

Wellness Assessment: Examining International Students

Center for the Study of Student Life

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INTRODUCTION

Student wellness is an essential component of academic success in higher education and subsequent opportunities in the labor market. To assess and improve student wellness holistically, The Ohio State University Office of Student Life's Student Wellness Center uses a model that includes nine key dimensions of wellness: career, creative, emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, physical, social and spiritual. This report investigates patterns in average wellness dimension scores among student groups that are typically underrepresented in surveys by combining three years of data (2014-2016). Specifically, this report considers international students.

RESPONDENTS

The Wellness Assessment survey was developed and made available to all students at The Ohio State University. Students could take the survey at any time during the school year to receive feedback about their own wellness. While students took the survey at various points in the year, this report focuses on students who took the survey in the month of October of any of the three years considered (2014, 2015, 2016). The month of October is used as a snapshot for consistency in comparison across years.

METHODOLOGY

The Wellness Assessment was designed as a self-assessment to a) improve students' awareness of their own wellness and b) provide them with resources that they can utilize to improve their wellness. The survey was developed using literature reviews and feedback from stakeholders on campus, including faculty, staff and students. Cognitive interviews were used to ensure that items and response options were interpretable and provided valid measures of the intended constructs.

The Wellness Assessment measures nine dimensions of wellness using items that assess a range of attitudes and behaviors. Average scores for each dimension of wellness were calculated by adding the values of each item within a given dimension, then dividing by the total number of items. Averages were adjusted for respondents who did not answer all of the items within a dimension; however, respondents who failed to provide a minimum number of responses on a scale did not receive a score for that dimension.

A 5-point scale is used for all of the wellness dimensions, with higher scores indicating more positive attitudes and behaviors. Likert-type items were used to measure wellness-related attitudes and frequency scales were used to measure frequency of positive/negative health behaviors. Negative statements or questions were reverse coded.

Descriptive statistics were used to examine overall trends in student wellness. Comparisons between groups of students with different demographic and/or academic characteristics were conducted using independent-samples t-tests and/or analysis of variance (ANOVA). Analyses were limited to comparisons where each category contained 20 or more students; student samples with fewer than 20 respondents would be too susceptible to extreme scores.

DEMOGRAPHICS

As shown by the table below, the demographic breakdown of students who took the Wellness Assessment shifted across years. The most notable shift was the percentage of students in the Second-Year Transformational Experience Program (STEP) who took the survey in 2016. This had an impact on the percentage of undergraduate versus graduate students in the samples as well. It is important to note this shift because the dramatic differences in samples limit our ability to draw conclusions about trends across years.

Variable	2014 (n = 768)	2015 (n = 1,371)	2016 (n = 1,021)
Undergraduate Student	77.8%	87.6%	92.7%
Graduate Student	22.2%	12.4%	7.4%
Race/Ethnicity			
African American/Black or African descent	4.6%	4.0%	3.2%
Asian American/Asian (East, South, Southeast)	8.8%	8.2%	7.5%
Latino(a)/Hispanic American	2.3%	1.6%	1.8%
White/European American	75.9%	77.2%	79.6%
Other	0.0%	2.1%	1.0%
Multiracial	8.4%	6.9%	7.0%
Female	70.6%	72.0%	72.7%
Male	29.4%	28.0%	27.3%
Academic Level			
First-year Undergraduate	20.5%	35.1%	21.3%
Second-year Undergraduate	15.9%	14.7%	43.0%
Third-year Undergraduate	18.5%	16.6%	17.0%
Fourth-year Undergraduate	18.2%	15.9%	9.2%
Fifth-year+ Undergraduate	4.7%	5.4%	2.2%
Graduate – Master’s	9.5%	6.5%	3.7%
Graduate – Professional	2.9%	1.9%	0.6%
Graduate – Doctoral	9.8%	4.0%	3.0%
Current or Past Participant in Second-Year Transformational Experience Program (STEP)	7.3%	10.4%	47.2%
Never Participated in STEP	92.7%	89.6%	52.8%
Sorority or Fraternity Member	10.0%	12.3%	11.6%
Student Unaffiliated with Sorority or Fraternity	90.0%	87.8%	88.4%
International Student	4.8%	4.0%	3.3%
Domestic Student	95.2%	96.0%	96.7%
Current or Past Members of the Military	1.3%	1.3%	1.2%
Never a Member of the Military	98.7%	98.8%	98.8%
Athlete	0.5%	3.4%	8.1%
Non-Athlete	99.5%	96.6%	91.9%

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

DIMENSIONS OF THE WELLNESS ASSESSMENT

EMOTIONAL

- I use alcohol/nicotine/other substances to manage stress.
- I am able to appropriately manage my feelings.
- I use relaxation techniques to manage stress.
- I am able to appropriately express my feelings.
- I would be willing to seek help from others when I am having a difficult time.
- I feel that I am able to cope with my daily stress.
- I have a positive image of my body.

CREATIVE

- I express myself through creative activities.
- I attend arts-related events or programs.
- I think of myself as a creative person.
- I value multiple perspectives when thinking about complex topics.
- The arts help me appreciate other perspectives and cultures.

SPIRITUAL

- I consider myself to be a spiritual person.
- I engage in self-reflection.
- I engage in spiritual practices.
- I feel a connection to something larger than myself.
- I seek out meaning in my life.

