National Survey of Student Engagement
2008

James Madison University
Presentation Outline

I. Intro: Engagement and NSSE
II. Preview of Strengths and Concerns
III. Benchmark Comparisons
IV. Highpoints (Individual Questions)
V. Concerns (Individual Questions)
VI. JMU Impact
   Freshmen to Seniors
   Freshmen vs. Transfers
Why Should We Care About Engagement?

- Involved students (academic and out-of-class) gain more from the college experience than those who are not as involved.

- Engagement affects:
  - Persistence and retention
  - Student learning
  - Student success
  - First-year grades

- Effective institutions channel students to engage in appropriate activities.
NSSE Background

- Pew Charitable Trusts convened higher education leaders in 1998 to discuss ranking systems.
- NSSE emerged as alternative to gather information about student engagement.
- Administered by Indiana University in spring to Seniors and First-Year students.
- Questions on institutional expectations, behavior, and student reactions to college.
Strengths

Perceived strengths of JMU students include:

- Working in **groups**.
- Integrating/organizing information.
- Well-rounded educational experience.
- **Relationships** (faculty, staff, & students).
- Involved in the life of the campus.
- Feel they are **supported** academically and socially.
- **Satisfied** with the JMU experience.
Concerns

- Concerns raised by JMU student responses:
  - **Ethnic diversity**: understanding and conversing with students from different ethnic backgrounds.
  - **Preparation**: time spent studying / preparing for academic work / accountability.
  - **Contact**: out-of-class contact with faculty (Freshmen).
  - **Rigor**: additional writing (Freshmen) and quantitative work (Freshmen and Seniors).
  - **Advising**: continued improvements with advising.
NSSE Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice

- Five benchmarks created to focus discussion on student engagement and guide improvement.

- Performance of JMU students compared with Carnegie Classification institutions and with the entire National study.

- Results help determine if the engagement of our typical student differs (statistically) from the typical student in comparison groups.
Level of Academic Challenge

Emphasizes the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance.

- JMU Freshmen mean score was slightly below\(^1\) their Carnegie peers and matched their National peers.

- JMU Seniors mean score matched their Carnegie and National peers.

- Preparing for class
- Number of assignments read
- Number of papers written
- Coursework emphasizes:
  - Analysis
  - Synthesis
  - Judgment
  - Application
- Worked harder than expected
- Campus emphasis on time spent studying

1. p<.01
Active and Collaborative Learning

Student involvement and collaboration in learning and problem solving.

- JMU Freshmen mean score was above\(^1\) their Carnegie and National peers.

- JMU Seniors mean score was above\(^1\) their Carnegie and National peers.

1. p<.001

- Class discussion
- Class presentations
- Worked in groups in and out of class
- Tutored other students
- Service-learning and community-based projects for class
- Discussed ideas from class outside of class
Student-Faculty Interaction

Learning how experts think and solve practical problems by interacting with faculty in and out of the classroom.

- Discussed grades or assignments
- Talked about career plans
- Discussed ideas from readings or class with faculty members outside of class
- Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, etc.)
- Received prompt feedback on academic performance
- Worked with faculty on research outside of course

- JMU Freshmen mean score matched their Carnegie peers and was below\(^1\) their National peers.

- JMU Seniors mean score was above\(^2\) their Carnegie and National peers.

\(^1\) p<.01
\(^2\) p<.001
Enriching Educational Experiences

Complementary learning opportunities, diversity experiences, technology utilization, and activities designed to integrate and apply knowledge.

- Co-curricular activities
- Practicum, internship, field experience
- Community service or volunteer work
- Foreign language coursework
- Independent study
- Culminating senior experiences
- Conversations with students from different backgrounds
- Electronic media
- Learning communities

- JMU Freshmen mean score was below\textsuperscript{1} their Carnegie peers and below\textsuperscript{2} their National peers.

- JMU Seniors mean score matched their Carnegie peers and was above\textsuperscript{1} their National peers.

\textsuperscript{1} p<.001
\textsuperscript{2} p<.01
Supportive Campus Environment

Perception that institution is committed to their success; cultivation of positive campus relationships.

- JMU Freshmen mean score was above\(^1\) their Carnegie and National peers.

- JMU Seniors mean score was above\(^1\) their Carnegie and National peers.

- Campus provides support for academic success
- Campus help students cope with non-academic responsibilities (work, family)
- Campus provides support for social interaction
- Quality of relationships with
  - Other students
  - Faculty members
  - Administrative personnel

\(^1\) p<.001
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSSE Benchmark</th>
<th>J MU</th>
<th>Carnegie</th>
<th>NSSE 2008</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Level of Academic Challenge:</strong></td>
<td>FY</td>
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<tr>
<td>How challenging is JMU’s intellectual and</td>
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<td>creative work?</td>
<td>SR</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Active/ Collaborative Learning</strong></td>
<td>FY</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are our students actively involved in</td>
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<td>learning individually and with others?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Student-Faculty Interaction</strong></td>
<td>FY</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do our students work with faculty members</td>
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<td>inside and outside the classroom?</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Enriching Educational Experiences</strong></td>
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<td>Do our students take advantage of</td>
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<td>complementary learning opportunities?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Supportive Campus Environment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do our students feel JMU is committed to</td>
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<tr>
<td>their success?</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>+</td>
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</tbody>
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High Points

Individual items in which the mean of our students’ responses were higher than the mean of their Carnegie and/or their National peers’ responses.

