



**Satisfaction with and Use of  
College Unions: Comparing  
First-Years and Seniors**

# Satisfaction with and Use of College Unions: Comparing First-Years and Seniors

## Benchworks College Union/Student Center Survey Research Note

### Research Description and Summary

The Association for College Unions International (ACUI), in partnership with Skyfactor Benchworks, has created the ACUI/Skyfactor College Union/Student Center Assessment. The union visitor and non-visitor assessments provide administrators with a sense of student perceptions about their union experience. Results can be effectively utilized to focus attention on strengths and areas in need of improvement. This research note compares the responses of 21,006 first-year and senior students from the 2013-14 academic year assessment.

First-year students were significantly more likely than seniors to reside on-campus. Nearly eight of ten first-year students indicated their place of residence was a residence hall, compared to one of ten seniors. First-year students were more likely than seniors to report visiting the college union multiple times per week and participating in activities sponsored by the union multiple times per month. When asked to cite the top three reasons they visit the college union, seniors were more likely than first-years to cite meeting others, using information services, accessing computers for email and not for email, utilizing photocopy services, or attending student organization meetings. First-years were more likely than seniors to cite eating, athletic activities, programs or events, postal services, movies, relaxing, or using the game room. First-year students were more satisfied than seniors with the extent to which the union publicizes opportunities to join organizations, publicizes activities sponsored by the union, promotes a sense of community on campus, promotes programs of interest to students, and involves students in the decisions about union activities. First-year students were also more likely to agree the union is an enjoyable, welcoming, safe, and student-oriented place to spend time, relax study, get involved, and get information on campus life. First-year students were more likely to agree the union offers a wide variety of entertainment options and they are reasonably priced. Overall, first-year students were more likely than seniors to be satisfied with the college union.

Class Standing	N	Percentages
First-Year	3785	18%
Senior	5063	24%

Class Standing		
Place of Residence	First-Year	Senior
Residence hall	82%	11%
Living at home	9%	20%
Off-campus apartment	5%	52%
On-campus apartment	2%	8%
Fraternity/Sorority	1%	2%
Other	1%	6%

## 1. First-year students are more likely than seniors to visit the college union multiple times per week.

- Twenty-seven percent of first-year students reported they visited the college union six or more times a week, compared to 20% of seniors.
- Three percent of first-year students and four percent of seniors indicated that they visited the college union once or twice a semester.

Class Standing		
On average, how often do you visit the college union building?	First-Year	Senior
Once or twice a semester	3%	4%
Once a month or less	4%	6%
2-3 times a month	11%	13%
Once a week	11%	12%
2-3 times a week	26%	29%
4-5 times a week	19%	18%
6-7 times a week	11%	8%
8-9 times a week	5%	4%
More than 9 times a week	11%	8%

## 2. Seniors are less likely than first-years to participate often in activities sponsored by the college union.

- Twenty-seven percent of senior students indicated they never participated in activities sponsored by the college union, compared to 21% of first-year students.
- Approximately 37% of first-year students reported they participated in activities sponsored by the college union at least once a month, compared to 29% of seniors.

Class Standing		
How often do you participate in activities sponsored by the college union?	First-Year	Senior
Never	21%	27%
1-2 times per semester or less	41%	44%
1-3 times per month	26%	20%
Once per week	6%	5%
2-4 times per week	4%	3%
Daily	1%	1%
More than once a day	0%	0%

**3. Seniors are more likely to visit the college union to meet others, for information services, access computers for email and not for email, utilize photocopy services, attend student organization meetings, or another reason, while first-years are more likely to visit the union for eating, athletic activities, programs or events, postal services, movies, relaxing, or using the game room. Seniors and first-year students are equally likely to visit the union to study, visit the bookstore, and view TV.**

- More than three-fourths of both first-years and seniors indicated a top reason for visiting the union was eating.
- Fewer than five percent of both first-years and seniors indicated a top reason for visiting the union was TV viewing, photocopy services, or athletic activities.

