

NSSE's five *Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice*: Five broad indicators of institutional effectiveness.

To focus discussions about the importance of student engagement and guide institutional improvement efforts, NSSE created five clusters or Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice:

- Level of academic challenge (LAC)
- Active and collaborative learning (ACL)
- Student-faculty interaction (SFI)
- Enriching educational experiences (EEE)
- Supportive campus environment (SCE)

The benchmarks are broad factors that collectively summarize the most important aspects of undergraduate education, as evidenced by the vast research literature on college student outcomes. They are based on 42 key questions from the NSSE survey that capture many vital aspects of the student experience. These student behaviors and institutional features are some of the more powerful contributors to learning and personal development.

Comparison groups

This Benchmark Report compares SCSU with three external groups of institutions (for the Spring 2009 administration):

1. **Carn.** *Carnegie group.* The 143 institutions in our Carnegie Group that participated in NSSE 2009.
2. **MnSCU.** The NSSE "MnSCU Consortium," which consists of five of the six MnSCU universities other than SCSU. (Southwestern Minnesota State did not participate in NSSE 2009.)
3. **Peers.** Listed in the table immediately below. Of the 27 institutions identified by SCSU's Strategic Planning Committee for benchmarking purposes, this group includes all 15 that participated in NSSE 2009.

"Peers" comparison group (2009 only)

Peer institutions	Aspirational institutions
1 Ball State University (IN)	1 Montclair State University (NJ)
2 Central Michigan University (MI)	2 Towson University (MD)
3 Eastern Michigan University (MI)	3 University of North Carolina at Charlotte (NC)
4 Louisiana Tech University (LA)	4 University of Northern Iowa (IA)
5 Minnesota State University-Mankato (MN)	5 Western Illinois University (IL)
6 Missouri State University (MO)	6 Western Kentucky University (KY)
7 Oakland University (MI)	
8 University of Central Oklahoma (OK)	
9 Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (IL)	

Note: This group of 15 is a subset of the 27-member "peer comparison group" selected by SCSU for benchmarking purposes (i.e., all 15 that participated in NSSE 2009). That group of 27 consists of 18 "peer" institutions that are similar to SCSU on key statistical indicators, plus another nine "aspirational" institutions with characteristics SCSU would like to emulate. The 15 institutions listed in this table include nine of the 18 peer institutions, and six of the nine aspirational institutions. As such, this NSSE 2009 "Peers" group is somewhat weighted in the "aspirational" direction.

Rough overview of SCSU's strengths and weaknesses on the Benchmarks

The chart below gives a quick view of SCSU's status in NSSE 2009 on the five Benchmarks, relative to the three external comparison groups: Peers, Carnegie and MnSCU. There were a total of 30 Benchmark comparisons (i.e., five Benchmarks times two classes times three comparison groups). Across those 30 comparisons, only nine significant effect sizes were found, eight of those nine were for first year students. Further, all nine significant effect sizes were "small" (but significant); that is not particularly surprising, given that we selected comparison groups that are *similar to SCSU*. To "set the bar higher," SCSU could instead focus on comparisons with the Top 50% and/or the Top 10% of NSSE-performing institutions; that would result in more and larger significant effect sizes.

SCSU's status on NSSE's five *Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice*¹

<i>Benchmark</i>	Number of significant effect sizes ²	
	<i>First year</i>	<i>Seniors</i>
Level of Academic Challenge (LAC)	2+ (of 3)	1+ (of 3)
Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL)	3+ (of 3)	0 (of 3)
Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)	1- (of 3)	0 (of 3)
Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE)	2- (of 3)	0 (of 3)
Supportive Campus Environment (SCE)	0 (of 3)	0 (of 3)

¹ Spring 2009 administration.

² Relative to the three comparison groups. For each of the ten Benchmark/class combinations, SCSU was compared with Peers, Carnegie, and MnSCU. For each of those ten, the number of significant effect sizes is shown; the largest possible value for each cell is 3 (i.e., one for each comparison group). The plus and minus signs indicate favorable and unfavorable comparisons for SCSU, respectively. All significant effect sizes were small, which is not surprising considering that we selected three *groups of institutions that are similar to SCSU* for comparison.

The next page of this report (i.e., "Benchmark comparisons") shows more detailed statistics on the Benchmarks for SCSU and the three comparison groups. Focus on the significant effect sizes¹ that are shown in bold. For more detailed information about the method used to determine significant effect sizes at the Benchmark level, [click here](#).

