

# Research in BRIEF

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## 2011 NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT (NSSE) Executive Summary (Administered Spring 2011)

### INTRODUCTION

Every two years Chapman administers the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to freshmen and seniors to determine the extent to which students are engaged in educational practices associated with desired college outcomes. In the spring of 2011, all Chapman freshman (FY) and seniors (SR) were invited to complete the NSSE through an email invitation which contained a link to an on-line survey. This Research in BRIEF highlights findings from the 2011 NSSE spring administration.

Throughout this report, Chapman University NSSE results are compared to a selected group of institutions. This group consists of a small group of schools selected by senior staff among participating institutions. The list of schools in the Selected Group includes Baylor University, DePaul University, Loyola University Chicago, Loyola University New Orleans, Pacific Lutheran University, Seattle University, Seton Hill University, Tulane University of Louisiana, University of San Francisco, and University of the Pacific. Significant differences between Chapman and the Selected Group are noted throughout the report.

### Response Rate and Survey Sample

The final sample size was 828 respondents which resulted in a response rate of 37 percent. A comparison of the sample and population demographics shows that female respondents are slightly overrepresented in the sample. The racial/ethnic categories employed by Chapman and the NSSE are slightly different. For example, international students are classified separately by Chapman, but they can pick a racial category in the NSSE. Nonetheless, the results suggest that the sample characteristics reasonably match the population characteristics in each racial/ethnic category. Latino and Asian students may be slightly underrepresented but this may be the result of the different categorization schemes.

Chapman University Population and Sample Demographics

	Population (N=2,233)		Sample (N=828)	
	FY	SR	FY	SR
<b>GENDER</b>				
Female	59%	59%	64%	66%
Male	41%	41%	36%	34%
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>				
International Students	4%	2%	-	-
Hispanic/Latino	12%	11%	8%	8%
Am Indian/Alaskan	0%	1%	1%	1%
Asian	9%	8%	13%	11%
Black/African-American	2%	2%	2%	2%
White (non-Hispanic)	64%	66%	64%	65%
Two or More Races	6%	1%	5%	6%
Other	-	-	1%	1%
Unknown	3%	8%	6%	7%

### FINDINGS

#### Campus Diversity

The NSSE asks students about campus diversity and their interaction with other racial/ethnic groups. One set of questions ask about their attempts to incorporate diverse perspectives during the current school year. The results show that freshmen and seniors at Chapman and Selected Groups reported near “often” engagement in the four surveyed items. Chapman freshmen reported engaging in serious conversation with students of different religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values more often than freshmen in the Selected Group, but they, along with seniors, reported including diverse perspectives in class discussion or writing assignments less often than students in the Selected Group.

## Campus Diversity - Mean Scores

	Chapman		Selected Group	
	FY	SR	FY	SR
<i>How often have you done each of the following?</i>				
Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments <sup>1</sup>	2.82	2.94	2.95**	3.03*
Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own <sup>1</sup>	2.94	2.92	2.86	2.90
Had serious conversation with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values <sup>1</sup>	2.97	2.97	2.87*	2.89
Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective <sup>1</sup>	2.87	3.08	2.92	2.96**
<i>To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?</i>				
Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds? <sup>2</sup>	2.78	2.60	2.96**	2.75**
Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds <sup>2</sup>	2.61	2.61	2.83***	2.88***

1. Four point scale: 1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very Often  
 2. Four point scale: 1=Very little, 2=Some, 3=Quite a bit, 4=Very Much  
 \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, and \*\*\*p < .001

The NSSE also asks students to evaluate their institution's effort towards promoting diverse interactions. On both items, Chapman freshmen and seniors reported less institutional contribution in these areas than students in the Selected Group.

## Learning Outcomes

The NSSE asks students to evaluate the institution's contribution to their intellectual and personal development. Chapman seniors reported higher scores in comparison to freshmen, as expected given their educational experience. The mean scores for freshmen were slightly below the "quite a bit" mark while the mean scores for seniors were slightly above this mark. When compared to the Selected Group, Chapman freshmen and seniors reported similar gains as result of their Chapman experience for many of the surveyed learning outcomes. Chapman freshmen and seniors reported less development in "analyzing quantitative problems" and "acquiring a broad education" as a result of their Chapman experience in comparison to their peers in the Selected Group.

## Learning Outcomes - Mean Scores

	Chapman		Selected Group	
	FY	SR	FY	SR
<i>To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?</i>				
Acquiring a broad general education	3.19	3.27	3.29*	3.40***
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	2.91	3.06	2.84	3.05
Writing clearly and effectively	2.81	3.15	3.06***	3.20
Speaking clearly and effectively	2.76	3.11	2.81	3.08
Thinking critically and analytically	3.24	3.44	3.32	3.46
Analyzing quantitative problems	2.87	2.87	3.00*	3.12***
Using computing and information technology	2.90	3.02	2.91	3.09
Solving complex real-world problems	2.73	2.77	2.74	2.92**

Four point scale: 1=Very little, 2=Some, 3=Quite a bit, 4=Very Much  
 \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, and \*\*\*p < .001

## Faculty-Student Interaction

The NSSE contains a variety of questions about faculty-student interaction. In the first set of questions, the results show that receiving prompt feedback and discussing grades or assignments are the most common forms of faculty-student interaction at Chapman. Results from interactions with faculty "outside of class" and "activities other than coursework" showed that Chapman students engage in these activities "sometimes." The Selected Group results are not significant.

## Faculty Student Interaction - Mean Scores

	Chapman		Selected Group	
	FY	SR	FY	SR
<i>In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?</i>				
Discussed grades or assignments with and instructor <sup>1</sup>	2.64	2.88	2.63	2.83
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor <sup>1</sup>	2.13	2.47	2.13	2.49
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class <sup>1</sup>	1.93	2.20	1.89	2.19
Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance <sup>1</sup>	2.78	2.88	2.78	2.90
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.) <sup>1</sup>	1.65	1.99	1.66	1.96
<i>Mark the box that best represents the quality of your relationship</i>				
Relationships with faculty members <sup>2</sup>	5.49	5.65	5.47	5.66

1. Four point scale: 1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very Often  
 2. Seven point scale: 1=Unavailable, Unhelpful, Unsympathetic to 7=Available, Helpful, Sympathetic  
 \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, and \*\*\*p < .001

The last item asks students to report the quality of their relationship with faculty members on a scale of one to seven with a higher score indicating a helpful and sympathetic relationship. Chapman freshmen and seniors reported scores near the "Available, Helpful, and Sympathetic" end of the scale. These scores were similar to the mean scores in the Selected Group.

## Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities

Students were asked to indicate if they had engaged or planned to engage in a variety of curricular and co-curricular activities during their time at Chapman. Not surprisingly, seniors reported greater participation in curricular and co-curricular activities than freshmen. In contrast to the Selected Group, Chapman seniors are more active in several areas (foreign language, study abroad, self-designed majors, and capstone courses), but Chapman students reported less involvement with community service or volunteer work.

### Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities

	Chapman		Selected Group	
	FY	SR	FY	SR
<i>Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution?</i>				
Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment <sup>1</sup>	9.2%	66.0%	7.2%	61.4%
Community service or volunteer work <sup>1</sup>	35.6%	63.8%	47.2%***	71.7%**
Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together <sup>1</sup>	8.0%	25.5%	19.2%***	29.7%
Work on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements <sup>1</sup>	2.8%	22.5%	3.6%	21.8%
Foreign language coursework	52.1%	74.4%	31.8%***	56.1%***
Study abroad <sup>1</sup>	0.3%	34.9%	2.4%***	25.7%***
Independent study or self-designed major <sup>1</sup>	1.4%	24.8%	3.0%*	20.3%*
Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.) <sup>1</sup>	1.5%	63.3%	1.7%	51.3%***
<i>About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following?</i>				
Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.) <sup>2</sup>	2.72	2.73	2.34***	2.27***

1. Percent Reporting "Done"

2. Eight point scale: 1=0 hrs/wk, 2=1-5 hrs/wk, 3=6-10 hrs/wk, 4=11-15 hrs/wk, 5=16-20 hrs/wk, 6=21-25 hrs/wk, 7=26-30 hrs/wk, 8=More than 30 hrs/wk

\*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, and \*\*\*p < .001

The last item in the table displays time spent on co-curricular activities. Even though Chapman seniors participate in more co-curricular activities, the hours spent data show freshmen and seniors spend about the same amount of time on co-curricular activities. And in contrast to the students in the Selected Group, Chapman students reported more hours spent on co-curricular activities.

