

Stephen F. Austin State University
National Survey of Student Engagement
Spring 2009

Executive Summary

Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) is focused on student success and strives to determine opportunities for improvement in student learning and personal development. The *SFA Strategic Plan 2013: Preparing for the Future* outlines plans for student success through university-wide collaboration. Additionally, SFA is regionally accredited through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), an organization which emphasizes “foundations for quality enhancement”.

To monitor the progress of its supportive learning environment, SFA adopted a regular assessment schedule for the administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), a project coordinated through the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. NSSE provides important insight about the quality of undergraduate learning and contributes to national benchmarks of effective educational practice.

SFA additionally scheduled regular participation with the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) as a complementary assessment instrument. FSSE is designed to measure faculty expectations for student engagement in educational practices that are known to be empirically linked with high levels of learning and development. The FSSE information may further assist the identification of institutional strengths, as well as motivating opportunities for improvement.

Methodology

The SFA Office of Institutional Research (OIR) prepared potential student and faculty respondent data in the fall of 2008. The OIR further coordinated with the NSSE Institute to administer the surveys during the 2009 spring semester. Many survey administration aspects were handled by NSSE (drawing random student samples, emailing student surveys, distributing follow-up contacts with non-respondents, and initial data analysis).

For the NSSE administration, random samples of first-year and senior students were selected for participation. The OIR reviewed sample populations and updated enrollment and graduation statuses to help ensure a valid and available survey group. The sampled students were invited by SFA President, Baker Pattillo, to participate in the NSSE survey. Students received four email contacts containing a hyperlink to the web-based version of the survey.

The FSSE paralleled student survey efforts. The OIR selected a faculty sample of full-time lecturers, instructors and professorial ranked individuals who were scheduled to teach at least one undergraduate during the 2008-09 year. The OIR reviewed potential faculty respondent information in the spring semester prior to survey opening and updated employment statuses as needed to secure a valid survey population. SFA Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Richard Berry, emailed the selected faculty to invite participation in the web-based FSSE administration. Selected faculty were emailed several participation reminders.

NSSE has been collecting data from students at four-year colleges and universities around the country since 2000. SFA participated in the 2009 national administration along with more than 1.1 million other first-year and senior students. The 2009 sampled students were randomly selected from data files provided by 640 participating four-year colleges and universities. Approximately 367,000 students from this sample responded.

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Results

NSSE sampling procedures require sending the survey to an equal number of first-year and senior students with the standard sample size determined by the number of undergraduate students enrolled at the institution. In Spring 2009, students at 42 colleges and universities (7%) had the option of responding via a traditional paper questionnaire. One hundred eighty institutions (28%) opted for Web+ administration which includes multiple email contacts and one paper questionnaire sent to a portion of nonrespondents. SFA used the Web-only administration mode where students received all contacts electronically and only completed the online survey. Four-hundred and eighteen schools (65%) opted for the Web-only administration. NSSE reports a continuing trend of institutions moving to more web-based administrations. Overall, about 98% of all NSSE 2009 respondents completed the survey online.

NSSE 2009 schools closely resemble the national profile of four-year colleges and universities with respect to institutional type, sector, region, and location. Caveats include the following: The Far West Region is slightly underrepresented, and the Southeast region is slightly overrepresented. Master's Colleges and Universities with larger programs and Research Universities are somewhat overrepresented while Baccalaureate Colleges-Arts & Sciences are slightly underrepresented.

In each NSSE administration, institutions are offered the opportunity to customize institutional reports by tailoring up to three comparison groups. In June 2009, SFA selected the American Democracy Project (ADP) Consortium, all participating Texas public universities, and all participating SACS level V public peer institutions for comparison purposes.

The NSSE instrument was completed by 670 SFA students (333 first-year; 337 seniors). Overall the SFA response rate was 18% with a slightly larger proportion of senior students responding than first-time freshmen. The SFA response rate was lower than the ADP, Texas Public, and SACS Public comparison groups. SFA responses by gender differed from comparison groups for both first-year and senior students with both groups reporting 72% female and 28% male respondents. Comparison groups were approximately two-thirds female and one-third male. The ethnic distribution of SFA and comparison group respondents was similar to the SFA student body population with slightly less proportions of Black/African American responses.

To focus student engagement and guide institutional improvement efforts, NSSE sorts response means from the 85 survey questions into five **benchmarks of effective educational practice**:

- *Level of Academic Challenge*
- *Active and Collaborative Learning*
- *Student-Faculty Interaction*
- *Enriching Educational Experiences*
- *Supportive Campus Environment*

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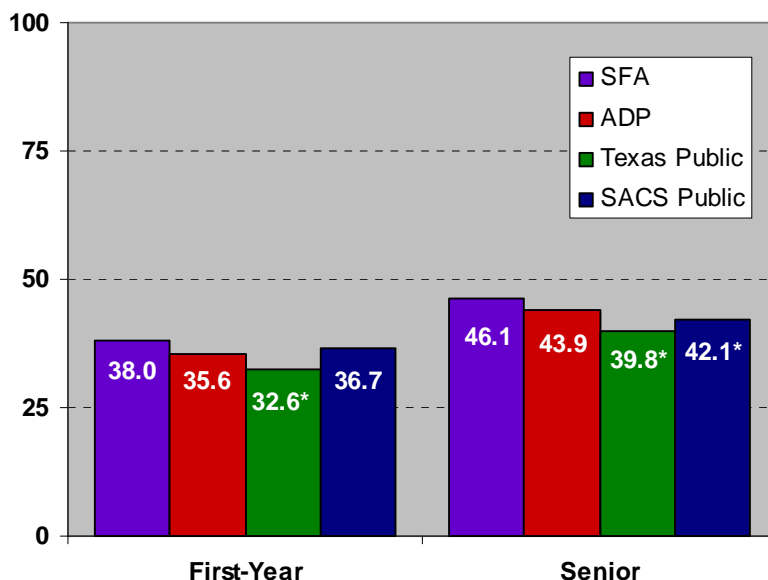
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Results (continued)

**NSSE Benchmark
 Student-Faculty Interaction
 (SFI)**

SFA response means were significantly higher than the comparison groups for the *Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)* benchmark for First Year and Senior students in several cases.

