



# NSSE Pulse Survey Results FA20

CSU conducted a NSSE pulse survey in October 2020 to assess students' FA20 experiences within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this report was to summarize CSU's survey results in comparison to national data from the NSSE Pulse survey. Results were also compared internally to CSU by populations of interest (race/ethnicity, first generation), and [to SP19 NSSE general survey](#) results, where applicable.

## Key Findings

- The majority of CSU respondents reported taking most of their courses online (56%) or as a hybrid format (31%). In contrast, over 80% of the reference group reported taking the majority of their classes online.
- CSU respondents were 7 percentage points (PP) less likely to feel challenged to do their best work in their courses compared to the national reference group (37% compared to 44%), and 10 PP lower compared to SP19 results (47%). CSU first gen respondents reported a higher level of challenge (43%) compared to CSU overall; Black-identified students reported a much lower level (21%).
- The majority of CSU respondents reported sufficient internet service (88%); generalized to the CSU population, this translated to almost 2,900 residential students without adequate internet. A high proportion reported sufficient hardware and software (93%), while 79% reported having sufficient study spaces to engage in online learning. Responses were similar to the reference group, however, Middle Eastern/North African, Black, and Native American-identified students were less likely to report sufficient hardware and software (6-7 PP), and Middle Eastern/North African and Native American students reported lower levels of adequate study spaces (7-8 PP).
- About 7 in 10 students felt the institution kept students safe and healthy during the current school year, about 4 PP above the national reference group. First gen students differed minimally compared to CSU overall; Black-identified students were 8 PP less likely to feel this way (63%).
- Half of CSU respondents had significant concerns about their own and others' ability to comply with pandemic-related campus health policies (mask wearing, physical distancing, etc.); however, this level of concern was lower than the national reference group. Asian/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (AHPI) and Native American-identified students expressed a higher level of concern regarding others' compliance (13 and 9 PP, respectively) compared to CSU overall, as did first gen students (5 PP).
- Two-thirds of students felt that CSU provided a high level of support for academic success and well-being, while about 1 in 4 felt supported in managing their non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.). CSU respondents felt more supported in their well-being compared to the reference group (5 PP), but less supported in each area compared to SP19 NSSE results. Compared to CSU overall, Black-identified students felt much less supported in their well-being and managing non-academic responsibilities (10-12 PP).
- About half of respondents rated their interactions with academic advisors, faculty, and students as very good or excellent, and about 40% rated student services and other administrative staff this way. CSU respondents were about 5 PP more likely to rate their interactions with faculty as good/excellent compared to the reference group. Compared to SP19, ratings for other students, student services staff, and other administrative staff decreased. Black-identified students consistently reported a lower quality of interactions across groups compared to CSU overall. First gen students reported a lower quality of interactions with faculty (7 PP) and student services staff (6 PP).
- Most students reported a high sense of belonging, with 90% feeling comfortable being themselves, 75% feeling valued, and 72% feeling like part of the community. The national reference group reported

similar results but the CSU FA20 average for feeling like part of the community was 8 PP lower compared to SP19 NSSE results. Black-identified students were 8 PP less likely to feel comfortable being themselves, and 9 PP less likely to feel like part of the community.

- About 81% of CSU respondents felt it was important to graduate from CSU, compared to 86% of the reference group and first gen students. Middle Eastern/North African students were 11 PP less likely to rate graduating from CSU as important.
- Almost 3 in 4 CSU respondents rated their entire experience as very good or excellent, which differed minimally by first gen status and in comparison to the reference group. By duplicated race/ethnicity, Native American students were 6 PP less likely to positively rate their experience. Compared to SP19, students were 16 PP less likely to rate their experience as very good or excellent.

## Methodology

The NSSE Pulse Survey was administered to a sample of 20,000 undergraduate students enrolled in the FA20 term. Racially minoritized, first generation, limited income, and students with a lower CSU GPA or part of the first-time cohort were oversampled; CSU Online students were excluded. Students were also sampled from each class, rather than first year and seniors, which was typically how NSSE was administered. Students were invited to participate through email on October 8<sup>th</sup>; the survey closed October 19<sup>th</sup> with an 8.6% response rate (n=1,722). NSSE de-identified the results, thus, demographics were self-reported and additional demographic and success indicators from the system of record (e.g., Pell recipient status, participation in support programs, CSU GPA, etc.) cannot be reported.

The instrument included select questions from the existing general NSSE survey, as well as new items specific to the challenges associated with the pandemic. The reference group included undergraduate students from large public doctoral-granting institutions (n=33,613) who responded to the survey during the same timeframe. Pulse Survey responses were also compared internally to responses from the SP19 CSU NSSE administration for existing items; responses were averaged across first year and senior class level and reported in aggregate. Internal results were also compared by first generation status and duplicated race/ethnicity, meaning students can be represented in more than one racial/ethnic group.

## Demographics

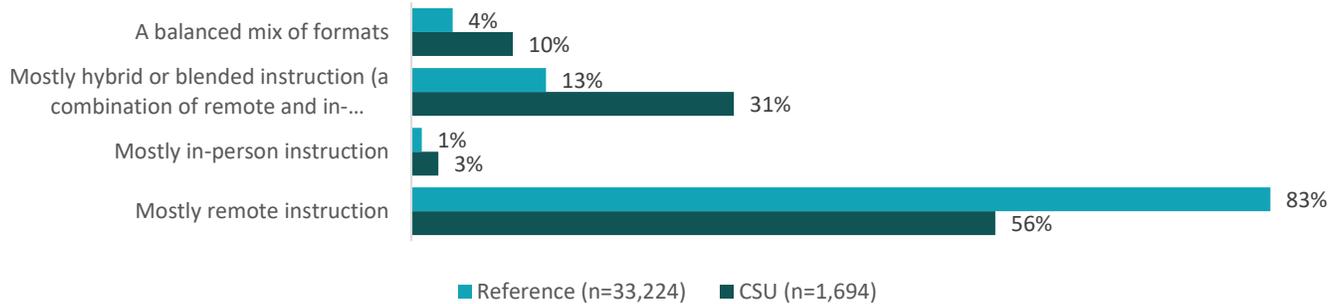
In general, the FA20 NSSE Pulse survey sample was representative of the FA20 undergraduate population. For instance, about 1 in 4 CSU respondents identified as first generation, which was similar compared to CSU overall. Similarly, 27% of CSU respondents were racially minoritized, which was roughly equivalent to the general CSU undergraduate population. The reference group had a larger proportion of first gen students (34%) compared to the CSU sample, and was more racially/ethnically diverse. The CSU sample also had a much larger proportion of first year students, a similar representation of sophomores, and smaller representation of juniors and seniors, and were much more likely to live on campus.

