

# What our Students Tell Us about Their Learning: Information from the National Survey of Student Engagement

Katherine Cermak, Associate Dean, Planning & Assessment



Spring 2018

# Framework

- What is the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)?
- Who participates?
- What does it measure?
- What does it tell us about the experiences of midshipmen?



Image: Downloaded 08/05/16 from:  
<http://www.ucdenver.edu/about/departments/InstitutionalResearch/NSSE/>



# What is it?

- Survey of 4-year undergraduate institutions. Measures student participation in programs and activities that have been correlated with learning and development
  - NSSE items examine best practices in undergraduate education
- 

# Who participates?

➤ Over 1,500 bachelor's degree - granting institutions from the US and Canada have participated.

➤ Institution types, sizes, and locations represented in NSSE are largely representative of U.S. baccalaureate institutions.

➤ Gold bars indicate USNA participation

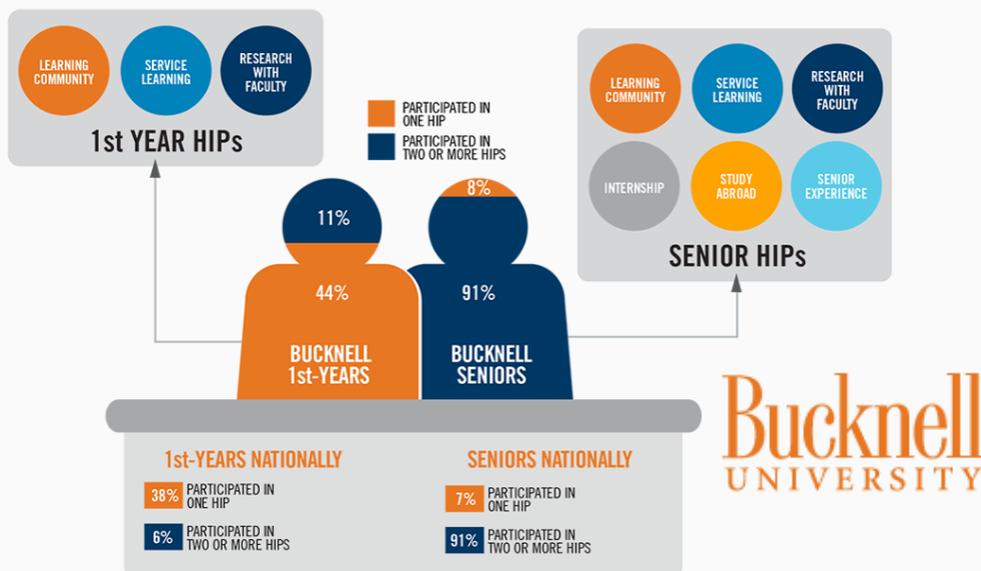
➤ \* Service Academy Consortium

➤ (2008 – 2014: USMA, USMMA, and USAFA  
2017 USCGA joined)

Year	Institutions
2008*	769
2009	640
2010	595
2011*	751
2012	577
2013	621
2014*	713
2015	585
2016	557
2017*	725

# High-Impact Practices (HIPs)

The figures below are from the NSSE and compare the percentage of students who participated in High-Impact Practices with those at institutions in our peer group. Both figures include participation in a learning community, service-learning and research with faculty. The Senior figure also includes participation in an internship or field experience, study abroad and culminating senior experience.



The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was completed by 450 first-year and 411 senior students in 2017 at Bucknell.



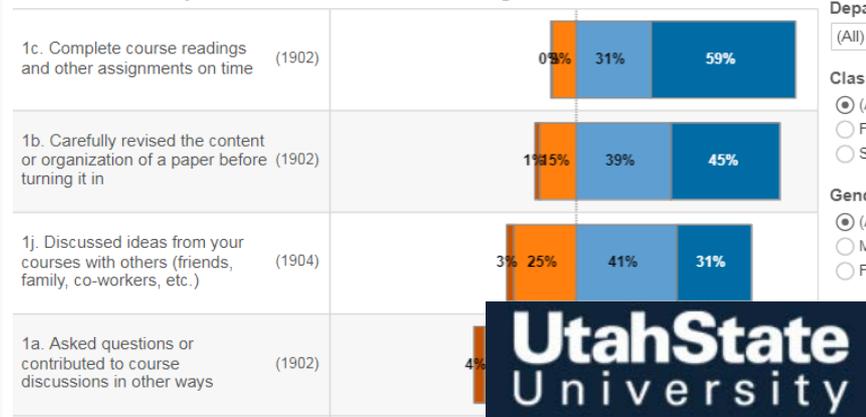
## NSSE 2017 Frequencies and Statistical Comparisons Ohio University

# National Survey of Student Engagement - Divergent Stacked Bars

Please choose from the list of select NSSE questions:

1. In your experience at your institution during the current year, about how often have you done each of the following?

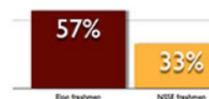
1. In your experience at your institution during the current year, about how often have you done each of the following?



## Level of Academic Challenge Benchmark Items

- Number of assigned textbooks, books or book-length packs of course readings **GRAPH**
- Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more **GRAPH**
- Number of written papers or reports of between 5 and 19 pages **GRAPH**
- Number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages **GRAPH**
- Coursework emphasizes: Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience or theory **GRAPH**
- Coursework emphasizes: Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships **GRAPH**
- Coursework emphasizes: Making judgments about the value of arguments or methods **GRAPH**
- Coursework emphasizes: Applying theories or concepts to practice or in new situations **GRAPH**
- Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations **GRAPH**
- Campus environment emphasizes spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work **GRAPH**
- Prepared for class 21 or more hours per week **GRAPH**

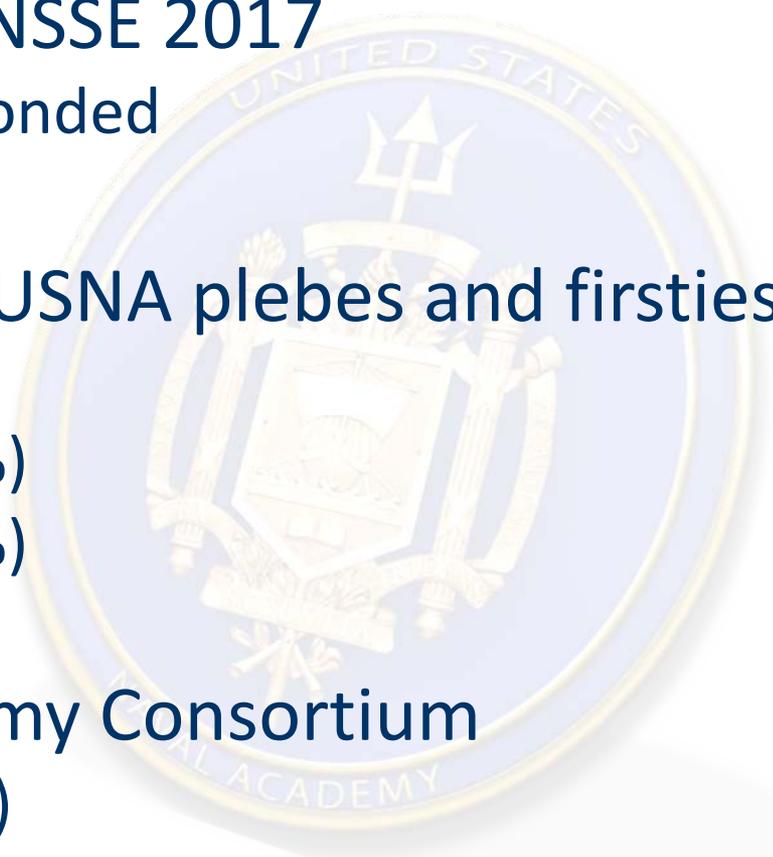
Wrote 5 or more 5-19 page papers





# NSSE 2017 Survey

## Population and Respondents

- About 2 million students were invited to participate in NSSE 2017
    - 517,850 responded
  - Population of USNA plebes and firsties were invited to participate
    - 4/C 486 (43%)
    - 1/C 382 (36%)
  - Service Academy Consortium
    - 4/C 740 (32%)
    - 1/C 523 (27%)
- 



