



**National Survey
of Student Engagement**

University of South Carolina Aiken

Benchmark Comparisons

August 2008

To focus discussions about the importance of student engagement and guide institutional improvement efforts, NSSE created five Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice: Level of Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, Enriching Educational Experiences, and Supportive Campus Environment. This Benchmark Comparisons Report compares the performance of your institution with your selected peers or consortium. In addition, page 9 provides two other comparisons between your school and (a) above-average institutions with benchmarks in the top 50% of all NSSE institutions and (b) high-performing institutions with benchmarks in the top 10% of all NSSE institutions. These displays allow you to determine if the engagement of your typical student differs in a statistically significant, meaningful way from the average student in these comparison groups. More detailed information about how benchmarks are created can be found on the NSSE Web site at www.nsse.iub.edu/2008_Institutional_Report/.

Class and Sample Means
Means are reported for first-year students and seniors. Institution-reported class ranks are used. All randomly selected students are included in these analyses. Students in targeted or locally administered oversamples are not included.

Mean
The mean is the *weighted* arithmetic average of student level benchmark scores.

Benchmark Description & Survey Items
A description of the benchmark and the individual items used in its creation are summarized.

Statistical Significance

Benchmarks with mean differences that are larger than would be expected by chance alone are noted with one, two, or three asterisks, denoting one of three significance levels ($p < .05$, $p < .01$, and $p < .001$). The smaller the significance level, the smaller the likelihood that the difference is due to chance. Please note that statistical significance does not guarantee that the result is substantive or important. Large sample sizes (as with the NSSE project) tend to produce more statistically significant results even though the magnitude of mean differences may be inconsequential. It is recommended to consult effect sizes to judge the practical meaning of the results.

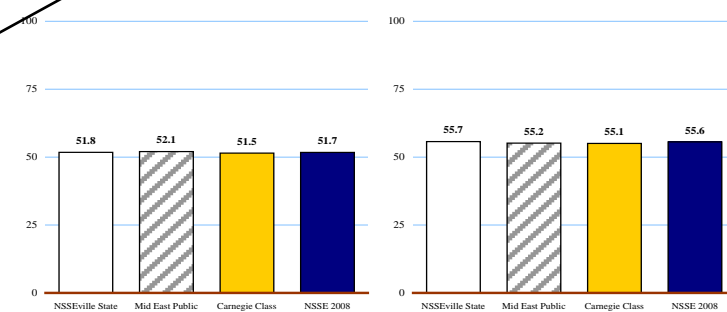
Effect Size^a

Effect size indicates the practical significance of the mean difference. It is calculated by dividing the mean difference by the pooled standard deviation. In practice, an effect size of .2 is often considered small, .5 moderate, and .8 large. A positive sign indicates that your institution's mean was greater, thus showing an affirmative result for the institution. A negative sign indicates the institution lags behind the comparison group, suggesting that the student behavior or institutional practice represented by the item may warrant attention.

Level of Academic Challenge (LAC)

Benchmark Comparisons

Class	NSSEville State				Mid East Public				Carnegie Class				NSSE 2008			
	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Sig ^b	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Sig ^b	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Sig ^b	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	
First-Year	51.8				52.1		-.02		51.5		.02		51.7		.00	
Senior	55.7				55.2		.04		55.1		.05		55.6		.01	



Level of Academic Challenge (LAC) Items

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Colleges and universities promote high levels of student achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance.

- Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, etc. related to academic program)
- Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings
- Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more; number of written papers or reports of between 5 and 19 pages; and number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages
- Coursework emphasizing analysis of the basic elements of an idea, experience or theory
- Coursework emphasizing synthesis and organizing of ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships
- Coursework emphasizing the making of judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods
- Coursework emphasizing application of theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
- Working harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations
- Campus environment emphasizing time studying and on academic work

Bar Charts

A visual display of first-year and senior mean benchmark scores for your institution and your selected peer or consortium groups.

^a See the *NSSE Effect Size Interpretation Guide* at www.nsse.iub.edu/html/effect_size_guide.cfm for additional information.

