



## 2025 NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS

Submitted by: Anshu Mishra

Requested by: Office of Institutional Research & University Reporting

Overview

The 2025 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) gathered responses from over 1,362 students at Sacramento State, offering valuable insights into the academic and social experiences of students across the campus. This report intentionally centers on the voices and experiences of international students, who contribute immensely to the Sac State’s diversity, innovation, and global outlook. While data is presented in aggregate, this analysis highlights how these insights apply to the international student population while also acknowledging shared experiences across the broader campus community.



NSSE Student Demographic Profile

In terms of reported ethnicity among all survey respondents, 39% identified as Hispanic or Latina/o, followed by 21% White, 21% Asian, 6% Black or African American, and 6% identifying with two or more races or ethnicities. Notably, 3% identified as foreign or nonresident, closely aligning with campus-wide international student representation. Another 3% preferred not to disclose their ethnicity, and small groups of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (1%) were also present.

Ethnicity (Institution Reported)		
Hispanic or Latina/o	39%	532
White	21%	288
Asian	21%	286
Black or African American	6%	80
Two or more races/ethnicities	6%	79
Foreign or nonresident	3%	45
Unknown	3%	41
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1%	8
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	3

2025 NSSE Survey Data

IPEDS RACE		
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	36%	10,994
White	24%	7,096
Asian	21%	6,305
Black	7%	2,032
Two or More Races	6%	1,928
Unknown	3%	763
International	2%	685
Pacific Islander	1%	270
American Indian	0%	91

Spring 2025 Enrollment Data for Sac State

The data reflects the broad diversity at Sac State and provide important context for understanding international student inclusion.

These figures are more than just statistics; they reflect the incredible range of voices, cultures, and lived experiences that enrich campus life at Sac State. For international students, being part of such a dynamic and multiethnic environment fosters a sense of comfort and acceptance, helping them feel less isolated in a new country and more

confident participating in campus activities. This diversity serves as a foundation for open dialogue, shared learning, and a community culture where difference is not just respected but celebrated.

International students at Sac State reflect a wide range of national, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. Their participation in NSSE was strong this year, and responses revealed an encouraging picture of students who are deeply engaged, highly motivated, and proud to be part of Sac State's inclusive academic environment.

Overall:

- Approximately 3.3% of survey respondents (45 out of 1,362) identified as international students.
- A large proportion of international students are pursuing degrees in STEM, business, and social sciences.
- Many attributed their motivation to attend Sac State to a combination of academic reputation, affordability, and Sacramento's multicultural environment.

### **NSSE Academic Challenge**

Academic challenge remains a strong component of the international student experience at Sac State. The university's rigorous curriculum was frequently praised for fostering deep reflection, collaboration of ideas, and real-world application.

Some key findings from the 2025 NSSE survey:

- 35% of all survey respondents said their institution emphasized spending significant time on academic work, while 25% said "very much," and 18% said "very little."
- 24% of all survey respondents reported spending about half of their class preparation time on assigned reading, 23% said "some," and 16% said "most."
- 27% of all survey respondents said their courses challenged them "somewhat," 20% said "to an extent," and 19% "to a large extent."

All survey respondents also appreciated inclusive classroom environments. 40% of all survey respondents reported very frequent discussions with peers from different racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Some graduate programs, such as the Master of Science in Business Analytics, host peer meet-and-greet sessions that foster a welcoming environment at the outset of a Sac State student's academic journey. These events not only introduce students to one another but also encourage informal dialogue about coursework, faculty, and career paths. For Sac State international students, these gatherings offer a vital space to ask questions, learn from peers, and overcome the initial hesitation that often accompanies entering a new educational culture. The sense of connection that emerges from these sessions enhances both academic understanding and social confidence.



High-impact practices (HIPs), such as research with faculty, learning communities, and internships, are known to significantly improve student retention and long-term success. For Sac State international students, they also offer pathways to integrate deeper into academic and professional life in the U.S.

Faculty-student interaction plays a key role in academic motivation and clarity, especially for international students adapting to a new educational system.

Findings include:

- 11% of all survey respondents participated in research with faculty.
- 13% of all survey respondents were part of learning communities.
- 21% of all survey respondents have completed or are completing internships, while 32% of all survey respondents plan to.

All survey respondents expressed interest in these opportunities but cited the following barriers:

- Limited awareness about available HIPs.
- Time constraints due to part-time work or heavy course loads.
- For international students, their uncertainty about eligibility due to visa status.

According to NSSE:

- 18% of all survey respondents "very often" talked to faculty about career plans.
- 38% of all survey respondents said they did this "sometimes."
- 41% of all survey respondents never worked with faculty on extracurricular academic opportunities.

These statistics reveal a mixed picture. While a sizable number of students (38% sometimes, 20% often, and 18% very often, 76% totally) are engaging with faculty on career-related topics, a substantial portion still lack deeper academic connection outside of the classroom (24% never). For international students, who often rely on faculty as their first point of contact for navigating a new educational system, this limited interaction may represent missed opportunities for mentorship, research involvement, and professional development. The data underscores the importance of intentional, proactive faculty outreach to ensure all students, especially those unfamiliar with U.S. academic culture, feel supported in forging those vital academic relationships.

The Career Center provides an essential bridge:

- It supports career exploration, resume development, mock interviews, and graduate school planning.
- Dedicated career advisors are trained to address the specific needs of international students, including visa limitations, Curricular Practical Training and Optional Practical Training (CPT/OPT) guidance, and global job market transitions.



## NSSE Mental Health and Wellbeing

Mental health is an increasingly important area of concern for international students, who often balance homesickness, academic rigor, culture shock, and time zone misalignment when staying in touch with family.

NSSE data shows:

- 41% of all survey respondents experienced moderate to severe mental health challenges.
- 31% of all survey respondents faced emotional exhaustion; with 20% of respondents reported it as "very difficult."
- Only 18% of all survey respondents found counseling services to be "very helpful."
- 52% of survey respondents said they would know how to access help in a crisis.

Despite these challenges, Sac State offers a range of resources:

- Relaxation Stations (massage chairs, nap pods) provide physical relief.
- The Meditation Room offers spiritual and reflective space.
- Therapy dog events coordinated by student groups and local therapy organizations provide students with a comforting and stress-relieving experience, helping them manage anxiety and maintain their mental well-being during busy academic periods.



Student feedback praised these initiatives but requested better communication and visibility. Many international students were unaware of services until late in the semester.

To better support students' emotional well-being, particularly those transitioning into a new culture and academic environment, Sac State should consider offering 2–3 complimentary counseling sessions to each student. These sessions would help normalize mental health support, lower access barriers, and encourage early engagement with campus wellness services. Additionally, integrating a dedicated mental health orientation into the onboarding process for students would ensure they are aware of available resources and feel empowered to seek help when needed.

## NSSE Inclusiveness and Engagement with Diversity

Sac State continues to uphold a strong institutional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, not just through official policies but through the everyday experiences of its students. The 2025 NSSE survey provides a window

into how these values are being lived out on campus and how they actively shape the student experience, especially for international students navigating a new academic and cultural landscape.

One of the strongest signs of this inclusive environment lies in the 32% of all survey respondents who reported “very frequent” discussions with peers from different racial or ethnic identities. For international students, these aren’t just casual conversations, but gateways into American student life, opportunities to find common ground, and moments that chip away at the unfamiliarity of a new country. Whether in group projects, residence halls, or student clubs, these interactions help international students feel like participants in the campus community. For domestic students, these same conversations build global awareness and interpersonal skills that are increasingly important in today’s interconnected world.

Likewise, 31% of all survey respondents shared that their coursework “very much” emphasized respecting diverse perspectives. Instructors are not only allowing for diverse opinions but encouraging them, creating space for international students to bring their global perspectives into academic discussions. This signals that their background isn’t a barrier, but a valuable asset. Domestic students benefit too, by engaging in academic environments that challenge biases and stretch their thinking beyond the familiar.

The sense of belonging continues beyond the classroom. 41% of all survey respondents reported participating in diversity-related clubs or organizations at least “sometimes,” with 20% of all survey respondents engaging often or very often. These clubs, from cultural associations to language exchanges, offer international students a home base where they can both maintain cultural identity and build new friendships. Domestic students, meanwhile, are invited into these spaces as peers and collaborators, creating a spirit of mutual exchange and celebration.

A highlight of this social calendar is the Hornet Nest Fest, Sac State’s annual fall kickoff celebration. In August 2024, the event drew over 10,000 attendees, including new students, families, and the campus community. With food stalls, games, music, cheerleading performances, appearances by university leaders and the mascot Herky, the event sets a tone of excitement and belonging for the semester ahead. For international students, it offers a chance to mingle with peers from all backgrounds, learn about clubs, and feel welcomed into the Hornet Family in a fun, relaxed environment.