# NSSE 2017 Survey

## Population and Respondents

### Response Rate and Sampling Error

	First Year Students (4/C)			Seniors (1/C)		
	USNA	Service Academies	NSSE 2016 & 2017	USNA	Service Academies	NSSE 2016 & 2017
Response Rate	43%	32%	23%	36%	27%	24%
Sampling Error (+/-)	3.4%	2.7%	0.2%	4.0%	3.2%	0.2%

### Response Rate by Gender w/in USNA

	First Year Students (4/C)			Seniors (1/C)		
	Respondent %	Population %	Weight (used in %s and Means)	Respondent %	Population %	Weight (used in %s and Means)
Female	31%	27%	.88	27%	23%	.82
Male	69%	73%	1.05	73%	77%	1.07



# What does NSSE measure?

- **Student Engagement:**
    - **Time and Energy** devoted to academic studies and other educationally purposeful activities that are empirically linked with learning and personal development as well as other desired outcomes including persistence, satisfaction, and graduation.
  - **Items ask:**
    - **How college students spend their time** – Related to the time and energy devoted to studies and educationally purposeful activities
    - **How institutions influence students** – Encouraging students to increase their learning through the availability of resources and use of effective educational practices
- 



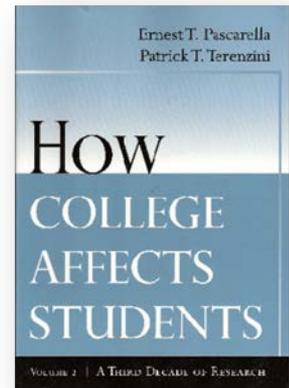
# Why Measure Student Engagement?

## Grounded in Empirical Research

Higher Education Researchers Ernest Pascarella and Patrick Terenzini , reviewed three decades of studies on college students. About 2,500 studies were conducted in the 1990s and more than 2,600 studies between 1970 and 1990.

Their conclusion: Student engagement is a central component of student learning.

Pascarella, E. & Terenzini, P (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.





# NSSE Survey Content

Engagement in  
meaningful Academic  
Experiences

Engagement in High-  
Impact Practices

Student  
Learning &  
Development

Student Reactions to  
College

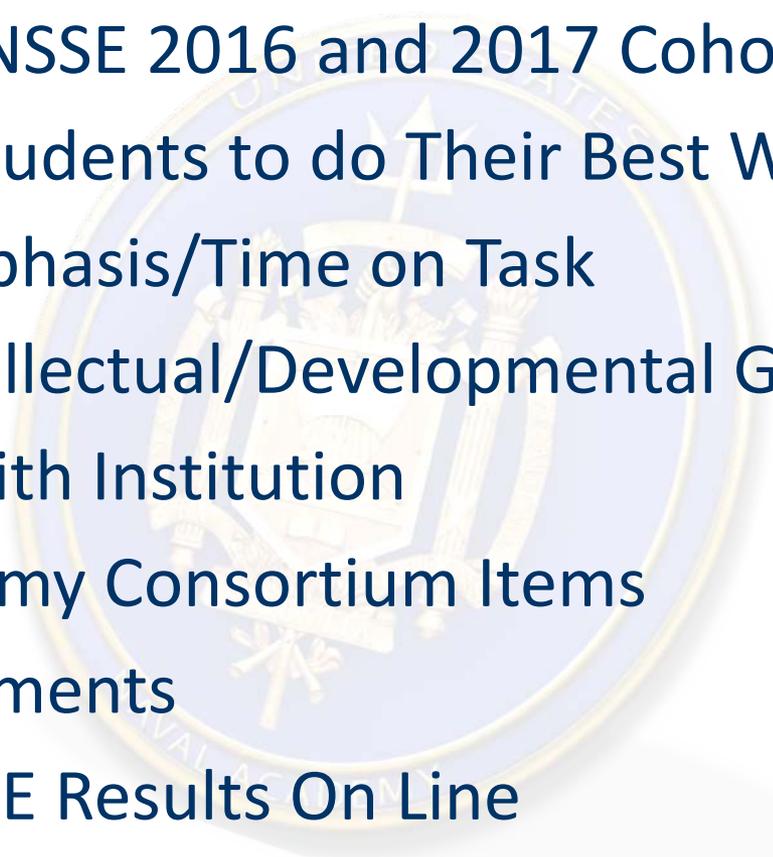
Student Background  
Information

# Selected 2017 NSSE Results: United States Naval Academy





# NSSE: Selected Results and Questions

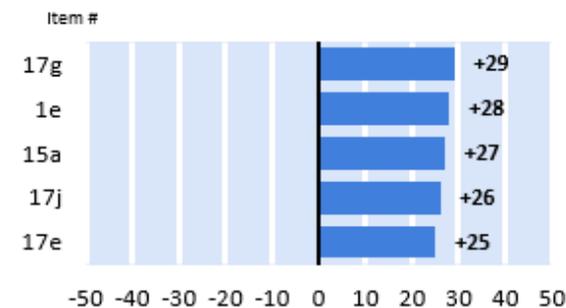
- Highest/Lowest Performing Items Compared to Aggregate of NSSE 2016 and 2017 Cohorts
  - Challenging Students to do Their Best Work
  - Academic Emphasis/Time on Task
  - Perceived Intellectual/Developmental Gains
  - Satisfaction with Institution
  - Service Academy Consortium Items
  - Selected Comments
  - Accessing NSSE Results On Line
- 

# Highest/Lowest Performing Items: Freshmen

## First-year

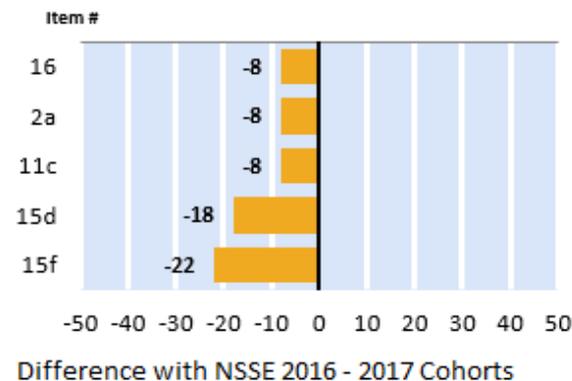
### Highest Performing Relative to NSSE 2016 and 2017 cohorts

- Developing or clarifying a personal code of values/ethics<sup>b</sup> (89%)
- Asked another student to help you understand course material<sup>a</sup> (81%)
- Spent more than 15 hours per week preparing for class<sup>(70%)</sup>
- Being an informed and active citizen<sup>b</sup> (82%)
- Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills<sup>b</sup> (79%)



### Lowest Performing Relative to NSSE 2016 and 2017 cohorts

- Time spent preparing for class by reading<sup>d</sup> (19%)
- Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments<sup>a</sup> (44%)
- Participated in a learning community<sup>(6%)</sup>
- Spent more than 15 hours per week working for pay off campus<sup>(0%)</sup>
- Spent more than 15 hours per week relaxing or socializing<sup>(6%)</sup>



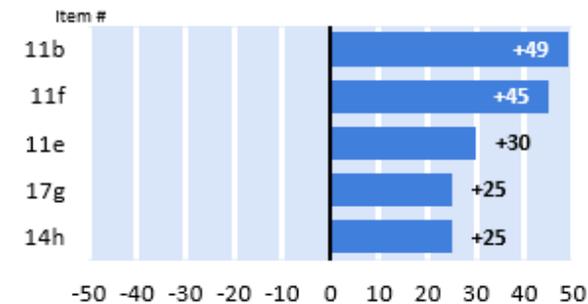
- a. Combination of students responding "Very often" or "Often."
- b. Combination of students responding "Very much" or "Quite a bit."
- c. Combination of students responding "Done" or "In Progress."
- d. Combination of students responding "Almost all" or "Most."
- e. Rated at least 6 on a 7-point scale.
- f. Estimate based on number of assigned writing tasks of various lengths.

