



## **National Survey of Student Engagement**

# **Western Michigan University**

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## **Benchmark Comparisons**

August 2006

# Interpreting the Benchmark Comparisons Report

To focus discussions about the importance of student engagement and guide institutional improvement efforts, NSSE created five clusters or "benchmarks" of effective educational practice: (1) Level of academic challenge, (2) Active and collaborative learning, (3) Student-faculty interaction, (4) Enriching educational experiences, and (5) Supportive campus environment. This Benchmark Comparisons Report compares the performance of your institution with your selected peers or consortium, selected Carnegie peers, and all 2006 NSSE institutions.<sup>1</sup> In addition, page 8 provides two other comparisons between your school and above-average U.S. institutions with benchmarks in the top 50% of all U.S. NSSE institutions and high-performing U.S. institutions with benchmarks in the top 10% of all U.S. NSSE institutions. These displays allow you to determine if the engagement of your typical student differs in a statistically significant, meaningful way from the average student in these comparison groups. More detailed information about how benchmarks are created can be found on the NSSE Web site at [www.nsse.iub.edu/html/2006\\_inst\\_report.htm](http://www.nsse.iub.edu/html/2006_inst_report.htm).

**Class and Sample**  
Means are reported for first-year students and seniors (institution reported). All randomly selected students are included in these analyses. Students in targeted or locally administered oversamples are not included.

**Mean**  
The mean is the *weighted* arithmetic average of student level benchmark scores. Although institutional benchmark score calculations have not changed from prior years, reference group calculations were revised in 2005.

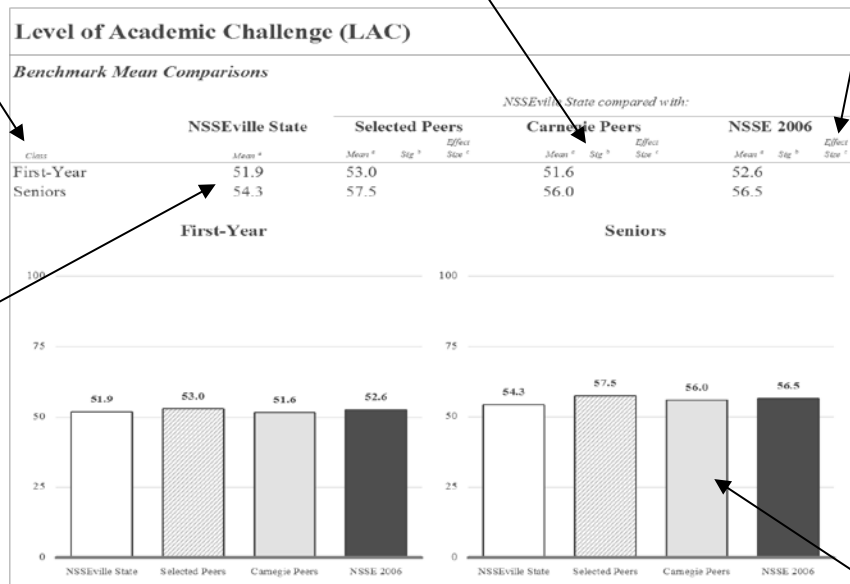
**Benchmark Description & Survey Items**  
A description of the benchmark and the individual items used in its creation are summarized.

## Statistical Significance

Benchmarks with mean differences that are larger than would be expected by chance alone are noted with one, two, or three asterisks, denoting one of three significance levels ( $p < .05$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $p < .001$ ). The smaller the significance level, the smaller the likelihood that the difference is due to chance. Please note that statistical significance does not guarantee that the result is substantive or important. Large sample sizes (as with the NSSE project) tend to produce more statistically significant results even though the magnitude of mean differences may be inconsequential.

## Effect Size

Effect size indicates the *practical significance* of the mean difference. It is calculated by dividing the mean difference by the standard deviation of the group to which the institution is being compared (selected peers, Carnegie peers, or all NSSE 2006 schools). In practice, an effect size of .2 is often considered small, .5 moderate, and .8 large. A positive sign indicates that your institution's mean was greater, thus showing an affirmative result for the institution. A negative sign indicates the institution lags behind the comparison group. Look for patterns of effect sizes that point to areas of student or institutional performance that warrant attention.



## Level of Academic Challenge (LAC) Items

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.

- Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, etc. related to academic program)
- Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings
- Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more; number of written papers or reports of between 5 and 19 pages; and number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages
- Coursework emphasizing analysis of the basic elements of an idea, experience or theory
- Coursework emphasizing synthesis and organizing of ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships
- Coursework emphasizing the making of judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods
- Coursework emphasizing application of theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
- Working harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations
- Campus environment emphasizing time studying and on academic work

## Bar Charts

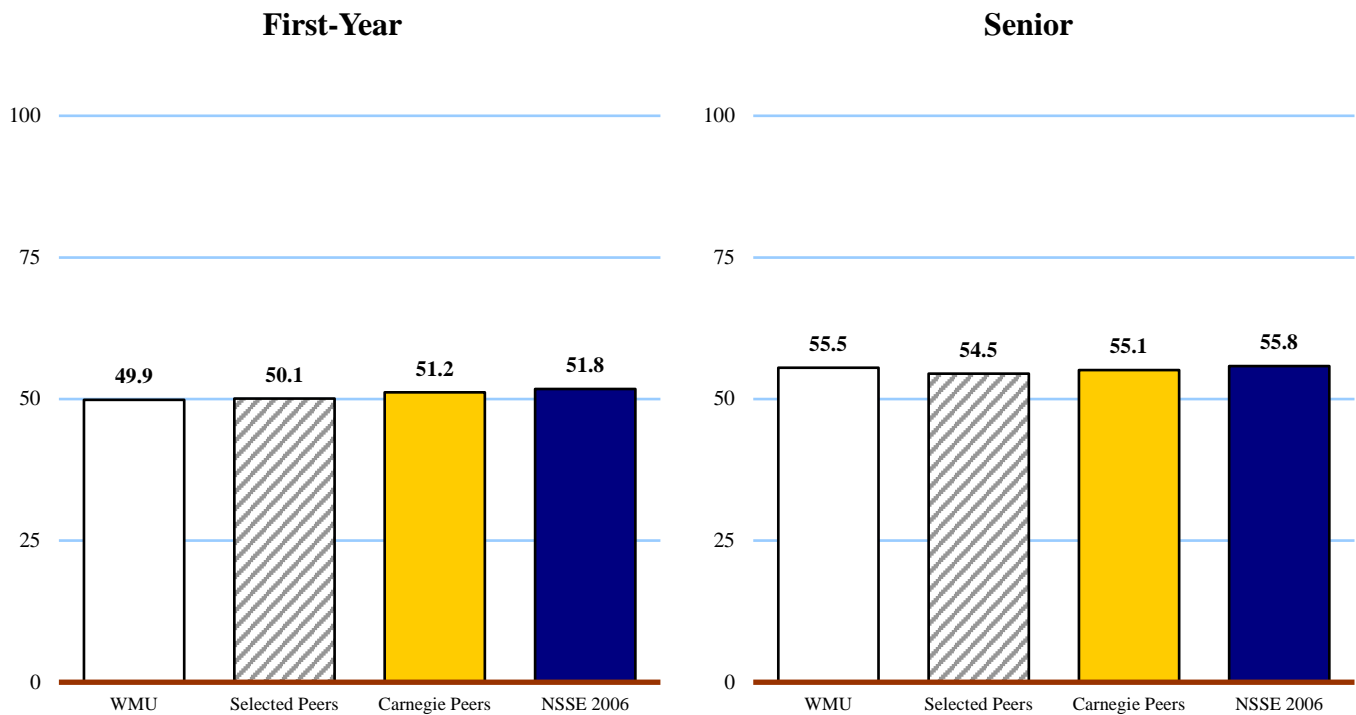
A visual display of first-year and senior mean benchmark scores for your institution and three reference groups.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. institution reports include U.S. schools only. Canadian institution reports include U.S. and Canadian institutions.

## Level of Academic Challenge (LAC)

### Benchmark Comparisons

Class	WMU Mean <sup>a</sup>	Selected Peers			Carnegie Peers			NSSE 2006		
		Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>
First-Year	49.9	50.1			51.2	**	-.10	51.8	***	-.14
Senior	55.5	54.5			55.1			55.8		



### Level of Academic Challenge (LAC) Items

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.

- Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, etc. related to academic program)
- Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings
- Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more; number of written papers or reports of between 5 and 19 pages; and number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages
- Coursework emphasizing analysis of the basic elements of an idea, experience or theory
- Coursework emphasizing synthesis and organizing of ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships
- Coursework emphasizing the making of judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods
- Coursework emphasizing application of theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
- Working harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations
- Campus environment emphasizing time studying and on academic work

<sup>a</sup> Weighted by gender, enrollment status, and institutional size.

