

**Lake Forest College
NSSE 2011
Administered Spring 2011**

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Introduction

Lake Forest College administered NSSE (the National Survey of Student Engagement) in the spring of 2011. Previous surveys have been given in 2007 and 2008. The College is beginning to administer the survey on a three year cycle.

The results discussed here compare:

- Lake Forest to the NSSE universe, and in particular those schools scoring in the top 10%,
- Lake Forest 2011 compared to 2008. First Years to First Years and Seniors to Seniors
- Lake Forest compared to a comparison group of selected liberal arts colleges in both 2008 and 2011

Generally, the benchmark scores were very favorable. Lake Forest compared well to the NSSE Top 10% group for three of the five categories, and two categories showed significant improvement since 2008. Lake Forest also was comparable to or better than the means of the peer group, except for one benchmark.

What is NSSE

The survey is administered nationally. This year 751 schools participated.

Extract from the NSSE 2011 Overview

“The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects information annually from first-year and senior students about the nature and quality of their undergraduate experience. Since its inception, nearly 1,500 baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities in the United States and Canada have used NSSE to measure the extent to which students engage in effective educational practices that are empirically linked with learning, personal development, and other desired outcomes such as satisfaction, persistence, and graduation. NSSE data are used by faculty, administrators, researchers, and others for institutional improvement, accountability, and related purposes.”

The survey is administered over the Web to volunteers in the First Year and Senior Class. All students in those classes receive an invitation to participate. Lake Forest had a participation rate in 2011 overall of 43%: 46% of the First Years and 37% of the Seniors responded. The respondents were 60% female and 40% male.

NSSE compiles the results and organizes 85 of the questions into 5 benchmarks. These benchmarks are then compared against the average results from selected comparison groups. A description of the benchmarks is included on the next page. The actual questions that are used are shown in the appendix.

Format

Throughout the report, the mean scores for Lake Forest are compared to the means from different groups. The term “comparable” in this report is used to describe a Lake Forest mean that can’t be shown to be significantly different from the other group’s mean; statistically the difference is not meaningful or significant. When statistical calculations do show a difference, this report follows convention by using the symbol * to indicate a “significant” difference.

In the charts below, where there is nothing in the “sig” column, such as for LAC and NSSE Top 10%, the reader can conclude that Lake Forest students are *as engaged* as the students in the comparison group. We cannot conclude, however, that Lake Forest is *in* the Top 10% of NSSE schools.

When there is at least one * in the column, that means that the groups are truly different from each other. The presence of ** or *** means that we are *even more* sure that this is true. These are used to mark confidence levels in the difference.

Description of Benchmarks

Level of Academic Challenge (LAC)

“Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Colleges and universities promote high levels of student achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance.”

Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL)

“Students learn more when they are intensely involved in their education and asked to think about what they are learning in different setting. Collaborating with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material prepares students for the messy, unscripted problems they will encounter daily during and after college.”

Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)

“Students learn firsthand how experts think about and solve practical problems by interacting with faculty members inside and outside the classroom. As a result, their teachers become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, life-long learning.”

Educational Enriching Experience (EEE)

“Complementary learning opportunities enhance academic programs. Diversity experiences teach students valuable things about themselves and others. Technology facilitates collaboration between peers and instructors. Internships, community service, and senior capstone courses provide opportunities to integrate and apply knowledge.”

Supportive Campus Environment (SCE)

“Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relations among different groups on campus.”

2011 to 2008 Comparison, with NSSE Top 10%

The NSSE Top 10% is the group of schools administering the survey in 2011 with the highest scores. There were 751 institutions participating this year. The Top 10% could contain all sizes and types of institutions.

For First Years, Lake Forest compared well both years with the top 10% for Level of Academic Challenge (LAC) and Supportive Campus Environment (SCE). In 2011, the mean for Student Faculty Interaction (SFI) improved and became comparable to the Top 10%. Lake Forest’s responses are lower than the Top 10% for Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL) and Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE). See the appendix for the results for individual questions that comprise the benchmarks.

Below, the color green is used to highlight the results when Lake Forest is not significantly different from the Top 10%. Cells with no color show the symbol * to indicate the degree of difference.

First Years

	2011			2008		
	Lake Forest	NSSE		Lake Forest	NSSE	
		Top 10%		Top 10%		
	Mean	Mean	Sig	Mean	Mean	Sig
LAC	60.5	60.6		60.6	60.7	
ACL	48.9	52.1	**	44.7	51.6	***
SFI	42.5	43.7		40.9	43.6	*
EEE	30.1	33.7	***	31.0	33.0	*
SCE	70.7	71.2		67.0	68.5	

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

Seniors in 2011 improved greatly in SCE over 2008. The score this year is comparable to the Top 10% group. Lake Forest seniors continue to be lower than the Top10% in ACL.