# Highest/Lowest Performing Items: Seniors

## Senior

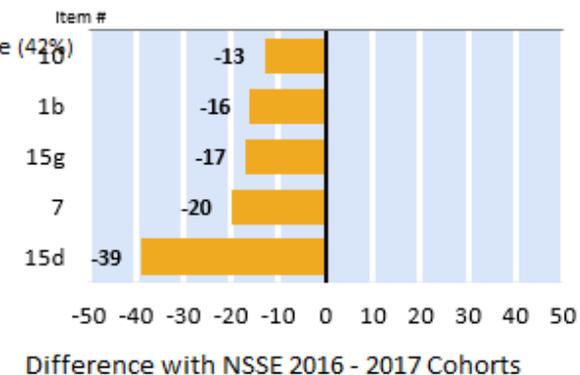
### Highest Performing Relative to NSSE 2016 and 2017 cohorts

- Held a formal leadership role in a student organization or group <sup>(84%)</sup>
- Completed a culminating senior experience (capstone, project, or thesis) <sup>(90%)</sup>
- Worked with a faculty member on a research project <sup>(53%)</sup>
- Developing or clarifying a personal code of values and ethics <sup>b (89%)</sup>
- Attending campus activities and events <sup>(78%)</sup>



### Lowest Performing Relative to NSSE 2016 and 2017 cohorts

- During the current school year, extent that your courses challenged you to do your best work <sup>e (42%)</sup>
- Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in <sup>a (28%)</sup>
- Sent more than 15 hours per week providing care for dependents (children, parents, etc.) <sup>(1%)</sup>
- Estimated number of assigned pages of student writing <sup>f (60 pages)</sup>
- Spent more than 15 hours per week working for pay off campus <sup>(2%)</sup>



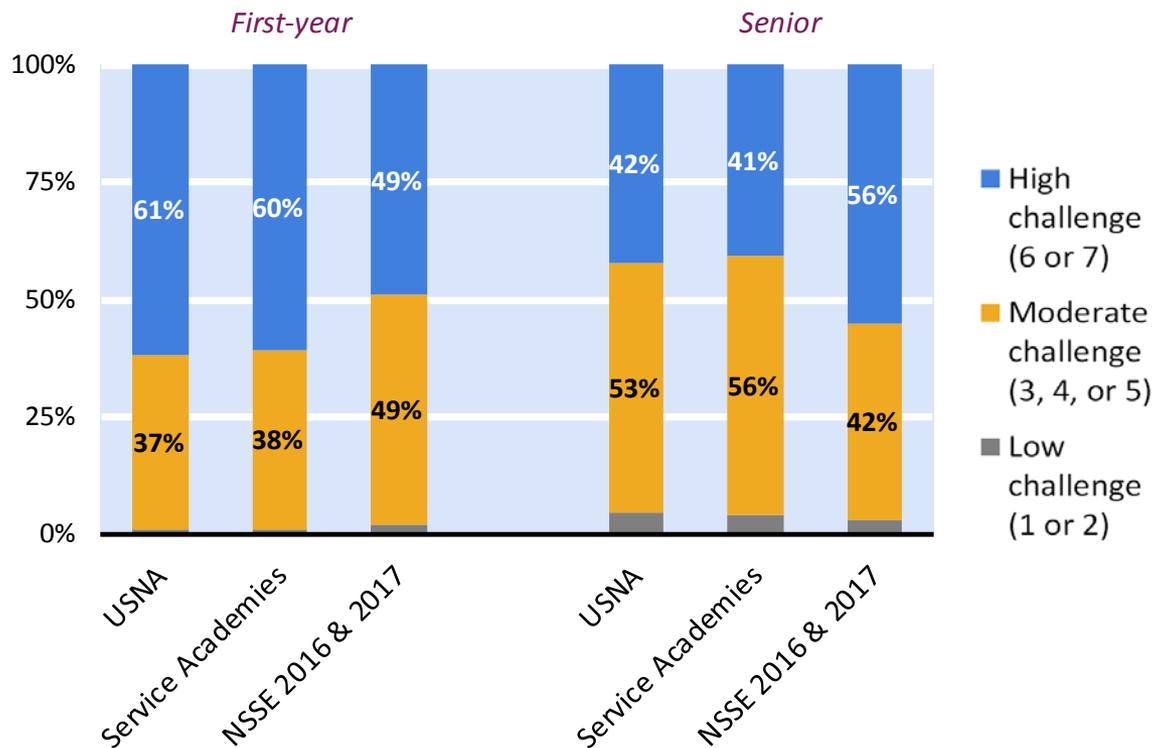
- a. Combination of students responding "Very often" or "Often."
- b. Combination of students responding "Very much" or "Quite a bit."
- c. Combination of students responding "Done" or "In Progress."
- d. Combination of students responding "Almost all" or "Most."
- e. Rated at least 6 on a 7-point scale.
- f. Estimate based on number of assigned writing tasks of various lengths.

# Challenging Students to Do Their Best Work



## Challenging Students to Do Their Best Work

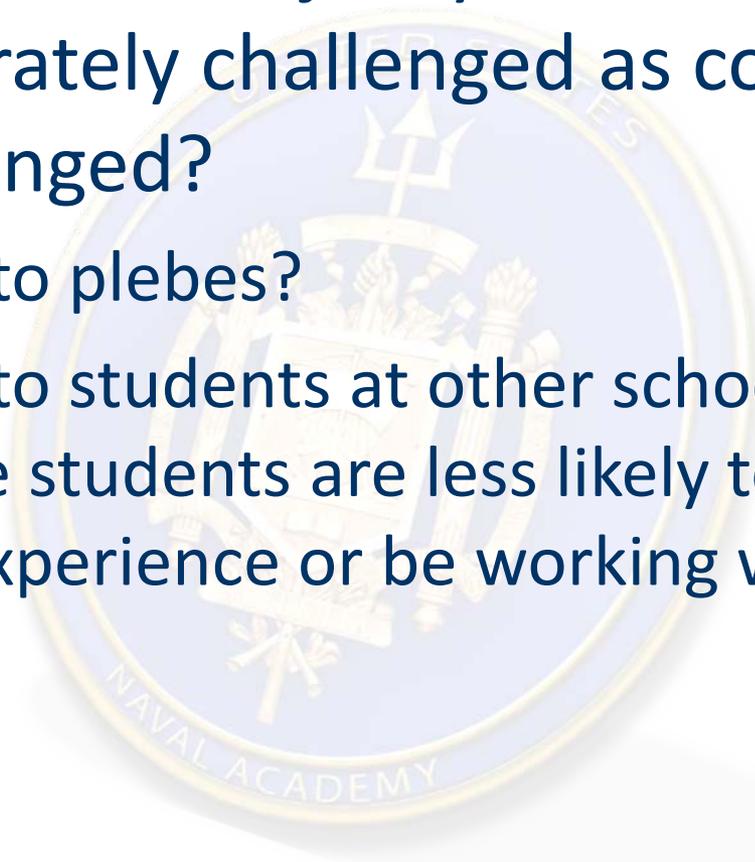
To what extent did students' courses challenge them to do their best work? Response options ranged from 1 = "Not at all" to 7 = "Very much."





???

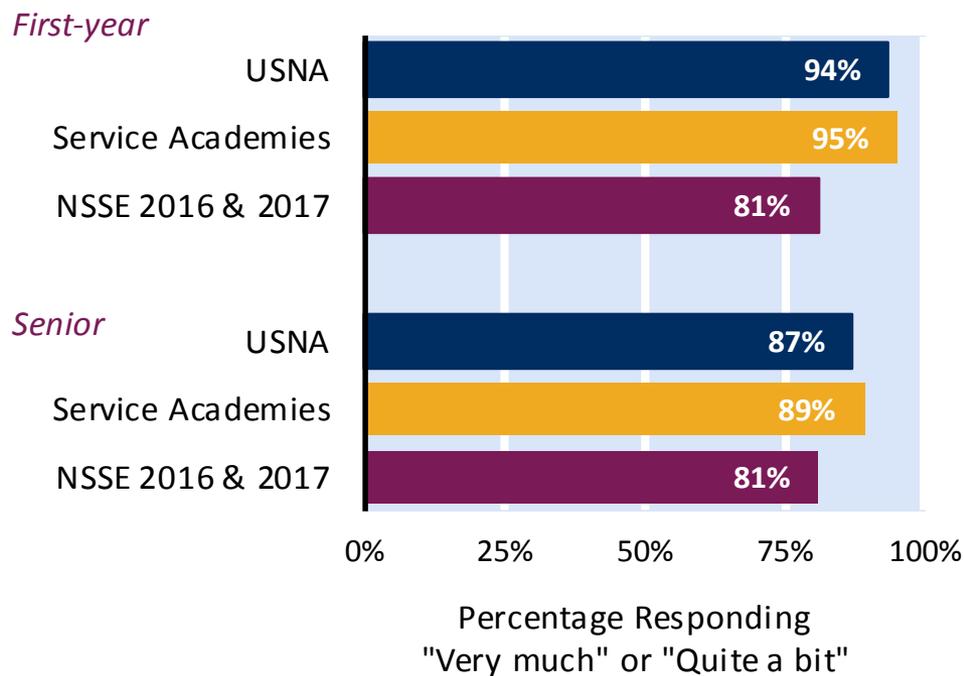
- Is it okay that the majority of the 1/C are being moderately challenged as compared to highly challenged?
  - Compared to plebes?
  - Compared to students at other schools—even when those students are less likely to have a capstone experience or be working with a faculty member?



