

New Mexico Highlands University
National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
Spring 2019 Administration
Summary of Results

Executive Summary

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is a nationally normed survey of academic and co-curricular activities that are associated with increased student engagement. First year students and seniors are invited to participate in the survey; results are reported separately for each group. NMHU administered the NSSE survey most recently in spring 2019. Below is a brief summary of some key results from the survey. Subsequent sections of this document provide more detail on these findings.

First year respondents:

- The response rate for freshmen was 26%, higher than the average for our peer groups.
- Compared to our peer institutions, NMHU first-year students scored comparably or better on all ten of the NSSE engagement indicators, with especially high scores on the indicators “Quantitative Reasoning” and “Student-Faculty Interaction.”
- Some of the survey items on which first-year students scored higher involved interactions with faculty, and working with other students.
- Some of the survey items on which first-year students scored lower involved time spent preparing for class, and amount of writing done for class.
- Compared to our peer institutions, first-year students had high participation rates in High Impact Practices.
- Since the 2016 NSSE survey, first-year students showed improvement in the engagement indicators “Quantitative Reasoning” and “Collaborative Learning.” However, there was a decline in the indicator “Assigned Writing.”
- First-year students gave positive responses to most items on the NSSE Advising Module.
- 83% of first-year students rated their entire educational experience at NMHU as "excellent" or "good."

Senior respondents:

- The response rate for seniors was 31%, higher than the average for our peer groups.
- Compared to our peer institutions, NMHU seniors scored comparably or better on all ten of the NSSE engagement indicators, with especially high scores on the indicator “Reflective and Integrative Learning.”
- Some of the survey items on which seniors scored higher involved community and family involvement, and interactions with diverse others.
- Some of the survey items on which seniors scored lower involved co-curricular participation, and time spent preparing for class.
- Compared to our peer institutions, seniors had comparable participation rates in High Impact Practices.

- Since the 2016 NSSE survey, seniors showed significant improvement in the engagement indicators “Assigned Writing” and “Student-Faculty Interaction.” However, there was a decline in the indicator “Preparing for Class.”
- Seniors gave positive responses to most items on the NSSE Advising Module.
- 89% of seniors rated their entire educational experience at NMHU as "excellent" or "good."

Overview of Survey Administration

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was administered to freshman and senior undergraduate students this year between February 12th and March 18th. A good deal of planning and preparation by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research (OIER) was completed in order to achieve the highest possible response rates by our students taking the survey. Survey response rates this year broke records for all years of Highlands NSSE survey participation going all the way back to 2009. First-year student response rates increased 44% from our last survey in 2016, and our senior response rate increased by 29%. Activities on campus that enabled the excellent response from our students were:

- Secured funding for four \$50 Amazon gift certificates used as incentives to our students for taking the survey.
- Advertising of survey and incentives through global email announcements, public service announcements through KEDP radio, twitter and Facebook reminders, and flyers placed across campus and in the dorms.
- NSSE informational webpage developed on OIER website as a landing site for our students.
- Emails sent to Deans and Instructors asking for assistance in getting students to take the survey
- Targeted marketing and in-person class visits to high enrolled freshman and senior classes.
- A global email went out the end of March announcing the four winners of the \$50 Amazon Gift cards (to encourage future student participation in the survey).

Overall, the OIER office was very pleased with the high degree of cooperation from other offices on campus, University Relations, and our Faculty and Deans, to promote the survey, which contributed to the high student participation rates.

Highlights of the survey are as follows:

Engagement Indicators

From the 47 questions in the survey, NSSE groups related questions into ten separate engagement indicators. From the ten engagement indicators the groupings are further summarized into four broad themes: Academic Challenge, Learning with Peers, Experiences with Faculty, and Campus Environment. This allows us to compare the survey responses from our students with those of Southwest Public, Carnegie Class, and the NSSE 2018 and 2019 surveys (described herein as “Comparison Groups” throughout this report)

Each engagement indicator is scored on a 60-point scale, with survey responses; Never = 0, Sometimes = 20, Often = 40, and Very Often = 60.

Engagement indicators for Quantitative Reasoning and Student-Faculty Interaction showed the most notable improvement to our first-year student's average response scores, significantly higher when compared to all comparison groups.

For our senior students, the most notable average response score was with the Reflective and Integrative Learning engagement indicator, which was significantly higher when compared with Southwest Public.

There were *no* instances for either first-year or senior students, where their average response scores were significantly lower on any of the engagement indicators, when compared with the comparison groups. On all engagement indicators, Highlands students average response scores, when contrasted with the other comparison groups, were either shown to have no significant difference, or a significantly higher difference.

Although in summary our students did quite well when compared to the other comparison groups, we can drill down into the data to find out what specific survey questions may have brought our average score down. For example, the "Learning with Peers" theme for our senior students has an engagement indicator in the area of Collaborative Learning. If we drill down into the data we can see that there were two survey questions where there was a fairly large negative point difference between the scores of our seniors and those of the other comparison groups. In these cases it may be prudent to drill down to the specific questions being asked, and determine if there are opportunities for improvement.

Frequencies and Statistical Comparisons

The report on frequencies and statistical comparisons allows the reader to quickly evaluate how well our students have performed on any survey question, when scored against the other comparison groups. The report provides both statistical comparisons along with the effect size. Although the statistical significance is a useful measure of whether the observed difference in the mean is due to chance, it may not be the best measure of actual or practical significance (i.e. it is actually important). For practical significance we look at the effect size (magnitude of change). A positive effect size indicates that that our institution's mean was greater than that of the comparison group, which shows favorably for the institution. NSSE simplifies the statistical comparisons by combining those items with statistical significance with those with an effect size taking into account its magnitude. For example, a solid blue triangle pointing upward represents a mean difference between responses that are significantly higher (on average) and has an effect size of at least 0.3 in magnitude.

