

**THE NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT
AND
THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA**

NOVEMBER 2011



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1. NSSE: BRIEF OVERVIEW

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), pronounced *nessie*) surveys freshmen and senior students and includes questions about their academic experiences. Developed by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, NSSE has been in use since 2000. It provides comparative standards for assessing effective educational practices in higher education and has been used by nearly 1500 institutions in North America. The University of Georgia first administered NSSE in 2003, and participated again in 2005, 2007 and 2008. For more information on NSSE, see <http://nsse.iub.edu> and <http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/nsse.htm>.

NSSE allows for internal comparisons between individual UGA students and UGA cohorts over time as well as external comparisons with students at other institutions. To facilitate meaningful comparisons, NSSE provides comparative scores for two defined groups: the **Carnegie Class** group, which for UGA is defined as the mean scores of the 35 research universities with very high research activity that participated in this year's NSSE; and the **UGA Peer Group**, which is defined as the mean scores of a smaller set of UGA-selected peer and aspirational institutions that participated in the 2011 NSSE. Lists of the institutions in both comparative groups are included in the appendices to this report.

In the 2011 administration of NSSE, UGA invited all eligible first-year students (4,626) and seniors (6,041) to participate in the survey in the spring of 2011. 799 freshmen and 992 seniors participated. This response rate was lower than in previous years. However, for both first-years and seniors, the response rates by ethnicity (White/Caucasian, Black/African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and all others) reflected UGA populations. More females responded than males, which is typically the case for NSSE at all participating institutions.

UGA administered the Beginning College Student Survey of Engagement (BCSSE) for the first time in 2010. BCSSE asks entering college students about their high school academic and co-curricular experiences, as well as their expectations about participating in educational activities during the first college year. BCSSE is designed to be paired with a NSSE administration to provide an in-depth understanding of the engagement of first-year students. All new freshmen were asked to complete the online survey during the summer of 2010. BCSSE is a much newer survey, but its use at UGA in 2010 indicates it may be a helpful tool, especially when used in conjunction with NSSE. Subsequent reports will analyze BCSSE and its relationship to the NSSE data.

One important point to underscore about both surveys is that they are snapshots: they capture the perceptions of groups of students at a singular moment. From the outset, UGA has considered the results with this caveat in mind, validating them through additional campus discussion and research. The NSSE data have proven over time to be quite useful to UGA and many other institutions that want to understand how students perceive their educational experiences.

2. WHAT NSSE TELLS US

Overall, the NSSE results are positive for UGA, indicating strong support for student engagement across campus. UGA is maintaining the gains seen in previous survey administrations and, from the national perspective, continues to fare well in comparison to respondents from institutions in our Carnegie Class and the UGA Peer Group schools. UGA students report continued satisfaction with their educational experience. According to the 2011 NSSE results, 93% of UGA first-year students and 91% of seniors report that their entire educational experience at this institution is either good or excellent. As in previous surveys, a high percentage of seniors (90% in 2011) said they would choose UGA again if they were starting their college career over.

This positive overview is just part of a detailed picture. While the NSSE data tells us that we are maintaining the gains from previous administrations, it also indicates that we have not attained new gains. Although our students fare quite well in comparison to peer groups overall, there are still identifiable areas in which attention can be focused. Furthermore, this year we were able to match 147 students who had completed the NSSE survey as first-year students in 2008 as well as in their senior year in 2011. This group's data, discussed later in this report, may offer us special insight into students' perceptions of their UGA experiences over the course of their time here.

In analyzing these results, it is important to consider the timing of this NSSE administration and the larger institutional context. The significant gains shown in the 2008 NSSE results followed several years of efforts to bring new resources and opportunities to our undergraduate students. Initiatives such as Learning Committees, the growth of Writing Centers, and the establishment of the Office of Service Learning, among others, were beginning to bear fruit. These new initiatives were responses, in part, to previous NSSE administrations that revealed students' needs and desires for these sorts of resources on our campus. In contrast, the period from 2008 to 2011 saw fewer new initiatives focused on the undergraduate academic experience.

