



UNIVERSITY OF  
**TORONTO**

# **Results of the National Survey of Student Engagement 2017**

University of Toronto – July 2018

## Introduction

This report provides an overview of the University of Toronto (U of T) findings from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) administered between February and March 2017. U of T participated in NSSE in 2004, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2017 along with all Ontario universities and many Canadian and US universities. This report provides a broad overview of the findings from this survey. Over the next couple of years a series of customized report will be provided to Faculties and departments.

## Understanding Student Experience at the University of Toronto

Providing high-quality student experiences is a priority at U of T. In his Installation Address in November 2013, President Meric Gertler highlighted “re-inventing undergraduate education” as one of his top three priorities for the University. This commitment includes helping our students maximize the value of their education, preparing them for a lifetime of success, and equipping them with tools to contribute in meaningful ways to society and the world ([www.president.utoronto.ca/speeches/installationaddress](http://www.president.utoronto.ca/speeches/installationaddress)).

Further, the Strategic Mandate Agreement between the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and The University of Toronto articulates many priority areas for the institution, including entrepreneurship, experiential and work-integrated learning, international opportunities, learning communities, the co-curricular record, and providing access to programs for a diverse student population (<https://www.utoronto.ca/about-u-of-t/reports-and-accountability>). Similarly, *Towards 2030*, the University’s long-term planning framework provides many recommendations, such as the promotion of learning communities, increased communication between faculty and students, opportunities for undergraduate research, and possibilities for international experiences ([www.towards2030.utoronto.ca/synth.html](http://www.towards2030.utoronto.ca/synth.html)).

The results from the NSSE survey, along with other metrics, serve as an important resource for the U of T in both understanding student experiences and identifying opportunities for growth and support.

## About the National Survey of Student Engagement

The NSSE survey was developed in 1999 by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research to assess the quality of the educational experience. Since its launch in 2000, more than 1,500 four-year institutions in Canada and the US have participated in NSSE. In 2017, approximately 517,000 students completed the survey in 725 colleges and universities in Canada and the US, including all 22 Ontario universities and our peer Canadian universities (U15).

NSSE is not a satisfaction survey. Rather, it provides institutions with data on student participation and engagement in activities that support learning and personal development. The survey seeks to understand what types of academic, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities students participate in, along with understanding their relationships with faculty, staff and peers. NSSE also provides institutions with important information on how students spend their time, what influences affect their ability to participate meaningfully, and how they perceive the skills and knowledge they are gaining from their university experience.

# U of T's Interpretation of Results

NSSE provides U of T with institutional reports that allow us to make consistent comparisons to our peers. The detailed reports contain data on each of the Themes and Engagement Indicators, indicating significance and effect size, both of which are key to understanding our results when comparing with our peers.

## Our two comparison groups are:

**1** Peer Canadian universities (U15). The most relevant group of institutions for our peer comparison, this is a group of 15 leading, research-intensive Canadian Universities:

Dalhousie University, McGill University, McMaster University, Université d'Ottawa / University of Ottawa, Université de Montréal, Université Laval, University of Alberta, University of British Columbia, University of Calgary, University of Manitoba, University of Saskatchewan, University of Toronto (results are not included in this report's U15 data), University of Waterloo and Western University.

**2** Ontario universities (Ontario). Twenty-two universities participated in the 2017 NSSE survey.

We compare to this group on relevant items, including the items that were administered to Ontario students only. As with the U15 group, U of T results are not included in this report's Ontario data.

## Survey Population – All First-Entry Programs



As defined by the researchers at NSSE at Indiana University, students in all first-entry faculties were invited to participate in the 2017 NSSE survey. At U of T, students from our second-entry Nursing program were also invited to participate but their results are excluded from this report. The survey was administered online only.

