
NSSE 2025 Topical Module Report

Development of Transferable Skills

Grand Valley State University

Adapted from a pilot survey that was developed by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, this module examines activities that develop useful and transferable skills for the workplace and beyond (such as verbal and written fluency, critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving, project management, and time management). The module complements questions on the core survey about higher-order learning, reflective and integrative learning, and students' perceptions of their development in a variety of areas.

Comparison group details are in the Selected Comparison Groups report, available in PDF format in your report download folder.

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First-Year Students

				Frequency Distributions ^a				Statistical Comparisons ^b		
				GVSU		Transferable Skills		GVSU	Transferable Skills	Effect size ^d
Item wording or description	Variable name	Values ^c	Response options	Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	
1. During the current school year, whether course-related or not, about how often have you done the following?										
a. Discussed or debated an issue of social, political, or philosophical importance	TRNdebate	1	Never	113	15	1,285	19	2.5	2.4 **	.10 △
		2	Sometimes	295	40	2,956	40			
		3	Often	224	29	1,953	27			
		4	Very often	126	16	1,029	14			
		Total		758	100	7,223	100			
b. Made a speech to a group	TRNspeech	1	Never	209	27	1,800	26	2.1	2.2	-.04
		2	Sometimes	319	42	2,986	41			
		3	Often	167	22	1,690	23			
		4	Very often	63	9	751	10			
		Total		758	100	7,227	100			
c. Worked in a group with people who differed from you in terms of background, political orientation, points of view, etc.	TRNgroup	1	Never	33	5	398	6	2.7	2.7	.01
		2	Sometimes	246	32	2,406	34			
		3	Often	351	47	2,990	41			
		4	Very often	128	16	1,427	20			
		Total		758	100	7,221	100			
d. Discussed the ethical consequences of a course of action	TRNethical	1	Never	89	12	1,018	15	2.5	2.4	.07
		2	Sometimes	315	42	2,945	41			
		3	Often	247	33	2,337	32			
		4	Very often	104	14	916	13			
		Total		755	100	7,216	100			
e. Evaluated the credibility of information sources	TRNcred	1	Never	34	5	420	7	2.8	2.8	.07
		2	Sometimes	228	30	2,265	31			
		3	Often	324	43	2,955	41			
		4	Very often	168	22	1,568	21			
		Total		754	100	7,208	100			
f. Discussed complex problems with others to develop a better solution	TRNcomplex	1	Never	46	7	528	8	2.7	2.7	.07
		2	Sometimes	242	33	2,517	35			
		3	Often	330	43	2,842	38			
		4	Very often	133	18	1,317	18			
		Total		751	100	7,204	100			
g. Generated multiple solutions to a problem or task	TRNsolution	1	Never	32	4	385	6	2.7	2.7	.02
		2	Sometimes	255	34	2,464	34			
		3	Often	343	45	2,987	41			
		4	Very often	122	16	1,366	19			
		Total		752	100	7,202	100			
h. Combined dissimilar concepts to create a novel idea	TRNcreate	1	Never	159	21	1,418	21	2.2	2.3	-.03
		2	Sometimes	332	44	3,099	42			
		3	Often	196	26	1,922	26			
		4	Very often	64	9	750	10			
		Total		751	100	7,189	100			
i. Adapted a previously used solution to a new situation	TRNadapt	1	Never	64	8	698	11	2.6	2.5	.01
		2	Sometimes	304	40	2,804	39			
		3	Often	294	40	2,681	37			
		4	Very often	87	12	1,005	14			
		Total		749	100	7,188	100			

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Frequencies and Statistical Comparisons