There were also some indicators of response bias in the NSSE pulse survey, particularly among class level, residence hall status, and gender. For instance, freshman/first-year students represented 44% of the sample, which was about 19 PP higher than the FA20 CSU population, so sophomores, juniors and seniors were underrepresented in the sample. Another indicator of response bias was that almost half of the CSU sample reported living in campus housing (47%), compared to about 22% of CSU students overall. Similarly, about 60% of respondents identified as female, which was about 7 PP higher than the FA20 undergraduate population.

# Pandemic Experiences

This section provides detail related to students’ challenges and concerns about the pandemic and their educational experience, as well as their opinions about institutional efforts to protect campus health and safety. These items were unique to the Pulse Survey. Figure 1 displays course instruction format.

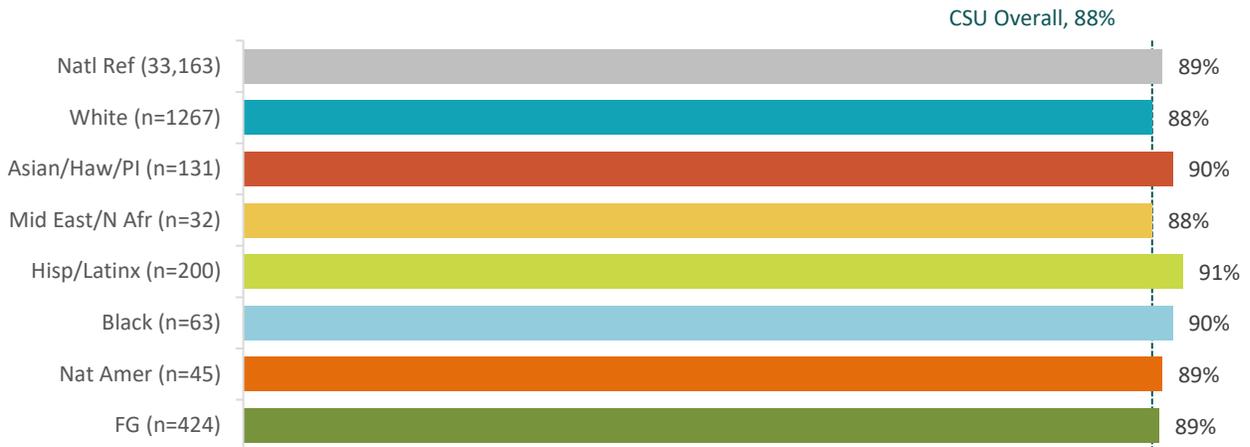
**Figure 1. Which of the following best describes the courses you are taking this term?**



CSU respondents were 18 PP more likely than the reference group to be enrolled in mostly hybrid or blended instruction courses (31% versus 13%), and 27 PP less likely to be enrolled in mostly remote courses (56% versus 83%). One in 10 CSU respondents reported a balanced mix of formats compared to 4% of the reference group, and 3% reported mostly in-person instruction, compared to 1%.

Figure 2 displays the proportion of students who agreed/strongly agreed that their internet service was sufficient for online learning by population of interest.

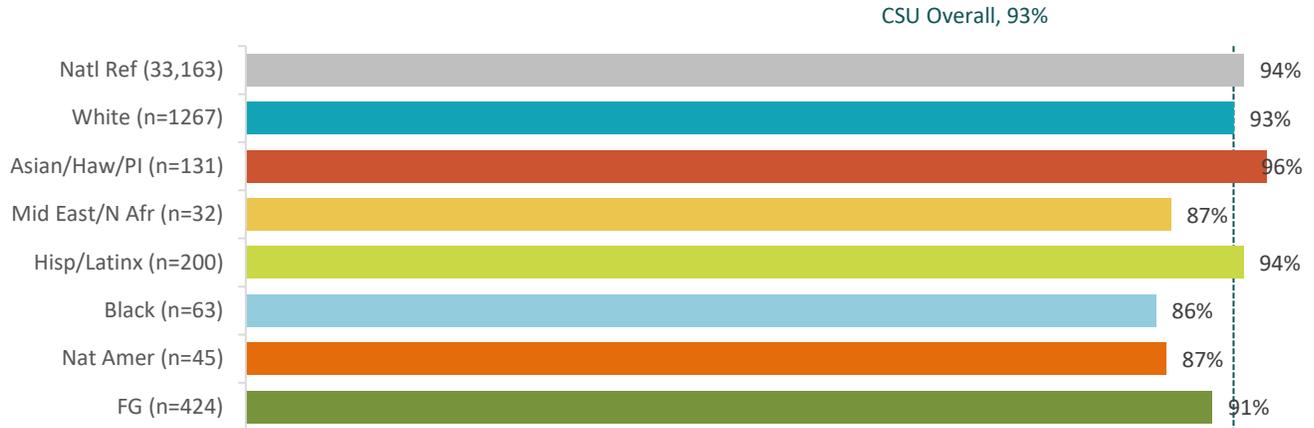
**Fig. 2: Internet service (availability, speed, reliability, etc.) has been sufficient**



Overall, CSU respondents reported a high level of agreement for sufficient internet service (88%), with minimal differences compared to the national reference group, and internally by race/ethnicity and first gen status. If results were generalized to the CSU main campus undergraduate population, the proportion of students who reported less than adequate internet (12%) translates to nearly 2,900 students. Given the overrepresentation of first-year students living on campus and their built-in internet access, the proportion of undergraduates without sufficient internet access was most likely underestimated.

Figure 3 displays the proportion of respondents who agreed/strongly agreed that their hardware and software have been sufficient.

