

Institutional Benchmark Report

November 2002

***University of Massachusetts
Amherst***



**National Survey of
Student Engagement**

The College Student Report



Introduction

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) annually assesses the extent to which undergraduate students are involved in educational practices empirically linked to high levels of learning and development. In an effort to make it easier for people on and off campus to more easily talk about student engagement and the importance to student learning, collegiate quality, and institutional improvement, NSSE created the National Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice. They are: 1) level of academic challenge, 2) active and collaborative learning, 3) student-faculty interactions, 4) enriching educational experiences, and 5) supportive campus environment.

The benchmarks represent clusters of items on the survey and are expressed in 100-point scales. Each year, NSSE calculates benchmark scores to monitor performance at the institutional, sector, and national level. This year's analysis is based on more than 135,000 randomly selected students at 613 four-year colleges and universities that participated in 2000, 2001, and 2002. The students represent a broad cross-section of first-year and senior students from every region of the country. The institutions are similar in most respects to the universe of four-year schools. More detailed information about the benchmarks can be found in the annual report that accompanies this mailing and on the NSSE website at www.iub.edu/~nsse.

Benchmark Report

The Benchmark Report presents your institution's benchmark scores and compares them to schools in your consortium.

NSSE and the National Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice provide a new way to look at and talk about teaching and learning. Thus, they are intended to help stimulate conversations on campus and may help determine whether student behavior and institutional practices are headed in the right direction.

Level of Academic Challenge (alpha: First-Year=0.76; Senior=0.75)

<p>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.</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>UMASS</th> <th>Doc-Ext</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>First-Year</td> <td>53.4</td> <td>51.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Senior</td> <td>54.9</td> <td>54.9</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	UMASS	Doc-Ext	First-Year	53.4	51.8	Senior	54.9	54.9	<p>Level of Academic Challenge Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, etc. related to academic program) Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings (F+, S+) Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more; Between 5 and 19 pages; (F+, S+) Fewer than 5 pages (F+, S+) Coursework emphasizing analysis of the basic elements of an idea, experience or theory Coursework emphasizing synthesis and organizing of ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships Coursework emphasizing the making of judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods (F+) Coursework emphasizing application of theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations Working harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations
Year	UMASS	Doc-Ext									
First-Year	53.4	51.8									
Senior	54.9	54.9									

Key: +/- = UMASS was significantly higher/lower ($p < 0.05$) than Doctoral Extensive Institutions (Doc-Ext).

Bolded **F** or **S** = Effect size was greater than 0.30, indicating at least a small magnitude of difference between UMASS and Doc-Ext.



Active and Collaborative Learning (alpha: First-Year=0.58; Senior=0.64)

<p>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.</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>UMASS</th> <th>Doc-Ext</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>First-Year</td> <td>35.4</td> <td>37.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Senior</td> <td>43.8</td> <td>46.0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	UMASS	Doc-Ext	First-Year	35.4	37.6	Senior	43.8	46.0	<p>Active and Collaborative Learning Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions Made a class presentation (S-) Worked with other students on projects during class Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments (S-) Tutored or taught other students (F-, S-) Participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course (F-) Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)
Year	UMASS	Doc-Ext									
First-Year	35.4	37.6									
Senior	43.8	46.0									

Student-Faculty Interactions (alpha: First-Year=0.74; Senior=0.78)

<p>Students learn firsthand how experts think about and solve practical problems by interacting with faculty members inside and outside the classroom. As a result, their teachers become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, life-long learning.</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>UMASS</th> <th>Doc-Ext</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>First-Year</td> <td>32.7</td> <td>33.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Senior</td> <td>40.1</td> <td>39.1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	UMASS	Doc-Ext	First-Year	32.7	33.0	Senior	40.1	39.1	<p>Student-Faculty Interactions Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor (F-) Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student-life activities, etc.) Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance (written or oral) Worked or planned to work with a faculty member on a research project outside of course or program requirements (S+)
Year	UMASS	Doc-Ext									
First-Year	32.7	33.0									
Senior	40.1	39.1									

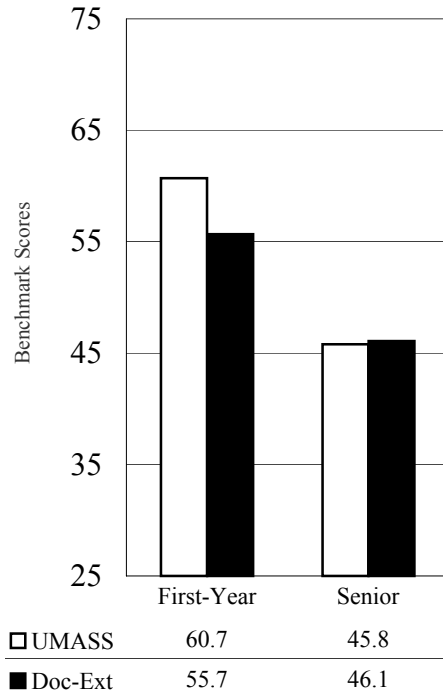
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Enriching Educational Experiences (alpha: First-Year=0.59; Senior=0.60)

Complementary learning opportunities in and out of classroom augment 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.

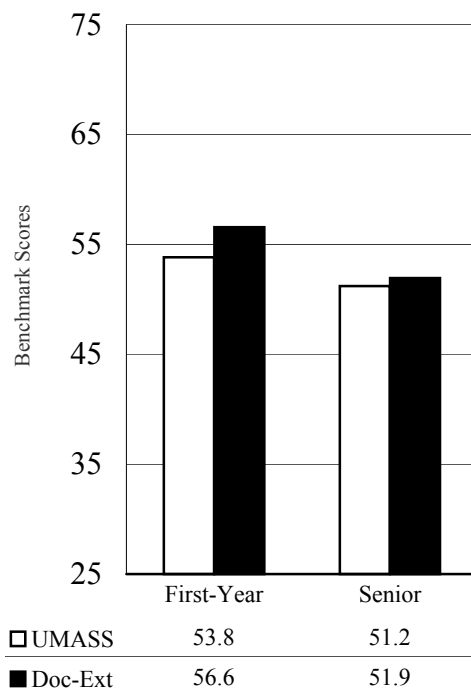


Enriching Educational Experiences Items:

- Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, publications, student government, sports, etc.) (F-)
- Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment (S-)
- Community service or volunteer work
- Foreign language coursework
- Study abroad (F+, S+)
- Independent study or self-designed major (F+, S+)
- Culminating senior experience (comprehensive exam, capstone course, thesis, project, etc.) (S-)
- Serious conversations with students of different religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values (F+, S+)
- Serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity (F+, S+)
- Using electronic technology to discuss or complete an assignment (F+)
- Campus environment encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, or racial/ethnic backgrounds

Supportive Campus Environment (alpha: First-Year=0.70; Senior=0.76)

Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success as well as the working and social relations among different groups on campus.



Supportive Campus Environment Items:

- Campus environment provides the support you need to help you succeed academically (F-, S-)
- Campus environment helps you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) (F-)
- Campus environment provides the support you need to thrive socially
- Quality of relationships with other students
- Quality of relationships with faculty members
- Quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices (F-, S-)

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