



Second-Year Student Needs Assessment

Spring 2024

Center for the Study of Student Life

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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To meet the changing needs of students, higher education institutions must continuously recognize and address the diverse needs of their student population. By providing comprehensive support systems to help with these needs, institutions can help students navigate the challenges in their lives, empower students to make the most of opportunities and create an environment conducive to both academic and personal development.

To stay up to date with these shifting needs, the Second-year Transformational Experience Program (STEP) partnered with the Center for the Study of Student Life (CSSL) to conduct a survey called the Second-Year Student Needs Assessment by surveying outgoing first-year students about their needs. Over 10 years ago, STEP was developed to support the specific needs of second-year students through building community with faculty and peers and engagement in high-impact practices. A recent literature review confirmed that the overall STEP structure was still relevant to the needs of second-year students. However, in the last decade there have been generational shifts in student needs related to mental health, financial wellness and online participation (Center for the Study of Student Life, 2024). The current Second-Year Needs Assessment was developed to explore if and how those changes in needs were relevant to first-year Ohio State students as they prepare to enter their second year. Though this assessment was designed to inform STEP, the results have applications for the broader student population at Ohio State.

KEY FINDINGS

- Students desire more friendships, but many did not actively engage in related behaviors:
 - When asked how they want to build community with other students in their second year, **80.4%** reported wanting to make new friends.
 - Compared to other social skills however, only **44.9%** reported often or always attending social activities with other students, **46.4%** reported often or always initiating social activities with other students and **48.1%** reported often or always starting conversations with other students.
- Most students (**88.4%**) preferred building community with other students in person.
- Students most wanted support in the following areas but did not know how to find it:
 - Preparing to move off-campus (**41.7%**)
 - Identifying work experiences or internships related to their major or career interest(s) (**34.5%**)
 - Learning how to reduce their amount of student debt (**32.1%**)
- When asked about mental health topics or skills they would like to learn about in a small group setting, **62.1%** selected time management.
- **76.8%** reported that internships made a large contribution to getting a job after graduation. Students reported that leadership skill development made a large contribution as well (**52.4%**).

METHODS

The Second-Year Needs Assessment was designed to uncover student needs as they prepare to enter their second year at Ohio State. The questions covered a range of topics, including those related to community, learning format, resource engagement, mental health, retention and future success. A random sample of 5,000 first-year students were invited to take the Second-Year Needs Assessment survey in spring 2024 from March 25th – April 14th. A total of 576 students responded to the survey resulting in a response rate of 11.2%. Survey respondents were entered into a drawing for one Apple Watch or one of fourteen \$25 BuckID deposits.



FINDINGS

COMMUNITY

The following questions asked students about how they wanted to build community with other students during their second year at Ohio State. Students were also asked about the frequency that they utilized certain social skills during their first year.

How do you want to build community with other students in your second year at Ohio State? Check all that apply. (n = 576)

	<i>n</i>	Percent
Make new friends	463	80.4%
Make new friends with similar hobbies	450	78.0%
Make new friends with similar major(s) or career interest(s)	437	75.9%
Build a network of peers that I can reach out to as a resource in similar major(s) or career area(s)	419	72.7%
Strengthen already established connections with friends or networks at Ohio State	408	70.8%
Build a network of peers that I can reach out to as a resource	398	69.1%
Not interested in building community with other students in my second year	3	0.5%

Note: Responses could contain more than one option, so the sum of codes in each category may exceed the overall *n*.

How frequently did you practice the following social skills in your first year at Ohio State?

	Never/Rarely	Sometimes	Often/Always
Actively listen when speaking with other students (<i>n</i> = 576)	1.9%	9.4%	88.7%
Ask follow-up questions when speaking with other students (<i>n</i> = 575)	5.2%	26.4%	68.3%
Attend social activities with other students (<i>n</i> = 573)	17.1%	38.0%	44.9%
Demonstrate that you care about other students' experiences, successes and challenges (<i>n</i> = 575)	4.3%	23.3%	72.3%
Find common ground with other students in conversation (<i>n</i> = 576)	3.5%	17.9%	78.6%
Identify other students that have goals that align with your own (<i>n</i> = 576)	9.2%	24.7%	66.1%
Initiate social activities with other students (<i>n</i> = 576)	22.0%	31.6%	46.4%
Start conversations with other students (<i>n</i> = 576)	14.1%	37.8%	48.1%

LEARNING FORMAT

This question block asked about students' preferred learning format. Topics included class size, virtual versus in-person events and comparing community building experiences in a virtual versus in-person environment.