Grand Valley State University

First-Year Students

Item wording or description	Variable name	Values ^c	Response options	Frequency Distributions ^a				Statistical Comparisons ^b		
				GVSU		Transferable Skills		GVSU	Transferable Skills	Effect size ^d
				Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	
j. Referred to online content (tutorial, forum, webpage, etc.) to solve a problem	TRNonsolve	1	Never	26	4	289	4	3.0	3.0	.02
		2	Sometimes	171	22	1,903	27			
		3	Often	344	46	2,820	39			
		4	Very often	211	27	2,167	31			
		Total		752	100	7,179	100			
k. Referred to online content (tutorial, forum, webpage, etc.) to learn a new skill or procedure	TRNonskill	1	Never	32	4	319	5	2.9	2.9	.03
		2	Sometimes	190	26	2,055	29			
		3	Often	319	43	2,798	38			
		4	Very often	207	27	2,017	28			
		Total		748	100	7,189	100			
l. Used project management tools to plan, organize, or schedule tasks	TRNproject	1	Never	56	8	727	12	2.7	2.6 *	.09
		2	Sometimes	257	35	2,526	35			
		3	Often	295	39	2,540	34			
		4	Very often	143	18	1,390	18			
		Total		751	100	7,183	100			
m. Used a daily or weekly "to do" list	TRNtodo	1	Never	50	8	687	12	3.1	2.9 ***	.22
		2	Sometimes	145	21	1,809	26			
		3	Often	160	22	1,851	25			
		4	Very often	398	49	2,837	37			
		Total		753	100	7,184	100			
n. Prioritized what tasks need to be accomplished	TRNtasks	1	Never	6	1	124	2	3.4	3.2 ***	.16
		2	Sometimes	99	14	1,214	17			
		3	Often	247	34	2,579	36			
		4	Very often	399	51	3,259	44			
		Total		751	100	7,176	100			
o. Worked longer hours than usual to meet deadlines (i.e., after midnight, before dawn)	TRNhours	1	Never	50	7	528	8	2.9	2.9	.02
		2	Sometimes	215	30	2,055	29			
		3	Often	235	31	2,229	32			
		4	Very often	252	32	2,380	32			
		Total		752	100	7,192	100			
p. Written something (paper, report, article, etc.) that used information from a variety of sources (books, journals, Internet, databases, etc.)	TRNwrsources	1	Never	16	2	222	3	3.1	3.0 ***	.15
		2	Sometimes	161	22	1,965	28			
		3	Often	300	40	2,707	38			
		4	Very often	276	35	2,299	31			
		Total		753	100	7,193	100			
q. Written something (paper, report, article, etc.) that assessed the conclusions of a published work	TRNwrassess	1	Never	86	12	769	12	2.6	2.6	.00
		2	Sometimes	253	34	2,515	35			
		3	Often	259	34	2,356	33			
		4	Very often	152	20	1,530	20			
		Total		750	100	7,170	100			

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Frequencies and Statistical Comparisons

Grand Valley State University

First-Year Students

				Frequency Distributions ^a				Statistical Comparisons ^b		
				GVSU		Transferable Skills		GVSU	Transferable Skills	Effect size ^d
Item wording or description	Variable name	Values ^c	Response options	Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	
r. Written something (paper, report, article, etc.) that included ideas from more than one academic discipline	TRNwrideas	1	Never	72	9	803	12	2.6	2.6	.04
		2	Sometimes	270	37	2,661	38			
		3	Often	275	36	2,325	32			
		4	Very often	134	17	1,389	19			
		Total		751	100	7,178	100			
s. Written something (paper, report, article, etc.) that presented multiple viewpoints or perspectives	TRNwrviews	1	Never	50	6	537	8	2.6	2.7	-.03
		2	Sometimes	299	41	2,644	37			
		3	Often	264	35	2,536	35			
		4	Very often	136	18	1,463	20			
		Total		749	100	7,180	100			

