Meaningful Undergraduate Experiences and How They Matter Now
April 2024 Survey of Recent U.S. College Graduates
Topline Results Report by Jessie L. Moore

The Elon University Center for Engaged Learning conducted an online survey of U.S. residents who were 18-34 years old and graduates of two- or four-year higher education institutions (n=956). The online survey was conducted April 18-19, 2024, using an online, opt-in sample via Prolific. Participants were pre-screened for location (USA), highest education level completed (Associates degree or higher), and age (18-34), and they received a small compensation for their participation.

Key Practices for Fostering Engaged Learning

During your college/university experience, to what extent did you encounter the following?

	Never	Once	Multiple Times
Faculty who asked you to draw on prior experiences when you learned new things	11.8% (113)	21.3% (204)	66.8% (639)
Meaningful relationships with faculty or staff	20.7% (198)	31.5% (457)	47.8% (457)
Meaningful relationships with other students	10.8% (103)	16.2% (155)	73.0% (698)
Feedback from faculty/staff on a submitted, final project	4.8% (46)	14.4% (138)	80.8% (772)
Feedback from faculty/staff to guide your work before you submitted a final version	7.8% (75)	21.8% (208)	70.4% (673)
Feedback from peers to guide your work before you submitted a final version	14.7% (141)	22.1% (211)	63.2% (604)
Opportunities to reflect on how the different parts of your college experience fit together	20.9% (200)	24.6% (235)	54.5% (521)
Opportunities to reflect on how what you were learning would apply to your future	12.1% (116)	20.3% (194)	67.6% (646)
Practice with real-world applications of what you were learning	11.7% (112)	20.7% (198)	67.6% (646)

Learn more about the Key Practices (Moore 2023)

Citation recommendation:
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High-Impact Educational Practices

Did you take part in any of the following during college? (Select all that apply)

	Yes	No
Capstone project or experience	41.7% (397)	58.3% (554)
ePortfolio	14.2% (135)	85.8% (816)
Internship	54.7% (520)	45.3% (431)
Service-learning or community-engaged learning course	27.3% (260)	72.7% (691)
Study away experience	13.9% (132)	86.1% (819)
Undergraduate research project	42.7% (406)	57.3% (545)

Study Away

Among participants who took part in a study away experience during college...
- 29.0% (33) participated in domestic study away
- 74.0% (97) participated in international study abroad
- 36.6% (48) participated in short-term study away (less than 1 month)
- 66.4% (87) participated in long-term study away (longer than 1 month)

Undergraduate Research

Among participants who took part in an undergraduate research project during college...
- 76.0% (307) participated in a course-based undergraduate research experience
- 72.5% (293) participated in a mentored undergraduate research experience
- 60.9% (246) believed they made an original contribution to their field of study

Internship

Among participants who took part in an internship during college...
- 56.6% (273) participated in a paid internship
- 67.4% (324) received academic credit for an internship
- 92.8% (480) participated in their internship in person
- 7.2% (37) completed their internship online

Mentoring relationships

Mentoring relationships: promote learning and development; evolve over time, becoming more mutually beneficial; and are individualized, attending to your strengths, needs, and identities. Based on this definition, how many mentors did you have during your time at college?

0	30.1% (283)
1	42.6% (401)
2 or more	27.3% (257)

