



National Survey of Student Engagement

Executive Snapshot 2008

University of South Carolina Aiken

This is a summary of some key findings from USC Aiken's performance on the 2008 National Survey of Student Engagement. Questions or comments regarding these results should be directed to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

Lloyd A. Dawe, Ph.D.
Director of Institutional Effectiveness, USC Aiken

Are All Students at University of South Carolina Aiken Equally Engaged?

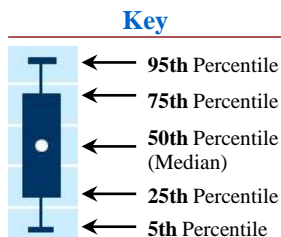
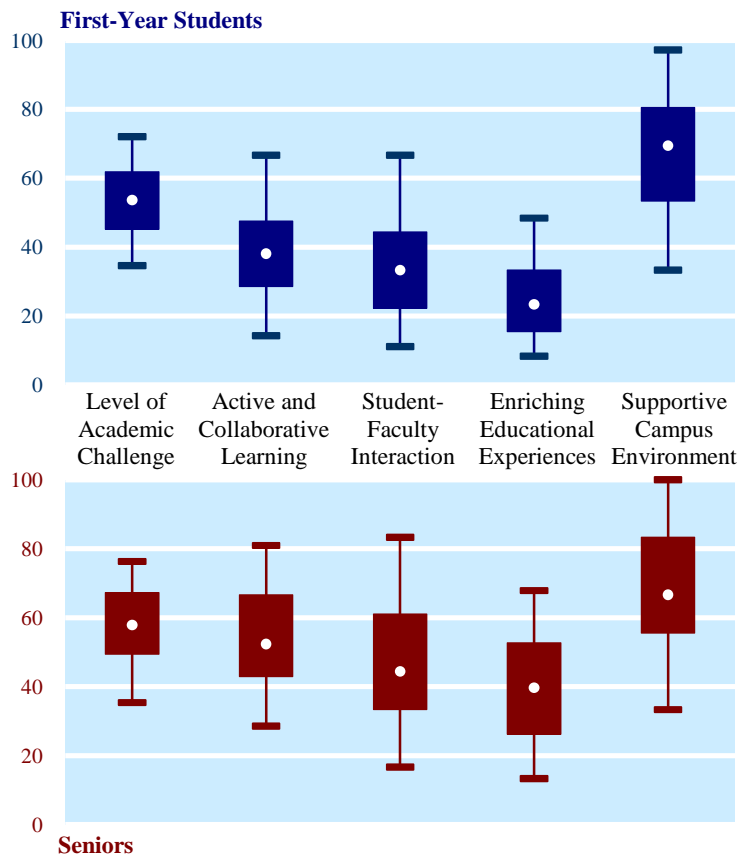
Quality in U.S. higher education is often considered an institutional attribute, as if one college offers a uniformly better or worse education than another. Yet, a robust finding from decades of research on college students holds that student experiences and outcomes are more varied among students *within* institutions than *between* institutions.

In this year's annual report NSSE urges institutions to "look within," calling attention to the need to examine variation in the student experience at your institution. Your (hypothetical) average student does not describe all students and groups on your campus.

The adjacent figures illustrate this phenomenon. We plotted your students' NSSE benchmark scores in a "box and whiskers" chart (see key). Here you can see the range and variation of your scores (whiskers), as well as where the mid-range or normal scores fell (box). Note the dispersion of your scores. The greater the range, the more varied the student experience is at your institution.

Improving the experience of your least engaged students may be the most effective way to raise your benchmark scores and improve your overall institutional quality. Even high-performing institutions have much to learn by examining variation in student engagement – by looking within.

Variation in NSSE Benchmark Scores by Class at University of South Carolina Aiken



The dot signifies the median – the score that divides all students' scores into two equal halves (means are reported on page 4). The box shows the middle 50% of your scores (from the 25th to 75th percentiles) and the whiskers show the range of scores excluding outliers (from the 5th to the 95th percentile).