## The first-entry Faculties and divisions at U of T are:

Arts & Science

John H. Daniels of Architecture, Landscape, and Design

Applied Sciences & Engineering

Kinesiology & Physical Education

Music

University of Toronto Mississauga

University of Toronto Scarborough

# **2017 NSSE Results**

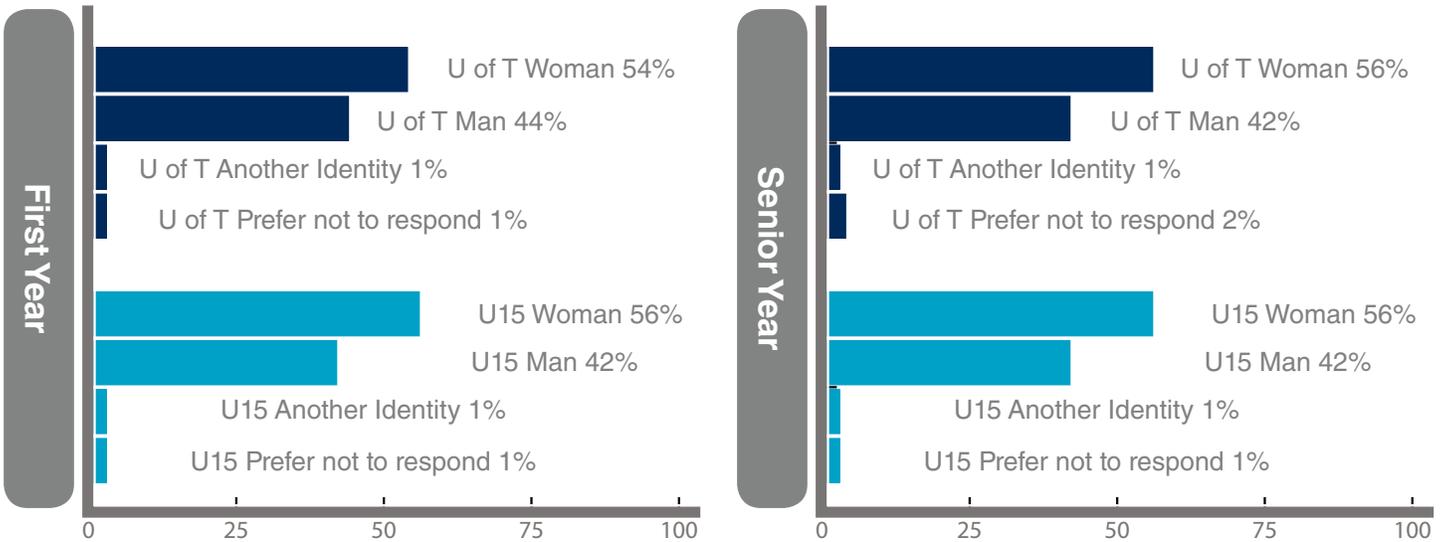
## Response Rate

The University of Toronto had 9,380 students complete the survey for an overall response rate of 31%.

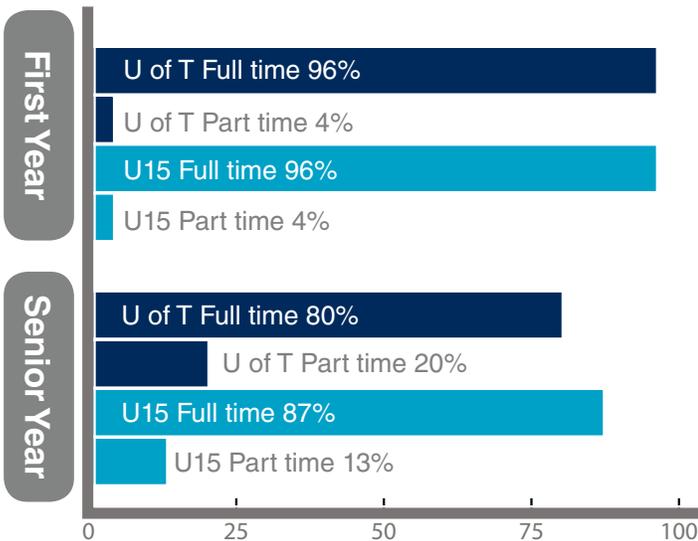
## Student Respondent Characteristics

U of T continues to represent a highly diverse demographic within NSSE. The following chart provides a snapshot on key student attributes as identified throughout the survey.

