Assessment

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) assesses the extent to which first-year and senior students engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development. A key purpose of NSSE is to provide data to universities for improving undergraduate education and to refocus conversations about undergraduate quality to what matters most. NSSE is administered by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research.

In February 2005, a random sample of 4,341 OSU freshmen and seniors were invited to participate in the NSSE, and 1,639 students completed the survey (38% response rate). This summary shows selected results, with comparisons of responses from OSU, 13 selected peer institutions, and 52 other doctoral / research-extensive institutions (see list on page 6). Sample sizes were 797 first year students and 842 seniors from OSU, 1,680 first year students and 1,730 seniors from 13 selected peer institutions, and 6,654 first year students and 6,598 seniors from 52 other doctoral / research-extensive institutions. Responses to survey items with larger mean differences than would be expected by chance alone are noted with one, two, or three asterisks (*), referring to three significance levels (.05, .01, and .001).

Academic and Intellectual Experiences

Seniors and first time students were asked how often they participated in various academic or intellectual activities during the current school year. Responses were given on a 4-point scale ranging from ‘never’ to ‘very often.’ The following graphs show the percent of seniors and first year students who responded ‘often’ or ‘very often.’

Frequent Academic Activities - Seniors

- Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources
- Used email to communicate with an instructor
- Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments
- Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
- Received prompt feedback from faculty on academic performance (written or oral)
- Used an electronic medium (list-serv, Internet, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment
- Came to class without completing readings or assignments
- Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, student life activities)
### Frequent Academic Activities - First-Year Students

- Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources
- Used email to communicate with an instructor
- Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments
- Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
- Received prompt feedback from faculty on academic performance (written or oral)
- Used an electronic medium (list-serv, Internet, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment
- Came to class without completing readings or assignments
- Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, student life activities)

**Enriching Educational Experiences**

The following graph shows the percent of seniors who indicated they had participated in these experiences before graduating.

- Community service / volunteer work
- Practicum, internship, field experience
- Foreign language
- Culminating senior experience
- Research with faculty member
- Independent study / self-designed major
- Study abroad
The NSSE National Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice focus on five clusters of activities that research studies show are linked to desired college outcomes. They are: level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interactions, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environment.

**Level of Academic Challenge**

- For first-year students, OSU’s ‘Level of Academic Challenge’ benchmark score is similar to score of Selected Peer institutions, but significantly lower than Doctoral Extensive institutions.

- For seniors, OSU’s benchmark score is significantly lower than the score of Selected Peers and Doctoral Extensive institutions.

**Benchmark description**

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Colleges and universities promote high levels of student achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance.

**Examples of activities and conditions included:**
- Preparing for class
- Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings
- Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more; number of written papers or reports of between five and 19 pages; and number of written papers or reports of fewer than five pages
- Coursework emphasizing analysis of the basic elements of an idea, experience or theory
- Coursework emphasizing the making of judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods
- Working harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor’s standards or expectations

**Active and Collaborative Learning**

- For first-year students, OSU’s ‘Active and Collaborative Learning’ benchmark score is significantly lower than the score of both Selected Peers and Doctoral Extensive institutions.

- For seniors, OSU’s benchmark score is similar to that of Selected Peers, and significantly higher than that of Doctoral Extensive institutions.

**Benchmark description**

Students learn more when they are intensely involved in their education and asked to think about what they are learning in different settings. Collaborating with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material prepares students for the messy, unscripted problems they will encounter daily during and after college.

**Examples of activities and conditions included:**
- Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
- Made a class presentation
- Worked with other students on projects during class
- Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments
- Tutored or taught other students
- Participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, coworkers, etc.)

**Student-Faculty Interactions**

- For first-year students, OSU’s ‘Student-Faculty Interactions’ benchmark score is significantly higher than scores of both Selected Peers and Doctoral Extensive institutions.

- For seniors, OSU’s benchmark score is similar to scores of both Selected Peers and Doctoral Extensive institutions.

**Benchmark description**

Students learn first-hand how experts think about and solve practical problems by interacting with faculty members inside and outside the classroom. As a result, their teachers become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, life-long learning.

