

*Spring Hill College*

*NSSE NOTES*  
*Enriching Educational Experiences*

*Introduction*

Among the harder tasks in assessing the success of a college or university are separating reputation from action, and untangling the quality of the students coming in from the quality of the students going out. Even if this can be done, there remains the not-so-simple task of knowing if the college in question is doing poorly, average, or well compared to other institutions. Finally, there is the need of colleges to take action to improve. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is an effort to deal with all of these issues. By concentrating on student engagement, the survey seeks to untangle reputation from quality. It seeks to ask what a college does, not how good the students are. The results are then broadly benchmarked to allow comparison to similar institutions. Finally, the creators of NSSE emphasize that the intent is to improve colleges, not just measure what they do.

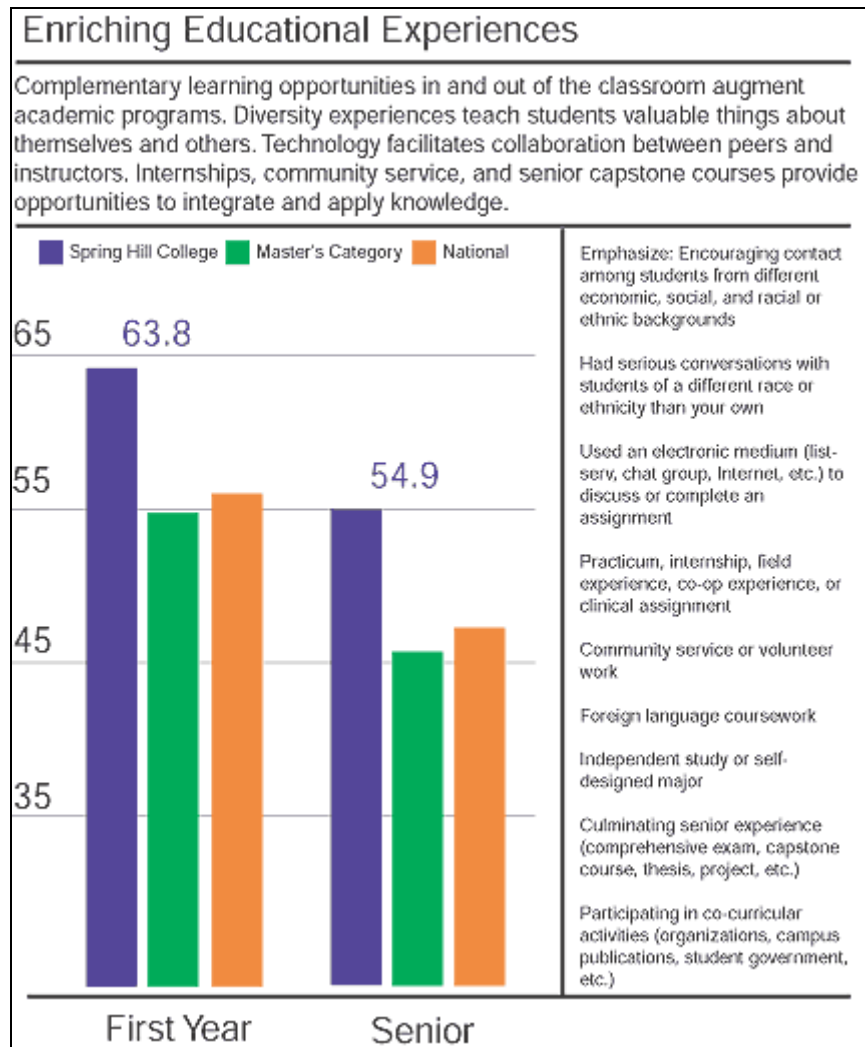
Spring Hill College participated in NSSE in 2002. The survey, done near the end of the spring semester, asked a series of questions of first-year students and students about to graduate. The results have been aggregated into five main benchmarks of “effective educational practices:”

- Level of academic challenge
- Active and collaborative learning
- Student-faculty interaction
- Enriching educational experiences
- Supportive campus environment

