



## 2024 NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS

Submitted by: Michele 'MJ' Vincent

Requested by: Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning

## Overview

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) continues to be a critical tool for evaluating and enhancing educational practices, faculty training, resource allocation, and student success across universities in North America.

The 2024 NSSE survey collected data from 765 students at Sacramento State University, providing valuable insights into student demographics, engagement indicators, and areas for institutional reflection regarding effective changes for future initiatives. Additional data and anecdotal information were also collected to complete this report, as the NSSE data only represents 2.6% of the student body. Using the [2023-2028 Strategic Action](#) Items developed due to President Woods' "100 Days of Listening" engagements across campus as a guide, the NSSE survey results may enhance the planning around these activities.

## Student Demographics

The demographic composition of the surveyed students reflects a diverse student body. Among the respondents, 47% identified as female, 22% as male, and 10% used other identifiers to specify their gender. As of Spring 2024, The official Sacramento State enrollment data shows a slightly different gender distribution, with approximately 59% of students identifying as female and 41% as male. Ethnic diversity is significant, with 38% Hispanic or Latina/o, 25% White, 18% Asian, 6% Black or African American, and 7% Two or More Races. The university's enrollment dashboard reports the ethnic composition as 42% Hispanic or Latina/o, 25% White, 16% Asian, 5% Black or African American, and 6% Two or More Races. Of note, mental health challenges were indicated by 11% of respondents, who listed anxiety as a disability. Additionally, 7% of respondents listed depression as a disability. In-person courses were reported at 47%, and 16% of respondents indicated a balance between in-person and virtual course modalities. Again, the NSSE survey responses were from 765 students, representing only 2.5% of the student body.

## Engagement Indicators

The NSSE survey assessed ten engagement indicators categorized into four themes: Academic Challenge, Learning with Peers, Experiences with Faculty, and Campus Environment.

Most students responding indicated they collaborate with peers in their learning, with 93% of students saying they sometimes, often, or very often work with other students on course projects and assignments. 45% of respondents indicated that they had never worked with a faculty member outside of the coursework for their studies. Conversely, those respondents who indicated responses in this category of very often still only hit a maximum of 13% in very often talking about career plans with a faculty member. 60% of respondents rate their interactions with peers as

average to excellent. Faculty and advisors are rated slightly higher (69% and 64%, respectively). Interactions with student services staff are rated lowest (42%). The university highly emphasizes academic work and study time (60%) but less emphasizes helping students manage non-academic activities (26%).

Each of the questions related to higher-order learning elicited about 60% of respondents saying that they were challenged to do their very best work this school year, from a moderate to very full extent. 73% of students indicated that they could connect ideas from courses to prior experience and knowledge.

For the 23/24 school year, 63% of students identified key information from reading assignments as a learning strategy often or very often. 43% of students who responded reached conclusions based on analysis of numerical information such as graphs, numbers, and statistics. In contrast, only 33% of students used numerical information to examine real-world problems such as unemployment, climate change, public health, etc.

The Presidents' 2023-2028 Strategic Plan has an imperative, Learning and Student Success with Activity 2: Implement a coordinated academic advising model with case management along with a University-wide early-warning system and early alert system, beginning in Fall 2024. Additional recommendations intend to avoid punitive measures, such as registration holds, for those not attending appointments after being captured in the early warning system alerts.

Sacramento State's academic advising teams continuously work on innovative strategies to engage students in meaningful advising interactions without relying on punitive measures, such as mandatory registration appointments. A key approach has been embedding advising sessions within early program core courses, where students attend a 15-minute discussion about their major and academic pathway. This meeting is scheduled through EAB and conducted via Zoom, providing a convenient and accessible format. Following the session, students receive an advising sheet, which they then upload to Canvas as proof of assignment completion. This integrated method has proven successful, with 86% of students in the program attending their advising sessions.

To further increase engagement, Student Counseling Center (SCC) staff actively participate in events hosted by the Multi-Cultural Center (MCC), ensuring visibility and building relationships with students in their social and non-course activities on campus. This outreach is critical for connecting with students who might not otherwise seek out advising services.

