



**National Survey of Student Engagement  
(NSSE)**

**Spring 2017 Administration**

2017 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)  
University of Scranton

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SCRANTON

*INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH OFFICE*

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# 2017 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) University of Scranton

## Executive Summary

The University of Scranton administered the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to first-year and senior students during spring 2017. Scranton collected 624 responses for a 32% overall response rate (first-year plus senior). This is a 12% increase in the response rate from 2015. Survey items represent empirically confirmed "good practices" in undergraduate education which promote student engagement. NSSE questions are categorized into four (4) themes including ten (10) areas of engagement.

Theme	Engagement Indicator (EI)
Academic Challenge	High-Order Learning
	Reflective & Integrative Learning
	Learning Strategies
	Quantitative Reasoning
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning
	Discussions with Diverse Others
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction
	Effective Teaching Practices
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions
	Supportive Environment

Listed below are several observations from the 2017 NSSE responses.

- Diversity - Students reported limited opportunities for discussions with diverse others, including in course discussions or assignments, along with opportunities for discussions with people with different races, ethnic and religious beliefs. Results did show, however, that Scranton students are having discussions with people regarding political beliefs other than their own.
- High-Impact Practices (HIPs) – Scranton first-year and senior students participate in HIPs more often than our peer group, including participating in the 2 or more category. Participation in community-based projects (service-learning) for first-year students continues to be high. Study abroad and culminating senior experience remains lower for Scranton students as compared to the peer group. Females participate at a higher rate in HIPs than males, especially in service learning, learning communities and study abroad.
- Campus Environment – Scranton’s first-year and senior students favorably rate the quality of their interactions. First-year students rate interactions with student services staff, academic advisors, and administrative staff highly; whereas seniors rate interactions with other student and faculty higher. Overall, first-year and senior students say there is a supportive environment at Scranton. Many of these indicators regarding a supportive campus environment also appeared in the 2015 data.
- Satisfaction – Student satisfaction remains high at Scranton, and is higher than our peer group for both first-year and seniors. Nine (9) out of ten (10) Scranton students would definitely or probably attend Scranton again. This compares with eight (8) out of ten (10) for our peer group.

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## Introduction

The University of Scranton administered the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to first-year and seniors students during spring 2017; it is Scranton's sixth NSSE administration (2015, 2012, 2010, 2008, 2005). Survey items represent empirically confirmed "good practices" in undergraduate education. That is, they reflect behaviors by students and institutions that are associated with desired outcomes of college. NSSE doesn't assess student learning directly, but survey results point to areas where colleges and universities are performing well and aspects of the undergraduate experience that could be improved (NSSE, 2015).

The NSSE launched its first survey in 2000, and after years of evidence-based and collaborative testing, an updated NSSE survey was administered in 2013. While changes range from minor adjustments to entirely new content, the survey maintains NSSE's signature focus on diagnostic and actionable information related to effective educational practice (NSSE, 2015).

The 2017 NSSE administration collected 382,530 student surveys representing 708 institutions with an average response rate of 30%. Scranton collected 624 responses for a 32% overall response rate (first-year plus senior).

## Additional Reports

In addition to the 2017 NSSE Core Survey, we administered the Jesuit Colleges and Universities Consortium questions. These supplemental questions will be analyzed under separate cover.

## Methodology

The research design and data collection methods for this survey were approved by the Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) of Indiana University and the University of Scranton. The population surveyed included all first-year and senior students, totaling 1,976 (1,159 first-year, 817 seniors). The initial survey invitation was emailed from Joseph H. Dreisbach, Ph.D., Interim Provost/Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs, University of Scranton, with four (4) reminder emails from NSSE over the course of the spring semester. All surveys were submitted using the NSSE online portal. Two (2) book store gift cards in the amount of \$200 each were offered as an incentive.

2017 NSSE	First-Year	Senior
Survey sample	1159	817
Total respondents	355	269
Response rate	31%	33%

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### Response Rates and Sampling Error

As shown in the chart below, Scranton’s response rate was higher for both first-year and senior students as compared to our Peer, Carnegie Class, and NSSE 2016 & 2017 groups. The University promoted this NSSE administration in a concerted effort to increase the response rate, and it is the first NSSE administration where the University’s response rate was higher than our comparison groups. Sampling error for the University is larger since the overall number of respondents is lower than the comparison groups.

	First-Year				Senior			
	Scranton	Peer	Carnegie Class	NSSE 2016 & 2017	Scranton	Peer	Carnegie Class	NSSE 2016 & 2017
<b>Response Rate</b>	32%	28%	23%	23%	33%	30%	25%	24%
<b>Sampling Error</b>	+/-4.3%	+/-1.4%	+/-0.3%	+/-0.2%	+/- 4.9%	+/-1.5%	+/-0.3%	+/-0.2%

Note: Sampling error, also called ‘margin of error,’ is an estimate of the amount the true score on a given item could differ from the estimate based on a sample. For example, if the sampling error is +/- 5% and 40% of your students reply "Very Often" to a particular item, then the true population value is most likely between 35% and 45%.

