

National Survey of Student Engagement

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) Model

Fall 2010



Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Respondent Characteristics.....	3
Respondent Characteristics Summaries.....	4
Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) Report.....	4
Comparing Freshmen to Seniors.....	6
Benchmarking.....	6
Benchmarking Conclusion.....	8

Appendix

Engagement Item Frequency Distributions ¹	1
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¹ 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. 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 outcomes². 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?*

This report includes benchmarking data, comparing the University of Scranton to respondents in other Jesuit institutions, institutions within our Carnegie class, and all institutions who participated in the 2010 administration of NSSE.

Respondent Characteristics

The NSSE was administered to both the freshman and senior classes. Collectively, the survey achieved a response rate of 34%, with a total of 705 students participating. By class, 318 freshmen students participated in the survey, for a response rate of 32%; 387 seniors participated, for a response rate of 36%. Female responses were higher than males for both first-year students and seniors. Of freshmen respondents, 70% were females and 30% males; senior respondents were 67% female and 33% were males. The majority of both classes are residential students, as shown in Chart 2.

Chart 1

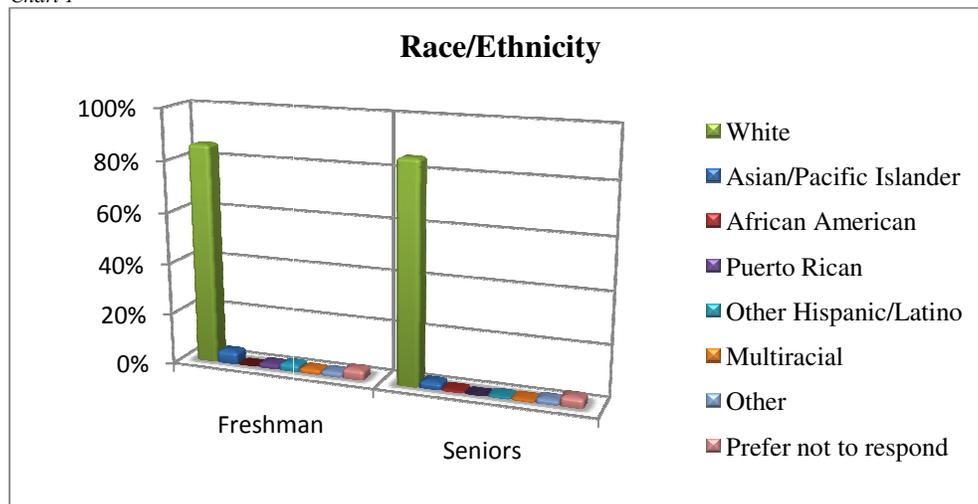
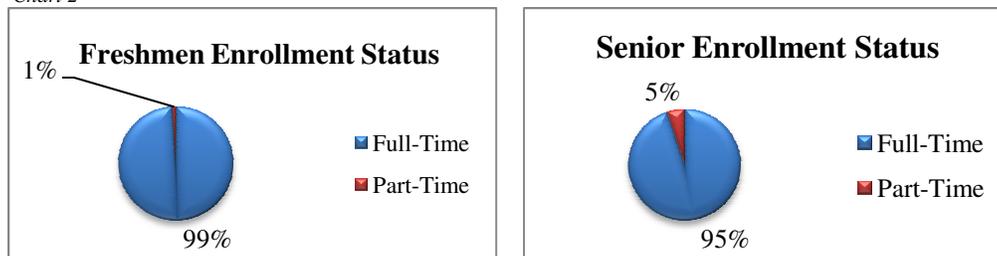
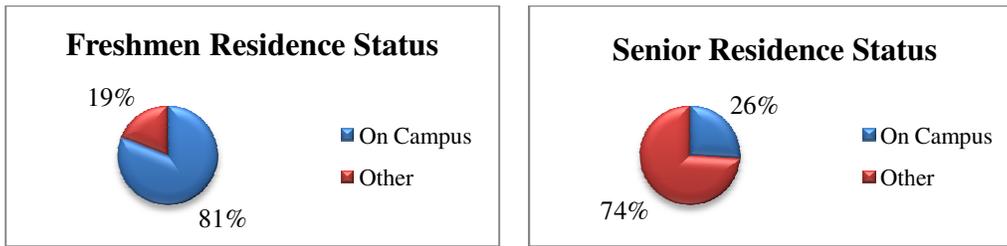


Chart 2



² This model is based on St. Olaf College's Student Learning Outcomes Catalog.



