



Southern Connecticut State University National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) 2004-2005 Results

Introduction and Methodology

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is an annual survey that evaluates the extent to which freshmen and seniors at 4-year colleges and universities engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development. Survey items fall into five clusters of activities that research shows are linked to positive outcomes of college: level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, and a supportive campus environment. More than 660,000 students, randomly selected from 529 participating institutions, were included in the NSSE 2005 sample. Approximately 245,000 students responded to the survey.

Invitations to complete the web-based survey were sent to 1,981 randomly selected SCSU freshmen and seniors via their mySCSU e-mail during the Spring 2005 semester¹. The SCSU response rate of 42% (N=829; 460 first-year students and 369 seniors) was higher than the national average (37%) and that of Carnegie Master's I (35%) and selected peer institutions (31%)².

The SCSU respondent characteristics from NSSE 2005 approximate closely the characteristics of SCSU's entire first-year and senior populations with few exceptions. First-year female respondents (74%) are overrepresented compared to all first-year females at SCSU (63%). Off-campus residents (52%) are overrepresented compared to their representation in the population (41%). Among seniors, female respondents (72%) are overrepresented compared to all females in the senior population (65%). [Females are typically over-represented among NSSE 2005 respondents.] First year respondents are 55% of the sample compared to 45% of the SCSU population, and the senior respondents are 45% of the sample compared to 55% of the population.

This report summarizes some of the key findings from the survey and compares SCSU's results with that of selected peers and other Master's I institutions. Frequency distributions for all items are included in the appendix. A separate report comparing freshmen responses with their responses to the Beginning College Student Survey completed at New Student Orientation in August 2004 (N=354) is available.

¹ Non-respondents received up to four follow-up e-mails followed by a paper survey after the fourth e-mail.

² Peer institutions included Bridgewater State College, Montclair State College, Oakland University, Rhode Island College, Salisbury University, Towson University, and William Patterson University.



Summary of Results

In general, Southern students report similar levels of engagement to that of students at selected peer schools. The following sections summarize results in the areas of academic experiences, student learning outcomes, enrichment and personal experiences, institutional environment, and student satisfaction.

Academic Experiences

Overall, Southern students reported similar levels of engagement as students from selected peer institutions on a variety of academic activities. For a majority of items, reported engagement levels were lower when compared with all Masters I and all NSSE participating schools. Some exceptions are listed here³

- Seniors reported having taken significantly more foreign language coursework than all other NSSE respondents.
- SCSU first year students reported that they prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in significantly more often than all other first year NSSE respondents.
- Both first year students and seniors reported working with other students on projects during class significantly more often than all other NSSE respondents.
- Significantly fewer first-year students reported coming to class without completing readings or assignments than all other first-year NSSE respondents.

For the most part, Southern students reported similar levels of cognitive activities in their coursework as all other participating students. These included the amount of memorization, synthesis, and making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods. SCSU seniors reported less emphasis on analysis than seniors at other schools. Both first-year students and seniors reported significantly less emphasis on application of theories or concepts to practical problems than students at other participating schools.

Although first-year students reported having fewer assigned texts, books, or book-length packs of course readings, seniors reported more of these assignments than students at selected peer schools and similar numbers as other Master's I and all NSSE schools. During the current year, 35% of first-year students and 21% of seniors reported reading no books for personal enjoyment or enrichment.

First-year students reported similar levels of writing as other student respondents, while seniors reported writing significantly more papers between 5-19 pages as well as 20 pages or more than students from other schools. Yet, 44% of seniors reported that they had not written any papers 20 or more pages in length.

³ Items are listed in order of the magnitude of the difference between SCSU students and the reference group.



First-year Southern students reported having significantly more homework problem sets taking more than one hour to complete than students at selected peer institutions.

Southern students reported spending approximately the same amount of time preparing for class as students at peer institutions. However, this was significantly lower than the time reported by students at other participating schools. Only 13% of full-time students reported spending more than 20 hours preparing for classes; 25% prepared 5 hours or less per week.

Both first-year students and seniors rated the level of challenge of examinations lower than all other participating students.

Table 1 presents the most frequently and least frequently reported academic-related experiences of Southern students.

Table 1. Most Frequently and Least Frequently Reported Academic Activities

	<i>First-Year Responding “Very Often” or “Often”</i>	<i>Seniors Responding “Very Often” or “Often”</i>
<i>Most Frequent Activities</i>		
Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	73%	89%
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	68%	50%
Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor	66%	79%
Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments	62%	65%
Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance (written or oral)	59%	65%
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	56%	73%
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations	55%	59%
Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own	51%	58%
Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	50%	51%
Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions	48%	68%
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	44%	62%
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family, co-workers, etc.)	41%	55%



	<i>First-Year Responding “Never”</i>	<i>Seniors Responding “Never”</i>
<i>Least Frequent Activities</i>		
Participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course	73%	59%
Tutored or taught other students (paid or volunteer)	63%	48%
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, student life activities, etc.)	59%	54%
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	46%	31%

Student Learning Outcomes

Seniors evaluated Southern’s impact on their learning in 16 general areas of knowledge, skill, and personal development. Seniors reported higher levels of impact than freshmen respondents. Table 2 shows the percent of seniors who reported their educational growth as being substantially impacted by SCSU in the 16 student learning outcome areas.

