

Level of Academic Challenge

This Level of Academic Challenge¹ memo presents survey results about time spent preparing for class, amount of work required, higher-level thinking (including critical thinking, theory to practice, and synthesis), and institutional emphasis on academics and challenge.

There are 11 questions most closely tied to Level of Academic Challenge. Evergreen First-years' mean responses were significantly higher than at least one peer² on six of the 11 questions, Evergreen Seniors were higher on five of 11 questions.

Evergreen First-Years have significantly* higher mean responses in the following areas:

- Analyzing an idea in depth by examining its parts
- Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source
- Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information
- Writing papers of up to 5 pages
- Hours per week preparing for class
- Percent of preparation time on assigned reading

Evergreen Seniors have significantly* higher mean responses in the following areas:

- Analyzing an idea in depth by examining its parts
- Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source
- Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information
- Hours per week preparing for class
- Percent of preparation time on assigned reading

Evergreen First-years say that Evergreen emphasizes spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work significantly less than students at peer institutions. *

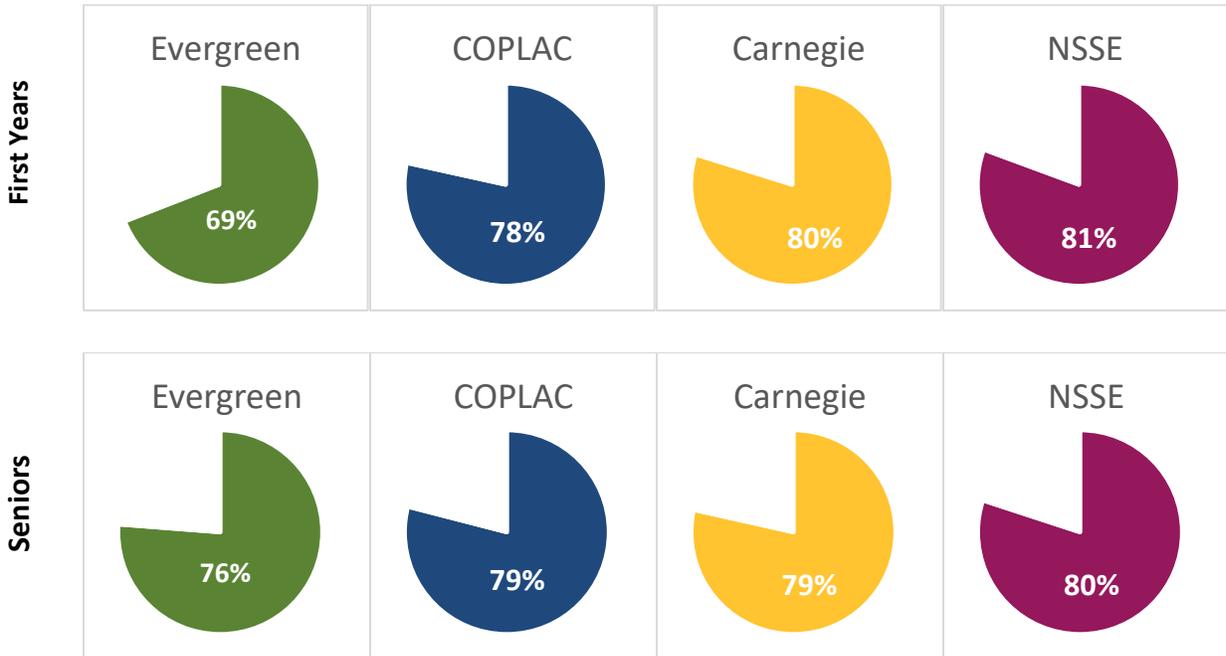
Evergreen Seniors wrote significantly fewer papers of 6-10 pages in length and wrote significantly fewer papers of more than 11 pages in length than at least one peer group. *



¹ The NSSE benchmark system, disbanded in 2012, had a group of items used to compare schools' Level of Academic Challenge. We have attempted to replicate this benchmark by using similar items that remain in the NSSE survey. (NSSE was revamped in 2013 - survey changes ranged from small adjustments to entirely new content.) No calculated overall score is available for 2018.

