



Executive Summary for the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) 2019

Tales of Student Life and Academic Experiences at Middle Tennessee State University(MTSU)

Executive Summary

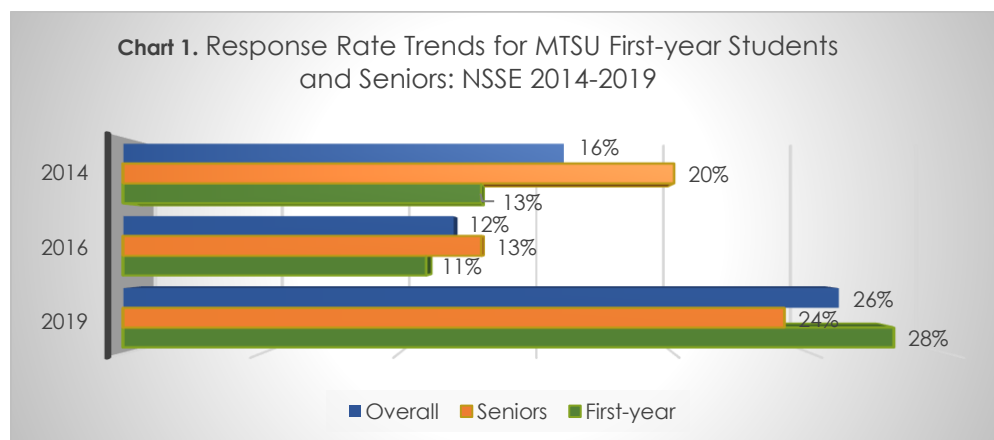
The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was administered to MTSU students in spring 2019; previously, MTSU participated in spring 2014 and 2016 (2015-2020 cycle). The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE) provided a student file to the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University School of Education. The sample file consisted of students classified as first-year students (FY) and seniors (SR) for the spring. Thus, NSSE surveyed 4,866 students at MTSU: FY (n=2,827), SR (n=2,039).

NSSE captures the academic experience of first-year and senior students attending four-year institutions. Students provide feedback about the quality of their undergraduate experience in a variety of areas. Survey items assess students' participation in activities and programs associated with the promotion of learning and personal development. The results provide the university insight into how students spend their time as well as students' perception of what they gained from attending the university. Subsequently, faculty, administrators, and researchers use student feedback for institutional improvement, public reporting, and other initiatives.

As part of its continuous improvement efforts in higher education, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) requires MTSU to participate in NSSE periodically; this is part of the Quality Assurance Funding (QAF) process. MTSU submits updates to THEC annually on some aspect of the university's efforts to improve programs and student learning. THEC recommended MTSU receive additional funding of \$4.6 million for the 2017-18 QAF cycle; more recently, MTSU successfully obtained all 10 points in the Institutional Satisfaction section (NSSE) for the 2018-19 QAF cycle. THEC applauded MTSU students for being more engaged as demonstrated by the substantial increase in the response rate.

