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# *A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College:* *NSSE 2020 Answers from Students* Tennessee Technological University

Each year the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) asks students at hundreds of colleges and universities to reflect on the time they devote to various learning activities. The topics explored are linked to previous research on student success in college.

Results from NSSE can provide prospective students with insights into how they might learn and develop at a given college. To help in the college exploration process, NSSE developed *A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College* to give students and their families key questions to ask during campus visits or virtual tours.

*A Pocket Guide to  
Choosing a College*  
is available at  
[go.iu.edu/NSSE-  
pocketguide](http://go.iu.edu/NSSE-pocketguide)

The following responses were provided by 1,068 Tennessee Tech students on the 2020 survey.

## Academics

### How much time do students spend studying each week?

First-year (FY) students spent an average of 15 hours per week preparing for class while seniors spent an average of 16 hours per week.

### Do courses challenge students to do their best?<sup>a</sup>

50% of FY students reported that their courses highly challenged them to do their best work.

### How much writing is expected?

In an academic year, FY students estimated they were assigned an average of 34 pages of writing and seniors estimated an average of 70 pages.

### How much reading is expected?

FY students estimated they spent an average of 6 hours per week on assigned reading, and seniors read 5 hours per week.

### How often do students make course presentations?<sup>b</sup>

41% of FY students and 58% of seniors frequently gave course presentations.

### Do class discussions and assignments include the perspectives of diverse groups of people?<sup>b</sup>

39% of FY students frequently included diverse perspectives in course discussions or assignments.

### Are students expected to use numbers or statistics throughout their coursework?<sup>b</sup>

41% of FY students frequently used numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue; 63% of seniors frequently reached conclusions based on their own analysis of numerical information.

## Experiences with Faculty

### How do students rate their interactions with faculty?<sup>c</sup>

51% of FY students rated the quality of their interactions with faculty as high.

### How often do students talk with faculty members?<sup>d</sup>

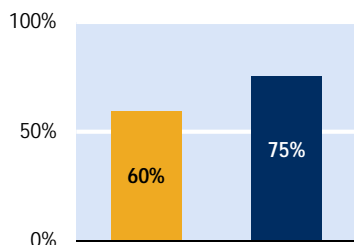
### Do faculty members clearly explain course goals and requirements?

4% of FY students and 26% of seniors worked on a research project with a faculty member.

## Learning with Peers

### How often do students work together on course projects and assignments?<sup>b</sup>

60% of FY students and 75% of seniors frequently worked with their peers on course projects and assignments.



### Do students help each other learn?<sup>b</sup>

70% of seniors frequently explained course material to one or more students.

### How often do students work together to prepare for exams?<sup>b</sup>

57% of FY students frequently prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students.

### How often do students interact with others who have different viewpoints or who come from different backgrounds?<sup>b</sup>

Among FY students, 70% frequently had discussions with people with different political views, 73% frequently had discussions with people from a different economic background, and 66% frequently had discussions with people from a different race or ethnicity.

## Campus Environment

### Are students encouraged to use learning support services (tutors, writing center)?<sup>d</sup>

72% of FY students said the institution substantially emphasized the use of learning support services.

### How do students rate their interactions with academic advisors?<sup>c</sup>

61% of FY students and 58% of seniors gave the quality of their interactions with academic advisors a high rating.

### How well do students get along with each other?<sup>c</sup>

55% of FY students gave the quality of their interactions with their peers a high rating.

### How satisfied are students with their educational experience?

84% of FY and 86% of seniors rated their entire educational experience at this institution as "excellent" or "good."

## Rich Educational Experiences

### What types of honors courses, learning communities, and other distinctive programs are offered?

During their first year, 7% of students participated in a learning community. By spring of their senior year, 54% of students had done (or were doing) a culminating senior experience.

### How many students study in other countries?

By their senior year, 6% of students had studied abroad.

### How many students get practical, real-world experience through internships or field experiences?

By spring of their senior year, 58% of students had participated in some form of internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement.

### How many courses include community-based service-learning projects?<sup>e</sup>

55% of FY students and 67% of seniors said at least some of their courses included a community-based service-learning project.

#### Notes

- "Highly" is a 6 or 7 on a seven-point scale where 1 is "Not at all" and 7 is "Very much."
- "Frequently" is "Often" or "Very often."
- A "High" rating is a 6 or 7 on a seven-point scale where 1 is "Poor" and 7 is "Excellent."
- "Substantially" is "Quite a bit" or "Very much."
- "At least some" is defined by combining responses of "Some," "Most," and "All."

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