Class Standing; Percent Selected as Top Three		
The top three most likely reasons you visit the college union	First-Year	Senior
Eat	80%	77%
Study	40%	40%
Meet others	38%	42%
Visit bookstore	34%	34%
Attend a program or event	32%	27%

Relax	19%	17%
Student organization meeting	17%	20%
Movies	14%	8%
Other	10%	12%
Postal services	9%	8%
Game room	7%	5%
Information services	6%	7%
Computer access (not email)	5%	10%
Athletic activities	4%	3%
Computer access (email)	3%	8%
Photocopy services	2%	5%
TV viewing	2%	2%
More than once a day	0%	0%

## 4. First-year students are more satisfied than seniors with the extent to which the union fulfills its functions.

- First-year students were significantly more likely than seniors to be satisfied with the extent to which the union fulfilled every function asked about on this questionnaire.
- First-year students and seniors were most satisfied with how their unions promote a sense of community on campus, and least satisfied with how their unions involve students in the decisions about union activities.

Class Standing; Percentage Moderately or Very Satisfied		
How satisfied are you with the extent to which the college union:	First-Year	Senior
Promotes a sense of community on campus	56%	49%
Promotes programs of interest to students	53%	47%
Publicizes activities sponsored by the Union	52%	47%
Publicizes opportunities to join student organizations	46%	39%
Involves students in the decisions about Union activities	34%	28%

## 5. First-year students are more likely than seniors to agree the college union is an enjoyable, safe, welcoming, student-oriented, and relaxing place; is a place to study, get information on campus life, get involved on campus activities; and offers a variety of reasonably priced entertainment, interesting events, and a variety of services.

- Sixty-five percent of first-year students agreed the college union was a place to relax, compared with 55% of seniors.
- Almost eight of ten first-year students indicated that the union was a place they feel welcome, compared with nearly three-fourths of seniors.
- Close to three-fourths of first-year students reported that the union was a student-oriented facility, where spending time is enjoyable, and a variety of services are provided, compared with seven of ten seniors.
- About six of ten first-year students reported that the union was a source of information for learning about campus events, a source of a wide variety of reasonably priced entertainment, and a place to get involved in campus life, compared with around 53% of seniors.

Class Standing; Percentage "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"		
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? The college union:	First-Year	Senior
Is a safe place	85%	83%
Is a place where I feel welcome	78%	74%
Is an enjoyable place to spend time	74%	70%
Is a student-oriented facility	73%	70%
Provides a variety of services	73%	69%

Is a central meeting place for students	70%	71%
Is open convenient hours	69%	68%
Is a place to relax	65%	55%
Is a source of information for learning about campus events	59%	54%
Is a source for a wide variety of entertainment	59%	53%
Is a source for reasonably priced entertainment	59%	53%
Is a place to get involved in campus life	57%	53%
Is a source for events I find interesting	51%	43%
Is a place to study	49%	43%

## 6. First-year students are significantly more likely to be satisfied with the college union than seniors.

- Sixty-five percent of first-year students agreed the college union was a place to relax, compared with 55% of seniors.

## Conclusion

First-year students are more likely than seniors to visit the college union multiple times per week and participate in union-sponsored activities. First-year students are more likely than seniors to cite eating, relaxing, using postal services, and entertainment activities as top reasons for visiting the union, while seniors are more likely than first-years to cite studying, use of computers or photocopying services, and attending student organization meetings as top reasons for visiting the union. First-year students are more likely than seniors to agree that the college union is an enjoyable, safe, student-oriented, welcoming and relaxing place; is a place to get involved in campus life, study, and get involved; and offers a wide range of reasonably priced forms of entertainment, interesting events, and a variety of services. Overall, first-year students are more likely to be satisfied with the college union than seniors.

### About Skyfactor

Skyfactor Benchworks includes over 60 easy-to-use student affairs and academic program assessments, all rooted in accreditation and professional standards, and designed to support a culture of continuous program improvement. Assessment reports include longitudinal data, the ability to benchmark against peer institutions, and interactive dashboards that enable rapid identification of critical issues.



For more information about Skyfactor Benchworks products and services, to schedule a demonstration, or to sign up for a webinar, please write to us at [info@Skyfactor.com](mailto:info@Skyfactor.com) or visit [Skyfactor.com](http://Skyfactor.com)