

Alphabet Soup

The higher education community has regularly used national surveys to gauge student satisfaction with and preparation for college. Recent results from two national instruments are reported in this issue of DataWave. *Your First College Year (YFCY)* measures student development during the first college year. The *National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)* tests the assumption that more engaged students are more successful learners by asking a random sample of first-year and senior students about their college learning experiences.

Your First College Year (YFCY)

In fall 2004, the YFCY was administered to 153 ENMU freshmen comparing their responses to twenty-eight 4-year public colleges.

ENMU students rated themselves **lower than peers** in

- academic ability
- artistic ability
- mathematics
- public speaking.

ENMU students rated themselves **higher than peers** in these areas:

- religiousness
- drive to achieve
- spirituality.

Since entering college, ENMU students were **more likely** than peers to

- attend church
- socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group
- discuss religion, and
- come late to class.

ENMU students were **less likely** than peers to

- drink
- discuss politics
- feel depressed, and
- use the Internet for research or homework.

College Choice

Students were more satisfied with their college choice.

If you could make your college choice over, would you still choose to enroll at your current university?

	Males	Females	Total
ENMU	4.13	4.16	4.15
Public 4-yr Colleges	3.90	4.02	3.97

1=Definitely no 2=Probably not 3=Don't know
4=Probably I would 5=Definitely yes

Feelings of Success

In gauging their success in several areas of campus life, ENMU students rated themselves close to peers.

How successful have you felt at . . .	ENMU	Peers
Understanding what professors expect of you academically	2.42	2.42
Developing effective study skills	2.14	2.15
Managing your time effectively	2.01	2.11
Getting to know faculty	2.16	1.99
Developing close friendships w/ students	2.59	2.50
Utilizing campus services for students	2.25	2.25

1=Unsuccessful 2=Somewhat successful
3=Completely successful

Academic Support

ENMU students reported **higher satisfaction** than their peers with

- computer facilities
- advising, tutoring
- registrar's office
- student health
- campus recreational facilities
- and new student orientation.

Classroom Behaviors

ENMU YFCY respondents also reported the following behaviors as frequent in their classes:

- group discussions (31.8%)
- formal lectures (53.5%)
- multiple drafts of written work (58.6%)
- evaluate each other's work (25.5%)
- on-line interaction with classmates and/or professors (17.7%)

National Survey of Student Engagement 2002 Results

Valued Academic Skills

"Important" or "Very Important"	1 st Year	Seniors
Critical thinking	79%	81%
Acquiring a broad general education	79%	79%
Working effectively with others	75%	73%
Learning effectively on own	64%	72%
Writing clearly and effectively	73%	70%
Using information technology	75%	66%
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	54%	76%

Reported percentages combine "very often" and "often"

Clearly, the knowledge and skills that students value are a good fit with the university's mission. Further, students generally report positive academic and intellectual experiences.

Academic Preparedness

During the past year, I . . .	1 st Year	Seniors
Came to class without completing assignments	20%	17%
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment	88%	48%
Worked with classmates on a paper or project <u>outside</u> of class	46%	60%
Connected ideas from different courses in assignments/discussions	39%	73%
Tutored students (paid or volunteer)	14%	24%

Reported percentages combine "very often" and "often"

Seniors and freshmen also see different critical thinking skills at work in their courses, with seniors reporting less memorization and more application of theories or concepts in their classes than first-year students.

Key Indicator—Class prep time

NSSE identifies time spent by students preparing for class per week (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, and other activities related to academic programs), as a key indicator of student engagement in their learning.

Hrs per Week	ENMU	Peers
Freshmen	8.6 hrs	9.8 hrs
Seniors	9.6 hrs	10.0 hrs

Unfortunately, freshmen and senior ENMU student respondents reported spending less time preparing for class than their peers. While not uniformly encouraging, these findings can help to identify ways that the University can motivate and enhance student learning.

Course Emphases

My courses emphasized . . .	1 st Year	Seniors
Memorizing facts, ideas, methods	84%	69%
Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, methods	73%	67%
Applying theories or concepts to practical problems, new situations	69%	78%

Reported percentages combine "very much" and "quite a bit" responses.

If you would like to review a complete version of the YFCY or NSSE data, please contact the Assessment Resource Office at ext. 4313. NSSE and YFCY are scheduled for administration next in spring 2005.

Assessment Day 2005

Assessment Day will be Wednesday, **April 6, 2005**. The Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee is developing events for faculty to be scheduled for part of the day. Freshmen will be completing either the NSSE or YFCY surveys. Juniors will take either the Academic Profile Test or a Critical Thinking exam, to be evaluated by faculty using a rubric designed by the Center for Critical Thinking Institute at Sonoma State University. The Assessment Committee and the Assessment Office will be sharing more information about Assessment Day plans early in spring 2005.

