

NSSE Pulse Survey Results

Introduction

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) offered a special fall survey (NSSE Pulse) in an effort to provide universities with data to inform campus actions in a timely manner. The Pulse survey included selected questions from the original NSSE survey that are most critical to understanding the undergraduate student experience. Between October 5 and November 23, more than 137,000 students from colleges across the U.S. and Canada responded to the survey. Among those who responded, some 1,064 were attending Portland State University (PSU).

Survey Results

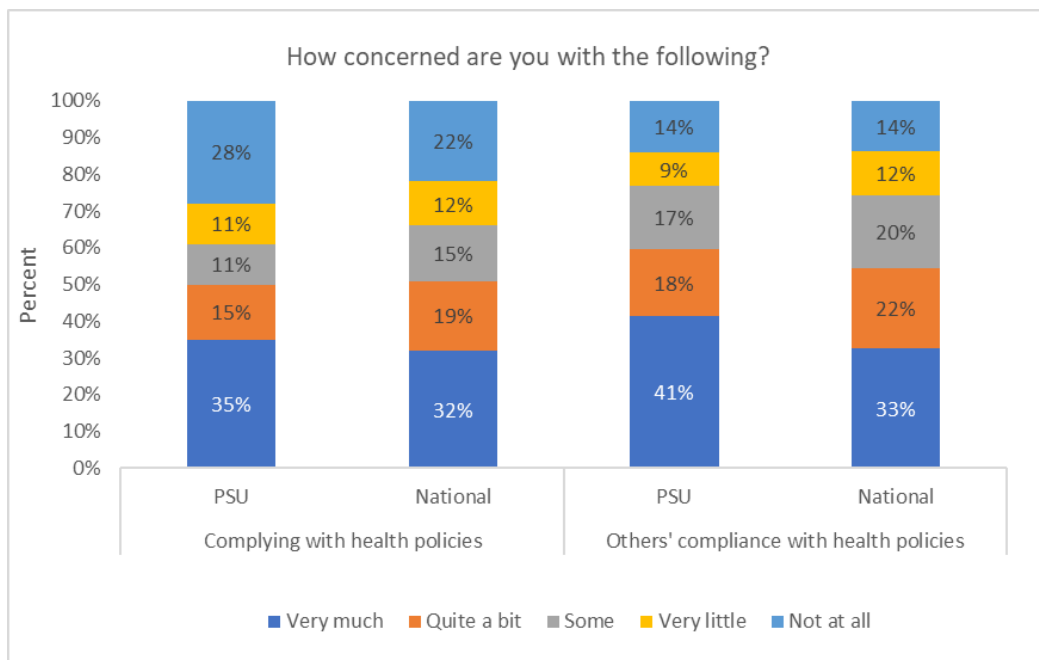


Figure 1. Fall 2020 NSSE Pulse respondents' level of concern with public health compliance.

Overall, students were concerned about following public health policies (i.e., mask wearing, physical distancing). When asked about their level of concern, about one-half (51 percent) of respondents from colleges across the country reported they were “very much” or “quite a bit” concerned about their own compliance (Figure 1). About 27 percent of the national sample reported “some” or “very little” concern, and 22 percent were “not at all concerned.” At PSU, a greater percentage of respondents (28 percent) reported being “not at all” concerned with complying with health policies, while 72 percent of respondents reported some level of care.

Interestingly, students were more concerned about whether others complied with health policies than with their own compliance. Nationally, about 55 percent of respondents were “very much” or “quite a bit” concerned, while 32 percent had “some” or “very little” concern, and 14 percent were “not at all concerned” (Figure 1). While this general trend was reported by PSU respondents, a slightly greater percentage (59 percent) reported they were “very much” or “quite a bit” concerned with whether others complied with health policies.