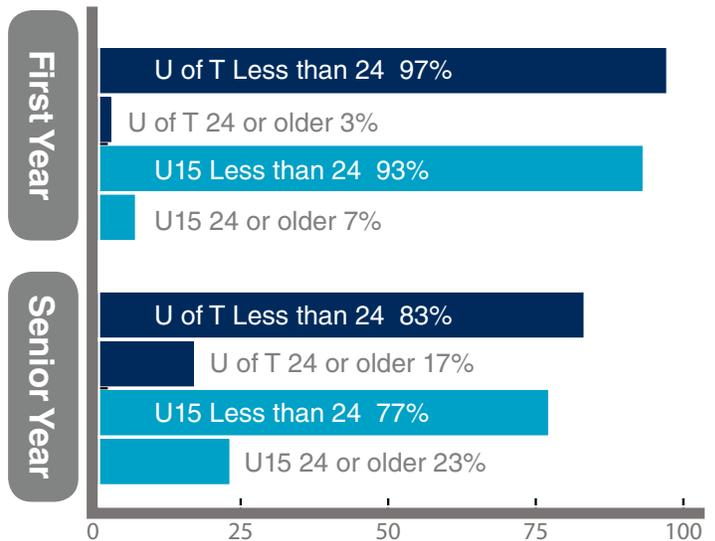
### Gender Identity



### Enrollment Status

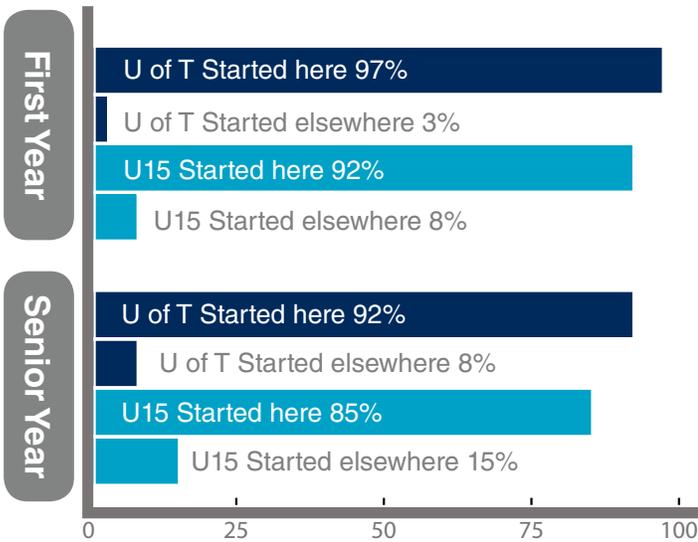


### Age

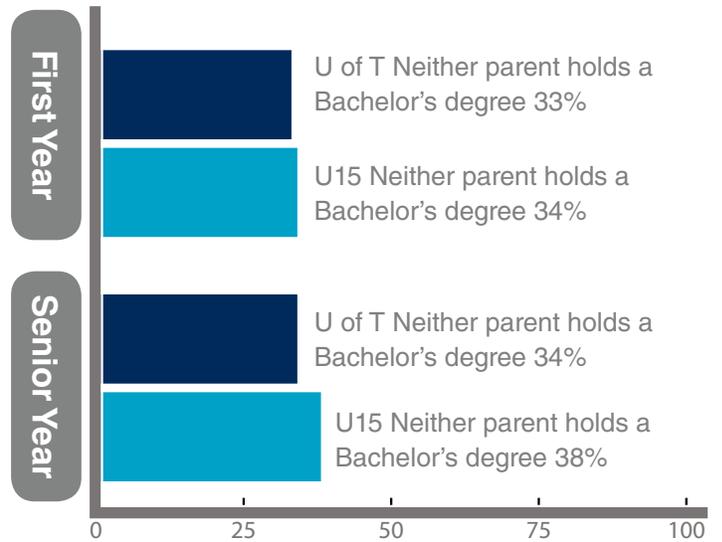


Percentages are rounded up to the nearest whole number at 0.5% or higher.