Areas where our students scored well should of course be celebrated, while areas where our students did not score well should be looked at to see what we can do to improve their experience. The following are examples of survey questions for both first-year and senior students, where they either scored well (above the mean of our comparison groups) or could improve (below mean).

First year students – Scored well

- Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in
- Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students
- Talked about career plans with a faculty member
- Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class
- Discussed your academic performance with a faculty member

First year students – Could improve

- Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)
- Of the time you spend preparing for class in a typical 7-day week, about how much is on assigned reading?
- Estimated number of assigned pages of student writing
- During the current school year, about how many papers, reports, or other writing tasks of the following lengths have you been assigned?

Senior year students – Scored well

- Connected your learning to societal problems or issues
- During the current school year, to what extent have your courses challenged you to do your best work?
- Encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (social, racial/ethnic, religious, etc.)
- Providing care for dependents (children, parents, etc.)
- Of the time you spend preparing for class in a typical 7-day week, about how much is on assigned reading?

Senior year students – Could improve

- Relaxing and socializing (time with friends, video games, TV or videos, keeping up with friends online, etc.)
- Commuting to campus (driving, walking, etc.)
- Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.)
- Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)
- Complete a culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, portfolio, etc.)

High-Impact Practices

NSSE identifies six high-impact practices (HIP), as those sharing the following traits: They demand considerable time and effort, facilitate learning outside of the classroom, require meaningful interactions with faculty and students, and encourage collaboration with diverse others, and provide

frequent and substantive feedback. NSSE goes further to suggest that all students should participate in at least two high-impact practices over the course of their undergraduate studies.

Participation rates were excellent for our first-year students, where 89% participated in one or more HIP (far more than our comparison groups), and 24% participated in two or more HIP's (more than double the number of our comparison groups).

Participation rates for our senior students lacked that of both our first-year students, and of our comparison groups in some instances. 85% of seniors participated in one or more HIP (more than all of our comparison groups), but only 49% participated in two or more HIP's, slightly better than one of our comparison groups, but behind the other two groups.

When comparing our participation rates for each of the high-impact practices to those of our comparison groups, it is clear that the first-year students did an excellent job (a higher percentage of participation) across all HIP's against the comparison groups.

Our senior participation rates for HIP's were good for both the service-learning and learning community HIP's, but lagged our comparison groups in research with faculty, internship or field experience, study abroad, and culminating senior experience.

Multi-Year Report

The multi-year report compares our student data with our NSSE survey administrations since 2013. We have completed the survey in 2014, 2016, and most currently in 2019. Using the three survey administrations as a source of comparison, the following are some areas that probably warrant a second look.

Academic Challenge: First-Year Students

Under the theme for Academic Challenge we have seen a lot of improvement around the engagement indicator Quantitative Reasoning for our first-year students. Assigned Writing however showed a fairly substantial drop in the number of pages assigned since the 2016 survey.

Academic Challenge: Seniors

Under the theme for Academic Challenge we have seen a lot of improvement around the engagement indicator Assigned Writing, increasing the number of writing pages assigned since the 2016 survey. The Preparing for Class engagement indicator however has been dropping in the number of hours per week preparing for class for all three years.

Learning with Peers: First-Year Students

Under the theme for Learning with Peers we have seen a lot of improvement around the engagement indicator Collaborative Learning since the 2016 survey. Discussion with Diverse Others, although showing a small improvement over the three years, showed the least positive growth in this area.

Experiences with Faculty: Seniors

Under the theme for Experiences with Faculty we have seen a lot of improvement around the engagement indicator Student-Faculty Interaction since the 2016 survey. The engagement indicator Effective Teaching Practices showed the least improvement over the course of the three years.

High-Impact Practices (HIP): First-year students

The Service Learning HIP has shown steady growth, particularly since the 2016 survey. The Learning Community HIP participation on the other hand has dropped quite a bit since 2016.

High-Impact Practices (HIP): Seniors

The Service Learning HIP has shown growth, particularly since the 2016 survey. The Internship/Field Experience HIP on the other hand has exhibited a drop in participation for all three survey years.

Academic Advising Module

For the 2019 NSSE administration it was agreed that we would also include an Academic Advising module to the base survey. The default comparison group was used consisting of 220 institutions of higher learning that also participated in the module. Both first-year students and seniors provided feedback through the surveys academic advising module.

First-Year Students

When contrasting our first-year students with those of the comparison group, there was one particular survey question where our student's average score was significantly higher. The question and responses were:

During the current school year, to what extent have your academic advisors done the following?

- Informed you of academic support options (tutoring, study groups, help with writing, etc.)
- Informed you of important deadlines
- Listened closely to your concerns and questions
- Provided useful information about courses
- Helped you when you had academic difficulties

There were no areas for our first-year students in the module where their average score was significantly lower than that of the comparison group.

Senior Students

When contrasting our senior students with those of the comparison group, average scores were either on par or above those of the comparison group. One question/response where seniors did particularly well was:

During the current school year, to what extent have your academic advisors done the following?

- Helped you when you had academic difficulties

There were no areas for our senior students in the module where their average score was significantly lower than that of the comparison group.

Summary

When our students were asked how satisfied they were with their educational experience here at Highlands their response was...

83% of first-year students and 89% of seniors rated their entire educational experience at this institution as "excellent" or "good."

This statistic speaks volumes to the hard work of everyone on campus to provide a positive experience for our students here at Highlands.

Prepared by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research

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