

# University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point

**National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)  
Effective Educational Practice**

**2008 Report**

Policy and Planning  
Office of the Chancellor  
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National Survey of Student Engagement  
2008 Report of Effective Educational Practice**

**Introduction**

The University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in the Spring Semester of 2008. The survey was distributed via the Web to a random sample of 1,662 first-year students and 2,059 seniors. A total of 898 first-year students returned surveys and seniors returned 1,060 surveys for an overall response rate of 53%.

NSSE is based on five Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice:

- Level of Academic Challenge,
- Active and Collaborative Learning,
- Student-Faculty Interaction,
- Enriching Education Experiences, and
- Supportive Campus Environment.

The NSSE Benchmark comparisons report compares UWSP with three peer groups: nine of the 10 other regional Universities of the Wisconsin system (UW), public master's degree granting institutions in the Midwest (Midwest), and all National public master's degree granting institutions (National). The latter two groups were defined by the Basic Carnegie Classification of master's-medium programs. A complete list of institutions comprising the three peer groups can be found in Appendix A.

The tables and figures in this report display the mean first-year and senior responses for UWSP compared to the three groups. Items with mean differences that are larger than would be expected by chance alone are noted for the three levels of significance ( $p < .05$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $p < .001$ ). Positive signs indicate that UWSP is significantly higher in the area. Conversely, negative signs indicate that UWSP is significantly lower in the area.

## Benchmark Comparisons with Peer Institutions

### Level of Academic Challenge

First year UWSP students are similar to their counterparts at UW peer institutions and Midwest peer institutions in the majority of the areas defined in this benchmark category. However, UWSP first year students are significantly lower in seven of the eleven areas compared to the National peer group. UWSP is significantly higher than the National peer group in the area of writing papers or reports of fewer than five pages. (See Table 1.)

UWSP seniors are significantly lower in over half of the items in this benchmark area compared to the Midwest and National peer groups and just under half compared to UW peers. UWSP seniors are significantly lower than all three peer groups in the number of assigned readings, writing papers over five pages, and working harder than they thought to meet an instructor’s expectations. UWSP was significantly higher than all three peer groups in writing papers or reports of fewer than five pages.

**Table 1. Level of Academic Challenge**

	First Year				Senior Year			
	UWSP	UW	Midwest	National	UWSP	UW	Midwest	National
Preparing for class per week (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, and other activities related to your academic program)	3.8	4.0 <sup>---</sup>	3.99 <sup>---</sup>	3.79	4.06	4.12	4.22 <sup>---</sup>	4.10
Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings	3.12	3.22 <sup>---</sup>	3.13	3.10	3.03	3.19 <sup>---</sup>	3.13 <sup>---</sup>	3.12 <sup>---</sup>
Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more	1.19	1.19	1.22	1.30 <sup>---</sup>	1.49	1.57 <sup>---</sup>	1.57 <sup>---</sup>	1.63 <sup>---</sup>
Number of written papers or reports of between 5 and 19 pages	1.94	2.15 <sup>---</sup>	2.15 <sup>---</sup>	2.17 <sup>---</sup>	2.42	2.55 <sup>---</sup>	2.53 <sup>---</sup>	2.52 <sup>---</sup>
Number written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages	3.04	3.09	3.05	2.93 <sup>++</sup>	3.3	3.17 <sup>++</sup>	3.1 <sup>+++</sup>	2.95 <sup>+++</sup>
Coursework emphasized analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience or theory	2.92	2.93	2.98 <sup>-</sup>	3.01 <sup>---</sup>	3.12	3.15	3.18 <sup>-</sup>	3.22 <sup>---</sup>
Course work emphasized synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships	2.71	2.72	2.76	2.78 <sup>---</sup>	2.96	2.96	2.97	3.03 <sup>---</sup>
Course work emphasized making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods	2.76	2.75	2.77	2.82 <sup>-</sup>	2.9	2.93	2.95	2.99 <sup>---</sup>
Course work emphasized applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	2.93	2.89	2.95	2.94	3.16	3.16	3.17	3.19
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor’s standards or expectations	2.5	2.51	2.53	2.65 <sup>---</sup>	2.57	2.65 <sup>---</sup>	2.65 <sup>---</sup>	2.75 <sup>---</sup>
Campus environment emphasized spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work	3.03	3.07	3.11 <sup>---</sup>	3.12 <sup>---</sup>	3.03	3.05	3.11 <sup>---</sup>	3.16 <sup>---</sup>
<b>Benchmark</b>	<b>48.6</b>	<b>49.7<sup>-</sup></b>	<b>50.2<sup>---</sup></b>	<b>50.8<sup>---</sup></b>	<b>53.9</b>	<b>55.1<sup>-</sup></b>	<b>55.5<sup>---</sup></b>	<b>56.1<sup>---</sup></b>