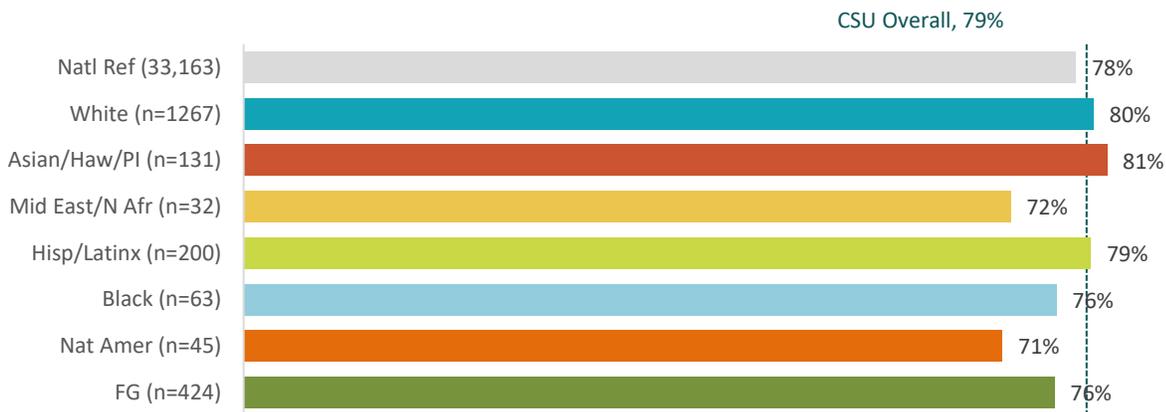
**Fig 3: Hardware (computer, tablet, mobile phone, printer, etc.) and software have been sufficient**



Both CSU overall and the reference group reported a high level of agreement for this item (93-94%); first gen students differed minimally. By duplicated race/ethnicity, students who identified as Middle Eastern/North African, Black, and Native American reported lower levels of agreement compared to CSU overall by 6-7 PP.

Figure 4 displays the proportion of respondents who agreed/strongly agreed that their study spaces have been sufficient.

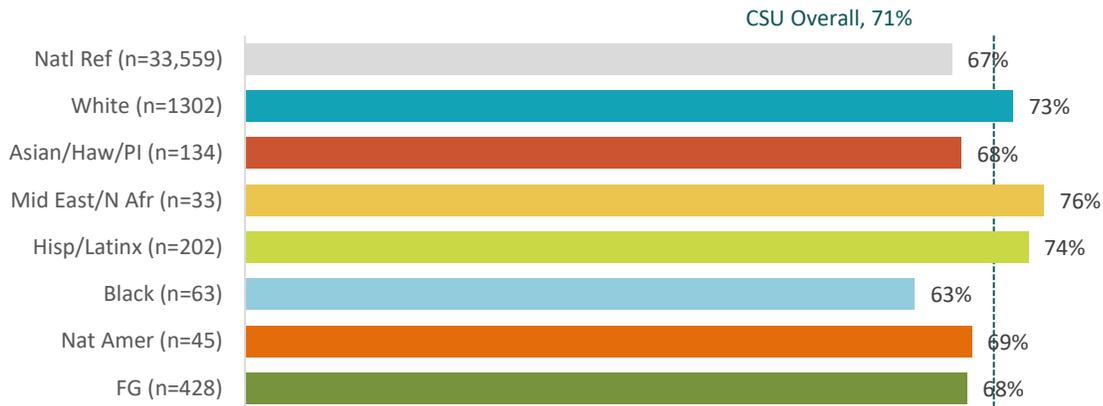
**Fig 4: Study spaces have been sufficient for your needs**



CSU students overall and the reference group reported a similar level of agreement for sufficient study spaces (78-79%); first gen students differed minimally (76%). By duplicated race/ethnicity, Native American students reported the lowest level of agreement compared to CSU overall at 71% (8 PP lower), followed by Middle Eastern/North African students at 72% (7 PP lower). The remaining identities reported a similar level of agreement compared to CSU overall.

Figure 5 displays the proportion of students who responded very much/quite a bit when asked about the extent to which their institution kept students healthy and safe during the current academic year.

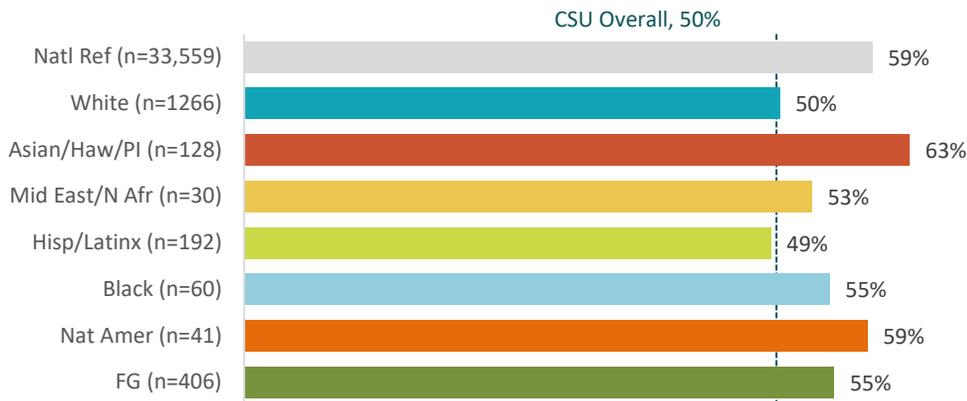
**Figure 5. To what extent has this institution kept students safe and healthy during the current school year?**



Over 70% of CSU students agreed that the institution kept students safe and healthy during the current school year, compared to 67% of the reference group (4 PP). Black-identified students were 8 PP less likely to agree with this statement (63%) compared to CSU overall; in contrast, Middle Eastern/North African-identified students reported 5 PP higher agreement (76%). Remaining identities, including first gen, differed minimally compared to CSU overall.

Figure 6 displays the proportion of students who reported very much/quite a bit when asked about their level of concern regarding the failure of others to comply with campus pandemic health guidelines (mask wearing, physical distancing, etc.).