It is also important to bear in mind the impact of the nation's economic crisis on our institution. Viewed through the lens of diminishing budgets and reduced faculty numbers, we find it especially encouraging that UGA is continuing to provide a strong education for its students and the means by which they can engage with their institution.

The report that follows is a first look at some of the details provided by the 2011 NSSE results. Given the mass of data that the NSSE provides, we find it helpful to look at groups of questions that address specific areas. NSSE has created the following benchmark areas for this purpose:

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

Our discussion of NSSE findings begins with these benchmarks because they are the standard measures that universities use to evaluate themselves. They provide useful comparisons between

cohorts of UGA students as well as comparisons with UGA peers across the nation. In addition, we shall examine UGA's performance according to four additional thematic areas, which the 2008 NSSE Steering Committee identified as being of particular value for assessing UGA:

- Academic Expectations
- Learning Experiences
- Campus Connections
- Educational Gains

3A. NSSE BENCHMARKS

The NSSE Benchmarks are the most commonly discussed aspects of the survey and are often used as an aggregate way to describe the campus environment. NSSE groups the survey items that form the "Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice" into five areas.

The Level of Academic Challenge (LAC) benchmark examines whether institutions promote high levels of student achievement and provide a challenging academic experience. Through Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL) experiences, students are encouraged to engage in group problem-solving, discussion, peer evaluation, and application of their learning in multiple settings. The Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI) benchmark examines the various ways students interact with faculty members both inside and outside the classroom. The Enriching Educational Experience (EEE) benchmark considers a student's intentional activities, including co-curricular activity. It includes items such as internships, community service, study abroad, leadership opportunities, and cultural awareness, all of which provide students with an occasion to synthesize, integrate, and apply knowledge. The Supportive Campus Environment (SCE) benchmark measures the degree to which students feel the campus is committed to their academic success, primarily through providing academic, social, and personal support.

We find that UGA's 2011 performance on the NSSE benchmarks is essentially flat, with small gains or decreases that are for the most part within the margin of error. These results are not surprising. From 2005-2008, UGA showed appreciable gains in benchmark responses from both first-year and senior students that coincided with UGA's focus on new educational initiatives resulting from the 2005 Task Force Report on General Education. UGA respondents in 2011 did not show further significant gains in benchmarks over 2008 respondents, as these initiatives matured and few additional initiatives were implemented.

The sharpest benchmark decline was in Student Faculty Interaction, which declined among senior respondents from 48.1 in 2008 to 44.5 in 2011. This finding may bear further analysis of the underlying items, but it also does not surprise, considering the reduced numbers of tenure-track faculty at UGA stemming from several years of budget reductions. While the university has certainly made every effort to meet its responsibilities by hiring temporary instructors and raising the number of students in classes, these results suggest that students do notice the diminished number of faculty.

Despite this one decline between internal UGA cohorts, UGA student performance on all five benchmark areas, including Student-Faculty Interaction, remains comparable to other institutions

in our Carnegie class as well as the UGA Peer Group. As Table 1 shows, the UGA scores on all five benchmarks were virtually the same as the scores reported by Carnegie Class and UGA Peer Group institutions; in fact, senior respondents at UGA reported slightly higher scores on four of the five benchmarks than their counterparts in the two comparison groups. As Table 1 suggests, the University of Georgia is maintaining its position nationally, despite the challenging fiscal climate.

Table 1: **Summary of Overall 2011 Benchmark Performance**

BENCHMARK		FIRST-YEAR	SENIOR
<i>Level of Academic Challenge (LAC)</i>	UGA	53.3	54.9
	Carnegie Class	53.2	56.0
	Peer Group	53.8	56.7
<i>Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL)</i>	UGA	40.4	50.0
	Carnegie Class	41.0	48.4
	Peer Group	40.9	48.4
<i>Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)</i>	UGA	31.2	40.1
	Carnegie Class	31.8	39.6
	Peer Group	31.7	40.0
<i>Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE)</i>	UGA	31.4	45.1
	Carnegie Class	29.5	42.0
	Peer Group	30.3	44.7
<i>Supportive Campus Environment (SCE)</i>	UGA	59.7	57.9
	Carnegie Class	61.3	56.8
	Peer Group	61.8	56.5

3B. UGA THEMES

In keeping with UGA's analysis of previous NSSE results, we feel it is important to consider four additional areas of comparison in UGA's current results: academic expectations, learning experiences, campus connections, and educational gains. Those results highlight our successes and point to areas where discussion and action may make the University of Georgia even better.

