Student Driven | Community Centered

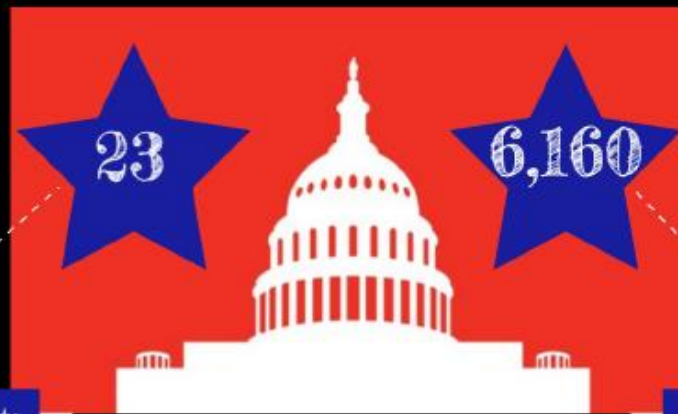# Office of Active Citizenship and Service

## VIEW

Volunteer Experience in
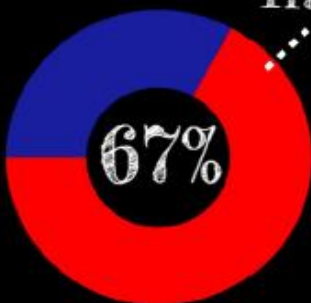
Internship Washington, D.C.
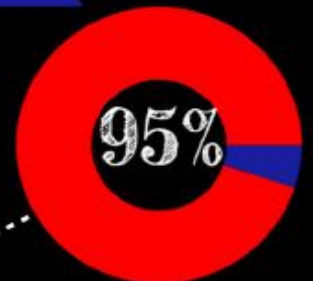
20  15

**23**

**6,160**

Student Participants

Internship Hours

## 8 Week Internships Focused on Active Citizenship

67% Feel "Personally Transformed" by the Experience

**95%**

95% Feel "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" with the Program

**67%**

www.vanderbilt.edu/oacs

# Student Driven | Community Centered

## Office of Active Citizenship and Service

I now understand what a career in Washington could look like, and while this has pushed me away from the sector, I could not have developed this opinion without the experience of this summer.

My internship gave me a lot of insight into one potential direction I could go with my career path, but also made me realize how many different options there are.

I think having a base of Vanderbilt peers in a new city really elevated the experience and provided us with a group of individuals with which to digest our experiences.

**Students Reflected throughout the Experience by means of 1:1 Conversations with Site Leaders, Blogs, Videos, and Group Sessions**
www.vanderbilt.edu/oacs/service-programs

**Student Fees Covered 100% of Program Costs**

**Every Student was Matched with a VU Alumnus Mentor who Reflected their Professional Interests**

## www.vanderbilt.edu/oacs

## Executive Summary

The Vanderbilt Internship Experience in Washington (VIEW) provides students with an opportunity to meaningfully explore and engage in community and public service in an effort to grow as active citizens. The experience introduces students to Washington D.C. institutions and personalities, and encourage exploration on how these entities create change in a dynamic and complex environment. Students participate in a living-learning community, dedicate themselves to internships with leading non-profit agencies and congressional offices, gain networking and mentoring opportunities with Vanderbilt alumni, and partake in a variety of social and academic activities.
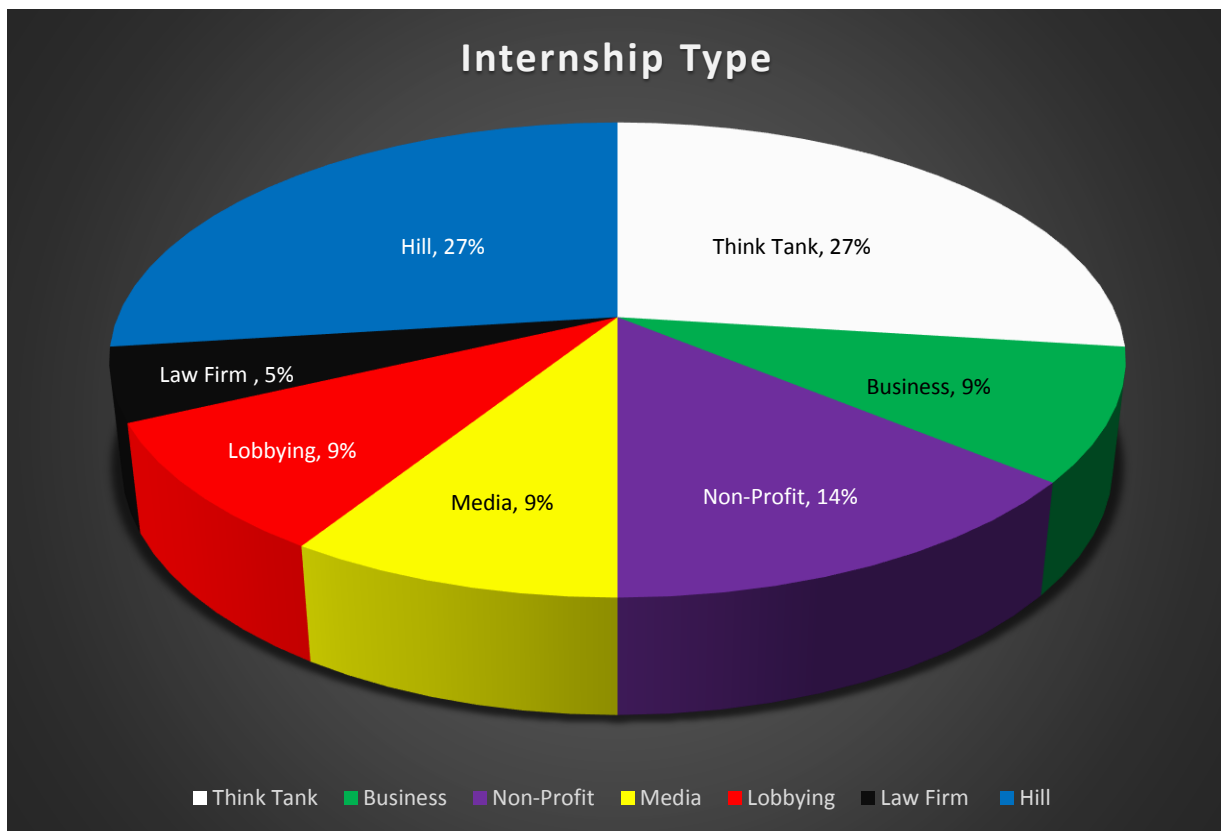
# Learning Outcomes