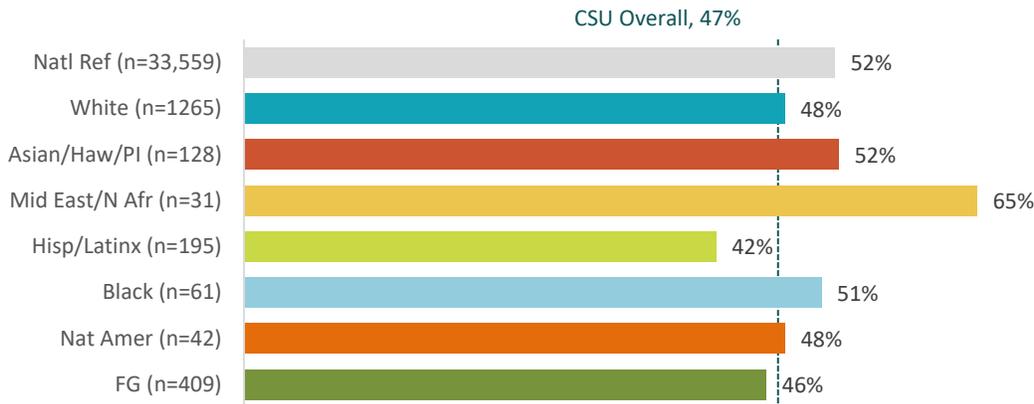
**Figure 6. How concerned have you been about failure of others to comply with your institution’s health policies?**



CSU respondents were less concerned about the failure of others to comply with campus health policies compared to the reference group (50% versus 59%). Asian/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander respondents were the most likely to report significant concern at 63%, which was 13 PP above the overall CSU rate, followed by Native American students at 59% (9 PP), and Black-identified students at 55% (5 PP). First gen students were also 5 PP above CSU overall.

Figure 7 displays the proportion of students who reported very much/quite a bit when asked about concerns regarding their own compliance with campus pandemic health guidelines.

**Figure 7. How concerned have you been about complying with your institution’s health policies?**



CSU students reported a lower level of concern (47%) compared to the reference group (52%). By duplicated race/ethnicity, Middle Eastern/North African-identified students were the most likely to express concern at 65%, which was 8 PP higher than the CSU average. Asian/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander-identified students also expressed a higher level of concern at 52%, 5 PP above the CSU average, while Hispanic/Latinx students were 5 PP below at 42%. The remaining race/ethnic identities and first gen students were relatively similar to the overall CSU average.

## Academic Challenge, Support, Belonging, and Overall Satisfaction

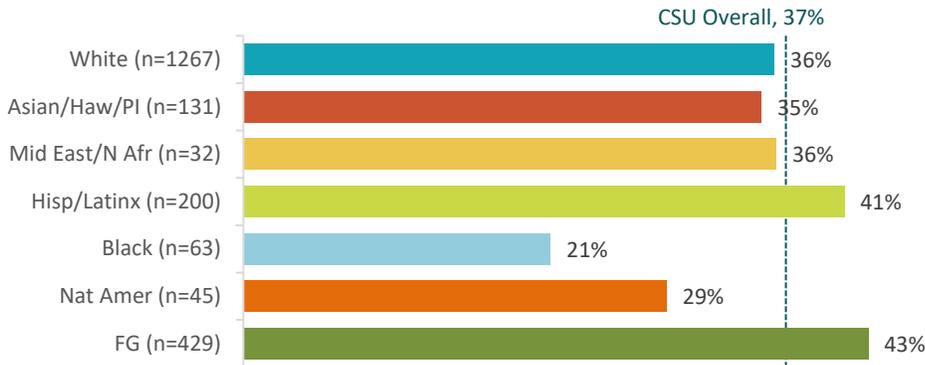
This section includes the NSSE pulse items that measured academic challenge, support, belonging and satisfaction during the pandemic. These items were also included on the NSSE survey completed in SP19 so this section references CSU’s prior data and the national comparison group. Figures 8 and 9 display the proportion of students who indicated their courses challenged them very much to do their best work.

**Fig 8: Course Challenge: Overall Comparison**



About 37% of CSU respondents reported being highly challenged compared to 44% of the reference group. Compared to SP19 NSSE results, Pulse respondents were about 10 PP less likely to feel highly challenged in FA20.

**Fig 9: Course Challenge: Internal Comparison**



Internally, first gen and Latinx students were more likely to feel challenged compared to the overall rate. Students who identified as Black reported a much lower level of challenge at 21% (16 PP lower), as well as Native American students at 29% (8 PP lower), with the remaining identities reporting a similar level compared to CSU overall.

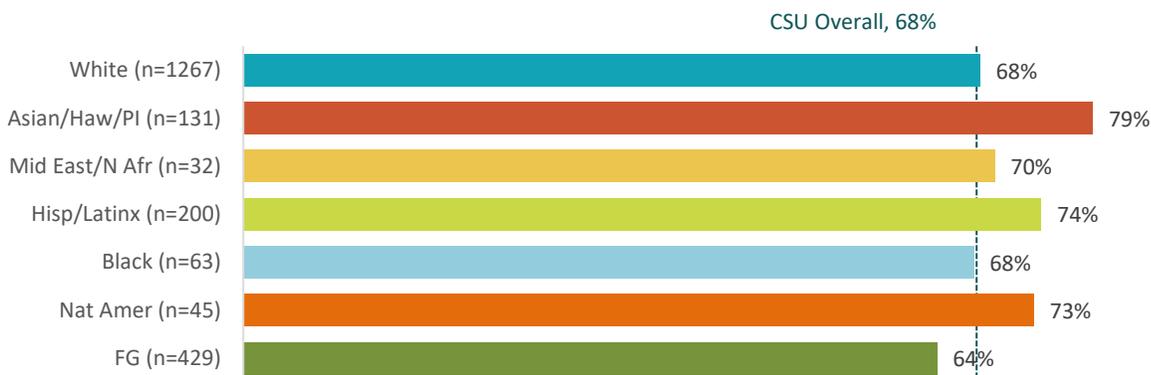
Figures 10 and 11 display the proportion of students who indicated quite a bit/very much when asked how much institutional emphasis was placed on helping students succeed academically.

**Figure 10. Institutional Emphasis: Academic Support, Overall Comparison**



About two-thirds of CSU and reference group respondents felt that their institution highly emphasized support for academic success. However, students reported a lower level of emphasis compared to SP19 NSSE results (9 PP).

**Figure 11. Institutional Emphasis: Academic Support, Internal Comparison**



By duplicated race/ethnicity, students reported similar or greater feelings of support compared to CSU overall, particularly among Asian/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander-identified students (79%, 11 PP) Hispanic/Latinx students (74%, 6 PP), and Native American students (73%, 5 PP). In SP19, racially minoritized students did not differ from

the overall average. First gen students were 4 PP less likely to feel supported academically (64%); a similar, non-significant gap was observed in SP19 NSSE results between first gen and students overall.

