Analysis of FHSU and Peer Results for the 2002 - 2008 NSSE Freshmen Benchmarks

A Multi-Year Comparison of Institutional and Peer Performance Relative to the NSSE Benchmarks for Freshmen Students

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1. Analytic Parameters

These analyses are predicated on the following parameters, unless otherwise indicated:

Dependent measures: NSSE benchmark mean scores
Independent variable: Institutional, peer, and combined NSSE performance
Sample\Population: Students with class rank of freshman

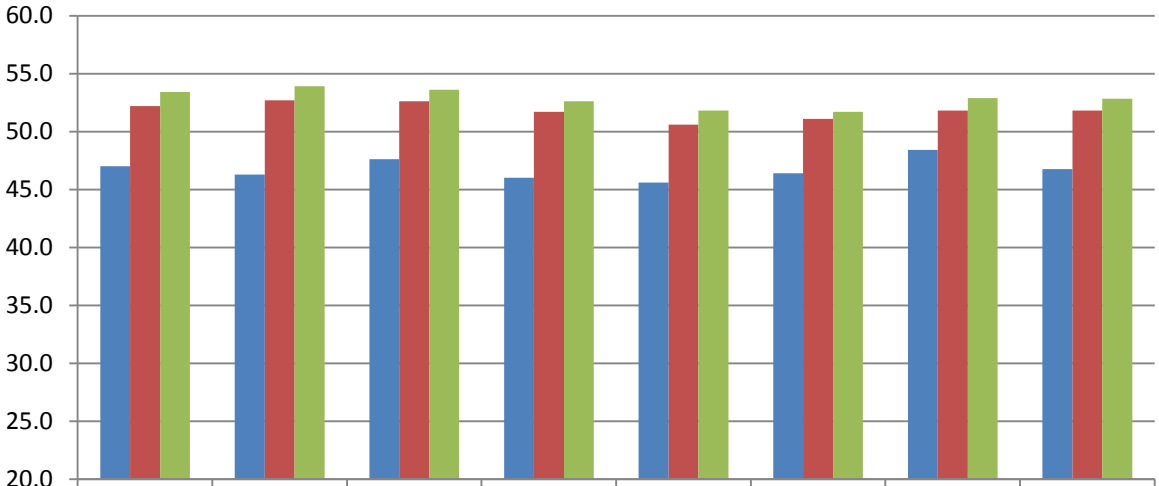
2. Results

Annually, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects information from samples of freshman and freshmen students about the nature and quality of their undergraduate experience. The survey is a powerful tool that assesses the extent to which undergraduate students are "engaged" in effective educational practices. NSSE concludes their analysis by calculating mean scores for each of its five benchmarks of effective educational practice. The five benchmarks of effective educational practice are:

Benchmark Title	Benchmark 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.
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 encounter daily during and after college.
Student-Faculty Interaction	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.
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 freshmen capstone courses provide opportunities to integrate and apply knowledge.
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.

Fort Hays State University has participated in NSSE annually since 2002 and has used the information as a means of informing curriculum change and institutional strategy. FHSU is a noted "innovator/rebel" due, in large part, to the number of distance learners that we educate.

Analysis 2.1: Level of Academic Challenge. This analysis explored the performance differences on the Level of Academic Challenge benchmark between freshmen at FHSU, Carnegie peer, and all NSSE institutions from 2002 through 2008.



