



National Survey of Student Engagement

Executive Snapshot 2008

Western Carolina University

Dear Colleague:

This is a summary of some key findings from your institution's performance on the 2008 National Survey of Student Engagement. We hope you can use this information to stimulate discussion on your campus about how to improve the undergraduate experience at Western Carolina University.

Sincerely,
 Alexander C. McCormick
 Director, National Survey of Student Engagement

Are All Students at Western Carolina University Equally Engaged?

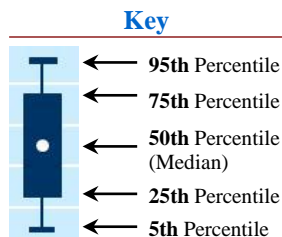
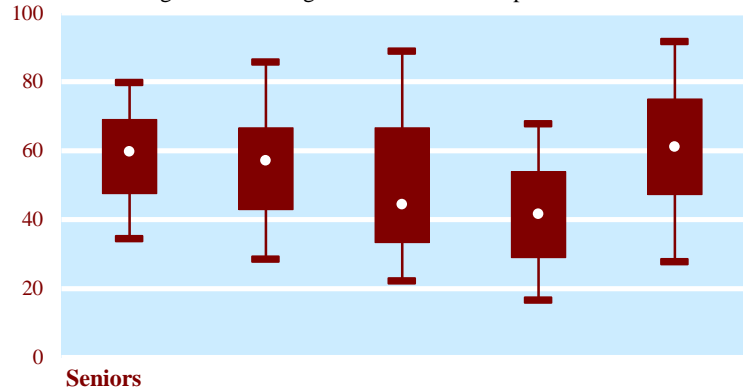
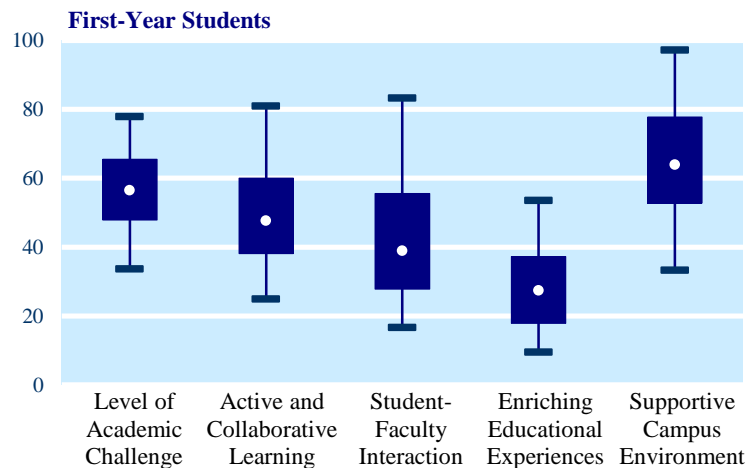
Quality in U.S. higher education is often considered an institutional attribute, as if one college offers a uniformly better or worse education than another. Yet, a robust finding from decades of research on college students holds that student experiences and outcomes are more varied among students *within* institutions than *between* institutions.

In this year's annual report NSSE urges institutions to "look within," calling attention to the need to examine variation in the student experience at your institution. Your (hypothetical) average student does not describe all students and groups on your campus.

The adjacent figures illustrate this phenomenon. We plotted your students' NSSE benchmark scores in a "box and whiskers" chart (see key). Here you can see the range and variation of your scores (whiskers), as well as where the mid-range or normal scores fell (box). Note the dispersion of your scores. The greater the range, the more varied the student experience is at your institution.

Improving the experience of your least engaged students may be the most effective way to raise your benchmark scores and improve your overall institutional quality. Even high-performing institutions have much to learn by examining variation in student engagement – by looking within.

Variation in NSSE Benchmark Scores by Class at Western Carolina University



The dot signifies the median – the score that divides all students' scores into two equal halves (means are reported on page 4). The box shows the middle 50% of your scores (from the 25th to 75th percentiles) and the whiskers show the range of scores excluding outliers (from the 5th to the 95th percentile).

NSSE 2008 Question Comparisons

By examining individual NSSE questions, you can better understand what contributes to your institution's overall benchmark scores. This section features the five questions on which your first-year and senior students scored the highest and the five questions on which they scored the lowest, relative to students at your first selected comparison group (listed in your *NSSE 2008 Selected Comparison Groups* report).

