



The Ohio State University

STEP

Second-year Transformational
Experience Program

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Executive Summary

The Second-year Transformational Experience Program (STEP) was established as part of the university goal to redefine the second-year student experience. Specifically, STEP aims to improve students' transition to their second year by bolstering their engagement on campus, with an end goal of fostering student success both during college and following graduation. STEP is a partnership between the Office of Student Life and Office of Academic Affairs. STEP was piloted for three academic years before being fully implemented during the 2016-2017 academic year.

This report provides a brief overview of STEP and highlights the results of recent assessments conducted by the Center for the Study of Student Life, including demographic trends in student and faculty participation, student retention numbers and results from quantitative and qualitative assessments of the program.



Overview of Program

As part of Ohio State's ongoing commitment to redefining the student experience, the university created a transformational second-year residential initiative designed to lead to higher graduation and retention rates, improved student engagement and satisfaction, as well as post-graduation success. STEP focuses on student success and development and allows students the opportunity to engage in activities that cater to their individual interests and needs. Through interaction with faculty, students develop skills for life and build essential network connections.

The second year is a crucial time for student success and a time when students can experience a "sophomore slump," but it has not often been a point of focus for campuses (Hunter, 2010; Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000). Students in their second-year can feel disengaged, uncertain, confused and frustrated (Lemons & Richmond, 1987; Hunter, 2010). The Ohio State University designed STEP to support second-year students' success after carefully reviewing the research literature on student development in the second year and local data on Ohio State students'

experiences, retention and graduation. Before STEP was implemented, The Ohio State University commissioned a study to identify the predictors of second-year student success and they were found to be participation in campus events, living on campus, peer interaction, interaction with faculty and institutional commitment.

By fulfilling the program requirements, students are eligible to receive a fellowship of up to \$2,000 to use towards a STEP Signature Project they might otherwise not be able to do.



Major Components of STEP

Cohort Meetings with Faculty Mentor:

During autumn semester, cohorts of 15 students meet weekly with their Faculty Mentor in residence halls to focus on personal development, career exploration and community building.

Professional Development Co-Curriculars:

Students complete 3 Professional Development Co-Curricular (PDCs) sessions throughout the year. Over 550 PDC sessions are offered. These sessions are designed to encourage personal and professional growth and development appropriate for students in their second year.

Scarlet & Gray Financial Coaching:

Students complete a two-part financial wellness program that includes a one-on-one session with a peer financial coach.

Signature Project:

Students can apply for up to \$2,000 to complete a Signature Project in one of 6 unique, education-enriching experiences:

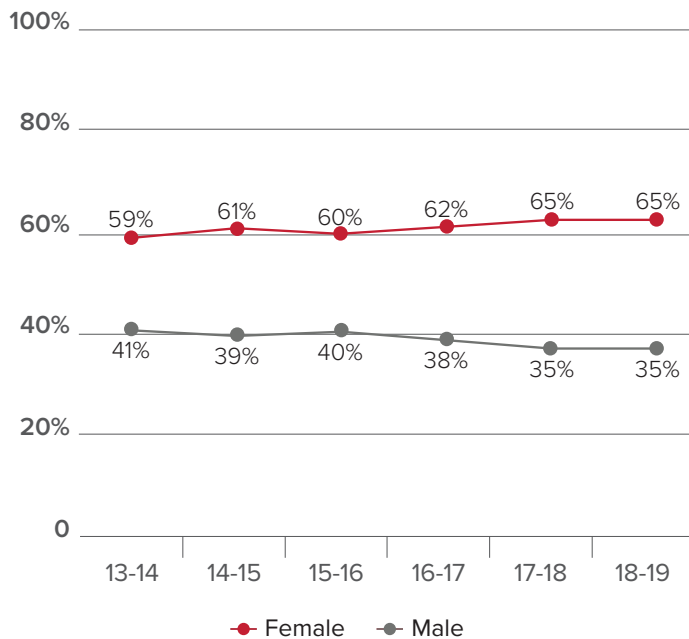
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|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Creative and Artistic Endeavors | 4. Leadership |
| 2. Education Abroad | 5. Service-Learning and Community Service |
| 3. Internship | 6. Undergraduate Research |