Level of Academic Challenge (LAC)

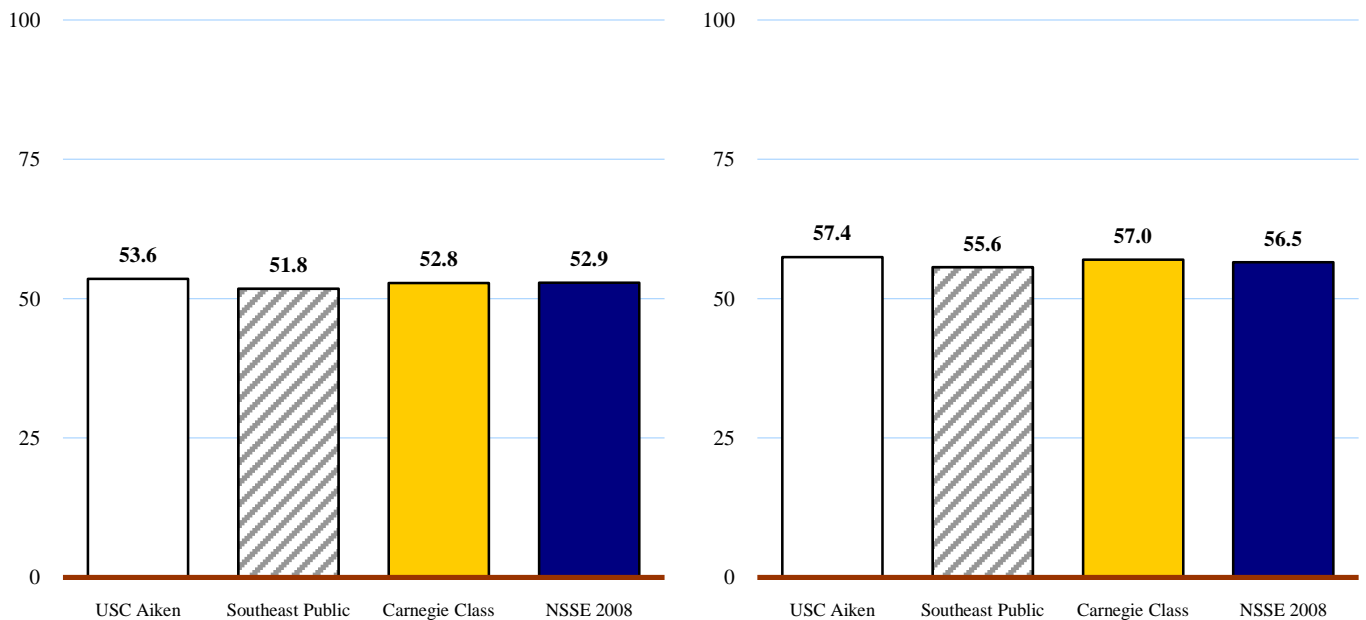
Benchmark Comparisons

USC Aiken compared with:

Class	USC Aiken		Southeast Public			Carnegie Class			NSSE 2008		
	Mean ^a		Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c
First-Year	53.6		51.8	*	.13	52.8		.06	52.9		.05
Senior	57.4		55.6	**	.13	57.0		.03	56.5		.06

First-Year

Senior



Level of Academic Challenge (LAC) Items

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Colleges and universities promote high levels of student achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance.

Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, etc. related to academic program)

Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings

Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more; number of written papers or reports of between 5 and 19 pages; and number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages

Coursework emphasizes: **Analysis** of the basic elements of an idea, experience or theory

Coursework emphasizes: **Synthesis** and organizing of ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships

Coursework emphasizes: **Making of judgments** about the value of information, arguments, or methods

Coursework emphasizes: **Applying** theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations

Working harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations

Campus environment emphasizes: Spending significant amount of time studying and on academic work.

^a weighted by gender, enrollment status, and institutional size.

^b * p<.05 ** p<.01 ***p<.001 (2-tailed).

^c Mean difference divided by the pooled standard deviation.

Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL)

