

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Summary

2011

NSSE uses five benchmarks of effective educational practice: Level of Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, Enriching Educational Experiences, and Supportive Campus Environment. In the Benchmark Comparison Report, Mesa State College is compared with Selected Peers. The following is a summary of the findings in each of the five benchmark areas as described by the Mesa State College Assessment Committee.

Level of Academic Challenge

Compared to Selected Peers (51.5), Mesa State College is roughly the same for First-Year Students (51.7) and Seniors (Selected Peers- 51.5: Mesa State College- 51.7).

Compared to 2008, 2010 First-Year Students are slightly higher (2008 – 51.2: 2010 – 51.7). Seniors showed an improvement (2008 – 53.2: 2010 – 56.9).

Strengths: Sixty percent of Mesa State Seniors reported that they spend between 6-20 hours preparing for class (studying, reading, homework assignments, etc.). This was about the same as seniors at selected peers (62%). Fifty-two percent of Mesa State First Year students and 43% of Seniors report that they write more short papers (5 pages or fewer) than first year students (46%) and seniors (37%) at selected peers. The number of students who report spending quite a bit or very much time studying was slightly lower for Mesa State First Year students (71%) compared to selected peers (78%) and the same for Mesa State Seniors and selected peer (83%). Mesa State Seniors (53%) report that they write more long papers (20 pages or more) than seniors at selected peers (45%).

Weaknesses: Forty-nine percent of Mesa State First-Year students reported that they spend between 6-20 hours preparing for class (studying, reading, homework assignments, etc.), this was lower than first-year students at selected peers (63%). Eighteen percent of Mesa State First Year students report that they write fewer long papers (20 pages or more) than first year students at selected peers (23%). Fifty-four percent of First Year Students and 61% of Seniors at Mesa State College reported that they often or very often worked harder than they thought they could to meet and instructor's standards compared to 63% of First Year students and 69% of seniors at selected peers.

In all other areas, Mesa State College was very similar to the selected peers (e.g., number of assigned textbooks, coursework emphasizing analysis, synthesis, making of judgments and applying theories or concepts). In terms of time spent on academic work and number and length of papers required, Mesa State College is less demanding on first year students but more

demanding on seniors than selected peers. Recommendations for improvement include an increased emphasis on writing in general and increasing demands placed on First Year students.

Active and Collaborative Learning

Compared to Selected Peers (43.1), Mesa State College is slightly lower for First-Year Students (42.6). Mesa State Seniors are higher (53.9) compared to the selected peers (50.9).

Compared to 2008, 2010 both First-Year Students (2008 – 40.2: 2010 – 42.6) and Seniors showed an improvement (2008 – 53.2: 2010 – 56.9).

Strengths:

Comparisons with Selected Peer institutions showed a greater level of activity in Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL) for Mesa State Seniors. For example, eighty percent of Mesa State College Seniors reported that they often or very often asked questions or contributed to discussions compared to 77% of seniors in the selected peers. Sixty-three percent of Mesa State College Seniors reported that they often or very often made a class presentation compared to 59% of seniors in the selected peers. Fifty-seven percent Mesa State College First Year students and 59% of Mesa State College Seniors reported that they often or very often worked with other students on projects during class compared to 48% of first year and 53% of seniors in the selected peers. A higher percentage of Mesa State College Seniors (24%) reported that they tutored or taught other students when compared to seniors (18%) at selected peers (18%). Sixty-eight percent of Mesa State College First-Year students reported that they often or very often discussed ideas from readings or classes with others outside of class when compared to 58% of first-year students at selected peers.

Weaknesses:

Only 27% of Mesa State College First-Year students reported that they often or very often made a class presentation when compared to 40% of first year students at selected peers. Six percent of Mesa State College First-Year students reported that they often or very often participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course compared to 10% of first-year students at selected peers.

In all other areas, Mesa State College was very similar to the selected peers (first year students asking questions or tutoring other student, first year and seniors working on projects in and outside of class). Recommendations include offering more opportunities for class presentation and community projects involvement in lower division courses.

Student-Faculty Interaction

Compared to Selected Peers (35.4), Mesa State College is lower for First-Year Students (32.7). Seniors are slightly higher (43.1) compared to the selected peers (42.6).

Compared to 2008, 2010 both First-Year Students (2008 – 31.6: 2010 – 32.7) and Seniors showed an improvement (2008 – 41.3: 2010 – 43.1)

Strengths:

Sixty-three percent of Mesa State College First-Year students reported that they often or very often discussed grades or assignments with an instructor compared to 58% of first year students at selected peers.

