

BAYLOR

UNIVERSITY

IRT Series

Vol. 06-07, No. 25

September 18, 2006

2006 National Survey of Student Engagement

Executive Summary

Baylor participated in the 2006 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) with a 34% response rate (36% first-year student response rate and 31% senior response rate).

- Baylor first-year and senior students scored higher than the NSSE sample on the “Level of Academic Challenge” benchmark, with the first-year students scoring significantly higher (53.6 compared to 51.7).
- On the “Active and Collaborative Learning” benchmark, Baylor first-year and senior students scored equal to or slightly higher than the NSSE sample.
- Both first-year and senior students scored higher than the NSSE sample on the “Student-Faculty Interaction” benchmark, with the senior students scoring significantly higher (45.5 compared to 41.3).
- On the “Enriching Educational Experiences” and “Supportive Campus Environment” benchmarks both first-year and senior students scored significantly higher than the NSSE sample, with the most significant difference being the senior students on the “Enriching Educational Experiences” benchmark (49.3 compared to 39.9).

Detailed Report

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was launched by a generous grant from The Pew Charitable Trust and since 2002 has been supported by institutional participation fees. Each year NSSE collects information from colleges and universities to ‘measure the extent to which students engage in a effective educational practices that are empirically linked with learning, personal development and other desired outcomes such as student satisfaction, persistence, and graduation’. Baylor participated in the survey in 2002, 2003 and 2006.

There were approximately 750,000 first-year and senior students from 557 colleges and universities included in the 2006 NSSE sample. The sample size from Baylor was 1,589 first-year students (from a population of 3,168 incoming fall 2005 students) and 1,585 seniors (from a population of 1,896 students). There was a larger proportion of female respondents than the national enrollment average, but this is indicative of a national trend for female students to complete surveys at a higher rate. White (non-Hispanic) first-year respondents were slightly under-represented while Mexican/Mexican American first-year and senior respondents were slightly overrepresented in the Baylor sample.

Baylor used the Web+ survey mode which includes multiple electronic contacts and one paper questionnaire sent to a portion of non-respondents. The 185 institutions that participated in the Web+ mode of administration recorded an overall response rate of 39%. The overall response rate for Baylor was 34% (36% first-year student response rate and 31% senior response rate).

The purpose of this report is to examine the Baylor survey responses and compare these to the NSSE national mean to identify where Baylor students mirror the national norms and to also identify those areas where Baylor students indicate statistically significant differences – either positive or negative – from other students. As a part of its survey output, NSSE develops a Benchmark Report based on five clusters with specific survey questions grouped within the specified clusters. The benchmarks are as follows:

- Level of academic challenge
- Active and collaborative learning
- Student-faculty interactions
- Enriching educational experiences
- Supportive campus environment

The Benchmark Comparisons report was revised in 2005 “to focus more squarely on students and institutional improvement and to provide more instructive and reliable statistical comparisons with peer institutions.” The comparison group scores are now calculated for students *across* institutions, whereas in the past comparison group scores were derived by calculating the benchmark scores for each institution and then averaging these scores for all institutions in the comparison group. The way an individual institution’s benchmark scores are calculated did not change. This move from institution-level to student-level comparisons means that the decile charts and the Engagement Index have been discontinued.

In this Benchmark Comparison report, Baylor is compared to three groups: institutions with our same Carnegie classification (“Carnegie Peers”), private universities with the doctoral/research universities Carnegie classifications (“Selected Peers”), and all NSSE 2006 institutions (“NSSE”). Baylor first-year and senior students scored lower than Selected Peers but higher than Carnegie Peers and NSSE on the “Level of Academic Challenge” benchmark. On the “Active and Collaborative Learning” benchmark, Baylor first-year students scored lower than Selected Peers but higher than Carnegie Peers and NSSE. The senior students scored higher than all comparison groups on this same benchmark. Both first-year and senior students also scored higher than all comparison groups on the “Student-Faculty Interaction,” “Enriching Educational Experiences” and “Supportive Campus Environment” benchmarks.