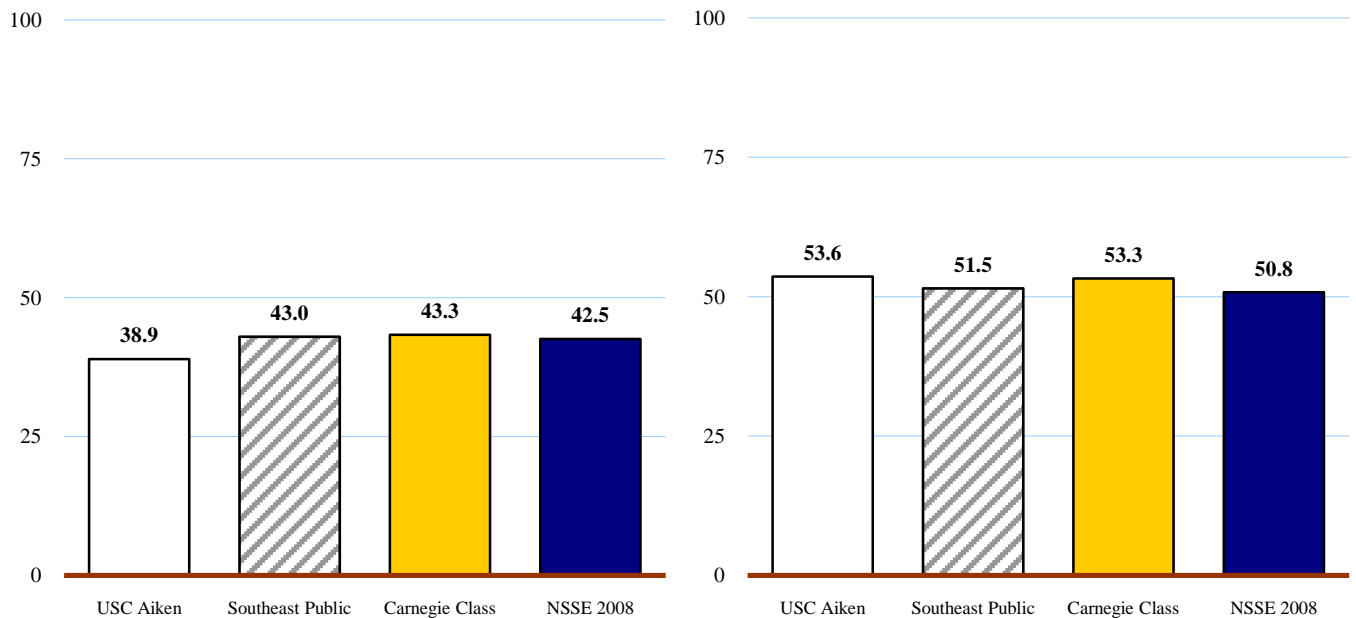
Benchmark Comparisons

USC Aiken compared with:

Class	USC Aiken		Southeast Public			Carnegie Class			NSSE 2008		
	Mean ^a		Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c
First-Year	38.9		43.0	***	-.23	43.3	***	-.24	42.5	***	-.21
Senior	53.6		51.5	*	.12	53.3		.02	50.8	**	.16

First-Year

Senior



Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL) Items

Students learn more when they are intensely involved in their education and asked to think about what they are learning in different settings. Collaborating with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material prepares students for the messy, unscripted problems they will encounter daily during and after college.

- Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
- Made a class presentation
- Worked with other students on projects **during class**
- Worked with classmates **outside of class** to prepare class assignments
- Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)
- Participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)

^a weighted by gender, enrollment status, and institutional size.

^b * p<.05 ** p<.01 ***p<.001 (2-tailed).

^c Mean difference divided by the pooled standard deviation.

Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)

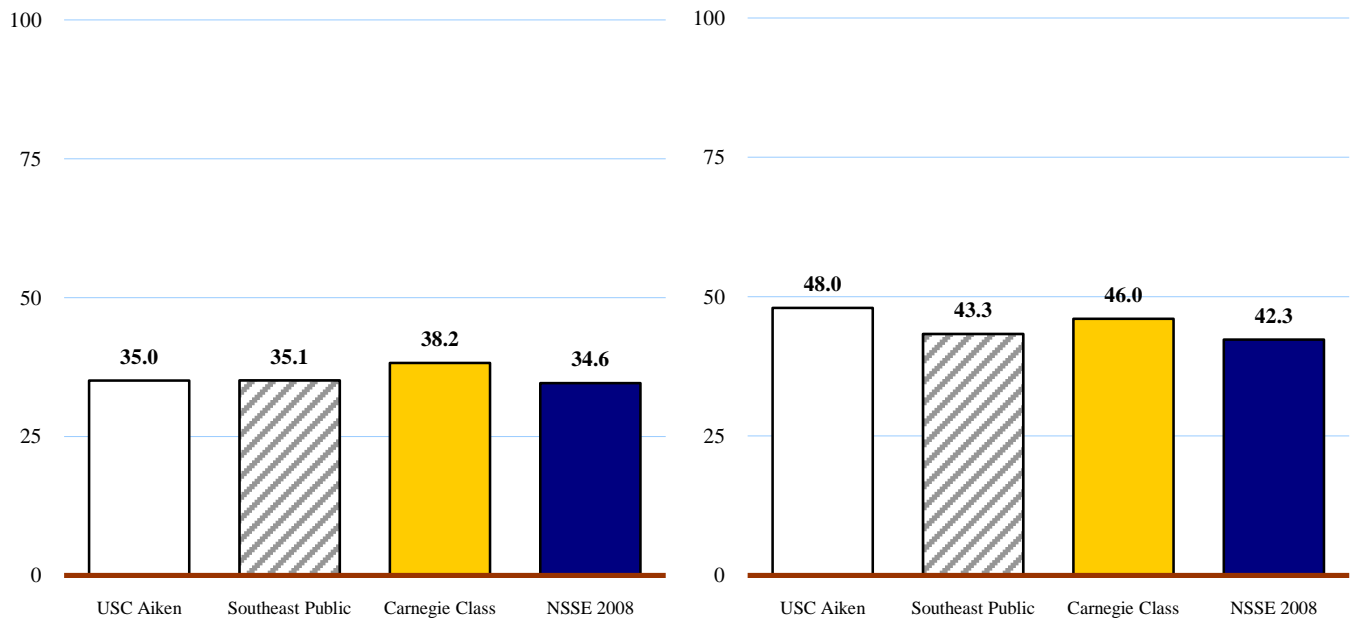
Benchmark Comparisons

USC Aiken compared with:

Class	USC Aiken		Southeast Public			Carnegie Class			NSSE 2008		
	Mean ^a		Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c
First-Year	35.0		35.1		.00	38.2	**	-.17	34.6		.02
Senior	48.0		43.3	***	.22	46.0		.09	42.3	***	.27

First-Year

Senior



Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI) Items

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.

- 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-life 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

^a weighted by gender, enrollment status, and institutional size.

^b * p<.05 ** p<.01 ***p<.001 (2-tailed).

^c Mean difference divided by the pooled standard deviation.

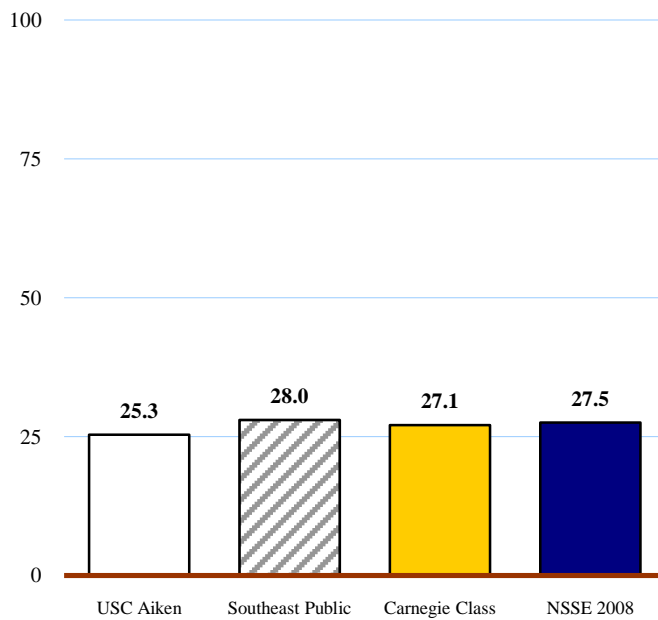
Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE)

Benchmark Comparisons

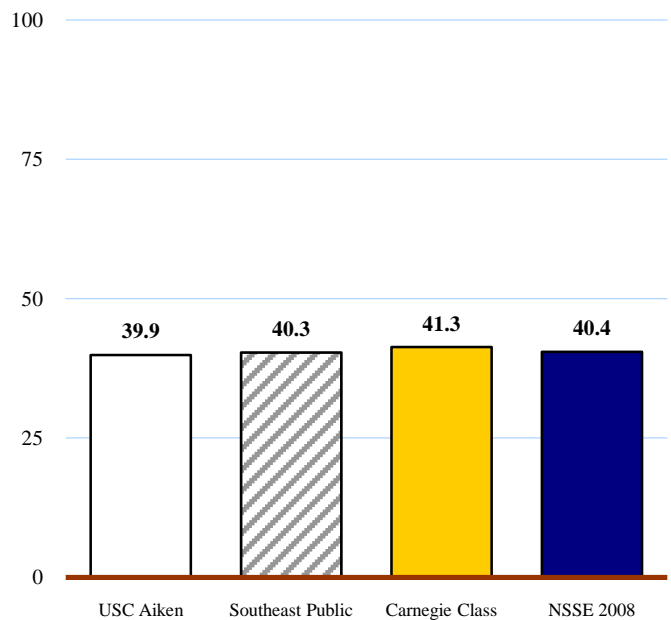
USC Aiken compared with:

Class	USC Aiken		Southeast Public			Carnegie Class			NSSE 2008		
	Mean ^a		Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c
First-Year	25.3		28.0	**	-.19	27.1	*	-.12	27.5	**	-.16
Senior	39.9		40.3		-.03	41.3		-.08	40.4		-.03

First-Year



Senior



Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE) Items

Complementary learning opportunities enhance academic programs. Diversity experiences teach students valuable things about themselves and others. Technology facilitates collaboration between peers and instructors. Internships, community service, and senior capstone courses provide opportunities to integrate and apply knowledge.

- Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, social fraternity or sorority, etc.)
- Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment
- Community service or volunteer work
- Foreign language coursework / Study abroad
- Independent study or self-designed major
- Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.)
- Serious conversations with students of different religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values
- Serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own
- Using electronic medium (e.g., listserv, chat group, Internet, instant messaging, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment
- Campus environment encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds
- Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together

^a weighted by gender, enrollment status, and institutional size.

^b * p<.05 ** p<.01 ***p<.001 (2-tailed).

^c Mean difference divided by the pooled standard deviation.

Supportive Campus Environment (SCE)

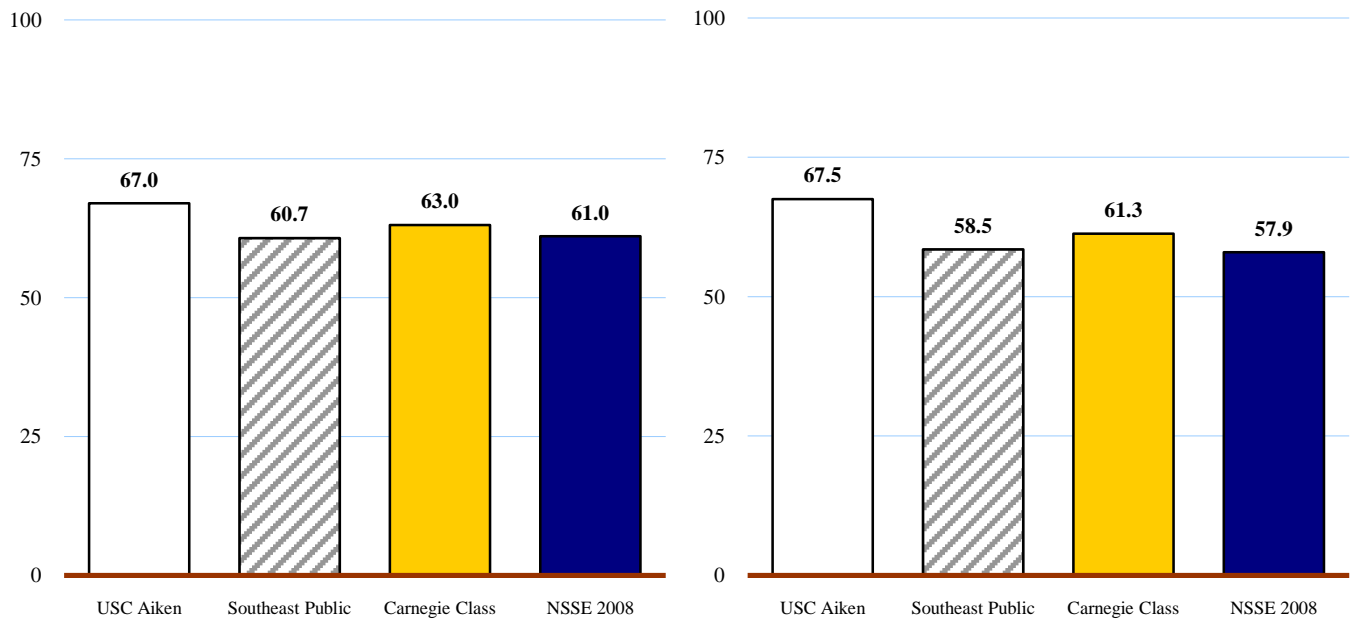
Benchmark Comparisons

USC Aiken compared with:

Class	USC Aiken	Southeast Public			Carnegie Class			NSSE 2008		
	Mean ^a	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c
First-Year	67.0	60.7	***	.34	63.0	***	.21	61.0	***	.31
Senior	67.5	58.5	***	.46	61.3	***	.32	57.9	***	.49

First-Year

Senior



Supportive Campus Environment (SCE) Items

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.