Seniors

	2011			2008		
	Lake Forest	NSSE		Lake Forest	NSSE	
		Top 10%		Top 10%		
	Mean	Mean	Sig	Mean	Mean	Sig
LAC	65.5	64.1		64.2	63.3	
ACL	55.1	60.1	**	52.4	59.7	***
SFI	52.9	56.0		54.7	55.3	
EEE	50.6	55.3	*	52.5	54.3	
SCE	65.7	68.7		59.5	66.7	***

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

Notice that the two categories, ACL and EEE, are below the Top 10% for both first years and seniors. EEE will have a fuller discussion below in the comparison to the peer group. This benchmark is a weakness for Lake Forest in both comparisons. However, ACL is interesting because it appears to be a category that Baccalaureate A&S schools do not generally do well on, which may perhaps mean that the activities measured are not of interest to us. For example, in 2008 at the schools in the Top 10%, 50% of the seniors said they “asked a question in class or contributed to class discussion” very often, which was also the *average for all* Bac/A&S schools. Yet, in the Top 10%, 43% of seniors said they “made a class presentation” very often, but at Bac/A&S schools the response for “very often” was only 23%.

Peer Groups

Although NSSE allows the selection of three comparison groups, in this report we will only discuss the difference between Lake Forest and the group of selected liberal arts colleges. The schools included in that peer group are shown below. They were chosen from the universe of liberal arts schools administering the survey last spring.

Peer 2011

Institution Name	City	State
Bard College at Simon's Rock	Great Barrington	MA
Beloit College	Beloit	WI
Bryn Mawr College	Bryn Mawr	PA
College of the Holy Cross	Worcester	MA
DePauw University	Greencastle	IN
Drew University	Madison	NJ
Grinnell College	Grinnell	IA
Hamilton College	Clinton	NY
Harvey Mudd College	Claremont	CA
Kalamazoo College	Kalamazoo	MI
Kenyon College	Gambier	OH
Luther College	Decorah	IA
Macalester College	Saint Paul	MN
Middlebury College	Middlebury	VT
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College	Saint Mary-Of-The-Woods	IN
Scripps College	Claremont	CA
St. Lawrence University	Canton	NY
St. Olaf College	Northfield	MN
Wabash College	Crawfordsville	IN

Peer 2008 – these were the schools included in that peer group.

Institution Name	City	State
Amherst College	Amherst	MA
Beloit College	Beloit	WI
Colgate University	Hamilton	NY
Colorado College	Colorado Springs	CO
Connecticut College	New London	CT
Denison University	Granville	OH
Earlham College	Richmond	IN
Franklin and Marshall College	Lancaster	PA
Furman University	Greenville	SC
Hamilton College	Clinton	NY
Macalester College	Saint Paul	MN
Middlebury College	Middlebury	VT
Rollins College	Winter Park	FL
Swarthmore College	Swarthmore	PA
Vassar College	Poughkeepsie	NY
Washington and Lee University	Lexington	VA
Wheaton College	Norton	MA
Whitman College	Walla Walla	WA
Willamette University	Salem	OR

Comparison to Peer Group

First Year Students

	2011			2008		
	Lake Forest	Peer 2011		Lake Forest	Peer 2008	
	Mean	Mean	sig	Mean	Mean	sig
LAC	60.5	61.7		60.6	59.9	
ACL	48.9	47.1		44.7	45.5	
SFI	42.5	37.9	***	40.9	38.0	*
EEE	30.1	33.0	**	31.0	32.0	
SCE	70.7	70.4		67.0	66.2	

Here we see that the mean for First Year students at Lake Forest was comparable to the mean at these peer schools for 3 of the benchmarks. Student Faculty Interaction was a higher score in both years and a particularly higher score in 2011. For SFI, the Lake Forest averages for four of the six questions were significantly higher than the Peers. Lake Forest responses were higher for “discussed grades or assignments with an instructor”, “talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor”, “worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework”, and “received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance”.

Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE) was lower this year. This is a category with questions more pertinent to seniors, such as “study abroad” and “culminating senior experience”. For first years, most responses are low in this category, but compared to the peer group Lake Forest scores very low in “foreign language coursework”.