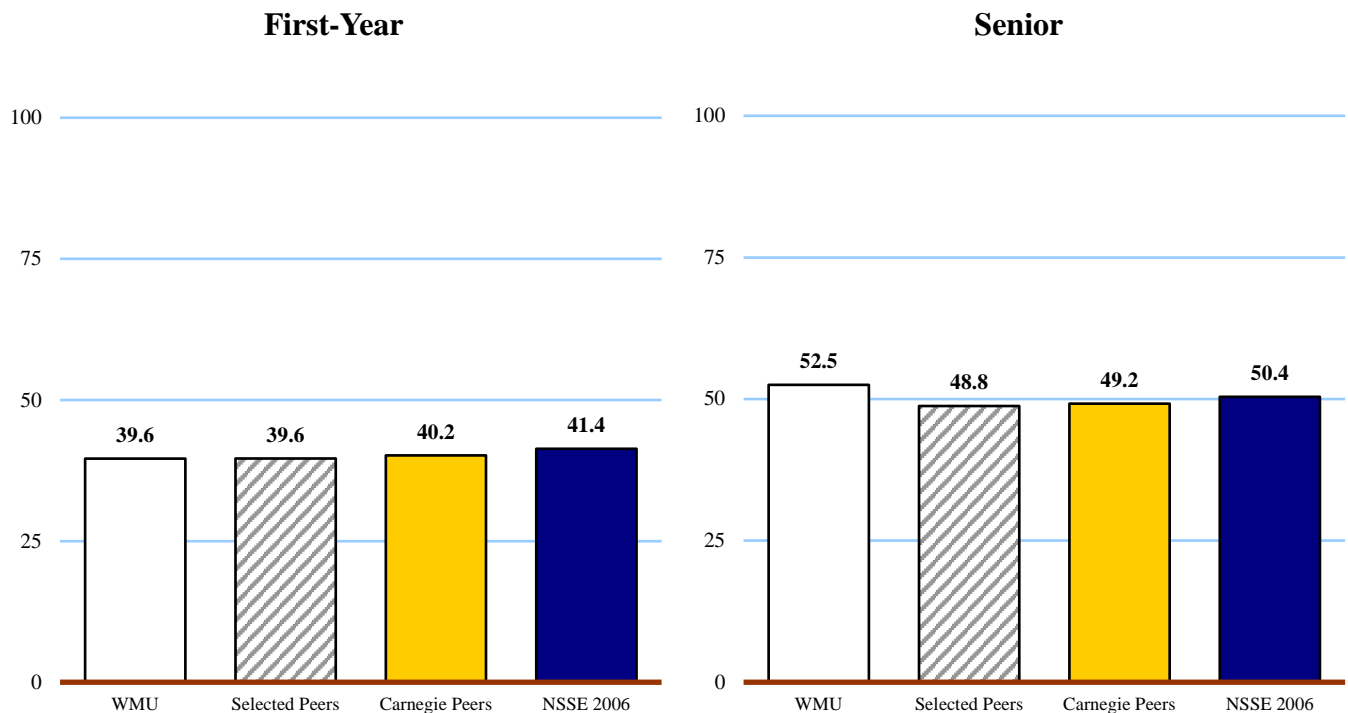
<sup>b</sup> \* p<.05 \*\* p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001 (2-tailed).

<sup>c</sup> Mean difference divided by comparison group standard deviation.

## Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL)

### Benchmark Comparisons

Class	WMU Mean <sup>a</sup>	Selected Peers			Carnegie Peers			NSSE 2006		
		Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>
First-Year	39.6	39.6			40.2			41.4	***	-.11
Senior	52.5	48.8	***	.22	49.2	***	.19	50.4	**	.13



### Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL) Items

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.

- Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
- Made a class presentation
- Worked with other students on projects during class
- Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments
- Tutored or taught other students
- Participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)

<sup>a</sup> Weighted by gender, enrollment status, and institutional size.