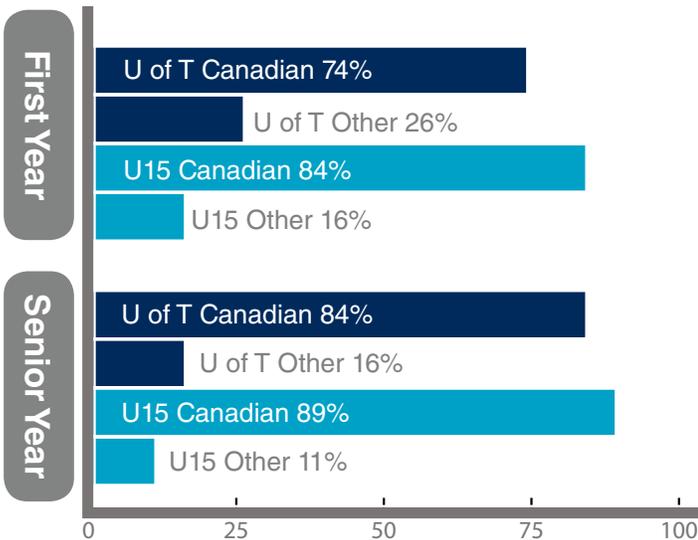
## Transfer Status



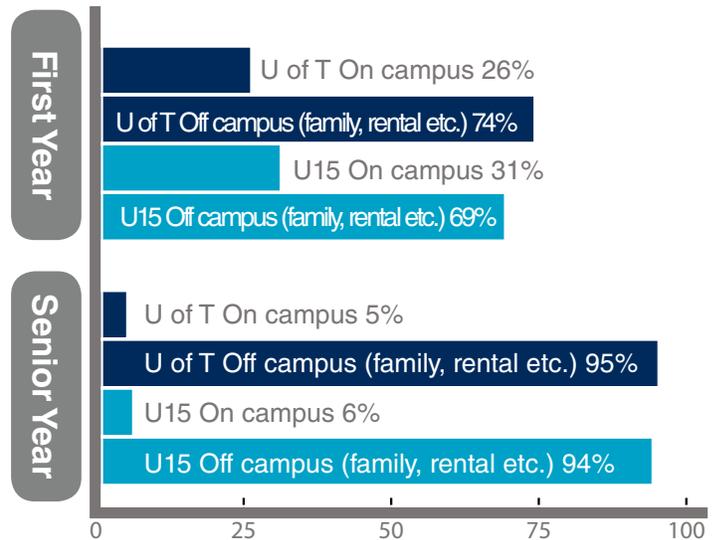
## Parental Education



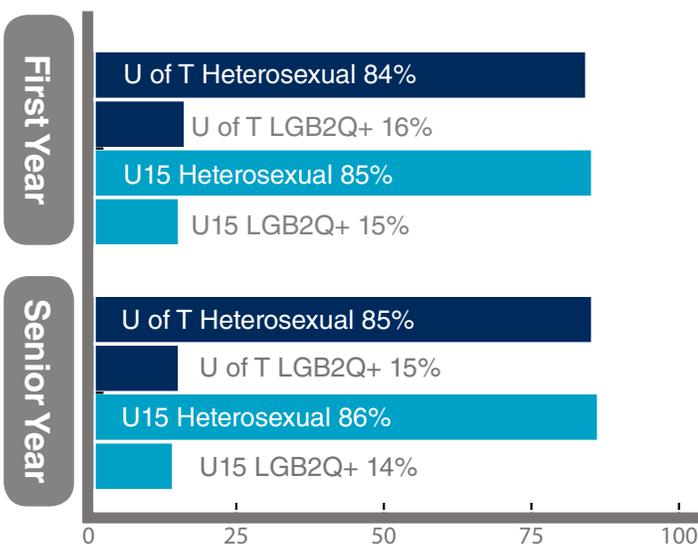
## Citizenship



## Place of Residence



## Sexual Orientation

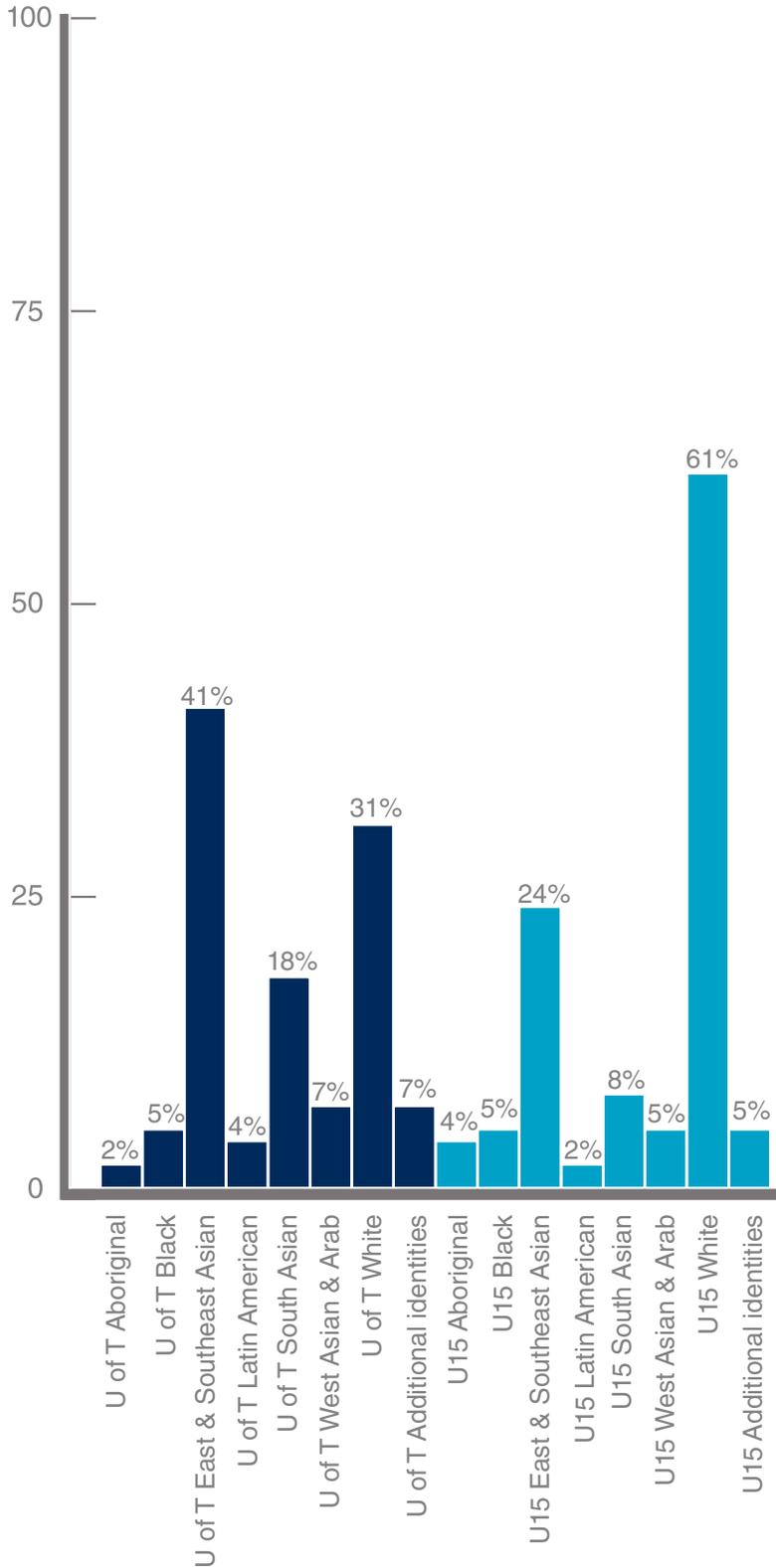


Percentages are rounded up to the nearest whole number at 0.5% or higher.

