

Drake University Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

2011-2015 Longitudinal Results of the Foundations of Learning Assessment

August 2015

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Executive Summary

Incoming students enter Drake University with varied learning experiences and expectations for how they plan to engage at the institution. The Foundations of Learning Assessment (FLA) is a survey instrument developed for the purpose of capturing this information. Each year incoming students complete the FLA. This report summarizes survey results and data trends between 2011-2015 on the following topics:

- Students' learning strengths and weaknesses
- Expectations for how students expect to interact with faculty
- Student advice seeking behaviors
- Student interest areas
- Community service

While results remain relatively stable over time, there were some notable changes. Findings indicate a shift in how students expect to interact with faculty. There is growing student interest in conducting creative and research projects with faculty. Results also show an upward trend of students' planning to reach out to faculty and department majors for advice on balancing academic and personal matters, and for personal support.

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Introduction

This report summarizes 2011-2015 results of the Foundations of Learning Assessment (FLA). Incoming students complete the FLA during Welcome Weekend to provide information about their learning experiences prior to coming to Drake as well as their expectations for their experiences at the institution. The instrument also asks students about ways they plan to engage at Drake. The information below represents select results from specific questions related to:

- Students' relative learning strengths and weaknesses
- Expectations for how students expect to interact with faculty
- Student advice seeking behaviors
- Student interest areas
- Community service

Student Relative Strengths and Weaknesses

Table 1 presents students' perceived competence in various learning and skill areas. FLA longitudinal results indicate that incoming students consistently rate themselves as "strong" or "very strong" in the following skill areas:

- Articulating a personal vision of ethics, values, and beliefs
- Reading carefully
- Understanding others' perspectives and experiences
- Integrating skills and knowledge from different sources

Students consistently identified relative weaknesses in the following learning areas:

- Creating and interpreting fine art
- Reading and understanding scientific writings
- Analyzing differences between industrialized and developed areas of the world

Other Trends. While students' consistently report their ability to read and understand scientific writings as a relative weakness, the percent of students reporting this learning area as "strong" or "very strong" has grown considerably. More incoming students seem to have prior experience engaging in these types of learning exercises, as evidenced by the 8% change from 37%-45% between 2011 and 2015. Larger proportions of students believe they are competent in using evidence to support claims in writing (62%-70%).

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Table 1. 2011-2015 FLA Responses to Skill Areas					
Based on your experiences in high school and other education venues prior to attending Drake, how strong do you believe your skills are in these areas?	Percent "Strong" or "Very Strong"				
Items	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Articulate a vision of my own values, ethics, or core beliefs	83%	82%	79%	77%	79%
Ability to read carefully	82%	83%	83%	82%	82%
Understand the perspectives & experiences of people who are different than you	78%	85%	83%	78%	78%
Ability to integrate skills and knowledge from different sources and experiences	77%	81%	78%	74%	74%
Construct reasoned arguments	71%	75%	73%	75%	76%
Evaluate reasoned arguments	71%	74%	74%	75%	75%
Communicate effectively with people from other cultures and backgrounds	68%	68%	67%	64%	65%
Apply understanding of ethical issues when developing solutions	67%	74%	67%	65%	66%
Understand the ethical issues related to the use & misuse of information	66%	71%	71%	70%	67%
Evaluate the quality or reliability of information	65%	67%	66%	69%	65%
Employ evidence effectively in writing	62%	68%	64%	69%	70%
Execute appropriate mathematical operations for a given question	59%	61%	62%	63%	61%
Analyze differences between industrialized and developing areas of the world	55%	59%	59%	55%	52%
Understand the historical, political, and social connections of past events	52%	55%	58%	52%	56%
Ability to use educational experiences to analyze civic and global issues	50%	55%	54%	50%	54%
Knowledge in how to participate effectively in the democratic process	50%	51%	52%	48%	49%
Read and understand scientific writings written for an informed lay audience	37%	42%	41%	41%	45%
Create or interpret fine art (ex. painting, sculpture, music, theatre)	32%	31%	32%	29%	32%

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Student-Faculty Interaction

Table 2 details ways students' plan to interact with Drake faculty beyond the classroom. FLA results indicate that most students expect to interact with faculty members during office hours and through study groups. Significantly more incoming students are desiring to partner with faculty to explore research or creative projects, as evidenced by the 13% increase between 2011 and 2015.

Table 2. 2011 FLA Responses to Faculty Interaction Ranked by Percent

I hope to interact with Drake faculty outside the classroom in the following ways:	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
By visiting them during office hours	91%	93%	94%	86%	87%
Through study groups for courses they teach	83%	84%	85%	82%	80%
On a research or creative project	64%	70%	74%	81%	77%
As advisors to my student organizations	51%	55%	57%	57%	59%
In social settings	44%	39%	51%	46%	47%

Student Advice

Tables 3-7 detail where students plan to seek advice from. 2011-2015 FLA longitudinal results indicate some consistent trends in who incoming students expect to reach out to for advice.