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¹ Because of the very large numbers of students in SCSU's external comparison groups of institutions, differences between SCSU and those comparison groups can be statistically significant and reliable, yet not large enough to be of *practical significance*. For that reason, NSSE focuses on (Cohen's d) effect sizes, which indicate differences that are large enough that they are likely *meaningful*, or significant *in practical terms*.

Level of Academic Challenge (LAC)

2009 Mean Comparisons

SCSU compared with:

SCSU		Peers			Carnegie Class			MnSCU		
<i>Class</i>	<i>Mean^a</i>	<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>	<i>Mean^a</i>	<i>Sig^b</i>	<i>Effect Size^c</i>
First-Year	54.4	51.6	***	.21	53.1		.10	51.2	***	.25
Senior	57.2	55.1	***	.15	56.9		.02	56.1		.08

Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL)

2009 Mean Comparisons

SCSU compared with:

SCSU		Peers			Carnegie Class			MnSCU		
<i>Class</i>	<i>Mean^a</i>	<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>	<i>Mean^a</i>	<i>Sig^b</i>	<i>Effect Size^c</i>
First-Year	45.4	41.9	***	.22	43.3	**	.13	41.5	***	.24
Senior	52.4	50.8	*	.10	51.5		.05	51.7		.04

Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)

2009 Mean Comparisons

SCSU compared with:

SCSU		Peers			Carnegie Class			MnSCU		
<i>Class</i>	<i>Mean^a</i>	<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>	<i>Mean^a</i>	<i>Sig^b</i>	<i>Effect Size^c</i>
First-Year	32.8	33.7		-.05	35.2	**	-.13	31.8		.06
Senior	39.0	40.5		-.07	41.8	***	-.13	40.1		-.06

Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE)

2009 Mean Comparisons

SCSU compared with:

SCSU		Peers			Carnegie Class			MnSCU		
<i>Class</i>	<i>Mean^a</i>	<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>	<i>Mean^a</i>	<i>Sig^b</i>	<i>Effect Size^c</i>
First-Year	23.9	26.5	***	-.20	27.1	***	-.24	24.2		-.03
Senior	36.8	38.3	*	-.09	38.5	*	-.09	37.2		-.02

Supportive Campus Environment (SCE)

2009 Mean Comparisons

SCSU compared with:

SCSU		Peers			Carnegie Class			MnSCU		
<i>Class</i>	<i>Mean^a</i>	<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>	<i>Mean^a</i>	<i>Sig^b</i>	<i>Effect Size^c</i>
First-Year	61.2	60.1		.06	61.6		-.02	60.0		.07
Senior	56.1	56.6		-.03	58.9	***	-.14	58.5	**	-.13

^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.

^d Significant effect sizes are shown in bold (all were small).

Percentages for items comprising Benchmark (2009): Level of Academic Challenge (LAC).

	SCSU	Peers		Carnegie Group		MnSCU Universities	
First year students (LAC effect sizes: Peers = .21 ; Carn = .10; MnSCU = .25). ⁶	%	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵
2b Said courses emphasized analyzing ideas, experiences, or theories. ²	75	76	-1	79	-3	74	2
2e Said courses emphasized applying theories or concepts to new situations. ²	74	74	0	74	0	73	1
1r Worked harder than you expected to meet an instructor's expectations. ¹	56	55	1	58	-3	51	4
10a Said institution emphasizes studying and academic work. ²	79	78	1	80	-1	77	2
2c Said courses emphasized synthesizing ideas into new complex relationships. ²	67	65	2	68	-1	63	4
9a Spent more than 10 hours/week preparing for class (studying, etc.)	57	54	3	55	2	59	-2
3d Wrote more than four papers or reports <i>between 5 and 19 pages</i> .	33	29	4	32	1	26	6
2d Said courses emphasized making judgments about the value of information. ²	73	68	4	71	2	67	6
3c Wrote at least one paper or report <i>of 20 pages or more</i>	26	17	9	20	7	16	10
3a Read more than ten assigned books or book-length packs of readings	43	33	10	36	7	32	11
3e Wrote more than ten papers or reports <i>of fewer than 5 pages</i> .	46	30	16	31	15	36	11
Seniors (LAC effect sizes: Peers = .15 ; Carn = .02; MnSCU = .08). ⁶	%	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵
2b Said courses emphasized analyzing ideas, experiences, or theories. ²	82	83	0	85	-2	85	-2
2c Said courses emphasized synthesizing ideas into new complex relationships. ²	71	72	0	76	-4	74	-3
2e Said courses emphasized applying theories or concepts to new situations. ²	80	80	0	82	-2	81	-1
10a Said institution emphasizes studying and academic work. ²	78	77	1	80	-2	77	1
2d Said courses emphasized making judgments about the value of information. ²	73	71	2	75	-2	74	-1
1r Worked harder than you expected to meet an instructor's expectations. ¹	60	58	2	62	-2	55	5
9a Spent more than 10 hours/week preparing for class (studying, etc.)	61	54	8	56	6	57	5
3c Wrote at least one paper or report <i>of 20 pages or more</i>	57	48	9	49	7	50	7
3a Read more than ten assigned books or book-length packs of readings	40	30	10	34	6	30	10
3e Wrote more than ten papers or reports <i>of fewer than 5 pages</i> .	45	33	12	31	14	39	6
3d Wrote more than four papers or reports <i>between 5 and 19 pages</i> .	54	42	12	45	9	46	8

