

# **The Student Employment Experience: Results from the 2018 Student Life Survey**

Center for the Study of Student Life

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## INTRODUCTION

This report explores differences between students in the Student Employment Experience (SEE) program in the Office of Student Life at The Ohio State University and student employees at The Ohio State University who were not in the SEE program. The Office of Student Life at Ohio State employs over 5,000 student employees each year in a wide variety of units and roles. Student employment, and specifically student employment while partaking in SEE, is an opportunity for co-curricular engagement and to develop transferable skills needed to be successful in their student employment role, the classroom and future careers (Mayhew et al., 2016; Neyt, Omeij, Verhaest, & Baert, 2017). These transferrable skills include concepts like communication, interpersonal engagement, critical thinking and problem solving. The SEE program is housed within Student Life Human Resources in the Office of Student Life at The Ohio State University. Of the 5,328 student employees in the Office of Student Life during the 2017-2018 academic year, 4,896 (91.86%) students participated in the SEE program. The SEE program features include GROW conversations (Guided Reflection On Work, which is used with the permission of the University of Iowa) with supervisors and student managers, opportunities for reflection, supervisor trainings and developmental training workshops. As of 2017-2018, almost all departments in the Office of Student Life had adopted the SEE program. All students in a department that had adopted the SEE program were enrolled in SEE.

This report seeks to explore potential differences between those who participated in the SEE program and those worked on campus at Ohio State, but did not participate in SEE. This report examines differences between the two groups in terms of intention to stay in one's job, one's sense of belonging at Ohio State and one's satisfaction as a student at Ohio State.

## HIGHLIGHTS

For all on-campus student employees who took the 2018 Student Life Survey:

- A total of **58.6%** of Student Employment Experience (SEE) participants indicated that they would stay at their current on-campus jobs, whereas **65.6%** of on-campus employees who did not participate in SEE indicated that they would stay at their on-campus jobs.
- A significantly greater proportion - **62.0%** - of SEE participants had an above-average sense of belonging at Ohio State, compared to **51.2%** of their counterparts not in SEE.
- **24.0%** of SEE participants were first generation students, whereas **14.7%** of on-campus employees who did not participate in SEE were first generation students.
- **24.0%** of SEE participants were international students, while **5.5%** of on-campus employees who did not participate in SEE were international students.

## METHODS

The Student Life Survey is administered annually by the Center for the Study of Student Life to examine trends in student engagement and sense of belonging, as well as to improve institutional practices and to address current issues affecting students at Ohio State.

The 2018 Student Life Survey was administered to random samples of 4,000 undergraduate students and 3,000 graduate and professional students on the Columbus campus during the spring semester. A total of 1,357 students responded to the survey, for an overall response rate of 19.4%. The response rate was 18.3% among undergraduate students and 20.8% among graduate and professional students.

Of the 1,357 respondents on the Student Life Survey, 7.4% (100 students) were student employees who participated in SEE, as identified by Student Life Human Resources data, and 40.2% (545 students) worked on campus, but were not in SEE (data were self-reported for non-SEE employees). The 100 individuals who responded to the Student Life Survey account for 2.0% of the 4,896 students who participated in SEE during the 2017-2018 academic year. Of these 100 SEE participants, 35% correctly indicated that they worked in the Office of Student Life and 55% indicated that they did not work in the Office of Student Life (i.e., over half of the SEE participants in this report did not realize they worked in the Office of Student Life).

Since the intention of staying in one's current employment position would be affected by impending graduation, additional intent-to-stay analyses were conducted for first- through third-year student employees only to assess whether the trends were consistent.

Both students' sense of belonging at Ohio State and satisfaction with Ohio State were measured by self-reported items, with Likert scales from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 4 (*Strongly Agree*). Higher scores indicated a greater sense of belonging or satisfaction. Example statements for sense of belonging include: "I feel a sense of belonging at Ohio State" and "I have relationships with other Ohio State students". Example statements for the satisfaction with Ohio State scale include: "Overall, I am satisfied with my experiences at Ohio State" and "Academic programs at Ohio State meet my needs". There were 6 sense of belonging items and 6 satisfaction items.

