

2011 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) – Executive Summary

The NSSE is an annual survey that assesses the extent to which first-year and senior undergraduates engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development. The survey is based on the premise that the frequency with which students engage in effective educational practices indicates the quality of the educational experience.

NSSE is supported by grants from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Pew Charitable Trusts. It is also co-sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Pew Forum on Undergraduate Learning.

In addition to allowing for national comparison of NSSE data, San Jose State University (SJSU) is also included in a consortium that is comprised of 12 additional California State Universities (CSU) campuses as a further comparative source for planning and benchmarking. For more detailed information about the NSSE and SJSU/CSU results, please refer to the *Mapping NSSE 2011 with WASC Standards* report available at oir.sjsu.edu/Assessment/projects/nsse.

Survey Sample and Demographics

In the 2011 spring semester, 2,748 first-year and 1,730 senior undergraduate students were selected through a random sampling process to receive the NSSE via electronic mail. The overall response rate for SJSU was 14%. Sixty-six percent of the first-year (freshmen) respondents were female and 34% were male. Senior respondents were similarly distributed in terms of gender, with 61% of respondents being female and 39% male. Ninety-nine percent of first-year students and 78% of seniors were enrolled full time in the Spring 2011 semester. First-year students and seniors had a similar race/ethnicity distribution (see table below). A total of 11% of respondents declined to respond to this item.

Ethnicity/Race	Freshmen	Seniors
American Indian/Native American	1%	0%
Asian/Asian American/Pacific Isl.	37%	29%
Black/African America	1%	3%
White (non-Hispanic)	29%	35%
Latino	20%	16%
Other*	7%	10%

*Other category includes multiracial and other

Summary of Findings

The following presents a summary of findings for each section of the NSSE. It describes items within each section of the survey and presents SJSU findings and comparisons to the CSU Consortium, Master's institutions (defined by Carnegie classifications), and the NSSE national group in text and tables. The tables contain mean scale scores and, in some cases, frequency distributions. Only items where SJSU significantly differed from at least one of the comparison groups were included in the mean comparison tables below. Significance was measured at the $p < .001$ level using t tests and are noted with an asterisk. Please visit the Office of Institutional Research's National Survey of Student Engagement page at <http://www.oir.sjsu.edu/Assessment/projects/nsse> to view NSSE results for the previous four administrations (2002, 2004, 2005, & 2008).

Academic and Intellectual Experiences

This section of the survey consists of 22 items that assess the frequency of student experiences within the current year. Items address issues such as class related participation and activities, working relationships and dialogue between students and faculty, course related use of technology, and paid or voluntary academically related services.

- The top three academic and intellectual experiences in which over 65% of SJSU freshmen and seniors experience most often are integration of ideas, inclusion of diverse perspectives, and use of e-mail.
- The top three academic and intellectual experiences in which less than 20% of SJSU freshmen and seniors experience least often are participation in a community project, working with faculty outside of course requirements, and tutoring other students.

SJSU: Activities Most Frequently Experienced	Freshmen	Seniors
Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	81%	86%
Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor	69%	81%

Seniors: Significant Differences	SJSU	CSU	Master's	NSSE
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	2.83	2.92	3.14*	3.10*
Come to class without completing readings or assignments	2.24	2.14	2.04*	2.08
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	1.84	2.01	2.09*	2.08*
Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance	2.60	2.68	2.83*	2.80*
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations	2.65	2.78	2.82*	2.78

1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=very often

* indicates significant difference at $p < .001$

Mental Activities

In this section, frequency of activities such as memorization, analysis, synthesis, making judgments and application of concepts were assessed.

- The mental activity practiced by over three quarters of SJSU freshmen and seniors is *analyzing* of information.
- The mental activity practiced by less than three quarters of SJSU freshmen and seniors is *memorizing* of information.

SJSU: Activity Most Frequently Experienced	Freshmen	Seniors
Coursework emphasizes: Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory	77%	88%

Percentages are based on "quite a bit" and "very much" responses

SJSU: Activity Least Frequently Experienced	Freshmen	Seniors
Coursework emphasizes: Memorizing facts, ideas, or methods from your courses and readings	67%	67%

Percentages are based on "quite a bit" and "very much" responses

Freshmen Comparisons

- Freshmen at SJSU feel memorization, synthesis, and making judgments is emphasized in their coursework as much as their peers in the comparison groups feel those mental activities are emphasized in their own coursework. Application of theories is perceived to be less emphasized at SJSU by freshmen, in comparison to the national sample.