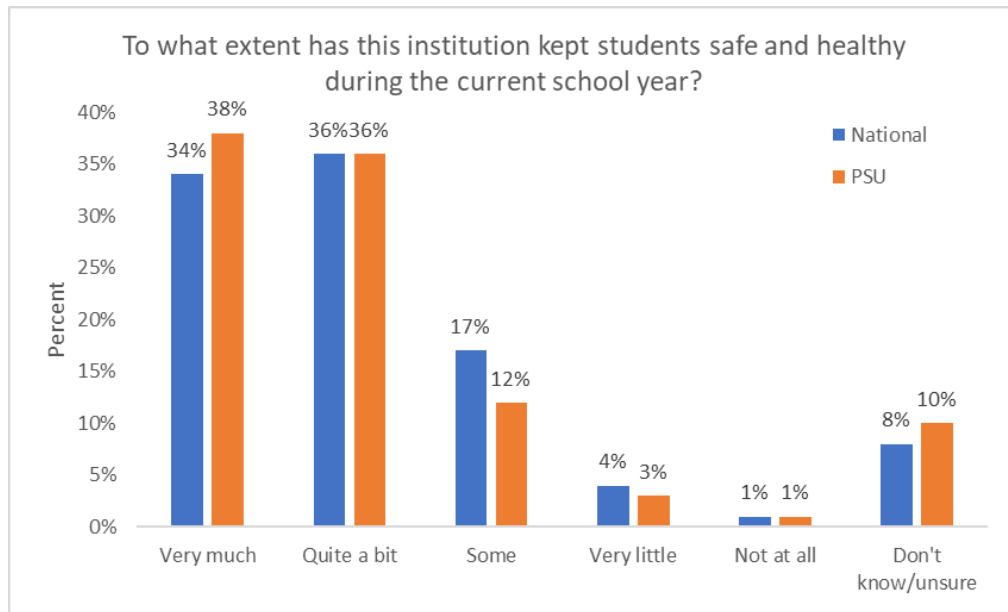


Figure 2. Extent to which institutions have kept Fall 2020 NSSE Pulse respondents safe.

In general, students felt as though their institutions were taking precautions to keep them safe. When asked about the extent to which PSU had done so, about 86 percent of respondents reported the university had taken at least some measures to keep students safe, while a roughly equal percentage (87 percent) of the national sample reported the same for their respective institutions. At PSU, the majority of respondents (74 percent) thought that the Institution did “very much” or “quite a bit” to keep students safe and healthy (Figure 2). Some 3 percent of PSU respondents reported that “very little” had been done, while only one percent felt nothing had been done.

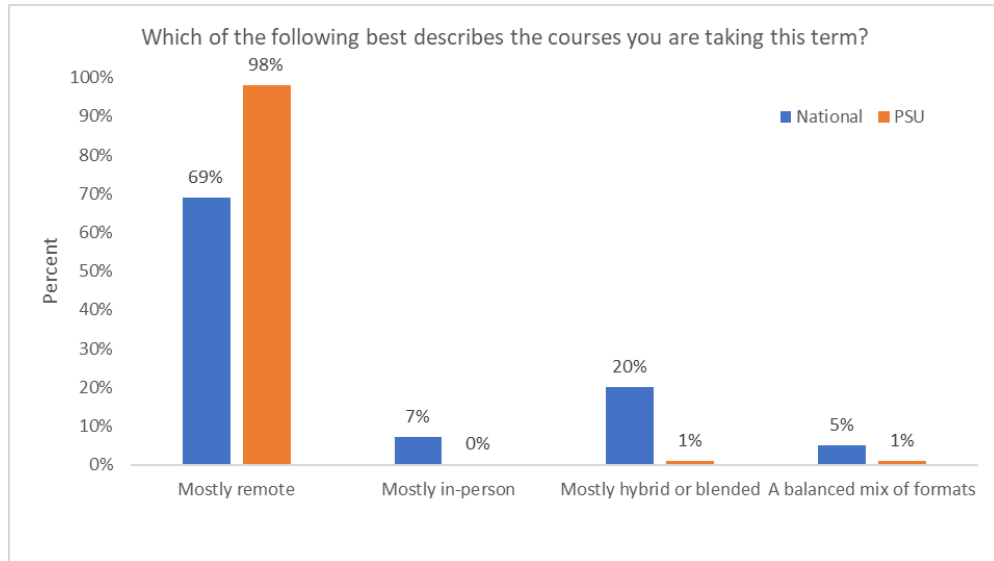


Figure 3. Modality of courses taken by Fall 2020 NSSE Pulse respondents.

Public health policies have required many institutions to shift the primary modality of their course offerings. At the national level, about 69 percent of respondents described their mix of courses as “mostly remote” with another 20 percent in “mostly hybrid or blended” (Figure 3). Only 7 percent of respondents took “mostly in-person” courses. Unsurprisingly, virtually all PSU students (98 percent) reported taking “mostly remote” classes, which reflects the safety measures the university has taken in response to COVID-19. One percent of PSU students reported “mostly hybrid or blended” courses and one percent took a “balanced mix” of courses in all formats.