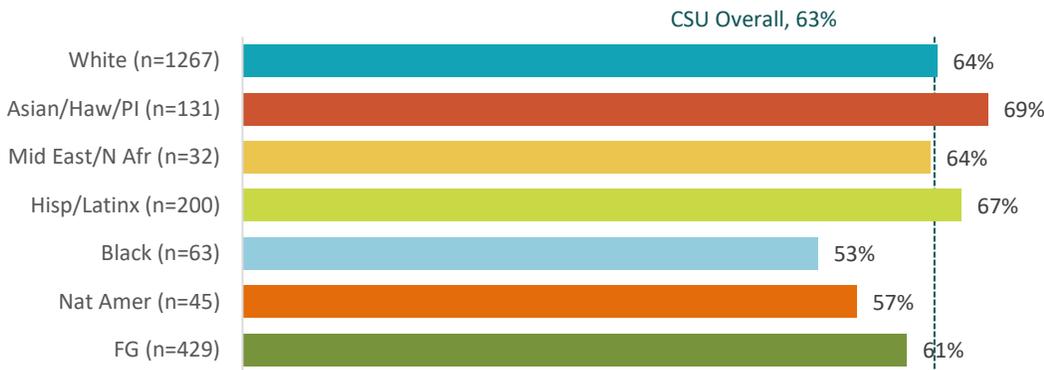
Figures 12 and 13 display the proportion of students who indicated quite a bit or very much when asked about the extent to which their institution emphasized support for their well-being.

**Figure 12. Institutional Emphasis: Support for Well-Being, Overall Comparison**



CSU respondents were 5 PP more likely to feel supported in their overall well-being (63% versus 58%) compared to the reference group, but 11 PP less likely compared to SP19 NSSE results (74%).

**Figure 13. Institutional Emphasis: Support for Well-Being, Internal Comparison**



Black-identified students were 10 PP less likely to feel supported, and Native American-identified students were 6 PP less likely to feel supported compared to CSU overall. In contrast, AHPI students were 6 PP more likely to feel supported (69%). White, Middle Eastern/North African, Hispanic/Latinx, and first gen students differed minimally from CSU overall.

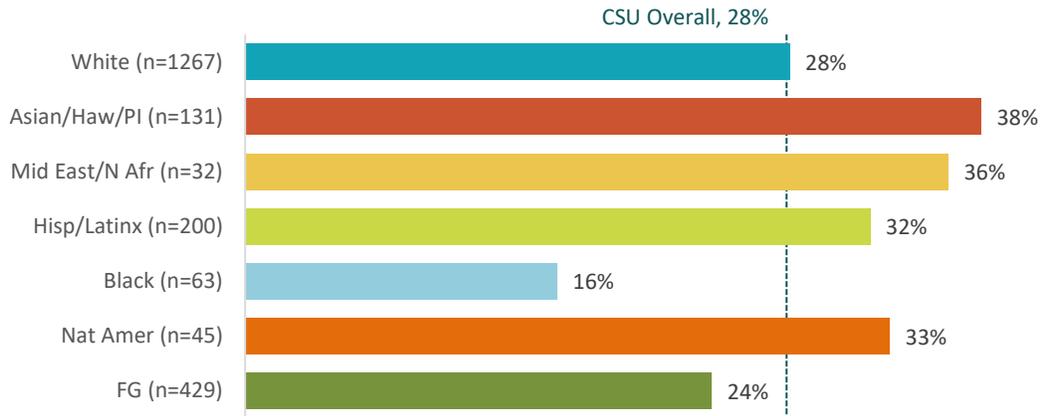
Figures 14 and 15 display the proportion of students who indicated quite a bit or very much in response to the extent to which their institution emphasized helping students to manage non-academic responsibilities.

**Figure 14. Institutional Emphasis: Managing Non-Academic Responsibilities Overall Comparison**



CSU and the reference group reported a similar level of institutional emphasis for managing non-academic responsibilities (28% and 31%, respectively); however, CSU students felt much less supported in FA20 compared to SP19 (12 PP).

**Figure 15. Institutional Emphasis: Managing Non-Academic Responsibilities Internal Comparison**



By race/ethnicity, Black-identified students reported the lowest level of emphasis at 16%, 12 PP lower than the CSU average. Asian/Hawaiian/PI-identified students reported the highest level of emphasis at 38% (10 PP above the CSU average), followed by Middle Eastern/North African-identified students at 36% (8 PP above the CSU average). Native American and Hispanic/Latinx students were 4-5 PP above the CSU average; White students did not differ. First gen students were below the CSU average by 4 PP (24%).

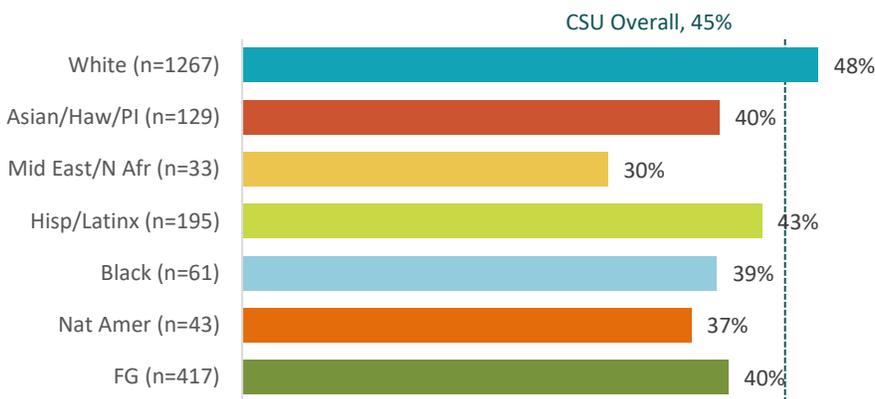
Figures 16 and 17 display the proportion of students who rated their quality of interactions with other students as very good/excellent.

**Figure 16. Quality of interactions with students: Overall Comparison**



CSU and the reference group reported a similar quality of interaction with other students, with 45% rating their interactions as very good or excellent. In SP19, 54% of CSU students rated their interactions this way, 9 PP higher compared to FA20.