Mean results recorded weighted by gender, enrollment status and institutional size.

-p<.05, <sup>-</sup> p<.01, <sup>---</sup> p<.001 Indicate UWSP is significantly lower.

<sup>+</sup> p<.05, <sup>++</sup> p<.01, <sup>+++</sup> p<.001 Indicate UWSP is significantly higher.

## Active and Collaborative Learning

First year UWSP students are significantly lower in the majority of the items defined as Active and Collaborative Learning compared to Midwest and National peer groups, but only three of the seven items compared to UW peer group. First year UWSP students were significantly higher than the UW peer group in the area of discussing ideas from reading or class outside of the classroom. (See Table 2.)

Senior UWSP students in this benchmark category are similar to all peer institution groups in the majority of the areas. UWSP senior students are significantly higher than all peer groups in working with other students on projects during class, but lower in other forms of classroom engagement, such as asking questions in class, contributing to class discussions, or making class presentations.

**Table 2. Active and Collaborative Learning**

	First Year				Senior Year			
	UWSP	UW	Midwest	National	UWSP	UW	Midwest	National
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	2.5	2.59 <sup>~</sup>	2.64 <sup>---</sup>	2.77 <sup>~</sup>	2.99	3.02	3.05 <sup>~</sup>	3.12 <sup>---</sup>
Made a class presentation	2.24	2.19	2.27	2.30 <sup>~</sup>	2.79	2.86 <sup>~</sup>	2.83	2.84
Worked with other students on projects during class	2.4	2.41	2.47 <sup>~</sup>	2.44 <sup>~</sup>	2.72	2.63 <sup>++</sup>	2.63 <sup>++</sup>	2.60 <sup>+++</sup>
Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	2.24	2.39 <sup>---</sup>	2.47 <sup>---</sup>	2.36 <sup>---</sup>	2.88	2.9	2.86	2.76 <sup>+++</sup>
Tutored or taught other students	1.51	1.61 <sup>---</sup>	1.65 <sup>---</sup>	1.64 <sup>~</sup>	1.96	1.91	1.94	1.91
Participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course	1.46	1.48	1.54 <sup>~</sup>	1.57 <sup>~</sup>	1.71	1.83 <sup>---</sup>	1.76	1.77
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers.)	2.55	2.48 <sup>+</sup>	2.56	2.66 <sup>~</sup>	2.73	2.73	2.74	2.84 <sup>---</sup>
<b>Benchmark Data</b>	<b>37.7</b>	<b>39.2<sup>~</sup></b>	<b>41.3<sup>---</sup></b>	<b>42.0<sup>---</sup></b>	<b>51.6</b>	<b>52.1</b>	<b>51.8</b>	<b>51.8</b>

Mean results recorded weighted by gender, enrollment status and institutional size.

-p<.05, ~p<.01, ---p<.001) Indicate UWSP is significantly lower.

+p<.05, ++p<.01, +++p<.001) Indicate UWSP is significantly higher.

## Student Interaction with Faculty Members

First year UWSP students are significantly lower in four of the six areas compared to Midwest and National peer groups and only two of the six items compared to UW peer group. (See Table 3.) First year students were lower than all three peer groups in discussing grades, assignments, or ideas with faculty members.

Senior UWSP students are significantly lower in three of the six areas compared to the National peer group and two of the six areas compared to Midwest peer group. They are about the same compared to the UW peers. However, they are significantly higher than the National peer group in working with faculty members on activities other than coursework.