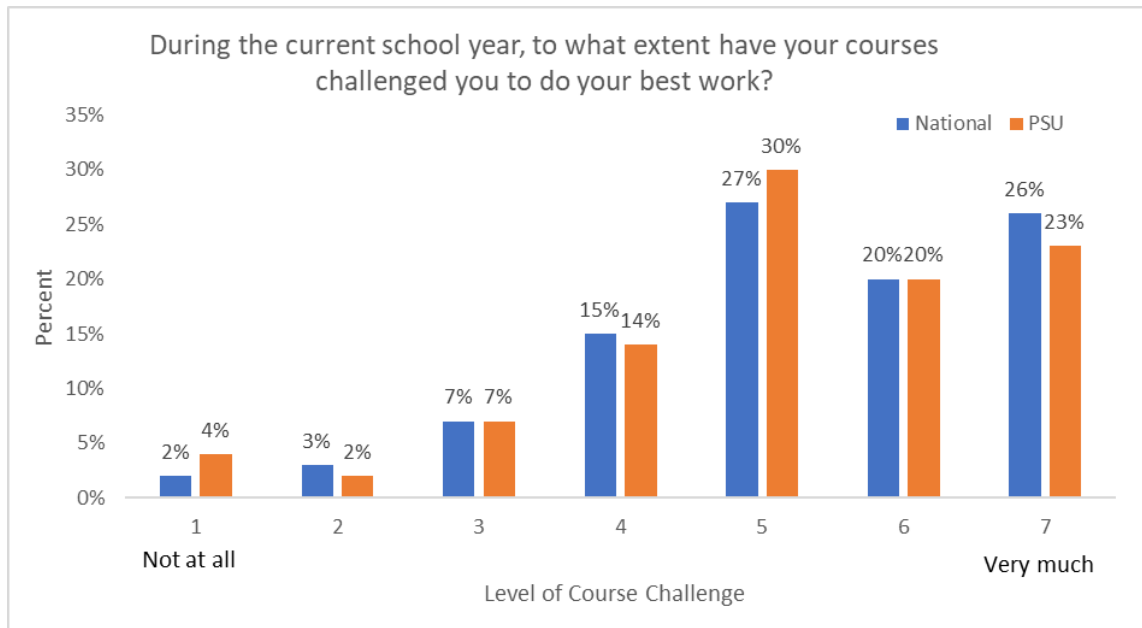


Figure 4. Level of course challenge reported by Fall 2020 NSSE Pulse respondents.

When asked about how these course modalities may have affected student performance, less than one-half of respondents (46 percent) across the country indicated that they felt highly challenged to do their best work in their courses (i.e., a 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale) (Figure 4). At PSU, a roughly equal percentage of respondents (43 percent) reported that they were highly challenged by their courses. Some four percent of PSU respondents reported they were “not at all” challenged to do their best work.

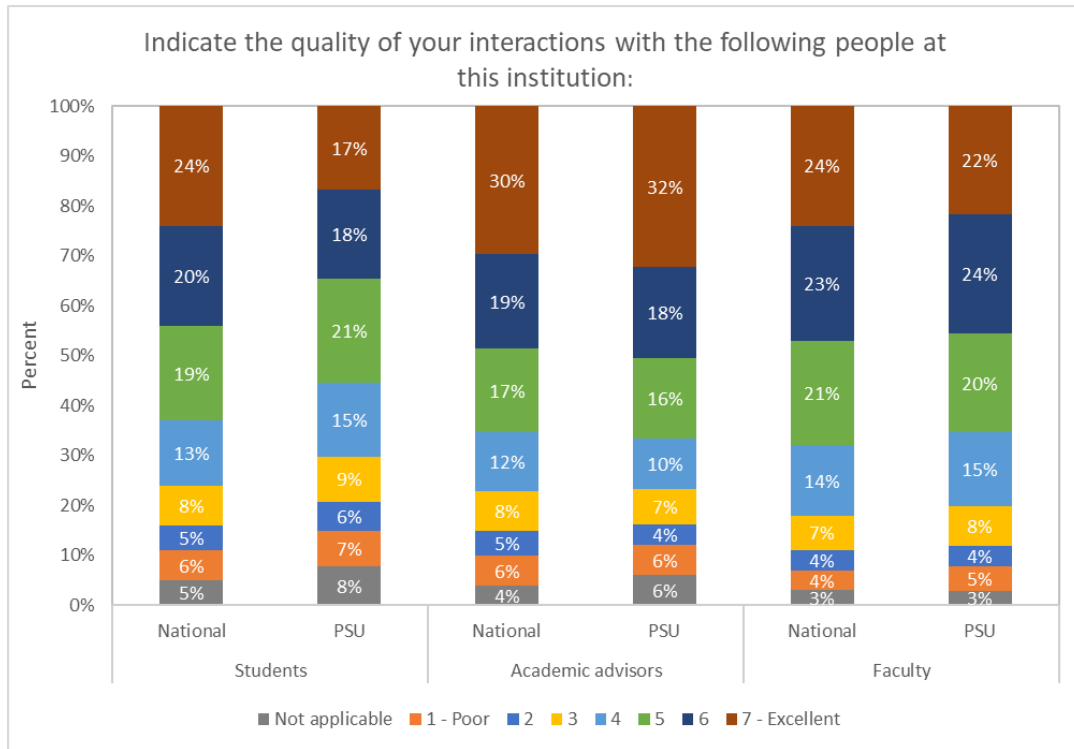


Figure 5. Quality of interactions among Fall 2020 NSSE Pulse respondents, by interaction type.