### Proportional Representativeness & Weighting

Proportional representativeness relates to the extent to which respondent demographics match those of the population. NSSE adds a weight/multiplier to gender and enrollment status (full-time) to adjust the results in a statistically meaningful way. NSSE weighs its data by gender and enrollment, not only because females and full-time students respond at higher rates, but also because they respond differently to important NSSE measures (Gonyea, et. al).

It should be noted that a 2008 study by NSSE examined whether only ‘highly engaged’ students responded to the NSSE survey, hence over-representing the level of engagement. Researchers found levels of engagement had no effect whether a student responds to the NSSE survey (Gonyea, et. al).

### Statistical Significance & Effect Size

In addition to overall comparisons, statistical significance and effect size are discussed in this report. Significance in this report refers to the difference in the means and is a result that is not likely to occur randomly.

Effect size indicates the practical importance, or magnitude, of observed differences. For Engagement Indicator comparisons, NSSE research has concluded that an effect size of about 0.1 may be considered small, 0.3 medium, and 0.5 large. NSSE research finds for service-learning, internships, study abroad, and culminating senior experiences, an effect size of about 0.2 may be considered small, 0.5 medium, and 0.8 large. For learning community and research with faculty, an effect size of about 0.1 may be considered small, 0.3 medium, and 0.5 large (Rocconi & Gonyea, 2015).

This report highlights comparisons of at least  $p < 0.05$  and an effect size greater than .3 in magnitude.

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**Themes & Engagement Indicators (EI) First-Year  
Peer Comparisons**

Theme	Engagement Indicator (EI)	Significant Difference
Academic Challenge	High-Order Learning	No significant difference
	Reflective & Integrative Learning	No significant difference
	Learning Strategies	UofS significantly <b>higher</b>
	Quantitative Reasoning	No significant difference
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning	No significant difference
	Discussions with Diverse Others	UofS significantly <b>lower</b>
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction	No significant difference
	Effective Teaching Practices	UofS significantly <b>higher</b>
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions	UofS significantly <b>higher</b>
	Supportive Environment	UofS significantly <b>higher</b>

**First-Year Students**

NSSE Themes and Engagement Indicators (EI) Peer Comparisons chart above displays Scranton’s **first-year students** compared with first-year students in our peer group (Appendix A) to show areas of significant difference (positive and negative).

Scranton’s mean average was significantly higher than the peer group on four (4) Engagement Indicators – Learning Strategies; Effective Teaching Practices; Quality of Interactions; and Supportive Environment. The University was lower than our peer group in Discussions with Diverse Others.

- Learning Strategies, part of the **Academic Challenge** theme, includes the following questions - *reviewed notes after class* and *summarized what you learned in class*.
- Effective Teaching Practices is part of the **Experiences with Faculty** theme and includes the questions - *instructors clearly explain course goals and requirements*, and *instructors taught sessions in an organized way*.
- Quality of Interactions and Supportive Environment comprise the **Campus Environment** theme and includes questions concerning *student services staff, academic advisors, other administrative staff, and other students*. Additionally questions about how well the institution *provides support for the overall well-being of the student (recreation, health care, community, etc.)*, and *support for succeeding academically, and using learning support services*.
- Scranton’s mean average was significantly lower on only one (1) EI – Discussions with Diverse Others, which is included in the **Learning with Peers** theme. This EI includes questions regarding the *discussions with people of different races, ethnic, economic and religion other than their own*. It did show, however, that our students are having *discussions with people regarding political beliefs other than their own*.

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### Senior Students

The next chart displays NSSE Themes and Engagement Indicators (EI) of Scranton’s **senior students** compared with senior students in our peer group (Appendix A). As compared to our peer group, Scranton’s mean average was significantly higher on the same four (4) EIs as Scranton’s first-year students, plus Student-Faculty Interaction. Scranton seniors were not significantly lower in any EI category.

- The Student-Faculty Interaction EI, part of the **Experiences with Faculty** theme, includes questions regarding *having conversations with faculty on career plans; working with faculty on activities other than coursework; and discussing course topics or ideas with faculty outside of class.*

### Themes & Engagement Indicators (EI) Seniors Peer Comparisons

Theme	Engagement Indicator (EI)	Significant Difference
Academic Challenge	High-Order Learning	No significant difference
	Reflective & Integrative Learning	No significant difference
	Learning Strategies	UofS significantly <b>higher</b>
	Quantitative Reasoning	No significant difference
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning	No significant difference
	Discussions with Diverse Others	No significant difference
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction	UofS significantly <b>higher</b>
	Effective Teaching Practices	UofS significantly <b>higher</b>
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions	UofS significantly <b>higher</b>
	Supportive Environment	UofS significantly <b>higher</b>

### Scranton Trend Data - 2015 versus 2017

Data show a significantly higher difference in Effective Teaching Practices in 2017 for first-year University students as compared with 2015 data. There’s also a significant difference in Discussions with Diverse Others; however, it’s a negative difference. Neither of these categories appeared as significant in the 2015 data.

