



**BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY**

**INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

## NSSE 2022 Analysis of Comments

The 2022 NSSE survey asked respondents an open-ended question, “Please describe the most significant learning experience you have had so far at this institution.”

Out of 1,662 students who responded to the NSSE survey, 661 responded to this item. There were 206 responses from first-year students and 455 responses from seniors. Each response was coded for up to three topical areas; as such, percentages/figures do not add to 100%. Some comments have been edited to protect anonymity but are otherwise unedited.

On the whole, the tone of the comments were ***mostly positive (89%)***, with categories breaking out this way:

<b>Code</b>	<b>Total</b>
High Impact Practices (HIPs)	133
Curriculum (specific class)	115
Curriculum (general)	88
Supportive faculty	75
Curriculum (hands on)	65
Life changing / personal development	63
Miscellaneous	64
Employment & career aspects (new)	46
Development of study skills	40
Development of social skills	28
Extracurricular activities	26
Working in groups with other students	23
Work (current employment)	22
Curriculum (pedagogical elements)	20
Social life	17
Diversity	8
Campus resources	8
Curriculum (integration across courses)	6

The most common positive comments spoke to participation in one of six different kinds of **High Impact Practices** ( $n = 133$ ), and many of these comments cross-pollinated with subthemes relating to hands-on learning, future employment prospects, or personal/professional development:

- The most significant learning experience I have had so far at this school is the internship that I am currently involved in through Boise State. I have learned so many great things about what I want to do

as a career. It has really helped me understand everything that goes into planning a sporting event and everything that goes into it to set it up, during the event, and afterwards.

- Doing the study abroad semester taught me much more than anything so far. My professors had smaller classes that helped with understanding materials more. It was also a great personal growth experience

A second common theme was to address the **benefits of a specific class** (or closely related set of classes identified clearly;  $n = 115$ ). Again, many of these classes overlapped with other themes, such as the supportive faculty, other aspects of the curriculum more broadly.

- [M]y UF Cities of Tomorrow course. In that class I learned about the expansion of Boise and what that means economically, culturally, and environmentally. I got to explore the city and find concepts that we learned in class in the real world in the city I've lived in my whole life and never took in consideration of how those concepts have affected my life.
- Ethics 430 was incredible! I learned so much about how others view my profession and how we can view each other. Also the difficulty in no win situations.

A third pool of comments also mentioned made **broader, general remarks regarding the curriculum**, be it in their specific major/program or the university at large ( $n = 88$ ); sometimes these comments helped them to adjust professionally or personally:

- It's impossible for me to pin down one experience. I've learned A LOT from all my classes and various experiences. Two of the most 'life-changing' if you want to say that are when I studied abroad in South Korea and when I took a class on American Renaissance literature.
- [M]y most significant learning experience has been the screenwriting and playwriting classes which have been the most valuable environment for my growth as a filmmaker.

Another important theme emphasized the role of **supportive faculty** outside aspects of the curriculum content itself ( $n = 75$ ):

- I would say my most significant learning experience is the support I got from my professors when a close family member of mine passed away. They allowed me to take my time catching up on assignments.
- As a non-traditional student, I learned more new material from the chemistry courses required for my degree track. The professors in my two general chemistry classes went out of their way to make the topic engaging and comprehensible to everyone.

Another group of comments addressed the **hands-on** aspects of **curricula** ( $n = 65$ ):

- The most significant learning experience I have had so far at this institution was my Comparative Vertebrate Anatomy course. I was a lot of material in a short time with an extensive lab where we dissected a neotoma, cat, shark, and another animal that I cannot remember. It was very tactile and a lot of self teaching (*sic*) not because of the professor but because of the amount of material. I learned a lot about my learning styles and how to explain things that are hard for me to learn.
- The most significant learning experience I have had so far at this institution is learning how to code, and then apply this analysis to a research paper on my own. I was challenged to come up with a proposal, find data, analyze that data with the technology I had learned in that class, very similarly to a research project in the real world. I experienced how frustrating it is to work with real life data and

how there are difficulties to overcome. I also learned how to time manage the tasks I needed to complete in order to finish the presentation and paper in around 5 weeks.

Students also discussed how their Boise State experience produced significant **personal development and life changes** ( $n = 63$ ):

- I think the most significant learning experience I have had so far at this institution is probably two different things. One being, it is okay to be alone and it is okay to find comfort in the discomfort. And I think the other significant learning experience I have had would probably be, it is okay to fail. If we do not fail as people we will have nothing to learn and thus grow from.
- I had to learn how to code with zero experience for one of my classes, and ended up teaching myself most of what I learned for that class my first semester. I felt like this helped me realize how persistent I can be when I set my mind to something. Also, since I plan on going into a tech field, I'm going to have to constantly learn and adapt to new technology, so this proved to myself that I could do that.

A noteworthy new code that emerged in 2022 was discussion about the role of their significant learning experience in preparing them for **future employment/career** ( $n = 46$ ):

- The most significant learning experience from this that I have had so far from this institution would probably be learning how to effectively work in groups in my marketing research class, marketing applications class, and international marketing class. These classes all focused on extensive group work. Learning how to coordinate everyone's schedules and work effectively was very important for my future career.
- My most significant learning experience has been this final semester's capstone project. It helped me realize what I would like to do post graduation (*sic*) and has connected me with other students who are excited to graduate and enter the work force. Having dedicated and hard working (*sic*) students to meet with twice a week has improved my overall experience in school and it makes me wish I had a group of smart people to work with like this right off the bat. The University likely has a way of doing this as a freshman but because I transferred from a different University during COVID-19 I missed out on this type of experience and didn't have friends within my major until now.

Finally, there were fewer negative comments about Boise State in 2022 (~11%) compared to 2018 (17%). The largest category ( $n = 22$ ) was a collection of miscellaneous and often personal issues (e.g., personal challenges; general campus climate; social settings). The remaining categories related to issues with faculty and coursework ( $n = 12$ ); navigating various offices around campus ( $n = 11$ ); and, in a small number of cases, challenges related to COVID-19 ( $n = 11$ ):

Misc: "Definitely just being an online student in general was a huge struggle. I was a high school dropout all the way back in 2003 and haven't even used a computer really, so learning how to do this was extremely difficult."

Faculty: "Math was good, chemistry was good until \_\_, and the professors that ask me to learn the material outside of class are the worst. I pay to have them teach me, not vice (*sic*) versa. I just realized that I can't depend on the professors all the time to help me."

COVID: "When covid hit, trying to figure out how to do all my work online was a significant learning curve."