

2005 National Survey of Student Engagement: Results for the University of Ottawa

Introduction

Institutional Research and Planning is pleased to present the results from the 2005 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). This is an important survey for our institution since it attempts to gauge the quality of the learning experience of our student body. We expect that these results will help identify areas where future improvement is needed, as well as recognize the characteristics that distinguish our university in Canada.

What is NSSE?

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is an increasingly used tool to assess the quality of the post-secondary educational experience across North America. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending a post-secondary institution. Survey items used on NSSE represent empirically confirmed “good practices” in undergraduate education. That is, they reflect behaviors by students and institutions that are associated with desired outcomes of attending a post-secondary institution.

The Indiana University Center for Post-Secondary Research administers NSSE. In 2005, 529 colleges and universities across North America participated in the survey, including eight Canadian institutions. This is the first year that the University of Ottawa participated in NSSE.

The Canadian Consortium

The participant Canadian institutions — Acadia University, Carleton University, Ryerson University, the University of New Brunswick (Fredericton campus), the University of Regina, the University of Windsor, the University of Ottawa and York University — formed a consortium to share the survey’s results. In 2006, all Ontario universities will participate in the survey and the results of an Ontario consortium will be shared among its members.

The survey sample

We invited approximately 2,000 first-year students and 2,000 senior-year undergraduate students to complete the online survey in March 2005. The overall response rate for the University of Ottawa was 26 per cent, and for the Canadian Consortium, 43 per cent.

NSSE benchmarks

To present and evaluate the multidimensional nature of student engagement, NSSE developed five benchmarks of effective educational practice. These benchmarks provide the University of Ottawa with scores to compare itself with peer institutions in Canada and the United States. The five key areas are level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experience, and supportive campus environment.

In this summary, we report on our relative position on NSSE’s benchmarks and on the individual items that are used to compute our scores.

NSSE and the balanced scorecard

NSSE also asks students to report on the development of specific skills (e.g., writing and speaking skills) over the course of their studies. These items are not included in the benchmarks mentioned above since “students begin college with different amounts of knowledge and at different developmental levels, [therefore] the results of self-reported gains are most appropriately considered in an institution-specific context.”(NSSE)

At the University of Ottawa, these 16 skills will be used in future years to calculate indicator 3.1, Learning Quality Assessment, of our institution’s Balanced Scorecard. In this report, we present, in detail, the components of this key institutional indicator.

Overview of Results

NSSE benchmarks

NSSE calculates separate benchmarks for first- and senior-year undergraduate students. We compared ourselves to the Canadian Consortium and to the group of US doctoral-extensive universities that participated in the survey. The overall scores indicate that:

- Our first-year students reported a higher level of academic challenge than did first-year students at other Canadian universities and at US doctoral-extensive institutions.
- Our first-year students also reported a more enriching educational experience than did students at the same level at other Canadian institutions. For this benchmark, we received a result that is on par with the one reported by first-year students at American doctoral-extensive universities.
- In addition, our first-year students reported similar levels of exposure to active and collaborative learning, of support from the campus environment, and of student-faculty interactions than those studying at other Canadian institutions. However, we lag far behind the American doctoral-extensive institutions.
- On the other hand, our senior-year students appear to be more critical and less engaged than our first-year students. In the five areas of analysis, the senior student results were disappointing when compared to the results from Canadian and American institutions.

Table 1: University of Ottawa scored higher (>), the same (=) or lower (<) than the Canadian Consortium and US doctoral-extensive institutions

Benchmark	First Year		Senior Year	
	Canadian Consortium	US doctoral-extensive	Canadian Consortium	US doctoral-extensive
Level of Academic Challenge	>	>	<	<
Active and Collaborative Learning	=	<	<	<
Enriching Educational Environment	>	=	<	<
Student-Faculty Interaction	=	<	<	<
Supportive Campus Environment	=	<	<	<

Overall satisfaction

The relatively lower scores in the NSSE Benchmarks are also reflected in the overall level of satisfaction expressed by our students:

- 78% of our first-year students and 67% of our senior-year students believe their overall educational experience was good or excellent. At US doctoral-extensive institutions, 85% of first- and senior-year students provide this rating.
- 83% of our first-year students would attend the University of Ottawa if they could start over again. Disappointingly, only 67% of our senior students shared this opinion. At US doctoral-extensive institutions, more than 80% of both first- and senior-year students would attend their current institution again if given the choice.

