



2026 NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS

Submitted by: Ruchika Rakesh Singh

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Overview

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects information about undergraduate students' experiences at colleges and universities, including their academic activities, interactions with others, and involvement in campus life. The 2026 NSSE gathered responses from 1,463 students at Sacramento State.

This report looks at student connection, engagement, and experience at Sacramento State using different areas measured in the survey. It begins with students' overall educational experience and interactions with other students and faculty, then looks at how students described their connection to the university. Institutional support, student-faculty interaction, and experiences beyond regular coursework are included to provide a broader view of the student experience.

Among students who responded, 80.9% rated their overall educational experience as good or excellent, and 82.6% said they would probably or definitely attend Sacramento State again if they could start over. Students also reported on their interactions with people at the university. 81.7% rated their interactions with other students as good, above average, or excellent, while 81.2% gave the same rating to their interactions with faculty.

Students were also asked how they felt as members of the Sacramento State community. 91.4% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt comfortable being themselves, 74.4% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt valued by the institution, and 75.2% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt like part of the community.

The survey also asked students about the university environment. 72.7% said Sacramento State appreciated their unique backgrounds and experiences quite a bit or very much, while 72.4% said the university created an overall sense of community at the same level.



Figure 1. Sacramento State students coming together for the annual Stingers Up Swarm photo.

Connection and Institutional Support

Students were asked how much Sacramento State emphasized different forms of support and involvement. 71.2% reported quite a bit or very much emphasis on opportunities to be involved socially, 69.0% on support for overall well-being, and 68.3% on connecting students with groups at the institution that shared their interests. 65.8% said Sacramento State emphasized attending campus activities and events quite a bit or very much, while 56.7% reported the same level of emphasis on connecting students with groups beyond the institution and 44.0% on providing help with non-academic responsibilities such as work and family. The responses varied across the areas of institutional support, reflecting differences in how students reported the university's emphasis on social involvement, well-being, and non-academic responsibilities.

Connecting students with groups that shared their interests was also looked at alongside belonging. Among students who said Sacramento State helped them make these connections very little, 27.5% reported belonging. The percentage was 65.0% among students who reported some help, 79.2% among those who reported quite a bit, and 91.9% among those who reported very much. The percentage of students reporting belonging increased across the different levels of help with connecting to groups that shared their interests.

Along with connections with other students and groups, the analysis also looked at students' interactions with faculty. Students rated the quality of these interactions, with 81.2% rating them as good, above average, or excellent. They were also asked how often they interacted with faculty in four specific ways. Talking about career plans was reported often or very often by 42.5% of students, followed by discussions about course topics, ideas, or concepts outside of class at 33.4%, discussions about academic performance at 33.2%, and working with faculty on activities other than coursework at 28.0%.

These four faculty interactions were also analyzed alongside belonging. For conversations about career plans, belonging was 54.7% among students who never had these conversations, 76.0% among those who sometimes did, 83.1% among those who did so often, and 82.4% among those who did so very often. The other three interactions showed a similar pattern across the response levels. For discussions about course topics outside of class, belonging ranged from 64.2% among students who never had these discussions to 86.7% among those who had them often. For discussions about academic performance, the corresponding percentages were 61.5% and 87.1%, while working with faculty on activities other than coursework ranged from 65.0% to 88.6%. Across all four types of faculty interaction, students who reported more frequent interactions generally reported higher levels of belonging.

Engagement Beyond Regular Coursework

Students' experience at Sacramento State also includes activities that extend beyond regular coursework. The survey asked students about six high-impact experiences: internships or other field experiences, formal leadership roles, learning communities, study abroad, research with faculty, and culminating senior experiences.

Two measures were kept separate for each experience. The first represents students who had completed or were currently participating in the experience. The second includes those students along with students who planned to participate.

Internships, co-ops, field experiences, student teaching, and clinical placements were completed or in progress for 27.8% of students and reached 74.2% when planned participation was included. Culminating senior experiences were at 26.0% and 52.9%, learning communities at 17.9% and 40.6%, formal leadership roles at 17.8% and 39.1%, research with a faculty member at 11.1% and 30.5%, and study abroad at 3.7% and 20.5%. Across all six experiences, the percentages increased when planned participation was included, showing a difference between students' current or completed involvement and their reported plans to participate.

