
WABASH NATIONAL STUDY OF Liberal Arts Education

URI is a participant in the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education, which is a large-scale, longitudinal study of thousands of students at 60 different colleges and universities nationwide. This grant-funded study is designed to investigate critical factors that affect the outcomes of a liberal arts education. Now entering its third year, the study has already yielded key information and promises to become one of the most important of its kind. (For detailed information, please visit www.liberalarts.wabash.edu/nationalstudy.)

More Details on the Wabash Study...

The Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education is designed to help colleges and universities learn what teaching practices, programs, and institutional structures support liberal arts education, improve student learning and enhance the educational impact of their programs. This is one of the most comprehensive national studies ever conducted to gauge the effects of American higher education on student learning and development.

The study is designed to assess the impact of teaching practices and institutional conditions on the following outcomes:

1. the inclination for life-long inquiry and learning;
2. leadership;
3. well-being;
4. moral reasoning;
5. the integration of learning;
6. effective reasoning and problem solving; and
7. intercultural effectiveness.

The study will collect data from first-year, first-time enrolled freshman at three points over the course of four years: at the beginning and end of the freshman year; at the end of the senior year. Data collection includes a series of instruments, each of which measures one of the specific learning outcomes listed above.

What are the Wabash Research Questions?

These data will be used to answer research questions including:

1. What are the institutional conditions, practices, programs, and structures that foster the development and integration of the above seven student outcomes?
2. What are the specific qualities and characteristics of institutional conditions, practices, programs, and structures that foster the development and integration of the seven outcomes?
3. Are the institutional conditions, practices, programs, and structures that foster the development and integration of these outcomes different for different kinds of students?
4. Are there combinations of these institutional conditions, practices, programs, and structures that advance all seven outcomes?
5. What are the qualities and characteristics of institutions that are more effective at promoting the combination of our outcomes?

Measurement Instruments and Procedures

Participants in the Wabash National Study will take a subset of the following measures:

- **Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale – Short form (M-GUDS):** A 15-item instrument that measures awareness and acceptance of both similarities and differences among people.
- **Defining Issues Test (DIT2):** A measure of moral reasoning.
- **Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale:** A 54-item scale designed to measure six dimensions of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, personal growth, purpose in life, and autonomy.
- **Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS-R2):** A 68-item instrument that measures seven aspects of leadership development: consciousness of self, congruence, commitment, collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, and citizenship as well as change.
- **Need for Cognition Scale (NCS):** An 18-item scale designed to measure how much people enjoy engaging in effortful cognitive activities.

- Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency Critical Thinking Test (CAAP Critical Thinking Test): A 32-item instrument that measures students' skills in clarifying, analyzing, evaluating, and extending arguments.

Participants are randomly divided into three groups and assigned a one of the outcome instruments. At subsequent assessment sessions, participants will take the same instrument as during their first session.

Participating Institutions

Community Colleges

Community College of Rhode Island
Ivy Tech – Lafayette
Kirkwood Community College

Liberal Arts Colleges

Allegheny College
Alma College
Alverno College
Augustana College
Bard College
Bard College at Simon's Rock
Bennington College
Blackburn College
Carleton College
Coe College
College of the Holy Cross
Columbia College
Connecticut College
Drew University
Franklin College
Gustavus Adolphus College
Hamilton College
Hampshire College
Hobart and William Smith Colleges
Hope College
Lasell College
Marlboro College
New College of Florida
Oxford College of Emory University
Prescott College
Ripon College
Vassar College
Wabash College
Warren Wilson College
Wheelock College
Whittier College

Small Universities

Brandeis University
Butler University
Delaware State University
Fairfield University
Millersville University
Salem State College
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Worcester State College

Large Universities

North Carolina A&T State University
San José State University
University of Kentucky
University of Michigan
University of North Carolina, Wilmington

University of Notre Dame
University of Rhode Island

URI Highlights:

Fall '07/Spring '08

638 students participated, 598 validated student participants /299 students returned for Part II

Fall '08

1236 students participated, 1158 validated participants