Learning quality assessment

Using the 16 items comprised in NSSE to calculate the Balance Scorecard's indicator 3.1, Learning Quality Assessment, we obtained a 48% result, and lagged behind the results of the Canadian Consortium (57%) and of the US doctoral-extensive institutions (62%).

Interpreting the Benchmark Results

Comparing average students

The benchmarks calculated by NSSE allow us to determine if the engagement of our typical first- and senior-year undergraduate student differs — in a statistical significant, meaningful way — from the average student in our comparison groups: the 2005 Canadian Consortium and the US doctoral-extensive institutions, as per the Canergie definitions.

Individual scores have little meaning

Each benchmark is calculated as the overall average across a number of questions. Each question might have been coded over a different scale (e.g., from one to four, from one to seven). Therefore, before calculating the overall score, all answers are converted to a 100-point base. In that sense, a benchmark of 50 on its own cannot be interpreted or explained. This value only makes sense when compared to the value obtained by a peer comparison group.

The importance of effect sizes

We compare our mean to that of peer groups to determine if we are faring better or worse than others. The simple calculation of a mean difference, however, could misguide our assessment, since its significance is also determined by other statistical characteristics of each comparison group (e.g., the standard deviation). The *effect size*¹ is a more sophisticated measure, which is also easily interpreted:

- A positive sign in the effect size indicates that our institution's mean is greater, therefore showing an affirmative result.
- A negative sign indicates our institution lags behind the comparison groups and points to areas that warrant attention
- To interpret magnitude of the lag, an effect size of .2 is often considered small, .5 moderate and .8 large.

Frequency distributions

Throughout this report, we have also added a few comments regarding the frequency distributions of certain questions. Percentages often help illustrate or better understand the results obtained. Complete frequency distributions and mean results will be shared with the University of Ottawa community upon request. If you require additional information, please contact H el ene Lacroix at (613) 562-5954, or via e-mail at hlacroix@uOttawa.ca.

¹ The effect size is calculated as the mean difference (between uOttawa and a comparison group) divided by the comparison group deviation standard.

Benchmark 1: Level of Academic Challenge

Why is this measured?

“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.” (NSSE)

Overall benchmark

Table 2: Results for Benchmark 1: Level of Academic Challenge

	uOttawa Mean	Canadian ² Consortium		US doctoral-extensive	
		Mean	Effect Size	Mean	Effect Size
First Year	52.5	48.8	.28	51.2	.10
Senior Year	52.2	54.0	-.13	55.0	-.20

Encouraging results

The University of Ottawa scored very well on the level of academic challenge offered to first-year students, outperforming in most items the Canadian Consortium institutions and our American peers. Our first-year students:

- Prepare for class with 57% spending between six and 20 hours per week studying, reading, writing, doing homework, and other academic activities.
- Write many papers during the academic year with 80% writing between one and 10 papers of between five and 19 pages.
- Are assigned a variety of readings with 39% being assigned more than 10 textbooks, books or book-length packs during the academic year.
- Indicate that their coursework emphasizes quite a bit or very much analyzing the basic elements of an idea (78%), synthesizing and organizing ideas and information (68%), making judgments about the value of information, arguments of methods (60%), and applying theories and concepts to practical problems in new situations (73%).

Disappointing results

However, we lag behind our peers in the level of academic challenge offered to senior students because at other institutions the challenge increases, on average, with the students' seniority.

- Our senior students identified similar areas of emphasis in their coursework as did our first-year students, such as analyzing the basic elements of an idea (78%), synthesizing and organizing ideas and information (67%), making judgments about the value of information, arguments of methods (61%), and applying theories and concepts to practical problems in new situations (68%).
- However, at US doctoral-extensive universities, a larger proportion of senior students find those key elements being emphasized by their coursework: analyzing the basic elements of an idea (84%), synthesizing and organizing ideas and information (72%), making judgments about the value of information, arguments of methods (68%), and applying theories and concepts to practical problems in new situations (78%).

Our students are not working as hard as they think they could. About 44% of our first-year students reported working as hard as they could often or very often — a percentage consistent with their peers at other Canadian institutions, but smaller than those who reported doing so at US doctoral-extensive institutions (49%). Moreover, less than half of our senior students (42%) reported working harder than they thought possible, while 54% senior-year students reported doing so at both Canadian and American peers institutions.