While these questions were chosen to represent the largest differences (in percentage points), they may not be the most important to your institutional mission or current program or policy goals. We encourage you to review your *NSSE Institutional Report 2008* for additional results of particular interest to your campus.

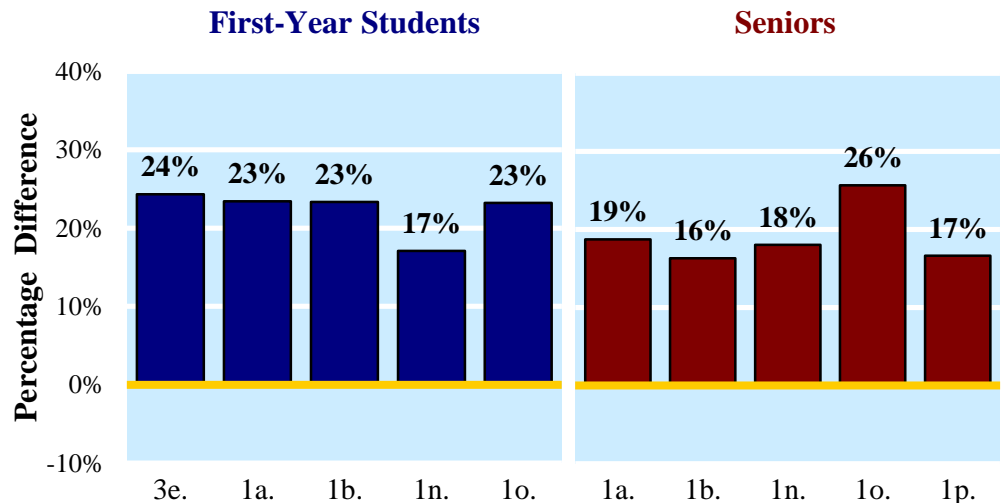
Highest Performing Areas

Comparison Groups

Question	Benchmark ¹	Percent of students who...	WCU	ADP	Selected Peers	NSSE 2008
First-Year Students						
3e.	LAC	Wrote more than 10 papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages	47%	23%	27%	31%
1a.	ACL	Asked questions/contributed to class discussions ²	76%	52%	59%	59%
1b.	ACL	Made a class presentation ²	58%	34%	36%	33%
1n.	SFI	Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor ²	63%	46%	53%	50%
1o.	SFI	Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor ²	53%	30%	34%	32%
Seniors						
1a.	ACL	Asked questions/contributed to class discussions ²	84%	65%	73%	71%
1b.	ACL	Made a class presentation ²	72%	56%	64%	61%
1n.	SFI	Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor ²	76%	58%	64%	59%
1o.	SFI	Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor ²	60%	35%	47%	42%
1p.	SFI	Discussed ideas from classes with faculty outside of class ²	42%	26%	31%	29%

The adjacent figure, based on the table above, displays the questions on which your students compare most favorably with those in your first selected comparison group named:

ADP





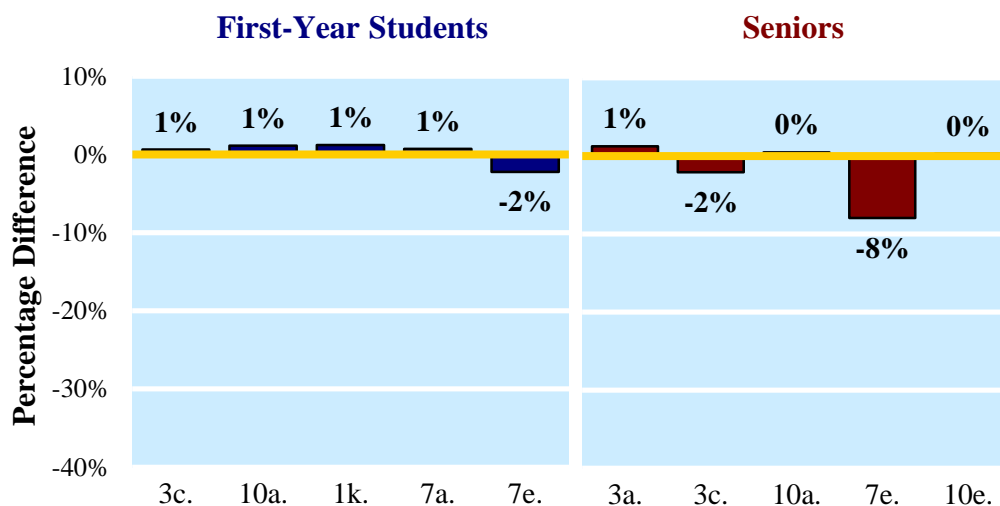
Lowest Performing Areas

Comparison Groups

Ques- tion	Bench- mark ¹	Percent of students who...	WCU	ADP	Selected Peers	NSSE 2008
First-Year Students						
3c.	LAC	Wrote at least one paper or report of 20 pages or more	16%	15%	15%	19%
10a.	LAC	Said the institution emphasizes studying and academic work ⁴	82%	81%	81%	81%
1k.	ACL	Did a community-based project as part of a regular course ²	19%	18%	14%	14%
7a.	EEE	Did a practicum, internship, field experience, clinical assignment	9%	8%	7%	8%
7e.	EEE	Completed foreign language coursework	13%	15%	14%	22%
Seniors						
3a.	LAC	Read more than 10 assigned books or book-length packs of readings	27%	26%	31%	35%
3c.	LAC	Wrote at least one paper or report of 20 pages or more	44%	46%	47%	50%
10a.	LAC	Said the institution emphasizes studying and academic work ⁴	79%	79%	80%	81%
7e.	EEE	Completed foreign language coursework	30%	38%	32%	41%
10e.	SCE	Said the institution provides substantial support for students' social needs ⁴	37%	37%	39%	36%

The adjacent figure, based on the table above, displays the questions on which your students compared least favorably with those in your first selected comparison group named:

ADP



Notes

¹ LAC=Level of Academic Challenge; ACL=Active and Collaborative Learning; SFI=Student-Faculty Interaction; EEE=Enriching Educational Experiences; SCE=Supportive Campus Environment

² Combination of students responding 'very often' or 'often'

³ Rated at least 5 on a 7-point scale

⁴ Combination of students responding 'very much' or 'quite a bit'

Respondent Characteristics

The adjacent table displays your number of respondents, response rate, and sampling error by class. Sampling error is an estimate of the margin by which the true percentage of your students may differ from the reported percentage on a given item (because not all of your students completed surveys).

	N	Resp. Rate	Sampling Error
First-Year Students	217	20%	+/-6%
Seniors	537	29%	+/-3.6%

Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice

To represent the multi-dimensional nature of student engagement, NSSE developed five indicators of effective educational practice. These "benchmarks" are created from clusters of NSSE questions that best represent these practices.

The table below summarizes key benchmark results for your institution and institutions in your selected comparison groups. The '+' symbol indicates that your institution's score is higher than the respective comparison group ($p < .05$), the '-' symbol indicates a score lower than the comparison group, and a blank space indicates no significant difference. For additional details, review your *NSSE 2008 Benchmark Comparisons* report.

		Comparison Groups			
		WCU	ADP	Selected Peers	NSSE 2008
<i>Class</i>					
Level of Academic Challenge (LAC)					
<i>How challenging is your institution's intellectual and creative work?</i>	First-Year	56	+	+	+
	Senior	58	+	+	+
Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL)					
<i>Are your students actively involved in their learning, individually and working with others?</i>	First-Year	50	+	+	+
	Senior	56	+	+	+
Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)					
<i>Do your students work with faculty members inside and outside the classroom?</i>	First-Year	44	+	+	+
	Senior	50	+	+	+
Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE)					
<i>Do your students take advantage of complementary learning opportunities?</i>	First-Year	29	+	+	
	Senior	42	+	+	
Supportive Campus Environment (SCE)					
<i>Do your students feel the institution is committed to their success?</i>	First-Year	64	+		+
	Senior	61	+		+

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For More Information

A comprehensive summary of all results is contained in your institutional report, which we sent in August to Melissa Canady Wargo, Office of Assessment. Reports used in this Executive Snapshot included the: NSSE 2008 Mean Comparisons, Frequency Distributions, Benchmark Comparisons, and Respondent Characteristics.



National Survey of Student Engagement

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