**Examples of activities and conditions included:**
- Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor
- Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class
- Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student-life activities, etc.)
- Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance (written or oral)
- Worked with a faculty member on a research project outside of course or program requirements
Benchmark Comparisons (continued)

Adjusting the Benchmark Scores for Comparison Year-to-Year

In 2004, changes were made in the process for calculating the NSSE benchmarks of effective educational practice.

Benchmark Recalculation – Oklahoma State University – NSSE 2002 and 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmark</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>NSSE 2002</th>
<th>NSSE 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of Academic Challenge</td>
<td>FY</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active and Collaborative Learning</td>
<td>FY</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Faculty Interaction</td>
<td>FY</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive Campus Environment</td>
<td>FY</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Due to changes in the response set for survey items that comprise the Enriching Educational Experiences benchmark, it is not possible to compare results to earlier years, hence its omission from the above table.
How do students spend their time?

Studying: In preparation for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, etc.), OSU seniors preparation was similar to peer institutions while OSU freshmen preparation was significantly less.

Working On / Off Campus: The amount of time working on campus was similar for both OSU seniors and OSU freshmen in comparison to peer institutions. However, the amount of time working off campus was significantly more for both OSU seniors and OSU freshmen when compared to peer institutions.

Caring for Dependents: OSU freshmen provided significantly more care for dependents living with them compared to peer institutions, and the amount of time for OSU seniors was similar to peer institutions.

Relaxing & Socializing: OSU freshmen spent significantly less time relaxing and socializing compared to peer institutions, but the amount of time was similar for OSU seniors and peer institutions.

Reading and Writing Assignments

Percent of seniors who indicated they had 'five or more' of the indicated assignments in courses during the current year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>OSU</th>
<th>Peers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assigned textbooks, books or book-length reading packs</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>70%***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written papers or reports fewer than 5 pages in length</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>65%**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages in length</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>43%***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coursework Emphasis

Percent of seniors who indicated their coursework during the current year emphasized these mental activities ‘quite a bit’ or ‘very much’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>OSU</th>
<th>Peers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing basic elements of an idea, experience or theory</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying theories, concepts to practical problems or new solutions</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesizing, organizing ideas, information, experiences</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorizing facts, ideas or methods</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making judgments about the value of information</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Academic Advising

Sixty-eight percent of OSU seniors and 79% of OSU freshmen rated their academic advising as ‘good’ or ‘excellent;’ overall, OSU students rated their advising significantly higher than students at other doctoral institutions.
**Diversity-Related Experiences**

Following are responses to several survey items related to students’ experiences with diversity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic and Intellectual Experiences</th>
<th>First Year</th>
<th>Seniors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tried to better understand someone else’s views by imagining how an issue looks from his / her perspective</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had serious conversations with students who differ from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversity in the Institutional Environment</th>
<th>First Year</th>
<th>Seniors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does your institution emphasize the encouragement of contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Selected Peer Institutions in OSU's comparison group:**
- Clemson University
- Colorado State University
- Iowa State University
- Mississippi State University
- Oregon State University
- Selected Peer Institutions in OSU's comparison group:
  - Clemson University
  - Colorado State University
  - Iowa State University
  - Mississippi State University
  - Oregon State University
  - Selected Peer Institutions in OSU's comparison group:
    - Brigham Young University
    - Case Western Reserve University
    - Catholic University of America
    - Clemson University
    - Colorado State University
    - Florida State University
    - Georgia Institute of Technology
    - Georgia State University
    - Indiana University – Bloomington
    - Iowa State University
    - Kent State University
    - Loyola University Chicago
    - Mississippi State University
    - Selected Peer Institutions in OSU's comparison group:
      - Brigham Young University
      - Case Western Reserve University
      - Catholic University of America
      - Clemson University
      - Colorado State University
      - Florida State University
      - Georgia Institute of Technology
      - Georgia State University
      - Indiana University – Bloomington
      - Iowa State University
      - Kent State University
      - Loyola University Chicago
      - Mississippi State University

The information in this brochure is reproduced from the NSSE 2005 Annual Report and the OSU NSSE Institutional Reports. More information about the NSSE or the statistical development of the benchmark scores is available at http://nsse.iub.edu. For more information about OSU’s participation in the NSSE, copies of the full OSU report (including college-level summaries), or additional copies of this summary, contact the Office of University Assessment and Testing (405-744-6687, pam.bowers@okstate.edu).