For this report, overall sense of belongingness and satisfaction were calculated for each respondent by first creating an average, or mean score, for each individual. This score was then compared to the aggregate averages of all student employees to determine if a student's score was below average or above average compared to other on-campus student employees who responded to the survey. After averaging belongingness and satisfaction for each individual and then taking the average for all on-campus student employees, the mean scores of sense of belongingness and satisfaction were 2.99 and 3.24, respectively.

Frequencies and chi-square tests were used to evaluate differences in intention to stay, sense of belonging and sense of satisfaction between those who participated in SEE and those who did not.

All demographic characteristics of students in SEE and on-campus student employees not in SEE are reported (see table on next page). For each characteristic, there is an associated chi-square test that indicates if there is a difference between students in SEE and on-campus student employees not in SEE on that particular demographic.

## PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

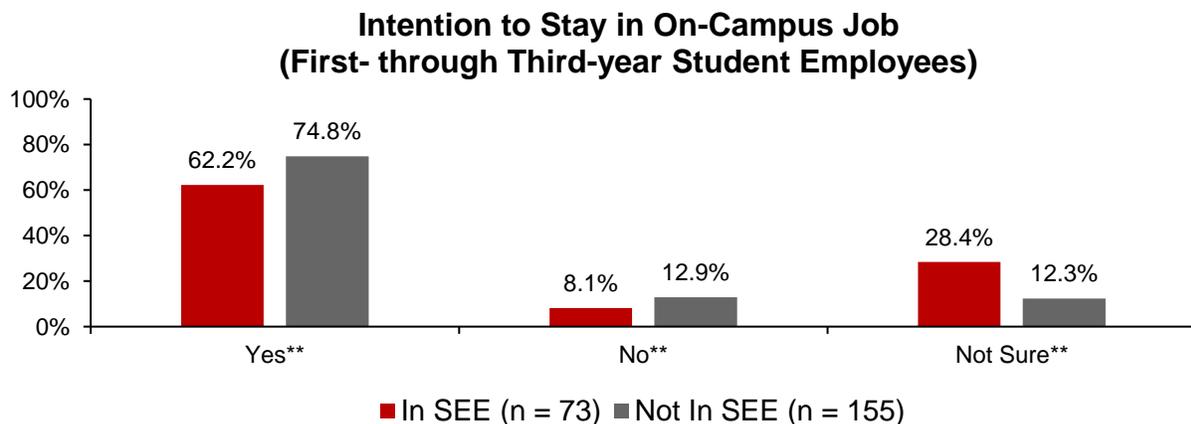
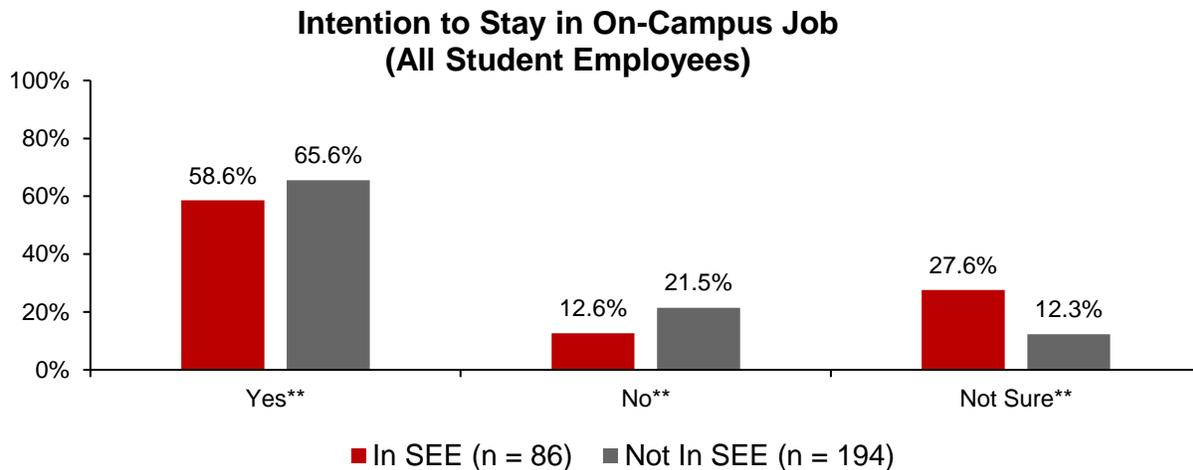
	SEE Participants		Student Employees Not in SEE		Statistical Significance