# Ethno-Cultural Information

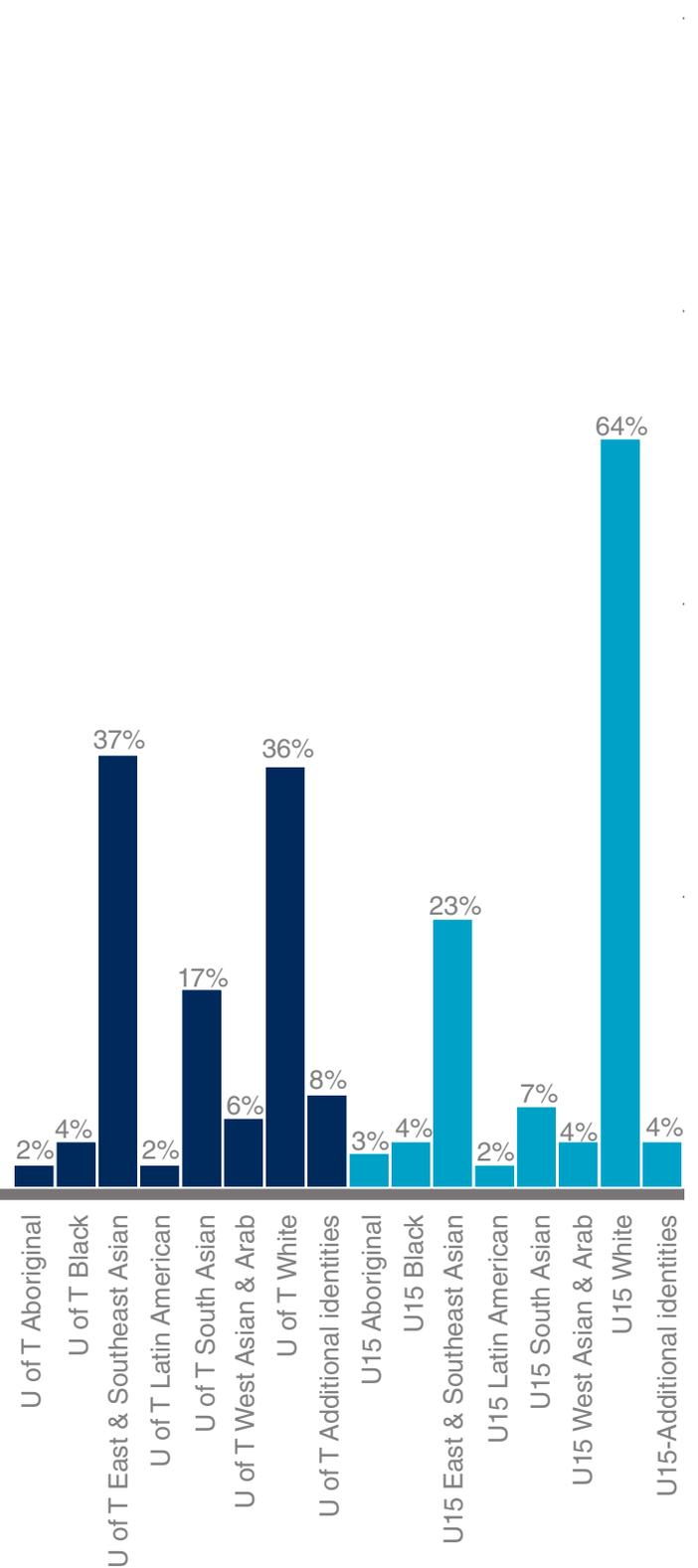
## First Year

U of T U15



## Senior Year

U of T U15



Percentages are rounded up to the nearest whole number at 0.5% or higher.

# Themes & Engagement Indicators

Engagement Indicators are summary measures based on sets of NSSE questions examining key dimensions of student engagement. The ten indicators are organized within four themes: Academic Challenge, Learning with Peers, Experiences with Faculty, and Campus Environment.

Each Engagement Indicator organizes the responses from the questions in its respective category, rescales them from 0 to 60 and averages the responses. A score of 0 means every student chose the lowest response option; 60 means every student chose the highest response.

## The following tables compare average scores for U of T students to those in our comparison groups.

U of T has done well relative to our peers in many categories. In particular, U of T students report higher levels than our comparators (Ontario and/or U15 universities) in the following Engagement Indicators:

- Higher-Order Learning (first year & senior year)
- Reflective & Integrative Learning (first year)
- Discussions with Diverse Others (first year & senior year)
- Student-Faculty Interaction (first year & senior year)
- Effective Teaching Practices (first year)

The data from the Engagement Indicators also suggest that many initiatives for first-year students at U of T are supporting students in high-impact learning and development. As a University, we can build on this success to ensure that students throughout their programs continue to experience the University in similarly positive ways.

The results from these Engagement Indicators can help support and drive institutional efforts aligned with the University's Three Priorities, the Strategic Mandate Agreement, the work of the Council on Student Experience and Experiential Learning initiatives, in addition to other initiatives supporting student experiences at the University.

# Themes & Engagement Indicators

<p>Academic Challenge</p>	<p><b>Engagement Indicator</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Higher-Order Learning</li><li>Reflective &amp; Integrative Learning</li><li>Learning Strategies</li><li>Quantitative Reasoning</li></ul>
<p>Learning With Peers</p>	<p><b>Engagement Indicator</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Collaborative Learning</li><li>Discussions with Diverse Others</li></ul>
<p>Experiences With Faculty</p>	<p><b>Engagement Indicator</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Student-Faculty Interaction</li><li>Effective Teaching Practices</li></ul>
<p>Campus Environment</p>	<p><b>Engagement Indicator</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Quality of Interactions</li><li>Supportive Environment</li></ul>

# THEME Academic Challenge

The four Engagement Indicators under this theme are listed below, including the questions that are included in each.

## *Higher-Order Learning*

- Applied facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situation
- Analyzed an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts
- Evaluated a point of view, decision, or information source
- Formed a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information

## *Reflective & Integrative Learning*

- Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments
- Connected your learning to societal problems or issues that include diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments
- Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue
- Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective
- Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept
- Connected ideas from your courses to your prior experiences and knowledge

## *Learning Strategies*

- Identified key information from reading assignments
- Reviewed your notes after class
- Summarized what you learned in class or from course materials

## *Quantitative Reasoning*

- Reached conclusions based on your own analysis of numerical information (numbers, graphs, statistics, etc.)
- Used numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue (unemployment, climate change, public health, etc.)
- Evaluated what others have concluded from numerical information

The following illustrates U of T's consistent performance in the Academic Challenge theme. U of T generally scores higher than our U15 Canadian peers in most areas.