² The Canadian Consortium is comprised of Acadia University, Carleton University, Ryerson University, the University of New Brunswick (Fredericton campus), the University of Regina, the University of Windsor, and York University. The University of Ottawa is excluded for comparison purposes.

Other findings

More than 75% of first-year students across all institutions reported that their university emphasizes, quite a bit or very much, spending a significant amount of time studying and on academic work. A good portion of our senior students also reported such an emphasis from their university (73%), although this share is lower than at US doctoral-extensive universities (78%).

In terms of the amount of time spent studying, 57% of our first-year students and 53% of our senior-year students reported spending between six and 20 hours per week preparing for classes.

Although the largest lag observed is in the *number of written papers or reports of fewer than five pages*, our students tend to prepare longer reports; this likely counterbalances the impact on the overall scores. Nonetheless, it raises the question of what kind of writing is more effective, albeit both are deemed challenging.

Table 3: Mean results for the components of Benchmark 1, Level of Academic Challenge

<i>Components of Level of Academic Challenge</i>	First Year			Senior Year		
	uOttawa Mean	Effect Size w.r.t. Canadian Consortium	Effect Size w.r.t. US doctoral-extensive	uOttawa Mean	Effect Size w.r.t. Canadian Consortium	Effect Size w.r.t. US doctoral-extensive
1. Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor’s standards or expectations (<i>1= never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=very often</i>)	2.41	-	-.13	2.43	-.22	-.26
2. Number of hours spent preparing for class per week (<i>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.</i>)	4.33	.14	.12	4.29	-	-
3. Campus environment emphasizes spending significant amount of time studying and on academic work (<i>1= very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4= very much</i>)	3.04	-	-	2.94	-	-.19
<i>Coursework emphasizes the following elements (1= very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much)</i>						
4. Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components	3.12	.18	-	3.13	-	-.12
5. Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships	2.90	.26	-	2.92	-	-
6. Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions	2.74	.13	-	2.79	-	-.12
7. Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	3.08	.17	.12	2.97	-	-.22
<i>Number of papers written/textbooks assigned (1= none, 2=between 1 and 4, 3=between 5 and 10, 4=between 11 and 20, 5=more than 20)</i>						
8. Number of written papers or reports of fewer than five pages	2.72	-	-.34	2.51	-	-.49
9. Number of written papers or reports between five and 19 pages	2.62	.29	.35	2.69	-	.10
10. Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more	1.50	.15	.53	1.86	-	.33
11. Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings	3.30	.15	-	3.07	-	-.12

Benchmark 2: Active and Collaborative Learning

Why is this measured?

“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.” (NSSE)

NSSE has also corroborated with their research that at institutions where faculty members use effective educational practices more frequently in their classes, students are more engaged overall and gain more from college.

Overall benchmark

Table 4: Results for Benchmark 2: Active and Collaborative Learning

	uOttawa Mean	Canadian Consortium		US doctoral-extensive	
		Mean	Effect Size	Mean	Effect Size
First Year	36.1	35.6	--	38.9	-.18
Senior Year	40.6	46.2	-.35	47.8	-.44

Encouraging results

The level of active and collaborative learning, *outside of class*, reported by University of Ottawa first-year students is, on average, higher than the level reported by first-year students at other Canadian institutions and at peer American institutions. Particularly, our first-year students reported that:

- 57% have worked often or very often with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments.
- 62% have discussed, often or very often, ideas from readings or classes with others outside of class.

Our first-year students also appear to participate as much in “in class” activities as those at other Canadian institutions. However, we lag behind US doctoral-extensive institutions.

- Often or very often, 36% of our first-year students asked questions or contributed to in-class discussions as compared to 49% who participated at US doctoral-extensive institutions.
- Often or very often, 25% of our first-year students worked with others on projects during class as compared to 38% who worked together at US doctoral-extensive universities.
- Close to 20% of first-year students at all institutions reported making a class presentation often or very often.

Disappointing results

In the case of senior students, the University of Ottawa scores lower in most items of collaborative learning. Learning does become more active and collaborative as the level of seniority increases at our institution; however, it does not reach the levels offered at comparative institutions.

- 50% of our senior students asked questions or contributed to in-class discussions often or very often, but lagged behind 63% who participated at US doctoral-extensive institutions.
- 27% of our senior students worked often or very-often with others on projects during class as compared to 42% who worked together at US doctoral-extensive institutions.
- 36% of our senior-year students reported making often or very often a class presentation as compared to 45% at US doctoral-extensive institutions.

