



Components of Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice: Loyola and Peer Groups



The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is based on the rationale that student engagement can serve as a proxy for student learning and personal development. The survey was created to assess the extent to which a university's practices, investments, and environment encourage undergraduate students to take full advantage of institutional opportunities and resources that lead to positive student outcomes such as student satisfaction, persistence, and graduation. The survey is administered to freshmen and seniors only.

From responses to various questions on the NSSE, five NSSE benchmark indices of effective educational practice are calculated (benchmarks are on a scale from 0 to 100). While these benchmarks are good summaries of aspects of student engagement, it is only by looking at the individual items that make up the benchmarks that we can see more specifically how students are engaged in their educational experience.¹ This report looks at the benchmarks themselves and at responses to the component questions for each benchmark, based on data from the 2009 NSSE, for freshmen and seniors at Loyola and at three sets of peer institutions that participated in the NSSE. The first peer group is other Jesuit institutions; the second is a set of institutions selected because of their similarity to Loyola; the third is other universities in the same Carnegie class as Loyola (see Appendix A for list of institutions included in peer groups; see Appendix B for sample characteristics of each group).

Key findings

Level of Academic Challenge

- The Level of Academic Challenge (LAC) benchmark is an indicator of the extent to which Loyola emphasizes the importance of academic effort and sets high academic expectations.
- For both freshmen and seniors, the LAC benchmark was higher than that of the Carnegie class peer group, but for seniors it was lower than that of our Jesuit peers.
- Compared to students at Carnegie peers, Loyola students' courses more heavily emphasized some higher order tasks, especially analysis and

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all activities refer to students' current school year.

synthesis. Loyola students also did more reading, and wrote more short and medium length papers.

- Loyola students also tended to spend more time preparing for class than did their Carnegie peers.
- Loyola seniors wrote fewer long papers than did students at Jesuit and selected peer institutions.
- Freshmen at Loyola perceived more institutional support for academics than did their counterparts at Carnegie and selected peers, but seniors perceived less emphasis than did their counterparts at other Jesuit schools.

Active and Collaborative Learning

- The Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL) benchmark indicates the degree to which students are active in class and collaborate with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material.
- For both freshmen and seniors (especially freshmen), Loyola was lower on the ACL benchmark than Jesuit and selected peers.
- The lower ACL benchmark was due primarily to less frequent class participation and class presentations, and lower frequencies of working with classmates, both in and out of class.
- For freshmen, another factor was low frequency of course-related service learning.

Student-Faculty Interaction

- The Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI) benchmark measures the degree to which students learn firsthand how experts think about and solve practical problems, by interacting with faculty both in and out of the classroom.
- On the SFI benchmark, Loyola freshmen were lower than freshmen at Jesuit and selected peer institutions, but Loyola seniors were higher than Carnegie peer seniors.
- For freshmen, the main reasons for the lower SFI benchmarks, compared to Jesuit and selected peers, were lower frequencies of discussions with faculty outside of class (career plans, ideas from readings or classes) and of having worked with faculty on activities other than coursework (committees, student life activities, etc.).

- For seniors, the main reasons for Loyola having a higher SFI benchmark than Carnegie peers were more frequently having had discussions of readings or other course content with faculty outside of class and having received more prompt feedback from faculty on academic performance.

Enriching Educational Experiences

- The Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE) benchmark indicates participation in complementary learning opportunities to enhance students' academic programs, including experience of diversity and involvement in a variety of both academic and non-academic activities.
- Freshmen at Loyola had lower EEE benchmarks than did those at other Jesuit and selected peer institutions, but both freshmen and seniors had higher EEE benchmarks than did their counterparts at Carnegie peer institutions.
- For freshmen, the lower EEE benchmarks, compared to Jesuit and selected peers, were due primarily to lower participation rates in learning communities and foreign language coursework, and less time spent on extracurricular activities.
- For both freshmen and seniors' higher EEE benchmarks, compared to Carnegie peers, the most important explanatory factors were higher rates of participation in community/volunteer work, more frequent conversations with others who are different from themselves (in race, religion, values, etc.), and a stronger perception that Loyola emphasizes contact with others who are different.
- For seniors, other factors explaining the EEE benchmark higher than that of Carnegie peers were higher rates of participation in field experiences, foreign language study, study abroad, and senior capstone experiences.