Formal leadership was one of these experiences and was also looked at alongside belonging. Belonging was 65.3% among students who did not plan to participate in a formal leadership role, 77.8% among those who had not decided, 83.9% among those who had completed or were currently participating, and 85.9% among those who planned to participate. The percentage reporting belonging varied across the different levels of participation and plans for involvement in formal leadership roles.

Students were also asked how often they attended events, activities, or presentations that reflected an appreciation for diverse groups of people. Among students who reported never attending these activities, 60.2% reported belonging. The percentage was 76.5% among students who attended sometimes, 86.1% among those who attended often, and 92.2% among those who attended very often. The percentage of students reporting belonging increased across the different levels of attendance at these activities.



Figure 2. Students exploring career opportunities and campus resources at the Sacramento State Career Fair.

Student Experience by Class Level

The different measures of student experience and connection were also analyzed by class level. The 2026 respondents included 647 Freshman and 816 Senior students. Looking at their overall experience, 81.1% of Freshman and 80.8% of Senior respondents rated their educational experience as good or excellent. When asked whether they would attend Sacramento State again if they could start over, 79.7% of Freshman and 84.7% of Senior respondents said they would probably or definitely do so.

Students' comfort, feeling valued, and sense of community were also analyzed by class level. Among Freshman respondents, 92.7% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt comfortable being themselves, 77.8% felt valued by the institution, and 78.5% felt like part of the community. Among Senior respondents, the corresponding percentages were 90.5%, 72.0%, and 73.0%.

Students were also asked how much Sacramento State created an overall sense of community. 75.1% of Freshman respondents and 70.6% of Senior respondents reported quite a bit or very much. While Freshman and Senior respondents reported similar levels of satisfaction with their overall educational experience, Freshman respondents reported slightly higher percentages across measures of comfort, feeling valued, and sense of community.

Belonging Across Racial and Ethnic Groups

Students' sense of belonging was further analyzed across racial and ethnic groups. The analysis looked at the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that they felt like part of the community at Sacramento State.

The same measure was analyzed using the 2020, 2022, and 2024 NSSE results alongside the 2026 responses. These four survey years provide a comparison of belonging across racial and ethnic groups at two-year intervals from 2020 through 2026. The figures below present the percentages for each group across the selected survey years.

The percentages reporting belonging varied across racial and ethnic groups and survey years. Some groups showed relatively similar percentages across the selected years, while others showed more variation. The number of respondents also differed across groups and years, providing additional context for the percentages presented.

Racial/Ethnic Group	2020	2022	2024	2026
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.0% (n = 1)	66.7% (n = 3)	100.0% (n = 2)	40.0% (n = 5)
Asian	75.9% (n = 133)	78.0% (n = 418)	78.5% (n = 107)	80.7% (n = 233)
Black or African American	76.7% (n = 30)	75.2% (n = 109)	75.0% (n = 28)	85.7% (n = 77)
Foreign or nonresident	96.2% (n = 26)	77.6% (n = 76)	100.0% (n = 17)	81.8% (n = 33)
Hispanic or Latina/o	81.1% (n = 196)	75.8% (n = 679)	75.0% (n = 208)	77.1% (n = 375)
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	75.0% (n = 4)	73.9% (n = 23)	57.1% (n = 7)	90.9% (n = 11)
Two or more races/ethnicities	72.7% (n = 44)	66.4% (n = 116)	80.0% (n = 40)	71.0% (n = 62)
Unknown	80.0% (n = 25)	62.4% (n = 85)	87.5% (n = 16)	55.0% (n = 20)
White	63.8% (n = 188)	64.7% (n = 532)	55.0% (n = 149)	65.4% (n = 234)

Note: The percentages show students who agreed or strongly agreed that they felt like part of the community at Sacramento State. The counts in parentheses show the total number of valid responses for each group and year. Percentages based on small numbers of respondents should be interpreted cautiously, as individual responses can substantially influence the reported percentages.

