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Undergraduate Student Satisfaction and Interaction with Faculty at Loyola

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One of Loyola's greatest strengths is its faculty. From previous studies we know that, in general, undergraduate students are pretty satisfied with their professors. Also, it appears that professors at Loyola tend to spend more time with their students than professors at many other universities.

In this report, we draw on the results from three surveys of Loyola undergraduates to evaluate student-faculty interaction both in and out of the classroom, student-faculty relationships, and student satisfaction with faculty.

The first of the three surveys is the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), with data from freshmen and seniors from 2001 to 2008. The second is the Loyola Undergraduate Survey (UGS), with data from all undergraduates for the period 2006-2008. The third survey is the Boston College Questionnaire About the Undergraduate Experience (BCQ), with data from seniors in 2008.¹

Key Findings

Student-faculty interaction

- A benchmark index of Student-Faculty Interaction has been calculated yearly since 2005 from responses to a set of questions on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).
 - For freshmen, the Student-Faculty Interaction benchmark was 44 out of 100 in 2005; in 2008 it was 39 (see Table 1). This drop is not large enough, however, to be significant.
 - For seniors, the benchmark was 49 in 2005 and 47 in 2008, which again represents no significant change.
- Individual questions in the NSSE ask about specific types of student interaction with faculty in the past year (2008 results in parentheses).

¹ One caveat with these results is that it is not always clear how students interpret "faculty;" some may think only of full-time, tenure stream faculty, while others may include instructors, both full- and part-time.

- Students often used email to communicate with their instructors (81% for freshmen, 89% for seniors).
- Seniors more often received prompt feedback from faculty on their academic performance than did freshmen (74% vs. 58%).
- Only half of freshmen and 57% of seniors often discussed grades or assignments with faculty.
- Most students did not often discuss ideas from readings or classes with faculty outside of class (21% of freshmen and 37% of seniors).
- One quarter of freshmen and 37% of seniors often discussed their career plans with a faculty member or advisor.
- Twelve percent of freshmen and 24% of seniors had often worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework.
- Within the last year, 19% of seniors had worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements (only 3% of freshmen had).
- The Boston College Questionnaire About the Undergraduate Experience (BCQ) asked questions of seniors about their interactions with faculty and, in some cases, how significant those interactions were to their overall college experience.
 - Ninety one percent of seniors had had conversations with faculty outside of class (see Table 2). Of those who had such conversations, 74% considered those conversations to be significant or very significant to their overall college experience.
 - Results from the BCQ also indicate that 15% of seniors had talked with faculty about religion/spirituality at least once a month.
 - Twenty four percent of seniors said they had worked on a research project with a faculty member, and of those who did, three quarters found it to be significant or very significant to their college experience.
- According to the Undergraduate Survey (UGS), 72% of undergraduates were satisfied or very

satisfied with faculty-student communication (see Table 3).

Relationships with faculty

- On the NSSE, students were asked how available, helpful, and sympathetic faculty members were.
 - The percentage of freshmen who thought faculty members were available, helpful, and sympathetic dropped from 79 in 2001 to 64 in 2008 (see Table 1).
 - The percentage of seniors who said faculty members were available, helpful, and sympathetic dropped from 85 in 2001 to 74 in 2008.
- In the Undergraduate Survey (UGS), undergraduate students were asked how satisfied they were with their relationships with faculty.
 - The percent of students who reported high or very high satisfactions with their relationships with faculty remained stable at about 67% (see Table 3).
- According to the BCQ, two thirds of seniors had a faculty member who they considered a mentor (see Table 2).

General satisfaction

- A summary index of general satisfaction with faculty was calculated in 2009 from responses to several questions in the Undergraduate Survey (UGS).
 - For 2009, the summary index was 7.3 on a scale of 0 to 10² (see Table 3).
- Results for the specific questions on satisfaction with faculty in the UGS reveal fairly stable patterns from 2006 to 2009. Specific results for 2009 show the following:
 - Most students reported high levels of satisfaction with regular faculty in their major (82%), followed by part-time faculty in their major (72%).
 - Students were less satisfied with faculty in the Core (65% satisfied or very satisfied with regular faculty, only 56% with part-time faculty).
 - Students were mostly satisfied (79%) with the overall quality of the faculty.
 - Seventy six percent were satisfied with the availability of faculty.

