you going to STOP doing?