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Skills Developed in College

How important are these skills to your day-to-day life, and which of these skills did you develop, at least somewhat, while in college?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not particularly important		Developed in college	Did not develop in college
Applying your existing skills to a new problem	64.4% (606)	33.4% (314)	2.2% (21)		77.9% (733)	22.1% (208)
Assessing your strengths and weaknesses	63.4% (597)	32.2% (303)	4.4% (41)		68.8% (647)	31.3% (294)
Connecting with people from different cultural backgrounds	57.6% (542)	32.5% (306)	9.9% (93)		70.7% (665)	29.3% (276)
Engaging in anti-racist practices	46.3% (436)	30.5% (287)	23.2% (218)		43.7% (411)	56.3% (530)
Giving feedback to others	46.3% (436)	43.4% (408)	10.3% (97)		69.9% (658)	30.1% (283)
Keeping up with the news	33.7% (317)	45.6% (429)	20.7% (195)		41.1% (387)	58.9% (554)
Making decisions on behalf of a team or organization	41.9% (394)	43.6% (410)	14.6% (137)		56.5% (532)	43.5% (409)
Making ethical choices	67.1% (631)	27% (254)	6.0% (56)		57.8% (544)	42.2% (397)
Managing time	82.0% (772)	14.9% (140)	3.1% (29)		81.0% (762)	19.0% (179)
Meeting deadlines	80.6% (758)	17.0% (160)	2.4% (23)		84.0% (790)	16.0% (151)
Networking to build relationships with others	57.5% (541)	35.4% (333)	7.1% (67)		70.2% (661)	29.8% (280)
Persisting in the face of setbacks	75.8% (713)	20.8% (196)	3.4% (32)		71.5% (673)	28.5% (268)
Researching and understanding the answers to complex questions	66.2% (623)	30.2% (284)	3.6% (34)		83.8% (789)	16.2% (152)

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	Very important	Somewhat important	Not particularly important		Developed in college	Did not develop in college
Responding to needs based upon on understanding of situational context	69.4% (653)	27.1% (255)	3.5% (33)		73.2% (689)	26.8% (252)
Speaking persuasively	45.4% (427)	43.7% (411)	10.9% (103)		64.3% (605)	35.7% (336)
Using and/or interpreting data	70.7% (665)	24.4% (230)	4.9% (46)		81.7% (769)	18.3% (172)
Using technology effectively	75.0% (706)	21.5% (202)	3.5% (33)		72.6% (683)	27.4% (258)
Working with a team to accomplish goals	70.8% (666)	23.4% (220)	5.8% (55)		78.1% (735)	21.9% (206)
Writing effectively	68.5% (645)	26.5% (249)	5.0% (47)		82.0% (772)	18.0% (169)

Prepared for Work

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement? My college experience prepared me well for the work I have done since graduating.

Strongly agree	13.2% (123)
Agree	32.7% (305)
Somewhat agree	28.0% (261)
Neither agree nor disagree	7.5% (70)
Somewhat disagree	8.5% (79)
Disagree	5.7% (53)
Strongly disagree	4.5% (42)

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Satisfaction with College Experience

Overall, how would you rate your college experience?

Very rewarding	41.3% (385)
Somewhat rewarding	39.1% (365)
Slightly rewarding	16.0% (149)
Not at all rewarding	3.6% (34)

Considering both the costs and benefits of your college experience, would you say attending college was "worth it" for you personally?

Definitely yes	47.1% (439)
Probably yes	36.4% (340)
Probably not	11.3% (105)
Definitely not	5.3% (49)

Demographics

Highest Degree Earned	
Associate's degree (e.g., AA, AS)	16.8% (161)
Bachelor's degree (e.g., BA, BS)	64.5% (617)
Master's degree (e.g., MA, MS, MEd)	16.3% (156)
Professional degree (e.g., MD, DDS, DVM)	1.2% (11)
Doctorate degree (e.g., PhD, EdD)	1.2% (11)

Graduation Year for First Degree	
2023	10.0% (96)
2022	11.8% (113)
2021	10.4% (99)
2020	12.0% (115)
2019	10.7% (102)
2018	12.0% (115)
2017	13.5% (129)
2016	16.5% (158)
2015 or earlier	3.0% (29)

Did you attend more than one college/university before graduating?
- Yes – 28.3% (264)
- No – 71.7% (668)

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In terms of the number of undergraduate students, was the college you earned your first college degree from small, medium, or large?

Small (Fewer than 4,000 undergraduate students)	17.1% (159)
Medium (4,000 - 15,000 undergraduate students)	39.5% (368)
Large (More than 15,000 undergraduate students)	43.5% (405)

Thinking about the college you earned your first college degree from, was it a private college/university or a public college/university?