## Academic Workload

The NSSE contains several questions focused on academic workload. For example, students were asked about the number of books they read, the number of papers they wrote, and how much time they spent studying or preparing for class. Chapman freshmen and seniors reported reading around 5 to 10 books during the current school year. In contrast to the Selected Group, Chapman seniors reported reading fewer books, but there was no significant

difference among freshmen. The next set of questions asks about the amount of writing performed by students. The results show that Chapman freshmen and seniors typically write three to four papers per year that were less than five pages. In contrast to the Selected Group, Chapman seniors report writing more papers of 20 pages or more, but not as many papers of 5 pages or less. The next two questions ask about the number of problem sets completed during the school year. Chapman freshmen and seniors reported completing somewhere between 1 to 4 problem sets per year. While Chapman freshmen completed as many problem sets as freshmen in the Selected Group, Chapman seniors completed fewer problems sets than seniors in the Selected Group.

### Time Spent on Academic Work - Mean Scores

	Chapman		Selected Group	
	FY	SR	FY	SR
Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings <sup>1</sup>	3.41	3.21	3.50	3.43***
Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more <sup>1</sup>	1.19	1.73	1.23	1.64*
Number of written papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages <sup>1</sup>	2.46	2.74	2.40	2.78
Number of written papers or reports fewer than 5 pages <sup>1</sup>	3.15	3.06	3.15	3.20*
Number of problem sets that take you more than an hour to complete <sup>2</sup>	2.74	2.43	2.76	2.62**
Number of problem sets that take you less than an hour to complete <sup>2</sup>	2.74	2.22	2.69	2.36*
Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities) <sup>3</sup>	4.24	4.50	4.58***	4.41

1. Five point scale referring to past year: 1=None, 2=1-4, 3=5-10, 4=11-20, 5=More than 20

2. Five point scale referring to typical week: 1=None, 2=1-2, 3=3-4, 4=5-6, 5=More than 6

3. Eight point scale: 1=0 hrs/wk, 2=1-5 hrs/wk, 3=6-10 hrs/wk, 4=11-15 hrs/wk, 5=16-20 hrs/wk,

6=21-25 hrs/wk, 7=26-30 hrs/wk, 8=More than 30 hrs/wk

\*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, and \*\*\*p < .001

The last item asks about time spent on class preparation. The class preparation item shows that Chapman students report spending about 11 to 15 hours per week. In contrast to the Selected Group, Chapman freshmen reported spending less time on class preparation.

## Classroom Engagement

Students were asked how often they engaged in various analytical tasks in the classroom. Chapman freshmen and seniors engaged in all of the surveyed activities in the "often/quite a bit" and "very often/very much" range. In particular, analyzing elements of "an idea, experience or theory" was the most common activity among Chapman students. The Chapman and Selected Group mean scores were similar.

## Classroom Engagement - Mean Scores

	Chapman		Selected Group	
	FY	SR	FY	SR
<i>In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?</i>				
Worked on a project that required integrating ideas from various sources <sup>1</sup>	3.13	3.49	3.12	3.42
Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions <sup>1</sup>	2.79	3.08	2.74	3.07
<i>During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities?</i>				
Memorizing facts, ideas, or methods from your courses and readings <sup>2</sup>	2.93	2.70	2.94	2.75
Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory <sup>2</sup>	3.30	3.37	3.31	3.41
Synthesizing ideas into new complex interpretations <sup>2</sup>	3.06	3.18	3.07	3.23
Making judgments about the value of information <sup>2</sup>	3.03	3.11	3.00	3.16
Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations <sup>2</sup>	3.15	3.28	3.12	3.29

1. Four point scale: 1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very Often  
 2. Four point scale: 1=Very little, 2=Some, 3=Quite a bit, 4=Very Much  
 \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, and \*\*\*p < .001

## Overall Institutional Satisfaction

Students were asked to rate the overall quality of their education. The results show that Chapman students reported high levels of satisfaction with their education.