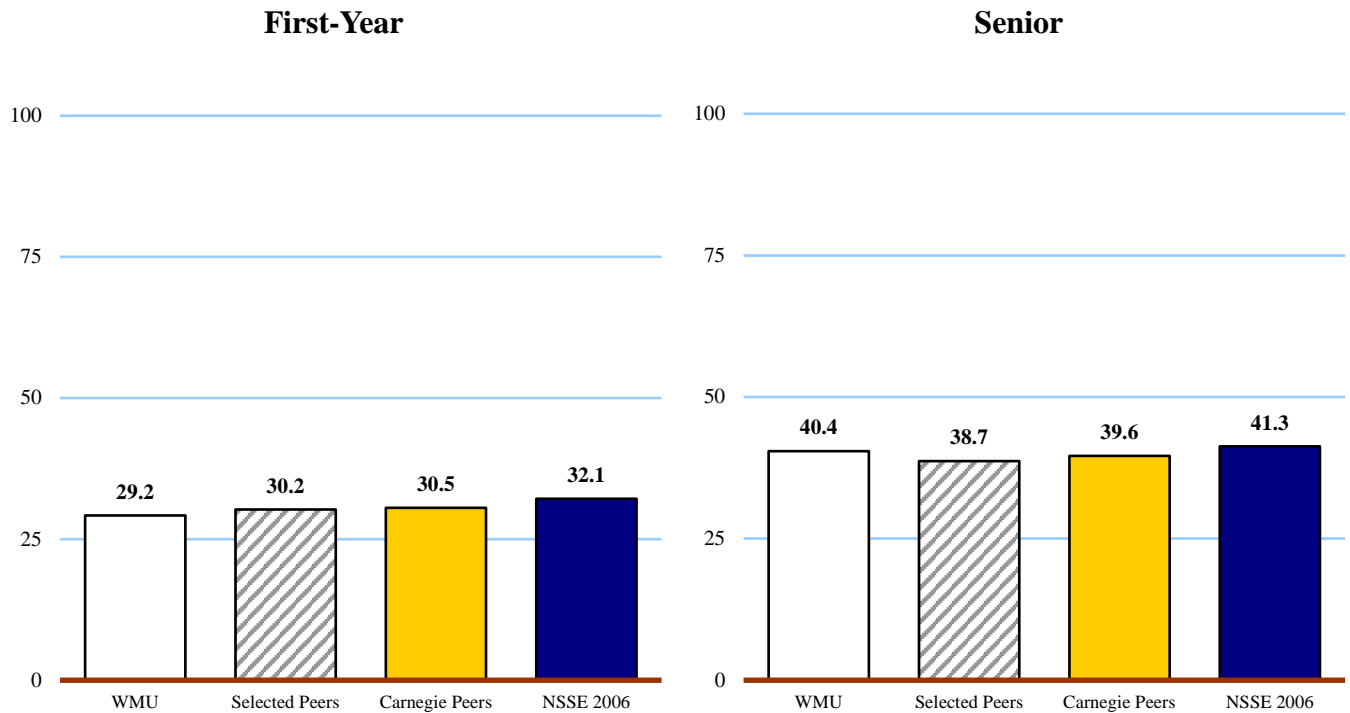
<sup>b</sup> \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$  (2-tailed).

<sup>c</sup> Mean difference divided by comparison group standard deviation.

## Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)

### Benchmark Comparisons

Class	WMU Mean <sup>a</sup>	Selected Peers			Carnegie Peers			NSSE 2006		
		Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>
First-Year	29.2	30.2			30.5	*	-.08	32.1	***	-.17
Senior	40.4	38.7	*	.08	39.6			41.3		



### Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI) Items

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.

- Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor
- Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class
- Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student-life activities, etc.)
- Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance
- Worked with a faculty member on a research project outside of course or program requirements

<sup>a</sup> Weighted by gender, enrollment status, and institutional size.

<sup>b</sup> \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$  (2-tailed).

<sup>c</sup> Mean difference divided by comparison group standard deviation.

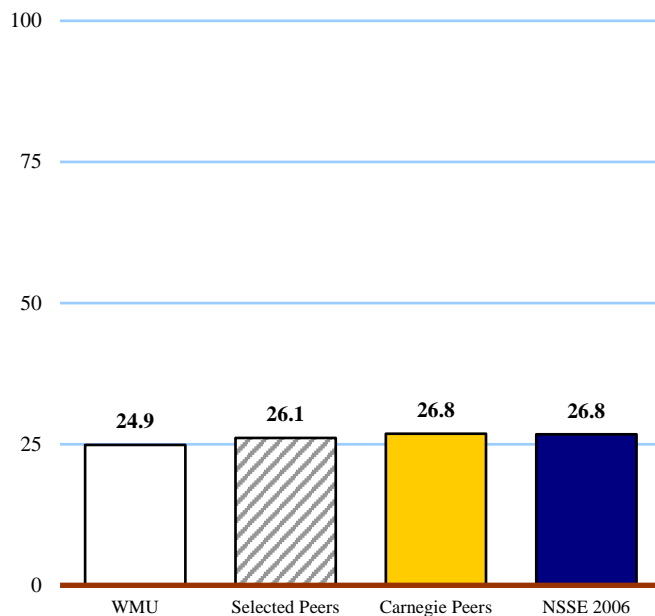
## Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE)