**Table 3. Student Interactions with Faculty Members**

	First Year				Senior Year			
	UWSP	UW	Midwest	National	UWSP	UW	PM	National
Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	2.34	2.41 <sup>~</sup>	2.51 <sup>---</sup>	2.61 <sup>---</sup>	2.74	2.73	2.82 <sup>~</sup>	2.85 <sup>---</sup>
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	2.14	2.19	2.20 <sup>~</sup>	2.18	2.49	2.45	2.45	2.46
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	1.7	1.76 <sup>~</sup>	1.83 <sup>---</sup>	1.88 <sup>---</sup>	2.06	2.07	2.09	2.14 <sup>~</sup>
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student-life activities, etc.)	1.56	1.58	1.64 <sup>~</sup>	1.64 <sup>~</sup>	1.93	1.93	1.91	1.86 <sup>++</sup>
Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance	2.54	2.52	2.59	2.58	2.75	2.75	2.80 <sup>~</sup>	2.83 <sup>---</sup>
Worked with a faculty member on a research project outside of course or program requirements	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.06 <sup>---</sup>	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.18
<b>Benchmark</b>	<b>30.0</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>33.0<sup>---</sup></b>	<b>33.9<sup>---</sup></b>	<b>42.1</b>	<b>41.9</b>	<b>42.5</b>	<b>42.9</b>

Mean results recorded weighted by gender, enrollment status and institutional size.

-p<.05, <sup>~</sup>p<.01, <sup>---</sup>p<.001 Indicate UWSP is significantly lower.

<sup>+</sup>p<.05, <sup>++</sup>p<.01, <sup>+++</sup>p<.001 Indicate UWSP is significantly higher.

## Enriching Educational Experiences

First year UWSP students are significantly lower in half of the items in this benchmark category compared to the National peer group and only two of the 12 items compared to the Midwest peer group. Compared to the UW peer group, UWSP first students are significantly higher in two areas: using electronic technology to discuss or complete an assignment and completing practicum, internship, field experiences, co-op experiences or clinical assignments. (See Table 4.)

Senior UWSP students are significantly lower in half of the items in this benchmark category compared to National peers, one third of the items compared to Midwest peers, and one fourth of the 12 compared to UW peers. They are significantly lower than all three groups in interactions with diverse students, completion of foreign language coursework, and participating in a culminating senior experience, such as a capstone. Finally, UWSP seniors are significantly higher than all peer institutions in the area of studying abroad.

**Table 4. Enriching Educational Experiences**

	First Year				Senior Year			
	UWSP	UW	Midwest	National	UWSP	UW	Midwest	National
Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, publications, student government, sports, etc.)	2.34	2.32	2.31	2.06 <sup>+++</sup>	2.26	2.2	2.17	1.97 <sup>+++</sup>
Had serious conversations with students that have different religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	2.53	2.5	2.56	2.59	2.57	2.6	2.59	2.64 <sup>+</sup>
Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity	2.27	2.23	2.31	2.43 <sup>---</sup>	2.28	2.31 <sup>+</sup>	2.37 <sup>---</sup>	2.52 <sup>---</sup>
Campus environment encouraged contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	2.52	2.53	2.57	2.58	2.27	2.37 <sup>---</sup>	2.4 <sup>---</sup>	2.45 <sup>---</sup>
Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment	0.07	0.04 <sup>++</sup>	0.6	0.08	0.56	0.56	0.5 <sup>+++</sup>	0.50 <sup>+++</sup>
Community service or volunteer work	0.3	0.31	0.31	0.36 <sup>---</sup>	0.62	0.67 <sup>---</sup>	0.6	0.58 <sup>+</sup>
Foreign language coursework	0.17	0.21 <sup>---</sup>	0.21 <sup>---</sup>	0.19	0.31	0.39 <sup>---</sup>	0.39 <sup>---</sup>	0.37 <sup>---</sup>
Study abroad	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.04 <sup>---</sup>	0.23	0.17 <sup>+++</sup>	0.15 <sup>+++</sup>	0.11 <sup>+++</sup>
Independent study or self-designed major	0.02	0.02	0.03 <sup>---</sup>	0.05 <sup>---</sup>	0.18	0.2	0.17	0.17
Culminating senior experience (comprehensive exam, capstone course, thesis, project, etc.)	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02 <sup>---</sup>	0.21	0.35 <sup>---</sup>	0.36 <sup>---</sup>	0.32 <sup>---</sup>
Participate in learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together	0.09	0.08	0.10	0.13 <sup>---</sup>	0.25	0.26	0.25	0.25
Using electronic technology to discuss or complete an assignment	2.54	2.42 <sup>+++</sup>	2.49	2.53	2.75	2.66 <sup>++</sup>	2.77	2.84 <sup>-</sup>
<b>Benchmark</b>	<b>23.3</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>24.3</b>	<b>25.4<sup>---</sup></b>	<b>37.4</b>	<b>39.6<sup>---</sup></b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>38.3</b>

Mean results recorded weighted by gender, enrollment status and institutional size.

