

Executive Summary of the 2013 NSSE Results for Westminster College

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Westminster College (WC) has used the results of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) for the past eleven years to assess the degree to which WC freshmen and seniors are engaged in effective learning practices linked to academic success. Students complete the NSSE during the spring semester with administration by the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University. Average NSSE participation rates at Westminster are 58% for freshmen and 63% for seniors.

Table #1

Year	Respondent Count*		Response Rate (%)	
	FY	SR	FY	SR
2013	113	116	56%	59%
2012	144	98	59%	54%
2011	138	96	48%	67%
2010	207	116	63%	66%
2009	156	134	53%	68%
2008	149	111	68%	55%
2007	162	95	61%	56%
2006	189	91	76%	83%
2005	90	94	41%	61%
2004	109	72	56%	69%
2003	113	52	58%	54%
Averages == >			58%	63%

NSSE was redesigned for 2013 with an update of survey items and changes in the institutional reports. The focus is now on *Engagement Indicators* and *High Impact Practices*.

Table #2

2000-2012	2013 & Beyond	
Benchmarks	Themes	Engagement Indicators
Level of Academic Challenge	Academic Challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher-Order Learning Reflective & Integrative Learning Learning Strategies Quantitative Reasoning
Active and Collaborative Learning	Learning with Peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative Learning Discussions with Diverse Others
Student-Faculty Interaction	Experiences with Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student-Faculty Interactions Effective Teaching Practices
Supportive Campus Environment	Campus Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of Interactions Supportive Environment
Enriching Educational Experiences	High Impact Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning Communities Service-Learning Research with a Faculty Member Internship/Field Experience Study Abroad Culminating Senior Experience

Engagement Indicators

Westminster’s NSSE results are compared with mean responses of first-year (FY) and senior (SR) means for three groups.

Table #3

WC’s Comparison Institutions who Participate in NSSE	9 Institutions [3 <i>Aspirational</i> , 1 <i>Transitional</i> , 5 <i>Current Peers</i>]
Carnegie Class (Bac/A&S) Institutions	80 Institutions
NSSE 2013 Pool of Institutions	567 Institutions

Table #4 offers a comparison summary for FY students. Westminster’s FY means are among the top 50% of institutional means on seven (7) of 10 *Engagement Indicators* and among the top 10% of institutional means on three (3). Westminster FY students responses indicate strengths in three of four NSSE *Themes*: Learning with Peers, Experiences with Faculty, and Campus Environment. Within the theme of Academic Challenge, Quantitative Reasoning stands out as an area where Westminster’s FY mean is among the top 10% of institutional means. Further, Westminster’s FY mean is significantly higher than corresponding means of the three comparison groups of institutions.

Table #4: First-Year (FY) Students		WC's Mean Among Top 50% or Top 10%	WC's FY students compared with:		
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Engagement Indicator</i>		WC Comparison Institutions	Carnegie Class	NSSE 2013
Academic Challenge	Higher-Order Learning		--	--	--
	Reflective and Integrative Learning		--	--	--
	Learning Strategies		--	--	--
	Quantitative Reasoning	Top 10%	▲	▲	▲
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning	Top 50%	--	▲	▲
	Discussions with Diverse Others	Top 50%	--	--	▲
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction	Top 10%	--	▲	▲
	Effective Teaching Practices	Top 50%	--	--	▲
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions	Top 50%	--	--	▲
	Supportive Environment	Top 10%	--	--	▲

▲ = WC mean significantly higher (p<.05) with effect size > .3; ▲ = WC mean significantly higher (p<.05) with effect size < .3;

Academic Challenge: For Higher-Order Learning, Westminster students tended to indicate average levels of learning except for “Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source,” which they rated as occurring significantly less often than at comparison institutions.” Responses for “reflective and integrative learning” were very similar to those at comparison institutions. One area of learning strategies that Westminster FY students reported doing less than those of peers was “reviewing notes after class.” For quantitative reasoning, Westminster FY students reported doing more than students at comparison institutions in the following ways: 1) Reached conclusions based on your own analysis of numerical information (numbers, graphs, statistics, etc.), 2) Used numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue (unemployment, climate change, public health, etc.), and 3) Evaluated what others have concluded from numerical information.

