

BCSSE 2022: Expectations for Starting College in a Pandemic

CSU Channel Islands, Office of Institutional Research

Matthew Zivot, Ph.D.

August 2022

Background

The Beginning College Student Survey (BCSSE) is a national survey, administered to 70,000+ first-time college students a year. The survey asks incoming students a range of questions about their experiences in high school and their thoughts about the coming year in college including topics such as study habits, in-class experiences, expectations for how they will overcome challenges, and intentions to interact with faculty, staff, and fellow students.

At CSU Channel Islands (CSUCI), the BCSSE is administered as part of Freshman Island View Orientation (FIVO). While not all new students attend orientation and not all of those who attend orientation matriculate, the BCSSE response rate represents a very high proportion of our first-time freshmen (FTF) cohort, averaging at least 86.1% over the past four administrations¹ with similar participation rates for students from historically underrepresented groups² (85.4%) and non-HUG students (86.6%), first-generation students³ (86.1%) and continuing-generation students (86.2%), [Pell grant eligible](#) (84.7%) and non-Pell grant eligible (87.1%) students, as well as males (84.2%) and females (86.6%). This survey, therefore, provides a good window into the expectations of CSUCI's FTF and how that set of expectations has changed over time. This analysis will focus on changes between the Fall 2019 cohort, who started before the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Fall 2022 cohort, who experienced the pandemic for the last two and a half years of their high school career.

Findings

Across almost every dimension of the survey, CSUCI's Fall 2022 FTF cohort expected less support and engagement when compared with the Fall 2019 cohort. A particularly notable dimension was a decrease from 2019 to 2022 in FTF students expecting to take advantage of university resources when challenged. When asked about how certain they were to ask an instructor for help when struggling with their assignments, 43% of students said *Very Certain* in Fall 2019, while only 24% of students said *Very Certain* in Fall 2022, a 19-percentage point (pp) drop (see Figure 1).

¹ On average, 2.6% of respondents do not provide a student ID or email address and therefore cannot be matched up with their enrollment records.

² HUGs, which includes students who identify as Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, or Native American/Alaskan Native

³ Students for whom neither parent has earned a four-year college degree

During the coming school year, how certain are you that you will do the following?

