NSSE Benchmark Report
November 2005

University of Nevada-Reno

National Survey of Student Engagement
Guide to Your Benchmark Report

Statistical Significance
Benchmarks with mean differences that are larger than would be expected by chance alone are noted with one, two, or three asterisks, denoting one of three significance levels (p<.05, p<.01, and p<.001). The smaller the significance level, the smaller the likelihood that the difference is due to chance. Please note that statistical significance does not guarantee that the result is substantive or important. Large sample sizes (like those seen with NSSE data) tend to produce more statistically significant results even though the magnitude of mean differences may be inconsequential.

Effect Size
Effect size indicates the "practical significance" of the mean difference. It is calculated by dividing the mean difference by the standard deviation of the group with which the institution is being compared (selected peers, Carnegie type, or 2005 national norm). In practice, an effect size of .2 is often considered small, .5 moderate, and .8 large. A positive sign indicates that your institution's mean was greater, thus showing an affirmative result for the institution. A negative sign indicates the institution lags behind the comparison group. Look for patterns of effect sizes that point to areas of student or institutional performance that warrant attention.

Bar Charts
A visual display of first-year and senior mean benchmark scores for your institution and three reference groups.
Level of Academic Challenge

Benchmark Mean Comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>U of Nevada Mean</th>
<th>Selected Peers Mean</th>
<th>U of Nevada Effect Size a</th>
<th>Selected Peers Effect Size a</th>
<th>Doc-Ext Effect Size a</th>
<th>NSSE 2005 Effect Size a</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>54.6</td>
<td>*** .22</td>
<td>*** .19</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>.08</td>
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</table>

First-Year Seniors

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.

- Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, etc. related to academic program)
- 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 5 and 19 pages; and number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages
- Coursework emphasizing analysis of the basic elements of an idea, experience or theory
- Coursework emphasizing synthesis and organizing of ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships
- Coursework emphasizing the making of judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods
- Coursework emphasizing application of theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
- Working harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations
- Campus environment emphasizing time studying and on academic work

\* p<.05  \** p<.01  \*** p<.001 (2-tailed).

Effect size = mean difference divided by comparison group standard deviation.
Active and Collaborative Learning

Benchmark Mean Comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>U of Nevada</th>
<th>Selected Peers</th>
<th>Doc-Ext</th>
<th>NSSE 2005</th>
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<td>Effect</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sig ^a</td>
<td>Size ^b</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Sig ^a</td>
<td>Size ^b</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Sig ^a</td>
<td>Size ^b</td>
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</table>

First-Year

Seniors

Active and Collaborative Learning Items

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.

- 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, co-workers, etc.)

\[ a \, * \, p<.05 \quad ** \, p<.01 \quad *** \, p<.001 \quad (2\text{-}tailed). \]

\[ b \, \text{Effect size} = \frac{\text{mean difference}}{\text{comparison group standard deviation}}. \]
Student-Faculty Interaction

Benchmark Mean Comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>U of Nevada</th>
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<th>Doc-Ext</th>
<th>NSSE 2005</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td>Mean</td>
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Student-Faculty Interaction Items

Students learn firsthand 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.

- 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

** Notes **

a * p<.05 ** p<.01 ***p<.001 (2-tailed).

b Effect size = mean difference divided by comparison group standard deviation.
Enriching Educational Experiences

Benchmark Mean Comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>U of Nevada</th>
<th>Selected Peers</th>
<th>Doc-Ext</th>
<th>NSSE 2005</th>
</tr>
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Enriching Educational Experiences Items

Complementary learning opportunities in and out of class augment academic programs. Diversity experiences teach students valuable things about themselves and others. Technology facilitates collaboration between peers and instructors. Internships, community service, and senior capstone courses provide opportunities to integrate and apply knowledge.

- Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, publications, student government, sports, etc.)
- Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment
- Community service or volunteer work
- Foreign language coursework & study abroad
- Independent study or self-designed major
- Culminating senior experience (comprehensive exam, capstone course, thesis, project, etc.)
- Serious conversations with students of different religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values
- Serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity
- Using electronic technology to discuss or complete an assignment
- Campus environment encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds
- Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together

a * p<.05  ** p<.01  ***p<.001 (2-tailed)
b Effect size = mean difference divided by comparison group standard deviation.
Supportive Campus Environment

**Benchmark Mean Comparisons**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>U of Nevada</th>
<th>Selected Peers</th>
<th>Doc-Ext</th>
<th>NSSE 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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**Supportive Campus Environment Items**

Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relations among different groups on campus.