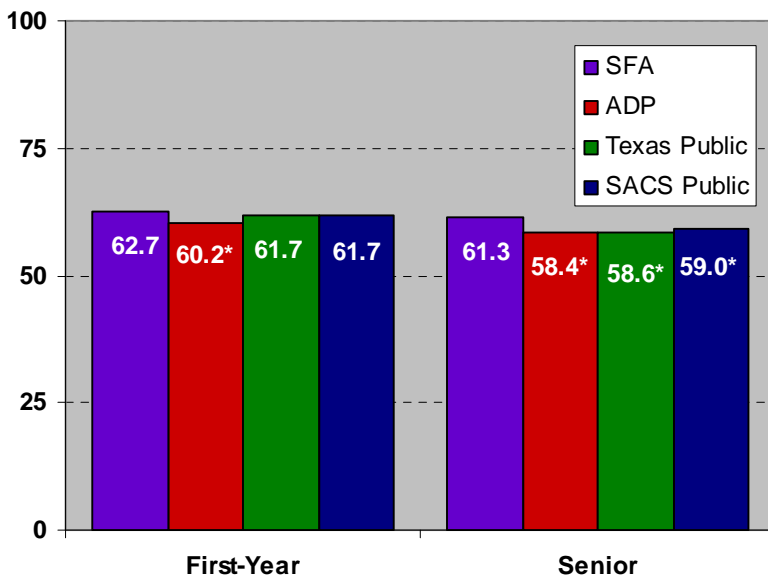
(Comparisons that are statistically significant are denoted with an asterisk.)



**NSSE Benchmark
 Supportive Campus Environment
 (SCE)**

SFA response means were significantly higher than the comparison groups for the *Supportive Campus Environment (SCE)* benchmark for First Year and Senior students in several cases.

(Comparisons that are statistically significant are denoted with an asterisk.)



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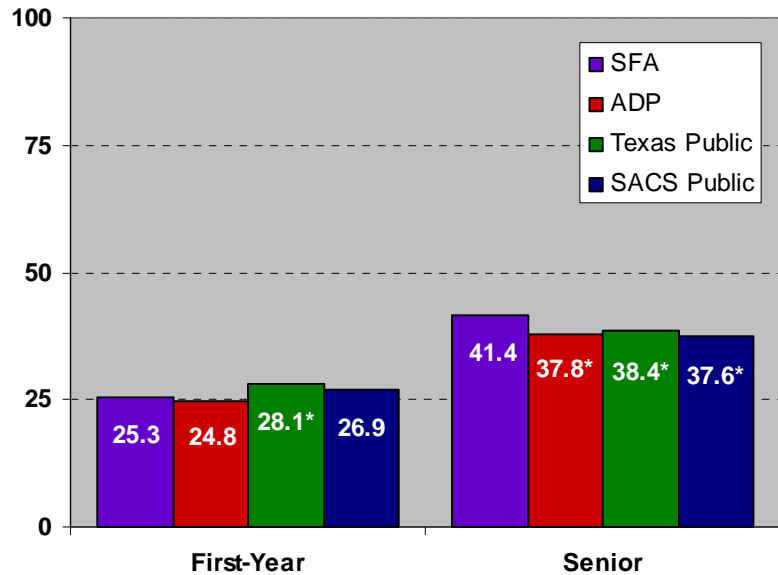
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Results (continued)

**NSSE Benchmark
Enriching Educational Experiences
(EEE)**

SFA response means were significantly higher than the comparison groups for the *Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE)* benchmark for Senior students. Response mean comparisons for First Year students were mixed.

(Comparisons that are statistically significant are denoted with an asterisk.)



FSSE Summary

The Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) was designed to compliment the NSSE by measuring faculty members' expectations of student engagement and educational practices that are linked to learning and development.

In 2009, over 18,000 faculty from 148 colleges and universities responded to the FSSE. Faculty members at participating institutions were sent invitation emails and asked to respond to the online survey.

Points to note concerning SFA FSSE respondents include the following:

- 232 of 472 invited faculty responded to the FSSE for a response rate of 49%.
- 79% were of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor rank.
- 80% were tenured or on tenure track.
- 52% were male; 48% were female.
- Respondents participated from each discipline.

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Conclusion

NSSE responses indicate that SFA students are effectively engaged in several areas.

- SFA students enjoy interacting with individuals different from themselves.
- SFA faculty members excel in engaging with students compared to other Texas Public institutions.
- SFA students are much more likely to work on-campus and much less likely to work off-campus than comparison institutions.
- SFA senior students are more likely to report completing community service or volunteer work than comparison institutions.
- SFA senior students are more likely to report completing a culminating senior experience than comparison institutions.
- SFA first-year students are more likely to approve of the quality of their academic advising than comparison institutions.

SFA falls behind (or maintains with) peer institutions in the following areas:

- Number of writing assignments required.
- Number of books read.

FSSE faculty perceptions and NSSE student responses differ in several areas:

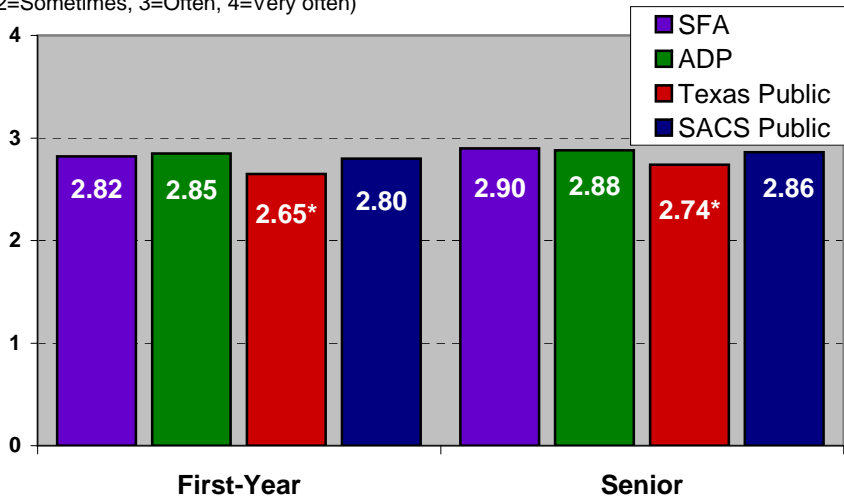
- Number of drafts prepared for written assignments.
- How often students attend classes unprepared.
- How promptly students receive written or oral feedback on academic performance.
- How often students interact with peers of a different race or ethnicity.

Student engagement at SFA appears to be strong, especially in relation to faculty interaction and to campus environment. Furthermore, it appears engagement strengthens as students progress to the senior year.

Most troubling among engagement data is the indication that writing and reading instruction and practice is lacking among students. Additionally, the disconnect between the perceptions of the faculty and students concerning class preparation also indicates a cause for concern. Therein exists an opportunity for improvement for SFA.

