Interpreting the Benchmark Comparisons Report

To focus discussions about the importance of student engagement and to guide institutional improvement efforts, NSSE created five Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice: Level of Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, Enriching Educational Experiences, and Supportive Campus Environment. This Benchmark Comparisons Report compares the performance of your institution with your selected peers or consortium. In addition, page 9 provides two other comparisons between your school and (a) above-average institutions with benchmarks in the top 50% of all NSSE institutions and (b) high-performing institutions with benchmarks in the top 10% of all NSSE institutions. These displays allow you to determine if the engagement of your typical student differs in a statistically significant, meaningful way from the average student in these comparison groups. They also provide more insight into how the student experience varies on your campus and in comparison groups. Additional details regarding how benchmarks are created can be found on the NSSE Web site.

nsse.iub.edu/links/institutional_reporting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class and Sample</th>
<th>Statistical Significance</th>
<th>Effect Sizea</th>
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<td>Means are reported for first-year students and seniors. Institution-reported class levels are used. All randomly selected students are included in these analyses. Students in targeted or locally administered oversamples are not included.</td>
<td>Benchmarks with mean differences that are larger than would be expected by chance alone are noted with one, two, or three asterisks, denoting one of three significance levels (p&lt;.05, p&lt;.01, and p&lt;.001). The smaller the significance level, the smaller the likelihood that the difference is due to chance. Please note that statistical significance does not guarantee that the result is substantive or important. Large sample sizes (as with the NSSE project) tend to produce more statistically significant results even though the magnitude of mean differences may be inconsequential. Consult effect sizes to judge the practical meaning of the results.</td>
<td>Effect size indicates the practical significance of the mean difference. It is calculated by dividing the mean difference by the pooled standard deviation. In practice, an effect size of .2 is often considered small, .5 moderate, and .8 large. A positive sign indicates that your institution’s mean was greater, thus showing an affirmative result for the institution. A negative sign indicates the institution lags behind the comparison group, suggesting that the student behavior or institutional practice represented by the item may warrant attention.</td>
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### Benchmark Description & Survey Items

A description of the benchmark and the individual items used in its creation is provided.

### Box and Whiskers Charts

A visual display of first-year and senior benchmark score dispersion for your institution and your selected comparison or consortium groups.

### Mean

The arithmetic mean is the weighted arithmetic average of the student level benchmark scores.

### Box and Whiskers Key

A box and whisksers chart is a concise way to summarize the variation of student benchmark scores. This display compares the distribution of scores at your institution, in percentile terms, with that of your comparison groups. The ends of the whiskers show the 5th and 95th percentile scores, while the box is bounded by the 25th and 75th percentiles. The bar inside the box indicates the median score, and the dot shows the mean score.

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See Contextualizing: Effect sizes at nsse.iub.edu/pu/efect_sizes_guide.pdf for additional information.