

2008 NSSE Summary

James Madison University

I. Demographics

- 2,500 freshmen and 2,500 seniors were randomly sampled.
- 825 freshmen (33%) and 1,075 seniors (43%) responded for an overall response of 38%.
- Freshman respondents were 71% female and 29% male.
- Senior respondents were 69% female and 31% male.
- 3% of the freshman and 15% of the seniors were listed as transfer students.
- Race/ethnicity for the freshmen was 79% White, 7% Withheld, 6 % Asian/Asian American/Pacific Island, 2% Black/African American, 2% Other Hispanic or Latino, 1% Puerto Rican, 2% Multi-racial, and 1% Other.
- Race/ethnicity for the seniors was 83% white, 6% withheld, 4% Asian/Asian American/Pacific Island, 2% Black/African American, 2% Multi-racial, 1% Other Hispanic of Latino, 1% American Indian/Native American, and 1% Other.

II. Items in which the means of JMU student responses were significantly higher or lower than their Carnegie and National Peers

Compared with their national and Carnegie peers, JMU freshman and seniors were *more likely* to report:

Academic and Intellectual Experiences

- Making a class presentation.
- Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas and information from various sources.
- Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments.
- Putting together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions.

Mental Activities

- Coursework emphasized making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of those conclusions.

Quality of Relationships

- High quality relationships with other students.
- High quality relationships with faculty members.

- High quality relationships with administrative personnel and offices.

Institutional Environment

- Attending campus events and activities.
- The institution provided the support they needed to succeed academically.
- The institution helped them cope with non-academic responsibilities.
- The institution provided the support they needed to succeed socially.

Educational and Personal Growth

- The institution contributed to their knowledge, skill, and personal development in speaking clearly and effectively.
- The institution contributed to their knowledge, skill, and personal development in working effectively with others.

Compared with their national and Carnegie peers, JMU freshman and seniors were *less likely* to report:

Academic and Intellectual Experiences

- Having serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than their own.

Problem Sets

- Number of problem sets that take them more than an hour to complete.

Time Usage

- Preparing for class (studying reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities).
- Working for pay on campus.
- Working for pay off campus.
- Providing care for dependents living with them (parents, children, spouse, etc.).

Institutional Environment

- Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work.

Educational and Personal Growth

- Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds.

III. 2005 Freshman / 2008 Senior Oversample

An oversample was conducted to capture the 2008 JMU seniors who had participated as freshman in the 2005 NSSE study. The objective was to determine what impacts the JMU experience had on these students in relation to the NSSE questions.

Of the seniors in the study who were previously surveyed as freshmen, the seniors reflected *increased likelihood* to report:

- High quality relationships with other students.
- Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.).

Of the seniors in the study who were previously surveyed as freshmen, the seniors reflected *decreased likelihood* to report:

- Working for pay off campus.
- Providing care for dependents living with them (parents, children, spouse, etc.).
- Number of problem sets that take you more than an hour to complete.
- Discussing grades or assignments with an instructor.
- Analyzing quantitative problems.
- Using computing and information technology.
- Memorizing facts, ideas, or methods from their courses and readings so they can repeat them in pretty much the same form.
- Preparing two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in.

IV. Benchmark Comparisons

NSSE items are consolidated under five Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice¹. A brief summary of JMU comparisons is included under each description.

- **Level of Academic Challenge.** *Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Colleges and universities promote high levels of student achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance.*

In the Level of Academic Challenge, the benchmark score for JMU freshmen was below that of their Carnegie peers ($p < .01$) and slightly higher than (but not significantly) their National peers. The benchmark score for JMU seniors was slightly higher (but not significantly) than that of both their Carnegie and National Peers.

- **Active and Collaborative Learning.** *Students learn more when they are intensely involved in their education and asked to think about what they are learning in different settings. Collaborating with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material prepares students for the messy, unscripted problems they will encounter daily during and after college.*

In the Active and Collaborative Learning, the benchmark scores for both JMU freshmen and seniors were above those of both their Carnegie and National peers ($p < .001$). This was one of the two benchmarks in which JMU students excelled.

¹ From National Survey of Student Engagement, James Madison University, Benchmark Comparison, August 2008.

- **Student-Faculty Interaction.** *Students learn firsthand how experts think about and solve problems by interacting with faculty members inside and outside the classroom. As a result, their teachers become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, lifelong learning.*

In the Student-Faculty Interaction, the benchmark score for JMU freshman matched that of their Carnegie peers and was below the benchmark score of their National peers ($p < .01$). The benchmark score for the JMU seniors, however, reversed this trend by exceeding both the Carnegie and National peers' scores ($p < .001$).

- **Enriching Educational Experiences.** *Complementary learning opportunities enhance academic programs. Diversity experiences teach students valuable things about themselves and others. Technology facilitates collaboration between peers and instructors. Internships, community service, and senior capstone courses provide opportunities to integrate and apply knowledge.*

The benchmark score for JMU freshmen was below both the scores of the Carnegie ($p < .001$) and National ($p < .01$) peers. The benchmark score for JMU seniors matched the Carnegie peers score and exceeded the National benchmark score ($p < .001$).

- **Supportive Campus Environment.** *Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relations among different groups on campus.*

In Supportive Campus Environment, the benchmark scores of both JMU freshmen and seniors exceeded those of both their Carnegie and National peers ($p < .001$). This was the other benchmark in which JMU students excelled.

V. Observations

- Perceived strengths of JMU students include working in groups and integrating information.
- The development of relationships with faculty, administrators, and other students seems to be a high priority for JMU students.
- JMU students indicate that the JMU campus supports them academically and socially.
- JMU students do not appear to spend as much time studying and preparing for their academic work as do their peers, and they seem to have less quantitative work to do. At the same time, without needing to work or care for dependents, JMU students may also have more free time than their peers.
- JMU freshman might benefit from additional exposure to faculty outside the classroom; JMU seniors seem to be doing fine in this regard.
- JMU freshmen might benefit from more exposure to and involvement in complementary learning opportunities such as service-learning, learning communities, and diversity experiences.
- All JMU students might benefit from increased opportunities to understand diversity and interact with students from different backgrounds.