



# ***NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT***

## ***2010 Benchmark Comparisons Report***

**OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL  
RESEARCH & PLANNING**

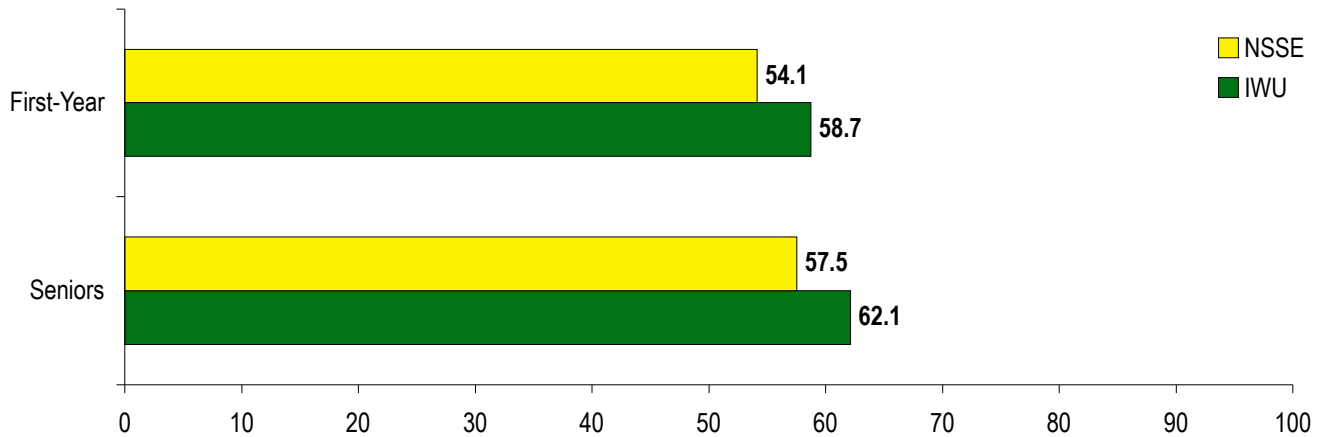
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To focus discussions about the importance of student engagement and to guide institutional improvement efforts, NSSE created five Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice: Level of Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, Enriching Educational Experiences, and Supportive Campus Environment. This Benchmark Comparisons Report compares the performance of Illinois Wesleyan University with the national NSSE consortium.

**The construction of the NSSE Benchmarks:**

- 1) All items that contribute to a benchmark are converted to a 0 - 100 point scale.
- 2) Student-level benchmark scores are created for each group of items by taking the mean of each student's scores. A mean was calculated for each student so long as they had answered three-fifths of the items in any particular benchmark.
- 3) Institutional benchmarks are created by calculating weighted averages of the student-level scores for each class (first-year students and seniors).

**Level of Academic Challenge Benchmark**



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.

**\* IWU had significantly higher scores than its NSSE peers for both first-year students and seniors in the Level of Academic Challenge Benchmark ( $p < .001$ ).**

**Level of Academic Challenge Benchmark Items - IWU**

● **Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, etc. related to academic program)**

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

Both first-year students and seniors spent an average of approximately 16-20 hours per week preparing for class.

Status	Mean
First-year	4.92
Seniors	4.85

● **Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings**

1 = none, 2 = 1-4, 3 = 5-10, 4 = 11-20, 5 = more than 20

First-year students averaged close to 11-20 assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings per school year, while seniors averaged between 5-10 and 11-20.

Status	Mean
First-year	3.71
Seniors	3.53

**Level of Academic Challenge Benchmark Items - IWU (continued)**

● **Number of written papers or reports of...**

1 = none, 2 = 1-4, 3 = 5-10, 4 = 11-20, 5 = more than 20

**...20 pages or more**

- 1) First-year students averaged almost no written papers of 20+ pages per school year.
- 2) Seniors averaged closer to 1-4 written papers of 20+ pages per school year.

Status	Mean
First-year	1.15
Seniors	1.68

**...between 5 and 19 pages**

- 1) First-year students averaged approximately 1-4 written papers per school year.
- 2) Seniors averaged closer to 5-10 written papers per school year.

Status	Mean
First-year	2.27
Seniors	2.66

**...fewer than 5 pages**

- 1) First-year students averaged approximately 1-4 written papers per school year.
- 2) Seniors averaged closer to 5-10 written papers per school year.