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

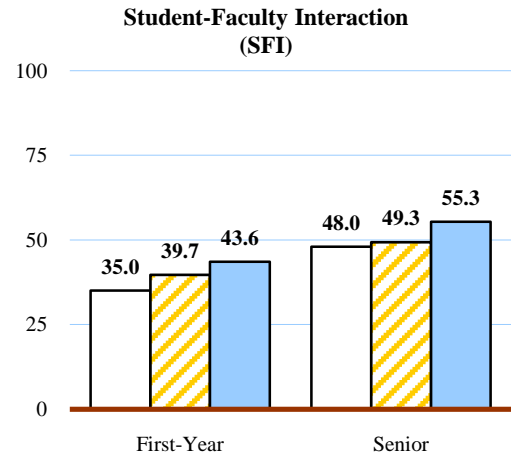
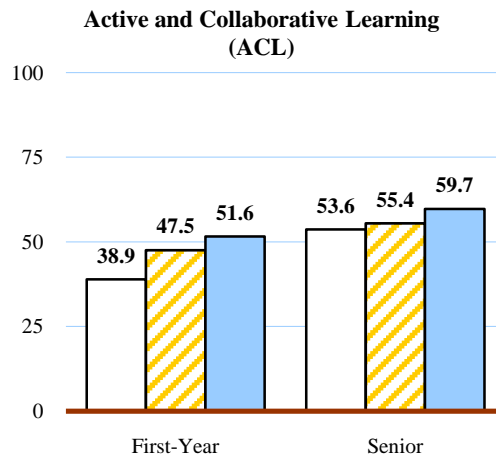
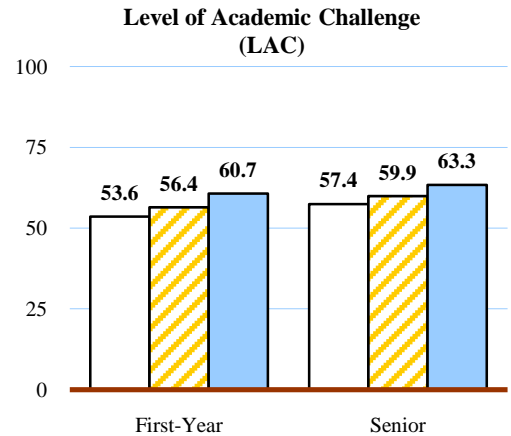
^a weighted by gender, enrollment status, and institutional size.

^b * p<.05 ** p<.01 ***p<.001 (2-tailed).




^c Mean difference divided by the pooled standard deviation.

USC Aiken compared with

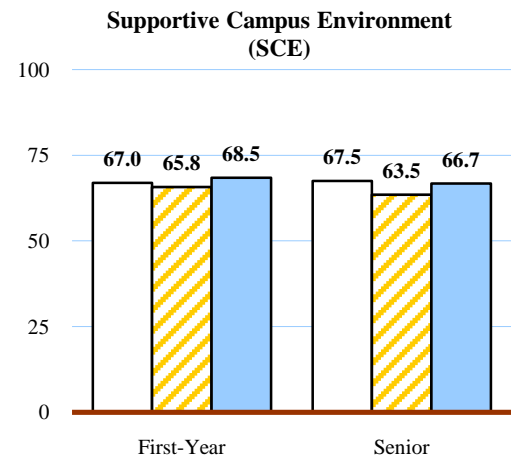
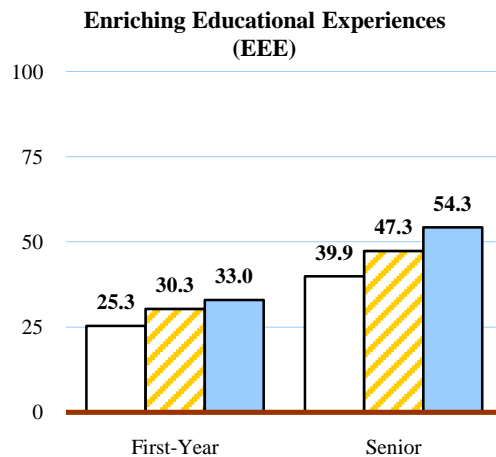
	USC Aiken <i>Mean^a</i>	NSSE 2008 Top 50%			NSSE 2008 Top 10%			
		<i>Mean^a</i>	<i>Sig^b</i>	<i>Effect size^c</i>	<i>Mean^a</i>	<i>Sig^b</i>	<i>Effect size^c</i>	
First-Year	LAC	53.6	56.4	***	-.22	60.7	***	-.56
	ACL	38.9	47.5	***	-.51	51.6	***	-.71
	SFI	35.0	39.7	***	-.24	43.6	***	-.40
	EEE	25.3	30.3	***	-.36	33.0	***	-.53
	SCE	67.0	65.8		.07	68.5		-.08
Senior	LAC	57.4	59.9	***	-.18	63.3	***	-.44
	ACL	53.6	55.4	*	-.10	59.7	***	-.35
	SFI	48.0	49.3		-.06	55.3	***	-.34
	EEE	39.9	47.3	***	-.42	54.3	***	-.83
	SCE	67.5	63.5	***	.21	66.7		.04



Legend

-  USC Aiken
-  Top 50%
-  Top 10%

This display compares your students with those attending schools that scored in the top 50% and top 10% of all NSSE 2008 institutions on a particular benchmark.