	<i>n</i>	percent	<i>n</i>	percent	
<b>Total</b>	100	15.5%	545	84.5%	N/A
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	67	67.0%	365	67.0%	
Male	32	32.0%	178	32.7%	
Self-Defined	1	1.0%	2	0.4%	
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>					
White	55	56.1%	372	71.1%	*
Asian	24	24.5%	49	9.4%	***
Multiracial	4	4.1%	32	6.1%	N/A
African American/Black/African	9	9.2%	26	5.0%	N/A
Hispanic and/or Latinx	3	3.1%	18	3.4%	N/A
Middle Eastern/Arab American	0	0.0%	8	1.5%	N/A
Native American/American Indian	0	0.0%	1	0.2%	N/A
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	1	0.2%	N/A
Other race	1	1.0%	6	1.1%	N/A
Prefer not to answer	2	2.0%	10	1.9%	N/A
<b>First-Generation College Student</b>					
Continuing generation	76	76.0%	465	85.3%	
First generation	24	24.0%	80	14.7%	
<b>Citizenship</b>					
Domestic student	76	76.0%	515	94.5%	***
International student	24	24.0%	30	5.5%	
<b>Age</b>					
Traditional age (18-27)	100	100%	423	77.6%	***
Non-traditional age (28+)	0	0%	122	22.4%	
<b>Academic Level (by credit hours)</b>					
First-year undergraduate	24	24.0%	34	6.2%	***
Second-year undergraduate	32	32.0%	61	11.2%	***
Third-year undergraduate	23	23.0%	90	16.5%	
Fourth-year+ undergraduate	14	14.0%	119	21.8%	
Graduate	6	6.0%	174	31.9%	N/A
Professional	1	1.0%	56	10.3%	N/A