Status	Mean
First-year	2.27
Seniors	2.66

● **Both first-year students and seniors reported substantial\* emphasis on the following coursework activities:**

Note: \* Combined "quite a bit" & "very much"

Coursework Activities	First-year	Seniors
Analyzing basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory	91%	93%
Synthesizing and organizing ideas	81%	83%
Making judgments about the value of information	70%	79%
Applying theories or concepts to practical problems	83%	87%

● **Percentage of students who frequently\* worked harder than they thought they could to meet faculty standards or expectations**

Note: \* Combined "often" & "very often"

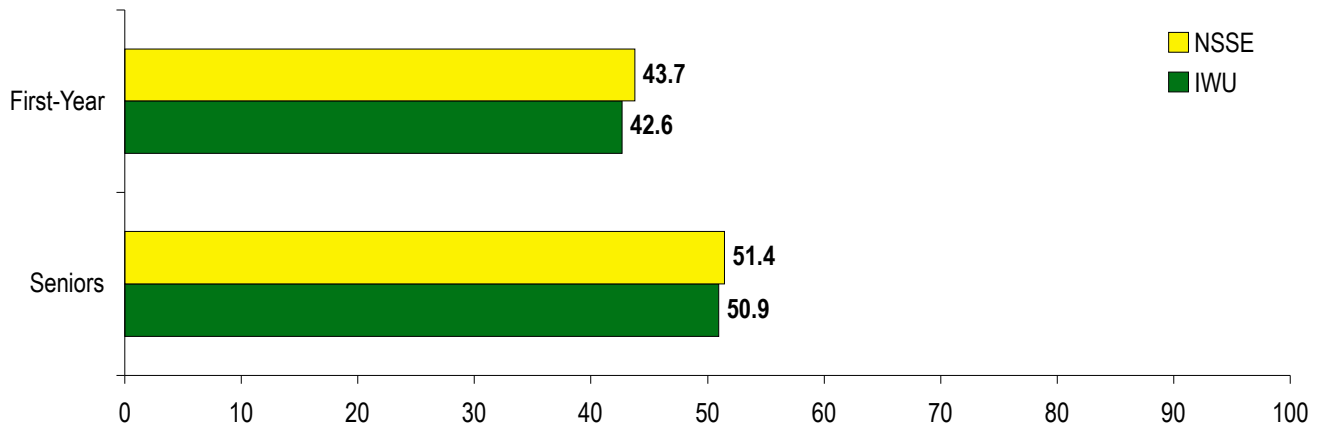
First-year	Seniors
62%	56%

● **Percentage of students who felt that IWU placed substantial\* emphasis on studying and academic work**

Note: \* Combined "quite a bit" & "very much"

First-year	Seniors
91%	94%

**Active and Collaborative Learning Benchmark**



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.

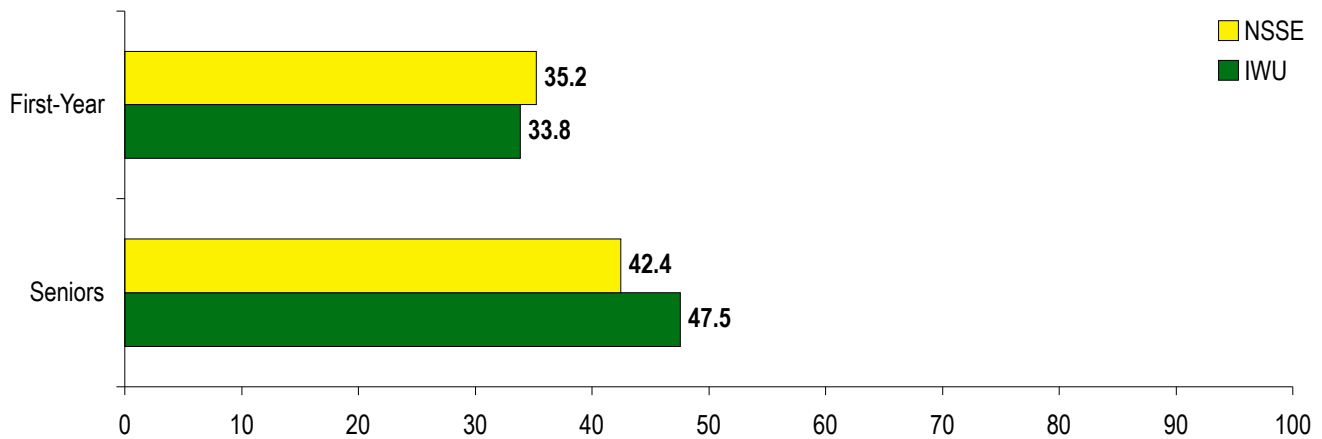
*\* There were no significant differences between IWU and its NSSE peers in the Active and Collaborative Learning Benchmark.*