Other findings

Although we lag behind peer institutions in the items regarding senior student collaboration outside of class, the gap is somewhat narrower.

- 54% of our senior students worked often or very often with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments, just behind the 59% at US doctoral-extensive that reported doing so.
- 64% of our senior students discussed often or very often ideas from readings or classes with others outside of class. This result is, in fact, in line with the results observed at both Canadian and American peer institutions.

Table 5: Mean results for the components of Benchmark 2: Active and Collaborative Learning

<i>Components of Active and Collaborative Learning</i> <small>(1= never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=very often)</small>	First Year			Senior Year		
	uOttawa Mean	Effect Size w.r.t. Canadian Consortium	Effect Size w.r.t. US doctoral-extensive	uOttawa Mean	Effect Size w.r.t. Canadian Consortium	Effect Size w.r.t. US doctoral-extensive
<i>Learning Outside of Class</i>						
Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	2.66	.20	.39	2.68	-.22	-.12
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (e.g., students, family members, co-workers)	2.84	.15	.18	2.86	-	-
Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)	1.72	-	-	1.78	-	-.11
Participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course	1.30	-	-.20	1.30	-.16	-.36
<i>Learning in Class</i>						
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	2.33	-	-.34	2.63	-.13	-.32
Made a class presentation	1.76	-	-.35	2.30	-.49	-.39
Worked with other students on projects during class	1.98	-.12	-.42	2.05	-.21	-.43

Benchmark 3: Student-Faculty Interaction

Why is this measured?

“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.” (NSSE)

Overall benchmark

Table 6: Results for Benchmark 3: Student-Faculty Interaction

	uOttawa Mean	Canadian Consortium		US doctoral-extensive	
		Mean	Effect Size	Mean	Effect Size
First Year	22.9	23.6	--	30.7	-.47
Senior Year	28.1	32.3	-.22	40.6	-.61

Encouraging results

Our first-year students reported a similar level of student-faculty interaction, as do first-year students at other participant Canadian institutions.

Disappointing results

Despite receiving scores from our first-year students that are on par with our Canadian counterparts, the overall results are generally disappointing. Not only are the scores for each individual item generally low, but also all Canadian institutions significantly underperform US doctoral-extensive institutions in this benchmark.

The problem is exacerbated at the senior-student level, where the University of Ottawa not only underperforms its American counterparts, but also its Canadian peers.

At the first-year level:

- 27% of our students often or very often discussed their grades or assignments with instructors as compared to 44% at US doctoral-extensive institutions. As well, 13% of our students talked often or very often about career plans with an advisor as compared to 25% at the American institutions.
- Fewer of our students (32%) appeared to receive prompt feedback from faculty on their academic performance than those at other Canadian institutions (40%) or US doctoral-extensive institutions (58%).

At the senior level:

- About 40% of our senior students discussed often or very often their grades and assignments with faculty, lagging far behind the 56% that reported doing so at US doctoral-extensive institutions.
- Only one-third of our senior students received often or very often prompt feedback from faculty on their academic performance as compared to 54% at other Canadian institutions and 66% at peer American institutions
- 18% of our senior students talked often or very often about their career plans with faculty. At US doctoral-extensive institutions, this percentage is doubled (37%).
- The percentage of students that discuss often or very often their ideas with faculty outside of class is about the same for all types of institutions, ranging from 20 to 23%.
- 73% of our senior students reported never working with faculty members outside of class on activities other than coursework (e.g., committees, student life). This percentage falls to 63% at other Canadian institutions and to 50% at US doctoral-extensive institutions.
- 15% of our senior students worked with faculty members on a research project outside of program requirements, a somewhat smaller proportion than senior students at US doctoral-extensive institutions (22%).

Other findings

- About the same percentage of first-year students from all institutions reported discussing ideas from their readings or classes with faculty members outside of class (15 to 17%) often or very often and reported having worked on a research project outside of class with a faculty member (5%).

Table 7: Mean results for the components of Benchmark 3: Student-Faculty Interaction

<i>Components of Student-Faculty Interaction</i> <i>(1= never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=very often)</i>	First Year			Senior Year		
	uOttawa Mean	Effect Size w.r.t. Canadian Consortium	Effect Size w.r.t. US doctoral-extensive	uOttawa Mean	Effect Size w.r.t. Canadian Consortium	Effect Size w.r.t. US doctoral-extensive
Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	2.14	-	-.41	2.41	-	-.39
Received prompt feedback from a faculty member on your academic performance (written or oral)	2.15	-.23	-.64	2.17	-.50	-.83
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	1.57	-	-.54	1.82	-.17	-.56
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	1.71	-	-	1.84	-	-.17
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (e.g., committees, orientation, student life activities)	1.35	-	-.17	1.40	-.17	-.39
Worked with a faculty member on a research project outside of course or program requirements (<i>mean equals the percentage that responded "done" among all valid respondents</i>)	.05	-	-	.15	-	-.17

Benchmark 4: Enriching Educational Experiences

Why is this measured?

