

UW-MADISON UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC ENHANCEMENT EXPERIENCES

Clare Huhn
Academic Planning and Analysis, Office of the Provost

January 3, 2005

How many of our undergraduates have studied abroad? How many worked with faculty members on research projects? How many ever lived in one of the residential learning communities? Questions about academic enhancement experiences like these are frequent. The purpose of this study is to show how many of our graduates participated in these types of academic enhancement experiences. ***Results measuring the experiences that are identifiable through official records show that almost 3 in 4 (73%) bachelors degree recipients in 2003-04 had at least one academic enhancement experience. Forty-six percent (46%) had two or more.***

Defining and Quantifying Academic Enhancement Experiences

Linking experiences inside and outside the classroom, increasing student exposure to diversity, applying classroom knowledge to real-life experiences, conducting research with faculty members, working with faculty members in small groups, exploring individual areas of interest and living in a residential learning community are all believed to affect many outcome measures of interest to the higher education community such as persistence, degree attainment, interest in post-baccalaureate study, marketability after graduation, preparation for work and educational satisfaction¹.

This study's purpose is to measure those experiences that are objectively quantifiable through student academic records, course descriptions/titles, or other official records. The number of students having these types of experiences is likely higher than those able to be counted for this study because not all such experiences are part of a student's official record.

For the purposes of this study, "academic enhancement experiences" are defined as:

- Studying abroad through a UW-Madison program
- Living in a residential learning community
- Taking a service learning course
- Having an undergraduate research experience – measured by participation in the Research Fellows, Research Scholars, McNair, or Med Scholars programs, or taking a research or thesis course
- Participating in an "internship" type experience for academic credit
- Working closely with a faculty member in a seminar course, honors course, or independent study.

Specific definitions of the activities measured and the methodology used can be found at the end of this report.

A preliminary study of academic enhancement experiences was conducted last spring for bachelors degree recipients in 2002-03. That study found that 65% of these graduates had an academic enhancement experience. Since the preliminary report in March 2004, the methodology and definitions have changed slightly so the proportions are not directly comparable.

¹ Astin, A. What Matters in College, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993.

Percent of Graduates with Academic Enhancement Experiences: Table 1

In the 2003-04 academic year, more than 6,100 students completed undergraduate degrees. Of these graduates, 73% had at least one academic enhancement experience as defined for this analysis. Forty-six percent (46%) had two or more such experiences.

**Table 1
Number of Academic Enhancement Experiences for Bachelors Degree Recipients in 2003-04**

	Percent of Graduates by School/College									
	ALS	BUS	EDU	EGR	HEC	L&S	MED	NUR	PHM	Total
Zero	22	52	10	32	8	26	0	42	0	27
One	32	16	23	31	24	31	2	28	0	28
Two	21	21	18	22	27	21	30	19	64	22
Three	16	8	31	10	28	13	14	8	36	15
Four	5	3	13	3	10	6	2	3	0	6
Five or more	4	1	5	2	3	3	51	0	0	3
<i>Total One or More Experiences</i>	<i>78</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>73</i>
Total Degrees	434	627	481	637	352	3,449	43	110	11	6,144

Note: Graduates with multiple occurrences of the same experience are counted once. For example, a graduate who did two internships would be in the "one experience" category. A graduate who did 2 internships and also studied abroad would be in the "2 experiences" category.

Types of Academic Enhancement Experiences: Table 2

By far, the most common academic enhancement experiences of these types were taking at least one independent study or seminar course. More than 1 in 3 graduates (35%) took at least one independent study course and a similar proportion (34%) took at least one seminar course. Nineteen percent (19%) took at least one honors course and the same proportion had some kind of field work experience (internship, practicum, co-op etc.). Fourteen percent (14%) of graduates in 2003-04 studied abroad, 11% lived in a residential learning community and 10% had at least one type of undergraduate research experience.

There are differences by school/college in participation rates for the various academic enhancement experiences. For example, graduates receiving degrees from the School of Business had the highest study abroad participation rates (26%) but the lowest participation rates in field work experiences (5%). Graduates receiving degrees from the School of Education had relatively high rates of participation in field work (64%) but lower participation in undergraduate research (1%).