**Active and Collaborative Learning Benchmark Items**

● Percentage of students who frequently* asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	First-year 71%	Seniors 82%
● Percentage of students who frequently* made a class presentation	First-year 18%	Seniors 59%
● Percentage of students who frequently* worked with other students on projects during class	First-year 36%	Seniors 35%
● Percentage of students who frequently* worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	First-year 48%	Seniors 64%
● Percentage of students who frequently* tutored or taught other students	First-year 19%	Seniors 29%
● Percentage of students who frequently* participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course	First-year 10%	Seniors 10%
● Percentage of students who frequently* discussed ideas from their readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)	First-year 61%	Seniors 69%

Note: \* Combined "often" & "very often"

**Student-Faculty Interaction Benchmark**



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.

**\* IWU seniors had significantly higher scores than its NSSE senior peers in the Student-Faculty Interaction Benchmark ( $p < .001$ ).**

**Student-Faculty Interaction Benchmark Items**

- Percentage of students who frequently\* discussed grades or assignments with an instructor
  - Percentage of students who frequently\* talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor
  - Percentage of students who frequently\* discussed ideas from their readings or classes with faculty members outside of class
  - Percentage of students who frequently\* worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student-life activities, etc.)
  - Percentage of students who frequently\* received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance
- Note: \* Combined "often" & "very often"

First-year	Seniors
48%	57%

First-year	Seniors
30%	60%

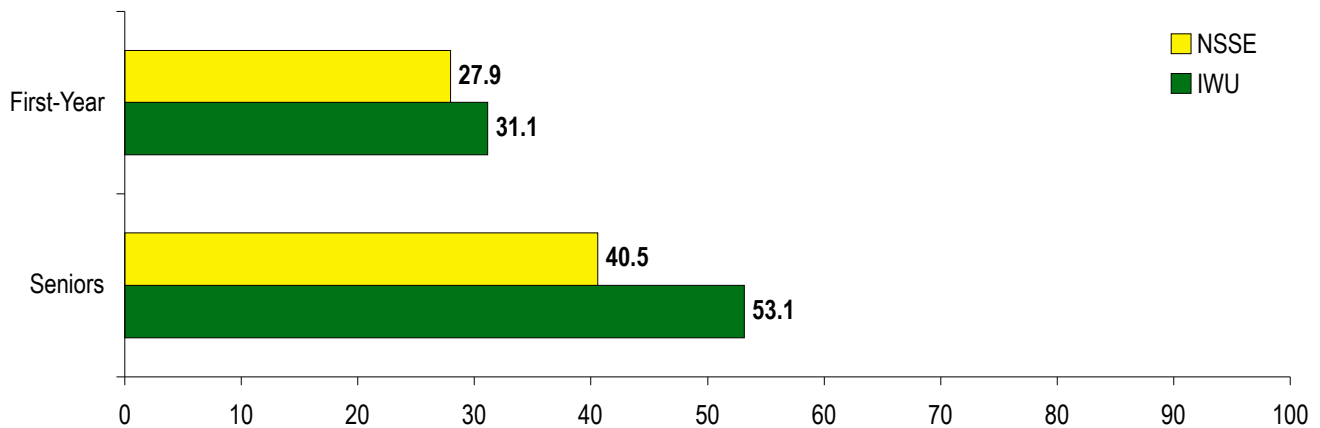
First-year	Seniors
19%	33%

First-year	Seniors
17%	29%

First-year	Seniors
66%	68%

- By their senior year, **24%** of students reported working with a faculty member on a research project outside of course or program requirements, while **46%** of the first-year students plan to work with faculty before they graduate.

**Enriching Educational Experiences Benchmark**



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 senior capstone courses provide opportunities to integrate and apply knowledge.

**\* IWU had significantly higher scores than its NSSE peers for both first-year students and seniors in the Enriching Educational Experiences Benchmark ( $p < .001$ ).**

**Enriching Educational Experiences Benchmark Items**

- **Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, publications, student government, sports, etc.)**

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

Both first-year students and seniors spent an average of approximately 6-10 hours per week participating in co-curricular activities.