Freshmen: Significant Differences	SJSU	CSU	Master's	NSSE
Coursework emphasizes: Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	2.92	3.05	3.07	3.09*

1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much

* indicates significant difference at $p < .001$

Senior Comparisons

- There were no significant differences at the $p < .001$ level among seniors.

Reading and Writing

This section asks students about the number of assigned books read as well as the number of written reports completed of various lengths during the current school year.

Freshmen Comparisons

- Based on NSSE responses, a typical writing workload for SJSU freshmen is between 5 and 10 papers (less than five pages in length).

- SJSU freshmen write more papers between five and ten pages in length than their peers at other CSUs.

Freshmen: Significant Differences	SJSU	CSU	Master's	NSSE
Number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages	3.05	2.84*	2.97	2.97

1=none, 2=between 1 and 4, 3=between 5 and 10, 4=between 11-20, 5=more than 20;

* indicates significant difference at $p < .001$

Senior Comparisons

- There were no significant differences at the $p < .001$ level among seniors.

Problem Sets

This section was made up of two questions assessing the amount of problem sets students completed per week. The first question asked for the number of problems that took an hour or more, and the second question asked for the number of problems that took less than an hour.

- There were no significant differences at the $p < .001$ level among freshmen comparison groups and among seniors comparison groups.

Challenge of Examinations

The only question in this section asks, "Select the circle that best represents the extent to which your examinations during the current school year challenged you to do your best work?" (1=very little to 7 = very much)

- There were no significant differences at the $p < .001$ level among freshmen comparison groups and among seniors comparison groups.

Additional Collegiate Experiences

In this section, students are asked six questions pertaining to the frequency of their experience with college related activities. Items relate to artistic experiences, physical fitness, spiritual growth, and reflections of your own perspectives.

- More than half of SJSU's respondents reported learning something which affected the way they saw an issue.
- Less than 20% of SJSU respondents reported participating in spiritual activities.

SJSU: Activity Most Frequently Experienced	Freshmen	Seniors
Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept	56%	68%

Percentages are based on 'often' and 'very often' responses

SJSU: Activity Least Frequently Experienced	Freshmen	Seniors
Participated in activities to enhance your spirituality (worship, meditation, prayer, etc.)	19%	17%

Percentages are based on 'often' and 'very often' responses

Freshman & Senior Comparisons

- Based on the percentage above, it is not surprising that both freshmen and seniors participated in spiritual activities significantly less than their peers in the Mater's and national comparison groups.
- In addition, SJSU freshmen reported examining their views on an issue less often than freshmen in the Mater's and national sample comparison groups.

Freshmen: Significant Differences	SJSU	CSU	Master's	NSSE
Exercised or participated in physical fitness activities	2.63	2.66	2.79	2.84*
Participated in activities to enhance your spirituality (worship, meditation, prayer, etc.)	1.69	1.76	2.02*	2.05*
Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue	2.43	2.53	2.60*	2.62*

1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=very often;

* indicates significant difference at $p < .001$

Seniors: Significant Differences	SJSU	CSU	Master's	NSSE
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- Significantly fewer seniors have participated in field work, foreign language coursework, independent study, and culminating experiences than seniors in all three comparison groups.
- The one enriching activity SJSU freshmen and seniors participate less often in as compared to their peers is foreign language coursework, but it is not the least frequently experienced among SJSU freshmen and seniors.

SJSU: Least Emphasized	Freshmen	Seniors
Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	38%	26%
Providing the support you need to thrive socially	46%	30%

Consortium Questions

Consortium items are questions developed by California State University administrators of participating institutions. These ten items were included in the survey distributed only to students attending a CSU. The items refer to courses students have taken, learning contributed by the institution in various areas (such as professional and working with others effectively), and a student's connection to the institution. Although there were no significant differences at $p < .001$, for number of courses taken not required for the degree, these data have been included in the report because of its importance.

- Overall, it seems as though more courses not required for the degree being pursued are being taken by students at other CSU's.
- 67% of freshmen and 50% of seniors at SJSU, reported taking between 0 and 2 courses not required for their degree.
- SJSU students' top two reasons for taking courses not required are for personal interest or enrichment (freshmen 43% and seniors 63%) and belief that the course was required for General Education (freshmen 47% and seniors 33%).

Consortium: Significant Differences	SJSU	CSU
Please indicate how many courses you have taken at this institution that are not required for your degree.		

Discussion

Reference

Student Organization Directory. (2011). Retrieved September 30, 2011,