Seniors

	2011			2008		
	Lake Forest	Peer 1 Select		Lake Forest	Peer 1 Carnegie	
	Mean	Mean	sig	Mean	Mean	sig
LAC	65.5	65.4		64.2	63.5	
ACL	55.1	53.9		52.4	52.8	
SFI	52.9	52.1		54.7	51.7	
EEE	50.6	56.8	**	52.5	55.7	*
SCE	65.7	65.1		59.5	62.9	*

The Seniors were lower than the 2011 Peers on only one item, EEE. There are three questions in this group where Lake Forest means were significantly lower: “practicum, internship, field experience”, “foreign language coursework”, and “study abroad”. The difference in the means for “foreign language coursework” had an effect size of $-.84$, which is large.

The improvement in SCE is attributable to two questions: “relationships with other students” and to whether the institution provides “the support you need to thrive socially”. The responses to those questions were low in 2008 and in 2007. This year, they were comparable. One Lake Forest response, however, was significantly higher than the peer group and that one was “relationships with administrative personnel and offices”.

Although Lake Forest’s scores for ACL were not comparable to the NSSE Top 10%, they were higher than the means for the peer group.

Questions that are not in the benchmark data

Satisfaction

There are some questions in the survey which are not included in the benchmarks. Below are the responses to two questions which were included in the 2008 report. Although the mean responses are positive, they are also very significantly different from the peer means. The first question evaluates the entire educational experience, and an answer of “3” is for “Good”. For the second question, an answer of “3” means “Probably yes”. Although the First Years scored well overall for engagement on the benchmarks above, the chart below shows they indicated that they were less satisfied and less committed to the institution than students in the peer group. The retention of first years into sophomore year has improved greatly in these two groups, which may indicate that satisfaction is not a key driver in retention.

Satisfaction	2011				2008			
		Lake Forest	Peers		Lake Forest	Peers		
		Mean	Mean	sig	Mean	Mean	sig	
How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution? (1 = Poor....4 = Excellent)	FY	3.26	3.57	***	3.19	3.41	***	
	SR	3.32	3.58	***	3.36	3.50	**	
If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending? (1 = Definitely no....5 = Definitely yes)	FY	3.08	3.46	***	3.02	3.27	***	
	SR	3.07	3.38	***	3.11	3.28	**	

Time Usage

Students were asked a set of questions pertaining to hours per week spent in a typical 7-day week. Lake Forest students spent less time on “preparing for class” and less time “relaxing and socializing”. They spent more time on “commuting”, “working for pay off campus” and “providing care for dependents living with you”.

Background Items

Lake Forest respondents were more likely to be international: 21% of the seniors characterized themselves as “international student or foreign national” compared to 6% in the peer group.

Lake Forest First Year respondents (LFFY) were more likely to be non-white: 53% reported themselves as US white at LF and 68% reported that way in the peer group.

Lake Forest respondents were more likely to be transfer students: 8% of the first years compared to 3% in the peer group, and 16% of the Seniors compared to 10% in the peer group.

LFFY were more likely to self-report as a “student athlete”: 31% of First Years compared to 25% in the peer group, and 25% of Seniors compared to 20% in the peer group.

LFFY reported lower grades. The question was “what have most of your grades been up to now at this institution?” 33% of our students selected responses lower than a “B”, compared to 11% in the peer group.

LFFY are less likely to live on campus. 80% reported on campus, compared to 93% in the peer group. Seniors were similar to the peer group.

LFFY reported the highest level of education completed by their fathers, and 47% of them said “attended, no degree” for college or less. In the peer group, this was 23%.

Lake Forest First Year and Senior respondents were more likely to report their “primary major or expected primary major” to be Business or Education: 23% for Lake Forest First Years compared to 4% in the peer group, and 13% for Seniors compared to 5% in the peer group.

Conclusion

NSSE is a survey of students self-reporting their engagement in activities which NSSE has determined to be important to various aspects of student success. The report allows us to compare how much our students engage in those activities compared to select peer groups.

Lake Forest students have similar levels of engagement, as measured on this instrument, with those institutions scoring in the Top 10% of all schools taking the test in 2011, for Level of Academic Challenge, Student Faculty Interaction, and Supportive Campus Environment. When measured against a group of selective national liberal arts colleges, Lake Forest compares well also in Active and Collaborative Learning. The only category that consistently falls lower is Enriching Educational Experiences, which is a factor of lower student participation in study abroad, internships and foreign language instruction. The Lake Forest First Year students were significantly higher than the peer group for Student Faculty Interaction, in both 2011 and 2008 but very significantly in 2011.