### Benchmark Comparisons

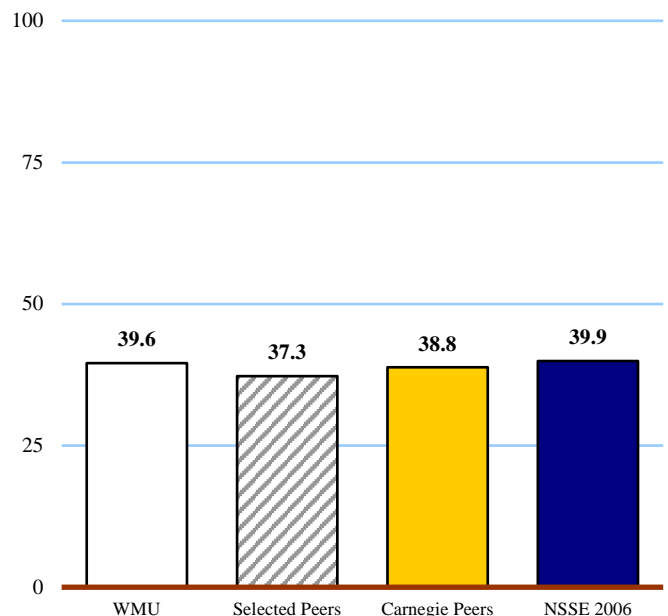
WMU compared with:

Class	WMU	Selected Peers			Carnegie Peers			NSSE 2006		
	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>
First-Year	24.9	26.1	**	-.10	26.8	***	-.15	26.8	***	-.14
Senior	39.6	37.3	**	.13	38.8			39.9		

#### First-Year



#### Senior



### Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE) Items

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.

- Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, publications, student government, sports, etc.)
- Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment
- Community service or volunteer work
- Foreign language coursework & study abroad
- Independent study or self-designed major
- Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.)
- Serious conversations with students of different religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values
- Serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity
- Using electronic technology to discuss or complete an assignment
- Campus environment encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds
- Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together

<sup>a</sup> Weighted by gender, enrollment status, and institutional size.

<sup>b</sup> \* p<.05 \*\* p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001 (2-tailed).

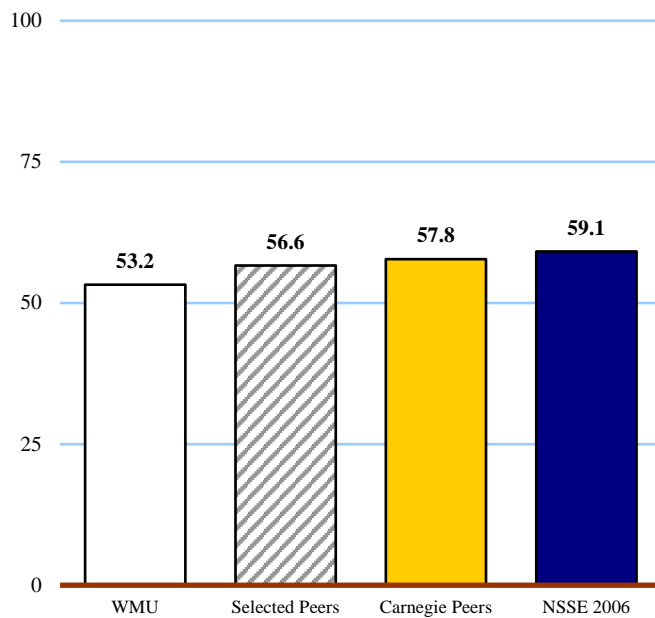
<sup>c</sup> Mean difference divided by comparison group standard deviation.

## Supportive Campus Environment (SCE)

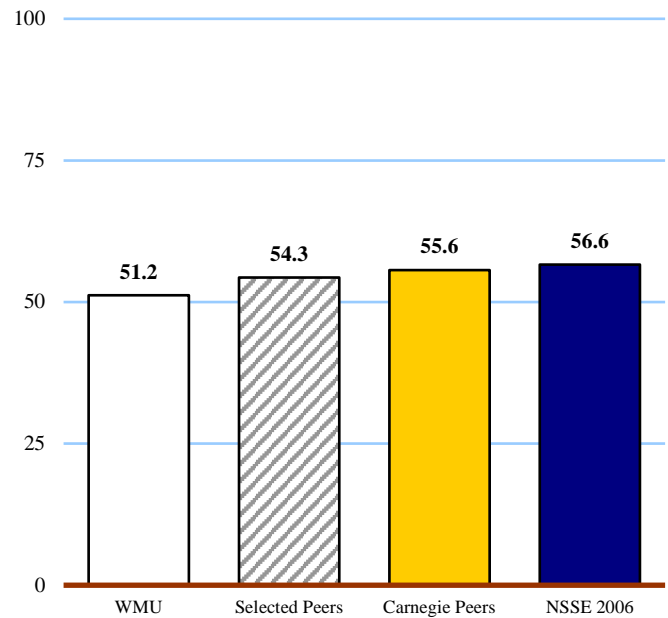
### Benchmark Comparisons

Class	WMU Mean <sup>a</sup>	WMU compared with:								
		Selected Peers			Carnegie Peers			NSSE 2006		
		Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect Size <sup>c</sup>
First-Year	53.2	56.6	***	-.19	57.8	***	-.25	59.1	***	-.32
Senior	51.2	54.3	***	-.16	55.6	***	-.23	56.6	***	-.29

#### First-Year



#### Senior



### Supportive Campus Environment (SCE) Items

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.