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

The Academic Expectations area highlights items that address student perceptions regarding their academic workload and preparation for class. The last decade has produced a steady stream of calls for increased focus on the central academic purpose of higher education. From the 2002 *Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College* report from the Association of American Colleges and Universities to the 2006 Spellings Commission report, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education* to the recent *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*, the nation's colleges continue to be called to hold higher academic expectations for students, to focus on learning, and to commit to demonstrated achievement, among other aims.

Over the same period, the University of Georgia has engaged in its own assessments of the undergraduate experience, which produced far-reaching action plans beginning with the report *Enhancing the Undergraduate Experience* (1999-2000), followed by *The Task Force on General Education and Student Learning* (2005) and *The Task Force on Writing: A Report for the Vice President of Instruction* (2006-07). Each report contains incisive observations and specific recommendations to enhance teaching and learning at UGA. Many of these plans were implemented in the years following the reports, so the increased levels of academic expectations observed in 2008 and 2011 NSSE data may reflect those efforts.

Most recently, UGA's reaccreditation process highlighted the desire of the university community to provide students with a common academic experience soon after they arrive on campus. Students and faculty helped create the First-Year Odyssey Seminar program to introduce first-year students to the nature of a research university and help them adjust to the high standards that they must meet. The BCSSE and NSSE data will help the university assess this ambitious program.

Table 2 reports the scores from UGA students and students at Carnegie Class and peer institutions on six items that indicate students' level of engagement with what they are learning in class. On most items seniors report substantially greater engagement than first-years. While these two groups may not be reliably comparable, this finding suggests a possible gain in student engagement from first to senior year. Analysis of the matched set of responses from 2008 and 2011 confirms this finding: the individual students in the set showed similar increases in engagement across their four years at UGA. The notable exception is the preparation of two or more drafts of a paper, a practice apparently avoided by seniors in every institution. Another important trend in this table is that UGA students perform either as well as or better than their counterparts in both the Carnegie Class and UGA Peer Group institutions. The exception is class presentations: first-year UGA students report giving notably fewer presentations than peers. This result may reflect large first-year class sizes at UGA, and it is an area where we can look for a positive impact from the First-Year Odyssey seminars.



THE ARCH

Table 2: Student Engagement with Class Material

ITEM		FIRST-YEAR	SENIOR
<i>Often or very often worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations</i>	UGA	59%	58%
	Carnegie Class	55	56
	Peer Group	54	52
<i>Often or very often prepared two or more drafts of a paper before turning it in</i>	UGA	64	37
	Carnegie Class	60	40
	Peer Group	48	37
<i>Often or very often worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources</i>	UGA	72	82
	Carnegie Class	72	82
	Peer Group	70	83
<i>Often or very often asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions</i>	UGA	49	63
	Carnegie Class	49	62
	Peer Group	49	61
<i>Often or very often made a class presentation</i>	UGA	13	46
	Carnegie Class	23	49
	Peer Group	20	49
<i>Often or very often discussed ideas from your class or readings with friends or family outside of class</i>	UGA	57	68
	Carnegie Class	57	63
	Peer Group	58	62

UGA students, however, continue to lag behind those in the Carnegie Class and peer institutions in the amount of time they spend preparing for class. Although 86% of first-years perceive that UGA emphasizes spending significant amounts of time preparing for class (up from 76% in 2005 and 83% in 2008), the number of hours per week that they reported actually spending on class preparation was relatively low. Table 3 shows that nearly one-third of all first-years and nearly one-half of all seniors spent 10 or fewer hours each week preparing for class. These percentages were considerably greater than the percentages of students in the Carnegie Class and peer institutions who also reported spending 10 hours or fewer preparing for class each week. And at the other end of the spectrum, far smaller percentages of UGA students, especially seniors, reported spending more than 20 hours a week on class preparation compared to their counterparts in the other two groups.

