

**National Survey of Student  
Engagement**

**Senior Report**

**Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)  
Model**

Fall 2010



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THE UNIVERSITY OF SCRANTON

*INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH OFFICE*

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by and provided to the University of Scranton by the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University

## Abstract

In spring 2010, the Institutional Research Office administered the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The survey was administered to our freshmen and senior populations. It also served as our senior survey for the class of 2010. The NSSE is designed to measure both the time and effort students put into their studies, and their engagement in other activities related to the college experience. This analysis aims to assess student learning outcomes through linking specific questions to desirable student learning outcomes<sup>2</sup>. Desirable outcomes are classified into three categories:

- *Variables That Describe Student Behavior: What Do Students Do?*
- *Variables That Describe Cognitive Outcomes: How Do Students [Think They] Improve?*
- *Variables That Describe Student Dispositions: What Do Students Care About?*

Also, this report will include data about other institutions that participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement, for the purposes of benchmarking ourselves against peers, competitors, etc. Other institutions included in the benchmarking analysis are categorized as: other Jesuit Institutions, colleges and universities within our Carnegie Class, and all institutions who participated in the 2010 administration of NSSE.

## Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) Report

This analysis includes three variable groupings within which desirable student learning outcomes for our seniors are categorized: *Variables that describe student behavior: What Do Students Do?*, *Variables that describe cognitive outcomes: How Do Students [Think They] Improve?*, and *Variables that describe their dispositions: What Do Students Care About?* Each category includes variables containing dimensions that address specific components of the college experience/education. Throughout this report, we will distinguish between seniors who report favorable student learning outcomes and seniors who report unfavorable learning outcomes. The National Survey of Student Engagement allows for this analysis through asking seniors if, and if so how often, they engaged in what scholars consider practices resulting in a fulfilling college experience and desirable student learning outcomes. We classify “often/very often,” “done/plan to do,” “quite a bit/very much,” and high Likert scale responses<sup>3</sup> as being indicative of favorable student learning outcomes. Conversely, we assess answers such as, “never/sometimes,” “do not plan to do/have not decided,” “very little/some,” and lower Likert scale answers<sup>4</sup> to denote unfavorable learning outcomes.

First, this report will assess University of Scranton seniors. Next, we will benchmark University students against other Jesuit institutions, other colleges and universities within our Carnegie class, and finally, all NSSE participants.

### *Variables that describe student behavior: What Do Students Do?*

<b>Favorable Student Learning Outcomes</b> <i>(Student responses of Often/very often, done/plan to do, quite a bit/very much, high Likert Scale answers are included.)<sup>5</sup></i>	
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Responses</b>
V1.) “Academic Engagement with People”	61%
V2.) “Academic Engagement with Learning Resources”	74%
V3.) “Investment of Time & Effort”	54%
V4.) “Use of Specific Academic Skills”	68%
V5.) “Use of Specific Modes of Thinking”	79%
<b>Categorical Average</b>	<b>67%</b>

<sup>2</sup> This model is based on St. Olaf College’s Student Learning Outcomes Catalog.

<sup>3</sup> Likert Scale questions on the National Survey of Student Engagement are scored 1 – 7. Students who reported 5 or greater are defined as having a high Likert Scale answer.

<sup>4</sup> Likert Scale questions on the National Survey of Student Engagement are scored 1 – 7. Students who reported 4 or less are defined as having a low Likert Scale answer.

<sup>5</sup> Variables may contain more than one question. Questions within each variable may allow for different response types, such as “done/plan to do,” “often/very often.”

*Dimensions within each variable:*

- V1. (a) academic engagement with faculty, (b) academic engagement with other students, (c) academic engagement with the community beyond the college.
- V2. (a) use of technology, (b) use of the library.
- V3. (a) amount of study time, (b) effectiveness of study time, (c) participation in classes/labs, (d) being on time/prepared for class, (e) amount of effort expended in academic work.
- V4. (a) doing research, (b) doing academic writing, (c) doing academic reading, (d) making presentations.
- V5. (a) memorization, (b) analysis, (c) integration/synthesis, (d) evaluation, (e) application.