Despite the distance, the majority of respondents reported positive interactions with peers, faculty, and academic advisors. At PSU, one-half of respondents (50 percent) reported “good” or “excellent” interactions with academic advisors and 46 percent reported “good” or “excellent” interactions with faculty (Figure 5). While respondents across the country rated their interactions with academic advisors and faculty similarly to those at PSU, a smaller percentage of PSU respondents reported “good” or “excellent” interactions with their peers than those at other colleges (35 percent vs. 44 percent).

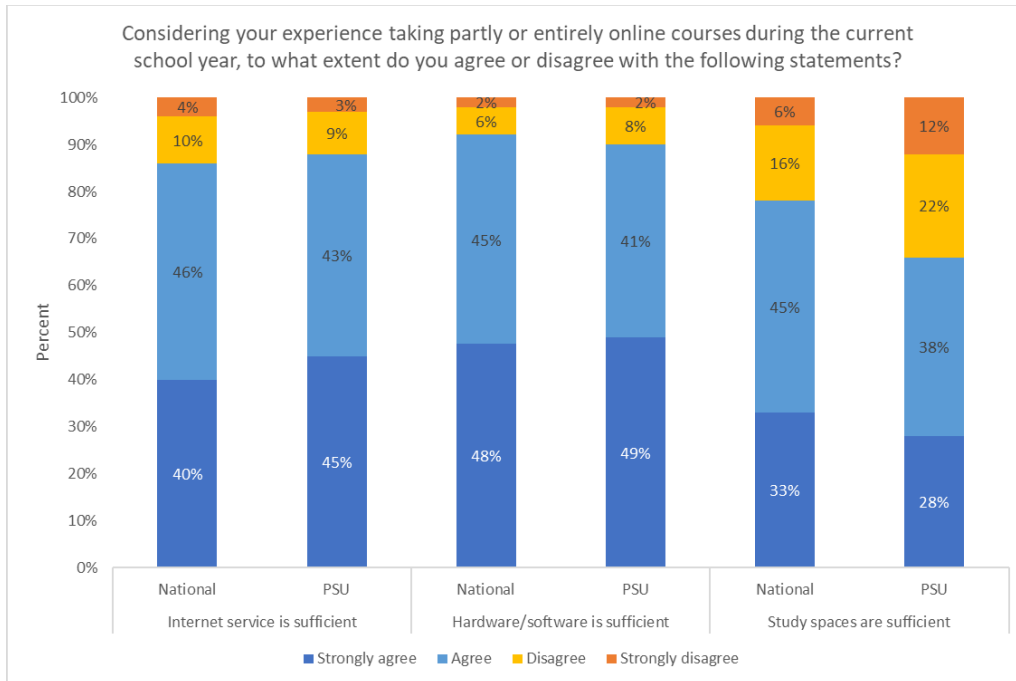


Figure 6. Level of sufficiency of conditions for online learning among Fall 2020 NSSE respondents.

Students need access to technology, Internet, and a quiet study space to be successful in online courses. When asked about whether various components of their environment were sufficient for online learning, national respondents were least likely to agree that their study spaces were sufficient when compared with their access to technology and Internet service (78 percent vs. 93 percent and 86 percent, respectively) (Figure 6). At PSU, an even small percentage of respondents thought their study spaces were sufficient (66 percent vs. 78 percent). Some 90 percent of PSU respondents had sufficient hardware/software and 88 percent had sufficient Internet service.

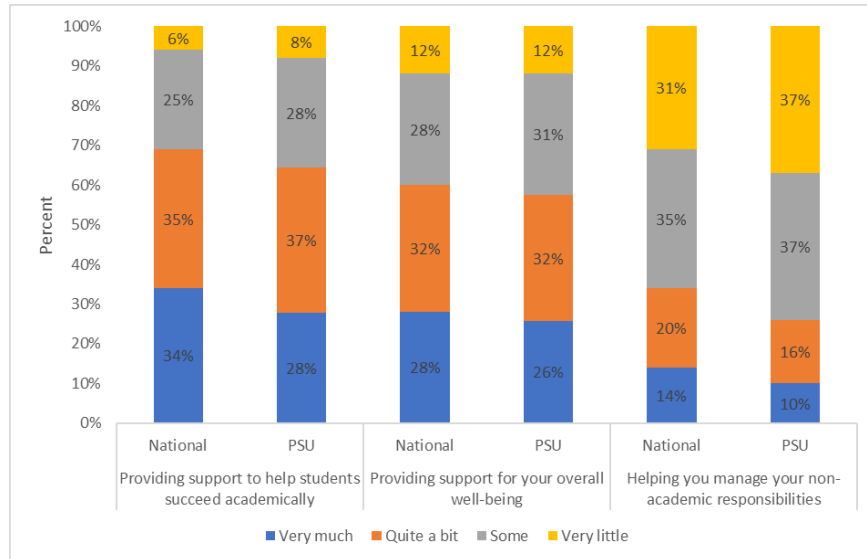


Figure 7. Institution support of Fall 2020 NSSE Pulse respondents' well-being and academic success.