Table 3: Time Spent on Preparing for Class

ITEM		FIRST-YEAR	SENIOR
<i>10 hours or fewer a week preparing for class</i>	UGA	30%	46%
	Carnegie Class	31	35
	Peer Group	25	31
<i>More than 20 hours a week preparing for class</i>	UGA	25	17
	Carnegie Class	27	27
	Peer Group	31	29

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

If students perceive UGA to place a greater emphasis on class preparation than a few years ago, it may be due to the view of both first-year and senior respondents that UGA's curriculum has a high level of academic challenge, particularly in honing students' mental abilities in memorizing, analyzing, synthesizing, making judgments, and applying theories to practical problems. Compared to 2008, both groups reported that examinations had challenged them to do their best work, and both groups also reported more coursework that emphasizes activities involving memorizing and analyzing. Further, significantly more UGA seniors than those in the Carnegie Class or the UGA Peer Group reported that their courses require quite a bit or very much memorization. This perception may be an important factor to understand if we are to push students beyond memorization to the higher order thinking skills of synthesizing ideas, making judgments about them, and applying them in new contexts.

Student learning takes place inside and outside of the classroom, however, and students need a variety of learning opportunities both to accommodate different learning styles and to provide intellectual breadth and depth. Acknowledging this need and building on recommendations from the 2003 NSSE results and the *Task Force on General Education and Student Learning* (2005), the University has developed, emphasized, and expanded opportunities for students to participate more widely in service learning, learning communities, study abroad, and civic and cultural activities.

Results of the 2011 NSSE administration, when compared with the results from 2005 and 2008, provide clear evidence of the positive impact of this increased emphasis on varied learning experiences, both academic and co-curricular. Table 4 shows the results across the different areas of learning experiences included in the NSSE survey. The percentages for both first-years and seniors went up from 2008 to 2011 on most items. Notable exceptions are study abroad, where participation or intended participation has declined for both groups, and research with a faculty member, where seniors report declining participation.

The declines in students who report studying abroad (although UGA remains a national leader in this area) and doing research with a faculty member might be consequences of the weak economy. Study abroad programs are an additional expense for students and their families. Fewer tenure-track faculty members mean diminished opportunities for students to engage in research with those faculty members.

Table 4: **Learning Experiences**

ITEM	UGA Class	2005	2008	2011
<i><u>Plan to or participated in community service or volunteer work</u></i>	FY	88%	92%	94%
	SR	80%	85%	89%
<i><u>Plan to participated or participated in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together</u></i>	FY	23%	31%	30%
	SR	32%	31%	33%
<i><u>Plan to work on or worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements</u></i>	FY	29%	35%	41%
	SR	32%	36%	32%
<i><u>Plan to study or studied abroad</u></i>	FY	65%	75%	70%
	SR	36%	43%	39%
<i><u>Plan to have or had a practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment</u></i>	FY	86%	89%	92%
	SR	79%	81%	83%
<i><u>Plan to take or took a foreign language coursework</u></i>	FY	70%	72%	74%
	SR	70%	71%	71%
<i><u>Plan to have or had a culminating senior experience</u></i>	FY	40%	36%	39%
	SR	46%	48%	50%

Comparison with peers in these areas, however, reveals potentially useful findings. Only 17% of UGA seniors report having completed a senior experience, compared to 30% of the Carnegie Class and 35% of the Peer Group. The low rate of participation of seniors in this area may be as expected given the fact that culminating experiences such as capstones are not currently required in all programs at UGA. Should the UGA community wish to give more consideration to broadening such a requirement, this data would prove useful in that planning process.

On the other hand, 76% of UGA seniors report having participated in community service, compared to 64% of respondents in the Carnegie Class and 69% of the Peer Group. Data from the same survey item in 2008 shows that first-year students (now seniors in 2011) also reported higher participation (50%) in community service or volunteer work than comparison schools (38% Carnegie Class; 39% Peer Group). These two points of comparison suggest that current seniors entered UGA with an interest in community service and volunteer work and have been encouraged to continue that work throughout their time here.