Supportive Campus Environment

- The Supportive Campus Environment (SCE) benchmark indicates the degree to which students feel supported by the university in both academic and non-academic areas, and the quality of students' relationships with other students, faculty members, and administrative personnel.
- On the Supportive Campus Environment (SCE) benchmark, Loyola freshmen and seniors were

lower than freshmen and seniors at other Jesuit and selected peer institutions.

- The differences were due in part to less positive relationships with faculty and administrative personnel, and for seniors, with other students.
- Both freshmen and seniors at Loyola also reported less institutional support for academic success than did their Jesuit and selected peers.
- Compared to Jesuit peers, both freshmen and seniors reported lower levels of non-academic and social support.

Conclusions

- Loyola is ahead of its Carnegie peers in Level of Academic Challenge because of more emphasis on some forms of higher order thinking, more reading, more writing, and more time spent preparing for class. For freshmen, another factor was perceived institutional emphasis on academics.
- Loyola is behind its Jesuit and selected peers in Active and Collaborative Learning because of lower rates of active participation in class and less time spent working with other students.
- Loyola freshmen had lower levels of contact with faculty than did Jesuit and selected peers, as reflected by the Student-Faculty Interaction benchmark, especially in terms of discussion of coursework outside of class and work with faculty on extracurricular activities. That Loyola's senior SFI benchmark was higher than that of Loyola's Carnegie peers was due to more course-related discussions with faculty and more prompt academic feedback.
- One key to the lower Enriching Educational Experiences benchmark for freshmen, compared to Jesuit and selected peers, was less time spent on extracurricular activities. For all students, contact with and institutional emphasis on contact with others who are different were important in explaining the higher EEE benchmark, compared to Carnegie peers
- Freshmen and seniors at Loyola had lower benchmarks of Supportive Campus Environment than did those at Jesuit and selected peers, primarily because of lower quality relationships with others on campus and perception of lower levels of non-academic institutional support.

Table 1 Level of Academic Challenge Benchmark and Components								
	Freshmen				Seniors			
	Loyola compared with:				Loyola compared with:			
	Loyola	Jesuit	Carnegie Class	Selected peers	Loyola	Jesuit	Carnegie Class	Selected peers
Level of Academic Challenge (LAC)	58.7	58.3	53.4	58.4	59.5	60.9	56.4	59.8
Academic and Intellectual Experiences								
<i>In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? 1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very often</i>								
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or	2.73	2.72	2.64	2.71	2.72	2.73	2.71	2.72
Mental Activities								
<i>During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities? 1=Very little, 2=Some, 3=Quite a bit, 4=Very much</i>								
Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory	3.35	3.31	3.14	3.32	3.38	3.42	3.28	3.39
Synthesizing and organizing ideas/information/experiences into new, more complex interpretations/relationships	3.08	3.10	2.93	3.12	3.18	3.26	3.06	3.20
Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods	3.03	3.02	2.90	3.04	3.10	3.15	3.01	3.11
Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	3.12	3.16	3.08	3.17	3.24	3.34	3.23	3.28
Reading and Writing								
<i>During the current school year, about how much reading and writing have you done? 1=None, 2=1-4, 3=5-10, 4=11-20, 5=More than 20</i>								
Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings	3.86	3.71	3.25	3.61	3.56	3.52	3.15	3.43
Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more	1.23	1.24	1.28	1.27	1.59	1.71	1.64	1.72
Number of written papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages	2.53	2.57	2.30	2.63	2.82	2.90	2.49	2.85
Number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages	3.26	3.31	3.03	3.46	3.20	3.19	2.97	3.17
Time Usage								
<i>About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following? 1=0 hrs/wk, 2=1-5 hrs/wk, 3=6-10 hrs/wk, 4=11-15 hrs/wk, 5=16-20 hrs/wk, 6=21-25 hrs/wk, 7=26-30 hrs/wk, 8=More than 30 hrs/wk</i>								
Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work)	4.92	4.59	4.21	4.52	4.53	4.37	4.24	4.26
Institutional Environment								
<i>To what extent does your institution emphasize each of the following? 1=Very little, 2=Some, 3=Quite a bit, 4=Very much</i>								
Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work	3.29	3.25	3.13	3.17	3.11	3.24	3.13	3.14
Source: National Survey of Student Engagement, 2009								