NSSE 2008 Question Comparisons

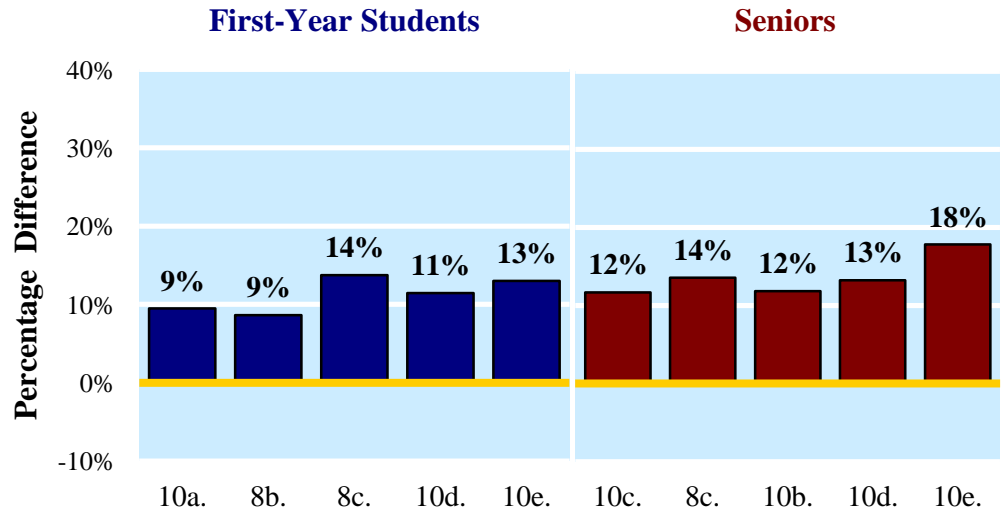
By examining individual NSSE questions, one can better understand what contributes to USC Aiken's overall benchmark scores. This section features the five questions on which our first-year and senior students scored the highest and the five questions on which they scored the lowest, relative to students at our Southeast Public comparison group.

While these questions were chosen to represent the largest differences (in percentage points), they may not be the most important to our institutional mission or current program or policy goals.

Highest Performing Areas

Ques- tion	Bench- mark ¹	Percent of students who...	Comparison Groups			
			USC Aiken	Southeast Public	Carnegie Class	NSSE 2008
First-Year Students						
10a.	LAC	Said the institution emphasizes studying and academic work ⁴	90%	81%	81%	81%
8b.	SCE	Positively rated their relationships with faculty members ³	77%	69%	77%	71%
8c.	SCE	Positively rated their relationships with admin. personnel and offices ³	66%	52%	61%	54%
10d.	SCE	Said the institution substantially helps students cope w/ non-acad. matters ⁴	49%	37%	41%	38%
10e.	SCE	Said the institution provides substantial support for students' social needs ⁴	63%	50%	48%	49%
Seniors						
10c.	EEE	Said the institution substantially encourages contacts among diverse peers ⁴	61%	50%	51%	48%
8c.	SCE	Positively rated their relationships with admin. personnel and offices ³	66%	52%	58%	52%
10b.	SCE	Said the institution provides substantial support for academic success ⁴	83%	71%	76%	71%
10d.	SCE	Said the institution substantially helps students cope w/ non-acad. matters ⁴	40%	27%	33%	27%
10e.	SCE	Said the institution provides substantial support for students' social needs ⁴	57%	39%	39%	36%

The adjacent figure, based on the table above, displays the questions on which USC Aiken students compare most favorably with those in the comparison group named Southeast Public