However, challenges still need to be addressed, particularly with the navigation system (EAB) for scheduling advising appointments. The current system can be difficult, leading to students being filtered into the wrong

advising departments. This issue is compounded when students need clarification on where their program is housed, resulting in frustration and delays. To address this, advising teams emphasize the importance of professional social capital, forming close-knit professional teams that include degree evaluators, financial aid advisors, and registration office staff. This approach ensures that when a student encounters a problem, there is a coordinated effort behind the scenes to resolve the issue efficiently, preventing the student from being bounced around different offices.

During peak times when advising appointments are fully booked, the advising teams implement a "POWER advising" strategy, offering triage sessions to assist students. These sessions focus on teaching students how to read their academic reports and build schedules that ensure continued progress in their educational journey. This proactive approach helps students secure classes and make immediate progress, even when regular advising appointments are unavailable.



*Ashely, an Academic Advisor sitting at a table with a computer and a student, power advising session*

These innovative strategies reflect Sacramento State's commitment to student success by meeting students where they are and providing the necessary support to navigate their academic paths effectively without the negative implications of punitive measures.

### **Academic Challenge**

The theme of Academic Challenge encompasses Higher Order Learning, Reflective & Integrative Learning, Learning Strategies, and Quantitative Reasoning. These core areas are critical for developing the intellectual rigor and critical thinking skills essential for student success in both academic and professional settings.

In the quantitative reasoning section, only 35% of respondents indicated that they would often evaluate what others have concluded from numerical information. This response suggests a potential gap in students' ability to assess and

interpret data critically, an essential skill in an increasingly data-driven world. Addressing this gap should be a priority, as it is fundamental to students' capacity to engage with complex real-world problems, from public policy to scientific research.

In contrast, collaboration among peers is a strength, with 93% of students reporting that they sometimes, often, or very often work with others on course projects and assignments. This high level of peer interaction is encouraging, as collaborative learning has been shown to enhance critical thinking, deepen understanding, and improve overall academic performance.

Discussions with people from different races or ethnicities are another important aspect of the academic challenge. Forty percent of respondents indicated that they "very often" engage in such discussions, which is the highest rate among various dimensions of diversity, including religion (32%), political views (23%), country of origin (26%), sexual orientation (28%), and economic status (32%). These findings highlight the importance of developing learning environments where students are encouraged to engage with diverse perspectives. Expanding opportunities for dialogue across all dimensions of diversity is crucial for preparing students to thrive in a multicultural campus and an interconnected world. The data from the NSSE survey indicates that while students actively engage in collaborative and diverse learning experiences, specific areas, particularly quantitative reasoning and broader inclusivity, require strategic attention. Faculty may consider interventions, such as integrating more quantitative reasoning tasks into the curriculum and promoting structured discussions around a wider definition of diversity, including disabilities and application of data sets to current campus/local problems. These efforts may enhance the academic challenge and contribute to developing a well-rounded, critically engaged campus community.

### **High Impact Practices**

High-impact practices (HIPs) are enriching educational experiences that demand considerable time and effort, facilitate learning outside of the classroom, and require meaningful interactions with faculty and other students.

In Service-Learning, the survey found that only 10% of students say "all" or "most" of their classes include a service-learning component. While Sacramento State has many formalized learning communities on campus, the NSSE survey found that only 12% of respondents participated, and only 14% plan to participate in a learning community. A larger percentage of respondents (34%) plan to refrain from participating in a Learning Community. Due to the survey format, it is unclear if there are similarities between these student participants and those planning to be non-participants in learning communities.



**“Earning the R2 Classification is a point of pride for our CSU campuses.” - Ganesh Raman, CSU assistant vice chancellor for Research.**

Regarding student research with faculty, 10% of respondents have completed or are currently working on research with faculty; 13% plan to do so. Sacramento State recently gained an R2 designation. To qualify for this classification, universities must confer at least 20 doctoral degrees annually, as documented in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Additionally, these institutions must report a total research expenditure of at least \$5 million, according to the National Science Foundation’s Higher Education Research & Development (HERD) Survey. Achieving this designation also categorizes universities as national rather than regional institutions in college rankings.