For seniors, four (4) of the five (5) EIs showing a significant difference in 2017 were not present in the 2015, meaning senior students responded more positively to these questions in 2017. Supportive Environment did not appear in 2015; and, it now shows the highest significance difference among all the EIs.

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**Themes & Engagement Indicators (EI)  
NSSE High-Performing Institutions (Top 10%) Comparisons**

Theme	Engagement Indicator (EI)	First-Year	Seniors
Academic Challenge	High-Order Learning	✓	✓
	Reflective & Integrative Learning	✓	
	Learning Strategies		✓
	Quantitative Reasoning	✓	✓
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning	✓	
	Discussions with Diverse Others	✓	✓
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction	✓	
	Effective Teaching Practices		
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions		✓
	Supportive Environment		

The chart above shows the results of EIs for Scranton students compared to students at high-performing institutions<sup>1</sup>. Engagement indicators showing a check mark represent areas where the University could focus more attention.

Three (3) areas, Higher-Order Learning, Quantitative Reasoning and Discussions with Diverse Others, are areas where both first-year and senior students at Scranton show a lower score. Another three (3) areas, Reflective & Integrative Learning, Collaborative Learning and Student-Faculty Interactions show a lower score for first-year Scranton students; and, two (2) areas, Learning Strategies and Quality of Interactions, are lower for Scranton seniors.

<sup>1</sup> Institutions identified by NSSE for their high average levels of student engagement.



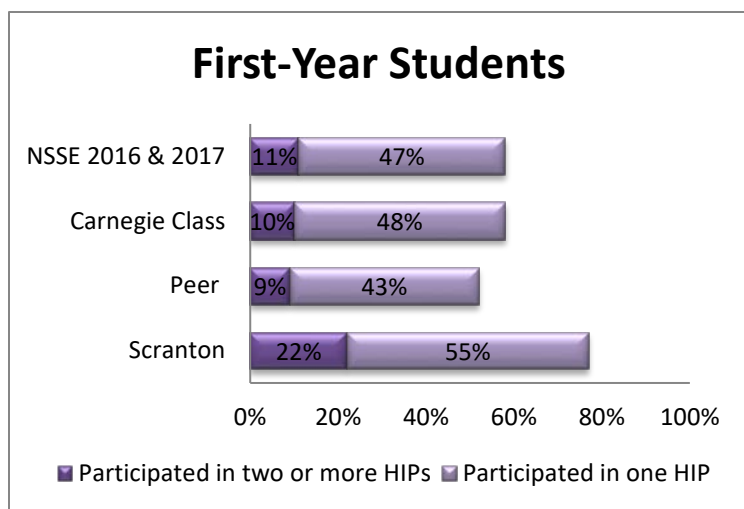
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## High-Impact Practices

High-Impact Practices (HIPs) represent enriching educational experiences that can be life-changing. HIPs are techniques and designs for teaching and learning that have proven to be beneficial for student engagement and successful learning among students from many backgrounds. Through intentional program design and advanced pedagogy, these types of practices can enhance student learning and work to narrow gaps in achievement across student populations.

The NSSE gauges participation rates for both first-year and senior students in learning communities, service-learning, and research with faculty. The senior students also include participation in an internship or field experience, study abroad, and culminating senior experience.

NSSE founding director George Kuh (Kuh, 2008) recommends that all students participate in at least two HIPs over the course of their undergraduate experience – one during the first-year and one in the context of their major.



### First –Year

Scranton has a 77% participation rate in HIPs, higher than our comparison groups (Appendices A, B & C), including participation in two or more HIPs.

Comparing data from 2015 to 2017 show that Scranton first-year students increased their participation in HIPs from 70% to 77%. Moreover, participation in 2 or more HIPs increased from 17% to 22%.