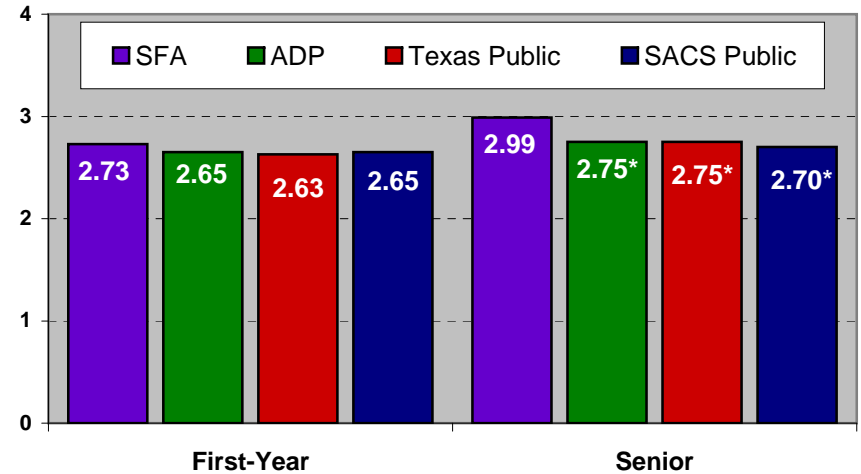
NSSE Question 1e.

How often have students included diverse perspectives (e.g. different races, genders) in class discussions or assignments? (1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very often)



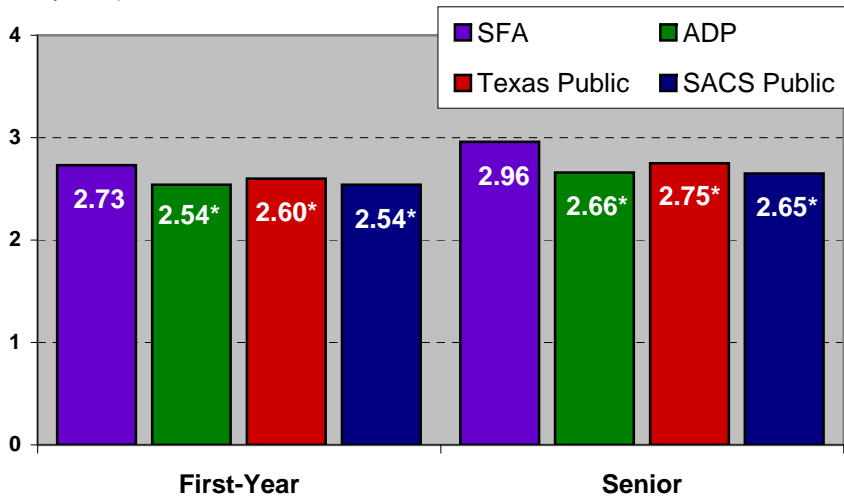
NSSE Question 1v.

How often have students had serious conversations with students who are very different from them in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values? (1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very often)



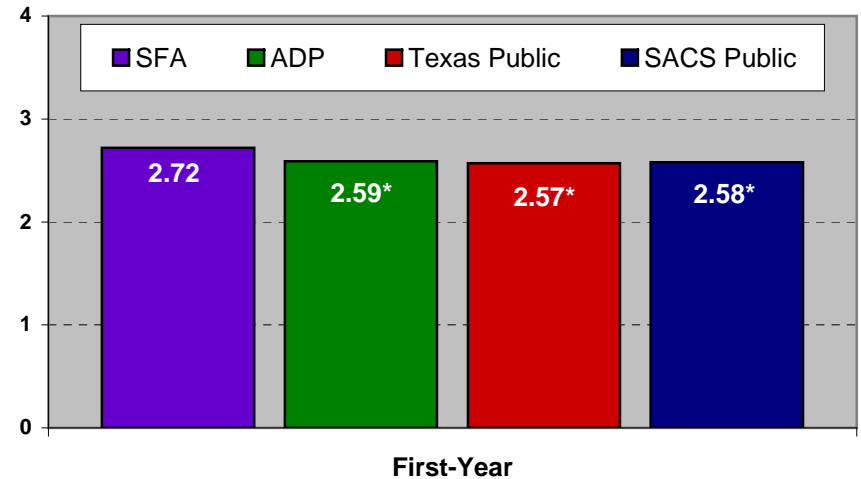
NSSE Question 1u.

How often have students had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than their own? (1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very often)



NSSE Question 6d.

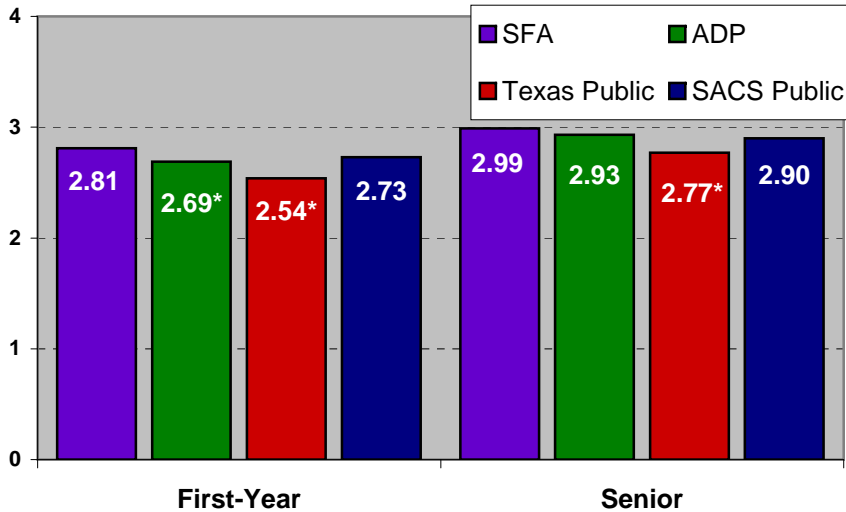
How often have students examined the strengths and weaknesses of their own views on a topic or issue? (1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very often)



*SFA's mean is significantly higher or lower at the p<.05 level.

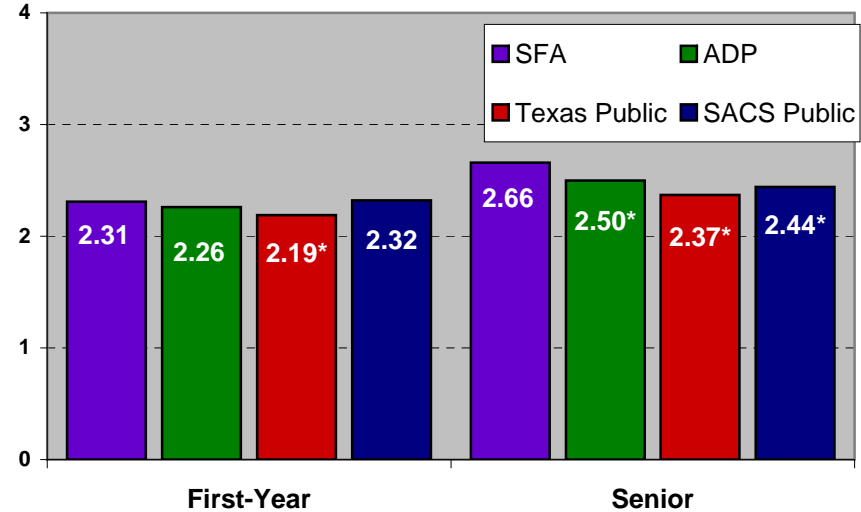
NSSE Question 1n.

