

Executive Summary, Results of the 2024 Marshfield and Wausau Campuses Entering Student Survey Administered by the UWSP Office of Student Retention

Survey Recipients: 147 first-year students matriculated to either (or both) the Marshfield or Wausau campuses
Survey Platform: Qualtrics
Survey Distribution Date: 16 August, 2024
Survey Close Date: 3 September, 2024
Completion Reminders Sent: on 22 August and 29 August, 2024
Completed Surveys: 54
Completion Rate: 37%

Survey Goals: (1) To inform our work with incoming students by learning more about their motivations, goals, concerns, strengths, interests, and needs,

and

(2) To attend both to the universal needs of the first-year student body as a whole and to the differential needs of specified demographic groups by identifying similarities and differences in reported experiences, expectations, strengths, and needs across racial or ethnic identity groups, gender identity groups, and status as first-generation or continuing-generation students.

Definitions: **Continuing-generation student (cont gen)** = a college student from a household in which at least one parent or guardian has earned a four-year post-secondary degree.

First-generation student (1st gen) = a college student from a household in which neither parent or guardian has earned a four-year post-secondary degree. Theories of student success and retention posit that 1st-gen students, relative to cont-gen students, have less knowledge of and access to the cultural, social, and linguistic capital needed to navigate the assumptions, beliefs, behaviors, mindsets, expectations, and relationships necessary for success in post-secondary education. The literature on student success and retention typically supports this hypothesis; additionally, the literature reveals that 1st-gen students often have fewer financial resources and greater familial or community obligations than their cont-gen peers.

Students of Color (SOC) = students who identify with a racial or ethnic heritage other than White / European American. Note that SOC is **not** the same as Underrepresented Minority (URM). URM refers specifically to individuals who identify as Black or African American, Native American, Hispanic or Latin-a-e-o-x, or Southeast Asian. Because of relatively small numbers in this survey as well as challenges in distinguishing between Southeast Asian respondents—who qualify as URM—and other Asian respondents—who do not qualify as URM—disaggregated results of this survey focus on SOC rather than URM.

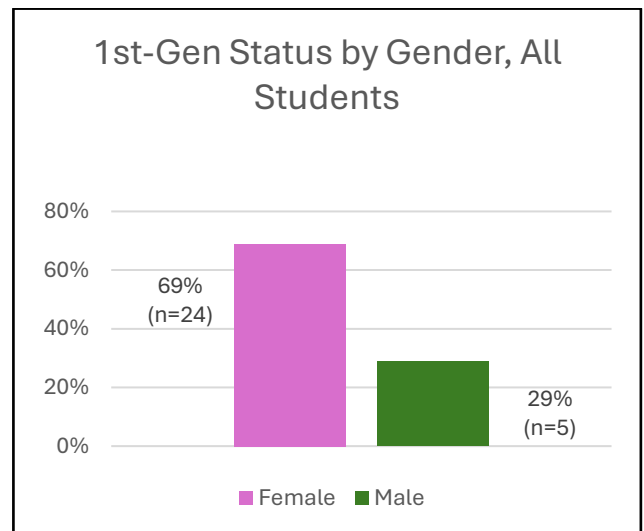
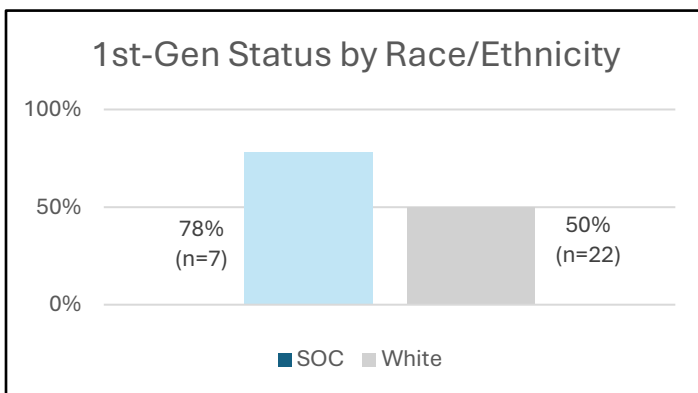
Respondent Demographics