NSSE 2025 Development of Transferable Skills

Frequencies and Statistical Comparisons

Grand Valley State University

Seniors

				Frequency Distributions ^a				Statistical Comparisons ^b		
				GVSU		Transferable Skills		GVSU	Transferable Skills	Effect size ^d
Item wording or description	Variable name	Values ^c	Response options	Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	
1. During the current school year, whether course-related or not, about how often have you done the following?										
a. Discussed or debated an issue of social, political, or philosophical importance	TRNdebate	1	Never	42	9	1,743	20	2.6	2.4 ***	.21
		2	Sometimes	203	41	3,213	37			
		3	Often	166	31	2,202	25			
		4	Very often	105	20	1,515	18			
		Total		516	100	8,673	100			
b. Made a speech to a group	TRNspeech	1	Never	97	19	2,034	23	2.3	2.3	.01
		2	Sometimes	223	44	3,531	41			
		3	Often	139	27	1,947	22			
		4	Very often	56	10	1,162	14			
		Total		515	100	8,674	100			
c. Worked in a group with people who differed from you in terms of background, political orientation, points of view, etc.	TRNgroup	1	Never	7	1	524	6	2.9	2.8	.04
		2	Sometimes	170	33	2,579	30			
		3	Often	215	41	3,328	39			
		4	Very often	123	24	2,247	26			
		Total		515	100	8,678	100			
d. Discussed the ethical consequences of a course of action	TRNethical	1	Never	35	7	1,118	13	2.7	2.6 *	.09
		2	Sometimes	194	39	3,091	37			
		3	Often	183	35	2,774	31			
		4	Very often	102	19	1,681	19			
		Total		514	100	8,664	100			
e. Evaluated the credibility of information sources	TRNcred	1	Never	15	3	559	6	3.0	2.9 ***	.17
		2	Sometimes	118	24	2,315	27			
		3	Often	208	40	3,275	37			
		4	Very often	173	34	2,521	29			
		Total		514	100	8,670	100			
f. Discussed complex problems with others to develop a better solution	TRNcomplex	1	Never	10	2	576	6	3.0	2.9 **	.12
		2	Sometimes	137	26	2,388	28			
		3	Often	223	44	3,386	39			
		4	Very often	144	28	2,303	27			
		Total		514	100	8,653	100			
g. Generated multiple solutions to a problem or task	TRNsolution	1	Never	13	3	456	5	3.0	2.9	.08
		2	Sometimes	133	26	2,443	28			
		3	Often	227	44	3,444	40			
		4	Very often	140	27	2,309	27			
		Total		513	100	8,652	100			
h. Combined dissimilar concepts to create a novel idea	TRNcreate	1	Never	81	16	1,594	18	2.4	2.4	-.01
		2	Sometimes	232	45	3,538	42			
		3	Often	139	28	2,295	26			
		4	Very often	59	12	1,219	14			
		Total		511	100	8,646	100			
i. Adapted a previously used solution to a new situation	TRNadapt	1	Never	32	6	754	9	2.7	2.7	.00
		2	Sometimes	186	36	3,025	35			
		3	Often	209	41	3,144	36			
		4	Very often	85	17	1,710	20			
		Total		512	100	8,633	100			

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Frequencies and Statistical Comparisons

Grand Valley State University

Seniors

Item wording or description	Variable name	Values ^c	Response options	Frequency Distributions ^a				Statistical Comparisons ^b		
				GVSU		Transferable Skills		GVSU	Transferable Skills	Effect size ^d
				Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	
j. Referred to online content (tutorial, forum, webpage, etc.) to solve a problem	TRNnonsolve	1	Never	10	2	326	4	3.1	3.1	-.03
		2	Sometimes	120	24	1,862	21			
		3	Often	200	39	3,104	36			
		4	Very often	183	36	3,360	39			
		Total		513	100	8,652	100			
k. Referred to online content (tutorial, forum, webpage, etc.) to learn a new skill or procedure	TRNnonskill	1	Never	9	2	347	4	3.1	3.1	.01
		2	Sometimes	119	23	1,997	23			
		3	Often	210	41	3,135	37			
		4	Very often	174	34	3,160	37			
		Total		512	100	8,639	100			
l. Used project management tools to plan, organize, or schedule tasks	TRNproject	1	Never	43	9	858	10	2.8	2.7	.04
		2	Sometimes	154	30	2,614	31			
		3	Often	182	36	2,997	34			
		4	Very often	134	25	2,164	25			
		Total		513	100	8,633	100			
m. Used a daily or weekly "to do" list	TRNtodo	1	Never	22	5	700	9	3.2	3.0 *** △	.20
		2	Sometimes	88	19	1,904	23			
		3	Often	111	22	2,075	24			
		4	Very often	292	54	3,969	45			
		Total		513	100	8,648	100			
n. Prioritized what tasks need to be accomplished	TRNtasks	1	Never	3	1	139	2	3.5	3.4 *** △	.19
		2	Sometimes	50	10	1,072	13			
		3	Often	124	25	2,712	32			
		4	Very often	336	64	4,703	54			
		Total		513	100	8,626	100			
o. Worked longer hours than usual to meet deadlines (i.e., after midnight, before dawn)	TRNhours	1	Never	26	5	528	6	2.9	3.0 * ▽	-.09
		2	Sometimes	165	33	2,277	27			
		3	Often	142	28	2,338	27			
		4	Very often	180	34	3,503	40			
		Total		513	100	8,646	100			
p. Written something (paper, report, article, etc.) that used information from a variety of sources (books, journals, Internet, databases, etc.)	TRNwrsources	1	Never	13	3	325	4	3.2	3.1 * △	.11
		2	Sometimes	81	17	1,871	22			
		3	Often	183	36	2,821	33			
		4	Very often	234	44	3,613	41			
		Total		511	100	8,630	100			
q. Written something (paper, report, article, etc.) that assessed the conclusions of a published work	TRNwrassess	1	Never	36	8	1,006	12	2.8	2.7	.07
		2	Sometimes	152	30	2,589	31			
		3	Often	179	35	2,544	29			
		4	Very often	145	27	2,490	28			
		Total		512	100	8,629	100			

