



Executive Summary: The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was administered at Siena College in Spring 2012. Results indicate that freshmen had somewhat lower benchmark scores than the comparison groups, whereas seniors had somewhat higher scores. Both groups, however, had relatively low scores on the benchmark “Enriching Educational Experiences.” Analysis of individual items reinforced the benchmark findings: freshmen tended to have lower scores than the comparison groups, while seniors had higher scores. Results may suggest certain areas in which Siena could promote higher levels of student engagement among freshmen.

Background: The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is a nationally normed survey of attitudes and behaviors that are correlated to student engagement and academic success. The NSSE is administered online to freshmen and senior students in the spring semester. This report provides a summary of results from the 2012 NSSE survey.

Methodology: In early February 2012, all Siena students who had been classified as freshmen or seniors in the Fall 2011 term received an email invitation to participate in the NSSE survey. Subsequently, frequent reminders were sent to students who had not yet responded. Out of 1551 students who were invited to participate in the NSSE 2012 survey, 353 students responded for a 22.8% response rate. The modest response rate suggests that caution should be exercised in interpreting survey results, which may not be representative of the Siena community at large.

In August of 2012, the NSSE staff released the results of the survey, providing both a raw data file as well as various types of reports. These reports allow a comparison of Siena results with the results for three groups of institutions participating in the 2012 NSSE survey: Catholic colleges and universities (N=31), institutions in Siena’s Carnegie classification (N=83), and all participating institutions (N=545). Results are typically disaggregated by class, i.e. separate results are reported for freshmen and seniors.

The NSSE output includes five summary measures, called “benchmarks,” each of which provides a composite score from a set of related questions. These five benchmarks are: Level of Academic Challenge (LAC), Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL), Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI), Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE), and Supportive Campus Environment (SCE). Responses to individual questions are also provided, both as mean values (most survey items are scored on a Likert scale, e.g. 1 to 5) and as frequencies. For a link to the actual survey instrument, click [here](#).

Results: The table to the right shows the mean freshman scores on the five benchmarks (see above) for Siena and for the three comparison groups. Siena freshmen had a relatively high score on the benchmark “Level of Academic Challenge” (LAC), and relatively low scores on the benchmarks “Active and Collaborative Learning” (ACL) and “Enriching Educational Experiences” (EEE). Scores on “Student-Faculty Interaction” (SFI) were slightly lower than for the comparison groups, while scores on “Supportive Campus Environment” (SCE) were slightly higher than for the comparison groups.

Benchmark Scores - Freshmen				
Benchmark	Siena	CCU	Carnegie	All NSSE
LAC	60.0	57.3*	58.5	54.5*
ACL	43.9	47.2*	47.0*	44.2
SFI	35.5	38.4	39.1*	35.9
EEE	25.9	30.5*	31.7*	28.4*
SCE	68.7	66.7	68.3	63.4*

Note: * indicates statistically significant difference

Benchmark Scores - Seniors				
Benchmark	Siena	CCU	Carnegie	All NSSE
LAC	61.8	60.5	62.6	58.4*
ACL	56.8	55.3	54.7	52.1*
SFI	52.3	46.4*	52.1	42.9*
EEE	45.1	44.4	52.5*	40.4*
SCE	66.6	63.9	64.8	60.5*

Note: * indicates statistically significant difference

The table to the left shows the mean senior scores on the five benchmarks. Compared to other Catholic institutions, Siena seniors had higher scores on all five benchmarks, although the difference was statistically significant only for “Student-Faculty Interaction”. Compared to other institutions in the same Carnegie group, Siena had similar scores on all benchmarks with the exception of “Enriching Educational Experiences” (EEE), on which Siena’s score was significantly lower.

The table below shows individual survey questions on which Siena freshmen scored significantly lower or higher than both primary comparison groups (Catholic colleges and universities, and institutions in the same Carnegie classification). It should be noted that different questions are scored on different scales, e.g. some questions have a 4-point response scale while other questions have a 7-point response scale.

Items with lower average score than comparison groups (freshmen):	Siena	CCU	Carnegie
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	2.08	2.30	2.27
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class	2.62	2.79	2.92
Number of books read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment	1.83	2.01	2.03
Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more	1.11	1.26	1.23
Attended an art exhibit, play, dance, music, theater, or other performance	1.93	2.14	2.44
Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective	2.69	2.85	2.92
To what extent has your experience here emphasized writing clearly and effectively?	3.04	3.21	3.24
To what extent has your experience here emphasized solving complex real-world problems?	2.61	2.78	2.80
Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your institution?	2.91	3.22	3.25
Preparation for a career is an important part of the mission of this institution.	4.05	4.23	n/a
As a result of my experience here, I am more aware of my own personal values.	3.81	4.08	n/a
Items with higher average score than comparison groups (freshmen):			
Number of textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings assigned during current school year	3.77	3.42	3.57

Similarly, the table below shows individual survey questions on which Siena seniors scored significantly lower or higher than both primary comparison groups.

Items with lower average score than comparison groups (seniors):	Siena	CCU	Carnegie
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	2.31	2.55	2.53
Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	3.34	3.48	3.53
Included diverse perspectives in class discussions or writing assignments	2.83	3.04	3.03
Number of books read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment	1.89	2.17	2.16
Time spend providing care for dependents living with you	1.38	2.60	1.75
Items with higher average score than comparison groups (seniors):			
Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	3.06	2.80	2.78
Applied theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	3.46	3.34	3.35
Relaxing and socializing (watching TV, partying, etc.)	4.01	3.42	3.55
Number of problem sets assigned that take less than an hour to complete	2.72	2.47	2.16
To what extent does your institution help you cope with your non-academic responsibilities?	2.39	2.22	2.20
To what extent does your institution provide the support you need to thrive socially?	2.59	2.39	2.42
To what extent has your experience here encouraged you to contribute to the welfare of your community?	2.98	2.81	2.75
This institution offers opportunities for volunteering and community service.	4.48	4.33	n/a
The environment here encourages students to develop an appreciation of diversity.	3.86	4.11	n/a

Discussion: In terms of the five NSSE benchmarks, some general comments can be made. Siena seniors had somewhat higher scores on all five benchmarks compared to other Catholic colleges and universities (CCU), with a particularly high score for “Student-Faculty Interaction.” For Siena freshmen, results were more mixed: Siena respondents had higher scores on two out of five benchmarks compared to the CCU group. This pattern of results shows a decline from the 2010 NSSE survey, on which Siena freshman scored higher than all comparison groups on four out of five benchmarks.

For both freshmen and seniors, Siena students tended to have the lowest relative scores on the benchmark “Enriching Educational Experiences.” This benchmark includes items related to the following: co-curricular activities; internships and field experiences; community service; learning communities; study abroad; capstone projects; use of electronic media for coursework; and interactions with diverse students.

Turning to the analysis of individual items, what it perhaps most striking is the near absence of questions on which Siena freshmen scored significantly higher than the CCU and Carnegie comparison groups. Items on which Siena freshman scored relatively low include a number of questions related to level of academic engagement. Siena seniors, in contrast, scored significantly higher on numerous items, although most of these items related more to social and co-curricular activities than to academic activities (and one might question whether a high score on “Relaxing and socializing” is necessarily positive).

In summary, results of the 2012 NSSE survey indicate relatively high levels of engagement for our senior class, but somewhat lower levels of engagement for our freshmen. Although we should be careful not to over-interpret the results of any standardized survey, which necessarily will have certain methodological limitations, the results of the NSSE survey may point to some directions for institutional improvement.