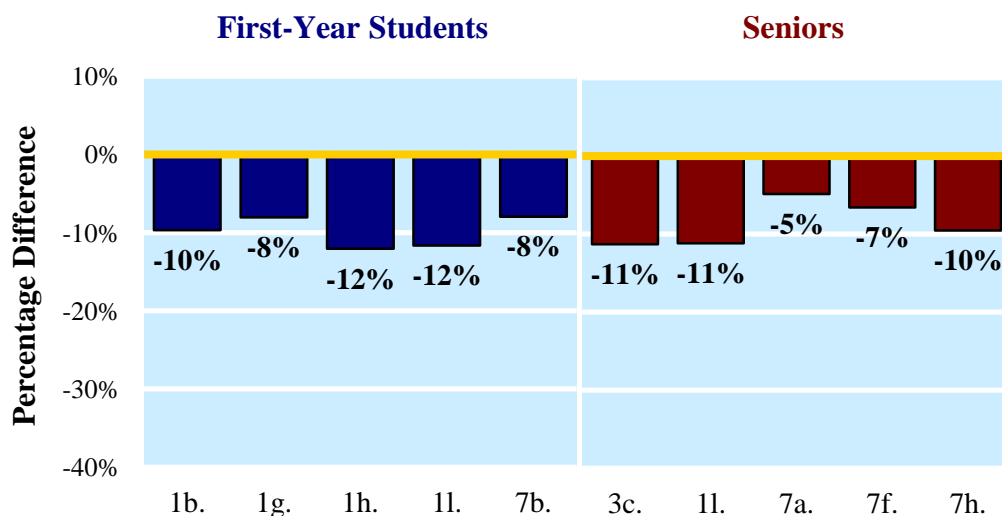


Lowest Performing Areas

Comparison Groups

Ques- tion	Bench- mark ¹	Percent of students who...	USC Aiken	Southeast Public	Carnegie Class	NSSE 2008
First-Year Students						
1b.	ACL	Made a class presentation ²	23%	32%	40%	34%
1g.	ACL	Worked with other students on projects during class ²	35%	43%	43%	43%
1h.	ACL	Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments ²	31%	43%	42%	42%
1l.	EEE	Used an electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment ²	43%	55%	52%	52%
7b.	EEE	Participated in community service or volunteer work	32%	40%	42%	38%
Seniors						
3c.	LAC	Wrote at least one paper or report of 20 pages or more	36%	47%	53%	50%
1l.	EEE	Used an electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment ²	52%	63%	62%	60%
7a.	EEE	Did a practicum, internship, field experience, clinical assignment	46%	51%	58%	53%
7f.	EEE	Had a study abroad experience	6%	13%	12%	15%
7h.	EEE	Completed a culminating senior experience (capstone, thesis, comp. exam)	19%	29%	40%	33%

The adjacent figure, based on the table above, displays the questions on which USC Aiken students compared least favorably with those in the Southeast Public comparison group



Notes

¹ LAC=Level of Academic Challenge; ACL=Active and Collaborative Learning; SFI=Student-Faculty Interaction; EEE=Enriching Educational Experiences; SCE=Supportive Campus Environment

² Combination of students responding 'very often' or 'often'

³ Rated at least 5 on a 7-point scale

⁴ Combination of students responding 'very much' or 'quite a bit'

Respondent Characteristics

The adjacent table displays the number of respondents, response rate, and sampling error by class. Sampling error is an estimate of the margin by which the true percentage of our students may differ from the reported percentage on a given item (because not all of our students completed surveys).

	N	Resp. Rate	Sampling Error
First-Year Students	299	48%	+/-4.1%
Seniors	377	58%	+/-3.3%

Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice

To represent the multi-dimensional nature of student engagement, NSSE developed five indicators of effective educational practice. These "benchmarks" are created from clusters of NSSE questions that best represent these practices.

The table below summarizes key benchmark results for our institution and institutions in our selected comparison groups. The '+' symbol indicates that USC Aiken's score is higher than the respective comparison group ($p < .05$), the '-' symbol indicates a score lower than the comparison group, and a blank space indicates no significant difference.

		Comparison Groups			
		<i>USC Aiken</i>	Southeast Public	Carnegie Class	NSSE 2008
<i>Class</i>					
Level of Academic Challenge (LAC)					
<i>How challenging is your institution's intellectual and creative work?</i>	First-Year	54	+		
	Senior	57	+		
Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL)					
<i>Are your students actively involved in their learning, individually and working with others?</i>	First-Year	39	-	-	-
	Senior	54	+		+
Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)					
<i>Do your students work with faculty members inside and outside the classroom?</i>	First-Year	35		-	
	Senior	48	+		+
Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE)					
<i>Do your students take advantage of complementary learning opportunities?</i>	First-Year	25	-	-	-
	Senior	40			
Supportive Campus Environment (SCE)					
<i>Do your students feel the institution is committed to their success?</i>	First-Year	67	+	+	+
	Senior	68	+	+	+

For More Information

Reports used in this Executive Snapshot included the: NSSE 2008 Mean Comparisons, Frequency Distributions, Benchmark Comparisons, and Respondent Characteristics. For more information, contact the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.



Office of Institutional Effectiveness

University of South Carolina Aiken
 471 University Parkway
 Aiken, SC, 29801-6399

Phone: 803-641-3338
 E-mail: LloydD@usca.edu
 Web: ie.usca.edu