

Civic Competency and Engagement Analysis

BSU Freshmen, BSU Seniors and the National Comparison Group

In 2017, Educational Testing Services (ETS) launched the HEIghten *Civic Competency and Engagement* (CCE) pilot study. Bowie State University (BSU) was one of 23 participating institutions that assessed freshmen students that year. In 2018-19, BSU was one of 28 participating institutions that assessed senior students.

During AY 2017-18, 110 BSU freshmen completed the assessment, and 1,818 students completed the assessment from the other 23 participating institutions. In 2018-2019 BSU assessed 107 seniors, and from the other 28 institutions, 5,091 students completed the assessment. The purpose of the study was to evaluate students' learning and participation in civic engagement and to design an assessment that specifically measured that domain. For BSU, this analysis examines the change from freshmen to seniors with civic learning, civic participation, and civic engagement. This analysis also compares BSU freshmen and seniors to the national comparison groups.

Civic Competency and Engagement (CCE) is defined as a combination of civic knowledge and skills, including the ability to analyze and make reasoned judgments about civic-related and political-related issues or situations. For this pilot study, according to the Educational Testing Services' test structure, four pilot forms were designed for the CCE assessment. Each CCE form contained 80 items and was designed to be completed in less than 40-minutes. Multiple item formats were used to gather information from the students which included: Likert-type items, single-selection multiple-choice, multiple-selection/multiple-choice, dropdown menus, situational judgment (SJT), and hypothetical scenarios. Scores for this assessment range from Developing = 150 – 156, Proficient = 157 – 172, and Advanced = 173 - 180. The results of the Civic Competency section are as follows:

1. BSU Freshmen = 157.6 (Proficient) [n = 110]
2. Comparison institution students = 163.3 (Proficient) [n = 1,818]
3. BSU Seniors = 159.6 (Proficient) [n = 107]
4. Comparison institution students = 163.0 (Proficient) [n = 5,091]

TABLE I: BSU FRESHMEN AND SENIORS Civic Competency and Engagement	Bowie State University Freshmen n = 110	Comparison Institutions for Freshmen CCE n = 1,818	Bowie State University Seniors n=107	Comparison Institutions for Senior CCE n = 5,091
Civic Competency: A combination of civic knowledge and skills, including the ability to analyze and make reasoned judgments about civic-related and political-related issues or situations (Developing = 150 - 156, Proficient = 157 - 172 and Advanced = 173 - 180)	157.6 Proficient (mean scale score)	163.3 Proficient (mean scale score)	159.6 Proficient (mean scale score)	163.0 Proficient (mean scale score)

Civic Competency - With the civic competency component of the assessment, the BSU freshmen and BSU seniors, as well as both comparison groups, scored in the “Proficient” range. While the two BSU scores were lower than the comparison group scores, there was a gain in the score from freshmen to seniors who were assessed at Bowie State (157.6 to 159.6). Also, there was a smaller difference in scores between the BSU seniors and their comparison group vs. the BSU freshmen and their comparison group (3.4 for BSU seniors vs. 5.7 for BSU freshmen).

Civic Attitudes – Civic attitudes is defined as "reactions to realistic situations in ways that demonstrate civic efficacy and democratic norms and values" (Score = Student Response of Medium + Higher for level of belief in civic and political efficacy and the norms and values of democracy). In this area, the BSU students, both the freshmen and the senior cohorts, scored higher than their peer groups from the other institutions.

TABLE II: Civic Competency and Engagement	Bowie State University Freshmen n = 110	Comparison Institutions for Freshmen CCE n = 1,818	Bowie State University Seniors n=107	Comparison Institution for Senior CCE n = 5,091
Civic Attitudes: Reactions to realistic situations in ways that demonstrate civic efficacy and democratic norms and values (Score = Student Response of Medium + Higher for level of belief in civic and political efficacy and the norms and values of democracy)	80%	78%	82%	78%

The scores for this section are for students’ level of belief in civic and political efficacy and the norms and values of democracy, where the reported percentages are for students’ responses of Medium plus Higher:

1. BSU Freshmen = 80%
2. Comparison institution students = 78%
3. BSU Seniors = 82%
4. Comparison institution students = 78%

Therefore, BSU freshmen and seniors had a medium to high belief in civic/political efficacy and norms/values of democracy (80% and 82% respectively) compared to 78% for both of the national comparison groups. As with civic competency, this civic attitudes score increased from the BSU freshmen to the BSU seniors. Both freshmen and seniors were randomly selected to participate in the CCE assessment.