*Other residence may include off campus housing, non-University affiliated housing, commuting, etc.

Respondent Characteristics Summaries

The demographic characteristics of respondents accurately represents the University of Scranton as a whole. Our student population is predominantly white and non-Hispanic, resulting in 86% the of respondents identifying as such. Our undergraduate student body is predominately full-time; however, it is not uncommon for a few students to scale course loads back to a part-time status by senior year. Finally, residence status is representative of the freshman and senior classes. The majority of freshmen students live in University owned, on campus housing. As students progress through their time at Scranton, they tend to move into non-University owned, off campus housing. University of Scranton NSSE respondents accurately represent this trend.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) Report

This analysis includes three variable groupings within which desirable student learning outcomes 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 students who report favorable student learning outcomes and students who report unfavorable learning outcomes. The National Survey of Student Engagement allows for this analysis through asking students if, and if so how often, they engage 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 responses³ 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 answers⁴ to denote unfavorable learning outcomes.

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

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

Variables that describe student behavior: What Do Students Do?

Favorable Student Learning Outcomes		
<i>(Student responses of Often/very often, done/plan to do, quite a bit/very much, high Likert Scale answers are included.)⁵</i>		
Variables	Freshmen Responses	Senior Responses
V1.) “Academic Engagement with People”	51%	61%
V2.) “Academic Engagement with Learning Resources”	69%	74%
V3.) “Investment of Time and Effort”	35%	54%
V4.) “Use of Specific Academic Skills”	47%	68%
V5.) “Use of Specific Modes of Thinking”	71%	79%
Categorical Average	55%	67%

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.

Across all variables, we can note trends towards seniors having higher levels of engagement. The largest discrepancy between freshmen and seniors appears in variable four, “use of specific academic skills.” **Our faculty and administration are successful in substantially developing our students in terms of “doing research, doing academic writing, doing academic reading, and making presentations” from freshmen to senior year. These skills are essential to a college student, as they are repetitive throughout all courses of study, and will be of immeasurable value in our students’ future careers and/or studies.** Also notable, our students develop the least in terms of their abilities to use technology and the library, as highlighted in variable two.

Variables that describe cognitive outcomes. (Self-reported): How Do Students [Think They] Improve?

Favorable Student Learning Outcomes		
<i>(Student responses of Often/very often, done/plan to do, quite a bit/very much, and high Likert Scale answers are included).</i>		
Variables	Freshmen Responses	Senior Responses
V6.) “Improvement in Knowledge or Understanding”	59%	69%
V7.) “Improvement in Academic Proficiencies”	75%	80%
V8.) “Increased Intellectual Maturity”	61%	72%
Categorical Average	65%	74%

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) critical/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.

⁵Variables 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.”

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

Again, we can decipher a trend showing seniors to engage more academically than freshmen. University of Scranton freshmen and seniors differ most (ten percentage points) in their perceived “intellectual maturity” and “improvements in knowledge and understanding.” These results are desirable, as we incorporate a goal to “develop the person as a whole” in our Jesuit mission at the University of Scranton. Students develop the least in terms of “improvements in academic proficiencies.”

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

Favorable Student Learning Outcomes <i>(Often/very often, done/plan to do, quite a bit/very much, high Likert Scale answers)</i>		
Variables	Freshmen Responses	Senior Responses
V10.) “Values”	64%	73%

Dimensions within each variable:

- V9⁶. (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.