Learning with Peers: Westminster FY students reported more collaborative learning, including explaining course material to others, and working in groups to prepare for exams or working on projects. They did not report more discussions with diverse others than did students at other institutions.

Experiences with Faculty: Westminster FY students were more likely to report that they 1) Worked w/faculty on activities other than coursework (committees, student groups, etc.), and 2) Discussed your academic performance with a faculty member.

Campus Environment: FY students rated their interactions with academic advisors more positively than did those at comparison institutions. Ratings of interactions with others (students, faculty, student life staff, registrar, financial aid office etc.) were approximately the same as at other institutions. Students were somewhat less likely to think that Westminster provided a good academic support system but more likely to think that the college provided support for contact with diverse others.

Table #5 offers a comparison summary for SR students. Westminster’s SR means are among the top 50% of institutional means on six (6) of 10 *Engagement Indicators* and among the top 10% of institutional means on two (2). The Westminster SR mean for items associated with Effective Teaching Practice was significantly lower than the corresponding mean of Westminster’s Comparison Institutions. Westminster SR students responses indicate strengths in all four NSSE *Themes*, especially in comparison to the entire sample of 567 institutions. Discussions with Diverse Others and Supportive Campus Environment stand out as areas where Westminster’s SR means are among the top 10% of institutional means. Disappointingly, though, Westminster seniors reported significantly lower scores for “effective teaching practices” than those at Westminster’s comparison institutions.

Table #5: Seniors		WC's Mean Among Top 50% or Top 10%	WC's seniors compared with:		
Theme	Engagement Indicator		WC Comparison Institutions	Carnegie Class	NSSE 2013
Academic Challenge	Higher-Order Learning	Top 50%	--	--	△
	Reflective and Integrative Learning	Top 50%	--	--	△
	Learning Strategies		--	--	--
	Quantitative Reasoning		--	--	--
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning	Top 50%	--	--	▲
	Discussions with Diverse Others	Top 10%	▲	▲	▲
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction	Top 50%	--	--	▲
	Effective Teaching Practices		▽	--	--
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions		--	--	△
	Supportive Environment	Top 10%	--	▲	▲

▲ = WC mean significantly higher (p<.05) with effect size > .3; △ = WC mean significantly higher (p<.05) with effect size < .3;

▽ = WC mean significantly lower (p<.05) with effect size < .3

Academic Challenge: Westminster SR students reported more “Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations,” “Included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments,” and “Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective.”

Learning with Peers: Like the FY students, Westminster SR students reported more collaborative learning experiences, including working in groups to prepare for exams and on group projects. They also reported more discussions with diverse others, including with people of different ethnicities and economic backgrounds and with people with different religious or political views.

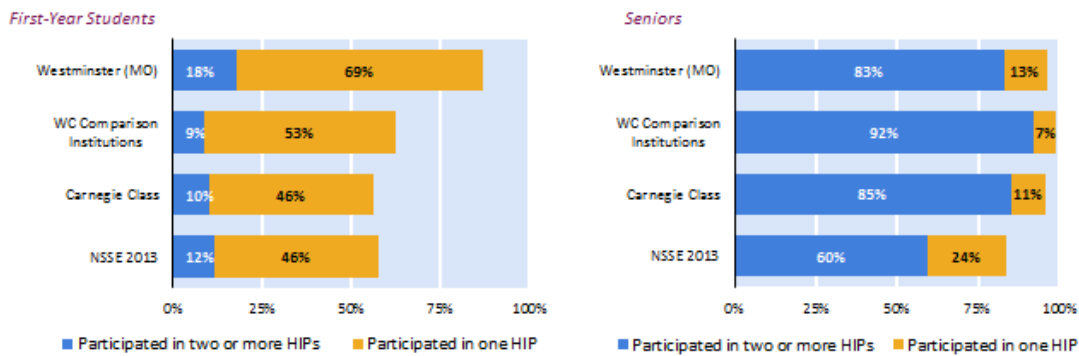
Experiences with Faculty: Like with FY students, Westminster SR students reported more likelihood that they “Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class.” However, Westminster faculty were rated lower than those at

comparison institutions in 1) “Taught course sessions in an organized way,” 2) “Used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points,” 3) “Provided feedback on a draft or work in progress,” and 4) “Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments.”