Civic Participation - This section investigated students’ engagement in civic life. Overall, BSU freshmen students participated at 36%, and the national comparison group participated at 51%. For BSU seniors, students participated at 61%, and the national comparison group participated at 52%. The BSU freshmen group started far behind their national comparison group; however, the BSU seniors scored ahead of their national comparison group. While all of the factors that contributed to this large difference in the participation rates of BSU freshmen vs. BSU seniors, as well as their respective comparison groups, are not known, one can surmise that student engagement on the campus may well have contributed to this large increase.

TABLE III: BSU FRESHMEN CIVIC PARTICIPATION Area Assessed	BSU FRESHMEN n = 110 students	NATIONAL COMPARISON n = 1,818	Difference- BSU Freshmen vs. National Comparison Institutions
Civic Participation: Engagement in a variety of civic and political activities across a wide variety of contexts. Breakout by issue below:	36%	51%	-14
Question 1-7 responses indicate % of students who responded in the affirmative that they performed or participated in each numbered activity			
1. Volunteered to do community service (Those volunteering for community service)	15%	80%	-65
2. Signed petition about social/political issue	15%	56%	-41
3. Collected money for a candidate or political/social cause	7%	22%	-15
4. Volunteered on campus (1-40 hours)	5%	42%	-37
5. Belong to student government	5%	5%	0
6. Participation in activities to help protect the environment	23%	61%	-38
7. Organized a group of people to work on a social cause/political issue	10%	26%	-16
Question 8-17 responses indicate % of students who participated in the following numbered activity “weekly” or “daily”			
8. Discuss campus-related issues with others	14%	22%	-8
9. Raise awareness about social/political issues using social media	7%	15%	-8
10. Read articles/stories in the newspaper (print or online) about <i>other</i> countries	20%	39%	-19
11. Listen to news on the radio about local/state/national politics or current events	38%	28%	+10
12. Watch TV news/cable shows for information about <i>national</i> politics or current events	33%	36%	-3
13. Discuss local/state/national political or social issues with others	26%	38%	-12
14. Read articles/stories in the newspaper (print or online) about <i>this</i> country	35%	60%	-25
15. Follow political blogs/podcasts/other online news services	22%	29%	-7

16. Listen to news on the radio about international politics or current events.	26%	21%	+5
17. Watch TV news/cable shows for information about <i>international</i> politics or current events	19%	26%	-7

TABLE IV: BSU SENIORS CIVIC PARTICIPATION Area Assessed	BSU SENIORS n = 107 students	NATIONAL COMPARISON n = 5,091	Difference- BSU Seniors vs. National Comparison Institutions
Civic Participation: Engagement in a variety of civic and political activities across a wide variety of contexts. Breakout by issue below:	61%	52%	+9
Question 1-7 responses indicate % of students who responded in the affirmative that they performed or participated in each numbered activity at the local/state/national and/or international level			
1. Volunteered to do community service (Those volunteering for community service)	91%	81%	+10
2. Signed petition about social/political issue	77%	53%	+24
3. Collected money for a candidate or political/social cause	35%	22%	+13
4. Volunteered on campus (1-40 hours)	70%	41%	+29
5. Belong to student government	17%	6%	+11
6. Participation in activities to help protect the environment	72%	66%	+6
7. Organized a group of people to work on a social cause/political issue	50%	25%	+25
Question 8-17 responses indicate % of students who participated in the following numbered activity “weekly” or “daily”			
8. Discuss campus-related issues with others	28%	21%	+7
9. Raise awareness about social/political issues using social media	25%	14%	+11
10. Read articles/stories in the newspaper (print or online) about <i>other</i> countries	40%	34%	+6
11. Listen to news on the radio about local/state/national politics or current events	38%	28%	+10

12. Watch TV news/cable shows for information about <i>national</i> politics or current events	41%	33%	+8
13. Discuss local/state/national political or social issues with others	35%	34%	+1
14. Read articles/stories in the newspaper (print or online) about <i>this</i> country	49%	54%	-5
15. Follow political blogs/podcasts/other online news services	37%	26%	+11
16. Listen to news on the radio about international politics or current events.	25%	18%	+7
17. Watch TV news/cable shows for information about <i>international</i> politics or current events	34%	23%	+11

Civic Participation - Detailed Questions - This section of the civic participation assessment measured students' engagement in a variety of civic and political activities across a wide variety of contexts. Questions 1-7 reported student responses for the mean percent of students who responded in the affirmative that they performed or participated in each numbered activity. Questions 8-17 reported the percent of students who participated in the numbered activity "weekly" or "daily."