² Responses from 147 Evergreen First Year students and 170 Evergreen Seniors are compared to peer groups, including students from the 19 other participating Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC), 69 participating institutions from our current Carnegie class, Master's Colleges-smaller programs (Carnegie), and 943 National NSSE participating institutions from 2017 and 2018 (NSSE).

How much does your institution emphasize spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work? (*% Quite a bit/Very much*)



69% of Evergreen First Years responded that Evergreen emphasizes spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work Quite a bit/Very much, significantly lower than all peers.

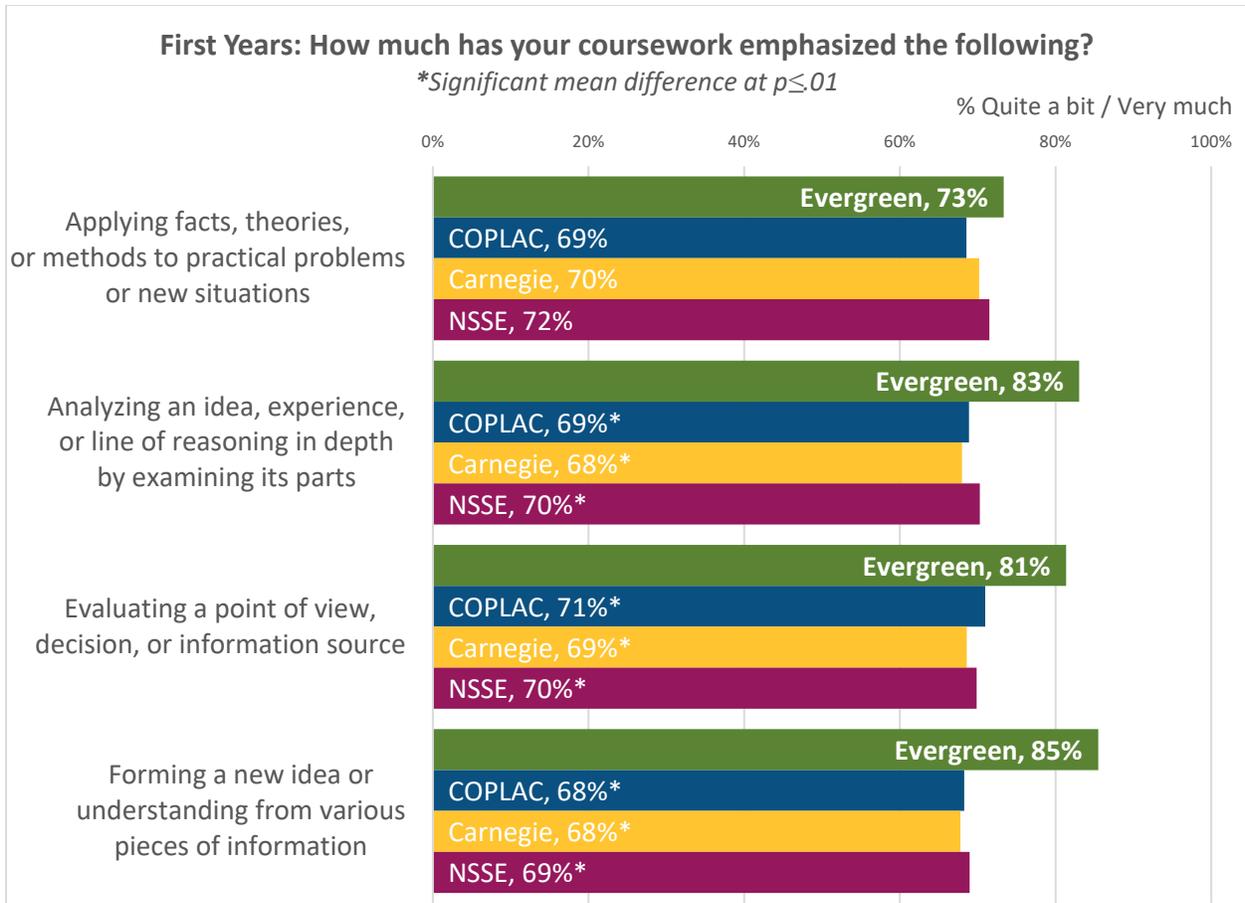
76% of Seniors responded that Evergreen emphasizes spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work Quite a bit/Very much, which does not significantly differ from any peer group.

