

University of Nebraska – Lincoln Summary National Survey of Student Engagement 2004

Executive Summary

In the Spring 2004, a sampling of UNL first-year and senior students participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The NSSE is a national survey administered annually at four-year colleges and institutions to assess the extent to which undergraduate students are involved in educational practices empirically linked to high levels of learning and development. UNL has elected to participate in the survey twice. The first participation was in the spring of 2002 and the second time was in the spring of 2004.

This summary of survey results will focus primarily on five clusters of survey items identified by NSSE administrators as benchmarks of effective educational practice. These five benchmarks are:

1. Active and Collaborative Learning
2. Student-Faculty Interactions
3. Enriching Educational Experiences
4. Academic Challenge
5. Supportive Campus Environment

This report discusses and explores UNL's score on each of these benchmarks. The first-year and senior benchmark scores are compared to what is expected for an institution like UNL, to scores for peer institutions, and to scores from the 2002 NSSE.

Benchmark scores suggest first-year students are actively and collaboratively engaged in their learning and are receiving a sufficient level of academic challenge especially in regards to the amount of writing they are expected to do. Scores for supportive campus environment have improved for first-year since 2002 but first-year student interaction with faculty is below what is expected for an institution like UNL and have decreased since 2002.

Benchmark scores for senior students suggest they are frequently involved in enriching educational experiences, have a variety of interactions with faculty, and are well engaged in active and collaborative learning. Areas for future improvement in the senior educational experience may include increasing the level of academic challenge and providing a more supportive campus environment. Senior benchmark scores in these two areas have not changed significantly since 2002 but senior scores in these two areas are below what is expected for an institution like UNL.

University of Nebraska – Lincoln Summary National Survey of Student Engagement 2004

Prepared by
Jessica L. Jonson
University-Wide Assessment Coordinator
April, 2005

Introduction

In the Spring 2004, a sampling of UNL first-year and senior students participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The NSSE is a national survey administered annually at four-year colleges and institutions to assess the extent to which undergraduate students are involved in educational practices empirically linked to high levels of learning and development. UNL has elected to participate in the survey twice. The first participation was in the spring of 2002 and the second time was in the spring of 2004.

In 2004, UNL sought to extend the utility of the NSSE survey in the following ways:

- administering the survey electronically allowing UNL to triple its sample size from 1000 to 3000
- sending the survey to additional first-year and senior students from each academic college so that results could be used at the college level as well as the institutional level
- sending the survey to all first-year and senior students of color at UNL so a better understanding of their experience could be gained
- participating in the inaugural version of Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) which parallels items from the NSSE survey.

Survey Overview

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is specifically designed to assess the extent students are engaged in empirically derived good educational practices and what they gain from their college experience. The main content of the NSSE instrument, *The College Student Report*, represents student behaviors that are highly correlated with many desirable learning and personal development outcomes of the college experience. Responding to the questionnaire requires that students reflect on what they are putting into and getting out of their college experience. Thus, completing the survey itself is consistent with effective educational practice.

Peer Comparisons

UNL participated, as it did in 2002, in the American Association of Universities Data Exchange (AAUDE) consortium. A consortium is a group of eight or more participating

NSSE colleges or universities that wish to share comparative, aggregated data among their institutions. In addition, consortiums are allowed to ask an additional 20 questions that address unique characteristics of the member schools. Eight peer institutions participated in the 2004 AAU Consortium. The UNL Board of Regents identifies four of these AAU peers as peer institutions and five of these AAU peers also participated in the 2002 NSSE. A listing of the eight AAU peers can be found in Appendix A.

In addition to the AAU peer group, UNL also can compare their results with other Research I peers that participated in the 2004 NSSE survey. Both the AAU peer group and the Research I peer group are referred to in the following discussion of NSSE results. Information from the Research I peer group is used when information from the AAU peer group is not available or not sufficient.

Survey Methodology

NSSE started by selecting a random sample of 1500 first-year students and 1500 senior students from a UNL student population data file based upon undergraduate enrollment in Fall 2004. Each of UNL's academic colleges was provided the opportunity to oversample students from its college. In February 2004, this sample received personalized emails asking them to complete an on-line version of the survey. When students finished completing the survey (typically 10 minutes or less), their responses were submitted directly to NSSE.

The Center for Survey Research (CSR) at Indiana University collected all of the data using techniques based on best practices in large-scale survey research by following up on their initial contact several times via email.