**Figure 17. Quality of interactions with students: Internal Comparison**



Students with racially minoritized identities were less likely to rate their interactions as very good/excellent

compared to CSU students overall, with Middle Eastern/North African students at 30% (15 PP), Native American students at 37% (8 PP), and Black-identified students at 39% (6 PP). Asian/Hawaiian/PI and Hispanic/Latinx students reported slightly lower ratings compared to the CSU overall rate. Forty percent of first gen students rated their interactions as very good/excellent, 5 PP below the CSU average.

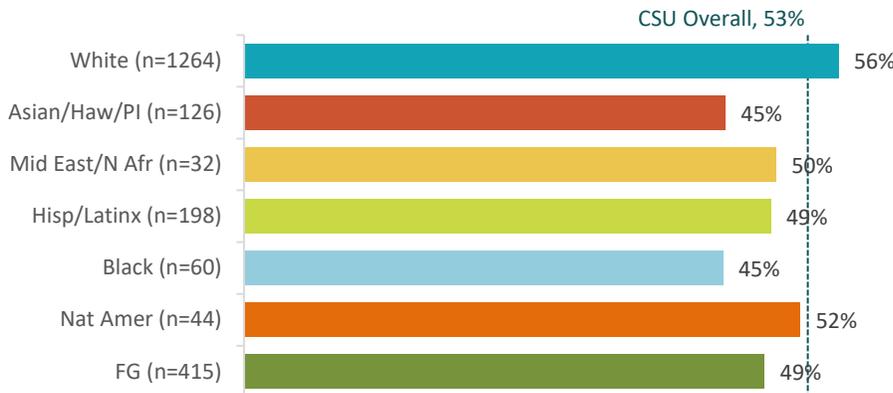
Figures 18 and 19 display the proportion of students who rated their quality of interactions with academic advisors as very good/excellent.

**Figure 18. Quality of interactions with Academic Advisors: Overall Comparison**



Just over half of CSU respondents rated their interactions with academic advisors as very good/excellent (53%), compared to 49% of the reference group. FA20 and SP19 results differed minimally for this item.

**Figure 19. Quality of interactions with Academic Advisors: Internal Comparison**



By race/ethnicity, AHPI and Black-identified students reported the lowest ratings at 45% (8 PP lower than the CSU average); the remaining identities were similar compared to CSU overall. First gen students were 4 PP less likely to report interactions as very good/excellent compared to CSU overall.

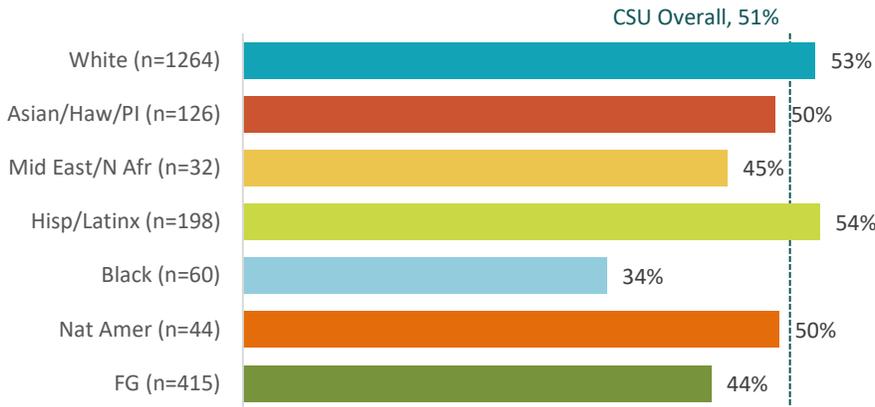
Figures 20 and 21 display the proportion of students who rated their quality of interaction with faculty as very good/excellent.

**Figure 20. Quality of interactions with faculty: Overall Comparison**



CSU respondents were 5 PP more likely to report high quality interactions with faculty compared to the reference group (51% versus 46%); results were similar compared to SP19.

**Figure 21. Quality of interactions with faculty: Internal Comparison**



Black-identified students were the least likely to report high quality interactions with faculty at 34% (17 PP lower than the CSU average) followed by Middle Eastern/North African students at 45% (6 PP below average). The remaining identities differed minimally compared to CSU overall. First gen students were 7 PP less likely to report high quality interactions with faculty (44%) compared to CSU overall.

Figures 22 and 23 display the proportion of students who rated their quality of interactions with student services staff (career services, student activities, housing, etc.) as very good/excellent.

**Figure 22. Quality of interactions with student services staff: Overall Comparison**



A similar proportion of CSU and reference respondents reported a high quality of interaction with student services staff (41% and 38%, respectively). CSU respondents were 6 PP less likely to rate their interactions this way compared to SP19 NSSE results (41% versus 47%).

**Figure 23. Quality of interactions with student services staff: Internal Comparison**



Black and Middle Eastern/North African-identified students were 9-10 PP less likely to rate their interactions as very good/excellent; AHPI students were 5 PP less likely compared to CSU students overall. Native American, Hispanic/Latinx, and White-identified students reported a similar quality of interaction compared to CSU overall. First gen students were 6 PP less likely to rate their interactions as very/good excellent compared to CSU overall (35%).

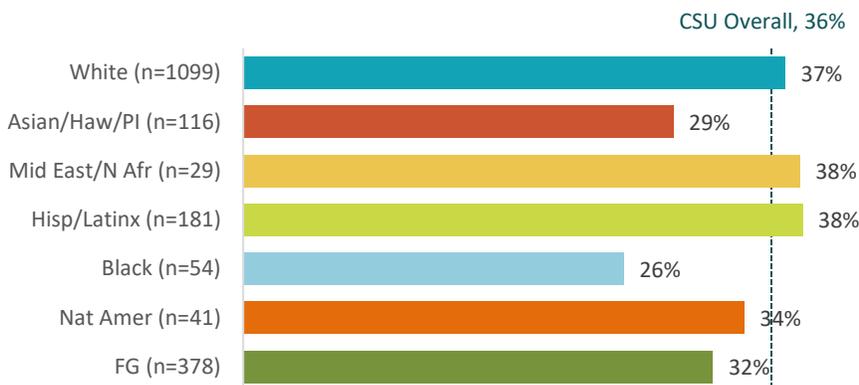
Figures 24 and 25 display the proportion of students who rated their quality of interactions with other administrative staff and offices (registrar, financial aid, etc.) as very good/excellent.

**Figure 24. Quality of interactions with other administrative staff and offices: Overall Comparison**



CSU and the reference group rated interactions with other administrative staff similarly, with 36% rating their interactions as very good/excellent; for CSU, this was 7 PP lower compared to SP19.

