

ASSESSMENT REPORT

**National Survey of Student Engagement Project
The College Student Report:
Mission Focused Analysis**

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SCRANTON

PLANNING, ASSESSMENT & INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH OFFICE

Background and Instrument

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) project gathers information about collegiate quality on a national basis, using a specially developed survey of good practices in undergraduate education entitled *The College Student Report*, administered under the auspices of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) project. The NSSE was conceived in early 1998 and supported by a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts.

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) *College Student Report Survey* is designed to obtain, on a yearly basis, information from colleges and universities nationwide about student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. This survey asks how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college. NSSE items represent empirically confirmed “good practices” in undergraduate education. Simply said, it reflects behaviors by students and institutions that are known to be associated with the desired outcomes of a college education.

The NSSE *College Student Report Survey* includes questions on topics ranging from the amount of work required in class and participation in extracurricular activities to the quality of relationships with administrative personnel. Both freshman and seniors are asked to complete the survey in order to develop a profile of progress for institutions. This was the first year The University of Scranton participated in this NSSE project. The University was able to select a peer group for comparison. The group chosen for comparison was the Jesuit Consortium consisting of all of the Jesuit institutions that participated in this survey administration. As part of the participation in the Jesuit consortium, local questions were added addressing issues surrounding the Jesuit mission. The Jesuit schools that participated in the NSSE for the last two years developed these local questions. The guidelines for developing the questions were that items should be reflective of our common mission but not evident in other sections of the NSSE and should be in a similar format to the other sections of the NSSE.

The instrument has been found to be reliable and has a high face and content validity. NSSE has a growing portfolio of psychometric tests and analysis that it conducts on a regular basis. A more comprehensive summary of this work is included in NSSE’s conceptual framework documents found on NSSE’s web site at http://www.indiana.edu/~nsse/pdf/conceptual_framework_2003.pdf.

Introduction

The purpose of administering the NSSE *College Student Report Survey* is two-fold. First, it offers a more efficient manner of assessing and investigating two frequently studied populations: freshmen and graduating seniors. This survey can assess the engagement of the freshmen in freshman seminar courses and replace the traditional senior survey, thus reducing the number of surveys students are requested to complete. Second, NSSE’s *College Student Report Survey* provides “a direct indicator of what students put into their education and an indirect indicator of what they get out of it” (NSSE Accreditation Toolkit, 2005), which is exactly the type of information that accreditors are now asking schools to provide.

This report presents the results of the NSSE *College Student Report Survey* completed by freshman and graduating seniors at The University of Scranton who were enrolled at the University during the 2005 spring semester. This will be the first of three reports utilizing the finding from NSSE’s *College Student Report Survey* data. This report focuses on the mission of The University and the Jesuit Consortium questions. Subsequent reports will focus on the results in relation to the Middle States Standards (2002) and a comparison between University of Scranton respondents and the Jesuit Consortium respondents regarding the level of student engagement reported. This report will specifically address the following aspects of the results:

- 1) A comparison of University of Scranton freshmen and senior responses to local Jesuit Consortium questions related to The University of Scranton Mission, Characteristics, and Goals.

- 2) A comparison of University of Scranton students to the Jesuit Consortium questions on mission with the Jesuit Consortium respondents (see Appendix B for Consortium Schools).

Methodology

Survey Administration

The NSSE *College Student Report Survey* was administered via the Web to freshman and graduating seniors enrolled during the spring semester 2005. The final sample included 815 freshmen and 877 graduating seniors. Fifty-four percent (54%) of the freshmen (440) and 50% of the seniors (439) completed the survey. The response rate overall was 52%. The overall response rate for the Jesuit Consortium was 43%.

The NSSE project staff were responsible for hosting the web survey and sending all correspondence to the students selected to participate. However, we were able to customize the correspondence to our students from our Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The students surveyed were sent a total of six email communications regarding the survey.

Respondent Demographics

Table 1
Majority Demographics for Students Responding to the NSSE Survey

Demographics	Gender	Ethnicity	Place of Residence	Enrollment Status	Transfer Status	Age
Freshmen	66% Female	83% White (Non Hispanic)	81% On-campus	97% Full-time	4% Transfer	96% Traditional (Less than 24)
Seniors	65% Female	86% White (Non Hispanic)	30% On-campus	94% Full-time	12% Transfer	92% Traditional (Less than 24)

The respondent characteristics are representative of the overall populations at The University of Scranton.