Potential Use of Survey Results

The NSSE offers a tool for gathering information with a wide range of uses and provides an important occasion to re-frame local conversations about collegiate quality. In particular, results are expected to be useful to institutions themselves in improving undergraduate education. For example, the data will be especially useful to UNL in gauging the degree to which they foster practices consistent with its particular institutional characteristics and commitments, in order to improve performance.

Under the terms of the NSSE participation agreement, NSSE provided UNL with a confidential report comparing our institution's performance on the survey with aggregated information from AAU consortium institutions, Research I institutions, and all institutions participating in the 2004 NSSE survey. NSSE has also issued national reports on the overall findings. However, how UNL uses its institutional data, is entirely in our hands. The Office of Undergraduate Studies (OUS) is sharing the results with several groups across campus. A listing of those presentations and the outcomes of those discussions are listed in Appendix B.

NSSE results are an instructive way to look at and talk about teaching and learning at UNL. They are intended to stimulate conversation on campus and determine whether student behavior

and institutional practices are headed in the right direction. Because this is the second time UNL has participated in the survey, comparisons between 2002 and 2004 responses will be useful in identifying areas where improvements have been made and where there might be persistent issues.

Response Rates and Demographics

UNL's response rate of 41% was slightly above the national survey response rate. For the UNL first-year sample, 42% or 739 students responded. For the UNL senior sample, 39% or 504 senior students responded.

- First-year female respondents were slightly overrepresented in comparison to the total population of respondents. Of UNL first-year survey respondents 61% were female, whereas females only comprise 51% of the first-year UNL undergraduate population in 2003-04. For UNL senior respondents, breakdown of respondents by gender was the same as the population.
- Transfer students who did not begin their education at UNL were overrepresented in the responses. Of senior survey respondents, 36% were transfer students while only 27% of seniors at UNL are transfer students.
- First-year students enrolled in CASNR and CEHS were slightly over represented in the respondent group while first-year students enrolled in the Division of General Studies were slightly underrepresented in the respondent group. Senior students enrolled in CEHS were also underrepresented in the respondent group. Despite these few differences across the board, the proportion of respondents enrolled in each college paralleled fairly closely the proportion of first-year and senior students enrolled in these same colleges at UNL.

On all other demographics (race/ethnicity, enrollment status, age) the percentage of UNL students responding was roughly parallel to the percentage of students in each of those groups in the undergraduate population.

Highlighting Survey Results

This summary of survey results will focus primarily on five clusters of survey items identified by NSSE administrators as benchmarks of effective educational practice. These five benchmarks are:

6. Active and Collaborative Learning
7. Student-Faculty Interactions
8. Enriching Educational Experiences
9. Academic Challenge
10. Supportive Campus Environment

Each benchmark has a score representing a group of survey items expressed on a 100-point scale. The set of survey items that contribute to each benchmark score can be found in Appendix C. The results on each benchmark are discussed in the five sections that follow.

1. Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL) Benchmark

The active and collaborative learning benchmark was identified as an effective educational practice by NSSE because “students learn more when they are involved in their education, asked to think about what they are learning in different settings, and collaborate with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material”.

The actual first-year and senior benchmark scores for active and collaborative learning were higher than what was predicted for UNL.¹ The predicted scores also indicate that senior respondents should be more engaged in these activities or have a higher ACL score than first-year respondents. Senior respondents did indicate a higher level of engagement as seen in actual scores in the table below.

Table 1. ACL Benchmark: Comparison of Actual and Predicted Scores (2004)

	Actual Score	Predicted Score	Difference
UNL First-Year	37.9	37.7	+0.3
UNL Senior	47.7	47.2	+0.5

When comparing UNL’s 2004 and 2002 benchmark scores there has been a slight increase in first-year and senior respondents engagement in active and collaborative learning activities since 2002.

Table 2. ACL Benchmark: Comparison of 2004 and 2002 Scores

	2004	2002
UNL First-Year	37	38
UNL Senior	47	48

Higher engagement by senior respondents in active and collaborative learning activities could be attributed to three survey items. Senior respondents report that they more often ask questions in class or contribute to class discussions, work with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments, and make class presentations than first-year respondents.