President Wood assigned Activity 5 in the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan to provide \$2 million in annual research assigned time for faculty members who conduct research or engage in artistic expression that engages students from Graduation Initiative 2025 communities by Fall 2027. With this new designation and this endorsement of funding, students interested in pursuing a terminal degree or a research education may be enticed to apply to or continue at Sacramento State.

Regarding internships and International programs of study, respondents were more interested in gaining experiences locally. Under the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan, Community Involvement is imperative, with Activity 18 listed as “Ensure that 80% of undergraduate students participate in a paid or credit internship before graduation by Fall 2028 by supporting the integration of all campus internship efforts.” The NSSE survey found that 21% have completed/are completing internships, 32% plan to participate in an internship, and only 3% have studied abroad. However, there was more potential interest (10%) from those who plan to study abroad. Engaging in international study allows students to advance their degree progress while immersing themselves in a new culture, traveling to various countries, and developing life skills that endure well beyond graduation from Sacramento State. Moreover, this experience can open new professional opportunities and pathways.

### **Inclusiveness and Engagement with Diversity**

Inclusiveness and engagement with diversity are vital for fostering a supportive educational environment. Coursework emphasizing diversity was reported at 46% of coursework emphasizing skills to work effectively with people from various backgrounds, as being quite a bit or very much. Further, 55% of respondents report coursework emphasizes respecting diverse ideas, as quite a bit or very much. This response closely aligns with the 60% of respondents who say Sacramento State is committed to diversity. This commitment mirrors the Division of

Inclusive Excellence’s goals of empowering our learners and researchers to be critical thinkers and rigorous scholars through their pursuit and production of knowledge.

Sixty-four percent of NSSE respondents indicated that they often had discussions with people of races and ethnicities other than their own, often or very often, which may foster a sense of belonging on campus.

Additionally, 59% of respondents felt Sacramento State provided a supportive environment for racial/ethnic identities. With the implementation of the Chancellor’s Office Black Student Success Recommendations (BSSR) by establishing a Black-themed Honors College (BHC) beginning in Fall 2024, the NSSE data aligns with Sacramento State's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

With 6% of the student body identifying as Black or African American and nearly half of the student population regularly engaging in discussions that include diverse perspectives, the foundation for the BHC's success is already in place. As a Sacramento State Business student, John Carey III expressed, “It’s a great idea to offer a program where people who look like me can learn together in the same space. It will bring us together as a group. It will build a sense of community, and I think that will help us academically as well.” This initiative seeks to honor and uplift Black excellence and serves as a model for a campus environment where students can thrive academically and personally.

The significance of this initiative is further underscored by remarks from Vice President Kamala Harris, who stated, “By establishing the first Black Honors College in the nation, Sacramento State serves as a beacon of leadership and a model for others. As an HBCU graduate, I know how important it is to ensure Black students have the resources they need to thrive.” Her words highlight the vital role that the BHC will play in expanding opportunities and empowering the next generation of Black leaders.