The NSSE survey also includes an item that asks if students participated in a community-based project (e.g. service learning) as part of a regular course. Twenty percent of UGA seniors have reported doing so “often” or “very often”, compared to 15% in the Carnegie Class and 14% of the Peer Group. Looking back to 2008, when current seniors would have been first-year students, data shows that this group also reported higher participation (18%) than peers (13% Carnegie Class; 13% Peer Group). The team thinks this is strong evidence of a successful continued effort at UGA to involve students in service learning.

In addition to their academic learning experiences, UGA students reported devoting more time to co-curricular activities in 2011 than in 2005 and 2008. Nearly half of first-year students (49%) and seniors (41%) were engaged for “6 hours or more” per week in 2011 in various co-curricular activities, including organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity or sorority, and intercollegiate or intramural sports. One reason for the rise in co-curricular activities may be the presence of new facilities on campus, such as the Tate Student Center expansion, new student housing, and new performing arts facilities on East Campus.

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

Research indicates that students are more successful when they have regular interaction with faculty and staff (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). The *UGA Task Force on General Education and Student Learning* (2005) identified various initiatives to help connect students with faculty and staff earlier in their college careers to ensure they “develop a zeal for learning and foster relationships that can help them develop future plans regarding a major and career” (p. 10). The new First-Year Odyssey program aims to encourage interaction between first-years and faculty in the hope of stimulating student interest in academics at the earliest point. In future years, we will need to keep an eye on these measures to see what effect the new courses have. Table 5 shows how this year’s UGA students compare to their counterparts in Carnegie Class and Peer institutions on various items measuring their connections with faculty and staff.

Three themes are evident in Table 5. First, UGA seniors reported greater contact with faculty on every item than first-years. This trend is confirmed in the comparison of matched student responses discussed elsewhere in this report. Second, UGA first-years are very similar to their counterparts at other institutions. Third, UGA seniors reported more contact with faculty than their counterparts at other institutions.

Table 5: **Student Connections with Faculty and Staff**

ITEM		FIRST-YEAR	SENIOR
<i>Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance</i>	UGA	54%	63%
	Carnegie Class	51	57
	Peer Group	51	56
<i>Often or very often discussed ideas from readings or class with faculty outside of class</i>	UGA	30	40
	Carnegie Class	30	36
	Peer Group	30	36
<i>Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor</i>	UGA	39	53
	Carnegie Class	44	53
	Peer Group	41	49
<i>Often or very often talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor</i>	UGA	30	40
	Carnegie Class	30	36
	Peer Group	30	36

While these results are quite encouraging, we were disappointed that our students continue to work less with faculty on research projects than students elsewhere. As Table 6 indicates, fewer seniors reported working directly with faculty on course-independent research projects than peers, and fewer first-years reported plans to do so. These percentages are similar to 2008 responses and represent one of the largest single-item differences between UGA and its peers. This result may be due, at least in part, to the difficult economy and the consequent reduction in tenure-track faculty at UGA in recent years. Fewer faculty members mean fewer faculty hours spent with students. However, since it appears that our first-year students have not been well-primed for taking on research projects, we should monitor these results as the First-Year Odyssey seminars are implemented to determine if early engagement between tenure-track faculty and students about research topics has the expected impact on both student plans and participation in research.

Table 6: **Student Research with Faculty**

ITEM		SENIOR
<i>Worked on research projects with faculty outside of course/program requirements</i>	UGA	16
	Carnegie Class	24
	Peer Group	30
		FIRST-YEAR
<i>Plan to work on research projects with faculty outside of course/program requirements</i>	UGA	36
	Carnegie Class	42
	Peer Group	45

Advising was one area in which UGA students appeared to be consistently more satisfied than their counterparts at other institutions. Overall, students in 2011 acknowledged the quality of academic advising at UGA. Both first-years and seniors rated advising higher than in 2008. Seventy-four percent of UGA seniors rated the quality of their academic advising as “good” or “excellent” compared to 67% of Carnegie Class and 68% of UGA Peer Group seniors; 84% of UGA first years gave the same response compared to 79% of Carnegie Class and 80% of UGA Peer Group institutions first years. Since reviewing the 2008 NSSE results, which showed some student concerns with advising, UGA has worked with the advising staff and has introduced the DegreeWorks system to help students. These efforts may have contributed to the change.