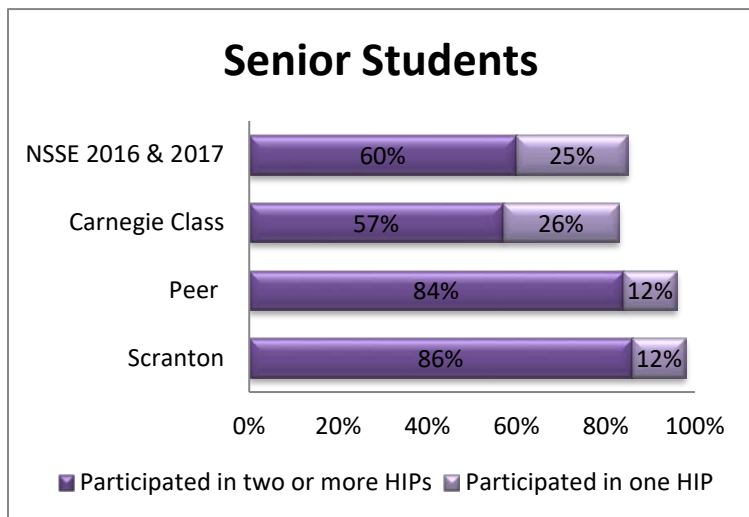
Service Learning among first-year students continues to have the largest participation rate among HIPs.

### Seniors

The overall participation rate in HIPs for seniors is 98%, and is also higher than our comparison groups (Appendices A, B & C), Scranton’s participation in 2 or more HIPs was 86%, and, again, was higher than our comparison groups.

Again, comparing Scranton’s 2015 data to 2017, senior participation in HIPs increased from 97% to 98%, and the largest gain is in the two (2) or more category where participation went from 77% to 86%.

Scranton continues to have lower participation rates in Study Abroad and Culminating Senior Experience than our peer group.

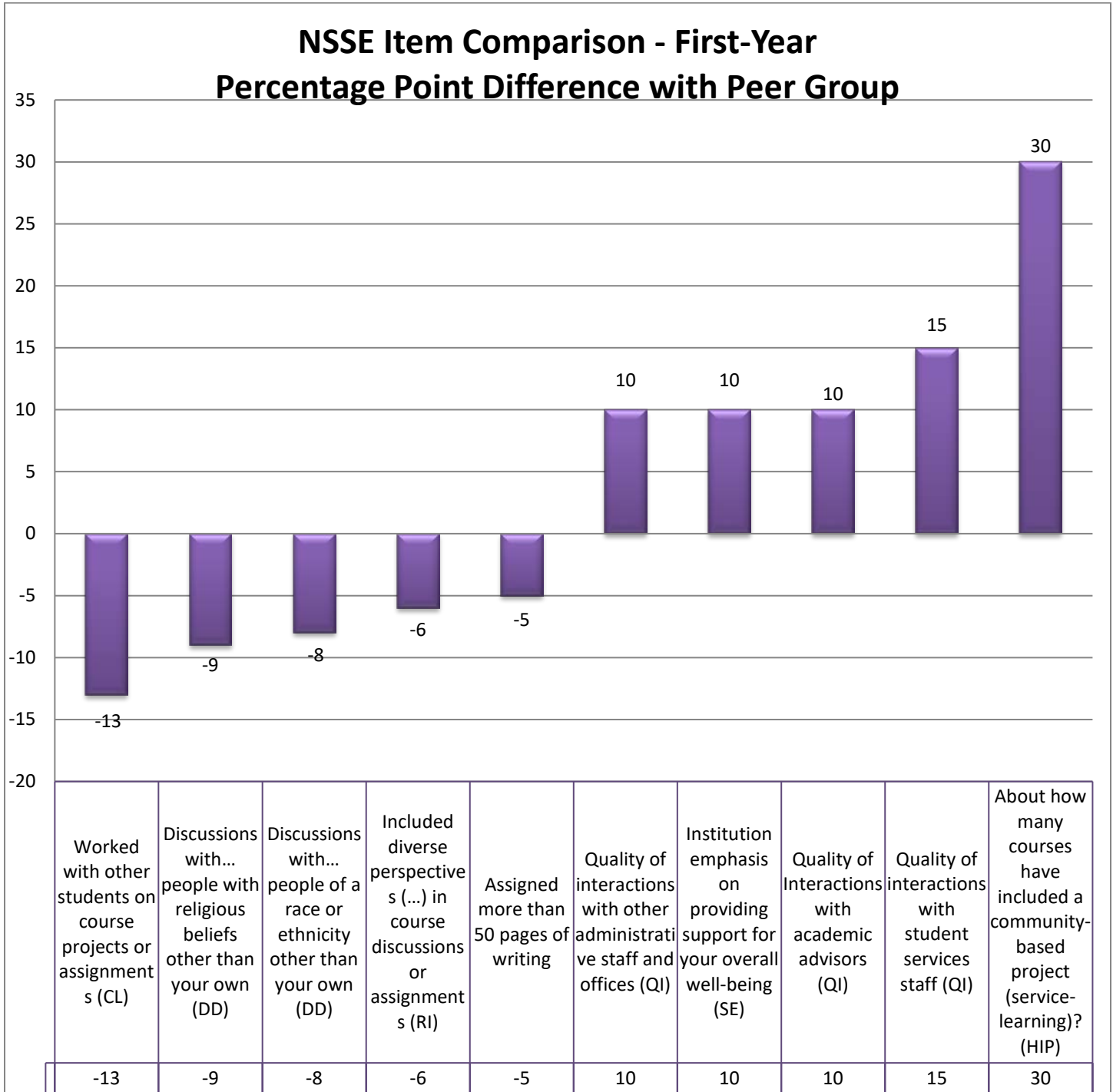


Data show that female students participate in HIPs more often than males; particularly in Service Learning, Learning Communities, and Study Abroad.