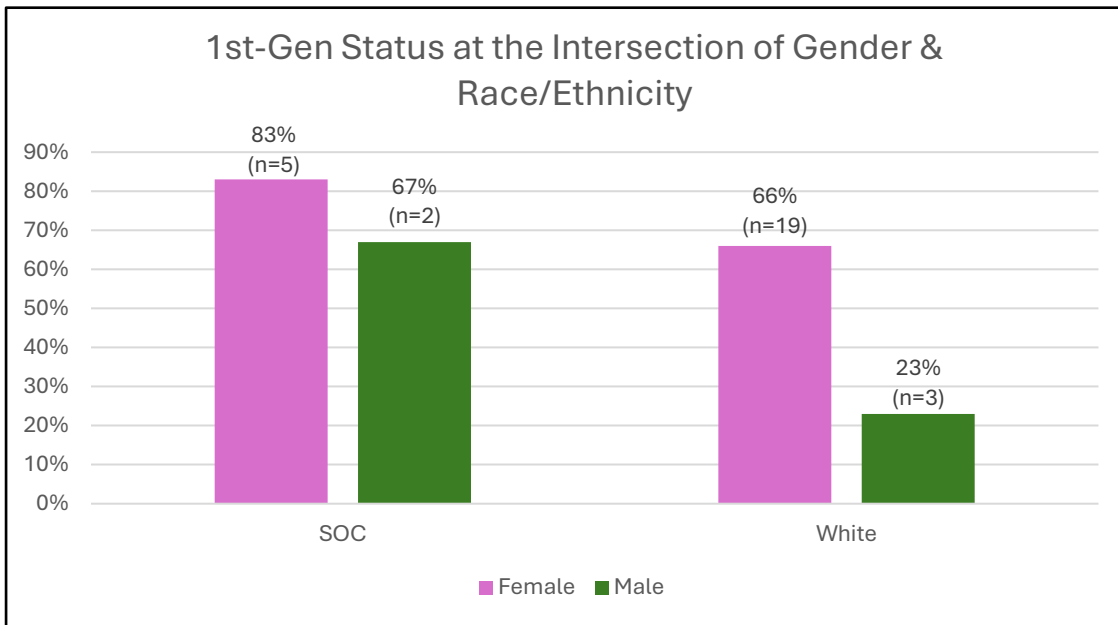
While numbers are small, they nevertheless point to both a racial imbalance and a gender imbalance in 1st-gen status. As is the case on the Stevens Point campus, SOC on the Marshfield and Wausau campuses are more likely than their White peers to be 1st-gen students. Meanwhile, female students on the branch campuses are more likely than male students to be 1st-gen. This pattern differs from the pattern on the Stevens Point campus, where 1st-gen status is distributed approximately equally across genders when considering all students.

It is helpful to note that the data presented both in this section and throughout the report frequently reveals differences between or among student groups based on gender, race, or status as a 1st-gen student. At the same time, the data frequently reveals similarities between or among groups. For example, all students share similar motivations for attending college and for choosing UWSP, all students share similar levels of confidence in the skills they need to succeed as students, and all students share similar worries.

Readers are encouraged to view the results presented on the following pages not as a means of predicting which students will be more successful or less successful, based on the different experiences they bring to campus, but as a reminder of the need to support all students in building upon their strengths while overcoming the challenges they face.

All Students	Cont gen	1 st gen	SOC	White	Female	Male
54	24 (44%)	29 (54%)	9 (17%)	44 (81%)	35 (65%)	17 (31%)
	1 respondent declined to disclose parental education levels, which are used to determine 1 st -gen / cont gen status	1 respondent declined to disclose race/ethnicity.	2 students (4%) reported that they identify as another gender. Because the numbers in this group are too small for analytical accuracy, results have not been disaggregated for students who identify as another gender.			