## Academic Challenge



# THEME

## Learning with Peers

The theme of Learning with Peers includes two Engagement Indicators: Collaborative Learning and Discussions with Diverse Others. The questions that make up these Engagement Indicators are:

### Collaborative Learning

- Asked another student to help you understand course material
- Explained course material to one or more students
- Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students
- Worked with other students on course projects or assignments

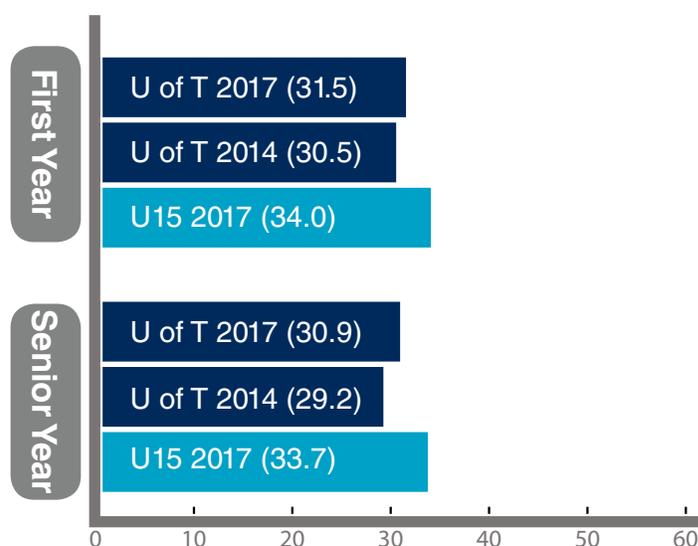
### Discussions with Diverse Others

- People from a race or ethnicity other than your own
- People from an economic background other than your own
- People with religious beliefs other than your own
- People with political views other than your own

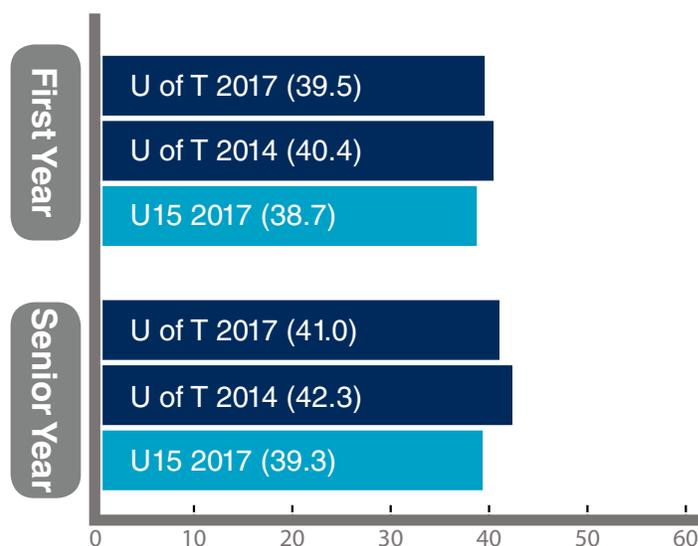
The following illustrates U of T's performance in the Learning With Peers theme. Although the score is lower than in 2014, U of T scores higher than our U15 Canadian peers in the Engagement Indicator, Discussions with Diverse Others.

## Learning With Peers

### Collaborative Learning



### Discussions with Diverse Others



# THEME Experiences With Faculty

The theme Experiences with Faculty includes two Engagement Indicators: Student-Faculty Interactions and Effective Teaching Practices. The questions that make up these Engagement Indicators are:

## Student-Faculty Interactions

- Talked about career plans with a faculty member
- Worked with faculty on activities other than coursework (committees, student groups, etc.)
- Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class
- Discussed your academic performance with a faculty member

## Effective Teaching Practices

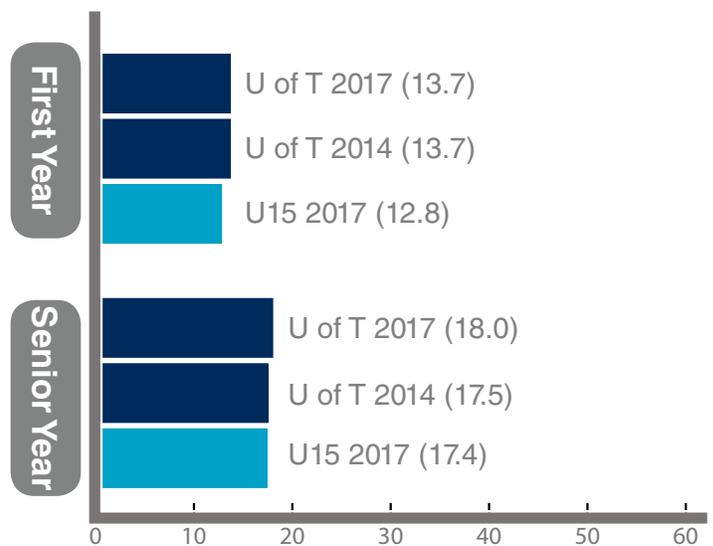
- Clearly explained course goals and requirements
- Taught course sessions in an organized way
- Used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points
- Provided feedback on a draft or work in progress
- Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments

The following chart illustrates U of T's performance in the Experiences with Faculty theme.