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<sup>+</sup>p<.05, <sup>++</sup>p<.01, <sup>+++</sup>p<.001 Indicate UWSP is significantly higher.

## Supportive Campus Environment

First year UWSP students score significantly higher than Midwest and National peer groups in terms of the campus environment providing the support the students need to thrive socially and the quality of their relationships with administrative personnel. They also were significantly higher than the UW and Midwest peer groups in quality of relationships with faculty. (See Table 5.)

Senior UWSP students rate the campus environment as providing support they students need to succeed academically and socially. However, UWSP scored significantly lower than UW and National peers on the item, “campus environment helped you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)”

**Table 5. Supportive Campus Environment**

	First Year				Senior Year			
	UWSP	UW	Midwest	National	UWSP	UW	Midwest	National
Campus environment provided the support you need to help you succeed academically	2.98	2.97	3.00	3.01	2.97	2.92	2.92 <sup>+</sup>	2.94
Campus environment helped you cope with your nonacademic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	2.16	2.21	2.18	2.19	1.89	1.97 <sup>~</sup>	1.94	1.98 <sup>---</sup>
Campus environment provided the support you need to thrive socially	2.52	2.46	2.45 <sup>+</sup>	2.40 <sup>+++</sup>	2.27	2.25	2.20 <sup>+</sup>	2.21 <sup>+</sup>
Quality of relationships with other students on a scale from 1 to 7, 1 being worst and 7 being best	5.50	5.47	5.45	5.42	5.68	5.65	5.65	5.66
Quality of relationships with faculty members on a scale from 1 to 7, 1 being worst and 7 being best	5.19	5.01 <sup>+++</sup>	5.06 <sup>++</sup>	5.13	5.43	5.44	5.44	5.51
Quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices on a scale from 1 to 7, 1 being worst and 7 being best	4.74	4.64	4.62 <sup>+</sup>	4.59 <sup>++</sup>	4.58	4.59	4.61	4.65
<b>Benchmark</b>	<b>60.4</b>	<b>59.5</b>	<b>59.5</b>	<b>59.3</b>	<b>58.2</b>	<b>58.3</b>	<b>57.8</b>	<b>58.6</b>

Mean results recorded weighted by gender, enrollment status and institutional size.

-p<.05, ~p<.01, ---p<.001 Indicate UWSP is significantly lower.

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## Benchmark Area Summary

For first year students, UWSP was statistically lower than one or more peer groups in four of the five benchmark areas. The benchmark score for first year students in the category Supportive Campus Environment was higher than all three peer groups although not by a statistically significant level. By senior year, UWSP was statistically lower than one or more peer groups in only two of the five benchmark areas, Academic Challenge and Enriching Educational Experiences. UWSP seniors had scored well enough to eliminate statistical differences in both Active and Collaborative Learning and Student/Faculty Interaction. In the next section, the difference between first year students and seniors are illustrated.