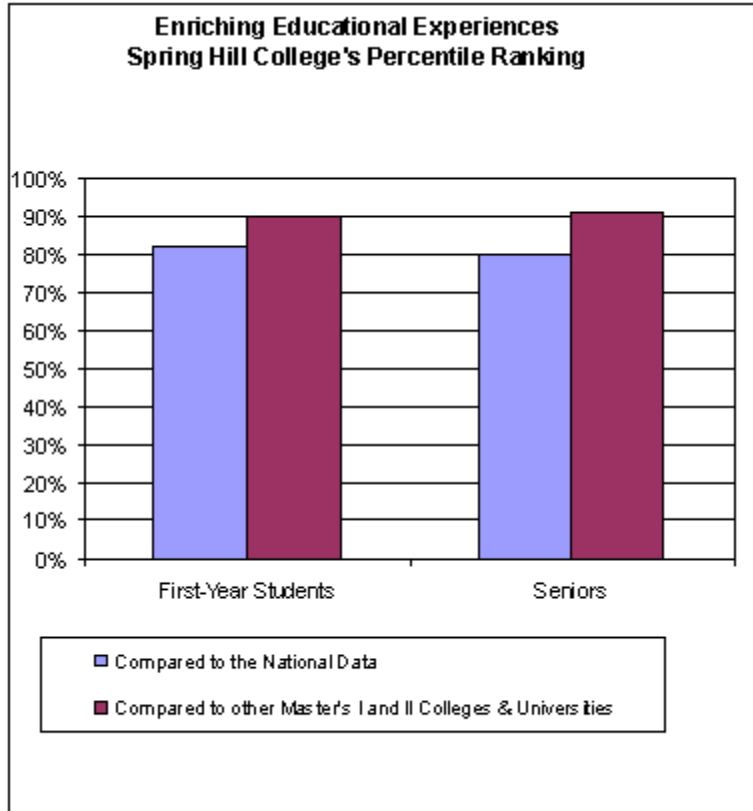
To explore the results more fully, the College conducted a “NSSE Summit” during the beginning of the Spring 2003 semester. At this gathering, a cross-section of 63 students discussed the results with 13 faculty facilitators. This second in a series of *NSSE Notes* will summarize results pertaining to “Enriching Educational Experiences” from both the Survey and the Summit and, we hope, point us in the direction of making Spring Hill College an even stronger institution than we currently are.

## *ENRICHING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES*

### Overall Benchmark Results



The numbers in the chart represent index numbers that can hypothetically range from zero to 100. An institution would receive a ranking 100 if 100% of survey participants answered each question in the index with the most favorable possible response. Actual values do not vary by the fullest possible extent. For example, for first-year students at master's institutions, the highest score of any school was 71.4, while the lowest was 40.1.



These results show that Spring Hill's enriching educational experiences index score for first-year students ranks higher than the matching score of more than 80% of the participating schools nationwide, and higher than the index score for first-year students at more than 90% of the master's institutions in the study. For seniors, our results are almost identical. These results rank us in the top 10% to 20% of all schools surveyed.

Enriching Educational Experiences							
2002 NSSE Results	First-year students			Seniors			
Item	Spring Hill College	Master's Institutions	National Results	Spring Hill College	Master's Institutions	National Results	Scale
Overall Index Score	63.8	54.0	56.3	54.9	45.7	48.0	0 to 100
Time spent participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, etc.)	2.39	1.96	2.10	2.16	1.85	2.04	hrs/week: 1 = none 2 = 1 to 5 3 = 6 to 10
Participated or plan to participate in community service or volunteer work	90%	93%	94%	74%	76%	76%	% answering yes
Had or plan to have foreign language coursework	83%	59%	61%	58%	39%	44%	
Did or plan to do study abroad	55%	49%	56%	25%	15%	20%	
Did or plan to do independent study or self-designed major	24%	27%	28%	21%	29%	31%	
Had or plan to have a culminating senior experience (comprehensive exam, capstone course, thesis, project, etc.)	88%	73%	76%	92%	60%	63%	
Had serious conversations with students who differ from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	2.77	2.62	2.70	2.80	2.59	2.64	1 = never 2 = sometimes 3 = often 4 = very often
Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own	2.90	2.53	2.59	2.89	2.56	2.58	
Used an electronic medium (list-serv, chat group, Internet, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment	2.84	2.57	2.61	2.77	2.77	2.76	
Campus environment emphasizes encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	2.97	2.52	2.55	2.54	2.39	2.38	
significantly better than at least one reference group:							
significantly worse than at least one reference group:							

## *Enriching Educational Experiences*

### **Student Reflections from the “NSSE Summit”**

#### **Which, if any, of these results surprise you and why?**

- The only result that somewhat surprises me is “Time spent participating in co-curricular activities.” ‘Guesstimating’ I would say that not too many SHC students are in co-curricular activities but since we have a lot of athletes it’s not too surprising.
- I am surprised that overall the freshmen have a more positive regard for their experience at Spring Hill than seniors do and I wonder why this is, especially in areas like internships and volunteer work.
- Different race or ethnicity. It seems like everyone of different races are in one part of campus (i.e. Murray).
- Study abroad—55% Freshmen, 25% Sr. Year
- I found it a little surprising that so many first year students had planned to do internships, community service, etc. while this number was lower in seniors. Also, foreign language coursework in seniors seems low—isn’t it a requirement??
- None of them surprise me in particular.
- Study Abroad was higher than I thought. I don’t really hear about it
- The results about having “serious conversation with students of a different race or ethnicity” surprised me because Spring Hill isn’t all that socially diverse.
- The decrease in percentage of students who did or plan to study abroad, because it seems that 1st years plan to, but those who plan to or actually do it as Seniors is much smaller. Implies need more advertising for this and other things.
- The campus emphasizing contact among student from different backgrounds etc, I have never seen any actions that would show this.
- I was surprised with the result that time spent participating in co-curricular activities was 2.39. I think that students spend more time in co-curricular activities. Language coursework should be 100% because it is mandatory to take language classes to graduate.
- Foreign language not 100%--a requirement to graduate; 20% decrease in seniors’ participation in community service; co-curricular & outside experience in general.