Table 3. ACL Benchmark: Significant differences in the responses of first-year and seniors (% responded “often” or “very often”)

How often in 2003-04 did you...(% responded “often” or “very often”)	First-Year	Senior
ask questions in class or contributed to class discussions?	47%	79%
work with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments?	40%	62%
make a class presentation?	21%	59%

¹ Expected scores were calculated by statistically determining what students at UNL would be expected to do based on their background characteristics (e.g. gender, enrollment status, race/ethnicity) and selected institutional information (e.g. Carnegie classification, undergraduate enrollment).

First-year respondents may have had a higher than predicted score because they participated more often in community-based projects as part of a regular course than their AAU peers. This same activity may have also contributed to the increase since 2002 given the percentage of first-year respondents who participated in a community-based course project has almost doubled since 2002.

Table 4. ACL Benchmark: First-year comparison with peers and 2002 responses (% responded “often” or “very often”)

	Seniors			
How often in 2003-04 did you...	2004 UNL	2004 AAU	2004 Rsch I	2002 UNL
participate in a community-based project as part of your course?	14%	8%	---	8%

Senior respondents at UNL made class presentations more often than their AAU and Research I peers. Engagement in this activity for seniors has also increased significantly since 2002.

Table 5. ACL Benchmark: Senior comparison with peers and 2002 responses (% responded “often” or “very often”)

	Seniors			
How often in 2003-04 did you...	2004 UNL	2004 AAU	2004 Rsch I	2002 UNL
make a class presentation?	59%	44%	51%	51%

Discussion

Scores on this benchmark suggest UNL is providing undergraduate students with opportunities to be actively and collaboratively involved in their learning and are providing as many if not more opportunities to do so than their peers and since 2002.

Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI) Benchmark

Student-faculty interaction is identified as an effective educational practice by NSSE because when students interact with faculty members inside and outside the classroom students have the opportunity to “learn firsthand how experts think about and solve practical problems”.

A higher than predicted benchmark score for the student-faculty interaction benchmark indicates that senior respondents interact with faculty more than expected while a lower than predicted first-year score indicates first-year students interact with faculty less than expected. Seniors, also as predicted, interact more with faculty than first-year students.

Table 6. SFI Benchmark: Comparison of Actual and Predicted Scores (2004)

	Actual Score	Predicted Score	Difference
UNL First-Year	27.4	28.4	-1.0
UNL Senior	42.0	39.5	+2.5

2004 first-year respondents interacted less with faculty than first-year respondents in 2002, while senior respondents in 2004 reported more interaction than senior respondents in 2002.

Table 7. SFI Benchmark: Comparison of 2004 and 2002 Scores²

	2004	2002
UNL First-Year	32	34
UNL Senior	44	41

On all student-faculty interaction survey items, senior respondents interacted more frequently with faculty than first-year respondents. Items where differences between senior and first-year respondents were the greatest involved working with faculty outside of coursework on research or other activities like committees and discussing career plans or grades and assignments with faculty/instructors.

Table 8. SFI Benchmark: Significant differences in the responses of first-year and seniors

How often in 2003-04 did you... (% responded “often” or “very often”)	First-Year	Senior
discussed grades or assignments with an instructor?	40%	54%
discussed career plans with a faculty member or advisor?	23%	42%
worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (e.g. committees)?	11%	25%
Have you ... (% responded “have done”)	First-Year	Senior
worked on a research project with faculty member outside of course or program requirements?	2%	30%

² The response options for one of the student-faculty interaction benchmark survey items was rescaled in 2004 and therefore is not included in the comparison between the 2002 and 2004 benchmark scores. This modification is why the 2004 benchmark scores for first-year and senior respondents on table 6 and table 7 differs.

First-year respondents reported interacting with faculty less than their peers on several survey items. They reported receiving less prompt feedback and discussing less often than their peers career plans, grades/assignments, and ideas from their courses with faculty. However, discussing career plans was the only SFI item where 2004 first-year respondents interacted with faculty (or advisors) significantly less than 2002 first-year respondents.

Table 9. SFI Benchmark: First-year comparison with peers and 2002 responses

How often in 2003-04 did you... (% responded "often" or "very often")	First-Year			
	2004 UNL	2004 AAU	2004 Rsch I	2002 UNL
discussed ideas from their readings or classes with faculty members outside of class?	49%	54%	54%	---
receive prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance?	46%	53%	52%	---
discussed grades or assignments with an instructor?	40%	---	45%	---
How often in 2003-04 did you... (% responded "some", "often" or "very often")	First-Year			
	2004 UNL	2004 AAU	2004 Rsch I	2002 UNL
discussed ideas from their readings or classes with faculty members outside of class?	70%	77%	---	77%

Seniors reported interacting more frequently with faculty than their peers on several survey items. These activities include working on research or on committees outside of a course with faculty members and talking about career plans with a faculty member or advisor.