^a Weighted by gender, enrollment status, and institutional size.

^b * p<.05 ** p<.01 ***p<.001 (2-tailed).

^c Mean difference divided by the pooled standard deviation.

First-Year Students

		Mean Statistics			Distribution Statistics					Reference Group Comparison Statistics			
		Mean	SD ^b	SEM ^c	Percentiles ^d					Deg. of Freedom ^e	Mean Diff.	Sig. ^f	Effect size ^g
		5th	25th	50th	75th	95th							
LEVEL OF ACADEMIC CHALLENGE (LAC)													
USC Aiken	(N = 281)	53.6	11.6	.7	35	45	54	62	72				
Southeast Public		51.8	13.5	.1	30	43	52	61	74	283	1.8	.011	.13
Carnegie Class		52.8	13.7	.1	30	44	53	62	75	291	.8	.269	.06
NSSE 2008		52.9	13.5	.0	31	44	53	62	75	281	.7	.318	.05
Top 50%		56.4	13.1	.0	35	48	56	66	77	282	-2.9	.000	-.22
Top 10%		60.7	12.8	.1	38	52	61	70	80	21,066	-7.1	.000	-.56
ACTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING (ACL)													
USC Aiken	(N = 296)	38.9	15.0	.9	14	29	38	48	67				
Southeast Public		43.0	17.4	.1	19	33	43	52	75	298	-4.0	.000	-.23
Carnegie Class		43.3	18.4	.1	14	33	43	56	76	308	-4.4	.000	-.24
NSSE 2008		42.5	16.9	.0	19	29	42	52	71	296	-3.6	.000	-.21
Top 50%		47.5	17.0	.1	24	33	48	57	76	298	-8.6	.000	-.51
Top 10%		51.6	17.9	.1	24	38	50	62	83	306	-12.6	.000	-.71
STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTION (SFI)													
USC Aiken	(N = 288)	35.0	17.1	1.0	11	22	33	44	67				
Southeast Public		35.1	19.2	.1	11	22	33	44	72	289	-.1	.960	.00
Carnegie Class		38.2	19.2	.1	11	22	33	50	73	297	-3.2	.002	-.17
NSSE 2008		34.6	18.7	.0	11	22	33	44	72	328,636	.4	.693	.02
Top 50%		39.7	19.4	.1	11	28	39	50	78	289	-4.7	.000	-.24
Top 10%		43.6	21.2	.2	13	28	39	56	83	300	-8.5	.000	-.40
ENRICHING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES (EEE)													
USC Aiken	(N = 271)	25.3	12.5	.8	8	15	23	33	48				
Southeast Public		28.0	14.0	.1	8	18	26	36	51	68,480	-2.6	.002	-.19
Carnegie Class		27.1	14.1	.1	8	17	25	35	52	20,247	-1.7	.043	-.12
NSSE 2008		27.5	13.6	.0	8	18	26	36	51	316,501	-2.2	.008	-.16
Top 50%		30.3	13.7	.0	11	21	29	38	54	143,949	-5.0	.000	-.36
Top 10%		33.0	14.3	.1	11	23	32	42	58	277	-7.6	.000	-.53
SUPPORTIVE CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT (SCE)													
USC Aiken	(N = 266)	67.0	18.5	1.1	33	53	69	81	97				
Southeast Public		60.7	18.7	.1	31	47	61	75	92	66,449	6.3	.000	.34
Carnegie Class		63.0	19.2	.1	31	50	64	78	94	19,754	3.9	.001	.21
NSSE 2008		61.0	18.9	.0	30	47	61	75	92	308,845	5.9	.000	.31
Top 50%		65.8	18.4	.1	33	53	67	78	94	92,583	1.2	.285	.07
Top 10%		68.5	18.4	.1	36	56	69	81	97	21,588	-1.5	.198	-.08

^a All statistics are weighted by gender, enrollment status, and institutional size.

^b Standard Deviation is a measure of the average amount the individual scores deviate from the mean of all the scores in the distribution.

^c The 95% confidence interval for the population mean is equal to the sample mean plus/minus the product of 1.96 times the standard error of the mean.

^d A percentile is the point in the distribution of student-level benchmark scores at or below which a given percentage of benchmark scores fall.

^e Degrees of freedom used to compute the t-tests. Values vary for the total Ns due to weighting and the equal variance assumption.

