

Results from annual Mount Mercy Longitudinal Study on Student Growth

2022–2023

To explore whether Mount Mercy students developed in the degree to which they are “living purposefully” (i.e., the Mount Mercy University goal “purposeful living”), data were collected from all incoming students new to the university during the 2022-2023 academic year. A total of 406 undergraduate students started their studies at Mount Mercy in the fall 2022 term. Purposeful living pretest data were collected from 277 students (68.2% of the entering class). Students were asked to complete the parallel purposeful living posttest at the end of the spring 2023 term. After eliminating students who withdrew from the university, a total of 133 students completed the posttest and student experiences survey (a Time 1 to Time 2 response rate of 48%).

Respondents decreased in their levels of purposeful living from their first to second year at the institution (4.12 to 3.82, respectively). Next, respondents rated the instruction they have received at Mount Mercy rather favorably (an overall score of 4.02/5 in response to the following statement: *The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent*). Students’ overall satisfaction with Mount Mercy declined slightly from 3.11/4 last year to 3.05/4 this year. Though slightly lower from the previous year, this finding provides support for the claim that Mount Mercy students are generally quite satisfied with their overall educational experience. This finding is especially important considering the linkages between satisfaction and a range of important student outcomes—including enhanced odds of persistence. Similar to last year, respondents indicated a relatively high level of satisfaction with the institution’s library services (4.15/5 last year to 3.89/5 this year). Though this reflects a slight decline from the previous year, the absolute estimate of 3.89 suggests students value the services they receive from the library staff.

Finally, results from multivariate analyses suggests that even after accounting for a variety of potential confounding influences, the following were positively associated with gains in purposeful living: satisfaction with library services, service learning, and volunteer experiences. The following were negatively associated with purposeful living: taking a portal class and living on campus.

Highlights from 2022–23	Notable patterns and examples
Students’ growth in the Mount Mercy goal of Purposeful Living was assessed.	There was a slight decline from the beginning to the end of this academic year in students’ scores on the purposeful living measure (4.12 to 3.82, respectively). Despite this decline, the following Mount Mercy educational experiences led to gains in this important measure: satisfaction with library services and college volunteer experiences. In contrast, the high-impact practice of taking a portal class and living on campus were negatively associated with this outcome.