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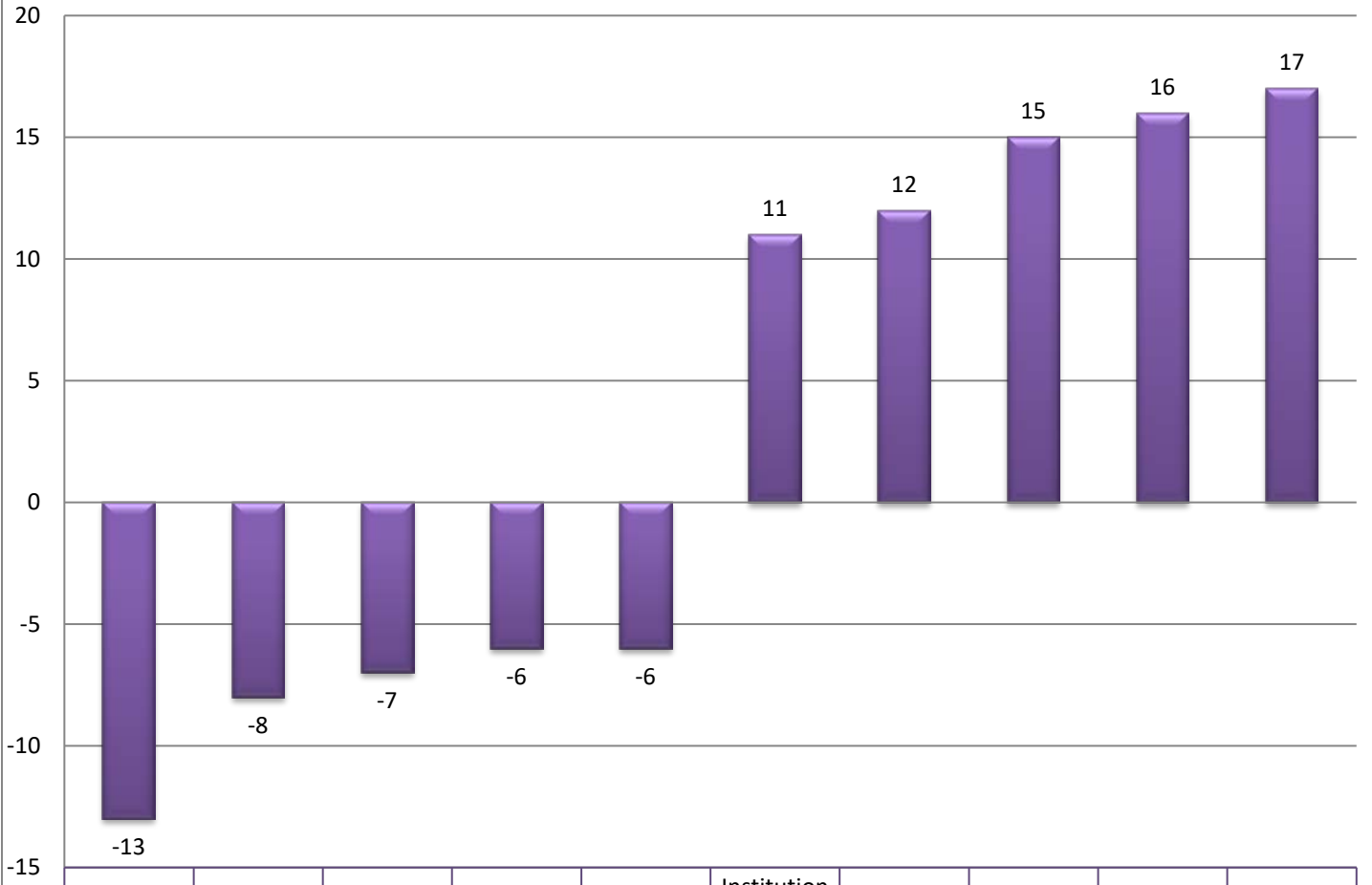
**Individual Question Comparisons**

By examining individual NSSE questions, we can better understand what contributes to Scranton’s performance on Engagement Indicators (EI) and High Impact Practices (HIPs). This section discusses the five (5) questions which Scranton’s first-year and senior students scored the highest and lowest, relative to students in our peer group.