Seniors respondents in 2004 reported more engagement on all SFI items than 2002 seniors except one, although none of these increases were significant. The small increases across all SFI items probably account for the increase from 2002 to 2004 in the SFI benchmark score for seniors.

Table 10. SFI Benchmark: Senior comparison with peers and 2002 responses

How often in 2003-04 did you... (% responded "often" or "very often")	Seniors			
	2004 UNL	2004 AAU	2004 Rsch I	2002 UNL
work with faculty members on activities other than coursework (e.g. committees)?	55%	45%	47%	---
talk about career plans with faculty member or advisor?	42%	36%	37%	---

Have you... (% responded "have done")	Seniors			
	2004 UNL	2004 AAU	2004 Rsch I	2002 UNL
worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements? ³	30%	23%	20%	---

Discussion

The interaction between seniors and faculty at UNL appears to occur in a variety of ways and in some ways more frequently than their peers. Two SFI items in particular are the percentage of seniors who are working on a research project with faculty members outside of course or program requirements, and working with faculty on activities other than coursework. This high level of interaction exhibited by seniors does not occur for first-year respondents. It is not surprising that first-year students interact less frequently with faculty than seniors given the adjustment first-year students are making to a new educational context. Survey results do suggest that improvement is possible because first-year students' interaction with faculty is occurring below what is predicted for UNL and occurs less often than it does for first-year peers.

³ This survey item was rescaled on the 2004 NSSE and therefore makes 2002 and 2004 responses incomparable.

2. Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE) Benchmark

“Complementing learning opportunities both in and out of class can augment academic programs” is why enriching educational experiences is identified as a benchmark of good educational practice by NSSE.

For first-year respondents, the actual and predicted benchmark scores for enriching educational experiences were equal. Seniors had a higher than predicted benchmark score indicating they were more involved in enriching educational experiences than what was predicted for UNL. In addition as predicted, senior respondents were more involved than first-year respondents in these enriching educational experiences.

Table 11. EEE Comparison of Actual and Predicted Scores (2004)

	Actual Score	Predicted Score	Difference
UNL First-Year	25.4	25.4	0
UNL Senior	40.8	39.0	+2.5

A comparison of 2004 and 2002 benchmark scores is invalid because the response options for several survey items were rescaled in 2004. However, comparisons among survey items that did not change are still valid and discussed below.

First-year respondents are less involved than seniors in many enriching educational experiences because they haven't been at UNL long enough to get involved in many of those experiences. These experiences include: practicum/internship/field experience, study abroad, and foreign language coursework. However, the survey also asks about involvement in experiences during the 2003-04 school year. On these items first-year respondents were less involved than seniors in the use of an electronic medium for courses and in discussions with students of a different background than themselves. However, first-year students were as involved as seniors in learning communities and time spent participating in co-curricular activities. This response makes sense given first-year students are more likely to get involved in these experiences than they are in some of the other experiences.

Table 12. EEE Benchmark: Significant differences in the responses of first-year and seniors

How often in 2003-04 did you... (% responded “often” or “very often”)	First-Year	Senior
use an electronic medium (list-serv, chat group, Internet, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment?	49%	63%
How often in 2003-04 did you... (% responded “sometimes”, “often” or “very often”)	First-Year	Senior
have a serious conversation with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own?	75%	84%
have a serious conversation with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values?	86%	92%

Have you ... (% responded "have done")	First-Year	Senior
participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together?	21%	26%
Do you spend time each week ... (% responded spend some time each week)	First-Year	Senior
participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, social fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.)?	71%	60%

Even though the actual score for first-year respondents on the enriching educational experiences benchmark was equal to the predicted score for UNL, there are some significant differences when UNL responses are compared with peers. UNL first-year respondents participated significantly more than their peers in practicum/internships/field experiences, community service/volunteer work, learning communities, independent study/self-designed majors, and the amount of time spent each week participating in co-curricular activities. On the other hand, first-year respondents participated significantly less than their peers in foreign language coursework, serious conversations with students of different backgrounds, and in the use of electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment.

