

***NSSE NOTES***  
***STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTION***

***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 itself. 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 them.

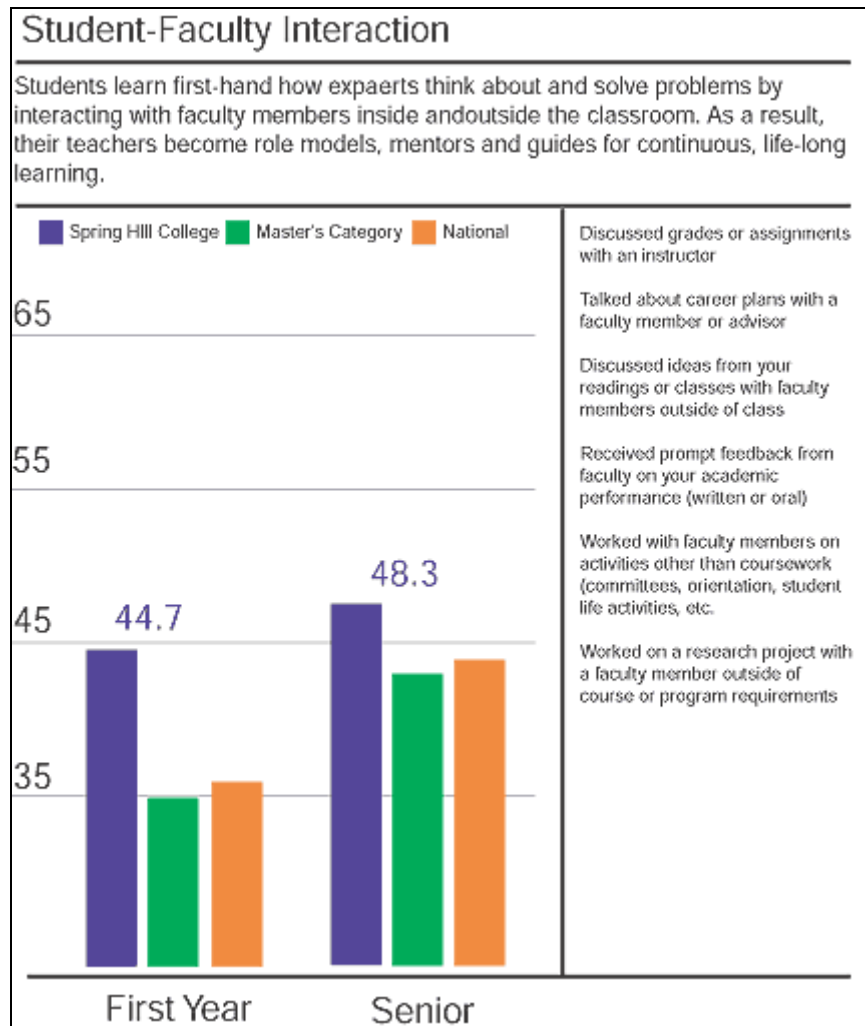
Spring Hill College participated in NSSE in 2002. The survey, done near the end of the spring semester, asked a series of questions of first-year students and students about to graduate. The results have been aggregated into five main benchmarks of “effective educational practices:”

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

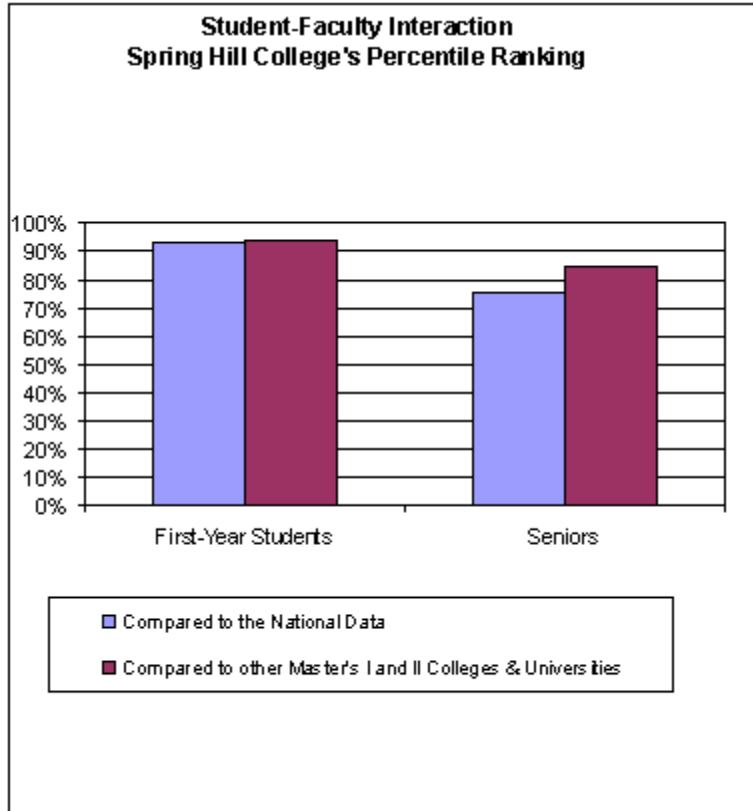
To explore the results more fully, the College conducted a “NSSE Summit” during the beginning of the Spring 2003 semester. At this gathering, a cross-section of 63 students discussed the results with 13 faculty facilitators. In this third in the series of *NSSE Notes*, we summarize results from both 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.

## STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTION

### 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 51.7, while the lowest was 23.0.



These results show that Spring Hill’s student-faculty interaction index score for first-year students ranks higher than the same score of more than 90% of the participating schools, both in the national sample and in the sample of master’s institutions in the study. For seniors, our results are still above national averages. It is not surprising that the senior ratings are not as outstanding as the first-year scores: In large institutions, first-year students often have little faculty contact, but as seniors this increases greatly. At Spring Hill, we have close faculty contact with students from day one.

<b>Student-Faculty Interaction</b>							
<b>2002 NSSE Results</b>	First-year students			Seniors			Scale
Item	Spring Hill College	Master's Institutions	National Results	Spring Hill College	Master's Institutions	National Results	
Overall Index Score	44.7	35.0	36.2	48.3	41.9	43.5	0 to 100
Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	2.89	2.57	2.60	2.90	2.79	2.81	1=never 2=sometimes 3=often 4=very often
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	2.39	2.13	2.16	2.66	2.41	2.45	
Discussed ideas from your reading or classes with faculty members outside of class	2.05	1.77	1.80	2.33	2.06	2.08	
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)	2.08	1.50	1.53	1.87	1.75	1.81	
Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance (written or oral)	2.87	2.58	2.62	3.02	2.80	2.81	
Worked or plan to work on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements	44%	45%	51%	20%	24%	28%	
significantly better than at least one reference group:							
significantly worse than at least one reference group:							

## ***Student-Faculty Interaction***

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

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

- “Career plans” discussion for seniors (2.66). In my opinion, students should begin discussing their careers during their JUNIOR year.
- I would have hoped that the talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor would have been higher than average. With this being such a small school and it being one of the better schools in the south you’d hope we could have better job placement. Maybe as a junior, advisors could schedule meetings to do this or even as sophomores, because at that point the advisor needs to play a major role.
- As a freshman, there was less feedback about grades than seniors. Drastic change in the amount of students from freshman to senior year planning to work with faculty. Why is this, lack of opportunities?
- 44% of the freshmen worked or plan to work on research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements. I have never heard of anyone doing this but it sounds very interesting.
- Senior talking about career plans- the main time to talk about careers or grad school.
- The results which stated that 44% of freshman students planned to work on a project with a faculty member outside of course requirements. It’s been my experience that freshmen aren’t that ambitious so early on in their college career.
- The size of SHC makes it easier for our institution to score higher on student-faculty interaction, especially among freshmen. The treatment of freshmen at SHC, especially the lack of TA’s and large number of PH. D. faculty in the core curriculum to which all freshmen are exposed, makes SHC’s high score, as well as the freshman-senior difference not surprising. At larger schools, seniors begin to enjoy the class sizes SHC freshman experience.
- None are very surprising because it seems fairly obvious that students and faculty at SHC communicate well and make the effort to interact.
- None
- I cannot believe how low the seniors responded to talking about career plans with faculty and or advisor. The score should be between 3.0-4.0, not 2.66.
- “Received prompt feedback”- I probably wouldn’t rate this quite so high.

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

- I don’t work with faculty members because neither they nor I have the time (most of the time). I already have a research job outside of school so I would have given #6 a score of zero.
- I’ve had a few two many teachers that just go through the motions instead of challenging me to put forth my best effort.
- There are certain faculty members who make more of an effort to get to know their students, which prompts more interaction.
- I often discuss class topics with instructors outside and I know many people do too. That is why it is so high.
- I think the discussion of grades or assignments is slightly low because I think a lot of students do not take advantage of the availability of their professors. It has been my experience that the professors are always willing and eager to discuss academic issues.
- The majority of the faculty are extremely approachable. I have yet to come into contact with a professor I was unable to talk to.
- Faculty doubling as advisors increase the chance of outside classroom interaction. Size again affects this score because students are more likely to have an advisor or professor.
- Definitely, yes; I have made it a point to become comfortable communicating with professors. I also know that this is encouraged at SHC, so it is no surprise that our faculty/staff interaction is so good.
- 2 items on the chart decreased from F to S year and they both involved work with faculty members outside the classroom (extra curricular). Students often tend to become less involved as they grow older.
- On the part about discussing grades and assignments, it really does help when professors are available a lot outside class. SHC has a significantly high number because they are willing to help however and whenever possible.