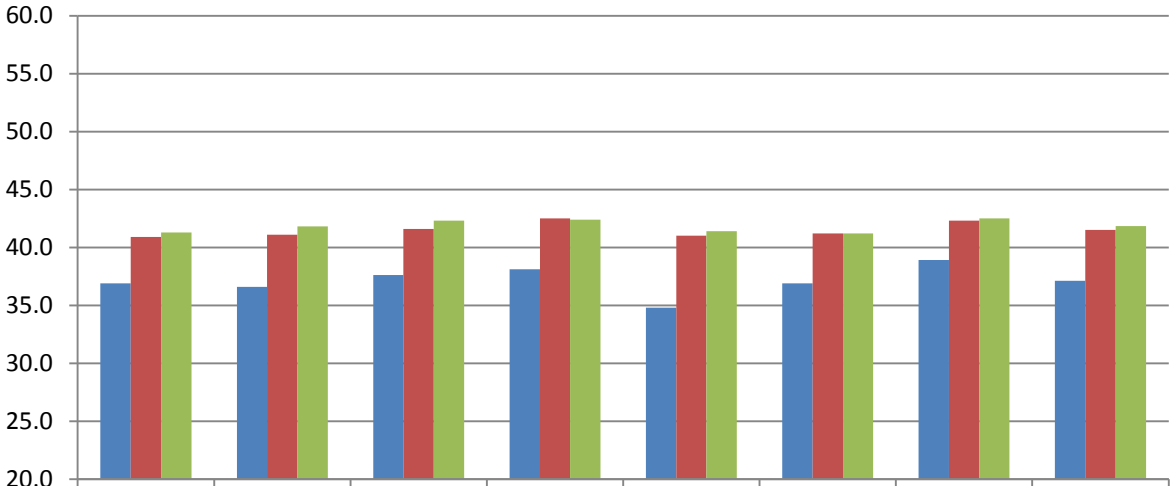
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Mean
FHSU	47.0	46.3	47.6	46.0	45.6	46.4	48.4	46.8
Carnegie Peer	52.2	52.7	52.6	51.7	50.6	51.1	51.8	51.8
NSSE	53.4	53.9	53.6	52.6	51.8	51.7	52.9	52.8

FHSU freshmen have consistently reported lower than peer and overall NSSE performance on this critical benchmark. Performance since 2006 reflects some improvement, but relative to peers and overall NSSE mean scores, a large gap still exists. The 2008 results reveal the best FHSU performance in "Level of Academic Challenge" for freshmen across our seven year history with NSSE.

Freshmen students' levels of academic challenge could be enhanced with the following activities:

- Set higher expectations related to preparing for class,
- Assign more readings and written assignments,
- Require more time studying and on academic work,
- Emphasize analysis, synthesis, application, and value judgment in coursework.

Analysis 2.2: Active and Collaborative Learning. This analysis explored the performance differences on the Active and Collaborative Learning benchmark between freshmen at FHSU, Carnegie peer, and all NSSE institutions from 2002 through 2008.



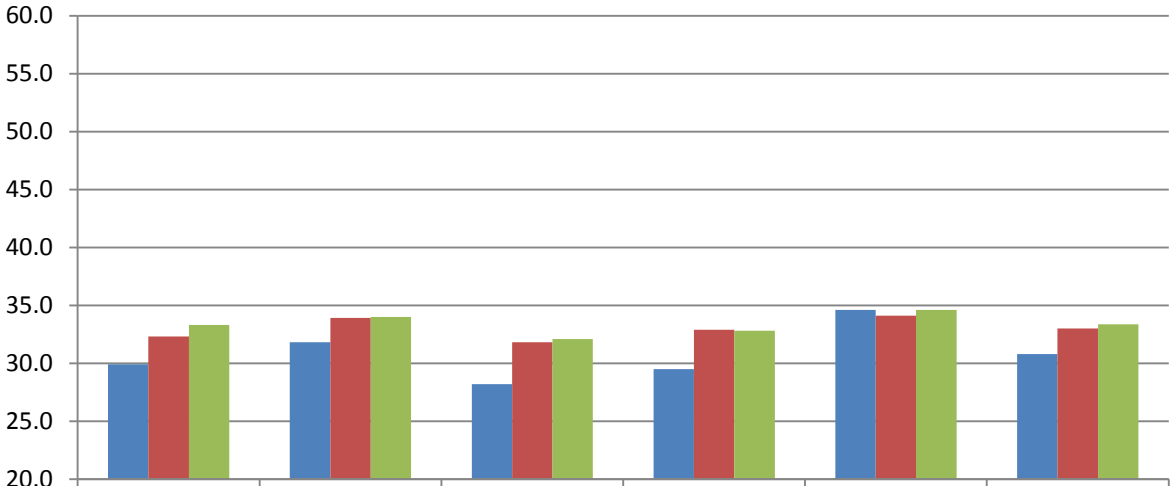
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Mean
FHSU	36.9	36.6	37.6	38.1	34.8	36.9	38.9	37.1
Carnegie Peer	40.9	41.1	41.6	42.5	41.0	41.2	42.3	41.5
NSSE	41.3	41.8	42.3	42.4	41.4	41.2	42.5	41.8