- Campus environment provides the support you need to help you succeed academically
- Campus environment helps you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
- Campus environment provides the support you need to thrive socially
- Quality of relationships with other students
- Quality of relationships with faculty members
- Quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices

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*a p<.05  ** p<.01  ***p<.001 (2-tailed).*

*b Effect size = mean difference divided by comparison group standard deviation.*
### NSSE 2005 Benchmark Report
Comparisons with Highly Engaging Institutions
University of Nevada-Reno

#### U of Nevada compared with

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-Year</th>
<th>U of Nevada</th>
<th>NSSE 2005 Top 50%</th>
<th>NSSE 2005 Top 10%</th>
<th>Level of Academic Challenge</th>
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<tr>
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<th>Level of Academic Challenge</th>
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<td>LAC</td>
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<td>67.0 *** -9.5</td>
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Legend
- U of Nevada
- Top 50%
- Top 10%

This display compares your students with those attending schools that scored in the top 50% and top 10% of all NSSE 2005 institutions on the benchmark.

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**Active and Collaborative Learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-Year</th>
<th>Senior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>59.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>55.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>59.5</td>
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</table>

**Student-Faculty Interaction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-Year</th>
<th>Senior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>49.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>56.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.4</td>
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</tbody>
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**Enriching Educational Experiences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-Year</th>
<th>Senior</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26.7</td>
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<td>30.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>55.9</td>
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**Supportive Campus Environment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-Year</th>
<th>Senior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>56.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>69.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>70.2</td>
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*a* p<.05  **p<.01  ***p<.001 (2-tailed).

b Effect size = mean difference divided by comparison group standard deviation.
## First-Year Students

### Mean Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Academic Challenge</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
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### Distribution Statistics

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<tr>
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### Active and Collaborative Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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<th>SE</th>
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### Student-Faculty Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Academic Challenge</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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### Enriching Educational Experiences

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### Supportive Campus Environment

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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<td>17.3</td>
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<td>64.6</td>
</tr>
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<td>8,245</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>69.1</td>
<td>69.8</td>
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</table>

NSSE 2005 Benchmark Report
Detailed Benchmark Statistics and Effect Sizes
University of Nevada-Reno
### Senior Students

#### Mean Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEVEL OF ACADEMIC CHALLENGE</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>U of Nevada</td>
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<td>14.1</td>
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<td>59.1</td>
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<td>13.6</td>
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#### Distribution Statistics

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<th>Conf. Interval</th>
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#### Reference Group Comparison Statistics

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<th>Conf. Interval</th>
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<td>Diff.</td>
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#### ACTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

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<thead>
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<th>Upper</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>16.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 10%</td>
<td>9,597</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>16.6</td>
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#### ENRICHING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SUPPORTIVE CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT</strong></td>
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<td>NSSE 2005</td>
<td>105,539</td>
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<td>44.2</td>
</tr>
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<td>Top 50%</td>
<td>42,492</td>
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<td>49.8</td>
</tr>
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<td>7,126</td>
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<td>56.4</td>
<td>57.4</td>
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</table>

#### SUPPORTIVE CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENRICHING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>U of Nevada</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>20.8</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7,126</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>57.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**University of Nevada-Reno IPEDS: 182290**
College Students "Swirl": Benefit from First-Year Seminars

Findings from a national survey released today show that almost half (45%) of all college seniors took at least one course from another postsecondary institution prior to enrolling at their current institution. This "swirl pattern" – taking classes from multiple institutions on the way to the baccalaureate – is a concern because transfer students participate less in activities that enrich their learning, such as doing community service or volunteer work and working with a faculty member on a research project.

A third of seniors took at least one course at another college after enrolling at their current institution. Most of the outside coursework was done at vocational-technical schools or two-year colleges. Among the more popular reasons for taking a course at another school were to complete degree requirements sooner (47%), have a better course schedule (21%), or to take an easier course (17%).

The 2005 report from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is based on information from about 237,000 first-year and senior students at 528 four-year colleges and universities. The NSSE study, titled “Exploring Different Dimensions of Student Engagement,” gives schools an idea of how well students are learning and what they put into and get out of their undergraduate experience.

"Engagement is a critical factor in the educational process because the more time and energy students devote to desired activities, the more likely they are to develop the habits of the mind that are key to success after college," says George Kuh, the NSSE director and Indiana University Bloomington professor of higher education. "In addition, engagement is positively related to grades and graduation, outcomes that everyone agrees are important."

Joni Finney, vice president of the National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education, says “NSSE has changed the national conversation about quality in undergraduate education, providing a rich model for institutional change and improvement.”

The survey findings annually provide comparative standards for determining how effectively colleges are contributing to learning. Five key areas of educational performance are measured: 1) level of academic challenge, 2) active and collaborative learning, 3) student-faculty interaction, 4) enriching educational experiences, and 5) supportive campus environment.
This report displays the 2005 comparison institutions for University of Nevada-Reno. The institutions listed below are represented in the 'Selected Peers' column of the Respondent Characteristics, Mean Comparisons, Frequency Distributions, and Benchmark reports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Name</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clemson University</td>
<td>Clemson</td>
<td>SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado State University</td>
<td>Fort Collins</td>
<td>CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa State University</td>
<td>Ames</td>
<td>IA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of California-Davis</td>
<td>Davis</td>
<td>CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Idaho</td>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Vermont</td>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>VT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Wyoming</td>
<td>Laramie</td>
<td>WY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 2004, changes were made in the process for calculating the NSSE benchmarks of effective educational practice. The changes were a result of our continuing efforts to provide institutions with the best information possible. By revising our calculation process, we enhanced the usability of the information for intra-institutional comparisons. For example, institutions can now calculate scores using the benchmark items at the school, college, or department level. This was not previously possible because the benchmarks were only constructed at the institution level. In addition, using the student-level scores, the precursors to the benchmarks, institutions can compare groups of students (e.g., seniors from two different years). For more information about the benchmark construction process and to download syntax that calculates student-level scores, please see the NSSE Web site: nsse.iub.edu.