- In regards to seniors working with faculty members on activities other than course work, I believe that by the fourth year one has lost some faith in the faculty as a whole in their support of clubs/orgs. Ex: Fraternity life
- I know several professors have asked me about my career plans and offered advice. My previous advisor, Fr. Campbell, especially has been very helpful.

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

- If the class is reviewing for a test and the teacher is getting us involved in the review (asking questions, games). It is more engaging than a lecture.
- I am interested, I look forward to a class, I’m learning. A teacher needs to have some sort of animation or humor or at least be interesting. They have to find a way to make the student interested. Make the info come alive.
- Classes where I feel engaged are classes where discussion is encouraged. Also, there are different teaching strategies being used to teach the material. I am working harder because I am given the opportunity to share and teachers encourage and support my ideas- they give me a place to express myself.
- I am attentive and my mind is always mulling over a topic and its connections. The faculty member is posing difficult questions and allowing for open discussion.
- Discussion! But not mindless discussion that veers towards tangents. Faculty members who lead discussion by thought provoking questions not just requesting simplistic and uninformed opinions, really motivate, encourage and challenge students to reach higher intellectual levels. Also, faculty members who make useful assignments- that require “digging deeper”- usually summaries of a difficult scholarly article or other short written assignments.
- Hands on activity, with interest, making what might be boring material enjoyable to cover in a way other than repetitive lecture.
- The faculty is reaching out to students, thus making them more involved in the learning process
- Questions, questions, questions. If students are asking, they are engaged.
- The classes in which I feel engaged, it is mainly due to the professor’s enthusiasm for the subject material . . .if the professor isn’t excited about the class, why should I be?
- Faculty are enthusiastic, creating a diverse and comfortable learning environment, challenging yet open.
- In the classes that I feel engaged in, they are more interactive. It’s not just me taking notes and the professors lecturing the whole time. There’s a lot of questioning and answering going on.
- I am being especially challenged. The professor is interested, even passionate, about their subject. Frequently, though not always, there is quite a bit of class discussion. The teacher is animated.

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

- Group 3: --engaging faculty to participate in more student activities.
- Group 4: --The opening of the conversation between faculty and students concerning future plans should occur earlier, and faculty should coordinate with Career Services regarding such things as internships.

## ***Student-Faculty Interaction***

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

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

- Career plans: Did seniors interpret CP as planning for graduate school?
- Freshman Seminar: have opportunity to talk to faculty about plans.
- Advising: Just classes discussed or careers, too?
- Some students have already figured it out and faculty don't talk about it unless there's a problem.
- Education students have a plan already so don't need to talk about it
- Worked/planned to work on research: big discrepancy between freshmen and seniors – is it: lack of opportunity; don't know that teachers emphasize it; maybe freshmen misunderstood question; lack of current resources on campus?
- prompt feedback.
- need to talk to faculty earlier regarding career plans.

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

- Discussing ideas outside class - personal experience of doing it.
- Activities outside coursework: a small number of faculty who regularly participate—see same people; makes students feel that faculty are more approachable.
- Makes classes more enjoyable when you know faculty better.
- Will try more in classes because you care what teacher thinks.
- Prompt Feedback - experience is that feedback is frequent.
- Faculty are available.
- Most students have talked to faculty members.
- Easy to contact faculty due to generous office hours.
- Availability of faculty is remarkable.

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

- Want to learn when engaged; like animated professors.
- Opportunities to interact or discuss.
- Can voice opinions out loud.
- Not enjoyable when faculty member calls on people they know don't know the answer.
- Use different teaching strategies, not all lecture.
- Teacher provides thought provoking questions; more informed opinion required.
- Students are asked to provide discussion questions.
- Do activity hands on in class; don't want to hear lecture on what I read in text.
- Summary of what you've read and then respond to it is engaging.

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

- Have a positive attitude.
- No group work.
- Focus reading assignments (specify pages and not just listing (each/every??) chapter)
- More informal interactions.
- Ending class with a thought-provoking statement or question.
- Show interest in the subject matter.
- Don't just fill up time.

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

- More opportunities for students and faculty to interact outside of class (e.g., SHC field day).
- More students should be consulting with faculty regarding career planning. Some faculty seem to be overloaded with advisees. And there should be better coordination between faculty and career services with regard to such things as establishing internships
- Students (especially freshmen) should be less hesitant to see faculty outside of class for help with course material or other concerns.