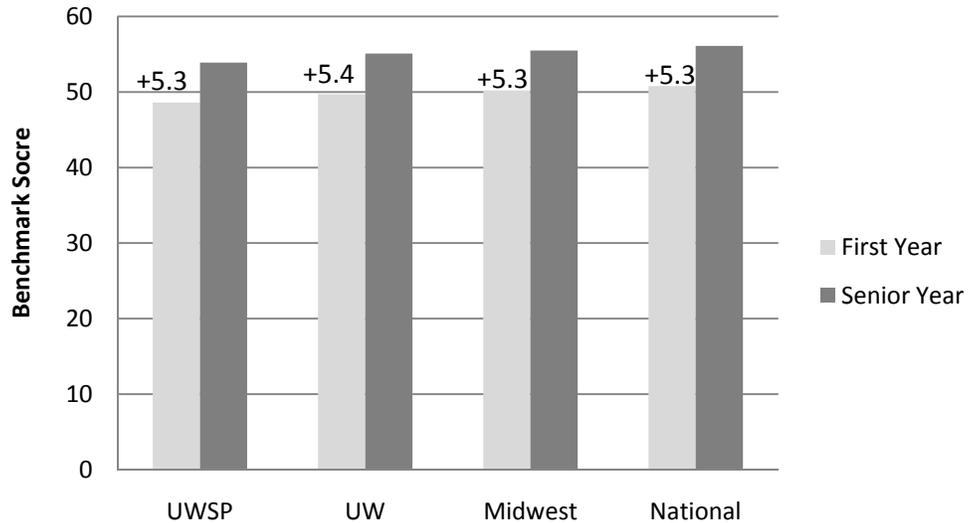
## Benchmark Comparison First Year vs. Senior Year

In this section, the difference in benchmark score between first year and senior students are illustrated for each of the five benchmark areas.

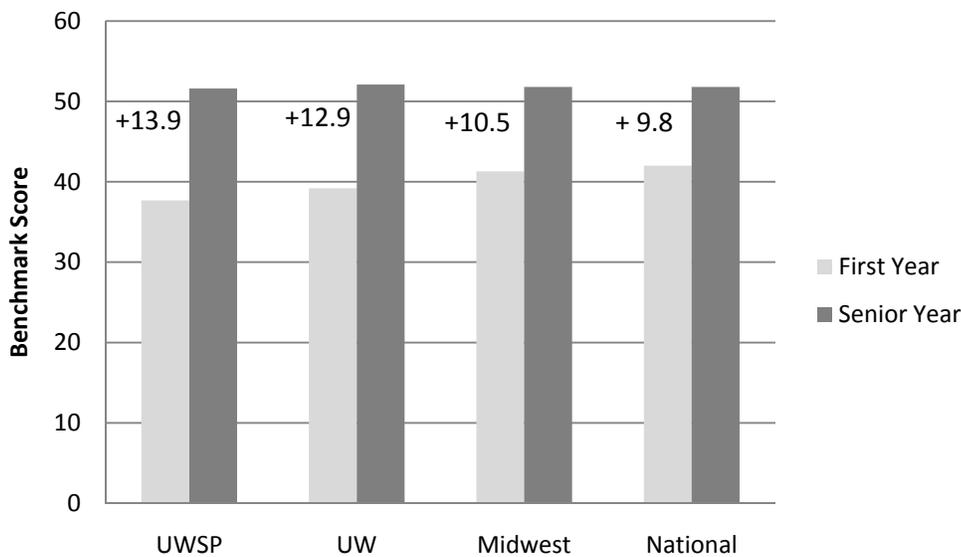
### Level of Academic Challenge

The difference observed between UWSP first year students and seniors is similar to that of all peer groups. See Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Level of Academic Challenge  
Difference Between First Year and Senior Students**



