

2013 National Survey of Student Engagement

Executive Summary

Prepared by NDSU's Office of Institutional Research January, 2014

Administration

1,228 first-year and senior NDSU students completed the 2013 NSSE. Response rates for first-year (391 completed) and senior (837 completed) students were 23% and 30%, respectively; both response rates are higher than the national averages. The higher response rate for seniors is a national trend. Participants were recruited to take the survey online via five email invitations during the first half of the Spring 2013 semester. The respondent population is generally representative of NDSU as a whole in terms of demographics and distribution across academic colleges.

The NSSE underwent significant revision resulting in an updated version for 2013. 23% of the items are new, and 55% of the items were modified to a major or minor extent. The five benchmarks were revised into five themes, each comprised of specific engagement indicators. Themes include Academic Challenge, Learning with Peers, Experiences with Faculty, Campus Environment, and High-Impact Practices. The ND Higher Education System has been paying for the NSSE. At additional expense to NDSU OIRA, NDSU students also completed the topical modules of 1) Experiences with Writing and 2) Academic Advising.

Three comparison groups include:

- 1) **NDSU Peer Institutions that participated 2013:** Clemson University, Iowa State University, University of Alaska Fairbanks, University of Arkansas, University of Connecticut, University of Nebraska Lincoln, University of Nevada Reno, and University of Rhode Island
- 2) **NDSU Area Competitors that participated 2013:** Concordia College, Minnesota State University Moorhead, University of Minnesota-Crookston, University of North Dakota, University of Wisconsin-River Falls, and Valley City State University
- 3) **All NSSE 2013 Participating Institutions:** (567 Institutions; 364,193 participants)

Results Overview

As was the case in 2011, NDSU students are less satisfied and less engaged than students at peer institutions, competing area institutions, and institutions nationally. (This summary statement is the case of all years of NDSU NSSE administration {back to 2000} and all comparison groups chosen over those years.) This is especially the case for seniors who compare unfavorably to other seniors across the board; like seniors, NDSU first-year students compared unfavorably nationally and with NDSU peer institutions but were more comparable to the six area competitors. On the whole, satisfaction and engagement trend upward from first-year to senior year, and this pattern holds true for NDSU students. However, NDSU seniors do not experience increased satisfaction and engagement from first to senior year to the extent that seniors at other institutions do. Again, this has been a consistent trend with previous NSSE administrations at NDSU. Even for areas in (and times at) which NDSU is (was) not statistically significantly different from a peer group, it is (was) almost always below the peer group.

A one page summary of the 2013 results is the last page of this Executive Summary. Of the 60 comparisons, 70% are statistically in disfavor for NDSU, 27% are not statistically significant, and only 3% are statistically in favor of NDSU.

Results of the Two Global Questions

Compared to NDSU peer institutions, 85% of NDSU first-years and 85% of seniors rate their entire educational experience as “good” or “excellent” versus 90% and 88% for peers. 86% of NDSU first-years and 84% of seniors would “definitely” or “probably” attend NDSU again versus 88% and 85% of peers. Of the 12 combinations of three comparison groups and the two global questions, the sum of “Poor/Fair” or “Definitely/Probably Not” attend percentages were larger for NDSU 2 of 3 times for both first-years and seniors.

Results Summary by Theme

Academic Challenge:

Both first-years and seniors report less engagement than all three comparison groups with practices related to higher-order learning, reflective and integrative learning, learning strategies, and quantitative reasoning—this trend is especially pronounced for seniors. Eight of the 12 first-year negative comparisons were statistically significant ($P < 0.001$ for 5). All 12 for seniors were negatively statistically significant ($P < 0.001$ for 9). NDSU first-years are equally engaged in quantitative reasoning as area competitors and nationals. NDSU seniors are less engaged with all practices (individual survey items) related to higher-order learning, reflective and integrative learning, learning strategies, and quantitative reasoning than peers, area competitors, and nationals.

Learning with Peers:

Collaborative learning is a relative area of strength for NDSU students. Seniors in particular spend more time than area competitors and students nationally working with fellow students on projects, preparing for exams, and learning course material collaboratively ($P < 0.01$). However, comparisons with peers are statistically significantly negative for first-years and seniors.