Critically examine challenging issues through dialogue and reflection

Participate in informed and humble service

Engage in serious conversation with people who are different than me in terms of their cultural background, religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values

Examine the strengths and weaknesses of my own views on a topic or issue and consider others' point of view when making decisions

Demonstrate commitment and accountability in a living-learning community with other Vanderbilt students

Gain a stronger knowledge of the political landscape in D.C.

Gain a stronger knowledge of the non-profit landscape in D.C.

Understand D.C. in a global context

Understand how institutions and individuals can serve as change agents in D.C.

Become more comfortable interviewing and networking

Understand and practice professional communication skills

Develop leadership skills

Understand and take advantage of opportunities that exist within their area(s) of interest

Grow as a professional in a workplace

## Key Learning Outcome Data Analysis

Learning Outcome 1
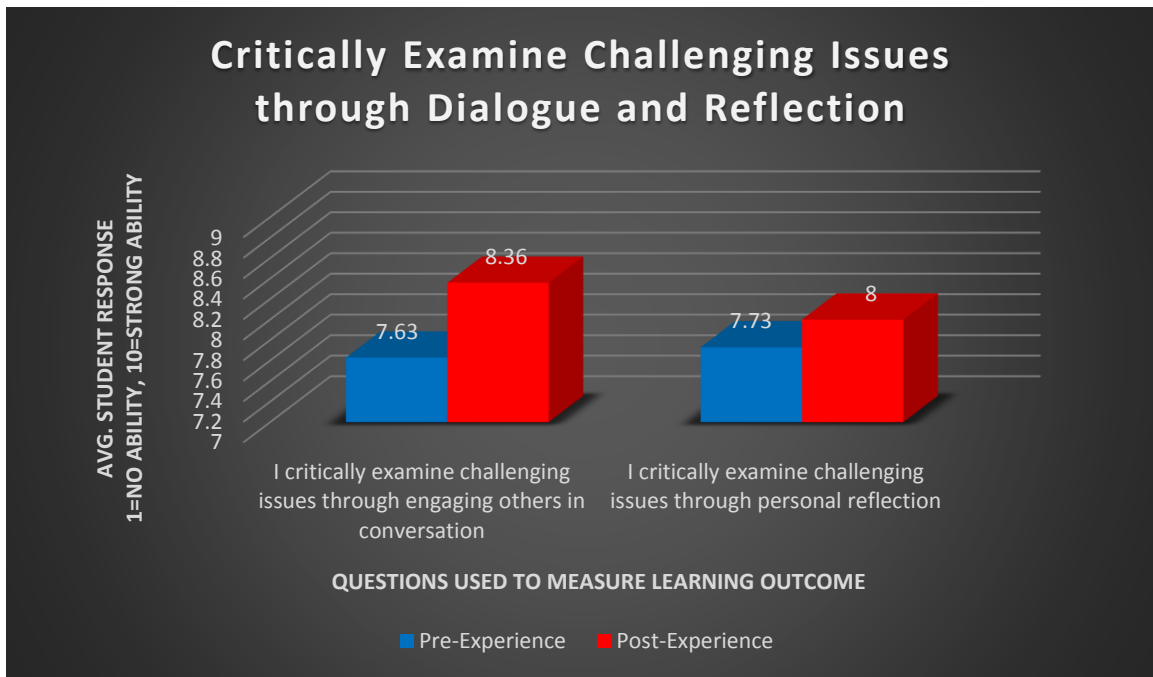


Learning Outcome 2
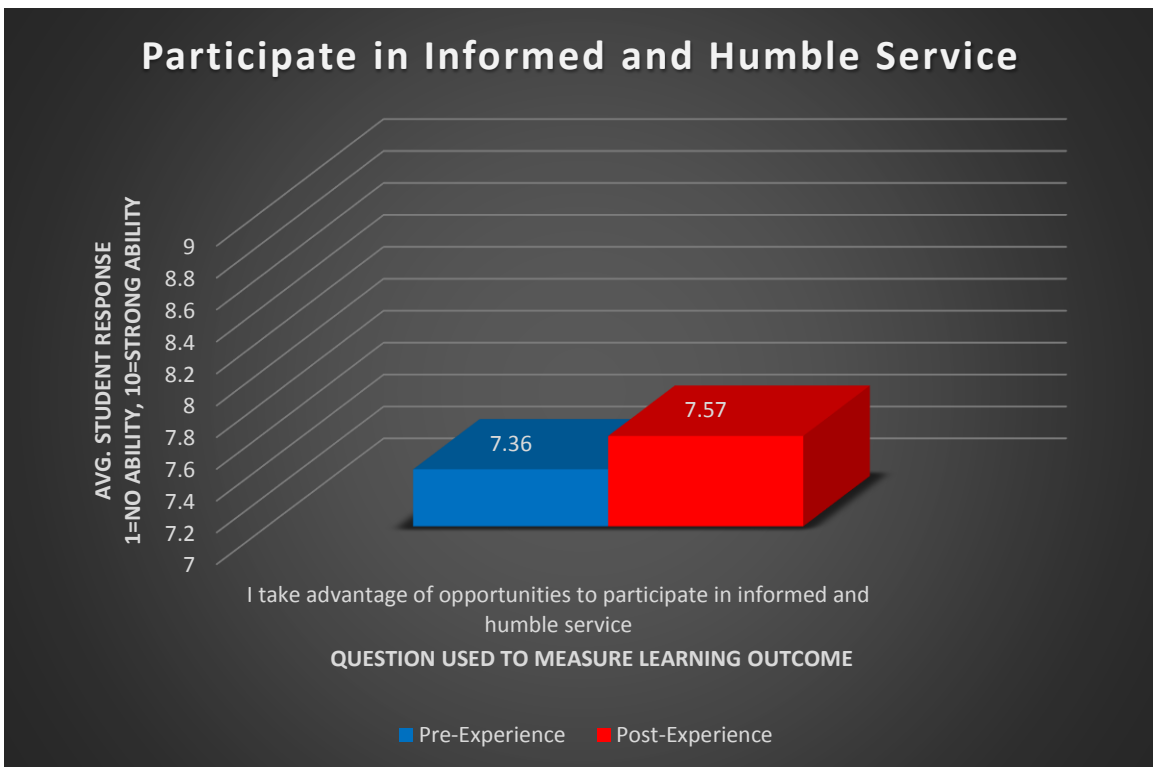
Learning Outcome 3



**Engage in Serious Conversation with People who are Different Than Me in Terms of Their Cultural Background, Religious Beliefs, Political Opinions, or Personal Values**
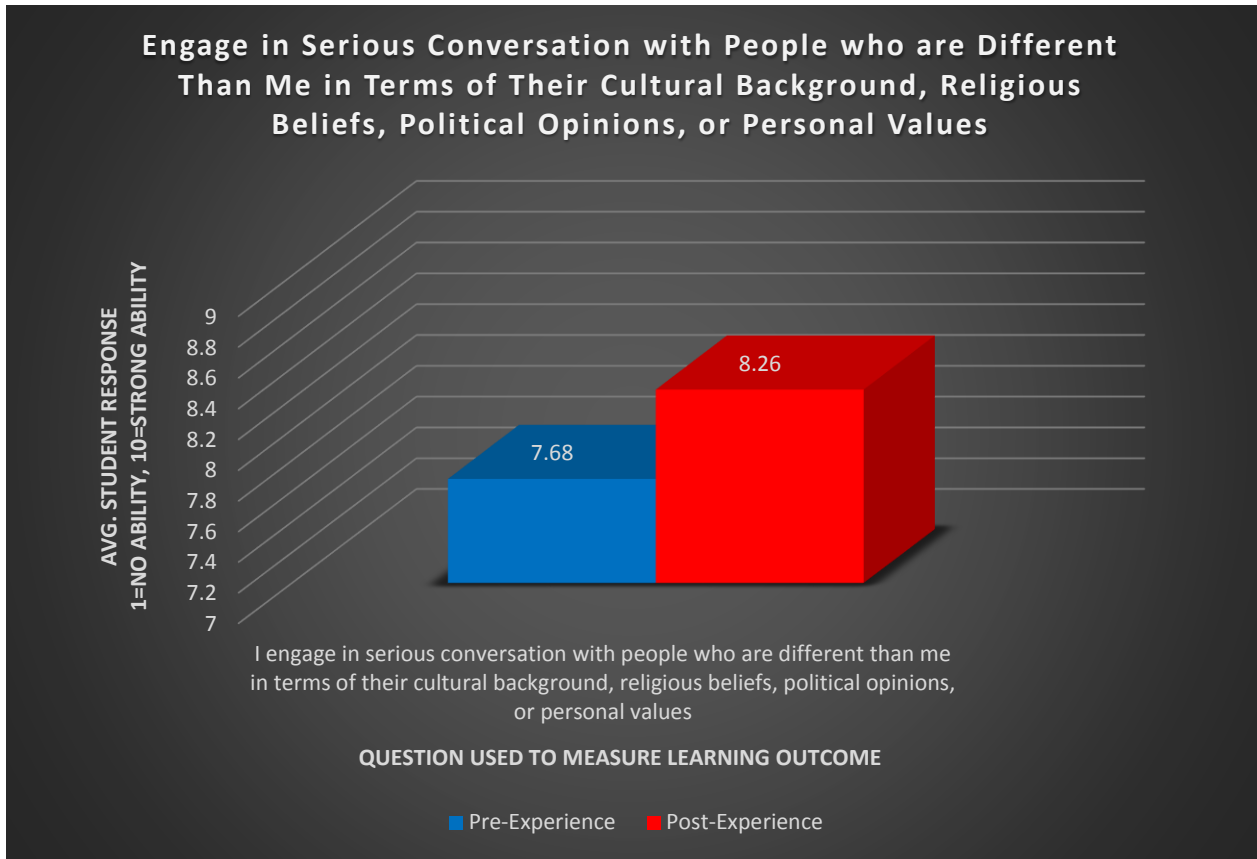
## Participant Satisfaction Data Analysis

