



University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

2004 National Survey of Student Engagement Experiencing Diversity Research Brief #16

In spring 2004, UCCS participated in a national study of college students, along with other four-year colleges and universities. Randomly selected first-year and senior students at UCCS were invited to share their views by completing *The College Student Report*. This survey is part of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) administered by the Indiana University at Bloomington.

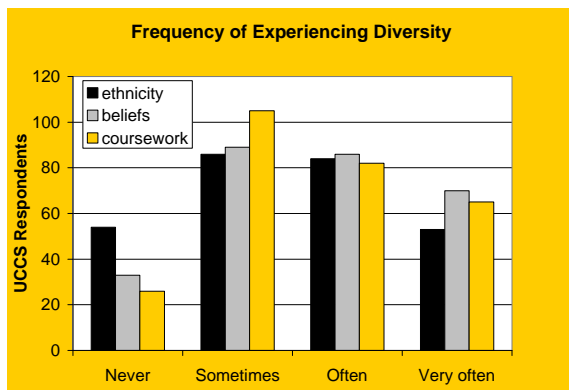
The survey asked students how they spend time, the nature and quality of their interactions with faculty members and peers, and what they had gained from their classes, as well as other aspects of their college experience.

Experiencing Diversity

The chart below depicts UCCS student responses to three questions asking how often they have:

- had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than their own,
- had serious conversations with students who are very different from them in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values, and
- had class discussions or writing assignments that include diverse perspectives—different races, religions, genders, political beliefs.

These questions are labeled ethnicity, beliefs, and coursework, respectively, in the chart below.

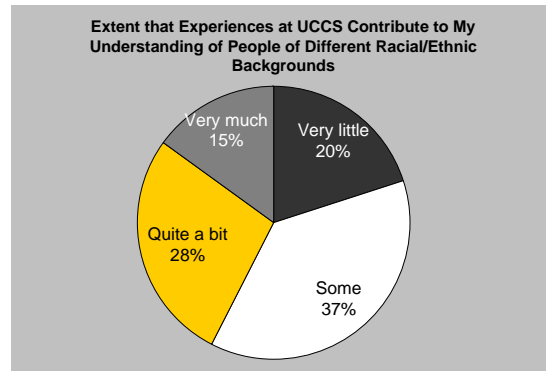


According to the first-year and senior students who responded, 19% never had a serious conversation with a student from a different background.

12% had never done so with a student having a different value system, and 9% report that they never included diverse perspectives in class discussions or writing assignments. The response patterns of UCCS students are similar to those found at peer universities and colleges nationwide.

Institutional Environment

UCCS scores lower than peer universities and college nationwide on encouraging contact among students with different backgrounds and on emphasizing attendance at campus events. Asked whether the institution provides support needed to thrive socially, 30% of first-year and 37% of senior students said “very little.” Nationally, 21% of freshmen and 32% of seniors indicate that their institution supported their social needs.



Seniors were asked whether their college experiences contributed to their understanding of people from other racial/ethnic backgrounds. Forty six percent of UCCS seniors said either “quite a bit” or “very much” and less than a quarter said “very little” to this question. Similarly, one-half of the seniors nationwide reported that their college helped them to understand people from different backgrounds.

In general, the NSSE results show that institutional emphasis on diversity is relatively low across the nation’s colleges and universities.