

Appendix II:

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT SPRINGFIELD National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

Each year, the National Survey of Student Engagement asks first-year and senior-level students at participating schools to answer questions about their educational experiences—for example, their classroom participation, interaction with faculty, and time spent on various enriching activities. The goal is to help schools determine how engaged their students are in activities that lead to learning. Based on these questions, NSSE created five benchmarks of effective educational practices to focus discussions about the importance of student engagement and to guide institutional improvement efforts.¹ These benchmarks include: 1) Level of Academic Challenge, 2) Active & Collaborative Learning, 3) Student-Faculty Interaction, 4) Enriching Educational Experiences, and 5) Supportive Campus Environment. The benchmarks are based on 42 key likert-style questions from the NSSE survey that capture many vital aspects of the student experience. According to NSSE, these behaviors and institutional features are among the more powerful contributors to learning and personal development.

The purpose of this document is to review multi-year UIS benchmark scores to determine if and how our benchmark scores compare to those of students enrolled at peer institutions. These peer groups include: (a) our Carnegie class for 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2010 and (b) COPLAC institutions for 2010. Additional attention is focused on how UIS students compare to two additional peer groups identified by NSSE for their high levels of student engagement: (a) institutions with benchmark scores placing them in the top 50% of all NSSE schools in 2010 and (b) institutions with benchmark scores in the top 10% for 2010.

For each benchmark, UIS scores in **BOLD** indicate that UIS students' responses were significantly lower than the average responses on their counterparts at peer schools. Where such differences appeared, the effect size was noted to provide a level of practical significance to the difference. In general, an effect size of .2 is often considered small, .5 moderate, and .8 large.

¹ The construction of the NSSE Benchmarks has four steps. First, all items that contribute to a benchmark are converted to a 0 - 100 point scale. For the 'enriching' items (question 7 on the survey), those students who indicated that they had already "done" the activity receive a score of 100, while those students who "plan to do," "do not plan to do," or who "have not decided" to do the activity receive a 0. Other items are converted as would be expected. For example, items with four response options (e.g., never, sometimes, often, very often) are recoded with values of 0, 33.33, 66.67, or 100. Second, part-time students' scores were adjusted on four Level of Academic Challenge items. For each item, a ratio was calculated by dividing the mean score of all full-time students by the mean score of all part-time students. Each part-time student's score on an item was multiplied by the corresponding ratio to get their adjusted score. Adjusted scores were limited so as not to exceed 100. Third, student-level benchmark scores were created for each group of items by taking the mean of each student's scores. A mean was calculated for each student so long as they had answered three-fifths of the items in any particular benchmark. Finally, institutional benchmarks were created by calculating weighted averages of the student-level scores for each class (first-year students and seniors).

Benchmark 3: Student-Faculty Interaction

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. The NSSE questions central to this benchmark include:

- 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-live activities, etc.)
- Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance
- Worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements

Benchmark 5: Supportive Campus Environment

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. The NSSE questions central to this benchmark include:

- Campus environment provides the support you need to help you succeed academically
- Campus environments help you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
- Campus environments provide 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

Top 10% and Top 50% Comparisons

These data allow you to estimate the performance of your average student in relation to the average student attending two different institutional peer groups identified by NSSE for their high levels of student engagement: (a) institutions with benchmark scores placing them in the top 50% of all NSSE schools in 2010 and (b) institutions with benchmark scores in the top 10% for 2010.^a These comparisons allow an institution to determine if the engagement of their students differs in significant, meaningful ways from students in these high performing peer groups.

		UIS	NSSE 2010 Top 50%			NSSE 2010 Top 10%		
		Mean	Mean	Sig	Effect Size ^a	Mean	Sig	Effect Size ^a
First Year	Student - Faculty Interaction	39.5	39.9		-.02	44.1	*	-.21
	Supportive Campus Environment	63.1	67.2		-.23	70.8	***	-.43
Senior Year	Student - Faculty Interaction	36.3	49.2	***	-.60	55.3	***	-.86
	Supportive Campus Environment	58.9	64.7	***	-.31	68.6	***	-.52

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

^a Effect size is the mean difference divided by the pooled standard deviation.

^a Precision-weighted means (produced by Hierarchical Linear Modeling) were used to determine the top 50% and top 10% institutions for each benchmark, separately for first-year and senior students. Using this method, benchmark scores of institutions with relatively large standard errors are adjusted substantially toward the grand mean of all students, while those with smaller standard errors receive smaller corrections. Thus, schools with less table data, though they may have high scores, may not be identified among the top scorers. NSSE does not publish the names of the top 50% and top 10% institutions because of its commitment not to release individual school results and its policy against the ranking of institutions.