NSSE 2025 Development of Transferable Skills

Frequencies and Statistical Comparisons

Grand Valley State University

Seniors

				Frequency Distributions ^a				Statistical Comparisons ^b		
				GVSU		Transferable Skills		GVSU	Transferable Skills	Effect size ^d
Item wording or description	Variable name	Values ^c	Response options	Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	
r. Written something (paper, report, article, etc.) that included ideas from more than one academic discipline	TRNwrideas	1	Never	36	7	932	11	2.8	2.7	.06
		2	Sometimes	170	34	2,834	33			
		3	Often	171	33	2,592	30			
		4	Very often	136	26	2,273	26			
		Total		513	100	8,631	100			
s. Written something (paper, report, article, etc.) that presented multiple viewpoints or perspectives	TRNwrviews	1	Never	36	8	859	10	2.7	2.7	.04
		2	Sometimes	169	34	3,004	35			
		3	Often	186	35	2,624	30			
		4	Very often	120	23	2,153	24			
		Total		511	100	8,640	100			

NSSE 2025 Development of Transferable Skills

Detailed Statistics^e Grand Valley State University

First-Year Students

Variable name	N	Mean		Standard error ^f		Standard deviation ^g		DF ^h	Sig. ⁱ	Effect size ^d
	GVSU	GVSU	Transferable Skills	GVSU	Transferable Skills	GVSU	Transferable Skills	Comparisons with: Transferable Skills		
TRNdebate	746	2.47	2.37	.034	.010	.93	.94	887	.007	.10
TRNspeech	745	2.13	2.17	.033	.010	.90	.93	892	.257	-.04
TRNgroup	745	2.75	2.74	.029	.009	.78	.84	906	.682	.01
TRNethical	742	2.48	2.41	.032	.010	.87	.89	886	.052	.07
TRNcred	742	2.82	2.76	.030	.009	.83	.86	888	.058	.07
TRNcomplex	739	2.72	2.66	.031	.010	.83	.87	887	.060	.07
TRNsolution	739	2.74	2.72	.029	.009	.78	.84	895	.552	.02
TRNcreate	739	2.23	2.26	.032	.010	.88	.91	885	.452	-.03
TRNadapt	737	2.55	2.54	.030	.009	.81	.86	890	.718	.01
TRNnon solve	740	2.97	2.96	.030	.009	.81	.86	895	.576	.02
TRNnon skill	737	2.92	2.90	.031	.010	.83	.87	883	.444	.03
TRNproject	739	2.68	2.59	.032	.010	.86	.92	895	.015	.09
TRNtodo	741	3.11	2.88	.037	.011	1.01	1.04	887	.000	.22
TRNtasks	739	3.35	3.23	.028	.009	.75	.81	895	.000	.16
TRNhours	740	2.89	2.87	.034	.010	.94	.95	882	.538	.02
TRNwsource	741	3.09	2.96	.030	.009	.81	.85	891	.000	.15
TRNw assess	738	2.62	2.62	.034	.010	.93	.93	875	.930	.00
TRNw ideas	739	2.62	2.58	.032	.010	.88	.92	890	.243	.04
TRNw reviews	736	2.63	2.66	.031	.010	.84	.88	884	.382	-.03