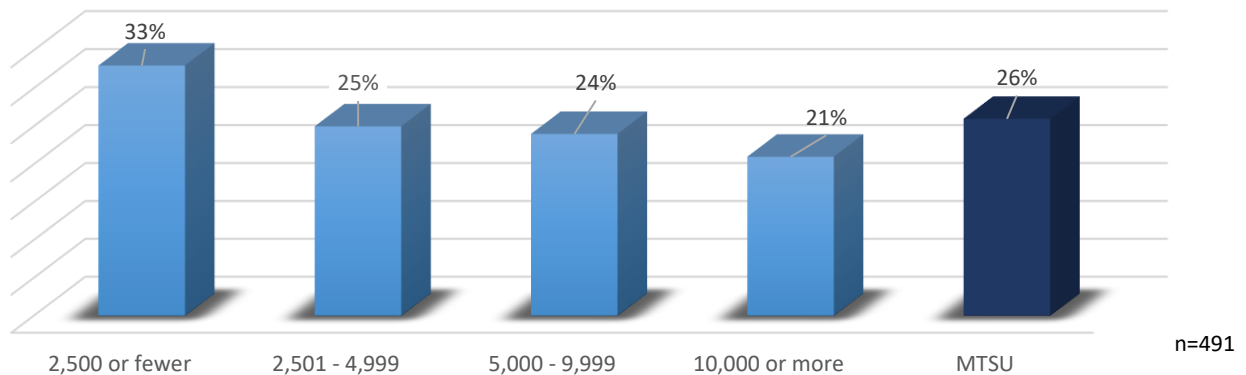
NSSE Campaign

MTSU made impressive gains based on recent results from NSSE. MTSU students engaged the NSSE process at a higher rate than the two previous cycles and a higher rate than students at universities/institutions with half the undergraduate enrollment—see charts 1. – chart 2.



MTSU's response rate jumped between 10%-14% since spring 2014 to 26% in spring 2019. The significant increase in responses resulted from the concerted efforts of the 2019 NSSE Campaign. With the support of the Provost Office, ITD, and other stakeholders, IE spearheaded a campaign to raise students and faculty awareness about the importance of the survey. Advertisement for NSSE appeared on IE's webpage, PipelineMT, flyers, digital media boards, and yard signs.

Chart 2. Average Institution Response Rate(%) by Enrollment Size: NSSE 2019



After completing NSSE, nine highly engaged students would walk away with big-ticket prizes: three Apple iPads, three Faculty/Employee Parking Decals, and three Study Abroad Scholarships. Winners were selected randomly every week.

Students Perception of Their Academic Experience

Students spoke favorably about their academic experience at MTSU, and they agreed in impressive fashion that the university is getting it right. The majority of students rated their overall experience as "Excellent" or "Good": FY (88%) and SR (87%). Nearly nine out of 10 students asserted they would "Definitely" or "Probably" attend MTSU again if they had a do-over. MTSU students tended to share these sentiments more often than students in the comparison group (see chart 3 – chart 6).

Chart 3. Percentage Rating Their Overall Experience as "Excellent" or "Good" First-year : Southeast vs. MTSU

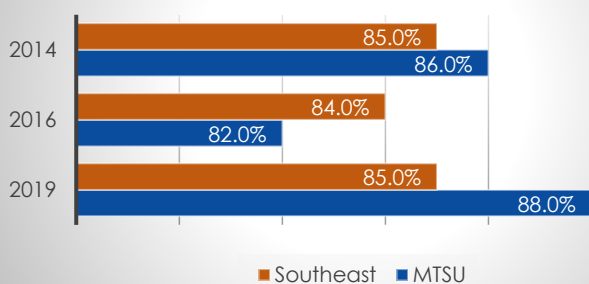


Chart 4. Percentage Who Would "Definitely" or "Probably" Attend This Institution Again First-year : Southeast vs. MTSU

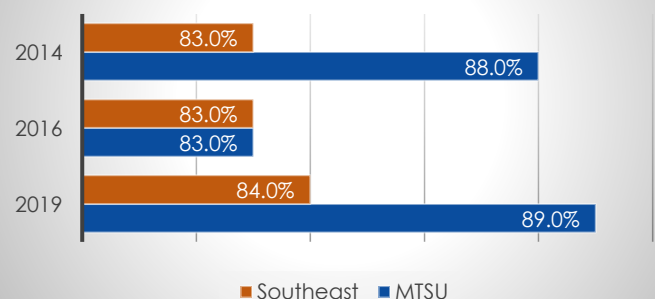


Chart 5. Percentage Rating Their Overall Experience as "Excellent" or "Good"
Seniors : Southeast vs. MTSU