Public college/university	75.6% (705)
Private college/university	23.6% (220)
Not sure	0.8% (7)

In which of these broad areas did you major in college? (Select all that apply)

Business	21.0% (196)
Physical Sciences, Mathematics, and Computer Science	17.5% (163)
Arts and Humanities	17.0% (158)
Social Sciences	17.0% (158)
Biological Sciences, Agriculture, and Natural Resources	11.7% (109)
Engineering	10.0% (93)
Health Professions	8.5% (79)
Communications, Media, and Public Relations	7.6% (71)
Education	4.5% (42)
Social Service Professions	2.5% (23)
Other	5.4% (50)

Did you take most of your undergraduate classes online or in-person?

Online	15.8% (147)
In-person	84.2% (785)

Did most students at your degree-granting college live on campus (or in student housing near campus) or did most commute to campus?

Most lived on or near campus	60.4% (563)
Most commuted to campus	39.6% (369)

Did you live on campus for at least a year while in college?

Yes	57.8% (539)
No	42.2% (393)

Did at least one of your parents or legal guardians complete college before you?

Yes	63.5% (592)
No	36.5% (340)

Did you participate in intercollegiate athletics as a student-athlete?

Yes	10.8% (101)
No	89.2% (831)

Did you work while you were pursuing your degree?

Yes - Only on-campus	19.5% (182)
Yes - Only off-campus	41.4% (386)
Yes - both on-campus and off-campus	20.3% (189)
No	18.8% (175)

Did you participate in an academic cohort program (e.g., Honors program, fellows program) for at least one academic year during college?

Yes	30.3% (282)
No	69.7% (650)

Did you participate in a social cohort program (e.g., Greek Life) for at least one academic year during college?

Yes	29.9% (195)
No	79.1% (737)

About how much did you take out in student loans to finance your undergraduate education?

None	36.2% (337)
Less than $10,000	11.7% (109)
$10,000 - $19,999	14.1% (131)
$20,000 - $29,999	15.6% (145)
$30,000 - $40,000	10.6% (99)
More than $40,000	11.9% (111)

In total, about how much did you receive in scholarships?

None	24.9% (232)
Less than $5,000	15.0% (140)
$5,000-$9,999	15.1% (141)
$10,000-$19,999	15.6$ (145)
$20,000-$29,999	8.7% (81)
$30,000-$40,000	7.1% (66)
More than $40,000	13.6% (127)

Gender

Man	51.8% (481)
Woman	45.9% (426)
Non-binary	2.2% (20)
Prefer not to disclose	0.1% (1)
Prefer to self-disclose	0.1% (1)

Hispanic
- Yes – 13.0% (121)
- No – 87.0% (808)

How would you describe yourself? (Select all that apply)

White	61.9% (575)
Black or African American	14.1% (131)
Middle Eastern or North African	0.5% (5)
South Asian	3.7% (34)
East Asian	11.1% (103)
Native American	1.1% (10)
Native Hawaiian	0.2% (2)
Pacific Islander	0.2% (2)
Other or prefer to self-identify	7.2% (67)

Region

Northeast	22.9% (213)
Midwest	22.8% (212)
South	32.0% (297)
West	22.3% (207)

Employment Status

Employed full time (40 or more hours per week)	68.8% (639)
Employed part time (up to 39 hours per week)	16.7% (155)
Unemployed and currently looking for work	7.9% (73)
Unemployed and not currently looking for work	3.1% (29)
Other	3.6% (33)

We will showcase additional results and analysis on the Center for Engaged Learning's survey site when they are available: https://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/surveys/

Related surveys conducted in partnership with the Elon Poll in 2019 and 2021 are available from the Elon Poll Archive: https://www.elon.edu/u/elon-poll/archive/. This survey did not attempt to replicate the weighting strategies used in those prior surveys. Special thanks to Kaye Usry and Jason Husser for their collaboration on the precursors to this current survey.

About the Report Author

Jessie L. Moore, PhD, is director of the Center for Engaged Learning and professor of Professional Writing & Rhetoric at Elon University. She leads planning, implementation, and assessment of the Center's international, multi-institutional, and multi-disciplinary research seminars. She is the author of *Key Practices for Fostering Engaged Learning: A Guide for Faculty and Staff* (Stylus Publishing, 2023) and co-editor of five collections on engaged learning topics. She also produces the Center's multimedia resources, including concise online guides on research-informed practices for engaged learning, videos, and podcasts.

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