Results

Questions related to The University of Scranton Mission, Characteristics, and Goals

The results presented in this section are related to the University's Mission, Characteristics, and Goals and the interrelationship among them. For the purpose of this report, from here forward the mission, characteristics, and goal statements will be referred to in their totality as the Mission. The table below includes selected characteristics and goals for the University, the Jesuit Consortium survey questions that are related to the specific goals or characteristic, freshmen and senior response percentages compared, and any significant differences between freshmen and seniors.

The students responded to the statements below which followed the leading statement, *To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your development of each of the following?* The scale for the responses were 1= Very little, 2= Some, 3= Quite a bit, and 4= Very much. The percentage listed in the table represent a combination of 3, quite a bit, and 4, very much.

Table 2
University of Scranton Students Who Responded “Quite a Bit” or “Very Much” to Jesuit Consortium Questions in Relation to The University Mission, Characteristics, and Goals

Characteristic and Goal	Survey Question	Freshmen (Quite a bit or Very Much)	Seniors (Quite a bit Very Much)	Significant Difference/Means	
<i>As a Catholic and Jesuit University, The University of Scranton will: Educate men and women for others who are committed to the service of faith and promotion of justice.</i>	A12: Understanding what it means to be men and women for others	72%	71%	None	
	<i>As a Catholic and Jesuit University, The University of Scranton will: Invite persons from other religious traditions and diverse backgrounds to share in our work and contribute to our mission.</i>	A4: Increasing your awareness of the relationship between global and local issues	57%	58%	None
		A7: Demonstrating respect for others’ differences	73%	70%	None
		A8: Actively working toward a more inclusive community	69%	60%	None
<i>As a Comprehensive University, The University of Scranton will: Provide educational opportunities and support programs that promote the mission of the University, meet the needs and interests of traditional and non-traditional students, and serve the needs of the local region.</i>	A1: Understanding the mission of your institution	73%	76%	None	
	A3: Leading by example	72%	71%	None	
	A8: Actively working toward a more inclusive community	69%	60%	None	
<i>As a University in the Liberal Arts Tradition, The University of Scranton will: Provide learning experiences that reach beyond the fundamental acquisition of knowledge to include understanding interactions and syntheses through discussion, critical thinking, and application.</i>	A9: Ability to look critically at society and its institutions	66%	72%	** Freshmen =2.86 Seniors= 3.02	
		67%	62%		
<i>As a University in the Liberal Arts Tradition, The University of Scranton will: Promote a respect for knowledge and a lifelong commitment to learning, discernment and ethical decision making.</i>	A6: Defining your own values and beliefs	71%	71%	None	
	A9: Ability to look critically at society and its institutions	66%	72%	** Freshmen =2.86 Seniors= 3.02	
		65%	77%	*** Freshmen = 2.89 Seniors= 3.14	
	A10: Making ethical decisions in personal situations	69%	78%	*** Freshmen = 2.91 Seniors= 3.19	
<i>As a Caring Community, The University of Scranton will: Foster a spirit of caring, grounded in the Jesuit tradition of cura personalis, that enables all members of our community to engage fully in our mission, according to their needs and interests.</i>	A8: Actively working toward a more inclusive community	69%	60%	None	
<i>As a Caring Community, The University of Scranton will: Extend this spirit of caring to the wider community through civic engagement and service.</i>	A5: Actively working to further social justice	56%	54%	None	
	A2: Devoting effort to help others in need	72%	70%	None	

** significant at the .01 level *** significant at the .000 level **Bolded** questions present a significant difference

The Jesuit Consortium questions did not address any of the goals related to the University’s character as a “dynamic institution”.

A comparison of responses to the Jesuit Consortium questions

The results presented reflect a percentage difference of 5% or better between our freshmen and seniors and of the Jesuit Consortium (Appendix B). The questions in Table 3 are the Jesuit Consortium questions reported in their entirety and are on the same scale as the questions in Table 2.