¹ Combination of students responding

² Combination of students responding "Very much" or "Quite a bit."

⁵ Rounded to the nearest whole percentage point.

⁶ Significant effect sizes are shown in bold. (All are small.)

Percentages for items comprising Benchmark (2009): Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL).

	SCSU	Peers		Carnegie Group		MnSCU Universities	
	%	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵
First year students (ACL effect sizes: Peers = .22 ; Carn = .13 ; MnSCU = .24). ⁶	%	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵
1j Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary) ¹	13	13	-1	15	-2	12	1
1t Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.) ¹	55	54	1	58	-4	52	3
1a Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions ¹	58	56	3	63	-5	52	7
1k Participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course ¹	16	13	3	13	2	13	3
1g Worked with other students on projects <i>during class</i> . ¹	52	48	4	47	5	49	3
1h Worked with classmates <i>outside of class</i> to prepare class assignments ¹	50	40	11	41	9	44	6
1b Made a class presentation ¹	49	34	14	37	12	35	14
Seniors (ACL effect sizes: Peers = .10 ; Carn = .05 ; MnSCU = .04). ⁶	%	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵
1a Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions ¹	69	72	-3	75	-6	75	-6
1g Worked with other students on projects <i>during class</i> . ¹	54	54	0	52	2	58	-4
1t Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.) ¹	64	62	2	65	-1	61	3
1j Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary) ¹	21	18	3	20	1	17	4
1b Made a class presentation ¹	66	63	3	63	3	63	3
1k Participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course ¹	21	18	4	19	3	20	1
1h Worked with classmates <i>outside of class</i> to prepare class assignments ¹	68	58	10	57	11	61	7

¹ Combination of students responding "Very often" or "Often."

⁵ Rounded to the nearest whole percentage point.

⁶ Significant effect sizes are shown in bold. (All are small.)

Percentages for items comprising Benchmark (2009): *Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)*.

	SCSU	Peers		Carnegie Group		MnSCU Universities	
	%	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵
First year students (SFI effect sizes: Peers = -.05; Carn = -.13 ; MnSCU = .06). ⁶	%	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵
1o Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor ¹	27	32	-4	33	-6	30	-3
1q Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance (written or oral) ¹	51	55	-3	59	-8	49	3
1n Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor ¹	48	50	-2	54	-6	47	2
1s Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.) ¹	16	15	1	16	-1	15	1
7d Worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements. ⁴	36	34	2	36	0	32	4
1p Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class ¹	22	21	2	23	0	18	5
Seniors (SFI effect sizes: Peers = -.07; Carn = -.13 ; MnSCU = -.06). ⁶	%	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵
1q Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance (written or oral) ¹	59	63	-3	67	-8	64	-5
1n Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor ¹	56	60	-3	62	-6	58	-2
1o Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor ¹	39	41	-2	43	-4	40	-1
1p Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class ¹	24	25	-1	28	-5	24	0
7d Worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements. ⁴	28	28	0	29	-1	28	0
1s Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.) ¹	22	21	0	21	1	21	1

¹ Combination of students responding "Very often" or "Often."

⁴ Combination of students responding "Done" or "Plan to do."

⁵ Rounded to the nearest whole percentage point.

⁶ Significant effect sizes are shown in bold. (All are small.)

Percentages for items comprising Benchmark (2009): *Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE)*.