When comparing 2004 and 2002 responses, there were only two significant changes. First-year respondents in 2004 spent more time on extra-curricular activities each week but were less likely to use an electronic medium to complete an assignment than 2002 first-year respondents.

Table 13. EEE Benchmark: First-year comparison with peers and 2002 responses

Have you ... (% responded "have done") ⁴	First-Year			
	2004 UNL	2004 AAU	2004 Rsch I	2002 UNL
practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment?	9%	4%	5%	N/A
community service or volunteer work?	39%	33%	34%	N/A
participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together?	21%	16%	14%	N/A
independent study or self-designed major?	7%	1%	2%	N/A
foreign language coursework?	19%	34%	26%	N/A

⁴ Survey items that list 2002 as N/A were rescaled on the 2004 NSSE and therefore makes 2002 and 2004 responses incomparable.

Do you spend time each week ... (% responded spend some time each week)	First-Year			
	2004 UNL	2004 AAU	2004 Rsch I	2002 UNL
participating in co-curricular activities? (organizations, campus publications, student government, social fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.)?	71%	---	61%	66%
How often in 2003-04 did you... (% responded "often" or "very often")	First-Year			
	2004 UNL	2004 AAU	2004 Rsch I	2002 UNL
have a serious conversation with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values?	52%	64%	59%	N/A
have a serious conversation with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own?	38%	54%	51%	N/A
use an electronic medium (list-serv, chat group, Internet, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment?	49%	56%	55%	58%

Seniors participated as often as their peers in many enriching educational experiences but were significantly more involved in learning communities and independent study/self-designed majors and significantly less involved in foreign language coursework and in serious conversations with student of different race or ethnicity than themselves than their peers. Seniors participation in enriching educational experiences has not changed significantly since 2002.

Table 14. EEE Benchmark: Senior comparison with peers and 2002 responses

Have you ... (% responded "have done")	Senior			
	2004 UNL	2004 AAU	2004 Rsch I	2002 UNL
participated in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together?	26%	20%	21%	N/A
independent study or self-designed major?	33%	18%	18%	N/A
foreign language coursework?	38%	58%	48%	N/A

How often in 2003-04 did you... (% responded "often" or "very often")	First-Year			
	2004 UNL	2004 AAU	2004 Rsch I	2002 UNL
have a serious conversation with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own?	46%	56%	55%	N/A

Discussion

There are many ways to enrich an educational experience and first-year and senior students at UNL experience some of those ways more than others. UNL first-year score for this benchmark is about where it should be but a closer look at the survey items suggest some areas where the first-year experience is being enriched significantly and other areas where the first-year experience could be enriched more. Learning communities and availability of independent study or self-designed majors are two experiences that first-year and seniors are experiencing more frequently than their peers. An experience that UNL first-year and senior received significantly less of is interacting with students of a different race or ethnicity other than their own. Providing this opportunity is more of a challenge at UNL because UNL is more homogenous campus in terms of race and ethnicity than many of its peers making these opportunities less readily available at UNL than it is at peer institutions.

3. Level of Academic Challenge (LAC) Benchmark

“By setting high expectations for student performance and emphasizing the importance of academic effort universities promote high levels of student achievement and make challenging intellectual and creative work central to student learning and collegiate quality” and therefore is identified by NSSE as a benchmark of good educational practice.

The benchmark score for first-year respondents was slightly higher than predicted indicating the level of academic challenge is slightly higher than expected while the benchmark score for seniors is slightly lower than predicted indicating the level of academic challenge is slightly less than expected. As indicated by the predicted score difference between first-year and seniors, the level of academic challenge is higher for seniors than for first-year students at UNL.

Table 15. LAC Comparison of Actual and Predicted Scores (2004)

	Actual Score	Predicted Score	Difference
UNL First-Year	51.1	50.9	+0.1
UNL Senior	54.2	54.6	-0.4

For seniors, the level of academic challenge score remained the same in 2004 as it was in 2002 but for first-year the score decreased slightly in 2004.

Table 16. LAC Benchmark: Comparison of 2004 and 2002 Scores

	2004	2002
UNL First-Year	51	53
UNL Senior	54	54

Difference between level of academic challenge for first-year and seniors lie mainly with the level of mental activity that is emphasized in their courses. Senior respondents indicate that their courses emphasize complex mental activities more than first-year respondents.