NSSE 2025 Development of Transferable Skills

Detailed Statistics^e Grand Valley State University

Seniors

Variable name	N	Mean		Standard error ^f		Standard deviation ^g		DF ^h	Sig. ⁱ	Effect size ^d
	GVSU	GVSU	Transferable Skills	GVSU	Transferable Skills	GVSU	Transferable Skills	Comparisons with: Transferable Skills		
TRNdebate	512	2.61	2.40	.040	.010	.90	1.00	579	.000	.21
TRNspeech	511	2.28	2.27	.039	.010	.89	.97	574	.763	.01
TRNgroup	511	2.88	2.84	.035	.009	.78	.87	577	.318	.04
TRNethical	510	2.66	2.58	.038	.009	.87	.94	573	.039	.09
TRNcred	510	3.04	2.89	.037	.009	.83	.90	571	.000	.17
TRNcomplex	510	2.97	2.86	.035	.009	.79	.88	576	.003	.12
TRNsolution	509	2.96	2.89	.035	.009	.80	.86	570	.061	.08
TRNcreate	507	2.35	2.37	.039	.009	.88	.94	566	.734	-.01
TRNadapt	508	2.68	2.68	.037	.009	.83	.89	569	.930	.00
TRNnonsolve	509	3.09	3.11	.036	.009	.81	.86	567	.438	-.03
TRNnonskill	508	3.07	3.07	.036	.009	.80	.86	569	.885	.01
TRNproject	509	2.77	2.73	.041	.010	.93	.94	564	.368	.04
TRNtodo	509	3.24	3.04	.042	.010	.94	1.01	570	.000	.20
TRNtasks	509	3.53	3.38	.031	.008	.70	.76	572	.000	.19
TRNhours	509	2.91	3.00	.041	.010	.93	.96	565	.045	-.09
TRNwrsources	508	3.21	3.12	.037	.009	.83	.88	566	.014	.11
TRNwrassess	509	2.81	2.74	.041	.010	.93	.99	570	.096	.07
TRNwrideas	509	2.78	2.71	.041	.010	.92	.97	568	.139	.06
TRNwrviews	508	2.73	2.69	.040	.010	.91	.95	566	.315	.04

Endnotes

- a. Column percentages are weighted by institution-reported sex and enrollment status (and institution size for comparison groups). Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding. Counts are unweighted; column percentages cannot be replicated from counts. Comparison group details are in the Selected Comparison Groups report, linked in the Data & Reports table on the Institution Interface.
- b. All statistics are weighted by institution-reported sex and enrollment status (and institution size for comparison groups). Unless otherwise noted, statistical comparisons are two-tailed independent t-tests. Items with categorical response sets are left blank.
- c. These are the values used to calculate means. For the majority of items, these values match the codes in the data file and codebook.
- d. Effect size for independent t-tests uses Cohen's d; z-tests use Cohen's h.
- e. Statistics are weighted by institution-reported sex and enrollment status (and institution size for comparison groups). Categorical items are not listed.
- f. The 95% confidence interval for the population mean is equal to the sample mean plus or minus 1.96 times the standard error of the mean.
- g. A measure of the amount individual scores deviate from the mean of all the scores in the distribution.
- h. Degrees of freedom used to compute the t-tests. Values differ from Ns due to weighting and whether equal variances were assumed.
- i. Statistical comparisons are two-tailed independent t-tests or z-tests. Statistical significance represents the probability that the difference between your students' mean and that of the students in the comparison group is due to chance.
- j. Statistical comparison uses z-test to compare the proportion who responded (depending on the item) "Done or in progress" or "Yes" with all who responded otherwise.
- k. Mean represents the proportion who responded (depending on the item) "Done or in progress" or "Yes."

Key to symbols:

- ▲ **Your students' average** was significantly higher ($p < .05$) with an effect size at least .3 in magnitude.
- △ **Your students' average** was significantly higher ($p < .05$) with an effect size less than .3 in magnitude.
- ▼ **Your students' average** was significantly lower ($p < .05$) with an effect size less than .3 in magnitude.
- ▽ **Your students' average** was significantly lower ($p < .05$) with an effect size at least .3 in magnitude.

Note: It is important to interpret the direction of differences relative to item wording and your institutional context. You may not see all of these symbols in your report.