There are many ways that institutions have supported their students during the COVID-19 pandemic. At PSU, some 65 percent of respondents felt the Institution was doing “very much” or “quite a bit” to support them academically, while 28 percent thought the Institution was doing “some” work, and eight percent responded that “very little” was being done (Figure 7). When asked about support for their overall well-being, about 89 percent of respondents felt that PSU was making at least “some” effort and 12 percent reported “very little” was being done. Students reported the least amount of institutional support in managing their non-academic responsibilities. Less than two-thirds of PSU respondents (63 percent) felt that the Institution was making at least “some” effort to support them in their non-academic lives. The level of institution support reported by PSU students mirrored the responses received from students across the country about support from their own universities.

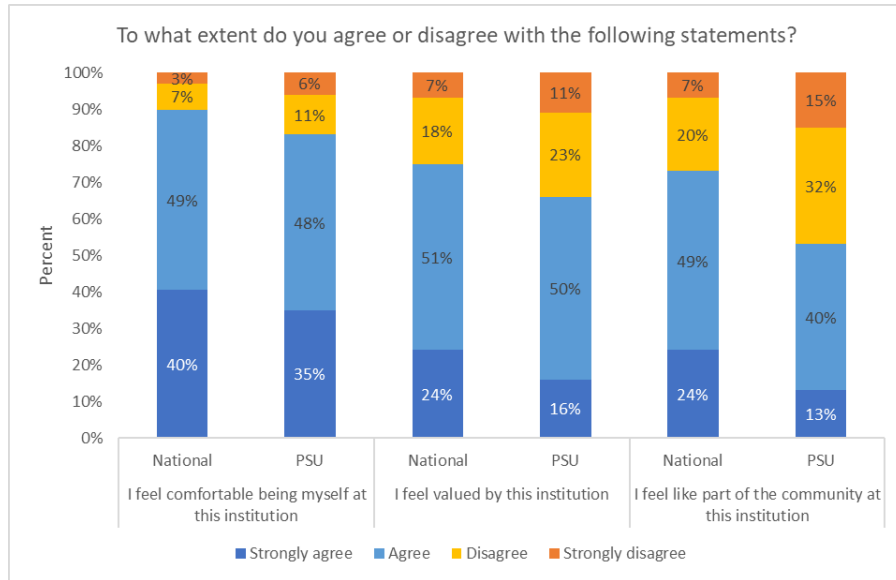


Figure 8. Sense of belonging among Fall 2020 NSSE Pulse respondents.

Overall, the majority of students reported a sense of belonging at their university, even when studying remotely. When asked a series of questions about their sense of belonging, two-thirds of respondents at PSU (66 percent) reported they felt valued by the institution, some 83 percent felt comfortable being themselves at the institution, and 53 percent felt like they were part of a community (Figure 8). However, these percentages were lower than those at the national level on each of the three questions (53 percent vs 73 percent on being part of a community; 66 percent vs 75 percent on feeling valued; 83 percent vs 89 percent on being comfortable being themselves).

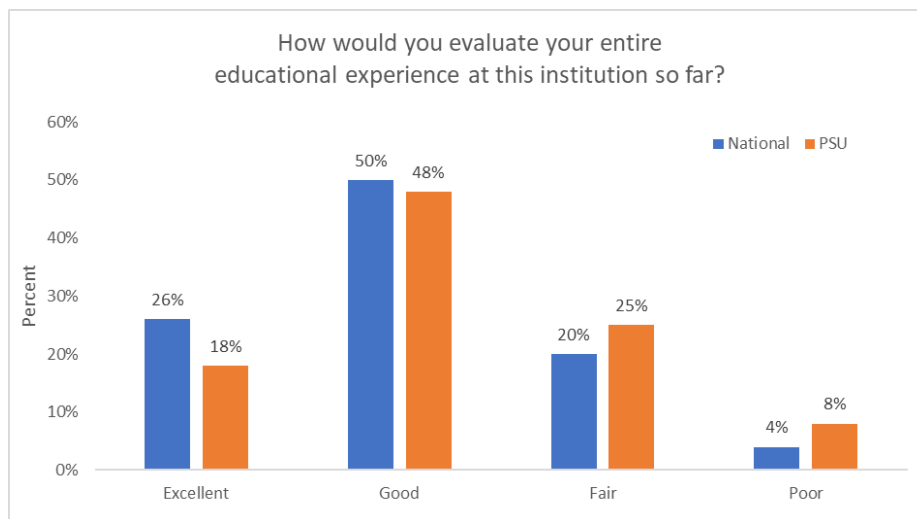


Figure 9. Fall 2020 NSSE Pulse respondents' evaluation of educational experience at current institution.