Campus Environment: Westminster SR students reported less positive interactions with fellow students, with academic advisors, and with student services and other administrative staff than did students at comparison institutions. Westminster SR students reported comparable levels of academic and social support and higher levels of support for engaging diverse others and “Attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues.”

High Impact Practices

The charts below display the percentage of students who participated in high-impact practices. Both charts include participation in learning communities, service-learning, and research with faculty. The SR chart also includes participation in internships or field experiences, study abroad, and culminating senior experiences. The first segment in each bar shows the percentage of students who participated in at least two *High Impact Practices*. The full bar (both colors) represents the percentage who participated in at least one *High Impact Practice*.



Larger percentages of Westminster’s FY students participate in *High Impact Practices* than do FY students at the other three groups of institutions. Westminster’s SR participation in *High Impact Practices* is greater than participation across the entire NSSE pool of institutions and is more similar to participation rates for SR’s at other baccalaureate institutions.

Voluntary Modules

Westminster decided to include two additional sets of questions as part of the NSEE 2013 administration. Participating students completed items designed to assess their engagement in activities associated with *Civic Engagement* [see Table #6] and *Diverse Perspectives* [see Table #7].

The NSSE 2013 results for the Civic Engagement module provide evidence that Westminster is providing curricular and co-curricular experiences that support student civic engagement. Westminster’s FY and SR means on all items are essentially equal to or greater than the means of their peers at the other sixteen institutions. Eight of ten means of Westminster FY and SRs are significantly higher than equivalent means of their peers on the other campus.

Table #6
Civic Engagement Module

Statistical Comparisons^b

Westminster (MO)	Civic Engagement Institutions N = 16		
Mean	Mean	sig.	Effect size ^d

Westminster (MO)	Civic Engagement Institutions N = 16		
Mean	Mean	sig.	Effect size ^d

First-Year Students

1. Select the response that best represents your ability to do the following: 1 = Poor to 7 = Excellent

a. Help people resolve their disagreements with each other	5.1	5.2		-.10
b. Resolve conflicts that involve bias, discrimination, and prejudice	4.9	4.9		-.01
c. Lead a group where people from different backgrounds feel welcomed and included	5.0	5.1		-.09
d. Contribute to the well-being of your community	5.4	5.4		.01

Seniors

5.6	5.4		.15
5.3	5.1		.14
5.5	5.5		.01
5.6	5.6		-.07

2. During the current school year, whether course-related or not, about how often have you done the following? 1 = Never to 4 = Very Often

a. Informed yourself about local or campus issues	2.7	2.5	**	.25
b. Informed yourself about state, national, or global issues	2.6	2.7		-.07
c. Discussed local or campus issues with others	2.7	2.4	**	.29
d. Discussed state, national, or global issues with others	2.6	2.6		.05
e. Raised awareness about local or campus issues	2.1	1.8	***	.45
f. Raised awareness about state, national, or global issues	2.1	1.9	**	.29
g. Asked others to address local or campus issues	2.2	1.7	***	.59
h. Asked others to address state, national, or global issues	1.9	1.7	**	.29
i. Organized others to work on local or campus issues	1.9	1.4	***	.57
j. Organized others to work on state, national, or global issues	1.8	1.4	***	.50

2.8	2.6	**	.27
3.0	3.0		.06
2.9	2.6	***	.35
2.9	2.8		.11
2.2	1.9	**	.26
2.3	2.1	*	.24
2.1	1.8	***	.35
2.1	1.8	*	.23
2.0	1.6	***	.41
1.8	1.6	**	.26

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, and *** $p < .001$ (2-tailed)

The NSSE 2013 results from the Experience with Diverse Perspectives module provide very strong evidence that Westminster is providing impressive curricular and co-curricular experiences with diversity. Westminster’s FY and SR means, with one exception, are significantly greater than the means of their peers at the other nineteen institutions.