Time spent in discussions with diverse others is abysmal for both NDSU first-years and seniors when compared with peer institutions and NSSE takers nationally. However, NDSU students’ experiences with diversity are very comparable to regional competitors.

Experiences with Faculty:

NDSU first-year student-faculty interaction is comparable to that of peer institutions, area competitors, and national NSSE takers for the most part; however, NDSU first-year performance is numerically below all three comparison groups for most survey items constituting student-faculty interaction. By senior year, however, NDSU students report statistically ($P < .001$ for all three student-faculty interaction comparisons and all three effective teaching practices) less interaction with faculty. Providing feedback

on a draft or work in progress remains as dismal as 15 years ago. Providing prompt and detailed feedback on tests and completed assignments remains an un-proud second to last.

Three items of note that relate to, but are not constituents of, the survey's academic challenge and experiences with faculty themes are time preparing for class, time on assigned reading, and pages of assigned writing. NDSU first-years have more assigned pages of writing; otherwise NDSU has values lower than all three comparisons groups.

Campus Environment:

This theme has to do with supportive settings that cultivate positive relationships among students, faculty, and staff. Two engagement indicators investigate this theme: quality of interactions and supportive environment.

NDSU first-years and seniors report having the same to slightly higher satisfaction with interactions with their student peers than those of the three comparison groups. First-year satisfaction with interactions with academic advisors is the same as for each of the three comparison groups. NDSU senior satisfaction with these advisor interactions is the same as for peers but definitely less than area competitors and nationals ($P < 0.001$ for both). Both first-years and seniors compare less favorably to comparison groups when it comes to interactions with faculty (all six comparisons statistically significant and more so for seniors).

NDSU first-years and seniors are fine with student services staff, but again, just equal to the three comparisons groups. The same can be said for interactions with administrative staff and offices.

Regarding providing a supportive environment, for which there are eight items, NDSU is scored statistically below peers and nationals for most all eight by both first-years and seniors, and equal to area competitors except (negatively) for senior help succeeding academically, senior contact with diversity, and senior attending events that address social, economic, or political issues¹.

¹The other five items pertain to learning support services (tutoring, etc.); social involvement; overall well-being (counseling, etc.); managing non-academic responsibilities; and attending campus activities and events.

High-Impact Practices:

High-impact practices are positively associated with student learning and retention. Those evaluated by the NSSE include participation in learning communities, service-learning, research with faculty, internships/field experiences/student teaching, study abroad, and a capstone project (the last three for seniors only). NDSU first-year students participate in two or more of these activities less frequently than peer ($P < 0.001$) and national students and the same as those of area competitors. NDSU seniors participate in two or more of these activities at a greater rate than area competitors and nationals ($P < 0.001$) and an equal rate as peers. Completing a capstone project is one exemplary area for NDSU seniors (statistically so for peers and nationals); research with faculty is not – especially compared to peers and especially so compared to peer seniors.

Academic Advising module:

The Academic Advising module has eleven items over and above the basic NSSE items. The number of institutions participating 2013 was 233. The comparisons are of NDSU vs. the approximate total of 47,300 first-years and approximate total of 70,500 seniors of these 233 institutions.

Overall, NDSU first-year students are as satisfied as peers with their advising experience while seniors are not. NDSU first-years meet just as often with an academic advisor as the comparison group and the nine satisfaction averages are numerically equal to those of the comparison group. NDSU seniors not only meet statistically less often but are statistically less satisfied on six of the nine satisfaction items and equal to less than for the other three. The six statistically significant senior items are: 1) informing of important deadlines ($P < 0.001$), 2) explaining academic rules and policies ($P < 0.001$), 3) informing of academic support options ($P < 0.001$), 4) providing information about courses ($P < 0.01$), 5) helping with academic difficulties ($P < .001$), and 6) helping get information on special opportunities, e.g., study abroad ($P < 0.001$).

The eleventh item is source of advice regarding academic plans. Of interest is that a smaller percentage of NDSU first-years interact with academic advisors available to any students and higher percentage of interactions with friends or other students and family members. Four percent of NDSU seniors interact with academic advisors available to any student (vs. 10% for the comparison population) and 15% with friends and other students (vs. 10%).