- Students plan to seek advice about courses, career planning, internships and activities pertaining to professional development from their department major, faculty advisors, and the Professional and Career Development staff.
- Students plan to seek out faculty, upper level students and resident assistants for help balancing academic, professional, and personal life, and guidance on developing leadership skills.
- For personal matters, students expect to reach out to friends, upper level students, and resident assistants (RAs).

Changes: Some notable changes are between 2011 and 2015 fewer proportions of students planned to seek advice from peer mentors (-19%) and RAs (-20%) about balancing academic and personal matters, and instead reach out to their department major (+20%) and faculty advisor (+20%). More students planned to seek out faculty (+13%) and department major (+18%) for personal support. At the same time, there was a decline in the proportion of students planning to seek advice from peer mentors (-7%) and RAs (-31%) for personal support. A larger proportion of incoming students plan to seek advice from friends (+17% from 2011) about co-curricular activities for professional development and graduate school and career planning.

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Table 3. 2011 FLA Responses to Where Students Will Seek Advice

For the following activities, please indicate where you will seek advice	College/ department offices in my major	Faculty advisor	Friends	On-line resources	PMAC or upper level students	Professional and Career Development Services staff	Resident Assistant (RA)	Other
Available courses & semester scheduling	74%	80%	31%	35%	41%	19%	16%	2%
Career or graduate school planning	73%	83%	10%	24%	16%	51%	5%	4%
Connecting academic, professional & personal development	48%	63%	38%	13%	42%	32%	22%	3%
Developing a balance between your academic work & personal life	11%	28%	76%	8%	67%	5%	49%	7%
Find personal support services (ex. counseling, health, roommate or relationship issues)	5%	22%	66%	12%	45%	4%	66%	13%
Advice on co-curricular activities important to developing a meaningful personal life	13%	31%	71%	17%	71%	9%	47%	7%
Finding and obtaining internships	83%	80%	13%	40%	20%	66%	9%	4%
Advice on co-curricular activities important to my professional development	70%	75%	18%	21%	33%	51%	14%	2%
Guidance on developing leadership skills	36%	61%	25%	13%	60%	33%	40%	10%

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Table 4. 2012 FLA Responses to Where Students Will Seek Advice

For the following activities, please indicate where you will seek advice	College/ department offices in my major	Faculty advisor	Friends	On-line resources	PMAC or upper level students	Professional and Career Development Services staff	Resident Assistant (RA)	Other
Available courses & semester scheduling	74%	84%	31%	35%	39%	26%	18%	3%
Career or graduate school planning	80%	81%	13%	30%	20%	59%	6%	4%
Connecting academic, professional & personal development	53%	66%	43%	17%	43%	39%	24%	3%
Developing a balance between your academic work & personal life	14%	32%	76%	8%	69%	7%	49%	9%
Find personal support services (ex. counseling, health, roommate or relationship issues)	8%	24%	67%	14%	50%	5%	66%	17%
Advice on co-curricular activities important to developing a meaningful personal life	15%	31%	76%	17%	72%	12%	51%	8%
Finding and obtaining internships	87%	83%	16%	43%	28%	73%	12%	7%
Advice on co-curricular activities important to my professional development	73%	80%	21%	20%	38%	53%	17%	3%
Guidance on developing leadership skills	40%	65%	28%	16%	63%	37%	42%	10%

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Table 5. 2013 FLA Responses to Where Students Will Seek Advice

For the following activities, please indicate where you will seek advice	College/ department offices in my major	Faculty advisor	Friends	On-line resources	PMAC or upper level students	Professional and Career Development Services staff	Resident Assistant (RA)	Other
Available courses & semester scheduling	79%	81%	29%	36%	37%	29%	13%	2%
Career or graduate school planning	76%	83%	13%	31%	21%	61%	7%	5%
Connecting academic, professional & personal development	63%	71%	43%	18%	45%	44%	21%	7%
Developing a balance between your academic work & personal life	24%	41%	73%	10%	60%	13%	39%	13%
Find personal support services (ex. counseling, health, roommate or relationship issues)	15%	31%	65%	17%	52%	11%	60%	18%
Advice on co-curricular activities important to developing a meaningful personal life	20%	38%	74%	21%	77%	14%	49%	10%
Finding and obtaining internships	87%	79%	14%	41%	22%	67%	7%	6%
Advice on co-curricular activities important to my professional development	72%	75%	23%	23%	34%	48%	14%	6%
Guidance on developing leadership skills	53%	70%	26%	20%	58%	42%	38%	11%

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Table 6. 2014 FLA Responses to Where Students Will Seek Advice