# Academic Emphasis

## Academic Emphasis

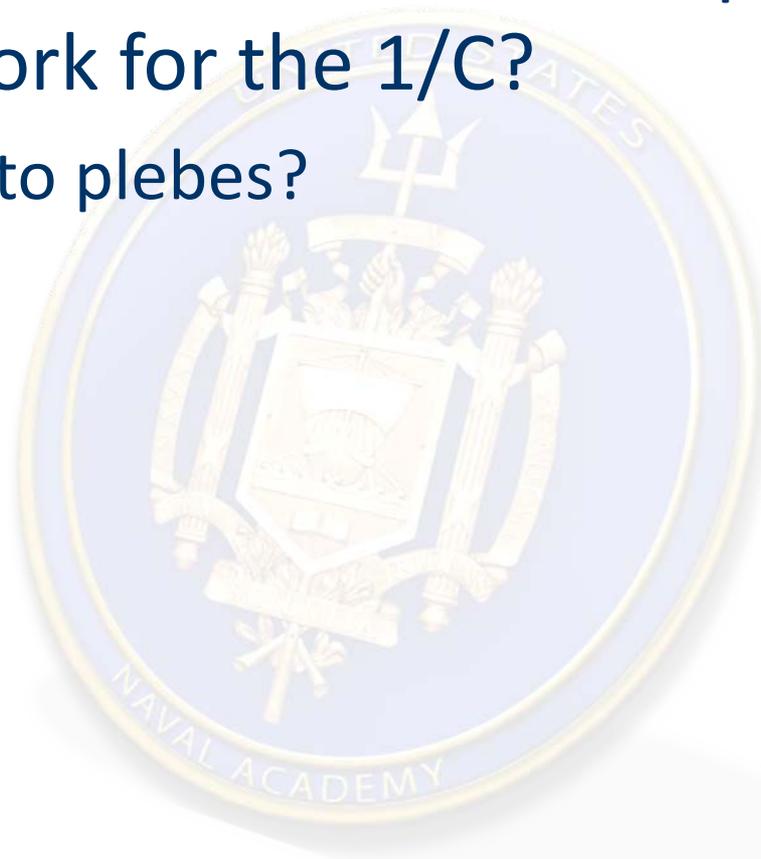
How much did students say their institution emphasizes spending significant time studying and on academic work? Response options included "Very much," "Quite a bit," "Some," and "Very little."





???

- Do we think that there is less emphasis on academic work for the 1/C?
  - Compared to plebes?

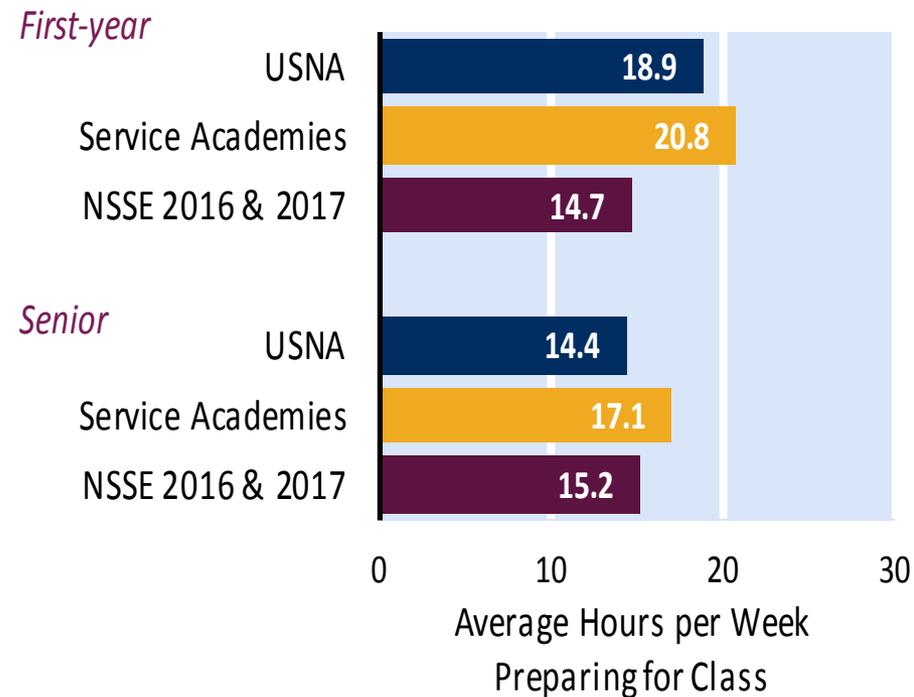




# Time Spent Preparing for Class

## Time Spent Preparing for Class

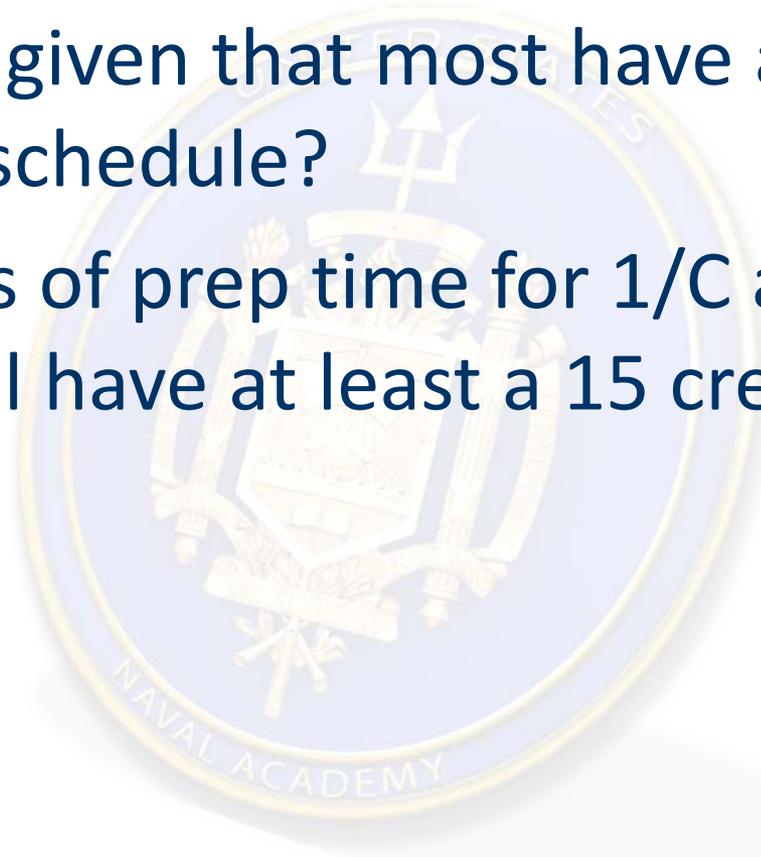
This figure reports the average weekly class preparation time for your students compared to students in your comparison group.





???

- Is 19 hours of class prep time for 4/C appropriate given that most have about an 18 credit hour schedule?
- Is 14.4 hours of prep time for 1/C appropriate given that all have at least a 15 credit hour schedule?