*Please indicate your overall level of satisfaction with the OACS VIEW Program.*
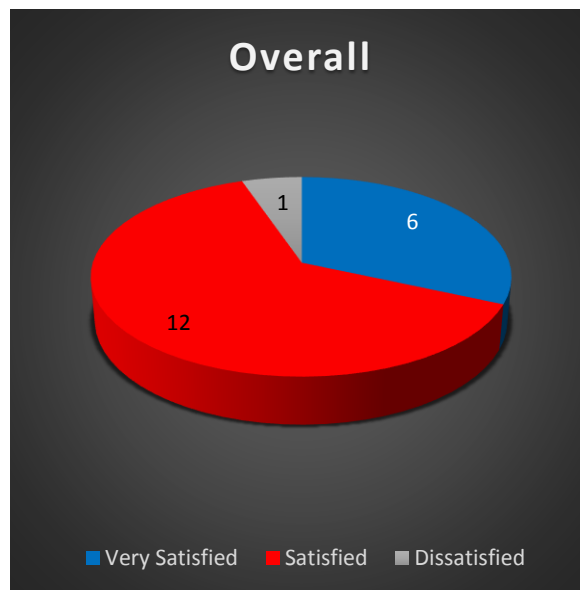
*Do you feel you were personally transformed by the impact the OACS VIEW Program made on your life?*
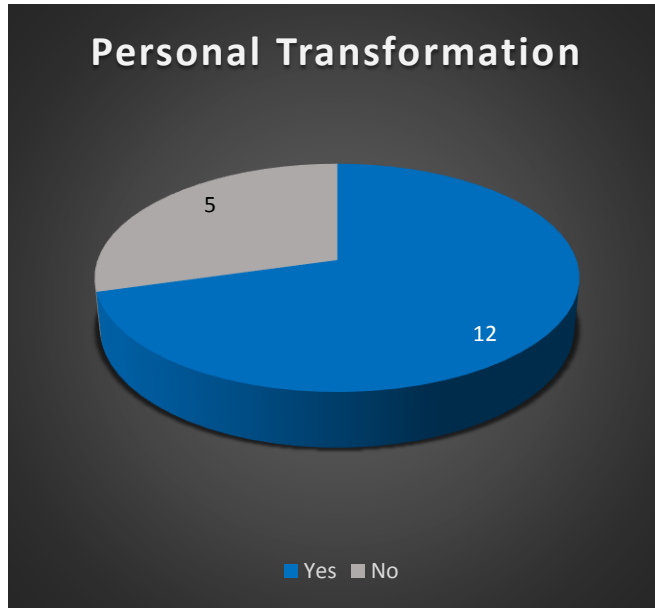


*Do you feel the spring course prepared you for the summer experience?*
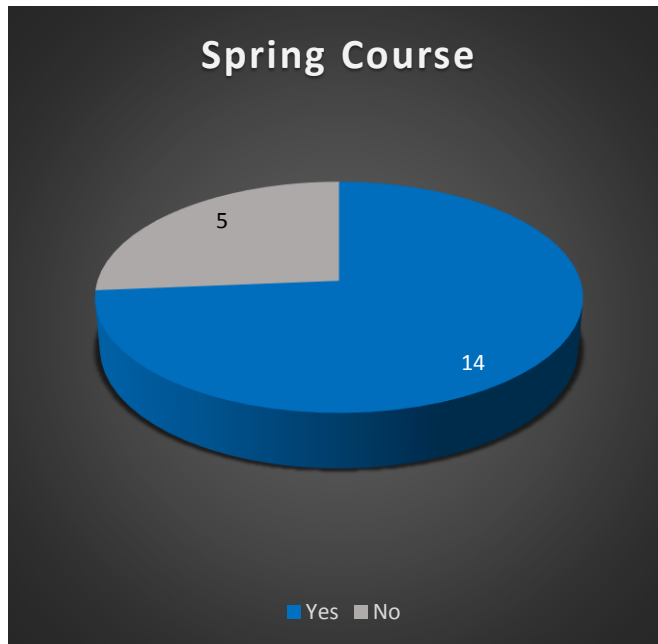
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## Methodology

To properly assess learning outcomes, pre and post experience assessment instruments were created through Baseline to efficiently gather qualitative and quantitative data. OACS staff designed these instruments, composed of Likert scale and free response questions, and distributed them in January, 2015 and August, 2015. Students responded to the pre survey before they attended a seminar and to the post survey after VIEW concluded. The pre survey was distributed to all 23 student program participants and 21 responded. The post survey was distributed to the same 23 students, and 19 responded.

Students completed the pre survey *en masse* at the start of the initial spring seminar. While this ensured a high response rate, the downside to having students complete the survey using a direct web link (rather than via an email sent to each individual by Baseline) is that there was no identifying information collected on respondents. Thus, we cannot see how each student answered the pre survey questions, we can only view the data as anonymous. For the post survey we do have this identifying information because the survey links were emailed to students by Baseline staff. In the future we must consider the cost/benefit of both options, because while higher response rates are desirable, our data analysis in this report is slightly hindered by not being able to conclusively say that both sets of pre and post respondents are in fact the same people. For this report, two responses from the pre survey were eliminated such that we have 19 pre and post surveys to analyze and compare against each other.