- Campus environment provides the support you need to help you succeed academically
- Campus environment helps you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
- Campus environment provides the support you need to thrive socially
- Quality of relationships with other students
- Quality of relationships with faculty members
- Quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices

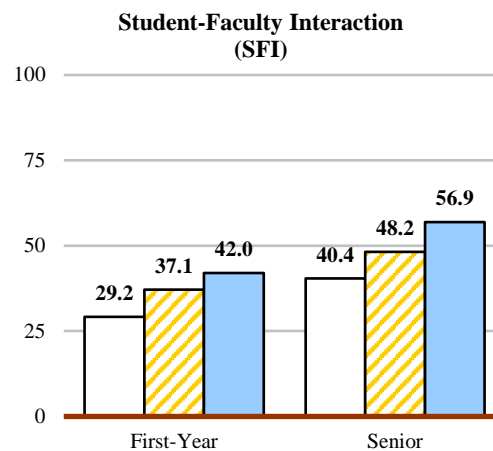
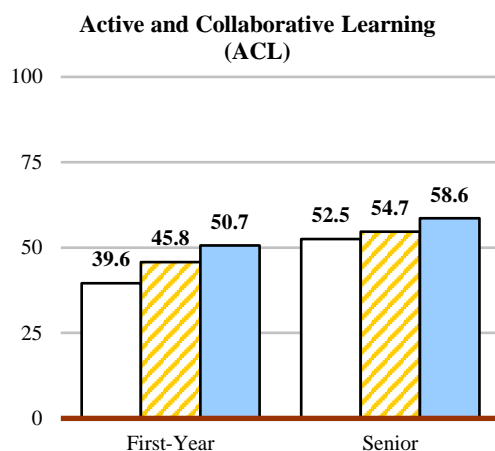
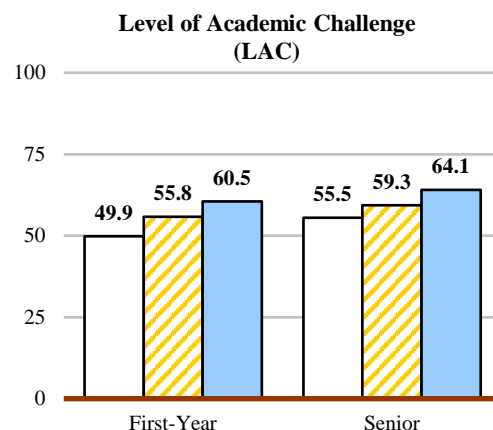
<sup>a</sup> Weighted by gender, enrollment status, and institutional size.

<sup>b</sup> \* p<.05 \*\* p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001 (2-tailed).

<sup>c</sup> Mean difference divided by comparison group standard deviation.

*WMU compared with*

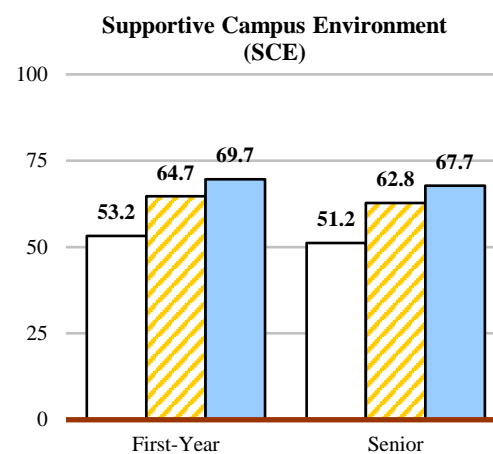
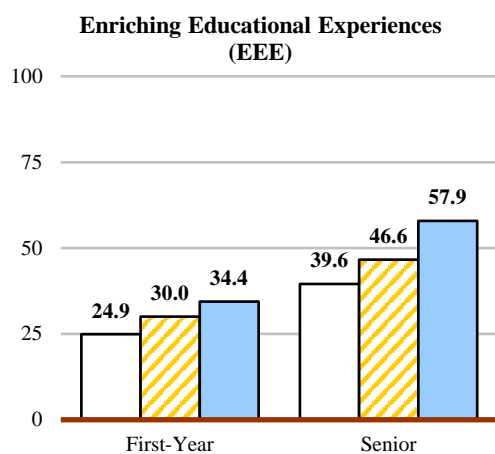
		WMU Mean <sup>a</sup>	NSSE 2006 Top 50%			NSSE 2006 Top 10%		
			Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect size <sup>c</sup>	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>b</sup>	Effect size <sup>c</sup>
First-Year	LAC	49.9	55.8	***	-.46	60.5	***	-.87
	ACL	39.6	45.8	***	-.39	50.7	***	-.69
	SFI	29.2	37.1	***	-.44	42.0	***	-.66
	EEE	24.9	30.0	***	-.40	34.4	***	-.74
	SCE	53.2	64.7	***	-.64	69.7	***	-.93
Senior	LAC	55.5	59.3	***	-.28	64.1	***	-.68
	ACL	52.5	54.7	**	-.13	58.6	***	-.37
	SFI	40.4	48.2	***	-.36	56.9	***	-.76
	EEE	39.6	46.6	***	-.40	57.9	***	-1.15
	SCE	51.2	62.8	***	-.63	67.7	***	-.91