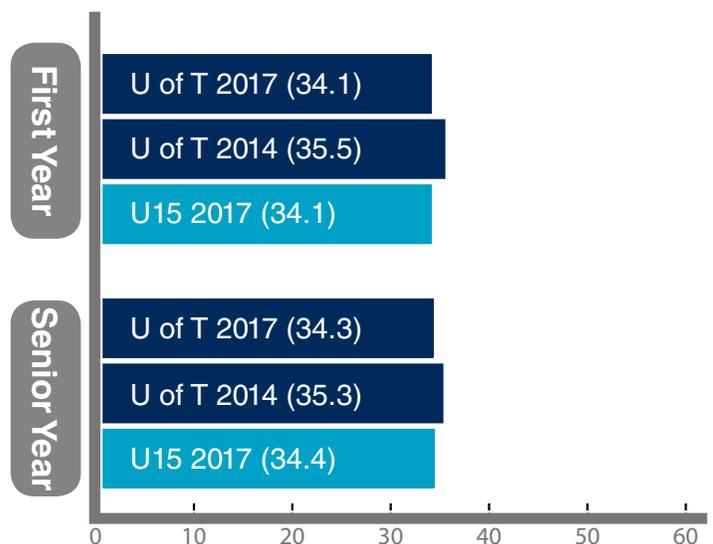
U of T scores higher than our U15 Canadian peers in Student-Faculty Interaction. The results here provide positive feedback on effective teaching strategies that engage and support our students.

## Experiences with faculty

### Student Faculty Interaction



### Effective Teaching Practices



# THEME Campus Environment

The theme Campus Environment includes two Engagement Indicators: Quality of Interactions and Supportive Environment. The questions that make up these Engagement Indicators are:

## Quality of Interactions

- Students
- Academic advisors
- Faculty
- Student services staff (career services, student activities, housing, etc.)
- Other administrative staff and offices (registrar, financial aid, etc.)

## Supportive Environment

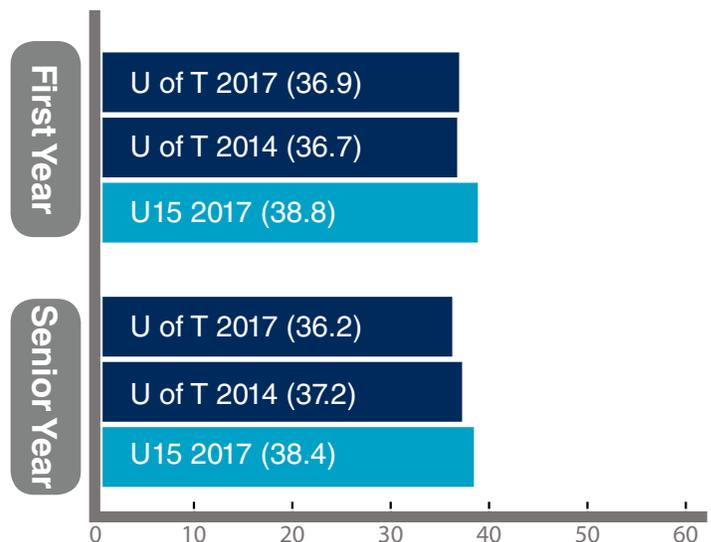
- Providing support to help students succeed academically using learning support services (tutoring services, writing centre, etc.)
- Encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (social, racial/ethnic, religious, etc.)
- Providing opportunities to be involved socially
- Providing support for your overall well-being (recreation, health care, counselling, etc.)
- Helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
- Attending campus activities and events (performing arts, athletic events, etc.)
- Attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues

The following chart illustrates U of T's performance in the Campus Environment theme.

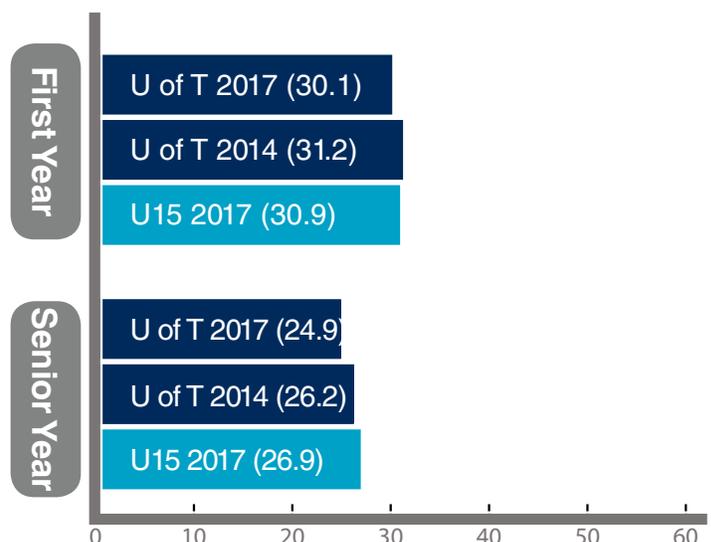
U of T scores slightly lower than our U15 Canadian peers in both of these Engagement Indicators but has seen some positive progress over time, along with opportunities for growth. The results here provide valuable feedback on how students perceive their campus environment. As can be seen from some of the specific questions identified below, we can leverage our strengths in this theme area.