**Figure 2. Active & Collaborative Learning  
Difference Between First Year and Senior Students**



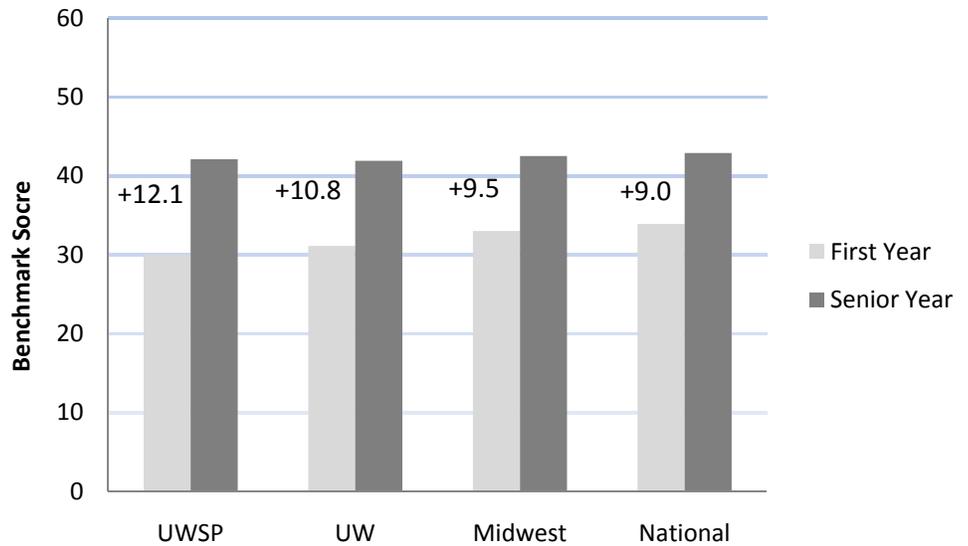
### Active and Collaborative Learning

The difference observed between UWSP first year students and seniors is greater than the change experienced by all peer groups in this benchmark category. See Figure 2.

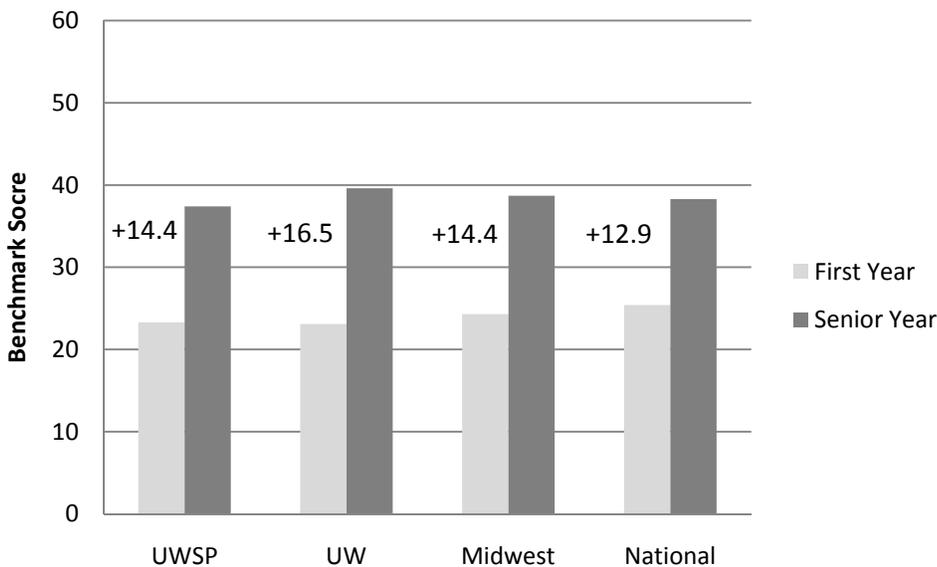
### Student Interactions with Faculty

The difference observed between UWSP first year students and seniors is greater than the change experienced by all peer groups in this benchmark category. See Figure 3.