Table 2 Active and Collaborative Learning Benchmark and Components								
	Freshmen				Seniors			
	Loyola compared with:							
	Loyola	Jesuit	Carnegie Class	Selected peers	Loyola	Jesuit	Carnegie Class	Selected peers
Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL)	41.3	44.8	42.2	46.7	51.1	53.1	50.4	53.5
Academic and Intellectual Experiences								
<i>In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? 1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very often</i>								
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	2.89	3.03	2.74	3.07	3.13	3.30	3.03	3.25
Made a class presentation	2.09	2.24	2.18	2.35	2.77	2.89	2.73	2.93
Worked with other students on projects during class	2.22	2.29	2.43	2.35	2.37	2.42	2.54	2.52
Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	2.37	2.56	2.45	2.60	2.74	2.82	2.83	2.87
Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)	1.65	1.76	1.73	1.76	1.81	1.86	1.88	1.84
Participated in a community-based project (e.g. service learning) as part of a regular course	1.54	1.67	1.54	1.77	1.92	1.86	1.64	1.85
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)	2.81	2.81	2.75	2.83	2.97	2.98	2.89	2.93
Source: National Survey of Student Engagement, 2009								

Table 3									
Student-Faculty Interaction Benchmark and Components									
	Freshmen				Seniors				
	Loyola compared with:				Loyola compared with:				
	Loyola	Jesuit	Carnegie Class	Selected peers	Loyola	Jesuit	Carnegie Class	Selected peers	
Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)	32.8	36.4	33.3	36.4	44.5	45.5	40.9	44.3	
Academic and Intellectual Experiences									
<i>In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? 1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very often</i>									
Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	2.61	2.70	2.59	2.73	2.86	2.83	2.78	2.87	
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	2.08	2.21	2.17	2.16	2.41	2.53	2.37	2.47	
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	1.84	1.99	1.84	1.98	2.18	2.18	2.05	2.16	
Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance	2.75	2.79	2.61	2.85	3.02	2.97	2.73	2.92	
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)	1.48	1.71	1.60	1.69	1.88	1.97	1.81	1.88	
Enriching Educational Experiences									
<i>Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution? (Recoded: 0=Have not decided, Do not plan to do, Plan to do; 1=Done. Thus, the mean is the proportion responding "Done" among all valid respondents.)</i>									
Work on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements	.03	.04	.05	.04	.20	.23	.20	.22	
Source: National Survey of Student Engagement, 2009									

Table 4								
Enriching Educational Experiences Benchmark and Components								
	Freshmen				Seniors			
	Loyola compared with:				Loyola compared with:			
	Loyola	Jesuit	Carnegie Class	Selected peers	Loyola	Jesuit	Carnegie Class	Selected peers
Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE)	29.6	31.8	28.0	32.5	47.5	48.6	40.7	48.4
Academic and Intellectual Experiences								
<i>In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? 1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very often</i>								
Used an electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment	2.61	2.65	2.69	2.74	2.85	2.87	2.87	2.89
Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than	2.75	2.73	2.61	2.77	2.97	2.77	2.70	2.82
Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	2.87	2.87	2.72	2.92	2.96	2.89	2.75	2.89
Enriching Educational Experiences								
<i>Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution? (Recorded: 0=Have not decided, Do not plan to do, Plan to do; 1=Done. Thus, the mean is the proportion responding "Done" among all valid respondents.)</i>								
Practicum, internship, field experience, or clinical assignment	.06	.08	.07	.07	.60	.64	.52	.64
Community service or volunteer work	.47	.48	.39	.51	.69	.73	.59	.69
Participate in a learning community	.16	.21	.20	.23	.22	.30	.26	.29
Foreign language coursework	.26	.39	.21	.39	.63	.60	.41	.55
Study abroad	.01	.02	.03	.02	.27	.29	.15	.30
Independent study or self-designed major	.02	.03	.03	.03	.15	.19	.17	.20
Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.)	---	---	---	---	.47	.46	.34	.49
Time Usage								
<i>About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following? 1=0 hrs/wk, 2=1-5 hrs/wk, 3=6-10 hrs/wk, 4=11-15 hrs/wk, 5=16-20 hrs/wk, 6=21-25 hrs/wk, 7=26-30 hrs/wk, 8=More than 30 hrs/wk</i>								
Participating in co-curricular activities	2.27	2.65	2.33	2.57	2.15	2.53	2.14	2.45
Institutional Environment								
<i>To what extent does your institution emphasize each of the following? 1=Very little, 2=Some, 3=Quite a bit, 4=Very much</i>								
Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	2.90	2.86	2.69	2.78	2.71	2.68	2.50	2.65
Source: National Survey of Student Engagement, 2009								