#### **Can you think of situations you have experienced that demonstrate how/why the results on any individual items are higher or lower?**

- I am involved in SGA, I’ve had two internships, done community service, know a foreign language, studied abroad, basically done a thesis, had conversation with students who differ than me, use electronic mediums, and enjoy the campus environment. So yes, that’s why results are higher or at least equal, but not lower.
- Study abroad—I would have expected it to be much lower.
- Study Abroad—not really emphasized. Plus with some majors it would seem like you are simply falling a semester behind. Independent study—who has time for that as a senior?
- The core classes at SHC help students to experience a lot more than I think students at a non-Jesuit institution would. I think SHC could be a little more diverse, but that is dependent on who applies . . .
- In all of the individual items that are higher, I can think of specific examples to demonstrate them. There are many campus organizations, an emphasis on volunteer service, a required senior project, a widely diverse student body, and teachers who integrate technology into their classes.
- “The electronic medium” question could be higher because Spring Hill has very little technology in the classroom and could benefit from updating the Internet, i.e. having a wireless connection.
- A good explanation for the very high results in both community service and foreign language involvement I think have to do with the existence of the Foley Center and the language requirement.
- We NEED a Recycling Program!!
- For example, the use of an electronic medium to complete an assignment is high because a lot of faculty members use ERes to help or assign work.
- There is a group of students that are very active in many organizations on campus. So doing work for such clubs, sports and school can be very overwhelming at times.

-- Small groups of students are active in many organizations whereas others do not participate at all. ERes (use of technology).

**Can your group agree on one item that faculty and students should focus on for further discussion and improvement?**

Group 1: -- How to make the classroom more interesting and engaging.

Group 2: -- Class format- don't just lecture.

## *Enriching Educational Experiences*

### **Faculty Notes (of student responses) from the “NSSE Summit”**

#### **Which, if any, of these results surprise you and why?**

Time spent in co-curricular activities should be higher except for sports.  
Self designed majors higher than expected.  
Foreign language- Seniors should be higher.  
Spring Hill does a terrible job with study abroad 1) don't advertise 2) don't promote it.  
Why do scores between freshmen and seniors go down?  
Surprised by first item- lower than expected number hours  
Why wasn't foreign language higher? It's required; some place out, but not that many.  
Study abroad - why so high as freshman? Why decrease? Not pushed. Don't hear about it unless you know someone who did it.  
Campus environment happens on its own. Events planned but people don't go.

#### **Can you think of situations you have experienced that demonstrate how/why the results on any individual items are higher or lower?**

Electronic medium use would be higher if Internet worked. Other colleges have wireless campuses.  
Foley Center boosts community service here. All at table have done and do it now. Clubs and organizations also pushed services. Teams.  
Service-learning (e.g., Forström's ethics), but some students left out of the service scholarships.  
SHORES camping; most of the people who went were not club members so got to know more people.  
ERes – we like using it; like PowerPoint.  
Question- do students get lazier because they can go to ERes? Teacher tests on material that is not on ERes.  
Expected race/ethnic question to be lower because students stay separate.  
Student life gives opportunities to interact.  
Not great diversity in race or religion.  
Very cliquish, more comfortable with those like you.  
In class people mix much.  
We're doing well in minority education for schools our size.  
It's obvious looking around cafeteria that incoming class more diverse.  
Athletics may explain co-curricular activities participation  
As you progress in your college career, academics becomes more and more important to students and have less time to devote to other things (co-curricular, study abroad)

#### **In the classes in which you feel “engaged,” what’s happening? What are you doing? What is the faculty member doing?**

Most classes are engaging  
a) Class size makes big difference.  
b) Discussion classes versus lecture allows for more interaction and engagement. Also, interacting through in-class group work  
c) Displayed interest by professors in topic. Teacher organized and work returned in a timely manner.  
d) Students prepared.  
Teacher who is enthusiastic, tells stories, ask questions.  
Interaction with the teacher, engaged classes - faculty don't allow students to zone out.  
Use of multimedia- lecture/questions/multimedia/group/class  
Daily assignments  
Discussion in general without having to take notes  
Lecture- doesn't work even with visual aids  
Ability to feel free to share opinions even if different

**How can faculty help you to become more engaged in your learning?**

More classroom engagement, less lectures/powerpoint

Don't lecture for a whole class

Good sense of humor

Be excited about being there

Ask questions directly to students

Go outside- e.g., drawing, measuring the Avenue of the Oaks.

Adjust to class size

Play games

For freshmen, make classroom inviting for sharing since they don't know people

Sharing- interaction

Flexible- change format every once in a while

More faculty should be involved in student organizations- really disappointed that only small groups of the faculty attend

Nurture body, mind and spirit

Sorority event faculty attended

Springhillian should advertise events

**Can your group agree on one item that faculty and students should focus on for further discussion and improvement?**

How to make classroom experience more engaging.

Class format-don't just lecture.