“Complementary learning opportunities in and out of class 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.” (NSSE)

Overall benchmark

Table 8: Results for Benchmark 4: Enriching Educational Experiences

	uOttawa Mean	Canadian Consortium		US doctoral-extensive	
		Mean	Effect Size	Mean	Effect Size
First Year	27.4	23.5	.32	28.2	--
Senior Year	31.6	33.3	-.11	40.9	-.54

Encouraging results

University of Ottawa first-year students find their educational experience more enriching on average than first-year students at other Canadian universities, and at least as enriching as first-year students from peer American institutions. Our first-year students:

- Appear to be relatively technologically-savvy with 66% having used an electronic medium often or very often to discuss assignments with their peers compared to only 56% at US doctoral-extensive institutions.
- Reported having more exposure to discussions with students from other ethnicities with 60% having such conversations often or very often, compared to only 52% doing so at US doctoral-extensive institutions.
- Have engaged in conversations with students who are very different in terms of beliefs, political opinions or religious beliefs. Almost 60% reported having done so often or very often.
- Have participated in an internship or co-op program with 17% doing so, which is likely a reflection of our large co-op program.
- Have studied abroad (6%) and have been involved in independent study (5%) more often than their counterparts at US doctoral-extensive institutions (2% in both items).

At the senior level, our students reported exposure to other ethnicities as much as students were at US doctoral-extensive institutions. In addition, more than half of our senior students had opportunities to have serious conversations with students with different religious beliefs or personal values.

Disappointing results

At the first-year level, we underperform our Canadian peers on one item; this item is, nonetheless, a clear indicator of student participation in campus activities:

- Close to 60% of our first-year students report no participation or involvement in campus co-curricular activities, such as student government or intramural sports. Only 35% of first-year US doctoral-extensive students do not participate.
- At the senior level, the gap closes since fewer students at US doctoral-extensive institutions participate (42%). However, our share of non-participant senior students increases to 63%, leaving our institution lagging behind.

In general, for senior students, the educational experience at the University of Ottawa does not prove to be as enriching. Although for most items, we perform on par with other Canadian institutions, we often lag behind our American peers.

- While 6% of our first-year students reported having studied abroad, only 7% of our senior students reported having done so as compared to 17% at the US doctoral-extensive institutions. Since we are comparing two different cohorts, this discrepancy might signal a recent increase in participation in exchange programs that would be reflected in future surveys.
- 25% of our senior students reported undertaking foreign language work, compared to 50% at comparable American institutions. This result is difficult to interpret since the meaning of foreign language work might be ambiguous for our students, and they may have refrained from reporting coursework in their second official language.
- We also lag in participation in community work. Although about half of our senior students participate in such activities, 62% do so at US doctoral-extensive institutions.
- Regarding participation in a culminating senior experience, only 17% of our senior students reported having this kind of experience, lagging behind the 22% senior students at other Canadian institutions and 28% at US doctoral-extensive institutions, which had such an opportunity.
- Despite our co-op program, only 42% of our senior students reported having some kind of field experience or practicum as compared to 54% at US doctoral-extensive institutions.

Table 9: Mean results for the components of Benchmark 4: Enriching Educational Experiences