How often have students discussed grades or assignments with an instructor? (1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very often)



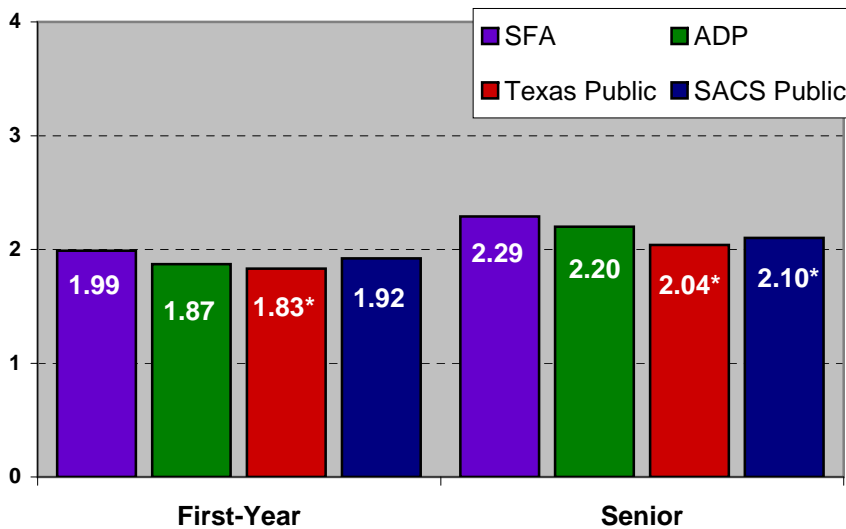
NSSE Question 1o.

How often have students talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor? (1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very often)



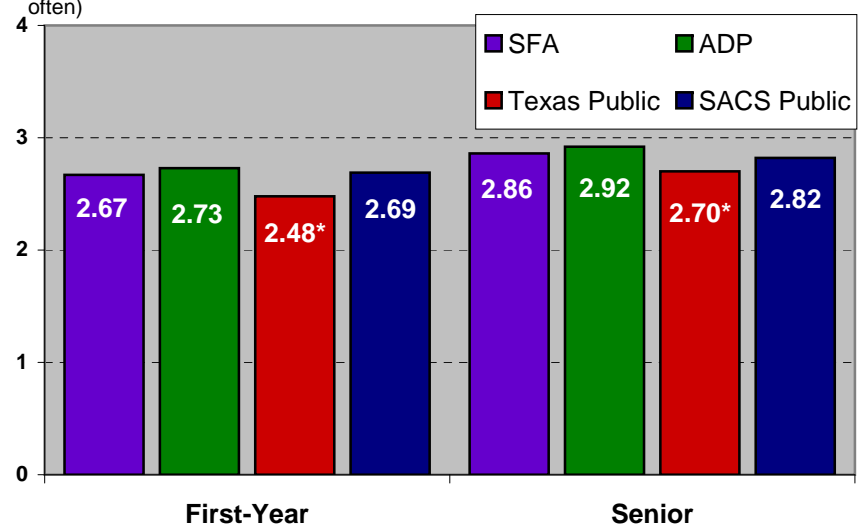
NSSE Question 1p.

How often have students discussed ideas from readings or classes with faculty members outside of class? (1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very often)



NSSE Question 1q.

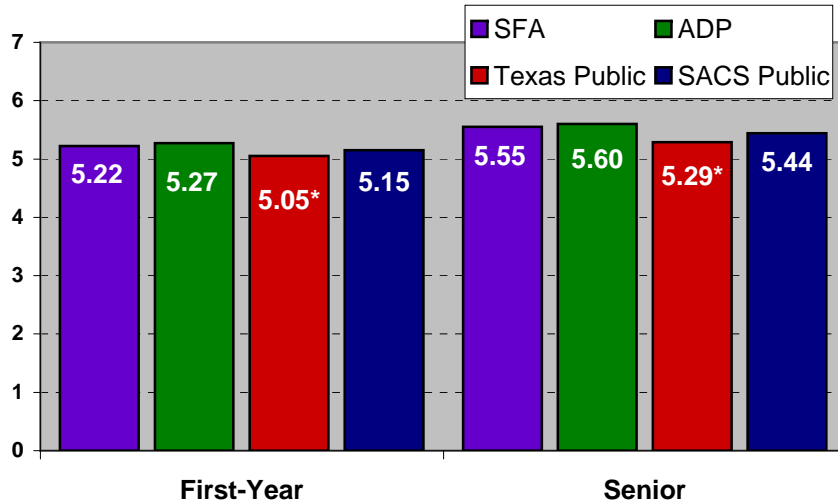
How often have students received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on academic performance? (1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, 4=Very often)



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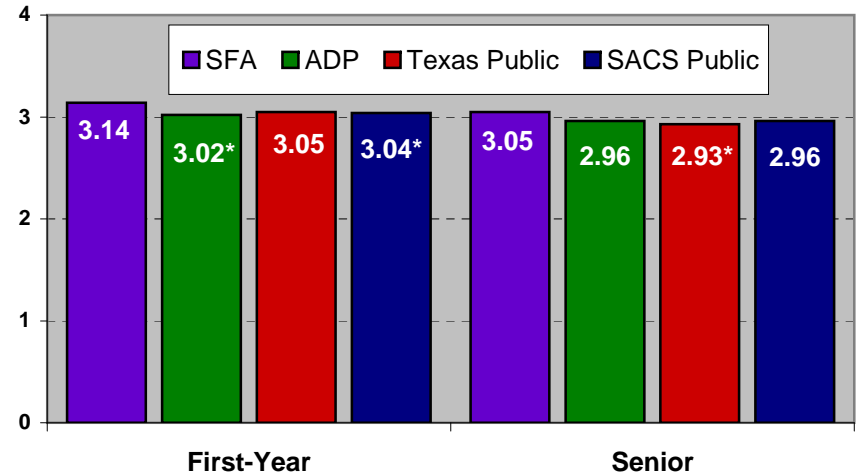
NSSE Question 8b.

