

SUMMARY OF THE 2003 & 2004 NATIONAL SURVEYS OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT FOR UW-LA CROSSE SEPTEMBER, 2004¹

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) assesses college students' involvement in curricular activities that are associated with academic achievement. The NSSE is based on extensive research that shows that "the time and energy college students devote to educationally purposeful activities is the single best predictor of their learning and personal development." The survey includes items "that are known to be related to important college outcomes" and encompasses a broad range of activities from such things as the number of papers student write and participation in class discussions to their involvement in experiential learning and extracurricular activities. The [NSSE](#)² is a national survey; therefore UW-L can compare performance of its students to comparable institutions. Additionally, in 2004, the UW-System required participation by all campuses and included some additional questions. Therefore, we can compare responses of students here at UW-L with other UW-System schools.

WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION DOES THE NSSE PROVIDE?

The NSSE comprises approximately 80 items about college life, plus several demographic information items. In general, items tend to form a smaller number of clusters. Five specific clusters, or *benchmarks*, are identified by the NSSE. These benchmarks include:

- **Level of Academic Challenge**: time spent preparing for class; amount of reading and writing; institutional expectations for academic performance
- **Active and Collaborative Learning**: participation in class; working collaboratively with other students inside and outside of class; tutoring; participating in a community-based project
- **Student-Faculty Interaction**: talking with a faculty member about class material, career plans, ideas; working with a faculty member on a committee or research; receiving prompt feedback from an instructor
- **Enriching Educational Experiences**: participation in co-curricular activities, practica, internships, community service, volunteer work, independent study, international education; engaging in conversations with students with different ethnicities, religious beliefs, values and a campus environment encouraging such contact
- **Supportive Campus Environment**: the extent to which students feel the university is supportive of their academic, personal, and social needs; quality of relationships with other students, faculty members, and administration

In addition to the five benchmarks, three items measure *general satisfaction* with experiences at the university. These items are:

- Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your institution?
- How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?
- If you could start over again, would you go to the *same institution* you are now attending?

HOW DOES UW-L COMPARE TO OTHER SIMILAR, MASTERS LEVEL, INSTITUTIONS?

Percentile Ranks of 2003^a UW-L Benchmark Scores

Benchmark	UW-L Freshmen	UW-L Seniors
Level of Academic Challenge	27	58
Active and Collaborative Learning	31	66
Student-Faculty Interaction	10	46
Enriching Educational Experiences	27	54
Supportive Campus Environment	42	42

^a 2004 benchmark scores were unavailable at the time of this report.

Percentile Ranks of General Satisfaction with University

Question	2003		2004	
	Freshmen	Seniors	Freshmen	Seniors
Satisfaction with advising	45	46	45	45
Evaluation of entire educational experience	56	56	57	54
Would attend the same institution	60	61	59	60

HOW DO SUBGROUPS OF UW-L STUDENTS COMPARE TO EACH OTHER?

In general, student gender, transfer status, enrollment status (full time vs. less than full time) and declared major (declared vs. undeclared major) have little to no relationship with any of the five benchmark scores or the three general satisfaction questions. Classification (freshmen vs. seniors) and average grade received relate to the benchmark scores, but not to the general satisfaction questions. Specifically, freshmen have lower scores than seniors on Level of Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, and Enriching Educational Experiences. Active and Collaborative learning and Student-Faculty Interaction show the greatest differences (see italicized rows in table below). Classification does not relate to scores on Supportive Campus Environment (see table below). As expected, those students who receive higher grades generally report higher levels of endorsement on each of the five benchmarks. The differences in benchmark scores among students who receive higher versus lower grades are so small, however, that while they are statistically significant, they have very little practical significance.

Benchmark	2003			2004		
	Freshmen ^a	Seniors	Effect Size ^b	Freshmen	Seniors	Effect Size
Level of Academic Challenge	2.53	2.69	.04	2.52	2.09	.04
<i>Active and Collaborative Learning</i>	2.27	2.68	.19	2.26	2.63	.15
<i>Student-Faculty Interaction</i>	2.15	2.69	.19	2.21	2.78	.18
Enriching Educational Experiences	3.26	3.51	.07	3.49	3.92	.13
Supportive Campus Environment	2.75	2.70	.00	2.73	2.65	.00

^a Scores are averages based on a 4 point scale on which higher scores indicate higher levels of endorsement.

^b Effect size is a measure of the *practical* significance of the differences in benchmark scores dependent upon classification. In general, an effect size of .20 is considered small, .50 is medium, and .80 is large.

HOW CAN THE NSSE RESULTS BE USED?

The NSSE assesses educational quality in terms of how student engage in educationally purposeful activities and how the university allocates its resources, organizes curricula and other learning opportunities to get students to participate in educationally meaningful activities. In addition to the type of information presented in this *preliminary* report, results could be

- useful in preparing for accreditation reviews.
- reported for particular colleges, or majors.
- used to identify relative strengths and weaknesses at UW-L.
- used to assess student growth and development from the first year to the senior year.
- used to monitor campus progress over time.
- used to help faculty, staff, administrators and students better understand and improve the quality of education.

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² For more information about the College Student Report and the NSSE, visit the NSSE web page at <http://www.iub.edu/~nsse/>