To what extent do courses challenge you to do your best work?

There is no significant difference* between Evergreen First Years or Seniors and peers in the extent to which courses challenge students to do their best work.

Challenge	Evergreen	COPLAC	Carnegie	NSSE
<i>Mean of responses on a scale of 1-Not at all to 7-Very much</i>				
First Years	5.5	5.3	5.4	5.4
Seniors	5.7	5.6	5.5	5.5

Evergreen First Years had a mean score of 5.5 on a scale from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much), compared to means of 5.3 for COPLAC, 5.4 Carnegie, and 5.4 NSSE. Evergreen Seniors had a mean score of 5.7 compared to means of 5.6 for COPLAC, 5.5 Carnegie and NSSE.



Evergreen First Years' mean responses were comparable to peers in coursework that emphasized applying theory to practice. 73% of Evergreen First Years responded that Quite a bit/Very much of their coursework emphasized applying facts and theories to practical problems, compared to 69% of COPLAC, 70% of Carnegie, and 72% of NSSE.

Evergreen First Year coursework had significantly more emphasis on analysis than all peer groups.

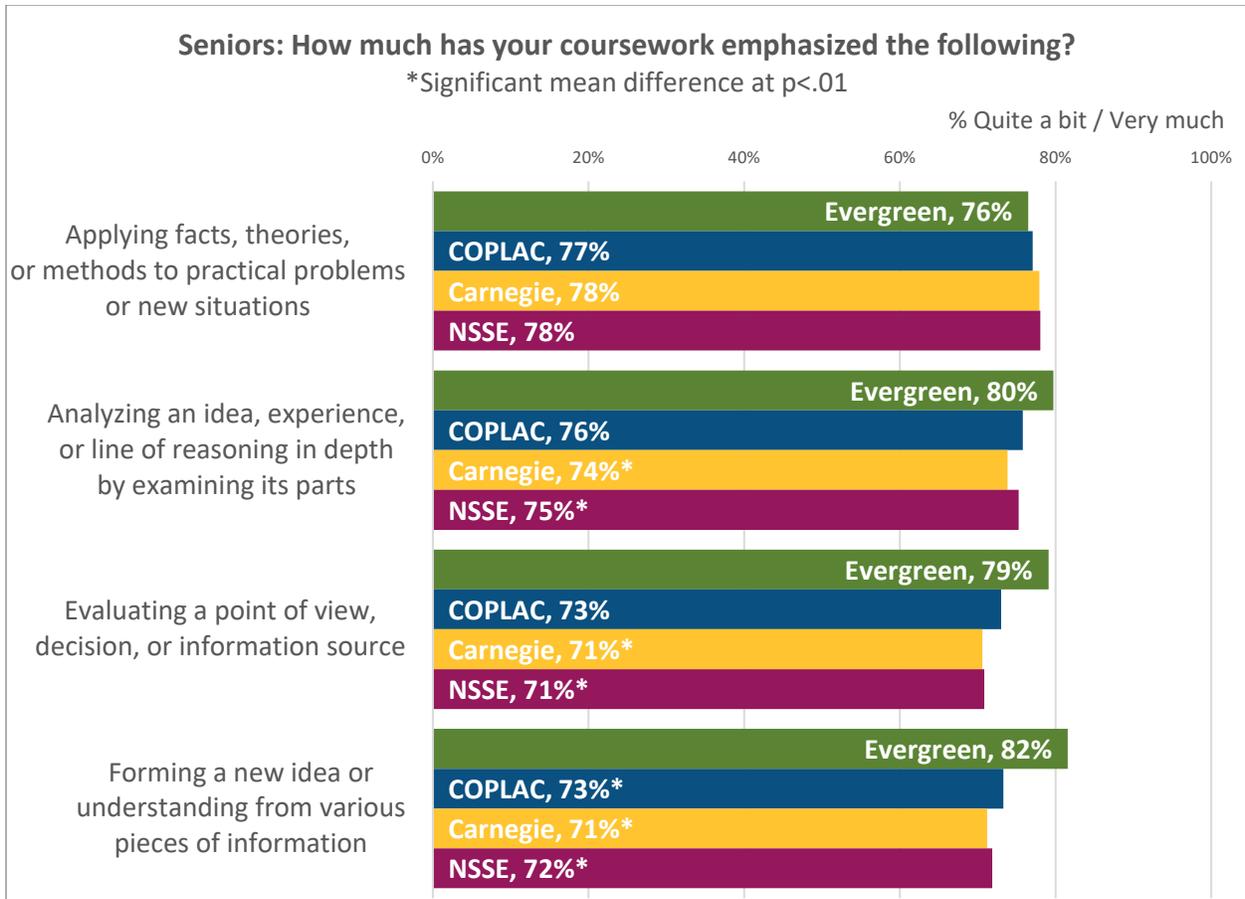
83% of Evergreen First Years responded that coursework emphasized analyzing an idea in depth by examining its parts, compared to 69% of COPLAC, 68% of Carnegie, and 70% of NSSE.