How do students rate the quality of relationships with faculty?
 (1=Unavailable, Unhelpful, Unsympathetic to 7=Available, Helpful, Sympathetic)



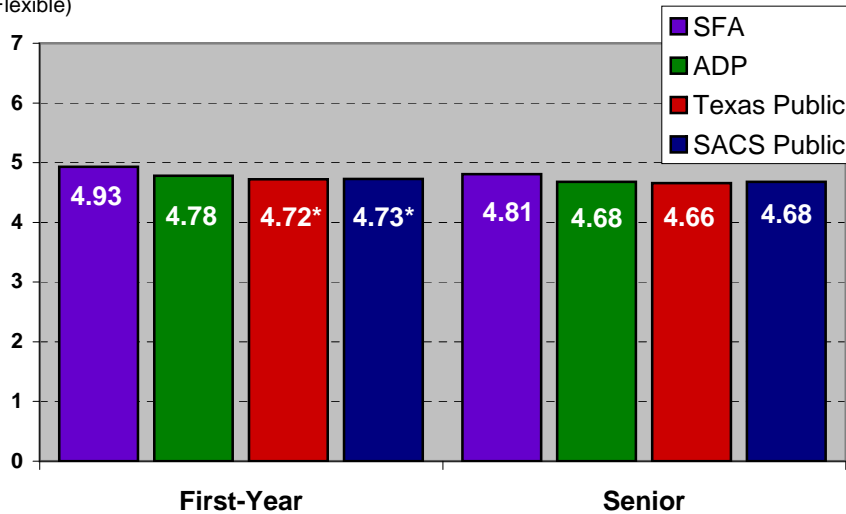
NSSE Question 10b.

To what extent does the institution emphasize providing students the support they need to succeed academically?
 (1=Very little, 2=Some, 3=Quite a bit, 4=Very much)



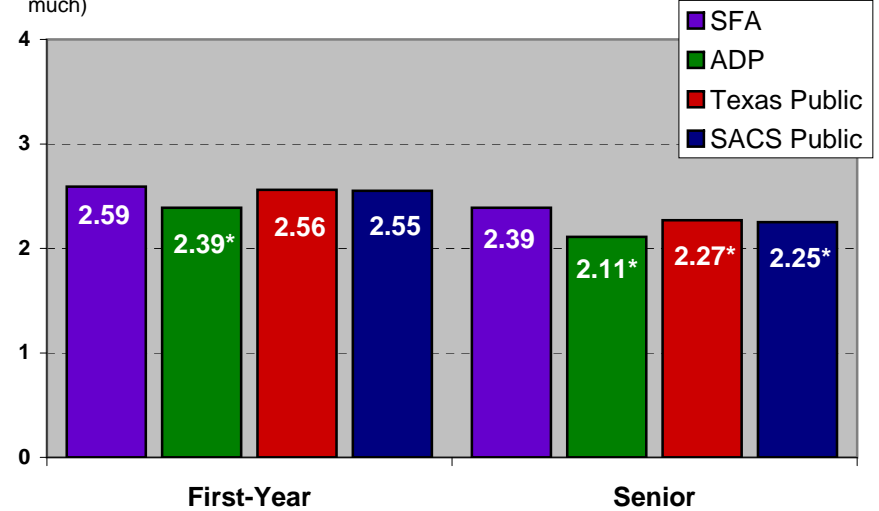
NSSE Question 8c.

How do students rate the quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices?
 (1=Unhelpful, Inconsiderate, Rigid to 7=Helpful, Considerate, Flexible)



NSSE Question 10e.

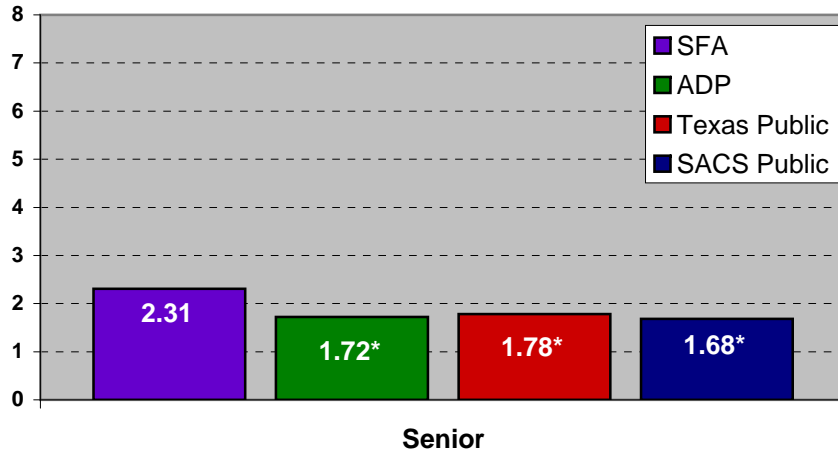
To what extent does the institution emphasize providing students the support they need to thrive socially?
 (1=Very little, 2=Some, 3=Quite a bit, 4=Very much)



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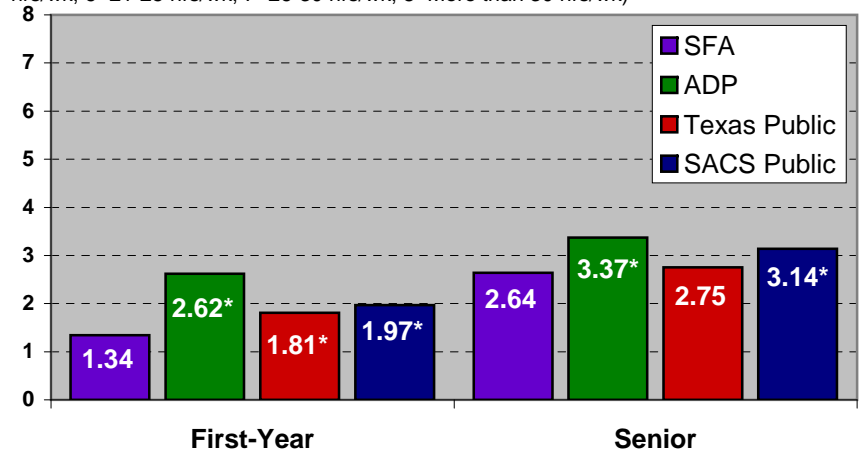
NSSE 9b.