<i>Components of Enriching Educational Experiences</i>	First Year			Senior Year		
	uOttawa Mean	Effect Size w.r.t. Canadian Consortium	Effect Size w.r.t. US doctoral-extensive	uOttawa Mean	Effect Size w.r.t. Canadian Consortium	Effect Size w.r.t. US doctoral-extensive
Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own (<i>1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=very often</i>)	2.79	.20	.14	2.70	-	-
Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values (<i>1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=very often</i>)	2.80	.18	-	2.68	-	-.10
Number of hours spent participating in co-curricular activities (e.g., organizations, campus publications, student government, intercollegiate or intramural sports) (<i>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.</i>)	1.64	-.14	-.44	1.65	-	-.33
Campus environment encourages contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds (<i>1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much</i>)	2.38	-	-.16	1.95	-.16	-.37
Used an electronic medium (e.g., listserv, chat group, Internet, instant messaging) to discuss or complete an assignment (<i>1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=very often</i>)	2.93	.30	.23	2.85	-	-
<i>Participated in educational experiences (mean equals the percentage that responded "done" among all valid respondents)</i>						
Foreign language coursework	.15	-	-.23	.25	-	-.48
Study abroad	.06	-	.32	.07	-	-.27
Independent study or self-designed major	.05	-	.20	.12	-	-.17
Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment	.17	.40	.41	.42	-	-.24
Culminating senior experience (e.g., capstone course, thesis, project, comprehensive exam)	.03	-	-	.17	-.12	-.24
Community service or volunteer work	.33	-	-.17	.50	-	-.25

Benchmark 5: Supportive Campus Environment

Why is this measured?

“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.” (NSSE)

Overall benchmark

Table 10: Results for Benchmark 5: Supportive Campus Environment

	uOttawa	Canadian Consortium		US doctoral-extensive	
	Mean	Mean	Effect Size	Mean	Effect Size
First Year	52.7	53.1	--	56.8	-.23
Senior Year	45.3	50.3	-.28	53.2	-.43

Encouraging results

University of Ottawa first-year students find our campus environment as supportive as those at other Canadian universities. In particular, first-year students find that other students, faculty members and administrative personnel are generally available and helpful. Based on a scale of 1 to 7:

- 61% of our first-year students provided top marks (5, 6 or 7) to the quality of their relationships with faculty members. This is on par with the level reported at other Canadian institutions (61%) and close to that reported at US doctoral-extensive universities (67%).
- 46% of our first-year students provided top marks to the quality of their relationships with administrative personnel, compared to 48% reported by the Canadian Consortium and 49% reported by US doctoral-extensive institutions.

Our first-year students also believe that our university is keen on helping them succeed academically, at least at the same level as in other Canadian institutions:

- 62% of our first-year students reported having received quite a bit or very much of such support, the same level reported by the Canadian consortium. Nonetheless, Canadian institutions appear to be somewhat less supportive than US doctoral-extensive institutions, where 72% of first-year students reported feeling supported.

Disappointing results

A common theme throughout this report is the lower scores that our senior students gave our institution. This tendency is observed once again in this benchmark, where our senior students indicated that our campus environment is not as supportive as in other Canadian or American institutions.

The quality of the relationship with faculty members and administrative personnel decreases with the seniority of our students, but also the gap with our comparators widens.

- Only 38% of our senior students provided top marks (5, 6 or 7) to the quality of their relationship with administrative personnel, a much smaller share than the one reported by the Canadian Consortium (49%), or at US doctoral-extensive institutions (48%).
- Only 58% of our senior students provided top marks to the availability and helpfulness of faculty members as compared to 70% reported by our Canadian counterparts and 73% by our American counterparts.
- In the eyes of senior students, the level of support to help them succeed academically also decreases. Only 45% of our seniors report receiving quite a bit or very much of such support compared to 56% at the Canadian Consortium and 53% by our American peers.

Across all institutions, and in particular the Canadian ones, students do not find their universities to be supportive of their needs to thrive socially or to provide them with the help needed to cope with non-academic responsibilities. In those items, we appear to perform, on average, at the same level as other Canadian institutions, but lag behind our American counterparts.

- Only 35% of our first-year students and 20% of our senior students reported being quite a bit or very much supported in their need to thrive socially as compared to 42% of first-year students and 31% of senior students at US doctoral-extensive institutions
- Only 23% of our first-year students and 13% of our senior students believe that they have received quite a bit or very much support to cope with non-academic responsibilities such as family and work. The share of students feeling supported at US doctoral-extensive institutions is somewhat higher: 27% for first-year students and 21% for senior students.