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**NSSE Item Comparison - Senior**  
**Percentage Point Difference with Peer Group**



Completed a culminating senior experience (...) (HIP)	Assigned more than 50 pages of writing	Discussions with... People with religious beliefs other than your own (DD)	Participated in a study abroad program (HIP)	Discussions with... people of a race or ethnicity other than your own (DD)	Institution emphasis on attending events that address important social/eco./polit. Issues (SE)	Talked about career plans with a faculty member (SF)	Institution emphasis on providing support for your overall well-being (SE)	Quality of interactions with faculty (QI)	Quality of interactions with students (QI)
-13	-8	-7	-6	-6	11	12	15	16	17

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The five (5) questions to the right on the graphs above represent areas where the University has a much higher score than our peer group, and Scranton should continue to reinforce these good practices. The five (5) questions on the left of the graphs represent areas in which the University should focus more attention to improve student engagement.

### Highest Performing relative to Peer Institutions (Areas to Reinforce)

- Both first-year and senior students
  - *institution emphasis on providing support for your overall well-being* (SE)
- First-year students
  - *about how many courses have included a community-based project (service-learning)?* (HIP)
  - *quality of interactions with student services staff* (QI)
  - *quality of interactions with academic advisors* (QI)
  - *quality of interactions with other administrative staff and offices* (QI)
- Senior students
  - *quality of interactions with students* (QI)
  - *quality of interactions with faculty* (QI)
  - *talked with career plans with a faculty member* (SF)
  - *institution emphasis on attending events that address important social/econ./polit. issues* (SE)

### Lowest Performing Relative to Peer Institutions (Areas for Improvement)

- Both first-year and senior students
  - *assigned more than 50 pages of writing* (--)
  - *discussions with...people with religious beliefs other than your own* (DD)
  - *discussions with...people of different race or ethnicity other than your own* (DD)
  - *included diverse perspectives (...) in course discussions or assignments* (RI)
- First-year students
  - *worked with other students on course projects or assignments* (CL)
  - *included diverse perspectives (...) in course assignments* (RI)
- Seniors students
  - *completed a culminating senior experience (...)* (HIP)
  - *participated in a study abroad program* (HIP)