About how many hours per week do students spend in a typical 7-day week working for pay on campus? (1=0 hrs/wk, 2=1-5 hrs/wk, 3=6-10 hrs/wk, 4=11-15 hrs/wk, 5=16-20 hrs/wk, 6=21-25 hrs/wk, 7=26-30 hrs/wk, 8=More than 30 hrs/wk)



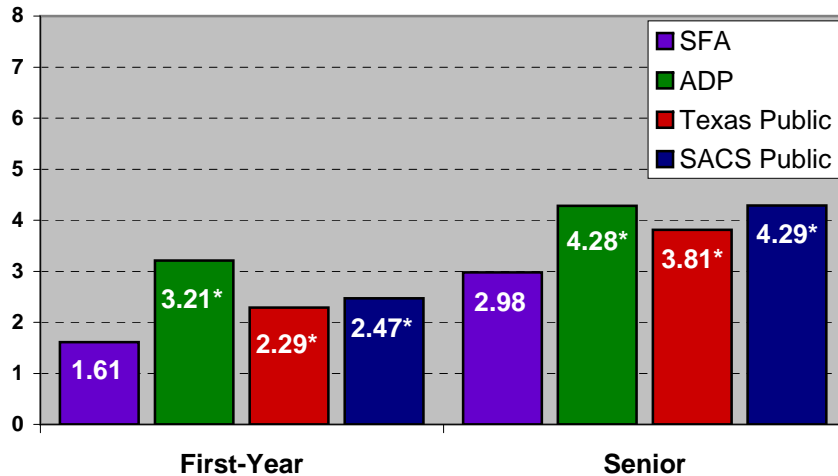
NSSE 9f.

About how many hours per week do students spend in a typical 7-day week providing care for dependents living with them (parents, children, spouses, etc.)? (1=0 hrs/wk, 2=1-5 hrs/wk, 3=6-10 hrs/wk, 4=11-15 hrs/wk, 5=16-20 hrs/wk, 6=21-25 hrs/wk, 7=26-30 hrs/wk, 8=More than 30 hrs/wk)



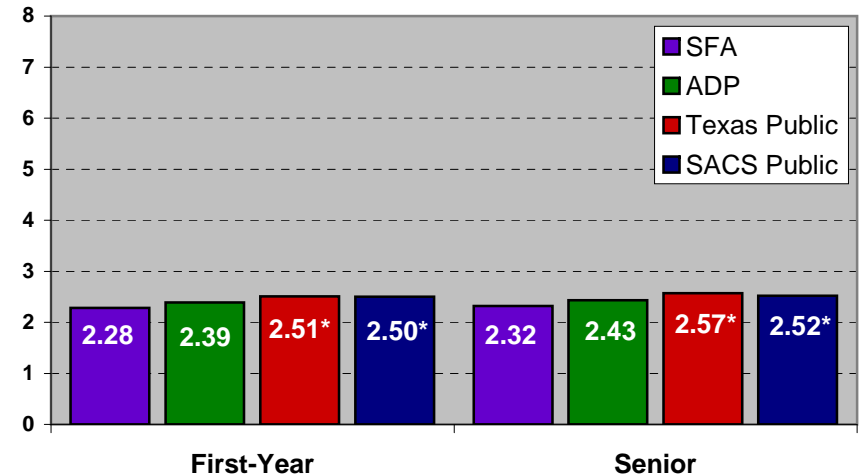
NSSE 9c.

About how many hours per week do students spend in a typical 7-day week working for pay off campus? (1=0 hrs/wk, 2=1-5 hrs/wk, 3=6-10 hrs/wk, 4=11-15 hrs/wk, 5=16-20 hrs/wk, 6=21-25 hrs/wk, 7=26-30 hrs/wk, 8=More than 30 hrs/wk)



NSSE 9g.

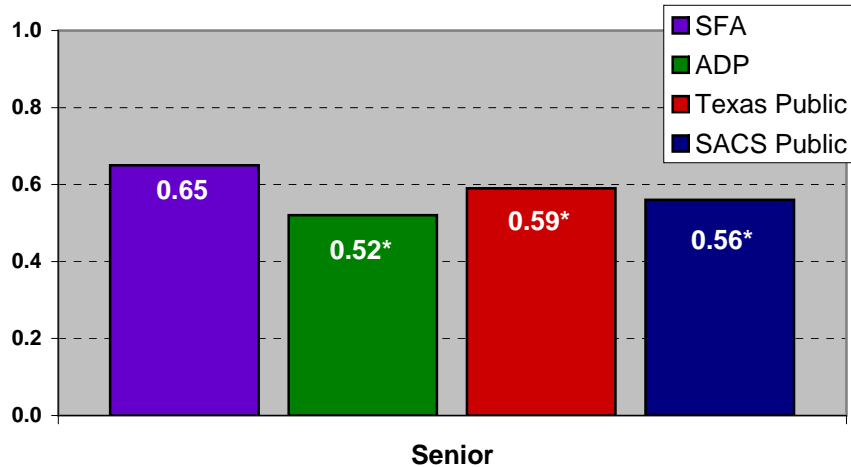
About how many hours per week do students spend in a typical 7-day week commuting to class? (1=0 hrs/wk, 2=1-5 hrs/wk, 3=6-10 hrs/wk, 4=11-15 hrs/wk, 5=16-20 hrs/wk, 6=21-25 hrs/wk, 7=26-30 hrs/wk, 8=More than 30 hrs/wk)



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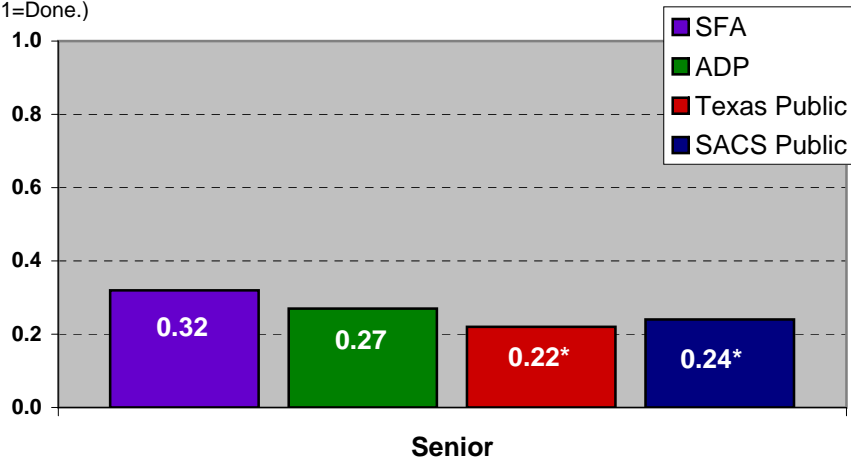
NSSE 7b.

How many students have completed or plan to complete **community service or volunteer work**? (0=Have not decided, Do not plan to do, Plan to do; 1=Done.)