**Figure 3. Student Interactions with Faculty  
Difference Between First Year and Senior Students**



**Figure 4. Enriching Educational Experiences  
Difference Between First Year and Senior Students**

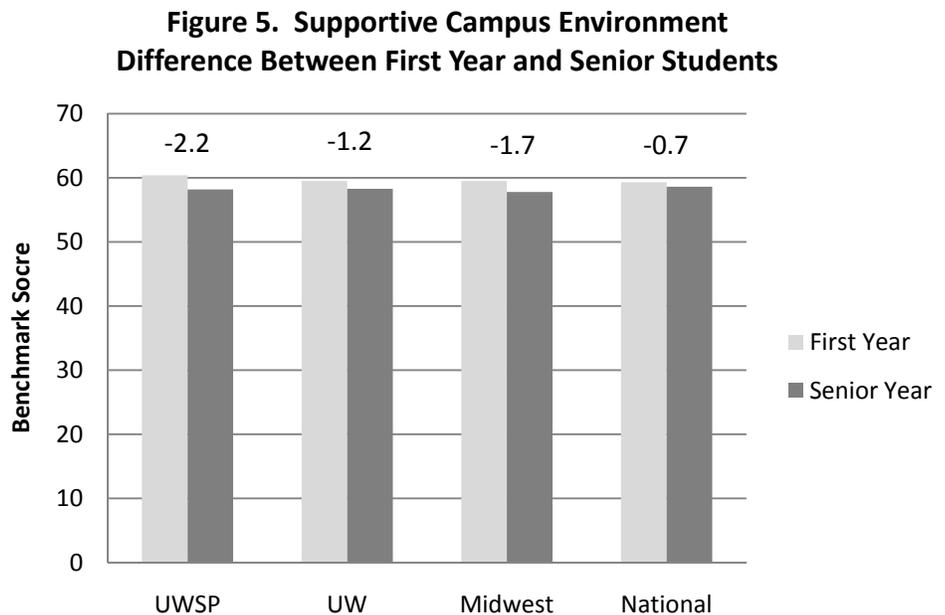


### Enriching Educational Experiences

The difference observed between UWSP first year students and seniors is slightly less than the difference in the UWSP peer group, the same as the Midwest peer group, and greater than the National peer group. See Figure 4.

## Supportive Campus Environment

All groups show a decline in benchmark score between first year and senior year student. UWSP reports the largest negative difference although this is due in part to the fact that UWSP freshmen had higher scores than the three peer groups. See Figure 5.



### Benchmark Comparison First Year vs. Senior Year Summary of Findings

The most substantial finding in looking at differences between first year and senior year benchmark scores is that UWSP makes *equal or greater gains* from the end of the first year to the end of the senior year in four of the five benchmark categories. This leads one to conclude that UWSP students are engaged in their experiences at UWSP from the end of their first year to end of their senior year and they are making gains that reflect those of similar institutions in the three peer groups.

However, given that UWSP students are lower in these four benchmark scores at both the freshman and senior level, the following questions can be posed: (1) Are first year students at UWSP different from other first year students at the outset of their enrollment (i.e., are they entering college with a deficiency in skills of engagement)? OR, (2) Are the experiences of first year students at UWSP such that they *are* less engaged at the conclusion of their first year than are first year students at institutions in the peer groups? Given the high (and increasing) quality of the entering freshman class, the former is less likely. Nevertheless, UWSP may want to consider participating in national survey of incoming freshman (i.e., pre-enrollment baseline) so that new UWSP students can be compared to those of other institutions, thus providing information on any areas of deficiency that could be addressed. Given the proliferation and implementation of first year initiatives at many institutions outside of UWSP, the second scenario seems more plausible. Thus, continued exploration of ways to enhance and support students in their first year at UWSP is warranted. The results herein may be used to identify specific strategies or goals to increase engagement in the five benchmark areas of effective educational practice. Presumably, students at UWSP will continue to make gains in these areas; however, UWSP would be well served to consider additional ways in which students can become engaged in their educational experiences.

## **Appendix A**

### **Comparison Group Details**

#### **UW-System Peer Group (UW), N=9**

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire  
University of Wisconsin-Green Bay  
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse  
University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh  
University of Wisconsin-Parkside  
University of Wisconsin-Platteville  
University of Wisconsin-River Falls  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

#### **Midwest University Peer Group (Midwest), N=9**

Ferris State University  
Northwest Missouri State University  
Truman State University  
University of Michigan-Flint  
University of Minnesota-Duluth  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire  
University of Wisconsin-Platteville  
University of Wisconsin-River Falls  
University of Wisconsin-Superior

#### **National University Peer Group (National), N=38**

Albany State University  
Alcorn State University  
Augusta State University  
California State University San Marcos  
Cameron University  
Cheyney University of Pennsylvania  
Coppin State University  
Eastern Connecticut State University  
Ferris State University  
Georgia Southwestern State University  
Henderson State University  
Humboldt State University  
Longwood University  
Louisiana State University-Shreveport  
Midwestern State University  
New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology  
North Georgia College & State University  
Northwest Missouri State University  
Rutgers University-Camden  
Southeastern Oklahoma State University  
Southern Polytechnic State University  
SUNY Institute of Technology at Utica-Rome  
The State University of New York at Geneseo  
The University of Tennessee Martin  
The University of Texas at Brownsville  
The University of Texas of the Permian Basin  
Truman State University  
University of Mary Washington  
University of Michigan-Flint  
University of Minnesota-Duluth  
University of North Carolina at Pembroke  
University of Washington Tacoma  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire  
University of Wisconsin-Platteville  
University of Wisconsin-River Falls  
University of Wisconsin-Superior  
Weber State University  
Worcester State College