

NEWS RELEASE



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CONTACT

Orna Duggan, Director of Institutional Research and Planning
Wilfrid Laurier University
519-884-1970 ext. 4340 or oduggan@wlu.ca

Kevin Crowley, Director, Communications & Public Affairs
Wilfrid Laurier University
519-884-0710 ext. 3070 or kcrowley@wlu.ca

NSSE results affirm Laurier's reputation for excellent student experience

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University continues to excel at providing students with a positive university experience, according to results from the 2011 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).

The results support Laurier's "integrated and engaged" learning model, which provides students with an effective mix of in-class and experiential learning opportunities, Laurier officials said.

The university met or exceeded the provincial average in each of the five categories covered by the survey, achieving particularly high scores on questions related to integrated learning. In addition, 88 per cent of first-year respondents and 85 per cent of final-year students rated their overall educational experience at Laurier as good or excellent. This was significantly better than the provincial average of 82 per cent for first-year and 77 per cent for final-year students.

"Laurier has always been a leader when it comes to the student experience," said Max Blouw, the university's president and vice-chancellor. "We take pride in continuing to uphold our standards of excellence in this area, and believe our students are both enjoying their time here and graduating from the university well prepared for successful and purposeful lives."

Laurier's integrated and engaged learning model is an educational philosophy that combines classroom learning with applied experiential learning opportunities, whether in the form of co-op, internships, collaborative research, community-service learning or other opportunities. Responses to a number of individual questions on the survey underscored the university's emphasis on this approach:

- Seventy per cent of Laurier's senior students reported participating in community service or volunteer work, against a provincial average of 54 per cent.
- Twenty-eight per cent of first-year students and 34 per cent of seniors at the university spent more than five hours per week participating in co-curricular activities, against provincial averages of 19 and 23 per cent.
- Seventy-nine per cent of first-year students and 68 per cent of seniors said the university provides substantial support for academic success, against provincial averages of 71 and 58 per cent.

"It's very gratifying to see these results, which are an affirmation of Laurier's distinctive approach to the overall student experience," said David McMurray, the university's vice-president: Student Affairs. "Creating learning conditions that motivate and inspire students to engage is key, because it makes them ready to hit the ground running when they graduate. They have the teamwork, leadership and communication skills to succeed in the workplace and in their lives."

Laurier's results in this year's study were consistent with the positive scores the university received when it participated in the survey in 2006 and 2008, noted Orna Duggan, Laurier's

director of Institutional Research and Planning. Duggan's team is currently analyzing the results of the study and will prepare a report to be released in 2012 designed to support continuous improvements in the university's performance.

"The NSSE is one of the best measures of outcomes for students we have available," Duggan said. "There is a robustness to the methodology and data that means we should pay attention. We take it seriously, and will use it to get a better understanding of how we are doing on behalf of our students and how we can improve."

The NSSE is administered annually and is used to gauge the level of student participation and satisfaction at universities and colleges in Canada and the United States. Its 82 questions are designed to reflect empirically confirmed "good practices" in undergraduate education, and are organized into the following five categories: level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student/faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences and supportive campus environment.

A total of 761 schools participated in the survey in 2011, including 20 universities across Ontario.