Experiences with Writing module (for which 114 institutions and approximately 25,250 first-years and 35,500 seniors participated):

The experience of NDSU first-year students is very comparable to that of comparison peers; of the 10 items about writing related tasks and behaviors, NDSU was statistically above for three and statistically below for four. NDSU first-years give ($P < 0.001$) and receive ($P < 0.001$) feedback from their student peers more often than students at the other institutions. They are assigned a real or imagined audience more often ($P < 0.05$). The statistically negative differences are for 1) talked to other in developing ideas; 2) analyzing or evaluating something you read, researched, or observed; 3) argued a position using evidence and reasoning; and 4) wrote in the style and format of a specific field. First-years are as satisfied as the comparison students with instructor clarity of instructions, learning goals, and grading criteria.

Seniors, on the other hand, have statistically significant lower scores on eight ($P < 0.001$ on five) of 10 items. Most noteworthy, NDSU seniors argue a position using evidence and reasoning much less of the time than do peers. The only two items of equality (but as usual, lower average) are giving feedback to a classmate and explaining in writing the meaning of numerical or statistical data. In contrast to first-years, NDSU seniors strongly rate instructors lower for clarity of instructions, learning goals, and grading criteria.

Conclusion:

Compared with peers, NDSU is competitive in collaborative learning and participation in the high impact practices of service learning and a senior capstone project. NDSU seniors are not as satisfied or engaged as seniors of every comparison group across nearly all NSSE areas and the two additional modules in which NDSU participated.

A final consideration is the ranking by NDSU seniors by the percentage responding “Very much” or “Quite a bit” to the question “to what extent has NDSU contributed to perceive gains” in 10 areas of academic and social development (keeping in mind NDSU averages are below 28 of the 30 total senior comparison group averages, with $P < 0.001$ for 14 of these 28 and with $P < 0.01$ or $P < 0.05$ for another six of these 28):

1. Thinking critically and analytically (83% seniors responding “Very much” or “Quite a bit”)
2. Working effectively with others (71%)
3. Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills (70%)
4. Writing clearly and effectively (68%)
5. Analyzing numerical and statistical information (65%)
6. Speaking clearly and effectively (63%)
7. Solving complex real-world problems (57%)
8. Developing or clarifying a personal code of values and ethics (53%)
9. Understanding people of other backgrounds, e.g., economic, racial, religion) (47%)
10. Being an informed and active citizen (46%)

Engagement Indicators: Overview

Engagement Indicators are summary measures based on sets of NSSE questions examining key dimensions of student engagement. The ten indicators are organized within four themes: Academic Challenge, Learning with Peers, Experiences with Faculty, and Campus Environment. The tables below compare average scores for your students with those in your comparison groups.

Use the following key:

- ▲ **Your students' average** was significantly higher ($p < .05$) with an effect size at least .3 in magnitude.
- △ **Your students' average** was significantly higher ($p < .05$) with an effect size less than .3 in magnitude.
- No significant difference.
- ▼ **Your students' average** was significantly lower ($p < .05$) with an effect size less than .3 in magnitude.
- ▼ **Your students' average** was significantly lower ($p < .05$) with an effect size at least .3 in magnitude.

First-Year (FY) Students

Theme	Engagement Indicator	Your FY students compared with NDSU Peers	Your FY students compared with 6 Area Competitors	Your FY students compared with NSSE 2013
Academic Challenge	Higher-Order Learning	▼	--	▼
	Reflective and Integrative Learning	▼	--	▼
	Learning Strategies	▼	▼	▼
	Quantitative Reasoning	▼	--	--
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning	▼	--	--
	Discussions with Diverse Others	▼	--	▼
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction	--	--	--
	Effective Teaching Practices	▼	▼	▼
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions	--	--	--
	Supportive Environment	▼	--	▼

Seniors

Theme	Engagement Indicator	Your seniors compared with NDSU Peers	Your seniors compared with 6 Area Competitors	Your seniors compared with NSSE 2013
Academic Challenge	Higher-Order Learning	▼	▼	▼
	Reflective and Integrative Learning	▼	▼	▼
	Learning Strategies	▼	▼	▼
	Quantitative Reasoning	▼	▼	▼
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning	▼	△	△
	Discussions with Diverse Others	▼	--	▼
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction	▼	▼	▼
	Effective Teaching Practices	▼	▼	▼
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions	--	▼	▼
	Supportive Environment	▼	▼	▼