Student Demographics

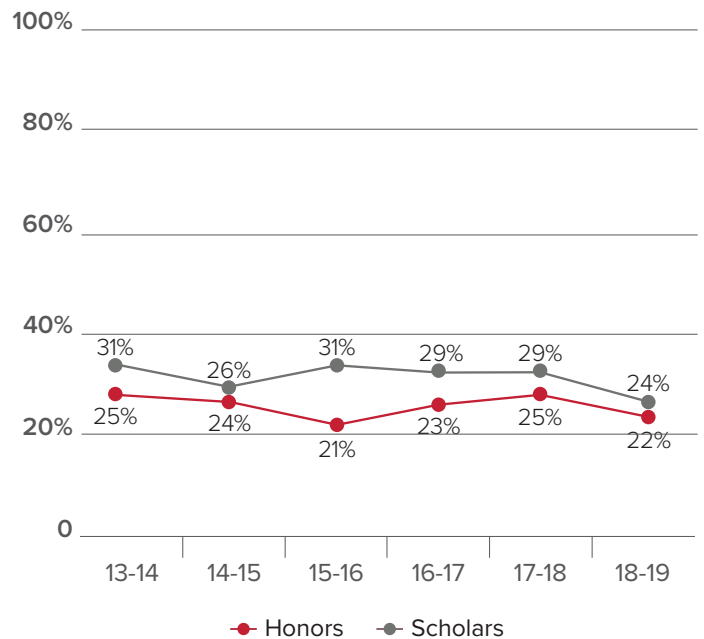
There are 2,801 second-year students participating in STEP during the 2018-2019 academic year. The following presents the trends in participation by demographic background.

Gender



*Autumn 2018 Columbus undergraduate population:
51.3% Male; 48.7% Female*

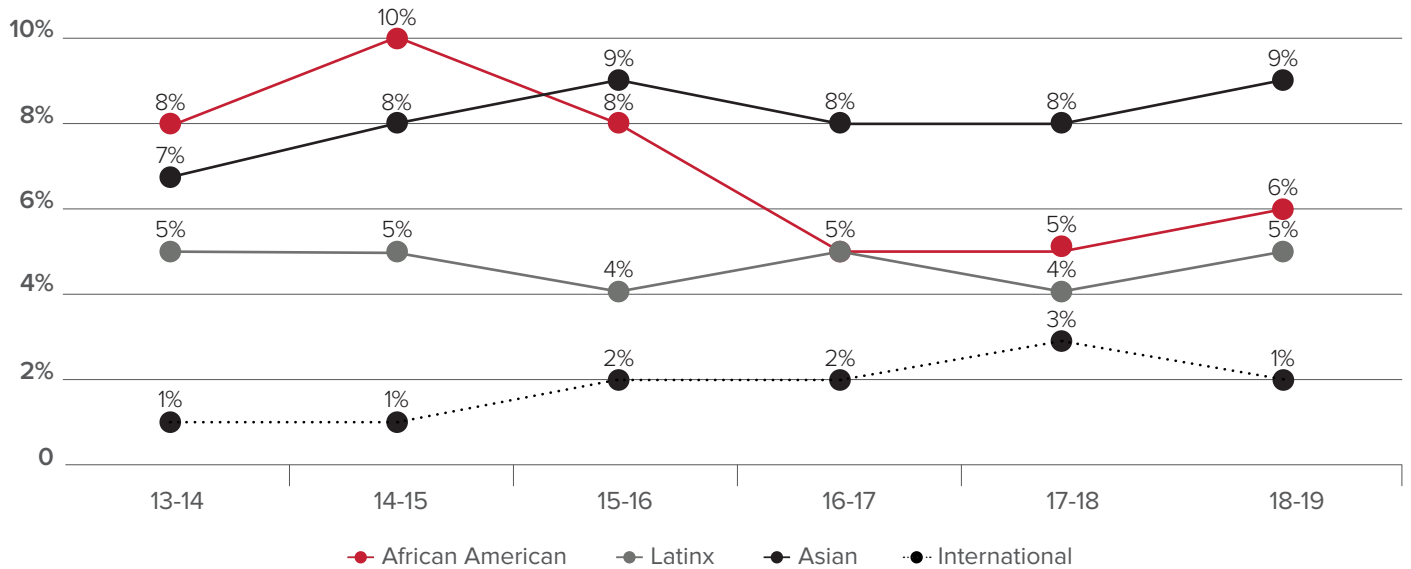
Honors/Scholars Status



*Autumn 2018 Columbus undergraduate:
9.7% Honors; 9.4% Scholars*

Demographics Continued

International Students & Racial/Ethnic Minorities



*Autumn 2018 Columbus undergraduate population:
6.3% African American; 4.4% Latinx; 7.1% Asian; 8.6% International*