Table 17. LAC Benchmark: Significant differences in the responses of first-year and seniors

In 2003-04, how much has your course emphasized... (% responded “quite a bit” or “very much”)	First-Year	Senior
analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory?	75%	84%
applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations?	67%	79%
synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences?	60%	70%

On some LAC items first-year respondents were challenged significantly more than their peers, while on others they were challenged significantly less. First-year respondents were assigned more writing assignments than their peers but were assigned fewer course readings and complex

mental activities were emphasized less in their courses. They also spent significantly less time studying than their AAU peers.

On three of the LAC survey items the first-year response has changed significantly since 2002. First-year respondents in 2004 received significantly fewer course readings, spent significantly less time studying, and responded that they did not work as hard as they thought they could in 2003-04.

Table 18. LAC Benchmark: First-year comparison with peers and 2002 responses

In 2003-04, have you ... (% responded)	First-Year			
	2004 UNL	2004 AAU	2004 Rsch I	2002 UNL
received at least one writing assignment of 20 pages or more?	21%	14%	15%	---
received 5 or more writing assignments that were between 5 and 19 pages?	49%	30%	36%	---
received 11 or more writing assignments of fewer than 5 pages?	44%	31%	35%	---
received more than 20 assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings?	11%	18%	15%	---
received 11 or more textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings?	39%	---	---	45%
In 2003-04, how much has your course emphasized... (% responded "quite a bit" or "very much")	First-Year			
	2004 UNL	2004 AAU	2004 Rsch I	2002 UNL
analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory?	75%	83%	80%	---
applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations?	67%	76%	73%	---
synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences?	60%	66%	65%	---
In a typical 7-day week, do you... (% responded)	First-Year			
	2004 UNL	2004 AAU	2004 Rsch I	2002 UNL
spend 16 or more hours preparing for class (e.g. studying, reading, writing, rehearsing)?	35%	42%	---	41%
In 2003-04 how often did you, ... (% responded "often" or "very often")	First-Year			
	2004 UNL	2004 AAU	2004 Rsch I	2002 UNL
worked harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations?	47%	---	---	56%

The level of academic challenge for senior respondents differed from their peers on only one survey item regarding the number of assigned course readings which was significantly less than their peers.

An increase in the level of academic challenge for seniors in 2004 occurred on only one survey item regarding how much their courses emphasized the complex mental activity of making judgments since 2002.

Table 18. LAC Benchmark: Senior comparison with peers and 2002 responses

In 2003-04, have you ... (% responded)	Senior			
	2004 UNL	2004 AAU	2004 Rsch I	2002 UNL
received 5 or more textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings?	68%	75%	75%	---
In 2003-04, how much has your course emphasized... (% responded “quite a bit” or “very much”)	Senior			
	2004 UNL	2004 AAU	2004 Rsch I	2002 UNL
making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods?	63%	---	---	52%

Discussion

In 2004, UNL first-year and seniors scored fairly close to what was predicted for UNL; however, significant differences in comparison with peers and since 2002 for first-year respondents indicate potential areas for improvement. While first-year students at UNL receive more writing assignments than peers, first-year peers receive more readings, more emphasis on complex mental tasks, and spend more time studying for courses. First-year students also report in 2004 they spend less time studying and do not have to work as hard to meet expectations as 2002 first-year respondents. However, for seniors many of these differences with peers and UNL’s 2002 score disappear. Seniors were challenged as much as their peers and as much as they were in 2002 except for number of assigned course readings.

A missing perspective in the level of academic challenge benchmark is that the survey items provide evidence about the “quantity” of challenging activities but very little if any about the “quality” of those challenging activities. For example, writing is an activity at UNL that first-year students are highly engaged in but the survey only provides evidence about the quantity of those writing assignments and not the quality.

4. Supportive Campus Environment (SCE) Benchmark

NSSE identified this last benchmark on supportive campus environment because “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”.

The actual first-year and senior benchmark scores for supportive campus environment were much lower than predicted for UNL. In addition, supportive campus environment is the only one of the five benchmarks where seniors are expected to have a lower score than first-year respondents. Seniors did have a lower score than first-year indicating seniors report less campus support than first-year.