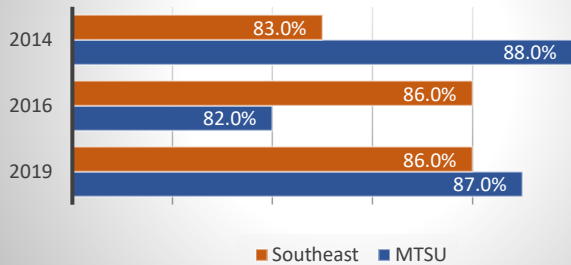
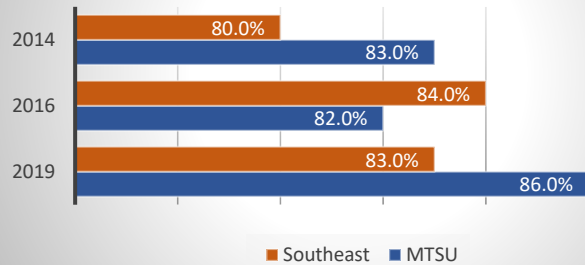


Chart 6. Percentage Who Would "Definitely" or "Probably" Attend This Institution Again
Seniors: Southeast vs. MTSU



Engagement Trends

Table 1. Engagement Trends for First-year Student and Seniors

		First-year Students			Seniors		
		2014	2016	2019	2014	2016	2019
Academic Challenge	Higher-Order Learning	38.1	37.2	38.4	40.2	37.4	39.8
	Reflective & Integrative Learning	35.9	34	37.5	37.4	34.7	38.3
	Learning Strategies	39.7	37.6	39.3	40.1	37.5	39.2
	Quantitative Reasoning	26.7	24.7	28.3	29.0	27.0	29.9
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning	29.9	30.4	35.1	29.9	29.1	34.3
	Discussions w/Diverse Others	43.2	41.8	42.8	40.8	38.7	43.5
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction	21.1	18.2	23.7	24.9	22.5	27.4
	Effective Teaching Practices	41.2	38	39.8	41.7	38.4	40.1
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions	39.1	39.7	43.2	41.9	41.7	43
	Supportive Environment	36.3	36	37.1	30.9	29.0	32.4

Overall, NSSE 2019 reflects improvement for both FY students and seniors in all ten engagement areas. Mean scores for 2019 are higher than all mean scores in 2016 and all but three for 2014. Mean scores in green denote scores that were higher than the current ratings in 2019. *Learning Strategies*, *Discussions w/Diverse Others*, and *Effective Teaching Practices* means were higher in 2014 than 2019 for FY students; the same held for seniors for *Higher-Order Learning*, *Learning Strategies*, and *Effective Teaching Practices*.

MTSU, Southeast, Carnegie Group, and NSSE 2018-19

MTSU means were significantly higher than all comparison groups in three of the ten engagement areas for FY students: *Reflective & Integrative Learning*, *Collaborative Learning*, and *Discussion w/Diverse Others*. Seniors' mean for *Discussion w/Diverse Others* was higher than all comparison group too; seniors' mean for *Student-Faculty Interaction* was stronger than two comparison groups (Southeast group, NSSE 2018-19) and *Collaborative Learning*

was higher than NSSE 2018-19. Means in red denotes effect sizes greater than 0.10 (greater than 0.1 but less than 0.3).

Table 2. Engagement Trend for MTSU with Others

		First-year Students: spring 2019				Seniors: spring 2019			
		MTSU	Southeast	Carnegie	NSSE2018-19	MTSU	Southeast	Carnegie	NSSE2018-19
Academic Challenge	Higher-Order Learning	38.4	37.7	37.8	38	39.8	40.1	40.6	40.0
	Reflective & Integrative Learning	37.5	34.6***	34.9***	35.2***	38.3	37.7	38.1	38.0
	Learning Strategies	39.3	38.4	39.6	38.1*	39.2	39.3	39.9	38.5
	Quantitative Reasoning	28.3	28.3	28.7	27.3	29.9	30.5	29.4	29.8
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning	35.1	33.4**	32.3***	32.4***	34.3	33.7	33.4	31.8***
	Discussions w/Diverse Others	42.8	39.8***	40.1***	39.4***	43.5	41.1**	41.0**	40.1***
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction	23.7	22.5*	22.5*	21.7***	27.4	25.6*	26.1	24.1***
	Effective Teaching Practices	39.8	38.0***	38.8	38.5**	40.1	40	41.1	39.6
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions	43.2	42.6	42.4	42.6	43	42.9	43.1	42.8
	Supportive Environment	37.1	37.1	37.1	36.1*	32.4	33.6	33.6	32.2