As stated in our Jesuit mission: “The University of Scranton is a Catholic and Jesuit university animated by the spiritual vision and the tradition of excellence characteristic of the Society of Jesus and those who share in its way of proceeding. The University is a community dedicated to the freedom of inquiry and personal development fundamental to the growth in wisdom and integrity of all who share in its life.” As our students’ values scores increased nine percentage points from freshman year to senior year, we can proudly note that our students report leaving the University with an increased understanding our Jesuit mission and values.

Comparing Freshmen to Seniors

Of all University of Scranton students who responded to the National Survey of Student Engagement, 66% of students report engagement proven to result in desirable student learning outcomes; while 34% report to lack engagement that results in desirable student learning outcomes. By class, 71% seniors who participated reported to engage in activities and academic practices that are shown to correlate to favorable student learning outcomes. Of freshmen respondents, 61% report favorable student learning outcomes. For every variable, seniors reported more favorable levels of student engagement. In summary, we can conclude from the results of the National Survey of Student Engagement that University seniors engage more favorably in practices shown to result in desirable student learning outcomes than do freshmen.

Benchmarking

The following portion of this report offers benchmarking data provided by the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University. The data will compare the University to other Jesuit institutions, institutions within our Carnegie Class, and all colleges and universities participating in the National Survey of Student Engagement. The data is presented to reflect the Student Learning Outcomes Model. Note, for the purposes of benchmarking, first-year and senior data are averaged to represent each comparison group.

⁶ 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 behavior⁷: What Do Students Do?

Favorable Student Learning Outcomes <i>(Often/very often, done/plan to do, quite a bit/very much, high Likert Scale answers)</i>				
Variables	University of Scranton	Jesuit Institutions	Carnegie Class	NSSE 2010
V1.) “Academic Engagement with People”	56%	55%	57%	51%
V2.) “Academic Engagement with Learning Resources”	72%	74%	72%	72%
V3.) “Investment of Time and Effort”	45%	48%	47%	46%
V4.) “Use of Specific Academic Skills”	58%	49%	58%	48%
V5.) “Use of Specific Modes of Thinking”	75%	77%	78%	73%
Categorical Average	61%	61%	62%	58%

The University of Scranton is very much competitive with other schools who participated in the 2010 NSSE. Notably, the University’s scores average to be slightly higher than other Jesuit institutions. Other Jesuit institutions score higher than the University in terms of “academic engagement with learning resources” and “investment of time and effort.”

University of Scranton students report greater “academic engagement with people,” “use of academic skills,” and “use of specific modes of thinking” than other Jesuit institutions. We are most competitive with institutions in our Carnegie class. Where we are in close competition with fellow Jesuit institutions and institutions within our Carnegie class, our average is notably greater than the aggregate group of NSSE 2010 participants.

⁷ 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.

Variables that describe cognitive outcomes. (Self-Reported)⁸: 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”	64%	64%	64%	60%
V7.) “Improvement in Academic Proficiencies”	78%	73%	73%	70%
V8.) “Increased Intellectual Maturity”	67%	70%	66%	66%
Categorical Average	70%	69%	68%	65%

The University of Scranton is also very competitive in regards to cognitive outcomes assessment. Notably, the University’s scores are slightly lower than other Jesuit institutions pertaining to “increased intellectual maturity”. Again, of the three comparison groups, the lowest average scores fall within the NSSE 2010 group.

Variables that describe their dispositions⁹: What Do Students Care About?

Healthy Engagement Responses				
Variables	University of Scranton	Jesuit Institutions	Carnegie Class	NSSE 2010
V10.) “Values”	69%	63%	69%	48%

The University of Scranton also measures well against our comparison groups in terms of variables describing student dispositions. Notably, the University’s “Values” scores are greater (by six percentage points) than other Jesuit institutions. **As noted in the previous section of the report, analyzing University seniors only, we can note a trend toward our students’ understanding of our Jesuit mission over their time here.** The group with the lowest scores, again, was the NSSE 2010 group.

Benchmarking Conclusion

The overall scores for the University of Scranton are most related to those schools within our Carnegie Class. Our most notable low score occurs against other Jesuit Institutions in terms of “Increased Intellectual Maturity;” 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 cognitive outcomes. All scores considered, the University of Scranton scores well against all comparison groups.

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.