² The index could not be calculated before 2008.

Conclusions

- Students were more satisfied with faculty (both regular and part-time) in their major than in the Core.
- Within their major and within the Core, students were more satisfied with regular faculty than they were with part-time faculty.
- Up to one quarter of Loyola seniors have worked with faculty on a research project,³ and most of those who did so found that experience to be significant to their overall college experience.
- Many students said they did not often receive prompt feedback from faculty on their academic performance.
- Results from the UGS and the NSSE suggest that students are more satisfied with faculty overall than they are with student-faculty interaction and communication.
- There is evidence of substantial student-faculty interaction outside the classroom. Two thirds of seniors reported having a faculty mentor, 15% said they regularly talked about faith with a faculty member, and up to a quarter of seniors had worked on a research project with a faculty member. These interactions, however, imply relationships with single faculty members.
- A warning flag in these results, however, is that the percentage of students who think faculty members are available, helpful, and sympathetic has been dropping over the last eight years. Unfortunately, there are no specific results from these surveys that seem to explain the drop.
- One possibility is that the average size of classes has increased at Loyola, especially for freshman courses. This leads to less interaction in general between students and faculty.

³ More BCQ seniors reported a research project with a faculty member than did NSSE seniors. This may be because the NSSE question refers specifically to research outside of class or program requirements.

Table 1 National Survey of Student Engagement Freshmen and Seniors																
	Freshmen								Seniors							
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Student-Faculty Interaction Benchmark (average, scale 0-100)	---	---	---	---	44	37	35	39	---	---	---	---	49	46	46	47
Often or very often (%)																
Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor	64	65	70	68	76	72	75	81	82	73	86	88	90	85	87	89
Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance (written or oral)	69	63	57	54	71	57	53	58	80	75	81	79	81	75	71	74
Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	55	54	53	50	59	44	43	50	58	59	62	66	57	55	57	57
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	17	19	13	20	22	16	14	21	24	24	28	22	26	27	25	32
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	25	22	16	19	44	27	20	25	40	38	39	37	40	37	37	37
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework	10	7	11	11	13	9	10	12	16	17	22	16	18	23	21	24
Have worked on research project with faculty member outside course or program requirements (%)	---	---	---	2	5	2	2	3	---	---	---	19	21	23	20	19
Relationships with faculty members: Available, helpful, sympathetic (%)	79	82	76	80	75	69	66	64	85	84	87	84	77	77	75	74
N	121	116	167	123	151	710	863	1051	123	152	196	154	146	480	607	850

Source: National Survey of Student Engagement, 2001-08

Table 2	
Boston College Questionnaire About the Undergraduate Experience	
Seniors	
	%
Conversations with faculty outside of class, during college	
Had conversations	91
Significant or very significant to college experience	74
Research project with faculty member during college	
Did such project	24
Project significant or very significant	67
Talked with faculty about faith at least once a month	15
Had faculty mentor	67
N	649

Source: Boston College Questionnaire About the Undergraduate Experience, 2008

Table 3				
Loyola Undergraduate Survey				
All Undergraduates				
	2006	2007	2008	2009
Faculty summary index (scale from 1 - 100)	---	---	7.4	7.3
Satisfaction (% high or very high)				
Faculty-student communication	73	72	73	72
Relationships with faculty	67	67	69	67
Regular faculty in major	84	84	84	82
Part-time faculty in major	68	71	72	72
Regular faculty in Core	65	65	66	65
Part-time faculty in Core	54	55	57	56
Overall quality of faculty	---	---	80	79
Availability of faculty	77	79	75	76
N	3,837	4,175	3,398	3,971

Source: Loyola Undergraduate Survey, 2006-09