Conclusion

The 2026 NSSE results provide a view of student connection, engagement, and experience among the 1,463 Sacramento State students who responded to the survey. Students reported on their overall educational experience, interactions with other students and faculty, their connection to the university community, and the support and opportunities for involvement they experienced at Sacramento State.

The analysis also looked at how belonging appeared alongside different parts of the student experience, including connections with similar-interest groups, interactions with faculty, formal leadership, and participation in activities reflecting an appreciation for diverse groups of people. Across these areas, the percentages of students reporting belonging varied with their reported levels of connection, interaction, and participation. Student experience was further analyzed by class level, showing the results separately for Freshman and Senior respondents.

The report then looked at belonging across racial and ethnic groups and across selected NSSE survey years. Using the same belonging measure for 2020, 2022, 2024, and 2026 provides a two-year interval view of the responses across these groups.

Together, these results provide different views of how the students who responded to the 2026 NSSE described their connection, engagement, and experience at Sacramento State.

Methodology and Data Notes

The 2026 NSSE was sent to 7,861 students at Sacramento State, and 1,463 students responded, including 647 Freshman and 816 Senior students. The overall response rate was 18.6%.

The analysis used responses from the 2026 NSSE to look at different areas of student connection, engagement, and experience. The percentages were calculated using the number of students who answered each question, excluding missing responses. For the belonging analysis, the percentage represents students who agreed or strongly agreed that they felt like part of the community at Sacramento State.

The analysis also used the 2020, 2022, and 2024 NSSE results alongside the 2026 responses to look at belonging across racial and ethnic groups over the selected survey years.

All percentages are based on unweighted survey responses, excluding missing responses for each question.

Survey Overview

- The 2026 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) received responses from 1,463 Sacramento State students, including 647 Freshman and 816 Senior students.
- 80.9% of respondents rated their educational experience as good or excellent, while 82.6% said they would probably or definitely attend Sacramento State again if they could start over.
- Students also reported on their interactions with others at the university. 81.7% rated their interactions with other students as good, above average, or excellent, while 81.2% gave the same rating to their interactions with faculty.
- 91.4% of respondents felt comfortable being themselves, 74.4% felt valued by the institution, and 75.2% felt like part of the Sacramento State community.

Key Findings

- Students reported different levels of institutional support, with 71.2% reporting quite a bit or very much emphasis on social involvement, 69.0% on overall well-being, and 44.0% on help with non-academic responsibilities.
- Belonging increased from 27.5% among students reporting very little help connecting with similar-interest groups to 91.9% among those reporting very much help.
- Career discussions were the most frequently reported faculty interaction, with 42.5% reporting them often or very often. Belonging also varied across levels of faculty interaction.
- Internships and related field experiences had the highest current or completed participation at 27.8%, increasing to 74.2% when planned participation was included.
- Freshman and Senior respondents reported similar overall educational experiences, while their responses differed across measures of connection and community. Belonging across racial and ethnic groups was also examined using the 2020, 2022, 2024, and 2026 NSSE results.

Recommendations

- The analysis showed that belonging varied across the different levels of help students received in connecting with groups that shared their interests. Include a short session during student orientation to introduce students to the different clubs, organizations, and campus events available at Sacramento State.
- Students who reported more frequent interactions with faculty generally reported higher levels of belonging. Programs could organize informal get-togethers for students and faculty, either within individual programs or across multiple programs, to encourage connections and provide opportunities for academic and career guidance.

Summary

- The 2026 NSSE results provide a view of student connection, engagement, and experience among Sacramento State survey respondents, including their overall educational experience, institutional support, faculty interactions, and involvement beyond regular coursework.
- The class-level and historical racial and ethnic belonging analyses provide additional perspectives on students' experiences and their connection to the Sacramento State community.

About the Author



Ruchika Rakesh Singh is a graduate student pursuing her Master of Science in Business Analytics at Sacramento State. She currently works as a Data Reporting and Analytics Graduate Intern with the university's Information Resources and Technology team, where she supports institutional research through data analysis, visualization, and reporting. Previously, she worked as a Research Assistant and Instructional Student Assistant, where she gained experience in academic research, data analysis, and supporting faculty and students. Her interests include data analytics, research, and using data to support decision-making.