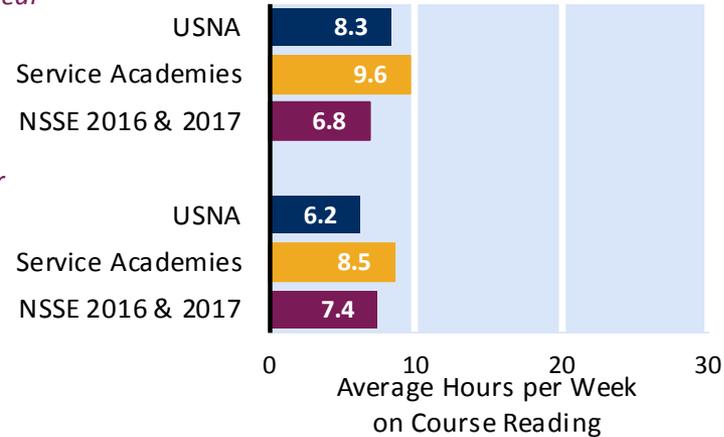


# Time Spent Reading and Writing

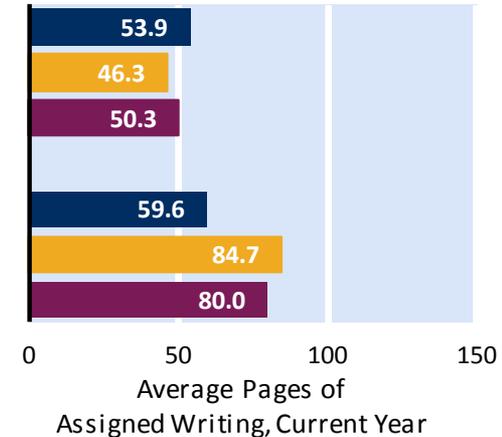
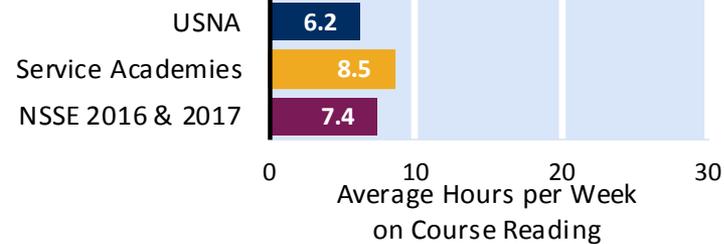
## Reading and Writing

These figures summarize the number of hours your students spent reading for their courses and the average number of pages of assigned writing compared to students in your comparison group. Each is an estimate calculated from two or more separate survey questions.

*First-year*



*Senior*





???

- Is the amount of time spent preparing for class by doing the readings appropriate? Are there other ways they may be preparing for class?
  - 8.3 4/C
  - 6.2 1/C
- Is the amount of writing taking place in the 1/C year surprising? Compared to the plebes, other service academies, other schools, and what we believe we know about 1/C workload?



# Perceived Gains Among Seniors

## Perceived Gains Among Seniors

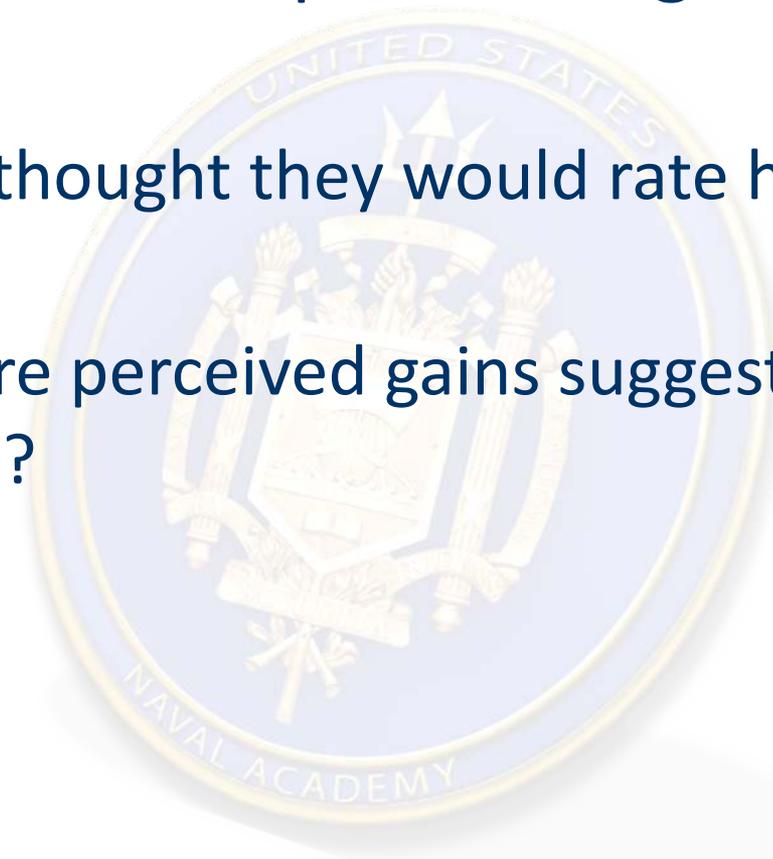
Students reported how much their experience at your institution contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in ten areas.

Perceived Gains (Sorted highest to lowest)	Percentage of Seniors Responding "Very much" or "Quite a bit"
Thinking critically and analytically	90%
Developing or clarifying a personal code of values and ethics	89%
Working effectively with others	87%
Speaking clearly and effectively	86%
Analyzing numerical and statistical information	83%
Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills	82%
Writing clearly and effectively	79%
Solving complex real-world problems	77%
Being an informed and active citizen	72%
Understanding people of other backgrounds (econ., racial/ethnic, polit., relig., nation., etc.)	71%



???

- Any surprises in the perceived gains among seniors?
  - Areas you thought they would rate higher or lower?
  - Areas where perceived gains suggest there is work to be done?

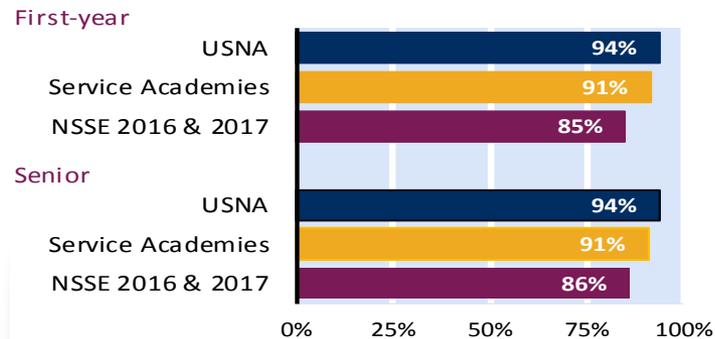


# Satisfaction with Institution

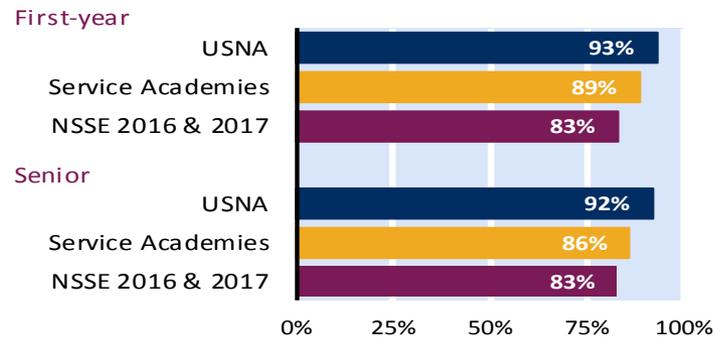
## Satisfaction with USNA

Students rated their overall experience at the institution, and whether or not they would choose

Percentage Rating Their Overall Experience as "Excellent" or "Good"