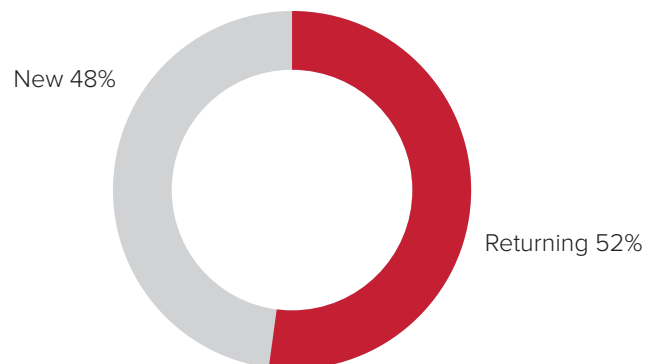
Faculty Mentors Demographics

STEP Faculty Mentors are comprised of individuals who are on the faculty of The Ohio State University according to University Faculty Rules.¹ On a case-by-case basis, non-faculty candidates can apply to serve as STEP Faculty Mentors if they either hold a terminal degree in their field, are active in the teaching mission of the university or bring a unique perspective or skill to the mentoring role.

The following is a profile of the 185 STEP Faculty Mentors participating during the 2018-2019 academic year. Among tenured and tenure-track faculty, 39% are assistant professors, 23% are associate professors and 39% are professors.

	%	n
Faculty		
Tenure/tenure-track	44%	82
Lecturer	31%	57
Clinical	8%	14
Emeritus	4%	7
Visiting	0.5%	1
Non-Faculty		
Post-doctoral scholars	0.5%	1
Other Positions	12%	23
Total	100%	185

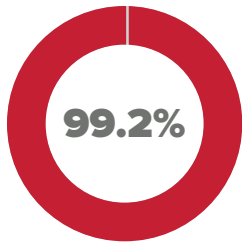
Returning v. New Mentors



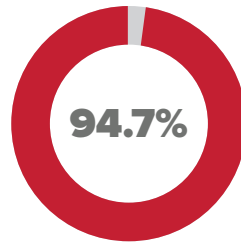
¹Chapter 3335-5-19, Faculty, Governance, and Committees.

Retention Rates

The following summarizes retention rates of students who participated in STEP during the 2017-2018 academic year compared to students who did not participate in STEP.²



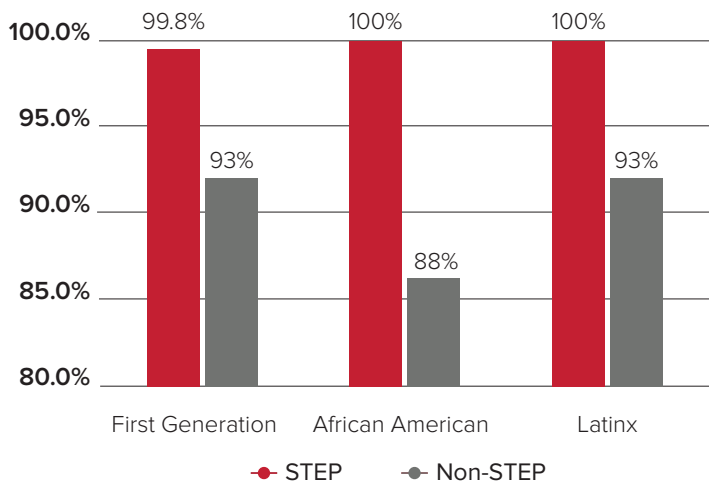
99.2% of students who participate in STEP persisted to their third year, compared to