Evergreen First Years coursework significantly higher emphasis on evaluation than all peer groups.

81% of Evergreen First Years responded that coursework emphasized evaluating an information source, a point of view, or a decision compared to 71% of COPLAC, 69% of Carnegie, and 70% of NSSE.

Evergreen First Year coursework also had significantly more emphasis on synthesis than all peer groups.

85% of Evergreen First Years responded that coursework emphasized forming a new idea from various pieces of information, compared to 68% of COPLAC and Carnegie, and 69% of NSSE.



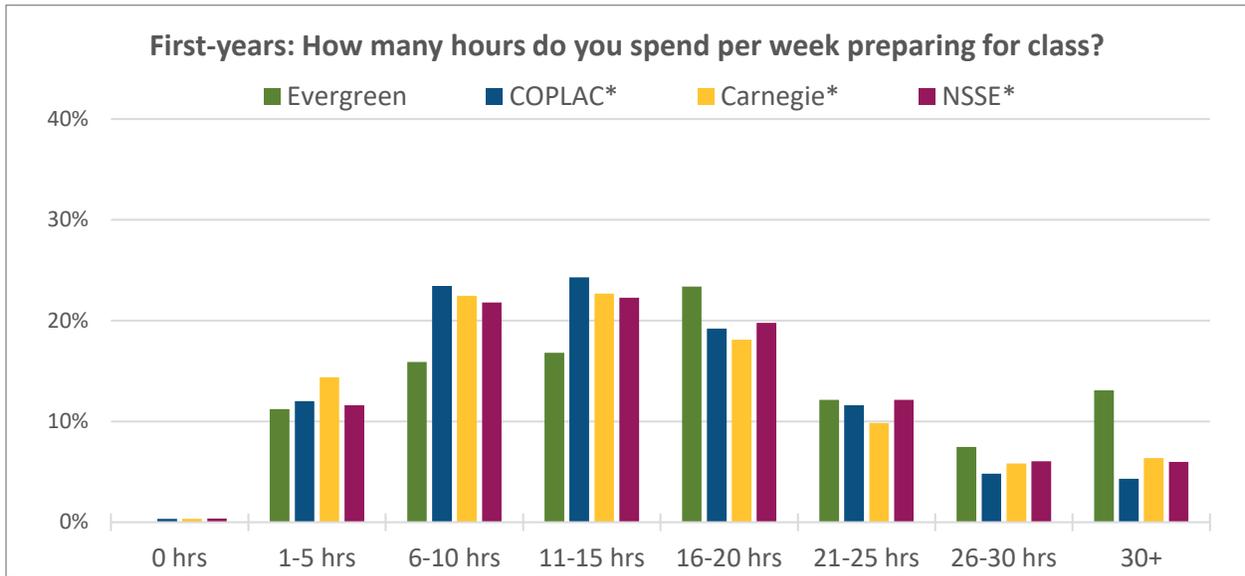
Evergreen Seniors were comparable to all peers in coursework that emphasized applying theory to practice. 76% of Evergreen Seniors responded that their coursework emphasized applying facts and theories to practical problems.