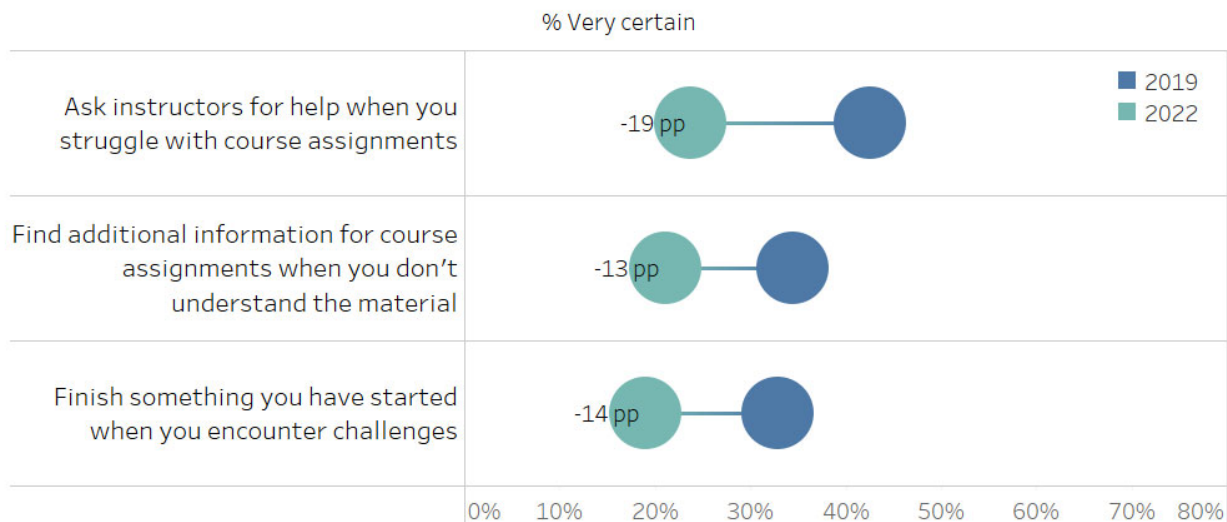


Figure 1

This drop was slightly larger for first-generation students than continuing-generation (21 pp vs. 15 pp drop), but similar for Hispanic students as compared with all others (18 pp vs. 20 pp drop) and women as compared with other students (19 pp vs. 18 pp drop).

Respondents also expected that engaging with fellow students would be less important in their strategy to understand the concepts taught in their classes. When asked how likely they were to ask another student for help understanding course material, 33% of students said *Very Often* in Fall 2019 while only 13% of students said *Very Often* in Fall 2022, a 20-percentage point drop (see Figure 2).

During the coming school year, about how often do you expect to do the following?

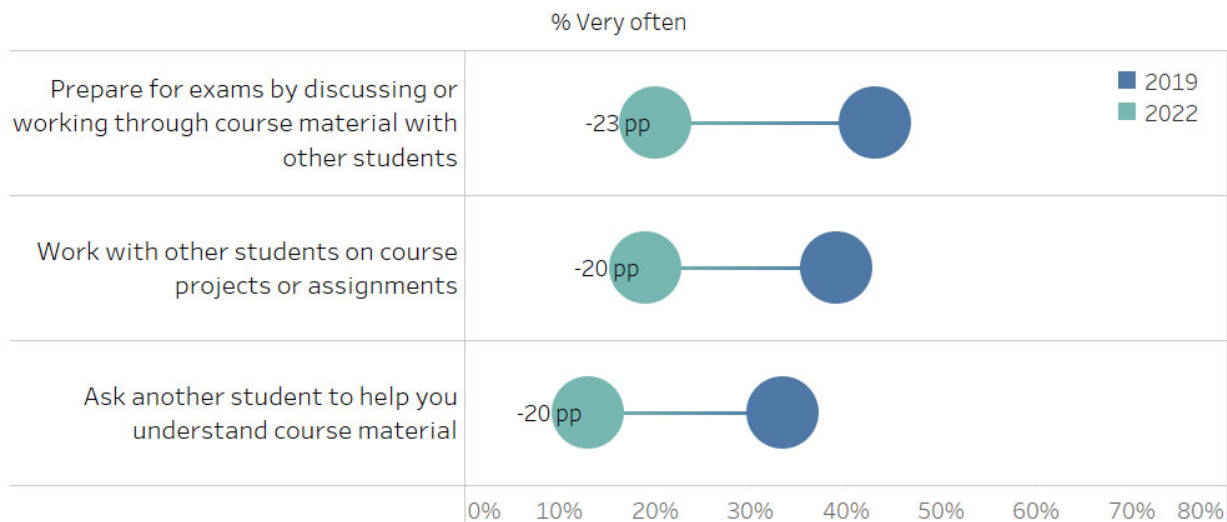


Figure 2

This decrease was similar across first-generation and continuing-generation students (21 pp vs. 19 pp drop), Hispanic students compared with others (21 pp vs. 20 pp drop) and women compared with others (21 pp vs. 18 pp drop).

In addition to expecting themselves to be less engaged with faculty and staff, new students also report reduced expectations of their university. When asked how important it was that the university provide learning support services such as tutoring, 54% of students responded *Very Important* in Fall 2019 while only 34% responded *Very Important* in Fall 2022, a 20-percentage point drop (see Figure 3).

How important is it to you that your institution provides the following?