Overall, two-thirds (66 percent) of PSU respondents reported that their entire educational experience at PSU has been “good” or “excellent” (Figure 9). About 25 percent reported their experience as “fair,” and 8 percent reported it as “poor.” At the national level, a greater percentage of respondents reported an “excellent” experience (26 percent vs 18 percent), and a smaller percentage had a “poor” experience (4 percent vs. 8 percent).

Student Demographic Characteristics

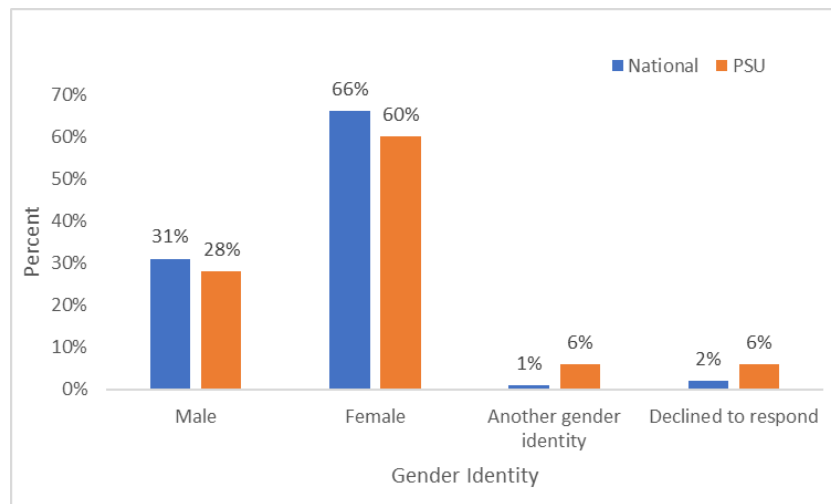


Figure 10. Gender identity of Fall 2020 NSSE Pulse respondents.

Nationally and at PSU, the greatest percentage of respondents identified as female (66 and 60 percent, respectively), while roughly 30 percent of respondents at both levels identified as male (Figure 10). At PSU, a greater percentage of respondents were gender-nonconforming than at the national level (six percent vs one percent).

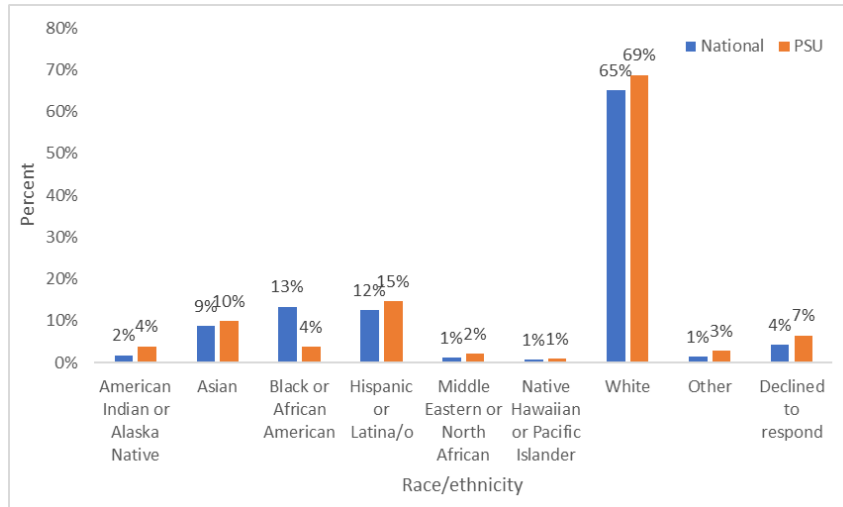


Figure 11. Race/ethnicity¹ of Fall 2020 NSSE Pulse respondents.

At both levels, the majority of respondents identified as white (65 percent nationally; 69 percent at PSU) (Figure 11). Compared to the national sample, PSU had a smaller percentage of respondents who identified as Black or African American (13 percent vs 4 percent).

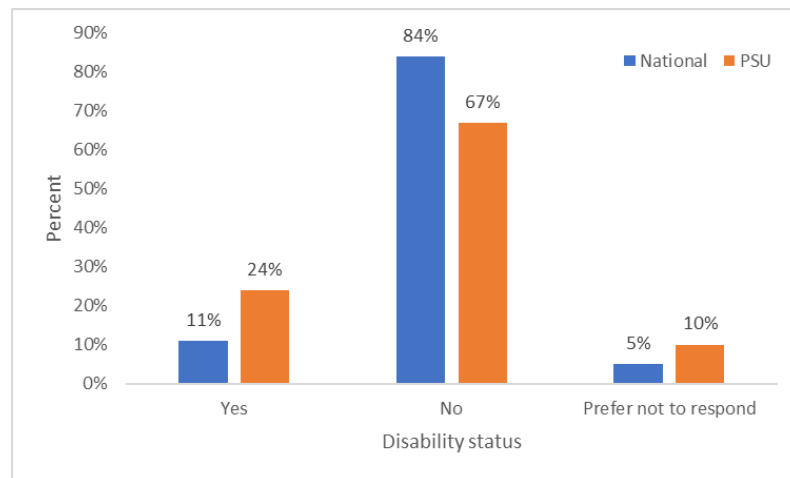


Figure 12. Disability status of Fall 2020 NSSE Pulse respondents.