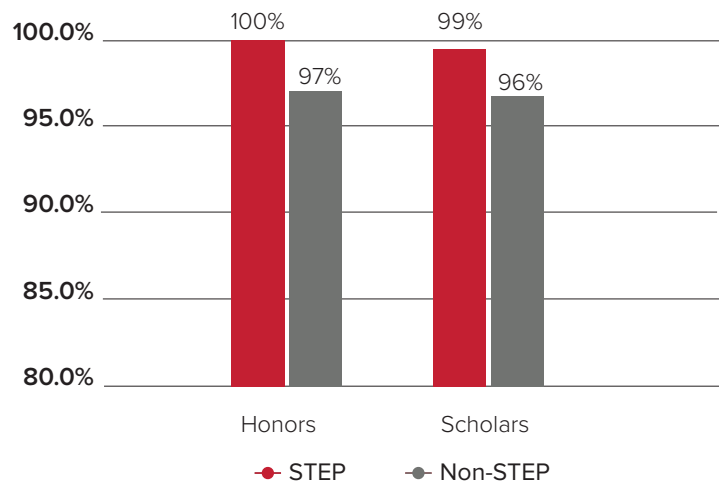
94.7% of students who do not participate in STEP; this is a statistically significant difference.

- First generation, African American and Latinx students who participated in STEP had statistically significantly higher retention rates than their peers who were not in STEP.
- Among students who participated in STEP, students who were not in Honors or Scholars had similar retention rates to Honors or Scholars students.

Second to Third Year Retention Rates



Second to Third Year Retention Rates



²Retention rates are calculated by examining the cohort of new first-year students on any campus of Ohio State during Autumn 2016 who persisted and were enrolled on the Columbus campus in their second year (Autumn 2017), and therefore eligible to participate in STEP (N = 7,445). Among students who started their second year on the Columbus campus, we calculate the percentage that returned for their third year in Autumn 2018.

Survey Results

During the 2017-2018 academic year, all students participating in STEP were surveyed about their experience in the program, as well as about their growth and development over the course of their second year. A randomly selected comparison group of non-STEP second-year students were sent an identical survey about their second year. The goal of this study was to evaluate STEP students' level of growth and development in comparison to a similar group of students who did not participate in STEP.

The total number of students who responded to both the autumn and spring surveys was 731. Among those students, 533 (72.9%) were in STEP and 198 (27.1%) were in the comparison group. Dependent sample t-tests and repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to evaluate change over time in students' growth and development.

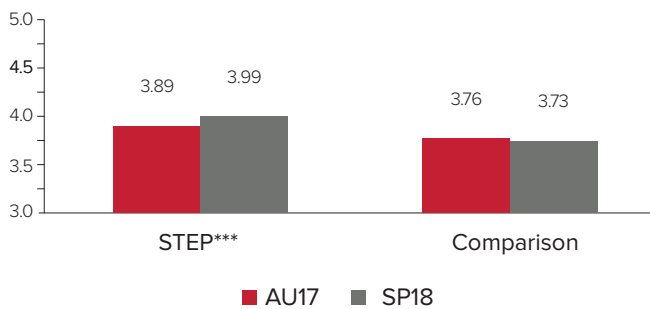
STEP students experienced statistically significant increases over the second year in:

- Perceived access to resources
- Faculty interactions
- Interpersonal communication
- Leadership confidence
- Career confidence
- Academic confidence

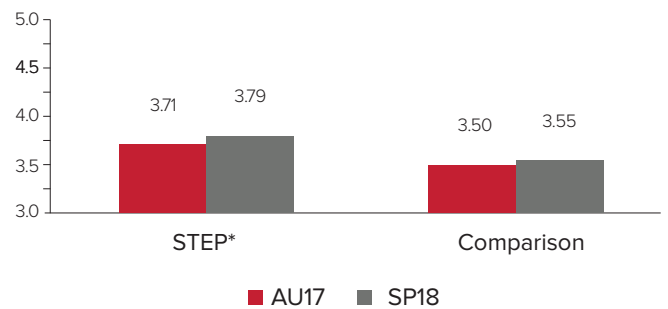
Non-STEP students experienced statistically significant declines in:

- Sense of belonging

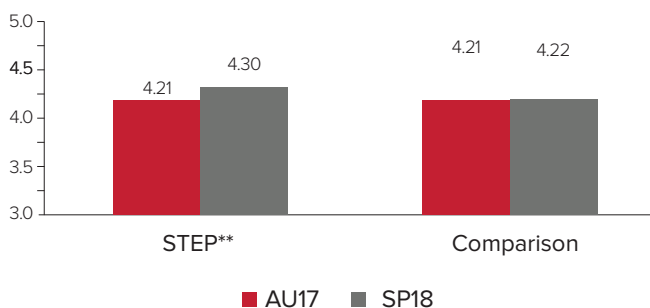
Access to Resources



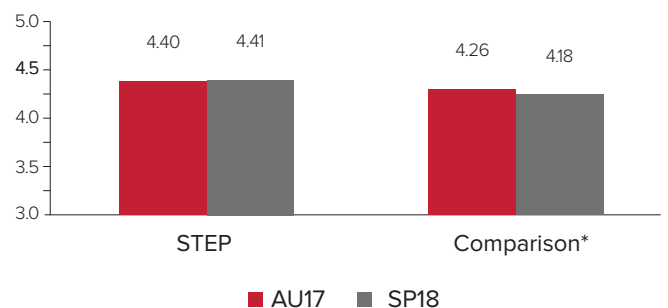
Faculty Interactions



Interpersonal Communication



Sense of Belonging



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

Percent Change Over Second Year in Confidence Levels in the Following

STEP	Non-STEP
Academic 1.5% ↑ **	Academic 1.5% ↓
Career 4.6% ↑ ***	Career 1.6% ↑
Leadership 1.9% ↑ ***	Leadership 2.0% ↑

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



Interview Results

During the 2016-2017 academic year, in-depth interviews were conducted with a random sample of STEP students to better understand their experiences with the program. Twelve semi-structured, hour-long interviews were conducted examining how and why students found their STEP experiences valuable and transformative. The research was designed to provide rich, detailed descriptions of students' development. Data were transcribed then coded for themes.

Throughout the interviews, students reflected on their experiences in STEP and were prompted to describe their thoughts on the learning and transformations they experienced throughout the program. Learning outcomes were then coded based on sub-themes as well as how they aligned with the three pillars of STEP: access, community and self-awareness.

The goal of the interview was to allow STEP participants to reflect on the program, their personal and professional growth and what parts of the program they believed led to that growth. Student responses were coded to detect self-identified learning outcomes and catalysts for that learning.

The following graphics highlight 1) key catalysts for learning and 2) the most frequently reported learning outcomes, which were coded to match the themes of the three STEP pillars: access, community and self-awareness.

"It also helped me to make some tough decisions regarding my career, regarding my project, so I really enjoyed that....it helped me see that that was the right decision for me and reaffirmed my choice."
-STEP Student