Percentage Who Would "Definitely" or "Probably" Attend This Institution Again





# Service Academy Consortium

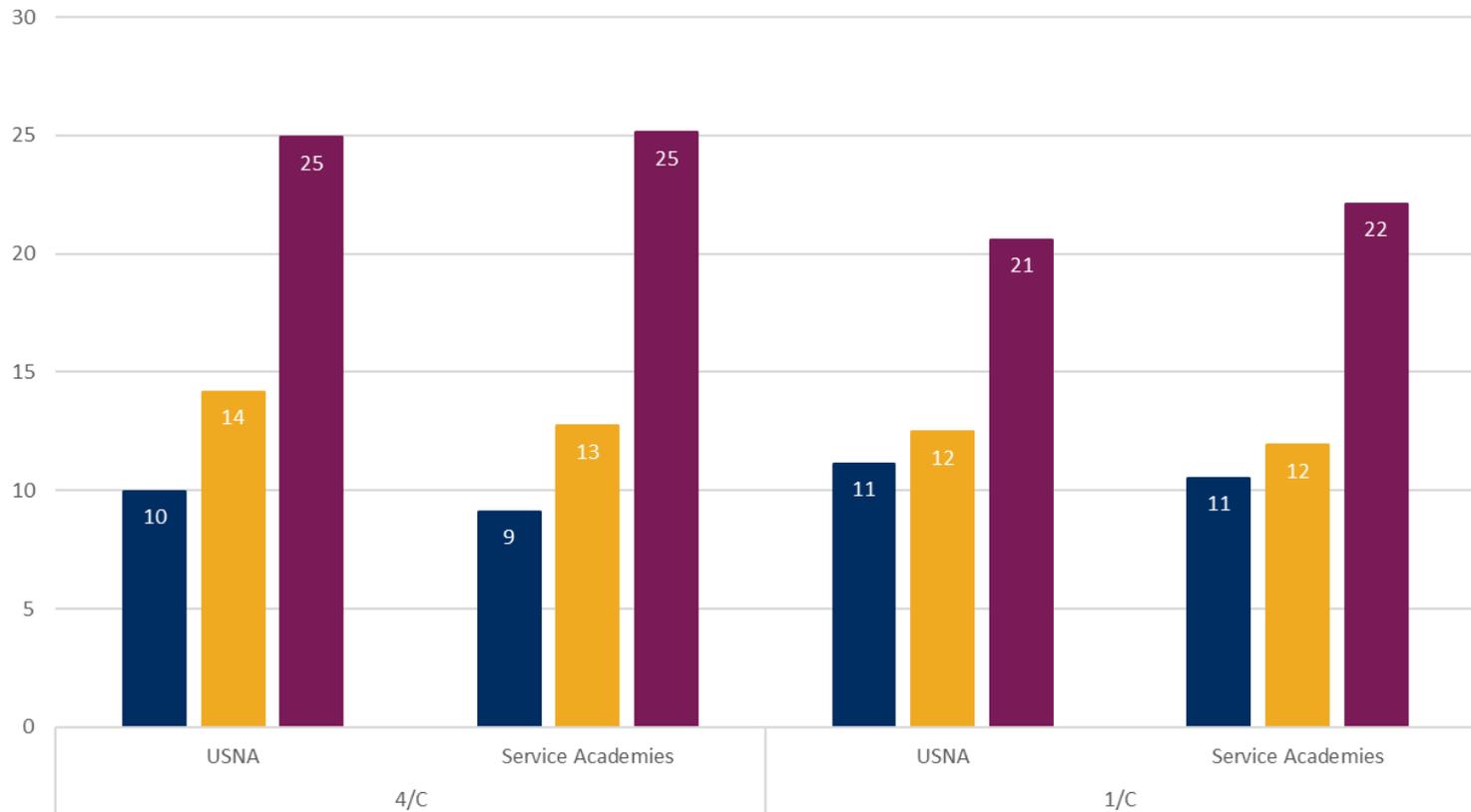
Aggregate of:

- United States Air Force Academy
  - (Colorado Springs, CO)
- United States Coast Guard Academy
  - (New London, CT)
- United States Merchant Marine Academy
  - (Kings Point, NY)
- United States Military Academy
  - (West Point, NY)

Caveat: Aggregate figures represent combined weighted scores for USAFA, UCGA, USMA, and USMMA. Considerable variation may exist between or within individual academies.

# How Time is Spent at the Service Academies

About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing the following?



- a. Military duties (including uniform preparation, mentoring subordinates in my unit, preparing for and completing inspections, completing required training, etc.)
- b. Athletics /Physical Fitness (including practicing with my club or IC team, intramurals, working out on my own time, travel time with the team or club, etc.)
- c. Academics (including attending class, preparing for class, studying, working on assignments, etc.)



???

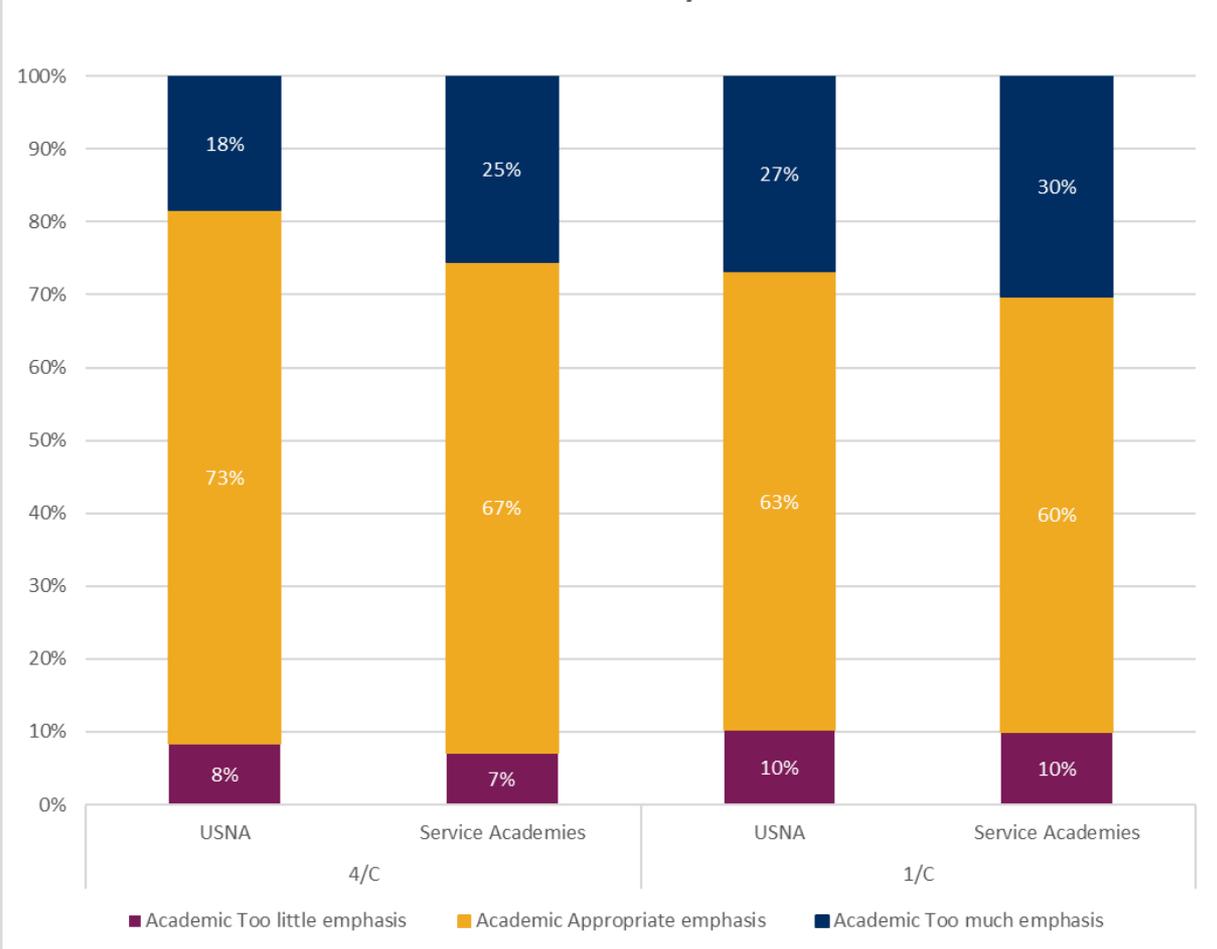
- Is this an appropriate amount of time for 1/C or 4/C to be spending on their USNA duties?