Table 11: Mean results for the components of Benchmark 5: Supportive Campus Environment

<i>Components of a Supportive Campus Environment</i>	First Year			Senior Year		
	uOttawa Mean	Effect Size w.r.t. Canadian Consortium	Effect Size w.r.t. US doctoral-extensive	uOttawa Mean	Effect Size w.r.t. Canadian Consortium	Effect Size w.r.t. US doctoral-extensive
<i>Quality of relationships with</i>						
<i>Other students (1=unfriendly, unsupportive, sense of alienation, to 7=available, helpful, sympathetic)</i>	5.30	-	-.12	5.03	-.30	-.35
<i>Faculty members (1=unavailable, unhelpful, unsympathetic, to 7=available, helpful, sympathetic)</i>	4.75	-	-.16	4.83	-.19	-.28
<i>Administrative personnel and offices (1=unhelpful, inconsiderate, rigid to, 7=available, helpful, sympathetic)</i>	4.33	-	-	3.92	-.26	-.24
<i>Institution that emphasizes (1= very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much)</i>						
<i>Providing the support that is needed to help succeed academically</i>	2.74	-	-.24	2.40	-.18	-.42
<i>Providing the support that is needed to thrive socially</i>	2.21	-	-.15	1.78	-	-.36
<i>Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (e.g., work, family)</i>	1.91	-	-.14	1.59	-	-.27

Balanced Scorecard's Learning Quality Assessment

Why is this measured?

Learning Quality Assessment was identified as a key indicator in the University of Ottawa's Balanced Scorecard. Although the 2005 scorecard uses results from another survey — the Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium Survey (CUSC) — we plan to use the items extracted from NSSE in future years.

Definition

Learning Quality Assessment is defined as the percentage of students that consider their experience at our institution as contributing quite a bit or very much to their knowledge, skills, and personal development across 16 different areas (listed in Figure 1 below).

It should be noted that the extent to which students have developed such abilities depends in part on the University they attend, but are also contingent on the abilities they had developed before reaching the post-secondary level.

2005 NSSE results

Given that Learning Quality Assessment is a measure of the development of specific abilities, the results in the Balanced Scorecard will take into account only the responses for senior students. However, the results for both first- and senior-year students are presented in table 12.

In summary, at the level of first-year students:

- The University of Ottawa outperforms other participant Canadian institutions and performs at the same level than its American counterparts in the item *acquiring a job or work-related knowledge and skills*. This is likely a reflection of our co-op programs.
- Our institution also outperforms its Canadian counterparts in the development of our students' contribution to the welfare of their community.
- Our institution has contributed at a similar level than other Canadian and American institutions to the development of critical thinking and analytical skills, to the ability of students of learning effectively on their own and to solving real-world complex problems.
- For all other items, we lag behind US doctoral-extensive institutions.

At the senior-student level, the University of Ottawa lags behind its Canadian counterparts and American peers in the majority of items. The single exception is acquiring job-related knowledge and skills, where we performed at the same level as our Canadian counterparts.

Regarding the results for the Balanced Scorecard, Figure 1 below provides the breakdown for the share of senior students that considered their university contributed quite a bit or very much to the development of these abilities. The index is 48% and lags behind the results of the Canadian Consortium (57%) and the results for US doctoral-extensive institutions (62%).

Comparison with CUSC results

In 2005, the Balanced Scorecard reported 72% as the result for indicator 3.1, Learning Quality Assessment. As indicated before, this result was obtained with a different survey instrument and the discrepancy might result from different items being included and differences in the composition of the surveyed population.

Figure 1: Percentage of senior students who indicated that institutions contributed very much/quite a bit, for components of the Learning Quality Assessment