In a small class (i.e., 15 students or fewer), how do you prefer to participate? One (1) being the most preferred and four (4) being the least preferred format.

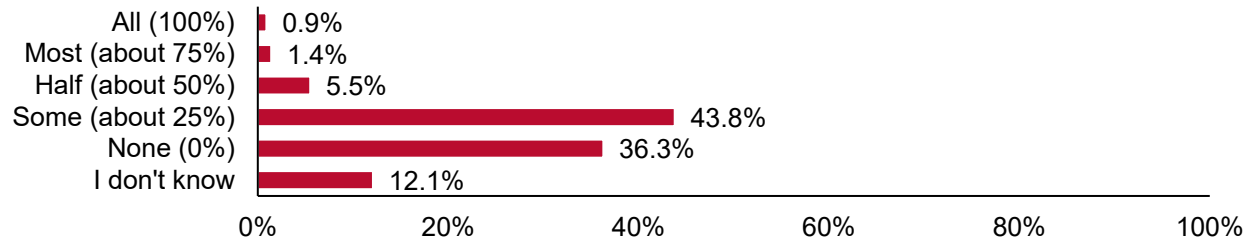
	1	2	3	4
Individual journaling or reflection (<i>n</i> = 523)	30.6%	19.5%	19.1%	30.8%
Discussion in pairs (<i>n</i> = 514)	19.6%	33.5%	30.0%	16.9%



In a small class (i.e., 15 students or fewer), how do you prefer to participate? One (1) being the most preferred and four (4) being the least preferred format. (Continued)

	1	2	3	4
Discussion in group of 4 students (<i>n</i> = 522)	21.8%	30.5%	29.5%	18.2%
Discussion with the full class (<i>n</i> = 548)	26.8%	18.2%	22.6%	32.3%

Roughly, what percentage of your classes in the autumn of your second year will be fully virtual? (*n* = 562)



How do you prefer building community with other students? (*n* = 567)

	<i>n</i>	Percent
Building community in-person is better	501	88.4%
Building community is the same online and in-person	49	8.6%
Building community online is better	11	1.9%
I am not interested in building community with other students	6	1.1%

For each of the event types listed below, which format do you prefer?

	Virtual/online	In-person	No preference
Group coaching session on a specific skill (e.g., studying, budgeting) (<i>n</i> = 552)	27.5%	55.1%	17.4%
Individual meetings with faculty/instructor (<i>n</i> = 553)	14.5%	70.2%	15.4%
Learning session about campus landmarks (e.g., Ohio Stadium, Planetarium) (<i>n</i> = 553)	30.6%	50.1%	19.3%
Learning session about campus resources (e.g., Dennis Learning Center, Counseling and Consultation Service) (<i>n</i> = 553)	51.4%	27.3%	21.3%
Meetings for group projects (<i>n</i> = 551)	8.7%	80.6%	10.7%
Poster forum (i.e., large group of students presenting posters on a topic) (<i>n</i> = 553)	17.2%	69.6%	13.2%
Weekly meetings with the same small group of students (<i>n</i> = 553)	14.8%	69.8%	15.4%
Workshop with social interaction required (<i>n</i> = 551)	6.4%	85.5%	8.2%
Workshop without social interaction (<i>n</i> = 553)	59.1%	23.0%	17.9%

RESOURCES ENGAGEMENT

Students were given several potential support areas. For each area, they were asked to rate their level of interest or experience.



Please indicate your level of interest or experience with the following types of support.