Parental Educational Attainment

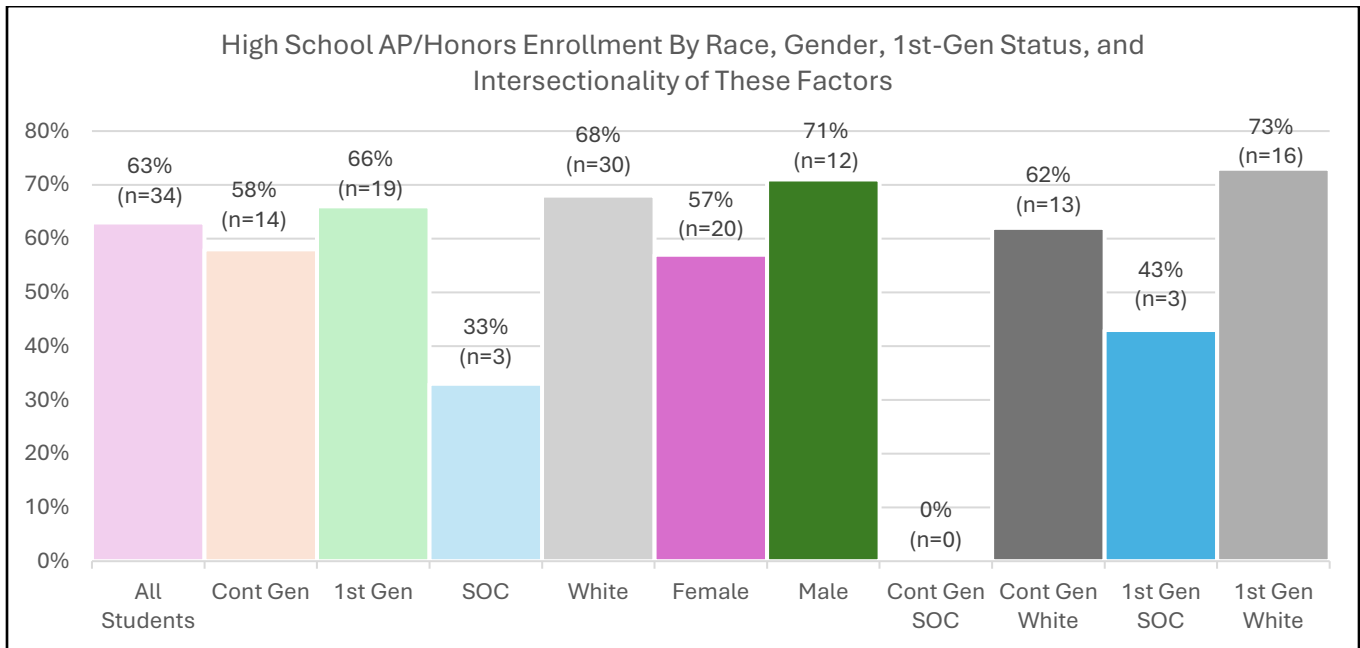
	All	SOC	White	Female	Male	SOC Female	SOC Male	White Female	White Male
Cont gen	24 (44%)	2 (22%)	21 (48%)	11 (31%)	11 (65%)	1 (17%)	1 (33%)	10 (34%)	9 (69%)
1 st gen	29 (54%)	7 (78%)	22 (50%)	24 (69%)	5 (29%)	5 (83%)	2 (67%)	19 (66%)	3 (23%)
At least one parent did not finish high school	8 (15%)	3 (33%)	5 (11%)	5 (14%)	3 (18%)	2 (33%)	1 (33%)	3 (10%)	2 (15%)

As noted above, the data reveals a racial imbalance in 1st-gen status, with the percentage of 1st-gen SOC being higher than the percentage of 1st-gen White students. Within the group SOC, female students are more likely than male students to be 1st-gen.

Respondents' High-School Preparation

The data presented below indicates that race-based gaps in AP/Honors course enrollment are larger than enrollment gaps between 1st-gen students as a group and cont-gen students as a group. This finding reflects findings on the Stevens Point campus. The data likewise points to a gendered gap in AP/Honors enrollment, with male students participating in AP or Honors programming at higher rates than female students. This trend is reversed on the Stevens Point campus, with female students participating in high school AP or Honors programming at higher rates than male students.

	All Students	Cont gen	1 st gen	SOC	White	Female	Male	Cont gen SOC	Cont gen White	1 st gen SOC	1 st gen White
Took AP or Honors Courses	34 (63%)	14 (58%)	19 (66%)	3 (33%)	30 (68%)	20 (57%)	12 (71%)	0 (0%)	13 (62%)	3 (43%)	16 (73%)



Reasons for Attending College

The table below lists entering students' top five reasons for deciding to attend college, based on the number of respondents who identified each factor as "important" on a three-point scale consisting of the choices "important", "somewhat important", and "not important."

Shading in the first column indicates that the factor appeared in the top five reasons for the group designated with the corresponding color. For example, the factor "gaining a general education, expanding my ability to appreciate new ideas, and broadening my perspective" appeared in the top five for continuing-generation students, but not for 1st-gen students and not for all students, when considered as a group.

Because of small numbers, analytical accuracy and helpful cross-group comparisons are difficult for both SOC and students who identify as male. For this reason, results in the following sections have not been disaggregated by race or gender.

	All students	Cont gen	1st gen	Shared with students on the Stevens Point campus?
Learning more about things that interest me	45 (83%)	19 (79%)	25 (86%)	y
Earning the credentials needed for a better job	44 (81%)	18 (75%)	25 (86%)	y
Gaining real-world, hands-on experience that leads to career-focused opportunities	43 (80%)	20 (83%)	23 (79%)	y
Earning the credentials needed to make more money in my career	40 (74%)	17 (71%)	22 (76%)	y
Gaining the skills and knowledge needed to change my community and make an impact on the world	34 (63%)		23 (79%)	y
Gaining a general education, expanding my ability to appreciate new ideas, and broadening my perspective		17 (71%)		y*

*This factor was identified as a top reason for students on the Stevens Point campus only when survey responses were disaggregated by race and gender.

Reasons for Choosing UWSP

The table below lists entering students' top five reasons for choosing UWSP, based on the number of respondents who identified each factor as "important" on a three-point scale consisting of the choices "important", "somewhat important", and "not important."

Shading in the first column indicates that the factor appeared in the top five reasons for the group designated with the corresponding color. For example, the factor "core values of the university" appeared in the top five for 1st-gen students, but not for continuing-gen students and not for all students, when considered as a group. In the case of a tie between multiple factors, all factors are listed; hence, the table identifies more than five factors for some groups.

	All students	Cont gen	1 st gen	Shared with students on the Stevens Point campus?
Affordability	48 (89%)	21 (88%)	26 (90%)	y
Location: close to home	39 (72%)	17 (71%)	21 (72%)	n
Accessibility of campus resources	34 (63%)	13 (54%)	20 (69%)	y*
Outstanding professors	33 (61%)	12 (50%)	20 (69%)	y
Opportunities for research and scholarship	29 (54%)	11 (46%)		y
Communication from the university that made me feel valued			20 (69%)	y*
Core values of the university			18 (62%)	n

Factors marked with an asterisk () were identified as top reasons for students on the Stevens Point campus only when survey responses were disaggregated by race and gender.

Declared Majors

The table below lists the top five majors declared by survey respondents. The list of top five majors has remained unchanged since the Entering Student Survey was first administered in 2022.

	All students	Cont gen	1 st gen	Shared with students on the Stevens Point campus?
Elementary Education	5	2	3	y
Nursing (RN to BSN)	5	1	4	n
Social Work	5	3	2	n
Business Administration	4	2	2	n
Psychology	4	0	4	y
Undecided	4	2	2	y

Confidence in Selected Major

Data in this section suggests that 1st-gen students may be more likely than other groups to enter college with a clear idea of their academic and professional goals. First-gen students were more likely than their cont-gen counterparts to indicate that they know exactly what major they want to pursue and do not plan to change their mind. This finding reflects findings on the Stevens Points campus.

	All students	Cont gen	1 st gen
I know exactly what major I want to pursue, and I do not plan to change my mind	40	16	24
I think I know what major I want to pursue, but I would not be surprised if I change my mind. I am thinking about one of the following possible majors: [text box entry]	10	7	2*
I am interested in a specific major, but I am not sure that I can manage the required coursework for this program	4	1	3

*one student who made this choice declined to provide parental educational levels; thus, status as first or cont gen is unknown

Plans Upon Finishing Studies at UWSP-Marshfield or Wausau

	All students	Cont gen	1 st gen
Enter workforce full-time	4	1	3
Not sure	7	2*	4
Other	2+	0	2
Transfer to a private college or university	1	1	0
Transfer to another UW school	11	7	4
Transfer to the Stevens Point campus	29	13	16

***no parental education data for one student**
+transfer to out-of-state school and one unknown

Entering Students' Concerns

The table below lists entering students' top five concerns, based on the number of respondents who indicated being "worried" or "very worried" about each item on a four-point scale consisting of the options "very worried", "worried", "somewhat worried", and "not at all worried".

Shading in the first column indicates that the factor appeared in the top five concerns for the group designated with the corresponding color. For example, the factor "adjusting to life in a new community" appeared in the top five for 1st-gen students, but not for cont-gen students or for all students, when considered as a group. In the case of a tie between multiple factors, all factors are listed; hence, the table identifies more than five factors for some groups.

It is noteworthy that "adjusting to life in a new community" appeared in the top five concerns for first-gen students. This group of students also selected "location: close to home" as an important factor in choosing UWSP. The numbers indicate that some overlap exists between 1st-gen students who chose UWSP for its location close to home and 1st-gen students who are worried about adjusting to life in a new community. This overlap raises the following question: are respondents worried about adjusting to life in a literal new community—i.e., a new town, new neighbors—or are they worried about adjusting to life in the metaphorical new community of higher education?

	All students	Cont gen	1st gen	Shared with students on the Stevens Point campus?
Modifying the time-management habits I learned in high school or developing new time-management habits	19 (35%)	9 (38%)	10 (34%)	y
Meeting my financial obligations	18 (33%)		10 (34%)	y
Meeting new people and making friends	18 (33%)		10 (34%)	y
Modifying the study skills I developed in high school or learning new study skills to ensure that I can meet my professors' academic expectations	17 (31%)	8 (33%)	9 (31%)	y
Handling the academic rigor of college courses	16 (30%)		9 (31%)	y*
Knowing which courses to take	15 (28%)	7 (29%)		y
Knowing what professors expect from me academically		7 (29%)		n
Adjusting to life in a new community			10 (34%)	n
Knowing when to ask for help with academic issues		8 (33%)		y*

Factors marked with an asterisk () were identified as top concerns for students on the Stevens Point campus only when results were disaggregated by race and gender.

Concerns Exhibiting a Difference of 5 Percentage Points or More Between 1st-Gen and Cont-Gen Students

The table below indicates that our 1st-gen students enter their first year of college with more concerns than our continuing-gen students. These findings reflect findings on the Stevens Point campus.

	Which group is more worried?
Adjusting to life in a new community	1 st gen
Adapting to a new living situation / roommates	1 st gen
Maintaining personal safety on and off campus	1 st gen
Overcoming homesickness	1 st gen
Maintaining relationships with friends and family back home	Cont gen
Coping with peer pressure	1 st gen
Fitting the courses I need into my schedule	1 st gen
Knowing what professors expect from me academically	Cont gen
Knowing when to ask for help with academic issues	Cont gen
Knowing where to find help with academic issues	1 st gen
Finding places to study	1 st gen
Knowing when to ask for help managing mental or physical health concerns	1 st gen
Knowing where to find help managing mental or physical health concerns	1 st gen
Meeting my financial obligations	1 st gen

Entering Students' Lack of Confidence

The table below lists the top five areas in which entering students feel least confident, based on the number of respondents who indicated being “not at all confident” or only “somewhat confident” about each item on a four-point scale consisting of the options “very confident”, “confident”, “somewhat confident”, and “not at all confident”.

In the case of a tie between multiple factors, all factors are listed; hence, the table identifies more than five factors for some groups.

	All students	Cont gen	1st gen	Shared with students on the Stevens Point campus?
Studying when there are distractions	33 (61%)	14 (58%)	19 (66%)	y
Recognizing strengths and weaknesses as a student and asking for help developing study skills, time management habits, etc.	30 (56%)	12 (50%)	18 (62%)	n
Developing supportive friendships with peers	30 (56%)	12 (50%)	18 (62%)	n
Balancing school with other aspects of life	30 (56%)	12 (50%)	18 (62%)	y
Developing effective study habits	29 (54%)	13 (54%)		y
Managing time effectively	27 (50%)	12 (50%)		y
Adjusting to the academic demands of college	27 (50%)		18 (62%)	y
Becoming integrated with the campus community	27 (50%)	12 (50%)		y*
Finding information on social events, co-curriculars, etc.	26 (48%)	12 (50%)		y*

Factors marked with an asterisk () were identified as top factors for students on the Stevens Point campus only when results were disaggregated by race and gender.

**Issues Exhibiting a Difference of 5 Percentage Points or More Between 1st-Gen and Cont-Gen Students'
Levels of Confidence**

The table below indicates that our 1st-gen students enter their first year of college with less confidence than our continuing-gen students. These findings reflect findings on the Stevens Point campus.