Benchmark	First-Year Students				Senior Students			
	Baylor	2006 Peers			Baylor	2006 Peers		
		Selected	Carnegie	NSSE		Selected	Carnegie	NSSE
Level of Academic Challenge	53.6	55.1	51.0	51.7	57.3	57.7	55.1	55.8
Active and Collaborative Learning	41.3	42.8	40.1	41.3	51.3	51.0	49.2	50.4
Student-Faculty Interaction	33.5	32.5	30.4	32.1	45.5	43.2	39.5	41.3
Enriching Educational Experiences	31.0	30.0	26.6	26.7	49.3	44.7	38.7	39.9
Supportive Campus Environment	63.7	60.2	57.4	59.1	63.0	58.7	55.4	56.6

In addition to the changes mentioned above with the Benchmark Comparison report, comparisons with two new reference groups have been added: (1) students attending above-average institutions with benchmark scores in the top 50% and (2) students attending high-performing institutions with benchmark scores in the top 10% of the entire NSSE 2006 cohort. “These comparisons allow institutions to determine if their average

student is significantly and meaningfully different from the average student in each of these high-performing, or potential aspirant, reference groups.”

Baylor first-year students scored lower than both the top 10% and top 50% in all clusters except the “Enriching Educational Experiences” benchmark. In this cluster, the Baylor first-year students scored slightly higher than the top 50% but lower than the top 10%. A similar trend is true with Baylor senior students scoring higher than the top 50% but lower than the top 10% in the “Enriching Educational Experiences” and “Supportive Campus Environment” benchmarks.

Benchmark	First-Year Students			Senior Students		
	Baylor	NSSE		Baylor	NSSE	
		Top 50%	Top 10%		Top 50%	Top 10%
Level of Academic Challenge	53.6	55.8	60.5	57.3	59.3	64.1
Active and Collaborative Learning	41.3	45.8	50.7	51.3	54.6	58.6
Student-Faculty Interaction	33.5	37.1	42.0	45.5	48.2	56.9
Enriching Educational Experiences	31.0	30.0	34.4	49.3	46.6	57.9
Supportive Campus Environment	63.7	64.7	69.7	63.0	62.8	67.7

On the Mean Comparisons Report provided by NSSE, “items with mean differences that are larger than would be expected by chance alone are noted with one, two, or three asterisks, referring to three significance levels ($p < .05$, $p < .01$, and $p < .001$).” An effect size is also given which indicates the “practical significance” of the mean difference. “In practice, an effect size of .2 is often considered small, .5 moderate, and .8 large.” Baylor first-year students scored lower at a statistically significant rate than the national sample in two questions relating to academic and intellectual experiences: “Made a class presentation (-.43 effect size)” and “Worked with other students on projects **during class** (-.20 effect size).” The senior students scored statistically lower than the national sample on “Worked with other students on projects **during class** (-.33 effect size)” and “Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in (-.18 effect size).”

The senior students scored higher at a statistically significant rate than the national sample in several questions relating to academic and intellectual experiences:

- Come to class without completing readings or assignments (.17 effect size)
- Worked with classmates **outside of class** to prepare class assignments (.19 effect size)
- Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions (.18 effect size)
- Participated in a community-based project (e.g. service learning) as part of a regular course (.20 effect size)
- Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor (.21 effect size)
- Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor (.27 effect size)
- Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.) (.20 effect size)
- Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own (.18 effect size)

Using a scale from 1 to 4 when 1 = very little and 4 = very much, Baylor first-year and senior students indicated they memorized facts, ideas and methods ‘. . . so they could repeat them in pretty much the same form’ at a higher rate than the national sample (3.03 for Baylor first-year students compared to 2.87 for the national mean and 2.89 for the Baylor seniors compared to 2.74 for the national mean). Both Baylor first-year and senior students scored significantly higher than the national norm in the following enrichment experiences: community or volunteer work (.46 for Baylor first-year students compared to .37 for the national mean and .84 for Baylor seniors compared to .59 for the national norm based on a scale where 0 was no and 1 was yes) and foreign language coursework (.38 compared to .22 for first-year students and .73 compared to .41 for seniors).

Other areas that Baylor first-year and senior students scored significantly higher than the national norm included: Participating in co-curricular activities, Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work, Exercised or participated in physical fitness activities, Participated in activities to enhance your spirituality (worship, meditation, prayer, etc.), Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue, and Tried to better understand someone else’s views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective.

The above summary looks at areas where Baylor shows a statistically significant difference from national responses. One other suggested way to utilize NSSE data is for Baylor to establish predetermined levels for the institution and then not only compare institutional responses to the national mean but also see where Baylor students fall when compared to institutional goals. The goals can apply to both first-year students and seniors or can be used to measure changes in perceptions/activities through the educational experience.