# Campus Environment

## Quality of Interactions



## Supportive Environment



# High-Impact Practices

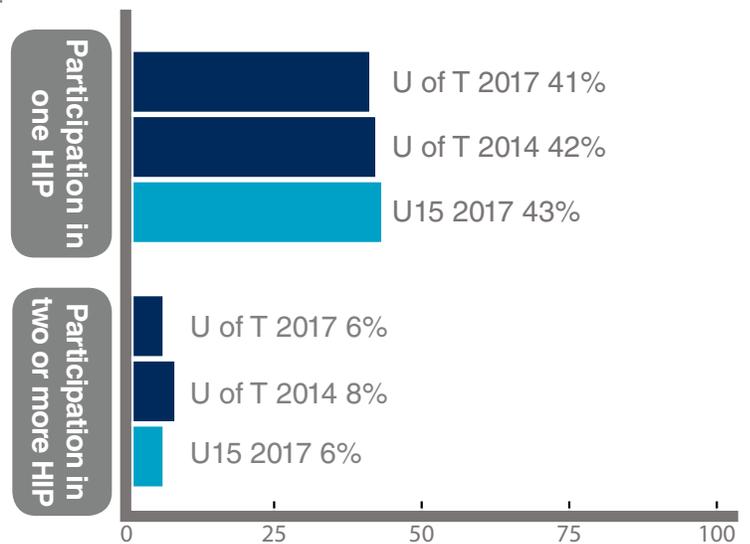
Due to their positive associations with student learning and retention, certain undergraduate opportunities are designated 'high-impact'. High-Impact Practices (HIPs) share several traits: they demand considerable time and effort, facilitate learning outside of the classroom, require meaningful interactions with faculty and students, encourage collaboration with diverse others, and provide frequent and substantive feedback. As a result, participation in these practices can be life-changing (Kuh, 2008).

NSSE founding director George Kuh recommends that institutions should aspire for all students to participate in at least two HIPs over the course of their undergraduate experience, one during the first year and one in the context of their major (NSSE, 2007). ([http://nsse.iub.edu/html/high\\_impact\\_practices.cfm](http://nsse.iub.edu/html/high_impact_practices.cfm))

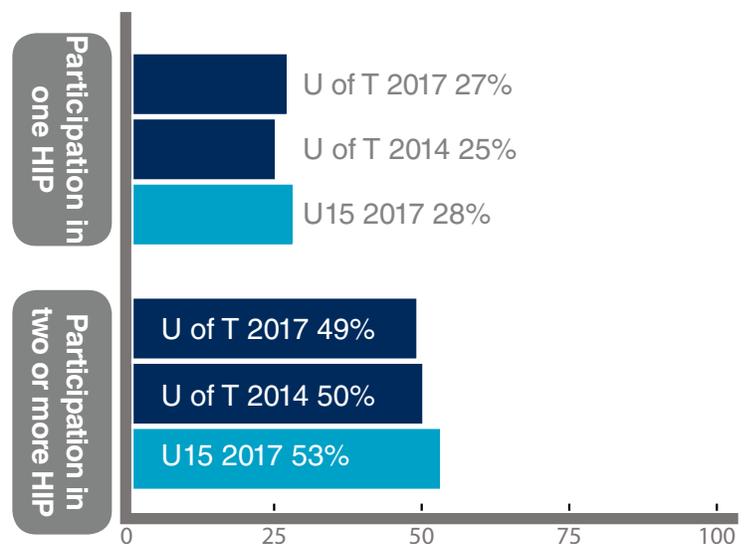
U of T first-year students have participated in one or more High-Impact Practices to a greater extent than students at other Ontario and U15 universities. If we continue to provide opportunities for students in these areas, and communicate their importance and value, we are likely to see more positive results for our senior-year students. The following activities are defined as High-Impact Practices:

- Learning in community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together
- Courses that included a community-based project (i.e., service-learning)
- Work with a faculty member on a research project
- Participated in internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement
- Study abroad
- Culminating senior year experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, portfolio, etc.)

## First-Year Participation in High-Impact Practices



## Final Year Participation in High Impact Practices



# Conclusion

The University of Toronto continues to use NSSE results to learn more about the many ways our students engage in their academic and co-curricular activities. As always, we remain focused on enhancing our supportive learning environment. The University is delighted that there has been positive progress since starting this survey in 2004. Building on the feedback provided by the new 2017 survey, we will continue to contribute to our students' personal growth and academic success through greater opportunities in both formal academic programming and in activities beyond the classroom.

# Next Steps

## Communication of Results

First-Entry deans will receive a package that contains results from the full NSSE sample and results for their division. Each division is encouraged to share their results throughout the University. Presentations by the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students will take place across the University.

Over the next couple of years, we will create a series of snapshot-themed reports with deeper analysis of these results for further dissemination.



UNIVERSITY OF  
**TORONTO**

# Further Research

The 2017 NSSE results have identified potential areas for further investigation. Through the work of the Council on Student Experience, the work of the Vice-Provost, Innovations in Undergraduate Education, and the initiatives of several units throughout the University, we will undertake specific projects, including deeper assessments, prior to the next NSSE administration.

## Further Information

The National Survey of Student Engagement is a project of the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students and the Planning & Budget Office of University of Toronto.

This report was prepared by David Newman, Senior Director, Student Experience, Xuelun Liang, Senior Institutional Research Analyst, and Jeff Burrow, Manager, Assessment & Analysis.

For more information on NSSE visit: <http://nsse.iub.edu/>

For more information on U of T's participation in NSSE and the results, contact:

David L E Newman  
Senior Director, Student Experience 416-978-1753  
[david.newman@utoronto.ca](mailto:david.newman@utoronto.ca)