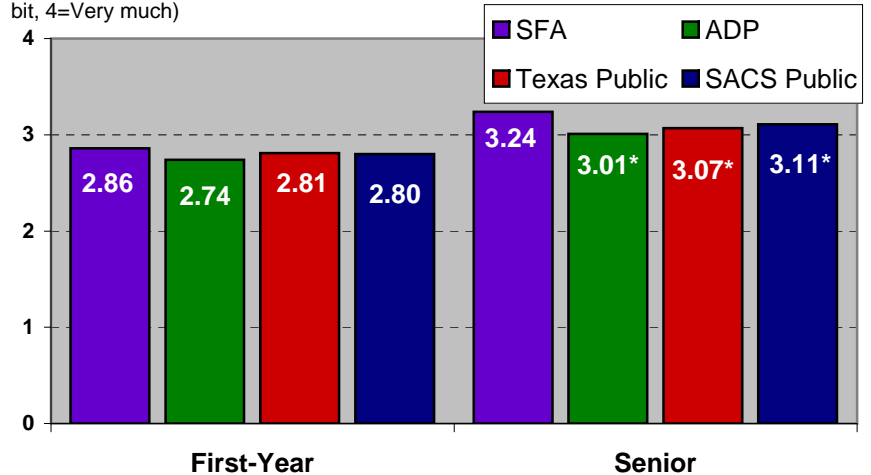
NSSE 7h.

How many students have completed or plan to complete a **culminating senior experience** (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.) (0=Have not decided, Do not plan to do, Plan to do; 1=Done.)



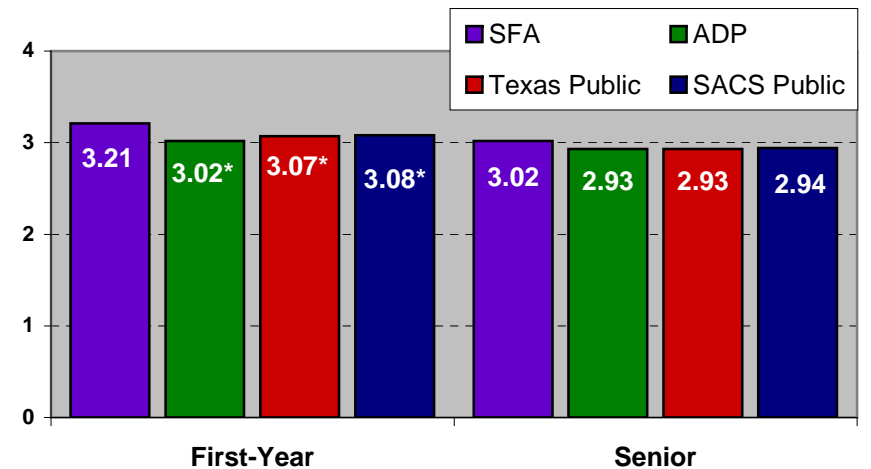
NSSE 11b.

To what extent do students report that experiences at this institution contributed to knowledge, skills, and personal development in acquiring job or **work-related knowledge and skills**? (1=Very little, 2=Some, 3=Quite a bit, 4=Very much)



NSSE 12

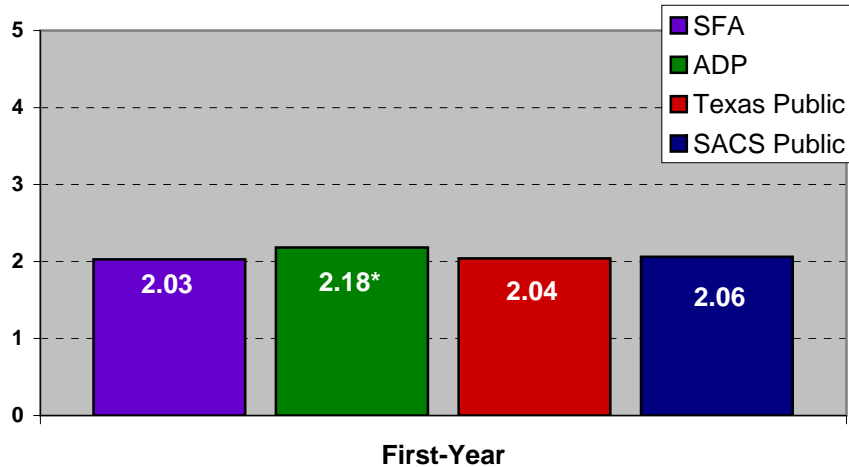
Overall, how do students evaluate the quality of **academic advising** they receive at the institution? (1=Poor, 2=Fair, 3=Good, 4=Excellent)



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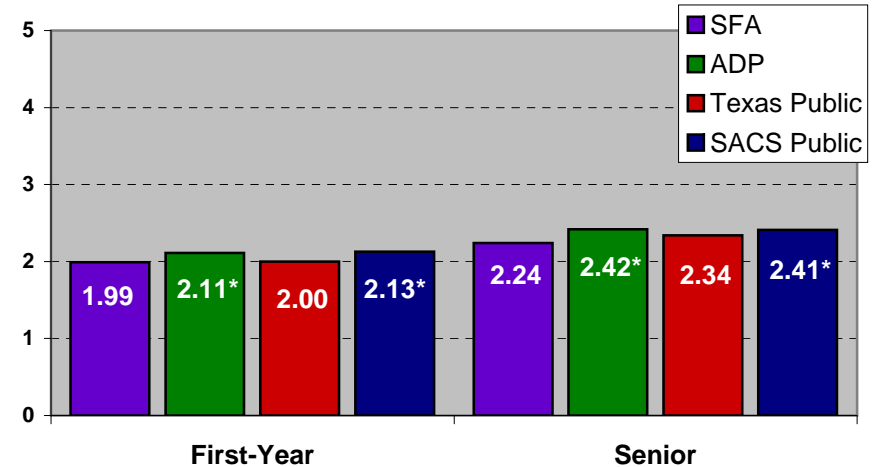
NSSE 3b.

During a given school year, about how many books do students read on their own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment? (1=None, 2=1-4, 3=5-10, 4=11-20, 5=More than 20)



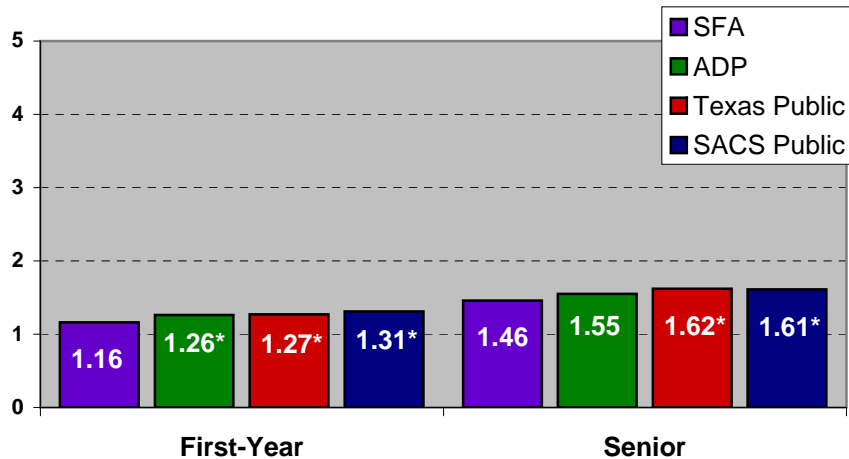
NSSE 3d.