**Figure 25. Quality of interactions with other administrative staff and offices: Internal Comparison**



Black-identified students were 10 PP lower than the CSU average (26%), followed by AHPI students at 29% (7 PP lower). Native American, Hispanic/Latinx, Middle Eastern/North African, and White-identified students differed minimally compared to CSU overall; first gen students were 4 PP lower at 32%.

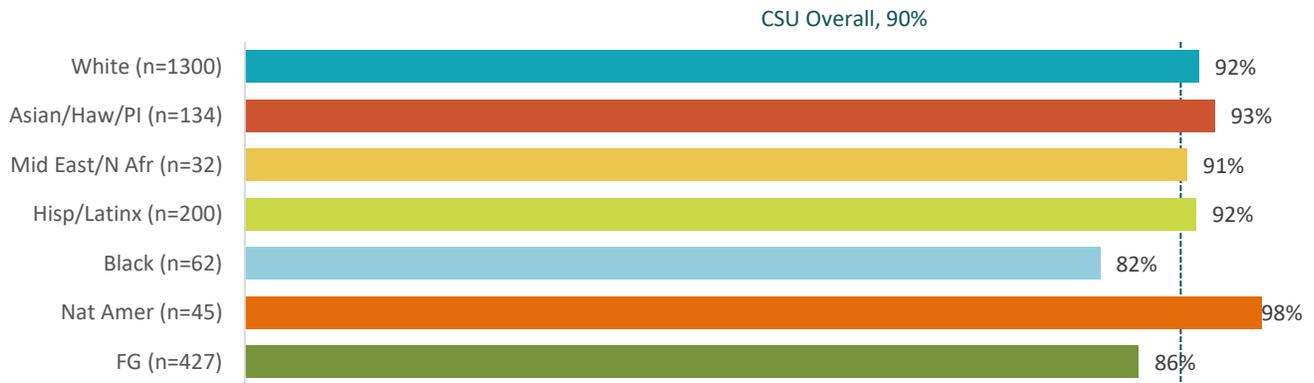
Figures 26 and 27 display the proportion of students who agreed/strongly agreed that they felt comfortable being themselves at their institution.

**Figure 26: I feel comfortable being myself at this institution: Overall Comparison**



Nine in 10 CSU and reference respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt comfortable being themselves; CSU’s response was similar to SP19 NSSE results.

**Figure 27: I feel comfortable being myself at this institution: Internal Comparison**



Each race/ethnicity felt comfortable at or above the overall CSU rate, with the exception of Black-identified students, who were 8 PP less likely to agree (82%) compared to CSU overall. First gen students were slightly less likely to agree (4 PP, 86%) compared to CSU overall.

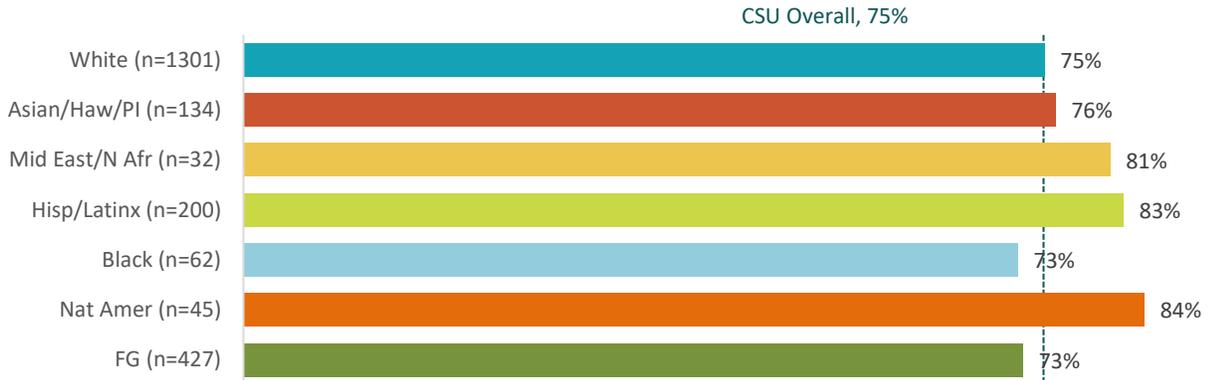
Figures 28 and 29 display the proportion of students who agreed/strongly agreed that they felt valued by their institution.

**Figure 28: I feel valued by this institution: Overall Comparison**



CSU and the reference group reported a similar level of agreement, with 75% of CSU respondents indicating they felt valued; this was similar to the SP19 NSSE rate (78%).

**Figure 29: I feel valued by this institution: Internal Comparison**



Native American, Hispanic/Latinx, and Middle Eastern students were 6-8 PP more likely to feel valued compared to CSU overall; the remaining identities were similar to the CSU average, including first gen students.

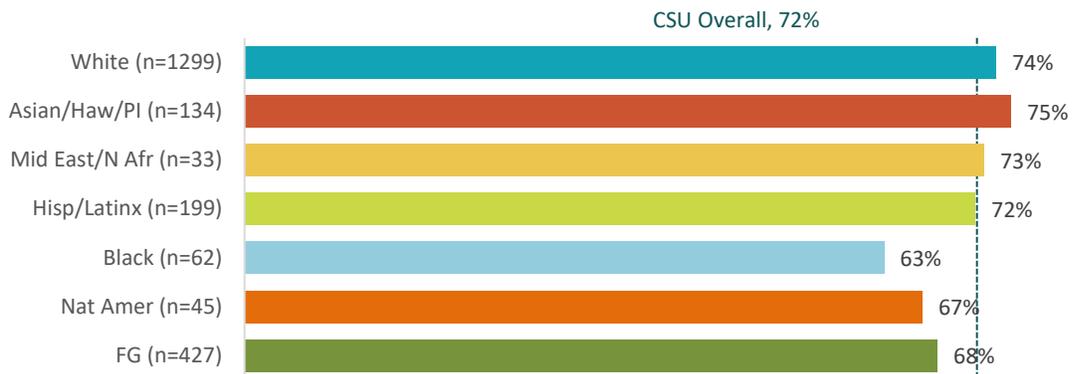
Figures 30 and 31 display the proportion of students who agreed/strongly agreed that they felt like part of the community at their institution.