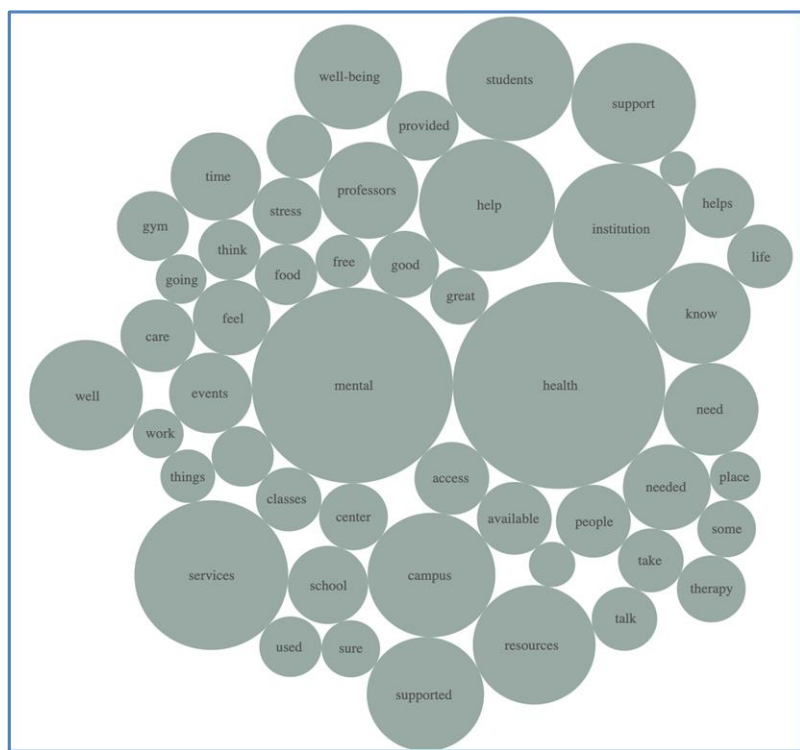


*CSUS Pres Luke Wood an incoming BHC student shaking hands in a room with people*

As the BHC prepares to welcome its inaugural class, Sacramento State must continue to share success stories, engage with local high schools, and offer early commitment incentives to attract prospective students. These efforts will ensure that the BHC becomes a cornerstone of academic excellence and leadership development, preparing students to overcome obstacles, break barriers, and reach their full potential. As Vice President Harris aptly noted, “When we invest in the success of our students, we invest in the strength of our nation.” The BHC embodies this investment, promising to cultivate leaders who will shape a brighter future for Sacramento State and our community.

## Mental Health and Wellbeing

Mental health and wellbeing, a newly introduced theme, highlight significant challenges.



*Word Cloud of Mental Health Responses*

The Student Health, Counseling, & Wellness Services (SHCWS) supports all aspects of student health and wellness by offering access to illness and injury care, psychological services, nutritional health care, and, as of Fall 24, basic needs support to Sacramento State’s current students.

The NSSE survey found that a significant proportion of students experience mental health difficulties (40% of respondents rated very difficult, difficult, or moderate) and emotional exhaustion (31% difficult/moderate, 20% very difficult). Additionally, the President’s imperative on Wellness and Safety, activity 21, is to reach a 1:1,500 ratio



of therapists to students by Fall 2024. This initiative includes set-alone therapists for Guardian Scholars, Black Honors College, and Project Rebound. The SHCWS 23-24 Impact Statement indicates there are currently 15 mental health counselors, and with a Spring 24 enrollment of 29,967 students, this is approximately 1,998 students per counselor. While this is above the desired 1:1500 ratio, the campus is well on its way to achieving this goal, with ongoing efforts to expand counseling services and support the mental health needs of all students. Additionally, non-professional support is available through peer counselors embedded in events hosted by several campus centers, including the Dreamer Resource Center, APIDA Center, MLK Center, and the Pride Center.

*Student Visits and Context of Services*

Number	Service Context
15,276	Primary Care Appointments Completed
4,574	Students see in Urgent Care
8,399	Mental Health Counseling & Psychiatry appointments completed
1,991	Telehealth Appointments for Medical Care
1,370	Telehealth Appointments for Mental Health Care
61	Peer-led Mental Health group sessions
1,418	CARES Appointments Completed
30	Students received Emergency Housing Support
45	Students housed through Rapid Housing
69	Rent Subsidies provided
330	Emergency Grants Approved

95% of students felt their needs were addressed in a culturally appropriate manner that respected their identities, felt a sense of safety and belonging, and were extremely satisfied or satisfied with the service(s) they received at SHCWS. Over 9400 students attended a wellness workshop or event, 890 students picked up free condoms and safer sex supplies, and 219 students, staff, and faculty received Narcan training.

Under Wellness and Safety Imperatives, Activity 22, Sacramento State aims to establish a Basic Needs Center by Fall 2025, providing streamlined access to resources for students in crisis and students experiencing food, housing, transportation, and employment insecurities. While most respondents were affirmative in knowing how to get help

regarding food insecurity, housing insecurity, and emergency financial situations, these are reasons for low academic performance and low satisfaction with institutional support. Only 25% of respondents are aware of services for domestic violence, and 32% were aware of services for substance abuse.

