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How do students spend their time?

Student engagement is the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities. Engagement also refers to the ways in which an institution allocates its resources, and organizes the curriculum, other learning opportunities, and support services to encourage and persuade students to participate in activities that lead to student success (learning, persistence, satisfaction, and graduation.) Pascarella and Terrenzini (2005) report that the impact of college is largely determined by individual effort. Students are not passive recipients of institutional efforts to “educate” or “change” them. Rather, they are engaged with the institution and their learning in varying degrees.

Engagement occurs not only in class, but outside of class through the co-curricular activities, sometimes called the "other" education. At Texas A&M, we have a strong tradition of student participation in co-curricular activities. How do students divide their time between academic work and co-curricular work? Does participation in the co-curricular mean less engagement in course work? Where do activities such as working for pay and socializing fit into a student's life? Are Texas A&M students like students at other universities in their engagement in these activities?

National Survey of Student Engagement

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is a nationally-normed college student survey that assesses the extent to which students engage in particular educational practices that are associated with high levels of learning and development. Texas A&M administered the NSSE in 2001, 2003 and 2005 to a sample of freshman and seniors in each of those years. Here we report on some of the results from the spring 2005 administration of the NSSE. We will also report on the comparison of TAMU responses to responses of students at other public research institutions.

AAUDE Benchmarks.

The Association of American Universities Data Exchange (AAUDE) is an organization of institutions of higher education aimed at improving the quality of assessment data relevant to higher education. Besides collecting the data, the AAUDE serves as a clearinghouse for the data of member institutions, one of which is Texas A&M. The AAUDE has collected the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) from member institutions who administer the NSSE each spring since 2000. The NSSE dataset maintained by the AAUDE contains responses from students from twenty-six public institutions of higher education.

The 26 AAUDE Institutions

Arizona, Colorado, **Florida**, **Illinois**, Indiana, Iowa, Iowa St, Kansas, Maryland, **Michigan**, Michigan St, Missouri, **N Carolina**, Nebraska, **Ohio St**, Oregon, **Penn St**, Pittsburgh, **Purdue**, SUNY-Buffalo, SUNY-Stony Brook, **Texas**, Texas A&M, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin. Institutions in bold are Vision 20/20 comparison universities.

To obtain a benchmark against which we could compare the Texas A&M NSSE 2005 results, we obtained the mean score on each NSSE question over all AAUDE institutions for all five years from 2000 to 2005. Thus, a mean of 1.96 for freshmen on the question, "Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions," is the mean of all freshmen in the 26 institutions for all five years combined. The benchmark means were subtracted from the 2005 TAMU NSSE means. The difference was divided by the standard deviation of the benchmark mean to obtain an effect size which we report as the benchmark score. The benchmark scores indicate the direction of difference. A score of zero occurs if the TAMU mean is identical to the benchmark mean. A negative benchmark score indicates that TAMU was lower than the benchmark. An effect size of .2 is generally considered small, .5 is medium and .8 large.

Questions.

In this report, we summarize the data from seven questions.

Socializing : About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week relaxing and socializing (watching TV, partying, etc.)

Working on campus: About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week working for pay on campus.

Working off campus: About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week working for pay off campus.

Preparing for class: About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities).

Community service: Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution? Community service or volunteer work.

Co-curricular participation: About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, social fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.).

Tutoring: In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)

- The response choices for **Community service** are: 1=Have not decided, 2=Do not plan to do, 3=Plan to do, 4=Done
- The response choices for **Tutoring** are: 1=Never, 2=Sometime, 3=Often, 4=Very often

- For all other questions, the response choices are: 1=0 hours, 2=1-5 hours, 3=6-10 hours, 4=11-15 hours, 5=16-20 hours, 6=21-25 hours, 7=26-30 hours, 8=More than 30 hours