One of UGA’s priorities has been to establish a diverse and inclusive campus environment, where differences in socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, and political and religious beliefs promote tolerance and understanding. Table 7 shows that UGA students, both first-years and seniors, either match or surpass their counterparts at Carnegie Class and Peer institutions on all three measures of diversity. While those results indicate that UGA students do encounter and respect diversity in their education, the experience of diversity remains an important goal of public education. This round of the NSSE indicates a gain for our students, but UGA needs to continue to build upon that gain.

Table 7: **Student Experiences with Diversity**

ITEM		FIRST-YEAR	SENIOR
<i>Included diverse perspectives in class discussions or writing assignments</i>	UGA	59%	63%
	Carnegie Class	58	56
	Peer Group	55	54
<i>Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity from yours</i>	UGA	58	58
	Carnegie Class	55	58
	Peer Group	53	55
<i>Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of religion, political opinions, or personal beliefs</i>	UGA	64	64
	Carnegie Class	58	59
	Peer Group	56	58

EDUCATIONAL GAINS

NSSE results grouped under the “Educational Gains” theme provide powerful indications of how much students perceive they learn while at UGA. These questions ask students directly to assess their own learning in areas of “general education” such as writing, speaking, and thinking critically and analytically as well as in areas of self-development, professional skills, and technological skills. Table 8 reports the results for some of these items. These results show that the vast majority of UGA students feel that they receive a broad general education. Two general trends were predominant in this table. First, UGA seniors were more likely to report these gains than first-years, which suggests that they have made substantial progress in these areas while at UGA. This claim is tentative, however, in the absence of longitudinal data. Second, UGA first-years reported slightly lower gains than their fellow students at Carnegie Class and Peer institutions, but these differences were reversed when seniors at the three groupings were compared.



OUTSIDE THE GEOGRAPHY BUILDING

Table 8: Educational gains

ITEM		FIRST-YEAR	SENIOR
<i>Has your institution helped you very much or quite a bit:</i>			
<i>To acquire a broad general education</i>	UGA	84%	84%
	Carnegie Class	82	80
	Peer Group	83	82
<i>To acquire job or work-related knowledge and skills</i>	UGA	60	72
	Carnegie Class	64	70
	Peer Group	65	70
<i>To think critically and analytically</i>	UGA	86	89
	Carnegie Class	83	86
	Peer Group	84	89
<i>To work effectively with others</i>	UGA	66	79
	Carnegie Class	70	76
	Peer Group	71	78
<i>To speak clearly and effectively</i>	UGA	57	72
	Carnegie Class	59	67
	Peer Group	57	67

In our analysis, we were able to pinpoint specific responses and to match 2008 first-years who responded as 2011 seniors (n=147). In general, this group of students acquired valuable skills and altered their thinking in positive ways through their UGA education. More specifically, comparing the changes in responses from 2008 to 2011 for this group, we found that:

- Students in this group show significant gains in the benchmark areas of Active and Collaborative Learning (19% higher), Faculty Interaction (21% higher), and Enriching Educational Experiences (45% higher). Seniors reported that compared to freshmen year, their coursework now put significantly more emphasis on applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations, and on synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships.
- Students gained significantly in effective learning and working skills through various learning activities, such as class presentation, discussion, working with other students on projects, and putting together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments.
- Students' relationships with faculty members grew significantly stronger over the four years, through working with faculty members on research projects, and on activities other than coursework, as well as seeking career advice.
- Students remained satisfied with UGA's positive contribution to their academic and personal growth. Especially in their senior year, they gave UGA high marks for contributing to their ability to think critically and analytically, speak clearly and effectively, learn effectively on their own while working effectively with others, and acquire job or work-related knowledge and skills.