A greater percentage of respondents from PSU indicated that they had a disability, when compared with respondents in the national sample (24 percent vs 11 percent) (Figure 12).

¹ Respondents could select multiple categories.

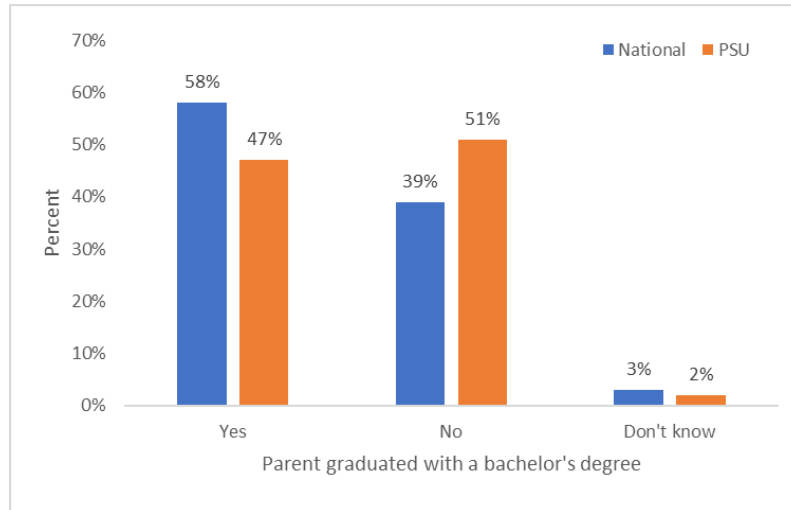


Figure 13. First-generation status of Fall 2020 NSSE Pulse respondents.

A greater percentage of PSU respondents were first-generation college students, when compared with respondents in the national sample (51 percent vs 39 percent) (Figure 13).

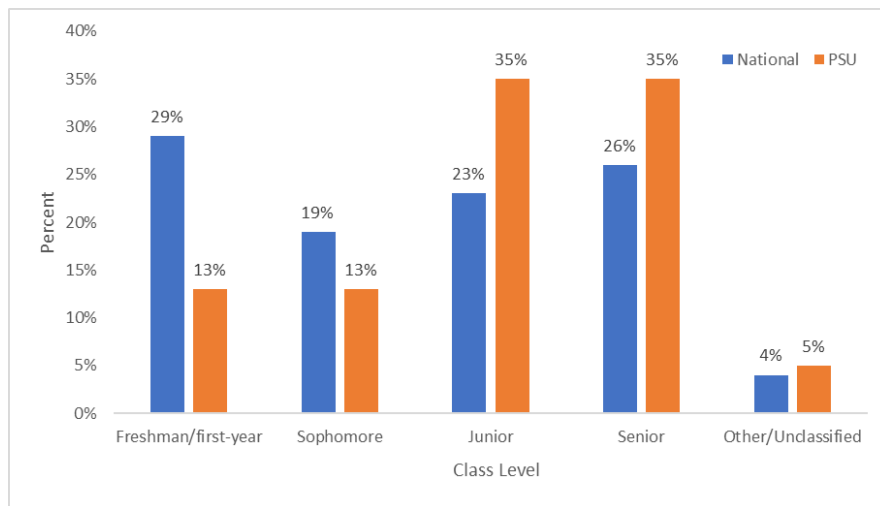


Figure 14. Class level of Fall 2020 NSSE Pulse respondents.

At the national level, some 48 percent of respondents were in their first or second year of college, while 49 percent of respondents had junior or senior level status (Figure 14). At PSU, the majority of respondents (70 percent) were juniors or seniors and roughly one-quarter (26 percent) were freshman or sophomore-level students.

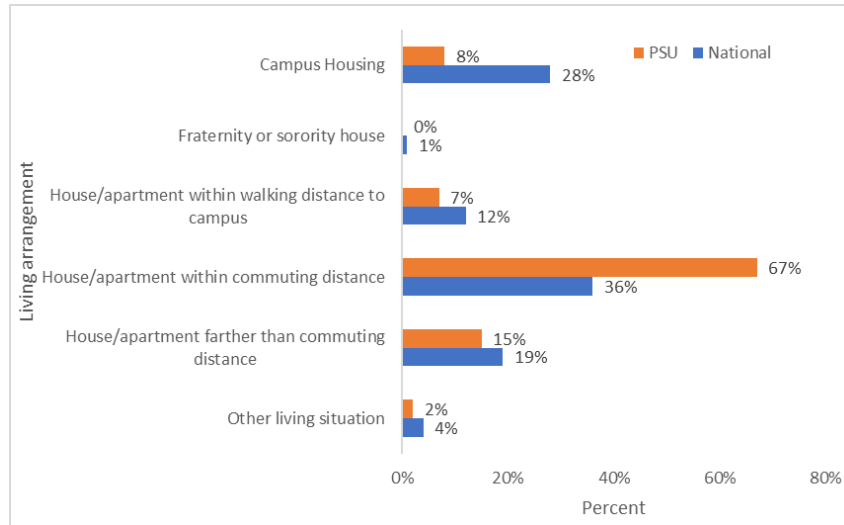


Figure 15. Livings arrangements of Fall 2020 NSSE Pulse respondents.