Evergreen Seniors' coursework had significantly more emphasis on analysis than Carnegie and NSSE. 80% of Evergreen Seniors responded that coursework emphasized analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts, compared to 76% of COPLAC, 74% of Carnegie, and 75% of NSSE.

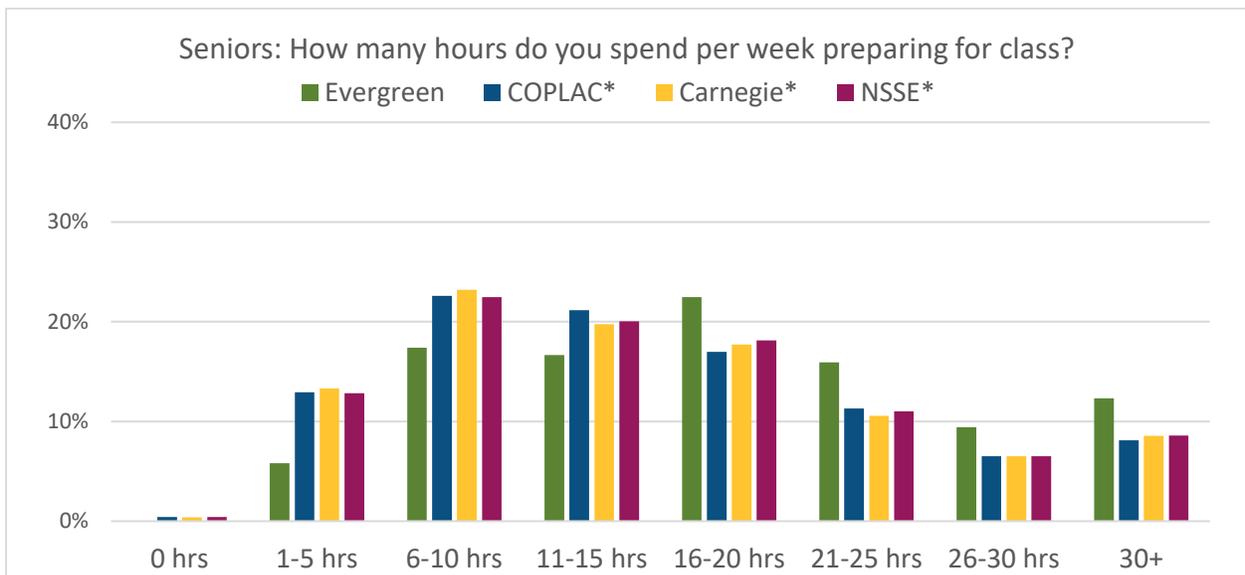
Evergreen Seniors reported significantly higher emphasis on evaluation in their coursework than Carnegie and NSSE. 79% of Evergreen Seniors responded that coursework emphasized evaluation of a point of view, decision, or information source, compared to 73% of COPLAC, and 71% of Carnegie and NSSE.

Evergreen Senior coursework also had significantly more emphasis on synthesis than all peer groups. 82% of Evergreen Seniors responded that coursework emphasized synthesis (forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information), compared to 73% of COPLAC, 71% of Carnegie, and 72% of NSSE.

How many hours do you spend per week preparing for class?