The data that NSSE provides is a snapshot of how a student feels at a particular moment in time. What makes this set of responses especially valuable, however, is our ability to examine how a specific group viewed their education. The students not only felt satisfied, but they also pointed to specific activities and experiences that educational research regards as most important for engaging students and helping them become lifelong learners.

4. HOW UGA SHOULD RESPOND

Looking at the 2011 results, we can suggest several areas that deserve consideration, and we organize our comments around the four UGA themes.

In *Academic Expectations*, evidence of UGA students' continuing engagement is clear. UGA continues to follow up on recommendations from its previous internal assessments, namely the *Report of the Task Force on General Education and Student Learning* and the *Task Force on Writing: A Report for the Vice President for Instruction*.

On the other hand, UGA students continue to report that they work significantly less intensively than their peers at similar universities. These results reflect a continuing challenge in helping students realize a balance between their academic and social lives. Faculty and students need to discuss these results and how to address them, and survey results from BCSSE should form an important part of the conversation.

While some might interpret UGA's NSSE results as a need for more academic challenge, the Steering Committee believes that we need more engagement, particularly in the classroom. Anecdotally we know that students often choose courses based on time of day, reputation of the professor or perhaps the average grade given by a professor. Our campus may wish to encourage students to seek courses that will challenge and engage them. Current students could be an excellent resource in this effort. For example, the Student Government Association could further serve its constituency by providing information about quality courses to other students.

Since a primary goal of the new First-Year Odyssey program is to introduce students immediately and personally to the academic life of the institution, the seminars may provide an excellent forum for further conversations about the NSSE results. We should also share these results with faculty, encourage them to engage students on these issues, and pay close attention to student engagement after the seminar program has been in place for several years.

The University of Georgia community has done an outstanding job of expanding the *Learning Experiences* available to students, who have eagerly taken advantage of those opportunities. The excellent work in that area deserves recognition. Yet it also needs to continue, for UGA cannot rest in its efforts to provide its students with opportunities to study abroad, carry out research, or engage in service learning and community service.

Comparisons with peers indicate that opportunities may exist to enhance *Campus Connections* through increased student research with faculty members. Two new initiatives should address this need. First, the recent expansions of the CURO program, outlined above, should be continued. Second, the First-Year Odyssey seminars are designed to create and maintain

connections between first-year students and faculty members. It is important to note that in support of the goals of the First-Year Odyssey the university has dedicated considerable financial and other resources.

Finally, the follow-up conversations that UGA has always conducted to consider NSSE findings should continue to include the Student Government Association, the UGA Teaching Academy, the Center for Teaching and Learning, as well as the Office of the Vice President for Instruction. One outcome of these conversations should be to develop ways to meet our students' call for engagement in the classroom. While students perceive themselves as faring well on *Educational Gains*, we want to make sure that such gains are concrete and continuing.

A number of campus conversations about the NSSE results should take place throughout 2011-2012, and additional analyses, including a focus on BCSSE results, should be created.



THE MAIN LIBRARY

5. APPENDICES

Carnegie Class comparators:

- Florida State University
- Georgia Institute of Technology
- Georgia State University
- Indiana University Bloomington
- Iowa State University
- Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College
- Mississippi State University
- Montana State University-Bozeman
- North Carolina State University
- North Dakota State University
- Penn State University – University Park
- Stony Brook University
- Texas A&M University
- Tulane University of Louisiana
- University at Albany, SUNY
- University at Buffalo, State University of New York
- University of Central Florida
- University of Cincinnati
- University of Connecticut
- University of Delaware
- University of Hawai'i at Manoa
- University of Houston
- University of Iowa
- University of Maryland – College Park
- University of Massachusetts Amherst
- University of Minnesota – Twin Cities
- University of New Mexico
- University of South Carolina Columbia
- University of Tennessee Knoxville
- University of Utah
- University of Virginia
- University of Washington-Seattle
- University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Virginia Commonwealth University
- Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

UGA's selected peer comparators:

- Iowa State University
- Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College
- North Carolina State University
- Penn State University

- University of Iowa
- University of Maryland
- University of Minnesota
- University of Virginia
- University of Washington
- University of Wisconsin

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