□ uOttawa □ Canadian Consortium ■ US Doctoral-Extensive

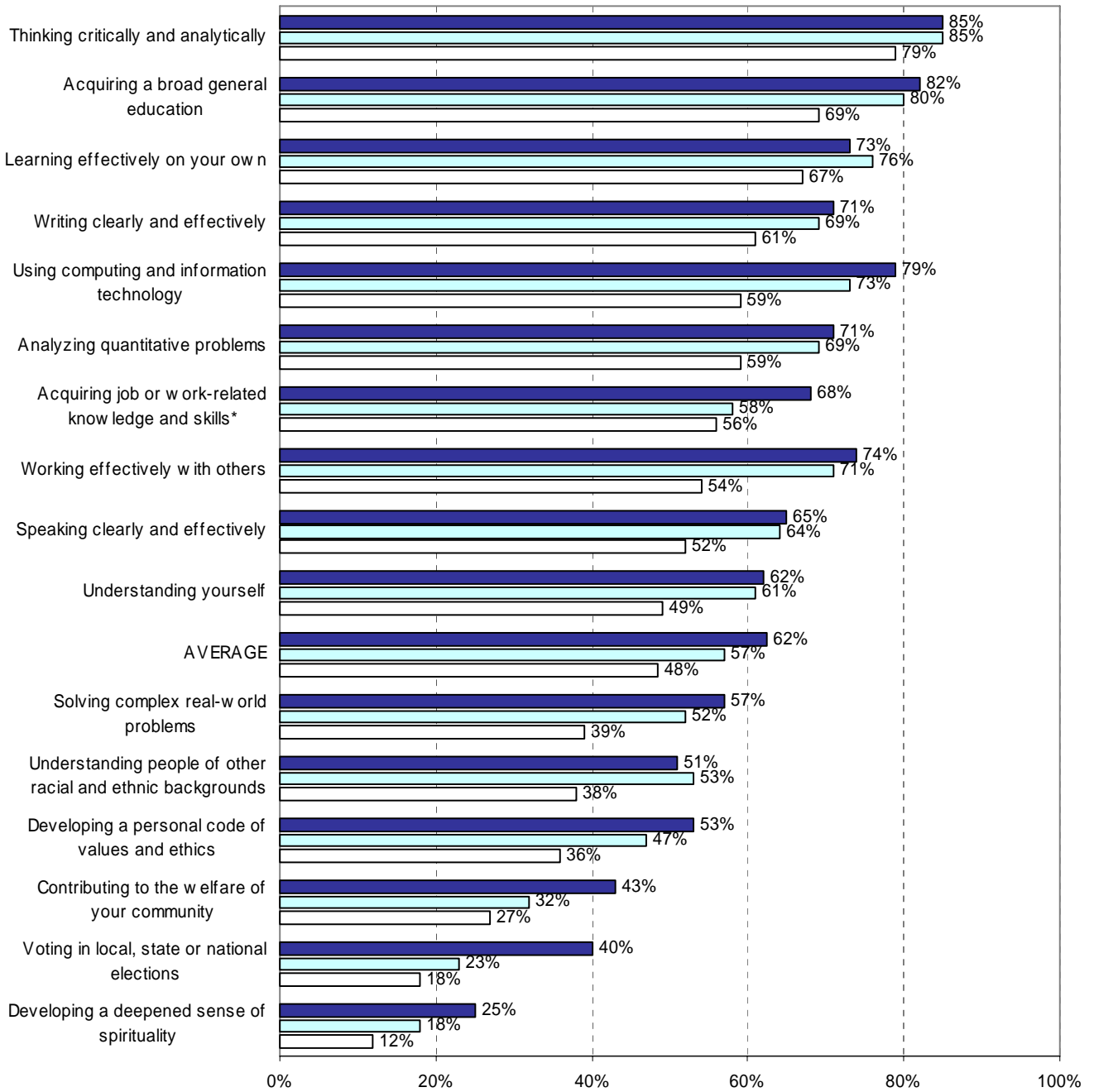


Table 12: Mean results for components of the Learning Quality Assessment

<i>Contribution of the Institution to the Development of:</i> (1= very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much)	First Year			Senior Year		
	uOttawa Mean	Effect Size w.r.t. Canadian Consortium	Effect Size w.r.t. US doctoral-extensive	uOttawa Mean	Effect Size w.r.t. Canadian Consortium	Effect Size w.r.t. US doctoral-extensive
Thinking critically and analytically	3.12	-	-	3.11	-.21	-.22
Acquiring a broad general education	2.93	-.13	-.27	2.93	-.31	-.36
Learning effectively on your own	2.89	-	-	2.81	-.27	-.20
Using computing and information technology	2.73	-	-.29	2.76	-.33	-.51
Writing clearly and effectively	2.69	-	-.16	2.75	-.18	-.25
Analyzing quantitative problems	2.68	-	-.19	2.72	-.22	-.31
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	2.71	.20	-	2.60	-	-.36
Working effectively with others	2.67	-	-.18	2.58	-.47	-.55
Speaking clearly and effectively	2.45	-	-.13	2.55	-.28	-.32
Understanding yourself	2.56	-	-.16	2.47	-.28	-.30
Solving complex real-world problems	2.48	-	-	2.26	-.32	-.44
Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	2.39	-	-.18	2.20	-.36	-.36
Developing a personal code of values and ethics	2.35	-	-.22	2.18	-.29	-.40
Contributing to the welfare of your community	2.18	.13	-.20	1.92	-.22	-.43
Voting in local, state or national elections	1.74	-.15	-.77	1.67	-.17	-.56
Developing a deepened sense of spirituality	1.62	-.13	-.40	1.43	-.24	-.42