FHSU freshmen have consistently reported lower than peer and overall NSSE performance on this benchmark. Performance since 2006 reflects some improvement, but relative to peers and overall NSSE mean scores, a large gap still exists. The 2008 results reveal the best FHSU performance in "Active and Collaborative Learning" for freshmen across our seven year history with NSSE.

Freshmen students' active and collaborative learning could be enhanced with the following activities:

- Require class discussion, class presentations, or a community-based project,
- Work with other students during class or outside class, or tutor other students,
- Discuss ideas from class with others.

Analysis 2.3: Student-Faculty Interaction This analysis explored the performance differences on the Student-Faculty Interaction benchmark between freshmen at FHSU, Carnegie peer, and all NSSE institutions from 2004 through 2008.



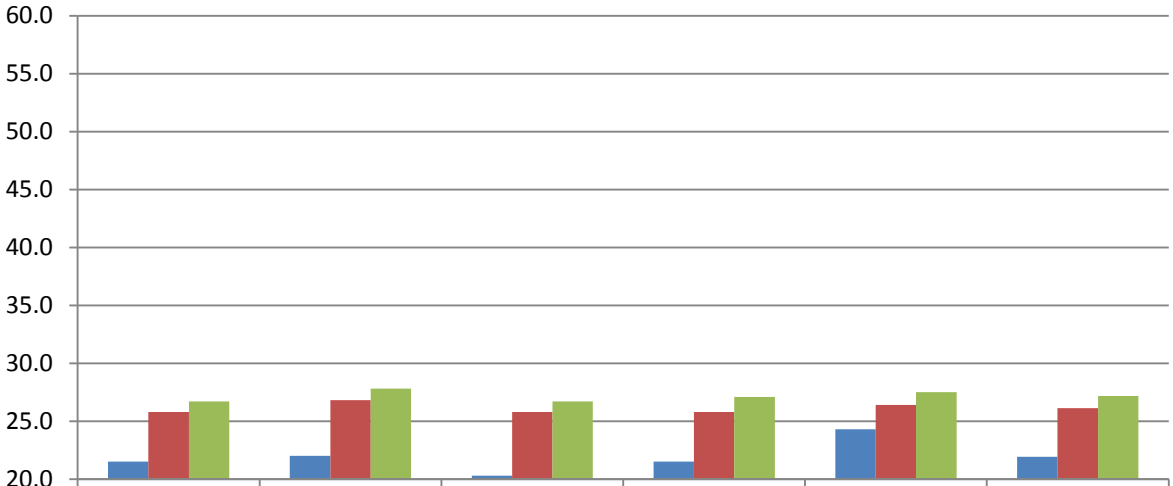
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Mean
FHSU	29.9	31.8	28.2	29.5	34.6	30.8
Carnegie Peer	32.3	33.9	31.8	32.9	34.1	33.0
NSSE	33.3	34.0	32.1	32.8	34.6	33.4

FHSU freshmen have consistently reported lower than peer and overall NSSE performance on this benchmark, until 2008. Performance since 2006 reflects improvement. The 2008 results reveal the best FHSU performance in "Student/Faculty Interaction" for freshmen across our history with NSSE, equaling the national NSSE average and exceeding our Carnegie peer average.

Freshmen students' student/faculty interaction could be enhanced with the following activities:

- Discuss grades, assignments, or class content with students,
- Provide prompt written or oral feedback on assignments,
- Discuss career plans or other co-curricular activities with students,
- Work with students on a research project outside course requirements.