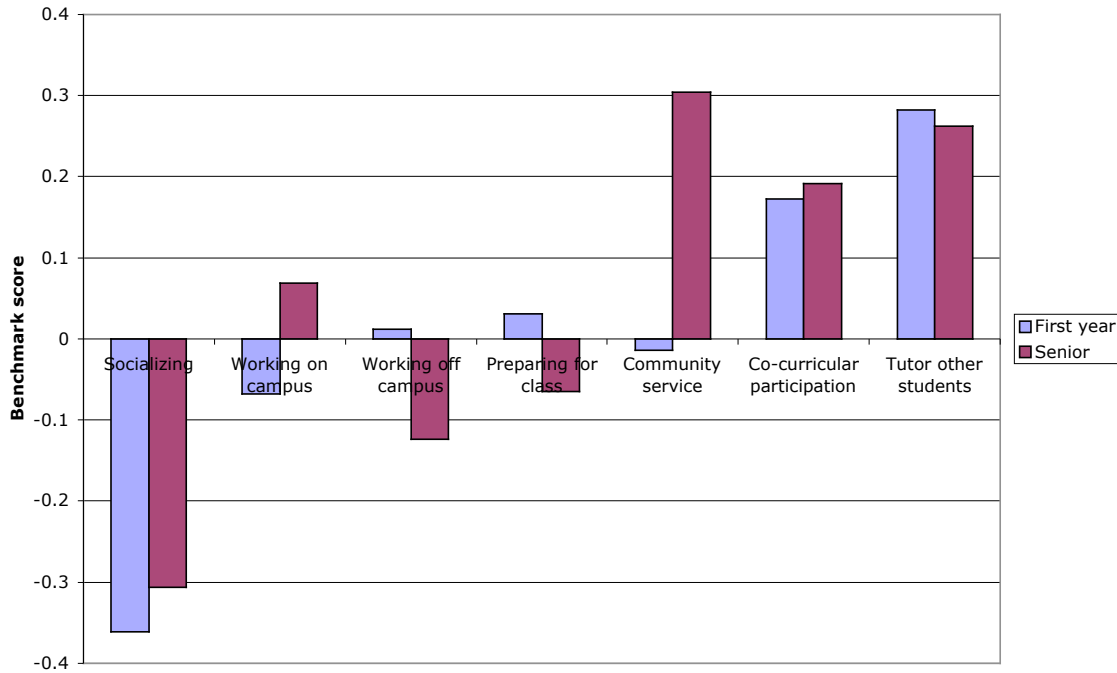
Results

Means for the AAUDE institutions from 2000 to 2004 (Benchmark means) and the TAMU means from NSSE 2005 are presented in Table 1. The standard deviations of the benchmark means are also presented as are the benchmark scores, calculated as the TAMU mean minus the benchmark mean divided by the benchmark standard deviation. The benchmark scores are displayed graphically in Figure 1. Since the benchmark scores are deviations from the benchmark mean, Figure 1 represents the benchmark mean as the center, zero, line. Bars that extend below the zero line indicate how far TAMU students are below their counterparts at other AAUDE institutions and bars that extend above indicate how far TAMU students are above their counterparts.

Table 1: Means, standard deviations, benchmark scores for TAMU 2005 and the AAUDE institutions

	Benchmark means		Benchmark standard deviation		TAMU means		Benchmark score (effect size)	
	First Year	Senior	First Year	Senior	First Year	Senior	First Year	Senior
Socializing	4.26	4.02	1.79	1.69	3.61	3.5	-0.361	-0.307
Working on campus	1.45	2.04	1.09	1.72	1.38	2.16	-0.068	0.069
Working off campus	1.52	2.83	1.34	2.35	1.54	2.54	0.012	-0.124
Preparing for class	4.40	4.22	1.71	1.82	4.45	4.1	0.031	-0.065
Community service	0.91	0.72	0.28	0.45	0.91	0.86	-0.014	0.304
Co-curricular participation	2.34	2.23	1.47	1.48	2.59	2.51	0.172	0.191
Tutor other students	1.70	1.82	0.81	0.91	1.93	2.06	0.282	0.262

How do students spend their time?



Socializing : The average TAMU student spends 6 to 10 hours socializing each week while the average student at other AAUDE institutions spends 11 to 15 hours.

Working on campus/Working off campus: the average first year TAMU student does not work for pay either on campus or off. In fact, 13% of first year A&M students work on campus and 17% work off campus. The A&M mean is not greatly different from the benchmark mean. The average A&M senior works 1 to 5 hours on or off campus. The percentage working on campus is 33% and the percentage working off is 40%. Compared to the AAUDE institutions, the average A&M works more hours on campus and fewer hours off, but the differences, as indicated by the effect size, are small.

Preparing for class: The average student at A&M and at the other AAUDE institutions spends 11 to 15 hours each week preparing for class.

Community service: 91% of first year students at A&M and at the AAUDE institutions have done or plan to do community service. 86% of TAMU seniors have done or plan to do community service compared to 72% of students at other AAUDE institutions. As is evident in Figure 1, this is a moderate size difference.

Co-curricular participation: TAMU students spend 1 to 5 hours per week, on average, in co-curricular activities. Both first year and senior students spend more time in the co-curricular than students at other AAUDE institutions. While they are above the benchmark, the effect would be considered small.

Tutoring other students: A&M first year and seniors are above benchmark. The effect is small to moderate.

Conclusions

NSSE results confirm what has long been a hallmark of Texas A&M students: their engagement in learning activities outside of the classroom. Compared to students at similar universities, A&M students do more tutoring of other students, take part in more co-curricular activities, and do more community service. Given the extent of engagement in these areas, it is reasonable to expect that engagement in other aspects of student life would suffer. The survey results suggest that class preparation and work, both on and off campus, do not suffer. TAMU students put in as many hours in work and class preparation as students at similar institutions. The aspect of student life that suffers from engagement in out of class activities appears to be socializing and relaxing.

Reference

Pascarella and Terrenzini (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research*