Students were instructed as to the importance of these surveys and asked to respond as accurately as possible, in a timely fashion. From a methodological perspective, web-based surveys were utilized rather than paper surveys in order to maximize the response rate and facilitate the means by which students could answer. This also eliminated the need for manual input of assessment data. The surveys took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

## Results – Learning Outcomes

Student responses are taken from questions utilizing a 1-10 Likert scale. For every response, a 1 correlates to the lowest agreement/experience/ability/etc. and a 10 correlates to the highest level. Student responses are then averaged to show how they progressed as a cohort, per learning outcome. Thus, a movement of "1" would indicate that the group averaged one step of positive growth. There is an exception for learning outcomes 11-13, which instead utilize a 1-5 Likert scale. The questions for 11-13 were only asked in the post survey and thus have nothing to measure against. Accordingly, we display results as a group average without indication of movement.

| Program Cohort Breakdown | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Program | # of Program Participants | # of Pre Survey Respondents | # of Post Survey Respondents |
| VIEW | 23 | 21* | 19 |

\*As mentioned above, two pre surveys were eliminated from data analysis in order to equalize pre/post numbers since we don't have identifying information for pre survey respondents.

**Core Principles**

1.      *Critically examine challenging issues through dialogue and reflection*
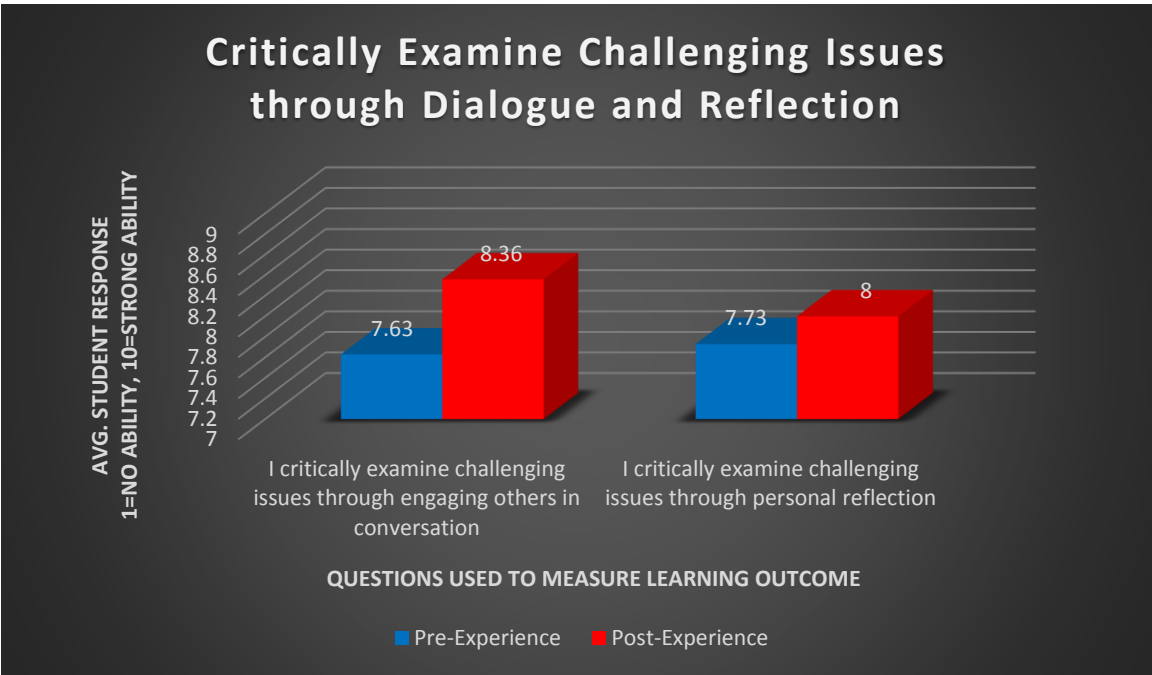


| Question | Average Pre-Assessment Result | Average Post-Assessment Result | Movement |
|---|---|---|---|
| I critically examine challenging issues through engaging others in conversation | 7.63 | 8.36 | .73 |
| I critically examine challenging issues through personal reflection | 7.73 | 8 | .27 |

2.      *Participate in informed and humble service*
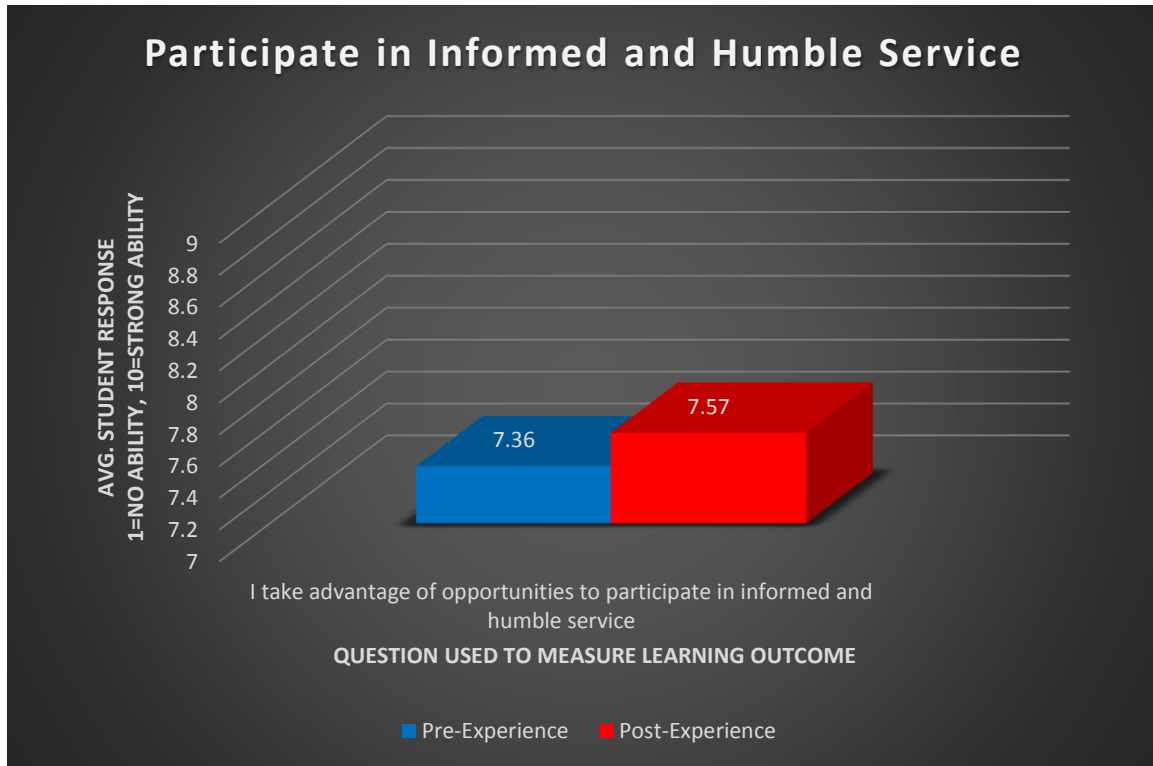