Status	Mean
First-year	3.08
Seniors	3.18

- **By their senior year, 75% of students reported participating in a practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment, while 77% of first-year students plan to participate in these activities before they graduate.**
- **Seventy-nine percent** of seniors reported participating in community service or volunteer work, while **39%** of first-year students have already participated, and another **44%** plan to do so before graduation.
- **By their senior year, 76% of students reported participating in foreign language coursework, while 54% of first-year students have already participated, and another 27% plan to do so before they graduate.**
- **Almost 50% of the seniors reported participating in a study abroad program. Sixty-seven percent of the first-year students plan to study abroad before graduation.**
- **Approximately 30% of the seniors reported participating in an independent study or self-designed major, while almost 20% of first-year students plan to do the same.**
- **Over 50% of the seniors reported participating in a culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.). Fifty-seven percent of first-year students plan a similar activity before graduating.**

*Enriching Educational Experiences Benchmark Items (continued)*

- Percentage of students who frequently\* had serious conversations with students of different religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values

Note: \* Combined "often" & "very often"

First-year	Seniors
68%	68%

- Percentage of students who frequently\* had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity

Note: \* Combined "often" & "very often"

First-year	Seniors
62%	57%

- Percentage of students who frequently\* used an electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment

Note: \* Combined "often" & "very often"

First-year	Seniors
47%	53%

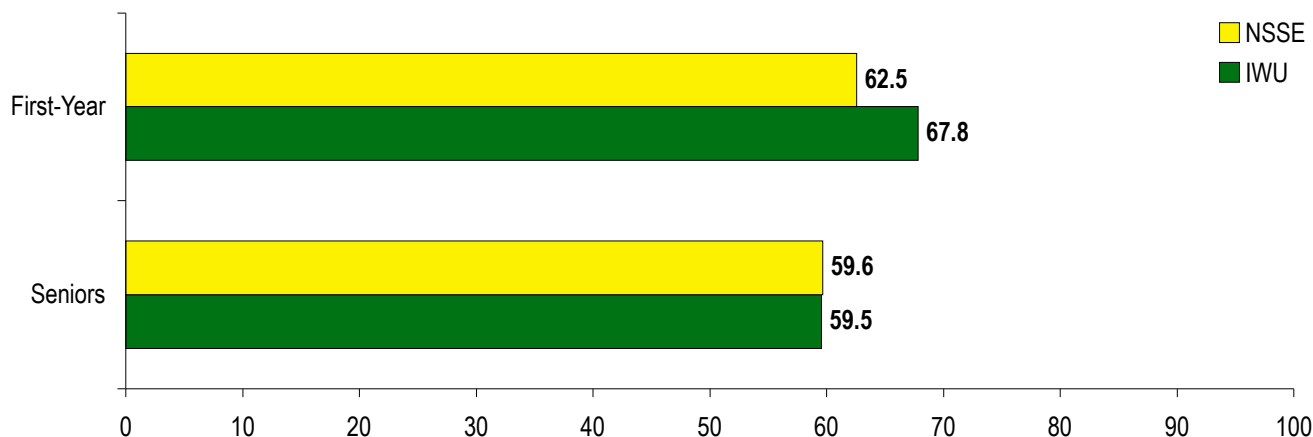
- Percentage of students who felt that IWU strongly\* encouraged contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds

Note: \* Combined "quite a bit" & "very much"

First-year	Seniors
67%	48%

- Almost **25%** of the seniors reported participating in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together. **Twenty percent** of first-year students plan to do the same before they graduate.

**Supportive Campus Environment Benchmark**



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.

**\* IWU had significantly higher scores than its NSSE peers for first-year students on the Supportive Campus Environment Benchmark ( $p < .001$ ).**

**Supportive Campus Environment Benchmark Items**

- Percentage of students who felt that IWU placed a substantial\* commitment to their academic success

Note: \* Combined "quite a bit" & "very much"

First-year	Seniors
91%	94%

- Percentage of students who felt that IWU strongly supported their needs in coping with non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)

Note: \* Combined "quite a bit" & "very much"

First-year	Seniors
48%	21%

- Percentage of students who felt that IWU strongly supported their social needs

Note: \* Combined "quite a bit" & "very much"

First-year	Seniors
54%	26%

- Seventy-two percent** of first-year students reported that their peers were friendly, supportive, and helped them feel as if they belonged, while **70%** of the seniors reported similar feelings.
- Fifty-eight percent** of first-year students reported faculty members as available, helpful, and sympathetic to their needs. **Sixty-eight percent** of the seniors reported feeling the same of faculty.
- Thirty-six percent** of first-year students found the administrative personnel and offices helpful, considerate, and flexible, while **26%** of the seniors reported the same.