During a given school year, about how many written papers or reports do students produce between 5 to 19 pages? (1=None, 2=1-4, 3=5-10, 4=11-20, 5=More than 20)



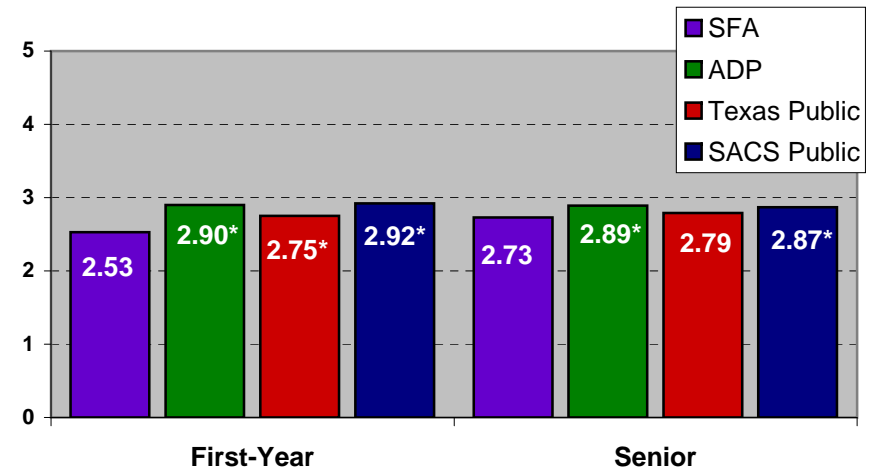
NSSE 3c.

During a given school year, about how many written papers or reports do students produce of 20 pages or more? (1=None, 2=1-4, 3=5-10, 4=11-20, 5=More than 20)



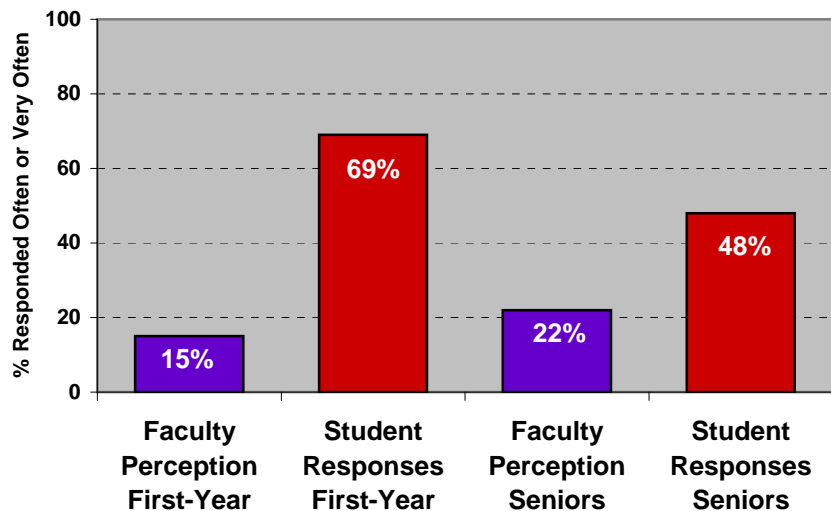
NSSE 3e.

During a given school year, about how many written papers or reports do students produce of fewer than 5 pages? (1=None, 2=1-4, 3=5-10, 4=11-20, 5=More than 20)

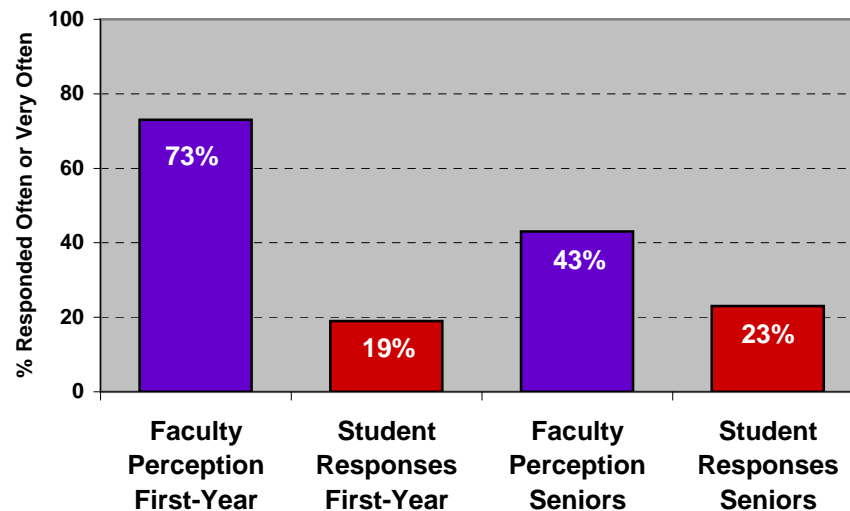


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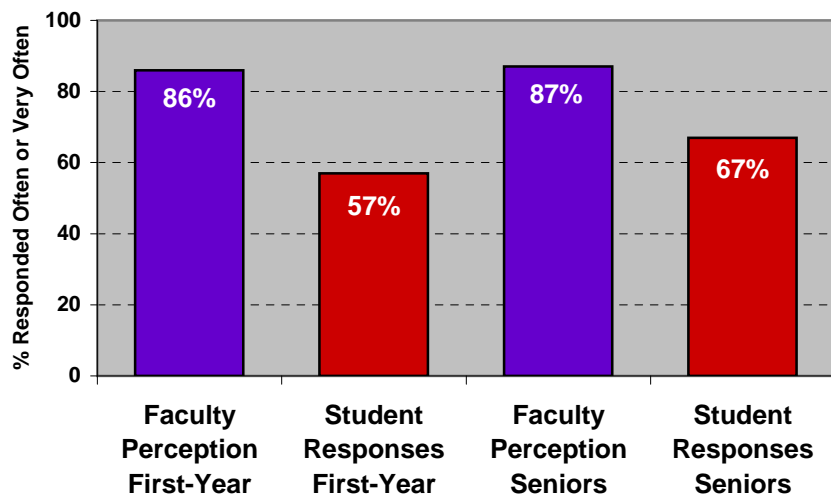
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in.



Come to class without completing readings or assignments.



Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on his or her academic performance.



Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than his or her own.