Recalculated Benchmarks

While individual institutions now have more options to reconstruct NSSE benchmark scores for their own purposes, the changes in the benchmark calculation procedures require that benchmarks prior to 2004 also be recalculated to more accurately interpret changes in institutional performance over the years. Table 1 provides all of your institution’s scores for four of the five benchmarks based upon this revised process, allowing you to compare benchmark scores from two or more years using the same metric. Note that the Student Faculty Interaction benchmark has been computed in a way to make possible accurate year-to-year comparisons. In contrast, no adjustment could be made to allow for comparisons between the 2004 and 2005 Enriching Educational Experiences benchmarks and earlier years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmark</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004a</th>
<th>2005b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of Academic Challenge</td>
<td>FY</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active and Collaborative Learning</td>
<td>FY</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Faculty Interaction</td>
<td>FY</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></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 2004 and 2005 results to earlier years, hence its omission from the table above.
How comparable are benchmark scores from year to year?

This report is a brief introduction to how to compare institutional performance over time, not an exhaustive treatment of all the pertinent issues that need to be considered. We recommend that you do further analysis and investigation to better understand the changes in relation to your institutional context. It is important to keep in mind three issues before comparing benchmark scores from year to year:

4) Drawing a random sample from a population results in a certain amount of sampling error—an estimate of the degree to which the characteristics of the sample do not match those of the population. Smaller samples relative to the size of the population risk larger sampling errors. Thus, relatively small benchmark differences could be attributed to random sampling fluctuation.

5) In addition to sampling error, you should examine the demographic characteristics of the samples to be sure that similar groups of students are represented among the respondents in various years. If respondent characteristics are different, and these differences likely could affect engagement scores, these differences should be acknowledged and taken into account when attributing reasons for benchmark differences. A more sophisticated approach would be to weight the samples so they more closely resemble the student population, and then recalculate the benchmark scores using the formulas provided by NSSE.

6) Some questions and response options were changed over the years based on psychometric analyses to improve the survey’s validity and reliability. Most notably, response options for the ‘enriching’ items (question 7 on the survey) were revised in 2004. Our analysis shows that these items are not comparable with prior years. For most institutions, this change will produce a substantially lower Enriching Educational Experiences score in 2004 and 2005 compared to prior years, particularly for first-year students. See the NSSE website for specific changes to these and other items.

What constitutes a real change in a benchmark score?

One way to estimate the magnitude of change in a benchmark score over time is to combine your institutional data from all participating years and run statistical analyses between students from the respective years. For example, t-tests can be computed between first-year students in 2003 and first-year students in 2004 to see if the differences between benchmark scores are statistically significant. Effect sizes can also be computed by dividing the difference of the benchmark scores by the standard deviation of the entire distribution. The t-tests can also be weighted according to statistical weights provided by NSSE (based on gender and enrollment status), or institutions can create their own weights based on school records.

Institutions can also conduct regression analyses using this multi-year data and include a dummy variable for the year of participation as an independent variable. With this approach, the regression model could control for student demographic variables or other independent variables to see what the unique effect of the year of administration might be.

Notes

a. Scores from NSSE 2000 are not included because several significant changes were made to the survey instrument after that year, thus making year-to-year comparisons less suitable.

b. Student weights prior to 2004 were computed exclusively using the most recent IPEDS data available. In 2004, institutional population files were used for class rank and gender because these files provide more recent and accurate data. Beginning in 2005, enrollment status information (full-time/part-time) was also taken from institutional population files rather than IPEDS.

c. All items in question 7 on the 2004 instrument were rescaled in 2004. One of these items, “Work on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements,” contributes to the Student-Faculty Interaction benchmark. The old response set (NSSE 2000-2003) was ‘yes,’ ‘no,’ or ‘undecided’ whereas the new response set is ‘done,’ ‘plan to do,’ ‘do not plan to do,’ or ‘have not decided.’ Our analysis shows that these items are not comparable across years. Therefore the Student-Faculty Interaction scores on this report do not include the ‘research’ item. This also means that the score on this report will not match benchmarks reported on previous year reports.

d. All items in question 7 on the 2004 instrument were rescaled in 2004. The old response set (NSSE 2000-2003) was ‘yes,’ ‘no,’ or ‘undecided’ whereas the new response set is ‘done,’ ‘plan to do,’ ‘do not plan to do,’ or ‘have not decided.’ Our analysis shows that these items are not comparable across years. Therefore, it is not possible to compare the 2004 and 2005 Enriching Educational Experiences benchmark with prior years (2001 – 2003).