

SUMMARY OF THE 2008 NATIONAL SURVEYS OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT FOR UW-LA CROSSE¹

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 [NSSE²](#) 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. The NSSE identifies five clusters, or *benchmarks*.

- **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.

- 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 INSTITUTIONS?

Benchmark Scores:

Both UW-L first-year students and seniors tend to score similarly to their peers at other UW System schools, as well as to students attending other Master's level institutions on most of the benchmark scores. Even amongst means that are statistically significantly different, the practical significance is small enough to suggest the actual difference does result in a real impact in student experience. The exceptions among first-year students are Level of Academic Challenge and Student-Faculty Interaction scores. UW-L First-year students rate the Level of Academic Challenge significantly higher than students at other UW System schools. Additionally, consistent with previous years, UW-L first-year students score significantly lower on Student-Faculty Interaction than their peers at other Master's level institutions. UW-L Seniors score significantly higher than their peers at other Master's level institutions on Enriching Educational Experiences. Additionally, UW-L students score higher on Supportive Campus Environment than their peers at other UW System schools as well as their peers at other Master's level institutions.

First-year students

Benchmark	UW-L	UW System		Carnegie Peers	
	Mean ^a	Mean	Effect Size ^b	Mean	Effect Size
Level of Academic Challenge	52.2	49.3**	.24	51.8	
Active and Collaborative Learning	40.5	38.9**	.11	42.3***	-.11
Student-Faculty Interaction	28.3	31.3***	-.18	34.1***	-.31
Enriching Educational Experiences	24.8	22.9***	.16	26.4***	-.12
Supportive Campus Environment	61.0	59.4*	.09	60.3	

Seniors

Benchmark	UW-L	UW System		Carnegie Peers	
	Mean	Mean	Effect Size	Mean	Effect Size
Level of Academic Challenge	56.9	54.6***	.16	56.1	
Active and Collaborative Learning	53.0	51.9*	.07	51.3***	.10
Student-Faculty Interaction	43.1	41.7*	.07	41.4**	.10
Enriching Educational Experiences	41.3	39.0***	.14	37.7***	.20
Supportive Campus Environment	63.0	57.6***	.30	57.3***	.29

^a Scores are averages based on a 100 point scale on which higher scores indicate higher levels of endorsement. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

^b Effect size indicates “practical significance” of the mean difference. In practice, an effect size of .2 is considered small, .5 moderate, and .8 large. Effect sizes below .2 generally do not suggest means are practically significant.

General Satisfaction:

Both UW-L first-year students and seniors score significantly above average on two of the three general satisfaction questions in comparison to their peers both at UW System and at other Master’s level institutions.

First-year students

Question	UW-L	UW System		Carnegie Peers	
	Mean ^a	Mean	Effect Size ^b	Mean	Effect Size
Satisfaction with advising	3.04	3.04		2.96**	.09
Evaluation of entire educational experience	3.31	3.14***	.27	3.14**	.24
Would attend the same institution	3.35	3.20***	.18	3.17***	.21

Seniors

Question	UW-L	UW System		Carnegie Peers	
	Mean	Mean	Effect Size	Mean	Effect Size
Satisfaction with advising	2.94	2.81***	.15	2.81***	.14
Evaluation of entire educational experience	3.42	3.19***	.32	3.14***	.37
Would attend the same institution	3.45	3.20***	.31	3.14***	.35

^a Scores are averages based on a 4 point scale on which higher scores indicate higher levels of endorsement. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

^b Effect size indicates “practical significance” of the mean difference. In practice, an effect size of .2 is considered small, .5 moderate, and .8 large. Effect sizes below .2 generally do not suggest means are practically significant.

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 (first-year students vs. seniors) relates to the benchmark scores, as well as the general satisfaction questions. Specifically, first-year students have lower scores than seniors on Level of Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, and Enriching Educational Experiences. Enriching Educational Experiences and Student-Faculty Interaction show the greatest differences. Classification does not relate to scores on Supportive Campus Environment (see table below). First-year students actually report higher levels of satisfaction with academic advising than do seniors, although the practical significance of the difference is very small. Seniors report higher levels of satisfaction with their entire educational experience and are more likely to indicate they would attend the same institution than first-year students. While the difference in the evaluation of the entire educational experience is practically significant, the difference in likelihood of attending the same institution is very small.

Benchmark	First-year students ^a	Seniors	Significance ^b	Effect Size ^c
Level of Academic Challenge	52.2	56.9	***	.19
Active and Collaborative Learning	40.5	53.0	***	.40
Student-Faculty Interaction	28.3	43.1	***	.40
Enriching Educational Experiences	24.8	41.3	***	.51
Supportive Campus Environment	61.0	63.0	**	.07

^a Scores are averages based on a 100 point scale on which higher scores indicate higher levels of endorsement.

^b * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$.

^c 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.

Question	First-year students ^a	Seniors	Significance ^b	Effect Size ^c
Satisfaction with advising	3.04	2.94	*	.05
Evaluation of entire educational experience	3.31	3.42	***	.10
Would attend the same institution	3.35	3.45	**	.08

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

^b * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

^c Effect size indicates “practical significance” of the mean difference. In practice, an effect size of .2 is considered small, .5 moderate, and .8 large. Effect sizes below .2 generally do not suggest means are practically significant.

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 form 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://nsse.iub.edu/index.cfm>