Table 19. SCE Comparison of Actual and Predicted Scores (2004)

	Actual Score	Predicted Score	Difference
UNL First-Year	56.9	59.1	-2.1
UNL Senior	52.6	54.8	-2.2

When comparing UNL’s 2004 and 2002 benchmark scores the first-year score did improve since 2002 while the senior score stayed the same.

Table 20. SCE Benchmark: Comparison of 2004 and 2002 Scores

	2004	2002
UNL First-Year	57	55
UNL Senior	53	53

Survey items that contribute to seniors scoring lower than the first-year on the supportive campus environment benchmark involved academic support, social support, and support with non-academic responsibilities. The only benchmark item where senior respondents voiced receiving significantly more support than first-year involved the quality of their relationships with faculty members.

Table 21. SCE Benchmark: Significant differences in the responses of first-year and seniors

To what extent does UNL emphasize... (% responded “quite a bit” or “very much”)	First-Year	Senior
providing the support you need to succeed academically?	68%	59%
providing the support you need to thrive socially?	35%	20%
providing the help you need to cope with your non-academic responsibilities (e.g. work, family)?	22%	10%
On a scale of 1 to 7 rate the quality of your relationship... (% responded 6 or 7)	First-Year	Senior
with faculty members (1=unavailable, unhelpful, unsympathetic to 7=available, helpful, sympathetic)?	46%	53%

First-year and senior benchmark scores are likely lower than predicted because of their response to three items about academic support, social support, and support with non-academic responsibilities (e.g. work, family). First-year respondents reported significantly less support on all three of these items than their peers. Senior respondents reported significantly less support on social support and support with non-academic responsibilities than their peers.

The first-year supportive campus environment benchmark score has increased since 2002 because first-year respondents in 2004 reported more support academically and in coping with their non-academic responsibilities. Seniors responses to supportive campus environment survey items have not changed significantly since 2002.

Table 22. SCE Benchmark: First-year comparison with peers and 2002 responses

To what extent does UNL emphasize... (% responded "quite a bit" or "very much")	First-Year			
	2004 UNL	2004 AAU	2004 Rsch I	2002 UNL
providing the support you need to succeed academically?	68%	77%	74%	60%
providing the support you needs to thrive socially?	35%	45%	41%	---
providing the help you need to cope with your non-academic responsibilities (e.g. work, family)?	62%	69%	68%	52%

Table 23. SCE Benchmark: Senior comparison with peers and 2002 responses

To what extent does UNL emphasize... (% responded "quite a bit" or "very much")	Senior			
	2004 UNL	2004 AAU	2004 Rsch I	2002 UNL
providing the support you needs to thrive socially?	20%	26%	28%	---
providing the help you need to cope with your non-academic responsibilities (e.g. work, family)?	10%	---	17%	---

Discussion

A lower than predicted benchmark score on supportive campus environment for first-year and seniors is due undergraduate student perception of how much UNL emphasizes social and academic success. However, the first-year perception has improved since 2002 and with renewed emphasis on this support, particularly with the creation of the Office of Undergraduate Studies and the work of committees like the Transition to University Taskforce these improvements have the potential to continue.

CONCLUSION

The NSSE survey suggests that the first-year experience at UNL has students actively and collaboratively engaged in their learning and receiving a sufficient level of academic challenge especially in regards to the amount of writing they are expected to do. Another positive result is that first-year students in 2003-04 felt more positive about the support they received both academically and socially than first-year students in 2001-02. This improvement in supportive campus environment is important because UNL in 2002 and in 2004 scored below what is expected of an institution like UNL. Another area where the first-year experience could be improved is their interaction with faculty. First-year respondents scored below what is expected for an institution like UNL and have decreased since 2002.

For the senior year experience, UNL is providing seniors students with enriching educational experiences, frequent interactions with faculty, and opportunities to be actively and collaboratively involved in their learning. In all three areas UNL scored above what was expected and has done as well or improved in those areas since 2002. Areas for future improvement may include increasing the level of academic challenge and providing a more supportive campus environment for seniors. Senior scores have not changed in these two areas since 2002 but senior scores are below what is expected for an institution like UNL.