| Question | Average Pre-Assessment Result | Average Post-Assessment Result | Movement |
|---|---|---|---|
| I take advantage of opportunities to participate in informed and humble service. | 7.36 | 7.57 | .21 |

3.	*Engage in serious conversation with people who are different than me in terms of their cultural background, religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values*
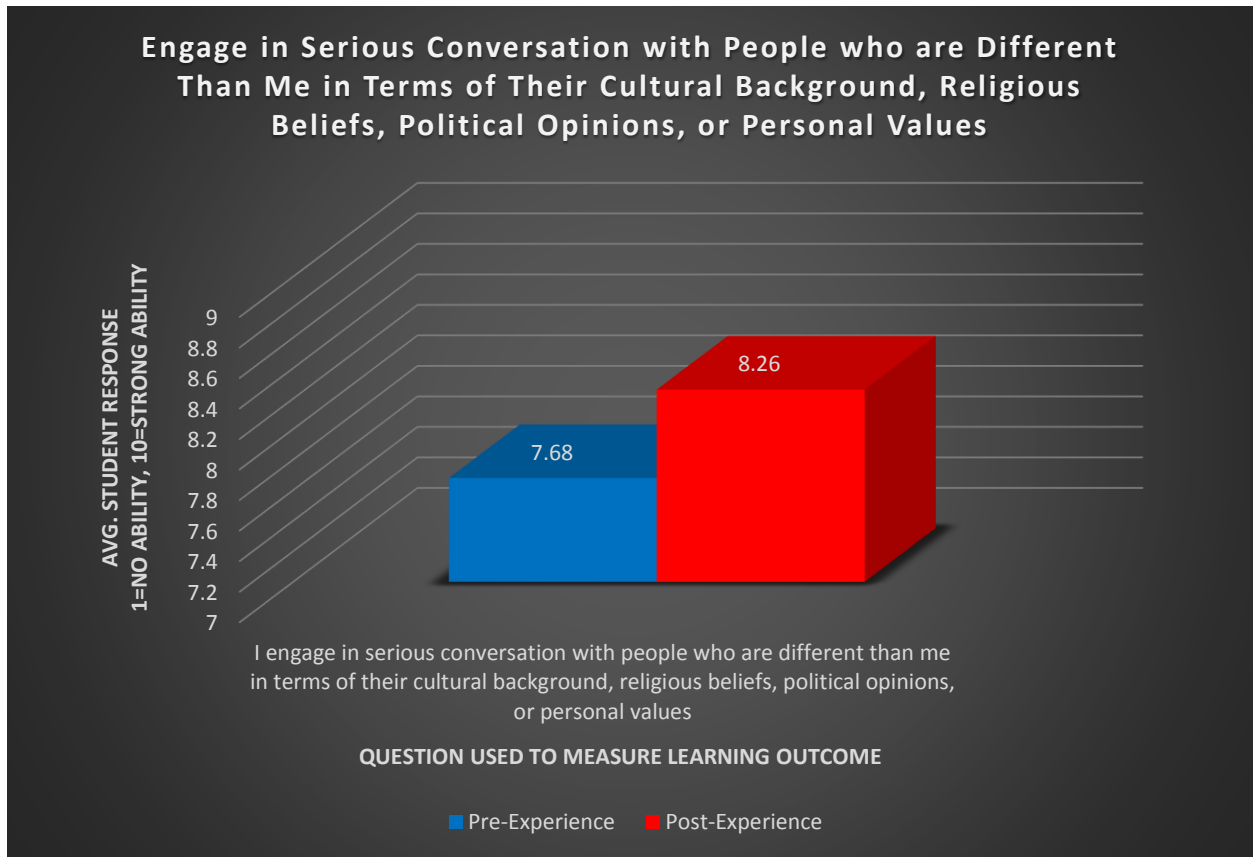


| Question | Average Pre-Assessment Result | Average Post-Assessment Result | Movement |
|---|---|---|---|
| I engage in serious conversation with people who are different than me in terms of their cultural background, religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values. | 7.68 | 8.26 | .58 |