Analysis 2.4: Enriching Educational Experiences This analysis explored the performance differences on the Enriching Educational Experiences benchmark between freshmen at FHSU, Carnegie peer, and all NSSE institutions from 2004 through 2008.



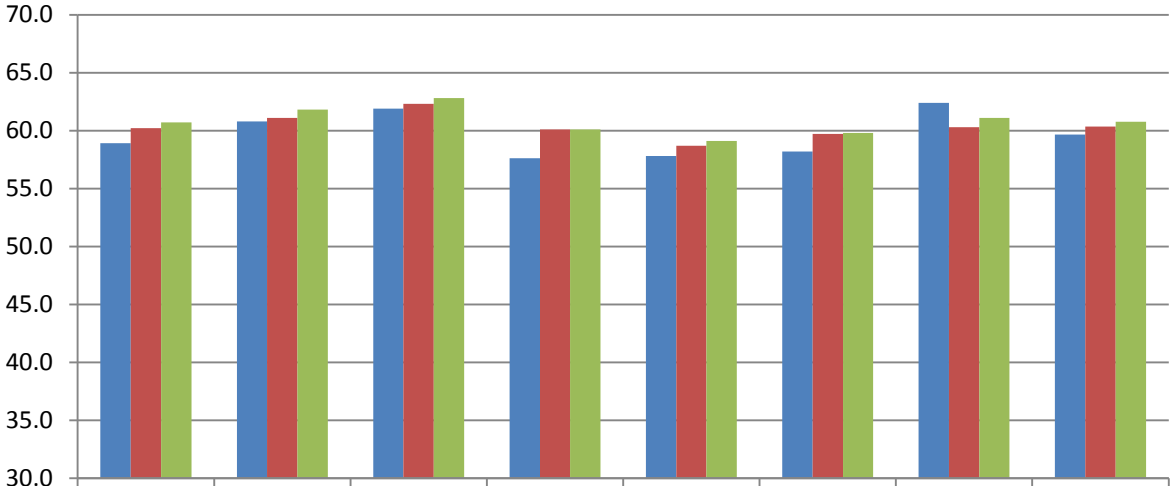
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Mean
FHSU	21.5	22.0	20.3	21.5	24.3	21.9
Carnegie Peer	25.8	26.8	25.8	25.8	26.4	26.1
NSSE	26.7	27.8	26.7	27.1	27.5	27.2

FHSU freshmen have consistently reported lower than peer and overall NSSE performance on this benchmark. Performance since 2006 reflects some improvement, but relative to peers and overall NSSE mean scores, a large gap still exists. The 2008 results reveal the best FHSU performance in "Enriching Educational Experiences" for freshmen across our seven year history with NSSE.

Freshmen students' educational experiences could be enriched with the following activities:

- Participation in co-curricular activities,
- Learning community or first-year experience,
- Conversations with diverse populations,
- Community service, foreign language coursework, or independent study.

Analysis 2.5: Supportive Campus Environment This analysis explored the performance differences on the Supportive Campus Environment benchmark between freshmen at FHSU, Carnegie peer, and all NSSE institutions from 2002 through 2008.



	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Mean
FHSU	58.9	60.8	61.9	57.6	57.8	58.2	62.4	59.7
Carnegie Peer	60.2	61.1	62.3	60.1	58.7	59.7	60.3	60.3
NSSE	60.7	61.8	62.8	60.1	59.1	59.8	61.1	60.8

FHSU freshmen have consistently reported lower than peer and overall NSSE performance on this benchmark, until 2008. Performance since 2005 reflects some improvement after a steep decline. The 2008 results reveal the best FHSU performance in "Supportive Campus Environment" for freshmen across our seven year history with NSSE.

Freshmen students' satisfaction with the campus environment could be enriched with the following activities:

- Campus support for academic, non-academic, and social issues,
- Improved relationships between students, faculty, support services, and administrative personnel.