Ongoing programming such as Diwali celebrations, Lunar New Year festivals, international carnivals, and club-hosted language exchanges continue to weave international experiences into the fabric of everyday campus life. Sac State is home to more than 20 cultural clubs and organizations, including:

Hindu Yuva

Sanskriti Indian Cultural Group

Arab Student Union

Chinese Student Association

Korean Student Association

Nigerian Student Association

Hmong University Student Association

Afghan Student Association

Japan Club



These organizations foster identity, community, and visibility. They also create critical opportunities for domestic and international students to learn with and from one another, forming relationships that transcend backgrounds. They can be accessed by going to <https://csus.campusgroups.com> and setting up a profile.



However, 16% of all survey respondents still reported experiencing discrimination or harassment. This underlines the importance of continued investment in training, visibility, and support systems to ensure that every student, regardless of background, can thrive. In every corner of campus life, from academic dialogue to cultural celebration, Sac State is building bridges between international and domestic students. These efforts help international students feel like they belong, and transform them into co-creators of the campus culture itself.

#### Suggestions for Continued Improvement

- Offer 2–3 free trial counseling sessions per student to normalize mental health support and reduce stigma.
- Strengthen collaboration between the Career Center and international advisors to introduce career planning resources earlier in students' academic journeys.
- Promote wellness resources in multiple languages, both digitally and in print, to improve accessibility and awareness.
- Embed research and internship opportunities into coursework, making them more accessible to students who face visa-related restrictions.

## Conclusion

Sac State offers a welcoming, dynamic, and opportunity-rich environment for international students. From academic engagement and peer support to mental health and cultural expression, Sac State continues to demonstrate its commitment to global education and inclusivity.

The 2025 NSSE survey data highlights the university's strengths, strong peer collaboration, diverse campus culture, and a growing foundation of student support services. While opportunities exist to expand high-impact practices and faculty engagement, these can be addressed through targeted investment and communication.

International students are not only participants in campus life, they are co-creators of its inclusive identity. Their stories, resilience, and contributions will shape Sac State's next chapter as a leader in global student success.





## **Survey Overview**

- 1,362 Sac State students responded to the 2025 NSSE survey, including 3.3% international students (45 respondents).
- International students represent a diverse range of countries and primarily study in STEM, business, and social sciences.
- International students chose Sac State for its academic reputation, affordability, and Sacramento's multicultural environment.

## **Key Academic Findings**

- International students value Sac State's rigorous curriculum, inclusive classrooms, and opportunities for deep learning.
- High-impact practices (research, internships, learning communities) are valued but underutilized due to limited awareness, visa restrictions, and heavy workloads.
- Faculty-student engagement is strong for some but inconsistent overall, with many students missing opportunities for mentorship and professional development.

## **Wellbeing & Mental Health**

- 41% of all survey respondents reported moderate to severe mental health challenges.
- Current resources (Relaxation Stations, Meditation Room, Therapy Dog events) are appreciated but not widely recognized, especially among international students.
- There is a need for proactive mental health support during onboarding.

## **Inclusiveness & Diversity**

- Strong evidence of cross-cultural interaction: 32% of all survey respondents frequently engage in discussions with peers from different racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- 31% of all survey respondents say their coursework strongly emphasizes diverse perspectives; while 41% of survey respondents participate in diversity-related clubs.
- Ongoing events like Hornet Nest Fest, Diwali, Lunar New Year, and Sac State's cultural clubs foster belonging.
- 16% of all survey respondents still report discrimination/harassment, indicating a need for continued focus on equity.

## **Recommendations**

- Provide 2–3 free counseling sessions per student to normalize mental health care and reduce stigma.
- Strengthen collaboration between Career Center and international advisors to introduce career planning resources earlier.
- Integrate research and internship opportunities into coursework to help students with visa restrictions participate.

## **Conclusion**

- Sac State offers a welcoming and opportunity-rich environment for international students, with room for growth in high-impact practices, early resource awareness, and faculty engagement.
- International students are active contributors to Sac State's inclusive identity, enhancing its global reputation.

## **About the Author**

Anshu Mishra is a graduate student pursuing her Master of Science in Business Analytics at Sacramento State. She currently works as a Data Reporting and Analytics Intern with the university's Information Resources and Technology team, where she supports data-informed decision-making through analysis, visualization, and reporting. Previously, she served as an administrative assistant in the Office of the Vice President, where she gained valuable experience in campus operations and student-focused services. Anshu is also a dedicated member of the Remediation team, where she works to make academic materials accessible for blind and visually impaired students. Her work reflects a deep commitment to equity, inclusion, and creating meaningful student experiences. In her free time, she enjoys exploring new tools in Python and R, spending time with loved ones, and finding joy in everyday moments.