4.	*Examine the strengths and weaknesses of my own views on a topic or issue and consider others' point of view when making decisions*

| Question | Average Pre-Assessment Result | Average Post-Assessment Result | Movement |
|---|---|---|---|
| I examine the strengths and weaknesses of my own views on a topic or issue when making decisions. | 7.73 | 8.21 | .48 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| I consider others' points of view on a topic or issue when making decisions. | 8.05 | 8.78 | .73 |

5.      *Demonstrate commitment and accountability in a living-learning community with other Vanderbilt students*

| Question | Average Pre-Assessment Result | Average Post-Assessment Result | Movement |
|---|---|---|---|
| I demonstrate commitment and accountability in living-learning communities with other Vanderbilt students. | 7.52 | 8.26 | .74 |

## Washington, D.C. Knowledge

6.      *Gain a stronger knowledge of the political landscape in D.C.*

| Question | Average Pre-Assessment Result | Average Post-Assessment Result | Movement |
|---|---|---|---|
| I understand the role and functionality of the branches of government. | 7.68 | 8.94 | 1.26 |
| I am familiar with the issue of political polarization in Washington, D.C. | 7.52 | 8.94 | 1.42 |

7.      *Gain a stronger knowledge of the non-profit landscape in D.C.*

| Question | Average Pre-Assessment Result | Average Post-Assessment Result | Movement |
|---|---|---|---|
| I recognize Washington, D.C. as a hub of non-profit activity. | 7.52 | 8.78 | 1.26 |

8.      *Understand D.C. in a global context*

| Question | Average Pre-Assessment Result | Average Post-Assessment Result | Movement |
|---|---|---|---|
| I have an understanding of the roles Washington, D.C. plays in a global context. | 7.89 | 8.78 | .89 |

9.    *Understand how institutions and individuals can serve as change agents in D.C.*

| Question | Average Pre-Assessment Result | Average Post-Assessment Result | Movement |
|---|---|---|---|
| I am able to critically examine the role of institutions/organizations as agents of change. | 7.63 | 8.78 | 1.15 |
| I am able to critically examine the role of individuals as agents of change. | 7.57 | 8.78 | 1.21 |

## Professional Development Knowledge

10.    *Become more comfortable interviewing and networking*

| Question | Average Pre-Assessment Result | Average Post-Assessment Result | Movement |
|---|---|---|---|
| Interviewing for a job or internship | 6.84 | 8.36 | 1.52 |
| Professional networking | 5.78 | 7.63 | 1.85 |

11.    *Understand and practice professional communication skills*

| Question | Average Pre-Assessment Result | Average Post-Assessment Result | Movement |
|---|---|---|---|
| Communicating in a professional manner | 7.78 | 8.47 | .69 |
| Please rate the extent to which the VIEW program aided you in the following areas: - Develop my communication skills | N/A | 3.63<br><br>(1-5 Scale) | N/A |

12.    *Develop leadership skills*

| Question | Average Pre-Assessment Result | Average Post-Assessment Result | Movement |
|---|---|---|---|
| Please rate the extent to which the VIEW program aided you in the following areas: - Develop my leadership skills | N/A | 3.63<br><br>(1-5 Scale) | N/A |

13. *Understand and take advantage of opportunities that exist within their area(s) of interest*

| Question | Average Pre-Assessment Result | Average Post-Assessment Result | Movement |
|---|---|---|---|
| Please rate the extent to which the VIEW program aided you in the following areas: - Gain insight into my field(s) of interest | N/A | 4<br><br>(1-5 Scale) | N/A |

14. *Grow as a professional in a workplace*

| Question | Average Pre-Assessment Result | Average Post-Assessment Result | Movement |
|---|---|---|---|
| Working in a professional environment | 7.78 | 8.94 | 1.16 |

## Analysis

- **Strengths**

The learning outcomes categorized under Washington, D.C. Knowledge and Professional Development Knowledge showed greater positive movement than did the Core Principles. This is to be expected, as VIEW participants would not have as much pre-existing knowledge in these areas. It's also a safe assertion that the Core Principles would be areas of focus in other Vanderbilt classes/programs, establishing a stronger base. Skills such as networking, interviewing, and professional communication show particular growth as a result of VIEW, as do the learning outcomes measuring knowledge of the U.S. government, D.C. non-profits, and global politics. The Core Principles category demonstrated the most growth in learning outcomes centered upon personal reflection (learning outcomes 1, 4, and 5), indicating reflection as a strength of the program that should be utilized and emphasized moving forward.

- **Areas for Improvement**

We see relatively weak growth from learning outcome 2 (participate in informed and humble service), indicating that service needs to be more of a focus in future years to sufficiently explore and grow this outcome. Overall, the Core Principles show growth but not significant growth, averaging .53 when taken together. This equates to approximately ½ of one step on a 1-10 scale of agreement, though it should be noted that the starting point as measured through the pre survey was high, coming in at an average of 7.67 across questions. Taken in conjunction with student feedback (below), there is a strong appetite amongst participants for a continued focus on professional networking. This skill registered the lowest pre survey measurement (5.78) and also saw the highest rate of movement of any question asked (1.85). This should continue to be a focal point of VIEW.

## Results - Program Satisfaction

Students responded during the post-experience survey to questions measuring their satisfaction with specific program components and with their overall experiences. These questions employed either a Likert scale or yes/no response.