**Figure 30: I feel like part of the community at this institution: Overall Comparison**



About 7 in 10 CSU respondents agreed that they felt valued by CSU, similar to the reference group. SP19 NSSE respondents were 8 PP more likely to agree with this statement.

**Figure 31: I feel like part of the community at this institution: Internal Comparison**



Black and Native American-identified students reported lower levels of agreement compared to CSU overall (9 PP and 5 PP, respectively); other identities differed minimally. First gen students were 4 PP lower compared to CSU overall (68%).

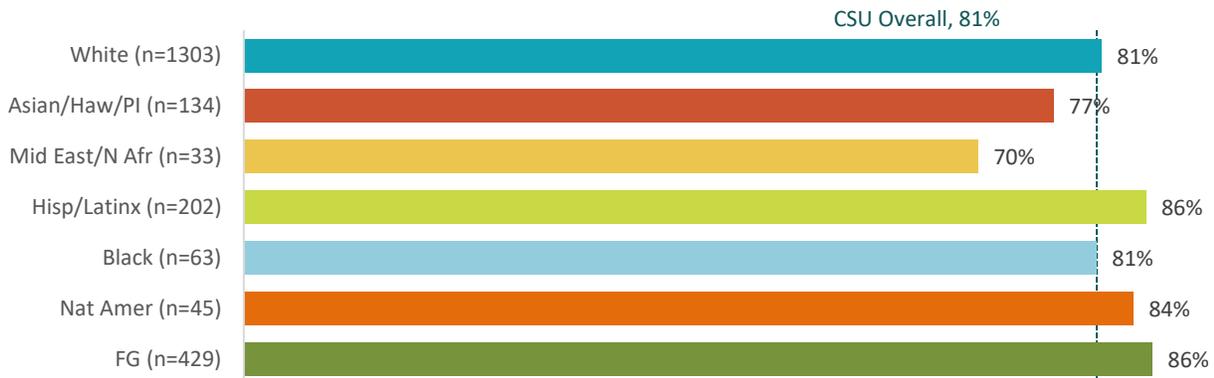
Figures 32 and 33 display the proportion of students who agreed that graduating from their institution was important or very important.

**Figure 32: How important is it to you that you graduate from this institution? Overall Comparison**



Overall, about 8 in 10 CSU respondents felt it was very important to graduate from CSU, compared to 86% of reference respondents (5 PP), and 75% of CSU respondents in SP19.

**Figure 33: How important is it to you that you graduate from this institution? Internal Comparison**



Middle Eastern/North African students were 11 PP less likely to agree (70%), and the remaining identities were within 5 PP of the overall CSU average, including first gen students.

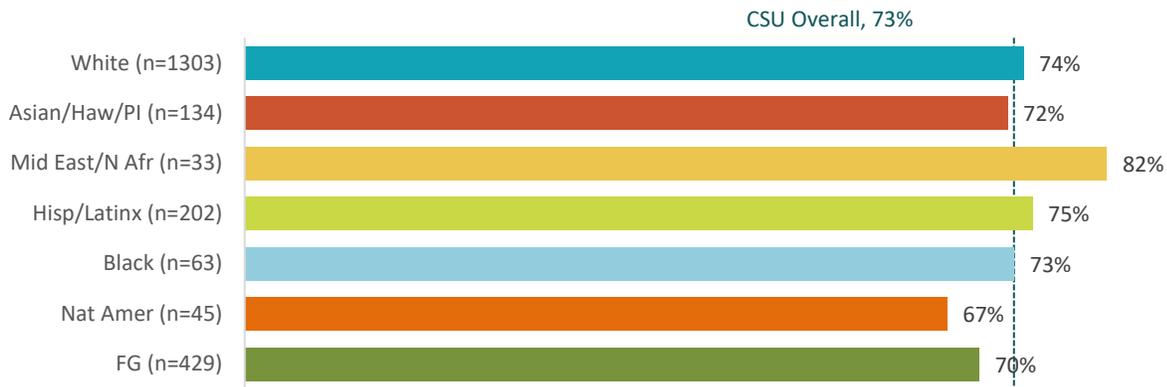
Figures 34 and 35 display the proportion of students who evaluated their entire institutional experience as very good/excellent.

**Figure 34: How would you evaluate your entire experience at this institution? Overall Comparison**



About three-quarters of CSU respondents rated their entire experience as very good or excellent, compared to 89% in SP19 (16 PP). CSU's FA20 rating was similar to the reference group.

**Figure 35: How would you evaluate your entire experience at this institution? Internal Comparison**



Native American students were the least likely of any race/ethnicity to rate their experience as very good/excellent at 67% (6 PP below the CSU average), while 82% of Middle Eastern/North African students rated their experience this way (9 PP above average). The remaining identities were similar to the CSU average, including first gen students.

## Conclusions

In general, CSU respondents felt they had adequate resources to engage in remote learning this past fall. Compared to national reference group respondents, CSU respondents were slightly more likely to feel that their institution kept students safe and healthy during the current school year. CSU respondents also expressed less concern about their own ability to comply as well as others’ compliance with pandemic-related health policies. While CSU respondents were less likely to feel challenged to do their best work in their courses than their national peers, they reported a higher quality of interactions with faculty. CSU respondents also reported a higher level of institutional emphasis on well-being, and were less likely to rate graduating from CSU as important/very important compared to the reference group.

Internally, Black, Native American, and Middle Eastern/North African CSU students were less likely to have adequate hardware and software, and Native American and Middle Eastern/North African students were less likely to have adequate study spaces compared to CSU overall. Both Black and Native-American identified students felt less challenged compared to CSU overall. First gen, AHPI, Native American, and Black-identified students reported a higher level of concern with others’ compliance with pandemic-related campus health policies. While the majority of students felt that CSU had put considerable effort into keeping students safe and healthy during the current school year, Black-identified students were less likely to agree. For general NSSE items, first gen students consistently reported a lower quality of interactions with others on campus and a lower sense of belonging, and Black-identified students reported a less positive experience in general. These results underscore the importance of sustained institutional emphasis on diversity and equity efforts during the pandemic and beyond.

Compared to SP19 general NSSE results, respondents in FA20 reported a lower level of agreement for the majority of items. In particular, students reported lower levels of institutional emphasis around academic support, well-being, and managing non-academic responsibilities, lower quality of interactions with other students, and a much lower rating of their overall institutional experience.