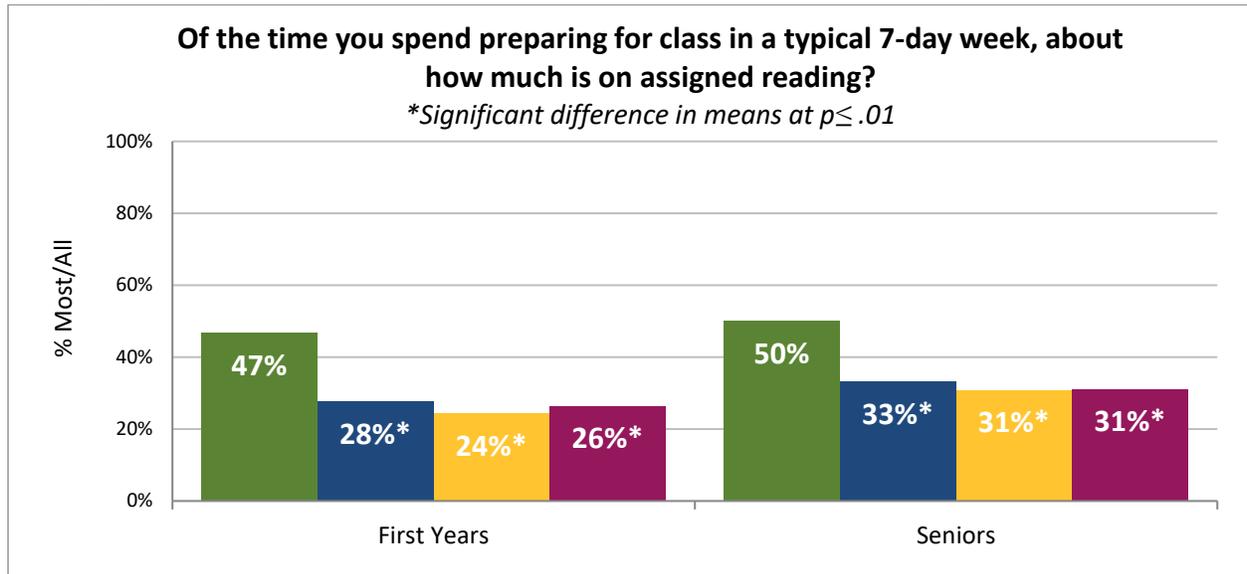


Evergreen First Years spent an average of 17 hours a week preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities). This is significantly higher than 14 hours a week for COPLAC and Carnegie, and 15 hours a week for NSSE. Evergreen First Years most frequently responded that they spent 16-20 hours preparing for class a week, (23% percent). 13% of Evergreen First Years reported that they spent over 30 hours preparing for class, compared to 4%-6% of First Years at peer institutions.



Evergreen Seniors spent an average of 18 hours a week preparing for class, significantly higher than COPLAC, Carnegie, and NSSE (all at 15 hours). 60% of Evergreen seniors spent 16+ hours preparing for class, compared to under 43%-44% for seniors at peer institutions.

Of the time you spent preparing for class in a typical 7-day week, about how much is on assigned reading?



Evergreen First Years and Seniors spent a significantly higher percentage of their time on assigned reading than peers. 47% of First Years spent Most or All of their time preparing for class on assigned reading, compared to 28% of COPLAC, 24% of Carnegie, and 26% of NSSE.

50% of Evergreen Seniors spent Most or All of their time preparing for class on assigned reading, compared to 33% of COPLAC, 31% of Carnegie, and 31% of NSSE.

During the current school year, about how many papers, reports, or other writing tasks of the following length have you been assigned? *(Includes papers not yet completed)*

Average number of papers assigned this school year								
	First Years				Seniors			
	Evergreen	COPLAC	Carnegie	NSSE	Evergreen	COPLAC	Carnegie	NSSE
Up to 5 pages	10.1	7.1*	6.7*	6.7*	9.1	7.6	7.8	7.7
6 to 10 pages	2.1	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.7	3.5*	3.5*	3.6*
11+ pages	1.0	0.8	0.9	0.9	1.5	1.7	1.8	2.0*

Evergreen First Years wrote significantly more papers that were up to 5 pages than peers. Evergreen First Years wrote an average of 10 short papers per year, compared to 7 papers for COPLAC, Carnegie, and NSSE. Evergreen Seniors wrote an average of 9 short papers, compared to 8 for COPLAC, Carnegie, and NSSE.

There is no significant difference between the number of six-to-ten page papers or eleven-or-more-page papers written by Evergreen First-Year respondents and peers. **Evergreen Seniors wrote significantly fewer 6-10 page papers than all peer groups, and wrote fewer 11+ page papers than NSSE peers.**