Table 5 Enriching Educational Experiences Benchmark and Components								
	Freshmen				Seniors			
	Loyola compared with:							
	Loyola	Jesuit	Carnegie Class	Selected peers	Loyola	Jesuit	Carnegie Class	Selected peers
Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE)	29.6	31.8	28.0	32.5	47.5	48.6	40.7	48.4
Academic and Intellectual Experiences								
<i>In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? 1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very often</i>								
Used an electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment	2.61	2.65	2.69	2.74	2.85	2.87	2.87	2.89
Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than	2.75	2.73	2.61	2.77	2.97	2.77	2.70	2.82
Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in	2.87	2.87	2.72	2.92	2.96	2.89	2.75	2.89
Enriching Educational Experiences								
<i>Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution? (Recorded: 0=Have not decided, Do not plan to do, Plan to do; 1=Done. Thus, the</i>								
Practicum, internship, field experience, or clinical assignment	.06	.08	.07	.07	.60	.64	.52	.64
Community service or volunteer work	.47	.48	.39	.51	.69	.73	.59	.69
Participate in a learning community	.16	.21	.20	.23	.22	.30	.26	.29
Foreign language coursework	.26	.39	.21	.39	.63	.60	.41	.55
Study abroad	.01	.02	.03	.02	.27	.29	.15	.30
Independent study or self-designed major	.02	.03	.03	.03	.15	.19	.17	.20
Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.)	---	---	---	---	.47	.46	.34	.49
Time Usage								
<i>About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following? 1=0 hrs/wk, 2=1-5 hrs/wk, 3=6-10 hrs/wk, 4=11-15 hrs/wk, 5=16-20 hrs/wk, 6=21-25 hrs/wk, 7=26-30 hrs/wk, 8=More than 30 hrs/wk</i>								
Participating in co-curricular activities	2.27	2.65	2.33	2.57	2.15	2.53	2.14	2.45
Institutional Environment								
<i>To what extent does your institution emphasize each of the following? 1=Very little, 2=Some, 3=Quite a bit, 4=Very much</i>								
Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	2.90	2.86	2.69	2.78	2.71	2.68	2.50	2.65
Source: National Survey of Student Engagement, 2009								

Appendix A Institutions in Peer Groups

Jesuit Consortium Peers

Boston College
College of the Holy Cross
Le Moyne College
Loyola College in Maryland
Loyola University New Orleans
Regis University
Rockhurst University
Saint Joseph's University
Saint Louis University
Saint Peters College
Santa Clara University
Seattle University
Xavier University

Selected Peers

DePaul University
Illinois Institute of Technology
Saint Louis University
Santa Clara University
The Catholic University of America
Tulane University of Louisiana
University of Denver
Villanova University
Xavier University

Carnegie Class Peers

Auburn University
Boston College
Bowling Green State University
Brigham Young University
Clark Atlanta University
Clark University
Clarkson University
Clemson University
Colorado School of Mines
Drexel University
Florida Institute of Technology
George Mason University
Howard University
Illinois Institute of Technology
Indiana University Purdue University-Indianapolis
Lehigh University
Miami University-Oxford
Michigan Technological University
North Dakota State University
Northeastern University
Northern Illinois University
Oklahoma State University
Polytechnic Institute of New York University
Saint Louis University
Stevens Institute of Technology
Syracuse University
Temple University
Texas Tech University
The Catholic University of America
The University of Akron
The University of Montana
The University of Texas at Arlington
The University of Texas at Dallas
The University of Texas at El Paso
University of Alaska Fairbanks
University of Denver
University of Houston
University of Louisville
University of Maryland, Baltimore County
University of Memphis

University of Mississippi
 University of Missouri-Kansas City
 University of Missouri-St. Louis
 University of Nevada-Las Vegas
 University of Nevada, Reno
 University of North Dakota
 University of Oregon
 University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras Campus
 University of Southern Mississippi
 University of Toledo
 University of Wyoming
 Virginia Commonwealth University
 Western Michigan University
 Wichita State University
 Wright State University

Appendix B								
2009 NSSE Response Rates and Sample Sizes of Loyola and Peer Groups								
	Loyola		Jesuit		Carnegie Class		Selected peers	
	Freshmen	Seniors	Freshmen	Seniors	Freshmen	Seniors	Freshmen	Seniors
Overall	33%		35%		28%		34%	
By class	30%	35%	33%	36%	26%	31%	33%	35%
NSSE sample size	1,990	1,995	12,441	13,010	94,117	96,204	11,412	10,554

Source: National Survey of Student Engagement, 2009