	Do not want support in this area	Want support but do not know how to find support in this area	Want support and know how to find support in this area	Received support in this area at least once this academic year	Prefer not to answer
Creating a lasting wellness routine (<i>n</i> = 529)	25.3%	20.0%	29.9%	20.6%	4.2%
Defining goals related to my major or career interest(s) (<i>n</i> = 528)	10.6%	20.6%	29.7%	36.6%	2.5%
Identifying work experiences or internships related to my major or career interest(s) (<i>n</i> = 528)	5.3%	34.5%	36.0%	21.4%	2.8%
Improving communication skills (<i>n</i> = 528)	25.2%	24.1%	24.2%	21.6%	4.9%
Learning strategies that I can use daily that improve mental health (<i>n</i> = 530)	27.5%	18.1%	26.0%	24.2%	4.2%
Learning how to budget (<i>n</i> = 530)	26.2%	31.9%	28.5%	10.4%	3.0%
Learning how to reduce my amount of student debt (<i>n</i> = 527)	33.2%	32.1%	19.5%	9.1%	6.1%
Navigating financial aid (<i>n</i> = 529)	27.8%	31.2%	23.6%	13.6%	3.8%
Learning strategies to improve my academic performance (<i>n</i> = 529)	22.5%	15.3%	33.3%	25.7%	3.2%
Preparing to move off-campus (<i>n</i> = 530)	27.7%	41.7%	19.8%	6.6%	4.2%
Talking with other students from backgrounds and/or identities different from my own (<i>n</i> = 529)	36.3%	14.6%	21.7%	23.1%	4.3%
Other area of support (<i>n</i> = 268)	34.3%	3.7%	10.4%	3.7%	47.8%
Other area of support - Text					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CBSC (community group) ▪ Finding a community while being a commuter/off-campus student ▪ Learning how to better initiate conversation/connect with peers ▪ Learning how to transition into your sophomore year of college ▪ Major-specific networking ▪ Navigating OSU job applications ▪ resources for people who are considering changing their major, but aren't sure what to ▪ stopping procrastination ▪ Studying/tutoring 					



MENTAL HEALTH

The following questions concern mental health programming. Students were asked about their level of interest or experience with certain programming formats and potential skills or topics they would be interested in exploring. They were also asked about assistance with self-awareness.

Please indicate your level of interest or experience in the following types of programming related to mental health at Ohio State.

	Not aware of this	Aware but have no plans to participate	Aware and plan on participating	Have already participated at least once	Prefer not to answer
Drop-in informal consultations (i.e., Let's Talk sessions) (<i>n</i> = 523)	28.3%	47.0%	13.2%	9.2%	2.3%
Group counseling (<i>n</i> = 521)	29.4%	58.3%	7.7%	2.1%	2.5%
Individual counseling (<i>n</i> = 519)	8.5%	54.7%	21.6%	13.1%	2.1%
Video series on mental health strategies (<i>n</i> = 519)	28.9%	52.8%	6.4%	9.4%	2.5%
Wellness coaching (<i>n</i> = 521)	17.1%	57.4%	14.8%	8.1%	2.7%
Workshops (<i>n</i> = 520)	20.6%	48.7%	16.0%	11.9%	2.9%

Which of the following skills/topics are you interested in exploring in a small group setting? Check all that apply. (*n* = 517)

	<i>n</i>	Percent
Time management	321	62.1%
Building healthy habits	307	59.4%
Finding fulfilling hobbies	301	58.2%
Sleep strategies	247	47.8%
Mindful movement (e.g., yoga)	235	45.5%
Mindfulness meditation (e.g., noticing your breath)	193	37.3%
Setting boundaries	190	36.8%
Recognizing emotions and your reactions to them	163	31.5%
Conflict resolution	161	31.1%
Gratitude practice	152	29.4%
Having respectful dialogue	134	25.9%
Journaling	125	24.2%
None of the above	41	7.9%

Note: Responses could contain more than one option, so the sum of codes in each category may exceed the overall *n*.