*Note.* Chi-square tests are not applicable if any cells have an expected count of less than 10.

All data are from the Student Information System with the exception of gender and race/ethnicity, which were self-reported by the student on the survey instrument.

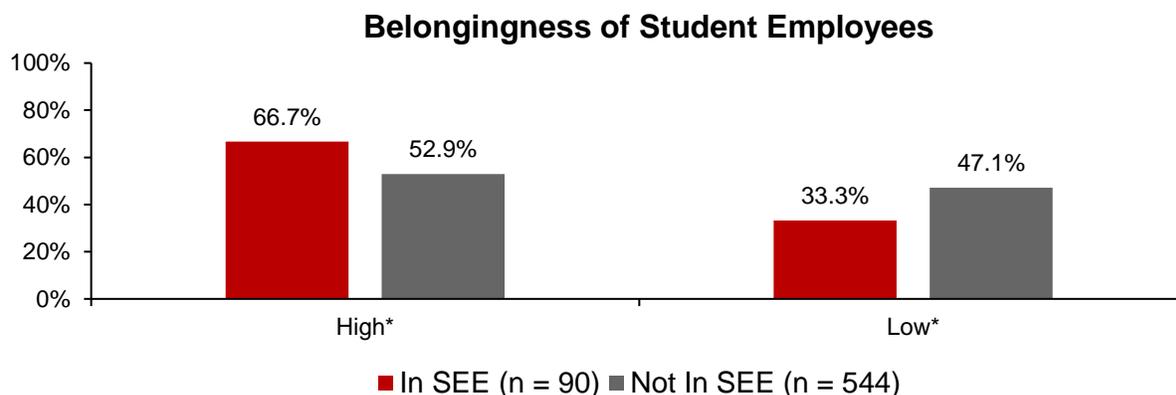
## FINDINGS

The following graphs depict intentions to stay in one's current job, sense of belonging and satisfaction with Ohio State. As shown in the graphs below, for on-campus employment, a greater proportion of those on-campus student employees who were not in the SEE program indicated that "yes" they planned to stay in their current jobs in the upcoming academic year. However, a greater proportion of on-campus student employees who were not in the SEE program also indicated that they did *not* intend to stay in their current on-campus job. A greater proportion of student employees in the SEE program were not sure about whether they would change jobs compared to their peers who were not in SEE program. The differences between SEE participants and on-campus non-SEE participants were statistically significant regardless of if all student employees were included in the analyses or if only first through-third year students were included.

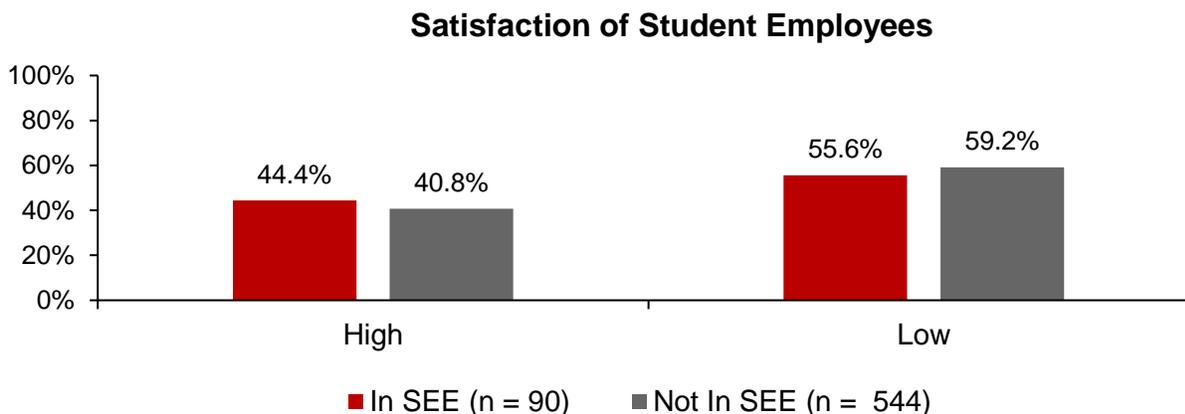


\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

The following graphs depict the sense of belongingness of students in the SEE program compared with on-campus student employees not in the SEE program. A greater proportion of SEE participants indicated an above-average sense of belongingness when compared with non-SEE participants. These differences were statistically significant.



The following graphs depict the satisfaction levels students have with Ohio State. Students in the SEE program are compared with on-campus employees who were not in the SEE program. A roughly equal proportion of SEE participants and non-SEE participants expressed both above-average satisfaction with Ohio State and below-average satisfaction with Ohio State. Differences were not statistically significant.



\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

## REFERENCES

- Mayhew, M. J., Pascarella, E. T., Bowman, N. A., Rockenbach, A. N., Seifert, T. A., Terenzini, P. T., & Wolniak, G. C. (2016). *How college affects students: 21st century evidence that higher education works* (Vol. 3). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Neyt, B., Omey, E., Verhaest, D., & Baert, S. (2017). Does student work really affect educational outcomes? A review of the literature. GLO Discussion Paper, No. 121, Global Labor Organization (GLO), Maastricht, 1-36.