Table 2. Rank-Ordered Percent of Seniors Reporting Substantial Impact On Their Learning In 16 Areas⁴.

	Learning Outcome Area	% Rating SCSU Impact as Substantial
1	Acquiring a broad general education	84%
2	Writing clearly and effectively	82%
3	Thinking critically and analytically	81%
4	Using computing and information technology	76%
5	Speaking clearly and effectively	73%
6	Working effectively with others	73%
7	Acquiring job or work related knowledge and skills	70%
8	Analyzing quantitative problems	69%
9	Learning effectively on your own	67%
10	Understanding yourself	58%
11	Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	53%
12	Solving complex real-world problems	52%
13	Developing a personal code of values and ethics	52%
14	Contributing to the welfare of your community	33%
15	Voting in local, state, or national elections	33%
16	Developing a deepened sense of spirituality	20%

⁴ Percent responding “quite a bit” or “very much” to the question, “To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?”



Southern's impact was similar to that of selected peers on all 16 outcomes. Compared to other Master's I institutions, Southern's impact was reported to be similar on 8 of the 16 outcomes. Significantly fewer seniors than in other Master's I institutions reported substantial growth on the remaining 8 outcomes. Results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. SCSU Impact on 16 Learning Outcomes Compared With Peer Institutions and Other Master's I Institutions on NSSE 2005

Learning Outcome Area	% Rating Impact as Substantial		
	SCSU	Peers	Master's I
<i>Impact comparable to peer and Master's I institutions</i>			
Acquiring a broad general education	84%	83%	86%
Writing clearly and effectively	82%	74%	78%
Using computing and information technology	76%	76%	79%
Speaking clearly and effectively	73%	70%	74%
Acquiring job or work related knowledge and skills	70%	69%	75%
Analyzing quantitative problems	69%	67%	72%
Understanding yourself	58%	56%	65%
Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	53%	49%	53%
<i>Impact comparable to peers but significantly lower than Master's I institutions⁵</i>			
Thinking critically and analytically	81%	82%	87%
Working effectively with others	73%	76%	80%
Learning effectively on your own	67%	68%	75%
Solving complex real-world problems	52%	51%	59%
Developing a personal code of values and ethics	52%	47%	59%
Contributing to the welfare of your community	33%	34%	48%
Voting in local, state, or national elections	33%	29%	40%
Developing a deepened sense of spirituality	20%	17%	33%

⁵ p<.001 two-tailed test for significance, from NSSE 2005 Means Comparison Report.



Enrichment and Personal Experiences

Students reported participating in the following activities at rates similar to students at peer institutions:

- Practica, internships, field experiences, etc. (81%)⁶
- Community service or volunteer work (65%)
- Research with faculty member (29%)
- Study abroad (18%)
- Independent study or self-designed major (27%)

Fifty-six percent of first-year students and 63% of seniors reported that they did not participate in any co-curricular activities. This is somewhat lower than students at peer institutions, and significantly lower than students at other Master's I schools.

Southern students reported working for pay at similar rates as students from peer institutions. However, in comparison to other Master's I institutions, significantly fewer Southern students work on campus, while significantly more students work off campus.

Seventy percent of full-time students reported working for pay off campus, and 17% reported working on campus. Eleven percent of full-time seniors and 9% of full-time first year students reported working both on and off campus. Forty-four percent of full-time students reported working more than 15 hours per week; 13% work more than 30 hours per week.

Southern seniors reported significantly more commuting time than students at peer institutions.

Institutional Environment

Southern students rated their relationships with other students and faculty similar to students at peer institutions, but significantly lower than students at all other NSSE participating schools. Students rated their relationships with administrative personnel and offices significantly lower than students from selected peer schools as well as all other NSSE participating schools. The effect sizes for these differences ranged from small to moderate for first-year students, and from moderate to large for seniors.

Students rated Southern's emphasis on various effective educational practices similar to students at peer institutions, although lower than students at all Master's I and other NSSE schools. Table 4 lists some of these practices and the percentage of students responding that the institution emphasizes the practice "quite a bit" and "very much."

⁶ Percentage of seniors who reported having already done or planning to do activity.