^f Statistical significance represents the probability that the difference between the mean of your institution and that of the comparison group occurred by chance.

^g Effect size is calculated by subtracting the comparison group mean from the school mean, and dividing the result by the pooled standard deviation.

Seniors

		Mean Statistics			Distribution Statistics					Reference Group Comparison Statistics			
		Mean	SD ^b	SEM ^c	Percentiles ^d					Deg. of Freedom ^e	Mean Diff.	Sig. ^f	Effect size ^g
					5th	25th	50th	75th	95th				
LEVEL OF ACADEMIC CHALLENGE (LAC)													
USC Aiken	(N = 360)	57.4	12.6	.7	35	49	58	67	76				
Southeast Public		55.6	14.4	.1	32	46	56	66	79	363	1.8	.007	.13
Carnegie Class		57.0	14.3	.1	33	47	57	67	80	377	.5	.478	.03
NSSE 2008		56.5	14.3	.0	33	47	57	67	79	360	.9	.170	.06
Top 50%		59.9	13.8	.0	37	51	60	70	81	361	-2.4	.000	-.18
Top 10%		63.3	13.5	.1	40	54	64	73	84	25,074	-5.9	.000	-.44
ACTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING (ACL)													
USC Aiken	(N = 374)	53.6	17.2	.9	29	43	52	67	81				
Southeast Public		51.5	18.3	.1	24	38	52	62	86	84,923	2.1	.024	.12
Carnegie Class		53.3	18.0	.1	24	43	52	67	86	19,656	.4	.704	.02
NSSE 2008		50.8	17.6	.0	24	38	48	62	81	428,945	2.8	.002	.16
Top 50%		55.4	17.2	.0	29	43	56	67	86	131,985	-1.8	.045	-.10
Top 10%		59.7	17.3	.1	33	48	57	71	90	26,811	-6.0	.000	-.35
STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTION (SFI)													
USC Aiken	(N = 364)	48.0	21.3	1.1	17	33	44	61	83				
Southeast Public		43.3	21.4	.1	11	28	39	56	83	80,098	4.7	.000	.22
Carnegie Class		46.0	21.5	.2	17	28	44	61	83	18,949	1.9	.089	.09
NSSE 2008		42.3	21.2	.0	11	28	39	56	83	408,140	5.7	.000	.27
Top 50%		49.3	21.5	.1	17	33	47	67	89	96,482	-1.4	.223	-.06
Top 10%		55.3	21.7	.2	22	39	56	72	94	13,679	-7.4	.000	-.34
ENRICHING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES (EEE)													
USC Aiken	(N = 357)	39.9	17.4	.9	13	26	40	53	68				
Southeast Public		40.3	17.8	.1	13	28	40	52	71	77,852	-.5	.618	-.03
Carnegie Class		41.3	18.5	.1	12	28	41	54	73	18,514	-1.4	.146	-.08
NSSE 2008		40.4	18.2	.0	12	27	40	53	72	397,789	-.6	.542	-.03
Top 50%		47.3	17.7	.0	18	35	47	60	76	136,550	-7.5	.000	-.42
Top 10%		54.3	17.3	.1	22	43	55	67	81	21,357	-14.5	.000	-.83
SUPPORTIVE CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT (SCE)													
USC Aiken	(N = 354)	67.5	19.4	1.0	33	56	67	83	100				
Southeast Public		58.5	19.6	.1	25	44	58	72	92	76,519	9.0	.000	.46
Carnegie Class		61.3	19.4	.1	28	47	61	75	94	18,244	6.2	.000	.32
NSSE 2008		57.9	19.4	.0	25	44	58	72	89	391,495	9.6	.000	.49
Top 50%		63.5	18.9	.1	31	50	64	78	94	113,691	4.0	.000	.21
Top 10%		66.7	18.5	.1	33	56	67	81	97	26,473	.8	.434	.04

^a All statistics are weighted by gender, enrollment status, and institutional size.

^b Standard Deviation is a measure of the average amount the individual scores deviate from the mean of all the scores in the distribution.

^c The 95% confidence interval for the population mean is equal to the sample mean plus/minus the product of 1.96 times the standard error of the mean.

^d A percentile is the point in the distribution of student-level benchmark scores at or below which a given percentage of benchmark scores fall.

^e Degrees of freedom used to compute the t-tests. Values vary for the total Ns due to weighting and the equal variance assumption.

^f Statistical significance represents the probability that the difference between the mean of your institution and that of the comparison group occurred by chance.

^g Effect size is calculated by subtracting the comparison group mean from the school mean, and dividing the result by the pooled standard deviation.