Freshmen and comparison group results - Detailed Questions - The results indicate that the BSU freshmen participated in the activities in Questions 1-7 either at the same rate (in one case) or at a lesser rate (in the remaining cases) than their national comparison peers.

The area where the participation level was the same between the two groups was "belonging to student government" where few of the BSU freshmen and few of the national comparison group participated - the level for both was 5%.

The other areas of difference, where the BSU freshmen participation was lower than the national peers, in rank order, from the greatest difference to the least difference are as follows:

1. Volunteered to do community service - Difference of 65
2. Sign petition about social/political issue - Difference of 41
3. Participation in activities to help protect the environment - Difference of 38
4. Volunteered on campus (1-40 hours) - Difference of 37
5. Organized a group of people to work on a social cause/political issue - Difference of 16
6. Collected money for a candidate or social/political issue - Difference of 15

In the section with Questions 8-17, student responses display the percent of students who participated in the numbered activity "weekly" or "daily." The results indicate that in two areas the BSU freshmen participated at a higher level than the comparison group. The first one is "Listen to news on the radio about local/state/national politics or current events" at 38% for BSU freshmen and 28% for their comparison group; the second is "Listen to news on the radio about international politics or current events" at 26% for BSU freshmen and 21% for the comparison group.

The other areas of difference, where the BSU freshmen participation on a daily/weekly basis was lower than the national peers, in rank order, from the greatest difference to the least difference are as follows:

1. Read articles/stories in the newspaper (print or online) about *this* country - Difference of 25
2. Read articles/stories in the newspaper (print or online) about other countries - Difference of 19
3. Discuss local/state/national political or social issues with others - Difference of 12
4. TIE: Discuss campus-related issues with others, and Raise awareness about social/political issues using social media - Difference of 8 in each case
5. TIE: Follow political blogs/podcasts/other online news services - Difference of 7 in each case
6. Watch TV news/cable shows for information about national politics or current events - Difference of 3

Seniors and comparison group results - Detailed Questions - The results indicate that the BSU seniors participated in the activities in Questions 1-7 at a higher rate than their national comparison peers in all areas, and in six of seven areas, their participation was ahead of the national peer group by double digits. The areas of difference, where the BSU senior participation was higher than the national peers, in rank order, from the greatest difference to the least difference are as follows:

1. Volunteered on campus - Difference of 29
2. Organized a group of people to work on a social cause/political issue - Difference of 25
3. Signed petition about social/political issue - Difference of 24
4. Collected money for a candidate or political/social cause - Difference of 13
5. Belong to student government - Difference of 11
6. Volunteered to do community service - Difference of 10
7. Participation in activities to help protect the environment - Difference of 6

In the section with Questions 8-17, the student responses indicate the percent of students who participated in the following numbered activity “weekly” or “daily.” The results indicate that in one area that BSU seniors participated at a lower level than the comparison group, which was “Read articles/stories in the newspaper (print or online) about *this* country,” where there was a difference of -5 (49% of BSU seniors vs. 54% for the comparison group for this activity).

The areas of difference, where the BSU senior student participation on a daily/weekly basis, were higher than their national peers, in rank order, from the greatest difference to the least difference are as follows:

1. TIE (3 activities) - Raise awareness about social/political issues using social media; Follow political blogs/podcasts/other online news services and Watch TV news/cable shows for information about international politics or current events - Difference of 11
2. Listen to news on the radio about local/state/national politics or current events - Difference of 10
3. Watch TV news/cable shows for information about national politics or current events - Difference of 8
4. TIE (2 activities) - Discuss campus-related issues with others; and Listen to news on the radio about international politics or current events - Difference of 7 for each
5. Read articles/stories in the newspaper (print or online) about other countries - Difference of 6
6. Discuss local/state/national political or social issues with others - Difference of 1

Civic Participation - Overall, BSU freshmen students participated at 36%, and the BSU seniors participated at 61%. While this is not the same group of students, but rather two different BSU cohorts, it does indicate that there is a substantial increase in BSU student participation in civic activities in the students’ senior year compared to their freshmen year. The detailed section measures students’ engagement in a variety of civic and political activities across a wide variety

of contexts. Questions 1-7 report student responses for the mean percent of students who responded in the affirmative that they performed or participated in each numbered activity. Questions 8-17 report the percent of students who participated in the following numbered activity “weekly” or “daily.”

Freshmen and Senior BSU students - Detailed Questions - The results indicate that the BSU freshmen participated in the activities in Questions 1-7 at a lower rate, in some cases, a far lower rate, than the BSU seniors.