# Emphasis: Academics

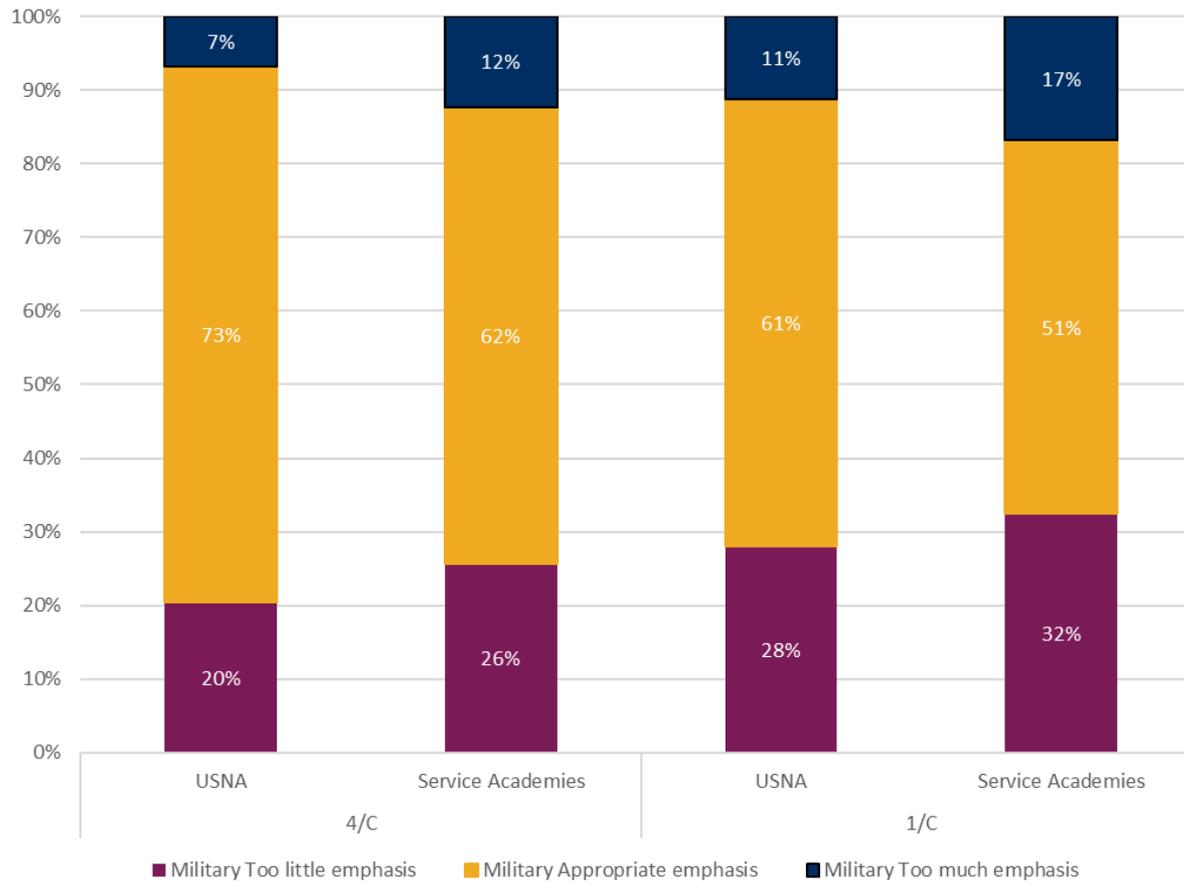
Military Academies must balance the emphasis on different experiences of cadet/midshipman life. Indicate how you perceive the ACADEMIC balance at your institution.





# Emphasis: Military

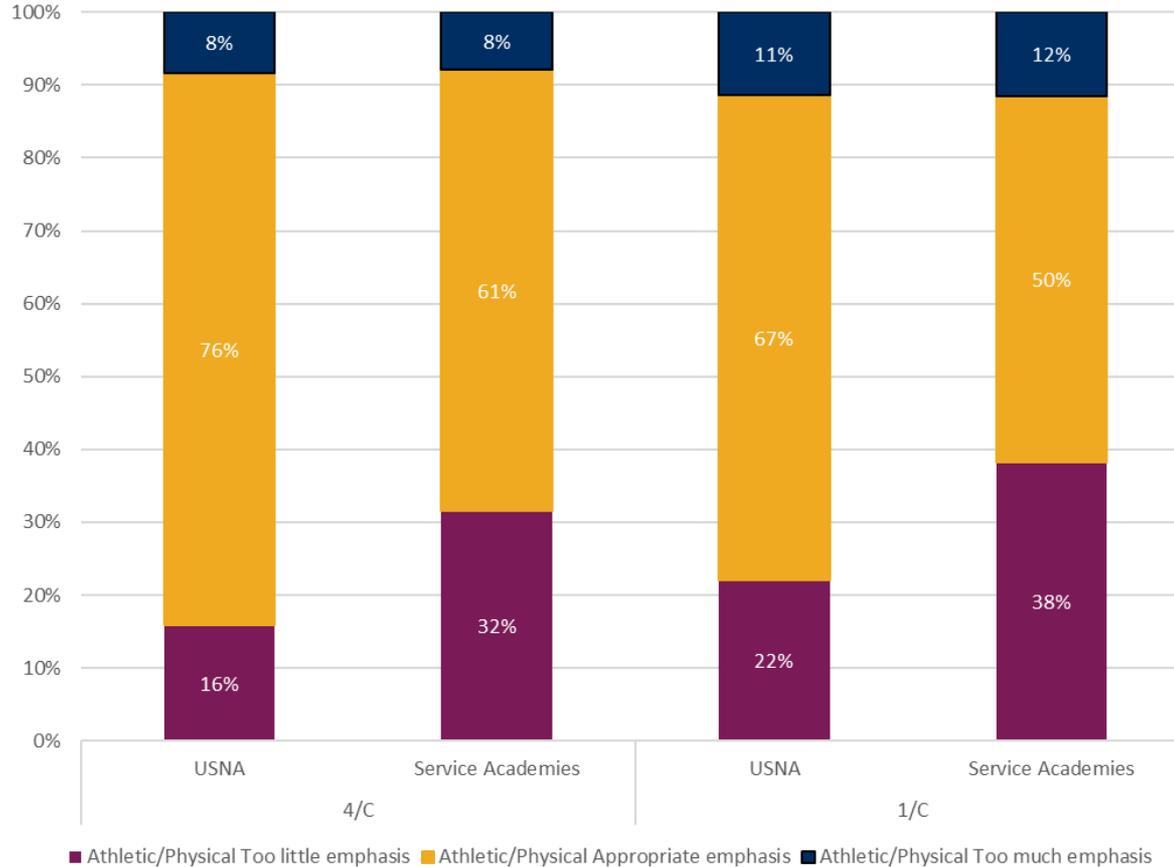
Military Academies must balance the emphasis on different experiences of cadet/midshipman life. Indicate how you perceive the MILITARY balance at your institution.





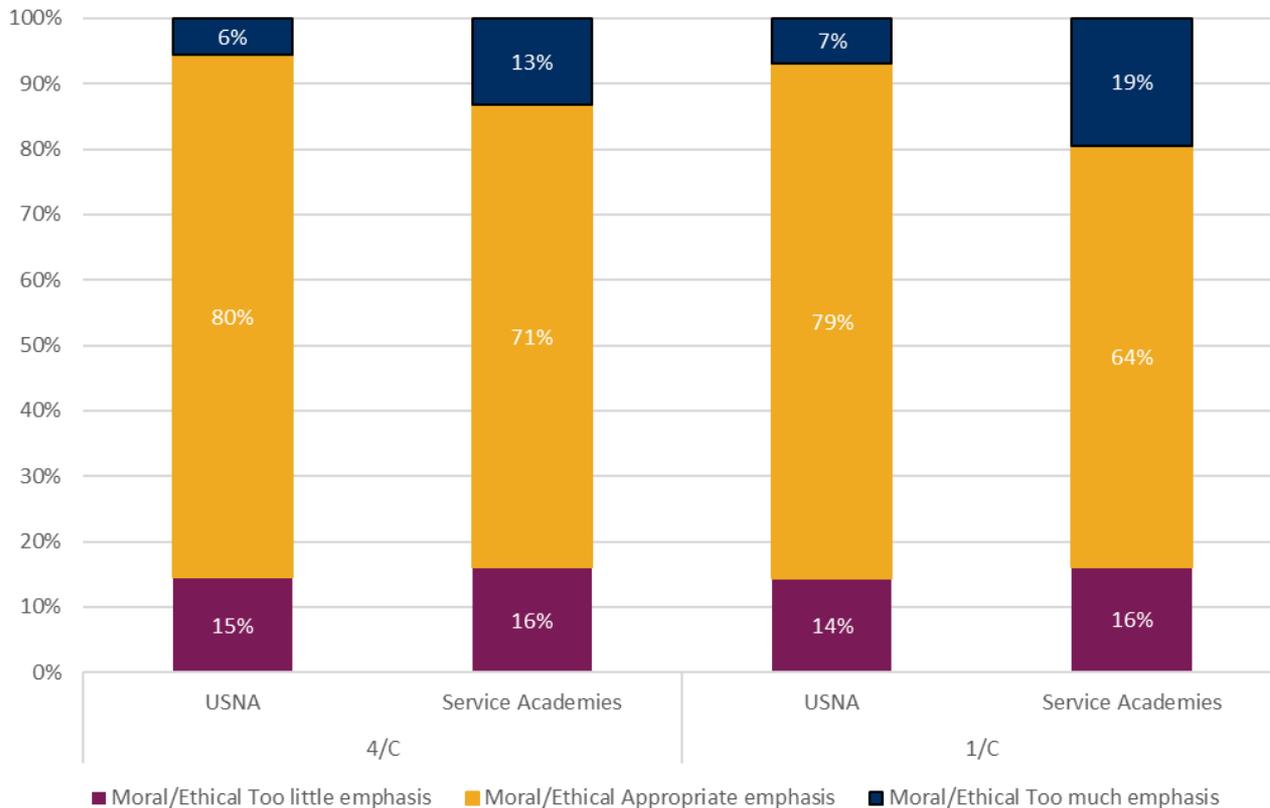
# Emphasis: Athletics/Physical Training

Military Academies must balance the emphasis on different experiences of cadet/midshipman life. Indicate how you perceive the ATHLETICS/PHYSICAL balance at your institution.