Weaknesses:

Only 26% Mesa State College First-Year Students reported that they often or very often discussed career plans with a faculty member or advisor compared to 37% of first year students at selected peers. The numbers were almost the same for Mesa State College Seniors (43%) and seniors at selected peers (44%). Fifteen percent of Mesa State College First Year students reported that they often or very often discussed ideas from reading or class outside of class compared to 22% of first year students at selected peers.

In all other areas, Mesa State College was very similar to the selected peers (seniors discussing grades and discussing ideas outside of class, first year students and seniors working with faculty on activities other than coursework, getting prompt written feedback on performance, and working on a research project) although the percentages were generally low (teens to mid 30s). Recommendations include communicating to faculty the need to give students more opportunities for interaction.

Enriching Educational Experiences

Compared to Selected Peers (25.3) Mesa State College is the same for First Year Students (25.3). Mesa State Seniors are higher (37.5) than Selected Peers (36.4).

Compared to 2008, 2010 First-Year Students (2008 – 25.7: 2010 – 25.3) stayed about the same. Seniors showed an improvement (2008 – 34.1: 2010 – 37.5)

Strengths

Fifty-nine percent of First Year Students at Mesa State reported that they often or very often have serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity other than their own compared to 50% of First-Year students at selected peers. Sixty-five percent of First Year Students and 59% of Seniors at Mesa State reported they often or very often have serious conversations with students who are very different from them in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions or personal values compared to 53% of first-year students and 52% of seniors at selected peers.

Eighty-one percent of First Year students at Mesa State College plan to do or have done a practicum, internship or some other type of field experience compared to 73% of first year students at selected peers. Forty-two percent of First Year Students at Mesa State College plan to take a Foreign Language compared to 37% at selected peers. Eighty -one percent of Seniors at Mesa State College plan to do a culminating senior experience compared to 62% of seniors at selected peers. Fifty-one percent of First Year students and 47% of seniors at Mesa State College spend some amount of time participating in co-curricular activities compared to 37% of First-Year students 36% of seniors at selected peers.

Weaknesses

Only 44% of Seniors at Mesa State College reported that they often or very often had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity compared to 52% seniors from selected peers. Only 58% of Seniors at Mesa State College reported that they often or very often used an electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment compared to 68% of Seniors at selected peers. Fifteen percent of seniors at Mesa State College reported that they plan to do community service or volunteer work compared to 23% of seniors at selected peers. Twenty-four percent of Seniors at Mesa State College reported that they plan to do or have done participation in a learning community compared to 41% of seniors at selected peers.

In all other areas, Mesa State College was very similar to the selected peers (first year students using electronic medium, doing community service of volunteer work, and participating in a learning community and seniors doing a practicum or internship and having taken a foreign language, both groups studying abroad and doing an independent study).

Recommendations include encouraging senior classes to plan for minority speakers, or include topics for discussion which include a broader global perspective.

Supportive Campus Environment

Compared to Selected Peers, Mesa State College somewhat lower First-Year Students and Seniors (Mesa State First Year 57.9, Selected Peers First Year 61.8; Mesa State Senior 59.0, Selected Peers Senior 61.2).

Compared to 2008, 2010 both First-Year Students (2008 – 55.4: 2010 – 57.9) and Seniors showed an improvement (2008 – 55.0: 2010 – 59.0).

Strengths:

Seventy-nine percent of First-Year and 83% Seniors at Mesa State college rated the quality of relationships with other student a five or higher (on a 7 points scale), 77% of First-Year and 88% Seniors at Mesa State college rated the quality of relationships faculty members a five or higher, and 56% of First-Year and 61% Seniors at Mesa State college rated the quality of relationships with administrative personnel a five or higher. These number are about the same as the selected peers (quality of relationship with other students, First-Year- 77% and Seniors – 84%: quality of relationship with faculty, First-Year- 72% and Seniors – 80%: quality of relationship with administrative personnel, First-Year- 59% and Seniors – 62%. Seventy-seven percent of First-Year students and 73% of Seniors at Mesa State College reported the college provided the support needed to succeed academically quite of bit or very much compared to 75% of First Year students and 73% of seniors at selected peers.

Weaknesses:

Only 26% First-Year students and 25% of Seniors at Mesa State College reported the college helped them cope with non-academic responsibilities as quite of bit or very much compared to 38% of first year students and 34% of seniors at selected peers. Thirty-three percent of First-Year students and 33% of Seniors at Mesa State College reported the college provided the support needed to thrive socially as quite of bit or very much compared to 47% of First Year students and 41% of seniors at selected peers.

Although students rate relationships with other students and faculty members as generally positive, relationships with administrative personnel are much lower. In addition, students rate the college highly for supporting academic success but rate the college much lower for supporting non-academic responsibilities and providing social support. Recommendations include strengthening connections between students and administrative personnel and providing more support for non-academic responsibilities and social support.