Table 4. Students' Perceptions of the Extent to Which the Institution Supports Academic and Social Needs⁷

Educational Practice	Percent Rating Institution's Emphasis as Substantial ⁸					
	First-Year			Seniors		
	SCSU	Peers	Master's I	SCSU	Peers	Master's I
Attending campus events and activities (special speakers, cultural performances, athletic events, etc.)	44%	53%*	64%***	33%	39%*	53%***
Using computers in academic work	77%	78%	83%***	82%	83%	89%***
Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically	66%	70%	75%***	57%	61%	71%***
Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	31%	27%*	33%	18%	17%	25%***
Providing the support you need to thrive socially	38%	36%	43%	23%	25%	34%***
Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work	75%	73%	78%**	76%	74%	78%
Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	52%	49%	52%	42%	38%	45%

Student Satisfaction

Eighty-two percent of first-year students and 76% of seniors rated the quality of their overall Southern experience as “good” or “excellent.” Seventy-six percent of first-year students and 68% of seniors indicated that they would “probably” or “definitely” choose Southern again if they were starting over. SCSU responses are compared to responses from selected peers, other Master's I institutions, and all NSSE institutions in Figure 1.

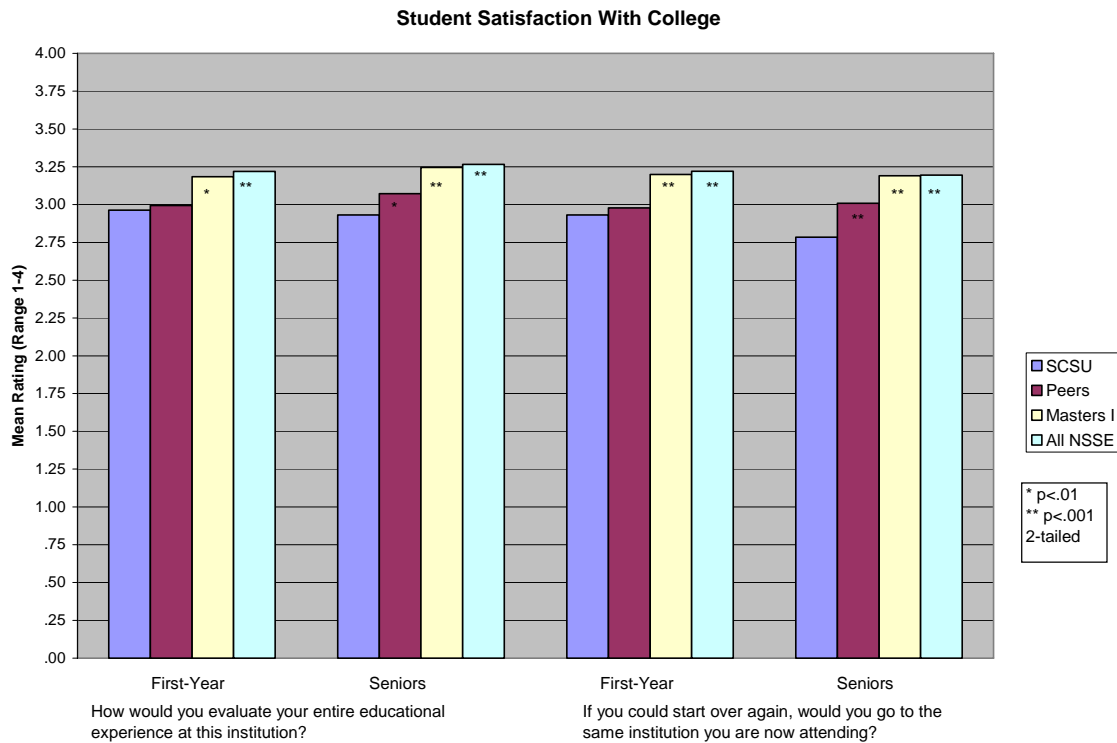
While Southern students rated the quality of academic advisement similarly as selected peer institutions, the ratings were significantly lower than for Master's I and all NSSE institutions.

⁷ Percent responding “quite a bit” or “very much” to the question, “To what extent does your institution emphasize each of the following?”

⁸ * p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001 two-tailed test for significance, from NSSE 2005 Means Comparison Report.



Figure 1. Student Satisfaction With College⁹



Concluding Remarks

This report summarizes some of the key findings from the 2005 National Survey of Student Engagement and compares our students' responses with those of students from selected peer institutions and other institutions. Overall, students at SCSU reported similar levels of engagement as students at selected peer institutions.

It is hoped that this information will lead to further analysis and help inform discussion among members of the university community regarding the planning and implementation of strategies to increase positive student outcomes.

⁹ Ratings: 1= poor, definitely no; 2=fair, probably no; 3=good, probably yes; 4=excellent, definitely yes.