For the following activities, please indicate where you will seek advice	College/ department offices in my major	Faculty advisor	Friends	On-line resources	PMAC or upper level students	Professional and Career Development Services staff	Resident Assistant (RA)	Other
Available courses & semester scheduling	81%	81%	32%	36%	48%	37%	11%	4%
Career or graduate school planning	80%	77%	21%	36%	45%	63%	6%	8%
Connecting academic, professional & personal development	63%	69%	51%	23%	50%	41%	18%	8%
Developing a balance between your academic work & personal life	26%	45%	76%	15%	50%	15%	29%	13%
Find personal support services (ex. counseling, health, roommate or relationship issues)	18%	37%	73%	21%	39%	13%	44%	20%
Advice on co-curricular activities important to developing a meaningful personal life	24%	42%	75%	23%	61%	14%	37%	10%
Finding and obtaining internships	83%	75%	19%	39%	42%	62%	9%	8%
Advice on co-curricular activities important to my professional development	69%	69%	29%	24%	43%	78%	11%	6%
Guidance on developing leadership skills	58%	69%	35%	22%	52%	38%	24%	9%

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Table 7. 2015 FLA Responses to Where Students Will Seek Advice

For the following activities, please indicate where you will seek advice	College/ department offices in my major	Faculty advisor	Friends	On-line resources	PMAC or upper level students	Professional and Career Development Services staff	Resident Assistant (RA)	Other
Available courses & semester scheduling	78%	80%	32%	33%	49%	36%	13%	5%
Career or graduate school planning	79%	78%	24%	34%	43%	52%	7%	7%
Connecting academic, professional & personal development	68%	69%	48%	22%	45%	37%	16%	5%
Developing a balance between your academic work & personal life	31%	48%	74%	17%	48%	16%	29%	11%
Find personal support services (ex. counseling, health, roommate or relationship issues)	23%	35%	71%	25%	38%	15%	35%	17%
Advice on co-curricular activities important to developing a meaningful personal life	82%	79%	26%	39%	43%	55%	11%	7%
Finding and obtaining internships	82%	79%	26%	39%	43%	55%	11%	7%
Advice on co-curricular activities important to my professional development	71%	71%	35%	27%	43%	37%	11%	6%
Guidance on developing leadership skills	60%	69%	38%	23%	51%	36%	22%	9%

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Community Service

Table 8 presents information about students' high school volunteer/community service requirements and their plans for engaging in community service while at Drake. FLA results indicate that many of Drake's incoming students attended high schools that did not require community service. Nonetheless, these students desire to engage in volunteer work—and do so, regularly.

Table 8. 2011 FLA Responses to Community Service/Volunteer Items

Question	Percent Indicating "Yes"				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
My high school had a volunteer/community service requirement for all students	28%	27%	30%	34%	36%
My high school volunteer/community service requirement included written or oral reflection	60%	61%	68%	60%	57%
I plan to volunteer 1 or more hours a week	74%	74%	79%	74%	71%

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Student Interest Areas

Table 9 details student interest and plan areas. FLA longitudinal results indicate that students consistently report high level of interest in service learning and broadening their perspective on international and diversity issues while at Drake. Likewise, students show growing interest in taking courses that enhance their perspective on diversity issues and studying abroad.

Few students who attend Drake plan to study a language other than their own. Because Drake does not have a foreign language requirement for graduation, it likely that the institution attracts students who are less interested in formally studying a foreign language.

Other trends: Students are showing increased interest in attending lectures and debates on current events.

Table 9. 2011-2015 FLA Responses on Interest/Plan Areas by Percent "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"

To what extent do you agree with the follow statements:	Percent "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
I am interested in taking a course that has a service learning component/experience.	68%	70%	71%	63%	63%
I am interested in taking courses that enhance my perspective on international issues.	67%	68%	68%	66%	68%
I am interested in taking courses that enhance my perspective on diversity issues in the U.S.	66%	64%	68%	70%	72%
I plan to study abroad while enrolled at Drake.	59%	66%	64%	64%	64%
I plan to attend lectures or debates on current events.	47%	55%	57%	53%	57%
I plan to study a language other than my native language at Drake.	37%	36%	33%	33%	38%

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Summary of findings from FLA Longitudinal Data

In general, 2011-2015 cohorts of incoming students reported similarly in the following areas:

Relative learning strengths and weaknesses

- **Strengths:** Reading carefully/Understanding others' perspectives/Articulating a personal vision of ethics, values, and beliefs/Integrating skills and knowledge from different sources
- **Weaknesses:** Creating and interpreting fine art/Reading and understanding scientific writings/Analyzing differences between industrialized and developed areas of the world

Expectations for interacting with faculty

- Plan to interact with faculty during office hours and in study groups

Social support for academic, professional, and personal matters

- Seek support from department major, faculty, and RAs.

High school community service requirements

- Majority of students did not have a high school requirement

Plans for volunteering

- Expect to volunteer at least once a week

Student Interest Areas

- Interested in service learning and expanding understanding on diversity and international issues

While trends were relatively stable over time, there were some notable changes:

- Growing interest in partnering with faculty to conduct research
- Slight increase in the proportion of incoming students coming from high schools with community service requirements
- Increased interest in studying abroad and attending lectures and debates outside of class
- Larger proportions of students planning to seek out career and graduate school advice from their friends
- Although a large number of students still expect to reach out to friends and resident assistants (RAs) for personal support, fewer students plan to reach out to the RAs and instead seek advice online, from their department major and faculty advisors