Housed in room 1000 of the first floor of The Well, the Sacramento State Crisis Assistance & Resource Education Support (CARES) office supports students who are in crisis or experiencing unique challenges to their education. CARES coordinates referrals to campus and community resources and offers follow-up support to address various issues. As of the start of the Fall 2024 semester, CARES is developing its Basic Needs Resources website (<https://bit.ly/3YJVQRQ>), and plans include services that would refer students to various resources to meet their housing, food, and financial needs. These basic needs are the minimum necessary to succeed in their personal and academic goals, including food, clothing, shelter, and safety (Sacramento State Student Health, Counseling, & Wellness Services, 2024).



*President Wood standing at a podium with microphones*

The proposed student fee increases, as discussed during the President's Town Hall on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024, directly align with several issues identified in the 2024 NSSE survey results, particularly in enhancing student services and experiential learning opportunities. The Instructionally Related Activities (IRA) Fee increase of \$302, for example, will fund expanded staffing and operations for cultural resource centers, case management advisors, and mental health practitioners, all of which address the low satisfaction rates students expressed regarding their interactions with student services and support staff. Additionally, the increased fees will bolster programs such as on-campus internships, debate teams, Model UN, and the Makers Space, providing students with valuable experiential learning

opportunities identified as areas needing improvement in the NSSE survey. Enhancing these offerings through fee increases could directly contribute to student engagement, which the survey found needing more high-impact practices like service learning and internships. Moreover, introducing five new mental health counselors, as outlined in the proposed Health Services Fee increase, will address the significant mental health challenges reported by students, further supporting their academic and personal success. These fee increases, coupled with transparent communication and accountability through an annual report on the allocation of funds, will ensure that students see a clear return on investment in their overall campus experience.

## Executive Summary

The 2024 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) provides valuable insights into the student experience at Sacramento State, highlighting areas of strength and opportunities for growth. This report, guided by President Wood's 2023-2028 Strategic Action Items, reflects the collective efforts of students, staff, and faculty to enhance academic challenge, foster inclusivity, and support overall student well-being.

The data reveals a diverse and engaged student body with significant strengths in collaborative learning and peer interaction. However, it also identifies critical areas for improvement, particularly in quantitative reasoning and broader inclusivity. The campus community has responded proactively, implementing innovative strategies to engage students without punitive measures and enhancing support structures across various domains. Establishing the Black Honors College (BHC), expanding mental health services, and integrating high-impact practices into academic programs are just a few examples of the positive momentum driving Sacramento State toward its goals.

As the University continues to build these efforts, the commitment to student success is stronger than in the past. The initiatives and strategies outlined in this report are not just responses to the data—they are part of a broader vision to create an inclusive, supportive, and academically challenging environment where all students can thrive. Sacramento State is well-positioned to meet the evolving needs of its diverse student population, ensuring that every student can succeed both academically and personally.

## Recommendations

Considering the insights gained from the 2024 NSSE data and aligned with Sacramento State's ongoing commitment to enhancing student success, the following recommendations are proposed to support and further improve our diverse student body's academic and personal experiences:

- 1. Emphasize Return on Investment for Students:** Communicate the direct benefits students will receive from the proposed fee increases. The addition of five new mental health counselors, increased athletic service staffing, and wellness program enhancements, as outlined in the President's Town Hall, directly address concerns raised in the NSSE survey. This includes improving access to mental health resources, wellness services, and athletic facilities, which were areas of need identified by students. Providing transparency and outlining these benefits will help raise student trust in how the fees are utilized to enhance their academic and personal experiences at Sacramento State.
- 2. Expand the Basic Needs Center:** Establish a dedicated Basic Needs Center by Fall 2025 to support students facing food, housing, transportation, and employment insecurities, promoting overall well-being and academic success.
- 3. Integrate Advising into Coursework:** Embed advising sessions within required courses or first-year experience classes to ensure students receive guidance as part of the regular academic routine.
- 4. Integrate Quantitative Reasoning and Inclusive Discussions in Curriculum:** Faculty may consider interventions such as integrating more quantitative reasoning tasks into the curriculum, promoting structured discussions around a wider definition of diversity, including disabilities, and applying data sets to address current campus and local community challenges.
- 5. Enhance the Sacramento State Mobile App:** Improve accessibility by incorporating service directories and appointment scheduling for Student Health Counseling & Wellness Services (SHCWS), CARES, and the Basic Needs Resource within a mobile app for the Sacramento State campus community.
- 6. Continue Peer Support Initiatives:** Continue to support and expand the reach of SHCWS peer advising and therapeutic programming into extracurricular clubs and activities to engage students who may not otherwise access these services.
- 7. Promote Internships and Study Abroad:** Focus on integrating internships into academic programs and encourage participation in study abroad opportunities to achieve the 80% participation goal for internships and broaden students' global perspectives.
- 8. Support the Success of the Black Honors College (BHC):** Share positive student stories, engage with local high schools, and offer early commitment incentives to attract prospective students, ensuring the BHC becomes a cornerstone of academic excellence and leadership development at Sacramento State.