Key Themes from Interviews

Figure 1

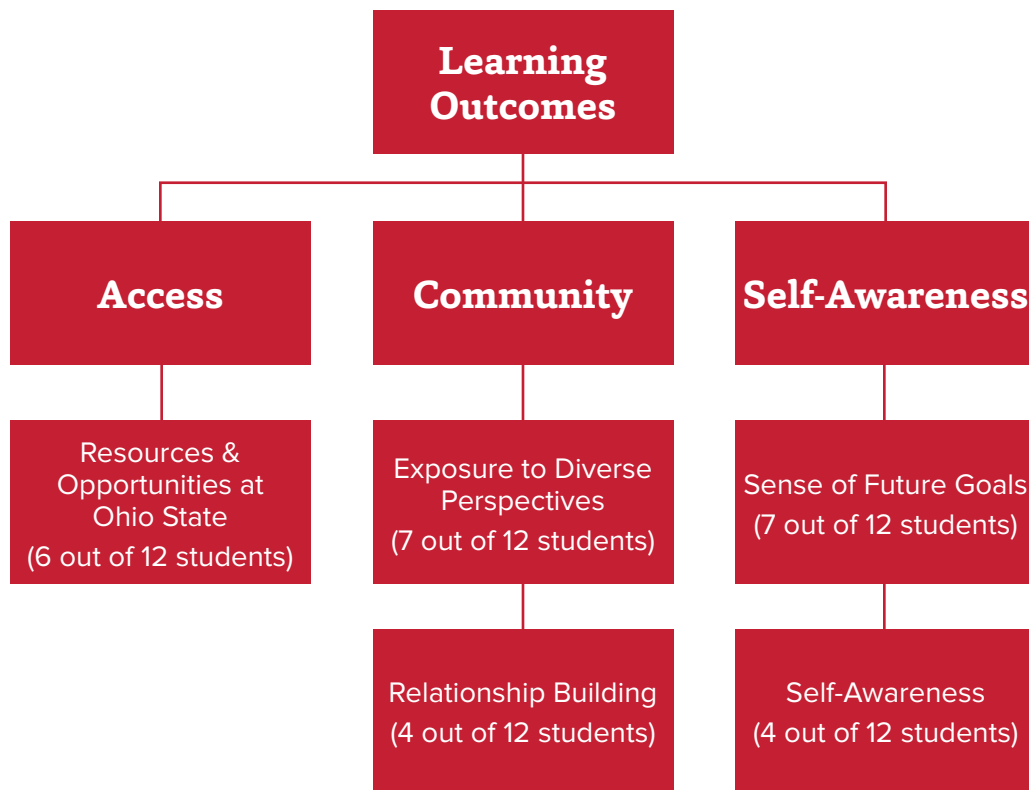
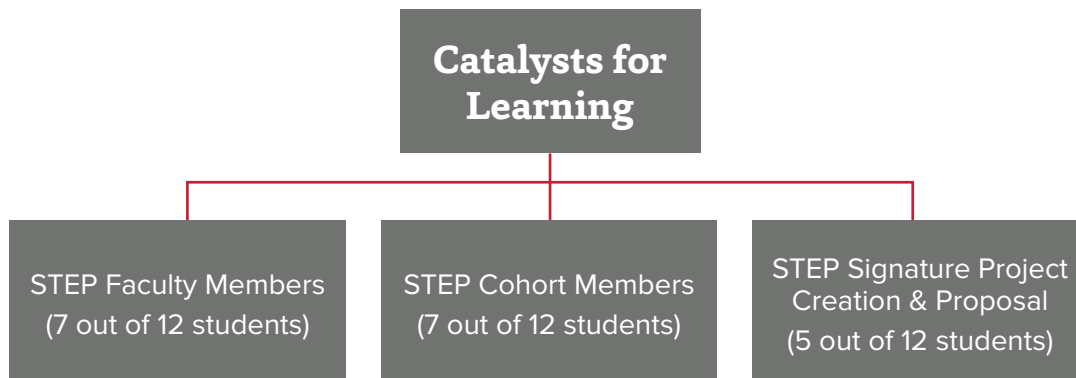


Figure 2



References

Hunter, M. S. (2010). *Helping sophomores succeed: Understanding and improving the second-year experience*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lemons, L.J., Douglas, R.R. (1987). A developmental perspective on the sophomore slump. *NAPSA Journal* 24(3), 15-19.

Schreiner, L.A., Pattengale, J. (2000). *Visible solutions for invisible students: Helping sophomores succeed*. (Monograph No. 31). Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.



What is STEP?

Ohio State's Second-year Transformational Experience Program (STEP) was developed as a continuation of the university's effort to redefine the student experience. STEP is designed to focus on student success and development and allows students the opportunity to engage in activities that cater to their individual interests and needs. Through interaction with faculty, students are able to develop tools for life and build essential network connections.



6 Areas of Education-Enriching Signature Projects

By fulfilling the program requirements, students are eligible to receive a fellowship of up to \$2,000 to use towards a STEP Signature Project they might otherwise not be able to do. The project areas are:

- 1. Creative and Artistic Endeavors
- 2. Internships
- 3. Leadership
- 4. Service-Learning and Community Service
- 5. Education Abroad
- 6. Undergraduate Research



185 FACULTY MENTORS



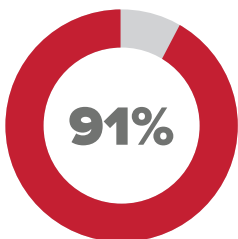
2,801 STEP STUDENTS



1:15 FACULTY MENTOR/STUDENT RATIO

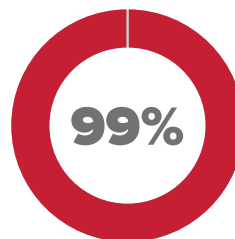
"{STEP}... encourages students to take advantage of opportunities and do things that they wouldn't have otherwise that really benefit the college experience, their education, their future careers."

-STEP Student



of Faculty Mentors agree that their role as a STEP mentor gave them a chance to make a difference in students' lives

(Average response, 2014-2018 STEP Faculty Mentor surveys)



of STEP students return for their third-year at Ohio State, compared to 94.7% of students not in STEP

(2017-2018 cohort)



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