Understanding when and why our students do and don’t engage, and how they feel about their SJSU experience

2011–2012 Teacher Scholars
Kathy Abriam-Yago, Pat Lopes Don, Sami Khuri, Mei-Yan Lu, Carlos Sanchez, Jacob Tsao, Shai Venkatsubramanyan, Amy Strage
Practical concern:

- understanding what stands in the way of our students’ success
- figuring out how we can remove roadblocks or provide supports

Build on the work of prior Teacher Scholar groups:

- 2006–07: matches and mismatches in students’ and faculty members’ perceptions of what it meant to be “engaged” with a course in fruitful ways
- 2007–08: students’ educational goals – vocational, liberal education – and their expectations about the roles they and their professors should play
Our process

- Began by examining the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data summarizing students’ experiences at SJSU, and comparing our students with students at comparable institutions

- Found several items where our students’ perceptions and experiences were significantly more negative than their peers’

- Surveyed current Seniors, to confirm & drill down, to learn more about their experience here

- To date, over 200 students have responded. Survey open until May 4th.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>SJSU</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of relationships with faculty members</td>
<td>5.07/7</td>
<td>5.52/7</td>
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<td>Receive prompt feedback on academic performance</td>
<td>2.64/4</td>
<td>2.83/4</td>
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<td>During the school year, how often have you participated in activities to enhance your spirituality?</td>
<td>1.73/4</td>
<td>2.06/4</td>
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## NSSE questions we took up

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<tr>
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<td>2.8 (improved from 2.79)</td>
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<td>During the school year, how often have you participated in activities to enhance your spirituality?</td>
<td>1.73/4 (lowered from 1.86)</td>
<td>2.06/4 (staying at 2.06)</td>
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<tr>
<td>How often have you talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor?</td>
<td>2.05/4 (lowered from 2.17)</td>
<td>2.40/4 (staying at 2.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you evaluate the quality of academic advising that you have received?</td>
<td>2.62/4 (improved from 2.56)</td>
<td>2.94/4 (improved from 2.81)</td>
</tr>
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<td>To what degree do you feel that your institution has provided the support you need to help you succeed academically?</td>
<td>2.69/4 (lowered from 2.70)</td>
<td>2.96/4 (improved from 2.91)</td>
</tr>
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<td>2.87/4 (lowered from 2.93)</td>
<td>3.21/4 (improved from 3.15)</td>
</tr>
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<td>How much time do you spend participating in co-curricular activities?</td>
<td>1.99/4 (lowered from 1.77)</td>
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Nearly sixty percent of our sample consisted of students between the age of 21 and 24. About twenty percent of our respondents were between the age of 25 and 30. The remaining respondents were over age 30.

A little over half of our sample was female, and a little less of our sample was male.
Residence

- Half of our sample lived with their family.
- About a third lived off campus with roommates.
- The remainder lived in the dorms, alone, or in some other arrangement.

Route to SJSU

- A bit less than half of our sample came to SJSU straight from high school.
- A bit less than half transferred from community college.
- About ten percent had worked full-time before coming to SJSU.
First in family to attend college?

- First in family to attend college?
  - Less than a quarter reported being first in their family to attend college.

Proportion of High School friends to go to college

- Proportion of High School friends to go to college:
  - For over two thirds of our sample, respondents reported that most or all of their high school friends had gone to college.
About a third of our sample reported working less than 10 hours per week. About a quarter said they worked between 11 and 20 hours per week. And about 40 percent said they forked over 20 hours per week.

A little over half of our sample reported spending 10 hours or less per week on family responsibilities. About a third said they spent 11 to 20 hours on family responsibilities. And a little over 10 percent said they spend over 20 hours each week taking care of their families.
Involvement in student-initiated activities

If yes:
- for social reasons,
- for leadership experience
- for career-related reasons

If no:
- no time
- have to work
- couldn’t find them

We’ll come back to this… it’s important!!
Quality of relationships with faculty members
(1 = unavailable, unhelpful, unsympathetic; 7 = available, helpful, sympathetic)

NSSE 2011 data:
  Our students: 5.07/7
  Comparison group: 5.52/7
  Our respondents: 5.56/7

Most of our students are happy–campers:
  I’ve found at least one faculty member
  ◦ whom I would describe as supportive of my education (4.6/5)
  ◦ whom I would describe as responsive to my personal situation, as needed (4.35/5)
  ◦ who makes an effort to get to know his or her students (4.55/5)
  I have the sense that in general my professors enjoy teaching us (4.10/5)
  Most or all of my professors know my name (3.80/5)

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE ONES WHO DON’T FEEL A CONNECTION…
Have you received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance?

- **NSSE 2011** (1 = never; 2 = sometimes; 3 = often; 4 = very often)
  - Our students: 2.60/4
  - Comparison group: 2.83/4

- **Our respondents said:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No/rarely</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It depends on the teacher</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, nearly always</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
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- As Vincent Tinto reminded us earlier this month... feedback is important, but only if students actually use it...
Do you turn in assignments early?

Our respondents said...

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If not, why not?
- Don’t get done in time (50.8% of respondents); don’t think instructors would want to take the time (16.6%); hadn’t thought of it (11.4%)

If yes, why?
- Like to get as much input as possible (25.5%); learn a lot by reworking drafts (25%); I’ll do anything to get the best possible grade (18.9%)
Do you talk to your professors after they have returned your assignments to you?