### Engagement Indicator and High-Impact Practices Key

(HIP) High-Impact Practice

(DD) Discussions with Diverse Others

(RI) Reflective & Integrative Learning

(QI) Quality of Interactions

(LS) Learning Strategies

(CL) Collaborative Learning

(SE) Supportive Environment

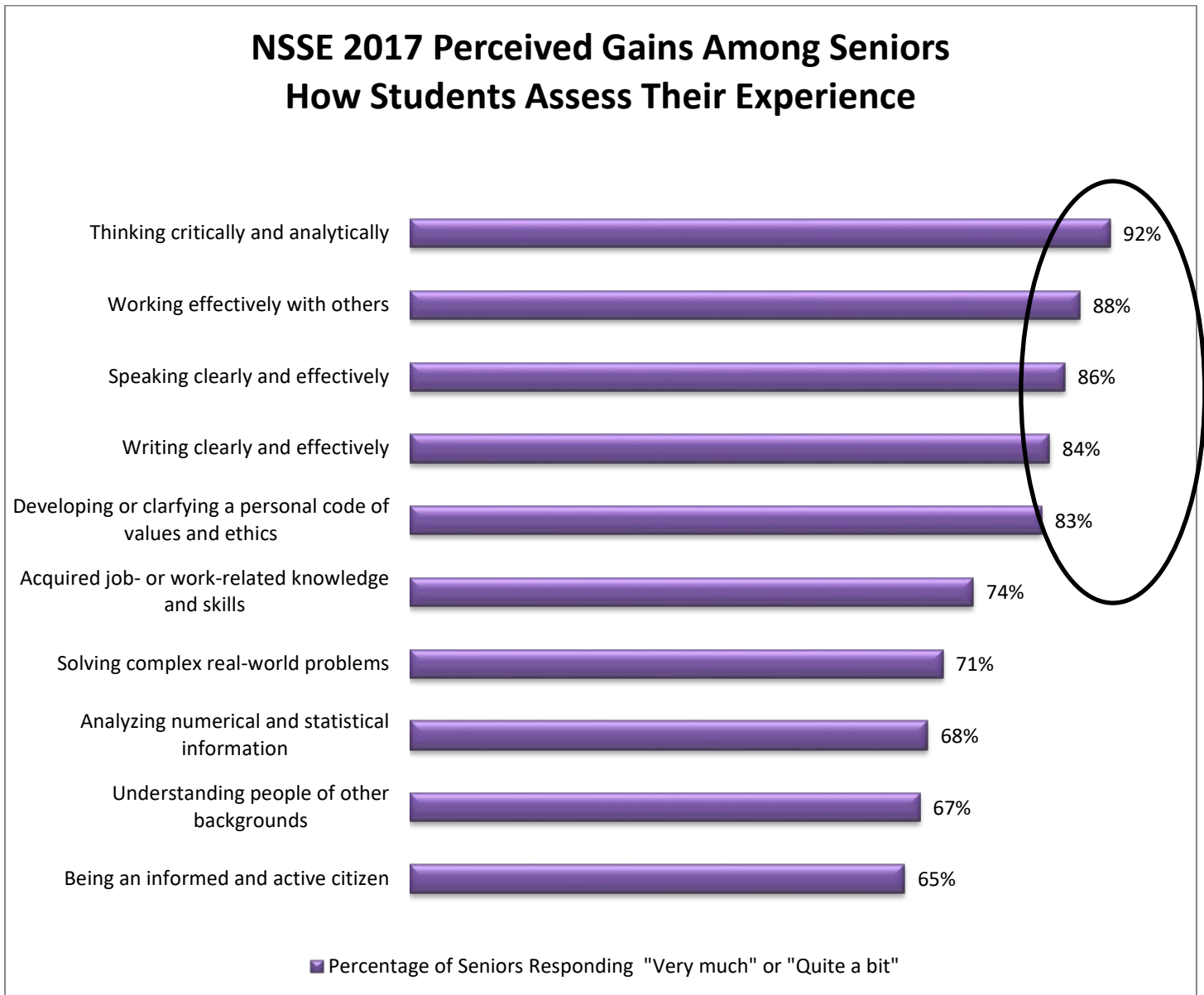
(---) No Assigned EI

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Perceived Gains by Senior Students

Reviewing senior responses to questions of perceived gains while attending Scranton, eighty-three (83%) percent or higher said they felt as if they perceived gains in the following areas:

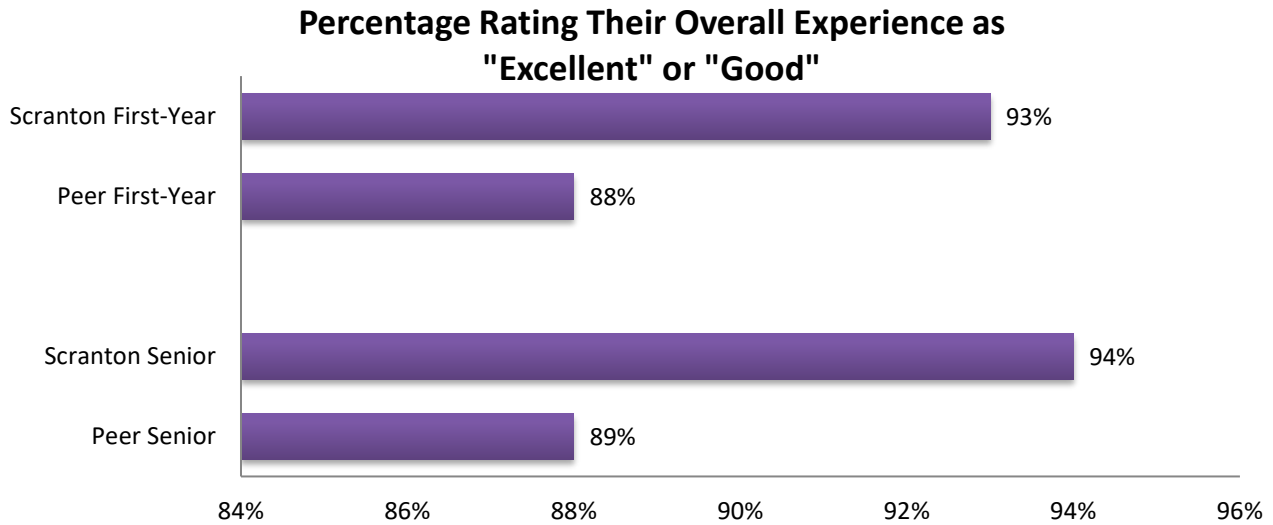
- thinking critically and analytically
- working effectively with others
- speaking clearly and effectively
- writing clearly and effectively
- developing or clarifying a personal code of values and ethics