INTELLECTUAL

- I am able to resolve conflicts peacefully.
- I am confident about my academic major decisions.
- I am confident in my ability to find solutions to my problems.
- I am confident that I can learn new skills.
- I am interested in learning new things.
- I engage in intellectually engaging activities.
- I feel that my education is a priority.
- I felt challenged by my academics during my most recent academic term.
- I was able to manage my academic workload during my most recent academic term.

CAREER

- I am confident about my career decisions.
- I envision my future career as a means to contribute to society.
- I feel that my current studies will be helpful to my future career.
- I feel that my major/career decision is an appropriate expression of my abilities and personal strengths.
- I feel that I work in a positive environment.
- I feel that I work in a stressful environment.
- I feel that my current job interferes with other aspects of my life.
- I am able to balance my current job with the rest of my life.

PHYSICAL

- I am confident that I can exercise regularly.
- I am confident that I can maintain a nutritious diet.
- I use illicit drugs (e.g. marijuana, cocaine, ecstasy).
- I use tobacco products.
- I use prescription medication that is not prescribed to me (e.g. Adderall, Xanax, Valium).
- I eat a nutritious diet.
- I engage in cardiovascular exercise 3-5 times per week for at least 30 minutes.
- I engage in flexibility exercise/stretching.
- I engage in strength training/resistance exercise 2-3 times per week.
- I get at least 8 hours of sleep per night.
- How often do you binge drink? (Males: 5+ drinks in about 2 hours, Females: 4+ drinks in about 2 hours)
- How often, in general, do you consume alcohol?

FINANCIAL

- I am comfortable leaving a balance on my credit card(s).
- I think it is important to spend less than I earn.
- I am confident that I can plan a financial budget.
- I pay off the entire balance of my credit card(s) each month.
- I have enough money saved to handle financial emergencies.
- I track my spending to stay within my budget.
- I feel stressed by the amount of money I owe (credit cards, student loans, etc.).
- I stress about my finances.

ENVIRONMENTAL

- I engage in environmentally friendly behaviors (turn off lights/faucets, walk or bike).
- I feel safe in my living environment.
- I feel that I live in a stressful environment.
- I often feel that I have little control over my safety.
- I take time to appreciate my surroundings.
- I take time to appreciate nature.
- I think it is important to conserve natural resources.
- If given the opportunity, I recycle.

SOCIAL

- I feel a sense of belonging in a community.
- I feel supported by my family.
- I feel that I am a person who other people like to be around.
- I have a strong social network.
- I have at least one close friend whom I trust and can confide in.
- I feel comfortable communicating face-to-face with others.
- I rarely feel lonely.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$



FINDINGS

AVERAGE WELLNESS SCORES

The following table presents average wellness scores, by dimension. Scores are reported for undergraduate and graduate students separately. Because the demographic composition of the sample shifted from year to year, it is inappropriate to make claims about scores rising or falling over time, but the table shows how scores compare across years.

Average Wellness Dimension Scores	2014	2015	2016
Career Score – Undergraduate	3.54	3.94	3.96
Career Score – Graduate/Professional	3.72	4.01	3.89
Creative Score – Undergraduate	3.59	3.48	3.52
Creative Score – Graduate/Professional	3.72	3.50	3.57
Emotional Score – Undergraduate	3.60	3.56	3.53
Emotional Score – Graduate/Professional	3.69	3.74	3.57
Environmental Score – Undergraduate	4.44	4.02	4.08
Environmental Score – Graduate/Professional	4.53	4.05	4.11
Financial Score – Undergraduate	3.92	3.38	3.47
Financial Score – Graduate/Professional	4.10	3.51	3.45
Intellectual Score – Undergraduate	4.24	4.20	4.24
Intellectual Score – Graduate/Professional	4.37	4.32	4.30
Physical Score – Undergraduate	3.47	3.75	3.81
Physical Score – Graduate/Professional	3.56	3.93	3.89
Social Score – Undergraduate	3.95	4.01	3.94
Social Score – Graduate/Professional	4.01	4.06	3.93
Spiritual Score – Undergraduate	3.73	3.69	3.62
Spiritual Score – Graduate	3.83	3.84	3.82

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

While the Wellness Assessment data do not allow us to make strong conclusions about trends over time in scores, one advantage of having data from three years is that we can combine the respondents into a larger dataset and investigate patterns among student groups that typically have population sizes too small to investigate. The following table compares average wellness scores, by dimension for international students and domestic students. T-tests were conducted to investigate whether the differences between these two groups of students were significantly different. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences between the two groups' average scores.

Average Wellness Dimension Scores	International	Domestic
Average Career Score*	3.75 (n = 122)	3.86 (n = 2,945)
Average Creative Score	3.47 (n = 122)	3.53 (n = 2,946)
Average Emotional Score	3.59 (n = 122)	3.58 (n = 2,949)
Average Environmental Score	4.12 (n = 122)	4.15 (n = 2,945)
Average Financial Score	3.59 (n = 121)	3.56 (n = 2,945)
Average Intellectual Score***	4.09 (n = 121)	4.24 (n = 2,946)
Average Physical Score	3.81 (n = 105)	3.74 (n = 2,662)
Average Social Score***	3.73 (n = 122)	3.99 (n = 2, 949)
Average Spiritual Score	3.68 (n = 122)	3.69 (n = 2,930)

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$