# Emphasis: Moral, Ethical, and Character Development

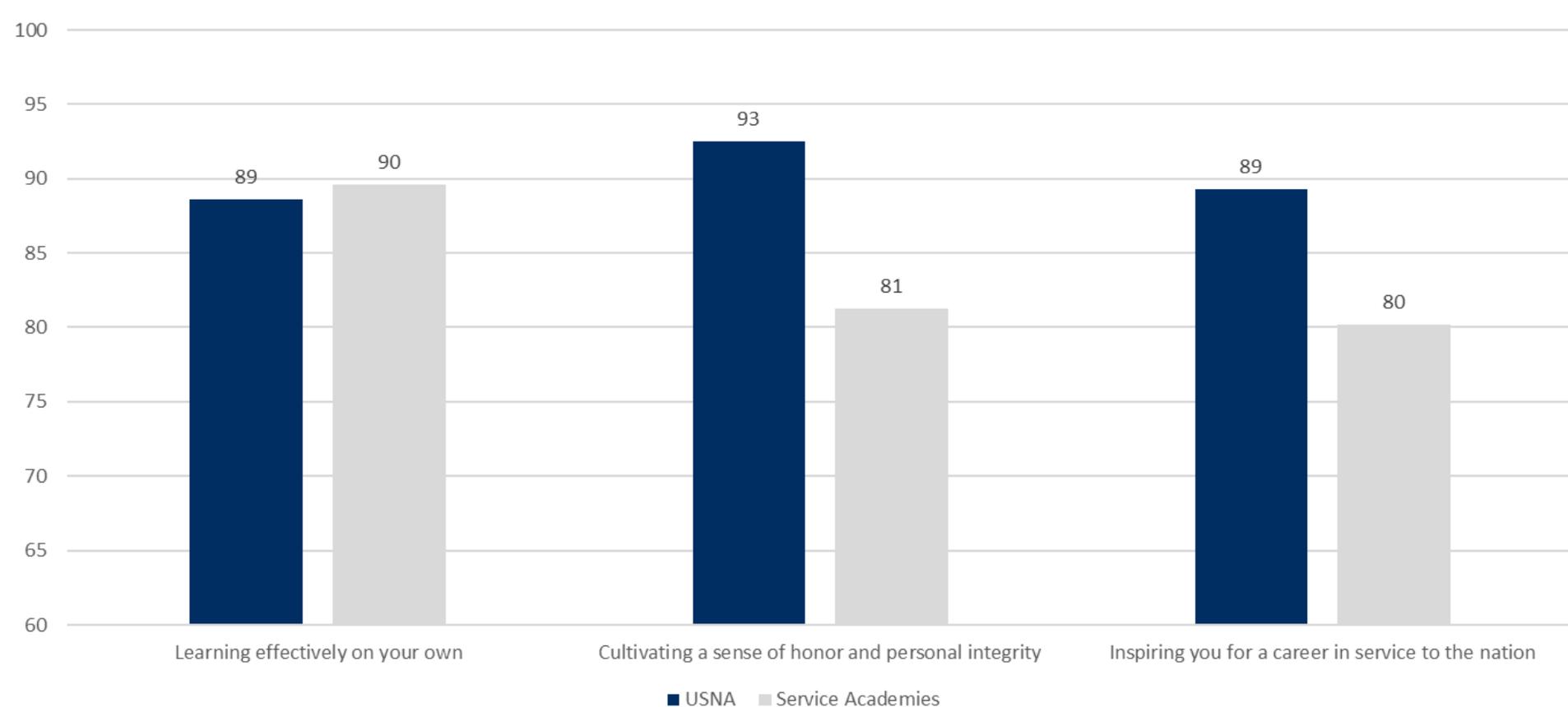
Military Academies must balance the emphasis on different experiences of cadet/midshipman life. Indicate how you perceive the MORAL/ETHICAL/CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT balance at your institution.





# Institutional Contributions

**1/C: To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?**  
(Percent Quite a Bit or Very Much)





# Selected Comments from 4/C

Describe your most significant learning experience:

- Seeing my superiors make mistakes and failures, and then consequently observing how they go about correcting them.
- ...Plebe Summer where I learned a little more about myself, my limits, military life and what kind of leader I would like to be.
- I learn every day by watching and examining my peers, teammates, classmates, teachers, and people I look up to. I look at how they handle challenging situations.... I look at the amount of effort they put into everything and how much they care.... This institute is extremely hard on Plebes and the most significant thing I have learned so far is time management, how to deal with failure, how to face adversity, and much more.



# Selected Comments from 1/C

Describe your most significant learning experience:

- ...learning to work with people of different races, religious backgrounds and political views in an professional environment. It was different being the minority by a great amount versus by approximately 10%.
- Opportunities to go interact with the fleet or people working in the real world in fleet cruise and internships. The academy is its own bubble and it is informative to see how other people in other bubbles (a ship or workplace) function and what is important to them.
- ...forming relationships with my professors in my major. Through interactions in class and EI over the years, I feel a deep respect and indebtedness.... I have had professors who not only believed in me but pushed me to achieve more.

# More USNA/NSSE Materials

Events Maps Directory A-Z IndexAdmin Midshipmen Faculty/Staff Support Activity

[DEPARTMENTS](#) [ACADEMICS](#) [COMMANDANT](#) [ATHLETICS](#) [LIBRARY](#)

[HOME](#) / [ACADEMICS](#) / [ACADEMIC DEAN](#) / [ASSESSMENT](#)

[ACADEMICS HOME](#)

[ACADEMIC DEAN >](#)

[ACADEMIC FACILITIES >](#)

[ACADEMIC RESOURCES](#)

[CALENDARS & EVENTS >](#)

[CANDIDATE INFORMATION >](#)

[FACULTY INFORMATION >](#)

[MAJORS & COURSES >](#)

[MIDSHIPMAN RESOURCES >](#)

[SPECIAL PROGRAMS >](#)

[REGISTRAR'S OFFICE](#)

## ACADEMICS



### National Surveys

#### National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

The NSSE is administered by the Center for Postsecondary Research, Indiana University School of Education. Student Engagement is measured by two crucial features of collegiate quality. The first is how time and effort students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities. The second is how Institutional resources, courses, and learning opportunities facilitate participation in activities relevant to student learning. Colleges and universities use the data to identify aspects of the undergraduate experience, inside and outside the classroom, which can be improved through changes in policies and practices.

- [NSSE Snapshot USNA 2017](#)
- [NSSE Snapshot USNA 2014](#)
- [NSSE Presentation 2014](#)
- [NSSE Snapshot USNA 2011](#)
- [NSSE Snapshot USNA 2008](#)

#### Contact Information

 [Dr. Katherine Cermak](mailto:kcermak@usna.edu)  
Associate Dean for Planning and Assessment

United States Naval Academy  
Nimitz Hall, Mail Stop 10g  
589 McNair Road  
Annapolis MD 21402

Phone: 410-293-1579 (DSN: 281-1579)  
Fax: 410-293-3735



# Thank You

Questions about

NSSE 2017 Administration and Items  
Service Academy Consortium

Other areas that we should explore

