



## Engaging with Other Learners Outside of the Classroom

### NSSE Overview

In the Spring of 2005, 873 undergraduate students (556 first-years and 317 seniors) on the Oxford campus of Miami University completed the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The NSSE contains 29 questions that assess the extent to which students engage in a variety of effective educational processes. A total of 5,813 students at 27 peer institutions also completed the NSSE during the Spring of 2005.<sup>1</sup>

### Engaging with Learners Outside of the Class

On all questions reported below, seniors at Miami University reported significantly higher levels of engagement than did first-year students ( $p < .01$ ).

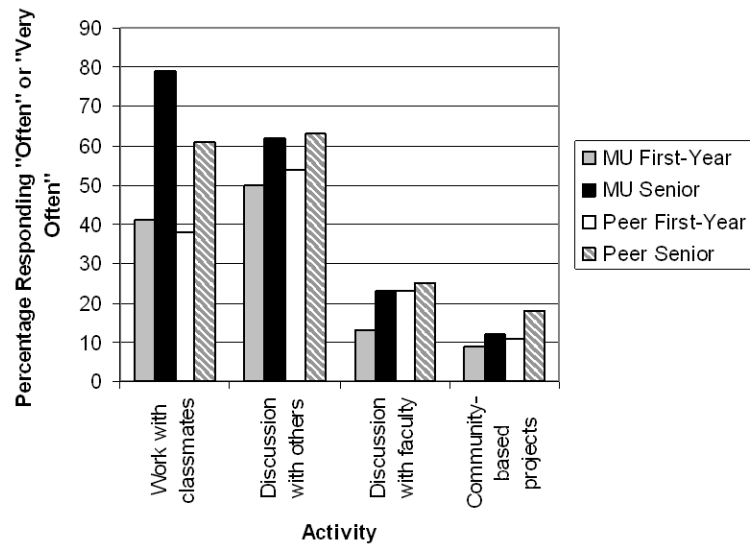
When asked how often, during the previous year, they worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments, 41% of Miami first-year students and 79% of Miami seniors reported that they had done so “often” or “very often.” Both first-year students and seniors at Miami were significantly more likely to report working with classmates outside of the class than were students at Miami’s peer institutions.

Miami seniors were also significantly more likely than first-year students to discuss ideas from their classes with others (e.g., students, family members, co-workers) outside of class. According to the NSSE, 50% of Miami first-year students and 62% of Miami seniors reported discussing course ideas with others outside of the classroom “often” or “very often.” There were no significant differences in the responses of Miami students and students at peer institutions.

Only 13% of Miami first-year students reported discussing course ideas with faculty members outside of class “often” or “very often,” although significantly more seniors (23%) reported discussing ideas with faculty outside of class during the previous year. There were no significant differences in the responses of Miami students and students at peer institutions.

Similarly, few Miami students reported frequent participation in course-related community-based projects. A total of 9% of first-year students and 12% of seniors at Miami reported participating in a course-related community-based project “often” or “very

Engaging with Learners Outside of the Classroom



often” during the previous year. In addition, 71% of first-year students and 63% of seniors reported not participating in community-based projects at all during the previous year. Miami students were significantly less likely than students at peer institutions to report engaging in course-related community based projects.

### Implications

Seniors were significantly more likely than first-year students to engage with other learners outside of the classroom. Opportunities to engage with other learners need not be restricted to the classroom, nor to interacting with other students in the class. When designing a course, particularly one involving a significant proportion of first-year students, consider whether you can include opportunities for students’ to engage with other learners through small group work, community-based projects, office hours, blackboard discussions, or other methods.

Questions about this assessment brief? Suggestions for future assessment brief topics? Please feel free to contact Andrea Bakker, Coordinator of Assessment, at 529-1567 or [bakkerai@muohio.edu](mailto:bakkerai@muohio.edu).

<sup>1</sup> Peer institutions are selected by NSSE on the basis of a variety of institutional characteristics.