### Legend

- WMU
- Top 50%
- Top 10%

This display compares your students with those attending schools that scored in the top 50% and top 10% of all NSSE 2006 U.S. institutions on the benchmark.



<sup>a</sup> Weighted by gender, enrollment status, and institutional size.

<sup>b</sup> \* p<.05 \*\* p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001 (2-tailed).

<sup>c</sup> Mean difference divided by comparison group standard deviation.

***First-Year Students***

Reference Group Comparison Statistics														
Mean Statistics					Distribution Statistics					Reference Group Comparison Statistics				
N		Mean	SD	SE	Percentiles					Mean Diff.	SE	Sig.	Effect size	
					5	25	50	75	95					
LEVEL OF ACADEMIC CHALLENGE (LAC)														
WMU	951	49.9	13.1	.4	29	41	49	58	72					
Selected Peers	15,833	50.1	13.3	.1	29	41	50	59	72	-.2	.4	.612	-.02	
Carnegie Peers	19,822	51.2	13.3	.1	30	42	51	60	73	-1.3	.4	.003	-.10	
NSSE 2006	119,778	51.8	13.4	.0	30	43	52	61	74	-1.9	.4	.000	-.14	
Top 50%	38,554	55.8	12.9	.1	34	47	56	65	77	-5.9	.4	.000	-.46	
Top 10%	5,824	60.5	12.2	.2	40	52	60	69	80	-10.6	.5	.000	-.87	
ACTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING (ACL)														
WMU	1,057	39.6	16.2	.5	19	29	38	48	71					
Selected Peers	17,137	39.6	16.2	.1	14	29	38	48	67	.0	.5	.967	.00	
Carnegie Peers	21,392	40.2	16.1	.1	17	29	38	50	67	-.6	.5	.241	-.04	
NSSE 2006	129,868	41.4	16.0	.0	19	29	38	52	71	-1.7	.5	.000	-.11	
Top 50%	38,001	45.8	15.9	.1	24	33	43	57	75	-6.2	.5	.000	-.39	
Top 10%	5,004	50.7	16.0	.2	29	38	48	62	81	-11.1	.5	.000	-.69	
STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTION (SFI)														
WMU	957	29.2	16.9	.5	6	17	28	39	61					
Selected Peers	15,989	30.2	17.5	.1	6	17	28	39	67	-1.1	.6	.068	-.06	
Carnegie Peers	20,020	30.5	17.4	.1	6	17	28	39	67	-1.3	.6	.021	-.08	
NSSE 2006	121,071	32.1	17.6	.1	11	20	28	44	67	-3.0	.6	.000	-.17	
Top 50%	27,964	37.1	18.3	.1	11	22	33	50	72	-8.0	.6	.000	-.44	
Top 10%	3,887	42.0	19.4	.3	17	28	39	56	78	-12.8	.6	.000	-.66	
ENRICHING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES (EEE)														
WMU	938	24.9	12.8	.4	6	15	23	33	46					
Selected Peers	15,494	26.1	12.9	.1	8	17	25	33	49	-1.2	.4	.004	-.10	
Carnegie Peers	19,419	26.8	12.9	.1	8	17	26	35	50	-2.0	.4	.000	-.15	
NSSE 2006	117,108	26.8	13.0	.0	8	17	25	35	50	-1.9	.4	.000	-.14	
Top 50%	48,100	30.0	13.1	.1	11	21	29	38	52	-5.2	.4	.000	-.40	
Top 10%	6,485	34.4	12.9	.2	14	25	34	43	56	-9.5	.4	.000	-.74	
SUPPORTIVE CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT (SCE)														
WMU	911	53.2	17.2	.6	25	42	53	64	83					
Selected Peers	15,251	56.6	18.3	.1	25	44	56	69	86	-3.4	.6	.000	-.19	
Carnegie Peers	19,136	57.8	18.4	.1	28	44	58	69	89	-4.5	.6	.000	-.25	
NSSE 2006	115,243	59.1	18.5	.1	28	47	58	72	89	-5.9	.6	.000	-.32	
Top 50%	33,535	64.7	18.0	.1	33	53	64	78	94	-11.5	.6	.000	-.64	
Top 10%	5,852	69.7	17.7	.2	39	58	69	83	97	-16.4	.6	.000	-.93	