Table 3
University of Scranton Students Who Responded “Quite a Bit” or “Very Much” to Jesuit Consortium Questions in Relation to the Schools in the Jesuit Consortium

Question	Uof S Freshman	Freshmen at Jesuit Schools	Freshman Difference	Uof S Seniors	Seniors at Jesuit Schools	Senior Difference
A1: Understanding the mission of your institution	73%	65%	8%	66%	66%	0%
A2: Devoting effort to help others in need	72%	68%	4%	70%	68%	2%
A3: Leading by example	72%	66%	6%	71%	69%	2%
A4: Increasing your awareness of the relationship between global and local issues	57%	59%	-2%	58%	64%	-8%
A5: Actively working to further social justice	56%	56%	0%	54%	59%	-5%
A6: Defining your own values and beliefs	71%	66%	5%	71%	72%	-1%
A7: Demonstrating respect for others’ differences	75%	74%	1%	70%	74%	-4%
A8: Actively working toward a more inclusive community	69%	61%	8%	60%	63%	-3%
A9: Ability to look critically at society and its institutions	66%	66%	0%	72%	74%	-2%
A10: Making ethical decisions in personal situations	68%	67%	1%	77%	73%	4%
A11: Making ethical decisions in professional situations	69%	65%	4%	78%	76%	2%
A12: Understanding what it means to be men and women for others	72%	62%	10%	71%	63%	7%
A13: Making connections between your intellectual and spiritual life	67%	57%	10%	62%	56%	6%

Analysis

The analysis presented will discuss the findings of Table 2 and 3 in relation to one another. There were three noteworthy findings in this report.

Finding One: Differences between our freshmen and seniors

The expected response to the question, *To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your development of each of the following?* would be a consistent percentage or a percentage increase between freshmen and senior students who indicated “quite a bit” or “very much”. Interestingly, the percentage of senior University of Scranton students who responded “quite a bit” or “very much” to the survey questions **decreased** in comparison to our freshmen respondents on 8 of the items while the Jesuit Consortium seniors either **maintained** the same percentages as the freshmen respondents or **demonstrated an increase** for all questions. The **decreases** between The University freshmen and seniors are not statistically significant but are worth mentioning.

The questions where The University seniors demonstrated **increases**:

- Increasing your awareness of the relationship between global and local issues
- Ability to look critically at society and its institutions
- Making ethical decisions in personal situations
- Making ethical decisions in professional situations

A question to consider in future investigations regarding the Mission is: How much information does The University consistently present during sophomore, junior, and senior years regarding The Mission?

Finding Two: Actively working toward a more inclusive community

The second finding was the relationship of question **A8: Actively working toward a more inclusive community** to the following three goals:

- *As a Catholic and Jesuit University, The University of Scranton will: **Invite persons from other religious traditions and diverse backgrounds to share in our work and contribute to our mission.***
- *As a Comprehensive University, The University of Scranton will: **Provide educational opportunities and support programs that promote the mission of the University, meet the needs and interests of traditional and non-traditional students, and serve the needs of the local region.***
- *As a Caring Community, The University of Scranton will: **Foster a spirit of caring, grounded in the Jesuit tradition of *cura personalis*, that enables all members of our community to engage fully in our mission, according to their needs and interests.***

This one question addresses three of the five characteristics of the University. The University of Scranton freshmen reported more frequently than seniors that their experience at this institution had contributed to developing their sense of *Actively working toward a more inclusive community*. Sixty-nine (69%) of University freshmen reported “quite a bit” or “very much” while only 60% of the University seniors reported “quite a bit” or “very much”.

As described in Table 3, for question A8, University of Scranton Freshmen reported more frequently (69%) that their experience at this institution has contributed to the development of *Actively working toward a more inclusive community* in comparison to the Jesuit Consortium freshmen (61%). This response could suggest that we are providing a different experience for freshmen than the other Jesuit Institutions; however, within The University, the seniors indicate a different experience. The services and activities that fall under the purview of these characteristics and goals may need to be explored further.

Questions to consider in future investigations regarding the Mission are:

1. What affects student perceptions of a more inclusive community?
2. What activities are in place to encourage a “more inclusive community?”