We can observe trends toward favorable student learning outcomes across all variables, as well over 50% of students report “often/very often”, “done/plan to do”, “quite a bit/very much”, or high Likert Scale answers. Notably, seniors report the greatest engagement in “use of specific modes of thinking.” Our seniors score lowest in terms of “investment of time & effort,” which includes the following variables and dimensions:

- C. Participation in Classes/Labs: (73%)
  - “During the current school year, about how often have you asked questions in class or contributed to discussions?” 77% often/very often
  - “During the current school year, about how often have you made a class presentation?” 68% often/very often
- D. Being on Time/Prepared for Class: (20%)
  - “During the current school year, about how often have you come to class without completing readings or assignments?” 20% often/very often
- E. Amount of Effort Expended in Academic Work: (69%)
  - “During the current school year, about how often have you asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions?” 77% often/very often
  - “During the current school year, about how often have you prepared two or more drafts of a paper before turning it in?” 43% often/very often
  - “Mark the box that best represents the extent to which your examinations during the current school year have challenged you to do your best work.” 89% answered 5 – 7 on the Likert Scale
  - “During the current school year, about how often have you worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor’s standards or expectations? 67% often/very often

Notably, Variable D is written differently than the other questions in the dimension. Questions within Dimensions C and E are written in a positive/positive direction. The sole question in Dimension D is written as a negative/positive question, therefore resulting in a lower score than other variables. A categorical average of 67% indicates our seniors are active in behaviors that result in desirable student learning outcomes and a positive overall college experience.

Variables that describe cognitive outcomes: How Do Students [Think They] Improve?

<b>Favorable Student Learning Outcomes</b>	
<i>(Student responses of Often/very often, done/plan to do, quite a bit/very much, and high Likert Scale answers are included).</i>	
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Responses</b>
V6.) “Improvement in Knowledge or Understanding”	69%
V7.) “Improvement in Academic Proficiencies”	76%
V8.) “Increased Intellectual Maturity”	72%
<b>Categorical Average</b>	<b>72%</b>

*Dimensions within each variable:*

- V6. (a) general knowledge, (b) knowledge of a specific subject area, (c) career preparation, (d) intellectual literacy, (e) civic literacy, (f) global literacy, (g) artistic literacy, (h) scientific/technological literacy, (i) quantitative literacy, (j) theological/ethical literacy.
- V7. (a) ability to work/learn independently, (b) ability to work/learn with others, (c) ability to organize, plan, manage, (d) crucial/analytic/problem-solving skills, (e) originality/creativity, (f) foreign language proficiency, (g) oral communication proficiency, (h) writing ability, (i) computer/technological ability, (j) capacity for lifelong learning/further study.

- V8. (a) intellectual self-confidence, (b) intellectual flexibility, (c) understanding of self, (d) understanding of others.

Our seniors report to achieve desirable cognitive outcomes. Our seniors develop the most in terms of “improvement in academic proficiencies,” and least in terms of “improvement in knowledge or understanding.” Collectively, 72% report favorable student learning outcomes in terms of cognitive development throughout college.

Variables that describe their dispositions: What Do Students Care About?

<b>Favorable Student Learning Outcomes</b> <i>(Student responses of Often/very often, done/plan to do, quite a bit/very much, and high Likert Scale answers are included).</i>	
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Responses</b>
V10.) “Values”	73%

*Dimensions within each variable:*

- V9<sup>6</sup>.) (a) interest in academic work, (b) commitment to academic excellence, (c) future academic plans.  
 V10.) (a) lifelong learning, (b) civic engagement, (c) artistic engagement, (d) diversity, (e) service, (f) professional accomplishment, (g) moral and spiritual development.

The majority of our seniors are reporting to graduate with an enhanced sense of values. Commitment to lifelong learning, civic engagement, artistic engagement, diversity, service, professional accomplishment, and moral and spiritual development are attributes a Jesuit university prides itself on instilling within its students.

### **Benchmarking**

The following portion of this report offers benchmarking data provided by the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University. The data will compare University seniors to seniors at other Jesuit institutions, seniors at other institutions within our Carnegie Class, and finally seniors at all colleges and universities participating in the National Survey of Student Engagement. The data is presented to reflect the Student Learning Outcomes Model.

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<sup>6</sup> Variable nine (V9) measures “Interests and Aspirations.” The National Survey of Student Engagement does not contain questions measuring this student learning outcome.

Variables that describe student behavior<sup>7</sup>: What Do Students Do?

Favorable Student Learning Outcomes (Often/very often, done/plan to do, quite a bit/very much, high Likert Scale answers)				
Variables	University of Scranton	Jesuit Institutions	Carnegie Class	NSSE 2010
V1.) “Academic Engagement with People”	61%	57%	62%	53%
V2.) “Academic Engagement with Learning Resources”	74%	77%	74%	76%
V3.) “Investment of Time and Effort”	54%	52%	51%	50%
V4.) “Use of Specific Academic Skills”	68%	66%	68%	61%
V5.) “Use of Specific Modes of Thinking”	79%	78%	81%	74%
<b>Categorical Average</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>63%</b>

Our seniors are very similar to those of our comparison groups. The University of Scranton’s average score was only one percentage point higher than other Jesuit institutions, scoring higher in terms of “academic engagement with people,” “use of specific academic skills,” and “use of specific modes of thinking.” Our average score was the same as our Carnegie Class, making this group our closest competitor in terms of senior outcomes related to academic behaviors. Where the University of Scranton averaged closely to other Jesuit institutions and institutions within our Carnegie class, we scored notable higher than the NSSE 2010 population as a whole.

Variables that describe cognitive outcomes. (Self-Reported)<sup>8</sup>: How Do Students [Think They] Improve?

Favorable Student Learning Outcomes (Often/very often, done/plan to do, quite a bit/very much, high Likert Scale answers)				
Variables	University of Scranton	Jesuit Institutions	Carnegie Class	NSSE 2010
V6.) “Improvement in Knowledge or Understanding”	69%	67%	69%	62%
V7.) “Improvement in Academic Proficiencies”	76%	76%	76%	71%
V8.) “Increased Intellectual Maturity”	72%	72%	72%	68%
<b>Categorical Average</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>67%</b>

<sup>7</sup> Variable dimensions: V1 – academic engagement with faculty, academic engagement with other students, academic engagement with the community beyond the college; V2 – use of technology, use of the library; V3 – amount of study time, effectiveness of study time, participation in classes/labs, being on time/prepared for class, amount of effort expended in academic work; V4 – doing research, doing academic writing, doing academic reading, making presentations; V5 – memorization, analysis, integration/synthesis, evaluation, application.

<sup>8</sup> Variable dimensions: V6 – general knowledge, knowledge of a specific subject area, career preparation, intellectual literacy, civic literacy, global literacy, artistic literacy, scientific/technological literacy, quantitative literacy, theological/ethical literacy; V7 – ability to work/learn independently, ability to work/learn with others, ability to organize/plan/manage, critical/analytic/problem-solving skills, originality/creativity, foreign language proficiency, oral communication proficiency, writing ability, computer/technological ability, capacity for lifelong learning/further study; V8 – intellectual self-confidence, intellectual flexibility, understanding of self, understanding of others.

University of Scranton seniors averaged the same as other Jesuit institutions and institutions within our Carnegie Class in terms of desirable cognitive outcomes. The University of Scranton’s seniors scored identically to those within our Carnegie Class on all variables. Our seniors scored the same as seniors graduating from other Jesuit institutions in terms of “improvement in academic proficiencies” and “increased intellectual maturity;” however, our seniors scored higher than those at other Jesuit institutions in terms of “improvements in knowledge or understanding.” The aggregate NSSE 2010 group average 67%, five percentage points lower than the other three groups.

*Variables that describe their dispositions<sup>9</sup>: What Do Students Care About?*

<u>Healthy Engagement Responses</u>				
<b>Variables</b>	<b>University of Scranton</b>	<b>Jesuit Institutions</b>	<b>Carnegie Class</b>	<b>NSSE 2010</b>
V10.) “Values”	73%	64%	73%	46%

Seniors at the University of Scranton are most competitive with other institutions in our Carnegie Class, scoring the same in terms of “values.” Notably, our seniors scored nine percentage points higher than those at other Jesuit institutions. All groups scored well above the NSSE 2010 group, which only averaged 46%.

### **Benchmarking Conclusion**

The overall scores for University of Scranton seniors are closest to those schools within our Carnegie Class. Our most notable low score occurs against other Jesuit Institutions in terms of “academic engagement with learning resources;” our most notable high score occurs against other NSSE 2010 participants in terms of “values.” Our strongest scores occur in terms of student dispositions – our lowest in terms of student behaviors. All scores considered, the University of Scranton scores well against all comparison groups.

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<sup>9</sup> This category contains two variables: “Interests and Aspirations” and “Values”. NSSE does not include questions classified within “Interests and Aspirations”. “Values” variable dimensions: lifelong learning, civic engagement, artistic engagement, diversity, service, professional accomplishment, moral and spiritual development.