Nationally, about 28 percent of respondents were living in campus housing in Fall 2020 while only 8 percent of PSU respondents were doing so (Figure 15). The majority of PSU respondents (74 percent) lived in a house or apartment within walking/commuting distance of PSU; fewer than one-half (48 percent) of respondents in the national sample did so.

Appendix

NSSE Pulse Survey Questions

Which of the following best describes the courses you are taking this term?

- Mostly remote instruction
- Mostly in-person instruction
- Mostly hybrid or blended instruction (a combination of remote and in-person instruction)
- A balanced mix of formats

During the current school year, to what extent have your courses challenged you to do your best work?

- 1=Not at all to 7=Very much

How much does this institution emphasize the following?

- Providing support to help students succeed academically
 - Very much
 - Quite a bit
 - Some
 - Very little
- Providing support for your overall well-being (recreation, health care, counseling, etc.)
 - Very much
 - Quite a bit
 - Some
 - Very little
- Helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
 - Very much
 - Quite a bit
 - Some
 - Very little

Indicate the quality of your interactions with the following people at this institution.

- Students
 - 1=Poor to 7=Excellent
 - Not applicable
- Academic advisors
 - 1=Poor to 7=Excellent
 - Not applicable
- Faculty

- 1=Poor to 7=Excellent
 - Not applicable
- d. Student services staff (career services, student activities, housing, etc.)
- 1=Poor to 7=Excellent
 - Not applicable
- e. Other administrative staff and offices (registrar, financial aid, etc.)
- 1=Poor to 7=Excellent
 - Not applicable

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- a. I feel comfortable being myself at this institution.
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
- b. I feel valued by this institution.
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
- c. I feel like part of the community at this institution.
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree

How important is it to you that you graduate from this institution?

- Not important (1) to Very important (7)

How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution so far?

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

To what extent has this institution kept students safe and healthy during the current school year?

- Very much
- Quite a bit
- Some
- Very little
- Not at all
- Don't know/Unsure

How concerned have you been about the following?

Response options: Very much, Quite a bit, Some, Very little, Not at all

- a. Complying with health policies (mask wearing, physical distancing, etc.)
 - Very much
 - Quite a bit
 - Some
 - Very little
 - Not at all
- b. Others' compliance with health policies (mask wearing, physical distancing, etc.)
 - Very much
 - Quite a bit
 - Some
 - Very little
 - Not at all

Open ended: What has been most satisfying about your experience so far at this institution, and what has been most disappointing?

What is your class level?

- Freshman/first-year
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Other/Unclassified

Which of the following best describes where you currently live?

- Campus housing other than a fraternity or sorority house
- Fraternity or sorority house
- House, apartment, or other residence within walking distance to campus
- House, apartment, or other residence within commuting distance to campus
- House, apartment, or other residence farther than commuting distance to campus
- Homeless or in transition
- A living situation not listed above

[Students reporting mostly remote, mostly hybrid, or a balanced mix of instruction with Q1 receive the following three questions.]

Considering your experience taking partly or entirely online courses during the current school year, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- a. Internet service (availability, speed, reliability, etc.) where you live has been sufficient to participate in the course.
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree

- b. The hardware (computer, tablet, mobile phone, printer, etc.) and software where you live have been sufficient to participate in the course.
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree

- c. Study spaces where you live have been sufficient for your needs.
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree

Did either of your parents (or those who raised you) complete a Bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.) or higher?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

How would you describe yourself? (Select all that apply.)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latina/o
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Another race or ethnicity
- I prefer not to respond

What is your gender identity?

- Man
- Woman
- Another gender identity, please specify: ___
- I prefer not to respond

Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

- Straight (heterosexual)
- Bisexual
- Gay
- Lesbian
- Queer
- Questioning or unsure
- Another sexual orientation, please specify: ___
- I prefer not to respond

Have you been diagnosed with any disability or impairment?

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to respond

[If answered “yes”] Which of the following has been diagnosed? (Select all that apply.)

Response options: A sensory impairment (vision or hearing), A mobility impairment, A learning disability (e.g., ADHD, dyslexia), A mental health disorder, A disability or impairment not listed above