Finding Three: A University in the Liberal Arts Tradition

The third finding demonstrates that there were significant differences between University of Scranton freshmen and seniors regarding the following questions:

A9: Ability to look critically at society and its institutions

A10: Making ethical decisions in personal situations

A11: Making ethical decisions in professional situations

These three questions are related to the University of Scranton Mission through the Characteristic of *A University in the Liberal Arts Tradition*, and specifically through the goal “**Promote a respect for knowledge and a lifelong commitment to learning, discernment and ethical decision making**”. Seniors had a significantly different higher reported mean for the three questions. The means are highlighted in Table 2. These findings suggest that The University is accomplishing this goal set forth by the Mission.

Summary

The results and analysis from the Jesuit Consortium local questions administered in conjunction with the NSSE *College Student Report* offers a general overview regarding the perceptions of the freshmen and seniors respondents as related to the Revised University of Scranton Mission. Overall, University freshmen report a higher percentage of positive responses compared to both University seniors and the freshmen in the consortium. The University seniors also reported significantly higher frequency percentages for critical thinking and ethical decision-making. However, for critical thinking and ethical decision-making, there were minimal percentage differences (less than 5%) between The University seniors and the consortium students; inconsistencies appear within The University between freshmen and seniors. A suggestion for further investigation is to assess the information and experiences provided and available to all students who attend the University of Scranton that promote the Mission.

References

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Project (2005). *Accreditation toolkit: Middle States Commission*. Bloomington, Indiana.

APPENDIX A

Jesuit Consortium Questions and Institutions

NSSE 2005 Jesuit Consortium

Institutions

College Of The Holy Cross
Fairfield University
John Carroll University
Le Moyne College
Loyola University Chicago
Loyola University New Orleans
Regis University

Rockhurst University
Saint Louis University
Seattle University
University Of Detroit Mercy
University Of San Francisco
University of Scranton
Xavier University

APPENDIX B

The University of Scranton

Mission, Characteristics, and Goals

The Mission of the University¹:

The University of Scranton is a Catholic and Jesuit university animated by the spiritual vision and the tradition of excellence characteristic of the Society of Jesus and those who share in its way of proceeding. The University is a community dedicated to the freedom of inquiry and personal development fundamental to the growth in wisdom and integrity of all who share in its life.

The Characteristics and Goals of the University²:

As a Catholic and Jesuit University, The University of Scranton will:

1. Share with all the fullness of the Catholic intellectual tradition, the distinctive worldview of the Christian Gospels, and the Spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola.
2. Educate men and women for others who are committed to the service of faith and promotion of justice.
3. Invite persons from other religious traditions and diverse backgrounds to share in our work and contribute to our mission.

As a Comprehensive University, The University of Scranton will:

4. Offer degree programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels in the traditional disciplines of the liberal arts as well as in pre-professional and professional areas.
5. Provide educational opportunities and support programs that promote the mission of the University, meet the needs and interests of traditional and non-traditional students, and serve the needs of the local region.

As a University in the Liberal Arts Tradition, The University of Scranton will:

6. Offer undergraduate students a core curriculum in the Jesuit tradition based on the arts and sciences.
7. Impart to students the importance of gathering, evaluating, disseminating, and applying information using traditional and contemporary methods.
8. Provide learning experiences that reach beyond the fundamental acquisition of knowledge to include understanding interactions and syntheses through discussion, critical thinking, and application.
9. Promote a respect for knowledge and a lifelong commitment to learning, discernment and ethical decision making.

As a Caring Community, The University of Scranton will:

10. Foster a spirit of caring, grounded in the Jesuit tradition of *cura personalis*, that enables all members of our community to engage fully in our mission, according to their needs and interests.
11. Facilitate the personal growth and transformation of all members of University community through a spirit of caring.
12. Extend this spirit of caring to the wider community through civic engagement and service.
13. Enhance our sense of community by demonstrating high standards of care for our physical environment.

As a Dynamic Institution, The University of Scranton will:

14. Develop goals and aspirations by systematically reflecting on opportunities for and challenges to fulfilling our mission.
15. Fulfill our mission through careful planning and management of resources in order to achieve our aspirations while remaining affordable to our students.
16. Engage the University community in purposefully monitoring progress toward the accomplishment of our mission.

¹ Approved by The Board of Trustees, 5-4-05

² Approved by AC, 10-5-04