Table 2
Types of Academic Enhancement Experiences for Bachelors Degree Recipients in 2003-04

	Percent of Graduates by School/College									
	ALS	BUS	EDU	EGR	HEC	L&S	MED	NUR	PHM	Total
Study Abroad	9	26	10	9	5	16	2	5	0	14
Residential Learning Community	12	9	9	12	5	12	0	8	0	11
Service Learning Course	12	1	5	0	30	4	56	3	0	6
Research Experience (Unduplicated)	12	28	1	3	3	10	0	15	0	10
Research Fellows Program	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Research Scholars Program	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
McNair Program	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Medical Scholars	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Research Course	4	28	0	2	1	3	0	5	0	5
Thesis Course	8	0	0	1	2	7	0	10	0	5
Field Work (Unduplicated)	10	5	64	38	63	8	98	8	0	19
Clerkship	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clinical	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Co-op	0	0	0	33	0	0	0	0	0	4
Preceptor	0	0	0	0	0	0	58	0	0	0
Student Teaching	0	0	44	0	2	1	0	0	0	4
Practicum	9	0	64	6	3	3	98	8	0	9
Internship	0	5	1	0	60	5	0	0	0	7
Honors Course	21	10	9	13	8	25	5	14	36	19
Independent Study	42	12	41	34	47	37	60	30	100	35
Seminar Course	46	5	43	15	55	37	93	19	100	34
Total Degrees	434	627	481	637	352	3,449	43	110	11	6,144

Note: Graduates with multiple occurrences of the same experience are counted once. For example, a graduate who did two internships would be in the "one experience" category. A graduate who did 2 internships and also studied abroad would be in the "2 experiences" category.

Graduates with One Academic Enhancement Experience: Table 3

The graduates with one and only one type of academic enhancement experience were most likely to have taken an independent study course (31%). The next most common experiences for these graduates was taking a seminar course (28%), taking an honors course (11%), and living in a residential learning community (7%).

The most common experiences are highlighted in **bold** and show differences by school/college. The most common academic enhancement experience for graduates with one type of experience in the School of Human Ecology and the College of Engineering were field work (internship and co-op). The most common academic enhancement experience for graduates with one type of experience in all other schools/colleges was with either an independent study or seminar course.

Table 3
Bachelors Degree Recipients in 2003-04 with One Academic Enhancement Experience

	Percent of Graduates by School/College									
	ALS	BUS	EDU	EGR	HEC	L&S	MED	NUR	PHM	Total
Study Abroad	5	5	5	3	2	9	0	3		7
RLC	1	15	0	4	2	5	0	10		5
Service Learning Course	12	5	2	1	5	2	0	0		3
Research Experience										
Medical Scholars	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Research Course	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	0		1
Thesis Course	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0		1
Field Work										
Co-op	0	0	0	41	0	0	0	0		5
Student Teaching	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Practicum	6	0	27	6	0	1	0	3		4
Internship	0	14	0	0	61	3	0	0		5
Honors	4	13	7	8	2	13	0	10		11
Independent Study	28	26	55	30	21	30	0	52		31
Seminar	41	10	5	10	6	35	100	23		28
Total with One Experience	138	100	109	200	84	1,075	1	31	0	1,738

Note: Graduates with multiple occurrences of the same experience are counted once.

Co-occurrence of Academic Enhancement Experiences: Table 4

For the 46% of graduates who had more than one type of academic enhancement experience, Table 4 shows the most common experience co-occurrences. For example, 133 graduates studied abroad AND lived in a residential learning community. The most frequent co-occurrence was taking a seminar course and taking an independent study course. Other more frequent co-occurrences included taking an honors course and an independent study course, taking an honors course and a seminar course, and taking a seminar course and doing field work of some type.

Table 4
Co-occurrence of Academic Enhancement Experiences
for Bachelors Degree Recipients in 2003-04

	Study Abroad	Resid. Learning Comm.	Service Learning Course	Research Exper.	Field Work	Honors Course	Indep. Study	Seminar Course
Study Abroad		133	31	237	129	231	359	333
Resid. Learning Community			27	118	109	267	371	271
Service Learning Course				16	172	46	146	196
Research Experience					46	343	281	299
Field Work						129	475	501
Honors Course							567	557
Independent Study								888
Seminar Course								

Note: Graduates with multiple occurrences of the same experience are counted once. Research experience includes research fellows/scholars, the McNair and Med Scholars program participants, and research and thesis courses. Field work experiences include internships, practica, co-ops, student teaching, preceptorships, clerkships, and courses with names like "professional experience in...." that describe an internship-type experience.

DEFINITION OF TERMS AND TECHNICAL NOTES

Study Abroad

Definition: Bachelors degree recipients who had a record indicating at least one semester abroad. This only includes students who studied abroad through UW-Madison-sponsored programs. We estimate that approximately 5% of UW-Madison bachelors degree recipients had a study abroad experience through another college or university. Measures have recently been implemented to capture the non-UW-Madison experiences; however, these measures were not available for the most recent graduating class.

Source: UW.RETENTION_SEMESTER_HISTORY data view.

Residential Learning Community

Definition: Bachelors degree recipients who had a University Housing record indicating they had ever lived in one of the following residential learning communities: Bradley Learning Community, Chadbourne Residential College, Women in Science and Engineering (WISE – Elizabeth Waters Hall).

Source: Division of University Housing records

Service Learning Course

Definition: Bachelors degree recipients who ever took a course (or course section) that was indicated to have some kind of service learning, volunteer, community service or other such experience. *Course examples: Agricultural and Applied Economics, Course 340 – Issues in Food Systems, Afro-American Studies, Course 151 – Introduction to Contemporary African American Society.*

Source: ISIS Class Notes Table, UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY data view

Comments: This only encompasses *courses* identified as having a service learning component – there are numerous non-course-based opportunities for students to engage in service learning and/or community service. In the 2004 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), 34% of seniors said that they had participated in service learning as part of a regular course.

There is no searchable field in the Timetable for service learning courses. Students are notified of a service-learning component in the class footnote section of the Timetable and it is this field that was used to develop the list of service learning courses for this analysis. There are several examples of courses that are believed to have a service learning component that are not identified as such in the Timetable. These were not included in this analysis. The Provost's Office and Morgridge Center for Public Service are working with the Registrar's Office to determine the feasibility of implementing a better means of identifying service learning courses for students. Since service learning courses often have a significant time commitment outside of class, it is important that students understand this commitment when registering. Furthermore, students who are seeking a service learning course currently must look through the Timetable for notes about classes – there is no searchable field. Once a better system of identifying these courses is implemented, the analytical opportunities for examining service-learning course participation will also be enhanced.

Undergraduate Research Experience (non course-based)

Definition: Bachelors degree recipients who have a student group record showing participation in one of the many undergraduate opportunities for research with faculty members outside of class. The groups included in this analysis were participants in the undergraduate research fellows and scholars, McNair, and Medical Scholars programs.

Source: <http://www.provost.wisc.edu/undergradresearch/>, UW.RETENTION_STDNT_GROUP_HIST data view

Comments: In this analysis, 2% of bachelors degree recipients can be identified as having such an experience. This is much lower than the 25% of seniors that reported in the 2004 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) that they had worked on a “research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements”. Many of the experiences that students may have identified on the

NSSE are the types of experiences that are not part of their official student records such as student hourly employment in research labs.

Undergraduate Research Course (non-thesis)

Definition: Bachelors degree recipients who ever took a course with the term “research” in the title/description where research/lab opportunities with faculty members are highlighted. *Course examples: Religious Studies 697 – Independent Research for Majors, L&S Interdisciplinary Course 250 – Undergraduate Research Experience.*

Source: UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY data view

Comments: In this analysis, 5% of bachelors degree recipients took such a class. This is much lower than the 32% of seniors that reported in the 2003 Undergraduate Student Survey that they had “participated in research with a faculty member...(for) academic credit” during the current year. Many of the students who took an independent study course were participating in research with faculty members. These experiences have been reported in the independent study category.

Undergraduate Thesis Course

Definition: Bachelors degree recipients who ever took a course with “thesis” in the course title. These are generally courses numbered 681, 682, 691 and 692.

Source: UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY data view

Field Work

Definition: Bachelors degree recipients who ever took a course with the term internship, co-op, practicum etc, in the title/description and courses of this nature identified by a course type of “field work” in the Timetable. *Course examples: Women’s Studies 660 – Internship in Women’s Studies, Plant Pathology 399 – Coordinative Internship/Cooperative Education.*

Source: UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY data view.

Comments: In this analysis, 19% of bachelors degree recipients can be identified as having taken such a class. This is much lower than the 54% of seniors who reported on the 2004 National Survey of Student Engagement (2004) that they had had such as experience. The question on the NSSE did not specify “for credit” and also did not specifically define the experiences. These definitional differences may help explain the differences in the proportion of students who participated in field work.

Independent Study Course

Definition: Bachelors degree recipients who ever took a course identified by the section type as independent study. These are generally courses that end in “89”, “98” and “99” including 100 and 200-level courses.

Source: UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY data view.

Comments: In this analysis, 35% of bachelors degree recipients can be identified as having taken an independent study course. This is higher than the 24% of seniors who reported on the 2004 National Survey of Student Engagement (2004) that they had had taken such a course.

Seminar Course

Definition: Bachelors degree recipients who ever took a course identified by the section type as a seminar. *Course examples: Psychology 211 – Freshman Seminar in Psychology, Management and Human Resources 470 – Seminar in Organizational Issues.*

Source: UW.RETENTION_COURSE_HISTORY data view