The areas of difference, in rank order, from the greatest difference to the least difference between BSU seniors and BSU freshmen, are as follows:

1. Volunteered to do community service - Difference of 76
2. Volunteered on campus (1-40 hours) - Difference of 65
3. Signed petition about social/political issue - Difference of 62
4. Participation in activities to help protect the environment - Difference of 49
5. Organized a group of people to work on a social cause/political issue - Difference of 40
6. Collected money for a candidate or political/social cause - Difference of 28
7. Belong to student government - Difference of 12

TABLE V: BSU FRESHMEN VS. BSU SENIORS CIVIC PARTICIPATION Area Assessed	BSU FRESHMEN	BSU SENIORS	Difference- BSU Freshmen vs. BSU Seniors
	n = 110	n = 107	
Civic Participation: Engagement in a variety of civic and political activities across a wide variety of contexts. Breakout by issue below:	36%	61%	+25
Question 1-7 responses indicate % of students who responded in the affirmative that they performed or participated in each numbered activity			
1. Volunteered to do community service (Those volunteering for community service)	15%	91%	+76
2. Signed petition about social/political issue	15%	77%	+62
3. Collected money for a candidate or political/social cause	7%	35%	+28
4. Volunteered on campus (1-40 hours)	5%	70%	+65
5. Belong to student government	5%	17%	+12
6. Participation in activities to help protect the environment	23%	72%	+49
7. Organized a group of people to work on a social cause/political issue	10%	50%	+40
Question 8-17 responses indicate % of students who participated in the following numbered activity “weekly” or “daily”			
8. Discuss campus-related issues with others	14%	28%	+14

9. Raise awareness about social/political issues using social media	7%	25%	+18
10. Read articles/stories in the newspaper (print or online) about <i>other</i> countries	20%	40%	+20
11. Listen to news on the radio about local/state/national politics or current events	38%	38%	0
12. Watch TV news/cable shows for information about <i>national</i> politics or current events	33%	41%	+8
13. Discuss local/state/national political or social issues with others	26%	35%	+9
14. Read articles/stories in the newspaper (print or online) about <i>this</i> country	35%	49%	+14
15. Follow political blogs/podcasts/other online news services	22%	37%	+15
16. Listen to news on the radio about international politics or current events.	26%	25%	-1
17. Watch TV news/cable shows for information about <i>international</i> politics or current events	19%	34%	+15

It is interesting to note that these first seven areas are active participation (vs. more passive activities of reading or listening to the radio), and these are also the areas, particularly in the first six questions, where there was a very dramatic difference in the participation levels by the BSU seniors. While it is difficult to draw specific conclusions about the differences, this seems to indicate that BSU cultivates a conducive environment for student engagement on campus from the freshmen to senior year, given the very high differences in several of the “active” campus activities.

In the section with Questions 8-17, the student responses indicate the percent of students who participated in the following numbered activity “weekly” or “daily.” The results indicate that in one the BSU freshmen participated at a slightly higher level than the BSU seniors, which was “Listen to news on the radio about international politics or current events,” at 25%, compared to 24% for the BSU seniors.

In another area, “Listen to news on the radio about local/state/national politics or current events,” both the BSU freshmen and the BSU seniors participated at the same level (38%).

All other areas the BSU freshmen participated on a daily/weekly basis was lower than the participation by the BSU seniors. In rank order, from the greatest difference to the least difference, the participation levels for these other areas are as follows:

1. Read articles/stories in the newspaper (print or online) about other countries - Difference of 20
2. Raise awareness about social/political issues using social media - Difference of 18
3. TIE (for 2) - Follow political blogs/podcasts/other online news services; and Watch TV news/cable shows for information about international politics or current events - Difference of 15
4. TIE (for 2) - Discuss campus-related issues with others; and Read articles/stories in the newspaper (print or online) about this country - Difference of 14

5. Discuss local/state/national political or social issues with others - Difference of 9
6. Watch TV news/cable shows for information about national politics or current events - Difference of 8

HIGHLIGHTS OF BSU FRESHMEN VS. BSU SENIORS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- Seniors engage in civic-related activities at a far higher rate than freshmen (61% vs. 36%)
- Volunteering for community service, volunteering on campus, and signing petitions about social/political issues were the three areas where the BSU seniors were far ahead of the BSU freshmen.
- Both the BSU freshmen and the BSU seniors scored higher than their respective comparison groups in Civic Attitudes - that is, their belief in civic and political efficacy and the norms and values of democracy.