	Which group is less confident?
Develop supportive friendships with peers	1 st gen
Develop relationships with faculty and staff in the major and in other departments	Cont gen
Understand critical university policies, procedures, etc. or know how to find more information about things I don't understand	Cont gen
Balance school with other commitments	1 st gen
Understand why my professors expect from me academically	1 st gen
Adjust to the rigor of academic coursework	1 st gen
Study when there are distractions	1 st gen
Recognize strengths and weaknesses as a student and ask for help, as needed, in developing effective study habits, time management skills, etc.	1 st gen
Recognize when I need to ask for help understanding course content	1 st gen
Set long-term academic or professional goals and ask for help achieving them, as needed	1 st gen
Communicate effectively in written and spoken contexts	1 st gen
Develop the critical thinking skills needed to solve problems	1 st gen
Manage my money and have a plan for financing my education	1 st gen

Entering Students' Confidence

The table below lists the top five areas in which entering students feel most confident, based on the number of respondents who indicated being “very confident” or “confident” about each item on a four-point scale consisting of the options “very confident”, “confident”, “somewhat confident”, and “not at all confident”.

In the case of a tie between multiple factors, all factors are listed; hence, the table identifies more than five factors for some groups.

	All students	Cont gen	1 st gen	Shared with students on the Stevens Point campus?
Develop and apply the critical thinking skills needed to solve problems	39 (72%)	19 (79%)	19 (66%)	y
Understand critical university policies, deadlines, etc. or know how to find more information about things I don't understand	38 (70%)	16 (67%)	21 (72%)	y
Manage my money and have a plan for financing my education	36 (67%)	17 (71%)	18 (62%)	n
Communicate effectively in written and spoken contexts	34 (63%)	17 (71%)	16 (55%)	y
Develop positive relationships with faculty and staff members in my major and in other departments	34 (63%)		19 (66%)	y
Set long-term academic and professional goals and know how to ask for help, as needed, in achieving them	32 (59%)	16 (67%)		y*

*This factor was identified by students on the Stevens Point campus only when results were disaggregated by race and gender.

Paying for College and Working for Pay

The table below lists the top three ways that survey respondents are planning to pay for their education.

In the case of a tie between multiple factors, all factors are listed; hence, the table identifies more than three factors for some groups.

	All students	Cont gen	1st gen	SOC	White	Female	Male	Shared with students on the Stevens Point campus?
Scholarships	10 (19%)	No significant differences across subgroups						y
Off-campus work	9 (17%)							n
Grants	7 (13%)							n
Federal Loans	7 (13%)							n

Numbers and Motivations of Respondents Planning to Work More than 20 hours/wk During the Semester

	All students	Cont gen	1 st gen
Students in each group working more than 20 hours per week	14 (26%)	5 (21%)	8 (28%)
Of the students in each group working more than 20 hours per week, what percentage are working to...			
pay for course expenses?	13 (93%)	5 (100%)	7 (88%)
pay for living expenses?	8 (57%)	3 (60%)	5 (63%)
provide for family back home?	2 (14%)	1 (20%)	1 (13%)

Numbers of Respondents Planning to Work Both On- and Off-Campus

	All students	Cont gen	1st gen	SOC	White	Female	Male
Students in each group planning to work both on- and off-campus	2 – both are first gen, both are white, one is female, one is male, both come from a household in which at least one parent did not complete HS; only one is planning to work more than 20 hours per week						

Sense of Belonging on Campus

Calculations presented in the table below are based on the number of students who indicated that a sense of belonging is “important” on a three-point scale consisting of the options “important”, “somewhat important”, and “not important”.

	All students	Cont gen	1st gen
“Important” responses	24 (44%)	7 (29%)	17 (59%)

Factors that Foster a Sense of Belonging on Campus

Calculations presented in the table below are based on the number of students who rated each factor as “important” on a three-point scale consisting of the options “important”, “somewhat important”, and “not important”.

	All students	Cont gen	1 st gen	Shared with students on the Stevens Point campus?
Meeting people with similar interests or hobbies	32 (59%)	13 (54%)	19 (66%)	y
Meeting people with similar values	30 (56%)	11 (46%)	20 (69%)	y
Meeting people with similar major and career interests	29 (54%)	10 (42%)	18 (62%)	y
Meeting people with similar identities (racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, gender, etc.)	22 (41%)	8 (33%)	14 (48%)	y*
Meeting people who are different from me	18 (33%)	6 (25%)	12 (41%)	y

*This factor was identified as important by students on the Stevens Point campus only when responses were disaggregated by race and gender.