National Survey of Student Engagement
Summary Report: 2005

The University of Alabama

Report compiled by
Jon Charles Acker, Ph.D.
Coordinator for Student Assessment

Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

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Introduction

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is designed to obtain, on an annual basis, information from scores of colleges and universities nationwide about student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college.

The NSSE questionnaire, The College Student Report, asks students about their college experiences-how they spend their time, what they feel they have gained from their classes, their assessment of the quality of their interactions with faculty and friends, and about other important activities. More information about this survey can be found at http://www.indiana.edu/~nsse/.

Students from The University of Alabama were surveyed based on the following criteria. First-year or freshmen students are represented by ALL undergraduate students (traditional, continuing education, full-time or part-time) who are currently classified as freshmen not counting advanced placement credit, who were enrolled in the fall 2004 semester, and who will also be classified as a continuing freshmen in spring 2005.

Seniors are defined as ALL undergraduate students (traditional, continuing education, full-time or part-time) who are currently enrolled in fall 2004, and counting the number of credits enrolled in fall 2004, are within 12-24 hours of graduation in spring 2005 or summer 2005.

From each of these groups (first-year students and senior students) 500 students were randomly selected. Students were asked to complete the survey via the web. Of these initial 500 students in each group, 479 first-year students and 451 senior students were retained for the final sample. Of these retained students, 77 first-year students and 103 senior students responded, for response rates of 16.1% and 22.8%, respectively.

Comparisons in this report are between UA and “peer” institutions. NSSE participating institutions were allowed to select peer comparison groups in 2005. The peer comparison group selected for UA included six Southeastern Conference schools (Mississippi State University, University of South Carolina, University of Georgia, University of Kentucky, The University of Tennessee, University of Arkansas) and one Atlantic Coast Conference school (Florida State University).

UA continues to have a response-rate problem, with only 16% of first-year and 23% of senior students responding to the survey in 2005. The response rate has fallen each year that UA has participated in NSSE. However, low response rates are experienced at the peer
institutions, as well. Overall, only 27% of first-year and 30% of seniors responded for the peer group.

Historically, with all surveys at UA, females have been much more likely to respond than males. The 2005 breakdown was more in-line with the student population for first-year students but overwhelmingly biased towards females for seniors. The peer group breakdown was greatly biased towards females as well, showing that this response bias is widespread.
Results and Discussion

The questions on the NSSE are categorized into thirteen themes. The themes are listed below.

1. Academic and Intellectual Experiences
2. Mental Activities
3. Reading and Writing
4. Problem Sets
5. Examinations
6. Additional College Experiences
7. Enriching Educational Experiences
8. Quality of Relationships
9. Time Usage
10. Institutional Environment
11. Educational and Personal Growth
12. Academic Advising
13. Satisfaction

Each theme is addressed below and has a brief discussion of any notable findings. Additionally, graphs are provided to depict items of special interest in more detail. The results for all items are given in a table following this section.
Academic and Intellectual Experiences

There was little difference on most items in this theme between UA and the peer group. Of the 22 items there were significant differences (p < .05) on one item for first-year students and four items for seniors.

The graphs, below, show the response breakdown for these significant items (1b, 1c, 1f, 1j, 1r).

Items 1b and 1c indicate that UA seniors were significantly more likely to make a class presentation and to prepare two or more drafts of paper assignments than the peer group. Item 1f related that UA seniors were significantly more likely to come to class prepared through completion of readings and assignments. UA first-year students, however, were significantly less likely to tutor or teach other students, as shown in item 1j. Item 1r showed that UA seniors were significantly more likely to say they worked harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's expectations.

1b. Made a class presentation: Seniors
1c. Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in: Seniors

![Bar chart showing the percentage of Seniors who prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment, categorized by frequency (Never, Sometimes, Often, Very Often).]

1f. Came to class without completing readings or assignments: Seniors

![Bar chart showing the percentage of Seniors who came to class without completing readings or assignments, categorized by frequency (Never, Sometimes, Often, Very Often).]
1j. Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary): First-Year

1r. Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations: Seniors
Mental Activities

None of the five items in this theme have significant differences between UA and the peer group.