## About the Author



Michele 'MJ' Vincent is an experienced American Sign Language Interpreter for the College of Education at CSU, Sacramento. She is a 2024 Pathways Fellow and is pursuing an MA in Gender Equity in Education, focusing her research on DisCrit theory, Principles of Disability Justice, and Feminism to examine how the intersection of gender, race, and other identities impact faculty and staff persistence in employment at colleges and universities. Michele's dedication to equity and access is reflected in her work and research, which seeks to elevate the lived experiences of marginalized peoples and support equitable opportunities for everyone. Beyond her academic pursuits, Michele enjoys traveling, exploring new places, and creating lasting memories with her family.



## References

- Beall, A. (2024, April 10). *Seven CSUs Hold Prestigious Research Designation* | CSU. <https://www.calstate.edu/csu-system/news/Pages/Seven-CSUs-Hold-Prestigious-Research-Designation.aspx>
- Bowden, J. L.-H., Tickle, L., & Naumann, K. (2021). The four pillars of tertiary student engagement and success: A holistic measurement approach. *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(6), 1207–1224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1672647>
- Flaherty, C. (2023, March 9). *Advised and Engaged: Getting Students More Involved in Academic Planning*. Inside Higher Ed. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2023/03/10/eight-ways-boost-student-engagement-advisers>
- Hubert, C. (2024, August 8). *National leaders help Sac State launch Black Honors College's first student cohort* [News and Media]. Sac State. <https://www.csus.edu/news/newsroom/stories/2024/8/black-honors-college-opening.html>
- Kinzie, J., & Kuh, G. D. (2004). Going Deep Learning from Campuses that are Responsibility for Student Success. *About Campus: Enriching the Student Learning Experience*, 9(5), 2–8. <https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.105>
- Mills, M. T. (2010). Tools of Engagement: Success Course Influence. *Journal of The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*, 22(2), 9–32.
- Mowreader, A. (n.d.). *Campus Engagement Tip: Reaching Students Where They Are*. Inside Higher Ed. Retrieved August 12, 2024, from <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/student-success/college-experience/2023/10/25/six-strategies-encourage-college-campus-event>
- Price, A. (2024). *BHC\_Opening\_Celebration\_AP\_8.8.22\_-76* [Photo]. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/sacstate/53912759443/>
- Sacramento State Student Health, Counseling, & Wellness Services. (2024). *Sacramento State Student Health, Counseling, & Wellness Services Impact Statement 2023-2024* (p. 4) [Internal Self Report]. Sacramento State.
- Schweinle, A., Reissetter, M., & Stokes, V. (2014). Elements of Engagement for Successful Learning. *The Qualitative Report*. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2009.1378>
- Smith, A. A. (2024, March 6). *CSU campuses focus on new strategies to help students of color* | EdSource. EdSource. <https://edsources.org/2024/csu-campuses-focus-on-new-strategies-to-help-students-of-color/707174>
- Tim Mertz. (2019, June 12). *6 ways to engage college students in campus recreation and wellness* | Trustmark. Trustmark Benefits. <https://www.trustmarkbenefits.com/healthfitness/newsroom/blog/engage-students-in-campus-recreation>
- Wood, J. L. (2024, September 5). *Proposed Category II Fees* [PowerPoint Deck]. Student Town Hall, University Union, Sacramento State.