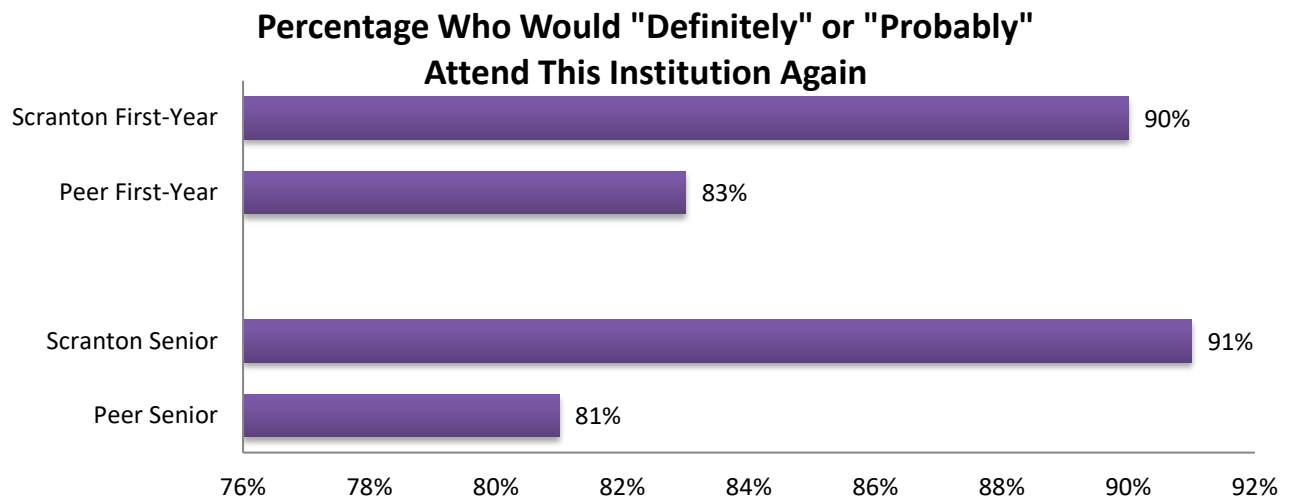
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Overall Satisfaction

Ninety-three percent (93%) of first-year and 94% of senior students at Scranton rated their overall experience as 'Excellent' or 'Good'. This is higher than our peer group at 88% and 89%.



Ninety percent (90%) of first-year students and 91% of seniors at Scranton said they would "Definitely" or "Probably" attend Scranton again. Both first-year and seniors responded to this question much more positively than our peer group (83% and 81%, respectively).



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## Conclusions

### Areas of Strength

#### Engagement Indicators (EIs)

- First-year - Learning Strategies, Effective Teaching (new from 2015), Quality of Interactions, Supportive Environment
- Senior - Learning Strategies, Effective Teaching, Quality of Interactions, Supportive Environment, Student-Faculty Interaction (all new from 2015)

#### High Impact Practices (HIPs)

Overall, participation in HIPs increased for both first-year & seniors, with a large increase in participation of 2 or more HIPs.

#### Satisfaction

Students are more satisfied with their decision to attend the University of Scranton than our peer group.

#### Item Comparison

Both first-year and senior students stated that the University places emphasis on providing support for overall well-being of the student. Quality of interactions also appears high, but with differences for first-year than seniors. First-year students state student services staff, academic advisors and administrative staff, where seniors state interactions with faculty and other students as high.

#### Perceived Gains for Seniors: Top five (5)

Thinking critically and analytically; working effectively with others; speaking clearly and effectively; writing clearly and effectively; and developing or clarifying a personal code of values and ethics. The same five (5) perceived gains appeared highest in 2015.

### Areas for Improvement

#### Engagement Indicators (EIs)

- First-year -Discussions with Diverse Others (new from 2015)

#### High Impact Practices (HIPs)

Study Abroad and Senior Culminating Experiences. Focus on more male participation.

#### Item Comparison

- Both first-year and seniors scored lower on discussions with people with religious beliefs and races other than their own; diverse perspectives in course discussions
- First-year scored lower on worked with students on course projects or assignments
- Seniors scored lower than their peers on two (2) HIPs – study abroad and senior culminating experience

#### Perceived Gains for Seniors: Bottom five (5)

Acquired job-or work-related knowledge and skills; solving complex real-world problems; analyzing numerical and statistical information; understanding people of other backgrounds; being an informed and active citizen. The same five (5) perceived gains appeared lowest in 2015.

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**Appendices**

**Appendix A – Peer Aspirant (N=10)**

Bryant University (Smithfield, RI)  
Butler University (Indianapolis, IN)  
Fairfield University (Fairfield, CT)  
Ithaca College (Ithaca, NY)  
Manhattan College (Bronx, NY)  
Providence College (Providence, RI)  
Quinnipiac University (Hamden, CT)  
Rider University (Lawrenceville, NJ)  
Sacred Heart University (Fairfield, CT)  
Xavier University (Cincinnati, OH)

**Appendix B – Carnegie Class (N=260)**

Master's Large

Contact the University of Scranton Institutional Research Office for full list.

**Appendix C – NSSE 2016 & 2017 (N=961)**

All other NSSE 2016 & 2017 U.S. participants

View list at [nsse.indiana.edu/pdf/nsse2016and2017\\_list.pdf](http://nsse.indiana.edu/pdf/nsse2016and2017_list.pdf)

**Appendix D - References**

Kuh, G. D. (2008). High-Impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

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Rocconi, L., & Gonyea, R.M. (2015). Contextualizing student engagement effect size: An empirical analysis. Paper presented at the Association for Institutional Research Annual Forum, Denver, CO.