Reading and Writing

Only one of the five items (3c) in this theme had a significant difference between UA and the peer group. It showed that UA seniors were much more likely to write one or more papers or reports of at least 20 pages.

3c. Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more: Seniors

![Bar chart showing the number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more among UA and peer group seniors. The chart displays the percentage of seniors in three categories: None, Between 1 - 4, Greater than 4 papers or reports. The UA group shows a higher percentage in the Greater than 4 category compared to the peer group.]
Problem Sets

Neither of the two items in this theme had significant differences between UA and the peer group.

Examinations

There was no significant difference between UA and the peer group for the one item in this theme.

Additional Collegiate Experiences

Only one of the six items (6c) in this theme had a significant difference between UA and the peer group. It showed that UA seniors were much more likely to participate in activities to enhance their spirituality.

6c. Participated in activities to enhance your spirituality (worship, meditation, prayer, etc.): Seniors
Enriching Educational Experiences

None of the eight items in this theme have significant differences between UA and the peer group.

Quality of Relationships

Only one of the three items (8c) in this theme had a significant difference between UA and the peer group. It showed that UA seniors thought administrative personnel were much more helpful than those at the peer institutions.

8c. Quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices: Seniors

![Bar chart showing comparison between UA and Peer in helpfulness]
Only one of the seven items (9e) in this theme had a significant difference between UA and the peer group. This item indicated that UA seniors were significantly more likely to spend time relaxing and socializing.

9e. Relaxing and socializing (watching TV, partying, exercising, etc.): Seniors
Institutional Environment

One of the seven items (10c) in this theme had a significant difference between UA and the peer group. It showed that UA first-year students were significantly less likely to believe that the institution encouraged contact among differing students.

10c. Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, racial/ethnic backgrounds: First-Year

![Bar chart showing the percentage of students from UA and peers who believe the institution encouraged contact among students from different economic, social, racial/ethnic backgrounds. The chart indicates a significant difference, with UA students showing lower percentages than the peer group.]
Educational and Personal Growth

Two of the sixteen items (11c, 11e) in this theme had significant differences between UA and the peer group responses. These items showed that UA seniors were significantly more likely to believe that they can write clearly and effectively than the peer group respondents, while first-year students were significantly less likely to believe they can think critically and analytically than the peer group students.

11c. Writing clearly and effectively: Seniors

![Bar chart showing the comparison between UA and peer group responses for seniors.]

11e. Thinking critically and analytically: First-Year

![Bar chart showing the comparison between UA and peer group responses for first-year students.]

There is only one item in this category and there were significant differences between UA students and the peer group for both first-year and senior students. It showed that UA first-year students were significantly more critical of advising than the peer group, while UA seniors were significantly more satisfied with advising than the peer group.

12. Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your institution: First-Year

12. Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your institution: Seniors
Satisfaction

Neither of the two items in this theme had significant differences between UA and the peer group.
Benchmark Comparisons

In an effort to distill all of the information contained in the survey, NSSE identified five latent variables, or benchmarks, of effective educational practice. These benchmarks are composed of groups of items from the survey.

The five latent variables are:
- Level of Academic Challenge (LAC),
- Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL),
- Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI),
- Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE), and
- Supportive Campus Environment (SCE).

UA first-year students scored substantially lower on four of the five groupings and essentially equal on the fifth. UA seniors, however, scored noticeably higher than the peer group on three of the groupings, essentially equal on one, and noticeably lower on one. This pattern of first-year students indicating greater dissatisfaction as a whole is confirmed when looking at the specific items (see Survey Item Frequency Distributions). To the contrary, senior students at UA as a whole are much more satisfied about the entire environment at UA, indicating that something beneficial is happening between the first and last year of the undergraduate experience that is resulting in such an upswing in satisfaction and engagement.
Benchmark Scores: First-Year

Benchmark Scores: Seniors