	SCSU	Peers		Carnegie Group		MnSCU Universities	
	%	%	% Difference⁵	%	% Difference⁵	%	% Difference⁵
First year students (EEE effect sizes: Peers = -.20 ; Carn = -.24 ; MnSCU = -.03). ⁶	%	%	% Difference⁵	%	% Difference⁵	%	% Difference⁵
1u Had serious conversations w/ students of another race or ethnicity. ¹	39	48	-10	52	-13	36	3
1v Had serious conversations w/ students of other relig./politics/values. ¹	45	55	-9	55	-9	47	-2
7e Foreign language coursework. ⁴	42	51	-9	53	-11	37	4
7h Culminating senior experience. ⁴	38	46	-8	48	-11	44	-7
9d Spent more than 5 hours per week participating in co-curricular activities.	28	31	-3	28	0	28	0
7a Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op, or clinical assignment. ⁴	80	81	-1	80	0	79	1
1l Used an electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment. ¹	50	51	-1	53	-2	51	0
7b Participated in community service or volunteer work. ⁴	79	78	0	79	0	79	0
7c Participated in a learning community. ⁴	45	42	3	44	1	38	7
7g Participated in independent study or self-designed major. ⁴	23	19	3	22	0	17	5
7f Completed a study abroad program. ⁴	46	38	8	41	5	34	11
10c Said institution substantially encourages contacts among diverse peers. ²	68	58	10	59	9	54	14
Seniors (EEE effect sizes: Peers = -.09 ; Carn = -.09 ; MnSCU = -.02). ⁶	%	%	% Difference⁵	%	% Difference⁵	%	% Difference⁵
7e Foreign language coursework. ⁴	33	46	-13	45	-12	30	3
1u Had serious conversations w/ students of another race or ethnicity. ¹	44	51	-7	55	-11	40	4
1v Had serious conversations w/ students of other relig./politics/values. ¹	52	55	-3	56	-4	48	4
1l Used an electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment. ¹	56	59	-2	62	-6	63	-7
7g Participated in independent study or self-designed major. ⁴	23	23	-1	26	-3	30	-7
7a Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op, or clinical assignment. ⁴	79	78	0	75	3	77	2
9d Spent more than 5 hours per week participating in co-curricular activities.	25	24	1	21	4	19	6
7c Participated in a learning community. ⁴	37	35	2	35	2	34	3
7h Culminating senior experience. ⁴	66	62	4	64	2	69	-4
7b Participated in community service or volunteer work. ⁴	77	73	4	72	5	73	4
10c Said institution substantially encourages contacts among diverse peers. ²	56	50	6	52	4	49	7
7f Completed a study abroad program. ⁴	24	17	7	20	4	16	8

¹ Combination of students responding "Very often" or "Often."

² Combination of students responding "Very much" or "Quite a bit."

⁴ Combination of students responding "Done" or "Plan to do."

⁵ Rounded to the nearest whole percentage point.

⁶ Significant effect sizes are shown in bold. (All are small.)

Percentages for items comprising Benchmark (2009): Supportive Campus Environment (SCE).

	SCSU	Peers		Carnegie Group		MnSCU Universities	
	%	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵
First year students (SCE effect sizes: Peers = .06; Carn = -.02; MnSCU = .07). ⁶	%	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵
8b Positively rated their relationships with faculty members. ³	69	70	-2	74	-5	70	-1
8a Positively rated their relationships with other students. ³	77	78	-1	77	0	82	-5
10b Said the institution provides substantial support for academic success. ²	76	74	1	77	-1	73	3
10d Said the institution substantially helps students cope w/ non-acad. matters ²	41	38	3	40	0	36	5
10e Said the institution provides substantial support for students' social needs. ²	53	50	3	50	4	48	5
8c Positively rated their relationships with admin. personnel and offices. ³	59	55	4	58	1	56	4
Seniors (SCE effect sizes: Peers = -.03; Carn = -.14; MnSCU = -.13). ⁶	%	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵	%	% Difference ⁵
10b Said the institution provides substantial support for academic success. ²	66	68	-2	72	-5	71	-4
10d Said the institution substantially helps students cope w/ non-acad. matters ²	24	24	-1	29	-5	27	-3
8b Positively rated their relationships with faculty members. ³	77	77	0	79	-2	80	-3
8a Positively rated their relationships with other students. ³	81	81	0	81	0	85	-4
10e Said the institution provides substantial support for students' social needs. ²	36	35	1	37	-1	36	0
8c Positively rated their relationships with admin. personnel and offices. ³	56	51	4	56	0	57	-1

² Combination of students responding "Very much" or "Quite a bit."

³ Rated at least 5 on a 7-point scale.

⁵ Rounded to the nearest whole percentage point.

⁶ None of these effect sizes are significant.