

Results of the Spring, 2009 Administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement at New Mexico Highlands University

Prepared by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is administered to freshmen and senior students in the spring semester to assess their experiences with their undergraduate institution. It is administered by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. In 2009, 640 institutions from the United States and Canada participated in the survey. As a part of Highlands' participation in the Voluntary System of Accountability, we must administer a survey of student engagement at least once every three years. The NSSE was first administered at Highlands' in the spring of 2009. We will administer it again in the spring of 2012. This report summarizes the results from our first administration of the survey.

More information about the NSSE can be found here: <http://nsse.iub.edu/>. More information about the Voluntary System of Accountability can be found here: <http://www.voluntarysystem.org/>.

We can compare Highlands' performance to three different comparison groups: 1) all NSSE participants; 2) all institutions sharing our Carnegie classification (Masters-Large Programs); or 3) a self-selected group of comparison institutions consisting of all public masters-granting institutions in the southwest.

578 freshmen and 458 seniors were invited to take the survey online. The overall response rate was 21% (13% of the freshmen and 30% of the seniors). While this response rate is disappointing, it is not significantly different from the response rates of our selected peer group (see table below). The small size of our samples overall leave us with relatively large sampling errors. The current results do provide a useful, and probably reasonably accurate, comparison of NMHU to other institutions, particularly our selected peer group. However, in order to feel confident that the results provide an accurate picture of our students, we must work to increase our sample size the next time the survey is administered.

	Highlands		Selected Peers		Carnegie Class		NSSE 2009	
	FY	SR	FY	SR	FY	SR	FY	SR
Response Rate^a								
Overall	21%		20%		29%		31%	
By class	13%	30%	15%	25%	26%	32%	29%	34%
NSSE sample size ^b	578	458	19,195	22,764	169,384	160,248	557,604	520,918
Sampling Error^c								
Overall	6.0%		1.0%		0.3%		0.1%	
By class	10.6%	7.0%	1.7%	1.2%	0.4%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%
Number of respondents ^b	75	138	2,889	5,635	44,696	51,008	159,116	175,798
Total population	579	459	24,109	28,888	192,885	197,226	719,458	708,234

The NSSE groups its items into five general categories: Level of Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, Enriching Educational Experiences, and Supportive

Campus Environment. Examples of the items that made up each of these categories are included at the end of this report.

The tables below, (provided by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research), compare Highlands' performance in each of the five categories to the performance of the three comparison groups. As can be seen, in not a single category did Highlands' students score significantly lower than any of the comparison groups. In fact, in several cases, Highlands' students, particularly our freshmen, scored significantly higher than the comparison groups, with moderate effect sizes (see the tables on Active and Collaborative Learning and Student-Faculty Interaction).

Level of Academic Challenge

Mean Comparisons		<i>New Mexico Highlands University compared with:</i>								
	Highlands	Selected Peers			Carnegie Class			NSSE 2009		
<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	54.5	50.6	*	.28	53.1		.11	53.7		.06
Senior	57.9	56.1		.12	56.9		.07	57.0		.06

^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.

Active and Collaborative Learning

Mean Comparisons		<i>New Mexico Highlands University compared with:</i>								
	Highlands	Selected Peers			Carnegie Class			NSSE 2009		
<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	52.9	43.5	***	.53	43.3	***	.57	43.2	***	.59
Senior	56.5	52.5	*	.22	51.5	***	.28	51.0	***	.31

^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.

Student-Faculty Interaction

Mean Comparisons		<i>New Mexico Highlands University compared with:</i>								
	Highlands	Selected Peers			Carnegie Class			NSSE 2009		
<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	46.8	36.2	***	.55	35.2	***	.63	34.6	***	.66

Senior	43.8	41.8		.10	41.7		.10	42.0		.09
^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.										

Enriching Educational Experiences

Mean Comparisons		<i>New Mexico Highlands University compared with:</i>								
	Highlands	Selected Peers			Carnegie Class			NSSE 2009		
<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	29.9	26.7		.23	27.0		.22	28.0		.14
Senior	37.8	36.3		.09	38.5		-.04	40.8		-.16
^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.										

Supportive Campus Environment

Mean Comparisons		<i>New Mexico Highlands University compared with:</i>								
	Highlands	Selected Peers			Carnegie Class			NSSE 2009		
<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	63.6	61.9		.08	61.6		.10	61.6		.11
Senior	60.2	60.1		.00	58.8		.07	58.2		.10
^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.										

Box and whisker charts (available in this [Excel sheet](#)), show that Highlands' students demonstrate a great deal of variance in their responses to the NSSE, suggesting that individual student experiences at NMHU vary a great deal. While we do have access to Highlands' raw data, I do not feel that the small sample sizes allow for any meaningful analysis of the sources of this variance. This might be possible after our next administration of the survey.

One exciting aspect of the NSSE is that several of the items relate directly to the student traits we have identified as expected outcomes for all undergraduate degree recipients at NMHU. This means that the NSSE could serve as a valuable part of our assessment of those traits. Examples of how NMHU students responded to individual items can be found [here](#).

Summary: The results from our first administration of the NSSE are extremely encouraging. Highlands' students show levels of engagement equal to, or significantly higher than, the levels of engagement

demonstrated by students at a wide variety of institutions across the U.S. and Canada. Sample sizes in our first administration of the NSSE were small, and we will need to work to increase the response rate when we administer the survey again.

Level of Academic Challenge

- Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or labwork, etc. related to academic program)
- Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs course readings
- Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more; number of written papers or reports of between 5 and 19 pages; and number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages
- Coursework emphasizes: **Analysis** of the basic elements of an idea, experience or theory
- Coursework emphasizes: **Synthesis** and organizing of ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships
- Coursework emphasizes: **Making of judgments** about the value of information, arguments, or methods
- Coursework emphasizes: **Applying** theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
- Working harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations
- Campus environment emphasizes: Spending significant amount of time studying and on academic work

Active and Collaborative Learning

- Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
- 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 (paid or voluntary)
- Participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)

Student-Faculty Interaction

- Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor
- Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class
- Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student-life activities, etc.)
- Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance
- Worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements

Enriching Educational Experiences

- Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, social fraternity or sorority, etc.)
- Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment
- Community service or volunteer work
- Foreign language coursework / Study abroad
- Independent study or self-designed major
- Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.)
- Serious conversations with students of different religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values
- Using electronic medium (e.g., listserv, chat group, Internet, instant messaging etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment
- Campus environment encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds
- Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together

Distribution of Student Benchmark Scores

- Campus environment provides the support you need to help you succeed academically
- Campus environment helps you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
- Campus environment provides the support you need to thrive socially
- Quality of relationships with other students
- Quality of relationships with faculty members
- Quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices