



Analysis of Results from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Central Connecticut State University, 2008

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Central Connecticut State University

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President

University Mission

Central Connecticut State University is a community of learners dedicated to teaching and to scholarship. We encourage the development and application of knowledge and ideas through research and outreach activities. We prepare students to be thoughtful, responsible and successful citizens.

Fulfilling the Mission

Central Connecticut State University is, above all else, about teaching students at the baccalaureate, master and doctoral levels consistent with our historical mission. Our research endeavors improve us as teachers and expose our students to methods of inquiry. The public service expected of all members of our community benefits our society—local and global—and builds our sense of citizenship.

We value the development of knowledge and its application in an environment of intellectual integrity and open discourse. We expect that members of the university will engage in activities ranging from basic research and the creation of original works, to helping individuals and organizations achieve success in purely practical endeavors. All these activities enrich our community of learners.

As a public university, we receive support from the state of Connecticut. We have three designated Centers of Excellence and many nationally accredited programs. We take very seriously our commitment to provide access to higher education for all citizens in this state who can benefit from our offerings. Our high expectations for ourselves contribute to the fine quality and continuous improvement of our undergraduate and graduate programs. We believe that quality and access are compatible and simultaneously achievable; our objective is to provide the support needed for our students to reach their full potential.

We also believe that higher education should promote the personal and social growth of our students, as well as their intellectual achievement and professional competence. We provide various opportunities for students to engage in activities or to join organizations and clubs where they develop leadership and other social skills. We foster a welcoming environment in which all members of our diverse community receive encouragement, feel safe, and acquire self-confidence.

Vision

Central Connecticut State University aspires to:

- be the premier public comprehensive university in Connecticut, with teaching as its primary focus, enhanced by the dynamic scholarship of its faculty;
- be highly regarded by its many constituents;
- be a significant resource contributing to the cultural and economic development of Connecticut;
- be global in its perspective and outreach; and
- be widely respected as a university dedicated to innovative, activity-based, life-long, and learner-centered higher education.

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Executive Summary

This report provides an overview and analysis of results for Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) administered in Spring 2008. Relevant comparisons to previous administrations of this survey are provided. CCSU's response rate on the survey rose from 14% in 2007 to 23% in 2008, with the total number of respondents increasing from 444 in 2007 to 558 in 2008. The profile of respondents was reasonably representative of the CCSU undergraduate population.

Major findings from the survey results include:

- On NSSE's five benchmarks for engagement, responses of CCSU students were highest on the Student-Faculty Interaction index and lowest on the benchmark for Supportive Campus Environment. National percentiles for CCSU students were:

First-Year Students	Percentile	Seniors	Percentile
Student-Faculty Interaction	50	Student-Faculty Interaction	40
Enriching Educational Experiences	45	Enriching Educational Experiences	40
Level of Academic Challenge	40	Level of Academic Challenge	35
Active and Collaborative Learning	35	Active and Collaborative Learning	35
Supportive Campus Environment	30	Supportive Campus Environment	25

- Satisfaction with the overall educational experience at CCSU for first-year students was comparable with students at other CSU institutions but rated less highly than by first-year students at public Carnegie Master's-L institutions and all institutions participating in NSSE. CCSU first-year female students reported higher levels of satisfaction than did men. CCSU seniors reported lower level of satisfaction than did seniors in all comparison groups, and CCSU male seniors reported higher levels of satisfaction than did women. Factors most related to satisfaction at CCSU were:
 - Institutional contribution to educational and personal growth
 - Providing support to thrive academically
 - Quality of relationships with faculty members
- Perceptions of advising quality among first-year students were most related to institutional emphasis on providing the support needed to thrive academically and talking with a faculty member or advisor about career plans. Among seniors, perceptions of advising quality were most related to the quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices as well as talking with a faculty member or advisor about career plans.
- CCSU students indicated they spent slightly less time preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities) than other students nationwide and much more time working off-campus.

- Percent of students spending **10 hours a week or less preparing for class**:
 - CCSU first-year students: 55%, first-year students nationwide: 43%
 - CCSU seniors: 56%, seniors nationwide: 43%

- Percent of students **working for pay off campus for 30 hours a week or more**:
 - CCSU first-year students: 6%, first-year students nationwide: 8%
 - CCSU seniors: 29%, seniors nationwide: 19%

- Time working for pay off-campus was unrelated to the amount of time that first-year students spent studying and only slightly related to the amount of time that seniors spent studying.

- About seven out of ten (69%) of first-year students and two-thirds (66%) of seniors indicated they had read 10 or fewer assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings since the beginning of the academic year. These figures are comparable to freshmen and seniors nationwide.

- Women reported higher levels of engagement than did men across a range of activities, including, interaction with instructors, volunteer work, and most importantly on time spent studying.

- CCSU students reported writing about the same number of papers during the academic year as did their counterparts across the U.S. Among both groups, short written assignments appear to be the norm.

- Fewer CCSU first-year students indicated the University contributed significantly to their general education than did freshmen nationwide, but responses of seniors on this item were comparable to seniors at other institutions:
 - Students reporting the institution contributed “very much” or “quite a bit” in acquiring a broad general education:
 - 79% – CCSU first-year students
78% – first-year students at other CSU institutions
83% – first-year students nationwide
 - 84% – CCSU seniors
83% – seniors at other CSU institutions
84% – seniors nationwide

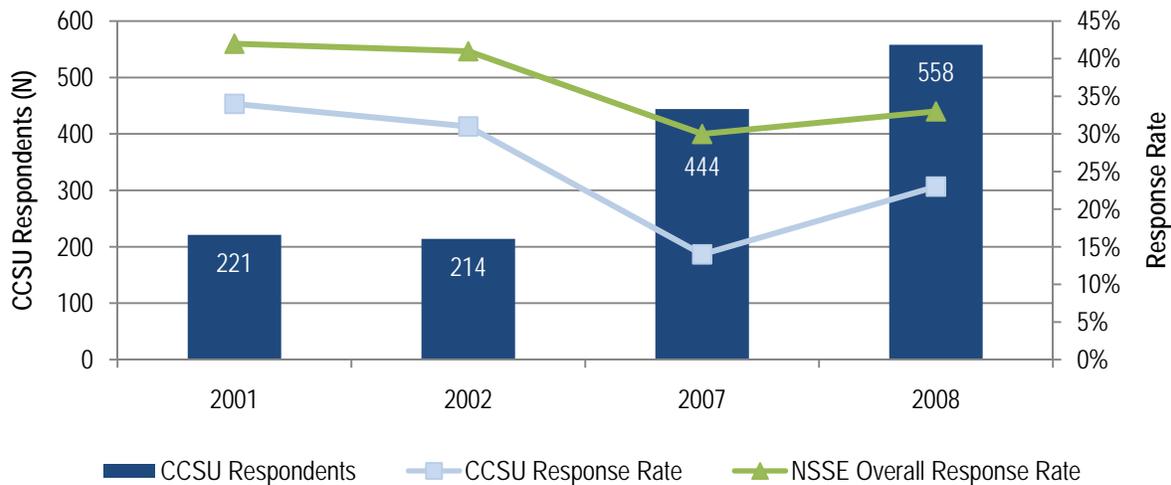
Methodology

NSSE is conducted by the University of Indiana at Bloomington, and was first administered in 1998. Initial funding for the project was provided by the Pew Charitable Trusts, and the survey is now supported by fees from participating institutions. Grants from the Lumina Foundation for Education and the Center for Inquiry in the Liberal Arts at Wabash College support additional research (NSSE, 2007). The survey gathers information about student activity and participation in programs that benefit their educational and personal development. A basic premise of the survey is that how students spend their time and energy on matters related to the educational experience reflects their level of engagement and learning. In this respect, the survey is a instrument that measures behavioral outcomes from which some cognitive outcomes may be inferred (Kuh, 2003).

Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) was one of 763 institutions nationwide to participate in the 2008 administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Nationwide, approximately 1.4 million first-year students and seniors were selected to participate in the survey, and just under 500,000 responded to the survey for a response rate of about 33%. On the CCSU campus, a total of 2,443 first-year students and seniors were selected for participation in NSSE, with 297 first-year students and 261 seniors responding to the survey for as response rate of 23%. Surveys were administered via web-only method, which entails a series of invitation emails to selected participants, with no paper survey administration. To encourage students to respond, all students who completed the survey were entered into a drawing for two iPhones and contacted several times before and during the survey administration roughly following the tailored-design method (Dillman, 2000). This additional incentive increased the number of respondents from 424 in 2007 (14% response rate) to 558 in 2008 (23% response rate), representing a net decline in per survey cost.

The profile of respondents by race or ethnicity roughly corresponded to the profile of the campus at-large. Excluding students who chose not to report their race or ethnicity, 78% of CCSU first-year student respondents and 72% of CCSU senior respondents reported their race or ethnicity as white compared to 83% for CCSU overall (because students whose race or ethnicity is unknown are not included in these proportions, percentages provided here will not match those listed in Table 1). Among CCSU's NSSE respondents, 4% of first-year students and 7% of seniors indicated their race or ethnicity as African American or Black, compared to 8% of the campus. Students who indicated they were of Hispanic (Mexican/Mexican American, Puerto Rican, or other Hispanic or Latino) also appear proportionally represented in the sample, although the mismatch between race/ethnicity categories used by NSSE and how race and ethnicity data are collected at CCSU to comply with reporting to the Department of Education makes these data difficult to compare precisely. Women were over-represented in the NSSE sample nationwide and at CCSU, likely because women tend to be more likely than men to respond to surveys (Tourangeau, Ripps, & Rasinski, 2000). Full-time students at CCSU were over-represented in the survey population.

Fig 1. Respondents and Response Rate



Following administration of the survey, participants' responses were processed by NSSE, including determination of means by question, generation of benchmark scores on five indices of engagement, and comparisons to relevant groups. From the results of a factor analysis, NSSE has constructed five indices for benchmarks:

- Level of Academic Challenge
- Active and Collaborative Learning
- Student-Faculty Interaction
- Enriching Educational Activities
- Supportive Campus Environment

Based on a comprehensive study of the psychometrics of the survey, NSSE has determined that these benchmarks are both reliable and stable over time (Kuh, 2003).

In addition to summarized results, a data file in SPSS format was provided to CCSU. These results were received in August 2008. Comparison groups for CCSU were (1) the other three universities in the Connecticut State System, (2) Carnegie peers, consisting of the 140 other participating institutions that shared the 2005 Basic Carnegie Classification of Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs), and (3) all institutions participating in NSSE in 2008. These results include raw frequencies, means, standard deviations, t-test comparisons with relevant groups, and effect sizes (Cohen's *d*) to compare differences in units of standard deviation. In some instances in this report, Cohen's *d* is calculated as a measure of difference with the CCSU population. In general, an effect size of 0.20-0.49 is considered small, 0.50-0.79 is considered medium, and 0.80 and larger is considered large (Cohen, 1992).

Importantly, item and benchmark comparisons are weighted to control for gender, full-time/part-time status, and institutional size. This statistical weighting allows for ready comparison with national benchmarks without significant concern that the profile of CCSU students – especially enrollment status as full-time or part-time students – may skew the survey results.

Table 1. NSSE 2008 CCSU Respondent Characteristics

	CCSU NSSE Participants		CCSU Overall (Spring 2008)		Carnegie Peers		NSSE 2008	
	FY	SR	FY	SR	FY	SR	FY	SR
Response Rate^a								
Overall	23%		--		28%		33%	
By class	21%	25%	--	--	25%	30%	31%	35%
NSSE sample size ^b	1,390	1,053	--	--	137,600	141,835	588,291	562,410
Sampling Error^c								
Overall	4.5%		--		0.3%		0.1%	
By class	5.0%	5.5%	--	--	0.5%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%
Number of respondents ^b	297	261	--	--	37,737	43,105	182,903	194,651
Total population	1,390	1,588	--	--	188,066	204,149	767,623	753,587
Student Characteristics^d								
<i>Mode of Completion</i>								
Paper	0%	0%	--	--	2%	2%	2%	2%
Web	100%	100%	--	--	98%	98%	98%	97%
<i>Class Level^e</i>	53%	47%	21%	35%	45%	55%	49%	51%
<i>Enrollment Status^e</i>								
Full-time	98%	83%	81%	68%	95%	82%	95%	85%
Less than full-time	2%	17%	19%	32%	5%	18%	5%	15%
<i>Gender^e</i>								
Female	60%	64%	45%	50%	66%	66%	64%	64%
Male	40%	36%	55%	50%	34%	34%	36%	36%
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>								
Am. Indian/Native American	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Asian/Asian Am./Pacific Isl.	2%	4%	3%	4%	7%	6%	6%	5%
Black/African American	4%	7%	9%	8%	7%	6%	7%	7%
White (non-Hispanic)	78%	72%	75%	73%	68%	68%	70%	71%
Mexican/Mexican American	0%	0%			4%	4%	2%	3%
Puerto Rican	3%	3%			1%	1%	1%	1%
Other Hispanic or Latino	2%	2%	5% ^f	6% ^f	3%	3%	3%	3%
Multiracial	2%	2%			3%	2%	3%	2%
Other	2%	1%			2%	2%	2%	1%
I prefer not to respond	6%	8%	8%	8%	6%	7%	6%	7%
<i>International Student</i>	4%	18%	2%	1%	5%	4%	5%	5%
<i>Place of Residence</i>								
On-campus	59%	18%	44%	7%	59%	9%	72%	21%
Off-campus	41%	82%	56%	93%	41%	91%	28%	79%
<i>Transfer Status</i>								
Transfer students	3%	54%	18%	53%	9%	43%	9%	41%
<i>Age</i>								
Non-traditional (24 or older)	2%	33%	8%	35%	6%	41%	6%	32%
Traditional (less than 24)	98%	67%	92%	65%	94%	59%	94%	68%

^a Response rate (number of respondents divided by sample size) is adjusted for non-deliverable mailing addresses, students for whom contact information was not available, and other students who were sampled yet unavailable during the survey administration.

^b This report is based on information from all randomly selected students for both your institution and your comparison institutions. Targeted and locally administered oversamples (i.e., non-randomly selected students) are not included in this report.

^c Sampling error is an estimate of the margin by which the *true* score for your institution on a given item could differ from the reported score. To interpret the sampling error, assume that 60% of your students reply "very often" to a particular item. If the sampling error is +/-5%, then the true population value is most likely between 55% and 65%.

^d Percent of total respondents within each category. These results are *not* weighted.

^e Institution-reported data. This information was used to weight your Mean Comparisons, Frequency Distributions, and Benchmark Comparisons reports.

^f CCSU data uses IPEDS definitions and only includes the category "Hispanic" for ethnicity and "Unknown" for non-respondents.

Benchmarks for Engagement

Because differences in engagement as measured on NSSE vary much more among students within an institution than do differences among institutions, NSSE no longer calculates national percentiles for an institution's benchmark indices. It is possible, however, to estimate CCSU's position among all participating institutions based on additional data provided by NSSE.

For the 2008 administration of the survey, first-year students were in the 50th percentile for Student-Faculty Interaction, the 45th percentile for Enriching Educational Experiences, the 40th percentile for Academic Challenge, the 35th percentile for Active and Collaborative Learning, and the 30th percentile for Supportive Campus Environment. Seniors at CCSU were in 40th percentile for Enriching Educational Experiences and Student-Faculty Interactions, the 35th percentile in the areas of Academic Challenge and Active and Collaborative Learning, and in the 25th percentile for Supportive Campus Environment.

Fig. 2 Est. Nat'l Percentile for CCSU First-Year Students on NSSE Engagement Indices

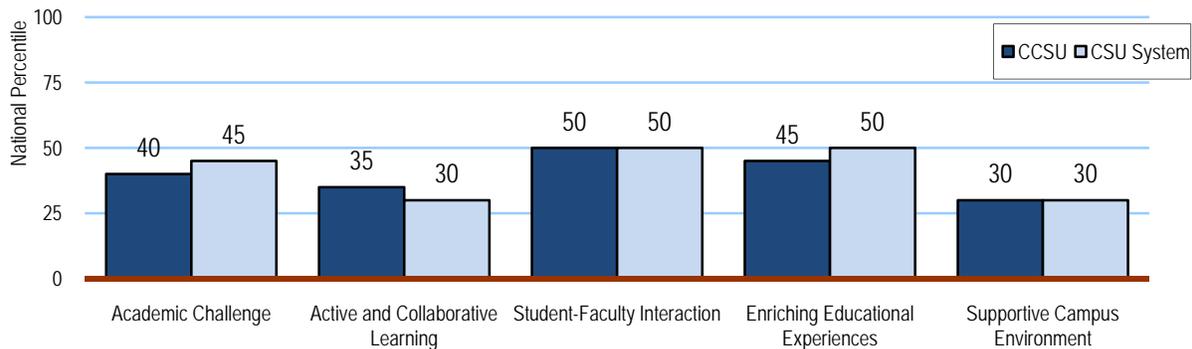
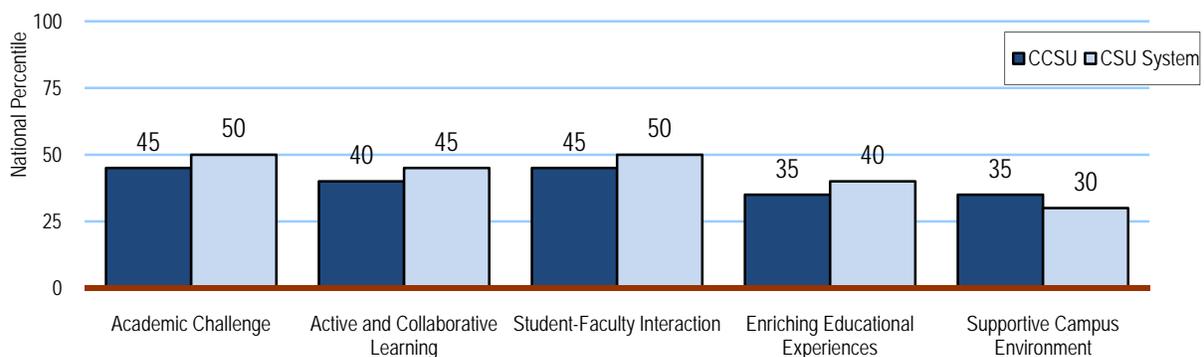


Fig. 3 Est. Nat'l Percentile for CCSU Seniors on NSSE Engagement Indices



From 2007 to 2008, first-year students at CCSU showed large improvements in most areas; seniors declined slightly on most benchmarks. In almost all areas, the benchmark indices for both first-year students and seniors were lower than those for students attending other institutions in the Connecticut State University System.

While the demographic profile of CCSU respondents was generally representative of the University population at-large, the overall response rate of 23% was somewhat lower than the national response rate of 33%, but reasonably comparable to the CSU System response rate of 24%. Respondents from CCSU also reported spending more time working off-campus than did students on other CSU campuses and other institutions participating in the NSSE.

These results may appear lackluster in terms of CCSU student engagement, but it is important to place them in the context of both the distribution of results as well as the results obtained over time. First, both percentile scores and item ratings are reasonably consistent with responses received from CCSU freshmen who participated in NSSE in previous years, so these percentile institutional rankings do not represent a significant change.

Second, NSSE's justification for no longer providing institutional percentile scores on benchmark indices is because inter-institutional variation (differences among participating institutions) is much smaller than intra-institutional variation (differences among respondents in a particular institution). On a practical level, this means that students who are highly engaged at their educational experience at CCSU are not much different from highly engaged students at the institutions with the highest benchmark scores (Hosch, 2007).

What this means is that most differences among students at various institutions are observed at the high and low ends of the distribution in scores on NSSE Benchmark indices. The students in the middle of the distributions are by and large engaged in their educational experiences at their various institutions at similar levels. It also means that even just modest increases in activities related to educational engagement so long as they affect all students at CCSU could have a significant impact on CCSU's relative position among institutions.

Overall Satisfaction

Satisfaction with the overall educational experience at CCSU for first-year students was comparable with students at other CSU institutions but rated less highly than first-year students at public Carnegie Master's-L institutions and all institutions participating in NSSE. Among seniors, satisfaction with the overall educational experience was lower than seniors at all three comparison groups.

Some differences in satisfaction were observed by gender, but differences in satisfaction by race were not large enough to rise to the level of statistical significance. First-year women were slightly more satisfied than men; and senior men were slightly more satisfied than women. Among first-year students, 24% of women rated their entire educational experience at CCSU as excellent, and 60% rated it as good, compared to 26% of men who rated their entire educational experience as excellent and 52% who rated it as good. Among seniors, just 14% of women rated their overall educational experience as excellent, and 60% rated it as good, compared to 27% of men who rated their entire educational experience as excellent and 59% who rated it as good.

Table 2. Satisfaction with Educational Experience by Gender and Race/Ethnicity

	How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?									
	First-Year Students					Seniors				
	N	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	N	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Men										
African American/Black	6	0%	0%	83%	17%	9	0%	11%	33%	56%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3	0%	67%	33%	0%	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Caucasian/White	72	1%	21%	50%	28%	54	4%	9%	61%	26%
Hispanic	6	0%	33%	67%	0%	4	0%	25%	50%	25%
Unknown	7	14%	0%	43%	43%	10	10%	10%	70%	10%
Total	94	2%	20%	52%	26%	78	4%	10%	59%	27%
Women										
African American/Black	10	0%	20%	50%	30%	7	14%	29%	57%	0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2	0%	0%	100%	0%	8	13%	13%	63%	13%
Caucasian/White	116	3%	11%	62%	24%	102	5%	19%	61%	16%
Hispanic	7	0%	14%	57%	29%	11	0%	18%	64%	18%
Unknown	6	17%	50%	17%	17%	17	12%	24%	53%	12%
Total	141	3%	13%	60%	24%	145	6%	19%	60%	14%

An examination of NSSE items related to overall satisfaction was also performed using bivariate correlations. Overall results for first-year students indicated that institutional contribution to personal growth and development in a range of areas (most prominently, speaking clearly and effectively, solving complex real-world problems, and analyzing quantitative problems) was most significantly related to satisfaction with the overall educational experience ($R^2 = 0.225$ to 0.251). Quality of relationships with faculty members ($R^2 = 0.222$) as well as institutional emphases on providing the support needed to thrive academically ($R^2 = 0.222$) and providing the support needed to thrive socially ($R^2 = 0.197$) were also significantly related to satisfaction with the overall educational experience among first year students. Similar items were also related to satisfaction reported by seniors but the relationships were stronger. Institutional contribution to acquiring a broad general education ($R^2 = 0.333$), thinking critically and analytically ($R^2 = 0.329$), and analyzing quantitative problems ($R^2 = 0.261$). Providing the support needed to thrive academically ($R^2 = 0.290$) and quality of relationships with faculty members ($R^2 = 0.256$) were also highly related to satisfaction with the overall educational experience.

Table 3. Top 20 NSSE Items Correlated with Overall Satisfaction (First-Year Students)

Item	Pearson's R	Pearson's R ²
Institutional contribution: Speaking clearly and effectively	0.501	0.251
Institutional contribution: Solving complex real-world problems	0.494	0.244
Institutional contribution: Analyzing quantitative problems	0.474	0.225
Quality: Your relationships with faculty members	0.472	0.222
Institutional emphasis: Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically	0.471	0.222
Institutional contribution: Thinking critically and analytically	0.454	0.206
Institutional emphasis: Providing the support you need to thrive socially	0.443	0.197
Institutional emphasis: Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	0.442	0.195
Institutional contribution: Working effectively with others	0.437	0.191
Quality: Your relationships with administrative personnel and offices	0.429	0.184
Coursework emphasized: 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	0.425	0.181
Institutional contribution: Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	0.425	0.181
Institutional contribution: Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	0.423	0.179
Quality: Your relationships with other students	0.419	0.175
Institutional contribution: Acquiring a broad general education	0.416	0.173
Institutional contribution: Understanding yourself	0.402	0.162
Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance	0.401	0.161
Institutional contribution: Writing clearly and effectively	0.392	0.154
Institutional contribution: Developing a personal code of values and ethics	0.375	0.141
Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	0.366	0.134

Analysis EXCLUDES the two other overall satisfaction items: would you come to CCSU again, and rate the quality of advising.

Table 4. Top 20 NSSE Items Correlated with Overall Satisfaction (Seniors)

Item	Pearson's R	Pearson's R ²
Institutional contribution: Acquiring a broad general education	0.577	0.333
Institutional contribution: Thinking critically and analytically	0.573	0.329
Institutional emphasis: Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically	0.538	0.290
Institutional contribution: Analyzing quantitative problems	0.511	0.261
Quality: Your relationships with faculty members	0.506	0.256
Institutional contribution: Working effectively with others	0.496	0.246
Institutional contribution: Speaking clearly and effectively	0.471	0.222
Institutional contribution: Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	0.454	0.206
Institutional contribution: Writing clearly and effectively	0.453	0.205
Quality: Your relationships with administrative personnel and offices	0.449	0.202
Institutional contribution: Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	0.445	0.198
Institutional contribution: Solving complex real-world problems	0.442	0.195
Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance	0.440	0.194
Institutional emphasis: Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	0.419	0.175
Institutional contribution: Developing a personal code of values and ethics	0.391	0.153
Coursework emphasized: SYNTHESIZING and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships	0.389	0.151
Institutional emphasis: Providing the support you need to thrive socially	0.389	0.151
Quality: Your relationships with other students	0.376	0.142
Institutional contribution: Using computing and information technology	0.374	0.140
Institutional contribution: Learning effectively on your own	0.371	0.137

Analysis EXCLUDES the two other overall satisfaction items: would you come to CCSU again, and rate the quality of advising.

Perception of Advising

Perceptions of advising quality were influenced by slightly different factors than satisfaction with the overall educational experience. Using a linear regression with stepwise entry, all NSSE items (excluding the two items about overall satisfaction) were regressed onto the survey item asking respondents to evaluate the quality of academic advising received at the institution.

For first-year students, the most important factor was an emphasis on providing the support needed to succeed academically, which alone could explain 22% of variation in perception of advising quality. Talking about career plans with a faculty member or advisor accounted for another 10%. Other predictive factors accounting for an addition 12% of variation were quality of relationships with faculty members, examining strengths or weaknesses of own views on a topic (negatively correlated), institutional contribution toward learning effectively on one's own, institutional contribution toward thinking critically and analytically, and time spent working for pay off-campus (negatively correlated). The entire model accounted for just under half (46.6%) of variation in perceptions of advising quality.

Table 5. Factors Related to Perception of Advising Quality - First-Year Students

Dependent Variable: Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your institution?

NSSE Items Related to Dependent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	SE	Beta		
(Constant)	0.544	0.276		1.969	0.051
Institutional emphasis: Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically	0.198	0.075	0.182	2.644	0.009
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	0.328	0.065	0.312	5.079	0.000
Quality: Your relationships with faculty members	0.132	0.044	0.194	3.002	0.003
Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue	-0.270	0.060	-0.262	-4.493	0.000
Institutional contribution: Learning effectively on your own	0.202	0.066	0.199	3.061	0.003
Institutional contribution: Thinking critically and analytically	0.192	0.080	0.161	2.392	0.018
Hours per 7-day week spent working for pay OFF CAMPUS	-0.053	0.023	-0.132	-2.295	0.023

Adjusted R² = 0.466 (df=173) in linear regression model with stepwise entry of all NSSE items, which means it explains 46.6% of variation. The first item alone accounts for 22.3% of variation in perception of advising quality; the entry of the second item improves model power by 10%; and the entry of the other five items improve model power by an additional 12.2%

For seniors, quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices was the most predictive factor associated with a high rating of advising quality, accounting alone for almost 18% of variation. Entry into the model of four other items added to the model's power, accounting for an addition 12.5% of variation. These items were talking about career plans with a faculty member or advisor, using an electronic medium (listserv, chat group, Internet, instant messaging, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment (negatively correlated), institutional contribution to using computing and information technology, and discussing ideas from readings or classes with faculty members outside of class.

Table 6. Factors Related to Perception of Advising Quality - Seniors

Dependent Variable: Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your institution?					
NSSE Items Related to Dependent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	SE	Beta		
(Constant)	0.923	0.286		3.232	0.001
Quality: Your relationships with administrative personnel and offices	0.184	0.038	0.332	4.877	0.000
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	0.177	0.079	0.178	2.228	0.027
Used an electronic medium (listserv, chat group, Internet, instant messaging, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment	-0.220	0.066	-0.226	-3.319	0.001
Institutional contribution: Using computing and information technology	0.226	0.082	0.192	2.749	0.007
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	0.169	0.084	0.156	2.020	0.045

Adjusted R² = 0.301 (df=168) in linear regression model with stepwise entry of all NSSE items, which means it explains about 30% of variation. The first item alone accounts for 17.6% of variation in perception of advising quality; the entry of the other 4 items improve model power by an additional 12.5%

Time Usage

CCSU students indicated they spent considerably less time preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities) than other students nationwide and much more time working off-campus. Differences in the amount of time spent preparing for class were statistically significant for both first year students and seniors ($p < 0.001$). CCSU seniors also reported spending less time on their academic work than did their peers nationwide, although these differences were not statistically significant after controlling for full-time and part-time enrollment status (see Fig. 4 and 5).

Fig. 4. Hours Per 7-Day Week Spent on Academic Work Outside Of Class: First Year Students

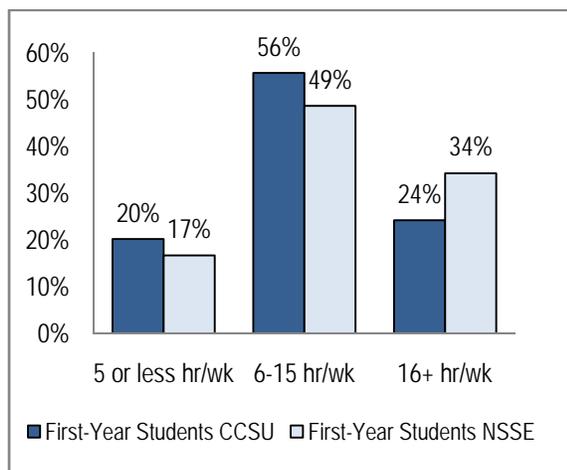
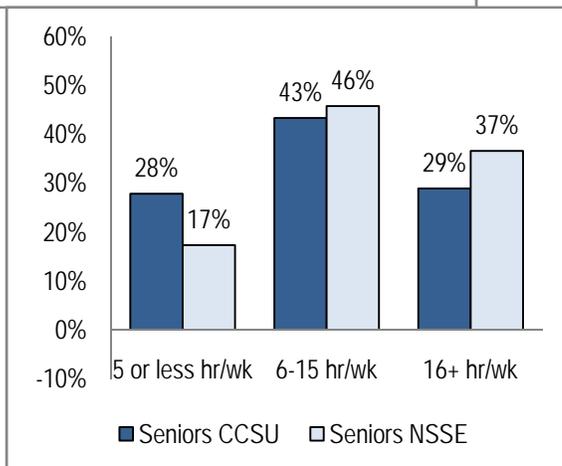


Fig. 5. Hours Per 7-Day Week Spent on Academic Work Outside Of Class: Seniors



CCSU students indicated they spent considerably less time preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities) than other students nationwide. Approximately a fifth of first-year students (20%) at CCSU spent 5 hours or less time preparing for class compared to about 3 percentage points lower for first-year students at other institutions (17%). Only about a quarter of first-year students (24%) study over 16 hours a week, compared to about a third of reported first-year students nationwide

(34%). Over half (56%) of CCSU first-year students prepared 6-15 hours per week for class which is more than the national percent of just under a half (49%)

Just over a quarter (28%) of seniors attending CCSU spent 5 hours or less time a week preparing for class which is considerably less to just under a fifth (17%) of seniors nationwide. The norm for hours spent preparing class is between 6 and 15 hours per week with just about just over four out of ten (43%) of CCSU seniors, compared to 46% of seniors nationwide. Among seniors across the country, about two fifths (37%) study over sixteen hours a week which is considerably more than the third of CCSU seniors (29%) who study a comparable amount.

Fig. 6. Hours Per 7-Day Week Working for Pay Off-Campus – First Year Students

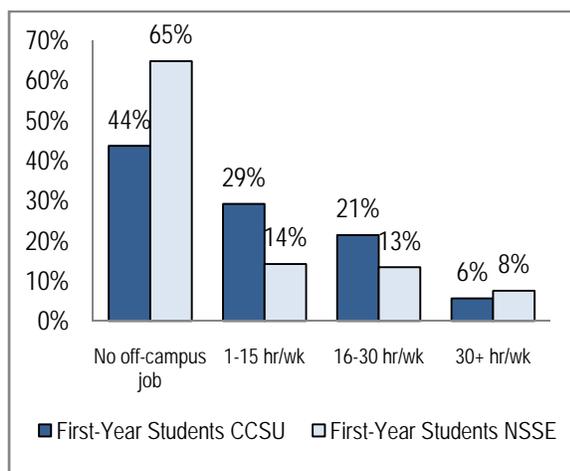
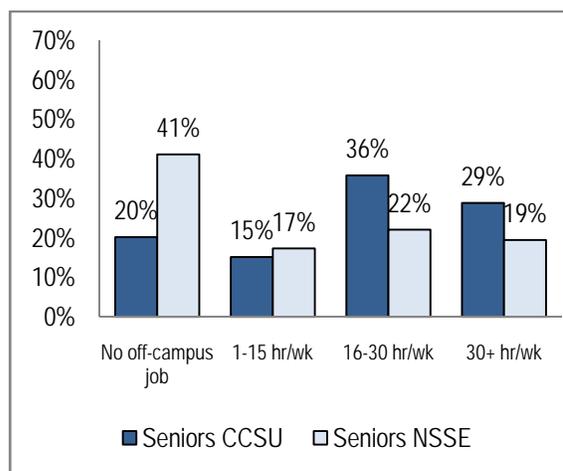


Fig. 7. Hours Per 7-Day Week Working for Pay Off Campus – Seniors



CCSU students, especially seniors, spent significantly more time working for pay off-campus than did students nationwide (see Fig. 6 and 7). Among CCSU first-year students, 44% did not report holding an off-campus job, compared to 65% of freshmen nationwide. Just under a third of CCSU first-year students indicated they worked for pay off-campus 1-15 hours per week, compared to 14% of first-year students at other institutions, and about a fifth (21%) of CCSU first-year students reported working for pay off-campus for 16-30 hours per week, compared to just 13% of first-year students nationwide.

By contrast, only about a fifth (20%) of seniors at CCSU reported not working for pay off-campus, compared to 41% of seniors at other institutions who reported not working for pay off-campus. About a sixth (15%) of CCSU seniors indicated they worked for pay off-campus for 1-15 hours per week, comparable to 17% of seniors nationwide, but over a third of CCSU seniors (36%) reported they worked for pay off-campus 16-30 hours per week, compared to only about a fifth (22%) of seniors nationally. Approximately three out of ten CCSU seniors (29%) reported

working for pay off-campus for more than thirty hours per week, compared to two out of ten seniors nationwide (19%).

A portion of this difference in working for pay off-campus among seniors can be explained by the lower proportion of CCSU seniors who held an on-campus job (see Fig. 9). About 14% of seniors at CCSU indicated they spent any time at all working for pay on campus, compared to 27% of seniors at other institutions across the country. The proportion of first-year students at CCSU who reported working for pay on campus (18%) was comparable to the proportion of freshmen nationwide who reported working for pay on campus (20%).

Fig. 8. Students Who Work for Pay On-Campus
First-Year Students

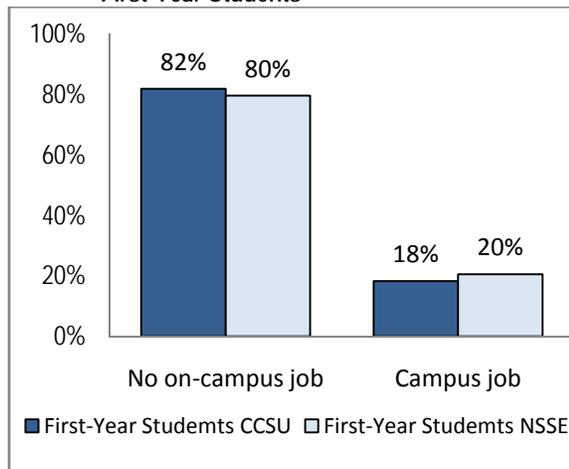


Fig. 9. Students Who Work for Pay On-Campus
Seniors

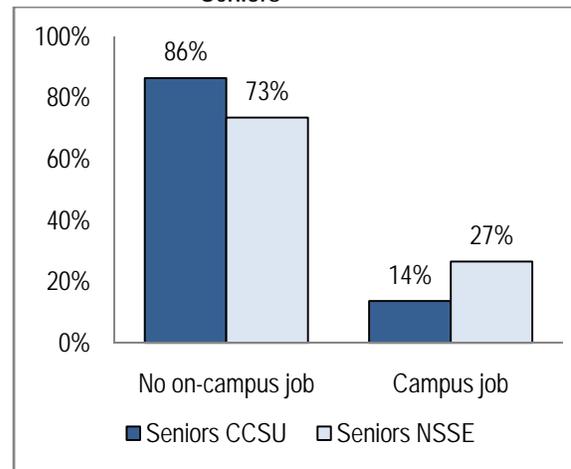


Fig. 10. Hours Per 7-Day Week Spent Relaxing
and Socializing – First-Year Students

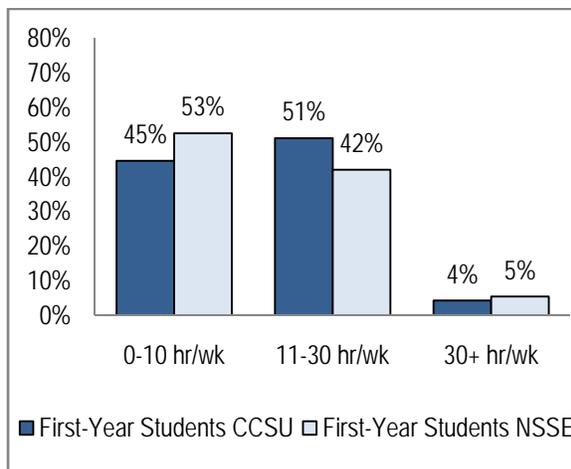
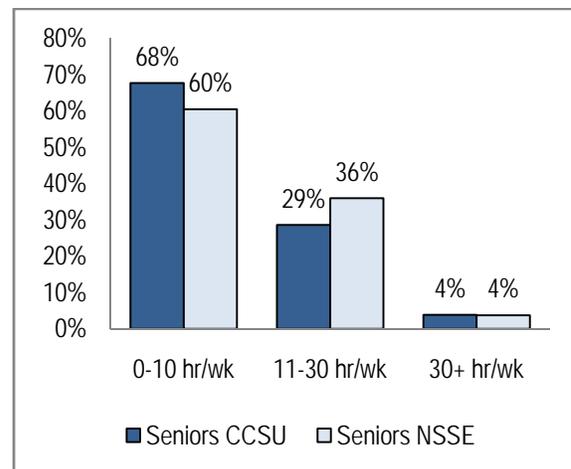


Fig. 11. Hours Per 7-Day Week Spent Relaxing
and Socializing - Seniors



The proportion of CCSU first-year students reported spending substantial time relaxing and socializing per week (watching TV, partying, etc.) was slightly higher than for those at other institutions nationwide (see Fig. 10), with just over a half (51%) of CCSU first-year students indicating they spent 11-30 hours per week relaxing and socializing, compared to 42% for other first-year students. By contrast, CCSU seniors reported spending slightly less time than their national counterparts relaxing and socializing than did their national counterparts. Just under a third (29% of seniors reported spending 11-30 hours relaxing and socializing, while just over a third (36%) of seniors nationwide reported relaxing and socializing for this amount of time each week, perhaps because they reported spending less time working for pay off-campus.

Fig. 12. Hours Per 7-Day Week Spent Participating in Co-Curricular Activities– First-Year Students

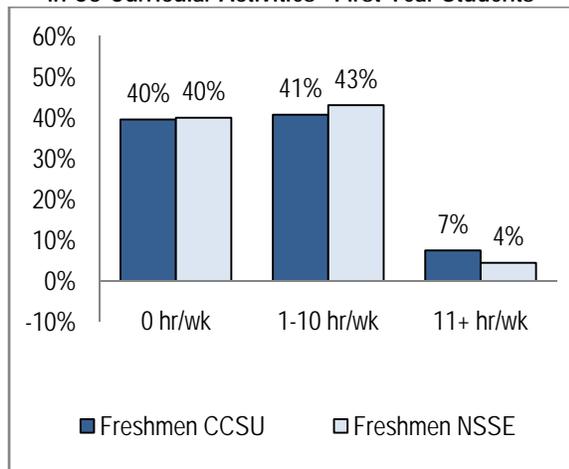
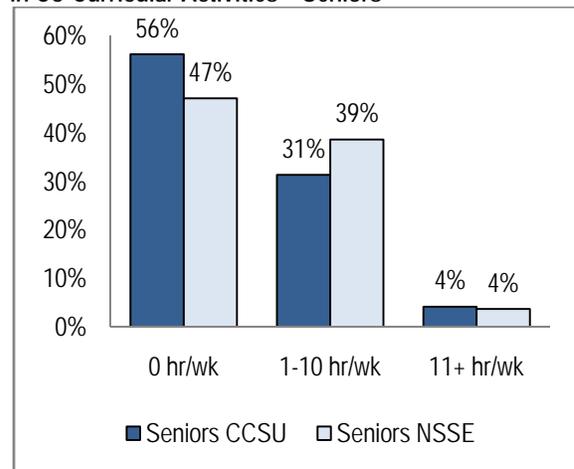


Fig. 13. Hours Per 7-Day Week Spent Participating in Co-Curricular Activities – Seniors



CCSU first-year students reported spending about the same amount of time each week as their counterparts at other institutions participating in co-curricular activities, such as student organizations, campus publications, student government, Greek life, or intercollegiate or intramural sports (see Fig. 12), although quite significantly, two-fifths of first-year students at CCSU and nationwide reported spending zero hours each week engaged in co-curricular activities. A considerably higher proportion of seniors (56%) also indicated they did not participate in co-curricular activities, compared to (47%) seniors nationwide, although this difference was not statistically significant.

Participation in eleven or more hours per week of co-curricular activities was comparable between first-year students and seniors at CCSU with their national counterparts, indicating that the largest differences in student engagement with co-curricular activities is within institutions rather than among institutions. The most significant factor in this respect may lie in the decision of each individual student to participate regularly or not.

Relationship between Working for Pay and Time Spent on Academic Work Outside of Class

One explanation about students' low number of hours spent on academic work outside of class attributes this lack of engagement to spending significant amount of time working for pay, but evidence from NSSE suggests that this may not be the case. Indeed, survey results indicate that time working for pay off-campus was unrelated to the amount of time that *full-time*, first-year students spent studying and only slightly related to the amount of time that *full-time* seniors spent studying.

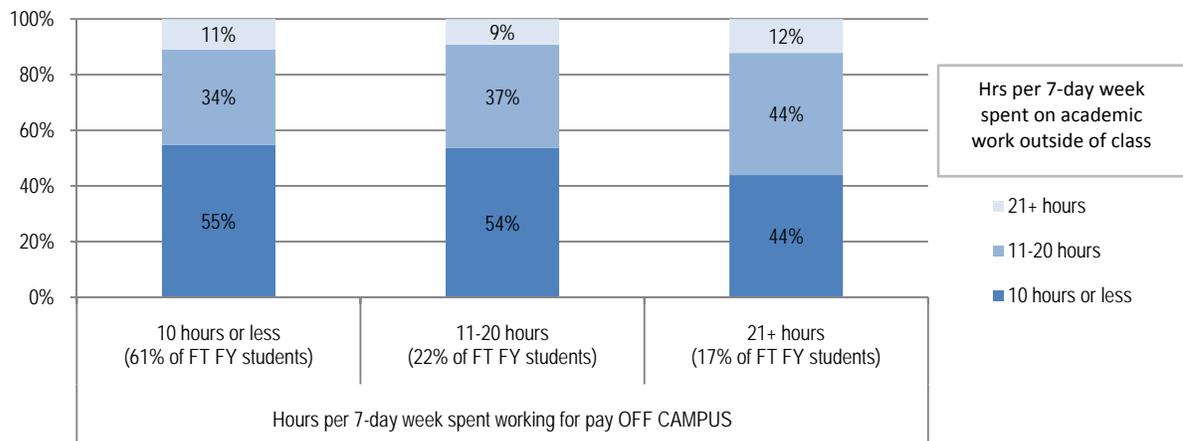
Among full-time, first-year students, six out of ten (61%) reported working 10 hours per week or less for pay off-campus, but 55% of this group reported spending fewer than 10 hours per week on academic work outside of class and only 11% reported spending 21 hours or more per week on academic work outside of class. By comparison, the high-work group of full-time, first-year students – those who worked for pay off-campus 21 hours or more per week (17% of the group) – actually reported slightly higher levels of studying, with 44% reporting 10 or fewer hours a week spent on academic work outside of class and 12% reporting 21 hours or more per week on academic work outside of class (see Table 2 and Figure 14).

Table 7. Time Spent by Full-Time, First-Time Students on Academic Work and Working for Pay Off-Campus

		Hours per 7-day week spent working for pay OFF CAMPUS						Total N Pct	
		10 hours or less		11-20 hours		21+ hours			
		N	Pct	N	Pct	N	Pct	N	Pct
Hours per 7-day week spent preparing for class*	10 hours or less	80	55%	29	54%	18	44%	127	53%
	11-20 hours	50	34%	20	37%	18	44%	88	37%
	21+ hours	16	11%	5	9%	5	12%	26	11%
Total		146	100%	54	100%	41	100%	241	100%

* (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)

Fig. 14. Amount of time spent on academic work outside of class by amount of time spent working for pay off-campus (full-time, first-time students)



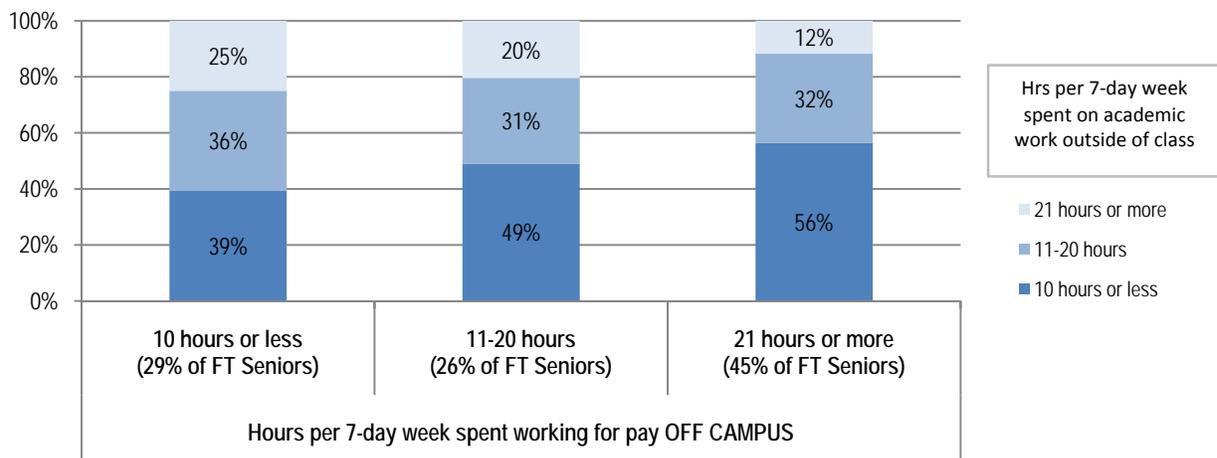
Among full-time seniors, a larger proportion of respondents reported working for pay more than 20 hours per week, but the effect on study habits shifted only 12-15% of the population to the high- and low-study groups. Just under a third (29%) of full-time seniors reported work for pay 10 or fewer hours per week, but more than a third of this group (39%) reported spending 10 or fewer hours per week on academic work outside of class and just a quarter (25%) reported spending 21 hours a week or more on academic work outside of class. For the high-work group, 45% of full-time seniors reported working for pay off-campus 21 hours or more each week, and unsurprisingly the proportion of respondents reporting spending 10 or fewer hours on academic work outside of class jumps to 56%, and the proportion spending 21 hours per week or more on academic work outside of class declines to just 12%. Nevertheless, these figures indicate a large swath of seniors who simply do not spend as much time on academic work as faculty expect them to, yet still manage to perform well in their classes.

Table 8. Time Spent by Full-Time Senior Students on Academic Work and Working for Pay Off-Campus

		Hours per 7-day week spent working for pay OFF CAMPUS						Total	
		10 hours or less		11-20 hours		21+ hours			
		N	Pct	N	Pct	N	Pct	N	Pct
Hours per 7-day week spent preparing for class*	10 hours or less	22	39%	24	49%	48	56%	94	49%
	11-20 hours	20	36%	15	31%	27	32%	62	33%
	21+ hours	14	25%	10	20%	10	12%	34	18%
Total		56	100%	49	100%	85	100%	190	100%

* (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)

Fig. 15. Amount of time spent on academic work outside of class by amount of time spent working for pay off-campus (full-time, seniors)



Reading, Writing, and Problem Sets

CCSU students indicated that they completed fewer assigned reading, writing, and problems sets as their counterparts nationwide. About seven out of ten (69%) first-year students and about two-thirds (66%) of seniors indicated they read 10 or fewer assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings since the beginning of the academic year. These figures are comparable to first-year students and seniors nationwide. In terms of writing, short written assignments appear to be the norm. At CCSU, five out of six first-year students (82%) and about half of seniors (50%) did not write any papers or reports longer than 20 pages; 55% of first-year students and 44% of seniors wrote no more than four papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages in length; 38% of freshmen and 33% of seniors wrote between 10 and 20 papers or reports of 5 or fewer pages.

Table 9. Amount of Reading, Writing, and Problem Sets Completed

		First-Year Students		Seniors	
		CCSU	NSSE	CCSU	NSSE
<i>During the current school year, about how much reading and writing have you done?</i>					
Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings	None	1%	1%	1%	1%
	1-4	18%	21%	25%	26%
	5-10	50%	43%	40%	38%
	11-20	24%	24%	22%	20%
	More than 20	7%	11%	12%	14%
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of books read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment	None	34%	25%	25%	21%
	1-4	48%	54%	53%	54%
	5-10	12%	13%	11%	16%
	11-20	2%	4%	7%	5%
	More than 20	3%	4%	4%	5%
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more	None	82%	81%	50%	50%
	1-4	13%	13%	43%	41%
	5-10	2%	3%	4%	6%
	11-20	1%	1%	1%	2%
	More than 20	1%	1%	1%	1%
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of written papers or reports between 6 and 19 pages	None	15%	14%	9%	9%
	1-4	55%	53%	44%	44%
	5-10	23%	25%	32%	31%
	11-20	6%	6%	11%	11%
	More than 20	1%	2%	5%	4%
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages	None	0%	3%	5%	6%
	1-4	26%	31%	36%	34%
	5-10	38%	34%	33%	28%
	11-20	30%	21%	16%	18%
	More than 20	7%	11%	11%	14%
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
<i>In a typical week, how many homework problem sets do you complete?</i>					
Number of problem sets that take you more than an hour to complete	None	12%	13%	16%	19%
	1-2	41%	35%	35%	32%
	3-4	30%	32%	29%	29%
	5-6	7%	10%	7%	9%
	More than 6	11%	10%	12%	11%
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of problem sets that take you less than an hour to complete	None	8%	13%	17%	27%
	1-2	30%	36%	41%	36%
	3-4	32%	27%	20%	21%
	5-6	15%	12%	12%	8%
	More than 6	14%	12%	11%	9%
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Engagement by Gender

A number of substantial and significant differences between responses of men and women were observed, and these differences in engagement may have broad effects on student success.

Among full-time seniors, 88% of women reported they used email to communicate with an instructor very often or often, compared to just 74% of men. Two-thirds (66%) of women reported discussing grades or assignments with an instructor very often or often, compared to less than half (48%) of men. About half (49%) of women indicated they talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor very often or often, compared to just over a third (36%) of men. Almost two-thirds (64%) of women reported they very often or often worked harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations, compared to half (50%) of men. Six out of ten women (60%) reported they had done community service or volunteer work in the past year, compared to just over four out of ten (43%) men. And perhaps most importantly, 21% of women reported they spent more than 20 hours per week on academic work outside of class, compared to just 12% of men.

Table 10. Selected NSSE Items by Gender (Full-Time Seniors)

NSSE Item	Women	Men	Difference
Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor very often or often	88%	74%	12%
Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor very often or often	66%	48%	18%
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor very often or often	49%	36%	13%
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations very often or often	64%	50%	14%
Did community service or volunteer work	60%	43%	17%
Spent more than 20 hours per 7-day week spent preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)	21%	12%	9%
Six-Year Graduation rate of Full-Time, First-Time students entering in Fall 2002	53%	39%	14%

Responses to these items suggest that men and women may approach the college experience at CCSU differently, and the ways in which they engage with their studies and the co-curricular aspects of their lives may indicate a great commitment to college life and also motivation to participate fully in the educational experience. These differences in engagement may account for differences in graduation rates and other success metrics, although this connection is circumstantial at best. Nevertheless, different levels of engagement may indeed account for some of the differences in success observed by gender at CCSU and at other institutions nationwide.

NSSE Results and General Education

A variety of items on NSSE are directly related to CCSU's stated outcomes for general education. Many of these items appeared in a grouping of questions that allowed students to report the extent to which their experience at their institution contributed to their knowledge, skills, and development in various areas (1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much).

Results from the 2008 administration of the survey reflect the same rank ordering of general education outcomes as in 2007. The top five items to which seniors indicated the CCSU had contributed very much or quite a bit to knowledge skills and personal development were Acquiring a Broad General Education (84%), Thinking Critically and Analytically (82%), Using Computing and Information Technology (78%), Working Effectively with Others (76%), and Analyzing Quantitative Problems (73%). Small declines were observed in ratings for most items in question this question about institutional contribution to development which may be related to the higher response rate. Additionally, responses of CCSU seniors were below those of seniors nationwide on nine out of sixteen items at statistically significant levels ($p < 0.05$) when using a 2-tailed t-test, a statistical test that accounts for differences in proportions that may have responded "quite a bit" and "very much."

For first-year students, significant gains were observed compared to 2007 results, although levels of institutional contribution toward development in these areas remained below levels reported by students in the national comparison group and also below those reported by seniors. The top five items to which first-year students indicated the CCSU had contributed very much or quite a bit to knowledge skills and personal development were Acquiring a Broad General Education (79%), Thinking Critically and Analytically (78%), Using Computing and Information Technology (71%), Writing Clearly and Effectively (70%), and Analyzing Quantitative Problems (70%). These percentages reported by first-year students at CCSU in 2008 are considerably higher than those reported in 2007.

The bottom five items for which seniors indicated CCSU had contributed very much of quite a bit to their knowledge, skill, and personal development were Developing A Personal Code of Values and Ethics (52%), Understanding People of Other Racial and Ethnic Backgrounds (49%), Contributing to the Welfare of Your Community (37%), Voting in Local, State or National Elections (29%), and Developing a Deepened Sense of Spirituality (19%). For first-year students, the five items for which the lowest proportion of respondents indicated the institution had contributed quite a bit or very much were Understanding Yourself (57%), Solving Complex Real-World Problems (56%), Developing a Personal Code of Values and Ethics (50%), Contributing to the Welfare of Your Community (37%), and Voting in Local, State, or National Elections (36%). While the universe of other institutions participating in NSSE showed similar rank orderings of items, about 10-11% fewer CCSU students at the senior and first-year levels (significant at $p < 0.001$) reported that their experience at their university had contributed to their development in contributing to the welfare of the community. Given that in 2007-08, CCSU identified Community Engagement as one of four distinctive elements about the university, the extent to which students develop or perceive their development in this area may deserve further investigation.

Table 11. Educational and Personal Growth: First-Year Students

	2007			2008		
	CCSU N=182 Pct "Very Much" or "Quite a Bit"	NSSE National Group N=147,044 Pct "Very Much" or "Quite a Bit"	Sig ^a	CCSU N=297 Pct "Very Much" or "Quite a Bit"	NSSE National Group N=182,903 Pct "Very Much" or "Quite a Bit"	Sig ^a
To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas? 1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much						
Acquiring a broad general education	67%	80%	***	79%	83%	*
Thinking critically and analytically	67%	81%	***	78%	82%	**
Using computing and information technology	58%	72%	**	71%	73%	
Writing clearly and effectively	60%	71%	**	70%	74%	
Analyzing quantitative problems	60%	68%		70%	71%	
Learning effectively on your own	59%	69%	**	66%	72%	*
Working effectively with others	53%	69%	**	64%	71%	**
Speaking clearly and effectively	51%	61%	*	62%	65%	
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	52%	60%	*	60%	63%	
Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	61%	54%	**	58%	57%	
Understanding yourself	43%	61%	***	57%	64%	**
Solving complex real-world problems	44%	55%	**	56%	58%	
Developing a personal code of values and ethics	42%	55%	***	50%	58%	***
Contributing to the welfare of your community	25%	44%	***	37%	48%	***
Voting in local, state, or national elections	26%	31%		36%	39%	
Developing a deepened sense of spirituality	19%	33%	***	25%	36%	***

(a) Statistically significant difference from comparison group using a 2-tailed t-test at the following levels: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001. In instances where the differences in percentages appear negligible but a statistically significant difference is indicated, CCSU students had more respondents who indicated "3=Very Much" and fewer who indicated "4=Quite a Bit" than did those in the comparison group.

Table 12. Educational and Personal Growth: Seniors

	2007		2008		Sig ^a
	CCSU N=242 Pct "Very Much" or "Quite a Bit"	NSSE National Group N=148,271 Pct "Very Much" or "Quite a Bit"	CCSU N=261 Pct "Very Much" or "Quite a Bit"	NSSE National Group N=194,651 Pct "Very Much" or "Quite a Bit"	
To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas? 1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much					
Acquiring a broad general education	87%	83%	84%	84%	*
Thinking critically and analytically	88%	86%	82%	87%	**
Using computing and information technology	78%	79%	78%	80%	
Working effectively with others	74%	76%	76%	78%	
Analyzing quantitative problems	77%	73%	73%	75%	*
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	75%	72%	71%	73%	
Learning effectively on your own	71%	73%	69%	75%	*
Writing clearly and effectively	70%	75%	68%	77%	**
Speaking clearly and effectively	70%	69%	67%	72%	*
Understanding yourself	61%	62%	59%	64%	*
Solving complex real-world problems	61%	60%	59%	62%	
Developing a personal code of values and ethics	56%	56%	52%	58%	*
Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	54%	52%	49%	55%	
Contributing to the welfare of your community	36%	45%	37%	47%	***
Voting in local, state, or national elections	26%	31%	29%	33%	
Developing a deepened sense of spirituality	22%	27%	19%	29%	***

(a) Statistically significant difference from comparison group using a 2-tailed t-test at the following levels: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Another way to examine NSSE results in the context of CCSU's specific general education outcomes is to align various survey items with the learning outcomes as they have been defined by the faculty. This sort of analysis is always somewhat subjective in nature, since survey items rarely are asked in such a way that they directly line up with the institution's specifically tailored outcomes. As a result, the analysis below should be considered suggestive at best, but it does provide some means for identifying relative strengths and weaknesses among CCSU students.

CCSU seniors showed highest levels of performance in the areas of quantitative skills enhancement of global awareness. While most areas were lower for seniors than in 2007, the area of personal health improved. None of these aggregate measures of NSSE questions combined by units of standard deviation above/below the national mean are indicative of significant weakness in any area, and it is likely that disciplinary distribution has some effect on outcomes.

Discussion and Conclusion

The fourth administration of NSSE at CCSU appears to indicate that CCSU students exhibit lower levels of engagement than do students nationwide. On the NSSE engagement indices, CCSU first-year students were in the 30th to 50th percentiles nationally, and CCSU seniors were in the 25th to 40th percentiles nationally; engagement levels for first-year students increased significantly since the last administration in 2007. On the other hand, senior engagement appears to have decreased slightly since the 2007 administration.

While these results may appear lackluster, they do not indicate that all CCSU students are disengaged with the educational experience nor should the results be read to indicate that some students at CCSU are not highly engaged. Indeed, many students exhibit high levels of active involvement on all aspects of the educational experience, which parallel those of students at institutions with the highest levels of engagement. It is important, however, to recognize that a high level of engagement among CCSU students is neither consistent nor uniform, and high percentages of CCSU students do not exhibit behaviors that would most usefully supplement their educational experience in college.

Results from this study appear to offer a counter-narrative to the popular explanation that students at Central do not engage in academic and campus activities because of the amount of time they spend working for pay. Indeed, time spent on academic work did not change at all for first-year students as the number of hours spent working for pay increased, and the relationship between time spent working and time spent studying for seniors shifted only 10-15% of respondents from the high-study to the low-study group. Indeed, while just under a third of seniors (29%) reported working for pay off-campus for thirty hours a week or more – a level that almost certainly interferes with academic life – only 6% of first-year students reported working this many hours off-campus. Additionally, such figures indicate that a super-majority of students spend a more reasonable amount of time working for pay off-campus, and that the excuse of work interfering with academic work should not apply to most students. This is not to discount the fact that over half (52%) of CCSU seniors report working over 20 hours a week for pay off-campus, compared to 38% of seniors at other public Master's-Larger programs institutions.

The University's current Strategic Plan (CCSU, 2008) already provides focus on some of these items; others could serve as useful indicators for monitoring progress on this plan. Because data obtained from surveys are self-reported, there is inherent uncertainty in what they mean, but they can provide a valuable supplement to other information about student performance at the institution gathered from locally developed and other instruments. NSSE is scheduled for administration again at CCSU in Spring 2009, and commitment to a future administration schedule of the survey could assist in monitoring how students proceed through the educational experience at the University.

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