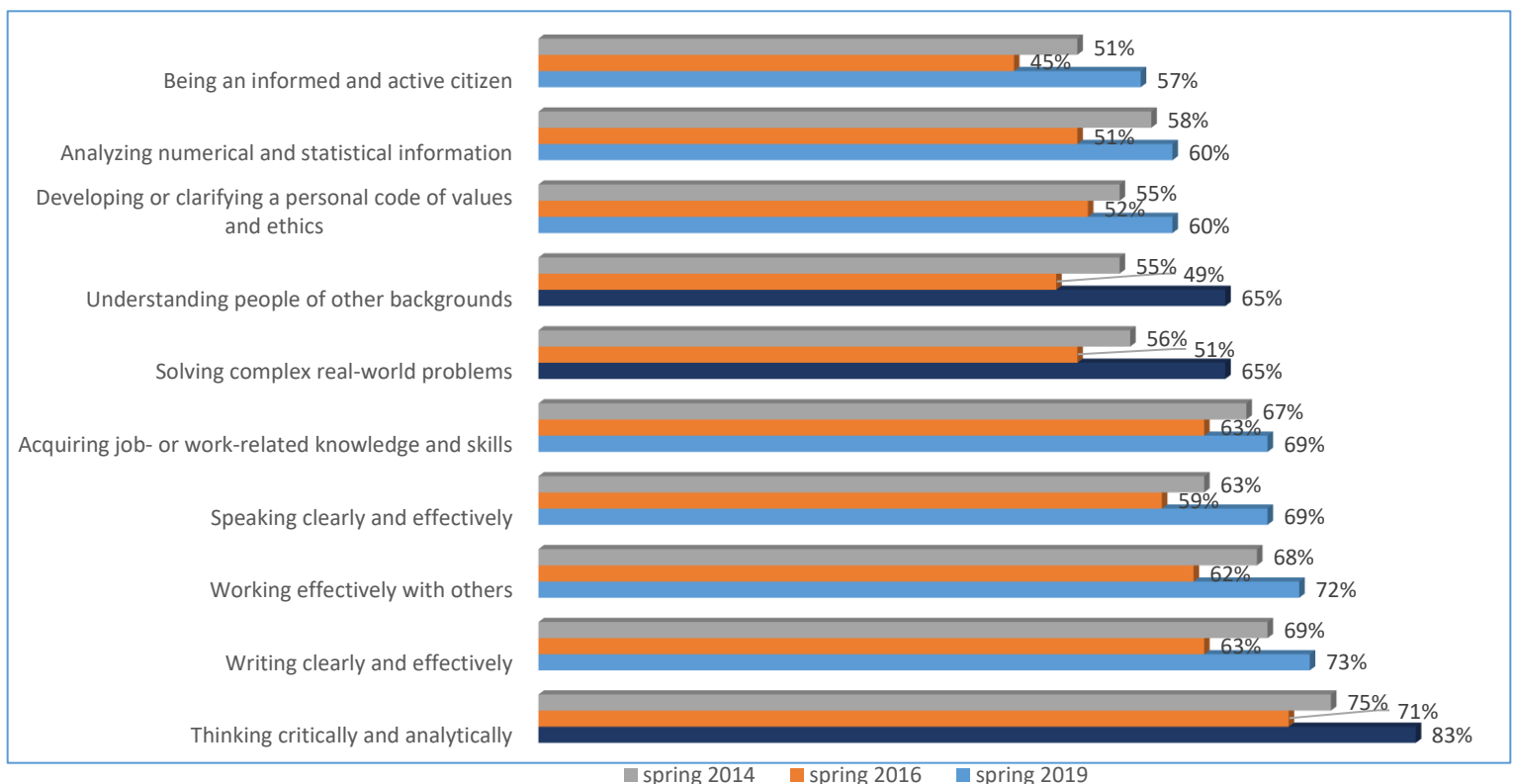
Red font denotes an effect size >0.10

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Seniors

Perceived gains for seniors is a highpoint in the survey results. Seniors reported greater confidence in critical areas like *analyzing numerical and statistical information, solving complex real-world problems, acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills, and thinking critically and analytically*. Their perceived gains improved compared to the two previous cycles. These gains were particularly true in areas of *thinking critically and analytically, solving real-world problems, and understanding people from different backgrounds*.

Chart 7. Perceived Gains Among Seniors: Trend in Percentage of Students Responding “Very Much” or “Quite a Bit”



Highlights from Advising, Honors Consortium and High-Impact Practices (HIPs)

Additional questions were posed to honor students exclusively, and all students generally about advising and their participation in high impact activities. Results show MTSU resembled other institutions in general in the area of academic advising; honor students responses were a mixed bag of high-points and opportunities for improvements.

Academic Advising

- ❑ Mean scores are comparable to other institutions in majority of areas (FY,SR)

Advisors are more likely to...

- ❑ inform about important deadlines: (FY,SR)
- ❑ provide useful information: (FY)
- ❑ be available when needed: (SR)
- ❑ reach out about academic progress/performance: (SR)

Advisors are less likely to...

discuss academic interests, course selections, or academic performance: (FY)

N=220

Honors Consortium

- ❑ Mean scores are comparable to other institutions in majority of areas (FY,SR)

Means at or above average...

- ❑ reported greater incidents of feeling stressed, depressed, or mentally exhausted: (FY,SR)
- ❑ Placing value on making a difference in the world, having a job that reflects one's values, being a leader in profession/community, taking a stance despite popular norms, and finding purpose in life: (FY)