Table #7
Experience with Diverse Perspectives

Statistical Comparisons^b

Westminster (MO)		Diverse Perspectives Institutions N = 19	
Mean	Mean	Sig.	Effect size ^d

Westminster (MO)		Diverse Perspectives Institutions N = 19	
Mean	Mean	Sig.	Effect size ^d

First-Year Students

Seniors

1. During the current school year, to what extent have events or activities offered at your institution emphasized perspectives on societal differences (economic, ethnic, political, religious, etc.)? 1 = Very Little to 4 = Very Much

2.9	2.7	**	.28
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2.9	2.6	**	.28
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2. During the current school year, about how often have you attended events or activities that encouraged you to examine your understanding of the following? 1 = Never to 4 = Very Often

	Westminster (MO)	Mean	Sig.	Effect size ^d
a. Economic or social inequality	2.3	1.9	***	.49
b. Issues of race, ethnicity, or nationality	2.4	1.9	***	.47
c. Religious or philosophical differences	2.5	1.9	***	.59
d. Different political viewpoints	2.2	1.8	***	.55
e. Issues of gender or sexual orientation	2.2	1.8	***	.44

	Westminster (MO)	Mean	Sig.	Effect size ^d
a. Economic or social inequality	2.2	1.9	***	.34
b. Issues of race, ethnicity, or nationality	2.2	1.9	**	.36
c. Religious or philosophical differences	2.2	1.9	***	.41
d. Different political viewpoints	2.2	1.8	***	.46
e. Issues of gender or sexual orientation	2.1	1.8	***	.46

3. During the current school year, about how often have you had discussions about the following? 1 = Never to 4 = Very Often

	Westminster (MO)	Mean	Sig.	Effect size ^d
f. Economic or social inequality	2.7	2.7		.18
g. Issues of race, ethnicity, or nationality	2.8	2.8	**	.27
h. Religious or philosophical differences	2.8	2.8	**	.28
i. Different political viewpoints	2.7	2.7	**	.31
j. Issues of gender or sexual orientation	2.6	2.6	*	.22

	Westminster (MO)	Mean	Sig.	Effect size ^d
f. Economic or social inequality	2.9	2.7	*	.22
g. Issues of race, ethnicity, or nationality	2.9	2.6	***	.33
h. Religious or philosophical differences	2.9	2.6	**	.28
i. Different political viewpoints	2.8	2.6	**	.30
j. Issues of gender or sexual orientation	2.8	2.5	**	.27

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, and *** $p < .001$ (2-tailed)

Overall Conclusions

NSSE 2013 results provide strong evidence to indicate that Westminster offers an environment characterized by relatively high levels of student engagement. Westminster performs well when compared with other institutions, both similar baccalaureate institutions and the broader NSSE pool that represents all higher education sectors.

Westminster means are higher than corresponding means of institutions in the top 50% of all NSSE institutions on seven of ten *Engagement Indicators* for first year students and six of ten for seniors.

Westminster FY students are reporting significantly higher involvement with High-Impact Practices than their peers at other institutions. Westminster SR students report higher involvement with High-Impact Practices that is found for entire NSSE pool, but just slightly lower levels than their SR peers at other baccalaureate institutions.

Westminster students appear to be both very engaged and satisfied with their Westminster educational experience, a perception that has remained consistent across the eleven years that Westminster has been participating in the NSSE. NSSE 2013 results also certainly continue to support a belief that Westminster is successfully offering a supportive learning environment for students....and further, provides greater opportunities for students to engage in the learning activities at levels beyond what is commonly found at other higher education institutions.