- Frequency (how often)
- Quantity (how much)
- Quality (how good)
- Emphasis (how important to JMU)
High Points: Academic and Intellectual Experiences

JMU Freshmen and Seniors were more likely than their Carnegie and National peers to report:

- Making class presentations.
- Integrating ideas and information from various sources.
- Working in groups.
- Coursework emphasized making judgments about the value of information and assessing the soundness of those conclusions.
- JMU contributed to their speaking skills.
High Points: Institutional Environment

JMU Freshmen and Seniors were more likely than their Carnegie and National peers to report:

- Attending campus events and activities.
- JMU provided the support they needed to succeed academically and socially.
- JMU helped them cope with non-academic responsibilities.
- High quality relationships with faculty, staff, and students.
High Points:
National Peers Only

JMU Freshmen and Seniors were more likely than their National peers to report:

- Having serious conversations with students different from them in religious beliefs, political opinions, personal values.
- Exercising or participating in physical fitness activities.
- Acquiring a broad general education.
- Acquiring job or work related knowledge and skills.
- Developing a code of values and ethics.
- Contributing to the welfare of their community.
- High satisfaction with the entire educational experience at JMU.
- If they could start over again, they would still go to JMU.
High Points: Freshmen

JMU Freshmen were more likely than their Carnegie and National peers to report:

- Reading a greater number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length course-packs.
High Points: Seniors

JMU Seniors were more likely than their Carnegie and National peers to report:

- Using electronic media/using computers in academic work.
- Receiving prompt feedback from faculty.
- Working with faculty on activities other than coursework.
- Organizing information and experiences into more complex interpretations.
- Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations.
- Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project, etc.).
Additional High Points: Seniors

JMU Seniors were more likely than their Carnegie and National peers to report:

- They learned something that changed the way they understood a concept.
- Examining the strengths and weaknesses of their own views on a topic.
- Tried to better understand someone else’s views and perspectives.
- Understanding themselves.
- Developing a deepened sense of spirituality.
Concerns

Items in which the mean of our students’ responses were lower than the mean of the Carnegie and/or the National peers’ responses.
Concerns: Freshmen

JMU Freshmen were *less likely* than their *National* peers to report:

- Number of books read on their own.
- Number of papers or reports 20 pages or more.
- Participated in a learning community or other formal cohort program.
- Working on research projects with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements.
- Independent study or self-designed major.
Concerns: Freshmen and Seniors

JMU Freshmen and Seniors were less likely than their Carnegie and National peers to report:

- Having serious conversations with or understanding students of a different race or ethnicity than their own.
- Number of problem sets that take more than an hour.
- Preparing 2 or more drafts of a paper or assignment.
- Time spent preparing for class (studying, reading, homework, and other academic activities).
- Institutional expectations for significant amounts of time studying and doing academic work.
Concerns: National Peers Only

JMU Freshmen and Seniors were more likely than their National peers to report:

- Time spent relaxing and socializing (watching TV, partying, etc.).

JMU Seniors were more likely than their National peers to report:

- Coming to class without completing assignments.
Impact of Being at JMU

- Items in which Freshmen scored below and Seniors scored above their Carnegie and/or National peers:
  - Asked questions in class / contributed to class discussions.
  - Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor.
  - Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor.
  - Discussed ideas from readings or class with faculty members outside class.
  - Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op, or clinical assignment.
  - Community service / volunteer work.
  - Study abroad.
Impact of Starting at JMU

- After controlling for class rank, **Native** students at JMU scored significantly higher than **Transfer** students on:
  - Learning something that changed the way they understood an issue or concept.
  - Participating in practicum, internship, community service, study abroad, culminating senior experience.
  - Acquiring knowledge and skills in general education, learning on their own, understanding themselves, solving complex problems, and developing values and ethics.
  - Participating in physical fitness, co-curricular activities.
  - Feeling supported for academic and social success.
  - Evaluating the JMU experience highly.
Summary: Strengths

- Perceived strengths of JMU students include:
  - Working in **groups**.
  - **Integrating/organizing** information.
  - **Well-rounded** educational experience.
  - **Relationships** (faculty, staff, & students).
  - **Involved** in the life of the campus.
  - Feel they are **supported** academically and socially.
  - **Satisfied** with the JMU experience.
Summary: Concerns

- Concerns raised by JMU student responses:
  - **Ethnic diversity**: understanding and conversing with students from different ethnic backgrounds.
  - **Preparation**: time spent studying / preparing for academic work / accountability.
  - **Contact**: out-of-class contact with faculty (Freshmen).
  - **Rigor**: additional writing (Freshmen) and quantitative work (Freshmen and Seniors).
  - **Advising**: continued improvements with advising.
Conclusion

- 66% of our students have participated in some form of practicum or internship by the time they graduate.

- 73% of our students have participated in community service by the time they graduate.

- 87% of our freshmen feel that JMU places substantial emphasis on academics.

- 89% of our seniors have discussed career plans with faculty.

- 91% of our seniors would choose JMU again if they were starting over.

- 92% of our freshmen report a favorable image of JMU.
2008 JMU NSSE Summary

http://www.jmu.edu/stusuccess/

NSSE (top left)