### Overall Institutional Satisfaction - Mean Scores

	Chapman		Selected Group	
	FY	SR	FY	SR
Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your institution? <sup>1</sup>	3.12	2.81	3.15	2.95**
How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution? <sup>1</sup>	3.42	3.40	3.35	3.37
If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending? <sup>2</sup>	3.37	3.30	3.29	3.27

1. Four point scale: 1=Poor, 2=Fair, 3=Good, 4=Excellent  
 2. Four point scale: 1=Definitely No, 2=Probably No, 3=Probably Yes, 4=Definitely Yes  
 \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, and \*\*\*p < .001

In particular, the mean score for “How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution,” was near “excellent.” Chapman seniors reported less than “good” satisfaction with academic advising, but the mean score for seniors in the Selected Group was also below the “good” level even though it was higher than that of Chapman students.

## NSSE Benchmark Scores

Each of the five benchmark scores represents the “weighted arithmetic average” of several survey items. The benchmarks measure important aspects of student development and learning. The higher the scale score, the higher the level of the measured outcome. The findings show that Chapman freshman or seniors significantly outperformed students in the Selected Group in the Active and Collaborative Learning (freshmen only) and Enriching Educational Experiences (seniors only) categories. In examining the individual items that compose the Active and Collaborative Learning scale, Chapman freshmen reported performing more class

presentations and working with their classmates more often outside of class.

### NSSE Benchmark Scale Scores

	Chapman		Selected Group	
	FY	SR	FY	SR
Level of Academic Challenge	55.3	58.6	56.5	60.1*
Active and Collaborative Learning	46.7	54.2	44.6*	54.8
Student Faculty Interaction	34.7	45.1	34.7	44.8
Enriching Educational Experiences	31.9	52.2	31.4	48.5***
Supportive Campus Environment	64.0	61.0	64.6	61.4

\*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, and \*\*\*p < .001

In regards to the Enriching Educational Experiences scale, Chapman seniors were more likely to take foreign language coursework and study abroad than seniors in the Selected Group. Chapman seniors though reported encountering less difficult coursework according to the Level of Academic Challenge scale. The individual items composing this scale reveals that seniors in the Selected Group are assigned more course readings, read more books in their spare time, and write more papers of five pages or less.

## CONCLUSION

The findings from the 2011 NSSE allow Chapman University the opportunity to compare themselves against a group of institutions selected by senior staff in order to assess areas of strengths and improvement. Chapman University aims to develop “global citizens” and the results show progress toward this end. Chapman seniors are taking more foreign language and study abroad courses than seniors in the Selected Group. They are also creating independent studies and participating in senior capstone courses more than seniors in the Selected Group. About 63% of Chapman seniors participated in a senior capstone course, an astonishing figure when compared against the Selected Group (51%). The robust activity in self-designed and capstone courses reflect a notable feature of Chapman University - personalized education.

In moving to areas for improvement, academic workload represents one possible target area. The coursework data show that Chapman students read and write less than their counterparts in the Selected Group. But in terms of analytical rigor (i.e., analyzing, synthesizing, and applying ideas), Chapman students attributed as much growth to their institution as students in the Selected Group. In contrast to the Selected Group, community service and learning communities are underutilized. Growth in these activities may allow more opportunities for students to apply classroom ideas and facilitate cognitive growth for students. Lastly, when compared to the Selected Group, Chapman freshmen and seniors believe that the university does less to promote interactions with students from diverse backgrounds and foster an understanding of people from different racial/ethnic backgrounds. The continual growth in study abroad partially addresses this issue, and further growth in this area should allow students more opportunities to interact and learn about different cultures.

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