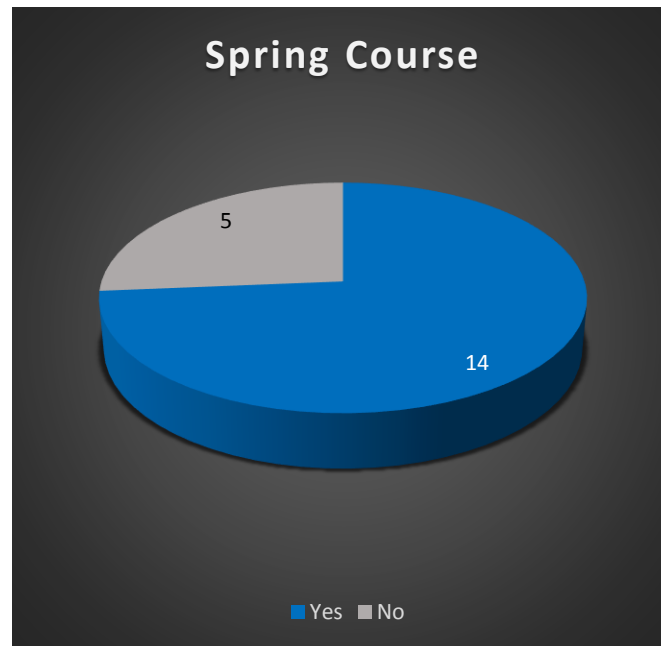*Please indicate your overall level of satisfaction with the OACS VIEW Program.*
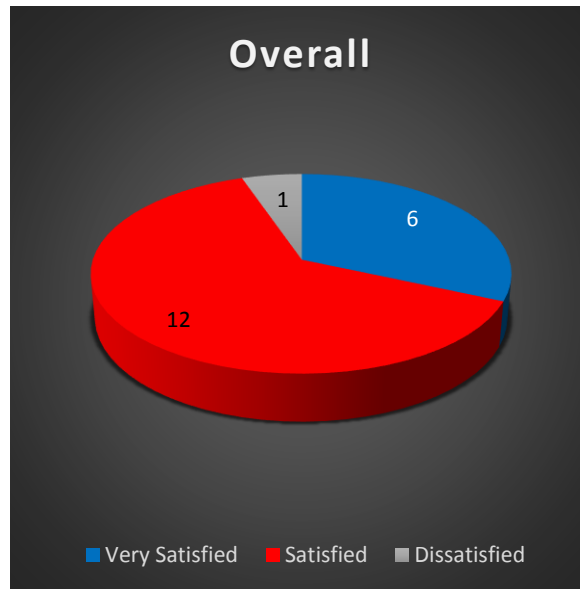


*Do you feel you were personally transformed by the impact the OACS VIEW Program made on your life?*



16
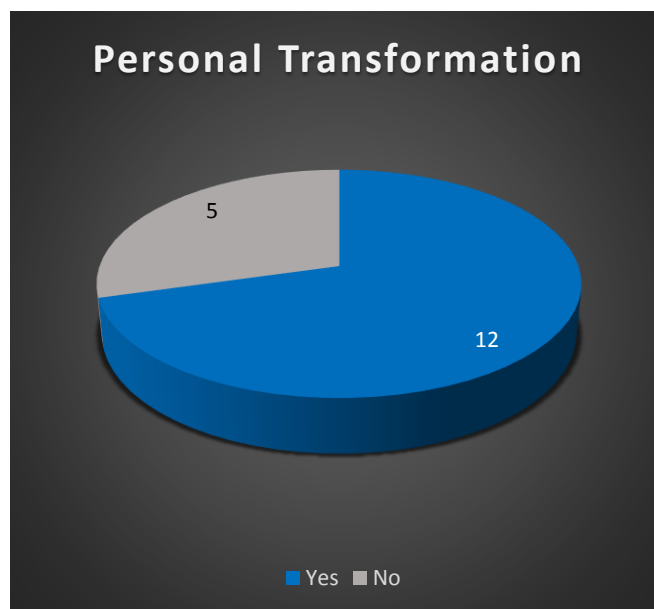
*Do you feel the spring course prepared you for the summer experience?*



**Spring Course**

5

14

■ Yes ■ No

## Student Recommendations

The following are student responses from the post survey question *"Is there anything that could have made your experience better? Is there anything you would change?"*

- o Heavier on networking, and possibly more skewed to an older cohort.
- o I didn't like living in Pentagon City because I felt very out of the loop from other interns. As there were no other undergrad interns at my job, there was no way for me to meet other people my age besides people on VIEW, and it would have been nice to be in a location to facilitate those kinds of interactions.
- o I think it was a little over programmed and having mandatory events defeats the program's purpose to make people self-sufficient.
- o I would have like to have been paid, received more polisci credit, or had some other form of compensation for the hours. I ended up spending a lot of money on lunch, and if there was any way to cut costs or increase benefits that would have been cool.
- o The housing was extremely far, inconvenient, and overall not satisfactory. We had multiple issues with the apartment maintenance and bugs. I probably would not have joined the program had I known of the housing in advance.
- o There was a considerable lack of networking opportunities, which was a main reason I wanted to do the program.
- o I think it would be better if VIEW programs reflects more than just politics of the U.S. Granted, there was an event regarding non-profit, but it will be better if you guys can balance the nature of event between non-profit and government affiliated.

The following are student responses from the post survey question *"What would you add, change, or adjust in the spring course seminar to make it most helpful to future cohorts?"*

- o A bigger focus on the internship search and professionalism. And if there is going to be a project/paper at the end, to make that more relevant and better integrated into the course.
- o Learn relevant political information relating to the current state of the political structure. For instance, knowing who the Speaker of the House, Majority/Minority leader, and Whip are should be considered important to someone who is going to work on the Hill.
- o More networking tips: how to interact at the opening reception.
- o More of the fun group activities early on! Those were great.
- o I would introduce the students to more speakers.