Do you believe you would benefit from assistance in becoming more self-aware (i.e., recognizing and understanding your own thoughts, emotions, strengths, weaknesses and behaviors)? (n = 521)

	<i>n</i>	Percent
Strongly agree - I believe I would greatly benefit from assistance in becoming more self-aware.	61	11.7%
Agree - I think I could benefit from some assistance in becoming more self-aware.	159	30.5%
Neutral - I'm unsure if I need help becoming more self-aware.	120	23.0%
Disagree - I think I am somewhat self-aware and may not need much assistance.	114	21.9%
Strongly disagree - I believe I am already very self-aware.	67	12.9%

RETENTION & FUTURE SUCCESS

The following section included questions about retention and future success. Students were asked to identify reasons that are causing them to feel unprepared for their second year. They were also given several experiences and were asked to give their opinion about how much each contributed to getting a job after graduation.

When thinking about your upcoming second year at Ohio State, do you feel prepared? If not, what are the reasons you feel unprepared? Check all that apply. (n = 519)

	<i>n</i>	Percent
I am prepared for my second year at Ohio State	158	30.4%
Balancing time needed for different commitments	240	46.2%
Taking more difficult courses	218	42.0%
Unsure about social relationships	151	29.1%
Financial stress	149	28.7%
Ability to maintain my health and/or well-being	142	27.4%
Unsure about my major or career path	135	26.0%
Homesickness	96	18.5%
Inadequate support systems	49	9.4%
Other reason	6	1.2%
Other reason – Text		
• Career readiness		
• One of my classes is only offered online and I do not feel prepared for that		

Note: Responses could contain more than one option, so the sum of codes in each category may exceed the overall *n*.



In your opinion, how much do each of the following experiences contribute to getting a job after graduation?

	No contribution	Some contribution	Moderate contribution	Large contribution
Certification courses (<i>n</i> = 517)	7.5%	33.7%	36.8%	22.1%
Conferences or workshops related to a profession/career (<i>n</i> = 517)	9.1%	37.9%	34.4%	18.6%
Developing creative skills related to art, music or performing arts (<i>n</i> = 517)	33.8%	37.3%	20.1%	8.7%
Education abroad (<i>n</i> = 516)	23.1%	40.1%	27.1%	9.7%
Internships (<i>n</i> = 514)	2.1%	4.9%	16.1%	76.8%
Involvement in student organizations (<i>n</i> = 516)	2.7%	20.0%	46.3%	31.0%
Leadership skills development (<i>n</i> = 515)	2.7%	11.3%	33.6%	52.4%
Part-time student employment (<i>n</i> = 516)	7.8%	28.5%	40.7%	23.1%
Service projects or service learning (<i>n</i> = 516)	5.8%	26.2%	42.2%	25.8%
Undergraduate research (<i>n</i> = 516)	5.8%	19.2%	27.7%	47.3%

CONCLUSION

Students continue to be interested in building community with peers through growing friendships, not just peer networks. At the same time, students do not practice initiating or attending social events as frequently as other social skills. When building community and participating actively in programming, students largely want to do so in-person. When taking part in programming that does not have an active component, students are more open to participating virtually.

In relation to resource engagement, students wanted more support in reducing student loan debt and moving off-campus, but were unsure about how to find support in those areas. Most students were aware of individual counseling but there was lower awareness and use of other mental health related resources.

When students think about entering their second year, they feel the most unprepared for balancing time needed for different commitments; additionally, students list time management as the top skill they are interested in learning. Students are also interested in learning about building healthy habits and finding fulfilling hobbies.

Students see internships as the largest contributor to getting a job after graduation, followed by leadership skills development. Students perceive creative and artistic endeavors and education abroad as the least impactful in getting a job. Those experiences may be influential in developing other aspects of students' identities.

REFERENCES

Center for the Study of Student Life (2024). *Second-year needs literature review 2024*.



APPENDIX: DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographics in this section were gathered from Student Information System data and were self-reported by students when they applied to Ohio State.

Sex (*n* = 576)

	<i>n</i>	Percent
Female	400	69.4%
Male	176	30.6%

Race/Ethnicity (*n* = 576)

	<i>n</i>	Percent
Asian	103	17.9%
Black or African American	38	6.6%
Hispanic	45	7.8%
None Given/Race Unknown	12	2.1%
Two or More Races	29	5.0%
White	349	60.6%

Generational Status (*n* = 576)

	<i>n</i>	Percent
Continuing-generation student	439	76.2%
First-generation student	137	23.8%