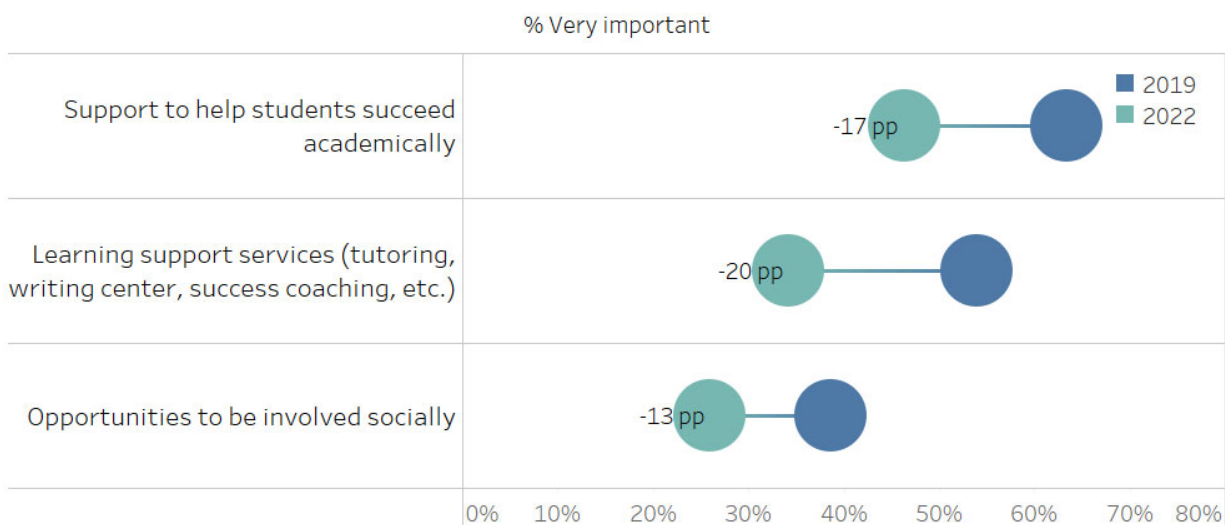


Figure 3

This decrease was larger for women than for others (23 pp vs. 12 pp drop) and for Hispanic students compared with others (22 pp vs. 17 pp drop), but similar for first-generation students compared with continuing-generation (21 pp vs. 18 pp drop).

The BCSSE also asked about how students' high school experienced prepared them for college. Students in the Fall 2022 cohort reported less academic and social engagement during their past year of high school, and when asked how many papers of between 6 and 10 pages they had written in high school, 37% of students answered *None* in Fall 2019 while 55% answered *None* in Fall 2022, an 18-percentage point increase. On the social side, when incoming students were asked how involved they were in community service or volunteer work, 31% of students responded *Very Much* in Fall 2019 while only 17% responded *Very Much* in Fall 2022, a 14-percentage point decline.

Conclusion

The incoming class of first-time students have spent the past two and a half years learning under the hardships and complexities of the COVID-19 pandemic. They report decreased engagement across many dimensions of

classroom experiences and have reduced expectations of how to meet the challenges posed by college, expecting less of the academic assistance and critical interpersonal engagements that support meeting those challenges. Future Institutional Research analyses, such as first-year academic success and reporting on the Spring 2022 National Survey of Student Engagement, will show how well we have helped our students to raise expectations of themselves and of CSUCI and whether they have the tools they need to successfully learn and persist.

Additional BCSSE Resources:

For more information about the BSSCE, see:

<https://nsse.indiana.edu/bcsse/reports-data/bcsse-overview.html>

For the BCSSE instrument, see:

<https://nsse.indiana.edu/bcsse/survey-instruments/fy-us-codebook-web.docx>

CSUCI's annual BCSSE reports are available here:

<https://www.csuci.edu/ir/survey-results.htm>

CSUCI employees can access a dashboard with detailed BCSSE data here:

<https://oneci.csuci.edu/t/IRPE/views/BCSSE/AboutBCSSE>

For other questions about CSUCI's BCSSE data, including how to access the raw data, please contact: Matt Zivot at matthew.zivot@csuci.edu