<sup>a</sup> All statistics weighted by gender, enrollment status, and institutional size. The N is weighted to show the correct degrees of freedom for the statistical tests.

**Seniors**

		Mean Statistics				Distribution Statistics					Reference Group Comparison Statistics			
N		Mean	SD	SE	Percentiles					Mean Diff.	SE	Sig.	Effect size	
					5	25	50	75	95					
LEVEL OF ACADEMIC CHALLENGE (LAC)														
WMU	567	55.5	14.4	.6	32	46	55	66	79					
Selected Peers	19,198	54.5	14.3	.1	31	45	55	64	78	1.0	.6	.087	.07	
Carnegie Peers	23,845	55.1	14.2	.1	32	45	55	65	78	.4	.6	.494	.03	
NSSE 2006	122,365	55.8	14.2	.0	32	46	56	66	79	-.3	.6	.641	-.02	
Top 50%	35,715	59.3	13.7	.1	36	50	60	69	81	-3.8	.6	.000	-.28	
Top 10%	4,245	64.1	12.6	.2	43	56	65	73	83	-8.6	.6	.000	-.68	
ACTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING (ACL)														
WMU	595	52.5	17.6	.7	24	38	52	67	86					
Selected Peers	20,033	48.8	17.3	.1	24	38	48	62	81	3.7	.7	.000	.22	
Carnegie Peers	24,834	49.2	17.2	.1	24	38	48	62	81	3.3	.7	.000	.19	
NSSE 2006	127,858	50.4	17.0	.0	24	38	48	62	81	2.1	.7	.002	.13	
Top 50%	35,608	54.7	16.7	.1	29	43	52	67	83	-2.2	.7	.002	-.13	
Top 10%	4,958	58.6	16.7	.2	33	48	57	71	86	-6.1	.7	.000	-.37	
STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTION (SFI)														
WMU	572	40.4	20.6	.9	11	28	39	56	80					
Selected Peers	19,338	38.7	20.6	.1	11	22	33	50	78	1.8	.9	.045	.08	
Carnegie Peers	23,997	39.6	20.8	.1	11	22	39	50	78	.8	.9	.346	.04	
NSSE 2006	123,303	41.3	20.8	.1	11	28	39	56	83	-.9	.9	.316	-.04	
Top 50%	28,536	48.2	21.3	.1	17	33	44	61	89	-7.8	.9	.000	-.36	
Top 10%	2,821	56.9	21.7	.4	22	39	56	72	94	-16.5	1.0	.000	-.76	
ENRICHING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES (EEE)														
WMU	554	39.6	16.2	.7	14	28	39	50	68					
Selected Peers	18,916	37.3	17.0	.1	11	25	36	48	67	2.3	.7	.002	.13	
Carnegie Peers	23,536	38.8	17.6	.1	11	25	37	50	69	.7	.7	.298	.04	
NSSE 2006	120,511	39.9	17.9	.1	12	26	39	52	71	-.4	.7	.600	-.02	
Top 50%	41,194	46.6	17.6	.1	17	34	47	59	76	-7.1	.7	.000	-.40	
Top 10%	3,828	57.9	16.0	.3	30	47	58	69	83	-18.3	.7	.000	-1.15	
SUPPORTIVE CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT (SCE)														
WMU	546	51.2	17.7	.8	25	39	50	64	83					
Selected Peers	18,711	54.3	19.0	.1	22	42	56	67	86	-3.1	.8	.000	-.16	
Carnegie Peers	23,275	55.6	19.3	.1	25	42	56	69	89	-4.4	.8	.000	-.23	
NSSE 2006	119,076	56.6	18.9	.1	25	44	56	69	89	-5.4	.8	.000	-.29	
Top 50%	33,171	62.8	18.3	.1	31	50	64	75	94	-11.6	.8	.000	-.63	
Top 10%	6,261	67.7	18.2	.2	36	56	69	81	97	-16.5	.8	.000	-.91	

<sup>a</sup> All statistics weighted by gender, enrollment status, and institutional size. The N is weighted to show the correct degrees of freedom for the statistical tests.