Means below average ...

- ❑ taking courses outside of perspective/field, or was encouraged by advisors to take such courses: (FY,SR)
- ❑ derived personal satisfaction from studying: (SR)
- ❑ have/or plan to present research results or other scholarly work: (FY)
- ❑ participated in the Congressional midterms election in 2018: (FY,SR)
- ❑ *Difficulty admitting one was wrong about an idea (restated: more willing to admit a mistake)* (FY)

N=9

High Impact Practices (HIPs)

MTSU students' participation is trending in the right direction

- ❑ Seniors stood out in several key areas and put MTSU on par with the comparison groups: Southeast, Carnegie, NSSE 2018-19
- ❑ *Seniors' participation in areas like service-learning, research with faculty, internship/field experience, culminating senior experience did not differ significantly*
- ❑ Seniors participated in study abroad program at a significantly higher rate than seniors attending both the Southeast and Carnegie groups
- ❑ In contrast, seniors participated in learning communities significantly less than seniors in the Southeast group
- ❑ FY students participation in service learning was significantly less than all comparison groups
- ❑ Overall, FY students' participation in at least one HIP was significantly less than the Southeast group and NSSE 2018-19

Carnegie (N=6)

Southeast (N=91)

NSSE 2018-19 (N=812)

Challenges and Opportunities

- Helping manage your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)(FY)
- Participating in co-curricular activities, organizations, campus publications) (FY)
- Time spent reading (FY, SR)
- Analyzing numerical and statistical information (FY, SR)
- Solving complex real-world problems (FY)
- Participate in a community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together (SR)
- Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work (SR)
- Attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues (SR)

What's next?

- Share NSSE results (i.e., IE page, meetings, summaries)
- In-depth analysis
- Report results by college, program
- Qualitative analysis of open-ended questions