Appendix A
2002 and 2004 NSSE AAU Peers

<i>2002 NSSE – AAU Peers</i>	<i>UNL Regental Peer Institution</i>	<i>2004 NSSE – AAU Peers</i>
Did not participate in 2002		Indiana University Bloomington
Ohio State University	***	Ohio State University
Pennsylvania State University		**Did not participate in 2004**
University of Colorado - Boulder	***	**Did not participate in 2004**
University of Illinois – Urbana Champaign	***	University of Illinois – Urbana Champaign
University of Maryland – College Park		**Did not participate in 2004**
Did not participate in 2002	***	University of Kansas
University of Missouri - Columbia	***	University of Missouri - Columbia
University of Pittsburgh		University of Pittsburgh
University of Texas - Austin		University of Texas - Austin
University of Virginia		**Did not participate in 2004**
University of Washington		**Did not participate in 2004**
Did not participate in 2002		University of Wisconsin

Appendix B Documentation of How UNL Shared and Used 2004 NSSE Results

- Each of the academic colleges and the Division of General Studies received a breakdown of their results. This included replicating the same notebook the institution received from NSSE. The notebook included a summary of the college's student responses to the survey questions arrayed by year in school and compared with the institutional response. It also included other useful information such as respondent characteristics, guidelines for interpreting NSSE results, a codebook for the survey items, and a Powerpoint template given to UNL by the NSSE administrators for the college to use when sharing their results with groups on and off the campus. (November 2004)
- The University-Wide Assessment Coordinator presented NSSE benchmark results for the institution and colleges to Senior Advisory Team. The Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs ask that information related to his unit be shared with his directors and Chancellor suggested that individual colleges receive their benchmark score results. (December 2004)
- NSSE results were shared with Council of Student Affairs Directors. Directors of several units requested additional analysis specific to their program (e.g. greek affairs, financial aid). (January 2005)
- NSSE results were analyzed for each program in the Office of Undergraduate Studies. University-Wide Assessment Coordinator met with individuals in charge of each program to discuss the results and discuss possible follow-up. (January 2005)
- NSSE results were presented to the Admission, Advising, and Retention Committee (AARC). Discussion prompted an analysis of differences in the survey responses of first-year student who returned for their sophomore year and those that did not. (February 2005)
- Selected NSSE results to be discussed in greater depth with a student leadership group in student affairs to gain their thoughts on those results. (March 2005)
- NSSE benchmark results to be shared with Enrollment Management Council. (April 2005)
- A comparison of NSSE benchmark scores for each college and institutional benchmark scores were shared in individual meetings between University-Wide Assessment Coordinator and associate deans in each college. Colleges plan to share and discuss scores with faculty and students as well as share them at college retreats and in alumni newsletters (March/April 2005).

Appendix C

NSSE Survey Items Contributing to Each Benchmark Score

Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL)

About how often during the current school year have you ...

- asked questions in class or contributed to class discussion?
- 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?
- participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course?
- discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class?

Student – Faculty Interaction (SFI)

About how often during the current school year have you ...

- discussed grades or assignments with an instructor?
- talked about career plans with faculty member or advisor?
- discussed ideas from readings or class with faculty member outside of class?
- received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance?
- worked with a faculty member on activities other than coursework?

Have you or do you plan to work on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements before you graduate from UNL?

Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE)

How much time do you spend in a typical 7-day week participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, publications, student government, sports, etc.)?

Have you participated or do you plan to participate in...

- practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment?
- community service or volunteer work?
- a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together?
- foreign language coursework?
- study abroad?
- independent study or self-designed major?
- culminating senior experience?

About how often during the current school year have you ...

- had a serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity?
- had a serious conversations with students of different religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values?
- Used an electronic technology to discuss or complete an assignment?

To what extent does your institution encourage contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds?

Level of Academic Challenge (LAC)

How much time do you spend in a typical 7-day week preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, etc. related to academic program)?

During the current school year, how many...

- assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings have you done?
- written papers or reports of 20 pages or more have you done?
- written papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages have you done?
- written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages have you done?

During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized?

- analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory?
- synthesizing and organizing ideas, information or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships?
- making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods?
- applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations?

About how often during the current school year have you worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations?

To what extent does your institution emphasize spending significant amount of time studying and on academic work?

Supportive Campus Environment (SCE)

What is the quality of your relationships with...

- other students at your institution?
- faculty members at your institution?
- administrative personnel and offices at your institution?

To what extent does your institution emphasize...

- providing the support you need to help you succeed academically?
- helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities?

providing the support you need to thrive socially?