- Our respondents said…
  Sometimes (half the time). or rarely (about a third of the time).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>Frequently 12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
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- If not, why not?
  - They might think I was trying to complain about my grade (18.9%); I’m not sure what I’d learn from talking to them (11.4%); I don’t feel comfortable approaching them (10.6%)

- If yes, why?
  - I might learn something to help me with future assignments (60.1%); I enjoy talking with my professors (37.9%); I might get more points that way (27.3%)
Recent work by Astin et al reveals the importance of spiritual growth and engagement – nebulous as the constructs are.

NSSE 2011 question:
- During the school year, how often have you participated in activities to enhance your spirituality? (1 = never; 2 = sometimes; 3 = often; 4 = very often)
  - Our students: 1.73/4
  - Comparison group: 2.06/4

We asked our participants:
- Do you participate in any sort of activity to enhance your spirituality at school?
  - Yes 23.5%  No 76.5%
- Do you think your spiritual well-being has anything to do with your academic success?
  - Yes 54.6%  No 45.4%
For students who said they DO participate in activities to enhance their spirituality, we asked... What kind?
  - Yoga, meditation (n = 14)
  - Religious worship or prayer (n = 12)
  - Presentations by motivational speakers (n = 9);
  - Counseling services (n = 8)

For students who said they DO NOT participate in activities to enhance their spirituality, we asked... Why not?
  - Don’t feel the need to enhance my spirituality (n = 54)
  - Do so off campus (n = 37)

We also asked, How could SJSU nurture a student’s spirituality?
  - Ethics classes (n = 40)
  - Philosophy classes (n = 30)
  - Career devt classes (n = 31)
  - Religion classes (n = 21)
How often have you talked with an advisor about your career plans?

- NSSE 2011: (1 = never; 2 = sometimes; 3 = often; 4 = very often)
  - Our students: 2.05/4
  - Comparison group: 2.40/4

- Participants: 2.01/4

This is also pretty important... it will be very interesting to contrast what students from the professional schools say with what the students from other programs say...
If never...why not?

- It is my responsibility to know my career plan
- A faculty member or advisor does not have time to meet with me
- I have not had time to meet with a faculty member or advisor
- I have never thought of talking about career planning with a faculty member...
- I have not seriously thought about career planning yet
- Other
The most common answer was because they needed help figuring out their career plans.
Academic advice and guidance....

- How would you evaluate the academic advising?
  
  NSSE 2011 (1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; 4=excellent)
  
  Our students: 2.62/4
  Comparison group: 2.94/4
  Participants: 2.76/4 (58.3% said “good” or “excellent”)

- Where do you turn to for advice?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advisor Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A favorite professor</td>
<td>60.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A departmental advisor</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A current professor</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A classmate</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SJSU website</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents/family friends</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-line sites (e.g., ratemyprofessor)</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer mentors, advisement centers</td>
<td>Not on their radar (&lt;10%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most common topics were major requirements, general education requirements and graduation issues. Very few students talked about personal issues with their advisors. Overall, they were satisfied with their advisor’s guidance.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Discussed?</th>
<th>Satisfaction?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major requirements</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>4.21/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GE requirements</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
<td>3.65/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation issues</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>3.79/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer credit issues</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>3.75/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career issues</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
<td>3.39/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal issues</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>3.32/5</td>
</tr>
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</table>
To what degree do you feel your institution has provided the support you need ...? (1 = very little; 2 = some; 3 = quite a bit, 4 = very much)

NSSE 2011:

Our students (2011): 2.69/4
Comparison group: 2.96/4
Our respondents: 2.71/4

Follow-up questions:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tr>
<td>I know where I stand in my classes as far as my grades are concerned</td>
<td>3.40/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My professors are approachable to help me when I need help</td>
<td>3.34/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level of difficulty of my classes is appropriate</td>
<td>3.33/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received help from my professors to improve my reading and writing</td>
<td>2.89/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received help from my professors to improve my math skills</td>
<td>2.53/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received help from my professors to improve my public speaking and presentation skills</td>
<td>3.01/4</td>
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</table>
How would you evaluate your educational experience...? (Poor, fair, good, excellent)

NSSE 2011
- Our students: 2.87/4
- Comparison group: 3.21/4
- Our respondents: 2.77/4

If “poor” or “fair”
- I couldn’t get the courses I needed when I needed them (17.4%)
- I have not felt that I was an integral part of the university (12.3%)
- Came to SJSU to learn career/job skills..education too theoretical (9.4%)

If “good” or “excellent”, why?
- My courses were challenging but good (52.2%)
- Came to SJSU to learn career/job skills..education is balanced (45.6%)
- Faculty took time to get to know and help me (37.7%)
How could students’ experience at SJSU have been improved?

What could YOU have done?

- #1: Become more involved in campus/ campus life (n = 46)
- #2: Be more diligent, as a student (n = 22)
- #3: Be more proactive about resources (people, services...) (n = 9)
- Other: $$, work, living arrangement, go elsewhere, start earlier, nothing.

What could SJSU have done?

- Much greater variety of answers...
  - #1: Better teachers
  - #2: Better customer service
  - #3: Cost less
  - #4: Have more classes/ classes offered at better times
  - #5: Different kinds of student opportunities
So where does this leave us...

Next steps – analyze the data
- Look for differences among sub-groups of students (by major; by ethnicity)
- Look for patterns
  - What characterizes the students who feel the most positive about their experience?
  - What characterizes those who feel the most negative?

Think about implications for SJSU and our services and supports
- Role of faculty, advisors, etc.
- How and when to communicate expectations and “secrets to success”
Questions...

Comments...

Suggestions...

Thank You!!!!!